

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

29 February 2024

Chris Ferreira
Associate Director
Ethos Urban

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PROJECT: Liverpool Civic Place BTR
RE: State Design Review Panel – 21st February – Review 2

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the continued opportunity to review the above project. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 21 February 2024.

The project's prominent location warrants the delivery of streetscape, public domain improvements and through-site connections commensurate with the civic facilities in Stage 1 of the precinct.

The site is subject to Liverpool Local Environmental Plan (2008) Design Excellence requirement (clauses 7.5 and 7.5A) and conditions of consent relating to the Concept Approval. It is noted that a modification application to amend Conditions 4 and 5 of the Concept Approval has been lodged with Liverpool City Council. These conditions outline the requirement for a public domain design excellence panel to review the design excellence merit of the public domain and landscape plan for any detailed DA subject to the Concept Approval. It should be noted that at the time of this review, the modification has not been approved by Liverpool City Council and the processes involving the public domain design excellence panel (which is a requirement of the conditions of consent for any detailed DA under the Concept Approval) and the SDRP (which is a requirement of the SEARs for the Stage 2 SSD) have not been resolved.

To demonstrate design excellence, the project team should illustrate how the proposal is equal to or an improvement upon the Public Domain and Landscape Plan that was endorsed by the Design Excellence Panel in May 2021.

The following elements of the design strategy are supported and should be retained and developed throughout the project:

- consideration of how stage 2 relates and integrates into the wider masterplan for the precinct
- connecting with Country principles uniting design strategies across stage 1 and stage 2

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- the vertical articulation of the tower to create two distinct forms in response to Country narratives
- the overlapping and weaving together of the podium and tower forms on the eastern side of the building
- the planted awning at level 1, noting further comments below regarding activation of the level 1 roof space
- the improvements to the apartment planning to provide natural light and outlook from the common lobbies and corridors of the tower
- the engagement that has occurred with local knowledge holders.

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country

This is a significant project on public land and the engagement that is being undertaken with local knowledge holders and cultural consultants should form a basis for ongoing design decisions.

1. Continue to explore how the Connecting with Country themes can be more strongly represented in the design of the built form, public domain, and landscaping. For example,
 - a. illustrate how the narrative of fresh and saltwater converging is represented in the design
 - b. consider dedicating a Country theme to each of the different landscaped areas to create a unique character for each space.

Public domain and landscape

Civic Place Plaza is bisected by the (north-south) vehicle access from Scott Street.

2. Confirm how vehicles will be managed during large events when the Plaza will be used in its entirety.
3. Provide detail on how the design of the plaza will prioritise pedestrian access and safety.
4. Continue to test the relationship between the western façade at ground level and Civic Place Plaza. Explore ways to increase the building setback, activate the facade, and avoid the removal of 2 existing established trees that define the driveway.

5. The landscaping in the Stage 2 plaza area appears cluttered and disordered.
 - a. Use landscape elements to reinforce the diagonal pedestrian circulation route.
 - b. Take cues from Stage 1 to create a coherent and connected plaza. Illustrate this with a combined Stage 1 and Stage 2 public domain plan.
6. The water play area is proposed to be located adjacent to Scott Street and there are concerns regarding the safety of children near the busy road. Relocate the water feature so that it continues to contribute to the arrival experience of the building but is safe for all users.

It is understood that an alternative location for the carpark exhaust could not be achieved, however it is noted that locating the exhaust pipes within the public domain, concealed by artwork is not desirable.

7. Provide advice from the mechanical engineer regarding potential impacts on public amenity, e.g., noise, air quality.

After the formal part of the meeting, the following advice was provided regarding the public domain:

Design Excellence and Public Domain & Landscape Plan

The project team is proposing considerable change to the Liverpool Civic Place Public Domain and Landscape Plan Panel (*Public Domain and Landscape Plan Lower and Upper Ground, by fjmt, sheet no. PD8001, revision 03, dated 14/5/21*), previously endorsed for design excellence by the Liverpool City Council Design Excellence Panel. It is understood that this plan was endorsed during the Stage 1 development and does not form part of the Concept Approval for the site, however the endorsed plan establishes several significant urban design elements, including:

- an open-to-sky, east-west pedestrian link, which is generous in width
- the creation of two separated built forms which mitigate the bulk and scale of the development
- a pocket park which addresses George Lane and receives eastern and northern sun
- setback and planting along the length of the eastern site boundary on George Lane, enhancing the pedestrian experience of the lane

- a boundary setback along Terminus Street to allow for screening planting adjacent to the building
- a landscaped southern forecourt which provides pedestrian activation to Terminus Street
- 8 street trees flanking and defining the Scott Street driveway.

To demonstrate that the project has the potential to achieve design excellence, the project team should demonstrate how the proposed scheme is equal to, or an improvement upon the endorsed public domain plan.

8. Provide an analysis of the proposed scheme against the endorsed Public Domain and Landscape Plan, including:
 - a. location, size and amenity of public open space, including a solar access analysis
 - b. the relationship of public open space to adjacent buildings, both within and outside the site
 - c. character, and amenity of the through-site link
 - d. area of canopy cover, deep soil, and other zones for soft landscaping.

As previously noted, George Lane is an important through-site link connecting Terminus Street and Scott Street.

9. Continue to develop the interface between George Lane, the public domain and the proposed building. Provide:
 - a. an elevation of the proposed eastern façade illustrating the proposed landscape and architectural treatments
 - b. sections through the northern, central and southern parts of George Lane, illustrating the topography and the building's relationship with the lane and neighbouring sites
 - c. an eye level view looking down George Lane from Terminus Street.
10. Illustrate the character of the public open space at the corner of Scott Street and George Lane.
11. Explore opportunities to further activate George Lane and provide options.
12. Increase the setback along the eastern boundary to create space for soft landscaping and improve the pedestrian experience along George Lane.

13. Provide plans and 3D views illustrating the relationship between Stage 2 and Terminus Street, including the design of the public access from Terminus Street and associated landscaping and the communal open space to the south of the site. Demonstrate how this area connects and relates to Civic Place Plaza.
14. Provide views of the Terminus Street elevation at eye level, illustrating the interface between the building and the street.

Architecture

The building will play a significant role as a landmark building due to its height and scale. Vertically separating the tower to break down the mass is a successful approach. However, the horizontal banding counteracts this intent, making the building appear larger. In addition, the uniform approach to the facades results in very little differentiation between the tower and the 'podium' form in front. This contributes to the perception of increased bulk.

15. Analyse how the smaller built form relates to the other civic buildings in the Plaza and modify the current approach.
 - a. Differentiate the facade of the smaller built form to visually separate it from the tower. For example, consider altering the scale of the horizontal banding or increasing the solidity of the facades.
16. Vary the design of the tower facades in response to their solar orientation. This will contribute to a richer response to Country.
17. Illustrate the colour and materiality of the facades and balustrades. Provide reference images.

The studio apartment on the south-west corner of the building is occupying a prime location, with potential for good cross-ventilation.

18. Locate a 2- or 3-bedroom apartment in this location.
19. Refine the apartment planning to avoid circulation paths through kitchens.
20. Explore opportunities to connect the typical levels via stairs in selected locations to reduce residents' reliance on lifts and provide more natural light to the common corridors.
21. Provide GFA and overshadowing diagrams and sun-eye views.

Terminus street is a busy, 4-lane arterial road.

22. Provide façade details illustrating how acoustic impacts are managed.

Communal space

Diverse and well distributed communal spaces are a key amenity consideration in build-to-rent developments.

23. Continue to develop the internal and external communal areas to create a distinct character. The areas should cater for a variety of uses (i.e., a mix of active and quiet) and gatherings of different sizes.
24. Ensure that the external spaces compliment the internal communal areas.
25. Create larger pockets of usable space around the perimeter of the external terraces, rather than designating the edges entirely to circulation.
26. Ensure that all areas of the communal spaces are accessible.

With its proximity to the plaza, the level 1 roof area has the potential to foster a stronger connection between the building and the plaza.

27. Allocate the northern upper ground roof space to active communal outdoor space. Provide plans and sections that illustrate the relationship of the space to the adjacent apartments.
28. Consider resident privacy in the design of the individual apartment entrances by:
 - a. creating a private entry nook, rather than opening directly onto the living space, and/or
 - b. ensuring that apartment doors are offset on opposite sides of the corridor.

Apartment Design Guide (ADG)

As previously advised, compliance with the objectives of the Apartment Design Guide needs to be carefully considered and non-compliances, if unavoidable, should be thoroughly justified. Some of the apartments marked as benefiting from cross-ventilation in the first 9 storeys do not have leeward and wayward facing windows.

29. Provide supporting technical information to demonstrate that natural cross ventilation to the single aspect apartments can be achieved via the proposed building indentations.

30. If the naturally ventilated corridors contribute to the method of cross-ventilation, provide technical information to demonstrate the effectiveness of the overall strategy.

Sustainability and Climate Change

As a build-to-rent development, owned and operated by a developer long-term, the project provides a unique opportunity to design and deliver a highly sustainable, low-carbon building that minimises energy use.

31. Demonstrate an ambitious sustainability strategy with commensurate targets. Include embodied energy and ongoing energy demands for the building.
32. Provide strategies for how a net-zero building can be achieved. This is highly encouraged to reach NSW's Net Zero emissions goal by 2050. Refer to ['NSW, DPIE, Net Zero Plan, Stage 1: 2020-2030'](#) for further information.

It is recommended that the project return to the SDRP once Liverpool Council has provided advice on the proponent's application to amend the Concept Approval conditions of consent. The issues outlined above are to be addressed at the next SDRP session.

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Brooke Matthews, brooke.matthews@dpie.nsw.gov.au, if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



Melizza Morales
Principal Design Advisor
Chair, SDRP

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24 November 2023

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PROJECT: Liverpool Civic Place BTR
RE: State Design Review Panel – 15th November – Review 1

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project at an early stage. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 15 November 2023.

The site is subject to Liverpool Local Environmental Plan (2008) Design Excellence requirement (clauses 7.5 and 7.5A). It is noted that the information provided is insufficient to ascertain the design excellence merit of the project. Further development of the design, including addressing the matters outlined in this letter, is required.

The following elements of the design strategy are supported and should be maintained throughout the project:

- consideration of how stage 2 relates and integrates into the wider masterplan for the precinct
- connecting with Country principles uniting design strategies across stage 1 and stage 2.

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country

This is a significant project for Liverpool and early engagement with Indigenous knowledge holders and cultural consultants should form a basis for ongoing design decisions.

1. It is acknowledged that an Indigenous Design Consultant has been engaged on the project. However initial investigations are limited to

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high-level principles with little opportunity to create a basis for participatory design.

2. Consider how learnings from Indigenous engagement can inform the design development of the landscape and built form, moving beyond the application of patterns onto surfaces.

Site strategy and landscape

The prominent location of the site and connection to the public facilities of stage 1 offers potential for the project to deliver significant streetscape, public domain improvements and through site connections.

However, the drawings only show the location of proposed public and communal spaces with little detail provided. It is unclear how the outlined landscape principles and urban design moves manifest in the project.

3. Provide landscape plans that demonstrate how the landscape design has been informed by a detailed site analysis and delivers the proposed design principles. Include:
 - a. how the design responds to the users and character of proposed public and communal spaces
 - b. the treatment of public/private and built form/open space interfaces
 - c. plans and cross sections that include adjacent built form and public spaces beyond the site boundary, eye level views and perspectives, solar access analysis and a planting and materials strategy, including deep soil areas, canopy cover and WSUD.
4. It is understood a new public space is proposed as an extension of the existing plaza between the library and stage 2 (Civic Place plaza). This area is bisected by the (north-south) vehicle access for stage 1 and 2.
 - a. Provide expected vehicle numbers using this shared lane.
 - b. Clarify the location of the vehicular access for stage 1 and stage 2.
 - c. Demonstrate how the proposed continuity and integration between the library area and stage 2 will be achieved.
 - d. Illustrate how vehicular and pedestrian zones will be defined and how pedestrian safety will be provided.

- e. As presented, the plaza lacks a sense of definition and containment. Demonstrate how this public space will provide the spatial qualities and amenity for it to be more than a thoroughfare.
 - f. Review the ground floor address of the western boundary to improve the interface with the library plaza. Consider wrapping the retail use around the corner to the western façade.
- 5. George Lane is an important site through link connecting Terminus Street and Scott Street. Provide elevations and cross sections of the ground floor along George Lane illustrating its relationship with neighbouring sites and proposed architectural treatment.
- 6. Rooftop terraces at high altitudes impact useability, good amenity and landscaping opportunities. Demonstrate a clear strategy for a functional and safe rooftop terrace that incorporates suitable planting and encourages occupant use.
- 7. Undertake wind impact analysis for all public spaces including the new plaza, the pocket park along Terminus Street, the outdoor communal space on level 9, and the rooftop communal space.
 - a. Demonstrate appropriate wind comfort criteria can be met without retrofitting the public spaces with wind mitigation devices.

Apartment Design Guide (ADG)

Compliance with the Apartment Design Guide needs to be carefully considered and non-compliances, if deemed necessary, should be thoroughly justified.

- 8. The current scheme exceeds recommended ratio of apartments to circulation cores which is impacting meeting corridor amenity and cross ventilation. Consider options to reduce the number of apartments per level to provide adequate amenity for residents.
- 9. A large portion of the apartments are south-east facing onto busy Terminus Street. There is concern regarding the noise and solar amenity of these apartments. Provide options to increase amenity of these apartments and alternatives to meet ADG guidance.

10. The proposed cross ventilation strategy relying solely on the willingness of future residents to use screen doors is not supported. This does not account for individual preferences in relation to privacy, noise or sense of safety. The use of screen doors can be promoted to improve cross ventilation, however minimum cross ventilation requirements should be able to be met without the use of screen doors. Provide an adequate cross ventilation strategy that demonstrates compliance with the ADG definition of Natural Cross Ventilation.
 - a. Reconsider the double loaded corridor layout.
 - b. Explore providing more frequent external openings in corridors, which can assist not only with the cross ventilation but also with the experience of the corridors.
 - c. Provide details of any reliance on mechanical ventilation for apartments or corridor spaces.

Architecture

There was limited information provided to understand the architectural intent of the project and further development is required.

11. Communal spaces are a key amenity consideration in build-to-rent developments. While it appears there is a good provision of large communal spaces, it is unclear what are the spatial qualities of these spaces and how they can cater for a diversity of users and activities.
 - a. Investigate distributing smaller communal spaces through the building, to complement the larger spaces, and accommodate smaller gatherings and quiet activities.
 - b. Illustrate the spatial qualities of communal spaces. Consider creating vertical neighbourhoods by providing double height communal spaces connecting multiple levels.
12. Review the design of the north facing apartments to take better advantage of this location. Review:
 - a. The location of bedrooms onto the northern façade.
 - b. Balconies facing directly west or east.

13. Consider improving the entrance to apartments by creating a better transition rather than opening directly onto the living space. This is of particular relevance in the context of the proposed screen doors.
14. Provide details of the fire egress strategy and address the possible requirement for a second fire stair to meet compliance.
15. Provide details of the architectural expression and articulation of the building, including but not limited to:
 - a. Facade treatments and materiality.
 - b. The building connection to the ground plane.
 - c. The street wall interface to Scott Street.

Sustainability and Climate Change

The build-to-rent type, with a developer owning and operating the building long term provides a unique opportunity to design and deliver a highly sustainable, low-carbon building that minimises energy use.

16. Demonstrate an ambitious sustainability strategy with commensurate targets considering embodied energy and ongoing energy demands for the building.
17. Provide strategies for how a net-zero building can be achieved. This is highly encouraged to reach NSW's Net Zero emissions goal by 2050. Refer to ['NSW, DPIE, Net Zero Plan, Stage 1: 2020-2030'](#) for further information.

Design Excellence

It is understood it is a SEARs requirement that a Design Excellence Strategy and a Design Review Report be submitted with the Stage 2 Amended Concept DA. These should outline how the recommendations of the SDRP have been addressed. In addition, the Design Excellence Strategy should outline the Design Integrity Process for the future stages of the project.

As this project is on public land it is not subject to the SDRP waitlist reduction scheme.

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It is recommended that the project return to the SDRP when there is evidence of support from Liverpool Council for the proposed change of use. The issues outlined above are to be addressed at the next SDRP session.

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Grace Mortlock,
grace.mortlock@dpie.nsw.gov.au, if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



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