



1 March 2024

Emailed to: email@willoughby.nsw.gov.au

**WEPA Submission to Willoughby City Council on DA 2024/13
100 Edinburgh Road Castlecrag**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very significant DA.

Willoughby Environmental Protection Association (WEPA) Inc is an active local environmental association formed in 1981. We contribute to discussion and resolution of issues via submissions, lobbying and participating in campaigns, some initiated by us. We contribute to Willoughby City Council by responding to various plans and strategies and have a voice on council advisory committees.

WEPA intends to comment only on the issue of the trees on and surrounding the site.

When The Quadrangle was purchased by Dr Stanley Quek of Greencliffe Pty Ltd he undertook to sound out community views by asking representatives of various local community groups for their opinions about a proposed development.

We soon found that Dr Quek was committed to a quality development based on sound environmental values.

WEPA's representative stressed the importance of the trees on and around the site, for their visual amenity and also for their environmental contribution to wildlife corridors, habitat provision, cooling of the building and surrounding area and climate mitigation. We requested that the trees be retained and Dr Quek readily agreed.

Later he employed arborists who assessed the health of the trees and measured their root zones, finally confirming that their retention was possible and compatible with a proposed development.

At a public meeting organised by the Castlecrag Progress Association in March 2023, the developer, Mr Ilya Melnikoff of Luxcon, also confirmed Dr Quek's commitment to the retention of the trees as well as to his vision for the site.

Now finally a DA has been submitted and we find that removal of 17 healthy mature trees is proposed.

Protection of the trees on site has been maintained throughout various reviews of council planning controls, mentioning their important contribution to the heritage character of the area and to the adjacent Castlecrag Heritage Conservation Area which borders the southeast corner of the site.

The trees recommended for removal are on the southern boundary of the site and along part of the Eastern Valley Way frontage. They form a screen for the existing building and for the proposed development, softening its bulk, protecting the privacy of residents below and in the development itself, as well as contributing to their enjoyment. The trees along Eastern Valley Way soften the western facade on the approach from Northbridge towards the intersection at the entrance to Castlecrag.

Protection of all the existing trees during demolition is vital, so that there can be no excuses for untimely accidents facilitating tree removal.

In conclusion, WEPA expects that Dr Quek's and Mr Melnikoff's commitments to retain the trees are honoured, a wish we believe is strongly supported by the local community. We also urge that any pruning is conservative and done with great care. The trees are a valued part of the community's heritage. They deserve to be kept and will make a very positive contribution to the new development.

Further, Council made the Planning Proposal (PP) from which this DA arises at its meeting on 26 April 2023.

The report in relation to the agenda item for the PP dealt with a number of concerns which had been raised during exhibition and contains the following in relation to the issue of "Landscaping and tree preservation" commencing at page 102 of the papers:

Issue

A number of submissions raised concerns regarding the potential loss of trees and also that a future development on the site will also impact on the health of trees to be retained.

Response

The applicant has stated that a future development will maintain all existing mature street trees to the west and north of the site as well as nearly all of the existing mature trees on the southern boundary. Compensatory planting of endemic species will be provided on the southern boundary where two trees will be lost to construction and four dead trees removed.

To ensure the retention of the majority of the existing trees on site, the draft DCP also includes a plan showing trees to be retained as well trees to be removed or pruned (*DCP Figure 5 Tree Preservation Plan*).

It is also stated in the draft DCP that conditions around the pruning of trees will be determined at development stage.

In order to provide greater certainty around future tree preservation and landscaping on the site, iis (*sic*) also proposed to amend the DCP to state that landscaping and tree preservation control No. 1 is to be amended to state that landscaping to be provided as per the “*Landscaping Concept specified in “Planning Proposal Architecture and Landscape Report” by FJMT Studios (Aug. 2021).*”

It is therefore proposed to recommend the amendments to the DCP landscaping and tree preservation controls as follows:

2. *Street trees adjoining the site on Eastern Valley Way and Edinburgh Road are to be retained as shown in Tree Preservation Plan (Fig. 5).*

3. *Trees on the southern boundary, other than trees specified in the report of the arborist for removal, are to be retained as shown in Tree Preservation Plan (Fig. 5). Trees subject to pruning are to be re-assessed at DA stage.”*

Below is a screenshot of Tree Preservation Plan (Fig. 5). It shows almost all the existing trees marked for retention (yellow circles and purple circles), the removal of two healthy trees (red circles – one on southern boundary and one on south-east corner), and the removal of four dead trees (black circles – three on southern boundary and one on south-east corner).

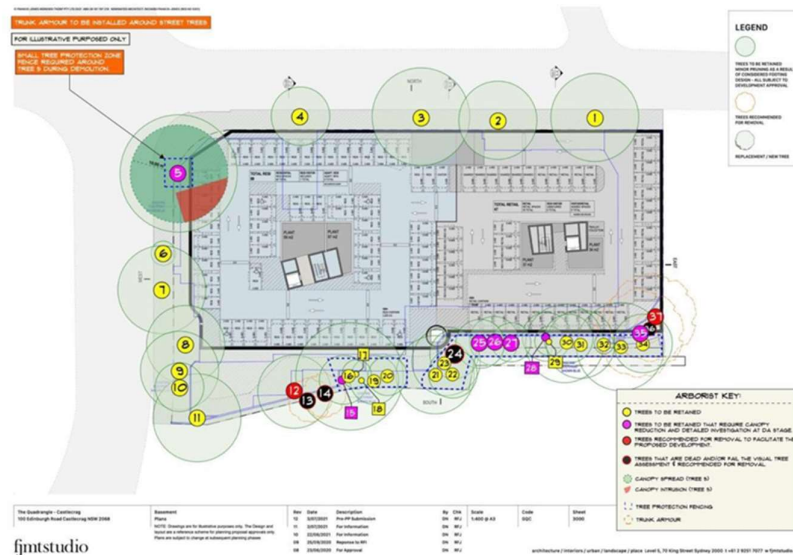


Figure 5: Tree preservation plan

WEPA cannot see that circumstances have changed since the making of the PP on 26 April to justify the removal of any more trees than those identified for removal in Fig. 5 and believes

that the developer should be held to the representations it has made to the community and the conditions imposed when the PP was made.

Trees, particularly mature trees such as those here, are of enormous value to the community.

As already mentioned, trees provide aesthetic benefits by breaking building lines and softening bulk, but importantly they reduce wind speeds and cool the air as they lose moisture and reflect heat upwards from their leaves. It's estimated that trees can reduce the temperature in a city by up to 7°C. Trees also help prevent flooding and soil erosion, absorbing thousands of litres of storm water.

A City of Toronto study titled "Every Tree Counts" compared the environmental performance of a 6" diameter tree to a 30" diameter tree. The larger, mature tree was able to intercept 10 times as much air pollution, store up to 90 times more carbon, and possess a leaf area as much as 100 times the size.

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