

Application Reference: SDD-95997711

Location: 903-921 Bourke Street, Waterloo, NSW

Submission: Objection to Proposed Increase in Building Height and Density

I write to formally object to the proposed development, which seeks to increase building heights from the existing/planned range of approximately 12 and 21 storeys to 31 and 37 storeys respectively, in a location more than 1 kilometre from the nearest heavy rail or metro station.

As a resident of Zetland, I am generally in favour of well-planned high-density neighbourhoods; however, this proposal, in its current form, represents a significant departure from the City of Sydney's original community-accepted plan, particularly in relation to transport accessibility, built-form outcomes, and parking provision.

1. Misalignment with Transit-Oriented Development Principles

The metro urban planning principle was that higher-density development would be concentrated within walkable catchments of the high-capacity public transport it provided. Typically, this is defined as within 400–800 metres of a train or metro station. This site is more than one kilometre from both Waterloo and Green Square stations and falls well outside this catchment.

I am concerned that, given Sydney's humid climate, urban form, and pedestrian conditions, reliance on walking as a primary mode of access to rail will be unrealistic for a large proportion of residents. As a result, future occupants of this development will remain heavily reliant on private vehicles or the already crowded public transport.

My nearest bus stop is served by the 304 bus service, which, over the three years I have lived here, has become increasingly congested, leading to longer journey times and unreliable service provision. This bus regularly bypasses the nearest bus stop to this development on Bourke Street, as the bus is already at max capacity in the morning. The bus is also at capacity in the evening, with buses regularly skipping bus stops on Crown and Baptise streets. As buses are not the appropriate transport response for this level of housing density, this development will further exacerbate this issue.

2. Increased Traffic and Local Network Impacts

The proposed height uplift represents a 67% increase in the number of dwellings and, consequently, in trip generation. In the absence of proximate high-capacity public transport, a significant proportion of these trips will be made by private vehicle, car share, taxi or bus, which will all use the local roads.

The local road networks in Waterloo, Zetland and Redfern have not been designed to accommodate such volumes, and there is already substantial congestion at the intersection of Lachlan, Bourke and McEvoy Streets. Given the current state of congestion, this development is likely to increase traffic congestion and travel times and put pressure on already constrained intersections. In addition, increased car traffic raises safety concerns for pedestrians and cyclists in an already dense neighbourhood and reduces the area's overall amenity.

3. Parking Provision

Of particular concern to me is the proposal to not proportionally increase on-site car parking despite the substantial uplift in density.

While reduced parking provision can be appropriate in highly accessible, transit-rich environments, this is not such a location. Given the site's distance from high-capacity public transport, car ownership rates are likely to remain high.

Waterloo and Zetland both represent high-density inner-city precincts within Australia, yet ABS data shows that over 60 per cent of households have at least one car.

In this context, insufficient on-site parking will not reduce car usage but will instead displace parking demand into surrounding streets. This is likely to result in increased on-street parking congestion and reduced accessibility for existing residents.

Additionally, constrained parking supply will lead to increased vehicle circulation as drivers search for spaces, contributing to localised congestion within a congested area.

This approach effectively transfers the burden of parking provision from the developer to the public domain.

4. Insufficient Social Infrastructure

The dramatically increased residential population will generate substantial additional demand on community infrastructure that is already at or beyond capacity. There are already substantial developments planned for the Green Square location, and this project will further increase demand. In particular, the Green Square library is always full, with limited access to desks and meeting rooms. The proposed development will add a significant number of new residents who will place further pressure on this facility, for which no funding or expansion plan has been identified.

There is no clear evidence that increased social infrastructure will be delivered in tandem with the proposed development. Without it, existing services may become overburdened, leading to reduced access and quality of life for both new and existing residents.

Conclusion

In summary, the proposed development represents an inappropriate intensification of the site, given its distance from high-capacity public transport. The combination of significantly increased height and density, coupled with insufficient parking provision, is likely to result in adverse impacts on traffic, infrastructure, amenity, and overall liveability to the residents of Waterloo, Zetland and Redfern.