



2011 Residents' Association Inc.

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APPLICATION No. D/2016/476

118A DARLINGHURST ROAD, DARLINGHURST NSW 2010

Members of 2011 Residents Association object to this proposal and provide the following reasons for our objection:

Background:

The Residents Association's aims are to:

Protect the amenity of Residents in the 2011 postcode to ensure the quality of living standards for all whether rich or poor, young or old.

Support diversity and the village atmosphere of inner city neighbourhoods

Preserve the heritage of our neighbourhood and adjoining precincts.

The proposal to develop 188A Darlinghurst Road and literally cover it from boundary to boundary with an unimaginative and in fact ugly high-rise building is the main focus of our objection. The proposed building has been designed without regard for:

- Residents and visitors
- Business owners and patrons of the café's and shops located on Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street
- Those who attend the St John's heritage Church and its associated buildings.
- The quality of living for the homeless or aged people that this building purports to serve.

Members of the Residents Association would be supportive of the proposal with the following modifications:

- Creation of set-backs that allow for grassed areas at street level. Space for the occupants to enjoy the streetscape rather than being forced to sit on a rooftop isolated from the rest of the people in the neighbourhood.
- 24-hour access between Victoria Street and Darlinghurst Road and without compromising the sandstone wall to the Church. The easement ought to be integral to the site and not impinge on the Church grounds.
- the building design to be more in line with the heritage architecture of the area; sympathetic to rather than insensitive to it's surrounding.
- the height of the building reduced to allow visibility of the heritage Church and still allow sunlight/light to the surrounding buildings.
- The scale and design of the building reduced to prevent the creation of a permanently shaded and gloomy streetscape where there was once light and open space.

- Adequate solutions to problems with traffic flow; service vehicles, ambulance, visitors, garbage trucks etc. be provided. Both roads are major access roads and are already heavily congested.

Details of Our Objections:

The Site

The site directly adjoins St John's Church; a heritage listed landmark. The sandstone Church, quite small in scale when compared to many newer buildings, was erected in the 19th century. It features the Edmund Blacket Gothic Revival transepts, spire and tower which are easily visible and an integral part of the surrounding neighbourhood. Both Victoria Street and Darlington Road that run on either side of the Church grounds have beautiful heritage residential buildings.

The site which is currently a car wash has long-been used as a walkway between Victoria Street and Darlington Road; a short-cut for residents and visitors to the area due to the very long block between William Street and Liverpool Street.

The present building on the site is single story and its scale ensures that there is maximum light to cafes, restaurants, and residential apartments.

Bulk and Scale

This area already suffers from the construction of a number of buildings that have zero architectural merit and which have been built with little or no regard for the historical importance of the area. The proposed building would join the list; it is basically a block or cube, that if built, goes from boundary to boundary. There are no setbacks to the street and no green areas; a rooftop garden for residents of the building contributes nothing to the streetscape. Without any setbacks on the site, views of the Church will be obliterated from Victoria Street and Darlington Road. Only a very small portion of the 43-metre-high tower will be visible once the proposed building is constructed.

The scale of the proposed building takes light and sunlight from the street; it serves to close in the street producing a canyon effect and likely issues with wind; making it unpleasant to actually sit outside at cafes which have for many years added vibrancy to this area.

This area of the city does not need more ugly box-style buildings regardless of their purpose.

Heritage

Heritage refers to: "St John's Church of England Church Group which includes the church and interior, rectory and interior, fences and grounds".

Views of the 158-year-old heritage St John's Church will be lost from both Victoria Street and Darlington Road and further afield if the proposal is allowed. Only a very small portion of the 43-metre-high tower will be visible under the new proposal; blocked by the proposed five story building which will tower over it.

One of the highlights of the heritage St John's Church is the ability to admire the stained glass windows that cannot be appreciated from the outside. The distance to the stain glass windows of the Church from the proposed development is only 12 metres while the **Council's Design Study recommends a minimum of 19 metres** (AJ&C, 2006). It is likely that these beautiful works of art will be compromised due to the proximity of the proposed building and lack of light needed to bring these windows to life.

There does not appear to be any investigation with regard to the potential damage that might occur to the Church due to excavations for the proposed development that could well undermine the structural integrity of the Church.

The entrance and exit to the proposed building site abuts the historic St John's Church, just metres away. The Church invites us to visit for quiet contemplation. The proposal ensures that this is no longer a quiet sanctuary. The crowding of the space and increased traffic noise will ensure that.

Overshadowing

The applicant states that “only minor additional overshadowing occurs on the buildings on the opposite side of Victoria Street in the late afternoon”. In contrast, the owners of these establishments are extremely concerned about the loss of business that this the scale of this building will cause; the street will be in shadow all afternoon. Currently the cafes opposite the site on Victoria Street have sunlight in the afternoon.

The applicant says “there is no additional shadow cast on the buildings on Darlinghurst Road; the shadows created by the development largely fall within the site or on the road reserve”. It is inconceivable that a building of this scale would not create shadows and greatly reduce light and sunlight to Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street.

The demographics of Darlinghurst have changed with the gentrification of the inner suburb; young families have moved in. The families use the Church grounds on the northern boundary as a park for their children and pet dogs. The sunshine and enjoyment they enjoy in the park will be obliterated by the five storey tower next door.

Traffic

The proposal shows one combined entrance and egress of vehicular traffic to and from Darlinghurst Road on the northern perimeter abutting the church boundary. This will be for use by ambulances and emergency vehicles, all delivery and service vehicles, parking for staff and the church, etc. Waste in particular will be a problem with garbage trucks entering and exiting from Darlinghurst Road “several” times a week, if not every day as is the case with restaurants.

The Traffic Report of the applicant states that “Darlinghurst Road is not a significant road...”. This is in fact an inaccurate statement. Darlinghurst Road is one way for vehicular traffic from Oxford Street through to the busy William Street intersection. This road is a main route back into Kings Cross and the City, from eastern suburbs, the airport and St Vincent’s Hospital... hardly insignificant. It has three lanes; one parking and two traffic lanes. These lanes are narrow and traffic quickly banks up. This plan ensures Darlinghurst Road will become increasingly gridlocked.

It appears that there has not been a recent measure of traffic flow in the area. This ought to be carried out given recent buildings completed as part of St Vincent’s expansion which add to the traffic pressure on these roads.

The volume of traffic and speed travelled along Victoria Street makes it quite dangerous for pedestrians. The William Street lights are notoriously slow and motorists speed through to beat the lights. The build up of traffic with cars idling on both road adds to pollution for those living nearby.

Public Walkway

The proposal indicates that there is to be a walkway on Church grounds and not on the subject site. *“... the provision of a through site link accessed via a ... forecourt area on Victoria Street within the HammondCare site before stepping up to the existing Church grounds and moving through to the existing Church entry on Darlinghurst Road. Accessibility will be provided by a hydraulic disability access platform connecting the HammondCare level with St John’s church ground level.”*

To achieve this, requires the demolition of part of the wall surrounding the Church, which is included in the heritage property, on the northern side of the heritage site near the proposed development on both ends of Victoria and Darlinghurst streets which is against the Heritage proclamation: *“‘St John’s Church of England Church Group, including church and interior, rectory and interior, fences and grounds.’ – Part 2 of the Sydney LEP 2012. Under the provisions of Part 5.10 of this plan:(4)*

Effect of proposed development on heritage significance The consent authority must, before granting consent under this clause in respect of a heritage item or heritage conservation area, consider the effect of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the item or area concerned.

The proposed plan contains multiple problems; demolishing heritage property to provide a stairway from the street, relying on a hydraulic link for disabled persons which could be out of action for various reasons including who is to open and close the link, lack of maintenance, vandalism etc, and the closure from midnight until 6:00 am. It is important that this access-way be open 24 hours a day, well-lit, and not on Church property as proposed, but using some of the land from the site rather than demolishing a heritage wall.

Environmental Safety of the Site

The site for the proposed development was once a petrol service station. What checks, if any, have been undertaken to ensure that the site is free of toxic chemicals and indeed suitable for an aged-care facility.

Summary

- The proposed development is next door to the heritage-protected St John's Church. The Church will lose light to its beautiful stained-glass window and will also be completely dominated and hidden by the building.
- Only a very small portion of the 43-metre-high tower of the heritage church will be visible under the new proposal.
- The proposed development contravenes the height regulation of 60 metres and as such would tower over the heritage Church which is only 13 metres tall.
- Traffic congestion on Darlinghurst Road and resultant pollution from idling cars waiting for traffic lights on the William Street intersection will increase dramatically with the one entrance and exit for all service, parking, emergency vehicular traffic off Darlinghurst Road.
- The building as proposed would overshadow a thriving restaurant strip on Victoria Street and Darlinghurst Road, shutting out direct sunlight and light. It also has the potential to create a wind tunnel, making it unpleasant for people to sit outside.
- A public walkway between Darlinghurst Road and Victoria Street is inadequately addressed and contravenes The Heritage Act in that it destroys protected Church property i.e. a wall on both sides of the Church property.
- The demographic of Darlinghurst has changed with families moving into the area and using the northern grassed pocket park of the Church for recreation and relaxation and a place to breathe while living in the city.
- This proposal will leave the area with an ugly, big box-style building that has no sympathy for the buildings and streetscape in which it is located. It detracts from rather than adds to the 'village'. There are no setbacks, and not a blade of grass or open space.
- Common areas on the roof 60 metres above do not make a memorable place for the people who live below in the village. It also ensures those residing in the building are separated from the environment in which they live; not optimal for their well-being.

Council has made a substantive donation of \$1.5 million for the project prior to the DA being approved. It is difficult to see how Council can be objective in their assessment of objections.

We believe that it is possible to provide housing for the aged or homeless without compromising the quality of life of residents; those who will live in the building and those who live in neighbourhood. Respecting the different needs of all constituents will, in the long-term, make for a more cohesive, inclusive, and supportive community.