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NSW Department of Planning,  
Housing and Infrastructure

# What we heard

Explorer Street Rezoning Proposal

February 2024





# Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure acknowledges that it stands on Aboriginal land. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land and we show our respect for Elders past, present and emerging through thoughtful and collaborative approaches to our work, seeking to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to providing places in which Aboriginal people are included socially, culturally and economically.

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Consultation summary for the Explorer Street Rezoning Proposal

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Image on front cover: Artist impression of proposed Explorer Street redevelopment, park auditorium  
Artwork by Nikita Ridgeway

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# Overview

This document provides a high-level overview of the feedback we received from the community and from agencies on the Explorer Street State-led Rezoning Proposal, the issues raised in submissions and the next steps.

We made the Explorer Street Explanation of Intended Effect, draft Design Guide and supporting technical studies available for public comment from 13 October to 1 December 2023. During the exhibition period, we invited community members and stakeholders to give your comments and feedback on the rezoning proposal.

## Explorer Street Rezoning

The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (formerly known as the Department of Planning and Environment) has prepared a rezoning proposal for the Explorer Street social housing estate in Eveleigh. The rezoning proposal would allow us to renew the site, making new and added housing possible. This would cater for a range of tenures including social, affordable, and private housing, supported by improved public spaces. The intention of the proposed changes is to support:



Approximately 32,600 square metres of floor space for residential flat buildings providing approximately **400 new homes**, including **30% social housing** and **20% affordable housing**



Renewal of South Sydney Rotary Park, an **existing public park of 6,880 square metres**, with accessible paths and increased tree canopy cover and biodiversity, as well as space for active recreation and quiet enjoyment



Maintaining the existing 655 square metre council-owned pocket park on Station Place



Maintaining and upgrading the existing streets, Explorer Street and Aurora Place, with new kerbs, footpaths, on-street car parking and street trees to provide welcoming, accessible public spaces.

## Feedback

The department would like to thank the community and stakeholders for providing your valuable feedback on the exhibited proposal. Feedback generally fell into the following categories:

1. Need for more social and affordable housing
2. Building height
3. Impact on existing infrastructure including schools, public transport, drainage and roads
4. Local built form character and context
5. Increased traffic on local roads
6. Privatisation and profit from public land
7. Car parking provision
8. Overshadowing of neighbouring buildings
9. Relocation impacts on existing social housing tenants
10. Quality and quantity of public open space
11. Density
12. Design and heritage

All the issues raised are important to the future of Explorer Street Rezoning. The department will address them in detail in later stages of the renewal. We will carefully consider the issues as we assess and finalise the proposal.

## Next steps

The department has reviewed all submissions received. We will now prepare a response to these, which may include changes to the rezoning proposal. The department will work with support from the City of Sydney and NSW Land and Housing Corporation to address the issues raised. We will then prepare an assessment and recommendation for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces about finalising the Explorer Street rezoning proposal.

# Planning process for Explorer Street Rezoning



## Step 1

### **NSW Government announcement – November 2020**

The NSW Government announced the proposal to renew the Explorer Street site and NSW Land and Housing Corporation began consulting with residents on concept options.

## Step 2

### **Initial investigations – 2020–2022**

Between 2020 and 2022, NSW Land and Housing Corporation undertook investigations to inform initial plans and options for the proposed renewal of the site, including compiling technical reports and studies.

## Step 3

### **Early community consultation – November–December 2020**

Feedback from the community was used to inform the preliminary design of the site.

## Step 4

### **State-led rezoning – December 2022–2023**

On 5 December 2022, the government announced that Explorer Street was one of several sites for which the former Department of Planning and Environment would take over rezoning control from local councils to unlock housing supply.

## Step 5

### **Collaborative working group**

Including representatives from NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the City of Sydney Council, met to consider and build on previous work. The group explored new options, investigated the site in more detail, and prepared the draft rezoning proposal.

## Step 6

### **Exhibit Explorer Street rezoning proposal for community feedback – 13 October to 1 December 2023**

The department has reviewed all submissions and published these on the its website.

## Step 7

 We are here

### **Response to submission issues – March 2023**

The department will respond to the issues raised during exhibition, with support from the City of Sydney and NSW Land and Housing Corporation. We will prepare a recommendation for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces about new planning controls for the Explorer Street site.

## Step 8

### **Design development and development application lodgement – date to be confirmed**

If approved, future development applications for Explorer Street social housing estate in Eveleigh will use new planning controls to guide the detail of the final built form. This will include consultation and engagement with the community.

NSW Land and Housing Corporation will give tenants at least 6 months notice before relocation. A dedicated relocations officer will give support throughout the relocation process. Construction will begin after the final, detailed planning approvals.

# Consultation

The department received a total of **551 submissions** from individuals, council, government agencies, industry bodies, non-government organisations and interest groups. We received 2 types of proforma submissions. All submissions are published on the [department's website](#).

People raised a wide range of topics during the consultation, including:

- the need for more social and affordable housing
- concerns about building heights
- effect on existing infrastructure

- the character and context of local buildings
- increased traffic on local roads
- privatisation and profit from public land
- car parking provision
- overshadowing of neighbouring buildings
- effects on social housing tenants
- quality and quantity of open public space
- the proposed density
- design quality
- effects on heritage.

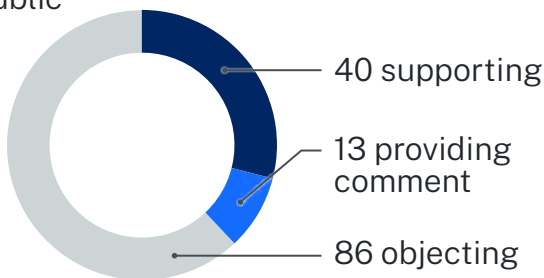


**11** submissions from NSW Government agencies.



A submission each from the City of Sydney Council, City West Housing, Bridge Housing, Community Housing Industry Association, Shelter NSW, Friends of Erskineville, Redwatch, Counterpoint Community Services, and The Greens.

**139** individual submissions received from the public



**392** proforma template email submissions objecting to the proposal, (included in Attachment A).



Artist impression of south west park entry

The department exhibited the Explorer Street rezoning proposal with:



**7** weeks of public engagement



Advertisements in the *South Sydney Herald*, the *Australian Chinese Daily*, Koori radio, targeted social media posts on Facebook, and post on the department's LinkedIn with a link to the Explorer Street website



**1,767** letters formally notifying surrounding properties of the exhibition



Public exhibition formally notified on the department's planning portal



**46** postcards delivered to the homes within the Explorer Street estate



A physical model of the proposed reference scheme available to view at Town Hall House

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A range of engagement activities were held during the exhibition including:



**1** livestream event held on Thursday 26 October 2023



**2** community drop-in sessions at 2 Davy Road, Eveleigh, on Saturday 28 October and Tuesday 31 October



**5** virtual 'talk to a planner' sessions on Friday 3 November and Wednesday 8 November



# What we heard

The department exhibited the Explorer Street rezoning proposal from 13 October to 1 December 2023. We received submissions from a broad range of stakeholders including individuals, local council, government agencies, industry bodies, non-government organisations and interest groups. All submissions are published on the department's website. The summary below sets out the key issues.

## Most frequently raised topics



### Need for more social and affordable housing

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The vast majority of submissions indicated that the community would like the proposal to provide more social and affordable housing. Some submissions supported the proposed tenure mix of a minimum 30% social and 20% affordable housing, while other submissions, including those from council, community organisations, proforma and individuals, would prefer up to 100% social and affordable housing. Some submissions recommended that affordable housing be provided in perpetuity. Some submissions also stated concerns about housing affordability and the need to provide housing for essential workers in the inner city and to address housing affordability more broadly.

Proforma submissions further stated that replacing family-sized dwellings with units of one or 2 bedrooms and the right of return for existing tenants would only be meaningful if the proposed housing mix will meet their needs. These submissions recommended that existing dwellings should be refurbished rather than demolished. They also recommended that the NSW Government should buy and develop local brownfield sites for public housing to avoid reducing the amount of social housing during the redevelopment process.



### Height and density

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Nearly half of all individual submissions – and type-2 proforma submissions and submissions from REDWatch, Friends of Erskineville and City of Sydney Council – raised concerns about the heights of the built form, particularly the 13-storey buildings. Submissions noted that the site is elevated above the neighbouring buildings, which would increase the appearance of building bulk and scale and would alter the character of the neighbourhood. Submissions also raised concerns that the proposed buildings would significantly exceed building heights in the surrounding area, including the heights in the nearby South Eveleigh commercial area.

Submissions from the City of Sydney and some community organisations supported applying provisions that would allow more height for achieving design excellence. The REDWatch submission also supported exemptions from the affordable housing bonuses.

Several individual public submissions were concerned about over-development and density. Others supported the proposed density, seeing the benefit of more housing in a location close to existing transport, shops and services.





## Impact on public transport, schools and other infrastructure

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Around a third of individual submissions were concerned about the effect development could have on public infrastructure. People expect there will be more demand placed on schools, public transport and emergency services.

Several individual submissions, as well as those from Friends of Erskineville and REDWatch, were concerned about potential effects on stormwater drainage, particularly to South Sydney Rotary Park.



## Neighbourhood character, visual impact and local context

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Some submissions raised concerns about the impact on neighbourhood character.

These submissions noted the contrast between the proposed development and the surrounding context of lower-scale, medium-density housing. Some recommended that the scale of the proposed development should transition from the existing buildings in Rowley Place (5-storeys in height).

Some submissions stated that the visual impact assessment did not include views from nearby streets including Rowley Place. Some submissions also noted that the proposal could affect views from Sydney Park to the CBD.



## Increased traffic on local roads and parking impacts

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Traffic and parking impacts were raised in many individual submissions including the City of Sydney Council and Transport for NSW. Some individual submissions that discussed parking noted that on-street parking was already limited. They stated that the proposed onsite basement parking would not be enough and would create more demand for on-street parking.

Some submissions were concerned about an increase in through-traffic on Henderson Road. People were concerned about the transport impact assessment and that there may be a need to add traffic-calming devices and reconfigure local roads. Other submissions were concerned about the effect future construction could have on traffic.

The submissions by Transport for NSW and the City of Sydney recommend further assessment of traffic impacts while supporting low parking rates. These submissions make a range of recommendations reinforcing the priority of active and public transport for the site.



## Privatisation and profit from public housing

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Around one-third of individual submissions, as well as all proforma submissions and those from council and some community organisations, objected to the perceived privatisation of public land in the redevelopment of the site. Some submissions did note that renewal of the site did not necessarily prevent public ownership.



## Overshadowing

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Overshadowing was raised as a concern in about 20% of submissions from community and in those from council and community groups. Public submissions raised a range of concerns regarding the impact of overshadowing on local dwellings, noting that analysis for the dwellings on the eastern side of Station Place was not provided.

Some submissions recommended strengthening the proposed height controls in the draft Design Guide to preserve sun access to South Sydney Rotary Park and including these in the local environmental plan.



## Impacts on social housing tenants

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Community submissions were concerned about the effect that rezoning and redevelopment may have on existing social housing tenants. These concerns were also raised by community groups, the Australian Greens and the City of Sydney. They included the need to ensure existing tenants had a meaningful right of return, and ensuring that tenants have support to maintain connections to local social networks, medical and mental health support services.



## Quality and quantity of open space

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Some submissions valued the commitment to retaining public open spaces and wanted to see more high-quality public spaces with good amenity. Some submissions suggested that greater sun access and tree planting was needed in South Sydney Rotary Park.



## Design and heritage

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Submissions raised concerns regarding the contrast of the proposal with existing architecture and the historical character of the area. The submissions suggested the design should be sympathetic to the history of Erskineville, and its characteristic low-scale homes and heritage industrial buildings associated with the former Eveleigh rail yard workshops. People were concerned that the heritage impact statement found that the proposed high-rise development would not physically or visually affect any understanding or appreciation of the surrounding area. They suggested the towers will affect the character of the neighbourhood and setting of significant heritage items.

# Agency submissions

## Transgrid

No recommendations

## Hazards and Risk, former Department of Planning and Environment

No recommendations

## Environment and Heritage, former Department of Planning and Environment

Recommends a Flood Impact and Risk Assessment be submitted to Environment and Heritage for approval.

## NSW Environment Protection Authority

Recommends further noise and contamination investigations be considered.

## Sydney Local Health District

The submission supports open space, comprehensive design approach and tenure mix including 50% social and affordable housing and providing 20% of affordable housing for Aboriginal housing. It supports providing affordable housing in perpetuity. The submission recommends:

- provisions for future community spaces allow for small health and primary care services
- design measures include reverse cycle air-conditioning, natural ventilation, outdoor spaces and green roofs
- a pedestrian bridge be provided from South to North Eveleigh
- the intersection at Henderson Road and Progress Road be upgraded to improve safety
- the amount of parking be decreased and parking spaces be unbundled from residential lots to improve safety, affordability and flexibility for residents
- the planning framework recognise and support the Tech Central precinct.

## Heritage NSW

Recommends a Statement of Heritage Impact and Visual Analysis be submitted with future development applications and interpretation of the Explorer Street Estate by traditional owners and its former use as a siding in future development.

## Sydney Water

Recommends compliance with guidelines for building around existing stormwater, water and wastewater assets.

## School Infrastructure New South Wales

Recommends ongoing engagement with them to confirm any future growth and that any changes are identified to ensure existing schools are fully used before new ones are considered for the locality. The submission also recommends transport planning for the proposal be guided by the NSW Government Movement and Place Framework and its Built Environment Performance indicators.

## Sydney Trains

Recommends further discussion with Sydney Trains to confirm that the extent of works can be achieved without affecting on rail facilities, adequate setbacks to allow future redevelopment of Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE) land, and that future arrangements for services be considered for the Sydney Trains corridor.

## Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE)

Recommends that the proposal not encroach on easements and rail infrastructure, provide adequate setbacks to allow future redevelopment of TAHE land and not rely on access to TAHE land during construction or future operation. The proposal should leave capacity within the local road network for a potential future redevelopment of TAHE-owned land.

## Transport for NSW

The submissions support low parking rates and encourage further reduction of parking rates and greater emphasis on active transport modes. The submissions raise considerations around traffic impact and modelling, and potential need for contributions towards new sections of Henderson Road cycleway, active transport bridge across the rail corridor.

Recommends that:

- footpaths be provided with sufficient width to accommodate increased pedestrian volumes in accordance with the Network Planning in Precincts Guide
- construction and traffic management plans and travel plans implementing measures to reduce reliance on cars be required at development application stage.

# Submissions from council and other organisations

## REDWatch

REDWatch's submission notes the benefit of undertaking social impact assessment (SIA) at an early stage. The submission objects to privatisation of government land, noting that the SIA should assess the impact resulting from sale of the site and supports removal of the self-funding obligation from Land and Housing Corporation. The submission recommends:

- retention of the existing housing, noting cumulative impacts on the waiting list for larger dwellings due to relocation of existing residents from Explorer Street
- assessment of overshadowing and visual impact on Station Place and Rowley Street
- inclusion of greater height controls to preserve sun access to South Sydney Rotary Park, transition heights towards 4-storey development to the east, and consider the local built form context with retention of design excellence bonuses
- provision of 10% of all housing as Aboriginal housing, provision of all affordable housing in perpetuity and supports the disapplication of affordable housing bonuses
- further assessment of drainage, the transfer of South Sydney Rotary Park to the City of Sydney and provision of a pedestrian bridge across the railway corridor
- removal of this and other sites from the Redfern Waterloo Authority Sites, the application of the Design Guide through inclusion in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021, and supports the City of Sydney's comments on the Design Guide
- provision of a community facility to provide outreach services to tenants and requirement for a social impact management plan to be undertaken at development application stage.

## Counterpoint Community Services

The submission recommends the site be maintained as 100% social housing or that the land be retained in government ownership or a balance of one-third social, one-third affordable and one-third private housing on government-owned land. The submission further recommends:

- affordable housing be maintained in perpetuity and that 10% of the site deliver Aboriginal affordable and social housing
- the bedroom mix of social housing reflect the need with consideration for waiting times
- a social impact management plan and a community engagement compact be prepared for the renewal and a community facility be provided on site to support residents and facilitate social cohesion
- environmental and sustainability provisions in the Design Guide be made mandatory
- a CPTED study be prepared for the renewal.

## Friends of Erskineville

The submission seeks the retention of the existing housing, noting sustainability concerns and objection to the privatisation of government land. The submission notes that social housing is not public housing and that affordable housing may not be maintained in perpetuity. The impact of the potential redevelopment on existing tenants is noted and the submission raises the need for larger dwelling sizes to accommodate the right to return for existing residents. The submission objects to proposed building heights, overshadowing South Sydney Rotary Park and neighbouring buildings and raises concerns regarding pressure on local roads, parking and other infrastructure.

## Shelter NSW

The submission recommends 100% social and affordable housing, affordable housing in perpetuity, retention of the site in public ownership, larger dwelling sizes for family-friendly community, and commitment of 10% of all housing to be for Aboriginal housing. The submission seeks that the findings of the SIA be adopted, that 100% of social and affordable housing is delivered to the Liveable Housing Guideline Gold level. It also endorses the City of Sydney's recommendations regarding built form and public space.

## Community Housing Industry Association

The submission supports the proposed delivery of 30% social and 20% affordable housing and commitment to Aboriginal affordable housing. The submission recommends:

- minimum commitments to affordable and social housing through the local environmental plan
- removing the need for design competitions where a pre-approved designer is used
- requirement for the end owner/manager of the social and affordable housing to be engaged in its design
- requirement for affordable housing to be retained over the long term and owned and managed by a not-for-profit community housing provider in accordance with the NSW Affordable Housing Ministerial Guidelines.

## Bridge Housing

The submission supports the proposed delivery of new homes, including 30% social and 20% affordable housing. The submission further supports the accessible location, minimum number of 3-bedroom dwellings, commitment to Aboriginal affordable housing and minimum requirements for accessible dwellings. The submission recommends feasibility analysis and the following additional planning controls:

- requirement for a minimum number of 4+ bedroom properties
- requirement for allocation and ongoing management of affordable housing be in line with the NSW Affordable Housing Guidelines
- including the adjoining land in Rowley Street [owned by NSW Land and Housing Corporation] as part of the rezoning proposal
- requirement for social and affordable housing be designed in accordance with Land and Housing Corporation *Good Design for Social Housing*
- exemption from design excellence processes for social and affordable housing.

## City West Housing

Supports the proposal noting that the City of Sydney Affordable Housing Program requirements are considered to apply. Recommends that dwelling tenures remain unmixed and that buildings are dedicated for the purpose of social and affordable housing.

## The Australian Greens

A submission by Greens Member for Newtown, Jenny Leong MP, and City of Sydney Councillor, Sylvie Ellsmore, objects to any reduction of the existing stock of public housing and displacement of the existing tenants noting that:

- relocation may disrupt tenants' social, educational and health care networks
- there is no justification for privatising the majority of homes on the site
- there is a lack of appropriate temporary accommodation in the area
- the right of return for existing tenants should be formally established in a policy, planning instrument or condition of a planning decision
- rezoning should not occur without meaningful consultation with the existing tenants of Explorer Street and Aurora Place.

## City of Sydney

The City of Sydney provided an initial submission giving a broad range of planning recommendations for the proposal and a supplementary submission giving recommendations for the social housing renewal process.

The City of Sydney's initial submission recommends that:

- amended maximum building heights or other specific requirement be included in Sydney local environmental plan protecting solar access to South Sydney Rotary Park
- the City of Sydney be identified as the consent authority for future development applications
- retention of the site in public ownership and 100% of the site is delivered as social and affordable housing or, failing this, provision of social and affordable housing is maximised
- affordable housing be provided in accordance with Section 13(1)(a) of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021, managed by a community housing provider and a restriction applied requiring it to remain affordable in perpetuity
- some larger social housing apartments be provided to safeguard meaningful right of return for those larger households living in the existing housing
- upgrades to South Sydney Rotary Park Controls be secured in the Sydney local environmental plan and the draft Design Guide requires a public open space plan be submitted with the first development application only if the City of Sydney does not become landowner

- rezoning of the site is contingent on complete review and consideration of any possible contamination and provisions be included stipulating that environmental management plans are to be avoided where possible
- the Sydney local environmental plan clause 6.21(D) (3)(b) incentives to achieving design excellence apply to the site and that additional provisions be included in the Design Guide to enable a proponent to progress to design competition without a concept development application
- amendments to the draft Design Guide include:
  - review of tree species with consideration for deciduous species to ensure sun access in winter
  - reflection of ADG minimum setback and cross-ventilation requirements
  - making Explorer Street and Aurora Place a 10 km/h shared zone and other design changes to the vehicle and pedestrian connectivity on the site
  - requirement for assessment of traffic impacts based on comparable development close to the site
  - updated provisions for bike parking and waste management in basements
  - sustainability provisions regarding climate risk and resilience, achieving Net Zero, circular design, and minimising urban heat island effects
  - a provision requiring archival recording the existing social housing dwellings, setting views, landscape and oral histories of the residents
  - considerations for essential flood studies and requirement for a flood emergency response management plan
  - modifications to flood study and stormwater provisions
  - other minor amendments.

The City of Sydney's supplementary submission recommends that:

- relevant agencies should recognise the potential impact of the Explorer Street project on tenants and respond to the needs of tenants, making all efforts to minimise disruptions
- future stages of the Explorer Street renewal be preceded by consultation with tenants and be informed by a compact for renewal agreed between tenants and NSW Government agencies
- written commitment be provided to the right of return to the site for all existing tenants
- tenants be relocated within a 10-kilometre radius of Explore Street to maintain social, health, education and employment links where feasible including consideration for non-social housing options
- the dwelling mix accommodates right to return for existing tenants
- the proposal responds to the cultural and housing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

# What's next

The department will continue to work with NSW Land and Housing Corporation and the City of Sydney Council to respond to the issues raised in submissions. This will include assessment and, if required, changes to the proposed planning controls to resolve any outstanding issues. The department will then prepare a finalisation package and recommendation for the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to consider.

Once finalised, the planning controls and Design Guide will be used to shape and control future development at Explorer Street estate. NSW Land and Housing Corporation will lead the future stages of development, including preparing a detailed design for the development application stage. During the assessment of the detailed design, we will consult the community again, and give you an opportunity to share feedback.

NSW Land and Housing Corporation will give tenants at least 6 months notice before relocation and will have a dedicated relocations officer to provide support through the relocation process.



Artist impression of overall Explorer Street rezoning

## More information

For updates, visit [planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/priority-growth-areas-and-precincts/explorer-street-eveleigh](https://planning.nsw.gov.au/plans-for-your-area/priority-growth-areas-and-precincts/explorer-street-eveleigh)

# Attachment A

## Proforma Submission Type 1

I oppose the proposal to demolish and redevelop the public housing site at Explorer St Eveleigh.

The fundamental problem with this proposal is that the NSW Government is trying to increase the supply of public housing by privatising the very land on which it sits. Housing Minister Rose Jackson admitted this problem at Budget Estimates on 1st November 2023 when she described it as “a snake eating itself”<sup>1</sup>.

While the Explorer St proposal will eventually increase social housing, it will see 70% of the development privatised and therefore lost to the public housing system. The proposal is therefore in clear breach of NSW Labor’s election promises and party policy as voted by delegates at the 2022 NSW Labor Party Conference<sup>2</sup>. In addition to privatising 70% of the site, the proposal will see public housing transferred to community housing without consulting residents to understand their preferences.

The current housing at Explorer St provides family dwellings which will be replaced by one- and two-bedroom units unsuitable for many current residents. There is a significant shortfall of larger homes on the public housing wait list - with a minimum 10 year wait for local applicants who need more than one bedroom - and any demolition will take such homes out of the system for good.

The residents of Explorer St have been a valued part of the Alexandria-Erskineville community and have contributed greatly to it for the last 31 years. They were guaranteed long term tenancy when they moved in and are being treated very poorly in this proposal. Some have already experienced forced relocation from Millers Point. They have been offered no opportunities to provide meaningful input until now.

The Social Infrastructure and Impact Assessment makes it clear that residents are opposed to the proposal. Despite the promise of a right of return, they are unlikely to do so because the new housing will not suit their needs. Already the project has taken a severe toll on their health and wellbeing, and this will only deepen if redevelopment proceeds.

There are currently more than 57,000 applicants on the waiting list throughout NSW and more than 1,500 in Explorer St’s allocation zone. More public homes are needed. But forced relocations for redevelopment will further delay access to public housing for these applicants, most of whom face a waiting period of at least five years. Rather than demolish 46 homes that are only 31 years old, the urgent priority must be to build new public housing on vacant land. Local examples of this include North Eveleigh and 600 Elizabeth St, Redfern, which are already publicly owned.

The NSW Government should also buy local brownfield sites and develop these as public housing. Funding should also be allocated to the proper repair, maintenance and refurbishment of existing public housing. Redevelopment of existing estates should only be considered once the waiting list and wait times have been significantly reduced, based on dwelling qualities and residents’ needs.

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1. [parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3165/Transcript%20-%20PC2%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20\(Jackson\)%20-%201%20November%202023%20-%20UNCORRECTED.pdf](https://parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3165/Transcript%20-%20PC2%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20(Jackson)%20-%201%20November%202023%20-%20UNCORRECTED.pdf)
  2. [redwatch.org.au/issues/public-housing/221016alp](https://redwatch.org.au/issues/public-housing/221016alp)



# Proforma Submission Type 2

Department of Planning and Environment NSW, I oppose the proposal to demolish and redevelop the public housing at Explorer St Eveleigh.

## **Purpose:**

The fundamental problem with this proposal is that the NSW government is trying to increase the supply of public housing by privatising the very land on which it sits. It is no different to that of the previous government and is based on a flawed model.

Housing Minister Rose Jackson admitted this problem at Budget Estimates on November 1 when she described the way public housing is funded as “a snake eating itself”<sup>1</sup>.

Rather than demolish 46 homes that are only 31 years old, the urgent priority must be to build new public housing on vacant land. Local examples of this include North Eveleigh and 600 Elizabeth St, Redfern, which are already publicly owned.

In the middle of a housing crisis, the NSW and Commonwealth governments should also look to buy local brownfield sites marked for private residential development, such as at Ashmore Estate and Brightwell Transport on Coulson St and develop these as public housing sites. Funding should also be allocated to the proper repair, maintenance and refurbishment of existing public housing.

The Explorer St proposal, which will see the whole site privatised, is in clear breach of NSW Labor election promises and binding policy. The 30% social housing is not public housing and will be privately managed. The 20% affordable housing is ill-defined, privately owned and managed –and likely to be only ‘affordable’ for a limited time, after which further profits will accrue to the developer.

Here are a few examples of the many promises:

Chris Minns: “We are immediately freezing the sale of all public and social housing. The sell-off stops now. Because privatising this public housing hurt our state and hurt the most vulnerable.”

Ron Hoenig sent out mass SMS messages: “ONLY LABOR WILL STOP THE SELL-OFF & PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC HOUSING IN NSW! VOTE [1] RON HOENIG ON SAT, 25 MARCH.”

City of Sydney Councillor Linda Scott: “If you live in public housing, Labor will protect your home. Your home will not be sold, and you will not be relocated.”

This came after a binding motion was passed at NSW Labor’s 2022 conference to legislate a moratorium on the privatisation, sale and outsourcing of any public housing assets or services.<sup>2</sup>

The motion also bound Labor to legislate to ensure that public housing in the inner city increased at a rate exceeding local private housing developments.

This proposal fails on both these counts and is against community expectations, and hence must be rejected.

## **Housing mix and current tenants:**

The current housing at Explorer St provides family dwellings which will be replaced by one-and two-bedroom units unsuitable for many current residents. There is a significant shortfall of larger homes on the public housing wait list -with a minimum 10 year wait for local applicants who need more than one bedroom –and any demolition will take such homes out of the system for good.

The residents of Explorer St have been a valued part of the Alexandria-Erskineville community and have contributed greatly to it for the last 31 years. They were guaranteed long-term tenancy when they moved in and are being treated very poorly in this proposal. Some have already experienced forced relocation from Millers Point. They have been offered no opportunities to provide meaningful input until now.

The Social Infrastructure and Impact Assessment makes it clear that residents are opposed to the proposal. Despite the promise of a right of return, they are unlikely to do so because the new housing will not suit their needs. Already the project has taken a severe toll on their health and wellbeing, and this will only deepen if redevelopment proceeds.

## **Height of buildings:**

The proposed building height controls permit two tower blocks that will be 43 metres high. In context, the tallest building nearby is the Channel 7 building which has a permitted height of 35 metres -and that is within a fully commercial precinct.

Furthermore, as Explorer Street sits significantly higher than Henderson Road on the other side of South Sydney Rotary Park, the effective height of these towers from the point of view from the street, only 75 metres away, is over 50 metres. That makes them taller than the massive blocks at Redfern Station -also in an otherwise commercial precinct.

The nearest new development in the Erskineville/ Alexandria area is the nearby Ashmore precinct, where building heights have been restricted to a maximum of 27 metres.

The eastern block in the state’s proposals will tower above the neighbouring 49 Henderson Road development, just across Station Place. The DPE has failed even to consider the major adverse impacts (sunlight, daylight, privacy etc) on the units in 49 Henderson Road.

In summary, towers of this height are entirely inappropriate to the local neighbourhood. They are far more suited to centres such as Green Square, Mascot or Zetland, where such buildings are common, rather than situated among two and three-storey buildings less than a fifth of the size.

#### **Overshadowing:**

Shadowing by these buildings will greatly impact on the amenity of South Sydney Rotary Park, in an area which currently receives sunlight all day throughout the year.

#### **Environmental destruction:**

The outdated strategy of destroying perfectly good housing results in very poor environmental outcomes. Worldwide there are much better strategies for refurbishing and redeveloping existing homes that could also provide more housing but without the degradation and waste of demolishing existing sites and the poor environmental outcomes for surrounding residents.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Infrastructure:**

There are major issues already with water drainage, vibration from the underground trains, and contamination of the site which will need to be dealt with. With the completion of just Stage 1 of the Ashmore Estate introducing difficulties in public transport, that have only been partially addressed by the recent upgrades to Erskineville Station, a development of the Explorer Street proposal would appear to have the potential to overwhelm existing and future infrastructure of the local precinct. There are no known plans for the introduction of, or expansion of, essential public infrastructure like schools, day care etc.

#### **Traffic and parking impacts:**

Mitchell Rd, Park Street, Henderson Rd, and Railway Parade have already been adversely impacted by increased traffic rat runners as a result of the construction of WestConnex. The traffic studies referred to in the intended effects statement makes no reference to the comprehensive traffic studies recently completed by council. It appears that traffic counts along Park Street were taken when through traffic was severely limited due to the council's recent upgrades and the closure of Railway Pde to vehicles turning from Erskineville Rd.

Impacts on the local road network and parking during the construction phase are not known or accounted for in the proposal. However, it can be argued the existing network has little or no capacity for the level of demand and access that heavy vehicle and earthmoving traffic would require for the proposed construction. Proposed removal of parking in Henderson Road to accommodate construction traffic would introduce unsustainable pressures on local side streets and remove safety features for pedestrian crossings especially outside the Camelia Grove Hotel. A further influx of approximately 800 to 1000 new residents will inevitably increase demands for parking, which will not be available off-street under council policies and unlikely to be offset by the planned public transport solutions.

The movement of heavy vehicles, which will be required during the construction phase, will be problematic. There is a 4 tonne vehicle limit applicable on Park Street however this is frequently ignored by heavy vehicle traffic from Sydney Trains and other large vehicles.

Navigation Apps will default to Park Street as a more direct route and access point encouraging the movement of heavy vehicles required during the construction phase putting unrealistic pressure on local road network and the recently repaired and upgraded drainage systems under Park Street.

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1. [parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3165/Transcript%20-%20PC2%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20\(Jackson\)%20-%201%20November%202023%20-%20UNCORRECTED.pdf](https://parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/transcripts/3165/Transcript%20-%20PC2%20-%20Budget%20Estimates%20(Jackson)%20-%201%20November%202023%20-%20UNCORRECTED.pdf)
  2. [redwatch.org.au/issues/public-housing/221016alp](https://redwatch.org.au/issues/public-housing/221016alp)
  3. [smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-french-solution-for-sydney-s-apartment-blocks%2020230727-p5drqd.html](https://smh.com.au/national/nsw/the-french-solution-for-sydney-s-apartment-blocks%2020230727-p5drqd.html)

Postal Address:  
Department of Planning,  
Housing and Infrastructure  
Locked Bag 5022  
Parramatta NSW 2124

Street Address:  
4 Parramatta Square  
12 Darcy Street  
Parramatta NSW 2150