



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	76 Wilford Street, Newtown
Proposal:	Demolition of existing structures and construction of a six-storey shop top housing development consisting of 40 residential apartments, ground floor commercial floor area, and two levels of basement carparking
Application No.:	DA/2025/0431
Meeting Date:	19 August 2025
Previous Meeting Date:	NA
Panel Members:	Diane Jones (chair) Peter Ireland Peter McGregor
Apologies:	Vishal Lakhia
Council staff:	Sinclair Croft (Team Leader, Heritage & Urban Design) Ferdinand Dickel (Team Leader Development Assessment) Kuepper Weir (Senior Planner)
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Karla Castellanos (Audax Urban) Vince Connor (Planning Lab) Theo Loucas (Architect) Brian Metledge (Owner)



Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The Panel acknowledges that the proposal is subject to Chapter 4 – State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Housing 2021 - Design of residential apartment development - and the NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG) applies to the proposal. Additionally, the Panel reviewed the proposal in terms of design excellence as required by the Inner West Local Environmental Plan 2022 – Clause 6.9.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. Site Planning and Urban Design:

- a. The Panel expressed their view that the proposal represents overdevelopment of the site and recommends amendments to ensure high quality amenity and a satisfactory level of activation to the surrounding streetscapes can be achieved.
- b. The Panel recommends that the revised design documents present a detailed contextual analysis in terms of relationships with surrounding sites, showing building configurations in section and elevation, the location of windows and habitable spaces and architectural expressions.

2. NSW ADG non-compliances:

- a. The Panel is concerned about the number of inconsistencies with the NSW ADG, notably building separation, communal open space, deep soil and residential storage. The Panel believes that redesign is required to meet the key objectives of the ADG in terms of amenity for the occupants of the site and those in surrounding buildings.
- b. The Panel recommends that the setbacks be adjusted to meet the minimum separation distances set out in the ADG. Similarly, the design requires amendment to accord with the ADG requirements of communal open space, deep soil and residential storage.

3. Architectural Resolution:

- a. The Panel acknowledges that the 7.2 m floor to floor height of the commercial / retail areas is required to accommodate the brewery machinery for Young Henry's. The Panel questioned whether this volume was needed for all proposed commercial / retail areas (for example, the offices to the south) as these industrial scaled volumes add substantially to the bulk of the development and its overshadowing of neighbouring properties. Reducing the floor-to-floor height of these areas would assist in reducing the bulk and visual impact of the building.
- b. The Panel recommends increased floor to floor residential floor heights (shown as 3.1m, including areas with external terraces above) to meet the NCC and DBP Act requirements of waterproofing, acoustic and thermal comfort, and contemporary structural engineering codes. Drawings to demonstrate that the minimum ceiling heights of 2.7m in habitable areas can be met including set downs, falls to drainage, reticulation of services and structural elements are required.
- c. The Panel notes that the planning of some apartments is not well resolved. For example, some bedrooms have a snorkel-like arrangement. Further, Unit 3.11, an adaptable single bed unit has a lot of space devoted to circulation. Reconfiguration of the bathroom and laundry and living areas could integrate this area into usable living space.
- d. The proposed building has a complex undulating and stepped form in both plan and section with a range of curved and counter curved corners. The applicant is encouraged to reconsider this form in relation to that of the surrounding context, including the relatively recent and understated infill development across Gladstone Lane.

4. Communal Open Space:

- a. The Panel understands the space in front of Young Henry's tenancy is designed to be an active open to others. Details of how this will be achieved should be provided with the revised design.

The apartments that are accessed from the northern lobby do not have direct access to the communal open space shown on Level 5. Therefore, the communal open space design requires redesign both in terms of equitable access from all apartments and size to meet the requirements of the ADG.

5. Parking and Storage:

- a. The Panel notes the provision of the surplus car parking proposed on site as a response to the lack of street parking in the area. However, as the site is located within walking distance (500m) of Newtown Railway Station, the Panel recommends removing some of the proposed basement parking to accommodate more generous deep soil zones in keeping with the ADG requirements.
- b. Further, the revised design documents should accurately show the structural design within the basement including columns and shoring walls; storage provisions and consolidated areas of bicycle parking that are readily accessed from the lift lobbies.

6. Inconsistencies in the drawings:

- a. The Panel notes the legend for the overshadowing diagram appears to be incorrect.

7. Additional information:

- a. Section drawings showing the adjoining buildings are required to enable a proper understanding of the site context.
- b. The Panel recommends the consideration of the impacts on nearby windows, such as the windows to the neighbouring properties to the northeast.
- c. If the applicant proposes to retain the 3.1 floor to ceiling, detailed sections should be provided demonstrating how these heights will work, while achieving 2.7m clear ceiling heights in habitable areas (as noted in point 3b above).

8. Noise:

- a. The site is located within a Special Entertainment Precinct. It will be impacted by noise from aircraft, road and rail and the Special Entertainment Precinct. An acoustic report is required to address this condition and the implications for the building fabric identified.

9. Colours and materials:

- a. Dark colours are being proposed, creating a dramatic contrast with the lighter brickwork. The revised design documents should articulate the strategy for the location of materials and colours within the proposed composition and how they respond to the surrounding edge conditions. For example, are the materials being used to express a commercial base, a residential middle and a recessed top?
- b. The effects of the dark-coloured materials on energy usage and heat island conditions in a densely developed area should be addressed.
- c. The Panel suggests consideration of re-using salvaged bricks from the demolition of the former Young Henry's building.

Conclusion:

1. Given the number of important matters requiring further refinement and resolution, as set out above in relation to amenity and contextual fit, the Panel requests that further developed design material be submitted for review by the Panel as part of this development application.