

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	673-677 Darling Street Rozelle NSW
Proposal:	Demolition of existing structures and construction of part 3 storey and part 6 storey mixed use development comprising ground floor retail and co-living student accommodation on Levels 1 to 6 above basement parking
Application No.:	PDA/2022/0367
Meeting Date:	21 February 2023
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Vishal Lakhia – chair, Dr Michael Zanardo, and Garth Paterson
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Eric Wong, and Iain Betts
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	Tarun Chadha – Architect for the project; Eltin Miletic – Urban Planner for the project

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant’s team through an online conference.
2. The Panel noted that the Pre DA drawings did not include urban design analysis and a convincing statutory planning assessment summary was not offered by the applicant as part of their documentation.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. Overarching Statutory Planning Concern:

- a. The AEDRP typically advises on matters related to architecture, urban design, landscape design and design excellence, however at this instance, the Panel identified an overarching statutory planning concern with the permissibility of the proposed development at the subject site. The Panel understands that the proposal does not comply with the minimum 800m² lot size requirement within the Housing SEPP 2021 legislation [Part 3, Clause 69(1)(b)(ii)].

- b. The applicant should seek separate statutory planning advice from the Inner West Council's development assessment officers regarding the permissibility of the proposal at the subject site which has an area of 441.27m², significantly below the SEPP requirement.

2. Density & Contextual Fit:

- a. The Panel considers that the overall built form and scale of proposal requires a more context-appropriate response, particularly since the site is located within a Heritage Conservation Area (HCA). The Panel strongly recommends retention of the existing buildings which are identified as contributory items within the Inner West Council's planning framework. The Panel notes that the existing 2 storey Victorian shop fronts appear intact in this part of Darling Street, and demolition of any contributory items should not be supported.
- b. In terms of the rear additions (expected to be set behind the retained contributory items) the Panel considers that 6-7 storeys is not an appropriate built form response to the area. The capacity for any additional height to the rear should be informed by the maximum permissible floor space ratio control applicable to the site.
- c. The Panel further discussed that the proposed floor space ratio (2.28:1) significantly exceeds the maximum permissible floor space ratio for the subject site (1.5:1). The Panel recommends the Inner West Council's assessment officers should review the floor space ratio calculation methodology – whether the rear vehicular 'access handle' for the site should be excluded from the calculations. Furthermore, the Panel is not convinced whether the floor space bonus as 'co-living' use [SEPP Housing Part 3, Clause 68(2)(a)(ii)] can be awarded since 'residential flat buildings' do not appear to be permissible in the B2 zone.
- d. The Panel discussed that if the floor space ratio is significantly higher than the current controls then a planning proposal would be a more appropriate approval pathway. The applicant should consider a separate discussion with Council's assessment officers for further guidance.
- e. Regardless of the approval pathway the rear built form needs to demonstrate suitability within the HCA. Visual impact of the rear built form should be tested from various locations within the public domain including vantage points from Darling Street and Victoria Road.
- f. The Panel is not convinced with the applicant's built form strategy of entirely relying on the DA-approved massing of the adjoining Balmain Tigers site as their justification for additional height and FSR. The Panel understands that the proposal on the adjoining site has undergone a separate merit-based planning proposal process where significant public domain benefits were offered as part of a public square and through-site pedestrian connections, the equivalent of which cannot be provided by the proposal.

3. Site Planning:

- a. In addition to the discussion of height and floor space ratio, the Panel identified a non-compliance in terms of building separation distances which are required by the Housing SEPP 2021 [Part 3, Clause 69(2)(b)].
- b. Based on the Part 3F of the Apartment Design Guide (ADG), a total building separation distance of 18m is required between the proposed rear building and the DA-approved building on the adjoining Balmain Tigers site for the fifth storey and above. The Panel recommends a 9m building separation should be provided by the subject site and it should be measured from the centre of the future potential laneway at the rear of the site.
- c. The architectural and urban design drawings should show the DA-approved plans, elevations and sections of the adjoining Balmain Tigers site. Furthermore, future potential building envelopes for the adjoining sites fronting Darling Street should also be included as part of any future submission/s to the AEDRP.
- d. The architectural drawings do not clearly document the extent of site boundary at the rear and its relationship with the laneway appears ambiguous on the plans and sections. The Panel expects further clarity on the land ownership status of the entire rear laneway lots identified as 'Little Darling Lane'. The applicant should demonstrate that the proposal can fully rely on

the rear laneway access for all vehicular movement, including standard access to the car park as well as garbage removal and deliveries. Swept path diagrams should be provided. The applicant needs to indicate the upgraded pavement and kerb material required as part of these site works based on Council's standards and material palette.

4. Building Configuration:

- a. The Panel queried about the vehicular access and egress from the rear laneway as it appears to be highly constrained in its current configuration.
- b. The ground floor configuration needs a much greater resolution and refinement. In terms of the CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) principles, a clear line of sight should be established from the pedestrian entry point to both lift shafts. A more generous and better architectural and spatial quality is expected for the entry foyer. Fire exits and staircases should be thoughtfully organised to egress directly onto the streets.
- c. A floor-to-floor height of 2.9m is considered to be constrained and not in-line with other co-living proposals within the Inner West area reviewed at the AEDRP. The Panel recommends a clear 2.7m floor-to-ceiling height within all habitable areas, and a minimum floor-to-floor height of 3.1m would be required to achieve it. The Panel expects provision of ceiling fans to all Co-living rooms as a low energy alternative and greater ceiling heights should be considered to address the Panel's recommendation.
- d. Given the building height is expected to exceed the 12m BCA effective height, a stretcher-compliant lift should be considered for both building wings. The Panel also discussed that an open-type fire stairs are more suitable for a lower height building typology (such as a 3 storey walk-up building). The open-type treatment within a building higher than 3 storeys creates potential safety concerns for the residents within the upper levels of the development. If an open approach is pursued, the Panel suggests obtaining NCC and fire engineering advice to substantiate the alternative solution.
- e. The Panel expects a greater level of activation of the central communal open space. A minimum 3 hour direct solar access at mid-winter, as required by the Housing SEPP 2021 should be demonstrated to the common living room. The Panel also recommends that a minimum 3 hour direct solar access at mid-winter achieved within the communal open space to improve the amenity of residents. The applicant should provide sun eye views at hourly interval.
- f. The panel recommends the applicant engage a suitably qualified landscape architect be engaged to work on the central communal courtyard. The design team should apply the ADG guidelines for the design and planning of communal areas.

Conclusion:

The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel recognises that there are fundamental statutory planning and urban design matters that need to be addressed to the Panel's satisfaction as a priority. The Panel has not fully commented on other architectural and landscape design issues considering these are lower-order issues in comparison with more fundamental issues listed earlier in this report.

It is also the Panel's view that the proposal, in its current form and configuration, should not be supported as it does not achieve the design excellence standards (Inner West LEP 2022, Clause 6.9) for – urban design, architectural and landscape design, as expected for a co-living proposal within the Inner West local government area.