



Our ref: 06068

28th May 2009

Mr. Sam Haddad
Director General
NSW Department of Planning
22-33 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Sir,

RE: Part 3A Request under Section 6 for Minister's Declaration - Proposed Commercial Development at 89 George Street, Parramatta

We act on behalf of Webb Property Investments Pty Limited the owner of premises at 89 George Street, Parramatta, currently used for automotive repairs and dry cleaning. The site is centrally located within the commercial core of the Parramatta CBD. It is proposed to develop a major high quality office building on the land and has appointed Ingham Planning Pty Ltd to provide planning advice to assist in the preparation of plans by Woods Bagot Pty Ltd, architects, for the redevelopment of the land.

The aim of the project is to develop an A Grade 13 storey office building with a 5 star green rating to address the need for premium quality office space in the Parramatta CBD. Our client has recently undertaken consultations with the NSW Department of Planning in relation to floor space ratio issues and the option of having the development proposal assessed under the Part 3A Major Infrastructure and Other Projects provisions of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act)*.

This submission requests that a declaration by Order of the Minister be made in accordance with s75B(1) of the *EP&A Act* that the proposed commercial building is a project to which Part 3A of the *Act* applies. On the assumption that the Minister declares the proposal to fall within Part 3A of the *Act*, it is also requested that the Director General issue his requirements relating to the nature and extent of necessary plans, documentation and assessment for the preparation of an Environmental Assessment to accompany a Project Application for the proposal.

The following supporting information and preliminary assessment is included to assist in understanding the proposal and the main development, planning and environmental issues relevant to the proposed development at 89 George Street, Parramatta.



1. The Site

The subject land is located in the Parramatta City Centre on the southern side of George Street, between Smith Street and Charles Street, as shown in **Figure 1 – Location**. The site is strategically located centrally within the commercial core precinct of the Parramatta CBD where the planning controls envisage the development of office towers to a height of more than 20 storeys to strengthen Parramatta’s role as Sydney’s second CBD.

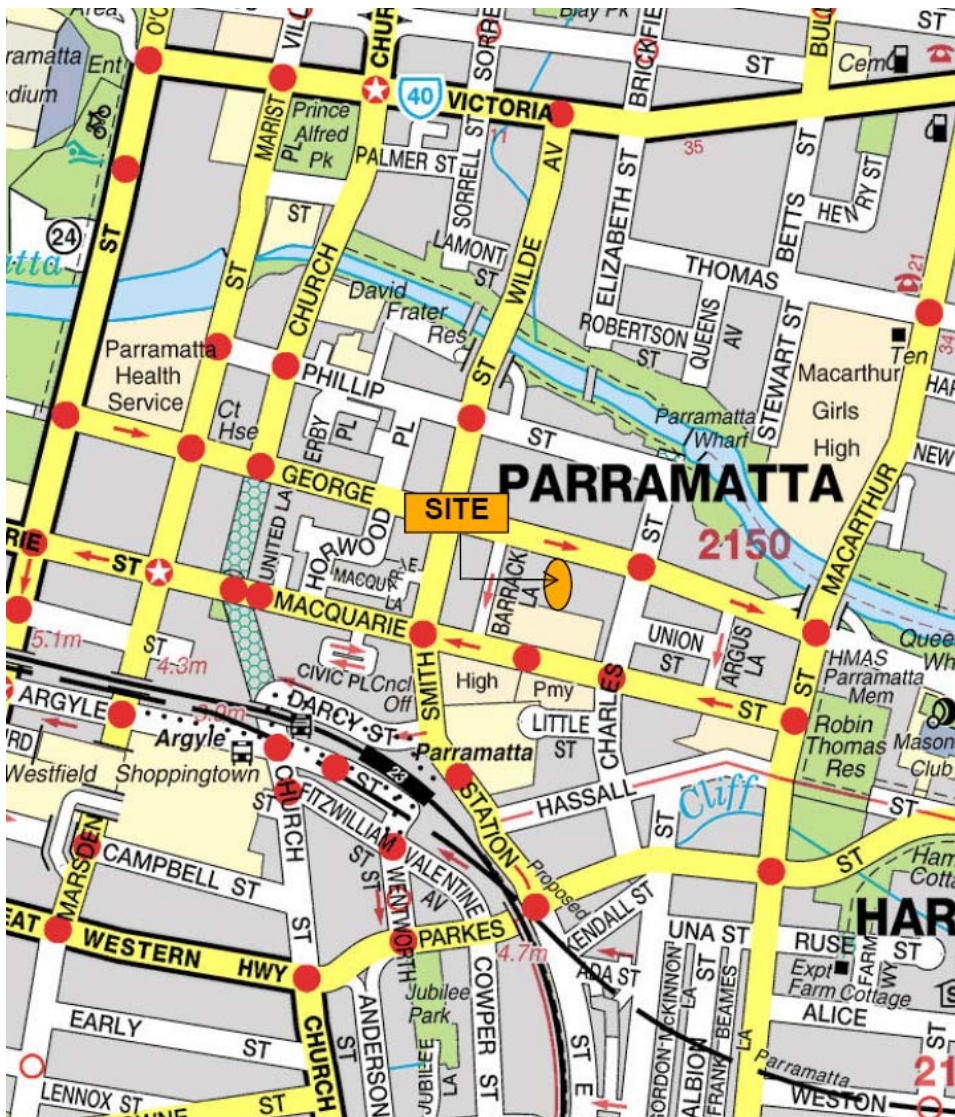


Figure 1 - Location



The site is rectangular in shape, with a total area of 1,354m², a relatively narrow frontage of 18.25 metres to George Street and a depth of between 75.58 and 75.75 metres. The site is generally level and is currently used for automotive repairs and a dry cleaning business. The surrounding locality in George Street predominantly comprises commercial office buildings of varying heights. A number of these sites may be expected to be redeveloped with taller office towers under the new planning controls for the Parramatta City Centre introduced in December 2007.

A 6 storey strata titled office building adjoins the site to the east. The Arthur Phillip High School adjoins the land to the south at the rear of the site. The historic single storey Perth House adjoins the land to the west. The heritage significance of Perth House has been an important consideration in the design of the proposed building at 89 George Street, with a carefully crafted solution to significantly enhance the setting of Perth House.

Photographs of existing development adjoining and near the site are included at **Figures 3-5**. **Figure 2** below is a view of the site looking south from George Street.



Figure 2 – View of 89 George Street



Figure 3 – View of Perth House, 91, 93 & 95 George Street viewed from George Street looking East



Figure 4 – View of George Street looking West



Figure 5 – View of Perth House and office tower to the south (85 George Street)



2. The Project

The Proponent is seeking approval for construction of a 13 storey commercial building, with 4 basement car parking levels at 89 George Street, Parramatta. The building is planned to have a GFA 11,567m² comprising 12 levels of office floor space and ground level retail/restaurant floor space. A maximum building height of approximately 55 metres is proposed.

The proposed building has been designed to provide A Grade quality commercial floor space and achieve a 5 star Green Star rating. The proposal includes improvements to the public domain in George Street including a pedestrian connection through to the outdoor dining area located at the rear of Perth House.

The design of the building has been developed to strongly address the urban design issues associated with this section of George Street. It will create a clear and responsive urban statement by reinforcing the current sense of place created by both Perth House and the very large fig tree located at 85 – 87 George Street.

The proposal achieves a strong urban response by addressing both the street frontage and the neighbouring Perth House and its associated square. The proposed building steps back to frame views of Perth House and activates the ground plane by elevating the building to create a 3 storey colonnade to Perth House creating a new greatly enhanced urban presence across the immediate vicinity of 85, 87, 89 and 91 George Street . This will provide for a significant civic presence.

The building facade throughout will be high quality and simply modelled. In particular, the highly visible western facade is environmentally efficient comprising a screen element forward of the glass line. The screen is in elements of simple “folds” to provide a delicate and sensitive backdrop to Perth House and its associated open space. The facades include further modulation through inclusion of balcony recesses to add subtle form to the exterior view.

The street frontage to George Street incorporates a significant entry statement, giving a strong sense of arrival and presence, with the three storey colonnade running the western side of the site. This provides entry to the similarly scaled foyer and addresses the open square formed by Perth House.

The front northern facade steps back from George Street at the third level. The building is set back from the front boundary enhancing the sense of the public realm and providing clear line of view to the adjacent Perth House.

All in all, the design will provide a quality companion to the recently completed buildings for Sydney Water, the Law Courts and NSW Police collectively enhancing the architectural and urban design qualities confirming a new benchmark for the Parramatta CBD.

The appearance of the building is illustrated in the following perspective views.



Figure 6 – Proposed commercial building at 89 George Street, as viewed from George Street looking south-east



Figure 7 – View of proposed building entry and colonnade off George Street



3. SEPP (Major Projects) 2005

Clause 6 of SEPP (Major Projects) 2005 provides that development, that is in the opinion of the Minister, development for the purposes referred to in Schedule 1 (Classes of Development) and Schedule 2 (Specified Sites) is declared to be a project to which Part 3A of the *EP&A Act* applies.

Clause 13 of Schedule 1 of SEPP (Major Projects) 2005 relates to residential, commercial and retail projects that may be considered under Part 3A as Major Projects on the following basis:

Group 5 – Residential, commercial or retail projects

(1) Development for the purpose of residential, commercial or retail projects with a capital investment value of more than \$50 million that the Minister determines are important in achieving State or regional planning objectives.

The capital investment value of the project is \$70,600,000 (excluding GST) based on a cost estimate prepared by WT Partnership, well qualified and industry respected quantity surveyors. A copy of the Development Budget Summary prepared by WT Partnerships is attached at Appendix E. This value exceeds the minimum \$50 million threshold contained in the SEPP for commercial projects. The project is also considered to be important for achieving State and regional planning objectives, particularly in relation to encouraging high quality office development in the Parramatta CBD that contributes to strengthening Parramatta's role in the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy as Sydney's second CBD.

The Department of Planning has prepared guidelines for assessing whether a project is likely to contribute to meeting State or regional planning policies. Criteria relevant to the proposed development are urban renewal, job growth, transport accessibility. These criteria are considered in the following discussion.

Criteria A – Local Impediments to Urban Renewal

The project is located in an area identified in the Metro Strategy or regional or sub-regional strategies for urban renewal or increased urban development and there are local impediments to the implementation of the development identified as a result of consultation with local council to implementing the project.

- Is the development within a centre or urban renewal area nominated for growth in the Metro Strategy or a regional or sub-regional strategy?

The site is located within the Parramatta CBD that is identified as one of three Regional Cities in the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy "City of Cities". Under this Strategy the Parramatta CBD is earmarked for significant growth to the year 2031, including a 44% increase in jobs from 41,662 to 60,000. A substantial portion of



these new jobs is to be located within the commercial core of the CBD where new planning controls have been introduced to allow development up to a floor space ratio of 10:1 to facilitate higher density re-development of a number of existing under-utilised sites, including the subject land.

The proposed development will create in excess of 200 construction jobs and provide employment floor space for approximately 500 to 600 office workers. Early indications suggest there is interest in A Grade 5 star Green Star office space in Parramatta of the type proposed from major businesses with a national profile. Currently Parramatta is not well supplied with such office space and there are no significant office buildings under construction in the Parramatta CBD.

- *Are there provisions in the LEP which are likely to prevent or frustrate the implementation of the Metro or regional strategy?*

The Parramatta City Centre LEP 2007 appropriately identifies a maximum 10:1 floor space ratio (FSR) for the commercial core area of the CBD however the FSR clause in the LEP imposes a very restrictive limit on FSR for sites of less than 2,500m². This is a significant issue for the subject land which has an area of less than 2,500m², but cannot feasibly be amalgamated with any adjoining sites.

The subject land has a site area of 1,354m² and is therefore precluded from being developed to an FSR of more than 6.944:1 plus 10% under clause 22B of the LEP. It is not feasible to amalgamate the site with adjoining sites to provide a larger development site. Land to the east comprises a 6 storey strata title office building, whilst land to the west contains a heritage item and land to the rear comprises a high school.

The subject land is relatively narrow and hence costly to develop. An FSR of less than 8.5:1 is not economically viable, leaving the site to remain in its current use as tyre sales and fitting outlet, a most inappropriate and underdeveloped use for such an important site located centrally within the commercial core of a major CBD.

Reducing FSR to between 6.944:1 to 7.6384:1 would not only make the project unviable but also, in order to provide marketable floor plates with a net leaseable area of at least 800m², building height would be reduced to 10 storeys. Such a height would be out of character with the anticipated 16 to 20 storey building heights that will prevail in the commercial core.

- *Does the council have the resources to assess and determine major projects?*

Parramatta Council has the capacity to assess and determine the project and whilst Council has expressed "in principle" support for the proposed design it has indicated to the Proponent that the planning controls prevent flexible application of the FSR controls to an extent greater than 10%.



- *Do council practices demonstrate that projects important in implementing Metro or regional strategies can be determined on their merits?*

Although Parramatta Council has a favourable opinion of the proposal, particularly its urban design and public domain outcomes, the Council is not prepared to proceed with any changes to the LEP provisions that would enable the project to proceed. There are few new office building projects commencing in Parramatta and encouragement should be given to new well design commercial building projects.

It is important to note that a complying FSR would result in a building that would appear substantially the same as the proposed building, although somewhat lower at 10 storeys. In this case, although the height controls seek to encourage taller buildings, a complying FSR would tend to be at odds with the desired building height outcome for the precinct.

Criteria B – Facilitate Housing or Job Growth

The project will contribute to major employment or residential growth in centres or urban renewal areas identified in the Metro or regional strategies. Will the development directly result in permanent jobs in the area? Is the development in a centre identified in the Metro Strategy or Regional Strategy.

As noted above, the site is located within the Parramatta CBD which has been identified as a Regional City in the Metro Strategy and the Draft West Central Subregion Strategy. The proposed development will create in excess of 200 construction jobs and provide employment floor space for approximately 500 to 600 office workers on a permanent basis.

Compared to the Sydney CBD and many other major CBD's in the subregions to the east of Parramatta, there is a limited availability of high quality office space and white collar employment in western Sydney. A large proportion of western Sydney residents must travel long distances to the Sydney CBD and other nearby CBD's for employment. Providing high quality office space will attract white collar employment to the Parramatta CBD and improve accessibility to white collar jobs for the rapidly growing population of western Sydney.

Criteria C – Transport Accessibility

The project will contribute to increased accessibility to public transport services by providing quality housing or employment generating development within a transport corridor or in the vicinity of a transport hub. Is the development readily accessible to a railway, bus stop with frequent service, transitway station or ferry wharf? As an example within 800 metres from a station or transport node.

The site is located centrally within the Parramatta CBD which is serviced by high frequency bus, rail and ferry services and is one of the most important transport interchanges in the Sydney metropolitan region. The Parramatta Railway Station and Bus and Transitway Interchange are located to the south-west within a 550 metre walk from



the site. Bus routes through the CBD are located near the site and the Parramatta Ferry Terminal is located 350 metres to the north-east.

4. Environmental Planning Issues

The proposal is generally in conformity with the planning controls for the Parramatta City Centre Commercial Core Area (Zone B3), apart from the maximum FSR controls for sites of less than 2,500m² as prescribed in clause 22 of the Parramatta City Centre LEP 2007. Council has indicated support for a reduced on-site parking provision due to the site's accessibility to high quality frequent public transport services.

The proposal achieves a high quality urban design outcome with appropriate presentation to George Street and the adjoining heritage item, Perth House and improved public domain and pedestrian accessibility. Council's urban designer Janelle Scully in her pre-DA Urban design Assessment concluded that *"the design of the building as a tall, slender block building with a modulated façade and 10 metre high public colonnade responds positively to the constraints of the site, its context and expected future form of the city. The building opens up views to the heritage item from the street and provides an appropriate frame for this building."*

Supporting information, plans and reports are attached as Appendices. These Appendices include the following:

- APPENDIX A - Urban Design Assessment of the project prepared by Dickson Rothschild
- APPENDIX B - Heritage Assessment prepared by NBRS & Partners
- APPENDIX C - Architectural Report and plans of the proposal prepared by Woods Bagot Pty Ltd architects
- APPENDIX D - Preliminary environmental performance report prepared by Advanced Environmental
- APPENDIX E - Development Budget Summary dated May 2009 prepared by WT Partnership
- APPENDIX F – Facts and Figures
- APPENDIX G –Parramatta City Centre LEP 2007 Compliance Table
- APPENDIX H –Parramatta City Centre DCP 2007 Compliance Table

Applicable environmental planning controls and design issues are identified in the Parramatta City Centre LEP 2007 and the associated Parramatta City Centre Development Control Plan. The proposal has been assessed against the relevant planning controls in the compliance tables attached as APPENDIX G and APPENDIX H.

5. Conclusion

The proposed commercial development of 89 George Street, Parramatta is a major project designed to provide a high quality environmentally sustainable office building on a strategic site centrally located within the commercial core of the Parramatta CBD.



The proposed development is important to facilitating the ongoing development of the Parramatta City Centre as a major Regional City within the Sydney metropolitan region.

The project is considered to meet the criteria of a Major Project as outlined in the guidelines to Part 3A of the *EP&A Act* and we trust that the information we have provided supports the view that the proposal should be classified by the Minister for planning as a Major Project that can be dealt with under Part 3A of the *Act*. We also look forward to the issue of Director General's requirements for the preparation of the necessary Environmental Assessment.

Please contact the undersigned Nick Juradowitch of Ingham Planning on 9416 9111 or by e mail at nick@inghamplanning.com.au should you require and further information.

Yours faithfully

Nick Juradowitch
Director