

WRITTEN REQUEST PURSUANT TO CLAUSE 4.6 OF PITTWATER LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2014

24 CAPUA PLACE, AVALON BEACH

VARIATION OF A DEVELOPMENT STANDARD REGARDING THE MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT CONTROL AS DETAILED IN CLAUSE 4.3 OF THE PITTWATER LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2014

FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS, INCLUDING CHANGE OF USE OF AN EXISTING HOME OFFICE TO A SECONDARY DWELLING

For: For proposed construction of alterations and additions, including change of use of an existing home office to a secondary dwelling
At: 24 Capua Place, Avalon Beach
Owner: David Crossley
Applicant: David Crossley
C/- Vaughan Milligan Development Consulting

1.0 Introduction

This written request is made pursuant to the provisions of Clause 4.6 of Pittwater Local Environmental Plan 2014. In this regard, it is requested Council support a variation with respect to compliance with the maximum building height as described in Clause 4.3(2FA) of the Pittwater Local Environmental Plan 2014 (PLEP 2014).

2.0 Background

Pittwater LEP 2014 – Clause 4.3(2FA) prescribes a maximum building height for secondary dwellings within the E4 Environmental Living zone for the subject site of 5.5m. This control is considered to be a development standard as defined by Section 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

The proposed works will provide a height of 6.4m above natural ground level which exceeds Council's maximum building height by 0.9m or 16.36% and therefore does not comply with this control.

The controls of Clause 4.3 are considered to be a development standard as defined in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979.

Is clause 4.3 of PLEP 2014 a development standard?

- (a) The definition of "development standard" in clause 1.4 of the EP&A Act mean standards fixed in respect of an aspect of the development and includes:

"(c) the character, location, siting, bulk, scale, shape, size, height, density, design or external appearance of a building or work."

- (b) Clause 4.3 relates to the maximum building height of a building. Accordingly, clause 4.3 is a development standard.

3.0 Purpose of Clause 4.6

The Pittwater Local Environmental Plan 2014 contains its own variations clause (Clause 4.6) to allow a departure from a development standard. Clause 4.6 of the LEP is similar in tenor to the former State Environmental Planning Policy No. 1, however the variations clause contains considerations which are different to those in SEPP 1. The language of Clause 4.6(3)(a)(b) suggests a similar approach to SEPP 1 may be taken in part.

There is recent judicial guidance on how variations under Clause 4.6 of the LEP should be assessed. These cases are taken into consideration in this request for variation.

In particular, the principles identified by Preston CJ in *Initial Action Pty Ltd vs Woollahra Municipal Council* [2018] NSWLEC 118 have been considered in this request for a variation to the development standard.

4.0 Objectives of Clause 4.6

Clause 4.6(1) of PLEP provides:

(1) The objectives of this clause are as follows:

- (a) to provide an appropriate degree of flexibility in applying certain development standards to particular development,*
- (b) to achieve better outcomes for and from development by allowing flexibility in particular circumstances.*

The decision of Chief Justice Preston in *Initial Action Pty Ltd v Woollahra Municipal Council* [2018] NSWLEC 118 (“Initial Action”) provides guidance in respect of the operation of clause 4.6 subject to the clarification by the NSW Court of Appeal in ***RebelMH Neutral Bay Pty Limited v North Sydney Council* [2019] NSWCA 130 at [1], [4] & [51]** where the Court confirmed that properly construed, a consent authority has to be satisfied that an applicant’s written request has in fact demonstrated the matters required to be demonstrated by cl 4.6(3).

Initial Action involved an appeal pursuant to s56A of the Land & Environment Court Act 1979 against the decision of a Commissioner.

At [90] of *Initial Action* the Court held that:

“In any event, cl 4.6 does not give substantive effect to the objectives of the clause in cl 4.6(1)(a) or (b). There is no provision that requires compliance with the objectives of the clause. In particular, neither cl 4.6(3) nor (4) expressly or impliedly requires that development that contravenes a development standard “achieve better outcomes for and from development”. If objective (b) was the source of the Commissioner’s test that non-compliant development should achieve a better environmental planning outcome for the site relative to a compliant development, the Commissioner was mistaken. Clause 4.6 does not impose that test.”

The legal consequence of the decision in *Initial Action* is that clause 4.6(1) is not an operational provision and that the remaining clauses of clause 4.6 constitute the operational provisions. Clause 4.6(2) of the LEP provides:

- (2) *Development consent may, subject to this clause, be granted for development even though the development would contravene a development standard imposed by this or any other environmental planning instrument. However, this clause does not apply to a development standard that is expressly excluded from the operation of this clause.*

Clause 4.3 (the Maximum Height Control) is not excluded from the operation of clause 4.6 by clause 4.6(8) or any other clause of the LEP.

Clause 4.6(3) of PLEP provides:

- (3) *Development consent must not be granted for development that contravenes a development standard unless the consent authority has considered a written request from the applicant that seeks to justify the contravention of the development standard by demonstrating:*
- (a) that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the case, and*
 - (b) that there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.*

The proposed development does not comply with the maximum building height control development standard pursuant to clause 4.3 of PLEP which specifies a maximum building height of 5.5m for secondary dwellings within the E4 Environmental Living zone. The development will result in a maximum building height of 6.4m or exceed the height control by 0.9m or 16.36%.

Strict compliance is considered to be unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of this case and there are considered to be sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard. The relevant arguments are set out later in this written request.

Clause 4.6(4) of PLEP provides:

- (4) *Development consent must not be granted for development that contravenes a development standard unless:*
- (a) the consent authority is satisfied that:*
 - (i) the applicant's written request has adequately addressed the matters required to be demonstrated by subclause (3), and*
 - (ii) the proposed development will be in the public interest because it is consistent with the objectives of the particular standard and the objectives for development within the zone in which the development is proposed to be carried out, and*
 - (b) the concurrence of the Planning Secretary has been obtained.*

In *Initial Action* the Court found that clause 4.6(4) required the satisfaction of two preconditions ([14] & [28]). The first precondition is found in clause 4.6(4)(a). That precondition requires the formation of two positive opinions of satisfaction by the consent authority. The first positive opinion of satisfaction (cl 4.6(4)(a)(i)) is that the applicant's written request has adequately addressed the matters required to be demonstrated by clause 4.6(3)(a)(i) (*Initial Action* at [25]). The second positive opinion of satisfaction (cl 4.6(4)(a)(ii)) is that the proposed development will be in the public interest

because it is consistent with the objectives of the development standard and the objectives for development of the zone in which the development is proposed to be carried out (*Initial Action* at [27]). The second precondition is found in clause 4.6(4)(b). The second precondition requires the consent authority to be satisfied that the concurrence of the Planning Secretary (of the Department of Planning and the Environment) has been obtained (*Initial Action* at [28]).

Under cl 64 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000*, the Secretary has given written notice dated 21 February 2018, attached to the Planning Circular PS 18-003 issued on 21 February 2018, to each consent authority, that it may assume the Secretary's concurrence for exceptions to development standards in respect of applications made under cl 4.6, subject to the conditions in the table in the notice.

Clause 4.6(5) of PLEP provides:

- (5) *In deciding whether to grant concurrence, the Secretary must consider:*
- (a) *whether contravention of the development standard raises any matter of significance for State or regional environmental planning, and*
 - (b) *the public benefit of maintaining the development standard, and*
 - (c) *any other matters required to be taken into consideration by the Secretary before granting concurrence.*

Council has the power under cl 4.6(2) to grant development consent for development that contravenes a development standard, if it is satisfied of the matters in cl 4.6(4)(a), and should consider the matters in cl 4.6(5) when exercising the power to grant development consent for development that contravenes a development standard: *Fast Buck\$ v Byron Shire Council* (1999) 103 LGERA 94 at 100; *Wehbe v Pittwater Council* at [41] (*Initial Action* at [29]).

Clause 4.6(6) relates to subdivision and is not relevant to the development. Clause 4.6(7) is administrative and requires the consent authority to keep a record of its assessment of the clause 4.6 variation. Clause 4.6(8) is only relevant so as to note that it does not exclude clause 4.3 of PLEP from the operation of clause 4.6.

The specific objectives of Clause 4.6 are as follows:

- (a) *to provide an appropriate degree of flexibility in applying certain development standards to particular development, and*
- (b) *to achieve better outcomes for and from development by allowing flexibility in particular circumstances.*

The development will achieve a better outcome in this instance as the site will provide for the construction of alterations and additions to provide for a secondary dwelling, which is consistent with the stated Objectives of the E4 Environmental Living Zone, which are noted as:

- *To provide for the housing needs of the community within a low density residential environment.*
- *To enable other land uses that provide facilities or services to meet the day to day needs of residents.*

- *To provide for a limited range of other land uses of a low intensity and scale, compatible with surrounding land uses.*

The proposal will provide for the construction of alterations and additions, including change of use of an existing home office to a secondary dwelling to provide for increased amenity for the site's occupants.

The non-compliance with the height control arises as a result of the existing levels created by the existing garage and home office.

The new works maintain a bulk and scale which is in keeping with the extent of surrounding development, with a consistent palette of materials and finishes which will provide for high quality development that will enhance and complement the locality.

Notwithstanding the non-compliance with the maximum building height control, the new works will provide an attractive residential development that will add positively to the character and function of the local residential neighbourhood. It is noted that the proposal will maintain a consistent character with the built form of nearby properties.

The proposed new works will not see any unreasonable impacts on the views enjoyed by neighbouring properties, nor will the works see any unreasonable impacts on the solar access enjoyed by adjoining dwellings.

The general bulk and scale of the dwelling as viewed from the public areas in Capua Place and the wider public view of the site, together with from the surrounding private properties, will be largely maintained.

5.0 The Nature and Extent of the Variation

- 5.1 This request seeks a variation to the maximum building height standard contained in clause 4.3 of PLEP.
- 5.2 Clause 4.3(2FA) of PLEP specifies a maximum building height of 5.5m in the E4 Environmental Living zone.
- 5.3 The proposed additions and alterations will have a maximum height of 6.4m, which exceeds the height control by 0.9m or 16.36%.

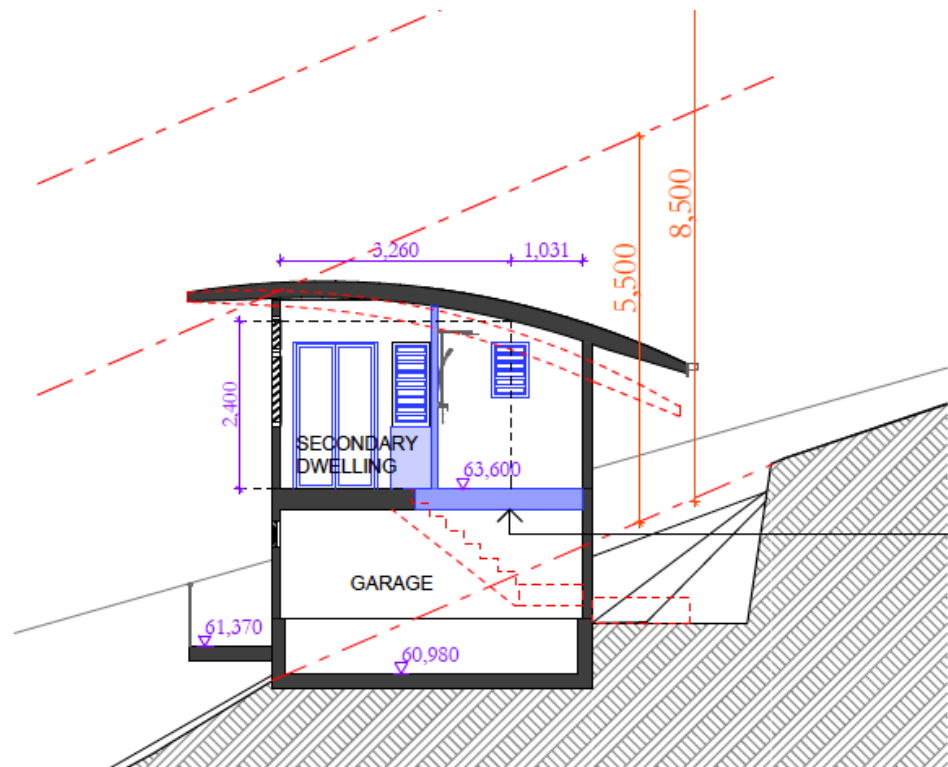


Fig 3: View of area breaching maximum building height control as noted in Section B-B prepared by Northern Beaches Designs

6.0 Relevant Caselaw

6.1 In *Initial Action* the Court summarised the legal requirements of clause 4.6 and confirmed the continuing relevance of previous case law at [13] to [29]. In particular the Court confirmed that the five common ways of establishing that compliance with a development standard might be unreasonable and unnecessary as identified in *Wehbe v Pittwater Council* (2007) 156 LGERA 446; [2007] NSWLEC 827 continue to apply as follows:

17. *The first and most commonly invoked way is to establish that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary because the objectives of the development standard are achieved notwithstanding non-compliance with the standard: Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [42] and [43].*
18. *A second way is to establish that the underlying objective or purpose is not relevant to the development with the consequence that compliance is unnecessary: Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [45].*
19. *A third way is to establish that the underlying objective or purpose would be defeated or thwarted if compliance was required with the consequence that compliance is unreasonable: Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [46].*
20. *A fourth way is to establish that the development standard has been virtually abandoned or destroyed by the Council's own decisions in granting development consents that depart from the standard and hence compliance with the standard is unnecessary and unreasonable: Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [47].*
21. *A fifth way is to establish that the zoning of the particular land on which the development is proposed to be carried out was unreasonable or inappropriate so that the development standard, which was appropriate for that zoning, was also unreasonable or unnecessary as it applied to that land and that compliance with the standard in the circumstances of the case would also be unreasonable or unnecessary: Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [48]. However, this fifth way of establishing that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary is limited, as explained in Wehbe v Pittwater Council at [49]-[51]. The power under cl 4.6 to dispense with compliance with the development standard is not a general planning power to determine the appropriateness of the development standard for the zoning or to effect general planning changes as an alternative to the strategic planning powers in Part 3 of the EPA Act.*
22. *These five ways are not exhaustive of the ways in which an applicant might demonstrate that compliance with a development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary; they are merely the most commonly invoked ways. An applicant does not need to establish all of the ways. It may be sufficient to establish only one way, although if more ways are applicable, an applicant can demonstrate that compliance is unreasonable or unnecessary in more than one way.*

6.2 The relevant steps identified in *Initial Action* (and the case law referred to in *Initial Action*) can be summarised as follows:

1. Is clause 4.3 of PLEP a development standard?
2. Is the consent authority satisfied that this written request adequately addresses the matters required by clause 4.6(3) by demonstrating that:
 - (a) compliance is unreasonable or unnecessary; and
 - (b) there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard
3. Is the consent authority satisfied that the proposed development will be in the public interest because it is consistent with the objectives of clause 4.3 and the objectives for development for in the E4 zone?
4. Has the concurrence of the Secretary of the Department of Planning and Environment been obtained?
5. Where the consent authority is the Court, has the Court considered the matters in clause 4.6(5) when exercising the power to grant development consent for the development that contravenes clause 4.3 of PLEP?

7.0. Request for Variation

7.1 Is compliance with clause 4.3 unreasonable or unnecessary?

- (a) This request relies upon the 1st way identified by Preston CJ in Wehbe.
- (b) The first way in Wehbe is to establish that the objectives of the standard are achieved.
- (c) Each objective of the maximum building height standard and reasoning why compliance is unreasonable or unnecessary is set out below:

(a) to ensure that any building, by virtue of its height and scale, is consistent with the desired character of the locality,

The Objective of Clause 4.3 (1)(a) seeks to ensure buildings are compatible with the height and scale of surrounding and nearby development.

The surrounding area is predominantly characterised by one and two storey development.

The proposal seeks to accommodate the additions within a compatible building form, with the slope of the site and siting of existing development resulting in a portion of the roof being up to 6.4m in height.

(b) to ensure that buildings are compatible with the height and scale of surrounding and nearby development,

The proposed height of the dwelling maintains consistency with the siting of surrounding development. The proposed development that is consistent and sympathetic with the existing development and wider site. The proposed development is considered to be compatible with the bulk and scale of surrounding development.

(c) to minimise any overshadowing of neighbouring properties,

The proposal is accompanied by Shadow Diagrams (Drawing No. DA12 – DA14) which demonstrate that the proposal will see any unreasonable diminution of the existing solar access currently received by neighbouring properties.

(d) to allow for the reasonable sharing of views,

Due the location of the site which slopes away from the street, the proposal is not considered to result in any unreasonable view impacts on uphill properties. The existing front and rear setbacks are not altered, which will ensure that the neighbouring properties will maintain their views.

(e) to encourage buildings that are designed to respond sensitively to the natural topography,

The proposal will continue to present as a consistent and modest two storey development to Capua Placed.

The external form of the built form does not alter the existing building envelope and continues to be sympathetic to the sloping topography of the site, and the development is considered to be effectively integrated into the landform.

(f) to minimise the adverse visual impact of development on the natural environment, heritage conservation areas and heritage items.

The proposal provides for the construction of alterations and additions to provide for a secondary dwelling in a manner which will retain the residential dwelling character of the site and the immediate area.

The proposal will maintain the modest two storey scale to Capua Place.

The proposal will be consistent with and complement the existing detached style single dwelling housing within the locality and the wider Pittwater area.

This objective is achieved in that the proposal will not require any substantial site disturbance or excavation.

Accordingly, we are of the view that the proposal is consistent with the objectives of the development standard.

7.3 Are there sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard?

In Initial Action the Court found at [23]-[24] that:

23. *As to the second matter required by cl 4.6(3)(b), the grounds relied on by the applicant in the written request under cl 4.6 must be “environmental planning grounds” by their nature: see Four2Five Pty Ltd v Ashfield Council [2015] NSWLEC 90 at [26]. The adjectival phrase “environmental planning” is not defined, but would refer to grounds that relate to the subject matter, scope and purpose of the EPA Act, including the objects in s 1.3 of the EPA Act.*
24. *The environmental planning grounds relied on in the written request under cl 4.6 must be “sufficient”. There are two respects in which the written request needs to be “sufficient”. First, the environmental planning grounds advanced in the written request must be sufficient “to justify contravening the development standard”. The focus of cl 4.6(3)(b) is on the aspect or element of the development that contravenes the development standard, not on the development as a whole, and why that contravention is justified on environmental planning grounds. The environmental planning grounds advanced in the written request must justify the contravention of the development standard, not simply promote the benefits of carrying out the development as a whole: see Four2Five Pty Ltd v Ashfield Council [2015] NSWCA 248 at [15]. Second, the written request must demonstrate that there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard so as to enable the consent authority to be satisfied under cl 4.6(4)(a)(i) that the written request has adequately addressed this matter: see Four2Five Pty Ltd v Ashfield Council [2015] NSWLEC 90 at [31].*

There are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.

The proposed development achieves the objects in Section 1.3 of the EPA Act, specifically:

- The proposed additions will maintain the general bulk and scale of the existing surrounding newer dwellings and maintain architectural consistency with the prevailing development pattern which promotes the orderly & economic use of the land (cl 1.3(c)).
- Similarly, the proposed development will provide for improved amenity within a built form which is compatible with the streetscape of Capua Place which also promotes the orderly and economic use of the land (cl 1.3(c)).
- The proposed new development is considered to promote a consistent design and enhance the residential amenity of the buildings’ occupants and the immediate area, which is consistent with the Objective 1.3 (g).
- The proposed development improves the amenity of the occupants of the subject site and respects surrounding properties by locating the development where it will not unreasonably obstruct views across the site and will maintain the views from the site (1.3(g)).

The above environmental planning grounds are not general propositions. They are unique circumstances to the proposed development, particularly the provision of a building that provides sufficient floor area for future occupants and manages the bulk and scale and maintains views over and past the building from the public and private domain. These are not simply benefits of the development as a whole, but are benefits emanating from the breach of the maximum building height control.

It is noted that in *Initial Action*, the Court clarified what items a Clause 4.6 does and does not need to satisfy. Importantly, there does not need to be a "better" planning outcome:

87. The second matter was in cl 4.6(3)(b). I find that the Commissioner applied the wrong test in considering this matter by requiring that the development, which contravened the height development standard, result in a "better environmental planning outcome for the site" relative to a development that complies with the height development standard (in [141] and [142] of the judgment). Clause 4.6 does not directly or indirectly establish this test. The requirement in cl 4.6(3)(b) is that there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard, not that the development that contravenes the development standard have a better environmental planning outcome than a development that complies with the development standard.

As outlined above, it is considered that in many respects, the proposal will provide for a better planning outcome than a strictly compliant development. At the very least, there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.

7.4 Is the proposed development in the public interest because it is consistent with the objectives of clause 4.4 and the objectives of the E4 Environmental Living Zone?

- (a) Section 4.2 of this written request suggests the 1st test in *Wehbe* is made good by the development.
- (b) Each of the objectives of the E4 Environmental Living Zone and the reasons why the proposed development is consistent with each objective is set out below.

I have had regard for the principles established by Preston CJ in *Nessdee Pty Limited v Orange City Council* [2017] NSWLEC 158 where it was found at paragraph 18 that the first objective of the zone established the range of principal values to be considered in the zone.

Preston CJ found also that "*The second objective is declaratory: the limited range of development that is permitted without or with consent in the Land Use Table is taken to be development that does not have an adverse effect on the values, including the aesthetic values, of the area. That is to say, the limited range of development specified is not inherently incompatible with the objectives of the zone*".

In response to *Nessdee*, I have provided the following review of the zone objectives:

It is considered that notwithstanding the modest breach of the maximum building height by 0.9m, the proposed alterations and additions to the existing dwelling will be consistent with the individual Objectives of the E4 Environmental Living Zone for the following reasons:

- **To provide for the housing needs of the community within a low density residential environment.**

As found in Nessdee, this objective is considered to establish the principal values to be considered in the zone.

Secondary dwellings are a permissible form of development within the Land Use table and is considered to be specified development that is not inherently incompatible with the objectives of the zone.

The E4 Environmental Living contemplates low density residential uses on the land.

The housing needs of the community are appropriately provided for in this instance through the proposed alterations and additions to provide for a new secondary dwelling which will provide for an appropriate level of amenity and in a form which will respect the predominant bulk and scale of the surrounding dwellings.

The proposed new works are carried out in a manner which will retain the single dwelling character of the site and the immediate area.

The proposal will continue to present as a modest two storey development to Capua Place, in keeping with the extent of existing development.

The proposal will be consistent with and complement the existing detached style single dwelling housing within the locality and the wider Pittwater area.

The compatible form and scale of the proposed development will meet the housing needs of the community within a secondary dwelling which is a permissible use in this environmentally sensitive zone.

- **To enable other land uses that provide facilities or services to meet the day to day needs of residents.**

This control is not relevant to the subject residential development.

- **To provide for a limited range of other land uses of a low intensity and scale, compatible with surrounding land uses.**

This control is not relevant to the subject residential development.

Accordingly, it is considered that the site may be further developed with a variation to the prescribed maximum building height control, whilst maintaining consistency with the zone objectives.

7.5 Has council obtained the concurrence of the Director-General?

The Council can assume the concurrence of the Director-General with regards to this clause 4.6 variation.

7.6 Has the Council considered the matters in clause 4.6(5) of PLEP?

- (a) The proposed non-compliance does not raise any matter of significance for State or regional environmental planning as it is peculiar to the design of the proposed additions to the dwelling house for the particular site and this design is not readily transferrable to any other site in the immediate locality, wider region of the State and the scale or nature of the proposed development does not trigger requirements for a higher level of assessment.
- (b) As the proposed development is in the public interest because it complies with the objectives of the development standard and the objectives of the zone there is no significant public benefit in maintaining the development standard.
- (c) there are no other matters required to be taken into account by the secretary before granting concurrence.

7.0 Conclusion

This development proposes a departure from the maximum building height control, with the development to provide for a height of up to 6.4m.

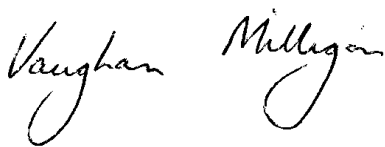
This variation occurs as a result of the sloping topography of the site and siting of existing development.

This objection to the maximum building height control specified in Clause 4.3 (2FA) of the Pittwater LEP 2014 adequately demonstrates that the objectives of the standard will be met.

The bulk and scale of the proposed development is appropriate for the site and locality.

Strict compliance with the maximum building height would be unreasonable and unnecessary in the circumstances of this case.

In summary, the proposal satisfies all of the requirements of clause 4.6 of PLEP 2014 and the exception to the development standard is reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances of the case.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Vaughan Milligan'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

VAUGHAN MILLIGAN
Town Planner