

27 September 2024

Chris Ferreira
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PROJECT: 16-20 Old Castle Hill Road, Castle Hill
RE: State Design Review Panel – 18th September 2024 – Review 1

Dear Chris,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project at an early stage. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 18 September 2024.

The prominent site at Old Castle Hill Road, McMullen Avenue and Garthowen Crescent is an opportunity to lead development at the northern fringe of the Metro precinct by providing good urban design outcomes alongside housing diversity.

The project is pursuing FSR bonuses relating to unit mix and size, maximum car parking numbers, and the provision of in-fill affordable housing, and must exhibit design excellence in accordance with The Hills LEP 2019.

The project as presented requires significant improvement. This can be achieved through improved urban strategies for the public domain, ground plane, streetscape, built form and landscape design that clearly respond to the intent of the Castle Hill North Precinct DCP and the Castle Hill North Precinct Plan.

The following elements of the proposal are supported:

- The intent to engage with the Aboriginal community via yarns, workshops, co-design and endorsement.
- The early landscape investigations into Country, e.g. healing Country via ecology and biodiversity, and spaces that celebrate Bidjigal land.
- The project vision for housing diversity, local character, access and connectivity, and sustainability.
- The landscape vision and principles.
- The sustainability targets and initiatives, including full electrification.
- Intent to retain existing trees at street frontages.
- A built form outcome that does not result in additional overshadowing of public open space between 11am-2pm on 21 June as per the DCP.
- Use of rooftop locations for communal open space.
- Locating the basement driveway on Garthowen Crescent.

The following commentary provides advice and recommendations for the project:

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Connecting with Country

1. Prioritise engagement with the local Aboriginal community to develop and refine a list of key opportunities that can be delivered and will be enduring and impactful for Country, e.g. initiatives with an environmental or sustainability focus.
2. Demonstrate how these opportunities and initiatives are manifest in the design.
3. The project team is encouraged to refer to the recently finalised [Connecting with Country framework \(2023\)](#) and case studies available on the [GANSW website](#).

Design Excellence

The project must exhibit design excellence in accordance with The Hills Shire LEP, including solar access controls and other relevant requirements of the DCP as per clause 7.7 (4) (d) and 7.7 (4) (e).

4. Address key urban strategies and metrics of the DCP including:
 - a. setbacks to enable the DCP street character
 - b. built form at the ground plane and podium levels to deliver good public domain outcomes
 - c. minimising site coverage to enable generous landscaped areas
 - d. floor plate sizes to enable slender tower forms of high amenity and minimal bulk and scale impacts.

Site strategy and landscape

Revisit the site planning to address the above strategies and requirements. Focus on the quality and spatial logic of the ground plane, public domain and building interfaces, and the landscaped outdoor spaces.

5. Ensure the ground plane and setbacks deliver:
 - a. minimum distances of the DCP, exclusive of any widening of the road reserve
 - b. street character of the DCP, including active street frontages and deep soil landscape zones
 - c. improved legibility of the built form and pedestrian movements as the ground plane transitions topography and the street frontages
 - d. increased area of landscape and common open space through reduced building site coverage
 - e. increased deep soil area by reducing the basement footprint

- f. greater commitment to tree retention along the site boundary, via Tree Protection Zones (for roots and canopy) free from basement impacts
 - g. maximised activation and integration with the public domain, balanced with the need for privacy and security.
6. Revise the approach to McMullen Street to avoid barriers between public and private spaces as the primary street response, e.g. minimising retaining or eliminating walls and avoiding excessive height differences.
 7. Optimise winter sun to communal outdoor spaces, considering the overshadowing of future development from surrounding sites.
 8. Ensure deep soil is contiguous at a minimum width of 6m as per the ADG and avoid isolated pockets.

No detail was provided on the Garthowen Crescent public domain and building elevation, as such, advice was not provided at the session.

9. Provide drawings and details of all three street frontages and interfaces at the next SDRP session to address issues outlined in this letter.

Built form

The lack of a demonstrable podium presents a range of negative urban design impacts, including definition of the street wall and public domain edge, clarity of pedestrian movements, wind, and capacity for a variety of uses that could provide activation and contribute to family friendly apartment living. Acknowledging the challenges of the typography, an alternative built form response is required.

10. Provide options for a 2 to 3 storey podium. The preferred option should:
 - a. mediate the scale between the tower form and public domain
 - b. strengthen the corner
 - c. provide capacity for a variety of uses
 - d. manage ground level changes along all street frontages
 - e. clearly define building entrances
 - f. ensure legible delineation between public and private areas
 - g. mitigate against wind impacts
 - h. enable a safe, comfortable and accessible pedestrian environment.
11. Provide options for a revised tower form to deliver high amenity dwellings, including an option of smaller floorplates in separate towers and an option that provides greater distinction between forms of a singular floorplate. The preferred option should:
 - a. maintain solar access to public open spaces as per the DCP

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- b. offset any ADG variances with amenity improvements such that the permissible FSR can be achieved without adverse impacts.
- 12. Consider a further option that consolidates the existing site with the adjacent Council land to the east, focussing on the amenity benefits and improved outcomes that could be achieved if the proposed density was dispersed.

Housing diversity and family living

Acknowledging the project is pursuing FSR bonuses for housing diversity, ensure the approach to family-friendly apartment living is not limited to dwelling mix and size only. Instead, adopt this concept in a wholistic manner across the entire project.

- 13. The quality of the outdoor space is critical for families. Ensure sufficient area for various uses and user groups, good sightlines for child supervision, co-location with shared indoor spaces, and access to landscape amenity, winter sun and summer shade.
- 14. Provide building and lift lobbies, corridors, and common areas that are generous for family groups (with strollers and young children) and promote incidental socialising.
- 15. Optimise dwelling layouts for family use (refer to items under Architecture below).
- 16. Provide bike storage at the ground floor that caters for families.
- 17. Ensure equity for all tenants by distributing affordable dwellings throughout the building with equal access to amenities such as shared facilities and common areas.
- 18. Benchmark against precedents and refer to [Healthy Higher Density Living for Families with Children](#) (Western Sydney Local Health District, 2024).

Architecture

- 19. Explore two storey maisonette apartments at the podium.
- 20. Locate communal indoor spaces at the street frontage to activate the street.
- 21. Improve dwelling layouts by:
 - a. increasing the size of the typical living and dining
 - b. decreasing the size of the master bedroom
 - c. reducing excessive circulation.
- 22. Keep balconies consistent, simple and stacked.

23. Develop the materiality, architectural expression and facade articulation to respond to the vernacular and microclimate of The Hills Shire.

Sustainability and climate change

24. Investigate opportunities for stretching sustainability and Net Zero targets to respond to design excellence requirements and present them at the next SDRP session. This includes:
 - a. ensuring sustainability drives the architecture, e.g. building facades responsive to passive design and sun-shading relative to orientation
 - b. developing WSUD options in response to the local hydrology
 - c. testing rooftop capacity for PV cells
 - d. connecting sustainability outcomes to Country-led opportunities.
25. Refer to 'NSW, DPIE, Net Zero Plan, Stage 1: 2020-2030' for further information.

Requests for the next SDRP

It is recommended the project return to the SDRP. In addition to addressing the advice and recommendations above, the following information is to be provided at the next SDRP session:

26. An overview of any discussions with Council and the Community Housing Provider.
27. Wind analysis, including mitigation measures.
28. The strategy for affordable dwelling mix and distribution.
29. General arrangement drawings including landscape plans, cross-sections and site sections to communicate:
 - a. the key interfaces for the building and landscape
 - b. the relationship with topography and the street.

Please contact GANSW Design Advisor, Angus Bell
(Angus.Bell@planning.nsw.gov.au), if you have any queries regarding this advice.

Sincerely,



Emma Kirkman
Principal Design Advisor
Chair, SDRP

Distribution:

NSW SDRP Panel Members	Tony Caro, Anna Chauvel, Emma Kirkman (Chair), Nicole Leuning, Peter St Clair
GANSW Design Advisor	Angus Bell
DPHI observer	Kevin Kim
Hills Shire Council representative	Marika Hahn
Studio SC	Nicholas Bandounas, Janette Chow, Andrew Nicholas
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