

SUBMISSION ON DRAFT REDFERN WATERLOO BUILT ENVIRONMENT PLAN (STAGE 1) FEBRUARY 2006

We are residents of Darlington. Our submission relates to the Built Environment Plan for the North Eveleigh 'Strategic Site' and its deleterious consequences for the adjacent residential area of Darlington.

High density, high rise development of North Eveleigh is marketed in the Plan as a solution to socio-economic problems that exist in the wider Redfern-Waterloo area. There is no credibility in this claim. Crowding high rise into this area will further detract from what is already a poor urban built environment in the Redfern-Waterloo area as a whole. Local residents see the 'Plan' for North Eveleigh for what it is, a grab for money by the State Government by selling off public assets with minimal development controls.

In this submission we summarise the problems the North Eveleigh plan presents and we set out the issues that would need to be addressed in any genuine attempt to frame a satisfactory built environment plan for this site.

The area of Darlington adjacent to North Eveleigh consists primarily of well-maintained two-storey Victorian terrace houses constructed in the period 1880-1900. It is almost entirely residential. The area is quiet, the streets are leafy, and there is not a great deal of traffic flow. From most of the residences on Wilson Street, along which the development will be built, there is an uninterrupted southern view to the heritage railway buildings in the ATP and beyond.

Our first concern is with the visual impact of the proposed development. The proposed ten to 16 storey buildings will present a wall of high-rise that will dominate the southern aspect of the neighbourhood. Darlington slopes downward from North Eveleigh towards the university. This will exacerbate the impact of the high rise which will be on the ridge line. The four storey heights that are proposed for the street front along Wilson Street are twice the height of the terraces opposite. They will dominate the terraces and destroy the present character of the street. The building heights need to be substantially scaled down so that the development complements rather than dominates the area.

Our second concern is with effect on traffic flows of this high density urban infill. All traffic in and out of the development will have to pass through Wilson Street and the residential area of Darlington. It reflects very badly on this Plan that floor space ratios and heights have been specified in advance of any consideration of their sustainability in terms of traffic flows. Such a study should have been a precursor to developing the plan, not an afterthought. Local Government and local residents will be left to deal with the consequences of this poor planning. It is essential that a study be done of what traffic flows are sustainable in the area, and the height, floor space and population density parameters need to be framed in light of this.

To further exacerbate the traffic situation, a proposed tunnel will carry traffic into Wilson St (near Codrington St) from Waterloo. It takes about ten minutes to drive from the University of Sydney to the ATP or Henderson Road via either Lawson Street or Erskineville Road, so an additional road connection is not needed for local

travel. The inevitable consequence of a traffic tunnel is that it will become a traffic corridor attracting large scale traffic flows between Botany Road and City Road through the residential area of Darlington.

What is urgently needed is pedestrian and cycle access between North and South Eveleigh at a number of points. To begin with, there has been no planning for the parking requirements of the Performing Arts Centre at North Eveleigh. Pedestrian access is needed so that the patrons of the Centre can use the parking areas at the ATP. The proposal to re-establish a walkway between the western end of Redfern Station, the ATP and Darlington is to be commended and will be beneficial for university students using rail transport. However there is a need for a further link to connect the university and the ATP via a pedestrian and cycle bridge aligned with Shepherd Street. This will also provide an efficient pedestrian connection between the residential area of Darlington and shops and businesses along Redfern Street and Botany Road.

To summarise: There should be no additional traffic connection between North and South Eveleigh; a pedestrian walkway is needed to connect the Performing Arts Centre with parking areas in the ATP, and a pedestrian walkway and cycle path aligned with Shepherd Street is needed to connect the University with the ATP.

Our third concern is that there is no provision at all in the Plan for green space or public areas within the development. There is already a lack of parkland in Darlington. Although the Plan does not provide an estimate of the number of residences proposed for North Eveleigh, the number estimated for the Redfern-Waterloo Strategic Areas as a whole is 2000, and it is evident that the bulk of these will be located in North Eveleigh. Clearly a large area of park and recreational area needs to be built on the site to provide for the needs of the new residents. This cannot be left to the developers, it is a necessary part of the infrastructure and land for this purpose needs to be specifically earmarked in the Plan. The Plan needs to provide an assessment of the amount of park and recreation area needed for the new residents (as well as for daytime use by workers in the proposed commercial component of the development) and to make specific provision for it.

Our fourth concern is that the Plan does not require integration of the development's frontage along Wilson Street with the existing streetscape. The existing residences, for the most part, are set back from the street and have gardens in front. There are no driveways - vehicle access to residences, where it exists, is entirely from Wilson Lane at the back. There is no requirement that the new development be set back from the footpath along Wilson Street, no requirement for landscaping to soften the impact on the streetscape, and the current Plan permits driveways which will detract from the streetscape as well as create large scale traffic movement across the footpath. The Plan needs to stipulate that any new structures along Wilson Street be set back from the footpath, landscaped to screen the buildings from the street, and that access to parking should be from the rear, not through driveways from the Wilson Street frontage.

Our fifth concern is for the preservation of the significant heritage buildings on the site. There is no provision in the Plan that any of these buildings be retained. Heritage assessment of the existing buildings on the site should have been carried out

prior to the development of the Plan. As it stands, the Plan leaves the future of these buildings to the developers - with obvious consequences. A proper assessment of the heritage aspects of the site needs to be made and significant buildings to be preserved need to be specifically identified in the Plan. The development of these buildings needs to be consistent with that of the historic railway buildings when the ATP was developed. That is, the existing external appearance of the buildings needs to be retained.

Our sixth concern is that the Plan proposes mixed business and residential use for the Eastern half of the site. A concentration of commercial activity in North Eveleigh is not compatible with the existing residential and heritage character of adjacent area of Darlington. As already noted, the area simply cannot sustain the traffic flows that would be created by large scale commercial activities in North Eveleigh. There are already substantial, underutilised commercial buildings and commercial land in Alexandria as well as in areas of Redfern-Waterloo. The infrastructure does not exist to support large scale business use of North Eveleigh, and it would be inconsistent with the character of the adjacent area of Darlington. The entire North Eveleigh site (apart from the cultural area around the Performing Arts Centre) should be zoned residential.

Cliff Bott and Vimala Sarma
Darlington.