

# DESIGN REVIEW PANEL REPORT

## 4 & 6 PARRAMATTA SQUARE

### SITE

The subject site is known as Parramatta Square Sites 4 and 6 (12-30 Darcy Street) and is located immediately to the north of Parramatta Station forming the majority of the southern boundary of Parramatta Square. It is noted that the site has an area of 12,752m<sup>2</sup> which is an increase in site area from the design competition site of approximately 1900m<sup>2</sup> (Note: the site boundary has been moved 22.8m to the west into the PS 8 site). This increase in site area has been made available as Walker Corporation has entered into contractual arrangements with Parramatta City Council for PS 4 & 6 as well as PS 8 (site of former 'Aspire' tower) and accordingly is able to vary the boundary between sites PS6 and 8.

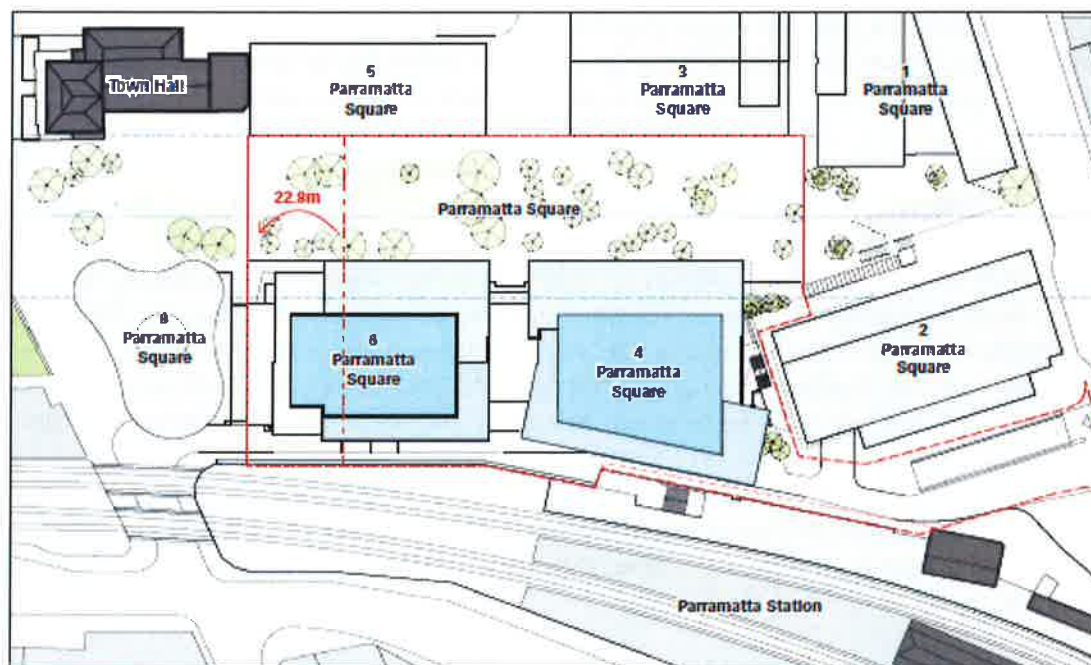


Figure1: Site (Source: Architectural Design Report, JPW, 2016)

### BACKGROUND

The site was the subject of a design competition held in 2013. The Design Competition consisted of two stages:

- Stage 1 International Ideas Competition
- Stage 2 Invitation Only Design Competition

The Stage 1 International Ideas Competition was held on 5 November 2013. Seventy three (73) submissions were received and considered by the Design Competition Jury. Four (4) architects were selected from Stage 1 to compete in Stage 2.

1. Bates Smart Architects
2. Francis -Jones Morehen Thorp
3. Johnson Pilton Walker
4. Mario Cucinella Architects, Italy

The Stage 2 Invitation Only Design Competition was held on 13 December 2013. The Johnson Pilton Walker (JPW) submission was announced by the Jury as the winning design and the scheme was awarded design excellence.

In February 2015 Parramatta City Council wrote to the NSW Government Architect seeking a waiver from the design competition requirement outlined in clause 7.10(5) of Parramatta Local Environmental Plan 2011 on the basis that a previous design competition had been held and design excellence granted. It was identified that changes were required to the design to meet the needs of a proposed future tenant. On 27 February 2015 a waiver was granted by the NSW Government Architect to the design competition requirement subject to the use of an award winning architectural firm (equal to the field participating in the original competition) and the requirement that the competition jury be reconvened as a design review panel to assess the design and oversee the design development prior to lodging a development application to ensure the design excellence provisions are met.

This tenant did not proceed with the site and the jury, whilst presented with the schemes, never formally commented on them.

Walker Corporation were confirmed as the Developer for 4& 6 Parramatta Square in August 2015. They indicated that they wished to continue with the original architects and two tower scheme although the floor space would need to be reduced. The Government Architects Office confirmed in writing (26<sup>th</sup> August 2015 and 28<sup>th</sup> September 2015) that this was seen as a continuation of the original Design Excellence competition and reiterated that the amended scheme should be referred back to the original Design Jury to ensure Design Excellence.

The Design Competition Jury was reconvened on 21 April 2016 and 9 June 2016 to consider the revised proposal. This report outlines the Jury's comments on the amendment proposal.

The original (13<sup>th</sup> December 2013) Design Jury comprised:

1. Graham Jahn AM, Director City Planning Development and Transport, City of Sydney
2. Scott Gregg, Property Development Director, Parramatta City Council
3. Elisabeth Peet, Team Leader Urban Design, Centre and Urban Renewal, Department of Planning and Infrastructure
4. Peter Poulet, NSW Government Architect

The reconvened jury of the 21 April 2016 and 9 June 2016 comprised:

1. Peter Poulet, NSW Government Architect

2. Graham Jahn AM, Director City Planning Development and Transport, City of Sydney
3. Kim Crestani, City Architect, City of Parramatta Council

## COMPETITION WINNING SCHEME 2013

As outlined in the previous design competition report (dated 13 December 2013), the JPW scheme was selected as the winning scheme and was awarded design excellence. The Jury's comments on the scheme were as outlined below:

*The JPW scheme proposes a high legible, naturally lit connection between the rail station concourse and the future Parramatta Square with multiple opportunities for retail activation on two levels. It proposes twin towers which complement but do not compete with the landmark 'Aspire' tower design. These towers will provide 21<sup>st</sup> century flexible workplaces in the heart of Parramatta.*

### Advantages of the Scheme

#### 1. Connectivity

##### a) To Station

- The scheme proposed a greater urban connection for pedestrians to the town centre as a whole as well as providing clarity of connection for the new development
- The scheme also explores and provide the use of secondary pedestrian connections effectively
- The scheme proposes an effective line of sight to the library lantern. Light voids on the upper lobby provide glimpses of sky, creating visibility, activation and legibility
- The scheme activates the Parramatta Square public domain with retail and the possibility of multiple fine grain business opportunities.

##### b) To Parramatta Square public domain

- The scheme proposes a strong edge to Parramatta Square at RL 14.5, defining the southern edge of the Square

##### c) To Sydney Water building

- The scheme proposes a strong connection to the Sydney Water building podium

#### 2. Flexibility of Twin Tower Design

- Good variety of floor plate size options
- Good connection at multiple locations
- Vertical gardens on west side provide an effective and logical buffer to the 'Aspire' residential tower
- Good architectural companion to the landmark 'Aspire' tower, complementing but not competing with it

#### 3. Form of the Building

- Responds to the surrounding buildings with the majority of tower articulation

#### 4. Efficiency

- Double height lifts help maintain efficiency across the floorplates

#### 5. End of trip facility

- Good spiral entry to cycle facilities from public domain

#### 6. Sky lobby and Terrace

- *An effective shared space for tenants, and bookability as a shared resource*
- *The two level treatment allows 270 degree views*
- 7. *Floorplate*
  - *Perimetre columns are pulled well back from the envelope edge which increases efficiency of the floorplates and simplifies internal workplace design*
- 8. *Efficiency and Buildability*
  - *Efficiency floorplates and large flexible spaces are easily divisible for multiple tenancies*
- 9. *21<sup>st</sup> Century Workplace*
  - *The expandable open plan office design provides a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Workplace with good internal amenity and access to semi-outdoor spaces and communal conference facilities in the sky terrace.*
- 10. *Sustainability*
  - *5 Star achieved*
- 11. *Stageable*
  - *Yes in a variety of different configurations.*

Further the Jury identified the following potential improvements:

- *Possible glass reflectivity which can be addressed at the DA stage and materiality of the north façade*
- *In relation to connecting the two towers with bridge, the jury supports this concept of combining the floorplate as needed but only below midrise lobby and only for a limited number of floors*
- *Environmental controls i.e. wind testing.*

## **PRESENTATION OF THE REVISED SCHEME BY JPW**

The JPW presentations to the Design Jury made on 13 April 2016 and 9 June 2016 outlined the similarities between the competition scheme and the current proposal noting that the design intent has been maintained with changes resulting primarily from:

1. the amendment to the site boundary
2. the need for a larger building floorplate to meet tenant requirements, and
3. detailed design development.

## **JURY COMMENTS**

The proponent presented the amended scheme with the increase in site area this has enabled an increase in the footprint of the proposed buildings when compared to the competition winning scheme.

The Jury majority (Mr Peter Poulet and Ms Kim Crestani) concluded that the proposed design demonstrates design excellence consistent with the original competition winning scheme notwithstanding the proposed changes. It noted that the architectural design, language and materiality of the proposal are consistent with the competition scheme and reflect design excellence. It further noted that the scheme incorporates the following positive attributes:

- High level of connectivity particularly between the Station and Parramatta Square
- Strong active contiguous edge to Parramatta Square
- Space between the buildings aligns with future Civil Link (Horwood Place)
- Retention of Darcy Street as a one way connecting street is preferable to the Competition Scheme treatment of Darcy Street and provides appropriate setback to railway line
- Good commercial floorplate which is highly sought after in the location and will meet the needs of future tenants

Wintech presented a wind study indicating the measures that would be required to mitigate wind effects at the threshold of the buildings.

One jury member, Graham Jahn AM, registered a dissenting view considering that the amended design which projects past the 40m set out line by 9.2m (2.7m more than the DCP provides for) for the entire length of the proposal does not achieve design excellence. Whilst he agreed that the scheme in isolation met design excellence in terms of architectural design, language and materiality, he raised concerns that the proposed changes to the design when compared to the competition scheme is to the detriment of the public domain. Mr Jahn's view is that the revised building footprint will move the proposed towers closer to surrounding buildings and to the adjacent Parramatta Square and will thereby result in increased wind impacts and enclosing presence. It was discussed that the previously awarded design excellence scheme also had the potential of detrimental wind effects as noted by the jury for further investigation at DA stage. However the wind effects have not been measured or quantified at the time. Ms Crestani questioned this as this is not able to be quantified or comparisons made as no studies were done on the original scheme. Mr Jahn considers that this impact has resulted in deleterious impact on the amenity and quality of the public domain and in particular Parramatta Square.

Ms Crestani raised issues, after viewing the eye-level 3 dimensional animations with regard to the splayed columns.

The Jury majority noted the issues raised by Mr Jahn and recommended that the City of Parramatta should as a matter of priority, undertake a wind and microclimate study for Parramatta Square taking into account all planned new buildings to ensure that the Square will achieve a suitable wind and microclimate environment. Notwithstanding this issue the Jury majority of members were satisfied that the amended design demonstrates design excellence.

## **JURY CONCLUSION**

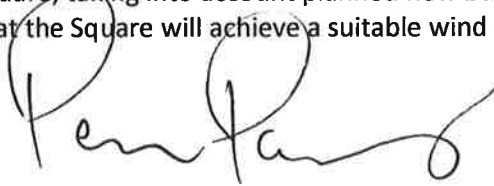
The Jury concluded 2-1 that the proposed amended design demonstrates design excellence in accordance with the design competition winning scheme.

## **CAVEATS ON DESIGN EXCELLENCE**

- FSR not as-of-right. The 9.2m cantilever into the square does not comply with the site specific DCP and therefore is also not as-of-right.
- Final clarification of 10m allocation of retail seating areas will need collaboration with final design of public domain proposition and layout.

- iii. Design develop splayed column language design, test a colonnade solution similar to east Circular Quay, and wind mitigation awnings and potential planting between both towers.
- iv. City of Parramatta to engage animation company or architects to produce 3D animations in colour of entire Parramatta square project in relation to other buildings and the square.

It is recommended that the City of Parramatta immediately engage a suitably qualified wind and microclimate consultants to undertake a precinct wide wind study for Parramatta Square, taking into account planned new buildings and/or building envelopes, to ensure that the Square will achieve a suitable wind environment fit for purpose.



Peter Poulet  
Chair , Design Jury  
NSW Government Architect



Kim Crestani  
City Architect  
Parramatta City Council

Graham Jahn AM,  
Director of City Planning, Development and  
Transport  
City of Sydney