

Storm in 'sleepy' Palm Beach over apartment plans

Property development

Martin Kelly

Change does not come easy at Sydney's wealthy Palm Beach, where many residents are angry over development plans they claim could turn the elite enclave into Mosman, Noosa or – heaven forbid – Dee Why, a hotbed of high-rise a few kilometres down the coast.

Their ire is focused on plans by Rich Lister Robin Khuda, who made his \$600 million fortune from data centres, to redevelop the local fish and chip shop into apartments and retail, in the process modifying a development application approved in 2014.

Dozens of objections have been lodged for the three-storey, six-apartment project on Barrenjoey Road, next door to iconic 98-year-old Barrenjoey House in the small retail precinct opposite Pittwater.

The residents are also concerned about plans for a site on the other side of Barrenjoey House, recently bought off-market by developer IPM for an

estimated \$12 million. IPM plans to develop a four-storey building featuring ground floor retail and eight three-bedrooms apartments above.

Local agent Noel Nicholson, from Ray White Prestige, said the developments were "going to change Palm Beach from being a very expensive sleepy hollow into a real Noosa feeling, which a lot of people aren't going to like".

Andrew Goldsmith, managing director at the Boathouse Group, owner of Barrenjoey House, said: "Change is coming and there's definitely a lot of talk about it in Palmie at the moment."

He said locals, led by the Palm & Whale Beach Association, like things the way they are, have the best interests of the area at heart and do not want it to go the way of beaches such as Dee Why.

"I can definitely understand why everyone is concerned," he said. "If both sides of Barrenjoey House turn into a whole lot of apartments, it definitely changes the feel."

When asked what he thought of the new design lodged by Mr Khuda, to which Boathouse Group has lodged no

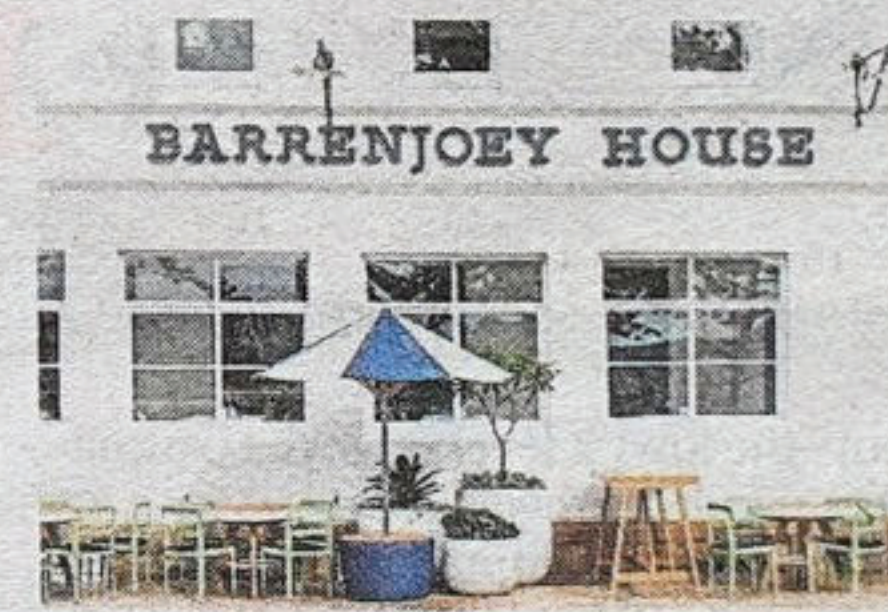


How the apartment development at 1102 Barrenjoey Road, Palm Beach, would look. Below: Robin Khuda and Barrenjoey House, a 98-year-old landmark.



official objection, Mr Goldsmith declined to comment. "I'm always pretty careful when commenting on these things because I think beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and everyone has their personal opinion."

Richard West, president of the Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association, said the lobby group was not against change but "both of these developments are totally out of context with the local



environment. They're multi-storey, they take up the whole block. We object on the basis that they are out of character and going to dwarf Barrenjoey House."

Rudi Annus, who owns Palm Beach Bed & Breakfast, believes the character of what he considers to be a "lovely little strip" will be destroyed and "turned into a Mosman or Neutral Bay".

"I'm totally against it. I think it's hor-

rendous. Barrenjoey House is a gorgeous old building which has incredible heritage, and all of a sudden it's going to be enveloped by these two massive complexes," he said.

As for the developers, Mr Khuda, founder and chief executive of AirTrunk, said he had engaged one of Australia's leading architects, Rob Mills, to ensure an aesthetic outcome for the project. "There's a fair bit of emotional attachment – people don't like changes. I actually bought a DA-approved site."

A lovely little strip ... will be turned into a Mosman or Neutral Bay.

Rudi Annus, Palm Beach B&B owner

Other locals though have embraced the increase of apartment stock in an area dominated by large homes.

IPM managing director Steven Sroba confirmed the company would be seeking to amend the existing development approval and said it had already been approached by potential buyers.

"It's funny, we already have people from the Palm Beach community that have sold houses in recent times for big sums of money calling to ask what's coming, and we don't even have a set of plans yet."

A Northern Beaches Council spokesperson said the amendment to the fish shop's development application was being considered by council, with a decision expected by the end of July.

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