

# Competitive Design Alternatives Report

Market and Key Worker Housing

600-660 Elizabeth Street, Redfern



**Ethos  
Urban**

**bridge**  
**housing**



NSW Land and Housing  
Corporation

Prepared by Ethos Urban

On behalf of Bridge Housing

1 November 2023 | 2210823



**'Gura Bulga'**  
Liz Belanjee Cameron

'Gura Bulga' – translates to Warm Green Country. Representing New South Wales.

By using the green and blue colours to represent NSW, this painting unites the contrasting landscapes. The use of green symbolises tranquillity and health. The colour cyan, a greenish-blue, sparks feelings of calmness and reminds us of the importance of nature, while various shades of blue hues denote emotions of new beginnings and growth. The use of emerald green in this image speaks of place as a fluid moving topography of rhythmical connection, echoed by densely layered patterning and symbolic shapes which project the hypnotic vibrations of the earth, waterways and skies.

Ethos Urban acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people, of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land where this document was prepared, and all peoples and nations from lands affected.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

#### Contact

Brendan Hoskins  
Director – Planning

BHoskins@ethosurban.com

#### This document has been prepared by:

*Juliet Wittenoom Louw* *Kwok-Chi Chau*

Juliet Wittenoom Louw /  
Kwok-Chi Chau

1 November 2023

#### This document has been reviewed by:

*Jacob Dwyer* *Brendan Hoskins*

Jacob Dwyer / Brendan Hoskins

1 November 2023

Reproduction of this document or any part thereof is not permitted without written permission of Ethos Urban Pty Ltd. Ethos Urban operates under a Quality Management System. This report has been prepared and reviewed in accordance with that system. If the report is not signed, it is a preliminary draft.



Ethos Urban Pty Ltd | ABN 13 615 087 931 | 173 Sussex Street Sydney NSW 2000 (Gadigal Land) | +61 2 9956 6962 | ethosurban.com

This Competitive Design Alternatives Process Report has been reviewed and endorsed by the Competition Selection Panel, which comprises:



1/11/2023

-----  
**Paulo Macchia FRAIA (Chair)**



1/11/2023

-----  
**Ingrid Mather FAILA**



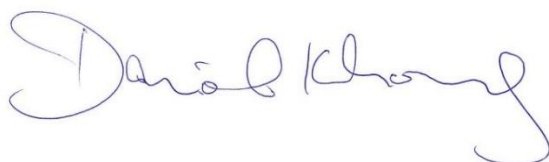
1/11/2023

-----  
**Graham Jahn AM LFRAIA**



1/11/2023

-----  
**Emily Wombwell**



1/11/2023

-----  
**Daniel Khong**

# Contents

- 1.0 Introduction ..... 5**
  - 1.1 Design Excellence Strategy.....5
  - 1.2 600-660 Elizabeth Street, Redfern .....5
  - 1.3 Competitors .....5
  - 1.4 Selection Panel ..... 6
  - 1.5 Technical Advisors ..... 6
  - 1.6 Observers..... 6
  - 1.7 Competition Manager..... 6
- 2.0 Competition Program Outline ..... 7**
- 3.0 Submission Summary and Assessment..... 8**
  - 3.1 Silvester Fuller ..... 8
  - 3.2 Studio Johnston ..... 10
  - 3.3 Weston Williamson + Partners.....12
- 4.0 Selection Panel Decision .....14**
  - 4.1 Further Refinement of the Selected Scheme..... 14

## Appendices

Appendix		Author
A.	Design Competition Brief	<i>Ethos Urban</i>
B.	Design Excellence Strategy	<i>Ethos Urban</i>

# 1.0 Introduction

This Competitive Design Alternatives Report has been prepared by Ethos Urban on behalf of Bridge Housing (the Proponent), for the Competitive Design Alternatives Process (Design Competition) undertaken for the key worker and market housing building at 600-660 Elizabeth Street, Redfern.

This Report has been prepared in accordance with the draft *Government Architect's Design Excellence Competition Guidelines* (GANSW Guidelines) and the City of Sydney Council (the City) Competitive Design Policy and summarises:

- the competition process;
- the competitor submissions; and
- the Selection Panel's deliberations, decision and recommendations.

This Report should be read in conjunction with the Competition Brief (the Brief) provided at **Appendix A**. The Competition was conducted in accordance with the Brief, which was endorsed by the Office of the NSW Government Architect (GANSW). The Proponent also consulted with the City of Sydney throughout the process.

Following the deliberations of the Selection Panel, **the Silvester Fuller scheme was selected as the winning scheme**. An overview of the process, along with the Selection Panel's recommendations for design refinements in the selected scheme to achieve design excellence, is outlined in the following sections of this Report.

## 1.1 Design Excellence Strategy

The Competition Design Alternatives Process was undertaken in accordance with the endorsed Design Excellence Strategy, dated 30 June 2023 (refer to **Appendix B**). The Design Excellence Strategy was prepared to define the location and extent of the Competition, the type of Competition, and the key elements of the competition process, including ongoing design integrity requirements.

## 1.2 600-660 Elizabeth Street, Redfern

The redevelopment of 600-660 Elizabeth Street, Redfern will physically comprise four (4) buildings and is divided into the following components, comprising:

- **Portion 1** – Community Facility: A planned 3,500m<sup>2</sup> community facility which will replace the existing PCYC located on the site.
- **Portion 2** – Market and Key Worker Housing: The subject of this design competition, a single building comprising approximately 180 apartments.
- **Portion 3** – Social Housing: A single integrated building containing approximately 109 social housing apartments to be owned by LAHC.
- **Portion 4** – Bridge Affordable, Specialist Disability Housing (SDA NDIS) and ancillary commercial floor space: A single integrated building containing approximately 39 affordable housing apartments to be owned and managed by Bridge Housing, 10 disability support (plus one carers) units, ancillary commercial office space to be occupied by Bridge Housing and Community Hub to support the local community.

The market and key worker housing in Portion 2 is the site subject to the Competition Design Alternatives Process.

## 1.3 Competitors

The architectural firms invited to participate in the process were (in alphabetical order):

- **Silvester Fuller**
- **Studio Johnston**
- **Weston Williamson + Partners**

## 1.4 Selection Panel

The Selection Panel was formed with consideration of Section 3.4 of the draft GANSW Guidelines and the Design Excellence Strategy. The Selection Panel comprised a total of five (5) members, with two nominated by GANSW, each of whom have no pecuniary interest in the development or involvement in the development approval process, one nominated by the City of Sydney, and two nominated by the Proponent. The Selection Panel comprised the following members:

- Two (2) nominated by GANSW:
  - **Paulo Macchia FRAIA** (Chair) – Director Design Governance, GANSW.
  - **Ingrid Mather FAILA** – Director, JMD Design.
- One (1) nominated by the City of Sydney:
  - **Graham Jahn AM LFRAIA** – Director, City Planning Development and Transport, City of Sydney.
- Two (2) nominated by the Proponent (Bridge Housing):
  - **Emily Wombwell** – Director, SJB.
  - **Daniel Khong** – Director, Capella Capital.

The substantial breadth and depth of experience across the Selection Panel ensured there was informed debate and rigour applied during the deliberation and selection process.

## 1.5 Technical Advisors

The Proponent made available several advisors during the Competition to provide technical assistance to the Competitors and/or the Selection Panel, including:

- **Urban Planning** – Ethos Urban
- **Quantity Surveyor** – MBM Consulting
- **Ecologically Sustainable Development** – Atelier Ten
- **Buildability** – Hickory
- **Connecting with Country** – Yerrabingin (Walk on Country only)

## 1.6 Observers

The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), GANSW and City of Sydney Council appointed impartial observers to oversee the Competition.

The following were present as impartial observers at the Competition presentations and Selection Panel deliberations:

- Guy Pinkerton – Senior Design Advisor, GANSW.
- Anna Nowland – Principal Planning Officer, DPE.

Lindsey Gray was an observer for Bridge Housing and Yudhi Setiawan was an observer for LAHC.

## 1.7 Competition Manager

Ethos Urban (Jacob Dwyer) was engaged by the Proponent to act as the Competition Manager.



## 2.0 Competition Program Outline

An outline of the key events in the Competition is provided in **Table 1**.

**Table 1**      *Key Events in the Competition*

Date	Event	Description
6 September 2023	Walk on Country	Competitors invited to walk the site with Connecting to Country advisors prior to Competition commencement.
11 September 2023	Commencement of competition	Competition brief issued to invited Competitors.
12 September 2023	Competitor briefing session	Briefing session conducted via Microsoft Teams attended by Competitors, Selection Panel members and observers.
14 September 2023	Selection Panel briefing session	Selection Panel briefing session conducted via Microsoft Teams attended by Selection Panel members and observers
22 September 2023	Technical workshop	Competitors attended a voluntary interactive workshop with Technical Advisors, as requested by the Competitors. Advice given at this session was strictly limited to technical matters.
9 October 2023	Final submission lodgement	Competitors submitted electronic copies of their Final Submissions via the Design Competition Manager (DCM) online platform to the Competition Manager for distribution to the Technical Advisors and Selection Panel.
16 October 2023	Presentation material lodgement	Presentations submitted via the DCM to the Competition Manager for compliance review.
23 October 2023	Technical advisor presentations	Technical Advisors presented their assessments of each Competitor's submission to the Selection Panel.
23 October 2023	Final presentations	Competitors presented their Final Submissions to the Selection Panel.
23 October 2023	Selection Panel deliberations	The Selection Panel met, deliberated and decided on a winner.
November 2023	Notification to Competitors of decision	Notification of the winner was issued to the Competitors via email.

## 3.0 Submission Summary and Assessment

A total of three concept design schemes were considered by the Selection Panel. Each scheme provided a distinct and unique response to the Brief. All Competitors presented a high-quality written submission and presentation, addressing the complexities of the site and offering solutions to address the design objectives and requirements of the Brief. A summary of the schemes and accompanying Selection Panel's assessment is provided in the following section.

### 3.1 Silvester Fuller

#### 3.1.1 Summary of Submission

Silvester Fuller's scheme proposed a stepped fifteen/ten-storey built form, arranged as a series of smaller volumes in a u-shaped footprint. The scheme included 161 units. The following features were integral to the scheme:

- The reallocation of private open space from approximately 50% of the apartments to be offset against a generous communal space at Level 10.
- A large, contiguous rooftop garden ('Family Park') at Level 10, with indoor and outdoor communal spaces for use by residents.
- A breezeway-like "internal street" at each level as a key organising device, bookended by two clusters of apartments around vertical circulation cores,
- The breezeway used for access, storage and circulation with cross-through apartments central on the floorplate.
- A set of "rooftop homes" between Levels 11-15, with larger typologies.
- A pitched roof form on the tallest building element.
- Two arrival points providing north-south access along the "internal street" with a clear streetscape presence on Kettle Street.
- Live-work studio typologies provided at external and internal street edges and served for activation of open space and the public domain. At the Walker & Kettle Streets corner this typology offered a means of sleeving the carpark entry and potential blank ground level façade to Walker Street.
- A contrast of light and dark earth toned materials and colouration served to modulate the building massing while also highlighting community area.

#### 3.1.2 Selection Panel Assessment

##### Positives of the Scheme

- The large, contiguous communal area on Level 10 was an innovative response to the Brief and representation of local culture and communal lifestyle.
- The 'Internal Street' was a unifying idea and further communal lifestyle feature bringing activity and life to the building, as well as potentially positively activating the internal courtyard subject to further development.
- The pitched roof form provided a unique contribution to the skyline.
- Materiality and colour were used well to punctuate key site features.
- The entry and arrival sequence was well-considered and logical.
- A high level of amenity was achieved, particularly in regard to solar access and natural cross ventilation.

##### Drawbacks of the Scheme

- Overshadowing of the edge of Redfern Park and Oval and Walker Street façades would result from the tower element. The proponent stated that the design could be revised to prevent overshadowing.
- The provision of extensive ground level paved terraces in the deep soil setback on Walker Street have resulted in the deep soil requirement of the Brief was not achieved. The proponent stated that this design component could be resolved in the later stages of design development.
- The apartment yield target of the Brief was not achieved.
- While innovative and achieving a high level of amenity, apartment planning needs refinement.
- The "Grand Juliette" façades and green roof present ongoing maintenance issues.





**Figure 1** *Silvester Fuller scheme*

## 3.2 Studio Johnston

### 3.2.1 Summary of Submission

Studio Johnston's scheme proposed a part fifteen, part eleven-storey built form. The scheme delivered 177 units,. The following features were integral to the scheme:

- A large, contiguous "urban microforest" provided at Level 10 which including outdoor communal spaces for residents and opportunity for access by residents of other buildings.
- Three housing typologies: "sky country homes" with inboard protected balconies, "courtyard homes" with integrated kitchen and outdoor terraces, and "terrace housing" mezzanine homes at the ground level with direct access to the street.
- Positioning of the basement ramp more central to the site allowing for public domain activation of the Walker/Kettle Street corner.
- Generous entry lobbies marked by curved awnings and allowing access from Walker Street to the central communal courtyard within the site, providing a clear public domain presence.
- Terrace planters and greening to the lobbies and circulation areas.
- An earthen, red palette of materials.

### 3.2.2 Selection Panel Assessment

#### Positives of the Scheme

- The apartment planning was high-quality and achieved the mix provided in the Brief, with highly marketable apartments.
- The relocation of the basement ramp allowed for a more positive presentation to the Walker/Kettle Street corner. A high level of public domain activation was also achieved with the terrace housing typology directly accessing the street.
- The entry sequence was well considered, and a strong sense of arrival was achieved through the articulation of the lobby entrance.

#### Drawbacks of the Scheme

- While the apartments were considered to be marketable, a some apartments were considered to be inefficient and would require rationalisation and replanning.
- The lack of deep soil and necessary amendments to achieve the Brief requirement would result in significant changes to the scheme.
- The internal planting was viewed as a positive attribute, however given the depth of this planting in the floor plate and lack of access to natural light, a high level of maintenance was anticipated its long term success and resilience is less likely.
- The inclusion of multiple entries to the street created activation, but was deemed to result in a less recognisable single lobby entry and requires the loss of deep soil. Resolution of the ramp to the lobby and integration with the courtyard was deemed to be a substantial requirement.

#### Reason for Non-Selection

- Although a number of positive features were identified by the Panel, there was a concern that issues such as a lack of deep soil, apartment replanning, and the entry sequence would be difficult to resolve.
- There were also concerns that the impact of value engineering to bring the design back within the project budget would require such significant redesign it could be a substantially different scheme.





**Figure 2** *Studio Johnston scheme*

### 3.3 Weston Williamson + Partners

#### 3.3.1 Summary of Submission

Weston Williamson + Partners scheme included a stepped form ranging from seven to fourteen stories. The scheme delivered 180 units. The following features were integral to the scheme:

- The façade was articulated and expressed by vertical metal battens along the edge of the outdoor terraces and balconies.
- A swapping/undulation of balconies was provided across the façade.
- Two separate communal outdoor spaces on Level 10 and Level 11.
- Entry to the building from the west, central to the site.

#### 3.3.2 Selection Panel Assessment

##### Positives of the Scheme

- A simple “stacking” architectural language was proposed, comprising a strong base with façade articulation elements affixed to the exterior. The Panel noted these could be dialled up or down to suit the final outcome or project requirements.
- The scheme achieved the yield target of 180 apartments.
- The history and context of the site and Redfern more broadly were referenced in the scheme.

##### Drawbacks of the Scheme

- The placement of the lobby entry internal to the site presented wayfinding and safety issues, also impacting the ability for street activation and public domain presence. Concern was also raised on the lack of generosity provided to the lobby.
- A significant extent of blank façade was provided to Walker Street due to the placement of the basement ramp and lack of usable floor space adjoining the ramp to the east.
- Built form encroached into the Kettle Street cul-de-sac, inconsistent with the Brief.
- Cantilevered balconies with a zero-setback to Kettle Street were proposed at the upper levels. These balconies would limit the planting of canopy trees in the deep soil zone, and were seen to be an expensive proposition.
- Replanning of apartments would be necessary to achieve efficient layouts and achieve a higher level of amenity, particularly in regard to cross ventilation. The basement structure driving apartment planning was seen to be a suboptimal outcome.

##### Reason for Non-Selection

- The Panel was concerned that key matters such as the internalised entry sequence, the need for apartment replanning, and the cantilevered balconies over deep soil would result in substantial amendments required to the scheme.





**Figure 3** *Weston Williamson + Partners scheme*

## 4.0 Selection Panel Decision

The Selection Panel acknowledged the quality of submissions given the 4-week working period, and were impressed by the high calibre of the submissions. Following deliberations, the Selection Panel unanimously selected the Silvester Fuller scheme as the winner. In consideration of all three schemes, Silvester Fuller presented a compelling scheme that has the potential to achieve design excellence. In comparison to the other schemes, the Selection Panel believed that the Silvester Fuller's scheme was the most robust in concept, and therefore more capable of further development and refinement.

The Selection Panel considers that the following attributes of the winning scheme (in no particular order) were valued and should be retained throughout the design and delivery phases of the development.:

- The scheme achieved the key vision of the project to deliver a flexible built form accommodating key worker housing and market housing that placed community and country at the forefront.
- The inclusion of the 'Internal Street' was a compelling proposition, providing an open-to-air breezeway to encourage community interaction and a physical connector between Kettle Street and the southern portion of the competition site. The orientation of the breezeway towards the central courtyard space was commendable and capable of being an activating feature to the internal courtyard, albeit the Selection Panel noted that further consideration should be given to the location and orientation of living spaces within units accessed from this space.
- The significant amount of communal space consolidated on a single level, referred to as the 'Family Park', is innovative and expected to foster interaction between residents.
- While the scheme did not provide private open space to many apartments, this was intelligently offset by the generosity of the Family Park.
- A high level of internal amenity was achieved, particularly in respect to cross ventilation and solar access. The option of a naturally ventilated building was highly supported by the Panel.
- The logical entry sequence from Kettle Street was well-considered with a clear sense of arrival for residents and visitors.
- The distinctive pitched roof design is integral to the design and will achieve a unique contribution to the Redfern skyline.
- The design demonstrated a solid foundation in Connecting with Country principles, and the Panel were convinced that the developed design could be informed by further engagement.

### 4.1 Further Refinement of the Selected Scheme

In acknowledging the limited competition working time and complexities of the Brief, there is a recognition that refinements and further design development will be ongoing. The Selection Panel identified a range of matters that require resolution during the design development phase of the project to ensure the design continues to respond to all aspects of the Brief, maintains the key design intent and principles, and ensures the scheme achieves design excellence. These matters are outlined below:

- Refinement of the tower component and redistribution of floor space to ensure there is no overshadowing to Redfern Park and Oval or Walker Street as required under the Brief, while retaining the concept of a distinctive roof form. It was noted that the specific form and orientation of the roof may need to adjust as part of design development to remove overshadowing of public open spaces.
- Further effort to realise greater deep soil areas and increased canopy coverage, particularly along the Walker Street frontage where the oversized terraces could be reconsidered.
- The scale and program of the communal space on Level 10 is to be further reviewed to achieve a balance between a high level of amenity, sufficiently offsetting a lack of private open space, resilience of the facility and achieving the project requirements in respect of maximising the delivery of apartments.
- General floorplate and apartment planning refinement is required to ensure the objectives of the Brief are achieved, including achieving a diversity of layouts, provision of greater number of apartments with private open space, maximisation of views and general usability. The depth of apartments located on the ground level at Walker Street requires review, particularly with regard to the viability of the live-work apartments.
- Further consideration of the use of colour and materials is required, noting there is an opportunity to consider the context of the whole precinct with the broader design team.



- The basement ramp location should be tested and investigated to increase the ability for viable dwellings at ground floor with appropriate levels of privacy and an engaging frontage to the corner of Kettle and Walker Streets.
- Further investigation of the interplay between flood and public domain levels is required to maximise accessibility, while retaining the entry sequence and sense of arrival.
- Exploration of the opportunities for integration of public art should seek to understand how these features can contribute to the unique identity of the building as part of a precinct wide solution.
- Refinement is required to maximise the project objectives to the best ability of the design and constraints of the budget, while maintaining the core principles of the design.
- Investigation of meeting the minimum deep soil requirements of the Design Guide and opportunities for tree canopy cover.