

An Opportunity to Renew

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This document has been put together to support a submission by R3 Residents



Let's not be limited in our thinking

Let's not be held back by individual setbacks.

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AN OPPORTUNITY TO RENEW

The Sydney Metro Norwest presents **a once in a lifetime opportunity**.

For that very reason we wish to congratulate Ann-Maree Carruthers and her Urban Renewal team for many of the ideas contained in the Department of Planning and the Environment's (DPE) proposal for the Showground Station Precinct.

More particularly however we wish to thank the team for the way they have conducted the **consultation process and given us the opportunity to engage in a constructive dialogue**. This submission is made in the spirit of that discussion. We would welcome the opportunity to continue the discussion further.

The document is intended to support submissions by the R3 residents and should be read in conjunction with the APP submission document and also the "Showground Station Precinct R3 Economic Viability - A Residents' Perspective" document.

Those two documents demonstrate clearly that the proposed **R3 zoning and controls are quite simply not viable** and would lead in time to the kind of ugly buildings and streetscapes that appear in places like Westmead, near the hospital.

They also show that:

- The area zoned as R3 up to the western edge of Fishburn Crescent should be rezoned to R4.
- **All the proposed extra roads that cut up the precinct should be removed**, as they restrict the opportunities to master plan.
- Existing residents have **embraced the ideas of master planning** and producing liveable neighbourhoods.

This document seeks to go a bit further in two primary areas:

Supporting Vision and Opportunities through better Incentives and Flexible Controls	By adopting a more flexible and objectives based set of guidelines and controls, we believe a genuinely innovative and very attractive precinct could be created. We need to rise above the conventional debates over FSRs, heights and setbacks and find ways that create real opportunities.
Implementing a much better road network and pedestrian friendly precinct	Further to the statements in the APP submission we believe that the Cecil Avenue and Warwick Parade connections should not be done, the grid of local roads should be removed and traffic should be channelled to the edge of the precinct, with Fishburn Crescent joined to Showground Road.

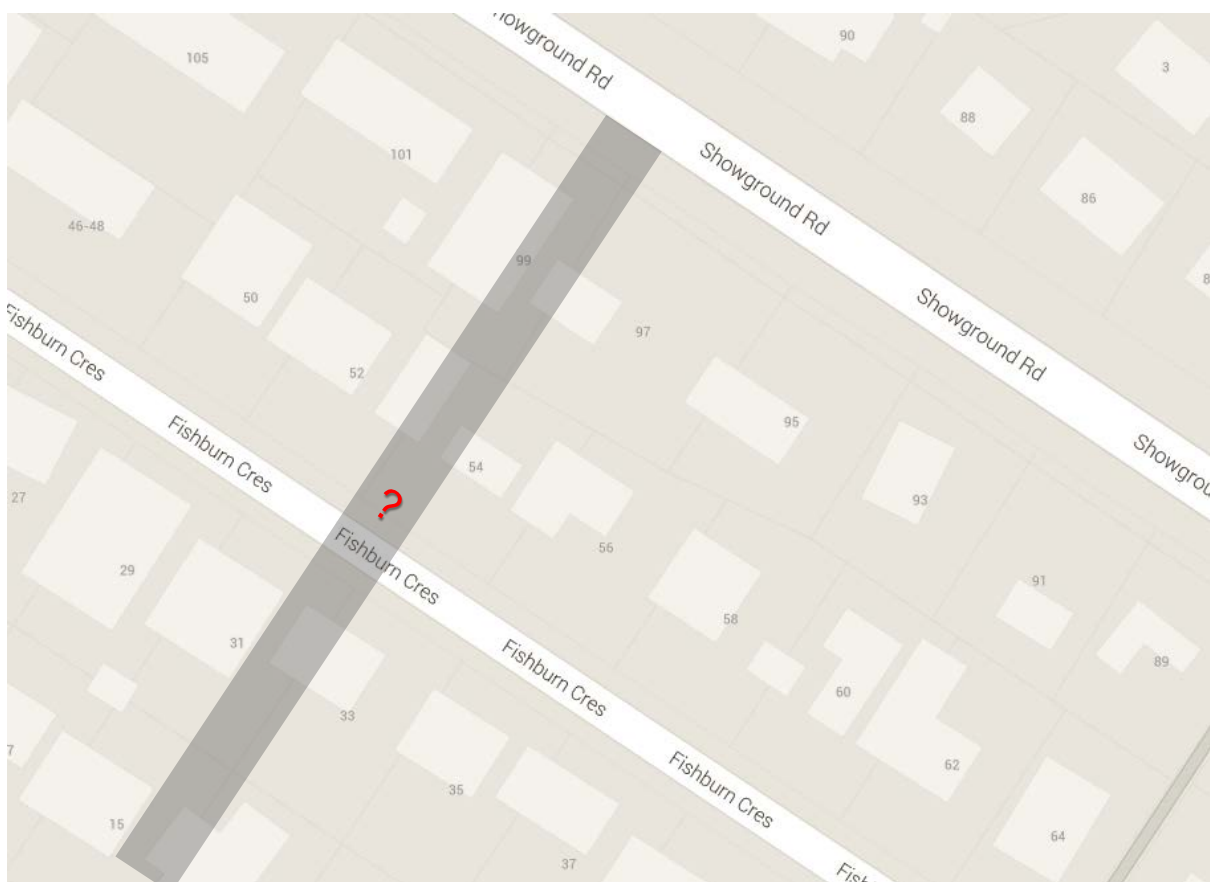
We would welcome further dialogue on these issues, perhaps with the Council, the DPE, the Sydney Growth Commission, developers and community representatives – this is too important. **We must get it right!**

FLEXIBILITY RATHER THAN CONSTRAINTS

We could focus on why a 10 metre setback should become 12, or 8, but we believe that this totally misses the point – **we need big picture thinking**, rather than micro-management.

If we persist with the kind of controls and zonings that are currently being exhibited by the State Government, and being contested by the Hills Shire Council, then we run a very real risk of descending into mediocrity. If we focus on our house, or our little block that 5-10 neighbours have put together, then inevitably people explore within the constraints of this little world. When we think at the micro scale:

- we see our house, and those of our immediate neighbours
- we remember the dispute that our neighbours had over the fence
- we ask why that proposed road is going through our neighbour's property and how that will create traffic right on our doorstep, traffic that has not been in our street for the 30+ years we have lived here
- we challenge why the Chapman Reserve is being extended – we know that hardly anyone ever uses it today anyway
- we lament that the existing trees will all come down, and that the streets where we strolled will become unsafe for walking the dog in the early morning or the evening.



A walk through the possibilities

We start to think about what can be packed onto our little block:

Yes, that will satisfy all the setbacks and building footprint limitations. And Yes! We can see how many units that might create. Our neighbours on all the nearby 'blocks' do the same.

Maybe we can improve it however. We know **Showground Road will become a nightmare to get onto** in the next couple of years. Well actually we know that already. It already has 2,000 cars per hour in the peaks and cars go past at roughly four second intervals. We have watched cars sit for minutes on driveways trying to get onto Showground Road, and we recall the many 'rear enders' that we have heard over the years.

And then there is the noise. **Lots of traffic make lots of noise** and those trees in our neighbour's yard just do not stop that.

Green space is not laid out all that efficiently either.

Why don't we see if we can move those two buildings we envisage closer to Showground Road and create a bigger area on the Fishburn Crescent boundary? Well no. The setbacks won't allow that and of course putting the green space on the south west will be cold in winter. But we cannot move the green space to the Showground side – imagine the noise and pollution.

Maybe **we need to expand our thinking**.



Now that's a park!

If we think 'bigger picture', then **all sorts of possibilities open up**. For example:



Please forgive the graphics but hopefully you will see the opportunities rather than deride the artwork, or criticise individual setbacks.

Such a configuration could deliver:

- The **same amount of dwellings and GFA** as might have been envisaged with 'micro' thinking.
- A **mix of building products that could be more attractive to the market**, and
- **Amenity and life style opportunities, far beyond those elsewhere** in the Hills or many other parts of Sydney.

Note:

1. **A central park that could be of the order of 2-2.5ha.** It could actually have a couple of playing fields (infrastructure issues at least partly addressed), a few netball courts, a hitting wall, a basketball hoop, some playground areas, a performance area, some shady trees and a BBQ or two. If of course you have some sporting fields (probably for younger people) then you will need some more parking, but maybe you could build **underground parking too** (maybe under the park, and of course that will help with off-street **overflow commuter parking during the week** (600-1,000 cars) – after all it is just a short walk to the station). Note too that Chapman Avenue could be eliminated from the network. And of course this would be **public open space**, but available to all the residents as community space. **Impossible – well no, not if the exercise is approached with imagination and on a different scale.**

2. Forget about the Chapman Reserve. It is the wrong size and not accessible anyway. **Create north south walkways through the parkland.** People can stroll through the park on their return from the bus stop on Showground Road – not everyone can or will use the train.
3. The **buildings on Showground Road could have larger footprints.** They could be of a height and form that would **not shadow the park, but would really cut down the noise from Showground Road.** They would help the park become a tranquil oasis. Also some of the buildings could be **mixed use with some cafes and convenience shops** on the ground floors and some offices for medical and other professionals. The apartments could be of a larger size and help **extend the range of housing possibilities.**
4. The buildings between the old Chapman and Dawes roads would have **road access via Dawes.** Their northern boundary would directly border the park, probably with some landscaping on some private green space.
5. Diversity in Housing Product can be achieved. With the right development controls and an R4 zoning, developer(s) will have the opportunity to produce a diverse mixture of housing that will cater to the market's appetite. Developers could market and promote this diverse housing product in such a manner that highlights the Park Avenue ambience and lifestyle.

Now hopefully far smarter people than us could work with something like the above, and create a **vibrant, healthy and happy place to live** for the new community that will make it home.

Unfortunately of course there are all too many problems with such a project:

- "You could not get that many people to sell" – well it would not be a walk in the park, but with the **right incentives and the right consultation approaches** you could persuade people of goodwill. As has been conclusively demonstrated in the "Showground Station Precinct R3 Economic Viability - A Residents' Perspective" document, the proposed R3 zonings are demonstrably NOT viable. We also showed that many, many people do care about the area and what it will become – many will want to live here – this is where families and friends are.
- "People aren't going to want a park to be built on their land. They want 8 storey apartments and lots for the superannuation fund." We have to overcome this micro thinking and look at the big picture. The commercial side of the equation has to give equal weight to every part of the package. Every square metre contributes to why such a development could be so attractive, so **rewards shared on a per square metre basis.**
- Apartments cannot be built on the R3 land. Well this one is simple. Convert R3 to R4.
- You cannot create that amount of Public Open Space. You can only extend the Chapman reserve. Why?
- You cannot put parkland and buildings on Chapman Avenue – Why? It would not be needed.

Incentives NOT Constraints

Rather than figuring out why things cannot work, let's look at some strategies to help create possibilities.

Incentivise super lots that can be master planned	Where developments of this scale can be produced, and appropriate investment, innovation and consultation demonstrated, proponents ought to be rewarded with appropriate benefits. However we need to think beyond heights and FSRs. We can start to think of working with developers in terms of their total business case. Think about the underground car park under the park – a source of revenue for the future. Certainty and speed of approvals. Economies of scale with buildings that maximise the relative benefits from common facilities such as lifts and stormwater drainage and storage. Solar power, rent from commercial facilities ... let's use some imagination.
Shift emphasis from controls to objectives	Rather than micro managing all the aspects of the design of individual buildings, shift the emphasis towards objectives like: • Total open space (not just public and private, as you can see the space in the above park could service both purposes at different times). • Expressed as percentages but with even more weight given to large areas of open space (like 1-2ha)
Allow Flexibility	Give developers the opportunity to demonstrate how they can move buildings closer to Showground Road, and to get rid of Chapman Avenue. Highlight the hierarchy of objectives – Open Space, Garden Shire amenity, mix of facilities and housing types ... and then height, FSRs ... and then setbacks. Maybe have some absolute minimums and maximums, but allow a lot of latitude e.g. you can reduce setbacks down to a very small number of metres provided the compensating adjustments are made on other parts of the design. Allow roof top green space to contribute to the private space targets.
Reward good design and sustainability	Look at all aspects of the designs and reward those who contribute to the total community experience. Reward recycling of water to irrigate the park and community facilities. Reduce the air conditioning bill with devices like rooftop and vertical gardens. Look at the total life cycle costs for developments and review that as part of the assessments and approvals.

Think about flow	Think about how you want traffic and access to work for example. Encourage layouts that work overall e.g. provide ready access to the station and to the Showground Road bus stops.
Avoid breakages	Everywhere you draw a line, you create tension. There are those on one side of the line and those on the other. These zoning, height and FSR lines become points where groups break. Instead use objectives and controls that describe 'appropriate gradations' rather than being overly prescriptive and set incentives that lead smaller groups (and developers) to combine.
Don't put in little boxes	Do not cut up the area with a gridwork of roads. With all the setbacks and other controls you simply lead to small plots of land where the only place you can build is to fill up the middle.
Much better consultation	We should avoid the overly simplistic approaches of supporters, objectors, notifying your nearest neighbours and the like. We should look to build goodwill and build on the goodwill and consultation that the DPE is clearly trying to practise. Get people in the same room and use AND language. "If we put the park on 90% of the Fishburn-Chapman block, AND we used a lot of that space for an underground car park, AND we reserve so many spaces for residents visitors AND during the week we make so many available to paying commuters, AND ..." We believe further facilitated workshops with a cross section of stakeholders should be conducted, to help flesh out the possibilities described in this document (and we are sure, others). Rather than 'behind closed door' meetings of planners and selected Councillors and a State representative or two, let's open this up to some real vision.

Can we, together, glimpse a better future?



A MORE RATIONAL ROAD NETWORK

Do not connect Cecil Avenue and Warwick Parade

Showground Road is being upgraded to be a major arterial road with four lanes, cycle ways, bus lanes and the like. It has been designed to carry 3-4,000 vehicles per hour at the peaks, 50-100% more than at present. It is a busy road already but is designed to be so and is having its capacity increased to suit the growth in traffic to the Towers and for the new residents. **It is where traffic should be.**

By concentrating the traffic on Showground Road we also **localise the sound issues and address them with buildings abutting Showground Road** as sound barriers.



Why then are we connecting to Cecil and Warwick Parade? It has been stated that this will improve permeability. However what it will do is **encourage rat runners** to get down to Carrington and Victoria Avenue. It will **compromise the safety and amenity** of the Showground Station Precinct. If you do need permeability of some degree put in a couple of walking and cycle paths. If you must connect Cecil, only make it one way – going east.

Ditch the North-South Roads

The extensions of Ashford and of Cadman to link up with Fishburn and Showground simply **break up the precinct**. There is no evidence that they are needed. Even with apartments, volumes of traffic in these streets will be light.

You can travel half the length of Fishburn Crescent or Middleton Avenue in just a minute or a bit more, and still be driving well under the speed limit. So it is easy to travel to the edges of the precinct. A small price to pay to avoid compromising the safety and amenity of the overall precinct. We and **our children want to be able to walk to the station in safety**.

All these connections also only break up the precinct and further put buildings into little boxes. The grid will **gridlock opportunities for real master planning**.

Connect Fishburn Crescent through to Showground Road

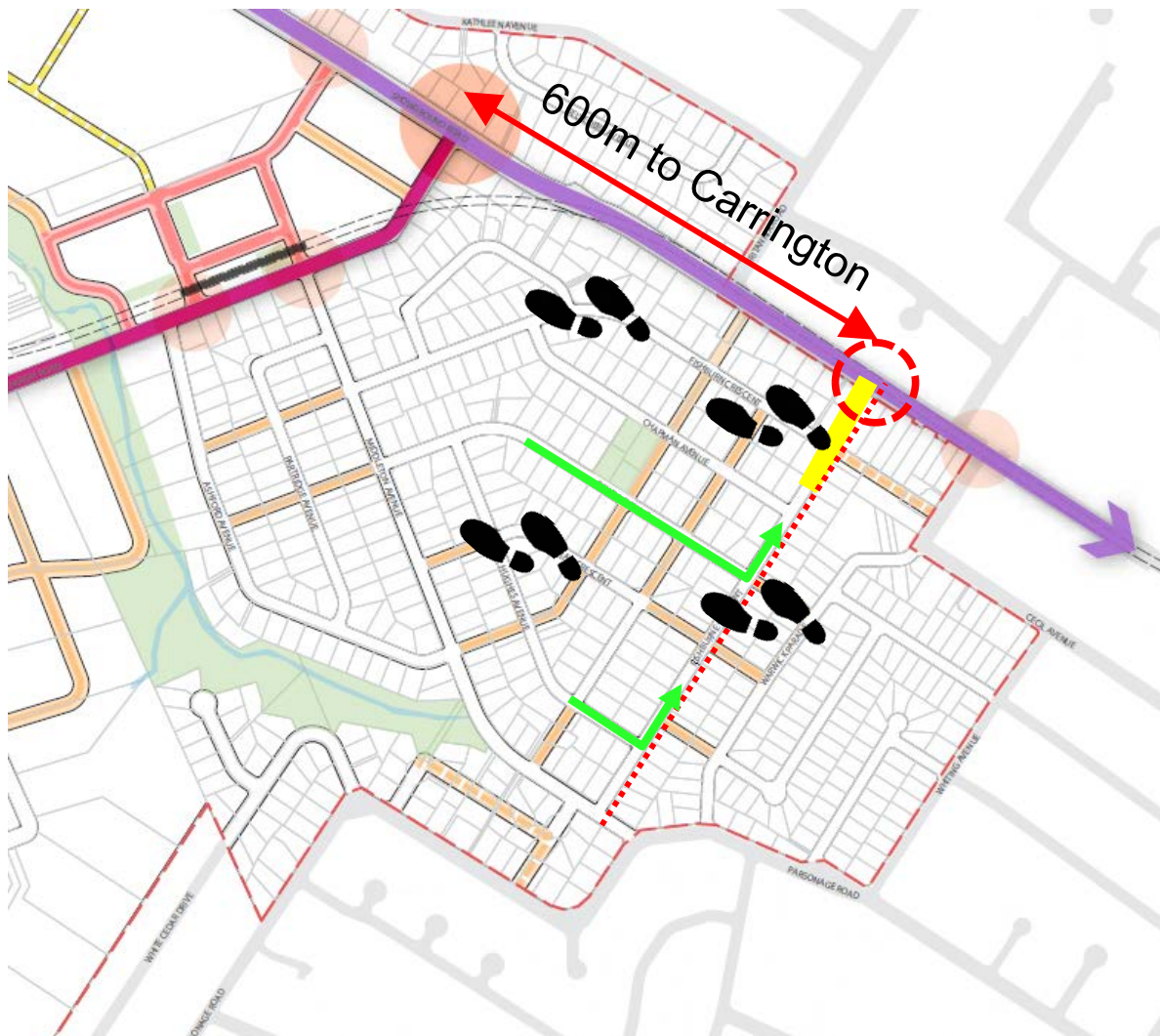
With extra dwellings in the precinct, it is imperative that access be provided to Showground Road in some way. The existing proposal is to extend Ashford and run a road right through to 52 and 54 Fishburn Crescent, down onto Showground Road.

We do not believe it is the preferred option for a number of reasons:

- It cuts the precinct in two, which means that opportunities like the large 2+ha park simply could not be built.
- It limits the opportunities to master plan and to provide flexible building areas.

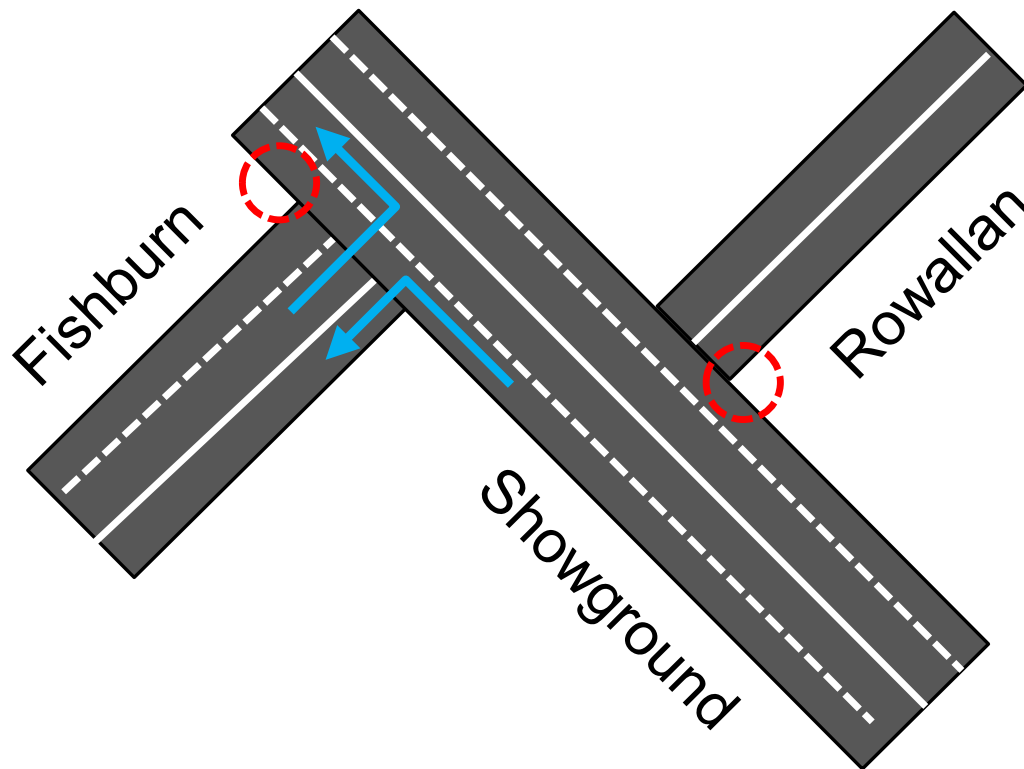
Similarly shifting the Ashford extension to the west to align with Britannia Road might appear attractive but it would suffer from the problems just mentioned, and worse would introduce traffic into the precinct from the north.

It would be far better to have an appropriately designed intersection, connecting Fishburn Crescent to Showground Road ...



Fishburn Crescent would become a very **well defined precinct boundary**, with **traffic funnelled to the precinct edges**, keeping it out of areas best kept for people.

In addition the intersections of Showground Road with Rowallan and Fishburn could work well as follows:



The intersection with Rowallan is about 120 metres from the intersection with the proposed extension of Fishburn Crescent. Travelling at 60 kph, a vehicle will traverse that distance in just over seven seconds.

120 metres would also mean that almost the entire peak hour flow of cars from Rowallan could 'park up' in the space on Showground Road between Rowallan and Fishburn. They would wait for the right turn lights from Rowallan, turn onto Showground Road and then wait for the Fishburn lights to turn to green (while cars exiting Fishburn were getting onto Showground). If you are worried about having space between Rowallan and Fishburn, you could phase the Fishburn stop signal just 5-10 seconds after the Rowallan top signal – it would free up more than enough space. The volume of cars from Rowallan is miniscule in any event and the intersection should be designed around the Fishburn volumes which are likely to be greater at peak times.

We suggest that the following also ought to be considered in any design:

- Having dual lanes exiting the precinct, as you want minimal interruption to the Showground Road flow. You want cars from the precinct to get onto Showground in numbers and quickly once the lights go green.
- Allow for a small amount of widening of Fishburn up the hill to facilitate any queuing that might be needed for the lights. Having 80-90m of double lanes however should reduce this requirement somewhat.

Does this sort of thing work?

Well yes it does ... at Boundary Road Cherrybrook.



- There are lights at the alleyway along Boundary Rd (in between Lutanda Cl and Lois Lane) - traffic light intersection to facilitate crossing the road for school kids attending Pennant Hills High School (distance from these lights to the next set at Kitchener Rd is 360.5 metres)
- Lights at Kitchener Rd & Lights at Cherrybrook Rd (distance between the lights is 53metres)

We are sure that Local and State Government can find other examples. All we want to demonstrate right now is that it is possible and could easily lead to a much improved approach to the precinct's design, its safety and amenity and its traffic flow.

A FINAL SENTIMENT

We don't want ...



We want and deserve much, much better ...



The Showground Precinct does too. Let's talk some more.