

DESIGN EXCELLENCE REVIEW

KAMIRA AVENUE VILLAWOOD – PPSSWC-281



24_072

REV B 17-04-2025

The following provides a statement to assist the consent authority in determining whether the proposed development DA 303.1/2002 at 2 Kamira Court Villawood exhibits design excellence as required by clause 6.12 of Fairfield Local Environmental Plan 2013.

The statement is set out to demonstrate whether design excellence can be considered to have been achieved with regard to the matters listed under clause 6.12(4).

The planning panel requested advice on the design concerns raised by council – in particular the ground level apartments facing Kamira Avenue, proposed driveways to the Villawood Road frontage and un-sleeved car parking contrary to the DCP.

SUMMARY

Design excellence is not demonstrated by mere compliance (or over compliance) but it is demonstrated through how it balances often competing planning provisions, economic pressures and environmental considerations. It focuses on how well a development integrates with the context and contributes positively to the community.

The proposal in its current form does not demonstrate design excellence.

As discussed below, the masterplan sets up a complex relationship between the open space, built form and adjacent railway infrastructure where amenity needs to be balanced between the private and public uses. The proposal fails to provide a good interface at two key frontages - Kamira Avenue and the new park. It also fails to provide adequate amenity to the ground level apartments that face Kamira Avenue.

The proposal commendably puts an emphasis on maximising the solar access to the private and public spaces this focus has resulted in compromises in other aspects proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the following amendments were made the proposal could be considered to demonstrate design excellence:

1. Loading dock: Consolidate loading into a single dock that serves both buildings – this would enable an additional commercial space facing Villawood Road and integration of the substation from Kamira Avenue into this façade.
2. Replace the single level apartments facing Kamira Avenue and the park with two storey apartments.

3. Raise floor level of apartments to Kamira Avenue to be at or above the footpath level and reduce setback of glazing.
4. Provide secure cycle facilities in both buildings for residents and employees.

CONTEXT

The site is located on the western edge of the Villawood Town Centre. The site was part of the Land and Housing Communities Plus Program. There is significant history that underpinned the masterplan of the site – including council and proponent led planning proposals. The site is to the south of Villawood Station and the T3/T2 rail line corridor.

The residential area to the west of the site comprises single dwelling houses.

Development consent for Stage 1 comprising the southern portion of the site was granted by the Sydney Western City Planning Panel on 23 March 2023. Modifications to this consent are being considered by council.

MASTERPLAN

The Villawood Town Centre masterplan (Figure 1) intended to provide opportunities for redevelopment of the B2 and R4 zoned land to increase population adjacent the railway station and provide an active commercial hub that services the local community. The masterplan aims to substantially improve the quality of the public open space through the inclusion of a series of new public spaces, east-west and north-south pedestrian connections that traverse the precinct.

The subject development (inclusive of the Stage 1 consent) delivers a substantial portion of the Villawood Town Centre Masterplan.

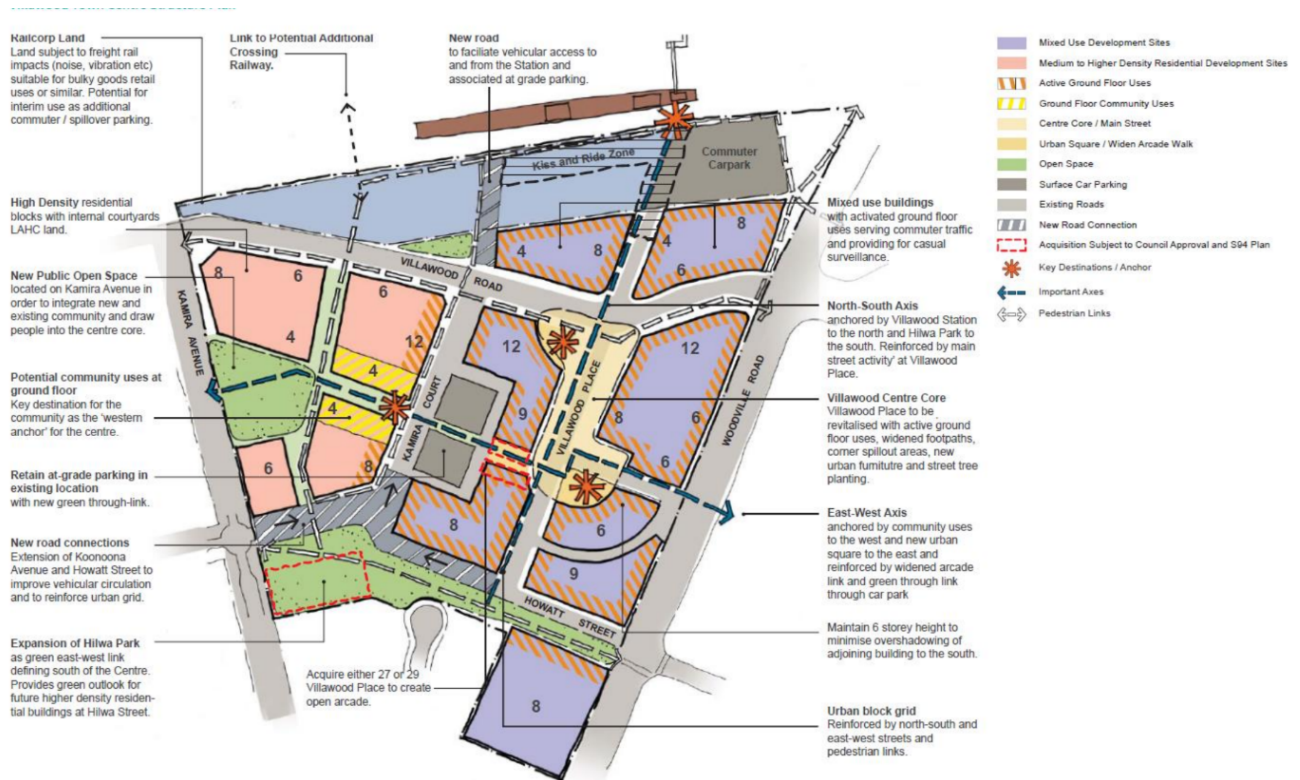


FIGURE 1: VILLAWOOD TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

Amended masterplan

The proposed development improves upon the DCP. The alternative massing and height distribution results in increased solar access to the park. It shifts height on Building C from Kamira Ave to Villawood Road and combined with the redistribution of the floor space in Stage 1, it has enabled a larger park with increased solar access at the southern edge.

The redistribution of height also enables a better interface with the lower density residential areas to the west of the site.



Figure 12. View of Villawood Town Centre looking north (source LPA)



FIGURE 2: MASTERPLAN - DCP AND AMENDED (SOURCE: DKO URBAN DESIGN REPORT)

Masterplan sets up amenity conflict

There are several aspects of the masterplan that are admirable – such as the strong east-west pedestrian connections and the provision of open space. The masterplan creates a strong connection to the adjacent lower density residential neighbourhood. However, the masterplan sets up a particular relationship between the public spaces, built form and surrounding infrastructure that is less than ideal, in particular:

- The active areas of the park are shaded by the building on the corner of Kamiera Ave and Villawood Road (Building C)
- The buildings along Villawood Road are adjacent the railway line and will be impacted by noise from trains (both passenger and freight)

Could there be an alternative that resolves the conflict

A better masterplan alternative could have been to move the park to the corner of Villawood and Kamira Avenue. The east-west pedestrian link then creating the southern boundary of the park and defining the north facing façade that could contain retail uses overlooking the park. There would be almost no overshadowing to the park, and the pedestrian area in front of the retail would be in sun throughout the winter. The apartments above would then retain the northern orientation but would have the benefit of being setback further from the railway – reducing the impacts of noise and vibration.

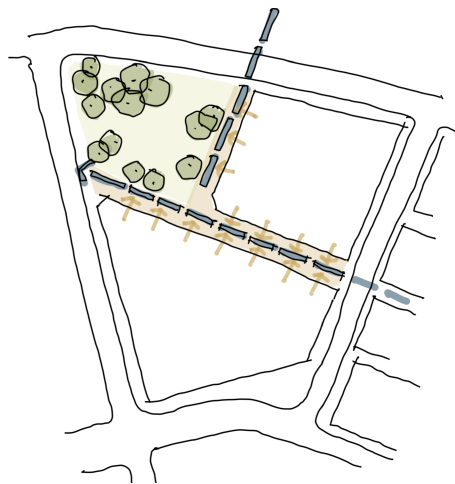


FIGURE 3: ALTERNATIVE MASTERPLAN

I mention this not because this application should be amended to consider this (that time has long passed, and the application is consistent with the planning controls set for the site) but because masterplan establishes a context that the proposal responds to with respect to the address to Villawood Road, building massing and also the above ground car parking. It also sets up a series of conflicts that need to be resolved in the design.

How these are resolved is a measure of design excellence, and generally the proposal resolves them well – in particular with respect to the amended massing to maximise solar

access to the park and the apartments – except for the lower level interface with the public domain.

VILLAWOOD ROAD INTERFACE

Villawood Road frontage (ground level)

The Villawood Road provides a challenging frontage. It has an interface with the railway line (subject to noise and vibration) but also provides substantial northern aspect. It is the most significant east-west road on this side of Woodville Road, however with the new east-west connection it has a limited role for pedestrian circulation.

As an active frontage – the retail and commercial opportunities are less attractive as the frontage is some distance away from the retail / commercial core. Of all facades on the site – this frontage is best suited for services.

It is unclear why two separate loading docks are required – residential waste for both buildings is collected in the basement and brought to ground by goods lift – which could occur by a single goods lift in Building A.

Consolidating the waste areas reduces the building area needed for waste collection, reduces cost by deleting a turntable and reduces the overall number of driveway crossings on the site, and increasing opportunities for street tree planting. This then provides an opportunity for increased commercial space fronting Villawood Road.

A balanced approach to placement of driveway crossings may be to relocate the basement car park entrance to Building C – however this is not critical

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Loading dock: Consolidate loading into a single dock that serves both buildings – this would enable an additional commercial space facing Villawood Road and integration of the substation from Kamira Avenue into this façade. ¹

ABOVE GROUND CAR PARKING

The application provides for one level of basement car parking and two levels of above ground parking (above the ground floor retail).

Why is there above ground car parking

While no specific reason has been given in any of the documentation for this design direction, the geotechnical report does identify ground water at 4.5m (that would intersect with a second level of basement parking). It is also reasonable to assume that providing

¹ Design note: Refer to comment below regarding access to supermarket.

above ground parking enables a more economical construction solution – contributing to the viability of the project.

Because of the site geometry, the above ground parking facilitates the 3 storey podium and enables large communal open space for the residents at the upper level.

Above ground car parking

It is not necessary that all car parking be provided below ground – if the impacts of the above ground carparking can be appropriately managed. Above ground car parking is considered less desirable in centres as it reduces surveillance to public space, provides ‘inactive’ facades.

The above ground car parking is required by the DCP to be ‘sleeved’ by other uses. (it is also a consideration of Objective 3J-4 in the *Apartment Design Guide*).

The issues raised around above ground car parking and active frontage are linked and exacerbated by multiple driveway entrances onto Villawood Road that service both above ground and below ground parking - where there are five driveways required to serve the development in lieu of the two driveways that would be required if there was only a single basement entry and single loading dock.

Above ground car parking in Building A is satisfactory

Apartments have been used to sleeve the car parking along the Villawood Road frontage, Kamira Court and within the new north-south pedestrian laneway.

Car parking above ground in Building A is considered satisfactory. The visibility of this parking would be limited from the public domain – and apartments in this area would not have great amenity resulting from the outlook across the lane and southern aspect.

Above ground car parking in Building C

Apartments have been used to sleeve the car parking along the Villawood Road frontage, and within the new north-south pedestrian laneway.

There is no sleeving to the new park (south) or Kamira Ave (south-west) In doing so, the development has preferenced the location of apartments where solar access is available consistent with Objective 4A-1 of the Apartment Design Guide.

This solar focused approach is consistent with the overall approach to amenity including the massing of the built form.

The balance to consider is:

- Is it better to have north facing apartments that are impacted by railway noise (but gain the amenity of sun in winter), or
- South and south-west facing apartments that have amenity by overlooking the residential streets and open space – they don’t get winter solar access but are shielded from the railway noise.

It is also necessary to consider the character of the streets and impacts from the loss to the additional passive surveillance that would otherwise be available if apartments were replace the above ground car parking on these facades.

It is also interesting to note that none of the perspectives provided include views of the building with above ground car parking – all 5 perspectives only include views looking at the podium where apartments are visible.

There is no justification for the design as documented, no discussion that considers the conflicts or issues raised above.

On balance, I consider that a better approach for the amenity of both the residents and the public domain would be to provide apartments at least at Level 1 facing both Kamira Avenue and the Park. This will both improve the visual appearance at the part of the building most visible by pedestrians, but also provide a residential interface that offers passive surveillance to the residential streets and open space.

This would be best achieved using a two storey apartment form similar to what the same architects designed at Arkadia in Alexandria, where the ground level provides living rooms and the upper level contains bedrooms. This form of apartment would resolve privacy at the ground level, enable a shallow plan and eliminate the need for corridor access on the upper level. A shallower plan (6m deep) to the park will enable retention of car parking circulation.

A consequence of this design change may be that the design criteria under 4A-1 – Solar and Daylight Access may not be achieved as these apartments will not receive winter solar access. Despite this the consent authority can consider that solar access in the development has been maximised as required by the objective – and that a better outcome is achieved by providing apartments along these frontages that have superior aspect, receive good daylight (due to shallow depth) and benefit the public domain. This arrangement is a factor of the masterplan set out in the DCP.



FIGURE 4: TYPICAL PLAN FOR TWO STOREY APARTMENT THAT WOULD BE SUITABLE FOR THE STREET AND PARK FACING APARTMENTS – SOURKE DKO ARKADIA ALEXANDRIA

It is not considered necessary that car parking at Level 2 is required to be sleeved. Car parking at this level would be less visible from the street and the surveillance is achieved at the lower levels.

It is noted that car parking provided currently exceeds the requirements. The central apartments facing Villawood Road (where affected by acoustic impacts of the train and loading dock below) could be replaced with car parking if desired

RECOMMENDATION 2

Replace the single level apartments facing Kamira Avenue and the park with two storey apartments

Kamira Ave facade

The two key facades – Kamira Ave and the park façade are highly visible because the street width and depth of the park enable expansive views. These frontages would provide excellent amenity for residential uses with a pleasant outlook – despite their orientation away from the winter sun. Providing apartments along this façade also contribute to passive surveillance to the street and park and provide ‘activation’ and animation.

The ground floor apartments along Kamira Ave are sunken below street level – with very deep balconies. This provides poor amenity and outlook from these dwellings. The ground floor apartments should be provided with a floor level either at street level or ideally elevated slightly above street level to provide better privacy and outlook. The provision of 2 storey apartments will also improve privacy to bedrooms and facilitate a shallower recess. (ADG Part 3C and 4L)

RECOMMENDATION 3

Raise floor level of apartments to Kamira Avenue to be at or above the footpath level and reduce setback of glazing.

BUILDING SEPARATION

The ADG (Part 3F) requires 24m building separation where buildings are 9 storeys and above. Building A facing Kamira Court has a height of 11 storeys. It has a separation across Kamira Circuit to a 12 storey building of approximately 18.7m. Given the scale of buildings, length of façade and orientation of the apartments in both buildings this is considered a satisfactory outcome in this instance.

A. WHETHER A HIGH STANDARD OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN, MATERIALS AND DETAILING APPROPRIATE TO THE BUILDING TYPE AND LOCATION WILL BE ACHIEVED.

Design excellence will be achieved through a high standard of architectural design, materials, and detailing that are tailored to the specific building type and location. This ensures a harmonious integration with the context, functional efficiency, aesthetic appeal, and careful consideration of sustainable and appropriate material choices.

The proposed development comprises quality materials and finishes.

B. WHETHER THE FORM, ARRANGEMENT AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT WILL IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND AMENITY OF THE PUBLIC DOMAIN,

The form, arrangement, and external appearance of the development are key factors in enhancing the quality and amenity of the public domain. The development considers the surrounding context, taking into account the existing urban fabric, nearby landmarks, and pedestrian flows through and around the site. By thoughtfully integrating with the surrounding environment, the development creates a harmonious and cohesive streetscape, compatible with recent development in the area. The three storey podium provides a consistency in the street wall throughout the precinct and creates a 'pedestrian scale'. The massing of the buildings above have been carefully resolved to maximise solar access and amenity to the public spaces.

The overall architectural resolution carefully balances simplicity and robustness with careful articulation that splits the building into smaller parts – suitable for the context in which the development will create.

The form of the development is visually appealing and engaging, with careful attention to scale, proportion, and architectural elements. This contributes to the overall character and identity of the area, creating a sense of place that residents and visitors can appreciate. A well-arranged development considers the spatial organization and circulation patterns, ensuring ease of movement and accessibility for pedestrians.

The proposal delivers a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing in the form of well resolved setbacks provided in conjunction with an appropriate degree of built form articulation across the frontages. The form and appearance of the development will establish a high standard for the transitioning area delivering high internal and external amenity for residents and the community.

C. WHETHER THE DEVELOPMENT DETRIMENTALLY IMPACTS ON VIEW CORRIDORS,

There are no specific view corridors that traverse the site.

D. HOW THE DEVELOPMENT ADDRESSES THE FOLLOWING MATTERS—

I. THE SUITABILITY OF THE LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT,

The proposed residential flat building use for the site is permissible with development consent in the R4 High Density Residential zone. It is also consistent with the zone objectives in that it will provide for the housing needs of the community within a high-density residential environment in proximity to the station. The retail and commercial uses extend the commercial core and provide active edges to the laneways that bisect the site enhancing the amenity of the streetscapes.

The scale, height and form of the proposed development is generally consistent with the development controls and is consistent with the desired future character of the area set out by the Villawood Town Centre section of the DCP.

II. EXISTING AND PROPOSED USES AND USE MIX,

The proposed development contains a mix of uses including:

- Retail
- Supermarket
- Community use
- Medical centre
- Residential apartment development
- Public open space

The proposed development is complementary to the recently approved Stage 1 development to the south and completes the masterplan for the block. These are compatible with the uses in the surrounding area – which includes a mix of apartment buildings of a similar scale and lower density houses. The proposal is consistent with the masterplan for the site.

III. HERITAGE ISSUES AND STREETSCAPE CONSTRAINTS,

The site does not contain a heritage item. There are no heritage items nearby. The site is not in a conservation area.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE DEVELOPMENT WITH OTHER DEVELOPMENT (EXISTING OR PROPOSED) ON THE SAME SITE OR ON NEIGHBOURING SITES IN

TERMS OF SEPARATION, SETBACKS, AMENITY AND URBAN FORM,

The proposal is of a similar scale to recent development in the same precinct and provides a positive contribution to the redevelopment of the Villawood Town Centre DCP.

V. BULK, MASSING AND MODULATION OF BUILDINGS,

The proposed building podiums have been designed in accordance with the DCP requirements. The distribution of built form and massing of the buildings across the site is the result of a considered analysis of the context and the desire to deliver a positive urban design outcome.

The proposal skilfully maximises solar access to the park – albeit from a less than ideal masterplan. The proposal incorporates a diversity of scale and form across the site while generating a high level of visual interest with modulation to the skyline as well as creating engaged ground floor planes that are strongly influenced by dense levels of landscaping.

The floor levels provided result in apartments along Kamira Ave being located below street level and combined with the excessively recessed glass line providing poor amenity for the future residents.

VI. STREET FRONTAGE HEIGHTS,

Street frontage heights have been provided in a manner that is appropriate for the scale of the proposed development and will ensure a sense of enclosure as well as a comfortable pedestrian environment. The DCP specifies the following setbacks:

- Generally: zero setback except above the 4th floor – which is to be setback 3m.
- Kamira Ave: 3m setback with 6m from 4th floor
- Kamira Court: To permit widening of Kamira Court

A 3 storey high street wall has been provided to all buildings creating consistency in the built form that defines the streets. Setbacks required by the DCP have been provided.

VII. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS SUCH AS SUSTAINABLE DESIGN, OVERSHADOWING, WIND AND REFLECTIVITY,

The amended proposal reduces overshadowing, increases solar access and reduces the environmental impacts

VIII. THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ECOLOGICALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,

Principles of ecologically sustainable development have been achieved in the residential development through various strategies such as incorporating passive solar design, implementing energy-efficient designs, utilizing renewable energy sources, promoting water conservation, integrating green spaces and landscaping, and encouraging sustainable transportation options resulting in reduced environmental impact and enhanced resident well-being.

IX. PEDESTRIAN, CYCLE, VEHICULAR AND SERVICE ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND REQUIREMENTS,

Vehicle access is provided to the site in a central location, with car parking provided in a single basement car park and two above ground level car parks.

Service and loading areas and waste collection are provided along the Villawood Road frontage. Commercial car parking is located within the basement and is accessed via the lift and travellator adjacent the supermarket.

Pedestrian circulation and service access is generally well resolved and efficient.

Circulation in the commercial / retail carpark is clear and generally good line of sight to the lifts and travellator.

There is no internal access to the commercial waste room in Building C. Noting the proposed use access is acceptable from the public domain – however this would be facilitated by a door (other than the roller shutter to the loading dock) – which would be required in any event for fire egress.

After hours access from the health and medical centre to the commercial / retail car park will require access to the lift and travellator in Building A. Although not detrimental to the overall quality – this lobby could have greater visibility from the laneway – and the link through to Kamira Court is not entirely necessary.

Cycle facilities are provided in Building A for residents – however there does not appear to be any cycle facilities provided in Building C for residents or for commercial employees or cycle facilities in the public domain for visitors to the retail.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Provide secure cycle facilities in both buildings for residents and employees.

The location of vehicle access and car parking is considered acceptable. As noted above – a better outcome could be achieved if the loading facilities were consolidated into one loading dock in Building A.

X. THE IMPACT ON, AND ANY PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO, THE PUBLIC DOMAIN,

The development is located at the edge of the town centre and provides a successful transition from the commercial core to residential land uses. The key pedestrian streets – Kamira Court, and the new cross site link and park facing façade are well activated.

The development provides a landscaped setback to the street along Kamira Avenue consistent with the desired future character of the area. This setback enables low planting and high canopy trees establishing the buildings in a landscape setting.

The proposal provides substantial improvements to the public domain with the delivery of the remainder of Villawood Park facing Kamira Avenue. Additional tree planting provided will enhance the local environment and combined with active play, games areas and the children playground and open green space the public domain improvements proposed have the potential to provide significant amenity for the local community.

Where appropriate individual entrances are provided to the ground level terraces to assist with street activation and provided improved amenity for the dwellings.

The proposal supports the east-west link desired by the DCP and the masterplan for the town centre.

The documentation provided for approval provides limited detail with respect to materials and finishes – except for imagery and a conceptual approach to the design. This further detail should be provided to council's satisfaction prior to construction to ensure appropriate quality.

A positive interaction between the development and the public domain is not fully achieved – see above regarding recommendations 1, 2 & 3.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Provide a deferred commencement consent condition with respect to the detailed landscape plans associated with the delivery of the public domain (including the park)

XI. THE INTERFACE WITH THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

The configuration and design of public access areas, recreation areas, and communal open spaces on the site have been designed to create engaging and inclusive spaces for the community. Thoughtful consideration of pedestrian pathways, seating areas, green spaces, and recreational amenities promote social interaction, physical activity, and overall well-being. The communal open spaces provide a path to traverse the site.

The DCP requires that active uses are to be provided to a minimum of 75% of the ground floor fronting Kamira Place, Villawood Road and Kamira Avenue. This is achieved on all frontages except for Villawood Road. Each block contains its own loading zone with turn table that combined with the carpark entries consumes a considerable proportion of the interface with the public domain along these streets.

While Villawood Road is the optimal location for the service entrance to the development a better outcome can be achieved if the loading facilities were consolidated.

The apartments facing Kamira Ave have their floor level located below the footpath level – resulting in compromised outlook and privacy. This floor level should be elevated to either match the footpath level or ideally elevated slightly above.

XII. THE QUALITY AND INTEGRATION OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The configuration and design of public access areas, recreation areas, and communal open spaces on the site have been designed to create engaging and inclusive spaces for the community.

The landscape is generally thoughtful and considerate of the orientation and overshadowing impacts.

There is limited detail with respect to the design and plant selection – however this can be resolved through condition of consent.