

## Urban Design + SEPP 65 Peer Review

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### Review in support of Planning Proposal for residential development by Landmark Developments at Neil Street, Merrylands.

#### Introduction

This report has been prepared as an urban design review in support of the Planning Proposal for 4 additional floors on top of the currently DA approved Building 3. The assessment is made against the principles of SEPP 65 and good urban design outcomes based on the objectives for the Merrylands Neil Street Precinct.

Comments are based on inspection of the site context and review of the following:

- DA plans by Marchese Architects; issue A 23/5/2018
- Merrylands Neil Street Precinct Urban Design Review – Oct. 2015
- Clause 4.6 Variation for Height of Buildings

#### Overview

This is a significant site due to its position relative to the Neil Street gateway from the south-east, and should be considered within the context of the surrounding development envelopes to ensure the best fit in urban form. As per below, while there are certainly environmental impacts from the additional height, when assessed against ADG guidelines under SEPP 65, there does appear to be sound justification for the variation proposed.

With due consideration for the constraints that location and topography impose on this site, there is potential to create an enhanced development outcome that will be consistent with the broad objectives for the R4 zone density. It is concluded that this Planning Proposal, with its continuation of a well resolved architectural form and configuration, can create a complementary addition to the high quality residential unit development already approved.

#### Background

Based on the Holroyd DCP 2013, the Neil Street Precinct Urban Design Review notes the importance of protecting solar access to key public domain areas in a framework that can allow for greater height in certain locations to augment yield potential. It is important to understand this objective in terms of implications for the built form expectations, and how this can best accommodate urban design outcomes to benefit qualities of architecture and the public domain, while ensuring a balance between pedestrian networks, landscaped open space, traffic movement and environmental amenity.

This Urban Design Review endeavours to maintain the general principle of providing a transition in building heights from the lower scale residential development to the north of the Merrylands Centre through to the higher scale mixed use development in the core of the Centre. (p5)

It is noted that in terms of scale and form of development for this Block E of the site north of Neil Street the objectives for zone are:

- To ensure the development contributes to the provision of public infrastructure.
- To ensure scale and form of development contributes to the public domain and is sympathetic to the residential development to the north.

To provide the New Road 2 connection around the north west corner of this site to serve the broader needs of the surrounding neighbourhood there has been a loss of significant developable GFA for Block E in providing this public infrastructure. This has been further affected by provision for the overland flow path and associated open space provisions, and consequent impacts on vehicular access to basement car parking.

While this will create a small increase in yield for Block E of the Merrylands Precinct, provision for a very walkable neighbourhood and accessible local amenities can help sustain a relatively small increase residential density without significant further impacts on vehicular traffic generation, and also encourage more physical activity for health benefits.

Therefore support for this Planning Proposal should be given with consideration that non-compliances are acceptable under the aims and objectives of the MNSP and the ADG under SEPP 65.

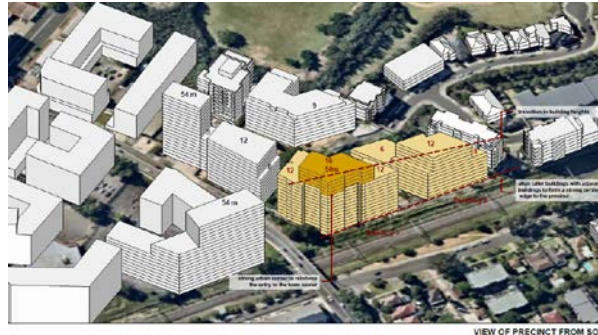
## Height

In accordance with Clause 6.10 of MNSP, the original building height complied with 12 stories based on the intentions for a 39m height limit in the R4 zone along the edge of the railway corridor. However on the opposite corner of the Neil Street bridge a 54m height limit has been allowed to provide a marker for this corner of the precinct with B4/B6 zoning.



With this route being a secondary 'gateway' to Merrylands, it is appropriate to therefore consider the proposal for an additional 4 floors that will complement this urban form statement. A further benefit of this built form addition is to create more variation in the height plane that would otherwise see a plateau of 12 storeys along a significant length of Buildings 2, 3 and 4 within this precinct.

The result is also a stepped envelope that follows a similar strategy to that for Building 4 to the east, and also allows inclusion of further roof terrace communal open space on Level 12 at either end of Building 3. This will benefit the few south facing units with access to winter sun, and also complement the ground level communal landscaped space with areas that are more suited to occasions for social and family groups, with the potential for several gatherings at the same time to enjoy broader district views.



It is clear that, with the proposed 4 storeys modification in height for this Planning Proposal, there is an improved built form potential that can be configured to minimise any impacts on neighbouring properties, and establish an appropriate urban design outcome with quality design attributes. Consequently the basis for a Cl. 4.6 variation of height over a relatively small part of the overall proposal should be supported.

With respect to SEPP 65 and ADG Guidelines it is considered that there is a valid case for this addition that will have minimal environmental impacts, and in some instances scope to improve and/or add value to the Planning Proposal for the benefit of future residents and the broader community

## SEPP 65 – URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

SEPP 65 includes 9 design quality principles. These principles are intended to guide good design, provide a basis to evaluate the merits of proposed design solutions and provide a basis for subsequent planning policy documents, design processes and decisions made under SEPP 65. The SEPP requires that before determining a development application for residential apartment development, the consent authority must consider the design quality principles.

### Principle 1:

#### Context & Neighbourhood Character

“Good design responds and contributes to its context. Context is the key natural and built features of an area, their relationship and the character they create when combined. It also includes social, economic, health and environmental conditions. Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of an area’s existing or future character. Well designed buildings respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood. Consideration of local context is important for all sites, including sites in established areas, those undergoing change or identified for change.”



VIEW OF PRECINCT FROM NEIL STREET BRIDGE

Given the location issues identified in the analysis above, there are significant benefits from this Planning Proposal that benefit the urban form character and be complementary to the surroundings as the precinct develops.

This site has the potential to create a contextual urban form transition between the other buildings within the precinct those in the mixed-use zone to the south-east across Neil Street. These results would be regarded as positive urban design outcomes.

### Principle 2:

#### Built Form & Scale

“Good design achieves a scale, bulk and height appropriate to the existing or desired future character of the street and surrounding buildings. Good design also achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building’s purpose in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type, articulation and the manipulation of building elements. Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscapes and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook.”

The form and articulation of the building envelope will result in an expressed and well modelled form with high quality architectural detail that should mitigate against any concerns about variances to height controls. This design approach enables a considerate relationship with adjacent buildings.

The proposed height increase and unit configuration has envelope modelling and indents that can achieve the intent implied from further reading of Section 2E of the ADG, and thereby satisfy the aims for amenity and layout:

*Where greater depths are proposed, demonstrate that indicative layouts can achieve acceptable amenity with room and apartment depths. This may require significant building articulation and increased perimeter wall length.*





VIEW 04 - VIEW FROM RAILWAY LINE FACING SOUTH



In order to achieve the high quality resolution of this building, there is a legible and efficient floor plan that uses wall modulation, material selection and balcony expression to create an appropriate architectural language that transitions well both horizontally and vertically.

### Principle 3:

#### Density

“Good design achieves a high level of amenity for residents and each apartment, resulting in a density appropriate to the site and its context. Appropriate densities are consistent with the area's existing or projected population. Appropriate densities can be sustained by existing or proposed infrastructure, public transport, access to jobs, community facilities and the environment.”

The proposed increase in GFA does not appear excessive and is still within the 3.5:1 FSR target for this block of Neil Street Precinct. A well configured built form is proposed to accommodate the additional floors. This optimises unit layouts and environmental amenity in an extended building envelope that follows the language, set-backs and articulation of the elevations of the approved DA.

### Principle 4:

#### Sustainability

“Good design combines positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. Good sustainable design includes use of natural cross ventilation and sunlight for the amenity and liveability of residents and passive thermal design for ventilation, heating and cooling reducing reliance on technology and operation costs. Other elements include recycling and reuse of materials and waste, use of sustainable materials, and deep soil zones for groundwater recharge and vegetation.”



LEVELS 12-15

Following the orientation of the approved DA envelope for the site, the unit configuration arranges living areas to benefit from available solar access where practicable, and to also achieve optimum natural cross ventilation.

Access corridors are also planned to benefit from natural light and ventilation. There is also scope for inclusion of solar p/v panels at roof terrace level and on the upper roof if required that could provide power to common areas.

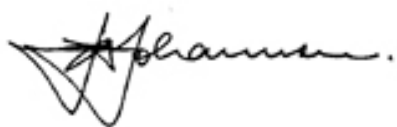
Adequate provision appears to be made for additional services, storage and waste collection.

<p><b>Principle 5: Landscape</b></p> <p>“Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, resulting in attractive developments with good amenity. A positive image and contextual fit of well designed developments is achieved by contributing to the landscape character of the streetscape and neighbourhood. Good landscape design enhances the development’s environmental performance by retaining positive natural features which contribute to the local context, co-ordinating water and soil management, solar access, micro-climate, tree canopy, habitat values, and preserving green networks. Good landscape design optimises usability, privacy and opportunities for social interaction, equitable access, respect for neighbours’ amenity, provides for practical establishment and long term management. ”</p> 	<p>To complement the common open space at street level, the provision of additional rooftop terraces with landscaping, shade and amenities would provide very complementary communal areas, and ‘green roof’ potential that can add to insulation for thermal comfort.</p> <p>The scope for families to mix in a range of communal outdoor places should also be recognised for capacity to help build a sense of community, and contribute to surveillance and security.</p>
<p><b>Principle 6: Amenity</b></p> <p>“Good design positively influences internal and external amenity for residents and neighbours. Achieving good amenity contributes to positive living environments and resident wellbeing. Good amenity combines appropriate room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, outlook, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas, and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility.</p>	<p>The floor space allowed for extra units will be adequate for well-planned layouts and appropriate room dimensions with access to sun and ventilation.</p> <p>Overshadowing impacts during the winter solstice fall largely on Neil Street or the railway reserve, and are within the limits required for the future development to the south and properties to south-east.</p>
<p><b>Principle 7: Safety</b></p> <p>“Good design optimises safety and security, within the development and the public domain. It provides for quality public and private spaces that are clearly defined and fit for the intended purpose. Opportunities to maximise passive surveillance of public and communal areas promote safety. A positive relationship between public and private spaces is achieved through clearly defined secure access points and well lit and visible areas that are easily maintained and appropriate to the location and purpose.”</p>	<p>Configuration of Building 3 has provided all lift lobbies with excellent access to both daylight and natural ventilation, and also ensures good visual surveillance of the adjacent communal and public areas.</p>

<p><b>Principle 8:</b>  <b>Housing Diversity and Social Interaction</b>  “Good design achieves a mix of apartment sizes, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets. Well designed apartment developments respond to social context by providing housing and facilities to suit the existing and future social mix. Good design involves practical and flexible features, including different types of communal spaces for a broad range of people, providing opportunities for social interaction amongst residents. “</p>	<p>The additional 2 and 3 bedroom units intended will have extensive balconies and terraces for private open space, and supplement the provision for family accommodation in the complex.</p> <p>As noted above, the extended communal roof terraces will augment the scope for social engagement between residents.</p>
<p><b>Principle 9:</b>  <b>Aesthetics</b>  “Good design achieves a built form that has good proportions and a balanced composition of elements, reflecting the internal layout and structure. Good design uses a variety of materials, colours and textures. The visual appearance of well designed apartment development responds to the existing or future local context, particularly desirable elements and repetitions of the streetscape.”</p>	<p>Continuation of a well-conceived palette of materials, colours and architectural language from the approved DA will ensure the additional built form is visually coherent and suitable for the context.</p>

## CONCLUSION

I therefore conclude this Planning Proposal can, while at variance with some of the planning controls for the Neil Street Precinct, meet the objectives for the relevant planning controls without creating any undue environmental concerns. The proposal should be supported, and has the potential to establish a quality benchmark for the desired urban design character of this evolving precinct.



Jon Johannsen  
B.Arch; M.Arch; M.Urb.Des (Hons).

25 June 2018