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190902_GalstonRd_Design
Advice_J RevisedScheme

James,

RE: REVIEW OF GALSTON RD DEVELOPMENT - ADDITIONAL DESIGN ADVICE

I have been asked to provide general commentary as part of the assessment process for the proposed Galston Road Retirement Village for Living Choice Australia (LCA) at 330 Galston Road, Galston. The following advice is my assessment of the revised layout and design of the proposed development and is based on the architectural drawings (dated 25/03/2021).

This latest scheme improves on the previous layout and in my opinion, the proposed siting of the Apartments and Leisure Centre buildings demonstrate a sound design approach that appropriately balances a range of design and character opportunities and constraints.

It is also my opinion that the proposed developed is a significantly better outcome than the Current Development Approval for the site, as it delivers higher amenity to residents on the site, better-resolves the technical site constraints and lessens the impacts on the streetscape and adjoining neighbours.

General layout and siting of buildings

This scheme arranges the larger buildings in a more consolidated location in the central/Eastern part of the site. This approach of 'clumping' the larger/taller buildings together allows them to screen and contextualise each other rather than spread their impacts across the rest of the site as with the Current Approval. Locating these taller buildings on the eastern edge takes advantage of local taller vegetation to the East of the site which provides a soft backdrop to help mitigate the impact of building height. This proposal removes taller multiple dwellings from the western boundary (shared with existing single detached houses) which significantly reduces the impacts on neighbours that are currently locked into the Current Approval.

The consolidation of the larger buildings improves on the Current Approval in two other important ways. Firstly, it allows single-storey detached and attached houses to provide a softer, more appropriate built-form character to the more sensitive Galston Rd frontage, and western and northern boundaries. This is a vastly improved outcome for the western neighbours and delivers

a more relaxed character to Galston Road, with a lower aggregate building height on this edge than the Current Approval. Secondly, the combined built form of the Leisure Centre and Apartments create a more legible, accessible and useable community space for residents and visitors to enjoy than the Current Approval.

The entry road into the site is longer than the Current Approval which allows new visitors to the site more time to make directional decisions. The arrangement of the three taller buildings increases the legibility of this entry experience, by providing stronger visual cues to visitors about their intended destination. Visitor parking is more obviously and conveniently located at the front of the site. This scheme uses a circular internal street providing more legible cues and more convenient movement options for residents and visitors, rather than forcing cars closer to Galston Road to access units on the other side of the development.

Siting of proposed apartment buildings

The two proposed apartment buildings have rectilinear floor plates, generally along an East/West axis, which optimises the buildings' solar orientation. Apartment 2 is 'L-shaped' with a 'leg' against the eastern boundary. Each building is positioned across the slope to address an orthogonal and legible street network and shape a communal BBQ area and terraced garden space. This approach allows the living spaces of units to face internal open space areas and the short ends of the buildings help shape the internal streets, delivering good CPTED outcomes for the Village. It is appropriate that the design response satisfactorily addresses these factors as the primary design considerations.

The contours on the south-eastern part of the site, are generally flatter and locating taller built form here helps manage the impacts of taller buildings on neighbouring sites. The elongated East/West axis of the apartments runs down the existing contours which allows basement parking to 'soak-up' the slope and provide a consolidated carparking entry on the western elevations where it is more legible and accessible. The diagonal site cross-fall varies on each building, but it generally allows the North-East corner to be positioned at ground level, with the basement car access positioned in the SW corner (the least desirable aspect).

The full-basement car-parks are generally 'half-in/half-out' which minimises the impact of cut on the existing topography, compared to a fully submerged basement.

The split-level approach is a design strategy often employed to ensure building profiles mirror the slope of steeper sites. However this strategy is not appropriate in retirement-focused, independent living units (ILU's) apartments which have a central lobby and fire escape, as it creates internal accessibility conflicts for users.

Arrangement of units

The primary design considerations appropriately locate both apartment buildings and the Leisure Centre generally on a East/West axis. Apartment 1 is rectangular in shape with 2 blocks of apartments with 9 units in each over 2 levels. Apartment 2 is 'L-shaped' with a leg against the eastern boundary and comprises 3 blocks of 8 or 10 units over 2 levels. 2 of the blocks of Apartment 2 are on a north/south axis which does impact on the solar access, however private open space balconies are positioned to access northern light. The Leisure Centre has 4 upper level apartments each with a North orientation.

The three larger buildings contain a total of 48 units over 2 levels - each with good outlook and adequate private open space (POS). 30 of the 48 units are north-facing and an additional 6 units on Apartment Building 2 have POS which can access direct sunlight from the North.

A solar access study demonstrates that 100% of units in the Leisure Centre, 78% of units in Apart-

ment Building 1 and 88% of units in Apartment 2 achieve a minimum of 3 hours of direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm in mid-winter. This exceeds the requirement under *SEPP (Housing for Seniors with a Disability) 2004* which requires a minimum of 70%. This also exceeds what could be considered an average market response and is a significant improvement on the approved scheme, which has a majority of units facing East/West.

Building heights

The taller buildings are arranged to mitigate the site slope, and living spaces of units to face and activate internal open space areas with the short ends of the buildings helping to shape the internal streets, delivering good CPTED outcomes for the Village. This is an appropriate design approach which also allows for single storey dwellings to be located on the edges the site and where the sensitivities with neighbouring land are highest.

The proposed apartment buildings sit diagonally across the site contours. The 2-storey apartments sit on podia of varied height which mostly screens each of the semi-basement parking areas below the units. The height of the apartments built form varies due to their diagonal placement and simple, gently sloping roof-forms. The built form of the apartments mostly read as 2-storeys with an average effective height above ground of approximately 8.5 metres. The overwhelming majority of the buildings have a height above natural ground level (NGL) of less than 8.5m although some projecting parts are higher. The South-West corner of Apartment 1 is approximately 9.4m above natural ground with an average elevation of around 9m above NGL. This is not considered a significant encroachment and is consistent with heights of the Current Approval. Apartment 2 is at its highest in the south-west corner where the basement car-parking is exposed. The overall building height above NGL is approximately 10.5m however this is screened from Galston Road by other dwellings. Proposed landscaping around the base of the podia walls help mitigate the overall impact of the building heights.

The proposed Leisure Centre sits on predominantly flat ground. The 2-storey building also has a variety of heights and the built form reads as 2-storeys with an average effective height above ground of approximately 8.5 metres. The overwhelming majority of the building has a height above natural ground level (NGL) of less than 9m although part of the South and Eastern elevations are higher where the ground slopes away and the roof tips up, with a maximum height of approximately 9.5m (Elevation 4) above NGL. This projection represents a small part of the overall Leisure Centre built form and the perceived impacts of this additional height are considered negligible.

In summary, it is my opinion that on balance the proposed development is consistent with the architectural and urban design intent of Part 3 - Design Requirements of the *SEPP (Housing for Seniors with a Disability) 2004*. Furthermore, in my opinion this proposed scheme far exceeds the design outcomes of the Current Approval for the site.

If you wish to discuss aspects of this advice, please call me.

Kind regards,



Phil Smith
Architect + Urban Designer



DESIGN EXCELLENCE PANEL MEETING

Application No:	DA/850/2011/A	
Proposal:	Section 4.55(2) modification to modify an existing approved Seniors Housing Development resulting in a development containing 85 x independent living units, made up of 43 x single storey villas and 42 x apartments over basement car parking.	
Property Description:	330-334 Galston Road, Galston	
Date:	Thursday 5 November 2020	
Time:	Commenced: 3.55pm	Concluded: 4.53pm
Held:	Microsoft Teams Meeting	

ATTENDANCE

<i>Chair:</i>	Brett Newbold
<i>Panel Members:</i>	Andrew Stanic, Marc Deuschle
<i>Council Staff:</i>	James Farrington, Rod Pickles, Cassandra Williams, Caroline Maeshian
<i>Proponents:</i>	Nicole Lennon, Gail Eyres, Jason Sack, James Brownsworth, Phil Smith, Craig Eyles, Andrew Hii

BACKGROUND

DA/850/2011 was approved with a deferred commencement condition by the (former) Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel on 23 February 2012. The deferred commencement condition has been satisfied and the consent will lapse on 2 November 2021.

The approved development is for the demolition of existing buildings, filling of the dam and construction of a seniors housing development comprising ninety-six self-contained dwellings, a community centre, landscaping works and waste water management facility. The approved development is to operate as a retirement village.

On 27 May 2020, a Section 4.55 application (DA/850/2011/A) was lodged for the modification of the approved seniors housing development resulting in a development containing 85 x independent living units, made up of 43 x single storey villas and 42 x apartments over basement car parking.

At its meeting on 13 August 2020, the Design Excellence Panel considered the Section 4.55 application (DA/850/2011/A).

In response to the matters raised by the Design Excellence Panel, the applicant has submitted a revised site plan and floor plans of all the buildings. The submitted scheme seeks to reinstate the sewer pump out driveway in the original approved location.

PANEL COMMENTS

1. Overview

- The panel's comments and recommendations respond to design-related considerations under *SEPP (Seniors Living) 2004* together with the LEP's design excellence considerations.
- The amended concept site and floor plans demonstrate extensive reworking of the original modification application.
- Unlike the original modification, the amended concept appears substantially - or in essence - the same as the approved development in terms of general arrangements of buildings and open spaces.
- In the absence of detailed drawings such as sections, elevations and landscape plans, only general comments may be offered in relation to design excellence and related design quality matters that are raised by the *SEPP*.

2. Desired character

- In principle, relocation of apartment buildings and the "leisure centre" to central and eastern portions of the Site has moderated or eliminated the Panel's previous concerns in relation to compatibility with the locality's existing character – in particular with the pattern and scale of detached dwellings in zone R2 which adjoins immediately to the west.
 - Nevertheless, compatibility with desired rural and residential characters will depend upon the careful arrangement or design of landscaping, building forms and facades: compatibility could be compromised by 'raw' dimensions of the proposed apartment buildings and leisure centre which present street elevations that are over 50m wide.
- Setbacks of 15m from the rear boundary and portions of side boundaries, in principle, provide for separation and landscaped areas that would contribute to compatibility with adjoining rural-zoned properties to the north and east:
 - Although the DCP nominates 15m as the minimum setback facing rurally-zoned properties, and subject to effective arrangement of canopy landscaping, minor and intermittent encroachments upon that dimension might be achieved without contradicting objectives for the setback control, and also without resulting in a development that would no longer be *substantially the same* as that which was approved.
- Although the proposed road setback remains the same as the development as-approved, an effective arrangement of canopy landscaping is essential to ensure compatibility with existing rural and residential characters – without clusters of canopy trees, future road widening would compromise effectiveness of the setback in relation to character and compatibility.

3. General arrangement of landscaped areas and buildings

- As recommended during the previous Panel meeting, the arrangement of buildings and open spaces must be well-considered, and should contribute to place-making as well as amenity within the development.
- The network of roadways provides a framework for the arrangement of buildings and open spaces, and certain aspects of that network interrupt 'social relationships' between major 'places' – for example, between the leisure centre's relocated main entry and the new 'primary' courtyard that sits between apartment buildings one and two:
 - Spatial form of that courtyard is interrupted by the main entrance roadway, which also severs important visual and pedestrian links between the courtyard and the leisure centre's southern and eastern entries.
- In order to provide optimum visual and pedestrian links within the Site, further amendments are desirable:
 - Further amendments should be guided by a clear understanding of pedestrian desire lines which connect a hierarchy of destinations within the Site, and which also establish a framework for vistas through the Site's landscaped areas.
 - The leisure centre should be reoriented and / or reconfigured to provide appropriate outlooks and direct access to significant outdoor gathering places; to present a more-appropriate built-form backdrop at the head of the Site's primary entrance road (noting that the current trapezoidal form sits awkwardly within an arbitrary space which is contained by access roads); to ensure that major indoor activity areas would be visible from major pedestrian paths; and with service or enclosed rooms located to ensure appropriate amenity for neighbouring and nearby villas.
 - Entries of apartment building one should be reoriented to face the primary outdoor courtyard.
- With regard to free-standing and semi-detached villas:
 - Variation of building forms is essential to achieve satisfactory streetscape quality, and reasonable compatibility with immediate residential neighbours to the west – however, current repetition of dwelling types does not guarantee a satisfactory outcome in this regard.
 - Uniform street setbacks for villas compromise the capability to accommodate street trees that are essential to moderate climate in summer, as well as to provide more-varied streetscapes - uniformity of the current villa setbacks not only accentuates visual density, but also fails to identify places or social neighbourhoods within the development.
 - The variation of street setbacks could be assisted by 'intermittent' encroachment of proposed side or rear boundary setbacks – subject to effective clustering of canopy landscaping in order to visually-separate neighbouring buildings and land use zones.
- Open spaces along boundary setbacks and between rows of buildings accommodate an amended pattern of pedestrian paths:

- However, in the absence of design sections, the viability of those paths and flanking landscaping cannot be confirmed: the site's topography will affect pathway gradients, but also might require retaining structures which could compromise landscape amenity of the Site, or might result in elevated pathways that allow intrusive overlooking of private dwellings (noting, however, that a modest degree of overlooking might not be entirely inappropriate for a seniors living estate).

4. Detailed building layouts: interior amenity

- Proposed apartments and apartment buildings present a number of concerns which should be remedied:
 - The arrangement of ground floor lobbies prevent direct sight lines from building entries to lift waiting areas and stairs – and absence of sight lines compromises safety, security and potential for social interaction – a simple solution would be achieved by 90 degree rotation of fire stairs to create an entrance corridor between stair shafts and the current lifts (with complementary modest amendments to upper storey apartment layouts), or by simply switching the lift and stair locations.
 - Energy efficient occupancy is likely to be compromised by orientations and designs of apartments which are unlikely to admit three hours daily sunlight for at least 70% of the proposed apartments, and there is no indication of summertime shading for north- and west-facing apartments.
 - A high proportion of apartments are single aspect, which would compromise natural cross ventilation and result in higher energy to achieve a comfortable indoor climate.
 - Floorplans do not demonstrate vertical integration of services or illustrate service risers through ground floor apartments: quality of apartment layouts is likely to be affected by future service design.
 - Noting that apartment areas are generous, layouts should not result in bedrooms which open directly onto living spaces, dwellings which are entered via kitchens, or layouts which result in excessively-wide circulation areas.
 - There is potential for overlooking from apartments into neighbouring villas and private courtyards.
- Proposed villas raise a number of similar concerns:
 - There is direct access from bedroom to living spaces, and improved 'zoning' or separation of sleeping and living areas is highly-desirable.
 - Visual and physical access should be provided from living areas to street entries, as well as to private outdoor spaces.
 - In villa type V4, kitchens have no windows which would compromise daylight and outlooks.

CONCLUSION

- The concept amendment demonstrates a positive step that has clear potential to deliver reasonable compatibility with existing character of the surrounding locality.

- However, compatibility and design quality remain subject to effective future design of landscaped areas and building exteriors.
- Compatibility and design quality also depend upon significant refinement of the current concept to address the Panel's detailed recommendations.
- In order to clearly explain proposed design solutions, future documentation should include detailed 'design' sections together with 3D views in order to illustrate building forms and the Site's most-significant landscaped places which include backdrops to the main entry road, typical villa streetscapes, and the Site's primary courtyard between apartment buildings one and two.
- Prior to submitting the final modification application, detailed landscape and building designs should be reviewed by this Panel.