

I am a resident of Osborn Road Normanhurst and wish to lodge an objection to the Loreto School development application (SSD-8996). My objections relate to the following:

Rationale

The application states that the development is justified "on the basis that it will offer additional positive social economic and ecological benefits". I do not consider that the application provides evidence that justifies this conclusion. On the contrary, any benefits will accrue solely to the Loreto community

The application states that the development of the school site is necessary in order to update and refurbish old buildings, and to enable the increase in the student population. I do not have any argument against the upgrade of school facilities, but would dispute the need to allow for the increase in student numbers, and the implication that this is a service to the community. The application cites a projected increase in the school enrolments in the North District area of Sydney of 20%. However the proposed increase for Loreto Normanhurst is in the order of 75%. Furthermore, as an expensive private school, Loreto Normanhurst is only accessible to a limited portion of the population.

Consultation

The development application states that there were a number of opportunities for community consultation. This in fact amounted to two 'information' sessions, held within a few days of each other. I was absent overseas at the time and did not have an opportunity to attend either session. I did not receive the postcard advising of these sessions, and had no knowledge of the proposed expansion of the school until I received a letter early in December 2019. Information does not equate to consultation, and my reading of the application gives not a hint of any attempt to consider the views of the local community prior to lodgement of the application.

Community Access

The application states that "the school grounds are generally accessible for residents and the community". It is true that the community can access the pool for swimming lessons, fitness squads and aqua aerobics, and a local basketball team uses the gym. However, in the more than 40 years I have lived adjacent to the Loreto property, access to the grounds has significantly decreased, as a high fence has been erected, and gates are locked out of school hours and at weekends and during school holidays. It is no longer possible, for example, to walk through the bush from Osborn Road to Mount Pleasant Avenue in order to access the bush tracks at the end of Mt Pleasant Avenue, as was previously possible. Although I understand there is some justification for this, it makes nonsense of the statement that the school is open to the community.

Traffic

The additional traffic which will be generated by the proposed development is to my mind the most significant issue. Traffic during peak school arrival and departure times, and for Saturday sport and school functions, is already a problem, and despite the 'analysis' in the report, the addition of some 850 additional students and extra staff will inevitably add to the unacceptable difficulties for local residents, as well as increased risks to pedestrian safety. As a resident of Osborn Road, I do not have personal experience of the difficulties experienced by residents of Mount Pleasant Avenue, but am aware that there are also significant safety and congestion issues for these residents. Mount Pleasant Avenue also ends in a cul-de-sac, and is the only access road to a nursing home and retirement village.

Osborn Road is a narrow street which ends in a cul-de-sac. It is the only exit road onto Pennant Hills and Normanhurst Roads for a total of 6 streets. There are lights controlling the exit but despite this, the intersection can be quite dangerous, given the complexities of traffic turning right onto Pennant Hills Road from either Osborn Road or Normanhurst Road, traffic going straight ahead into and out of Normanhurst Road, and frequent heavy traffic on Pennant Hills Road. There are many mornings where it can take 4-5 sets of light changes to exit Osborn Road. Similarly, in the afternoon peak, there can be a significant delay entering Osborn Road, either from Normanhurst Road or Pennant Hills Road, because the road is blocked by cars which are waiting to enter the pick up zone. These problems are also exacerbated by the proximity of Loreto Normanhurst to Normanhurst Primary School. Any increase in the congestion of this intersection is in my opinion unacceptable.

The fact that Osborn Road is also a cul-de-sac, makes the turning of buses and large trucks difficult and dangerous. For this reason, and because of the narrowness of the road, it is not a road suitable for such large vehicles. An increase in the school population will doubtless mean more buses, and the construction period will obviously mean many large trucks will be using this road. I believe that this will create safety issues as well as adding to congestion.

The increase of 850 students will include 80 children accessing the Early Learning Centre which is the subject of a different development application. However, as these children will obviously not be arriving by public transport, it is obvious that this ELC will generate more than 80 extra car journeys each morning and afternoon, when the additional staff for such a centre is taken into account. The increase in students also includes primary students from K-4, although information about the proportion comprised of these younger students is not included in the application. However, it can be assumed that the majority of these young children will also be transported to and from school by car. Additional staffing for these extra students, teachers as well as ancillary staff, will further exacerbate this problem.

As the application notes, the school is close to a train station and the area is also serviced by a number of public bus routes. A large percentage of current students travel to school using these options, but they are used by few staff. The proportion of students travelling by public transport is however likely to decrease with the increase in the number of younger students (K-4). Public transport is also unlikely to be used by parents accessing the Early Learning Centre or workmen on the site. The application states that the proposal "continues to limit car parking and provides a Green Travel Plan that encourages use of public transport". My reading of the application did not reveal any such realistic plan, and 'encouraging the use of public transport' is to my mind an empty statement.

The application proposes an "Active Travel Plan" with goals including the promotion of walking and cycling for journeys to school, and "reduced reliance on the use of private vehicles for all journeys". A cited survey of current pupils reveals that no students cycle to school, so it is difficult to imagine that there will be a significant uptake of this option. Similarly, uptake of walking as an option would be dependent on a higher proportion of students living in the local area, and there is no indication that this will be the case. There is also no indication of how any reduced reliance on private vehicles would be achieved, and this goal, while laudable, is in my opinion totally unrealistic. What is the "long term plan for car use reduction"?

The application does not appear to give any consideration to the extra traffic which will be generated by what will undoubtedly be an extended period of building. The majority of workers on the site will drive to the school, adding considerably to parking and traffic congestion. This is in addition to the large trucks which will be required. The statement that "Stage 1 works will not result in any adverse traffic impacts on the surrounding road networks ..." is patently ridiculous, especially when considered in conjunction with the construction of the Early Learning Centre.

Parking

The current parking available on school grounds is limited, and the number of school personnel (staff, students, parents and visitors) who park on local streets is evidenced by the observable difference in street parking between school terms and school holidays. The increased demand for parking for Saturday sport and school events also causes difficulties for residents, and parking for workmen during the building process will further add to the number of cars parked in surrounding streets. The provision of underground parking in the development plan will possibly solve some of these issues, although parking for school functions for a student body of 2000 is likely to continue to cause problems. There is no indication of when the additional parking is likely to be operational.

Building heights

Loreto Normanhurst is situated in a low density residential area in a low density residential suburb. This application proposes a number of buildings over 20 metres, including a 6 storey building for boarders which has street frontage and is to be built on land which is now substantially open space. The application claims that the architecture will minimise the impact of these building heights and that because the application relates to a school these heights are permissible, even though they are approximately 2.5 times the otherwise allowable heights for this site. Buildings of this height are completely out of place in this local area, and will be completely overpowering. No amount of clever architecture can disguise the fact that there will be a number of tall buildings on a relatively small site.

Views and Beauty

The plan proposes removal of 78 trees which will be largely replaced by new plantings. New immature trees cannot replace large mature trees and I do not think the impact of the tree removal will be insignificant. The report also states that "design

principles will ensure future buildings ... contribute to the beauty of the campus and integrate sustainability and wellbeing". While attention appears to have been given to the environment within the school, and the application states that "the visual impact of development will be considered", it is difficult to believe that the addition of 6 storey buildings will improve the beauty of the local area. The relocation of the boarding facilities is said to provide a more suitable location because it is in a residential street characterised by homes. However, this six storey building will contrast sharply with the single and double storey homes which currently characterise surrounding streets.

Summary

In summary, while I accept the need for upgrade and refurbishment of the school, I believe that the proposed increase in student capacity cannot be justified, and will have major detrimental consequences for residents. Further, the proposal for 6 storey buildings, including the new boarding facilities, is of a scale completely out of character with the surrounding streets and will create an unacceptable visual impact .