

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	252 Johnston Street Annandale NSW 2038
Proposal:	Alteration and additions to existing residential care facility to facilitate change of use to co-living housing (off campus student housing), provision of neighbourhood shop (cafe) and associated works, including signage and site remediation
Application No.:	DA/2023/0909
Meeting Date:	5 December 2023
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Vishal Lakhia – chair; Jon Johannsen; Jean Rice; Niall Macken
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Angela Berryman; Sean Wilson; Kaitlin Zieme; Martin Amy
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	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.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. The Panel discussed that only one lift is proposed for 103 rooms which will create pressure on vertical circulation within the building. It is recommended that the layout be modified to make the three existing fire stairs more accessible and inviting to the residents so they form an opportunity for interaction. A further recommended strategy is to create break-out spaces for casual interaction around the staircases by eliminating some of the rooms located adjacent to the stairs on each typical level.
2. The Panel further discussed the monotony in the layout with excessively long corridors and repetition of rooms on either side. Some spatial relief is required, for example by the introduction

of additional break-out spaces for social interaction between the residents. Reduction in the number of rooms and/or reconfiguration of rooms would improve the overall amenity benefits and meet community-oriented aspirations from the project.

3. Furthermore, the landscape design within the ground floor plane should be modified to create accessible walkways connecting the fire stairs with the pedestrian entry points from the public domain including – Johnston Street, Rose Street and Piper Lane.
4. The Panel supports addition of the external balconies to the rooms, however, further resolution within the layouts is required at all internal building corners, to eliminate potential visual and acoustic privacy issues between the rooms. The utility of some of the balconies was queried due to their constrained size or configuration (eg. to room 110, 124, 332).
5. The Panel discussed that potential long-term maintenance, cleaning and privacy issues with glass balustrades within the balconies should be avoided. Instead, the applicant should consider provision of solid or permeable balustrade treatment or alternatively composite treatment (eg. 750mm high solid treatment with open-type palisades above) to create a balance between outlook and privacy within the balconies. The Panel also notes that the recommended treatment would be more suitable for the site located within the heritage conservation area and would allow better ventilation through the adjoining doorways.
6. The Panel notes the slightly undersized rooms which are below the 12m² minimum requirement of the Housing SEPP 2021. In the Panel's view, a slight departure from the SEPP control should be supported in this instance if the kitchenettes, wardrobes, and bar-fridges are thoughtfully integrated into joinery design, as was indicated in visual interior impressions. The Panel also appreciates provision of balconies to these undersized rooms will offer additional amenity as a balance, provided the balustrades are amended as noted above to improve privacy, ventilation and visual impacts.
7. The Panel recommends all adaptable rooms should be relocated adjacent to the lift for ease of access for residents with a disability.
8. The Panel recommends that the conservatory could be treated as a community garden possibly maintained by the residents, and the addition of a pergola with climbers over the carpark entry to soften the hard concrete interface and outlook from the adjacent communal area.
9. The Panel recommends that the landscaped garden on the ground floor could include a secured outdoor clothes drying area adjacent to a communal laundry and these might be best located near a social activity area. Provision of a bike maintenance workshop within the building and a short-term bike rack for visitors near the main entry are also recommended for the residents and visitors. The bike storage areas should be designed to link to the interior of the building and to be pleasant and safe spaces.
10. The adaptive reuse proposition has overall sustainability benefits, however, incorporation of further Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) design principles are encouraged to create high performance, energy, and resource efficient building. Use of ceiling fans should be considered as a low energy alternative/augmentation to A/C/ mechanical systems. Provision of a rooftop photovoltaic system should be incorporated with details confirmed on architectural drawings and 3D views. The applicant should allow water capture and reuse for landscape irrigation. A full building electrification would be recommended and include provision of EV charging points.
11. The Panel recommends that fire egress within the proposal should be reviewed by/with a suitably qualified specialist/certifier to ensure NCC compliance and travel distances to the exit points.
12. The Panel was informed at the de-briefing about a car parking shortfall of 9 car spaces, and in the Panel's view the shortfall should be supported if the proposal incorporates the recommendations in this report.

Conclusion:

1. The Panel acknowledges its independent and advisory only role, and the proposal should return for a further review with the recommendations of this report incorporated and/or addressed as part of this development application stage.