

Mr. Neil Bettles, 11 Holwood Avenue, Ashfield, NSW 2131

**Re: Trinity Grammar School Redevelopment (SSD-10371)**

I am a resident at the above address and have **very strong objections** to the above proposed development. The school refers to this project as "The Renewal Project" in their communications, but from the residents perspective it is hardly renewal given that it involves expanding outside the current school boundary into a residential area with the consequential **destruction of four properties**.

**Objection 1 - 40% increase in student numbers**

Fundamentally I see each component of the proposal as either **redevelopment** of the existing structure, or **development** of additional buildings and facilities. It is the new development component which I object to as there is no justification or indeed persuasive evidence that the school needs the additional capacity it proposes and therefore no justification to expand further into the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

If the school is unable to utilise the space it currently occupies without expanding into the residential surroundings and upwards beyond the height of the existing buildings, it seems clear they have reached **physical capacity** on the existing site.

Trinity themselves acknowledged this prior to their last major development by embarking on the purchase of another site (the University of NSW's teacher training campus at Oatley) to accommodate an expanded Junior School on a single site. This purchase didn't complete and the extension of the junior school was accommodated on the Summer Hill campus but only by extending the school boundary into Seaview Street and demolishing residential properties.

Acquiring additional land on a different site to consolidate and expand the school would be far more strategic for future growth and would eliminate some of the constraints of the current site. Instead this current plan proposes to expand the junior school facilities by encroaching on the residential boundary even further.

It was only in 2015 that Trinity tried to increase student numbers by just 200 (from 1500 to 1700), but **NSW Land and Environment Court ruled against** any student increases arguing that more pupils would generate "unacceptable traffic impacts" and "adverse amenity impacts for local residents". It is precisely what this current more ambitious growth plan of 600 students (from 1500 max. to 2100) would create.

The scoping report states that as part of this application the School is considering its optimal size over the next twenty years in response to current enrolment demand, growth in its local catchment areas, and the projected demand for schooling across the population. The report goes on to say that the Inner West will need to accommodate an additional 6,000 students by 2031, with approximately 1,500 of these in non-government schools. These projections align broadly to those on NSW government repositories.

However, Trinity's proposal to accommodate 600 (40%) of the non-government projected growth on

one campus of one school in the Inner West does **not seem reasonable** given the disproportionate share of the growth it is projecting even disregarding the unlikely demand for those places relative to other schools.

The Head Master stated in his latest communication to residents that "Trinity is not committed to a timeframe to commence construction" and so not only are the target student numbers without foundation, there is no timeframe over which the additional places should be available.

### **Recommendation**

- Growth in student numbers should not be approved given they are not mandated, not reasonable, and not supported by any evidence.
- Given that the expansion seems to be future proofing for potential future demand and not based on empirical evidence any new development should certainly prohibit the continued destruction of the surrounding residential neighbourhood.
- Notwithstanding the objections regarding the volume of student increases, development for new capacity should be accommodated on the existing site with the new classroom tower in particular being limited in height to the structure which it replaces. This would achieve the renewal objectives in the proposal without expanding the school boundary and structural profile.

## **Objection 2 -Heritage & Conservation**

Even though the area of development is not located within a conservation area, the school is surrounded by Heritage Conservation Areas with historic significance to the Inner West and the local community. Any development which faces the surrounding residential area affects the aesthetic and detracts from the heritage environment in which the surrounding residences sit.

The school has already breached the residential boundary on Seaview as a result of the last development giving the school a prominence which didn't exist previously on that side. The current proposal depletes the residential boundary further to the extent that Seaview becomes a school access and service road for Trinity and it creates a visually overbearing impact.

**Residential** planning applications which involve building higher than an existing structure are routinely rejected by the Inner West council. Residents appreciate and embrace those restrictions as they preserve the heritage and provide uninterrupted views across the suburb and beyond to the City, Botany Bay and other landmarks.

## **Recommendation**

- I take the view that even though the school does not have specific restrictions on height they should not build above the existing ridge line. Any expansion of the school profile or demolition of residential dwellings is completely at odds with the general residential suburban setting in which the school is lucky to be positioned. Any renewal should be created within the current boundary and profile.

### **Objection 3 - Seaview Road Development**

Trinity have already destroyed **seven** residential properties on this street as a result of the previous major development. In spite of this the street still retains its residential aesthetic due to the residential properties at each end of the street and the wide median strips where the large weeping fig trees sit. The trees mask the new junior school building when approaching from each end of Seaview.

I object to a further **four** residential properties in Seaview Street being demolished. They are described as being "on site" but they actually sit outside the current structural border of the school and although they may be owned by Trinity they are a constituent element of what is still essentially a residential street and provide a barrier from the school for residents and the community.

The proposed development will remove this barrier and Seaview will become another school facing border losing the residential aesthetic which it currently enjoys. The proposal will certainly not provide a "suburban" approach as Trinity suggests in its rhetoric. It is also contrary to the objective of the proposed design, namely to "Ensure development is compatible with surrounding development and the local context".

Compounding the above, the demolished houses will be replaced by an open playground and a new service, maintenance and delivery area, both of which will create noise and nuisance to the one side of the school border which is still relatively quiet.

Seaview should remain the quiet residential street it currently is, and not dominated by a visually overbearing school facade which is inappropriate and unsympathetic to the appearance and character of that part of the residential leafy neighbourhood.

### **Recommendation**

- The location of the new playground for the Junior school should not be approved as it involves further destruction of the residential neighbourhood. Space for this additional facility should be found within the existing school boundary or reversion to the status quo.

#### **Objection 4 - Traffic Congestion**

There are no satisfactory plans to mitigate the adverse impact on congestion from the consequential increase in traffic. Indeed there is currently an unresolved issue with traffic flow and congestion around the school, especially during drop offs, pickups, weekend sporting activities and evening events.

The Environmental Impact Statement includes a traffic and parking assessment for the school campus and surrounding streets, but there is no assessment of the additional traffic and congestion on the major arterial routes away from the school, namely Victoria Street/Liverpool Road junction and the junctions with Canterbury Road.

During school peak traffic times, congestion flows from the school down Victoria Street to the Liverpool Street intersection where the lights cause traffic to queue back to the mini roundabout at the intersection with Norton Street and beyond thereby obstructing traffic on local roads. This can impede the emergency services which are located at that intersection.

There doesn't seem to be any mitigating plans to resolve the current traffic issues and congestion to the local residential neighbourhood, only for the schools own road network. The proposal offers an additional token 12 new parking places to accommodate the additional 44 new staff members and additional student drivers which is insufficient to meet the increased demand for parking. The excess demand will be absorbed by residential streets.

#### **Recommendation**

- In 2005 the NSW Land and Environment Court ruled against an increase in student numbers of 200 because of the unacceptable traffic impacts it would cause. Given we have seen no changes or improvements to the local road network since that ruling and given there are no satisfactory solutions offered in this current proposal there cannot be any justification for the demands this even larger proposed expansion would impose on the local road network and surrounding neighbourhood.
- The school should present serious solutions to this issue before consideration of expansion plans,

**Neil Bettles, 31st May 2020**