



6th September 2022

Draft Hornsby Town Centre Review Recommendations

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback on this draft. The aim of Friends of Berowra Valley (FoBV) is to protect the natural landscape, heritage and biodiversity of Berowra Valley while making the valley more accessible to the community.

We have seven main concerns: edge effects, corridor design, effect of light on fauna, plant selection, performance spaces, openness around funding and upgrades to waste water treatment facilities.

FoBV presented our views on towers on the western side of Hornsby to the Sydney North Planning Panel (DA Number DA/201/2018), The following includes the main points from this submission.

Edge effects

The town centre is on top of a ridge, part of it directly above a steep valley forming part of Berowra Valley National Park.

Parts of the development is adjacent to Hornsby Park which joins Old Man's Valley and then to Berowra Valley National Park. This creates a green corridor from the National Park directly up to the town centre.

The Office of Environment and Heritage published "Guidelines for Developments Adjoining Land Managed by the OEH." The introduction of this document states "These guidelines have been prepared for use by councils and other planning authorities when they assess development applications that may impact on land and water bodies managed by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH)."

Councils and other consent authorities need to consider the following issues when assessing proposals adjacent to NPWS land and, in particular, their impacts on the park, its values and NPWS management of the park:

- erosion and sediment control
- stormwater runoff
- wastewater
- management implications relating to pests, weeds and edge effects

- fire and the location of asset protection zones
- boundary encroachments and access through NPWS lands
- visual, odour, noise, vibration, air quality and amenity impacts
- threats to ecological connectivity and groundwater-dependent ecosystems
- cultural heritage
- road network design and its implications for continued access to the park.

FoBV is confident that some of these issues will be addressed, for example by water sensitive urban design, but we are particularly concerned about threats to ecological connectivity.

Corridor design

While FoBV welcome the increase in canopy and natural ground cover we are concerned that the Green Infrastructure Network and Biodiversity Network (p26, Landscape and Public Domain) are too simplistic to serve as an effective biodiversity link through and across Hornsby. They will probably only favour even more Rainbow Lorikeets, and these will compete for nesting hollows with bushland birds in the nearby bushland. This will decrease biodiversity rather than increasing it.

We particularly welcome the Burdett Street “aspirational” corridor and support interlocking canopy, setbacks with deep soil, DCPs to enhance environmental outcomes, removal of wires, and green walls and roofs.

FoBV is however concerned green infrastructure and biodiversity links will only enhance fauna species already well adapted to the urban environment. We consider that two steps are required to ensure that the links functional for a wide range of fauna. Firstly, studies of the local fauna and their likely interaction with the corridors, with appropriate recommendations included. Secondly the development of DCPs and specifications to control, among other things, plant species selection, habitat provision and bird friendly building design.

We wonder if designing corridors around the outskirts of Hornsby would be more effective and hence consider the green canopy within the Hornsby Town Centre as amenity planting only.

Effect of light on fauna

At night, birds use stars and the moon for orientation, and illuminated windows often confuse them. Attracted by artificial lights on and around tall buildings, birds collide into them with usually fatal consequences. Other nocturnal fauna is attracted by bright lights at the edge of bushland areas and may be lured into dangerous urban areas. Blocking a major aerial route into the surrounding bushland will be a risk to micro-bats which depend on green corridors.

Glass

Studies show that billions of birds perish from collisions with glass every year, making it the second largest human-made hazard to birds, after habitat loss.

Clear reflective glass kills birds because they perceive those hard reflective surfaces as unobstructed passageways to the sky and nearby vegetation and fly straight into them. Guidelines will need to be developed to ensure the green roofs and walls are not death traps for fauna.

Plant selection

FoBV is concerned about the indicative species lists. For example, *Banksia integrifolia* does not natural exist in this area, *Doryphora sassafras* only exists in the nutrient rich and protected sites in the diatrema. Both lists need revision.

FoBV is also concerned that the plant species selection and the absence of understorey will simply encourage Rainbow Lorikeets and Noisy Miners and exclude bushland birds. More consideration of species selection and corridor design for the benefit of the local fauna.

We would favourably consider the inclusion of introduced non-invasive deciduous tree species into the public spaces to help enhance climate and recreational use in these spaces.

Performance spaces

Outdoor performance areas at the Quarry, Hornsby Park and Hornsby Square are either in use or designed for the future. FoBV is concerned about the apparent absence of indoor performance spaces. We are concerned about this for two main reasons:

- External performances, particularly at night, disturb the local fauna. The Powerful Owls of the Quarry are an obvious example.
- Weather – The weather is not always suitable, as we have discovered over the past few years. As the effects of climate change increases, unsuitable weather will increasingly disrupt outdoor performances

Hornsby needs an interior performance space seating approximately 500 people similar to facilities provided by Willoughby (499 seats in the Concourse), The Hills (350 seats in The Pioneer Theatre), and Parramatta (538 seats at The Riverside Theatre). Hornsby needs a theatre for local groups such as Becroft Orchestra, and The Golden Kangaroos, local schools and visiting guests.

Funding

We would like to see a document that outlines how the council intends to fund this blue print. We fear that the community and environmental facilities will get dropped by developers.

Infrastructure Upgrades

We would like to see mention of how the two local waste water treatment facilities are going to be upgraded to improve their current poor performance. If they are already

struggling to cope with the current population how will they cope with an increased population?

Recommendations

1. Studies of the local fauna and their likely interaction with the corridors, with appropriate recommendations is needed.
2. The development of DCPs and specifications to control, among other things, management of night light, plant species selection, habitat provision and bird friendly building design.
3. An indoor performance space.
4. Document detailing approach to funding.
5. Upgrades to Waste Water Treatment Facilities.