

OBJECTION in response to SSD 17_8800 - Parramatta Leagues Club Hotel

I have not made a reportable political donation.

Introduction

In my capacity as a former Convenor of the Better Planning Network (BPN), I assisted the local community group, North Parramatta Residents Action Group in response to Urban Growth's proposed redevelopment plans for North Parramatta, and the loss of the Memorial Pool as a consequence of the redevelopment of the Stadium.

After leaving BPN I have continued to work with the group, and local advocates. This includes making representations to the then Administrator in 2017 in relation to the changes to the planning controls for the nearby Fleet Street/Cumberland Heritage Precinct (the Precinct) and meeting with senior executive from the Department of Planning and Environment.

As a consequence, I am familiar with the site and like many others have an active interest in the proposal, given its wider significance in terms of its relationship Old Government House's and Parramatta Park's World Heritage Listing, Bank West Stadium and the Leagues Club, and plans for the Precinct and the expansion of University of Sydney's Westmead campus.

Given the proposed scale and massing of the hotel and its visual impact, I do not believe the proposal is in the public interest and should be rejected. My detailed submission follows.

Background Information

- The site is approx. 0.3 ha in size and owned by Parramatta Park Trust, in Crown Plan 80-3000
- The street address is 17 – 19 O'Connell Street, Parramatta, also known as 1 Parramatta Park Land, Parramatta and 1 Eels Place, 369 DP 752058, Lot 7054 DP 1074335
- The land is zoned private recreational RE2, and does not have a height or FSR limit
- In 2015, the club proposed to build a much lower hotel complex as part of a master planning process for the site: <https://bit.ly/2BOWkQb>
- In 2017, the club changed its plans and lodged a Request for a SEARs based on a 15 storey hotel and associated facilities. This followed the appointment of a Club Administrator by the government, after the Club's salary cap [scandal](#), in which the Club was fined one million dollars.
- In response to the Request for the SEARS, a number of key agencies, including the Heritage Council raised a number of concerns.
- The application was put on public exhibition in mid-January, 2019, i.e. more than 15 months later during the January summer holidays, with submissions closing 22 February. In response to public feedback, the exhibition period was extended till March 2019.
- Notably, the application is for an 18 storey hotel and function centre (not 17 storeys as described for the public exhibition process) with a single level basement for services. The Hotel will have 209

rooms with the lower levels of the hotel incorporating a number of ancillary venues including a function centre and terrace for 500 patrons. In addition is a roof top bar.

- The proposal will require the demolition of existing facilities.
- Prior to the initial closing date for the public exhibition process, I contacted the Department regarding some difficulties with some of the images that show the visual impact. Specifically it was difficult to distinguish the massing from the sky/other items. Whilst in part some images were corrected, others continue to be problematic, thereby impacting the capacity for the wider public to properly understand the consequence of the proposal.

Key concerns:

1. The application was incorrectly notified as a 17 storey building vs the actual, being 18 storeys. While an additional storey may not seem significant, given the impact on sightlines and vistas from Old Government House and Parramatta Park which is World Heritage Listed and, the impact on the potential future World Heritage Listing for Parramatta's Female Factory, any height increase is important.
2. Notably too, the Request for a SEARS in 2017 was for a 15 storey hotel (see [article](#)), whereas the application that was exhibited was for a 18 storey hotel, further exacerbating the impact on the view and sight-lines from World Heritage listed Old Government House at Parramatta Park and [overshadowing](#) the adjoining public domain.
3. The proposal jeopardises any potential World Heritage Listing for Parramatta's Female Factory, and the potential of extending the heritage precinct further.
4. A number of agencies identified concerns in response to the SEARS. This included the [Heritage Council](#). However, the response from Greater Sydney Commission ignores some more substantive comments.
5. The Visual Impact Analysis indicates the significance in terms of the heritage impact.

In particular, see images from Parramatta Female Factory/Cumberland Hospital site

<https://majorprojects.accelo.com/public/d83f61530190ed201ac5de027d353580/Attachment%20D5.1%20Design%20Report%20Visual%20Impact%20Analysis%201.pdf>

6. Notwithstanding this, the massing in a number of images is difficult to understand the impact on the actual heritage buildings given the overriding nature of the white massing on some images.
7. The [EIS](#) and Heritage Report fails to properly identify the impact on the existing world heritage listed Old Government House/Parramatta Park, and the proposal's impact on the potential future world heritage listing for Parramatta Female Factory (as part of the historic Cumberland hospital precinct). Further, the report does not properly identify the Hotel's visual impact on the adjacent Heritage Conservation area to the east.
8. [The site context map](#) (pp 4) shows Urban Growth's initial redevelopment plans. This includes a number of high-rise buildings with the application seeking to justify the height by making

comparisons between the hotel (RL 75m, actual 66m), new stadium and Urban Growth's redevelopment plans for Fleet Street/Cumberland Heritage Precinct at North Parramatta (the Heritage Precinct).

Given however the previous DA for the Heritage Precinct has been withdrawn and a planning review is now underway in response to the plans to expand the University of Sydney's campus at Westmead, the comparison with the plans for the Heritage Precinct is considered premature.

9. The application includes a number of images that don't accurately reflect the plans; e.g. page 78 of the EIS shows a perspective. The perspective however appears to be lower than 18 storeys when compared to the [design plans](#).
10. The proposal appears to include the upgrade of existing areas around the application, yet this is not well understood, so informed comment can be made.
11. The request for [SEARS](#) is dated 9. October, 2017. It includes a proposal for a [Design Excellence Process](#), outlined in Attachment B. This includes the suggestion for '*an Iterative Design Review process encompassing a panel of representatives from the OGA, Parramatta Council's City Architect and a senior representative from the Parramatta Park Trust*' work alongside the design team from Hassell, will facilitate achieving the seven key principles outlined in the NSW Government Architect 'Better Placed' draft policy'.

In response, the SEARS included a Design Excellence Strategy. This was prepared in consultation with the Government Architect NSW. However notwithstanding this, the report from the Design Review Panel fails to adequately respond to matters pertaining to clause 7.10(4) in the local controls, which significance is reinforced in the case, [The Uniting Church vs Parramatta City Council \[2018\] NSWLEC 158](#), specifically:

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- (a) whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved,
 - (b) whether the form and external appearance of the proposed development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain,
 - (c) whether the proposed development detrimentally impacts on view corridors,
 - (d) how the proposed development addresses the following matters:
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- the suitability of the land for development,
 - the existing and proposed uses and use mix,
 - any heritage and archaeological issues and streetscape constraints or opportunities,
 - the location of any tower proposed, having regard to the need to achieve an acceptable relationship with other towers (existing or proposed) on the same site or on neighbouring sites in terms of separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form,
 - the bulk, massing and modulation of buildings,
 - street frontage heights,
 - environmental impacts, such as sustainable design, overshadowing and solar access, visual and acoustic privacy, noise, wind and reflectivity,
 - the achievement of the principles of ecologically sustainable development,
 - pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access and circulation requirements, including the permeability of any pedestrian network,

- the impact on, and any proposed improvements to, the public domain,
 - the impact on any special character area,
 - achieving appropriate interfaces at ground level between the building and the public domain,
 - excellence and integration of landscape design.
12. Further while the [Trust's consent](#) notes 'significant consultation' has occurred and 'a Trust representative was an observer on the Design Review Panel for the project', the involvement of the Trust's representative should not justify the departure from the proposal meeting the requirements under the PLEP. Further, there is wider public concern in relation to a perceived conflict of interest given the Chair's current role as Chair of the Manly Sea Eagles and prior his association with the Wanderers; in addition to questions around integrity.
13. The SEARS included community consultation requirements for pre-application lodgement; specifically there was no consultation with the area's major community group, North Parramatta Residents Action Group, despite their representation locally and express interest in the Precinct.
14. Neither was consultation undertaken with aboriginal people. Instead the assumption is made that this 'was not required' as the 'site does not contain any Aboriginal cultural material based on empirical data'. Both assumptions are disputed.
15. The SEARS requires a detailed CIV. The capital cost for the proposal is \$125.7 Million. While a [detailed cost estimate](#) is included in the application, there are significant concerns about the business case, and viability of the project which in turn is prompting questions around funding.
- In addition, given the Club remains under administration following the Salary Cap affair, and further [allegations](#) against the Club were made in 2018, this is prompting further concerns around the application and process, and concerns about a conflict potential conflict of interest by the government.
16. The application states that '*Current zoning on the carpark site allows for a hotel whereas the club's previous earmarked site would have required rezoning prior to approval*'. Does this mean a loophole is effectively enabling the WHL to be jeopardised?
17. The proposal is for a single level basement. Notwithstanding the car park was recently constructed, if consent approval is given, there are concerns that the approval could be used as a stepping stone for a subsequent application to incorporate the car park and redevelop the site into a larger hotel/venue/facility.
18. The site is subject to the provision of the EPBC Act and identified as 'high sensitivity'. Yet the EIS (pp 9) states that the proposal will NOT require approval under the Act, arguing that '*critically, the proposed building height does not breach a control requiring 80% of the building height to be below the tree canopy from key vistas. Indeed the building is generally at or below that tree height from such locations*'.

Given the impact on the Precinct, and existing WHL, this assumption is ridiculous and should be

urgently reviewed.

19. The proposal includes a number of ancillary functions. This includes a function centre and terrace for 500 patrons, as well as a roof top bar. These venues are likely to include amplified music.

In the case of the function centre the proposed operating hours are 24 hours a day 7 days a week with the venue operating from 7am to midnight 4 days a week, nominally Sundays to Wednesdays, AND till 2am from Thursday to Saturday. In addition the café is proposed to operate from 6am to midnight, 7 days a week and likewise the pool, fitness and wellness centre from 6am to midnight, 7 days a week.

Consequently, there will be a significant intensification of use, with potential for major impact on local amenity, particularly late at night and during the early morning hours when there is little background noise. In response the proposed operating hours for the function centre is not supported given their impact on local amenity. In relation to the roof top bar the operating hours while not known should be restricted to ensure residential amenity is maintained.

As a comparison, the use of Sydney Football Stadium and its associated facilities is strictly limited till 11pm during summer daytime savings. With the Hotel targeted at teams and sporting codes the proposed trading hours will have a major impact on amenity which has not been properly assessed.

Further, a number of assumptions in the Noise & Vibration Assessment are queried. This includes but is not limited to:

- a. Function Centre and Terrace: Given the hotel is 'specifically targeted to a market segment for teams and groups', assumptions in relation to the '*vocal effort of patrons*' is queried; specifically, that '*for every two patrons only one person will be speaking at any given time*', with no reference to the impact that celebratory events and the target market will have; e.g. singing, shouting etc or cumulative impact of a large crowd of people at an events that are likely due the hotel's location next to the Stadium.
- b. Roof Top Bar: Similarly the assumption that '*The vocal effort of patrons communicating are "normal" speech to provide a worst case scenario*' for a Rooftop Bar operating late at night are queried, as is the assumption that only one person out of two will be speaking at any given time.
- c. The location of the acoustic loggers is queried, given the noise impact from construction works associated with the Stadium. While the assessment report acknowledges the impact, the assumptions in relation to the noise levels are queried.
- d. No consideration appears to be given to the cumulative noise impact from the hotel and club facility alongside the stadium.
- e. No consideration appears to have been given to noise associated with social loitering and pedestrian movement from the Hotel venues late at night to transport (e.g. Light Rail) which pedestrian movement will use local residential streets.
- f. Given no detailed design or construction program has been included the application, the impact from mechanical plant and the like.

Given the concerns and complexity to review the predicted noise levels, an independent assessment of this report is suggested.

20. In addition, given the hotel's location next to the new Bank West Stadium, and traffic generation from a multi-storey car park, the Hotel will require very specific noise mitigation.

Consequently, alternative means of ventilation will be necessary, given windows will not be able to opened, and arrangements put in place to limit the noise impact. As such, sustainable environmental ventilation practices will not be achieved.

21. No additional parking is proposed. Instead the Hotel and Function Centre will rely on the existing car park for the club/stadium, which is limited to 773 vehicles, disabled parking and provision for cyclists and the introduction of Light Rail.

However given the demand from visitors to the Stadium, Club, Hotel and Function Centre, there are likely to be challenges relating to parking for Hotel Guests or Club attendees, when events are on at the Stadium.

22. The absence of sufficient public domain within the context of the Hotel is a major concern, particularly given the intensification of use.

23. The construction works will impact the nearby colony of Grey-Headed Flying Foxes, which are approximately 110 metres west in Parramatta Park.

24. No detailed design or construction program has been included in the application, thereby limiting public comment in relation to this, prior to consent approval.

25. Given the impact on local amenity and the intensification of use, no reduction in developer contribution should apply.

26. While not the subject of this application, there is general concern about the 'commercialisation' and intensification of the use of public land and loss of associated green space and passive recreational facilities.

In conclusion, the application fails to meet the following provisions in the Act:

- to protect the environment
- to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage
- to promote good design and amenity of the built environment,
- to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment

Consequently the proposal is not in the public interest and should be rejected.

Yours sincerely,

