

21 July 2020

24-25, 1 Nipper Street  
(18 Parramatta Road)  
Homebush NSW 2140

To: Jeremy Hung  
via email

Architecture  
Urban Design  
Planning  
Interior Architecture

Dear Jeremy,

**Re: Columbia Precinct Stage 2 – Revised Urban Design Review**

Further to Architectus' engagement by JQZ to provide urban design advice and review for the proposed development at 11-17 Columbia Lane Homebush (the site), this letter provides Architectus' review of the current architectural plans (MPA Issue D, 15/7/2020) and landscape plans (Clouston Associates Issue F 16/7/2020) with particular regard to Council's letter 22 May 2020 following the proposal's review by the Sydney Eastern Planning Panel.

Architectus has previously provided urban design advice alongside the development of the architectural plans for this site (by MPA architects) in relating to the massing and articulation/design of the block, including through the Planning Proposal stage and a recent review (2019) submitted with the DA.

Architectus Sydney  
Level 3 341 George Street  
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia  
T 61 2 8252 8400  
F 61 2 8252 8600  
sydney@architectus.com.au  
www.architectus.com.au

This letter below is divided as follows:

- Summary of massing approach – Describing the key factors that have informed the overall massing of the proposal.
- Response to Council's comments 22 May 2020 – Describing a response to key urban design issues raised through this process including key changes to the previous design. This follows as closely as possible the headings raised in Council's letter.

Auckland  
Brisbane  
Melbourne  
Shanghai  
Sydney

Throughout this letter, reference is made to the following documents:

- State Environmental Planning Policy 65- Design Quality of Residential Apartment Buildings (SEPP65)
- the Apartment Design Guide (ADG).
- The Parramatta Road Urban Transformation Strategy 2016 (PRCUTS)

**Summary of massing approach**

The massing approach for the project has been supported by and developed with Architectus. The fundamental design response made to best fit the site and context is summarised below.

These principles were present in the illustrative design and massing approaches that accompanied the Planning Proposal for the site however have been refined through subsequent design.

Any significant change to the building form will unpick some of the key decision making below. The key principles in the massing approach are as follows:

- **Deliver the Nipper Street extension link and open space to the northeast corner of the site at the heart of the Columbia Precinct** – This link and open space have a long history, having been included in a previous form (across ownership boundaries) at the heart of the previous Part 3A approval for the 'Columbia Precinct'. They were subsequently reorganised through the design and approval north of the subject site. The current design matches the Strathfield LEP Height of Buildings Map reflecting

Architectus Group Pty Ltd  
ABN 90 131 245 684

Managing Director Sydney:  
Ray Brown  
Nominated Architect  
NSWARB 6359

Council's own strategic decisions already implemented in statutory form prior to the current planning proposal for the site. The new open space will form an important central open space at the heart of the new development area, providing amenity not just for the site but the development to the north and future developments to the west.

- **Provide a human scale street wall that addresses key frontages** – The block structure and key streets are addressed with a street wall, an approach consistent with the Strathfield DCP Part 20. An eight storey scale street wall has been set up by development to the north and is followed through here adjacent to the new open space however this scale is brought down slightly with a 'popup' top storey that is inset from the street wall edge.
- **Two tower design** – Initially single and multiple tower designs were considered for the site however the bulk of a single-tower option was considered too significant in views and overshadowing impact. Architectus also recommended a two tower design as providing the best overall amenity for the site including more dual aspect units, even though a single tower design may also achieve key SEPP65 standards such as solar access and cross-ventilation.
- **Minimise overshadowing of properties to the southwest through retaining the northwest corner of the site at a low scale** – The existing properties to the southwest have potential to be overshadowed by development and the design response to this has been to keep taller development away from the north western corner of the site. This has been revised and updated in the latest plans (see comments below).
- **Respond to the Powell's Creek Corridor** as designed and for its future potential – This has been emphasised more recently through the design process (see comments below).

#### **Response to Council's comments 22 May 2020**

This project has been through a long process and has benefited from a broad range of comments and views since its inception. The latest comments provided by Council (22 May 2020) following feedback from the Planning Panel raise some new issues that had not been raised or weighted before. Architectus has provided input into the revised design and supports the revised scheme. Key urban design responses to comments are considered below in an order following that of Council's letter.

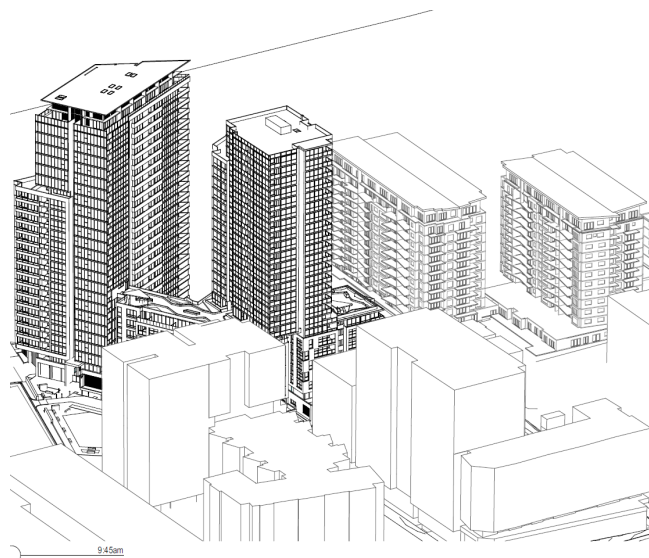
#### **Overshadowing – 14-16 Station St:**

Plans for the existing buildings to the southwest of the site (14-16 Station Street) have been obtained since feedback from the Panel and Council and the design has been tested against these and amended to improve this interface fundamentally through:

- Lowering of the height of the north western wing of the design
- Amending the tower floorplate to 'cut' the leading edge of shadowing.

The revised impact on the sites at 14-16 Station Street is a reduction in units achieving 2 hours sun access in midwinter between 9am-3pm of 21 units, from 75 units of 109 (69%) to 54 units (50%). None of these units are reduced to below 1 hour of sun access. These are generally the southeast units of the proposed development and the shadow is caused by the leading edge of the tower (See image below). The impact is consistent with the ADG's Objective 3B-2 "Overshadowing of neighbouring properties is minimised during midwinter" as one of the key organising principles of the design has been to ensure no taller built form in the northwest corner of the site to minimise this overshadowing. In particular the following aspects of the ADG's design guidance around this issue have been followed:

- "If the proposal will significantly reduce the solar access of neighbours, building separation should be increased beyond minimums contained in section 3F Visual privacy". The nearest point of the tower is approximately 44m from the closest point on 14-16 Station Street, almost double the typical ADG separation of 24m.
- "Where an adjoining property does not currently receive the required hours of solar access, the proposed building ensures solar access to neighbouring properties is not reduced by more than 20%" which the development complies with on a per-unit basis.



*Example image (9:45am overshadowing, MPA overshadowing analysis) showing the leading edge of the northern tower overshadowing part of the eastern edge of Building C at 14-16 Station Street (behind).*

In response to the issue of “Future Development to be considered” raised by Council, it is not possible to foresee the design requirements for the Kennards site and due to its large size there are many different potential configurations that may be explored. It is also not certain whether this site would be considered as capable of achieving its own maximum Floor Space Ratio. Thus any building massing drawn on this site will be misleading with regard to solar impacts. If the Kennards Site is developed and overshadows the subject site or others it will be held to the same standards as this site is in its shadow impact to 14-16 Station Street, the ADG’s Objective 3B-2 “Overshadowing of neighbouring properties is minimised during midwinter”.

#### **Overshadowing – Solar access for communal open space:**

The design has been adjusted as far as possible to improve ground level solar access to communal open space of over two hours as requested, particularly through a new walkable access route along the western side of the site which receives afternoon sun. Revisions to the landscape design have also taken place to improve useability of spaces in line with comments.

Council’s comments appear to describe the future Powell’s Creek Corridor and public pedestrian connections well beyond any current statutory or strategic policy (including the assessment framework set out in Council’s letter), particularly through comments such as “pedestrian movement along Nipper Street and under the train line” and “interface with Powell’s Creek following the future decommissioning of the substation and delivery of the Powell’s Creek open space” (although the substation is understood to be proposed for decommissioning, this will not fundamentally change the nature of the open space unless further changes are made). To the author’s knowledge no public document anticipates the corridor extending past the existing substation or under the railway. This would require agreement with energy and rail authorities and as such its potential to be delivered, as well as design and cost, is highly uncertain at this stage. Nevertheless this is agreed by Architectus as a good long term aspiration for the site and its context and as such the design has been reconfigured to improve the potential for future additions, particularly through improving the design’s front face to the west and the response of the bin store to the southeast.

Fundamentally there may remain some disagreement with Council’s comments on issues of prioritising ground level solar access and the configuration of open space where it should be noted that:

- The ADG allows for communal open spaces on podium or roofs (there is no requirement for communal open space receiving sun to be at ground level) and provides for a range of uses within communal open space umbrella that are satisfied

by the ground level communal open spaces shown including deep-soil planting, environmental and water cycle management, amenity and outlook for residents, circulation spaces and areas for passive use and outlook, etc. as well as different areas for social use of which the ground level spaces propose will form a different offering than the rooftop spaces.

- The design achieves the numeric standard for solar access to communal open space set out in the ADG and provides more than twice the total open space as is required under the ADG (3,693sqm of total communal open space where 1,642sqm of communal open space is required as 25% of the site area of 6,568sqm)
- The design and structure of the open spaces as noted above has fundamentally been driven by Council's own planning, including the provision of open space in the northeast corner of the site (as noted in the Strathfield LEP 2012 Height of Buildings Map at 0m) and a street wall approach which reflects the height of recent the development to the north.
- The site's proximity to existing 8-14 storey development to the north prevents a high degree of midwinter solar access at ground level under any design. It is typical across Sydney for sites in high density environments such as this to provide communal open space for sun access at podium level or on rooftops.
- The site is also highly accessible to the Powell's Creek corridor which, as it has no development to its north, will always provide better midday sun than ground level communal spaces on site.

#### **Apartment amenity:**

Unit A1.01 and above have been modified and should respond to Council's concerns.

Unit B1.01 and above have not changed. These units have an appropriate design with appropriate amenity with regard to ADG standards. Fundamentally the proposal has been designed to ensure that only one unit per floor is facing south as its primary aspect, and this unit is dual aspect. This minimisation of impact is consistent with the advice in '*Development near Rail Corridors and Busy Roads – Interim Guideline*' (NSW Government Department of Planning – 2008).

Other issues in this section relating to acoustics, storage and materials have been addressed by others in the project team.

#### **Building design:**

In response to concerns around circulation cores for each level:

- The circulation core to Building A has been reduced to 10 apartments and the length of the west facing corridor has also been reduced.
- This remains over the design criteria of 8 apartments however is consistent with the guidance which allows for "no more than 12 apartments".
- The design provides significant daylight, ventilation and a generosity of space around Lift Lobby A as well as some small balconies where appropriate, consistent with the ADGs guidance for corridors over 12m and where there are more than 8 apartments per lift core.
- The ADG design criteria around lifts refers to up to 40 apartments 'sharing a single lift' which is not the case here (apartments share a group of lifts).

Regarding the podium heights, as noted previously Architectus considers the podium height appropriate in responding to the development to the north. Council's letter raises the "transitions in height objectives detailed in PRCUTS" which appear to (as described for Homebush on page 134-135 of the PRCUTS Planning and Design Guidelines Implementation Framework) relate to:

- Transitions to heritage items which are not present close to the site.
- Solar access to open space, where the main open space on site is consistent with Council's previous planning and is prevented from gaining higher solar access primarily by the existing development to its north. Despite this space not being able to

achieve solar access consistent with the PRCUTS guidelines in the configuration shown (consistent with Council's own planning and LEP Height of Buildings Maps) due to the existing development to the north, Architectus considers this space useful and important in providing spatial relief, outlook and aspect within the wider Precinct and supports its delivery.

Regarding entry points, the northwest corner of the development has been set back to respond to Council's comments. The security gates at the edge of development are typical of other buildings of this scale and consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles which encourage a clear edge to developments.

#### **Public domain:**

Public domain plans have been reviewed and revised in response to Council's comments. Of concern to urban design matters raised in this section;

- Improvements to the setback and design along Gramophone Lane have been achieved.
- A greater setback and improved landscape design response to Powell's Creek corridor has also been achieved. Sight lines have also been opened here and the connection documented more clearly including intended crossing and Stage 1 works for the Powell's Creek Corridor (in their current design).
- The location of the basement car park access has not been moved. This is seen from an urban design perspective as the preferable location for vehicular access on site as the only location not fronting a major open space. The presence of a vehicular entry should not prevent the use of Gramophone Lane as an attractive pedestrian link.
- Architectus supports the Nipper Street extension as a shared zone with a role in providing pickup/dropoff for the development.

#### **Conclusion**

As noted above Architectus supports the design and massing decisions made through the project. Following the Planning Panel and Council's most recent comments the design has been revised to further address concerns, with the key revisions from an urban design perspective being:

- Reductions to overshadowing of the existing buildings at 14-16 Station Street southwest of the site through lowering the northwest corner of the building and reshaping the tower
- Reshaping the building to more fully address the Powell's Creek corridor and improve the Gramophone Lane interfaces including increased setbacks, a new landscaped entry to the development to the west including active sunny areas and a better interface to the southeast. This has been designed particularly to consider a longer term future for the Powell's Creek corridor as set out in Council's letter (however is not in current statutory or strategic documents seen by the reviewers).

Architectus is happy to support the current proposal from an urban design perspective based on the above.

Regards,



Oscar Stanish  
Associate