

2 September 2020

Your Ref: SSD-8636-Mod-2
Our Ref: R/2018/7/E
File No: 2020/384579

Ingrid Berzins
Planning Officer
Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

via Planning Portal

Dear Ingrid

New Request for Advice – University of Sydney – Engineering & Technology Precinct – SSD 8636 Modification 2

Thank you for your correspondence dated 14 August 2020 which invites the City of Sydney Council (the City) to provide comments on the applicant's response to submissions (RtS) regarding modifications to tree pot sizes, landscaping and changes to flooding conditions. The City has reviewed the submitted material, including the additional material submitted on 26 August 2020 and provides the following comments for your consideration:

1 Variations to tree pot sizes

The submitted RtS seeks further changes to tree sizes due to supply issues. The amended proposal now includes a 4th tree species as 200L pot size, *Jacaranda mimisifolia*, in addition to the *Backhousia citriodora* *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* and *Syzygium luehmannii*. The RtS also proposes to substitute species *Syzygium luehmannii* with *Waterhousia floribunda*.

Of the 42 new trees proposed only 12 trees or 30% will be 400L at installation. These changes are a result of poor project and tree procurement management.

Further, the RtS shows evidence of tree stock availability from only one nursery. The City recommends that the developer engages with other nurseries for 400 litre trees and species availability including 400 litre *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark) trees for the South Plaza.

2 Landscape changes

The amended Landscape Plan proposes the substitution of six *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark) in the South plaza detention basin with six *Jacaranda mimisifolia* (Jacaranda). Jacaranda trees are an exotic semi-deciduous tree species, native to South America. Paperbark trees are evergreen trees endemic to the eastern coast of Australia. Paperbark trees naturally grow in swampy areas and are culturally important to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The approved South Plaza plans proposed planting the Paperbark trees within a garden bed, ideal conditions for healthy tree growth and aiding in mitigation of flood water. The Jacaranda trees as shown on the proposed South Plaza plan will be planted in compact gravel, with restricted root growth by the concrete retaining walls and are situated too close together (future canopy conflicts and suppression of healthy canopies). The proposed design for the South Plaza would be a poor design outcome for supporting healthy canopy trees, contributing to the site 15% canopy coverage in accordance with Sydney DCP 2012 and aiding in the mitigation of flooding.

If the replacement of the approved *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark) species is supported, the substitute species must be to a native tree species of a comparable mature size and within a garden bed area as detailed in the existing approved plans.

2.1 Maze Crescent

The City does not support the proposed deletion of six street trees along Maze Crescent. The six trees will provide much needed shade and aid in combating the urban heat island effect.

2.2 North Landscape

The proposed tree species within the northern landscaped area are predominantly small to medium sized trees that would reach a mature height of 10 metres. The City recommends larger canopy trees with a minimum mature height 15 metres are provided to achieve the 15% canopy coverage in accordance with the Sydney DCP 2012. The proposed raised tree planters on slab will not provide adequate soil depth to support healthy tree growth and do not comply with the Sydney Landscape Code. Consideration must be given to adequate soil availability and space (above and below ground) for all tree species to reach their full genetic potential.

2.3 South Plaza

The South Plaza and bioretention /detention basin design varies from the SSDA approved design. This results in a major change to the design layout, symmetry of the outdoor spaces that related to an overriding indigenous strategy for the site, reduces new trees planting from 10 to 6, and reduced surface materials and features.

The proposed raised planting walls are low and rely on 1:3 mounds to achieve 600-700mm soil depth. The planters on slab do not provide adequate soil depth to support healthy tree growth and do not comply with the Sydney Landscape Code.

2.4 East Plaza

Changes to the East plaza include rationalisation of the layout and addition of a new glazed awning (3.5-4m high) to engineering walk for users accessing the bike racks that segregates the landscape from the building. It's unclear if the seating walls will be accessible for students to sit and learn outdoors or now just a space that's viewed from the building.

The proposed changes to the layout, geometry, surface materials, and design quality of the plazas all dilutes and removes the considered TCL design approach and overriding indigenous strategy that was fundamental to the landscape design for the site. The changes may achieve significant cost savings, however, the significant changes proposed to the plazas are not supported from a landscape perspective. Overall, the proposed amendments to the approved Landscape Plans would result in a poor

outcome for achieving 15% canopy coverage within 10 years of the completed works, in addition to mitigating the urban heat island effect and mitigating flood water. The City recommends additional larger-canopy trees with a minimum mature height 15 metres are incorporated into the design.

The substitution of *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark) with *Jacaranda mimosifolia* (Jacaranda) is not in keeping with the 'University's Wingara Mura design principles or 'Paul Carter's original 2005 'Golden Grove' exploration as a natural extension of Cadigal Green's' as referred to in the Request for Further Information Letter prepared by the applicant. Any proposed substitute species for the *Melaleuca quinquenervia* (Paperbark) must be to a native tree species of a comparable mature size.

For the above reasons, the proposed Landscape Plans are not supported by the City and recommends alternatives to be explored prior to the determination of the application.

3 Flooding conditions

The RtS indicates that the proposal is seeking the replacement of the phrase 'flood planning level' to specifically refer to '1% AEP level' in Condition B33 as follows:

*Any material used for the habitable/non-habitable floor level below the **flood planning levels for each respective flood levels** shall comply with the flood compatible materials under section 6 – flood compatible materials of the Council's Interim floodplain Management Policy dated May 2014.*

With this change, the applicant no longer proposes any changes to conditions B35, B36 and B37. The City raises no objection to the removal of Conditions B37 and B38, however, recommends that the FPL should remain as 1% + 0.5m as per the Floodplain Management Policy, and any new works, below that level, should still comply with clauses B33, B35, and B36.

Should you wish to speak with a Council officer about the above, please contact Marie Burge, Planner, on 9265 9333 or at mburge@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Rees
Area Planning Manager