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BRONTE NSW 2024

The NSW Department of Planning & Environment
Major Projects Assessments
Planning Service
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

RE: SSD 6339 St Catherine's School Campus Master Plan and Stage 1 development

We are writing to object to the Master plan DA and Stage 1 proposals lodged by St Catherine's School.

Our principle concerns are:-

Overdevelopment of the site including Height and FSR

St Catherine's School is a landlocked site bounded between Macpherson, Albion, Leichhardt Streets, and Bronte Road. Renovations and additions over the years have been ad hoc, often beyond planning controls and with minimal consultation with the local community.

The school's property is currently zoned R2 – Low Density with a FSR limit of 0:6:1 with a building height restriction of 9.5 metres with many existing school buildings already over this height. Previous development outside planning controls have resulted in the school's existing FSR of 0:9:1, which is 50% over the FSR allowable for the site. The current proposal seeks to increase the FSR to 1:1. All of the buildings in Stage 1 will exceed allowable heights, rising to over 19 metres, or almost 10 metres over the limit.

The school justifies these excessive breaches of the planning controls with an argument that most of its buildings are already over the height and FSR limits. Therefore they are assuming that further increases are to be expected. Stated plainly it implies an institution with a culture of ignoring planning law wanting to continue to be allowed to do so.

The impacts of this over development will be observed in increased levels of activity around the school boundaries potentially from 6am – midnight. Due to the proposal for increased number of events the consequence will be increased student numbers, increased number of teachers and employees, increased parental vehicles and pedestrians, possible increase in number of voluntary staff working on site, increased vehicle parking on surrounding streets, increased number of vehicles for drop off and pick up zones and increased traffic problems on extremely congested roads.

Intensification of use of the site including evenings and weekends and 365 days per year use of the pool complex and 500-seat Theatre

Stage 1 includes the construction of a 500-seat theatre, an aquatic centre with three swimming pools (open 365 days per year), with seating for approximately 250 spectators, an entertainment terrace, and a research centre and a new major entry off Macpherson Street with only 19 new underground parking spaces. The school is relying on local streets almost 100% for its current parking requirements and assuming that the additional parking generated by the operation of the proposed new facilities will utilise the local roads.

As a result of adding only 19 new parking spaces on its site, the school intends to expand its use of on-street parking to include parking for all its evening functions. Many of these functions are planned to commence at 5.30/6:00pm. Therefore the guests and staff will need to park on local roads for the evening. This will eliminate spaces for residents who are required to park on the local roads due to lack of on-site parking in their residences.

As residents, we are concerned about the potential for escalation of use of the school's new facilities day and night throughout the year. As a school, St Catherine's enjoys some privileges contained within the planning controls. For example it is exempt from a requirement for off-street parking. However, St Catherine's has diversified into commercial activities on its site, and the proposals for expansion increases these commercial activities in scale and hours of operation. Subsequently, the consent authority should now treat St Catherine's as a commercial organization without special planning privileges and diligently apply the appropriate controls.

In view of the added pressures on surrounding areas, residents strongly urge that the number and scale of events for 365 days per year should be specified in the conditions of consent for the Master Plan proposal. These events should be limited to St Catherine's school use only. The school should be required to provide Council and local Precinct Committees with an annual calendar of events at the beginning of every school year.

Further, any increases in the numbers and duration of events beyond those planned must be approved by a Development Application to Waverley Council. Any application for additional events must require the school to bring these before a regular 6 monthly meeting formalised in consent conditions by the Consent Authority between school management, senior council officers and office bearers of Charing Cross and Bronte Beach Precincts. This process should be designed to improve communications and understanding of respective issues between all parties and has been successfully applied to other schools in the LGA.

Like any commercial business or landlocked school, St Catherine's should be required to provide adequate on-site parking for its operations.

Inadequate on-site parking (only 19 new spaces)

This is the result of inadequate planning over the years at the school. Currently, the school has a total of 55 on-site spaces for its official staff numbers of 202. The school's survey has identified that 70% of teachers drive to the school. In other words, approximately 80 staff park on the local streets. This does not include tuck shop staff, volunteers, non-teaching staff and students and visitors that drive to school.

The pool complex planned to operate 365 days per year potentially from 6 am - midnight and the theatres planned for the site, will increase the parking impact of the school in the surrounding streets up to 8 minutes' walk away. Parking impacts will be escalated in the evenings and all through the weekend. This is an unreasonable impact for residents.

Increase in an already saturated traffic congestion on Bronte Road, Leichhardt Street, Macpherson and Albion Streets and surrounding streets

The school survey shows that 60% of students arrive at the school by private car. In other words, 600 students per day are dropped off at the school. Current drop off zones are inadequate causing parents to double-park, park in no standing zones and use residential driveways to drop off children. The

school survey also shows that no one cycles to school and only 14.5% use public transport. Around 50% of students live within 1.5 kilometres of the school campus. In other words, 500 students could walk to school. The school has no public transport or walk to school program.

Dr Julie Townsend, Principal of St Catherine's School, is quoted in a Daily Telegraph article on 14 November, 2014, that "illegal parking is a community problem, not a school problem". St Catherine's School cannot issue fines but they are causing the illegal parking by not providing appropriate parking and drop-off and pick-up zones. I note that Scots College, Bellevue Hill, recently had a DA overturned due to illegal parking by parents.

The proposed works re-orient the school away from the Albion Street public transport hub towards a new entry off Macpherson Street close to the drop off zone. This reinforces the school community mindset that a private car is the mode for getting to the school. This predominant use of the private car for student and staff movements to and from St Catherine's School has a major negative impact on the surrounding community. This transport approach cannot be permitted to stand in its current form.

It is at this juncture in the history of the development of the school that the consent authority can and should require St Catherine's School to ameliorate the social harms it is already causing and allow no further exacerbation of those harms. This would require a range of changes:

- Re-orient entrance ways and people movement patterns within the school to embrace use of the public transport corridor at Albion Street;
- Explore use of school specific buses to take students to Bondi Junction and Randwick Junction
- Encourage walking to school, noting that 50% of students live within 1.5 kilometres of the campus – a 20 minute walk; make sure lockers are provided for heavy student bags;
- Design drop off and pick up zones within the school boundaries, not in local streets
- Provide a large number of on-site car parking spaces to address the acknowledged needs of permanent and temporary staff, senior students, theatre users, pool users, volunteer tuck shop and uniform shop operators.

Increase in Students Numbers

Residents do not have a clear understanding of total student numbers on the campus. In its 2011 DA (140/2011) the school stated it had 930 enrolments. In its preliminary notes to the NSW Department of Planning for this proposal it stated it had 990. In its current DA it states 970. For clarification residents request that any DA approval must cap the number of students enrolled at the school. Further, it requests publication of an Annual Audit of numbers.

No plan to provide parking for 75 construction workers per day for the next 15 years.

In St Catherine's Stage 1 Construction Management Plan there are no arrangements for parking for construction workers. Residents request a plan of how the School intends to manage construction workers vehicles. Construction workers need access to their tools and materials for the site.

Concerns for Shopkeepers in Charing Cross

The increased reliance on Street Parking by St Catherine's impacts on shopkeepers because parents, in

desperation, are parking along the Charing Cross Shopping strip and walking to the school. Shop owners request that any consent for this DA should require the school to provide on-site parking for its parents and guests especially with the increased use of their new facilities. For example during major events like the “Magnolia Fair Day” on a Saturday in May with over 5,000 visitors to the school, parking on Bronte Road at Charing Cross Shopping strip was taken up by visitors to the school, and trading was diminished. We do not want to see this increase with the greater use of facilities at St Catherine’s School.

On a personal note, we have owned and lived in our property since August 1984. We have witnessed the significant increase in congestion of traffic and parking problems since this date. Each morning and afternoon of the school terms, our street is blocked. Lugar Brae Avenue, off Leichhardt Street, is often congested whilst parents park and walk their daughters to school.

We did not receive a copy from the school of the letter referring to this Master Plan in our letterbox. I had to email the school for a copy.

Since August 1984 at times of renovations and additions, St Catherine’s School has sought community feedback. This feedback, whilst meeting the criteria for consultation, I believe, has never been actioned. I can document examples.

We are not opposed to expansion of educational facilities. However having witnessed the growth of St Catherine’s since August 1984, we believe the geography of the school precludes further expansion. I would suggest, like Cranbrook School initiated and constructed, they seek alternate real estate and incorporate appropriate developments on that site. The Principal lives in Leichhardt Street in a building that once housed several school services. Therefore a school building was lost in this extensive renovation to a house. Also, the Principal is unaffected by traffic and parking issues.

We trust our comments and suggestions are given due consideration.

Yours faithfully

Mark and Cassandra Jordan