

21 October 2015

Gary James
General Manager
Woollahra Municipal Council
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Attention: George Fotis

Dear Mr James

DA 438/2015/1 - Redevelopment of White City

The Paddington community has long hoped that the White City site would one day provide public open space, pedestrian links to Rushcutters Bay Park and Trumper Park, and protection of heritage items including the Centre Courts. These hopes were recognised in the White City Development Control Plan 2007.

While there is disappointment that the outcomes the community hoped for will not be delivered, the recreation activities proposed for the site, particularly continued use for tennis, have broad community support. Furthermore, Paddington residents don't want the site to continue to be left in disrepair or inappropriately developed.

Paddington has few recreational facilities – I understand there are no nearby swimming pools or sporting fields – and there are few, if any, opportunities to provide them in this densely populated heritage area. Woollahra Council needs assessment has also identified childcare as a priority for this precinct.

I support the proposal for private recreation however changes are needed to improve outcomes and reduce impacts on Paddington, particularly to protect heritage including views and vistas across the site from Glenmore Road and Neild Avenue, minimise traffic congestion and to protect amenity on and adjacent to the site.

Scale of Clubhouse

There is significant community concern that the proposed clubhouse is too high. The building is in a central location within the open valley floor and will dominate views from Glenmore Road. While the applicant refers to its height as comparable with the height of Sydney Grammar Preparatory School, this is not a useful comparison because the clubhouse is located a significant distance from the boundary and within the valley.

Paddington is densely populated and White City provides views and vistas that are essential to its character. These views and vistas also form part of the heritage values of the site.



The Woollahra Municipal Council Local Environment Plan 2014 allows for buildings with heights up to 9.5 metres however this can increase to 11.5 metres provided that, among other conditions, the consent authority is satisfied that the development does not affect the view lines from Glenmore Road.

The proposed clubhouse building would be a little over 11.5 metres and because it would be located within green open space, at the proposed height, it would impose significantly on view lines from Glenmore Road as well as Neild Avenue.

There is also significant community concern over the shape of the building, which adjacent residents say makes it more imposing and is inappropriate.

The clubhouse building height should be reduced.

Heritage

The proposal includes a heritage interpretation strategy and retention of heritage items namely the Southern Stand trusses, the northern stand arches and retention of the NSW Tennis Association gate. These are essential and their preservation must be included in conditions of consent.

The proposal must also better recognise the heritage importance of the open valley floor, which connects to Rushcutters Bay, with modifications to the clubhouse to reduce intrusions and potentially modifications to vegetation plans to prevent intrusions.

Childcare Car Parking

It appears from plans that the childcare centre car park will impact on views from Glenmore Road. While I understand that parking has been provided via Glenmore Road for the childcare centre to reduce the traffic load on Alma Street, I am concerned that the carpark and ramps will be adjacent to Glenmore Road, resulting in visual blight from Glenmore Road and Cambridge Street.

Access to the car park could also cause traffic congestion on Glenmore Road, given cars travelling from the east will have to travel to roundabouts at Goodhope and Lawson streets or at Five Ways or execute dangerous U-turns. Glenmore Road is a highly pedestrianised area and access and congestion could put pedestrians at risk. This must be further addressed.

Vehicle Access, Traffic, and Parking

Paddington's heritage streetscapes with narrow, winding roads and lack of off-street parking leave it prone to transport and parking congestion. The proposed development will create new activity that would contribute to increased congestion and conditions of consent must include requirements to address this.

The provision of on-site parking to meet demand responds to legitimate concerns from local residents that the development must not create new demand for on-street parking in adjacent Paddington streets, which already fail to provide for existing demand. However, it is important that parking provisions do not encourage private car use to White City causing congestion impacts particularly in Alma Street and Glenmore Road.

Use of the car park for purposes other than staff, customers and members visiting the site must be ruled out, with parking for commuters and local shopping patrons on site banned.

I strongly support proposals for 131 bicycle parking spaces and it must be a requirement for future White City operators to promote these spaces to customers, members and staff, which could be done through a Transport Access Guide as proposed in the Traffic and Parking Report. This guide should cover all local active and public transport options with its distribution to all staffers, customers and members a condition of consent. New South Head Road and 389 bus services should be promoted for access to the site.

Similarly, when large sporting events are held on the site, the report proposes the potential to provide a free shuttle bus to and from Edgecliff Railway Station and this must also be a requirement of any consent.

No separate pedestrian access to the site has been provided and it appears that pedestrians will enter the site in the same place as motor vehicles. This could pose risks for pedestrians who use the facilities and measures to separate vehicles and pedestrians need to be considered, with alternative access provided if needed.

Owners of the site should be required to work with owners of adjacent sites to provide pedestrian access to New South Head Road which would encourage public transport use. While there are legitimate concerns about safety late at night, gates could be used to prevent access when the sporting facilities are not in use.

I share community concerns that the dual vehicular access for student pick-up and drop-off at the adjacent school inappropriately intrudes on the valley floor. While the proposal would ease traffic congestion on Alma Street, alternative solutions must be explored.

There is community concern that large underground car park exhaust fumes will spill into adjacent homes, eroding air quality. Conditions of consent should address these concerns, for example requiring ventilation points to filter the air to prevent the dissipation of concentrated small particle pollution in adjacent homes.

Lights on the Field

Lighting will be provided on the synthetic field, which the proponent informs me will be low lighting for night training purposes however they tell me on occasions it could be used for evening matches.

There are community concerns that light spill from the field will impact on neighbours and views. It is important that this is assessed with measures required to prevent impacts. Conditions must limit the number of nights that large matches are held per year to prevent impacts on neighbours and control the level of light spill and hours that it is permitted.

Trees and Vegetation

Removal of trees must be kept to a minimum. Eight significant trees are proposed to be removed along Glenmore Road. This is inappropriate and should not be permitted, with modifications to the proposal required to protect trees.

It is also essential that any removal is compensated with new trees to ensure that there is no net loss of tree canopy or vegetation. Any tree earmarked for removal must be assessed for heritage significance.

While I strongly support the planting of trees on the site, the heritage open valley floor should be protected and this may make tree planting in certain locations on the site as inappropriate.

Noise

There is concern that activities on the site could cause noise impacts, including functions at the clubhouse, late night use of the rooftop gardens, late night matches and activities from the childcare centre, particularly on rooftop gardens.

The conditions of consent must protect amenity for adjacent residents and ensure noise levels are not excessive, loud activities are limited and noise does not occur late at night.

Private recreation opportunities are needed in Paddington and I hope that the issues raised can be addressed so that the community benefits proposed can be realised.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AG', written in a cursive style.

Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney