

Independent Planning Commission

Objection

22 November 2018

I would like to respond again to Pemulwuy Project submission, particularly on the increased height of the proposed student accommodation on Lawson Street.

I am a very long-term resident of the area. I lived in Hugo Street (opposite the Redfern Community Centre) for 15 years, before moving 10 years ago to the Redfern station end of Wilson Street where I still live.

The proposed increased height of the student accommodation on Lawson Street to 24 stories will have a significant detrimental impact to accessibility and use of the surrounding area.

Increased foot and vehicle traffic

- Others have already noted that pedestrian traffic along Lawson Street is very heavy with the footpath very narrow.
- The developers have audited current foot traffic at a time that is out of university semester, no doubt suiting their desired outcomes for increased height and density for the building
- As a regular user of Redfern Station to travel to and from work, there is a no doubt that current infrastructure is barely keeping up with the number of pedestrians moving to and from Redfern Station heading west.
- There are many factors affecting this pedestrian bottleneck:
 - Very narrow foot paths - 1 – 2 people can walk abreast for the majority of Lawson Street on the south side. Where landscaping occasionally allows 3 to walk side by side, there is a bottle neck 10 metres further on as pedestrians attempt to merge at the next street planting
 - This often means pedestrians walk along the road to avoid the foot traffic, causing significant risk – not if, but when – of a pedestrian being hit by a motor vehicle
 - Lawson Street is a narrow 2 lane road, built when vehicles were smaller, so it means larger modern cars need to slow to pass each other without incident. When a large vehicle (eg a truck or van) travels down Lawson Street, often traffic heading in the other direction needs to pull over and stop completely to allow the larger vehicle to pass. There is certainly no room for pedestrians to walk on the road safely
 - There is a significant amount of vehicle traffic on Lawson Street as it is the only crossing over the railway lines for more than a kilometre in either direction
 - The foot path on the other side of the street is equal to or even narrower to the one on the south side of Lawson Street

- The developer proposes that Caroline Street is used as an alternative pedestrian avenue, but its footpath on the south side is even narrower. Only one person is able to walk on it at a squeeze, as many residents don't have backyards and leave their bins at the front of their homes.
- The other side of Caroline Street is wider, but traffic for proposed child care, the community centre etc means that it's not a viable alternative.
- Caroline Street pedestrians often walk on the road already, bringing extra foot traffic would only increase that number significantly and the obvious risks associated with that
- This is the current state. Even allowing for Deicorp's (overtly or covertly) inadequate approach to assessing foot traffic on Lawson Street, this does not allow for:
 - Additional pedestrians from new developments just the other side of Redfern Station:
 - Deicorp's own TNT development (181 apartments – studio, 1 and 2 bedrooms)
 - 88onRegent's 82 apartments (studio, 1, 2 and 3 bedrooms)
 - Plus additional development sites recently sold adjacent to these two developments¹
 - It's worth noting that Deicorp's own website for their TNT development lists their proximity to Sydney University as a selling point, so they must be expecting some of their new residents in that development to increase the pedestrian burden heading west from Redfern Station too
- The developers also make the spectacularly naïve claim that residents of the proposed development will not increase the number of vehicles.
- This is patently untrue:
 - There is absolutely no doubt that a percentage of these additional residents will own cars. These will be parked on already crowded streets and add to traffic on Lawson and surrounding streets
 - They will also get deliveries of parcels and other items from furniture to groceries. This will increase traffic and there are obvious safety concerns about vehicles double parked on narrow, busy roads
 - These residents will take Ubers or taxis to and from their home. These will increase traffic
 - They will also have friends who pick them up or drop them off in their cars. These cars will also increase traffic in the area.
 - They will require increased services - from garbage collection to maintenance. This will increase traffic in the area.
- Again, this is before allowing for additional vehicles owned by, or servicing residents at new developments just the other side of Redfern Station

¹ <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/redfern-site-snapped-up-for-student-accommodation-20180605-p4zjks.html>
<https://www.realcommercial.com.au/property-land+development-nsw-redfern-502605262>

Proposed building height completely out of character for the area

- There is no doubt that this proposed new building height is completely out of step with the character for the area
- While there are a handful of high-rise buildings (5 in total) on the other side of the train lines at Redfern, this is several hundred metres from the Pemulwuy site and they're located in a business zoned area (TNT Apartments, Deicorp's development on the other side of the railway lines is repurposing former office buildings)
- It's worth noting that the span across the railway lines is significant as all Sydney Trains (bar the Airport Line) run through Redfern Station. (Redfern Station was formerly the main railway station for Sydney.)
- This is in a heritage area of much significance to the Indigenous and wider communities
- The location of this building is the highest point in the area, at the top of what was originally a natural ridge
- With the exception of a handful of businesses (café, art gallery etc), the entire area is medium density residential (terraces, low rise industrial buildings converted to residential, and similar)
- Surrounding buildings are 2-3 storeys in the majority. Usually these are terraces or other housing stock, where buildings exceed this height – usually by a couple of storeys or so) they are either:
 - existing light industrial buildings converted, eg 4-storey The Foundry apartments on the corner of Lawson and Abercrombie Streets
 - new developments in keeping with the density and needs of the area, eg 5-storey Urbanest student accommodation of the corner of Cleveland and Abercrombie Streets
 - It's worth noting that the latter example sits at a point significantly lower than Lawson Street, where it does not overwhelm or overshadow the existing buildings around it
- I note that all the architectural images of this proposed height increase for the Pemulwuy Project show it from a point looking south east. This means perspective and the distance of several hundred metres across the railway lines to the higher rise developments on the Redfern side of the station make the new building appear in keeping with the size and proportion of other buildings in the area.
- This could not be more untrue. Looking to the west, no building exceeds six storeys (and that is just one in Sydney University) until you travel more than a kilometre to King Street in Newtown. That again is a single building - Alpha House is 9 storeys high and is a former industrial building. Beyond that you would need to travel through many suburbs before encountering anything of this height.

This Mirvac² image below shows just how out of character and inappropriate a building of this size would be in the Pemulwuy development.



There is no doubt that 24 (or even 16) storeys is completely out of character for this side of Redfern Station and that Deicorp's proposed building size increase is nothing more than a cynical exercise to maximise their return on investment.

Certainly, their behaviour to date supports that view. Their original proposal was for six floors. While a little taller than other buildings around it on that side of the Redfern Station, would have fitted with the area and other parts of the proposed Pemulwuy development.

To substantially increase that by 400% is about nothing more than profit maximisation.

It is clear that the Deicorp application to increase the height of the student accommodation ignores:

- The low rise, medium density residential nature of the area
- Heritage of the area from both an Indigenous and historical point of view
- Appropriate building scale for its surroundings
- The significant increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic in an area where roads and related infrastructure are already stretched to breaking point at the current levels of both foot and vehicle traffic
- The resulting public safety risk from increased pedestrians and vehicles

² <https://atp.mirvac.com/>

Finally, I would like to comment on factors controlled by the Independent Planning Commission which appear designed to minimise the engagement with parties affected by this proposed development:

- I objected to this proposal when it was originally raised, but cannot find my objection, or that of others anywhere on the website
- The public hearing was held at 10am on a weekday with limited notice, this obviously significantly reduces the number of people who are able to attend
- I note that initial submissions were overwhelming against the proposed changes, however this was not reflected in those who submitted at the hearing, so is not in any way representative of wider opinions
- Although I must be surely regarded as an interested party, I was not notified that additional submissions could be made (although I was notified of the public hearing)
- Nor was I notified that the submission date was then extended to 29 November 2019

There seem to be significant gaps in how the commission engages with the wider community. These actions and inactions clearly favour developers over other interested parties, as it is the developer's job to push their proposals through the commission.

In conclusion, I strongly object to the proposed height increase for the student accommodation at the Pemulwuy Project. While no doubt there is demand for additional student accommodation, increasing the height of this building by 400% would place unbearable strain on local infrastructure and resources. In addition, its height significantly out of step with anything within several kilometres west of the Redfern Station.

I am happy to discuss any of these points in more detail if you require.

Your sincerely

Mary Gillespie