

### **3 - DA2022/1510 - 9 Francis Street/28 Fisher Road Dee Why**

## **PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***General***

This is a resubmission of DA (DA2020/1167) for a church and boarding house that the Panel reviewed on 24 June 2022.

The Panel did not support the previous DA and called for a complete redesign including a reduction in floor area, building height and increased setbacks to achieve a better environmental fit on the site.

The Panel appreciates the significant effort that has been made to address previous comments and the peer review process by Johannsen Architects. The DA now complies with the principal planning controls but the poor entry and circulation patterns that require either passing through the actual church space or gaining access to the front build via the rear building are not considered acceptable.

Conversely, the Panel is aware of the need for the proposed specialised accommodation and strongly supports the overall proposal. Accordingly, it is the Panel's view that the convenience and needs of the residents who may have reduced mobility should be given priority over numerical compliance with car parking numbers or setbacks in the basement if this makes it easier for residents to use. Refer to Movement and car parking comments.

The detailed comments should be read in this context: the circulation both for vehicles and (more importantly) residents needs to be redesigned, the other matters are of less consequence.

### ***Strategic Context***

The Panel strongly supports the proposed uses. The Panel commends the proponent for considering the possible future development pattern on adjoining sites.

### ***Scale, Built form and articulation***

The massing and building envelope are generally well resolved.

Although Fisher Road is surrounded by 2 or 3 storey buildings, the development controls here permit five. It's therefore critical to articulate a street wall which addresses the scale of the neighbouring buildings and awnings over the footpath which contributes to the existing street character and to recess any larger building mess further back from the road. The proposal does this satisfactorily.

Francis Street is characterised by 4 storey buildings so the 16-meter height limit here is appropriate. Nevertheless, careful attention to vehicular access is considered important to retain the finer grain pedestrian quality in the residential precinct.

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

2 levels of car parking are proposed for church goers and boarding house residents. A high proportion of disabled parking is provided to meet the needs of the residents with tandem car spaces for church goers and some bicycle parking. As noted previously it is the Panels view that priority should be given to the needs of the residents.

No columns are shown on the plans which make it difficult to assess whether manoeuvrability is possible and convenient through the basement levels and access driveway approach which splits to the 2 levels. 3-point turns are shown at the end of the basement driveways but it's unlikely that disabled drivers would be able to negotiate this. Additionally, it would appear that there is no side setback for spaces 16, 17, 18 and part of space 1.

Tandem parking for church goers is awkward; tandem parking is usually provided for co-habitants in the same unit in residential developments.



The Panel supports the single car driveway from Francis Street that minimises the impact on the streetscape. The widening of this driveway to provide space for vehicles to wait before entering the basement car park has an undesirable impact on the street and consideration should be given to providing permeable paving to complement soft landscape on the site.

The Panel found the design very difficult to understand. What purpose does the 1:14 ramp for the “Common Outdoor Zone” perform? How is the hydrotherapy pool accessed? Why is it next to the managers private open space?

The alternative access to the Church from Francis Street is awkward and undesirable and this space is best and most appropriately dedicated for residents only.

### **Recommendations car movement and parking**

1. Review and redesign the carparking with the aim of making manoeuvring easier
2. The travel paths and sightlines for cars from the lower basement around the lift on the upper basement level will be difficult; re-arrange
3. The rear lift is accessible only through the bulky goods store on the lower basement level; re-arrange
4. If the church car parking were removed, it could be possible to rearrange the car spaces to the south with the lifts in between spaces as is show on the upper basement level lifts could serve residents and staff alone without having to open to the church space
5. In consultation with council reconsider the need for onsite parking for church goers, café loading (given the need for #16 to reverse a long way back) and give priority ease of use and movement for residents with specific needs
6. Allow the basement to encroach into the 2.500m setback to provide ‘optimal alignment for 1 point turn’
7. Remove tandem parking

### **Recommendations pedestrian access**

8. Reconsider and re-design the entry and journey through the site particularly for residents
9. Review, simplify and redesign the circulation, fire stairs and egress
10. Investigate establishing the same floor levels in the front and rear building
11. Avoid ramped floors
12. The scissor stairs to the south of the Communal space are circuitous and a simpler, more compact stair access should be explored

## **Landscape**

The landscape treatment on the site is not successful.

Given the built form controls it is acknowledged that creating coherent landscaped spaces is challenging.

Although the landscape areas meet the numeric provisions, the treatment of the circulation further diminishes the potential amenity of this already challenging long narrow space.

The development’s presentation, entry experience and circulation are very complex, and the site levels are contributing to this. The experience for residents and users does not seem to have been a driving aspect of the design but is very important, particularly for the intended residents.

The Panel supports the idea of a communal landscaped space with hydrotherapy pool however the changes of level – ramps and stairs - create an uncomfortable transition and circulation between Francis Street and the entry into the Church/Conference Hall.

A more cohesive set of outdoor spaces from Francis Street, with subtle articulation/level changes along the side of the building to the communal open space without ramps which bisect and obstruct circulation and visual continuity would be a more desirable way for residents to approach from the rear.

The green roof on the top floor of the Fisher Road building is supported by the Panel however further attention should be given to a more casual setting, with provision for greater safety by avoiding benches and planters that might be scalable. The glass dividing fence is not necessary.

Generally, sunken landscape spaces are hard to make successful and can have issues with safety / a sense of safety.

The managers private space and hydrotherapy pool are reducing one of the larger and more consolidated spaces.

Separate residential access from Fisher Road for the residences would be positive from a usability, safety, social and streetscape point of view. It says a lot about respect to residents about where and how the entry occurs and this should be an important consideration. This could also allow the circulation through the rear of the site to the benefit of the amenity of the landscape.

The Fisher Street frontage treatment is limited by the basement under and building extending over. This is to the detriment of the café tenancy and the streetscape. It is unlikely that trees will be possible in the narrow verge which is impacted by the overhead power lines.

The Francis Street setback is significantly impacted by the driveway. The paved area is wider than the basement entry and this reduces the potential for landscaping and improving the character of this frontage to the street.

The lowered, narrow, and overshadowed nature of the landscape spaces are going to be difficult to develop as usable, high amenity spaces. While the landscape offers a lot of vegetation, which is positive, it is also exacerbating the deep, shaded, dark nature of these areas.

The planting is mixed native, and exotic does not have a clear character and is not making a significant contribution to biodiversity.

The furniture and fitments are quite public / commercial and are not contributing to the sense of this as a home to residents. This does not mean they cannot be contemporary in character.

The rooftop open space is a very positive provision and will offer a sunny usable area. While the water tanks are supported, they are taking up valuable rooftop space.

## Recommendations

13. Maximise landscape on the Fisher Street frontage by cutting back the basement and the rooms over. Allow for the provision of trees within the site – similar to what is shown on the renders
14. Minimise pavement and maximise landscape on the Francis Street frontage to improve the streetscape presentation
15. Simplify the landscape, consider usability and amenity and as far as possible reduce the sense that the linear landscape spaces will simply be for circulation
16. Reconsider the design of the rooftop for flexibility of use, increased planting and safety of potential for stepping up and falls. Look to relocate the water tanks to liberate more rooftop space for communal use.
17. Rework the location of the managers private open space and hydrotherapy pool to expand the ground level open space amenity
18. Reconsider the planting palette to enhance biodiversity, use endemic/ native species and where shade and canopy is beneficial and where access for light is the priority
19. Consider the character of the furniture and fitments and the creation of comfortable 'homely' spaces for the residents
20. Consider pervious paving to the wide part of the driveway

## Amenity

The relationship of the entry to Fisher Road has been improved. Nevertheless, a separation between residents and church/conference attendees is necessary to provide dignity and amenity for both. It would be preferable for the lifts to be relocated to the southern side of the building to provide access for

residents up to the boarding house. The cafe, toilets and public spaces would therefore be located in a manner which avoids conflict between the two uses on the site.

As previously stated, the communal landscape space in the centre of the site is supported however the manager's accommodation laundry and common space could be improved with better access to natural light ventilation and landscaped area.

The amenity of the rooms has been significantly improved however some are short of storage space. Consideration should be given to providing meeting rooms for groups of 5-10 rooms.

The sloped floor in the Common room at the rear is simply strange in addition to creating very awkward sill and threshold conditions.

### **Recommendations**

21. Reconsider the arrangement of the common room, managers accommodation and hydrotherapy pool to improve accessibility and privacy

### ***Facade treatment/Aesthetics***

The external expression of the building has been greatly enhanced compared to the original DA submission – with better articulation of walls and roofs. Nevertheless, consideration should be given to minimising excessive use of perforated metal screening.

### **Recommendation**

22. Consider using simple overhead window projections to northern windows and operable and/or fixed louvres to the east and west. These would be appropriate and provide greater visual interest to the buildings instead of perforated screens.

### ***Sustainability***

### **Recommendations**

23. 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
24. Install EV charging allows for bi-directional (2-way) charging of EV battery for powering the building

## **PANEL CONCLUSION**

**The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form.**

The Panel very much appreciates the proponent's willingness to accept the comments made on the previous submission and engage in additional peer review. This process has been very helpful, and the overall design has improved significantly however both resident and vehicular circulation is complex, awkward and detracts from the landscape spaces. In short, the circulation simply does not work and will require a redesign of the lower levels.

The Panel recognises and supports the significant social benefits this proposal provides in terms of the provision of low-cost housing for disadvantaged members of the community. Suggestions made by the Panel should be incorporated to enhance the quality of the design.