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Sent: 4/03/2025 9:26:47 AM
To: DA Submission Mailbox
Subject: Online Submission

04/03/2025

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North Turramurra NSW 2074
[REDACTED]

RE: DA2025/0077 - 28 Lawrence Street FRESHWATER NSW 2096

To the Assessing Planner, Northern Beaches Council

I am writing to protest the proposed construction of shops/apartments on Lawrence Street, Freshwater. I have long been a regular visitor to Freshwater, firstly being drawn to its wonderful beach and friendly village shopping centre, and secondly, because all four of my children (and 11 grandchildren) reside in either Freshwater or Curl Curl.

To begin I would like to quote Northern Beaches Council's own view of Freshwater village: "Freshwater is the quintessential coastal village. Situated 2km north of Manly, Freshwater village is 500 metres inland from Freshwater Beach. The village is known for its attractive highstreet, which features boutique fashion and surf-wear, homewares, cafes, bars, beauticians and bakeries. The unique retail mix, combined with a laid-back atmosphere, beckons barefooted surfers, workers and families alike." (Northern Beaches Council website)

It is pleasing to see that Council does in fact appreciate how special Freshwater village is, so you might understand why it is so unfathomable to me that Council would consider totally changing the feel of this little 'jewel' by stooping to the lowest common denominator: uninspiring, multi-storied apartment blocks set above run-of-the-mill shops - sights you can see anywhere else you may travel. For it is the very village itself that it is at risk here. After the beach, this trendy yet welcoming, uncluttered, accommodating and relaxed outdoor village is Freshwater's major attraction!

A village is a community whose members have that sense of 'we' or 'us', and where customs, conventions and culture are held in common, resulting in that really strong sense of community which I have observed over and over - because it really does exist in 'Freshie'. For Freshwater to remain this beloved quintessential coastal village in the face of unbridled development, it must follow some important general principles. I have listed those that pertain to this situation below - along with my responses:

1. A village should be small and intimate, where the scale of the buildings and spaces is suitable and comfortable.

Freshwater village's current shopping strip works well, with all you need within easy strolling distance; and the low-rise buildings either side of Lawrence street (many with a real sense of character) allow for a broad wash of light in the shopping precinct and an openness to the elements - that 'blue-sky' feel essential to any beachside village. To construct a wholly

unattractive, stepped monolith that runs the length of lower Lawrence Street will not only block much of the northern light (causing shading on properties to the south), it will raise the skyline/horizon, thereby detracting from the light and airy feel of the place - both on Lawrence Street itself and in Undercliff Road behind. Suitable it is not, and it will definitely not feel comfortable to locals in this context, being so out-of-character with the Freshwater village they know and love.

2. A village must have its own atmosphere and sense of place, as well as community landmarks and a sense of uniqueness that sets it apart from every other beach-side suburb in Sydney.

Freshwater currently does this so well! Its landmarks are so well-known and beloved by its residents and visitors alike. Anyone who has raised children here knows of the legendary Harbord Community Kindergarten (so sought after and cherished by all), and the historic Harbord Literary Institute on the corner - that library building greets me every time I drive into the village so, to me, it signifies the quaint type of place I am entering and gives me a sense of a happy return. Don't desecrate such charming and symbolic buildings (albeit on the opposite side of the road) by turning this strip into an ugly, relatively-high-rise imposition of brick and concrete! Build such structures in Manly - it has long since lost its claim to be 'miles from care' with its high rises and traffic snarls. These buildings imbue a sense of place and history and are what sets this place apart from all the usual town high streets we see everywhere today. They contribute to its uniqueness. Such monuments are precious - don't throw them away. If you MUST update them, choose architecture worthy of this site and its influential position and certainly rising no higher than the current roofline.

3. In a village there must be regular community events and festivals, where residents can create collective memory, celebrating old traditions and creating new ones.

Again, you do this so well - from the surfing contests to the Freshie Carols - and the village plays a major part in supporting such events. Please don't erase these memories and that sense of history for the sake of lining someone else's pockets.

4. A village should be locally driven and locally responsive - where residents are involved in managing the life of the village and there is a long-term vision that residents support. Leaders should represent the community and reflect its concerns.

Already I know of so many in this community who are appalled at the prospect of this suite of buildings being imposed upon them. As for those premises abutting the development, they will lose ALL of their outlook, northern light, and views, with far-off vistas being totally replaced by a wall of glass windows allowing all prospective south-facing inhabitants a close-up view of families' daily lives within all those established houses in Undercliff Rd whose owners have invested in building or renovations, positioning living areas to the rear, designed to capture the northern light and sweeping views - their only non-street view and their major asset! Privacy of any description will be impossible for these members of your community. And as if that isn't enough, the design is so uninspiringly dull (while, I repeat, demonstrating absolutely no consideration of the effect on long-term neighbouring residents) that there is not even a trace of attractive architecture to compensate! Additionally, the proposed development is so TALL that, not only will it adversely affect closest neighbours immediately behind the veritable wall of glass, even those many residences on the southern side of Undercliff Rd will suffer major losses of views. Local Councils are meant to look after their long-term residents, not punish them by wiping out a lifetime's investment in community and property. There is nothing

salvageable for any of these Undercliff Road residents - their dream homes are wiped out as effectively as if they were hit by some natural disaster - except this time it will be with the stroke of a pen.

In conclusion, my neighbour, David, in North Turramurra (another village which has successfully fought to retain its long-cherished character and sense of community) has travelled to Freshie every Thursday for the last 10 years to enjoy coffee and cake in the Village because of the atmosphere, ambience and accessibility that this (other) village offers. Be clever and hold onto these aspects of Freshwater that make it a desirable place to live and visit. There should be more to living in a place than 'how much money' can be made from it.

Please reconsider your planned proposal to forever change a place that means an awful lot to generations past, present and future. What you are proposing is not only totally out of character for 'the place', it is punitive for its neighbours and nearby residents.

Yours sincerely,
Kay Watson