

Mrs Anna Johnston
A/Team Leader Strategic Assessments
NSW Department of Planning
23-33 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

DOC11/59955

Dear Mrs Johnston

RE: School Site Selection – Minmi/Newcastle Link Road Concept Plan (MP10_0090)

The Department has previously indicated (ref: DOC09/7407 and DOC11/40471) its school infrastructure requirements for the Minmi and Newcastle Link Road Concept Plan put forward by Coal and Allied.

The Department previously advised that further land use and environmental planning investigations into suitable areas for the school extension and a suitable site for the new school would be undertaken.

The Department recently completed this exercise and advises accordingly:

1. The proposed school extension site, whilst generally sited on land unsuitable for a range of uses, is accepted in the absence of a better alternative being available.
2. The proposed primary school site in the South Link Road Precinct is not agreed to for the following reasons:
 - a. The site is situated on and adjacent to land mapped as bushfire prone. Locating school children on land prone to bushfire is not supported for the following reasons:
 - i. School communities are identified in Local DisPlans as a community group likely to require special attention in relation to the impact of a source of risk (such as bushfires) and are therefore vulnerable in such circumstances.
 - ii. Places school children and teachers in danger of being affected by life threatening bush fires, resulting in unacceptable fire and life safety risks that can be avoided through good planning.
 - iii. Schools are identified by Emergency Management NSW as potential evacuation spaces during a State emergency. Locating the school site on bush fire prone land would likely discount the facility being used for such purpose during periods of significant bush fire threats. This represents a loss for the whole community. Good village and town planning would dictate that education facilities are sited in areas where its uses can be of significant community value in times of distress.

- iv. Locating school land on bushfire prone land will result in increased construction costs to meet building standards for bush fire conditions.
- v. Locating school on bush fire prone land requires an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) thus requiring specific APZ requirements such as Fire Brigade access roads, alternative on-site water supply and ongoing fuel reduction maintenance to which schools neither have the expertise or budget to maintain.
- b. The Department confirms that an existing site in adjacent suburb Cameron Park can capture demand in Link Road South Precinct. In addition, residents of the Link Road South Precinct would have access to the Edgeworth Public School and Edgeworth Heights Public School, which currently has capacity for additional enrolments.
- c. There will be physical road barriers and natural barriers requiring the school community to cross to access the site for residents located in the Link Road North Precinct and Village Centre Precinct. It is noted that children in Link Road North Precinct and Village Centre Precinct would represent a significant portion of enrolments.
- d. Being located to the southernmost portion of the Link Road South Precinct result in an inability to efficiently or effectively capture the significant demand that would be created in the Link Road North Precinct and Village Centre Precinct.

It is requested that an urgent workshop meeting with the Department of Planning and Coal and Allied is held to identify an alternative site, discuss the issues identified and to move forward on this development project.

Please contact Martin Karm, Statutory Planner on 9561 8147 or email martin.karm@det.nsw.edu.au should you require any further assistance or clarifications in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely



Tony McCabe
Director, Planning and Delivery
April 2011