

Mr Steven Head
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1 June 2021

Dear Mr Head,

Re: Hornsby Park Master Plan

Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) is a community group working to protect and conserve the heritage, environment and biodiversity of our northern areas.

We are extremely concerned about the overdevelopment of the proposed Hornsby Park site which we believe will have potentially disastrous effects on nationally, and internationally, significant geology, fauna and flora.

Hornsby Quarry Diatreme

Having reviewed the information made available on this project, there is essentially a lack of protections afforded the park's internationally significant geological formation, being the Quarry diatreme.

To use this feature as an inappropriate backdrop to a park and swimming area undermines its value to geoscientists both nationally and internationally, and likewise all Australians. Whilst we do treasure our geological heritage in remote areas such as Uluru, we do need to apply the same respect to those of international significance close to urban centres which can be viewed and appreciated by a greater number of people.

The Hornsby diatreme and its international significance has been cited for decades in various papers, and recently in the Quarry magazine in 2015, with noted geological heritage specialist, Dr Ian Percival stating that 'Hornsby Quarry's diatreme was "distinctly different. It contains relatively fresh rocks compared to others [diatremes] that have weathered into depressions. It is the largest, best preserved example in the entire Sydney Basin.

"Quarrying at the site has also exposed a perfect cross-section of the diatreme. It's quite rare to actually see the disc-shaped layers of rock as they've fallen back into the vent."
<https://www.quarrymagazine.com/2015/11/12/geologists-lobby-to-preserve-quarry-rock-formation>

And in 2021 at the Australian Earth Sciences Convention, the Quarry was cited as a 'geoheritage treasure'. "Globally, there are very few instances of such excellent exposure, revealing a full range of macroscale to microscale features in three dimensions. It is arguable that this exposure alone, makes it a site of international geoheritage significance." <https://www.aesconvention.com.au/a-geoheritage-treasure-a-case-study-of-the-hornsby-diatreme/>

We strongly recommend that any Masterplan highlight the Quarry for its international geological significance with signage and displays regarding its geoheritage. We recommend that a required distance to protect the Quarry wall is maintained to avoid any destruction or vandalism. The walls of Hornsby Quarry are quite variable in texture, and likely to be fractured and unstable.

In this sense we object to the Hornsby Masterplan as it seriously understates the importance of this internationally significant geosite and does not provide the necessary measures for responsible geoheritage protection.

Diatreme Blue Gum Forest

Associated with the significance of the Diatreme is the Blue Gum Forest adjacent to it. It is cited as the only such forest in the world and supports a critically endangered ecological community already highlighted by the NSW Government as requiring protection and conservation. This masterplan fails to address this and actively ignores its vulnerable status.

The use of trails, both walking and mountain bike riding, should be deleted from this area to allow it to revegetate. The current plan would destroy this unique Forest.

Vulnerable Powerful Owls

The Masterplan appears to ignore the protections already required by Hornsby Council under the State listing of Powerful Owls as vulnerable.

The range of features in this Masterplan will affect a wide area currently a core habitat of the Powerful Owl in and around Hornsby Park. Noise, lights, the extent of trails, especially mountain bike trails, skywalks and the resultant thinning of vegetation and tree canopy will result in reduced breeding and very quickly the loss of this iconic creature from the Hornsby area.

The recommendation is to reduce all these activities as part of the masterplan and remove them completely from the northern section of the park.

Overdevelopment of the Hornsby Park area

The extent of activities and features incorporated into this plan is an overdevelopment of the site. Linking with the National Park, this area would be preferably designed as an area that helped residents appreciate bushland and nature. With increased stress within the community, a place for calm and low-key interaction would better serve the community as a whole.

The Masterplan appears designed by young adults requiring high levels of activities to engage with each other, as it is not engaging with nature. Children's playgrounds, areas for families to meet and enjoy nature, without the noise and impact of motorbikes and sporting fields, would be a preferred solution for a site with a showcase of unique features such as the Quarry diatrema and forest, and the vulnerable Powerful Owl. We would recommend a masterplan that reflects more a Centennial Park than a Luna Park approach would be preferable for this special site.

The use of synthetic turf is not consistent with increasing the engagement with nature. Synthetic turf is detrimental to the environment, local species as well as humans in times of increasing summer heatwaves.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

If you wish to contact Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment on any of these issues, please do not hesitate to email us on info@foke.org.au.

Yours faithfully

Kathy Cowley
PRESIDENT