

Submission
No 88

INQUIRY INTO DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Organisation: Avalon Preservation Association

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Avalon Preservation Trust

incorporated as Avalon Preservation Association



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Submission to NSW government on proposed planning reforms

The Avalon Preservation Association (APA) is a community-based group founded in 1967 and advocating for and representing residents of Avalon Beach and surrounding localities.

Thank you for the opportunity to put forward our views on the Government's Low- and Mid-Rise Housing Proposals.

The nature of the Avalon Beach locality

Avalon Beach is located at the northern end of Pittwater and is one of the furthest north of any of Sydney's coastal villages. Geographically the area is a cul-de-sac, with the only immediate exit a (in parts) 2-lane road (Barrenjoey Road) leading south. Public transport is extremely limited - to buses, which are limited in scope and capacity and subject to the same limitations as other motor vehicles using the only exit. There is no rail service or other mass transit in the locality.

General concerns

To increase housing in NSW overall, building denser development near railway stations and transport hubs may be appropriate. However, the proposals also affect Avalon Beach (which has neither) dramatically. The result will be a chaotic approach to development, and the impact on social amenity and quality of life will be significant for very little return.

Lack of definition and ambiguity of terms

There are many terms used in the proposals which are not defined or ill- defined. This ambiguity makes it very difficult to respond in a meaningful way to the proposals.

The proposals a broad brush approach to the housing problem has significant downsides and fails to make good use of local knowledge possessed by Councils. It is critically important that the Government continue to look for ways of working with Council and using its skills and experience in a manner acceptable to the communities living in these localities.

Non-refusal proposals

APA is deeply concerned about the proposed application of non-refusal standards for “complying” developments. This negates the experience of Northern Beaches Council in assessing development applications on their merits. In the case of developments which may eventually find their way before Council, the proposals, unless tightened up considerably will make it impossible to assess whether they comply or not.

One of the likely consequences of using non-refusal standards is that there will be greater numbers of allegedly compliant developments. These developments are not subject to the same transparency rules as development applications, and there is no good reason why they should not be. The community, particularly neighbouring owners, are entitled to the same right to know what is proposed to be built and to examine the effects of what is proposed on their own properties and their own neighbourhood. This is a significant flaw and APA is resolutely opposed to it.

Risk management

Removing hazards, risks and environmental factors from zoning decisions will lead to bad planning decisions and will greatly increase the risks to localities which are already challenged by these risks. These risks are very real in Pittwater in general and in Avalon Beach in particular, and may mean loss of property or even life in extreme circumstances.

Lack of consideration for Council’s current housing plans

The government’s proposals do not take into consideration Northern Beaches Council’s Local Housing Strategy, which was exhibited and approved by Council in 2021. In December 2021 the Department of Planning and Environment approved this strategy.

Avalon Beach issues

The items detailed above apply to Avalon Beach as to other localities. There are specific local concerns which we address below.

E1 zone (local centre) and R3 zones (Medium density residential)

APA is very concerned that the proposals in part target “local centres”, with a lack of definition as to what specifically constitutes a “local centre”. Avalon Beach does not contain “a wide range of frequently needed goods and services”. Specifically, the Avalon Village area contains a limited line Woolworths Metro which is less than 2500sqm. It does not carry a full stock and is not a “full line supermarket” such as the Woolworths in Mona Vale. There is one bank (for who knows how long), as the other banks have already relocated to Mona Vale, one service station and some boutique shops.

APA therefore puts forward the view that many of the government’s proposals cannot and should not apply to Avalon Beach.

APA is deeply troubled about the effect that proposed new R3 height limits of 21 metres will have on the Avalon Village area which is majority zoned E1 and currently comprises mostly one or two-storey buildings with a small number of three storey. The height limit is currently 8.5 metres. That limit should be retained to preserve the style and atmosphere of the village which is highly valued by residents and visitors alike.

Proposals affecting areas zoned R2

The R2 zones within 400 and 800 metres of these “station and Town centre precincts” will be dramatically affected by the proposals. These R2 zones will face an increase in the height control from 8.5 metres to 9.5 metres and will be required to allow town houses, terraces and manor houses. As stated elsewhere in this paper, APA submits that Avalon Beach is totally unsuited to many of these new developments, which will negatively impact on increased loads on local roads, parking, access especially in emergencies, and most other relevant factors. They will inevitably lead to a loss of local amenity and livability.

Infrastructure

The Avalon Beach locality is already straining to cope with increasing densities being applied, in terms of the pre-existing geographic constraints and unsuitability of local roads to provide additional through trips.

Parking

Limiting parking to 0.5 or 1 vehicle per dwelling unit ignores the reality that a high proportion of residents own 2 vehicles per dwelling unit. The increased limitation will result in a higher demand for on-street parking in Avalon Beach, which already has a preponderance of narrow twisting streets where parking is already unable to meet demand. Parking in Avalon Village is often difficult and even more so in summer when visitor levels peak.

In short, it is not appropriate for the NSW Government to simply attempt to legislate for increased housing and development densities, especially with “one size fits all” policies which ignore basic factors such as local character, geography, demographics, pre-existing development challenges, risks, local amenity, green space, and the role of local government. It is also not good policy-making. APA acknowledges the need to increase housing across NSW. However, we strongly support utilising existing expertise and pre-existing housing proposals and plans within local government to achieve this aim.

The Avalon Preservation Association appreciates this opportunity to make our views known to the NSW Government regarding housing supply.

Craig Boaden
President
Avalon Preservation Association