

ITEM 3

Date of Panel Assessment	18 th November 2009
Name/Address of Project	22 Milford Street, Islington
DA number	DA 09/1205
No. of Buildings	3 with common podium
No. of Units	26
Declaration of Conflict of Interest	Nil
Attendees	John Smith (Developer), Kevin Snell (Architect) David Paine (Council)

This report is based on the ten Design Quality Principles set out in State Environmental Planning Policy No.65 which must be addressed in considering residential flat development in NSW. It is also an appropriate format for applications which do not include residential flats.

Generally

There is an existing approval for development of this site on which the Group made considerable comment over the course of several meetings. The new application has adopted a very different approach to the configuration of the residential units, which is supported in principle. There are other innovative and attractive aspects to the design. The primary reservation in relation to the new application is in relation to the density which Council advises is some 68% in excess of Council's policy.

1. Context

The immediate environs of the site comprise a mix of largely disused industrial and storage structures, vacant properties, and early 20th century cottages mainly of timber construction and some of considerable charm. The adjoining building to the south in Milford Street is an industrial structure which has been sensitively converted for use as residential units. The challenge is to respond creatively to this mixed and gradually, but inevitably changing context.

2. Scale

The scale relates satisfactorily to that of the nearby former industrial structures, but there is concern about the interface with the adjoining residential properties to the west.

3. Built Form

It is proposed that there are three blocks of units running east-west spaced apart to provide reasonable amenity between units and satisfying the recommendations of the Residential Flat Design Code in relation to solar access to living areas. The southern block has three levels of residential units above ground-level parking which relates well to the height of the adjoining building. The central and northern blocks are three levels above ground, the latter fronting The Avenue with ground-level units having direct entry from the street and activating this frontage. All three blocks have their

western walls located on the common boundary with the adjoining single dwellings, - which is of concern.

4. Density

The density which has been calculated to be 68% in excess of the planning control is difficult to justify. The approved DA exceeded the control and the applicant argued that the present proposal is of better quality and therefore deserving of a higher FSR. This logic cannot be supported for two reasons. Firstly the allocation of bonus floor space on the grounds of better quality design is not in reality a workable or quantifiable process and such precedent would place the approval authority in an untenable position. Secondly the building form does have negative impacts in relation to the neighbouring properties which could readily be resolved by increasing setbacks and reducing density.

5. Resource, Energy and Water Efficiency

Subject to BASIX compliance.

6. Landscape

The landscape plan by "Envisage" proposes street-tree planting in accordance with Council's specified species with turfed areas adjoining the footpath. It is suggested that the extent of turfing should be minimized and more substantial ground cover and/or small native species be used at least adjoining the property, although the group defers to Council expertise on this matter.

Within the site the narrow planted strips adjoining the entry and access routes which adjoin the parking areas are somewhat problematic because of their limited area. However the concept of allowing deep-soil planting at ground level, which includes trees and tall plantings whose foliage is able to extend to the floors above is supported as a more sustainable approach than podium planting. There exist further opportunities for utilizing voids and openings between the buildings to permit a greater extent of tall landscaping. For example the planting at the north-western end of the car-park could be extended and improved by relocating the vehicular route between bays as discussed at the meeting.

The proposed long and narrow shared walkway/gardens situated between the east-west blocks should be reconfigured into a more useful space adjacent to the southern side of the lobby spaces. This would permit more flexible uses of these common spaces, in addition to their being used as common gardens.

7. Amenity

The amenity of the residential units should potentially be of good quality. Internal service rooms on the top floor should be provided with natural light and ventilation by way of roof lights.

The amenity of neighbouring properties to the west would be compromised by the bulk of the three and four storey walls on the common boundary. It is considered that the parking level could reasonably be built to the boundary, but that the residential floors above should be set back significantly, to the extent of 4 to 6 metres.

8. Safety and Security

The new units themselves should be satisfactory as proposed, but it is considered that it would be highly desirable to improve passive surveillance of Milford Street and the three entrances to the development along this street, -desirably by locating living room windows along this frontage. The consequential internal re-planning should not be difficult to resolve.

9. Social Dimensions

Provision of some communal space would be desirable. It may be that this could be achieved in the areas at first floor level which would be available with the recommended set-backs from the western boundary.

10. Aesthetics

The general approach to the design is sensitive and appropriate. The proposed roof forms and materials should result in a consistent and urbane streetscape. A possible refinement of the detail of the junction between the brick walls and the steel-clad walls above, would be to increase the setback of the corrugated steel wall from the outer plane of the brick wall. On the western elevations such setback at the highest level would assist in reducing the dominance of the buildings over the adjacent properties.

The applicant's advice that the present external brick walls were newly constructed after the 1989 Newcastle earthquake is noted. Replacement of these walls using brickwork similar to the existing former wool store adjacent to the site or the possible use of recycled bricks should achieve a satisfactory outcome.

The presently somewhat bland Milford Street elevation would potentially be enhanced if the living rooms were to be relocated at the eastern end as recommended above for security reasons, with appropriately expressed openings/balconies etc.

Recommendation: The basic configuration and planning of the proposal is fully supported in principle, and would result in a significantly better development than the approved scheme. The Group is not able to support an exceedance of the density standard of this order and recommends in particular that there should be reasonable setbacks from the western boundary for amenity reasons. Other issues raised under the headings of Landscape, Amenity, Safety and Security and Aesthetics should also be addressed.

**The Minutes of the
Urban Design Consultative Group Meeting
held on Wednesday, 17 February 2010
at Newcastle City Council.**

ITEM 1

The minutes of the previous meetings of 18 November, 2009; 16 December, 2009 and 20 January, 2010 were confirmed as true and correct.

ITEM 2

Name/Address of Project	DCP Elements = Urban Renewal Corridor
Pre-DA consultation	N/A
No. of Buildings	N/A
Declaration of Conflict of Interest	Nil
Attendees:	Johannes Honnef (NCC)

ITEM 3

Name/Address of Project	Wharf Road, Newcastle
Pre-DA consultation	N/A
No. of Buildings	1
Declaration of Conflict of Interest	Nil
Attendees:	Craig Marler (ADW Johnson), Barney Collins (EJE)

This report is based on the ten Design Quality Principles set out in State Environmental Planning Policy No.65 which must be addressed in considering residential flat development in NSW. It is also an appropriate format for applications which do not include residential flats.

Context

The proposed site consists of an existing elevated constructed concrete platform which protrudes into Newcastle Harbour. This is the largest of four existing tug boat wharves, which have been redundant for some time. The applicant's planner has indicated that NSW Maritime intend to demolish the remaining three wharves.

The Group supported the retention of this resource, and further suggested that it was desirable if possible to retain the other three structures for public use, subject to structural and maintenance issues being resolved. The applicant's planner observed that the commencement of the demolition work was imminent, and may have already commenced. (Work on one of the wharves was observed to be underway after the meeting.)

The proposed use of the platform as a restaurant/ take away food outlet was considered to be an appropriate use of this resource, subject to public access to the perimeter decking being retained.

The site is within the visual catchment of residences and offices to the south (which are viewed across the landscaped foreshore park). The closest building of significance to the site is Customs House, and given the heritage value of this building, any visual impact of the proposal upon the Customs House warrants careful consideration.

Scale

The footprint of the proposed structure was considered to be acceptable. The perceived height of the building was considered to be somewhat more demonstrative than necessary, and the Group suggested the pitch of the roof might be lowered somewhat to place less visual emphasis on the north eastern corner of the roof. This may also assist in sun control.

Safety and Security

The proponents advised that the public access to the deck which wraps around the exterior of the wharf would need to be secured overnight, which was agreed to be necessary for security and safety reasons.

Social Dimensions

The proposal was considered to offer a useful addition to the city's dining experiences, and the inclusion of a take-away outlet and access for the public to the deck were positive inclusions.

Aesthetics

It was noted that the design is currently in schematic form at this stage, but it was stressed that the detailing of this building will be a key element in determining its success. Selection of the colours of elements including the framing of the fenestration were also important considerations, as were the design resolution of sun shading and structure.

At this stage the southern elevation was considered to be the least successfully resolved. Whether sandstone was the most appropriate material for this wall was questioned, with other options of lighter, more 'maritime' materials being suggested as alternatives.

Recommendation:

Providing the design development mooted in the points above is successfully executed, the proposal is considered to have potential to be a positive contribution to this very popular part of the city.

ITEM 4

Name/Address of Project: 22 Milford Street Islington
D.A. No: DA09/1205
No. of Building: 3 with common podium
No. of Units: 24
Declaration of Conflict of Interest: Nil
Attendees: John Smith (Developer), Kevin Snell (Architect), Victor Schubert (Council)

This report is based on the 10 design quality principles set-out in State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 which must be addressed in considering residential flat development in NSW. It is also an appropriate format for applications which do not include residential flats.

Generally

This application was previously considered by the Group on 18th November 2009. While the Group was generally supportive of the design approach taken (when compared to the current Development Approval for the site), there were reservations regarding density, setbacks, street surveillance, landscaping and other matters of detail. The applicant has responded with a revised proposal to address the concerns of the Group outlined in the Minutes of the previous meeting.

Context

The Group noted the particular context of this site with an existing industrial building on the South boundary and the favourable North orientation creates a unique setting which contributes significantly to the amenity and the density achieved. The other significant considerations are the existing, free-standing houses along the Western boundary of the site. The Group has previously raised concerns regarding an appropriate setback to these properties. The revised drawings have addressed these concerns with an increased setback of 4.5m to the West boundary.

Scale

The Group is satisfied with the relationship of this development to the large, existing industrial building on the South boundary. The height of this existing building enables this proposal to achieve a height which may otherwise have been problematical. As noted above, to address the

The amenity of the neighbouring properties to the West has been improved by the incorporation of a 4.5m setback to the shared West boundary. The increased planting proposed will also be of benefit to the adjoining residents.

Safety and Security

The amended proposal includes a greater number of windows along the Milford Street elevation as suggested by the Group. These windows will improve passive surveillance along this street. The living areas for Units 7 and 16 have been relocated to the Milford Street frontage. The living spaces of these units now have solar access to the North and bay windows overlooking Milford Street. The combination of these measures within the amended proposal has satisfied the concerns of the Group regarding surveillance.

Social Dimension.

Satisfactory.

Aesthetics

The amended proposal adds further refinement to the design approach previously presented to the Group. The applicant advised that the face brickwork shown on the drawings would be selected to match as closely as possible the bricks used in the existing, industrial building to the South. On the coloured elevations, the lightweight cladding on the South side of each block has been shown in strong contrasting black and white panels. While there were some reservations regarding the strength of this contrast, it is assumed that final colours will be submitted to Council for approval. Council may wish to refer final colour and materials selections to the Group for comment.

The applicant has amended the proposal as suggested by the Group by relocating the living/dining spaces for Units 7 and 16 as previously noted to the Milford Street elevation. Bay windows to these units provides further articulation and variety to this streetscape.

Recommendation

The Group generally supports the amended proposal and notes that it would result in a significantly better development than the current development approval. The Group is now more comfortable with the non-compliance with the density standard which is now quite minor in comparison to the current development approval. The increased setbacks along the Western boundary have also resulted in a significant improvement to the scheme. This context has resulted in a unique proposal which can be recommended for approval by Council.

ITEM 5

Name/Address of Project	23 Steel Street, Newcastle West
DA number or pre-DA?	DA 09/1039
No. of Buildings	One large podium & 3 residential above
No. of Units	To be confirmed
Declaration of Conflict of Interest	Nil
Attendees	None

This report is based on the ten Design Quality Principles set out in State Environmental Planning Policy No.65 which must be addressed in considering residential flat development in NSW. It is also an appropriate format for applications which do not include residential flats.

Generally

This report supplements previous reports as the proposal has been progressively developed and changed in response to comments of the Panel as well as commercial decisions. It deals only with two matters, the minor changes to the Ravenshaw Street elevation, and the applicant's SEPP No.65 Statement dated 3rd February 2010.

Recommendation:

The Panel supports the additional minor changes, but retains in principle the reservations expressed in the December report in relation to the nature of the Ravenshaw Street façade. Note also the comment regarding the importance of submitting additional montage views.