

Loss of residential amenity.

Good afternoon, Commissioners. My name is Michael Wensley of Mount Pleasant Avenue, and I want to speak today about the loss of residential amenity.

Local schools enjoy a rate-free status in our communities because they are part of our social fabric. They educate our local children, and our local parents gather at the gates and community is formed. The nearby Normanhurst Public School educates local children. The Loreto of decades past educated local children.

Today however, Loreto has firmly shifted its focus to business profit and expanding its market. That would be its own business if it happily covered all the costs that align with its profits. However, over the last few decades, their costs have been progressively pushed onto surrounding residents in the form of unacceptable traffic issues, and now with this proposal a substantial change to vegetation and our physical streetscape

The Department concludes that the proposal is in the “public interest” and backs that up with not a skerrick of value added to the local community. Their recommendation is based on jobs, 100’s of construction jobs. But at an unacceptable cost to others.

I am here today to ask you Juliet, Wendy and Adrian to amend this proposal to ensure that it really is in the public interest. I am asking for four things:

1. The widening of Osborn Road in order to properly manage the traffic that they generate
2. The boarding house to be reduced in height from five stories to a maximum of two stories
3. The boarding house to be relocated to the centre of the site
4. Enforceable conditions to protect all trees located on Council land

Let’s get specific about the loss of amenity. The dictionary defines ‘avenue’ as “A broad roadway lined with trees”. I moved into Mount Pleasant Avenue in the late nineties. The two most striking aspects were tall trees arching over the avenue and almost exclusively single-story homes. The area was zoned low density residential, with Council records showing the Mount Pleasant edge of the Loreto oval as potential single building blocks. My children could play in the street, they could walk safely to Normanhurst Public School. Resident motorists could freely move in local streets including making the short trip to Normanhurst Public if it was raining.

Widen Osborn

In the early 2000’s Loreto dramatically increased the size of their business and pushed the costs onto residents. We lost the ability to freely move in our supposed low density

residential streets. Spill over Loreto traffic created chaos for the pickup and drop off of our local primary school children at Normanhurst Public (despite them not increasing in size!). As noted by our State Member, Alister Henskens in his July 2019 submission there have been seven crashes at the end of Mount Pleasant Avenue including one fatality.

Hornsby Council recognises the severity of the traffic issue and has recommended widening Osborn.

The Planning Panel that assessed Loreto's 2019 proposed child-care business also acknowledged this history and the significant loss of residents' amenity from Loreto's traffic. Despite the relatively smaller scale of that proposal, the then Panel deferred their initial decision and asked Loreto to explore working with Council to widen Osborn Road to increase the capacity of the existing traffic light cycle. When the Panel reconvened some weeks later it was argued by Loreto that the issue of widening could be put on hold until their 'masterplan', that is this proposal currently before us today.

Sorting out the traffic is simply a business expense that Loreto wants the residents to fund. Instead, please consider the accidents, consider the voice of our MP, consider the voice of our Council, and consider what was promised to the last Planning Panel.

Fair is fair – I ask for the Panel to require widening Osborn as recommended by the Council.

Boarding house height

I want to turn to the boarding house and my second point. I understand that Loreto tried it on and applied for six stories, but the Department is offering five stories. I repeat that Mount Pleasant is a tree lined avenue with free-standing low-density and mainly single-story dwellings. Sure, this is only doubling from single to two stories at the northern end. However, from the southern end – that is where the street level is at or below the oval level – absolutely nothing will hide this from being anything other than a five-story building wrongly placed in a low-density residential zone. Then there is the sheer scale of its length. It is hard to take in the audacity of a business expecting approval for a five-story building on the verge of a low-density avenue. Consider if an ordinary resident could turn up at Council and expect approval for even a three-story home.

Let's be clear, this increase in students is not needed to support the educational needs of our local community. I ask you to consider if the catch cry 'construction jobs' could possibly make this loss of my amenity in the public interest. Ethics and transparency are however definitely in the public interest. While it was not disclosed in their application, it may interest the Panel to know that Loreto has just this month put the home at 45 Mount Pleasant Avenue on the market rather than incur a devaluation (*attachment*). This home is directly opposite where the garbage trucks will access the five-story boarding house. I put to

you that, while asking for approval in the so-called public interest, they have only considered their private interests and importantly the impact of the looming loss of amenity for a home opposite. Yet another example of Loreto seeking for someone else to incur their business costs.

Fair is fair - I ask for the Panel to set a maximum height of two stories irrespective of the public interest in construction jobs.

Boarding house position

My third point is the positioning of the boarding house.

Over the years the school's athletics department has made many adjustments to the alignment of their 400m track. Why can't the Panel ask the school to simply rotate the track slightly clockwise and then build their five-story boarding house between the carpark (envelope 8) and the track. Our streetscape is important to us and, by keeping it well away from both Osborn and Mount Pleasant, the Panel could provide an option for them to build their monstrosity

The current plan for the removal of 105 trees is with 70 trees lost due to the current positioning of the boarding house. Could perhaps all of these 70 trees be saved as well as avoiding a five-story street scape?

I ask the Panel to consider this.

Protecting Council trees

My fourth point is in relation to trees on Council land. Loreto has long lost the trust of residents. I am fearful for those trees. If Loreto are true to historic form, they will find a way to remove them – it may be scope creep via future amendments, it may be something else.

My final ask of the Panel is to add a condition that places a significant multi-million-dollar penalty on Loreto to protect these trees. This is the Panel's opportunity to ensure that this avenue stays true to the dictionary definition of "A broad roadway lined with trees".

Summary

In summary, I have four asks of you:

1. Widening of Osborn Road
2. Five stories reduced to a maximum of two
3. If the boarding house is to be any higher than two stories, that it be relocated to the centre of the site
4. Enforceable conditions to protect Council trees

Thank you.

Attachment:

SOAMES

24th September 2021

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Mount Pleasant Avenue
Normanhurst NSW 2076

Dear [REDACTED]

RE: 45 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Normanhurst

As you may have been aware, we have been handling the sale of 45 Mount Pleasant Avenue, Normanhurst on behalf of Loreto Girls High School. The property is set for Auction starting on Tuesday 28th of September at 11:00am and completing on Wednesday 29th at 5pm. We expect the competitive bidding to start from 4pm so we would like to extend a warm welcome to you to watch in what we believe will be a great Auction.

Please find the link below: please note you will need to type the address into your preferred web browser.

<https://www.soldonline.com.au/properties/946-45-mount-pleasant-avenue-normanhurst-2076-nsw-australia.html>

Yours sincerely,
SOAMES REAL ESTATE



Edmond Wong
Sales Executive
Mobile: 0402 688 296
Email: edmond@soames.com

soames.com

261 Pennant Hills Road
Thornleigh NSW 2120
P 9481 9199
E thornleigh@soames.com

26-28 Railway Avenue
Wahroonga NSW 2076
P 9487 1500
E wahroonga@soames.com

208 Pacific Highway
Hornsby NSW 2077
P 9987 0011
E hornsby@soames.com