



Sylvia Hale
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Parliament of NSW
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Director, Strategic Assessments
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
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24 January 2008

Dear Sir,

Re: 'Middle Camp' Site, Catherine Hill Bay – State Significant Site and Project Applications (MP 07 0095) – submitted by Coal and Allied Operations Limited

I make this submission on behalf of the NSW Greens in response to the proposed development by Coal and Allied at Catherine Hill Bay.

The Greens oppose Coal and Allied's proposed development at this unique historical settlement. The proposal is just one of five projects currently being considered by the Minister for Planning. As such, it must be assessed in terms of the cumulative impact of five separate, large, residential developments on Catherine Hill Bay and the wider Wallarah Peninsular. The environmental and social consequences will do irreparable damage to the existing natural and village community life on the peninsular, with years of on-going construction undermining the beauty, biodiversity and community values of the whole peninsular.

ENVIRONMENT

The process of developing the locality - from clearing blocks to making access roads and storing heavy machinery - will disturb the pristine and unique nature of the area across the Peninsular.

The daily movements of numerous construction workers, machinery and eventually new residents will soon impact on the declared State recreation area that surrounds the proposed development. The multiplier effect of the development would extend ever further into the conservation areas and threaten the fragile biodiversity of the countryside.

With the arrival of large numbers of residents the local natural fauna may fall victim to predator pets and result in the deaths of thousands of native animals a year.

The encroachment of development will affect the fragile flora and fauna ecosystems, eventually impacting on the surrounding conservation areas including the scattered

koala colonies.

SUSTAINABILITY

C&A do not intend to construct the dwellings to be built on the site themselves and exhibit little genuine concern for their impact. In the statement of its Beyond Basix sustainability aims, C&A notes that “whilst the developer is not undertaking these strategies they can be promoted to each lot purchaser.” This clearly indicates the superficiality of C&A’s commitment to environmentally sustainable housing and is indicative of a lack of responsibility for the final nature of the development and its impact on the existing environment.

Nor is there any commitment to community in the establishment of a precinct with few services, no facilities and no sympathy for existing village communities.

Moreover, there is the danger that the growing commercialisation of the area will lead to properties being turned into holiday lettings, resulting in an influx of holiday makers with little concern for the true nature and value of the area.

HERITAGE

Catherine Hill Bay and nearby Nords Wharf are unique miner’s communities that remain from a time of company-owned mining villages that date from the end of the 19th Century. As such, these communities provide a snapshot of working class life that is steeped in history and irreplaceable along coastal NSW.

The development of large modern enclaves within this setting would devalue or destroy this microcosm of the State’s industrial history. Catherine Hill Bay provides a unique opportunity to preserve this historical community in its original state.

Catherine Hill Bay is, moreover, a place that has been consistently listed as an inappropriate site for development. It is disturbing that, from being second last on a list of 92 possible development sites, it has now been moved to the top of the list, thus making a mockery of the State’s heritage protections.

GOVERNMENT

The Greens have strong concerns about the powers invested in the Minister for Planning by Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act which he can use to override due process.

The project has been rejected by every body that has examined it from the local councils (Wyang and Lake Macquarie) to the Land and Environment Court. Even the Department of Planning did not consider it suitable for development, yet it has been made a priority by the Minister. The development sets a dangerous precedent for the creation of developments that have little social value other than allowing developers to maximise financial returns on their land investments.

Approval of the proposal cannot but cement in the minds of the public that the government is more concerned to protect and promote the interests of property developers than to genuinely preserve the State's environmental and cultural heritage. The proposed reservation of major parts of the site for conservation and parkland is an unacceptable trade-off for the destruction of a unique community.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Hale MLC