

APPENDIX E – DRP Meeting Minutes

DA24/0369 – 1323 to 13269 Princes Highway, Heathcote

Report and Recommendations of the Design Review Panel, Sutherland Shire Council Thursday, 22 August 2024

Panel Members: Peter Hill (Chairperson), Kathy Bryla, Jared Phillips (Landscape)
Council Staff: Daniel Lukic (ROFF), Meredith Bagnall (TL)
Applicant Team: Gavin Duffy (Owner), Nigel Dickson & Alan Vidler (Architects Dickson Rothschild), Antony Vitale (Duffy Kenned Constructions)
DA No: DA24/0369
PAD No: DA22/0016
Project Address: 1323-1329 Princes Highway, Heathcote
Proposal: Demolition of existing structures and construction of shop top housing constructed in stages

PREAMBLE

A proposal for the site was previously reviewed by Council on 15 June 2022 and the comments made have been taken into account in framing this report.

The site was visited by the Panel members prior to the meeting.

The proposal has been considered in relation to the design principles for residential apartment development in the SEPP (Housing).

Issues considered relevant to the proposal are noted below.

COMMENTS

The Panel supports well-considered design and acknowledges that care has been taken in the preparation of the development proposal. There are certain aspects of the proposed design that the Panel recommends for further consideration, as outlined below.

Context and neighbourhood character

Built form and scale.

Density

1. The site is located in the local centre of Heathcote, a small village on the southern edge of metropolitan Sydney. It is a large site in the E1 zone, separated by a park from the small shopping strip to the south also zoned E1, which is opposite the railway station. The site has three street frontages: the Veno St frontage at the south is reasonably level; Strickland St frontage at the north is reasonably level, but as much as 8 metres lower than Veno St; the Princes Highway frontage at the east has a considerable slope.

2. The surrounding residential development is low- and medium-density at 1,2 and 3 storeys, with a relatively recent residential development to the west, on Veno St, at 4 storeys.

3. Strickland St and Veno St are quiet streets that could provide good residential amenity. However, the eastern frontage is exposed to considerable traffic noise from the highway, and residential development in the noisy context requires some design innovation.

4. The site's planning controls are an FSR of 2:1 and maximum height of 13 metres, the same as the sites in the shopping strip closer to the station. On a mixed-use site in a local centre, anything more than a 3 storey building - assuming commercial/ retail use for the ground floor with residential levels above - would breach the 13m height control. It should be noted that the calibration of height and floor space controls is a problem with many sites in Sydney; an FSR of 2:1 usually suits a residential building of 6-7 storeys. In order to comply with the maximum height control of 13m a mixed-use development at the maximum floor space ratio of 2: 1 would require a substantial proportion of floor space to be

dedicated to a non-residential use. It should also be noted that a development of only 3 storeys would not be subject to the requirements of the Apartment Design Guide, which was established to improve the design of residential flat buildings and mixed-use buildings in NSW.

5. The proposal seeks to access, in part, the bonuses under the infill affordable housing provisions, which provide for an increase in height to accommodate a corresponding increase in floor space, to a maximum of 30%.

6. The proposal is for a mixed-use building of 6 storeys at the north - hotel at ground with residential above - and 5 residential storeys at the south, on Strickland. The proposed hotel occupies a large amount of the ground floor on the Veno St and highway side, but it is in a compact form that follows the footprint of the residential above, rather than occupies a significant proportion of the site. The proposed height of the development is well in excess of the LEP height control, higher than the increased height allowed for under the infill affordable housing provisions for bonus allowable floor space, and higher than the surrounding built context.

7. In the strategic context, of a city in need of increased residential development, and with a state government eager to increase housing supply in well-located areas, it is the view of the Panel that a proposed mixed-use development on a well-located site near a railway station, on a busy highway, should be capable of accommodating a built form that is higher than the 3 storeys allowed under controls more appropriate for a residential village. Although the proposed building is higher than the surrounding context, and higher than the LEP height control, the Panel considers that the scale may be suitable for the site. We should be thinking of an urban future rather than looking back to a suburban past.

8. Nonetheless, the Panel suggests that the proposed built form needs modification, to improve its relationship with its context, provide space for street tree planting and to improve residential amenity.

9. The location of the hotel at the southeastern corner of the highway and Veno St, without a setback, is supported. However, for the building on the highway, north of the residential entry, the proposed arrangement of acoustic wall and planters to the boundary is not a suitable interface with the street and is not supported. To improve the relationship of the hotel to the sloping street, north of the proposed residential entry, the building should be set back to the DCP landscape setback of 6m, with deep soil to provide suitable conditions for substantial trees. In addition to the landscape setback, it would be worth considering stepping the level of the ground floor to better accommodate the slope.

10. The residential units facing the noisy highway need to be re-configured - a layout using a double-loaded corridor ('business as usual') does not provide noise attenuation, fresh air and cross ventilation at the same time, as required by the relevant controls (Transport and Infrastructure, ADG and NCC) when considered together. The units fronting the highway, with their southeast orientation are further penalised with poor solar access. Residential buildings in noisy environments need to be designed with innovation. The residential units in the eastern side, Building C, should be re-designed, in a thinner (and taller) form that opens to the northwest and does not rely on the southeastern frontage for ventilation. If the building facing the noisy road is designed correctly, as a sound wall, it will protect the dwellings behind from the noise impacts.

11. The long driveway from Strickland provides poor amenity for unit AG04 and a visually poor treatment of a blank wall retaining the site of the eastern neighbour. The vehicle entry should be re-configured as a ramp placed inside the building. To improve the building frontage the pad-mount substation on Strickland should be relocated to inside the building.

12. Building separation and visual privacy:

- The setback at the north-eastern corner, to the interface with the R3 zone on Strickland, requires an additional setback to 9m, to suit the design guidance in ADG 3F.
- Levels above 4 should be set back further from side boundaries, to 9m, to suit the design criteria in ADG 3F.
- The upper levels at the separation between Buildings A and B above Level 4 should be set back further, to 9m, to suit the design criteria in ADG 3F.

- At the junction of Buildings Band C the balconies and bedroom windows should be re-configured to improve privacy, for example balconies at B1 08 and C109; bedroom windows B108 and B109 and C108.

13. Cross-ventilation

- The 'slots' between Buildings A and B - A306 and A310, B108 and B111 – would not provide the pressure differential required for natural cross-ventilation and should be re-configured as wider gaps, rather than deep slots, in order to be counted as providing cross-ventilation to these apartments.
- The "snorkel" style windows to allow light and ventilation to inbound bedrooms is not encouraged. It would suggest that the number of bedrooms planned for the apartments is too high and should be reviewed in line with the overall facade area of the apartment block.

Sustainability

14. Although sustainable strategies were not discussed in detail at the meeting, the Panel recommends that a full suite of well-considered sustainability measures should be designed and integrated into the proposal during design development. As a minimum this proposal should provide RWT for irrigation and WC flushing, electric systems rather than gas for domestic HW, electric cooking, solar PV cells and EV charging. The addition of a clothesline on balconies or in communal areas is also supported, to allow residents the opportunity to freely dry clothes without the need of operating a clothes dryer.

Landscape

15. A large area of communal open space is proposed to internal areas between buildings A, Band C. Landscape frontages are proposed to Strickland Street and the Princes Highway. The panel welcomes the extent of deep soil and retention of existing significant trees on the site, notably the *Syncarpia glomulifera* (Turpentine Trees). Programming of the communal open space is important particularly given the shared use of the space with the proposed tavern.

16. The extent of communal open space and open space associated with the tavern should be clearly identified. The location of children's cubby house and other 'play' related activities could be better considered and its proximity to the Princess Highway raises concerns of safety and surveillance.

17. There is a rooftop garden proposed on Level 5 Building A. It is important to consider any rooftop landscaping has appropriate access for maintenance and automatic irrigation system to support healthy plant growth and establishment. The proposed communal open space could be better programmed offering a range of experiences. An increased number of planters and landscaping could be provided minimising the expanse of hardscape. The addition of a shade structure and additional trees should be considered, providing shade protection from the midday and afternoon sun.

18. The landscape frontage to Strickland Street and associated with Building A could be better considered. The composition of planting, materials and access paths should consider screening to the proposed driveway entry, use of less turf and potentially greater landscaping, reducing overall maintenance and increasing privacy screening to those lower ground units which front the street.

19. The landscape frontage to The Princes Highway could be better integrated with the building, as suggested at 9 above. Council's DCP identifies a 6m landscape strip along the Princes Highway and semi-activated frontage. There is an opportunity to amend the footprint of the building, providing a small extension of the landscape wrapping around and properly addressing the Princes Highway. This approach would also help to soften the street wall which eventuates due to the proposed finished floor levels of the building and natural ground level changes across the site.

20. An urban design principle identified the consideration of endemic species particularly *Syncarpia glomulifera* (Turpentine Trees) and the proximity of the site to the Royal National Park. The current planting palette does not fully reflect this approach and shall consider a revised planting palette.

Amenity

21. There are excessive areas of storage in some apartments, for example B102. The panel recommends a review of the spaces that appear almost "room size" to assess if these areas can be better utilised in the planning.

22. In relation to the design and layout of private balconies, the Panel recommends that:
- HVAC equipment should ideally be grouped within designated screened plant areas either on typical floors or on roof-tops;
 - Wall mounted equipment and associated pipework is concealed into wall cabinets and ducts;
 - If equipment is located on private balconies, additional area above ADG minimums should be provided;
 - Rainwater down pipes are thoughtfully designed and integrated into the building fabric;
 - The above items should be positioned so that they are not visible from common areas or the public domain adjacent to the development;
 - Balustrade design must address visual screening of large items typically stored on balconies, for example BBQ's, clothes drying devices and bicycles.
23. Internal planning of rooms should have rectangular rooms which facilitate a flexible area for planning of furniture layout (in accordance with the ADG); there are several internal layouts in building C with walls at angles which would not comply with this clause.
24. Building A exceed the maximum number of units accessed from one corridor under the ADG.

Safety

25. The interface between the proposed mix of uses has been reasonably well-considered. The hotel generally does not have a connection to the residential common open space, which is supported, although the relationship between the open north-eastern end of the hotel and the residential common open space requires clarification. If the levels remain as proposed there may be some opportunity for a residential communal room to be located beneath the hotel at the northern end.

26. The pedestrian entry to Building B from Veno St should be reconfigured as more welcoming and direct, rather than the tortuous path from a small lobby on the street via a lift to Level 1, then a long walk along a corridor to the next lift to the required floor.

Housing diversity and social interaction

27. A good range of apartment sizes is proposed.

Aesthetics

28. The design proposes a dark roof in "monument" which is not recommend due to the heat gain effect of the dark colours absorption factor. A light roof colour would be recommended.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. Further design development should be undertaken to respond to the issues noted above. Although it is the Panel's view that the proposed height is not excessive for the location, subject to reconfiguration of the buildings as suggested above, it is considered likely that a planning proposal will be required to establish a maximum height control that is better calibrated to the current maximum floor space ratio control for the site - including affordable housing bonuses, the proposed proportion of non-residential floor space, and the particular requirements that apply to the design of safe, comfortable and healthy dwelling environments on a noisy road.

Planning Proposals should demonstrate site specific merit and alignment with Council's adopted Local Strategic Planning Statement and the housing strategy, as well as State Government policies. Furthermore, any proposal should consider the implications of such changes for the precinct as a whole.