

No F6 splitting our Shire, please!

Sutherland Shire Council has refused to make a policy submission to the State Government on possible use of the abandoned F6 corridor south of the Sutherland-Cronulla railway line, claiming that time is needed for community consultation. Instead they intend to ask the NRMA to conduct consultation to determine a preferred use of the corridor. **Jenni Gormley** reports and asks WHY.

IN 2002, the previous Minister for Roads, Carl Scully, issued a direction, under Section 49 of the *Transport Administration Act 1988*, "that the Roads & Traffic Authority (RTA) shall not construct any road or transport development of any type in the portion of the corridor south of the rail line at Gymea, so that this portion of the F6 corridor can be preserved, as much as possible, for open space". Furthermore, the Minister assured the MP for Miranda, Barry Collier, that the existing open space in RTA ownership in the corridor south of the Cronulla railway line would not be sold to developers.

The decision by the State Government to abandon their plans to build a freeway was the result of a PEOPLE'S campaign, a campaign run by the residents action group CARTS (Citizens Advocating Responsible Transport for the Shire) which was initiated and supported by the Sutherland Shire Environment Centre. CARTS had hundreds of members all along the F6 corridor who vehemently opposed the construction of the F6. Its strongest membership was in the section of the corridor that was eventually regazetted.

When asked to comment on the Council decision, Mr Collier said: "I remain committed to the abandonment of the F6 in favour of open space and community use in the southern portion of the corridor and a public

transport option in the northern portion."

"In March 2003 [previous State election campaign], Liberal Candidate Kevin Schreiber publicly stated that the Coalition would support the Carr Government's decision to remove the freeway reservation between Gymea station and Loftus.

"Now Schreiber and his Liberal Councillors reject a thoughtful and well-rounded report by senior Council staff on how that land could best be used by the Shire community. To make matters worse, they want to waste ratepayers' money on a joint study with the NRMA aimed at building the F6 freeway." Mr Collier explained that independent consultants had already been engaged by Minister Craig Knowles. "The budget for this study is \$350,000 and the results are expected to be released for public comment later this year."

While councillors claimed that the report's recommendations were not backed up by "community consultation", Neil de Nett from CRoSS (Combined Residents of Sutherland Shire) disagreed. "Council has been consulting with us on a fairly continuous basis for over six years, firstly with the *Shape the Shire* process followed by the *Blueprint for Action* and the *People's LEP*. One thing that has consistently emerged is that the

community wants a sustainable and long term approach to planning. We need to have less dependence on motor vehicles, improved access to public transport and better recreational facilities such as walkways and cycleways."

"And remember that this road reserve was proposed in 1948 by the same Liberal Government that had commenced sandmining on the Kurnell peninsula in that very year," pointed out Bob Walshe, patron of Sutherland Shire Environment Centre. "Hardly a government with good 'foresight!'"

Proposed Landuse

The Council officers' report rejected by the councillors was prepared based on recommendations from across all division of the Council.

These recommendations were consistent with the results of previous community consultation studies carried out on residents views regarding future possible use of these lands.

The corridor encompasses a number of types of landuse from remnant bushland and passive and active open space through to residential. The officers' report recognised that many of the parcels of land in the corridor are already being used by the community. Some of the current uses include:

- Dog off-leash area** Helena St Kirrawee;
- Montessori School**, Gymea;
- Anglican Church Parking Area**, Gymea Bay Rd Gymea;
- Matchpoint Tennis Courts**, Singleton Place, Kirrawee
- Remnant bushland**, active bushcare groups;
- Informal walkways/ cycleways /open space.**

Installation of a cycleway/footpath

Improved cycleway and pedestrian systems will encourage Shire residents to cycle or walk for recreation or commuting purposes. This will reduce residents' dependence on motor vehicles for transport and in turn improve air quality.

Council has recognised that



Popularly used areas such as the Singleton Place (Matchpoint) Tennis Courts in Gymea and the Offleash Dog exercise area in Helena Street Kirrawee area also under threat.

current trends in local transport planning and infrastructure development encourage a greater reliance on car use. This is environmentally unsustainable and has negative aspects in terms of diminished accessibility, delays and lost productivity for the local economy.

Council has also acknowledged that it has a major role to play in facilitating accessibility and encouraging greater public transport use. There is an opportunity for Council to improve accessibility to bus stops and railway stations by the provision of footpaths, cycleways and bicycle parking facilities, complemented by good signage and information.

Bushcare/Greenweb

Several parcels of land in the corridor have valuable bush regeneration potential that will influence regeneration works further along the corridor. There are already several Bushcare Groups operating in the area that would benefit from the assistance of Council's bush regeneration team. Once Council has received clear indication in terms of ownership and boundaries to be maintained by Council, this will assist the resourcing available to its Bushcare Groups.

Council's Biodiversity and Greenweb Strategies aim to identify and manage significant vegetation and vegetated links throughout the Shire so as to ensure the long term conservation of the biodiversity of the Shire and surrounds, while providing for recreational opportunities and improvements in water and air quality.

This is to be achieved via a Greenweb network of habitat nodes (existing bushland) and corridors. This network will enable plants and animals to

move between habitat areas within the Shire, and support the viability of the populations.

Existing and potential corridors were identified and selected because they incorporated such features as: existing vegetation, public land, rivers, creeks, foreshores, wetlands, endangered ecological communities, threatened species.

Parks and playgrounds

A review of the land currently used for public open space in the Gymea/Kirrawee region has identified a shortfall of parks and playground areas. Setting aside land within the F6 corridor as public open space, including several well located playground areas, will address this regional shortage of active and passive open space.

There is the opportunity to utilise some of this open space for community-related centres and infrastructure. If located within the proposed public open space, this will encourage maximum community support and easy pedestrian and bicycle access.

Wetland

The opportunity exists to develop a wetland in the area in the far western portion of the corridor beside the Princes Highway. This will allow the creek draining much of the Sutherland region and the Princes Highway to pass through a filtering system to remove litter, sediment and pollutants before flowing into the Royal National Park.

Conclusion

The proposed uses of the redundant F6 Corridor provide an integrated approach to landuse, combining public recreation opportunities such as cycleways/footpaths with the

preservation and enhancement of the bushland environment.

"The abandonment of the F6 corridor in favour of community use and public transport was a major victory for the people of the Shire - and one supported by the then Sutherland Council. We cannot now squander this investment in our children's future and destroy our Shire all for the sake of a few people's political ambitions," Mr Collier said.

Residents need to urge their local Councillors to adopt and submit this report to the State Government as representative of the type of usage that should be made of the abandoned corridor. *

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

CONTACT your local Councillors and tell them that you are not happy that they are considering destroying these community amenities in Gymea and Kirrawee with yet another road.

WRITE to Member for Miranda, Barry Collier and let him know that you support the uses of the corridor as outlined in the report. The CARTS website has a full copy of the officers' report that was REJECTED by Shire Councillors. See www.ssec.org.au/CARTS

CONTACT Federal MP for Cook Bruce Baird who does not appear to understand the negative impacts that would result from construction of the F6 through the Shire (for an outline of these see the CARTS website). Voice your opposition to the possibility of your Shire being split by this massive motorway.

The heritage listed natural stone bridge over Dents Creek is just one area that would disappear under the freeway.



PROPOSED ZONINGS

Proposed National Park - The land that runs contiguously with the Royal National Park to be rezoned and returned to the Royal National Park. A buffer to remain between the National Park and residential properties. The poor quality vegetation in the hazard reduction zone is proposed as public open space.

Proposed Public Open Space - Land identified as Public Open Space is typically open, grassed land that is only sparsely vegetated. This land would be ideal for passive and active open space and should include the currently leased tennis courts off Singleton Place. Other uses could include dog "off leash" areas, potential playground sites and, more importantly, provide the linkages to allow a cycleway/pedestrian pathway to connect the proposed public open spaces from the Princes Highway through to Gymea.

Proposed Public Open Space (bushland) - Land that has been identified as containing valuable bushland

suitable for regeneration. There are only four parcels of land suitable for this classification. This includes the land surrounding the natural stone bridge off North West Arm Road.

By zoning this land Public Open Space (bushland), the existing bushland communities (Sydney Sandstone Gully Forest and Sydney Sandstone Ridgetop Woodland) will be preserved, whilst still allowing complementary activities, such as the proposed cycleway/footpath network, to traverse this zone. The land between Thacker Close and Houston Street is part of the Sydney Sandstone Forest and has a stand of native trees. Although being quite degraded, there is regeneration potential and is located toward the top of Ewey Creek, and is therefore important as it has the potential to influence regeneration work all the way down the creek to Yowie Bay.

Proposed Residential - Many of the lots within the F6 corridor will be suitable to be rezoned for residential use. Many of these lots are privately owned and most

of them have an existing dwelling. Zoning has been determined to minimise the number of houses that will need to be acquired to successfully construct the open space network. There are 71 properties that are recommended to be returned to residential use. Further negotiations between the RTA and the Community Taskforce may need to adjust these numbers.

Proposed special uses - The RTA owned land off Gymea Bay Road, opposite the Anglican Church, is currently used as an informal car park. It is proposed to retain this land as a car park, due to its proximity to Gymea shops, the church and the station. The proposed installation of a playground in the adjoining land earmarked for public open space would be ideal to utilise this carpark for maximum community use. In addition, the zoning for Montessori School, located in Manchester Road, would need to be modified to special uses - educational establishment.