

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 23rd November 2023

ITEM 4 - DA2023/1400 - 13 Lodge Lane FRESHWATER

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Demolition of the existing residential flat building and construction of a 4-storey residential flat building with four 3-bedroom apartments and basement parking for 7 vehicles.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

As noted at the previous Panel:

The area has a mix of detached dwellings with the occasional residential flat building that were generally developed prior to the 1979 EPAA. The existing building comprises four small flats (2 x 1-bedroom units and 2 x 2-bedroom units). The site is within the R2 Low Density residential zone under the Warringah LEP. Residential flat buildings are prohibited in this zone.

The application seeks to use the provisions of Existing Use Rights under the Act, given the existing residential flat building on site.

The Panel notes the significant increase in GFA from about 300 sqm to 750 sqm. While there is nothing inherently problematic with this, there is little question that a 750sqm building, spread over effectively 5 levels (including car parking that is effectively at street level, on a lot that is similar to those surrounding is not 'consistent' with the surrounding development.

Conversely, there is a great variety in the built form of surrounding dwellings and due to the topography, it would appear possible to accommodate a significant increase in floor area without unacceptable impacts on neighbouring properties, though not necessarily the full 750sqm proposed.

Following on from the above comments, the Panel would have preferred to see a reduction in the proposed GFA.

The Panel remains supportive of the applicant's plan to create a pathway within Council's land between Coastview Place and Lodge Lane, noting that this is likely to benefit residents walking to the beach both for this project and those living in Lodge Lane.

Recommendations

1. Continue discussions with council regarding the walkway from Coastview Place to Lodge Lane, and explore potential conditions to ensure this is completed as part of the Development Application under Public Domain upgrades;
2. Consideration given to a reduction in proposed GFA.

Scale, built form and articulation

The applicant has adopted a much reduced setback of 0.9m rather than the ADG and BCA setback of 3m-6m, which has resulted in a defensive façade and little room for planting, natural ventilation, or outlook (for both the subject site and neighbours). The Panel note that the existing setback does not comply either. But at approximately 2m it is double what is now being proposed. The Panel is of the view that the negative amenity impacts of this non-complying existing condition should not be made worse by a building façade brought even closer to the boundary. The existing setback should therefore be retained along the eastern boundary. This would potentially retain more of the existing rock escarpment along with the possibility for more soft landscaping and better amenity for residents.

The Panel also remains concerned about the large amount of excavation, including removal of the existing natural rockface. However, a meaningful attempt has been made at differentiating the top two stories from the bottom three.

Additionally, the applicant should review the inclusion of full height windows within 3m of the boundary – these are likely to increase overlooking opportunities, but may also create a fire separation issue due to reduced spandrel distances between units/floors.

Recommendations

3. East side setback not to exceed existing side setback (nominally 2m) of existing and proposed demolished building.

Access, vehicular movement, and car parking

The proposed design includes two double “garages,” 2 single “garages,” and a visitor parking space. The basement extends fully to the eastern boundary, 3m from the rear boundary and 2m to the western boundary, significantly impacting the provision for deep soil planting and retention of existing vegetation.

It appears as if the garages are wide enough, but are unlikely to meet the Australian standards for depth and manoeuvring. The additional width required for garages also increases the amount of excavation required. Additionally, the “deep soil” zone between the double garages is unlikely to support significant vegetation due to the rock in this area. Instead, it appears as if all 7 spaces could fit within the front wall and the stairwell, limiting excavation to the rear, and increasing the opportunity for meaningful deep soil zones to the rear, and reducing the excessive amount of excavation.

As noted in the meeting and previously, excavation of this scale impacts on the environmental and landscaping outcomes of the site, and removes existing soil networks which support existing vegetation.

Recommendations

4. Reduce the required excavation by minimising & rationalising space for parking within the basement, preferably to the area before the lift core.

Landscape

The site appears to be over-developed and gives little back to the streetscape in the same way that adjoining residences do with larger setbacks and greater extent and number of tree/shrub planting.

The non-compliance with the 6.5m front setback should be mitigated with a more robust screen tree planting of native coastal trees e.g., *Banksia integrifolia* or similar. Only one tree is proposed to the east side of the block and a row of 3 small *Tristania* along the west boundary which provide little screening from the mass and large scale of the new apartment block.

Recommendations

5. Given no views are at stake the entire frontage with exception of driveway should be planted.
6. Plant endemic coastal species should only be planted to front setback and green roof
7. Consider reuse of site sandstone to create a facsimile of the rock outcrop that will be destroyed by excavation.
8. Increase landscape setback to western boundary to at least 2 metres as per existing condition and introduce screen planting to separate neighbours and protect privacy.
9. Ensure roof gardens/planters are on common property, safely accessible and maintained under a professional maintenance regime to ensure their success.

Amenity

Previously, the Panel noted that all bathrooms were naturally ventilated, a feature which appears to have been removed in the current developed design.

The provision of large storage rooms in Units 1&2 in addition to the cellar/workshop/gym in the common spaces on these levels is queried in light of the previously noted concerns about excessive excavation as well as their unsuitability for potential future occupation. Additionally, the height and location of windows for living spaces in Units 1 and 2 appear to be below ground level significantly impacting their ability for natural ventilation.

The Panel would like to ensure that adaptable and/or liveable units have been accommodated for.

Additionally, it is likely that residents will come and go via the Coastview Place entrance, due to its connection to the beach via Dick Street. A separate pedestrian entrance would be supported at the lower ground level. Additionally, a pedestrian entrance from Lodge Lane to Unit 3 would be preferable rather than requiring the use of a lift for half a floor – this may be a stair rather than level access.

Recommendations

10. Ensure natural ventilation to all habitable rooms, including cross ventilation, is appropriate and BCA compliant, particularly along the eastern boundary.
11. Provide adaptable unit layouts which demonstrate compliance, including the requirement for units which can be “easily modified” – i.e., no movement of plumbing fixtures.
12. Improve pedestrian access where possible.

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

As noted previously: Depending on the quality of the stone that will be excavated and the likelihood that this will be done with rock saws, the Panel would strongly support the re-use of stone on the site particularly in the lower two levels. Sydney has a wonderful heritage of using sandstone from the site in the construction of buildings, foundations and retaining walls.

Other comments from the Panel appear to have been taken into consideration with a sandstone base and differing materiality for the top two levels. As noted previously, the Panel supports the top section being further set in to accommodate outlook and to further articulate the built form. Alternatives to painted render surfaces should also be considered. Materials with integral finishes such as face brick, prefinished, integral colour square edged, compressed fibre cement (CFC) panels, metal cladding including zinc and copper panels or integrally coloured acrylic textured coatings with longer-term warranties are options to be considered.

Recommendations

13. Explore the retention and reuse of local rock excavated within the project.
14. Reduce reliance on painted render, and replace with integral materials where appropriate.

Sustainability

From the previous DSAP report, there were a number of sustainability items which have been addressed, such as putting in heat pump hot water for domestic hot water as well as the pool, rainwater recycling, a small provision of PV on the roof, provided bike parking and they removed gas cooking.

Recommendations

15. The PV system on the BASIX certificate is only 2.5kW. This should be increased significantly
16. Consider the use of induction cooktops instead of standard electric, as they are more efficient.
17. EV charging should be included within basement parking.

PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel is generally supportive of the proposal but remains concerned about the extent of excavation, the eastern setback, as well as extent and variety of soft landscaping. The Panel is of the view that further modifications to these elements are desirable and would likely result in a more sympathetic and contextual built-form.

Additionally, the Panel supports the introduction of a pedestrian walkway from Coastview Place to Lodge Lane, and encourages the applicant to continue discussion with council regarding the public domain.