



## **URBAN DESIGN CONSULTATIVE GROUP MEETING**

### **ITEM No. 7**

Date of Panel Assessment:	20 June 2018
Address of Project:	735 Hunter Street, Newcastle
Name of Project (if applicable):	—
UDCG Number:	2017/00054
No. of Buildings:	1
Type:	Commercial development with car parking and retail.
Declaration of Conflict of Interest:	—
Attendees:	<u>Applicant</u> Gary Fielding John Streeter Tom Elliot Chris Speak  <u>Council</u> David Paine

*This report addresses the nine Design Quality Principles set out in the Apartment Design Guide (2015) under State Environmental Planning Policy No.65.*

*These principles are also appropriate for applications which do not include residential flats or do not meet the strict criteria of the ADG and for developments in sensitive urban, heritage or natural contexts where complex design issues must be assessed.*

### **Background Summary**

This is an amended proposal for a large commercial building above a parking and retail podium. Subject to incorporation of recommendations made at the meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 the UDCG supported the design. These have now been addressed.

Previous comments from 22 February 2018 are included in italics.

## 1. Context and Neighbourhood Character

22/02/2018: *The subject site is located within the Newcastle Heritage Conservation area and it spans between Hunter Street to the north and Little King Street to the south, bordering Birdwood Park. The site appears to be relatively level, with only approximately 600mm fall from Hunter Street to Little King Street. The southern part of the site contains the historic Army Drill Hall (a local heritage item) which also means that only the northern part of the site can be developed. With the majority of the bulk and scale of the proposal focused to the north:*

- (i) overshadowing to Birdwood Park is reduced,*
- (ii) any potential privacy conflicts with the approved 'vertical' seniors village ('site B') to the south-west are minimized.*

*To the west of the Hunter Street section of the subject site is a row of three terrace houses and 'Latec House', a 14-storey residential development.*

*This part of Newcastle is currently the focus of several new developments, and being close to the Wickham transport interchange it is ideal for a major commercial building. This proposal is also the last major part of the Birdwood Park redevelopment. The nearby Holiday Inn (Site A) is under construction, the Childcare Centre (Site D) is nearing completion. The RSL Life seniors living building (Site B) is approved. The present proposal largely completes the redevelopment of the holding, accommodating an important through-site link from Hunter Street to Birdwood Park.*

20/06/2018

No additional comments.

## 2. Built Form and Scale

22/02/2018:

*The design proposes an approximately 22m high, 5-storey podium structure. This podium has ground floor retail to both Hunter Street and the north-south pedestrian laneway link. The car-park entry is from Little King Street leading to four levels of parking above. Above the podium there is a 7-storey commercial building with a roof-top function terrace.*

*The primary building height is approximately 48 metres, although the roof-top function room and outdoor terrace will raise this potentially up to around 51m. This is still within the maximum allowable height on this site, but marginally exceeds the level wherein an architectural competition is required. The UDCG believe that this marginal variation does not require a competition, especially in light of the considered and quality approach proposed thus far.*

*The base of the podium is modelled in such a way that its underside (soffit) curves up towards the heritage townhouses to the west on Hunter Street, and then falls down to the Army Drill Hall to the south. This is an effective way to accommodate the shift in scale from new to old and to open up entry to the laneway. However, while this part of the podium design is effective, on Hunter Street it is above the street-wall height anticipated in the Newcastle LEP and it can be, depending on its detailing and materiality, visually bulky. The UDCG acknowledges that there is not currently a uniform street wall height in the area, and that some recent approvals in the area do not precisely comply with council's controls. However, the UDCG's preference is for any development to work as closely as possible with the Newcastle's street wall height control.*

*The proposed commercial tower above the podium is located approximately 11.5 meters from the side façade of 'Latec House', but it proposes locating its lifts and services to this part of the plan, sensibly minimizing any potential amenity conflicts.*

*To the south west of the proposed tower the separation distance to the corner of the approved seniors living development is approximately 18 metres. Provided that some screening or façade treatment is employed for the commercial tower in this area (to limit its capacity to look directly at the residential apartments and their balconies) then the setback distances are acceptable.*

*The proposed office tower cantilevers over the rear section of the Army Drill Hall. The renderings suggest that this is a successful relationship but it must be confirmed at DA stage.*

*Overall, built form and scale is well handled on this complex site.*

20/06/2018

The Group noted previous recommendations as to built form and scale have been addressed. The curving of the facade of the commercial tower on the western side would significantly improve its relationship to adjacent development and is commended.

### **3. Density**

Compliant and acceptable.

### **4. Sustainability**

Acceptable for office accommodation

### **5. Landscape**

22/02/2018:

*The laneway, podium level and roof all require landscape design at the next stage.*

Landscape plans by experienced landscape architects 'Terras' were submitted with the current application. They indicate paving and planting which has the potential for a very attractive outcome in the forecourt, pedestrian laneway and surrounds to the Drill Hall.

Along the Hunter Street frontage the proposed bluestone footpath paving is 'as per NCC Public Domain Manual'. It appears that there is adequate space for an additional street tree which should be included subject to Council approval.

### **6. Amenity**

22/02/2018:

*The following issues should be considered:*

- (a) While an awning to Hunter Street is desirable, there are several complicating factors which should be considered. First, the three terrace houses to the west on Hunter Street do not have a street awning (and never will) and the adjacent Latec House (Newcastle Central Plaza) has only a limited awning over its entry. Second, a street awning may compromise the clarity of the entry to the proposed laneway, and the nice relationship between the podium soffit and the terrace houses that is suggested in the design. It is also noted that the angled columns in the original variation of the laneway entry space were more welcoming than the regular columns and canopy depicted in the update and animation.*
- (b) Ensure that the south-western corner of the commercial tower is treated in some way to minimise amenity conflicts with the nearby approved seniors living development.*
- (c) Reducing the size of the proposed roof-top meeting or function spaces will also assist in minimising amenity conflicts with Latec House and the approved seniors living development.*

20/06/2018:

These previous recommendations have been addressed.

The

### **7. Safety**

22/02/2018:

*Consideration will need to be given to how security the more secluded areas around the Drill Hall and the proposed building are managed at night. While the laneway may have sufficient casual*

surveillance to remain open, other spaces, such as the walkway between the Drill Hall and the proposed building is not well overlooked and it is probable that this area requires physical security measures after hours.

**20/06/2018**

The Group noted previous recommendations as to safety have been addressed.

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

NA

## **9. Aesthetics**

22/02/2018:

*No detailed comment at this stage, however:*

- (a) *Be wary of any façade treatment which exaggerates the vertical scale of the podium. The podium should have a balance of vertical and horizontal elements.*
- (b) *Be wary of dark glass to the tower curtain wall. Too often lately, double-glazed, engineered façade systems appear very dark and heavy, and the vertical exterior blades (which are meant to give them some life and possibly improve environmental performance) are so minor as to have no alleviating affect on this visual property.*

**20/06/2018**

Previous recommendations as to aesthetics have been addressed and the character and design of the facades is excellent in principle. The detailed design and final selection of external materials/colours will be critical to ensure that:-

- The building will not be too dark in colour/tone or too assertive
- The screening of facades of the car-park will fully block out any view of cars, headlights etc from the street and nearby buildings.

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

22/02/2018:

*The following issues should be considered as part of the next stage of the design:*

- (a) *Podium street wall height (expression, modelling and materiality) to Hunter Street.*
- (b) *Design of the entry from Hunter Street to the laneway including landscape consideration.*
- (c) *Screening and control of any possible amenity conflicts with developments to the west and south west.*
- (d) *After hours security to secluded ground areas.*
- (e) *Undercover protection for pedestrians in Hunter Street linked to the adjoining buildings.*

*Issues Raised by the Government Architect:*

- (a) *A more sensitive relationship to the heritage listed Drill Hall.*
- (b) *Activation of the proposed laneways (which are supported)*
- (c) *Screening of the above ground carpark.*

**20/06/2018**

The three issues raised by the Government Architect and the five issues raised by the Urban Design Consultative Group have been address in the amended design, which is considered to achieve very high quality.

## **Summary Recommendation**

22/02/2018:

*The UDCG strongly supports the proposal at this stage.*

20/06/2018

It is recommended that the requirement for a design excellence competition be waived for the reasons that:-

- (a) The design is already of excellent quality which has been achieved during an extended process of consultation with the Panel and Council
- (b) Both architectural and landscape consultants have extensive experience and reputation for work of high quality
- (c) The height of the building is only marginally above the 48m. level which triggers requirement for a competition.
- (d) A key objective during the consultation process has been to ensure that the development will fit discreetly within its context, not to produce a building which 'stands out' from its neighbours.

If exemption from a competition is approved, the applicants should continue to consult with the Panel, in particular for agreement as to final selection of external materials and finishes to ensure that the outcomes summarized above under 'Aesthetics' are achieved.