Lord Mayor Clover Moore
City of Sydney
cmoore@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Dear Lord Mayor,

The Society strongly opposes Council’s plans to adjust the boundaries of the St Phillips Heritage Conservation Area to exclude 2A-2D Wentworth Park Road and 17-31 Cowper Street to enable their demolition and replacement by two eight story apartment buildings.

The proposal flies in the face of over five decades of exemplary planning in Glebe whereby historic character was conserved, utility improved, and additional housing provided, without destroying the spirit of place. The Society recognises the urgent need for social housing, however this proposal which provides for only 15 net additional social housing bedrooms can only be described as inept, retrograde, and corrosive.

Almost fifty years ago Glebe was identified as containing the largest continuous number of 1860s and 70s cottages and terraces forming a continuous townscape in Australia with a scale and character little disturbed by modern intrusion. This was the result of the unique circumstance whereby over 700 houses were in long term ownership by the Anglican Church.
The architectural and social character of the church estates was retained after they were acquired by the Federal government, who restored and renovated the properties. Later, NSW Housing Commission architects skilfully designed infill housing which was inspired by the form and scale of Glebe. Over 1,000 bedrooms were added with no building being over three storeys tall.

The Locality Statement for St Phillips in the Council’s 2012 Development Control Plan recognises the special character of the area and establishes sensible controls to manage it by setting objectives that:

- There will be a predominant one to two storey building scale to respect the heritage character of the area
- The intact townscape, including the building form, scale, architectural elements and relationship to the street is to be retained and enhanced
- New development that is introduced is to be sympathetic to its surrounds

These are supported by the following principles:

(a) Development must achieve and satisfy the outcomes expressed in the character statement and supporting principles

(b) Development is to respond to and complement heritage items and contributory buildings within heritage conservation areas, including streetscapes and lanes

(c) The siting, massing and height of new development is to retain the visual prominence of the tree canopy

(f) Retain the vertically proportional façade rhythm characteristic of the narrow terrace form

(g) Encourage simple pitched roofs for dwellings to create an appropriate spatial relationship to the street

Comparing the current buildings, Fig. 1, with their proposed replacements, Fig. 2, demonstrates the poor quality of the scheme. It defies belief that this is taking place in a heritage conservation area. It has been developed by the Prince’s Trust Australia who claim it is designed in a way that builds upon the historic identity of this beautiful part of Sydney and aims to show how we can do density well. This is patently untrue as the scheme involves the demolition of well-considered low-rise infill housing and its replacement by apartments designed to resemble Edwardian brick warehouses – an architectural form which characterises Ultimo but not Glebe.

The 1980s infill did density well because it understood the importance of scale, form and rhythm and respect for historic sub-division patterns. The proposed scheme does none of these things and as a result does density...
very badly. It could be more acceptable if it were relocated to Land and Housing Corporation land in Bay Street Ultimo.

The St Phillip's estate has one mid-rise building, the 1959 John Byrne Court. It is identified as an obtrusive element in the LEP. If this scheme proceeds there will be three mid-rise buildings, opening the way to the replacement of more of the good 1980s infill by inappropriate tower developments and the destruction of the character of this unique suburb.

Lord Mayor, the Society seeks your support in opposing the rezoning, retaining the existing controls in St Phillips and respecting Glebe’s remarkable character. Attached is further background on the scheme.

Yours sincerely

Janet Wahlquist
President
The Glebe Society

2 attachments — Download all attachments

- Attachment 2 architects 1980s St Phillips.docx
  17K View as HTML Download

- Attachment 1 St Phillips Heritage Conservation.docx
  3420K View as HTML Download