

Compliance with State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) 65 - Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development

A design statement has been prepared by the project's registered architect. The statement addresses each of the 9 'design quality principles' listed under schedule 1 of SEPP 65. In determining an application, a consent authority must take into consideration the design quality of the residential apartment development when evaluated in accordance with these 9 design principles. The 9 principles are listed below, together with a town planning response. (Note: SEPP 65 does not apply to the business/retail component of the development).

Principle 1: Context and neighbourhood character	
Control	Town planning comment
Good design responds and contributes to its context. Context is the key natural and built features of an area, their relationship and the character they create when combined. It also includes social, economic, health and environmental conditions. Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of an area's existing or future character. Well designed buildings respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood.	The site is located within the northern precinct of the Blacktown Central Business District (CBD). The Blacktown CBD was rezoned in 2012, which as part of the Blacktown master plan encouraged a variety of uses within the Blacktown major centre. Land uses including retail and business uses combined with residential uses were identified for the future character of the area. The proposed shop top housing development is in keeping with the desired future character of the northern precinct of the CBD. The site and surrounding sites are zoned B4 Mixed Use under BLEP 2015. The site has a 56 m height limit. It is considered that the development will contribute to the quality and identity of the area. The site's close proximity to public transport, services, facilities and a main road network also makes this a highly desirable site for high-rise, mixed-use development. The development is consistent with the future desired character of this transitioning precinct.
Principle 2: Built form and scale	
Control	Town planning comment
Good design achieves a scale, bulk and height appropriate to the existing or desired future character of the street and surrounding buildings. Good design also achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building's purpose in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type, articulation and the manipulation of building elements.	The height of the development is consistent with the desired future character of this locality. A 4.35m departure is proposed to the building height. The majority of the departure (i.e. 2.96 m) is attributed to the roof features including the parapet, lift overrun and plant and equipment. The additional 1.39 m is because the base of the building has been increased in height to provide better access to the commercial tenancies on the ground level and improve the overall design and appearance of the building. The additional height does not impact on the bulk and scale of the development and in fact, improves the overall design and appearance of the building.

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.	The scale, bulk and height are appropriate for a mixed-use development in the CBD and represent a suitable response to the development controls applicable to the site. The development is in keeping with the requirements of the Apartment Design Guide (ADG) and Council's DCP requirements in relation to building alignment, setbacks and building type. The use of the podium and provision of an awning along the streetscape will help define the streetscape and provide all weather protection for future users. The stepped eastern façade also helps to reduce the buildings visual impact and solid appearance.
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Principle 3: Density

Control	Town planning comment
Good design achieves a high level of amenity for residents and each apartment, resulting in a density appropriate to the site and its context. Appropriate densities are consistent with the area's existing or projected population. Appropriate densities can be sustained by existing or proposed infrastructure, public transport, access to jobs, community facilities and the environment.	BLEP 2015 establishes a maximum floor space ratio (FSR) of 6.5:1. While the proposal exceeds the maximum FSR by 4%, the density of the development is still considered to be suitable in a CBD context. The site is also located within 400 m of the Blacktown train station, bus interchange, major commercial areas and main arterial road network. In addition, existing community facilities including medical centres and parks such as the Blacktown Showground, are all within close proximity to the site. The minor variation to FSR is considered negligible when consideration is given to the sites context within the Blacktown CBD and services available to the development.

Principle 4: Sustainability

Control	Town planning comment
Good design combines positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. Good sustainable design includes use of natural cross ventilation and sunlight for the amenity and liveability of residents and passive thermal design for ventilation, heating and cooling reducing reliance on technology and operation costs. Other elements include recycling and reuse of materials and waste, use of sustainable materials and deep soil zones for groundwater recharge and vegetation.	The development has been designed so that at least 70% of the units receive satisfactory levels of natural light and ventilation in accordance with the requirements of the ADG. Given the north-south orientation of the site, 18% of the units (i.e. 2 on most levels) will not receive direct sunlight in mid-winter. The ADG recommends that a maximum of 15% of the units not receive any direct sunlight. The ADG, however, is a guide only. It is also recognised that the non-compliance (i.e. 6 additional units) is a direct result of the north-south orientation of the site. The proposal is supported by a BASIX Certificate. The commitments are incorporated into the design of the building. The proposal demonstrates satisfactory levels of sustainability and the efficient use of energy and water resources. The proposal demonstrates appropriate waste management during the construction and ongoing use phases.

Principle 5: Landscape

Control	Town planning comment
Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, resulting in attractive developments with good amenity. A positive image and contextual fit of well-designed developments is achieved by contributing to the landscape character of the streetscape and neighbourhood. Good landscape design enhances the development's environmental performance by retaining positive natural features which contribute to the local context, co-ordinating water and soil management, solar access, micro-climate, tree canopy, habitat values and preserving green networks. Good landscape design optimises useability, privacy and opportunities for social interaction, equitable access, respect for neighbours' amenity and provides for practical establishment and long term management.	The development provides 588 sqm of communal open space at the podium level and a 45 sqm meeting room / gymnasium is provided at the first floor level for the exclusive use of the residents. The outdoor communal open space area will be embellished with paving, timber decking, synthetic grass as well as suitable trees and shrubs within landscape planter boxes. Communal bench seating, tables and a barbeque are also proposed. As the podium level covers the entire site, there is no opportunity for deep soil planting. Planter boxes, however, have been provided on the north-east corner of each residential level to provide additional greenery to the elevations. The proposal demonstrates appropriate landscaping for a CBD location. The landscaping suitably complements the built form and areas of common open space. Overall, the landscaping offers a suitable level of amenity for the future occupants. Conditions will also be imposed on any consent to ensure that suitable street tree species are planted that complement the height and scale of the development.

Principle 6: Amenity

Control	Town planning comment
Good design positively influences internal and external amenity for residents and neighbours. Achieving good amenity contributes to positive living environments and resident well-being. Good amenity combines appropriate room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, outlook, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility.	The proposal is considered to be satisfactory in terms of unit sizes, room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, outlook and service areas. All of the units comply with the minimum unit areas recommended by the ADG and provide an adequate outdoor private open space area in the form of a balcony or terrace which is directly accessible from the internal living area. All units have direct access to the basement via centrally located lifts and stairs. Adequate storage areas have been provided for each unit and within the basement and garbage chutes and waste rooms are conveniently located. Significant ramping was originally required to achieve disabled access into the retail/business tenancies at the ground level, and the dropped floor level resulted in a poorly designed base for the building. The development has been redesigned to provide ease of access for all future residents and visitors to the site.

Principle 7: Safety

Control	Town planning comment
Good design optimises safety and security within the development and the public domain. It provides for quality public and private spaces that are clearly defined and fit for the intended purpose. Opportunities to maximise passive surveillance of public and communal areas promote safety. A positive relationship between public and private spaces is achieved through clearly defined secure access points and well lit and visible areas that are easily maintained and appropriate to the location and purpose.	The proposal provides good casual surveillance of the street frontage and public domain. The development has also been designed so that the future residential occupants will overlook communal spaces while maintaining internal privacy. Public and private spaces are clearly defined and suitable safety measures are integrated into the development. Appropriate lighting will be provided to all common area to increase the safety of those areas, especially at night. The parking areas will be secure and separation will be provided between the resident and visitor / customer parking compounds. Separate access is also proposed for the business / retail area and the private residential lobby. The proposal provides clear and legible entry points which benefit from casual surveillance. Overall, the development is capable of providing a high level of safety and security which deters unsafe behaviour.

Principle 8: Housing diversity and social interaction

Control	Town planning comment
Good design achieves a mix of apartment sizes, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets. Well-designed apartment developments respond to social context by providing housing and facilities to suit the existing and future social mix. Good design involves practical and flexible features, including different types of communal spaces for a broad range of people and providing opportunities for social interaction among residents.	This principle essentially relates to design responding to the social context and needs of the local community in terms of lifestyles, affordability and access to social facilities and optimising the provision of housing to suit the social mix and provide for the desired future community. While the proposal has a limited mixture of units (i.e. 1 and 2 bedroom only), this is in response to the anticipated market and demographic demands and is supported by a market assessment report. The proposal also provides 16 adaptable units, thus providing a choice of attractive living locations and facilities to persons with disabilities and their families. The design promotes easily accessible common facilities and outdoor recreation spaces, and caters towards ease of use for everyone from children right through to the elderly. It is considered that the proposal satisfies these requirements by providing alternate housing opportunities in the locality. The development will provide additional housing choice within the area in close proximity to public transport and potential employment opportunities.

Principle 9: Aesthetics

Control	Town planning comment
Good design achieves a built form that has good proportions and a balanced composition of elements, reflecting the internal layout and structure. Good design uses a variety of materials, colours and textures. The visual appearance of a well designed apartment development responds to the existing or future local context, particularly desirable elements and repetitions of the streetscape.	The proposal comprises an interesting and visually appealing built form which is in line with the desired future character of the transitioning locality. The building has been architecturally designed by a registered architect and is supported by a Design Verification Statement in accordance with the requirements of SEPP 65. It is recognised that the development is in an extremely prominent position on a main approach to the Blacktown CBD. It is also a prominent building and one that will be viewed 'in the round'. Council's City Architect, however, has raised no objections to the design. The stepped eastern façade helps to reduce the building's visual impact and solid appearance. Interesting cladding treatment and window patterning has also been proposed. The irregular window placement between floors and contrasting, dark panels generates visual interest. The proposed building finishes include painted concrete, glass, aluminium and high pressure laminate. The building form is simple and understated with individual expression in the random pattern of infill and colours.