tim williams architects

21st January 2014,

Attention: Rebecka Groth
Assessing officer,
Lane Cove Council
PO Box 20 Lane Cove
NSW 1595

Your ref: DA 13/194

Dear Rebecka,

RE: Development Proposal 2–22 Birdwood Avenue and 11–15 Finlayson Street, Lane Cove

I refer to your letter of the 4th of December 2013 requesting my comment on the matter. I refer also to your e-mail communication indicating that this submission relates to broader SEPP65 issues and that more detailed architectural drawings will follow.

This report therefore deals with the principles of context, scale, built form, landscape in general terms.

The following comments have been prepared based on the drawings and documents supplied by Council Including:

- A design report in a 3 format by Turner studio architects dated 19th of November 2013, containing an executive summary, regional context, pedestrian network, village structure plan, development potential, street address, public domain, building height, streetscape, architectural approach, scheduled benefits, SEPP 65 and RFDC report, landscape report, architectural drawings, and landscape drawings.
- Architectural drawings by Turner studio
- landscape drawings by aspect studios
- statement of environmental effects by city plan services dated November 2013
- environmental impact statement by environmental investigation services EIS
- geotechnical report by JK Geotechnics
- ecological constraints report (desktop) by GIS environmental consultants
- development impact assessment report by the Earthscape Horticultural services
- services report by Wood and Grieve engineers
- transport impact study by Henson consulting
- sustainability statement by ARUP

TIMOTHY WILLIAMS & ASSOCIATES PTY LIMITED A.B.N. 82 084 003 592 tim@twarch.com.au
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- quantity surveyors value of the assessment by MBM

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 an amalgamation of lots on the western side and in close proximity to the Lane Cove town centre. The site occupies the whole of the street frontage to Birdwood Avenue between Coxes Lane and Rosenthal Avenue. And additional site fronting Finlayson Street forms the down stroke of a T-shaped site. The Finlayson Street site is flanked on the East and the West by already approved residential developments.

The proposed development represents a large proportion of the developable land in the vicinity of the Lane Cove town centre and is therefore extremely important.

The proposal is presented as a master plan for the site and includes a proposed through site pedestrian link on the East West or long axis of the site. The proposed link appears to connect the pocket park at Coxs Lane to the Rosenthal car park site. It is unclear what public benefit this through site link would bring to the residents of Lane Cove. It would be a convenient way to organise pedestrian movement patterns within the site, but the public footpaths on Birdwood Avenue and Finlayson Street provide adequate east-west movement to the town centre and have the advantage of linking up existing streets and destinations. Ensuring the accessibility and amenity of the public footpaths is more in the public interest than the proposed through site link.

The proposal departs from councils desired future character for the area in terms of floor space ratio and building height. There is insufficient evidence provided to justify these non-compliances.

The proposal does not meet 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)

As mentioned above, the proposal departs from councils height and floor space ratio requirements and is therefore out of scale with the desired future character of the area.

Whilst a large amalgamated site such as this offers some potential for challenging some controls, these are usually considered if other principles of good design are observed for enhanced. In this case issues such as building separation and set back from boundaries are below the recommended minimum as set out in the RFDC.

The proposal does not meet 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)

This site been arranged into 4 separate buildings, 3 along Birdwood Avenue (ABC) and one fronting Finlayson Street (D). Blocks A and B are U shaped with the courtyards facing south. Block C is trapezoidal with no courtyard and forms the corner with Rosenthal Street. Block D is L shaped with the open quadrant to the North East contiguous with the north-south axis of the project.

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It is understood that the documents submitted are not final architectural drawings but are diagrammatic in that regard, however there is sufficient information to comment on the form and massing of the proposal.

The proposal is for 6 to 7 storeys throughout with some five-storey wings flanking the courtyards of blocks A and B and a small portion of block a is four stories opposite the park in Coxs Lane.

Some issues, such as distance between habitable spaces, may be able to be conditioned in certain circumstances to provide adequate screening and these have been taken into consideration, however there are certain situations where this would not be appropriate.

- Between blocks B and C, the distance between balconies is 13 m. this distance should be 18 m for buildings of 6 to 7 storeyss in height
- side boundary setbacks of block the are 7.5 m on the western side and 8 m on the eastern side. The buildings of this height should provide a minimum 9 m setback. The condition on the eastern side is considered less problematic as the main living spaces could face north and south, thereby allowing for adequate privacy screens.

The form of the buildings has been designed to protect the solar access to the buildings to the south. The principles applied are sound keeping the buildings a minimum of 9m away from the southern boundary and stepping them down towards the south, however there are some units at the ground and first floors of the approved development at 3-9 Finlayson that appear to be adversely affected by the proposal and would not achieve the 3hrs minimum between 9 am and 3 pm on 21 June.

The proposal partially 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 is for 245 units at an FSR of 1.95:1. This is over the LEP maximum FSR of 1.7:1 which would yield 31 units less. This represents a 15% increase on expected densities.

I am not aware of how finely tuned Council's population projections and anticipated servicing requirements are, but given that the proposal has height and setback non compliances, I must conclude that the proposed density is not in keeping with Council's expectations with respect to Density.

The proposal does not meet 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)

It is noted that this application is primarily to have a GFA approved and that detail issues are not included.

The proposal has a pleasing amount of deep soil planting. Landscape discussed below.

Passive solar design principles have been followed. It is therefore disappointing and a little surprising that the scheme will, at best, achieve the minimum rules of thumb for solar access and cross ventilation. This does not allow for any contingency for unexpected overshadowing etc.

I note that the 3-9 Finlayson site will be overshadowed to some degree. If this scheme was designed to the minimum rule of thumb for solar access, this subject proposal would result in it no longer achieving the standard.

There are some opportunities to achieve a higher standard such as combining units to create cross ventilation etc. A higher degree of amenity would help justify a modification of other controls such as building height.

The proposal partially 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 proposal has a well-organised landscape scheme. The circulation within the site works well. The location of the major open areas at the crossing point of the north and south axes works well and should provide useful common areas with the potential for both sun and shading from trees.

It is a shame that so many existing trees have to be removed but on the whole the landscape scheme could be very good.

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)

To addressed in detail in subsequent submissions but some issues covered under principle 5.

The proposal partially 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)

The proposal has the potential to address this principle. See comments on 9.

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 benefits of the through-site link to the general community are questionable and may in fact create some issues with respect to safety and security. In my experience, such links are closed to the public as soon as the development is occupied.

Notwithstanding, the common outdoor areas in this proposal are well designed and are likely to foster a sense of community within the development. It would have been great to see some sort of communal room adjacent to the open spaces to provide a hub for the residents for social activities.

The proposal generally 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)

Too early to say, but the perspective sketches show good intentions.

The proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

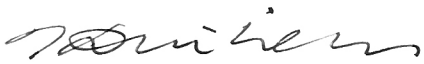
Conclusion

This proposal seeks to vary the FSR and height controls. The suggested public benefit of the through-site link is put forward as justification.

The proposal has some setback and building separation issues and claims to only achieve the minimum rules of thumb for solar access and cross ventilation.

Given that the proposal does not, in my opinion, result in a net gain for the public and does not result in a project with superior amenity (apart from the Landscaping) , the proposal does not meet the objectives of the principles of Context , Scale, Built form and Density.

Tim Williams
Architect AIA



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