

# **DA I483/2018 – Short Street Mixed Development Masterplan Amended Stage I DA - June 2020**

## **Review of urban design quality**

### **A Introduction**

- 1 This review of urban design quality has been prepared by a member of the *Central Coast Urban Design Panel*, and relates to the following development application documents:
  - i Architectural plans: CKDS Architecture dated 26 June 2020;
  - ii Landscape plans: Xeriscapes dated 25 June 2020;
  - iii Planning report (SoEE): Beveridge Williams dated 26 June 2020;
  - iv Various supporting documents which include:
    - Public Domain Improvement Plan: CKDS Architecture dated December 2019 (sic).
- 2 The current documents were preceded by three versions of the Stage 1 DA, of which two were the subject of urban design reviews and detailed discussion with the Proponents:
  - i December 2018 (reviewed October 2019);
  - ii December 2019;
  - iii January 2020 (reviewed February 2020).
- 3 Urban design considerations for this application are provided by local and state controls which may be listed according to the following hierarchy or sequence:
  - i *Wyong LEP 2013* clause 7.11: design excellence considerations for *Key Sites*;
  - ii *Wyong DCP 2013* Chapter 6.1 section 3.4 (*DCP 6.1 – 3.4*): detailed requirements for the Denning and Short Streets carpark;
  - iii *DCP 6.1 – 2.1*: design excellence considerations for *Key Sites*;
  - iv *DCP 6.1 – 2.2*: design quality considerations for *Key Sites* (in effect, these adapt the *SEPP No 65* design quality principles);
  - v *DCP 6.1 – 2.3 to 2.5*: detailed considerations for *Key Sites* in terms of green building design, social and economic outcomes;
  - vi *DCP 5.3 – 3.2.5 and 3.2.6*: envelope controls for developments in The Entrance Town Centre;
  - vii *DCP 5.3 – 2.7*: desired character outcomes for developments in The Entrance Town Centre.
    - Note that items iii to v above generally reiterate *Key Site* provisions in the DCP at 5.3 – 5.2.

- 4 Noting the complexity and repetition which are features of local controls that apply to *Key Sites*, this assessment of design quality has considered the following five topics:
- i Technical presentation of the Stage 1 DA;
  - ii Built form: in terms of tower and podium elements;
  - iii Street-level activity: in relation to publicly-accessible areas, ground floor uses and activated frontages, locations of service and vehicle entries;
  - iv Residential amenity: for apartments, common areas, and developments nearby;
  - v Public benefits: in terms of public domain improvements and green building solutions.

## **B Summary design quality opinion**

- 5 From the perspective of urban design, the amended stage one development proposal remains unsatisfactory:
- i Due to absence of a comprehensive and compelling design rationale;
  - ii Due to insufficiency of information and details which have been presented as a framework for a detailed stage two application;
  - iii Due to qualitative shortcomings which relate directly to the proposed stage one development;
  - iv Due to non-conformities with significant requirements that are specified by the local controls.
- 6 The amended stage one proposal demonstrates a number of urban design shortcomings:
- i Shortcomings relate to public frontages which are unlikely to generate vibrant activity within the town centre, insufficiently-coherent building forms which would have undesirable visual impacts, poor amenity of common areas within the residential component of the proposed mixed development, and public benefits which are unsatisfactory or insufficient.
  - ii Documents do not present a comprehensive or compelling design rationale, and fail to provide sufficient dimensions or 'structured' details which are necessary to guide any future stage two development application.
- 7 Consequently, design excellence considerations of the local controls have not been addressed by the current proposal, and are highly-unlikely to be satisfied by any future stage two application which might follow this stage one proposal.

## **C Technical presentation**

- 8 The stage one DA does not provide an appropriate framework for a subsequent detailed stage two development application:
- i Architectural documents present a convoluted sequence of information which does not sufficiently-specify dimensions or parameters for the stage one DA.

- ii In essence, the stage one DA is described by ten pages which are scattered throughout the current 46-sheet set:
    - Site plan DA-1003;
    - Ground, podium and typical tower plans DA-0018;
    - Ground floor optional uses DA-0019;
    - Elevations DA-2001 to 2004;
    - Sections DA-3001 and 3002.
  - iii The proposed stage one envelope does not provide sufficient dimensions for footprint and floorplate elements:
    - DA-0018 includes a sample of ground floor setbacks, but does not fully-specify the alignments of exterior walls on each level;
    - For residential levels, setbacks are measured to the perimeters of extensive balconies, and do not identify exterior walls or include articulation zones which might offer flexibility to accommodate detailed floor-planning solutions by a future stage two DA;
    - There is no basement ‘envelope’ and, consequently, no clear indication of deep soil areas that are critical elements of sustainability and public domain improvements.
  - iii Proposed public domain areas are not dimensioned or clearly defined:
    - There is a reliance upon prescriptive design solutions rather than a ‘zoned framework’ which might direct detailed design development by a future stage two DA.
- 9 For reasons which are explored in later sections of this report, any future stage two DA would depend upon extensive design development in order to demonstrate design excellence:
- i Due to shortcomings which are inherent in the stage one proposal, a future stage two application could not merely follow loose parameters which are provided by the proposed stage one envelope.
  - ii In order to establish suitably-clear foundations for design evolution and assessment of any future stage two DA, extensive and complex conditioning of the current stage one DA would be necessary.

## **D Built form**

- 10 Carefully-composed building forms are essential elements of design excellence which are noted repeatedly by the applicable controls:
- i The LEP’s design excellence provisions in sub-clause 7.11(3);
  - ii Desired character provisions in chapter 5.3 section 2.7 (5.3 - 2.7) of the DCP;
  - iii General design principles for Key Site developments in 5.3 - 5.1 of the DCP;

- iv Matters for consideration in relation to Key Sites at 5.3 – 5.2 of the DCP;
  - v Design excellence requirements for Key Sites in chapter 6.1 of the DCP.
- 11 Important elements of the stage one DA do not demonstrate comprehensive analysis, and reveal unsatisfactory outcomes:
- i In relation to the ground floor, logic of 'perimeter' walls and the interior layout are not evident, and also are undesirable:
    - West-facing shopfronts incorporate an irregular 'indented' alignment which is setback approximately 10m from faces of the residential podium at level two, and the resulting 'shop-front terrace' has a two storey height;
    - North-facing shop-fronts have an average setback of 8m from the terrace edge which faces Bayview Avenue;
    - Adjacent to major public places (the future Lakeside Plaza forecourt and Bayview Mall), curvilinear shopfronts create 'convex' public places which are inherently inappropriate settings for public gatherings, and there is no indication that the use or arrangement of interiors would contribute to activation of those convex exterior terraces;
    - Furthermore in terms of outdoor activity, alignments of exterior walls together with depths of exterior terraces create 'commercially-concealed' places – particularly at the northern end of the site - which would compromise viability of tenancies and the extent of pedestrian activity surrounding the development, as well as contributing to a public safety risk for places that would not receive satisfactory surveillance;
    - Commercial visibility of west-facing shopfronts would be further-compromised by planters and level changes which visually-separate indoor activity from public street frontages and mall places;
    - Depth and two storey height of proposed shop front terraces – in particular along the western frontage facing Theatre Lane – are uncomfortably-tall for outdoor dining, and would result in a wind-exposed frontage that offers poor amenity – hence, these areas are unlikely to attract significant level of public activity which is essential for vibrant town centre streetscapes.
  - ii Rationale of the podium form has not been demonstrated, and the associated envelope would be undesirable:
    - Alignment of the podium form partly-overhangs ground floor shop-fronts, and also is partly-overhung by the residential floorplate on level two: irregular relationships between perimeter walls and floorplates appear to be derived from spatial requirements for carparking and apartments rather than for reasons which may be explained by urban design principles;
    - Misalignment of perimeter walls and floorplates creates architecturally-inelegant relationships which are likely to compromise the design excellence of any stage two development application;

- Reasonable compatibility with the nearby heritage-listed former police station is not demonstrated by ‘misaligned’ forms which contain ‘overscaled’ architectural elements – in particular, the two storey undercroft which relies upon exposed supporting structure.
  - iii Some uncertainty surrounds the residential element of the proposed envelope:
    - Curvilinear screens are ‘suggested’ by perspective views of the podium, are ‘ghosted’ on indicative floorplans, but are not annotated on the dimensioned plan DA-0018;
    - The proposed envelope does not incorporate articulation zones which might provide sufficient certainty regarding urban design intent;
    - Consequently, it is unclear whether the proposed residential element would comprise a jagged composition of stepping planes, or whether those planes would be ‘shrouded’ by a curvilinear screen.
- 12 Dimensions and details of the proposed envelope are not specified sufficiently:
- i A limited range of floorplan dimensions are provided by DA-0018:
    - For ‘outermost-portions’ of some ground floor walls;
    - For ‘outermost portions’ of some residential balconies;
    - These drawings are not to scale, and at A3 paper size, are too small to measure (somewhere short of 1:1000);
    - Notably, the drawings do not identify ‘articulation zones’ which typically are employed to provide ‘qualified certainty’ for a stage one proposal.
  - ii Cross-sections and elevations specify some levels:
    - Finished roof-levels;
    - The podium-top at level two;
    - ‘Retail terraces’ facing Short Street, Theatre Lane and Bayview Avenue.
  - iii However, no plan dimensions are provided for key elements of the stage one development:
    - Basements;
    - Deep soil areas (which are critical elements of sustainability), and
    - The level one podium.
- 13 A number of significant and undesirable consequences are the likely results of insufficient dimensioning for the proposed stage one envelope:
- i The conformity with qualitative building form controls cannot be evaluated;
  - ii Insufficient information regarding alignments of exterior walls and the latitude for articulation would prevent efficient planning and assessment of any future stage two development;

- iii Reinforcing this absence of certainty, missing information regarding the proposed stage one 'envelope' is contrary to specific technical requirements that are specified by the DCP in chapter 5.3 section 5.2.c.

## **E Street level activity**

- 14 Street level activity is a fundamentally-important outcome for major town centre developments which is highlighted repeatedly by the applicable controls:
  - i The LEP's design excellence provisions in sub-clause 7.11(3);
  - ii Desired character provisions in chapter 5.3 section 2.7 (5.3 - 2.7) of the DCP;
  - iii Detailed controls for The Entrance Town Centre in 5.3 – 4.2 of the DCP;
  - iv General design principles for Key Site developments in 5.3 - 5.1 of the DCP;
  - v Matters for consideration in relation to Key Sites at 5.3 – 5.2 of the DCP;
  - vi Design excellence requirements for Key Sites in chapter 6.1 of the DCP;
  - vii Specific requirements for the Denning and Short Streets carpark site in 6.1 – 3.4 of the DCP.
- 15 General arrangements of the ground floor and surrounding terraces are unlikely to generate optimum levels of street level activity:
  - i Concerns related to amenity, activity and safety, together with insufficient commercial-exposure, were noted previously at paragraph 8i.
  - ii Although drawing DA-1006 identifies pedestrian desire lines and service areas, the stage one proposal shows insufficient regard for impacts of level changes and visual separation of shopfronts or retail terraces from public places – for example, the future Denning Street plaza which was approved as an element of the Lakeview Plaza stage one development application, and the existing Bayview Mall.
  - iii In relation to activation of the proposed retail frontages and terraces, stage one drawings do not provide 'structured' detail or guidance which would be sufficient to ensure that any stage two development application would achieve design excellence.
- 16 Street activity would be compromised by the absence of active uses within the podium at level one:
  - i The stage one proposal indicates that the entirety of the podium level would be allocated to carparking;
  - ii The extent of proposed above-ground carparking would limit the extent of visible activity which is essential to the vibrance of town centre streets and public places.
- 17 Concerns in relation to street level activity are not mitigated by the detailed landscape concept:
  - i Presumably, that concept forms a key element of required public domain improvements;

- ii However, the landscape concept repeats 'structural' shortcomings which have been created by dimensions and alignments of the proposed shop-terraces, by level changes between terraces and public places, and by planters or stairs which either block or do not optimise visual connections between public places and the proposed terraces.

## **F Residential amenity**

- 18 Residential amenity is an important consideration for design excellence which is raised directly and indirectly by the local controls:
  - i The LEP's design excellence provisions in sub-clause 7.11(3);
  - ii Desired character provisions in chapter 5.3 section 2.7 (5.3 - 2.7) of the DCP;
  - iii Matters for consideration in relation to Key Sites at 5.3 – 5.2 of the DCP;
  - iv Design excellence requirements for Key Sites in chapter 6.1 of the DCP.
- 19 The absence of a sufficiently-dimensioned residential envelope results in limited certainty regarding likely apartment layouts:
  - i Due to dimensions which relate to the faces of extensive balconies, there is the prospect that a future stage two development application would seek to reduce balconies in order to increase residential yield or reduce construction costs.
  - ii In relation to residential feasibility, sizes of balconies are known to have significant impact upon construction costs, and those costs generally cannot be recouped by sale prices which are based primarily upon the number of bedrooms in each apartment.
  - iii Therefore, any stage two application is likely to involve significant 'evolution' of indicative layouts which are illustrated by DA-4003 and DA-4004, which would supersede current 'conceptual' analysis of solar access and cross-ventilation which have a fundamental bearing upon indicative residential yield.
  - iv Consequently, there is insufficient information to confirm whether the current application provides a foundation for design excellence, or sufficient certainty that excellence would be achieved by a future stage two application.
- 20 Indicative layouts which are part of the current application indicate communal areas on the podium top at level two:
  - i Notably, those areas are not indicated by the dimensioned residential floorplate on DA-0018, and there are differences between architectural plan DA-4003 (which shows one open space) and landscape plan L102 (which shows two open spaces).
  - ii Arrangements and locations of both communal open spaces are inherently unsuitable:
    - The principal area to the south of the towers would be substantially overshadowed during mid-winter, and would be exposed to cold south-westerly and south-easterly winds;

- The secondary area adjacent the lift lobby is hemmed between sheer vertical walls of between 9 and 12 storeys, and would be exposed to summer afternoon sun;
- For reasons inherent to the locations and design of both spaces, reasonable amenity would not be achieved and, consequently, primary objectives regarding recreation and social interaction would not be realised.

## **G Public benefits**

- 21 Societal benefits in relation to public domain improvements, sustainability, social and economic outcomes are important considerations for design excellence which are raised directly and indirectly by the local controls:
  - i The LEP's design excellence provisions in sub-clause 7.11(3);
  - ii Desired character provisions in chapter 5.3 section 2.7 (5.3 - 2.7) of the DCP;
  - iii Detailed controls for The Entrance Town Centre in 5.3 – 4.2 of the DCP;
  - iv General design principles for Key Site developments in 5.3 - 5.1 of the DCP;
  - v Matters for consideration in relation to Key Sites at 5.3 – 5.2 of the DCP;
  - vi Design excellence requirements for Key Sites in chapter 6.1 of the DCP;
  - vii Specific requirements for the Denning and Short Streets carpark site in 6.1 – 3.4 of the DCP.
- 22 Inherent shortcomings in relation to public backdrops, and consequences for pedestrian and business activity, have been discussed in Part E of this report.
- 23 In relation to social outcomes, there are two broad considerations:
  - i Design of common areas which have been discussed in parts E and F of this report;
  - ii Housing mix and tenure per DCP at Chapter 6.1-2.2.9 and 6.1-2.4:
    - The stage one proposal makes no special or "exemplary" offers in relation to these considerations.
- 24 Public domain improvements are outlined by the *Public Domain Improvement Plan* which incorporates landscape plan L-101:
  - i 'Structural' shortcomings in relation to proposed public domain improvements have been discussed in part E of this report.
  - ii Architectural and landscape plans reveal a number of detailed shortcomings in relation to the proposed improvements:
    - Visual disconnection from Bayview Mall and Theatre Lane due to level changes, extent of exposed basement walls and planters, together with inappropriate orientations and alignments for stairs and retail terraces.
    - Inappropriate 'convex' configurations of adjunct-areas which face major public places: the future Lakeside Plaza forecourt and Bayview Mall.



- 25 A sufficient range of sustainability measures and commitments has not been identified or proposed:
- i Architectural drawing DA-0015 nominates a limited range of measures which do not appreciably extend BASIX requirements.
  - ii There is no detailed appreciation of daylighting, ventilation or sunshading requirements, or of innovative practical solutions which would minimise energy consumption.
  - iii The document offers no comment in relation to proposed deep soil areas in terms of their extent, dimensions and potential to accommodate landscaping which might have a direct bearing upon sustainability outcomes.
  - iv The document does not identify energy performance targets which might be applied to guide the design of mechanical services for a future stage two application.



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