Urban Design report: 50 Lawrence St. Freshwater

In support of DA proposal for shop-top housing by Life Property Group.

Introduction

At the request of the Life Property Group, this report has been prepared in support of the urban design approach related to this DA proposal for an 11 unit shop-top development with ground floor unit entry, retail with associated amenities and parking on split ground and 01 levels, and mix of 1,2 and 3 bedroom units on L01, 02 and 03.

Comments are based on the site, context and review of the following:

- DA plans by CKDS Architecture (including amendments Issue D)
- BFF Statement of Environmental Effects – May 2020
- Correspondence from Northern Beaches Council – 12 January 2021
- BFF Response to NBC feedback - 21 January 2021
- Warringah LEP and DCP 2011

Overview

This is a tight and isolated site within a B2 Local Centre zone and should be assessed with due consideration for the constraints that location and topography impose on it within this precinct under the Warringah LEP and DCP 2011.

As noted by Greg Boston of BBF related to the EPA: *section 4.15(3A)(b) of the Act which requires Council to be flexible in applying such provisions and allow reasonable alternative solutions that achieve the objects of DCP standards for dealing with that aspect of the development.* Clearly this intends that sites such as this should be considered suitable to provide for new development subject to reasonable consideration of the relevant controls, and the inherent potential for a 'place based' merit assessment of the proposal.

Various improvements to the original DA submission (as addressed below) will provide further benefits to the proposal and resolve issues raised with respect to perceived shortcomings that are listed in earlier NBC feedback.

1. Bulk and Scale

***NBC comment**: The constraints of the site are such that a stepping of built from across the site and the crossfalls; both south to north and east to west is a particular constraint of the site. The revised drawings demonstrate further compliance with the control however it could be argued that the middle section of the building is still perceived as 4 storey in a limited section between grid C and E as viewed from the southern elevation on Dowling Street.*

Section 4.15(3A)(b) of the EPA should be relevant here - '*that most observers would not find the proposed development offensive, jarring or unsympathetic in a streetscape context nor having regard to the built form characteristics of development within the sites visual catchment.'*

***NBC comment**: Whilst it is acknowledged that the cross fall from east west is exacerbating this perceived (Oliver Street) and actual breach consideration is made to the constraints of the site, with the upper level storey breach considered for further discussion. Clearly the site constraints and cross falls are contributing to the breach on one side of the building and it could be questioned that reducing the floor area on the eastern sector of the uppermost level would result in an unusable area of floor space and strange configuration to the unit at this level. (It is noted that the grid lines indicated above are not on the elevations and it may be useful to transpose these on the elevations for ease of reference.)*

The outline of the existing adjacent house at 30 Oliver Street has been indicated, and an approved building opposite in Dowling Street is shown to clarify the context relationships. It should be noted that while the cross-fall results in a minor height exceedance of the building envelope along Dowling Street, there is no environmental impact from this outcome. All plans, elevations and sections have coordinated grid lines shown for ease of cross reference.

***NBC comment**: It is acknowledged that the amended drawings have incrementally reduced the upper level following the previous meetings. It is noted that the further reduction assists somewhat but is a small incremental change. See discussion above.*

Further articulation and variation to the façade depth and material detail has been introduced that will help break down the elevation view of built form massing. This will also help address the need raised in NBC correspondence of 7/9/20 for '*finer grain response to the built form and scale'* and this is also evident in the various 3D views provided.

It must be noted that the perception of bulk and scale is a comparative issue, and in the 3D views it is apparent from an urban design perspective that the proposal is well conceived in its relationship to the surrounding built form. At the northern street front the proposed 2-3 storey height matches that of the units to the west at 52 Lawrence Street, and at the rear the envelope is marginally higher than the 2 storey house to the south and complementary in scale.

The proposed stepped built form on this site involves a very small height limit exceedance and does not generate any adverse impacts, and the resultant bulk and scale are considered to be sympathetic with the immediate site setting and complementary in design character to the range of recent developments in the area.

2. Building Setbacks

NBC Comment: Rear Setback
The rear setback has been increased slightly and the upper level setback a little further but it is demonstrated in the shadow diagrams that there is still little to no solar access to this planting zone during mid-winter. Setback of the carpark retaining wall on the lower level has been setback to the recommended 3m minimum dimension to allow for deep soil planting zone enabling the potential for mature planting to provide a buffer to the adjoining property to the south.

The rear setback includes a deep soil area that will receive both morning and afternoon for much of the year, and even though it is limited in winter there are plant species that will grow well in this location as detailed in the landscape design submission. There should be no issue with the appropriate plant selections made by the landscape architect that would achieve a mature vegetation buffer as trees grow up with canopies in full sun, while giving protection to the under-canopy planting and establishing the required buffer to the south.

***NBC Comment:** At a minimum it was requested that an accurate sectional diagram showing the sun azimuth in mid-winter to demonstrate that some solar access could penetrate this rear setback zone be provided. Noting the orientation of the building and the site a simple diagram to determine adequate upper*

setbacks to achieve this would also demonstrate that adequate solar access to the adjoining residence to the south could be achieved.

A mid-winter sun azimuth diagram (see DA 3001 D) shows that solar access to the planting in the rear garden area of 30 Oliver Street will be maintained, and an increased setback to the roof eaves over Level 3 will ensure good winter sun through the garden of for filtered light to the lower level windows.

***NBC Comment**: This has been discussed on several occasions in various meetings with only small incremental moves submitted each time. It was requested that the two upper levels, level two and three be setback by 6 metres allowing for adequate solar access during winter and to minimise impacts on the adjoining southern property. In accordance with the requirements of SEPP 65 and the ADG a six (6) metre setback to habitable rooms will be required. Currently the two bedrooms and bathroom on Level 2 have windows and are only setback 3 metres from the boundary. Council seeks compliance with the requirements of the ADG.*

Given the substantial existing vegetation of the garden to 30 Oliver St and the proposed landscaping for the deep soil zone in this DA, it is not expected that privacy would be an issue with the existing house around 8m back from the boundary thereby creating at least 11m in overall separation. The ADG is a guideline document, and there are many precedents where the issue of reduced setbacks on constrained sites have been resolved with no environmental impacts on the adjacent site. The Level 2 bedroom and bathroom windows of Units 7 and 8 are all high level and could also be obscure should there be privacy issues with the adjacent house at 30 Oliver St, and these will also assist natural through ventilation to those units.

NBC Comment: Side Setbacks
Council is satisfied that the zero alignment of the building in it's current footprint is a logical result given the distinct and unusual nature of the allotment.

This admission by Council supports the overall approach of this built form footprint, and the various envelope modifications that result from the constrained nature of this site as are detailed elsewhere in this report.

3. View Impacts

NBC Comment:
Discussions in the last couple of meetings was the request for a thorough view impact analysis in particular the impacts on the adjoining property to the south and view impacts to the properties to the west and subsequent view impact loss to the east.

From the limited view impact analysis available due to restricted access into affected properties, it is anticipated that only first floor bedrooms of 30 Oliver St would be affected to a minor degree. Further review would necessitate photos of the actual outlook from affected rooms, and these already have significant vegetation in front of the windows. Consideration of district view impacts can be ascertained from the site analysis plan, and it would not appear in my opinion that there would be any significant view loss impacts from either 30 Oliver St or 52 Lawrence St.

4. Streetscape Urban Interface

***NBC Comment:** Further detailing of the urban domain public/private interface has been addressed in the documentation and it can be seen that a more fine-grain approach to the site and the level constraints around the site are being further developed in the current drawings. The sandstone base/podium working around the north east frontage to the site can be supported as well as the finer grain activation of the interface of the commercial premises at ground level. Further design development is recommended to ensure access to the premises addresses accessibility to all frontages. Additionally, the requirement to*

achieve a high level of design excellence and sustainability outcomes, as previously noted, will be required to be demonstrated in the final built form, noting the prominence of the site.

The Council's positive support for the urban interface character is noted, but further refinements have been made with various façade elements, articulation and material details. These have been well presented in the 3D views, precedent images and the associated legend of finishes. Scope for introduction of urban art that might relate to some local heritage or environmental interest could be considered for the ground plane walls and footpath areas on the perimeter. A high level of design quality is evident in the updated DA documentation that also includes details of further sustainability measures noted below.

5. Unit Planning

***NBC Comment**: Previous comments noted the removal of the circulation stair to the south and an increase in floor area of the apartment 7. This has been addressed.*

Additionally it was previously noted there was a missed opportunity to investigate strategies to improve internal natural lighting and ventilation mechanisms to increase the internal amenity of the circulation corridor by opening up the southern end of the circulation corridor with removal of the apartment entrance hall and reduction and re planning of the apartment.

Natural light and ventilation to the corridor on L2 has been provided through changes to circulation amending the Unit 9 entry. This involved making the front door access at the top of the stairs on L3 and the lower entry a security gate and grille to allow light and ventilation to the corridor through a louvred opening onto Oliver St. The stairs have been reconfigured to create a small indent for this opening on L2 and L3 that helps with façade articulation referred to above.

***NBC Comment**: The current plan still retains a closed end to the south of the internal corridor where this could be opened up to allow for cross ventilation and solar gain to the internal corridor. Previous notes suggested through plan apartments that optimise cross ventilation. It is noted this is addressed on level 3 whilst level 2 apartments have not optimised the potential to increase passive design strategies; the current plan being a double loaded corridor and enclosed at both ends. The difficult her being there are two-level apartments to the western sector of the corridor, thus a ix on one and two level apartments off this corridor making it difficult to achieve a through plan solution,*

The unit configuration has 8 of 11 units achieving natural cross ventilation so the ADG target of 60% can easily be achieved, but the opening created by changes to Unit 9 entry will further help with natural light and ventilation for the L2 common corridor.

***NBC Comment**: As such the current plan arrangement of level is still unsupportable, particularly in terms of the southern portion of the building, which could undergo further planning testing to achieve better passive design outcomes. The applicant is recommended to address this area of concern which could help to provide additional breaking down of the bulk and scale at the southern elevation which adjoins the R2 residential zone by both stepping back of the Level 2 plan in alignment with the level three plan to address comments herein on solar amenity."*

Changes noted above will help break down the perceived bulk at the southern end of Oliver St. and is augmented by introduction of further louvred openings to the stairs. Improved solar amenity is addressed above.

6. Landscape

***NBC Comment**: "No specific landscape details provided, so would rely on comment from Urban designer. Balcony planters could be increased."*

Plans by a landscape architect are now provided and include a range of balcony planters and vegetation screens. On L3 a change to the balcony relationship between Unit 10 and

11 shows removal of the solid wall, introduction of planter and a frosted glass panel as separation between unit balconies. Further alteration of Unit 11 planning also enables more open views out from kitchen area, and rationalisation of the planter around the lift overrun linking the two terrace areas to benefit use and maintenance.

A high level of consideration has been given to the landscape buffer in the deep soil zone to the south, and the Landscape Design Statement details the various species that have been selected as appropriated for the growing conditions in this area. There is also further landscape treatment indicated with green walls and planters that will help provide amenity and visual benefits to residents and the surrounding public domain.

7. Sustainability

While there was not mention of sustainability or ESD features in the Council response, in the interests of providing a sustainable design approach these are issues to consider.

- While it is intended to provide for units to have the option for air conditioning, this is a design concept that allows natural ventilation with inclusion of ceiling fans, and for a/c condenser locations at high level in parking areas if required.
- With the orientation and sloped height plane, provision of solar p/v panels for power to communal areas has been considered, and areas of suitable flat roof have been identified.
- Provision is made for rainwater collection to provide water for potential reuse on landscape irrigation and for car washing.

Incompatibility with the character of the locality

The Warringah DCP 2011 Part A.5 sets a number of objectives for how a proposal should be assessed with consideration of response to the locality and surrounding neighbourhood:

1. *To ensure new development is a good neighbour, creates a unified landscape, contributes to the street, reinforces the importance of pedestrian areas and creates an attractive design outcome*.

This proposal has a design approach that will enable it to achieve the qualities stated above, with resolution of landscape and presentation to the street that can satisfy the stated objectives above. The overall 2-3 storey built form has been well conceived with façade articulation, recesses and roof elements to create a potential outcome that is considered to be an attractive contemporary character, and will contribute to the streetscape without detriment to the existing built surroundings. In conjunction with a comprehensive planting concept that will enable the proposal to integrate well within its landscape setting, pedestrian and vehicular entries have been located to suit access needs while maintaining appropriate separation from neighbouring properties.

2. *To inspire design innovation for residential, commercial and industrial development*

This DA has an contemporary architectural expression with detail elements and a well-presented materials palette that is an appropriate response to the brief for a mixed-use development in this coastal area. Modelled elevations give the building a distinctive character that will be responsive to environmental and contextual influences with innovative façade elements.

3. *To provide a high level of access to and within development.*

With consideration of the site topography and conditions, the pedestrian and vehicular access have been located to best suit both code compliance and visual amenity. The impact of the access to the service areas and car parking on two levels has been considered to minimise impacts of street crossings and vehicle paths. Internal access has been amended to create circulation spaces that can benefit from natural light and ventilation on L02, create discrete and private unit entries, and also satisfy building and access codes.

4. *To protect environmentally sensitive areas from overdevelopment or visually intrusive development so that scenic qualities, as well as the biological and ecological values of those areas, are maintained.*

In this constrained location the inclusion of landscaping is primarily to the public domain on the perimeter, provision of ground level landscaping to the rear deep soil zone and inclusion of upper level planters to the apartments. This will benefit both future residents of the development and enhance the outlook and scenic qualities from surrounding properties and add further to a mature tree canopy to protect lower level vegetation and mitigate effects of climate change.

5. *To achieve environmentally, economically and socially sustainable development for the community of Warringah*.

The development would provide a much-needed contribution to the housing needs for the Freshwater Village, benefit the community with local service-oriented retail and complement the existing urban realm character without detriment to the environmental qualities of the precinct. Activation of the building facades will help provide surveillance of the surrounding streets and add vitality to the precinct.

Conclusion

It is considered that this DA proposal, with its well resolved built form and configuration in response to a challenging context, can create a commendable insertion within this location. By thoughtful design the development has the capacity to address all the perceived adverse impacts noted in the concerns raised by the NBC.

The project can be an exemplary demonstration of how such shop-top accommodation can be introduced in a way to foster positive social and community benefits and improve housing choice in the Freshwater village within close proximity to the amenities and transport.

I therefore maintain that in urban design terms the proposal is capable of meeting the intentions of the WLEP 2011 and objectives of WDCP 2011 without creating major environmental effects or diminishing the desired future character of this precinct. The project can set an exemplary benchmark while making a positive contribution to the growing and changing needs of the Freshwater community.

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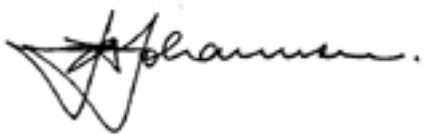

31 March 2021