

Is a Hindu temple appropriate for Pitt Town?

Description

A number of residents have approached me about a development application which was lodged in late November for the construction of a \$6.4M temple complex at 95 Old Pitt Town Road, Pitt Town.

default watermark



The image below should provide some context: In the upper left is the Pitt Town cemetery and in the lower right is Pitt Town Sports Club.

default watermark



The application as submitted to Hawkesbury council requests permission to

Description of Proposal

**Demolition of existing structure
public worship including a hall
space at-grade carpark and**

[Council's DA Tracker website has the details](#) (use DA0513/19 or the address as the reference). The application has been initiated by a group called [Sri Mandir who are based at Auburn](#). They appear to be a different entity to the organisation who successfully sought permission to build a Hindu temple at Beddek St in McGraths Hill in October 2016. That group is called [Sri Siva Jyothi Temple](#), who are based at Wentworthville.

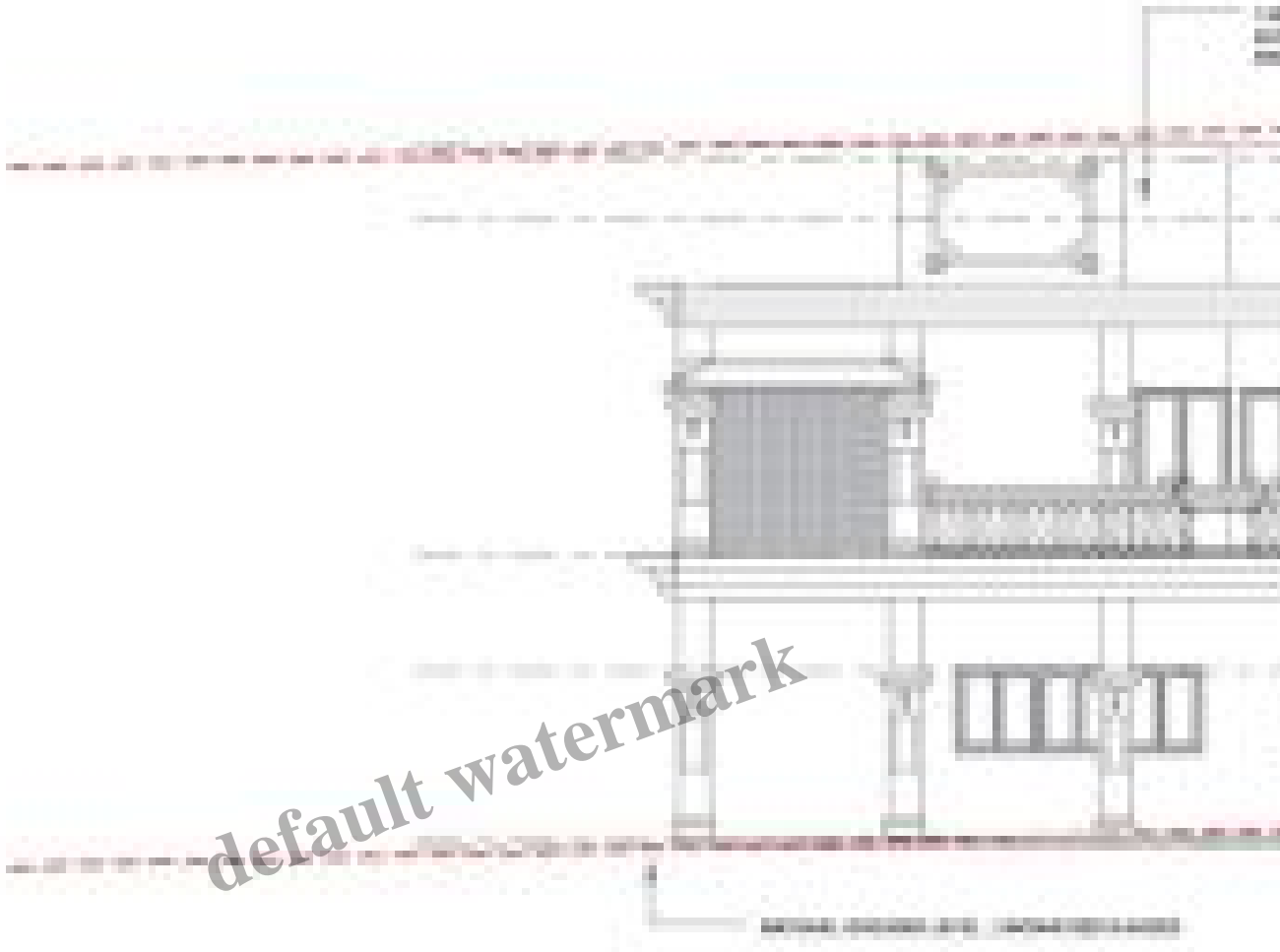
With respect to the 2016 DA, this occurred during the time when Council was the consent authority. On that occasion I voted against approval, [and the public remarks I made as to why are on the public record](#).

The [Hawkesbury Social Atlas](#) shows that at the time of the 2016 Census, the Hindu population of the Hawkesbury was 0.2% (130 individuals), vs 3.5% in the Greater Sydney area.

It would appear that the D.A is for a very ostentatious structure, being multi story and with 67 car parking spaces. The structures are "forward" on the subject block, and close to the road.



default watermark



default watermark

OLD P I T T T O W N R O A D

SITE BOUNDARY
100.00 FT

default watermark

The residents who have approached me have expressed a range of concerns about the appropriateness of this development for this site, citing traffic, scale, noise, fire hazard and the effect on amenity. The development sits quite close to Scheyville National Park, as detailed in the Bushfire Assessment Report.

default watermark



Under [changes to NSW Planning](#), Hawkesbury City Councillors no longer vote on DA's before our Council. These planning powers were [removed from many NSW Councils](#) and given to unelected, unaccountable "Planning Panels". I and [many other](#) Councillors (Liberal and non Liberal alike) are [opposed](#) to this [diminution of democracy](#) in our planning laws.

Planning Panels may empanel people with eminent subject expertise in planning matters, but in our democracy, the expertise of public servants must be balanced with democratic accountability to the community.

If a Planning Panel makes an unpopular decision, frequently they have no "skin in the game"— they can't be voted out by the public, and in some (not all) cases, don't even live in the communities they are affecting by their decisions.

[Details about the Hawkesbury Local Planning Panel are at Council's website.](#)

Hawkesbury Council has at least some part to play however. They act to receive and process paperwork related to DA's, and before the Planning Panel meets, will write a staff report either listing the consent conditions that should be applied, or alternatively, recommending refusal and citing the ways in which the DA would be inappropriate in that zone or at that site.

Residents have also expressed concern that the exhibition period, occurring over Christmas, and during a time of significant duress within the community with bushfires, has not afforded people enough time to digest and respond to the proposal. There is also a report (unverified by me) that not all the documentation currently on the DA tracker was made available in a timely fashion.

I think a public meeting should be held so that residents can receive information and understand the implications of this proposal.

[As was the case with the McGraths Hill proposal](#) (which curiously has not broken ground on their land since consent was granted in October 2016), I will be happy to support local residents as they seek representation to the Planning Panel, which will meet later this year (date unknown) to consider it.

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. Development
2. Planning panels
3. Hindu Temple
4. Pitt Town

Date Created

January 19, 2020

Author

councill