

Heritage Impact of the Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Scheme' Architects (FJMT with BSA [Building Studio Architects]) and Hassell Scheme for the Proposed Centre for Obesity Diabetics and Cardiovascular Disease at The University of Sydney

Introduction

I am the author of *The University of Sydney Architecture* (Sydney: The Watermark Press, 2007) and Director of the Graduate Heritage Conservation Program in the Faculty of Architecture Design & Planning at the University of Sydney. I am a member of the University's Heritage Advisory Group (HAG) and the opinions expressed here are not those of the HAG but my own.

This report has been written to provide an independent assessment of the heritage impact of the Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Proposal' Architects (FJMT with BSA [Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp with Building Studio Architects]) and Hassell Proposal for the Centre for Obesity Diabetics and Cardiovascular Disease (CODCD).

Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Scheme'

Alignment of Building Footprint

In this proposed scheme the northern façade, overlooking St John's Oval of the building which presents the predominant public view of the CODCD is located on the alignment of the southern wing of St John's College, forming the primary architectural relationship with the nearest heritage listed building. The design concept of two near parallel wings has an immediate geometric simplicity and clarity of plan that is the hallmark of good architecture. The adjacent St John's College expresses a similar simplicity of geometric massing and configuration of plan. Due to the fall of the topography from the College to the east this view of St John's is of critical importance as an individual heritage-listed building and as the major view of the College from the University's Camperdown Campus. This regular parallel alignment of the reinforces the massing and orientation of the College's mass, form and alignment and represents a successful and sensitive response by inserting a substantial new building with an appropriate relationship to define the south-eastern edge of St John's Oval.

The southern façade of the proposed building is aligned along John Hopkins Drive as an extension of the street. The intended and only partially realized Wilkinson east-west axis beginning from RC Mills, running through the Hockey Field and Oval No 1 intersects with that of John Hopkins Drive to form the creation of a substantial triangular open space of lawn that ties the building visually to the main campus both symbolically and physically in a direct and simple manner that all users of the University will be able to understand. Historically no such connection has thus far existed and its creation will help to tie Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to the University proper.

Façade Composition

The articulation of the northern façade, broken into two broad areas predominantly composed of sandstone or terracotta tiled cladding reflects and extends 'architectural language' the golden sandstone of St John's College in a most appropriate manner. Here an appropriate sense of materiality is established that essentially expresses the innate characteristics of texture, colour, depth and solidity of traditional stone masonry, successfully relating old to new. Furthermore the location of a shorter section of masonry-clad façade closest to St John's, separated by a substantial space between them establishes a hierarchy of solid and void that allows both buildings to stand adjacent but in a harmonious and respectful relationship that greatly enhances the view from St John's Oval.

The treatment of the new façade of the proposed CODCD building has been carefully designed to express floor levels and the arrangement of vertical slit window openings represents an elegant interpretation of the stone mullioned windows of the College, in this case in an entirely contemporary manner as a fine work of new architecture. A balanced sense of proportion of the proposed building is counterpointed to those of the College: in both is a legible sense of 'reading' the floor levels, an overall sense of more solid than void with fenestration patterns though different complimentary and closely related to each other. The fully glazed section along the northern façade of the proposed building and its ground floor treatment of floor to ceiling glazing punctuated by the building's columns are a clear and considered architectural expression of its contemporary nature.

Spatial Relationship to St John's College.

The substantial separation of the proposed CODCD building establishes a setback from the College that allows both buildings to stand as independent identities without a sense of crowding or visual competition. The separation permits a generous new entry to the proposed building that allows the open landscape to flow between.

Potential New Campus Connections

Historically the buildings of the University's Camperdown Campus, Colleges and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital developed without any degree of conscious visual connection to each other, one of the saddest characteristics of the independent process of piecemeal development of a century and a half. The proposed Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Scheme' will permit a defined view from Manning Road to St John's College that doesn't exist at present. The proposed Student Entry Square will provide the first opportunity to make a direct connection between the CODCD through the University Ovals 1 and 2 to the Camperdown Campus, an element that has not existed since the creation of the University.

Hassell Scheme

Alignment of Building Footprint

By comparison the Hassell proposal fails to respond appropriately St John's College. Consequently it will sit unhappily beside the College, as unhappily as the piecemeal development of what became Science Road, comprised by the Old Geology Building, Pharmacy and Badham Buildings. The complex design of the plan footprint lacks geometric simplicity and clarity of massing and composition. Most disappointingly the Hassell proposal main northern façade is skewed from an exact alignment with the College whilst its easternmost element has an irregular geometry unrelated to any adjacent buildings whether

of heritage status or not. Whilst the narrow space between the two major wings is aligned with John Hopkins Drive but fails to continue its southern edge.

Façade Composition

The façade treatment of the Hassell scheme represents has been designed to be composed of substantial areas of glass curtain wall rising six stories or is intended to be clad in highly reflective white panels. Both façade treatments are highly inappropriate in close visual connection with the sandstone of St John's College and are unacceptable elements of its design that would greatly impact upon and diminish the setting of the College. The choice of white as the predominant colour of the external wall cladding is particularly inappropriate not only in relationship with the College but all other existing adjacent buildings.

Spatial Relationship to St John's College

The separation of the Hassell Scheme from St John's College is similar to that of the Alternate Scheme and allows for an appropriate setting for both buildings.

Potential New Campus Connections

The Hassell proposal lacks a clarity and simplicity of design that will permit the creation of clear links to the Camperdown Campus to the east and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital to the west.

Conclusion

In consideration of the heritage impact that both proposals will have to the existing adjacent heritage-listed buildings and the associated landscape of the site of St John's College, the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the Camperdown Campus of the University, it is my professional opinion that Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Proposal' Architects (FJMT with BSA [Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp with Building Studio Architects]) is clearly the preferable proposal of the two discussed above. I believe, on as basis of an appropriate response to the identify built heritage of the College, Hospital and University heritage, as a work of fine contemporary architecture and urban design that Brookfield Multiplex 'Alternative Proposal' will compliment and greatly enhance its site. I believe the Hassell proposal, for the reasons set out above, have a negative impact on the heritage values of the College, Hospital and University, is problematic as an appropriate new work of architecture and urban design.

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