

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 28 July 2022

## **Item 3 - DA2022/0646 - 122 Queenscliff Road QUEENSCLIFF**

### **PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### ***General***

Proposal is for six (6) dwellings within a 3-storey residential flat building with underground car parking.

#### ***Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character***

The site falls to south from street and benefits from excellent views towards the south. Adjacent and surrounding development on the South side of Queenscliff Road comprises predominantly dwelling houses and small residential flat buildings.

The subdivision pattern is legible and meaningful from the street as gaps between buildings offer vistas from footpath level to the South.

The proposal agglomerates two adjacent sites and although zoned for low density development, relies on existing use rights to justify new residential flat building development.

#### ***Scale, built form and articulation***

Although a single built form is proposed across the two consolidated sites, the existing subdivision pattern is acknowledged by breaking the built form into wings separated by the pedestrian and vehicle entry.

The Panel considers this response appropriate, but that it could be improved.

The built form steps down towards the South, approximately following the slope of the land.

Deep excavation to eastern and western boundaries is proposed to accommodate several habitable rooms at subterranean levels, providing poor outlook and light for these spaces.

Side envelope controls and wall height controls are breached. It is the opinion of the Panel that these breaches have not been convincingly argued as;

a) compliance may ensure greater levels of amenity for occupants either side of both side boundaries and

b) apartments contained in the proposal would benefit from more efficient planning and the resulting greater access to light.

Many of the weaknesses in the design stem from the sheer size of the proposed units. While the Panel understands that the 'market' will seek as large an internal floor space as possible, there is a limit to what can be fitted on any site irrespective of whether there are floor space controls or not. In this instance the Panel considers the proposed floor areas excessive.

#### **Recommendations**

1. Enhance and further articulate central gap, explore use of northern clerestory windows to reinforce urban pattern and take advantage of solar potential for the upper units
2. Significantly reduce reliance on excavated space for habitable rooms and reduce the internal floor areas of the lower units in particular.
3. Allow for retaining wall thickness, soil and planting retention during and after construction wherever retaining walls are in proximity to boundaries. The Panel suggests retaining a continuous zone of at least 900mm adjacent to adjacent property line at natural ground level. The applicant mentioned

technology that would allow for minimal setback from the boundary, but the Panel was not shown details of the final appearance or potential impact on neighbouring properties.

4. The side setbacks should be increased to take advantage of oblique views, solar access about Eastern and Western elevations, to lessen impact on adjacent neighbours and to improve views from footpath towards South.

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

The pedestrian entry from the street is compromised by tight arrangement, steep descent and lack of weather protection. Outdoor lift configuration is not acceptable.

Car lift is acknowledged as an innovative solution to specific site constraints - basement can be made more efficient to reduce excavation. The aesthetics of the car lift surrounds to the streetscape requires improvement with timberwork or other materials to improve its basic appearance. The planting wall should not be the *only* treatment as this not a durable element.

### **Recommendations**

Reconfigure entry considering protection, viability of lift and quality of experience. Utilise landscape features to enhance the amenity of the entry area.

It is likely that the driveway will require adjustment / widening to enable a waiting car to be clear of the road and local car traffic and buses passing the site.

## ***Landscape***

Landscape does not maximise the deep soil provided. The pools, paving, OSD are all over deep soil while grassed and planted areas are over the car parking. This needs to be rectified.

Rooftop private open space is setback from the edges which addresses privacy and visual impact and adds amenity to the dwellings, concern was raised by the Panel over matters of safety, shelter, overlooking to and from space and given the exposure to southerly winds, the unsuitability of lightweight temporary shade structures which occupants may wish to install.

Enhance biodiversity by using native species. Existing species are fine but mixed with exotics and the same quality could be achieved with use of all native species.

Trees shown inside setbacks do not have space to grow to their natural size (shown at scale of a shrub). Assume trees are here and not at the rear to retain views but canopy trees are important and need to be located where they have space to grow to their natural scale and form.

Brachychiton trees, while beautiful native trees, are not an endemic species and should be reconsidered for a different species more appropriate to the area.

### **Recommendations**

5. Use all native species / endemic where possible in the landscape. The planting will do better also with more similar water/ nutrient requirements etc.
6. Adjust tree locations to provide canopy cover in the rear yards.
7. Consider shade, privacy and safety of rooftop private open space.
8. Deep excavation within 1m of the side boundary just to "flatten" the side setbacks against the side boundary is not an appropriately sensitive design response. NGL within 1m of the boundary lines should be retained to allow for site stability, drainage, landscaping and prevent deep cutting / walls on the side boundary.

## ***Amenity***

The Panel considers the solar access for the lower units inadequate and that only two (2) apartments receive more than 2 hours of sun in winter and only via horizontal skylights.

Furthermore, that it was possible with changes to allow all apartments to receive adequate sunlight which will increase comfort and amenity to apartments.

Floor to floor heights proposed may not be adequate for tolerances with terraced areas above habitable spaces. The Panel suggests 3.3 metres would be more appropriate.

Apartments are generally excessively deep and dark, this is a result of very large internal areas, without increase to ceiling height and with few windows which has the potential to create glare and require constant artificial lighting.

Enclosure of rooftop access stair is not indicated.

Ground floor terraces overlook adjacent properties.

### **Recommendations**

9. Reconfigure the plans and utilise increased side setbacks to allow sunlight to penetrate living spaces to all apartments and to minimise reliance on artificial lighting.
10. Consider switching the layout of the units to have the living areas on the outside walls, include extensive obscure glass (that may need to be double glazed for thermal performance) to increase natural light levels.
11. Increase floor to floor heights to at least 3.3m where terraces are located above habitable space
12. Provide detail of cover to roof access stair, (the cranked stair arrangement will make the design and operation of these devices particularly challenging)
13. Provide adequate screening to southern boundary to protect privacy of neighbours.
14. The placement of the spa and large terrace in full view of numerous overlooking apartments to the north affords no natural privacy to this private open space. Reshaping this area, a smaller terrace that is partially protected by an attractive feature of the roof / parapet shape / roof area and helps to visually integrate with the streetscape of the adjoining buildings at No.124 and No.118 Queenscliff Road would provide a more innovative design response. This should minimise view impacts and avoid the need for ancillary elements such as cabana / shade installations on the roof to protect the BBQ/tables/spa area.

### ***Façade treatment/Aesthetics***

Proposal has a minimal contemporary, monolithic appearance made primarily from off form concrete which relies on extensive integrated planting to 'soften' its appearance. The Panel notes face brickwork as being typical of the character of the locality and that in the cases where high quality bricks have been utilised, that they seem to have weathered the environment well.

### **Recommendations**

15. Investigate alternative materials, noting that the planting, while supported will rely on a commitment by owners to maintain it. The design should fit with its context without the use of planting. Investigate face brickwork as an alternative facade material with a view to improving the fit with the local context.
16. Removal of building infrastructure (service boxes, pergolas, convoluted pathways) in the front setback and a more graduated / stepped excavation profile with landscaping, at least 50% of the front fencing open style with landscaping is required. The WDCP (Part D2) does not seek any privatisation (balcony / bedroom courtyards etc) in the 6.5m front setback area.

### ***Sustainability***

The proposal demonstrates minimal effort relating to energy efficiency, which is reflected in the BASIX certificate which requires provision of refrigerators and washing machines in order to meet minimum compliance. It should be possible to achieve compliance without provision of these appliances. The lifts have not been included in the certificate, therefore the Energy score will fail once this is included, along with the revised NatHERS score (see comments below) which is likely to reduce the energy score as

well. Consider some energy efficiency initiatives such as increasing the PV array, adding ceiling fans to more apartments etc., to provide better energy efficiency.

The second major concern is around solar access. The lower four apartments have minimal daylight access and are unlikely to be meeting the ADG requirements. A slit window into a study area does not meet the intent of the living room solar access required for the ADG. Flipping the living areas with the master bedrooms would allow a window with more northerly aspect to be included into the living spaces.

The top two apartments receive sunlight through the skylights, however these are excessively large skylights which will create uncomfortable heat gain in summer. This combined with the stairwell with glass door, would create very hot conditions in the top apartments in summer. Both the skylights and the glazed door to the stair well do not appear to be included in the NatHERs modelling, as they are not nominated in the construction details on the stamped plans, and the cooling loads in the results are not as high as would be expected. Once these are included, minimum compliance may not be achieved.

### Recommendations

17. Increase the PV provision and consider connection direct to the units as there is minimal common area energy consumption
18. Reconsider the apartment layout to provide some northerly aspect to the building
19. Ensure the lifts are included in the BASIX
20. Ensure the skylights and glazed entry to the stair wells are included in the NatHERs modelling
21. Consider the inclusion of bidirectional EV charging points
22. Replace a car space with space for motorbikes and scooters
23. Full electrification and no gas in anticipation of decarbonisation of the grid. Replace the stove tops with induction and the hot water with heat pump hot water.
24. Increase the size of the rainwater tank and connect it to the spa and pool top up as well as the irrigation
25. Investigate material choices with low embodied carbon; low carbon concrete mixes with 70% less cement are readily available. Fly ash concrete should be investigated for the structure of the building, as well as other low carbon materials
26. Select roofing materials with high albedo roof to reduce urban heat and install high insulation levels

## PANEL CONCLUSION

**The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. A significant redesign is required in accordance with the recommendations above.**

The Panel refer the applicant to the Apartment Design Guide for aspects related to amenity and internal planning of apartments.