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**Alexandria Residents Action Group – Presentation to the Planning Assessment  
Commission  
Thursday 17 November 2016**

Thank you for the opportunity to present to the Planning Assessment Commission on the proposed re- development of Australian Technology Park.

My name is Vanessa Knight and I am presenting today as the Co-Convenor of the Alexandria Residents Action Group on behalf of the nearly 6,000 residents who make this part of Sydney their home.

I wish that we were here today to stop the sale of Australian Technology Park to a consortium that clearly has little understanding of what a technology park is and what it could create for Australia's future, but we're not. That deal was done.

I also wish we were here today to discuss the development of new schools which are desperately needed in the City of Sydney LGA, with the dream of having a technology high school co-located in a Technology Park, but again we're not. That opportunity was lost.

We're here today to present our views on a proposal for a business park and to appeal to you three commissioners, Ms Goldberg, Mr O'Connor and Professor Lipman to listen to the very real concerns of the Alexandria Community if the development goes ahead as planned, despite the trivial conditions proposed by the NSW Planning Department.

The concerns can be summarised as follows:

- The bulk, scale and design of the three proposed buildings
- The inadequate assessment of the impact on existing public transport and the road network
- The inadequate assessment of the impact on the important and unique heritage value of the site
- Avoidance of contribution to local infrastructure

I will deal with each of these in turn.

**Bulk, scale and design**

We strongly object to the height of Building 1 due to the excessive bulk and scale, visual impact, lack of building height transition and the overshadowing impacts.

The building exceeds the Gross Floor Area by 6.4% which is unacceptable, but in addition, there is little understanding of the lack of privacy and visual impact experienced by the nearby residents on Henderson Road, who have already experienced the blinding impact of the night lighting from the existing Channel 7 building.



Building 1 exceeds the four story height control at the western end of the building by five storeys which, when you add the level for the plant required, effectively means an increase of six storeys, an increase of 150%

Alexandria residents have long memories and the fact that the Channel 7 building omitted to include its huge satellite dishes in the original DA (which are now perched on top) has not been forgotten. Using the bulk and scale of the Channel 7 building as justification for Building 1 is not justified, nor appreciated.

The proposed set back of a mere 13 meters from the Childcare Centre which is about half the length of a tennis court, is vastly inadequate. This in no way 'provides a reasonable separation distance to reduce the visual dominance of the building scale on the child care centre, particularly when viewed at ground level'.

The three levels of above ground parking should be re-located underground and the plant should also be re-located to greatly reduce the height of the building.

Building 2 is a whopping 35% over the Gross Floor Area allowed for this site and its proximity to the heritage locomotive sheds means that a building of that height and bulk completely conceals the locomotive sheds from view.

In no way is this excess in Gross Floor Area acceptable to the Alexandria Residents and the attempt to average the Gross Floor Area calculation over the three proposed buildings to demonstrate that the whole development is compliant is spurious.

Like Building 1, parking in Building 2 is accommodated above ground, although some is located below ground at the northern end. Making the developer put all parking underground would greatly reduce the height and bulk of the buildings.

The developer has countered that this would add significant delay to the project and added cost due to issues with groundwater, geology, contamination and proximity of the rail tunnels, but we would argue that they are not insurmountable and should be pursued.

One could ask why the maximum allowable parking spaces need to be provided. If only 7.5% of workers intend to drive their cars, this equates to 750 parking spaces.

Although the entire site allows for approx 1,600 spaces it should be noted that currently 270 of these can only be used for 'special events' on very limited occasions each year. Why do they require so many spaces for the type of tenant occupation they propose if the majority of workers use public transport?

Let's turn to design.

The Planning Department's own Director General has defined 'design excellence' as something that 'should positively contribute to the overall architectural quality of the city and provide buildings appropriate to their context. In some circumstances, this contribution may be as an iconic or landmark building, but more typically it is as a well-designed building that fits sensitively into the streetscape.'



However, sadly, in the Planning Department's own Environmental Assessment Report, the focus is on the orientation matching the pattern and hierarchy of existing streets and squares, the ground floor 'activation' opportunities, the glazed facades that will allow the 'overlooking' of the public domain, the fact that there will be no 'adverse overshadowing' and that the visual setback between Henderson Road and Building 1 and the Locomotive Workshop are acceptable.

The waves design at the top of Building 1 is supposed to be a tribute to the locomotive workshops industrial saw tooth design. In our opinion, this design element fails to disguise the ordinariness of the design.

No mention is made in the Planning Department's report of contribution of architectural quality and appropriate context.

On all counts, the proposed development fails in the meeting of the design excellence criteria.

In addition, the lack of regard for the interface with the adjacent residential areas does not meet the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (or SEARs as they are known). SEARs # 3 requires that 'consideration of the relationships and interface with existing buildings'.

The loss of privacy, loss of solar access and levels of light pollution will lead to a substantial loss in the quality of life of those Alexandria residents bordering the ATP. Transition to the surrounding areas has been disregarded.

### **Inadequate Assessment of Public Transport and Traffic Impacts**

While the developer claims that 80% of workers who will be at Australian Technology Park will favour public transport which is admirable, there is little recognition of the fact that the current public transport services will not be able to cope with the additional load.

Redfern Station is already over capacity and despite being close by, it will be unable to cope with an additional 8,000 workers moving to and from Australian Technology Park every day.

Access to Technology Park from the station is generally gained largely via Platform 10 and we believe that it will in fact be dangerous with the volume of people who will need to move through the station at peak periods.

Also, it should be noted that Platform 10 is currently used by Sydney trains as their fall back platform if there are other problems on the network. When this happens, Platform 10 cannot easily be used as a thoroughfare.

The proposal does not take into account the number of residents who will be travelling against the human tide at peak periods and assess the danger of that many people using a relatively narrow platform to and from ATP at the one time.



The diagrams in the Planning Department's EIS show about 4,100 pedestrians arriving from Redfern Station. It is not clear how the remainder of the 80% of staff will access ATP given that the diagram also shows 1,800 people accessing the site from Henderson Road and from Garden Street.

Trains arriving at Redfern are already over capacity and there is no commitment from the State Government to increase the capacity or services of trains to the area.

Alexandria residents have for some time been fighting for a better, more accessible station, but to date, we have only been able to achieve the installation of a single lift on a station of 12 platforms. One is better than none, but there is much more required.

There is little mention of the number of people who will choose to drive to the site and try to find parking in already crowded residential streets.

This was and continues to be the very real experience of the Alexandria residents living closest to Australian Technology Park and we know of instances where teams of workers have coordinated car moving activity to get around the two hour resident parking restrictions.

This will only be exacerbated with the proposed development.

In its Environmental Assessment Report, the Department of Planning asserts that 'the ATP site is well placed to assertively pursue sustainable transport options being well serviced by high quality public infrastructure'. High quality it may well be, but adequate it is not – not now and definitely in the future as a result of this development.

The EIS also notes the 'increase in public transport capacity with the NSW Government's commitment to deliver a new Metro station'. While this is encouraging, the metro station proposal is currently in its very early stages and will not be operational until some years after the proposed building is occupied.

Unless the State Government upgrades Redfern Station amenities and in addition increases the capacity and volume of the trains in advance of the development, the increase in passenger number is likely to cripple the area.

Apart from the appalling lack of public transport and amenities, there is little appreciation of the impact on traffic congestion of the proposed development.

A development of this scale should have included a Traffic and Transport impact assessment that took into account the surrounding area and other contributors. Local roads in and around ATP are not coping now, let alone when all the car spaces are taken up.

The impact assessment fails to take into account the imminent development which is already in train (such as the Ashmore Estate development), the growing Green Square developments and makes no mention of WestConnex which is slated to disgorge between 70,000 and 100,000 cars a day into local Alexandria streets.



Collectively these will have a huge impact on our streets which has not been accounted for.

The lack of an adequate Traffic and Transport Impact Assessment means that the proposal also fails SEARs # 6

### **Inadequate assessment of the impact on the important and unique heritage value of the site**

We very much share the Heritage Council's concern that the northern alignment and articulation of Building 2 along Locomotive Street will diminish the scale and setting of the former Locomotive Workshops, and note that the alignment of Building 2 does not comply with setback requirements of the Redfern Waterloo Built Environment Plan (BEP) 2006.

In addition, the Heritage Impact Statement:

- Does not comply with the policies of the ATP Conservation Management Plan (CMP)
- Does not demonstrate how the proposal will achieve the collective management of heritage significant assets of the ATP precinct and
- Does not comply with the objectives of the draft Heritage Covenant or heritage asset management strategy.

We believe that the ATP Conservation Management Plan is the principal conservation document for the ATP and provides the guiding conservation policies for the site.

We are greatly concerned that the Heritage Impact Statement provided by the developer is a high level document, contains many sweeping generalisations not backed by evidence, is contradictory, negative, fails to grasp opportunities, avoids timelines and specific commitments, contains no financial analysis and project plans and refuses to accept or commit to consultation with key stakeholders.

In summary, the Heritage Impact Statement fails to successfully address many of the key principles of the Conservation Management Plan including:

- The Labour, aboriginal and community history
- The future of the Machinery collection/moveable heritage with the only announcement being negative: that is was not compulsory to adopt a reuse of the machinery collection.
- The management of the ATP in relation to custodianship of a major public asset, the engagement with workers, both past and present, local people, the wider community and the presentation of the old and new Eveleigh/ATP stories in an engaging way both on and off site

### **Avoidance of contribution to local infrastructure**

The Alexandria Residents Action Group understands that the developer seeks to achieve a waiver of the Section 94A levies and tries to justify this by saying that the improvements that they are making are 'above and beyond what is typically provided in a suburban business park'.



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While ARAG does not have expertise in this area, a commonsense review of what the developer proposes in no way justifies this ambit claim.

We believe that the works itemised would be considered to be routine works to cater for the incoming workers and meeting their amenity requirements rather than considering the community as a whole.

The proposed development places extraordinary demand on local and regional infrastructure for the wider public domain; on roads, on public transport and access; on community facilities and drainage.

The Section 94A contribution which we believe to be about \$8.6 million, should be put to public benefits arising from the demands of the development in the local and wider region.

This could include connecting workers to Redfern Station via improved pathways along Cornwallis and Marian Streets, improving the cycle way infrastructure along Henderson Road to connect the existing on-road path via a safer passage to the Waterloo Estate precinct or enhancement of the eastern and western interface of the project which appears to end abruptly.

In addition, Redfern Station must be upgraded as a priority in advance of the proposed development including adding lifts to improve accessibility.

ARAG is not made up of professionals with depth of experience in planning. We urge the Commissioners to place some weight on the concerns of the nearly 6,000 Alexandria residents and ensure that the worst aspects of the proposal are changed or rejected.

As we have only been given 15 minutes, I will make a final comment on behalf of the Alexandria Residents Group.

We would contend that overall, the development appears to be more about accommodating the anchor tenant and the timelines that have already been agreed rather than achieving the best outcome for the site, the local area and the people of New South Wales.

We do not believe that the NSW Planning Department has gone far enough to ensure that the development is appropriate in scale, that the transport impacts are truly understood and that the important heritage aspects have been preserved for the future. The developer contribution must be enforced to ameliorate in small part the impact from this development.

Thank you.