



Your Reference: MP10_0068
Our Reference: NCA/1/2013
Contact: Liam Frayne
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Director, Urban Assessments
Department of Planning
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Attention: Matthew Rosel

14 August 2013

Dear Mr Rosel,

**Major Project MP10_0068 - 171 Church Street – Parramatta
Concept Plan and a Stage 1 Project Application for a commercial and retail
development at Westfield Shopping Centre – Parramatta – Response to public
submissions**

I refer to the public exhibition of the above Major Project seeking approval for the following:

- a Concept Plan for a staged development consisting of alterations and additions to the existing retail and car park facilities and a building envelope for a 20 storey office tower above the retail podium, public domain improvements and activation of the Argyle Street frontage
- a Preferred Project Report for the first stage of the development consisting of an additional retail level and additional car parking levels.

As advised in our previous letter of 15 April 2013. Council objects to this proposed development for the following reasons:

- The retail expansion of Westfield Parramatta would be likely to result in the following adverse outcomes for the Parramatta CBD:
 - *Further isolate Westfield Parramatta from the Parramatta CBD*
 - *Increase the risk of vacancies in the Parramatta CBD*
 - *Make it increasingly difficult for the Parramatta CBD to retain, and capture mid- range to high end retailers*
 - *Potentially reduce the ultimate scale of retail development supportable at Parramatta Square*
 - *Potentially delay the timing of the various stages of the Parramatta Square development*
 - *Reduce the range and quality of tenants that could be attracted to the Parramatta Square precinct*
 - *Reduce the potential sales that could be achieved by prospective retailers at the precinct.*

- *The current urban design issues associated with Westfield need to be resolved before any further additional retail floor space can be considered. This includes issues such as public domain, CPTED, building presentation and active street frontages.*
- *Inadequate public domain works and public benefits have been proposed and are not commensurate with the level of development proposed. Detailed public domain plans should be submitted and approved by Council. Opportunities to link the development with Parramatta Square should be investigated. All public benefit works should be incorporated within a Voluntary Planning Agreement.*
- *No certainty is provided that the commercial tower will be built. The commercial tower being subject to a design excellence competition is strongly supported by Council.*

Council remains concerned about these issues following review of the Preferred Project Report and the response to submissions.

RETAIL IMPACT

Council remains concerned about the likely impact of the additional quantity of retail proposed as was addressed in the Parramatta CBD Retail Impact Study prepared by MacroPlan Dimasi dated March 2013. Council agrees with the summary of this study and as outlined in our previous submission, we consider an expansion of Westfield Parramatta would be likely to result in the following adverse outcomes for the Parramatta CBD:

- Further isolate Westfield Parramatta from the Parramatta CBD
- Increase the risk of vacancies in the Parramatta CBD
- Make it increasingly difficult for the Parramatta CBD to retain, and capture mid-range to high end retailers
- Potentially reduce the ultimate scale of retail development supportable at Parramatta Square
- Potentially delay the timing of the various stages of the Parramatta Square development
- Reduce the range and quality of tenants that could be attracted to the Parramatta Square precinct
- Reduce the potential sales that could be achieved by prospective retailers at the precinct.

The submitted Economic Impact Assessment (prepared by Urbis dated November 2012 and updated May 2013) has not diminished Council's concern.

URBAN DESIGN AND PUBLIC DOMAIN

Specific Issues & Concerns with respect to the PPR proposal

The following response is provided with respect to the PPR submission:

1. Commercial tower:

The applicants have mentioned that the tower as proposed offered less visual impact and better viability to the commercial tower envelope recommended by Council. They have also mentioned that the impact of the taller tower would affect the views from the Old Government house.

There are two existing residential/ mixed use towers to the south east of the proposed tower and a proposal for another 38-40 storey mixed use tower further south on Church Street. During the exhibition period, Council received calls regarding the impact to these towers from residents.

The following response is provided with respect to the proposed commercial tower:

- While Council's land use and urban design officers support a commercial tower at this location, given the existing and proposed mixed use/ residential towers in the immediate context, a taller slender tower is considered more appropriate. A commercial floor plate the size of the Sydney Water building will have a bigger impact on the residential amenity of the towers to the south and south west of the site. It is recommended that a maximum building envelope of 1800sqm in area for the corner tower, with a floor plate no larger than 1400sqm be adopted. A maximum height of 120metre/ Existing Retail Podium + 25 storeys (height inclusive of any design excellence bonus) may be considered for the tower element only, to compensate for the reduced floor plate, provided it addresses the impact to the adjacent context. As a reference the new 'Eclipse' office development on Station Street has a floor plate of 1400sqm.
- We reiterate the following:
 - The proposed tower has a 5 storey podium located above the existing retail podium. This creates a tiered effect – a simpler tower and podium is preferred. It is recommended that the second setback be removed from the street side.
 - The tower will form a way finding element/ landmark in the southern City Centre. It is recommended that part of the tower component engage directly with the street without a setback – possibly along a future corner entrance forecourt.
- The Old Government House and Domain study has defined an area of 'High Sensitivity'. The location of the proposed Westfield tower is outside the area of 'High Sensitivity'. Furthermore, the view assessment from Council's own 3D visualisation tool shows that the impact of the proposed tower will be eclipsed by the Part 3A approved Marsden Street development (see the attached document).

2. Public domain upgrade and activation:

The PPR mentions that the City Centre and Bondi Junction Westfield developments and the resultant public domain upgrades/ interventions are notably different from Parramatta Westfield because it is claimed Parramatta lacks the retail street networks present in those locations. Given that Parramatta is the second CBD in Sydney with significant developments in the pipeline, the PPR appears to be selling Parramatta short.

The PPR notes that a lot of the existing blank facades are as a result of existing services and vehicular/ loading facilities of the existing shopping centre and that further activation on the streets along the existing development is difficult. While this difficulty is acknowledged, the proposed provision of additional internalised retail floor space without providing any activating /upgrading of the surrounding streetscape or providing through site links is something **Council does not support**.

From a land use/ urban design perspective:

- Westfield Parramatta is not a visually appealing pedestrian environment especially along Marsden and Campbell Street. It represents a super block development synonymous with internalised retail environments of the 70's and 80's of the last century. This is inconsistent with best practise urban design evidenced by recent policy and research.
- We reiterate our concern that the significant increase of internalised retail floor space proposed by Westfield will increase the lack of activation and street based retail along the secondary streets edging Westfield and will significantly affect street activation and street-based retail within the City Centre retail area in the short term.
- The existing street based retail for significant parts of the Parramatta City Centre consists predominantly of low end discount stores and food outlets and lacks the range of diversity that a City Centre like Parramatta warrants, given its strategic importance. It appears that the significant amount of internalised retail floor space already provided in the existing Westfield has had a substantial impact by significantly constraining the range of retail offerings available in the on-street retail areas of the CBD.

Loading 20% more retail floor space in an already sensitive environment for on-street retail will have a detrimental effect on the retail streetscapes and the pedestrian environment for the rest of the City Centre retail area, in the short term.

- This proposal is a significant development in its own right and its impacts should not be diminished as being equivalent to a normal addition and alteration project. Accordingly, Council expects a public domain outcome over and above the provision of S94A levy for significant developments.
- The PPR has not adequately addressed existing significant issues with street activation and pedestrian experience on the street edges around the Westfield centre, especially along Argyle, Marsden, Aird and Campbell Streets.

- It is recommended that a separate public domain upgrade and street activation plan (identifying the nature and extent of key works) is provided for the bounding street edges of Church, Argyle, Marsden, Aird and Campbell Streets. Council officers can provide further feedback at a meeting with the proponents if requested. This plan should identify the:
 - extent of the new/ increased street front retail/commercial/ active uses introduced accessed directly from the street (preferably with long operating hours such as 24 hour gyms),
 - new spill-over uses like cafes and outdoor dining,
 - new pedestrian entrances/ through site links,
 - new/ increased glazed fenestrations on blank walls allowing increased casual surveillance and outlook at street and above street level,
 - extent of upgraded paving, new street trees, lighting and furniture as well as potential location of artwork,
 - night lighting/ down-lighting/ CPTED measures and
 - quality architectural finishes (including screening and signage) to the street wall visible from a pedestrian eye level.

It is noted that the PPR submission response indicates that the requirement for public domain improvements plan be required via the conditions of consent as a matter to be resolved with Council at a later date.

Given the level of public domain improvement to be provided has direct implications with respect to the merits of the Stage 1 proposal given such works may serve to mitigate some of the street activation concerns outlined above, it is not considered appropriate that the public domain improvements plan be held off until after determination of the application. Rather, a detailed public domain improvements plan should be provided at the earliest opportunity to assist in an assessment of the overall merits of the proposal. It is noted that the applicant has expressed no objection to the provision of a public domain plan generally.

PUBLIC ARTS PLAN

While it is acknowledged that Westfield has made a commitment to public art, the level of the commitment (\$60,000) is considered unsatisfactory and inadequate to the scale of the development proposed (CRV estimated at \$446,000,000).

- Council's Public Art Policy requires **high quality** artworks in new developments. Achieving a high artistic standard in the design and execution of public artwork requires a commitment of significantly greater value than that proposed.
- Best Practise Public Art commissioning worldwide encourages Developers to commit between 0.25% - 1% of the total development cost to public artwork. The \$60,000 commitment towards Public Artwork represents 0.001%, a figure considered inappropriate for this scale of development.
- For this particular development, Council recommends a budget commitment of no less that 0.25% of the total cost of development towards public art.

- It is noted that Westfield Sydney worked with Urban Art Projects to develop an Arts Plan that has delivered 3 significant public artworks both inside and outside of the Westfield complex. An example of one work is below. Advice from a professional public art consultant similar to that engaged to deliver Sydney Westfield's arts plan is recommended.
- Public art should not be considered in isolation of street activation and an improved pedestrian experience around Argyle, Marsden, Aird and Campbell Streets but rather should be complimentary with street activation schemes. However, Public Art should also not be delivered in lieu of public domain provisions/ upgrades.
- Council's Officers would be pleased to discuss the above conditions and Council's position prior to work commencing on the Arts Plan.

TRAFFIC

The revised plan includes a taxi pick up/set down area in the car park and pedestrian access to Campbell Street. This proposal is supported. A condition should be added that the taxi area and pedestrian access be signposted from within the retail part of the centre and the Campbell Street access locations.

The response to submissions does not include any comments regarding the Westfield planter boxes in the bus passenger circulation area of Bus Stand B in Argyle Street outside the line of bollards for the restaurants. This reduces the area for bus passengers and causes congestion. As the shopping centre becomes larger the number of bus passengers will increase.

It is understood that the planter boxes have been placed outside Westfield area, which is approximately delineated by the line of bollards. TfNSW is responsible for this area but has not been able to get Westfield to shift the planter boxes. It should be a condition of consent that the planter boxes are removed and that no objects are placed in the area under the control of TfNSW in the interchange.

The response regarding traffic comments advises that an additional boom gate on the Marsden Street speed ramp entry (Figure 4.2, page 21 of the Traffic Impact Study's Appendix B) is included. However, the additional boom gate has not been included in the original or revised plans for the proposal.

In the 'PREFERRED PROJECT REPORT AND RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS UNDER PART 3A OF THE EPA ACT 1979', Section 4.3, there is a commitment from Westfield to the proposed traffic upgrades including the Great Western Highway from east of O'Connell Street to Church Street (including the additional right turn lane in Church Street on the northbound approach to Great Western Highway). However, this is contradicted in other submitted reports. A condition of consent should be included that required these works should be provided by the developer at no cost to Council prior to the completion of stage 1). This would not form part of the S94A contribution. Updated plans for the intersections of Great Western Highway with Church Street and Marsden Road are available from Council.

LANDSCAPING

There does not appear to be any proposed tree removal or landscaping associated with the application. The photo montage indicates roof top planter boxes however there are no details of these planter boxes in the documentation provided with the application.

In this regard, should the Department be of the mind to approve the application, the following condition should be imposed:

Construction details showing substrate depth, drainage, waterproofing, and so on for ground floor and roof top planters are to be provided prior to the issue of the construction certificate.

Reason: *To ensure the creation of functional gardens.*

CONCLUSION

It is requested that the matters outlined in this letter and those in our previous letter of 15 April 2013 be considered together. Where comment has not been provided on an issue raised in our previous correspondence, our position remains as previously expressed.

Council appreciates the opportunity to comment on the above application.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above matters, please contact Council's Senior Development Assessment Officer, Liam Frayne on 9806 5595.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Robert Lang
Chief Executive Officer
Parramatta City Council