

Caroline Owen - Objection to Columbia Precinct (Parramatta Road and Columbia Street) Development Application

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Subject: Objection to Columbia Precinct (Parramatta Road and Columbia Street) Development Application
CC: <khalils@innerwestcourier.com.au>

Introduction

Hello I am a resident in the area of this proposed development. I only learned of this proposal recently from the local paper so I am emailing you my objections which I know is shared by most people who live in the area even if they didn't have the opportunity to make a submission to this application.

I feel that many in our community don't speak out because they feel nothing can be done to change things anyway. They get stuck in a rut and don't believe things can improve. Unfortunately most people that live in the immediate area already live in high rise buildings and have enough to worry about without making a submission to a development application for a building similar to one they are already live in. Don't think for a minute that a lack of opponents is an indication that the average person on the street would not object if asked about the development.

I hope that by describing what it is like living in this area while trying to raise children will give a feeling of why this development (and all similar developments) should not be allowed to bypass the local council planning rules. Specifically on maximum height. I hope that this description will give the decision makers a feeling of how high density living would affect them if built in their back yard.

I hope that if we keep making the right choices some of the problems associated with living in this area can be alleviated in the future rather than take the money now and pass on the problem to the next generation.

I object to this application for the following reasons.

Too High

Why have maximum height restrictions when a developer can ignore them in the application anyway? Are the height restrictions just an indicator of where the developer should start the bribes? Don't get all defensive about bribes. They have happened before, they will happen again – most of us are not stupid! Read the Papers!

Why do developers build high rise buildings with foundations to support buildings of much greater height than the building was approved for or the building regulations allow for? Because the developer knows that once the building has been approved for and built at the current maximum height with suitable campaigning (bribes) they will be allowed to build higher than the maximum height. Take a look at the Strathfield triangle for an example. The developer applied to extend the building height soon after the building was complete. The maximum height in the LEP is there for a reason. It is made with the whole suburb in mind. Violating the maximum height for one project throws out the whole balance and consideration under which the maximum height was originally set in the LEP.

If the buildings are too high, there are too many people in a built up area. High density living has all sorts of costs that the LEP took into account. Don't allow this development to be higher than the

LEP allows.

Where does all the Poo go?

That part of Parramatta Road was never designed to handle that much effluent. The sewerage pipes in Strathfield are already overloaded. Look at how long over the initial estimate SewerFix are still operating. The SewerFix operation is a stop gap solution to clean and fix old pipes. What is needed along Parramatta Road to support this and many other mega high rise buildings that would follow, is the addition of new sewerage infrastructure to support the massively increasing load.

There is a creek running through the area into the Cooks River. How are a bazillion people living right on top of the creek going to affect pollution running into the river? The nature strip in my front yard is treated as a convenient ashtray and garbage bin by the residents on my street – that's just the medium density brought into the neighbourhood by our resident Slum Lords. Can you imagine how much rubbish a high density development like this would introduce to the creek? There is a clean-up project currently underway for the Cooks River. This development would kill that project in its tracks.

Traffic

All people looking to approve this application should take into account the simple question. Would you want such a development in your neighbourhood? Knowing that it will exacerbate traffic and parking problems. I can't leave my house with my car on the weekend without knowing that I'll be stuck in traffic for half an hour when I could walk to my destination in 15 minutes. Unfortunately with young children, walking is not always an option.

Then there is the fight for parking on arrival anywhere in the neighbourhood. The high rise living conditions rarely allow for more than one parking space but families rarely have less than two cars.

Take a look at the streets around Rhodes. Once almost deserted streets are now packed with cars taking every available parking space. Parking too close to corners, parking on bike lanes and across access to pedestrian paths. Making it difficult to motorists in the area to see pedestrians and bicycles.

If one opts to take public transport rather than drive they take the risk of being run over by frustrated drivers stuck in the bumper to bumper traffic jams. Even at the crossings on Concord Road and Parramatta Road, cars block the intersection and continue turning through the red light even after the crossing indicator has turned green. Thus making it dangerous for pedestrians to cross, particularly the elderly, parents with young children or those with disabilities. At the crossing on the entry to the F4 from Concord Road, it is difficult to get cars to stop at the crossing to allow one to cross. I can stand at the crossing in disbelief while four of five cars race by actually accelerating past the crossing in case you get forceful and step out forcing them to stop. Once the drivers see a chance to accelerate, even for just a moment before they join the parking lot that is the F4, they pursue that chance with a frenzied fervour such that pedestrians become invisible. Such is the frustration of being struck in traffic on Parramatta Road.

I have been waiting to cross Parramatta road, knowing that the cars will block the crossing when a police car pulled up on Concord Road in the lane to continue into Leicester Avenue. I watched with interest, believing that the presence of the police car would prevent motorists from blocking the intersection knowing that it was an offence to do so. To my dismay the police car, seeing that the intersection was about to block up, sounded the siren to prevent cars from blocking his car, drove across the intersection before his light turned green, stopping traffic passing in the still flowing West heading lane and crossed the intersection before being blocked. The police car driver turned off the siren immediately once through the intersection and drove off at normal speed. So instead of trying to prevent cars from blocking the intersection by fining offending drivers and police car driver just accepted that the problem was so endemic that rather than enforcing the law he used the additional powers at his disposal to make sure he was not affected by it. As the intersection invariably blocked

and I was not able to cross at the crossing, I wished I had a siren on my Pram.

Parking

George Street is a car park when dropping off and picking up children from day care. In the afternoon this is not even during peak hour.

If I take the children home from day care, walking on George Street, I pass directly past the site of the proposal. Passing Columbia and Cooper streets is already very dangerous because cars queue up to turn onto the busy Parramatta road. Often not leaving enough space between cars for a pram to fit through. It is not safe to cross in front of the waiting cars because often the drivers are looking for breaks in traffic rather than pedestrians. This will only get worse if the proposed development is approved.

Also bikes come down the hill on Parramatta Road and have very little visibility of Cooper and Columbia lanes risking a car pulling out in front of them and requiring urgent breaking. I would point out that there is very little room for pedestrians on the other side of Parramatta road from the proposed development. Too narrow to push a Pram safely.

Wouldn't it make more sense to stop developing on Parramatta road and along the railway and keep the corridor open to widen the road or railway in future? Does any planning go into the long term future? Do we want future generations looking back and thinking "Now why did the regulatory agencies allow high density building right on the worst areas for local traffic congestion? How can we widen the road or railway to cope with our gazillion population growth? What were they thinking? That we would travel around in flying saucers in future? Oh hang on, I forgot about that IAC Investigation. That's right there wasn't much thinking other than on money going on. I can't believe all they thought they could get away with all that corruption!"

Pollution

More people, more traffic more pollution. Pollution sucked up and distributed through the building by the air conditioning system. What a great place to live and raise kids.

Also noise pollution from freight trains. Don't stop the freight trains as they are required and have been in that location for ever. Stop the development!

Do we have a right to place high rise housing development right on two major roads knowing that for many hours of the day cars will be inching forward rather than moving at the most efficient speed for combustion. Therefore spewing out harmful pollution. Do we know the effects of breathing all the pollution generated on their very door steps will have on people living in these high rise buildings? Do we have the right to place these dwelling where only those that cannot afford to live elsewhere will live and be exposed to that pollution? Sentencing their children to Asthma and eczema!

No Parks

No Parks. I talk to mothers who live in the current high rise dwellings on Parramatta road and they complain that there are no Parks for the children to play in and meet with other children. As a result, the kids are cooped up inside all day with their eyes glued to television and computer screens. To the point where it is difficult to get the children out of the house to do any activity. How can we prevent teenage sedentary diseases afflicting our kids if we continue to replace outdoor spaces and parks with high rise buildings? Unlike Strathfield Park and Burwood Park, there are no parks in this area. As industrial and commercial regions, without the need for Parks, are converted to residential areas, the children have no parks to play in.

Sufficiently set back from Parramatta road, this site would make an excellent area for a park to service the already overcrowded and continuing to develop Strathfield Triangle area. I'm talking

about a real park where kids can run around and feel some direct sunshine. Not a token park in the middle of a high rise complex that is in shadow most of the day and doesn't allow a child to get up a run without running into another building. Not a park that is only there because it was a condition of the DA.

Rubbish

Recently on Concord Road, in anticipation of a council collection residents placed piles of rubbish outside a few unit block prior to collection. There is only a small strip of grass between the footpath and the gutter. This space was piled high with rubbish. Spilling over onto the footpath making it difficult for pedestrians especially those with prams. Also passing buses and trucks would drag loose rubbish onto the road causing a traffic risk not to mention the health risk. Can you imagine how much rubbish would come out of the high-rise buildings during council collections?

Not to mention the amount of rubbish that regularly finds its way onto the streets as short term residents come and go from the apartments leaving mattresses and any other furniture too large to fit in a car.

Not the mention the chaos during the weekly rubbish collection. A little of which each week finds its way onto the footpath. The stinky eyesore for pedestrians on the morning (and usually the afternoon) of garbage collection day who have to navigate the walls of garbage bins and the poor owners of units near the garbage collection site who have to wake to coffee and the stench of garbage for breakfast on garbage collection day. Take the example of Rhodes to see how much rubbish high-rise developments produce and the problems in removing it each week.

Take a walk along Parramatta road between Burwood Road and Cooper Street to see the carpet of rubbish lining the footpath. The layer on layer on layer of posters that end up on the footpath after rain. The sticky tape and empty tape rolls. As the residential buildings continue westerly along Parramatta road, so do the carpets of rubbish.

Commercial Premises

Who would want a commercial premises with cars screaming past the front door? Angry drivers honking the horn as cars block traffic to make an illegal right turn into Cooper Street or making an illegal U-turn to then turn left into Cooper Street. With dumped rubbish lining the footpath.

Whole sections of Parramatta Road between Mosely Street and Burwood Road have empty commercial buildings because Parramatta Road is too busy and car parking too scare to attract customers.

Most existing residential high rise buildings in this area have commercial premises on the ground floor. None of which appear occupied long after residential apartments are sold.

Just around the corner on George Street is a whole street devoted to retail and commercial buildings. More commercial premises along this stretch are not required. Commercial premises are only included in this application to make the application "of public significance" and thus bypass local council planning regulations.

Schools

Where will all the children who will inevitably occupy the building attend school? Many of the occupants from the high-rises further up Parramatta Road, towards the city, attend Strathfield North School which is already at capacity. The school has a tiny strip of grassed area left and the school has started to build upwards (multi-level buildings) to cater for increasing student numbers. Where will these kids go to school? Again take the Rhodes example where the buildings were approved (again the height of a number of the buildings increased after suitable campaigning – application of bribes) without suitable infrastructure allowed for.

Slumlords

A friends who lived in a unit block in the large development off Station Street in Parramatta not far from Parramatta Road, moved out of the unit shortly after purchase. When asked why, they explained that in a block with that many units there is always someone having a loud late party. Always someone with music or the television on too loud. With that many people in a small area, there was always someone exhibiting some form of antisocial behaviour.

It has been my experience that this is the norm in high density living. As those able to move out do so, more and more antisocial people move in and before long a slum develops. With that many residents the Owner's Corporation has little power and no control. Slum lords move in and those most vulnerable become exploited (young overseas students).

Summary

I saw a comment in the paper that not many individuals responded to the public exhibition of this development. Well I guess all other objectors were like me and didn't get any notification about the exhibit until reading about this development in the local paper long after the exhibition period was closed. Maybe they don't have the resources to travel all the way to the city to see the public exhibition. This development was not well advertised. Why would it be? It is not in the interests of any of the parties to widely advertise the fact that local council planning rules are being overridden.

No one except Developers, Bribe Takers or Slum Lords want a high rise development at this location. To allow a building three times higher than the current LEP maximum makes the whole approval process a bad joke. There is nothing of community significance about this development other than opening up the maximum height restrictions for all new and existing developments in the area and all the damage that comes with high density living to the existing community.

Such a high rise high density development is not fair on any of the existing residents in the surrounding areas. It represents a sun blocking eye sore, a drain on infrastructure, and an increase in Traffic Congestion, Parking Problems and Pollution to the surrounding area. It represents Rubbish problems and a strain on overflowing schools. The message from planners to existing residents is clear. If you want to live near a station then you need to put up with Traffic, Noise, Rubbish and Pollution. We'll take your light away. Placing your house in lengthy periods of shadow, removing any chance of solar power generation. If you don't like it. Sell up to developers and move away! Forget the fact that you have lived in the area for generations and would like for your children to also do so. What are you still doing here?

We have already left enough problems for our children to have to live with in their lifetimes. Let's not make this one of them.

Regards, Concerned Resident.

