

Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	77 Glassop Street Balmain
Proposal:	A part 4 to 5 storey residential flat building over a basement carpark
Application No.:	DA/2022/0684
Meeting Date:	18 October 2022
Previous Meeting Date:	25 January 2022
Panel Members:	Russell Olsson – chair; Jon Johannsen; and Garth Paterson
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia; Niall Macken; and Iain Watt
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant’s representatives to address the panel:	Nicholas Day Architects – Architect for the project

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural and landscape design drawings and discussed the proposal with the applicant through a virtual conference.
2. As a proposal subject to the State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 – Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development (SEPP 65), the Panel’s comments have been structured against the 9 Design Quality Principles set out in the SEPP 65 NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG).
3. In terms of urban strategy, building configuration and architectural expression, the development application is largely the same as the submission reviewed at the previous Panel Pre-DA meeting in January 2022. The recommendations from the previous AEDRP Report therefore remain largely relevant to this application and have been restated in this report.
4. In summary, the Panel notes that the revised proposal reviewed as part of this development application does not meet the Panel’s expectations in terms of compliance with the principle ADG controls and a significant redesign previously recommended by the Panel has not been considered by the applicant.

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 re-states its concern regarding the built form of the proposal, which is excessively sunken below natural ground level, is excessively tall and the roof form and slope is not compatible with the character of the area. The built form is an overreach related to an excessively high floor space ratio
2. The Panel considers that the second submission provided as part of this development application does not demonstrate a well-reasoned, coherent built form relationship with the building types and built form character of the Heritage Conservation Area.
3. The Panel discussed the potential loss of water views for the neighbouring sites due to the height and form of the proposed roof, and the documentation provided as part of the development application does not provide any urban design analysis for potential view loss or view sharing with the surrounding sites.
4. The proposed bonus FSR for Affordable Housing does not meet the design requirement for the proposal to be compatible with the desirable elements of the character of the area.

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 proposal does not satisfy the primary controls from the NSW Apartment Design Guide of communal open space and apartment mix.
2. The four large apartments proposed do not comply with the requirement of the IWLEP that at least 25% of the apartments are to be studio or 1 bedroom apartments and that no more than 30% of apartments are to be 3 bedrooms or more.
3. The front setback needs to be consistent with the alignment of the adjoining buildings and the applicant should refer to the Inner West Development Control Plan for further guidance.
4. The Panel understands that the proposed carparking configuration is to be reviewed by Council’s engineering section. It is the Panel’s view that the car parking strategy is problematic as it relies entirely on mechanical equipment for access and egress.

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 considers the proposed floor area, excessive height and sub-terranean habitable spaces represent overdevelopment of a constrained site. The Panel is concerned as to whether a residential flat building (as defined by the NSW SEPP 65 – a proposal with 4 or more apartments and more than 3 storeys) could be achieved on a constrained site with approximately 15m frontage and 37m depth, whilst ensuring consistency with the principal controls of the ADG.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

INNER WEST

“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 principle of sustainability was not discussed in detail, since it is the overarching urban design and ADG compliance matters which need to be addressed as a priority. Nevertheless a subsequent revised submission should provide a thorough and considerate approach to inclusion of ESD strategies including PV solar panels, elimination of gas through electrification and provision for rainwater harvesting and reuse in irrigation.

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.”

1. The Panel supports the proposed landscape design based on design merits. Rather, it is the architectural and urban design issues that need to be addressed as a priority.
2. The Panel does not support the use of level four for a private outdoor terrace for apartment 3, as access to the terrace necessitates a high roof form and the high roof form at the eastern end of the site is incongruous with a flat roof / terrace at the western end of the site. These forms will be visible in angled views from the street and surrounding sites and are not consistent with the character of the Heritage Conservation Area.

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 north-eastern and south-western walls have a number of essential and non-essential windows with proposed screening up to a height of 15m above floor level to minimise privacy issues with neighbours, however high window sills also reduce amenity to bedrooms and are not supported.
2. The Panel expressed concern that potential habitable area labelled ‘store’ within the ground floor apartment since it lacks provision of windows. The proposed internal configuration is problematic as the ‘store’ potentially qualifies as a bedroom. The Panel considers a lack of window provision to this habitable area is not consistent with the guidance offered within Part 4D-1.2 of the ADG, and there are potential issues with NCC compliance.
3. The Panel discussed that there are habitable areas below natural ground level (bedrooms 2 and 3 within the lower level apartments) which raises outlook and amenity concerns for these apartments. Such habitable areas are contrary to the guidance offered within the ADG Part 4L. The Proponent needs to draw accurate sections that indicate the typical size, height, and extent of retaining walls on the side boundaries and the accurate depiction of the side boundary properties including floor levels and window locations.

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 took place.

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 took place.

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 restates that the architectural form and expression appears largely out-of-character with the HCA due to its excessive height, the projecting front bay past the building alignment and the high roof pitch.

Conclusion:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel does not support the proposal in its current form as there are fundamental concerns with its relationship to the character of the HCA, its built form, site configuration, density, architectural expression, and residential amenity. The Panel considers that the proposal does not meet the standards of urban design and residential quality expected for achieving design excellence for a residential flat building within the Inner West local government area.
2. The Panel recommends a significant redesign. As part of a new DA process, the applicant should investigate a residential typology other than a SEPP-65 residential flat building, such as townhouses, possibly Torrens Titled, that would be more appropriate to the subject site and the character of the HCA. A less intense proposal would help to alleviate the Panel’s primary concerns regarding excessive FSR, height, built form compatibility, residential amenity, carparking and loss of views for the adjoining properties.