



Preserving Our Heritage

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18 August 2024

NSW Planning via

<https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/ppr/under-exhibition/fairland-hall-planning-proposal>

Re: Submission to the Fairland Hall Public Exhibition from the Hunters Hill Trust



Figure 1: Location Map (source: Nearmaps)

Hunters Hill Council proposes to reclassify the whole of the land on which the C.A. Fairland Hall (above) stands, from 'Community' to 'Operational' use.

The Hunters Hill Trust strongly recommends that the site of the C.A. Fairland Hall be subdivided into three parcels (not four):

- two parcels, at the bottom of the cliff, which can then be reclassified as Operational, and sold to one or several of the adjoining properties, and
- one parcel, comprising the whole of the land with a frontage on Church St, including the Hall and the Playground. This parcel should retain its Community classification to keep the C.A. Fairland Hall and Playground in Council's ownership for continued use by the community.

Background

Council has released a Planning Proposal [1] seeking to reclassify the land on which the C.A. Fairland Hall (14 Church St, Hunters Hill) stands. The land has a total area of 1258 m², the rear part of which is at the foot of a 10m cliff, and at present is accessible only via properties Nos 9 and 11, The Avenue. Currently these properties use the land as extensions to their properties. (Fig 1 of the Planning Proposal shows the boundary also contacts parts of the rear boundaries of Nos 7 and 13 The Avenue).

The land is 'Zoned R3 – Medium Density Residential under the Hunters Hill Local Environmental Plan 2012'. categorised as Community Land.

The Planning Proposal seeks to reclassify all of the land from Community to Operational, which would allow some or all to be sold. And to subdivide it into four parts; two at the bottom of the cliff, corresponding to the rear boundaries of the two properties in The Avenue, and two parts fronting Church St. This would enable each part to be sold, although the stated intention is that the Southern two parts (fronting on Church St) will continue to accommodate the playground and the hall 'for the foreseeable future', a term not further defined.

Why is Council proposing to reclassify the whole site?

No reason is given for the intention to reclassify the whole site from 'Community' to 'Operational' rather than just the Northern (i.e. lower portion(s) which Council intends to sell in the near future.

'Community' land is defined as *'land council makes available for use by the public, for example as parks or sports grounds'*, and cannot be sold. But *'Operational' land can be 'sold, exchanged or otherwise disposed of by a council'*. The Planning Proposal intends that the whole site be reclassified as 'Operational'.

The Planning Proposal [1, p5] states that *'It is Council's intention to continue the operation of the C.A. Fairland Hall as a community asset for the foreseeable future'* (our underlining). And this intention is supported by the notes towards the foot of p36:

- *'Any funds raised will be allocated to Council's reserve funds set aside for the improvement and maintenance of the C.A. Fairland Hall.'*, and
- *'It is the intention to reinvest the funding received from the sale of land into renovation of the C.A. Fairland Hall.'*

However this intention is weakened by the term *'for the foreseeable future'*. Were the upper half of the site to be reclassified to 'Operational', at any time Council could decide to sell the land (and Hall), perhaps to a Developer seeking to redevelop adjacent properties. Retaining the current 'Community' classification would ensure there is full public scrutiny of any such proposal.

What is the C.A.Fairland Hall and why is it important?

Council's website explains: *'CA Fairland Hall is a modest community venue named after Charles Fairland. CA Fairland Hall is utilised by various community groups, ranging from martial arts to quilting and seniors education, and is fitted with:*

- *air conditioning*
- *kitchen*
- *accessible ramp and toilets*
- *fenced playground'*

Is the C.A.Fairland Hall surplus to Council's needs?

Hunters Hill has five small halls/meeting places (see Table 1), of which only three (A, B and C) are easily accessible and suitable for a full range of purposes, and only two (A, B) can be reached conveniently by public transport throughout the day and evening.

Table 1. Council's small halls/meeting places [2].

Venue		Capacity	Area (m ²)	Attributes
A	C.A.Fairland Hall	34	140	Centrally located, accessible by bus
B	Gladesville Road Community Centre	36	145	Centrally located, accessible by bus
C	Henley Community Centre (Green Room)	33	135	Somewhat remote, no direct bus from most of HH
D	Weil Park Scout and Community Hall	19	77	Somewhat remote, poor bus service, unsuitable after dark
E	The Yarn (leased, not owned, by Council)	50?	?	Centrally located, accessible by bus but not available 10-4 week days

Council has not explained how demand for small hall hire would be met were the C.A.Fairland Hall site to be sold.

Current usage of Council's small halls

Attachment [3] compares bookings for the C.A.Fairland Hall with Council's other small halls for a recent week (11-17 August 2024); that week it was booked for six sessions, all of which are believed to be permanent bookings for activities such as pre-school playgroups and martial arts.

Most of these bookings overlap in time with those of other halls, meaning that the loss of this hall would inconvenience current users.

Historical/Architectural Aspects of C.A.Fairland Hall



The site is currently owned by Council after (in 1962) it was appointed as Trustee of the Hunters Hill Men & Boys Club Fund. A Caveat forbids the use of the land for purposes not consistent with the duties of its trustees. Council is therefore not in a position to sell the land under the registered interests. After legal advice Council proposes to reclassify the land to enable its sale.

The foundation stone dates the C.A.Fairland Hall at 1915, and a second stone shows it was partially funded by public subscription.

Summary

The Trust recognises the importance of the early 19th Century history of Hunters Hill and seeks to preserve buildings from that century. But it is also important to preserve the subsequent 'layers of history'. The historical layering of Australia is briefer than in the many countries from which most of the Australia's population originate, and is rapidly being destroyed.

Alongside the early houses and public buildings, the Trust's position is that we must also preserve important remnants of 20th Century history such as C.A.Fairland Hall, particularly in light of its continuous use as a community asset and social meeting place.

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References

- [1] Hunters Hill Council **PLANNING PROPOSAL**, Reclassification of Council Owned Land, C.A.Fairland Community Hall, February 2024 (<https://connect.huntershill.nsw.gov.au/fairland-hall-planning-proposal>)
- [2] Figures illustrating current usage Council's small Halls are compiled from the Business Paper for Council Meeting 19 Feb 2021, p171 and Council's current website.
- [3]

