



Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

Site Address:	1-5 Chester Street Annandale
Proposal:	Modification to approved development to increase number of student rooms to 88, and add additional two levels to building
Application No.:	PDA/2024/0230
Meeting Date:	25 February 2025
Previous Meeting Date:	24 August 2021, 6 April 2021
Panel Members:	Diane Jones (chair) Russell Olsson Jean Rice
Apologies:	-
Council staff:	Vishal Lakhia Anthony Roydhouse Sinclair Croft
Guests:	-
Declarations of Interest:	None
Applicant or applicant's representatives to address the panel:	Sonny Oh (DKO Architects) – architect for the project Andrew Martin – urban planner for the project

Background:

1. The Architectural Excellence & Design Review Panel (AEDRP) reviewed the architectural drawings and 3D views provided by the applicant and discussed the proposal through an online conference.

Discussion & Recommendations:

1. The Panel notes that the current planning controls, including a floor space ratio of 2:1, a building height of 17m and 5 storeys, and a 6m wide through-site link along Johnston's Creek, are an outcome of a site-specific Development Control Plan gazetted as part of a Planning Proposal.
2. The site already benefits from a previous development application [DA/2021/0518] approved through a Class 1 Appeal by the NSW Land & Environment Court. This approval was for a 5 storey building with an FSR of 2: 1.
3. The current modification reviewed by the Panel proposes two Design Options:
 - 1 Option 1, with 8 storeys on both building wings and an FSR of 3: 1;

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- 2 Option 2, with 8 storeys on the north-eastern wing and 7 storeys on the south-western wing and an FSR of 2.7: 1.
4. The spatial and built form context for this site consists of:
 - A public park to the west of Johnston's Creek and the subject site;
 - one and two storey houses to the west of Johnstons Creek and the park;
 - one, two and three storey light industrial buildings to the north, east and south of the subject site;
 - tall canopy trees along the creek and in streets surrounding the site. The built form of the one, two and three storey buildings sits below the height of trees in the vicinity of the site.
5. A 17m height limit in Chester Street to the north, east and south of the subject site would allow for 5 storey buildings. There have been no approvals for 5 storey buildings in that area.
6. The existing approval for a 5 storey building on the subject site is an acceptable built form outcome, as the overall proportion of the built form is horizontal. While the built form is taller than the existing built form context, the horizontal built form relates to the horizontal proportions of the large footprint light industrial buildings. The 5 storey height has minimal overshadowing of the public park on the western side of Johnston's Creek.
7. Annandale is characterised by low-rise industrial and residential buildings successfully co-existing. The existing approval reflects this mix of uses at a scale that is not inconsistent with the built form and landscape context. The proposed height of 8 storeys is out of character with the existing built form and landscape context. The 8 storey Chester Street building has a strongly vertical proportion, particularly when viewed from the public park, compared to the overall horizontal proportion of the approved development.
8. The Panel does not support the proposal in terms of its built form and scale as it appears largely out-of-character. The Panel further notes that the proposed 8 storey 'tower-like' form on Chester Street in Option 1 is a result of 'a straight-extrusion' of the LEC approved building footprint and as a result it is considered unsympathetic to the existing context. The 7 storey stepped form of the southern wing in Option 2 is also out of context. The public park is partially overshadowed in both options.
9. The Panel notes that the proposed rooftop communal open space would require structures such as lift-shafts, fire stairs, accessible toilets, shading and associated building elements in addition to the proposed built form, exacerbating visual and overshadowing impact on the context. Additionally, the Panel expressed concerns regarding additional visual and solar access impacts on the Annandale Heritage Conservation Area located north-west of the site across the creek-line.
10. The Panel is concerned that while the application proposes further intensification of the development, the extent of amenity and building services have not been increased in a similar proportion. For example, provision for waste storage and collection, car parking, bicycle parking, motorcycle and scooter parking, the size of the common foyer and circulation corridors have not been increased in similar proportion, suggesting an overdevelopment of the site.
11. The additional height and the resultant overshadowing of the public park, the central courtyard (on the site) and the central open space of the future potential development on the adjoining property to the east is considered problematic. The Panel is concerned by the proposition that the adjoining property to the east should have all open space on the roof-top to meet solar access requirements in mid-winter. The Panel notes that the additional solar access impact in terms of the number of additional hours of shadow in mid-winter was not provided in the applicant's submission.
12. The Panel was informed at the briefing session by Council officers that the site-specific controls expect commercial use for the 2 lower levels for the project to be successful. The Panel finds it contrary to Council's DCP guidance that a 'Communal Room' for the residential component of the development is provided on the Ground Floor.
13. Furthermore, contrary to the intent of the site-specific DCP, the proposal does not create a desirable address to the northern through-site link along the creek-line in terms of the expected activation, accessibility, connectivity, and landscape / public domain design offerings.



14. While the approval pathway is a matter for Council and the applicant, the Panel observes that a Planning Proposal may allow for greater planning and urban design analysis to support an amended approach to land uses, yield and built form.

Conclusion:

1. The Panel does not support the proposal since it represents overdevelopment of a small site, and does not achieve the architectural, landscape design, urban design quality, and design excellence expected for a co-living proposal within the Inner West and in this context.
2. The Panel recognises that the proposed built form, scale, height and density outcomes are significantly greater than those anticipated by the Inner West LEP and the DCP, and there are statutory planning considerations which potentially impact the planning pathway (whether the proposal should be a Development Application or a Planning Proposal). The applicant should seek independent statutory planning advice and liaise with Council's development assessment team to resolve this issue.