



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	1-5 Chester Street Annandale
Proposal:	A part four to five storey building with 60 student accommodation rooms above two commercial floors.
Application No.:	DA/2021/0518
Meeting Date:	24 August 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	6 April 2021
Panel Members:	Peter Ireland (external member); Jean Rice (external member); Niall Macken (internal member); and Vishal Lakhia (internal member) – Chair
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Rachel Josey, Adele Cowie, and Eamon Egan
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None During Vishal Lakhia's former employment role in 2016, he was the project urban designer for the planning proposal on the subject site. Vishal confirms that he is not involved within this DA and confirms that he has no affiliations with or involvement in any organisation or entity with any financial or non-financial interests on the proposal or any material discussed in this report.
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Sonny Oh (DKO) – Architect for the project; Anna Johnston – Urban Planner; and Kate Azzopardi – Applicant's representative

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and 3D views, and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The Panel notes that the proposed floor space ratio of 2:1, a building height of 17m and 5 storeys, and a 6m wide through-site link along Johnston's Creek, are an outcome of a site-specific Development Control Plan gazetted as part of the Planning Proposal.
3. The Panel thanks the applicant for considering and responding to the recommendations made at the previous AEP meeting at Pre-DA stage, and appreciates the series of design amendments provided in the DA submission mainly including:
 - a. Resolution in the extent of commercial use within the two storey building base. Improving the address to the street and the through-site link. And provision of a separate foyer space for the commercial component with connection to Chester Street.
 - b. Increasing the amenity within the communal open space through addition of a toilet, outdoor kitchen/bbq, covered areas and seating. The Panel also notes addition of planters and garden beds to the communal open space.
 - c. Resolution of the overall architectural expression, particularly reduction in the extent of the open balustrade treatment within the student accommodation levels.

- d. Resolution of the layouts in terms of separate lift allocation, fire stairs provision and other building configuration aspects.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. Room Amenity:

- a. The Panel expressed concern at the internal amenity within the rooms due to their constrained sizes. The Panel also notes the absence of wardrobes, appropriate storage areas and furniture for students.
- b. The Panel considers that the internal layouts of all rooms need improvement in terms of their size and spatial planning. In addition to an ensuite, kitchenette, sofa bed and a desk, all rooms should also be provided with a wardrobe, a small storage area and a small dining table, whilst ensuring that adequate circulation areas are achievable within the rooms.
- c. The Panel is not convinced with the reasons mentioned by the applicant, justifying the constrained sizes of these rooms. The Panel understands that the SEPP 2009 Affordable Rental Housing provisions for the minimum room sizes are not applicable to the subject site, however, it is the Panel's preference that the room sizes should be consistent with the minimum requirements for single users within a typical co-living/student accommodation facility (i.e. 12m² of unencumbered floor area per room/student). The Panel notes that these recommended room sizes are also consistent with the Draft SEPP Housing 2021 provisions likely to be formalised by October 2021.
- d. The applicant mentioned at the meeting that incidental communal spaces have been added to improve the overall amenity, however in the Panel's opinion this approach does not alleviate their concern for the internal room amenity, as room sizes are directly associated with comfort and well-being of students.

2. Ground Floor Connectivity:

- a. The Panel considers that effective pedestrian connectivity for both interfaces – to Chester Street and to the through-site link are essential to make this project successful. The Panel appreciates the barrier-free integration of the through-site link with the commercial spaces, however the integration with the Chester Street public domain needs further resolution.
- b. The Panel notes that the commercial and student accommodation lobbies addressing Chester Street are physically disconnected from the existing street level as the users have to rely on platform risers or sets of staircases to access the lifts.
- c. The Panel recommends that at least the 'student accommodation lobby' and the 'internal communal area' (on Ground Floor) should be lowered, or its location or orientation adjusted, to align with the Chester Street level, to enable barrier-free pedestrian connection to the lift. The Panel notes that this recommendation will also improve passive surveillance of Chester Street.
- d. As a consequence of Recommendation 2c, the plant room and the main switch room on Lower Ground Floor may be required to be relocated, if adequate height clearances are not achievable within these service areas.

3. Building Configuration:

- a. The Panel restates its concern for lack of daylight and natural ventilation within the lengthy southern corridors on the upper levels. The panel suggests consideration be given to rooflights or light scoops and vents in the roof. This could be combined with lightshafts or slots at the edges of the corridor slab (or similar) or south wall detailing to allow light and air to enter.
- b. The Panel appreciates that the applicant has considered provision of balconies for all rooms, and as a matter of equity the accessible rooms should also be provided with balconies.

- c. The Panel recommends reconfiguration of the western corner of the building to resolve 3a and 3b, by ensuring:
 - i. Addition of balconies for the accessible rooms;
 - ii. Rearrangement of the staircase and opening-up the end of the building to draw natural light and ventilation into the deep southern corridor; and
 - iii. Relocation of the refrigerant riser, to avoid visual clutter within the corridor.
- d. The Panel notes the constrained size and amenity within the room located at the northern corner of the proposal, and recommends this corner should be replaced with an incidental communal space or a communal room provided on all upper levels. The Panel recommends that all students should benefit with access to this northern corner, with maximum visual connectivity to – Douglas Grant Park, the adjacent netball court, Johnston’s Creek, the surrounding walkways and other public domain features.

4. Architectural expression:

- a. The Panel notes that the southern side boundary wall will be highly visible from the surrounding public domain until the adjoining site is redeveloped. The Panel recommends resolution and refinement of this side boundary wall in terms of design treatment, composition and material selection. One suggested strategy is to provide glass blocks to the common corridor along the southern parti wall, to partly improve natural light to the corridor.
- b. The panel suggest a review of the ‘interpretive’ gable treatment and fenestration on the Chester St façade. Possible investigation of; continuing the canal side horizontal parapet around to Chester St, or if the gable expression is to be maintained perhaps this elevation could become ‘calmer’ The Panel discussed the uneven triangular parapets proposed over the brick building base addressing Chester Street, and considers the parapet treatment emulates fake gables implying roofs behind. The Panel suggests the Chester Street façade treatment could be more authentic with openings slightly adjusted to allow regular pilasters dividing the façade into bays. The Panel prefers the expression within the northern façade addressing the through-site link, and suggested that the Chester Street façade treatment should be more consistent with the northern façade treatment.
- c. In addition to recommendation 3.c.ii. the Panel encourages the applicant to consider the possibility of provision of open stairs, to create greater emphasis at the northern and western ends of the building, considering the building will be highly visible from the Creek and the surrounding public domain.
- d. Revised set of architectural drawings should include details of the design intent for key façade types in form of 1:20 sections indicating primary façade types, balustrade fixings, balcony edges, junctions, rainwater drainage, including any downpipes, and similar details within the proposal.
- e. Revised architectural drawings should include details on the locations and sizes of the plant room/s, including any mechanical equipment or condensers for the rooms, common areas and commercial spaces. The equipment should not be located within the balconies, above the rooftop, within the communal open space areas, or anywhere apparent from the public domain.
- f. Also refer **Recommendations 3.d.**

5. Sustainability:

- a. The Panel notes that the rooms are configured with a single aspect without natural cross ventilation. However, the rooms are adjacent to a common circulation gallery open to the courtyard. The Panel recommends introduction of some measure to facilitate natural ventilation, potentially with addition of high-level operable windows or shutters above all entry doors to the rooms. Addition of these natural cross ventilation features should be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified certifier. Also refer **Recommendation 3.a**
- b. The Panel expects that key targets established within the site-specific DCP for solar access, cross ventilation and other sustainability should be met. Similarly, the Panel strongly



encourages further sustainability targets for water, energy, waste efficiency through appropriate initiatives.

- c. The applicant is encouraged to include an appropriate photovoltaic system over the rooftop, for environmental benefits.

6. Landscape Design:

- a. The panel suggested landscape treatment adjacent the Johnston's Creek Stormwater Channel will need to consider maintaining the structural integrity of the canal walls ie limiting invasive and destructive tree roots. Liaison with Sydney Water will be essential. More detailed sections are needed that show the relationship between the canal wall, existing walls noted on plans and the proposed path. The panel recommends the applicant should consider appropriate surface treatment within the through-site link, to allow infiltration of rain water, at the same time the treatment should be able to endure high-pedestrian usage.
- b. The Panel discussed that the Johnston's Creek Stormwater Channel is a Stage-heritage item. Given its history and significance, the landscape architect is encouraged to consider whether the proposed plantings are consistent with the canal and to consider some form of interpretation through the landscape design proposed along the through-site link.

Conclusion
The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel considers that the proposal should be supported if the applicant responds positively to the recommendations offered in this Report.