

City of Sydney

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28 September 2011

Our Ref : 2011/298255

File No : R/2008/1/1

Megan Boazman
Acting Planning Divisional Manager
Planning Division | Campus Infrastructure & Services
The University of Sydney
Services Building G12
22 Codrington Street
Darlington NSW 2008
Email: megan.boazman@sydney.edu.au

Dear Megan

I refer to our meeting on Thursday 15 September 2011 to discuss a new planning and design response to the issues raised by the City and residents for the Abercrombie Precinct for the proposed Business School. The City and the Lord Mayor has raised a number of key concerns with the project design to date.

As Director of City Planning, I express my strong in-principle support for the new engagement and design directions that were outlined and which involve:

- design workshop(s) to re-vision new urban design, built form, sustainability, and teaching, learning and working environments
- real community engagement at the beginning and through the process rather than an information session at the end of the process and
- collaborative and transparent methodology, with community feedback and updates

If this is carried out well, I believe that this will help to rebuild the actual disconnect and sense of disenfranchisement that the community feel and have expressed in their submissions to the City in relation to this project.

With regard to the proposed new design and planning aims of the project, the City stresses the importance of the following key issues (which are not conclusive and exhaustive):

- retention of the joinery workshop building, including the roof trusses and parts of the floor and floor framing where appropriate, which will contribute to the ambience, character and sustainability of the site as well as maintaining a palimpsest and meaningful heritage connection to the previous uses on the site

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- retention of the major Sydney Blue Gum tree and incorporate into the planning and landscaping strategy
- provide enough aggregated publicly accessible open space to substitute for the corner pocket park
- locate any publicly accessible open space to the outer edges of the site rather than in the centre of the site, so that the public can genuinely use the spaces and feel comfortable in doing so; the preferable location is at the northern edge on the corner with Abercrombie Street and minimise the amount of pathways that cross through any publicly accessible green open space so that it is not broken up into small pieces and is more flexible in its potential use
- significantly increased setbacks to Codrington Street
- significantly increased setbacks to the adjacent school which will ensure the retention of the substantial trees on the school site near the boundary
- resolution of the car parking entry

The City is also supportive of a more permeable building design that is networked to the site and which breaks the bulk of the project into smaller elements that are linked together rather than a monolithic approach. The City strongly supports the 'market place of ideas' concept and the broken down building forms that it suggests. The use of brick (especially recycled brick contrasted against fine glazing) and less glass walls overall is encouraged. How the building will read at night and during the day is equally important.

In summary, this letter is a strong endorsement for the new direction and community engagement strategy that was outlined on the 15 September, a direction which will potentially rebuild the acceptance of the community for the university expansion into the suburb and produce a more interesting and integrated architectural and learning outcome.

The City has extensive consultation strategies and practices which it would be willing to share with the University in relation to the community. If you have any queries, please contact myself on gjahn@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or call 9265 9945.

regards



Graham Jahn LFRAIA Hon AIA Hon FPIA Hon FNZIA
Director City Planning and Regulatory Services

Lord Mayor of Sydney

CLOVER MOORE MP

Sydney Town Hall

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Dr Michael Spence
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006

3 NOV 2011

VC / CR to see

Dear Dr Spence

Abercrombie Precinct Development

I write about University of Sydney's proposed development of the Abercrombie Precinct for a new Business School.

On 24 August I wrote to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the University's Colin Rockliff, Director Campus Infrastructure and Services, about concerns the local community and I share on this development. I enclose a copy of the letter.

We were particularly concerned about the relationship to the terrace houses on Abercrombie Street, the loss of green space, demotion of the Joinery Shop Building and the loss of trees.

On 15 September the University project team met with Graham Jahn, the City's Director City Planning and Regulatory Services and my staff and presented a new approach to the development of the site. I am told this approach includes new consultation to involve the local community and will address the concerns I raised in previous correspondence.

Graham tells me he has given his strong in-principle support to the new approach and has provided further comments to your project team.

I commend the University for this new direction and I hope the result will be a reconnection with the community and preparation of a development proposal that will make a strong architectural, social and environmental contribution to the University and the local area.

Yours sincerely

Clover Moore MP
Lord Mayor of Sydney

Encl

city of villages

Lord Mayor of Sydney

CLARENCE MOORE MP

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24 AUG 2011

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
Level 33, Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

COPY

Dear Minister

**MP 07_0158 - Abercrombie Street Precinct, Syd Uni
University of Sydney Abercrombie Street Business School**

I write about Sydney University's major development application MP 07_0158 for a new Business School in the Abercrombie Street Precinct. As the Member for Sydney I wrote to you about the concerns of local residents, and City planning staff made a submission to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. I enclose a copy of those submissions.

On Monday 1 August I met with other City of Sydney Councillors and Darlington residents at the site.

A number of residents who live very close to the site told me they were not formally notified by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure about the public exhibition of the application. While the University has carried out some consultation, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure should be notifying beyond the adjoining land owners to ensure better community involvement in major development applications that impact on their neighbourhood.

I particularly share residents concern about the Abercrombie Street elevation. Abercrombie Street is within a heritage conservation area and comprised of two to three storey Victorian terrace houses forming a fine grain with a strong vertical rhythm. A contemporary architectural response may be appropriate, however it is critical the articulation and massing of the façade responds to the rhythm, grain, palette and materials of the Victorian streetscape. The length of the elevation should also be broken up to minimise the perceived size of the building.

I am concerned about the loss of the green space on the corner of Abercrombie and Codrington Streets. I understand that this space is not public land and the proposal includes landscaped setbacks; however, it is an amenity currently enjoyed by the residents. As density throughout the City increases pocket parks become increasingly important for neighbourhood amenity. Integrating this or a similar space into the development in an accessible location would provide an important amenity for students and residents. Residents also say there is a need for through site public access to increase permeability in the area.

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I am particularly concerned about the demolition of the Joinery Shop building on Rose Street. The demolition of this building was approved under the delegation of Council in 2010 due to its structural condition. However, it was a Crown DA that Council could not refuse. Given the investment in this site, the adaptation of this simple but significant industrial building should be feasible. It would contribute to the character of the development and provide a link to the past given the University has carried out so much development in the area.

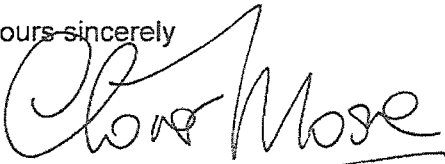
I am concerned about the loss of a large number of trees which provide shade, shelter and visual amenity for residents and Darlington Public School students and habitat for wildlife. The loss of trees will impact on the environment and reduce the amenity of the area. Residents are also concerned about potential archaeological relics on the site and believe that an archaeological assessment should be carried out.

Could you please:

- ***Review the Abercrombie Street elevation to ensure it is sensitive to the predominant built form of the neighbourhood;***
- ***Ensure appropriate accessible green space within the development;***
- ***Encourage the University to retain the Joinery Shop; and***
- ***Ensure the retention and replacement of trees.***

If Department staff would like to speak with a someone from my office about the Abercrombie Street Precinct proposal they can contact Ben Pechey, Policy Officer on 9265 9333 or at bpechey@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely



Clover Moore MP
Lord Mayor of Sydney
Encl.

CC: Colin Rockliff, University of Sydney

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24 June 2011

Our Ref: 2011/166339

File No: R/2008/1/1

Your Ref: MP 07_0158

COPY

Director – Metropolitan and Regional Projects North
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Attention: Peter McManus

email: peter.macmanus@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Peter,

RE: Sydney University Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment – Project Application (MP07_0158)

I refer to your letter of 18 May 2011 about the abovementioned application.

The City provides its comments in relation to the proposed University of Sydney to create a new Business School facility to support the Faculty of Economics and Business on the Abercrombie Precinct at the southern end of the Darlington Campus.

It is acknowledged that the project has the potential to deliver social, environmental and economic benefits and also an improved built form outcome for the southern end of the University Campus, which contributes positively to Darlington.

Notwithstanding this, the Abercrombie Precinct is located within a sensitive context and it is important that the proposal responds appropriately within its context and mitigates potential detrimental impacts both in terms of built form and the increased staff and student population in this location. The following specific comments and concerns about the development are provided:

Abercrombie Street

The site is located at the northern side of Abercrombie Street marking the boundary between the Sydney University and Darlington's residential and mixed land uses to the south. It is an important gateway site and it forms part of the southern entrance approaching the Sydney University Campus from Darlington and Redfern Railway Station.

The scale of buildings along Abercrombie Street is influenced by 2-3 storey terraces on the southern side and a number of other traditional buildings mainly located at the intersection between Abercrombie Street and Codrington Street.

In response to the context, the bulk of the development has been distributed in the middle of the site some 45 meters away from Abercrombie Street. The building along Abercrombie Street has been setback and the heights along the street frontage have been kept to 3-4 storeys, reducing in height towards the western edge of the site next to the Darlington Public School utilizing the slope of the site.

Darlington Lane

The building complex has been designed so that it will not be generally visible from Darlington Road. However although the scale of the new building is to be kept 2-storeys relative to the natural ground level of Darlington Lane, the interface relationship between the building and Darlington Lane is not supported.

The existing Faculty of Economics and Business Building (which is to be retained) is setback from alignment to Darlington Lane and the setback has been successfully landscaped to form an appropriate relative buffer to the rear yards of the terraces facing Darlington Road.

Whilst the lower levels of the new addition along Darlington Lane provide a matching setback, the top level fails to provide a setback (refer to Figure 1 below).

Furthermore, the excavated nature of the setback area for the lower levels, and the basement below rather than deep soil, is such that the ability to provide meaningful landscaping within the setback area is unlikely. The setback is likely to appear as a 'gap' from Darlington Lane. This interface issue needs to be addressed in order to provide a consistent treatment along Darlington Lane and appropriate interface to the northern adjoining terraces.

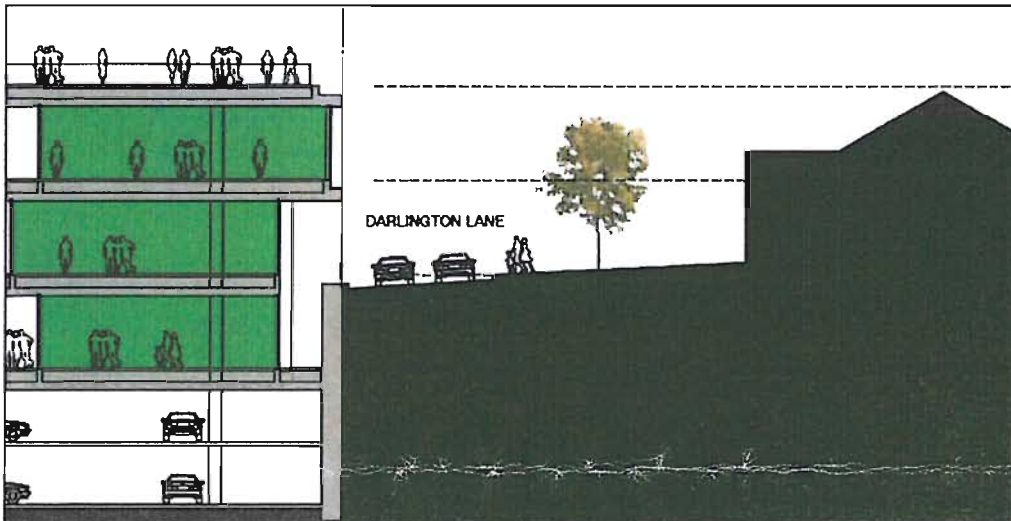


Figure 1 – Darlington Lane interface

Codrington Street

The proposed complex will have the greatest visual impact on Codrington Street. Looking north-west from the intersection at the junction with Abercrombie Street the taller structures in the middle of the complex will be clearly visible. However the various building forms will be seen in the context with other larger university buildings and in that respect the scale of the complex as a whole is considered potentially compatible subject to good design detail and proportions.

Streetscape Character

Whilst the size of the project is considerable and the design of the building

architecturally is contemporary in terms of massing, the strong horizontal lines of the exposed slabs that have been expressed on the street elevations fail to adequately respond to the fine-grain vertical character of the surrounding streets, and particularly along Abercrombie Street. The architectural character of the perimeter of the building needs to be amended by incorporating strong vertical articulation to ensure the buildings along Abercrombie Street harmonize with the character of the Victorian terraces.

Notwithstanding the above issue which requires amendment to the design, it is noted that in order to assist in achieving a successful integration with the surrounding context, the proposed student housing component of the development has been deliberately located to face Abercrombie Street to complement the residential uses in the precinct. Similarly, at the south eastern corner of the building complex at the intersection between Abercrombie Street and Codrington Street a café is to be provided which will supplement the other cafes that exist along the street.

The proposal has the potential to integrate well with the neighbourhood in that it has adopted a scale along the perimeter of the site which is not incompatible with its context. However in order to respect and respond appropriately to its context, further vertical emphasis in the facades is considered necessary.

Public Domain

The buildings along Codrington Street and Abercrombie Street are provided with reasonable setbacks which will be landscaped and/or paved to supplement the public domain. The landscaped setback of the building along Abercrombie Street in particular will assist in reducing the perceived scale of the building

Traffic management measures undertaken by the City in the past have created nodal characteristic for the intersection between Abercrombie and Codrington Streets. The treatment to the setback of Codrington Street with seating and paving will reinforce these nodal qualities including street life activity by the introduction of the café.

The landscaping around and inside the complex has been designed to reinforce established visual axis, through site links and provide a pleasant setting for students in the proposed courtyards.

It is noted that part of the development will require closure and acquisition of Rose Street and Boundary Lane, subject to approval from the City. Rose Street and sections of Boundary Lane have substantial sandstone kerbing along the street, which should be salvaged where possible. All existing sandstone kerb on Rose Street and Boundary Lane is to be inspected by Council to determine the condition and serviceability of the stone prior to commencement of any works.

Heritage

The only building on the site with some heritage significance is the Joiner's Workshop at 224 Rose Street; however it faces structural issues such as cracking and rotation of walls and was approved for demolition in 2010. The remainder of built elements within the site have either no heritage significance.

The site planning for the development is supported as it is based around an orthogonal grid, reflecting the original Golden Grove Estate street pattern and the development incorporates entry points which present as narrow gaps in the otherwise continuous built form, similar to the Golden Grove Estate street pattern.

The residential block fronting the western side of Abercrombie Street reflects aspects of the contributory terrace development aligning the eastern side of Abercrombie, through its vertical proportions which echo the vertical rhythm of the terraces, and through small setbacks that echo the transitional verandah zone of the Victorian terraces.

Trees

The proposal requires the removal of 171 trees which range in size, health, condition and benefits provided to the overall amenity and environment of this area. A further 16 street trees are proposed for retention during construction and development. The following issues of concern are discussed in relation to trees:

Substation

According to the Site Plan (A1002/3) prepared by Woods Bagot architects dated 9 March 2010, a new chamber substation is proposed in the rear of 105 & 106 Darlington Road. The Arborist Assessment states that within the rear yard of this property is a group of Lilly Pillies. The report states this group of trees has a high retention value.

The location of this new substation has not considered the likely impacts on existing vegetation. It is considered that several other locations could have been selected for this substation that would not require tree removal or impact on trees with high retention values

Trees on adjacent Darlington Public School

The western adjoining Darlington Public School contains a number of large Eucalypts along the boundary with the development site that will be adversely affected by the current project design (refer to Figure 2 below). Deep excavations are proposed within close proximity to these trees and where large woody structural roots are likely to occupy the area.



Figure 2 – Trees on adjacent school

The severing of large woody structural roots will impact on the stability of these trees and will introduce a high probability of the trees failing as a result of significant root damage. This creates a safety concern for the public school and occupants to the building. In the absence of root investigations being undertaken to determine an appropriate basement setback to preserve these trees, the excavations should be setback by a minimum of 10 metres from the western boundary (project site). This will ensure the trees within the school grounds are not adversely affected and destabilised by the design of this project

Rose Street

A row of Crow's Ash trees on the northern side of Rose Street (refer to Figure 3) are proposed to be removed contrary to the recommendation of the proponent's arborist assessment on the basis that they are located within a building footprint. However, the trees are located directly adjacent to the Economic and Business building that will be retained and accordingly it is considered that there is no reasonable impediment to the retention of these trees and accordingly their removal is not supported.

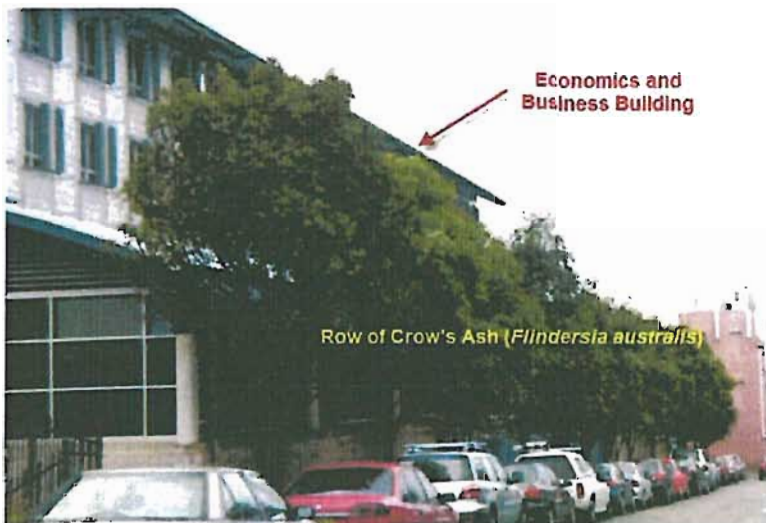


Figure 3 – Crows Ash trees adjacent to Economics and Business Building

Sydney Blue Gum Tree

The proponent arborist's assessment states the following in relation to a prominent Sydney Blue Gum tree on the site (refer to Figure 4 below):

"the most significant tree in the entire precinct is the Sydney Blue Gum (Eucalyptus saligna) located at the eastern end of the block bounded by Rose Street, Codrington Road and Boundary Lane. The tree has a very high retention value. The tree is healthy, vigorous, structurally sound and visually dominant. It is unlikely that the City of Sydney would approve its removal..... should the area be redeveloped, every effort should be made to retain the Sydney Blue Gum and to facilitate its long-term health. In order to ensure this, it must be seen as a constraint in the design process and must be considered at every stage of the development, including final landscaping. There must be no excavation beneath this tree. The recommended tree protection zone is a radius of 12 metres from the base of the tree in all directions."

The proponent has suggested that the retention of the tree is impracticable because the required tree protection zone (12 metre radius) would effectively sterilise a

considerable portion of the proposed development area. It is also suggested that removal of the tree is reasonable because the tree is located in an area which is subject to intensive pedestrian traffic and therefore the tree would require intensive maintenance to mitigate ongoing risk. Furthermore, the tree is considered to provide limited habitat value due to its isolated position with no linkage to vegetation areas.



Figure 4 – Sydney Blue Gum

The City does not accept the above position of the Proponent and considers that the provided reasoning is unacceptable and does not warrant the trees removal.

Given that the proponent's arborist advice was previously provided in 2008 in relation to the need to retain this tree in particular, significant opportunity and time has been available to the proponent to incorporate the tree into the proposed redevelopment. The Abercrombie Precinct is a generous parcel of land and is not constrained by size and therefore the retention of the tree is not impractical.

The subject tree is in a healthy and very good condition. The proponent's suggestion that intensive maintenance will mitigate possible future risk in relation to this tree is onerous. This is not considered the case in managing an important asset, and risk is noted as a consideration is every day life.

Finally, the proponents concern about the trees habitat value being reduced, and therefore supporting the trees removal, is not supported by the City. This tree provides many other benefits other than habitat, and within the urban context, the other environmental and visual benefits outweigh this argument.

The design of the proposal needs to be amended to allow retention of the Sydney Blue Gum and extensive landscaping should be undertaken to eliminate the isolation of this tree and to replace the substation loss of canopy cover and habitat destruction that will be caused during the demolition and construction phase of this project.

Car Parking

The Abercrombie Precinct currently accommodates 72 car parking spaces and the proposal seeks to increase this by 113 spaces to a total of 185 car parking spaces. It is noted that the provision of 185 spaces is well below the permissible 607 spaces under the current Development Control Plan No. 11 and also below the 203 permissible spaces under the Draft Sydney LEP 2011. The proposed number of car spaces is supported as it is consistent with the City's desire to reduce the use of private transportation and particularly relevant to the Abercrombie Precinct which is in close proximity to Redfern train station as well as numerous bus routes and cycling infrastructure.

It is noted that notwithstanding the increased capacity of 113 spaces associated with the proposal, the surrounding intersections will continue to operate at very high levels of service and therefore no objection is raised in relation to the proposed car parking associated with the proposal.

It is also noted that the proposal is primarily to consolidate existing facilities associated with the Faculty of Economics and Business which are currently scattered across the campus, to a purpose built precinct in the Abercrombie Precinct. Accordingly, the existing 500 staff and 7000 student population associated with the Faculty of Economics and Business is not anticipated to greatly increase by virtue of the redevelopment of the Abercrombie Precinct.

Bicycle Parking

The Transport Impact Assessment accompanying the application states that the proposal will provide 390 bicycle parking spaces, being 15 for the student accommodation and the remainder for other staff and students. It is not apparent on the architectural plans where this bicycle parking is to be provided, and the bicycle parking for the student accommodation in particular should be undercover, highly secure and located in close proximity directly accessible from the accommodation.

Road Changes

The proposed changes to traffic and parking restrictions within the surrounding street network will require the approval of the Sydney Traffic Committee and it is suggested that the proponent commence discussions with the City of Sydney Area Traffic Engineer in relation to obtaining this approval.

The City does not object in principle to the proposed bus layover, subject to detailed design, dedication as public way and approval by the Sydney Traffic Committee. However, the detailed design of the bus layover (which appears to be shorter than would potentially be required) may also impact on the proposed 4 car parking spaces, and accordingly these spaces are only supported in principle subject to the bus layovers detailed design.

However, in relation to the proposed removal of four angle parking spaces in Golden Grove Street, it is considered that there is not adequate justification as these spaces are consistently used for the set down and pick up of school children. The proposal also suggests the replacement of these four spaces to Darlington Lane for staff parking however this an appropriate replacement of the loss of the on-street spaces which currently provide an important service to the school.

Student Accommodation

The proposed student accommodation has been reviewed and is generally considered to provide a satisfactory level of amenity for the students, consistent with the provisions within SEPP (Affordable Housing) and the City of Sydney Boarding House DCP. Notwithstanding this, it is noted that there does not appear to be any washing facilities provided for students within the building, which should be provided.

Conditions

The granting of consent for the proposal should include the recommended conditions of consent as detailed in Attachment A to this letter. If the proponent is a Crown Authority, reference to Construction Certificates will need to be removed. Council staff are available to assist with the final drafting of any conditions of consent.

Conclusion

The proposal is generally considered to respect and respond well to its context and

in particular in regard to the streetscape character on Abercrombie Street. The development has been effectively scaled down and the facades are well articulated to achieve an appropriate compatibility with the streetscape. The proposed expansive green roofs in particular are strongly supported.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of the proposal, issues in regarding the relationship of the development to Darlington Lane, retention of appropriate trees, provision and location of bicycle parking, and appropriate traffic works need to be addressed in order for the proposal to be capable of support.

If you would like to speak to an officer, please contact Aaron Sutherland on 9246 7720 or asutherland@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GJahn', written in a cursive style.

Graham Jahn LFRAIA Hon AIA Hon FPIA Hon FNZIA
Director City Planning and Regulatory Services

Clover

MEMBER FOR SYDNEY

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COPY

22 June 2011

The Hon. Brad Hazzard MP
Minister for Planning and Infrastructure
Level 33 Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Minister

**University of Sydney Abercrombie Precinct Business School
MP 07_0158 - Abercrombie Street Precinct, Syd Uni**

I write on behalf of residents who have contacted me to raise concerns about this scale of this development, along with loss of open green space and traffic and parking impacts.

Residents who have contacted me are concerned about the scale of the development, which they say covers three blocks and will result in a seven storey business school and a four storey student accommodation building with limited setbacks. They believe that this is inconsistent with adjacent streetscape of terraced houses and low rise buildings.

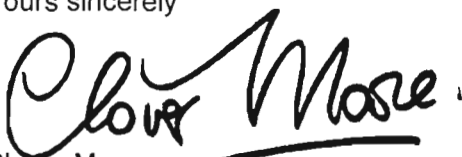
Adjacent residents are concerned about loss of existing roadways, open space and mature trees. The proposal will result in reduced green open space and trees but an intensification of use, and residents have asked that the development be amended to include green open space that accessible to the adjacent community and school.

Residents who have contacted me are very concerned about increased traffic from the 185 basement parking spaces proposed for students and staff. They are concerned that ongoing problems with on-street parking in this precinct will be worsened as a result of this development. Residents have told me that the nearby Redfern Railway Station and City Road bus routes means that additional parking is not needed and will lead to increased traffic.

Residents are also concerned about construction impacts on adjacent residents and Darlington Public School students, particularly proposed construction access and routes. Some residents and parents of school students have raised concerns about noise and dust impacts

I ask that you consider the strong community concern about this proposal and the issues they have raised about scale of development and its interface with the local community, parking, traffic and open space.

Yours sincerely


Clover Moore
Member for Sydney