Wollongong Design Review Panel Meeting minutes and recommendations

Date	14 December 2023
Meeting location	Wollongong City Council Administration Offices
Panel members	(Chair) David Jarvis
	(Member) Sonny Embleton
	(Member) Sue Hobley
Apologies	None
Council staff	Pier Panozzo – City Centre & Major Projects Manager
	Nigel Lamb – Senior Development Project Officer
	April Wilkinson - Architect
Guests/ representatives of	Charbel Kazzi (Developer/Applicant)
the applicant	Eddy Haddad (Developer/Applicant)
	John Kavanagh (Architect)
	Jesus Garcia (Architect)
	Alfonso Casanova (Architect)
	Troy Loveday - Planning Ingenuity
	Jeff Mead – Planning Ingenuity
Declarations of Interact	Shaun Carter - Carter Williamson
Declarations of Interest Item number	None 2
DA number	DA-2023/156
Reason for consideration by	SEPP 65, Cl. 7.18 of WLEP 2009 - Design Excellence
DRP	
Determination pathway	Southern Regional Planning Panel (SRPP)
Property address	2-4 Gladstone Avenue & 357-363 Crown Street Wollongong
Proposal	Mixed Use Development - demolition of existing structures,
	construction of a 19 storey shop top housing development
	including car parking and associated earthworks and landscaping
Applicant or applicant's	The meeting was conducted in person at Council and by video link
representative address to the	between the Panel and the applicants' team
design review panel Background	This is the accord time the site has been inepected and reviewed
Background	This is the second time the site has been inspected and reviewed by the Panel post lodgment, the first being 3 May 2023.
	The proposal was also inspected and reviewed by the Panel under
	DE-2022/80 prior to lodgement on 31 August 2022.
	DE-2022/00 phor to lougement on of August 2022.
Design Quality Principles SEF Context and Neighbourhood	
Character	The proposal is located on a prominent corner site in close proximity to Wollongong train station.
	The western edge of the site adjoins a recently constructed mixed use building, with a 4-storey base that abuts (nil setback) the boundary. The base contains a shallow recess accommodating windows to commercial tenancies that are orientated back towards the subject site. A 19-storey high residential tower sits above the commercial base, set back 6m from the boundary with balconies and windows to habitable rooms orientated back towards the subject site.
	A hotel adjoins the site's southern boundary. The neighbouring building has nominal setbacks from its northern boundary and a facade that appears to accommodate windows to hotel rooms orientated back towards the subject site.
	The site contains a heritage listed tree located in the southern portion of the site. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment (by Moore Trees consulting Arborist) was commissioned by Council to establish the impact of the proposed development upon the tree. The assessment raises a number of issues in relation to the

	propagal's impact upon the health of the heritage listed tree. In
	proposal's impact upon the health of the heritage listed tree. In response to issues raised in the report a number of positive developments have been undertaken, including the provision of increased setbacks to the tree to eliminate the need for pruning and refinement of tower forms to increase the level of solar access to the tree. The Panel acknowledges the significant developments that have been made but recommends that the revised proposal be reviewed by the arborist to confirm that the design will not impact adversely on the health and longevity of the tree.
	Note: if the arborist's requirements cannot be met the applicant is encouraged to reconsider an alternative development strategy previously outlined by the Panel:
	Consideration should be given to moving the above ground carparking that does not correspond to existing site levels around the tree to a basement to allow the podium to be lowered closer to the levels around the tree. This will provide a more direct connection between the tree and communal open space and enable a continuation of Parkinson Street along the southern boundary of the site. Accommodating vehicular and pedestrian circulation through the site.
	This strategy may be developed to further reduce the scale of the residential towers to improve solar access to the tree.
Built Form and Scale	Developments made to tower forms (reduced footprints, increased setback's introduction of deeper / more clearly defined recesses within tower facades) and the expression of the building base have improved the overall composition of the building forms to provide an improved response to the immediate context of the site.
	Parkinson Street interface / Heritage tree
	The currently proposed design locates above-ground parking in the central portion of the site, creating a south facing podium and wall that sits at RL43.8, approximately 7m above the base of the tree. In response to the Panel's previous comments the base of the podium facing the tree has been wrapped with two storey residential units to provide a more active interface with the tree. This is an effective strategy that assists in developing an active residential precinct at the eastern end of Parkinson Street, centered around the heritage tree. In response to the Panel's previous comments, an increased setback from the tree has been provided, creating an improved interface with the tree.
	An entry has now been provided from Parkinson Street to accommodate a more direct / accessible entry to the two storey units. However, the entry relates awkwardly to the single point of vehicle access to the development. A tight pinch point has been created where pedestrians accessing the building from Parkinson Street will be clashing with vehicular movements to and from the basement carpark. Further refinement is required to provide a safe clearly defined pedestrian path to the building. This may be achieved by moving the ramp further east increase the space available to allow a dedicated footpath to be provided. Surface finishes should also be developed to clearly define the footpath between Parkinson Street and the pedestrian entry ramp.
	In response to the Panel's previous comments, the southern edge of the carpark has been wrapped with a community room which screens the carpark. This is a positive development which will contribute to activating the eastern end of Parkinson Street.

However, it is suggested that this space be developed as a gym as part of an overall strategy to provide an improved range of communal spaces to the development (refer to detail comment, Landscape for a detail description of recommended developments to COS).

Access to the two storey units is provided directly from the level 2 carpark. It is suggested that consideration be given to reconfiguring vehicular circulation and relocating the garbage room to allow each of these units to be serviced with its own garage. This development would improve the amenity / value of these units.

Vehicular access

The current proposal is serviced by singular vehicle access from Parkinson Street. Given the density of the proposed development, the approved high-density development that will utilize Parkinson Street and the modest proportions of this street, the applicant was previously encouraged to consult with Council's traffic engineer to determine the viability of this proposal.

The applicant has outlined the rationale behind the current vehicular access strategy. This includes maximizing the activation of Gladstone Avenue, which is a positive design outcome. The Panel have also been informed that Council's traffic engineer has not raised any concerns with the single point of access/ egress strategy.

Relationship with southern neighbour

A 12m setback (levels 2 to 17) has now been provided from the southern boundary. The southern edge of the tower also orientates living rooms and areas of POS in an east / west direction, mitigating any potential privacy issues with the southern neighbour.

A two-storey base has been created at the southern edge of the building (building B); the base has a reduced setback from the southern boundary. The base relates poorly to the four-storey high brick street wall of building B, compromising the composition of the building base. It is recommended that the 12m setback from the southern boundary be provided at all levels. To assist in achieving this goal consideration may be given to reconfiguring the vehicular entry ramp from Parkinson Street. If the ramp were to turn north after entering the building it may be possible to reduce the extent of / eliminate the two-storey form fronting Gladstone Avenue.

In response to concerns raised by Council, the proposed pedestrian link between Parkinson Street and Gladstone Avenue has been gated and turned into a private point of access, to be used solely by residents of the subject site. This is an unfortunate development that will compromise the permeability of the city centre and turn Parkinson Street into a dead-end space. Council and the applicant are encouraged to reconsider this decision to accommodate an improved urban design outcome for the city centre. The Panel is aware that a planned development proposal further to the west with frontages to Crown Street and Parkinson Street includes the long-term vision to develop a link between the railway station and the hospital via Parkinson Street. Previous DRP reviews have been supportive of this.

Relationship with western neighbour

A detailed study of the recently constructed building to the west has been provided. In response to the Panel's previous comments the revised proposal has:

- provided an increased setback to units directly abutting the lightwell servicing commercial levels of the neighbouring building on levels 4 and 5. However, the setback should be increased to improve the proportions of the lightwell; a minimum setback of 3m is recommended.
- modeled the western edge of building A to provide a more positive interface with the angled / stepping form of the neighbour's Crown Street façade.
- provided planting at the base of the exposed nil setback blank wall of the neighbouring building to soften its interface with the subject site.

The Panel notes that a stormwater pit is located in the northwestern corner of the site and that run-off from the adjacent development is directed out through pipes to this portion of the site. The implications of this need to be resolved.

Gladstone Avenue

A deep slot has been developed in the Gladstone Street façade to assist in mitigating the perceived bulk by expressing building B as two separate forms.

To further assist in providing a clearly defined corner expression it is recommended that the roof form of the corner tower be developed to emphasize the height / verticality of the corner tower, rather than providing a recessive upper level similar to the other tower forms.

Expression of street wall

In response to the Panel's previous comments, the Crown Street wall has been stepped to respond to the topography of the site and configured to align breaks in the wall to align with building entries. This is a positive development that assists in providing a more legible building with a more appropriately scaled / contextually responsive base.

The curved language of the façade makes a positive contribution to the character of the building. Noting comments above in relation to the southern neighbour, incorporating the curved language approach to the south west corner of the building would continue this characterization and assist in better transitioning the building along Gladstone Avenue towards the adjacent hotel building to the south.

Interface with street

A sensible strategy has been developed to relate each retail unit to the street level. However, the applicant is encouraged to further investigate the detail resolution of the entry door and sills to each retail unit to ensure the steep levels of the street can be accommodated in a visually appealing and amenable manner. Particular consideration should be given to the street corner which should aim to provide a greater contribution to the quality of the public domain. In this location some localized steps may be necessary in creating a more usable space whilst maintaining accessibility.

The purpose of the double height glazed elements at the southern end of Gladstone Avenue to conceal upper-level parking area from the view of the street is acknowledged and supported. However, the height of the glazing in this location may distort the perception of the human scale in this portion of Gladstone. For this reason, and to support the functionality of the awning discussed below, the

	Panel encourages the applicant to investigate further articulation and lowering of the awning in parts.
	The deep solid columns expressed in the base of the building have been developed to provide a more rounded appearance that may assist in reducing potential CPTED issues. However, there remain some questionable street level spaces, particularly where columns are located closely together, that still create areas of concealment that may facilitate anti-social behavior. Consideration could be given to maintaining the same expression of the columns but relocating the glass line closer to the site boundary, to reduce the depth of concealment spaces fronting the street. The aesthetic intent of the columns is clear, but it must be demonstrated that areas of concealment (contrary to the principles of CPTED) are not being created. The columns also create unusable balcony spaces for some apartments (e.g. Building A 301-303, 401-403 and 501- 503), which will need to be further considered.
Density	The proposal must demonstrate that the bulk / density of the tower forms does not compromise the longevity of the heritage tree.
	Input from Council's arborist to confirm that the impacts upon the heritage tree have been mitigated is required.
Sustainability	Opportunities to harvest rainwater for use in maintaining any plantings established on the building or the site should be explored. Other water minimisation measures (reuse of rainwater for toilet flushing and washing machines) should also be considered.
	The use of solar power, solar water heating and general electrification of the building is strongly encouraged, particularly to service communal circulation and parking areas.
	Low embodied energy should be a consideration in material and finish selections.
	Landscape plantings should address aims for biodiversity protection, weed minimisation and low water use. The current species list does not achieve this.
	The Panel strongly recommends that electric vehicle charging stations and provision for car-sharing vehicles be provided in the different carpark levels.
Landscape	The Panel commends the considerable further development of the design in response to previous concerns raised, particularly with regard to potential impacts on the heritage tree, the connectivity between various areas of designated COS and the integration of the built form with the landscape. It is acknowledged that the location of the heritage tree and the level changes affecting the site present very difficult challenges for the design team, given the permissible development standards that apply. Nevertheless, the Panel is of the opinion that further improvements to the landscape (and associated building) design are possible and desirable with regard to the Parkinson Street interface, access, circulation and way-finding, and the integration of the COS and its proposed program of uses.
	1. Parkinson Street
	- The Panel remains very concerned about the safety and amenity of the pedestrian entry to the site off Parkinson

 Street. The plans do not show what is proposed for the strip of land (annotated on the plans as LANE 3.66 WIDE") between the site boundary adjoining the entrance to the carpark and the relatining wall immediately to the west. Unfortunately, this was not discussed at the meeting. Can this be used as a public pathway to the pedestrian entrance to the site? This would enable a safer (possibly fenced off) dedicated pedestrian path that does not rely on shared usage with the vehicle driveway. If this is not permissible, the questions still need to be answered as to how this interface will be treated to ensure amenity and how can the pedestrian entry be improved in terms of safety and way-finding. As noted above, the Panel notes that Council does not support the development of a pedestrian link along parkinson Street to Gladstone Avenue (and therefore the future, the Panel recommends that the design of the sature) and associated landscape at the end of Parkinson Street be flexibility designed to allow for it to be easily converted into a public pathway. This would involve widening the stairs and associated landscape at the end of Parkinson Street be flexibility designed to allow for it to be easily converted into a public pathway. This would involve widening the stairs and reconfiguring them to decrease heights of individual flights (increasing instead the number of flights and landings). Work still needs to be done to improve the interface with the unfortunately designed levels and retaining walls of the adjoining development to the souther. Access, circulation and way-finding The location of the heritage tree has driven a design that provides for layered COS covering much of the souther and exist of the eavel of the south way-finding will significantly benefit the functionality and appeal of COS. Further work is required to annot way-finding will significantly benefit the functionality and appeal of COS. Further work is required to achive and of way-finding will signific	
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interface between the pathway enabling the access and the soft landscape is unclear; the varying levels require resolution and universal access is not provided. Direct access to the ramp from Parkinson Street should be available to these units and the other components of the level 2 COS.
- The level 2 communal open space terrace should be directly linked via a ramp / pathway / stairs to the soft landscaped COS at the level below it and the narrow pathway to the heritage tree landscape should be reconsidered to ensure universal access and a generous circulation system. This terrace lends itself well to being developed as a combined communal room and open terrace (with the gym deleted). The communal room should be provided with kitchen and toilet facilities.
- The pedestrian entry from the lift foyer to the level 2 COS needs to be developed further to improve its amenity and deliver a sense of address. It currently conflicts with the stairs from level 3 and looks out to the stairs and the proposed gym. The outlook from the foyer should be high amenity.
 How does a person in a wheelchair access the COS ground floor COS (east of the tree)? The design needs to be amended to provide universal access to this space.
- The stairs linking level 4 COS, the small terrace on level 3 and the level 2 COS need rethinking. The design and scale of the stairs lacks the generosity that should be afforded to the main connecting element between the two primary areas of communal open space. The Panel strongly encourages the applicant to consider a more generously proportioned staircase that, in itself, offers a series of experiences to attract and transition between levels. This could be in part about the view lines and vistas afforded between the primary COS elements it connects, as well as the experience and sense of destination afforded by the stairs themselves and interim destinations such as the "open terrace" on Level 3. The Panel encourages the applicant to further investigate how the design of the stairs can bring all of these experiences together to attract and transit people between levels enjoyably and practically. This may possibly include an expansion of the level 3 open terrace.
 The entry points – including lift lobbies - to the level 4 COS require further work to improve their amenity and role in way-finding. The outlook from the lobby should be appealing and provide visual cues to what lies outside.
 The access points from the level 4 units and the level 4 COS should not be directly into high usage zones and should not conflict with uses of the COS.
3. Program for COS
The Panel is of the opinion that the proposed program for the various elements of the COS could be revised to achieve a more functional and logical scheme. More thought should be given to the environmental conditions affecting the various spaces and also to the relationship between those spaces and the residential units. The use of shadow diagrams should inform both the proposed

	activities and the plant selection. The following suggestions are
	intended as a guide:
	- The lowest level of COS that is visible from many parts of the COS above lends itself to the child's play area (with good surveillance and noise affectation on only a very few units). This would not preclude the inclusion of terraced plantings but the terraces may also be designed to offer adventure play?
	- The heritage tree landscape could provide ancillary services to the child's play area but high usage activities should be avoided – the arborist should be consulted with regard to suitable traffic options. It may be possible to include activities that support both children's play and the gym.
	- The level 2 terrace would work well as an indoor-outdoor communal space for meetings, barbecues etc.
	- The level 3 terrace is currently a 'dead' space. It could be developed to support the role of the level 2 terrace which it overlooks.
	- The level 4 terrace would easily accommodate a variety of different activities, including a community garden where the good solar access is ideal. This would require furniture, a water supply and storage facilities. The south- western corner may be suited to specialist gardening (ferns, shade-loving species) and a retreat zone. A small winter playground for kids may also be appropriate. An area for pets? Additional barbecue areas
	4 Other
	In addition to the key issues discussed above, the following details require consideration:
	- The species list should be amended to include locally indigenous species in all the amenity plantings. For community gardens where the intention is to support food production this does not apply.
	- The 'gully' ramp is liable to become dank and desolate unless the design details and finishes are robust, specify materials that deliver high amenity and enable easy maintenance.
Amenity	Solar access
	It is acknowledged that a successful design response to this site must include a proposal that responds to and activates the space surrounding the heritage tree, located in the southern portion of the site. This will potentially result in a design that has an active south- facing courtyard. Given this site-specific condition, strict compliance with ADG solar access requirements may not provide the best design outcome for this site, as an ADG-compliant proposal may drive a design that turns its back on the heritage tree. A balanced design response, that responds to the heritage tree and maximises solar access is encouraged.
	Given this constraint the minor non-compliance with ADG solar access design criteria is considered an acceptable outcome.
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Cross ventilation

The current proposal claims natural cross ventilation is provided to 63% of units. Several of the units nominated as cross ventilated are dependent upon openings within recesses within the building façade. In some instances, it appears that windows in recesses will be directly opposite each other, which may result in visual and / or acoustic privacy issues.

Further detail is required to determine if natural ventilation is achieved without compromising the amenity of individual units. The size and location of window openings with building recess must be clearly documented. It must be demonstrated that the clear unobstructed opening required to achieve ADG compliant natural ventilation have been provided.

Internal circulation

Building B corridors, levels 1 and 2 contain landscaped areas that are recessed into the circulation space, adjacent to the lifts. The landscaped areas are effective in breaking up the perceived length of the corridors. However, the crank points in the corridor disrupt sight lines and potentially create an awkward path for manoeuvring objects/ furnishings when moving into or out of the building. This could be improved by reducing the depth of the protrusion, increasing the amount of glazing (if structure allows) and chamfering of corners to reflect the curvilinear language of the building's exterior.

The lift lobby of building B (typical level) will be well serviced by natural light and has an outlook towards Gladstone Avenue and the heritage tree. The circulation to units consists of a single linear corridor servicing 9 units. The applicant is encouraged to develop the quality of the corridor space, consideration should be given to:

- providing slight recess in the corridor to highlight unit entries and provide slightly wider corridor widths in selected locations.
- using floor finishes wall finishes to identify entrances units.
- the glazing configuration at the northern and southern ends of the corridor. The southern glazing may be developed to capitalise upon the direct solar access that will be achieved at mid-day.

Other amenity issues that require further design consideration:

- The north facing living room windows of units A0201, 202, 203, 204, 301, 302, 303 and 304 sit awkwardly against the brick columns, creating narrow inaccessible spaces on balconies. Consideration should be given to deepening the column and / or moving the glazing line. The space between glazing and column should either be made slightly deeper or eliminated entirely.
- Units A0408 and 508 contain two-bedroom units with snorkel windows to the second bedrooms. It is recommended that these units are developed as single bedroom units. This will assist in meeting ADG amenity objectives (a window is to be visible from any point within a habitable room, objective 4D1) and also allow a more generously proportioned setback to be provided from the western boundary to improve the proportions of the lightwell servicing the neighbouring building.

	 All units must demonstrate compliance with ADG minimum room dimensions and combined living dining kitchen depths (8m).
	 The proposed gym should be provided with appropriate changing and shower facilities.
	 It is recommended that units are developed to ensure bedrooms are not accessed directly through living spaces.
Safety	Further refinement of the buildings interface with the street should seek to eliminate potential CPTED issues. Recesses created by columns should be minimal, to allow clear lines of sight to the retail space and not create areas of concealment.
	Further refinement is required to minimise vehicle and pedestrian conflicts at the Parkinson Street entry.
Housing Diversity and Social Interaction	The proposal will provide a typical mix of uses for this neighbourhood. However, consideration could be given to providing more commercial space within the base of the building and a greater number of three-bedroom units.
Aesthetics	The form of the building (towers and base) is now generally acceptable. Pending, further development of corner tower expression (refer to detail comments above, Built Form) and confirmation from Council's arborist that the heritage tree will receive sufficient solar access.
	The brick base of the building will provide a positive contribution to the town centre. The detail resolution of the curved brick work will play an important role in ensuring the design intent shown in perspectives is realised. The applicant is encouraged to provide large scale details (1:20 recommended) to demonstrate how the design intent shown in the perspectives is realised.
	Consideration should also be given to the height of each awning as it steps along the street frontage in response to the steep topography of the street. The aim should be to maintain practical weather protection and a consistent human scale along the street perimeter.
	Tower forms appear to consist entirely of concrete and glass. It is a concern that this approach may present as too utilitarian if a fine detail resolution is not achieved. The material select also appears to lack the detail finessing required to control solar access to each façade to provide an environmentally responsive design. The applicant is encouraged to reconsider the extent of glazing and develop a screening strategy that improves the proposals environment performance and contributes to the aesthetic quality of the towers. To ensure the architect's design intent is realised, the applicant is encouraged to provide larger scale detail sections (minimum 1:20) to assist in providing a better understanding of the quality of finish being proposed. The sections should show balcony / balustrade details, screens, balcony overflows, soffit finishes, street awning design and material junctions. All materials finishes must be clearly documented.
	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 and substations should be shown.

	Material selections lack clarity and commitment. Elevation must clearly show all materials and material selection must be definitive. The word "or similar" should be removed form material legend, the type of brick should be specified, the street awning should be designed and its materiality specified.
Design Excellence WLEP2009	
Whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved	Some significant improvements have been made. However, further detail refinement is required.
Whether the form and external appearance of the proposed development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain,	Some significant improvements have been made. However, further detail refinement is required.
Whether the proposed development detrimentally impacts on view corridors,	No apparent issues
Whether the proposed development detrimentally overshadows an area shown distinctively coloured and numbered on the Sun Plane Protection Map,	N/A
How the development addresses the following:	
the suitability of the land for development,	The site is appropriately sized and conveniently located. However, the constraints and opportunities created by the heritage tree create some unique challenges for this site.
existing and proposed uses and use mix	The proposed mix of uses will potentially provide an acceptable contribution to this neighbourhood. However, an increased number of three-bedroom units is recommended.
heritage issues and streetscape constraints,	Further input from Councils arborist is recommend confirming if the heritage tree will receive sufficient solar access to ensure its longevity.
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,	Acceptable pending arborist input
bulk, massing and modulation of buildings	Further refinement to improve corner expression.
street frontage heights	Acceptable
environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing, wind and reflectivity	Further development required.

the achievement of the principles of ecologically sustainable development	Further development required.
pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access, circulation and requirements	Further development of the Parkinson Street entry required.
impact on, and any proposed improvements to, the public domain	Further development of the Parkinson Street interface required.
Key issues, further Comments & Recommendations	Developments made to tower forms (reduced footprints, increased setback's introduction of deeper / more clearly defined recesses within tower facades) and the expression of the building base has improved the overall composition of the building. The revised proposal has also developed an improve response to the heritage tree to provide an active residential precinct at the eastern end of Parkinson Street. However, further consideration of the following issues is required:
	 Input from Council arborist to confirm that the impacts upon the heritage tree have been mitigated and the longevity of the tree can be assured.
	 Reconfiguration of access and circulation and of COS to improve amenity.
	- Further development of the Parkinson Street entry.
	 Refinement of the southern interface to maintain a 12m setback at all levels.
	 Further consideration (discussion with Council) to reinstate a public right of way between Parkinson Street and Gladstone Avenue.
	- Further development of the towers corner expression
	 Further detailed information / refinement of tower expression.
	- Further refinements to improve amenity.