

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

30 September 2021

Mike Ryan
Project Manager
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PROJECT: Northside Clinic Wentworthville
RE: State Design Review Panel (SDRP) – 15 September 2021 (First Review)

Dear Mike,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project. Please find below a summary of the advice and recommendations from the first design review session held on Wednesday, 15 September 2021.

The following elements of the Northside Clinic Wentworthville upgrade are supported, specifically:

- appropriate scale compared to the surrounding residential houses and the projected development within the area
- varied façade articulation across a repetitive floor plan that can be mass-produced for faster construction
- minimum façade depth of 350mm for solar shading and visual dynamism
- stair locations to show the movement of people
- co-utilisation of resources and connection to the existing clinic
- alignment of stage 2 with the stage 1 building along Lytton Street
- grounding the building with screening to the undercroft car park
- considering biophilia in planning and design
- providing views to the parkland
- inclusion of Aboriginal artwork in prominent parts of the proposal.

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

The increased FSR and height beyond the approved planning proposal (PP-2020-2448) are not supported – the increased density leads to compromised internal amenity, lack of quality landscape spaces and excessive overshadowing to the south residential neighbour. The current proposal is responding primarily to the challenges of the site and the high yield brief rather than prioritising wellbeing, recovery and amenity for the vulnerable future patients. The opportunities outlined below allow for a competitive clinical facility and provide an improved patient experience.

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Connecting with Country

1. Explore additional locations for Aboriginal artwork and develop the design by partnering with local Aboriginal artists where possible.
2. Applied art alone is not considered comprehensive or an integrated response to Country. It is challenging to respond to Country when the building is elevated spatially, but still possible. For example, consider what parts of the landscape or building people gravitate to in order to feel connected to the place during different times of the year. Consider access to running water, the breeze, endemic plant species, biophilia and, critically, solar access to useable spaces.
3. It is recommended the project team engages with local Indigenous Community members early and consistently throughout the project lifecycle. If this is not possible due to Covid-19, consider engaging with an Aboriginal cultural heritage and spatial expert. Refer to the draft framework [Connecting with Country](#) on the GANSW website for further information.

Site strategy and landscape

4. Prioritise the reconfiguration of the stage 2 massing to improve the amenity of the raised courtyard. A courtyard enclosed on four sides by three-storey walls is not supported. Creating a U-shaped courtyard could provide an outdoor space facing the park, providing airflow and western sun during winter. When designing outdoor spaces, strive for high amenity and quality – beyond making an area for smokers.
5. Reduce the parking to the minimum requirement to enable internal communal spaces and increased external landscape on the ground level, taking advantage of favourable outlooks to the park and creek. Explore the possibility of physically opening the facility up to the park or providing a ground-level visual connection through reconsidered boundary and fencing conditions.
6. The entry sequence is unclear and could feel unsafe as it is located at the back of the car park. Relocate or reconfigure the entry so it is well lit with access to natural light and visibility and clarity of approach from the public domain to help with orientation. Additionally, consider how to make the transition from ground level to the upper levels clearer and more welcoming.
7. The stage 2 undercroft car park height of approximately 5m is significantly higher than required for vehicles. It is recommended the design team explore providing a different floor level for stage 2 compared to stage 1 to reduce the floor to floor height closer to 3m, resulting in a lower overall building height.
8. The residential property to the south is overshadowed, which requires mitigation as described above. For future presentations, clarify the shadows produced by buildings by removing the trees from the shadow diagrams.
9. Some of the ground floor rooms have no windows or views. Re-evaluate how these occupied spaces could receive natural light and outlooks.
10. Where possible, provide access to natural light and views to the outdoors at the end of corridors. The stage 2 extension blocks the natural light to the stage 1 corridor – consider how this condition could be improved.

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11. Use high quality and visually considered screening to the undercroft car park, which does not rely on planting as it could die or take some time to provide coverage to mitigate views of the undercroft car park. Additionally, this screening could form the secure line to the facility rather than a fence in some locations to create a more nuanced and welcoming boundary condition.
12. Use the built fabric as the secure line where appropriate to blend the public domain and the private space. Allow for landscaping at this boundary that benefits the public, staff and patients and integrates the project into the neighbourhood. Where a fence is required, provide a high-quality one that is well integrated with the landscape design.
13. During construction, ensure the existing tree roots on and around the site are protected for long term tree survival.
14. Consider the placement of site sheds during construction as the site lacks open space.
15. Consider the use of the undercroft car park for future extensions.

Architecture

16. To provide increased amenity to patients (and create a point of difference in the mental healthcare market), consider if patient rooms could have a balcony or Juliet balcony.

Sustainability and Climate Change

17. Develop ESD ambitions for the project. Utilise the vast roof surfaces for renewable energy and capturing stormwater. Provide operable windows for natural ventilation.
18. Aiming for a net-zero building is highly encouraged to reach NSW's Net Zero emissions goal by 2050. Refer to ['NSW, DPIE, Net Zero Plan, Stage 1: 2020-2030'](#) for further information.

GANSW recommends further review of this project as the design progresses (including prior to lodging any future planning application). The issues outlined above are to be addressed at the next SDRP session.

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We trust this information is helpful and look forward to seeing the project as it develops. Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Laura Graham (laura.graham@dpie.nsw.gov.au), if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



Rory Toomey
Principal Design Review
Chair, SDRP

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