



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	55 Smith Street Summer Hill
Proposal:	Demolition of the existing structures on site and construction of a residential flat building with 35 residential apartments including affordable housing over a basement parking.
Application No.:	DA/2021/1367
Meeting Date:	19 April 2022
Previous Meeting Date:	22 February 2022 – DA for a Boarding House – REV/2021/0024
Panel Members:	Jocelyn Jackson – chair; Tony Caro; and Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; and Conor Wilson
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	<i>The Panel was informed at the meeting that the applicant was invited but was unable to attend.</i>

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal through an online conference.
2. The Panel notes that there are a number of fundamental concerns with this residential flat building proposal and some of these concerns were identified at a previous AEDRP review on 22 February 2022 which was for a separate development application lodged for a boarding house proposal (REV/2021/0024).
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

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 Panel notes that the development application submission did not include any urban design or contextual analysis to justify the site planning and the overall design strategy. The Panel considers a detailed urban design analysis to be essential given the scale and context of the proposal and the unusual deep and narrow configuration of the site. The proposed site planning strategy and the built form character (including the roof form, architectural expression and materiality) appears inconsistent with the immediate context. A lack of street address for 27 out of 35 apartments is also a concern arising primarily from a flawed site planning strategy.
2. The Panel considers that the proposed building separation distances within the proposal and with the adjoining properties are constrained and do not match with the guidance offered under the NSW Apartment Design Guide Parts 2F and 3F.

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 discussed the entry location and identified a need to ensure that the ground floor entry level is universally accessible from Smith Street, to create a barrier-free street entry for wheelchair access (currently absent in the proposal).
2. The Panel discussed that a 9m LEP height limit applies to the site, which is more suitable for a 2 storey residential typology such as terrace houses. The current 3 storey built form and roof form, tries to emulate terrace house typology, however the design is not successful in this attempt and its bulk and scale appears out-of-character.
3. The Panel further considers that 2 storey terrace houses, if provided with an appropriate emphasis on the vertical rhythm and urban design with internal pedestrian streets or similar, would create a finer grain built form character appropriate to the surrounding context. The ground floor levels of these dwellings would allow better street integration and activation when provided with direct individual street entries and individual gardens.
4. In relation to the building height, the Panel notes that 3 stories may not be achievable on this site. The Panel is concerned that the proposal will not achieve the minimum acceptable standards required for achieving design excellence, and is inconsistent with the guidance offered within the ADG.
5. Furthermore, the Panel is concerned with habitable areas proposed within the subterranean spaces of the northern building, in terms of potential outlook and the amenity of affected apartments.
6. The overall built form strategy is not supported by the Panel as it represents overdevelopment of the site. The additional floors proposed and floor space ratio bonus for affordable housing compromises residential amenity.
7. The Panel notes that the proposal needs to further demonstrate how appropriate built form response has been provided with regards to the flooding concerns raised by Council’s engineers.
8. Fire egress from the basement should be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified certifier.
9. The Panel raised concerns about waste collection and storage strategy. The lack of a waste collection bay is problematic as the scheme relies entirely on residents taking their own waste to the basement. Furthermore, with a lack of consideration given to waste chutes, the waste storage rooms within the basement appear to be at an inconvenient location for the residents. The Panel also considers that bin collection from street (if private waste collection is discontinued



in future) should not be supported as the quality of street interface will be compromised with the required large number of bins to be placed within the public domain for storage and/or collection.

10. The amenity and quality of the ground floor will be further compromised after incorporating realistically sized building services requirements, for example – a substation (if required), fire hydrant booster valve, pump room, fire indicator panel, meters panel, main switch board, communications, letter boxes, etc for both buildings. The Panel considers the lift is best located near the entry and stairs for ease of access for residents and visitors.
11. The Panel is unconvinced with the pre and post adaptation layouts provided for adaptable housing as the extent of changes required for post adaptation rely on structural and plumbing modifications which could be difficult to achieve at post adaptation stage.
12. The development application lacks details on the location and size of the plant room, including any mechanical equipment or condensers for the apartments. The equipment should not be located within the balconies, above the rooftop, within the communal open spaces, or anywhere visible from public domain.

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 Panel discussed the floor space ratio bonus offered through the affordable housing provisions at considerable length in the meeting. It is the Panel's view that the bonus offered through the affordable housing is causing significant design and amenity concerns.
2. The bonus will be only supported (in a new/revised proposal) if the proposal genuinely offers affordable housing by demonstrating compliance with the relevant planning mechanisms that are currently in place. The applicant needs to work with Council to establish compliance with the relevant planning mechanisms and to satisfy Council's requirements in terms of the number of apartments offered as affordable housing, its timeframe/perpetuity and management. A detailed management strategy for the affordable housing component should also be provided to gain Panel's support.
3. The Panel acknowledges that full floor space ratio including the affordable housing bonus may not be achievable if the recommended 2 storey built form is considered for this unusually deep and narrow site.

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 does not meet guidance for mid winter solar access within Part 4A of the ADG, including minimum 2 hours direct sunlight within living rooms and private open spaces of at least 70% apartments between 9am and 3pm at mid winter.
2. 14 out of 35 apartments (40%) would receive no direct sunlight between 9am and 3pm at mid winter, which exceeds the maximum 15% criteria within the ADG. The proposed double loaded corridor configuration provided to both buildings with the intention to maximise yield is primarily the reason for this inconsistency with the ADG Part 4A criteria.
3. Given the scale of proposal, the proposal is lacking commitments for achieving sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency, including provision of solar panels, ceiling fans and rain-water capture for watering plants.
4. The Panel notes that the proposed dark roof colour will result in increased heat load and require additional insulation to meet NCC requirements and that this will impact on the roof structure depth and 9m height LEP Height limit.

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.”

No detailed discussion at meeting entirely. Provision of deep soil planting was commended.

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 queried about the size, functionality, comfort and amenity achieved within several studio apartments which appear to be below the minimum 35m² area requirements within Part 4D of the NSW ADG.
2. With a lack of provision of furniture layouts for all apartments, the Panel is unconvinced that the residential layouts can provide acceptable residential amenity. The Panel also queried the sizes and proportions of some living rooms and bedrooms for good furnishing, as these seem to be below the minimum requirements within Part 4D-3 of the ADG (e.g. width of living areas within the studio apartments, width of bedroom 3 within Units 10, 23 and 35).
3. The double loaded common corridors have constrained widths and should be widened to allow comfortable and intuitive movement for the residents. Natural light and ventilation to the common corridors should be investigated with the relocation of the lifts.
4. The Panel expressed acoustic amenity and air quality concerns for some bedroom windows opening onto a vehicular driveway. Bedroom windows addressing common corridors should be avoided to maintain visual and acoustic privacy.
5. The Panel queried about the size of bedroom windows as these appeared to be inconsistent with the guidance offered within Part 4B-1 of the ADG and the NCC requirements.
6. There is inadequate provision for letter boxes and seating in the ground floor entry areas.
7. There appear to be errors in the accompanying documents including setbacks, solar access, claims for cross ventilation and natural light and assertions about context and character.

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.”

No detailed discussion. General concern expressed about safety in internal corridors and walkways.

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.”

No detailed discussion. General concern expressed about opportunities for social interaction and community identity because of poorly considered urban design.



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.”

No detailed discussion. There was general concern that the design does not succeed in achieving the terrace house character asserted by the proponent.

Conclusion:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel does not support the proposal as there are fundamental concerns with its built form, site configuration, density and residential amenity. The proposal does not meet the standards of urban design and residential quality expected for achieving design excellence for a residential flat building within the Inner West local government area.
2. Given the scale of the site and complexity of the brief it is recommended that an architect who also specialises in urban design should develop an urban design for the unusual deep and narrow site and begin a new development application process.
3. As part of a new DA process, the Panel expects the applicant to consider alternative site planning and urban design strategies, including an investigation into high-level, workable schematic design scenarios with a preferred option as part of a new Pre DA discussion.