

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	391 Illawarra Road Marrickville
Proposal:	A shop top housing proposal
Application No.:	DA/2021/0982
Meeting Date:	14 December 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	None
Panel Members:	Jon Johannsen – chair, Peter Ireland and Russell Olsson
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia, Niall Macken and Matthew Di Maggio
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	Felipe Ayala, Spiral Architects Lab – Architect for the project; and Tim Cooper, Chapman Planning – 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.
2. The Panel understands that the site is subject to a previous development application with a deferred commencement consent and the applicant’s intention of lodging this ‘new development application’ is to make built form additions to the previous proposal.
3. The Panel notes that the proposal exceeds the maximum permissible height and the maximum permissible floor space ratio controls under the Inner West LEP. The Proposal also lacks appropriate provision for car, motorcycle and bicycle parking.
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

INNER WEST

“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 to a considerable length during the meeting and it is the Panel’s view that the proposal fails to establish its suitability with the immediate context as there is a lack of consideration given to:
 - a. Lot amalgamation of the subject site with the adjoining properties to the south including – 393 and 395 Illawarra Road; and
 - b. Appropriate built form response given to the recently approved development application at 387 Illawarra Road Marrickville (proposed by SJB Architects).
2. In addition to 1.b, the Panel notes that the previously existing Church building (existing in 2018, at the time of lodgement of the previous DA) on 387 Illawarra Road has been recently demolished (in 2020). The immediate built form context to the north of the subject site has significantly changed with the introduction of a new building now already under construction. The proposal presented to the Panel as part of this new development application does not consider these recent changes, particularly in terms of response to the street setback, laneway setback, the overall built form alignment and the architectural expression.
3. It is the Panel’s view that the DA-approved building at 387 Illawarra Road sets a benchmark for the area and the applicant should consider this as a good architectural and urban design precedent, particularly in terms of the rear setback and building depth, for their design to be based upon.
4. The Panel has been also made aware at the meeting that the applicant had previous discussions with Council (in 2018) with regards to the overall site planning and the ground floor configuration. It is also the Panel’s understanding that Council’s previous discussions with the applicant were based on the premise of lot amalgamation with the adjoining properties to the south. The proposal presented to the Panel does not respond to the previous discussions for lot amalgamation and the applicant’s strategy is problematic as it isolates the subject site from the adjoining properties to the south, and compromises the potential for an improved urban form outcome on this prominent corner.
5. 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. With a lack of consideration given to lot amalgamation with the adjoining properties to the south, the proposal creates a blank wall interface towards Grove Street. The Panel notes that this blank wall will be highly visible from the surrounding public domain (from Grove Street and Illawarra Road) until the adjoining properties to the south are redeveloped in future. It is also likely that future development on the properties to the south would be compromised due to their constrained lot widths and areas, since these adjoining lots will be left isolated by the proposal.
 - The Panel also questioned how the side walls to the northern and southern boundaries, can be built and maintained without relying on access from the adjoining properties.
 - The Panel considers the architectural expression to the Illawarra Road frontage is weak and inappropriate due to open balconies and a large area of glazing to the streetscape. There are potential noise, visual privacy and amenity concerns with the open balconies addressing the busy Illawarra Road frontage.
2. The Panel expressed grave concerns for poor amenity, quality and legibility of the ground floor residential entry proposed from the Laneway. There is a lack of a sense of arrival or street presence for the residents, and configuration is problematic for any visitors or for deliveries (e.g. mail or online parcels). The Panel considers that it is not acceptable for the residents to walk-

through the commercial parking and a motorcycle parking space on daily basis. There is also a lack of consideration given to disability impaired entry from surrounding public domain.

3. In addition to Paragraph 4, the amenity and quality within the ground floor configuration will be further compromised once the applicant considers addition of realistically scaled building servicing requirements such as – fire hydrant booster valve, pump room, a fire indicator panel, meters panel, main switch board, communications and letter boxes.
4. The proposed floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights are not consistent with the 2.7m and 3.1m requirements within the NSW ADG Part 4C – ceiling heights. The Panel notes that the non-compliance with the LEP height control will be further exacerbated if ADG-compliant floor-to-floor heights of 3.1m were to be considered for the proposal.

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. The proposal on 391 Illawarra Road Marrickville is highly constrained for the proposed density, if developed in isolation from 393 and 395 Illawarra Road.

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 notes that the proposal is not consistent with the key targets established within the NSW for solar access and natural cross ventilation. Solar access through skylights is not a recognised way of achieving consistency with the ADG.
2. Provision of ceiling fans is strongly encouraged in all habitable areas. Floor-to-floor and floor-to-ceiling heights should be adjusted to allow the use of ceiling fans within the proposal.
3. Installation of p/v solar panels on the roof is also recommended, for power to common areas within the proposal.
4. The Panel encourages the applicant to consider commitment to sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency.

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. Given that there are other fundamental concerns with the proposal, Principle 5 – Landscape was not discussed at the meeting. Nevertheless incorporation of balcony planters is supported, and inclusion of terrace planting to the northern side of the Level 2 Unit 103, and appropriate landscape details provided.

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. It was noted that Unit 102 had no external private open space, and scope for incorporation of a 'winter-garden' balcony behind the existing façade window could be considered.

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 expressed concern for CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) matters with the ground floor pedestrian entry from the rear lane
2. There is also a privacy and safety concern for residents of apartments 103, 104 and 105 as the lift directly opens-up in to the interior of these apartments, as there is a lack of a transitional common lobby area between the lift and these apartments.

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 notes that the post adaptable layout for apartment 103 requires significant reconfiguration for the bathroom, laundry and storage layouts. The extent of amendments required from pre to post adaptation should be minimal, particularly with regards to structural and building services elements.

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. Given that there are other fundamental concerns with the proposal, Principle 9 – Aesthetics was not discussed in detail at the meeting. Also refer comments within Principle 2 – Built form and scale.

Conclusion:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel does not support the proposal in its current form, as there are serious deficiencies that arise out of its consideration in isolation from the adjoining properties to the south, and without proper built form consideration given to the recently DA-approved proposal on 387 Illawarra Road (the SJB Architects proposal).
2. It is also the Panel's view that the proposal does not demonstrate design excellence, and is not in-line with the architectural and urban design standards and quality expected from a contemporary shop top housing proposal within the Inner West local government area.
3. The Panel restates that lot amalgamation with the adjoining properties to the south is critical to the success of this proposal, as this strategy could partly alleviate the Panel's concerns. In its current form the proposal would create an undesirable precedent for the area and is likely to constrain the development ability of adjoining properties to the south. Isolation from the adjoining properties further limits the site's ability to achieve compliance with the key standards of the ADG including but not limited to – solar access and natural cross ventilation. A lack of provision for car, motorcycle and bicycle parking should not be supported at this instance.
4. While the Panel has concerns about (but has not commented in detail) on other issues such as the aesthetics, residential amenity, and internal apartment configuration, it is the fundamental urban design issues for this proposal that need to be addressed as a priority.