

SAVE EPPING'S FOREST PARK ACTION GROUP'S COMMENTS ON THE CITY OF PARRAMATTA SUBMISSION ON HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL PLANNING PROPOSAL – EPPING AND BLAXLAND ROADS, EPPING, 14 MARCH 2016 (REFERENCE F2005/00400-D04053618)

During the meeting with Amanda Chadwick, Administrator City of Parramatta (CoP) and Sue Weatherly, Director Strategic Outcomes and Development on 18 January 2017 the Save Epping's Forest Park action group was invited to comment on the CoP's Submission to Hornsby Shire Council (HSC) in relation to the Austino Property Group's Planning Proposal for the 2-18 Epping Road, 2-4 Forest Grove and 725 Blaxland Road (Planning Proposal). Save Epping's Forest Park has identified a number of areas of concern with this Planning Proposal and do not consider it to be in the public interest or to provide real public benefit. Details of our concerns were provided during this meeting and are also outlined through our comments below.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the CoP Submission. Save Epping's Forest Park agrees with and supports a number of the planning principles in the Submission. We note a summary of the planning principles includes:

- Limiting the overshadowing on Forest Park
- Addressing the sloping down of the gradient towards Forest Park
- Minimising the cumulative bulk and scale impacts
- A preferred efficiency for the residential gross floor area
- A design excellence process
- A proposed pedestrian link linking Blaxland Road with Forest Grove on the northern edge of Forest Park
- Redirection of the proposed community benefits to other proposed community benefits

We agree with these planning principles with the exception of the proposed pedestrian link linking Blaxland Road and Forest Grove on the northern edge of Forest Park. We also think the Submission does not go far enough in limiting the overshadowing on Forest Park.

In addition to the CoP's planning principles we would like to add the following:

- The preservation of the entire site at 725 Blaxland Road as public recreation space and as a buffer to Forest Park from large scale development to its north
- The need to maintain this open space within the Epping Town Centre to accommodate the growing population
- The preservation and conservation of Forest Park as a heritage item and the need to evaluate in detail proposals in regard to their impact
- Need for traffic and public transport studies. To note that the surrounding roads are already beyond capacity at peak hours and the stress to occur to public transport capacity when the Epping to Chatswood rail link is closed
- The consideration for the negative impact to the health of the community with the loss of and insufficient active recreation space
- The connection of public open space to the Epping Town Centre Core including direct safe pedestrian access

The Save Epping's Forest Park action group does not agree with or support the proposed building envelopes and the reconfiguration of the 6,665sqm of public recreation space which will result in the

loss of useful open space. The reconfiguration does not deliver back to the community usable public recreation space. It also constitutes the loss of 3,205sqm of public recreation land for the community.

We note that the Submission refers to need for a site specific DCP and would welcome the opportunity to make comment on this should it be developed. The Submission also recommends that further analysis against the principles be undertaken. We support the need for further analysis and as such also support the City of Parramatta's request to the NSW Department of Planning and Environment that the Epping Planning Reviews be undertaken prior to any decision being made in relation to this Planning Proposal.

COMMENTS ON THE SUBMISSION

Please note our comments follow the format of the CoP Submission.

BACKGROUND

10. The site is 18,859sqm in area (excluding No.18 Epping Road) of which 6,665sqm comprises the property known as 725 Blaxland Road.

Comments: The land at 725 Blaxland Road, Epping (former Epping Bowling Club site) is zoned RE1 public recreation land and is approximately 35% of the total site (excluding No.18 Epping Road). This is a significant percentage of the total development and a significant loss to the community of potential green, active, useful recreation land, for now and for future generations.

12. The site is approximately 200 metres south of Epping Train Station and is bounded by the Epping Road to the North, Blaxland Road to the West, Forest Park to the south and Forest Grove Road to the west.

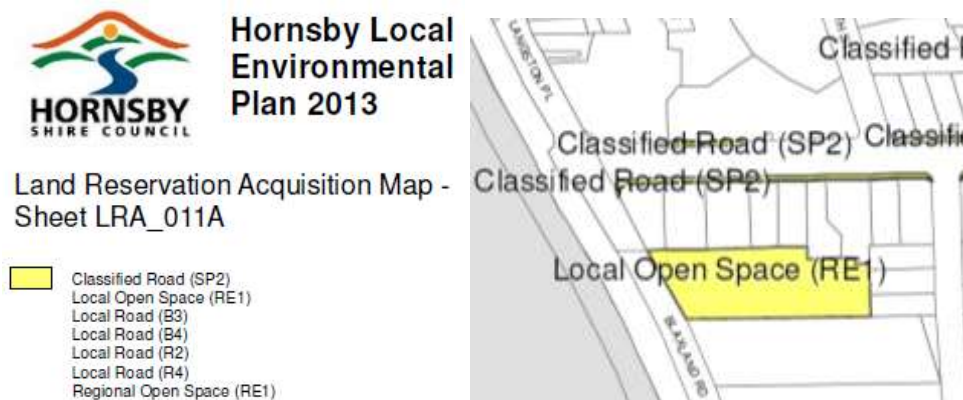


The Epping Town Centre Study 2011 showing Town Centre Core

Comments: 725 Blaxland Road and most of the site for the Planning Proposal is outside the Epping Town Centre Core. The Epping Town Centre Study and Priority Precinct Plan identified the site as a transition zone to the Forest Grove Precinct and other low rise developments adjoining Forest Park.

17. Despite the purchase of the land by a private entity, HSC is not intending to remove the item from its LRA Map as it is strategically committed to retaining the land as public open space. However, this is likely to become a concern of PCC if the area is ultimately merged with PCC and PCC becomes the identified acquisition authority.

Comments: 725 Blaxland Road is zoned RE1 public recreation land in the Hornsby Local Environment Plan (HELP) 2013 and in accordance with the Department of Planning and the Environment's Epping Town Centre Precinct Plan. 725 Blaxland Road is also shown as land for acquisition (Local Open Space RE1) on the HLEP 2013 Map as shown below. We would like to encourage the purchase of this land by CoP.



Save Epping's Forest Park Petition, with more than 700 signatures, shows public feeling is strong that this land zoned for public recreation be retained as public recreation land. The community would expect CoP to require this public asset to remain for the benefit of the community for generations to come. Particularly, as this land is noted on the HLEP 2013 Land Reservation Acquisition Map as RE1 public recreation land to be acquired. There is a need to maintain this land for community use in view of the intensive development in the Epping Town Core and the Epping Town Centre Precinct and it being identified as much needed open space in numerous studies.

Examples of documentation identifying 725 Blaxland Road as open space for Epping include:

The Epping Town Centre Study 2011 for the Epping Town Core - Public Domain Improvements shows the Epping Bowling Club as open space, an extension to Forest Park just outside the town core.

The Epping Town Study, 2011, Chapter 7, Summary of Recommendations records:

'Undertake a recreational needs study to determine the future demand for a new recreation facility on the former Epping Bowling Club site.'

We have not been able to identify whether this recreational needs study has been completed by HSC or its outcome.

The Epping Town Centre Study Volume 1 (August 2011) noted:

'A Land Reservation Acquisition Map has not been prepared as part of the Epping Town Centre Study. It is recommended that Hornsby and Parramatta Councils each prepare a Land Reservation Acquisition Map as part of the Planning Proposal to implement the Study, identifying all land to be acquired to implement the recommendations... The former Epping Bowling Club should be reflected as land for acquisition by Hornsby Shire Council if the recreational needs assessment shows that the land is required for future recreational purposes as a result of the incoming population.'

The NSW Department of Planning's Epping Town Centre Urban Activation Finalisation Report (November 2013) p.31. notes comments from HSC including:

'A footbridge crossing over Epping Road should be provided to enable easy access to planned open space parkland at 725 Blaxland Road.'

Hornsby Council's General Meeting Group Manager's Report No. PL21/13 for Planning Division Meeting (17 April 2013): Epping Urban Activation Precinct noted:

'Whilst it is anticipated that the former West Epping Bowling Club land will provide additional space for active recreation, increased requirements for additional passive open space within Epping Town Centre would still need to be met. Property No. 725 Blaxland Road would provide opportunities for additional passive recreation facilities adjacent the Town Centre Core, supplementing that currently provided within the adjacent Forest Park...Property No. 725 Blaxland Road does however, provide a large flat area that is suitable for a range of recreation uses which may include:

- a skate park and related activities;*
- a formalised leash free dog park where people and dogs can socialise; and*
- a community building'*

We ask why did Hornsby Shire Council not make acquiring this public recreation land a priority, when it was clearly identified from 2011 to be needed by Epping's growing population? We are aware that at one stage there were plans for a 25-metre swimming pool to be built on this site and for the Epping Aquatic Centre at Dence Park to be closed. HSC may have decided not to acquire this land in the belief there would be a 25-metre swimming pool would be built on the site by a private company. However, the 25m swimming pool was deemed as inadequate to meet the needs of the community and fortunately for the community Dence Park was not closed. Whatever the reason for HSC not purchasing this land, the community continues to require this public recreation space. It is within the role of councils to purchase properties for public interest and the benefit of the community and we advocate for CoP to purchase this much-needed land.

We believe it is time to put this right for the benefit of the community, by ensuring this land is kept as public recreation space, to help to maintain Epping as a liveable suburb.

THE PROPOSAL

20. The planning proposal seeks to amend HELP 2013 as follows:

a) Reconfigure the R4 and RE1 zone across the site to enable open space connection from Epping Town Centre and the site.

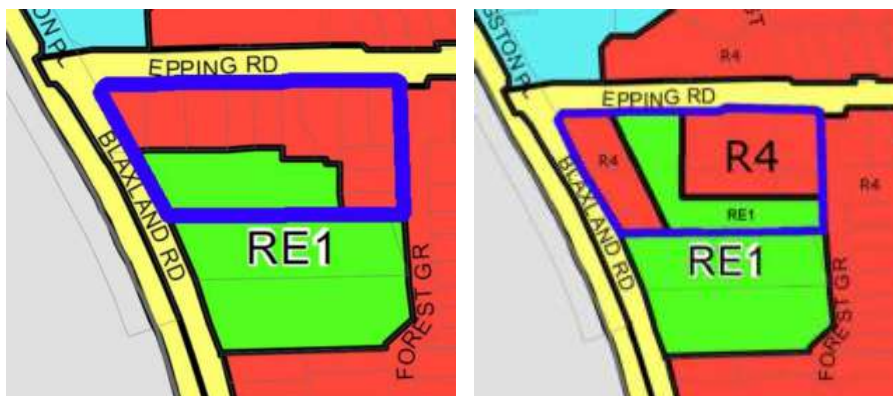
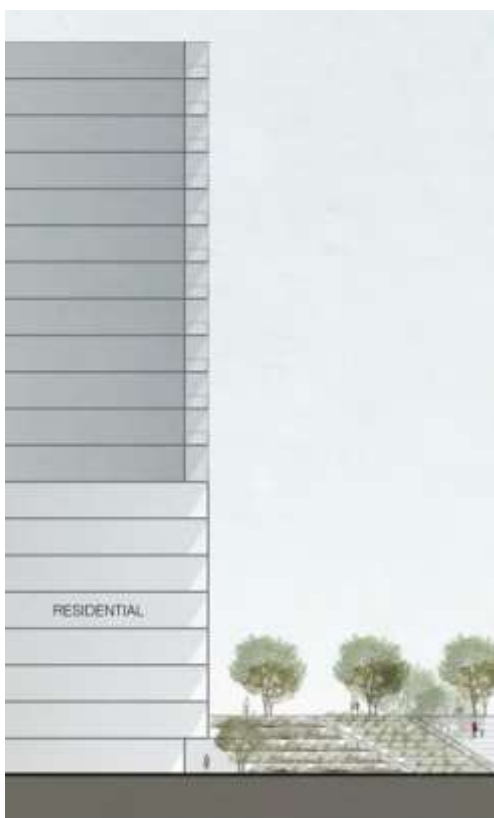


Figure 5 – Proposed land zonings (extracted from the applicant's planning proposal)

Comments: We do not support this reconfiguration as providing public benefit for the community. This does not provide useful recreation space for the community. The re-configuration of the RE1 public recreation zoned land, comprising the former Bowling Club, into an L-shape has been to the benefit of the developer and not the community. A significant area of public recreation land (3,204sqm) will be lost. See comments in 24 b) for further details. Useful land has been swapped for a narrow concreted and/or terraced piece of land between tall buildings, duplicating 'urban plazas' in the town core and a narrow shaped and an unusable proposed terraced area, both useless for active recreation. Images provided by the proponent show the reconfigures land will not provide a flat surface to enable recreation.



Section B: Building Interface for residential uses with new urban plaza. Note required change in floor level and ground plane.



Artist's image of urban plaza connecting to Forest Park

Images taken from Urban Design Strategy for Forest Park, Epping. PTW Architects

The Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036, NSW Government p.22 states, '*Achieving equity, liveability & social inclusion*' and '*delivering parks, playing fields and public spaces that suit new multiple uses*'. The proposed reconfigured RE1 areas are useless for active recreation.

The terraces shown on the artist's impressions above and below in 24 b) may give residents of the development a walkway to connect the development with Epping Road and Forest Park but it serves no useful recreation purpose for anyone else in the community. The proposed reconfiguration of this public recreation land blurs the boundaries between what is private and what is public land and by not having the required setbacks, according to height, to private land boundaries, obscures the fact that a considerable area of public recreation land has been lost for public use. For example, how can 'public recreation land' be deemed or feel 'public' 1m from the face of a private residential flat building overlooking that public land? In reality the design and height of the terrace, adjacent to the residential flat buildings, has the appearance of private land and would most likely act as private land.

Furthermore, retail activity in the proposed 'urban plaza' is not supported by the SWJRPP *Pre-Gateway Review* (22 September 2016) which states:

'Special provisions allowing for retail development should not be part of the proposal.'

If there are apartments on the ground floor of the 'urban plaza' there would need to be setbacks to apartments narrowing the 'public space' further to little more than an access way or private communal space.

The reconfiguration does not facilitate recreation facilities for children, teenagers, older residents and families in the eastern part of Epping Town Centre or surrounding areas. The site at 725 Blaxland Road through its location near the station, town centre and Forest Park as well as its shape and size has so much potential as active recreation space and numerous active and passive recreational uses can be considered. The size and shape of the land allows its use to change as community needs change over generations.

The children's playground in Forest Park is small and will be inadequate for the large numbers of apartment dwellers/families moving into the area. The land at 725 Blaxland Road would be more suitable for a large playground and family barbecue areas adjacent to Forest Park so that modern accessible toilet facilities and passive recreation areas could be shared. Gardens with extensive plantings of trees and shrubs that compliment Forest Park and a leash free dog area would be useful for the area as green recreation space. There would also be space to provide informal opportunities for young people to socialise and participate in physical activity. The eastern part of Epping Town Centre will need more recreation space for the expanding population and we promote 725 Blaxland Road as an ideal site for this.

We also do not support the loss of mature trees (many of which are 60+ years old), vegetation and the changes to Forest Park which will result from this reconfiguration.

22. It may also be the case that the Planning Proposal needs to amend the Land Reservation Acquisition Map

Comments: We do not support any change to the zoning of 725 Blaxland Road as RE1 public recreation zoned land or to the Land Reservation Acquisition Map. As noted above this public recreation land is required by the community. It is valuable as public recreation space. It is in the Epping Town Centre, adjacent to Forest Park. Its size, its shape and the fact that it is flat allows for a combination of passive and active recreational uses.

We note the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, *Pre-Gateway review- Information Assessment and Recommendation Report* p. 9, states,

'The planning proposal is not a result of a strategic study or report.'

Given this site has previously been identified for acquisition by HSC we think a strategic study is essential before any decision can be made with regards to the possible rezoning or changes to the configuration of this land.

The media is already reporting there is a shortage of useful playing fields to support local sports clubs throughout Sydney. The increasing population in Epping is already putting pressure on the public recreation spaces available. The Healthy Urban Development Checklist: A guide for health services when commenting on development policies, plans and proposals, NSW Health (2009) p.98 talks about the importance of public open spaces '*as more than just a space for physical activity but also as an important forum for the expression of local identity and culture and celebration of community and place*'. This document also notes that "*public access to the natural environment is particularly*

important for good health and that this access is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain ... of particular importance for the healthy development of children’.

We understand CoP is currently undertaking a social infrastructure audit and we anticipate this will confirm the need to maintain and indeed increase the public recreation land and open space available in Epping for its growing population.

THE DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

24. a) Increase the density on the site to realise a predominantly residential development comprising two towers on Blaxland Road at 22 storeys (72 metres) and 20 storeys (65 metres) and a series of residential flat buildings fronting Epping Road with heights of 18 storeys (58 metres), 8 storeys (26.5 metres) and 5 storeys (17.5 metres).

Comments: We acknowledge and agree with CoP’s principle of the need to minimise the cumulative bulk and scale impacts. We would also like to add that the bulk and scale of this development does not support providing a sustainable and liveable suburb. The Planning Proposal is not based on any studies and is not consistent with the Epping Town Centre Urban Activation Precinct Structure Plan and Planning Report, prepared by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and the HLEP 2013 which limited buildings over 8 storeys to the Epping Town Centre Core. The estimated dwelling yield was 3,750. It is estimated that the proposed developments in Epping will yield a greater number of dwellings. A development this size is not necessary for Epping to reach the State Government’s additional dwelling target for Epping.

Hornsby Council's General Meeting Group Manager's Report No. PL21/13 for Planning Division Meeting (17 April 2013) records:

‘Council has already prepared a plan for Epping based on detailed studies and the provision of supporting infrastructure.’ And ‘Additional housing provision in the Epping Town Centre is outside the scope of dwelling targets identified in Council’s current Housing Strategy.’

The Planning Proposal includes an additional 654 dwellings and 860 car spaces. This will place pressure on the infrastructure (water, sewerage, electricity, schools, public facilities, parks and public recreation space) as well as traffic, parking and public transport. Many of the roads in Epping are already very congested in peak hours. We support the CoP’s current Epping Planning Reviews in relation to traffic studies and social infrastructure for Epping and the need for these to be completed to make an informed decision on this Planning Proposal.

The height restriction outside the Epping Town Centre Core in R4 zoned areas is 8 storeys. All sites within 400m of Epping Station are not zoned 18-22 storeys. This development will be higher than the HLEP 2013 allows in some of the Epping Town Centre Core.



PROPOSED HEIGHT CHANGES

It does not follow that because the land is controlled by one owner, that the owner should get what they ask for in zoning and height, overturn the recommendations of the Epping Town Centre Precinct Plan and ignore heritage values and community concerns. If a number of owners developed the land the LEP controls would most likely not be so significantly changed.

24. b) Deliver a publicly accessible urban plaza through the proposed development providing a pedestrian connection between Epping Road and Forest Park. It also proposes a stepped terraced section of parkland immediately to the north of Forest Park. The applicant is putting forward the agreement that the Urban Plaza and terraced parkland will be equivalent to the area of land zoned RE1 Public Recreation (6,665sqm) so there will be no net loss in open space.

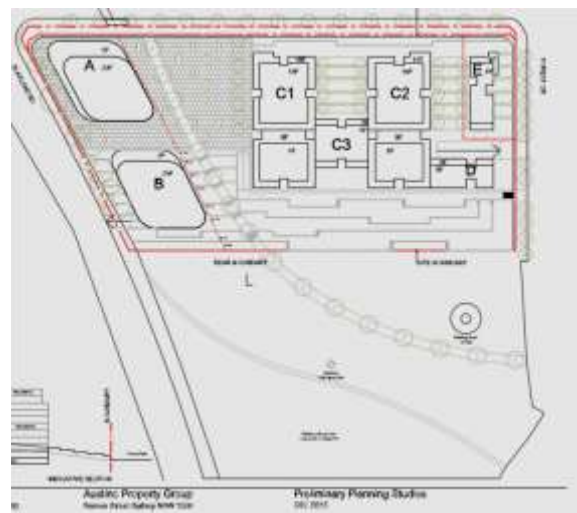
Comments re the pedestrian connection: We do not support the pedestrian connection proposed between Epping Road and Forest Park.

Pedestrian flow coming from the Epping Town Centre Core will not be so straight forward as indicated on the proposal’s pedestrian flow diagram. Will people really want to go out of their way to use a possible pedestrian bridge, ramps /stairs and go down stairs and/or terraces rather than go straight across Epping Road at the traffic lights?

Those people living in Blaxland Road, Maida Road and in residential areas further south currently walk along Blaxland Road and many of those living in the eastern areas walk along Epping Road. Some people do not like to walk through the park at night preferring to use public roads.



THE CURRENT PEDESTRIAN FLOW - STATION, BUSINESS/RETAIL AREA TO (AND FROM) RESIDENTIAL AREAS



PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN LINK THROUGH FOREST PARK

The proposed link will change the layout design and character of historic Forest Park, a heritage item. People love Forest Park because its design forms a huge outdoor room and its peripheral planting is important in shaping this character. The existing entry/exit point to Forest Grove from the park is at a low point in the terrain linking to a pedestrian walkway to Essex Street and a level footpath south along Forest Grove to Maida Road. The proposed new path bisects the sunny grassy slopes, ends up on a slope near the park's current car park and will destroy the grove of existing large trees on the northern boundary.

The pedestrian link to an 'urban plaza' and associated terraces make significant changes to the character of the park. HSC's comments on the Planning Proposal include:

'1.1 The proposed urban plaza is inconsistent with the adopted strategy for the Epping Town Centre;

'the proposal is inconsistent with the Community and Cultural Facilities Strategic Plan...The location of the proposed plaza space would be disconnected from the primary pedestrian thoroughfares of the centre with no feasible means of providing an integrated connection without the cooperation of future developers on the northern side of Epping Road. Although the provision of a pedestrian overbridge may improve connectivity of the proposed plaza to the remainder of the centre, the proposal makes no provision for this connection and the commercial prospects of supporting an urban plaza in the proposed location are not supported by the proposal.'



Artist's View of the Pedestrian Link. URBAN DESIGN STRATEGY FOR FOREST PARK, EPPING. PTW ARCHITECTS

The traffic lights are not shown in the artist's view above, and as the intersection is an important one, they must remain. The Planning Proposal's supporting documentation, *Forest Park, Epping Planning Proposal Traffic Impact Assessment* (7 December 2015) notes:

'Signalised pedestrian crossings at the intersection of Epping Road and Blaxland Road allow easy access to and from the Railway Station to the site'

The pedestrian bridge in this image is slightly along Epping Road from the traffic lights. The Planning Proposal does not include details of its construction or who will pay for it. It will need unsightly ramps for disabled access/strollers, stairs and/or lifts on both sides of Epping Road. We note these are not shown in the image and that they will take up space which could be used for trees which are shown, but not realistic. The proposed walkway between Epping Road and Forest Park is by terraces (ramps, escalators, stairs, lifts?) and is unsatisfactory for those with prams, wheelchairs or poor mobility.

A better option is to widen the current direct pedestrian access to Forest Park along Blaxland Road, to make it a safer, pleasanter walking space with paving, street trees and good lighting. It is short, direct and eliminates the need for bridges, ramps, stairs, escalators and lifts. The current line of mature trees to the northern edges of Forest Park (approx 16m high) is retained and a less obtrusive and destructive link to public recreation land at 725 Blaxland Road can be designed.

Comments re the urban plaza and terraced gardens: We do not agree that the urban plaza and the terraced gardens are the equivalent of the 725 Blaxland Road land zoned RE1 Public Recreation (6,665sqm). The urban plaza and the terraced gardens do not provide usable public recreation space that provides public benefit. A significant area (3,205 sqm) of public recreation land is lost to the community and future generations.

The Austino Property Group, *Voluntary Planning Agreement Letter of Offer* notes RE1 reconfigured areas in lieu of 725 Blaxland Road including:

'...of Public Open Space Land incorporating an urban plaza of 2,280m², tiered gardens of 1,181m²'

This does not equate to 6,665sqm and represents a loss to the community of 3,204sqm or approximately 48% of 725 Blaxland Road, public recreation land. We wish to highlight the Submission's 3.0 *Proposed Amendments* p. 4 notes:

'...and Forest Park (assumed to equate to the remaining amount of 3,205sqm)'

The former Epping Bowling Club land is both rare in the area as zoned public recreation land open space and very useful in its size and shape, being a rectangular level block. It has the potential to be developed as a useful active green public recreation space to compliment historic Forest Park. Reconfiguring the land into an 'urban plaza' to fit the required setback space between buildings on top of a private car park does not provide public benefit.

In the indicative section drawings, large trees are shown growing on a concrete slab. Planters will need to be provided for trees and shrubs and we note the details are very vague.



Terraces to Forest Park are to be provided as another 'public benefit' of the reconfiguration of the RE1 land. The Apartment Design Guide recommends a 9m+3m setback between windows/balconies to the property boundary given a change in zoning – the setback shown on the drawing below to RE1 land is 1m. The terraces benefit neither the public nor the residents (security, privacy and noise issues) as there is no clear fence between private and public spheres. The terraces proposed have no merit as useful public recreation space, no aesthetic merit, do not integrate well with Forest Park which is a heritage item, lead to the possible destruction of the line of mature Brush Box on the north boundary of Forest Park (c1950's, 16m high) and will be costly to maintain. We note that the car park, to accommodate the high-rise apartments, and the terraces takes up a large proportion of the

development site. Given the loss of mature trees on the site and the minimal area of deep soil for new large trees it is important to maintain the large mature trees on the northern boundary of Forest Park.

The terraced areas (see Artist's Impression of Terraces to Forest Park below), all on the reconfigured RE1 land, do not provide any significant area for deep soil planting area with their concrete paths and retaining walls. If there were a number of separate developments on the site, setbacks to side and rear boundaries to 725 Blaxland Road, as RE1 land, would have provided some deep soil areas. As well, the proposed development risks the demolition of the mature northern trees in Forest Park.



Both the height of the proposed development, the 'urban plaza' and the terraces ignore the aesthetic, social and recreational values of historic Forest Park first developed in the early 1900's. It is a heritage item and it is surprising that no independent heritage study has been required to ascertain the proposed development's impact on its layout and aesthetic values. We note Hornsby Shire Council's *Generic Plan of Management for community Land and Crown Reserves Planning District One* (adopted 10 November 2004, amended 18 December 2013), *European Cultural Heritage*, p.13 states:

'There are 19 parks and reserves with items of local heritage significance listed in the Hornsby LEP in Planning District 1... There are 2 parks and reserves with items of regional heritage significance listed in the Hornsby LEP in Planning District 1- the Boer War Memorial at Beecroft and Forest Park Epping.'

One of the core objectives for community land categorised as an area of cultural significance in the above document, p.15 is:

'The continuous protective care and maintenance of the physical material of the land or of the context and setting of the area of cultural significance.'

Forest Park, being a heritage item, is valued in the community for its aesthetic value, its early 1900's layout, its historic mature trees and rose gardens, as a predominately passive and peaceful recreation space and as a cultural and social asset. Most people who signed our recent petition do not want to see these historic elements change.

We also think there should be an independent expert study to ascertain the impact of the proposal on the vegetation and recreational value of Forest Park. None of the documentation presented has meaningfully addressed these issues.

Active recreation space for older children/teenagers/adults, an interesting, challenging and imaginative playground for young children and green space for families with picnic and safe toilet facilities would

be desirable for 'liveability' and mental and physical health. A study found that people who use public open spaces are three times more likely to achieve the recommended levels of physical activity for maintaining good health, than those who do not use the spaces. Users prefer nearby, attractive, and larger parks and open spaces (Wolf, Kathleen L., 2008, *City Trees, Nature and Physical Activity: A Research Review, Arborist News, Vol. 17, No. 1.*). Physical inactivity is a major public health risk (World Health Organisation, 2002). In Australia, nearly half of all Australians do not meet even the 30 minutes' physical activity recommendations (Armstrong T, Bauman A. & Davies J. 2000, *Physical Activity Patterns of Australian Adults*. Results of the *1999 National Physical Activity Survey*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra). A Hornsby Shire Council *Community Engagement Survey* (May 2012) p.21 noted that of those surveyed: '79% of young families go to parks 'more than once a week/about once a week'.

c) Deliver active uses on the ground floor, such as cafes, by adding additional uses over the site in order to activate the proposed urban plaza

Comments: The 'urban plaza' is the setback space required between the two residential towers sitting on top of a private car park. It is likely to be windswept and have limited solar access. It does not compensate for the loss of the former Epping Bowling Club site which could be developed into useful green space that could be used for active public recreation and as such be a beneficial asset to the health and well-being of the whole community.

VOLUNTARY PLANNING AGREEMENT

25. A Letter of Offer proposing a voluntary planning agreement supports the planning proposal. It proposes to deliver the following community benefits:

- a) Dedication of 6,665sqm of land (plaza and terraced parkland) for public open space purposes to HSC.**
- b) Embellishment of the dedicated land (6,665sqm) delivering an urban plaza and connection to Forest Park.**
- c) Maintenance of the dedicated open space for 5 years;**
- d) Improvements to the existing Forest Park; and**
- e) A monetary contribution of \$10 million towards a community facility (such as a pool facility).**

Comments: We consider none of the proposed 'public open space', 'embellishment' and 'improvements' to provide community benefits.

- a) The reconfiguration of land, the lack of adequate setbacks from buildings to private boundaries, the blurring of private and public land boundaries hides the fact that a considerable area of zoned public recreation land has been lost. More importantly we note that its usefulness as active green public recreation land has been lost.
- b) The 'embellishment' of the connecting 'urban plaza', 'the pedestrian link' and 'the terraces' are items not required by the public and therefore do not offer any public benefit. See details above.
- c) The maintenance of the dedicated space for 5 years benefits the developer in that the property boundaries to Forest Park are used initially on drawings as the boundaries. When the reconfigured RE1 space comes into CoP's hands after 5 years the RE1 boundaries are shown as 1m from the face of buildings above the terraces and the 'urban plaza' is above a private car park. Maintenance of the membranes for the planters, lifts, ramps etc by CoP, after the five-year period, will present a large cost to rate payers. A bad deal for the public, and for CoP.

- d) The proposal shows little regard for Forest Park as a heritage park – for its layout (c. early 1900s), its trees (northern boundary trees c.1950s) and vegetation, its aesthetic value and its social and recreational value, all of which will be compromised if the proposal goes ahead. With the park overshadowed and trees destroyed on its northern boundary for the new pedestrian access, and new terraces and the park dominated by huge towering and bulky apartment buildings, ‘improvements’ at that point would have minimal public value. The developer should not be the one to ‘improve’ Forest Park – any ‘improvements’ should be with community approval and open public tender to make sure it is value for money.
- e) A monetary contribution cannot replace the loss of this valuable public recreation land which is greatly needed by the growing population of Epping. What is lost to the community is scarce, irreplaceable, active green public recreation space within Epping Town Centre and within walking distance to a large number of apartment blocks.

26. This VPA is at the very early stages and negotiations are yet to commence with the HSC. However, should they progress, PCC would need to analyse the value and impact the open space format and configuration will have on the Epping Town Centre as a whole.

Comments: Analysing the impact of the loss of significant RE1 land and community consultation is supported. The reconfigured RE1 land in the proposal is not supported.

SITE SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN

27. A site specific DCP will be prepared to support the planning proposal should it progress to the gateway stage. It will provide detailed controls to deliver the proposed design concept.

Comments: This is not supported. If a site specific DCP is prepared by CoP we believe it is vital that there should be community consultation before it is finalised especially as RE1 public recreation zoned land and a heritage item park is affected.

28. It is assumed that the DCP and planning proposal will be exhibited concurrently.

Comments: This is not supported. We disagree that the planning proposal and the DCP be exhibited concurrently. Given the size and impact of proposed changes on the community the DCP proposals should be exhibited first, to allow for community consultation. If they are exhibited concurrently how much weight does any community consultation have?

PARRAMATTA CITY COUNCIL SUBMISSION

Context

35. The existing context around Forest Park consists of 4 to 5 storey apartment blocks (Hornsby LEP 2013 control of 17.5m) as well as detached homesteads in the surrounding blocks to the north, east and south of the park. The existing Hornsby LEP 2013 controls do not prescribe an FSR but have built form controls in place by way of the Hornsby DCP 2013. To the north of Epping Road with proximity to the station, the existing B2 Local Centre zoned land has height controls of 72 metres which appears to have determined the maximum 72 metre tower height on Blaxland Road.

Comments: It does not follow that because one owner owns the land that was once owned by a number of individuals, that the height controls and zoning should be altered to suit that one owner – changing the zoning and the height restrictions from those proposed by the Department of Planning and the Environment in the Epping Town Centre Study would unlikely have been considered to suit several owners of the same land along Epping Road. Other developments along Epping Road, Forest Grove and Maida Road outside the Epping Town Centre Core and under construction have not been spot rezoned to double or almost triple their height so why should it be considered for this proposal?

We do not think the heights proposed are compatible with a heritage item park, not just in terms of overshadowing which will affect all vegetation and trees on the northern boundary (being almost continually in shade), but also in their visual impact on the park, reduced privacy for children playing in the park, additional noise and reduced safety.

36. While it is noted that the planning proposal attempts to step down to the 4 to 5 storey (17.5 metre) context to the east of the block, the very dense built-up character to the north of the park does little in its transition to the east.

Comments: The dense built up character to the north of the Forest Park is not supported. The proposed development does not provide the transition area to the south and to Forest Park in accordance with the Epping Town Centre Plan.

Overshadowing of Forest Park

38. The proposal significantly overshadows Forest Park between the hours of 10am and 3pm in mid-winter. (Refer to Figures 13 to 18. Note: the pink shadow represents the proposed CBUS development on the northern side of Epping Road).

Comments: We note the Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel *Pre-Gateway Review* (22 September 2016) includes a recommendation with regards to the need to minimise the overshadowing of Forest Park.

The Epping Town Centre Brochure (March 2014) p.2 notes that the precinct will deliver a range of benefits for the community including:

‘controls on building heights and design that maximise sunlight and minimise overshadowing.’

The 22, 20 and 18 storey buildings proposed are not consistent with these controls. The 20-storey tower building adjacent to Forest Park is not compatible with Forest Park. A heritage study by an independent heritage consultant should be required as to the appropriateness of the proposed development adjacent to a heritage item.

In the prime time, at 3pm, when children may use the park after school almost the entirety of Forest Park is in shadow. See the diagram below.



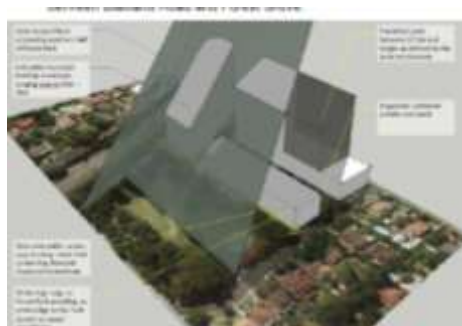
Austino Property Group
Success Street Sydney NSW 2000

Preliminary Planning Studies
DC 2015

We acknowledge the CoP principle of limiting shadowing of Forest Park. We promote gathering more details on overshadowing by the proposed development by an independent expert as well as more detail on the effect of overshadowing on the park, trees, rose gardens and other vegetation of Forest Park by an independent arborist/landscape consultant. More detail is required on the implications of overshadowing for the recreational use of Forest Park.

39. It is recommended that the proposed building envelopes be reviewed so that solar access is retained to the southern half of the park between the hours of 10am and 2pm as illustrated in Figure 19. This figure:

- a. Provides a recommended truncated building envelope which reduces the overshadowing impact of the applicant's proposal;**
- b. Provides a recommended 17.5 metre building height for the buildings flanking Forest Park;**
- c. Suggests a contained courtyard to the cluster of buildings fronting Epping Road;**
- d. Illustrates a transition zone for the buildings fronting Epping Road; and**
- e. Illustrates the location of the proposed local road/pedestrian link between Blaxland Road and Forest Grove.**



PROPOSED BUILDING ENVELOPES



Buildings on RE1 land – no RE1 land required for green recreation space in the development in lieu of 725 Blaxland Rd – no building setback noted to proposed access-way

Comments: The building envelopes proposed by CoP are still too excessive and do not go far enough to limit the overshadowing to Forest Park. They appear to cover all of the RE1 zoned land with high rise apartment buildings, a 12m road/pedestrian link and a private courtyard. A local road/pedestrian link between Blaxland Road and Forest Grove is not supported.

We do not support the building envelopes proposed by CoP in response to overshadowing of Forest Park or changes to the current height restrictions on the R4 zoned areas of the site. CoP's proposed building envelopes allow the developer to build multistorey apartments all over land zoned public

recreation land. We support the initial building height restrictions proposed in the Epping Town Centre Study and in the Hornsby LEP.

Approximately 35% of the site is currently zoned public recreation land. CoP's proposed building envelopes' diagram shows no proposed public recreation land on the development site other than the 12m wide access road. It is preferable to the proposed terraced gardens but the 12m public laneway/shared way appears to be the only public land provided by CoP in lieu of the loss of 725 Blaxland Road (6,665 sqm) as green public recreation land. We do not support the loss of 6,665sqm of public recreation land that the proposed building envelopes imply.

The Epping Town Centre Study Chapter 7, Recommendations - Public Domain (2011) notes:

'Provide new access road from Forest Grove providing street access for sites along Epping Road.'

This assumes that properties along Epping Road will be developed separately, with their own basement car parks requiring several driveways off Epping Road. The proposed access road from Forest Grove would then act as a vehicular access to those underground car parks. The proposed development, however, is a single development with one car park with access from both Forest Grove and Blaxland Road so this access road is unnecessary for the purpose for which it was originally proposed.

We therefore do not support the proposed 12m wide public local road/pedestrian link proposed. It is assumed it will be situated on private land and can be used when required for emergencies. If it were to be built on Forest Park this would cause loss of vegetation and trees. The underground car park which has access to lifts can be used for medical emergencies. We do not see the need to have this pedestrian link between Blaxland Rd and Forest Grove as we have a whole park that provides a pedestrian link between Blaxland Road and Forest Grove. We also have concerns with the potential for this pedestrian link to become a local road in which case it would become a 'rat run' for traffic bypassing congestion on nearby roads.



 NEW PEDESTRIAN LINK PROPOSED BY PCC
 EXISTING PEDESTRIAN LINKS THROUGH FOREST PARK

The proposed local road/pedestrian link does go towards solving some of the topography issues and is preferable to the terraces proposed as 'public space' but the topography issues would also be resolved by having the former Epping Bowling Club site used for the purpose it was zoned for, in its entirety. It would provide greater benefit to the community as much needed green recreation space.

Proposed public domain

43. The applicant's planning proposal reconfigures and retains the extent of open space of the former bowling club site in the form of a public plaza fronting Epping Road and a landscape terrace flanking the northern edge of Forest Park.

Comments: As detailed above, the proposal significantly reduces the area of open space and does not provide for useful active recreation land or green open space. This is not in the public interest and does not provide 'public benefit'.

48. In terms of the interface between the proposed development and Forest Park, the delivery of an active, public edge is encouraged. This could be achieved through a local 'road' or pedestrian link along the interface and connecting Blaxland Road with Forest Grove (refer to Figure 19, above). It would provide a clearly defined and accessible pedestrian link. It could form a 12 metre wide public laneway/shared way with street furniture, lighting and street trees immediately provided north of the park instead of the proposed terracing element. It could also be fronted with development that activates the laneway that is no higher than 17.5m similar to the other sides of the park and would not permit vehicular access other than service and emergency vehicles, and could be delivered through the VPA.

Comments: We do not support this as it provides no useful active green public recreation space. Refer to 39. above for details.

Community benefit

51. The VPA offer of a \$10 million monetary contribution presents opportunities for existing facilities within Forest Park to be upgraded as follows:

- ***New playground***
- ***New relocated amenities building***
- ***Update park furniture***
- ***New circuit pathway connecting key facilities and park entrances***

Comments: What is really needed is the public recreation land that 725 Blaxland Road provides, as a valuable public asset for the community. All 'improvements' to Forest Park need to take into consideration its heritage features. As such we are promoting the need for a heritage study.

PRINCIPLES

52. As outlined above, there are numerous impacts associated with the current proposal which require further analysis and potential amendment to the concept proposal. Before the planning proposal is progressed, it should address the following principles:

Comments: We agree that there are numerous impacts associated with the current proposal.

- ***No more than 50% of Forest Park should be overshadowed in midwinter between the hours of 10am-2pm.***

Comments: This blanket rule for overshadowing does not take into account the recreation uses and the existing layout and vegetation in Forest Park which is a heritage item. Children use the park, to play in after school and in the afternoon on weekends. The shadow diagrams show most of the park in shadow at 3pm in June. Most of the trees (c. 1950s) and vegetation along the northern boundary which is currently in a sunny position in the park will be constantly in shade in winter. Much of the turfed area will be in significant shade throughout the day. The turfed areas are important in the park as the southern side has many trees none of which anyone would like to see removed.

The building heights should remain as stipulated in the current Hornsby LEP and the Epping Town Centre Precinct Plan. This site was meant to be a transition area with lower heights than the Town Core and with heights that do not have adverse effects on Forest Park.

- ***The design efficiencies of residential GFA should be based on a GBA x 75%.***

Comments: Good design is supported as aesthetic quality visible to all in the community, as a development integrating well into the surrounding environment, as providing a suitable transition between the Epping Town Core and areas of lower density and height, as respecting the heritage and recreation character of Forest Park and the value to the community of RE1 zoned 725 Blaxland Road.

- ***A design excellence competition process should be put in place in addition to the site specific DCP.***

Comments: The site is part of HLEP and DCP which should not be changed to a site specific DCP without community consultation. The result depends on the site specific DCP which is unknown - this should have community input.

Conclusion

We do not support this Planning Proposal in its current form and we agree with the CoP recommendation that further analysis against the principles needs to be undertaken. We also support the Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel's recommendations for actions the Austino Property Group should take although we do not agree with them that there is strategic merit in this Planning Proposal. As noted in our introduction we would like to add further principles to the reviews including consideration for ensuring Epping has sufficient recreation space, the heritage of Forest Park, traffic studies, infrastructure needs, the cumulative effect of this development with other proposed and under construction developments in Epping, pedestrian access, public transport issues and the impact to the health of Epping residents. In its current form the Planning Proposal does not provide public benefit and significantly negates Epping being a liveable and sustainable suburb.

We would like to highlight the comments by HSC following assessment by members of the HSC Design Excellence Panel including:

- *the proposal does not recognise the critical interface between private and public open space;*
- *the proposal overstates the amount of public open space that could be dedicated to Council due to the requirement for internal setbacks to open space;*
- *the scale of development at the northern western corner of 22 storeys competes in scale with the commercial core and is out of proportion with other R4 zoned land; and*
- *shadow impacts would adversely impact on the environmental amenity of Forest Park and proposed additional open space.*

Further HSC noted that:

- *Access to basement levels below the proposed open space area for private parking would confer an additional private benefit to the land owner that is not addressed in the proposal. The preferred approach is to separate public and private land uses so that future open space land is not burdened by basement parking or commercial uses which are primarily for the benefit of the development.*

We continue to ask for the actions recorded in our recent Save Epping's Forest Park Petition signed by 700 plus people including:

- To keep the former Epping Bowling Club site as public recreation land, with preference for it providing green open space to accommodate the needs of the growing population. The reconfiguration of this land, with tiered gardens and a walkway between high-rise buildings, does not provide the community with useful recreation space.

- To keep the height restrictions for 2-18 Epping Road and 2-4 Forest Grove as per the current zoning under the Local Environment Plan (ie. 2-18 Epping Road is 8 storey/26.5m; 2-4 Forest Grove is 5 storey/17.5m).
- To prevent any development that allows overshadowing of Forest Park.
- To prevent any development that allows damage to, or removal of existing trees and peripheral vegetation within Forest Park. Epping has already seen a huge loss of trees and vegetation and this is negatively impacting on this suburb.
- To prevent any approval for rezoning and development of the site until the relevant Epping Planning Reviews are completed (ie. traffic and social infrastructure reviews). The road network is not capable of servicing the additional vehicular movements this level of development will bring nor is on street parking adequate.

The people of Epping do not want to see the loss of public zoned recreation open space, the destruction of our much-loved park and loss of greatly needed green space. Various studies and reports as well as the *Hornsby Local Environment Plan 2013* have led the community to believe that Forest Park and 725 Blaxland Road would remain together as useful public recreation space. Now we find this is not the case. The Planning Proposal is not in the public interest. The Austino Property Group's *Pre-Gateway Review Request Forest Park Epping* (26 April 2016) states, '*the proponent will continue to work with Council to ensure that the detailed design exhibits design excellence.*' We believe for the proponent to achieve this and to meet the needs and expectations of the community that significant changes are required to their Planning Proposal. In addressing the recommendations by the Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel the proponent will be making a start towards this. In the current form the Austino Property Group's Planning Proposal is not delivering back to the community usable public recreation space.

Save Epping's Forest Park

13 February 2017

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