

Design Excellence Advisory Panel Report

Address: 85-91 Thomas Street, Parramatta

Date: 22 February 2024

Application Summary

Application Number	DA/344/2023
Assessing Officer	Patrick Santos
Applicant/Proponent	Glenda Lam
Architect and Registration Number	PTI Architecture Peter Israel 5064
Landscape Architect	
Planner	
Others in attendance	

DEAP Members	David Epstein, David Logan, Andrew Stanic
Chair	Andrew Stanic
Other Persons in attendance	Jan McCredie – Team Leader, Design Excellence
Item No.	3 of 3
DEAP Meeting Number	1st Referral

General Information

The City of Parramatta Design Excellence Advisory Panel (DEAP) provides independent expert advice on applications relating to a diverse range of developments within the City of Parramatta Local Government Area.

The DEAP comments are provided to assist both the applicant in improving the design quality of the proposal and the City of Parramatta in its consideration of the application.

Proposal

Demolition, tree removal and construction of 2 residential flat buildings over basement car parking with associated site and landscaping works. The application is Integrated Development pursuant to the Fisheries Management Act 1994 and Nominated Integrated Development pursuant to the Water Management Act 2000. The determining authority is the Sydney Central City Planning Panel.

Preamble

This is the first time the proposal has been reviewed by DEAP.

Panel Comments

1. The site is significant in that it backs onto Baludarri Wetlands on the northern bank of Parramatta River, west of James Ruse Drive. The wetlands are part of a natural watercourse and public open space.
2. A publicly accessible pathway runs through the site near the southern boundary.
3. Land at the rear of the site is being dedicated to Council via a VPA that is currently under review. This should ensure that a continuous green space between the development and Parramatta River is retained.
4. Ecological and biodiversity studies undertaken by the applicant conclude that the proposal is acceptable. It is unclear whether or not the studies considered the potential impact of overshadowing of the wetlands. The Panel is of the view that given the size and sensitivity of the site that any additional overshadowing of the wetlands should not be supported.
5. The applicant has submitted S4.55 requests to vary both the height and FSR for the development. The height variation partly sought is towards the rear of the development partly due to the topography of the site.
6. In consideration of the above, the Panel queried the height and overall form of the development with regard to potential impacts on the open space and ecologically sensitive zone to the south side of the development.
7. Whilst the street building is within height plane, due to the topography the building exceeds the height plane at the rear by 2.85m for the eastern building and 3.45m for the western building.
8. As mentioned above, given the sensitivity of the site, the Panel does not support the extra height and FSR.
9. The Panel queried the design of the common open space in the centre of the development. The Panel considered the courtyard too formal and 'hardscape'. Instead the courtyard could be 'looser' and softer with more soft landscaping and 'bump' spaces for informal gathering.

10. Whilst the central walkway is proposed to be private and not be used by the public to access the open space along the river, more should be done to give the courtyard a sense of openness, a wider central passage with (pedestrian) street-like character and more flexible space.
11. Linking the central courtyard from Thomas Street all the way through to the public walkway at the rear of the site should be explored both visually and physically.
12. The steps and gate at the southern end providing access to the open space need to be designed with 'generosity' as an important connection to the open space and as a secondary entrance to the development with a 'sense' of entry and not a back door.
13. The Panel queried the lack of architectural and landscape response to the use and treatment of the open space on the south side development. The opportunity to connect the development at the lower level to the open space should be explored.
14. The landscape plans should include the open space at the rear of the site with a path leading from the rear entrance to the boardwalk. The boardwalk is to be included in the landscape plans.
15. The proportions and design of the rear elevation could also be improved to give it a more hospitable feel with less verticality in response to it facing the natural open space and the view of the development from the south.
16. The Panel queried the different architectural expression for the northern and southern buildings. It was suggested that reducing the number of materials and colors on the elevations would help to achieve a 'calmer' architectural resolution.
17. The Panel raised the following concerns with regard to the layout of the development;
 - a. The corridors from the street entrance in the northern part of the buildings through to the rear lobbies and units in the southern part of the buildings is too long, convoluted and with limited access to natural light. The lack of light to corridors was particularly noticeable on the ground floor. The quality of an entrance and circulation space is better if there is clear and simple access and with plenty of natural light. Entrances should include parcel storage.
 - b. The Panel suggested entering the southern parts of the buildings from the central courtyard. The applicant's architect noted that Council had previously objected to that idea but that he was not against it as the original vision had the access via a central corridor.
 - c. The Panel queried the difficulty of gaining access to the upper-level communal spaces located on the roof of the southern part of the buildings. Residents from the northern parts of the buildings would need to go down to the ground floor and walk to the lift in the southern parts of the buildings to access the communal open space.
 - d. The proposed 9m separation between the buildings with balconies directly opposite one another is not supported. Example units A.205 and B.205.
 - e. The balconies for the 1 bed units for example A.204A and B.204A are only 1m deep in an attempt to comply with the 12m separation requirement. The balconies do not comply with the ADG 4E regarding private open space and balconies.
 - f. The courtyard needs to be widened or the positioning of balconies and windows changed to comply with 2F building separation and 3F visual privacy in the ADG.

- g. Consideration also needs to be given to design of the interface between the units and the access pathways within the courtyard area with regard to privacy. Consider using appropriate landscaping and positioning of openings to ensure privacy.
- h. The Panel queried the location of the bins on the northwest corner of the site with occupants at the eastern end having to negotiate a long and convoluted pathway to get to the bins. The applicant advised that there are bins on each level adjacent to the lifts where they are stored temporarily before being taken to the main storage area.
- i. External sun control devices should form part of the built form resolution for the northern and western facades.

Panel Recommendation

The Panel recommends that further design development is carried out in a revised proposal that responds to the issues noted above.