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1 September 2011

John McGloughlin
University of Newcastle
University Drive
CALLAGHAN NSW 2308

Our ref: 22/15724/95552
Your ref:

Dear John

Peer Review Student Accommodation Project
Proposed Student Accommodation and Carpark - Urban Design

We write to confirm the outcome of the urban design review that has been undertaken for the architectural and landscape design described in the Development Application documentation, refer schedule of documents Appendix 1. Our Peer review has been fully informed of the design development through regular attendance of Design meetings and Workshops with the stakeholders, refer to Appendix 2 of this letter. This final review is the culmination of a series of reviews undertaken during the design development process. This statement is a summary of the consensus of individual reviews undertaken by the undersigned who are all registered Architects. Our response is summarised as follows.

1 Concept Design

The concept design can be summarised as the provision of four, eight storey buildings and a separate multilevel carpark located within a landscaped setting. The location of the buildings allows the landscaping to permeate the space between and adjacent to the proposed buildings. The form of each residential building consists of a templated plan and geometric form with three wings radiating from a central core. The landscape has been designed to provide for an extension of the treed character adjacent the site (which is typical throughout the University) and to provide activity zones at the base of each of the buildings. The car park is located remotely from the main building cluster. The area between the carpark and the residential buildings will be subject to landscape improvements.

We support the design outcome of reducing total building footprint with a resultant increase in building height because of the following outcomes:

- Maximization of bushland character.
- More public space.
- Ease of circulation planning.
- Reduction of retaining walls.
- Reduced shadow footprint.
- Potential for landscape to manage overland flow of stormwater.

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2 Siting of Buildings and Structures

The subject site for the residential buildings is constrained by the existing ring road located to the west, riparian zone located to the south, sporting fields located to the east.

The site is partially bisected by a primary pedestrian path which connects the existing student accommodation to the teaching precinct. A number of significant habitat trees are located throughout the site. The location of this site provides opportunity to extend and develop the existing student precinct while utilising the existing riparian corridor and sports field adjacent the site to provide amenity.

The location of the site adjacent the university ring road provides for direct service vehicle access into and out of the site.

The carpark site is constrained by roads to the north, south and west and the University to the east. The carpark is located a sufficient distance from the residential portion of the site. The existing roads surrounding the carpark provide for vehicular access without the need to reduce existing landscaped area to provide for new service roads.

The utilisation of this part of the campus for student accommodation and provision of car parking in a location on the outer edge of the ring road is consistent with the University master plan and landscape plan.

We support the proposed siting of the development for the following reasons:

- The development consolidates residential activities.
- The development supports the pedestrianisation of the central campus.

3 Place Making

The proposed development will generate a distinct campus precinct. This will result from the combination of the siting of the buildings, their form and treatment of the surrounding landscape between and adjacent to the buildings. The landscape design interfaces with proposed public activities such as covered outdoor communal areas, building entry and administration which are proposed to occur on the ground floor level of the building. The landscape design provides for active and passive external spaces of varying scale and orientation adjacent the perimeter of each building and connected to the building entry. These spaces are connected to the central pedestrian spine by clearly defined paths. The existing managed bushland is proposed to be extended throughout the site and has been designed to incorporate existing significant trees which are to be retained on site. The retention of many of the significant trees on the site, provision of accessible pavements and bicycle travel paths will all contribute to the amenity, quality and character of the place provided.

The following design, materials and elements expressed and articulated in priority places will enhance and the viability and success of placemaking including:

- Accessibility for cycles and pedestrians.
- Reducing pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.

We support the design outcomes because they will generate a positive perception of place generated by this development.

4 Building Design and Visual Impact

Residential Buildings

The bulk and scale of the buildings is modulated through the articulation of the building facades by incorporation of the following elements:

Screens, hoods, recesses, windows. Further a variety of cladding materials in combination with a stepped plan and a clearly defined building mass and active building base and entry will ensure that the potential for the scale of these large buildings to overwhelm the viewer is mitigated by provision of a gradation of scale.

The visual impact of the buildings from foreground, middle distance views and distant views has been considered. The following larger scale elements expressed and articulated in building form and elevation have been provided to mitigate detrimental visual impact from mid-range and distant views:

- Tonal change in elevations to reinforce plan stepping of building wings.
- Use of colour to provide legibility and contribute to passive way finding. Use colour to help modulate forms and facades and mitigate detrimental effects of the bulk.
- Transparency of screening elements to allow legibility of the uses and to celebrate activation of outdoor balconies and façade over which the screen is located.
- Stepping of roof parapet to provide a modulated termination to the building elevation.

The above in combination with retention of significant trees will provide for an appropriate level of building articulation in order that building massing is controlled by providing an appropriate gradation of scale. The consequence of this outcome is that the potential for this large scale development to generate detrimental visual impact is mitigated.

We support the design outcomes which provide for a gradation of scale reduction in perceived building mass.

5 Carpark Building

The elevation treatment of the carpark utilises varied screening elements to provide a gradated scale to the building and to generate visual interest. This treatment in combination with low scale and vertical planting to the building perimeter improves the visual amenity of a large utilitarian structure.

We support the design outcomes proposed and confirm that visual impact of the proposed development has been appropriately managed.

Yours sincerely

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John Clarke (Principal Architect - GHD Brisbane office)

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Attachments: Appendix 1 – Schedule of Documents
Appendix 2 – Design Meetings – Peer Review Participation