



Cr Declan Clausen

Newcastle Labor Councillor | Ward 1
City of Newcastle

17 February 2026

Ms Fiona Dowler
NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Via submission portal

Dear Fiona

Objection – Proposed Rezoning and State Significant Development - 47 Darby Street, Cooks Hill

I write in my capacity as a City of Newcastle Councillor representing Ward 1 to lodge a formal objection to the proposed site-specific rezoning and concurrent State Significant Development at 47 Darby Street, Cooks Hill.

This proposal seeks to increase the permitted height from 14 metres to 45 metres. That is more than triple the current legal limit. It also seeks a substantial uplift in floor space ratio.

I do not support this development in its current form and request that consent be refused.

This matter has been raised with me by many local residents. As you are aware, the proposal is being assessed under the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) pathway. City of Newcastle is not the consent authority and does not determine this application. If approved, the proposal would override key elements of Newcastle's established planning framework without sufficient strategic justification.

I want to be clear. I am not opposed to development. Newcastle needs more housing. Increasing density in appropriate locations is good planning. Preventing further sprawl into greenfield land is responsible. Bringing more people into the city to support local businesses, cultural venues and public transport is positive.

Over the past decade, Council has supported significant uplift in the west end of the city centre, consistent with the adopted Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, and reflected in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan, the Newcastle Local Strategic Planning Statement, and our Local Environment Plan. That approach has delivered a revitalised CBD and substantial new housing supply.

However, that growth has always been balanced by an understanding that certain parts of our city are of exceptional civic and cultural importance and must be treated with care.

47 Darby Street sits within the Newcastle City Centre Heritage Conservation Area and on the boundary of the Cooks Hill and The Hill Heritage Conservation Areas. It is directly opposite Civic Park and the Newcastle Art Gallery, within our most significant civic and cultural precinct.

A 45-metre building in this location would be entirely out of scale. It would dominate the two-storey art gallery, overshadow Civic Park and overwhelm the established streetscape of Cooks Hill. It would permanently alter the skyline of the civic precinct.

This is not balanced development.

A building of this height and bulk would:

- Overwhelm the heritage conservation areas that define this part of the city
- Diminish the setting of Civic Park and the Art Gallery
- Set a precedent for excessive height in areas never intended for high rise development



02 4974 1366



dclausen@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Newcastle already has sufficient up zoned land to meet and exceed its housing targets. We urgently need state government partnership to unlock the Broadmeadow Place Strategy and progress the next stage of Honeysuckle. Those areas are strategically identified for significant uplift and are supported by transport and infrastructure planning.

We do not need ad hoc, site specific upzoning in our civic heart that is disconnected from our Local Strategic Planning Statement, Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan.

If government is to permit such a substantial uplift in height and density, it must be accompanied by clear public benefit. City of Newcastle has established mechanisms for this, including incentive height provisions and affordable housing contributions in areas such as Wickham and Broadmeadow. The use of the HDA pathway in this instance risks circumventing those established frameworks and avoiding a fair and proportionate contribution to public infrastructure and amenity.

I also wish to raise concern about accessibility and equity in the consultation process. Many residents have reported difficulty navigating the NSW Planning Portal to lodge a submission. When proposals of this magnitude are exhibited for a limited period, the process must be straightforward and accessible to all members of the community. Meaningful community participation is fundamental to confidence in the planning system.

I understand that City of Newcastle planning officers will be preparing a detailed technical submission. I strongly request that their assessment be given serious and careful consideration.

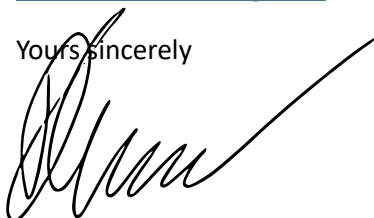
Newcastle can and should grow. But growth must be thoughtful. It must respect heritage, scale and civic character. A tower that overshadows and overwhelms our cultural heart is not the right outcome for this site.

I urge the Department to refuse the proposed rezoning and State Significant Development at 47 Darby Street.

Should you require any further information, please contact me on 02 4974 1366 or via email at

dclausen@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Declan Clausen', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Cr Declan Clausen

City of Newcastle