

16 July 2021

Michelle Fawcett

Georges River Council

## **PP2020/001 | 19-25 MACQUARIE PLACE AND 46-56 PITT STREET MORTDALE | AMENDED PLANNING PROPOSAL**

Dear Catherine and Michelle

The purpose of this letter is to provide a summary of amendments to the above Planning Proposal. These amendments have arisen from the engagement we have had with staff in correspondence and meetings; observing the commentary of Councillors at the relevant Committee Meeting; and benefiting from our review of the draft Mortdale Town Centre Strategy.

This submission includes commentary on key matters arising from an analysis of the Mortdale Town Centre draft exhibition documents, in an effort to demonstrate areas of compliance; identify a key shortcoming of the Urban Design work; and provide a background to the amendments made to the Planning Proposal.

### **Status of Submitted Proponent Urban Design Study**

The amendments to the Planning Proposal are refinements to the proposed planning controls, rather than a wholesale amendment to the design approach, urban design analysis, or planning arguments that underpinned the original submission.

Accordingly, the original Urban Design Study that supported the original submission remains a relevant consideration, in particular the following key points within the Study:

- The town centre comprises a highly fragmented land use pattern, resulting in the inherent challenge of the need for future consolidation of numerous sites to achieve redevelopment sites.
- Redevelopment of the town centre should not erode the existing urban character of the town centre comprising a number of 1-2 buildings along the main streets, and that controls need to be fashioned to ensure that the character is protected, with recessed greater heights. In addition, the town centre pattern allows for “marker developments” on key sites in key locations.
- The subject site is an appropriate “marker” or “anchor” development site that marks the entry point to Mortdale Town Centre and exhibits good consolidated

size, regular configuration and has excellent frontage that can contribute to town centre activation and place making.

- These attributes supports the proposed planning outcome of increased height and density.
- The sites size and configuration allows for the modelling of built form to ensure that there is a positive contribution to the town centre and allowing for impacts such as overshadowing being capable of being resolved by employing varying heights and separations.

The above principles remain relevant and no amendment to these principles arises because of the amendment to the Planning Proposal outlined in this submission.

### **Relevant Elements of the exhibited C+M Urban Design Report**

We have reviewed the adopted and currently exhibited Urban Design Report and make the following comments in relation to that report –

- The subject site is without any constraints in the relevant Constraints Overlay Map.



- The subject site is without any constraints in the relevant Constraints Diagram



- The subject site is recognised as an “opportunity site” on the Opportunities Diagram.



- It is recommended that all of the subject site be zoned for “business” purposes as a B2 zone.



- It is apparent that the methodology for determining height of buildings is determined on the basis of achieving a minimum target of employment lands and assumes that the FSR is to be delivered in forms that are bulky, rather than refined. The extract of the built form map illustrates that for the subject site to achieve the FSR identified, then the resulting built form and building envelopes will be bulky and elongated, rather than slender and refined. This matter is discussed in further detail below.


### Missing Urban Design Analysis

The Masterplan and Urban Design Study contains little analysis of what is an appropriate built form for the town centre in relation to height. The proposal results in a recommended height that is mismatched with the FSR control and that will inevitably be directly responsible for a poor urban design outcome.

The study confirms in Section 5.0 that there is no practical limitation to heights greater than 7 storeys, with the potential of up to 133m with respect to aircraft movements. Neither the study or our submission seeks such heights, rather we note that there is no practical requirement for heights of only 6 storeys.

The study undertakes appropriate background analysis of context and establishes a series of urban design principles. It is Section 7 of the study that sets out the draft Masterplan and incorporates recommendations in relation to height and FSR. It is in this section that we would expect to read a clear explanation of the form of





development that the urban design work is seeking to achieve; an articulation of the massing sought and the reasons for it; an overview of how the planning controls will deliver on aspirations such as spaces between buildings for solar penetration or views to the sky, etc.

The Study appropriately sets out a methodology for providing adequate “non residential” floor space on sites to meet the target for employment activity in the Centre.

It is noted that there is no analysis or justification for the limit of the residential floor space. While the study confirms that Georges River is on track to meet its 2036 housing targets, the study also confirms that *“further work will be needed in the future LEPs to add to supply and diversity of housing”*.

Accordingly, there is no urban design analysis or justification as to what the right mix of residential floor space for the town centre from an urban design perspective is. The lack of detail as to why the correct residential floor space is 1.75:1 + a 0.5:1 bonus (total of 2.25:1 resi) is a shortcoming of the study. This lack of urban design analysis makes it impossible to understand the reasoning for the urban design conclusions in relation to proposed height and FSR.

Just as there is no urban design analysis for the make up of the FSR recommendations within the study, there is also a fundamental lack of analysis for the make up of the Height of Building recommendations within the study.

The study identifies the need for a transition in height from the B2 areas to the eventual low density areas further from the town centre. But the study is silent on the urban design rationale for the heights and the methodology for transition. Key questions are not addressed in the study, such as –

- Why is 21m the right height in Mortdale Town Centre?
- What built form outcome is being pursued, and why is it appropriate (ie why are long unbroken squat street edge built forms preferred over slender towers)?
- Why is a transition from 6 storeys to 4 or 3 storeys the best and only urban design response?
- What is best practice across the Sydney metropolitan area for town centres transitioning to adjoining high density and then low density residential zoned land?

Of greatest concern is the lack of analysis around the interrelationship between the proposed height of 6 storeys and the proposed FSR of up to 3:1 on B2 zoned land.

It is a well understood principle in NSW and further afield that an FSR of 2:1 for residential apartment buildings leads to a 6-7 storey outcome and an FSR of 3:1 for residential apartment buildings leads to a 9-12 storey outcome.

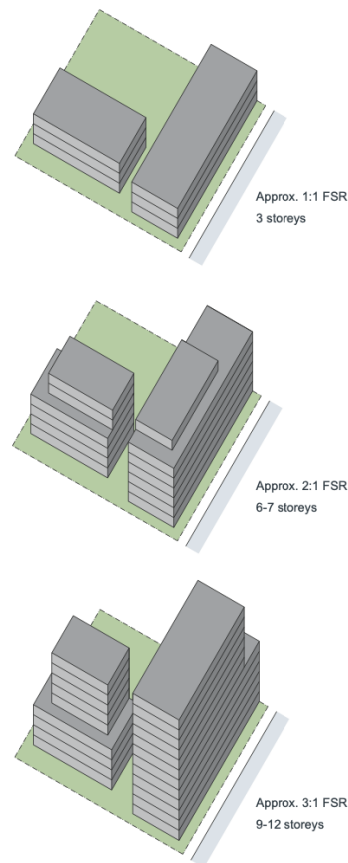


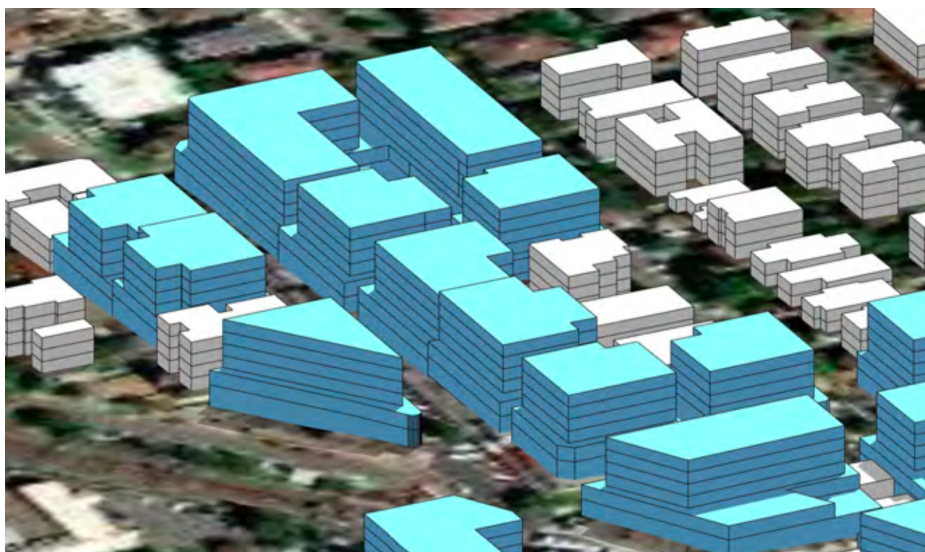
Figure 2D.1 Indicative built form massing for residential flat buildings with different floor space ratios

Sections 2C and 2D of the Apartment Design Guideline sets out relevant commentary and diagrams for establishing height and FSR. The Urban Design study lacks commentary on many of these principles. For example there is no commentary on the fundamental issue of what is the Desired Future Character for Mortdale town centre with respect to height and corresponding FSR.

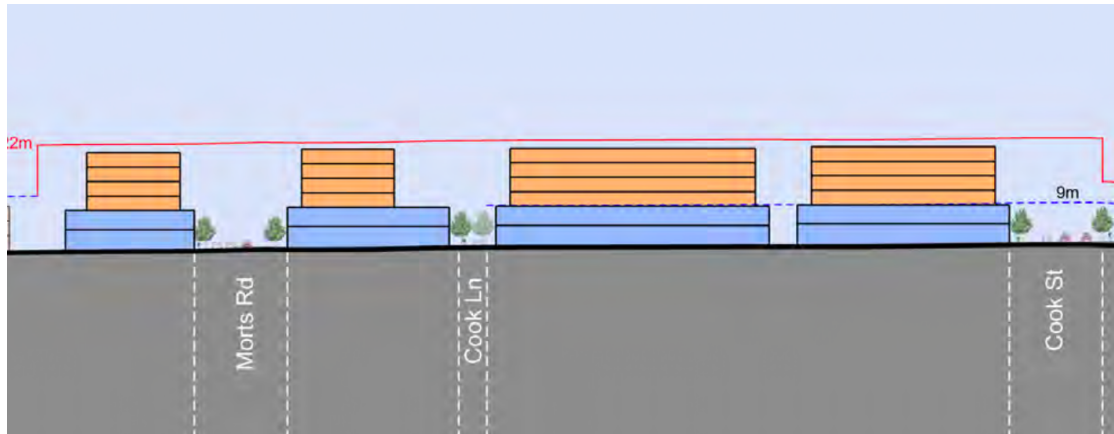
Any analysis of the proposed controls for the B2 area of 6 storeys and an FSR of 3:1 confirms that the building massing arising from the proposed controls will comprise squat buildings, with large floor plates, long street edge development and bulky form. The diagrams prepared and embedded in the urban design study confirm this built form outcome, as illustrated in the relevant extracts from the study below –



Extracts above and below illustrate the 6 storey elongated squat building forms arising from proposed planning controls








Extracts above and below illustrate the 6 storey elongated squat building forms arising from proposed planning controls, and the consequential broad shadow profiles that are created.







The impacts of the proposed planning controls will result in a series of detrimental impacts such as wide shadow impacts, limited solar penetration, limited breaking down of the mass of buildings through separation, extensive visual building mass along the town centre streets that will require articulation to be achieved through built form features such as balcony recess, blades, extruded elements, etc rather than actual physical articulation of the forms.

It is submitted that the Council should have regard to the inherent issues arising from the proposed built form controls, generally for the town centre, and in particular in relation to the Planning Proposal site.

In addition to the urban design implications of misaligned height and FSR controls, there is the consequential commercial impacts that arise. It is probable that the very intention of the Town Centre planning framework to deliver employment opportunities locally will not be delivered, as a direct consequence of the misalignment. Where planning controls are misaligned and lead to challenges for the market to deliver, there is a consequential slowing of development uptake. If the Council is truly invested in revitalising Mortdale town centre it should ensure that planning controls result in good built form outcomes and so too investment and development opportunities that enliven the market and deliver on aspirations. There are many examples throughout the Sydney metropolitan areas of town centres that have planning controls that stifle redevelopment, do not encourage amalgamation and investment, and that directly impact on the town centre remaining status quo and subject to the negative factors of no investment, reduced services, inadequate accumulation of contributions by Council to invest in public domain improvements, and general decay of the centre over time.

Finally, it is disappointing that the urban design study does not include any additional urban design analysis or planning bonus for large opportunity sites. The fragmented ownership in the town centre is likely to be the status quo, unless the planning provisions incorporate controls that encourage amalgamation. It is submitted that sites without constraints, that are large amalgamations of land, and are identified as opportunity sites present a unique opportunity to set the standard for future redevelopment of the town centre and provide a catalyst for further development. The larger sites are also able to accommodate increased FSR's due to the ability to allocate FSR across the site, particularly in the B2 town centre where the podium form permits more generous delivery of GFA.

The amended Planning Proposal sets out a better urban design outcome for the site, that results in no greater FSR, but a superior built form.

## The Amended Planning Proposal

In summary the amended planning proposal comprises:

**This Planning Proposal seeks to amend the Hurstville LEP 2012 to allow for the redevelopment of the site for the purposes of mixed use development by:**

- **Rezoning the land parcels (19-25 Macquarie Place and 46-56 Pitt Street, Mortdale) to B2**
- **Amending the Maximum Building Height to be 35m (to accommodate 2 levels of commercial space, 7 levels of residential and lift overrun).**
- **Amending the Maximum Floor Space Ratio to 3.0:1; comprising 0.75:1 non-residential and 2.25:1 residential.**
- **A VPA offer consistent with the principles of the Affordable Housing Contributions, exhibited as part of the Mortdale Town Centre review.**

### Zone Proposed

The proposed zone of B2 is consistent with the Mortdale Town Centre exhibition.

### FSR Proposed

Consistent with the exhibited Mortdale Town Centre Masterplan and Urban Design Study the planning proposal is amended to seek an FSR of 3:1, comprising a split of 0.75:1 of non residential and 2.25:1 of residential.

### Height Proposed

Are concerns in relation to the proposed height of 6 storeys for the B2 lands of Mortdale Town Centre are set out earlier in this paper. We raise significant concern that the urban design outcomes arising from the proposed height will lead to buildings that will be designed as excessive elongated masses exhibiting excessive bulk and scale; with limited meaningful articulation through breaks in form; and leading to extreme shadow impacts on town centre streets that should be activated comfortable and inviting spaces for pedestrians, outdoor dining, social interaction and healthy landscaping.

It is our view that the proposed FSR and Height controls comprise an antiquated mix of planning controls that are synonymous with building forms no longer perceived as desirable or contributing to place making. We note that the Apartment Design

Guideline clearly illustrates that an appropriate Height of Building range for a site with an FSR of 3:1 is 9-12 storeys.

In arriving at the proposed height of 35m and 9 storeys we have been cognisant of:

- The site is recognised as being without constraints and thereby is an opportunity site.
- The sites area allows for careful arrangement of building mass that results in various heights within the site that respond to orientation, activate streets, and design for solar penetration into and through the site. The modulation of form and height gives rise to positive solar access outcomes to the street and adjoining public spaces.
- The site does not immediately adjoin land of lower height or FSR but is bound by streets that form the appropriate place of transition between differences of height and FSR.

Accordingly, and having regard to the attached amended Reference Design, the planning proposal seeks to amend the Maximum Building Height to be 35m (to accommodate 2 levels of commercial space, 7 levels of residential and lift overrun).

#### Voluntary Planning Agreement

The introduction of an Affordable Housing Contributions Scheme is an excellent initiative contained within the Mortdale Town Centre exhibition material. We have made enquiry with Georges River to confirm that application of the draft policy to the site.

Our understanding of the implications of the policy is that a calculation of the bonus control would result in an in-kind contribution of affordable housing of 311m<sup>2</sup>, based on the site area of 4,612m<sup>2</sup> and the bonus FSR of 0.5:1 (0.75:1 non residential and 2.25:1 residential).

Subject to confirmation of the above from Council, our clients VPA offer is equivalent to that arising from the Council scheme, being in kind dedication of apartments with no less than 311m<sup>2</sup> of GFA in total.

#### **Planning Proposal Public Benefits**

In addition to the VPA dedication, this Planning Proposal will be directly responsible for delivering the following key benefits:

- **Revitalisation of Mortdale RSL.** The proposal will deliver a reinvigorated RSL club on the ground floor which will activate Macquarie Place and Pitt Street. This will



assist with nurturing a stronger Mortdale by growing investment, business opportunities and jobs in this strategic centre.

- **Housing variety.** The Mortdale is a place of variety and contrast, from the leafy neighbourhoods of with single and two storey dwellings to the commercial area located on Morts and Pitt Street near the Mortdale train station. Mortdale is a diverse urban area and the proposal seeks to deliver a variety of housing opportunities within 250m of Mortdale train station. This enables the opportunity to create a housing which is well connected to public transport, health services, education services, employment and recreational facilities.
- **Housing supply.** The proposal comprises new housing supply, choice and affordability with access to jobs, services and public transport.
- **High quality public domain.** The proposal will ensure the delivery of new pedestrian links along both Macquarie Place and Pitt Street which will enhance the pedestrian environment including the safety of people accessing the site and accessing surrounding land. The new RSL building provides significant community benefit through street level activation with the aim of creating a new vibrant facility for the community.
- **Commercial uses.** The proposal is consistent with the aspirations of Georges River Council to enliven the centre and deliver employment floor space to meet an employment target.
- **Employment.** Ensuring the Mortdale RSL Club is contemporised to meet the needs of the future community is to be secured with the revitalisation of the Club facility. This will ensure the Club continues to deliver a service to the residents and likewise local employment opportunities. The development of this site seeks to enhance the future status of Mortdale as a local centre. During the construction phase there will also be a number of construction related jobs created.

Kind regards

Adam Byrnes  
**Think Planners Pty Ltd**

## ENCLOSURES

1. Amended Reference Design