



30 June 2025

Sylvio Falato
Team Leader, Housing Delivery Assessments
Department of Planning, Housing & Infrastructure

via Major Projects Planning Portal

SSD-85848713
EB (P&E)

RE: 601 Pacific Highway, St Leonards, State Significant Development Application (Ref: SSD-85848713)
Advice on Request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs)
Applicant: Stockland Development Pty Limited

Dear Mr Falato

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the SEARs to guide the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will accompany a State Significant Development Application (SSDA) and concurrent rezoning proposal to enable the construction of a 52-storey shop top housing development in the St Leonards Strategic Centre.

The Department has completed two strategic planning reviews of St Leonards within the last five years, those being the *St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan (2020)* and *Crows Nest Transport Oriented Development (TOD) Accelerated Precinct (2024)*. Both reviews retained the employment function of 601 Pacific Highway on the basis that it is a large commercial site, well-served by rail and metro services, that can support future jobs and services for the growing population.

On 27 November 2024, the implementation of the Crows Nest TOD saw the planned commercial capacity of the site significantly increased by assigning a maximum building height of (RL 259) and setting a maximum FSR of 20:1 FSR and a minimum non-residential FSR of 20:1.

The E2 Commercial Core zone represents only 2% of the North Sydney LGA but largely drives the \$23B in output per annum for the NSW economy. Council questions the strategic merit of rezoning commercial land to mixed use given its economic output and that the State Government's housing supply objectives have been shown to be met in the local government area (LGA) without compromising the E2 zone.

Please note, as per Council's resolution of 26 May 2025, on 6 June 2025 a letter was sent to the Minister for Planning, Housing and Infrastructure seeking a moratorium on proposals involving the conversion of commercially zoned land to residential uses until an updated Greater Sydney Region Plan is in place. At the time of writing, Council is awaiting a response to that request.

1. It is recommended that a decision to issue SEARs on 601 Pacific Highway is placed on hold until the Minister has made a decision on Council's request.

Notwithstanding, should SEARs be issued, in addition to the standard inclusions, the following matters are recommended to be addressed in the EIS.

A. Statutory context

Planning Proposal (ref PP-2023-92) for the site proposing to increase the maximum building height from 49 metres to RL259 (equivalent to approximately 171.5 metres) for 42 storeys and imposing a maximum floor space ratio of 20:1 is currently showing on the Department's tracking tool as being at the 'finalisation' stage.

2. The EIS should address the proposal's consistency with:
 - a) the State Governments (*St Leonards and Crows Nest 2036 Plan*, including Local Planning Direction 1.13- Implementation of St Leonards – Crows Nest 2036 Plan,
 - b) the State Governments Crows Nest TOD finalisation report – which formed the justifications/explanations for the amendments to North Sydney Local Environmental Plan (NSLEP) 2013 (implemented via a SEPP pursuant to Section 3.29 of the EP&A Act)
 - c) any recommendations from any relevant Gateway determination applying to the site.

B. Economic impact

To date, nine SSDs in the North Sydney LGA have been lodged or declared SSDs via the Housing Delivery Authority that each propose to convert commercially zoned land to residential, including build to rent proposals (Attachment 1). Another is in the pipeline. If approved:

- 225 businesses currently operating in the North Sydney LGA will be displaced
- 25,000+ planned jobs capacity will be permanently lost, based on initial modelling.

This will have an adverse effect on the NSW economy and productivity.

At 601 Pacific Highway, it is estimated that this proposal will displace existing businesses and significantly reduce the planned employment capacity of the site by over 5,000 jobs.

3. It is recommended that an Economic Impact Assessment assesses the following impacts:
 - a) the loss of jobs and services that are currently supported in the existing building
 - b) the displacement of existing businesses and the consequent disruption to productivity
 - c) the loss of planned employment capacity associated with a commercial tower at this location having regard to the recent development controls set for the site under the Crows Nest TOD
 - d) the jobs created by the proposal in comparison to the planned employment capacity of the site
 - e) the cumulative loss of planned employment capacity from Build-to-Rent and Housing Delivery Authority SSDs in the E2 Commercial Core and MU1 Mixed Use zones lodged with the Department on the North Sydney LGA (Attachment A)
 - f) people having to travel further for work, and the resulting environmental, social and productivity impacts.
4. The Economic Impact Assessment should:
 - a) evaluate the existing provision and demand for retail, night time venues, population serving and commercial uses on the site and within the commercial catchment area
 - b) address State Government's employment target for St Leonards Strategic Centre of 6,900-16,400 additional jobs (North District Plan 2018)

- c) ensure any analysis of office vacancy, rental rates and incentives in St Leonards is benchmarked against similar Sydney-based commercial centres, and that the proportion of vacancy that is attributed to new supply, including the Victoria Cross over station development, is clearly identified
- d) ensure data on office vacancy, work-from-home and rental rates is supported by current, relevant, region-specific, and robust data that is in the public domain or provided as an attachment to the assessment
- e) review the proposal's strategic alignment against the [North Sydney Economic Development Strategy \(2024\)](#).

C. Social impact

The Crows Nest TOD precinct is planned to accommodate approximately 5,900 new homes, equating to 11,000 new residents. This is in addition to previous uplift permitted under the 2036 Plan.

The TOD program identifies 601 Pacific Highway as a key employment site and does not anticipate it contributing to residential housing supply. The precinct currently has limited and ageing social infrastructure, and neither the TOD program nor the 2036 Plan includes provisions for expanding or delivering new community facilities.

The proposal introduces approximately 551 additional dwellings at 601 Pacific Highway, beyond the planned residential capacity. This raises significant concerns about the precinct's ability to support further population growth without adequate social and community infrastructure.

5. It is recommended that a Social Impact Assessment be undertaken to:
 - a) assess the increased demand for social infrastructure resulting from the proposed residential development, with reference to the planned uplift under the Crows Nest TOD
 - b) justify the proposed 5% affordable housing contribution, having regard to demand in the community for affordable housing and proposed residential uplift of the design scheme
 - c) evaluate the quality, equity and accessibility of affordable housing units in comparison to market-rate dwellings
 - d) assess any proposals to displace or relocate [Studio A](#), ensuring continuity of community-based infrastructure for artists with a disability.

D. Public benefit

There is a voluntary planning agreement associated with Planning Proposal (ref PP-2023-92) has been the subject of public exhibition.

6. Address the currently outstanding voluntary planning agreement offer associated with the planning proposal (PP-2023-92), being a commitment to make a monetary contribution for community infrastructure purposes in the amount of \$172,000.

E. Built form and urban design

The site occupies a key location within the precinct, with prominent views from the Pacific Highway. The Crows Nest TOD identifies this site, along with adjacent sites around St Leonards Station, as part of a concentrated zone for tall buildings, reinforcing the area's role as a high density commercial and mixed-use centre.

7. The EIS must demonstrate that the proposal will deliver a high-quality context-responsive design:

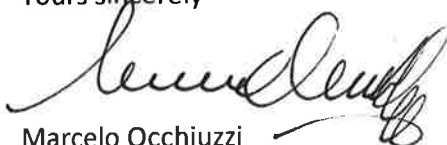
- a) demonstrate design excellence referencing the *Crows Nest TOD Design Guide* and State Governments 'Better Placed' policy
 - b) show how the built form responds to site context including the interface with Mitchell Street Plaza
 - c) include a comprehensive assessment against the Apartment Design Guide (ADG), with a summary table demonstrating compliance for all dwellings, including affordable housing units
 - d) assess how the development complies with the relevant accessibility requirements.
8. Specifically, the SEARs for 601 Pacific Highway should require the EIS:
- a) demonstrate how a minimum 24m tower separation will be achieved in the event the future development at 619-621 Pacific Highway is approved so as to provide adequate separation between the cluster of tall residential towers near the station
 - b) demonstrate how the 5m whole of building setback to Mitchell Street Plaza will be landscaped in keeping with the principles under the *St Leonards East Public Domain Upgrade* (NSC 2015)
 - c) demonstrate how the podium height aligns with proposed DA at 619-621 Pacific Highway to deliver a consistent street frontage along both Pacific Highway and Atchison Street
 - d) demonstrate how the podium uses and ground plane design will activate all three street frontages, with a particular focus on:
 - o Atchison Street, where an active Civic 'High Street' is envisioned that supports day and nighttime activity
 - o Mitchell Street, in relation to activation of the adjacent plaza
 - o Pacific Highway that should provide shelter and a wide, continuous footpath that aligns with the proposed built form along 619-621 Pacific Highway
 - e) examine delivering a shared basement car park access with 619-621 Pacific Highway, to maximise active street frontages and minimise pedestrian and vehicle conflict along Atchison Street
 - f) provide noise and vibration and air quality mitigation measures with consideration to the location of apartments fronting Pacific Highway, in accordance with the Department's *Development near rail corridors and busy roads – interim guideline*.

The design proposal must have regard to the cumulative shadow impacts of the cluster of tall towers enabled under the Crows Nest TOD and the suite of SSDs now being lodged via the HDA pathway.

9. The design proposal should:
- a) assess how the building design will meet the solar requirements under the Crows Nest Precinct Design Guide
 - b) assess the overshadowing impacts of the development on Hume Street Park, Mitchell Street Plaza, Ernest Place, Willoughby Road, Friedlander Place and Wadangari Park during spring and autumn equinox, between 9am and 5pm
 - c) consider the additional impact of the proposal at 19-33 Chandos Street that has recommended to be declared SSD (HDA-237320)

Should you wish to discuss the contents of this submission, please contact Mr Neal McCarry, Manager Strategic Planning, on 9936 8325, or at neal.mccarry@northsydney.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Marcelo Occhuzzi
Director Planning & Environment

Attachment 1

Build To Rent SSD applications – SEARs issued and/or SSDs lodged

SSD-62363217	105-153 Miller Street, North Sydney*
SSD-72980712	132 Arthur Street, North Sydney
SSD-61000021	146 Arthur Street, North Sydney
SSD-79658964	270 Pacific Highway, Crows Nest

*This site has another SSD currently in train (SSD-83956216) for a university use as well as a DA (commercial) under assessment by Council.

Housing Delivery Authority recommended projects for SSD assessment pathway and concurrent rezoning of land required.

SSD-82599709	153-157 Walker Street, North Sydney
SSD-86270706	5 Blue Street, North Sydney
SSD-86299960	15 Blue Street, North Sydney
EOI No. 234993	275 Alfred Street, North Sydney
SSD-85848713	601 Pacific Highway, North Sydney