

# MATTHEW PULLINGER ARCHITECT

4 Phillips Street  
ALEXANDRIA  
NSW 2015  
AUSTRALIA

M +61 413 990052

matthew.pullinger@tpg.com.au

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Mr George Revay  
Platino Properties  
Suite 11, 20 Young Street  
NEUTRAL BAY NSW 2089

## **Urban Design Statement - Skyline Place, Frenchs Forest - Section 8.2 Review**

Dear George,

This brief Urban Design Statement has been prepared in support of Platino Properties' intended application for a Section 8.2 review of a recent refusal for a proposed mixed use, seniors living development at Skyline Place in Frenchs Forest.

This statement addresses the cumulative positive benefits derived from the amended proposal, and the extent to which they mitigate urban design concerns that contributed to the initial refusal of the development application by the Sydney North Planning Panel.

Additionally, the statement notes the design amendments made to the original proposal necessarily respond to the terms of a Section 8.2 review (copied below with author's emphasis):

*'In requesting a review, the applicant may amend the proposed development the subject of the original application for development consent or for modification of development consent. The consent authority may review the matter having regard to the amended development, but only if it is satisfied that it is substantially the same development.'*

In order to be consistent with the terms of a Section 8.2 review, a series of relatively minor modifications have been made to ensure the amended proposal remains 'substantially the same' as that considered by the Planning Panel.

This statement is based on a review of the original development proposal and the subsequently amended development proposal, along with the relevant planning policies - in particular State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) and State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 - Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development.

An assessment and careful consideration of the existing neighbourhood character has been made prior to amending the original development proposal. This step is critical to ensuring the amended design will make a positive contribution to its setting, and is consistent with the guidance provided by Seniors Living Policy - Urban Design Guidelines for Infill Development and the Apartment Design Guide.

The Urban Design Statement has been structured around the key design issues that have been addressed, and are necessary to ensure the amended proposal achieves a positive relationship with its site and within its immediate urban setting.

### **Applicable Development Standards**

The subject site is not governed by development standards for maximum height of building, or a floor space ratio.

The State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability), 2004 makes the proposed Seniors Living uses permissible within the subject site.

### **Existing Urban Character**

The existing urban character in the immediate vicinity of the subject site can be described at high level in the following terms:

\_North of Frenchs Forest Road - predominantly single detached, one and two storey homes, a number of which (numbers 25 to 31) present their primary address to Bimbadeen Crescent, and turn away from Frenchs Forest Road revealing rear fences to the main road.

\_South of Frenchs Forest Road - a light industrial and mixed uses 'business park', comprising a range of buildings, characterised by larger floor plates (routinely of between 80 and 120 metres in length) and comprising two and three storeys in height, typically in the order of 3.6 metres from floor to floor level.

\_East along Wakehurst Parkway - a strong bushland landscape buffer to the main road.

\_More generally - mature vegetation and urban tree canopy exists across the immediate vicinity, particularly within the residential area to the north, and as a strong feature of the site perimeters and internal street network within the 'business park' south of Frenchs Forest Road.

The scale of these mature trees establishes a strong landscape character for the various building types, which are generally diminutive to the scale of the mature tree canopy.

The strength of this landscape setting, its mature trees - predominantly eucalypts - is critical to the resulting urban character of the area, particularly given the clear distinction between building types and scales north and south of Frenchs Forest Road.

### **Reasons for Refusal of the Application by the Planning Panel**

A series of urban design concerns were raised by the Planning Panel in relation to the original development application. The following issues were included in the Planning Panel's Determination and Reasons for Refusal:

\_The proposal is inconsistent with the aims of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) in relation to design and compatibility.

\_The scale, bulk and height of the proposal is not consistent with the desired future character of the area and does not contribute to the quality and identity of the area.

\_The proposal is inconsistent with the aims of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability) in relation to building height, density and scale, and solar requirements.

\_The proposal fails the principles of State Environmental Planning Policy No. 65 - Design Quality of Residential Apartment Development insofar as they apply to context, neighbourhood character, built form and scale.

### **Design Amendments to Address Reasons for Refusal**

A series of amendments have now been made to the original development proposal to address the concerns outlined above. These amendments seek to significantly improve the proposed built form and its compatibility to the urban and neighbourhood context, enabling it to better sit within the immediate urban environment.

#### *1. Reduced building height*

The original development proposal was for a single building with a maximum height of seven storeys (made up of seniors living with some commercial uses at lower levels), and additionally included rooftop structures to facilitate access to common spaces and a rooftop garden.

Further, a significant portion of the proposed basement structure protruded above natural ground level as the proposed development addressed Frenchs Forest Road.

As a result, the original proposal presented to Frenchs Forest Road as a nine storey structure set approximately ten metres from the northern site boundary.

The amended proposal has been reduced in height (from nine) to a maximum of six storeys. Within the eastern portion of the building, this height includes a lower ground floor, which 'sleeves' the basement structure with proposed commercial uses when viewed from Frenchs Forest Road.

No blank basement structures protrude above the resultant ground level.

Rooftop access is no longer proposed, and the upper-most floor is set back from the building perimeter to further reduce its apparent scale within the Frenchs Forest Road streetscape.

The reduced building heights result in an amended proposal which is better scaled relative to the heights of existing and approved buildings in the immediate vicinity, noting in particular a recent approval for a six storey redevelopment of the Parkway Hotel east of the subject site.

The amended development proposal is reduced in height to relate more directly to the scale of adjacent mature eucalypts and will generally be sited within and below the prevailing local urban tree canopy.

A proposed additional set back to the western portion of the building (discussed in more detail below) will further reduce the amended design proposal's apparent scale when viewed from Frenchs Forest Road and elsewhere in the local neighbourhood.

#### *2. Strong building articulation*

Additionally, the built form has been strongly articulated along its Frenchs Forest Road frontage, with the western portion of the proposal set back an additional eight metres (for a total setback of approximately 18 metres) from the northern site boundary.

The effect of this adjustment is to clearly interrupt the original building length of approximately 90 metres, creating two distinct and more appropriately scaled forms, each approximately 40 metres in length.

To further address concerns with the original proposal and to clearly articulate the proposed built form, the amended design is delineated as two distinct and separate building forms sited above a united building base.

From the third floor and above, the amended proposal comprises two separated building forms, which contributes to a significant reduction in the apparent scale and bulk of the proposal. This design strategy also gives clear distinction between the seniors living and non-residential uses contained within the amended design proposal.

Additionally this building break, coupled with a multiple core design, results in a significant reduction to the extent of internal corridors and a corresponding reduction in the number of seniors living units served from any one corridor.

### *3. Improved siting, building address and relationship to street level*

The set back western portion of the amended design creates additional open space for a north-facing communal garden. This communal garden space offers amenity to both the commercial tenants and seniors living residents, and also enhances the proposed landscape and building presentation to Frenchs Forest Road.

In the area of this additional set back, the amended building siting permits the retention of three existing mature eucalypts in addition to those already retained elsewhere within the site along Frenchs Forest Road. This further sets the amended building design within a strong urban landscape character.

The stepped building line increases the building separations across the main road to the lower scaled residential dwellings on Bimbadeen Crescent to the north.

The amended design establishes a direct, on-grade, accessible pathway from the bus stop on Frenchs Forest Road to primary address points within the amended proposal.

The basement structures have been reconfigured to ensure they do not protrude above natural ground level, and are 'sleeved' with commercial uses at ground and lower ground levels to bring improved animation and passive surveillance to street level.

The extent of site area allocated to a new internal street has been reduced (in favour of communal open green space), and is directly addressed and activated by ground floor commercial tenancies.

The key design metrics for solar access and natural cross ventilation established in the Apartment Design Guide have each been improved upon in the amended design and significantly exceed the minimum recommended targets in each case.

The proportion of commercial (non-residential) uses relative to seniors living uses has been adjusted to bring them into closer alignment with the prevailing uses within the business park south of Frenchs Forest Road.

### **Conclusion**

The amended proposal successfully establishes a design response that clearly addresses the relevant concerns raised by the Planning Panel in its reasons for refusal of the original development application.

The amended design proposal responds positively to each of the critical sections outlined in Seniors Living Policy - Urban Design Guidelines for Infill Development, specifically - neighbourhood character, site planning, streetscape impacts, and internal and neighbouring amenity.

Similarly, the amended design proposal improves upon the performance of the original development proposal when assessed against the guidance provided within the Apartment Design Guide - specifically in the areas of solar access, natural cross ventilation and common circulation spaces.

The amended design is of a scale and built form that sits comfortably within its immediate site and context, with an enhanced relationship to Frenchs Forest Road and the existing (and approved) buildings in the immediate vicinity.

The amended proposal exhibits a more diminutive relationship to the existing urban tree canopy, increased building separation to sensitive northern neighbours, allows for the retention of more existing mature trees within the site, and delivers a far more strongly articulated architectural form.

Please contact me on 0413 990 052 if you wish to discuss any issues raised in this Urban Design Statement further.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew S". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Matthew Pullinger FRAIA  
Registered Architect: 6226