

4 September 2020

**FIVE DOCK, ROSEBANK COLLEGE, PROJECT 8**

**RESPONSES TO DESIGN REVIEW PANEL (DRP) REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS dated 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

**Background**

The DRP noted:

*a) The development application to construct a new permanent school building (to replace demountable buildings) at Rosebank College was presented to the Regional Planning Panel on Tuesday 11 August 2020. This panel requested that the proposal be reviewed by Council's Design Review Panel, **in terms of its architectural presentation to Parramatta Road and Harris Road.***

*Council subsequently convened an extraordinary meeting with the Canada Bay Design Review Panel to consider and provide the requested advice on the proposal.*

Response:

- Noted that the Design Review Panel's (DRP) comments are *advisory*.
- Notwithstanding the architectural qualifications of the DRP, their comments are still nevertheless personal and subjective.
- It was apparent during the meeting with the DRP that they had not been fully briefed on the nature of the project.
- Noted that the DRP went beyond the specific terms of reference as bolded above.

*b) The DRP suggested a drawing explaining the key access points, public transport locations (bus stops), private car drop off points, and pedestrian flow patterns and volumes to be provided as a basis for communicating the need for a new entrance at the corner of Parramatta Rd and Harris Road.*

Response:

Drawing, as suggested, is provided at the end of this report.

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**The following are responses to Commentary and advice made by the DRP:**

### **Building Siting**

The panel noted:

*The location and L-shaped plan form of the proposed building is logical, as it provides security, street presence, and a useable quadrangular, protected outdoor space for school activities.*

#### Response:

The DRP comments are noted.

### **Integration with Existing Movement Patterns**

The DRP noted:

*a) The Panel has concerns in relation to pedestrian movement around the edges and across the new quadrangle at RL 11.40. Is this outdoor space to be used for play or is it a quieter green space for more passive uses? It may be difficult for it to accommodate both activities.*

#### Response:

The *new quadrangle* referred to by the DRP is an existing central open space in the College known as the Green. It will be used following the completion of the new building in the same manner as it is currently used. During recess, the space is a passive outdoor recreation space. During class times, the space is active, used for curriculum activities such as PE, etc. Outside of class times, all of the Green is in essence, a large circulation space. The perimeter cantilevers of the new building above the Green along the southern and eastern sides provides an additional benefit of covered access/ circulation but is not only a circulation path. The Green extends to the building and accommodates both active and passive uses.

*b) The upper level Verandah (RL15.5) is colonnaded (as described above), however the paired columns do not extend to the quadrangle ground plane at RL11.4. This will encourage students to simply move across the quadrangle towards their various destinations, rather than navigating along the edges.*

#### Response:

Although this was not of part of the DRP's scope of reference, as noted above, the activity at ground level on the Green at RL11.4 is not to provide a defined circulation route, such as that which might be surmised by the phrase *rather than navigating along the edges*. Not having an understanding of the brief, this is a misconception of the project Briefing by the DRP.

*(c) The drawings also appear to indicate that the artificial turfed area extends to the wall of the external GLA area, rather than providing a paved circulation space around the edge of the quadrangle space.*

#### Response:

Refer to comments in response to (a) and (b) above.

## Internal Layouts

The DRP noted:

*a) The layout of the two levels of general learning space (GLA) raises questions of access to sufficient natural light and cross ventilation. The plan is quite deep (over 20m) and the internal GLA rooms are arranged along the street façade behind the external learning areas, meaning that there is limited access to light from the north.....*

### Response:

Although this was also not of part of the DRP's scope of reference, the section of the building containing teaching spaces is oriented in a north/south direction, which is the most desirable. There is extensive glazing along both the north and south facades. The floor plate depth ranges from 15m, 17.3m and 20.4m. Any building with a floor plate depth of 20m and glazing along each of the long sides is seen as having more than adequate natural light.

*b) Any windows opening directly onto Parramatta Road would create likely problems with noise and air quality within the classrooms.*

### Response:

Although this was also not of part of the DRP's scope of reference, the DRP was not informed that the building will be airconditioned due to its location in a similar successful manner to that of the other buildings at Rosebank College which face Parramatta Road & Queens Road (*and no doubt, most non-residential buildings in similar locations*). Notwithstanding the use of mechanical ventilation to counteract external noise issues, it is also noted that all windows can be opened if needed.

*c) An alternative may be to arrange these rooms across the width of the plan, so that each room has direct access to daylight on one side and the capacity to open onto the external GLA spaces that could provide better natural ventilation opportunities.*

### Response:

Although this was also not of part of the DRP's scope of reference, please refer to the response by College Principal, Tom Galea, with respect to the Teaching and Learning practices of the College which will be enhanced with this new facility.

*(d) To facilitate this, the central lift and stairs could be shifted to the Harris Road side of the entry foyer area, to make more useable space available for the two classroom levels.*

### Response:

In the light of previous responses with respect to internal layouts, this re-arrangement is not required. Also refer to letter provided by the College in response to the DRP Report together with comments in (a), (b) and (c) above.

## Parking Design & Layout

The DRP noted:

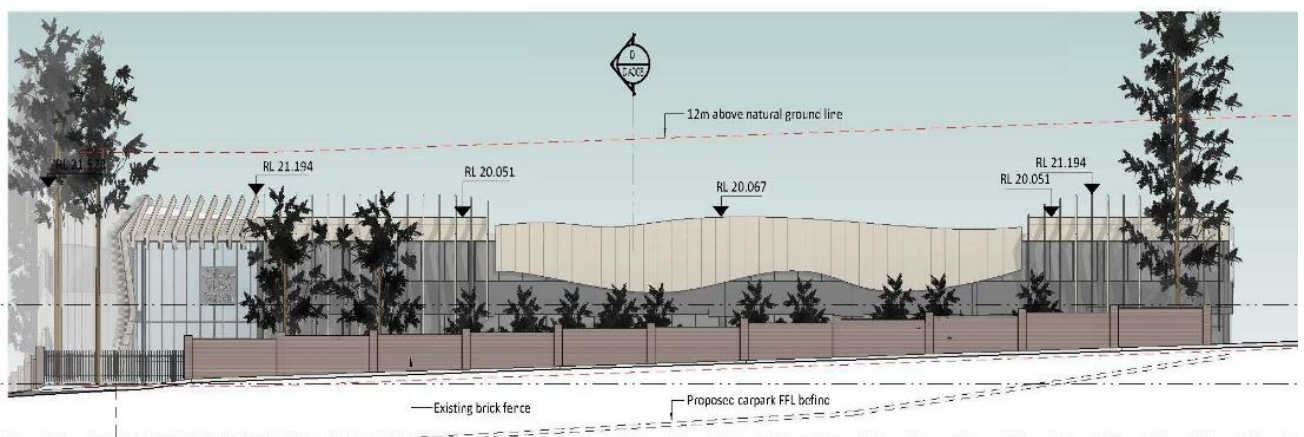
*a) The proposed carparking provision is wasteful of space and provides a poor, inactive frontage to Harris Rd.*

### Response:

All frontages are in essence, *inactive*, as a result of the existing 1.8m high brick wall along all street frontages. The undercroft in the school suggested by the DRP, as the precedent for a suggested re-design at Rosebank, is very elevated with hardly any street screening and far more exposed than the proposed elevation of the new building to Harris Rd. The elevation below reveals that the carpark, as proposed, will be hardly visible from Harris Rd.



DRP precedent, Military Road, Mosman



Proposed Harris Road Façade, Rosebank College

*b) The eastern leg of the carpark is a sequence of ramps and graded parking bays, creating inefficiency and unnecessary volume. An alternative may be to investigate a curved two-way return ramp to the north of the footpath crossing (ie. within existing on grade parking area) to provide access to full basement at level RL8.6.*

Response:

This was also not of part of the DRP's scope of reference. Their comments were made without any understanding of the site constraints .

- The ramping avoids a Sydney Water Sewer main which traverses the site. This was not known to the DRP.
- The existing open carparking to the north of the entry gate, suggested by the DRP as a location for a *curved two-way return ramp*, is used for Visitor parking and visually is also part of the forecourt of the main entrance of the school. It is also noted that ingress and egress from the carpark will be as existing with the exit gate being that closest to the existing admin building. The construction of a *curved two-way return ramp* at this location, as proposed by the DRP, does not reflect an understanding of the functional aspects of traffic movement within the site.
- No loss of existing parking spaces. Although not able to be *officially* counted, parking will be available on the ramped sections of the carpark, providing extra parking to that noted on the DA. *(The ramped sections are much shallower than the equivalent ramps in the public carpark opposite the Canada Bay Council Offices which are safely used for parking).*
- The suggestion by the DRP would result in significant cost of additional 4m deep excavation at the location of the proposed *curved two-way return ramp*.

*c) This would improve efficiency and avoidance of looking into the carpark from the street.*

Response:

Refer to comments above with respect to efficiency and visibility of the carpark.

*d) Importantly, it would allow the two outdoor courts to be situated closer to natural ground level now (above a basement carpark), and thereby preserve a future capacity to create an additional level of eminently useable habitable floor space at quadrangle level, by simply moving the courts up to the currently proposed level at a future date.*

Response:

This comment would only be valid if it were feasible to construct the carpark as suggested by the DRP.

## New Entry at Parramatta Road/Harris Road Corner

The DRP noted:

*a) Whilst the Panel recognises and supports the operational need for a new entry at this corner, it considers that the scale of the proposed entry exceeds this functional need and creates ambiguity and confusion with the School's existing "front door", which is intended to remain in its existing location on the north-east corner of the site.*

### Response:

This proposed *entry* should not be confused with the entrance to a facility such as, for example, a shopping centre, where it is submitted comments by the DRP in relation to *entrance* are more appropriate.

The nature of the corner element in the proposed building is misinterpreted by the DRP in suggesting that this element should only respond to an *operational* and *functional* need suitable for the number of students who will use it. The proposed corner treatment has the necessary visual strength and presence, proportional to and in response to the robust, busy, traffic dominated environment in that precinct, to provide a contemporary imagery that the College wishes to project to the community, which is more than just a functional need for student entry.

The College currently has 3 pedestrian entrances - one at Parramatta Rd, another at 1A Harris Road and a third at the corner of Queens Rd and Harris Rd. The third entry is the most convenient for visitors and is used as the daytime visitor entrance to the College. The other two entrances, as well as the new entry on the corner of Parramatta Rd and Harris Rd, are only used at morning arrival and afternoon departure times by students. All day-time visitors are by appointment and directions to the corner location are provided at the time of appointment. As a result of this management practice, there is no ambiguity or confusion as to where the school entrance for visitors is located.

Later comments provide a response in relation to the appropriateness of the imagery of the architecture at the corner, as a modern interpretation reflecting the College's Benedictine traditions.

*b) In addition, there is further concern that the design of the proposed corner element (two storey glazed void with sculptured external fins) will not satisfy the School's ambition to project itself as a modern educational facility to the broader community. The Panel acknowledges however that convincing representation of this ambition is not easily achieved. One possibility may be a glassy communal facility on the corner at the RL15.5 upper level, perhaps with a sculptural roof admitting natural light— a library or communal space/common room where members of the school community are visible to the public in the act of learning, rather than an empty void space above a lobby.*

### Response

It is submitted that the corner design as submitted with the DA, although different to that which might have been prepared if any of the DRP representatives had designed it, is nevertheless a valid solution satisfying the *School's ambition to project itself as a modern educational facility to the broader community*.





## Architectural Expression of the Street Facades

The DRP noted:

*a) The panel does not support the design of the proposed street facades in their current form.*

### Response:

The College was encouraged to propose a contemporary design to the exposed frontages to Parramatta Rd and Harris Rd.

*b) It is a reasonable premise that the new building is representational of its educational use and expressive of contemporary architectural design, however this is not achieved by the current proposal. (our emphasis)*

### Response:

This implies a preconception by the DRP of what the term *educational use* means and what street facades for *educational* architecture should look like. The DRP comment begs the question – what does *representational of educational use* in buildings mean? The examples below are current, acclaimed examples of educational architecture. By any standard, they are not reflective of past thinking relating to these facilities. There is no current paradigm of what educational facilities should look like.



UTS Building by Denton Corker Marshall



UTS Building by FJMT



UTS Building by BVN



Ravenswood School for Girls by BVN

c) *The south façade is an arbitrary pattern of solid and void formed by flat fibre cement panelling and randomly curved bands of fixed glazing.*

Response:

This again reflects a personal design philosophy of the DRP. One wonders if the same DRP comments would have been applied to the two educational buildings below, both of which have received international acclaim.



UTS Building by Frank Gehry



Storey Hall RMIT by ARM

d) *The Panel is not convinced by the materiality and arbitrary pattern applied to the façade surface, as this does not effectively convey a design character readily understood as that of educational architecture. It could equally be a proposal for the façade of a commercial or light industrial building, such as already surround the site.*

Response:



ALL HALLOWS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL  
EDUCATION

This is the street façade of a recently completed, award-winning school building, clad in fibre cement, at Five Dock by BVN Architecture. Could this equally be *the façade of a commercial or light industrial building, such as already surround the site?*

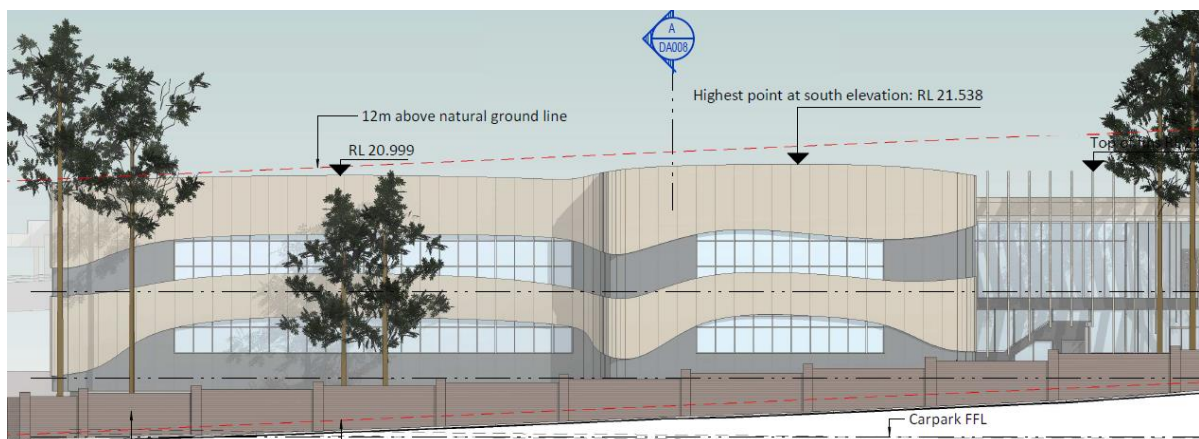
It is submitted that the design concept proposed with this submission for Rosebank College is firstly, not *an arbitrary pattern of solid and void* and secondly, is a valid, site-specific contemporary design response.



A study of the corner location reveals that the vast majority of people who view this building will be in passing vehicles. The corner site is associated with *movement*. The heritage component of the Benedictine tradition of the school is associated with *rhythm*. The design solution for the two street facades is reflective of both *movement* and *rhythm*.

## Movement

The way architectural elements are interpreted in locations where the predominant viewing aspect is by moving past the object, are the precedents which influenced the approach to the contemporary solution to the street facades at this location.



It is submitted that this premise is as valid, although different, to suggestions made by the DRP. Rosebank College is a contemporary design solution reflective of *movement* of vehicles along Parramatta Rd.

## Rhythm

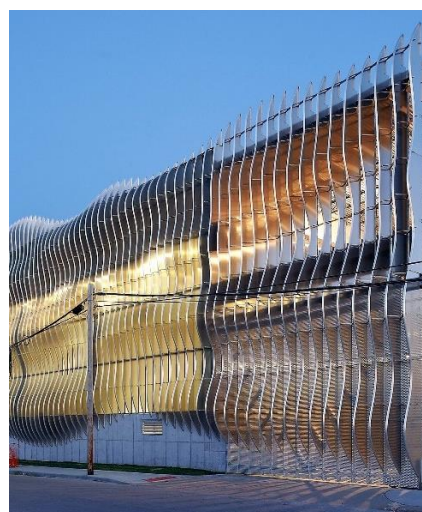
The interior courtyard façades of Rosebank College are reflective of the rhythm of the columns and cloistered enclosure of Benedictine architecture.



Similar effect is reflected in contemporary architecture by the use of fins which also emphasise both rhythm and repetition.



Macquarie Uni Library By FJMT





The use of fins at the Parramatta Rd corner of the new building at Rosebank College is a similar interpretation, where the fins represent the rhythm of design elements associated with the College traditions whilst also providing an element of *enclosure* and *protection* at the corner entrance.



e) *The façade to the roof level playing courts is equally unconvincing, being a quite arbitrary composition of vertical fins and flat/profiled surfaces that say little about the uses and activity that they conceal.*

Response:

The east and north facades to the Harris Rd wing screen the active and passive recreational and educational use of the facility behind the facades. The aesthetic principles are the same as that which have driven the design of the Parramatta Rd façade. With reference to (d) above, it is submitted that these principles are as valid and appropriate.

f) *Is it possible that a view from the street of school children engaging in healthy outdoor activities would say more about the school's values compared to what is now proposed?*

Response:

It is submitted that this comment by the DRP is both subjective and uninformed. Firstly, it does not make specific reference as to which of the assumed College values this comment applies. Secondly, the comment does not reflect an understanding of current Child Protection values where the nature of the *healthy outdoor activities* which will take place on the facility is best screened from outside view.

### Materiality

a) *As noted above the selection of materials appears to have more in common with the surrounding commercial context than the schools existing built fabric of masonry (including the street fencing to be retained). The Panel therefore recommends that the architects might look beyond the immediate context towards Five Docks significant inventory of heritage brick architecture, as this would also be a sound strategy for unifying the architectural representation of the school to the wider public. An example of brickwork used effectively in a contemporary design idiom (and fronting a major road) is the Sacred Heart Primary School Mosman, designed by Eeles+Trelease Architects (1999-2010).*

### Response:

Refer to previous comments with respect to *Materiality*. Also refer to correspondence from Rosebank College in response to DRP Report and recommendations, which refers to the appropriateness of a new building *looking back* to heritage brick architecture and the appropriateness of the suggested precedent of the Sacred Heart Primary School at Mosman.

### Landscape

a) *The Panel expresses concerns in relation to the retention of existing indigenous landscape along the street edges of the site, in particular the mature stand of eucalypts on the subject corner and the trees along the Harris Rd frontage. There is little mature landscape in the immediate vicinity, which makes retention and viability particularly significant.*

### Response

The design has been prepared in conjunction with specialist Arborist advice to ensure the retention of the existing *mature stand of eucalypts* facing Parramatta Rd, as well as existing treed screening along Harris Rd.

This matter has been previously resolved with the submission of an arborist report as part of the DA / SEE lodgement package.

Council has raised no concerns with respect to tree removal and tree retention as proposed in the DA, as evidenced above in the Council Tree Services comment *Council's arborist has granted approval for the proposed tree works as per the submitted arborist report.*

### Alleanza Architecture



**Charles Glanville**  
Architect