
Meeting: UDRP - May

Date 31 May 2023

Chair: Dr Philip Pollard, Urban Design Review Panel

Attendees: Colin Brady, Urban Design Review Panel

Kerry Hunter, UDRP (Unable to attend meeting but considered the amended proposal post meeting).

Amy Ryan – via Teams - City of Newcastle

Geof Mansfield – Panel Coordinator, City of Newcastle

Ellise Redriff – Business Support Officer, City of Newcastle

AGENDA

Item

Description

2

Matters for consideration

9:30am-
10:30am

2.1

UD2022/01318.01 - DA2022/01317

[60 mins]

711 Hunter Street Newcastle West

Design, construction and operation for Stage 2 of a 26-storey mixed-use development with high quality tower forms at 711 Hunter Street, Newcastle West

UD2022/01317.01 – DA2022/01316

711 Hunter Street Newcastle West

Stage 1 - 26 storey mixed-use development

Attendees:

Applicant: Luke McNamara, St Hilliers

Justyn Ng, St Hilliers

Andrew Harvey, Urbis (Planning)

Sam Shepherd, Bellringer

Mark Kuhne, Urbis (Landscape)

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
Design Response Report (46 pages)	St Hilliers	22 May 2023
Amended CPTED Report (65 pages)	The Design Partnership	May 2023
Amended Preliminary Const. Management Plan (23 pages)	Frank Katsanevas	19 May 2023
Amended Public Art Plan (38 pages)	Art Pharmacy	Oct 22
Amended Architectural Plans – Stage 1 (81 pages)	Plus Architecture	19 May 2023
Amended Architectural Plans – Stage 2 (80 pages)	Plus Architecture	19 May 2023
Amended Report on Staged Stratum Subdivision (21 Pages)	CMS Surveyors	19 May 2023
Retail & Ground Plan Experience Brief (63 pages)	BellRinger	August 2021
Retail Staging Approach (1 page)	BellRinger	18 May 2023
Design Integrity Panel 2A (18 pages)	St Hilliers	18 February 2023

Background

The proposal has been considered previously by the UDRP on 22 February 2023.

The proposal has been the subject of a previous Pre-DA application (PR2022/00049) with CN's advice confirmed in a letter dated 22 May 2022. The UDRP was not involved in this Pre-DA.

Furthermore, the proposal and associated design were the successful entry of an architectural design competition undertaken in accordance with the provisions of Part 7 of the Newcastle LEP 2012. In addition to the initial selection of the proposal as the winning entry in the limited

design competition, the Design Integrity Panel (DIP- the competition Jury) considered developed design and other amendments to the proposal on three occasions to date. The most recent consideration was specifically for the DIP to address issues around the proposed staging of the development, and how the area that constitutes the footprint of Stage 2 will be managed until such time that Stage 2 proceeds.

The proposal is the subject of two current development applications, one for the northern, Hunter Street tower, the other for the southern, Little King St tower.

1.	Context and Neighbourhood Character
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22 February 2023

It was confirmed that following the lodgement of the DA, the UDRP will take over oversight of the design excellence integrity of the proposal, including any subsequent amendments and future s4.55 modifications. The role of the UDRP also covers the SEPP 65/ Apartment Design Guidelines (ADG) considerations and any aspects not covered by the design excellence process under architectural design competition.

The Panel requested information in respect to Designing for Country and Connecting with Country, and following the meeting was provided with the documentation prepared for the design competition by COLA. This was considered to be a valuable input, that established principles for the design that are supported by the UDRP. It is noted that these demonstrated principles for designing for Country and Connecting with Country need to be carried through the design development of the project. From the documents currently provided, it is unclear how these principles are meaningfully progressing and how the proposed staging will be managed so that there is no loss of integrity.

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The physical context of the proposal is largely unchanged. The UDRP again acknowledged the cited COLA document and noted the importance to the design of conceptually and physically connecting ground plane landscape with elements of the podium façade and with extensive soft landscape treatment of the podium level.

2.	Built Form and Scale
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22 February 2023

The Panel noted that the proposed subdivision of the site and the subsequent consideration of the overall design competition proposal under two separate Development Applications,

brought with it some design-related considerations that did not arise in the design competition process. It was noted that, while the technical aspects of the proposed staging of the overall development do not form part the Panel's considerations, any uncertainties arising may have impacts upon amenity, safety or other ADG impacts, that would need to be considered. These include:

- *Easements and reciprocal agreements for parking, access and public domain areas.*
- *In terms of the proposed two DAs to effect staging, the public domain outcomes for the site will be a concern. Provisions need to be in place to ensure the preservation of the public domain/open space and it is likely a combination of easements for aspects such as access, pedestrian spaces, public domain etc will be required. The development, including the upper floors, are likely to need complex and comprehensive reciprocal easements to ensure vehicular and pedestrian access is properly addressed and preserved.*
- *Having to the design and nature of the public domain areas, especially the changes in levels and the design of the walkways and resolution of the ground plane, the proposal needs to include restrictions on possible impediments to accessibility. These include locations for any retail outdoor displays, and seating in these areas considering the intended food and drink offerings (which may also extent to restrictive covenants considering the proposed 'staged' split within the proposal).*
- *It needs to be ensured that the restaurant/bar on level two has proper provision for services.*
- *Consideration should be given to the protection of privacy of the roof decks, which will be seen from adjoining buildings (e.g. the new proposal at No 1 National Park Street).*
- *Street address, entry and access to Commercial G.04 needs development.*

It was noted that the design of the podium was modified following the design competition, which involved the introduction of extensive residential accommodation on the common podium – which previously entirely devoted to landscape and communal space for residents. The DIP has made recommendations in respect to this area, and a revised design has not as yet been received in response. The UDRP has raised a number of issues pertaining to this area, and awaits the mooted design revisions.

31 May 2023

The UDRP acknowledged the provision of additional documentation in respect to staging and the temporary use of the Stage 2 footprint area pending the commencement of the second stage of the development. The proposal to create an interim public place that has visual and physical connection to the central plaza space was supported, as was the increase of the Stage 1 footprint to permit the great majority of the central public space to be constructed as part of Stage 1. Further reference to these changes is made under the following headings.

The UDRP also noted a moderate widening of the raised walkway outside the National Park St retail spaces in Stage 1, which had previously been raised as a concern in respect to possible clashes between outdoor dining or retail displays and pedestrian and wheel chair paths of travel. The Panel supported the increase in width, which resulted in what was considered to be the minimum workable dimension for this area.

In respect to the proposed elevated food and beverage spaces in the podium volume on the corner of Hunter Street and National Park St, for which further detail had been sought by both panels, the Applicant advised that internal stair access was still considered likely to be

provided, but the proponent was awaiting the requirements of a future tenant / occupant/operator for possible layouts in this respect. While accepting that the business that occupies the spaces will have requirements for fit-out and operational considerations, the UDRP noted previous requests to demonstrate, at least indicatively, where stairs might workably be located. This will be determined by both operational considerations and structural restrictions. The loss of any soft landscape elements from these external corner spaces was again noted. While functional F&B space was obviously a necessary priority, the provision of soft landscape elements should not be abandoned as this assists the external visual connection of landscape elements between ground level and the podium as noted in the COLA report.

3.	Density
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22 February 2023

While the proposal, including tower massing and heights was supported in principle by the UDRP, it is noted that the design is currently undergoing refinement in response to the Design Integrity Panel's (competition Jury's) input. Satisfactory resolution of this design development may result in a minor reduction of proposed yield.

31 May 2023

The proposed density of the development is considered to be generally acceptable. However, comments in respect to provision of an indoor communal space in the southern tower are reiterated under heading *8 Housing Diversity and Social interaction*.

4.	Sustainability
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22 February 2023

Detailed information in respect to sustainability provisions has not as yet been provided to the UDRP for consideration, and the Panel's attention has primarily been directed to the broad urban design and primary ADG considerations at this stage.

The overall sustainability strategies, including energy and emissions, local PV generation, provision for electric vehicle charging, were issues identified by the UDRP for further consideration.

5.	Landscape
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22 February 2023

It was noted that the Designing for Country documentation prepared by COLA envisaged an integrated landscape treatment that visually connected the podium level to the ground plane with vegetation in a number of locations, including the north-east corner (National Park St/ Hunter St corner) and the south-west corner adjacent to the Drill Hall. The extensive podium level soft landscape proposed in the Competition design was an integral part of this, and the design development identified by the DIP needs to take into account how the Design for Country vision can be successfully implemented. Towards this end, the leafy landscape character of the podium and the cited connections to ground needs to be reinstated.

While the introduction of residential accommodation to the podium level is not opposed in principle, the reduction of landscape and the consequential close juxtaposition of public and private areas requires further consideration. For example, the NW corner of the communal open space and the proposed dwelling bedrooms are a potential conflict and need to be further developed, and near the southern tower, the close proximity of the running track and dog exercise area needs to be reconsidered, in favour of greater soft-landscape buffer areas.

Very extensive hard-paved private open areas associated with the introduced residential component at podium level are inappropriate for a range of reasons. They do not support the Design for Country vision, they lack privacy for residents, they are excessive in area, and contribute to heat island effect. These areas do not provide an attractive green foreground area for residents of the subject towers or their neighbours that overlook the podium.

Further details are also required of how the communal open space and podium between the two towers will work, in the light of the proposed staging/subdivision and maintaining a continuous development.

31 May 2023

Temporary arrangements for Stage 2 footprint:

The UDRP was strongly supportive of the proposal to demolish the existing Spotlight car park and to temporarily landscape the area as a publicly accessible landscaped space until such time as Stage 2 works commence.

Treatment of Surface Area to Stage 2:

- The site of Stage 2 is proposed to be landscaped as a horseshoe shaped plan with natural turf intended as the main central surface treatment, surrounded by a continuous band of low shrubs and ground covers.
- Surrounding hard paved areas are of decomposed granite providing some permeability.
- Catenary lighting above the open space is proposed to facilitate casual surveillance.
- Perimeter planting of trees in large pots is proposed to be supplemented to prevent unauthorised vehicle access.
- A licenced coffee/food van is proposed to support leisure activities in the temporary area.

The Panel suggested that further consideration be given to tree placement, both to better visually connect the Stage 1 public landscaped entry with the temporary area, and to avoid a monotonous “shooting gallery” appearance of lines of potted plants. Unauthorised vehicle access to the space should be restricted by visually attractive physical barriers, such as the proposed large potted plantings.

Podium top:

In respect to earlier Panel commentary on landscape and spatial treatment of the podium level open spaces and under-croft areas, the following amendments to the design were proposed:

- Privacy issues to Podium Level apartments in part addressed with a continuous extended awning (reducing oversight from apartments nearby – and potentially also assisting downdraught wind conditions – the Panel noted that the latter appeared a positive addition, but should be tested by wind modelling, as should any reduction in winter sun to apartments from awnings).
- Surface treatment proposed to be combination of timber decking, synthetic turf and perimeter planted beds.

While the landscape proposal has to some extent addressed some noted concerns, it was noted by the Panel that podium level private open spaces remained extremely large, at the expense of more expansive and appropriate areas of living plants that contribute to both the external appearance of the development – which was a feature of the winning competition design – and to resident enjoyment of the communal spaces *as soft-landscaped areas*.

Furthermore, the limited perimeter planting, estimated by the proponent to be in the order of only 1.5m in width, was proposed to serve also as the access way for maintaining the planter beds. This arrangement is considered to be quite unworkable, and should be reconsidered with proper provision made for safe, convenient access for maintenance of all the contributory planter beds across the podium, and for considerably larger areas of soft landscape. This maintenance access needs to take account of the periodic need to access plants for pruning and mulching, and the less frequent need to replace soils and plants.

While timber decking can be attractive, and is considered appropriate for areas under awning cover, it will have a fairly short life-span if fully exposed to the elements. Synthetic turf is not supported for both sustainability and aesthetic reasons, and has a short useful life with no prospect of being recycled in Australia. It can be very hot underfoot, and is not considered an appropriate inclusion – other than the limited designated dog area.

While there has been some increases in the planted areas outside bedroom windows that can act as a setback from communal spaces, this separation remains less than desirable for achieving reasonable levels of privacy. This should be reconsidered as part of the recommended overall increase in soft landscape area on the podium in lieu of synthetic turf and some hard paving.

6.	Amenity
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The apartments were generally considered to provide a good level of internal amenity for future residents. Two areas of needed design development for internal/circulation areas relate to the southern tower:

- 1. Internalised studies – A number of “study” alcoves were considered to be unsatisfactory. These are habitable spaces requiring natural daylight and ventilation consistent with ADG requirements (that is, habitable spaces/rooms must not borrow daylight and ventilation from other rooms). This requirement is reinforced by the need of increasing number of people working from home. The Panel further noted this has flow-on implications for increased energy demand for artificial light and ventilation needed for day-to-day functionality over the life time of the development.*

Exploration of how these spaces can be located on external walls should be pursued. Alternatively, they should be deleted, returning the space to storage or other adjacent habitable spaces. It was also suggested that improved amenity as a bare minimum could be achieved by relocating the adjacent bedroom wardrobe, and aligning the bedroom door and window with the study area so there is an opportunity for some daylight to reach part of the space and so a sightline enabling glimpses to the exterior through windows of the adjacent room.

- 2. The lobby/corridor areas of the southern tower - have reduced access to views and natural ventilation due to the locating of a plant area at the end of the space, which effectively halves the aperture in the western façade. It was recommended that this area either be relocated or rearranged to widen the glazed opening to an extent commensurate to that proposed in the competition design.*

The Panel noted the proposed solution in turn reduces the proportional modulation of the southern tower massing achieved with the competition design’s expression of massing.

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Comments above under the Landscape heading in respect to bedroom privacy for some dwellings on podium level are reiterated.

Internal arrangements in Stage 2 apartments and study alcoves are considered acceptable for occasional utilisation - though it is noted that these alcoves remain unsuitable for extended use, such as work-from-home.

The arrangement for natural light access into the corridors of the Stage 2 tower has been illustrated, and though considerably more restricted than the competition design, is considered acceptable.

7.	Safety
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22 February 2023

The UDRP noted, and fully concurred with the concerns raised by the DIP in respect to the lack of CPTED consideration demonstrated in the layout of the residential pedestrian entrances at ground level. The proposed staging of the towers and the consequential partitioning of the landscaped communal space between them, has potential to further

exacerbate the condition that the DIP raised concerns about in respect to CPTED. Both the design for the eventual completed central space, and especially the reduced area available in stage one, need to be further considered in respect to providing safe and welcoming all-hour access to residential lobby spaces.

The Panel noted the modified car park layout for Stage 2, Levels 01 and 02, spaces Residential R.050, 051 and R.121, 122 appear to conflict with the pedestrian open corridor and does not provide a safe swept path due to the corridor's skewed geometry.

31 May 2023

Previous advice in respect to locations in the car park of storage areas is reiterated, in so far as gaining convenient, workable access to the storage, and reducing the likelihood of accidental damage to other residents' parked vehicles when loading or unloading goods for storage.

The Panel noted the revised CPTED report, and changes in the design to better address issues around places of concealment in the car parks and around the pedestrian entries at ground level.

The changes and proposed provisions are considered to have potential to adequately address the concerns raised in respect to pedestrian safety at ground level, and access to the residential lobby spaces from the public area. It is important that the recommendations of Table 2 of the CPTED Report (repeated below) are maintained.

Table 2 of the CPTED Report - items 1 & 2 to ensure activation of frontages and sightlines are maintained:

1 The application of displays, decals, signage and posters on ground level glazing should be minimised so as not to obstruct sight lines.

2 Seating, shelving and other internal built elements within the ground floor retail and commercial premises are encouraged to remain low or transparent to improve views.

The Panel suggested that conditions of consent might be applied along the following lines:

Item 1: DA condition with numerics for extent of shop frontages that must maintain direct lines of sight into retail tenancies (eg. only 10% can have decals/signage/posters etc) plus landscape structures and signage in the public domain are not to obstruct sightlines.

Item 2: DA condition that shelving / internal fit-outs not to have shelving above say 600mm along the frontage.

8.	Housing Diversity and Social interaction
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22 February 2023

The UDRP concurred with the DIP's requirement for dedicated interior communal space within the stage 2 southern tower. While there may be proposed reciprocal rights to communal areas, residents are more likely to feel comfortable making use of spaces closer to their residences.

31 May 2023

The Panel noted advice from the Applicant that, on completion of Stage 2, residents are intended to share the use of all common areas between both stages. While this is accepted, better provision should be made for indoor communal space in the Stage 2 building – both for local convenience of residents of Stage 2, and to ensure that any residents of the later stage who may not feel comfortable using the elevated common area within the Stage 1 tower, have access to an indoor communal space more proximate to their residences.

9.	Aesthetics
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22 February 2023

The UDRP noted the critical importance of the proposed landscape treatment to the development's overall aesthetic presentation, as well as its Design for Country. The winning Competition design should inform design development in this respect.

The treatment of the podium, in particular the areas in which the car parking extends to the façade, needs to offer a high-quality, residential-friendly presentation to the three streets that the development will occupy.

Landscape treatment is one key component of this presentation, that can soften the façade, as outlined above.

The detail of the façade treatment of non-habitable areas of the podium is critical to ensure a civil, welcoming street presence to customers and to residents returning home.

Cars within the podium should be screened from view, and lighting should be in the form of soft wall "washes" rather than bright lighting or exposure to glare from luminaires.

It was suggested that a large scale working model of the façade and its lighting would be a useful development tool.

Material boards, including accurate representations of colours and finishes, should be provided.

31 May 2023

The Panel's previous advice is reiterated.

Screening of the car park interior from the street and from nearby residences has been a topic that has involved both the DIP and UDRP since the competition design. The most recent

renderings of the car park / podium indicate that the LED light source will deliberately be exposed. This is directly contrary to ongoing discussions, which have called for a layered screening of the car parks, coupled with a warm coloured *light wash* of the screens, that specifically avoids visibility of the light source and that minimises glare. Further design development is required for the podium exterior, including large scale sections and 3D representations showing layered screening, locations of light sources, and renderings.

Soft landscape design featured highly in the winning competition proposal, as well as being a key element in the COLA Design for Country approach. These were strongly supported by the DIP.

The move to include a significant number of private residences on the podium level, as well as other changes, have substantially reduced the extent of soft landscape treatment, which remains deficient in spite of the most recent design amendments.

RECOMMENDATION

22 February 2022

Amber

The UDRP considers the proposal to have good potential for a completed development that contributes positively to all streets and public spaces and to the area more broadly, and that offers residents a stimulating, vibrant, living environment.

Most, if not all, of the areas identified by the UDRP for further design development arise from three main areas:

- 1. Introduced changes that dilute the strength of winning competition design;*
- 2. Areas already identified for improvement by the DIP; and*
- 3. The complexities and challenges arising from the proposed staging and subdivision of the development.*

Further information in respect to identified areas is also required, in line with usual practice for a development of the proposed scale and significance.

31 May 2023

The UDRP notes its view that the proposal has good potential to achieve design excellence and to be a positive contribution to the city. Positive progress is noted in respect to a number of issues raised previously, with the outstanding items, as outlined above, appearing to the Panel to have capacity to be readily addressed with some relatively minor design development.

Panel Recommendation (Amber)

The proposal has moved closer to warranting support, but design development and some further documentation of matters previously identified, is necessary for endorsement. The warranted design development is not extensive and in the Panel's view should be capable of being achieved in a timely manner.

Selected Recommendation	Description	Action
<p>Amber</p> 	<p>The UDRP generally supports the proposal in its current form with caveats that require further consideration.</p> <p>The UDRP advises that this is a reasonably well considered and presented scheme and that the architectural, urban design and landscape quality are of a reasonable standard.</p>	<p>The applicant and design team are required to address the issues outlined above.</p> <p>The amended application requires review by the UDRP.</p>