

Objection to SSD-81890707

(10, 14 & 14A Stanhope Road, Killara)

31 May 2025

Introduction

I am a long-term resident of Stanhope Road (12 years at 5 Stanhope Road, Killara) and I write to lodge a formal objection to State Significant Development application SSD-81890707 for 10, 14 and 14A Stanhope Road, Killara.

This proposal seeks to demolish existing dwellings and construct a multi-building residential development ranging from 3 up to 10 storeys with infill affordable housing. My objection is based on serious concerns regarding negative impacts on local ecology, traffic congestion and safety, and the development's insensitivity to the heritage context of the Stanhope Road Heritage Conservation Area.

As outlined below, the proposal exhibits numerous planning compliance deviations (e.g. exceeding height and density controls) and fundamental inconsistencies with the character and environmental values of the area.

I respectfully urge the Department of Planning and Environment to reject SSD-81890707, in line with the evidence and arguments detailed herein.

Ecological and Biodiversity Impacts

The subject site contains a grove of mature Sydney Blue Gum trees, which are self-seeded remnants of the indigenous forest that once covered this area. These trees are not only iconic to the suburb's landscape but form part of the Blue Gum High Forest ecological community – listed as a critically endangered ecological community under NSW and Commonwealth laws. In fact, independent ecological analysis (Ross Wellington, Ecologist) confirms that the TOD (Transport-Oriented Development) up-zoning areas around Killara include “high value, mature trees” that represent remnant stands of Blue Gum High Forest (and associated Sydney Turpentine-Ironbark Forest). The presence of this Blue Gum grove on the site means the proposal would involve clearing critically endangered forest remnants, with irreversible loss of biodiversity values.

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and supporting Biodiversity Assessment for SSD-81890707 appear to vastly understate the ecological significance of the site. Removal of these trees and surrounding habitat will directly contravene the objectives of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, which mandate the conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecosystem integrity for future generations. Simply proposing token offsets or plantings cannot replace the ecological function of century-old Blue Gums in situ. The Ku-ring-gai Council's own

expert ecologists (e.g. Land Eco Consulting, Ross Wellington) have highlighted that blanket high-density redevelopment in this precinct “prioritise[s] housing density at the expense of biodiversity conservation”, inconsistent with State environmental laws and Ecologically Sustainable Development principles.

Moreover, Ku-ring-gai Council’s Urban Forest Strategy aims to increase tree canopy cover in residential areas to 40% (from current ~30%) as a vital measure to protect amenity and wildlife corridors. The wholesale tree removal envisaged by this development runs counter to these targets – Council’s modelling indicates the new high-density controls will result in a significant loss of tree canopy, making it “impossible to meet [canopy] cover targets” in Ku-ring-gai. The biodiversity impact here is not just local but cumulative: each large tree supports native fauna (such as birds, bats, and arboreal mammals) and contributes to the connected “Green Web” of urban bushland. Clearing the Blue Gum grove would fragment this habitat network and diminish the environmental quality of the suburb.

In summary, the proposal’s ecological harm is unacceptable. It would destroy a remnant of critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest, undermine regional biodiversity conservation efforts, and violate the principle of protecting natural assets in urban planning. No amount of landscaping or offsets can compensate for the permanent loss of this grove and the significant biodiversity values it embodies. This ground alone – the environmental impact – warrants refusal of the application under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act’s merit considerations.

Traffic Congestion and Safety

The influx of traffic from a development of this scale would overwhelm the capacity of Stanhope Road and surrounding local streets. The proposal reportedly comprises around 135 apartments (including affordable units), which can be expected to introduce hundreds of additional residents and vehicles. Even with some residents using nearby Killara Station, the majority of households will own cars, leading to a sharp increase in daily traffic movements. The Traffic Impact Assessment in the EIS must be scrutinized against on-ground reality: Stanhope Road is a local collector street connecting to the Pacific Highway with a single lane each way and a 50 km/h speed limit. It is not designed to handle high volumes of traffic. Indeed, Stanhope Road currently functions as a quiet residential street; any surge in traffic will create congestion at the junction with Pacific Highway (near Killara Station) and along the road’s length.

Safety risks are a major concern. The street environment of Stanhope Road – with its wide garden verges and lack of heavy traffic infrastructure – is currently pedestrian-friendly and used by local residents (including children and the elderly) for walking and recreation. A large apartment complex’s worth of vehicles would introduce substantial conflict points – more cars exiting/entering the site’s driveways, more movement at the Pacific Hwy intersection (which has limited sight lines and is already under strain during peak hours), and generally faster, cut-through traffic once congestion builds on the highway. The cumulative traffic impacts of this and other proposed high-density projects in the vicinity have not been properly quantified by the proponent. Notably, Ku-ring-gai Council has pointed out that the State’s accelerated housing program was advanced “with no transport impact assessment” for the resulting increase in dwellings – effectively leaving local communities to bear the brunt of unexamined traffic congestion and safety problems.

It is foreseeable that the development's residents, visitors, service vehicles, and delivery trucks will generate traffic volumes equivalent to a large commercial development. In fact, preliminary Council assessments suggest that the added traffic from the new density around each train station could be equivalent to "approximately 2 new full-line supermarkets" worth of vehicle trips in the peak hour. Injecting such load onto Stanhope Road without any upgrades is a recipe for gridlock and accidents. No road widening or intersection improvements are proposed to mitigate this – nor are they feasible without destroying the very streetscape and private gardens that define Stanhope Road. The safety of pedestrians is at stake: more cars on a road with driveways and without extensive footpaths or crossings heightens the risk of collisions. I draw attention to the duty of care to school children who walk in the area and commuters accessing Killara Station on foot – their safety would be compromised by the projected traffic surge.

In conclusion, the traffic and transport impacts of SSD-81890707 are unsustainable. The development would exacerbate congestion, harm the quiet residential amenity, and create new road safety hazards that neither the proponent nor Council can adequately ameliorate. This contravenes the orderly development principle and fails to satisfy the likely requirements of Traffic NSW and RMS for maintaining road network efficiency. The prudent course is to refuse the application on grounds of traffic overload and public safety.

Heritage and Local Character Impacts

The proposed development site lies within (or immediately adjacent to) the Stanhope Road Heritage Conservation Area (HCA), known as HCA C25A/C25B under the Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan 2015. This conservation area is an exceptionally significant heritage precinct. According to Council's heritage study, Stanhope Road HCA is "a good and largely intact residential precinct" characterised by streetscapes of high-quality single detached houses from the Federation, Inter-War and Post-War periods, set in large garden grounds with mature trees and wide streets. The very essence of this area is a low-density garden suburb – a "blend of fine domestic architecture within a landscape of indigenous forests and exotic plantings", which is synonymous with Ku-ring-gai's heritage identity. The heritage significance is both individual (many properties are historically important) and collective (the area as a whole reflects an important layering of Sydney's suburban development over time).

It is in this context that the SSD-81890707 proposal for a part 3, part 10-storey apartment complex is profoundly objectionable. The height, bulk, and modern architectural form of the proposed buildings bear no relationship to the scale or character of the surrounding heritage streetscape. A ten-storey flat building would tower over Stanhope Road's predominantly 1-2 storey heritage houses, utterly dominating sight-lines and destroying the human-scale ambience. The Heritage Impact Statement submitted by the proponent cannot gloss over the stark reality: this development would visually and physically overwhelm the conservation area. It would interrupt the "large garden settings, ... street plantings and remnant trees" that define the area, replacing them with an intrusive built form that detracts from the historic environment.

Notably, Lisa Trueman, Council's independent Heritage Advisor, has provided expert advice that the State-led up-zoning around stations poses severe risks to Ku-ring-gai's heritage. In her analysis, "new layers of development are important, but not at the cost of the historic layers...identified as being significant", which have been given statutory protection in HCAs. The current proposal exemplifies exactly that unacceptable cost: it seeks to insert a grossly out-of-scale "new layer" at the direct expense of the established heritage fabric of Stanhope Road. Ms. Trueman's advice –

reflected in Ku-ring-gai Council's submission – concludes that concentrating the highest densities in areas like Killara will “irreversibly degrade the heritage significance” of both individual heritage items and the broader conservation area due to the disparity with the existing low-scale built form. This is a critical point: the heritage value here is not just the survival of a few old buildings, but the collective ambience and scale. A 10-storey development shatters that scale relationship irretrievably.

It is also telling that 83% of the land within 400m of Killara Station (the target radius for this TOD development) is either a heritage-listed item or within a heritage conservation area. In other words, Killara's immediate environs are uniquely heritage-rich. Placing a high-rise, high-density complex in the midst of this goes against all principles of sympathetic development. Heritage experts including Colin Israel (Heritage Consultant) have raised alarm that the proposal fails to respect the Stanhope Road HCA's Statement of Significance, which emphasizes intact subdivision patterns and early 20th-century streetscapes. The proposed buildings would erode the “high level of integrity” in the area's late Victorian and Federation-era layout and housing stock. They would introduce an anomalous built form that would dominate views, cast shadows over neighboring gardens, and likely necessitate removal of period homes (the demolition of the existing houses at 10, 14, 14A Stanhope – which themselves contribute to the area's character – is itself a heritage loss).

In planning terms, the proposal offends Clause 5.10 of the Ku-ring-gai LEP 2015, which requires that development in a conservation area “conserve the heritage significance of the area”. It also contravenes the objectives of the Stanhope Road HCA and Council's DCP controls that new development “be of a scale and form that respects the existing character”. The massive scale and bulk here do not “respect” the character; they obliterate it. Even the Affordable Housing SEPP or any State policy does not override the fundamental need to consider heritage impacts – the Department is obligated to refuse proposals that cause undue adverse impact on heritage significance (as per the Heritage Act and EP&A Act). To approve this SSD would be to set a dangerous precedent that no heritage area in NSW is safe from inappropriate high-rise encroachment.

Non-Compliance with Planning Controls and Guidelines

From a town planning perspective, SSD-81890707 exhibits numerous compliance deviations from applicable planning controls and sound planning practice:

- **Excessive Height and Bulk:** The Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan (LEP) prescribes a height limit in this locality that is on the order of 8.5–12m (2-3 storeys) for residential buildings (consistent with the low-density zoning and HCA status). The proposed 10-storey height (approximately 30+ metres) vastly exceeds these controls by several-fold. As experienced town planner John McFadden has observed in his review, such an exceedance is unprecedented and would not be entertained under normal circumstances – it represents a gross overdevelopment of the site. The resulting bulk and scale are plainly inconsistent with the desired future character of the area set out in Council's planning instruments. The proposal also likely breaches floor space ratio (FSR) limits (though the proponent may be seeking to bypass local FSR controls via the State Significant development pathway). The sheer mass of the development would cause significant overshadowing of adjacent properties and loss of privacy/amenity, contrary to the Apartment Design Guide's objectives for context-sensitive design.

- **Inadequate Transitions:** Good planning and the Apartment Design Guide (ADG) call for height transitions between higher-density zones and established low-density areas. Here, no meaningful transition is provided – a 10-storey block would directly abut existing single and two-storey homes, creating an abrupt and jarring interface. This failure to transition is a deviation from planning guidelines and will exacerbate the development’s visual dominance and amenity impacts on neighbours (loss of sky view, looming building presence, etc.). The proponent’s plans show some portions at 3 storeys, but these are still far above the height of adjacent cottages and do not mitigate the impact of the 10-storey element. The outcome remains a development that “towers” over its surroundings in a manner completely at odds with the principle of compatible scale.
- **Heritage Conservation Controls:** As noted, the proposal conflicts with heritage conservation provisions. Specifically, it does not comply with Ku-ring-gai DCP Heritage Conservation Area guidelines (which require new development to be subservient in scale and to complement the architectural period of its context). The architecture and density proposed are insensitive to these guidelines. The proponent has not demonstrated how the project meets the Burra Charter principles or the heritage impact criteria – instead, it effectively argues that the need for housing outweighs heritage, a position that has no support in planning law or policy for this site.
- **Precedent and Cumulative Impact:** Approving this SSD would set a damaging precedent for further high-rises in low-density heritage suburbs. It would signal that even areas long protected by local planning controls can be subject to ad hoc high-density projects if labeled “state significant.” This undermines public confidence in the planning system and the integrity of strategic plans. The cumulative impact of similar projects (the proponent CPDM Pty Ltd has multiple SSD applications in Ku-ring-gai) could lead to an aggregate outcome – hundreds of new units – that has never been evaluated in a holistic way. The community is facing piecemeal proposals that, in total, would fundamentally transform the character of suburbs like Gordon, Lindfield, Killara, and Roseville. Such a scenario should properly be dealt with via a comprehensive LEP review or masterplan, not individual developer-led SSD applications. Until infrastructure (roads, schools, parks, utilities) and environmental/heritage issues are planned for, proposals of this scale are premature and non-compliant with the principles of orderly development and infrastructure coordination (per EP&A Act s1.3(c) and (g)).

In light of the above points, it is evident that SSD-81890707 fails to satisfy key planning controls and guidelines. It relies on a State Significant Development pathway to circumvent local requirements, but it does not meet the merit test of being a well-planned, contextually appropriate development. On the contrary, it represents an overreach that violates both the letter and spirit of applicable planning provisions. As the consent authority, the Department (or ultimately the IPC) should refuse consent on the grounds of these compliance deviations and the unsound planning outcome it would produce.

Conclusion and Request

For all the reasons detailed – environmental destruction, traffic and safety issues, heritage and character incompatibility, and multiple planning breaches – I firmly believe that the proposed

development is unsuitable and unacceptable at 10, 14, 14A Stanhope Road, Killara. The adverse impacts cannot be mitigated through conditions; they are inherent to the proposal's excessive scale and inappropriate siting. Approving this SSD would contravene the objectives of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 by failing to promote the orderly and economic use of land, the conservation of heritage, and the protection of the environment.

I therefore urge the Department of Planning and Environment to reject SSD-81890707. This objection is submitted in accordance with the Department's guidelines for SSD submissions (via the NSW Planning Portal), and I trust it will be given full consideration in the assessment report. I also request that, should there be any public hearing (e.g. via the Independent Planning Commission), this submission be taken into account as a formal expression of community concern.

In summary, the proposal is fundamentally inconsistent with the public interest and the values of our community in Killara. I respectfully ask that the consent authority refuse development consent for this application. By doing so, the Department will be upholding the principles of sustainable development, heritage conservation, and community wellbeing that are enshrined in our planning system.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. Please confirm receipt of this objection. I am available to provide further information or clarification if required, and I look forward to a determination that reflects the considerations raised above.

Sincerely,

Scott A Atkins

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