

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

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| Date | 25 November 2021 |
| Meeting location | Wollongong City Council Administration Offices |
| Panel members | (Chair) Brendan Randles (Member) Tony Quinn (Member) Marc Deuschle |
| Apologies | None |
| Council staff | Pier Panozzo – Development Assessment & Certification Manager (Acting) Theresa Whittaker – Senior Development Project Officer Alexandra McRobert – City Architect Andrew Heaven - Development Engineering Manager |
| Guests/ representatives of the applicant | George O'Donovan – Level 33 Eddy Haddad – Level 33 Ross Meachin – Planning Ingenuity Jeff Mead – Planning Ingenuity |
| Declarations of Interest | None |
| Item number | 1 |
| DA number | DA-2020/677 |
| Reason for consideration by DRP | Design Excellence – WLEP 2009 SEPP 65 |
| Determination pathway | Southern Regional Planning Panel |
| Property address | 30 Ellen Street, Wollongong |
| Proposal | Mixed Use Development - demolition of existing structures, construction of 273 apartments across two residential towers incorporating commercial/retail spaces over three (3) levels of basement parking and level 1 parking, and an 80 place childcare centre |
| 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 proposal has been to the design review panel a number of times. Although recent amendments have resulted in significant urban design and amenity improvements, there are still a number of matters that fall short of design excellence standards. |
| Design quality principals SEPP 65 | |
| Context and Neighbourhood Character | <p>As noted at the last Panel meeting, <i>“this is a complex, large scale and flood prone site with great impact on context and adjacent public domain. Accordingly, it requires a comprehensive site and context analysis; this has not been submitted. See pages 44 – 50 and 150 of the ADG for what is required from a site analysis, including inclusions design responses to key challenges.”</i></p> <p>Apart from a few additional axonometric illustrations, it would appear that no further site and context analysis has been provided. For a project of this scale, this remains unacceptable.</p> <p>Design measures required to address issues raised at the last meeting include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further rationalisation of ramps and steps to improve pedestrian movement and use of the spaces along the edge of the building (see Landscape below) - Clarification of planters so that they do not block key entrances and retail tenancies |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How this proposal and its adjacent open spaces align with adjoining public domain requires explanation. |
| <p>Built Form and Scale</p> | <p>At the last design review panel meeting, concerns were raised about the ground floor and its interface with the public domain, including the landscaped frontage. Many of the design responses to these issues are addressed in Landscape below.</p> <p>The amended driveway configuration now results in a major street tree being retained in the north west corner of the site. While this is a commendable outcome, street frontages generally still require attention to achieve acceptable urban design standards.</p> <p>The south facing landscaped area and undulating covered walkway, including entries and retail (both which require clear visual access), are still plagued by physical and visual barriers. Ramps and stairs appear not to be coordinated with specific entries or other important nodes. Structural columns are randomly located inside and outside glazing. It is noted that the required 2 – 3m high windscreens are not shown on drawings, nor are plants in planters (also required for wind), which greatly constrains a thorough assessment of the ground floor plane. Considering the complexity of this interface, additional perspectives along the length of the walkway should be provided to demonstrate the physical and visual amenity of this vital publicly accessible space.</p> <p>Required amendments to ground level built form include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the framed elevational elements currently proposed to identify residential entries will not be read at pedestrian level. Entries must be provided with clear markers that can be read from each end of the walkway, such as well integrated blades or other planar architectural devices - columns along walkways should be rationalized, reduced in number and repositioned behind glazing - the curved steps to the south west corner incorporate a planter with large tree. As the perspective provided indicates, this is very awkward and should be removed. <p>While the separation of cores is supported, it has resulted in some poor built form outcomes, such as a very small retail tenancy between the western residential lobbies and highly constrained access to the north eastern lobby. It may be better to combine entry lobbies and allow the size and form of adjacent retail tenancies to be increased and further rationalized.</p> <p>At the last design review panel meeting, a number of concerns were raised about the residential towers, specifically relating to the towers' visual bulk, their internal layouts, non-complying cross ventilation and long corridors.</p> <p>The separation of cores has now allowed for the integration of cross-through units, thereby resolving issues of cross ventilation and markedly reducing the length of corridors.</p> <p>However, the tower bulk has been increased, with widths of up to 23.5m now proposed.</p> <p>In addition, many of the apartments are highly constrained by the relationship of internal spaces to the undulating façade; in fact, many units do not appear to have sufficient space for living</p> |

arrangements to function as proposed. This may result in further amendments to increase unit depths, leading to even greater building width and additional visual bulk, which would be untenable.

Amenity issues currently identified throughout the tower layouts include the following:

- many of the proposed units appear unable to comfortably accommodate furniture as proposed. These units include U2.2 Level 2), U4.8 (living has no outlook), U4.9, U4.15 (dining has no outlook), and U4.16 (levels 2 – 5).
- many units throughout the towers, at all levels, have furniture placed against glazing, necessitated by lack of internal dimensions (depth and/or width). Apart from constraining outlook, this measure appears to prevent access to balconies in a number of cases.
- the curved corners of the towers impact on many units, greatly constraining furniture layouts and compliance with minimal ADG spatial requirements. Eg. units U2.1, U2.6, and U2.9 on level 2, U4.5, U4.6, U4.9, U4.11, U4.17 and U4.20 on levels 3 – 5 and U9.5, U9.6, U9.9, U9.10, U9.15 and U9.18 (levels 6 – 15), and many units above.
- many units feature oddly shaped balconies, greatly constraining their use and compliance with ADG private open space requirements. These units include U4.2, U4.4, U4.7, U4.12, U4.16 and U4.19 (levels 3 – 5), U9.4 and U9.7 (levels 6 – 15) U16.4 and U16.7 (level 16) and U17.4 and U17.7 (level 17).
- due to structure, configuration, and width, it is not clear how access from living areas and across balconies is provided in units U4.2, U4.4, U4.14 and U4.19 (levels 3 – 5), U9.4, U9.8, U9.14 and U9.17 (levels 6 – 15), U16.4 and U16.8 (level 16) and U17.4 and U17.8 (level 17).
- many units incorporate snorkel portions of bedrooms, which do not comply with the ADG. These units include U2.8 (level 2), U4.4, U4.6, U4.11 and U4.19 (levels 3 – 5), U9.4, U9.6, U9.8, U9.10, U9.14 and U9.17 (levels 6 – 15) U16.4, U16.6 and U16.8 (level 16) and U17.4, U17.6 and U17.8 (level 17).

The livable unit plan provided appears not to comply with standard accessibility requirements; for example, the nib and width requirements in the entry and bedroom areas require review. It is also not clear how access to the balcony is provided from the living room and a pinch point in the balcony is far too narrow to allow movement across its length. The adaptable units need further clarification so that adaption can be achieved without major alterations to plumbing and waterproofing of bathrooms.

Compliant mid-winter solar access appears to have been demonstrated, although constrained by the neighbouring development on Atchison Street, which is now in construction. This needs confirmation by Council staff.

Although the elevations demonstrate additional solidity due to spandrels and vertical screening over some levels to tower ends, the Panel remains concerned that large expanses of glazing are still not screened or shaded.

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| | <p>As noted at the recent meeting, there are concerns that the floor-to-floor height provided in the loading area is insufficient to allow for the DCP's required clearances.</p> <p>The roof plan provided is incomplete and does not include sufficient detail, such as services, plant and access, to meaningfully assess.</p> |
| Density | <p>Although the proposal has been substantially improved, especially in terms of ADG compliances, the proposal still has a number of significant amenity issues evident in proposed units and at ground level. The capacity of the proposal to house the density proposed is therefore still to be demonstrated.</p> |
| Sustainability | <p>As noted above, the integration of cross through units now allows the proposal to achieve ADG cross ventilation compliance.</p> <p>Although some screening has been provided to reduce solar impacts on west facing glazing, large expanses of unscreened glazing remains.</p> <p>It is noted that the NatHERS rating provided is not complete and does not correspond with the current proposal. This will impact on BASIX compliance.</p> <p>Notwithstanding, it is not clear what sustainability initiatives over and beyond those required by BASIX have been proposed. These include solar energy generation, rainwater harvesting, etc. On such a large proposal, these measures should be championed at all stages of the design of the proposal.</p> |
| Landscape | <p><u>Public Domain</u></p> <p>Several design amendments have been made in response to previous comments, which are beneficial to the public domain. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The existing street tree in Atchison Street has been retained via a driveway redesign - The existing trees along Ellen Street have been retained and planters have been adjusted to avoid their existing root zones - The space available to the existing tree on the corner of Ellen and Kenny Street has been increased. <p>While the retention of these trees is commended, several small street trees on Kenny Street are shown to be retained but, being small bottlebrushes, are of lesser value and detract from the quality of the future streetscape. These should be removed and replaced with a coordinated series of new street trees.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that an attempt has been made to rationalise the walls and planters along the retail edge. However there remains a distinct disconnect between the streetscape and retail façade. This, together with the height of planting (generally not indicated in drawings), and wind baffle devices (generally 2-3m in height and also not clear on design drawings), creates a visual disconnect that results in poor retail activation and raises a high CPTED risk.</p> |

A further rationalisation of the public domain interface - including a genuine attempt to create useful, meaningful and activated space – is needed. This should include:

- an improved physical connection between the streetscape and the development that does not appear utilitarian in nature but rather is welcoming and attractive
- an improved visual connection from the street to the retail spaces – how this is done given the wind requirements must be clearly indicated on all drawings
- better circulation is still required along and between retail levels
- significant space should be made available outside the retail spaces for outdoor dining / activation.

Issues that have been identified in this iteration that need to be resolved specifically include:

- The levels indicated on the survey and design drawings do not match for the ramp to Ellen Street. The 1:14 ramp is already poorly conceived in its current arrangement and will likely need to be extended further, only exacerbating this poor interface.
- The ramp to the northern part of Kenny Street residential results in the lobby door being squeezed to the top of the landing, and a retail space only accessible via the residential lobby.
- Further to this, all ramps and walkways appear in excess of their maximum allowable length which will further impact the previous 2 two issues.
- Wind shields are proposed along substantial sections of the development's frontage, creating visual clutter, and adding to its poor spatial quality.

An arborist should provide an updated report outlining how the current development impacts all existing trees, including street trees and those on neighbouring sites.

Communal Open Space (COS)

The gym / lobby interface has been improved to avoid sight lines that would have made gym users potentially uncomfortable by passers-by.

The edge planting to private open space has been increased, though this needs to be coordinated between landscape and architectural drawings.

A concerning issue that remains is that spatially the COS struggles to cater for the large number of residents. It does not define space very well and struggles to provide a suitable variety of spaces usable by individuals and groups. The design appears to be overly complicated in its conception (i.e. it appears focused on the pattern as opposed to the quality of the spaces) and when the spaces are reviewed in detail they lack clarity and function. Issues include:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The edge pergolas appear to be an aesthetic feature unrelated to the use of the COS under - The free-standing pergola between the kids play area and lawn will provide little shade to the various seats surrounding it. Perhaps the gathering area it services could take advantage of the edge pergolas by moving that space to the east? - Posts for the two free-standing pergolas will likely constrain movement and inhibit universal access. Further detail is required. - There are several natural lawn spaces which are all mounded with large trees in their respective centres. The trees have variously-sized planter beds around them, making the lawns just edge strips in several places. This arrangement makes the lawns conducive only to some passive uses such as sitting. How lawns could be used for informal active use should be resolved. - Several potentially usable spaces, e.g. the space beside the water feature, become obstructed by a central planter, resulting in these spaces forming circulation spaces as opposed to destinations - The playground in plan appears to be very small while in the section it appears to be much more substantial. The intended design must be shown and specified so it can be approved as part of the DA - Universal access does not appear to have been considered with several pathways inaccessible due to surface materials - It is still unclear if wind has been taken into consideration or how it has been resolved in the landscape design. Further detail is required. |
| <p>Amenity</p> | <p>As noted above, although the ground level has been improved generally, there are numerous instances of poor ground level amenity and potential CPTED issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visual and physical obstructions between the public domain and south facing loggia; - the 2 – 3 m high wind screens and plantings are not shown on drawings; - the landscape plan, architectural plans and public domain plan are inconsistent with each other; - residential lobbies are poorly marked; - some retail tenancies appear too small and inflexible for future uses; - steps and ramps are not sufficiently resolved and aligned; - an excessive number of large columns obstruct retail frontages and unnecessarily impede on publicly accessible covered space; - incapacity of floor-to-floor allowances in loading area to facilitate required clearances; <p>As discussed at the meeting, the childcare internal and open spaces shown on the drawings do not appear to scale with the</p> |

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| | <p>areas expressed and required. It is therefore not clear if the childcare facility, and its provided open spaces, will comply with the requirements for the number of children proposed, or if more area will be taken from the adjacent residential communal open space to achieve required areas.</p> <p>The proposed towers have been improved through the separation of lobbies, integration of through units and resultant compliance with cross ventilation.</p> <p>However, as noted above, there are numerous amenity and compliance issues throughout the scheme. See comments above regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - visual bulk of towers appears excessive; - unresolved impacts of curved tower corners on amenity and spatial compliance of internal spaces; - apparent incapacity of many units to comfortably house furniture as proposed due to internal spatial limitations – this issue may lead to the requirement to further increase the width of existing towers; - some living and dining spaces are completely internal and do not have access to outlook, light and air; - many balconies do not appear capable of achieving the minimum width and private open space requirements required by the ADG; - due to structure and layout, many balconies appear unable to be accessed from adjacent living spaces or to allow access across their width; - liveable units require further design refinement to achieve requirements of the model; - adaptable units require further demonstration that bathrooms can be adapted without excessive change to plumbing; - the roof plans of towers are incomplete and therefore cannot be assessed; - Naters ratings and therefore Basix are incomplete. <p>In addition, storage allocations are to be verified by Council staff in order to establish that the proposal complies with the storage requirements of the ADG. A minimum 50% of all storage must be located within each apartment.</p> |
| <p>Safety</p> | <p>See comments above regarding stepping, ramping and planter beds along the public domain interface, all elements which reduce clear lines of site and pedestrian safety.</p> <p>The Panel understands that flooding requirements have now been met. However required amendments to landscape may require further adjustments to flood measures to ensure compliance and performance.</p> <p>Overlooking of childcare open space is of concern; it is not clear what measures to address this issue have been provided.</p> |
| <p>Housing Diversity and Social Interaction</p> | <p>See comments above regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - internal unit amenity and compliance - liveable and adaptable units' compliance |

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| Aesthetics | <p>The Panel notes that the elevations have improved in the latest iteration, with more attention to podium quality and solidity of the lower levels of the building. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- the towers are very bulky and may need to increase in width to address internal amenity and compliance requirements; this would be a very poor outcome- although spandrels and some screening has been added, there is still excessive unscreened glazing to the towers; the resultant performance glazing is liable to be very dark- new vertical blades are only added to tower ends; it may be better to integrate more vertical elements to enhance language and better recognize the residential – rather than commercial - nature of the proposal- as noted above, the columns are poorly integrated at ground and first floor levels- although it is hard to discern from such limited perspective views, the building appears to be very dark at podium and upper levels. It is not clear if this is intended but it would appear excessive.- the glazed faceted balustrade at the top of the very large residential towers appears very weak; either the balustrade should be setback so as not to be visible or replaced with a solid spandrel to match lower levels |

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| Design Excellence WLEP2009 | |
| Whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved | Not achieved; insufficient resolution of material, screening and composition |
| Whether the form and external appearance of the proposed development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain, | Not achieved; relationship to the public domain |
| Whether the proposed development detrimentally impacts on view corridors, | Acceptable |
| Whether the proposed development detrimentally overshadows an area shown distinctively coloured and numbered on the Sun Plane Protection Map, | Acceptable |
| How the development addresses the following: | |
| the suitability of the land for development, | Suitable |
| existing and proposed uses and use mix | Suitable |
| heritage issues and streetscape constraints, | Streetscape not refined and resolved |
| 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, | While the arrangement of towers is acceptable, the visual bulk of each tower is liable to adversely impact on adjacent streetscape and distant views |
| bulk, massing and modulation of buildings | The towers are very bulky and fail to demonstrate sufficient articulation to reduce or modulate apparent scale |
| street frontage heights | Acceptable podium height |
| environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing, wind and reflectivity | The 2-3m high windscreens are potentially very intrusive; however, as they are not shown on drawings, they cannot be assessed |

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| <p>the achievement of the principles of ecologically sustainable development</p> | <p>Although cross ventilation is now achievable, Nat hers and Basix ratings are not completed. In addition, is not clear what commitments are proposed to further enhance sustainability measures.</p> |
| <p>pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access, circulation and requirements</p> | <p>Acceptable</p> |
| <p>impact on, and any proposed improvements to, the public domain</p> | <p>Still not refined and resolved.</p> |
| <p>Recommendations</p> | <p>With so many amenity and compliance issues still to be resolved, the Panel is concerned that the proposal is still failing to meet the requirements of Design Excellence, which is required for this site. After so many iterations and discussions with the Design Review Panel, in which many design suggestions have been made and discussed, it is not clear why the proposal fails to meet acceptable standards. However, the Panel would point out that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a comprehensive site and context analysis has still not been undertaken - clear design objectives based on that analysis have still not been provided - without clear design objectives, the proposal still struggles to meet the potential of its location and the urban design and amenity standards required - based on the current process, partial amendments will not lead to design excellence <p>Given the difficulties the proposal continues to demonstrate in reaching design excellence, the Panel believes that it requires a much more thorough internal review by the design team, with greater attention given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the amenity and character of the ground floor interface with the public domain and desired future context; - identification and comfort of residential lobbies; - accuracy of documented child care internal and external space; - individual apartment planning, access to and form of balconies, the form and layout of living areas, ADG compliance; - visual bulk, especially relating to the rationalisation of internal spaces to further reduce tower widths; - building expression, especially relating to articulation, screening and other devices to boost sustainability while modulating apparent scale; - a clearly defined and intelligently resolved integration of servicing and plant at roof levels; - co-ordination between architectural, landscape architectural and all consultants' designs and drawings.. |