

28th February, 2023

Job no 18046

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

## 1.0 CONTEXT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CHARACTER

The site is located in the heart of the new urban district planned at the long-neglected western end of central Newcastle, identified for higher density development near the new Wickham Interchange. Its position is ideal to take full advantage of the transport, shopping, public places and civic open spaces available in central Newcastle (Refer to Architectural Plans A1-002, A1-003).

1

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

The project's site comprises a single allotment 4 236.2m<sup>2</sup> in area, with a primary frontage to National Park Street to the West and to King Street to the south. It is currently occupied by a set of low-scale commercial buildings with a paved hardstand. The design has been developed with extensive consultation with Council's Design Review Panel: The Government Architect's appointed Design Excellence Panel and is a considered response to the scale and character of site and the area's evolving urbanity;

Consistent with the area's rezoning, the urban block will, over time, come to house a series of residential towers. Building heights are likely to vary considerably, between 3 storeys up to 30 storeys. A scattering of heritage-listed buildings, primarily along Hunter Street, to the north of the site, will be interspersed with new towers with a robust street walls consistent with the DCP;

The site's eastern boundary adjoins the 'Verve' Towers. The development will form a cohesive city block, by creating an appropriate pedestrian scale along King Street and responding to the street wall established by the Verve podium.

The setback section addressing National Park Street will create an attractive and well scaled space serving as the main address to the residential apartments. The setback appears to be carved out of the podium and presents a softened edge to the public domain through the use of a sculptural batten screen, which will create opportunity for integrated public art. A cantilevered street awning provides protection for pedestrians and further defines the main entrance into the site.

The landscaped podium deck at level 4 will provide visual and enjoyable amenity to the residents. The proposed changes include additional amenity of an outdoor swimming pool located along the western side of the podium. Whilst only accessible to residents, the elevated

2

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

urban garden is visually linked to the proposed ground level landscaping and contributes to the overall objective of creating a high-quality streetscape including paving, street furniture and tree planting (Refer to landscape architects details and Architectural Plans A2-006).

The layout responds appropriately to the site's various conditions. The project is articulated as a series of related but distinct forms and spaces with different urban presences;

To King Street, a 5-storey street wall building continues the scale established by the 'Verve' development to the broad boulevard. The development realises a confident architectural expression to the unfulfilled urban potential;

Along the National Park Street frontage on the site's western edge, a pair of slender towers address the newly created public domain plaza formed by the generous setback at ground level, and define a new landscaped square between them;

The height variations between the two towers respond to each other as well as to the 'Verve' development, mediating between the scale and urban presence of each frontage, as well as the anticipated 90m building on the adjacent spotlight site.

Behind the street wall and surrounded by a combination of residential and commercial units, is concealed a 5 storey above ground car park structure, below a generous landscaped podium. The slender forms of the two residential towers emerge from the podium level.

Within the new 66 metre permissible height controls (60m + 10% Bonus), the two slender tower forms have footprints much smaller than the norm for such types. They are primarily oriented on an east-west axis, maximising access to sun, sea breeze, views and privacy. The towers are

setback 9m from the northern and 6m from the eastern boundaries, creating a 15m separation from the closest corner of the 'Verve' site. Furthermore, a setback 6m from the National Park Street frontage and 4.5m along the King Street frontage, is in keeping with the 'Verve' residences. These setbacks have been supported by UDCG and design excellence panel comments throughout the design process (Refer to Architectural Plans A1-007 - 009).

The site planning and architectural form is based on a well-considered urban design rationale;

The site planning efficiently uses its site to create a tight urban composition

The lower buildings to King Street relate to the DCP street wall objectives

The new buildings vary slightly from the LEP height limits, with one tower projecting slightly over the height limit and one tower responding more closely to the height limit and the neighbouring height of the 'Verve' development. Height variation between the towers is recommended, to mediate between the various conditions surrounding the site. This was deemed an appropriate design response as part of the Design Excellence Panel consultation. The encroachment into the height limit of the Southern tower with roof height of 75.3m (0.63m above the approved DA roof height), Lift overrun reaching to 77.82m) is balanced by the lower northern tower roof height of 66m (4.12m above the approved DA roof height). The 'Verve' towers to the east are 64.5m high, whilst the city block to the west has a potential for 90+m development in the future (Refer to Architectural Plans A3-001 - 006).

## 2.0 BUILT FORM AND SCALE

Consistent with the pattern of buildings in the vicinity, the new buildings are set out parallel to King Street, presenting a thin edge to National Park Street. The proposed setbacks, massing, indentations, fin walls, screening and internal planning are configured to protect the amenity and privacy of neighbouring properties;

The two towers are oriented east-west and are slightly offset to maximise solar access, privacy and ventilation. The small footprint of the towers, the splayed balconies and the articulation of the base means that apartments will enjoy extended sunshine and extensive views;

The pair of residential towers have slender floor plates compared to the norm for such types. The King Street tower floor plate houses a maximum of 6 apartments on the lower floors and 5 per floor on the upper levels. The Northern Tower has a slightly smaller floor plate, with a maximum of 5 apartments on the lower floors and only 4 per floor on the upper levels (Refer to Architectural Plans A2-007 - 023);

The separation between the towers is slightly less than that set out in the ADG, being approx. 22 metres. However, this is mitigated by a number of factors: The towers are offset which avoids primary living spaces from directly facing each other. The setback is increased slightly where this occurs (Refer to Architectural Plans A1-007 - 009). Solid wall panels and external vertical louvres are also provided for privacy and solar control;

The site planning is based around creating generous public and communal landscape spaces. This means that every unit facing inwards into the development will have an outlook to at least one new landscape space;

The considered site planning ensures surveillance of the street, the podium's communal landscape terrace, courtyards and roof terraces for all apartments, and respects the amenity and privacy of neighbours when they in time come to redevelop.

### 3.0 DENSITY

The proposal is consistent with the floor space controls and vary slightly from the LEP height controls.

The proposed density of 5.5:1 is in line with the 10% Design Excellence Bonus. The density is deployed to best address the specific site conditions and constitutes an efficient use of precious urban land. The proposed density and dwelling mix will be appropriate in the local context, and the development provides a suitable mix of accommodation to support the shifting needs of the population over the next century (a likely lifespan for such an apartment project) (Refer to Architectural Plans A31-001 - 003).;

6

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

The proposal contains 194 apartments (with an additional 5 commercial units) that provide a mix of accommodation, which cater for contemporary requirements and comply with current standards. The overall breakdown of the mix includes 36 x 1 bed, (19%), 127 x 2 bed (65%), 31 x 3 bed (16%). The following accommodation is proposed;

#### South Tower

21 x 1 bedroom apartments

72 x 2 bedroom apartments

4 x 2 bedroom + study duplex's

20 x 3 bedroom apartments

#### North Tower

11 x 1 bedroom apartments

4 x 1 bedroom + study duplex's

51 x 2 bedroom apartments

1 x 3 bedroom + study duplex's

7

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

10 x 3 bedroom apartments

Each apartment is designed to fit its specific situation within the overall site plan, providing light, air, amenity, privacy, and a panoramic, green or screened outlook;

The proposed density and mix will be appropriate in the evolving urban context in such a well-served context, and acknowledge the site's existing urban qualities and urban potential. Given the proximity to transport, schools, the harbour front, parks, and shopping centres across King Street and along Hunter Street, this site is ideal for such a positive contemporary apartment proposal.

#### **4.0 SUSTAINABILITY**

The development of this well-located site within easy walk to the new station interchange promotes Compact City planning principles and is consistent with a raft of planning policies and best planning practices;

8

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT



In addition to the substantial residential accommodation, the proposal has a mix of retail and commercial spaces addressing both King and National Park Street, that will add diversity to the area and promote live / work and recreational opportunities;

Beyond compliance with BASIX's numerical standards, the site planning and building design maximise the benefits of passive solar design to the dwellings, exceeding ADG minimum standards;

110 dwellings (57%) are north-facing and receive mid-winter sun for more than 3 hours to living areas between 8am and 3pm on 22 June. 162 dwellings (83%) receive mid-winter sun for the required 2 hours between 8am and 3pm on 22 June. The scheme performs well in excess of the 2 hour 70% target in the ADG (Refer to Architectural Plans A21-020 - 022).

The site planning and building design ensure excellent environmental performance;

The majority of dwellings (85%) have courtyards and balconies open to northern, north-eastern or western orientation;

All living rooms (100%) open directly to courtyards or balconies, which offer protection from direct sun to interiors in summer;

140 dwellings (72%) have two orientations for prolonged access to daylight;

9

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

Sun control is achieved by balconies, vertical louvres, awnings and the like provided to most windows, appropriate to orientation. This strategy provides passive winter heating, better insulation, and reduces exposure to southerly winds while optimising privacy;

Winter garden glazing both fixed and operable have been added to podium units that face King Street. The additional protection provided to balconies will provide acoustic benefits by attenuating traffic noise and provide improved thermal performance in winter.

Wind protection is provided to the southern elevation of the southeast and south west balconies of the southern tower. This will afford the occupant with greater opportunities to utilise private outdoor areas in a range of weather conditions and protection from southerly winds.

The buildings are designed to maximise natural ventilation as a high percentage of dwellings have good cross ventilation;

58 units have openable windows in at least two orientations for excellent cross ventilation in the first nine storeys of the development. When the ADG dispensation on units above level 9 is factored in, the percentage rises to 140 units (72%), which is in excess of the 60% cross ventilation requirement in the ADG;

9 dwellings are two storeys, thus benefiting from stack effect ventilation.

10

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

All apartments have a range of openable windows, doors and toplights, which will allow future occupants control of their internal environment. Allied to the cross and stack ventilation provided by the shallow floor plan, there is no need to rely on air-conditioning for the dwellings;

All common areas (excluding the communal cinema, steam room and amenities) on all levels (100%) are day-lit and naturally ventilated.

## 5.0 LANDSCAPE

Even constrained urban sites can have evocative landscapes – this site's landscape strategy is a centrepiece of the site planning, with significant public domain and communal landscape initiatives;

The landscape design is by an established Australian landscape design practice, Xeriscapes Landscape Architects;

A generous landscaped setback along National Park Street will provide an inviting urban plaza as the main entry to the residential towers, which will then be visually linked to the level 4 podium communal landscaped area. Multiple other opportunities for landscaping throughout the design have been identified to reintroduce a softened edge to an urban area dominated by hard stand surfaces, as well as provide visual amenity to the residents.

11

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

Two major vegetated communal spaces are proposed that will significantly enhance living in this high-density site, with landscape at their core;

Areas of communal landscape, with opportunities for deep soil in the ground level forecourt define the entry to the residential complex and allow outdoor seating for the retail offerings.

On the extensive podium above the car park structure is an expansive communal landscaped space. Due to the available depth of the car park structure there will be a minimum of 300mm depth of soil, rising to more than a metre depth in places. This green oasis in the heart of the site is readily accessed from every residential core, and is directly addressed by the level 4 podium units. Additionally, many units will overlook this space, providing a treasured green foreground;

Along the eastern and Northern boundary at Level 4 Podium, there is also a 6 metre wide band of private courtyards with hard and soft landscaping, which open directly to the podium units on this side.

The scheme significantly increases the area available for soft landscaping on the site over the current built and paved situation. The proposal creates 1,118m<sup>2</sup> (26%) of soft landscaping at throughout the development.

## **6.0 AMENITY**

12

1 National Park Street, Newcastle

SEPP 65 DESIGN QUALITY STATEMENT

All dwellings have well-proportioned internal living spaces that open directly to private courtyards, balconies and terraces. Most dwellings (83%) benefit from 2 hours of north sun for internal and external living spaces;

All dwellings have generous private outdoor spaces in the form of courtyards or balconies. The majority of dwellings (85%) have courtyards and balconies open to northern, north-eastern or western orientation;

In conformity with the SEPP 65 Design Code, all habitable spaces have 2.7 metre high ceilings, as 3.1 metres floor to floor is provided. 9 units (4.6%) have higher volumes in their stairs;

A thin cross section is adopted throughout, maximising the buildings' perimeter and therefore windows and available orientations. The depth of dwellings is typically 8 m for optimised solar access and ventilation internally.

All the common lift lobbies from Level 4 and above are close to external glazing providing ample natural light and ventilation. Care has been taken with the section and detailed design of the communal spaces;

40 (20%) silver level adaptable dwellings are provided to allow choices for people with disabilities, in accordance with the minimum stipulated by the ADG (20%);

In addition to the storage within the apartments, all have additional storage cages in the car parking levels;

Common garbage rooms have been provided in the car park convenient to the cores. The rooms are discreetly located and are to be mechanically ventilated. Separate (Garbage and Recycling) vertical chutes are accessible via all corridors for ease of responsible waste disposal.

## 7.0 SAFETY

The apartments, commercial and retail spaces will provide excellent animation and passive surveillance of King and National Park Street, whereas currently there is minimal activation or passive surveillance along these street frontages;

The main entry to the site is clearly denoted and branches off towards two secure access points with full height doors linked to intercom access at the street. The grand entries lead to the common circulation and lift lobbies, which come in contact with a range of the landscape spaces;

Within the site, entry to all apartments is from clearly defined routes integrated with landscape spaces. Each apartment's entry door is clearly legible to the common space;

Lighting to the entry lobbies and to the main plaza to the building will animate the façade at night;

The services and escapes are discreetly handled to minimise their impact on the common areas and footpath environment and to maximise landscape and residential space.

## 8.0 HOUSING DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

The proposed development is extremely well located in relation to major public transport, shopping centres, parks, schools and existing services. The new Wickham Station interchange is located nearby, the new light rail route will be convenient and there are existing bus services in the streets. Ample bike parking is provided (secure storage for 220 bikes, 10 open bike storage spaces), and the site is within easy walk of many destinations. This well-serviced location should minimise reliance on the use of private motor vehicles;

In contrast to many new developments in the LGA that comprise standard units, the proposal offers an extraordinarily wide range of apartment types, sizes and configurations to encourage a diversity of housing options to attract future residents.

The additional generous communal garden spaces at Level 4 and atop each tower will become a great asset for future residents and their visitors, and should engender a sense of community, provide recreational opportunities and the chance for easy socialisation (Refer to Architectural Plans A2-006, A2-022 & A2-024);

Particular care has been taken with the detailed design of all common spaces. The entries are clearly denoted, expressed as breezeways forming open-ended slots;

In addition to the apartments above, retail and commercial spaces at lower levels will diversify the use of the site, and offer potential live / work and shopping opportunities;

The building will be served by discretely placed common facilities, including a large landscaped courtyard at podium level including pool, gym communal cinema and functions space. Garbage and service rooms, storage, and dedicated bicycle spaces are located for easy access within the podium;

## 9.0 AESTHETICS

The architectural design will bring a distinguished presence to the Newcastle streetscape and skyline, as it has been subject to extensive external design review. The scheme has a considered material palette that considers aesthetics, durability and maintenance. (Refer to detail design drawings A3-010 to A3-026);

The design has been developed with extensive consultation with Council's Design Review Panel; the Government Architect's appointed Design Excellence Panel and is a considered response to the scale and character of site and the area's evolving urbanity;

The site arrangement brings into a tight composition the calming horizontal of the linear King Street podium, against which is contrasted the vertical forms of the two slender towers that address National Park Street;



The King Street façade is a grand urban façade, in the tradition of street wall buildings that define and reinforce the space of the street. The façade has a calm arrangement of horizontal projections, which are counterpointed by a range of minor and major vertical elements (Refer to Architectural Plans A3-001);

The National Park Street façade is generously recessed to denote the main entrance into the site, creating a well proportioned plaza sheltered from the hustle and bustle of King Street. The setback appears to be carved out of the podium and presents a softened edge to the public domain through the use of a sculptural vertical batten screen and vegetation. A cantilevered street awning provides protection for pedestrians and further defines the main entrance into the site (Refer to Architectural Plans A3-002).

The towers' north-south facades facing the harbour and the city, and slender east-west facades facing Newcastle's hinterland both have a striking expression of open and screened balconies, with full height columns and concrete and glass balustrades. The balconies provide deeply-modelled areas of shade in contrast to the flatter side elevations;

The towers' side facades have horizontal architectural expression that integrates overhangs and shading into the north facing windows along these façades. Full-height window assemblies, vertical louvres and slatted screens reminiscent of the podium expression sit between or proud of the expressed slab edges adopted for the upper parts of the building;

The proposed architectural character expresses in a positive way the environmental and amenity objectives embodied in the design.

## CONCLUSION

The design achieves a high quality architectural, urban design and landscape resolution, and signals the revitalisation of the central areas in Newcastle;

The design has been developed with extensive consultation with Council's Design Review Panel: The Government Architect's appointed Design Excellence Panel and is a considered response to the scale and character of site and the area's evolving urbanity.

The site is the ideal setting for a coordinated residential project, and the project provides a **model for the envisaged redevelopment of west Newcastle.**

The site is well situated adjacent the transport, recreational, civic and shopping centres and is thus **ideally located for urban consolidation.**

The **scale mediates between** the scale of the envisaged taller buildings to the west and retained heritage and other buildings, including the adjacent 'Verve' development, currently under construction, and signals the planned transformation of the area's urban character

The project has a **distinctive architectural character, scale and silhouette** that will be an appropriate addition to Newcastle's urban landscape.

The combination of fine tower forms and street wall buildings provides an **appropriate model** for matching higher density housing with high amenity locations.

The retail and commercial uses have direct address and activation to the street and canal frontages.

**Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)** issues have been holistically incorporated into the project.

The **landscape design is fully integrated** with the site planning, and embellishes the National Park Street frontage and car park podium.

The proposal **consolidates communal courtyard spaces** in the heart of the block, for the shared enjoyment of residents and neighbours.

The project incorporates **a diversity of residential accommodation**, incorporating the principles of adaptability, to increase the housing choices available in Newcastle.

The proposal satisfactorily considers the privacy and amenity of the neighbouring properties, and **respects their redevelopment potential by applying appropriate setbacks**.

The project will create a **high quality residential environment** for future residents, with very good amenity well above ADG requirements.

The resolution of urban, architectural, environmental and social design considerations demonstrates that the proposal is an **appropriate fit to its site and context**.



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