From:	Rob Shoebridge
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Subject:	I STRONGLY OBJECT TO THE PROPOSAL AS DESCRIBED IN 2020SNH005-PP_2020_NORTH_004_00
Date:	Wednesday, 25 November 2020 11:11:51 PM
Attachments:	Opposition_173_179Walker.pdf

Dear Premier and Planning Panel,

I am a North Sydney resident and the Strata Committee Chairman for Belvedere, 138 Walker St North Sydney. I write to strongly oppose a proposed development at 173 – 179 Walker St North Sydney. You will be aware that approval responsibility for this project was taken off North Sydney Council by your Government in July 2020, at the time that Council is conducting its precinct study, negating the effectiveness of our elected local representatives and their legislated planning processes.

My letter opposing this proposal is attached. I would also like to extend an invitation to you, your colleagues, the Mayor and David Shoebridge to visit Belvedere at your convenience. That would provide an opportunity to see at first hand the impact the proposed development will have. If the visit was around 08:00 to 08:15 on a weekday morning, you could see the current traffic chaos in Walker St, exacerbated by any more high-rise projects.

Yours faithfully,

Rob Shoebridge
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Apartment 1605
138 Walker St
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2060
26th November 2020

The Honourable Gladys Berejiklian, MP
Premier of NSW

PROPOSAL 2020SNH005-PP_2020_NORTH_004_00

173-179B WALKER ST & 11-17 HAMPDEN ST NORTH SYDNEY

Dear Premier,

I WISH TO STRONGLY OBJECT TO THE PROPOSAL AS DESCRIBED IN 2020SNH005-PP_2020_NORTH_004_00

I am a resident in Belvedere apartments, 138 Walker St, NORTH SYDNEY, and Chairman of the buildings Strata Committee. I am writing to strongly object to this proposed development. On 14 August 2019, the North Sydney Local Planning Panel rejected a previous proposal for this site and provided reasons for the rejection. The list of reasons provided by the Local Panel at that time do not appear to have been addressed in any definitive manner by this proponent, sufficiently to convince a reader that the issues raised have been addressed in the current Proposal.

The developer has now gone down the path of approaching your Government in an attempt to circumvent the wishes of Council and residents who oppose the proposal. My wife and I actively supported North Sydney Council in opposing this proposal and now find ourselves having to fight again, against the same opportunistic developer who hopes to have success by going to your Government, ignoring the opinion of residents and their elected Council.

My submission covers *traffic, loss of sunlight and overshadowing and loss of view*. Those concerns are demonstrably evident by observing what it is like now to live in Belvedere and envisage what it will be like if this proposal proceeds.

To that end, I extend on behalf of the Belvedere community, an open invitation to you, Premier, to visit and see for yourself.

Fellow residents from Belvedere and neighbouring apartment blocks will, in correspondence to you, address the strategic merits of this proposal, the ignoring of the North Sydney Council Strategic Masterplan and perceived flaws in the NSW planning process. Submissions will make it very apparent that this proposal is not in the interests of local residents.

Traffic

Walker Street between Ridge and Berry Streets is already one of the most congested vehicular traffic areas in North Sydney. The Proposal includes a reference to an additional “25 vehicle trips during the AM/PM peak hour”. The comment demonstrates a complete lack of understanding about what happens every working weekday in Walker Street. Traffic bottlenecks occur daily at the Walker/Berry, Walker/McLaren and Walker/Ridge intersections and it is extremely difficult to access Walker Street now from existing buildings. The current level of traffic congestion is happening before the 800 plus residential developments are completed at 168 Walker and 41 and 45 McLaren Streets. These issues are not considered in the Proposal.

The issues associated with the current and future traffic congestion in Walker Street and with residents accessing Walker Street from existing buildings, both of which are compounded by the large number of school students that have to access the area with the inherent safety issues involved, have all been totally ignored in the Proposal.

Walker St adjacent to Belvedere, is split by a very narrow two-way lane, parallel to Walker and leading to Hampden St. The northern end of the dividing wall is heritage listed. It is so narrow that garbage trucks must reverse down it to get to Hampden. Of greater concern is that restricted access has been seen to directly impact Emergency Service vehicles, where fire engines have had to back down to reach Hampden. More vehicles in that immediate area will exacerbate the congestion and access difficulties.

The issues associated with the current and future traffic congestion in Walker Street and with residents accessing Walker Street from existing buildings have all been totally ignored in the Proposal. For Belvedere residents, turning right from our carpark to access the freeway from Berry St, is near impossible during peak periods. So, turning left on to Walker for the City means that drivers recirculate through the North Sydney CBD, adding to traffic congestion and pollution on Miller St and the Pacific Highway. Over the last couple of years there have been several serious collisions at the nearby intersection, due to the increasing numbers of residents and vehicles in this one block alone.

Add traffic entering Walker St from this proposed development increasing peak load and grid lock. And then add the noise and air pollution that this traffic will cause and you can imagine, Premier, that your Government is endorsing a traffic nightmare and extreme overdevelopment.

Linked to the dramatic increase in the traffic is the impact on precinct parking and pedestrians. In this proposal there are less in-house parking places than apartments. Where do owners without in-house parking leave their cars? The conclusion is that there will be increased demand for on-street parking, a demand that already exceeds supply. Walker St is a heavily used pedestrian thoroughfare for local residents, people walking to and from the North Sydney CBD and students from Wenona School and other local schools. Not all intersections off Walker St have pedestrian crossings.

Loss of sunlight and overshadowing

The proposal does not address the excessive overshadowing of adjoining buildings, obscuring morning sunlight to residential apartments and Belvedere's street level café. East facing apartments will have no sunlight at all during a winter day, being in the shadow of the proposed buildings on 173 –179 Walker St. Any summertime sun access will be similarly restricted to all East facing apartments.

The sunlight that is such a plus for the Belvedere café, will be a flicker around noon in summer and non-existent in winter when the sun is further to the north.

People familiar with the 'urban canyons' of New York City or Tokyo might appreciate this deprivation of sunlight and the constant overshadowing of multi-story buildings. North Sydney already possesses some of those traits, and more opportunistic developments are a real threat to the success of the Council's planning strategy. I cannot imagine, Premier, that this is the type of urban landscape you would wish on North Sydney residents. People who have made considered decisions to downsize in order to be closer to the city and its attractions will have their retirement plans trashed, having to contend with the inevitable loss in value in their investments. It is totally unfair that building height legislation and subsequent approvals can be changed just to accommodate greedy developers who have absolutely no regard for the damage done.

Loss of view

This proposal is silent on the loss of iconic views for East facing Belvedere apartments. The view analysis is inadequate and requires further refinement. Does this mean Government accepts incomplete proposals?

For my wife and I, the iconic view of the Harbour and the Lower North Shore was a major consideration in our decision to buy into Belvedere seven years ago. After periods of living overseas, we returned to Sydney looking for an apartment that had views of the Harbour and Lower North Shore suburbs, views we had missed during my 31 years of Army service around the world but never in Sydney. We found them. Now we are threatened with losing them because of this proposal.

Associated with the lost views, the overshadowing that will occur and the overwhelming presence of the proposed building, the value of properties on the West side of Walker Street will be substantially reduced. These issues are not covered in any detail in the Proposal, but they will have significant impact on the values of adjacent properties as well as on the well-being and lifestyles of every individual whose property will be negatively impacted if the Proposal was to proceed.

Is the Government prepared to face the legal challenges for compensation? A precedent exists where residents of a CBD apartment have been financially compensated for the loss of view and life-style, identical circumstances to the impact of this proposal on Belvedere and neighbouring residents. It would be negligent if the Panel were to approve this proposal without even a comprehensive impact study being undertaken.

Conclusion

Why should a "Property Developer" be able to make further submissions to a higher authority, your Government, which are essentially the same in principle as those that have been rejected by North Sydney Council on two previous occasions? When should the umpire's decision be respected?

North Sydney regularly features near the top of lists of best places to live in Australia, something we cherish and promote. Why would the planning experts willingly accede to wishes that will inevitably threaten that quality of life many people have moved here to enjoy? Please help us to protect that as we support North Sydney Council efforts to continue to provide the elements of their extensive planning strategies.

The Walker Street streetscape is one very attractive feature which will be destroyed if such a huge development is permitted. Mature Jacaranda trees will be lost, as well as all of the trees in Hampden St. I fear a concrete jungle is the predictable outcome which will be to the detriment of the area.

I hope, Premier, that you and your colleagues will consider the rejection of this proposal, another unsolicited grab for money at the expense of current residents, many of whom I suspect would vote for your team.

Yours faithfully,

Rob Shoebridge

Submitted by email