

Design Review Forum

Proposal: Partial demolition of existing surf club and alterations and additions to North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club

Property: 62 Prince Street CRONULLA NSW 2230

Applicant: North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club

File Number: DA17/1001

The following is the report of the Design Review Forum Meeting held on Thursday, 28 September 2017 at the Administration Centre, Sutherland Shire Council, Eton Street, Sutherland. The report documents the Panel's consideration of the proposed development described above.

2. "DA17/1001 - Partial demolition of existing surf club and alterations and additions to North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club at 62 Prince Street Cronulla

Council's David Jarvis; Carolyn Howell; Lauren Franks; Claudia Miro; Harald Strutzenberger and Barbara Buchanan outlined the proposal for the Panel, including providing details of Council's relevant codes and policies

Tom Bergstrom and Cecille Cura (architects); Julie Horder (planner) and Craig McKinnery (Deputy President NCSLSC) addressed the Panel regarding the aims of the proposal and the constraints of the site.

Description of the Site and Proposal

Pre DA or DA: Development Application

File No:- DA17/1001

Proposal:- DA17/1001 - Partial demolition of existing surf club and alterations and additions to North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club

Project Address:- 62 Prince Street Cronulla

Zoning:- R2 – Low Density Residential

Applicant:- Craig McKinnery (Deputy President NCSLSC)

Meeting Date:- 21 September 2017

PAD:- Yes (PAD15/0026)

ARAP Pre-DA:- Yes (ARAP16/0010)

Responsible Officer/Team Leader:- Lauren Franks/ Carolyn Howell

Consent Authority: Sydney South Planning Panel

Key Controls

Sutherland Shire Local Environmental Plan 2015 (SSLEP 2015).

Applicant's Submission

From Pre-DA ARAP Report:

The Panel notes that this development is located in a sensitive environmental zone and important public domain area, and that there are significant matters to be addressed in relation to coastal erosion, structural stability, heritage significance and appropriate use of public land. It is understood that separate procedures to address these matters (including a comprehensive Heritage assessment of the existing building and curtilage, and preparation of a Council Plan of Management) are required in order for this proposal to proceed to submission of a full development application for consent.

In this development context, this Report is therefore restricted to commentary and advice in relation to the design quality of the proposal as currently presented.

These comments still apply.

PRINCIPLE 1 – CONTEXT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

The context of the proposed extensions to the North Cronulla SLSC is both visual and historical. As the previous ARAP report states :

“This is a very challenging project for the large expansion of a heritage-listed public building on a significant and sensitive site in coastal Cronulla. A strong and comprehensive urban design strategy is required, along with the protection of extant built and landscape heritage values.”

The built heritage has been well documented, but the landscape heritage is not as fully explained. The urban east coast beaches of Sydney from Collaroy to Cronulla have followed the early tradition of planting Norfolk Island Pines. Such trees were created as early landmarks, soon after the settlement in Norfolk Island in 1789, because early movement was achieved by water rather than land. Manly, Bondi, Coogee were the earliest beaches to use the pines to define 19th century recreation beaches. This tradition has continued to be followed on urban beachfronts generally.

The visual significance of the SLSC has been considered from certain viewing points but the increased height of the built form along Gerrale Street to the south and Mitchell, Burke & Marlo Roads to the north emphasises the need for a long low built form for the club. Also from the previous ARAP Report:

“The site for the proposed North Cronulla SLSC extensions is a magnificent beachside setting in the north-east corner of Dunningham Park. The Park and three-storey heritage-listed 1950’s Club building together form a significant edge to an important part of the coastal promenade that stretches from Bass and Flinders Point to Wanda SLSC. Behind and to the south of the site and Park are medium-high rise residential/commercial developments while to the north is a large Council car-park.

Dunningham Park contains children's play equipment and a significant number of mature Norfolk Island Pines that represent the character of the Shire's beach and coastal environment, where the primary focus is on the landscape and its associated public amenity....The proposed development represents a substantial change to the existing character and scale of the present Club building complex and the landscape setting within and around Dunningham Park. The single storey gear store is to be replaced with a larger and higher building that will obscure the present visual access to a substantial portion of the pine copse from both the promenade and surrounding areas. The new works will also impact on at least one of the mature pines. It is understood by the Panel that there are significant civil infrastructure works required to support the proposal including sea walls and terracing. Details of these works were not provided with the proposal, however the cumulative impact of the proposal and these elements must be considered as a whole."

The North Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club (NC SLSC) is one of 4 SLSCs on Cronulla Beach, facing Bate Bay. The other 3 Clubs have all undergone some expansion in recent years, including adding commercial facilities such as cafes and restaurants. The work in the vicinity of this Club is covered by three different assessment processes:

- the current development application;
- the Plan of Management for North Cronulla SLSC prepared by the applicant, ready for exhibition in draft form (but not yet exhibited); and
- the Plan of Management for Dunningham Park, prepared by Council.

In addition, there was a Concept Masterplan of Dunningham Park prepared by Council in 2012, that provides an indication of landscape intentions that will be incorporated into a comprehensive Coastal Management Plan for the area. The Panel understand this is currently being prepared. The Panel is concerned that the crucial aspects of siting and interface will be missed in this three-strand process.

For example, as it is being addressed in the Dunningham Park Plan of Management, no landscape design has been included in this current DA package; however, it is vital to the appraisal of a scheme in this location to understand how landscape and built form are working together. Therefore the nature of the ground plane, new paths and entry locations, servicing, levels, boundary planting and other fundamental interface issues have not been demonstrably resolved in the current submission, nor has the interface with any proposals for the sea wall and beach access been shown. The Panel considers these matters essential components of this DA submission.

The Plan of Management for North Cronulla SLSC states that

"11. A licensed restaurant (within the footprint of the building) with a maximum total indoor/outdoor seating capacity of 330 persons subject to all planning requirements and provided that it complies with all relevant laws and does not operate outside the hours of 6.00am to 10.30pm Sunday to Thursday and 6.00am to 12 midnight Friday and Saturday. Such hours include all external activities including setting up, cleaning, packing away and securing the premises;"

It is not clear how this requirement was established nor what impacts its patronage or servicing will have on its context. No parking is proposed for club members or the patrons of the proposed restaurant; given its sensitive location, this is supported by the Panel in principle.

See below for concerns re the degree of Club expansion proposed.

PRINCIPLE 2 – SCALE AND BUILT FORM

The existing surf club is a modest three-storey building in the Post-War Functionalist style, comprising a simple arrangement of interlocking blocks, with a horizontal rectangular form, and a small tower emphasising the corner and entry. Fenestration is mostly punched openings in solid walls. Larger openings to the terrace outside the 1st floor function room are protected with a repetitive frame, which provides a simple counterpoint to the general arrangement of flat walls. Rooms were added to the upper level in the 1960s, reducing the clarity of the original configuration. A single-storey building of low architectural merit housing change rooms and equipment store, with a kiosk on the beach side, is on the southern side of the 1950s building.

As the current DA proposal seems little changed from the Pre-DA proposal, comments from the Pre-DA ARAP Report remain relevant:

“The proposed additions will result in a significant increase in the perceived scale and mass of the Surf Club complex, and this is the major design concern to ARAP in the context of this environmentally sensitive, scenic, and highly valued public recreation area. The additions will dominate the visual environment and impact on the spatial qualities of the surrounding areas.

...The mass and scale of the proposal with its extensive commercial balconies should be more carefully related to the mass, scale and datums of the heritage building. The new works must visually complement the existing building, not dominate it.”

The Panel again questions the size of the additions. Though the Panel accepts that both increased equipment storage and commercial space are required for Club viability, the quantum of change seems excessive in relation to both the increasing use of the Park and the visual appreciation of the heritage Club building which will be dominated by the proposal. The applicant should note the much more modest additions recently proposed for Cronulla SLSC, further south. From a public domain perspective, increasing the building footprint some 10m further west into the Park for equipment storage, while also subsuming existing change facilities, doesn't seem justified. The applicant should show a layout of equipment proposed so that this can be better assessed. If the additional space provided by more efficient change facilities (and minor incursions into the Park) does not provide sufficient space, then perhaps off-site storage could be considered. After all, this is valuable public space in a very popular destination and within area undergoing considerable growth.

An enclosed commercial space of 700m² seating 330 patrons seems out of scale, especially when function spaces already exist in the heritage building. The draft Plan of Management nominates a restaurant as an ancillary use only. The applicant should consider reducing the size and height of this space and compensating with more unroofed outdoor terrace at first floor level, which will be less visually intrusive. In this regard, the applicant needs to be influenced by robust heritage advice, and should submit a Conservation Management Plan or Policy, which details the heritage building's significance and view corridors, and stipulates future refurbishment strategies.

The additions should enhance and strengthen the building's original character. Just as long coastal horizons inspired the horizontal proportions of the original building the additions should build on this strategy, containing height and matching datum lines where possible. At the meeting, the Panel expressed a view that the second floor parapet should form the datum for the new main roof over the commercial space, which should be predominantly a horizontal building. Clerestories or skylights can be provided, but they should be set well back from the front of the new building, no further forward than the façade of the 1950 building. Clerestories or skylights should be much lower than shown, set well below the top roof of the 1950s building. The form of the wide glazed openings could be reconsidered, perhaps with a view to a more regular rhythm as used, for example, to frame the terrace to the 1st floor Function Room in the 1950 building.

The geometries of the curved roofs and balconies do not provide a cohesive whole; they appear open, rather bland, and quite alien to the modest 1950 building – more like a stand-alone club on a green-field site, rather than an addition to a powerful existing context. The angled eastern façade is supported to facilitate a view corridor, but would be more convincing if the ground floor followed the angle shown for the first floor. However, the large first floor proposed is not supported as it will significantly reduce views of the heritage building from the south, and cut off views of the Park from the Esplanade in front of the Club. Any upper level should be well recessed and as transparent as possible, to not dominate the heritage building.

Though the entry foyers have been much improved from the pre-DA submission, a better visual break between the new building and the existing should be created with a glazed entry, set back from the façade of the 1950 building, not pushing forward. The extension to the top floor bar area that includes the lift access should be visually as open as possible, and could be an unroofed terrace. The plant room should be moved away from the top roof, as it continues the connection between the existing building and the new building, when a clear visual break is preferred. Perhaps space for the A/C plant can be found behind the main façade, set on top of the new bathroom addition proposed for the western side of the 1950 building.

The service path at the Park side of the building is not supported. Not only does it remove the softer landscape interface provided by the existing vegetation, it sets up a service entry attitude to the park, which will only increase over time. The provision of outward opening WC doors is an unacceptable presentation to a children's playground and to the public domain generally; it is recommended that the

club reconsider its amenities strategy completely to provide comfortable and secure change rooms and to remove this unfortunate feature from the public domain

PRINCIPLE 3 – DENSITY

The first floor addition seems too big in its setting and extends too far forward. As mentioned at the Pre-DA ARAP: *“This may require a reduction in the overall Level 1 commercial space internal space allocation.”* The ground floor extension to the west will impact on a Park area currently used for events, as well as significant Norfolk Island pine trees, and has not been well justified.

PRINCIPLE 4 – SUSTAINABILITY

Windows should be openable, to make use of the prevailing sea breeze.

The extent of roofing proposed over the first floor balcony will restrict solar access to this area, which is desirable to have in winter.

Rainwater reuse tanks should be provided and used for equipment and bin wash-down, watering of landscape and, ideally, for WC flushing.

The shadow diagram submitted shows an appreciable increase to Park shadowing in winter; the winter 3pm diagrams need to be checked as shadows shown are much less in extent than 9am shadows. Afternoon shadows on the esplanade would be reduced if the commercial space and balcony roofing were to be substantially reduced.

PRINCIPLE 5 – LANDSCAPE

The landscape issues are complex.

The Norfolk Island Pines

First, the loss of two Norfolk Island Pines must be addressed but the cost of transplanting could possibly be better spent on planting 2 new Norfolk Island Pines in the grass area west of the existing building next to the existing pine. This would extend the area of pine groves and contain the building to some extent. The impact of construction on Pines 1-4 will require branch removal that must be done with a highly qualified arborist, including 18 months on-going monitoring of the trees' health. It is also recommended that timber decking be used for paths on the south side of the building to prevent any impact on the existing root systems.

The heritage assessment of the trees needs to be re-assessed :

Does the tree contribute to the heritage significance of the item or landscape?

- *The trees are the primary character of this park and are in abundance throughout the area and so are not rare or featured elements in this landscape context.*

Rarity is not the issue. The heritage significance relates to a cultural landscape and its associative value. It is the collection of pines in the SLSC vicinity that is the key heritage value.

Impact of Waste Management

The Waste Management Plan indicates that :

A new driveway is proposed along the western edge of the building in order for the grease arrestor to be accessed without conflicting with pedestrian movements along The Esplanade. A vehicle can reverse along this driveway to the grease arrestor and exit the site in a forward direction.

This new drive way to service waste management is not supported as it reduces the western side of the SLSC to 'back of house' with resulting deleterious impacts on the park. The Panel suggest monthly access to the grease arrestor would be better located north of the kiosk in the walkway, where sea winds would disperse unpleasant smells.

Pool in a Park

It would be better to visually integrate the SLSC with the park by creating repeating glazed elements in the pool wall (similar to North Sydney Pool) as mentioned in the previous ARAP report.

In order to address the bland/stark design presenting to the Park, consideration needs to be given to providing a vista toward the pool. One option maybe to open up the brick infills within the fence and replacing these panels with glass to provide a view towards the pool, which will result in a more aesthetically pleasing line of sight, and connection from the public space to the development proposed (an example to be considered is that of the North Sydney Swimming Pool).

PRINCIPLE 6 – AMENITY

The amenity of the Park will be reduced through the wholesale loss of considerable area and landscaping. In addition, the western face of the proposal is largely blank (as it is currently). Inserting glazed areas into the west wall of the first floor, and in the western wall to the Pool, would assist to link the building more with the Park, as well as improving surveillance. It is suggested that the deck is extended around the south and west sides of the SLSC to integrate more with the park.

The location of the garbage rooms and grease arrestor also reduces the amenity of the Park – locating them further north, possibly at the NW corner of the heritage building, will be more convenient for vehicle servicing and would allow more integration of the building with the Park. The proposed location of the new Loading Bay will make a poor entry to the heritage building's Stair 2 entry. This bay should be moved further west and a small paved and landscaped entry designed for the entry.

Though the provision of change areas is noted as a primary use for the Club in the draft Plan of Management, the proposal reduces existing large change facilities to fourteen individual toilets, facing outward to the public domain and an adjacent playground. Not only will they be uncomfortable for changing – see ‘Safety’ below – they create an extremely poor visual interface. Ideally, there would be an efficiently designed male and female change/WC/ shower area incorporated into the proposal. The Panel observes that new facilities at Tamarama and Bondi incorporate internal changing rooms and wc’s; it is strongly recommended that this design strategy is reviewed entirely.

The second exit from the storage area will adversely impact on the promenade and the use of the kiosk at a busy potential pinch point; it is not supported. In addition, there is no shelter for people queuing outside either of the two kiosks.

PRINCIPLE 7 – SAFETY

The concept of common change rooms has been dispensed with in favour of individual toilet cubicles that also serve as individual change rooms. While it is claimed that this has been necessitated ‘for community safety reasons’, it results in poor visual amenity to the public domain and the playground, poor amenity for the public and great reduction in public space. Cronulla SLSC has retained its change/WC/shower areas in their recent DA. This is an area that must be redesigned completely. Instead of unsightly exposed cubicles, the upgrade to the surf club must include change rooms for the community’s use that are public, accessible, safe and amenable.

The Statement of Environmental Effects, Clause 3.3, states that the truck servicing the grease arrestor will reverse down the new driveway along the western façade – this is not a safe manoeuvre in a park environment and cannot be supported by the Panel. The grease arrestor should be relocated close to the Loading Bay.

The current planting bed on the west side of the pool is seen as a hazard, as it can facilitate illegal entry. This planting could be relocated on the other side of the suggested decking. The following recommendation from the SEE is not appropriate in terms of safety. Trees with trunks provide much better sight lines than shrubs.

“The proposed vegetation located at the frontage of the site is to be limited to shrubs that do not preclude direct lines of sight from the public footpath to the pedestrian entrances. The vegetation at the site frontage is to be maintained to ensure that vegetation does not obstruct sight lines to building entries;”

PRINCIPLE 8 – DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

While the club provides a great service to the community through its surf patrols and swimming lessons in the pool, it remains a club for the benefits of members and guests. It is a concern that the addition of a large alien form to the park, essentially to earn money for the club, could be seen as an unnecessary imposition on the public good. The Panel believe that the opening of the pool wall to the park should be

considered – at a minimum for that part of the wall facing the Main Foyer entry - to improve the sense of interaction between the Club and the public domain.

PRINCIPLE 9 – AESTHETICS

Pre-DA ARAP comments remains relevant:

“The Panel is interested in a clear conceptual response to the many complex and conflicting constraints inherent in the site and building program. For this project to achieve a high and enduring aesthetic value, it is essential that these issues are resolved within a clear conceptual framework and expressed through appropriate architectural form, character and detail. The perceived scale and mass of the proposed additions should be more related to the height and materiality of the existing second storey parapet height of the heritage building. This could be achieved by lowering the upper parapet and providing a higher, glazed setback clerestory over the main commercial space on Level One. The strong cubic forms proposed for the rear additions may be appropriate, however the additions must to be clearly separated from the heritage building by a transparent or negative/recessed link with visual access through to the Pool. The proposal is weak in this area, with an indeterminate third form that spread across the roof and “glues” the two elements together.

The current form to the façade facing the beach appears heavy, bulbous and bunker-like, and does not sit easily with the relatively fine, restrained form of the existing heritage item. Materials and components must be rigorously selected, specified and detailed to withstand the corrosive salt environment – ferrous products should be avoided wherever possible and manufacturers’ warranties on all components must be provided.”

It should also be added that panel systems relying on surface fixings to light steel framing would not be expected to have a long life in this environment, even if the panel material is durable.

As there are 4 SLSCs in Cronulla, the applicant should consult Council re the colours and theming of the proposal, to enhance identity and public recognition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel remains concerned about:

- size and aesthetic of the addition and its relationship with the existing 1950 building (and the lack of considered design development since Pre-DA)
- the lack of balance between the public domain of the Park and the more private use by the Club.
- relationship with the park at ground level – expansion, blank facades and those toilet doors – and the provision of common change rooms with good amenity (and safety)
- the proposal turns its back on the Park rather than taking the opportunity to have a more transparent ‘pavilion in a park’ building at both ground and first floor levels.
- The relationship with the promenade at southern end – the second exit from the storage area is not supported

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- The fractured planning and assessment process, that has left matters vital to the DA Assessment - such as landscaping, detail and interface issues – unresolved, unexplained and completely undocumented. The redevelopment of this important building requires a much more comprehensive and integrated approach than has been demonstrated to date.

The proposal requires a lot more refinement, alignment with heritage and landscape principles and integration with its public domain before it is can be recommended for approval.”

Brendan Randles
ARAP Chairman

03 October 2017