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26 April 2023

Adam Flynn
Director Social and Infrastructure Assessments
NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Dear Mr Flynn,

**Cover Letter to Draft Submission - State Significant Development
(SSD-39005127) – Alterations and Additions to Meriden Senior School**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed amended SSD – Alterations and Additions to Meriden Senior School. Council staff have reviewed the amended proposal and prepared a draft submission which is attached below.

Please note that this draft submission has not yet been endorsed by Council. A final submission will be provided upon endorsement by the Council in May 2023.

Please contact Paul Bu - Place Planning Coordinator on 9748 9999 or paul.bu@strathfield.nsw.gov.au for any further correspondence or to discuss Councils input.

Regards,

Clare Harley
Director Planning & Environment

Strathfield Council Draft Submission to State Significant Development (SSD-39005127) – Alterations and Additions to Meriden Senior School – April 2023

Strathfield Council provided a submission regarding the original scheme in October 2022 and appreciates the opportunity to provide comments on the amended application for SSD – Alterations and Additions to Meriden Senior School, which includes:

- the construction of two new buildings, one of which will replace an existing lawn area;
- the inclusion of an adjoining property at 30-32 Redmyre Road which will be utilised as a new lawn area.

It is noted that the amended application ameliorates some of Councils original concerns. However, some concern remains regarding traffic, built form, deep soil landscaping, trees.

Built Form and Historic Character Interface

As stated in the original submission:

Maintaining streetscape character and amenity is important. The Strathfield Town Centre has a distinct boundary with the quaint Redmyre Road Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) which includes local items and a suburban feel. Meriden straddles these distinct localities. Currently, the landscaped open space area within the school adjoins the HCA and provides an appropriate transition to the Town Centre.

The relationship of the subject site with the adjoining Redmyre Road Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) has been significantly improved by the amendments to the proposal. In particular, the proposed demolition of 30-32 Redmyre Road will create significant visual separation to the HCA, particularly in conjunction with Margaret Street. The amendments have also refined projections of façade elements, specifically by reducing the vertical blade depths from 1,200mm to 900mm. The materiality and perceived scale are now considered acceptable.

However, the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) anticipates the recently acquired allotment at 30-32 Redmyre Road will be developed in the future, with no details provided on the proposed scale. This area is labelled as an interim open space in the application. It is strongly suggested that a condition of consent requires this area to remain open space in perpetuity to maintain the transition to the HCA.

The height of the Design and Creative Arts Building (DaCA) is proposed to be reduced from RL 31.88 to RL 29.75 which will help reduce the visual prominence of the structure. However, the design of both the new Social Science and DaCA buildings still protrude above the 11m height plane stipulated in Strathfield LEP 2012. The Street Elevation on Drawing DA-03-0003 shows that the DaCA building is taller than the ridge of the main building and the auditorium of the heritage listed Wallis Building. The design the DaCA building needs to ensure that the building is subservient in its built form scale to the neighbouring heritage item (the Wallis Building) when viewed from the surrounding public domain.

As such, it is recommended that the Applicant incorporates the following design amendments in the DaCA building to improve the built form outcome:

- Introduce a substantial indent as a visual break on the north and south façades to break up its visual mass and continuity. That will improve its relationship with the adjacent HCA and existing residential properties at 15 and 17 Margaret Street.
- Increase the upper-level setback from Redmyre Road to reduce its perceived scale from the public domain.

- Further lower the floor-to-floor heights to reduce the overall building height and the extent of non-compliance with the LEP height control.

Deep Soil Landscaping

The amended proposal offsets the loss of deep soil landscaping at Selbourne Lawn with a new open space area of approximately 848.6m² at 30-32 Redmyre Road. This addresses Council's concerns and is supported. However, the Amendment Report states:

Post the completion of the DaCA building, 30-32 Redmyre Road will be landscaped and is proposed to be used as outdoor play space for Meriden students until such time as a future application is lodged for the redevelopment of this site for school purposes.

Council is of the view that this area should remain deep soil landscaping in perpetuity. As stated in the original submission:

Ground level open space with deep soil landscaping provides superior amenity for students compared to similar open space on upper levels. There are also secondary benefits in terms of stormwater percolation and reduction of the urban heat island effect. Accordingly, more should be done to protect existing ground floor lawn areas. This is particularly since, with the future increase in scale of development within Strathfield Town Centre, overshadowing of ground floor open space will only increase. The more ground level open space is retained, the greater the likelihood that a portion will retain solar access at any one time.

Given the potential for intensification within the Strathfield Town Centre, any extensions to the school should seek to provide a capacity that can accommodate this growth. This includes an increased demand for play areas within the school. Given the reality of the growth, any loss of ground floor open space is unlikely to ever be reclaimed. Accordingly, its protection becomes critical.

The loss of Selbourne Lawn and the future loss of lawn area at 30-32 Redmyre Road is considered unacceptable.

Trees

Trees Proposed for Removal

There are 15 trees within the allotment at 30-32 Redmyre Road. Of these, 11 are proposed for removal. All of these are either exempt species under the Strathfield Consolidated Development Control Plan (SCDCP) 2005 or less than 4m in height and, therefore, not protected under the SCDCP 2005. Accordingly, their removal is acceptable on the basis that replacement planting can be provided. In this regard, the application states:

A future application for the school site could consider new replacement trees to enhance the landscape setting of the site once the future use of the school site is determined.

This does not provide an acceptable level of certainty for Council. The application in its current form needs to be acceptable on merit. The removal of existing trees needs to be offset. The Landscape Plan has not provided for any replacement tree planting, given that six trees of significant size are to be removed (as well as smaller specimens).

A minimum of 12 canopy trees (2:1 ratio to significant trees being removed) should be incorporated into the landscape scheme.

Trees Proposed for Retention

Four trees are proposed to be retained and are discussed in turn below.

Trees 39 and 52 are Cypress species located at the North East and South East corners of the property, respectively. The impact of the amended proposed works does not appear to significantly alter conditions around these trees from the previous scheme and their retention is supported in line with the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA).

Tree 44 (*Corymbia citriodora*) is a tree of high significance and is noted as a priority for retention within the original AIA. Tree 50 (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) is a tree of moderate significance and is located at a prominent position near the corner of Margaret Street and Redmyre Road. The AIA Addendum does not address the impact of the proposed amended works on these trees. The proposed works include significant soil level changes throughout almost 50% of each tree's Tree Protection Zone (TPZ) and a proposed new brick-based boundary fence. The AIA should detail any required design modifications to retain and protect the health and condition of these trees. This could include the use of pier and beam construction methods to span roots. In addition, the internal stormwater pipe connection shown within TPZ (and potentially Structural Root Zone (SRZ)) of Tree 50 should be relocated.

There are two street trees (*Lophostemon confertus*) within the Redmyre Road verge of the property. They are noted as Trees A and B in the AIA. The AIA Addendum does not address the impact of the proposed stormwater to kerb connection which is within TPZ and likely SRZ of Tree A. The AIA should assess the impact of the proposed stormwater works on Tree A, including any required design modifications to retain and protect the health and condition of the tree. The SRZ and TPZ calculations for Trees A and B should be recalculated as they were found by Council's Tree Officer to be greater than nominated in AIA. In addition, tree bond and protection conditions should apply for Trees A and B.

It is noted that these trees assist in softening the built form and improving the interface with the HCA in the vicinity. Their protection is therefore of high importance.

During Construction

A Tree Protection Plan and Specification is required for all trees to be retained and should apply to the demolition and construction phases of the project. The Construction Management Plan nominates the property as being temporarily used for construction purposes for the adjacent DaCA building. Appendix 1 provides a 'Prospective Site Layout' which shows an internal construction road through the location of Tree 39, Tree 44 and Tree 50. All trees are proposed for retention with Tree 44 being of high significance and landscape value.

The construction period site layout requires modification in collaboration with the project arborist to ensure the retention and protection of these existing trees.

Landscape Design

The proposal does not provide any screen planting at the boundary with 19-21 Margaret Street.

The Landscape Plan should nominate suitable screen planting to maintain the amenity of the north facing apartments of this property.

Traffic

The proposal seeks to extend an existing driveway on Redmyre Road to allow for two-way access into the new basement within the proposed DaCA building. The basement is proposed to have 53 staff car parking spaces. The application has been reviewed by Council's Traffic Engineer and it is considered that the amended application addresses Council's concerns in relation to off-street pick up and drop off area. As requested, additional details have been provided on the proposed median extension and deceleration lane. These appear acceptable, subject to a detailed plan being provided at the Construction Certificate stage. This can be worked out between Council Officers and the Builder and the time of construction. Council will take into consideration the Meriden Senior School Green Travel Plan when developing its own Strathfield Local Government Area Active Travel Plan into the future.

It is noted that Transport for NSW has requested the on-site parking provision within the DaCA building basement be reduced. Council does not believe the 53 spaces should be reduced. As the school continues to expand, it makes sense to utilise the opportunity to provide additional parking now. This parking will also reduce the pressure for on-street parking on the road network surrounding the school grounds. Council does, however, note a concern that the increase in student numbers and school capacity will cause additional congestion in the streets surrounding the school.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the amended SSD. As addressed above, Council have remaining concerns over the built form and landscaping of the proposed development.