



# Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

## Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	307-309 Parramatta Road Leichhardt
Proposal:	A 6 storey mixed use proposal with 32 apartments above a large retail space
Application No.:	DA/2021/0727
Meeting Date:	19 October 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	None
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger – chair; Jean Rice; and Michael Harrison (via email correspondence)
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia, Niall Macken, and Iain Watt
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Paul Buljevic (PBD Architects) – Architect for the proposal

### Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The Panel understands the subject site has a previous Land & Environment Court approval for demolition of existing buildings and construction of a new mixed use proposal with 23 apartments over 2 commercial spaces. The court-approved proposal has a 2.05:1 FSR with a 4 storey height to Parramatta Road and Redmond Street.
3. As a proposal subject to the State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development (SEPP 65), the Panel's comments have been structured against the 9 Design Quality Principles set out in the SEPP 65 NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG).

## Discussion & Recommendations:

### Principle 1 – Context and Neighbourhood Character

*“Good design responds and contributes to its context. Context is the key natural and built features of an area, their relationship and the character they create when combined. It also includes social, economic, health and environmental conditions.*

*Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of an area’s existing or future character. Well designed buildings respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood.*

*Consideration of local context is important for all sites, including sites in established areas, those undergoing change or identified for change.”*

1. The Panel notes the proposed floor space ratio of 2.75:1 significantly exceeds the maximum permissible floor space ratio control of 1:1 within the Inner West LEP. The Panel understands that based on the LEP provisions, a 1.5:1 FSR may apply to the proposal if the design response establishes consistency with the Parramatta Road Heritage Conservation Area.
2. The Panel expressed some concern regarding the justification for the demolition of existing buildings within a Heritage Conservation Area. Additionally, the Panel is concerned for the proposed scale, which will be highly visible in the local area, and could set an undesirable precedent within the Inner West Heritage Conservation Areas.

### Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale

*“Good design achieves a scale, bulk and height appropriate to the existing or desired future character of the street and surrounding buildings.*

*Good design also achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building’s purpose in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type, articulation and the manipulation of building elements. Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscapes and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook.”*

1. The Panel notes the DA documentation provided by the applicant lacks any detailed contextual analysis, particularly built form and streetscape analysis of the Parramatta Road Heritage Conservation Area to support the significant change in scale and prominence proposed on the site.
2. The Panel notes the proposed parapet is significantly higher than the existing and adjacent parapets with two residential levels above the commercial and that the upper residential levels are four and five storeys above the commercial level. The apparent scale of the proposed residential components on Parramatta Road is increased because the setbacks are only 2-3m whereas the Petersham Inn development (cited as a comparable precedent) is setback an average of 6m.
3. The Panel recommends that a detailed local character analysis be prepared and that the proposal be presented through a detailed visual impacts assessment to understand its scale and prominence from key vantage points along Parramatta Road and within the immediate context.

### Principle 3 – Density

*“Good design achieves a high level of amenity for residents and each apartment, resulting in a density appropriate to the site and its context. Appropriate densities are consistent with the area’s existing or projected population.*

*Appropriate densities can be sustained by existing or proposed infrastructure, public transport, access to jobs, community facilities and the environment.”*

1. Although density was not specifically discussed during the meeting, the Panel notes that the FSR development standard is exceeded and sought to be varied. Prior to offering support, the Panel would expect that recommendations in this report are accommodated, and any associated impacts resulting from increased density and FSR are carefully examined and justified.

## Principle 4 – Sustainability

*“Good design combines positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. Good sustainable design includes use of natural cross ventilation and sunlight for the amenity and liveability of residents and passive thermal design for ventilation, heating and cooling reducing reliance on technology and operation costs. Other elements include recycling and reuse of materials and waste, use of sustainable materials, and deep soil zones for groundwater recharge and vegetation.”*

1. The Panel recommends the north-easterly apartments (Apartment A101, A201, A301, A401 and A501) could include additional openings to the light well, to maximise natural cross ventilation.
2. The Panel encourages the applicant to consider the provision of ceiling fans within all habitable areas of the apartments. The floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights should be resolved to accommodate the use of ceiling fans within the apartments.
3. The applicant is encouraged to include an appropriate rooftop photovoltaic system.
4. The provision of a rainwater tank for should be considered to allow collection, storage and reuse within the subject site.
5. The Panel supports the identification and application of appropriate sustainability targets and rating tools.

## Principle 5 – Landscape

*“Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, resulting in attractive developments with good amenity. A positive image and contextual fit of well designed developments is achieved by contributing to the landscape character of the streetscape and neighbourhood*

*Good landscape design enhances the development’s environmental performance by retaining positive natural features which contribute to the local context, co-ordinating water and soil management, solar access, micro-climate, tree canopy, habitat values, and preserving green networks. Good landscape design optimises usability, privacy and opportunities for social interaction, equitable access, respect for neighbours’ amenity, provides for practical establishment and long term management.”*

1. The proposal relies on two rooftop communal open spaces. Detailed landscape architectural drawings were not provided to the Panel. The Panel encourages the involvement of a registered landscape architect.
2. Rooftop communal open space should achieve consistency with the ADG in terms of solar access during mid-winter. Similarly, it should be demonstrated that the size of the rooftop communal open space is consistent with the guidance offered by the ADG Part 3D-1.
3. The Panel recommends the amenity of the two rooftop communal open spaces be enhanced through provision of shaded areas, a barbecue or outdoor kitchen, sink and a unisex accessible toilet.
4. The applicant is encouraged to apply the ADG (Parts 4O and 4P), and Inner West Council’s Green Roof Policy and Guidelines to develop a detailed landscape design.

## Principle 6 – Amenity

*“Good design positively influences internal and external amenity for residents and neighbours. Achieving good amenity contributes to positive living environments and resident well being.*

*Good amenity combines appropriate room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, outlook, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas, and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility.”*

1. The Panel notes there are a number of visual and acoustic privacy issues existing between the habitable areas and/or balconies of apartments on each residential level. The Panel notes these issues arise as a result of the internal orientation adopted for 9 out of 32 centrally located apartments (Apartments A104, B104, A204, B204, A304, B304, A404, B404, and A503). Alternative configuration strategies should be considered by the applicant to resolve amenity, privacy and cross viewing issues.
2. The Panel recommends the proposal (with 5 residential levels, 1 retail and 2 basement levels - resulting in a total of 8 levels served) should be provided with 2 lifts per circulation core, rather than a single lift as proposed. The provision of a second lift per circulation core would improve residential amenity and provides some redundancy in a scenario where any single lift is out-of-service or is being used for removalists, deliveries or commercial uses.
3. The Panel notes the tension that exists between the ambition to orient living spaces to the north and the resulting tendency for bedrooms to orient onto the noisy Parramatta Road frontage. In seeking to optimise the maximum amenity available to each residential apartment, the Panel would potentially consider some modest compromise to solar access if appropriately justified. For greater clarity - the Panel recommends that master bedrooms should not front a main road whenever possible and in such a scenario living rooms are more appropriate addressing the public domain than the internal courtyard even when this conflicts with targets for solar access. Living rooms have the capacity to strike a better relationship with the street due to the availability of a more open aspect and outlook, better casual surveillance and since they are generally less sensitive to noise.

## Principle 7 – Safety

*“Good design optimises safety and security, within the development and the public domain. It provides for quality public and private spaces that are clearly defined and fit for the intended purpose. Opportunities to maximise passive surveillance of public and communal areas promote safety.*

*A positive relationship between public and private spaces is achieved through clearly defined secure access points and well lit and visible areas that are easily maintained and appropriate to the location and purpose.”*

1. The Panel recommends the residential component of the proposal should have a principal address to the Parramatta Road frontage, which is most convenient to commercial activities and public transport. The ground floor uses should be reconfigured to facilitate a direct, barrier-free pedestrian connection from Parramatta Road to both circulation cores of the residential apartments. The Panel understands that in its current configuration, the applicant is trying to maximise the flexibility and size of retail uses, however a balance needs to be with a much-needed residential address at Parramatta Road.
2. The Panel recommends careful exploration of alternatives to the current provision of a 3-stepped entry with a chair-lift from Parramatta Road, recognising there are flooding constraints affecting the site.

## Principle 8 – Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

*“Good design achieves a mix of apartment sizes, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets.*

*Well designed apartment developments respond to social context by providing housing and facilities to suit the existing and future social mix. Good design involves practical and flexible features, including different types of communal spaces for a broad range of people, providing opportunities for social interaction amongst residents.”*

1. The Panel supports the proposed apartment mix and the inclusion of ground floor non-residential uses.

## Principle 9 – Aesthetics

*“Good design achieves a built form that has good proportions and a balanced composition of elements, reflecting the internal layout and structure. Good design uses a variety of materials, colours and textures.*

*The visual appearance of well designed apartment development responds to the existing or future local context, particularly desirable elements and repetitions of the streetscape.”*

1. The Panel noted the rear elevation appeared to be more successful in its composition and expression than the Parramatta Road elevation. This is attributable to richness in brickwork detailing, proportions of openings and a stronger horizontal emphasis.
2. The Panel recommends the applicant should study patterns of traditional building forms along the Parramatta Road Heritage Conservation Area and consider further refinement of the Parramatta Road elevation and expression to create a stronger emphasis on the horizontal elements, vertical divisions and maintain an appropriate level of solid to void ratio within the architectural expression.
3. The Panel also recommends a finer grain of shopfronts for the ground floor along Parramatta Road, and a closer correlation between those parts of the architectural composition above and below the awning line.
4. As previously noted, the proposal will be highly visible along the Parramatta Road corridor and from surrounding areas. The applicant should develop a comprehensive view analysis from several prominent vantage points to demonstrate if the building form and its architectural expression can sit positively within the local area.

### Non SEPP 65 Matters:

1. The Panel notes that the Heritage Impact Statement and the Statement of Environmental Effects provided by the applicant lacks information regarding the history of the existing building or a detailed historical or contextual analysis of the area. The documentation lacks evidence to assess the merit of the existing building and its shopfront proposed to be demolished.

### Conclusion:

The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel notes the applicant seeks a significant variation to the permissible floor space ratio control.

The Panel recommends the proposal should only be supported once it satisfactorily demonstrates improved design quality in line with the recommendations provided in this AEDRP Report.

Additionally, the Panel recommends the applicant:

1. Establish there is merit in the proposed demolition of the existing building within the Parramatta Road Heritage Conservation Area, noting the current justification appears to be based on a previous Court approval not relevant to this development application
2. Provide a more detailed design and planning justification for the proposed floor space ratio variation (exceedance of 1.25:1 or 1,640m<sup>2</sup>).