

As a Stanhope Road resident, my recollections of the immediate area, and more broadly across Ku-ring-gai, extend back decades. Memories of exchanges during the 1960s and 1970s with many of the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary then stationed at Lourdes, along with bushwalks through the adjacent Garigal National Park and Seven Little Australians Park, are as clear as day.

A sense of space and unimposing articulation has always characterised the Lourdes site and surrounding context, located at the extreme end of Stanhope Rd, a no-through thoroughfare with a singular point of entry/exit. Lourdes Retirement Village, which came about in the early 1980s, reflected a thoughtful response to this context by way of the low-profile assigned to its habitable units, step-linked to echo the contours of the land and site, such design methodology a means to avoid the pitfalls of what can be termed 'bulk-&-mass-laden' living structures.

This redevelopment initiative (SSD-88004956) by Levande follows its quashed planning proposal (PP-2022-658) of 2022-23, the latter underpinned by unresolved issues – particularly regards safety, bushfire & emergency risks, and compounded by traffic, congestion, access, pollution and other burdens.

That which is proposed via SSD-88004956 reveals similarly unresolved problems and insufficient risk mitigation, with what would result in detrimental outcomes – bushfire and emergency evacuation issues embracing potential loss of life; environmental and flora/fauna degradation (e.g. via runoff, pollution, loss of tree canopy, water-table interference, noise, lighting); traffic and congestion excesses; and resident vulnerability (within and beyond Lourdes), among many others.

Such problems stem from an ill-conceived model where elderly residents would be assigned to multi-level residential apartment blocks, most exceeding Ku-ring-gai LEP limits, and incompatible with prevailing site characteristics, conditions, and makeup – all exacerbated by global warming.

The limited-radius notification process for this SSDA, to a very limited number of stakeholders across the community, coupled with a markedly short 14-day (online-only) exhibition window doubling as a submission period, arguably amounts to procedural unfairness and compromised due process. An insufficient and lacklustre consultation process prior to issuance of notification has compounded the matter.

Resident numbers at Lourdes are now down to approximately forty-five in total, such cohort with varying levels of stamina, have effectively been left in limbo while many residential buildings, which could and should be maintained or improved, have been left to dwindle and deteriorate.

The irresponsibility and extended uncertainty of this 'do-nothing' approach has precipitated the departure of many (previously content) residents. Lourdes Village was and is in need of upkeep, improvement, and renovation. The now-proposed approach – comprising a near-total demolition and massive rebuild over a multi-year timeframe – could have, and could still be, rejected.

The current blueprint is misaligned when evaluated in tandem with the surrounding area, including its fire-prone bushland, and low-density & low-profile residential area (1-2-storey + sloped/tilled roofing). As such, SSD-88004956 is in need of rejection, well before the pitfalls of its DNA wreak irreversible havoc.

These and other concerns are discussed, expounded upon, and taken up in greater detail via the attached report accompanying this introduction, professionally undertaken on my behalf.