

27 October 2017

Attention: Director Key Sites Assessments
Planning Services
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Sir/Madam

Objection to Proposed Modification to the Pemulwuy Project, Redfern (SSD 8135 and MP 06_0101 MOD 2)

We act on behalf of the owners of a terrace located within Hugo Street, Redfern in response to the proposed modification to the concept approval and a new State Significant Development application relating to the Pemulwuy Project, Redfern. The proposal seeks a 24 storey building comprising student accommodation for 596 students. Our client's property is located west from the site. This letter sets out the main concerns for the owners associated with this proposal, primarily relating to the proposed bulk and scale, traffic and car parking, and pedestrian safety as a result of the proposed development.

Figure 1 below shows the location of Hugo Street highlighted in yellow in relation to the site subject of the proposed development.

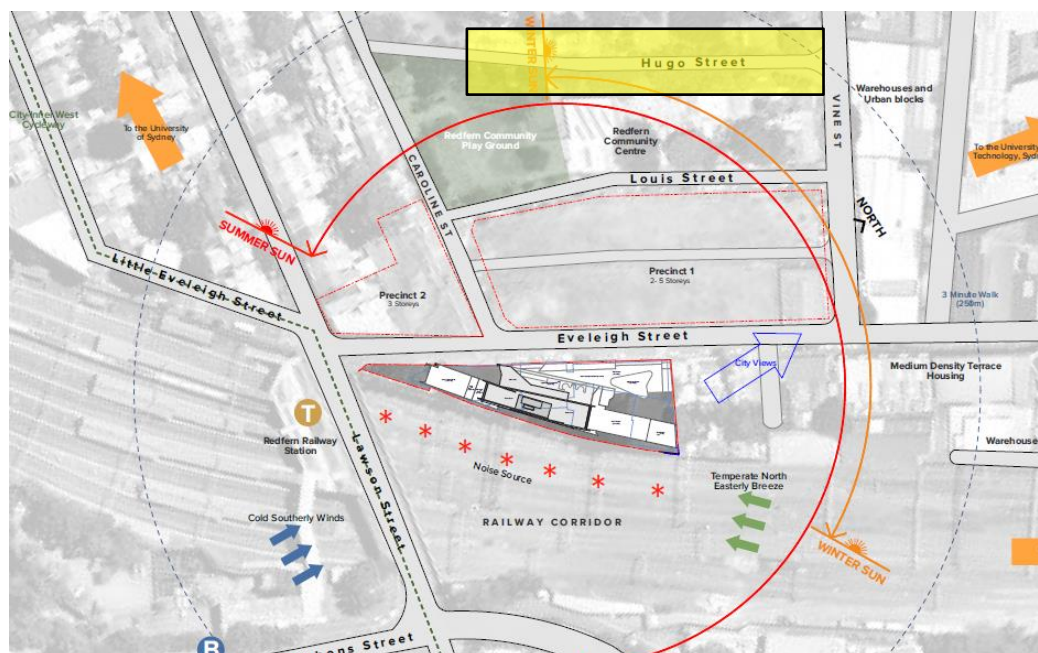


Figure 1: The proposal in relation to Hugo Street (Turner Architects)

The Pemulwuy Project has evolved over time as demonstrated by the various applications to increase density. Figure 2 below shows the latest approved development involving all three precincts including Precinct 3 identified in red.

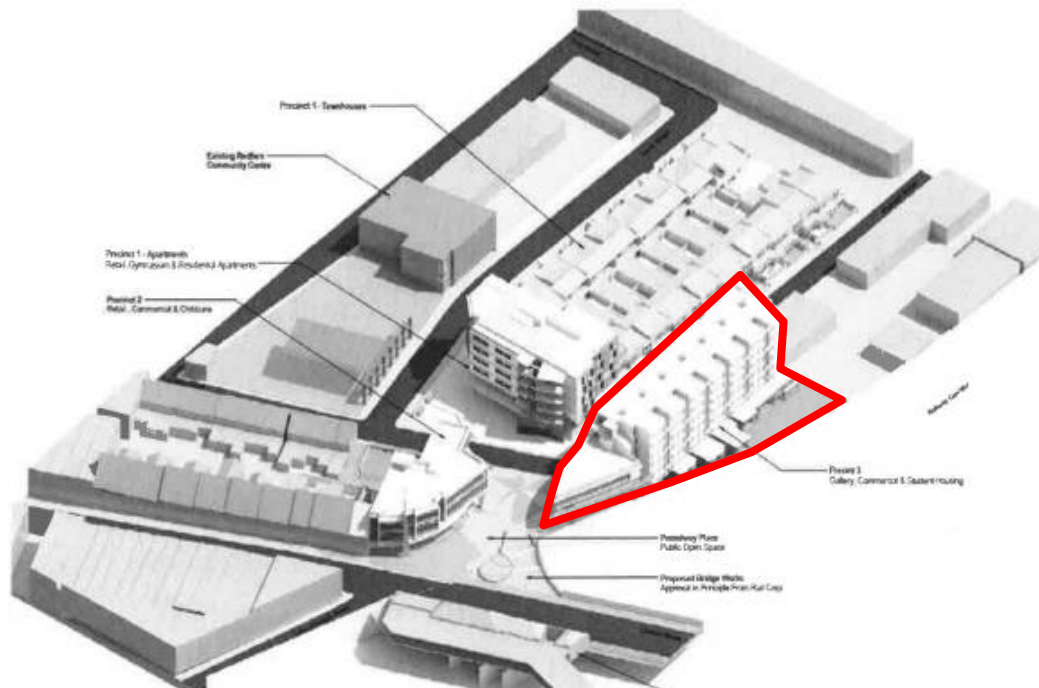


Figure 2: 3D model of approved development (MP11_0093 and MP06_0101)

In Figure 3 below is a 3D model submitted by the applicant for the current proposal at Precinct 3. This perspective clearly articulates how out of character the proposed building will be in the context of the immediate area west of the Redfern train station.

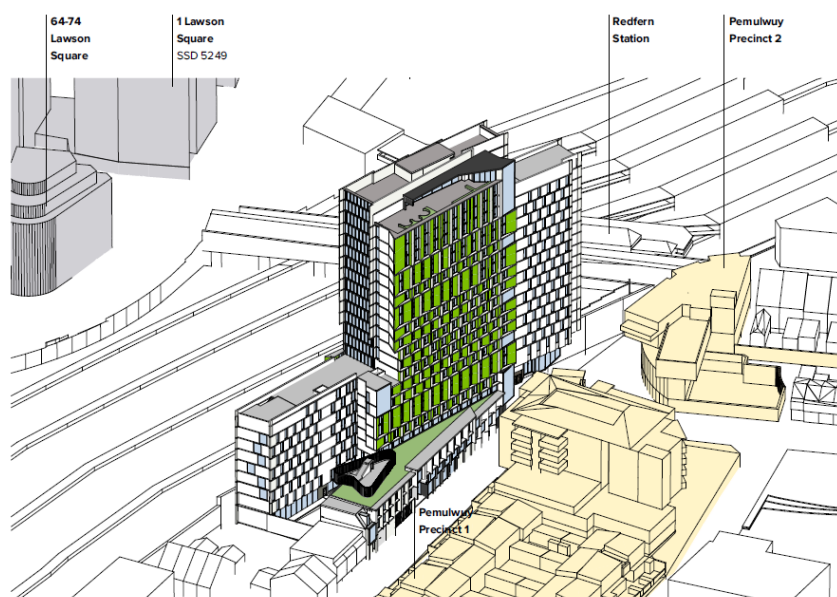


Figure 3: 3D model of the proposal (Turner Architects)

FSR and Height

We understand the proposal relates to modification of Precinct P3 where approval was granted on 21 December 2012 for the construction of a 3 part 6 storey mixed-use building containing 1,100sqm of retail/commercial space, a 475sqm gallery and student housing accommodating a total of 154 students in 42 units and a manager's flat.

This current proposal is not the first time the height of Precinct 3 has been increased. In the Director General's Environmental Assessment Report of the latest approval, dated December 2012 (MP11_0093 and MP06_0101), it noted the following:

"The seven-storey student housing building in Precinct 3 is the tallest element within the modified proposal and represents a two-storey increase in height above the Precinct 3 envelope approved by the Concept Plan."

Additionally, the original approved concept plan allowed a height of 3 storeys and a FSR of 2.55:1. The current proposal now seeks to modify this approval by the construction of a 24 storey boarding house for student accommodation for 350 units containing 522 rooms to provide accommodation for a total of 596 students. This proposal also removes the originally approved retail/commercial and community gallery comprising some 1,690sqm of floor area.

It is noted that the original proposed modification sought approval for an FSR of 7.16:1 and up to 16 storeys under the Secretary Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEAR's) on 6 December 2016. However, the current proposal diverges from this scheme with an increase in height up to 24 storeys and a reduced FSR of 6.95:1. The design of the original modification also incorporated accommodation for 572 students and the current proposal seeks approval for 596 students.

The current proposal represents a significantly larger development as summarised in the table below.

Approved Concept Plan		Approved Modified Proposal (No.6_0101)		Current Proposal (SSD 8135 and MP 06_0101 MOD 2)	
Height (Storeys)	FSR	Height (Storeys)	FSR	Height (Storeys)	FSR
3	2.55:1	3-6	2.3:1	3-24	6.95:1

The difference in height between the original concept approval and the current approval is 21 storeys and an increase in FSR by 4.4:1. Subsequently, this substantial increase in bulk and scale of the proposal is of great concern to the owners for various reasons.

Firstly, the intensification of the approved development to provide an additional 442 students (Total 596) will create cumulative impacts to the surrounding area. The surrounding road network, pedestrian pathways and cycleways are not considered to be able to adequately support the influx of additional residents.

Secondly, the height and bulk of the building will dominate the skyline and lead to loss of visual amenity for the existing residents. The prevailing character of the area west of the train line is low to medium density residential. The proposed 24 storey building will considerably vary the established character.

Thirdly, the strategy employed by the applicant to evolve the design and increase it over time is coined as 'development creep'. There are concerns that further applications to enlarge the building even more could be made, which would generate additional impacts for the residents.

Fourthly, should the proposal be approved, it would create an undesirable precedent for future high-rise development within the area. The proposal does not provide an appropriate height transition from the existing buildings within Redfern and the approved development within the Pemulwuy Project.

We also have concerns that the proposal does not respect or reflect the existing and future character of the area. The overall design is not compatible with the characteristics of the other buildings in the area, particularly the terrace housing on Caroline Street, Louis Street, and Hugo Street.

Based on the above, the approved design should be retained at 2.9:1 FSR and height of 3-6 storeys to align with the surrounding neighbourhood west of the rail line, characterised by terraced housing and low rise apartment buildings. Subsequently, this application should be refused.

Zoning

The site is zoned Business Zone- Mixed Use under Division 3 Redfern-Waterloo Authority Sites of the State Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005. A review of the zoning objectives appears below demonstrating the proposal does not achieve the relevant objectives.

10 Business Zone—Mixed Use

(1) The objectives of the Business Zone—Mixed Use are as follows:

(a) to support the development of sustainable communities with a mix of employment, educational, cultural and residential opportunities,

Comment: The introduction of an additional 442 students to the approved development (total of 596) does not positively contribute to a sustainable community. The overall approved Pemulwuy Project will already house some 154 students in Precinct 3 (subject site) and 62 dwellings in Precinct 1. The ability for the new development and surrounding areas to support the proposal is questionable.

(b) to encourage employment generating activities by providing a range of office, business, educational, cultural and community activities in the Zone,

Comment: The proposal removes the previously approved commercial shops on the ground level and seeks to replace these uses for communal spaces for the students. 13 staff are to be employed as a result of the proposal, however the loss of these commercial shops will result in reduced employment opportunities.

(c) to permit residential development that is compatible with non-residential development,

Comment: The proposed student accommodation/boarding house is defined as residential accommodation, however as discussed above, the intensification of the constrained site at Precinct 3 will result in significant impacts to the surrounding area, including Hugo Street. Removal of the

commercial shops on the ground level was likely necessary to provide adequate space for necessary communal facilities to meet the demand of the additional residents, which is not a sound planning outcome.

The Social Impact Assessment does not address the potential social impacts as a result of the introduction of an additional 442 students adjoining the approved child care centre in Precinct 2 accommodating 60 children. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to be compatible with the non-residential development within the approved Pemulwuy Project precinct.

(d) to maximise public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling,

Comment: The proposal does not incorporate any on-site car parking and relies on public transport, bicycles and walking. While this is sometimes an important principle for sustainable developments, the Traffic Report fails to adequately address how the existing cycleways and footpaths will cope with the additional residents. Safety concerns also arise for pedestrians and bicycle riders due to the increase in residents within the area. Therefore, the proposal is not considered to achieve this objective.

(e) to ensure the vitality and safety of the community and public domain,

Comment: There are potential safety risks associated with the future residents utilising footpaths to access the nearby universities. Existing footpaths and cycleways are not currently sufficient to accommodate the increased demand generated by the 596 students.

(f) to ensure buildings achieve design excellence,

Comment: The proposed building is incongruous with the existing area, due to its significant increase in FSR and height to the previously approved development. Under Division 3, Clause 22 of the SEPP, it encourages the utilisation of a design competition for projects over 12 storeys in height. In this case, it is not evident why the consent authority did not require a competition for this project. Due to the unique characteristics of the site, a design competition is highly recommended to ensure the design can achieve design excellence. Further details of the proposal's inability to achieve design excellence is discussed below.

Design Excellence

The proposed building is incongruous with the existing area, due to its significant increase in FSR and height in relation to the previously approved development. Under Division 3, Clause 22 of the SEPP, it encourages the utilisation of a design competition for projects over 12 storeys in height. It is not clear why the consent authority did not require a competition for this project. We are concerned that the proposal does not create a high architectural standard because the proposal has not undergone a design competition given the excessive bulk and scale, the building is not integrated with the topography, and the site's proximity to the Darlington Heritage Conservation Area.

The siting and massing of the development does not mitigate against the visual bulk when the proposal is viewed from the east and west. The proposed building is more suited to the CBD than to the existing

low-density character of Redfern. Due to the unique characteristics of the site and the reasons identified above, a design competition is requested to ensure the design can achieve design excellence.

Traffic

While the proposal seeks to accommodate 596 students, it does not provide any on-site car parking. The proposal relies upon residents walking to their chosen destination, i.e. the university, or to use public transport. The Traffic Report argues that parking permits will not be granted to the residents, although this does not rule out that residents will not own or use a car. Furthermore, the existing road network is already congested and will only be exacerbated following the completion of the overall Pemulwuy Project. The report suggests no additional infrastructure upgrades are necessary to accommodate the intensification of the site. It also makes a baseless argument as follows:

"As the site is so well-located for pedestrian trips, the proposed traffic generation from the site is not expected to exceed the traffic generation that would otherwise be generated from the two-storey building if it were occupied."

According to this rationale, the proposed 24 storey building will generate the same volume of traffic as the existing two storey building. Unfortunately, this statement cannot be accepted because the assumption does not take into account those students who own a car, visitors, contractors and tradespeople. The original development was approved for 154 students and no car parking was provided, however, the significant increase in density (442 students) warrants the provision of adequate car parking.

Pedestrian Safety

Safety concerns are raised in relation to pedestrians utilising Redfern Station to travel to universities and other places of interest. The pedestrian refuge on Lawson Street (opposite the Lawson Street entrance at Redfern Station) is already dangerous, especially during peak hours.

It was raining across Sydney on the day of the site inspection to meet with the owners in Hugo Street (Friday 20 October 2017). While driving towards Hugo Street at 9am during peak hour, it was observed that pedestrians were walking from the train station in the direction towards the university (west). There was no spare space on the pedestrian footpaths along Lawson Street due to the sheer number of pedestrians walking. The cumulative impact on the already congested narrow footpaths by additional students within the area is of serious concern.

The Traffic Report submitted with the application notes the following in relation to pedestrians:

"The walking routes to the above destinations would be similar to the pedestrians alighting from a train service from the Redfern railway station. These walking routes are expected to be well trafficked by pedestrians that will maintain a level of passive security for students from the site."

This statement does not address the potential safety hazards as a result of an additional 442 students residing in Precinct 3. While passive surveillance is an important element in the design of such a building, it does not address the safety impacts throughout the surrounding streets and pedestrian footpaths.

Should the proposal be approved, the increase in pedestrians walking along the surrounding streets will significantly exacerbate the safety risk. Coupled with the increase in traffic, the proposal will lead to crossing Lawson Street at Redfern Station even more dangerous for pedestrians than currently.

To circumvent the provision of adequate car parking, the proposal seeks to provide 180 bicycle spaces for residents and visitors. There are no corresponding bike paths located within close proximity to the site in the area to accommodate these additional bicycles. We are concerned that the addition of 180 bicycles to the local street network will create a multitude of hazards and safety issues within the surrounding streets.

It is noted that the EIS states that *"An on-road cycle route for low to medium traffic is to be established connecting Lawson and Abercrombie Streets via Eveleigh, Caroline, Louis and Vine Streets to promote and facilitate bicycle use by local residents and the workforce in this area. The existing shared zone at the southern end of Eveleigh Street will be retained and reinforced by proposed public domain works."*

Based on our review of the documentation, there are no such plans provided in any of the documentation submitted with this application. Such a proposal would typically be found in the Public Domain and Public Art Strategy, although it was not identified within this report. The Traffic Report is also silent in relation to this proposal. Further details of the proposed on-road cycle route is requested to enable a detailed review on the potential impacts to Hugo Street.

Conclusion

In summary, the owners of the terrace within Hugo Street, Redfern strongly oppose to the proposed modification to the student accommodation within Precinct 3 of the Pemulwuy Project. The proposed intensification of the site by a significant increase in height and FSR to the approved development, will generate unacceptable bulk and scale, amenity, traffic and car parking, and safety hazards for the site and surrounding area.

The proposal represents a design inconsistent with the objectives of the Business Zone- Mixed Use under Division 3 Redfern-Waterloo Authority Sites of the State Environmental Planning Policy (State Significant Precincts) 2005. The proposed building is also not considered to achieve design excellence and will create an undesirable precedent for future developments, should it be supported.

On this basis, we do not support the proposed development and must object to it. In assessing this application, the Department of Planning and Environment is requested to further consider the impacts to Hugo Street including the issues described above. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 8355 7108.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Gescheit".

Eli Gescheit
Director