



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	194 Marion Street Leichhardt
Proposal:	Alterations and additions to an approved mixed use development under DA/2021/0110 dated 23/08/2023, works include the construction of two (2) additional storeys and ten (10) additional units under the In-Fill Affordable Housing Provisions.
Application No.:	DA/2024/0979
Meeting Date:	16 December 2024
Previous Meeting Date:	DA/2021/0110 – 20 April 2021
Panel Members:	Matthew Pullinger (chair) Peter Ireland Jocelyn Jackson
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia Katerina Lianos
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Jonathon Al Dreiby and George Youssef – Architects for the project Jason Dodaro Darren Laybutt – Urban planner 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.

2. The Panel acknowledges that the proposal is subject to Chapter 4 – State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) Housing 2021 - Design of residential apartment development - and the NSW Apartment Design Guide (ADG) applies to the proposal. Additionally, the Panel reviewed the proposal in terms of design excellence as required by the Inner West Local Environmental Plan 2022 – Clause 6.9.

Discussion & Recommendations:

Principle 1 – Context & Neighbourhood Character

1. The Panel notes that the gross floor area and bonus floor space ratio calculations adopted by the applicant should be reviewed to Council's satisfaction being a statutory planning matter. Based on Council's briefing session, it would appear that a maximum permissible floor space ratio of 1.95:1 applies to the proposal (being 30% bonus applied to 1.5:1 base FSR).
2. The site's context is prominent, with three street addresses and a strong presence to two primary street frontages within Leichhardt.

Principle 2 – Built Form & Scale

1. In terms of the overall built form strategy and associated architectural expression, the DA proposes a vertical extrusion of the approved DA, from 3-storeys to 5-storeys. Two additional levels are proposed to Marion Street and one additional level to Foster Street. The Panel is concerned that by adopting the repetition of the existing horizontal masonry expression, this strategy is problematic as it creates a very heavy, monolithic built form exaggerating the resultant scale of the proposal. The Panel recommends the applicant should approach the question of architectural expression and scale for the 4-5-storey building differently, and develop a more appropriate and finely scaled language for the top upper-level additions.
2. The Panel queried the viability, maintenance and long term amenity provided by the proposed planter beds located within the balconies. The Panel understands these planter beds are to be planted and maintained by individual residents and therefore may become inconsistent across the primary elevations. At a minimum, the DA should indicate relevant strategies for irrigation, maintenance and green waste removal from balconies. Alternatively, the planter-boxes could be reduced in prominence and the area allocated to balconies. Any such amendments might also consider the related concerns for architectural expression and may allow more open balustrades rather than continuous horizontal brick spandrels which impact on sunlight access into apartments.
3. The Panel encourages the applicant to consider other architectural devices, including vertical indentations or compositional elements within the architectural expression to counter the current excessively horizontal expression.
4. The Panel is concerned that the DA maintains a single residential lift servicing the two additional floors and increased number of apartments. Additional lifting may be required for amenity and redundancy, considering a scenario where one of the lifts might be out-of-order or being used by removalists. The Panel also notes that since there are more than 8 apartments per level, an additional lift is encouraged by the NSW ADG.
5. Given the long corridors and significant walking distances from the lift-core to the more remote apartments, the lift core location might be reconsidered to improve residential amenity.
6. The Panel reviewed the approved proposal as part of the development application stage at the 20 April 2021 meeting and a number of recommendation appear not to have been considered and are restated:
 - a. The degree to which the commercial tenancies are segregated from the ground floor level is a concern for the Panel and the applicant should investigate relevant strategies to allow direct barrier-free street connectivity from the street to the individual tenancies.

- b. The applicant should consider narrower tenancies, typical of traditional shopfronts, which should appropriately step down to the corresponding street level and provide barrier-free connectivity.
 - c. Operable windows/glazing should be introduced within the ground floor tenancies to allow greater activation of adjacent streets, natural ventilation and reduce potential heat loading within the commercial tenancies.
 - d.
7. The Panel is concerned for the proposed (and approved) floor-to-floor heights of 3.1m, which may constrain the achievement of competing NCC and ADG requirements. The applicant is encouraged to investigate increased floor to floor heights (to 3.15m or 3.2m) in order to achieve the minimum 2.7m floor-to-ceiling height nominated within the Inner West DCP and NSW ADG Part 5C, whilst also achieving compliance with structural, services integration, drainage, waterproofing and insulation requirements arising from the Design & Practitioners Act 2020 and the relevant NCC provisions.
8. The applicant should further ensure the necessary falls for drainage and allowance for insulation in the rooftop areas can be successfully incorporated at the upper-most levels within proposed floor-to-floor and floor-to-ceiling heights.

Principle 3 – Density

- 1. In its current form and configuration the proposed scale and form of the DA represents an overdevelopment of the subject site, and the proposed density is currently not supported by the Panel. The applicant is encouraged to develop an alternative architectural expression to better mitigate against the impacts and bulk of a 5-storey proposal and addressing the Panel's recommendations.

Principle 4 – Sustainability

- 1. The Panel expects the proposal should meet the minimum solar access and natural cross ventilation targets within the NSW ADG, and these should be reviewed in detail to Council's satisfaction. Clarification is requested whether any apartments rely on skylights to achieving the ADG targets for solar access or cross ventilation.
- 2. The Panel encourages the adoption of ambitious sustainability targets and exceeding minimum BASIX requirements. Additionally, the Panel encourages the inclusion of ceiling fans to all habitable rooms, incorporation of photovoltaic systems, EV charging facilities, and the provision of an all-electric building.

Principle 5 – Landscape

- 1. A qualified landscape architect should be engaged to develop the design consistent with Parts 4O and 4P of the ADG.

Principle 6 – Amenity

- 1. A significant proportion of the approved and proposed apartments include separated, internalised kitchens, which the Panel considers problematic given limited extent of natural light, ventilation and outlook available from these spaces. The Panel encourages some reconfiguration to improved internal amenity within these apartments.

Principle 7 – Safety

No discussion - safety and security appear to be acceptable.



Principle 8 – Housing Diversity and Social Interaction

No discussion - the proposed provision of affordable housing is welcome, and the apartment mix is acceptable.

Principle 9 – Aesthetics

Recommendations offered in Principle 2 – Built Form and Scale.

1. The Panel is not convinced that the proposed architectural expression is appropriate to this part of Leichhardt and considers it to be overwhelming, monolithic and uncharacteristic of the area.
2. The Panel encourages a 're-think' of the appropriate architectural character and expression for a five-storey building, incorporating a range of architectural and compositional devices to mitigate against the building's scale.
3. The Panel is concerned for the approved ground level treatment of commercial and retail tenancies and their disconnection from the adjacent street levels, lack of activation and fixed glazing expression.

Conclusion:

Recognising its independent and advisory-only role, the Panel does not support the proposal in its current form and encourages the preparation of an amended proposal developed in-line with the recommendations made in this report.

The Design Verification Statement provided by the applicant is considered incomplete and a full assessment of the proposal should be provided against Parts 3 and 4 of the NSW Apartment Design Guide.