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TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

TRANSCRIPT IN CONFIDENCE

O/N H-1561918

INDEPENDENT PLANNING COMMISSION

MEETING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, INDUSTRY AND ENVIRONMENT

**RE: LORETO NORMANHURST SCHOOL REDEVELOPMENT (SSD 8996)
(CONCEPT PROPOSAL AND STAGE 1)**

COMMISSION PANEL: **ADRIAN PILTON (CHAIR)**
WENDY LEWIN
JULIET GRANT

ASSISTING PANEL: **JANE ANDERSON**
CASEY JOHSUA
PHOEBE JARVIS

DEPARTMENT: **KAREN HARRAGON**
ADITI COOMAR
TAHLIA ALEXANDER
MATTHEW ROSEL (TOWN PLANNING CONSULTANT)

LOCATION: **VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

DATE: **8.59 AM, TUESDAY, 21 SEPTEMBER 2021**

MR A. PILTON: Okay. Good morning and welcome. Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land from which we virtually meet today and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. Welcome to the meeting today to discuss the Loreto Normanhurst School Redevelopment Project SSD-8996 (Concept Proposal and Stage 1) which is currently before the Commission for determination. Loreto Normanhurst Limited, the applicant, is seeking consent for the proposed redevelopment of Loreto Normanhurst Independent Girls School in Normanhurst.

The application for the redevelopment of Loreto Normanhurst comprises of a Concept Proposal for new building envelopes, car parking, internal roads, landscaping and staged increase of 850 students. Consent is also sought for concurrent Stage 1 works comprising of the construction and operation of a boarding accommodation building, car parking, pick up and drop off facilities, through-site road, landscaping works and an additional 500 students. My name is Adrian Pilton and I am the Chair of this Commission Panel. I am joined by my fellow Commissioners, Wendy Lewin and Juliet Grant. We are also joined by Jane Anderson, Casey Joshua and Phoebe Jarvis from the Office of the Independent Planning Commission.

In the interests of openness and transparency, and to ensure the full capture of information, today's meeting is being recorded and a complete transcript will be produced and made available on the Commission's website. This meeting is one part of the Commission's consideration of this matter and will form one of several sources of information upon which the Commission will base its determination. It is important for the Commissioners to ask questions of attendees and to clarify issues whenever it is considered appropriate. If you are asked a question and are not in a position to answer, please feel free to take the question on notice and to provide any additional information in writing, which we will then put up on our website.

I request that all members here today introduce themselves before speaking for the first time and for all members to ensure they do not speak over the top of each other to ensure accuracy of the transcript. We will now begin. Karen.

MS K. HARRAGON: Good morning, Commissioners. Good morning, Commission Secretariat. I am Karen Harragon, director, social and infrastructure assessments at the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and I'm here with my colleagues, Aditi Coomar and Tahlia Alexander – one moment – from the social impact assessments team, and I'm also joined here today with Matt Rosel, our town planning consultant. Our presentation today will outline the Department's approach to the assessment of the SSD application for Loreto Normanhurst School Redevelopment comprising a Concept Proposal and Stage 1 works.

45

The application is SSD as it development for the purpose of alterations and additions to an existing school with a capital investment value of more than 20 million. The proposal was referred to the Commission as more than 50 public submissions in the form of objection were received during exhibition of the EIS. Our presentation today
5 will include a brief overview of the key issues of concern that were raised in submissions, the Department's assessment of the application, and matters noted in the IPCs agenda for today's briefing. These issues include traffic, parking, built form, landscaping, noise and signage. I am now going to ask Tahlia to provide a very brief overview of the site and the development, so that we can then move to
10 issues. We will now start to present our slides, thank you.

MS T. ALEXANDER: Thank you, Karen, and good morning, Commissioners. My name is Tahlia Alexander. I'm a principal planning officer in the school
15 infrastructure assessments team. I might just wait for Aditi to share our presentation slides.

MS A. COOMAR: Actually, I am sharing the screen?

MS HARRAGON: No, you're sharing your desktop, Aditi.
20

MS COOMAR: Sorry.

MS HARRAGON: If you have trouble, we'll share it as well.

MS COOMAR: Just give me one moment, please. That is okay?
25

MS HARRAGON: Perfect.

MS ALEXANDER: Thank you, Aditi. As detailed in the Department's assessment
30 report, the SSD application relates to the Loreto Independent Girls School, Normanhurst Campus. The site consists of both the existing Loreto school campus, as well as an adjoining residential property located at 4 Mount Pleasant Avenue. The aerial view of the site shows the existing school campus outlined in red and 4 Mount Pleasant Avenue highlighted in blue. The use of both properties as a school is
35 permissible under the Hornsby Local Environmental Plan 2013. This slide shows the layout of existing building across the school campus and the surrounding roads.

The campus adjoins Pennant Hills Road to the north, Osborn Road to the west and
40 Mount Pleasant Avenue to the east. The closest residential properties to the site are located on the opposite side of Osborn Road and Mount Pleasant Avenue, comprising low density houses fronting the site. The majority of the school campus site is listed as an item of local heritage significance under the Local Environmental Plan. In addition, the site contains remnant bushland comprising critically
45 endangered plant communities, including Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest and Blue Gum High Forest.

The school caters for years 5 to 12 and has an approved maximum capacity of 1,150 students. A total of 1,100 students are currently enrolled at the campus, including 155 students that reside on site within the school's student boarding accommodation. The school currently employs approximately 254 staff members.

5 The site is currently accessed six gated vehicle entrances located on Osborn Road, Pennant Hills Road and Mount Pleasant Avenue. An onsite pick up, drop off facility, including four spaces and two bus bays, is located off Osborn Road, and the site contains 187 existing car parking spaces and a service yard.

10 The application comprises a Concept Proposal and Stage 1 works for the staged redevelopment of the school as detailed in the Department's assessment report. The Concept Proposal includes the creation of 10 building envelopes across the site for school buildings and associated facilities. It also includes an increase in student numbers by 850 students and an increase of up to 236 car parking spaces. The
15 Concept Proposal is intended to provide a long-term school development master plan for the next 30 years. The Stage 1 works is the first stage of the redevelopment and includes the demolition of existing school buildings and structures and the staged construction of three new buildings and associated infrastructure and landscaping works.

20 The proposed new Stage 1 buildings include a five-storey boarding accommodation building for 216 students with two staff apartments and two single-storey carpark buildings with playing courts on their roofs. The proposed new Stage 1 infrastructure includes alterations to existing school car parking areas, creation of a
25 new through-site road, provision of two new pick up, drop off facilities, and site-wide landscaping. We will talk further about the details of traffic and transport later in this presentation.

30 Together with the physical works, Stage 1 also includes a staged increase of 500 students from 1,150 to 1,650 students. The increases would be linked to the construction and operation of the proposed pick up, drop off and car parking facilities. The Department has assessed the key issues of the proposal and concludes that on balance the proposal can be supported, as it would result in better and improved school facilities. However, the Department's recommendation is subject to
35 key conditions requiring amendments to the application.

In particular, the reduction of the height and scale on building envelope 2 to ensure it does not have an adverse built form impact on the Osborn Road streetscape; the
40 installation of a no right turn restriction for vehicles exiting from Mount Pleasant Avenue onto Pennant Hills Road during school peak times; amendments to buildings and car parking to increase the retention of existing significant trees along Mount Pleasant Avenue and Osborn Road; a requirement that all essential transport infrastructure is provided prior to the first increase in student population; and
45 preparation and implementation of key operational management plans, including a green travel plan, operational transport plan and boarding accommodation plan. I will now hand over to Matthew, who will present further details on traffic and transport.

MR M. ROSEL: Thank you, Tahlia. Good morning, Commissioners. My name is Matthew Rosel and I'm a planning consultant from Townscape. As the Commission would have noted, the impact of the increased student numbers on the operation of the surrounding roads, as well as queuing on Osborn Road, have been raised as key issues by Council and the public. First, I'm going to talk about the pick up and drop off facilities, and I will then move on to traffic generation and intersection performance. The existing pick up and drop off facilities within the site are not currently satisfactory. In particular, only four cars can be accommodated on the site with three cars queued.

Consequently, it's common for overflow vehicle queuing to occur on Osborn Road, resulting in delays and unsafe traffic environment. One of the main components of this proposal is to resolve and improve the school's pick up and drop off operations. To address existing overflow queuing on Osborn Road and to meet future pick up and drop off demands, the proposal includes the deletion of the four existing underperforming pick up and drop off spaces; the provision of five new pick up and drop off spaces; the creation of a one-way through-site road connecting Osborn Road to Mount Pleasant Avenue; and the creation of capacity for a total of 36 vehicles queuing within the site.

The Department has considered the public and Council's concerns in detail in its assessment report and concludes that the proposed new pick up and drop off facilities, coupled with the delivery of a green travel plan promoting reduced car usage, would ensure that facilities are adequate to meet the demands of the proposed development and prevent queuing onto Osborn Road. The Department has recommended conditions requiring construction and commencement of the operation of all pick up and drop off facilities and the through-site road in Stage 1 prior to the increase in student numbers. I will now turn to the proposed internal operation of the pick up and drop off facilities.

In response to concerns raised by the Department and in submissions, the applicant has undertaken a number of reviews to internal operation of the pick up and drop off facilities, and this has revised also its operational transport and access management plan. As a result of these reviews, the operation of the facilities has been improved and are now subject to key management and mitigation measures, including that parents will be allocated one of the two facilities to use; traffic marshals will be present at both facilities to manage operations; both facilities include a passing lane to allow vehicles to pass if the pick up and drop off spaces are currently occupied; drivers will be limited to stopping for a maximum of two minutes and must remain in or near their vehicles at all times; and preparation of information guides and quarterly review of operations.

The Department supports the implementation of the management plan to manage the operation of the pick up and drop off facilities. To further improve their operation, the Department has recommended additional mitigation measures requiring that the facilities are open at least 30 minutes prior to the commencement of the afternoon pick up; the management plan is reviewed prior to each staged increase in student

population; and a road safety audit is prepared and implemented. With reference to traffic generation and intersection performance, the applicant has submitted updated SIDRA modelling to analyse the performance of the two key intersections of Osborn Road and Pennant Hills Road, and Mount Pleasant Avenue and Pennant Hills Road, shown circled in this slide.

Based on the concerns from the Department and the community, the applicant has provided additional traffic analysis of surrounding intersections. The updated intersections analysis demonstrates that the proposal would have an acceptable impact on the continued functioning of the surrounding road network. The Department has noted in its assessment report that the right turn from Mount Pleasant Avenue onto Pennant Hills Road is a difficult and dangerous manoeuvre, particularly during school peak periods due to the need to cross over three lanes of traffic. To address this, the applicant proposes that traffic marshals would be used to restrict vehicles that exit the school site to only making a left-hand turn onto Pennant Hills Road.

Although the Department supports this approach in principle, it's concerned that in practice it may be difficult to enforce. In order to minimise the risk of accidents, the applicant has recommended a condition requiring the applicant – sorry, the Department has recommended a condition requiring the applicant amends the application to instal road signage. The signage would confirm a no right-turn restriction from Mount Pleasant Avenue onto Pennant Hills Road during the school morning and afternoon peak periods. The Department considers, subject to the management of the pick up and drop off facilities as previously discussed and the installation of new road signage, the proposal would not have an unacceptable impact on the operation with adjoining intersections or road network.

The Department notes the Commission's meeting agenda includes an item relating to signage. The Department would like to clarify that the applicant has confirmed at page 59 of its EIS that it does not seek consent for the installation or display of external signage as part of this application. This being the case, the Department has not considered it necessary to assess the application against the requirements of SEPP 64. Notwithstanding that the applicant has confirmed it does not seek approval for signage, the Department acknowledges that indicative signage is shown on the conceptual landscape plans as outlined in red on this slide.

To ensure signage is not approved and to avoid any ambiguity, an additional condition could be imposed stipulating that separate approval is required for any signage or works. I will now hand over to Karen, who will provide our conclusion.

MS HARRAGON: Thank you, Matt. Commissioners, this concludes our presentation on the key issues of the application. On balance, the Department concludes in its report that the impacts of the development can be mitigated through the recommended conditions of consent and that the development would be in the public interest. The Department is also satisfied that the design of the building envelopes and Stage 1 works buildings respond appropriately to the site context, its

heritage listing, biodiversity significance, and surrounding residential streetscapes, subject to our recommended conditions. I will now hand back to the Commission panel if there are any questions. Thank you.

5 MR PILTON: Thanks. Thank you, Karen. I might just kick off with one question about the no right turn signage on Mount Pleasant Road. I was just wondering if there's any reaction from the residents about that right turn ban in the morning peak. Are they happy with that?

10 MS HARRAGON: Aditi, could you confirm whether we've received any information from the community subsequent to our recommendations being made public on the Commission's website?

15 MS COOMAR: We have not received any further concerns from the community regarding this specific issue following the conditions being issued.

MR PILTON: Thank you. Juliet and Wendy, have you got any questions?

20 MS J. GRANT: Just following on from that, Adrian, if we're banning right turn, what does the traffic modelling say about a likely distribution of traffic flow and where those vehicles that are wanting to head north – where are they going to then turn around? Is there some assumptions or some modelling that demonstrates where we're – if we're shifting an impact somewhere else?

25 MS ALEXANDER: I will answer that question, thank you, Commissioner. So the SIDRA modelling has taken into account that rerouted traffic. Within the assessment report there is an alternative route identified and our traffic consultant Bitzios is satisfied that the SIDRA modelling has taken into account the rerouted traffic and they're satisfied with that outcome.

30 MS GRANT: And so where would that rerouted traffic be likely to travel?

35 MS ALEXANDER: So it is shown in the assessment report but essentially they would turn left onto Pennant Hills Road, turn right at the first intersection, where they proceed down to a roundabout, and then back up to Pennant Hills Road, where they would proceed left.

MS GRANT: Right. Okay. Thank you.

40 MR ROSEL: Just to add, there's an image of this rerouting at page 69 of the Department's assessment report.

MS GRANT: Thank you.

45 MR PILTON: Wendy, have you any queries? Can people hear me?

MS GRANT: Yes. Yes, Wendy's on mute.

MS W. LEWIN: I'm coming up now, sorry. Thanks. Excellent. This is just a question on ESD, which we've been musing on over a couple of the other assessment matters that are in front of us, but for Loreto, you have a target of five star and that's quite interesting because on a current matter, on Trinity, the Department has
5 confirmed that it will be four star. Just wondering is this the future target for the Department to elevate the achievement of ESD performance and design? It's a question out of interest, rather than anything negative. It's for us to understand where the consideration is heading, I suppose.

10 MS HARRAGON: Thank you, Commissioners. Matt, I'll let you answer and I can also supplement that answer.

MR ROSEL: Sure. Thanks, Karen. So overall the applicant's targeting an ESD of four, a four star, and that's part of the conceptual – the concept plan, the conceptual
15 part of the application. They've actually striven to actually push further and as part of the Stage 1 they've identified that they could achieve a five star rating. So overall it would be a four star but at each stage it's their viewpoint that they could try to exceed beyond that and, as mentioned, in Stage 1 they think they can do that.

20 MS ALEXANDER: I might just add to that, thanks, Matt. So while the applicant has targeted four stars for the Concept Proposal, the Department has recommended conditions B19 to B21, that they should strive for a five star for the conceptual stage.

MS LEWIN: Yes, that's what we noted, which is why it would be – it's intriguing
25 but it's also good to talk about it. Karen, you were going to mention - - -

MS HARRAGON: Yes, thank you.

MS LEWIN: - - - something in addition.
30

MS HARRAGON: Yes. The Department's, I guess, been on a journey of investigation over a number of years around the challenges an applicant faces in terms of meeting sustainability regardless of which of the rating systems it uses. We do recognise from the rating organisations the advice they've given to us around the
35 challenges for adaptive reuse of buildings where that is often a very challenging space to achieve that, and also particularly if you're needing to undertake construction in and around existing buildings. Again, it's often a very challenging, if not impossible, outcome to achieve. So it's usually a conversation that we are very much having with applicants from the beginning about understanding how or why
40 they would not be able to do so, and if there are site contexts and site limitations that would hinder from that being achieved.

And typically there is no formal policy around the five but we endeavour on sites that have the capacity to have opportunities to achieve that, that we try and drive that
45 additional outcome.

MS LEWIN: Thank you, Karen.

MS GRANT: Adrian, I've got a couple of other questions, if I may.

MR PILTON: Yes, please go ahead, Juliet.

5 MS GRANT: A couple of statutory questions, and apologies if I've missed it in the report. The Council raised the issue of Clause 4.6 and compliance with the LEP height limit. I didn't see a 4.6 but I might have missed in all of the package of information. I haven't been through everything at this stage, so I guess the first question is, is there a 4.6 and was the Department satisfied with that?

10 MS HARRAGON: So the application's been assessed under the provisions of the Education SEPP. The Education SEPP actually contains a clause that exempts the height requirements of an LEP. Notwithstanding that, the approach the Department still takes is to actually apply the principles of a 4.6 variation in the way it forms an opinion on the appropriateness of those heights. I can't recall specifically but we can provide information later regarding a page reference where that breakdown of the analysis of the objective of a height control and why in this instance the circumstances are that it's not appropriate to be compliant.

20 MS GRANT: Okay. Terrific, thank you. And I guess then the next step of that, the consistency between the building envelopes in the Stage 1 and then the boarding house heights proposed – sorry, the consistency of the building envelopes in the concept versus the actual heights in the Stage 1 for the boarding house. Is there analysis or explanation that looks at that because I think at the eastern end of the site, 25 it looks like the proposal probably isn't within the concept envelope?

MS HARRAGON: We might have to take that offline, Commissioner, just to clarify that corner that you're talking about. Just also by way of background, obviously the report reflects a long-term resolution of a number of issues by the applicant from its original exhibition to the point in time of this building at the moment to respond better to the site constraints and also to respond to what was considered a priority, which was the retention of significant trees on that elevation. So we may have to actually provide a better look at that particular corner that you're talking about as some of those footprints shifted on the site from exhibition start to 35 the end.

MS GRANT: Yes.

MS HARRAGON: We can confirm though that that last – the last building form was actually made public so that the community was aware of the evolving – or 40 evolution of that design outcome.

MS GRANT: Thank you.

45 MR PILTON: Thank you. I'm a little bit intrigued by the pick up, drop – drop off and pick up facilities. If there's only three spaces provided, will there be a great big backup on the through road of people coming in? It seems a bit different to, if you

recall, Trinity. There's a lot more drop offs at Trinity to keep the system working. I'm just wondering what will people – you know, will people just start dropping off their kids in the through-site road?

5 MS HARRAGON: So, Matt, perhaps you could just talk to that circulation again.

MR ROSEL: Yes. So, firstly, there'll be traffic marshals that will take control of the two separate pick up, drop off areas. So the applicant plans that these marshals will actually ensure that, you know, parents and children stay within their cars when
10 they're not within the pick up, drop off areas. So that's how that would be managed, I suppose, but in terms of the storage capacity, the creation of the through-site road has ensured that there is quite a lot of onsite queuing that's available, and the reason for that was to prevent overspill queuing onto Osborn Road. This is also the case for the new pick up, drop off facility in the Osborn Road carpark, where cars can queue
15 behind the spaces that are there.

There is intended to be a maximum of a two-minute drop off time limit, and to prevent people from – or cars from banking up waiting for people to get out of the vehicles, there are passing lanes, so the other task of the marshal is to ensure that if
20 the spaces are full, that people banked up behind are moved along and they recirculate around and join the queue at the back to come through again.

MR PILTON: Thank you. And just while we're on that, can you refer me to where I will find details of the Osborn Road carpark drop off? I missed that on my quick
25 read through all the documents. I picked up the three drop offs on the through-site road but I hadn't picked up the drop offs in the other carpark. Is that – do you know off the top of your head where that might be in the report?

MR ROSEL: I can find it for you now. There's a handy image in the report which
30 actually identifies the drop off locations and also the amount of queue-back that is accommodated onsite. If the Commissioners give me just a moment, I'll be able to find that for you and direct you to that.

MR PILTON: Thank you very much.
35

MS ALEXANDER: That image that Matthew is referring to is figure 29 within the assessment report.

MR PILTON: I've got it. Okay. Thank you.
40

MS HARRAGON: And, Commissioner, not that you asked this question but this is probably one of the better serviced schools in terms of public transport that we've seen and to date has quite high levels of modal split as well. It's well connected with that railway line and that seems to serve a purpose of keeping the use of the pick up
45 and drop off by vehicles down to a reasonably low number in comparison to other schools that we've had exposure to.

MR PILTON: Thanks, Karen.

MS GRANT: And related to that, are there intersection works proposed as part of this application at Osborn and Pennant Hills Road or is that only in conjunction with
5 the Wahroonga Estate application?

MR ROSEL: There's no intersection works proposed as part of this application. That's primarily because since the inclusion of the through-site road, all cars are now accommodated onsite in terms of queuing, so it wasn't felt that there was a need to
10 upgrade the surrounding intersection at that location because there's no impact on the street.

MR PILTON: I noticed that the Council had made a comment that they thought Osborn Road should be widened. Did that go anywhere or has that just been –
15 disappeared, as it were?

MS HARRAGON: Matthew, can you answer that? There's certainly no – there's certainly no traffic assessment evidence that would suggest that's a necessary outcome that's identified as a trigger because of this school.
20

MR PILTON: Thank you.

MR ROSEL: The other thing to mention is our independent traffic consultant had a look at this on our behalf and confirmed that it wasn't necessary. The other third
25 thing to point out was that any widening of the road and footpath areas would have potentially quite a lot of streetscape impacts in terms of taking up road – existing verge space, I apologise, and landscaping. So all those things put together, the Department concluded it wasn't necessary to widen in that location.

30 MR PILTON: Thank you.

MS HARRAGON: Probably just another broad comment to make reference to, to give an understanding of the situation that existed at the time of the original exhibition, at that time, the NorthConnex tunnel had not opened. It was a very
35 different road environment that the community was experiencing and it was within that context that the first round of exhibition occurred and the submissions definitely speak to that. And certainly the conditions that were imposed previously on the local development approval at Wahroonga Estate were also in the context of that being a very different traffic scenario, it was a black spot.
40

And so the circumstances that we find ourselves in today – whilst we still recognise that there will be an increased movement along that Pennant Hills Road in the future – we've got to make that observation now on the basis of the NorthConnex tunnel making a difference to the traffic regime in the area.
45

MR PILTON: Thank you, Karen. I don't have anymore questions to ask. Wendy, Juliet?

MS LEWIN: No, I'm fine. Thank you very much.

MS GRANT: No. Thank you, yes, that's touched on all of the queries I had too.
Thank you.

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MR PILTON: Thank you, Karen, Aditi, and Tahlia and Matt.

MS HARRAGON: Thank you for the opportunity to present on our assessment
today.

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MR PILTON: Thank you.

MS ALEXANDER: Thank you, Commissioners.

15

MR PILTON: Thank you.

MATTER ADJOURNED at 9.32 am ACCORDINGLY