

8.7. Marist Catholic College Major Project Application (Application SSD – 10473)

AUTHOR: George Youhanna, Executive Assessment Planner.
Gavin McConnell, Executive Planning Advisor.

ENDORSED BY: Joseph Hill, Director City Strategy

ATTACHMENTS: Nil

PURPOSE:

To highlight for Council's information planning issues arising from the Marist Brothers Catholic College State Significant Development application.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Marist Brothers Catholic College located at 264 – 270 Miller Street and 34- 36 & 40 Ridge Street North Sydney has lodged an application for State Significant Development (SSD) with the Department of Planning Infrastructure and Environment (DPIE).

The proposal includes the following key elements;

- The construction of two x 4 storey buildings located at the corner of Miller Street and Carlow Street including basement parking for 71 cars and an auditorium with capacity for 1,528 seats
- Redevelopment of numerous ground level spaces around the campus including the demolition of three houses and removal of 2 demountable classrooms.
- Creation of a childcare centre with capacity for 90 children
- Provision of two on-site drop off / pick up areas
- Increase in student numbers from 1,300 to 2,074 including childcare places
- Increase in staff numbers by 50 to 196.

The proposal has been lodged as a State Significant Development and the determining authority is the Department of Planning (DPIE) and the Minister for Planning. DPIE is inviting submissions until 22 March 2021. It is a significant redevelopment that increases the capacity of the school by 54%.

This report provides Councillors with a summary of the issues and concerns identified to date regarding traffic, building height, design, setbacks, landscaping and heritage impacts. Several referrals are outstanding at the time of finalising this report, and additional issues may be raised.

This report is provided for Council's information.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no direct costs to North Sydney Council resulting from the development.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council notes the issues raised within this report and that these issues will form the basis of the Council submission.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

3. Our Future Planning

3.4 North Sydney is distinctive with a sense of place and quality design

BACKGROUND

The Marist Catholic College in North Sydney is a boys school catering for years 7-12. Also located on the site is St Marys Catholic Primary school and pre-school.

It is noted that in 2021 Marist College will combine with St Marys Primary School to form a K-12 campus and will begin accepting female students in year 7.

The campus has an area of 22,420m² or 2.25 Ha

The proposed redevelopment of the campus has been discussed with Council staff in June and September 2020 and the current proposal indicates that the issues previously identified with the draft proposals (excessive bulk and scale) have not been resolved in the current proposal.

DETAIL

Statutory Framework

The application SSD – 10473 meets the threshold for State Significant Development as it has a capital value which exceeds \$10 million. Under the provisions of Division 4.7 of the EP&A Act 1979, the application will be assessed as State Significant Development by the DPIE. The relevant Heads of Consideration contained in S. 4.15 (1) will be considered in assessing the application.

The proposal will also be assessed against the requirements of SEPP (Educational Establishments and Childcare Facilities) 2017, The North Sydney LEP 2013 as well as the NS DCP 2013.

The Proposal

The proposed redevelopment of the campus will be staged over many years. The capital investment value (CIV) of the works is \$89 million and includes the following;

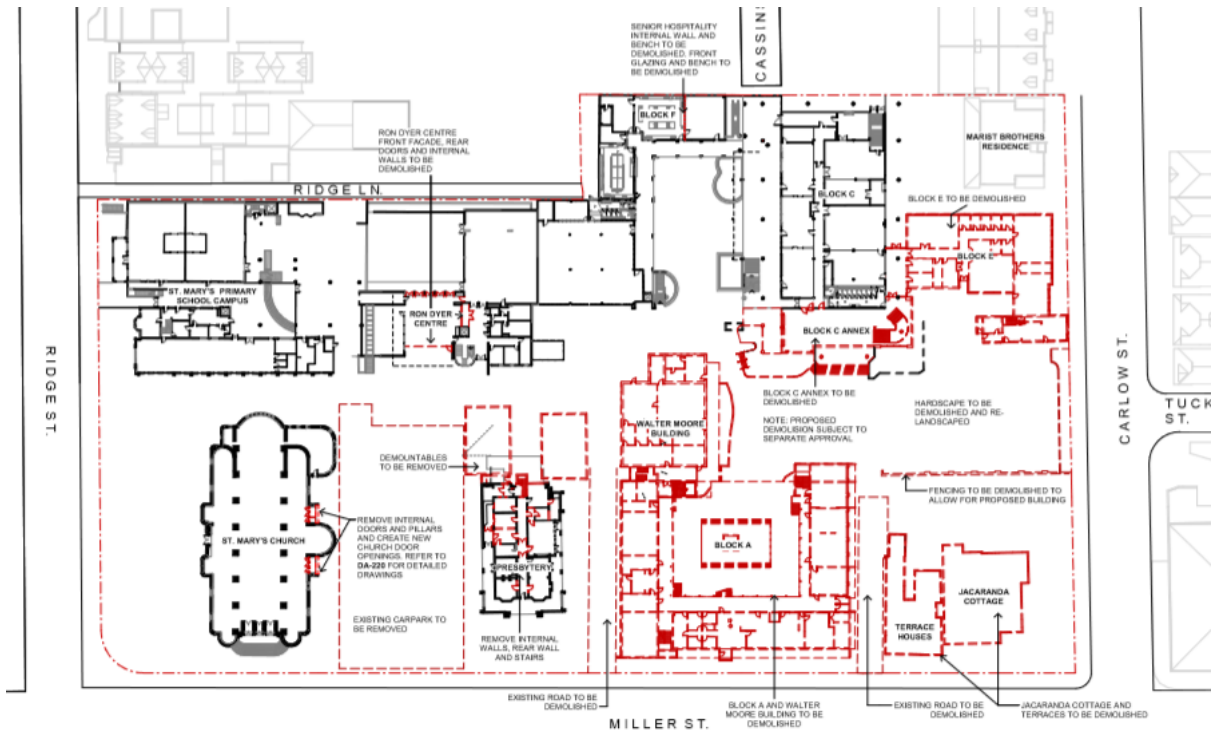
1. site preparation works including remediation, demolition, excavation and tree removal (59 trees to be removed).
2. adaptive reuse of the existing Presbytery as an administration area/Parish Centre, a two-storey pavilion and a new canteen/café.
3. alterations and additions to existing buildings and the removal of demountable buildings.

4. construction of a new five storey building at the corner of Carlow Street and Miller Street comprising a basement car park with 71 car spaces, an undercroft play space, administration/staff facilities, a library, general learning areas, science laboratory and rooftop open space.
5. construction of a new five storey building (including basement) along Miller Street comprising an auditorium for 1528 spectators, a childcare centre for 90 children, performing art learning spaces and roof top open space for passive recreation.
6. provision of two on-site pick-up/drop-off areas; and
7. landscaping and public domain works including the creation of a new public piazza within the site.

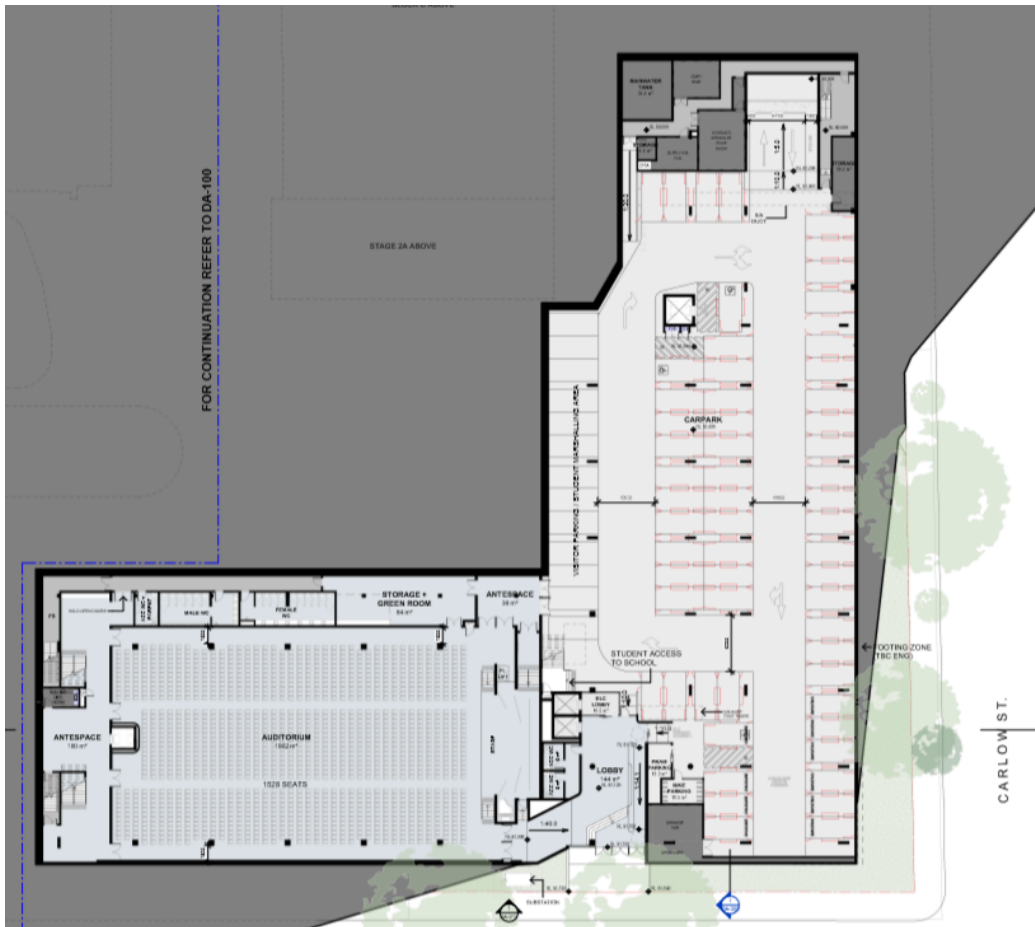
Images of the development proposal



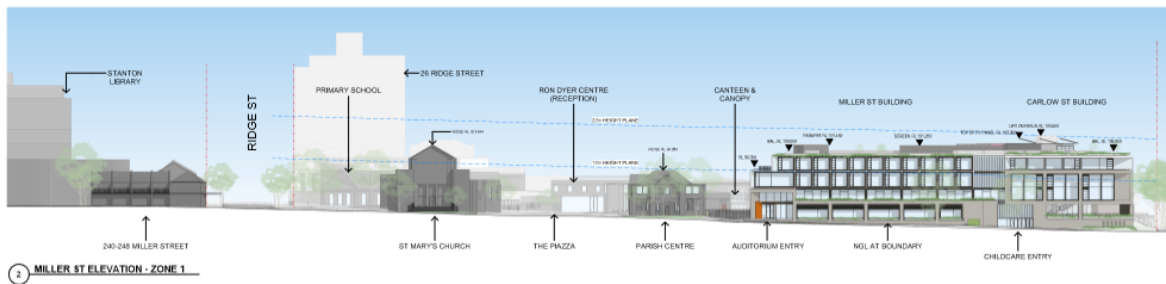
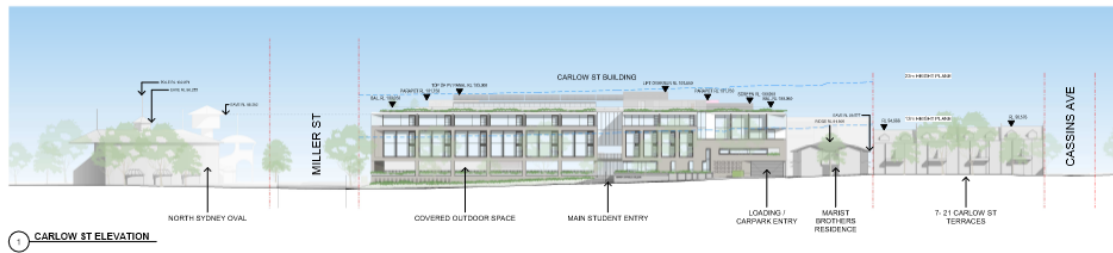
Artists Impression at Corner Miller and Carlow Streets



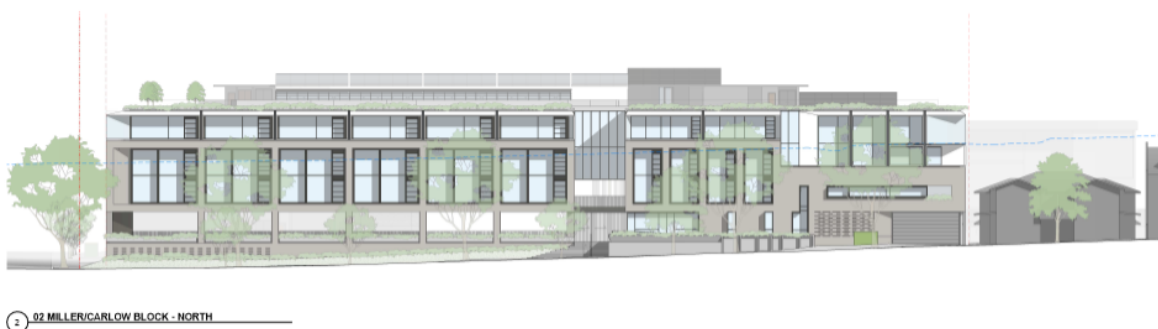
Demolition Plan



Lower level of new buildings showing auditorium and parking. Vehicle exit/ entrance is at top right of the image onto Carlow Street.



Above – Street view Carlow and Miller Streets



Elevations from Carlow and Miller Streets

Consultation with North Sydney Council

The Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) required consultation with North Sydney Council (in addition to the community and public authorities), during the preparation of the EIS.

The outcome of the required consultation from the applicant's point of view is summarised in the EIS at page 58 as follows:

4.2 North Sydney Council

Several meetings have been held with Council over the course of the project, most recently on the 25 September 2020. Council was generally supportive of the planning process and the proposed development, in summary:

- 1. Council agreed that the proposed development can progress without the need for a Planning Proposal, using the provisions under Clause 42 of the Education SEPP.*
- 2. Council supported Sydney Catholic School's ambition to reduce car mode share and promote public transport use.*
- 3. Council supported the rooftop outdoor spaces being used for passive recreation, noting that active uses would contribute to concerns around noise.*
- 4. Council suggested that the design should enable community access to the school's sporting facilities for use outside of hours and on the weekend.*
- 5. Council did not raise significant concerns regarding the proposed building height, however suggested that key concerns would relate to connectivity (pedestrian and vehicular access) and use of the school's facilities out of hours.*

While changes have been made during the development of the proposal several matters could be better addressed.

Issues Arising From the Proposal

The application is currently under review by relevant teams within Council and the following comments have been provided to date. Preliminary comments include:

Traffic

Traffic impacts will be a major consideration in the determination of this application. The EIS indicates a progressive increase to student and staff numbers over the next 20 years and anticipates that the proposed capacity will not be reached until around 2040.

Transport and Accessibility Impact Assessment

Bus occupancy data – the data suggests that most bus services analysed are below 40% occupied. Buses travelling between North Sydney Station and Marist College are often at seated and standing capacity with a majority of passengers being school students from local schools including Marist College – particularly between 8am and 9am. It would be prudent to gauge occupancy of the buses departing North Sydney Station Blue Street interchange in the AM; and departing North Sydney Oval – Miller Street in the PM.

Road Network Impacts - Scenario Modelling

The modelling assumes a future road connection from Ridge Street to the Western Harbour Tunnel. There is no such connection proposed as part of the Warringah Freeway/Western Harbour Tunnel project that Council is aware of. This assumption is of concern as it impacts much of the modelling outcomes, and it is stated that the traffic data was supplied by TfNSW. The accuracy of this data and assumptions should be clarified before any determination is made. Clarification of this issue will also be sought from TfNSW.

Green Travel Plan

The Green Travel Plan encourages increased walking, cycling and public transport modes to and from the site and is supported.

Draft Construction Traffic Management Plan

The project is estimated to commence in mid-2021 and conclude in mid-2026 (5 years duration) in 7 stages.

Construction vehicle access is proposed via existing driveways on Miller Street, and Carlow Street at various stages. Temporary access driveways are also proposed on Miller Street, Carlow Street and Cassins Lane at various stages. A construction Work Zone is proposed on-street in Carlow Street during Stage 2.

Trucks ranging from 8.8m MRV to 12.5m MRV are proposed.

To ensure construction traffic impacts are appropriately managed it is recommended that the CTMP be submitted to Council for approval by the North Sydney Traffic Committee prior to issue of a Construction Certificate.

Conclusion

It is recommended that clarification be sought with regarding the road network impact scenario modelling.

Engineering

Traffic Management

Major development adjacent to a Regional Road. CTMP to be referred to Traffic Committee

Stormwater

Existing flooding issues. Major drainage works required. Extensive pipelines to be constructed in Miller Street. Council's Drainage Engineer has some issues with the stormwater management proposal.

Parking and Access

Basement carpark proposed. 2 existing driveways on Miller Street to be removed. New double driveway in Carlow Street proposed.

Sediment and Erosion controls

Appropriate controls to deal with these issues will be required to be maintained.

Excavation and Retaining Walls

Significant excavation for basement parking adjacent to council property noted. Appropriate conditions will be recommended to address the above matters.

Landscaping

Street Trees and Private Trees

There are many mature street trees potentially impacted by the proposal, two of which are proposed to be removed. A tree bond of \$197,000 will be recommended to be imposed on any consent issued.

Numerous mature site trees are proposed for removal. While Council would not normally support the removal of such trees, it is considered that in light of the need to maximise the use of the site for growing educational needs, and the well-considered landscape plan prepared by Oculus dated 01/02/21, that improves the public interface and includes replacement planting of a large number of trees, Council would not object to the removal of the proposed trees other than T8, T36 & TQ86, 3 x mature Phoenix canariensis which should be transplanted on site. It should be noted that many of the trees proposed to be removed are not readily observed from the public realm.

Landscape Plan

The Landscape Drawings prepared by Oculus dated 01/02/21 are generally considered acceptable subject to the following amendments:

Suggested amendments

- T8, T36 & TQ86, 3 x mature Phoenix canariensis shown for removal shall be transplanted on site.
- 2 x Platanus digitata (200l) shall be planted along the Miller Street frontage between TQ54 & TQ55
- Amended Landscape Plan shall show pot sizes and numbers
- All trees shall be minimum 75l pot size, with feature trees to be minimum 200l.
- All services shall be located so as not to traverse through the SRZ of any protected tree, and to avoid traversing the TPZ of any protected tree. If it is not possible to avoid encroachment within the TPZ of a protected tree, sensitive techniques (eg, boring) shall be used.

Urban Design

The design of the school is inward looking which responds to the security and operational needs typically required by a school. Having regard to this need the following comments are offered:

Height

A design principle in the Civic Precinct Planning Study is that any additional height should be located (in principle) at the centre of the school's ground with a lower scale perimeter that can relate to the streetscape.

Having regard to the design principle the proposed four storey height along Miller Street and Carlow Street might not be considered to respond appropriately to the surrounding low-scale context, particularly as the height is concentrated around the perimeter of the site rather than in the centre. There is no stepping down of height towards at the edges of the site, which reinforces the monolithic form of the development.

Consideration should be given to providing a variation in building height to provide a transition between the proposal and surrounding lower scale development.

Bulk and scale

The façade provides no substantial architectural breaks or articulation, resulting in a consistent building mass along the two street frontages. The building does not relate to the low scale residential further north along Miller Street and east along Carlow Street.

The proposal does include elevations that highlight architectural details on the façade and their relationship with the surrounding context. These would be more successful if they incorporated setbacks and height variations.

The length of the development on the corner of Miller Street and Carlow Street should be broken up through physical breaks in the building façade.

The proposal provides up to 3 meters setbacks from Carlow and Miller Streets. This provides deep soil planting opportunities. However, greater setbacks would enhance planting that would reduce the perceived bulk and scale of the development.

Piazza

The proposed publicly accessible piazza is supported, especially the connection from Miller Street to the rear shared lane behind the site. The piazza significantly offsets other concerns raised in terms of bulk and scale. The piazza repurposes what is an open-air carpark and represents a significant urban design and potential community benefit.

More information on the defined public/private spaces would be beneficial to define what area is publicly accessible and what is not and under what terms.

Any proposal should include an accessible ramp to the piazza from Miller Street.

Fortress like appearance

The proposal is designed to focus into the site rather than out. There may be some secondary interaction/glimpses into the undercroft play area from the intersection at Miller and Carlow Streets. A setback above the first or second floor is needed to break down the 'fence like' appearance of four storeys around that corner.

Additional Comments

Due to the short timeframe, detailed comments are yet to be received in relation to the BCA, Heritage, Health and Public Works. Of these, Heritage issues will be of most significant concern particularly the proposal relationships to the North Sydney Oval, St Leonards Park, North Sydney Hotel, the Church and Rectory and the Carlow Street Conservation area. Any additional issues raised would be included in Council's submission to the DPIE.

Conclusion

This report has been prepared to provide Councillors with information on the subject application and provide a summary of those issues and concerns identified to date. Several referrals are outstanding at the time of finalising this report, and additional issues may be raised.

As set out in this report, a preliminary review of the proposed development has raised concerns regarding traffic, building height, design, setbacks, landscaping and heritage impacts.

It is recommended that Councillors note the issues raised within this report and that these issues will form the basis of the Council submission.