

09.05.2016

189 Macquarie Street, Parramatta

Urban Design Review

Antoniades Architects have been appointed by Elton Consulting on behalf of the Parramatta City Council to undertake an independent Urban Design assessment of the adequacy of the Urban Design Report provided for the purpose of meeting the requirements to seek a Gateway Determination under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979, as well as the review of the proposal specifically in relation to the increase in height and GFA, and any associated impacts it may have to its immediate and broader context.

The assessment has been undertaken pursuant to the following;

1. Inception briefing held at the Parramatta City Council outlining background to project
2. Site visit
3. Review the proposal and its immediate context by referring to the city electronic 3D model
4. Review of the following documents,
 - Urban Design Report prepared by GM Urban Design & Architecture Pty Ltd dated September 2015
 - GM Urban Design & Architecture Pty APPENDIX 1
 - Planning Proposal prepared by LJB Urban Planning Pty Ltd dated 8th September amended 27 January 2016
 - PCC Planning proposal criteria
 - Draft Architectural Design Competition Brief [competition 2]
 - 189 Macquarie Street simplified model to review shadow impacts

A review of the following aspects of the proposal were undertaken:

Urban design Analysis

Assess the proposal against the urban design report (GMU)

Visual assessment

Assess the proposal against current and future development potential in the immediate and broader context of the site.

Solar assessment

Assess amenity impacts resulting from the proposal on the surrounding context.

Urban Design Report - Review

A review was undertaken of the report prepared by GM Urban Design & Architecture Pty Ltd, who were also engaged by Toplace Pty Ltd for the initial Urban Design Study for the said site, to provide an Urban Design assessment in consideration of additional height and FSR increases based on the future strategic vision for the Parramatta City Centre.

GMU's methodology in reviewing the opportunity and potential for greater height on the site is derived and developed from a broader strategic framework study and reference, which informed the proposal in terms of potential heights, FSR and massing that might be reasonably achievable on the site in the context of the:

Parramatta CBD Planning Strategy adopted by Parramatta City Council on 27 April 2015; Growth and creation of Sydney's second CBD; Recent planning approvals and Planning Proposal to increase height and FSR on nearby sites, taller slender skyline potential with transitional heights across the CBD, streetscape and shadowing impacts, and Heritage values.

More specifically, GMU's analysis is undertaken in the context of Council's current vision outlined in the PCPS that will form the basis of a Council Initiated Planning Proposal that is likely to see:

1. Expansion of the CBD boundary;
2. Increase in FSR of up to 10:1 throughout the CBD;
3. Potential removal of maximum height control (subject to sun access and aviation restrictions); and
4. Increase in the Design Excellence bonus from 10% to 15%.

The modelling of Parramatta skylines by GMU illustrates how towers up to 150m high would complement the Parramatta skyline and how an increase in height on the subject site would be a better urban design outcome to match the eastern gateway site at 142-154 Macquarie Street.

To this end, GMU report provides a series of massing options to determine appropriate distribution of height across the site and in consideration of heritage values, solar access impacts in the public domain, with particular consideration of Robin Thomas & James Ruse Reserve Masterplan and Experiment Farm Reserve and Hambledon Cottage. The resultant Urban Design Study recommends a change to the current height controls on the subject site to permit;

1. *Macquarie Street tower* -Maximum height of 178m to top of roof feature with 167 metres or approximately 54 storeys to with a lower edge to the south at 39 storeys.
2. *Hassall Street tower* -Maximum of 135 metres to top of roof feature, and 126 metres or 41 storeys.

The report also considered that a FSR of 11.5:1 could be reasonably achieved on the site.

The increased height and floor space ratio for the subject site would be a better fit for the strategic vision of Parramatta. Furthermore, this site and related proposal, together with the proposal under assessment on 142-154 Macquarie Street would work collectively in creating the eastern gateway to Parramatta off the east-west axis, and connect to the broader and nearby strategic centres of Westmead, Rydalmere, and Camellia.

Assessment

The principles around height should be centred around both visual and amenity impacts, as well as the context and in this case, its potential to reinforce the eastern gateway to Parramatta. The location and distribution of height across the site has been developed in a manner to ensure visual and amenity impacts are mitigated. Accordingly, the height strategy across this site by way of increased height along Macquarie Street and a reduced height on Hassall street is supported.

The site is located in a transitional zone that has a diverse characteristics and opportunities to influence and direct the formation of design principles and response.

Whilst it is noted that the permissible height across the site is 90.6 metres and the surrounding context is currently ranging from 54 – 72 metres, it is recognized and accepted that, commensurate with its locality, size area, and potential to advance the future strategic vision for the Parramatta City Centre, it would be appropriate to establish a height that would be in dialogue with the proposed 142-154 Macquarie Street development, as well add to the visual significance of the gateway.

After assessing the proposal on its own merits and with the aid and reference to the city electronic model as well as the simplified model which focuses on the overshadowing impacts including those to the Experiment Farm Reserve and Experiment Farm Cottage, the following heights are seen as acceptable;

Built form along Macquarie Street frontage – range from 165 – 178 metres.

Built form along Hassall Street frontages site. 125- 135 metres

The GMU urban design report to provide further consideration to the following,

Whilst the broad urban design principles undertaken in the report are accepted, it would be beneficial to include further information in relation to any specific impacts created by the increased height and built form proposed.

Accordingly, an analysis if already undertaken should be included which demonstrates that the development potential of adjacent sites is not compromised as a result of the proposal and visa versa, in particular the future potential of the adjoining school grounds to the east, as well as the proposal at 142-154 Macquarie Street, to understand their interrelated impacts as well as to their immediate context.

GMU report requires to complete the following missing information and clarification;

1. Page 40 makes reference to Figures 39 and 40, however are not included, whilst Figures 39 and 40 exist on page 39 referring to Design Principles & Guidelines.
2. Arborist firm to be noted on page 30.

The proposal itself would benefit from a more responsive build form strategy that references to the design principles outlined GMU's Urban Design report, and which is subject to further detail and assessment. Accordingly, the requirement for the additional height and built form to be subject to a further design competition is supported as a step towards also addressing the concerns noted below.

The Macquarie Street tower in particular has the appearance of a tall thin building as it addresses the street, however appears bulky and inarticulate as viewed from from the east, which would be intensified due to the width of the building, as well as it been primarily cast in shade for most of the day throughout the year.

The composition of this tower should consider a more modulated architectural typology that appears slenderer as it rises above the approved 30 storey building.

Recommendations

The report prepared by GMU, generally meets the requirements to provide sufficient direction towards the second design competition as well as the seek a Gateway Determination under the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979, with the provision of additional information/ amendments' outlined above to be undertaken prior to Gateway.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'A' followed by a horizontal line and three dots.

Andreas Antoniades

Antoniades Architects