

Appendix Two - Clause 4.6 *Exceptions to Development Standards – Height of Buildings*

Clause 4.6 of the Manly Local Environmental Plan 2013 (MLEP 2013) permits departures from development standards in certain circumstances. In this case, it is necessary to consider if compliance with the development standard is consistent with the aims of the policy and, in particular, does compliance with the development standard tend to hinder the attainment of the objects specified in section 1.3 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) being:

- (a) to promote the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment by the proper management, development and conservation of the State's natural and other resources,*
- (b) to facilitate ecologically sustainable development by integrating relevant economic, environmental and social considerations in decision-making about environmental planning and assessment,*
- (c) to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land,*
- (d) to promote the delivery and maintenance of affordable housing,*
- (e) to protect the environment, including the conservation of threatened and other species of native animals and plants, ecological communities and their habitats,*
- (f) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage),*
- (g) to promote good design and amenity of the built environment,*
- (h) to promote the proper construction and maintenance of buildings, including the protection of the health and safety of their occupants,*
- (i) to promote the sharing of the responsibility for environmental planning and assessment between the different levels of government in the State,*
- (j) to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.*

The aims and objectives of Manly LEP 2013 Clause 4.6 are as follows:

- (a) to provide an appropriate degree of flexibility in applying certain development standards to particular development,*
- (b) to achieve better outcomes for and from development by allowing flexibility in particular circumstances.*

Under Clause 4.6(3) and (4) of the MLEP 2013, consent for a development that contravenes a development standard must not be granted unless the consent authority is satisfied that:

(3)(a) compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the case, and

(3)(b) there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.

(4)(a)(ii) the proposed development will be in the public interest because it is consistent with the objectives of the particular standard and the objectives for development within the zone in which the development is proposed to be carried out,

These matters, along with case law judgements from the NSW Land and Environment Court, are addressed below.

1. Environmental Planning Instrument Details (Manly LEP 2013)

1.1 What is the name of the environmental planning instrument that applies to the land?

Manly Local Environmental Plan 2013

1.2 What is the zoning of the land?

R2 – Low Density Residential

1.3 What are the objectives of the zone?

- *To provide for the housing needs of the community within a low density residential environment.*
- *To enable other land uses that provide facilities or services to meet the day to day needs of residents.*

1.4 What is the development standard being varied?

Cl 4.3 - Height of Buildings

1.5 Under what clause is the development standard listed in the environmental planning instrument?

Cl 4.3 of the Manly Local Environmental Plan 2013

1.6 What are the objectives of the development standard?

(1) The objectives of this clause are as follows:

(a) to provide for building heights and roof forms that are consistent with the topographic landscape, prevailing building height and desired future streetscape character in the locality,

(b) to control the bulk and scale of buildings,

(c) to minimise disruption to the following—

(i) views to nearby residential development from public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

(ii) views from nearby residential development to public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

(iii) views between public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

(d) to provide solar access to public and private open spaces and maintain adequate sunlight access to private open spaces and to habitable rooms of adjacent dwellings,

(e) to ensure the height and bulk of any proposed building or structure in a recreation or environmental protection zone has regard to existing vegetation and topography and any other aspect that might conflict with bushland and surrounding land uses.

1.7 What is the numeric value of the development standard in the environmental planning instrument?

The numeric value of the height of buildings development standard applicable to the subject site is a maximum of 8.5m.

1.8 What is proposed numeric value of the development standard in your development application?

The development proposes a maximum building height of 9.326 metres.

1.9 What is the percentage variation (between your proposal and the environmental planning instrument)?

The percentage variation sought is 9.76% or 0.83 metres.

2. NSW Land and Environment Court Case Law

Several key Land and Environment Court (NSW LEC) judgements have refined the manner in which variations to development standards are required to be approached. The key findings and direction of each of these matters are outlined in the following discussion.

2.1 Wehbe v Pittwater [2007] NSW LEC 827

The decision of Justice Preston in *Wehbe v Pittwater [2007] NSW LEC 827*, (expanded on the findings in *Winten v North Sydney Council*), identified 5 ways in which the applicant might establish that compliance with a development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary. It was not suggested that the five ways were the only ways that a development standard could be shown to be unreasonable or unnecessary.

The five ways outlined in *Wehbe* include:

1. *The objectives of the standard are achieved notwithstanding non-compliance with the standard (**First Way**).*
2. *The underlying objective or purpose of the standard is not relevant to the development and therefore compliance is unnecessary (**Second Way**).*
3. *The underlying object or purpose would be defeated or thwarted if compliance was required and therefore compliance is unreasonable (**Third Way**).*
4. *The development standard has been virtually abandoned or destroyed by the Council's own actions in granting consents departing from the standard and hence compliance with the standard is unnecessary and unreasonable (**Fourth Way**).*
5. *The zoning of the particular land is unreasonable or inappropriate so that a development standard appropriate for that zoning is also unreasonable and unnecessary as it applies to the land and compliance with the standard would be unreasonable or unnecessary. That is, the particular parcel of land should not have been included in the particular zone (**Fifth Way**).*

In the Micaul decision Preston CJ confirmed that the requirements mandated by SEPP 1 (as discussed in Wehbe) are only relevant in demonstrating that compliance with a development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary for the purpose of Clause 4.6(3)(a).

2.2 Four2Five Pty Ltd v Ashfield Council [2015] NSW LEC

In the matter of *Four2Five Pty Ltd v Ashfield Council [2015] NSW LEC*, initially heard by Commissioner Pearson, upheld on appeal by Justice Pain, it was found that an application under Clause 4.6 to vary a development standard must go beyond the five (5) part test of *Wehbe V Pittwater [2007] NSW LEC 827* and demonstrate the following:

1. Compliance with the particular requirements of Clause 4.6, with particular regard to the provisions of subclauses (3) and (4) of the LEP;
2. That there are sufficient environment planning grounds, particular to the circumstances of the proposed development (as opposed to general planning grounds that may apply to any similar development occurring on the site or within its vicinity);
3. That maintenance of the development standard is unreasonable and unnecessary on the basis of planning merit that goes beyond the consideration of consistency with the objectives of the development standard and/or the land use zone in which the site occurs;
4. All three elements of clause 4.6 have to be met and it is best to have different reasons for each but it is not essential.

3 Randwick City Council v Micaul Holdings Pty Ltd [2016] NSWLEC 7

In *Randwick City Council v Micaul Holdings*, the Court allowed a departure from development standards, provided the processes required by clause 4.6 are followed, a consent authority has a broad discretion as to whether to allow a departure from development standards under clause 4.6, even where the variation is not justified for site or development specific reasons.

Preston CJ noted that *the Commissioner did not have to be satisfied directly that compliance with each development standard was unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the*

case, but only indirectly by being satisfied that the appellant's written request had adequately addressed the matter in clause 4.6(3)(a) that compliance with each development standard was unreasonable or unnecessary.

4 Zhang v City of Ryde

Commissioner Brown reiterated that clause 4.6 imposes three preconditions which must be satisfied before the application could be approved:

1. The consent authority must be satisfied that the proposed development will be consistent with the objectives of the zone;
2. The consent authority must be satisfied that the proposed development will be consistent with the objects of the standard which is not met; and
3. The consent authority must be satisfied that the written request demonstrates that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances and there are sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard.

It is only if all of these conditions are met that consent can be granted to the application, subject to an assessment of the merits of the application.

The Commissioner applied the now familiar approach to determining consistency with zone objectives by considering whether the development was antipathetic to the objectives.

In contrast to four²five, the reasons relied on to justify the departure from the standards in this case were not necessarily site specific.

5. Action Pty Ltd v Woollahra Municipal Council [2018]

In Action Pty Ltd v Woollahra Municipal Council, the court demonstrated the correct approach to the consideration of clause 4.6 requests, including that the clause does not require that a development that contravenes a development standard, must have a neutral or better environmental planning outcome than one that does not.

3. Consideration

The following section addresses the provisions of clause 4.6 of the MLEP 2013 together with principles established in the NSW Land and Environment Court Case Law outlined above.

Clause 4.6(3)(A) - Is compliance with the development standard unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the case (and is a development which complies with the development standard unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the case)?

In order to demonstrate that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary, in the circumstances of the case, the Five (5) Part Test established in *Winten v North Sydney Council* and expanded by Justice Preston in *Wehbe v Pittwater* [2007] NSW LEC 827 is considered:

The five ways outlined in *Wehbe* include:

3.1 Five (5) Part Test - *Wehbe v Pittwater*

1. *The objectives of the standard are achieved notwithstanding non-compliance with the standard (First Way).*

The objectives of the standard are:

(a) to provide for building heights and roof forms that are consistent with the topographic landscape, prevailing building height and desired future streetscape character in the locality,

Comment

The proposed variation is largely the result of the slope of the site and the vast majority of the building complies with the maximum height control. The resulting dwelling is of a lesser scale than the neighbouring dwellings and presents as a largely compliant residence to Peronne Avenue.

The proposed breach is minor at 830mm and proposes a maximum height of 9.326 metres, in the control area of 8.5 metres. The resulting dwelling is considered to be compatible with the prevailing height of buildings and streetscape character within the locality, despite the non-compliance.

It is considered this objective is met, despite the numerical variation.

(b) to control the bulk and scale of buildings,

Comment

The proposed built form for the most part is below the maximum height of 8.5m. The proposed height exceedance of an additional 830mm is considered to be negligible in relation to bulk and scale, given that it is of a lesser scale than surrounding dwellings.

The proposed development will not present with excessive bulk from the public domain due to the sloping topography of the site and surrounding area.

It is considered this objective is met, despite the numerical variation.

(c) to minimise disruption to the following:

(i) views to nearby residential development from public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

(ii) views from nearby residential development to public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

(iii) views between public spaces (including the harbour and foreshores),

Comment

The proposed variation in height of 830mm will not result in any unreasonable material view loss when assessed in relation to the view sharing principles set out in Tenacity Consulting v Warringah Council [2004].

The view loss assessment undertaken for this proposal is provided as Appendix 2 and concludes that the impact will be minor.

It is therefore considered this objective is met, despite the numerical variation.

(d) to provide solar access to public and private open spaces and maintain adequate sunlight access to private open spaces and to habitable rooms of adjacent dwellings,

Comment

The proposed variation to height does not result in any unreasonable solar access impacts to adjoining dwellings.

As described in the SEE the proposed development will result in a minor increase to shadowing to 10 Peronne Avenue at 9am, 12pm and 3pm. The increase is only to a very small portion of this property and No 10 Peronne Avenue and this property will retain excellent solar access to front balconies and the rear yard for the enjoyment of the residents.

Given that compliant solar access is achieved, despite the height variation sought, it is considered the underlying objective of this clause has been satisfied.

(e) to ensure the height and bulk of any proposed building or structure in a recreation or environmental protection zone has regard to existing vegetation and topography and any other aspect that might conflict with bushland and surrounding land uses.

Comment:

No applicable as the subject site is not located in a recreation or environmental protection zone.

2. *The underlying objective or purpose of the standard is not relevant to the development and therefore compliance is unnecessary (Second Way).*

This exception to development standards request does not rely on this reason.

3. *The underlying object or purpose would be defeated or thwarted if compliance was required and therefore compliance is unreasonable (Third Way).*

This exception to development standards request does not rely on this reason

4. *The development standard has been virtually abandoned or destroyed by the Council's own actions in granting consents departing from the standard and hence compliance with the standard is unnecessary and unreasonable (Fourth Way).*

This exception to development standards request does not rely on this reason.

5. *The zoning of the particular land is unreasonable or inappropriate so that a development standard appropriate for that zoning is also unreasonable and unnecessary as it applies to the land and compliance with the standard would be unreasonable or unnecessary. That is, the particular parcel of land should not have been included in the particular zone (Fifth Way).*

This exception to development standards request does not rely on this reason.

This clause 4.6 variation request establishes that compliance with the development standard is unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances of the proposed development because the objectives of the standard are achieved and accordingly justifies the variation to the height of buildings control pursuant to the First Way outlined in Wehbe.

Thus it is considered that compliance with Clause 4.6(3)(a) is satisfied.

3.2 Clause 4.6(3)(B) – Are there sufficient environmental planning grounds to justify contravening the development standard?

There are sufficient grounds to permit the variation of the development standard. In particular:

- The proposed variation is very minor at just 830mm or 9.76% and does not result in any unreasonable impacts.
- The proposed variation satisfies the objectives of the underlying intent of Clause 4.3, and therefore the merits of the proposal are considered to be worthy of approval. It has been demonstrated within Council and the Courts to apply a reasonable approach in supporting variations to development standards.

- Strict numerical compliance would not necessarily result in a materially better urban design outcome and would thwart the underlying objectives of the controls
- The proposed development will not present with excessive bulk from the public domain due to the sloping topography of the site and surrounding area. It is considered this objective is met, despite the numerical variation.
- By supporting this variation to building height in its current form, it is considered that an appropriate degree of flexibility be applied, which results in a reasonable built form, consistent with newer dwelling houses in the locality.
- The extent of the variation is considered to be in the public interest as the proposal remains consistent with the objectives of the zone.
- The proposed variation adequately satisfies the underlying objectives of the controls and will not result in any unacceptable built, natural, social or economic impacts for consideration under the Act.
- A variation of 10% is generally accepted by the Land and Environment Court in relation to a negligible/minor non-compliance and impact. In this instance, the proposal seeks a variation of 9.76%.

3.3 Clause 4.6(4)(A)(ii) – Will the proposed development be in the public interest because it is consistent with the objectives of the particular standard and objectives for development within the zone which the development is proposed to be carried out.

The proposed development is consistent with the objectives of the standard (see Cl 4.6(3)(A)). An assessment of consistency with the objectives of the Zone is provided below:

Zone – R2 Low Density Residential

Objectives of zone

- *To provide for the housing needs of the community within a low density residential environment.*

Consistent. The proposal is for a new dwelling house.

- *To enable other land uses that provide facilities or services to meet the day to day needs of residents.*

Not relevant. The proposal is for a residential dwelling.

Despite the proposal seeking an exception to the building height clause, the bulk and scale of the building will have minimal effects as it represents a minor exceedance and is consistent with surrounding development.

The proposed development is not contrary to the public interest, because it is consistent with the objectives of the standard (see Cl 4.6(3)(A)) and objectives for development within the zone.

Clause 4.6(5)(a) whether contravention of the development standard raises any matter of significance for State or regional environmental planning,

The non-compliance will not raise any matter of State or Regional Significance.

Clause 4.6(5)(b) the public benefit of maintaining the development standard,

The proposed development is not contrary to the public interest, accordingly there can be no quantifiable or perceived public benefit in maintaining the standard.

Clause 4.6(5)(c) any other matters required to be taken into consideration by the Secretary before granting concurrence

How would strict compliance hinder the attainment of the objects specified in Section 1.3 of the Act.

Strict compliance with the standard would hinder the attainment of the objects specified in section 1.3 of the Act

- (a) to promote the social and economic welfare of the community and a better environment by the proper management, development and conservation of the State's natural and other resources,*
- (b) to facilitate ecologically sustainable development by integrating relevant economic, environmental and social considerations in decision-making about environmental planning and assessment,*
- (c) to promote the orderly and economic use and development of land,*
- (d) to promote the delivery and maintenance of affordable housing,*
- (e) to protect the environment, including the conservation of threatened and other species of native animals and plants, ecological communities and their habitats,*
- (f) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage),*
- (g) to promote good design and amenity of the built environment,*
- (h) to promote the proper construction and maintenance of buildings, including the protection of the health and safety of their occupants,*
- (i) to promote the sharing of the responsibility for environmental planning and assessment between the different levels of government in the State,*
- (j) to provide increased opportunity for community participation in environmental planning and assessment.*

Strict compliance with the 8.5 metres height development standard would hinder the development for the purpose of *promoting the orderly and economic use and development of land, promoting good design and amenity of the built environment and promoting the proper*

construction and maintenance of buildings, including the protection of the health and safety of their occupants.

Conclusion

The proposed development is for a new dwelling house and swimming pool on land zoned R2 – Low Density Residential.

As stated above the proposed non-compliance is minor at just 830mm or 9.76% and does not result in any unreasonable impacts. The variation is largely the result of taking into account the slope of the site and the majority of the dwelling will present with a compliant building height. Overall the proposed development does not present with excessive bulk and is of a lesser or consistent scale to surrounding properties. There will not be unreasonable view loss for surrounding properties.

Strict numerical compliance is considered to be unnecessary and unreasonable given that the proposed variation sought is consistent with the underlying objectives of the control despite the numerical variation of which have been reasonably satisfied under the provisions of Clause 4.6.

The proposed variation satisfies the objectives of the zone, underlying intent of Clause 4.6 and Clause 4.3, and therefore the merits of the proposed variation are considered to be worthy of approval.