

ITEM No. 4

Proposed Residential Development

282 Bunker Road Adamstown

Date of Panel Assessment 18 January 2012

DA 1/1391

No. of Buildings 1

No. of units. 95.

Declaration of

Conflict of Interest None

Attendees. Michael Rathbourne (Project Manager), Tony Melroy (Adamstown RSL Club), Kristy Ryan (Design Partnership). Steve Moore (Design Partnership).

Peter Chrystal & Chris Speek, NCC

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 included residential flats.

Generally

The site for the proposed development and the rear western aspect of the present RSL are currently uninviting in appearance, and residential units in this location could in principle potentially substantially enhance the area. For social reasons it is also a very suitable location for additional accommodation given the general amenity of the area and the proximity of the club itself. Although the Panel is also sympathetic to the position of the club in seeking to develop the site for financial reasons, the scale and design of the application as submitted cannot be supported. .

1.Context

The subject site located to the western rear side of Adamstown RSL Club is currently occupied by three single storey residences and an extensive bitumen paved carpark serving the Club . The rectangular site slopes to a long eastern street frontage to the narrow carriageway of Date Street with the northern boundary facing Victoria Street. The setting is defined by freestanding single storey residences of early and later 20th Century construction, the scale of construction rising to the east.

The proposed development represents a dramatic increase in scale and density within the context. Reflecting recent changes to development controls the development rises 6 storeys above Date Street with the centre section of the western, street elevation stepped back at the third and sixth level. Despite setbacks, the pronounced end elevations of five and four storeys remain the defining interface of the building with the established low scale context.

Acknowledging the development's response to the current development controls the Group considers the proposal substantially unrelated to the existing low scale and density of the residential surrounds particularly that of Date Street.

2. Scale

The proposal rises six storeys in a setting predominantly of one storey construction. Although the residential flat development to the north of the site (across Victoria Street) is of 3 storeys, it well set within set in relatively expansive grounds which have been densely landscaped with tall trees, and has a much smaller floor plate than the subject proposal. As noted the proposed development represents an increase in scale allowed under new controls. However, the height, exaggerated by the rising site, the shear end elevations and long dimensions of the building extending across the rising ground coupled with minimal street setbacks provides a scale of development unrelated to any structure in the setting, including the club to the east and the residential flat development across Victoria Street to the north. The group notes the scale is substantially increased by construction of the development over two levels of above ground parking. The narrow width of Date Street and the consistency of surrounding building height to the west further emphasises the disparity in scale. These factors are considered to provide a scale of development identified as unacceptable by the group.

3. Built Form

The proposal comprises an elongated central range of residential apartments located above split level parking and bookended by four and five level rises of apartments. Carparking is partially set into the slope but rises two levels above grade. Despite efforts to reduce bulk through stepping of the central western elevation; provision of two level apartments at the eastern street frontage; step back of mid level apartments and further step back of the penthouse level; the overall assembly is unacceptably bulky..

It is generally considered that localised efforts to relieve mass are nullified by the shear bulk and extent of the structure, aspects exacerbated by the inclusion of two levels of above grade carparking.

In response to comments by the group, the applicant noted alternate responses such as paired towers have been investigated however it was not clarified why these were not considered more effective given the poor outlook and aspect of so many apartments inherent in the current application. The panel considers that too much of the form and planning of the building derives from the preferred carpark set out serving both the apartment building and the adjacent club.

4. Density

The development whilst based upon current zoning and floor space ratio controls is considered by the group to provide a visual outcome appearing so out of context with the setting that factors other than density must be the determining considerations in assessing the application. One of the prime purposes of density provisions in planning measures is to control the overall volume and bulk of development. In the subject case if the floor area of the parking levels is included in calculation of density the proposed building would be very substantially in excess of the standard and the bulk would clearly be inconsistent with the intentions of the planning control. It is noted that a significant proportion of the proposed parking is unrelated to the residential development, and serves as member and visitor parking for the RSL club.

5. Resources, Energy and Water Efficiency

Whilst noting the provision of solar panels to the upper roof area the group considers the form, planning and orientation of the development serve to negate benefits derived from any identified aspects of environmental sustainability. The linear plan form should provide opportunity for effective cross ventilation and solar control, however the lack of break outs, voids or other openings along the length of the building limits opportunity for natural ventilation. The north/south alignment further impacts on thermal efficiency with nearly a third of all apartments facing western without a secondary aspect. The provision of sun louvers to apartments is unlikely to adequately counter the effects of orientation, the need for screens to be fully drawn over western elevations for extended periods during summer limiting natural lighting to the apartments. It is again noted that this is a direct outcome of the chosen building form and alignment. A related outcome is likely to be the need for supplementary cooling resulting from limitations to thermal performance.

The group notes that the northern and southern elevations incorporate the least number of apartments, whole sections of these elevations remaining blank.

6. Landscape

The proposed development provides very limited external planted areas, these being concentrated in small courts to the Date Street frontage, a roof deck on the southern end of Level 4 and Potential Street planting. No opportunity exists for any large scale tree planting within the site which might otherwise assist in visually reducing the dominant scale of the proposal. Only a small number of small to medium sized trees is proposed, and there is no opportunity at all under the proposal for planting usefully scaled trees in deep soil which might otherwise have assisted in improving the aspect of the dwellings which face the rear of the Club and the businesses facing Bruncker Road. Relief planting shown at the interface of the building and the adjacent club appears to have very limited growing area or in the case of the 'green wall', proposed to the western carpark wall – none. The prospect of a green wall surviving in a busy, narrow traffic way which faces due west is considered to be very limited.

7. Amenity

The proposed development was explained as a means of ensuring the survival of the adjacent club and its community services.

Amenity issues raised by the group are largely related to the plan form and orientation of the building. Particular concern is raised as to the relationship of the car park to the rear entries of the ground/first floor apartments opening directly onto the carpark. Beyond exclusion of club parking, no provision appears to have been made to avoid amenity issues stemming from club patrons wandering into this area or the acoustic impact of vehicles traversing the long floor plates and steep ramp returns.

No assessment of the design as to compliance or otherwise with the quantitative amenity standards of the Residential Flat Design Code was provided to the Panel. It appears that the application would fall well short of these standards relating to solar access and cross-ventilation in particular. It is also undesirable that as proposed there would be no natural light to the internal corridors at the lower residential levels. The outlook of the east-facing residential units at lower levels would also not be attractive.

The lack of separation between club and residential parking is considered a potential amenity issue with no provision for peak flow and the circulation system able to be blocked by a single vehicle waiting to access the residential parking area. Similarly garbage collection appears to require blocking of the singular vehicle entry way for as long as is required to load bins serving the overall complex. The entire residential block is surrounded by roads and vehicular service access, which severely limits any opportunity to provide useful buffers between the back of house functions of the Club and adjacent businesses including Veterinary Hospital and shops.

Access to bicycle parking appears only possible via the main carpark entry and boom gates unless the bicycle is carried up stairs from the lobby.

8. Safety and Security

The group identified concerns of safety and security relating to the interface of club and residential parking. As noted in section 7- Amenity, the lack of controlled entry to the residential carpark and the relationship of this to the ground floor apartment entries is considered unacceptable.

The vulnerability of the vehicle flow routes to a single point blockage are also identified as a significant safety issue. Related to this, the cross over from the carpark to the club entry appears to raise safety issues with service vehicles having limited sightlines of pedestrians exiting either club or carpark.

The current configuration of the two storey 'terrace' apartments which have pedestrian access directly into the car park was considered to be particularly dangerous as proposed. A resident or visitor could step from the living room of the apartment directly out their door into the path of a vehicle using the car park.

9. Social Dimensions

The group considers that whilst the level 4 roof deck provides some positive benefit as a communal space, further provision is highly desirable for a development of this scale. In addition the entrance lobby areas and mail collection points could be made more attractive and provided with seating to encourage opportunities for social interaction. The adjacent club should not be relied upon to instigate social interaction.

10 Aesthetics

The group considers that whilst documentation illustrates a degree of refinement in elements of the building exterior these are negated by the overall bulk, orientation and interface of levels. The group notes the failure of exterior detailing to maintain the cohesion of the framed modules defining the overall form. In particular: shallow roofs over lower projecting floors; the raised skillion roof; treatment of the central stair enclosure; use of glazed balustrades; massing of the north and south bookends; and the alignment of apartments to the western elevation; are considered problematic.

The group also notes the need for setback and or reduction of the bookends forming the north and south ends of the building. Ostensibly breaking up the overall mass, these elements are considered to emphasise the substantial bulk and height of the development.

Recommendations

The group notes that cohesive design of such a large and singular volume within the existing setting presents a challenge beyond the limitations of the current form. At the least the group expresses the need for considerable amendment in planning and aesthetic expression, with greater setbacks and increased deep soil planting. The group maintains that the juxtaposition of so many apartments over a predetermined and substantially above-ground car-park severely limits opportunities for an acceptable response to the setting. For the reasons set out above, particularly those relating to context, scale and amenity, the application cannot be supported.