

Submission to Transport for NSW

Artarmon Station Accessibility Upgrade

Artarmon Progress Association (APA) makes the following submission in response to the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for the Artarmon Station Accessibility Upgrade. Below is a summary of the issue that the APA feel are most important. Appendix A is also included that details our review of the REF in detail and Appendix B shows some thoughts on how a single lift solution should be possible.

The progress association supports the State Governments actions to provide better access to the Artarmon Station, especially for people with disabilities. The progress association and members have been heavily involved in lobbying for an appropriate solution. We feel though the solution proposed falls well short of what is viable and desired by the community. As per the 4,750 signature petition, the community preferred easy access is a rebuilt subway stairs on one side and single-lift access to the platform on the other. The lift would have 3 stops – Platform, Hampden Rd, Wilkes Ave.

The recently rebuilt Springwood Station entrance, with stairs and lift on opposite sides of a subway, is a precedent for easy access at Artarmon. A new subway would permit a lift with just two stops and a long zig-zag ramp from Wilkes Ave to Hampden Rd level, but its not a preferred option due to a ramp length of over 60 metres.

The community proposal is a practical solution to the whole problem, NOT just a partial, incomplete facility which compromises the integrity of the Village and its Garden's .

The progress association has a number of concerns with the proposal, primarily these are

Location and utility of the solution

The location of the proposed lift facility serving only one side of the Station and being positioned away from the main pedestrian paths does not provide an acceptable level of amenity for disabled persons, parents using prams or those with large amounts of luggage nor does it benefit the commuters and businesses on the east side of the station.

Whilst a number of the ageing and parents with prams will use the structure to gain access to the platform many potential users will shun the “white elephant” 2 lift solution and continue to use the stairs with prams and luggage. The time to negotiate the stairs with a pram, less then a minute versus a 2 lift solution that will take close to 5 minutes will see increasingly time poor commuters continue to bounce prams down the stairs and the elderly will work their way down the handrails as present – simply because the proposed solution is not in any way urban user-friendly.

The two-lift proposal has twice the likelihood of failure as a single lift and twice the maintenance, which can be considerable over the life of the solution.

The location of this monolith near the middle of the Hampden Road shopping strip and It's platform access between the existing stairs and the Station building where it can create the greatest potential for commuter disruption, does not seem an appropriate solution.

While overhead structures have been used successfully on many stations on the Network we see this where the station is placed in a cutting or level with the adjoining area, not at stations that currently rely on subways to access platforms.

It is not the right solution for Artarmon Station.

Access for residents of East Artarmon

Access for East Artarmon has not been considered in any meaningful way. Ramp solutions are possible using existing railway land behind the old library. Or is this not possible as it may impact the potential line duplication. This has not been addressed in the REF.

Disabled access is only to be provided from the Hampden Road side of the Station. No disabled access is available from the Wilkes Avenue side of the Station. This is a substandard solution for a public transport node serving a large residential population and a commercial centre.

Utilisation of a single lift solution in a subway would provide equal access and consolidation of access routes to the station increasing safety and usage of the upgrade.

Visual, Aesthetic and design

Why a large standalone solution when a much more sympathetic and integrated solution is possible. The tall lift structure towers over the heritage character of the station are completely inappropriate.

The proposal would see a pedestrian bridge and lift tower of industrial appearance more than twice the height of the station building just 20 metres from the station single-story building. The new structures will dominate the historic building and degrade its heritage.

The four-story lift motor placements create a monolithic edifice towering over everything else in its surrounds, delivering an eyesore totally incompatible with its environs. It is, at best, an industrial-style structure plonked in the middle of the historical Artarmon Railway Station and its adjacent historical streetscape of the Hampden Road shopping strip and totally at odds with the suburban Heritage Area to its east.

The construction of this structure will have a significant visual impact on the adjacent open space and the Artarmon Village Shopping Centre.

The proposed structure will also result in a reduction of green space within the Artarmon Village which has historic significance as part of the Village Green. Why valuable open space is being alienated for use of access to the station when a rebuilt subway could be used. It would appear no value is being placed on the open spaces that are becoming more and more rare.

The steel and glass lift / footbridge structure is not sympathetic to the character of the Hampden Road Conservation Area.

The removal of a core section of garden will alter the character of the neighbourhood. The proposal changes the character of the neighbourhood from garden/retail to one with a large industrial component.

Traffic and Parking

Surely providing access to East Artarmon is much more appropriate rather than having the access directly off the very busy Hampden Rd. East Artarmon has many key facilities appropriate to the user of this facility.

The TfNSW proposal has failed to identify key facilities on the east side of the station that can also serve disabled people – these include the disabled parking space, Kiss & Ride, Taxi Rank and Commuter Carpark, none of which exist on the West side.

The additional parking spot is a general use disabled spot likely to be used for local activities and often not available for commuter use.

Longer term considerations

The proposed duplication of the line between Artarmon and St Leonard's has the potential to provide a much more elegant solution to the problem. If the lines are brought over ground then the Subway will need to be rebuilt and the lift could be incorporated with little effort. The subway has effectively been identified as not suitable long-term due to its structural integrity so why not bring this work forward and create the correct solution rather than working around the problem.

I am sure much planning has already been done on routes for the duplication and therefore the upgraded subway could be provided now with consideration for the line duplication. This should not be an impediment to providing the access prior to the line duplication.

Process

The TfNSW proposal was a major surprise and major disappointment. There was no community consultation when it mattered – at the initial planning stage.

Conclusion

While the solution may provide a solution to the brief provided it certainly does not provide a worthy solution to the problem. The proposed lift structure will transform the visual appearance of the streetscape, character and amenity of this section of Hampden Road. It will have an adverse relationship to the Heritage Conservation Area and the Artarmon Village Green. It will provide some benefit to disabled people who want to access the station from Hampden Road (west side of the station) but not Wilkes Plaza (east side of the station).

We believe this is not a temporary solution and will be with us well after the architects and engineers of this solution will have moved and therefore we should strive for a solution that will leave a worthwhile lasting legacy, not a structure that we will look upon in a few short years and wonder what were they thinking.

The community has a right to the details of why a subway solution is not being seriously considered (1 paragraph in a 100 page document does not indicate serious consideration). The reasons given are able to be overcome. The community view is that the solution is being influenced by the yet to be finalised duplication of rail between Chatswood and St Leonards. If this is so why can't this be used as a way to get the best solution. The duplication if above ground would provide the opportunity to upgrade the subway and provide the appropriate solution.