



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	469-483 Balmain Road LILYFIELD
Proposal:	Concept and detailed (Stage 1) development application for a mixed-use development comprising of residential flat buildings and light industrial uses
Application No.:	DA/2023/0467
Meeting Date:	13 February 2024
Previous Meeting Date:	22 August 2023 (as part of the development application stage) 7 June 2022 (as part of the site-specific Draft DCP Review)
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (chair) Diane Jones; and Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; Annalise Ifield; Tom Irons
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Tai Ropiha, Joshua Zoeller – Architects for the project (CHROFI); Matthew Di Maggio, Michael Oliver – Urban Planners for the project (Ethos Urban); Wes van der Gardner – Applicant's Representative (Roche Property Group)

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The AEDRP (comprising the same Panel members) had the opportunity to review the proposal at a previous meeting as part of the development application stage. The Panel thanks the applicant for thoroughly responding to its previous recommendations, mainly including:
 - a. Reconfiguration and relocation of the communal open spaces and deep soil areas;
 - b. Resolution of the internal building separation distances and interfaces;
 - c. Reconfiguration of Building D to improve internal amenity;
 - d. Consideration of sustainability recommendations;



- e. Improvement in the internal apartment layouts; and
 - f. Resolution of traffic access and relocation of the bicycle parking
3. As a proposal subject to *Chapter 4 – Design of residential apartment* of the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Housing 2021, the Panel’s review and comments have been structured against the 9 Design principles set out in the SEPP (Housing) 2021 – Schedule 9 and the Apartment Design Guide (ADG).

Discussion & Recommendations:

Principle 1 – Context and Neighbourhood Character

1. The Panel noted a number of built form and landscape design improvements at the eastern corner of the site due to the increased setback from Cecily Street. However, the Panel considers that uniting buildings D, E and F tends to create a long built form along Fred Street and the south eastern site interface and serves to further enclose the internal lane network within the site.
2. In order to alleviate this, the Panel suggests the partial reinstatement of a break between buildings E and F. A through-site pedestrian link may be added within this suggested building break, and importantly such a link would also create a visual connection from Balmain Road to Fred Street (across Alberto Lane). The Panel considers this visual link is essential for this suggestion, to successfully reduce the sense of density and enclosure within the internal site planning.
3. The suggested link does not necessarily need to provide barrier free access and could be configured in the form of stairs. Further, the link does not need to be reinstated in a full laneway width, so long as the break aligns to some extent with the existing visual link created between Alberto Lane and Balmain Road, and potentially offering a clear line-of-sight across the site.

Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale

1. The Panel understands from Council’s assessing officers that the proposed staging arrangement for a second stage of works, which is anticipated for the link building may be problematic if considered at the later stages of the development approval process and given that the first stage of works proposes complete demolition of this link building. The applicant is encouraged to have further discussions with Council to resolve this as part of a separate statutory planning discussion beyond the Panel’s typical scope. The Panel would support a greater extent of retention of the link building, particularly its Balmain Road façade and a small return. The Panel notes heritage issues with demolition and future staging and considers the link building should maintain a zero setback to Balmain Road, to complement the setbacks of the adjacent buildings.
2. The Panel discussed the ground floor lobby widths proposed for buildings A and B, and whether the nominated widths are adequate given the scale and presence of these buildings. The ground floor lobbies should provide a generous sense of address, adequate space for casual interaction between residents and storage for parcel deliveries, whilst also allowing safe and intuitive movement for the residents. The applicant should ensure that the proposed dimensions and spatial quality of the foyer spaces are not diminished once building services elements (fire indicator panels, mailboxes, meters and cupboards etc) are incorporated as part of the detailed design.

Principle 3 – Density

1. The Panel notes that the proposal appears to be consistent with the endorsed planning proposal and has been amended in a manner which reduces its apparent sense of density as discussed in Built Form and Scale above. The Panel supports the amended proposal subject to suggestions and recommendations made in this report.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

1. The Panel recommends Council undertakes a detailed review of the proposal in terms of its consistency with the targets within the ADG for solar access (Part 4A-1, design criteria 1, 2 and 3) and natural cross ventilation (Part 4B-3, design criteria 1).
2. Additionally, Council should satisfy itself that earlier recommendations of the Panel have been incorporated within the DA documentation, including:
 - a. Use of ceiling fans within all bedrooms and living areas as a low energy alternative/augmentation to mechanical A/C systems.
 - b. Provision of a rainwater tank to allow collection, storage and reuse within the subject site.
 - c. Inclusion of an appropriate photovoltaic system.
 - d. Full building electrification including provision for EV charging points within the basement carpark.

Principle 5 – Landscape

1. The Panel acknowledges the positive changes offered by the applicant in terms of increased deep soil areas and roof top communal open spaces for buildings A, B and C. Provision of a unisex toilet on each roof top communal open space is noted, however, the Panel recommends these toilets should also be designed as accessible facilities.

Principle 6 – Amenity

1. The Panel identified a small number of instances where the proposal does not yet achieve acceptable visual and acoustic privacy for the residents. For example – the separation between apartments A205 and B202 on Level 2, and apartments A504 and B502 on Level 5 appears constrained. Provision of screening devices may resolve the Panel's concern for visual privacy. However, the applicant may also consider alternative internal apartment configuration strategies to improve acoustic as well as visual privacy.
2. The Panel notes that the apartments within buildings E and F should benefit from further resolution of the ground floor layouts. In the current configuration, the courtyards appear to be partly below ground and the AC condensers should be moved to a more discrete location. The applicant may consider improving these apartment layouts in terms of outlook, internal amenity, and the effectiveness of natural cross ventilation.
3. Council should satisfy itself that the proposed internal and external storage volumes for all residential apartments is consistent with the targets set out in *Part 4G Storage* of the ADG.

Principle 7 – Safety

1. The applicant is encouraged to develop a night-time safety, activation and (particularly) lighting strategy. The location of a number of residential lobbies on internal laneways, away from the primary street network, needs to be supported by such a strategy.

Principle 8 – Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

The Panel supports the proposed mix of residential and commercial uses including the range of dwelling types and sizes.



Principle 9 – Aesthetics

1. The Panel restates its strong recommendation that the applicant provide a clear expression of the proposed architectural design intent. This may take the form of 1:50 sections and details (or annotated 3D diagrams) of each primary facade type to clearly show materials, balustrade types and fixings, balcony edges, junctions, integration of rainwater drainage including any downpipes and similar details within the proposal. Material should also confirm whether a 3.1m floor-to-floor height will be adequate in achieving compliance with the relevant NCC provisions, whilst also achieving the ADG target of 2.7m floor-to-ceiling heights within all habitable spaces of the apartments.

Conclusion:

1. The Panel acknowledges a series of improvements evident in the latest set of design amendments, and continues to offer its in-principle support for the proposal.
2. Council should satisfy itself of the suitability of any further amendments made to the proposal. The proposal should only return to the Panel for further review if the assessing officer has residual concerns.

Attachments:

1. Previous AEDRP Report from the 22 August 2023 Meeting



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Previous Meeting Date:	7 June 2022 (as part of the site-specific Draft DCP Review)
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (chair); Diane Jones; and Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; Annalise Ifield; Tom Irons; and Kaitlin Zieme
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Tai Ropiha and Joshua Zoeller – Architects for the project (CHROFI); Matthew Di Maggio and Michael Oliver – Urban Planners for the project (Ethos Urban); Wes van der Gardner – Applicant's Representative (Roche Property Group)

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The Panel understands that the proposal is lodged as a Stage 1 Concept Development Application. A previous draft site-specific Development Control Plan (DCP) forming part of the rezoning process was reviewed by the Panel at an earlier meeting in June 2022. The previous AEDRP Report (7 June 2022) is attached to this report for reference.
3. As a proposal subject to the State Environmental Planning Policy No 65 (SEPP 65) – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development, the Panel's review and 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

1. The Panel commends the applicant for providing a comprehensive set of architectural drawings, 3D views and photomontages. The Panel recognises that the amended scheme presented at this meeting reconfigures and improves the proposed built form by eliminating the earlier 'H-shaped' building envelope and instead providing two distinct, separate buildings atop a united podium.
2. The amended building forms also improve the presentation of the proposal to Balmain Road and Callan Park to the northwest, and improve the transition in scale as it steps down towards the traditional, lower-scale areas of Lilyfield to the southeast.
3. As part of the overarching discussion and the Panel's in principle support for the proposal, the Panel questioned the applicant's approach to the extent and distribution of proposed communal open space and deep soil particularly given the demographic profile and mix of uses anticipated within the precinct.
4. The Panel encourages the applicant to demonstrate the greatest possible consistency with Parts 3D *Communal and public open space* and 3E *Deep soil zones* of the ADG as part of the Stage 1 DA - acknowledging though that the endorsed Planning Proposal and building retention strategy establishes a number of constraints. One strategy that may assist here is a comparative analysis between the extent of deep soil currently accommodated on the site as a baseline for comparison.
5. Further discussion regarding the format, quantum and quality of the communal open space is offered in *Principle 5 – Landscape* of this report.

Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale

1. The Panel offers further in principle support for the proposed 12m building separation between the 4 storey towers addressing Balmain Road. A key benefit of this strategy over the earlier 'H-shaped' buildings is the reduced apparent density afforded by the physical break between these two building forms. Notwithstanding this support, the Panel notes that the twisted forms towards the centre of the site (which seek to better capture city views), result in a diminution of the benefits of the building separation. For example –
 - a. The pinch point of 6m internal building separation between the ends of the south eastern residential towers located over the podium creates acoustic and visual privacy impacts, particularly for the 1 bed apartment to the east;
 - b. Minimum 8.1 and 8.9m separation between the upper levels of residential buildings (D, E and F) addressing Alberto Lane similarly creates acoustic and visual privacy impacts.
2. The Panel discussed the location of the proposed adaptable apartments within the south eastern residential apartment buildings (D and E). The allocation at the topmost level is potentially problematic as it risks isolating residents from the surrounding public domain and communal open space. Adaptable apartments should generally have either direct access to the street network or be located in a building with more than one lift.

Additionally, the lobby connectivity for residential flat buildings D, E and F with their surrounding public domain needs resolution to demonstrate barrier-free connection along Fred Street.

3. Bicycle parking should be provided in a more readily accessible location, rather than at the lowest of the basement levels.



4. The proposed kiosk substation should be sited in a more discreet location or integrated into a built chamber. The current prominent location along Alberto Street detracts from the residential address of Building D.

Principle 3 – Density

1. The Panel notes that the proposal appears to be consistent with the endorsed planning proposal and has been amended in a manner which reduces the apparent density as discussed in Built Form and Scale above.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

1. The Panel notes that the applicant's decision to depart from the preparation of a site-specific DCP should not diminish any commitment to ecologically sustainable development principles that were previously set out in the draft DCP. As a minimum, the Panel expects that the applicant demonstrates consistency with the sustainability targets within the ADG for solar access (Part 4A-1, design criteria 1, 2 and 3) and natural cross ventilation (Part 4B-3, design criteria 1). Additionally, the applicant should identify any further commitments related to energy, waste and water efficiency as part of this Stage 1 development application. It is the Panel's view that the sustainability outcomes should be ambitious regardless of the approval pathway.
2. The Panel encourages use of ceiling fans within all bedrooms and living areas as a low energy alternative/augmentation to mechanical A/C systems.
3. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered to allow collection, storage and reuse within the subject site.
4. The applicant should include details of an appropriate photovoltaic system on all architectural drawings and 3D views.
5. Full building electrification is encouraged along with the inclusion of EV charging points within the basement carpark.

Principle 5 – Landscape

1. The Panel questions the extent and distribution of the proposed communal open space and deep soil areas within the proposal. The Panel encourages the applicant to demonstrate the greatest possible consistency with Part 3D-1 of the ADG in terms of the minimum 25% target with a minimum 50% direct solar access to the principal usable part of a communal space at mid-winter. Similarly and in terms of the deep soil areas proposed, the applicant should demonstrate the greatest possible consistency with the ADG targets for a minimum of 15% of the site area, given that the site is greater than 1,500m².
2. In particular, the Panel is concerned for the apparent constrained utility of the podium top communal open spaces given the proposed arrangement of central skylights and the resultant irregular open spaces created by the twisting building forms relative to the podium.
3. If the proposal can clearly demonstrate that the extent, distribution and resultant quality of communal open space and deep soil is acceptable in landscape and urban design terms and relative to the extent of deep soil currently provided on the site, the Panel may offer support for an inconsistency in meeting the communal open space and deep soil targets set out in the ADG.
4. The applicant should further demonstrate social sustainability benefits of the proposed landscape design in terms of its ground level porosity and connectivity, accessibility and usage. For example, the extent to which the site permits public access and activation, whether children and a range of age groups living within the precinct are catered for, whether the communal and public spaces invite informal recreation, outdoor play activities and shaded areas. The Panel notes a significant degree of potential cross viewing between commercial tenancies and residential open



spaces (both communal and private). Further opportunities should be considered for integrating play equipment, indoor/outdoor gyms or similar facilities for the residents or wider public.

Principle 6 – Amenity

1. In terms of the residential amenity, the Panel queried the effectiveness and amenity of the proposed 'light-well gardens', particularly those within Building D. It is currently not clear if these light wells offer adequate daylight, natural ventilation and a desirable outlook to the residents given their constrained size adjacent to the basement ramp structure. Reliance on light-wells within apartments D001, D002, D004, E001, E002 and E004 is potentially problematic for the master bedrooms, primary living areas and balconies served within these apartments and for achieving effective cross ventilation. The applicant should demonstrate that acceptable amenity, privacy and outlook can be achieved, or consider alternative internal configuration strategies to eliminate these issues.
2. The Panel recommends further resolution and refinement of a number of detailed apartment layouts to establish greater consistency with the guidance offered within *Part 4D Apartment size and layout* of the ADG. For example, combined living/dining rooms should have a minimum width of 3.6m for studio and 1 bedroom apartments, and 4m for 2 and 3 bedroom apartments.
3. The applicant should confirm the internal and external storage volumes for all residential apartments in terms of demonstrating consistency with *Part 4G Storage* of the ADG.

Principle 7 – Safety

1. The Panel recommends further refinement of the ground level layout to improve safe and barrier-free connectivity between the existing surrounding streets and the newly introduced public domain within the site. Additionally, opportunities for passive surveillance and direct address from ground floor apartments should be maximised, particularly within the south eastern residential apartment Buildings D, E, and F.
2. The applicant should develop a night-time safety, activation and lighting strategies as part of any revised documentation.

Principle 8 – Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

1. While the proposal is supported for the good unit mix, the Panel suggests introducing an occasional 'Dual Key' apartments within the proposal, potentially linking a studio unit and a 2 or 3 bed apartment to broaden the scope and affordability of accommodation types provided.

Principle 9 – Aesthetics

1. The Panel requests the applicant provide a clear expression of detailed design intent. This should take the form of 1:20 sections and details of each primary facade type to clearly show materials, balustrade types and fixing, balcony edges, junctions, integration of rainwater drainage including any downpipes and similar details within the proposal. Sections should also confirm whether a 3.1m floor to-floor height will be adequate in achieving compliance with the relevant NCC provisions, whilst also achieving minimum 2.7m floor-to-ceiling heights within all habitable spaces of the apartments.

Non-SEPP 65 Matters:

1. The applicant and Council are encouraged to consider whether community consultation should be required to be undertaken as part of the Stage 1 development application process.



Additionally, background and research regarding indigenous history of the site should be considered as part of the applicant's investigation of an appropriate connection with Country.

Conclusion:

1. In order to build upon the Panel's in principle support, the proposal should be refined to demonstrate the greatest possible consistency with the NSW Apartment Design Guide and the recommendations within this AEDRP Report.
2. The Panel recommends a second opportunity to review this proposal as part of this Stage 1 development application.