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Housing and Infrastructure  
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Ben Hendriks  
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**Submitted by: Ben Hendriks**  
**Attention: Stephen Dobbs**

Date: 24 March 2025

Dear Stephen Dobbs and the assessment team,

**Submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure**  
**Re: Objection to The Timberyards Rental Housing Project (SSD-76927247)**  
**Victoria Road, Sydenham Road, Farr Street and Mitchell Street, Marrickville**

I am writing this submission as a local resident and property owner in Marrickville, who both lives near the proposed Timberyards development and owns land that is directly adjacent to a future development site within the same precinct. I am someone who has actively supported the transformation of this area. I previously supported the rezoning and development control plan (DCP) for the Victoria Road Precinct, and I continue to welcome positive and sustainable change in this part of the Inner West.

However, I have serious concerns about the current development proposal. In its current form, I believe it significantly overreaches and departs from the agreed planning framework. As a resident, I am particularly worried about the impacts on local amenity, traffic, parking, overshadowing, and infrastructure strain. As a landowner, I am concerned about the precedent this will set for future developments—including directly next door to where I live.

As someone who has worked professionally on urban renewal projects across Sydney for more than 25 years—including roles in government and through my own planning consultancy—I am well placed to understand both the opportunities and impacts of development. While objections to development can often overstate potential impacts, in this case the concerns are well-founded: the scale and design of the proposal are likely to cause genuine and significant impacts to the surrounding community.

This submission outlines my key concerns. I hope it is received in the spirit in which it is intended: as a constructive contribution from someone who wants to see the precinct flourish in line with the good urban planning principles and community outcomes.

### **1. I Support the precincts Development, but This Goes Too Far**

Let me begin by reaffirming my support for change in this area. I understand the need for more housing, including affordable housing, and I welcome new investment in public spaces, employment, and creative industries in Marrickville. The rezoning and DCP adopted in 2018 were developed after extensive consultation and offered a balanced path forward.

Unfortunately, this proposal is not just a step beyond that framework—it's several leaps ahead.

At 1,188 dwellings, this project would create one of the densest residential precincts in Australia. The Floor Space Ratio (FSR) of 3.43:1 and building heights up to 30.2 metres are well beyond what was anticipated in the LEP and DCP, and significantly exceed even the more intensive Transit Oriented Development areas across Sydney. Typically, densities at this level are only found in major centres where taller buildings can comfortably accommodate this level of floor space. This is not a minor variation—it fundamentally alters the nature of the precinct and threatens the liveability of the surrounding area.

### **2. A Concerning Precedent for Future Development**

One of my core concerns is the precedent this proposal sets. I live next to a future development site in the precinct. If this application is approved in its current form, it will set a powerful benchmark for what is considered acceptable—even if it dramatically exceeds the controls in the DCP and LEP. This raises serious questions about fairness and consistency

Why should one precinct be allowed to significantly exceed planning controls while others are expected to follow them? And how will Council or the Department justify holding other proponents to account if this project is approved as is?

Approving this proposal would undermine community confidence in the planning system and risk a domino effect of similarly oversized projects that will overwhelm local infrastructure and degrade the character of the precinct.

### **3. Overshadowing and Visual Impact on Surrounding Homes**

Buildings along Sydenham Road and Farr Street are proposed at heights of up to 30.2 metres—far exceeding the 11m and 20m height limits that currently apply. This means eight-storey buildings will be constructed directly adjacent to and across from single-storey homes.

The result? Unacceptable levels of overshadowing, loss of privacy, and an imposing street presence. At least three nearby dwellings will receive less than two hours of sunlight in winter, breaching the DCP's minimum solar access requirement.

As a nearby resident, I find this especially concerning. Many homes and backyards will be in near-permanent shadow during winter months. Privacy will also be compromised, with higher buildings directly overlooking living areas. The proposed "step-down" of building height is minimal and inconsistent with the intent of the DCP, which sought a more gradual and respectful transition.

#### **4. Inadequate Housing Diversity**

Nearly half of the proposed dwellings are co-living units, and many of the rest are studios or one-bedroom apartments. Only a very small number of two- and three-bedroom units are provided. This does not reflect the demographic makeup of Marrickville, where the average household size is over 2.3 people.

Again, I do not object to the proposal for co-living buildings but I believe at the scale of this precinct there should be greater diversity of housing.

This project is not delivering housing that supports families, long-term residents, or key workers. Instead, it targets a narrow segment of renters—mainly single people in transient or short-term arrangements.

If we are going to build new homes in the Inner West, they should be homes that serve a range of people and promote long-term community building. This proposal fails to do that.

#### **5. Traffic Safety Around Marrickville Public School**

One of the most troubling aspects of this proposal is the plan to place residential and delivery vehicle access points on Farr Street. This street is a major pedestrian thoroughfare for children walking to Marrickville Public School.

Introducing two new access points on Farr Street will significantly increase traffic on a narrow, local road that is already congested during school drop-off and pick-up times. The risks to pedestrian safety, particularly for young children, are unacceptable. This runs counter to basic urban design principles that prioritise walkability, safety, and access to schools.

This is not an appropriate location for high-traffic vehicle access, and it must be rethought urgently.

#### **6. Inadequate Car Parking and On-Street Pressure**

While the project provides 238 parking spaces, this falls short of the required number under the Housing SEPP and the Inner West DCP. This part of

Marrickville does not have a resident parking scheme, and most homes do not have off-street parking.

Adding over 1,000 new dwellings without adequate parking will cause serious stress on already limited on-street parking. It's not just a nuisance—it's a daily frustration for residents trying to live their lives. It's also likely to increase illegal parking and reduce the amenity of local streets.

Again, this isn't about opposing development. It's about making sure the infrastructure is provided that can support it.

## **7. The LEP and DCP Should Matter**

Clause 6.31 of the Inner West LEP clearly states that development in this precinct cannot proceed without a site-specific DCP that addresses design, infrastructure, staging, and environmental matters.

The current DCP was prepared for a very different scale of development. This proposal is far beyond what the existing DCP envisaged. No updated DCP has been prepared or exhibited. Therefore, this proposal is inconsistent with the LEP and should not be approved in its current form.

Trying to override the LEP and DCP using a Clause 4.6 variation is not only inappropriate—it may be legally questionable. Clause 4.6 expressly excludes its use in varying provisions under Clause 6.31.

## **8. Overdevelopment and Design Quality Failings**

The development includes long building blocks, excessive site coverage, and minimal deep soil zones. Building lengths exceed 70 metres in some cases—well beyond the 65m rule of thumb considered appropriate for master planned developments. These buildings will feel bulky and visually overwhelming from the street.

Internal amenity is also compromised. There are too many units per lift core and long corridors, especially in the build-to-rent and co-living buildings. Natural light and ventilation will suffer, and the shared spaces lack usability—most are located on podium rooftops rather than at ground level.

This is not good design. It's a case of squeezing too much onto one site without regard for how people will live, move, and connect.

## **9. Local Infrastructure Can't Keep Up – no proposed improvements**

Local infrastructure—especially schools—is already at capacity. The local library is heavily used. Parks and community centres are busy.

This development will add thousands of new residents to an area with no clear plan or funding for additional local infrastructure. The proposal does not include new community facilities and will place pressure on those that already exist. As a parent and active local, I worry this means reduced services and support for those of us who already live here—and for the new residents, too.

## **10. Open Space: More Gated or Public?**

The proposal refers to “publicly accessible open space,” but the details are vague.

The Plan of Management suggests that key areas may be gated at night, and there is no clear statement about how long or how often these spaces will be open to the public.

If this space is not truly open, then it does not serve the wider community and should not be counted as a public benefit. We need real, unrestricted public spaces—particularly in high-density areas like this.

## **7. Community Assumptions and the Importance of Transparency**

One of the reasons this exhibition has not attracted significant community interest is because many locals—myself included—initially assumed this proposal was simply a reflection of what had already been agreed through the LEP and DCP processes.

There was an expectation that the development would proceed in accordance with the planning framework that had been carefully negotiated and exhibited in 2018. This included LEP provisions to ensure future development would be consistent with new controls

However, as people have come to understand the extent of the proposed variations—including building heights that are more than double what was anticipated, and an unprecedented residential density—they’ve realised this is not just a minor step forward, but a major departure from what was promised.

This disconnect has created frustration and confusion among residents. As a result, interest in the public exhibition has spiked only recently, and for many, it’s the first time they’ve realised how dramatically the project exceeds the planning controls.

## **My Request**

To be clear: I am not against development on this site. I supported the original rezoning and DCP and still support the vision for a vibrant, mixed-use precinct.

But the proposal on the table today is not what was promised. It goes too far, too fast, and with too many negative impacts on the surrounding community.

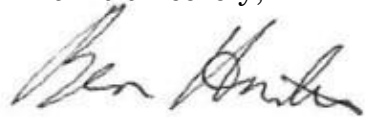
I respectfully ask that the Department:

1. **Reject the proposal in its current form and work with the proponent to improve the scheme to address points raised in this submission.**
2. **Request a new or updated DCP** to guide future development in a way that aligns with the scale and intent of the Precinct.
3. **Reduce the building heights** at the sensitive edges along Sydenham Road and Farr Street.
4. **Move all vehicle access away from Farr Street** to protect children and families walking to school.
5. **Improve the diversity of housing**, including more two- and three-bedroom apartments for families.
6. **Provide adequate parking** to avoid on-street congestion.
7. **Ensure true public access** to open space at ground level.
8. **Ensure the local community is consulted** on future iterations of the proposal.

*History has shown that when development significantly exceeds what communities reasonably expect—whether on Canterbury Road or other poorly developed corridors across Sydney—the political pendulum often swings sharply back, leading to prolonged backlash, policy reversals, and a hardening of anti-development sentiment. **If approved in its current form, this project risks becoming a symbol of planning overreach, jeopardising future housing delivery efforts by eroding public confidence and empowering those opposed to change.***

Thank you for taking the time to consider this submission. I'd welcome the opportunity to meet or discuss further with the assessment team.

Yours sincerely,



**Ben Hendriks**