



*PRESERVING AUSTRALIA'S OLDEST GARDEN SUBURB*

*PO BOX 85, HUNTERS HILL, NSW 2110*

13-11-2018 St Josephs PESPP HHT Submission Nov 2018

**St Josephs College Physical Education and Sports Courts Project SSD:  
PROPOSED NEW BASKETBALL COMPLEX AND GYM  
Submission by the Hunters Hill Trust**

**Introduction**

The sites for the College's proposed Basketball Complex and the Healy Gymnasium are wholly within Hunters Hill Council's Heritage item No 1242 (St Josephs College) as well as being within Council's General Conservation Area, which means any proposed works should pay attention to following the heritage objectives set out in Council's Local Environment Plan and its Development Control Plan that relate specifically to heritage. This proposal fails to observe these heritage objectives for reasons of its scale, lack of setback from the college's boundary, and lack of compatibility with both the existing college buildings, and the neighbourhood. Unfortunately it also fails to present design excellence, probably because of the constraints imposed on the architects.

**A) THE PROPOSED BASKETBALL COMPLEX**

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The proposed Basketball Complex, which includes 3 covered courts, spectator seating with 180 seats, change rooms, a commercial-sized kitchen, entrance foyer, meeting rooms, classrooms and basement parking for 85 cars, is massive, designed not only for the use of St Joseph's students but also for competition matches between school teams.

**Location**

The proposed structure is to be built on the site of four existing outdoor basketball courts, which provide open-air space within the walled College campus, and a generous setback from the surrounding residential area for the several multi-storey structures within. The proposal reduces the number of courts by one.

**Building size**

To accommodate three basketball courts at 28m x 15m each, plus runoff all round each court, spectator accommodation and other facilities means the building is approximately 95m x 34m taking up an area of 3,230 sq m. This is a substantial area, which would accommodate more than four individual house lots of 700 sq m (the minimum lot size in this part of Hunters Hill).

**Building Height**

At the corner of Luke St and Gladesville Rd, the proposed walls are approximately 14m high, and the pitched roof 2m higher. This is almost twice the maximum wall height (7m) that is allowed in the adjacent residential streets, and with a setback of only 1m from the heritage stone wall, would be intrusive in the extreme.

## **Building Street Setbacks**

In Hunters Hill's consolidated DCP, the minimum street setback for residential development is 5m. The massive 14m high walls of the basketball complex are set back only 1m from both Luke St and Gladesville Rd frontages.

## **Building form**

The structure is of an industrial scale completely at odds with the residential scale and character of the surrounding streets, particularly Luke St. The style of the building has been described as "brutal," "stark" and "industrial."

## **The proposed building will have the following negative impacts:**

- **On the heritage item itself:**
  - The replacement of the existing outdoor basketball courts with this massive building will destroy the garden setting of the existing buildings in this part of the college campus and will quite change its character.
  - The creation of the partially-underground carpark will increase the height of the building
  - Views of the various buildings and landscape features within the campus will be obliterated.
  - The heritage-listed stonewalls to Gladesville Road and Luke St will be overwhelmed by the scale of the new structure's walls, particularly when they are set back only 1m inside the stone wall on the boundary, with no allowance for any significant landscaping to soften the impact. As well, by locating the new building so close to the boundary will require the demolition (and reconstruction) of the heritage listed stone wall, and the removal of the street trees.
  
- **On the surrounding streets and Conservation Area**
  - The character of Luke St will be severely downgraded by this massive 14+ metre high 'Industrial' building extending 95m along Luke St, and 34m along Gladesville Rd.
  - The impact on Gladesville Road will change the character of the street, which, apart from the shops at the junction with Ryde Rd, is essentially low-rise heritage residential, comprising housing, nursing homes, and aged care facilities, all with carefully maintained gardens.
  - There will be significant over-shadowing of the existing properties in Luke St to the serious detriment of the existing amenity of residents living here, particularly the loss of afternoon sun in winter.
  - The proposed measures to limit sound escape through ventilators and louvre windows are not acceptable as they rely on staff to close the openings and activate mechanical air conditioning during noisy activities.
  - There will be problems created by additional need for on-street parking for spectators in the surrounding area when sporting events take place – particularly when events are scheduled out of school hours or at night.
  - There will be problems with spectator traffic coming and going through the College, particularly through the Gladesville Rd Entrance.

## **B) THE GYMNASIUM BUILDING**

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The Gymnasium building appears to have two separate areas plus an office, a physio-room and a toilet and shower. Unlike the Basketball Complex, it does not appear to be designed for spectators or competition use.

### **Location**

The location for the proposed building is to be built in the existing landscaped courtyard adjacent to the historically significant stone Chapel building that faces Mary Street. The building will take up most of the courtyard and will require the removal of a number of existing trees and shrubs.

### **Building size and height**

From the documentation it is difficult to precisely determine the size of the building. However, by scaling off the drawings, it would appear that its roof is approximately 39m x 21m or 819 sq m, which is bigger than the minimum building lot size of 700sq m. The ceiling height will be around 6m, which is typical for a gymnasium.

### **Building Setback from Mary St**

The setback from Mary St is approximately 6m, which is in line with buildings in the rest of the street.

### **Building form**

The building form is rectangular with a single pitched roof (approximately 15 degrees) and from the perspective drawings the external materials appear to be a combination of dark charcoal metal panels above brown coloured timber or metal panels. The form and finishes are quite alien to the existing surrounding buildings, for example:

- the existing chapel walls are rusticated sandstone with arched windows, and
- the adjacent Brothers' Residence, whilst not being a building of any particular distinction, has walls of light coloured brick that do not clash with the stone colour.

### **The proposed building will have the following negative impacts:**

- **On the heritage item itself:**
  - The major impact of the proposal results from the destruction of the existing landscaped court between the Brothers Residence' and Chapel.
  - Like the Basketball complex, this will degrade the existing character of the campus.
  - The proposed materials to be used and the form of the proposed building are completely unsympathetic to those of the existing buildings.
- **On the surrounding streets and Conservation Area**
  - The character of Mary Street will be negatively impacted through the loss of garden space between the two existing buildings and through the imposition of the proposed, unsympathetic gymnasium.
  - Whether there is any impact caused by noise or on-street parking needs to be further investigated.

### **Impact Summation**

The proposal will have a negative impact particularly on the heritage-listed Chapel and College campus. Its impact on the surrounding Conservation Area will not be as stark as the proposed Basketball Complex, however loss of views of the Chapel and the replacement of open landscaped space with an unsympathetic building will have a negative impact on that part of Mary St.

### C) THE COMMUNITY'S INVESTMENT IN THE COLLEGE

The local community has a direct investment in the college as a result of:

- The college's exemption from the payment of rates on their property, while the community continues to fund the maintenance and upkeep of the surrounding streets and playing grounds that are used from time to time by The College
- Its exemption from income tax
- Its funding by both state and federal government with the federal government funding private schools at twice the rate of public schools.
- It is disappointing that it is the stated intention of the college to seek exemption from the Section 94A levy towards infrastructure, in spite of the large budget (\$38 million) of this project.

### D) REQUIREMENTS of SEARs

The proposal fails to address and/or meet several of the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements, namely:

- The project creates no permanent jobs
- There is no indication of how it will increase education results (indeed, since it reduces the number of basketball courts (replacing four outdoor courts with three indoor ones) it could be said to reduce them.
- There is no indication of how the project will **'Revitalise existing suburbs'**
- The project fails to **'enable the use of school facilities ... to be shared with the community'**. In previous times local residents were able to use the college's swimming pool during the summer holidays, but this practice was discontinued some years ago. The only use by outside bodies mentioned in the proposal is by kindred organisations, typically for one event per year, but none with the general community.

### E) COMPLIANCE WITH EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE SEPP – SCHEDULE 4 – SCHOOL DESIGN QUALITY PRINCIPLES

**Principle 1:** In presenting a 16m high wall only 1m inside it's heritage stone wall, the Basketball Complex quite fails to **'contribute to the streetscape and mitigate impacts on neighbouring sites'**

**Principle 3:** It is simply not true that **'SJC facilities are currently shared with the community during school holidays'**. And while 50% of students may board at the school, most go home during term vacations, and very few remain through the summer vacation.

**Principle 5:** The project fails to meet the stated standard.

**Principle 7:** The proposed building height, bulk and scale simply are NOT **'appropriate for the site and maintain the existing educational form and character of school buildings'** and certainly will not **'have a positive impact on the quality and sense of identity of the neighbourhood'**.

### F) CONCLUSION

The severe impact of this proposal on its surroundings stems from the stated intention to build a large, tall building without impacting on the College's playing fields, or on the original, heritage building. To protect its own heritage, the college is proposing to downgrade the heritage of the surrounding community.

By virtue of being classed as a State Significant Development, The College is not necessarily bound by the LEP controls that ratepayers are required to abide by. This does not absolve The College from its moral duty to do the right thing by the community and to respect the objectives and controls set out in Hunters Hill Council's Local Environment Plan and its Development Control Plan as it applies to its own heritage-listed campus, as well as to the neighbourhood.

What the College is proposing with these two buildings will have a significantly detrimental impact on the local area and flies in the face of the objectives of Hunters Hill's planning controls.

**G) RECOMMENDATION**

- 1) The Trust objects to the proposal on the grounds that it is an overdevelopment of the site, is excessive in bulk and height, will be too close to the college's boundary, and by its intended use outside normal college hours will create additional traffic and street parking congestion.
- 2) The Trust calls on the Minister for Planning to hold a public hearing into this proposal