



ALTERNATIVE DESIGN EXCELLENCE STRATEGY

100 EDINBURGH ROAD, CASTLECRAG

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Disclaimer

Endorsement of this Alternative Design Excellence Strategy does not approve any deviations from the relevant planning controls or fetter the discretion of the consent authority in assessing any future planning applications.

The outcome of an endorsed alternative design excellence process does not limit the consent authority's discretion in assessing any future State Significant Development Applications (SSDA) or State-assessed rezoning applications for the proposed development.

When determining any future SSDA or State-assessed rezoning applications, the consent authority will consider the advice of the nominated Design Review Panel to ensure the proposed development exhibits design excellence in accordance with relevant legislation.

As part of the planning assessment process, the consent authority will also confirm endorsement of the competition exemption request

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to outline a strategy which achieves design excellence for a Housing Delivery Authority development at 100 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag. This strategy is intended to achieve design excellence for the site as an alternative to a competitive design process.

The competitive design process is one means of achieving design excellence for the subject site, as outlined by Clause 6.23(6)(b) of the Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 (WLEP 2012). Clause 6.23(8) states that a competitive design process is not required should the consent authority agree that a competition is not required, if a design review panel for the proposal in question is established, and if the consent authority considers the feedback of the design review panel in their assessment of the application.

The consent authority for the proposal at 100 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag is the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI).

This strategy has been prepared in consultation with Willoughby City Council as well as the NSW Government Architect (GA). The strategy has been prepared in accordance with the GA's *'Housing Delivery Authority: Alternative Design Excellence Guidelines'*.

2. Site & Locality Description

The subject site is 100 Edinburgh Road, Castlecrag. It is formally recognised as Lot 11 in DP 611594. An aerial view of the site is provided below.



Figure 1: Aerial view of subject site (Source: SixMaps)

The site previously comprised of the 'Quadrangle Plaza', which was a 2 level commercial premises with a range of retail offerings. Development Consent 2024/13 was issued on 30 November 2024 for construction of a mixed-use development at the site, including 38 dwellings. Existing development at the site has been demolished in accordance with the aforementioned consent.

The design approved as part of consent 2024/13 was prepared by FJC Studio. It was the outcome of a prior design competition. It is intended to retain FJC Studio for the purposes of the State Significant Development Application.

3. Summary of Relevant Planning Controls and Brief Proposal Description

The subject site has been nominated as a 'Housing Delivery Authority Declared Site' on 23 July 2025. The relevant reference number is 256918. Subsequently, the proposal will proceed as a HDA State Significant Development Application according to State Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Planning Systems SEPP).

The Expression of Interest (EOI) submitted to the Housing Delivery Authority (HDA) for the subject site included a mixed use development, 150 dwellings, as well as 11 storeys. These are considered to be the relevant statutory town planning provisions for the site.

4. Nominated Design Team

The design team for the proposal is as follows:

Architecture	Francis Jones Carpenter Pty Ltd trading as FJC Studio - David Haseler – Principal (registration 6690) - Michelle Ho – Senior Associate Conquest In house Design Team - Melinda Lim – Design Lead (registration 10311) - Ziad Zahran (registration 10650) - Justin Holly (registration number 11341)
Landscape Architecture & Public Domain	Site Image Landscape Architects - Ross Shepherd – Director (registration 449) - Felicity Ratcliffe – Associate
Traffic Impact Assessment and Geometry	PTC Jake Jansen – Senior Traffic Engineer
Arboricultural Assessment	Tree Wise Men Peter Castor - Director
Acoustic Consultant	Acoustic Logic Weber Yeh – Senior Project Engineer
Visual Impact Assessment	Urbaine Design Group Daniel Knight – Technical Director
Heritage Consultant	Weir Phillips Heritage Anna McLaurin - Associate

5. Design Team Credentials

The table in Section 2 demonstrates that a highly qualified and experienced team has been engaged to deliver the proposal. This ensures design excellence will be achieved.

Whilst an extensive team has been engaged, FJC Studio and Site Image Landscape Architects will be responsible for leading the team. Both are highly qualified and respected throughout the industry. Some specific credentials are as follows:

- Registered architects – Richard Francis-Jones (5301) and Elizabeth Carpenter (6141).
- Darlington Public School – World Building of the Year 2024.
- Yellamundie Library – Shortlisted for Public Library of the Year 2024.
- King and Philip Residences – Best of Best Residential Architecture – Multi Unit 2023.
- UTS Central – Best Tall Buildings under 100m – Awards of Excellence 2020.
- EY Centre, 200 George St - GOLD in Architecture Categories / New Commercial Building 2018
- Harrington Collection – Residential Architecture – Multi Unit 2023

Further evidence of credentials are provided in the following links:

FJC Studio –

- [Living - fjcstudio](#)

Site Image Landscape Architects –

- [Residential — Site Image](#)

Heritage –

- [Weir Phillips Architects - Residential](#)

Acoustic Logic –

- [Residential / Student Accommodation Archives - Acoustic Logic Consultancy | Acoustic Logic Consultancy](#)

PTC –

- [Experienced Engineering Consultants | See our Projects | ptc.](#)

Consideration will be given to the use of appropriate materials for the purpose of responding to GA's Connecting with Country Framework. It should be noted that consent has already been issued for construction at the site, and construction works for that consent has already commenced, including demolition and excavation. In this regard, there are limited opportunities to integrate the Connecting with Country Framework.

6. Satisfaction of WLEP 2012 Design Excellence Considerations

Clause 6.23(4) and (5) of the Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012 (WLEP 2021) outlines the relevant items to be addressed for the purpose of achieving design excellence. These matters will be addressed in full as the proposal continues to evolve. In the meantime, the relevant provisions are addressed as follows:

Whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved

This objective will be satisfied largely by retaining FJC, who prepared the original successful design competition scheme. FJC's original design was informed by an indepth analysis of the locality's geography and historical context. As a result of this analysis, the vast majority of finishes are sandstone and terracotta cladding which reflect the character and offer high durability.

In addition to high quality materials, the design competition winning scheme was suitably articulated and this will be integrated within the HDA SSDA scheme.

It is intended to provide 2 envelopes above the approved development. The new envelopes will be rectangular in nature. At right angles, they will reinforce the horizontal nature of the approved envelope, thereby generating appropriate scale and definition at street level.

Whether the form, arrangement and external appearance of the development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain.

The addition of 2 envelopes above the previously podium element will, in fact, enhance its human scale. Further, 2 envelopes above the podium at right angles, will enhance the rectilinear overall presentation, thereby adding further definition to the public domain.

Whether the development detrimentally impacts on view corridors.

The proposal is not within any land based view corridors.

The suitability of the land for development

The subject site is within a local centre, and previously included a commercial development. The site is large in area with multiple frontages. It is without any prohibitive constraints such as contamination, flooding and the like. The dwellings within the proposal would benefit from high amenity, in particular with district and city views. The locality is severely undersupplied by retail and commercial services, as well as affordable housing. On this basis, the site is considered to be suitable for the proposal.

Existing and proposed uses and use mix

The proposal is for a mixed use development comprising of a supermarket within the lower ground level as well as specialty retail stores and food and beverage outlets on the ground floor. The upper floor of the podium and the remain levels above are proposed to include a combination of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings. Specifically, 150 dwellings are proposed, including approximately 10 affordable dwellings.

Heritage and streetscape constraints

A local heritage item is located approximately 50m to the east of the subject site, at 118 Edinburgh Road. It is considered that sufficient separation exists between the subject site and the heritage item to avoid any unreasonable impact.

The proposal will retain the previously approved 3 level podium element. This is considered to be a suitable scale for the streetscape. The envelopes above reinforce the lower scale and its relationship with the street. Numerous

trees are located along Edinburgh Road which the proposal will retain. The proposed ground floor food and beverage tenancies will not only provide destination options for locals, but also activate the street.

The relationship of the development with other existing or proposed development on the same site or on neighbouring sites in terms of separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form

The proposal's podium will adopt 0m setback to the east, which is considered to be suitable given the local centre environment. Landscaped, including deep soil landscaped setbacks are proposed along Eastern Valley Way which is considered to provide a suitable relationship to the street corridor.

Above the podium, the proposal will comply with separation recommendations as provided by the Apartment Design Guide. In this case, objectives for privacy are satisfied.

Bulk, massing and modulation of buildings.

The proposed overall bulk and massing is considered to be appropriate given the local centre context and the current housing crisis. Suitable modulation, largely in the form of 2 separate envelopes above the podium, is achieved. High quality finishes are also proposed so as to generate even further appropriate modulation.

Street frontage heights.

The proposal will adopt the previously approved 3 storey envelope to address the street. Given it was approved previously, it is considered suitable for the proposed scheme.

Environmental impacts such as sustainable design, overshadowing, wind and reflectivity.

The proposal will achieve a high standard of sustainable design given it will utilise dense external finishes to deflect external heat sources as well as retain comfortable internal temperatures. The proposal will also exceed the ADG's recommendations for ventilation. Further, the proposal will be BASIX compliant.

Pedestrian, cycle, vehicular and service access, circulation and requirements

The proposal seeks to utilise the existing site access, which is considered suitable. A substantial amount of onsite bicycle parking provisions are allowed for within the proposal's basement. Circulation has been well considered for the site for residents, visitors, and employees. In particular, ample lifts and travellers are provided for to ensure convenient and safe circulation for visitors as well as for operational purposes.

The impact on, and proposed improvements to, the public domain.

The proposal will improve the public domain by replacing outdated ground level finishes. Existing street trees will also be retained and embellished. The proposal contains numerous ground floor tenancies which are intended for a variety of active uses such as restaurants and the like. These elements will create a vibrant and active public domain.

The impact on special character areas.

The subject locality is not listed as a 'special character area' according to any environmental planning instruments. However, it is recognised that there are key features to the area including the involvement by Walter Burley Griffin in its design, existing vegetation as well as its proximity to water bodies.

The proposal seeks to recognise these features by retaining as many street facing trees as possible, planting new trees, as well as using materials which reflect the locality's sandstone geology.

Achieving appropriate interfaces at ground level between the building and the public domain

The proposal will adopt the previously approved low scale (e.g. 3-4 level) podium. 3-4 storeys is low in scale and creates an appropriate relationship at street level. Further, the podium will include retail premises' with relatively

small glazed frontages which further creates a suitable human scale. The podium will also include outdoor dining facilities, extensive weather protection and the same high quality materials and finishes used throughout the above podium envelopes.

Excellence and integration of landscape design

It is intended to retain established and well recognised landscape architectural firm Site Image to prepare landscape architectural concepts for the proposal. Similarly, the projects arborists Tree Wise Men will be retained for the SSDA scheme. Site Image and Tree Wise Men were involved in the original successful design competition scheme as well as the original DA. Therefore, they have extensive knowledge of the site and surrounds.

Both firms, together with FJC, will seek to retain as many trees as possible, proposed replacement trees where necessary, as well as provide a suitable environment within the proposal's podium. As with the original DA, it is intended to improve the public domain surrounding the site, and apply materials in particular which will create a sense of a large public domain area.

7. Commitment to Design Diversity and Variety

The proponent, together with the entire design team, commits to diversity and variety in design. The proponent's brief for the proposal includes the delivery of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom apartments, as well as at least 10 affordable dwellings for a period of 10 years. This, in itself, confirms the suitability of the Alternative Design Excellence Strategy as less than 5% of all dwellings within the Castlecrag locality are apartment style. Rather, existing housing stock is extremely homogenous in the form of large detached dwellings, as well as a small amount of townhouse style dwellings. This does not create a sense of diversity or affordability.

Variety and diversity will also be delivered as commercial tenancies, for either retail or professional services, in the range of 80m² to 1,500m², are intended to be provided on the proposal's ground floor and lower ground floor. Such tenancies are intended to be planned to encourage congregation by visitors. Such congregation could occur within planned outdoor or indoor dining areas, or incidental meeting spaces

Finally, the proposal's external finishes are intended to be diverse, but nevertheless coordinated and robust.

The site and proposal is not of a scale where multiple precincts could be delivered. Rather, the intent is for 2 residential envelopes above a shared podium. Accordingly, one architectural firm, in this case FJC Studio, is sufficient. This aside, the proponent has an inhouse architectural team. This team is led by Melinda Lim (registration 10311) and supported by Ziad Zahran (registration 10650), Justin Holly (registration number 11341), Isabel Chia (architectural design coordinator) and Hong Le (senior architectural technician). Conquest's in-house architectural team commits to supporting the lead architect, FJC Studio, during the SSDA design development and assessment phase, as well as during any post approval phase. This collaboration will enable the sharing of information as well as enable professional development between both parties.

Below is a conceptual site layout for the proposal, indicating a maximum of 2 envelopes proposed for the site. This confirms that FJC will be responsible for designing only 2 buildings at the site as required by criteria 5 of the GA's guidelines.

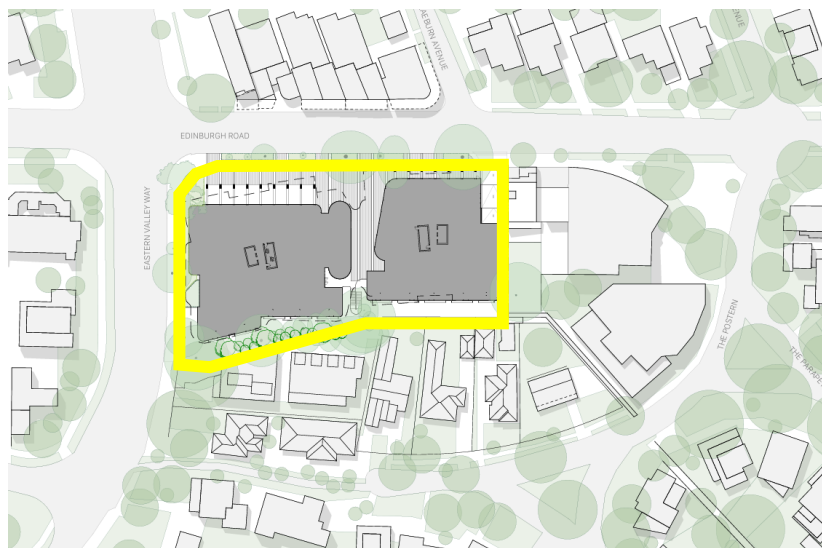


Figure 2: Indicative site plan outlined yellow demonstrating maximum of 2 buildings (Source: FJC/PPUD)

8. Extent of Design Team's Involvement

It is confirmed that the design team of FJC Studio and Conquest's in house design services will be involved for the duration of the project, through to completion. FJC Studio is the proposal's design lead. They have been involved in the site since the original design competition completed in 2019 and will continued to be involved until the completion of any SSDA scheme for the site. They will be supported by Conquest's in house design services who will also be involved until the project is completed.

FJC Studio's scope includes preparation of all SSDA plans from design development, lodgement and any post lodgement services. Conquest's in house architectural team will be involved in the preparation of such plans, largely in the form of providing input so that any construction phase is deliverable.

Post lodgement, FJC Studio will provide oversight of any construction plans which will be prepared by Conquest's in house architectural team.

Both FJC Studio and Conquest's in house architectural team will provide ongoing over sight of the project until any Occupation Certificate is issued.

9. Commitment to Design Review

The proponent and FJC Studio commit to, and looks forward to, undertaking design review. The proponent nominates the consultant administered Design Review Panel (DRP) process. It is proposed to adopt a 3 person panel. The panel is comprised as follows:

- Chair and GA representative: Paul Berkemeier (ARB 4017)
- Proponent's representative: Kim Crestani (ARB 4630, CV at Appendix 1)
- Willoughby City Council's representative: Mark Raggatt (ARB 11783)

Carlo Di Giulio from PRINCIPLE Planning + Urban Design will act as the competition manager. The competition manager's contact details are as follows:

- carlo@principleplanning.com.au
- 0421 285 782

The nominated DRP process will be undertaken generally in accordance with the [Terms of Reference: DRP for a SSD Design Competition Exemption](#).

10. Consultation with Council

PRINCIPLE planning + urban design as well as the proponent have liaised with multiple representatives from Willoughby City Council (WCC) in relation to various elements of the proposal, including design excellence and general community consultation. These discussions occurred on the following dates:

- 7 August 2025. Email sent to all WCC Councillors, Council General Manager, Council's Director of Planning and Council's Manager of Planning. The email sought to introduce the proponent to Council and provide an opportunity to liaise with the proponent. A response was received by Mayor Tanya Taylor on 29 August 2025.
- 30 October 2025. Email sent to all WCC Councillors, Council General Manager, Council's Director of Planning and Council's Manager of Planning. The email invited Councillors and Senior Council staff to attend a community information session relating to the proposal. No response was received.
- 31 October 2025. Email sent to Council General Manager, Council's Director of Planning and Council's Manager of Planning. The email notified Council that an Alternative Design Excellence Strategy (ADES) was being pursued in relation to the proposal and requested that Council nominate its preferred representative for the associated DRP.
- 3 November 2025. An acknowledgement was received from Council's General Manager in relation to the proponent's ADES.
- 7 November 2025. Phone call received from Wil Robertson, Council's Urban Design Specialist, confirming that Council was in the process of securing their representative for the DRP.
- 10 November 2025. Email received from Wil Robertson, Council's Urban Design Specialist, confirming their representative for the DRP. An acknowledgement email was issued by Carlo Di Giulio.
- 12 November 2025. A community consultation session was held within Castlecrag in relation to the proposal. There were various attendees from Council, including (but may not be limited to) the Mayor Tanya Taylor and Councillor Roy McCullagh.

Appendix 1 – Kim Crestani CV (Proponent's representative)