

## Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – 29 April 2021

### DA2020/1759 - 51 Arthur Street, FORESTVILLE

## PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *General*

The site comprises a single storey commercial building comprising 6 retail units which has almost 100% site coverage with the exception of a small service area to the rear. A driveway from Duke Street provides access to the rear service area. The land fall across the site from east to west and north to south. There are no significant trees on the site. An area with public car parking for 8 vehicles is located along the Arthur Street frontage.

The proposal has previously been presented to a PLM on 18 April 2019. The Panel has been provided with a briefing by Council officers that identifies a wide range of non compliances.

The Panel recognises that the proposal is for a re-development of an existing building that is itself “non-compliant” in relation to current controls and policies.

### *Strategic context*

The proposal is for demolition of existing shops. The shops are an essential service in the area, and shop-top housing is an appropriate approach to increasing and diversifying housing supply while also preserving and up-grading retail offerings and services. The Panel also recognises the social function of local shops as gathering places and the importance of informal encounters that they provide.

In short, the Panel is very supportive of shop-top housing and understands the financial challenges but also the need to fit in and complement the surrounding area and adjoining properties that may not

### *Urban context: surrounding area character*

Surrounding development consists primarily of one and two storey detached dwellings set back from the street in landscape settings. A single storey brick residence is located to the immediate east at No 49 Arthur Street and a two storey detached dwelling with a garage and pool is located to the immediate south at No 34 Duke Street.

The Panel has seen the scheme presented to the PLM and considered the revised design much improved and having the **potential** to be more sympathetic to the context.

### *Scale, built form and articulation*

A height limit of 8.5 metres applies to most areas in the Northern Beaches. The intention of this height limit is to allow for development which is compatible in height to surrounding residential development, and given cross fall of a site slope and floor to ceiling dimensions for commercial requirements and residential amenity may result in only a 2 storey buildings capable of being designed within the height limit.

The Panel is aware that a 2-storey shop top housing development with basement parking will present financial feasibility issues for the development.

The Panel notes the cross-fall across the site.

The proposal has a repetitious form and the row of apartments with strong vertical expression serves to emphasise the height of the building rather than moderate it.

No consideration has been given to the relationship between the eastern elevation (DA303) and the adjoining property 49 Arthur Street.

The Panel commends and supports the stepping down of the retail floors to match the adjoining public domain, however as noted, it is not clear what has driven the roof form or the direction of pitch, that serves to emphasis height, requires valley gutters and unnecessarily exceeds the height limit at the street and rear alignments.

The internal ceiling heights on the upper level appear to range from 2.6 to 3.3m, while the retail is too low.

The Panel is concerned that the 2.9m floor to floor dimension will prove inadequate, 3.1m floor to floor is the generally accepted minimum to accommodate services.

Given the overall concern with the bulk, apparent height and relationship to adjoining properties, the Panel does not understand why the prominent two storey expression has been adopted, why two bedroom apartments need a second bath room, or a 'wintergarden' all of which contribute to the bulk of the building.

The Panel notes and supports the F1 Local and Neighbourhood Centres guidelines:

*(6) Buildings greater than 2 storeys are to be designed so that the massing is substantially reduced on the top floors and stepped back from the street front to reduce bulk and ensure that new development does not dominate existing buildings and public spaces.*

The Panel agrees with many of the comments provided in the Urban Design referral, however if the overall presentation of the building were modified to present a predominantly 2 storey form as described above, with an expressed parapet/ balustrade at approximately RL8.0 and with the upper level eave and roof set back by 3m the proposal may be supported.

The panel supports the non trafficable landscaped green roofs and the set back to 34 Duke Street.

### Recommendations.

1. Reduce the overall bulk of the building. Any breaches of the height controls should be in the centre of the building while keeping the extremities as low as possible.
2. Reduce the height of the building at the eastern end by introducing a set back above the ground level.
3. Floor to ceiling heights should comply with the ADG and floor to floor should be sufficient to achieve this with adequate tolerance for construction; 3.1m floor to floor is general practice.
4. Reconsider the need for a second bathroom and the need for 'wintergardens' in the apartments.
5. More clearly define a 2-storey form with the third level set back. The panel notes that the PLM scheme had this form but also presented a monolithic appearance. It is not at all clear how the curved forms in the PLM scheme, or the double storey form of the apartments relate to the local area.
6. The Panel does not support the roof forms and recommends that alternative approaches be explored to reduce the apparent height, in passing noting the re-orientation of the roofs would also provide a better solar orientation and avoid box gutters.

### Access

The rationale for the levels and access to the apartments is not clear. Is it intended that the pedestrian access is via the ramp along the southern boundary and then up the stairs?

While access to the 'accessible' toilet is not clear, the Panel recognises the challenges of resolving levels on the site.

It is not clear how the lift will serve the lobby and the retail, or is it intended that the lift not open to the retail passage?

The proposal includes an accessible path of travel to the front door of each apartment but then there are stairs immediately inside. Presumably the stairs intrude into the retail space below. It is not clear why the ramp could not be higher, the stairs shifted to the space currently occupied by the second bathroom.

Raising the ramp would also allow the ground floor to be raised.

Planning for the basement will be made easier by a reduction in the retail car spaces.

### **Recommendations**

7. Replan the access to all for direct level access to shops and apartments wherever possible.
8. Rearrange the internal circulation in apartments

### ***Landscape,***

The existing building already covers the site entirely. There is no existing vegetation on the site, so any improvement is welcomed.

### **Recommendation.**

9. Provide further detail on the landscaping of the 'green roof'
10. Consider enhancing the public domain design and landscape character to further complement the landscape context.

### ***Vehicular movement and car parking***

The Panel notes that the development does not provide sufficient on-site car parking for the retail component according to the WDCP

Given that there is no increase in the amount of retail, the Panel suggests Council should consider some concession or 'credit' is given to the development and that underground spaces are not required and in fact unlikely to be used. There are also issues of shared use of the lift between customers and residents.

### **Recommendations**

11. Consider a reduction in the amount of car parking on site.

### ***Façade treatment***

The range of façade compositions, materials and colours are supported.

### ***Amenity***

The amenity of the dwellings is good.

### ***Sustainability***

Steel roofing products are becoming available in the market that have high solar reflectance and are able to improve the thermal performance of the building. These are in a range of light colours. It is recommended that a metal roof with these qualities is used.

Heat pump hot water systems are recommended as a good sustainability outcome. Unfortunately, including heat pumps may reduce the energy score, but this can be compensated for with additional PV. Increasing the PV would be a positive and practical outcome.

### **Recommendations**

12. Consider utilising electric heat pump hot water and induction cooktops to replace the use of gas.
13. The Panel recommends increasing the capacity of PV.
14. Add external windows to bathrooms and utility rooms wherever possible including ground level retail toilets.



## PANEL CONCLUSION

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

Significant changes to building massing, roof form, access arrangements, setbacks on the upper level and improved relationship to the adjoining residence on no 49 Arthur Street are required.