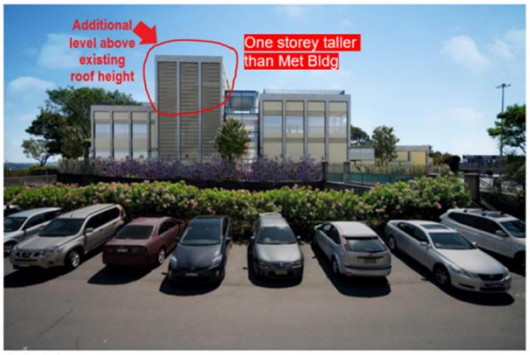
Detailed Objection to Proposed Fort Street Public School Development to Increase Building Heights

Figure 2.33: James Taylor's depiction of the third government mill and Fort Phillip, circa 1817-1819. The tower of the former mill encompassed by the Fort was converted to provide residential accommodation and storage for the signal master of Flagstaff Hill. (Source: SLNSW ML 942, digital order no. a1528797.)



View from the South

Preserve the heritage of this historic location for future generations

Table of Contents

1. Summary

There are significant changes to the current building development proposal at Fort Street Public School. The *currently approved plan*'s height max is *the existing height* of the tallest building, the Bureau of Meteorology (Met) Building. However, the new proposed modification will result in exceeding the current height by one storey.

One of the reasons the original design was approved was because the height of the Meteorology Building was not exceeded. The State Significant Development Assessment SSD-10340 by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment stated that "Public submissions raised concern that the new buildings represented an over-development of the site. However, the public submissions supported the proposed overall height being below the Met Building". **This is no longer the case with the new changes. The changes are proposed in order to reduce development costs at the expense of the local community and the enjoyment of future generations of this historic location.**

This will set a precedent for increasing development heights on this site and throughout the area.

2. Currently Approved Development

The currently approved documents for Fort Street Development can be found here under the “Archive” drop down:
https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/13596

The highest building is the Meteorology Building (Building “M”) with the other buildings being at the same roof height or below.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is the key document of the currently approved work:

https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10340%2120200320T022558.661%20GMT

It shows the *current* max height of Building “J” is maintained below the Meteorological Building (Building “M) – see Page 42 (Figure 25 – Section 3.8). It shows the currently approved building heights are the same or less than Building “M”.

Figure 25 **Proposed Eastern Elevation**
Source: FJMT

Currently Approved Determinations – State Significant Development Assessment SSD-10340 by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment document:
https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10340%2120201009T050032.927%20GMT

One of the reasons given that the original design was approved in the above document was because the height of the Met Building was not exceeded. On page 49 in Section “6.2.3 Bulk and scale” of the previous assessment it stated that “Public submissions raised concern that the new buildings represented an over-development of the site. However, the public submissions supported the proposed overall height being below the Met Building” and “The proposed maximum building height has been designed not to exceed the height of the existing Met Building”. **This is no longer the case with the proposed changes for Building J.**

6.2.3 Bulk and scale

The Applicant's EIS stated that the proposed bulk and scale have been considered with respect to:

- minimisation of disruption to the heritage items retained.
- retention of key views. The proposed maximum building height has been designed not to exceed the height of the existing Met Building.
- need to minimise disruption of archaeology (Section 6.3).

Public submissions raised concern that the new buildings represented an over-development of the site. However, the public submissions supported the proposed overall height being below the Met Building.

The Applicant's RtS clarified that while the proposed height of the new buildings and addition to the FSPS Building when measured from ground level, exceed the Met Building, the slope of the site means that the Met Building remains as the highest building on-site (see **Figure 36** and **Figure 37**).

3. Proposed Changes – new storey to be added to Bldg "J" (SSD-10340-Mod-1)

The proposed changes include adding an additional storey to the currently approved development. As a result, Building "J" will become one storey taller than the current Meteorology Building (Building "M").

The proposed changes can be found here:
https://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/project/41261

In Figure 2 on Page 5 of the document it shows the Photomontages of the proposed development as modified.

View from the South

https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10340-MOD-1%2120210331T065719.496%20GMT

In section 2.1 on page 2, the 4th bullet point is where it is subtly mentioned that there is a new storey to be added. However, it fails to call out the true nature of the impact – impacting the overall harmonious and integrated feel of the school into the surrounds due to the increase in building height of the modification.

On page 23 of the "Modification Report" in section 4.3.4 Visual Impact, it is noted that “Curio Projects have found that the additional partial storey to Building J presents a minor to **moderate negative visual impact to the site**”

4.3.3 Heritage

Heritage Impact

Curio Projects have prepared a Heritage Impact Statement (**Appendix E**) that has assessed the heritage impact of the proposed modifications, particularly the key modifications relating to the Met Building, Building J and the

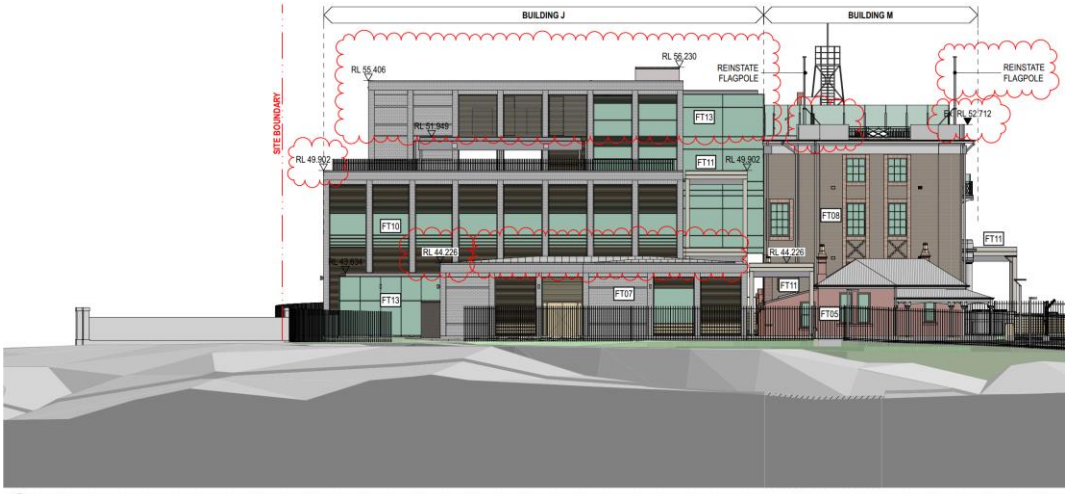
Ethos Urban | 2200762 22

Fort Street Public School Redevelopment | Section 4.55(2) | 1 April 2020

reduction in excavation. Even though the height, density, bulk and scale of the proposed development, as modified, remains generally consistent with the approved development, and sensitive setbacks retain the hierarchy of forms established in the approved development, Curio Projects have found that the additional partial storey to Building J presents a minor to moderate negative visual impact to the site.

In Appendix B - DA-3001 Elevations North East, in the following link the overwhelming size and bulk of Building J compared to Met Building can be observed:

https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10340-MOD-1%2120210331T064817.248%20GMT



2 ELEVATION EAST
1:200

How can Curio Projects on behalf of School Infrastructure NSW say that the increased building height of Building "J" is compliant to their own Conservation Management Plan (CMP) policies when it is proposed that the new height is well above the parapet of the Met Building? Building J is much larger, the general bulk much bigger and it very clearly exceeds the height of the Met building, leaving the Met building to no longer be the most dominant building on site in terms of both height and architectural form.

The following CMP policies are clearly not complied with:

- **Policy 21.4:** ***"Any future development should retain the general bulk and massing character of precinct (i.e. complement single storey Messengers Cottage as well as three stories of MET)".***
- **Policy 25.3:** ***"Maximum heights of new buildings should not exceed those of the existing heritage items to which they are locationally and visually related."***
- **Policy 25.5:** **"*The Bureau of Meteorology should remain as a dominant building on site (both in height, and architectural form*)".**

The following diagram also shows that the above policies are not met. Notice how Building "J" compared to Met Building is well above the parapet of the Met building:

/ S4.55 - North East View

4. Short-term Cost Cutting vs Long-term Consequences

This is a situation of short-term, cost-cutting decision-making vs long-term and long-lived consequences for the community. It mentions on page 5 of the "Modification Report" that this is being done to avoid additional costs involved with developments involving heritage buildings. This avoidance of costs has long-term consequences and must be balanced with the impact on the overall historic and heritage nature of the overall site and on the community.

It sets an important precedent for the future of not complying with the principles that were developed in Section 6.1 of the Conservation Management Plan document regarding building heights (outlined in the below points).

NSW Government must adhere to the principles and policies in the original development application and reject this current proposal to extend Building J above the height of the existing Bureau of Meteorology Building.

5. Proposal fails to meet the original Conservation Management Plan

The proposal fails to meet the principles that were developed in the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) by Curio Projects for School Infra NSW submitted as part of the original development proposal (refer p180 of the link below - "Part B - Conservation Policy and Implementation Policies"). On p181 in Section 6.1 it states: **"The conservation policies provide the essential guiding aims for the FSPS (Fort Street Public School) site, which should be adopted by SI (Schools Infrastructure) NSW and the relevant approval authorities".**

Original Conservation Management Plan:
https://majorprojects.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/prweb/PRRestService/mp/01/getContent?AttachRef=SSD-10340%2120200320T022601.981%20GMT

The policies below are not complied with in the modification as Building "J" is proposed to be one storey taller than the Met Building:

- **Policy 21.4:** ***"Any future development should retain the general bulk and massing character of precinct (i.e. complement single storey Messengers Cottage as well as three stories of MET)".***
- **Policy 25.3:** ***"Maximum heights of new buildings should not exceed those of the existing heritage items to which they are locationally and visually related."***
- **Policy 25.5:** **"*The Bureau of Meteorology should remain as a dominant building on site (both in height, and architectural form*)".**

In the letter from the same consultant as part of the modification, Curio state that all of the modifications "have been found to be compliant with all CMP policies." The modification to the FSPS building J to increase its height above the Met Building **contradicts the policies and principles above. It does NOT comply with the CMP.**

6. Lack of Consultation of the Millers Point Community (MPC) and Residents

The consultation of the MPC was lacking. Only one apartment building was consulted and there was no mention of the increased building height in the consult. The surrounding and impacted resident buildings including Highgate, Stamford Marque, Georgia and Stamford on Kent were not consulted at all. Views and sitelines for these residents are also impacted, however they were not part of the consultation process of this modification.

7. MPC RAG and National Trust of Australia (NSW) do not support the changes

Both the Millers Point Community Resident Action Group and the neighbouring National Trust of Australia (NSW) strongly oppose this new modification. Many residents in the community have complained and are unhappy with the proposed

modifications. The Director of the National Trust of Australia (NSW) has advised he strongly objects to the proposal for numerous reasons. He is contactable on David Burdon on (02) 9258 0179.

8. CONCLUSION AND ACTION REQUESTED

The Observatory Hill area has been used for weather recording since the time of the First Fleet, with the current observatory building being opened in 1859. It is an area of historical significance to the nation. It would be unconscionable to divert the attention of visitors and residents from the historical aspect of the area by imposing a modern eyesore as the tallest building and focal point on the hill.

There is an additional storey being added to Building "J" which will make it the tallest and most prominent building on this historical site. The result being it will change the nature of the entire area of Observatory Hill permanently.
It is a poor design choice driven by cost-cutting with no real benefit to the school, but a long-term impact to the community.

Rob Stokes, as Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, to reject the modification and preserve the heritage of this historic location for future generations to enjoy.