



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	119 Booth Street Annandale
Proposal:	The partial demolition of the former Commonwealth Bank building at 119 Booth Street, Annandale and construction of a three-storey co-living development; and alterations and additions, plus site remediation to an existing boarding house at 121-125 Booth Street, and change of use to 'co-living'. Overall the new co-living development will provide 91 co-living rooms connected across the two sites with integrated communal indoor and outdoor spaces.
Application No.:	DA-2023-0900
Meeting Date:	13 February 2024
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (chair); Diane Jones; and Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; Eamon Egan; and Adele Cowie
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Gyula Toth (Toth & Partners) – Architect for the project; Kate Bartlett (The Planning Studio) – 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 understands the proposal unites 2 buildings located on 2 separate properties – involving the alteration of an existing boarding house at 121 Booth Street and construction of a new co-living building proposed at 119 Booth Street. The applicant also proposes to change the

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operational arrangements of the existing boarding house to create a new, integrated 'co-living' use, in order to jointly function as a co-living development united across both properties.

2. The Panel notes that although the two buildings are attached and intended to function as a single integrated facility, the buildings retain separate street addresses and the internal circulation is only connected on Levels 2, and 3. The Panel's concern is that contrary to good urban design practice and undermining the practical utility of the proposal, the buildings remain disconnected on the ground floor level and Level 1. Additionally, the carpark level within the existing building is disconnected from the new building.
3. The Panel raised concerns for the quality and practicality of the internal circulation that links the buildings on Levels 2 and 3. In the Panel's view, the common corridors between the buildings are not effectively connected. The connection relies on a pass-through lift to link the two adjacent corridors, and the lift car is required to be present between the corresponding levels of both buildings to allow residents to walk along the corridors of the buildings (via the pass-through lift car). The Panel finds this arrangement convoluted and counter-intuitive. Provision of only 1 lift for 91 rooms further exacerbates the circulation constraints within the buildings, particularly in any scenario where the lift is out of order.
4. The Panel discussed the proposed location of the on-site Manager's room within the lower ground/basement level of the existing building. The proposed location is disconnected from the communal areas of the proposal and from this location the Manager will not be able to effectively oversee the premises.
5. The Panel notes that the communal open space and the communal room are proposed on the ground floor level of the new building. Given the limited building circulation, this proposed location would only effectively serve the users of the new building and isolate users within the existing building. Similarly, the Panel notes that common facilities, such as the laundry and kitchens, would not be readily accessible to all users within both buildings.
6. Council should satisfy itself of appropriate compliance with the relevant matters set out within SEPP (Housing 2021), particularly minimum requirements for the communal room area, communal open space area, landscaped area, provision of solar access, carparking, bicycle parking and room sizes. The Panel recommends that the proposal comply with these SEPP controls to ensure an acceptable level of amenity and quality of living is offered to users. Additionally, compliance with the National Construction Code and the relevant Australian Standards, particularly for accessibility and fire safety are a concern for the Panel, which should be reviewed by suitably qualified specialists.
7. The Panel noted some positive features evident within the existing 'L' shaped building - such as generous room sizes and outlook - however, the proposal appears to adopt a strategy of intervening 'as little as possible, as much as necessary' which contributes to the poor general arrangement. The Panel encourages consideration of a greater degree of intervention and adaptation within the existing building in order to resolve the overall integration of the two buildings.
8. An alternative circulation strategy may be to create a single, generously spaced pedestrian entry for both buildings directly accessible and visually prominent from Booth Street. Additionally, the common corridors connecting both buildings should be thoughtfully planned to allow comfortable and intuitive movement across the buildings (without relying on a pass-through lift to facilitate access).
9. Overall however, the Panel does not support the proposal in its current form since it lacks the basic intuitive internal circulation, provides little opportunity to foster community and lacks the spatial cohesion expected from a contemporary co-living development. The common spaces such as the entry foyer/s, circulation corridors, communal room, and communal open space should be prioritised to be at heart of the proposal delivering high levels of amenity.

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10. The Panel acknowledges that matters related to the proposed architectural expression, sustainability, FSR exceedance, outlook, privacy and landscape design were not fully discussed during the meeting since the threshold issues are those discussed in this report. However, these design and planning issues will need to be satisfactorily resolved in any future amendments.
11. Similarly, the following concerns were identified in the current proposal:
 - a. constrained outlook and separation from rooms G.4, G.5, 1.05, 1.06, 2.05, and 2.06
 - b. constrained size and amenity within majority of rooms located within the new building
 - c. poor building presentation with bin storage located within the entry lobby area
 - d. lack of resolution for waste storage and collection
12. The Panel encourages all applicants to engage with the design review process in the pre-DA environment in order to benefit from early discussions on fundamental urban design and amenity merits, and prior to lodging a fully detailed development application.