

Attachment 3 - Applicant Response to Design Review Panel Comments

DRP Comments - Northfields

Building 120, Northfields Avenue
DA-2014/1474

HUTCHINSON BUILDERS

| Item | Heading | Description | pg | Comments |
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| N.74 | Project description | The proposal consists of a 7 storey building containing 215 units, providing accommodation for up to 261 post graduate students. An at grade secure car park containing 42 parking spaces is proposed to the east of the building. Communal facilities are provided for the students at the lower ground floor level. | 1 | N/A - statement. |
| N.75 | Context | A Campus Master Plan was tabled by the applicant. The Master Plan provides an analysis of the current campus and outlines potential development opportunities on both sides of Northfields Avenue, the new bridge location and anticipated retail areas. | 1 | The Wollongong Campus Notional Master Plan had been issued to WCC in May 2014 to provide WCC with background to the proposed development. The document outlines the development opportunities and framework developed by the UOW after significant consideration and outlines the notional opportunities which has guided the proposed Building 120 project. Additional information has been submitted to WCC including supporting commentary from GBB Architects on the notional masterplan and images prepared from a 3 D model of Northfields avenue. |

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| N.76 | Context | <p>The area within which this current application is proposed is relatively small and isolated from the main campus by the busy landscaped avenue, Northfields Avenue. From the master plan and discussion with the applicant the following was observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A pedestrian bridge is proposed, linking this area and the adjoining residential neighbourhood with the main campus. The bridge is shown running through the centre of the current proposal; however it was advised by the applicant that the bridge is currently proposed to be located to the west of the proposal. - A future built form, similar in scale to the current proposal will be located to the east of this proposal, fronting the corner of Northfields Avenue and Irvine Street. - Buildings of a smaller scale will be located to the south of the primary building forms fronting Northfields Avenue. The intent of these buildings is to help provide a transitional scale with the adjoining residential neighbourhood to the south which consists predominantly of one and two storey single dwellings. - A childcare centre will be located on the southern side of the proposed student residence. | 2 | <p>The UOW notes that the Master Plan document is notional, and as such, is subject to change as design development for various projects are undertaken. For instance;</p> <p>The location of the proposed pedestrian bridge, as shown in the Notional Master Plan was notional. The University has undertaken further analysis of the linkages on both sides of Northfields Ave and the future location as indicated on the Development proposal plans is inline with this analysis.</p> <p>Whilst the Master Plan shows childcare as a notional use to the southern side of the proposed accommodation development this may change in the future as a result of either the UOW considerations or in fact changes to legislation governing the design of childcare centres. Additional information has been submitted to WCC including supporting commentary from GBB Architects on the notional masterplan, images from a 3 D model of Northfields avenue and cross sections indicating the transition relationship</p> |
| N.77 | Context | <p>The aim of any master plan is to set out a framework within which future development can progress in an ordered manner, ensuring that buildings are developed to relate to each other and their future context appropriately. Apparently, a number of iterations were prepared for discussion, with various options for childcare and parking, these options were not presented to the panel.</p> | 2 | <p>It was understood that the purpose of the design review was to review the merits of the proposed design of the accommodation development not review the basis of the Notional Master Plan.</p> <p>Refer to item N.75</p> |

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| N.78 | Context | <p>However, as currently proposed, the childcare centre will sit within the shadow of the proposed 7 storey student residence building. If this goes ahead, opportunities to provide both internal and external play areas that receive required solar access during winter months will be extremely limited.</p> <p>Consideration must therefore be given to how these two buildings relate to each other if a functional childcare centre with a good level of amenity is to be provided at a later date. If a reasonable level of amenity cannot be provided to the childcare centre alternative strategies should be explored. By locating the car park to the south of the proposed student accommodation and allowing the student accommodation to front Northfields Avenue a childcare centre with good solar access and an address to the main street can be provided. This approach would also allow a landscaped buffer to be provided between the student accommodation and the adjoining residential properties.</p> | 2 | <p>As noted above the Childcare Facility is notional, however, in the interests of demonstrating how the 2-3 storey height limit for this area would be considered appropriate and used as a Childcare Centre a concept proposal for the Childcare Facility has been developed to incorporate the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building to be two storeys over parking with outdoor play areas and a roof top terrace to address Madoline Street. • Overlooking and overshadowing of the facility from a Student Accommodation block to be considered in the configuration of the Childcare Facility. • Childcare Facility to provide a transition in scale from the Student Accommodation building to existing properties on the south side of Madoline Street. <p>Additional information has been submitted to WCC including supporting commentary from GBB Architects on the notional masterplan, a 3 D model of Northfields avenue and cross sections indicating the transition relationship</p> |

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| N.79 | Scale / density | The main university campus is located on the northern side of Northfields Avenue. The master plan outlines a strategy to reinforce that side of the street with buildings up to 8 stories in height, defining the Campus edge, providing street definition, expressing a landscaped setback to reinforce Northfields Avenue character and allowing views between buildings to the landscaped grounds of the university. | 2 | <p>As outlined in the Wollongong Campus Notional Master Plan the UOW intends to develop "flagship" large scale buildings on both the north and south sides of Northfields Ave.</p> <p>The UOW land bounded by Northfields Ave, Irvine St, Madoline Ave and the Botanic Garden is critical to establishing a significant entrance statement for the University including academic/research buildings, a new transport interchange/student hub and enhanced retail/commercial facilities. This land sits with the Wollongong Campus (it is a single lot) and the UOW does not consider it an "relatively small and isolated area" in the future development.</p> <p>A transition in scale from Northfields Ave (6-8 storeys) to Madoline St (2-3 storeys) is achieved within the site which is 55-80m wide. The transition is assisted by the topography. Refer to the attached site cross section.</p> <p>The local community forum (NF5) also proposes that the area to the south of Madoline Street be a transition zone where the Floor Space Ratio is increased to 0.6:1. The proposed transition to 2-3 storeys on Madoline street by the University is consistent with this outcome.</p> <p>The location of the proposed pedestrian bridge, as shown in the Notional Master Plan was notional. The University has undertaken further analysis of the linkages on both sides of Northfields Ave and the future location as indicated on the Development proposal plans is inline with this analysis.</p> |

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| N.80 | Scale / density | The proposed student residence site is located on the southern side of Northfields Avenue, with Kooloobong Oval and the Botanical Gardens to the west, smaller detached buildings to the east and a small scale residential precinct to its south. In contrast to the northern side of the street's eight storey built form, the south will remain largely free of built form and be dominated by landscape. Given the very different contextual settings of the two sides of the streets, it is questionable that buildings of very similar scales are proposed on both sides of the street. It is suggested that built form on the southern side of Northfield Avenue should provide a transition in scale between the main university campus and the surrounding area. A scale between 4-5 residential storeys is considered to be a more appropriate response to this site. | 2 | Refer to commentary in Item N.79. |
| N.81 | Built form | The applicant explained that the building entrance was located on the end of the building rather than in a more central location, to allow the communal north facing court yard to function as a single space secured from the street. It was also explained that the entry was positioned on the eastern end (as opposed to the west) to provide a more direct connection to the car park and provide separation from the pedestrian link connecting with the future bridge to the west of the building. | 3 | <p>The entrance location maintains the security and functionality of the northern courtyard and allows for a shared entry with future additional development to the east of the proposed building.</p> <p>The requirement for a single secure entrance is so that unauthorised entry to the building, especially out of hours, can be manage as an essential University briefed requirement. This security requirement flows into the secure common courtyard.</p> <p>Relocation of the car park to the south side of the building would impact on the proposed use of this area of land.</p> |

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| N.82 | Built form | Though this configuration reflects a certain logic (if the car park position were to be supported), it does little to strengthen the typological parti of the building or engage with its avenue context. For example, an entry in between the two opposing limbs would better engage the courtyard and provide more autonomy between the two wings. If the building were able to be accessed directly from the Avenue, it would better activate the street and make better use of the lifts, and so on. However, as proposed, the current entry results in a building with a 60m long double loaded corridor serviced by lifts located at one end only. Travel distances from lifts to the western units are likely to be excessive in fact. . Therefore, the Panel recommends that the building's circulation be reviewed. Ideally an additional lift – and entry - would be provided at the western end of the building or the lifts be more centrally located. | 3 | <p>To provide an entry through the middle would split the courtyard and reduce its functionality and render it less active. This would also compromise the security requirements.</p> <p>Similar travel distances can be found on recent student accommodation projects such as Monash University's Briggs Hall which comprises of 600 studios in two buildings. Each building has two wings accessed from a central lift and stair core. Wings are 60m long double loaded corridors. The project sets the new benchmark for the National and State Government for Affordable Housing. However, the long corridors of Briggs Hall have no breaks such as for windows, views and natural ventilation. Our building whilst similar in corridor length is broken along its length to allow full height openable windows for views and natural ventilation of the common corridors.</p> |
| N.83 | Amenity | Large communal spaces have been provided at lower ground floor level to service all of the 261 students occupying this building. Though these spaces provide important social spaces for a large gathering, they lack the intimacy necessary to help create social bonds between smaller groups of students. To help foster a greater sense of community within the building it is recommended that social spaces / living areas are provided on each floor. This will provide spaces that are used by much smaller groups of students, helping to form a bond between groups of student occupying the same floor. | 3 | <p>The Northfields Student Accommodation is to provide facilities for postgraduate students. UOW Accommodation Services Division prepared the specific project brief after analysing the needs of the existing 'Graduate House' (postgraduate) community and benchmarking the requirements against national and international projects. Some relevant requirements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of family/child friendly communal facilities. Examples would include children birthday parties, playgroups. • Provision of a larger flexible communal space rather than small group (undergraduate style) group work rooms. This is particular important for larger social events which is a requirement for the Post Graduate cohort. • Partners of student residents may hold tea and coffee mornings, English Language classes, craft mornings, etc. <p>Postgraduate students have direct access to office/research and associated facilities on the main campus.</p> <p>The communal spaces allows for flexibility to cater for smaller groups.</p> |

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| N.84 | Amenity | Two bed room units located on the corners of the building are configured to provide deep narrow living spaces, exactly the same configuration as those provided for the single bed studios. It is suggested that the quality of these rooms could be improved by re-orientating the bed rooms to allow the living spaces to be located on the external corner of each unit, providing more natural light and an improved outlook from living rooms. | 3 | This suggestion only applies to the 2 Bed Units above the entry foyer. Re-orientating the living room results in an unusable L-shaped living area. See attached sketch SK001 by GSA. |
| N.85 | Environmental | It is not uncommon for student accommodation buildings to generate double loaded corridors, with some units receiving little or no direct solar access. It is acknowledged that given the typology of building and associated economic constraints that compliance with the RFD rules of thumb for solar access and cross ventilation would be too arduous. However this makes it all the more important that alternative steps to improve the environmental credentials of the building are taken. | 3 | The provision of north facing communal indoor and outdoor space has been provided on the Lower Ground Floor. The amount and types of spaces have been carefully considered to cater to the post graduate student. The accommodation is naturally ventilated. A CFD model is being developed to assess the ventilation and comfort criteria the University has set. To provide affordable student housing and the north south aspect of the site has resulted in a design outcome whereby a large percentage of the studios are south facing. To offset this private secure balconies are provided to every student accommodation in the Northfields development. This acknowledges the requirements and lifestyle of the postgraduate student and takes advantage of the unique landscape of the campus. |
| N.86 | Environmental | The applicant's description of measures taken regarding selection of materials, use of solar panels, water reuse and solar shading are commendable. The applicant is encouraged to get a formal assessment and recognition of the proposals environmental credentials by applying for a green star rating. | 4 | The University has set a high bar in setting the briefed objectives for Ecological Sustainable Design strategies. As student accommodation does not fall easily within the framework of existing rating tools (such as Green star) the University has a maximum Embodied Carbon intensity rate of 680 kg/CO2/m2. This measure flows through the full life cycle of the building and would be considered a higher bar than many of the Green Star requirements. |

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| N.87 | Aesthetic | Generally, the aesthetics of the building have been handled in a competent manner. However, the Panel question the height of the building in this location and suggest that it be more transitional in scale. The entry and steps up appear awkward as proposed and the courtyard appears somewhat detached from the functioning of the building and is at risk of detracting from the building's vibrancy. | 4 | <p>UOW is purposely seeking a strong/vibrant image and appropriate scale for facilities at the entrance to the campus reflective of a significant research/teaching University.</p> <p>The location of the entry provides a clear way finding landmark from Northfields Avenue. The steps and ramp arrangement facilitate this and works with the levels of the existing footpath. The function of the entry does not have to be adjacent the courtyard. The entry is purposely positioned away from the courtyard to maintain the privacy and security of the common areas.</p> <p>The position of the courtyard is directly linked to the common areas providing a functional indoor/outdoor amenity. As such it is positioned for maximum vibrancy.</p> <p>The relationship of the northern courtyard to the main communal area is a critical and central focus of the building. The quality and types of amenities provided in these spaces respond to the postgraduate student. Some of which have partners and families who will also rely on these spaces for social interaction.</p> |
| N.88 | Social dimension | The proposal is appropriately located to provide convenient residential accommodation for students. | 4 | N/A - statement. |
| N.89 | Social dimension | When grouping together 261 young adults in a single residential building the potential social implication must be understood and addressed. Locating the main communal area on the north side of the building away from the adjacent residential properties is a sensible strategy. However the applicant is encouraged to develop more opportunities for smaller groups of students to socialise. | 4 | <p>The proposed building is for mature post graduate students. The research that the University has carried out has directed the design.</p> <p>Refer also to commentary in Item N.83.</p> |
| N.90 | Summary | The organisation of built forms outlined in the master plan is questionable, it is major a concern that the area allocated for the proposed childcare centre receives little solar access in mid winter (refer to drawing N1110). Consideration must be given to how these two buildings relate to each other if a functional childcare centre with a good level of amenity is to be provided at a later date. The resolution of this issue may impact upon some fundamental design decisions that have been made, such as where the car park is located and how this relates to the entry process and vertical circulation cores | 4 | <p>The organisation of the built forms is a well considered response to the density requirements of the developing University campus while respecting the need to provide a transition in scale to adjoining residential areas to the south of Madoline Street.</p> <p>Refer to attached site cross section (prepared by GBB).</p> |

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| N.91 | Summary | It is suggested that the built form on the southern side of the street should provide a transition in scale between the main university campus and the surrounding area. A scale between 4-5 residential storeys is considered to be a more appropriate response to this site. | 4 | <p>The UoW Notional Master Plan effectively addresses and considers the building height transition from Northfields Avenue to Madoline Street.</p> <p>Refer to attached site cross section (prepared by GBB).</p> |
| N.92 | Summary | To help foster a greater sense of community it is recommended that social spaces / living areas are provided on each floor of the building. Consideration should also be given to room layout to provide better amenity to living areas. | 4 | Small group meeting areas located on each floor are not critical for postgraduate accommodation. |
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