

Richard Mason

23 June 2020

The Director of Social Infrastructural Assessment.

Dpt. Planning, Industry and Environment.

Locked Bag 5022

Parramatta NSW 2124

Re: Development Application for 'Mount Errington' 1 Rosemead Rd. Hornsby, Lodged by Best Practice Education Group Ltd.

DA/1119/2019.

Dear Madam / Sir,

I have signed a letter for the Hornsby Conservation Society as President opposing this plan but I am submitting a personal objection as I am sorry about the damage the proposal will inflict on what was my home for almost 49yrs from January 1953 to November 2001. I have studied the environmental statement of impact lodged by Heritage 21 and I object to the proposal on many grounds including the following:-

#### **Fire**

In 1951 a bushfire burnt up to the edge of the footpath on Rosemead Rd and the resulting scar may still be seen on a Camphor Laurel tree on the nature strip. With the present greatly increased risk of fire owing to climate change two concerns arise: Firstly, how quickly could the staff and pupils be evacuated, and secondly is the local water supply adequate for fire-fighting.

#### **Traffic**

Both Dural St and William St have wide nature strips and relatively narrow carriageways. In recent years commuter car parking has taken up the kerbside on both sides of the street almost up to Mt. Errington. Extra traffic will make negotiating these streets even more difficult than it is at present.

#### **Trees**

There are four very large Canary Island Date Palms along the eastern boundary. The dangerous spines on the leaves of these trees make them highly undesirable in a children's school yard. Hornsby Conservation Society has some time ago written to Council about the dangerous nature of these trees. If they are to remain as of heritage significance they will require regular pruning and the removal of dead fronds from the site.

The arborist's report is inaccurate and under values the importance of the site. Many trees which the arborist described as more than 40yrs old I remember well as mature trees in 1953. The Bunya Pine which is a street tree, was about 20mtrs tall then and is well over 100yrs of age and so are

many other trees on the block. I have not had the opportunity to check the identification of many of the trees in the report but I know of one tree which the arborist was unable to identify saying it looked like a Sassafras or Elaeocarpus, it resembles neither. It is a Red Carabeen (*Geissois benthamii*), a rainforest species occurring from the Manning River, north to Southern Queensland.

The proposal requires the removal of many trees which is always a matter for regret.

## **House**

The house is one of the finest old mansions still surviving in the Shire. Many have been demolished. The area is heritage listed by Council. Many years ago the National Trust declined to list the house partly at least on the ground that it did not have a marble fireplace, which, in fact, it does. It makes me wonder how well the Trust examined the house which is of Arts and Crafts style but of unique design and has been well maintained.

It is proposed to widen some of the internal doorways requiring the removal of the architraves and doors which are to be stored in a safe place in case a future owner should wish to restore the house to its former state. It is also proposed to establish wet areas to be the sites for toilet facilities in two rooms, one in the south-west corner of the house, the other in the back room in the southern wing of the house. This raises again the question of the adequacy of the local water supply. This will entail extensive plumbing in the house and grounds. All these changes will make it virtually impossible for a future owner to restore the house to its former state.

It is further proposed to widen the drive way entailing the removal of the front gates which are to be re-erected somewhere on the block.

I also request that an extension be made to the time for response to this proposal as many people have been affected by the major disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused and many local organisations are in recess.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Mason