Newcastle Ocean Baths Stage 2

AMENDED DA2025/01321 | ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY SUBMISSIONS

Independent FONOB analysis of publicly available submissions — provisional findings as at 15 October 2026.

Purpose and overall findings

This report summarises the positions expressed in submissions publicly available for the amended Stage 2 development application. It distinguishes opposition to particular elements of the proposal from support for restoration of the Baths, and identifies matters bearing on the place's continuing public bathing and social heritage values.

The amended DA has addressed some objections to the original scheme, notably by removing the rooftop terrace and revising the roof and internal arrangements. These changes are acknowledged by some supporters and objectors alike. Nevertheless, the submissions reviewed show that opposition to the amended proposal remains high, especially regarding the scale and operation of hospitality uses, loss of genuinely open-air changing, and protection of free public amenities. The pattern is not a rejection of conservation or improvement; it is a disagreement over the form and priorities of the redevelopment.

Submission numbers: current evidentiary position

The reconciled working collection comprises 243 PDF records. After excluding six duplicate or supplementary records from the individual count, 237 submission records remain. Of these, 202 carry an Oppose selection or express opposition, while 35 carry a Support selection. Thus 202 of 237 (85.2%) are classified as opposed in the working register. This is a provisional classification, not a certified count of unique people or an assessment of the merits of each submission. All 20 initially uncertain forms were visually reviewed: 15 showed an Oppose selection, and the five without a verifiable selection expressed opposition in their written comments. Additional comments from repeat submitters were retained for thematic analysis.

1 Food and Drink Premises, alcohol and operating hours

The most prominent recurring concern is the proposed scale and nature of the hospitality operation. Many submitters favour a kiosk or modest daytime café serving bathers, families and visitors, while opposing a larger restaurant-style premises, possible alcohol service and extended evening activity. Susan Gray, Jane Hunter, PJ Lydon-James and Terry Rosenblatt are among those distinguishing refreshments from a substantial commercial venue. Greg Jordan, a swimmer of 65 years' association with the Baths, likewise supports a kiosk for swimmers and families while opposing alcohol licensing and a dining venue that becomes a separate attraction. Ian Izzard questions whether the scale of hospitality use is ancillary to bathing. Conversely, supporters consider café and community facilities a useful addition and a means of activating the pavilion. The evidence points to a dispute about scale, hours, alcohol and priority of use, rather than universal opposition to refreshments.

2 Open-air change rooms and living heritage

A second central concern is that glazed or translucent roofing does not preserve genuinely open-to-the-sky communal changing. Submitters associate direct sky, sea air, sunlight, visibility and informal interaction with the Baths' distinctive character and longstanding social use. The National Trust Hunter Branch recognises improvements in the amended scheme but distinguishes true open air from daylight and ventilation beneath a roof. Amanda Hinds/Origin Architecture & Heritage and Peter Shaddock also identify alternatives or unresolved design concerns. Greg Jordan similarly asks that the changing facilities retain an open roof, sunlight and fresh air. Other submitters favour the glazed-roof compromise for privacy, shelter and improved amenity. The heritage question raised by these contrasting positions is whether the traditional experience of open-air changing is retained, rather than simply suggested visually.

3 Free public space and swimmer-first facilities

Submissions raise the availability of free seating and shade, picnic areas, promenade circulation and facilities for families, school groups, older users and people with disabilities. Kerry Fagan and Julianne Turner stress the importance of places to sit and gather without making a purchase. Other submissions address change-room circulation, privacy, supervision of children, accessible amenities and the potential interaction between bathers and hospitality patrons. Some regard the revised layout as an improvement; others consider the needs of swimmers insufficiently prioritised. The exact number and location of public seats and the commercial footprint should be checked against the amended drawings before being stated as established losses.

4 Safety, privacy and accessibility

Submitters express differing views about natural surveillance, enclosed circulation, private changing, child supervision, toilets and accessibility. These are important accounts of user experience, but predictions of specific safety outcomes should not be presented as established findings without the relevant design and expert evidence. The submissions support further scrutiny of how privacy and accessibility can be improved while retaining open-air character.

5 Improvements and qualified support

Several submitters welcome removal of the rooftop terrace and other changes to the original scheme. John Mayo, for example, describes the revised DA as a significant improvement while continuing to question the scale of hospitality use and favouring open-roof changing. The 35 forms marked Support also warrant closer reading: 18 convey broad support, 10 support with qualifications or requested changes, six expressly object to material elements, and one addresses a specific issue without a clear overall position. Andrew O'Callaghan supports aspects of the revision but opposes a liquor licence. Ernst Eastman selected Oppose while supporting other elements of Stage 2. Accordingly, a Support selection should not automatically be read as endorsement of every element of the proposal.

6 References to the Shaddock Community Concept

A text review of the 243 available PDFs identified 10 documents expressly naming Peter Shaddock. This includes Shaddock's own submission and FONOB's submission; the other eight include individual and organisational submissions. The figure measures explicit name references, not ten independent endorsements of the entire Community Concept. For example, Susan and Jemima Foster express support for his alternative, Michael Campbell prefers his design, Wendy Heys highlights genuinely open-to-sky changing, and Narelle Nelson favours the kiosk arrangement. John Mayo and the National Trust Hunter Branch refer to particular design features. Other submissions advocate similar outcomes without naming Shaddock and should not be counted as endorsements. The references are significant as evidence that constructive alternatives were placed before Council, not as a measure of overall public preference between complete designs.

7 Original and amended DA: continuity and change

FONOB's 19 February 2026 summary reported approximately 262 original-DA submissions and approximately 94% substantive opposition. It identified commercialisation, alcohol, enclosure of open-air changing and loss of public space as recurring concerns. The amended scheme responds to some criticisms, yet the same principal subjects recur in the current submissions. Council advised that original submissions would remain under consideration and that resubmission was unnecessary; accordingly, the two exhibition totals should not be added together or compared as if they represented equivalent voting exercises. The separate Food and Drink Premises lease consultation is also a distinct process and is not included in these DA figures.

Conclusion

The amended proposal has made recognisable improvements, and some submitters support the revised design and proposed facilities. Nevertheless, the reconciled working record shows a high level of opposition: 202 of 237 retained submission records (85.2%) are classified as opposed. Moreover, 16 of the 35 Support selections contain qualifications or express objections to material elements. The principal unresolved concerns concern the scale and operation of hospitality use, genuinely open-air changing, and the preservation of free public space and swimmer-first facilities. These submissions provide evidence of community expectations and lived experience; assessment of the proposal's heritage impacts remains for the Heritage Council.

Evidence note: Based on 243 PDFs in the working collection, reconciled to 237 retained submission records after excluding six duplicate or supplementary records, and FONOB's 19 February 2026 original-DA summary. The 85.2% figure is a provisional record-level classification, not a certified count of unique submitters. References to individuals illustrate recurring themes and do not represent an exhaustive inventory.