

Urban Design Report

Module Shopping Centre Beecroft Redevelopment, Hannah Street & Beecroft Road



Multi-unit Mixed Use Development

August 2014

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1. Introduction

GM Urban Design & Architecture (GMU) has been appointed by Sony Brothers Pty Ltd to prepare an urban design report considering an appropriate built form outcome for the site located at 87-91, 95 Beecroft Road and 16-24 Hannah Street, Beecroft NSW. The site comprises 7 lots: Lot B DP 117495, Lot B DP 4367; Lot 1 DP 1096815; Lot 1 DP 900898; Lot 1 DP 211441; Lot 11 DP 601185 and Lot 12 DP 601185. The site is also known as the Module Shopping Centre Beecroft Redevelopment and it is within the Hornsby Council LGA. The site is subjected to site specific controls for the Beecroft Road Precinct under Part 9 – Heritage Conservation Areas – 9.6 Beecroft Heritage Precinct, which provides guidance as to the desired future character for the precinct.

The current Development Application (DA) proposes the demolition of the current structures on site and the construction of 4 individual buildings above a retail/commercial podium and shared car park or basement levels. The types of buildings include 5 storey mixed use buildings along Hannah Street and 6 storey residential flat buildings toward the north-western end of the site on Beecroft Road. The residential component of the buildings facing the internal open space ranges from 4 storeys to the south eastern corner of the site to part 4 and 5 storeys on the north eastern corner of the site. The proposed uses include retail uses at the ground floor with commercial uses at the podium level and residential uses at and above the podium level. The site is located within the locality of Beecroft, which is part of the City of Hornsby Council and as such is subject to the Hornsby Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013 as well as the Hornsby Development Control Plan (HDCP). In addition to local controls, SEPP 65 and the Residential Flat Design Code also apply to the site.

The purpose of this report is to consider whether the proposed massing and form of the mixed use residential development provides an appropriate urban design response given the applicable controls, SEPP 65 considerations and the surrounding context.

The conclusion of this report is that the proposal provides a well-considered solution for the site given the unique characteristics of the context providing the much needed regeneration of an outdated but important site at the heart of the Beecroft community. Retail and commercial tenancies along the public domain will activate the street frontages and a central courtyard/plaza space will provide a vibrant meeting place for the community. Residential uses above the podium level will help to overlook the public domain and open spaces and better integrate the proposal with the surrounding residential precinct to the north and west, which is a positive outcome. The proposal achieves a balanced outcome for the streetscape with a two storey podium that responds sensitively to the existing 'fine grain' character to the east and across the street on Hannah Street. The proposal also transitions to the lower scale heritage item to the north with a landscaped setback, articulation and transition down in scale. The proposed form will deliver an appropriate response to promote the village atmosphere of Beecroft and to respond to latent development potential of the existing adjoining properties with ready pedestrian links and open spaces that will link to future development creating a network of spaces at the centre of the block as envisioned by the site specific DCP.

1.1 Documents Reviewed

In preparing this report, GMU has reviewed the following applicable controls and documents describing the site and its immediate surroundings:

- Development Application drawings prepared by DKO:
 - Context Plan 10733/DA/1002
 - Site Plan 10733/DA/2001
 - Plan Drawings 10733/DA/2005 -2012
 - Elevations 10733/DA/3001 -3004
 - Sections 10733/DA/4001-4003
 - Perspectives 10733/DA/6001-6002
- Landscape Concept Drawings date August 2014 by Oculus:
 - Level 01 + Level 02
 - Ground Level + Level 02
 - Plaza Detail Plan
 - Planting and Materials Palette
- Civil Drawings (drainage, erosion and sediment control) dated Aug. 2014 by Van der Meer Consulting

- Development Application Statement of Environmental Effects dated August 2014 by GAT & Associates Pty Ltd
- Design Verification Statement by DKO dated August 2014
- Survey plans by Lockley Land Title Solutions dated 28 February 2013
- Landscape Design Report Rev. B by Oculus dated August 2014
- Economic Assessment by Hill PDA dated August 2014

GMU has reviewed the following controls relevant to the development proposal:

- Hornsby Local Environmental Plan (HLEP) 2013
- Hornsby Development Control Plan (HDCP)
- SEPP 65 and the Residential Flat Design Code

GMU has also conducted extensive site visits and photographic documentation of the site and its context.

1.2 Site Description

The site is located at the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road, Beecroft. It is a quadrilateral site that bounds Hannah Street to the south, Beecroft Road to the west, and a single existing heritage property to the north (Section 6 DP 758074). This boundary is 75.135m with the fourth boundary to the east being occupied by existing retail/commercial facilities (1-5 DP 11738 and part of the rear and servicing areas of the retail plaza at SP 31888). The eastern boundary is approximately 85.495m. The Hannah Street frontage is approximately 184m to the south. The boundary to the west has three components (north, south with the middle component having a boundary to Lot 2 DP 211441). The northern segment of the western boundary bound by Beecroft Road is 46.51m and the southern segment also bound by Beecroft Road is 22.337m. The middle segment that bounds Lot 2 DP 211441 shares a common boundary with the subject site of 14.021m. The northern and southern boundaries of Lot 2 DP 211441 are 10.135m and 10.06m respectively. The subject site has a site area of 5,823m² in total and comprises 7 lots. The land has a moderate slope of 10-11m from the north western corner of the site on Beecroft Road (RL 152.94) to the south-eastern corner of the site on Hannah Street (RL 142.03).

The site is currently occupied by a mix of commercial and retail uses with surface car park at the rear of the site along the northern boundary. It is a large consolidated site (not inclusive of Lot 2 DP 211441) adjacent to other retail and commercial facilities to the east and across Hannah Street to the south at the centre of the Beecroft Village Precinct. The site is also surrounded by a residential precinct to the north and west with the Beecroft railway station at the end of Hannah Street to the east.



Photographs showing the existing site looking toward the south west (left) and to the corner of Hannah St and Beecroft Road (right)



Photographs looking at the existing development on the site along Hannah St toward the southwest (left) and along the eastern boundary (right)

The existing development on the site consists of large commercial/retail buildings of 2-3 storeys; however, due to the drop in the topography some of these heights appear to be taller on the lower side of the slope. The site presents as a largely vacant site when seen from Beecroft Road on approach from the north. Large footprint buildings can be observed at the centre of the site with large plant rooms visible on the upper levels. A two storey building is visible at the corner of Beecroft Road, but it appears as a 2 and a half storey tall building as seen from Hannah Street due to the drop in the topography. To Hannah Street the development currently presents as a series of retail and commercial facilities generally of 2-3 storeys stepping down with the terrain toward the east. The elevation visible along the eastern boundary is a blank wall roughly two storeys in height (6.21m) with the top of the parapet at the relative level of RL 149.68 AHD. The largely vegetated character of the surrounding residential neighbourhoods, the small to medium trees along Hannah Street and the mature landscaped character of the railway corridor limit district views across the site that would normally be available to higher level properties to the north above the subject site. The following images illustrate the mature vegetated character to the east along the railway corridor and potential filtered views across the site to the southeast.



Views looking at the vegetated character of Hannah Street toward the station (left) and filtered views across the site due south east (right)

The site is currently occupied by commercial/retail buildings, a part vacant lot and a large surface car park to the rear of the site. This part of the block has a different lot pattern, size and area to the traditional smaller lot pattern seen across Beecroft Road to the west and the rest of the Neighbourhood to the north. The subject site does not benefit from any existing vegetation except from the public domain trees along Hannah Street and the large mature plantings to the north that are visible from the subject site.

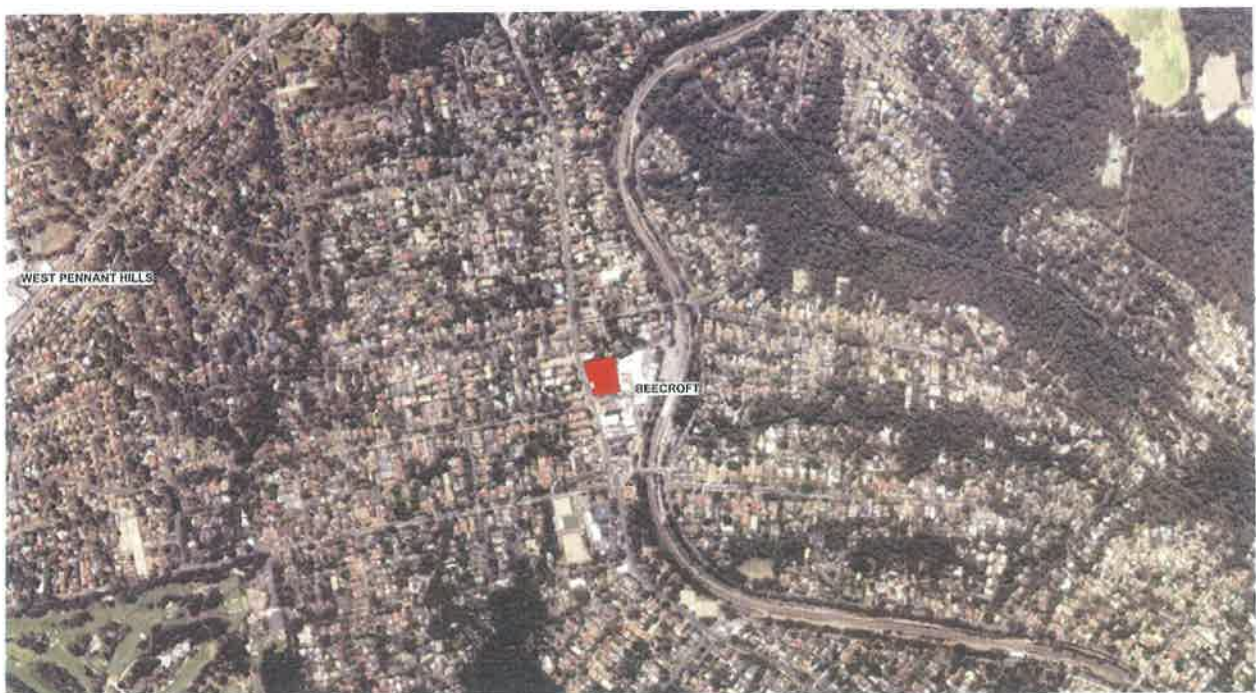
The character of the centre and rear of the site is characterised by run down and outdated facilities that are in need of regeneration and updating. Loading and servicing areas are visible and open to the open car park to the north of the site. This is the arrival point to patrons who drive into the site, which presents a degraded and run down character with no clear distinction of what is back of house from the arrival point for visitors and patrons.



Photographs looking at the existing development on the site at the rear of the site due northeast (left) and due northwest (right)



Photographs showing some of the visible areas at the rear of the existing development on approach from the internal car park to the north



Aerial showing the site boundary in its immediate context N.T.S. (courtesy of DKO)

A current aerial view of the site and its immediate surrounding context shows that the subject site occupies the north-western quadrant of the Beecroft Town Centre, which straddles across Hannah Street to the north and south. The Centre is located to the west of the Beecroft Station and Wongala Crescent and to the east of Beecroft Road. The character of the centre is marked by large footprint buildings and surface car parks. The centre is also marked by a lack of vegetation in contrast with the largely vegetated residential areas to the east, north and west. A number of larger residential buildings can be seen to the south of Hannah Street on the western footpath of Beecroft Road; the rest of the archetypal footprints are composed by large single residential dwellings with direct access and frontage to the local roads.

GMU is aware that Beecroft is a precinct in transition as residential flat buildings are being proposed to the north of the heritage item on Lots 1-5 DP 508531 also known as 81 Beecroft Road with frontage to Beecroft Road and Chapman Avenue. A large seniors living development is approved and currently under construction to the east of Beecroft Road on the southern footpath of Hannah Street. These proposed and approved developments in the vicinity of the site are an indication of the current planning strategies, which favour higher density development in precincts close to public and mass transport. Those with direct routes to the CBD and within 45 min. commute to major job hubs are experiencing rapid change to cater to the demand for affordable and conveniently located housing in the greater Sydney area.

1.3 Proposed Development

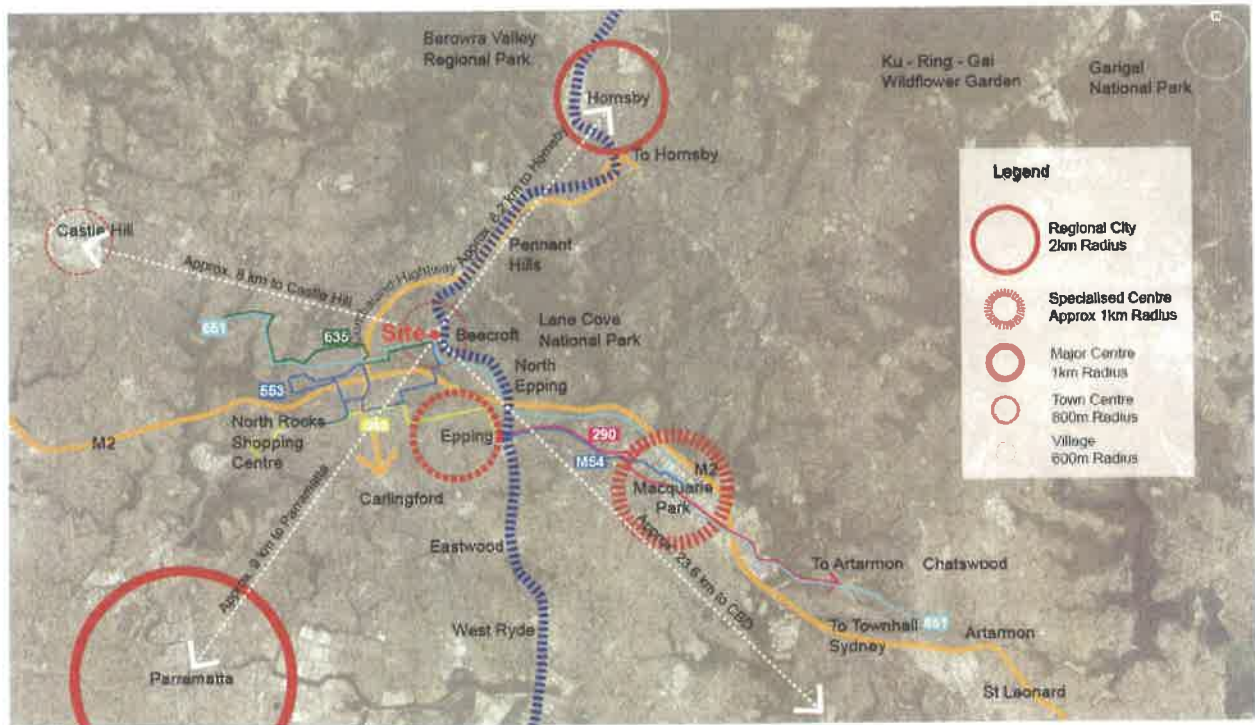
The proposed development is for a multi-unit mixed-use development containing:

- A total of 122 units above 1 levels of retail/commercial uses and 3 levels of basement car parking
- Proposed FSR of 2.6:1
- Proposed GFA: 15,261m² comprising of:
 - 5,911 m² of proposed commercial/retail uses
 - 9,350 m² of proposed residential uses
- A common courtyard area of 1,892 m²
- Proposed landscaped communal open space (including all plaza areas and boundary planting / circulation) = 2062m²
- Total deep soil planting (including planting on structures) = 570m² (25% of communal landscape area)
- The proposal contains the following number of non-residential uses:
 - 2,605m² of (major) retail space
 - 1,943m² of (specialty) retail space
 - 906m² of commercial office space
- The proposal contains the following number of residential units:
 - 16 no of apartments of 3 bedrooms
 - 3 no of apartments of 3 bedrooms + study
 - 34 no of apartments of 2 bedrooms
 - 2 no of apartments of 2 bedrooms + study
 - 42 no of apartments of 1 bedroom
 - 18 no of apartments of 1 bedroom + study
 - 7 no of Studios
 - 37 no adaptable units contained within the unit sizes listed above (totalling an estimated 30% of the units)
 - 132 car parking spaces including the following:
 - 133 residential spaces (incl. 12 accessible spaces)
 - 6 residential tandem spaces
 - 17 visitor spaces

- 169 retail spaces (incl. 2 accessible)
- 2 x 12.5m HRV service/loading vehicle spaces
- 1 x 6.4m SRV service/loading vehicle spaces
- 1 car wash bay located in Basement 3
- 37 residential bicycle parking spaces and 9 commercial bicycle parking spaces
- Buildings of 5 storeys to 6 storeys to Hannah Street
- Buildings of 5 storeys to Beecroft Road
- Buildings of 4 to 5 storeys along the eastern side of the internal courtyard
- Buildings of 5 to 6 storeys along the western side of the internal courtyard
- A general street wall height to both Hannah Street and Beecroft Road of 2 storeys
- A general front setback of 0m to all frontages on ground and 1st floor
- A general secondary front setback to Hannah Street above the street wall height of 3m to Beecroft Road
- 6m setback to the northern boundary for Building A up to Level 5 with a secondary setback of 3m on Level 6
- 6m setback to the northern boundary for Building B up to Level 4 with a secondary setback of 3 on Level 5
- 6m setback to the eastern boundary for Buildings B and C for Levels 1-4, with a secondary setback of 6m on Level 5 of Building B and 3m on Level 4 of Building C.

2. Context

2.1 General Context



Broader context surrounding the site

The subject site is located within the locality of Beecroft, which is located south west of Hornsby and north-west of Epping. The suburb of Beecroft comprises a larger area generally bound to the north and west by Pennant Hills and West Pennant Hills. To the south is the suburb of Carlingford and to the east and south east is North Epping and Epping. The area is generally accessed from the east and west by the M2 motorway and from the north and south by the Cumberland Highway (A28). Beecroft railway station is on the North Shore, Northern & Western Line of the Sydney Trains network. "In addition to passenger railway traffic, the Main Northern Line also acts as an intercity and freight train thoroughfare passing through Beecroft. Beecroft is also serviced by various bus routes including route 553 from Sydney Buses and routes 651 and 635 from Hillsbus". It is approximately 23.6km from the Sydney CBD (26-minute drive on the M2 motorway), which is home to approximately 300,000 jobs according to the City of Sydney's Employment Lands Study (2013).

The site has accessibility to public transport and other important service necessities. The majority of commercial activity is concentrated within a couple of blocks servicing the suburb and its immediate area, including parts of Cheltenham. The commercial area is located between Beecroft Road and Beecroft railway station. According to Wikipedia, "Old English is used throughout as the typeset of the Beecroft Village arcade" to reference the spirit of the traditional heritage of the area. The main commercial street in Beecroft is Hannah Street, which underwent a significant beautification upgrade in 2005. Beecroft has three Primary Schools, an independent Anglican school and a high school on the border of Carlingford. They include Beecroft Primary School established in 1897, Roselea Public School, St. Gerard Majella Catholic Primary School, Arden Anglican School and Carlingford High School.

Beecroft also has a number of recreational facilities within its boundaries. Beecroft is home to Pennant Hills Golf Club, as well as a lawn bowls club near the school, a lawn tennis club, as well as general park space at the Village Green, walking trails through Chilworth Reserve and other forested areas.

2.2 Local Context – Existing and Desired Future Character

The local context surrounding the development is characterized by a diversity of building forms and typologies within two distinct areas. One of the typologies is the more traditionally single lot residential areas to the west of Beecroft Road and North of Chapman Avenue. This development is characterised by larger footprint homes within deep and long blocks. Due to the depth of the blocks it is common to have rows of houses facing the street and some lots deep within the block accessed by right of ways and internal access roads. Battle-axe and court access arrangements are common on most lots to the west up to the Cumberland Highway. The development to the east of the railway line is characterised by long east-west roads that travel between heavily forested areas. There is no prevalence of north-south roads that actually connect to the east-west connectors. Local short distance access roads mainly service the residential lots off from Malton and Copeland East Roads up to Kethel Road to the east. These lot arrangements usually contain 2-4 homes in a row, where the last lot is bound by a vegetated or riparian corridor. These areas are generally characterised by leafy streets, large homes fronting the street and secluded lots behind a row of homes facing the street.

The other prevalent type of residential development in the area has taken place along Beecroft Road. This is in the form of 2-3 storeys walk-up development and seniors living homes. There are a number of these developments currently under construction in close proximity to the site at 64 Beecroft Road and 129-131 Copeland Road. This development also has a frontage to Hannah Street (7, 9 and 11) and it was approved on 26 July 2012. The development comprises buildings with a height of up to 5 storeys across the site. The village centre precinct is undergoing a transition. There are currently a number of DAs being assessed including mixed use and residential developments for the sites in close proximity to the train station and within the subject block. The sites immediately to the north of the block facing Chapman Avenue at the intersection with Beecroft Road have a current DA for a total of 6 buildings with heights up to 5 storeys.

This illustrates the preference for intensified development in close proximity to conveniences and public transport. The future character of the village centre is likely to transform and have taller development within a mixed use setting to provide active edges, public open spaces, meeting points and a greater variety of services at the heart of the village. This will be in contrast with the more traditional single residential development serviced by intimate and leafy streets, which is characteristic of the surrounding residential catchment. The controls already anticipate this as part of their desired future character for the village centre. Part 9 – Heritage – Beecroft Heritage Precinct provides desired future character statements for residential and mixed use development in the precinct. The Desired Future Character statement (P. 9-43) applicable to the mixed use portion of the Beecroft Road precinct states that:

The locality is characterised by 5 storey mixed use buildings with at grade car parking for retail customers and underground car parking for employees and residents.

Shops are visible and accessed directly from street frontages to retain the historic relationship of the railway and shopping centre.

Business uses are located on the lower two storeys providing a broad podium for dwellings above to be setback from, creating a pedestrian friendly scale. Visible and active shops and street frontages with continuous awnings enhance streetscape character.

Shopfronts are designed with suspended, traditional steel box section awnings over footpaths to assist maintain the village character and fabric of the commercial area.

Roofs are flat or gently pitched with wide eaves around top storeys

The gradual redevelopment of the village centre area with mixed uses and larger amalgamated sites will transform the character of the retail precinct in comparison to the traditional housing on the surrounding areas. The advantages of development in amalgamated sites will be the provision of well integrated development with a variety of intimate open spaces and a network of pedestrian links that can connect to other areas of the suburb to enhance connectivity across the precinct. Other advantages include coordinated access and servicing areas that respond better to the changes in the topography. The existing built form in the centre internalises the retail development away from the edge of Hannah Street, where a lack of spill over cafes is evident due to the sloping nature of the street and the prevalence of indoor eateries and shopping outlets deep inside the shopping centres. The existing traditional 'fine grain' retail development in the block is concentrated on the eastern end of Hannah Street along the northern footpath. This represents a section of the retail street, which the future development in the block will have to respond and transition down to with a sympathetic street wall height response that provides and continues the lower pedestrian scale to the western end of the street.

The preservation of the lower scale street edge response is paramount; however, the controls do envision an increase in the scale of the centre. The future desired character defines the future scale of the centre as 5 storeys. The Key Development Principles Diagram - Typical East-west Cross Section shows a series of 5 storey 'pavilion buildings' cascading down the slope on the northern footpath of Hannah Street. Due to the change in the level of the topography, some of the buildings portrayed in the diagram are 5 storeys to the higher side of the slope and 6 storeys to the lower side of the slope with the upper storeys being setback from the lower level.



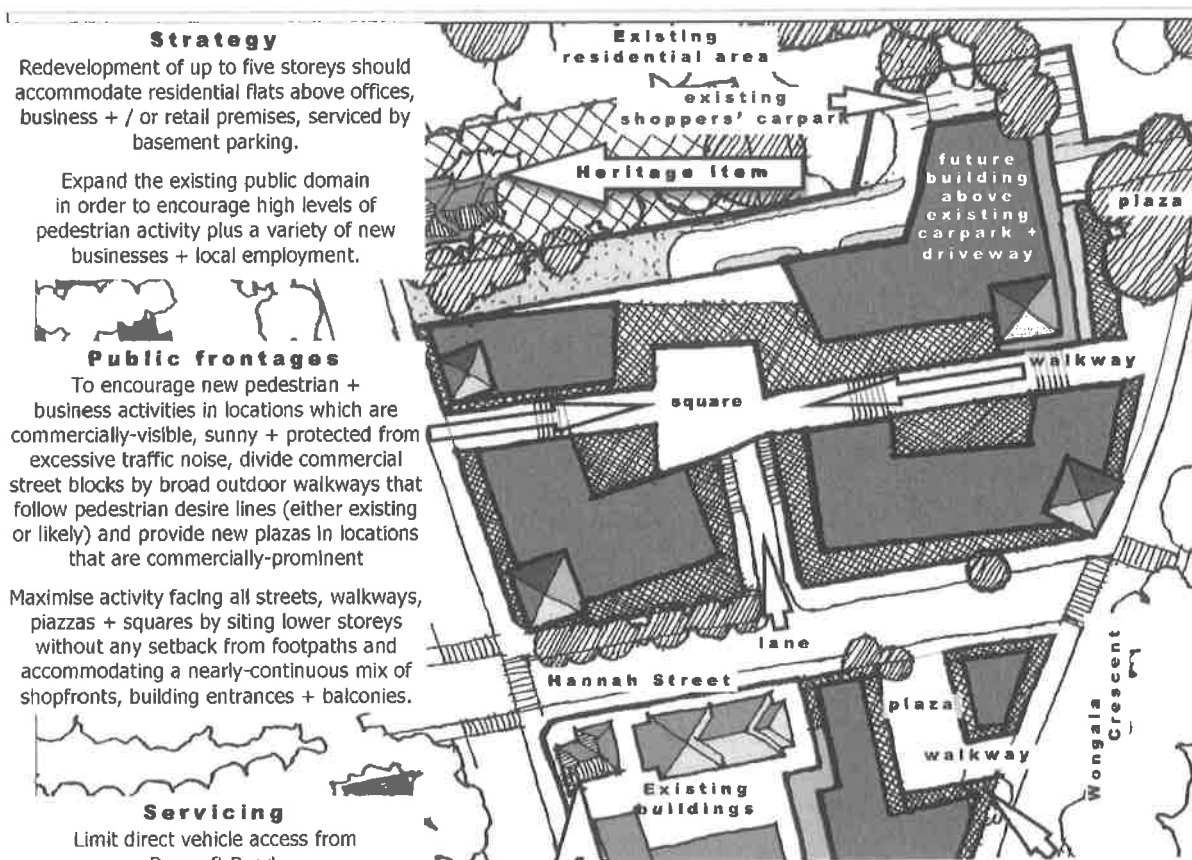
Key Development Principles Diagram - Typical East-west Cross Section shows a series of 5 storey 'pavilion buildings' down Hannah Street (extract from the HCDP Part 9)

Other Built form considerations as part of the Beecroft Heritage Precinct provisions include the following:

"Provision of a continuous podium up to two storeys high facing all streets, and shape each podium to address street corners. Avoid extensive sheer vertical facades by setting upper storeys back from podiums. Provide gently-pitched roof forms with eaves. Design quality of facades should consider visibility from all quarters".

While the controls attempt to preserve a pedestrian scale at the ground floor retail level, the proposed character and overall heights are not consistent with the traditional scale of development seen up to now in the centre of the village. The controls anticipate an orderly redevelopment with increased densities concentrated into taller (5 storey pavilion buildings) with a lower scale edge at the pedestrian level. The existing retail lots have little landscape due to their operational requirements. Key principle diagrams envision the introduction of a more vegetated character between the structures and at the rear of the site. The controls also envision the introduction of east-west pedestrian links and internalised open spaces to "encourage new pedestrian plus business activities in locations which are commercially-visible, sunny and protected from excessive traffic noise, divide commercial street blocks by broad outdoor walkways that follow pedestrian desire lines (either existing or likely) and provide new plazas in locations that are commercially-prominent".

This summarises the vision for the village centre, which is illustrated in the following diagram below.



Key Development Principles Diagram – Beecroft Heritage Precinct shows one large building occupying half of the block to the western end of Hannah Street (extract from the HCDP Part 9)

2.3 Adjoining Development Scale

The adjoining development in the vicinity of the subject site is mainly located along Hannah Street, Beecroft Road and adjacent sites facing Wongala Crescent and Chapman Street.

Hannah Street -

Hannah Street has varied built form response on both the north and southern footpaths. This in turn is different from that of Beecroft Road due to the traffic dominated character of that road. The northern side of Hannah Street is characterised at its western end by the existing 2-3 storey shopping centre development that occupies the subject site. This structure is outdated and does not respond to the drop in the slope very successfully as some of the shops are partly sunken below the footpath level. The eastern end of the street presents remnant 'fine grain' shops that address the street directly and provide a continuous steel box awning to the end of the street.

The southern footpath also has a variety of scales starting with the low scale (1 storey) of the heritage post office at its western end next to a more recent development of 3 + storeys in height next to two 1 storey shops with parapets. This is followed by a vacant lot (between No.3 and 1A) and a section of 2 storey shop top housing that continuous to the eastern end of the street at the corner with Wongala Crescent.



Images showing the existing retail development on the northern footpath of Hannah St at the western end (left) and at the eastern end (right)



Images showing the existing retail development on the southern footpath of Hannah St at the western end (left) and at the eastern end (right)

Beecroft Road -

Beecroft Road is a heavily trafficked road with a wide character and larger low scale (1-2 storeys) single residential homes or walk-up development to the south west of Hannah Street. The eastern side of the road is characterised by commercial/retail development for the block to the north and south of Hannah Street where the village centre is located.

The western side of Beecroft Road south of Chapman Avenue is characterised by larger footprint homes that have been adapted for commercial uses such as the building at the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road that is currently occupied by a medical surgery. Generally, these dwellings have a larger setback to Beecroft Road, which allows them to present more mature plantings along the frontage to the road. This character changes to the south of Hannah Street as the development type is more consistent with walk-up or 2-3 storey strata development. This is prevalent for the lots immediately across the village centre until Copeland Road where the Beecroft Primary School is located.



Images showing the existing retail development on the western footpath of Beecroft Road South of Hannah Street

The existing character along the eastern side of Beecroft Road is very dissimilar to that of its western side for this part of the road. The eastern side is marked by the scale and street wall response of the retail/commercial facilities in the village centre, which extend one block north and one block south of Hannah Street. The street edge character of this part of road is not very appealing at the moment due to the demolition of part of the existing buildings that used to occupy the subject site. The remnant buildings are low in scale with the corner of Beecroft Road and Hannah Street being occupied by a two storey derelict structure that detracts from the pedestrian experience on arrival from the west.



Image showing existing development along the eastern side of Beecroft Road to the north of Hannah Street



Images showing the existing retail development on the eastern side of Beecroft Road North of Hannah Street



Images showing the existing retail development on the eastern side of Beecroft Road South of Hannah Street

The existing development immediately to the north of the site is a 1 storey plus attic heritage cottage, which is likely to be preserved as part of an amalgamated development with the properties to the north.

The scale and type of development to the east consists of large footprint buildings of 1 to 2 storeys in height. These sites have redevelopment potential as the same controls that apply to the subject site apply to the sites to the east. While the street front character along Hannah Street is likely to be preserved, the deeper rear portion of the site is earmarked for uplift up to 5 storeys in height. It is GMU's understanding that the ownership pattern for this site is strata commercial and this might delay development in the short term; however, due to its size, location and level of actual improvements, it is likely that it will redevelop in the medium to long terms.



Images showing the existing adjacent development to the east of the site

2.4 Section Conclusion

The context is a mix of different types and scales of development. There is a marked duality in the character or massing of the surrounding development compared to that of the village centre. Mixed with the prevalent character of the retail/commercial precinct, the existing scale varies considerably from smaller 1-2 storey residential dwellings to large 2-3 storey strata apartment developments along Beecroft Road. Recently approved seniors developments on this road will be interspersed within the remaining residential buildings converted into commercial buildings, which is the case for the site across the subject site. The built form character within this precinct is experiencing a gradual transition to a more mixed use, low to medium density precinct, especially for the larger amalgamated sites available in the centre of the village. The applicable controls encourage this transformation as this complements the current trend of intensifying development next to transport routes and railway.

Any future development on the subject site needs to consider and respond to the scale of the lower levels of Hannah Street and transition to the existing heritage item to the north of the subject site whilst also providing renewed facilities, infrastructure and public amenities to the village centre. A coherent and integrated built form solution including pavilion buildings interspersed with open spaces, pedestrian links and a suite of retail choices will comply with the desired future character sought for the precinct. The proposed massing and density for the subject site should be considered based on its individual merit, response to the site and potential as a single consolidated large site, so that an orderly and cohesive redevelopment is achieved for the village centre.

3. The Controls and the response of the proposal

There are a number of controls applicable to the site and these controls inform the desired future character for the area. It is important to understand the development form that is encouraged by the controls; however, only the most relevant of these that influence the built form will be discussed within this section of the report. The most relevant facts and outcomes that are sought by these controls are as follows:

3.1 Hornsby Local Environmental Plan 2013

The HLEP 2013 zones the subject site as a Local Centre Zone (B2). The objectives of the HLEP are to "provide a range of retail, business, entertainment and community uses that serve the needs of people who live, work and visit the local area". Other objectives include encouraging "employment opportunities in accessible locations" and "to maximise public transport patronage and encourage walking and cycling".

The objectives of the plan place great emphasis on sustainable development. The LEP includes objectives for the provision of a choice of housing as well as the provision of employment opportunities which seeks to ensure the density is complimentary to both the provision of housing as well as employment in the area. The objectives of this zone are to ensure sustainable growth of the village centre and reinforce the function, role and identity of established business centres. It seeks to integrate residential and business development while minimising noise, traffic and waste to maintain amenity.

The allowable FSR for the zone is 1:1; however, the site is within area 5, cl. 4.4(2c), which allows the FSR to exceed 1:1 if it comprises shop top housing and any other floor space ratio of at least 0.5:1. This is an important provision, due to the fact that any mixed use development on the site will require greater density and scale than that which is characteristic of low scale residential development which is normally feasible within or less than 1:1 FSR.

A variety of development is allowed in this zone including "Boarding houses, Child care, Commercial premises, Community facilities, Educational establishments; Entertainment facilities; Function centres; Group homes; Hostels; Information and education facilities; Medical centres; Passenger transport facilities; Recreation facilities (indoor); Registered clubs; Respite day care centres; Restricted premises; Roads; Service stations; Shop top housing".

The B2 Local Centre zone has as its objectives to provide a range of business, entertainment and community uses and to encourage employment in accessible locations. It seeks to maximise use of public transport and to provide for business and community uses with moderate traffic generation. Business uses are not to compromise the amenity of the residential surrounding them.

3.2 DCP

Hornsby DCP contains both general and specific controls for the area and the zone type as well as the development type. The general controls discuss issues such as the natural environment, transport and parking, accessibility, and crime prevention. Other aspects discussed under the general provisions of the DCP are sustainability, hazards and isolated sites. Part 4 of the HDCP considers Height, FSR, setbacks, private open spaces, communal open space and landscaping. Other relevant controls to the subject site under Part 4 discuss sunlight and ventilation, public domain and design details. However, the more relevant parts of the HDCP are the sections relating to the Beecroft Heritage Precinct under Part 9 of the DCP – 9.6 Beecroft Heritage Precinct, which is discussed in detail in the following section of this report.

9.6 Beecroft Heritage Precinct

As discussed in the previous section 2.2 of this report titled Local context – existing and desired future context, Section 9.6 provides a desired future statement for residential and mixed use development in the precinct. In few words, development is to provide a sensible response to the low scale character along the ground floor, provide a sympathetic form and scale and protect the local heritage providing an environment meeting the principles of good urban design. The various key principle diagrams suggest that future development is to maintain amenity and provide a sense of place and community with linkages and access to public open space. The heritage values of the plan place emphasis on protecting and conserving the cultural heritage of the area including places and buildings while the character and identity of the area are to also be enhanced through regeneration and uplift in scale. The most relevant controls in this sections that guide the built form are:

State Environmental Planning Policy - SEPP 65

- *Buildings have to be design in accordance with the 10 principles of the State Environmental Planning Policy - SEPP 65*

Heritage Conservation

- A transition in building height should be provided at sensitive interface areas adjacent to heritage items.
- A transition in setbacks should be provided at sensitive interface areas adjacent to heritage items.
- Variations to the setback controls may be considered where the variation assists the protection of heritage qualities.
- New shops/commercial buildings should be designed to be seen and accessed directly from their street frontages by complying with the setback controls in the DCP.
- Pedestrian and bicycle through-links should be provided in accordance with the key principles diagrams and Town Centre Linkage Diagrams contained in the DCP.
- Pedestrian and bicycle through-links should be provided in accordance with the key principles diagrams and Town Centre Linkage Diagrams contained within the DCP.
- The setting of Beecroft Village should be maintained through the retention of significant landscaping and major trees.
- Shopfronts should be designed with suspended, traditional steel box-section awnings over footpaths to assist maintain the village character and fabric of the commercial area.
- Parking for residents should be provided in basements. Where off-street parking for shoppers is proposed, it should not dominate the street frontage.

Height

- 17.5m height limit
- 5 storeys (excluding basement car parking)
- Business uses, including shops and offices, should be confined to the lower two storeys, providing a broad "podium" for dwellings from levels three to five.
- Dwellings may be located on level two within the podium and may incorporate a component at ground level facing a side street or lane provided that they would not interrupt the desired continuity of commercial activity.

Setbacks

- 2 storey podium setbacks:
 - All streets, laneways and side or rear boundaries: 0m
- 3rd storey and above:
 - Primary and secondary streets: 3m from business podium façade
 - Rear streets, laneways or pedestrian alleyways: 0m
 - Side or rear boundaries that are shared with neighbouring properties: 6m
 - Stop storey setback: 3m should be provided between exterior walls of the lowest storey above the podium and exterior walls of the top-most storey.
- Minor encroachments are allowed, being a basement ramp up to 6m wide, roof eaves, pergolas, sunshades and blade columns.

Building Form and Separation

- Residential floorplates should have a maximum dimension of 25m measured perpendicular to the primary retail frontage and between opposing exterior walls at any point. Balconies and terraces may project beyond this maximum.
- The minimum separation between buildings up to 5 storeys/over 12m is 18m between unscreened habitable rooms/balconies/principal POS areas.
- In addition to the above, where the Key Principles Diagrams require separate building on the same site, buildings should be separated by open-air pedestrian walkways that are at least 6m wide at street level.
- Podium façades to consist of brick, shopfront windows and entrances.
- Exterior walls on residential levels should be substantially face brick in medium to darker tones, although a portion of walls may be brickwork and render.

- Balconies should be framed behind the face of exterior walls or between masonry blade walls and should have balustrades of brickwork, painted masonry or steel strapping.
- Facing primary and secondary streets, at least two steps should be provided between the podium facade and upper residential storeys along 50% of any facade.
- At street level, shop and office windows and building entrances should occupy 90% of the primary frontage, 30% of facades facing side streets or alleyways and 10% of rear facades.
- Facades should be expressed as two or three distinct levels.
- Provide continuous awnings along active street fronts.
- Articulation of residential facades should be achieved by dividing facades into vertical panels generally no wider than 8m, and by visually separating the adjoining panels by steps of at least one metre such as:
 - Indentations or projections in the alignment of exterior walls;
 - Balconies that are indented behind and/or project forward of exterior walls; and/or
 - Eaves, pergolas and awnings that project forward of exterior walls.

Open Space

- Each unit should be provided with private open space as follows:
 - 1 bed unit – 10sqm with 2.5m width;
 - 2 bed unit – 12sqm with 2.5m width; and
 - 3+ bed unit – 16sqm with 2.5m width.
- Private open spaces should be designed as "outdoor rooms" that adjoin interior living areas, with L-shaped or irregular floor plans that would accommodate a number of outdoor activities plus extensive screening to provide privacy and shade.
- Each dwelling is to have a clothes drying area that is screened from public view.

Sunlight and Ventilation

- On 22 June, at least 70% of proposed dwellings should receive two or more hours of unobstructed sunlight during midwinter to at least half of a dwellings principal living room windows and principal private open space area between 9am and 3pm.
- Active communal open spaces should be located to receive at least 2 hours sunlight during 9am to 3pm on June 22.
- At least 60% of apartments should have dual aspect and natural cross ventilation.

Vehicle Access and Parking

- Direct access to main roads should be avoided.
- Resident and visitor parking should be provided within basements.
- Access to garages and storage areas should be confined to side and rear facades, with access from main roads avoided.
- Street level parking for shoppers should be provided in convenient proximity to primary retail frontages.
- Separate dedicated and secure storage areas for each dwelling should be provided in basement car parks suitable to accommodate larger items such as sporting equipment.

Public Domain and traffic Management works

- Development of the public domain should make each precinct an attractive place that encourages development and provides amenity for residents.
- Embellishment of the public domain should include street furniture, new street plantings, and footpath improvements.
- All active street frontages should have fully paved verges.
- Provide pedestrian linkages as shown the key development principles diagrams and town centre linkage diagrams.

- *Mixed use development within centres should enhance the role of the public domain as a meeting and gathering place and should encourage active use of the public domain through active street frontages.*
- *Where required, ground level walkways between mixed use buildings should be open air, attractive pedestrian thoroughfares which encourage activity.*
- *Balconies should not be located on, or overhang the road reservation.*
- *For development incorporating shopfront awnings, the awnings should be continuous and setback from the edge of the kerb in accordance with Council or the Roads and Maritime Services requirements.*
- *Outdoor dining areas should be located in areas with good amenity, landscape, outlook, solar access in winter, shading in summer and a compatible local traffic environment.*
- *Traffic Management works should be undertaken in accordance with the traffic improvements identified in the key development principles diagrams.*

3.3 Discussion

Council's controls regarding the heritage character of the area including those related to the overall height and street wall height and permeability through the site are strongly related to Council's desired future character for the precinct. The HDCP sets out character statements around the residential and mixed use desired urban form, discussing building elements such as setbacks, heights and landscape. The controls anticipate an increase in height for the village centre by allowing height to reach 5 storeys.

Street wall height (podium) controls direct all future development to maintain a sensitive response to the 'fine grain' character of parts of Hannah Street. However, the controls also recognise the need for diversity of development with the provision of housing choices as well as job creation.

The controls recognise this need and the different character of a business or mixed use zone. The increased height on the site up to 5 storeys indicates the control's departure from the traditional two storey shop top housing to a more robust retail precinct with residential uses above. The allowable heights underline the importance of the village centre as a destination at the heart of the Beecroft community. Therefore a more robust solution is desirable and it is not reasonable to try to achieve a strict mimicry of low scale shop top development elsewhere in the precinct. A sensitive response can be achieved that relates sensitively to the surrounding contributory elements of the streetscape and that is what the proposal has attempted to do.

The heritage part of the DCP reinforces that the correct response to existing and future character is to consider the existing development in the immediate context and to provide a sensitive transition and complementary response to lower scale development. Good design would require a tailored respond to the existing heritage item to the north in terms of built form scale and character from that provided to the adjacent 'fine grain' shops to the east. This is also reinforced by the SEPP 65 principle on context.

The setback and transition to the heritage item are different from the response to the 'fine grain' shops, where the cottage needs to be seen in the round. The 'fine grain' shops are built to the edge and define the public domain. An appropriate response to the subject site according to the controls is a more robust form that creates a defined and active edge to the street, activates the street as well as the internal open spaces. The controls clearly acknowledge that there is a difference in scale to be had in the village centre from that of the surrounding residential catchment. It acknowledges the need for a diversity in housing choices in the area and the strong need for job generation and "employment opportunities in accessible locations". This is important as it shows that the proposal is consistent with these characteristics.

3.4 Section Conclusion

The proposal complies with the allowable density and the general objectives of the applicable controls for overall height and street wall heights. As discussed later in this report, the proposal presents a sensitive built form response to the lower levels of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road; it complies with the required uses for the site and provides high levels of amenity with ample communal and public open spaces thus relating and linking well to the surrounding future context. The proposal seeks to provide a response that creates a balanced and appropriate street scale relationship to Hannah Street and to the future development potential to the north and east, while creating a destination and meeting place when arriving by rail or walking from the rest of the catchment to the west.

It also contributes to the activation and natural surveillance along both streets at ground level and throughout the development while providing additional internal open areas, which is a positive outcome sought by the DCP. Therefore, the proposal performs well with regards to the relevant controls affecting the built form and its relationship to the existing context.

4. SEPP 65 and RFDC Commentary

This section of the report provides a review of the proposal against the principles SEPP 65 including consideration of the objectives and rules of thumb in the Residential Flat Design Code. The report provides further commentary on the proposal's performance and its response to the surrounding context and the applicable controls.

4.1 Principle 1: Response to Context

"Good design responds 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 current 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 the area."



Aerial view of the subject site and its immediate context (Courtesy of Google)

Comment

As discussed in the previous section dealing with the applicable controls, the general built form context for the precinct is characterized by mix of development including traditional 'fine grain' development as well as recently approved low to medium residential and seniors developments. Larger residential development proposals are being considered especially on the subject block. Due to the lots in the village centre being occupied by large footprint retail except for the 'fine grain' street edge, these sites generally have greater site areas than the typically residential lots in the surrounding residential catchment. These properties have been identified for increased heights and therefore must provide a sensitive transition between their evolving character and that of the existing surrounding precinct. The proposal achieves this successfully.



Figure Ground Diagram (Courtesy of DKO)

As stated in Principle 1 – Response to Context – “in the case of precincts undergoing a transition”...the proposal should respond to “the desired future character as stated in planning and design policies”. As shown in the figure ground diagram above, the proposal responds better to the desired footprints above podium than those illustrated in the controls as suggested in the Key Development Principles diagram (master plan) for the sites north of Hannah Street, where a single building is shown on half of the block. In contrast, the Key Principle Diagram (section view) suggests a more sensitive built form with a series of ‘pavilion’ buildings stepping down the topography from west to east. Regardless of the contradictory information presented in the controls, the proposal adopts the more sensitive approach by creating a series of ‘pavilion’ buildings and arranging them on the site around a courtyard. The proposal also creates intimate internal open spaces further carving out the built form above the podium. The figure ground diagram also shows, at the broader scale, that the relationship between built form and open space within the site and the separation distances between buildings is also representative of the future desired character for the block, but the proposal does it in a more successful and considered way than that put forward in Council’s Key Development Principle Diagram (P. 9-62 HDCP – Part 9 Heritage). The proposal explores the nuances of the terrain and proposes realistic built form relationships, widths of buildings and practical pedestrian links across a sloping terrain, in contrast to the DCP Key Principles Diagram, which does not.

With regard to the proposal’s response to the desirable character built features of the area at the lower levels of the public domain, the proposal responds well to the desired street wall height, desired materials and height of the fine grain buildings along Hannah Street. It provides a balanced scale relationship to the height of the mixed use development across Hannah Street to the south with contemporary buildings inspired in traditional ordering principles, high quality and robust materials, which will improve the general streetscape character of that part of the street. The typology and grain of the buildings will be discussed below and the issues of height and scale will be discussed in more depth in the section relating to the principle of scale.

The predominant character of Beecroft Road across the site consists of 1 to 2 storey single house forms with roof above to the north of Hannah Street; recently approved (under construction at the time of writing this report) seniors living developments might introduce a variety in scales to this segment of the Beecroft Road. The existing scale of development to the south of Hannah Street diagonally across the proposed development is 2-3 storey residential strata units or walk-ups. The proposal will respond to this scale by presenting a two storey podium to this road and stepping the built form behind a secondary setback above the podium height.

The contrast in built form typologies between the two main frontages of the site varies in use, scale and setbacks to the street on the ground floor. Essentially, the character of both streets is vastly different. The response of the development application is to present a unifying element along the street frontage facing Hannah Street and Beecroft Road with an articulated 2 storey podium. The proposed corner marker is intended to be a built form marker that announces the entry point into the precinct and it marks the intersection providing a way-finding element. This built form element is taller than the rest to provide the village centre with a 'gateway' point.

The proposal also responds to the rhythm of the 'fine grain' shops to the east on Hannah Street, by articulating the façade in vertical segments. Units above the podium are also articulated in a way that they present a strong two storey frontage above podium with the upper storey being recessed above the fourth storey to minimise the scale of the buildings as seen from the opposite footpath to the south. This further reduces the appearance of bulk and scale and relates better to the uneven topography of the street. The articulated building segments also step down with the topography further responding to the existing natural features of the area. Surveillance and overlooking is also provided by the residential units above the street and internal plaza level. This can be seen in the artist's rendition below.

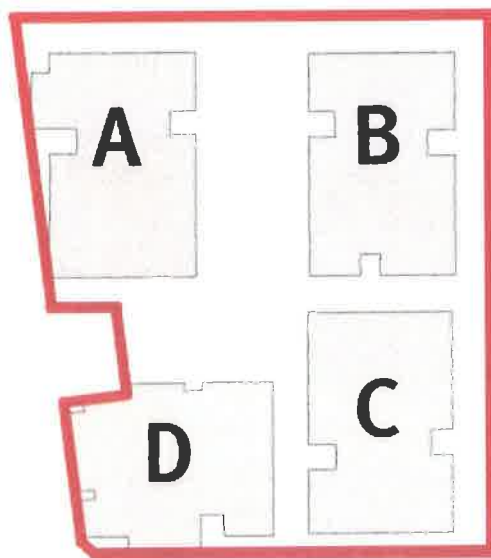


Artist's impression showing proposed built form response to Hannah Street (Courtesy of DKO)

The proposed awnings at the street level are being carefully designed and placed to prevent disturbing the existing trees on the street. Additional landscaping is being proposed to improve the landscape character of this street in the form of a landscaped wall as a feature at the entrance steps to the internal courtyard. A landscape master plan has been prepared which will enhance and soften the overall streetscapes of both Beecroft Road and Hannah Streets. This can be seen in the artist's rendition below.



Artist's impression showing section of the proposed built form response for Hannah Street (Courtesy of DKO)



Proposed building key map (Courtesy of DKO)

Length of buildings -

As discussed in the previous section, the proposal's response to the street frontages provides a more considered scale relationship and street wall length to the public domain than that put forward by the DCP Key Development Principles diagram for the site. The proposal includes reduced building lengths, more articulated elevations and generally a two storey frontage above podium with a recessed fifth storey. This is a far better response to the streetscape than the typology suggested by the Key Principle Diagrams in the DCP. For ease of discussion, the proposed buildings have been labelled A, B, C and D and they are arranged clockwise on the site starting from Building A - located on the north western corner of the site. The length of the proposed frontages on the subject site presents a moderate and scaled down version of the DCP suggested building envelopes.

Building A across the recently approved seniors' development on Beecroft Road presents a 2 storey street frontage above the 2 storey podium with a setback 5th storey. The frontage of Building A as seen from Beecroft Road will be approximately 34m. Proposed Building B does not have a street frontage as it is located internally within the site, but it will be visible from the public open space and new plaza area at the centre of the site. Building B would present as a 4 storey building with a setback 5th storey and a façade length of approx. 34m. Proposed Building C will have its southern elevation visible from the public domain across a three storey mixed use development on the southern footpath of Hannah Street (5 Hannah Street). Building C would present as a 2 storey building above the two storey podium with a setback 5th storey. The frontage for Building C visible from Hannah Street will be approximately 22.5m.

Proposed building D will be visible from both frontages along Beecroft Road and Hannah Street. This building's frontage to Hannah Street will be approximately 29m including the corner marker or 'campanile'. The frontage to Beecroft Road for Building D will be approximately 21m long. It is important to mention, that the proposal has considered the development potential of the site at No. 93A Beecroft Road. The proposal envisions that for this site to reach its maximum development potential, this site will need to attach to the proposal resulting in a longer elevation as seen from the corner.

If this site were to occupy its full frontage and attach to the proposed building, it will have a total frontage of approximately 35m between the two structures, which is in character with the proposed building to the north along this road. This will maximise the development potential of that site and allow an appropriate built form response to Beecroft Road.



Artist's impression showing the proposed buildings next to the Heritage item on Beecroft Road (Courtesy of DKO)

Conclusion

The proposal's overall heights, setback upper storeys, strong podium and gradual stepping of the massing with the topography as well as fragmented building lengths create an interesting and varied street-wall response, sculpted bulk and articulated massing. The proposal provides a sensitive response to the distinct characters for Beecroft Road and Hannah Streets as well as presenting a more sensitive response to the internal open spaces than the Key Development Principles diagram for the site suggest. The proposal's choice of traditional language and individual pavilion buildings above a strong podium level provides an appropriate scale relationship creating a sensitive streetscape response to both Hannah Street and Beecroft Road.

The built form response follows the desired future character for the area in terms of typology, number of storeys, façade articulation and choice of traditional materials. The relationship between building footprints and open space as seen in the figure ground diagram above is also in keeping with the rest of the precinct and the recently proposed developments for the northern part of the block. Therefore the proposed development is considered to relate well to the desired future character not only in terms of choice of materials and the typology of the buildings but also in terms of building placement, separation distances and provision of open space. The proposal fulfils this principle.

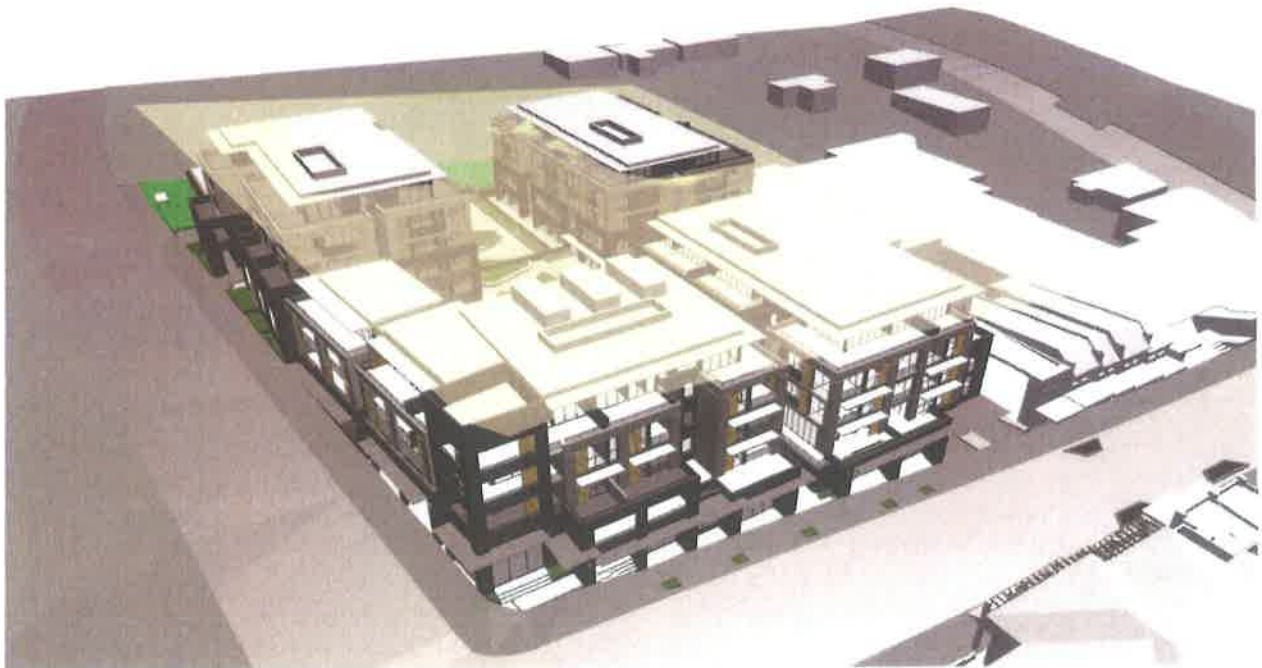
4.2 Principle 2: Appropriate Scale

"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."

Comment

The Beecroft Precinct is an area in transition, therefore the proposed bulk and height is guided by the scale identified in the desired future character for the area. The predominant scale guiding the proposal's response in terms of heights is the existing applicable controls for the site of 5 storeys as well as the proposed buildings' relationship to the topography of the land. For this site, the maximum height control is 17.5m (or approx. 5 storeys). However, the Key Development Principles diagram in page 9-64 of Part 9 of the HDCP suggests that the height of proposed buildings also has to respond to the existing topography on the site, where a five storey building on the high side of the slope can be read as a 6 storey building on the lower side of the slope.

It is important to note that the height control in Part 4 - Business has a number of important provisions, which include a podium of 8.5m high/ 2 storeys, a setback of 3m above podium along the street frontages and a transition in building height to provide a sensitive interface to adjacent heritage items.



Height plane diagram (Courtesy of DKO)

The proposed overall height is measured from the existing ground level, at the front of the building. As the building height plane diagram above shows, the proposal is compliant with the maximum height control except in areas where the topography drops and a more sensitive response to the terrain dictates that a five storey building is actually 6 storeys on the lower side of the slope. These small protrusions into the maximum height plane are located deep into the site and will not change the required height of the proposal as seen from the public domain. The proposal also meets the required height along the street wall height. The proposal presents a very strong 2 storey podium along the entirety of the frontage to Hannah Street and Beecroft Road. All frontages are setback 3m above the podium height. Furthermore, the glass to glass building line on the upper storeys is also setback an additional 3m for a total of 6m setback for Buildings C and D, which have a parallel response to Hannah and Beecroft Road. In the case of Building A, the building is not parallel to the street creating even wider setbacks at the upper levels ranging between 6-9m in total. This provides a sensitive response to the streetscape and complies with the height provisions in Part 4 – Business controls.



Elevation Diagram showing the stepping nature of the elevation to Hannah Street (Courtesy of DKO)

In general, the proposed heights follow the provisions of Part 4 – Business Height Controls, except for the corner element, which is proposed right at the corner and it does not setback at the upper levels in order to mark the corner and provide a built form marker at the intersection of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road. The provisions in the controls also require transition in building height to provide a sensitive interface to adjacent heritage items. As shown in the west street elevation (Beecroft Road), careful attention has been given to providing a transition in scale to the heritage item. The lower levels setback a distance of 6m while the upper level sets back an additional 3m for a total of 9m. The frontage to Beecroft Road has also been expressed as a lower scale element in order to achieve a transitional volume that scales down the building envelope for a more sympathetic response to the heritage item. In general and as shown in the diagram below, the scale to Beecroft Road is a total of 4 storeys with a setback fifth storey including a strong podium level to further articulate the elevations.



Elevation Diagram showing the relationship of the proposed Beecroft Road elevation with the heritage item to the north (Courtesy of DKO)

As shown in the diagram above, the response to Beecroft Road attempts to provide a comparable scale relationship to the heritage items, but also takes into account the current proposed buildings at No. 81 Beecroft Road. The proposal's response presents articulated elevations and reduced footprints at upper levels. The proposed buildings on the subject site present a more sensitive and considered response to the heritage item and to the overall streetscape, in general, along both frontages. In these buildings, the upper floors are setback 3m above the street wall scale to create a continuous pedestrian experience at the edge of the street. Building A across has a maximum height at the roof level (excluding the plant) of RL 168.300. The maximum height of the heritage Building is approximately RL 159.060 to the top of the ridge. The top of the corner element that serves as a transitional form is three storeys. This helps to mitigate the overall scale of the proposal by sensitively scaling the building down to relate to the heritage item. The height of the podium along this street has been carefully studied to relate to the overall height of the heritage item.

The proposed proposal also takes into consideration a potential future development on the site at 93A Beecroft Road (Lot 2 DP 211441). The proposal assumes a full redevelopment of the site with similar bulk and scale as the rest of the proposed development. Should this site not redevelop in the short or medium terms, the streetscape will present as a wide view corridor to the street, creating a large light and view corridor as seen from the internal plaza or public open space. Any exposed elevations in the interim will be treated sensitively to mitigate any potential visual impacts. In general, the proposal will create vibrant street scenes with sensitive and well-articulated buildings. This will improve the overall quality of the streetscape along this part of Beecroft Road.

A separate aspect that indicates how well the proposal responds to the adjacent natural and built form characteristics of the site is the discontinuous building forms, which provide the opportunity for view corridors through the site breaking up the massing and allowing view glimpses into the site from the surrounding public domain and *vice versa*.

Conclusion

The proposed heights and scale respond well to the desired future character for the site maintaining a lower overall height across all frontages to the public domain. The height along Hannah Street follows the topography of the site and creates a stepping form from west to east that breaks the bulk and scale as seen from the railway station.

The proposal arranges the proposed buildings around a publicly accessible space and the footprint, scale and overall height of the buildings responds sensitively to the streetscape and the internal courtyard. The proposal responds appropriately to the desired future character of the precinct and therefore satisfies this principle.

3.5 Principle 3: Built form response

"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 building elements. Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscapes and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook."

Comment

The proposal relates well to the boundaries of the site by maintaining and responding to a number of key existing and future alignments and setbacks. The proposal builds to the site boundary on the ground and level one of buildings B, C and D. Building A has a variable setback at the ground level ranging between 0-4.5m to the northern end of Beecroft Road. Given the deeper setbacks of the properties opposite on the western side of the road, this is a reasonably consistent response that is characteristic of a retail/commercial precinct and it will reinforce the sense of enclosure to the street and offer a greater level of definition to the public domain. Unlike the dwellings across the Beecroft Road, the proposal does not present vehicular entries as part of the interface with this road but instead provides lower commercial/retail uses that offer much needed activation to this side of the site. The existing retail tenancy that is not part of the site will most likely retain its vehicular entry point from Beecroft Road until the site redevelops and access easements through the subject site are negotiated. The Applicant for the subject site has expressed willingness to allow for this access arrangement.

To all frontages above the podium level, the proposal provides a consistent response with regards to setbacks, except for the corner which will act as a marker on arrival to this important intersection. The setbacks have in this case been deliberately ignored in order to create a point form that marks the corner. The success of this volume rests in the transformation of geometry that joins together the two frontages in this one point.

The proportions of the facades help to provide an adequate response to the streetscape as the design concept relies in the provision of a strong base with a taller mass above recessing at the upper levels. It is important to note that the orientation of the buildings with their longer axis oriented in the north-south orientation offers narrow elevations to Hannah Street, which is a positive outcome. These elevations are proportional to pavilion buildings in that the width of building C is only 16m from glass to glass line, with the additional articulation zone in the form of external balconies increasing the total width of the building to 22.5m, which offers a proportionate scale in relation to the height of the building as seen from Hannah Street.



View of the proposal along Hannah Street (courtesy of DKO)

The proposal utilises the spaces between the buildings for the provision of pedestrian links that visually connect to other spaces in the precinct. For instance the corridor between buildings C and D will be visible across the street between the existing 1 storey shops and the two storey shop top housing at the intersection of Hannah Street and Wongala Crescent. This open space has been discussed as an ideal space to provide a civic open space for the village. Ideally these two spaces will connect and create a network of visual links to offer better 'way-finding' in the precinct.

The corners of the proposed buildings have been modulated to create lower corner elements that break down the proportion of the facades when seen obliquely on approach, but this also opens up the vistas if the adjacent site where to redevelop. The simple articulation of these elements as lower scale pivot points helps to avoid the effect of a continuous development wall, should adjacent sites redevelop in the future.



Diagram showing the proposed network of links and open spaces (Courtesy of DKO)

Conclusion

Due to the articulated nature of the built form across all levels, the proposal is perceived as a series of individual pavilion buildings linked by a network of internal open spaces.

The proposal also responds to key existing and future street setbacks and existing street wall heights in both frontages with the introduction of view corridors and pedestrian links. With the introduction of retail and commercial uses along the street edges and direct street entries to and from internal open spaces, the proposal provides a good quality interface to the street and internal areas. These will become ideal areas for the community to interact and enjoy the enhanced public domain character. Therefore, the proposal meets the built form principle.

4.3 Principle 4: Proposed 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."

Comment

The proposal's density is considered to be reasonably consistent with the future desired character and height discussed in the applicable controls. The allowable FSR for the zone is 1:1; however, the site is within area 5, cl. 4.4(2c), which allows the FSR to exceed 1:1 if it comprises shop top housing and any other floor space ratio of at least 0.5:1. This is an important provision, due to the fact that any mixed use development on the site will require greater density and scale than that which is characteristic of lower scale development which is normally feasible within or less than 1:1 FSR.

The proposed FSR for the subject site is 2.6:1. This FSR is compliant with the FSR provisions on the site, which indicate that there is no actual limit in terms of FSR. The design team's approach has been to arrive at the right built form for the site observing urban design principles in the placement of buildings and the proposed overall bulk and scale of each of the pavilion buildings. Not only does the proposal propose a moderate FSR for the site, but the resulting built form outcome is an appropriate, well-considered and balanced built form that allows visual breaks and visual interest, quality amenity outcomes and a variety of good open spaces within the site as it also provides 35.4% of the site area as landscaped open space. Therefore, this complies with the applicable controls and is an excellent outcome.

The final built form proposed for the site is derived from the proposal's strong design principles, which aim to not only meet the numerical controls in terms of height, number of storeys, appropriate length of buildings, provision of setbacks but it also sets out to meet the objectives of the controls with appropriate built form and a responsive street scape character. The development achieves an appropriate fit with the surrounding character and it can be argued that it provides a more sensitive response to the natural environment than that envisioned by the Key Development Principles diagrams. Therefore, the proposed density achieves a balanced streetscape, appropriate built form outcomes and high amenity communal open spaces.

Conclusion

The proposed FSR results in a reasonable concentration of residents on the site, responding to the demand for quality housing in close proximity to transport routes and rail. The proposal has no visual or view-loss impacts, where its bulk and scale respond well to the desired future character for the precinct. Therefore, the proposal presents a sustainable density for the site and its context and therefore fulfils this principle.

4.4 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 reuse of water.'

Comment:

According to the architect's design statement, high levels of amenity are achieved throughout the project through ventilation measures, solar access, apartment depth and daylight access. A high number of apartments are corner units with dual aspects with 60.7% of the units being cross-ventilated. Each living area has full access to an outdoor area, which enhances the amenity levels and the flexibility of the plan layouts. The proposal includes initiatives for energy reduction and rain water collection and reuse for irrigation of the open space areas. The proposal makes efficient use of natural resources, energy and water through the use of the following measures:

- The proposed selection of low embodied-energy materials reduces the overall green footprint.
- The demolition of materials and removal of waste materials will comply with state and local government standards.
- Living spaces for a great number of dwellings have dual aspect (corner units) with the majority having north, easterly or south-westerly aspect, which optimises solar access, therefore increasing daylight penetration which reduces heating and artificial lighting requirements. There are 9 units with a single aspect facing south, which is only 8.3% of the total units. This is less than the allowed 10% and this is a good outcome.
- Generally, the distance to the back of kitchens achieves the required 8 meters from a window which reduces the dependency on artificial lighting.
- A high number of dwellings/apartments are cross ventilated, which also reduces the need for air conditioning units / artificial climate control.
- Rainwater is collected and reused for landscaping and irrigation.
- The location of the subject site close to a major bus corridor and rail services reduces the resident's individual carbon footprint by providing more sustainable alternative transport options to a variety of destinations and reducing the use of private motor vehicles.

Through the use of the above listed measures, the proposal therefore meets this principle. For more detailed discussion on the efficiency of appliances and mechanical services, please refer to the BASIX report.

4.5 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 existing site's natural and cultural features in responsible and creative ways. It enhances the development's natural environmental performance by co-ordinating water and soil management, solar access, micro-climate, 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.'



Plan showing the proposed landscape strategy for the subject site (Courtesy of Oculus)

Comment:

Oculus was engaged by the Applicant to prepare a landscape design for the public and private landscaped areas within the proposal. According to the Landscape Design Report, "the landscape design for Module Shopping Centre Beecroft Redevelopment aims to provide an attractive and functional public domain for residents, office workers and shoppers, while addressing the design of public domain interfaces and private residential courtyards".

The landscape approach to the site is guided by a number of principles. These include the following:

- Address the public domain interfaces to the surrounding streets, namely Hannah Street and Beecroft Road;
- Provide a dynamic internal landscape that caters to a variety of uses, taking into account the view from the apartments;
- Create through-site links from Beecroft Road and Hannah Street;
- Address the level change in the landscape to provide equal access across the site;
- Integrate the landscape with the architecture; and
- Create attractive and functional private spaces for residents, ensuring privacy is maintained.

Response to the Public Domain -

According to the *Landscaping* provisions under Part 9 – Beecroft Heritage Precinct,

- *Primary and secondary retail frontages should be landscaped with tree-plantings combined with paving in accordance with the following:*
- *Trees should be planted as widely-spaced avenues along kerbsides, using a consistent range of species for each precinct or centre;*
 - *Species should have elevated canopies and should achieve mature heights of at least 10 metres to 12 metres; and Pavements within each precinct should be of a consistent design, constructed of durable and non-slip modular units that are resistant to fading, discolouration and chipping, and that may readily be removed and replaced following future installation of in-ground services.*



Artist's Impression of the central courtyard space (courtesy of DKO)

The landscape works will include the "creation of a generous network of open spaces and legible access through the site from north to south and with the provision of a potential link from east to west to cater for the future potential redevelopment of the adjacent site to the east. There is little in the way of an existing vegetated character on the site, so the proposal relies on the creation of a considered landscape plan to enhance the character of the site and introduce some natural shading to central open areas and to improve the vegetated character along the footpaths, especially along Beecroft Road, which currently has a very poor landscape character. The proposed landscape strategy for the site attempts to create of a 'sense of place' strengthening the relationship between the built form, topography and the landscape. The proposal also provides a legible network of safe publicly accessible open spaces that encourages the use and patronage by the wider community. These spaces provide for future links to developments to the north and east, which will enhance the connectivity across the precinct.

The above landscape concepts comply with Council's requirements for kerbside plantings along primary and secondary retail frontages.

Separation between the public and the private domain -

According to the Landscaping provisions under Part 9 – Beecroft Heritage Precinct,

- *Residential levels should be landscaped with native or exotic species in planter boxes watered by recycled grey water or stormwater to provide screening.*
- *Fencing enclosing private residential courtyards may be up to 1.8 metres high if constructed from lightweight materials with the design allowing at least 50 percent openings/ transparency.*

The communal open space design includes the provision of large open spaces, pedestrian links and activated edges to the publically accessible space. These spaces have a different theme tailored to the user and location of the each of the spaces. The main areas are divided into publicly accessible and private residential use.

These spaces are expected to provide opportunities for socialising as well as to enhance the visual character between the proposed buildings. While the area for residential use is restricted to the public, the publicly accessible space is meant to encourage interaction with the community. According to the Landscape Design Report, separation between the residential and communal open spaces is achieved through the use of raised planter beds:

The residential courtyard garden is situated in the centre of the site and to the north, accessible from Beecroft Road and the upper commercial plaza to the south. The informal arrangement of paving, turf and planting creates a textural canvas when viewed from above while enabling the space to remain functional as a communal area. Generous planting in low raised steel planters, lawn areas with gravel paths, custom seating and shade feature trees provide a functional and aesthetic landscape for use by the residents. Trees and raised planter beds create a buffer to the private courtyards, ensuring privacy is maintained.

While the proposal does not comply strictly with the provision of fencing, it achieves the objective of the control with an alternative system.

The design for the pedestrian network of links and cross links allows access through the site with an emphasis on the north to south links, which will probably be developed first. This link will connect the future proposed development at 81 Beecroft Road with the open space across to Hannah Street. The area of landscaped communal open space is approximately 2062m² which is almost 35.4% of the total site area. This greatly surpasses the RFDC requirement which requires up to 25-30% of the site to be dedicated as communal open space. According to the RFDC rules of thumb, 25% of the communal open space should be deep soil. The deep soil area required for this site should be equivalent to a minimum of 550m² and the proposal provides approximately 570m² of deep soil area including planting on structures. This is equivalent to 25% of the communal open space for the site.

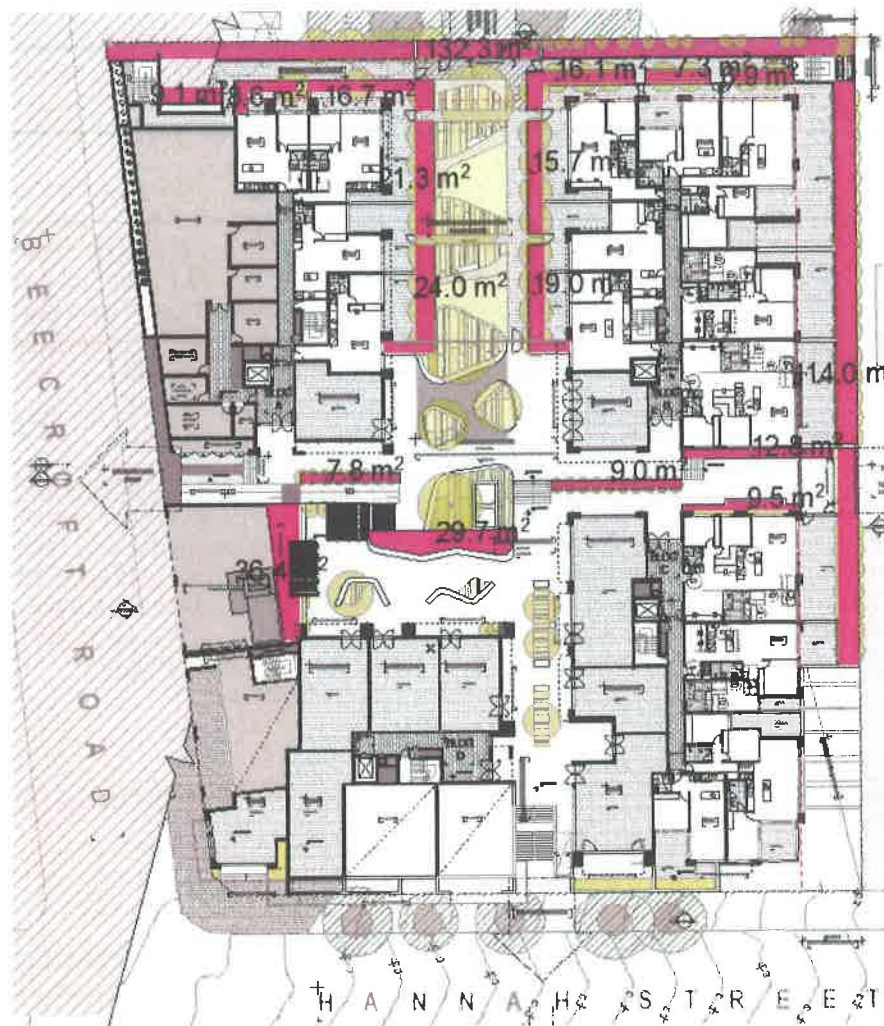


Diagram showing the areas of deep soil and planting on structures for the subject site (Courtesy of DKO)

Conclusion

The proposal results in high levels of aesthetic quality and amenity for both future residents and the community at large with the introduction of semi and private open spaces and a series of publicly accessible areas, pedestrian links and improved public domain areas. The proposed landscape strategy enhances the development's natural environment as it responds well to the changes of topography. The landscape strategy contributes to the positive image and contextual fit of development through the enhancement of the streetscape character, especially along Beecroft Road. An important outcome of the landscape design is the site interconnectedness and high levels of open space, which meet the objectives of the RFDC. Therefore, the proposal fulfils this principle.

4.6 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.'

Comment:

The proposal presents high levels of amenity and quality internal layouts and outdoor spaces. 51.6 percent of apartments are dual aspect, providing good levels of solar access and daylight. The majority of apartments have northerly aspect with the rest enjoying easterly or westerly aspect. Only 9 out of 122 units have a single southerly aspect, which is a positive outcome.

The majority of units 60.7% are cross-ventilated which meets the required percentage by the Residential Flat Design Code. Due to the height of the building and positioning among a series of open spaces, apartments have an open, high quality outlook, especially those located on the upper storeys. The proposal complies with the necessary storage recommendations by the RFDC, fulfilling the guideline's objectives by placing internal storage near the main entry points to the apartments. The layouts of the apartments are very efficient, as the main living space, the kitchen, and bedrooms have windows that face directly to the outside, providing increased ventilation and solar access while maximising privacy and outlook. Generally, distances to the back of kitchens are no greater than 8m with almost 60% of the kitchens being naturally cross ventilated.

A total of 71% of the units are provided with 2 hours of sunlight between 9:00am and 3:00pm on the shortest day of the year (June 21st) with a vast number of units receiving 3 hours of solar access.

Due to the varied configuration and placement of buildings on the site, the setbacks and separation distances between the buildings present a variety of conditions. These are carefully managed following the RFDC guidelines to ensure that privacy is achieved through separation and reorientation of outlooks for all buildings. The large areas of common landscaped areas which occur within the separation between buildings ensure high amenity outlooks even for those units not directly facing the public domain. The site abuts properties to the north and east and provides a 6m setback distance to the common boundary to ensure appropriate levels of privacy to and from the existing development on those properties with upper levels setting up to 9m. All outlooks and aspects are directed toward the central communal open spaces or to the public domain.

Conclusion

Most units are cross-ventilated, enjoy good solar access and outlooks to internal spaces and/or the public domain and therefore the proposal meets this requirement.

4.7 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.'

Comment:

The proposal optimises safety and security for residents by the provisions of multiple building entry points and dedicated elevator cores, which increases the 'sense of community' as it reduces the number of residents per core. This increases social interaction and improves recognition of permanent residents from visitors. Access to the communal open areas through the site increases the level of activation for all pedestrian links, which in turn are given high levels of natural surveillance by the residential units above the ground floor.

The entry corridors are visible from a single entry point centred along the Hannah Street elevation and two entry points along Beecroft Road. This maintains a regular level of safety through natural surveillance of pedestrians entering and exiting the site at various times of the day. The street also benefits from passive surveillance from the ground level retail and commercial tenancies that front the street and the internal pedestrian links that can increase activation and permeability throughout the site.

As discussed in the architect's design statement, there are a number of key safety features that "minimise the opportunity for crime" including principles of surveillance, access control, territorial enforcement and space management. The main features that promote this through the site in addition to those discussed above are as follows:

- Windows to secondary frontages to facilitate surveillance along the ground plane
- Security system at residential entry points and circulation areas for control access after visual or verbal confirmation
- High quality architectural lighting throughout development for enhanced security after business hours
- Controlled access to basement areas via a secure entrance doors and gates

This complies with the DCP controls under Part 9 for *Privacy and Security*, which require the following:

- Orientate living areas and open space to front and rear of site.
- Screen balconies, terraces or bedroom windows that are located near street or communal areas.
- Open space should not be provided on the roof.
- Balconies should incorporate operable louvres for privacy, shade and glare control.
- Provide clear identification for private and common areas, and entrances.
- Where a mix of land uses are proposed, separate and secure access should be provided to lift lobbies, basements and communal storage areas.

Conclusion

The proposal presents high levels of internalized security and enhanced safety to the surrounding streetscape therefore the proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

4.8 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 in the neighbourhood or, in the case of precincts undergoing transition, provide for the desired future community.'

Comment:

The proposal includes a mix of uses and dwelling types ranging from commercial/retail and residential uses. For residential apartments dwelling types include:

- 16 no of apartments of 3 bedrooms
- 3 no of apartments of 3 bedrooms + study
- 34 no of apartments of 2 bedrooms
- 2 no of apartments of 2 bedrooms + study
- 42 no of apartments of 1 bedroom
- 18 no of apartments of 1 bedroom + study
- 7 no of Studios

The above mix of apartments supports a range of lifestyles and provides choice in living arrangements. There is a balanced provision of unit sizes, which is a reflection of the site's appeal to young professionals as well as families. It is important to note that current DAs on the adjacent sites have a disproportionate percentage in terms of unit mix. They have a very low percentage of 2 and 3 bedroom apartments with only 1 bedroom apartments being proposed. This will have a significant impact in the ability of young families, couples and retirees to find a suitable size accommodation for their needs. According to the Economic Assessment prepared by Hill PDA "there is also a market within Beecroft for existing residents looking to downsize". The proposal caters for this sector of the population with a healthy provision of all unit sizes to create a better social mix that serves a greater cross section of the population.

Hill PDA's report also states that the Pennant Hills-Cheltenham area is "characterised by a substantially older demographic with the median age increasing from 39 in 2001 to 41 in 2011". "This would suggest that the Pennant Hills-Cheltenham ... has a strong representation of pensioners and 'empty-nesters' which highlights the potential size of the downsizer market within Beecroft.

While other current DAs ignore this sector of the community, the proposal embraces the local demographic with a provision of a variety of unit types and sizes for a more inclusive response to the needs of the local community. This will create a balanced social mix that is inclusive of all age, groups and affordability levels.

It is important to mention the DCP requirements for Housing Choice under Part 9 – Heritage which requires that,

- *Development should include a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom units. At least 10% of each unit type should be provided.*
- *For developments with 10 or more units:*

- At least 10% of proposed dwellings should be accessible by people with impaired mobility.*
- At least 30% of proposed dwellings should be adaptable to meet needs of residents as they age.
- Accessible and adaptable housing is to be equitably distributed through all types and sizes of dwellings.

The proposal also meets the required percentage as per the DCP with at least 10% of each unit size including 1, 2, and 3 Bedroom units. The percentage of accessible units is 30% which meets Council's and state requirements.

The range of apartments provide living options for a variety of different family types and age groups, but also caters to the demand for affordable housing choices in close proximity to the Sydney CBD and other local centres. The proximity of the subject site to retail and commercial centres, public open space, schools/educational institutions, hospitals / health care facilities and entertainment districts caters for the needs of future residents and workers while promoting more sustainable living/working choices.

4.9 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.'

According to the Architect's Design Statement, the strength of the proposal rests in a high quality panel of materials. The chosen materials attempt to merge the functional aspects of the environmental performance of the facade with representative materials to the unique design aesthetics chosen for the proposal.



Material sample board showing the proposed materials (Courtesy DKO)

The basic framework of the façade is a modular expression of vertical bays with horizontally expressed balconies within framed areas. The façade system includes a combination of operable and fixed screens with operable glazing and balcony areas providing a flexible system adaptable to individual privacy and solar requirements. The proposal presents a traditional approach in that the materials reference the desired future character for the locality; therefore responding not only to the performance requirements, but also reinforcing the desired future character of the area.

Conclusion

The proposal presents a traditionally inspired façade expression that responds well and complements the surrounding existing character; therefore the proposal meets the objectives of this principle.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The review of the context and the proposal by GMU confirms that the development for the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road, Beecroft achieves an appropriate response to the surrounding existing and future context in terms of built form, open space, amenity and streetscape character. The variety of dwelling types and the proximity to public and mass transit systems, shopping, educational and entertainment facilities makes the subject site particularly suitable for mixed use development.

It is GMU's opinion that the proposal satisfies the objectives of the existing controls and will achieve an appropriate outcome. The existing residential character to the north and west as well as the rest of the retail precinct across Hannah Street will benefit from the added energy and revitalisation that this development will bring to the area. Great care has been taken to develop a design that is responsive to the topography that introduces landscape features and pedestrian links non-existing in the site at the moment. This reinforces the desired future character supported by Council and achieves a more consistent evolving character for this precinct.

The proposal as a whole provides the following positive outcomes:

- A variety of dwelling types for different lifestyles;
- Increased passive surveillance to both Hannah Street and Beecroft Road as well as the internal open spaces and pedestrian links thereby increasing pedestrian safety;
- Improve public domain, specifically the pedestrian amenity along the streets but also through the introduction of a robust network of internal future links;
- A sensitive response to the surrounding character, especially that of the lower scale retail level.
- A sense of transition in scale and massing from the proposal to adjacent heritage items
- A vibrant streetscape and public domain response with improved streetscape and renewed architecture and landscaping as well as gathering spaces and retail/commercial tenancies
- An appropriate visual gateway on arrival to the precinct at the corner of Hannah Street and Beecroft Road, and
- A varied and interesting massing solution that responds to the topography of the site.

It is GMU's opinion that the proposal provides high levels of internal amenity and meets the objectives and recommendations of the Residential Flat Design Code. The proposal is a positive development outcome in that it provides the following:

- Good solar access for all apartments;
- Good levels of natural and cross-ventilation;
- No overshadowing impacts to surrounding properties;
- Generous allocation of communal and private open spaces; and
- Enhanced internal as well as local safety and security.

The proposal is a well-designed, multi-unit mixed use development that will help strengthen the sense of place for the Beecroft Village delivering a great place to live and work for the local community; therefore it is GMU's recommendation that the proposal be considered for approval.