



**URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING**

**ITEM No. 3**

Date of Panel Assessment:	21 September 2016
Address of Project:	89 Park Avenue, Kotara
Name of Project (if applicable):	Westfeld
DA Number or Pre-DA?	2016/00023
No. of Buildings:	1 building
No. of Units:	na
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	none
Attendees:	<u>Applicant</u> Nicky Watson David Winley Kate Murphy Sony Lim  <u>Council</u> Dean Wooding

*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 proposed development involves the addition of 5,855m<sup>2</sup> of gross leasable retail floor space to Westfield shopping centre at Kotara. The proposed works involve:

- The relocation of the Kmart store including the back of house area.
- The addition of 3,239 m<sup>2</sup> of mini majors retail space.
- The addition of 2, 967 m<sup>2</sup> of specialty retail and kiosk
- 121 m<sup>2</sup> of additional storage
- The relocation of Kmart Autobay to the carpark adjacent to Cynthia Street.
- The addition of 189 car spaces on Level 3
- Associated landscape works.

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

The site is located on the corner of Park Avenue and Northcott Drive and extends to Lexington parade to the west and Cynthia Street to the south. The site has historically been a shopping centre surrounded by the residential suburb of Kotara. The centre has progressively grown over the years and attracted further retail development to the north across Park Avenue. The centre was originally surrounded by trees but with progressive additions to the centre the landscaping has been significantly reduced with the centre and associated car park now filling the site. The site is zoned B2 Local Centre.

## **2. Built Form and Scale**

While the buildings exceed the height limit there has been an historic exceedance of this and the present proposal is consistent with a previously approved bowling alley DA and below the existing cinema box adjoining the extension. The overall development is also well within the allowable FSR for the site. The form of the extension is in keeping with the clean simple forms making up the existing development and is generally acceptable

## **3. Density**

NA

## **4. Sustainability**

With such a large car parking area on top of the building, thought could be given to shading cars. Whilst mindful of costs, this could be done by banks of solar panels, or fabric shade structures or shade trees in large pots. This would also improve the aesthetics of the large roof top parking area for nearby residents who look down on it.

## **5. Landscape**

The photo montages do not give a reasonable image of how the development will look in its future context in respect to the capacity for new, appropriately scaled landscape trees and street planting. The latter is severely impacted by overhead cables. The removal of the existing trees along Northcott Drive and around the existing Kmart Autobay will significantly impact on the view to the complex from Northcott Drive. The Panel recommended that the proponent's Arborist and engineers to review the proposal for removing these existing mature trees, as a retaining wall and level changes already exist, and therefore the tree roots are well constrained to allow further development. It is understood that the ground level is proposed to be lowered a further 1m or so at the base of the retaining wall, but this construction should be possible while still retaining the trees.

The progressive removal of the trees that once surrounded the centre combined with the internalization of the centre, has had an unfortunate visual impact. The corner feature on Park Avenue and Northcott Drive is filled with domestic scale plantings so as not to conceal the signage. The Panel felt that the ground level landscaping needed significant improvement with the provision of climbing frames to allow some greening of the vast expanses of blank walls. This may also be able to be done as the building steps in with narrow planter beds of climbers to soften the upper levels of blank walls. There are many examples of greened buildings and internal shopping centres which are attractive additions to streetscapes and the Panel encourages the designers to consider enhancing Westfield in similar ways.

## **6. Amenity**

The proposal potentially improves the amenity of the public inside the development but fails to improve the amenity for people arriving on foot to the centre or for people passing by. Indeed, it removes one of the better pedestrian accesses to the centre, which although it traverses an open car park, is less circuitous and confused than other pedestrian entries. The centre focuses almost exclusively on the public arriving at the centre by car. While it is appreciated that this is the most common method of transport, there is reasonable foot traffic, mostly associated with pedestrians arriving by public transport or walking from the adjacent Homemakers Centre. The opportunity for making a real improvement to the visitor arrival experience should be embraced as part of this development stage, rather than the situation being made even less attractive than it is currently.

The amenity of shopfronts facing into the carpark was questioned, as the proposal will at ground level “bury” these retail spaces even further from natural light and ventilation because of the extension of the enclosed car park.

## **7. Safety**

Improved wayfinding and pedestrian pathways without the necessity to traverse through the carpark to the mall, would improve safety around the site.

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

NA

## **9. Aesthetics**

While the Panel acknowledged the considerable effort by the proponent to improve the aesthetics for the public when they are inside the development, the panel felt that insufficient attention was being given to the exterior of the centre. The Proponent noted the simple box like structures enclosing the additional retail space were in keeping with the existing structures already there. The panel accepts that a logical approach to this addition can be a continuance of the forms that have preceded it and the warm grey metal cladding does become quite recessive in certain weather, however, the addition is still going to be viewed as simply a metal box on top of a carpark. Much more should have been done with the exterior view of this facility, particularly as the higher this development gets the more surrounding areas see it.

Some greening of areas to soften the mass and blandness of the development would improve the overall appearance.

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

The group considers the following aspects of the proposal should be the subject of design development.

- Provision for more landscaping of an appropriate scale around the development particularly at ground level to soften the blank walls facing the surrounding streets. Particularly look at the potential of retaining the existing trees adjacent to the existing Kmart Autobay and along Northcott Drive.

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- Improve the pedestrian pathways through the carpark to access the shopping mall.
- Reconsider the retail areas which will as proposed face directly to the enclosed car-park

**Summary Recommendation**

The issues raised above should be resolved to the satisfaction of Council before the design is approved. If considered desirable by Council any proposed amendments could be referred back to the Panel for further review.