

Planning Services
Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Submission - Proposed Santa Sophia Catholic College – Fontana Drive Box Hill North – SSD 9972

We are residents of Rouse Hill and have been made aware of the proposal by the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta (CDEP) to construct Santa Sophia Catholic College within Box Hill North in lieu of a site on Terry Road, Box Hill as previously foreshadowed. The proposed school is of particular interest to us as Our Lady of the Angels Primary School in Rouse Hill, which our children will attend, will be a feeder school for the high school component of Santa Sophia.

In terms of the school, we do not support the current proposal at the proposed location. The reasons for our concerns are detailed below.

- **Non-Compliance with State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017** – The proposal does not satisfy the design principles within Schedule 4 of the Education SEPP. In particular:
 - Principle 2 – The design of the school is not durable or adaptable and cannot cater for any future expansion.
 - Principle 4 – The proposed design within a high rise setting and the associated lack of open space does not provide for a safe and healthy learning environment. There would also be limited access to areas where physical activity could be undertaken.
 - Principle 5 – Open space and outdoor learning areas that are available to all students and which are open to the sky are not provided.
 - Principle 6 – The design of the school does not account for future needs.
 - Principle 7 – The design is not aesthetically pleasing, and as it is essentially a single building it is of a bulk and scale that is not appropriate for a school. It will also have a negative impact on the character of the neighbourhood.
- **Suitability of the site** – The proposed development is not suitable for the site due to the proposed occupant density and bulk and scale of the buildings. The proposed 2:1 floor space ratio is also not appropriate. The location of the site will result in a heavy reliance on private vehicles as a means of getting to and from the school.
- **Solar access** – The shadow diagrams indicate that there is insufficient solar access during the winter solstice. This is of a particular concern considering the limited amount of open space that is available.
- **Amenity** - There is a very large number of students proposed to be accommodated on a relatively small site. This will impact negatively on student enjoyment and will result in limited access to physical activity during recess and lunch times. There is also likely to be excessive noise levels generated with such a large number of students in a confined space. This excessive noise will impact negatively on the proposed development immediately surrounding the proposed school as an inadequate buffer zone has been provided.
- **Bulk and Scale** – The proposed development is essentially one large building that covers a significant proportion of the site. The building will dominate the streetscape and lacks suitable articulation and variation in height. It is also likely to be significantly larger than any of the buildings within the adjoining development.

- **Traffic and Parking** – The proposed development has inadequate parking and does not cater for the volume of traffic that would be anticipated. In particular:
 - *Incorrect Catchment* – The school catchment area on which the traffic study has been based is incorrect. With Our Lady of the Angels Primary School at Rouse Hill being a feeder school for Santa Sophia, the actual catchment area extends much further towards the east and south east taking in areas of Rouse Hill, Kellyville, North Kellyville, Beaumont Hills, Riverstone and Schofields. This larger catchment will have a significant impact on traffic volumes as a large proportion of the movements to and from the school will be via private vehicle due to the distance travelled and lack of public transport. The current traffic study cannot therefore be relied upon.
 - *Inadequate kiss and drop facilities* – The traffic study acknowledges that the proposed number of kiss and drop facilities will be insufficient (Refer Conclusions, Page 88). This will put the safety of children at risk. The anticipated turnover of the kiss and drop facilities, which amounts to 1 vehicle per minute is manifestly inadequate. Most parents particularly those within the primary school will at a minimum escort their children to the gate. This will take significantly longer than 1 minute.
 - *Senior Students Driving Policy* – The traffic study indicates that it is CDEP policy that senior students do not drive to school. It is understood, that most if not all, of the other CDEP senior schools within the area allow senior students to drive to school. Noting the location and the lack of public transport, this will also likely be the case at Santa Sophia. This needs to be taken into consideration.
 - *Non-compliance with the Hills DCP 2012* – For a development of this nature, the Hills DCP would require over 200 spaces for staff, visitors and the senior students. The allocation of parking within the shopping centre for the school is less than a third of the amount required. This is a significant non-compliance and will not even cater for the number of staff that will be employed at the school. It is also considered inappropriate to rely on parking being provided within the shopping centre as there is no assurance that such would be available both in the short and long term. Any commercial arrangements that may exist could change further reducing the availability of parking. The lack of onsite parking will also impact on the local road network.
 - *No Visitor Parking* – There will often be visitors to the school at various times and there has been no provision has been made for visitor parking. Visitors should not be expected to park in the shopping centre.
- **Safety** – A critical feature is access to a suitable evacuation and assembly point that can accommodate all occupants. Such is not available in this case. Whilst the proposed playing fields could be utilised, this is a significant distance away and will require the crossing of public roads making evacuation difficult. This is not appropriate for a school of this size. Consideration must be given to the age of the occupants, and in particular those within the early childhood centre that need assistance to evacuate. This will significantly increase the time it would take to evacuate all the occupants, as it is likely that some occupants will need to be carried by a carer during an evacuation. The lack of adequate visitor parking and kiss and drop facilities as stated earlier, will also put the safety of children at risk.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there is a need for additional school facilities within the north-west, the proposed school in its current form and in particular at the current location is not in the public interest. The proposed school development will result in a poor-quality learning environment that will put the safety of children at risk. It is also likely to have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area.

There is a more suitable location currently available where the proposed school could be constructed. This alternative site is much larger and provides a greater scope for a more appropriate

built form, increased levels of open space, better addresses the safety of the occupants and allows for improved accessibility.

We thank you for taking all of our concerns into consideration.

Kind Regards

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