



Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting

## DA2021/0212 – 5 Skyline Place, FRENCHS FOREST

### PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Strategic Context.

The Panel notes and supports the comments provided by Council to the applicant at the pre-lodgement meeting of 14 December 2020 in relation to the inconsistency with the strategic vision for the area and the Northern Beaches Hospital Precinct Master Plan.

#### General

The Panel recognises a range of significant improvements to the Pre DA design.

These include:

1. Offsetting of the towers and a reduction in the self shadowing of the courtyards
2. Reduction in the area of courtyard above the car parking by reconfiguration of the car parking layout
3. And increase in the courtyard dimension
4. Incorporation of generous storage areas
5. Reduction in the length of corridors and improved natural lighting and ventilation (though this could be further improved)
6. Common areas and roof terraces

The applicant has provided a schedule of responses to the Panel's previous comments. Whilst helpful it also serves to highlight the issues that have not been addressed, either in the design or in the Panel session.

These include;

1. The poor amenity of units looking to the high tension power lines to the west
2. Deep floor plates
3. Few dual aspect apartments
4. The DA has been lodged without a Sustainability Strategy being developed in consultation with Council

The Panel's notes and comments from 22 October 2020 remain relevant.

For ease of referencing these are highlighted in *red italics*.

Additionally there are a number of claims, made that do not appear to be borne out by the drawings or the design, (for example

1. living rooms in east-west facing units receiving 2 hours of sunlight to the living rooms,
2. cross ventilation that relies on drawing air from deeply inset recesses and may provide induced ventilation to corner bedrooms only).



## Recommendations from previous meeting

- 1 *Explore a range of approaches to the massing of buildings and distribution of activities to derive urban design and planning principles that address the following issues:*
  - *minimisation of the impact of adjoining uses*
  - *explore locating commercial activities to buffer the residential component from adjoining business park activities*
  - *maximising deep soil – (the courtyard over the large single car park is not supported)*
  - *separate commercial and residential car parks and*
  - *arranging car parking so that it is clearly identified and related to individual buildings*
  - *maximising the usable ground level for private courtyard and common space for residential (as opposed to the current arrangement which is not useable and simply an entry forecourt to the commercial uses).*
  - *buffering and screening of the electricity lines to the west*
  
- 2 *Adopt an ‘urban design’ and landscape led approach that considers a number of alternative roads and ‘public domain’ arrangements and demonstrate why one option is preferred in relation to:*
  - *street address,*
  - *legibility,*
  - *safety and security,*
  - *extent of usable landscape*
  
- 3 *Define a preferred option that performs best in relation to the considerations outlined above and comments that follow.*

## Comment

The options consist principally of rearrangements of the same block forms. The Panel had expected a more in depth analysis of a more varied range of alternative forms given the scale of the project and the size of the site.

The Panel notes that the yield has remained the same. The only justification for the yield is the financial viability of the overall scheme. The yield was determined by the applicant without any consultation with Council, and without reference to any planning controls, because there were none that anticipated the change of use from business park to aged housing.

The Panel is not concerned with the permissibility of the proposal and is focussed on the amenity and impact on the adjoining areas.

Given the way the NSW planning system works, the Panel also takes into account the fact that the proposal may be interpreted as having set ‘a precedent’ that could be replicated and therefore the impact on adjoining sites should they develop in the same way should be taken into account.

## **Building height and prominence**

The building is significantly higher than the development on Lot 2 and closer to the ridge and of a similar height to the hospital and will be visible from many locations. The presentation at the Panel session explained the context for the heights but did not provide an analysis from various locations on the ground.



Given the determination by the Sydney North Planning Panel that the development on lot 2 was only acceptable after having the height reduced from 9 storeys to 6 after refusal by the SNPP in December 2018, no compelling arguments have been presented as to why 12 storeys should be supported on Lot 1 given the impacts and overshadowing of the central court area.

- 4 *Prepare built form options study for tower locations to assess impact on desired future character, and overshadowing of dwellings, private and communal open space and adjoining sites*

**Comment**

Provided: built form is an improvement but floor plates are still deep. No exploration of a more varied built form.

- 5 *Undertake a visual impact analysis of the final preferred built form tower options in locations where the visibility from residential R2 zones are highest. Suggest particular emphasis on streets with a line of site such 3 Nandi Ave and the north footpath at the intersection of Romford Road / Frenchs Forest Road, and the eastern footpath of Romford Road and Bimbadeen Crescent.*

**Comment**

Provided: tower forms are screened from most of the public domain

**Sensitive interfaces (Adjoining site use)**

Consider future employment generating B7 uses on the adjoining sites and design to ensure employment development will not be unduly constrained e.g. can build with DCP 'nil' side setbacks.

- 6 *Locate and orientate uses to ensure the activities in the adjoining business park can continue.*

**Comment**

Provided: Acoustic report and mitigation measures.

**Public domain, Landscape and bushland setting**

As noted previously the site is sufficiently large to include an internal access street or shared zone.

*The proposal recognises the amenity provided by the bushland outlook and the tree planting in the business park.*

- 7 *Configure the built form to create an open to the sky internal shared street arrangement that ensures all residential lobbies have direct access to a street.*
- 8 *Consider providing an internal pedestrian street network that connects the end of Skyline Place with the access along the northern boundary. Consider integrating with the existing access driveway to the northern site.*
- 9 *Ensure all building entries are clearly defined and adjoin a street or public open space*
- 10 *Enhance the bushland setting provided by the Garigal National Park, the Wakehurst Parkway wildlife corridor and the Frenchs Forest landscaped road setbacks by providing endemic planting in deep soil setbacks at boundaries.*
- 11 *Minimum 9 m setback from boundaries to allow for a double, or offset rows of trees. (precedent: the Edgelea Precinct in Lindfield with 10m landscaped setbacks in response to the bushland setting)*
- 12 *Landscape buffer zones should be 100% endemic plantings.*

The landscape plan and design of the public domain is unresolved and inadequate. The current design is extremely monotonous and repetitious. There is very little variation in the materials,



form or built form. Consequently the character and amenity of the development will rely very heavily on the quality of the landscape and public domain design

The Panel specifically suggested the use of endemic and native species. This is hardly a onerous requirement and appropriate for the area, It is not clear why in the BASIX report there is 0.0sqm of 'indigenous or low water species'.

The central courtyard and garden spaces are essential to the liveability and amenity of the proposal. It is not clear how the extensive areas of glass fronted commercial tenancies will activate these spaces. The overall character and feel of the ground level is very 'corporate' and unwelcoming, with extensive areas of paved over-scaled colonnades.

The Panel notes that the commercial suites will be subject to a future DA. This is problematic as these frontages are critical to the character and useability of the courtyard.

### **Recommendations**

1. Engage a qualified Landscape Architect to work as an integral part of the design team to improve the character and useability of the ground level. Particular attention needs to be given to the interface with the 'commercial tenancies'. Blank floor-to soffit glass and recessed colonnades would be a very poor outcome.

### **Site Coverage and deep soil**

*SEPP HSDP requires a minimum 15% of the site area to be deep soil, and 30% of the site to be 'landscaped'. As noted previously, these requirements assume a residential infill context. The panel recognise that the proposal has 51% 'landscaped area' but this include a high portion of paved area and areas above the underground parking.*

- 13 *Site coverage must not exceed 33.5% under the DCP. Due to the residential use proposed consider increasing landscaping to 40% in line with adjoining residential use and town centre precincts.*
- 14 *Ensure minimum 15% deep soil of which 5% is located in any internal courtyards to allow for large trees.*

### **Comment**

Landscaped and deep soil areas have been increased and exceed ADG guidelines

### **Amenity; Building separations**

ADG setbacks are minimums. On this site it should be possible to configure buildings to have splayed outlooks and skewed views. This is preferable to apartments looking directly at one another as is indicated for apartment types K6A and K8 that face the buildings on Lot 2

### **Recommendations**

- 15 *Ensure ADG Part 2F/3F building separations fully comply.*
- 16 *Investigate potential splayed outlook and skewed building layouts to avoid direct (perpendicular) outlook to other building frontages*
- 17 *Recommend that at the boundary between apartment buildings and non-residential uses on adjoining sites the building setback be increased a further 3m*
- 18 *Avoid planning with units with single outlook to blank walls*

### **Comments**

Separations have been increased, splayed outlooks and skewed view have not been investigate but offset towers are an improvement, residential use have be set back further and



have alternative outlooks to east and west, with the exception of project independence- single aspect units looking at blank walls have been avoided.

### ***Building depth, cross ventilation and apartment layouts***

Submitted plan testing indicates that the building footprints are too deep to achieve good amenity including ADG cross ventilation and solar compliance.

- 19 *Where setback bedroom plans are proposed they should have windows at least 1.5m wide, full height and there needs to be a line of sight to the window in accordance with ADG 4D-1 design guidance.*
- 20 *East west facing plans will require the living room to be on the outside face of the building to achieve two hours solar and these typically require shallower plan depths. Test for compliance.*
- 21 *Investigate multi-core typologies with more cross through apartments, shorter corridors and less units per core.*
- 22 *Cross through apartments should have a maximum depth of maximum 18m glass to glass.*
- 23 *Reduce the number of apartments with single aspect east and west*
- 24 *Locate lifts so where lobbies have natural light and ventilation and are visible from the central courtyards, street or shared zone.*
- 25 *Ensure all seniors ILU's are provided with access to two lifts per core where height in storeys exceeds 4 storeys.*

#### **Comment**

Visibility of lift cores from courtyard has been improved. Corridor lengths have been shortened. Other recommendations have not been included.

### ***Sustainability and Environmental Performance***

As noted previously, given that there are no height or density controls, and given the scale of development a very high environmental performance could be expected well beyond compliance.

If the commercial component exceeds 2000sqm Commonwealth legislation requires NABERS reporting.

There is no formal mechanism for Council to require a higher performance than BASIX for the residential component.

The Panel therefore can only encourage the applicant to develop a sustainability strategy that would have long lasting benefits for the occupants and that would be likely to appeal to the Northern Beaches market.

The panel has already recommended an increase and maximisation of natural and cross ventilation and improved solar access and penetration for the dwellings.

The Panel notes that there are many guidelines and strategies for similar precincts that have been developed for 'State Significant Precincts', by Landcom and other developers for similar sites. The applicant is strongly encouraged to refer to these in developing a sustainability strategy for the site.

- 26 *Develop a sustainability strategy for the site in consultation with Council.*
- 27 *For illustration references to examples of briefs for sustainability strategies and links to examples of strategies are provided at the end of this report.*

#### **Comment**

The Applicant has provided a 'Sustainability Report' that is a generic catalogue of sustainability measures without any commitment to implementation, modelling or definition of targets.



There are many elements in the report (e.g. ceiling fans, car share, bicycle racks and many others) that appear nowhere else in the proposal, so the Panel questions their inclusion in the Sustainability report, and the purpose of the Sustainability report overall.

There has been no attempt to develop a sustainability strategy.

For example, although the 'Sustainability Report' refers to 5-star WELS taps in handbasins, general taps, 4 star toilets and showers and 6-star urinals, there is only a commitment to the minimum required to meet the bare minimum BASIX targets.

As previously noted:

*The Panel notes that there are many guidelines and strategies for similar precincts that have been developed for 'State Significant Precincts', by Landcom and other developers for similar sites. The applicant is strongly encouraged to refer to these in developing a sustainability strategy for the site.*

### **Council Urban Design Comments**

The panel has reviewed and endorses all of the comments made in the PLM report.

## **CONCLUSION**

**The Panel does not support the design.**

The Panel recognises that there have been a range of improvements to the design.

However the landscape design is not adequate, and given the importance of this central shared space to the overall character and amenity of the project, it is important that the nature of the commercial activities is known.

The Panel observes that these difficulties arise directly from the proposal to develop the site as seniors housing in the B7zone, and that it is therefore reasonable for these matters to be resolved as part of this Development Application.

Failure to provide a sustainability strategy or commitments to achieving environmental performance greater than the bare minimum for compliance on a site of this size where there are no set planning controls cannot be considered adequate.