

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL ASSESSMENT REPORT

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| DA No. | 89/2013 |
| DA Title and Location | Lots 1 to 5 DP 35236 34 to 40 Hume Highway Warwick Farm |
| Applicant | Olsson & Associates Architects |
| DA Planner | Patrick Hurley |
| Date lodged with Council | n/a |
| Applicant's designer confirmed as SEPP 65 compliant | yes |
| Date of Design Review Panel meeting | 4 April 2013 |
| Pre-DA or DA consideration | DA |
| Panel members in attendance | Brett Newbold (chair) Jennifer Bautovich Roger Hedstrom |
| Council representatives in attendance | Natalie Stewart, Manager Statutory Planning |
| Declaration of conflict of interest | nil |

Introduction

The Design Review Panel (DRP) considered a development proposal for a residential flat building of 12 and 14 storeys on a property which is defined as a 'key site' within the Liverpool City Centre. The site is zoned for high density residential development which may be up to 45m high.

Prior to the meeting, Panel members reviewed pre-DA plans and visited the subject site.

The DRP meeting was addressed by the project architect and the landowner.

Background

The development application which was considered by this DRP represents the culmination of a design competition process that was required by clause 7.5(4) of the *Liverpool LEP 2008 (LLEP 2008)*.

The current development proposal represents the fifth iteration of the design competition concept which was reviewed by a design jury that had been convened according to guidelines of the Director General, Department of Planning & Infrastructure. In September 2012, after reviewing the third iteration of the design competition concept, the design jury confirmed that design excellence could be achieved provided that further information was prepared and a number of specific design modifications were made. The design competition process was concluded, in effect, at that time.

In October 2012, the fourth iteration of the initial concept was presented to Liverpool City Council for pre-DA review. That review involved LCC's representative on the preceding design jury. The assessment report by the LCC representative (who is chairman of the current DRP) confirmed that, in order for the development concept to demonstrate design excellence, the following matters must be addressed:

- Regional traffic planners must confirm that vehicle access via George Street has not adverse impact in relation to the Hume Highway, and therefore that this critical element of the development concept is acceptable.
- In relation to built form and exterior architecture, further details and refinements are necessary, and are outlined in detail by later sections of this report.
- The awarding of design excellence would be compromised in the event of any significant departure from conclusions and recommendations in this report (which have been provided in response to architectural plans and the Architect's slide presentation that were provided in October).

The current development proposal which was presented to the DRP seeks consent for bonus floor space according to clause 7.5(6) of the *LLEP 2008*, and as a result, concurrence of the Director General, Department of Planning & Infrastructure will be necessary to confirm that the proposal has demonstrated design excellence and that bonus floor space may be granted.

Summary

The Panel considers that the proposed development achieves satisfactory design quality in relation to almost all of the design excellence considerations which are specified by the *LLEP 2008*.

However, Panel members agree that further amendments are necessary in relation to scale and the modulation of built form which are significant considerations for design excellence according to that LEP. The recommended amendments relate to improved modulation of

proposed northern and southern elevations, together with the building's visually-prominent north-eastern corner. Panel members note that near-identical recommendations were made by a pre-DA report which was prepared by this Panel's chairman at the conclusion of the design competition process, but that the current development proposal has not implemented those recommended amendments.

Consequently, in order to demonstrate design excellence which is a mandatory pre-condition before development consent may be granted, the Panel requires that the current proposal should be amended to incorporate all of the recommendations which are specified by this report.

The development proposal

The subject site is located at the northern edge of the Liverpool City Centre, and has three street frontages to the Hume Highway, Brown Parade and George Street. It is affected by a road widening easement which is zoned *SP2 Infrastructure* and which varies in width up to 2.5m.

Immediate neighbouring properties to the south are vacant at present, but the portion of those lands which have a frontage to Browne Parade are the subject of a development application for a nine storey residential flat building which was lodged in late 2012. Along the Hume Highway, properties which are located east and westwards of the subject site have consents for residential flat buildings with nine storeys or more.

The subject development proposal involves a single building with floorplates that measure almost 65m by depths of 18m to 24m. Central and eastern portions of the proposed building contain 12 storeys, while the western portion rises to a total of 14 storeys. There are three basement parking levels which are fully contained below ground, and driveway access to those basements is via George Street which is approximately 2m lower than Browne Parade.

The building comprises two lift cores which each service up to five apartments per level. At the eastern end of the building, living rooms and balconies are oriented to face Browne Parade. Apartments in central and western portions of the building generally have living rooms which face the Highway. Windows along the proposed southern façade are limited to bedrooms and bathrooms, or high-level windows which provide a secondary outlook from living areas.

The ground floor accommodates a combination of dwellings and communal areas for recreation or storage. This level incorporates a pedestrian street which provides internal access to lifts and communal areas from the entrance lobbies which face Browne Parade or George Street.

Along the Highway frontage, setbacks from the road-widening alignment vary from 4m to almost 10m (measured to faces of balconies which are enclosed by glass louvers, or to external walls which are not screened by balconies). There are setbacks of 4m along Browne Parade and George Street (measured to the faces of balconies which are not enclosed). Along the southern boundary, facades are setback by approximately 6.5m.

Setbacks to the basement together with mounding above the basement provide deep soil along all boundaries. A landscape plan indicates a combination of 'avenue', 'screen' and 'amenity' plantings in those areas.

Building forms are rectilinear, and a variety of façade treatments are proposed for each elevation. The Highway frontage comprises a combination of glass-screened balconies, cut-away or open balconies, and planes of metal panelling which are punctured by varied patterns of windows. On the ground floor and at the twelfth storey, facades are setback to create colonnades or a balcony.

The eastern elevation presents four stacks of open balconies, while the western elevation incorporates a combination of punctured metal-clad walls and a single stack of balconies. The southern elevation presents three punctured planes which follow the same alignment but which are separated by lightwells that provide ventilation for lobbies.

Discussion

i General matters

In relation to key points which were raised by the pre-DA design review report:

- The Panel understands that formal endorsement by the regional traffic committee regarding proposed vehicle access from George Street has not yet been received. However, the project architect advised that a preliminary discussion with the Council's traffic engineer did not raise any concerns in relation to the proposed access.
- Documents of the proposed development indicate that some recommendations from the pre-DA report have not been implemented. In particular, satisfactory adjustments have not been made to the southern elevation or to the visually-prominent north-eastern corner which faces Browne Parade and the Highway.
- DA documents indicate that the proposed development remains generally consistent with the development concept which was presented in October 2012.

ii Built form + aesthetics

The Panel recognises that building forms and facades comprise a variety of elements and finishes.

However, Panel members who had not reviewed previous versions of the proposed development expressed concern in relation to mass, scale and modulation - particularly in relation to northern and southern elevations which would provide visually-prominent backdrops to the Highway and to the northern end of the Liverpool City Centre.

Those concerns reiterated recommendations by the pre-DA report which have not been implemented by the current development proposal, and which relate to "bulk, massing and modulation" that are critical considerations for design excellence according to clause 7.5(3)(f)(v) of *LLEP 2008*.

Also, the Panel notes that details of east-facing balconies depicted by elevation drawings are less-refined than those depicted by perspective views.

Consequently, the Panel recommends further amendments to elevations (listed at the conclusion to this report). In light of this project's history, and noting that all iterations of the competition design concept have proposed a single long building, the Panel has not recommended that modulation should be achieved by dividing the proposed building into separate structures.

iii South boundary setback

Panel members who had not reviewed previous versions of the proposed development expressed concern in relation to the southern boundary setback which does not conform with guidelines in the *Residential Flat Design Code (RFDC)* under *SEPP No 65*. Panel members noted separation controls under the *LLEP 2008* that apply generally to development within the Liverpool City Centre, but agreed that those development standards do not necessarily deliver satisfactory amenity for residential developments.

Panel members expressed concern that the 6.5m setback which is proposed for levels 1 to 11 would compromise the amenity of neighbouring developments to the south, particularly in terms of sunlight and privacy.

However, Panel members were assisted by the applicant's arguments in relation to overshadowing, and noted the quality of documentation with this DA that demonstrates simple design solutions for neighbouring properties which achieve satisfactory solar amenity. Panel members also noted that maximum building height and FSR which are permitted by the *LLEP 2008* inevitably impose shadow impacts upon buildings that would be located southwards of tall tower developments along the Highway. Panel members acknowledged that the degree of such shadow impacts would increase if developments to the south are significantly lower than the maximum permitted height of 35m.

With regard to privacy, Panel members noted that none of the proposed apartments have living areas with a primary orientation toward the southern boundary. On that basis, proposed upper-storey setbacks are not unacceptable.

Finally, Panel members noted that dimensions of deep soil along the southern boundary would be sufficient to accommodate screen plantings of canopy trees as proposed by the application's landscape plan. Consequently, proposed ground level setbacks which marginally-exceed requirements of the *RFDC* are considered acceptable.

In summary, the Panel considers that proposed south boundary setbacks are acceptable in terms of likely amenity impacts, and their potential to accommodate landscaping which would provide effective and attractive separation between neighbouring buildings.

iv Interior planning

The Panel raised no concerns regarding layouts of proposed apartments.

With regard to the ground floor layout, Panel members noted positive features that include a combination of apartments and communal areas, opportunities for direct street-access to those ground floor apartments, together with the design of lobbies and corridors as a pedestrian arcade which links the two side streets and which would provide a focus for positive social interaction between residents.

In relation to the ground floor layout, a Panel member raised the opportunity for redesign of the pedestrian street as a gently-graded ramp in order to eliminate outdoor ramps which currently are proposed within street setbacks. However, the Panel noted contrary arguments which were provided by the applicant's architect, and generally accepted that redesign would have undesirable implications for depth of deep soil above the basement, or increased excavation which would be necessary to lower the proposed basements (basements include a mezzanine storage level which is not clearly marked on the cross-section).

v Landscaping

The Panel raised no concerns regarding proposed landscaping. The project architect provided satisfactory responses to questions regarding proposed treatment of the road widening easement, and separation of proposed communal and private open spaces from the street.

Conclusions + recommendations

The Panel considers that the proposed development achieves design excellence according to most of the considerations which are specified by the *LLEP 2008*.

However, the following amendments are necessary to satisfy design excellence considerations which are specified by the LEP regarding scale and modulation:

- i. The northern elevation should be amended by extending the vertical recess (which currently appears between levels 2 and 6 in front of apartments x04) from level 6 up to level 11.

Reasons: Moderate horizontal scale of the proposed northern facade which has a width of 65m by modulation which is visually-pronounced.

Divide the northern elevation into three visually-distinct elements in order to accentuate modulation effect of the cranked glazed façade, similar to division of the southern elevation as currently-proposed.

- ii. The north-eastern corner should be amended by applying the 'level three variation' (drawing 203 - DA1) with a corner window for apartment x08 added in at least three additional locations between levels 5 and 11.

Reasons: Moderate vertical scale of the visually-prominent north-eastern corner by modulating the blunt blade wall in this location.

Provide an improved design treatment for this visually-prominent location so that the building would 'turn the corner' more-effectively.

- iii. The eastern elevation should be amended to match the composition of balconies which is depicted by perspective views: balconies between levels 9 and 11 should be arranged as a pattern of interlocking cantilevers which are not enclosed by individual frames (note that privacy screening would be required, and should incorporate light-weight materials which are consistent or compatible with the design of balustrades).

Reasons: Moderate vertical scale of this visually-prominent elevation by varying fundamental design elements.

Enhance patterning as a technique to articulate this visually-prominent elevation.

- iv. The south-eastern corner should be amended to match the composition of balconies which are proposed at the south-western corner: southern edges of balconies to apartments x10 should be extended by approximately half a metre and supported by a wide blade column which stands forward of the general alignment of exterior walls in the southern elevation.

Reasons: Contribute to moderation of horizontal scale for the visually-prominent southern elevation which is 65m wide.

Enhance layering of elements and shadow-modelling as techniques to articulate this substantial planar façade which will provide a prominent backdrop to the City Centre.

- v. The southern elevation should be amended by varying the vertical alignments of windows to bedrooms and living rooms, and by applying a diversity of panel wall finishes to the eastern and western modules of this elevation in order to complement composition which is currently proposed for the north-eastern and western facades.

Reasons: Moderate horizontal scale of the visually-prominent southern elevation which is 65m wide.

Incorporate improved patterning as a technique to articulate this substantial planar façade, as well as enhancing presentation of south-eastern and south-western corners of the proposed building which would provide visually-prominent backdrops to the City Centre.