



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	102 Norton Street Leichhardt
Proposal:	Alterations and additions to an existing commercial building to create a 3 storey mixed use building with a café, co-living dwellings over a basement carpark
Application No.:	DA/2023/0555
Meeting Date:	19 September 2023
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Vishal Lakhia (chair); Russell Olsson; Jon Johannsen; and Niall Macken
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Anthony Roydhouse; Ferdinand Dickel; Sean Wilson; Tom Irons; Kaitlin Zieme; Adele Cowie; Martin Amy
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Joseph Panetta (Habitation Design) – Architect for the project; Andrew Martin (Andrew Martin 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's team through an online conference.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. The AEDRP typically provides independent advice on matters related to architecture, urban design, landscape design, and design excellence, however at this instance, the Panel highlighted an overall statutory planning concern regarding the permissibility of the proposal at the subject site. The Panel understands that the proposal does not

comply with the minimum lot size requirement within the Housing SEPP 2021 legislation [Part 3, Clause 69(1)(b)(ii)]. 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 448.6m², significantly below the 800m² SEPP requirement.

2. Additionally, the issue regarding potential isolation of the adjoining property to the south – 98 Norton Street, should be addressed as a priority. The Panel notes that amalgamation with the adjoining property to the south will not achieve the minimum lot size requirement within the Housing SEPP 2021, however, additional site area would be beneficial in alleviating development pressure and improving the overall urban design outcome for the proposal. Site amalgamation would allow an efficient site layout benefitting from the blank side wall of the commercial building at 96 Norton Street and may allow for the retention, at least in part, of the existing building on the subject site.
3. The Panel discussed if there is any merit in retaining the existing building on the site. The applicant's strategy appears counter-productive as retention diminishes the overall quality of the architectural design. The built form to the rear appears largely out-of-character. The Panel recommends demolition of the existing structures, and a significant redesign of the proposal as part of any new strategy. Should that approach be taken, the new design would need to resolve the numerous constraints due to the site size in a sophisticated re-design that also considers the streetscape context.
4. However, should the Applicant decide to pursue a scheme with retention of the existing building that could have benefits in retention of some heritage fabric and minimising waste, there would need to be a more recessive design approach for built form to be less assertive behind the existing envelope.
5. The Panel considers the side and rear setbacks (within a range of 1.15m to 3.5m) to be inadequate in achieving the expected visual and acoustic privacy, and the desired outlook from the proposed boarding rooms. There was a discussion at the meeting that based on the Housing SEPP 2021 provisions, a large boarding house (with a built form equivalent to 3 storeys or more) should incorporate building separation requirements based on the NSW Apartment Design Guide - Part 3F – Visual Privacy. The Panel notes that this may not be realistically achievable for the proposal if developed in isolation from the adjoining property to the south.
6. In terms of the side and rear setbacks, the Panel does not expect strict numerical compliance with the ADG separation distances, however, consistency should be established with the guidance offered within Part 3F of the ADG. The applicant needs to develop thoughtful building configuration strategies to maximise privacy and outlook within the boarding rooms. The potential visual and acoustic privacy cross-viewing issues with the outdoor area of the child care centre located on the adjoining property to the north need to be resolved as part of the re-design.
7. The Panel supports the applicant's strategy of retaining trees within the rear setback, however, the proposed deep soil width (860mm) will be inadequate to support a healthy tree root zone. The applicant should work with a suitably qualified landscape architect and an arborist to develop further details of the landscape design and tree retention. The Panel recommends addition of small-medium tree canopy cover within the rear setback and the northern side setback from the child care centre, to improve privacy and to enhance the interface along the adjoining properties.
8. The Panel expects the proposal should demonstrate compliance with the minimum common room and common open area sizes, including 3 hour solar access in mid-winter as part of the Housing SEPP 2021 requirements. The applicant should provide views from the angle of sun for further review.

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9. As part of the revised proposal, the Panel encourages use of ceiling fans incorporated within all boarding rooms and common rooms as a low energy alternative/augmentation to mechanical A/C systems. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered for collection and reuse within the site. A photovoltaic system should be incorporated for sustainability benefits. The applicant is strongly encouraged not to use gas and that any future development be all-electric.
10. The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form and configuration, and recommends that a revised proposal should return to the Panel with recommendations of this report incorporated and/or addressed.