

Wollongong Design Review Panel - MS Teams Meeting
Meeting minutes and recommendations

Date	15 November 2021
Meeting location	Wollongong City Council Administration Offices
Panel members	(Chair) David Jarvis (Member) Tony Tribe (Member) Sue Hobley
Apologies	None
Council staff	Pier Panozzo – Development Assessment & Certification Manager (Acting) Nigel Lamb – City Centre & Major Projects Manager (Acting) Anne Starr – Senior Development Project Officer Alexandra McRobert – City Architect
Guests/ representatives of the applicant	Eddy Haddad – Level 33 George O'Donovan – Level 33 Architect Aaron Sutherland – Sutherland & Associates Planning
Declarations of Interest	None
Item number	2
DA number	DA-2021/1000
Reason for consideration by DRP	Design Excellence – WLEP 2009 SEPP 65
Determination pathway	Southern Regional Planning Panel
Property address	35-43 Flinders Street, Wollongong
Proposal	Demolition of existing structures, tree removal, site remediation and construction of a 7 to 9 storey shop top housing development containing ground floor commercial tenancies and 201 apartments, above 2 basement levels containing 239 parking spaces
Applicant or applicant's representative address to the design review panel	The meeting was conducted by video link between the Panel (remote) and the Applicant's team (remote)
Background	The Panel chair visited the site on 14 th November 2021
Design quality principals SEPP 65	
Context and Neighbourhood Character	<p>The proposal is located within an area zoned B6 enterprise corridor. One of the primary objectives of the zone is to promote a mix of business along the main road that will provide a range of employment opportunities. Permissible business uses range from light industrial to bulky goods retail. As such the character of the precinct is intended to be distinctly different from a traditional high street retail centre. 'Shop-top housing' is the sole permissible residential use. The current proposal is typical of more recently approved developments in the area, which provide street level commercial spaces and develop the remainder of the site with residential apartments.</p> <p>The context and site analysis provided is short on significant detail in terms of the drivers for the planning, design and development.</p> <p>Referencing the ADG (Appendix 1), it is recommended that the key constraints and opportunities be summarised and analysed, to clearly illustrate the site planning principles from which architectural design evolves.</p>

	<p>The applicant advised that the ground floor retail spaces would likely be occupied by bulky goods type retail. This typology of retail can benefit from large display areas visible from the street and will largely be used by customers arriving by car.</p> <p>WLEP 2009 design excellence criteria requires the proposal to demonstrate how an acceptable relationship with other buildings (existing or proposed) on the same site or on neighbouring sites is achieved, in terms of separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form. To meet this criterion a future urban form study must be developed. The study should show how neighbouring sites can be developed to realise the vision outlined in Council's controls for this precinct. The study should incorporate all sites fronting Flinders Street, between Gipps Street and Campbell Street. Ultimately the study must demonstrate how the proposal contributes to a cohesive pattern of development for the full city block. Built form studies on neighbouring sites must demonstrate how each development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - realises Council's FSR controls - complies with ADG setback requirements - meets ADG solar access objectives - provides functional vehicular and pedestrian access - provides a positive contribution to the street <p>The proposal adjoins a general residential zone (R1) to the east. The neighbouring sites are occupied by small scale residential flat buildings that are orientated directly towards the site's eastern boundary. The position of balconies and habitable rooms of the neighbouring buildings should be clearly documented. This information will help to inform an appropriate design response on the subject site which reduces potential privacy issues with the eastern neighbours.</p> <p>The proposed "U" shaped residential building above the ground floor appears to be a reasonable conceptual response to the constraints of the site. However, to confirm this the building form must be tested within its future context and compared with alternative design responses. The future urban form study should also be used to further develop / refine the preferred design concept.</p> <p>Notes: The floor plans should be labelled correctly in terms of the building level to which they refer, not to a conceptual level of "residential ground level" (ie level 1).</p> <p>Neither architectural nor landscape plans have sufficient external finished surface levels shown to assess the design intent or potential impacts.</p>
Built Form and Scale	<p>Residential address, access, egress and wayfinding are primary concerns of the panel.</p> <p>Pedestrians access the residential buildings directly from Flinders Street. Residents of the eastern buildings access their lobbies via narrow passages approximately 50m long. The passages are partly open to the sky and partly enclosed. Bulky goods retail will address the sides of the passage. The Panel are concerned about the quality and safety of space being proposed:</p>

- Much of the passage would be dependent upon artificial lighting 24 hours a day.
- Bulky goods retail will not contribute to an active attractive entry process for residents or provide an appropriate shop front for the retail. The retail would benefit from an active frontage to a public street, not a large frontage to a private residential entry.
- The curvilinear geometry and extensive shopfront glazing seem at odds with the flexibility and wall-racking demands of big box retailing
- Perspective images depicting café seating within the entries do not realistically depict the nature / likely usage of these spaces.
- The long, dead-end spaces create significant safety concerns for residents. The passages are concealed from the street, creating secluded spaces that can facilitate antisocial behavior. CPTED principles have not been adopted.
- The southern passages will be utilized by customers of the bulky goods stores traveling between the carpark and the store. It appears that customers will enter the midpoint of the passage then walk back onto the street to access commercial / retail tenancy 2. Residents of the western buildings will share their lifts and ground floor lobbies with retail customers. Retail customers utilizing these lifts will travel from the carpark up into a residential lobby, then exit on to the street to access the bulky goods stores.
- A safe, functional and amenable access, egress and wayfinding strategy has not been provided for both residents and retail customers.

The deep passages servicing the building appear to be failing to meet many basic design criteria, the Panel encourages the applicant to progress alternative design solution that will: provide secure dedicated entries to residents; maximize retail exposure to the street; and reduce access and circulation conflicts between residents and retail customers. Consideration should be given to providing direct access to the podium from the street, perhaps by increasing the width of an opening between buildings fronting the street to provide a clearly defined entry into the residential courtyard.

The proposal's setbacks from the site's southern boundary are not compliant with ADG building separation (part 3F) objectives. Levels 3 to 6 are required to be set back a minimum of 9m from the southern boundary and level 7 is required to setback a minimum of 12m from the southern boundary. The proposed reduced setbacks are likely to contribute to potential privacy issues and excessive overshadowing of the neighbour. This issue is further exacerbated by the expression of the southern façade, which orientates a largely glazed wall back towards its southern neighbour further increasing the potential for privacy conflicts.

	<p>Consideration must also be given to how the proposal interfaces with its southern neighbour at street level. Should the intent be to provide a continuous retail commercial strip fronting the street or is the aim to provide stand-alone buildings separated by landscaping? The current proposal provides continuous 3m setback that is fronted by a 4m high blank wall, providing neither a generous landscaped setback nor the opportunity for a continuation of the street.</p> <p>The proposal cuts into the eastern end of the site, creating a retaining wall in excess of 4m in height running along the site's eastern boundary. Further detail information is required to document the finish to the retaining wall and quality of space provided. Consideration may be given to terracing the retaining wall to reduce its visual impact on adjacent residential units.</p>
Density	<p>Further analysis is required to test the proposal in its future context (refer to comments above, context and neighbourhood character) and determine if the proposal presents as an over-development of the site.</p> <p>The Panel also recommends increasing the area of retail / commercial at street level. Reducing the extent of the over-sized loading areas servicing each tenancy could contribute to an increased retail / commercial area. This will allow the bulk of the upper-level residential buildings to be reduced whilst maintaining the proposed GFA of the development.</p>
Sustainability	<p>Opportunities to harvest rainwater for use in maintaining any plantings established on the building or the site should be explored. Other water minimization measures (reuse of rainwater for toilet flushing and washing machines) should also be considered.</p> <p>The use of solar power and water heating is strongly encouraged, particularly to service communal circulation and parking areas.</p> <p>Low embodied energy should be a consideration in material and finish selections.</p> <p>Landscape plantings should address aims for biodiversity protection, weed minimisation and low water use.</p> <p>A reasonable strategy has been developed to maximise solar access to residential units</p> <p>The current proposal claims 68.6% of units are naturally cross ventilated in accordance with ADG objectives. Many of the units claiming ADG compliance are reliant upon windows in bedrooms orientated into narrow slots within the building. The window openings are orientated toward openings in adjacent units or</p>

	<p>common circulation corridors. It is a concern that the proximity of windows to potential noise sources, will compromise the acoustic privacy of the unit. Further information is required to demonstrate that effective natural cross ventilation is being provided, without creating acoustic privacy issues within units. The size and type of window must be clearly documented.</p> <p>The ADG requires that “The area of unobstructed window openings should be equal to at least 5% of the floor area served”. For a typical 70sqm, 2 bed unit, this equates to clear unobstructed openings on opposing sides of the apartment of 1.75sqm. BCA requirements for restricted opening within bedrooms must also be considered when selecting window types.</p>
Landscape	<p>The following issues/concerns are raised by the Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The landscape plan needs to correctly label the building level (rather than refer to its usage as the level) to which each sheet refers. The landscape treatment for each actual (rather than category of use) level should be clearly shown and the plans should include RLs. The plans for ground level do not show the proposed treatment of the landscape along the eastern setback or what is fully proposed in the northern setback – these are shown the sheet for the level 1 landscape that is incorrectly labelled as “ground level east” and does not include key RLs. As a result, it is difficult to work out what is proposed with regard to access to, use of, and relationships between important spaces. - The site analysis does not explain the site stormwater issues or options for its management. The panel is concerned with the amenity, safety, landscape and aesthetic impacts of the proposed 3 metre wide swales to the north, east and south boundaries. The requirements for the stormwater easement and need to be established with Council’s engineer. - The proposal should include full upgrading of the public domain along the site frontage (rather than retention of existing kerb and pavement in places and replacement of redundant existing driveway cross-overs with new kerbing and pavement). Council should be consulted to ascertain the requirements. - The proposal includes relocating a power pole. The option of under-grounding the power should be investigated at this opportune time. - The Panel supports the proposed establishment of street trees along the full frontage, provided they are substantial canopy trees of species that are locally indigenous. The building awning should allow for their growth. - Proposed plantings in planters underneath the building will require a high degree of maintenance in terms of lighting, irrigation and replacement of plants that do not thrive. (Council’s traffic engineer has flagged that proposed plantings adjacent to the driveway ramp need to be amended to allow for sightlines.)

- On a development of this scale it is unlikely that the tree marked for retention in the south-east corner will survive the extent of the works. It may be more practical to specify a replacement planting.
- As outlined above, the Panel is not persuaded that the proposed ground floor lay-out will work acceptably in terms of way-finding, circulation, safety or amenity. Additional issues in this regard include: the corridors to the eastern residential entrances will be partially uncovered, exposing people to patches of rainfall in places; the residential lobbies are very small and single lifts will potentially give rise to people having to wait in the public, dead-end of the corridor; the planters intended to screen the walls of the loading docks will be fully under cover; the small doorway to the fire stair egress is a security and amenity concern; and the opportunity exists to link the level 1 communal open space to the ground level.
- Elevations and sections, but not plans, indicate significant structure-borne planting. This is to the extent that planting is read as a primary aesthetic in façade treatment, and contributor to the streetscape. All structure-borne planters need to be shown on architectural drawings clearly indicating overall depths and levels. Full details/sections need to be provided, including long-term maintenance proposals.
- The proposed extensive area of communal open space on levels 1 and 6 is supported by the Panel. However, level 1 needs further refinement with regard to access and circulation (a more generous approach to opening the residential towers into the COS could be achieved; level 1 units could potentially have direct access into the COS from their terraces). Given the size of the level 1 COS, it may work better to allocate all or part of the linear eastern area between the east-facing units and the terrace edge to the units. The plan commendably proposes several different activity spaces for the COS (level 1 and 6 combined) but this could be developed even further to reduce duplication. Rather than simply include amenity plantings that help define different areas, a generous community garden could be included on level 1 (or 6). The level 1 COS should be provided with kitchen and toilet facilities and be linked to a community room. Ideally, level 6 COS should also be provided with kitchen and toilet facilities. A water supply should be available to the different parts of the landscapes on both levels.
- The planting plan shows trees overhanging the corridors below. This raises further concerns about the amenity of the space below (trees may be nice but not when they cut out limited sunlight and drop organic matter). More importantly, safety concerns for people working on the trees (or kids wanting to climb them) arise.
- The species list should be revised to specify predominantly locally indigenous plant species (excepting for the community garden).

<p>Amenity</p>	<p>Residents are required to drive around the full perimeter of the site past commercial loading areas, down a ramp then through the commercial carpark before accessing the residential carpark. Consideration should be given to locating a ramp adjacent to the vehicular entry to allow resident to access their carpark in a more convenient / direct manner.</p> <p>The depth of the site effectively isolates the residential buildings in the eastern portion of the site from the street. The Panel acknowledges that providing a pedestrian entry / street address to these buildings is a challenge. However, the deep passages created to provide access to the eastern buildings are not amenable, well resolved spaces. The applicant is encouraged to develop alternative pedestrian access and circulation strategies (refer to Built Form for detailed comment).</p> <p>Balconies located at the southern end of the courtyard sit directly adjacent to each other (unit 101 and 102 for example). Consideration must be given to the detail treatment of these balconies to minimise potential privacy issues.</p> <p>The single lift in the southeast corner is servicing in excess of 40 units. Consideration should be given to configuring the building to achieve a ratio of no more than 40 units per lift.</p> <p>Room and balcony sizes and depths must be shown of floor plans to demonstrate compliance with ADG objectives.</p> <p>A consideration in a circulation wayfinding strategy would include convenient access in the event of lift downtime. Stairs excessively remote from lifts are not favoured.</p>
<p>Safety</p>	<p>It is recommended a NCC BCA Report accompany all applications to ensure critical access, egress and fire protection/ fighting measures are reasonably incorporated in planning and design. There are numerous issues arising in this proposal eg Egress travel distances, connected rising & falling stairs, etc</p> <p>The provision of the previously mentioned circulation, access, egress, wayfinding strategy would include safety issues.</p> <p>Shared resident/retail/public use of lifts is unacceptable.</p> <p>Conflicts between service vehicle movements and resident/shopper vehicle access need to be addressed.</p> <p>The street entry passages are dead end spaces over 50m in depth that create spaces that are concealed from the street, creating secluded spaces that can facilitate antisocial behavior. CPTED principles have not been adopted.</p>
<p>Housing Diversity and Social Interaction</p>	<p>The proposal consists predominantly of 2-bedroom units. Only 4 of the proposed 201 units (1.9%) in the development are 3-bedroom units. The Panel encourages the applicant to provide more 3 bed units to cater for the growing number of young families that choose to live in apartment buildings.</p>

Aesthetics	<p>The proposal consists large areas of glazing, with solid elements predominantly expressed with painted render finishes. It is recommended that higher quality textured finish is applied to the base of the building (currently expressed with a dark paint finish), such as face brickwork.</p> <p>The use of a more light-reflective colour palette is suggested, particularly to maximise available light within the COS courtyard bounded by 7-8 storey apartments</p> <p>Large areas of glazing are provided on all facades, with the exception of the northern façade. Consideration should be given to the specific screening requirements of each façade to respond to its specific orientation and providing controlled solar access and reduce excessive heat gain. The lack of screening shown on the upper level of the western façade is of particular concern.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the quality of space created in the lower-level apartments fronting Flinders Street. The extent of glazing in close proximity to the busy road may leave these units exposed to the street. Perhaps increasing the extent of solid elements within the façade would improve the amenity of these units.</p> <p>A larger scale detail section would assist in providing a better understanding of the quality of finish being proposed and also help to ensure that the architect's design intent is realised.</p> <p>Servicing of the building must be considered at this stage of the design process. The location of service risers, car park exhausts, AC condensers, down pipes and fire hydrant boosters should be accommodated.</p>
Design Excellence WLEP2009	
Whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved	<p>Further detail development is required.</p> <p>The delivery of Design Excellence requires demonstrated evidence of a <u>process</u> where all issues have been identified, prioritized, alternative options considered and decisions made can be clearly seen to be a valid design response. See also comments under Site and Context.</p>
Whether the form and external appearance of the proposed development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain,	<p>Further detail development is required.</p>
Whether the proposed development detrimentally impacts on view corridors,	<p>Further detail development is required.</p>

Whether the proposed development detrimentally overshadows an area shown distinctively coloured and numbered on the Sun Plane Protection Map,	Further detail development is required. Over shadowing of the likely future development of site to the south is a particular concern.
How the development addresses the following:	
the suitability of the land for development,	The land is appropriately located and proportioned to accommodate a development of this type.
existing and proposed uses and use mix	Considering the objectives of the zoning, the Panel would encourage a higher percentage of retail and commercial be provided at street level.
heritage issues and streetscape constraints,	
the location of any tower proposed, having regard to the need to achieve an acceptable relationship with other towers (existing or proposed) on the same site or on neighbouring sites in terms of separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form,	A contextual study showing how the proposal can be developed in harmony with future building forms on neighbouring sites must be provided.
bulk, massing and modulation of buildings	A contextual study showing how the proposal can be developed in harmony with future building forms on neighbouring sites must be provided.
street frontage heights	A contextual study showing how the proposal can be developed in harmony with future building forms on neighbouring sites must be provided.
environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing, wind and reflectivity	Further detail development is required.
the achievement of the principles of ecologically sustainable development	Further detail development is required.
pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access, circulation and requirements	A safe and amenable pedestrian circulation strategy has not been provided.
impact on, and any proposed improvements to, the public domain	The proposed shopfront is some 12-14 metres back from the kerb. Information on the future character of Flinders Street needs to be provided in the context analysis to assess appropriate, paving, street tree planting and furniture.
Key issues, further Comments & Recommendations	A more robust site analysis must inform the proposal, so it may be developed to contribute to a cohesive urban design strategy for this precinct. The proposal must be informed by a future building form study for neighbouring sites fronting Flinders Street. The impact of the current proposal on the development potential of the sites to the south is of particular concern to the Panel.

	<p>The 50m deep entry passages provide a poor-quality entry process for residents. The panel does not support this access strategy, an alternative safe and amenable pedestrian circulation strategy must be developed.</p> <p>Further developments are also recommended to improve the amenity and building aesthetics.</p> <p>A further panel meeting is encouraged.</p>
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