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16 March 2025

Subject: Objection to Proposed State Significant Development: The Timberyards by RTL Co.

Dear Stephen Dobbs

I am writing to formally object to the proposed apartment development: The Timberyards by RTL Co. as outlined in SSD-76927247. As a resident of Marrickville for almost 20 years and a Demographer of over 25 years, I have significant concerns regarding the potential negative impact this development may have on our community and the misalignment of the proposed development with the needs of the community.

1. Impact on Community Character, Liveability, and Privacy

The proposed development represents a gross overdevelopment, with building heights that far exceed any existing structures in Marrickville. The neighbourhood is predominantly composed of single detached family homes in a relatively quiet, low-traffic area. The introduction of high-density housing will fundamentally alter the peaceful and close-knit nature of our community, leading to increased noise levels, reduced privacy for existing residents, and significant changes to the social fabric of the area.

Furthermore, I note that neighbouring town centres such as Annandale, Leichhardt, Petersham, and Stanmore will be exempt from the “low and mid-rise” housing reforms due to their location under Sydney Airport’s flight path (“The Sydney suburbs excluded from ‘missing middle’ housing plan”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 February 2025). However, the Timberyards development, which falls within an ANEI of 25, is still being considered for an 8-13 storey proposal, despite the fact that Petersham and Stanmore’s town centres—classified under an ANEI of 20—are exempt. This raises serious questions about the consistency and fairness of the planning process.

Additionally, the height and scale of the proposed buildings may lead to overlooking issues, reducing the privacy of adjacent homes and outdoor spaces. This is particularly concerning for residents who have long enjoyed the tranquillity and security of their properties.

2. Mismatch with Community Demographics and Housing Need

The proposed development fails to align with the existing demographic composition of Marrickville. According to the 2021 ABS Census, 60.6% of households in Marrickville were

family households, 11.8% were group households, and 27.6% were single-person households. However, with 73% of the proposed Timberyards development consisting of one-bedroom apartments or smaller, the project is disproportionately catering to single-person households, failing to provide appropriate housing for families and larger households in the area.

Studio and co-living apartments in Sydney are typically occupied by younger residents (under 30 years old), whereas Marrickville, like the rest of Australia, has an ageing population. The Australian Homelessness Monitor has also highlighted that the fastest-growing group affected by homelessness in the last six years are individuals aged 55 to 64. The proposed development does not provide adequate housing solutions for this vulnerable demographic, further exacerbating housing inequalities in the area.

Additionally, the 12 existing dwellings on the eastern side of Farr Street, which are set to be demolished as part of this development, currently provide low-cost rental housing for many family households. Their removal will displace these families, forcing them into an already stretched rental market. Given the significant demand for family and group dwellings in Marrickville, there is a real concern that these studio and co-living apartments will be inappropriately occupied by families and groups, placing even greater pressure on local infrastructure and services.

3. Flawed Architectural Justification and Design Issues

The developer's 'Design Report' presents a skewed perspective by focusing primarily on Marrickville's industrial areas while overlooking the broader architectural character of the suburb. While the site is located within an industrial zone near two major roads, industrial architecture is not the dominant style in Marrickville. A short walk from Farr Street to Thompson Street, Edward Street, or Gorman Street reveals a predominantly Victorian-era architectural landscape.

The only reason the Timberyard site is available for redevelopment is its industrial zoning, which meant it was historically developed with low-cost infrastructure, anticipating future redevelopment. However, the developer is using the existing industrial aesthetic as a justification for applying an 'industrial design' theme—typically associated with cheaper construction materials and finishes—rather than respecting the surrounding Victorian-era character of the broader area. This approach risks creating a development that lacks longevity and may devalue nearby heritage homes.

Additionally, the proposed design does not adequately consider the existing residential context. The scale of the development on Farr Street is extreme, despite it being the only part of the site directly adjacent to existing residential properties. Given its location, this section should feature smaller-scale buildings, greater setbacks, and enhanced landscaping to provide a more suitable transition between the high-density development and the surrounding homes.

The other three sides of the development face major roads (Sydenham and Victoria Roads) or industrial areas (Mitchell Street), making Farr Street the most sensitive interface. However, the

current proposal for Building A, in close proximity to Marrickville Public School and the heritage Victorian homes along Thompson Street, is excessive in scale and lacks appropriate mitigation. Building A should be the most modest in height to ensure a more harmonious integration with the existing neighbourhood.

4. Inadequate Parking Provision and Congestion Issues

The proposed development includes only 200 parking spaces for 1,200 apartments, which is a drastic underprovision. With Marrickville's average household size of 2.3 people per dwelling (ABS Census 2021), this development could bring approximately 2,760 new residents to the area. Given that parking on Farr Street and Thompson Street is already extremely limited and that there are no parking facilities available on Sydenham or Victoria Roads, the question remains—where will the remaining 2,500 residents park?

This lack of parking will inevitably lead to significant overflow into surrounding residential streets, creating congestion, restricting access for emergency services, and causing frustration for existing residents.

Additionally, the increased number of vehicles will place further strain on the already stretched local road network, particularly on Victoria Road and Sydenham Road, which were not designed to accommodate such high volumes of traffic. This will likely result in increased commute times, road safety concerns, and greater pressure on public transport systems that are already at capacity.

I respectfully urge the NSW Government to reconsider this development proposal, taking into account the concerns of local residents. I request that alternative solutions be explored, such as reducing the density/height of the development, reviewing the mix of dwelling types being provided so that they meet the needs of the local community and that the design, particularly along Farr Street, is of an appropriate scale and quality design.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact a signature.