



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	476 Parramatta Road Ashfield
Proposal:	Integrated development under Roads Act 1993, works include demolition of existing dwelling and structures at 306 Parramatta Road, partial demolition of the existing Bunnings Warehouse (retention of heritage façade and clock tower) at 476 Parramatta Road, construction of a new 3 level detail building for use as Hardware, Building Supplies and Garden Centre. Ancillary works include tree removal, landscaping works, business identification signage, new on-site car parking. Proposed hours of operation are 6.00am to 10.00pm Monday to Friday and 6.00am to 7.00pm Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays.
Application No.:	DA/2024/0278
Meeting Date:	16 July 2024
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Tony Caro (chair) Russell Olsson Jon Johannsen
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia Sean Wilson Martin Amy Tom Irons Kaitlin Zieme Ferdinand Dickel Andrew Newman Annalise Ifield Felicity Hannan Angela Berryman
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Doug Djordjevic (John R Brogan & Associates) – Architect for the project Phillip Drew (Phillip Drew Consulting) – Urban planner for the project Ben Fogarty (Bunnings Warehouse) – Applicant's Representative

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings and DA documentation, and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The AEDRP recognises its independent and advisory-only role on matters related to – architecture, urban design, landscape design and design excellence.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. The Panel discussed the built form relationship of the proposal with the The Infants' Home, a heritage-listed facility located to the immediate west of the subject site, and recommends that this sensitive existing relationship be further improved by increasing the setback and quality of the landscape interface along the western boundary. The applicant should also consider investigating appropriate site edge treatments along the western boundary, to minimise potential acoustic impacts to neighbours.
2. The Panel asked whether basement parking had been part of the design concept investigation, in order to create a more compact built form with reduced amenity impacts. Following the applicant's presentation, the Panel acknowledges that the site is significantly constrained by major infrastructure elements including the WestConnex Tunnel, Sydney Water Easement, and a stormwater culvert that when aggregated make it difficult to provide basement parking. The upper level parking adds to the built form bulk however, and the Panel recommends further consideration of how the consequent visual impacts can be better resolved (as noted in Nos.5/6/7 below).
3. The Panel recommends the applicant reconsider the use and treatment of the "Vitawheat" factory heritage listed building at the north eastern corner, and how this significant streetscape element could be utilised in a more engaging way. The Panel suggested some alternative uses: eg. a childrens play area, cafeteria, or possibly a training/workshop area for community members. Alternatively it could be lightly restored and offered as an independent commercial opportunity to the broader market, and could help activate this prominent corner.
4. As part of the briefing with Council staff, the Panel expressed concern that the factory building is proposed to be painted in Bunnings Warehouse corporate livery, and asked whether the applicant has considered an alternative approach that is more suitable to the heritage character and authentic architectural expression of this building. A colour specialist could be considered, to investigate ways in which the Bunnings corporate colours could be introduced in a more sympathetic way to this significant heritage item.
5. The Panel is also concerned about the future integration of this proposal into an upgraded Parramatta Rd corridor. Traffic calming via Westconnex, light rail, removal of overhead wires and generous tree planting will, over the medium term, transform the corridor to a more pedestrian/user friendly and pleasant environment. The design team need to consider this now, and develop a more human-scaled proposal to futureproof this extremely large and hermetic built form. Active retail frontages should be considered, or at the least how the building could be adapted to such uses in the future (floor-floor height, utility services etc).
6. The Panel therefore recommends for this Bunnings Store that as presently proposed, the unrelenting and monolithic painted facades would greatly benefit from activation, articulation, modulation, enhanced materiality, and a more refined architectural composition.
7. This applies in particular to the architectural expression along the eastern façade addressing Parramatta Road. For example, the first floor corner element at the south eastern end of the site, which is over-scaled and clumsy in its bulky form and painted coloration in corporate livery. The proposed composition of curved and rectilinear forms and colours should be revised to create a more cohesive design. Is there potential for the nursery area to be swapped with the bulky goods storage on Warehouse Level 3, enabling a façade opening to Parramatta Road that would help relieve this section of the elevation and provide views into the fabric sail canopy?
8. The Panel reviewed the site sections and notes that a significant number of existing mature trees would be impacted along the eastern site edge, and it is strongly recommended that a suitably qualified arborist reviews the impacts and provides a sustainable plan for their long term protection.



Conclusion:

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form, and recommends that matters raised in this report are addressed prior to submission of a full DA.