69 Trafalgar Street & 2-6 Gover Street, Peakhurst

design excellence report

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6.10 design excellence assessment

5. introduction

Georges River Local Environmental Plan 2021 – Section 6.10 Design Excellence – Clause 5 aims to exhibit design excellence in terms of both residential amenity and urban design outcomes.

An evaluation of the proposed development's performance in relationship to the clause is included below.

a. ***Whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved***

The subject site is located in a residential area of Peakhurst, that is currently undergoing transformation, driven by the redevelopment of several properties in line with the R4 High Density Residential zoning established in the Georges River Local Environmental Plan 2021. Surrounding the site, a mix of single- and two-story dwellings coexists with newly constructed three-story apartment buildings.

The site is an irregularly shaped corner lot with steep topography sloping from south to north, featuring two street frontages, one of which offers views of Peakhurst Park.

Due to the unusual shape, size and topography of the site, a typical larger building footprint, would disrupt the development's harmony with its surrounding context. This has been addressed by carefully considering geometry, simplification and breaking the larger footprint into distinct blocks.

Through design studies, various options were considered, indicating that the proposal for distinct building blocks with differing characteristics would lead to a visually cluttered and imposing project.

In contrast, the current design presents three distinct blocks while maintaining a cohesive approach with a unified base expression, resulting in a development that is well-suited to this site.

subject site

single dwelling residence block pattern

emerging block pattern mainly multidwelling/ duplex dwellings

The proposed development, in particular:

- exhibits a high standard of contemporary design that responds to and enhances the adjoining streetscape whilst providing additional housing in an area with excellent proximity to services and transport
- comprises of three main building blocks that step down with the topography of the site
- maintains height and scale consistent with neighbouring properties along Trafalgar Street and supports the future character of Gover Street
- utilizes contrasting colours, combining predominantly light elements with dark highlights to enhance building articulation
- features durable materials and a resilient finish that reduces maintenance needs while seamlessly fitting into the context and offering a high level of amenity for residents
- creates a simple and unified façade with the window geometry fronting the streets
- integrates roof design with the façade, using a parapet to reduce height and skillion roofs for each block to enhance streetscape articulation
- clearly defines building entrances
- provides a visual break in the façade and massing by incorporating a high level of articulation, projecting balconies, building indentations, varied materials, and architectural roof elements
- features a careful composition of design elements and architectural detailing, including the treatment of windows, balconies and balustrades
- offers social housing and a range of unit types to cater for the desired demographic

b. ***Whether the form and external appearance of the development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain***

The limited presence of pedestrian activity along the site frontage, especially on Gover Street, influenced by the topography and absence of pedestrian pathways, detracts from the overall quality of the urban environment while offering opportunities for the development to establish a relationship with the public domain

This has been approached by ensuring a seamless transition between the public domain and the building through strategies such as creating active frontages, promoting safety, incorporating building articulation, enhancing landscaping, and implementing clean façade detailing.

The proposed development, in particular:

- minimizes visual bulk from the public domain by incorporating three building masses fronting the street, aligning with its length and curvature while featuring significant breaks
- harmonizes with the height, scale, and massing of neighbouring buildings, presenting clearly articulated blocks that establish individual street presence
- gradually steps down the topography, while the articulated façade creates a visual break when viewed from both the streets
- proposes a single driveway for the site, thoughtfully positioned to minimize streetscape impact while allowing for enhanced landscaping within the streetscape
- incorporates deep soil zones at the site frontage, utilizing local species to soften building edges and enhance streetscape
- activates the street frontages by providing a new pedestrian path along both the streets
- incorporates clearly defined street-level entries characterized by articulation, indentations, material changes, and detailing
- responds to the changes in height due to the topography, creating a volume and expression that harmonizes with the height plane
- ensures that landscaping connects the building to the public domain
- improves passive surveillance of the public domain with upper-level balconies and windows overlooking the streets
- integrates services into the basement and positions substation at a discrete corner of the site, ensuring they do not obstruct views or interfere with the public domain while maintaining an attractive façade
- achieves a cohesive and inviting design by integrating the car park with the building
- establishes a human-scale design through a mix of horizontal and vertical elements that are visually engaging
- enhances visual interest and differentiates building elements through varied materials and textures
- encourages casual interaction between residents and the public domain along both street frontages

c. ***Whether the development detrimentally impacts on view corridors***

The subject site is strategically located at the periphery of Peakhurst Park, which is characterized by its expansive greenery and tree-lined borders, thereby offering a significant visual amenity.

The neighbouring buildings along Grover Street exhibit increased height as compared to the subject site due to the topography.

The intersection of Trafalgar Street and Grover Street also presents an aesthetically pleasing view of the trees along the Park.

Recognizing that this area is classified as a high-density zone, the proposed development thoughtfully integrates with the surrounding context through careful consideration of geometry and volume. It also aims to preserve the view corridors of neighbouring properties while enhancing the overall urban landscape.

The proposed development, in particular:

- preserves the view corridors of adjacent residential developments by adapting to the topography with a stepped design along the site
- integrates volume, articulation, and massing that respond to the height variations across the site
- the building is designed to steps back to maintain views of the trees at the junction from the public domain
- block A offers views of Trafalgar Park, while units in Block B benefit from the preserved view corridor resulting from the building's setback and orientation

d.i ***How the development addresses the following matters –***
The suitability of the land for development

The subject site is zoned under Zone B4 – High Density Residential under the Georges River Local Environmental Plan 2021.

The proposed development, in particular:

- meets the community's housing needs by offering social housing with a diverse range of apartment types in a high-density residential environment
- responds to the neighbourhood context by facilitating the transition from detached dwellings on single lots to predominantly three-storey apartment buildings, reflecting the ongoing changes in the area
- offers and preserves the opportunities for park views as a corner lot
- offers a high-density apartment development with an increased footprint over three storeys, well-integrated into the community
- is located on a site that is free of utility lines or services, contamination and heritage

d.ii ***Existing and proposed uses and use mix***

The local context surrounding the site features a mix of single- and two-story homes alongside newly constructed three-story apartment buildings. The site currently consists of four single-storey dwellings and the proposed development will cater to the same use as a residential development.

The proposed development, in particular:

- is intended for social housing located in an established residential zone
- promotes housing diversity and social interaction within the community
- caters to a wide range of tenants with different mobility needs by including 2-bedroom and 3-bedroom units and four adaptable units
- provides easy access to adaptable units located right above the basement adaptable carpark
- ensures LHA Silver level standard to all other units
- fosters social interaction by offering a variety of activities within the communal open space, featuring various types and sizes
- offers flexible layouts that accommodate various uses for social housing. For example, a 2-bedroom unit could accommodate a couple and allow for a separate TV room or study

d.iii *Heritage issues and streetscape constraints*

The site and its surroundings are free from any heritage constraints.

Along Grover Street, the streetscape has a 6m topographical drop and a bend that interferes with pedestrian convenience and activity, while also limiting visual access along the road. As a result, there is no pedestrian footpath observed along the site's frontage.

To promote pedestrian movement and activate the street, the development carefully considers building organization, massing, setbacks, articulation and landscaping.

The proposed development, in particular:

- achieves a human-scale design by organizing the development into three distinct blocks with a scale that complements the neighbourhood character
- offers visual relief, pleasing views and a sense of belonging along the site frontage by incorporating building setbacks in alignment with adjacent developments, complemented by landscaping features
- creates a user-friendly design by strategically positioning building entrances and circulation routes without the dependency on steps
- incorporates a pedestrian path along the site frontage, creating pleasant and continuous vistas that connect the site to the park and activate the streetscape.

d.iv *The relationship of the development with other development (existing or proposed) on the same site or on neighbouring sites in terms of separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form*

:

In relation to its immediate context, the site is surrounded by:

- Peakhurst Park along the Trafalgar Street frontage to the north of the site
- newly constructed 3-storey buildings at 63-65 and 67 Trafalgar Street to the north
- a potential future redevelopment site to the east
- a two-storey strata title complex to the south
- 3-storey buildings at 13-15 and 23-25 Gover Street

As the area transitions, the project recognizes the opportunity to integrate seamlessly with the surrounding context while addressing concerns related to overlooking, privacy, and amenity for both the site and its neighbours. This is achieved through appropriate setbacks, building separations, architectural detailing, and landscaping. Given the site's shape, size and topography the development incurs minor or negligible setbacks in certain areas. To address this, the design implements various measures to mitigate overlooking and privacy issues, including:

- high level windows
- window placements
- 90-degree window orientation to boundary providing views of the Peakhurst Park
- vertical screening elements where balconies are located adjacent to one another and there is potential privacy and overlooking issue
- building indentations
- privacy screens
- deep soil and landscaping elements
- vertical metal balustrades that also maximise views and sunlight while allowing for privacy
- balconies and private terraces located in front of and/or adjacent to living rooms as required for building separation and solar access
- habitable rooms located away from circulation spaces

Considering the narrow shape and unusually large size of the site as compared to neighbouring developments, the project integrates with surrounding structures in terms of scale, volume, and architectural detailing to reflect the existing urban form.

The proposed development, in particular:

- harmonizes with neighbouring buildings by presenting three clearly defined blocks that establish a distinct street presence and align with the urban form

- responds to topographical height variations, resulting in a volume and expression that aligns with the height plane while fostering a more human-friendly experience
- features a façade with high-level architectural detailing, materials and elements, enhancing it visually appeal and adding value to the streetscape
- creates a simplified and inviting façade that complements the adjoining properties

In terms of amenity,

- it is a high-quality contemporary design with well-considered landscape
- most dwellings enjoy a frontage to either street or the rear communal open space
- a majority of units are oriented to provide a good level of solar access and designed with 2 or 3 aspects for improved daylight penetration and cross ventilation
- northern façade features projected balconies to capture more sunlight
- all units are greater than the minimum required size
- a single driveway is strategically placed to minimize streetscape impact
- noise sources are primarily located in the basement
- window in habitable spaces are set over 6m from common boundaries to prevent overlooking
- it offers a balanced design for good solar access, passive heating and daylight in winter months
- green infrastructure supports ample communal open space to the rear
- ground floor units include private open space within the front boundary to offset limited green space within same private open space area
- all areas within the development are easily and equitably accessible for users of all age groups and degrees of mobility
- the site's visual appeal is enhanced by landscaping using various local species, while the exterior features a durable, inviting character that integrates well with the surroundings and offers high amenity for residents.
- casual interaction between residents and the public domain along both street frontages is encouraged with the addition of pedestrian route and other landscaping elements

d.v *Bulk, massing and modulation of buildings*

The site's narrow shape, size, and slope, if developed as a single block, could potentially result in a bulk that appears disproportionate and imposing within the neighbourhood. The current design takes this opportunity to address the issue through strategies that carefully consider mass modelling, volume, height, and façade design.

The proposed development, in particular:

- creates three main building blocks that step down with the topography
- resonates in building volume and massing with the newly constructed residential developments in the neighbouring context
- adopts a similar street alignment to the neighbouring properties and the stepped building form allows the building to respond to the curved street frontage whilst protecting view corridors
- incorporates dark recessed linkages between the buildings that appear as significant breaks, while the articulated façade creates a visual separation when viewed from both the streets
- utilizes contrasting colours, combining predominantly light elements with dark highlights to enhance building articulation
- presents a simplified, human-scale street façade, with the two edge blocks showcasing a modulated façade that incorporates varied materials, effectively framing the development
- adopts a split-level foyer to reduce the massing of the rear portion of the block in the eastern corner of the site
- utilises existing built upon area and is oriented to maximise solar access opportunity to private open space and living areas
- incorporates clearly defined street-level entries characterized by articulation, indentations, material changes, landscaping and detailing
- enhances streetscape articulation by integrating roof design with the façade, using a parapet to reduce height and skillion roofs for each block

d.vi *Street frontage heights*

The subject site is located in a residential area of Peakhurst, that is currently undergoing transformation, influenced by the redevelopment of several properties in accordance with the R4 High Density Residential height plane established in the Georges River Local Environmental Plan 2021.

In response to the context, the development prioritizes a human-friendly scale by employing a variety of articulations, architectural detailing, roof detailing, materials and landscaping, while maintaining a simplicity that mitigates volume and bulk to enhance the user experience along the street.

The proposed development, in particular:

- responds to the height variations resulting from the topography, creating a volume and expression that aligns with the height plane.
- preserves view corridors from the properties along Gover Street by stepping down to accommodate the site topography
- maintains consistency in height and volume with the neighbouring developments
- features a building façade that showcases a high level of architectural detailing, materials, and elements, making it visually engaging from the street
- emphasizes appropriate scale, proportions, and details to break up massing and create a more human-friendly experience
- designs the façade to integrate seamlessly into the broader streetscape, reflecting both the existing and proposed future character of the area
- utilizes landscaping and plantings to soften the building's presence on the street, enhancing the overall urban setting

d.vii ***Environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing and solar access, visual and acoustic privacy, noise, wind and reflectivity***

The proposed development adopts a deliberate approach to create comfortable and enjoyable spaces within the site that prioritizes orientation, modelled massing, and architectural detailing, while minimizing excess reliance on mechanical measures.

Within the development, Building A is oriented at a 90-degree angle to the neighbouring boundary, and Buildings B and C are oriented towards the neighbouring properties to the north-east.

The proposed development, in particular:

Orientation and Design
- most units are oriented to maximise solar access and are designed with 2 or 3 aspects to enhance daylight penetration and cross ventilation
- leverages the site's narrow configuration to primarily orient living areas toward the north or northeast
- predominantly features light-coloured finishes
- incorporates a well-balanced design approach that ensures ample solar access, passive heating and daylight penetration during winter months
- includes vertical screening and planting that act as shading devices
- integrates basement ventilation into the building design

Solar and Air Ventilation
- facilitates natural ventilation with appropriate rooms depths and ceiling heights
- achieves natural ventilation through stepped façades, a variety of opening sizes and types, and shallow balcony ratios
- feature single-aspect apartments that protrude and step along the façade to enhance airflow and ventilation
- offers flexible of opening sizes with a range of opening types, such as sliding doors to balconies and sliding/awning windows
- has multiple units where balconies extend across the living areas, providing solar protection

Noise Management
- locates non-habitable rooms and circulation areas adjacent to common circulation spaces to buffer noise to habitable rooms
- locates noise sources primarily in the basement
- features window openings in all habitable spaces that are located more than 6m common (rear and side) boundaries to prevent overlooking

Sustainability and Cost Efficiency
- manages shading and glare control by projecting balconies and strategic stacking
- as a corner block allows most units to capture prevailing breezes
- takes into account future needs for low running costs for residents, featuring durable finishes and energy-efficient appliances

d.viii *Pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access and circulation requirements, including the permeability of pedestrian networks*

The site is located near the Riverwood Train Station and features a bus stop along the Trafalgar Street frontage, facilitating convenient access to public transport.

The development acknowledges the site's unusual shape, size, and topography in providing effective vehicular access and a pedestrian network that accommodates diverse user needs without causing disruption.

The current design, through careful site planning, ensures that all areas within the site are universally accessible, permeable, safe, inter-linked and enjoyable for all residents

Vehicular access and waste services are strategically located at the lowest point of the site, minimizing interference with the building's overall functionality and maintaining easy access to and from the public domain.

The proposed development, in particular:

- provides access to and from both street frontages to the residents
- features clearly identifiable building entries from the public domain, achieved through materiality, articulation and landscaping
- has each building foyer featuring a canopy roof or distinctive screening
- includes clearly defined waiting areas in the basement
- facilitates easy wayfinding and safety by ensuring that all three ground-floor foyers exhibit permeability and establish both visual and physical connections to the rear communal open spaces and other areas of the site
- establishes a continuous pedestrian network throughout the site, supported by wayfinding maps and ramps that ensure access for individuals with diverse accessibility needs
- features pathways that are seamlessly integrated into the overall design, making them legible, attractive and usable
- enhances pedestrian experience with considerable landscaping and privacy, creating an enjoyable journey

- locates the car park entry at the lowest point of the site along Trafalgar Street, which is a secondary street to minimise protrusions
- features a limited visible driveway length
- incorporates a recessed car park entry that blends seamlessly with the building's design
- proposes only one driveway, thoughtfully positioned to minimise its impact on streetscape while allowing for planting
- places the carpark entry nearly a story below the habitable rooms
- situates adaptable parking conveniently next to the circulation core
- offers easily accessible bicycle spaces in the basement, with entry from both Trafalgar Street and the lift lobbies

- provides direct access to the bin storage areas in the basement for Council garbage collection
- includes support areas in the basement that are assessible without crossing parking spaces

d.ix *The impact on, and proposed improvements to, the public domain*

As noted earlies, the lack of pedestrian activity along the Gover Street frontage presents an opportunity for the proposed development to improve the interface between the building and the public domain. The current absence of a pedestrian path along the site frontage detracts from the urban streetscape.

To address this, the proposed development, in particular:

- improves connectivity to Peakhurst Park and activates the street by introducing pedestrian pathway along both the street frontages
- fosters a sense of safety in the public domain by facilitating a seamless transition from the building to the street through level changes, ramps and gradual slopes, making the area accessible and inviting
- softens the building edges with local plant species and creates a vibrant streetscape by incorporating deep soil zones at the site frontage

- integrates a mix of horizontal and vertical elements to create a visually engaging human-scale design
- opts for a clean and simplified façade to promote visual harmony
- aligns with the newly constructed apartment buildings on adjacent sites, creating a cohesive community that balances familiarity with a sense of belonging while maintaining its own distinct character

d.x *Achieving appropriate interfaces at ground level between the building and the public domain*

The development features several ground-floor units facing Gover Street, each accompanied by additional private open space along the street frontage. It takes into account the topographical changes related to privacy and overlooking concerns. The design addresses these through strategies such as landscaping, setbacks, architectural elements and level changes.

The proposed development, in particular:

- incorporates front fences set back behind landscaped areas
- features boundaries between the ground-floor units and public zones that are defined by planted buffer zones, softening edges and providing visual privacy
- has units located at or above ground level
- incorporates screens and balustrades that enhance privacy for ground-floor units while allowing for surveillance of the public domain and communal open space
- maximises solar access for the units by offering window types and placements
- enhances activity within the units by incorporating larger private open spaces and windows that face the street, fostering connections to the outdoors

d.xi *Excellence and integration of landscape design*

The proposed development has been designed to incorporate landscape as an integrated element of its overall design.

The landscape design responds to existing site conditions, in particular it:

- has been designed as a continuous and cohesive landscape
- integrates with the overall development
- emphasises on reflecting existing topography
- includes deep soil planting that supports a diverse range of plant sizes and types, including ground covers, shrubs and canopy trees
- provides a balance of active and passive spaces
- includes screen planting for privacy to and from units and the areas within the site
- promotes social interaction through a range of spaces and facilities
- contributes positively to the amenity and living environment of future residents
- includes native and endemic species and reflect the ecology of the local area
- incorporates planting as a buffer between the private and public domain
- enhances the development's overall design in terms of sustainability, useability, amenity and appearance

d.xii *The provision of communal spaces and meeting places*

The site is a narrow and irregularly shaped corner lot with steep topography, requiring careful consideration of the opportunities for the placement of communal open spaces.

The design addresses this by creating pockets that distribute the communal open spaces, forming a cohesive area across the site, even with the presence of three distinct blocks. To address the topography, ramps and pathways are used for access to the communal areas, while avoiding the use of steps.

Within the proposed development, the communal open spaces are:

- integrated seamlessly with the overall development
- located on ground floor along the northern portion of the site to maximises solar access

- located away from the street
- well-lit with spaces that are naturally sunny, naturally shaded and covered
- designed as a unified and cohesive area accessible equally by all buildings
- consolidated in discrete areas and include raised terrace and a series of courtyards
- easily identifiable
- suitable to accommodate a range of activities and age groups including varied seating areas, interactive spaces and BBQ facilities
- universally accessible via paths and ramping from all three lift lobbies
- co-located with deep soil area featuring diverse plantings
- benefitted by high level of passive surveillance from upper floor units and building lobbies
- contained of planting buffers and level changes ensure privacy for the ground-floor dwellings

d.xiii *The provision of public art in the public domain*

As the proposed development is social housing situated in a residential area, the public domain offers limited opportunities for public art.

d.xiv *The provision of on-site integrated waste and recycling infrastructure*

The current design addresses the irregularly shaped site and topography through careful consideration of building geometry, basement design and access to accommodate services on-site.

The proposed development, in particular:

- provides adequate bin storage area that is easily accessible for Council collection from the basement along Trafalgar Street, whilst minimizing its visual impact from the street
- provides convenient access from each dwelling by strategically locating waste facilities in the basement
- minimizes visual impact of the substation on the public domain by locating it in a discrete corner of the site
- ensures easy accessibility of the bin room from adaptable units
- provides composting bins
- incorporates on-site rainwater harvesting
- provides bulky waste room
- uses drought tolerant, low water use plant within the landscaped areas

d.xv *The promotion of safety through the application of the principles of crime prevention through environmental design*

In a high-density residential zone in transition, the current design enhances safety through building orientation, passive design strategies, landscaping, and thoughtful design elements. This approach reduces the need for mechanical measures, solid walls, and tall fences that can create a sense of separation in the area.

The proposed development, in particular:

- features clearly defined street-level building entrances through articulation, indentation, materiality and landscaping
- offers open-layout foyers with unobstructed sight lines to and from the entrance and communal areas
- provides legible and continuous wayfinding throughout the development
- is oriented to allow for casual surveillance of the street and the communal open space from most of the private open spaces and living rooms on the upper floors In response to the narrow nature of the site
- include windows in the lobbies of upper floors of block A and B, that face both the street and the communal areas
- incorporates level changes, landscaped buffers, privacy screens, and balustrades for ground-floor apartments to ensure privacy while still allowing surveillance of public domain and communal spaces
- enhances safety along the Trafalgar Street frontage by ensuring clear sightlines for both pedestrians and vehicles

about the author

anthony nolan

Anthony is an acknowledged industry leader in the integration of social sustainability and architecture, with a particular focus on the provision of housing to meet a diverse range of specialist needs including affordable housing, social housing, accessible housing, homeless youth, domestic violence, foster care, persistent mental health care, aged care and the like.

In this time, Anthony has developed a particular expertise in the delivery of Specialist Disability Accommodation (SDA) for the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) having worked across hundreds of projects. The current NDIS SDA Design Standard contains numerous examples of his work and in 2023/24 he oversaw the preparation of all of the reference designs, and provided technical assistance, for the NDIA SDA Pricing Review.

Anthony's work has received numerous industry awards and he has been extensively involved in advocacy with contributions to a wide range of industry submissions and is a regular presenter of papers at conferences and forums.

Anthony is a partner of Kennedy Associates Architects, an architectural and urban design practice based in Annandale, Sydney. KAA have worked on over 500 projects ranging in value up $150m and have extensive experience across a wide range of residential typologies including: large mixed use apartment buildings, small scale apartment buildings, manor homes, duplexes, townhouses and single dwellings. Their experience also incorporates a range of community buildings such as swimming centres, childcare, community centres and sporting amenities.

KAA employs more than 15 people with a client base that includes, government agencies, local councils, religious organisations, community organisations, and private developers.

KAA's work seeks the achievement of buildings, places and environments which not only meet the physical and financial requirements of their clients but also provide places which enhance and influence the lives of their users and contribute meaningfully to the progression of our cultural development.

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Bachelor of Architecture (Honours) - University of Technology, Sydney

professional registrations

NSW Architects Registration Board. Registration No. 6773

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Member of the Australian Institute of Architects

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