

Detailed Submission by Dr Tim Brooker, 251 Forbes Street, objecting to the proposed development.

In principle the residents of this area of Darlinghurst (Forbes Street and Thomson Street) have no objection to the School constructing additional new facilities including a swimming pool within the site. However the full extent of the proposed Masterplan building demolitions and new building constructions will, we believe, be highly disruptive and unacceptable in this local area of Darlinghurst, where the road network traffic calming changes and road narrowings which have been implemented since the completion of the Eastern Distributor Roadworks in 1999 (including the narrowing of Bourke Street to create a cycleway and the creation of angle parking and landscaped traffic islands in Forbes Street) mean that the local road network is no longer able to safely and comfortably accommodate the number and type of large truck movements which will be necessary to service a major infrastructure project like the proposed Masterplan.

A number of the Forbes Street and Thomson Street residents are also extremely concerned that their detailed comments which have been provided to the School in the consultation process to date since October 2018, have not been adequately addressed by any changes to the submitted development plans.

The primary concern of the nearby Forbes Street residents is that the height of the proposed new Multipurpose Building at RL 53.0 is between 1.4 metres and 2.8 metres higher than sections of the existing Old Gym Building, which is located on that part of the SCEGGS School site. This will cause unacceptable view loss impacts from either an entire storey or half a storey of the twelve Forbes Street houses from number 231 to 253, which currently have generally unobstructed views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge through the existing view corridor over the upper part of the SCEGGS school site. The only way in which this adverse view loss impact can be avoided is by reducing the proposed new building height by an entire storey, from RL 53.0 m to RL 50.2 m

There are also approximately eight other serious amenity impacts and other deficiencies with the application and the information provided in the application, which are each sufficient to justify refusal by the DPE of virtually every component of the current Masterplan application.

1/ The design of the seventh storey (rooftop level) of the proposed multi purpose building appears to include outdoor areas, which could be used for school functions/receptions or other potential noise generating uses. Any assessment of the acceptability of this building in terms of its height and other impacts for neighbouring residents, must also consider all potential uses for this level of the building. Also, although the proposed new multi purpose building is within the defined building height limit for the Upper Part of the SCEGGS Site (facing Forbes Street), the new building is clearly not complying with the defined building height limit for the lower part of the SCEGGS Site (facing Bourke Street), where it needs to be at least 2-3 stories lower to comply.

2/ There is a significant existing landscaped buffer zone including mature trees 7-8 metres tall in the northern footpath end of Thomson Street. This landscaped buffer needs to be conserved as a visual screen during both the construction work for the future multi purpose building and as a longer term visual screen to the proposed new building. Any excavation zone for the new multi purpose building must be set back at least 2.5 metres from the site boundary to the public roadway of Thomson Street and the adjoining houses, to protect the existing soil moisture levels to ensure the survival of these trees.

3/ Also, even more importantly, to avoid potential structural damage and undesirable vibration type damage or effects on the northern most houses at Thomson Street, this excavation also needs to be set back at least 2.5 metres from the site boundary for this reason.

4/ There is no information in the assessment report for either construction traffic daily or peak hourly truck volumes for any of the proposed building or the number of construction workforce vehicles which are likely to be parked on street, in the streets surrounding the development. This is a clear deficiency in the SEARS requirement for assessment of the “construction traffic impacts” for the project as without this information there can be no assessment of the likely impacts. With the scale of the proposed deep basement level excavations envisaged, the large amounts of excavated spoil and consequent large numbers of truck movements generated are likely to cause unacceptable adverse amenity impacts to the adjoining quiet residential neighbourhoods of Forbes, Bourke and Thomson Streets.

5/Any attempt by the school to use Thomson Street for construction access by either trucks or for workforce parking, will cause unacceptable traffic safety and amenity impacts for the residents of this street, which is a very narrow street but has parking permitted along both sides currently. Because there is no proper cul de sac at the northern end, any vehicle larger than a small car cannot always turn around in the street. At the school consultation meetings regarding the proposed masterplan, the school has been repeatedly asked to provide assurances to the local residents that there will be no attempts to use Thomson Street for any construction access for any of the proposed masterplan buildings and the school has repeatedly declined to give these assurances.

6/The 1920s Wilkinson building which is located at the corner of Forbes street and St Peters Street makes a highly significant visual contribution to defining the heritage streetscape of this section of Forbes Street and no changes to the facades of this building should be permitted in order to maintain the existing heritage character of this section of Forbes Street. Recently a Victorian terrace house at number 235 Forbes Street was effectively demolished and rebuilt, but the owners of that property were required to preserve and restore the existing building façade as part of their renovation and a similar condition should be imposed on any similar major redevelopment of the Wilkinson building.

7/The existing 1830s building Barham, designed by the renowned architect of that period, John Verge, which is located within the school site, only has limited public views available from the Forbes Street footpath. The proposed Masterplan desires to further reduce these public views by constructing an inappropriate modern building on the Forbes Street side of the Barham building, which will then effectively block all meaningful public views of the historic building from the Forbes Street footpath and make these views only available in the future to persons within the private areas of the school grounds. This loss of all existing public views of an important heritage building is totally unacceptable and in accordance with current international heritage practice (for which I quote as an example Chiswick House in the UK) the existing later additions on the eastern side of Barham should be removed to restore the original appearance and curtilage of the building on that side and then to remove the existing high wall also to fully restore the original public views of the building from the Forbes Street footpath.

8/The proposed new “early learning/child day care” use at the site with 90 proposed “student” places is a clear breach of the existing agreement by the school not to increase “student” numbers at the site. These additional early learning/day care places at the site will actually have a greater per student impact on the already significant school traffic and parking congestion on the local streets surrounding the site as the parents of these children will be even less likely to walk or use public transport and will therefore have a higher car usage rate than for the parents of the other school students. Also the parent’s vehicles will be parked for longer, either within or in the vicinity of the school site, due to the longer drop off and pick up period required for these younger age students.

