

The 'Nimby zones' where developers tread warily

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Sydney councils that reject more than 10 percent of all developments say they are protecting their areas' heritage, writes Nigel Gladstone.

Residents and developers looking to build in Mosman, Hunters Hill, Leichhardt, Strathfield and Woollahra are more likely to have had their plans refused than anywhere else in Sydney.



Mosman mayor Carolyn Corrigan says all the council's DAs are sent to an independent panel. Photo: Edwina Pickles

Mosman and Hunters Hill councils knocked back more than 11 per cent of development applications compared with some western Sydney councils, including Camden and Penrith, which only refused about 1 per cent, analysis by the *Herald* has found.

The NSW Department of Planning data from 2014 to 2016 showed the most development friendly council in Sydney was Camden, where just 0.6 per cent of 3626 DAs lodged in the area were blocked. The data was collated before a number of council mergers took place over the past 18 months.

Camden was, on average, the fastest place to get the go-ahead to extend or alter one's home, with approvals taking an average of 37 days.

Hunters Hill was the slowest to approve home renovation plans, with average waiting times running to 123 days.

Hunters Hill Council general manager Barry Smith said comparing inner Sydney metro councils with western Sydney councils was unfair because the inner metro area was "fully developed".

"Seventy per cent of Hunters Hill is a heritage conservation area, the largest proportion of any Sydney council. This adds a layer of complexity to applications and therefore processing times," Mr Smith said.

"There's got to be some rules about these things, and Hunters Hill was originally the dormitory suburb for Cockatoo Island shipyards, so we have a lot of small cottages that are heritage listed."

Mosman mayor Carolyn Corrigan said all DAs, except those on public land, were reviewed and determined either by the Mosman Development Application Panel (MDAP), an independent panel formed to assess DAs at arm's length from the councillors, or delegated to the council's planning staff.

"What we all [councils with high rates of DAs refused] have is more land that falls in the protected foreshore area, and more complex sites than those in western Sydney", Cr Corrigan said.

"The big difference now is that the [NSW] government is suggesting who we should put on the [MDAP] panel and that's taking the decision away from the local community.

"Depending on which side of the fence you sit, you could see the result [refusing 85 DAs] as a success.

"In the government's new local planning panel policy there have got to be 10 objections to a DA for it to go to the panel, but we refer it after three objections, or council staff can refer a matter to MDAP.

"Currently about 35 per cent of [Mosman] DA's are referred to MDAP."

A Camden Council spokesman said greenfield areas, where new housing developments are built, tend to have more DAs that are compliant with development controls and receive no submissions, and as such are approved at a council officer level.

comments

- **stojo01**Zeadney, Jan 15 2018

I didn't think people did development applications anymore, I thought it was all complying developments with guns for hire private certifiers green lighting everything.

- **Lance**Jan 15 2018
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Here we go again where this government previously had to back down on their pro developer legislation is back at it again.

Roberts comments re finding homes for the extra people rather than should we have those extra people. It all about removing community involvement in the decisions.

The government would have a point if they did long term infrastructure planning rather than just pump more people into existing areas. A good example is the current trains debacle.

This is a pro developer government and can't be trusted to do what is right for the community.

- **Danger Ranger**Jan 15 2018
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Why does the author feel it necessary to headline with a derogatory term for our elected officials, often the ones putting a brake on rampant development destroying what was once a beautiful city.

If you admire ugly, close down all councils and let developers do what they do best, knock down something old and graceful (in many cases) for something new and trashy to make a quick buck. What an ambition.

Imagine Europe if all the historical buildings were "redeveloped", it would be a clone of all the cloned suburbs of Sydney with the big M clones, Westfield clones and road and house clones.

Come on!

Sydney is becoming sterilised of taste and class just for money worship. Sad.

- **OS**Jan 15 2018
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Nimbys have got it right, rollover councils have got it wrong.

Developers can build in their own backyard and make their profits, not in ours.

Hands off!

And reduce immigration.

- **Rick**Sydney,Jan 15 2018
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The issue of corruption is ever present but taking away the powers of local council's is not necessarily the way to go. Handing power to the state government is a fraught exercise. One has only to look at the over development going on. Travel by train through Burwood and look how close the multi-story developments are to the passing trains.

Use the light rail and go past a development at Annandale that is so close you could shake hands with the residents.

The solution is a lower migrant intake that leads to less over development. I would suggest that rather than finding a problem with the council's mentioned most residents would applaud their reluctance to approve excessive development that fundamentally alters the local environment. The desire would be for more council's doing the same.

- **concise**Jan 15 2018
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Not that I live there but Mosman, Hunters Hill, Leichhardt, Strathfield and Woollahra are pretty dense areas already - admittedly some parts of which (but not most) have larger dwellings and bigger blocks - for many people these are very desirable areas although most of us can't afford to purchase there.

We are constantly told by both sides of politics that we need to provide more dwellings across Sydney - why? Why turn desirable locations into Hong Kong or the Gold Coast? Why is there a need to lower living standards and promote increased congestion? It is already proven that there is now inadequate infrastructure, not enough schools, green space, hospitals parks and sporting facilities - and this applies equally to the inner and outer western, northern and southern areas of Sydney. Bob Carr was right about one thing - Sydney is full!

- **CCSydney**,Jan 15 2018
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Interesting, I think the bigger issue that your paper should investigate is the number of complying developments underway in NSW, this way people can't really object to anything if it meets the somewhat loosely interpreted legislation. For instance, any property can be up to 8.5 m high, but it isn't clear whether this needs to be with a pitch roof or not, so naturally everyone is building houses with very low sloping houses to get the maximum height. This is just one example of the issues complying development is causing. There is no way to contest a development and the department of planning is very unhelpful

- **Bluestocking**,Jan 15 2018
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These figures don't tell us much of use. In Camden and Penrith what is likely to be proposed is a standard detached house in a new subdivision. In fact, if the development in those areas was more like the older terrace house suburbs we could accommodate more people in much more liveable and sustainable environments. The "naughty" councils are right to be choosy.