



east sydney neighbourhood association inc.

21 April 2020

By electronic submission

Dear Panel Members

SCEGGS Darlinghurst Concept and Stage One SSD 8993

East Sydney is a residential village, is one of the highest density residential communities in Australia and home to thousands of people. The East Sydney Neighbourhood Association (ESNA) represents East Sydney and surrounding residents and has existed for over 35 years with the aim of improving local residential amenity. ESNA addresses issues impacting residents within the area bound by College, William, Oxford and Boundary streets.

The Department of Planning, Industry & Environment (DPIE) Assessment Report <https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/resources/pac/media/files/pac/projects/2020/03/sceggs-darlinghurst-concept-and-stage-1-ssd-8933/referral-from-department-of-planning-industry-and-environment/dpie-final-assessment-report.pdf> has some extraordinary findings.

Despite wide spread opposition, including from the Local Member, the local Council, the National Trust and many community members, the DPIE has recommended the panel approve the application. In your role as the Independent Planning Commission of NSW (IPC), we urge you to reject several critical aspects of this development proposal.

Residents have three key concerns: demolition of heritage buildings; inappropriate bulk of proposed buildings; and traffic.

Demolition heritage buildings

We object to any heritage or contributory building being demolished. However, in this case the sanctioning of the demolition of Wilkinson House is a travesty. This building is a locally listed heritage item and one of the last remaining earliest buildings in Sydney of prominent architect Emil Sodersten. There are many examples of heritage buildings being repurposed and we reject SCEGGS' statement that it is unable to develop an appropriate educational use without demolishing the building. Residents are willingly subjected to requirements to renovate homes sensitively and if we can do it, then so can a very richly resourced school. We are sure we do not need to remind you that were these buildings to be demolished, they would be lost for ever. That "The Department supports the proposed demolition of Wilkinson House in the context of the significant social benefit the proposal would provide for the community." is clearly ludicrous. Please do not condemn these heritage buildings to this fate.

secretary: jane anderson
treasurer: sonda griffiths:

committee members: doug purdie
veronica heron
rod hanratty
coral hoggett

Inappropriate bulk of buildings

The bulk of the proposed buildings is totally inappropriate. It is out of character and detracts from the neighbourhood with particularly negative impacts on Thomson and Bourke streets. In general, the design is that of poorly built form transition as well as the creation of overshadowing of terrace homes. Minor changes proposed by the developer fail to mitigate these negative impacts and buildings still exceed the height limit albeit somewhat strangely “the Department concludes that compliance with the standard is unnecessary and unreasonable in this circumstance, and there are enough environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.”. We cannot think of any grounds to justify contravening the development standards in this instance and question the use of having standards in the first place if they are swept aside.

Traffic

The traffic assessment bears no relation to residents’ lived experiences and twice daily every school day, in an area very well serviced by public transport, our narrow neighbourhood streets are clogged with school traffic, including many instances of illegal parking and U turns. The development proposal makes no attempt to address this well-known problem. Indeed, the proposal even seeks an increase of 15 on-site parking spaces (from 112 to 127 spaces), although the SLEP maximum car parking provision for the site is 86 spaces. How a school with approximately 63 staff can possibly need 2 parking spaces each is extremely difficult to understand. If that were not already enough, the 19 on-site bicycle parking spaces would be removed due to the proposed works. Whilst the conditions provide for 50 bicycle spaces, residents have seen many instances over the years when developers make applications for conditions to be removed, and there is no guarantee that even this token requirement would eventuate.

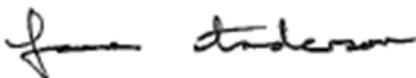
How the school can proceed with such wide spread community opposition is unclear – and certainly they have failed to establish a social licence to operate. Our view is that the school's plan at every step of the way does not acknowledge that it is in heritage zone and has a moral and ethical obligation to adapt and work with the beautiful buildings of which it is custodian as well as respect residents’ amenity and not inflict the neighbourhood with this monstrosity. These actions are incongruous with an institution which espouses the “worth of the individual, personal integrity and social responsibility”.

We ask you to consider the community concerns and reject the school's overdevelopment of this sensitive heritage site.

ESNA

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Secretary