

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 14 December 2023

DA2023/0998 - Level 7140 Freshwater Beach 9999 The Esplanade FRESHWATER

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Freshwater Surf Life Saving Club – Freshwater Beach Reserve – The Esplanade – FRESHWATER

Alterations and additions to a Community Facility including use for Public Recreation of the Freshwater SLSC. Ancillary uses include Restaurant – Café – Indoor Recreation – “Museum of Surf” – SLS Club rooms – SLSC storage and administrative rooms – Caretaker’s dwelling.

Note: heritage listed clubhouse

The subject development is currently lodged and under assessment. The determination authority is the Sydney North Planning Panel.

Council would like feedback on:

- Bulk and scale
- Reshaping elements to improve proposal
- Sustainability elements
- Manager’s residence
- Heritage – how to address concerns and work out best approach

Council is completing the Landscape Masterplan for Freshwater reserve with Stage 1 currently in progress. Later staged work can be co-ordinated with the DA proposed works where suitable.

A request for Further Information has already been sent to the applicant for which the applicant is in the process of preparing a detailed response. This includes:

- i. Heritage impact of the proposal (original building fabric / materials and the new western built form)
- ii. Excessive bulk and scale – including DCP controls
- iii. Zone objectives for the RE1 Public Reserve
- iv. Coastal Lands Plan of Management requirements
- v. View impacts
- vi. Restaurant and café use
- vii. Acoustic impacts
- viii. 3D image analysis of the built form
- ix. Site detail and landscaping areas
- x. Construction and operational management plan

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

It is noted that there is no reference to or information about local Indigenous knowledge for this site – either in the site analysis or design response.

The connections to and consideration of the coastal walk is commended.

Concerns were noted about future sea level rises, flood levels and impact of future beach erosion. It is also noted that the work is being proposed in the safest location, and the existing heritage listed building will bear the brunt of these issues in the future.

Generally, the development improves overall current spatial relationships and functionality but needs some further consideration of specific elements. Improvements to building program along the north, eastern and southern sides result in more functional internal arrangements and a clear rationality of building form that is an improvement on the existing series of rear additions.

The Panel noted the scale of the western veranda, with its double height screen, and its role as a public hub at the interface to the reserve. The Panel would like to see how it can be evolved to encourage a greater sense of 'publicness', with consideration given to how it can work as both restaurant and public space outside of opening hours.

Recommendations

1. Confirm the indigenous knowledge of this place so it can inform the design development of the public spaces and landscaping.
2. Reconsider the architectural and landscape interface to the western reserve to enhance role as a public offer.
3. Ensure heritage concerns appropriately inform the detailed design and material selection.

Scale, built form and articulation

The general approach to the location of the new work, working with significant parts of the existing building, and making the new building simple and subservient in the setting of the heritage building is commended. Additionally, retaining the historic connection to Surf Life Saving and Surfing for the Museum of Surf is important.

Additional design development is required to deal with the following concerns:

- Scale and articulation of the double storey western verandah needs to be reconsidered so it can provide a scaled approach to the new work while maintaining its shading and protection. Confirmation of impact on views from neighbouring residents using 3D modelling should guide this work.
- Entry to the museum which crowds the entry door of the existing 1935 building and does not allow it to be celebrated and contribute to wayfinding. The new work could be set back to expose the original doors.
- Articulation of the expanded eastern balcony and its impact on the heritage building need to be carefully considered with a heritage consultant as the details are developed.

Recommendations

4. Develop the architectural response to the new work to minimise the visual impact of the extended building, particularly to the west.
5. Reconsider the southern entry experience to the museum and heritage building so this element can be used as a device for wayfinding and delineating heritage from contemporary.
6. Develop the eastern verandah details with consideration for its impact and integration with the 1935 heritage building.

Access, vehicular movement, and car parking

There appears to be little change to the existing access, vehicular movement, and car parking. The majority of this is not included in this site, sitting within the Council's masterplan for the surrounding area.

The Panel sees an opportunity for pedestrian access to connect the southern end of the western deck with the coastal walk and the new external areas to the south of the building.

Recommendations

7. Consider refining the access from the south / west to create a more integrated access to the SLSC and its surrounding facilities.

Landscape

Generally, the landscape is supported as is the engagement of the same consultant doing the masterplan within which this sits.

The Panel note the site is sensitive - within the Warringah DCP mapped areas for Threatened and High Conservation Habitat, Wildlife Corridors, Native Vegetation, Coastal Zone. As the detail is developed, the landscape should enhance the natural biodiversity and be appropriate for the location in coordination with Council's master plan works.

Additional detail could be informed through engagement with the local Indigenous people and their knowledge, as recommended above.

A sedum green roof may be a more appropriate treatment to the new roof with ecological benefit and reduced heat through its insulation. It can also assist photovoltaic panels to operate more effectively.

As noted in both points above, consider the treatment to the western deck to better connect with the coastal walk / southern gardens, and how this will work for the public good when the restaurant is closed.

Recommendations

8. Reconsider the relationship to the reserve on the western interface to make it inviting to the public and have the sense of giving back, rather than privatising.
9. Investigate the viability of a sedum roof over the new work.

Amenity

The improved amenity for the club members is noted and commended.

Further consideration of the amenity of the wider public and access to the facilities can help improve the design as it is developed.

Recommendations

10. Identify how the external space can be better integrated with the wider public area.

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Re-using as much of the existing fabric is a positive approach and is commended.

The new façade approach provides 3-dimensional depth and layering, play of light and shadow, and a simplicity that creates a cohesive architectural character in contrast to the heritage building.

The proposed use off-form conc is supported as this will not dominate and allow proposed colour of heritage walls and roof tiles to dominate visually. However, it is noted the performance of concrete and its reinforcement in exposed coastal locations can be problematic and will need careful specification and construction.

While the selection of the timber for the screening can be beautiful, there is concern for how a sustainably sourced species will perform in such an exposed marine environment. This will need further consideration.

Recommendations

11. The detailed specifications of materials for the new work will need to carefully consider how they will perform in such a difficult location – in durability, maintenance, and sustainable sourcing.

Sustainability

The role of the Panel is to advise on ‘design (quality) and sustainability’ and is not confined to existing legislation or the approaches of the past. Accordingly, the Panel believes it is appropriate and necessary for it to provide ‘forward-thinking advice’ to both proponents and to council staff involved in the assessment of development.

With the regulatory environment changing right now– for efficiency, electrification, and zero emissions in operation and construction – these investments at this time will be worthwhile both now and in the future.

Recommendations

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

1. Decarbonisation of energy supply
 - a. All services should be electric – gas for cooking, hot water and heating should be avoided. GBCA has excellent advice on how to achieve this.
 - b. Electric heat pump systems for hot water throughout should be considered. The storage of hot water can be considered a de facto battery if heated by PVs during the day.
 - c. Onsite power generation and battery storage should be investigated. 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.
 - d. 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 insulating and ecological benefits.
2. Passive design and thermal performance of building fabric
 - e. Given the coastal location, a very comfortable indoor environment should be achievable with well designed and constructed building envelopes.
 - f. The inclusion of ceiling fans to all spaces, including the manager’s unit, will provide comfort with minimal energy while reducing the need and energy required for air-conditioning.

PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel supports the proposal in principal but will need to be adjusted to incorporate the ideas noted in this report. In particular, the bulk of the new section, its materials and interface with the parkland needs further development. Further improvements to the heritage aspects of the 1935 front pavilion – the address to the SW corner entry and detailing of the front balcony – need to be undertaken.

Additional consultation with the local community (not just club members) to update them on the latest developments in this long process is advised.

The updated proposal should return to the Panel for consideration.