

Design + Sustainability Advisory Panel Meeting Report – Date 26th September 2024

ITEM 2 - DA2024/1003 - 1-5 Rickard Road NORTH NARRABEEN

PANEL COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

General

The Panel welcomes the opportunity to see the scheme at an early design stage and the opportunity to contribute to the development of a high-quality approach. It is mindful that the development will set a precedent in the area.

The site on flood-prone land (medium – high risk) is challenging and requires design-led solutions to overcome these barriers, while connecting the building and its occupants with the streetscape.

Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character

The Panel notes a Response to Country should be carried out, which will benefit the design response in a more holistic way, including the landscape, approach to the significant flood prone conditions, and how the building performs in the wider urban context and how people will experience the development.

The presentation also continues to lack of a proper site analysis that clearly shows topographical and built form context of place, with the constraints to overcome and opportunities to be realised. It is highly recommended using the ADG guidelines so it can inform the design.

The site is zoned E1 Local Centre under Pittwater Local Environmental Plan 2014, and the proposed shop top housing development is permissible with consent. The site is within the North Narrabeen Locality under the Pittwater 21 DCP. The area is changing from single storey buildings to mainly 3-storey mixed commercial and residential.

Whilst the strategy of avoiding a basement carpark (with its cost and flood-related issues) is understood, the disconnection of the building and occupants from the street caused by the now raised carparking (proposed subfloor overland flow void) continues to detract from the urban context, quality of experience within the streetscapes, and for both building occupants and neighbours.

The opportunities and constraints of this decision also need to be better articulated. Design-led solutions need to mitigate the negative aspects of raising the commercial retail spaces (including demonstrated well-resolved street geometries, the character of any solid walls, whether narrower separated vehicle crossovers to access from each street and a defensive deep-soil landscape buffer between the building and the street, and the minimising impacts of services). The proposed amendments have not resolved these issues.

The Panel notes the increased flood planning level is 2.4m above street level and the carpark is at 1%AEP which is about 1m above street level. This results in wider urban character considerations where the proposed typology, if repeated, will create unacceptable impacts to all streets in the E1 zone and interface properties in the R2 zone:

- Raised podium walls to the west and south boundary that are approximately 8.5m high which is the height limit in the adjacent R2 zone.

- Dual street addresses with extensive un-activated frontages at street level with the commercial/retail uses 4m above existing ground/street levels.

To provide better activated frontage consider two level commercial suites with 5m max depth plans at 1% AEP level RL 3.03 (1.0m above the street) and internal stairs to main level at RL 6.03 commercial level. Recommend as a design principle that all car parking be skinned to street frontages.

The setback to Minarto Lane is non-compliant with the 3.5m DCP control.

Recommend provide full deep soil setback with endemic tree planting. This will:

- Define the spatial qualities intended for the lane under the public policies
- Provide a higher quality public domain and streetscape character
- Enhance a residential lobby and its sense of address

The wide amalgamated dual level driveway access is impactful in the Minarto Lane streetscape, dominating the streetscape and reinforcing the 'service entry' character for the residential entry lobby.

Recommendations

1. Undertake a Response to Country and thorough site analysis using the ADG guidelines.
2. Substantial improvements are required for the proposal to sit within the wider urban context and its presentation to and engagement with the street. See recommendations about access, car parking, landscaping and amenity noted in *Scale, built form and articulation; Access, vehicular movement and car parking; Landscape; and Amenity.*
3. Reconsider the treatment of the commercial frontage and resident entries to contribute to the public domain through movement, active frontages and eyes on the street.

Scale, built form and articulation

The development continues to not offer a quality entry experience for either the commercial or the residential users as is detailed in previous comments and other categories.

The Panel remains mindful that the deletion of basement carparking results in a less-expensive building and may be appropriate for other environmental reasons. But it cannot be at the expense of a good urban design outcome for the area.

The Panel notes previous recommendations to investigate an L-shaped building typology. However, the proposed is not supported as an appropriate model. The building form has located a void space at the south-western corner. Further design development is needed to resolve the quality of this space for long-term access to daylight and cross ventilation in context of future permissible redevelopment of neighbouring lots.

Internally, the proposed building form results in a residential typology that is not supported - internalised, dog-legged, double-loaded corridor, with single-aspect unit types. This is indicative of an excessively deep floorplate, with known associated poor amenity contrary to the ADG *minimum* amenity performance objectives – See comments at Amenity.

The building form has attempted to express the base, mid/body and residential levels in light of the response to the flood levels. However, further design development is needed to resolve wall geometries and alignments, internal arrangements to better resolve the composition of elevations. There appear arbitrary geometries along Minarto Lane which are poorly resolved vertically between the ground floor, retail and residential levels.

Further, there is no roof expression that terminates the building form when viewed from the public domain. While the composition of elevations is intending to present uniformly to the street geometries, this external 'cohesion' is not reflected in the internal spatial layouts for units along the Minarto Lane frontage.

Setbacks required by the public policies should establish the proposed building form which will define the public domain spatial quality. No justification was presented for the proposed variation to Minarto Lane.

Any non-compliance with planning controls can only be considered where there is:

- contributions to the public domain or other public benefits (affordability, environmental performance)
- reduced impact on adjoining sites (either existing or in relation to future development potential)
- a demonstrable improvement in amenity within the proposal (e.g. streetscape, deep soil landscape, solar, natural ventilation and cross ventilation, overshadowing, privacy).

Recommendations

4. Site arrangement of built form above the retail/commercial must facilitate required *minimum* ADG communal and private amenity and overall required building performance.
5. Should an L-shaped or courtyard type be pursued, conflicts between resident and communal spaces are to be avoided both requiring good access to light, ventilation and outlook amenity.
6. Consideration should be given to reductions in floor area, unit mix and/or yield on the residential levels to achieve adequate internal amenity, resolve circulation, COS and POS conflicts and deficiencies if suitable alternative types and layouts are not achievable within a deep residential floorplate.

Access, vehicular movement and car parking

The carpark continues to dominate the Minarto Lane streetscape and is contributing to the poor sense of address. This is both because it remains as a single point for the two car parking levels.

Amendments have provided a clear definition/security point between the commercial and residential parking. However, the Retail Level residential car parking lobby presents as if a service entry where the lobby and lift are not visible.

The awkward geometries created by the proposed back-of-house layouts continue to create inefficiencies at both carparking levels, as does the combined vehicle entry point for both levels of parking. The overall amenity still requires further design development.

The Panel reiterates previous comments to consider any options that might enable less car spaces, such as car share locations in the commercial zone.

Recommendations

7. Consider separating carparking entry points to rationalise the swept paths and maximise the spatial efficiencies.
8. Reconsider the design and layouts of all back-of-house, services, egresses so they are approached as considered building elements that need to be carefully integrated to achieve good design outcomes and maximise the site potential.
9. Separation of the residential and commercial access and parking needs to be incorporated.
10. Consider a less impactful location for the bin storage.
11. An integrated response to parking, ground level access and the landscape treatments to the streets needs to be considered holistically to create a safe and high-quality streetscape in this difficult area.

12. Consideration should be given to making the carpark part of the landscape (e.g., with permeable paving and planting, along with access to light and air that a more permeable elevation on the 2 street sides would provide).

Landscape

No sense of appreciation or care for Country with all that this contributes to a response to a site and its functions. This beautiful place and land should be respected through all development.

Location and size of the communal open space is insufficient and poor in terms of amenity for the open space and the adjoining units. The ADG requires a *minimum* 25% of the site area to be provided as communal open space and for 50% of this space to receive direct sunlight in mid-winter. This provision is not demonstrated, particularly in the case that the neighbouring block to the west is developed to a similar scale.

The provision of deep soil in the 3m front setback is not meeting the 6m dimension for deep soil under the ADG. Co-location of deep soil with the communal open space or in a consolidated landscaped area where large trees can be provided would be beneficial. This could be considered with a scenario of a residential communal open space co-located with the building entry, which would break down the building bulk from the street and avoid issues of dwelling privacy proposed adjacent to the podium communal open space. If this space could be located in order to retain Tree 7 (Sydney Blue Gum) this would be highly beneficial, despite the fact that this is an exempt tree. Existing canopy trees and where located to contribute to the wider streetscape character have a public benefit. Removal of these also need to demonstrate replacement within a viable, contiguous deep soil zone.

The large rooftop is a missed opportunity, and as currently proposed, will contribute to urban heat island effect and reduce the building efficiency, both of which are contrary to public policies.

Recommendations

13. An appreciation and respect of Country would go a long way to informing a more respectful approach to the design and landscape outcomes.
14. Consider the wider contribution of the landscape and communal space to the development and how this can enhance residential amenity, rather than just meet numerical compliance. This could enhance the attractiveness and commerciality of the development through enhanced quality of the residential units.
15. Landscape and PV to reduce urban heat and contribute to energy generation.

Amenity

Amendments have sought to separate the commercial and residential entries and made changes to the common circulation and resulting unit types. However, the outcomes have not resolved previous issues and remain unsatisfactory.

The Panel reiterates previous comments that the arrival experience is critical and should be a key consideration of the internal planning configuration.

Commercial

Poorly resolved site geometries, back-of-house, services and street-to-retail engagement requires further consideration. The design needs to demonstrate good passive design amenity for all tenancies, be spatially efficient for well-performing office/commercial fit-outs which benefits lettable areas. See also suggestions at *Strategic context, urban context: surrounding area character*.

The design approach to the street geometries, back-of-house and services are poorly resolved. This is resulting in inefficient and spatially awkward outcomes for the ground floor, carparking

and retail/commercial levels, and for all unit types addressing Minarto Lane. This impacts on building performance and resident amenity outcomes.

Entries

While the commercial entry is prioritised - a wider frontage, shallow lobby with a northerly aspect, clear direct access from the street - this is lost at the dislocated commercial level above where tenancies are internalised and accessed via an enclosed corridor. The street address has a lost opportunity for the open stair to be visible at the street level rather than the extent of wall proposed.

By contrast the residential entry is in the secondary lane. Presenting within a recessed space within a geometry that appears arbitrary to Minarto Lane and demonstrates no cohesion for services and residential hierarchy. The full lane frontage is otherwise sleeved by services, excessively wide car park entry or back-of-house uses. The lift itself is located well beyond what could be a generous lobby space which itself presents poorly with a wall (backing the letter boxes) further reducing the resident entry and character.

Common circulation and communal open space

The entry sequence and circulation, access to units and quality of internal corridors remains unsatisfactory.

The relationship of access, communal open space and private open space is important in creating visual and acoustic privacy for residents while creating communal amenity that promotes social interaction, and quieter uses.

Proposed double-loaded, dog-legged corridors with little or no access to direct daylight and natural ventilation are not supported by the ADG – this goes to the fundamental building typology and unit typology decisions. While the lobby space in front of the lift and for adjacent units is positive, the access corridors to remaining units is unsatisfactory with poor sightlines and/or long narrow corridors.

The access and spatial relationship to and from the lobby and COS is both indirect, down a long featureless corridor that provides no view into the communal outdoor space. The layout also results in privacy conflicts between the COS and Units 08, 09 with impacts of living areas and balconies being fully screened, obstructing required daylight, outlook and ventilation and promoting poor acoustic privacy.

The communal open space is long and narrow, conflicts with the adjacent units and unlikely to be used. The relationship to the lobby and access present as if an access to private use areas. Consider the quality of this space resulting from permitted future development on the neighbouring lots.

Private open space

As per the previous presentation, private open spaces should have their wide frontage to the outside and not be in effect snorkel spaces or within a reverse wedge that squeezes the extent of frontage.

Natural daylight and ventilation

All habitable rooms must provide windows that are visible from all points in the rooms consistent with ADG *minimum* requirements noting width-to-depth ratios for indentations if bedrooms or studies are located inboard of the building edge – Units 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16 affected representing 56% of the development.

Conformance with all ADG criteria needs to be demonstrated, note reference to Objective 4A-2 – “courtyards are used only as a secondary light source in habitable rooms” and where they are used; “use is restricted to kitchens bathrooms and service areas”. This should be noted for

outcomes should future permitted development on neighbouring properties results in the proposed south-western space being enclosed, which is foreseeable.

The tapered wedge shape of Units 6 and 14 result in poor daylight, and solar amenity with the narrow edge of the wedge to the sky. The kitchens of those units also are behind a wall and receive no direct daylight or ventilation. These are also the accessible unit types, which has implications for satisfying the DDA for equitable and dignified access to housing where those future residents are allocated units with compromised amenity. This is not supported as representing good design practice.

Rectangular balconies that are positioned with 1 short side to an external wall remain unresolved – Units 1, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14 affected representing 37% of the development.

“Studies” with no natural light or ventilation are not acceptable (ADG non-compliant) - Unit 1.

Natural cross ventilation

Effective dual aspect unit types is demonstrated for only 5 of the proposed 16 units or 31% of the development. Pop-up roofs that do not enable an air flow path reach deep into the floor plan or where open window result in privacy conflicts between units or relying on a foreseeably central enclosed common space area cannot be relied upon.

This is indicative of a building floorplate that is too deep, too many units being serviced from a single core and/or poorly aligned density and/or yield and/or unit mix.

Bedrooms opening directly into living rooms

All units, that is, 100% of the development propose one or more bedrooms opening directly into the living rooms contrary to the ADG *minimum* amenity at 4D.

Recommendations

16. Reconsider the residential building component – building type, building depth, number of units served by a single core, address, access to natural daylight and ventilation as the main driving factors to generate a satisfactory quality environment for residents.
17. Consider the commercial amenity and the need to also create work environments of the quality needed to attract tenants and provide good working environments for staff.

Façade treatment/Aesthetics

Consider materials that are robust and minimise the need for maintenance over the life cycle of the development. Painted render finishes have not tended to perform well as evidenced throughout the Northern Beaches area.

Careful attention to edge detailing and junctions of materials is needed to achieve a sufficiently characterful development to make a positive contribution to the future urban character for this area.

Recommendations

18. Façade design should be informed by the changes to design to address the issues noted above.
19. Material selection should be carefully considered so they positively contribute to the future character of the area.
20. Attention to edge detail is needed to deliver a fine-grain architectural character of sufficient quality.

Sustainability

See notes in Amenity regarding better layouts for apartments to ensure good natural light and ventilation for all apartments.

To ensure these dwellings are future ready and the best they can be for their occupants, we strongly recommend that the energy supply is decarbonised (no gas), EV charging is supplied, and the passive design and thermal performance of the building fabric is optimised.

By avoiding unhealthy fossil fuel gas cooktops, space heating and hot water heaters. Hot water should be provided by electric heat pump systems or instantaneous electric heaters. This will enable savings for the developer and tenants by not installing gas to the site.

Consider as many PV panels as possible for the roof to enable as much onsite power generation as possible, installed on green roofs to be more effective. This will have side benefits of increasing biodiversity and reducing heat island effect. Consider locations for possible battery storage along with EV charging for cars.

The Panel notes that the new building code requires an average of 7 stars NatHERS, with no apartments less than 6 stars. Greater comfort in a changing climate and future disclosure of energy efficiency at point of sale or lease make this a good investment.

Recommendations

The following aspects of design and servicing can be easily, and cost effectively considered for inclusion:

21. Decarbonisation of energy supply

- All services should be electric – gas for cooking, hot water and heating should be avoided.
- Heat pump systems for provision of electric hot water should be considered.
- The storage of hot water can be considered a de facto battery if heated by PVs during the day.
- On site battery storage has benefits for the grid and may be a highly desirable back-up during the transition to a de-carbonised grid
- Unshaded roof space is a valuable resource for PV installations. Their efficacy can be greatly enhanced when placed over a green roof, which has additional ecological benefits.

22. EV charging: Provide EV charging points for each unit (Min 15 amp) to suit level 1 charging. Also consider charging and storage for E Bikes.

23. Passive design and thermal performance of building fabric

- Higher BASIX thermal performance standards that commenced on 1 October 2023 require an average 7-stars NatHERS, with no unit below 6 stars. This is consistent with the National Construction Code for 2022. Given the coastal location a very comfortable indoor environment should be achievable.
- Particular attention is required for the south facing apartments to ensure they meet this requirement.
- The inclusion of ceiling fans to all bedrooms and living rooms will provide comfort with minimal energy while reducing the need and energy required for air-conditioning.

24. Water use minimisation

- All fixtures and appliances should be water efficient
- Water storage for rainwater from the roofs should be included and plumbed to at least the landscaping and toilets
- Landscape design and planting should be water tolerant and suitable for the microclimate

25. Materials

- A new area of BASIX, it would be good to understand the approach to this score and embodied carbon reduction strategies.
- Address material selections, colours and building performance to mitigate urban heat

PANEL CONCLUSION

A re-design should be undertaken that particularly addresses and is informed by the issues of a considered response to the Place, streetscape character and deep soil landscape, relationship of the commercial/retail that engages with the street, access for people and cars, overall amenity, and good building performance. The combination of commercial and residential needs to be carefully considered so this does not degrade the quality of the project.

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form. A complete redesign that addresses the issues noted above is required. Any breaching of the height controls or setback controls would need to be supported by an analysis of the benefits compared to a complying scheme.

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