

07 July 2020

Ms Shona Porter – Coordinator Strategic Assessments
Canterbury Bankstown City Council

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By Email

creating great places

Re. Urban Design Review of a Planning Proposal at 1 Leicester Street, Chester Hill –

Addendum 1

Dear Shona,

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to review further information supplied for the Planning Proposal for the redevelopment of the Chester Square Shopping Centre. We have relied on the following documents for this additional work:

- Chester Square – Peer Review prepared by Nation Architects dated 16 June, 2020
- Chester Square Shopping Centre – Planning Proposal (amended) prepared by Sutherland & Associates Planning dated June 2020
- Chester Square - Amended Planning Proposal prepared by Turner Architects dated

Before providing any additional commentary, I think it's important to note the following with respect to the site and the precinct:

- The site is a large parcel of land held under one ownership and contains a supermarket. This is a unique development opportunity for a master planned approach to development
- Increasing density around transit nodes provides an appropriate match of land use and transport. It leverages public investment in infrastructure and reduces private car dependency.
- The subject site is within 200m walking distance of a train station. Though the route is through a laneway (Charles Place) which has limited visibility
- Waldron Road is the main street and focal point of the Chester Hill locality. The maintenance of this space as a vital main street and a community focal point for the area should remain of upmost priority in the assessment of any planning proposal or development application in the locality.
- The locality shows no evidence of renewal or infill development despite development controls in the planning scheme allowing for redevelopment to low rise multi-unit development.
- A range of community services including a library are located on the southern side of the station adjoining the school. This additional advice provides no commentary around the need or otherwise for a new library as part of the planning proposal.

Our previous advice to Council discussed a number of inconsistencies the planning proposal had with the context of the location given the current and future expected nature of development and the intent of a range of planning documents including the new LSPS for Canterbury Bankstown City Council.

Subsequent to this additional advice amendments were made to the Planning Proposal based on Council feedback to the proponent. Further advice was sought by the developer from Nation Architects. There are a range of issues we agree on and some issues of difference which are generally set out below.

There is common agreement regarding a number of elements such as:

- The arrangement of building forms on the site with a podium and tower arrangement with the greatest building height located towards the centre of the site
- The separation created between towers provides suitable acoustic and visual privacy
- The additional treatment of upper floors of any potential taller elements to articulate the skyline
- The frontage treatment using townhouse/terraced housing forms to sleeve the podium provides a good human scale and appropriately activates the edges
- the one way servicing and access arrangements
- The central open space accessing directly from Leicester Street
- The lack of landscape detail provided with the Planning Proposal to demonstrate how the proposed landscape can be achieved
- Deep planting along the edges of Priam and Bent Streets facilitates a better public domain response to these streets and facilitates a better interface at ground level.
- The appropriateness and importance of creating a link through Charles Place to the station of suitable width and function
- The improvement of public realm along the entire length of Waldron Road

There is general disagreement around the following issues

- Height – This remains the single greatest issue regarding the proposal. Neither the Nation report nor the Turner proposal address the height of the buildings in relation to their existing context. Or indeed the future context as determined by the planning scheme and in particular the Local Area Plan. The Nation review acknowledges the proposal will 'celebrate the new and emerging precinct creating a distinctive skyline'. The report does not attempt to address the appropriateness of the proposed height in its existing context even taking into consideration potential increases in height allowable under the planning scheme.
- Articulation of the building – I would consider the building well-articulated horizontally, but the vertical building planes could be better articulated. The revised planning proposal provides a better articulation response breaking the building through changes in materiality and facade detail to achieve articulation. It is preferable that long building lengths of facade surfaces are articulated with physical changes in the building line as detailed in Appendix 1 of our original response. Increasing building setbacks does little in the way of breaking up vertical surfaces.
- Connectivity – Pedestrian connectivity is a good thing. The more there is the better. However, the proposed connections from both Bent and Priam Streets need to be carefully detailed in order for them to meet CPTED requirements. Ideally the connections would be for the full height of the building i.e. open to the sky, be generous in width (6m minimum), be suitably activated along their edges, facilitate end to end views, be appropriately lit, have surveillance from surrounding buildings and no points of concealment. The proposed connections do not appear to meet accepted CPTED standards and need further detailed consideration. The inclusion of pedestrian access points if they were for the full height of the buildings, would contribute to the articulation of the proposal and help break down the bulk of the buildings
- Frost Lane – Frost Lane is essentially a service lane. Any further activation of this lane with retail and commercial uses has the potential to detract from activation along Waldron Road. The focus of retail activation and public realm improvements should be on maintaining an active and vital main street for Chester Hill being Waldron Road. Any activation or public realm detail should be limited to the activation of a pedestrian connection between the planned development through Charles Place to Waldron Road. Any further activation of Frost Lane is unnecessary at this stage.

Clearly the proposal is out of scale with existing adjoining and potential development given the develop standards in the planning scheme as they exist. There is very limited public benefit attached to the proposal as it stands other than that which directly benefits the planning proposal that would justify the increase in height over and above what the scheme allows for.

However, if council were of a mind to approve the Planning Proposal as it currently stands, we would recommend the following additions and caveats:

- Built form – the proposal would need to be carried out generally in accordance with plans of layout provided in the Planning Proposal and in particular the requirement to maintain those items as agreed above being:
 - The arrangement of building forms on the site with a podium and tower with the greatest building height located towards the centre of the site
 - The separation distance between towers
 - The frontage treatment using townhouse/terraced housing forms to sleeve the podium
 - the one way servicing and access arrangements
 - The central open space accessing directly from Leicester Street
 - Deep planting along the edges of Priam and Bent Streets.
 - The importance of the improvement of public realm along the entire length of Waldron Road
- Precinct review – if there is a genuine demand for this kind product in this location then a review of the entire precinct should be undertaken. This will facilitate a proposal of the nature and scale proposed and will facilitate additional development which will leverage public investment in the existing rail infrastructure and have the ability to generate footfall for the Chester Hill main street. If this were to occur, then the proposal may indeed have a catalytic impact upon the locality. But the precinct needs to be considered in its entirety and not in isolation.
- Further articulation – the buildings are generally mid rise however they will be significant visual references in the local skyline once established. To facilitate a more landmark quality to the built form outcomes we see value in adopting the recommendation from the Nation Report that notes -

"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. The 3-storey height differential will also improve the articulation of the skyline".

This could be achieved through the use of either additional setbacks or changes in materiality for these upper levels to feather the structure against the skyline.

- Public Realm Improvement – At present the Planning Proposal considers public realm improvements to the immediate edges of the development along Bent, Priam and Leicester Streets. These are not well detailed and need to be significantly bolstered, given the nature of the proposal to ensure a pleasant streetscape is maintained at the pedestrian level and maintain faith with Council's Green Grid priorities in the LSPS.
- Landscape Detail – in either event there is a considerable lack of detail contained in the Planning Proposal around landscape. The renders and imagery provided contain some lovely ideas around planting and podium treatments. However given most of this planting is occurring on structure, considerable detail will need to be provided to demonstrate how this should be achieved. This detail should be subject to third party review to ensure its long-term viability and health.

- Pedestrian Connectivity – this element has been recently introduced to the scheme and whilst we are not in disagreement with the intent, there is insufficient detail to support these connections in their current form. Considerably more detail is required to address the issues raised above.
- Reduced car parking – we encourage consideration of reduced car parking numbers through inclusion of a car sharing service such as Go Get or similar in the basement and inclusion of electric vehicle charging stations both in the basement and on Waldron Road.
- Charles Place – this is the principal pedestrian connection between the planning proposal and Chester Hill Station. The proponent should be contributing to the upgrading and widening of this lane to improve pedestrian connectivity and allow any proposed library facility to have a strong visual connection with Waldron Road.
- Waldron Road – this is the community focal point for the locality but is looking tired and run down. The Planning Proposal should be contributing to the significant improvement of the public realm along Waldron Road including footpath widenings, street tree planting and a range of other urban interventions both temporary and permanent. A detailed streetscape concept should be prepared for the main street which looks at the experience of the place, pedestrian connections, on street parking, events and activation, landscape both hard and soft, lighting, street furniture, play opportunities, Wifi, directional signage etc.

Please do not hesitate to call me to discuss any of the above in more detail.

Kind regards,
Place Design Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen Smith', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Stephen Smith
Principal Planning & Urban Design