

# **Submission to NSW State Planning Dept.**

## **In ref. to Arncliffe NSW Development Precinct**

### **Introduction**

In this submission we will firstly demonstrate our personal knowledge and experience stemming from our long term community involvement as individuals, with associations and referring to the infrastructure projects which have affected us all.

Secondly, we will show our long term knowledge and understanding of the local situation, conditions and infrastructure needs of this area. We do not of course have the resources of a professional consultant, but we do have lengthy experience of development in this area and not a little technical experience.

We have been resident in Arncliffe since mid 1980, nearly 37 years. [REDACTED] was born in Arncliffe and although shortly after having moved elsewhere continued to retain considerable ties within the district. [REDACTED] family lived for many years in Wickham St Arncliffe.

Our experience with building, construction and development as such comes in part from our own knowledge and experience as well as that of our wider families' occupations and experience. [REDACTED] working career has covered the electrical trade having held an electrical contractors license most of his working life and as an electronics technician with exposure to building projects of a very wide nature. [REDACTED] trained in landscape architecture and we have both had close exposure to a number of building and development projects. In all, our combined experience and understanding of the needs of a community and dealing with large projects and developments is considerable.

Much of our comment here comes from our own knowledge and experience of this area and is not directly in response to the Dept. of Planning reports for the Arncliffe precinct. In the section relating to the public exhibition we do address directly some of the proposals and content within those reports.

### **Area Background**

Early settlement in the Arncliffe area generally involved relatively large holdings which in time were subdivided into the individual residential housing lots of today. Many of those houses would have been built in the earlier part of the 1900s and in days when horses and buggies or just walking was more likely to be the norm.

Although many streets and traffic access ways may be considered reasonable for present motor vehicle access, a number of routes and intersections now do not work effectively for the current high density traffic traversing this area.

Over the years we have been aware of a number of developments in this wider area including the Woll

Creek precinct since the early concept studies. A number of these projects we have also had involvement with and some very close involvement. The circumstances surrounding these projects demonstrate both the concerns of the local community and what may be appropriate for this area.

Although the local community is changing and has changed over the years we have been here, we have seen that a multi layered population strata has developed. There are older residents whose memories are lengthy, but also others who have been resident for long enough to have engendered within them a strong desire to see this area properly developed. Not just turned into a large area of essentially only high rise, high density residential structures, without intelligent consideration of how that and any much newer community strata may affect and influence the present strong community.

## **Development Site Examples**

The Wolli Creek area for a very long period was essentially an industrial area with relatively low buildings. Various proposals resulted in a local community study instituted by Rockdale Council described as a Cherette. This partly involved community and land owner consultation and public meetings. We clearly recall the outcome recommendations for this area were to be for relatively high density but low rise residential development and with sensitive community development.

Partly, it seems because of a proposal to add a rail station here on the Airport Line and the subsequent infrastructure costs, the original concept for the whole project eventually became much higher density and heights, resulting in little of what could be in any way described as a coherent community centre and facilities. The only obvious part being the parkland area towards the Cooks River including the original convent and chapel, all of which was at least required to be preserved in the earlier proposals. In what could be called the central area all you have is a railway station, hard paving and canyon like enclosed spaces.

In the early 1990s a development proposal was presented to Rockdale Council for a large parcel of land on the south east corner of Princes Highway and Wickham St. On the eastern side this land is bounded by a lane and on the south by Arncliffe Public School. The original proposal was for an 11 storey building at a point almost on the highest point of the ridge line next to the Princes Highway. After extensive community involvement including two school communities and with support of Council, the Land and Environment Court granted permission for a 4 story building with significant controls over the extent of the building. This ruling in part considered the proven extensive overshadowing of nearby residences and the school grounds. It also considered the overall height of the structure in such an elevated position, thus becoming the acceptable standard of total height for this area.

In the mid 1990s a large field between Princes Highway and the railway line a little to the south of the Forest Road ridgeline, was sold by the Education Department. For many years it seems this had been kept for future school development and many people had come to consider it as parkland. St Francis Xavier

school had permission to use it for many years as a playing field and Council had maintained it on a regular basis. It appears construction will soon commence here for a high density development covering this land and with little public or otherwise usable outdoor space available. A great loss to the local community.

A large site on the south east corner of Princes Highway and Kyle St Arncliffe was for many years an industrial property generally now known as the EFCO site. It has also been many years since this was proposed for a high rise high density residential development and after much debate finally received an approval with construction commencing during 2016.

We presented submissions and objections to this proposal. In part our objections were the density of the development resulting in what appears to be a very large footprint of the buildings and very little public/community space at ground level not overshadowed by buildings. Also the arrangement of access to underground car parking on a sharp, blind bend in Charles St. Much of the traffic to this development and all of the traffic from it is now forced to use Charles St. It would have made much more sense to place the car park entrances in Kyle St. and rearrange entry and exit for that portion of Kyle St. off and on to Princes Highway. This development will end up imposing some significant problems in the area.

## **Traffic**

For the past 20 years or more, it has been apparent, the whole Arncliffe area has been increasingly suffering from very high traffic levels, particularly due to the through traffic flow. This area has become a funnel between areas south / south west and the north / north east. At times of high traffic flow, nearby residential streets are being used in an attempt to bypass traffic.

An example of traffic short cuts happens almost every morning peak period. North bound traffic on West Botany Street approaching the Wickham Street intersection will turn left into residential streets and aim for Bellevue Lane meeting Wickham Street a little to the west. Some will even at this point then turn right against a no right turn traffic sign. Most will force their way through heavy traffic to Charles St and then continue through to the northern end of Duncan St. This can result in a significant flow of continuous traffic in tight groupings, imposing significant dangers upon many narrow residential streets.

Heavy vehicle traffic is also being forced to use residential streets to access business and industrial sites, particularly towards the north and north west of the Arncliffe area. An example being large trucks and tour buses using Firth St though the Arncliffe shopping centre as a route to and from north west of Arncliffe and the M5 / airport precinct / Botany industrial area.

With the construction of the M5 tunnel a great deal of traffic was diverted from the Arncliffe area, but gradually traffic has increased again, to at least as much as before its construction. However, as soon as the M5 was opened it became apparent to residents that a new more subtle problem was evident, caused by the entry and exits points to the motorway. One example of these peculiar traffic patterns is, a large increase in traffic south bound on the Princes Highway began to enter Kyle St with drivers obviously not

knowing where to go, this traffic coming from the M5 exit ramp to Princes Highway.

## **Proposals**

As a result of our own direct experience of traffic problems in this area we propose the following as needing attention.

- Through traffic using Charles, Kyle and Duncan Sts, Arncliffe needs to be better controlled by preventing certain traffic patterns, providing direct traffic control and other preventive measures.
- Consider re-alignment of Charles St northern end to eliminate the double bend and reduce the dangers of a narrow section of road with the increased traffic from further development.
- The intersection of Princes Highway, Kyle St and Burrows St needs to be better thought out. Presently drivers south bound will frequently turn right illegally here to avoid the need to turn at the main intersection at Forest Road. Drivers also will illegally cross directly from Burrows St to Kyle St.
- Consider ways of reducing traffic or creating alternative routes to divert heavy vehicle traffic west bound from the airport precincts and M5, needing to access areas to the north west of Arncliffe. Without needing to use Wickham St, Forest Road and the main Arncliffe shopping centre in Firth St.
- Consideration must be given to southbound traffic on Princes Highway needing to turn into the area to the west after leaving Cooks River. There is opportunity to turn soon after Cooks River, but this leads into narrow convoluted streets not designed for high levels of any traffic, including heavy vehicles. The next available turn is Forest Road which banks up past the M5 exit.
- A careful study of the traffic flow to and from the M5 and particularly alternative routes taken by vehicles using nearby side streets trying to avoid blocked intersections. At absolute minimum, better signage to deflect spurious wanderings from main roads.
- Take the opportunity to extensively redesign the intersections of West Botany St. with Wickham and Marsh Sts.. This area has long been a bottleneck for traffic creating significant delays and should have been addressed along with the construction of the M5 tunnel exit onto Marsh St. It has been adjusted since, but never properly corrected.

## **Parking**

Although this area may have adequate available public transport it is still very much the case that residents and commercial tenants will use motor vehicles – and these need to be parked somewhere.

Large buildings are also required to incorporate parking for occupants, but where do their visitors park? Equally so, where do the occupiers of nearby single residences park? Especially those whose houses have no, or very little, off street parking.

For a very long time the streets in the eastern side of Arncliffe have had a growing problem with the lack of available parking. If the only vehicles being parked in these streets were residents' vehicles, there would be adequate on street parking for the residents and their visitors. But the situation in Charles, Kyle and Duncan Sts Arncliffe is certainly far from that ideal.

Residents have been forced to compete with the following for the available parking space.

- Air travel holiday and business travelers plus worker commuters to the Sydney Airport precinct using local streets as cheap parking and then using the bus stop in Wickham St, Arncliffe to travel to the airport. This stop being a one section fare makes it cheap parking for these people but clogs up local streets at all hours with some vehicles being left outside residents homes for weeks at a time.
- Local businesses use the residential streets not only for worker parking, but also for their excess vehicles. In one case, a nearby smash repairer regularly empties its yard of vehicles they consider to be in the way because they have been written off, condemned, or damaged and not yet scheduled to be transported, or repaired. This causes all sorts of problems for residents.
- Added into this mix fairly regularly unregistered vehicles are dumped by owners, in this area. Which once reported to Council will probably not be moved for some time because the owner must be notified and given the opportunity to remove it. Sometimes this results in nothing more than the vehicle being moved to another street.
- More recently added to all this has been a vast army of building workers associated with the site at the corner of Princes Highway and Kyle St Arncliffe. They could only be described as a swarm who take over the area. A foreshadowing of what will happen once the development is ready for occupation.

## **Proposals**

- The only answer to all this is to restrict street parking to residents only and only those in single residential dwellings at that. Such parking should not be available to residents and even visitors associated with business, commercial and high density housing properties. As one local Council ranger stated recently, although these buildings are provided with parking spaces within them whenever such a building is built parking in the surrounding streets is suddenly scarce.
- At minimum a parking scheme providing for no more than 2 hour parking for non residents from 6am till 10pm should be applied to all streets within the precinct area and strict controls should be applied to the gaining of a resident parking permit.

## **Public Transport**

In general the Arncliffe area is quite well provided with public transport. Apart from the railway service, bus routes cover a reasonable area beyond the rail corridor.

The only drawback of the rail service however is the frequency of stopping trains. To attract greater usage and to be able to adequately service a greatly increased local population a better train service would be needed.

In regards to buses, a rethink of planning, routes and service frequency would be needed. One example requiring a rethink is the incongruous arrangement of the 400/410 buses and the stop in Wickham St. This is essentially an express route with limited stops and although it is generally meant to stop at both domestic and international airport terminals and Banksia and Rockdale rail stations, the only other stop it makes within this area is at Wickham St.

Although this stop does seem to be utilised by locals, the majority of people using this stop, park their vehicles in local streets and commute to the airport precinct, a cheap alternative to expensive airport parking. This stop should not be used as commuter transfer point from vehicles to bus without a dedicated parking area. (The vacant land on Wickham Street has been fenced off as commuters were using it as a free parking area.) The surrounding area definitely cannot sustain such a practice.

A change to the 400/410 bus route which should be considered, is to use Spring St to the south instead of Wickham St and to have these buses stop at one of the 423 bus stops on West Botany St between Spring and Wickham Sts. This would facilitate a change over point between these routes.

## **Public Exhibition**

As soon as proposals for the Wolli Creek area became public and more settled it was obvious to us that in time such development would extend into the Arncliffe area. Particularly along the strip between the airport and along the railway corridor. This would seem to be a natural progression considering the area's easy access to transport and the airport.

However, the faults of recent development to the north of Arncliffe, particularly Wolli Creek, should not be repeated in these new areas.

We do not need closely spaced buildings, massively high towers, or a lack of useable community space between buildings. We would like to see a community created, including a shopping hub within the area east of the Princes Highway, which can work from within and to a reasonable extent be protected from the problems of traffic and parking caused by influences outside this area.

## **Proposals**

- It is extraordinary that a building height of 70 meters is to be applied to three seemingly choice areas. The result for example would be a building on the western side of Princes Highway more than double the height of the eastern side and almost three times the height of the area around Charles, Kyle and Duncan Sts. Such buildings would end up far higher than any other structure in the area. This situation should be severely moderated by the reduction of the highest and increase of the lowest currently proposed heights.

- It is unreasonable that the development of existing and new parks in Arncliffe should be restricted to the western side of Princes Highway. Parkland should be easily accessible to young families on the eastern side of the Princes Highway, particularly as this area is bounded by three extremely busy roads, Princes Highway, West Botany St and Wickham St.
- The whole of the area bounded by Princes Highway, West Botany St and Wickham St needs to be clearly planned as a community of its own. Possibly it might be described as a mini community. Not separate as such from the Arncliffe centre and its main facilities, but as an area which could work on its own day to day basis. Building height limits should be increased if it can be shown that by doing so good clear green space can be provided between those buildings. Provision should be made for community activity space, both inside and outside the buildings, and also for retail space for such as cafes, restaurants and daily provisions.
- Planning must allow for local residents who choose to remain living where they are or who are not in a position to move elsewhere. It should not be assumed that the development precinct plans will result in high rise high density mainly residential buildings replacing all single dwelling residences. Leading to supporting infrastructure and such as parking and traffic controls with high density development in mind only, leaving present residents isolated.
- The opportunity should be taken to better plan for rail and bus services, transport interchange points, better placed long term parking and commuter support which does not otherwise impinge upon residents. Particularly concerning local needs and the influence of the Sydney Airport precinct.
- Opportunity should also be taken to better arrange main road thoroughfares such as at the West Botany/Wickham/Marsh Sts intersection.
- Restrict though access in Charles, Kyle and Duncan residential streets. Consider closing the northern end of Bellevue Lane to prevent dangerous right turns and crossing Wickham St to Charles St. Institute traffic control measures to discourage any through traffic. Make these streets resident friendly.
- Improve right turn access out of Charles St to Wickham St.
- Proposed new left turn from eastern end of Kyle St into West Botany would not afford any great benefit and would very likely only encourage more "short cut" through traffic.
- Limiting parking within buildings will not encourage residents to use public transport, it will impact on all residents and visitors to the area having them compete for very limited street parking.
- During the construction phase of any new high density development close consideration should be given to the effects of all vehicles servicing the sites. Not only delivery and service vehicles such as supply trucks, and concrete pumps, but also many worker vehicles often only delivering one worker each overwhelming any available surrounding street parking spaces.

## **Previous Area Studies**

### **Residents Report, Charles, Kyle and Duncan Streets Arncliffe NSW 2012**

Included along with this submission is a report by residents of Charles, Kyle and Duncan Sts Arncliffe. This report was part of a submission process to Rockdale Council in an attempt to have traffic and parking problems corrected, of which residents were very much aware.

This was a collaborative process with input from numerous residents both directly in the manner of coverage and by the inclusion of individual written responses from resident survey material.

Unfortunately any such approaches from residents have not been supported by Councilors or the Local Roads and Traffic Committee and as such Council has done very little to address the problems.

The area bounded by Princes Highway, West Botany St and Wickham St has long been regarded by the residents of mainly the three streets inside that area, as a unique and special sort of community. At one time in the not so distant past this triangle of land fostered a very quiet and close community of people who took the time to get to know and to support each other.

Unfortunately this has taken a battering in recent years and could be traced to about the inception of three external and nearby changes.

- The completion of the M5. Though not so much the M5 itself which affected this area. More the traffic patterns which developed from the exit ramp at Princes Highway and also the interchange at Marsh St. Even then, it did not seem so much to be the fault of these intersections as such, but rather the manner in which traffic was allowed to encroach upon nearby residential streets.
- The rise of traffic densities on nearby main roads. This has defiantly given rise to greater amounts of traffic seeking bypass routes via these residential streets disturbing and greatly upsetting the amenity of the area.
- The increase of passenger traffic at Sydney Airport along with difficulties with airport parking. Particularly the large increase in parking costs to travelers and airport workers in recent years, has resulted in a very large increase in vehicle owners seeking parking in residential streets. In the experience of local residents, this has been acutely felt in the area just to the west of the International Terminals as well as the area bounded by Princes Highway and West Botany St and extending to the south beyond Wickham St. Much of this area is within walking distance of the International Terminals or a short taxi ride or a short cheap trip on the bus to and from the Wickham St bus stop.

This report contains a wealth of information and experience of the residents and should be regarded as a valuable source for further study.



## **Rockdale Council Princes Highway and surrounds Arncliffe Study 2004**

We are aware of studies commissioned by Rockdale Council in about 2004 concerning essentially development along the Princes Highway corridor. Although in looking back at the proposals it is apparent such as building heights and densities recommended were somewhat less than being presently considered, these reports are however useful reading since they show a very similar vision. Particularly in regard to areas recommended for development. As such this would be well worth including in the investigative process.

## **Conclusion**

Whereas development in the Wolli Creek area involved largely a beginning from scratch, the whole of the areas surrounding Arncliffe and Banksia are very much established and very distinct existing communities. The opportunity and indeed a very great obligation exists, that any escalated development of these areas should preserve that strong existing sense of community and not destroy it by ill conceived change.

The result in Wolli Creek has been a main centre with essentially little soul or decent community focus. This sort of situation should not now be allowed to happen in these more established areas.

Circumstances shown above have led to a degrading of the community spirit which existed in this area. Any future development should take these matters into careful consideration and by applying careful control over traffic and parking, planning of indoor and outdoor shared community space and the provision of decent outdoor public green space between those buildings, such considerations as these would engender a good sense of community.

The alternative would be the creation of what could only be described as nothing more than dormitory accommodation.

There is opportunity also to address many deficiencies of the area which have become more apparent as population density and such as traffic and parking has become more acute. Roads, intersections, public transport, commuter interchange points and parking need to all be urgently addressed and planned for before significant developments are approved and indeed before it becomes too late to provide for present and future needs.

The opportunities are there, they should not be squandered!