

# CHEAP 'LEGO' HOUSING ESTATE FOR WORONORA

Life-size 'Lego' housing may replace the existing Woronora caravan park, with two-storey cabins sold as no-frills homes in Sydney's lucrative property boom. Walls and roof will be of fibro and tin on container-like structures.

It shapes up as Woronora's first low-cost, medium-density 'resort' by the water – and done by stealth, with Sutherland Shire Council refusing to reveal details discussed with the developers for this cheap "new housing estate".

Building costs will be low, but with much higher returns, featuring "Axon *fc* wall cladding" (cheap fibro-cement). 'Legoland' is aimed at investors wanting to build low-cost rentals, but in a high-priced location.

An official company drawing at right shows the front view of one unit now before Council, with a deck overlooking the water.

This 2-storey "caravan" site includes a lift (right).

Concrete foundations appear to be 1.2metres deep, excessive for such a flimsy structure – more suited for a block of flats eventually.

The slab is more than three times the area of the building. Council has refused to reveal the full plans for the slab when the "temporary" structure is moved.

## PROPERTY VALUES THREATENED

Property values could plunge in Woronora, because of the high-visibility location at the gateway to the Valley.

A report discovered by WVRA Inc talks of using planning loopholes in the Shire's notorious code, LEP2015 -- "should Council be of a mind to consider the Caravan Park as a new housing estate."

Rezoning may not be needed, if the loopholes are big enough.

A Trojan-horse plan currently before Council (DP18/0049) is for a solitary two-storey display home, perhaps the first of 67 of them. It is all "prohibited" under the Shire's rubbery LEP2015.

This is a flood-prone site, but Legoland could float due to its lightweight design. Paddles may be part of the land-sale package.

Council loopholes allow the formal prohibition to be lifted, if it is used for "a moveable dwelling as a display home" for just such a new housing estate -- thanks to former Mayor Kent Johns and his Liberal team in 2015. The current Mayor Carmelo Pesce follows in his footsteps.

The final irony for Cr Johns will be his fine view of Legoland from his own waterfront home across the river. Bad news is that his neighbours will suffer with him in their high-value homes.

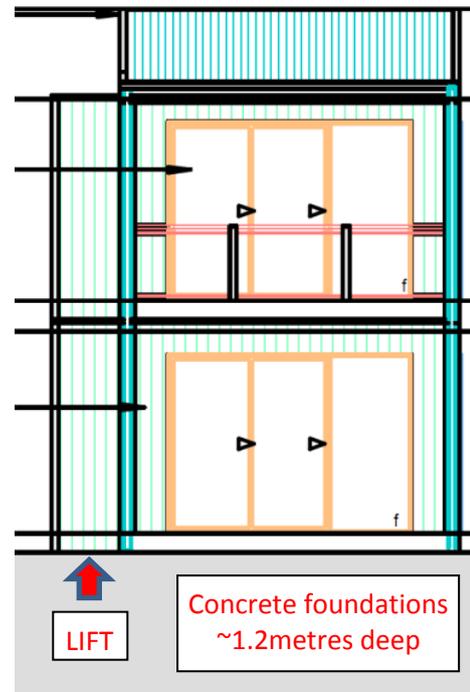
No further details were made public, but the existing Woronora caravan park has 67 sites on 9,000 square metres of land. The low-profile caravan park could be transformed into a giant Legoland, already named "Waters Edge" in company records.

It would need to unfold in stages, to avoid a community backlash until too late. This is Stage One.

## STACKED LIKE CARGO CONTAINERS

Current residents lease their one-storey sites, but newcomers could buy their proposed two-storey units in this medium-density social experiment, by a company which paid \$6.75million for the river-side site in 2016, Wattle Residential Parks Pty Ltd.

Tenants have been complaining of harassment and threats of eviction for some time, to force them out and clear the way for this redevelopment – which will eventually go to the State Government for rubber-stamping, once the foundations are laid by our local councillors.



The worst fears of residents are confirmed now with proof that this “new housing estate” was discussed behind closed doors, between the developer and Sutherland Shire Council since 2016. When full details were sought by Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc, Council refused because talks were “commercial in-confidence”.

A formal prohibition can be sidestepped if it is only “temporary” use of the double-stacked cabin, and provided that it is used as a housing “display unit” or sales office -- as for Legoland, according to the document dated 16 January 2018, a Statement of Environmental Effects for this development (DP18/0049).

Cabins proposed are like cargo containers for easy transport by truck, and bolted together at their destination -- usually side-by-side for better use of space, but can be stacked like containers to cram more on site.

A legal anachronism is that they are not really “moveable” as are caravans in an emergency, such as a flood on this low-lying land. But Council has ignored this oddity.

There has been no explanation of why massive foundations are needed for a flimsy structure as proposed to council. They were designed for a much heavier building once the Lego cabin is moved, but there are no details of what is planned.

The waist-high foundations defy the Council’s requirement that the “land will be restored to the condition in which it was before”, when the temporary office is moved. The concrete is deep enough to support a block of flats.

### **APPROVALS RUSHED THROUGH COUNCIL**

Plans for the two-storey display home for Legoland were advertised for public comment for barely a fortnight at the end of school holidays, a ploy often used to minimise public input.

WVRA Inc has requested an extension to expose all the facts for public comment, but one councillor contacted by us was keen not to delay approval. Two others did not reply.

[www.woronoravalley.com](http://www.woronoravalley.com) 18 February 2018

### **DEVELOPER’S MISSION**

The Wattle Parks director, Christian Martin, promotes the firm’s low-budget structures to cash in on high-value areas like Woronora, on his LinkedIn page.

***“Our parks allow residents to purchase their home for a fraction of the price of surrounding properties, and to live in a community that provides first-class facilities,” he wrote. The company was formed:***

***“to provide low-cost housing solutions” for baby-boomers in retirement and others “who have been priced out of the housing market.”***

***An appeal to low-end investors in this no-frills development promises:***

***“steady cash flow from rental income and park improvements.”***