

19 October 2018

HERITAGE PEER REVIEW: 6-8 PARRAMATTA SQUARE

1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared in response to a request from Walker Corporation to provide a Peer Review of the proposal for the subject site. I have reviewed:

- The Design Rationale (JPWDR), dated 2 October 2018, prepared by the project architects JPW for DA 47/2018.
- Parramatta LEP 2011 Assessment Report (Prepared by Walker)
- Parramatta DCP 2011 Assessment report (Prepared by Walker)
- The reports of NBRS for the City of Parramatta, including their Peer Review and Heritage Impact Statement,
- The final heritage report for Parramatta Council by Tropman and Tropman Architects (TTR),
- The correspondence from the Heritage Division of the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH),
- Design Excellence Competition Brief
- Jury Report
- NBRS response to Independent Review by TTR and OEH

The subject site at 6-8 Parramatta Square, Parramatta, is not listed as a heritage item, nor is it located within a heritage conservation area. However, the subject site is located in close proximity to a number of cultural heritage items, including built, European archaeological and Aboriginal archaeology of local and state significance.

The Town Drain listed in Parramatta LEP 2011 (L647), known as the 'Convict Drain', is identified as being located on the northern edge of the site. Remnant parts the drain were identified and removed as part of the archaeological excavation works approved under separate DA's.

2.0 Consideration

I will respond to the application by using the headings and discussion raised by Tasman Storey in the Tropman and Tropman Report (TTR), then cross reference the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and NBRS reports.

2.1 The Appropriateness of Scale

The OEH has objected to the proposal on the basis of scale. The scale is relative to the overall plans for Parramatta and the adjacent heritage items will always be viewed in the context of high rise buildings. This is acknowledged in all reports, including TTR and NBRS. The use of the Burra Charter in this regard has been raised but I do not see that it should be explored further for the purposes of this application other than included in the above reports and my discussion below. I accept that the Burra charter could be reviewed in future with respect to these sort of circumstances.

I also accept that the scale per se of the overall building is not in contention but will analyse the ground plan below.

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I am not convinced by the argument put by OEH that the building should be made more solid at ground level. The openness of the foyer- and views of the adjoining heritage items are a part of the integral design and the scale of the columns and strength of the building, including the screened glazing, will ameliorate the overall scale of the building at ground level. A contemporary building need not have the same density as a 19C building to provide a successful relationship but may use other devices as referenced in this report. This will also be supported by the public domain plan discussed below.

The opinion is well put by NBRS when it is said:

The podium and heritage items will be read together to create the civic precinct while the tower, due to its height and detailing, will be read as a separate component.

NBRS correctly says that the building is an expression of a civic place. They also state, and illustrate, that *"there is no identifiable 'consistent street wall' around Bicentennial Square and Church Street Mall. Rather, the buildings are at various setbacks from these pedestrian areas and are at various distances from each other, such that the spatial effect is of a collection of buildings with frontages to the Square and Church Street, rather than a 'wall.'*" When the Town Hall was erected it was of a larger scale than the surrounding buildings and now its addition is to be a very contemporary form. This addition was designed by an international consortium comprising French firm Manuelle Gautrand Architecture and the Australian firms Design Inc. and Lacoste Stevenson. Whilst it steps away from the Town Hall it has a strong contemporary relationship to the building. The subject site is one that cannot be of a similar scale - even of the civic extension to the Town Hall - as it is strategically planned to be a service building for central Parramatta and part of a suite of buildings of approved density for the second CBD. Central Sydney is similar in that new contemporary buildings are erected in association with heritage items and a similar analysis to that prepared in the JPWDR is an appropriate way to realise the difference scale, which is inevitable in a major city centre. This is explored in the NBRS response to the Independent Review in the Case Study analysis at 1.3.

I have also reviewed the Public Domain Plan and consider that it is appropriate for the scale and spatial qualities of the proposed building.

2.2 Street Views

The Council, TTR and NBRS are both comfortable with the street views. The OEH letter does not raise these specifically.

The design rationale by JPW looks at the view issue in detail. The rationale has been influenced by the Design Jury. The 1.0 Heritage section includes a response to the Town Hall and the screen elements in the foyer glazing have been increased to respond to the horizontal expressed detailing of the Town Hall. Whilst I feel that this may be difficult to interpret on site I believe the increase in density of the screening of the glazed foyer will assist in breaking down the scale of the podium by the resultant complexity of the design.

Whilst the JPW Design Rationale (JPWDR) has not included St Johns Church in the same manner as the Town Hall the sandstone columns are referencing the material of the Church. Whilst the use of sandstone can sometimes be superficial in façade design the scale, circumference and quality of the subject solid sandstone is considered a suitable reference material.

The Alignment analysis of the JPWDR for the North side tower provides an argument for the height of the soffit as RL39.55. This height provides for the view along the square to allow the visual appreciation of the Church towers. The vista looking west along the square is one which is very important and this has been recognised in the design.

The steps to the podium are a response to flooding and levels however the steps in association with the large columns provide a space with its own integrity and a shadow line along the length of the colonnade. The steps will provide for a meeting and sitting space on the Mall which will extend the Mall and Square into the building. Public design will be discussed below.

The TTR states that the SHI by NBRS is deficient in its assessment of bulk and scale - whilst not disagreeing with the actual bulk and scale - however the JPWDR, as discussed above, does analyse these aspects in terms of the proposed impact on heritage.

2.3 Materials and Built Form

The TTR says there is no analysis or comparative materials palette assessment between the items and the proposal.

Whilst this may be correct in part the JPWDR does analyse the relationship in detail. The use of the sandstone as a solid quality material plays a role in this analysis. I consider that in a situation where the sandstone Church, the rendered Town Hall traditional and contemporary buildings of varying materials are in the vicinity that the "setting" and "context" issues are reduced as there is no 'language' for the proposal to follow in terms of the "precinct". The surrounding heritage items as illustrated in Fig 1 of the NBRS HIS Response show the site as surrounded by heritage items yet the sites are large and diverse, such as the Station, and do not have a consistent language. Any new building in this area should have its own integrity, notwithstanding its opportunity to relate to the items, as discussed.

2.4 Human Scale

It is agreed by everyone that there cannot be a solution to the human scale of the proposal overall however the design review has addressed a number of the issues in this respect. The reference to the Burra Charter for 'New Work' by the TTR is rather misleading as the principle relates more to the addition or work on an item or conservation area rather than a new city building in the vicinity of heritage items. The response by the JPWDR to the Design Jury recommendations have provided in Option 1b a suite of changes that have responded to the scale of the proposal in terms of the address to the Mall and Square.

2.5 Statements of Significance of the Two Key Heritage Items

These are noted and accepted. The significance of these sites have been acknowledged and responded to through the entire Design Jury and DA process`

3.0 Conclusion

I am satisfied that the proposal is worthy of being judged as Design Excellence.

I am satisfied that the HIS reports prepared by NBRS, and reviewed by TTR, are of the standard to meet the Heritage Impact of the proposal.

The submission by the OEH is acknowledged however the response is too simplified with regard to the planning controls and has been well satisfied by the design itself and the other reports/feedback.

The JPWDR has examined in detail the response to this site and its heritage context. The TTR has set proper parameters for Peer Review and has raised a number of local and wider issues for this scale of development.



My understanding in examining the Tropman and Tropman Report is that the proposal is in principle acceptable to them and the matters raised have been addressed by JPW in response to their winning design and subsequent feedback from the Design Jury.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Davies", followed by a small dot.

Stephen Davies
Director