



URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING

ITEM No. 7

Date of Panel Assessment:	26 th October 2016
Address of Project:	745 Hunter Street (also known as 500 Hunter Street), Newcastle
Name of Project (if applicable):	N/A
DA Number of Pre-DA?	DA 2016/00746
No. of Buildings:	One
No. of Units:	170 hotel guest rooms + carparking, retail etc
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	Glen Spicer
Attendees:	<u>Applicant</u> Garry Fielding Richard Campbell Sean Malone Jim McBurnie <u>Council</u> Priscilla Emmett Melissa Thomas Adrian Quinn (observer)

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

This application has been reviewed at pre-DA stage at two previous meetings, the last on 21st April 2016. The design has been further developed since that time and has responded to a number of the issues identified. Where relevant the recommendations/comments contained in the April report of the Panel are reiterated in *italics*.

(c) Little King Street and Birdwood Park

Council advised that discussions have been held with the RMS, and further advice is awaited as to its intentions for traffic management. The Panel remains

strongly of the view that it is extremely desirable to maintain two-way traffic in Little King Street, which should be designed as a slow speed 'shared-way' as proposed in the DCP, and attractively landscaped. Given both the hotel which will have retail frontages and generate significant pedestrian movements of guests and visitors, and the adjacent very large seniors housing development, it will be critical for the street to be safe for pedestrians and for its design to be integrated into and complement Birdwood Park.

(d) Right of way/easement and narrow site to the north-west.

This narrow site is highly conspicuous when driving into the city via one of its main 'gateways': the southern end of the site is undevelopable and unsightly and should be integrated into the new landscape of the area. It is recommended that Council initiate discussions, and failing resolution it is a site where compulsory acquisition would be justified in order to achieve an acceptable outcome.

1. Context and Neighbourhood Character

No comments further to the April report.

2. Built Form and Scale

(a) The upper accommodation levels of the hotel to be set back 3.5m from the front boundary with an approximately 10.5m high podium below. This would respond to the podium as proposed in the adjoining RSL development. Although lower than the latter, it would be acceptable in principle, provided that the designs for the two podia are refined to include articulation/stepping etc to ensure that they are sensitively related in detail where they interface.

The podium to the south along King Street adjacent to the RSL development as now proposed reads only as approximately 8.5 metres in height, which is unacceptably low and would not satisfactorily complement that of the RSL building. It is essential for this to be resolved, for example by a framing element at the third floor (RL 13900) –as is the case on the north-western façade (see cross-section drawing DA-012) for this elevation to be acceptable, but not necessarily with a similar screen. Openings in the façade to the car park should also provide some visual screening as viewed from public spaces.

(c) The design of street-level frontages in both buildings now provides for continuous awning cover, with accentuation of the main entry to the RSL building. The design of the hotel frontage should be similarly refined.

The awning as proposed for the hotel is now satisfactory in principle, stepping as it does to emphasize the corner and allow for vehicle entry at the south end. There is potential for detailed design development to express its structure and integrate lighting, signage etc, rather than the presently somewhat bland character of the soffit as suggested in the montage views. Some reference or relationship to the detailed design of the awning on the RSL development, which was separately presented to the Panel is encouraged: the relevant drawings could be made available to the applicant.

Cover to upper-level of carpark

As submitted the upper level of the carpark which extends into the courtyard beyond the footprint of the tower to the north is not covered. This is unacceptable in view of its negative visual and acoustic impacts, particularly in relation to neighbouring and nearby present and future residents. Whilst the Panel continues to urge that the carpark should be fully roofed and greened as a responsible and what would be a very modest gesture in relation to environmental sustainability, at the very least *it must be covered* to ensure that it is not unattractive to look down upon, and to ensure that vehicle movements do not generate any unacceptable environmental impacts.

3. Density

Remains compliant with the LEP standards and acceptable

4. Sustainability

The initial report of the Panel recommended that in view of their large scale both the hotel and the RSL project should include environmental initiatives beyond statutory requirements. In particular it advised that *“...hotel and aged care residential units should not be reliant on year-round air-conditioning...: and that this would not only minimize energy usage, “...but also enhance the ambience and amenity of rooms by ensuring that guests can open windows when the ambient outside temperature is pleasant.”* These comments were further emphasized in the April 2016 report, as well as recommending the greening of rooftops.

The response of the applicants in relation to the present DA submission advises that:-

“The global brand standards for the Holiday Inn Express are governed by the brand owner Intercontinental Hotels Group.” – and that “In particular these standards do not allow for some of the comment made by the UDCG under operating and safety standards, including in particular:-

-Operable guest room windows; and

-Trafficable roof spaces

...unfortunately the brand licence does not permit such variations to the standards.”

The supportive letter from the Pro-Invest Hotels Group is noted, as is the policy of that Group to participate in the IHGs Green Engage system, which is stated to be incorporated into the design, and the ESD report by Cundalls. The development could no doubt readily satisfy minimal statutory environmental standards in NSW, and is not legally required to go beyond this level. As to the two matters about which comment is made:-

.It would be unfortunate if the potential for better amenity of guest rooms is not realized because of the policy of a “global brand”, -simply by providing openable windows as is the case for many other hotels in the area: perhaps the representatives of the proponents who are aware of the temperate climate of Newcastle might explain this to those responsible for drafting the policy?

.It is appreciated that a trafficable roof space at either/or roof level or courtyard level would pose some modest management issues, but the roof could be a very luxuriant and visually inviting green space, without needing public access

5. Landscape

The landscape design in the plans by Terras Landscape Architects is extremely limited in its area of proposed planting, but is generally acceptable in relation to the street-level planting and paving. The public domain paving as indicated appears appropriate, although the material selection is yet to be confirmed. This, along with other components of the streetscape will need to be finalized in consultation with Council and the designers of the adjoining new seniors housing development to ensure consistency in the streetscape.

As to other areas it is accepted that podium planting, although it would enhance the character of the building would require maintenance. The reference to courtyard planting applied to both the seniors housing and to the hotel as discussed above under 'Sustainability'.

6. Amenity

.See comments above under 'Built Form' in relation to the awning.

.Street-front amenity comments have been addressed to the extent possible, with details to be resolved in consultation with Council

.At the eastern end of the corridors obscure glass would resolve the overlooking concerns, and presumably glazing at the other end would be clear to enable views outward.

7. Safety

No further comments

8. Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

No further comments

9. Aesthetics

Generally acceptable with only the following issues discussed at the meeting to be addressed:-

.There should be more 'warmth' in the colour and finish of the horizontal panels on the southern façade

.It would be preferable for the colour and finish of the carpark levels on the southern facade to be more consistent with the 'rust' colour of the screen on the western façade, rather than the dull grey indicated.

.Signage is now acceptable subject to it meeting Council requirements.

. Light spill from the car park to the exterior of the building as viewed from the street, the park and the adjacent proposed seniors living development is a concern – both in respect to car headlights and ceiling lighting. This should be screened to avoid direct viewing into the car park levels and to reduce the visual presentation of the carpark to surrounding spaces at night.

.Amendments Required to Achieve Design Quality

The three critical issues which should be resolved before the application could be supported are:-

- .Covering of the upper level carpark in the northern “courtyard” space
- .Addressing the form of the third carpark level fronting the park to ensure that the podium reads as three storeys and approx. 10.5 metres high
- .Ensuring that there is adequate screening of carpark in relation to its external impacts
- .Refining the colours and finishes to the southern façade.

The detailed design of the public domain is equally critical, but will require time and negotiation with Council, possibly RMS, and the developer of the adjoining RSL site to ensure an urbane outcome for these very important sites.

Other detailed matters raised above are for consideration but not determinative.

.Summary Recommendation

The remaining issues as summarized above should be addressed to the satisfaction of Council before the application is approved, and referred back to the Panel only if considered necessary..