Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 9 December 2021

3 - DA2021/2034 - 30 Fairlight Street FAIRLIGHT

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Proposal is for five (5) three-bedroom apartments over three storeys, plus basement level. Floorspace proposed exceeds allowable FSR by 23.3%.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

Surrounding development has been identified as consisting of a mixture of residential flat buildings and dwelling houses of varying height including some that are considerably taller than would be permissible presently.

The varied heights of surrounding development has been referred to as part of a potential justification of additional floor space, however, in this instance the additional floorspace has led to a larger than normal number of car spaces for a site of this size, which has in turn resulted in an extent of excavation which has negative affects even beyond the site, including the necessary removal of trees on adjoining lot.

Surrounding development generally has a landscaped setback to the street. In contrast the proposal has a minimal setback to a podium-like form comprising driveway entry and services, concealed by Architectural screening.

Existing development on the site includes three car garage with minimal setback to the street, the top of which broadly aligns in height to the adjoining picket fence of adjoining development to the west of the site.

This existing setback condition has been referenced with respect to the proposal's similar minimal setback street interface. However, it is the view of the Panel that the proposed condition is not consistent with the character of the street and that proposal should seek to address the street in a manner which encourages passive surveillance and is consistent with the landscape character of the street.

The Panel observes that the proposal has the potential to cause view loss due to the topography and that a detailed visual impact analysis has not be undertaken.

Recommendations

1. Reduce excavation significantly so as to minimise impact on existing trees on and off site, particularly at rear of site.
2. Increase front landscape setback and provide more contextual street interface
3. Develop a view sharing strategy as a part of a detailed view impact analysis.

Scale, built form and articulation

Three storey scale of the proposal is generally appropriate, notwithstanding front garage setback mentioned above.

The Panel notes that the northern private open spaces are located well below natural ground level and together with the flat floored apartments results in an excessive amount of excavation. The overall

approach to the planning and size of units (3 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms) means the design fails to respond to the limitations of the site topography.

The Panel supports the splayed walls to bedrooms adjacent to the side boundaries as they assist with providing light and views to bedrooms whilst preserving reasonable privacy relationships.

The balconies at the south and north ends of the building are separated by an exaggerated articulation which may enhance diagonal views, but has the effect of exacerbating privacy concerns, especially about western boundary. Due to the articulation of these walls at the northern end of the building, a poor privacy interface between north facing balconies results.

Recommendations

4. Set back ground level car park a minimum of 8m with trees and shrubs planted in setback
5. Reduce depth of excavation – reconsider overall planning to incorporate an east/west split between apartments rather than the proposed longitudinal split.
6. Ensure configuration and articulation maintains reasonable privacy to/from neighbouring development.
7. Ensure adequate privacy between the balconies and private open spaces of respective apartments within the proposal.

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

The number of car spaces provided are in accordance with the number of units and number of bedrooms. However the number of units and bedrooms rely on an excess floor area resulting in unacceptable impacts relating to loss of canopy due to excavation identified previously.

Street presentation is dominated by garage door, fire hydrant booster cupboard etc. which are consolidated into monolithic podium element.

Lines of sight for vehicle leaving site are restricted, potentially creating a hazard for pedestrians

Subterranean pedestrian access successful from an experiential point of view, but adds to extensive site excavation.

Recommendations

8. Reduce the number of units and or the number of bedrooms in order to reduce the number of car spaces and excavation required.
9. Improve sight lines from the car park for drivers leaving site to increase pedestrian safety.

Landscape

Extent of excavation would require removal of multiple trees, including trees on adjacent lots, which is an unacceptable impact.

Although generally large private open spaces have been incorporated, some communal open space should be considered.

Minimal deep soil planting has been provided - most is provided at significantly reduced levels, whereas it would have a more positive impact if it were provided as un-excavated deep soil area incorporating existing vegetation.

Planters on balconies provide positive softening of built form and have the potential to contribute to biodiversity.

Recommendations

10. Preserve canopy at rear of property as part of broader bio-corridor.
11. Consider Incorporating a communal open space in the form of a front garden.
12. Reduce extent of excavation so that all trees on neighbouring properties are protected.

13. Increase deep soil planting at front and rear of property.

Amenity

Whilst solar access is technically compliant, the means of receiving insolation in the form of west facing windows has created a privacy concern along the western boundary.

A number of skylights have been incorporated into the roof design, however these may present a source of uncomfortable, uncontrollable solar heat gain in summer.

Privacy interface between proposal and western and northern neighbour is poor as many windows and balconies offer direct lines of sight between respective habitable areas.

Many bathrooms have been located adjacent external walls, however, have not been provided with operable windows.

Many windows throughout proposal appear to be inoperable, reducing potential for occupants to cool spaces passively by capitalising on sea breezes.

Recommendations

14. Reconfigure means of solar access to western apartments so that reasonable privacy may be maintained with the neighbor to the west.
15. Where top level apartment(s) may benefit from sky light, provide means of controlling solar gain during summer. Consider clerestory type glazing favoring Winter insolation.
16. Ensure reasonable privacy between private open spaces of each dwelling
17. Provide means of natural ventilation and light to bathrooms wherever possible
18. Maximise natural ventilation options and provision for operable windows

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Faux timber battened treatment of front facade is relentless and acontextual.

Three storey residential flat building is composed of multiple geometries, expressions and gestures presenting as whimsical expression and has a consistent off white and beige materiality with bronze coloured metalwork. The panel have confidence in the ability of the Applicant's Architect do develop a fine architectural expression.

Recommendations

19. Soften front presentation with plantings including tree(s) in concert with greater setback to garage.
20. Greater sectional detail of balconies, planters etc. may assist in interpreting proposal.

Sustainability

The essence of the current approach does not use the considerable skills of the architects and other consultants to honour or address the climate and biodiversity emergency we are experiencing. It would be worth investigating what approach would be taken if this guided the design. This would start by identifying the constraints (and opportunities) required to keep and nurture the existing landscape and the biodiversity it supports and designing buildings that have optimal solar access and are net zero emissions.

The level of ambition for the BASIX and NatHERS is very low – any lower and it would be illegal. Additionally, 2 star dryers (or any appliances) are not acceptable.

We strongly recommend the apartments achieve more than the lowest BASIX score, be fully electric (no gas), with as many PV panels on the roof as possible to supply more of the required power. A more efficient building envelope – with a particular focus on the windows/doors and insulation– will help achieve this, and provide a more future proof development that immediately delivers more comfort and affordable energy bills for the occupants.

Recommendations

21. Reconsider the layout on the site with the priority being to maintain the existing landscaping on the site and its neighbours.
22. Make the building fully electric, with no gas provided.
23. Use efficient electric options for hot water, cooking, BBQ, and space conditioning (if required).
24. Increase the energy efficiency of the building to deliver more natural comfort, higher BASIX scores and natural comfort for the occupants.

PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. A complete redesign incorporating substantial reduction in the floor area, significantly reduced extent of excavation and significant retention of existing tree canopy is required. Any breach of the floor space controls would need to be supported by an analysis of the benefits compared to a complying scheme.