



## **URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING**

### **ITEM No. 4**

Date of Panel Assessment:	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
Address of Project:	Hunter and King Streets
Name of Project (if applicable):	Hunter Village
DA Number of Pre-DA?	2011/0617
No. of Buildings:	2 - above common podium
No. of Units:	To be advised
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	Nil
Attendees:	Chris Chapman – (Pacific Lifestyle Group) Kevin Snell – (Architect) Michael Rodgers – (Architect/consultant)  Peter Chrystal (Council) 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**

Various proposals for the site have been presented to and reported on by the Panel over several years. At the May meeting verbal advice was provided to the applicant regarding continuing concerns about the design, in particular those relating to the height and form of the block fronting King Street, detailed design of the tower block, and the absence of photomontage views in view of the very large scale of the development.

In view of these comments and in response to current market conditions a revised proposal was presented to the meeting. The basic configuration of the plan and disposition of the buildings as presented in the new scheme remains unchanged, but there are very significant changes, which together have addressed the major reservations of the Panel.

## **1. Context**

Comments made in previous reports are not reiterated.

## **2. Scale**

Satisfactory in principle. The major building forms as now proposed should relate to the broader scale of the city, and in both King and Hunter Streets the podiums in combination with awnings and activation of the retail frontages would create a comfortable pedestrian scale.

## **3. Built Form**

The revised design includes the following amendments:-

- The King Street block reduced in height by three storeys, with three distinctive components at varying angles to the street frontage, and with major detailed changes to the architectural expression. The new montage views demonstrated that the building form should relate satisfactory to the character of the street, and would substantially reduce overshadowing impacts by comparison with earlier schemes. The form of the podium and awnings would create a satisfactory base to the building.

- The tower block has been substantially simplified in plan and the projecting balconies eliminated. The montage views demonstrated that the basic height and form of the building should in principle fit comfortably into the skyline. The main parapet level was within the LEP 60m height limit, and the rooftop element marginally above. It is considered that more detailed design development is required to provide greater articulation to the tower form, whether by emphasizing vertical components, providing a 'cap' at the top, providing more contrast in materials, or some combination of such devices, -the objective being to minimize the visual 'bulk' of the tower.

- The Hunter Street podium façade has been revised and is considered to respond satisfactorily to the heritage context and streetscape. The continuation of the awning, expression of columns on the frontage, and setback to retail and residential lobby combine to produce a reasonable outcome.

## **4. Density**

It is noted that the density has been marginally reduced to approximately 4.8:1. While this remains considerably in excess of the FSR control, it is considered acceptable in the context of the unique conditions applying to the site, and the design and form of the building being reasonable and acceptable.

## **5. Resource, Energy and Water Efficiency**

No comment at this stage.

## **6. Landscape**

In the next stage of design development there are major opportunities for very attractive and environmentally responsible initiatives in the podium landscaping, the upper deck level of the King Street block, and along both street frontages.

## **7. Amenity**



Amenity of residential units should in principle be excellent. The reconfiguration of balconies in the tower block should make for major improvement in their usability and integration into the unit plans.

It is noted that the internal units in the Hunter Street podium block which were previously of concern have been deleted in favour of 'through-units' which should have good amenity.

## **8. Safety and Security**

Satisfactory

## **9. Social Dimensions**

The communal areas, which were a very positive feature of the previous submissions, have been retained and should provide very attractive facilities.

## **10. Aesthetics**

The architect explained the genesis of the ideas behind the architectural expression of the building in relation to materials, texture, colours and finishes. The intention to relate the finishes to the varied colours of sandstone was supported in principle by the Panel, particularly having in mind the relation of the site to the nearby civic buildings. It is understood that the design was at a preliminary stage: the main concern was that the combination of the proposed coloured panels would not read as 'pattern-making', but rather as subtle textures on the facade, which would blend and not dominate the architectural form. The introduction of adjustable screens to balconies would be a significant improvement to detailed appearance of the building as well as enhancing their amenity, -whether standard louvres or the laser-cut panels being investigated by the architect

The two street facades are very different in their architectural expression and both should relate well to their very different contexts, -the consistent low-scale heritage buildings in Hunter Street, -and the larger-scale commercial buildings in King Street. The latter has been addressed by breaking down the impact of the street wall with three angled components, each with different facade design. Although the design needs detailed design development, this approach is generally endorsed.

**Recommendation:** The Panel was encouraged by the new approach to the design and considers that the issues of concern in the previous proposals have been satisfactorily addressed. Although detailed design of the building facades is yet to be resolved, the directions proposed are fully supported. The montage views as presented were very valuable in assisting assessment of the proposal.



## **URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING**

### **ITEM No.2**

Date of Panel Assessment:	21 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
Address of Project:	509-511 Hunter Street, Newcastle
Name of Project (if applicable):	Hunter Village
DA Number of Pre-DA?	DA 2011/0617
No. of Buildings:	2 Tower Blocks over common podium
No. of Units:	252 residential + commercial retail
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	None
Attendees:	Kevin Snell – Architect for Project Michael Rogers – Principle EJE Architects

*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**

The Panel last reported on this proposal in October 2011, following presentation of the application as amended at that time. The applicant has subsequently made a number of amendments in response, the most significant being the provision of additional parking to achieve compliance with Council standards. In relation to comments made under 'Amenity', the westernmost units on levels 1 to 6 of the King Street block have been provided with small north-facing balconies and windows, the internal corner units amended and screened, and upturns and some screening provided to balconies. The six units with poor amenity in the Hunter Street podium block remain.

A series of diagrams were provided indicating the massing of the proposed building forms from street level and aerial views, and the potential massing of future buildings on adjoining sites. Street-level photomontage views and landscape plans were not provided, nor any physical model, which would normally be expected for a project of such large scale.

A separate supporting letter was provided by Mr Rogers who was a member of the Design Integrity Panel that reviewed the previous application, which was for a

'Seniors Living' proposal argued at the time to be of commercial nature and justifying the approval of an FSR of approximately 5:1. The UDCG when commenting on the application in 2007 and 2008 took the view that if this was demonstrated to be the case the application could be acceptable subject to a range of design issues being addressed. Subsequently the then draft LEP has been gazetted and the current application is not for a commercial use, although the height and bulk are similar. In these circumstance where the proposal is a completely new Development Application it is considered that it is not the role of the Panel to justify the supporting a floor space so significantly in excess of the LEP provisions, when there are not offsetting 'public benefit' provisions. The applicant's argument for the proposed FSR relied upon the fact that the development was very similar to the previously approved development.

**Recommendation:** The Panel appreciates that there have been successive improvements made to the proposal, but does not resile from the comments and conclusions made in its October report. These need not be reiterated in the present report. It might be noted that the main reservation at the time in relation to the bulk of the building, with implications in relation to density and bulk, related to the four top levels of the King Street block.



## URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP

### MINUTES

#### ITEM No. 7

Date of Panel Assessment:	19 <sup>th</sup> October 2011
Address of Project:	509 Hunter & 386 King Streets, Newcastle
Name of Project (if applicable):	Hunter Village
DA Number of Pre-DA?	11/0617
No. of Buildings:	2 tower blocks above common podium
No. of Units:	264 residential + commercial/retail
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	Nil
Attendees:	Chris Chapman (proponent) Kevin Snell (Architect) David Paine (Newcastle City 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**

The application is for a very large residential development of the same overall built form and architectural character as a previously approved proposal for this site, for a 'Seniors Living' development. Although the present design is generally similar in external appearance to the approved scheme, it differs significantly in its internal planning and the nature of proposed occupancy and in the number of residential units, which have increased from 152 seniors units to 264 standard residential apartments. It has been deemed to legally require a new application.

The previous application was assessed by the Panel in November 2007, and with changes in response to comments was again reviewed in January 2008. At that time the Panel was generally accepting as to its form and height, subject to a number of issues being addressed, in particular the following:-

- The street-front façade in Hunter Street and its relationship with the nearby heritage buildings
- The need for better articulation of the façade of the King Street block, and preference for removing the top three levels of this component.
- Improvement of vehicular and pedestrian access planning in King Street.

- Redesign of the narrow pedestrian entry from Hunter Street
- Increased areas for common rooms and kitchen on Level 2
- Full information as to compliance with the RFDC
- Reconsideration of the full-height glass balcony balustrades

Because of the large scale and assessed value of investment in the project it was required by the Department of Planning that there be either a limited competition or assessment by a Design Integrity Panel. The applicant chose the latter course and the report of the Panel dated September 2009 supported the application in principle subject to attention to various matters related to landscape, amenity and aesthetics. Under the latter it was considered that the street-front design in Hunter Street was not resolved, the lower section of the King Street façade required further articulation, as did the northern façade, and the dark zinc sheeting proposed on the 18 storey tower needed further articulation and should be of lighter tone. The application with further amendments addressing these concerns was ultimately approved in August 2010.

The current application was presented to the Panel in July 2011 and a range of preliminary comments/suggestions were made at the meeting. At that time photomontage views were not provided, and there were inconsistencies between the plans and elevations, both in Hunter Street and King Street. A written report was not prepared by the Panel pending the provision of full and accurate information by the applicant. The submission now before the Panel has responded positively to a number of the verbal comments made at the July meeting, including refinement of internal planning and the Hunter Street elevation, and substantial changes by way of articulation and modeling of the King Street elevation.

There are two critical and somewhat complex issues regarding compliance with the planning controls relating to height and density. The approved application benefited both in relation to both height and density from its proposed 'seniors living' use, and its being lodged at the time the new LEP was in draft form. As to density the 2008 LEP standard of 3.5:1 was not applied and the density approved was over 5:1, but although the height proposed was considerably in excess of the then DCP control, approval was given to the development being 57 metres in height since the then draft LEP proposed 60 metres.

### **1. Context**

Previous comments are not reiterated.

### **2. Scale**

The general scale of the development at street level should be satisfactory, with the Hunter Street three-storey podium and awning producing a comfortable pedestrian environment and the tower block set well back. In King Street the seven-storey block and awning should be similarly effective, but the four-level component above is of concern, being inconsistent with the scale of the street. The submitted montage view confirms the reservations of the Panel.



### **3. Built Form**

The general arrangement of building forms is similar to the approved scheme and the July 2011 submission. The tower form is potentially acceptable and useful improvement relates to the block facing King Street. Here the façade of the lower 7 storey component has been articulated into three sections both in plan and elevation, which would better relate to the scale and character of the street. The top four levels have been set back but nevertheless appear unduly intrusive, and given the limited potential for future development on adjoining and nearby sites would remain so in the foreseeable future.

### **4. Density**

The permissible density under LEP 2008 is 3.5:1. That proposed is 5.0:1. Although this may have been permissible under the former DCP controls for some uses, as a new application the Panel cannot support a density some 42% in excess of the standard, particularly given concerns regarding the top four levels in the King Street. There is no apparent 'public benefit' which would appear to justify this order of excess.

### **5. Resource, Energy and Water Efficiency**

Subject to BASIX.

### **6. Landscape**

Landscape plans were not available. Although the development covers the full site and no deep-soil areas will be available, there are good opportunities for enhancing both frontages with street trees and paving, as well as landscaping of the extensive podium and roof terraces and courtyard. Plans by a qualified landscape architect presumably will be submitted.

### **7. Amenity**

- The amenity of units should generally be of reasonable to good standard, although there are reservations regarding the large number of south-facing units in the King Street block. It is suggested that at least the westernmost units on each level could be 'through-units' and have northern orientation to living rooms.
- Amenity of the south-facing units in the Hunter Street podium would be poor, given their orientation to a very narrow courtyard space, lack of solar access and noise issues. Noise from the immediately facing car park should be isolated.
- Separation distances between balconies and bedrooms in the internal corner junction between the tower block and the King Street block are inadequate.
- It will be essential to ensure that balconies in the high-rise block are adequately screened against wind if they are to be habitable, especially since many are projecting and in corner locations. Walls, solid balustrade upstands and/or screens should also be included to provide a degree of perceived enclosure to users of the balconies. It is suggested that at least a section of the balustrade for each dwelling be solid rather than of clear glass.



- Entry to units in the tower block from Hunter Street via two elevators is very indirect and is likely to cause management issues. On the other hand a positive outcome could be the enhancement of social interaction because entry and exit will be past the communal facilities.
- It is noted that the design is some 45 parking spaces short of the code requirement. The Panel defers to Council expertise in this matter but given the potential socio-economic profile of future residents and availability of public transport considers this to be not a matter of major concern.

## **8. Safety and Security**

Generally satisfactory

## **9. Social Dimensions**

The new application represents a significant change from a 'seniors living' development to standard residential units, and the commercial reasons driving this are appreciated. With the large proportion of studio and one-bed units proposed and the likelihood of occupancy by many students and singles, there will be serious management challenges. It was indicated by the applicant that a live-in manager was intended, but experience with student accommodation suggests that considerably more supervision will be required. For example another application by an experienced operator in this market considered by the Panel, proposed a ratio of one on-site supervisor to every 50 residents.

Positive features are the small sunny sitting areas on each level of the King Street block, which should be excellent meeting places for residents, the large communal area on level 2 which also has a good northern orientation and outdoor deck, and the pool and gymnasium. Again detailed planning of these areas is required, and management strategies will be critical to their success.

## **10. Aesthetic**

Two issues are raised:-

- The Hunter Street podium frontage with the gymnasium now set back is generally acceptable as to its overall form, but detailed articulation of balcony openings could be more sympathetic to the vertical character of nearby buildings.
- The western end wall of the King Street block will be very prominent and detailed attention to material and finishes is important: deletion of the top four levels would be very desirable.

**Recommendation:** The Group does not support the proposed significant departure from the density controls. The application could be supported in principle, subject to deletion of at least the top four levels of the King Street block, and positive response to the other matters raised above under Built Form, Density, Landscape, Amenity, Social Dimensions and Aesthetics. It is fully appreciated that there is an extant approval for a development of the density proposed, but given the changed circumstances of the current application the amendments proposed are strongly recommended.