



27th January 2011,

Attention: **Atalay Bas**
Planner, Development Assessment
Ashfield Municipal Council
260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield

Dear Mr Bas,

RE: Development Application 2A Brown Street, Ashfield
REVISED SEPP 65 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thank you for inviting me to comment on the modifications to this project.

The following comments have been prepared based on the drawings and documents supplied by Council including: Drawings by Olsson & Associates Architects numbered DA01B- DA29B dated May 2010 stamped by Council on the 6th December 2010 and a statement of environmental effects by Allan Caladine Town Planner dated December 2010.

We take on face value the accuracy of all the documents given to us and rely on them to form our assessment.

We have visited the site.

I believe the contents of the previous comments to be largely valid for the revised proposal.

I note the following changes from the previous proposal.

1. The increase in footpath width to the Drakes Lane in front of the ground floor offices
2. The inclusion of a public stair and disabled lift from the Drakes Lane Level to the Brown Street Level
3. Modifications to the vehicular entry and exist off Brown Street.
4. The Applicant's architect has provided an analysis of the development potential of the property to the west of the site across Drakes Lane.

Comments

1. The additional footpath width to drakes Lane will benefit the pedestrians using the lane as a link from Hercules Street to Brown Street. In addition, the extra width allows for the office/commercial spaces to have a more sheltered entry area off the lane. There is also the possibility of some active uses to spill out onto the lane.
2. The through-site link mentioned above is accessed via a stair that links the level of the lane to that of Brown Street. A disabled lift has been proposed to render the link accessible. I am slightly concerned that the treatment of the landscaped area on the upper level may not be perceived as

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a safe public thoroughfare. In addition to good lighting and the elimination of places of potential concealment, maintaining an unobstructed visual link through to the access point from Brown Street is important for a sense of security. Maximising the opportunity of passive surveillance in this area is also important. The treatment of the entries to the bed/office spaces should be detailed with this in mind.

3. I have no comment regarding this modification.
4. In my previous report I raised the issue of the proximity of the building to Drakes Lane and the resulting impact on the development potential of the adjacent sites. The architect has provided a diagram, which illustrates the resulting possible development on an amalgamated site assuming the proposal is built according to the approved Master Plan. The diagram shows that the development on the other side of the lane is disadvantaged by 6m for the width of the amalgamated site, or 126m² per level.
For equitable development potential, a 9m setback from the centre line of the lane(s) should be applied above podium level (1 commercial level).

Conclusion

The proposal generally meets the objectives of the 10 principles of good design.

It is my opinion however, that the setback issue from Drakes Lane should be addressed. Unless a master plan for the entire block is established, the only equitable solution is to apply SEPP 65 separation principles.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Williams'.

Tim Williams
Architect AIA



10th September 2010,

Attention: **Atalay Bas**
Planner, Development Assessment
Ashfield Municipal Council
260 Liverpool Road, Ashfield

Dear Mr Bas,

RE: Development Application 2A Brown Street, Ashfield
SEPP 65 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thank you for inviting me to comment on this project.

The following comments have been prepared based on the drawings and documents supplied by Council including: Drawings by Olsson & associates architects numbered DA01A- DA26A dated May 2010 and a statement of environmental effects by Allan Caladine Town Planner dated June 2010.

We take on face value the accuracy of all the documents given to us and rely on them to form our assessment.

We have visited the site.

DESIGN QUALITY PRINCIPLES

Part 2 of SEPP 65 sets out the following design quality principles as a guide to assess a residential flat development. The 'Residential Flat Design Code' (The Code) is referred to as an accepted guide as to how the principles are to be achieved.

1. Context

Good design responds to and contributes to its context. Context can be defined as the key natural and built features of an area. Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of a location's character or, in the case of precincts undergoing a transition, the desired future character as stated in Planning and design policies. New buildings will thereby contribute to the quality and identity of an area. (SEPP65)

The site is located in Brown Street in the Ashfield Town Centre in close proximity of the railway station. Brown Street connects the railway station to Liverpool Road and is a major feeder road through the town centre.

The area is in the process of transformation with medium to high-density residential developments occurring in the vicinity. Buildings of a similar scale to the proposal have been constructed to the east and south of the subject site.



Hercules Street to the west of the site remains predominantly two storey with traditional shop top retail buildings. The proposal is separated from these buildings by Drake Lane

It is appropriate for higher density residential and mixed-use developments to occur close to public transport and other infrastructure. The proposal reinforces the evolution of Ashfield as a significant residential and commercial town centre in line with the wishes of the Metro Strategy.

The proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

2. Scale

Good design provides an appropriate scale in terms of the bulk and height that suits the scale of the street and the surrounding buildings.

Establishing an appropriate scale requires a considered response to the scale of existing development. In precincts undergoing a transition, proposed bulk and height needs to achieve the scale identified for the desired future character of the area. (SEPP65)

The height and bulk of the proposal is in keeping with eight storey apartment building on the east side of Brown Street and with the seven storey office development to the south, which addresses Liverpool road.

There is a large change in scale from the developments mentioned above and the one to two storey retail buildings on Hercules Street and those fronting Liverpool Road. Juxtapositions such as this are bound to occur in town centres undergoing change. The proposal has the benefit of being separated from these lower scale buildings by Drake Lane. Whilst the difference in scale will be stark along Drake Lane the impact of the development as seen from Hercules Street and Liverpool road will be mitigated by the depth of the sites on Hercules Street and Liverpool Road and by the fact that those streets have active frontages and awnings which tend to keep eyes focused on what is happening at ground level.

Of some concern is the scale of the portion of the rear building on the angle of Drakes Lane, which is drawn to the property boundary. Should the properties that back onto the lane behind or along side the proposal be redeveloped, their development potential would be compromised due to required set backs from the proposed building across the lane. To provide equitable development potential for those sites, a setback of 9m from the centre of the lane should be applied.

It is not known whether Council has envisaged likely built form for the adjacent properties. Given that the proposal is within the envelope of the previously approved Master Plan it is assumed that the proposal is acceptable in this regard

The proposal generally meets the objectives of this principle.



3. Built form

Good design achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building's purpose, in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type and the manipulation of the building elements.

Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscape and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook. (SEPP65)

The proposal's built form is based on a perimeter block typology with a generous internal courtyard. The street façade follows the curve of Brown Street and is skilfully handled in terms of how it accommodates the slope of the land and the heights of adjacent properties. The street pattern of Ashfield is reinforced by the built form.

The gap between the two buildings allows for views into and across the site and reduces the apparent length of the building.

The proposal meets the objectives of the principle.

4. Density

Good design has a density appropriate for a site and its context, in terms of floor space yields (or number of units or residents)

Appropriate densities are sustainable and consistent with the existing density in an area or, in precincts undergoing a transition, are consistent with the stated desired future density. Sustainable densities respond to the regional context, availability of infrastructure, public transport, community facilities and environmental quality. (SEPP 65)

The proposal reflects the Council's urban housing policy in that it locates higher density housing in the town centre. A total of 120 units are proposed with an FSR of 3.52:1. This is in excess of the bonus amount of 1:1 over the 2:1 allowed in return for a community benefit. The applicant argues that this is acceptable as it is less than was approved in the previous Master Plan and the building is within the Master Plan's envelope.

The density is certainly appropriate in this location irrespective of the value to the community of the additional parking in exchange for an additional 1.52:1 FSR.

The proposal meets with the objectives of this principle.



5. Resource, energy and water efficiency

Good design makes efficient use of natural resources, energy and water throughout its full life cycle, including construction. Sustainability is integral to the design process. Aspects include demolition of existing structures, recycling of materials, selection of appropriate and sustainable materials, adaptability and reuse of buildings, layouts and built form, passive solar design principles, efficient appliances and mechanical services, soil zones for vegetation and re-use of water. (SEPP65)

The proposal is very well designed with a predominance of apartments with cross ventilation and good sun amenity. The SEE states that there are 2 units that face south. I have counted 7, which is still acceptable and well within the RFDC guidelines.

There is some harvesting of water for car washing and garden watering.

The proposal meets the objectives of this principle

6. Landscape

Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, resulting in greater aesthetic quality and amenity for both occupants and the adjoining public domain.

Landscape design builds on the site's natural and cultural features in responsible and creative ways. It enhances the development's natural environment performance by coordinating water and soil management, solar access, microclimate, tree canopy and habitat values. It contributes to the positive image and contextual fit of development through respect for streetscape and neighbourhood character, or desired future character.

Landscape design should optimise usability, privacy and social opportunity, equitable access and respect for neighbours' amenity and provide for practical establishment and long-term management. (SEPP65)

The extent of proposal's landscape area is concentrated on the courtyard space that acts as the common outdoor area. Deep planters are proposed in order to sustain larger trees and shrubs. Species that grow tall would be desirable in this courtyard to reduce the apparent scale of the buildings and provide additional privacy across the courtyard. It is assumed the planters are indeed deep enough for this.

Additional plantings could also be provided in front of the ground floor units to the courtyard to improve privacy.

It is noted that Brown Street will have new street trees to complete the existing ones.



The proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

7. Amenity

Good design provides amenity through the physical, spatial and environmental quality of a development.

Optimising amenity requires appropriate room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas, outlook and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility. (SEPP65)

The proposal has good cross ventilation and sun amenity to most units. The units are well designed with well-sized and orientated balconies. Additional storage is provided in the basements.

Privacy distances according to the code are generally observed within the courtyard and where they get a little close on the eastern side, the affected apartments have appropriately orientated windows and openings. The marginal transgressions are not significant as the angle of the balconies is such that there will be little impact on privacy.

Apartments on the Southern side adjacent to the office building are within 12m but, as the building is set about 8m off the southern boundary it is considered acceptable. The office buildings steps well away from the proposal at the upper floors.

The only concern in terms of privacy are the units onto Drake Lane. This is a concern for the future if the properties to the west and south were to be redeveloped with similar densities.

The garbage disposal system appears to be well handled and the parking areas work efficiently given the curved shape of the block.

It is noted that the building will have some accessible and adaptable units and that the cross over typology limits the number of units where adaptability is possible. The lifts allow for access to each level and the building entrances have been treated equitably albeit that entrance B is via the courtyard which will need to be accessed by Entrance A for the mobility impaired.

Consideration has been given to the acoustic performance of the apartments facing the railway side with the double façade treatment. The flexibility of use of the balconies is not ideal in every situation as it may be that the louvers would be opened on a warm night for ventilation and thereby admitting the railway noise. Natural ventilation systems that reduce sound transmission exist that could be used in this situation.

The proposal generally meets the objectives of this principle.



8. Safety and security

Good design optimises safety and security, both internal to the development and for the public domain. This is achieved by maximising overlooking of public and communal spaces while maintaining internal privacy, avoiding dark and non-visible areas, maximising activity on streets, providing clear, safe access points, providing quality public spaces that cater for desired recreational uses, providing lighting appropriate to the location and desired activities, and clear definition between public and private spaces. (SEPP65)

Safety and security have been well handled in this proposal. Active frontages and living spaces that overlook the street will enhance the sense of security on Brown Street. The internal courtyard is well defined and secured with a gate. The residential entrances are open and free of obstructions.

The proposal meets with the objectives of the principle

9. Social dimensions

Good design responds to the social context and needs of the local community in terms of lifestyles, affordability and access to social facilities. New developments should optimise the provision of housing to suit the social mix and needs of the neighbourhood or, in the case of precincts undergoing transition, provide for the desired future community. (SEPP65)

The proposed mix of dwellings is appropriate to the area and will encourage a range of residents. The associated commercial and retail space will be an additional amenity for residents of the area and encourage use of the town centre.

The proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

10. Aesthetics

Quality aesthetics require the appropriate composition of building elements, textures, materials and colours and reflect the use, internal design and structure of the development. Aesthetics should respond to the environment and context, particularly to desirable elements of the existing streetscape or, in precincts undergoing transition, contribute to the desired future character of the area. (SEPP65)

The proposal will be a positive addition to the streetscape. The materials and colours selected are elegant and sophisticated. The parts of the building are clearly expressed and the scale broken down by human scale elements such as the screens.

The building has a classical arrangement of base (retail), middle (residential with louvres), and top (Overhanging roof). The brick sides of the buildings are like book ends and add a warmth and reassuring scale to the courtyard entrance. The composite metallic element on the western end finishes the building well against the laneway.



The proposed building is responsive to it's location and to the environment and will set a new benchmark for the future character of the area

The proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

Conclusion

The proposal satisfies the 10 principles of good design.

The Author qualifies this statement however, due to the impact of the proposal on the south western side of the site to Drakes Lane.

Had the proposed development not had the precedent of the approved Master plan, a recommendation to set back or re-design this part of the scheme would be made.

Tim Williams
Architect AIA