

SUBMISSION RE SSD-8996

LORETO NORMANHURST SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT

(CONCEPT PROPOSAL AND STAGE ONE)

91-93 PENNANT HILLS RD, NORMANHURST

Objection to Proposal

I object to the Development Proposal. My concerns relate to traffic, parking, construction arrangements, streetscape and the proposed Mt Pleasant Pavilion. I have also made some comments on the size of the proposed expansion.

1 - TRAFFIC

In the 44 years that I have lived in [REDACTED] many traffic generating developments have been proposed. Each was considered in isolation and, in isolation, each proposal was deemed acceptable. In combination they have generated a many fold increase in traffic in Mt Pleasant Ave and have seriously overloaded the intersection with Pennant Hills Rd (the intersection is rated F). As with previous development proposals, this concept plan suggests that further overloading of the intersection is acceptable without fully explaining why. But with this proposal there is, at last, an opportunity to look at the overall picture and to include it when considering the proposal. Matters which I believe are relevant to this consideration are:

- In March 2010 the Minister for Planning approved Major Project No. 07_0166 (Concept Plan for Wahroonga Estate). The approval covered five precincts, one of which was the Mt Pleasant Precinct consisting of 16 dwelling houses, 38 town houses and 27 residential flat building dwellings. While much of the Wahroonga Estate is now complete construction of the Mt Pleasant Precinct has yet to commence. When completed all traffic will have access only via the intersection with Pennant Hills Rd;
- In late 2019 an Early Learning Centre was approved for Mt Pleasant Ave and again, construction has not yet commenced but when completed much of the traffic will have access via the intersection with Pennant Hills Rd;
- The Loreto concept plan proposes a large boarding house and a pavilion (which may include a grandstand and function centre) with access from Mt Pleasant Ave; and
- Recent traffic counts for the early learning centre were taken just prior to the end of the school year when a substantial number of students were absent on school camps or had already broken up (particularly Year 12 students) and were largely taken outside peak times. If these traffic counts are to be used for any further analysis then appropriate adjustments should be made to correct for approved and proposed new developments and for shortcomings in the recent counts.

The applicant's traffic studies show that there are long average delays for traffic leaving Mt Pleasant Ave. The intersection is operating at level F indicating that it is already over capacity. The geometry of the intersection is also a safety concern and a recent road safety

audit by DC Traffic Engineering found that turns from Mt Pleasant Ave, both right and left, are dangerous (as is the right turn in). This is particularly so because of the a high brick fence at the north east corner of Mt Pleasant Ave which severely restricts the view of oncoming traffic in lane 1 of Pennant Hills Rd and the intersection geometry. These factors make gap selection hazardous.

There have been several proposals to ban right turns out from Mt Pleasant Ave at certain times of the day. While accident statistics do support concerns about the safety of the intersection, they do not support proposals to ban right turns out (accident statistics quoted in the application do not include any accidents for a vehicle turning right out) and I am not aware that any intersection studies have been done to justify this action. At present right and left turns can operate in parallel, but if all turns are left then there will likely be even longer average delays, pushing the intersection even deeper into category F without, in any way, addressing the gap selection problem and any such ban would substantially reduce amenity for Mt Pleasant Ave residents.

The Mt Pleasant Ave/Pennant Hills Rd corner needs urgent attention to address its existing delay and safety issues and without that, it cannot safely accommodate any increase in traffic volume. I believe there are three ways forward:

1. Traffic signals have often been proposed for the intersection but I understand that Roads and Maritime Services are opposed on the grounds that it is too close to the signalised intersection of Pennant Hills Rd with Osborn Rd (approx. 200m). I find this curious as there are already six pairs of signalised intersections on Pennant Hills Rd, within 5 km of Mt Pleasant Ave, having approximately 200m spacing (Jasmine Rd & Hinemoa Ave, Duffy Ave & Loch Maree Ave, The Comenarra Pkwy & Bellevue St, Bellevue St & Railway Pde (eastbound on PH Rd), Trebor Rd & Boundary Rd and Boundary Rd & Beecroft Rd). I think traffic signals would be a viable way forward;
2. Connect Mt Pleasant Ave to Osborn Rd and widen Osborn Rd to accommodate additional traffic, for the full length to Osborn Rd. This would ameliorate existing problems on Osborn Rd and allow access from Mt Pleasant Ave to Pennant Hills Rd at traffic signals. This would require the school to give up a strip of land for the full length of Osborn Rd (could be done now but would become much harder once the Concept Plan is implemented) but would make it easier for it to pursue this and other future development. It would also require the school to provide land just north of its protected bushland for a connecting road, or alternatively the Adventist community have previously offered, on more than one occasion, to make land available for a connection at the southern of Osborn Rd and if that offer is still available it would obviate the need for a connecting road; or
3. Reject the aspects of this proposal that will generate traffic in Mt Pleasant Ave and all future traffic generating developments in Mt Pleasant Ave.

2 - PARKING

Previous developments were meant to have adequate parking for all school users but, by my assessment, about 40 staff and 20 students regularly park on Mt Pleasant Ave. On-site parking should be provided for these vehicles in addition to vehicles generated by the proposed developments.

3 – CONSTRUCTION ARRANGEMENTS

Bringing trucks in via Mt Pleasant Ave and out via Osborn Rd is sensible and has been adopted for previous developments at Loreto but looping them in and out at the present Mt Pleasant Ave gates before entering again further to the south would create a dangerous situation.

For previous construction works all trucks have entered only once, that is where the southern Mt Pleasant Ave construction access point is proposed. Building materials were then conveyed to where they were required on the site. This avoids the dangerous practice of bringing large trucks into and out of the school at a point of poor visibility (on top of a hill and at a bend in the road) and where the road is narrowest.

4 - STREETSCAPE

I do not agree that the boarding house, as proposed, is in keeping with its surroundings.

Mt Pleasant Ave is an old residential street. The houses are mostly brick and are set well back from the road. They are mostly single storey and many (including my own) are 100 years old. The proposed boarding house would look starkly modern in style, it would be six storeys high, 110m long and be set back just 6 m from the property boundary. It would be constructed of materials not used elsewhere in the street.

The boarding house as proposed would look completely alien and would dominate surrounding houses. A partial solution would be to break it into several distinctly separate buildings, each no more than two stories high and each set well back (at least 12m) from the property boundary to allow room for landscaping and screening as well as reducing the impact on Mt Pleasant Ave. If necessary, the buildings could be connected by enclosed walkways.

I also do not understand why, given that it is to have 40 car parking spaces, the boarding house will not generate traffic. This should be explained before further consideration of the boarding house proposal.

5 – MT PLEASANT PAVILION

It is hard to accept that a pavilion that might contain a grandstand and a conference centre, among other uses, would not generate traffic and there are no details given to support this assertion. Given Mt Pleasant Ave's well known traffic problems I think this part of the concept plan should be rejected. This would also allow space for a more spread out and less imposing boarding facility.

SIZE OF THE EXPANSION

Many of the residents' concerns with this proposed development arise because of its size.

The concept proposal justifies the target of 2,000 students in part by the community benefit of providing for expected growth in student numbers in the northern part of Sydney. But this benefit comes at a cost to the amenity of residents and the two should be balanced. The expansion proposed (74% increase in student numbers and similar increase in dormitory beds) is well in excess of Loreto's share of student growth and the campus has limited capacity to cope. A substantial part of the campus, the protected bushland, is not available for building development, sporting fields or other open areas. So, to accommodate the numbers, it is proposed to dramatically increase building heights right to the edge of the campus.

If Loreto was seeking only a proportionate growth on this campus then many of their neighbour's concerns would be more easily resolved.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.