

MINUTES OF NSROC DESIGN EXCELLENCE PANEL MEETING LANE COVE COUNCIL Monday 12th July 2021

DEP PANEL MEMBERS:

Peter St Clair (PSC)	Chairperson	Architect
Brendan Randles	Panel Member	Urban Designer
Digby Hall	Panel Member	Sustainability consultant
Aldo Raadik	Panel Member	Architect

APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVES:

Adam Haddow (AH)	Architect	SJB
Millie Lakos	Architect	SJB
Lishi Li	Architect	SJB
Ross Shepherd (RS)	Landscape Architect	Site Image
Tracey Cools (TC)	Applicant	efficient living
Alison Adendorff	Applicant	efficient living

COUNCIL STAFF:

Mark Brisby	Executive Manager, Environmental Services
Rajiv Shankar (RS)	Manager Development Assessment
Greg Samardzic	Senior Town Planner
Lara Fusco	Strategic Planner
Angela Panich	Panel Secretary

COUNCIL OBSERVERS:

None

APOLOGIES:

None

ITEM DETAILS:

Property Address: 13-19 Canberra Avenue St Leonards NSW 2065 (Area 5)

Council's Planning Officer: Greg Samardzic

Owner: Hyecorp Property Group

Applicant: Hyecorp Property Group

Proposal: Demolition of existing buildings, construction of a 15-storey residential flat building comprising approximately 91 apartments, 4-6 storey basement car parking, provision of east-west pedestrian link and associated stairways and landscaping and green spine/communal open space on ground level and other associated landscaping.

1.0 WELCOME, ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND OPENING

RS and PSC welcomed the Applicants and Design Team. All Panel members, Council staff and Applicant's representatives introduced themselves and described their respective project roles. PSC provided an acknowledgement of country.

2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Panel members had separately indicated that there were no conflicts of interest.

3.0 PRESENTATION

The Applicant was invited to present the updated pre-DA proposal for the subject site at 13-19 Canberra Avenue St Leonards South, also known as Area 5. AH presented the architectural proposal contained in SJB's Design Excellence Report dated June 2021.

AH summarised ways in which the previous design review panel comments have been addressed in the modified design. This includes the removal of the one bedroom north facing apartments to provide a more defensive approach to the Northern boundary and so avoid privacy concerns. The building massing has been further developed by pushing the public elevator into the building mass and creating terraced building with a higher form to the west and lower forms to the east. The Eastern form is intended to read as a softer building responding to the street and the Western building as a more articulated form to the communal open space. This revised building form achieves additional corners and therefore higher rates of both cross ventilation (above 60%) and solar access (above 70%).

The podium design has been modified to wrap around the south-east corner into the east-west pedestrian spine, in order to enhance the street scale presented to Canberra Avenue. A series of civic openings have been sculpted into the podium to enhance legibility from the street particularly around the proposed cafe.

AH confirmed that all building heights were compliant with the LEP height controls and intent of the DCP setback controls. Whilst the numerical controls for the side setbacks have not been met, the design team is of the view that the intent of these controls have been changed. The corners of the building have been softened with the introduction of curved glazing and balconies, each capitalising on corner views towards the harbour.

The design proposes a palette of soft colours consistent with the adjacent park including terrazzo and other stone finishes to the podium and Equitone or GRC panels above. The facade designs have been rationalised with a highly structured grid and a Keim finish is proposed for concrete surfaces.

AH advised the garbage truck access to the south and the electrical substation towards the northern boundary have not been changed due to the ground levels. The cafe has been re-planned to terminate the corner as a civic gesture and to give a sense of publicness and has been re-orientated towards the east-west spine. A new seating amphitheatre has been provided opposite the cafe as an informal seating area for cafe users.

The apartment mix has been developed further to achieve approximately equal numbers of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments.

The childcare centre has been planned in greater detail with an improved relationship to the outdoor play area. An awning has been situated above the child play area to provide shade and partly insulate the apartments above from the noise of the child play activities.

The response to Country is related to the changing topography and ecology and the cascading landscape. The building materials and colours draw from the local Ghost Gums and tonal qualities of the tree bark.

AH presented images of a 3-D physical model demonstrating the overall approach to the built form and subtle material changes in the podium.

TC summarised the sustainable design strategies contained in the ESD Report dated 29th June 2021. This includes the solar access and natural ventilation strategies and the commitment by the Applicant to a 6 star BASIX rating.

4.0 DRP PANEL COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Introduction

This design review forms part of the St Leonards South pre-DA process. The Panel is engaged by Council to provide independent and impartial advice on the design of development proposals and applications to lift the design quality of projects. The Panel's comments and recommendations are intended to assist Council in their design consideration of an application against SEPP 65 principles and where relevant the requirements of the St Leonards South Landscape Masterplan (the Masterplan) dated October 2020, Lane Cove LEP 2009 and Lane Cove DCP Locality 8 (Parts A & B), dated 22nd October 2020. This review also assesses compliance with the LEP design excellence requirements Parts 7.6. The absence of a comment under a particular heading does not imply that particular matter to be satisfactorily addressed, more likely the changes are suggested under other principles to generate a desirable change.

Your attention is drawn to the following;

- SEPP 65, including the 9 Design Quality Principles and the requirements for a Qualified Designer (a Registered Architect) to provide Design Verification Statements throughout the design, documentation and construction phases of the project.
- The Apartment Design Guide, as published by Planning NSW (July 2015), which provides guidance on all the issues addressed below.

Both documents are available from the NSW Department of Planning.

1. To address the Panel's comments, the applicant may need to submit amended plans. **Prior to preparing any amended plans or attending additional Panel presentations, the applicant must discuss the Panel's comments and any other matter that may require amendment with Council's assessing Planning Officer.**
2. When addressing the Panel's comments by way of amendments, if the applicant does not propose to address all or the bulk of the Panel's comments and wishes to make minor amendments only, then it should be taken that the Panel considers the proposal does not meet the SEPP 65 requirements. In these instances it is unlikely the scheme will be referred back to the Panel for further review.

4.2 Panel comments and recommendations

The Design Review Panel makes the following comments and recommendations in relation to the project. These are primarily based on the submitted Design Review Report by SJB dated June 2021, Landscape and Public Domain Concept by Site Image dated 29th June 2021 and ESD Report by Efficient Living dated 29th June 2021.

4.3 Principle 1 Context and Neighbourhood Character

The site context and neighbourhood character are well described in the revised document that incorporate useful 3-D diagrams. The east-west pedestrian spine has been clarified as a more legible public open space with the public lift push backed into the built form which is supported. The simplified and accessible public spaces are commended and the ground level plaza supported.

4.4 Principle 2 Built Form and Scale

The Panel supports the general approach to the building form, including the expressed podium with townhouses to Canberra Avenue and the articulated civic edge to the southern elevation. However, as identified by the design team, further development is required to the building form and facades as described below.

The height now complies with the LEP which is a positive development. Whilst the massing strategy is legible, the articulation of levels from the more solid base to the lighter upper levels results in too much openness i.e. a glazed tower with minimal unspecified cladding. This is not considered a good result for the context.

The Panel continues to be concerned with the sheerness and openness of the West facade, where the former language was perhaps more successful (eg. Bryant Park Hotel). The elevation requires further development to resolve the overly flat facade. The narrative of the other elevation setbacks could be applied to reduce the monolithic nature of this wall.

The west facing awning is very extensive and liable to adversely impact the amenity of the units immediately above. The Panel believes there is a lost opportunity for the townhouses to be more legible as a smaller and lower scale human scale element to Canberra Avenue, a language that may be extended to incorporate the front entry and driveway access.

The Panel acknowledges the development of the corner architecture to enhance the plaza retail and lift location. The strong arch element however dissolves into the adjoining bays, possibly as the material changes, with a lack of cohesion in the composition. Pushing the cafe back behind the bicycle parking and housing it within a shaded heavy structure may reduce its visibility and commercial performance and lead to the need for unnecessary signage and lighting.

The public elevator is awkwardly located midway along the arcade on the South elevation. This may be better pushed further north to allow for a clear line of expression and circulation and to conceal any lift motor room (which has not been shown in the current drawings).

The Northern setback has been improved by the removal of the north facing units however some questions remain regarding solar access and privacy. Please refer to section 4.8 for additional commentary.

The stepped building form does not allow for sufficient communal open space for a population of this size. Refer to Section 4.7 for further commentary. Additional floor height may be required on the building level directly below the open terraces to allow for waterproofing etc

The Panel would therefore recommend that the Applicant:

- revise the podium design to achieve a cafe more in line with the presented concept diagrams, further develop the facade composition including the arches and townhouse legibility and revise the lift location,
- increase the habitable terraces and roof garden to provide more communal open space,
- further develop the West elevation to achieve a more residential character, such as setbacks at higher levels, recessed windows and introducing varied sun shading strategies and green walls, etc. If better urban form design and an improved interface can be demonstrated, the Panel may support some minor encroachments into the 24 m building separation.

4.5 Principle 3 Density

The proposed building density appears to be within the FSR. However this seems to be at the expense of providing open space to the extent required by the ADG Part 3D-1. Refer to Section 4.6 and 4.7.

4.6 Principle 4 Sustainability

The Panel is concerned with the very small dedication to communal open spaces which appears to be only on Level 12. Refer to Section 4.7 for further commentary.

The green roof is supportable on its own merits and the Applicant is encouraged to show specific details of how this would be constructed and managed, including planting selections and their suitability for the context.

The inclusion of solar panels on the roof is supportable on its own merits however more details are required in order to demonstrate that the system is visually designed, including nomination of the system size, mounting methodology and whether or not the system is connected to grid. The Panel would expect to see a significantly higher number of panels given the building and roof area, noting that green roof and solar panels are not mutually exclusive. It is noted that the ESD Report states that recycling bins are to be provided at each residential level (Section 5.1) however the Panel was unable to locate the community gardens in the drawings and requests clarification.

The Panel noted that the provision of bicycle parking for residents, their visitors and the public is supported, however the location of the residential bicycle parking in the lowest basement level furthest from any entry or exit point is not considered to be in line with best practice. The Applicant is asked to review the location of residents bicycle parking with a view to locating this on the lower ground floor level where residents can access them without needing to use the carpark ramps or lifts.

The ESD Report refers to a rainwater tank (Section 3.1 4.3) however the Panel was unable to identify the rainwater tanks on the drawings and requests clarification.

The Panel recommends that the Applicant:

- further develop the building design to incorporate the strategies and treatments identified in the Applicant's ESD Report, the comments provided above and the sustainability objectives of the St Leonards South Landscape Masterplan, Lane Cove Sustainability Action Plan 2016-2021 and the ADG.

4.7 Principle 5 Landscape

The Panel supports the development of the east-west link planning and the creation of a pedestrian plaza at street level and the adjacent usable active pocket park.

The Panel do not however support the limited extent of communal open-space and consider that it is unreasonable to rely on the communal open space to the neighbouring property. It had been anticipated that the Level 13 roof terrace would be retained as part of the communal space as shown in the first Design Review Report. However the current iteration shows that all of Level 13 has now been devoted to private floorspace and services with no communal access to the roof. The privatisation of the communal open space for purposes of commercial childcare centre should be compensated for by the provision of additional landscape terraces throughout the building. The Level 12 communal open space is undersized and inadequate for multiple groups and should be at least doubled in size. Additional space could also be created perhaps on Level 2 where a step in the built form is located.

Further clarification of the private rooftop garden design is requested and its relationship to rooftop services, lift motor room's and solar panels.

The Panel recommends that the Applicant:

- provide additional communal open space,
- provide a direct Level 1 pedestrian connection from the lifts to the neighbouring communal open space to the west of the playground to integrate the building into the green spine,
- continue meeting with Council and adjacent land-owners/design teams to develop a coordinated response to the Masterplan.

4.8 Principle 6 Amenity

External and internal spatial amenity

The Panel requests further resolution of a number of internal and external items to form positive living environments and resident well being.

The Panel recommends that the Applicant further study and develop the:

- amenity of the cafe which would be compromised by the very heavy vaulted structure and bicycle spaces,
- there are numerous habitable spaces such as large living spaces to the upper level of the townhouses and studies with doors on typical levels that do not have windows and therefore do not comply with the ADG,
- poor location of the public elevator which closes down the open loggia on Level 1,
- final layout and usages of the mezzanine space above the loading area,
- opportunities for natural light to resident amenity areas to ground level,
- amenity of the units directly above the child care centre which appear to be compromised by the large canopy roof directly outside the sill height of windows and balustrade height of balconies - refine the design height, structure and finishes
- implications of rainwater drainage within the enclosed internal roof stairs to the penthouses,
- terrace houses which should be re-planned to remove the un-inhabitable lounge areas on mezzanines,
- re-arrange the northern units on Level 12 to maintain end of corridor windows to all levels.

Cross ventilation, natural light and solar access

The provision of additional corner apartments is supported by the Panel. However the cross ventilation strategy is not proven to some units to the north-east corner such as 206-606. These are highly constrained by visual and acoustic privacy issues to adjacent apartments.

It is not clear if the required solar access is being achieved to the eastern elevation in accordance with Part 4A of the ADG, where the sunlight at 11 am is almost parallel to the facade. There continues to be insufficient sun-shading to the west facing units and reliance on roller blinds is not supported due to their short lifespan and poor maintenance track record.

External screens to the northern elevation are proposed to provide visual privacy to the neighbouring property whilst also being relied upon for solar access and cross ventilation. Further details are requested to support the proposed design.

The Panel recommends that the Applicant:

- provide more detailed solar analysis confirming a minimum of 2 hours of sunlight and 1 m² of direct sunlight is achieved to apartments being counted towards 70% in accordance with Objective 4A-1 of the ADG,
- further develop the apartment layouts and openings to the north-east apartments to achieve compliant cross ventilation and privacy between adjacent units,
- provide details of screens to the northern elevation demonstrating that all window openings are provided with both privacy and solar access.

4.9 Principle 7 Safety

Ensure the colonnade elements adjacent to the cafe do not obstruct the communal lift legibility or create hidden areas.

Address the potential lack of visual surveillance to the Level 1 pedestrian area between the lift landing, the child care facility and the east-west pedestrian link.

4.10 Principle 8 Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

The Panel generally supports the proposed mixture of apartment types and sizes subject to development of the natural ventilation requirements.

The project provides a good mix of apartment types and integration with its context. The revised plaza design at ground floor provides positive opportunity for social interaction however please see other comments regarding potential improvements to the cafe.

Insufficient areas of communal open space would significantly reduce opportunities for social interaction.

4.11 Principle 9 Aesthetics

The Panel considers that some very sound principles that were previously proposed regarding the built form and elevational design, have been lost. For example the open corners and solid elegant frame and consistency of upper-level material treatments similar to Bryant Park Hotel. The new strategies are less convincing and more open to criticism that the proposal becomes a glass box to the upper levels.

Also see other comments above regarding inadequate environmental protection to the Western elevation. Windows could be recessed into the expressed building frame to provide greater amounts of horizontal and vertical shading and also incorporate additional sun-shading elements.

The low-level streetscape expression to Canberra Avenue results in awkward unresolved components. It may be better to express the double height townhouses and provide the arched expression to the publicly accessible areas only at the Southern bay.

The Panel recommends that the Applicant:

- further develop the composition and environmental response to the west elevation,
- further develop the composition of the podium facade to Canberra Avenue.

4.12 Other comments

The Panel commends the Applicant and Design Team on their well considered design concept presentations and the high quality of their design drawings and reports.

5.0 OUTCOME

The Panel has determined the outcome of the DEP review and provides final direction to the Applicant as follows:

- The Panel recommends that the pre-DA submission including drawings and schedules be further developed in accordance with the above recommendations and returned to Council and the Panel for consideration at a further design review. Subject to the level of resolution demonstrated in the amended documents, this may be in the form of a documentation review requiring attendance by Council and the Panel only.