

Mowbray Road, Lane Cove North, Affordable Housing
SSD-71687208

I strongly oppose the proposed development at 618-624 Mowbray Rd & 25 Mindarie Street, Lane Cove North. I have read through the development application, and as a local resident (as defined in the Consultation Report) I find that some of the assumptions and statements made to be entirely inaccurate. Additionally, community issues that have been raised during the consultation phase were not properly addressed. As the NSW Government is both the applicant and consent authority of the project, there is a clear conflict of interest. This application should at the very least be referred to an Independent planning Commission to have at least an appearance of being fair.

Engagement with the Community

As a local resident, during the consultation phase I was provided with notice of this development through a letter in the mail. I provided my feedback and questions regarding the project to the listed email channel. I have several issues with the assumptions made in the Consultation Report.

The Consultation Report at Section 4.5 states that the low attendance rate (3% of households invited) at the Community drop-in session demonstrated substantial community support, or impartiality for the project. This is not a fair or accurate assumption that can be made. Note I did not attend the drop in session, as I did not receive notification of it until a couple of days before the meeting. I utilized the other ways to provide feedback that was listed in the letter provided, as did many other residents.

A more accurate depiction of whether the community supports this project would be to look at the total number of submissions received listed at 4.6 of the report. 93 submissions were received, as well as one with 124 signatures. Whilst it is highlighted in the Consultation Report that this surge was driven by local councilors, this shouldn't be a reason to not take the high number of submissions seriously and as a true representation of what the local residents have issues with regarding the development. To want community feedback and then to not give credit to the submissions received and instead focus on the percentage of in person community engagement to determine if the community supports this project is completely inaccurate and misleading.

This has been a tick-the-box exercise by Homes NSW without any real meaningful community engagement. We have not received any real meaningful feedback and responses to our questions and concerns regarding this project. The only response I received was a FAQ form, which did not address any of my questions or concerns. Additionally, no notification or letter was received regarding the SSD. I am not sure if that is required, but I want to note as a local resident that was identified in the area map, I did not receive any additional communication regarding this stage of the project.

Lack of amenities included

I, as many other local residents, would like to see local amenities or shops included in this development. Lane Cove North does not have adequate access to local shops and services due to the rapidly growing population along the Mowbray Precinct. There is also no identifiable place for our community to meet and socialise outside of our homes. Traffic and demand for parking has become an issue, and even more so as each new apartment complex nears completion.

In 2021, Lane Cove Council identified 25-29 Mindarie Street as a potential site for a neighbourhood centre. This was after a decade of back and forth and expressed concerns for the need for a neighbourhood centre (all part of the rezoning of this precinct). A review undertaken by the Department of Planning and Lane Cove Council was even completed in 2011 by JBA consulting with traffic studies prepared by SMEC Australia. The full background and summary can be found in the agenda of Lane Cove Council's October 2024 meeting.

I've been following this for some time, especially as I purchased and moved into the area only a few years ago. From my readings and just the general consensus from discussing this with my neighbours, we believed a neighbourhood centre and shops were to be built at this location. It is quite disappointing that the current local resident's needs are being ignored.

There is also a clear lack of understanding of the current amenities and shops that are located in this area. There are several mentions of local residents being able to access our day to day needs from the current shops in the area. Specifically it mentions we have a specialty butcher and greengrocer. This research must have just been done by googling and including the results that pop up. Whilst we do have a South African specialty butcher that identifies as a greengrocer on its storefront, it is not a greengrocer. This is a specialty shop that people go to specifically for their South African meats. They do have a few staple items, but the costs of these items are more than the typical local grocer and would not be used by someone who needs social or affordable housing. Additionally, the hours are very limited and thus does not provide an adequate resources for everyday needs.

The Consultation Report also mentions that shops are easily walkable or a ten minute bus ride. However, it fails to mention that it is not an easy walk to and from the main shops of Lane Cove Village, and that a 10 minute bus ride would only be at nonpeak hours, of course when the bus only comes every 30 minutes or every hour. There is a need to have a car in this area because of this. However, having a car is also an issue as there is a severe lack of parking, especially on Mindarie Street.

There is also a statement made that shops would lead to increased traffic in this area. However there is no mention of this in any traffic study, and the belief would be that traffic would actually decrease in Lane Cove North and traffic into Lane Cove Village, as less people would need to leave by car and instead could walk to get their essential items. I would urge Homes NSW to undertake a traffic study to demonstrate the actual impacts shops would have on the area.

Homes NSW has mentioned that if they were to include shops that it would compromise their ability to provide quality homes for those in need. However, including shops would actually allow Homes NSW to provide a liveable location for these residents and the current residents. This location is a prime location for shops in the area, with it located across a school and a busy park. This is the best place for a neighbourhood centre to thrive. Instead, Homes NSW is just trying to hit their target numbers without trying to fully better the lives of those residents. It's about hitting a number, moving residents in, and then moving on to their next project.

Misleading comments from Homes NSW regarding who would be living in the social and affordable housing

During the consultation phase, Homes NSW has led local residents to believe those that are in need of social housing are the elderly, and thus that would be the large makeup of the residents at this development. This was because many local residents feel that there should be more 3 bedroom and 2 bedroom apartments, as this location would benefit families as it is centrally located across a school and next to a park.

However, based on the Social Impact Statement, this is not the case. According to Table 12, over 50% are expected to be between the ages of 20-49, and 27% are expected to be 50+.

Thus, Homes NSW has misled local residents with its reasoning in not having 3 bedroom apartments due to the large elderly population in need of these units. There is local concern about the demographic of the residents, as it is in close proximity to a school and a park. A school and a park does not cater to single persons ranging from 20-49, and if anything, raises even more concerns that were not able to be properly addressed due to the misleading statements from Homes NSW.

The demographics of the expected residents was also discussed at the school P&C meeting. The Homes NSW representative mentioned that often perpetrators of domestic abuse/violence are sometimes easier to remove from the home and are in need of social housing. Parents made comments that they didn't want perpetrators of domestic abuse/violence living across the street from a school and next to a park. Homes NSW went on to say that there wouldn't be perpetrators and likely it would be elderly persons (even though an elderly person would have trouble living in this area due to no medical access, tough terrain, and no local shops). Now, based on the reports that the age demographic is lower and primarily 20-49, should we now assume perpetrators of domestic abuse will be living in these units? This raises additional safety and security questions.

Safety and Security

I have concerns regarding safety and security. We already live in close proximity to other social housing properties, and our experiences have not been great.

In regards to crime, whilst the rates in Lane Cove North are lower than NSW as a whole, crime rates are higher in Lane Cove North compared to Lane Cove. This is a concern, as the goal is not to just live in an average NSW crime area, but to be in a safe area with little crime. Theft is already high in this area, and I have experienced this firsthand. We've also had our secure apartment building garage broken into a couple of times. This combined with the anti-social behaviour and issues with the current social housing buildings, we do not see the benefit of having social housing.

There is also a communal space included in the development proposal, and suggestion that as this is close to the park, this will lead to strengthening the relationships between residents and nonresidents. This communal space is located in a dark and shadowed area (as it is at the back of the property on Mindarie). Based on our other experiences with social housing communal spaces, this space will not be well maintained, and will invite anti-social behaviour. Having this communal space right next to a park where young children play will create a safety risk.

There are other buildings in the area where social housing is mixed within a commercial development. These don't have the negative stigma associated with them. A mix seems like it would do more good to integrate with the community than the current proposed plan. Local residents do not have a good view on social housing because of our own current experiences with it. And I'm afraid even with the words and promises made in these documents, they simply won't hold up and are not trusted by local residents.

Conclusion

These are just a few of the many concerns and reasons why I object to the development. I ask that at the very least, more consultation and engagement be undertaken and that we receive responses that fully address our concerns.