

**MINUTES OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE PANEL MEETING
Thursday the 12th of October 2023**

DEP PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Shaun Carter	Chairperson	Carter Williamson Architects
Lee Hillam	Panel Member	DunnHillam Architects + Urban Design
Garth Paterson	Panel Member	Paterson Design Studio Landscape Architects

APPLICANT REPRESENTATIVES:

Aram Lello	Architect / Director	CHC
Jordan Curran	Architect / Partner	CHC
Jeff Mead	Managing Director	Planning Ingenuity
Jonathan Joseph	Senior Planner	Planning Ingenuity
Gabriel Sicari	Landscape Architect / Director	Ground Ink
Tony Pratt	Regional Development Manager	Woolworths

OBSERVERS:

Amanda Merchant	Panel Support Officer	Liverpool City Council
Joshua Walters	A/Senior Urban Designer	Liverpool City Council
Robert Micallef	Senior Planner	Liverpool City Council
Margaret Roberts	Planner	GAT and Associates
Di Wu	Convenor	Liverpool City Council

ITEM DETAILS:

Item Number: 2

Application Reference Number: DA-381/2023

Property Address: 330-350 Eighth Ave, Austral NSW 2179

Council's Planning Officer: Darren Laybutt – GAT and Associates

Applicant: Fabcot Pty Ltd

Proposal: Demolition of existing structures, excavation and construction of a commercial development involving the provision of an anchor supermarket, commercial and retail tenancies, public piazza and through-site link, with at-grade parking, Pylon Signage (business identification signage), associated landscaping and public domain works

Meeting Venue: Microsoft Teams Meeting

1.0 WELCOME, ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND OPENING

The Chairperson introduced the Panel and Council staff to the Applicant Representatives. Attendees signed the Attendance Registration Sheet.

The Liverpool Design Excellence Panel's (the Panel), comments are to assist Liverpool City Council in its consideration of the Development Application.

The absence of a comment under any of the objectives outlined in Better Placed does not necessarily imply that the Panel considers the particular matter has been satisfactorily addressed, as it may be that changes suggested under other objectives will generate a desirable change.

All seven objectives must be considered and discussed. Recommendations are to be made for each of the seven objectives, unless they do not apply to the project. If repetition of recommendations occur, these may be grouped together but must be acknowledged.

2.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

NIL.

3.0 PRESENTATION

The applicant presented their proposal for DA-381/2023 - 330-350 Eighth Avenue, Austral NSW 2179.

4.0 DEP PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

The Design Excellence Panel makes the following recommendations in relation to the project:

General Notes:

The Minutes has been prepared with reference to Better Placed by Government Architect NSW, instead of the SEPP65 Design Principles, as SEPP65 is an Apartment Design Guideline. The Better Placed guideline prioritizes the establishment of high-quality architecture, public spaces, and overall environmental quality for the proposed development.

4.1. Better Fit

- The Panel express their disappointment that the proposed development appears to be primarily self-interested, lacking consideration for the masterplan and therefore the neighbouring site, its local context, and a broader community. This is not supported by the Panel.
- The proposed development is notably lacking an overarching vision and a city-making strategy that would align it with the context and future character of the site. It does not appear to take into consideration its relationship with the surrounding context, such as the public streets, the growing residential population, the emerging medium-density residential development, landscape or Country considerations, future open spaces, schools, and neighbouring community use.
- The Panel highlights that Woolworths serving as a piece of social infrastructure, plays a crucial role in city-making, especially in responding to the context of being situated within a local town centre setting.

- The Panel strongly recommends that the applicant conducts an in-depth exploration of the connection to country, by engaging with First Nations communities, walk-in-Country with an Elder and acknowledging the local indigenous narrative. Subsequently, the revised scheme should be adjusted to align with these insights and harmonize with the overall landscape design.

4.2. Better Performance

- The Panel does not support the applicant's assertion that at-grade parking is a preferred choice for customers. They have expressed concerns regarding the extensive at-grade car parking (the appears like a 1980's response, not a 2023 response), particularly because it does not appear to be responsive to the context of Liverpool, which experiences significant urban heat island effects.
- The Panel further expresses the concern regarding the at-grade parking design. In accordance with the LGCP DCP, it is expected that 50% of the car park, excluding travel aisles, should be shaded by trees. However, the proposed development only incorporates 8 trees, leaving a substantial amount of hard surface within the car park. This not only fails to comply with the DCP but also contradicts the urban cooling principles promoted for this project. If the project persists with on-grade carparking, the design team should strive for more than 20 trees, with an environmental and climate vision to exceed DCP controls. The Panel strongly encourages the applicant to conduct a heat analysis for the car park.
- The Panel seeks clarification from the applicant regarding the consideration of a basement car parking option, which could make more efficient use of the 6-meter level difference. The applicant confirmed that a basement car parking solution is not their preferred choice.
- The proposed glazed canopy structure for the through site link at the rear is a concern, especially considering Liverpool's susceptibility to the heat island effect. It is likely it will exacerbate the issue. Notwithstanding this design should be re-evaluated to ensure it aligns with the masterplan design of a shared through-site link, which also considers urban cooling principles.
- The Panel expresses concerns about the practicality and effectiveness of the proposed plantings on the glazed canopy, as they may not adequately provide the desired shade.
- The Panel encourages the applicant to incorporate and document committed ESD principles in the next iteration, such as better utilize the large roof structure for collecting rainwater that can be advantageous for tree irrigation; and provide more details of the proposed PV systems (i.e.: size, storage, use, public benefit etc.).

4.3. Better for Community

- The conversation around the proposed internalised through site link and its associated treatment along the eastern boundary was extensively discussed. The applicant explains that, given the uncertainty surrounding the future development of the adjacent site, their intention is to create a 'self-contained' development. This approach ensures that the development will be fully operational and activate the through site link independently, without relying on the adjacent development. However, this 'self-interested' approach is not supported by the Panel. The Panel does not accept there is uncertainty with the masterplan, only the viability of the site if the masterplan is not implemented and the public domain is ignored.
- Given the through site link is proposed to be fully located within the site, under single ownership, effectively privatising the public benefit and domain, likely leading to night-time closures. This contradicts the original intention of having an open and accessible pedestrian link in the DCP. The DCP envisions the through-site link as a direct connection from the T-intersection on Auger Street, running north to south, and spanning the two allotments with activation on both sides, including the community facility located on the eastern neighbour's property.
- The Panel strongly recommends that the applicant collaborate closely with Council's Urban Design team to present a clear vision for the centre and the intended role of the proposed through-site link, that is alignment with the DCP.
- Additionally, the proposed 0m (nil) setback to the common boundary to the east, resulted in a blank wall condition to the future community use. This is not supported by the Panel.
- The proposed smaller-sized Piazza, accompanied by just one tree planting and one bike rack, has created a compromised public space. The Panel does not support this approach.
- The re-design of the project should prioritise active frontages to the street and through-site-link. The design should strive for a stretch target of 70% active shop-front for all streets and through-site link locations.

4.4. Better for People

- The Panel clarifies with the applicant regarding the main pedestrian access, as the current design emphasizes the entry from the car park at the rear with a prominent architectural structure and minimizing the entrance from the street level along Eighth Avenue. Ensure a minimum of equal access from the street as a priority.
- Additionally, it is noted that the proposed loading dock dominates the frontage along Warrawal Avenue, and there is a shortage of loading bays, resulting in non-compliance with DCP. The Panel recommends the applicant reconfigure the loading bay to east-west orientation to minimise the extent of loading dock visible to the street and minimise impacts to pedestrian movement. This will significantly help with your active frontage targets.
- Active frontage plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of people's everyday life, providing better passive surveillance. However, the current design does not adequately incorporate active frontage elements along Warrawal Avenue, due to the configuration of the loading bay. It is recommended that the applicant consider reorienting Woolworths to face Eighth Avenue and Warrawal Avenue to improve street activation.

- It is recommended that the applicant consider how the revised internal layout would increase the active street frontage and enhance the site connectivity to surrounding amenities, including future open spaces and schools.

4.5. Better Working

- The Panel clarifies with the applicant regarding the potential uses for the proposed commercial spaces. The applicant expresses that there is a demand for a variety of uses, including medical centre, gym, co-working space, etc. These shops are intended to help activating the centre during the day. The Panel supports this idea, but encourages the applicant to conduct further test fits to make sure the shop type and size is appropriate, and explores the possibility of relocating these commercial uses along Warrawal Avenue facing the future park.

4.6. Better Value

- It is recommended that the applicant explore ways to optimize the site's potential for future community activities and amenities.
- A better design with more activated streetscapes and public domain provides better commercial outcomes, which in turn provides better value for the proponent.

4.7. Better Look and Feel

- The Panel raises a question whether a rooftop garden has been considered for the commercial uses. The applicant confirms that a rooftop garden has not been considered for this iteration.
- It is noted that proposed street trees along Warrawal Avenue and Eighth Avenue are generally of small size. The Panel highly recommends conducting a canopy analysis to inform and guide the tree planting design.
- In addition, the proposed screening planting in front of the loading dock raises concerns because of its smaller size, that may undermine its effectiveness in serving the intended screening purpose.
- The Panel encourages the client and design team to embrace the challenges of climate change, the Liverpool LGA and the site-specific response of Country with this design. It is a wonderful opportunity for a sector leading design response that embraces contemporary issues and the community it seeks to serve for the useful life of this building.

5.0 OUTCOME

The panel have determined the outcome of the DEP review and have provided final direction to the applicant as follows:

The proposal is not supported by the DEP and must return to the panel, with all feedback incorporated or addressed.