



POSITION PAPER

CORRIMAL COKE WORKS

Railway Street, Corrimal: Lot 1 DP 795791,
Lot 126 DP 598190, Lot 5 DP 749492

BACKGROUND

In October 2017 Wollongong City Council received a planning request from Legacy Property & Illawarra Coke Company to rezone the Corrimal Coke Works site from IN3 Heavy Industry, RE2 Private Recreation and SP2 Infrastructure (Road) to R3 Medium Density Residential, RE1 Public Recreation & SP2 Infrastructure (Road), with changes to minimum lot size, maximum height & floor space ratio to facilitate medium density development. The site owners propose to build approximately 700 dwellings/apartments, food & drink premises and shop(s). Council referred a draft Planning Proposal to the NSW Department of Planning & Environment, and on 20 August 2018 a Gateway Determination required an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment, Conservation Management Plan for the long term conservation of Heritage items and Flooding, Geomorphological, Ecological, Traffic and Remediation Plans and Studies. Council resolved to prepare a site specific Development Control Plan prior to Public Exhibition. On 8 May 2019 the Company sought to demolish all structures on the site and a Complying Development Certificate (CDC) was issued. Council placed an Interim Heritage Order (IHO) on the site, gazetted on 20 May 2019, which deferred any demolition. On 23 May 2019, the requested studies were completed and submitted with an updated Master Plan and revised Planning Proposal. On 28 Oct 2019, Council resolved to extend the IHO for an additional 6 months to allow refinement of potential heritage listings. Council will consider the revised Planning Proposal prior to it going on public exhibition. The National Trust listed the Corrimal Coke works on the National Trust Register in October 2019.

SITE HISTORY

The Corrimal Coke Works operated for over 100 years between 1911 and 2014, and was the longest continuously operated coke works in the world. The business underwent expansion, adopted new technologies and the site holds potential to yield information pertaining to the development of coke making. In 1916, the site captured waste gases from the coke ovens to heat water and produce steam which was used to generate sufficient electricity to supply the Coke Works, the Corrimal Colliery, which was connected to the coke Works via a company owned tramline, and residences associated with both sites. By 1945, enough gas was produced to also fuel 400 street lamps in the Northern Illawarra Municipality. The coke works electricity franchise was sold to the newly formed Wollongong Municipal Council in 1948. The works was key to the establishment of the Corrimal area, provided employment opportunities for local families and made a significant contribution to the economy. It has been associated with people, companies and technologies significant to the coal and coke industry and Illawarra Region. The site retains the 1911 Thomas type Battery, associated underground flue network, remnant wall and intact brick combustion stack of the 1912 powerhouse. There is also the late 1950s similar style, but larger capacity battery, extended powerhouse, later grinding mill, fine coal bins, quenching tower and associated metal stacks. Additional structures include a coal conveyor, production office, weigh bridge, crib room, workshop, waste oil tank and coal storage shed. The site environment incorporates the pre coke works alignment of streams that fed into Towradgi Creek, Corrimal Colliery Tramway alignment, a distinctive border planting of mature trees, avenues delineating internal roads and border plantings around reservoirs and tailings dams within the site. The site retains archaeological deposits from the century of coke making and the potential to reveal evidence of earlier Aboriginal activity on the site.

NATIONAL TRUST POSITION

The Trust opposes the rezoning from employment and Industrial land to residential land. Given that large tracts of Industrial land in the Northern Illawarra have been rezoned for residential development with the district now facing a shortage of potential places of long term employment for the local community, the Trust supports retaining the Industrial Zoning as a more appropriate zoning to achieve heritage conservation objectives and to allow ecologically sustainable, clean, light industrial land use. The adjoining railway affords direct access for raw materials, products and people, enhancing the sites ability to continue as a place of long term employment for the community

The Trust supports

- retention, conservation and innovative interpretation of significant heritage items/assemblages/landscapes in situ.
- remediation of the site and rehabilitation of the natural environment including the riparian corridor.
- retention of the mature tree perimeter, mature trees & avenues within the site.
- retention and management of funds from income generated by development on site, to fund ongoing maintenance and innovative interpretation of the site's natural & cultural heritage.

ACTION TO PROMOTE THE TRUST'S POSITION

The Corrimal Coke Works Site has been entered on the National Trust Register and the Trust has prepared discussion papers outlining alternatives to the current 700 dwelling proposal. The Trust will support the listing of the Corrimal Coke Works as an item of heritage in the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan. The Trust will also support the site's inclusion on the NSW State Heritage Register. The Trust will promote its position on this issue in the media, with Council and State Government.