

Gosford Regional Library – Architects Statement and Design Excellence

The following statement has been written to address Clause 8.3 Design Excellence of the Gosford City Centre SEPP.

The Gosford Regional Library has been designed to generate a civic presence within the Civic Heart of Gosford, directly addressing the public space of Kibble Park. Kibble Park itself serves the symbolic role of 'Town Square', and the new Library will in turn symbolically act as a 'Town Hall'. In this way the Library design directly responds to its context and responsibility of being a public building in a central location that is suitable to its public function. This location has been identified as the site of the new Regional Library in the Gosford Urban Design Framework prepared by the NSW Government Architect.

As a public building, Lahznimmo Architects believed it was important to create a link between the new Library and Kibble Park by drawing the public domain of the park into the building and creating a semi-outdoors landscaped forecourt within the site. This space is named the 'Neighbourhood Room', a covered space that connects three levels of the building and provides a weather protected and gently tempered environment, containing tall mature Cabbage Tree palms, a plant synonymous with the natural environment of the Central Coast. The space is protected from direct summer sun, yet allows winter sun to reach into its depth. The various functions of the library are arranged around the Neighbourhood Room, with views directly into and across it. Whilst this space can be secured out of hours, during normal operating hours it will be the heart of the Library; the main point of entry, a place to meet and rest, a place for book readings or outdoor events, a place to escape summer sun or rain – it will activate the building and improve the quality and amenity of the public domain.

The modern library is more than a place to store books. The modern library has become something of a community centre, where all types of public and educational activities can occur within. Parents will come to introduce their children to a lifetime of learning and literacy; students will come to work on group projects or find a quiet place to study; retirees will come to explore the world of lifelong learning; and everyone will come to access the many community facilities within. Whilst the collection remains core to the meaning of the library, other activities, such as; multi-function meetings spaces of varying sizes, wet and dry maker spaces, a recording studio, innovation hub, exhibition,

local history, a range of formal and informal breakout and reading spaces – all have a home in this building and are a part of the library, creating a vital mix of uses reflecting the needs of the community. This is the other role of the Neighbourhood Room – as a single space that unites all parts of the Library.

Early analysis by Lahznimmo Architects determined that the iconic views toward Presidents Hill and Rumbalara Reserve were the prime assets of the site, and that these should be preserved and celebrated for the benefit of the public. Therefore, the decision was made to locate the main library collection and public reading rooms to the top of the building where the views are at their best, with a ‘Public Living Room’ running the full width of the north façade unobstructed.

To maintain an active and continuous street presence, there is no vehicle cross over, with all vehicle access to the site from the rear via a dedicated right of access and easement. A street awning extends from the west boundary to the Neighbourhood Room to provide continuous cover to the front door. The awning does not extend to the east boundary, as it would overshadow the Neighbourhood Room and compromise the design expression of the public space.

The children’s library is located on the ground level at the street front with extensive glazing which helps to animate the street and promotes the early learning activities within. It also provides convenient access for the many parents with children and prams who are attending the book reading activities.

Whilst the building is well below the maximum FSR and building height permitted on the site, and is fully compliant with the statutory controls in the Gosford City Centre SEPP, there are some minor encroachments into the non-statutory envelope controls within the Gosford City Centre Development Control Plan. These encroachments do not have negative impacts on the adjacent sites, do not cause overshadowing, are for the public benefit, and improve the design outcome through a more cohesive building form. It should also be noted that the Library site only slightly exceeds classification as a small site on the Donnison Street boundary (36m), with a site width of 37.73m to the street, and 34.33m at the rear.

On the north elevation facing Donnison Street and Kibble Park, the municipal nature of the building warrants a street presence that highlights its civic status

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and public function. Rather than stepping back at a podium height of 9.5 metres, the zero setback is maintained, creating a minor encroachment. This will not affect future development opportunities of the adjacent sites, as the top level of the Library is set back from the front corners of the site.

On the East boundary, the adjacent site is less than 36m wide, therefore is deemed a small site and can maintain a zero-lot setback to the side boundaries, meaning a setback along this boundary would have no mutual benefit. This site is unlikely to be amalgamated to make a wider site, as the next site to the east is occupied by the Gosford Uniting Church.

On the West boundary, the zero setback is mitigated with articulation and a central deep-set window. It should be noted that the site to the west is a corner site, therefore is unlikely to have residential living spaces positioned along this boundary should it be redeveloped in the future.

To the east and west elevations, the Library is clad in high quality precast concrete panels, which also provide the required fire resistance. These panels will be lightly textured and colour controlled to a light grey tone. To the street, facing into the Neighbourhood Room and the south, the elevation is a mix of glass and integrally coloured compact fibre cement panels. The fibre cement is unpainted, with two muted colour tones. Neither materials require maintenance or painting, and will age gracefully.

As Kibble Park is positioned to the north of the site, and the land at the southern rear is used for carparking, there are no adverse overshadowing effects of the proposal onto public or private open spaces. Key vistas and view corridors to Presidents Hill and Rumbalara Reserve as identified in the Gosford DCP are not encroached due to the scale and location of the site.

The building has been designed with a strong commitment to Environmentally Sustainable Design, and will exceed the statutory requirements contained in Section J of the National Construction Code. In consultation with Council and the ESD consultant. Eight ESD themes have been developed which will guide the ESD strategy throughout the project. These are: Energy Efficiency, On-site renewable energy, Occupant wellbeing, Water efficiency, Materials impact, Transport impact, Social impact and Discharge from site. Further detail is contained within the ESD Statement prepared by Northrop which forms part of the development application documents.

Lahznimmo Architects have worked closely with Central Coast Council stakeholders to develop the design of the new Gosford Regional Library through a process of design workshops and briefing sessions that has addressed the requirements of the community. The design exhibits design excellence through an innovative approach to extending the public domain with the civic scaled Neighbourhood Room and a considered resolution of building form and function that responds to the context and attributes of the site.