

**DESIGN EXCELLENCE PANEL**

DA No:	30/2025
PAN:	PAN-509039
Address:	118-124 Benelong Road and 72 Gerard Street, Cremorne
Proposal:	Demolition of existing structures, construction of a part 4/5 storey residential flat building containing 23 units & basement parking
Date of Meeting:	13 May 2025
Attendance	
Panel Chair:	Peter St Clair – Panel Chair
Panel Members:	Louise Sureda – Member Emrah Ulas – Member John Dimopoulos – Member
Council Staff:	Andrew Beveridge, Senior Development Planner
Applicant:	Kit Cunningham-Reid and Mark Monk, Helm Properties – Applicant Marc Golombick, Brick Architects – Architect Geoff Bonus, Bonus & Associates – Urban Designer

Background:

1. The North Sydney Design Excellence Panel (the Panel) reviewed the documentation provided by the applicant, visited the subject site, and met with the applicant's representatives through an online conference to discuss the proposal.
2. As a proposal subject to Chapter 4 "Design of residential apartment development" under the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing) 2021, the review conducted by the Panel and the comments offered below have been structured against the 9 Design Quality Principles set out in the SEPP and the NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG).

Discussion, Comments & Recommendations

The panel thanks the applicant and their design team for presenting their development application proposal, for a 5-storey residential flat building situated on the corner of Gerard Street and Bendalong Road, Cremorne. The panel commends the team for the thoroughness of the urban design report and overall quality of the architectural proposal.

**Principle 1 – Context and Neighbourhood Character**

3. The surrounding context is characterised by a mixture of single and two storey bungalows and 3-4 storey residential flat buildings. The site was subject to a LEP 12 m building height control at the time of the development application submission, however this has since been replaced by the new Low and Mid-Rise Housing area 22 m height plane control.
4. The proposed building setbacks and stepping of the built form respond positively to the existing site character and topography. This stepping also coincides with high-quality views of Middle Harbour, Northbridge and Castlecrag, towards the north-west and with positive solar orientation. The panel requested that future anticipated building envelopes be shown to the 3d views and elevations to better understand the proposed building in a future context.
5. Whilst the panel is generally supportive of the character of the building and its sensitivity to the surrounding area, it is noted that the houses currently situated on the site, were built pre-WWI by prominent local builders, Harbutt Brothers. This may provide an opportunity for some historical interpretation to be introduced to the project.
6. The panel supports the undergrounding of services subject to the ability to retain key street trees, however recommended the applicant further test this with Ausgrid. It was noted that council's landscape architect has more detailed recommendations in this regard.

Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale

7. Whilst the proposed building height is approximately 21% in excess of the LEP height control, it is acknowledged that a new height control of 22m now applies to the site. The building form is well articulated to respond to the current sub-division pattern and the existing benching of the site from Gerard Street down to Gerard Lane. Building setbacks are consistent with the ADG objectives and increased with building height to provide amenity to neighbours and reduce visual bulk.
8. The building mass at the corner of Benelong Road and Gerard Street was discussed with the panel, recommending some further study in this area. A more highly articulated corner could be provided that may involve the extension of the Level 3 floor plan at this corner.
9. It is noted that the proposal results in some potential view impacts upon 1/74 Gerard St. Further submissions should be made to council to demonstrate how this will be managed.

Principle 3: Density

10. The development results in an appropriate number of new dwellings although it was noted that this could be increased further if a greater number of 1- and 2-bedroom apartments were provided.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

11. The panel recommended that the basement level be organised to allow for FOGO waste removal, which is expected to commence in 2028. The design should also make allowance for electric vehicle recharging.
12. The use of photovoltaic solar panels is supported. The incorporation of battery storage should also be considered, in order to achieve a more self-sufficient development and benefit nighttime power usage.

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13. The panel supports the use of fixed batten privacy screens, however recommends incorporation of additional sun-shading to bedrooms and living rooms particularly to the west elevation on Benelong Road. These should be consistent with Part 4A of the ADG.

Principle 5: Landscape

14. The development proposes only small areas of outdoor communal open space, situated at the lower ground level. However, this is augmented by an indoor guest living areas, a gymnasium and golf room, as well as significant areas of private open space being provided to many apartments.
15. The incorporation of street level courtyard gardens to all perimeters of the site is supported, as is the street articulation provided through the use of varied materials, feature walls, screens and plantings.

Principle 6: Amenity

16. The acoustic performance of apartments was discussed, in the context of the considerable traffic noise from Gerard Street. The applicant explain that this will be addressed through the provision of double glazing throughout.
17. The development has not been provided with garbage chutes, however the applicant explained that in previous projects they have received negative feedback from residents and building managers and that these systems can substantially add to recurrent costs due to repairs.
18. Apartment G05 is located substantially below ground (approximately 2.9m), leading to a subterranean appearance. Whilst this may provide some acoustic privacy benefit, this is not considered suitable, particularly given the southerly orientation. Consider replanning the ground level floor plan or the provision of a 2-storey dwelling in this location. It was also noted after the meeting, that the only outdoor communal open space (located at lower ground level), is situated approximately 3.9 m below the adjacent boundary level leading to a poor level amenity within this space. This should also be reviewed.
19. Apartments LG02, G02 and 102 are provided with snorkel bedrooms. These are not consistent with the ADG nor supported by the panel.
20. Apartments LG01, GO1 and 101 provide compromised apartment entrances with no daylighting or sightlines to the living room. They should be reviewed.
21. Apartments G06, 106 and 206 provide bedrooms to the building corner facing Gerard Street. The applicant explained that this was to ensure views from the living room towards the north-west, however it is not understood how this would be achieved. It should be demonstrated that genuine views and solar access are achieved to/from the living rooms. Alternatively consider relocating the living spaces to the building corner, where solar access could be maintained together with an outlook to the corner of Gerard St. and Benelong Rd and oblique views towards the north-west.

Principle 7 – Safety

22. The apartment configuration and building setbacks from the boundaries, facilitate good visual surveillance of the surrounding streets and building entrance. Street walls and fences should be sufficiently detailed to avoid security breaches and potential access to the narrow void space forward of the building entrance.
23. Consider providing a zone for secure parcel delivery.

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Principle 8 - Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

24. The design provides a variety of 1-, 2-, 3- and 4-bedroom dwellings. Whilst the percentage of 1- and 2-bedroom apartments is low with potential impacts on affordability, the applicant is responding to the demographics and market demand demonstrated by their past projects in the same location.

Principle 9 - Aesthetics

25. The material palette of feature stone, brick tile, glass balustrade, aluminium privacy screens, and aluminium clad soffits are generally supported. Areas featuring external render and paint finish such as tapered slab edges and balustrades should be reviewed further, to avoid material deterioration and the need for long-term maintenance. Consider natural finish reinforced concrete or other strategies.
26. The building appearance is of a high-quality, consisting of a variety of forms, materials, textures and colours to achieve a contemporary architecture, well suited to both the current and future anticipated context.

Development Services Manager's Note:

The outcome of this review by the Design Excellence Panel is not determinative and is but one of many inputs into the assessment process. Applicants are urged to have high regard to the panels' input and respond accordingly. The panel is supportive of the design proposal, subject to the addressing of the recommendations made within this report. The panel would welcome the opportunity to review the further developed scheme in the future.