

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 1<sup>st</sup> February 2024

## ITEM 5 – DA2023/1757 – Forestway Shopping Centre, Forest Way, FRENCHS FOREST

### PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### ***General***

Proposal is for extensive modifications to shopping centre including new and rationalised retail space, on grade and underground parking, public domain and traffic arrangement alteration and new boundary 'fence' structures.

#### ***Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character***

The site is located at the southern extent of the ridge road known as Forest Way and interfaces several varied conditions. Of principle consideration are the three public domain interfaces as follows:

- The broad and busy transport corridor (Forest Way) to the East. Proposed traffic arrangements require greater curtilage for carriageway and bus stop, leaving minimal verge and resulting in a frontage which is compromised and illegible for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The suburban street condition to the North and West of the site (Russell Avenue and Grace Avenue, respectively). Proposed buildings are relatively blank and inactive, yet leave minimal setbacks of around 1.5m which differ considerably from those of surrounding development. The panel suggest these small setbacks leave little opportunity to create a bushland character or positive landscape gesture to street.
- Sorlie Place Car Park to the West. Only small interventions are proposed including replacing existing potted plants. The Panel note that this interface would benefit greatly from the inclusion of in ground tree plantings

#### **Recommendations**

1. Increase setback to Eastern frontage. Develop the design to allow clear and safe passage of pedestrians and cyclists along Forest Way verge. Consider broader paths and additional space around bus stop
2. Increase setbacks to Russell Avenue and Grace Avenue adequate to provide generous landscape treatment and tree planting.

#### ***Scale, built form and articulation***

It is understood that the typical nature of this building typology is that active frontages are reserved for the internalised spaces and thus, the external, street facing facades become by default, blank in function, save for vehicle and pedestrian entries, services etc. The proposal employs decorative elements such as 'art walls' and murals to some of the blank street facing facades including the fence structure to the East and the facades facing Russell Avenue and Grace Avenue. Beyond these decorated, but ultimately blank structures, there are some moments where there is welcome relief including about the entry steps at the North East corner and the Glazed portion at the North West corner. In these instances, there is at least visual connection between the functional space of the proposal and the street. The panel would encourage that more of the site's perimeter be treated with genuine visual connection/address. Alternatively, where blank facades are required, larger setbacks and higher quality landscape should be employed either in lieu of or additionally to murals and facade decoration.

## Recommendations

3. Develop built form response to have greater visual connection with public domain including glazed portions, generous landscaped pedestrian entries, active street frontage. Where this is not possible, provide greater setbacks and landscape.

## ***Access, vehicular movement and car parking***

Site is constrained greatly by vehicular traffic infrastructure. The Panel feel that access and address for pedestrians and cyclists is compromised. Whilst this may respond to existing patronage, the imminent nearby development may generate more shoppers arriving by foot, bike or bus.

The design of the footbridge is such that the western landing blocks any possible continuation of the bike path to its South.

## Recommendations

4. Promote alternative transport by provisioning for legible access and considering how structures and spaces may adapt to support greater numbers of people arriving on foot or by bike in years to come.
5. Footbridge landing to better integrate with adjacent transport pathways.

## ***Landscape***

The Landscape Plans provide sufficient detail. The Panel recommends that some of the signature canopy trees should be derived from the local endemic plant communities (not Spotted Gum or Brushbox)

However; the site planning-especially the inadequate provision of landscape setbacks is at odds with the architects own expressed vision for a bushland shopping centre.

The frontage along Forest Way is not legible for pedestrians or cyclists and is dissected by numerous vehicle entries, slip lanes and a bus stop. It is dominated by a large multistorey carpark and the main pedestrian entry is not legible and provides little amenity.

The side setbacks at 1.5-2m provide little opportunity to create a bushland character and break down the huge scale of the shopping centre. Likewise; the limited area at Sorlie Place for planting and the proposal to put small trees in pots does not assist this vision either.

## Recommendations

6. Plant a greater number of signature canopy trees derived from the local endemic plant communities.
7. Look at opportunities to plant trees on podium in large volume soil vaults.
8. Provision of greater landscape setbacks to enable planting of both trees and screen shrubs.
9. Redesign the frontage along Forest way to be more legible for pedestrians and cyclists
10. Redesign the main pedestrian entry to be more legible and provide better amenity including provision of shade from canopy trees, understorey planting and change in paving materials for improved wayfinding.
11. Review opportunities at Sorlie Place with Council for planting including large canopy trees.

## ***Amenity***

Covered above

## Recommendations

## ***Façade treatment/Aesthetics***

Many parts of the proposal are well composed from a restrained, calm palette of materials. This is especially evident around the north eastern entry, where timber, brick and weatherboard are harmoniously matched and restrained.

However, other parts, in particular the parts of the proposal that interface public domain are less successful.

The 'SC1' 'Timber Look Battens' fence and screening is unrelenting and forms a significant part of the public domain interface.

The placeholder graphics for the wall artwork on the northern wall stand out as being at odds with the rest of the palette.

### Recommendations

12. Develop strategy for external fence that allows for greater interest (materiality, public art, climbing plants etc.). Avoid the use of faux materials.
13. Provide details about how the design of public art elements will be procured

### **Sustainability**

With the regulatory environment changing in the near future – 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 units.

The following aspects of design and servicing can be easily and cost effectively considered for inclusion:

### Recommendations

14. Decarbonisation of energy supply

All services should be electric – gas for cooking, hot water and heating should be avoided.

The storage of hot water can be considered a de facto battery if heated by PVs during the day.

Onsite power generation and battery storage. On site battery storage has benefits for the grid and may be a highly desirable back-up during the transition to a de-carbonised grid

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.

15. EV charging: Provide EV charging points (Min 15 amp) to suit level 1 charging

16. Passive design and thermal performance of building fabric

Fabric first approach to ensuring amount of energy required for heating and cooling can be kept to a minimum

17. Water use minimisation

All fixtures and appliances should be water efficient

Water storage for rainwater from the roofs should be included and plumbed to at least the landscaping and toilets

Landscape design and planting should be water tolerant and suitable for the microclimate

## **PANEL CONCLUSION**

**The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. A complete redesign is required to address the recommendations above.**