



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	1 The Esplanade Ashfield
Proposal:	A 10 storey mixed use development with 77 boarding rooms over a basement carpark
Application No.:	DA/2021/0651
Meeting Date:	21 September 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	None
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (external member); Russell Olsson (external member); Niall Macken (internal member); and Vishal Lakhia (internal member) – Chair
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Chirag Bhavan
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Joseph Panetta – Architect for the project; and Andrew Martin – Urban Planner.

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and 3D views, and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The Panel notes that the applicant is seeking floor space ratio and height bonuses offered to affordable housing proposals within the Ashfield Town Centre through the current Inner West LEP and DCP provisions. The Panel understands that Council's assessment team will review and identify whether such bonuses apply to privately-managed commercial boarding houses, such as the proposal.
3. The Panel notes that the applicant, architect and urban planner for the subject site – 1 The Esplanade Ashfield — have also lodged a development application for a similar 10 storey boarding house proposal at 301-305 Liverpool Road Ashfield (DA/2021/0776). Both proposals are in close proximity to each other and present similar urban challenges. The AEDRP has reviewed both development applications at the 21 September 2021 meeting.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. **Urban Design Strategy:**

- a. The Panel notes the proposal is largely documented and presented in isolation from its context. The Panel encourages the applicant to further elaborate on the overarching urban design rationale and justification for the proposed site planning, massing, setbacks and separation distances. Associated analysis is required to be established through an urban design and contextual study.
- b. The proposal should establish an appropriate built form relationship with the potential future development on the adjoining properties to the south (No. 291, 293 and 295 Liverpool Road) and to the east (No. 5-6 The Esplanade) of the subject site. An urban design and contextual analysis should include testing of future development scenarios for these neighbouring properties, to ensure that future development will not be compromised in terms of solar access, residential amenity, visual impact and privacy.
- c. In addition to 1.b, the Panel expressed concern with the proposed built form interface to the south, with the relatively blind elements of fire stairs and lift shafts directly abutting the southern boundary. The Panel considers a lack of separation from the southern boundary to be problematic, as there are potential built form amenity impacts and fire separation issues with the adjoining property. The proposal will be a highly visible element from Liverpool Road and consequently, its expression and presentation need to be composed and articulated, the Panel is concerned for the largely blank expression currently proposed. The Panel also notes the windows and projecting awnings opening directly onto a site boundary.
- d. The Panel expressed concern with the current building massing as the upper levels (Level 1 to 8) cantilever over the 2 storey building base, which is recessed from The Esplanade street alignment. The Panel considers this not to be a suitable built form response for the subject site, given the pedestrian-friendly scale and character of The Esplanade, as the projected upper levels will create an overbearing visual impact on The Esplanade.
- e. The Panel recommends the exploration of alternative massing strategies to better resolve the relationship between the lower levels of the building (and the 3m DCP setback control at street level) and the remainder of the proposed building form. The Panel is keen to mitigate against the cantilevered form described above, and to better resolve the form and articulation of the proposed tower element. Cues for an appropriate built form response should draw on a comprehensive urban and contextual analysis, including recent approvals in the vicinity.
- f. The development application proposes to 'harvest' the available floor space ratio from the site area of No. 287 Liverpool Road to maximise the floor space within the proposed building addressing The Esplanade. As a consequence, the Panel is concerned that No. 287 Liverpool Road risks being left in isolation, and could result in an inefficient and uncoordinated built form along the Liverpool Road frontage when future renewal occurs at No. 291, 293 and 295 Liverpool Road. The applicant should address this concern in their urban design study and contextual analysis and the proposal should ensure the existing property at 287 Liverpool Road is capable of code compliance, and is not orphaned.

2. Ground Floor Configuration:

- a. The Panel considers the extent of ground floor activation to the northern and western interface of The Esplanade should be maximised by relocating or reconfiguring waste collection areas and potentially co-locating vehicular access and servicing to the eastern site boundary with access provided from the existing right-of-way. If required, the applicant should investigate the possibility of widening the existing right-of-way, to improve vehicular movement and access.
- b. The Panel considers that the residential lobby should be more generous and prominent in its size, given the number of lodgers (77 rooms and 154 lodgers) within the residential component.

3. Building Configuration:

- a. The Panel expressed concern that a proposal with 8 residential floors, 2 commercial floors and 3 basement levels (total 1 of 3 levels) is served by only a single lift. The residential component of the proposal has 154 lodgers within 77 rooms and it should be provided with a minimum of 2 lifts in order to establish some level of redundancy in the level of service. There is a need for a minimum 2 lifts for the residential component to accommodate a scenario where one of the lifts is out-of-order or is being used by service providers (e.g. removalists or for deliveries). The Panel also recommends that a separate lift be provided for the commercial component, given its scale and more public use, with a commercial gross floor area of 390m².
- b. The Panel questioned the utility of the narrow cut out or building indentation on typical residential levels. The Panel considers the width-to-depth ratio for any such building indentation appears to be highly constrained to achieve effective air circulation or day light. It is also of a dimension that might prove impossible to construct, finish or maintain. The Panel considers this indentation should be eliminated as it adds to the overall bulk of the building without meaningfully improving internal amenity. The applicant is encouraged to consider a more compact built form with reduced building footprint and at the same time mitigate amenity impacts to the southern neighbour, and on the surrounding public domain.
- c. The Panel queried the viability and buildability of basement structures under the existing right-of-way.
- d. The applicant is encouraged to consider inclusion of ceiling fans to all boarding rooms, as a low energy alternative, or supplement ,to the use of mechanical A/C systems. The Panel considers that the floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights should be increased to a minimum 2.7m and 3.1m, to allow provision of ceiling fans.

4. Architectural Expression:

- a. The Panel recommends a strategy of improving privacy within the balconies and rooms of the lower levels would be by providing 700-800mm high solid elements with glass or open treatment above. Balconies on upper levels may incorporate open type/glass balustrade treatment, to maximise outlook and benefit from views.
- b. The Panel notes a predominant use of rendered and painted surfaces within the proposal, and encourages use of integral and self-finished materials such as brick. Rendered and painted surfaces should be avoided considering the longevity and associated long-term costs.
- c. The Panel recommends the applicant should document street views towards the proposal from the Liverpool Road public domain, for a further review of the architectural expression of the revised scheme.
- d. Revised architectural drawings should confirm locations of AC condenser units and other mechanical equipment. The Panel considers these should not be located within balconies (unless thoughtfully designed to be enclosed and screened from view) or anywhere visually apparent from the surrounding public domain.
- e. Revised architectural drawings should include details of the design intent for key façade types in form of 1:50 or 1:20 sections indicating primary façade types, balustrade fixings, balcony edges, balcony soffits, junctions, rainwater drainage, downpipes and similar details.

Conclusion

INNER WEST

With consideration given to the recommendations made in this report regarding the overarching urban design and architectural aspects, the Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel would like a second opportunity to review this proposal again as part of this DA stage.

At a second review, the Panel would consider whether the proposal is acceptable in terms of its site planning, massing, setbacks, separation distances, architectural expression and built form relationship with the potential future buildings within the vicinity.

The Panel encourages that the applicant to present the proposal at the subject site 1 The Esplanade Ashfield and their similar proposal at 301-305 Liverpool Road Ashfield (DA/2021/0776) together as part of a comprehensive 2D and 3D urban design study and contextual analysis.