

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 26th October 2023

ITEM 6 - DA2023/1289 – 1112–1116 Barrenjoey Road PALM BEACH

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

Proposal is for 5 storey Shop Top development comprising underground car parking, ground floor (non-food and beverage) retail uses and 7 residential units.

An active consent exists relating to the site (N0102/10).

DSAP reviewed previous scheme for the site subject of PLM 2021/0223.

Some of the comments of the Panel had been addressed (most notably an improvement to setbacks and internal apartment amenity) however, it is the view of the Panel that the proposal as presented still does not demonstrate adequate residential amenity and that the built form does not respond appropriately to the site's unique context.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

The site is zoned E1 Local Centre

The character of the immediate context is defined by predominantly fine grained 2/3 storey buildings amongst retained vegetation and natural topographical features.

To the west of the site is Pittwater Park and Palm Beach Wharf, from where, the site is visually prominent due to the topography.

The site interfaces C4 Environmental Living zones to its north and east, where dwelling houses predominantly sit within natural landscape features and are set back significantly from Barrenjoey Road.

Within close proximity to the south of the site is the Local Heritage item 'Barrenjoey House' which presents as a two-storey form with prominent dormer windows.

The Panel consider that the proposal does not adequately respond to the context and future desired character due to the following:

- The proposal's height, number of storeys and tiered form contribute to it having a comparatively overbearing prominence and bulk. This is further emphasized by the singularity and uniformity of expression and the predominant horizontality of its western facade.

The proposal does not achieve a balance between maintaining the landforms, landscapes and other features of the natural environment, and the development of land. Nor does it appear to retain and enhance locally native tree canopy as far as possible (with reference to Future Desired Character).

The landscape design does not suitably offset the building mass and reflect the character of the area.

The proposal does not make a suitable transition into low-density residential zone to the north and east.

The proposal does not adequately respond to the scale and character of Barrenjoey House.

The proposal requires significant excavation and land disturbance to facilitate the development and makes little attempt to integrate with the landform and landscape, representing minimal restraint with respect to site disturbance.

Recommendations

1. Reduce bulk and interrogate form, character and landscape to achieve greater consistency with context;
2. Preserve natural vegetation and topological features such that the proposal, particularly any parts above its second storey, may more effectively integrate (in a less impactful way) with the natural environment;
3. Consider ways to diminish the horizontality of the building's address (especially to the west) and to better respond to the dominant pitched-roof forms and deep verandahs of neighbouring dwellings/buildings;
4. Provide more compatible transition into adjacent low-density zoning through careful built form/landscape/set-back relationships;
5. In considering streetscape and built form impact, respond to and give prominence to Barrenjoey House;
6. Consider and implement strategies to greatly reduce site disturbance and excavation.

Scale, built form and articulation

Proposal would read as a 5-storey building, particularly when viewed from its West.

Its consistency of character and relatively small, evenly dispersed articulations have the effect of unifying rather than breaking up the mass, contributing to its overall impression of bulk.

Recommendations

7. Reduce height /number of storeys of building and undertake to achieve a prominence of lower 2 storeys;
8. Consider how through breaking up and manipulating the form, the impact of parts of the building(s) above 2 storeys could be greatly reduced;
9. Consider articulations/breaks in built form of far greater magnitude than proposed to assist with scale and presentation of built form.

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

The Panel appreciate the introduction of windows to typical floor lobbies to provide natural light and fresh air to those spaces, but note that the pedestrian entry lobby at ground level is a very long space with a blind corner and which will require constant artificial lighting. Further, the point of entry is located some 24m from the front boundary down a side lane with minimal surveillance, creating potential safety issues.

Recommendations

10. Improve residential entry such that a shorter, clearer path of travel and naturally lit environment should be achieved

Landscape

The submitted landscape documentation is lacking in detail and the lack of sections, elevations and any detailed information on the planter boxes / terraced plantings does not help with assessing the feasibility of the landscape treatment to the perimeters.

Due to the size of the site being less than 1500 square metres, the required setbacks are only 3 metres which may not provide adequate planting area for the establishment of mature, canopy trees and associated under planting.

The proposal presents as overdeveloped with a lot being asked of such a small and steep site with cramped pedestrian circulation around the site.

A revised proposal should consider broader setbacks with more landscape dedicated to the side interfaces of each of the units that are at the various ground levels as you move up the site.

Plantings are largely in structured planters.

Plantings in rear courtyard are unlikely to receive enough light to grow.

Recommendations

11. A revised landscape documentation package should include sections and elevations to provide more context with the landscape response to the proposed building footprint and the response to the existing conditions along Pittwater Road.
12. The revised landscape response should provide more deep soil landscaping and more landscaped area dedicated to individual units.
13. There should be more planting on structures at the upper levels.
14. There should be more substantial planting to the perimeter, raised planter boxes at each level along the front façade to provide more articulation and softening of the building footprint.
15. The revised proposal should consider recycled maritime elements that inherently have a beachside feel to them the help blend the proposed architecture with the existing neighbourhood character.

Amenity

The Panel still has concerns about a number of significant amenity issues. These include;

- Retail spaces have been designed in response to potential flood conditions, but where the floor is raised to comply with Council recommendations the resulting ceiling heights are not adequate for Food and Beverage tenancies. The Panel agrees that it would be beneficial to be better to have consistent and fully-compliant ceiling heights (in accordance with flooding and future potential usage requirements). This should therefore allow for the possibility of food and beverage retailers to take tenancy in the future.
- The rear courtyard serves as the sole source of light and air to the majority of bedrooms in the proposal. The courtyard is largely subterranean, very narrow and its access to light is severely restricted by the topography and overhanging built form. This means that occupants of some bedrooms have no chance of seeing the sky. Further, due to the narrow, hard nature of the courtyard, there exists a situation where sound may reverberate between apartments and the acoustic privacy of apartments may only be achieved at the expense of shutting windows and hence of natural ventilation. This condition is inconsistent with ADG Objective 4A-2 and would be a poor outcome for residents.
- The proposal would impact greatly on the privacy of development immediately to the north (1120 Barrenjoey Road), where habitable balconies/spaces are proposed to face those of the adjacent development in close proximity and direct line of sight/sound (circa 6m)
- Solar Access to apartments is stated incorrectly. Views from sun indicate that although the site has good access to sunlight, apartments 101, 102 and 103 (assume privacy screen) would not receive 2H sun as stated, hence, the proposal fails to meet ADG design criteria in this respect.
- Apartments proposed are large in size, however, the provision of three large apartments per floor of the lower levels of the building has created overwhelming amenity issues. The Panel not convinced that this configuration is desirable and that a significant reduction in floor space will be required to permit adequate amenity outcomes on the site. This may manifest as smaller apartments or fewer apartments (each equivalent in size to the proposed) per floor.
- Building tolerances do not appear adequate to achieve required ceiling heights, especially where terraces have been located above habitable spaces.

Recommendations

16. Provide adequate ceiling heights in accordance with ADG such that Food and Beverage Operators may take tenancy at the ground floor;
17. Re-plan apartments to achieve adequate access to light, privacy and outlook from all habitable spaces. Observe ADG Objective 4A-2;

18. Transition sensitively to residential development to north, ensuring adequate privacy, building separation and built form relationship with development at 1120 Barrenjoey Road;
19. Ensure design can meet ADG Solar access design criteria as a minimum. Ensure accurate reporting of solar testing;
20. Reduce floor space to assist in achieving higher levels of amenity befitting of the site's opportunities and limitations;
21. Allow and demonstrate adequate building tolerances with respect to meeting ADG required ceiling heights to habitable rooms .

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Fine, curved battened screens read as additional rather than integrated Architectural elements.

Panel commented that architectural language may benefit from some clarity and definition with respect to 'heavier' and 'lighter' elements which may assist with breaking up mass.

Recommendations

22. Consider distinguishing parts of the building in heavier and lighter architectural expressions to assist with clarity, breakup and robustness of built form.

Sustainability

The opportunity exists for this development to represent exemplary practice.

Concrete has been used extensively and expressed. The panel urge the applicant to respond to the large embodied carbon of this material by designing it to last and exploring the use of lower embodied carbon concrete.

See notes in Amenity regarding better layouts for apartments to ensure good natural light ventilation (AND acoustic privacy) and for all apartments.

To ensure these dwellings are future ready and the best they can be for their occupants, the Panel strongly recommend that the energy supply is decarbonised (no gas), EV charging is supplied and the passive design and thermal performance of the building fabric is optimised.

Avoid unhealthy fossil fuel gas cooktops, space heating and hot water heaters. Hot water should be provided by electric heat pump systems or instantaneous electric heaters. This will enable savings for the developer and tenants by not installing gas to the site.

Consider as many PV panels as possible for the roof to enable as much onsite power generation as possible, installed on green roofs to be more effective. This will have side benefits of increasing biodiversity and reducing heat island effect. Consider locations for possible battery storage along with EV charging for cars.

The Panel notes that the new building code requires an average of 7 stars NatHERS, with no apartments less than 6 stars. Greater comfort in a changing climate and future disclosure of energy efficiency at point of sale or lease make this a good investment.

Recommendations

23. All services (cooking, hot water and heating) should be electric – gas should not be connected.
24. Include as many PV panels on a light weight green roof as possible for use in common areas.
25. Provide EV charging points for car parking, and allow for future bi-directional (2-way) charging of EV battery for powering the building.
26. Ensure all apartments have an average 7 star NatHERS score, with no apartment below 6 stars.

PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. Further re-design and reduction in the floor area is required.

The Panel refer the applicant to the Apartment Design Guide for aspects related to amenity and internal planning of apartments.