

## **90-98 Glenmore Ridge Drive, Glenmore Park Proposed neighbourhood centre development**

### **A Scope**

- 1 This report evaluates the design quality of DA plans for mixed use development of a neighbourhood centre:
  - i Architectural plans by CD Architects dated May 2019;
  - ii Landscape plans by Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects dated May 2019.

### **B Summary assessment**

- 2 DA plans of the proposed development demonstrate exceptional standards of resolution and attention to detail.
- 3 Location and orientation of proposed retail, business and community uses would provide for a commercially-viable retail centre that would generate high levels of pedestrian activity:
  - Commercial viability of the proposed centre would be assisted by the high amenity of proposed public areas, together with the visibility of pedestrian activity from surrounding streets and community facilities;
  - The proposed centre would accommodate a diversity of uses that attract, and are underpinned by, high levels of pedestrian activity – and as a consequence, the proposed development would be consistent with the LEP's zone objectives that advocate creation of a local community focal point.
- 4 The proposed development would not be incompatible with character or amenity of the existing residential surroundings:
  - Well-articulated building forms, combined with landscaped setbacks, ensure a high level of compatibility with smaller-scaled neighbours;
  - The ground floor layout generally directs activity and noise away from residential neighbours and, subject to acoustic insulation plus a suitable management plan, there is no reason why the proposed loading dock should compromise neighbours' amenity;
  - Proposed apartments are suitably-separated from residential neighbours, and sight-lines from upper storeys would be managed by proposed balcony-planters.
- 5 The residential component demonstrates high levels of amenity:
  - Common areas would promote effective social interaction between residents;
  - In general, the layouts of proposed apartments are consistent with best practice design.
- 6 Overall quality is not compromised by details which require correction or additional information:
  - Solar access diagrams and calculations are incorrect;

- Minor elements of some apartments require adjustment;
- Landscape plans do not confirm species for canopy trees which are depicted upon the design plans.

## **C Background**

- 7 The current DA plans demonstrate progressive refinement of plans which the UDRP reviewed in July and October 2018.
- 8 In relation to concept and DA plans, all reviews of design quality reviews have been guided in the first instance by applicable controls:
  - i *LEP 2010* in terms of objectives for zone B2 and development standards:
    - In particular, objectives which encourage a mix of uses and require development to reflect desired future character of the area;
    - Also, a maximum permissible height of 15m (no FSR applies).
  - ii *SEPP No 65* design quality principles in relation to residential elements of the proposed mixed development and, in fact, in relation to overall built form and scale.
  - iii *DCP 2014* in relation to development of the designated neighbourhood precinct in Glenmore Park Stage Two.
- 9 Because no detailed controls apply to commercial and retail design, these elements of the proposed development have been evaluated by reference to best-practice which is indicated by extensive professional experience:
  - i The general layout and operation of town centre developments;
  - ii The operation of small retail businesses in a main street environment.
- 10 With regard to *DCP 2014*, limited weight has been assigned to diagrams and performance measures in section 7.4.5.3 which are inconsistent with:
  - i Zone objectives in relation to DFC;
  - ii Retail design practice in terms of commercial exposure and pedestrian accessibility;
  - iii Orderly development which is indicated by the maximum permissible building height of 15m.
- 11 Previous design quality assessments for this property have focussed upon:
  - i Scale and siting of proposed buildings, and compatibility with surrounding residential development which predominantly comprises one or two storeys;
  - ii The arrangement of ground floor elements in order to maximise visibility and pedestrian access from surrounding residential surroundings, as well as from the future school and open space to the south;

- iii Configuration of ground level elements in response to pedestrian desire lines and commercial exposure which are essential considerations for centres which are both vibrant and viable;
- iv Arrangement and articulation of building forms in a manner which would be consistent with a neighbourhood village of activities, supported by complementary designs of facades and landscaping of public and semi-public areas.
- v Location and design of common areas within the proposed residential component in order to encourage positive social interaction between residents.
- vi Layout and design of the proposed residential component in response to *SEPP No 65* principles for amenity and sustainability.

## **D Design quality assessment**

### ***Footprint and ground level layouts***

- 12 Assessment of the original design concept confirmed inherent logic of the proposed L-shaped building layout:
  - i Provision of surface parking toward the north-eastern corner of the Site is consistent with figure E7.33 of the DCP;
  - ii Location of buildings along southern and western sides of the surface carpark would maximise commercial exposure toward the most-significant arrival route, and also would concentrate pedestrian activity facing the primary point of arrival to this proposed neighbourhood centre;
  - iii In conjunction with proposed arcade links that allow sight lines and pedestrian access from surrounding residential neighbourhoods as well as from the future school and park, the L-shaped footprint allows for 'double loading' of active uses along the southern wing in proximity to future community focal points, and consequently ensures an activated edge facing those sources of future activity;
  - iv Progressive refinement of the ground floor plan has created a network of pedestrian routes which respond to visibility and accessibility from surrounding areas, as well as concentrating pedestrian activity within the centre:
    - The primary route comprises a 'promenade' backdrop to the ground-level carpark, and provides for the centre's most-important activated frontage;
    - Secondary routes comprise 'arcades' and 'alleyways' which link the primary promenade to surrounding street frontages, as well as providing sight-lines from surrounding streets toward key elements of the proposed development;
    - Tertiary routes are provided by the frontage to Deerubin Drive, as well as by 'corner' frontages to Deerubin Drive and Glenmore Ridge Drive which adjoin the arcade and alleyway links.

- v Detailed landscape design of the refined pedestrian routes provides for high levels of amenity and safety which are essential to encourage social interaction as well as ensuring optimum levels of retail and business activity:
  - The primary promenade is shaded and identified by canopy trees, and allows outdoor café seating that would be separated from the carpark by planters or mass planted beds;
  - Secondary arcades and alleys are shaded and weather-protected by first floor slabs, but openings through those slabs allow daylighting of these important pedestrian routes as well as accommodating 'emergent' trees that would 'sign-post' these thoroughfares from surrounding street frontages;
  - Tertiary routes are shaded by 'floating' awnings which step up and down in order to articulate proposed village centre building forms, as well as highlighting street entrances and accommodating canopy trees that would accentuate the articulation of proposed building forms;
  - Within the primary and secondary routes, detailed place-making has been achieved by landscaped features that include garden beds and children's play areas;
  - The carpark, which represents the primary point of arrival to the centre, is shaded by irregular spacing of canopy trees which, in conjunction with rows of perimeter trees, provide signature design elements for this 'outdoor' retail centre;
  - At the Site's south-eastern corner, an additional signature design element is provided by the playground area of the proposed childcare centre.
- vi Highly-activated frontages will be achieved by alignments and detailed designs of the proposed pedestrian routes together with ground floor uses which will serve as 'destinations': small and major retailers, food outlets, community and business services, recreation facilities and play areas, and residential lobbies.
- vii In the context of effective pedestrian and retail planning, proposed vehicle access points are both logical and inevitable:
  - Delivery access via Darug Drive is not inconsistent with that street's designated role as a collector road (which accommodates a bus route), and refinement of the proposed dock area in response to UDRP recommendations has created a relatively unobtrusive service facility that would be screened visually and acoustically from neighbouring dwellings;
  - A possible alternative location for the dock with access from the proposed ground-level carpark would compromise fundamentally-positive aspects of the proposed development: continuity of the primary pedestrian promenade which provides a backdrop to the carpark, together with continuity of the associated primary activated frontage;

- Proposed carparks which are accessed via Deerubin and Glenholm Drives are generally consistent with the DCP's figure E7.33, and do not compromise pedestrian routes or associated activated frontages.

### ***Compatibility and streetscape quality***

- 13 Substantial design refinement of the original concept has ensured that the proposed four storey building form would be compatible with scale and character of surrounding residential buildings that predominantly comprise one or two storeys:
  - i In terms of 'macro' considerations, the proposed four storey building form is not inconsistent with desired character which is indicated by the LEP's permissible building height of 15m.
  - ii At a more-detailed level, compatibility with the scale of surrounding one and two storey dwellings has been achieved by design refinements that responded to UDRP recommendations:
    - The western side of the proposed building has a 3m deep soil setback from Darug Drive (strictly-speaking, this element is contrary to performance measure (d) for retail built forms in section 7.4.3.5.3 of the DCP);
    - Notwithstanding non-compliance with a DCP performance measure, the deep soil setback allows the proposed western elevation to be screened by two rows of trees: existing street trees plus a second row within the Site – apparently comprising medium-to-taller species which are indigenous or native – which effectively moderate scale facing lower-scaled detached dwellings along the western side of Darug Drive;
    - Facing detached dwellings that to the north and the east, scale of the proposed development would be moderated by lateral separation from existing neighbours together with canopy landscaping of the proposed ground-level carpark: rows of perimeter trees together with a substantial scattering of shade trees between the parking bays.
  - iii With regard to the 'horizontal' dimension of scale, effective articulation ensures that proposed four storey buildings would be compatible with the finer-grain of neighbouring detached dwellings:
    - Long elevations of the proposed four-storey buildings comprise four or five distinct elements which are separated by alleyways or by facades which incorporate pronounced indentations;
    - Articulation is accentuated by detailed design of facades, together with strategically-located landscaping which comprises canopy trees at ground level and shrubs at first floor level.
- 14 A very high level of streetscape quality would be achieved by form and design of the proposed facades:
  - i Three-d views of the proposed development demonstrate effective articulation and a degree of architectural diversity which are appropriate to create a 'village of buildings'.

- ii Detailed three-d views confirm that residential facades comprise simple yet elegant compositions, with a predominance of horizontal elements that include balustrades, slab edges and infill panels of brickwork.
  - iii Articulation and a pedestrian-friendly scale are achieved by the ground level podium element which is substantially-glazed, but which also includes panels of brickwork that support 'floating' awnings that step up and down across the major elevations.
  - iv Finishes schedules identify a variety of high quality finishes that would accentuate a 'village centre character', and thumbnail images provide further details of the proposed finishes:
    - For example, thumbnail images indicate that off-form concrete elements would achieve a high level of quality: a polished finish for balustrades and slab soffits is proposed and, having regard for careful composition of proposed facades, a high quality outcome is considered to be achievable – and cannot be compared to the cheaper and less-desirable alternative of painted render which is designed to mask misaligned elements.
- 15 With regard to proposed landscaping, design drawings indicate high levels of streetscape quality:
- i However, the absence of planting plans prevents unequivocal endorsement of design quality:
    - Design plans indicate appropriate arrangements of trees, shrubs and understory plantings;
    - Nevertheless, design plans do not identify species of canopy trees which are proposed along street frontages and throughout the carpark – and those details are necessary to confirm design quality.

### ***Residential amenity***

- 16 Effective design of the residential component will ensure positive social interaction between residents:
- i Lift lobbies typically service a maximum of eight dwellings per storey:
    - Distribution of lobbies creates a series of 'activity nodes' which would encourage social interaction;
    - Although Block A lobbies serve nine or ten dwellings per level, social interaction would not be inhibited due to distribution of the 'lobby-nodes' which overlook the communal open space at level one together with multiple points of access to that well-designed space.
  - ii The communal open space at level one is readily-accessible from all lift-cores and stairs, and incorporates a variety of well-designed activity-settings:
    - The diversity of settings together with their spatial separation will allow concurrent recreation opportunities for unrelated individual and groups: layout and design reveal a high regard for personal and group territories.

- 17 Apartment layouts generally are consistent with best-practice design as advocated by the ADG under *SEPP No 65*:
- i Room dimensions and layouts are consistent with dimensional requirements, and would accommodate furniture which typically is associated with the purpose of each room.
- 18 However, the following aspects of proposed apartments require amendment or clarification:
- i A few apartments are entered from common corridors directly into a living area, and amenity is compromised by the absence of an 'entrance vestibule':
    - This shortcoming should be eliminated – for example by the strategic location of coat cupboards next to front doors.
  - ii Solar access calculations are not correct and should be corrected:
    - Analysis of mid-winter azimuths confirms that two hours sunlight should be received by east-facing apartments in Block A: currently, these apartments are shown as receiving less than two hours sunlight to living rooms and private open spaces;
    - Conversely, west-facing apartments in Block A would not receive two hours of sunlight: exterior walls are aligned approximately with the 2pm azimuth and, as a consequence, west-facing apartments with north-facing balconies would receive approximately one hour of effective sunlight;
    - Analysis diagrams and calculations should be corrected and, if necessary, some apartments may need to be reconfigured – for example, to ensure that all west-facing apartments have north-facing balconies (as opposed to the current back-to-back pairing).

### **Other matters**

- 19 Officers' assessments have raised the following points of concern which have a bearing upon design quality (either directly or indirectly):
- i Insufficient non-residential parking.
  - ii Proposed loading dock: likely amenity impacts and potential to accommodate larger delivery vehicles.
  - iii Inadequate waste collection facilities.
  - iv Quality of proposed finishes.
  - v Purpose of cut-outs in roof slabs above ground level pedestrian areas.
- 20 Insufficient non-residential parking:
- i The applicant's traffic report has been prepared by an experienced and authoritative consultancy:
    - In my experience, the quality and accuracy of work by that consulting practice are exemplary.

- ii The primary point of dispute appears to be the 'aggregated' calculation of non-residential parking.
- iii From an urban designed perspective, centres which accommodate a variety of uses or activities typically generate multi-purpose trips – particularly when they are located adjacent to community facilities such as schools and open spaces:
  - For such centres, calculation of parking requirements logically requires 'discounting' of the simple arithmetic aggregation of uses multiplied by area multiplied by parking rate;
  - In practice, if peak demand were to result in a parking shortfall, there are limited opportunities for overflow parking within *convenient proximity* to the proposed centre;
  - Furthermore, if on-site parking was in fact insufficient, then the shortfall would most-likely be 'managed' by shoppers' selection of an alternative destination which offers convenient parking – for example, the recently-expanded nearby Glenmore Park town centre;
  - From an urban designer's perspective, these factors indicate that any strict shortfall in parking would be highly unlikely to result in adverse impacts for surrounding neighbourhoods.
- iii While there is potential to accommodate the notional parking shortfall by providing a basement level beneath the proposed surface carpark, this would have serious and adverse consequences in relation to design quality:
  - In relation to compatibility and streetscape quality: a basement level would prevent proposed canopy landscaping within and surrounding the ground level carpark;
  - In terms of sustainability: the extent of unshaded pavement would create a summer-time heat-sink, and basement excavation would demand the input of energy together with a carbon-intensive concrete structure.

21 The proposed loading dock:

- i Possibility of acoustic impacts for residential neighbours can be avoided or moderated by design solutions and appropriate management:
  - Consistent with Council's current policies for on-site collection of waste from residential flat buildings, the proposed loading dock is fully enclosed by walls, an overhead slab and a door;
  - Potential impacts for surrounding dwellings (both neighbouring and within the proposed development) should be evaluated by an acoustic consultant and, if necessary, acoustic screening or insulation should be provided to moderate noise of vehicles, reversing alarms and unloading;
  - Acoustic assessment should acknowledge the potential benefits of a dock management plan, and should recommend hours during which deliveries or waste-collection should not occur in order to ensure satisfactory amenity for residential neighbours.



- ii The need to accommodate larger delivery vehicles is a matter which should be addressed by the applicant and their traffic consultant:
    - The primary question is whether articulated delivery vehicles are necessary for the supermarket;
    - From a practical perspective, the size of delivery vehicles is an essential element of negotiations with prospective supermarket tenants, and any 'limitation' of delivery vehicle sizes could not be proposed without endorsement by a prospective tenant;
    - Consequently, size of delivery vehicles is a matter for the 'market' to determine;
    - Due to flow-on effects in terms of streetscape quality and compatibility, resizing of the dock to accommodate larger vehicles could not be achieved by a proposed variation to a development consent.
- 22 Proposed waste collection:
- i This is a matter for discussion between the Council's waste officers and the applicant's consultants.
  - ii However, any agreed solutions should not interrupt the continuity of ground level pedestrian routes or activated frontages which currently are proposed, and also should not reduce the extent of proposed deep soil landscaping.
- 23 Quality of proposed finishes:
- i As noted previously, the quality of 'polished concrete' finishes is vastly-superior to painted render:
    - Off-form concrete surfaces which are designed to be exposed rely upon careful alignment of floor slabs with vertical structures, as opposed to painted render which serves to mask imperfections or misalignment of structural elements;
    - The proposed development incorporates bands of exposed slab edges which are aligned 'forward' of walls – consequently, proposed off-form concrete slab-edges would not be subject to design quality flaws that typically result from the poor alignment of edge forms and walls;
    - Given that off-form concrete is not inherently-inappropriate for slab edges, it would be most-appropriate to maintain a continuity of finishes for slab edges and soffits (ie balcony and roof undersides): water penetration which frequently is unavoidable for balconies would compromise any additional soffit finish and, consequently, would be undesirable;
    - However, in order to soften the residential component of the development, it might be appropriate to apply a flat white or off-white paint finish to balcony and roof soffits within 'margins' that are defined by cast-in drip-grooves: however, such finishes are neither necessary nor desirable for slab soffits above ground level pedestrian routes.

- 24 Purpose of cut-outs in roof slabs above ground level pedestrian areas.
- i Cut outs are proposed primarily above the ground floor 'arcade' and 'alleyway' in order to provide daylight and space for emergent tree canopies:
    - The proposed cut outs have irregular curvilinear shapes and maximum widths of approximately 4m.
  - ii The proposed cut-outs would enhance amenity of spaces which are between 7m and 8m wide and up to 30m or 40m long:
    - Absence of light wells would result in gloomy spaces that depend upon artificial illumination, and would not allow for emergent trees that are essential elements of 'place-making' and 'route-marking';
    - Given the widths of proposed pedestrian paths, cut outs would not expose pedestrians to rain or excessive summer sunlight.



Brett Newbold  
Independent Member,  
Penrith City Council Urban Design Review Panel