

**Proposed mixed use development
Mid City Square – Stage 2, Corner of Burelli and Kembla Street.
Design Review Panel Meeting held at Wollongong city council on the
19th January 2010.**

Present:

Design Review Panel: Steve Kennedy, David Jarvis, Tony Tribe.

Applicant representative: Karl Prince PRD Architects

Wollongong city council: Mark Riordan, Pier Panozzo, Theresa Whitaker.

The proposal is the second stage in a three stage development located adjacent to Wollongong Civic Square. The proposed stage two building is twelve storeys high and situated on a prominent corner site. A banking chambers (1499.7sqm) will be located at ground and mezzanine level. Upper levels will contain tenanted commercial space (7700sqm) and two penthouse apartments.

Additional comments outlining how the revised drawings issued in June 2011 have addressed issues raised by the Design Review Panel are highlighted in red:

Additional comments outlining how revised drawings issued in October 2011 have addressed issues previously raised by the Design Review Panel are highlighted in blue:

Context

The panel were presented with an earlier application that outlined a concept for the master plan of all three stages of the development. It was evident that a number of key changes (built form, vehicle entry and pedestrian entries) had occurred during the design development of Stage 2 that will impact the remaining two stages.

The panel believe that further detailed information is required to demonstrate how the proposal relates to Stages 1 and 2 of the development.

The proposal also lacks a broader detailed site analysis and contextual study.

The analysis provided is limited to part of the street block. There is little demonstration of how the proposal responds to the streetscape, the city block and the civic precinct in which it is located. A broader and more detailed contextual analysis is required.

Additional information has been provided documenting a broader context.

There is still no evidence of considered contextual analysis. What are the key site, climatic and civic precinct elements and how have they influenced design decisions?

Pedestrian links

Pedestrian links are shown crossing through the staged development in both a north south and east west direction. The proposed east west link directs pedestrians past a 'hostile' back of house space located between the corporate square car park and sacred heart church. There is little casual surveillance of this space,

It is a concern that the quality of space created will not be conducive to a desirable and safe pedestrian environment.

The stage three arcade forms the entry point of the east west pedestrian link. It is noted that since the initial staged concept plan a vehicular entry has been located within the stage three arcades. How this vehicle entry has impacted on the quality of

the arcade and its intended use as a pedestrian link has not been addressed in the documentation provided.

The panel question the necessity and viability of the proposed east west pedestrian link. Further contextual studies are required to establish if there is a need for this pedestrian link. If so then the applicant needs to demonstrate that a safe and attractive environment can be established.

The necessity and viability of the proposed east west pedestrian link has not been clarified by the additional contextual information provided. The impact of the relocated vehicle entry on the quality of the arcade and its intended use as a pedestrian link has not been addressed in the documentation provided.

The east west pedestrian access link now terminates at the stage 1 Plaza. This is considered to be a reasonable approach; however it should ideally be supported by a landscape proposal that demonstrates how the stage 1 and stage 2 plaza's connect.

Building entry

The main pedestrian entry to the development is located in a plaza created between the proposed development and the existing corporate square building to the east of the site. It was advised by the applicant that this was to provide maximum street exposure for the bank located ground floor.

Burelli Street is considered to be the most appropriate location for the main entry to the building, however the commercial constraints driving the current proposal are acknowledged by the panel. If the current entry location is to contribute to the success of the development it must make a significant contribution to activating the adjoining plaza. The inclusion of a café within the atrium foyer will contribute toward this however further development of the plaza is required.

A harsh inactive edge will be formed on the eastern face of the plaza by the existing corporate square building. Consideration should be given as to how landscaping within the plaza addresses this edge and also emphasises the north south pedestrian link through the site.

Additional information perspective and landscape information has been provided to document the eastern plaza.

The lobby area is being utilised as a future civic link providing a north south pedestrian connection to the approved stage one development.

The long bank of east facing glazed doors creates a continuous barrier between the adjoining plaza and the lobby area diminishing the potential for the lobby area and the plaza to work cohesively as a strong civic link through to stage 1.

The landscaping plan should also be extended to show how the north south pedestrian link through the site forms a connection to the approved stage 1 development.

The main pedestrian entry has now been relocated to Burelli Street, the ground floor lobby addresses both Burelli Street and the public space to the east of the building. A café has been located in the north east corner which also address's both the public space to the east of the building and Burelli Street.

The space to the east of the proposed building has been further rationalised to help form a clearer civic link through to the stage 1 development.

There is a noted improvement in how the proposal relates to Burelli Street and the eastern civic link. However an expansion of the landscape treatment / public domain could help to clearly demonstrate how the proposal relates to its immediate context.

Awning vs. colonnade

A light weight cantilevered awning is proposed to both Burelli and Kembla Street. The awning and associated structure add clutter to the street and an unnecessary layer of visual complexity to the building. Consideration should be given to the creation of a colonnade. This will help rationalise the building's aesthetic, un-clutter the street and provide a better level of all weather shelter for pedestrians. The colonnade would also be consistent with the adjacent corporate square building.

The awning treatment remains unchanged.

The proposed awning now uses fewer columns, reducing clutter from the street. However there is still no information rationalising design choice of this detached, high maintenance canopy/awning method of pedestrian weather protection with no apparent precedent in the civic precinct?

Built form

The concept building envelope proposed in the original staged master plan created a strong corner form. The building now proposed is focused on creating strong north facing façade to address the civic square. The intent to create a strong corner building shown in the master plan appears to have been lost.

Consideration should be given to how the new building form turns the corner and relates to Stage 3 of the development. It is suggested that creating a continuous base wrapping around the corner of Burelli and Kembla Street would help to relate the building to its corner location. It is recommended that the blade wall protruding through the building base on the corner of Burelli and Kembla Street be removed. This would contribute to creating a stronger building base and corner element.

The blade walls have been omitted from the base of the building. This has helped to rationalise the treatment of the base and form a stronger corner element.

The aesthetic treatment of the building form has altered significantly. In broad terms the developments that have been made are positive, the calmer aesthetic of the building relates better to the immediate context of the site. However the success of the various configurations of blades and louvers in controlling the environment requires further clarification. It is suggested that sketch sections be provide to show the detail intent of the proposal and demonstrate how the depth and orientation of blades / screening elements provide control the environment within the building.

Aesthetics

The north facing sloping façade is not, in the Panel's view, responding to any significant functional or contextual requirement. It is the opinion of the Panel that it is a purely stylistic element that does not contribute significantly to the buildings external aesthetic or the quality of space within the building.

This issue remains unchanged.

There is a noted improvement in the aesthetic treatment of the building (Refer to Built Form section above). However to justify 'design excellence', information is expected on how the design (particularly public elements, facades etc) has evolved as a response to the pragmatic user requirements, climate, context, sustainability, maintenance etc.....spiced ideally with some emotive fun, frolic, surprise and delight. Flowing from this, detailed information is also expected on proposed materials, colours, textures.

Q: What is rationale behind vertical and horizontal sun control blades on north facade?

Q: What is rationale for facade material/colour selections?? Are selections appropriate in context?

Q: What is grey material in upper facade?

Q: How is roofscape treated...viewed from high surrounding points?

Residential

Two residential apartments have been located on the upper two levels of the building. Both units sit within a large sculptural roof, one apartment has been orientated facing north and the other south.

A cantilevered roof has been created above the terrace of the northern apartment. The roof is in excess of 7m above the terrace and will provide little shade to the terrace. The main roof element cantilevers around the entire perimeter of the southern apartment at a height in excess of 7m also providing little shelter to the terrace. The proposed roof form is a stylistic sculptural element that does not contribute to the quality of the residential spaces it encloses.

It is recommended that both units be designed in a manner that will allow some northern orientation to facilitate good solar access. It is also recommended that the current roof is further developed create an appropriate environment for the residential units. This can be achieved by either altering the form of the roof or with the addition appropriate solar screening / shelters.

The residential unit design remains unchanged. A diagram has been provided on DA 12 revision C demonstrating that the living room of the southern unit receives less than 2 hours of solar access per day in mid winter. The extent and quality of the solar access received in the living room is restricted to a small corner of the living room for much of this time. Given that the building contains only two units over two floors and is not over shadowed by any adjoining buildings, the extent of solar access received by the southern unit is extremely poor.

The quality of the terrace spaces also remains a concern.

The proposal now locates one unit per level on the top two floors, this configuration now provides the opportunity to provide good solar access to both units.

The upper level residential units have been enclosed at each corner by the frame work of dark grey curtain walling used on the commercial levels below. It is a concern that these elements will diminish the quality (light, solar access, outlook) of the residential units and their terraces.

A two story high operable louver system has been used on the north, east and western elevations. The louvers will form a two story space that can be completely enclosed on the upper level. The position of these louvers has the potential to greatly impact the environment of both residential units.

Who will operate the louvers, which gets to decide what a suitable environment is for both units?

The strategy to fully enclose the residential units with curtain walling and operable louvers does not create an appropriate residential environment.

Resource, energy

The proposal is basically a glass box with sun hoods and screens. This typology of building raises concerns regarding maintenance and environmental performance. Further information / investigation of the following issues are required:

1. Further detailed information documenting proposed solar screens and demonstrating their efficiency, the sloping northern façade and western façade are of particular concern.
2. Practicalities of cleaning / maintaining a sloping façade with protruding louvers
3. The reflectivity of the proposed glass façade, particularly the sloping element.

These issues remain unaddressed by the additional information provided.

These issues can be clarified with further detail information (as outlined in Built Form).

Conclusion / Summary

The proposed building is considered to be of an appropriate scale for its prominent location. However the application lacks both contextual and detailed information. A detailed analysis of the site and the surrounding area are essential components of the design process, as is an amended master plan demonstrating how all three stages of the development relate to one another.

This analysis should be used to inform further detailed development of:

1. Plaza and arcade, a detailed landscape plan.
2. Building entrance
3. Appropriate pedestrian circulation routes
4. Building form, consideration of corner element and colonnade.
5. The amenity of residential units.

Further detail information is also required to document the proposed façade treatment to address the issues outlined above (Resources, energy).

Some additional contextual information has been provided, however there is no evidence that this information has been used to inform the proposal. It also remains unclear as to how the proposal responds to its immediate context as a revised master plan has not been submitted.

The relationship between the building entry lobby and the adjacent plaza does not facilitate a positive civic link through the site. Insufficient landscape information has been provided to show how the proposal links with the other stages of the development and in particular creates a positive link (in a north south direction) with the approved stage 1 development.

The necessity and viability of the proposed east / west pedestrian link has not been clarified by the additional contextual information provided. It remains a concern that this space will not be conducive to a desirable and safe pedestrian environment.

The removal of the blade wall from the base of the building has helped to simplify the building form and relate the building to its corner location.

The amenity of the south facing residential unit remains poor. Additional detail information is also required to demonstrate how the proposed façade addresses concerns raised solar screening, maintenance and reflectivity.

The proposed building is not considered to satisfy the objectives the design excellence clause required by Woolongong LEP 2009.

The proposal has developed significantly to address many of the issues previously raised by the panel. The proposal now responds to Burelli Street and the eastern plaza in a more considered manner. The calmer aesthetic of the building is also commendable. However further information / development of the following issues is recommended:

- Further detail of façade treatment.
- An expansion of the eastern plaza proposal to demonstrate the civic link to the stage 1 plaza.
- Further development of the treatment of the residential levels.
- Clarification of design intent (as outlined above, aesthetics).