

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	108-112 Smith Street Summer Hill
Proposal:	3 storey shop top housing proposal with 8 apartments
Application No.:	DA/2021/0794
Meeting Date:	30 November 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	25 February 2020 and 30 June 2020
Panel Members:	Jon Johannsen – chair, Diane Jones and Tony Caro
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia Chirag Bhavan
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	Palfreeman Sweeney Architects – Architect for the project

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.

Discussion & Recommendations:

Principle 1 – Context and Neighbourhood Character

“Good design responds and contributes to its context. Context is the key natural and built features of an area, their relationship and the character they create when combined. It also includes social, economic, health and environmental conditions.

Responding to context involves identifying the desirable elements of an area’s existing or future character. Well designed buildings respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood. Consideration of local context is important for all sites, including sites in established areas, those undergoing change or identified for change.”

1. The Panel notes that the architectural drawings did not include sufficient context analysis, particularly the wider precinct built form and open space analysis. Although there was reference to the context in the SEE, it did not seem to be adequately inform the design approach described by the submitted DA drawings.

Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale

“Good design achieves a scale, bulk and height appropriate to the existing or desired future character of the street and surrounding buildings.

Good design also achieves an appropriate built form for a site and the building’s purpose in terms of building alignments, proportions, building type, articulation and the manipulation of building elements. Appropriate built form defines the public domain, contributes to the character of streetscapes and parks, including their views and vistas, and provides internal amenity and outlook.”

1. The Panel considers that the 6m wide central courtyard space is too constrained to create an effective building separation between the northern and southern buildings. The central courtyard, with its proposed limited width would perform more like a circulation corridor, and there are potential visual and acoustic privacy concerns for residents within the southern building.
2. The Panel considers that the proposal should create a more generous separation distance that is consistent with the guidance offered by the NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG). The Panel notes that a separation distance of 9m is required based on the guidance within ADG – parts 2F building separation and 3F visual privacy.
3. The Panel suggested that the following strategies could be considered by the applicant in order to achieve greater building separation:
 - a. Reduction of the overall depth of the southern building and reconfiguration of the internal layouts by reducing the total number of apartments from 4 to 3 apartments; and/or
 - b. Reducing the overall building depth by removing the dining areas within the southern building and relocating the southern building closer to the existing right-of-way, subject to resolution of any BCA issues relating to boundary setback.
4. In addition to the recommendation for an increased building separation distance, the Panel recommends that the internal configuration of the apartments within the southern building (on Level 1) should be reversed, so the living areas are relocated to the north and benefit from direct solar access at mid-winter.
5. Also refer to the recommendations included within *Principle 6 – Amenity*

Principle 3 – Density

“Good design achieves a high level of amenity for residents and each apartment, resulting in a density appropriate to the site and its context. Appropriate densities are consistent with the area’s existing or projected population.

Appropriate densities can be sustained by existing or proposed infrastructure, public transport, access to jobs, community facilities and the environment.”

1. The Panel did not specifically discuss this principle, however, the discussion and recommendations offered within Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale, and Principle 6 – Amenity are required to be addressed.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

“Good design combines positive environmental, social and economic outcomes. Good sustainable design includes use of natural cross ventilation and sunlight for the amenity and liveability of residents and passive thermal design for ventilation, heating and cooling reducing reliance on technology and operation costs. Other elements include recycling and reuse of materials and waste, use of sustainable materials, and deep soil zones for groundwater recharge and vegetation.”

1. The Panel noted that the proposal should be consistent with key targets established within the ADG for solar access and natural cross ventilation. For the latter to be achieved there must be clear indication of the size and operation for openable windows.
2. Revised architectural drawings should include sun eye views, to review direct solar access to both balconies and living areas, as required by the ADG Part 4A.
3. The Panel queried the applicant about effective natural cross ventilation achieved within the apartments. While the Panel appreciates provision of windows on opposite ends of the apartments (the courtyard-facing ends), it is the Panel’s view that these windows should be large and operable at both ends in order to foster breezes through the interior of the apartments.
4. The Panel encourages the applicant to consider commitment to further sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency.

5. Provision of ceiling fans is strongly encouraged in all habitable areas. Floor-to-floor and floor-to-ceiling heights should be sufficient to enable the safe use of ceiling fans within the proposal.
6. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered to allow water collection, storage and reuse within the subject site, particularly to water plants within the courtyard.

Principle 5 – Landscape

“Good design recognises that together landscape and buildings operate as an integrated and sustainable system, resulting in attractive developments with good amenity. A positive image and contextual fit of well designed developments is achieved by contributing to the landscape character of the streetscape and neighbourhood

Good landscape design enhances the development’s environmental performance by retaining positive natural features which contribute to the local context, co-ordinating water and soil management, solar access, micro-climate, tree canopy, habitat values, and preserving green networks. Good landscape design optimises usability, privacy and opportunities for social interaction, equitable access, respect for neighbours’ amenity, provides for practical establishment and long term management.”

The Panel does not consider the internal courtyard planters are of sufficient size or layout to provide much benefit to residents. A more considered landscape approach is recommended for any revised submission.

Principle 6 – Amenity

“Good design positively influences internal and external amenity for residents and neighbours. Achieving good amenity contributes to positive living environments and resident well being.

Good amenity combines appropriate room dimensions and shapes, access to sunlight, natural ventilation, outlook, visual and acoustic privacy, storage, indoor and outdoor space, efficient layouts and service areas, and ease of access for all age groups and degrees of mobility.”

1. The Panel expects the proposal to be consistent with the minimum room width and sizes established within the Part 4D Apartment size and layout of the NSW ADG, and the residential amenity within the southern building appears to be challenging. The living rooms or combined living/dining rooms within the southern building should have a minimum width of 4m for 2-bedroom apartments.
2. In addition, the internal width of all 8 cross-over or cross-through apartments within the proposal should be at least 4m internally to avoid overly narrow apartment layouts, based on the guidance offered in Part 4D-3 of the ADG.
3. The Panel notes that the proposal lacks adequate internal and external storage which is an important component of apartment living. Appropriate volumes consistent with Part 4G-1 of the ADG should be provided within each apartment. At least 50% of the required storage should be located within the apartments.
4. Revised architectural drawings should confirm balcony areas for all apartments. The areas of primary balconies should be consistent with ADG requirements ie. minimum 8m² area for 1 bedroom apartments and 10m² area for 2 bedroom apartments.
5. The Panel expressed concern regarding spatial quality and amenity of the ground floor residential foyer. There are potential odour issues with the residential lobby and lift wedged between two bin storage areas. The Panel also notes a lack of an airlock for bin storage areas will further exacerbate the odour problems.
6. The Panel expressed concern that Apartment 5 is not truly adaptable as the accessible bathroom provided on the level above is disconnected from the primary living, dining and kitchen spaces. It is also the Panel’s concern that none of the apartments appear to be ‘visitable’ (the entry doors should allow wheelchair access). Further, the applicant should ensure that an accessible lift is provided within the proposal.

Principle 7 – Safety

“Good design optimises safety and security, within the development and the public domain. It provides for quality public and private spaces that are clearly defined and fit for the intended purpose. Opportunities to maximise passive surveillance of public and communal areas promote safety.

A positive relationship between public and private spaces is achieved through clearly defined secure access points and well lit and visible areas that are easily maintained and appropriate to the location and purpose.”

No discussion

Principle 8 – Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

“Good design achieves a mix of apartment sizes, providing housing choice for different demographics, living needs and household budgets.

Well designed apartment developments respond to social context by providing housing and facilities to suit the existing and future social mix. Good design involves practical and flexible features, including different types of communal spaces for a broad range of people, providing opportunities for social interaction amongst residents.”

No discussion

Principle 9 – Aesthetics

“Good design achieves a built form that has good proportions and a balanced composition of elements, reflecting the internal layout and structure. Good design uses a variety of materials, colours and textures.

The visual appearance of well designed apartment development responds to the existing or future local context, particularly desirable elements and repetitions of the streetscape.”

1. The Panel notes that in its current configuration the dormers appear very large and prominent within the overall built form, and as a result the second-floor addition is almost like a full storey rather than an attic.
2. The rear elevation addressing the right-of-way and the side elevation visible from the adjacent street require further resolution to sit harmoniously with the character of the area. The applicant is encouraged to give further consideration to the overall proportions, materiality and detailing of the rear and the side facades that are visible from the immediate public domain.

Non SEPP 65 Matters:

None

Conclusion:

1. With consideration given to the recommendations made in this Report, the Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel needs a second opportunity to review this proposal again as part of the Development Application stage.
2. At a second review, the Panel would consider whether the proposal is acceptable in terms of the built form, residential amenity, architectural expression and relationship with the surrounding context.