

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

11 October 2021

Saul Moran
Development Manager
Billbergia
By email:
saul.moran@billbergia.com.au

PROJECT: Communities Plus, Eden St, Arncliffe
RE: State Design Review Panel – 29th September Review

Dear Saul

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Communities Plus project in Arncliffe again. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on the 29th of September.

The panel acknowledges progress in specific areas of the design in relation to the public realm, podiums, Princes Highway interface, and amenity of the retail spaces. Significant concerns remain, however, in relation to the architectural character, inclusion of community facilities, and design of the residential towers. These issues currently undermine the design excellence of the project and need to be resolved.

The SDRP design review process for this project is occurring in place of conducting a Design Excellence Competition under Clause 6.14(6) of the Rockdale LEP 2011. The waiver states:

‘... that a design review panel should instead review the development. Feedback from the design review panel must be carefully considered and incorporated into the development at the relevant stages of the process and the consent authority is required to take into account the findings of the design review panel during assessment of the development.’

The following elements of the design are supported:

- The general arrangement of building form and open landscape space
- The inclusion of the library and the community centre and their critical value in adding public benefit
- Removal of car access off Princes Highway
- Addition of ‘terrace housing’ on the ground plane and ‘front doors on the street’
- Improvements to movement through and spatial experience of retail areas

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

- Engagement with Indigenous partners and commitment to ongoing relationship and maintenance of landscape elements
- The inclusion of a full line supermarket on the site is conditionally supported assuming it will offer better public amenity, no significant increase to parking or traffic movements, and will enable the inclusion of the library and community facilities as presented in SDRP 03.
- The increased quantum of natural ground and deep soil on the site
- The relocation of the childcare facilities and outdoor play area to the western (Eden Street) side of the site
- Inclusion of communal open spaces and solar farms on the top of buildings

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country –

1. A commitment to supporting Connecting with Country principles in the master planning and design processes is acknowledged. However, the project requires a coherent, integrated and site-wide Connecting with Country strategy that unites the discrete components including artworks, landscape, and community engagement.
2. The expression of Country within a building facade appears inconsistent when the apartments rely on generic solutions such as tinted glazing, excessive mechanical ventilation and curtains for environmental control that demonstrate an indifference to place, microclimate and seasonal conditions. A better way to demonstrate an understanding of Country could be to design apartments and buildings/facades that respond in a more considered and fundamental way to the specificities of place - solar, noise, wind, ventilation, air quality and privacy - rather than a reliance on narrative and landscape planting alone to achieve this.

Design Excellence –

3. The library and the community centre as presented at SDRP 03 contribute greatly to this project achieving a high level of public benefit in accordance with reasons given for the original design competition waiver.
4. If the library and community centre are not to be included in the application, there needs to be an alternative offering of public benefit above and beyond private retail GFA adjacent to public areas.

Site strategy and landscape –

5. Improvements to the soil depth and width are acknowledged but creating some larger areas with 6m radius with deep soil along the eastern (Princes Hwy) boundary is recommended to enable significant trees that will add greatly to both visual and spatial amenity.

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

6. The absence in the current EIS of the library and community centre brings into question the effectiveness and character of the associated outdoor public meeting place. The role and nature of this space needs to be carefully considered and presented in relation to how it will perform well for the community regardless of adjacent tenancies.

Architecture and built form –

Significant concerns remain about the architectural design, expression and character of the current residential buildings and the proposal as currently presented is not supported. There are two main areas of concern in relation to the architectural resolution of the projects:

Facades:

7. The buildings rely heavily on glazed facade systems and appear commercial with an expression that is consistent with serviced apartments, hotels, or office buildings. The design team needs to reconsider these facades to significantly reduce the amount of glazing being used for fenestration, cladding and balustrades, and to reconsider how the facades of these buildings can provide a more appropriate residential character for this new precinct and improved amenity for future residents.
8. Apartments facing Princes Highway demonstrate inadequate response to road noise and airborne pollution. The presence of winter gardens in the design is acknowledged as one move to mitigate this issue, but this isn't considered sufficient and the current approach is not supported. A more rigorous solution to external noise and natural ventilation is needed.
9. To be clear, the design team is not being asked to edit or make simple adjustments to their current facades, or to provide further justification of environmental performance, but to fully reconsider the character and performance of the façade designs throughout the development.
10. These comments also apply to the new terrace housing.
11. Clear elevation drawings of all buildings showing ratio of solid to glass and distribution of materials across facades throughout the development are required at the next SDRP. To date the panel has been asked to extrapolate this information from a range of 3D and partial views, in some cases superseded.

Ventilation:

12. Concerns remain that the scheme does not achieve ADG compliance in regard to passive ventilation. This is compounded by the extent of glazed facades noted above which will require mechanical ventilation (A/C) to maintain thermal comfort. We anticipate seeing the development of the buildings to address ADG conformance and allay these concerns at the next SDRP.
13. Significant questions also remain in relation to cross ventilation. Provide strong evidence that the current scheme will both work and meet the requirements of the relevant legislation or consider further design

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

development to achieve outcomes that meet a level of performance consistent with expectations for design excellence. Please include appropriately scaled sections that illustrate ventilation strategies in the next review.

The project is of sufficient scale and complexity to need an additional SDRP review. The issues outlined above are to be addressed at the next session scheduled for November 24, 2021.

It is critical that any information and/or drawings specifically requested above be included in the presentation for SDRP 05. No supplementary information packs can be considered at these sessions. ALL information the project team wishes to present must be included in the presentation slide pack.

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Barnaby Bennett
barnaby.bennett@dpie.nsw.gov.au if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



Rory Toomey
Chair, SDRP
Principle Design Excellence

Distribution:

NSW SDRP Panel members	Matthew Bennett, Michael Tawa, Rory Toomey (Chair)
GANSW Design Advisor DPiE	Barnaby Bennett David Glasgow
Billbergia GroupGSA	Saul Moran, Dean Stojanovski, Lisa-Maree Carrigan, Jenna Kayes, Steven Hammond, Paul De Saily
Ethos Urban	Jim Murray, Yousheng Li

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

30th November 2021

Saul Moran
Development Manager
Billbergia
By email:
saul.moran@billbergia.com.au

PROJECT: Communities Plus, Eden St, Arncliffe
RE: State Design Review Panel – 24th November - Fifth Review

Dear Saul

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Communities Plus project in Arncliffe again. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on the 24th of November.

The SDRP design review process for this project is the agreed alternative design excellence process in lieu of a Design Excellence Competition under Clause 6.14(6) of the Rockdale LEP 2011. The waiver states:

‘... that a design review panel should instead review the development. Feedback from the design review panel must be carefully considered and incorporated into the development at the relevant stages of the process and the consent authority is required to take into account the findings of the design review panel during assessment of the development.’

The proposed development has progressed considerably during the design review process.

The following elements of the design are supported:

- The commitment to improving the quality and architectural resolution of the scheme
- The increased soil depth and total volume of soil for trees along Princes Highway
- The simplification of the buildings and reduction in the palette of materials
- Ongoing engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Holders

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country

Encouraging progress has been made in developing a Connecting with Country framework for the project through ongoing engagement with Indigenous Knowledge Holders, and the difficulty of undertaking these processes during a Covid lockdown is acknowledged.

1. This framework needs resolving, and the Design Integrity process is required to ensure the engagement processes are followed through into the project.
2. Evidence of the framework establishing relationships and practices to care for Country and Indigenous peoples and culture that will continue post-occupation.

Site strategy and landscape

Meeting space

3. Remove some of the furniture (for example element 7) and some of the designed aspects of the space to open it up for greater flexibility. Ensure the spatial design can support multiple and varied uses use of the area and is not locked into singularly supporting the kiosk and other commercial tenancies.
4. Simplify the planting strategy in this area. Consider removing shrubbery to open up the space for better circulation and clarity of the ground plane.
5. Review and measure the shading from the canopy on the north side of the building and the space in front of the building as this will experience significant heat in summer months.

Architecture and built form

The proposal will have a significant impact on its neighborhood and wider urban context. The presented drawings have not provided sufficient contextual information or analysis of either the current or planned built context of the proposal.

6. The panel has not evaluated or provided an opinion on the scale and bulkiness of the buildings in their context.

Material selection: The reduced palette of materials is improving the legibility and character of the set of buildings.

7. Continue to refine and simplify the material set, so that each building retains a distinctive identity while reading as part of the group.

Building 'cap': Building C has the most successful resolution of the top of the building which acts to contain and resolve its form.

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

8. Consider similar 'cap' strategies to successfully resolve the tops of the other buildings.

Podiums: The articulation and quality of the podiums has improved but needs further resolution.

9. Building C has the most successful relationship between podium and tower, so extend this character to the other buildings.
10. Continue to refine and simplify the podiums. Create a stronger demarcation, through deep shadow, recesses, and material changes, between the podiums and the towers.

Condenser grates: the metal grates that are covering the condenser units on all the buildings need more consideration. They appear uniform, flat, and dominant in the renders at the moment.

11. Consider extending vertical blades, or different scales of mesh and louvers to introduce some depth and character and divert attention away from the condensers.

Building A: The building with the most outstanding design challenges.

12. The curves in the elevation are unnecessarily complicating this building. Take lessons from building C to simplify the elevations.
13. The Podium needs to be more rectilinear and simplified.
14. The horizontal blades on the tower are too thin and need to be more forceful.
15. Needs more vertical fins on the appropriate facades.
16. Tower needs to read as 4 blocks.
17. Relationship with Eden Street is important and needs more development.

Building B: Significant improvement and the rounded corners in plan are supported.

18. The visual presence of the vertical elements within the dominant horizontal lines could be increased to balance the two.
19. The elevation and façade over the condensers aren't working and needs further development (see point 11 above).
20. There are unresolved privacy issues in relation to the park and Building D which need addressing.
21. The podium is too busy and needs to be simplified and aligned with the other buildings in the group.

Building C: This is the most architecturally successful building in the proposal. The efficiency of the forms and associated functions produces a simple yet elegant building. A similar approach should inform the refinement of the other three buildings.

22. Consider making the whole tower the lighter of the current colour treatments and allow sunlight and shade to add richness to the façade. The

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

formal complexity of the building animated by the Australian sun will provide ample visual interest.

23. Support use of corrugated concrete infill panels to contribute to the visual impact of shadow. Look at Candalepas Pelican Street Apartments in Surry Hills for guidance on how to use concrete in a range of treatments, creating a coherent character.
24. Ensure the gold tone on the elevation is bronze and not gold coloured.
25. Simplify the balconies on the podium.

Building D: This building has significantly improved.

26. The use of infill panels is supported.
27. The contrast between the white brick podium and the darker volumes above is reading as too strong; changing the podium to a mid-grey brick or more natural colours may reduce this contrast and improve the building.
28. Vertical fins (see page 32 of the presentation, lower right image) are too thin and need further development.
29. The vertical cut into the building needs better resolution at its top. The current thickness of the blade walls is not reading strongly enough.
30. The floating roof canopy is starting to provide a stronger 'cap' to this building, but requires further resolution, including possible additional structure.

Across 5 SDRP sessions the panel has considered whether the project is achieving Design Excellence in accordance with the Bayside LEP. Under the LEP, it is required that *'the consent authority takes into account the findings of the design review panel'* prior to granting planning consent.

Under the terms of the competition waiver endorsed for this project, the design excellence process must include a Design Integrity Panel (DIP) process post planning consent. While there are outstanding matters with regards awarding Design Excellence to the project, they are deemed minor enough to be resolved post approval through an agreed DIP process.

Interim comments may be provided on updated drawings by a desktop review prior to submitting the RTS. Please contact the undersigned to discuss.

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Barnaby Bennett
barnaby.bennett@dpie.nsw.gov.au if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



Rory Toomey
Chair, SDRP
Principle Design Excellence

Distribution:

NSW SDRP Panel members

Matthew Bennett, Michael Tawa, Rory Toomey
(Chair)

GANSW Design Advisor
DPIE

Barnaby Bennett
David Glasgow

Billbergia
GroupGSA

Saul Moran, Dean Stojanovski,
Lisa-Maree Carrigan, Jenna Kayes, Steven
Hammond, Paul De Saily

Ethos Urban

Jim Murray, Yousheng Li

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au

