



## **URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING**

### **ITEM No. 2**

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Date of Panel Assessment:            | 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2015                                                                                                                          |
| Address of Project:                  | 470 King Street, Newcastle                                                                                                                          |
| Name of Project (if applicable):     | N/A                                                                                                                                                 |
| DA Number of Pre-DA?                 | Pre DA                                                                                                                                              |
| No. of Buildings:                    | All options include parking podium, low-scale building fronting King Street and two towers behind                                                   |
| No. of Units:                        | Approximately 200                                                                                                                                   |
| Declaration of Conflict of Interest: | Nil.                                                                                                                                                |
| Attendees:                           | <u>Applicant</u><br>Craig Marler (Planner)<br>Stuart Campbell (CKDS Architects)<br>Philip Thalís (Hill Thalís Architects)<br>Warwick Miller (Owner) |
|                                      | <u>Council</u><br>Chris Speek                                                                                                                       |

*This report addresses the nine Design Quality Principles set out in the Apartment Design Guide (2015) under State Environmental Planning Policy No.65. It is also an appropriate format for applications which do not include residential flats.*

### **Background Summary**

The applicant has analysed the context of the site in detail, and presented a wide range of options to the meeting. These included freehand sketch diagrams, three-dimensional modelling of building forms, and preliminary layout plans. The comprehensive material provided enabled an appreciation of the character of the area and potential opportunities available, and the substantial work undertaken is commended by the Panel. The option preferred by the applicant is supported in principle subject only to one amendment, and has the potential to achieve an excellent outcome.

It is noted that since the development proposes a height of over 48 metres, a design competition is required under Cl.7.75(5) unless waived by the Department. The Panel considers that there would be no advantage in the competition process in this case in view of:-

- .The excellent quality of the preliminary scheme presented
- .The extensive examination of options already undertaken by the applicant
- .The desirability of continuing close consultation with Council and the Panel from the very beginning and as the design develops to ensure that the scheme sets an ideal precedent for other future contiguous developments in this neighbourhood, -a process which is more difficult under a competition regime
- .The priority on this site of achieving an urbane and modest outcome, rather than the unusual or 'iconic' designs which typically emerge from the competition process.
- .The strong credentials of the applicant architects for work of excellent quality.

### **1. Context and Neighbourhood Character**

The proposed development occupies a large consolidated site addressing King Street to the south, bounded by Cottage Creek to the east, and other sites in private ownership to the north and west. The character of the Creek is currently unappealing, but there is potential for it to be transformed. To the north-east across the channel the Theatre Royal is a listed heritage item, which limits the potential for future development on that site. The area generally is subject to flooding as evidenced by a major flood event in recent years.

Although close to the civic centre of the city, the area immediate to the site is not attractive, and suffers from decades of uncoordinated development. There is little consistency in building forms, setbacks, heights or architectural character. With current nearby development in the civic centre including the law courts and University buildings now well under way, it appears very likely that this neighbourhood will undergo major redevelopment in the mid-term future. It has the advantage of proximity to the harbour front, civic park and other amenities, and potentially the proposed new light rail link.

Planning controls on the subject site, adjoining sites and the area generally are contained in LEP 2012 and the DCP. Heights and densities have been increased by comparison with the previous controls, further encouraging redevelopment. The height permissible on the site is 66m, with a 16m Street Wall height, and density is 5:1. To the west and east fronting King Street nearby sites have permissible heights of 90m and 66m respectively, with those to the north and south being lower.

The 2012 controls are considered to be reasonable and appropriate for the site, but if suitable scale and urbanity are to be achieved it will be critical for them to be applied consistently to all future redevelopment proposals. Variation in height of towers on the various sites should enhance the character of the skyline, but consistency in the street frontages will be particularly important.

## 2. Built Form and Scale

The options circulated to the Panel before the meeting all included four levels of above-ground parking with a landscaped courtyard above, lower buildings fronting King Street, activation of the King Street and Cottage Creek ground floor frontages, and variously configured tower buildings. All options complied with height and density controls and overall appeared to provide excellent amenity for the residential flats. Whilst all options had positive features, the least attractive was that with the continuous 'wall' of high buildings along the eastern Cottage Creek frontage, which would result in unacceptable visual and overshadowing impacts.

A further option stated to be preferred by the applicant was tabled at the meeting, and this was also considered to be the preferred option by the Panel. The following are very positive attributes of this scheme:-

- .Activation of the King Street frontage with retail/commercial uses
- .Opening up and activation of the Cottage Creek frontage with a landscaped pedestrian promenade which could in the future extend through to Hunter Street.
- .Parking concealed in the centre of the site with an attractive landscaped communal podium above
- .Two relatively slender 'fan-shaped' residential towers with a substantial space between, -allowing good sunlight access to the podium
- .Compliance with height and density controls for the towers and King Street frontage.

The one aspect of this scheme about which there are reservations is the location of the southern tower directly on the King Street frontage. Although articulation and modelling could mitigate the visual impact of a tower on this corner, it would inevitably be a dominant form which could compromise the scale of the streetscape. A further concern is that no matter how elegant the design of this tower might be, it would set an undesirable precedent undermining the intention of the new controls to create a consistent human-scale along the frontage. With other close-by high-rise-zoned sites to the east and west also awaiting redevelopment it is critical for development on the subject site to be an urbane model for other new buildings. It is recommended that there be a modest setback of the tower from the King Street frontage: the King Street/Cottage Creek corner of the podium form should visually reinforce this corner.

The indicative 'Section B' drawing suggests a satisfactory form for the King Street frontage, -with emphasis on the street-level activities, compliance with the control in relation to the 16m podium height, and a possible additional level set well back from the frontage.

Along Cottage Creek it will also be very important to ensure comfortable ambience along this potentially very attractive walkway, whether by way of small setback of the towers, strong articulation of the base, awnings, or some combination of these devices.

The two towers might be better if there were to be some small variation in their heights, and certainly strong articulation of the roof silhouette profiles would be desirable.

### **3. Density**

Compliant and acceptable

### **4. Sustainability**

No comment at this stage

### **5. Landscape.**

There is potential for excellent landscape design of the podium, and the proposed provision of substantial soil depth is commended. It is recommended that the level of the landscape planting and paving on the podium be varied to suggest a natural topography, rather than only horizontal planes.

The King Street and Cottage Creek frontages both offer opportunities for attractive landscape and substantial trees: it is important that these be developed in consultation with Council, particularly because there is opportunity to set a precedent of high standard for other future development

### **6. Amenity**

The preferred option offers excellent levels of amenity for the residential flats in relation to solar access, natural ventilation and outlook. As the design is developed attention should be given to addressing road noise from traffic in King Street.

### **7. Safety**

Potentially satisfactory, subject to ensuring that the proposed Cottage Creek pedestrian realm is secured after hours.

### **8. Housing Diversity and Social Interaction**

There appears to be the potential for a good mix of unit types, which is a matter for further consideration at the next stage. The layout offers many opportunities for designing to reduce social isolation, by way of a combination of measures such as small meeting bays on each level, attractive entry lobbies with seating etc, roof-top communal places, small toddlers play area on the podium etc.

### **8. Aesthetics**

The building forms indicated in the preferred option provide the basis for a development of excellent aesthetic quality.

## **.Amendments Required to Achieve Design Quality**

In relation to the preferred option there should be some setback of the southern tower from the King Street frontage to ensure that the scale of the street frontage is not compromised.

**.Summary Recommendations**

1. The preferred option is supported subject only to the amendment recommended. In all other respects this preliminary scheme would form the basis for a design of excellent quality.
2. The requirement for a competition under Cl.7.5(5) be waived for the reasons set out above under 'Background Summary'.