

State Significant Development SSD-101842729
2–6 Conway Avenue, 15–15A Fernleigh Avenue
& 38–40 Carlisle Street, Rose Bay

To the Department,

I own and live in Conway Avenue, directly across the road from the proposed development site.

I'm writing as a neighbour who will be directly affected by this project. My concerns are simple: I don't believe nearby residents were properly included in consultation, and I'm genuinely worried about what deep excavation below groundwater level could mean for our building.

Firstly, I did not receive notice of the original community consultation session. I only found out about it accidentally. Given that our building is immediately opposite the site, that was surprising. I have since become aware that other nearby residents also missed out on notification.

At the consultation, the project was described in a way that suggested a stepped building form designed to soften its impact. The plans now on exhibition appear substantially more intensive. I accept I'm not a planning professional, but I don't recall being shown anything like the current proposal. If what is exhibited differs materially from what was presented earlier, I don't think affected residents have had a fair opportunity to respond.

My greater concern, however, relates to excavation and groundwater.

Our building is a small 1930s block of four units. It likely has shallow foundations typical of buildings from that era. The proposal involves excavation to around 11 metres in sandy coastal soils, with groundwater encountered at approximately 7 metres. That means excavation will occur below the water table.

Residents have obtained independent geotechnical advice indicating that excavation will intersect groundwater, dewatering is likely to be required, and the proposal does not appear capable of meeting the 0.3 metre groundwater drawdown safeguard outside the site boundary. Redesign has been recommended.

In practical terms, that concerns me. If groundwater levels change, soil conditions can change. If soil conditions change, buildings can move. A 1930s building with shallow footings is not designed to tolerate significant ground movement.

From my reading of the exhibited material, I cannot clearly see:

- how much groundwater will need to be extracted
- how far any drawdown could extend beyond the site

- what settlement impacts are predicted for neighbouring properties
- or how compliance with the 0.3 metre off-site drawdown limit will actually be achieved

Without that information clearly demonstrated and independently reviewed, I don't understand how the risk to surrounding homes can be confidently assessed.

There has also been a recent example in Rose Bay where excavation below groundwater in similar sandy conditions resulted in serious issues and a Stop Work Order. Further examples in similar soil types include a property in Botany that resulted in a Stop Work Order and the evacuation of the occupant, and the much larger disaster that was Mascot Towers, which also resulted in an evacuation and substantial financial loss to owners and even the state government. These risks are real, not theoretical, and raise justifiable concerns around the safety of occupants in their homes surrounding the proposed development.

Our home is not an investment project. It is where we live. It represents years of savings and financial commitment. We have not chosen to take on the risks associated with a deep multi-level basement excavation. That risk is part of the development proposal, and I do not believe it should effectively be transferred to neighbouring residents through uncertainty.

Before any approval is granted, I respectfully ask that the Department require clear and final groundwater modelling, evidence that the 0.3 metre off-site drawdown limit can be met, and independent peer review of the geotechnical material. If significant new technical information is prepared, it should be made available for public review.

If approval is nevertheless considered, then I believe strong, enforceable protections for neighbouring properties should be imposed. At a minimum, this should include an independent pre-construction dilapidation report, a site-specific structural assessment of our building, real-time monitoring of groundwater and vibration during excavation, clear stop-work thresholds if movement exceeds conservative limits, and a security bond proportionate to the excavation risk that remains in place for several years after completion.

Without these measures, the practical financial risk sits with neighbouring homeowners. Not to mention the real risk of physical harm should substantial damage occur to property whilst occupied. If a reasonable level of confidence about impacts on surrounding properties cannot be reached, then I believe approval would place existing residents at unacceptable risk.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my concerns.