

Proposed Artarmon Boarding Houses by Peter Wilton

Development applications (DA's) have recently been lodged with Willoughby City Council for the construction of two boarding houses in Artarmon using the provisions of the State Environmental Planning Policy for Affordable Rental Housing (SEPPAH). These proposed boarding houses will greatly increase the number of residences and housing density in the area.

The SEPPAH is a NSW state government planning regulation that was established in 2009 by the then NSW Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally. SEPPAH provides developers with significant planning concessions as an incentive to encourage the construction of more affordable (low cost) rental housing.

The special planning provisions contained in the SEPPAH override those set out in council's Local Environment Plan (LEP). This allows the construction of boarding houses in any residential area that is located near public transport, with reduced on-site car parking requirements and increased building height and size.

At 42-44 Elizabeth Street Artarmon a 26 room, five storey boarding house is proposed. If constructed, this would be the tallest structure in Artarmon's east side, despite the 677m² site being smaller than the required minimum size of 1100m².

A 19 room, four storey boarding house has been proposed for 19 Hampden Road, Artarmon. This is site is also small and is only 572m².

Both of the proposed buildings are around 50% larger than is allowed under Willoughby City Council's LEP and contain more than double the number of residences than would otherwise be allowed. Yet with this increased density the proposed



42-44 Elizabeth Street, the site of the proposed 5 storey boarding house / Photo APA

developments have fewer on-site car parking spaces and less landscaping area than would normally apply.

Some amendments have been made to the SEPPAH by the current NSW government. Amongst these is a local area character test. This requires that a boarding house cannot be approved unless consideration is given to whether the development is compatible with the character of the local area. The Artarmon Progress Association (APA) believes that the proposed boarding houses are not compatible with the local area because of the building heights, residential density, reduced landscaping, and, with the Elizabeth Street site, proximity to the conservation area.

The required number of on-site car park spaces has also been amended increasing the number of car parks needed in a boarding house development. Both of the proposed developments do not comply with the

new car park requirement.

The boarding house DAs have been on public exhibition and attracted a high number of submissions from residents objecting to them. Due to this, the DAs will be determined by the Willoughby Local Planning Panel (WLPP) in the coming months.

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