



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	150 Smith Street Summer Hill
Proposal:	Remediation of the site and demolition of existing structures and construction of a four-storey mixed use building, including ground floor commercial space, 30 co-living housing rooms above, and basement car parking.
Application No.:	DA/2024/0786
Meeting Date:	18 October 2024
Previous Meeting Date:	-
Panel Members:	Vishal Lakhia (chair) Diane Jones Peter Ireland (via email)
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Kuepper Weir Christian Hemsley Martin Amy
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Jag Bola – applicant's representative

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel reviewed the architectural drawings provided by the applicant and discussed the proposal with the applicant through an online conference.
2. The proposal is nominated for this AEDRP Review by Council since it meets the minimum threshold/criteria established within the Terms of Reference.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. **Overarching Statutory Planning Concern:** The AEDRP typically advises on matters related to architecture, urban design, landscape design and design excellence. In this instance, there is an overarching statutory planning concern with the permissibility of the proposed development at the subject site. The Panel understands that the proposal does not comply with the minimum 800m² lot size requirement within the Housing SEPP 2021 legislation [Part 3, Clause 69(1)(b)(ii)]. The applicant should seek separate statutory planning advice from the Inner West Council's development assessment officers regarding the permissibility of the proposal at the subject site which has an area of 505m², significantly below the SEPP requirement.
2. **Building Separation Distances:** The Panel recognises that based on the Housing SEPP 2021, the building separation distances should comply with the criteria nominated in parts 3F-1 and 3F.5 of the NSW Apartment Design Guide. Accordingly, the proposed 6m setback from the southern property should be a minimum of 9m to resolve potential amenity impacts on the neighbours.
3. **Height & Contextual Fit:** The Panel notes that a height limit of 10m applies to the site. The proposed topmost level (Level 3) sits above this control plane and creates adverse visual and overshadowing impacts on the vicinity, particularly the adjacent heritage former post office.
4. **Architectural Form & Expression:** The proposed architectural form and expression are unsympathetic to the site context and therefore unsatisfactory in the Panel's view. The street façade appears as uniformly flat/planar without adequate articulation or proportions that would complement the heritage streetscape. Furthermore, the interface between the western end of the building in both composition and façade treatment (essentially blank walls which do not address the complex geometric relationships created by the change in angle of the street) with the adjoining heritage-listed former Summer Hill Post Office building is considered unsatisfactory.
5. **Ground Floor Presentation:** The recessed treatment for the ground floor entry and retail space diminishes the quality of street interface and is not supported by the Panel. The raised entry foyer creates a disconnect from the street level, and location of the laundry within the entry foyer diminishes the amenity and presentation of the space.
6. **Building Configuration:** The Panel notes that the common corridors within the proposal are very constrained and will restrict comfortable and intuitive movement for the users. Furthermore, the Panel is not convinced that the rooms can comfortably accommodate two residents.
7. **Floor-to-Ceiling Heights:** The proposed floor-to-floor height of 2.95m is unacceptable as this dimension will not give the minimum 2.7m ceiling heights expected in co-living proposals within the Inner West area.

Conclusion:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel recognises that there are fundamental statutory planning and urban design matters that need to be addressed to the Council's satisfaction. Therefore, the Panel has not fully commented on other architectural and landscape design issues considering that, while important, these are lower-order issues in comparison with the far more fundamental issues listed above in this report.
2. It is the Panel's view that the proposal, in its current form and configuration, should not be supported as it represents overdevelopment of a small site, and does not achieve the urban design, architectural and landscape design quality expected for a co-living proposal within the Inner West area.
3. If allowed by the statutory planning framework, the applicant should redesign a scaled-down proposal with 3 storeys, fewer and more generously planned rooms, and a revised architectural form and expression that forms a suitable urban design fit for this significant heritage townscape.