

Departure from Planning Controls and Community Expectations

This proposal represents an extraordinary departure from the planning framework that has been established for Wickham and Newcastle. While the Newcastle LEP allows increased building height and floor space ratio where community benefits are provided, the proposed tower far exceeds even those bonus provisions.

At approximately 150 metres in height and an FSR of 14.4:1, the development is more than double the maximum scale contemplated under the Wickham planning framework. The proposal would become the tallest building in the Newcastle Local Government Area despite no strategic review demonstrating that surrounding infrastructure, public open space, transport networks, or community facilities can support development of this intensity.

Approving a development of this scale risks undermining the integrity of the planning system. Local planning controls exist to provide certainty for residents, businesses, and investors. If a proposal can exceed adopted controls by such a significant margin, the purpose and credibility of those controls is diminished.

The proposal also establishes a precedent for further ultra-high-rise development across Wickham and Newcastle West. Once a tower of this scale is approved, it becomes increasingly difficult to resist similar applications, potentially leading to cumulative impacts on traffic, overshadowing, public amenity, infrastructure capacity, and neighbourhood character.

In addition, the development fails to respond appropriately to Wickham's distinctive industrial and maritime heritage. Its scale and design reflect a generic high-rise tower that could be located in any major city, rather than a building that reinforces the unique identity, history, and human-scale character of the Wickham precinct.

For these reasons, the proposal is inconsistent with the intent of the Newcastle LEP, the Wickham Masterplan, and the broader strategic vision for the area, and should not be approved in its current form.

John Thacker
Resident and Ratepayer
Chair, Newcastle West Community Group Inc.
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