

# Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

## Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	378 Liverpool Road Ashfield
Proposal:	A mixed use development with 40 boarding rooms, 3 apartments, a rooftop garden and ground floor retail above a basement carpark.
Application No.:	DA/2021/0928
Meeting Date:	16 November 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	None
Panel Members:	Jocelyn Jackson (external member), Russell Olsson (external member), and Vishal Lakhia (internal member) – Chair
Apologies:	None
Council staff:	Ryan Lennox, and Jai Reid
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Texco – Architect for the project, and Planning Ingenuity – Urban Planner for the project

### Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.

### Discussion & Recommendations:

#### 1. Built Form and Massing:

- a. The Panel notes that there is a recently DA-approved residential flat building located south of the subject site across Milton Lane at 40 Milton Street Ashfield. The applicant should incorporate 3D built form of this DA-approved scheme in the sun eye views. The sun eye views should confirm the extent of overshadowing to both – the private open spaces and habitable areas of the future residential flat building to the south at mid-winter between 9am to 3pm. It is the Panel's preference that the proposal should maintain a minimum 2 hour direct solar access to the future apartments to the south. The Panel considers that the proposed southern setback may be required to be increased to ensure 2 hour direct solar access to the future apartments on 40 Milton Street at mid-winter.
- b. It appears to the Panel that the proposal relies heavily on the adjoining residential flat building at 380 Liverpool Road and the opposite residential flat building on 425 Liverpool Road for establishment of the overall built form and architectural expression for the subject

site, which is considered to be problematic. The Panel considers that these recently constructed residential flat buildings set poor urban precedents for the area and strongly encourages the applicant to develop a different approach for their proposal. Further recommendations are offered in *Part 4 Architectural Expression* of this Report. The Panel also notes that the Ashfield DCP offers a different set of built form controls for the subject site, in comparison to the adjoining residential flat building.

- c. The Panel queried the applicant about provision of winter gardens to the Liverpool Road frontage, and whether these are required as part of the DCP or needed for noise attenuation. The Panel considers that provision of the winter gardens to the entire built form presentation to Liverpool Road is problematic as it diminishes the overall architectural quality of the proposal. The Panel also queried if winter gardens should be part of the gross floor area calculations as these are enclosed spaces.

## 2. Ground Floor Configuration:

- a. The ground floor pedestrian access and circulation is convoluted as the lift + foyer area lack direct visual and physical connection with Liverpool Road. The Panel recommends that the ground floor layout should be reconfigured to create a pedestrian entry and corridor along the eastern boundary, as this allows a clear line-of-sight from the point of entry up to the lift + foyer area.

## 3. Typical Residential Level Configuration:

- a. There is a 7 storey residential flat building on 380 Liverpool Road, abutting the western side boundary of the site. The applicant should include layouts of these adjacent building in the proposed floor plans showing all corresponding levels, for a further review of the built form interface with the western boundary.
- b. The Panel expressed concern that a proposal with a total of 9 levels (2 basement, 1 retail, 5 residential and a rooftop communal open space) is served by only a single lift. The residential component of the proposal is expected to serve more than 86 residents within 40 double rooms and 3 residential apartments. The Panel discussed about a scenario where a lift could be out-of-order or is being used by service providers (removalists or for deliveries). It is therefore the Panel's view that a minimum of 2 lifts should be provided within the proposal.
- c. The Panel expressed concern regarding amenity of the 6 rooms located in the middle part of the building on Levels 1, 2 and 3 – Rooms 107, 108, 207, 208, 305 and 306, as these rooms lack an acceptable outlook. These rooms have highlight windows which limit any visual or physical connectivity or address to the outdoor. The Panel further discussed that there are balconies provided for these rooms which offer some relief in terms of outlook, however these balconies tend to borrow amenity from the adjoining properties. The balcony configuration raises potential visual privacy concern with the adjoining properties, for any potential future development to the east (on the Ashfield RSL club) and the existing apartments within the residential flat building to the west. The applicant should consider alternative configuration strategies to address the Panel's concerns.
- d. The Panel notes that Rooms 305 and 306 are accessible rooms, and recommends that the balconies should also allow barrier-free wheelchair access. These accessible rooms are provided with high level windows, and there is a concern how a person in a wheelchair would open these windows.
- e. The boarding rooms within the upper levels are provided with a single fire stair, and the travel distances from the rooms to the fire egress should be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified certifier. Provision of bathroom windows and other openings in close proximity of the side boundaries should also be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified certifier to ensure that appropriate fire separation measures are incorporated.
- f. The Panel recommends reconfiguration of the typical residential floor plans to create more space outside the lift entries, to allow comfortable and intuitive movement for the residents.

- g. The applicant should consider inclusion of ceiling fans to all boarding rooms and apartments, as a low energy alternative, or supplement, to the use of mechanical A/C systems. The Panel considers that the floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights should be increased to a minimum 2.7m and 3.1m, to allow provision of ceiling fans.

#### 4. Architectural Expression:

- a. In addition to the discussion and recommendations included in *Part 1 Built Form and Massing of this Report*, the Panel discussed that with its current architectural expression, the proposal appears like an 'office' building as it is monotonous with lack of proper articulation. The repetitive wintergarden treatment across the façade creates a monotonous architectural expression (which seems to have been drawn from the surrounding buildings on 380 and 425 Liverpool Road).
- b. Further refinement and enrichment in the architectural expression is necessary for the project to be successful. The architectural expression for all façades need a greater degree of refinement and consideration in terms of design, composition and material selection.
- c. In terms of the architectural expression of the Liverpool Road façade, the applicant should avoid the repetitive use of winter gardens, create a more vertical emphasis within the expression possibly by vertically grouping 2 balconies. The Panel considers that the applicant should avoid 'flat' façade composition by offering a greater sense of substance and a 3-dimensional depth of say 450-600mm to the street interface, to create a more robust and visually interesting architecture. The Panel notes that the applicant may have to consider moving the building back (to the south) by 450-600mm, to create appropriate depth and articulation within this street facing façade.
- d. The Panel also suggested that as part of the redesign, the communal room (Level 3) could be expressed differently in the architectural expression to Liverpool Road.
- e. The Panel encourages use of self-finished materials such as face bricks. Rendered and painted surfaces should be avoided considering the longevity and associated long-term maintenance costs.
- f. The Panel supports a nil setback to the eastern boundary interface with the Ashfield RSL club. However, the eastern side boundary wall will be highly visible from the surrounding public domain until the adjoining RSL site is redeveloped and the applicant should consider appropriate treatment to this side wall that does not rely on paint finishes. One suggested strategy is to use face bricks along this side wall treatment by incorporating appropriate brick detailing, composition, texture and pattern.
- g. If face bricks are considered for the side walls then the proposal should ensure that these side walls are capable of being built, cleaned and maintained from within the site, without relying on access from the adjacent properties.
- h. The Panel discussed about lack of details regarding the air conditioning system proposed within the boarding rooms. The applicant should confirm details of the air conditioning system, and provide the location and size of a plant room/s for mechanical equipment. The plant rooms and /or the mechanical equipment should not be located within the balconies, on the roof-top, within any front boundaries, or anywhere visually apparent within the public domain.

### Conclusion:

1. With consideration given to the recommendations made in this Report, the Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel needs a second opportunity to review this proposal again as part of the Development Application stage (since the Panel considers that no Pre DA discussion was offered by the applicant).
2. At a second review, the Panel would consider whether the proposal is acceptable in terms of the built form, massing, residential amenity, architectural expression and relationship with the surrounding context.