

South Hobart residents up in arms over old Blundstone site plans

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It was standing room only at the Hobart City Council Planning Committee meeting on a recent Monday night, as more than 50 South Hobart residents crowded the room to present their deputations and listen to what the developer and the HCC planning committee had to say.

Residents are concerned about adverse impacts of the oversize, multiple-dwelling, residential development proposed for the former Blundstone's site in Wynyard St, South Hobart (Talking Point, Mercury, August 15).

Community members pointed out they support a development appropriate to the area, but not one of the

Rosemary Sandford raises serious concerns about impact on safety and lifestyle

scale, bulk and density as this. They made it clear they understood the developer's need for return on investment, but queried whether he appreciated the physical and social limitations of this site, in particular traffic volumes and loss of parking spaces for

residents, traders and shoppers.

Unfortunately, for all parties, it appears the developer has made two basic mistakes in his approach. He could have chosen a more appropriate design for a site with the natural backdrop of the rivulet and the mountain, rather than one better suited to inner-city Melbourne.

Second, given the negative impacts the design will have on the amenity of surrounds, he did not consult neighbours, despite several efforts by the South Hobart Progress Association and residents to meet with him. Had the proponent met with residents before submitting his planning application, he would have

had a greater understanding of the impacts the development will have on the area's amenity, and on the traffic hazards and loss of public benefit it will create.

The South Hobart community and the SHPA have been negotiating for more than 15 years with various Hobart councils for a traffic management plan, traffic calming measures and a reduced speed limit for the stretch of Macquarie St between the Southern Outlet and St John's hospital.

In the past five years, South Hobart has seen substantial growth in aged and childcare facilities, shoppers and traffic. Traffic congestion has been

intensified by the opening of a Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre in Macquarie St, a fitness centre, and expansion of the Salad Bowl. Not only have traffic volumes along Macquarie St increased, so has the number of cyclists and pedestrians, including disabled and elderly residents from BUPA who have to cross Macquarie St to go to the grocer and chemist. And this does not include the daily mix of heavy-vehicle traffic, including B-doubles, to and from McRobies Gully, Cascade Brewery, Cascade Hotel and St John's Hospital.

It is only time before there is a major accident. Let's hope it is not a fatality.

Add to this hazardous mix, a large residential development whose residents' vehicular movements in Wynyard St will be 168 per day as estimated by the developer. This does not include their visitors, trades people, garbage and other service vehicles. All traffic will enter and leave the development via the short, very narrow (6.1m) "no through road" of Wynyard St, which at present contains 12 single-family dwellings.

In the 90.1m distance between the Elboden-Macquarie St intersection and where Wynyard St enters Macquarie St, there are: a Metro bus stop; Males Sands' depot driveway with its regular

daily truck and B-double traffic; and the Salad Bowl carpark exit with its shopper and delivery traffic.

If the HCC approves the design, scale and density of this development it will introduce further traffic risks to the South Hobart village.

It is unlikely the developer or his traffic engineer will experience the daily impacts of their traffic management plans. Nor the major public safety risks and disruptions caused by large trucks accessing Wynyard St in the extended, three-stage construction phase.

For local families, this will be their lived reality, not a hypothetical case study of

graphs and crash numbers.

Then there is the removal of parking spaces in Macquarie and Wynyard streets that provide the only parking opportunities for eight local residences without any capacity for off-street parking.

At the corner of Wynyard St and Macquarie St is the local bakery, whose viability will be gutted if the developer's proposal to remove the bakery's only delivery and customer parking space is approved by council.

Given the cumulative traffic impacts of this development, it is hard to comprehend why the HCC would approve it. It has nil public benefit.

Council and the community have been collaborating to sort out the suburb's growing traffic chaos. In 2015, urged by the HCC, the SHPA and local businesses hosted a street party to seek ideas from residents about the best ways to make the Macquarie St village precinct safer. The community, backed by the HCC, applied for federal black spot funding, and the HCC allocated a budget for 2016-17 to implement traffic management and calming measures, including several crossings along Macquarie St to slow traffic and make it less hazardous. A reduction in the speed limit to 40km/h is a high priority.

Has South Hobart become a victim of its unique appeal as a heritage precinct, close to the CBD with a vibrant and caring community and thriving local businesses? It seems developers are flocking here to make a quid, but at whose expense? If the HCC does not stand up for South Hobart ratepayers in this case, will other local communities suffer a similar fate under the Hobart Interim Planning Scheme 2015, its successor the statewide Tasmanian Planning Scheme, and the recently passed Building Bill?

Rosemary Sandford is president of the South Hobart Progress Association.