

Pacific Brook Christian School – EC23090	
Meeting Minutes	
IMS Document No. TP004	Version No. 1.01



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Meeting Minutes

Meeting	Proposed New School at 72-74 Maitland Street, Muswellbrook – Pacific Brook Christian School		
Date	31 January 2024	Time	2:00pm – 3:00pm
Location	Virtual (online) via Microsoft Teams		
Chair	Stephen Earp, EPM Projects		
Attendees	State Emergency Service (SES)	Gillian Webber (GB) Kirra Waine, Senior Project Officer (KW)	
	Biodiversity Conservation Division (BCD)	Richard Murphy, Senior Floodplain Officer - Water Floodplains & Coast (RM)	
	Muswellbrook Shire Council (Council)	Sharon Pope, Director Environment and Planning (SP) Hamish McTaggart, Development Coordinator (HM) Peter Chambers, Chief Engineer (PC)	
	Pacific Brook Christian School (PBCS)	Dr E J Boyce, Executive Principal (EB) Dr Tina Lamont, Lead Principal Pacific Regional Schools (TL) Chris Baldry, Pacific Group Business Manager Ben Dodd, Group Business Development Manager (BD) Geoff Deane (GD)	
	NBRS Architects (NBRS)	Melanie Karaca, Associate (MK)	
	Royal HaskoningDHV (RHDHV)	Rohan Hudson, Principal Coastal and Water Resources Engineer (RH)	
	Impact Group (IG)	Richard Wykes (RW)	
	EPM Projects (EPM)	Stephen Earp, Head of Planning (SE) Kendall Clydsdale, Associate Planner (KC)	
Apologies	SES	Lisa Ignatavicius Elspeth O'Shannessy, A/ Senior Manager Emergency Risk Management	

1. Meeting Open and Introductions

- The meeting opened at 2.00pm.
- Whilst people were entering the meeting, GW provided apologies on behalf of SES officers.
- SE introduced himself and KC, then invited all those in attendance to introduce themselves.

2. Summary of site development application history

- SE provided the meeting with a brief overview of the site's development history:
 - PBCS submitted a State significant development (SSD) application to the then Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (now the Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure – *the Department*) in 2021 for a new school (PBCS) at 72-74 Maitland Street, Muswellbrook (the site). The SSD proposed a masterplan and Stage 1 works with an overall student population of 656 (140 in Stage 1).
 - The SSD was publicly exhibited at the end of 2021.

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- The Department requested information to assist with the determination of the SSD, including a request to response to flooding issues raised by SES and BCD, largely concerns were raised with regard to the probable maximum flood (PMF) event for the site and evacuation.
- PBCS liaised with the Department and ultimately decided to withdraw the SSD.
- PBCS is now considering a reduced scale option to develop a school at the site as there is demand in the area – 30 students, including 30 children with special needs. Stage 1 would be for 140 students, the proposal will not trigger SSD thresholds, therefore will be submitted to Council as a regionally significant development application (DA).
- The reduced scale option shows finished floor levels (FFLs) above the PMF event for the site.
- In light of the flooding comments received from SES and BCD during the SSD process, it is considered prudent to meet and discuss issues.

3. Pacific Brook Chrisitan School

- SE invited EB to provide a summary of PBCS.
- EB provided an overview of PBCS, highlighting that it aims to provide an affordable faith-based education option for the Muswellbrook area.
- PBCS is established in Muswellbrook and has a good presence in the community.

4. RHDHV & Site Evacuation

- SE invited RH to speak with regarding to flooding impact and evacuation for the site.
- RH provided that site is mostly above a 1% AEP event and within the PMF.
- The previous flood evacuation management plan (FEMP) prepared as part of the SSD demonstrated that evacuation time was 30mins, a 700m to walk to the evacuation point.
- When water visible on the eastern end of the site, it is time to evacuate (a visual trigger).
- Evacuation on foot was/is considered most time efficient for evacuation, calculation were based off actual evacuation times.
- In the new draft design for the site, all floor levels above PMF (previously on ground), this is a safer option and can provide for shelter-in-place if needed.
- Evacuation is still proposed on foot, whilst this is not 100% risk free, it is still considered a low risk for the site.

5. Overview of revised school design

- SE invited MK to provide an overview of the revised school design scheme
- MK presented a 'draft for discussion' set of plans for the school, generally the key flood related items were:
 - The school and connectivity between spaces has been elevated to above the PMF level for the site;
 - Stage 1 is for 140 students and comprises of approximately 6 general learning areas, amenities and on-site parking;
 - Built form comprises of modular, lightweight construction; and
 - Pedestrian entry to the school 'ramps up' from the southern side of the site.

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6. Questions and Discussion

- SE invited questions and/or comments from the Agencies and Council.
- **BCD** – RM outlined risks to evacuation and posed some questions to considered for an evacuation management plan:
 - Time to pull together students, finding students, messaging to parents – these feed into timing limitations and need to be considered in an evacuation management plan;
 - Some work involved in getting large number of students in wet weather conditions.
 - Would there be reluctance of younger students to leave the site? How is this managed?
 - How quickly can teachers think on their feet?
- Vertical evacuation – RM provided that he is more comfortable with that than perhaps the SES and their position. Rohan confirmed shelter-in-place would be up to 6 hours where access could be lost (longest it could be at PMF). Not zero risk, but not a high risk.
- Residual risk – if not building a school site, and land is redeveloped as residential, this could be a worse situation. RH argued that a school would seem a safer option. RM agreed, though deferred to SES on emergency evacuation management.
- Parents management – parents can pose a risk in a flood event (i.e. coming to site to collect children) – this needs to be addressed in a management plan. RH can accept that management of the site is no grounds for refusal, but definitely needs to be accepted.
- RM noted Council has implemented the Muscle Creek Flood Warning System – asked RH to discuss how this might be brought into this project? Noted that a public system is considered more reliable (less prone to failure) than a private system,
- RH outlines that the early flood warning system helps to further reduce the risks of the site. Would not want to rely on a mechanical or electronic flood management alone. Provided that the visual trigger of water of the site provides certainty.
- RM highlighted that there could be 'parent backlash' from multiple evacuations from the site when perhaps not needed (i.e. no subsequent threat after evacuation). Concerns about parents understanding how flood warning systems and the decision for flood evacuation will work.
- RW asked why a public system is considered more reliable that a private system and what measures/parameters are there for a private system to meet to be considered comparable to a public system.
- RM provided that a private system in BCDs experience is more prone to failure as plans are forgotten about and systems not maintained. RW asked if there is a way a private system could be captured in a similar was to an annual fire safety statement. This was discussed in a general nature further.
- KW confirmed that the flood warning system for Muscle Creek is for a small, targeted part of the creek – it only covers a 2-block section of high-risk properties that will receive a siren alert when waters hit certain levels. Current design is not suited for broader locations to be included (such as the school). RM queried if a separate level of could be incorporated to alert a different site – KW confirmed in theory, but it's not part of the current work. RH confirmed that it might still work with the School, as they would likely still hear the siren.
- KW confirmed they wouldn't, particularly in inclement weather conditions. RH reiterated that the visual trigger warning is the most fail-safe evacuation trigger you can have – backed up by

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monitoring by the School, annual mock evacuations, in management plans signed off each year etc.

- **SES** – GW advised that it was her first time seeing the new draft concept plan for the site and the SES can provide comments in the draft in writing upon request.
- Good that a smaller school population will reduce the population being put at risk, but still some issues remain, per their last written device. Shelter in place is not considered to be suitable justification
- An evacuation plan should not be the justification for development in a flood plain.
- Reassuring that it is a better arrangement than residential dwellings.
- SES would recommend that the school is closed early, but subject to 'crying wolf' effect as discussed previously by RM, if there are lots of closures.
- Because of these, SES considers that the site-specific response plan should not be used as grounds for consent – it's not an effective measure for mitigating a continued risk.
- Secondary risks, such as isolated population above a PMF (i.e. medical events, access fresh water, fires), then also the families and carers trying to move about in these conditions trying to reach children.
- RH responded to the 'cry wolf' issue, and how people may lose faith in the system – however this occurs if you only use low evacuation figures (1:5 or 1:20), but for this site even with those evacuation levels, it would be rare that water would show up. There is only a 2.6% chance that a child will need to evacuate over their school career. Need to be careful with management plans so that yearly updates are in place.
- RW sought clarification as to why consideration to people off-site (such as parents) need to be considered in an evacuation plan?
- RM clarified that this came from a Land and environment Court case.
- RW – general discussion for options how off-site people could be managed better and it was suggested by that a simple communication, such as a text service could be utilised.
- GW – There will be bus services that need to be contacted as well, need to look at the evacuation capability, where people are going to.
- KW – advised no further specific comments.
- **Council** – SP recommends looking at Muswellbrook High School, similar kind of catchment as for this School, and talk to relevant bus company.
- Town is actually cut in thirds, not in half.
- Suspects that the High School already has systems in place for when the river is rising, and local roads are being cut, buses are taking kids from the High School and sending them home, well before any PMF event. Quite minor flood events are used as a trigger for this site, so happens often, but moves children straight off the site.
- Having worked at other Councils where there are flash flooding – Muscle Creek doesn't flash flood like that, days of rain required to get a PMF event to occur. This means a lot of low-lying roads are already cut.

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- Council has previously given agreement that their Indoor Recreation Facility on Brunswick Road is able to be used as an evacuation facility.
- RM said the best evacuation plan would be one where no students were on-site to evacuate when it got that bad – offer schooling from home on days with flood risks.
- SP said Council would prefer that no one was driving around during flood events.
- RH confirmed school closure triggers and that it is addressed in the FEMP.
- RM asked could the PBCS accept the associated impacts from school closures on the business?
- EB confirmed that absolutely – safety of students is paramount. That would form part of any Management Plan.
- GD requested clarification from SES in response to the revised scheme, what specific comments that can be raised today that we can address:
 - GW clarified that the SES is not a consent authority;
 - It is good to see the school raised above PMF
 - SES will provide written feedback based on the draft concept scheme
 - GW confirmed there were no changes at this stage from the earlier written submissions to the SSD; and
 - SES always considers the transfer of risk to SES staff.
- GW provided a Flood Impact and Risk Assessment may be suitable due to risk to children.
- GD reiterated it was imperative that specific comments be provided as PBCS needs to consider the viability of the proposal.
- RW – further discussion about not having children at the school and if this was a suitable measure.
- RM – recommended that the project could possibly benefit from a consultant who specifically deals with flood evacuation and emergency management plans to review the project.
- **EPM** – SE asked PC if he had any concerns or additional discussion to add, PC confirmed no major issues to add to what was already discussed.
- GW advised that subject to operational matters, they could provide comments on the revised draft concept scheme within 21 days
- GW – SES would also be happy to look at a draft FERP as well, including commitments to review annually.
- SE – thanked everyone for their attendance.

Meeting close – 3:05pm.