

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	37-39 Fisher Street Petersham
Proposal:	A shop top housing proposal with residential apartments over a ground floor medical centre
Application No.:	PDA/2021/0327
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 Matthew Di Maggio
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	Matthew Pullinger indicated he is known to the Architect, Heidi Pronk.
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Heidi Pronk – Architect for the project, Bruce Threlfo – Urban Planner

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 thanks the applicant for seeking early feedback at the Pre DA stage, and for providing a comprehensive set of architectural drawings with a planning report.
3. The Panel understands that the subject site has an existing 34 room boarding house approval granted by the Land & Environment Court.
4. 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 immediate context was discussed at some length during the meeting. Critical to the site and the success of any design response will be establishing an appropriate relationship with the immediate neighbours along Fisher Street - the heritage listed Masonic Temple and the recently constructed boarding house to the west. To the south of the site are two existing lower scale residential dwellings, which reflects a zone boundary between the subject site (B2 Local Centre) and these dwellings (R1 General Residential).
2. These points are elaborated upon in the remainder of this report.

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 supports - in principle - the general arrangement of the proposal, with residential uses above ground floor health-related uses, and is generally supportive of the street wall height and upper level setbacks proposed, subject to other recommendations of this report.
2. The Panel recommends that some adjustment of the proposed street wall response be incorporated to better-resolve the relationship and interface with the immediate western neighbour - without mimicking it. The objective would be to establish an improved transition from the neighbouring 3-storey street wall to the proposed 4-storey street wall.
3. The Panel is concerned for the resultant amenity available to residential dwellings which rely upon a 0.9m to 3.0m eastern setback across a side boundary with the adjacent Masonic Temple for balconies and habitable areas of the proposed apartments. This relationship appears to be inadequate and risks creating building separation, outlook, visual and acoustic amenity constraints.
4. Similarly, a 3.5m to 4.0m southern setback for proposed balconies and habitable areas of the relevant apartments appears inadequate as these apartments tend to borrow amenity from the adjoining property to the south.
5. The applicant should consider adopting improved building separation distances from the eastern and southern boundaries, guided by Parts 2F and 3F of the Apartment Design Guide. Detailed studies should be provided to indicate the resultant level of outlook, separation and amenity available to units on these boundaries and the location of and relationship to windows within the Masonic Temple.
6. The Panel recommends the applicant tests a potential future renewal scenario (building envelopes only) for the neighbouring site to the south. Testing should ensure that future development on the southern property is not compromised in terms of residential amenity, building separation, visual and acoustic privacy, and that there is consistency demonstrated with the minimum mid-winter solar access requirements of the ADG. These scenarios should also demonstrate that the amenity of the apartments within the subject site can be maintained in a situation where the neighbouring property is redeveloped.
7. The Panel recommends that the revised architectural floor plans, as part of the DA submission, should show window locations of the existing adjoining Masonic centre building on corresponding floor plans for a further review during the DA stage.

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 this was not specifically discussed during the meeting, the Panel notes that both the FSR and height of building development standards are 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, FSR and height 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 expects the proposal to be consistent with key targets established within the ADG for solar access and natural cross ventilation. Similarly, the Panel would encourage commitment to further sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency.
2. The DA set of architectural drawings should include mid-winter sun eye views, to review direct solar access to both balconies and living areas, as encouraged by ADG (Part 4A). These views should also incorporate the existing adjoining Masonic Temple and the potential future building envelope on the adjoining properties to the south.
3. The Panel appreciates provision of high-level windows/fan lights above the entry doors of single aspect apartments (Apartment 1, 3, 6, 8, 11 and 13). The applicant should seek independent technical advice from an expert to confirm the effectiveness and compliance of natural cross ventilation within these apartments.
4. The Panel encourages the applicant to consider provision of ceiling fans within all habitable areas of the apartments. Floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights should be resolved and illustrated to demonstrate the use of ceiling fans.
5. The applicant is encouraged to include a rooftop photovoltaic system.
6. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered to allow water collection, storage and reuse within the subject site.
7. The Panel encourages the applicant’s intention to recycle the existing building materials on the subject site itself or on suitable developments at other locations and seeks confirmation of this in the DA documentation.

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 Panel recommends the applicant to consider the further provision of deep soil areas within the eastern and southern setbacks, with appropriate soil volume to allow for large canopy trees and shrubs and to improve the interface with the existing or future adjoining buildings.
2. The Panel notes the provision of rooftop communal open space on Level 5. It should be demonstrated that this communal open space can achieve consistency with the ADG in terms of solar access at mid-winter. Similarly, the size of the rooftop communal open space should be consistent with the guidance offered by the ADG Part 3D-1.
3. The Panel recommends the rooftop communal open space be enhanced through provision of planter boxes with appropriate soil depths, outdoor seating, shaded areas, a barbeque 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.”

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.”

The proposal is acceptable subject to the recommendations of this report.

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.”

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. As noted earlier, the Panel recommends refinement of the proposed 4 storey street wall built form addressing Fisher Street to establish a better correlation with the existing 5 storey boarding house on the adjoining property to the west which is expressed as a 3 storey base with 2 upper levels.
2. The applicant is encouraged to provide detailed 1:50 sections through each primary facade type in order to demonstrate the proposed arrangement of key materials, junctions, balustrades and fixtures, including the integration of building services such as balcony drainage or air conditioning condensers.

Non SEPP 65 Matters:

No discussion

Conclusion

The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel thanks the applicant for seeking early feedback at the Pre DA stage, and for providing a comprehensive set of architectural drawings and a planning report. With consideration given to the recommendations made in this report, the Panel would appreciate an opportunity to review the revised proposal during the formal DA stage.