

29 August 2022

Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124.

Submitted via the NSW Planning Portal
To whom it may concern,

RE: Submission regarding Gregory Place Build-to-Rent State Significant Development (SSD).

This letter has been prepared by Mecone on behalf of the Trustees of the Roman Catholic Church for the Diocese of Saint Maron, Sydney also known as the Maronite Catholic Eparchy of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania (Maronite) to provide feedback on the SSD application (SSD-31179510) for proposed concept affordable housing and build-to-rent development at 2A Gregory Place, Harris Park (development site).

The submission is made for 40-46 Alice Street, Harris Park and 128A Alfred Street, Harris Park (submission site) which adjoins the development site to the south (Refer to Figure 1 below). The site notably is currently occupied by the Our Lady of Lebanon Co-Cathedral (OLLC).



Figure 1: Context map of both sites

It is understood that the SSD application is on Exhibition for a proposed Concept Development Application (DA) to facilitate the development of a build-to-rent residential development for three (3) freestanding buildings ranging in height from 4-8 storeys for 483 dwellings (of which 50% are affordable housing) with 48,685m² of total gross floor area (GFA) at a floor space ratio (FSR) of 2.5:1.

1. Submission Site

The submission site is legally defined as Lot 212 DP 1117339 and Lot 2 DP209226 known as 40-46 Alice Street, Harris Park and 128A Alfred Street, Harris Park, respectively.



Figure 2: Submission site

The site includes OLLC which was opened in 1978 with the Our Lady of Lebanon's (OLL) hall. Across the road a school was established by the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family a few years earlier.

OLLC is the largest Maronite Catholic Parish in Australia. The OLLC holds five (5) Sunday church services with over 1,000 people at each service. At Easter celebrations, Christmas celebrations and feast day the parish will hold over 10,000 people at one time and caters for over 40,000 total parishioners.

The cathedral is regarded as a symbolic and notable landmark with the white arched columns, 'dome' roof and statue of OLL on the roof, contributing to the character and culture of the area over the last 50 years. There is high cultural significance of the cathedral to the community, and it is regarded as a key structure.

The site also includes a range of other land uses and services to support the Maronite community including a youth centre, admin offices, priest residences, counselling rooms, a

hall, Sunday School, recreational room, multi-storey parking, a childcare and seniors housing (90 beds).



Figure 3: Our Lady Of Lebanon, Harris Park – cathedral building view from south

2. Direct impacts to submission site

Height and bulk

The development site has a maximum height of building control of 9.2m under the Parramatta LEP 2011.

The development proposes a variation to this height limit with a proposed building height of up to 27.9m (67% variation). We acknowledge a Clause 4.6 Statement has been provided by Pacific Planning to support this variation however this does not adequately justify this large exceedance in height.

The proponent uses the reasoning that greater heights should be sought for the site given its location in close proximity to the Parramatta CBD which affords greater densities for residential and commercial uses.

However, in comparison, the site and surrounding Harris Park area is highly constrained by heritage values, environmental factors like flooding and low-density residential development. Therefore, the height proposed is considered excessive for the site noting the immediate surrounding context of the site.

To the west heights are limited to 6m, to the east heights are limited to 11m-14m and further south heights are limited to 13m. With the surrounding development only having heights of up to 14m, the proposal is considered out of context and unsympathetic to surrounding buildings.

The design of the buildings aims to minimise the bulk located at the north of the development site at the interface with the Hambledon Cottages (State heritage item at 47 Hassall Street,

Harris Park) to be sympathetic to heritage values. However, this has meant additional massing located at the south of the site which directly impacts the submission site.



Figure 4: Proposed concept development envelope - southeast view (Source: Stanisic Architects)

Privacy

The proposed bulk and scale will have negative privacy impacts onto OLLC and the childcare (located on lower level in the cathedral) which is located at the southern boundary of the development site.

Considering the cathedral is approximately 3-4 storeys high, the proposed 4-8 storey development is anticipated to compromise the privacy of parishioners and visitors of OLLC.

As noted previously, most of the bulk of the proposed development is located on the south which directly impacts OLLC the most.

Additionally, roof top gardens are not considered appropriate for the development noting privacy issues of residents onlooking onto the submission site.

Noise

The proposal proposes 483 units over the three buildings resulting in approximately 2,781 residents. This large increase in residents will have a large negative noise impact to the OLLC and surrounding low density development. This includes plant and equipment items like ventilation plants, fans and air-conditioners.

There is also anticipated noise associated with construction especially with bulk excavation works which will directly impact the southern boundary of the development at the submission site. A comprehensive Construction Noise Management Plan will be required to mitigate the noise impacts to the submission site and especially the OLLC.

Access to development is proposed at Gregory Place. As this is the only proposed access point to the development, being close to the submission site, there will be negative noise impacts disadvantaging OLL.

Noting OLLC occasionally hold events and services utilising outdoor areas, the anticipated noise from the proposal with significantly disrupt this.

Overshadowing

Considering the development site is located north of the submission site, OLLC is anticipated to experience significant overshadowing. This includes the play area of the childcare within the cathedral building, right at the boundary to the development.

Also, solar access to the translucent stained-glass windows within the OLLC will be compromised, detracting from the visual attractiveness of the cathedral.

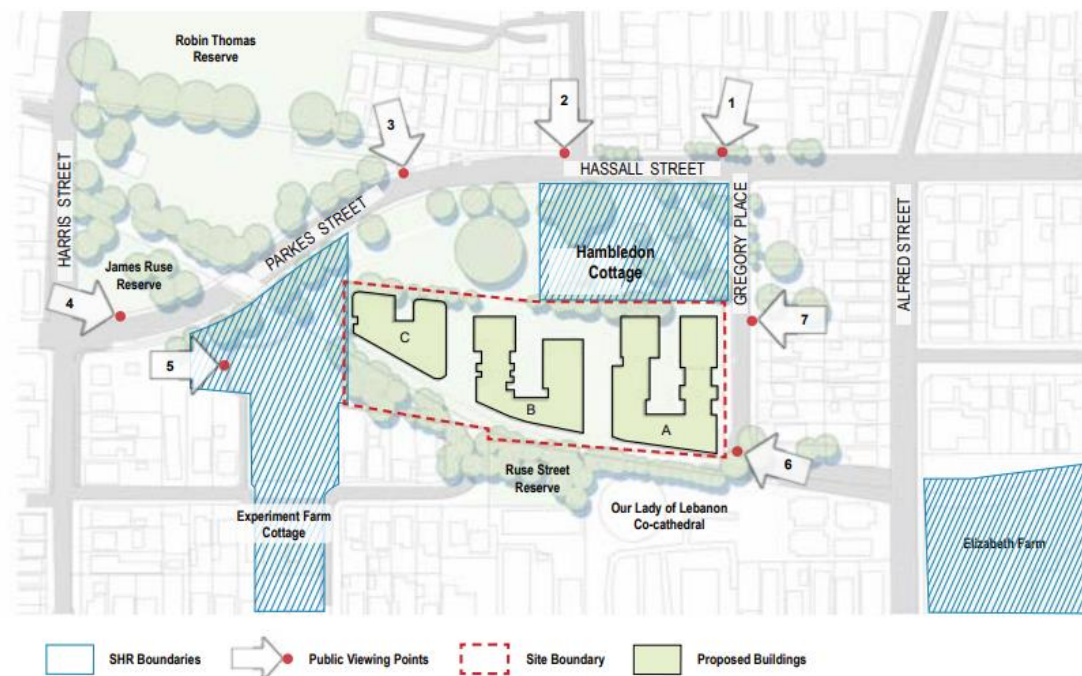
This loss of solar access will have negative impacts to the ability to develop the site in the future which is discussed further below.

The Shadow Diagrams prepared by Stanisis Architects have been sighted and we question their accuracy in demonstrating the shadowing impacts to southern properties including the submission site. By 3pm, we note that most of the submission site will be overshadowed during winter solstice.

Views

The development is anticipated to reduce the views of the submission site to State Heritage Register (SHR) listed site at Experiment Farm Reserve (to northwest of OLLC), SHR heritage item at Hambledon Cottage Reserve (north of OLLC), Robin Thomas Reserve and James Ruse Reserve (northwest of OLLC).

The excessive height and bulk of the development also blocks the visibility of the submission site from these northern open spaces which detracts from the prominence of the cathedral building in the skyline.



Key public viewing points - Proposal

Figure 5: Viewing points around development site (Source: Taylor Brammer)

Future redevelopment

The proposed overdevelopment of the development site will have highly negative impacts to the future redevelopment of the submission site.

The current buildings on the submission site are considered underdeveloped relative to its R4 high density residential zoning.

The proposed concept development will have adverse visual, privacy, noise and shadowing impacts to the submission site as previously detailed which will compromise the future redevelopment of the site.

3. Impacts to surrounding context and environment

Heritage

The sites are highly constrained by various heritage listed items and heritage conservation areas including the following.

- Hambledon Cottage (SHR item)
- Elizabeth Farm House (SHR item)
- Experiment Farm Cottage (SHR item)
- Robin Thomas Reserve (Local heritage item)
- Experiment Farm Conservation Area
- Elizabeth Farm Conservation Area

These items and conservation areas surround both sites to the north, west and east and considered culturally significant due to post-war significance.

The design of the development has considered impacts of bulk and scale on the Hambledon Cottage located north of development site and the closest heritage item to the site. However, this comes at the expense of southern properties with the proposed bulk and scale concentrated at the southern boundary of the development site, impacting the OLLC.

The proposed bulk and scale are not considered in consistency with the intended landscape and character of the surrounding heritage items and conservation areas. The development will dominate the landscape and obstruct views from heritage items to the surrounding environment and hinder site through links between heritage areas.



Figure 5: Heritage Map – submission site highlighted in green (Source: Mecone Mosaic)

Aboriginal culture

The site is considered a part of a sensitive Aboriginal archaeological area. The development fails to celebrate and acknowledge Aboriginal culture and engagement with the Aboriginal community is considered minimal. The proposal does not take into account the importance of Clay Cliff Creek or try to restore a natural creek that speaks to its I

Surrounding low density

The bulkiness and height of the proposal is far too inconsistent with surrounding lower density dwellings located to the east and southwest of the site which have maximum height controls of 6m-11m currently occupied by one-two storey dwellings, being far less than the 27.9m height proposed.

The apparent inconsistency of the proposed height to the surrounding environment contributes to undesired outcomes for the intended character of this area.

Parking and traffic

The development is anticipated to have negative parking and traffic implications to the surrounding sites.

It is anticipated that with a large increase in residents as a result of this development, there will be parking onflow issues onto surrounding streets including Alice Street (fronting submission site) which disadvantage the existing residents, parishioners/ visitors of OLLC and visitors to significant heritage items nearby.

There is also an anticipated great increase in traffic as the proposal relies on use of sub-arterial/ arterial roads and not local roads. Therefore, for existing residents that are currently affected by additional traffic on existing sub-arterial/arterial roads, they will be further disadvantaged.

Flooding

The development site has mainstream flood liability due to its proximity to Clay Cliff Creek and impacted by the larger Parramatta River system for extreme events (specifically in the Probable Maximum Flood).

Sufficient information is required to confirm the development of the site will not increase flooding of adjacent properties in the design event and result in negative impacts to surrounding sites.

Contamination

A Contamination Phase 1 report (26 August 2015) from Sullivan Environmental Sciences concluded that historic activities at the site may have caused potential site contamination and may pose a potential health risk.

The subsequent Contamination Phase 2 report and Remedial Action Plan (RAP) (2022) are based on findings of Phase 1 (2015). While they conclude the land is suitable for development subject to recommendations, the lack of investigations undertaken for the Phase 2/ RAP reports may mean any recent contamination present on site after the Phase 1 report is now is unaccounted for. Even if no further contamination has occurred in the last 7 years, this has not been confirmed with a recent site investigation.

4. Planning processes

Notification and stakeholder engagement

The lack of transparency and on-going consultation between the proponent and surrounding landowners has resulted in a proposed concept form that is unsupported and inconsistent with the surrounds.

The Stakeholder Management Report prepared by Forward Thinking commented that there was 'general support for the proponent's concept plans' by the OLLC which is not correct. The lack of transparency with OLLC before the lodgment of this application has resulted in an objection to this proposal from OLLC as the form proposed is considered incompatible with the surrounds.

This lack of consultation prior to lodgement has implications to the Marionite community. There was no appropriate time awarded to review the development, provide feedback and notify parishioners before formal submission of the SSD to avoid objection during exhibition.

Site Compatibility Certificate

The development site is zoned as IN1 General Industrial (under Parramatta LEP 2011), it is acknowledged that this SSD relies on a Site Compatibility Certificate (SCC) issued 19 July 2017 for 2A Gregory Place, Harris Park under the previous Affordable Rental Housing SEPP to permit the development of affordable housing on site.

The Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) expressed at the time concerns regarding the bulk and scale proposed and required "any future development be in-keeping and compatible with existing and approved uses within the area surrounding the site". Parramatta City Council also expressed concern for the excessive form proposed noting surrounding land uses, heritage and flooding.

It is noted that the final development outcome still does not adequately address surrounding land uses and environmental constraints as required by the SCC.

Also, it is noted that the SCC is valid for 5 years as per clause 37(9) of the previous Affordable

Rental Housing SEPP. Therefore, the validity of the SCC to support the permissibility of the proposed use on the land is questioned as the SCC has expired (2017 to 2022).

The use of the land for industrial is not seen as appropriate and OLLC supports the residential use of the site. But the reliance on the SCC to achieve this proposal is not considered optimal, as the SCC is seen as a means to permit residential development on the site not a means to amend planning controls like height.

A rezoning of the development site which proposes greater densities and heights for the site as sought by the proponent is seen as a more appropriate planning pathway to achieve a suitable and optimal development of the site.

5. Conclusion

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on the SSD application (SSD-31179510) for proposed concept affordable housing and build-to-rent development at 2A Gregory Place, Harris Park. We look forward to your response which outlines how neighbouring properties feedback have been considered in the determination of the application.

In summary, Marionite support the use of the site for affordable housing but object to the SSD being approved in its proposed form noting the excessive height, bulk and incompatibility with surrounding context.

It is considered that a rezoning of the site to achieve a large building envelope than permitted is more optimal for the future development of the development site. As the validity of the SCC which permits affordable housing on the site is questioned noting the 5-year expiry.

If you have any questions regarding the above submission, please feel free to contact Adam Coburn on 8667 8668 or via email at acoburn@mecone.com.au if you wish to discuss this letter in more detail.

Yours sincerely



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