

Application No: MP07_0158 MOD 3

Exhibition of Modification Request for the University of Sydney Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment

Date: 1 November 2013

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As someone who lives 60 metres from the proposed site and in support of my fellow concerned residents I add my voice to object to these modifications for the following reasons:-



S75w Submission OCTOBER 2013 ABERCROMBIE STUDENT ACCOMODATION View from Abercrombie Street (without existing trees)



This is the University's 3D rendered image of the Student Accommodation.

The picture is incorrect and misleading:

Truth in advertising? This picture is grossly inaccurate in its depiction of the scale, perspective and proportions:

- The people walking along the street in the picture would only just fit into the rooms on the ground floor. It appears as though the building would be built below ground level. However, this is not the case.
- The Darlington Public School building in the left of this picture is a 2 storey building yet appears to be the same height as the 5 storey Student Accommodation next door.
- The University's own picture below gives a truer idea of the way in which the Student Accommodation would be much higher than the Darlington Public School building to the left and also Mandelbaum House to the right.



- The University's own elevation below clearly shows that Darlington Public School, outlined in red on the left of the picture, is a 2 storey building which sits well below the 5 storey Student Accommodation.
- The red line at the top of Mandelbaum House on the right of the Student Accommodation is actually the height of its pitched roof.



Once again, it appears that the University is not being completely honest with residents by misrepresenting the 3D rendered image above in order to make the building appear much smaller than it would actually be.

The overwhelming height and proximity to the Abercrombie Street boundary of this proposed building would have significant impacts on the streetscape. It would not only adversely affect the privacy of residents living opposite but its appearance would also have a negative visual impact on them.

Having it set back from the boundary with a 2 metre buffer would provide a space to allow for many more native trees and vegetation to be planted. These native trees and vegetation would replace those surrounding the current buildings which will be lost when those buildings are demolished. This would therefore improve both the aesthetic and environmental aspect of the streetscape.

Throughout autumn and winter when the deciduous street trees lose their leaves this 2 metre buffer of native trees and vegetation would still provide a screen for residents on Abercrombie Street living opposite the Student Accommodation building.

Having the Student Accommodation building set back from the boundary and planting trees in the 2 metre buffer zone would also somewhat hide the fact that the proposed building is architecturally at odds with the Victorian terraces that predominate Abercrombie Street.

The 2 metre setback will also be more in keeping with the original plans of the Student Accommodation building which the University presented to the community. These plans showed the Student Accommodation set back from the Abercrombie Street boundary and aligned with Mandelbaum House.

This is a residential building and it should be built to conform with all the other residential buildings on Abercrombie Street as Mandelbaum House does.

If the University is allowed to build this large scale commercial looking building on a residential street then a precedent will be set and many more could be built on all of the University's residential boundaries with no respect to the heritage of the suburb.

History

During the initial consultations with the University in regard to the APD, the residents and other stakeholders were presented with a Stage 1 development which incorporated the major component, the Business School, and a Stage 2 development, the Student Accommodation along Abercrombie Street, which was to be built at a much later date. The perception that residents and other stakeholders were therefore always given by the University was that Stage 1 and Stage 2 were to be separate Development Applications.

The two developments were inappropriately sited, over-scale and commercial in their style. To build them would have meant demolishing some relatively new buildings along Abercrombie Street.

In June 2011, due to all the objections raised by residents and other stakeholders in regard to the size, height, scale, appearance and, in particular, the access road, it was announced that the developments were

to be redesigned and that Mandelbaum House was not to be demolished. The Vice Chancellor also promised that the access road would be relocated to Darlington Lane.

When the revised proposal was presented to residents and other stakeholders in May 2012, the University's focus was always on the Business School and certainly not the Stage 2 Student Accommodation which they were still saying was to be built at a much later date. The new plans showed that the access road was still located on Abercrombie Street. The danger that the access road posed therefore became the main issue on which the residents and other stakeholders were concentrating.

When the plans were finally approved by the Planning Assessment Commission in November 2012, residents felt that they had been deceived when they learned that the plans for the Student Accommodation had been approved at the same time. All along residents' energies and focus had been on the massive Business School and the struggle to get the University to keep to its promise of moving the access road off Abercrombie Street.

Throughout the process the residents and other stakeholders were always under the impression that this was a separate DA to the Business School and therefore have had very little, if any, consultation with the University in regard to the Student Accommodation building apart from a brief consultation meeting on Wednesday 25 September 2013 when further changes to the plans were presented to them.

As the timetable for the building of the Stage 2 Student Accommodation has now suddenly been brought forward, residents, who will be significantly impacted upon by this building, would like you to consider their comments below.

1. Studio Apartments – modification to internal configuration

The change to self contained 1 bedroom studio apartments from 5 – 6 bedroom shared rooms is a much better proposition for the Student Accommodation. However, the population of this facility should not be increased. As this development was approved for 188 students then it should not be increased to 200 residents. Residents would ideally prefer to see the number of students housed in the site reduced even further than what was approved.

The movement of such a large number of students into and out of the building (particularly late at night) as well as student activities in the building and on the grounds has the potential to cause a significant loss of amenity for local residents, mainly through increased noise and loss of privacy.

2. Height, Bulk and Scale – modifications to building facade

Many objections made to the original plans for the APD Business School and Student Accommodation buildings were on the basis of their height, bulk and scale, especially as they are proposed to stand much higher than Mandelbaum House to the east and Darlington Public School to the west, dwarfing both of them.

The scale of the proposed Student Housing building along Abercrombie Street is up to five storeys, which is out of character with the prevailing height and scale of the 2-3 storey Victorian terraces on the southern side of Abercrombie Street and a number of other traditional buildings mainly located at the intersection between Abercrombie Street and Codrington Street.

It is also out of scale with Mandelbaum House, which was designed to complement the Abercrombie Street streetscape.

One of the prerequisites of the planning authority at the time of the construction of Mandelbaum House was that it reflects the scale and look of the existing buildings in Abercrombie Street – terrace houses of 2-3 storeys. That is why Mandelbaum House was designed as a three storey building along the Abercrombie Street frontage with the fourth level set well back from the street. Mandelbaum House, at three storeys in height along the street, sits comfortably in the existing streetscape and is consistent in scale with the 2-3 storey terraces.

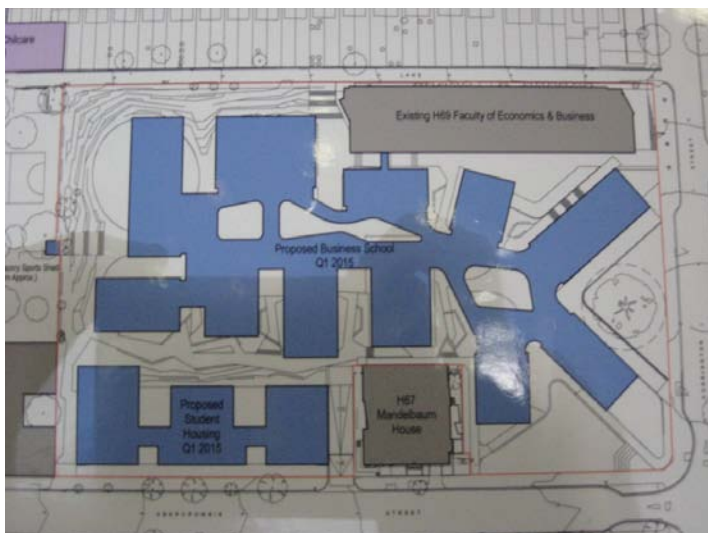
We, the residents, and business owners in the area, as well as Mandelbaum House, have all had to comply with these types of planning conditions along with maintaining heritage aspects and we believe that the University Student Accommodation building should also comply with these conditions. There should not be any exceptions at all.

The excessive scale and bulk of this proposed building would not only have significant impacts on the streetscape, but would have an adverse impact in terms of privacy, noise and visual impact on residents living opposite.

3. Boundaries – modifications to building footprint

Front Boundary – Abercrombie Street

These original plans for the APD and Student Accommodation show that the front of the Student Accommodation would be built in line with Mandelbaum House on the Abercrombie Street side. See pictures below.





Both the Boundary Lane Children's Centre and the Shepherd Centre are also built in line with Mandelbaum House, being approximately 2 metres back from the front boundary.

We believe that the Student Accommodation should also be set back from the front boundary by 2 metres and built in line with Mandelbaum House. Once again there should be no exceptions for the University owned building and it should be made to comply as other buildings have along Abercrombie Street. It should also be contained within the same footprint as those buildings being demolished to make way for it.

The overwhelming height and proximity to the Abercrombie Street boundary of this proposed building would not only have significant impacts on the streetscape, but would have an adverse impact in terms of privacy and visual impact on residents living opposite.

Having it set back from the boundary would allow for many more trees and vegetation to be planted, replacing those surrounding the current buildings which will be lost when they are demolished and thereby improving both the aesthetic and environmental aspect of the street.

Back Boundary – University Campus

The latest plans for the Student Accommodation, whilst showing the front of the building abutting the boundary on Abercrombie Street, also show an increase in floor area at the back towards the Business School.

The whole building should be moved back to align with Mandelbaum House as it was originally planned and presented to the residents - see above pictures. There should be no increase in floor area at the back and the number of students living in the facility should be restricted to the originally approved 188 or to an even lesser number. The number of students should not be increased to 200 as is now proposed.

4. Side Access Paths

Access pathways are proposed for either side of the new Student Accommodation running from Abercrombie Street into the APD at the back of the Student Accommodation.

The areas at either side of the proposed Student Accommodation should be kept as green areas. The provision of heavily landscaped buffers at each end of the Student Accommodation will discourage students and other groups from congregating at all hours bringing noise and disruption to residents living nearby as well as those living within.

This buffer should provide for the planting of trees which will assist in visually screening the proposed new buildings to allow for greater privacy and overall increased amenity not only for residents living opposite and next door but also those living within the Student Accommodation building itself.

If the access paths were to be built on either side of the Student accommodation then they would need to be extremely well-lit at night for reasons of safety at night. Any such lighting would have a negative effect on surrounding residents. Any noise generated from these alleyways, especially at night, will be magnified and echo out into the neighbourhood.

Students living here will be able to access the University through the back of the building; therefore these access paths are not warranted.

5. Trees at Front and Sides

Residents would like to have more trees at the front of the building due to the loss of those that will be destroyed during demolition. This will also provide a buffer and will assist in visually screening the proposed new buildings to allow for greater privacy and overall increased amenity for the residents. So that more trees can be planted at the front of the Student Accommodation it is important that the building be moved back to align with Mandelbaum House.

The neighbourhood will also lose many trees from the area between Mandelbaum House and the Shepherd Centre as well as between the Boundary Lane Children's Centre and Darlington Public School. By leaving the areas to each side of the Student Accommodation Building as green areas and not building access paths will mean that many more trees can be replaced.

6. Noise

The plans show a music room facing into Abercrombie Street. This room and any others that would have loud noise and are places where students will gather in numbers must be sound proofed protect the amenity of residents.

Residents are also very concerned about the noise impact of a large number of students suddenly arriving in the street. Suitable measures must be put in place to ensure that noise is controlled and does not affect surrounding residents.

7. Solar panels

The University is a world class educational facility and so we believe this building should reflect its status.

The University Environmental Policy states that the University “is committed to environmental best practice, and to the continual improvement of its environmental performance, recognising its obligations both locally and globally.

The University aims to lead in defining best environmental practice, and will set its own demanding standards where none exist.”

It also states that it “is committed to sustainable design principles in land-use, transportation, landscape and building planning and construction.

The University aims to minimise adverse environmental impacts of University buildings, landscaping and developments over the whole of their lifespan.”

There does not seem to be much sign of this in the proposed Student Accommodation. Residents agree that the University should “lead in defining best environmental practice” and should therefore at least be installing solar panels on the roof to provide the energy needed to run the facility.

8. Management of the Facility

Residents are concerned about the potential impact of student behaviour, especially in light of the many media stories over the last few years of student behaviour at nearby residential colleges.

We believe that a student resident’s management policy should be adopted by the University, including a permanent onsite caretaker arrangement as is the case at the University Village in Newtown and Mandelbaum House.

9. In Conclusion

Throughout the process the local residents and other stakeholders were always under the impression that this was a separate DA to the Business School and therefore have had very little, if any, consultation with the University in regard to the student accommodation building apart from on Wednesday 25 September 2013 when further changes to the plans were presented to them.

My main objections are:

- The building should be set back approximately 2 metres to align with Mandelbaum House along its Abercrombie Street frontage as shown on original documents presented to the community.
- Trees should be planted within the 2 metre setback along the front to assist in visually screening the proposed new buildings to allow for greater privacy and overall increased amenity for the residents.
- The building should be reduced in height and scale so that it is consistent in height with Mandelbaum House and conforms to the established 2-3 storey characteristic height of buildings along Abercrombie Street.
- The building should not accommodate more than 188 students as previously approved and even less if possible.
- The access paths at each side of the building should be removed and green tree buffers should be planted to provide privacy for those next door. Students should be prevented from congregating in these areas, making excessive noise and bringing disruption to those living nearby.
- A permanent caretaker should manage the operations and student behaviour on a permanent basis.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Britton', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Robert Britton