

Sub 16

Objection to Shore School Graythwaite Concept Plan (MP10_1049) and Project Application (MP10_0150)

FOR THE ATTENTION OF:

Director, Government Land and Social Projects

Mr Sam Haddad FVIPA MAICD

Director-General

Department of Planning

GPO Box 39

Sydney NSW 2001

SUBMISSION IN OBJECTION TO:

Application Name: Shore School Graythwaite Concept Plan
and Project Application

Application Number: Concept Plan (MP10_1049) and Stage 1
Project Application (MP10_0150)

SUBMITTED BY:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

McMahons Point NSW 2060

**Name and address to be suppressed in publication of this
submission**

I hereby declare that I have made no political donations in the past
20 years.

Date of preparation: 26 February 2011

Summary of submission

I object to the proposed development. My house adjoins Graythwaite from Bank Street. The proposal offers no benefit to the community and will, instead, do irrevocable harm to me personally and to the wider community.

1. It will have an unacceptable impact on me and my family in terms of:
 - a. Loss of privacy
 - b. Loss of greenery and bird-life at the back of my property
 - c. Increased noise, that will disrupt the conduct of my business
 - d. Loss of winter sun to the back of my property
 - e. Deleterious effect on the groundwater available to my property
 - f. Increased competition for car parking spaces near my house
 - g. Loss of value of my property
2. It will have an unacceptable impact on the neighbourhood in terms of:
 - a. Hazardous traffic conditions in surrounding streets, particularly Union Street
 - b. Hazardous pedestrian conditions in Union Street
 - c. Loss of heritage characteristics of the Graythwaite site
 - d. Loss of green space, vegetation and wildlife
 - e. Major disturbance to the water table
 - f. Increased pressure on parking
 - g. Contributing to the ongoing deterioration of the historic charm and character of the McMahons Point/Waverton/North Sydney community as a place to live
3. The proposal presages even more development almost immediately behind my house, quite possibly with a further increase in staff and student numbers (perhaps another 500, on top of the 500 mentioned in this proposal), leading to even greater impact of the sort described above.

The application under Part 3A is in breach of the Director General's requirements (*e.g.* no proper community consultation, and no adopted Conservation Management Plan). Further, past experience has demonstrated that assurances from the school about their intentions for development cannot be taken at face value. **I request, in the strongest possible terms, that a public enquiry be held to determine an alternative development acceptable both to the community and to the school. I propose such an alternative.**

Details of submission

1. The impact on my family and my property

a. Loss of privacy. Our house is an East-West-facing 3-storey terrace. The three levels at the rear of the house face Graythwaite. The top floor, our main bedroom, is at the same level as the bases of the line of fig trees in Graythwaite. My home office is at the rear of the second level. I rely on opening French doors for fresh air and light. At ground level, we have a family room opening out onto a rear terrace. On all three levels, we take advantage of the Eastern aspect, to avoid the heat in summer.

The proposal makes it plain that shrubbery will be reduced to a minimum, and that a number of trees will be removed with no guarantee of replacement. Further, there is a strong likelihood that further damage to the water table by planned developments will lead to more trees sickening and being removed. As a consequence, there will be increasingly clear line of sight from the grounds of the school into our main bedroom, my work area at the back of my house, and even oversight of our family room.

b. Loss of greenery at the back of my property. One of the most delightful aspects of where we live is the magnificent array of fig trees, with their attendant population of native birds, particularly parrots. We open the French doors on the ground floor and enjoy the beauty of the vegetation and the bird calls. It was one of the principal charms of the property when we purchased it: we feel that we're living in the bush, yet we are so close to the CBD. It is a very calm place. The planned and likely clearances will, bit by bit, destroy this, and destroy our property value.

c. Increased noise will be disastrous for my work. The positioning and form of the proposed West building, and of new play areas, will create a great deal of noise during school hours, especially during breaks and change-over times between classes. My work area is located at the rear (eastern end) of my house backing on to the Graythwaite property. My air conditioning consists of opening the French doors. The only sounds are a few bird calls. I am well aware of the level of noise generated by Shore students, as I frequently walk up Lord Street to my mail box. *This would be unmanageable for me.*

d. Loss of winter sun to the back of my property. At present, our back garden and family room receive filtered sunlight in the morning during the winter period. This is particularly important in the family room. *Shadow diagrams indicate that this will disappear.* This is totally unacceptable.

e. Likely deleterious effect on the groundwater available to my property. Over the last 8 years, I have noticed a significant reduction in the ground-water available to my property. It is manifested in major reduction in water available to my property, and I find that I need to supply much more water to my garden. This appears to be a consequence of changes to water courses in Graythwaite, and also to the fact that Shore has been drawing significant amounts of water from the water table, which used to be sufficient to supply water to significant parts of McMahons Point. Further development work will only exacerbate this problem.

f. Increased competition for car parking spaces near my house. I regard the assurances that the school has no plans to increase student numbers as specious¹. The school has a well-established track record of providing oral assurances and then, when they obtain control, immediately pursuing the very intentions they were denying². Thus, I feel confident in assuming that they intend to enrol another 400 students as soon as the West building can be constructed, and to proceed expeditiously to enrol a further 400 students as soon as they can construct the 'Southwest' building almost immediately behind my house. Parking in

¹ For example, in the Mosman Daily, February 24 2011, an article headed *Community unconvinced by Shore principal denial*, reads:

SHORE School management has again stressed it has no plans to increase student numbers once the Graythwaite Estate site is developed, but the community remains concerned.

As reported by the Daily on February 3, notes in the executive summary overview of newly-released development plans for the historic site stated that the school sought to build for a potential to "accommodate up to about 500 additional students and 50 additional staff".

Headmaster Tim Wright said: "It refers to the amount of students that we want to be able to accommodate on the site. We have no current plans to increase student numbers."

But North Sydney Council will write to the Planning Department to raise concerns about the proposal, including "the implication of the anticipated growth of Shore School student and staff numbers on local infrastructure".

² A classic example was their assurance not to demolish a heritage-listed building in Union Street. Literally, the minute that the heritage order expired (midnight), demolition commenced, and was halted only because a retired judge who lived opposite was woken up by the noise, ascertained what was happening, and managed to secure a temporary injunction to prevent further damage. Unable to redevelop the site, Shore eventually sold it.

Bank Street, which can already be a challenge, partly because there are always people having work done by tradesmen who have large trade vehicles, and partly because of students parking their cars, will thus get worse and worse.

g. Loss of value of my property. The loss of privacy, loss of greenery, increased noise, loss of winter sun, difficulty of parking ... all these factors will combine to diminish the value of my property. There are absolutely no compensating benefits to me and my family of having this development proceed.

2. The impact on the neighbourhood

a. Hazardous traffic conditions in surrounding streets, particularly Union Street. My own street, Banks Street, already has problems with newly-licensed student P-plated drivers speeding up and down, looking for parking places. The same problem exists in Edward Street/Lord Street, which I notice when I walk to North Sydney.

Union Street is already difficult to use in the period leading up to 9am on week-days. It is a principle through road that channels traffic from the Harbour Bridge through to Waverton, Crows Nest, Greenwich, Lane Cove and points beyond, and in the reverse direction. Buses also use this road. The two biggest problems are for traffic turning left from Union Street into Blues Point Road, and with traffic making a right-hand turn from Union Street (travelling west) into Shore school.

The proposal provides for major traffic flow into and out of the school grounds, using not just the current entrance in Union Street, but also the newly acquired entrance via Graythwaite. This will become a nightmare for traffic, twice a day, as long stream of parents' cars travel west up Union Street to turn into the school, blocking other traffic as they wait for a gap in the oncoming traffic flow, and then loop out again, cutting across the parents still queued and attempting to turn into the school. There will also be even greater congestion caused by visitors to the school during events such as parent/teacher nights. The proposal ignores these access and congestion problems and arranges that their impacts occur in public streets rather than within the school grounds.

And the boosted student numbers will only make this worse. The traffic survey commissioned by the school, inadequate though it was in terms of actual responses to questions, still demonstrated very clearly that a large proportion of students arrive at school in private vehicles.

My recommendation: *Institute a one-way system, whereby cars entering the school must do so by turning left into the Graythwaite entrance (while travelling east up Union Street), and cars departing the school must do so by turning left from the current school entrance and proceeding east along Union Street. Make it illegal,*

indeed impossible, to turn right into the school from Union Street, or to turn right into Union Street when leaving the school.

See Figure on next page.

b. Hazardous pedestrian conditions in Union Street. This will become increasingly hazardous for pedestrians, as the double-road access to the school is developed with consequent significantly increased usage for pick-up and drop-off. Pedestrians will have to cope both with cars entering one gate then, a few metres further on, the cars leaving through the other gate. Presumably a traffic monitor like the one at the top of Bay Road will be appointed to control all this traffic, leading to much greater delays for all concerned.

c. Loss of heritage characteristics of the Graythwaite site. There is no reason to believe that the school will pay any more than lip service to heritage issues. For example,

- The proposal as it relates to heritage issues is superficial at best, and fails to mention known heritage features, e.g. the Bunkers in the Graythwaite paddock and the set of stairs behind the Giant Bamboo, dating from before 1890.
- It is ludicrous to suggest that the historic patch of Giant Bamboo will survive the removal of a tree in the middle of it.
- The historic gardens will be eliminated, the ground flattened and turned into lawn.
- The tall palms directly in front of Graythwaite are planned to be removed and replanted but the new location is not indicated.
- A notable aspect of the heritage of the Graythwaite site is the magnificent line of fig trees. The proposal describes the removal of a significant number of trees. There is absolutely no mention of attempting to maintain the character of the site by replanting with the same sort of tree and, presumably, no intention to do this.
- The pine tree, planted by the RSL some years ago as a memorial to the ANZACs tradition and the role Graythwaite played in their tradition, receives no mention except that it is scheduled for removal.

For an application under Part 3A, there is a requirement that an adopted Conservation Management Plan be submitted. This has not occurred, a clear breach of the Director General's requirements.



Figure: Recommended traffic arrangements if both driveways are used in a one-way system. Note that the turn being made by the car shown turning from Union Street into the current Shore driveway would be illegal, as would be a right-hand turn by a car leaving Shore.

d. Loss of green space, vegetation and wildlife. Graythwaite once had wonderful gardens. Over the years, these became run down, but then were restored to a considerable extent by the efforts of a voluntary group, assisted by North Sydney Council. Since the school acquired Graythwaite, these are once again being allowed to deteriorate, and rampant weeds continually threaten to invade my property. The school proposes to solve this problem by eradicating the gardens and, by implication, associated wildlife, completely. This appears to be part of a wider strategy that I discuss below, whereby the school acquires property and deliberately allows it to fall into a state of disrepair to the point where they can legitimately claim that the property is beyond the point of restorability and should be demolished.

e. Major disturbance to the water table. See 1e above. This affects the whole community of McMahons Point and Waverton who reside down-hill from the school to the west.

f. Increased pressure on parking. See 1f above. This affects the whole community of McMahons Point and Waverton who reside down-hill from the school to the west.

g. Contributing to the ongoing deterioration of the historic charm and character of the McMahons Point/Waverton/North Sydney community as a place to live. This is a very general and important issue. In all the time that I have been a resident in this area, Shore school has not made the slightest effort to contribute to the community in which the school resides. On the contrary, many of its actions serve to alienate and impoverish the community, and to diminish the quality of life and value of the property of the residents:

- The school continues to acquire residential properties near the school, of the order of 100 at last count, here and in Northbridge. Many of these were once very attractive terraces and stone cottages, and an important part of the historical significance of the North Sydney/Waverton/McMahons Point area.
- Once acquired, the properties are being allowed to run down in appearance, modulo the occasional quick paint job on the outside. Certainly, the uncared-for appearance of front gardens, especially in Union Street and Lord Street, contribute to a general run-down appearance of the neighbourhood. There is absolutely no community spirit manifested in the way the properties are managed.
- My understanding is that, as an educational institution, the school is *not* required to pay rates on these properties. So, in addition to the appearance of the

neighbourhood declining, there is the prospect of a rates impost for ratepayers to support Council's services.

- The presence of the Graythwaite property added peace, heritage value, charm and very necessary green space to the area. Removing historic trees and all the shrubbery, surrounding the property with high fences, and dramatically increasing the traffic flows and noise, will all contribute to destroying these values. And the school gives no evidence that it actually cares.

I think it is time for a decision to be made about the extent to which a school can continue to take over an entire community. Presumably, the next important acquisitions will be houses along the eastern side of Bank Street, as the school moves to acquire the whole block bounded by Union, Bank and Lord Streets. And so on. The school runs a business, it has an enormous waiting list, and seeks to expand. Expansion will generate more ex-students wanting to send their children to the school, and so more buildings will be needed, a mad spiral of Malthusian growth. Now is the time to stop it, before the community is destroyed irrevocably.

It is my understanding that the development proposal was required to demonstrate how the developments would contribute to the community – to the welfare of many, rather than to that of a privileged few. There is not a scintilla of evidence to this effect. Since most families associated with the school come from outside the community, how the school behaves towards the community has no impact whatsoever on them; indeed, many would doubtless be blissfully unaware of the impact of the school on its surrounding community. I doubt that many would be happy were comparable developments to occur next door to them.

Alternative proposal

This is in four parts:

- Recommendation 1** A Public Enquiry should be held, before any decision is made, to determine a proposal that is acceptable both to the school and to the community. This will provide the opportunity for meaningful consultation with the community, something that did not occur with the development of the current proposal even though it was supposed to.
- Recommendation 2** The new proposal be based around a concept previously advanced by the school itself but rejected by the Mayor of North Sydney, wherein any construction is sited further east than the current proposal, and the remaining part of Graythwaite (lower level and paddock) is sold to North Sydney Council to be preserved as green space for the community.
- Recommendation 3** The proposed new building be reduced in scale, particularly in terms of height, to accommodate 100 students and staff, rather than 500, and redesigned to comply with the 8 metre maximum height requirement for the adjoining residential area.
- Recommendation 4** That the school establish a permanent and effective community liaison group, including senior officers from the school and representatives of the community chosen by the community.