

URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Report



Meeting:	UDRP – 27 July 2022
Date	Wednesday 27 July 2022
Chair:	Philip Pollard , Urban Design Review Panel
Attendees:	Justin Hamilton, Urban Design Review Panel Kristy Cianci, Urban Design Review Panel Amy Ryan, Development Coordinator, City of Newcastle Elle Durrant, Development Officer (Planning), City of Newcastle

AGENDA	Item	Description
	2	Matters for consideration
2:30pm-3:30pm [60 mins]	2.4	UD2022/00022 - DA2022/00538 643 Hunter Street Newcastle West Shop top housing Attendees: Applicant: Zac Smurthwaite - Planner - ADW Johnson Sasha Lesuik - Architect - Stewart Architecture Marcus Graham - Architect - Stewart Architecture Andrew Redwin – Architect – Bloc Duncan Miller - Propoent - Miller Property Corp Officer: Gareth Simpson Senior Development Officer (Planning), City of Newcastle

In the interest of providing open access to information to the public this referral will be made available on City of Newcastle's (CN's) Application Tracking system.

The content of this advice is intended to provide information for the Assessment Officer to consider in the determination of the relevant application. The Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP) is an advisory Panel only and the advice provided by the Panel is to inform the assessment process. It is not the purpose of the UDRP to have any role in the determination of development applications, nor are its recommendations binding on CN's determination of an application.

Scope

The following drawings / documents have been reviewed:

Plan No / Supporting Document	Prepared by	Reference/ date
Architectural Plans (53 pages)	Stewart Architecture	9/5/22
Landscape Plans (13 pages)	Context Landscape Architecture	1/4/22
Apartment Design Compliance Statement (15 pages)	Stewart Architecture	9/5/22

Background

Prior to lodgment of the current development application, the development proposal was previously reviewed by the UDRP on two occasions; and the meetings held 29 September 2021 and 24 November 2021. Relevant extracts from the advice provided at that time has been reiterated below in italics, followed by comments on the current development proposal.

1. Context and Neighbourhood Character

29 September 2021

The subject site has a current development approval (DA 2016/00564) for a 14-storey tower proposed for the corner of Hunter and Steel Street. A development application has been lodged for the neighbouring property to the west (653 Hunter Street) which will present a 5 storey blank wall to subject site's western boundary. The possible impacts of this blank wall on the amenity of the communal open space at podium level and the apartments of the approved development for the site is the reason for exploring an alternative proposal.

The panel identified the importance of Steel Street as a link to the harbour (both vehicle and pedestrian) and the National Park at a pedestrian level. The sky views to the north are also valuable. The site is located within the B3 Commercial Core zone and is surrounded by a range of two – eight storey commercial buildings including a Travel Lodge to the south-west of the site.

24 November 2021

No further comments

27 July 2022

Council advised that the adjoining commercial development at 653 Hunter Street has been approved and has commenced construction.

2. Built Form and Scale

29 September 2021

The proposed development to the west of the subject site is currently under assessment and has not yet been approved. Should the development be approved, there is no certainty that it will proceed in that form. Therefore, it is important that the development for the subject site be designed to as far as possible, address a range of development approaches to the adjacent site. Similarly, future development on the Travelodge site should be considered.

The development proposes to push back the tower to abut with the proposed adjoining built form. The panel is not opposed to the notation of pushing the tower back from Steel Street, providing that the podium level is well designed and contributes to the public domain and the street.

The applicant is encouraged to investigate opportunities to activate the street through a number of methods. These may include:

- *setting back the façade on the corner of Hunter and Steel Street to provide useable public domain space. The panel identified that this may assist in addressing the level changes required at the street to deal with flooding (transitions required for internal floor levels of commercial premises at street level).*

- *providing active uses at the first floor that overlook the street and are publicly accessible for uses such as food and beverage premises. Stepping down the podium to the street and the use of the podium roof top level could be considered.*
- *providing uses at the podium roof top that improve the street experience such as landscaping.*
- *establishing a strong street corner treatment to the intersection of Hunter and Steel Streets.*

It is important that the whole development be designed and 'read' as a single, cohesive well-considered building. However, the podium in its proposed form will be prominent, and should be considered in its own right – as an element almost 'in the round'. This means the podium façades should be designed to consider all of its boundaries (with the exception of the western façade which adjoins the neighbouring building), activate the street at all levels and should not visually read as a carpark.

The exposed interface of the podium with the Travelodge site, as it turns the corner from the Steel Street facade, will be an important contribution to the streetscape. The setting back of the tower and the resulting views north towards the harbour will provide valuable sky views. The podium when read from the southern end of Steel Street will form part of that view corridor.

The panel supports the integration of a 'reference' or datum line within the built form of the tower at the same height of the development proposed to the west. This line is potentially better addressed more strongly as a deep recess. In addition, the panel recommended consideration of a greater Hunter Street setback to the built form above this level.

The top of the built form, when read from the west, finishes bluntly against the skyline. Opportunities to improve this overall façade are encouraged. Refer to Item 9 Aesthetics for recommendations.

24 November 2021

The Panel noted the applicant has integrated the recommendations from the previous panel meeting and are supportive of the general direction of the revised design.

It is noted that the applicant has gone beyond some of the recommendations put forward by the Panel, such as the proposed increased setback to the western boundary to 6 metres. This is a positive initiative that will improve the amenity for the western apartments without compromising the podium on the eastern side.

The double storey/mezzanine arrangement for the ground commercial tenancies has also been included, which will assist in the activation of the street. The colonnade space between the ground floor façade and street boundary is also supported as it will improve the amenity at the street level for the public.

In further refining the design, the Panel suggests the applicant revisit the "notch" cut-out in the corner of the upper level of the podium. The Panel is generally supportive of this idea and encouraged the continued refining of this element. At this stage, the "notch" is revealing the inside of the carpark and doesn't respond to the sinuous curve of the awning below. At this stage the two treatments are not working together optimally. Furthermore, the parking levels are still reading as a carpark from the street and should be further integrated into the façade, in keeping with the rest of the building which is quite attractive. The Panel suggested exploring the carpark façade as a potential public art treatment should they be required to commit to providing a public art work. The Panel also notes that glare from lights from the carpark should not be visible at night (or at least minimised). A public art treatment could assist in minimising the impact of car lights.

The Panel appreciates the photomontages provided by the applicant however, suggests that long views should be provided to understand what it looks like in its context, in particular from the harbour looking back to the site and from National Park looking to the site.

The setback from the Travelodge has improved, and the closest apartments to the boundary now have their Living and main private open spaces orientated to the north, which reduces overlooking concerns. However, further consideration is encouraged in respect to separations that would eventuate with any new development undertaken on that adjoining site.

27 July 2022

The Panel congratulated the project team on the further design development of the building and the Panel have enjoyed watching this development evolve.

The Applicant has further developed the corner treatment (corner of Hunter and Steele Street) which was previously treated as a 'notch' and did not reinforce the corner. The Applicant has taken a portion of the carpark and provided a residents' lounge – described as 'the lantern'. This lounge is accessible from the communal open space on the podium via a feature spiral stair. This activates this corner and acts as a 'lantern'. This new approach is supported.

The carpark facade has been further developed and is intended to be illuminated. The Panel recommends uplighting opposed to downlighting as considered by the Applicant.

The Applicant advised that the Regional Planning Panel reviewed the project and had asked for more information about the Travelodge setbacks. The Applicant prepared a conceptual approach for the Travelodge site and showed one way it could be developed without impacting its development potential, and meeting setback and overshadowing requirements. The Panel considered the approach a reasonable and equitable assumption, which worked well for aspect and solar access.

3. Density

29 September 2021

The appropriate density will be the balance of achieving a well-activated podium that does not read as a carpark, and has a positive contribution to the street. The setback of the corner units facing the Travelodge site is currently inadequate – particularly as the units in this location have their open space and Living areas orientated in this direction.

The limited numbers of dwellings per floor otherwise offer the potential for a good level of amenity, aspect and an appropriate density.

24 November 2021

The density appears appropriate as the building provides good amenity, generous communal open space, street activation and meets the parking requirements.

27 July 2022

No further comments

4. Sustainability

29 September 2021

The concept is preliminary and there are opportunities to incorporate sustainability measures as the design develops.

24 November 2021

There continue to be opportunities to incorporate sustainability measures as the design developments.

The Panel encourages the applicant to incorporate Electric Vehicle charging points.

Consideration of photovoltaic array generation are encouraged are encouraged on the roof however, any arrangement should not impact upon the skyline and be integrated into the roof design

27 July 2022

Electric Vehicles

- Applicant advised they propose to provide Electric Vehicle (EV) charging in the carpark for both private residential parking and visitor parking areas.
- Preliminary feedback from electrical engineer is indicating that they can provide EV for all parking spaces – which was strongly supported by the Panel.
- The applicant's current approach is to provide some EV charges to visitor/ common parks so everyone can get a chance to use them, and then offer EV charges to residential purchases (at a cost of approx. \$5000 for 7kw Phase 2 Charger which is metred back to each apartment).
- The Panel suggested also having a few 'fast charges' (3 Phase) in the visitor parking area that is controlled by the strata.

The Panel reiterates previous comments about photovoltaic array generation and that it should not impact on the skyline and should be integrated into the roof design.

5. Landscape

29 September 2021

There is existing trees on Steel Street that are valuable to the streetscape. The design of the podium should retain the trees.

The podium roof top has the opportunity to provide a landscaped space that is a positive contribution to the development and to the street. Any proposed landscaping should be considered both for its amenity within the podium and how it will be viewed from the street. It is noted that a pool is proposed for the podium level which should be carefully planned to ensure appropriate depths are identified early. Likewise the podium slab structure needs to be designed from an early stage to accommodate loads from landscape areas and the pool, so as to avoid later compromises to the landscape design.

Careful planning for trees and other landscaping on the podium should be considered during concept phase to ensure adequate soil depths and volumes are accommodated.

Treatment of the internal garden courtyards (facing west) is encouraged at the concept stage. Should planting be proposed, realistic assessment of the light levels and survival of the plants should be considered. Additional measures such as public art could be considered to reduce the impact of the blank internal wall. Considerations for maintenance of the communal garden courtyards and the shaft above should also be addressed.

24 November 2021

The shifting of the tower to east creates more space for podium landscaping along its western edge. However, it is strongly recommended that the entirety of the podium be managed and maintained by the body corporate and not be for private use. This will allow for consistency in the landscape approach and provide an attractive outlook for all residents. This is likely to require a line of security to stop people accessing the western portion of the podium and having access to bedroom windows.

As the landscape design is developed, the Panel suggests shade and shelters be provided on the podium level. Consideration of how these structures will look from the street should form part of the design process.

To improve privacy for podium level residents, a greater landscape buffer between their private open spaces and the communal open space is recommended.

The location of the internal communal room will encourage its use by residents however, acoustic separation from the corridor is strongly recommended.

27 July 2022

The public, communal and private landscape areas are being managed well.

However, it is important to ensure that landscape intent is carried through to Construction Certificate stage, and to that end, confirmation of ADG compliant soil volumes should be provided at DA, in conjunction with confirmation that structural slab and beam dimensions and drainage / hydraulic penetrations have been allowed for in the preliminary structural design, to ensure that subsequent changes are not necessitated by inadequate structural provision for landscape loads.

There is a small planter bed on the Hunter Street podium level (outside units 404 and 405) that needs to be accessed from within the unit. This is not supported as the planter contributes to the façade and its maintenance will impact on the unit. It was suggested that this planter be deleted or relocated in an accessible location.

Previous advice in respect to street trees was reiterated.

6. Amenity

29 September 2021

The Panel question if it would be better to move the tower back from the west boundary by (say) 3 metres to facilitate maintenance access to the western façade and create a slightly less compressed space at podium level. This could potentially also assist in the future in creating a satisfactory interface of any future development with the western façade should the neighbouring development, as currently proposed, not proceed. It would also provide moderately greater space and options for treatment of the communal gardens shown adjacent the west boundary at podium level.

Further consideration regarding the setbacks and the relationship between the proposed apartments and the Travelodge site are recommended.

Acoustic treatment of the communal garden courtyards will be important to ensure sound does not reverberate off hard surfaces and travel up to impact on units with windows / ventilation into the circulation areas. Access to ventilation should also be considered should a taller tower be developed next door, further enclosing the courtyards.

The units currently facing south towards the Travelodge site might potentially obtain some northerly aspect, providing adequate privacy from the common circulation areas can be achieved.

24 November 2021

The apartment layouts are well considered and have the opportunity for good outlook.

It is understood the commercial and parking levels are still being resolved. At present, the waste room does not appear to line up with its location on the residential levels. Ensure that residents are not expected to access the waste room in the carpark as the current design requires them to leave the building to access that space.

To improve the amenity of the corridor, the Panel suggests the addition of a slit window into the corridor on the south side of the waste chute room.

27 July 2022

The evolution of the design has continued to improve the amenity of the development.

The following is recommended as the Applicant continues to refine and develop the design:

Carparking levels

- The Panel supports the changes to the façade screening (double screening system) that address light spill from carpark. The system proposes lighting as this will help obscure lighting from the carpark. The Panel recommends uplighting opposed to downlighting.
- The Applicant has established a double height residential communal space on the north-east corner ('lantern'). The Panel noted the spiral stair design lent itself to being an attractive sculptural element.
- There is potential conflict where carpark spaces are located close to adjacent storage cages, only separated by a narrow walkway. When items are removed this could potentially damage cars. The Applicant advised they exceed the required number of storage cages and can reduce them to avoid such conflicts.

Podium Level

- Maintenance of planter on the Hunter Street needs more consideration. Access via units is not recommended.

7. Safety

29 September 2021

Safety considerations should be integrated into the design during the concept phase. An important consideration for a mixed use development of this nature is ensuring there is a clear physical separation of residents and commercial users – in particular vehicles, access to units and commercial premises and waste.

As the tower is proposed to be setback from Steel Street there is less opportunity for natural surveillance. The activation of the podium will become an important part of providing safer streets.

24 November 2021

The proposed design shows access to the commercial amenities is via the residential lobby. The commercial and residential uses need to be completely separated. Therefore, ensure that any commercial amenities are only accessible from the commercial area.

27 July 2022

The evolution of the design has continued to improve the safety of the development. The Applicant has successfully managed the public and private interface at various levels of the building.

The following is recommended to continue to refine and develop the design:

Ground Floor

- Shift the access door, adjacent tenancy four, closer to the street frontage to eliminate long external corridor.
- Consider moving the letterboxes inside the foyer. This allows for more secure letter boxes and opportunity for artwork/ activation treatment on external wall near lobby entry – this will contribute to the street's activation.

Carparking levels

- Improve sightlines around the residential lobbies by removing some of storage cages behind the car parks which are obstructing views to carparks' lobby areas.
- Provide a secure door at the ramp that connects the ground floor visitor parking level with the first floor residential parking level. The gate should prevent unauthorised access to residential parking levels for both pedestrians and vehicles.

8. Housing Diversity and Social interaction

29 September 2021

The development has the opportunity to provide housing diversity in a range of unit sizes and types. The generous podium level can provide a space for residents to gather and interact on a daily basis. Social activity from the podium has the opportunity to contribute to the vibrancy of the street.

The activation of the street, achieved by setting back the façade at ground level, could create public spaces for social interaction and improved street connection.

24 November 2021

The podium level communal space provides excellent opportunities for social interaction. The Panel recommends a variety of spaces that cater for groups but also individuals who are seeking a quiet place away from their apartment. This will increase the likelihood of the space being used by its residents.

27 July 2022

- No further comments.

9. Aesthetics

29 September 2021

Once the tower rises above the proposed building to the west, all facades, though different, need to be treated as part of a cohesive composition. The western façade, although having a much more solid treatment, should not read as “back of house”. One way of achieving this may be to use more robust forms and materials on the eastern and northern sides and wrapping elements of this around to the western facade.

The panel suggests that further consideration of the communal garden courtyard shafts on the western podium. If these spaces were to be fully enclosed in by future development, they would potentially be unpleasant, breezeless spaces.

24 November 2021

The Panel notes the proposed material palette is attractive and elegant and the proposed development should be a positive contribution to the skyline and neighbourhood.

A signage strategy should form part of the design development process with the goal to maintain an attractive façade, minimise visual clutter, while ensuring there is good wayfinding for visitors to the building (both visitors to the commercial and residential areas).

27 July 2022

The Panel continues to support the aesthetic approach to the development, which has been further refined since the previous presentation.

The Panel reiterates previous comments regarding the importance of a signage strategy.

Recommendation:

29 September 2021

The Panel is broadly supportive of the strategy, in particular the pushing of the tower towards the western boundary, with a generous landscaped podium created to the east. The western façade of the building would be articulated and would have partially open but screened circulation areas. An opportunity for some very limited fenestration in the western façade is a possibility, but this should not form the main aspect or light and ventilation to rooms in the proposed apartments, due to the proximity of the proposal to the side boundary.

Above podium level, it is recommended that a west boundary setback that at least allows access for maintenance should be provided for the majority of the façade of the building.

While addressing currently proposed adjacent development, it remains important that the success of the subject design is not heavily dependent upon assumptions in respect to future neighbouring development that may not eventuate for some reason. The design should therefore consider a range possibilities, such as a different or taller adjoining development being constructed in the future, and respond with a reasonably open-ended interface.

24 November 2021

The design of the proposal has progressed well, and the issues previously raised, have been addressed. Providing the remaining points noted under the headings above are taken on board during design development, the project is considered to have good potential to achieve design excellence.

27 July 2022

The Panel is supportive of the proposal. A small number of relatively minor matters, as outlined under the headings above, are expected to be satisfactorily addressed, and it is anticipated that these will be resolved to the satisfaction of the Assessing Officers without necessarily referring further to the Panel.

URBAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL Report



With the expected resolution of the identified minor matters, the development can be considered to exhibit a high level of design quality, and the completed proposal can be expected make a very positive contribution to the area.