

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	308 Darling Street Balmain
Proposal:	A substantial demolition of existing building to facilitate construction of a 3 storey mixed use development with over-the-street verandah, ground floor retail, entertainment facility with a bar on the first floor, and 4 affordable rental apartments and communal open space on the second floor
Application No.:	DA/2021/0967
Meeting Date:	30 November 2021
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Jon Johannsen – chair, Diane Jones and Jocelyn Jackson
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia, and Eric Wong
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	Artmade Architects – Architect for the project

Background:

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 proposal lacks car parking and bicycle provisions required by the Affordable Housing SEPP and the Inner West controls.

2. The Panel queried whether the proposed strategy of protruding a verandah over the Council footpath is the suitable for the subject site. The Panel also questioned the use of the first floor outdoor seating as it appears disconnected from the entertainment area, relying on an indirect access through an air-lock space. The Panel considers that the outdoor seating area may function more like a smoking lounge due to its separation from the interior.

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 non-residential tenancies such as the ground floor retail and the entertainment area on the first floor appear to be provided with constrained floor-to-ceiling and floor-to-floor heights, when realistic depths for structure, floor and ceiling finishes, acoustic insulation and building services such as ducts and light fixtures are taken into account.
2. The Panel expressed concern regarding a lack of building separation distance from the rear/southern boundary. The built form interface with the rear boundary is problematic as it raises potential fire separation, visual impact, privacy and amenity concerns with the current and potential future building on the adjoining property to the south – 11 Beattie Street. The applicant should consider provision of appropriate rear setbacks consistent with the NSW Apartment Design Guide – Part 2F building separation and fire separation requirements in the BCA.
3. The Panel recommends that the residential level (second floor) should be moved forward towards the street, to create a greater building separation distance consistent with the NSW ADG and to provide a consistent building line with adjoining buildings at the upper level. Additionally, the internal layouts of the apartments should be reconfigured to relocate the internal spaces to the north, to benefit from direct solar access in mid-winter that does not depend on skylights.

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.”

No discussion

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 proposal should be consistent with the key targets established within the ADG for solar access and natural cross ventilation. It appears from the layouts that none of the apartments achieve consistency with the direct solar access of minimum 2 hours at mid-winter, based on the guidance within Part 4A of the ADG (minimum 70% required). The Panel also notes that none of the apartments have natural cross ventilation (minimum 60% required). Therefore the applicant should explore alternative configuration strategies as discussed in Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale, to discuss consistency with these principal ADG controls.
2. Similarly, the Panel encourages the applicant to consider commitment to achieving sustainability targets for water, energy and waste efficiency that could include ceiling fans, rain-water capture for planters, and p/v solar panels.
3. Provision of a rainwater tank should be considered to allow water collection, storage and reuse within the subject site. The applicant should also specify some type of irrigation system connected with the rainwater tank to water the plantation areas within the communal roof top garden.

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.”

No discussion

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 expressed concern regarding constrained widths of the studio apartments. The apartment layouts should be reconfigured to ensure that living rooms or combined living/dining rooms of the studio apartments achieve consistency with the minimum 3.6m width requirement within Part 4D-3 of the ADG.
2. In addition to the wardrobe spaces, the apartments should ensure adequate internal and/or external storage, which is an important aspect of residential amenity. Storage volumes consistent with Part 4G-1 of the ADG should be provided for each apartment. If an external storage area is not achievable, then all storage should be offered within the interior of the apartments.

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.”

1. The Panel expressed concern regarding the proposed shared access arrangement of the shared lift, stairs and lobby areas for both residential and non-residential uses, which will diminish amenity for the residents. The Panel recommends that the circulation areas should be segregated to avoid any potential safety and amenity concerns.
2. The Panel stated that fire egress distances appear to be a concern for the entire proposal, particularly within the first floor entertainment and bar areas. The applicant should consider further resolution of the internal configuration by working with a suitably qualified BCA consultant.

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.”

INNER WEST

1. The Panel discussed the overall street presentation of the proposal in terms of the proportions and heaviness of the structural elements, provided with rendered and painted surfaces. It is the Panel's view that the proposal needs to be redesigned to give a more harmonious and nuanced insertion into the rich streetscape of Darling Street..
2. The Panel strongly encourages use of self-finished materials (such as bricks, timber, steel, concrete, etc) for the proposal. Rendered and painted surfaces should be avoided in favour of materials with an integral finish.
3. Revised architectural drawings should confirm location of AC condenser units and other mechanical equipment. These should not be located within balconies and not be visible from the surrounding public domain
4. Revised architectural drawings should include details of the proposed design intent for key façade types in form of 1:20 sections indicating façade type, balustrade fixing, balcony edges, junctions, rainwater drainage system including any downpipes and similar details within the proposal.

Non SEPP 65 Matters:

None

Conclusion:

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current state and recommends amendments as set out in this Report. Moreover, the proposal also needs to establish consistency with the guidance offered by the NSW Apartment Design Guide.

The Panel needs a second opportunity to review a revised proposal that responds to the issues raised in this Report.