



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	7A-19 Norton Street Leichhardt
Proposal:	Construction of a Mixed use development comprising demolition of the majority of existing structures, consolidation of 6 lots, erection of a new building/s to contain ground floor retail tenancies with 217 Co-living rooms and ground and upper levels, all above basement parking/laundry/storage.
Application No.:	PDA/2025/0092
Meeting Date:	3 June 2025
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger Russell Olsson Vishal Lakhia (chair)
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Eamon Egan Adele Cowie
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Stefanie Hughes, Adrian Baker (SJB) – Architects for the project Karla Castellanos – Urban designer for the project Joe Vescio – Urban planner for the project Alan Chen (Developtek) – Applicant's representative

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 reviewed the proposal in terms of design excellence, as required by the Inner West Local Environmental Plan 2022 – Clause 6.9. Additionally, the proposal meets the threshold established within the AEDRP Terms of Reference to be nominated for this review.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. Reliance on the Draft PRCUTS:

- a. The Panel notes that the site currently has a maximum floor space ratio (FSR) of 1.5:1, with no prescribed maximum building height. The Applicant's proposal is predicated on the Draft Parramatta Road Corridor Urban Transformation Strategy (PRCUTS). The associated zoning, FSR, and height controls have not yet been gazetted and the timing for this remains unknown to both the Panel and Council's development assessment team.
- b. The Applicant advised that, under the draft PRCUTS, the site may be awarded an FSR of 3:1 and a maximum building height of 23.5m, pending finalisation by the NSW Government.
- c. At Council's request, the Panel has reviewed the proposal in terms of design excellence, while also acknowledging that the proposed building height exceeds 23.5m (6 storeys), and without the Panel having the benefit of the proposed Gross Floor Area and FSR calculations. The Panel's preliminary review is based on the schematic documentation provided and addresses the proposed urban design and built form strategies and assesses their relative success along with comments regarding impacts and resultant amenity.
- d. The Panel offers its advice regarding design excellence, which is provided with the caveat that the proposal at odds with the existing planning controls until such time as the PRCUTS is implemented.

2. Urban Design and Built Form Strategy

- a. The lane to the south of the proposed Norton Street building is noted in the documents as a sensitive interface. Whilst nominated as having a width of 6m, it appears to be a narrower dimension. This lane, including its extension further to the east as Dot Lane, has potential for regeneration as an active pedestrian priority space. The existing lane and the proposed lane include provision for car access, including to the subject development. Further study should be undertaken to clarify issues of rights-of-way, and to resolve the compatibility of vehicular and pedestrian movement, active uses, public/private interfaces, and the public realm character and materials more generally.
- b. The Panel understands that a (PRCUTS) maximum building height of six-storeys applies to the site. Given the proposed co-living use, the available 30% affordable housing bonus for building height (applicable to residential apartment developments) is not strictly relevant in this instance.
- c. Notwithstanding this, the Panel discussed the Applicant's approach to massing and yield distribution. The proposal seeks to retain the existing building at 7A Norton Street and 'transfer' its development potential to the remaining site—namely 9, 11, 13, and 15–19 Norton Street—resulting in two additional storeys (to a maximum of eight-storeys) across these properties. Meanwhile, 7A Norton Street would retain its single-storey warehouse form, with an additional storey accommodated within the roof structure.

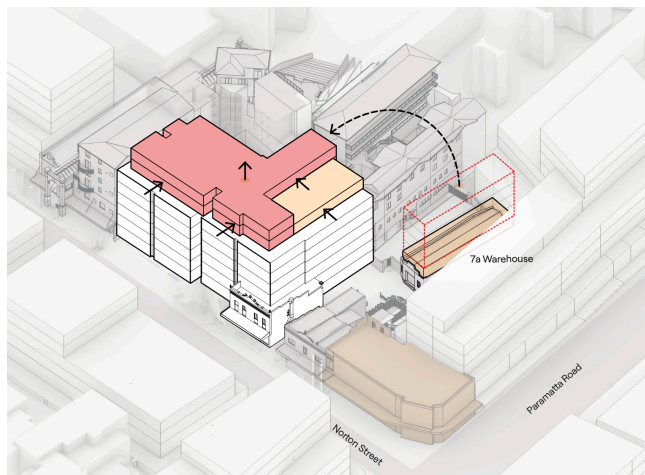


Figure 1 - Applicant's Massing Strategy Diagram

- d. The Applicant should seek independent planning advice to determine what statutory mechanism would support the transfer of GFA and height between adjacent properties. The Panel would seek to avoid a scenario in which 7A Norton Street is later sold and independently redeveloped to its full permissible FSR and height, potentially resulting in an overall floorspace exceedance across the precinct and loss of the stated benefit of retaining the existing lower-scaled warehouse.
- e. The Panel is generally supportive of the strategy to redistribute potential floorspace from the warehouse building to the Norton Street building due to the potential to reduce future overshadowing of neighbouring buildings along Parramatta Road. The adjacent Italian Forum development establishes a scale along Norton Street that could potentially accommodate a taller building form on the subject site.
- f. The retention of the existing two-storey warehouse building on the laneway, for more active uses, is supported in principle. However, the resultant additional two-storeys redistributed to the Norton Street building has the potential to become visually prominent when viewed from Norton Street, Dot Lane and Parramatta Road. The Applicant should provide a robust urban design justification for the proposed height exceedance, including visual and overshadowing impacts assessment. Due to the site's location within a Heritage Conservation Area, careful consideration must be given to the compatibility of the proposed scale with the surrounding heritage fabric and period buildings. Several of the preliminary design strategies presented to the Panel appear to be capable of successfully managing a building form and scale of eight-storeys should this be contemplated in the planning controls.

3. Adjoining Character/Period Buildings:

- a. The Panel notes that properties at 3, 5, and 7 Norton Street could become isolated in future and may be unable to achieve the FSR and height controls proposed within the PRCUTS. The Applicant should investigate the potential for site amalgamation with these properties.
- b. Alternatively, a redevelopment scenario should be explored to demonstrate how these adjoining properties could be integrated into a broader renewal proposition. At a minimum, indicative building envelopes and floor plans (basement, ground and typical levels) should be prepared to illustrate the anticipated future built form relationship alongside the current proposal.

4. Building Separation Distances:

- a. Although not specifically discussed during the meeting, the Panel notes that building separation distances should meet the criteria nominated in Parts 3F-1 and 3F.5 of the NSW Apartment Design Guide.
- b. Based on the information presented at the meeting, the Panel is unable to review consistency with the NSW ADG, and any amenity impacts upon residential apartments within 23 Norton Street (Italian Forum) located north and east of the site.
- c. Revised urban design and architectural documentation should include building footprints and 3D forms of these existing adjacent residential buildings to assess ADG consistency and amenity impacts.

5. Ground Floor and Typical Level Configuration:

- a. The Panel discussed challenges related to pedestrian and vehicular access across the site. As part of the urban design analysis, the Applicant is encouraged to prepare a ground plane diagram to explore how the proposal interfaces with both existing and potential future developments are to be configured to ensure safe and legible pedestrian access and movement networks.
- b. A landscape design strategy should be developed to provide a well-designed open space network, ideally co-located with deep soil zones to maximise environmental, amenity, planting and tree canopy outcomes.



- c. Review of the indicative floor plans suggests that some internal reconfiguration is required to improve amenity, spatial comfort, circulation and storage provision within the co-living rooms.
- d. Visual and acoustic privacy must be effectively managed at the internal re-entrant corners of the building plan. The Panel recommends significant redesign in these areas to eliminate visual and acoustic privacy concerns and direct cross viewing, rather than reliance on privacy screens alone.
- e. It appears that portions of the common corridor labelled as 'breezeway' is excluded from the GFA calculations. The Applicant should seek clarification from Council's development assessment team regarding the approach to any such GFA exclusions.

6. Architectural Expression:

- a. The Panel appreciates the inclusion of 3D diagrams illustrating the proposed urban design and built form strategies, the reference images, façade development diagrams and 'white card' 3D street view image of the proposal. The built form strategy, including the two-storey base, set back mid-levels and vertically proportioned, stepped street wall planes, has the potential to create a well-articulated built form. The approach is generally consistent with the heritage character of Norton Street and appears to be borrowing appropriate architectural cues from the existing streetscape.
- b. The Panel expects further urban design justification and analysis will be necessary to justify the uppermost two storeys, as noted earlier in this report.

Conclusion:

- 1. The Architectural Excellence and Design Review Panel appreciates that the Applicant's intention is to provide strategic concepts of the development for preliminary discussion. The Panel recognises that a fundamental statutory planning issue remains unresolved – the timing and implementation of the PRCUTS controls. This must be addressed to Council's satisfaction if any further pre-DA or formal DA submission is to be contemplated.
- 2. The advice provided in this report is only intended to guide the Applicant in the interim period while the PRCUTS remains in draft form. With appropriate statutory planning clarification, design refinement and resolution, and careful consideration of the heritage and urban context, the Applicant is encouraged to respond to the recommendations offered in this report.
- 3. Acknowledging its independent and advisory role, the Panel encourages the Applicant to develop a detailed proposal to facilitate further discussion as part of another Pre-DA at an appropriate point once the planning pathway is more certain.