

The 416 Group
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Mr George Dedes
General Manager
City of Ryde

21.5.2021

Dear Mr Dedes

This submission is from the 416 Group and objects to the Development Application LDA2021/0095 for the redevelopment of 307 Lane Cove Road, Macquarie Park.

The 416 Group is an environmental community organisation which aims to represent the 750 households in Killara and Lindfield west of Lady Game Drive. It was formed over 20 years ago in particular because of developments which were affecting or had the potential to affect the Lane Cove National Park and residents in Ku-ring-gai. These included noise and smells from the waste transfer station at Porters Creek and expansion plans at the time, the Transport for NSW proposal for a railway bridge through the National Park between Ku-ring-gai and Ryde and the proposal for service centres and shopping precincts on the M2 east of the current Eden Gardens site.

In each of these cases the 416 Group put forward the argument that a national park is a permanent setting aside of land primarily for nature conservation and secondly for recreational purposes. It must be protected and is not a temporary arrangement until an alternative of more compelling need for land arises. That the Lane Cove National Park with its rich indigenous and colonial heritage, its varied flora (more than 625 species) and fauna and its enduring popularity with the community is a fragile treasure to be protected. For reference we recommend the Field Guide to Bushland of the Lane Cove Valley by John Martyn and published by STEP in 2010. This book includes challenges faced by the Park due to human activity on its proximity.

The 416 Group chose as its emblem the nocturnal Powerful Owl whose habitat is in the Lane Cove National Park.

1. Excessive height of proposed office tower of almost 80 metres

307 Lane Cove Road is a large site of 2.5 hectares on the western ridgeline adjacent to and above the Lane Cove National Park. The proposed office tower would, due to its height of almost 80 metres, be dominant over the Park and as viewed from the western precincts of the Ku-ring-gai LGA being Gordon, Pymble, Killara and Lindfield.

All developments adjacent to National Parks should follow guidelines as set out in: *NPWS 2020, Developments adjacent to NPWS lands: Guidelines for consent and planning authorities, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, Sydney NSW*

They state:

*Planning authorities should take into account the visual....impacts of development adjacent to NPWS land to ensure they do not affect the amenity or public enjoyment of the land. Planning authorities should consider whether it is appropriate to apply control measures so that the development is sympathetic with the Park's natural and cultural heritage values. Such controls may include....**lighting and height controls**. Light trespass into parks from street and security lighting should be minimised.*

In the afternoons the proposed office tower will overshadow the National Park. Limited shadow diagrams are provided with the application. More diagrams at times after 3pm and at different times of the year will show the extent.

The application fails to address potential impacts on the flora and fauna of the Lane Cove National Park. At present the section of the Park below the subject site has almost no light trespass from any source and is very dark. Light pollution from the office tower would impact the habitat of nocturnal fauna including that of the powerful owl. This impact requires expert assessment.

The Urban Design Review Panel (minutes of meeting 26.11.20) reported that *"the site is generally not contiguous with the Macquarie Park corridor and is instead situated at its periphery"*. Good planning is for building heights to step back from national park boundaries with low rise adjoining and in Macquarie Park's case higher rise at the public transport hubs nearest to Metro stations.

The Panel also says *"The Panel is concerned that a commercial tower form may sit as an incongruous element distinct and separated from the built form elsewhere in the Macquarie park development corridor."* The 416 Group would add to this that there is currently no high-rise development in Macquarie Park east of the M2 adjoining the National Park. The M2 acts as a buffer and a precedent should not be set. In addition, even the developments west of the M2 are for most part 4-5 storeys and as such to a large degree within the tree canopy.

The site is on a ridge highpoint and directly under the flight path leading onto the main runway of Sydney Airport.

The apparent absence of a City of Ryde height limit for the site is in conflict with the NPWS planning requirement and requires review by Council to understand how such an anomaly could have occurred and the steps that can be taken to correct it. This should have occurred at pre DA stage but must now be dealt with.

2. Values of Lane Cove National Park

The NPWS (NSW) states that *"National Parks are areas of land protected because of their unspoilt landscapes, outstanding or representative ecosystems, Australian native plants and animals, and places of natural or cultural significance. In addition to their role in conservation, national parks provide opportunities for public nature appreciation, well-being, enjoyment, as well as valuable scientific research."*

In addition, the 416 Group notes the Lane Cove National Park is listed of State Heritage significance and this is inadequately responded to in the application.

We also note that the City of Ryde LEP 2014 states that *"the LEP aims to encourage the management and development of land in a manner which: conserves items and places of natural, indigenous, cultural, social and historical significance"*.

When there so many alternative sites for high rise development what is the public benefit of compromising the values of the Lane Cove National Park by building right next to it?

Whilst there is background traffic noise many sections of the Lane Cove Park are remarkably quiet at night. There is concern that the proposed function centre will broadcast noise across the Lane Cove Valley and any such activity must have an appropriate plan of management strictly limiting hours and nights of the week.

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3. Bushfire hazard

The Lane Cove National Park has a long history of bushfires with the more recent ones being in 1994, 2003 and 2019. In 1994 houses were lost in Albert Drive, Killara and in Ryde near to the subject site. Fires have generally travelled from the North West down the Lane Cove Valley and have jumped the Lane Cove Road between De Burghs bridge and the subject site. Many homes are in the bushfire red zone and are vulnerable with the time measured in minutes between fire at Lane Cove Road and destruction of homes.

Given the steepness of the valley and limited access to the Park the most effective means of suppression has been by use of helicopters for water bombing. The bushfire hazard report does not address implications of a new 18 storey building in the airspace adjacent to the park which has been used by helicopters in the past.

4. Public transport

The State Government has invested heavily in rail public transport which underpins the future development and operation of Macquarie Park as a commercial and residential centre. The Sydney Metro when complete in 2024 will provide a direct service from Macquarie Park to the city. To get people out of their cars, future development in Macquarie Park should be in the many available infill sites within easy walking distance of stations and not in a peripheral location like 307 Lane Cove Rd.

Bus transport on Lane Cove Road is unreliable during peak hours as the road is chronically affected by traffic congestion.

5. Congestion

416 Group members have become increasingly affected by traffic congestion on Lane Cove Road. During peak hours this affects the number of traffic light rotations before it is possible to turn out of Lady Game Drive onto Lane Cove Road. Then for motorists travelling south the section from Lady Game Drive to Epping Road is very congested. This congestion affects not just residents but is an economic impost on all businesses in Macquarie Park.

To add a large office tower in the middle of an already chronically congested section of road with the required number of parking spaces which will be accessed in peak hours will add further to congestion.

6. Pedestrian unfriendly location.

As noted by the Urban Design Review Panel, walking access to 307 Lane Cove Road is unpleasant for pedestrians. There is no pedestrian access to the site on the east side of Lane Cove Road. To walk to the nearest Metro station, which is just under 1000 metres, involves waiting to cross six lanes of Lane Cove Road and then the M2 off and on ramps. 416 Group members have walked the area and found the traffic overwhelming. In total after exiting the site a pedestrian crosses a total of 30 lanes of traffic to reach the Metro station. The walk to the nearest shops and food outlets on the east side of Lane Cove Road is little better than to the station as it also involves multiple road crossings.

The applicant has offered to upgrade the footpath on the west side Lane Cove Road in lieu of developer contributions but it is difficult to see this making any difference to the pedestrian experience in the area. The unattractiveness of the site for pedestrians will add pressure to maximise vehicle access and parking on site. The proposed 502 parking spaces may prove inadequate.

7. Conclusions

307 Lane Cove Road is well suited as a garden centre generating moderate vehicle traffic and steady numbers throughout the day but with the majority of customers not attending in peak hours and not accessing the site on foot.

Notwithstanding the business viability claim of the applicant reported by the Urban Design Review Panel, nursery businesses are reportedly doing very well. On 30.1.2021 the Weekend Australian reported that an effect of the pandemic over the previous 10 months has been a boom period for the nursery industry and quoted Peter Vaughan, CEO of the peak body Greenlife Industry Australia.

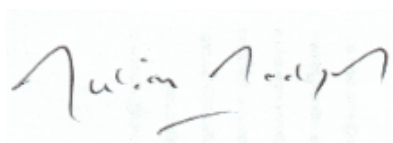
The IBIS industry outlook for Garden Supplies Retailing in Australia (2021-2026) says:
“Firms in the Garden Supplies Retailing industry are projected to face favourable trading conditions over the next five years. Continued growth in household numbers in Australia is anticipated to drive demand for garden supplies to suit a range of dwelling arrangements. Retail demand for industry products is forecast to be aided by stronger growth in discretionary income and a return to positive consumer sentiment. Projected growth in demand from gardening services is also likely to bode well for the industry.”

Diversification of business is one thing but a much more intensive use of the site through high-rise overdevelopment is another. An alternative scenario is the sale of Eden Gardens as a going concern. The proponent could then develop an office tower on a different site suitable for that type of development.

The proposed development, keeping as it does certain elements of the existing structures, then constrains what can be done and feeds an argument for the high-rise tower. An alternative approach would be to treat the site as a green field and given its 2.5 hectare size and the allowable FSR, design a campus style development upto an appropriate height of four storeys whilst still incorporating many green and attractive elements.

There has to our knowledge been an absence of community consultation prior to lodgement of the Development Application. The current application should be withdrawn. If a redevelopment is still proposed, then an appropriate community engagement process managed by experienced personnel is recommended.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julian Ledger', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Julian Ledger
President