

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 24 March 2022

3 - DA2021 2189 - 39 Frenchs Forest East FRENCHS FOREST

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

The proposal seeks to amend DA2015/0901 that was approved by the Land and Environment Court. The application is for a significant redesign of hotel including increase from 105 to 149 hotel rooms, increase from 164 to 202 car spaces and increased height of 600mm within the footprint of the approved development.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

The site is within walking distance of Northern Beaches Hospital and future Frenchs Forest Town Centre. In this respect, the Panel appreciate the potential for a hotel in this locality to serve community needs.

The application relates to part of a larger site upon which a liquor store, tavern and associated on-grade parking have already been constructed.

Adjoining development consists of 2 storey industrial buildings to the East and West, whereas to the north of the site, beyond the liquor store and tavern development consists primarily of detached dwellings.

The site adjoins the Warringah Road Corridor to the south that includes significant trees planted in the verge.

The applicant identifies that the site benefits from excellent views towards the South. The panel suggest that the site may additionally benefit from good views towards North due to the site's ridgetop location.

The proposal demonstrates appreciable improvements over the previously approved development with respect to spatial organisation and appearance. However, as the proposal follows roughly the building position and orientation of the approved design, it also inherits its significant strategic flaws as follows:

- The majority of hotel rooms are oriented East and West making solar heat gain most difficult to control
- The outlook of most hotel rooms does not take advantage of the site's access to views and orients instead to less appealing adjacent industrial development and/or hardstand car park
- The predominant experience of the site is of an unshaded hard stand car park
- No safe pedestrian access from the street has been provided.

The Panel consider it essential that each of these issues are addressed and resolved if the design is to achieve the quality that could be expected on the prominent and significant site.

The Panel is of the view that doing so will provide for a more integrated, responsible and viable outcome. Of particular importance is the matter of pedestrian access, without which, the proposition comes into question as the development would fail to realise the benefits of being located nearby to Northern Beaches Hospital facilities.

Recommendations

1. The Panel strongly suggests re-positioning the hotel building so that guests may enjoy more favourable outlook to North and South and that solar heat gain to rooms may be more effectively controlled. One possibility may start with simply rotating the building 90°
2. Provide safe, clear and dedicated pedestrian access to the hotel via Frenchs Forest Road East and Warringah Road. This may require modifications to the car park on the northern portion of the site

which should be documented as part of application. It is not clear why such modifications have not been part of the design or the submitted documents or a requirement of the previous approval.

3. Improve interface of building and landscape at ground level. Utilise generous landscape planting, including planters with sufficient soil volume to support mature shade trees.
4. Investigate changes in site levels to buffer pedestrian zones and strengthen relationship between internal spaces and landscape at entry level.

Scale, built form and articulation

Proposal is generally consistent with previously approved development with respect to siting and overall scale and form. Notwithstanding recommendation 1 above, the articulation and material treatment of the facades represent a significant improvement in the appearance of the building.

Recommendations

5. Following Recommendation 1, building form and articulation should respond to orientation

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

As proposed the only access to the site is via a long driveway running past liquor shop and tavern and vast amounts of on grade parking.

Space around and leading to the hotel building is essentially space for cars. Greater consideration needs to be given to the safety, comfort and way finding of pedestrians.

Large hardstand carpark has the potential to contribute significantly to heat island effect. The planting proposed is inadequate in addressing this.

Recommendations

6. Further to Recommendation 1, 2 and 3, reconfigure parking arrangement to create safe, pleasant and comfortable spaces for pedestrians entering and exiting the hotel, especially those whom may arrive on foot.
7. Reconfigure parking to allow generous landscaping and connection of ground floor spaces to landscape

Landscape

Planting on structure proposed is inadequate to provide shading and amenity and that the ground plane would benefit from a combination of significant increase in planting capacity to support canopy-forming trees in conjunction with PV shade structures over hard stand car parking.

The entry to the hotel is too immediate to vehicular zones and would benefit from a significant landscaped buffer which would ideally have the effect of delineating pedestrian space and connecting lobby space with landscape.

Within the setback zone, a large detention basin is proposed. Additional information required as to whether safety fences are proposed etc. Panel would like to see more of the space vegetated and planted with trees, and designed to avoid safety fence if possible.

Recommendations

8. Provide more planting opportunities to bring shade and amenity to car park spaces
9. Consider decking over car park to provision for private landscape space which may serve to benefit function facilities
10. Provide more detail on detention basin and explore opportunities to maximise planting

Amenity

Proposal improves on approved development in terms of functional/spatial amenity and hotel facilities, however there are several opportunities to improve amenity further. Especially with respect to pedestrian amenity, access to views, passive solar control and functional landscape.

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Proposal represents an improvement in appearance and cohesiveness of façade. Generally, high quality materials have been proposed including three dimensionally patterned precast, and face brick. The palette appears to be well coordinated, however, the exact materials and finishes proposed are not clear in some instances i.e. whether the concrete finishes are integral or painted. The panel's distinct preference would be for the natural finish and colour of precast elements to be preserved, rather than painted over.

The two-storey expressions are effective compositional tools, however shading and glazing ratios can be improved.

Irrespective of whether building position and orientation is reconsidered in response to recommendation 1, opportunities exist to respond more directly to environmental conditions and aspect in the facades.

Recommendations

11. Provide greater detail on materials and finishes
12. façade treatments should respond more directly to orientation

Sustainability

An excessive amount of glazing is proposed, particularly on the east and south. A reduced amount of glazing will improve performance and will not impact on amenity as it is likely that curtains will be across most of that glass most of the time anyway.

Glazing on the west is much more practical, but the shading design is not good for passive performance. The shading blocks the winter sun and enables the summer sun into the space later in the afternoon- more consideration need to be given to the movement of the sun and summer sun angles. Better design for that façade would be to 'mirror image' that façade design to provide better solar control.

Glazing properties are surprising. Lower U-value and higher SHGC would expect to provide better outcomes. Perhaps double glazing with a higher VLT and higher SHGC.

Recommendations

13. Rotate building 90° to have the long facades facing north and south, resolve the glazing ratios and shading design thereon.
14. If building is not rotated, western façade design needs to be reconsidered to allow better passive solar control and glazing proportions on east and south should be reduced.
15. Include PV on the roof and perhaps as sunshades in the car park.
16. Include rainwater recycling
17. Electrify all services including hot water



PANEL CONCLUSION

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. Although the hotel building has been improved significantly over that already approved, many of the strategic flaws of the approved development carry across to the proposal to its detriment.

The Panel would have made the same or very similar comments if the original scheme had been brought to it.

Significant opportunities to improve site response, amenity and feasibility have been missed.

It is the Panel's view that the issues outlined above are readily solvable and if addressed would yield many advantages.

The Applicant should reconsider siting of the building and to undertake significant development of how it relates to the ground plane and place, how natural landscape elements including views may enhance the experience of guests of the facility and how it responds to environment.

Note: the Panel has prepared a sketch to illustrate some of the point made above. This should not be used in the assessment of the proposed and is provided simply to assist in communicating the points.