

DA-2010/1682
PROPOSED MIXED USE DEVELOPMENT
CORNER OF BURELLI AND KEMBLA STREETS, WOLLONGONG

Urban Design Review: Update 2

HBO + EMTB Urban and Landscape Design

Project Number: SYU-002653

Prepared for: Wollongong City Council

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1.0 Introduction

This report follows two earlier documents, dated 21 July 2011 and 9 September 2011, providing an urban design review of a proposed development, known as Mid City Square, within the City Centre of Wollongong. The Applicant has made further amendments to the proposed development and this report provides an urban design review of the latest amended proposal. The author of these reports is Geoff Baker, Urban Design Principal, HBO+EMTB Urban and Landscape Design, Sydney.

1.1 Background Information

A description of the subject site and its context and the original proposed development are provided in the earlier urban design review.

1.2 Changes to the Proposed Development

The proposed amendments to the development relate primarily to the building's facade design and the configuration of the two residential units at the top of the building.

These changes are shown in a set of drawings generally dated October 2011.

1.3 Regulatory Framework

Two local planning instruments are of particular relevance to this review:

- Wollongong Local Environmental Plan (WLEP) 2009
- Wollongong Development Control Plan 2009

2.0 Urban Design Review

Wollongong LEP 2009 includes Clause 8.5 Design Excellence which states in sub-clause (3) that "Development consent must not be granted to development to which this clause applies unless, in the opinion of the consent authority, the proposed development exhibits design excellence". Sub-clause (4)(e) provides a list of matters which must be considered in making this determination. The following assessment includes those matters which are relevant to the current set of proposed changes to the design of the development and the reviewer's response. Clauses which are not applicable or now deemed to be satisfied are not cited.

- (a) whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved

In broad terms this criterion is deemed to be satisfied. Specific issues which require clarification or refinement to achieve design excellence are detailed below.

- (b) whether the form and external appearance of the proposed development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain

The overall architectural expression of the building's exterior has been altered significantly and is much enhanced. The proportions of the tower are improved by extending its glass frame to the top of the building. As seen in the perspective view from the northeast, openings in the roof slab and the upper facades allow views through the upper building mass to the sky beyond, adding visual interest. Facades are articulated by means of openings, recesses, exposed columns, sun blades and the colour scheme. Whilst the palette of elements is diverse, they have been composed in a relatively restrained manner. The awning along Burelli Street has been simplified, but the exposed framing as seen from above is not compatible with the visual character of the facades. Cladding of the top of the awnings to produce a wing-like form would resolve this issue.

In this reviewer's opinion, the building now relates appropriately to the heritage items and civic buildings nearby. The scale of the framed elements of its base and the patterns of blades is compatible with the scale characteristics of these buildings. Importantly, the proposal now engages the office buildings to its east, as seen in the perspective view from the west, rather than eschewing them. By helping to draw these buildings into the total composition of Civic Plaza and achieving compatibility with the heritage items, the new building contributes to the design quality of the public domain as a whole.

- (e) how the proposed development addresses the following matters:

- (ii) existing and proposed uses and use mix

Concerns about the uncertainty of other street front uses remain and it is again noted that an agreement with the Applicant to provide active ground floor uses is highly desirable.

- (vii) environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing, wind and reflectivity

With significant areas of glazing, limiting reflectivity to a maximum of 20% remains an important requirement.

- (viii) the achievement of the principles of ecologically sustainable development

The facade design of the building now relies strongly on shading devices for its expressive character. Whilst the configuration of these plays an important role in the aesthetic qualities of the building, it is important that they also function well as solar control devices. The spacing, orientation and depth of sun blades require confirmation.

High performance glazing will be required in areas where shading devices are not employed (for example, the northeast and northwest corners of the tower). Confirmation of the environmental performance of the facades and details of the design that achieves this must be properly documented.

The top two residential floors of the building have been completely reconfigured from two double storey units to two single level apartments one above the other. This resolves earlier problems to do with equitable view sharing and environmental performance, allowing each unit to achieve the same benefits of views and solar orientation. The outer skin of the tower extends up to the top of the residential floors, providing an additional layer of environmental protection for both solar gain and wind. Again, critical details of the design of this outer skin and the apartment facades behind it must be resolved and documented (for example, the solid balustrades to the roof openings on the northern side of the building, as seen in Section C-C, should be open railings, to admit more winter sun to the Living Area of the upper unit).

3.0 Conclusion

The two issues which remained to be resolved after the last review were the external architectural expression of the building and the poor design of the proposal's two penthouse apartments. These issues have now in general been addressed satisfactorily. In order for design excellence to be achieved, the more detailed and specific refinements described above need to be resolved and documented.