

17 Caroline Street
REDFERN NSW 2016

29 February 2012

Department of Planning & Infrastructure
23 – 33 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Attention: Jane Flanagan
Email: jane.flanagan@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Madam

Subject: Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development, Redfern (MP06_0101 MOD 1 & MP11_0093)

1. I have reviewed the Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development (MP06_0101 MOD 1 & MP11_0093) and the submitted plans on exhibition at the NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure, 23 -33 Bridge Street, Sydney.

2. These documents have been submitted by the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC).

Capability and capacity of the AHC to undertake such a project and subsequently manage the development

3. AHC has owned and/or controlled a large number of terraces in the area in and around Eveleigh, Caroline, Vine and Louis Streets, Redfern.

4. These properties have largely been gifted to the AHC for the purposes of providing affordable accommodation to Aboriginal people. The AHC has failed deliver in this purpose.

5. Under the AHC's management, these properties have been:

- a. allowed to fall into disrepair over the past 30 years and have been abandoned by Aboriginal families; and
- b. boarded up and/or demolished.

6. These properties also became synonymous with crime, drug dealing, drug taking and prostitution, and earned the name "the Block". The Block's reputation was so significant that it impacted upon the reputation of the whole suburb, and consequently property values.

7. The AHC's management remains largely unchanged.

8. It is therefore a legitimate concern that the area will once again fall into disrepair and become a crime area again.

9. The AHC has to date depended on (and existed as a result of) external funds and Government grants. For example, most recently, money for the demolition of the remaining section of the Block came from public funds. I understand that the proposed Development also depends on significant public funds.
10. Since the Block was demolished, there has been significant public and private investment in the Redfern area. Property owners, tax payers and no doubt Government would like ensure that it does not:
 - a. once again degenerate into disrepair;
 - b. become a crime area; and
 - c. become a disproportionate drain on local, State and Federal resources.
11. My own dealings with the AHC, over the past 6 years, as its immediate neighbour, indicate that the AHC has:
 - a. a poor understanding of the duties and responsibilities of a land owner;
 - b. a reluctance to intervene in issues such as:
 - i. drug taking and drug dealing on its property;
 - ii. vagrancy; and
 - iii. lighting of fires and remedying damage caused to adjoining property;
 - c. a reluctance to expend money in repairing dividing walls and fences; and
 - d. failed to answer any correspondence addressed to it, requesting it to comply with its obligations as a property owner or at all.

Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development concept

12. There is no continuity in the Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development (**Development**). It seeks to incorporate, amongst other things:
 - a. a gymnasium;
 - b. an art gallery;
 - c. a child care centre;

- d. commercial office space;
 - e. medium density affordable housing for Aboriginal people; and
 - f. high density student accommodation.
13. In my submission, these ideas are incongruous and are unlikely to be successfully implemented. For example,
- a. a disused child care centre already lies overgrown and in ruins on Eveleigh Street;
 - b. students, particularly foreign students, are unlikely to want to live in an area where there is crime, drug dealing and drug taking. Therefore the long-term viability of this income (and the Development) depends upon whether the AHC can effectively manage and maintain the Development; and
 - c. the Development also relies significantly upon external investment and Government grants. I understand that the moneys to undertake the proposed Development have not been generated by the AHC. It is therefore unclear that the AHC has the experience and resources to manage a Development of this size and complexity.
14. In relation to paragraph 13(b) above, I note that there is significant student accommodation already under construction in the vicinity, such as the former CUB site, which will lessen the demand for student accommodation in the area, particularly if it is inefficiently managed. The same applies for commercial property.
15. The Development also appears extravagant in the circumstances, in particular:
- a. the size and location of the AHC offices on the top floor of the commercial building on the corner of Eveleigh and Lawson Streets – the AHC is, after all, a strata manager; and
 - b. the size and location of the gymnasium – particularly as a gymnasium already exists; and
 - c. the colours and branding proposed detract from the area.
16. In my submission, the Development should incorporate ownership of residential property by non-Aboriginal people for the following reasons:
- a. the segregation/exclusion should not be encouraged;

- b. there is a high incidence of unemployment of Aboriginal people living on the Block. Within in a given family, there may be a number of generations without regular employment. It has been suggested that the Aboriginal youth would benefit from mingling with non-Aboriginal youth and observing the routine of working families; and
- c. Aboriginal people have been identified as vulnerable people and should be interspersed in society, and not grouped in medium density housing.

Pemulwuy Mixed Use Development design

Student accommodation and gymnasium

17. The Development contemplates:
 - a. a 6 story student accommodation on Eveleigh Street adjacent to the railway line; and
 - b. a large 6 storey mixed use tower at the top of Louis Street that incorporates a gymnasium.
18. These two buildings cast significant overshadowing of adjacent open space, roads, community areas, private property and even the proposed child care centre.
19. These buildings are significantly oversized for the area and are inconsistent with the zoning set by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority.
20. In my submission, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority zoning should apply with respect to the size and location of large buildings. ie large buildings should be located in the vicinity of Vine Street.

Affordable housing

21. The Development proposes dwellings of a size similar to the buildings that were demolished and are proposed to replace.
22. It is therefore unclear why these buildings were demolished in the first place and not simply renovated.
23. Having reviewed the street view plans proposed by the AHC of these buildings, in my submission, these dwellings appear to look like demountable sheds and are out of character with the area.

Conclusion

24. In my submission:

- a. the viability of the proposed Development relies heavily upon revenue generated by leasing the commercial space and the student accommodation. These income streams will depend upon the AHC's management of the Development and ensuring that the Development was kept well maintained and law abiding. The AHC does not have a track record of ensuring either;
- b. the Development is oversized and should be sympathetic and in keeping with the adjacent heritage area and Redfern generally;
- c. the Development should adhere to the floor space ratios and heights set out by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority;
- d. the facades of the buildings within the Development have little merit, in particular the affordable housing and should be re-designed so that they are in keeping with the Redfern area;
- e. the Development should consider more commercial property, which will bring workers and business people into the area;
- f. the Development should incorporate more open space and vegetation;
- g. the Development should not be allowed to overshadow public spaces, roadways, community areas and private property; and
- h. the AHC should consider a more modest and less complex development consistent with its level of expertise.

Yours faithfully

Tom Dive