

URBAN DESIGN REPORT
UWS WESTMEAD PRECINCT
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
LOT 4

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December 2016

CONTENTS

1.0	Introduction	Pg 1
2.0	Urban Design Principles	
2.1	Building height principles	Pg 2
2.2	Built form and context principles	Pg 3
2.3	Open Space Setbacks and Ground Level Address	Pg 4
3.0	Architectural design	Pg 5
4.0	Conclusion	Pg 6

1. INTRODUCTION

This Urban Design Report has been prepared by Russell Olsson, Principal of Olsson Associates Architects, to provide the Urban Design Principles that have informed this project. This report forms part of the Development Application lodged for Lot 4 of the UWS site, Westmead.

Urban design principles have informed the architectural design within a design led process. A design workshop was held at the Turner offices in September 2016, where design principles were outlined and design options discussed. A pre-DA meeting was held with City of Parramatta Planners, where the design options were presented and planning guidance was obtained. A pre-DA meeting was then held with the City of Parramatta Design Excellence Advisory Panel, where design options were presented, to demonstrate the basis for the preferred design for the site. The DEAP panel recognised the design process leading to the preferred design, and provided recommendations for minor amendments to the design.

Since the DEAP meeting, the proposal has been refined in response to the Panel's comments and in terms of architectural detail in preparation for lodging the DA.

2.0 URBAN DESIGN PRINCIPLES

2.1 BUILDING HEIGHT PRINCIPLES

The building height principles for the precinct are to locate the tallest buildings in the west and south of the precinct, and to step building height down from the west and south towards the north and east. This principle is contained within the PLEP building heights, which are 48m in the west and south, 40m in the adjoining area in the west, and 31m to the north and east.

The Stage 1 Concept Plan relied upon a Clause 4.6 request in relation to height and the PLEP heights have been effectively superceded. Nevertheless, the broad building height principles remain, to locate higher buildings in the south- west and lower buildings in the north-east of the precinct.

The proposed building heights have been derived from this building height principle and have been informed by other urban design principles. The tallest building in Lot 5 is 24 storeys. The proposed tower in Lot 4 is 21 storeys, so that the principle of stepping down from the south-west is retained. This is consistent with the building height principles - when viewed from Parramatta Marist High School, the building heights step down from 24 storeys to 21 storeys and to 10/9 storeys on the northern side of Lot 4. It is desirable that the tower heights on Lots 5 and 4 are not the same, to avoid a monumental, symmetrical composition of towers and to reinforce the topography and complement other stepped building heights.

Other urban design principles have informed the creation of a range of building heights, including towers. These principles are to:

- maintain a consistent perimeter block height of 9 storeys as a datum on a number of lots
- reduce the street wall height along the Reserve to 6 storeys to allow for better access to the Reserve. This lower height is approximately one-third of the height of the corner tower, creating good one-third and two-third proportions in the tower/street frontage heights
- create a substantial 16m setback from the boundary of Lot 3
- comply with SEPP 65 ADG guides for building depths and separations

All these urban design principles contribute to the creation of a tower height of 21 storeys, perimeter block heights of 9/10 storeys and one 6 storey building height. There are no adverse environmental impacts resulting from these heights in terms of views, loss of solar access to properties or loss of privacy.

The proposed heights are the outcome of a carefully considered urban design strategy for the lot in the context of previous planning controls, proposed buildings within Lot 4 and current built form proposals for other lots in the precinct.

2.2 BUILT FORM AND CONTEXT PRINCIPLES

The design relates to its context in terms of

- built form and
- open space - the Internal Road and the Reserve

2.2.1 Built form

The built form is comprised of

- the existing heritage building on Lot 1 - St Vincents
- the proposed buildings on Lot 5
- the proposed WSU buildings on Lot 2
- the proposed building on Lot 3

Existing heritage building on Lot 1 - St Vincents

The existing heritage building on Lot 1, St Vincents, is the symbolic gateway to the precinct. Its curtilage is created by the street layout around Lot 1. This curtilage places the heritage building within a landscaped setting. In Lot 4, the proposed building height closest to St Vincents is 9 storeys. This is the same height as 9 storey buildings in Lot 2 and creates an appropriate built form relationship with St Vincents.

Proposed buildings on Lot 5

The proposed buildings on Lot 5 step up from 15 storeys at the eastern end of the lot to 24 storeys on the western end of the lot. The proposed built form for Lot 4 also steps up from east to west. At the eastern end it is 9 storeys stepping up to 21 storeys on the western end of the lot. These lower heights in Lot 4 compared to Lot 5 provide an appropriate stepping down in height from the railway line corridor down towards the north-east. These stepped heights relate well to the topography, which slopes approximately 6m down from the railway line (approx RL 33.4) to Lot 3 (approx RL 27.35)

This approach is consistent with the PLEP and Concept Masterplan building height principles for the precinct.

Proposed WSU buildings on Lot 2

The proposed 9 storey buildings on the eastern end of Lot 4 relate well to the proposed 9 storey WSU buildings on Lot 2 on the eastern side of the Internal Road.

Proposed building on Lot 3

The proposed 9/10 storeys on the northern side of Lot 4 relates to the topographical change. The height relates to the proposed commercial building on Lot 3 due to the proposed building setback from Lot 3, the right of access, the sloping topography and the principle of stepping down building heights to the north-eastern side of the precinct. The building setback from Lot 3 is 16m, which contains the 6m right of access. The topography slopes down from Lot 4 to Lot 3, and the stepped building heights reinforce the topography. The proposal is consistent with the building height

principles in the Masterplan for the precinct.

2.2.2 Open Space

The building heights relate well to the open spaces in the precinct, creating open spaces that are well defined by consistent built form, informed by environmental design principles.

The Internal Road

The Internal Road between Lots 2 and 4 is well defined by 9 storey buildings on both sides of the space. Proposed Building A1 on Lot 5 is also 9 storeys, creating a consistent datum of 9 storeys on the three lots. The built form will define the open spaces with continuous street frontages and consistent heights.

The Reserve

The Reserve is a relatively generous space that extends the open space surrounding St Vincent towards the west, creating a continuous, wide space extending from the eastern to the western end of the Precinct. The Reserve contains large fig trees that make it a verdant space offering opportunities for passive recreation. The existing figs partially overshadow the space and there is potential for the space to be further overshadowed by buildings on Lot 4. For this reason, a lower 6 storey building is located between the 9 storeys on the Internal Road and the 21 storeys on the western end of the lot. This 6 storey gap allows for a wide shaft of sunlight into The Reserve, enhancing its landscaped character and creating further opportunity for passive recreation with good amenity.

2.3 OPEN SPACE SETBACKS AND GROUND LEVEL ADDRESS

2.3.1 Open Space Setbacks

The proposed buildings are set back from the open space areas to create ground level privacy for apartments and a well designed interface between the pedestrian footpath and the building. A 2m setback from the footpath to the ground level of the building is provided along the Internal Road in the east and from The Reserve along the southern boundary of the lot. The setback area allows for landscaping and the transition between topographical levels, to maintain privacy to ground floor apartments. Steps in the landscaped setbacks and 1:20 footpath falls create an interesting and functional streetscape treatment. Street trees are provided to the Internal Road and Reserve frontages, to enhance pedestrian amenity and to place the building ground levels within a landscaped setting.

At key corners, such as the intersection between the Internal Road and the Reserve, a high lobby entry to the building marks and activates the corner. The entry lobby to the tower at the western end of the lot is also prominent, being highly visible from the Reserve, with street level activity and a gym adjacent to the entry.

Cafe, retail and commercial spaces will be provided in Lots 1, 2 and 3, to allow for active frontages and social interaction in the precinct.

The playing fields of the Parramatta Marist High School are located to the west of the lot, and a landscaped transition between the playing fields and the proposed buildings is provided. A 6m setback along the boundary with the playing fields provides privacy to apartments, allows for mass planting in a deep soil area, to maximise privacy for residents and to create a landscaped edge on the schools playing fields.

3.0 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Built form proportions

The design approach to the built form proportions is to create horizontal proportions in the tower building, and to create vertical proportions in the lower level perimeter buildings.

The tower has a simple and elegant composition of white horizontal balconies that emphasise the curved corners of the tower when viewed from a distance. The horizontal proportions visually reduce the perceived height of the tower.

The lower perimeter block buildings have vertical proportions which articulate the relatively long facades with balcony bays and windows. These vertical proportions are emphasised with bay window boxes that project past the roof top, creating an articulated skyline silhouette. This articulation in the facades and the roofline creates visual interest when viewed from the street and assists in breaking down the scale of the perimeter block forms.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The design of Lot 4 is consistent with the building height principles that are contained with the PLEP height of buildings plan and the Concept Masterplan. The Concept Masterplan was based on a Clause 4.6 request regarding building height and the Concept Masterplan boundaries do not correspond to the PLEP heights of buildings plan, resulting in the effective abandonment of the PLEP height plan by Council.

The building height principles in the PLEP are still relevant to the extent that building heights in the PLEP are taller in the west and south of the precinct and reduce in height towards the north and east of the precinct. The same building height principles are demonstrated in this proposal.

The proposed tower in Lot 5 is 24 storeys. The proposed tower in Lot 4 is 21 storeys, so that the principle of stepping down from the south-west is retained. Also, it is desirable that the tower heights on Lots 5 and 4 are not the same, to avoid a monumental, symmetrical composition of towers and to reinforce the topography and complement other stepped building heights.

Other urban design principles that inform building heights are to:

- maintain a consistent perimeter block height of 9 storeys as a datum on a number of lots
- reduce the street wall height along the Reserve to 6 storeys to allow for better access to the Reserve.
- create a substantial 16m setback from the boundary of Lot 3
- comply with SEPP 65 ADG guides for building depths and separations

The proposed heights are the outcome of a carefully considered urban design strategy for the lot in the context of previous planning controls and current built form proposals for other lots in the precinct.

This approach complements the topography and is respectful of the scale and heritage significance of the St Vincents building.

The proposed 9 storey building height on the Internal Road complements the 9 storey height of buildings in Lot 2 on the eastern side of the Internal Road, and the 9 storey building on the southern side of the Reserve in Lot 5. The 9-10 storey height along the northern side of Lot 4 relates to the topographical change and complements the other 9 storey buildings in the precinct. A good relation is achieved with the commercial building in Lot 3 due to the substantial side boundary setback.

The ground level interface between the street and the private domain provides privacy to apartments and a well designed streetscape, with stepped landscape areas in the 2m setback and gently sloping footpaths. Street trees add to the front setback landscaping to provide a landscaped setting for the buildings.

The architectural design of the buildings is based on horizontal proportions in the tower and vertical proportions in the perimeter block buildings. The tower's composition is simple, calm and elegant, with the horizontal banding emphasising the curve of the tower. The vertical bays in the lower level buildings, and the bay windows projecting above the rooftop, create vertically articulated facades that break down the scale of the perimeter buildings.

