

Attachment 6: Design Review Panel's Comments 8 August 2011

The following is a report of the Design Review and Advisory Panel meeting held on 29th April 2011 at the offices of Wollongong City Council. The report documents the panels consideration of the proposed development described below.

Consideration of Pre-DA proposal for 21 story mixed use building located at 3 Rawson Street.

Attendees:

Eugene Marchese Marchese partners (Architect)
Steven Zappia Marchese partners (Architect)
Paolo Salotto Marchese partners (Architect)
Michael Summerton Caverstock Group (Development manager)
Pier Panozzo, Wollongong City Council
Mark McCosker, Wollongong City Council

Design Review and Advisory Panel members:

Brendan Randles
David Jarvis

A review of revised documentation submitted by the applicant took place on 22nd July 2011. Present at the documentation review were Brendan Randles and David Jarvis. Additional comment outlining how revised documents have addressed issues previously raised by the Design Review and Advisory Panel are highlighted in red.

Introduction

The proposed 20 story building consists of a five story podium containing approximately 5500sqm of commercial space and a small ground floor retail outlet. Positioned above the podium is a fifteen story tower containing 66 residential units. Vehicle parking and service areas are located within the podium and two basement levels.

Context

The site is significant to the Wollongong City Centre, being elevated significantly and on axis with the city's main pedestrian space. Given its scale especially, it is clear that while the proposal is appropriate in terms of uses, its refinement as a building within a specific urban context and viewed from many vantage points should be carefully considered.

Rather than responding to a detail analysis of the immediate context of the site however, the position of tower and the form of the building appears to be a literal response to the development. Whilst the development controls are based on sound principles they do not allow the proposal to positively respond to the specific contextual constraints and opportunities of the site, to provide the best design outcome for the site.

There is lack of contextual information to support basic design decisions that have shaped the form of the proposal. In particular the position of the tower locked into the centre of the site does not respond to the street or potential neighbouring built forms.

The applicant advised that the size of the podium has been determined by specific requirements of a future tenant. In developing the podium form consideration should also be given to how the form of the podium relates to the neighbouring buildings to the south. Detailed and accurate sections should be provided to demonstrate how the proposal relates to both existing and potential building forms on adjoining lots.

Consideration must be given to the proposals impact on both existing and potential building forms in the area. Of particular concern is the impact upon the existing residential buildings to the west. It is understood that a number of high rise buildings have recently been approved on neighbouring sites. These buildings should also be used to establish the future context of the site.

A detailed contextual analysis should be undertaken to inform and refine the proposed building form. The study should analyse solar, privacy and view impacts of the proposal on surrounding existing and future neighbouring buildings to help develop a building form that is more responsive to its context. It is strongly recommended that as part of this study a contextual physical model is provided showing existing buildings as well as recently approved proposals.

A more detailed contextual analysis has been developed by the applicant. As part of this analysis a physical model has been provided that clearly shows the relationship of the proposed building with its existing and potential future context. This information has been used to develop the form of the building, which now responds to the future context of the site in a more considered manner.

In consideration of the transitional nature of the area, the form of the building sets a good precedent for its future desired character. However, the transition in scale from the proposed podium to the residential flat buildings to its west is particularly abrupt. It is therefore crucial that the treatment of the proposed podium's west facade is sensitively resolved and articulated in detail.

Scale and Density

The scale and density of the proposal is consistent with the future desired character of the area that has been established by the current planning controls

No change to this issue.

Built form

As the tower is positioned only to comply with setback controls, it appears to have a poor relationship with the podium below. Setback from its street

frontage, the tower appears lost against its comparatively bulky podium. This relationship could be improved by strengthening the visual and physical connection between the tower and podium.

The form of the tower is also controlled by council's set back controls. The resultant tower plan is a narrow, twisting form that is difficult to plan without negative impacts on internal amenity. It is therefore questioned whether this form provides optimum internal amenity for residents. Potential to further develop and refine the tower form should be explored as part of the contextual analysis site.

It was explained by the applicant that the curved balconies have been developed to create a skin around the simple rectilinear shape of the tower. This is considered by the panel to be a reasonable approach, however the configuration of balconies proposed create some awkward and impractical spaces between this skin and the glazed walls of the individual apartments. Further development of this balcony skin and its relationship with the apartment glazed walls is therefore recommended.

The repositioned tower / refined tower form provides a stronger relationship between tower and podium. The tower form has also improved the amenity of residential the units and balcony configuration.

Landscape

It was explained by the applicant that a strategy has been developed to provide a communal area for residents on the eastern portion of the podium. Large terraces were to be provided to podium level units. Common areas of landscaping would be provided predominantly around the western portion of the podium, these areas will be looked down upon from the tower but not made accessible to residents. The basic strategy for the use of the podium was considered reasonable but further detail development is required to ensure the quality of these spaces and protect the privacy of residents.

Terraces have been provided at level 1 to service the commercial spaces. The relationship of these terraces with potential built form on the adjoining lots to the south is unclear. Further contextual analysis is required to help inform the extent and location of these terraces to ensure potential privacy issues with neighbouring buildings are minimised.

The use of *Metrosderos excelsa* to provide screening to the level 4 terraces adjacent to the pool is considered appropriate. Consideration should be given to the detail treatment around the stair and plate form lift to ensure the privacy of the adjacent private terraces.

Amenity / Resources

SEPP 65 requires: "Living rooms and private open space for at least 70% of apartments in a development should receive a minimum of three hours direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm in mid winter." The proposal appears to be falling short of this requirement. A detailed analysis of solar access to the

proposed tower should be undertaken and this information use to refine the form and detail treatment of the tower.

It is notable that as the tower contains less than four units per plan (on average), almost all apartments should be able to have access to north light. It is therefore recommended that in the interests of energy efficiency and apartment amenity, more attention is given to achieving this aim through revised planning.

Further refinement of unit layouts is recommended to help reduce circulation areas within units and provide more generous living spaces. Provision should also be made for the inclusion of adaptable units.

It is noted that the developed form and detail treatment of the building improves the potential for good solar access. However, as only 53 of the 77 proposed units (68.8%) provide 3 hours of continuous solar access between 9am and 3pm in mid Winter, the proposal does not achieve SEPP 65 compliance. By altering 2 floors from 6 units to 5 units, the proposal will then achieve SEPP 65 solar access requirements to 53 of 76 units, thereby achieving a 70.6% compliance.

An adequate amount of adaptable units has been provided (8 units 10% of total units). However all units nominated as adaptable are 1 bed room single sided units. It is recommended that a wider variety of adaptable unit types are provided (2 or 3 bed room units) to cater for the requirements of a wider variety residents.

Safety and security

The treatment of the base of the building and how it relates to the street is unclear in the current documentation. However the applicant explained that the intent of the proposal was to create a ground floor level that related to the level of the existing street to create a strong visual connection between the street and the ground floor commercial / retail spaces. This approach is considered appropriate and should be developed further.

Organisation of the car parking to provide specific zones for commercial / retail and residential parking is recommended. The residential parking area should be clearly identifiable and be secured from the commercial / retail areas.

Revised documentation clearly shows that the base of the building responds to Rawson Street in an appropriate manner. A gated entry has been provided to the residential car park at level 3.

Social dimension

The proposal provides a good mix of commercial, retail and residential uses. The range and mix of apartment types is also commendable.

No change to this issue.

Aesthetics

The form of the building should be better informed by a detailed study of the sites in the immediate context.

The aesthetic treatment of the building elements as models at this stage is considered reasonable. However further detail information regarding materials and how they are used is required to make a more informed judgment of this issue. A materials board and a detailed section should be provided for the future DA application.

A materials board has been provided, material selection and aesthetic treatment are considered reasonable.

Summary

The proposal is of an appropriate scale and density for the future desired character of the area. However the proposal lacks a detailed contextual study to support some of the fundamental design decisions that have been made shape the form of the building. It is strongly recommended that as part of this study a contextual physical model is provided showing existing buildings as well as recently approved proposals.

Further detailed contextual analysis of the site is required to develop a strategy that responds to the sites context. It is possible that this approach may lead to a building form that does not meet with council's current set back controls. If a departure from these controls is proposed a strong contextual justification is essential to demonstrate that the departure from the control results in the best urban design outcome for the site.

A contextual study including a physical model has been provided. The standard and detailed level of documentation provided by the applicant is commendable. The contextual study has been used to develop the form of the building, which now responds to the future context of the site in a more considered manner. The proposed build relates appropriately to its site and generally offers a good level of amenity to its future residents.

However it is recommended that further development of the proposal is undertaken to achieve compliance with SEPP 65 requirements for solar access. The provision of a wider variety of adaptable units is also strongly encouraged.

The proposed building is supported by the Design Review and Advisory Panel pending the successful address of the two issues noted above.