



PRELIMINARY SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT MEMO

5 BLUE STREET, NORTH SYDNEY

INTRODUCTION

1.1 REQUIREMENT FOR SIA

This memo has been prepared to provide a Social Impact Assessment (SIA) scoping study for 5 Blue Street, North Sydney which is a Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) nominated State Significant Development Application (SSDA) and concurrent rezoning application.

On 24 March 2025, the HDA recommended the proposed development for the purpose of a mixed use development at the site be declared State Significant Development (SSD) under section 4.36(3) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). The proposal has therefore been declared to be SSD for the purposes of the EP&A Act.

Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) were issued for the project on 16 July 2025. The relevant section of SEARs as it relates to social impact is noted in Table 1 below.

Table 1. SEARs

Issue and Assessment Requirements	Supporting documentation
19. Social Impact The EIS must consider social impacts and, should any significant social impacts be identified, a Social Impact Assessment must be prepared in accordance with the <i>Social Impact Assessment Guideline for State Significant Projects</i>.	Address in EIS <u>If required:</u> Social Impact Assessment in accordance with the guidelines.

On 8 July 2025 North Sydney Council provided an agency letter response to input on the SEARs. Council's letter includes several matters to be considered in the EIS, one matter which is 'Social Impact'. Specifically, Council's response noted that a Social Impact Assessment should be undertaken to:

- assess the demand for social infrastructure generated by the proposal, including open space, community facilities, health and education services, having regard to the cumulative residential growth in the CBD and LGA as a whole.
- assess the amenity of the co-living dwellings, particularly those located within the undercroft.
- ensure any co-living housing provides for a range of dwelling types to meet identified needs for use of affordable housing.
- review the proposal's strategic alignment with the North Sydney Social Inclusion Strategy (2024) and identify opportunities to enhance social outcomes.

The scope of what Council has requested with regard to assessing demand for social infrastructure has been addressed in the Social Infrastructure Needs Assessment. This Social Impact Memo has been prepared to address the SEARs requirement for a Social Impact Assessment and Council's requirements for assessment of amenity.

1.2 METHODOLOGY FOR SCOPING STUDY

The methodology below was undertaken to inform this study:

- Site visit and site analysis to understand any sensitive receivers and the local context.



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- High level demographic analysis
- High level policy review summary
- Identification of impacted communities
- Assessment of likely social impacts, potential project responses and overall residual impact.



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PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

1.3 PROPOSAL

The proposed above station adaptive reuse seeks to transform the landmark site into a vibrant mixed-use precinct that integrates residential, retail and public domain enhancements into the broader North Sydney precinct. Specifically, the proposal seeks approval for:

- Adaptive reuse of a mixed-use development, comprising residential and non-residential ground floor uses, including:
 - Two levels of basement car parking, comprising plant, bicycle storage areas and car parking spaces.
 - Ground floor retail and residential lobbies.
 - Co-living on Levels 1-3, to be operated as affordable housing by a Community Housing Provider in perpetuity.
 - Residential dwellings on Levels 4-14.
- Public domain and landscaping improvements, including the retention and enhancement of Blue Street Plaza at the eastern portion of the site.
- Extension and augmentation of services and infrastructure as required.
- Concurrent amendments to the North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2013 to facilitate the SSDA.

1.4 DWELLING MIX

In total, 68 co-living units and proposed and 62 build to sell (BTS) units are proposed. Of the BTS units, the following dwelling mix is proposed:

- One bedroom: 12 units
- Two bedrooms: 19 units
- Three bedrooms: 29 units
- 1 sub-penthouse
- 1 penthouse.

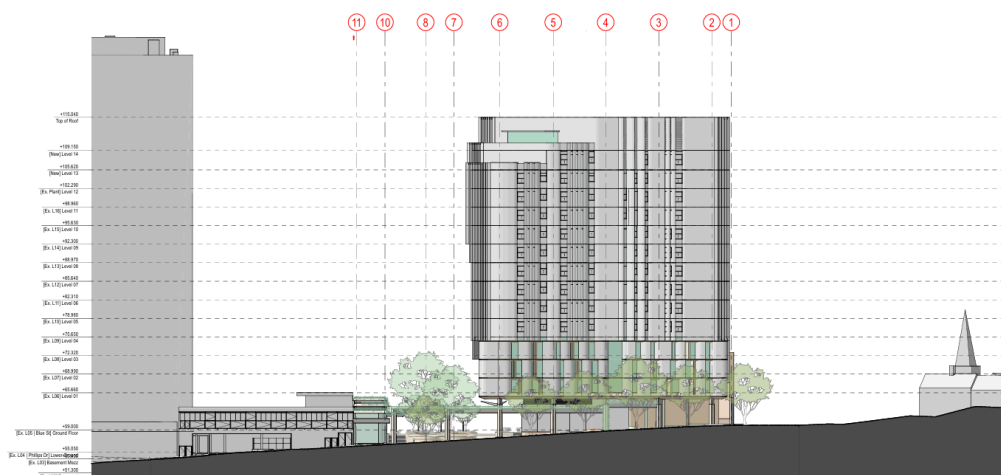


Figure 1 North Elevation
Source: fjc studio



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THE SITE

1.5 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located at 5 Blue Street, North Sydney, within the North Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). It is legally described as Lot 4 DP 1134234, is regular in shape and has a total site area of 3,007m² with a frontage to Blue Street to the north of approximately 84 metres and Blues Point Road to the west of approximately 35m. Within the site is Phillips Lane which is directly adjacent the site's northern boundary.

The site is freehold stratum above North Sydney Station (identified as Lot 4 in the stratum). There are various restrictions on title that both benefit and burden the site including but not limited to easements to drain water and drain sewage, right of footway and carriageway and easements for support. These easements will continue to remain or will seek to be improved with the redevelopment of the site.



Figure 2 Site Aerial

Source: MetroMap

1.6 EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The site currently consists of the Zurich building which is a commercial building that lies at the southern fringe of the North Sydney Central Business District (CBD). The Zurich building recently received lobby upgrades, however, is largely considered a legacy asset with limited ongoing commercial viability. The existing building is 14 storeys in height and has a total gross floor area of 11,723m².

Also at the site is Blue Street Plaza which is a privately owned but publicly accessible plaza. It has an area of 700m², a length of 32m and width of 20m. The plaza is thoughtfully landscaped featuring seating areas that offer views across the Harbour and towards Sydney CBD. The plaza was previously listed as a 'Special Area' under the North Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013 to protect solar access to the plaza. However, the listing was removed in October 2018.



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There are two different building height controls that apply to the site under the North Sydney LEP. The portion of the site that contains the Plaza is particularly restricted in height.

1.7 THE SITE IN ITS SURROUNDING CONTEXT

As noted above, the site sits within the southern fringe of the North Sydney CBD and is located within the North Sydney Local Government Area (LGA). It is approximately 2km north of the major Sydney Central Business District (CBD).

The site is located above North Sydney Train Station. The site is bound by Blue Street to the north, with commercial and mixed-use buildings located on the opposite side of the street which forms part of North Sydney's commercial core. In addition to commercial floor space, uses include food and beverage services, KU Greenwood Children's Centre and Greenwood Plaza.

To the east of the site is the Fujitsu Building at 15 Blue Street, North Sydney. This building was built in the 1970s and is also located above North Sydney Station. It is a leasehold building owned by Aqualand. The HDA also declared this site as SSD with a concurrent rezoning in March 2025. In their application, Aqualand described their proposal as *'a proposed mixed use commercial and residential development comprising up to 200 apartments with 10% affordable housing, 1200m² retail floor space, a new public plaza and at grade connection into North Sydney train station and upgrades to the concourse'*. It is noted that the HDA called for a collaborative approach between 5 and 15 Blue Street to ensure public benefit realisation including through site links and integration with the broader precinct.

Directly to the south of the site, on the opposite side of Phillips Lane is a three-storey residential flat building which adjoins St Peter's Park that fronts Blues Point Road. Also located to the south is St Frances Xavier Catholic Church and St Francis Xavier Retirement Village, owned by the Archdiocese of Sydney. Further to the south development transitions to medium density housing along Mackenzie Street.

To the west of the site, on the opposite side of Blues Point Road, is St Peters Presbyterian Church and Chinese Christian Bilingual Church.



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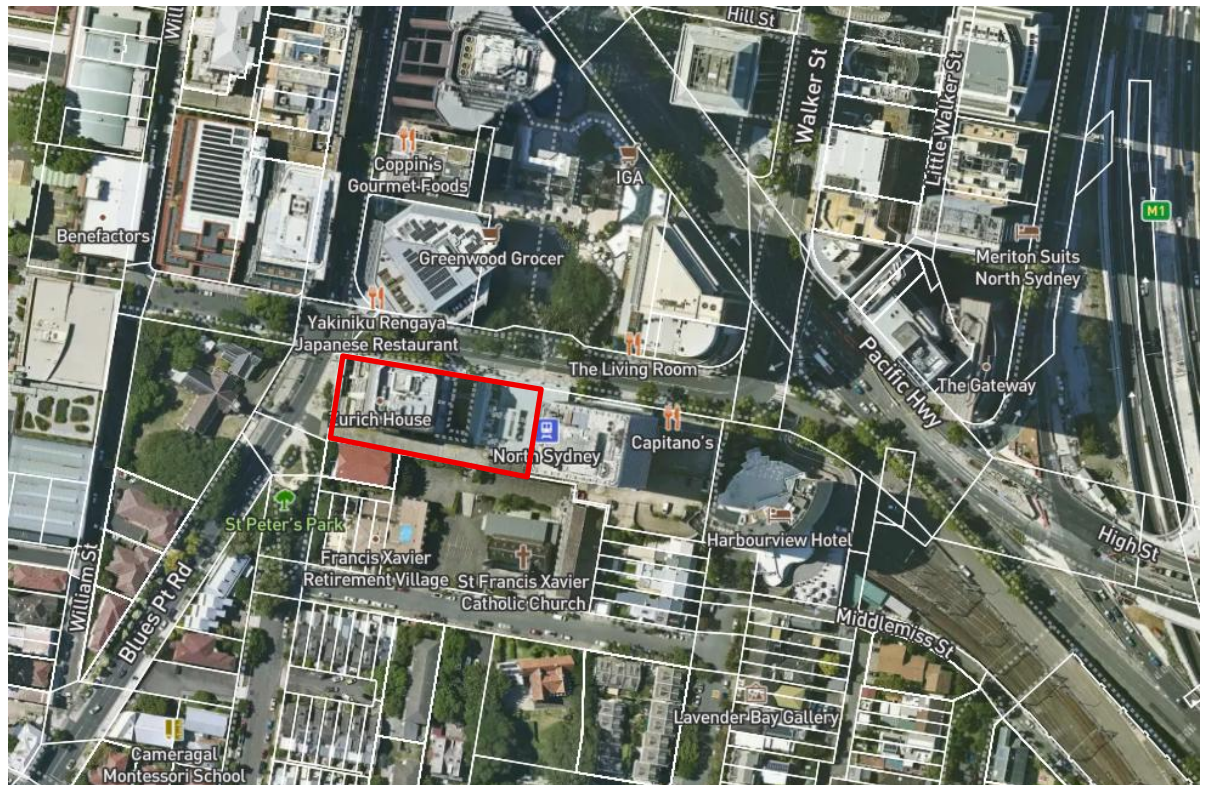


Figure 3 Aerial of the site and surrounding context
Source: MetroMap

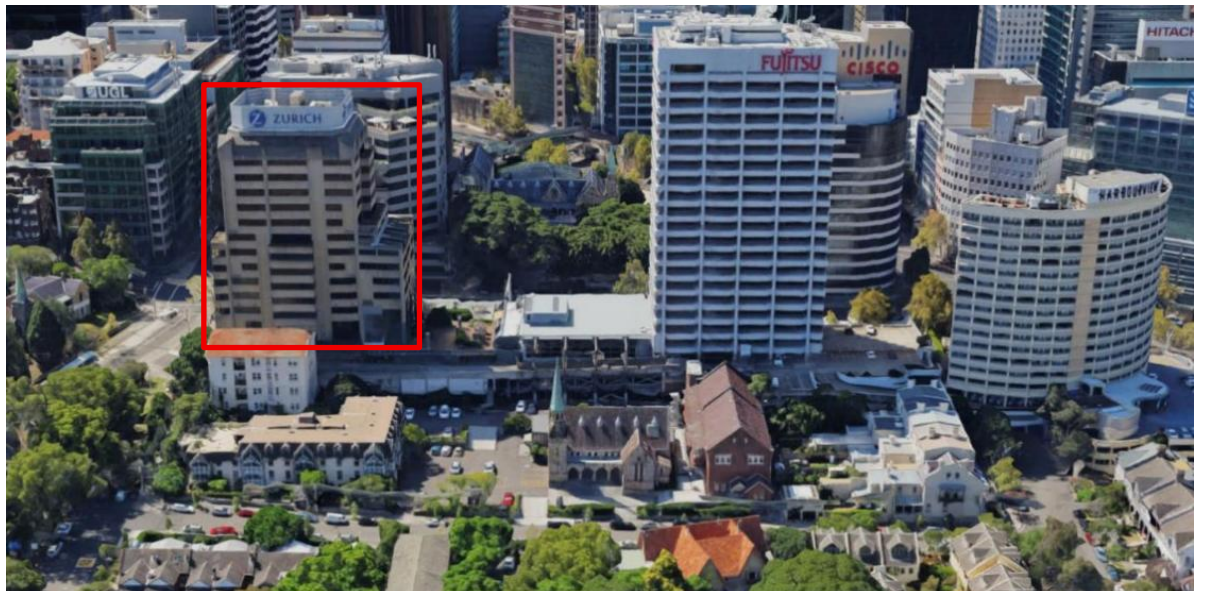


Figure 4 The site in its surrounding context
Source: fjcstudio



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1.8 SITE VISIT OBSERVATIONS

A site visit was undertaken on 6th of May 2026 to understand the local context and any potential sensitive receivers. Observations from the site visit are noted below and site visit images are shown in Figures 5 to 6.

- The existing building has an ageing façade but sits within a high-density environment.
- Blue Street Plaza was relatively well used, with people sitting in their plaza for their lunch break.
- St Peters Park near the site is well located and quite well used but in poor condition.
- When looking north up towards the site from Lavendar Street, the change in built form is evident with terrace buildings in the foreground and the Zurich building among high density commercial buildings in the background.



Figure 5 The existing building
Source: Patch Planning



Figure 6 Blue Street Plaza
Source: Patch Planning



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Figure 7 St Peters Park
Source: Patch Planning



Figure 8 Looking north from Lavendar St
Source: Patch Planning



Figure 9 Blue Street Plaza, Church car park
and neighbouring Aqualand site
Source: Patch Planning



Figure 10 Other nearby high-density
buildings
Source: Patch Planning



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STRATEGIC POLICY CONTEXT

The following section identifies any relevant social policy themes, drivers or implications for the site. This is based on a review of Federal, state and local policies and strategies. This includes:

- National Housing Accord 2022
- NSW Government Housing Targets
- North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019
- North Sydney Economic Development Strategy 2024
- North Sydney Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020
- North Sydney Social Inclusion Strategy 2024
- North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2040.

Table 2. Strategic policy context

Policy theme	Key findings of relevance to the site and assessment	Source
Need for housing to meet population growth	• As a commitment to the National Housing Accord, the NSW Government has a target of delivering 377,000 new, well-located homes across the state by 2029. • North Sydney LGA has a 5 year target of 5,900 new dwellings by 2029. • Population projections for North Sydney LGA is an additional 19,500 people to 2036. • The vision for housing in North Sydney LGA is to <i>"carefully manage expected levels of growth in population through planning for housing in North Sydney which is supported by good access to infrastructure, services and amenity; providing housing diversity and affordability choices and respects the unique character of our built and natural environment to ensure that North Sydney continues to enjoy high levels of amenity and livability"</i>. • The Housing Strategy notes that North Sydney LGA median rents and house sales are higher than Greater Sydney and other inner city ring suburbs. • At the time the Housing Strategy was prepared, a total of 1,908 very low income and low-income households were experiencing rental stress, which is almost all lower income households. Further, 100% of key workers living in North Sydney are in housing stress (at time of the Strategy). Therefore, there is an identified need for key worker and affordable housing.	National Housing Accord 2022 NSW Government Housing Targets North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019 North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2040



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	It is a priority in Council's Community Strategic Plan (CSP) to provide diverse housing options that meet the needs of the North Sydney community.	
Decline of North Sydney LGA as a major employment hub	- The relative competitiveness of North Sydney CBD was noted in Council's 2019 local housing strategy as declining and losing its place as the second largest office market in Sydney. This was noted as being due to competition with other centres, constraints on lateral expansion and the generation downturn in commercial property during and following the GFC. Post this plan being prepared, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred which is also likely to have continued to influence the reduction in need for commercial office space. - As of the 2021 Census, 67.5% of North Sydney LGA workers worked from home which is higher than the average for Greater Sydney (41%) and Eastern Harbour City (50%). - In 2024, vacancy rates in North Sydney were 21.40%, yet the average rents/sqm remained the second highest of all Greater Sydney centres. - The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the commercial office market with sharp decreases in demand and high levels of vacancy across the North Sydney CBD. - An online survey undertaken with the community to inform the Housing Strategy found that North Sydney could be improved by increasing residential development in the centre.	North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019 North Sydney Economic Development Strategy 2024
Highly accessible and well-serviced transport location	- North Sydney LGA is highly accessible and well-serviced by both road and public transport networks including rail, bus and ferry services. - Council's focus for residential density is to take advantage of locations with good access to transport, services, community facilities and employment opportunities to minimize development in sensitive areas such as along the foreshore, on land adjoining bushland and in heritage and environmental conservation areas. - Council also notes the importance of maintaining a significant level of commercial and retail floorspace in the CBD to support the economic viability of North Sydney as a centre.	North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019 North Sydney Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020



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	A planning priority in the North Sydney Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) is the 30-minute city which supports walkable centres and a connected, vibrant and sustainable North Sydney.	
High density living	- North Sydney already has predominately high density housing which has grown over the past decade and is expected to continue to grow. - As the Housing Strategy notes, two thirds of families with no children, and three quarters of lone person households live in high density dwellings. - The Housing Strategy notes a housing supply gap for small dwellings as at time of the Strategy there were 15,300 lone person households living in North Sydney LGA, however only 7,800 studio and one-bedroom dwellings in the LGA.	North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019
Connected and socially inclusive community	- The North Sydney Social Inclusion Strategy aims to create a connected and socially inclusive community where everyone is valued. To achieve this outcome, the strategy includes the following strategic directions: - Deliver and increase awareness of community events, programs and activities - Provide new and improved public and community spaces for people to meet and connect - Nurture a shared sense of belonging where everyone's voice is heard and people feel they are valued	North Sydney Social Inclusion Strategy 2024
Open space challenges	- According to Council's Open Space Provision Strategy, the North Sydney LGA open space network is distributed unevenly, with most open space located along foreshores. The Strategy notes there is low provision of open space in some areas of high population density including Crows Nest and there are inadequate linkages and connections to and between open spaces. - The community has provided feedback to Council that there is not enough open space and would like to see more prioritisation for public transport, walking and cycling.	North Sydney Local Housing Strategy 2019 North Sydney Community Strategic Plan 2040



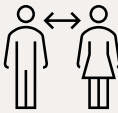
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COMMUNITY PROFILE

1.9 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Based on 2021 ABS Census of Population and Housing data, an overview of the demographic profile of North Sydney suburb and North Sydney LGA is provided below and compared to Greater Sydney averages where relevant for this assessment.

Table 3. Community profile

Theme	Demographic characteristics
	Similar median age to Greater Sydney, however lower household size - As of 2021, there were 8,964 people living in North Sydney suburb which makes up 13% of the North Sydney LGA population. - The median age is 36 in North Sydney suburb which is similar to Greater Sydney (37). - The average household size in North Sydney suburb is 1.9. This is similar to North Sydney LGA (2.0), however lower than the Greater Sydney average (2.7).
	Young adults are the dominant age group living in North Sydney suburb People aged between 25 and 39 years make up the largest proportion of the North Sydney suburb population (38%). Comparatively, this is much higher than the Greater Sydney average (23.4%).
	High proportion of single person households - Single (or lone) person households make up 42.3% of all households in North Sydney suburb. This is significantly higher than Greater Sydney (23.2%) and also higher than North Sydney LGA (38.6%). - Reflective of the high number of lone person households, family households only make up 52.5% of the North Sydney suburb population. This is lower when compared with Greater Sydney (72.6%). - The average number of children per family household is smaller in North Sydney suburb and LGA compared with Greater Sydney (1.5, 1.6 and 1.8 respectively).
	High proportion of renters living in high density - Most of the North Sydney suburb population live in flats or apartments (84.4%). This is higher than the LGA (75.7%) and Greater Sydney (30.7%). - Over half (60.7%) of the North Sydney suburb population rent. This is higher than both the LGA and Greater Sydney (51.9% and 35.9% respectively).
	Above average median household income with lower rates of rental stress, but higher rates of mortgage stress - The median household income in North Sydney suburb is \$2,405 which is slightly lower than the LGA (\$2,524), but higher than Greater Sydney (\$2,077). - Rental stress is lower in North Sydney suburb compared with Greater Sydney (26.1% and 35.3% respectively). - However, mortgage stress is higher in North Sydney suburb compared with Greater Sydney (21.4% and 19.8% respectively).



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1.10 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

North Sydney suburb and LGA are affluent areas of Sydney. North Sydney suburb has a SEIFA score of 1166 and a decile of 10 for socio-economic advantage and disadvantage which means that it is in the top 10% of all suburbs. Similarly, North Sydney LGA has a score of 1164 and decile of 10 for socio-economic advantage and disadvantage which means it is in the top 10% of all LGAs.

1.11 RELEVANT ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Community and stakeholder engagement was undertaken by Polymer Studios and engagement outcomes are summarised in the Community Engagement Report. Top issues and concerns that were raised by the community members include:

- Overshadowing and solar access: particularly for residents south of the site on Wilona Avenue and Mackenzie Street, and concerns about cumulative shadowing from multiple precinct developments.
- Traffic and car parking: questions about the number of parking spaces to be retained, traffic modelling methodology, and whether impacts are assessed individually or holistically across the precinct.
- Building height, scale and design: concern regarding the scale of the development and its relationship with neighbouring low-rise residential properties.
- Cumulative precinct impacts: concern that 5 Blue Street's impacts are assessed alongside those of 15 Blue Street (Aqualand) and the St Francis Xavier Church site.
- View impacts: Requests for view impact analysis from 61 Lavender Street.
- Operational noise: questions around day-to-day noise from residents versus the existing commercial building.
- Access to design information: request from community members for access to detailed design materials prior to formal SSDA submission.



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1.12 METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING SOCIAL IMPACTS

A SIA is required to consider impacts under the following 'social factors' as defined by the DPHI SIA Guideline:

- **Way of life** – including how people live, how they get around, how they work, how they play, how they interact.
- **Community** – including social cohesion, community composition, and people's sense of place.
- **Surroundings** – including access to and use of the natural and built environment.
- **Culture** – including both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.
- **Accessibility** – including how people access and use infrastructure, services and facilities.
- **Health and wellbeing** – including physical and mental health and social determinants of health.
- **Decision making systems** – including distributive equity and the impact on future generations.
- **Livelihoods** – including people's capacity to sustain themselves through employment or business.

The social impact significance matrix specified in the SIA Guideline has been adopted for the purposes of undertaking this SIA (see Table 4).

Table 4. Social impact significance matrix					
Magnitude level					
	1	2	3	4	5
Likelihood level	Minimal	Minor	Moderate	Major	Transformational
Almost Certain	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Very high
Likely	Low	Medium	High	High	Very high
Possible	Low	Low	Medium	High	High
Unlikely	Negligible	Low	Low	Medium	High
Very unlikely	Negligible	Negligible	Low	Medium	Medium

Source: SIA Guidelines Technical Supplement (DPHI)



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1.13 KEY IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

Considering the project and site context and background, community profile and strategic drivers, the following individuals and communities are likely to be impacted by the proposal:

- North Sydney residents, particularly those located in the immediate vicinity along:
 - Blues Point Road
 - MacKenzie Street
 - Miller Street.
- Local businesses in the immediate vicinity
- North Sydney employees
- Users of North Sydney station
- St Francis Xavier Catholic church members and retirement village residents
- St Peter's Presbyterian Church members
- Chinese Christian Bilingual Church members
- People looking to secure housing in the local area
- Key workers looking to secure affordable rental housing in the local area
- Construction workers.



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1.14 SOCIAL IMPACT SCOPING STUDY

Table 5. Scoping Study					
Potential Impact	Social factor/s	Key impacted communities	Impact rating	Project enhancement / mitigation measures	Recommended project responses (enhancement or mitigation)
Increased supply of infill housing including affordable housing in a good location near transport and existing amenities	Accessibility Livelihoods	People looking to secure rental housing in the local area Key workers looking to secure affordable rental housing in the local area	Almost Certain/Moderate = High (Positive)	- Co-living affordable housing to be professionally managed by a Community Housing Provider - The proposed co-living housing includes three different dwelling types to meet a range of affordable housing needs, including 40 Standard, 41 Premium and 5 DDA dwellings. - Since submission of the Scoping Proposal for SEARs the design has been amended so the cantilever is reduced from 8m to 1-3m. This means there are now no undercroft dwellings, as was raised as a concern by Council in their SEARs agency feedback.	N/A



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Retention of Blue Street Plaza ensuring the continuation of an established publicly accessible space that will support maintaining a familiar and valued place. This is aligned with Council's Social Inclusion Strategy (2024) which includes provision of new and improved public and community spaces for people to meet and connect as one of its key strategic directions.	Community Accessibility	North Sydney employees Sydney North Sydney residents Users of North Sydney station	Almost Certain/Moderate = High (Positive)	• Opportunities are being explored to further enhance the public domain surrounding North Sydney Station in collaboration with the proponent of 15 Blue Street. • As documented in the Public Space Plan, enhancements are proposed to Blue Street Plaza which include public art, new seating and new landscaping.	N/A
Change in land use has potential to increase the local resident population, which is likely to result in an increase in day-to-day activation, and more presence of people throughout the day and evening, having a positive effect on the sense of neighbourhood.	Community	North Sydney residents Local businesses in the immediate vicinity	Possible/Moderate = medium (positive)	• High degree of residential amenity will be achieved through consideration of visual privacy, solar access and view sharing for both the proposal and surrounding residential properties.	• Design shared spaces thoughtfully that enable social activities. This should include open kitchens, versatile seating and areas that enable shared hobbies. • Consider other spaces like co-working or study rooms to enable co-living residents to work from home.



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Loss of employment-generating floor space, potentially reducing local job opportunities and altering the economic function of the area.	Accessibility Livelihoods	North employees	Sydney	Likely/Minimal = Low (neutral)	- An Economic Impact Assessment has been prepared by Colliers which finds that there will be a limited impact from loss of commercial floorspace at the site. It finds that the displacement impacts (to businesses and workers) are expected to be temporary and readily absorbed by the market. - The proposal aligns with local and State policies which is to introduce new housing in areas that are already well serviced by transport and infrastructure. - As identified in the Strategic Policy Context of this memo, North Sydney council recognizes that there is a decline of North Sydney as a major employment hub and that an increase in residential development could improve North Sydney as a neighbourhood.	Consider implementation of local procurement strategies for the commercial spaces proposed at ground floor level.
Potential pressure on existing infrastructure including open space, community facilities and local services due to the increase in resident population – from this proposal as well as cumulatively across North Sydney new housing projects	Accessibility Way of life	North Sydney residents		Possible/Minor = Low (neutral)	A Social Infrastructure Assessment is being prepared and submitted with the SSDA. This assessment finds that the demand generated by the proposal for social infrastructure can be absorbed by existing supply.	N/A



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Amenity impacts on immediate surrounding residents such as overshadowing, views and visual impacts. A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared by Colliers. This finds that due to the presence of existing, larger scale, residential and non-residential built elements in the landscape, the sensitivity of the public domain in the proposal's visual catchment to the nature of change proposed ranges from medium to high. The viewpoint from Mackenzie Street (east) is the only viewpoint expected to have a high significance rating.	Way of life	North Sydney residents, particularly those located in the immediate vicinity along Blues Point Road, MacKenzie Street and Miller Street.	Possible; Moderate = Medium (negative)	- The design process undertaken has considered view and visual impact. Private view impacts are only experienced from surrounding commercial office buildings with elevated outlooks toward the harbour setting. While some changes to portions of existing views may occur, the proposal retains visibility of the primary iconic elements that contribute to view value (such as Sydney Harbour, Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney CBD skyline). - Design measures such as retaining appropriate lower-level setbacks to Blue Street Plaza, continue to allow for building separation that ensures private views from surrounding commercial developments to the harbour are retained. - The overshadowing analysis prepared by fjc studio shows that there will be minimal additional overshadowing to the existing built form at the site and existing neighbouring shadows at the winter solstice	N/A
Temporary disruptions to daily routines during construction, particularly people accessing North Sydney Station, as well as amenity impacts related to construction	Accessibility	Users of North Sydney station North Sydney residents	Possible/Minor = Medium (negative)	A Construction Transport Management Plan (CTMP) has been prepared to manage and mitigate construction impacts on the operation of North Sydney Railway Station, as well as pedestrian safety surrounding the site.	Implement a complaints management system during construction to ensure residents have a process to report any issues.



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| | | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regular construction notification letters to inform nearby residents and businesses of activities (particularly noisy activities) or any changes to vehicle access conditions. |
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CONCLUSION

This social impact assessment scoping study has been undertaken to identify any potential social impacts and project responses of the proposal.

The scoping assessment has not found any significant negative impacts, and therefore social impacts identified above can be addressed in the EIS, as required by the DPHI key guidance for social impact on HDA projects.