

Submission on SSD 88702457

St Francis Xavier Church site Mackenzie Street Lavender Bay

Submitted by Shane Jaffrey | Nearby resident | 17 September 2026

I object to SSD-88702457 in its current form. I support more housing, including affordable housing, but this proposal asks Lavender Bay to absorb a building of a scale that does not fit the site or the surrounding area. In my view, the application should either be refused or redesigned as a substantially smaller development.

I live nearby, so my concern is not theoretical. I know how constrained the local streets are, how difficult parking already is and how quickly traffic backs up around Lavender Bay. I also value the character of the area. Lavender Bay sits beside major commercial centres, but it has retained a distinct, lower-scale identity. That distinction is worth protecting.

The proposal is too large for this site

A 20-storey residential tower is an excessive response to this particular site. It would be highly visible and would dominate the church and the surrounding streetscape. Retaining parts of the existing heritage buildings is not enough if the new development overwhelms the very setting that gives them significance.

There is a clear difference between allowing a sensible redevelopment and accepting a tower that changes the nature of this part of Lavender Bay. The question should not simply be how many homes can physically be placed on the site. It should be what level of development the site and neighbourhood can reasonably carry without losing the qualities that make the area distinctive.

This proposal crosses that line. Its height, bulk and density would push the high-rise character of North Sydney and Milsons Point further into a much more intimate residential and heritage area. Once a building of this scale is approved and constructed, that change is permanent.

The heritage setting matters

St Francis Xavier Church is not an isolated object. It's scale, visibility and relationship with the surrounding streets are part of their heritage value. A development can retain old walls and still seriously damage the heritage character of a place if the new building becomes the dominant feature.

The proposal should be assessed against the character of Lavender Bay itself, not against the taller buildings visible in nearby commercial areas. Those taller areas already exist and serve a different purpose. They should not become the benchmark for gradually extending high-rise development through Lavender Bay.

Both major developments must be considered together

My strongest concern is that SSD-88702457 is being considered while another major proposal, SSD-86797708 at Lavender Street and Middlemiss Street, is also progressing nearby. These developments will affect the same small network of streets, intersections, parking spaces, footpaths and public transport services. Treating them as unrelated projects would give an incomplete picture of their real impact.

The Department should require a precinct-wide assessment based on the reasonable scenario that both developments proceed. That assessment should examine their combined effect on:

- traffic volumes and turning movements on Mackenzie Street, Lavender Street, Middlemiss Street and surrounding roads
- street parking and demand for resident parking permits
- pedestrian and cyclist safety
- deliveries, rideshare vehicles, tradespeople, removalists and other short-term vehicle movements
- construction traffic, worker parking and possible overlapping construction periods
- noise, dust, vibration and road occupation
- overshadowing, privacy, wind and the visual character of the conservation area

Looking at each application separately may allow the impacts of each one to appear manageable on paper. Local residents will experience the combined result. That is the result the planning decision needs to address.

Traffic and road safety are already practical problems

The local road network is narrow and busy. It carries residents, commuters, church visitors, school-related traffic, delivery vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. Mackenzie Street is not an obvious location for a substantial increase in vehicle entries, exits and turning movements.

Traffic modelling should not be limited to whether an intersection remains within a technical operating threshold. It needs to reflect how the area actually functions at busy times, including queuing, blocked sightlines, vehicles searching for parking, delivery stops and conflicts with people walking or cycling. A development of this size will add activity throughout the day, not only during a single modelled peak period.

Parking demand should remain with the development

Parking is already difficult in Lavender Bay during the working week and at weekends. The proposal should not rely on surrounding streets or the resident parking permit scheme to absorb demand that has not been accommodated on site.

The issue extends beyond the cars owned by future residents. Visitors, carers, cleaners, tradespeople, couriers, food deliveries and removalists will all need somewhere to stop. If the proposed density cannot be supported without increasing pressure on scarce public parking, that is a sign that the development is too large for the site.

Any approval should prevent residents without an allocated on-site space from shifting the development's parking shortfall into Area 6 Zone A. Existing residents should not carry that cost.

Construction would impose a long disruption

The estimated construction period is about two and a half years. For nearby residents, that means an extended period of heavy vehicle movements, noise, dust, vibration, road occupation and pressure from construction-worker parking. If work on SSD-86797708 occurs at the same time or shortly afterwards, the disruption could continue for years across the same small precinct.

These issues should be addressed before a decision is made, not left almost entirely to a construction management plan prepared after approval. The ability to build a project safely and with tolerable effects on surrounding residents is relevant to whether the proposed scale is appropriate in the first place.

The outcome I am requesting

I ask the Department to refuse SSD-88702457 in its current form or require a major redesign before it is considered further. A revised proposal should:

- reduce the height, bulk and overall density substantially
- preserve the prominence and setting of the church and former school
- respond to the established scale and character of Lavender Bay
- provide enough on-site parking for residents and the other vehicle demand it creates
- avoid adding unacceptable traffic and safety risks to local streets
- include enforceable controls for construction traffic, hours, noise, dust and worker parking
- be assessed together with SSD-86797708 through an independent cumulative-impact assessment

More housing is needed, but that does not make every proposal appropriate. This site can be redeveloped without accepting a 20-storey tower and the long-term consequences that come with it. Lavender Bay should not be permanently changed by two major projects approved one at a time without a clear assessment of what they will do to the area together.

For those reasons, I object to the current application and ask that it be refused or substantially redesigned.

Shane Jaffrey