

Director, Social + Infrastructure Assessments
NSW Department of Planning, Industry + Environment Locked Bag 5022 Parramatta
NSW 2124

Tuesday 14 May 2021

Re: Significant Development: Fort Street Public School Application No SSD-10340 – Mod 1

Submission from Observatory Tower

Observatory Tower (OT) objects to the above modifications and in particular the changes to increase the height of Building J. Our building, with 200 apartments represents over 400 owners and residents.

The school is our front yard. When we look towards the bridge, we overlook our neighbour, the National Trust, and then the school. A large percentage of our Owners and Residents have lived in the building and overlooked the current school for decades. The document noting the planned changes (Fort Street Public School Mod 1 - Design and Layout Changes) advised that the old Meteorological (Met) building would become part of the School. The Met Building and Messenger House were described as 'important heritage buildings' in the announcement of the school upgrading by the NSW Minister of Planning and Public Spaces (Rob Stokes),

The 87-page document was accompanied by tens of documents including the Conservation Management Plan and Heritage Impact Statement authored by Curio Projects. The more recent EEC building closest to OT will be demolished and replaced by three large new buildings.

The new buildings as presented in the original CMP on the south side of the School will already be very visible to a large number of resident's homes. We had nonetheless accepted the original Plans for the School redevelopment on the basis that **no new construction would be higher than the Met building roof parapet**. Putting to one side that the new buildings are visually overpowering, the buildings struck a reasonable balance between respecting the history of one of Sydney's most iconic areas and providing a modern school that works for the children learning and playing in its spaces.

Now however, the Department has circulated a modification **Mod-1** (the subscript 1 sounding ominous) proposing that Building J, will be set at a **height one floor higher than the current Meteorological (Met) building**.

We have a number of objections to this change, which we feel was 'sprung on' us with only a very short time to respond to this large pack of information.

Our key objections are as follows:

1. **Historical/heritage significance.** The site could be considered as the most historic in the city and is heritage listed. The Department's original study

recognised this and included a comprehensive and thoughtful Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) and Conservation Management Plan (CMP).

2. **Violation of original proposal and CMP.** The original HIS and CMP required for good reason that no building be higher than the Met building. The modification proposal VIOLATES this self-imposed and important requirement, failing to meet **the CMP accepted for the site.**
3. **Loss of ambience and light.** The changes will cause loss of views (and in some cases reduced light), for OT but also loss of views from other buildings along Kent St and potentially from Barangaroo, because of the overall bulk of Building J in particular but also all the additions. We appreciate that loss of views alone are not a basis for objecting. However, the changes also significantly they change the nature of our area by diminishing the overall positive effect of vegetation encompassing buildings. We will now see more building and less vegetation and open space.
4. **Architectural style.** We have had comments from residents in our building that the architectural style in the building faces facing Observatory Tower is noticeably different from anything else in the site, and that consideration should be given to revising their appearance.

It is difficult to see the justification for these changes as they do not add more space for pupils- the number of pupils has not been increased over that in the original scheme.