

454 Abercrombie St
Darlington NSW 2008

23 June 2011

Attn: Director, Metropolitan and Regional Projects North
Department of Planning
G.P.O Box 39
Sydney 2001

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Objection to Application number: MP 07-0158

I am writing to object to the submission of the University of Sydney Abercrombie Precinct Redevelopment, Application number: MP 07-0158 for the proposed development of a Business School and Student Accommodation in Abercrombie Street and Codrington Street in Darlington.

I live in the same block as the proposed development. As a resident of Darlington I have a number of serious concerns and objections in relation to this development proposal.

Firstly the university has not consulted with the community in a thorough way in regard to the massive planned development that will fundamentally alter and impact on this residential area. In January 2011, I discovered by accident that a meeting had been held last December 2010 (just before Christmas) with the community in relation to the proposal where architectural plans had already been drawn up. I did not receive any letter advising of this meeting.

The university sent a mail-out with a brochure to local residents around this time (December) with a mocked up picture of the planned proposal. This was the first time that I had been made aware of this major development proposal located within one block of my home. Furthermore, the meeting in December was not mentioned in this brochure. At no stage earlier than this was the community asked for input to the plans for the site or how this project might be realized or designed with the local community in mind. This is despite the fact that this large-scale proposal borders a residential area and a school and is situated in an established historic suburb.

After I and other members of the local community discovered this proposed development, we asked for a meeting with the University. A public meeting between the community and the architects representing Sydney University was subsequently held in April 2011, where finalized plan drawings and small-scale models were present. Residents were allowed to comment on the proposed

development or ask questions directly to the architects. However, the University representative informed the residents at this meeting that by this stage the finalized plans were in place and construction was scheduled to commence in July 2011.

During this meeting, all comments and suggestions regarding the scale and location of the proposed development were effectively dismissed by the University and the architects.

I found this consultation process to be most unsatisfactory and tokenistic. The community has never been given any opportunity to make any meaningful contribution to the planning process or design, including any alternative consideration of locating this proposed facility within the University's main campus rather than in the Abercrombie St residential area.

My main concerns in regard to the proposed development design submitted include:

1. The scale of the development

The design proposed is far too large and dominates the area. Every available area of space will be built on, right up to the border areas of the land with no set back. In addition, the University also wishes to remove two small roads and build on the road space as well, effectively removing public open space and privatizing the area for their own purposes.

2. The design of the building

No effort has been made to blend in to the surrounding buildings and streetscape with this design. There are no set-backs to soften its impact or to landscape the development with greenery. The modern design features a massive bald-faced façade of rendered concrete and glass, being decidedly harsh and distinctly commercial in appearance, which dwarfs the existing 2 storey Victorian terraces opposite the development on Abercrombie St and Darlington Avenue. It is in no way sympathetic to the Victorian architecture of the terrace houses, the historic industrial architecture or the historic corner pub that surrounds the development site.

Stage 2 of the development plan includes removing existing low-rise buildings along Abercrombie St, which are individual in character and sympathetic to the streetscape. The proposed building which will front Abercrombie St will dominate the historic streetscape and cause a loss of privacy to the terrace houses opposite, as well as add additional noise and light, particularly at night. Currently this is not the case. Mandelbaum House (385 Abercrombie St) is a modest 3-storey student accommodation building. It is the only building on this block that is currently accessible outside business hours. Consequently, it does not cause excessive noise in the area (at least, not since the rooftop parties were stopped). Nor is there excessive light from it as the front is landscaped and the windows

are of a size and style typical of a residential building. However, this is one of the buildings proposed for demolition.

The scale of the proposed development will also impact on the school by overshadowing the school play areas and causing a loss of privacy.

3. Increased Traffic and car parking pressures

Residents in the Darlington area already have the Entertainment precinct of Carriageworks and the former North Eveleigh Railway buildings in very close proximity to the proposed University development site. Carriageworks has already brought additional traffic and noise to the area both on weekends and after hours. While the entertainment precinct has revitalized the area it has also lead to increased traffic congestion on weeknights and weekends, with the Food Produce market and associated events at Carriageworks. This has impacted on local residents in Wilson and Abercrombie Sts which are now noticeably busier. Residents must also now compete for street car spaces after hours as a result of the changes in the use/zoning of the North Eveleigh railway land.

There are also further developments planned on the former railway land, with proposed high storey residential buildings. Therefore it is ill-considered to build a massive scale business school & student accommodation complex to service 7000 people on the Abercrombie/Codrington St site in such close proximity. The university also currently has plans submitted with the City of Sydney Council to build extra sports facilities on the opposite side of Codrington St, all of which will impact negatively on residents with the overdevelopment of existing land, removal of open space and introduction of further traffic and parking pressures for residents in the area.

I am concerned about the added strain of more traffic that will result from the proposed development which will erode the quality of life for residents by adding noise and traffic to the local streets, as well as jeopardize the safety of school children and others in the area with increased traffic movements.

Abercrombie St is busy already with pedestrians and cars dropping off young children at Darlington School during peak hours in the daytime. The road is also used as a cut through route for cars from surrounding suburbs and elsewhere wishing to by-pass congested King St and City Rd, particularly in peak hours. The church at the top of Abercrombie St, situated on Golden Grove St also regularly brings additional traffic, noise and congestion to this area with regular weddings on weekends, plus church services and funerals at any time.

4. Loss of Amenity and Open Space

In addition if this proposed development is to go ahead in its current form the construction stage will add increased noise, pollution and heavy vehicle traffic movements to Abercrombie St. The 100 year old terrace houses opposite are built on clay soil and heavy trucks and plant equipment may impact structurally on the surrounding residences. Given the scale of the development and the extended time period of construction (5 years) this also presents an

unacceptable level of noise and dust for residences bordering the area and particularly to the children attending Darlington School.

The university development includes plans to build on a small park area on the corner of Abercrombie St, Codrington St and Boundary Lane. This will reduce the already meager amount of open green space in the area, leaving only the small park two blocks up on Abercrombie St. The open green space behind the University Aquatic Centre is largely enclosed within the university buildings and not at immediate street level where its vistas can enhance the Darlington streetscape.

This new development will also effectively obliterate views across the suburb, now visible from Golden Grove St, and will also remove the open space provided by the roads of Rose St and Boundary Lane. In addition the native tree plantings along Rose St and others bordering the Darlington School playground, as well as trees provided in the setbacks of the existing Abercrombie St frontages (i.e. Child Care centre, Sheppard Centre, Mandelbaum House and the Computer Centre proposed for demolition in Stage 2 of the plan) will all be removed. This is unacceptable. The small green courtyard proposed as a replacement in this development will be enclosed by the new university buildings, effectively taking away open public space and privatizing the land for use by the University. In the meeting with the University in April 2011 the designers admitted that access to this space would be restricted "at times" by way of locked gates. How does this benefit the residents who also share the suburb of Darlington?

5. Demolition of existing buildings

The proposed development includes demolishing the old joinery building at 224 Rose St which dates from the 1920s. This building is part of the area's historic industrial architecture and should not be removed. The University currently uses this building and the former IXL jam factory on Golden Grove St as part of its maintenance section. They are a significant part of the history and character of Darlington and should be preserved. The University has already demolished several historic terraces in Rose St and previously in Codrington St in the last 15 years, eroding the character and integrity of the area.

6. Alternative locations within the main University campus not investigated

This proposed development should be built within the University's main campus area (Camperdown) as this has extensive open space and under-utilised areas which could be used. In doing so, the traffic which would be generated would be confined to the University's main campus and not affect the residents of Darlington. Furthermore, the Darlington School and its students would not be impacted by this proposal. To my knowledge, the University has not adequately investigated or considered locating this proposed development within their main campus where it would not impact on the residents or the amenity of Darlington.

7. Consideration of the Proposed Development under Part 3A of the EPA Act

Currently, the proposed development by the University is being assessed under Part 3A of the EPA Act 1979. I understand that the Premier has now revoked this part of the Act and intends to return planning responsibilities to local government.

The proposed development by the University should not be assessed under Part 3A of the EPA Act. It is not State significant infrastructure or a State significant development as defined under the Act. It should be assessed entirely by the Council of the City of Sydney as its major impacts will be on the residents of Darlington, rather than the people of Sydney or NSW.

Furthermore, it should be considered within the context of the City of Sydney's strategic plans for the Darlington/Redfern area and the University's [Campus 2020 Masterplan](#). In so doing, the Council can take account of the cumulative impacts of this development with others planned for this area. It is not appropriate to consider the University's proposal *in isolation* to other proposals in the vicinity (i.e. the proposed extension to the University Aquatic Centre in Codrington St currently under consideration by Council; and the Redfern-Waterloo Authority's North Eveleigh Concept Plan).

Conclusion

I am opposed to this development due to the inadequate consultation process with the local community, who were only included once the designs had been completed. I believe the scale of the development is inappropriate for the site and the suburb, which is located in a historic residential area. Finally the proposal needs to be considered not in isolation but in relation to other projects planned for this area, particularly in relation to the North Eveleigh site and assessed fairly and with a view to the long term impacts of upcoming redevelopment proposals in this vicinity.

Yours sincerely

Jillian Bartlett
(letter via email)