

Northbridge Progress Association Inc
PO Box 357 Northbridge 2063

July xx 2006

Mr John Owen
General Manager
Willoughby City Council
PO Box 58 Chatswood 2058

Dear Mr Owen

Re: DA-2006/432

Upgrade of facilities at Shore School playing fields, Northbridge

The Association wishes to comment on the above Development Application.

First, we note that the Assistant Bursar of Shore School briefed two officers of the Association about its proposal before Council notified the DA. Also, the Headmaster of Shore spoke to a meeting of the Association on July 12 to outline the proposal and answer questions from members. These initiatives by the school were much appreciated by the Association.

In many ways, Northbridge is fortunate to have such extensive green areas – Shore’s playing fields - in the suburb, even though there is no public access to them. In principle, the Association has no objection to Shore improving its facilities in Northbridge for the benefit of its pupils and their parents. We recognise that many features of Shore’s DA are well-designed and sensitive to community values.

Our comments are directed to specific aspects of the proposal that may adversely effect Northbridge residents.

Traffic and parking issues

We note that Shore states that “the proposed upgrade will not alter the periods when the facilities are used or increase the intensity of use.” Similarly, Shore’s traffic report concludes that “the upgraded facilities would not generate any new activity in terms of traffic generation and parking demand”. This may be so, but there are already two main ways that Shore’s playing fields impact adversely on traffic and parking in the area which could be reduced significantly in conjunction with this proposal.

1. Traffic congestion in Sailors Bay Rd between Alpha Rd and Eastern Valley Way was increased significantly in 2004 when Shore's early learning centre and lower primary school opened without any changes to cater for the new traffic conditions they generated. Traffic in that section of Sailors Bay Rd and nearby streets is now chaotic, particularly at school drop-off and pick-up times. It's time to correct this mistake and we request that Council and the RTA seek innovative ways to ease this problem as part of Shore's proposed development. For example, Shore could provide some of its land to allow an additional traffic lane (or bay) to be created on the north side of Sailors Bay Rd outside the playing fields to allow parents to pick-up and drop-off without interrupting traffic flow.
2. Traffic conditions during Shore's major sporting events on the playing fields are extremely bad as many hundreds of spectators and pupils attempt to arrive, park and depart the area. Surrounding streets are completely parked out. Some residents even complain of desperate spectators parking across their driveways. Many of the car spaces at the Plaza shopping centre are also taken illicitly by Shore spectators (and this may be one factor leading to a future expansion of the Plaza car park, to the detriment of nearby residents). The Association recognises that Shore has agreed (through DA 2002/1915) to use its proposed new Playing Field 'G' to park approximately 200 cars but this will provide for only a fraction of the total cars and only during "up to four major GPS home games each year". The Association asks Council and the RTA to seek an innovative solution to these problems as part of the proposed development. For example, Shore could make provision in its development for access to and parking of an additional (say) 200 cars on its under-sized and less used Playing Field 'E', on the southwest corner of its land, during all significant sporting events.

Proposed tennis courts

The Association notes that nine new tennis courts are proposed along the eastern boundary of the playing fields, immediately behind residents of Eastern Valley Way. Along residents' back fences, in a 4 metre wide corridor, the school proposes to plant "dense evergreen trees 6-10 metres high for screening". However, the report from Shore's noise consultant states: "noise levels ... exceed the lower criterion (41dBA) established in this report" and "noise from tennis will be clearly audible and may have the potential to disturb some residents at some times". We request that Council sets an approval condition that requires Shore to either move the courts to an area of the playing fields where noise will not be a problem or to install suitable noise barriers between the courts and residents.

Proposed tree removal

Shore's development proposal requires that 65 trees will be removed from the property and proposes that 94 new trees will be planted. Many of the trees to be removed are native (though some are called "non-local natives"). The Association is particularly concerned about the removal of 27 trees that are rated by Shore's consultant as having "high or moderate retention value". Of these, 18 mature trees are growing along the southern and western edges of the main oval. Their removal will result in a loss of amenity and, in the case of the mature trees on the southern edge of the oval, a loss of screening of the facilities from Sailors Bay Rd. The removal of another nine mature trees to make way for the new tennis courts will result in a significant loss of amenity for residents of adjacent houses. The Association requests that Council sets approval conditions that, as a minimum, require the retention of the mature trees along the southern edge of the main oval.

Proposed new grandstand

Shore proposes to build one large new stand to replace its two smaller stands. The Association is concerned about the massive size of the new building. From the rear, it is 15 metres high, that is, about two metres taller than the higher of the existing stands. We don't usually comment on aesthetics but we believe the stand will present a massive, virtually blank wall when viewed from Alpha Rd. We request that Council sets an approval condition that requires Shore to reduce the overall height of the new stand by two metres and to improve its appearance from the rear.

Construction issues

The Association understands that the project is expected to take about seven months to complete. During that period of demolition, earthmoving and construction, there will be many movements of trucks, vehicles and equipment in and out of the site on Sailors Bay Rd, which is already highly congested. We urge Council to set approval conditions to ensure that Shore will minimise interruptions to traffic flow, especially during peak hours and school drop-off and pick-up times.

Yours sincerely

John Becroft
President

Copy: Dr Timothy Wright, Shore School
Sailors Bay Ward councillors