

CHESTER SQUARE

PEER REVIEW

16 June, 2020



N A T I O N

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INTRODUCTION

This Peer Review has been prepared by Bob Nation AM, of Nation Architects. Turner Studio have engaged Nation Architects to undertake a review of their Planning Proposal for Chester Square, Chester Hill.

The CV of Mr Robert Nation AM is shown opposite.

The Documents that were reviewed were :

- Submitted Planning Proposal Report - Turner Studio
- Public Domain and Landscape Design - Turf Design Studio
- Urban Design Review - Place Design Group
- Response to Urban Design Review - Turner Studio

Robert (Bob) Nation AM
Architect

Dip Arch (HTC) 1972
M Arch (Toronto Urban Design) 1973
Life Fellow Royal Australian Institute of Architects 2006
Hon American Institute of Architects 2005
Hon Royal Architectural Institute of Canada 2005
Hon New Zealand Institute of Architects 2005
Hong Kong Institute of Architects 1983



Curriculum Vitae May 2020

Born, Melbourne, Victoria
Matriculated, Hobart High School, Tasmania
Diploma of Architecture 1971, Tasmanian College of Advanced Education
Degree of Master of Architecture (Urban Design) 1972 , University of Toronto, Canada

The following outlines major events and essential history of my past professional experience , that led to my current part time role for the Barangaroo Delivery Authority,(INSW) Sydney,

1973- 1980	Design Principal Heffernan Nation Rees Viney
1981- 1986	Design Partner Yuncken Freeman Hong Kong
1987- 1999	Design Principal Nation Fender Architects
2000- 2006	Design Principal Nation Viney Architects
2005- 2006	National President, Royal Australian Institute of Architects
2007- 2009	Regional Design Director, Dubai for an Australian Architecture practice
2009- 2012	International Design Principal , RMJM Architects Dubai ,New York, Shanghai, Hong Kong
2012-	Design Director , Barangaroo Delivery Authority , Sydney
2012-	Design Principal, Nation Architects Sydney , Hong Kong, Arezzo

As a practicing Architect, following completion of my Masters Degree in Urban Design in Toronto 1972, I have had a leadership role in the architecture practices listed above as Design Principal, commencing in Hobart Tasmania 1973-1980, followed by Hong Kong and Bangkok in 1980-1999 , Sydney in 2000-2006, and Dubai, Shanghai, New York and Hong Kong 2007-2012 before returning to Sydney in the role of Design Director for the Barangaroo Delivery Authority ,a mixed use Sydney Urban Project of 10 + billion AUD value.

These experiences cover a period of over 48 years of responsible leadership and experience, for major complex projects in many countries, as Principal Architect/ Urban Designer, that always pursued an outcome based on design excellence, sustainability, political process, and economic success.

The projects have ranged from, New Cities, Universities, Hospitals, Airports, Transportation Centres, Mixed Use Complexes, Embassies, Residential Towers and Hotels, all as the Architect / Leader of the Design Team.

In 1995-7 three of my major projects were selected as winning Design submissions; The Bangkok Sky Train System with new Urban Centres , the 2nd Airport in Bangkok (designed with Foster and Partners , London.) and the Master Plan and Education Plan for the new University of UNIMAS in East Malaysia.

My current role as Design Director of The Barangaroo project , requires me to oversee, critique, moderate and give direction to an amazing group of International Consultants including Lord Richard Rogers / Ivan Harbour(RSHP) , Wilkinson Eyre, Renzo Piano, Arup, Spiers and Major, Smith and Gill, KPF, to select but a few.

In addition to my architectural design roles, I have chaired and /or been a jury member of many major design competition juries and have represented Australia at numerous congresses and at the International Union of Architects Triennial events. Examples of these juries include: CUB site Sydney, 1 Bligh Street Sydney, Goldfields House Sydney, the Metro Design Review Panel, and currently on major projects that form the new Parramatta Square.

In the interest of simplicity, this outline is purposely limited to a page, however, a detailed list of projects is available that indicates the range of projects that have formed my architectural life , commencing at Architecture School in 1961, to the present day.

Many design awards, attest to the peer view of the substance of my work.

I am a dedicated , serious Architect, well known in the International Architectural Society , with extensive knowledge appropriate to the design of Major Projects that consider outcomes beyond context and performance, and that are fundamental to the success of any project type.

I am currently based in Sydney for my part time Barangaroo Consultancy Role, and am also active in my Practice on various Residential, Hospitality ,Education and Commercial projects.

Robert Nation Architect
Architect

PLANNING PROPOSAL

This Peer Review is providing strategic support for the Planning Proposal as submitted by Turner Architects, with caveats and further design development to be completed.

This project will be a huge catalyst for the area of Chester Hill and is well located adjacent to a heavy rail station. A mixed-use development of this scale will add to the life and vibrancy to this area. It is important that the urban approach ensures the future context of the evolving area.

This project will set the next future form and generation of Chester Hill housing and mixed use typology, and with the correct public benefits and a holistic public domain overlay will become a benchmark project for the Canterbury-Bankstown region.

Nation Architects is supportive, in principle, of the submitted Planning Proposal.



Aerial plan of subject site (shown red dotted) and Chester Hill Commercial + Village Centre (Source - Turf Studio)



ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Based on a detailed review of the Planning Proposal, and all relevant studies, Nation Architects have identified the following items that require further consideration by the project team.

Once these items have been addressed, it is our view that the Planning Proposal should be supported by Council.

Item 01 - Site Planning
Item 02 - Character and Fine Grain
Item 03 - Connectivity
Item 04 - Chester Square
item 05 - Public Domain
Item 06 - Building Setbacks and Built Form
Item 07 - Height of Built Form + Datums
Item 08 - Library
Item 09 - Residential Amenity
Item 10 - Public Benefits
Item 11 - Architectural Expression + Diversity

We recommend that the following next steps are considered by the project team:

Step One - Turner Architects and Turf Studios consider the recommendations noted in this report, as part of the Planning Proposal.

Step Two - A second review of developed documents is prepared, during the Development Approval phase.

Step Three - Final endorsement from Nation Architects following the satisfactory completion of the Step Two.

ITEM 01 - SITE PLANNING

The proposed site planning, built form massing and provision of new public spaces are very well considered. Particularly, the approach of stepping the massing and consideration of 4 blocks on the north/south axis.

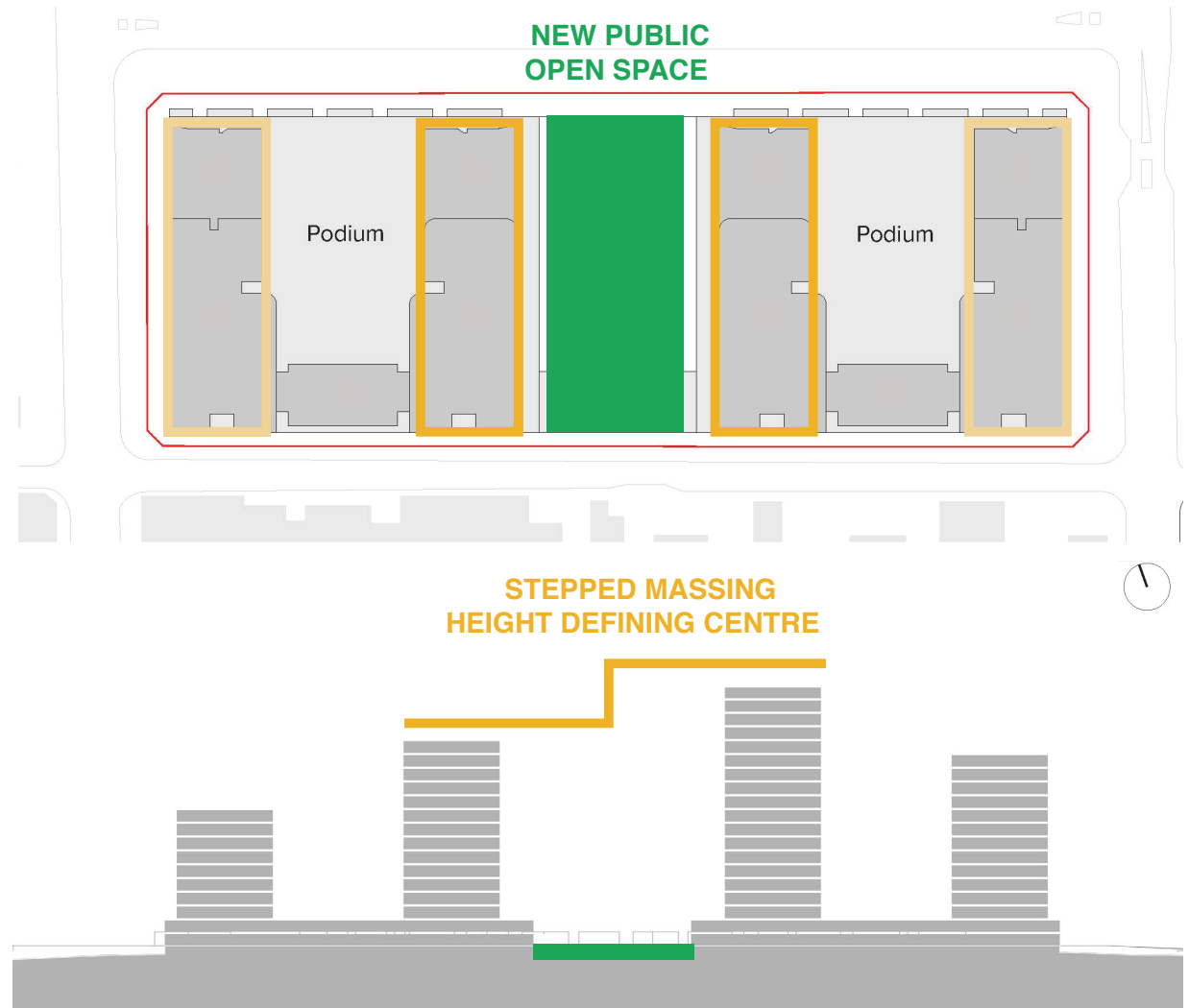
We consider that the site planning has been generated by a thorough analysis of the site and existing context.

The alternative built forms presented in the Planning Proposal report (Options 1 and 2) are not supported as they present homogeneous heights of tower forms with minimal articulation.

The proposition of a centrally located major fully accessible public space in the form of Chester Square is fully supported.

The allocation of a range of future retail uses will contribute to the local economy, and the location and configuration of loading docks and service zones are well located and minimise the impacts on the public domain.

The utilisation of the site topography to facilitate the lower level retail also allows for subterranean servicing and the opportunity for natural light to the mall from Chester Square landscape above, which is fully supported.



Annotated plan + section of the preferred option 3 massing concept (Source - Turner Architects)

ITEM 02 - CHARACTER AND FINE GRAIN

The townhouses along the northern frontage to Leicester Street are particularly well resolved as an interface with the existing single storey residential context. The townhouses provide a “crust” to the retail and loading uses set behind. Deep soil zones can be accommodated within the northern setback of the site and the carpark can still align with the built form above.

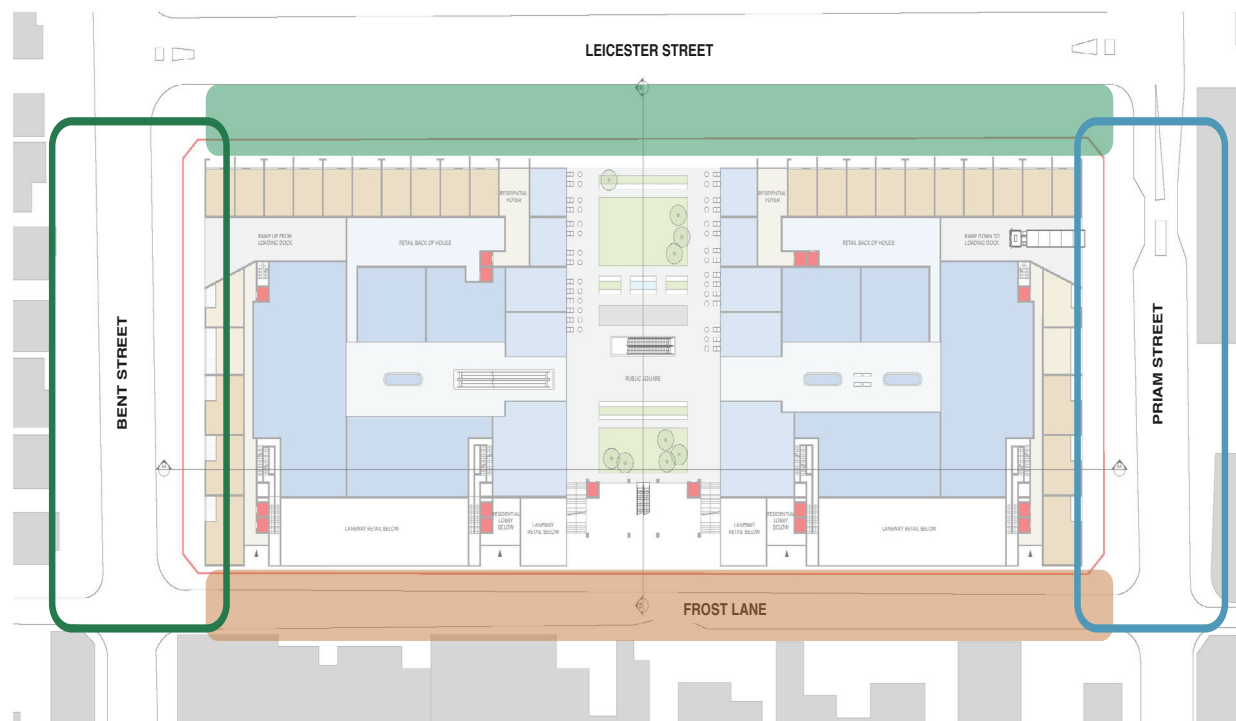
However, this review recommends that a range of different approaches should be developed for each street frontage to ensure a variety in urban character that also responds to the adjacent context.

The following items should be considered to improve the character and grain of the development:

Frost Lane - Encourage a more “grainy” laneway condition, which has more solid modulated shopfronts (as opposed to fully glazed) and provides opportunities for pop-up activations.

Bent Street - The interface to the residential along Bent Street (West) requires further articulation and street tree planting to provide an interface that acknowledges the residential scale. Street tree planting will provide an appropriate residential amenity outcome, which together with the 5m setback above the podium will develop a desirable street scaling. (See also item 06 below)

Priam Street - Could be enhanced by privileging the commercial on Priam Street to the east of the site, with a double row of street trees, to provide an urban shaded pedestrian street edge.



A range of different streetscape approaches will assist in delivering a fine-grain development.
(Source - Turner Architects)



ITEM 03 - CONNECTIVITY

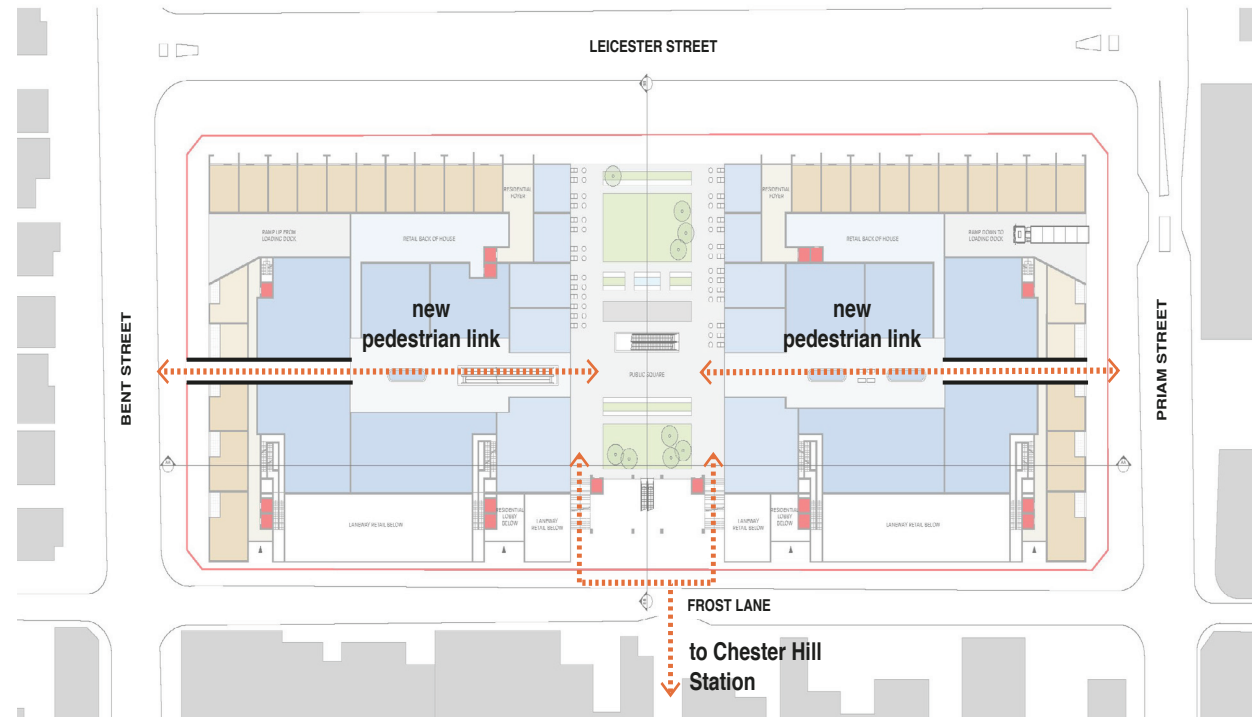
With regard to the public movement and the scale of the large block, there needs to be further resolution of the future connections to the broader dynamics of the precinct.

This will require further ‘breaking down’ of the block into a finer grain level of access points/laneways and well proportioned “internal streets” within the retail proposition.

As a result, the development will have increased permeability, porosity and intuitive wayfinding and access through the entire development. We acknowledge that this may be challenging due to site topography and requires further exploration.

There are also opportunities for skylights/light shafts (e.g. oculus’) to allow light to penetrate into the proposed internal streets to facilitate views to sky through to Chester Square, and through the residential courtyards to the internal shopping mall.

As noted above, the ‘breaking down’ of the extensive block can be achieved with improved connections from the internal shopping mall to both Bent and Priam Streets developing a strong east-west link through the site and its extended amenity and connections to the broader precinct.



A new east-west ‘internal street’ will improve connections to both Bent and Priam Streets. (Source - Turner Architects)

ITEM 04 - CHESTER SQUARE

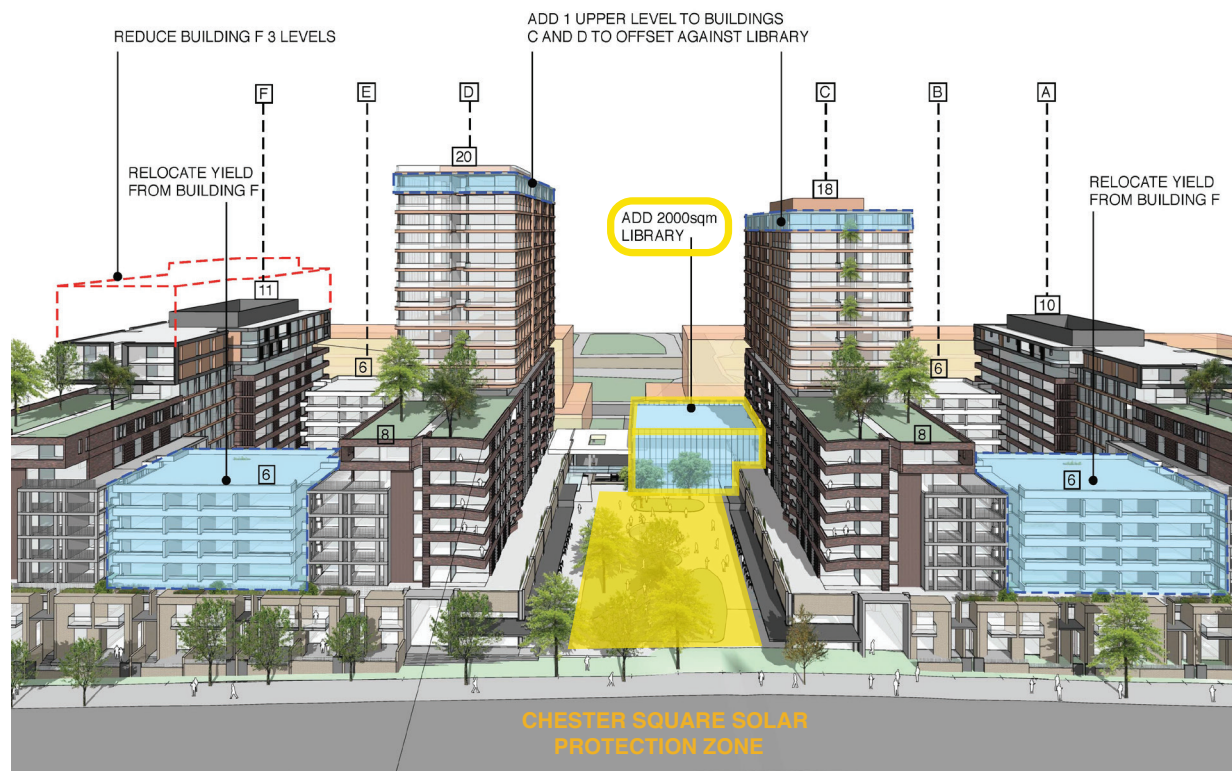
The proposition of a new major public space, Chester Square, is exemplary and will be enhanced and activated by the addition of a Library which should be a well crafted public building which can assist in mediating the levels to Frost Lane. (See also Item 08 - Library below)

Chester Square must be availed with sunlight in June (mid-winter) between 10am - 2pm.

The excellent precedent of Dairy Crest by Grant Associates and other precedents should be benchmarked in size, proportion and detail.

It is imperative that a comprehensive landscape document is prepared to ensure there is adequate soil depths and contiguous volume depths and configurations between the public square and retail components to allow for adequate and substantial tree planting.

The Planning Proposal documents require more detail on the landscape and public domain overlay as part of the Development Approval phase. However, it is acknowledged that a suitable design should be able to be accommodated in the space identified, and the developed topography of the square for deep soil planting.



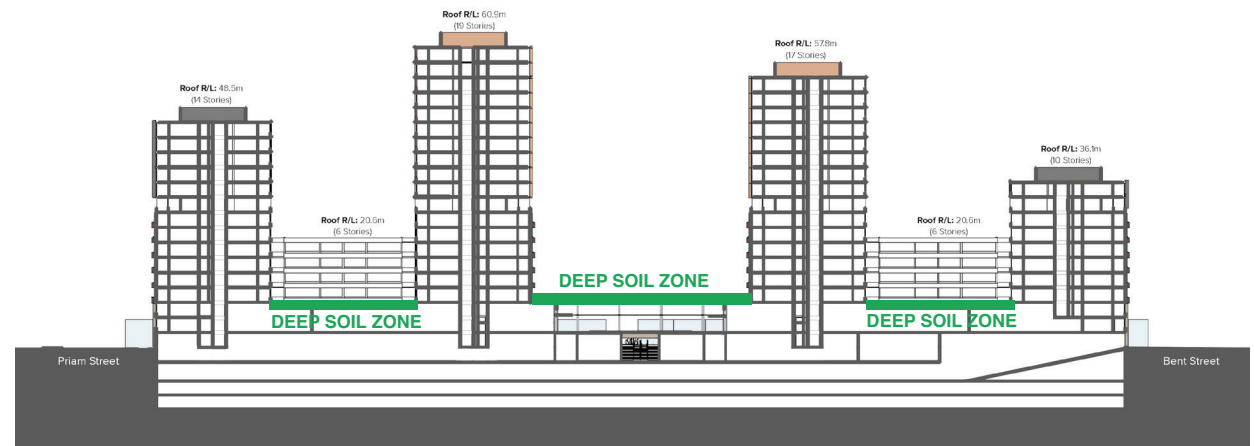
An elevated view of Chester Square (solar zone shown in yellow) looking south towards Chester Hill train station.
(Source - Turner Architects)

ITEM 04 - CHESTER SQUARE

The variation of the topography of Chester Square can be developed to create a rich and varied sequence of spaces and experiences towards a unique place for the broader precinct.

It is recommended that the project team ensure that appropriate provisions in the floor levels are provided so that the intended vision of Chester Square can be delivered.

It is essential that large, contiguous deep soil zones are provided so that large canopy trees can be delivered to ensure high public amenity and reduction of urban heat, through a rich and diverse topography and the use of space structuring planters.



Appropriate deep contiguous deep soil zones must be provided so that the vision for Chester Square can be delivered.
(Source - Turner Architects + Turf Design)

ITEM 05 - PUBLIC DOMAIN

The development of 'Chester Square' can be the catalyst for the proposed reconfiguration of Waldron Road and the Railway environs improving pedestrian permeability to and from the station, and with the support of Council, can be an initiative of an enriched destination that is Chester Hill.

Based on a review of the submitted documents, it is recommended that a contextual and public domain plan is prepared similar to what is shown in the Place Design Review (shown opposite).

The public domain plan should be for the entire site to address the potential for widening footpaths, future links and open space to align with the station and bus interchange. It should also explore and safeguard realistic development between Frost lane and Waldron Road, which is outside the scope of this project.



Detailed public domain plans provide the opportunity to establish the requirements for wide footpaths with LED smartpoles, large canopy tree's and future civic spaces which will revitalize the Chester Hill environs.
(Source - Place)

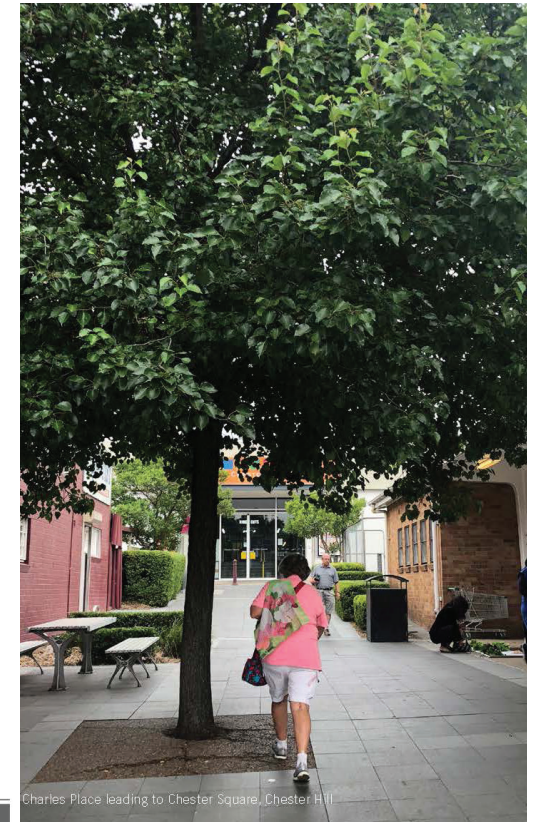
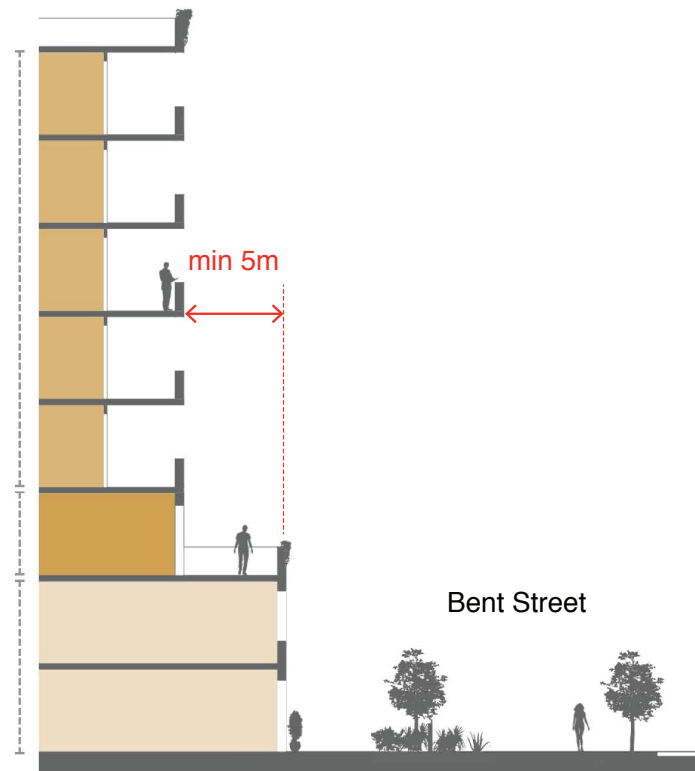


ITEM 05 - PUBLIC DOMAIN

Street sections should be prepared for all street blocks indicating the proposed, existing and future assumed context to illustrate the proposed street tree planting, public domain furniture, street lighting, signage and wayfinding. This should be part of detailed Development Approvals documents.

In particular deep soil planting zones within front setbacks and within public domain areas including adequate footpath widths and integration with the evolving context.

The site setbacks on ground at the exterior boundaries indicate the ability to achieve sustainable street tree planting which is a very positive precinct character and is fully supported.



Detailed public domain plans provide the opportunity to establish the requirements for wide footpaths with LED smartpoles, large canopy tree's and future civic spaces which will revitalize the Chester Hill environs. (Source - Place)

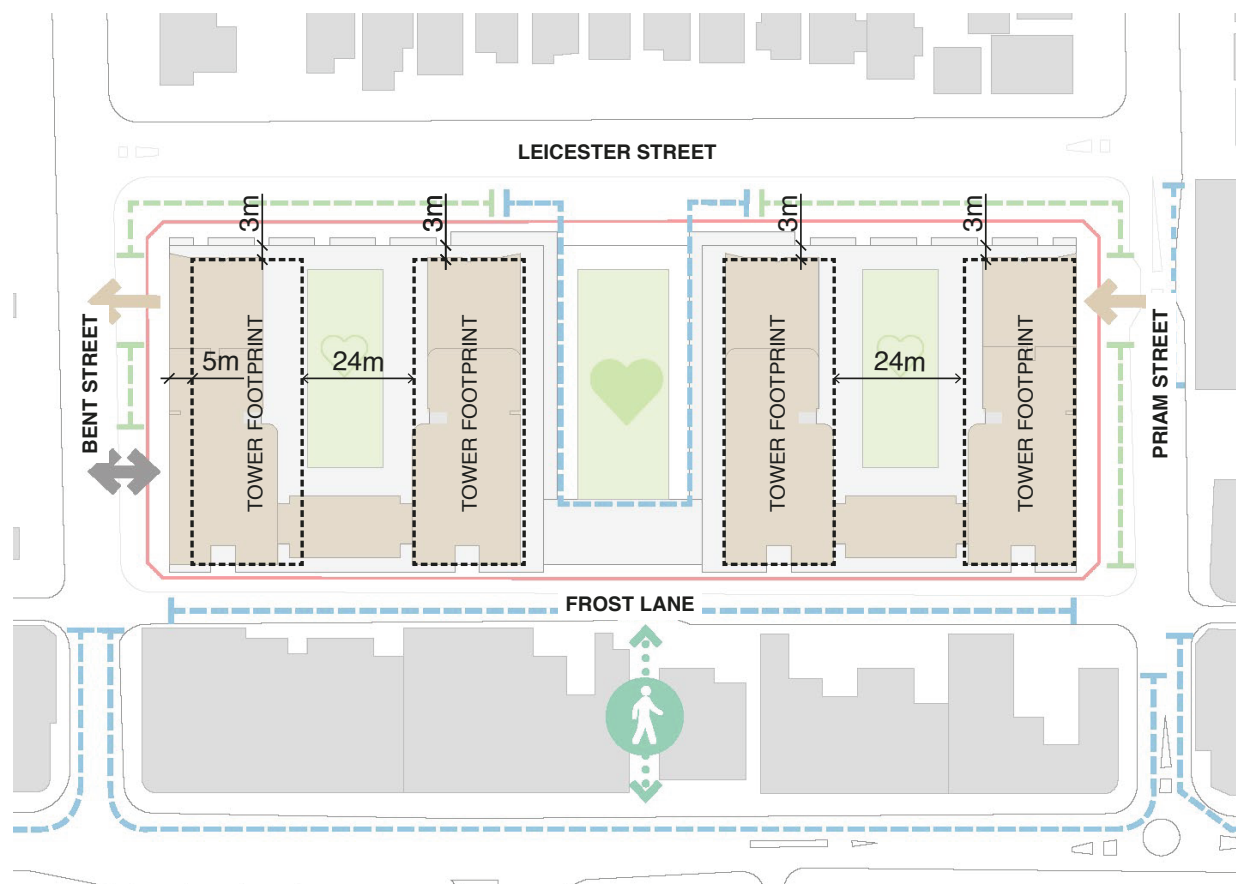
ITEM 06 - BUILDING SETBACKS AND BUILT FORM

As previously noted the proposed street setbacks to Leicester Street (north - townhouses) and Priam Street (east - residential podium and tower) are considered satisfactory.

However, the tower setbacks to the Bent Street (west) should be increased to a minimum of 5 metres. The tower setbacks for Leicester Street (north) should be increased to a minimum of 3 metres, above the podium.

This will assist in breaking down the apparent bulk and scale at street level and assist in reducing potential wind effects from the tower forms.

The resultant distance between the built forms that create the residential courtyards can be reduced to 24 metres in response to ADG recommendations, and allow an increase to the width of Chester Square for greater public amenity and civic opportunity.



This study recommends tower setbacks to both Bent and Leicester Streets. A minimum 24m inter-building separation is also required. (Source - Turner Studio)

ITEM 07 - BUILDING HEIGHT AND DATUMS

The proposed built form adopts a datum approach which is noted on following diagram. The base, middle and top approach has been well tested, and is considered a robust approach.

Particular support is made for the higher built form to be located in the centre part of the site and this peer review considers a highest built form to be approx. 21 storeys.

The primary tower forms of 21 storeys and 18 storeys respectively (currently 17 + 19 storeys) will act as a 'place' marker of the Chester Hill precinct. This collection of height (as opposed to single tower) acts to celebrate the new and emerging Chester Hill precinct with a distinctive skyline silhouette that may be read as a marker when viewed from surrounding areas.

Further enhancement of setbacks between podium and tower forms as previously noted along Bent Street will assist in the reinforcing the lower datums and establishing a lower scaled street wall, especially with the Bent Street interface with adjacent residential form.

It is considered that the upper most floors of the two taller towers, with heights of 21 and 18 storeys, could be further articulated to "read" as upper level / penthouse style apartments which will further articulate the skyline (see also Architectural Expression and Diversity Item 11 below). The 3 storey height differential will also improve the articulation of the skyline.

This peer review supports the proposed heights of the built form provided further design development is undertaken, as part of the Development Approval process.



Three tiered datums - Base, Middle and Top assist in reducing streetscape impacts and centrally locating height in the middle of the site (Source - Turner Studio)

ITEM 07 - BUILDING HEIGHT AND DATUMS

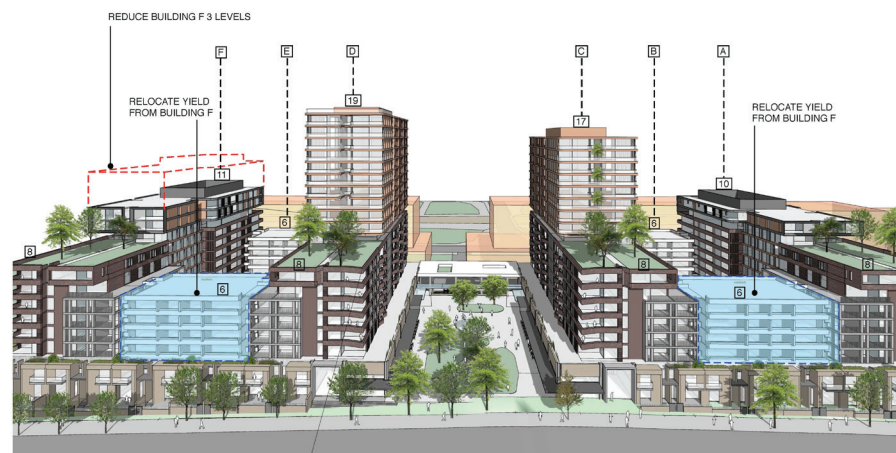
The Turner Studio response to the Place review suggests potential relocation of built form along Leicester Street (shown blue). This is not supported as it reads as a contiguous wall of development adjacent to its context.

The alternate proposition to decant some built form along the southern frontage to Frost Lane is considered a better proposition (shown orange).

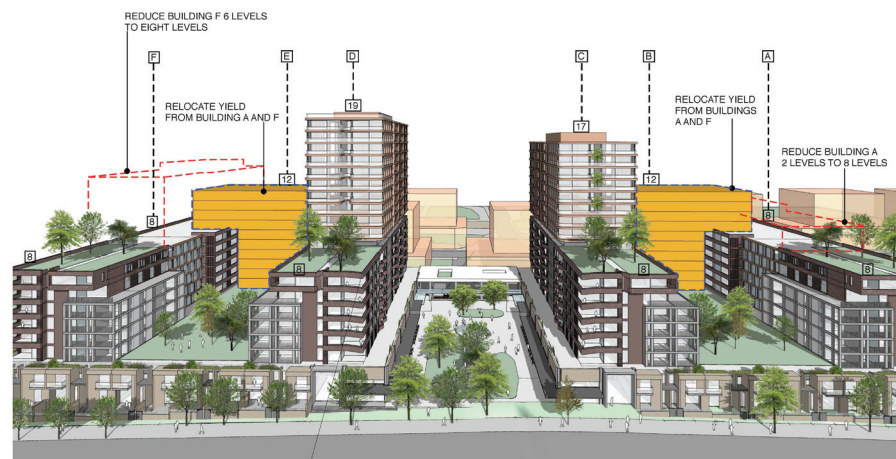
The grittiness and evolving 'fine grain' potential of Frost Lane demonstrates that this could add to the development in terms of community/public art installations etc.

Further, allocating any floor space along Frost lane would have minimal overshadowing effects.

The important planning objective is to ensure adequate sunlight is provided that supports the active use of the two residential podium courtyards and the principle new urban place that is Chester Square.



The potential relocation of floorspace to Leicester Street frontage is not supported - shown in blue (Source - Turner Studio)



The potential relocation of floorspace to Frost Lane is considered acceptable - shown in orange (Source - Turner Studio)

ITEM 08 - LIBRARY

The proposed Library (2000sqm) is considered to be an important component that will contribute valuable social infrastructure and contribute to the success of Chester Square.

This peer review acknowledges the major contribution to the broader social outcomes that the proposed Library will deliver.

It is recommended that an emerging collaborating architect and library consultant, in association with Turner Studio, is engaged to contribute to the design of this highly specialised and important piece of civic infrastructure.

The library will bring a new 'civic heart' to Chester Hill. Comparable examples of new libraries that have revitalised town centres include Double Bay, Crown Street Surry Hills and Green Square. These examples have helped to transform the destinalational character of their respective localities.

If the roof of the library is to be exposed, it is recommended that the design team consider a green roof to mitigate potential heat island effects. The rooftop will be visible to residents in the apartment above, and the visual softening of the library roof is an added benefit of a green roof.

The proposal for a new library is highly supported, as it provides significant public benefit to the local community.



The proposal for a new public library will assist in activating Chester Square and creating a new destination that provides significant public benefit to the local community. (Source - Turner Studio)

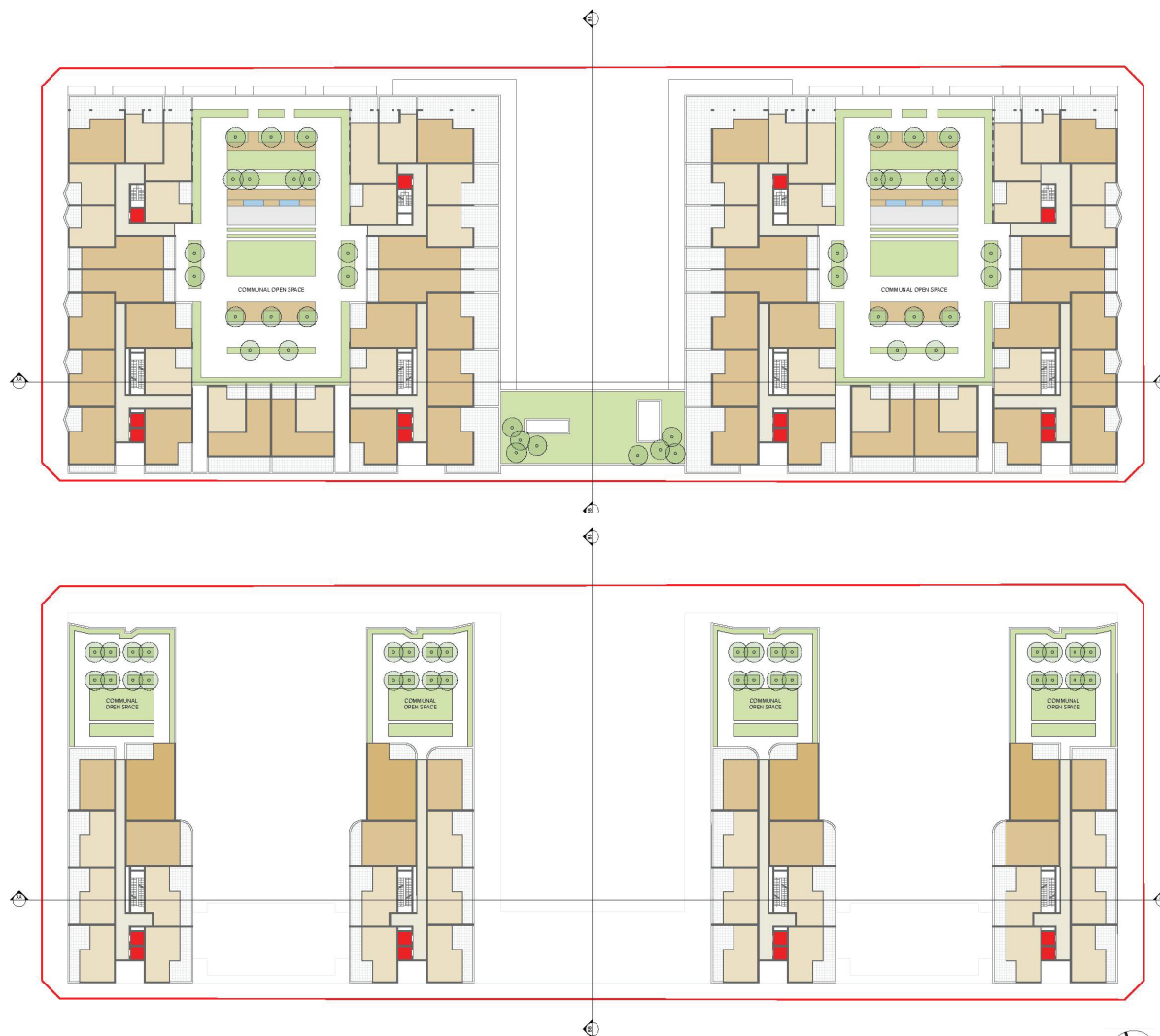
ITEM 09 - RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

Based on a high level review of the typical apartment layouts, we consider that the schematic residential design is well considered and meets the key objectives of the Apartment Design Guidelines (ADG) - including visual privacy, solar access and natural cross ventilation. Adequate building separation distances between tower forms (minimum 24 metres) can be achieved and all residential lobbies currently have a street address.

The provision of natural light and the potential for naturally ventilated lobbies and corridors is a positive outcome and is fully supported.

We request that Turner Studio provide confirmation that appropriate street address and wayfinding to all apartment buildings can be achieved. The schematic design must demonstrate that all entrances are legible and accessible from their street address. A detailed ground plan should be provided that clearly illustrates street activation, apartment address and all vehicle entry and exit routes.

The proposed tower footprints are considered satisfactory at approximately 835-850m². This is considered a standard benchmark for high rise residential developments in the Sydney Metropolitan Area. Additionally, the number of apartments served from each life core is appropriate.



The typical apartment layouts submitted achieve compliance with the key objectives of the Apartment Design Guide (Source - Turner Studio)



ITEM 10 - PUBLIC BENEFIT

Local Government Area's across Sydney have significantly benefited from the commitment of developers to deliver public benefits through the mechanism of a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA).

It is recommended that the Planning Proposal deliver public benefits to the local community that is commensurate to the uplift that is sought on the site.

A childcare centre should be considered within the development, which would augment the high mixed-use amenity on the site.

A 'Bike Hub' with full end of trip facilities should also be incorporated to leverage the public and mixed uses on site. This could be located on Frost Lane to activate the grittiness of this space as an active and vibrant laneway. Public Art and local artists could contribute to the place making of this zone, which could respond to indigenous and European heritage and interpretation.

To further enhance the development and leverage off the proximity to the railway station affordable housing in the order of 5% should be considered.

Because of the proximity to the railway station, wherever possible, carparking should be reduced. Carshare and the infrastructure for electric car charging stations should also be provided.

Council should investigate the potential upgrades to the public domain linking Chester Square to Chester Hill Station.



Example - Barangaroo Early Learning Centre (Source - Collins and Turner)

ITEM 11 - ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION AND DIVERSITY

The concept design that supports the Planning Proposal is considered to be at the right level of detail for this stage of the rezoning process.

However, to better inform the community and councillors it is recommended that additional 'hero' artist impressions / photo-montages are prepared during the Development Approval stage, particularly of Chester Square, its landscape structure, edges and the new community library. The artist impressions will also illustrate the opportunities at Chester Square for a diversity of architecturally expressive buildings that will contribute to the revitalisation of Chester Hill.

It is considered that further design development will improve the outcome and provide more diversity in the built forms and particularly the roof form articulations. The proposed materiality is fully supported, particularly the use of brickwork and differing elements and this should be further explored, during the Development Approval stage.

At this Planning Proposal stage, the current imagery illustrates a rich and diverse proposal that in development will result in a wonderful streetscape for the precinct.



Artist Impression - Ground level view looking west along Leicester Street (Source - Turner Studio)

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Nation Architects is pleased to have been invited to undertake a peer review of the Chester Square Planning Proposal.

The Planning Proposal has significant strategic merit, and is a rare opportunity to revitalise the Chester Hill centre with a single land owner.

The recommendations contained within this report should be addressed, and resubmitted to Nation Architects for an additional design review at DA stage. This will ensure the highest and best design excellence is achieved on this most important site.

The Chester Square development has the ability to be an exemplary project that can become a reference for other centres in the redensification of urban rail serviced centres and is applauded.

We note however, that many of the suggested adjustments proposed in this document are of a detailed nature and should be addressed at the Development Approval stage.



Artist Impression - Ground level view looking south into Chester Square (Source - Turner Studio)