



Hurstville Civic Centre Precinct Masterplan: Planning Proposal Urban Design Assessment

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Introduction

This urban design review has been requested by George's River Council as part of the independent assessment of the planning proposal for the Council-owned site bound by McMahon Street, Park Road, Queens Road and Dora Street, referred to as the 'Civic Precinct'.

SJB Planning is leading the assessment of the planning proposal, including all associated studies. This urban design review has been prepared by Jonathan Knapp (Director, Urban Design), of SJB Architects, who was also the project Director for the recently completed Hurstville CBD Urban Design Framework. The key documents that have been reviewed as part of this report include;

- Concept Design Report, by DWP
- Planning Proposal Report, by City Plan, and
- Draft Amendments to DCP

A bespoke assessment methodology has been prepared for the urban design review of the planning proposal. As there's no singular or universally accepted approach to reports of this nature, a number of key reference documents have been used to structure this assessment; SEPP65, Part 2, Design Principles (x9), and the recently published Hurstville CBD Urban Design Framework. Reference has also been made to the Government Architect's (GANSW) *Better Placed*, and the two accompanying documents relevant to this exercise; *Urban Design Guidelines*, and *Evaluating Good Design*, both which were referenced in the preparation of this review.

The assessment also considers the proposed amended LEP and DCP controls, focusing on the design implications and whether these proposed changes will lead to an improved and superior outcome on the site and for the city more broadly. A separate and more thorough independent planning assessment by SJB Planning has been prepared which interrogates the project against all relevant planning controls.

In addition to these key reference documents, this assessment also draws my professional experience as the Director of an established and highly regarded urban design practice, in addition to the knowledge gained from preparing Council's urban design and built form study of the Hurstville CBD, is perfectly placed to determine the relevant strengths and short-comings of the planning proposal.

Along with Stuart Gordon (SJB Planning), we met with the proponent on two occasions, both in 2017. The purpose of this consultation process was to interrogate the design approach and understand whether alternate approaches to the site's layout, location of open space and configuration of the built form could lead to an improved outcome, specifically in relation to amenity (internal and external to the site). The findings of this optioning are captured in the Concept Design Report, and revealed the proposed scheme provides an optimal outcome - this is interrogated in further detail below.

Following each of the consultation sessions a letter was issued to the proponent outlining preliminary feedback on the concept masterplan and associated studies. These letters were prepared by SJB Planning with urban design input provided in both instances, and are dated 16th March 2017, and 29th August 2017. The content of these letters and the nature of the design response has also been addressed below.

This urban design report has been prepared as part of a broader assessment of the planning proposal for the Civic Precinct, and should be read in association with the other reports, including traffic, heritage and planning.

Assessment Methodology

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The urban design assessment methodology has been specifically catered to the, scale, make-up, breadth and significance of the project. This review is not intended to be compliance focused, as this is covered in greater detail in the associated planning assessment by SJB. Rather, the assessment has been based on current 'best practice' design guidelines and relevant studies that relate to this type of development, within Hurstville.

The two key documents adopted as part of the assessment methodology include;

SEPP65, Part 2, Design Principles (x9)

Regularly used as the basis of assessing planning proposals and development applications by independent Design Review Panels (DRPs) throughout NSW, including the George's River DRP, and the Randwick DRP, on which I currently sit.

The George's River DRP has provided a separate report on this planning proposal, dated 4th May 2017, which has also been reviewed as part of this assessment.

The breadth and coverage of the SEPP65 principles provide an ideal framework to address any proposal, regardless of scale, land use or configuration. The principles provide the most commonly used basis for design assessment and have been adopted as the first phase of the urban design review of the Civic Precinct Masterplan.

Hurstville CBD Built Form and Urban Design Framework, 2017, prepared by SJB Architects

Council embarked on a review of the CBD built form controls in 2016, appointing SJB Architects to lead the project (Jonathan Knapp as Project Director), which was concluded in 2017. The primary focus of the study was to rationalise the current LEP and DCP controls for the CBD to ensure equity in the height and scale of development, leading to improved urban design outcomes, all while retaining the same scale of development (i.e. no amendments to FSR).

The initial stage of the study included a review of previous masterplans, principles and visions for the CBD to determine whether they've been accurately reflected in the form of development and current controls that will guide all future development. A set of consolidated urban design framework plans were prepared, based on the findings of the review, consultation with Council and the team's primary research. These address;

- Access & Movement
- Public domain & Open Space
- Day time and Night time Activation, and
- Built form.

These framework plans were then used as the basis for determining whether the planning controls for individual sites should be amended, not only for equity but also to achieve an improved outcome for the CBD.

The CBD Study was exhibited, amended and finalised to reflect feedback from key stakeholders, land-owners and the community. The report was finalised in 2017.

A number of sites were excluded from this study, including the Civic Precinct, due to the progressed nature of the planning proposal. This assessment presents an ideal opportunity to interrogate the planning proposal and masterplan against the urban design principles and framework plans prepared as part of the 2017 study.

The Hurstville CBD Study provides a valuable reference for this assessment, and in its absence the suite of documents prepared by the Government Architect (GANSW) would've been used as the primary reference. Previous urban design assessments have been structured around 'Better Placed', which still has value, but its emphasis is covered in greater detail by the Hurstville CBD Study.

This assessment starts with the identification of the issues first raised with the proponent in 2017 following each of the consultation sessions. These have been captured in the two letters dated March and August 2017. The assessment of the masterplan against the principles of SEPP65 and the strategic frameworks outlined in the CBD Urban Design Strategy follow.

Preliminary Assessment

2

Two meetings were held with the proponent throughout 2017, prior to lodgement of the planning proposal in June 2018. Each session was attended by myself and Stuart Gordon (SJB Planning), and followed by a letter outlining our feedback, and where necessary, additional input from the broader consultant team. In terms of the urban design feedback and response from the proponent, this has been outlined below.

Its recognised due to the extended time frame between the consultation sessions in 2017, and this review of the lodge planning proposal, some of these matters may have been addressed but not clearly articulated in the documentation being reviewed. However, the emphasis of the consultation process was to better understand the design rationale underpinning the masterplan, and openly interrogate whether alternate design approaches should be pursued, tested and considered as part of the planning proposal. In this context, preliminary assessment process and associated meetings were successful in crystalising the key issues and how they can be addressed.

The summary of the preliminary assessment below relates specifically to the urban design advice, and includes notations as to whether this information was provided or addressed (*noted in italics*).

Letter, 16 March 2017

Urban Design commentary was provided as a standalone section of the letter to the proponent in March 2017. A summary of the key points and the adequacy of the response as part of the lodge CDR is outlined below.

- Landscape concept plan requested
High-level plan with limited detail was provided in the final Concept Design Report (CDR), supplemented by precedent imagery.
- Circulation plan indicating private and public access
P. 23 of the CDR includes a pedestrian circulation plan, referencing the key routes across the CBD and their intersection with the site. Car parking access is noted on P. 24.
- View impacts from the public domain
Provide as part of the options analysis, though the perspectives are taken from an elevated position and not street-level, rendering them unhelpful
- Revised 'Sun Study' with greater context and impacts on adjacent properties
P37 of CDR includes plan view of the 3D model, making it difficult to determine the impact on the elevations of neighbouring buildings. A 'view from the sun analysis' was requested. The options review, held in August 2017 included animations of the shadow impact for each option, but this wasn't provided as part of the lodged plans (only stills images have been provided).
- Building envelopes to consider the relationship to neighbouring properties
CDR includes drawings that focus primarily on the site's proposed building envelopes, and not their relationship to those properties fronting Park Road, Queens Road and Dora Street, where the questions of impact and transition are most relevant
- Additional commercial to be provided in the northern area of the precinct, in response to the site's location within the CBD and desire for a more mixed land use.
This was addressed during the consultation session, and ruled out on the basis of viability and market demand

- No Sustainability strategy was proposed as part of the masterplan
No such strategy or design principles that addressed sustainability were provided as part of the planning proposal
- Approach to the provision of communal open space required to support the scale of residential development being proposed.
Not addressed as part of the CDR
- Extent of basement limits the opportunity for any substantial deep soil to be provided
Not addressed in detail as part of the CDR

Letter, 29 August 2017

Feedback on the urban design components of the proposal was provided throughout the letter in August 2017, which was structured around key headings, such as Yield, Storeys and Solar Access. These were addressed by the proponent in the form of an 'options analysis', presented in both 2D and using 3D animation, which was useful in analysing solar impacts. A summary of the key points and the adequacy of the response as part of the lodge CDR is outlined below.

- Maximum heights proposed as part of the building envelope options exceed the known OLS and Pans-Ops, which is assumed to be around RL115m
The matter of exceeding the OLS and Pans-Ops doesn't appear to be adequately addressed, or take into consideration the requirements for construction cranes to also operate within these aeronautical limits. A working assumption is for 15m clearance for a specific form of hammerhead cranes, though it can be as high as 30m for convention cranes.
- To protect the solar amenity of the proposed civic place, and other streets and spaces located around the site, a set of solar controls were suggested as part of the proposal
No solar controls were provided as part of the Draft DCP, other than a note in 3.4.1 D(l), which simply refers to 'Solar access' as a consideration of a public domain plan for the site.

- 'Connection to the town centre' was used as an assessment criteria for the options analysis, which reflects CBD's Strategy, 2017, appreciation of the importance of the site and the civic place to the performance of the CBD - as noted in the various urban design frameworks, addressed in greater detail below.
Whilst the qualitative assessment of the success or otherwise of certain options to achieve 'connection to the town centre', the visual connectivity of the Civic Place to Forest Road was considered important

Following the review of the draft CDR and the supplementary options analysis, which is appended to the lodge document, almost 12 months passed before the final Masterplan and Planning Proposal was received - noting the lodgement date was July 2018.

Assessment 1: SEPP65 Review

3

As noted in the assessment methodology, the 9 principles outlined in Part 2 of SEPP65 have been used as the basis of the urban design review, focusing primarily on the concept masterplan, as outlined in the Hurstville Civic Precinct Masterplan: Concept Design Report (CDR) by DWP. From my experience, the breadth and relevance of these principles provides the ideal framework to assess a design of this nature and significance. The application of the design principles remains relevant even at the planning proposal stage of the design and approval process.

Principle 1: Context and 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.

The CDR, including the appended options analysis, illustrates an appreciation for the role of the Civic Precinct to the performance and prosperity of the Hurstville CBD. The location of the civic plaza, a new and crucial public open space for the city, along McMahon Street reflects the understanding of the important visual connection between the space, the site and the broader context, specifically Forest Road, from where the majority of pedestrians will be coming.

The design has also benefited from the preparation of the CBD Urban Design Strategy, 2017, which was prepared in parallel with the masterplan and planning proposal. In addition, the two design review/consultation sessions undertaken in 2017 with myself and Stuart Gordon, in addition to the meeting with Council's independent design review panel, ensured that the proponent was responsive to the broader challenges and opportunities present across the city. The most important of these being the integration of public spaces, pedestrian connectivity, activation during the day and evenings, and the permeability of the large urban blocks. These are covered in greater detail in section 4.

Given the early stage of the design, more detail needs to be provided on the design, character and role of the public open spaces and ground floor activation in the context of the city. Again, the CBD Urban Design Strategy provides a framework for these future discussions.

Principle 2: Built form and 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 site's built form has been structured around two parcels, which are tied together at the ground plane and public domain. The northern portion, constituting Buildings A and B, is dedicated to primarily high-density residential with some ground floor retail, and potential for additional commercial within the podium (subject to market viability). The southern portion, Buildings C and D, feature a combination of commercial, retail and community uses, including the proposed auditorium and civic centre. These buildings frame the northern and western edges of the new civic plaza, which also includes the retained heritage item.

The Civic Precinct occupies an entire city block, bound on all four sides by public roads, each of which has a specific role, scale of space and built form that contributes to its unique characteristics. The relationship of the proposed building envelopes to each and the newly formed public open spaces has been addressed through adequate separation, orientation of buildings and consideration of solar access to satisfy the Apartment Design Guide. What we sought during the design reviews in 2017 was a better understanding of the relationships outside the site, to neighbouring properties fronting Park Road, McMahon Street, Dora Street and Queens Road. This matter was only addressed at a high-level in the lodge documents, and was more clearly illustrated during the August 2017 design review when the animation of the shadow impacts for each option were presented and discussed. This work highlighted by the proposed concept masterplan was selected.

Buildings A and B

The two 17-storey (60m) buildings encompass a proposed northern public open space, which fronts Queens Road. Both buildings propose to exceed the OLS and Pans-Ops, with no allowance for construction cranes. This matter has been addressed as part of the planning report by City Plan (pages 46), and was raised in the past as part of the preliminary assessment in 2017. This will be covered in greater detail in the accompanying planning assessment by SJB Planning.

The siting and orientation of these buildings prioritise the grid of the city over the compliance with solar access via the ADG. Both buildings address the street frontages and the natural grid of the site, rotating approximately 30-degrees off an east-west alignment to ensure this outcome. This can create issues with residential amenity, particularly in achieving adequate solar access, which is relevant to the DA stage, but should be considered as part of the planning proposal. Page 36 shows the design of a typical residential floor for Buildings A and B and how they could achieve solar amenity based on the proposed envelopes. This approach is supported.

The question of height transition has not been explicitly addressed in the CDR, however, it has been discussed during the design reviews and as part of the CBD Urban Design Strategy that Park Road defines the northern extent of this part of the CBD. Other strategic centres like Chatswood and North Sydney currently define their CBD extents with quite severe changes in building heights. They are currently wrestling with 'height transitions' as their centres continue to expand and the shoulder neighbourhoods attract growing pressure to increase in scale and density - this was also analysed as part of the CBD Urban Design Strategy, most notable in the north of the CBD.

Building A clearly marks the northern extent to the city at Park Road, and gateway to the city from the north-west along Queens Road. However, it also establishes a height datum that determines the scale of Building B. The transitioning of height from Building A to B would be primarily driven by impacts, both external to the site and internal. Concern was raised about the solar impact of Building B on the Civic Place, but this was adequately addressed through the shadow analysis (p. 37).

Assessment 1: SEPP65 Review

Buildings C and D

The southern portion of the site is defined by the commercial, community, civic and retail uses that tie the site into the broader CBD, in particular the retail and commercial uses along Dora Street, McMahon and Forest Roads. The placement and scale of built form is driven by both the specific spatial requirements of these uses, but also the potential solar impacts on the civic plaza. These impacts are addressed in greater detail below.

Similar to Buildings A and B in the northern portion of the site, the masterplan successfully defines the building envelopes to address the streets and spaces as a priority. Solar access is less of a priority with these commercial and community uses, however, the impacts on the neighbouring buildings was raised as a potential issue. This is particularly the case along Dora Street, which features a residential flat building along its southern frontage, opposite Building D.

The height and placement of Building C is supported, as it secures the solar amenity of civic plaza, and avoids the formation of a 'built canyon' along Queens Road, given the built form along its northern frontage and placement of Building A, B and D. This outcome is largely secured by the proposed Height of Building Control (17m) and the draft DCP relating to Building C, which 'ensure appropriate solar access is achieved to the Civic Plaza', objective a (ii).

The Draft DCP includes a section (3.3) on built form, which interrogates the concept masterplan and its constituent parts, both on a building by building basis, but also in terms of achieving a quality outcome. Section 3.2 of the DCP addresses Design Excellence, and how it could be achieved, but falls short of suggesting a design review or competition process to determine whether this controls has been satisfied.

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 Civic Precinct is the largest contiguous development site in Hurstville, and its ownership by Council provides a unique opportunity to deliver a mixed-use development that truly reflects the needs of the growing CBD and community more broadly. There's an appreciation that due to the scale of community and civic uses on the site, in addition to the extent of public open space that a certain scale is required. Residential remains the 'highest and best use' across the city, and there is evidence that A-grade office space is difficult to deliver to market in Hurstville.

The masterplan reflects a total gross floor area (GFA) of 51,045sqm across commercial, council, community, retail and residential (300 dwellings approx.). There's no study of how this yield equates to the proposed FSRs in either the CDR or planning report. The 3:1 FSR proposed for the southern portion appears reasonable given the amount of open space provided and scale of commercial and community uses. The two proposed FSRs for the northern portions (residential) at 7:1 and 5:1 are also reasonable given the relatively constrained nature of the middle site (7:1) and provision of additional public open space (assumed predominately within the 5:1). The planning proposal would benefit from a study that shows the extent of site area being designated for each FSR, and the total permissible GFA being proposed for the total site.

The final consideration into whether the proposed density of development is appropriate relates to the impact of the building envelopes, both internally and externally, which is covered below.

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.

No sustainability strategy has been provided, however, the draft DCP does make note that the 'site is to demonstrate sustainable principles for energy production, waste management towards carbon neutral and provide 5 Star Green Star outcome' under 3.2 Design Excellence. This approach is supported and should be extended to more aspirational, given the retention of Council ownership in key spaces and buildings (assumed).

The site is of a scale that precinct-wide sustainability measures could be implemented, including;

- On-site rainwater capture, treatment and reuse
- Solar panels on all building, whether integrated into the facades or placed on the roofs
- Car-sharing and bike-sharing schemes for all uses
- End of trip facilities to encourage modal shift away from the private vehicle, supplemented by reduce parking provision
- On-site waste management and processing, including pneumatic-collection, tri-gen power plants or similar
- Community gardens or outdoor gathering spaces that encourage social interaction

The masterplan has the potential to be a sustainable and carbon neutral precinct within an established CBD fabric. However, this opportunity will be lost without the proper governance and planning framework being in place.

Principle 5: Landscape

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 useability, privacy and opportunities for social interaction, equitable access, respect for neighbours' amenity and provides for practical establishment and long term management.

The masterplan presents the opportunity to deliver two interconnected, generous and valuable public open spaces within the centre of Hurstville. This is an excellent aspect of the proposal that should be safeguarded to ensure this offer isn't eroded or lost over the followed stages of design and delivery.

Limited information is provided in the CDR on the exact size, dimensions and character of these spaces, other than a number of sketches, model images and precedents. To provide certainty even greater certainty on the size of the public open space the RE1 zoning could be applied to the two public open space sites and additional FSR could be applied to the remaining B4 zoned land. If this is considered to restrictive and likely to stifle design excellence, then the DCP should be more specific around the size and location of the space, most specifically the second space on Queens Road in the north of the precinct.

The draft DCP includes a control under 3.4.2 Civic (MacMahon Street) Plaza, which specifies a minimum of 2,400sqm open to sky and a minimum dimension of 40m x 60m (i). The controls also seek 40% of the space being 'soft accessible landscape', though no description of what that entails (ii). A solar access control (iii) is

Assessment 1: SEPP65 Review

proposed, seeking 4 hours of direct sunlight in mid-winter between 9am-3pm.

This is a particularly important controls, given the location of the space on the south side of the proposed built form. Similar controls have been proposed in other centres, and tested through the continued development pressure and increased heights. Most notably Parramatta Square, Sydney's Hyde Park and Domain, and SJB's work on the new civic square at Merrylands, which also specified proportion of space that must receive direct sunlight. This aspect is missing from the draft DCP and should be considered as part of the next iteration.

Deep soil isn't addressed in either the masterplan or Draft DCP, and whilst addressed in the ADG through the landscape area, communal area and deep soil requirements, these relate to only the residential component. Given the extent and significance of the public domain being proposed, a set of specifically catered controls or aspirations should be included in the proposal. This may require the extent of basement parking to be significantly reduced, as compared to the indicative layout shown on page 25 of the CDR.

The landscape potential of the expansive roof planes across the four buildings should also be explored, given the density of development being proposed, requirement for communal open space and the improved access to sunlight at the upper levels.

In addition to the planning framework, the other mechanism that can lead to an improved and certain public domain outcome is to specify Council ownership, and then ensure a role for Council in the design and delivery of these spaces and associated pedestrian connections (i.e. Eat Street).

Principle 6: Amenity

Good design positively influences internal and external amenity for residents and neighbours. Achieving good amenity contributes to positive living environments and resident well being.

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.

As noted above, the building envelopes have the potential of achieving the core objectives of SEPP65 and the ADG, including separation, solar access and cross-ventilation. Despite the relatively early stage of design required in a planning proposal, its reasonable to seek some certainty as to the ability for the proposed controls to deliver buildings that can address the ADG, which is often relied upon for compliance.

The CDR includes typical floor-plate studies for the two residential buildings (A and B) are shown on Page 36 of the CDR and clearly illustrate how solar access could be achieved despite the site being orientated away from the north-south or east-west axis. Noted above is the analysis of the proposed built form and its orientation towards the existing street and urban structure, which makes solar more difficult to achieve. Despite this, the matter of solar access for the proposed development has been satisfactorily addressed.

The proposed LEP controls for Building Height essentially dictate the location of the two residential buildings in the northern portion of the site. When coupled with a minimum separation of 24m, as specified in the ADG, there is some certainty on the placement and siting of the residential buildings.

Amenity also considers those properties outside the site, most notably those residential buildings along the southern frontage of Dora Street, which may be impacted by Building D. However, in this instance the ADG will still review adequate solar access (2-hours in mid-winter) to be retained, which can be addressed at DA stage.

Principle 7: Safety

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.

The masterplan reflects a considered approach to public open space, street frontages and through-site connections, ensuring they all receive the appropriate level of passive surveillance from either existing or proposed development, or passing traffic (vehicles and pedestrians).

The positioning of the two public open spaces with direct street frontage is supported, however, recent guidance from the Government Architect seeks public open spaces to have a minimum of two street frontages, with preferably three or all four frontages to streets to maximise opportunities for passive surveillance. In this instance, the masterplan can supplement the role of additional street frontages with activated building frontages, either by retail, community uses, or entrance lobbies (commercial and residential).

These outcomes could be captured through active frontage controls in either a LEP or DCP to ensure blank elevations are orientated away from these primary spaces and pedestrian connections.

Further analysis of the safety implications of the design can be addressed through the DA phase.

Principle 8: Housing diversity and social interaction

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 and providing opportunities for social interaction among residents.

Housing mix hasn't been determined at this early stage in the design and planning process, and can be dealt with in greater detail and specificity in the DA stage.

What the masterplan does provide is sufficient opportunity for social interaction across a number of spaces, street frontages, buildings and levels. This can also be addressed in greater detail during the subsequent DA stages, though greater design interrogation and iterative review is recommended to ensure the best possible outcome. See below for more information on how this can be achieved.

Assessment 1: SEPP65 Review

Principle 9: Aesthetics

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 a well designed apartment development responds to the existing or future local context, particularly desirable elements and repetitions of the streetscape.

Aesthetics isn't directly addressed as part of the lodged planning proposal documentation, other than to illustrate an aspiration design outcome within the public domain. This is typically the case given the early stage of the design and approvals process, where the emphasis is on planning controls and their capacity to achieve a certain and known outcome. However, when it comes to design certainty in planning must be balanced against providing flexibility for architectural expression and excellence.

To achieve these often competing interests its recommended that a more aspiration and explicit design excellence process is proposed for this site. Given Council's interests in the site, this is the ideal opportunity to establish a high-quality benchmark that lifts the aspirations of the local community and land-owners. This relates to more than design, but also sustainability, as noted above.

There are many ways to approach 'design excellence', many of which are outlined in the GANSW guides on the topic. Regardless of the preferred approach, 'design excellence' should be addressed in the proposed planning controls. Those controls outlined in the Draft DCP (3.2) remain too vague and open to interpretation.

Assessment 2: CBD Urban Design Strategy

4

The Hurstville City Centre Urban Design Study, prepared by SJB for Georges River Council, was initiated in late 2016 and concluded in late 2017. The study begins with a review and synthesis of the various masterplans and studies completed on the CBD over the previous 13 years. These studies were distilled into a set of principles that remain relevant to the current challenges and opportunities within the CBD, and should therefore continue to guide the future development and performance of the city. These include;

- Connectivity
- Public Domain & Open
- Space
- Built Form
- Character & Views
- Sustainability & Wellbeing
- Liveability
- Employment
- Design Excellence

Many of these mirror those design principles outlined in SEPP65, and have been addressed in the previous section. To avoid duplication and to apply a greater level of specificity these principles were distilled into a set of spatialised urban design frameworks, which have been used as the basis for a supplementary assessment of the Civic Centre Masterplan and planning proposal. These frameworks include;

1. Day time and Night time Activation
2. Access & Movement
3. Public Domain & Open Space
4. Built Form

The CBD Urban Design Study also included a *Conceptual Strategy* that covered the entire CBD. What's particularly revealing about the conceptual strategy are the number of points that relate to the Civic Precinct, either directly or indirectly. This is due to the importance of this project to the future of Hurstville.

In addition to maintaining and strengthening the role of the Hurstville City Centre as a vibrant regional centre by improving the day-to-day liveability within the centre, the strategy also seeks to;

1. Maintain primacy of Forest Road as a pedestrian high-street with local businesses, supported by Westfield Shopping Centre
2. Maintain amenity and safety along Forest Road to enhance and support the vibrant street life
3. **Create and strengthen existing key gateways to mark the entrances to the Centre**
4. **Improve connectivity to surrounding open spaces**
5. **Encourage public transport as the primary mode of transport**
6. **Ensure amenity is retained through the public domain via built form controls**
7. **Rationalise Height and FSR controls to allow appropriate built form**

These are addressed in greater detail as part of the analysis against the urban design frameworks on the following pages.

Assessment 2: CBD Urban Design Strategy

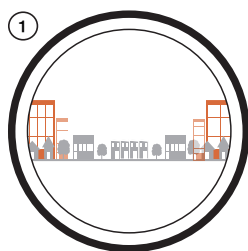
Day time Activation

The Civic Precinct is identified as one of the three key activation points for the entire CBD, along with Forest Road and Westfield. The framework indicates a potential gateway at the northern corner of the site, at the junction of Queens Road and Park Road. This gateway is to transition in height to the surrounding areas, though how this is expressed isn't discussed.

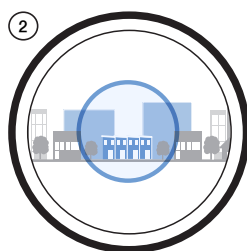
Other aspects of day time activation that relate to the Civic Precinct include the proposal for an 'Eat Street' to connect through the site between MacMahon Street and Queens Road, suggesting this needs to be tied back into the existing network of streets and spaces throughout the CBD - most notably the various food outlets along Forest Road.

The framework plan also places a significant emphasis on the activation of laneways and through site links through the use of public art, fine grain retail frontages to encourage local/smaller businesses, and placement of servicing and access points for vehicles to maximise active frontages. These could be captured as part of a site-specific DCP to ensure specific outcomes are achieved around the newly formed public open spaces, including the use of 'active frontage' controls.

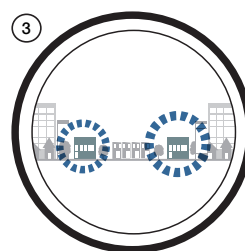
Day and night time activation is focused along Forest Road, and to a lesser extent Crofts Avenue, extending as far west as the junction with MacMahon Street. The placement of the civic plaza along the MacMahon Street frontage maximises the visual connectivity between these activation axes and this important public space and the associated community/civic uses.



1. Medium-High Density Residential at bookends



2. Active Retail & Commercial Centre focused around the Forest Road High Street, Civic Precinct and Westfield Shopping Centre.



3. Transition areas marked by gateways

Movement

The primary objective of the movement framework is to improve the function of the existing street hierarchy and reinforce the character and role of important streets and pedestrian connections. This plan does not replace or seek to contradict the TMAP, which is being updated by Council.

The diagram below illustrates the big moves proposed by the framework plan, including the creation of a 'ring road', which carries the highest volumes of traffic and will remain vehicular dominated; including Park Road and Queens Road along the site's northern and western boundaries. Dora and MacMahon Streets will continue to function as local access roads, providing access to CBD properties, bus routes and servicing requirements. These secondary streets also present an opportunity

for reduced traffic volumes and improved pedestrian amenity - reflected in the placement of the civic plaza.

To the south of the site along Forest Road is the pedestrian priority areas, where through traffic is discouraged, and vehicular access is focused on servicing, taxi and disabled access.

The role and hierarchy of the streets outlined in this framework plan should be addressed through the location of car parking and service access points to avoid conflicts with the high-trafficked roads (Park & Queens), and streets with the potential for improved pedestrian amenity (most notably MacMahon Street.

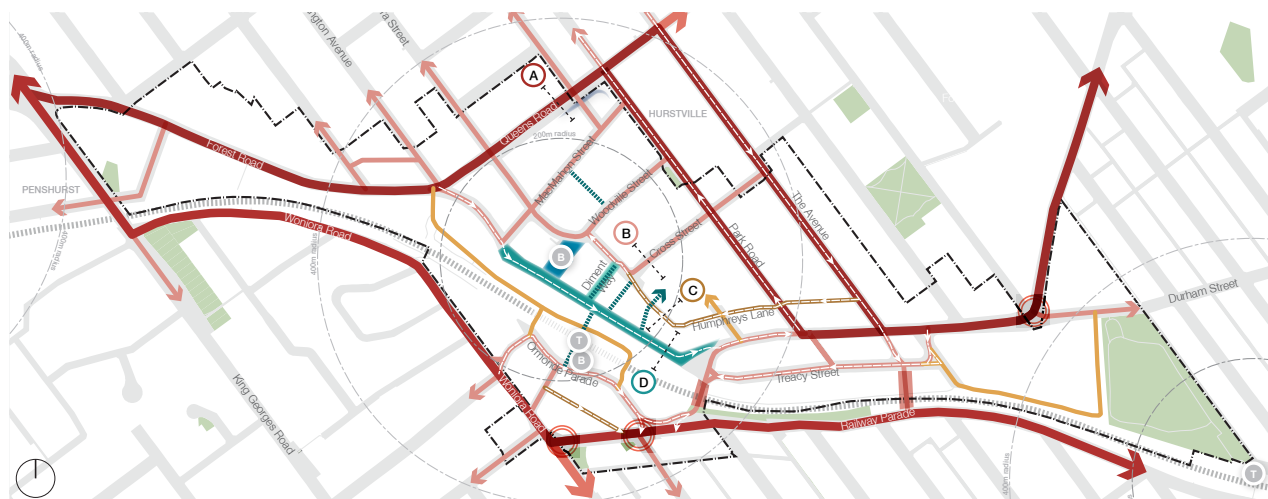
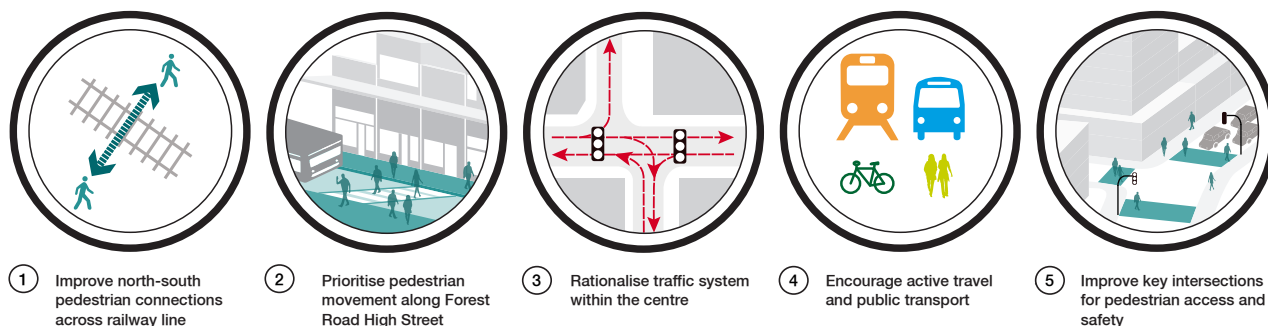


Figure 5.8.1 Access and Movement Structure Plan



Assessment 2: CBD Urban Design Strategy

Public Domain & Open Space

The framework plan connects the existing and proposed public open spaces throughout the CBD via an integrated network of streetscapes and connections, where the quality of the landscape, amenity and pedestrian priority is clearly articulated. The civic plaza and southern extent of the MacMahon Street frontage forms the north-western extent of this 'green loop', that continues along Forest Road and back via Humphrey's Lane.

A 'key street activation node' is designated at the junction of MacMahon and Dora Streets, at the site's south-eastern corner. The importance of this space with the city is its visual prominence from a number of vantage points and destinations, and role in guiding pedestrians towards the Civic Precinct from Forest

Road, the station and Westfield in the east. The quality, visibility and character of the Civic Precinct's south-eastern corner can influence the way in which people move through the city.

Outlined below are a number of specific design principles relating to open space, some of which have been addressed as part of the analysis. Many of these can be addressed during the DA stage, including those relating to 'planting' and 'passive and active amenity'. However, the framework plan reinforces the importance of 'solar access' to public domain, which has been suggested to be addressed in greater detail and weight in the proposed controls.

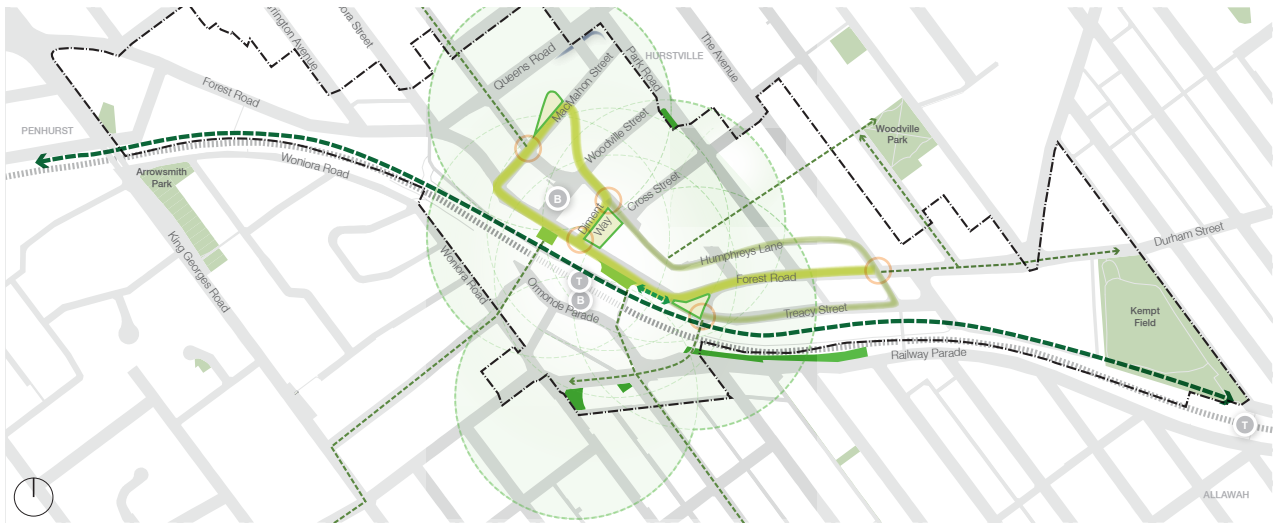
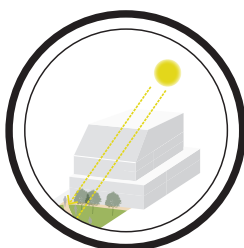


Figure 5.13.1 Public Domain and Open Space Structure Plan



1. Ensure direct solar access to public domain areas



2. Improve passive & active amenity



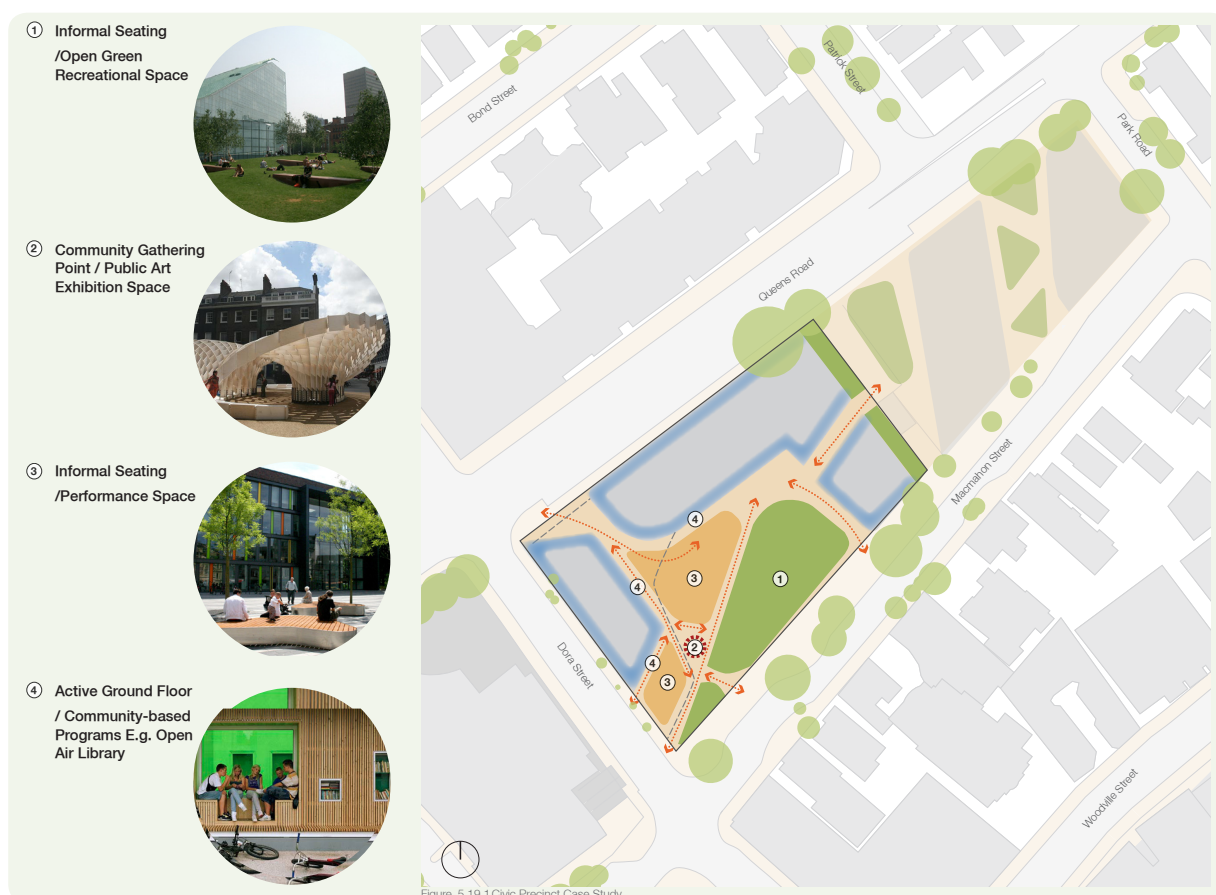
3. Establish a walkable city centre



4. Provide planting in key public domain and transition areas

As part of the open space framework the Civic Plaza was the subject of a more detailed design study, which illustrated how the structure of the new public space could be configured to reflect potential pedestrian routes, location of soft and hard landscape, passive spaces and tree-planting, and visual connections to key civic and community buildings.

This case study of the civic plaza is particularly useful given the lack of detail provided around the design and character of the space in the CDR and planning proposal. The design of the civic plaza will be interrogated during the DA phase, which again highlights the importance of a 'design excellence' provision to ensure there's appropriate consideration and analysis given to the design of this space and its contribution to the city.



Assessment 2: CBD Urban Design Strategy

Built Form

The Civic Precinct is located within the 'Medium-High Density North' area along with Westfield, which is also the subject of a separate planning proposal seeking additional height, density and open space. No character statement has been prepared for the various sub-precincts across the CBD - this may be a recommendation for the site-specific DCP as another mechanism to determine the quality and design outcomes through DA.

Reflecting the 'activation' framework, specific built form recommendations for the civic precinct include both the 'urban threshold' and 'urban marker' at the north-western corner, on the corner of Park and Queens Road. These are addressed through the masterplan by placing two tall buildings at the northern extent of the site, which frames Queens Road for traffic entering the CBD from the north-east. The existing 10-storey residential flat building at the corner of Patrick Street and Queens Road, already provides one side of the gateway/framing element, which will be completed with the proposed built form on the Civic Precinct.

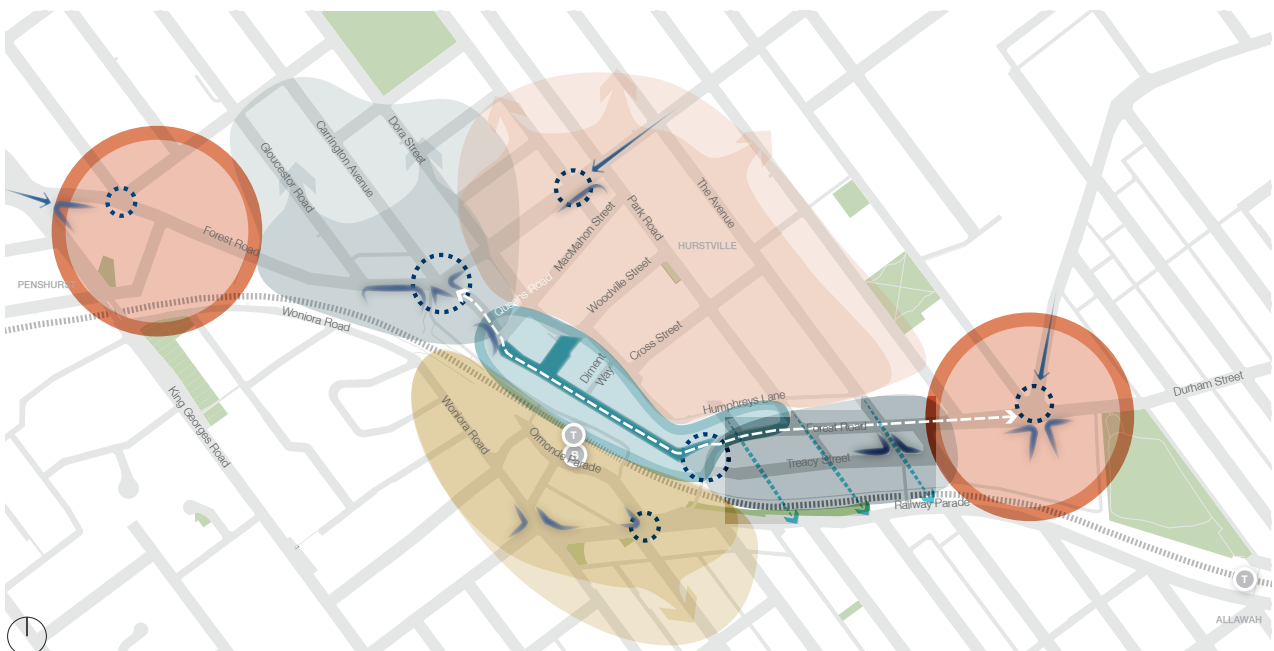


2. Urban Thresholds into the centre have height and open space

- The urban threshold gateways into the city are to be defined by open spaces framed by buildings.

3. Urban Markers within the centre are framed by view corridors.

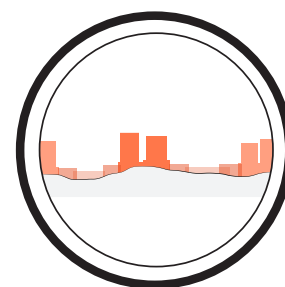
- Urban markers are recognisable buildings or items that create unique moments in the city.



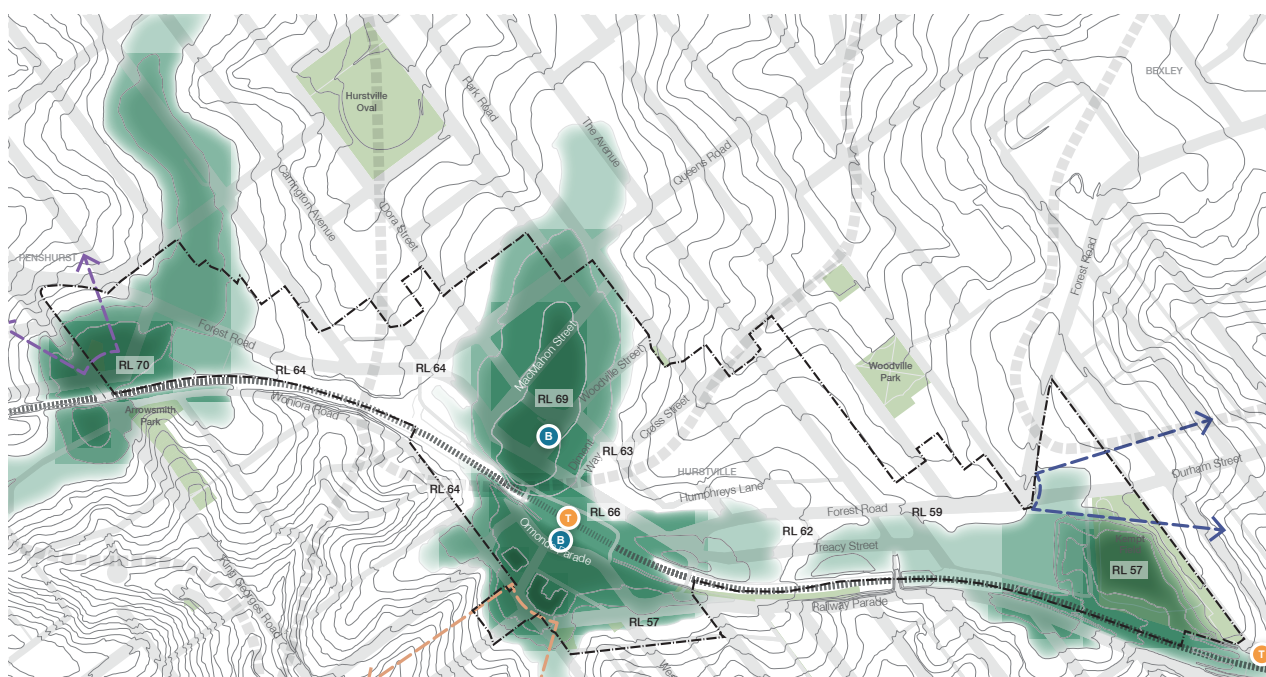
The role of 'urban markers/thresholds' across the city is to clearly delineate where the city begins and where the surrounding residential neighbours end or interface. The nature of these transitions between the two areas is addressed through the built form strategy principles, shown on the following page.

Many of these strategies reinforce the same approaches outlined in the ADG, including maximising amenity to neighbouring properties and open spaces. One unique strategy specific to Hurstville, and noted in previous masterplans and strategies, is the role of the local topography in locating and shaping built form. The local topography is illustrated on page 39 of the CBD Strategy, with three high-points/ridges located across the CBD; the eastern and western bookends, and a central ridge that extends from the station north through the Civic Precinct. The strategy seeks to reinforce this natural condition by concentrating heights along the ridges, so the CBD's skyline reflects the ground condition.

This approach is consistent with the approach to height in the planning proposal.



4. **Building height follows topography**
 - Building height is taller at the residential bookends to accentuate the topography of the centre, and provide increased residential densities close to Allawah and Penshurst Stations.
 - Building height is taller around the civic centre and commercial centre.
 - Treacy Street has taller height to allow views to be captured to compensate for loss of amenity due to the proximity to the railway line.



Conclusion

5

The role of the Civic Precinct within the Hurstville CBD has been appreciated and reflected in the masterplan and draft DCP lodged as part of the planning proposal. The masterplan has been interrogated over the course of two design workshops with SJB, in addition to the review with Council's staff and design review panel. Alternate options and approaches were discussed, tested and ruled out in favour of the current design, which configures the open space and built form in a manner that strikes an appropriate balance between maximising benefits (visual connectivity, open space configuration and activation, urban gateways and thresholds) and minimises impacts (solar access).

Given the importance of the civic precinct and its constituent parts, specifically the civic plaza, there are a number of recommendations that can be addressed as part of the future design phases, and potentially captured as part of a site-specific DCP (currently in draft).

Recommendations

- Greater specificity around the protection of solar amenity and certainty around the size, location and performance of the public open spaces being proposed. These should include quantitative controls in both instances, to ensure a 'minimum' outcome that's acceptable and appropriate
- Deep soil should be specified for the two public open spaces, beyond the guidance outlined in the ADG, due to the scale of the spaces and their contribution to the city. This may be aligned with further guidance on the 'extent of basement'
- Active street frontage controls to ensure all buildings address the public open spaces and through-site connections, whilst ensuring the basement access and servicing has a minimal impact on the performance of the ground plane.
- Sustainability targets and aspirations beyond those noted, as the scale and Council-ownership of the Civic Precinct presents a unique opportunity to pursue some benchmark targets and outcomes
- Public Art Strategy that extends beyond the site boundary to include wayfinding that integrates the site into the key destinations
- Fine Grain retail and activation strategy to provide greater opportunities for local businesses to operate within the city - building on the success of Forest Road as a retail High Street that's retained a distinctively local character.

Many of these have been captured to varying degrees in either Council's existing controls, SEPP65 and the ADG, the CBD Urban Design and Built Form Study, or the draft DCP lodged as part of the planning proposal. However, in most instances they lack detail that will make them more effective in delivering the best possible outcome for the site.

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