

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

27 August 2021

Kate Bimson
Project Director, Master
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Pymble Ladies College
Via email –
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PROJECT: Pymble Ladies College
RE: State Design Review Panel (SDRP) – Review 1, 18 August 2021

Dear Kate

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project. Please find a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 18 August 2021.

GANSW commends the project team on the redevelopment of the Grey House Precinct within the grounds of the established College. The quality of the presentation and descriptions of the project are also to be commended.

The following elements of the design strategy are supported:

- Commitment to 5-star Green star rating.
- Understanding of landscape and ecology as pedagogical devices to assist student learning and development.
- Preservation of the valuable Blue Gum plantation and plans to extend and expand this.
- Commitment to biophilic design and connection to landscape.
- Strategy of embedding the building within the landscape.
- Consultation with Indigenous students.
- Aligning the new building with the existing façades 20m from the boundary.
- The focus on children with smaller gardens and playful elements like slides.

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

Connecting with Country

An understanding of Country can inform richer and more place responsive design solutions. The following recommendations apply:

1. Demonstrate more rigorous consultation with Traditional Custodians and Knowledge-holders. The Connecting with Country Framework recommends engagement is undertaken and key strategies developed before sketch design, however there are still opportunities to better integrate Connecting with Country principles into the logic of the project through both the landscape and built form.

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2. The identification of a possible historic Aboriginal pathway near the site provides a useful metaphor to direct the design. Anchor the connection to Country by transforming the pathway metaphor into a coherent and integrated narrative to understand the new buildings or their experience. Explore other stories, and strategies so that the positive outcomes that Connecting with Country can produce are enabled.
3. Consult local Traditional Custodians including Denis Folly and Susan Moylan-Combs.
4. Refer to the draft [Connecting with Country Framework](#) on the GANSW website.

Site strategy and Landscape

The strategy of introducing more intimate, human (and child) scaled spaces and landscape elements into the site to create a rich place responsive scheme is supported. The following recommendations apply:

5. Further development of the transition between the existing larger scale formal modes and smaller spaces.
6. Demonstrate the opportunity for the landscape to tell more stories, specifically in relationship to any emergent narrative from Connecting with Country.
7. Review the landscape strategy for the central courtyard to ensure it has the necessary planting and landscape elements to fulfil its potential and its role in bringing the landscape deeply into the built form.

Movement and accessibility

The current proposal is an elegant response to the sloping site and its complex topography. The following recommendations apply:

8. Review the accessibility of all spaces on the project from the perspectives of comfort and legibility. Present a clear and coherent strategy for access and movement for all people around the site and into all the build spaces and associated external areas.

Architecture

The built form of the project carefully negotiates a complex site with a simple form that integrates interior functionality and connections with landscape. The architectural expression of the Grey House Precinct is to be commended. The following recommendations apply:

9. Review if the overshadowing of neighbours on Pymble Ave can be minimised through changes to the corners and edge of the building. Review the northern end of the new building and consider reducing the bulk and form to increase sunlight.
10. Re-examine the translation of the built form from sketch design to final design. Consider whether the architectural elegance has been lost in the formalisation and increase in scale of the building.

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11. The new building has a clear formal relationship with the interior character of the site and its historic buildings. Presently this same language is carried over to the suburban side of the building that faces Pymble Ave. In relation to the previous two points, re-examine the scale, character, and architectural language of this elevation so that it might fit into its context more appropriately.

GANSW recommends further review of this project as the design progresses. The issues outlined above are to be addressed at the next SDRP session.

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

Sincerely,



Barbara Schaffer
Principal Landscape Architect
Chair, SDRP

Distribution:

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