

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

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Local Planning Panel 19 October 2021

2-4 John Street, Camden

DA s4.56 Modification: 2008/644/5¹

Consolidation of buildings 3 and 5 into one building, conversion of 26 multiple-unit dwellings into 26 self-contained seniors living dwellings, conversion of 2 shops into 2 self-contained seniors living dwellings, internal layout reconfiguration to provide 2 additional self-contained seniors living dwellings, reconfiguration of the lower ground floor car park underneath buildings 3, 4, 5 and 6 and replacement of a turning circle with a pedestrian path

I speak on behalf of Camden Residents Action Group. We have lodged two submissions on this modification².

The original 2009 approval made generous trade-offs between heritage controls and the special circumstances of site contamination. This is the fourth modification and all indications are that others will be lodged.

A very main concern with this development is that it is morphing into something that Councillors involved in the original approval and the community were never led to envisage, one that is not consistent with Camden's Heritage Conservation Area and renowned sense of place as a country town.

The community, which highly values the town's unique historic and agricultural character, takes a keen interest in what is happening on the site.

¹ To approved development: *Staged redevelopment of the Former Camden High School Site comprising: demolition of disused school buildings, remediation of contaminated land, earthworks, staged subdivision, the erection of 26 multiple-unit dwellings, 162 self-contained seniors living dwellings, 76 bed residential care facility, 51 bed motel, restaurant, cultural & community centre, medical centre, ancillary shops, undercroft car parking and landscaping works*

² on the 9 and 21 April

The usual reaction to its first building, fronting the town farm, is one of shock and the question is asked how did that happen? The community was promised that the development would be integrated into the town, that the buildings, although exceeding the height limit would be compatible in the streetscapes. It was promised that they would be smaller, read as two-storey and be set back from the historic streets with an openness throughout to be more consistent with the town's development pattern.

We strongly object that what the community was led to believe is not the case. What has been built and now proposed significantly breaches LEP 5.10 and DCP heritage conservation provisions.

We also strongly object to the fact that the community cannot be aware of what is happening because much relevant information is not provided on the DA Tracker. Even the original plans were only made publicly available after our GIPA request for the most pertinent documents and after the exhibition period. Information is missing for modifications in 2012, 2017 and 2018.

We understand that the GIPA Act and Regulation require Councils to publish DA information on their websites unless there are overriding considerations. Council refused our request that the necessary documents be made publicly accessible, citing copyright reasons. The requested documents were made accessible by appointment on one computer in Council offices. They were difficult to read and search and it was not possible to research and study them in good time. We were advised by the Information and Privacy Commission to lodge a formal GIPA and if public access in the form requested was still denied to take the issue to NCAT for determination. That was not possible in the timeframe.

We wish to make the point that the public interest has not been served because public participation has been compromised by lack of access to information. We believe this DA modification should be re-exhibited with information readily accessible to all, not just our Group because we lodged a GIPA.

The Heritage Impact Statement does not address the modifications greater non-compliance with LEP 5.10 and DCP. This combination of buildings 3 and 5 increases the overall building footprint and bulk. What is proposed looms over John Street with minimal or no setback. Prospective purchasers would not appreciate private balconies being so close to a public footpath and road noise. Nor is it something that residents and tourists wish to see in the HCA.

The modification to remove the two retail shop frontages and replace them with senior living units, changes the interface with the public domain, and the setback must be accordingly increased. Our understanding is they need to be set back at least 6m and that the upper balconies must not encroach to within 4.5 metres for a maximum of 50% of the façade³.

³ DCP <https://dcp.camden.nsw.gov.au/residential-dwelling-controls/residential-flat-buildings-and-shop-top-housing/>

The modification also requires the removal of 6 street trees. The proposed compensation is 6 plantings of 75L size, which is grossly inadequate.

We submit that the 6 street plantings need to be at least 1000L or of heritage size. We suggest 6 jacaranda trees similar to the new trees planted in Argyle Street. The DCP requires that 4 trees be planted for each removed in the HCA. Therefore, the community expects 24 trees to be planted in compensation. This is particularly important because the buildings need to be screened and softened and because the HCA is renowned for its mature leafiness.

The additional adverse heritage impact of this modification is unacceptable to the community, and we sincerely request that it be refused.

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