

BUILDING A CITY WORTH LIVING IN

HOW THE HOUSING DELIVERY AUTHORITY IS RESHAPING PARRAMATTA



**CITY OF
PARRAMATTA**

July 2026

CAN THE HDA DELIVER A CITY WORTH LIVING IN?

This paper shows the cumulative impacts of the Housing Delivery Authority, not just against its target for housing, but meeting the needs of an integrated city for its existing and future residents.

Parramatta risks shifting away from its long-term vision and strategic city plan. Rapid, ad-hoc Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) applications, led through State Government planning processes to address broader housing needs, risk becoming misaligned with planned long-term strategic outcomes.

As the regional metropolitan centre, Parramatta is a city that has embraced growth. Council has planned for new homes, new communities and the infrastructure required to support a growing city. Council's concern is not with 'growth' itself. It is the way that the HDA is operating at a scale and impact large enough to reshape where and how people live, how they move, and how the city functions – without sufficient consideration of services and infrastructure as part of proposals at the EOI stage.

The HDA was designed as a fast-tracked State approval pathway for major housing proposals, including those seeking major uplift from existing building heights and density controls. The proposed volume and distribution of new housing in Parramatta is now so significant

that the potential impact on the rest of the city cannot be ignored. This new, State-enabled pipeline risks overriding the city's carefully sequenced planning framework.

Council's position is clear: the HDA can play a valuable role in delivering homes, but only when aligned with precinct planning, infrastructure sequencing, and the local context. Without this alignment, the pathway risks undermining the very outcomes it seeks to accelerate. How can the HDA ensure the new planning pathway does not risk compromising a city with living in?

This document aims to:

- **Assess** the possible cumulative impacts of applications that are currently in the planning process
- **Present** Council's position on key aspects of the HDA pathway
- **Inform** and raise awareness within the Parramatta community about the implications of the HDA process
- **Advocate** for improvements in the HDA process and for better collaboration

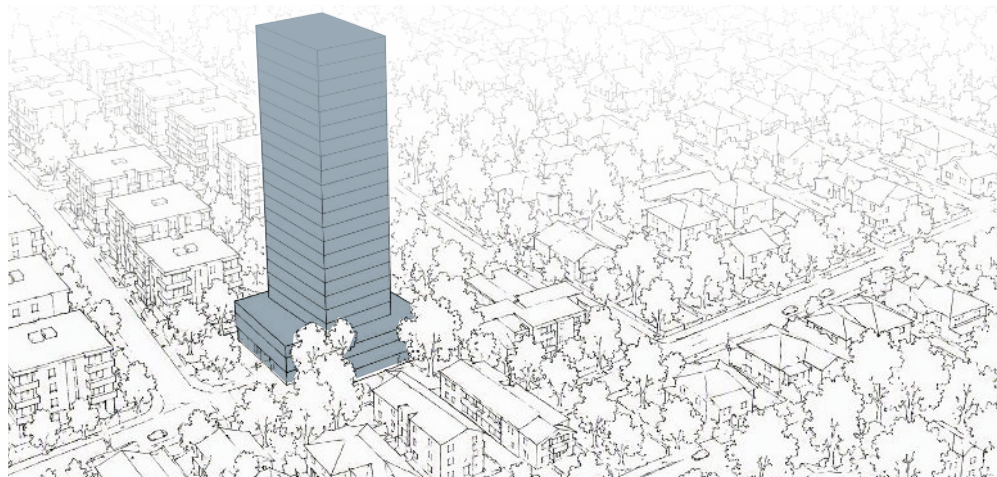


Figure 1: Artist impression of an example HDA proposal.



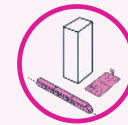
1. THE HDA SHOULD COMPLEMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING

RECOMMENDATION 1: Align HDA applications with community needs for infrastructure, amenity, and employment capacity.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Exclude land subject to an on-going government-led master plan or planning proposal from the HDA pathway.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Exclude all E2-zoned land in the Parramatta CBD from the HDA pathway.

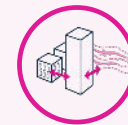
RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen delivery readiness criteria by requiring evidence of land control and a delivery program.



2. INFRASTRUCTURE MUST BE DELIVERED

RECOMMENDATION 5: Ensure the HDA pathway provides for identification, funding and prompt delivery of local infrastructure commensurate with its impacts, including a clear mechanism to secure local infrastructure (e.g. Letter of Offer or Planning Agreement).

RECOMMENDATION 6: Ensure the HDA pathway provides for identification, coordination and informs delivery of additional State infrastructure requirements, including schools and hospitals.



3. DEVELOPMENT MUST RESPOND TO LOCAL CONTEXT

RECOMMENDATION 7: Screen HDA applications against key criteria, including urban design impacts, heritage sensitivity, minimum site area, environmental hazards and impacts, character and access to frequent public transport.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Integrate Council local knowledge when reviewing HDA applications.



4. AFFORDABLE & DIVERSE HOUSING MUST BE DELIVERED

RECOMMENDATION 9: Provide clear minimum affordable housing disclosures, including quantity, tenure and duration.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Secure affordable housing delivered through permanent density uplift in perpetuity, rather than time-limited provisions.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Ensure approved HDA projects provide a dwelling mix based on community needs, including provision of more family sized and adaptable homes.



5. PROCESS IMPROVEMENT

RECOMMENDATION 12: Require consistent submission of information by applicants at the EOI stage.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Bring forward and strengthen strategic merit assessment into the EOI stage of the HDA pathway.

RECOMMENDATION 14: Make application and assessment reports public to increase transparency.

RECOMMENDATION 15: Revoke HDA-enabled approvals and amendments to the planning controls if substantial physical works have not commenced within 12 months of approval.

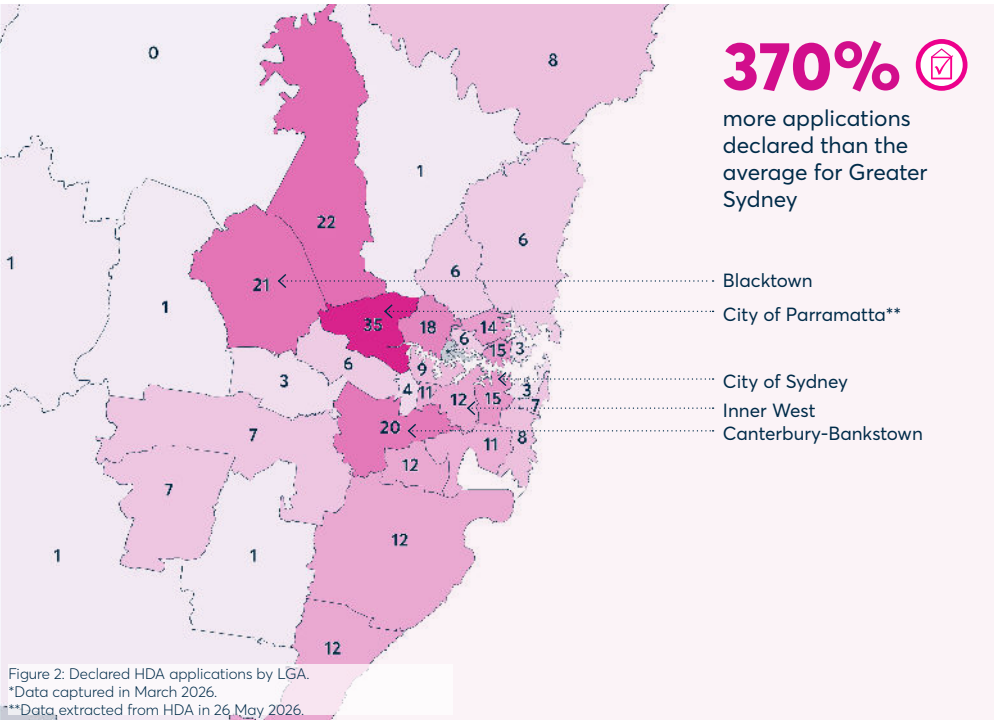
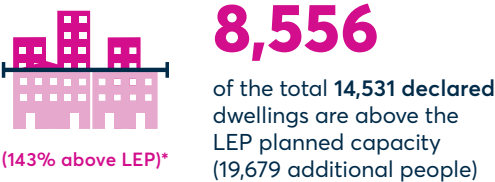
HDA IN PARRAMATTA COMPARED TO GREATER SYDNEY

HDA activity in Parramatta is operating at a scale of intervention that will materially reshape the City's housing, liveability, and infrastructure provision.

The HDA pathway was designed by the NSW Government to accelerate housing approvals. In Parramatta, however, the volume and distribution of proposals mean the pathway will influence long-term city-shaping outcomes – not just approval timeframes.

As of March 2026, more than 14,531* dwellings were proposed through declared applications within Parramatta – an unprecedented pipeline that is unevenly distributed.

More than half of all declared dwellings (8,556*), exceed current local planning controls. Parramatta is seeing the highest number of applications and dwellings declared compared to any other Local Government Area (LGA) in Greater Sydney. In effect, the HDA has become a substantial, ad-hoc State-enabled pipeline superseding and re-writing Parramatta's strategic planning framework.



HDA APPLICATIONS ACROSS GREATER SYDNEY*

Parramatta LGA has the highest number of received and declared applications.

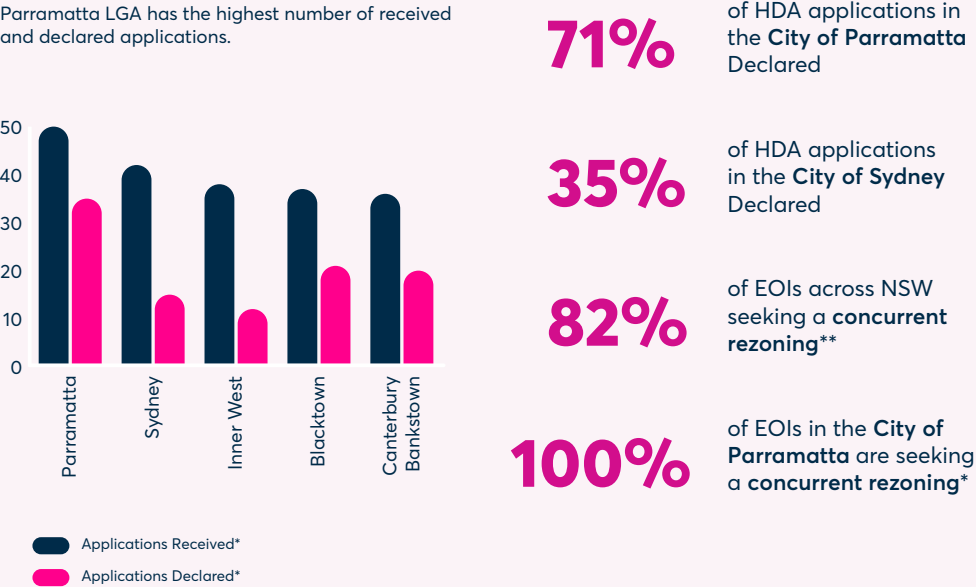
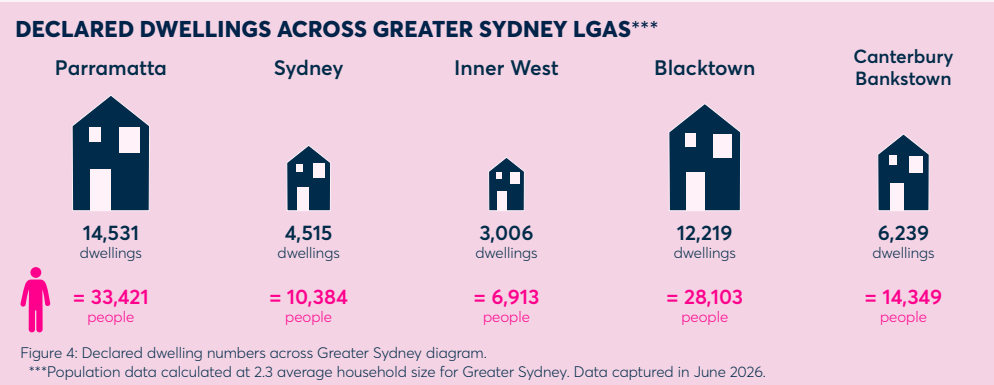


Figure 3: Comparison of highest combined applications received and declared across Greater Sydney.
*Data extracted from Housing Delivery Authority (26 May 2026).
**Concurrent rezoning data captured March 2026 (Source LGNSW) - HDA requires concurrent rezoning for applications 20% above LEP height.



HDA APPLICATIONS IN PARRAMATTA LGA

The significant number of HDA proposals are spread across the LGA, including locations never intended for high-density growth, and compromising the character of suburbs, putting pressure on neighbourhoods, transport, schools, and open space.

HDA APPLICATIONS DETERMINED BY MINISTER*



Figure 5: Spatial distribution of HDA applications in the Parramatta LGA.

📍 Declared SSD by Minister 📍 Progressed to SEARs and beyond 📍 Rejected by Minister

*Data captured in March 2026.
**All application data reflects what is over and above that established by the LEP.
***Data calculated at average 2.3 people per household.

PARRAMATTA'S PLANNED PRECINCTS

There are 16 planned precincts in Parramatta that have received significant uplift, with further two currently being prepared by Council. Planned precincts balance the growth of new homes with jobs, infrastructure, good design, and environmental constraints, creating great places to live, work and play.

In contrast, the HDA's site-by-site approach supersedes this coordination, creating uncertainty for residents, investors and infrastructure providers. The HDA pathway enables State-led declarations on a site-by-site basis, followed by State-led assessment and, where requested, concurrent rezoning.

Despite recent refinements to the HDA process, key gaps remain. Applications significantly greater than planned by Council continue to enter the system, resulting in issues for Parramatta as set out as follows:

1. Compromising years of strategic planning
2. Widened infrastructure gaps
3. Poor urban design and amenity outcomes
4. Limited affordable & diverse housing

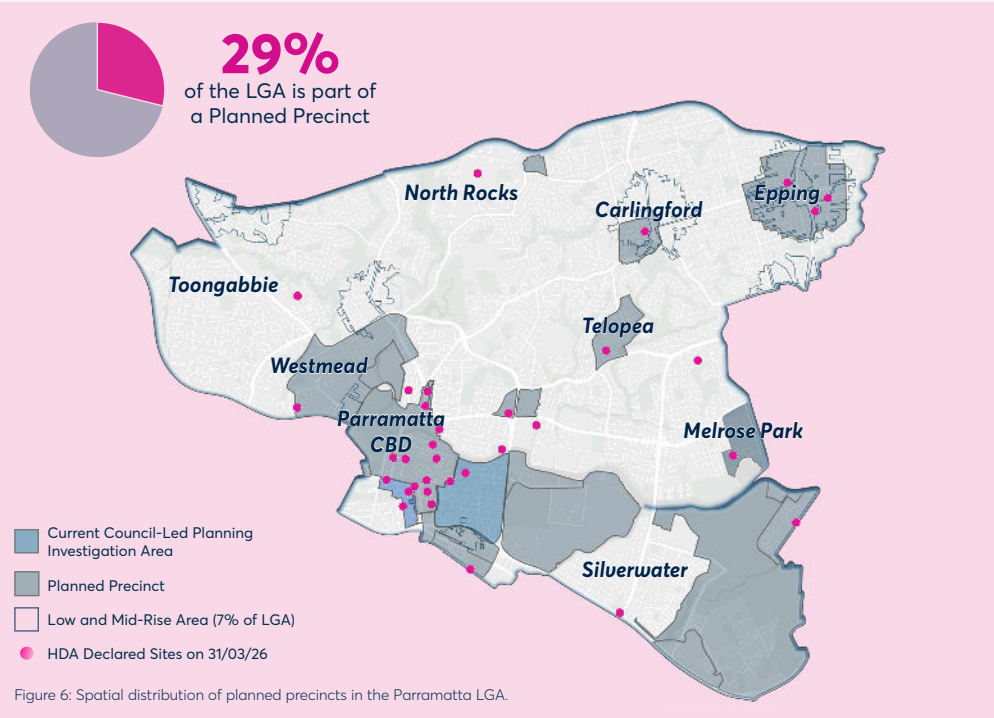


Figure 6: Spatial distribution of planned precincts in the Parramatta LGA.

1. COMPROMISING YEARS OF STRATEGIC PLANNING



Parramatta already has strong long-term housing capacity. The ad-hoc HDA approach to development approvals risks compromising and disrupting coordinated strategic precinct-based growth.

The City of Parramatta Housing Update 2026 shows Parramatta has substantial long-term housing capacity available under current controls. The issue is not whether Council has planned for enough homes, but whether the market can convert that planned capacity into delivered homes in the right places sooner than later.

The impact of the 8,556 additional dwellings above the current planned density and height is significant because they are not being sequenced through a strategic framework. Unplanned uplift creates real-world consequences: more children needing schools, increased pressure on parks and community facilities, and more cars on roads not designed for the additional level of population growth.

Public engagement has long informed strategic growth in Parramatta. However, the HDA now limits public exhibition to 14 days and risks disregarding the outcomes of previous community engagements.

Planning for future employment is also a key concern. If current declared projects are approved and built, Parramatta's commercial core - (E2 zone) is projected to lose 7,615 jobs - equivalent to 15-22% of CBD job capacity. This is in addition to the current loss of 13,273 jobs associated with recent Build-to-rent approved or being considered development applications.

The success of the Parramatta CBD depends on protecting its commercial core, which comprises only 11% of the CBD. Residential development is already permitted across the remaining of the CBD.

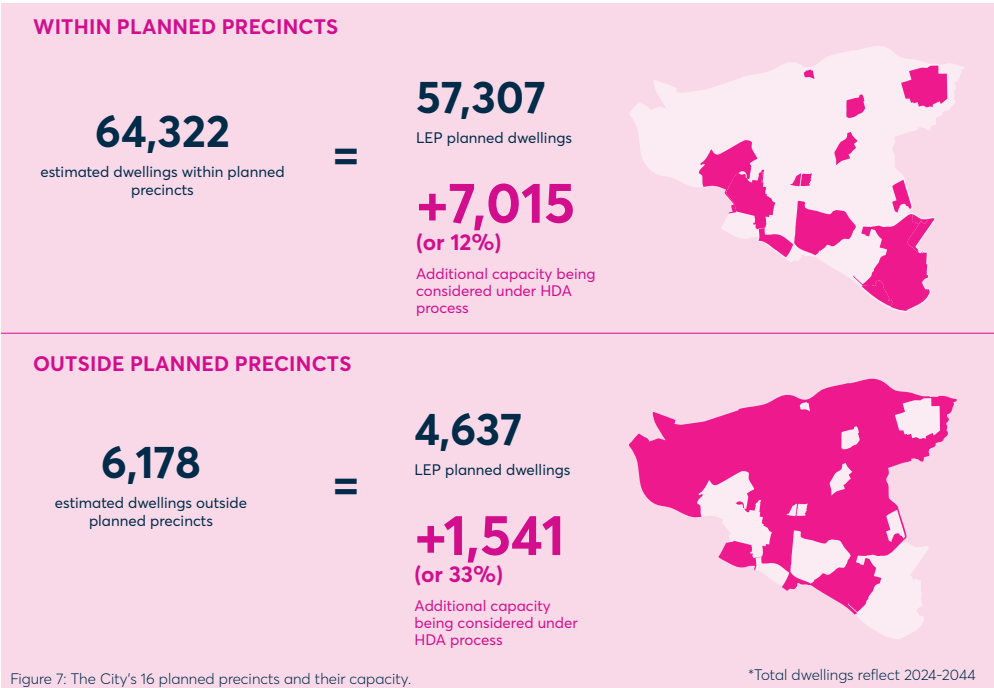


Figure 7: The City's 16 planned precincts and their capacity.



7,615

potential jobs lost in the commercial core through declared HDA pathway



9,439m²

loss of E3 productivity support and E4 general industrial land outside the CBD



Figure 8: HDA Applications within Parramatta CBD Commercial Core

Legend: CBD Boundary, E2 Commercial Centre, Under Construction, Declared HDA by Minister

COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY

RECOMMENDATION 1: Align HDA applications with community needs for infrastructure, amenity, and employment capacity.

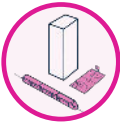
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RECOMMENDATION 4: Strengthen delivery readiness criteria by requiring evidence of land control and a delivery program.

*All data reflects declared applications captured on 31/03/26.

2. WIDENED INFRASTRUCTURE GAPS



Unplanned population growth creates infrastructure demand that is not sequenced, funded or delivered.

Council's research shows that the HDA applications, if approved in the form declared, would generate **143%** of additional dwellings above planned capacity and around **19,679** additional people beyond what is currently planned for.

This translates into significant extra demand for schools, open space, community facilities, roads and transport capacity.

Under normal processes, when new building height and density is considered, Council would seek to secure additional local infrastructure contributions through Planning Agreements. Developers then either directly deliver infrastructure or provide Council with funding to do so.

Council has estimated that the HDA declared applications represent a loss of \$231 to \$435 million in terms of Planning Agreement-led infrastructure

contributions should the State Government not secure such contributions. This loss is further exacerbated by development contribution caps, which set a limit on the amount councils can collect per dwelling. There is also a risk that development contribution obligations may be reduced, discounted or waived through HDA processes, further diminishing available funding.

Together these contributions are a key funding source for delivering local infrastructure to support growing communities and are now at risk of delivering enough infrastructure, particularly in the right locations.

Without early identification and funding of local infrastructure needs when an area is changing, the burden shifts to Council and the community in the long-term. Retrofitting infrastructure for unplanned and uncoordinated growth is costly, inefficient, and ultimately unsustainable.

ADDITIONAL STATE GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN PARRAMATTA TO SUPPORT HDA DECLARED GROWTH BASED ON ESTABLISHED INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS*

5 ADDITIONAL SCHOOLS



ADDITIONAL



47 hospital beds

public transport

regional road infrastructure

infrastructure maintenance

Figure 9: HDA cumulative impacts on State Government.

*All data reflects declared applications captured in March 2026.
**All infrastructure required is over and above that established by the LEP.

ADDITIONAL LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS IN PARRAMATTA TO SUPPORT HDA DECLARED GROWTH BASED ON ESTABLISHED INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS*



+30 ha

additional open space
= 0.5 x additional Parramatta Park

Benchmark: 15m² of open space per person.
Source: draft Community Infrastructure Strategy

\$100,000

yearly maintenance
/ 1 ha park (equal to \$3 million per year)

Figure benchmarked against recently agreed
voluntary planning agreement



+2,495m²

additional community
space = 1 x community hub

Benchmark: Community space: (80m² per 1,000 people) +
library (39m² per 1,000 people plus 20% circulation space)
Source: draft Community Infrastructure Strategy



\$460M

embellishment of open space and
construction of community hub
(excludes land acquisition)

Total cost is calculated at a rate of \$1,500 per m² for open
space and \$7,500 per m² for a Community Hub

Figure 10: HDA cumulative infrastructure needs.

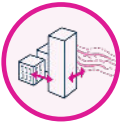
*All data reflects HDA-declared applications captured on 31 March 2026, equating to 8,556 additional dwellings above planned LEP capacity.

COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY

RECOMMENDATION 5: Ensure the HDA pathway provides for identification, funding and prompt delivery of local infrastructure commensurate with its impacts, including a clear mechanism to secure local infrastructure (e.g. Letter of Offer or Planning Agreement).

RECOMMENDATION 6: Ensure the HDA pathway provides for identification, coordination and informs delivery of additional State infrastructure requirements, including schools and hospitals.

3. POOR URBAN DESIGN & AMENITY OUTCOMES



Many HDA declared proposals are being lodged on constrained sites, that challenge integration with surrounding context.

A significant proportion of declared applications seek substantial increases in building height on constrained sites. Of the declared proposals, 30% are on flood affected land, 15% contain a local or state heritage item, and 57% adjoin a heritage item with limited height transition. Additionally, 21% are on sites smaller than 1,800m² resulting in reduced building separation, blank walls and reduced views to sky. Beyond this, proposals are on average 230% higher than permitted under existing planning controls. This disparity is most pronounced outside of the CBD and planned growth precincts.

Overall, 60% of proposals are incompatible with established or emerging character, particularly where they exceed the prevailing building height, typology,

and scale of neighbouring development. The HDA process is declaring certain proposals and risks creating expectations that neighbouring sites can also achieve similar uplift.

While there may be merit in unlocking sites through additional height and density, this must be carefully balanced against the complexity of site constraints and the need for rigorous design and assessment, particularly given the prevalence of these contextual challenges placing risk on SSD declarations failing later in the process. To date, applications that have progressed to the EIS stage have generally resulted in an increase in proposed dwelling numbers, by an average of 12%, rather than being scaled back to appropriately respond to site constraints and broader impacts.

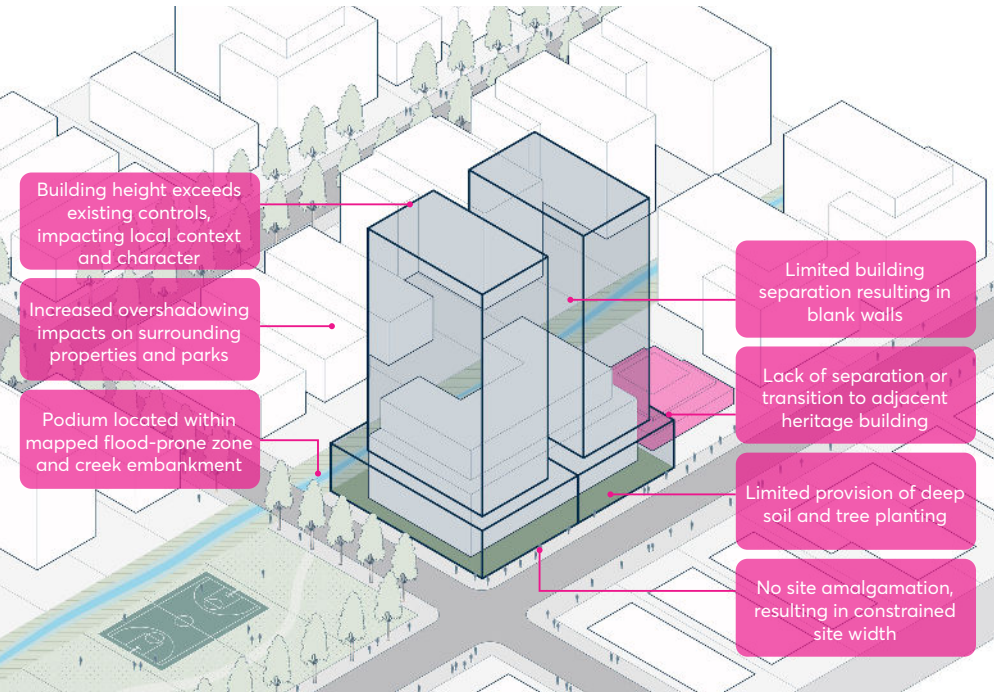


Figure 11: Typical HDA envelope in residential context.

■ HDA Envelope □ DCP Envelope ■ Heritage Building ■ Deep Soil

↑ 230%

avg. increase in Local Environmental Plan (LEP) Height controls

33%

applications seeking a minimum of double the planned density outside the CBD

42%

applications seeking a minimum of double the planned density

12%

avg. increase in dwellings from EO1 to EIS stages

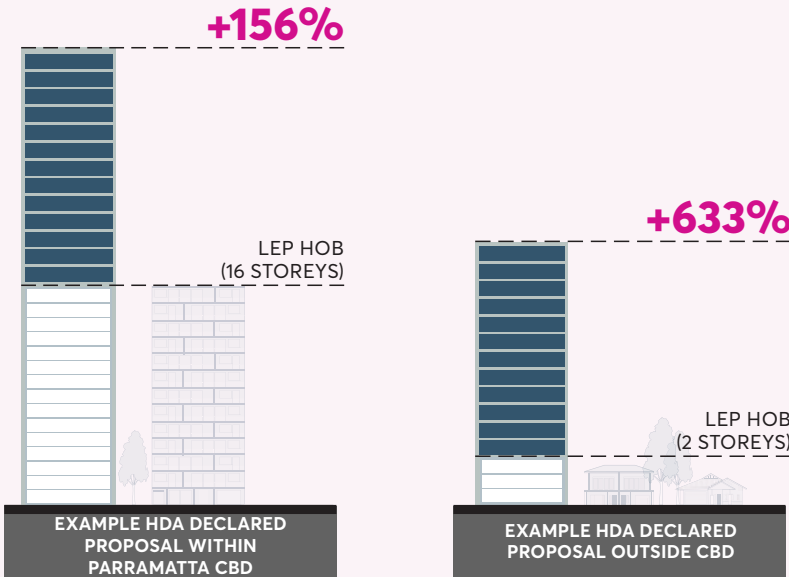


Figure 12: HDA declared applications built form impacts.
*All data reflects declared applications captured on 31/03/26.
**All data shown captures the exceeding of the building height and density controls within the LEP.

COUNCIL'S ADVOCACY

RECOMMENDATION 7: Screen HDA applications against key criteria, including urban design impacts, heritage sensitivity, minimum site area, environmental hazards and impacts, character and access to frequent public transport.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Integrate Council local knowledge when reviewing HDA applications.

4. LIMITED AFFORDABLE & DIVERSE HOUSING



There is a significant missed opportunity for the HDA process to deliver more affordable and diverse housing.

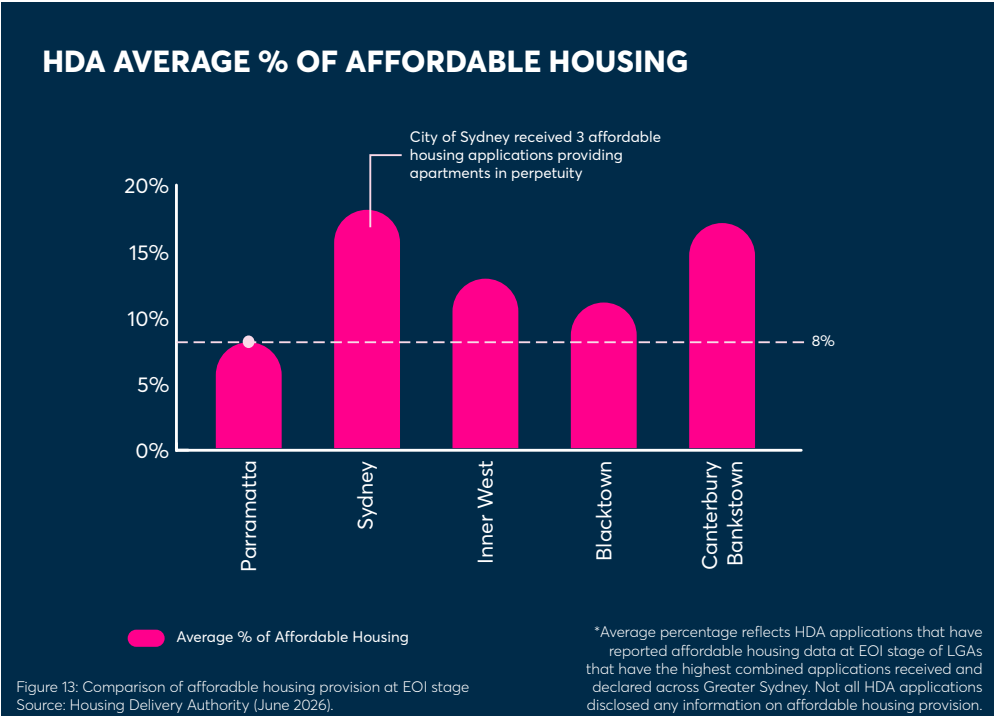
Affordable Rental Housing remains only a small share of new supply and is increasingly important for low income households and key workers due to increasing housing costs.

The HDA process could be making a more impactful difference in this area, with 57% of HDA declared proposals in Parramatta failing to clearly identify their affordable housing offer at EOI stage. Of the HDA EOIs only a handful of applications commit to affordable housing in perpetuity offering an average of 8% of affordable housing in total.

In comparison, other LGAs across Greater Sydney receive a much greater offer for affordable housing during the EOI stage with the City of Sydney receiving an average of 18% including multiple offers of

affordable housing in perpetuity. City of Parramatta is receiving the highest number of declared applications, yet the least amount of affordable housing.

At the same time, Council is seeing a decline in housing diversity, with a significant increase in one bedroom apartments proposed through the HDA pathway. This trend runs counter to Council's policy to provide dwelling mix, based on local demographic needs. Parramatta requires more 3-4 bedroom apartments to meet the needs of the 49% of households with children. Given the density uplifts available through this process, HDA proposals should be held to high standards for dwelling mix – including more family-sized and adaptable homes.



PARRAMATTA HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

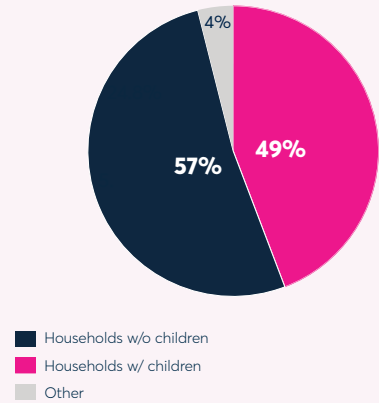
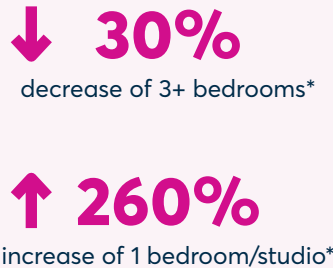


Figure 14: Household type (2021). Source: Informed Decisions (2025).

HDA AVERAGE DWELLING MIX



*Compared to Parramatta DCP Dwelling Mix

DCP & ADG TOWER FLOORPLATE

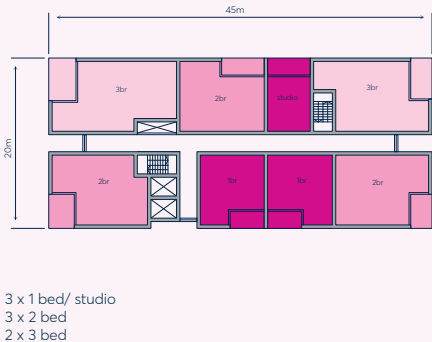


Figure 15: Typical Parramatta DCP & HDA floorplates diagram.

EXAMPLE HDA TOWER FLOORPLATE



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5. PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS: EARLY STRATEGIC PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Strategic outcomes and cumulative impacts are not adequately considered at the early stages of the HDA assessment.

Council's planning assessment process includes an early, comprehensive merit assessment that evaluates proposals within their local context and against broader strategic objectives. By comparison, the HDA pathway provides less opportunity to fully consider these outcomes at the point when key decisions are

made. Council advocates for a more coordinated approach that integrates strategic and merit-based assessment earlier, strengthens agency collaboration, and better aligns decision-making with local infrastructure capacity and community needs.

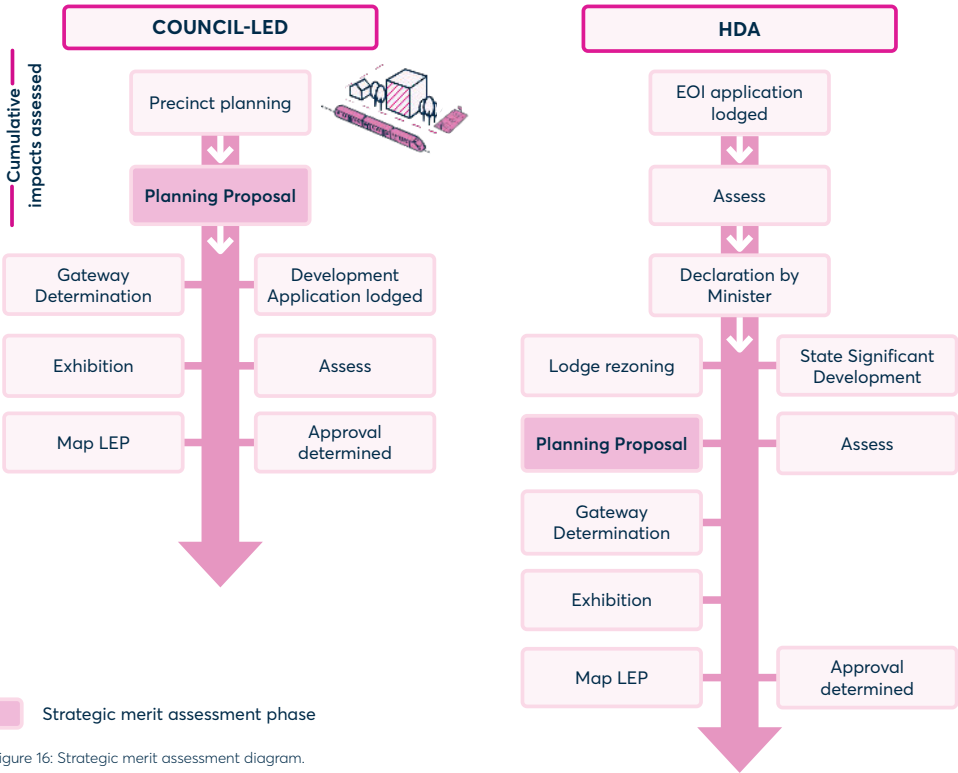


Figure 16: Strategic merit assessment diagram.

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IMPROVING THE HDA FRAMEWORK

Growth must be planned, not piecemeal - the HDA must be complementary to all other elements that make a city worth living in.

Parramatta has significant long-term housing capacity to meet and exceed demand. It is committed to delivering not just homes, but jobs, services, and great neighbourhoods. Approvals alone will not deliver homes.

The HDA must complement – not replace – coordinated precinct and infrastructure planning. With the right refinements, the HDA can support real housing delivery without creating infrastructure gaps or replacing the community's long-term vision for a city worth living in.

The HDA pathway must be strengthened, particularly at the EOI stage, to distinguish realistic, appropriate proposals from those likely to create infrastructure gaps, redesign, or speculative uplift. As the HDA process continues to evolve, there is an opportunity to refine the pathway so it better balances housing delivery with the broader elements that create a city worth living in.

Council invites the NSW Government to partner in refining the HDA process, so it complements - not replaces - coordinated precinct and infrastructure planning. In doing so, there is an opportunity to continue the conversation about how the HDA can support housing delivery while also achieving broader city-shaping outcomes.

Key questions remain:

- What refinements are needed to ensure housing delivery occurs in a way that integrates with other strategic outcomes for the city?
- How can infrastructure planning, funding and delivery keep pace with growth enabled through the HDA?
- How can the HDA deliver not only more homes, but also affordable and diverse housing that aligns with community demographics?
- How can the HDA ensure the delivery of a city worth living in?

NEXT STEPS

Council will pursue the advocacy recommendations expressed in this paper in the following ways:

1. Continue engagement with the State Government with a particular focus on the recommendations in this document.
2. Share the information with the community in an upcoming community update and via social media to drive stakeholders to more detailed information on Council website to maximise community awareness of the impacts of the HDA process on the City of Parramatta community.
3. Communicate with stakeholder networks relevant to key issues identified within this paper (i.e. infrastructure, business and industry, affordable housing, and urban design) to identify common views and potential shared advocacy opportunities.



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