



Columbia Precinct Stage 2

Urban Design Review

Prepared for
JQZ

Date
28 November 2019



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This report is considered a draft unless signed by a Principal

28 November 2019



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Revision history

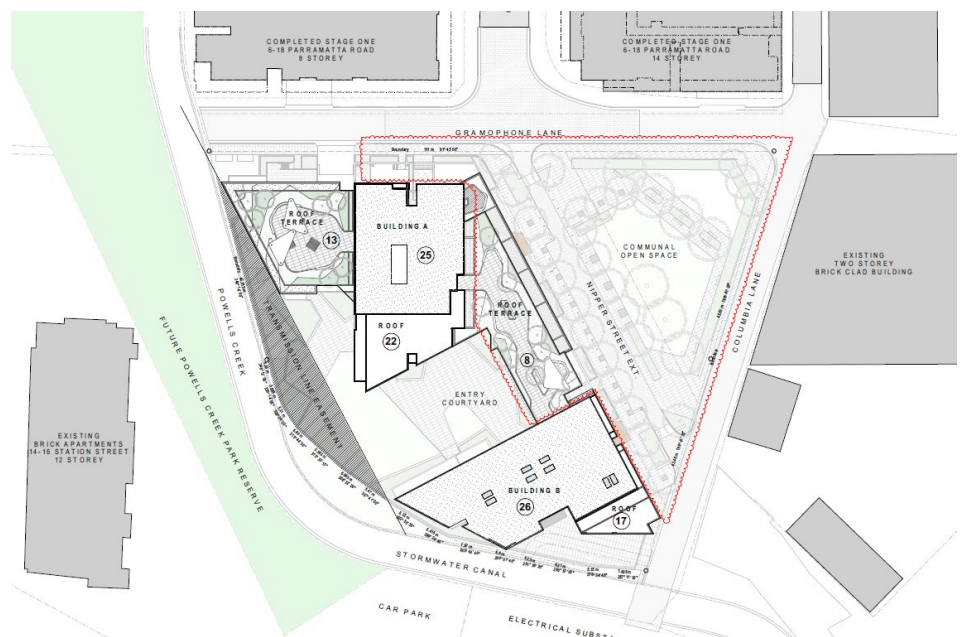
Issue Reference	Issue Date	Issue Status

1. Introduction

1.1 Preliminary

Architectus has been commissioned by JQZ to prepare an urban design review to accompany a Development Application (DA) for the redevelopment of vacant land at 11-17 Columbia Lane, Homebush. The DA seeks consent for:

- Construction of a mixed-use residential development comprising:
 - Maximum GFA of 32,840sqm;
 - A 25 storey (Building A) and 26 storey (Building B) mixed-use building (two tower elements) with an 8 storey podium which includes a total of 389 apartments (inclusive of 3 ground floor live/work suites and 2 retail suites).
 - 4 levels of basement car parking accommodating 488 parking spaces.
- Landscaping works including the embellishment of a new communal open space area located in the north-eastern portion, a communal open space (courtyard) at ground level (western portion) and roof terraces above podium levels 7,8 and 13.
- Provision of a public domain and new road corridor which includes an extension of Nipper Street to the south, providing a connection between Gramophone Lane and Columbia Lane.



Site Layout Plan (MPA drawing AP03)



Site Location map

The consent authority is Strathfield Council.

The site has been subject to a Planning Proposal (PP_2017_STRAT_003_01) which has been approved and the SLEP 2012 amended accordingly (26 July 2019). Architectus provided an Urban Design Report including massing for the site to support this Planning Proposal.

A design for the site was presented at a pre-DA meeting with Council (11 December 2018) and a series of detailed comments provided by Council (letter dated 15 March 2019). Subsequently the proposal was modified to address these issues and the subject of Council's Design Review Panel (16 October 2019) with comments provided by Council (31 October 2019). The current proposal is a modified form of this design intended to respond to Council's key issues.

In preparing this review, Architectus has reviewed and refers to the following documents:

- Architectural Drawing Set by Mosca Pserras Architects dated 22.11.19
- Landscape design report by Clouston Associates dated 01.08.19 plus revisions dated 10/10/2019

1.2 Structure of this report

The structure of this report is as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Overview of key design drivers and massing response
3. Response to Council's pre-DA review
4. Response to Design Review Panel
5. Summary and Conclusions

2. Overview of key design drivers and massing response

The current DA proposal is an evolution of the earlier design submitted with the Planning Proposal (as noted above this has been finalised and implemented), where the massing and response was developed and supported by Architectus. To assist in understanding

the design, a summary of key design drivers in the massing response of the site is provided below.

A. Nipper Street extension and open space requirement

There is a requirement through the site to provide heavy vehicle access through to the Strathfield STS Substation and Railway land to the south. The alignment for this route has been set out in Strathfield DCP 20 and reflected in the current LEP and 16-18 Parramatta Road development north of the subject site.

The area to the northeast of this vehicular access route is a small triangular site which has been earmarked as an open space, including through having no height permitted in the Strathfield LEP 2012. Although it may be possible to build on this 'triangle' of land it is considered by Architectus to be a major contribution to the amenity of the broader Columbia Precinct and appropriate for open space.

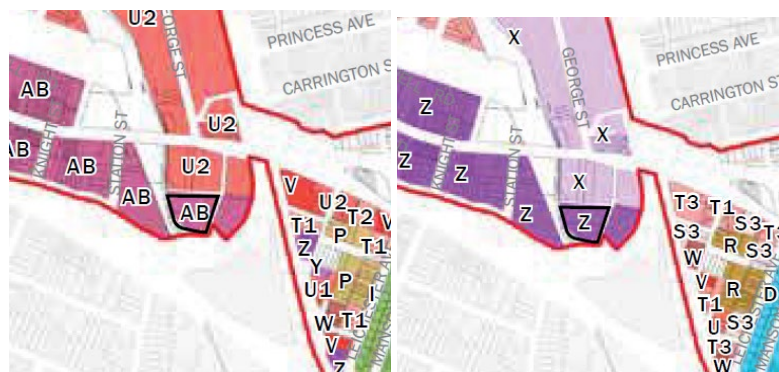


Left: Strathfield DCP 20 – includes the alignment of the vehicular access link

Right: LEP 2012 Height of Buildings Plan – The area indicated 'A' describes '0m' building heights (no buildings) for the link and intended open space area towards the northeast of the site

B. Height and density expectations provided by the Parramatta Road Strategy

The Parramatta Road Strategy sets out a strategic framework for density in this location (building on the previous Part 3A approval) and included recommendations for 80m height of building control and 5:1 FSR. The Planning Proposal for this site and controls to which the DA is subject to, are consistent with those presented in the Parramatta Road Strategy.



Left: Homebush Recommended Heights – AB is 80m. (Parramatta Road Strategy Implementation Toolkit)

Right: Homebush Recommended Densities – Z is 5:1 FSR (Parramatta Road Strategy Implementation Toolkit)

C. Massing to respond to views and overshadowing

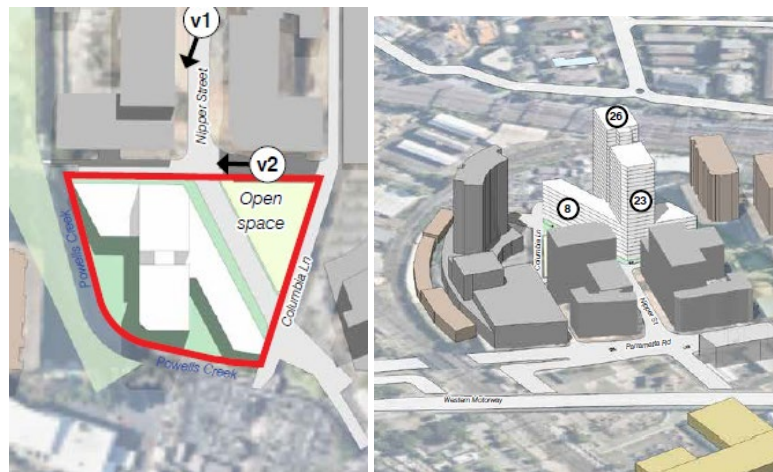
Following consideration of the issues noted above, designs for the site also need to take account of:

- Key views of the site and the response to the context. The towers will be seen from all directions with key views including from the north (Nipper Street and George Street beyond) and from Homebush Railway Station.
- Overshadowing impacts of the proposal, particularly to the existing residential buildings at 14-16 Station Street, southwest of the site.

In helping to guide the massing of this project in 2017 Architectus developed an Urban Design Report that was submitted to support the Planning Proposal. This included high level solar access testing and visual impact photomontages based on locations selected by Richard Lamb Associates.

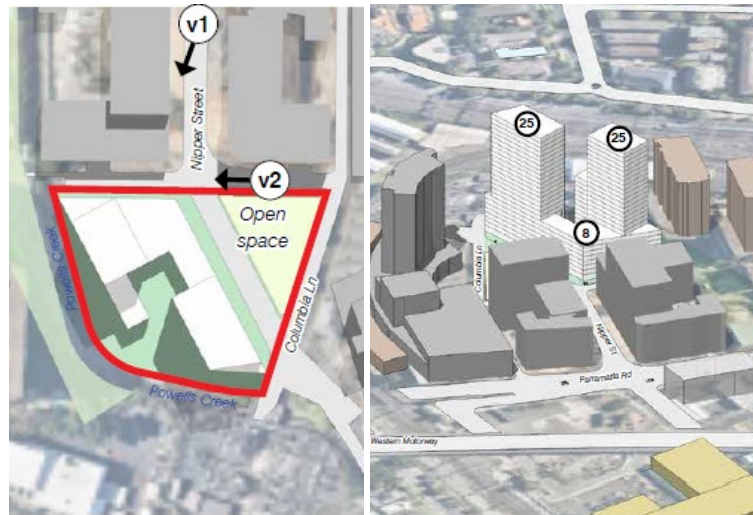
A summary of these three massing approaches is included below. These describe why the massing approach was selected (Scenario C below) that has been followed through and evolved in the current Development Application.

Architectus' general view is that the density proposed for this area, coupled with provision of new open space and public street link, would be better delivered with a greater height control however we understand that there has been a reluctance to allow variation from the controls proposed in the Parramatta Road Strategy through this process which constrains the potential design scenarios.



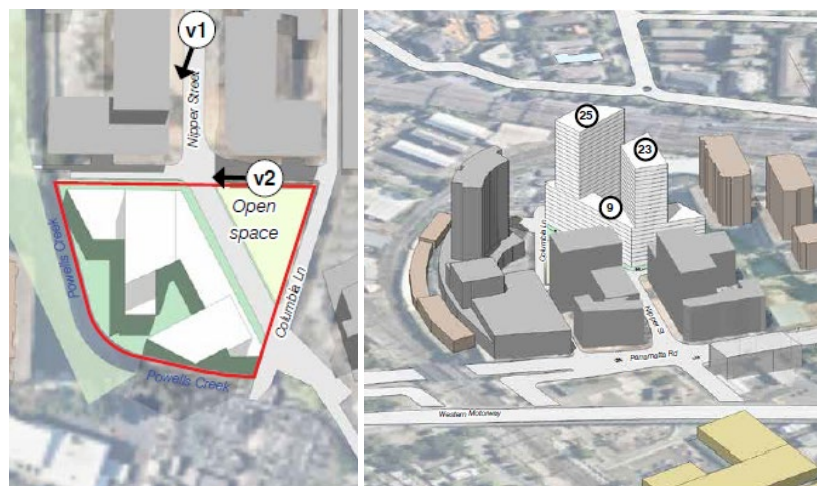
Scenario A – Single tower

This scenario provides a simple design response to the site however presents as a very long and visually bulky tower which was seen to be a poor outcome for views particularly from the east and west. For this reason, it was not preferred.



Scenario B – Two Parallel towers

This scenario presents two visually slender towers with good separation however their angled arrangement results in poor solar access outcomes within the site and the location of the tower to the northwest of the site provides significant overshadowing of the existing residential uses southwest of the site. For this reason, it was not preferred.



Scenario C – Preferred approach at the Planning Proposal level

This scenario was preferred as a general massing approach for the proposal at this Planning Proposal level as it provides two visually slender towers with good separation and solar access; and provides better solar access to its neighbour to the southwest than Scenario B. It has been further developed and evolved through the current DA.

3. Response to Council's Pre-DA review

The assessment below has been structured around Council's 'Points of Discussion' in the letter (15 March 2019) provided by Council to JQZ developments. This discussion covers urban design issues relevant to our expertise only. All these issues have either been addressed in design terms or responded to below where there is any disagreement.

2 Bulk and Scale

The comment by Council indicates that the proposal needs to do more to be consistent with the character of the area. This relates strongly to the '3 Building appearance' comments below which describes similar issues in greater detail – our response is provided below.

As described in Section 2 of this review, there has been a strong consideration of appropriate building forms for the site (particularly through the Urban Design options presented as part of the approved the Planning Proposal) which has led to the final massing approach to determine this as an appropriate response to the site and its context.

3 Building appearance

The façade appearance has been changed considerably in response to the comments made by Council. This is shown in the images below.

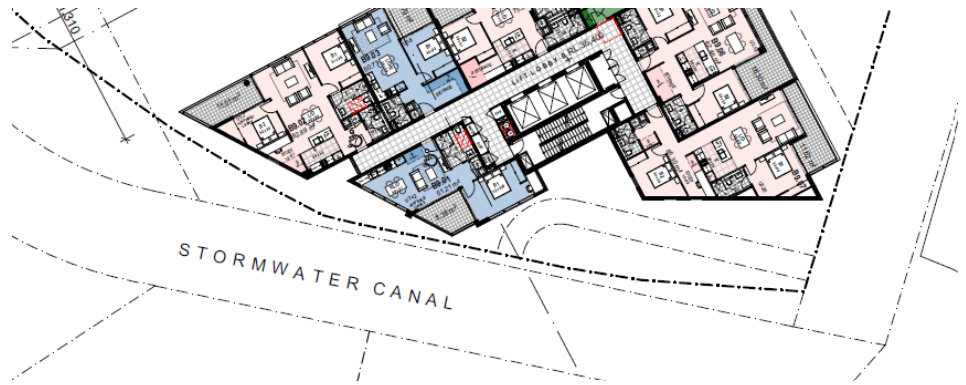


Comparison of Pre-DA scheme (left) and current proposal (right) showing simplified façade and stepping of heights (image: MPA)

Key changes in the design addressing Council's advice have been to:

- reduce the 'over-articulation' and 'over provision of details' through simpler façade treatments
- emphasise verticality through vertical breaks in building forms and a change in design of the roof forms and stepped building heights
- reduce the length of the podium façade and breaking this up with clearer entries and visual permeability at ground floor where there was a comment noting this was 'without enough breaks'
- step the building heights (responding to 3(d)). This has only been partially possible whilst retaining compliance with the height of buildings control. Architectus agrees with the comment that transferring some of the building height from tower A to Tower B would result in a better outcome for views however understands that Council would not accept a variation in the height of building control to achieve this.
- Provide detailed faced sections – Architectus has reviewed the façade sections provided and consider these appropriate for establishing design intent at a DA stage.

Architectus disagrees with Comment 3(c) that the exposed core of Tower B to the south is unacceptable – in our view the exposed portion of the core is minimal (approx.. 6.3m in length and inset from the apartments) and reasonable in views. Alternative design approaches where units 'wrap' this core would create amenity issues for apartments – increasing the number of single-aspect south facing apartments and creating further issues in relation to the same letter particularly points 7(d) that "balconies on the south side of the buildings are discouraged" and 7(i) that "units facing south with exposure to the railway corridor may endure acoustic issues".



Plan view of exposed core of Tower B

In summary of this issue, Architectus is satisfied that the final design presents an appropriate frontage to the development, with a human-scale frontage facing the new open space and Nipper Street, with towers emphasising their verticality.

4 Communal open space

The proposal provides compliant communal open space and solar access to communal open space. Architectus' calculations for this are that:

- 1,642sqm of communal open space is needed (25% of the site area of 6,568sqm)
- 821sqm of communal open space achieving 2 hours sun access is required (50% of the above)

Drawing SP05.1 of MPA demonstrates compliance with both of the above.

Architectus has worked with the architects to improve the usability and legibility of the ground floor communal open space. It has been redesigned to:

- Provide greater line of sight (and hence visual legibility) through the development from entry locations.
- Remove ground level apartments that were surrounded entirely by communal open space. These have been replaced by a communal gym at ground level.
- Simplify the columns provided and minimise their impact on the usability of this area.
- Reduce the 'blank' appearance of the south façade of the tower through the addition of translucent ('opaque') windows that also provide further daylight to residences.

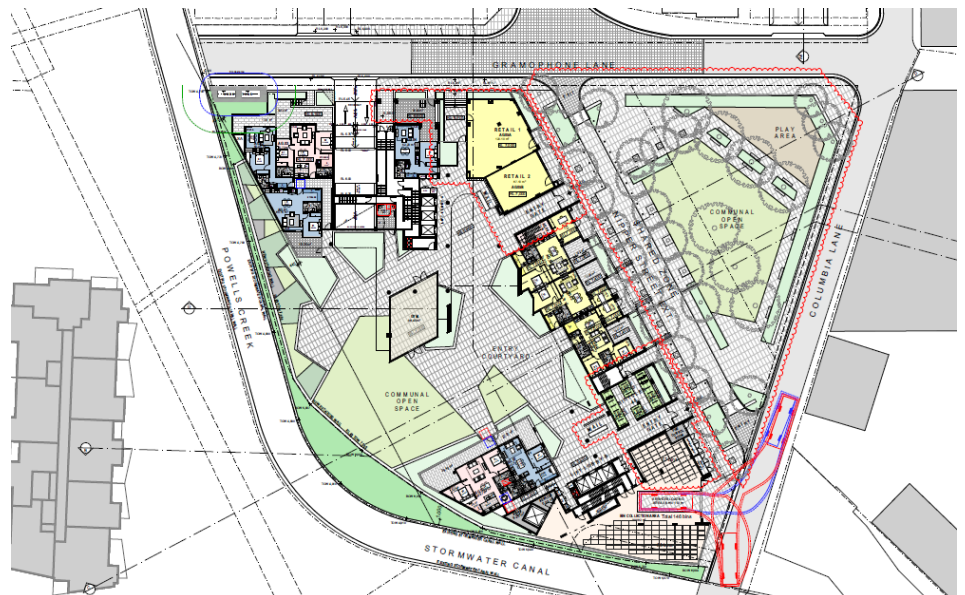
Architectus considers that this space now responds appropriately to its role, location and complex constraints given the building massing around it. The image below shows this area in its currently designed form.



Image showing the most complex massing of the communal open space with buildings over (image: MPA)

5 Setbacks

Comments have been provided on the relationship between units on Nipper Street extension. In the current proposal, Ground floor living areas facing the Nipper Street extension shared zone are generally 6m set back from the pedestrian area of the shared zone (including a 2m planted buffer plus a 4m private open space behind). The units are live-work units and the office components benefit from level street access. Architectus considers this an appropriate relationship to Nipper Street. This is further described on the plan and section below.



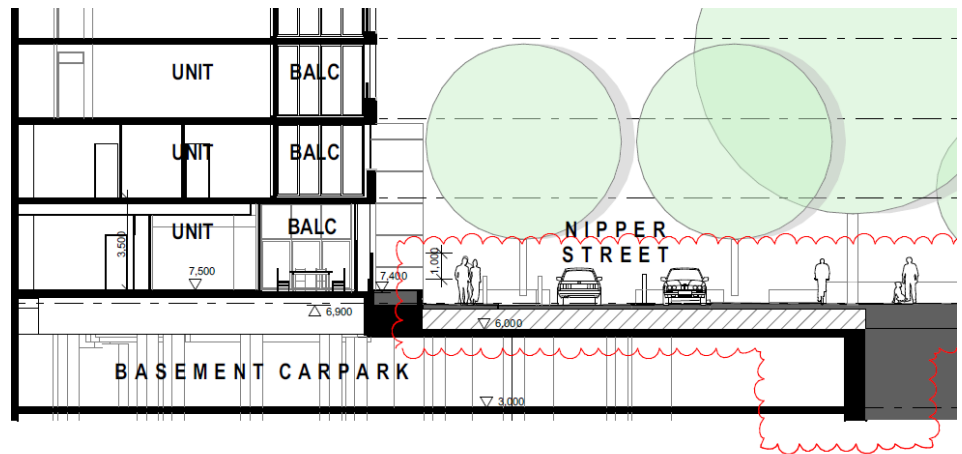


Image: Ground floor plans AP08 (above) and typical section through apartments and Nipper Street extension AP30 (below).

7 Internal amenity

In response to the points raised through Council's review of the pre-DA drawings, Architectus has worked with the design team to ensure that:

- Entries to the building are more well defined and articulated, with clearer lobbies and clearer line of sight to lift lobbies.
- As noted above, translucent ('opaque') windows have been provided on the southern façade of Tower A, which reduce the outlook of Tower B to a blank wall. The outlook towards this building is considered appropriate by Architectus (see also comments under '4 communal open space' above).
- The number of balconies on the south side of the buildings has been minimised. Architectus considers this a desirable outcome, however not always achievable.
- The fixed privacy screens between the units facing southwest in Tower 1 (typically unit 1 to unit 10 or 11 on Levels 1-12) protect views and outlook for these.
- Positions of windows facing L1-5 gallery walkways are noted as high level or translucent only to address 7(e).
- Acoustic issues from habitable areas facing south have been further considered in the acoustic report. From a design perspective, Architectus considers that the design has minimised the number of apartments facing this direction. This is also in conflict with Council's comment (3c) which notes a preference for less 'core' facing south (which would require more habitable units facing south).

There are some comments in this section that Architectus has a different view to Council's comments as follows:

- A comment (7g) on deeply inset balconies of approximately 4000mm. These balconies have been designed to respond to SEPP65. They provide good usable open space areas (in many cases well in excess of Apartment Design Guide minimums of 2m depth). The areas that are inset behind the balcony are bedrooms that do not require direct solar access under the ADG guidance, while the living rooms that do require direct solar access are at the edge of the façade and are provided excellent solar access.
- A comment (7h) on minimum apartment sizes noting that the minimum apartment sizes in the SDCP 20 are to be adhered to rather than those in the Apartment Design Guide. It is understood that according to SEPP65 cl. 6A, the provisions of the DCP are "of no effect" as they specify requirements in relation to apartment size.



Image: View from street entry to lift lobby

8 Public domain plan

A public domain plan has been provided with the DA consistent with the comments.

9 Solar access

Based on drawing SP04.6 the final design is SEPP65 compliant for internal solar access with 70.7% of units achieving 2 hours of solar access (compared to a 70% minimum) and 14.9% achieving no solar access in midwinter (compared to a 15% maximum).

Regarding overshadowing caused by the proposal on other sites, drawing SP04.1 describes the proposal as overshadowing the eastern face of a building to the southwest (within 14-16 Station Street block) in part from 9am-10:30am. The majority of affected units within 14-16 Station Street currently achieve solar access from 9am to around 11am, though some also have a dual aspect facing north and receive sun from 9am-3pm.

The key objective in the ADG relating to this is Objective 3B-2 which states 'overshadowing of neighbouring properties is to be minimised during midwinter'. In relation to this:

- The design has minimised its overshadowing impact through evolution of the massing, as described in Section 2 of this report. After consideration of the required Nipper Street extension and open space triangle, the design has primarily evolved to minimise its overshadowing impact on 14-16 Station Street.
- One aspect of the design guidance in this section is reference to the standards in Section 4A of the ADG, that 70% of apartments receive 2 hours solar access in midwinter (which are a design criterion for internal amenity). It has not been possible to do a detailed calculation of the solar access to these dwellings as we do not have detailed plans of the apartments, particularly locating living rooms from bedrooms. It is anticipated that most of these units are very close to compliance with effective solar access to living rooms falling off slightly before or after 11am. Regardless of the further detail that apartment layouts may provide in deciding whether these apartments currently achieve slightly over the numeric 2 hour standard or slightly under, minimisation of these impacts is desired and any proposal should aim to minimise this as far as possible.
- The key massing approach to minimise overshadowing here has been to locate tall building mass away from the north-western corner of the site where it would cause the greatest overshadowing of this property. This is by far the most important design approach that the proposal can do to minimise the impacts on the neighbour.
- In accordance with the design guidance for this objective, building separation is greater than AFGH minimums for visual privacy in this location (with almost 30m from building to building minimum to the roof terrace at its narrowest point and 40m to the tower form).

- One comment noted in Council's letter is that overshadowing is caused by excessive height. In relation to this it should be noted that it is not the high point of the towers causing the overshadowing – a lower scheme that extends closer to the western edge of the site could create much greater overshadowing.

Based on the above it is considered that the proposal achieves the objective to minimise overshadowing of neighbouring properties.

Regarding the overshadowing of the north-eastern communal open space, as described in Section 2 of this report the open space has been a feature of Council's planning for the area (alongside the Nipper Street extension) and is not being queried by this proposal, although we agree that it is strongly overshadowed in midwinter which is not ideal, this is due to other sites and proposals. Other spaces nearby also have achieved good sun access in midwinter and will be used by residents seeking sun.

10 Public Park

Architectus understands that the ownership of the park has been clarified to be part of the site and not dedicated to Council. It will not be fenced however designed to primarily face the residents of this development.

The basement parking of the site has been revised to be clear of the park, allowing deep soil planting, which is a much-improved outcome from the previous proposal.

18 Landscaping

The Landscape Plan provided with the DA includes considerably more detail than that of the pre-DA discussion. This report does not include a comprehensive response to the landscape issues described, however key to the urban design response raised in queries here include:

- The overall master plan form is that described in Chapter 2 of this report, which describes the provision of the through site link and open space queried in this section of Council's letter
- The open space 'triangle' northeast of the Nipper Street extension has been changed in the final design to be a deep soil space rather than having a basement under.
- Regarding the Powell's Creek Corridor, there is a transmission line easement through this area to the west of the site where tree planting cannot be provided. This has been mitigated through the design with trees in alternative locations.

20 Deep Soil Planting

The final design has been redesigned to provide deep soil underneath the proposed park. As described in ASP06 There are two areas of deep soil proposed – 1,012.40sqm under the park and 352.90sqm under the communal open space to the west, which is considerably above the 459.76sqm required under the ADG.

4. Response to Design Review Panel comments

Following the Design Review Panel the proposal has been reviewed and further amended. Key changes here and other responses to the recommendations of the panel are set out below under the headings used in the DRP response.

1. Nipper Street Extension, Shared Way & Communal open space Area

- The Nipper Street extension narrowed to form a low speed shared zone and basement narrowed to provide good soil depths to support trees, with large vehicles diverted along Columbia Lane.
- A café has been provided on the north-eastern corner of the site opposite the site.
- Changes to Nipper Street enable a much better connection to north-eastern open space from within the buildings.

2. Apartment layouts, Amenity and Communal Open Space

- Modifications to apartment designs have been provided to increase amenity including to A1.01 and A1.02 and above as noted by the design review panel.

An opening has been provided to the end of the corridor here and an additional opening to the 8-storey cutout to improve the amenity of this accessway.

- Some further diversity in apartment design has been provided within the bounds of the client's commercial model as well as some modifications to apartment designs to increase amenity. The breadth of unit types is shown in new drawing SP06.1. It should be noted that the predominant unit type with bedrooms recessed behind squarer balconies is favoured by JQZ for its popularity and usable balcony as compared to shallow-balcony in front of a living room only.
- The 8 storey gallery cutout has been amended to provide an opening that allows airflow and light from the north as well as had its materiality reviewed. Further wind testing has been undertaken to demonstrate the technical ventilation of this space however it is understood that the proposal can achieve SEPP65 compliant cross ventilation without units ventilating to this space.
- Landscape designs have been reviewed to increase activation and utility.
- Key comments from the DRP where the revised design has not been able to address their suggestions include:
 - o The perimeter podium which has been designed to address the northeastern open space at a human scale and reflecting also the scale of the podium of the Stage 1 buildings to the north. We do not agree that the outlook for this area towards the canal is negative as set out by the DRP and believe this space can form an active, attractive and highly useful open space. Although its solar access is acknowledged to be limited, the proposal does provide communal open spaces with solar access compliant with SEPP65.
 - o The number of cores. The design as submitted is non-compliant with the numeric design criteria in section 4F of the Apartment Design Guide which recommends no more than 8 apartments per core, however we are satisfied that the objectives of the ADG are met in providing a high level of amenity for lobbies and common corridors including through access to light and ventilation. Amendments to the design of this corridor now allow for through ventilation and light from 3 directions.

3. Acoustic

- Engineering advice has been provided to demonstrate the utility of apartments facing the railway. From an urban design perspective, the proposal has worked hard to minimise the number of south facing apartments exposed to the railway noise as well as the substation, consistent with the advice in *'Development near Rail Corridors and Busy Roads – Interim Guideline'* (NSW Government Department of Planning – 2008).

4. Other matters

- Fundamentally the design of the podium and then relationship to the street has remained similar to that seen by the Design Review Panel. Architectus agrees with the principles set out in this advice including 'clear legible entries', 'a unifying podium', 'a range of apartment types' and 'articulated scale' however consider that this is provided by the proposal at present. In particular the entries are clearly defined by two storey portals and a clear podium height is defined which reflects that of the 8-storey buildings to the north. Whilst in principle Architectus prefers a lower height for consistent podiums this decision has been made through the previous stages and it would not be a good design outcome for the unity of the precinct to define another scale here.

5. Summary and conclusion

Architectus has undertaken an urban design review of the Development Application for a new residential flat building comprising 389 dwellings at 11-17 Columbia Lane, Homebush.

The current Development Application follows a range of strategic work including the Parramatta Road Strategy which has recommended key planning controls for the site and the Planning Proposal for the site, which has been approved.

A range of built form options for the site has been explored by Architectus (originally developed alongside the Planning Proposal Process) and is included in Section 2 of this document. This describes the evolution of the final built form massing for the Development Application.

The proposal provides a significant contribution to the local context through provision of a new major open space and Nipper Street extension.

This report also provides a response to many detailed comments Council has provided in response to a pre-DA meeting on 11 December 2018 (based on feedback provided in a letter dated 15 March 2019) and through a Design Review Panel meeting (16 October 2019 with comments provided 31 October 2019). Architectus agrees with most comments provided and has worked with the design team to shape the design in a way to respond as best to these comments and best practice urban design as possible. Key changes to the proposal since these discussions with Council include:

- Following the Pre-DA meeting:
 - o The overall design and articulation have been simplified and made more legible with stepped tower forms, greater articulation in massing, simplified façade treatments and greater legibility to the public domain
 - o The proposed open space is now a deep soil space.
 - o The internal ground level has been significantly rearranged to improve amenity of the communal open space and reduce tensions between this and ground level apartments.
 - o Visual privacy in key locations has been clarified through design treatments.
- Following the Design Review Panel:
 - o The Nipper Street extension narrowed to form a low speed shared zone and basement narrowed to provide good soil depths to support trees.
 - o A café has been provided on the north-eastern corner of the site opposite the site.
 - o Apartment designs have been amended to increase amenity in key locations and provide further diversity within the bounds of JQZ's commercial model.
 - o The 8 storey gallery cutout has been amended to provide an opening that allows airflow and light from the north.
 - o Landscape designs have been reviewed to increase activation and utility.

In summary of the above, Architectus considers the proposal a successful response to the site and context, including strategic planning context mentioned above, and is happy to support the current Development Application as proposed.