PROPOSED EASTGARDENS RESIDENTIAL/RETAIL PROJECT REJECTED

The NSW Government has declined to accept a development proposal from British American Tobacco (BAT) at Eastgardens for assessment as a major project under its Part 3A planning laws.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said BAT is proposing to rationalise the current manufacturing operations at its 16.8-hectare site on Westfield Drive, freeing up 10 hectares of the site for residential and retail uses.

"However, the Department of Planning did not accept the proposal on the grounds retention of significant employment land is a key objective of the Government’s Metropolitan Plan," the Minister said.

“Concern was also raised regarding the suitability of the proposed uses and the potential impacts on existing retail centres.”

The proposal for a $626 million mixed-use residential/retail development was inconsistent with the site’s current industrial zoning and included:

- 15 residential towers of up to 12 storeys in height containing around 1,000 apartments; and
- 35,000 square metres of retail floor space.

In considering the request, the Department informed BAT it would be more appropriate for the site’s future use to be considered through the preparation of Botany Bay City Council’s new council-wide local environmental plan (LEP), or as a stand-alone rezoning request to Council.

BAT has indicated that it will now progress the matter with Council.

Mr Kelly said the decision shows the effectiveness of the Part 3A system which filters out inappropriate proposals at an early stage.

“Since 2005, around $60 billion worth of new projects have been approved under Part 3A, creating in excess of 220,000 jobs.

“However, when the wrong kind of proposal is lodged, the evidence has clearly been the system is robust enough to say ‘no’, and that is what has happened here.

“It is important any such proposal be considered within the broader strategic planning framework that Council and the Department are working to establish for the future of the Botany area.”

Issues that will need to be considered in relation to the site’s future use include:

- Loss of existing industrial lands identified as being of strategic importance to Sydney’s east subregion;
- Suitability of the site for the proposed uses in terms of accessibility and traffic;
- Compatibility of new uses with retained industrial uses; and
- Impacts of new retail uses on surrounding retail centres.