

6 April 2018

Ms Rita Vella
Strategic Planning Manager
Strathfield Municipal Council
PO Box 120
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135

Dear Ms Vella

**55 – 67 PARRAMATTA ROAD, HOMEBUSH
PRELIMINARY PLANNING PROPOSAL**

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2018 that provided options for progressing assessment of our proposal and outlined matters that required further assessment or additional information.

I confirm that Walker want Council to continue the preliminary Planning Proposal's assessment. I understand that a report will be prepared and forwarded to IHAP for their consideration.

The enclosed amended preliminary Planning Proposal addresses the matters raised in your 2 March letter. To assist I have summarised our response in the attached table.

It would be appreciated if IHAP could consider the amended preliminary Proposal.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss our vision for the site with you prior to any report being finalised, and I will contact you shortly to arrange.

I look forward to your positive response, and, please call me if you wish to discuss anything.

Yours sincerely



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The proposal is inconsistent with and the PRCUTS Strategic Vision for the Parramatta Road Corridor, and the Section 117 Ministerial Direction

The proposal is consistent with PRUCTS strategic vision and core planning principles, as it will:

- Contribute to a high quality public domain.
- Include a publically accessible, attractive urban Plaza and through site links.
- Create a destination and focus for the emerging community.
- Incorporate the refurbishment of the Homebush Theatre as an urban landmark, and its occupation with viable and needed businesses.
- Exhibit design excellence.
- Accommodate high quality apartments dedicated as for Affordable Rental Housing in perpetuity.
- Include a child care centre
- Include shops that will serve the existing and future community, and which will be attractive to businesses and customers as they will face into the sheltered Plaza.

Ethos Urban's *Preliminary Planning Proposal* report provides more detail, particular regarding the 'Out of Sequence Checklist' that applies in this case.

The proposal exceeds the PRCUTS recommended FSR and height controls. This is supported by direct and indirect public benefits that include and exceed the Section 7.13 and 7.22 contributions and Affordable Rental Housing contributions that would be generated by a proposal that is consistent with the PRCUTS recommended planning controls. These include:

- Protecting the key Knight Street view to the Heritage Theatre by locating the substantive building mass on the site's western side.
- Creating a publically accessible 2,800m² Plaza, sheltered in the site's centre and activated by shops and commercial space.
- Providing affordable commercial, retail or creative space.
- Providing a childcare centre.
- Refurbishing the front portion of the Homebush Theatre and interpreting its removed portion with an interesting structure that will integrate the heritage element with the new project.
- The provision of public art.
- The achievement of high quality architectural design.

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It doesn't provide for a diversity of:

- *Jobs*
- *Housing that meets the needs of a broad cross section of the community.*

The Reference Design includes a of variety land uses that can accommodate diversity of employment:

- Commercial floor area, which Walker intends to lease for 5 years at affordable rents to eligible start up businesses or creative enterprises.
- Shops that will tend to be food and beverage related, including cafes, restaurants and bars.
- Childcare centre.
- Homebased employment.

The site is 200 metres from Homebush Station, which provides access to Parramatta and Sydney CBDs in under 30 minutes. These are, or will be, two of Australia's largest employment centres.

The reference scheme demonstrates that the apartment mix can accommodate a range of households, and it is intended to dedicate 21 x 2 bedroom apartments to Council for Affordable Rental Housing.

Ethos Urban have considered this issue in detail in the *Preliminary Planning Proposal Report*.

The maximum building height and FSR is incongruous with the prevailing and desired future character of the Homebush Precinct.

The prevailing character of the Homebush Precinct is relatively poor, and fragmented. It is therefore not appropriate to draw on that character.

PRCUTS seeks 'taller residential will mark the core of the Precinct near all three stations' (page 96).

The proposal is entirely consistent with the desired future character outlined in PRCUTS.

The public domain and ground level benefits associated with the additional height will contribute to a far better outcome for the site and the emerging north Homebush community.

Ethos Urban have considered this issue in detail in the *Preliminary Planning Proposal Report*.

The inconsistencies with the maximum building height of 80m and FSR of 5:1 recommended in PRCUTS are inadequately justified in the 'Urban Design Report', 'Landscape and Public Domain Plan', 'Heritage Issues Statement', 'Retail Strategy' and 'Traffic and Parking Report'.

The *Landscape and Public Domain Plan*, *'Heritage Impact Statement'* and *'Retail Strategy'* relate to the public domain, the heritage listed Theatre and the retail component of the proposal. These are not relevant to the height or FSR issue.

The *Urban Design Report* at **Appendix B** has been amended to provide additional detail on the form, massing and location of future buildings on the site.

In summary, new buildings are focused on the western side of the site to accommodate a central sheltered Plaza and create a pedestrian lane way entrance that also serves to create a curtilage around the refurbished Theatre.

The transition from Building C to the Theatre does not comply with Section 7.8 of the PRCUTS Planning and Design Guidelines.

The amended *Urban Design Report* at **Appendix B** includes diagrams that demonstrate compliance with Section 7.8 of the PRCUTS *Planning and Design Guidelines*

The Parramatta Rd street edge must be defined by buildings that have a maximum height of 8 storeys, with appropriately scaled of 3 – 4 storey podiums to create a pedestrian scale at street level.

The amended *Urban Design Report* at **Appendix B** includes diagrams that demonstrate the proposed street frontage is consistent with other buildings in the locality, and in particular a high quality pedestrian scale space will be created along a widened Parramatta Road frontage, and within the Plaza and Theatre setting.

As a better design outcome would be achieved by amalgamating with 69 Parramatta Rd, documentation showing offers and responses is required.

Walker has made reasonable offers to purchase 69 Parramatta Road, which exceeded its market value by a considerable amount. This offer was rejected by the owner. Documentation is at **Appendix J**.

Notwithstanding this, the reference design illustrates that a high quality project will be provided on the site in accordance with the requested planning controls.

Requirements and timing for infrastructure generated by the additional population associated with the 2.3:1 FSR above PRCUTS recommendation must be considered.

In addition, the population and infrastructure implications of a scenario where the 7.3:1 FSR on the site sets a precedent for other sites in the Precinct should be considered.

The floor space provided on the site that exceeds the PRCUTS recommended FSR of 5:1 will be accompanied by commensurately higher Section 7.13 and 7.22 contributions for local and regional infrastructure, and other direct and indirect material public benefits that will enhance the amenity of the locality for existing residents and support new residents. These are described in the draft Letter of Offer at **Appendix G**.

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The Sydney Eastern City Planning Panel deferred consideration of the 11-17 Columbia Lane Planning Proposal until the Precinct wide transport study is complete in mid – 2018.

The potential traffic impact of the 7.3:1 FSR vs the 5:1 FSR must be assessed as part of the study.

It would be appreciated if Council would arrange for this preliminary Planning Proposal to be considered as part of the Study.

Notwithstanding, the Ason *Traffic Impact Assessment* at Appendix E concluded that the additional floor area would generate less than 1 additional vehicle per minute in the morning and afternoon peaks.

The Traffic Impact Assessment must address:

- *Existing constraints within the Precinct, such as high traffic volumes on the strategic road network*
- *Potential conflicts between vehicles entering and existing the site with:*
 - *The Powell St "High Pedestrian Activity Zone"*
 - *Movement & circulation at the Westconnex Portal*
 - *The delivery of new open space under the M4*

Reducing car dependency through on-site parking provision, encouraging active transport linkages & facilitating pedestrian movement within the Precinct

Ason have prepared a response to these issues. It is at **Appendix E**.

Notwithstanding, the site is connected to nearby train stations, bus stops, and a future Metro West station by existing and planned walking and bicycle paths.

A Connectivity Diagram is at **Annexure K**. It is anticipated this connectivity will encourage residents, workers and visitors to the site to use public transport and/or walk and cycle.

This is considered in more detail in Ethos Urban's *Preliminary Planning Proposal* report.

The Urban Design Report must address:

- i. *Planning Proposals in the vicinity of the site.*
- ii. *Floor plates above 8 storeys should be a maximum 750m² to create slender tower forms.*
- iii. *Links to open space and community facilities.*
- iv. *The building typologies must provide a mix of compatible land uses in accordance with the objectives of the Strathfield LEP 2012 B4 - Mixed Use zone.*
- v. *Implications of the proposed built form siting and layout on the development potential of surrounding sites, having regard to the requirements of the Apartment Design Guide (ADG) including, but not limited to building separation, solar access, visual and acoustic privacy, deep soil zones, communal and public open space, cross ventilation and private open space*
- vi. *Basement parking shall not protrude above the level of the adjacent street or public domain under the PRCUTS. "Building A" fronting Powell Street shall be amended to provide sufficient retail floor area at ground floor level to reinforce activity as well as provide passive surveillance of the adjoining public domain.*

The Urban Design Report has been amended to address:

- i. Planning Proposal near the site at 17 – 35 Powell Street.
- ii. Address potential future tower forms, and provide examples of successful projects recently completed. In respect of this issue it is noted that the tower form included makes a more efficient use of lifts and other building plant than two separate towers.
- iii. Include a Connectivity Diagram, which is also at **Appendix K**. It shows the links between the site and existing and planned open space and community facilities.
- iv. Include diagrams that demonstrate the variety of uses incorporated into the reference design includes a mix of land uses, particularly on the ground floor.

These reflect the objectives of *B4 Mixed Use* zone and PRCUTS actions, strategies and guidelines. The land uses on the site include:

- A Plaza
- Through site links
- Childcare centre
- Shops, bars, cafes and restaurants
- v. Include additional diagrams that explain the relationship of the reference design to adjoining properties, including street elevations and massing diagrams.
- An ADG compliance schedule is included.
- vi. Remove basement parking from under the land to be dedicated as footpath widening along the Parramatta Road frontage, which will also include deep soil planting. This amendment is reflected in all the documentation.

Include a new shop into the Powell Street frontage.

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<p><i>Address existing constraints within the Precinct, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Poor pedestrian connectivity</i> - <i>Bike & path links to public transport, open space, recreational opportunities & employment</i> - <i>Movement & circulation at the Westconnex Portal</i> - <i>The delivery of new open space under the M4</i> - <i>Fragmented communities.</i>
<p>The site currently enjoys excellent pedestrian connectivity to Homebush Station, bus stops and the Bakehouse Quarter on existing footpaths. From Homebush Station, minor and major employment, service, education, health, commercial, recreation and retail centres can be accessed by public transport, within 30 minutes.</p> <p>Bike and footpath connections to other destinations will be progressively implemented in accordance with the PRCUTS.</p> <p>It is estimated the proposal will have a 3 year planning lead time, and will take 2 years to construct. In this time frame infrastructure timing, funding and delivery will be finalised.</p> <p>It is an objective of this proposal to:</p> <p><i>Provide public domain improvements; being a plaza, a refurbishment of the local heritage item in the former Homebush Theatre, and other direct and indirect public benefits that will identify the Homebush Precinct as a distinct new urban place and ultimately provide a civic, social and retail focus for its new community.</i></p> <p>A Connectivity Diagram is at Appendix K.</p>
<p><i>The barriers to viability of retail/office space on the site shall be further investigated in terms of exposure to accessibility and market size to justify the strongly weighted residential composition.</i></p> <p><i>The Retail Strategy must address how retail tenants will be enticed and retained on the site to create an active Parramatta Rd frontage.</i></p>
<p>The site's owner, the Kemeny family have a 60 year old successful Sydney business as retailers of food and alcohol. They are committed to establishing a new food and liquor shop on the ground floor, that will be complemented by shops, bars, cafes and restaurants.</p> <p>They are a guaranteed occupant in the project, and will be an attractor for other compatible shops, cafes and restaurants.</p> <p>The Kemeny family will continue to own space within the completed project, ensuring their long term commitment.</p> <p>See the <i>Retail Study</i> at Appendix I.</p>
<p><i>The provision of affordable housing shall align with the PRCUTS and be updated to reflect the recommended density on the site</i></p>
<p>The proposed provision of Affordable Rental Housing is consistent with PRCUTS recommendations. See Appendix G.</p>

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A *Statement of Heritage Impact* in accordance with "Statements of Heritage Impact" is required that includes a full significance assessment and grading of the Theatre in accordance with "Assessing Heritage Significance". It must:

- Inform the final design.
- Include a full options analysis that explores the retention of the Theatre's rear portion.

A *Heritage Impact Statement* is at **Appendix D**. It considers the option of retaining the rear portion of the Theatre and concludes:

Demolition of the rear portion of the Theatre is supported in this case as the new Plaza will incorporate a structure to interpret the footprint and volume of the original auditorium and stage, be integrated with the rear of the retained part of the Theatre, and facilitates community access into the space. This will be activated further by shops, restaurants and cafes. The original auditorium and stage have been compromised by substantial modifications, in particular, the construction of a concrete floor to create two storeys and the removal of much of the original fabric.

Buildings on the Parramatta Rd frontage should relate to the height and proportionality of the Theatre, including:

- Setbacks
- Stepping down to 4 storeys to match the Theatre.

The *Urban Design Report* demonstrates the relationship of the Theatre to the new parts of the project described in the reference design. The new buildings will be setback from the Theatre.

The location and height of the towers must be reconsidered to reduce the impact on significant views to and from the Theatre and its setting.

The only significant view of the Theatre and its setting is from Knight Street. The proposal is founded on the key principle that this view must be protected.

Therefore buildings have been separated from the Theatre, and grouped on the western side of the site.

The Theatre's western wall will be exposed to Parramatta Road, as the new building will be set back 6 metres.

This wall was never intended to be exposed.

It will be an ideal location for piece of public art.

The *Urban Design Report* includes diagrams that demonstrate views to the Theatre. See **Appendix B**.

A Heritage Interpretation Plan is required in accordance with "Interpreting Heritage Places and Items: Guidelines", which addresses the proposed interpretation of the volume of the Theatre building, the stage and proscenium.

NBRS Heritage Architects have advised that this will be provided at the detailed design stage. Approval is not sought at this time for the removal of any part of the Theatre, or the construction of any new structures.

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The Landscape and Public Domain Plan must address the basement excavation on the Parramatta Rd on the 6m Green Edge setback to ensure a deep soil zone can be provided.

The Landscape and Public Domain Plan has been amended to include deep soil planting within the front setback area adjoining Parramatta Road, as recommended in the PRCUTS *Planning and Design Guidelines*.