



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	40 Milton Street, Ashfield
Proposal:	Section 4.55(2) Modification to DA/2021/0228 dated 23/11/2021, modification involves removal of the level 2 basement, reduction of both car and motorcycle parking spaces, multiple internal and external amendments to all levels, including access, setback, layout and material and finish changes.
Application No.:	MOD/2025/0172
Meeting Date:	16 September 2025
Previous Meeting Date:	4 May 2021 (DA/2021/0228)
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (chair) Peter McGregor Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Tom Irons Annalise Ifield Matteus Liebenberg Sinclair Croft
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Elizabeth McCabe (client rep) Ashkan Mostaghim (project architect) Anagha Chaudhary (project architect) Santo (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 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 notes that a previous pre-DA proposal was reviewed at the AEDRP meeting on 4 May 2021. The amended proposal is generally commended by the Panel for its refined architectural expression and general approach to rationalising the design.
- b. The Panel generally supports the overall approach to site planning and internal layouts, subject to the following comments.

2. Ground Plane Configuration and Landscape Design:

- a. The reduction in depth of the ground floor balconies and the consequent greater adjacency of the glass line to the footpath reduces the amenity of all ground floor rooms. Any increase to the northern setback along Milton Lane at street level to ease this relationship between ground floor residential accommodation and the narrow laneway is encouraged.
- b. The Panel notes that direct street access to ground floor balconies from the laneway have been removed. It is understood entries have been removed to improve resident security. More broadly however, more intensive casual use of the laneway will make it feel more secure through passive surveillance with approximately 60 rooms overlooking the lane.
- c. The Panel notes that if a separately defined footpath were not required (now direct pedestrian access has been removed), the northern setback may better be utilised for landscaping or other treatment to soften the interface between the proposal and the street level laneway address. Discussion with Council, and its support will be necessary.
- d. The modification results in a reduction in deep soil. The Panel encourages the Applicant consider minor basement design changes that may create more deep soil, such as a potentially better overlay with communal open space in the north-eastern corner, and more garden space directly above deep soil. The Panel also encourages investigations aimed at cutting the basement profile back for increased deep soil planting.
- e. The Panel recommends the basement plinth to the laneway be softened by introducing landscape and/or other detailing in this area.

3. Architectural Resolution:

- a. The Panel understands the modification includes a revised typical dual boarder room module. Internal sleeping areas appear small and there is a strong sense of enclosure, with beds located between the kitchen, bathroom and wardrobe, accessed via 2 steps onto a platform.
- b. The Panel appreciates the design focuses on the provision of storage, with the use of the stairs and platform as drawers, and the large volume under the bed available for storage.
- c. The Panel appreciates that separation between the living space and the sleeping space is key to the design, and the Panel seeks to ensure that the balance between separation of functions and a sense of openness is optimised. Some sense of connection between the living space and sleeping space, possibly provided by a glass splash back above kitchen, may be an option. In other examples shown at the meeting the sleeping area opened directly into the hall resulting in a more spacious feeling and better ventilation. The Panel encourages a detailed design that makes better use of the hall space.
- d. The Panel notes the joinery is proposed at 2.1m high, with a 400mm gap above for air and ventilation for the bed. The free movement of air for natural ventilation and thermal comfort is critical and should be evidenced.

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- e. Noting these points, the Panel requests more detail be provided to allow the primary room modules to be fully assessed for functionality and spatial qualities. Detailed plans, elevations and sections of each typical room type and 3D perspectives at a scale of approximately 1:50 will assist in the understanding of how the spaces will work.
- f. The Panel notes the northern windows in the attic plan are exposed to the summer sun and currently do not provide self-shading. There is potential to increase solar protection to these windows, which may be achieved by pulling the bedroom spaces back, with the stairs arriving earlier to provide more facade depth and modelling to the northern wall. There is also potential to recess the windows with deeper reveals or projections.
- g. The Panel supports the provision of natural light at both ends of the corridors on the typical upper levels, and the direct lines of sight are positive. The Panel encourages that these corridor windows be operable for ventilation. It also encourages appropriately fire-rated fanlights over boarding room doors to allow the units to achieve cross ventilation.
- h. The Panel notes the Manager's unit appears to have been replaced by an accessible unit at ground level. A Manager's room should be nominated on the drawings.
- i. Internal laundries to units (with individual washers and dryers) have been removed and replaced with a shared laundry facility. The Panel is concerned this room may not be adequately sized and requests confirmation of the appropriate level of demand. Generally, the size of the laundry could be increased as a key social space within the building, and direct access provided to an external drying court is supported. There is a potential for expanded laundry facilities to be provided to the upper levels, or alternatively as a commercial laundromat on the ground floor.
- j. The Panel recommends the consideration of a highlight window to serve the ground level room addressing Milton Street in the primary elevation, where windows have been removed for privacy.
- k. Each balcony appears to accommodate an AC condenser unit. The Panel recommends that alternative locations be investigated for these units, which otherwise reduce the usable area and amenity of every balcony. Grouping these in screened enclosures on the roof top would be preferable.
- l. The modification results in a loss of bicycle parking. The minimum requirements should be met for bicycle parking in a convenient and easily accessed location.
- m. The proposed services riser located in the central corridor, next to the lift is not a desirable outcome. The Panel recommends these services be relocated or better integrated for clear lines of sight through the lobby to the lift.
- n. A more dramatic, bold colour scheme to the balcony walls may be considered to provide individual identity and visual interest. This would require adjustments to the finishes schedule to ensure a clear hierarchy of materials is maintained.

Conclusion:

1. Recognising its independent, expert and advisory role, the Panel offers in principle support for the proposed Modification, noting the series of key moves and resultant improvement to the overall site planning, urban design quality and architectural expression. The Applicant is encouraged to adopt the recommendations set out in this report in order to obtain the Panel's full support.
2. The Panel recommends the matters outlined in this report be positively addressed, with potential amendment, and provided to Council.