

DESIGN AND SUSTAINABILITY ADVISORY PANEL MEETING REPORT

DA2025/0143 - 1749 and 1753 Pittwater Road MONA VALE

PANEL COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

This Development Application was presented to the Panel at Pre-DA stage on 25/07/2024. The advice provided the following conclusion:

Speculative proposal explores prospect of future building height limit increasing in Mona Vale Town Centre in response to increasing housing demand. Advice herewith focuses on design issues and whilst a potential future increase in height is considered hypothetically, this should not be construed as endorsement of additional height in isolation of supportive planning legislation.

The subject proposal differs to the PLM item presented on 25/07/2024 in that it has reduced height by one storey in part and that some statutory compliance matters have been resolved. However, overwhelming similarity in the configuration of buildings, courtyards and access result in the intrinsic issues of the original proposal remaining present in the proposal.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

The proposal challenges its surrounding area character and anticipated future character by proposing zero setbacks, but does so in isolation and without properly studying the impacts and ramifications of doing so.

It also challenges the future viability of the greater city block, by placing a residential tower at its centre and subverting an otherwise obvious and organic outcome: that as the block becomes denser and taller, it would depend on the landscape, light and air of a large central courtyard.

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- I. Thorough site analysis – Refer ADG guidelines
 - a. Comment: Some site analysis included, but significant further work required to demonstrate design synthesis in response to context and an acceptable urban outcome at the scale of the city block.
- II. If additional height is being sought, consider broader urban environment in the context of increased height controls. Scheme should derive from this enhanced context.
 - a. Comment: Significant additional height is no longer sought

Further recommendations for DA:

1. Include a meaningful Response to Country

2. Provide an urban design study investigating the street character and permitted built form under the LEP & DCP – This is considered fundamental information where significant variations to public policies are being proposed and that may have wider implications
3. Confirm previous Council requirements have not changed with NBC Flood Hazard Mapping

Scale, built form and articulation

Deletion of top storey from Western Building is positive.

The proposal presents a generally more complementary scale to Bungan Lane, however, no investigations have been undertaken to understand implications of nil setback with respect to future development of adjacent sites, opposite Bungan Lane.

Middle building has been retained in the proposal. It is unclear how cross ventilation can be guaranteed over the life of the development if neighbouring sites redevelop.

Claimed ADG minimum building separations have been shown to building lines rather than POS. Minor variations are proposed, irrespective, internal site character and amenity is questionable.

Floor to floor height of 3.1 is no longer considered adequate with respect to NCC changes for waterproofing 2025. New industry practice is minimum 3.2m and assumes all wet areas are aligned vertically and that no balconies, bathrooms or terraces etc. are located above habitable or accessible paths of travel. Non-aligned wet areas and/or accessible paths of travel between internal and external spaces are likely to require considerably greater than 3.2m floor to floor.

No evidence of alternative site arrangements has been provided.

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- III. Ensure that burden of ensuring adequate building separations may be shared by the subject site and neighbouring sites, especially directly adjoining sites and sites across Bungan Lane, where greater setbacks to residential uses will be required.
 - a. Comment: This has not been addressed. Inadequate building separations and solar access would result from adjacent development being at a similar scale and form to that proposed.
- IV. Remove problematic middle tower to alleviate the associated amenity impacts including overlooking, poor outlook and poor solar access.
 - a. Comment: This has not been addressed. Issues inherent to the provision of a central residential building remain and would be further exacerbated by adjacent development.
- V. Explore potential for block porosity to enhance air flow and ingress of light, particularly at western edge where noise does not present a significant concern.
 - a. Comment: This has not been addressed. As proposed, ADG minimum natural cross ventilation cannot be guaranteed over the life of the development.

Further recommendations for DA:

4. Building height is to accommodate minimum 3.2m floor to floor heights and significantly greater where wet areas/terraces/roofs are located above habitable rooms

5. Ensure all units achieve minimum ADG ceiling heights
6. Reconfigure block and development model to relate to a sustainable and replicable form by removing central residential building
7. Incorporate adequate block porosity to resolve natural ventilation.

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

Entry sequence from ground to the 3 x residential lift lobbies is poorly resolved

Residential and commercial address to Pittwater Road is conflicted and ambiguous.

Ramp configuration and core location at Pittwater Road address present poor street frontage character. Large setbacks at ground level create furtive space.

Access to building cores not well resolved, with address and passive wayfinding being generally poor. Link at podium level is narrow, disjointed and incomplete. Some building occupants would require to walk through basement car park to access communal open space.

Retail frontage to Bungan Lane are set significantly back from street – would be improved if chamber substation could be pushed back and retail brought forward.

Waste strategy is poorly resolved. Whilst bin room appears well located to minimise the impacts to Bungan Lane, in practice, it forces a messy and convoluted pathway through the site from East to West for both Residential and Commercial tenants alike.

Residential lift lobbies have no natural light or ventilation.

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- VI. Explore future implications of vehicular access being via Council car park.
 - a. Comment: Right of way confirmed, however, public impact on increased traffic movements through car park are not understood
- VII. Exploit frontage to Bungan Lane with generous activation of street. Explore bringing shopfronts closer to street as to encourage more oblique views to and from those tenancies.
 - a. Comment: Not addressed – reconsider resolution of Bungan Lane to prioritise the tenancies and subordinate the substation.
- VIII. Ensure dignified waste strategy.
 - a. Comment: Not addressed – Access to the waste storage areas to be simplified and convenient for all users.
- IX. Explore alternative solutions to universal access at Eastern Frontage including, if possible, lowering entry/retail level.
 - a. Comment: Not addressed, ramp configuration detracts from street frontage character
- X. Eliminate situations where residential and commercial uses share lobbies.



- a. Comment: Partly addressed, although problem has been pushed to front setback, where ambiguity between commercial and residential address remains problematic.
- XI. Ensure safe, unambiguous entry is possible for all building users, removing all hidden areas in the building access routes.
 - a. Comment: Improved, but still problematic. Bringing glass lines of commercial tenancies at both frontages significantly closer to street and avoiding undercroft spaces will improve further and make safer public domain and improved commercial tenancies.
- XII. Ensure safe fire egress.
 - a. Comment: Major statutory issues present in PLM scheme have been resolved, however, at the expense of amenity to the lift lobbies.
- XIII. Allow all residential lobbies to have access to natural light and air.
 - a. Comment: Proposal has gone significantly backwards in this respect. No typical lift lobby has access to light and air as proposed. ADG Objective 4F-1 Design Guidance suggests "Daylight and natural ventilation should be provided to all common circulation spaces that are above ground."

Further recommendations for DA:

- 8. Improve and untangle residential and commercial address at Pittwater Road, reduce large undercroft spaces and ensure well integrated universal access which doesn't inhibit address or activation of street.
- 9. Reconsider resolution of Bungan Lane to prioritise the tenancies and subordinate the substation
- 10. Clarify traffic effects on public car park as a result of increasing intensity of through traffic
- 11. Access to waste storage areas to be simplified, dignified and convenient for all users
- 12. Circulation sequence between entries, residential units and communal open space to be better resolved.

Landscape

Spaces for landscape proposed are primarily those left over after squeezing in a central residential tower. The spaces suffer from cumulative impact of tight courtyard spaces located between buildings that are very demanding of the space. The quality of these spaces bear the potential to be dramatically further degraded by adjacent development.

Provision of rooftop communal open space is supported, however, is not readily accessible to all residents and all other communal open space does not receive much sunlight. Should central tower be removed, provision of rooftop communal open space should be supported on block perimeter buildings.

The proposal represents a missed opportunity, that being a greater courtyard at the centre of the block. Such a configuration would be generative in informing future development on adjacent sites and offering fundamentally improved private open space, building address, access to sunlight and natural ventilation.

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- XIV. The redesign of the communal open space provision must consider achievement of the ADG requirements, show equitable provision and access for all residents and provision of suitable soil depths to support the landscape on structure. The provision of high-quality amenities for residents should be demonstrated in the next stage submission including landscape plans prepared by a suitably qualified Landscape Architect.
 - a. Comment: Not adequately addressed
- XV. Provision of deep soil should be considered
 - a. Comment: No Deep Soil provided – built form setting back in accordance with DCP may allow for deep soil zones at edge of site that could be contiguous with soil volumes in surrounding public domain
- XVI. Response to Country should be provided at the next stage
 - a. Comment: Not addressed

Further recommendations for DA:

- 13. Remove central residential tower to allow for greater courtyard at centre of block
- 14. Provide more communal open space, consider rooftop amenity to street facing buildings.
- 15. Provide deep soil planting
- 16. Provide clear and dignified access to communal open space for all residents.

Amenity

Proposal does not materially solve any of the amenity problems of the PLM scheme which are largely, ramifications of the gross built form.

Some backwards steps have been made, particularly in relation to lift lobby amenity, where the proposal has no potential for light or air to these spaces. Further, many habitable rooms within the development do not have direct access to light and air and instead borrow from other spaces. This should not be acceptable.

Natural ventilation remains unsolved, particularly in the likely scenario the small courtyards are enclosed by surrounding development.

Adaptable apartments do not contain adequate storage for essential household items to satisfy ADG minimum storage requirements.

Extent of privacy screening at L02 podium level will impact daylight, outlook and ventilation amenity of apartments 01, 02, 03 and 04

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- XVII. Consider passive attenuation to Pittwater Road frontage to encourage natural ventilation.
 - a. Comment: Not resolved – no attenuation solution articulated. Panel not satisfied that the proposal achieves natural ventilation and acoustic attenuation simultaneously



- XVIII. Revise scheme so as to achieve ADG solar compliance in current and future states with comparable adjacent development.
- a. Comment: Some clarifications made, however, development of key adjacent sites have not been considered, such as the site directly opposite Bungan Lane, which has been shown with no development at all. Further, multiple versions of surrounding massing are being utilised for different purposes within the drawing set. In some instances, massing of comparable height to the proposal is used to illustrate the proposal as seemingly consistent with future surrounding fabric. However, significantly lower building massing is illustrated on the view from sun analysis to indicate compliance. The panel feel that without explanation and proper urban analysis, this is potentially misleading.
- XIX. Explore performance of masterplan alternatives without central tower and which improve amenity.
- a. Comment: Not satisfied – no alternative schemes presented. The panel agree that removing the central tower and making a larger courtyard at the centre of the greater block is critical to providing an appropriate response. That allows for positive, accordant future development of adjacent sites.
- XX. Avoid providing spaces where light and air is only via skylight.
- a. Comment: Proposal contains spaces which have no access to light and air, so is not considered to have improved.

Further recommendations for DA:

- 17. Demonstrate how natural ventilation will work in the event courtyards are built out by adjacent development.
- 18. All habitable rooms to have direct access to windows – skylights may be used as secondary source of light.
- 19. Provide direct access to operable windows to all common internal spaces including lift lobbies on all levels
- 20. Provide ADG compliant storage to all apartments including min. 600mm deep cupboards for bulky items and excluding spaces for washing machines and dryers.
- 21. Privacy screening should not inhibit sunlight, daylight, natural ventilation or outlook of apartments.
- 22. ADG minimum ceiling heights to be incorporated and adequate tolerances to be taken into consideration

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Composition of street walls need further consideration, especially with respect to adequate setbacks.

Substation on West and core to East have a big impact on the reading of the facades. The approach has been to apply screens on to hide them, whereas a preferred approach would be to suppress and/or incorporate compositionally.

Internal courtyard elevations should be treated with as much importance as street facades.



Materiality consists largely of rendered and faux finishes which are considered to result in poor result over the long term. Painted render generally does not weather well in apartment developments over their life-cycle due to combinations of poor quality edge detailing enabled by cheaper materials/building systems, effects of harsh environments (salt and pollution), and painted surfaces inherently needing more frequent maintenance to retain their post-construction aesthetic quality.

Range of materials and colours is excessive – these need to be paired back and used in a disciplined way that is well-considered.

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- XXI. Explore calm, honest and environment-derived architectural expression.
 - a. Comment: Not satisfied, Elevations demonstrate large amounts of stylistic appliqué
- XXII. Promote finishes which will have inherent material characteristics which will complement and relate to the context of the greater village and location.
 - a. Comment: Not satisfied, greater work needed

Further recommendations for DA:

- 23. Materials are to be robust, more sustainable, and avoid the need and life cycle costs resulting from frequent maintenance to retain adequate visual quality in the public domain and for residents within the site.
- 24. Avoid use of faux materials
- 25. Restrain building materials palette
- 26. Resolution of other items will require elevations to be re-considered

Sustainability

Recommendations

Previous recommendations from Pre-DA stage:

- XXIII. Provide external shading to all living rooms.
 - a. Comment: Not complete, needs to be applied to all windows and doors
- XXIV. Detail the EV charging strategy and make sure fire safety provisions are going to be accommodated.
 - a. Comment: No indication this has been undertaken – still needs to be addressed
- XXV. Increase the amount of PV on the roof and consider dual functionality – such as PV shading structures for the communal open space or PV over green roof.
 - a. Comment: No indication this has been undertaken – still needs to be addressed
- XXVI. Ensure there is enough bike parking for all apartments and retail spaces.
 - a. Comment: confirm how number of spaces was determined to be sufficient



- XXVII. Include consideration for Design with Country.
- a. Comment: No indication this has been undertaken – still needs to be addressed
- XXVIII. Consider how hot water will be provided – a heat pump is 75% more efficient, but a centralised system would be required which will require spatial allowance.
- a. Comment: It is noted that the BASIX certificate refers to instantaneous electric. Please confirm calculations that show this to be more efficient than centralised heat pumps.
- XXIX. Remove any gas from buildings, including the retail. Induction cooktops and heat pump hot water is recommended.
- a. Comment: BASIX certificate confirms no gas for residential uses. Confirmation of no gas for Commercial units is required.

Further recommendations for DA:

- 27. Provide NatHERS reports demonstrating average of 7 stars and no apartments with less than 6 stars. Double glazing to all windows could assist with this.
- 28. Confirm how cross ventilation will be achieved to all units, making specific consideration of noise from main road.
- 29. Confirm how cross ventilation will be achieved to apartments that depend on contained courtyard space, making specific consideration of the potential for those courtyards to be isolated by adjacent development.
- 30. With regards to materials, please confirm:
 - a. That the polystyrene insulation proposed in wall has no fire issues
 - b. Strategies to re-use materials from demolition of existing buildings

PANEL CONCLUSION

The proposal inherits problematic outcomes from the earlier PLM scheme, beginning with how it responds to public domain and surrounding properties, and following to poor amenity outcomes for residents and commercial tenants.

The scheme fails to adequately consider future surrounding context, pushes outwards with zero setbacks, then inwards, by proposing a central building which stands to be isolated and 'landlocked' with poor outlook, ambiguous address, challenged privacy, and limited access to air and light.

Significant reconsideration of how this site is approached will be required before a convincing scheme may result. This likely begins with the removal of the central residential building and development of a more measured and well studied street wall setback condition that has capacity to generate greater accord with existing and future development.

The Panel does not support the development in its current form.