



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	310 Norton Street Leichhardt
Proposal:	Demolition of an existing single storey commercial building and proposed new 4-storey shop top development including 6 apartments and a commercial space above a basement parking.
Application No.:	DA/2022/0228
Meeting Date:	19 April 2022
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Jocelyn Jackson – chair; Jean Rice; and Tony Caro
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; Katerina Lianos; and Adele Cowie
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Tracee Lim, Metropoint Group Architects – Architect for the project; and Kerry Nash – 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. 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.

INNER WEST

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 limited activation achieved for the Norton Street frontage as a majority of lot width is occupied by a vehicular driveway and a pedestrian entry foyer.
2. The Panel discussed zoning requirements and notes that residential use is permissible at the rear portion on the ground floor. However, it is the Panel's view that removal of the rear studio apartment (though removing an accessible apartment) and reconfiguration of ground floor planning would allow a more generous lobby and a more viable commercial/retail area on the ground floor, perhaps sharing a view to the rear garden.

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 that the proposed built form has not been established through urban design analysis of the existing context, in particular its lack of consideration of recently approved mixed use proposals along Norton Street (around the subject site). The Panel does not support the 4 storey height and bulk as the built form appears visually imposing on the Norton Street public domain.
2. The Panel also had concern regarding visual and amenity impacts created by a 4 storey unarticulated built form on the single storey cottage to the immediate south. The proposal would also block the sub-floor ventilation to that cottage and remove access for maintenance.
3. The Panel recommends that the proposed built form should comprise a 2 storey building base with an upper level setback for the third level. This upper floor could only be supported if the visual and overshadowing impacts on the public domain and the adjoining cottage to the south are successfully resolved. Consideration could also be given to setting back from the south boundary to reduce amenity impacts on the adjacent cottage and for light and ventilation.
4. The Panel notes that the basement carpark is open and connected to the lightwell serving the residential apartments above. The proposed open configuration is likely to create problematic fire isolation, air quality and acoustic amenity issues.
5. The potential NCC compliance issues with openings in the lightwell abutting the southern boundary need to be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified certifier. Compliance may mean these openings would not provide the necessary light and ventilation.
6. The amenity and quality of the ground floor will be further compromised after incorporating realistically sized building services requirements, for example – mailboxes, fire hydrant booster valve, pump room, fire indicator panel, meters panel, main switch board, communications, etc.

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 notes that a maximum permissible floor space ratio of 1:1 applies to the site. An additional 0.5:1 would be offered by Council if the proposal achieves urban design and street activation required by the controls. The Panel further discussed that given the extent of built form recommendations offered in this AEDRP Report, the potential 1.5:1 floor space ratio is unlikely to be achievable on this site.
2. The Panel recommends that to achieve the available FSR, the applicant should investigate an alternative redevelopment strategy based on lot amalgamation with the adjoining property/properties to the south. This could offer potential to satisfy Councils requirements.



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 that key targets established within the ADG for solar access and natural cross ventilation are met by the proposal. The scheme submitted does not in the panel's view achieve adequate cross ventilation and solar access. Similarly, the Panel encourages commitment to further sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency.
2. The Panel notes that the proposal benefits from an east-west orientation to achieve direct mid-winter solar access to all apartments from the morning and afternoon sun. However, the Panel notes that in its current configuration, direct solar access to living areas is compromised since the living areas are located behind the balconies. A suggested strategy for maximising solar access is to extend the living areas out to the building perimeter. In this suggested configuration the balconies would be located in front of bedrooms and adjacent to the living rooms. This suggested staggered arrangement would enable direct solar access to both – living areas and balconies, to meet the ADG criteria 4A-1.
3. The Panel is unconvinced that compliant natural cross ventilation is achieved, as the plan relies on opening bedroom windows into the light well and few living spaces are cross ventilated. Ventilation from small lightwells should be limited to bathrooms and non-habitable spaces. Consideration could be given for specifically designed ventilation stacks and solar chimneys.
4. The Panel encourages provision of ceiling fans to all habitable areas. Floor-to-floor and floor-to-ceiling heights should be both ADG compliant and adjusted to allow the use of ceiling fans.
5. The applicant is encouraged to include a rooftop photovoltaic system for environmental benefits, including power/lighting to common areas.
6. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered to allow collection, storage and reuse within the site.

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 communal open space should include a garden with an appropriately sized canopy tree species and shrubs, to improve the interface with the adjoining low density residential sites to the west and to improve the amenity of the ground floor uses. The panel notes no deep soil planting is provided - the rear garden is over the underground car parking.

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 discussed internal residential amenity issues arising from the shape and configuration of the combined living, dining and kitchen areas of most apartments. These spaces need to be re-planned to improve efficiency and flexibility of layouts, and adequate circulation space for the residents. Furniture must be drawn to scale on the plans.



2. The Panel notes the disproportionate size of the balcony areas between the 1 and 2 Bed units on Level 1 and recommends the planning on this level be reviewed.

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 discussion

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 discussion

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 face bricks used in the street elevation should continue around the side walls to ensure that a more robust material with an integral finish is considered for these walls which will be visible from the surrounding public domain. The Panel considers that rendered and painted surfaces should be avoided due to the anticipated longevity and life-cycle costs and the limited access for maintenance. The panel notes that the use of bricks as an applied finish as proposed, rather than in a traditional form, is inconsistent with the character of the area and the nature of the material.

Conclusion:

The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel does not support the proposal in its current state and recommends that the design be amended to be in-line with the recommendations offered within this Report. The Panel recommends that a second review of this proposal as part of this development application stage is required, given that a pre DA discussion meeting was not considered necessary by the applicant.