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PLANNING ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN
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PROPOSED PRIVATE HOSPITAL, 1-8 NEILD AVENUE GREENWICH

URBAN DESIGN REPORT

Introduction

This report addresses urban design issues in relation to this application. It is based on consideration of the architectural drawings by Marchese + Partners dated October 2008, which include montage views, visual impact study and shadow diagrams. Other components of the submission including the Environmental Assessment Report by BBC Consulting Planners comprehensively document information in relation to details of the site and the planning background, and no purpose would be served by my duplicating this material. I note that the a hospital purpose is a permissible use under the planning controls, and that aspects of height and floor space have been discussed with Council and fully reviewed as part of the planning submission. I have been consulted as the design proceeded and the applicants have responded constructively to advice and comment. I have inspected the site on various occasions and attended when helium balloons were flown so that the height and potential visual impact could be assessed from a number of critical locations.

Site and Context

The site presents considerable constraints and challenges. It is steeply sloping and in part contains substantial mature vegetation. It is surrounded on all sides by residential accommodation of varying types, from the low density dwellings on adjoining and nearby sites to the west, medium density units to the south and east, hotel diagonally to the south-east, to further medium-density units and the recently completed seniors living development to the north. Vehicular access is limited to Neild Avenue to the east. Despite these restrictions it is an excellent location for hospital purposes, being sufficiently removed from the noise and pollution impacts of the constant traffic on Pacific Highway, with pleasant outlooks and reasonably convenient access to transport.

Urban Design Response

In my view the critical issue facing the designers of a relatively large institutional building in this location goes to ensuring that its relationship to the surrounding residential development is thoughtful and considerate. Some impact obviously cannot be avoided, but it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to produce satisfactory environmental and amenity outcomes.

The development has addressed these objectives by a range of measures. Firstly, the configuration of the building plan is extensively articulated, stepping away from the varied common boundary lines so that long unbroken wall planes are avoided, and the building is separated by varying distances from neighbouring dwellings. Secondly, the building height has very substantial variations in response to site slope and conditions, and in particular the nature of development on neighbouring sites. In relation to

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perhaps the most sensitive interface, -that with the single dwelling area to the west, -the setbacks are significantly greater and the building heights are lowered. The open side of the central courtyard also faces to this orientation.

The third and equally important initiative relates to the detailed character of the design. Each elevation and each section of every façade has very substantial variation in its architectural expression. The main entrance has a certain formality but elsewhere there is a diverse range of elements which articulate the facades in differing ways. Combinations of glazed and solid balcony balustrades, louvred panel screens, curved and straight projecting profiles, setbacks at the top levels to ensure an extensively articulated silhouette at roof level, together with planted areas on balconies and roof decks together make for an architectural character which is informal and unassertive. The proposed colours which are varied but all in a subdued range of warm brown and beige should both complement this character and assist in the building fitting discretely behind the native planting to all frontages and in the large courtyard.

The excellent montage views give a good indication of the way in which these components have been combined to produce an architectural character which is non-institutional and appropriate to its setting.

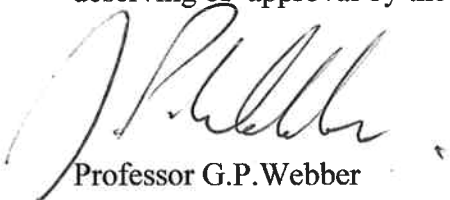
Amenity

The environmental amenity for future patients, staff and visitors should be excellent, with a variety of sitting rooms, balconies and outdoor decks in each section as well as provision for the essential requirements of medical and nursing services.

Conservation of the amenity of residents in neighbouring properties has been a key consideration in determining the form of the building envelope. Although it is inevitable that there will be some impact, these all appear to be within reasonable limits. The diagrams indicate that overshadowing will not be significant and adequate solar access maintained. Separation distances in all cases are well in excess of the minima recommended in the Residential Flat Design Code. Extensive replanting as proposed in the landscape design documents should in most areas significantly improve the present environment.

Conclusion

I consider that the application is for a development of very high quality and that it is one deserving of approval by the Minister.



Professor G.P. Webber

October 2008