

Public Submission – Objection

SSD-97528708 – Mixed Use Development with Infill Affordable Housing - 160 Oxford Street, Paddington

Submitted by: Deanne Latham

Address: 9 Gipps Street, Paddington NSW

Exhibition closes: 13 March 2026

I am writing as a local Paddington resident to object to the proposed development at 160 Oxford Street.

I live at 9 Gipps Street and use Bethel Lane on a daily basis. This proposal would directly affect my home, my privacy and sense of safety and the character of the neighbourhood that many of us have chosen to live in and care for.

I understand the need for more housing in Sydney, including affordable housing. However, I do not believe that this development is an appropriate or sensitive response for this location. The scale, height and intensity of what is proposed feels fundamentally out of place in Paddington and would permanently alter the character of our community.

Paddington is valued for its strong village character, walkable streets and the layers of history evident in its homes, lanes and streetscapes. It is made up of narrow streets, terraces, lanes and small buildings that have evolved gradually over time. That fine-grain pattern is what gives the area its character and sense of place. The proposed 8–9 storey building with four basement levels does not reflect that pattern. It introduces a level of bulk and intensity that Paddington has never absorbed comfortably, particularly at the edge of the Heritage Conservation Area and in such close proximity to the suburb's original established sandstone cottages. Once a building of this size is approved, the change is permanent and cannot be reversed.

The proposal feels out of place, despite what the documents say. The “prominent corner / civic presence” claim is factually incorrect. The architect claims the proposal “Reinforces the observable pattern of similar corner sites accommodating buildings of greater scale and with increased civic presence.” As someone who lives here this claim does not reflect lived reality and is not supported by the surrounding built form. The examples relied upon such as St Vincent's hospital, the Victoria barracks and the Paddington Town Hall are institutional structures, not private residential buildings. Using a hospital complex to justify a private residential tower is a false comparison and not an appropriate precedent for residential development in or near a heritage village. The everyday experience of this part of Oxford Street, Shadforth Street and Gipps Street and the surrounding lanes remains low-rise, residential and fine-grain. Corner prominence does not justify extreme height or density. This proposal would stand apart rather than fit in.

In addition the façade design does not make a tall building feel smaller. The architect suggests that breaking the building into smaller façade elements will reduce its impact. As a resident, it is difficult to accept this argument. No matter how it is designed or articulated an 8–9 storey building is still an 8–9 storey building. Its height, bulk, excavation and long-term presence will be felt every day, particularly from neighbouring homes and lanes. Design treatment does not change the physical reality of the scale being proposed.

Even the Visual Impact Assessment acknowledges that the building will be highly visible and dominant from several viewpoints, including Shadforth Street. As residents, we will see this building every day. In my own case, the proposed height and proximity of the development will result in my home being directly overlooked. Where I currently look out from my window to trees and open sky, my outlook will instead be to a large residential tower. This will fundamentally change how our streets and homes feel, increasing a sense of enclosure and reducing our connection to the surrounding Paddington village. Characterising these impacts as “acceptable” does not diminish their significance for affected residents.

Bethel Lane is currently a quiet, semi-private residential lane. It is not a public thoroughfare and is used primarily by residents. The proposal introduces new pedestrian access through the lane. While the documents focus narrowly on noise modelling, they do not address what this means in practice, i.e. loss of privacy and seclusion, increased lighting and surveillance, people passing close to our homes at all hours and a permanent change in the character of the lane. For those of us who live here this is not a minor change. It affects how safe and comfortable we feel in our own homes.

Shadforth Street traffic and parking impacts are also seriously underestimated. Access to the site is proposed via Shadforth Street, a narrow street that whilst technically two-way, in reality only allows one vehicle to pass at a time. Anyone who lives or travels along this street understands how constrained it already is. In addition to relying on theoretical traffic volumes and intersection modelling, the traffic assessment fails to address the real, everyday conditions of the surrounding streets. It does not properly consider the physical width constraints of Shadforth Street, nor does it account for vehicle conflicts, queueing and the stand-offs that already occur when cars meet head-on. The assessment also downplays the impacts of servicing, waste and delivery vehicles as well as the disruption that will occur during a long construction period involving deep excavation and heavy truck movements.

Importantly, the analysis is based almost entirely on 40 residential apartments, yet the proposal includes 83 parking spaces, which in itself indicates a much higher level of vehicle movement than the modelling suggests. The assessment does not adequately account for the circulation of vehicles within the car park, visitor parking turnover or the additional movements generated by the retail component, including customer vehicles, deliveries and waste collection associated with the shops. All of these movements will rely on the very narrow Shadforth Street.

The result is that traffic impacts are significantly understated. Even small increases in vehicle movements have disproportionate consequences in narrow streets like Shadforth Street and Gipps Street and these effects will inevitably flow back onto Oxford Street affecting pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and nearby businesses, particularly in the context of the proposed Oxford Street bike lane, which has not been considered at all as part of the assessment. This is not a theoretical concern, it reflects how the area already functions on a daily basis.

Construction impacts will also be long and exhausting. Four basement levels mean deep excavation, heavy machinery, trucks, noise, vibration and dust over an extended period. Living next to this level of construction is not a short term inconvenience, it will dominate daily life for years. In a tightly packed heritage area, these impacts are especially difficult to manage and hard to escape. Promises of future management plans do not change the reality of what residents will experience.

The affordable housing benefit also does not justify the scale. I support affordable housing in principle. However, this proposal involves demolishing 27 genuinely affordable studio apartments and replacing them with only 10 affordable dwellings, secured temporarily for 15 years only. In an area with very high market rents, a discount of 20–25% below market rent does not deliver genuine affordability for low-moderate income households. This represents a net loss of affordable housing, not a gain, and involves the displacement of existing residents. Using this limited and temporary outcome to justify a building of this scale feels like an inappropriate use of planning incentives and is unfair to both the existing community and those who will be displaced.

This decision will set a precedent and approving a building of this size at the edge of the Paddington Heritage Conservation Area sends a clear message about what may follow. Even if this site is described as unique, future proposals will point to it as a benchmark. Over time, this risks eroding the very qualities that make Paddington special.

This objection is not about resisting all change. It is about protecting a place that many people care deeply about. Paddington can accommodate growth but it must be careful, respectful and proportionate. This proposal goes too far.

I respectfully ask the consent authority to refuse this application or at the very least require a substantial redesign that significantly reduces height and bulk, protects residential lanes and privacy, addresses traffic, parking and construction impacts honestly and delivers genuine affordable housing without displacing existing residents.



Yours sincerely

Deanne Latham