



Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 24th October 2024

ITEM 1 – DA 2024/1091 – 1 Careel Head Road AVALON BEACH

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Proposal is for a 2 storey structure with underground and on-grade parking. The building is proposed to contain commercial uses including those nominated as 'Dan Murphys' Liquor store and Childcare Centre. The site agglomerates 1 Careel Head Road and 3 Careel Head Road, the current uses of which are 5 small retail tenancies and 1 dwelling house, respectively.

The provision of a liquor shop in the location has generated a great amount of community concern, particularly with respect to the viability of existing local boutique alternatives and to its co-location with a child care facility. Whilst the Panel share some of these concerns, we have turned our attention to the design issues related to the co-location of these uses and whether the current configuration is appropriate.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

The site is located on Barrenjoey Road, the primary transport Corridor of the Northern Beaches Peninsula and forms part of a small cluster of retail/commercial premises in the locality which include veterinarian, offices, wellbeing enterprises, restaurants and take away operations.

This cluster is one of many similar clusters of small tenancy suburban shops between the town centre of Avalon and Barrenjoey Headland, including those on Elvina Avenue, North Avalon Road, near Snapperman Beach, near Whale Beach, Adjacent Palm Beach Wharf and adjacent Ocean Place, Palm Beach. These suburban shop clusters provide services to local communities in an area of Sydney where access to such services would otherwise require driving a few kilometers to the nearest centre.

The Panel see great potential for the site to retain retail usage and build upon its status as a focal point for the local community. The provision of a well landscaped area to gather, meet and greet neighbours with safe pedestrian movements is seen as an important social consideration of any re-development of the site.

The existing traffic configuration is such that two driveway crossings are located in close proximity to the intersection of Careel Head Road and Barrenjoey Road, creating a disorganised and intense environment for vehicles and pedestrians alike. Surprisingly so, given its presently low intensity of usage.

This presents another great opportunity for the site in that there is the potential to consolidate and better co-ordinate vehicular traffic and prioritise pedestrian movements. Addressing this opportunity is seen as key, especially with the intensification of use on the site. Unfortunately, the proposal has a similar traffic layout of the existing development, except that it introduces a greater number of parking spots, includes a basement access ramp and locates a loading dock adjacent the primary pedestrian address. This adds up to an environment which will result in greater priority and intensity of vehicular movements at the expense of places for pedestrians to move, access and gather safely.

The site falls within an area identified as having a flood risk and is prone to regular flooding, which are predicted to increase with the affects of climate change. The Probable Maximum Flood level (PMF) is identified as AHD 4.9 which is significantly above ground level at the western end of the site (circa AHD 2.0), the basement threshold (AHD 3.05) and the retail floor level (AHD 3.70). This points to the likelihood of inundation of retail premises and proposed basement.

As the basement is proposed to service the child care facility, inundation poses a significant safety risk. The design does not adequately address this risk. Even if an active flood gate solution was implemented at the driveway, inundation of the basement would still occur via the elevator shaft and fire stairs.



The application includes multiple pages of site analysis material which does not identify many relevant matters of context or site attributes. At times the material is quite misleading or incorrect, such as with the suggestion of ocean views from the site. That the site analysis does not identify the above key strategic considerations as a starting point is disconcerting.

Recommendations

1. Applicant to provide thorough site analysis identifying key site specific attributes, opportunities and constraints
2. A considerable re-think of the layout of access and buildings on the site is required to convincingly address pedestrian safety issues and to avoid any situation where an enclosed basement could become inundated.
3. Provide an outdoor space which may function as a local social hub

Scale, built form and articulation

The Panel acknowledges that one storey has been removed from the proposal, since it was last reviewed by DSAP. The Panel commends and supports this reduction in building height and bulk.

The proposal is two storeys in height, within the height limit and set back considerably from the street frontages, hence presents as having a low visual impact especially compared to adjacent development at 5-7 Careel head Road.

The interface to the Southern neighbour is softened by the incorporation of a dedicated buffer planting zone with deep soil planting which assists to manage the interface of differing uses.

Due to the shift in scale and lack of articulation, the abutment between the proposed development and existing development at 5-7 Careel Head Road is abrupt and unresolved. This is emphasised due to development on the adjacent site having a blank party wall constructed from unfinished PVC lost form.

Recommendations

4. Consider alternative built form outcomes that may result from or assist in solving the practical/ strategic issues that the site faces.
5. Ensure interfaces with neighbouring properties maintain adequate sunlight and privacy
6. Improve interface with 5-7 Careel Head Road through articulation and landscape elements

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

As touched on above, there are serious safety implications of the proposal relating to traffic. These would need to be solved to gain the Panel's support.

Access to the Childcare facility is intermingled with the access to the general retail spaces, sharing a lobby volume and having direct adjacency. The applicant has pointed to the likelihood that the hours of operation of the liquor shop are such that hours of trade do not conflict with drop-off time, however this would not be true of pick-up time.

In any case, the corporate identity and advertising associated with the retail use may still be seen as problematic, even when not trading.

Irrespective of the type of retail use, it is the position of the Panel that the Childcare use would benefit greatly in terms of safety, amenity and identity if it had a distinct and separate point of entry/address. Separate, that is, to the liquor uses.

Pedestrian access generally, is convoluted by the efforts to comply with flood management and traffic arrangements. This should not be necessary as the topography of the northern street alignment offers a variety of entry levels which could easily be exploited to avoid convoluted level changes and allow more direct, universal access.

The retail loading dock is located on the northern edge of the site, parallel to its street frontage and requiring that MRVs and other vehicles reverse across the main pedestrian path of travel to the premises. This seems a poor utilisation of Northern street frontage and works against the proposal having a



connection to place. This arrangement is directly contrary to providing safe and prioritised pedestrian access.

As the basement is proposed to cater for childcare drop off usage, it is required to comply with the 'Vulnerable and Critical Use' category of flood planning and so would require protection from inundation up to PMF. The proposal does not resolve this non-compliance and as such poses a serious safety concern.

The current driveway crossings are located very close to the intersection of Barrenjoey Road and Careel Head Road. The proposal implies an intensification of use of the driveway crossings in terms of number of vehicles, larger types of vehicles including MRVs. It also is further convoluted by the inclusion of an on-grade loading dock requiring reversing manoeuvres and an acute angle turn into the basement driveway. These facts point to an environment which is hostile for pedestrians.

The opportunity exists to relocate the vehicular entry further from the intersection, hence better dealing with flood inundation, better separating the vehicular and pedestrian paths of travel and increasing the general safety of the intersection of Barrenjoey and Careel Head Roads.

It appears that 1 bike parking 'hoop' is proposed on the far side of the basement entry. With the increased popularity and accessibility of cycling and E-cycling, consideration needs to be given to where these vehicles are parked. As is currently proposed, it is easy to imagine that the small pedestrian fringe could be taken up by parked ebikes and the like which would further contrive safety of entry. Greater and more convenient allocation of bike parking would undoubtedly benefit the retail occupants and may in practicality, reduce the dependence on car parking spaces.

Recommendations

7. Differentiate the entries of the childcare centre and the general retail tenancies to separate parts of the building respectively. Give clear identity and autonomy to each.
8. Provide main pedestrian access from Careel Head Road in conjunction with greater re-think of site strategy such that a level connection can be made without intersecting vehicular paths.
9. Relocate loading dock such that it does not interfere with pedestrian entry and safety.
10. Resolve flood safety issue associated with childcare drop off/pick up
11. Provide generous allocation of space for bike/e-bike parking near to the retail entry.

Landscape

The Panel support the imaginative and useable play space on the roof top play area for the childcare. However; suggest more large planting and small trees to supplement the shade structures and mitigate the heat island effect due to the use of synthetic grass and the high sun exposure. It will be beneficial to reduce heat days where children are confined inside in air conditioning.

The Panel support the Tree removal of the cocos palms and the replacement plantings of native species. Would have been beneficial to retain the Norfolk Island Pine and Sheoak.

The childcare access through the carpark appears unsafe especially at afternoon pick up time. Examine changing the childcare entry to Careel Head Road or creating a shared zone low speed area at the carpark by change of pavement, bollards and pedestrian priority signage. Vehicles would be better configured rear to kerb to prevent backing incidents.

Reconfigure main entry to incorporate tree planting and greater area of planting to give a greater arrival experience and amenity. Provide bench seating for waiting parents.

Recommendations

12. Implement more large planting and small trees to supplement the shade structures and mitigate the heat island effect due to the use of synthetic grass and the high sun exposure
13. Consider planting a signature Norfolk Island Pine at the corner of Careel Head Road and Barrenjoey Road.
14. Consider relocating vehicular entry to further up Careel Head Road



15. In the event vehicular entry is retained as is, reconfigure on grade parking area to incorporate a shared zone low speed area marked by change of pavement, bollards and pedestrian priority signage.
16. Any on grade parking should be configured as rear to kerb to increase safety
17. Reconfigure main entry to incorporate tree planting and greater area of planting to give a greater arrival experience and amenity. Provide bench seating for waiting parents.

Amenity

Many aspects of amenity have been covered above including matters of separation of entries for different uses, safety, pedestrian priority and spaces to gather which, if addressed through design solutions, could readily contribute to a more appropriate and enjoyable environment.

The proposal suggests outdoor seating, but does not appear to provide a grease arrestor to facilitate the types of food and beverage tenancies that exist on site at the moment and which would undoubtedly remain popular.

The internal common circulation of the child care facility is internalised save for some skylights. It is also narrow, contrived and highly articulated resulting in un-surveyable nooks etc. The character of the play spaces in general is relatively flat and could benefit from a roof form such as a 'sawtooth' roof which would add character, daylight and ventilation opportunities to the spaces.

Recommendations

18. Ensure retail tenancies are adequately provisioned for restaurant operations
19. Reconfigure childcare plan to ensure outlook, clear lines of surveillance throughout common and back of house zones
20. Consider the use of a more celebrated roof form (such as saw-tooth) across the majority of the top floor child-care which may increase the spatial interest, sustainability and comfort of the play spaces – whilst also reducing operating costs long-term.

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

The top level of the proposed built form is set back considerably, meaning that the impression of the upper floor is largely made up of its required acoustic screening and non-integrated shade structures. There is a potential for acoustic attenuation and playground shading to be more integrated into the architectural strategy. In considering a different approach to roof form as described above, it may also be worthwhile extending the aesthetic proposition to these elements.

The lower level is expressed as a heavy colonnade element, however, is let down by column spacings which do not convincingly express the rhythm, structural integrity or environmental containment that can be enjoyable in well-designed colonnades. This is undermined further by the application of treatments such as the obviously thin applique stonework and the visually prominent white plinth.

Signage strategy is such that installations misalign and overwhelm the Architectural response, reducing the composure and integrity of the proposition further.

Recommendations

21. Consider how childcare facility is expressed as an integral Architectural response. In this way assist with addressing the concerns around co-location of childcare and retail as well as improving identity and amenity of the facility.
22. Consider how architectural form and detail could reinforce and enhance the expression of the colonnade
23. Utilise materials and form which have reference to country
24. Submit signage strategy with well integrated, non-overbearing signage locations and materials.



Sustainability

There is concern about the resilience of a building in this location regarding flooding, especially as sea levels rise and storm surges increase. Adjustments in response to the Panel recommendations should be focused and shaped by how to reduce the potential for this to occur, especially in the basement.

With the regulatory environment changing now – for efficiency, electrification, zero emissions and mandatory disclosure – these investments at this time will be worthwhile both for future residents and the developers' reputation, market position and marketability of the project.

Recommendations

25. Consider how to shape the response to these recommendations in ways that will reduce the potential of flooding in the basement. The following aspects of design and servicing can be easily and cost effectively considered for inclusion:
26. Decarbonisation of energy supply
 - a. All services should be electric – avoid gas for cooking, hot water and heating
 - b. Heat pump systems for providing electric hot water should be considered
 - c. The storage of hot water can be considered a de-facto battery if heated by Pvs during the day
 - d. On-site battery storage has benefits for the grid and may be a highly desirable back-up during the transition to a decarbonised grid
 - e. Unshaded roof space is a valuable resource for PV installations. Their efficacy can be greatly enhanced when placed over a green roof, which has additional ecological benefits.
 - f. EV charging: Provide EV charging points (min. 15 amp) to suit level 1 charging. Also consider charging and storage for E-bikes
27. Passive design and thermal performance of building fabric
 - a. Develop ideas for managing the impact from Western sun on the childcare centre and outdoor play area. The likely heat island effect can be alleviated by a combination of appropriate planting in addition to shade structures
 - b. Consider investing in higher than minimum Section J requirements in preparation for the changing climate we are experiencing
 - c. The inclusion of ceiling fans to all rooms will provide comfort with minimal energy while reducing the need and energy required for air conditioning
28. Water use minimisation
 - a. All fixtures and appliances should be water efficient
 - b. Landscape design and planting should be water tolerant and suitable for the microclimate
29. Materials - A new area of NABERS, consider the following approaches to reducing the embodied carbon of the project
 - a. Simplified structures and reduced spans to reduce the amount of steel reinforcement and concrete required
 - b. Optimising the quantity of space required
 - c. Dematerialising whatever possible (eg. bare concrete floors, reduced tiling etc.)
 - d. Designing for long life for the overall building and how to address different time frames for structure, envelope, services, fitouts etc.
 - e. Consideration of using biogenic materials such as timber for structures
 - f. Using low embodied carbon concrete, recycled steel and recycled materials wherever possible.



PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form.

A complete redesign in alignment with the recommendations herewith is required to form a sensible response to the site and its context and constraints.

Any breaching of the planning controls would need to be supported by an analysis of the benefits compared to a complying scheme including demonstration of improvements with respect to; amenity; compatibility with adjoining development; impacts on context and; public benefit.

Any future submission should address connection to country as integral to the proposal.