

Submission regarding SSD-80441462 (Waterloo Mixed Use Development 881-885 Bourke Street)

The site (and neighbouring Dasco site) have been vacant for many years. This development will provide many positive elements to the local community with new public domain works, through site link, Potter Street extension, and proposed artist and commercial spaces. The scale of the development is not unreasonable for an area so close to the city and its proximity to existing high density developments in Redfern and the Green Square area.

Public benefit

However, the Department should assess whether the proposed level of public benefit is proportionate to the additional scale and density sought. While the inclusion of affordable housing is positive, it still introduces additional dwellings and associated local impacts. Furthermore, the public domain improvements secured under the existing VPA and concept approval do not reflect the uplift now proposed. It may therefore be appropriate for the Department to explore whether further on-site public domain enhancements can be delivered (such as improved cycling infrastructure and multi-generational recreational facilities) to ensure benefits align with the increased development potential and changing demographics.

Transport

My other comment would be regarding implications to current public transport offerings. The EIS and Transport Impact Assessment state that the site is well positioned and serviced in terms of public transport, making note of Waterloo metro station, Green Square train station and local buses in the area. The reality is that:

1. Waterloo metro station is not a direct walk from the site
 - a. It is 950m walking distance as stated by the EIS – this is more than the 800m catchment rule of thumb for residents accessing railway stations.
 - b. There is currently no direct pedestrian link between Young and Elizabeth Streets for pedestrians moving east-west to and from the metro station – I understand there are future plans for some type of connection between Young and Morehead Streets (to connect to Wellington Street) but that is not part of this development and there is no firm timeframe for its delivery. People therefore need to take indirect routes to Waterloo metro station, which include walking via Danks, Philip or McEvoy Streets.
 - c. The topography between the site and station also makes it more challenging to walk as there is a quite a decrease in gradient towards the metro station, particularly between Elizabeth and Pitt Streets.
 - d. Given these elements, it is not reasonable to expect residents of the development to access Waterloo metro station by solely walking.
 - e. Note there is the option to catch a bus (392) to the metro station, however the capacity of bus services during peak hours are already at capacity (as discussed below).
2. Green Square train station is more direct along Bourke Street but it is further away
 - a. It is 1.1km walking distance as stated by the EIS – this is more than the 800m catchment rule of thumb for residents accessing railway stations.
 - b. There is no direct bus route linking Green Square train station and the site along Bourke Street or any other street.

- c. Given these elements, it is not reasonable to expect residents of the development to access Green Square train station by solely walking.
3. Local buses are already at capacity
- a. Buses are often already full once they get to the site's frontage along Bourke Street, especially 304 and 392 as they capture many areas of high bus usage.
 - b. Route 304 – connects the site to the City via Crown Street. This bus runs at a frequency of about 7-8 mins in the peak and is the main bus route connecting the site directly with the city. These buses in the peak are often already full on arrival, with bus drivers declining additional passengers due to the bus already reaching capacity.
 - c. Route 320 – connects the site to Central station. This bus runs every 20 mins and is therefore not a very viable transport option for local residents in the peak.
 - d. Route 392 – connects the site to Redfern train station via Waterloo metro station. Since the opening of Waterloo metro station, this bus route has increased in patronage with most buses in the peak already full on arrival, with bus drivers declining additional passengers due to the bus already reaching capacity. The bus runs every 10 mins in the peak so frequency should be improved in time for the completion of this development.
 - e. Route 343 – along Elizabeth Street to the City, runs similarly to 304 with capacity issues and bus stops located further away from the site.

Recommendations

- As part of a referral to TfNSW during the response to submissions stage, the Department should request TfNSW to provide comment on the plan for bus service improvements in the area in light of the addition of ~850 dwellings in this development, noting the site's distance to metro/train stations and likely reliance on existing bus services as the main form of public transport.
- Should the development be approved, include a condition requiring:
 - a post-completion transport monitoring program to assess impacts to local bus services and have data provided to TfNSW.
 - engagement with local residents and businesses to identify ongoing transport issues and solutions for Bourke Street.
 - the Applicant to provide signage, lighting and other wayfinding improvements along existing walking routes from the site to Waterloo metro station to assist in the routes' walkability, and to the satisfaction of the City of Sydney.
- Development to provide publicly accessible secure long-term bike storage facilities to support cycling as a mode of transport in the area, noting that most of the more established residential developments in the area do not have sufficient on-site provisions for bicycle parking.