

22 May 2018



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Dear Ms Vella

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

Walker wishes to respond to recommendations made in respect of this proposal by the Strathfield Local Planning Panel on 3 May 2018.

I trust that this response will be incorporated into any report forwarded to Council for their consideration.

Firstly, our proposal comprises three, integrated elements:

1. The proposed height and FSR planning controls
2. The layout and massing of future buildings illustrated in the reference design
3. The public benefit offer, which sets out how it is intended that the proposal be implemented and operated.

These integrated elements generate the strategic and site specific merits of the proposal. While Planning Proposals generally focus on the strategic matters, in this case the massing of the buildings in the reference design, and the use of ground level spaces outlined in the draft Public Benefit offer are directly pertinent to the proposed planning control amendments.

- 1. The proposed height and densities across the site are inconsistent with the recommended building typologies, heights, densities, and built form plans for the Homebush Precinct under the Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy (PRCUTS) and inadequate justification has been provided in this regard to support the variation.*

*In addition, the panel is of the view that the proposal is premature and lacks strategic merit.*

The *Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy (PRCUTS)* recommended a range of planning parameters and generic development controls for the Homebush Precinct, based on a broad analysis of the Corridor and the Homebush Precinct.

By contrast, this proposal addresses the assets and constraints of the locality and site, which were determined from a detailed and focused urban design assessment and site analysis.

North Homebush is an urban environment that is hostile for pedestrians, and lacks cohesion and a focus for the emerging community. It is characterized by vacant or neglected properties, interspersed with contemporary apartment buildings, which unfortunately have failed to attract services or shops for their residents, and contribute little to the public domain.



Accordingly, it is a strategic objective of this proposal to address these shortcomings, by creating a community destination and a physical land mark that will define north Homebush as a new urban place.

The Theatre is key to achieving this aim. The proposal has therefore been guided by two design principles:

1. Setting the Theatre in an active, high quality ground level public domain, that includes new 'laneways' and a Plaza.
2. Highlighting the key Knight Street view to the refurbished Theatre and the heritage shops and Horse & Jockey Hotel.





These design principles lead to the concentration of building envelopes and new floor area along the site's western side, away from the rear of the Theatre.

The Plaza and laneway will be activated by shops, bars, cafes, restaurants, commercial and childcare, which will be occupied by the site's owner, the Kemeny family, who will actively seek complementary uses to occupy these spaces.

The Kemeny family have an established retail business that has been operating successfully for 60 years, and their vision is to create a food and beverage based destination on the site.

While the Plaza and laneway will be privately owned, it will be accessible to the community as a public place, as outlined in the draft Public Benefit offer.

The additional height reflects two factors:

1. The proposed FSR of 7.3:1, which will support the inclusion of publically accessible laneways and Plazas, and other intended public benefits.
2. The need concentrate building mass along the western boundary to create:
  - Clear views to the heritage Theatre from Knight Street;
  - An active public domain setting around the Theatre; and
  - Separation between the Theatre and a future project's new elements.

In addition, PTW have prepared streetscape analysis, and massing diagrams that illustrate how the proposed massing fits with existing projects within the locality.

The proposal reflects key aspects of the PRCUTS and its associated documents, as outlined in the Draft Public Benefit Offer, and summarised below.

### 1. PRCUTS

- Project proponents are encouraged to *deliver permanent tangible outcomes for the greater public good within their development*. (page 64).
- Development controls could incentivise the delivery of social infrastructure, by including floor space bonuses, and discounting or excluding floor space provided as social infrastructure (page 62).
- Additional height and floor area can be considered where new public domain or open space is provided on a site (page 63).
- The provision of 'good public open space and other benefits' contributes to creation of a high quality urban place. New development can be leveraged to provide 'new open space, high quality and active public domains and new through site links' that connect people with destinations (page 97).

### 2. PRCUTS *Planning and Design Guidelines*

- Heritage items should be respected and integrated into new urban fabric, and their landmark and character qualities protected within streetscapes (page 36).
- Fine grain and integrated frontages should be provided to the public domain and urban plazas (page 60).
- It is a desirable planning and urban design outcome to break up long blocks with 'new lanes and high quality pedestrian prioritised links' (page 130).
- Provide 6 metre wide 'Green Setback' along the Parramatta Road frontage (pages 134 and 135). This will facilitate tree planting and the wider footpaths required in what will be a high pedestrian activity zone (page 133).




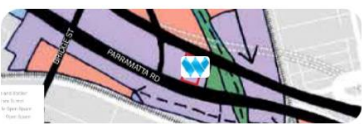



### 3. PRCUTS *Urban Amenity Improvement Plan*

- Small scale interventions such as 'parklets, footpath widening, plazas' are envisaged where the public domain is constrained limiting 'public domain enhancement opportunities'. These features can 'create feature spaces or nodes' (page 47).



The strategic merit of the site is unquestionable. It is large and mostly vacant, within the middle ring of the Sydney metropolitan area, and within a 3 minute walk to Homebush Station, which provides public transport access to the Sydney and Parramatta CBDs within 30 minutes.

The site and locality's strategic significance has been recognised by the State Government, who have committed significant agency and time resources to a multitude of planning processes with the aim of delivering high quality urban renewal, well served by infrastructure.

2014 – 16	URBAN GROWTH & GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION	<b>PARRAMATTA RD CORRIDOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 117 DIRECTION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Site is in the Homebush Precinct</li> <li>Recommended zones, FSRs and heights</li> <li>Identified required local and regional infrastructure in schedules</li> <li>Formulated controls for the public domain, setbacks, noise management, bicycle storage, car parking etc</li> </ul>	
2016 – 18	GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION	<b>OUR GREATER SYDNEY 2056 AND EASTERN CITY DISTRICT PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visions, directions, objectives, strategies, actions, planning priorities and actions</li> <li>Site is within an 'Urban Renewal Area'</li> </ul>	
2017 – 18	DEPT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	<b>GREATER PARRAMATTA AND OLYMPIC PENINSULA GROWTH PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Special Infrastructure Contributions Plan or 'satisfactory arrangement' clauses</li> <li>Growth Area Plan</li> </ul>	
2017 – 18	STRATHFIELD, CANADA BAY & BURWOOD COUNCILS	<b>HOMEBUSH PRECINCT PLANNING</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Precinct wide traffic study based on RMS model, which was received in early 2018.</li> <li>Precinct wide urban design study.</li> </ul>	
2017 – 19	DEPT OF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT	<b>HOMEBUSH, STRATHFIELD, BURWOOD PRECINCT PLAN</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Homebush, Strathfield, Burwood Planned Precinct Plan</li> </ul>	
2018 - 19	STRATHFIELD COUNCIL	<b>THE THEATRE PRECINCT</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DCP</li> <li>Section 7.13 plans,</li> <li>LEP amendments</li> <li>Housing Strategy</li> </ul>	
2017 - 20	TRANSPORT FOR NSW	<b>METRO WEST</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reference design</li> <li>Business case</li> <li>Environmental assessments and approvals</li> </ul>	

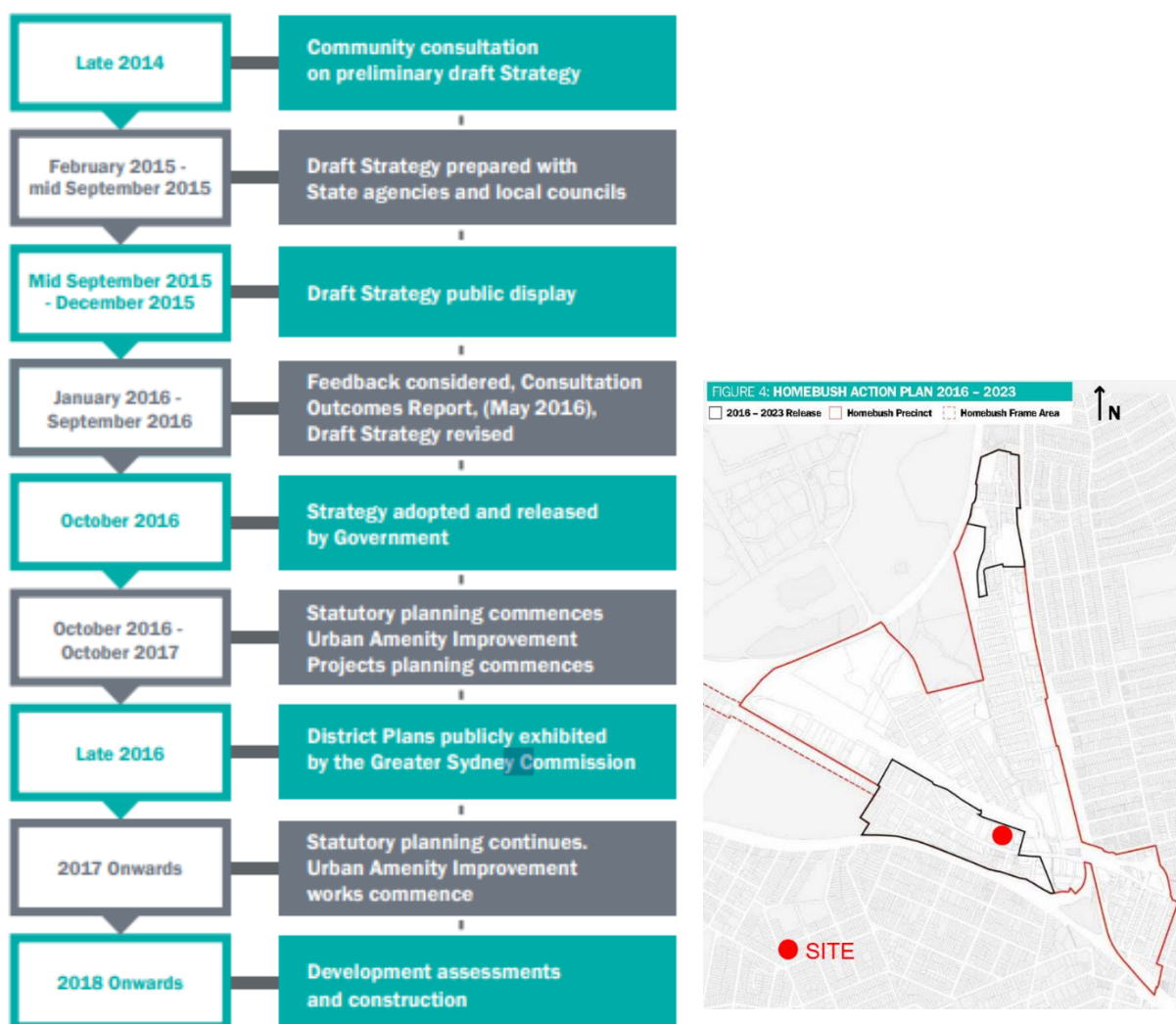
**Figure 1: Homebush Strategic Planning**

It would appear the Proposal is 'premature' only in relation to these strategic planning processes, which are at various stages.

Rather than the proposal being 'premature', it is actually very late. The timeframes outlined in the PRCUTS are already way behind, and key milestones have been missed, or they are about to be.

Development consents for new projects will not be obtained in 2018, and construction will not commence.

Further, the site is within an area that is nominated for ‘release’ between 2016 and 2023. It is already 18 months into that period, and no rezonings have occurred.



**Figure 2: Planning Progress is already well behind the Government's Schedule**

Source: *PRCUTS* page 80 and *PRUCTS Implementation Plan 2016 – 2023*, page 25

Commencement of strategic planning for this site will assist in bringing delivery of new projects closer in line with the planned timeframe, and the PRCUTS vision for the Homebush Precinct.

Further, PRCUTS recognises the imperative to conserve and refurbish heritage items and provides for ‘accelerated or prioritised planning processes for development that appropriately preserves, maintains and utilises these community assets’ (page 63).

The Theatre’s refurbishment should be a planning priority for both Council and the Panel. It is currently derelict and has been vacant for many years. Frankly, it is a depressing eyesore and blight.

Finally, there are no impediments to conducting the strategic assessment of this proposal simultaneously with the other strategic process, with each informing the other, facilitating coordination between state, city and local planners and Walker.

Notwithstanding the above, a pragmatic appraisal of the site and the locality would conclude that commencement of the planning process should be a priority:

1. Contemporary projects in the locality are of varying quality and have uniformly failed to contribute to a cohesive, high quality, active public domain, nor shops and services for their residents.
2. The north Homebush environment is degraded, with many neglected buildings and vacant sites that appear to be in hiatus awaiting until strategic planning processes are finally over.
3. The site is large and vacant, aside from the Theatre, which is a strategic asset to the locality and the community.
4. A project on this site has the potential to be a much needed 'game changer' for north Homebush.

*II. The proposal heights across the site do not provide an appropriate built form transition and are considered to physically overwhelm and dominate the heritage listed Former Homebush Theatre and the heritage listed Hotel and two (2) storey commercial buildings opposite the site.*

While transition heights have been considered carefully in the reference design, the focus has been on creating a great ground level plane for pedestrians, with active frontages onto Parramatta Road, the laneway and the Plaza. People will be able to move through the Theatre, which will be refurbished and occupied by shops, cafes, bars and restaurants.

These uses will be mirrored on the opposite side of Parramatta Road in the heritage listed shops and the Horse & Jockey, which Walker anticipates will also be refurbished for entertainment, shops and the like, contributing to an attractive and identifiable community destination. The additional population accommodated on the site will support the viability of undertaking those refurbishments, and attract new businesses.

Locating the building massing on the western side of the site also separates these buildings from the other heritage buildings.

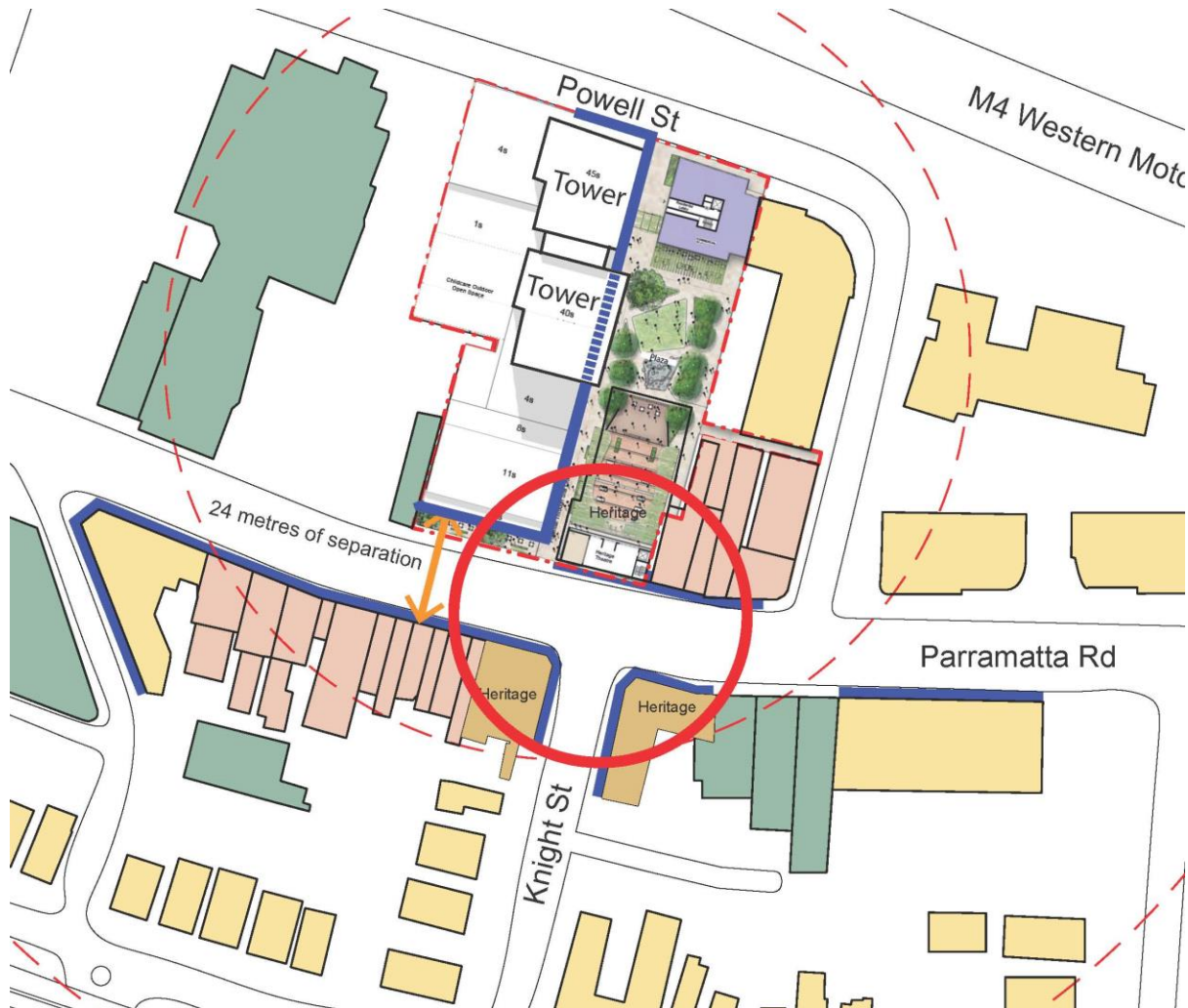
PTW undertook a streetscape analysis which informed the street wall heights, which are consistent with contemporary buildings adjoining. These are in the *Urban Design Report* dated April 2018.

**Attachment One** has diagrams that explain the relationship of the proposed public domain to all three heritage items.

In particular, they demonstrate that building setbacks behind the Theatre, and to the heritage shops and the Horse & Jockey comply with Figure 7.9 of the PRUCTS *Planning and Design Guidelines*.

It is important to note that the reference design's tower is set back substantially, behind the Theatre, and some distance from the heritage shops and Horse & Jockey.

The Parramatta Road building is 24 metres from the heritage shops, and the site is not directly opposite the Horse & Jockey.



**Figure 3: Relationship of Heritage Group to reference design**

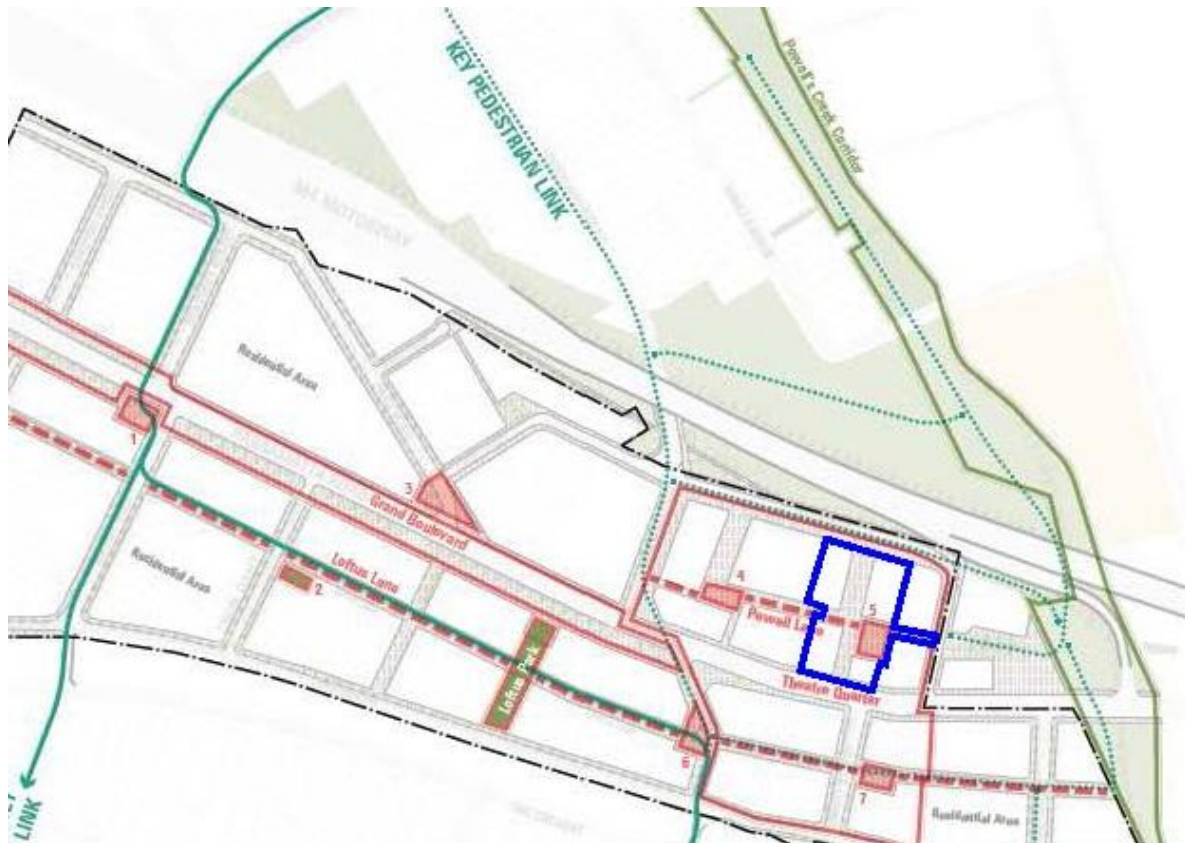
The creation of busy, intimate, human scale spaces and the incorporation of heritage buildings within large urban projects is a perfectly acceptable urban outcome, and common practice. In this respect, the Panel did not explain what they meant by 'domination'.

A mix of building scales, ages and uses is not only desirable, it is a consequence of the construction, demolition and redevelopment of thousands of city sites at different times over decades and centuries.



- III. *The proposed reinterpretation of the former Homebush Theatre is considered to be unacceptable in that it proposes the demolition of the rear portion of the Theatre which is a rare example of a 1920's suburban art deco theatre. It is recommended that adaptive reuse of the theatre building be considered. Further, there has been little regard paid to the other nearby heritage sites.*

Council's draft DCP includes a 'Theatre Square' in a location that coincides with the Plaza, and would require removal of the Theatre auditorium and stage.



**Figure 4: Theatre Square and through site links**

Source: Draft DCP Parramatta Road

The Panel may not have been aware that the Theatre's auditorium and stage have been modified with a substantial concrete floor splitting them into two levels, and removal of most of the original fabric, including the Dress Circle and stage.

The NRBS *Heritage Impact Statement* April 2018 supported the removal and replacement of this highly modified portion of the building with the interpretative structure.

Notwithstanding, Walker will submit a structural engineering report that addresses the removal or retention of the concrete floor during the Planning Proposal process, prior to any public exhibition of the draft Local Environmental Plan.

A large, barn like space with little amenity would make little contribution to the public realm. It would also be extremely difficult to find a viable and appropriate use for two storeys of space.

It is anticipated that the community will obtain more enjoyment and greater benefit from an outdoor Plaza, protected by a wonderful and interesting pergola that interprets the auditorium and stage, and integrates the Theatre with the new parts of the project, in accordance with PRCUTS guidelines.

In addition, the Theatre's foyer, lobby, salons, and staircases retain much of the building's character and features. This more ornate and showy part of the building will be refurbished and occupied by cafes, bars and restaurants that reflect its original use as an entertainment venue and its role as a Parramatta Road landmark.

*IV. Inadequate documentary evidence has been submitted to demonstrate that a genuine and reasonable attempt has been made to purchase No 69 Parramatta Road based on a fair market value.*

Amalgamation with 69 Parramatta Road should not delay progress of a Planning Proposal as the deletion of Clauses 4.3A or 4.3A (amalgamation) from SLEP 2012 has not been requested.

It is re-iterated that 69 Parramatta Road is not isolated by the proposal, and can amalgamate with the adjoining site.

While a genuine attempt to negotiate with the owner of 69 Parramatta Rd has been made, further attempts can be made, and the documentation required in Council's draft Parramatta Road DCP (page 15) can be submitted.

This can be undertaken during the Planning Proposal process, prior to public exhibition of the draft Local Environmental Plan.

The project site will be described in any Development Application, which will be assessed against the applicable planning controls.

*V. The proposed development, in its current form does not provide a sufficient mix of uses. Further work is to be undertaken to identify additional opportunities for retailing/commercial use to promote and encourage jobs within the Precinct. The proposal is contrary to the objectives of the B4 mixed use zone under Strathfield Local Environmental Plan SLEP 2012 and the actions identified in the Eastern City District Plan in terms of the strategic location for the provision of employment.*

Firstly, this Preliminary Planning Proposal does not seek amendments to the zone or zone objectives that apply to the site. The reference design has been submitted to inform the proposal, but it will not obtain Development Approval through this process.

Therefore, the proposal is not contrary to the objectives of the *Mixed Use 4B*, and this is not a reason to delay its progress.

Notwithstanding, the proposal and reference design clearly complies with the definition of ‘mixed use development’ contained in the Strathfield LEP 2012:

***mixed use development*** means a building or place comprising 2 or more different land uses.

Secondly, the Plaza and laneway will be activated by shops, bars, cafes, restaurants, commercial and childcare, which will be occupied by the site’s owner, the Kemeny family, who will actively seek complementary uses to occupy these spaces.

By contrast, other contemporary projects within this *Mixed Use B4* zone have only provided ground floor retail, which is predominately vacant and unsuccessful, and contributes nothing to the area or community.

Thirdly, the proposal is consistent with the zone objectives.

**Table 1: *Mixed Use 4(b)* zone objectives**

<i>To integrate suitable business, office, residential, retail and other development in accessible locations so as to maximise public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling</i>
<p>North Homebush is not ideal for offices, which require large floor plates, and may conflict Parramatta CBD and other Centres identified for this use.</p> <p>‘Suitable’ business uses are included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ground level Plaza commercial space, which it is intended startup businesses or creatives at ‘affordable rents’ for 5 years.</li> <li>• Shops, cafes, bars and restaurants in the Theatre’s 3 levels and the entire ground floor, activating the Plaza, Parramatta Rd and Powell Street.</li> <li>• Childcare centre on level 1.</li> </ul> <p>There is already a supply of ground level, vacant retail space in north Homebush.</p> <p>Therefore providing more than is already anticipated in this proposal is considered imprudent, however, may be more viable when the project is nearing completion and demand will be growing.</p>
<i>To facilitate mixed use urban growth around railway stations and transport nodes and corridors, commercial centres and open space</i>
<p>The project is highly accessible to existing and planned rail and road based public transport.</p> <p>It is not near a commercial centre.</p> <p>There is limited open space in the locality.</p> <p>However, the publically accessible Plaza and through site laneways will be activated by shops, commercial, bars, cafes restaurants, and will be attractive, sheltered pedestrian spaces.</p>



*To provide local and regional employment and live and work opportunities.*

New residents will have access to local and regional employment and live work opportunities.

Employment will be available on the site.

Homebush Station offers 30 minute access to Parramatta and Sydney CBDs, and other centres such as Burwood.

Metro West will provide additional west-east capacity in the public transport network, and access to new destinations.

Within the Homebush Precinct, PRCUTS has nominated the Flemington Market area as a large employment and retail area.

Finally, the Panel was in error referencing the *Eastern City District Plan* targets for employment and services.

The Plan notes the following:

*The Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy (November 2016) provides for a diversity of jobs and housing to meet the needs of a broad cross-section of the community.*

*Along with the Parramatta Road Corridor Implementation Tool Kit, they guide the incremental transformation of the Parramatta Road Corridor in line with the delivery of necessary infrastructure.*

*Provisions for development consistent with this Corridor Strategy and Implementation Toolkit are made under a section 9.1 Direction. This Corridor Strategy and Implementation Toolkit reflect the extensive process undertaken and therefore the land subject of this Corridor Strategy is not subject to the industrial land strategies and actions of the District Plan.* (page 93)

Accordingly, PRUCTS is the correct reference document for employment objectives.

The Homebush Precinct vision is provided in the PRCUTS *Planning and Design Guidelines*:

*Homebush Precinct will become a new, mixed use precinct for the Corridor, housing a new community of residents attracted to the area for its high amenity and access to employment at Parramatta CBD and Sydney Olympic Park. The precinct will provide a long term supply of housing stock to meet increasing demand as Sydney Olympic Park grows into a new city.* (page 33)

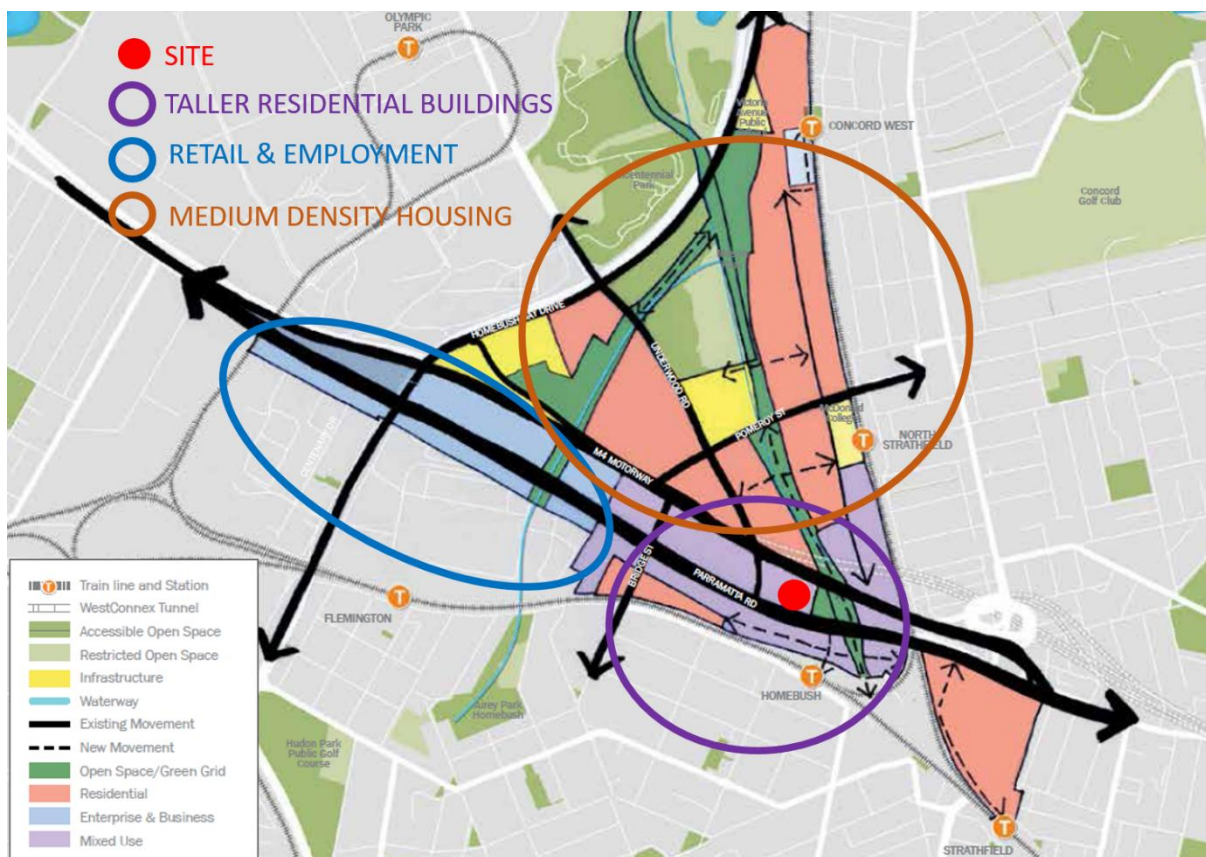
*Sitting between Sydney's two main CBDs, Homebush can be transformed into an active and varied hub, blending higher density housing and a mix of different uses, supported by a network of green links and open spaces with walking access to four train stations.*

### *Living and Working There*

*Homebush will be a focus for high density housing, with a hub of activity between Homebush, North Strathfield, Concord West and Strathfield Stations. Both Parramatta Road and George Street will form main streets to build on the character of the Bakehouse Quarter and the curve of Parramatta Road.*

*Taller residential buildings will mark the centre of activity at the Precinct's core. The network of streets to the north and west from here will be easy and safe to walk through, with medium-density housing and the green corridor of Powells Creek. The area around Flemington Markets will have a new employment and retail focus.* (page 128)

The Vision is reflected in the PRUCTS structure plan, which lays out where those uses are to be located.



**Figure 5: PRCUTS Homebush Precinct Structure Plan components**

The proposal is 100% compliant with the PRCUTS' vision and planning principles for the Homebush Precinct, which places an emphasis on the provision of housing to support other employment areas within the Precinct and the region:

1. Long term housing supply to meet Olympic Park new city demand;
2. High density housing blended with other uses.
3. Taller residential buildings at the core;
4. Medium density and green space to the north around Powells Creek
5. New employment and retail focus at Flemington Markets.

*VI. Council cannot determine what the cumulative impacts will be on the existing State and Local Road network as a result of the proposed development of the site. Until such time as a precinct wide traffic study is prepared for the 'Homebush Precinct', consideration of any Planning Proposal within the Parramatta Road Corridor should be deferred. The Panel understands that this study will be available in July 2018.*

Walker looks forward to seeing the results of this study, which is the only outstanding matter before the new planning controls foreshadowed in PRCUTS can be drafted and exhibited.

*VII. The proposed material public benefits contained within the Letter of Offer submitted by Walker Corporation Pty Ltd and dated 6 April 2018 are not considered to facilitate the provision of public services and facilities, outside of those that would normally be required as part of the redevelopment of the site. Any future Voluntary Planning Agreement should be prepared to align with Council's corporate strategic documents including the Strathfield Community Strategic Plan and any other infrastructure delivery documents.*

Firstly, the draft Letter of Offer includes contributions that will comply with the Section 7.13 local contribution, and Section 7.22 state contribution plans in place when any Development Approval is obtained.

Therefore, contributions will be aligned with Council's corporate strategic documents, the Strathfield Community Strategic Plan and any other infrastructure delivery documents, as any plan under Section 7.13 will be based on those documents.

Other benefits, such as dedication of land along Parramatta Road and footpath embellishments will be imposed on all new projects in the Homebush Precinct, and have accordingly been included here.

Secondly, it is understood contributions toward Affordable Rental Housing will also be imposed in any Development Approval. Strategic documents have been referenced to determine the amount and correct calculation method.

The Greater Sydney Commission (2017) *Information Note 4: Affordable Rental Housing Targets*

1. Contributions toward ARH should be equivalent to 5 - 10% of the residential floor area permitted by the amended planning controls, over that permitted by the existing planning controls (page 2).
2. *Other recent examples of a target-based approach have been indicated as part of the Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy and Central to Eveleigh Transformation Strategy, which tested and confirmed the viability of a 5 per cent Affordable Rental Housing Target across the transformation area. (page 3)*
3. ARH dwellings are to be owned by planning authorities or Community Housing Providers (page 4).



Thirdly, while ARH, and local and state infrastructure contributions are ‘standard’, this proposal intends additional benefits.

In this respect, PRCUTS encourages Project proponents to:

*...deliver permanent tangible outcomes for the greater public good within their development. (page 64)*

Therefore, intended public benefits are provided within the site and integrated into the overall proposal, aside from substantial Section 7.13 and 7.22 plan contributions, which will fund infrastructure off the site.

These on site benefits include:

1. Publically accessible, sheltered ground level Plaza, laneways and through site links, landscaped to a high quality urban standard and opened for long hours that will create a community destination, which is currently sorely lacking.
2. Public art in accordance with the policies of Canada Bay, Sydney and Waverley Councils.
3. A design competition in accordance with the policies of Sydney City Council, where the LEP incorporates a 10% floor area bonus for this (Clause 6.21).
4. Commercial floor area rented at an affordable rate to eligible start businesses or creatives, in accordance with the concept applied in Parramatta Council.

The PRCUTS *Implementation Plan 2016 – 2023* targets provision of an additional 332 Childcare spaces are required (page 20).

PRUCTS provides for implementation of:

*...development controls that incentivise the delivery of social infrastructure, such as floor space bonuses, and discounting or excluding floor space provided as social infrastructure. (page 62)*

This is a similar approach to the City of Sydney, which provides for floor space bonuses for the provision of community benefits, such as through site links (Clause 6.12).

The draft Letter of Offer, dated 6 April, outlines Walker’s intentions in this regard.

Finally, the public benefits obligations included in planning agreements are formulated during strategic planning processes, referencing Council’s policies and the Department’s 2005 *Development Contributions Practice Note: Planning Agreements*, and 2017 draft *Secretary’s Practice Note: Planning Agreements*.

In other words, Walker’s draft Letter of Offer is just a starting point for continued discussion with Council, the Department and agencies during the strategic planning process.

Therefore, the Panel’s comments in relation to proposed public benefits are not a reason to defer progress of this Planning Proposal.

Walker looks forward to working with Council and the state government to prepare a draft Planning Agreement.

## **Conclusion**

The proposal and the reference design are consistent with the PRCUTS vision and principles.

The height and FSR have been proposed giving consideration to the urban context within which the site is situated, the constraints and strategic opportunities associated with the Theatre and the need to create a community destination in North Homebush.

Walker looks forward to working with Council on this overdue project and trusts Council will support the progress of this Preliminary Planning Proposal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sally Lewis'.

**Sally Lewis**  
**Principal Town Planner**  
**Walker Corporation Pty Limited**