

Conquest
Mr Joseph Puckeridge
joseph.puckeridge@conquest.com

Dear Joseph,

**RE: 100 EDINBURGH ROAD, CASTLECRAG
DRP No. 2 MONDAY 2nd FEBRUARY 2026
DESIGN ADVICE LETTER**

As you may be aware, the second Design Review Panel (DRP) meeting was held in relation to a HDA SSDA at the abovementioned site on 2 February 2026. This correspondence represents the Design Review Panel's Design Advice Letter following the DRP of 2 February 2026.

The letter is prepared in accordance with the '*Housing Delivery Authority: Alternative Design Excellence Strategy Guidelines*'. The letter provides a summary of the meeting. It also outlines the Panel member's key issues, advice and recommendations during the second DRP. These items should be reviewed and responded to by Conquest as well as the engaged architect, FJC.

ATTENDEES

- Mr Paul Berkemeier (Chair, GANSW nominee)
- Mr Mark Raggatt (Council nominee)
- Ms Kim Crestani (Proponent nominee)
- Mr Michael Akkawi (CEO/Proponent, Conquest)
- Mr Joseph Puckeridge (Assistant Development Manager, Conquest)
- Mr Joseph Kazzi (Assistant Development Manager, Conquest)
- Mr David Haseler (Principal, FJC)
- Ms Michelle Ho (Senior Associate, FJC)
- Ms Fiona Dowler (Planning Officer Assessments, HDA, DPHI)
- Mr Tim Griffith (Design Advisor, GANSW)
- Mr Corey Diffin (Principal Design Advisor [Acting], GANSW)
- Mr Tony Nunn (Manager Statutory Planning, Willoughby City Council)
- Mr Wil Robertson (Urban Design Specialist, Willoughby City Council)
- Mr Dylan Porter (Director Planning, Willoughby City Council)
- Mr Ross Shepherd (Director, Site Image Landscape Architects)
- Ms Felicity Ratcliffe (Associate, Site Image Landscape Architects)
- Ms Anna McLaurin (Associate Director, Weir Phillips Heritage)
- Mr Michael Eaddy (Director, MEL Consultants)
- Mr Carlo Di Giulio (Director, Principle Planning + Urban Design)
- Ms Shilin Zheng (Town Planner, Principle Planning + Urban Design)
- Ms Serena Li (Town Planner, Principle Planning + Urban Design)

CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Following the first Design Review Panel (DRP 1) meeting, the Panel recommended that the landscape architects and heritage architects engaged for the proposal be present for the next DRP meeting. Thus, the landscape architects, Mr Ross Shepherd and Ms Felicity Ratcliffe from Site Image Landscape Architects as well as Ms Anna McLaurin from Weir Phillips Heritage attended DRP 2.

During DRP 1, there were several elements that were supported by the Panel. These included:

- Proposed materiality which responds to the heritage context of Castlecrag.
- The through site link with connection to the local pedestrian network.
- Diverse retail offerings and generous outdoor areas.
- The retention of trees as well as potential for new landscaping.

In addition, there were several matters which the Panel requested further investigation into. These included:

- Height and massing in relation to the heritage context.
- Evidence of ADG compliance including solar access and natural ventilation for lower residential levels.
- Improved access to the ground floor residential lobbies,
- Replanning the podium level residential access corridors to provide natural light and ventilation.
- Analysis of wind impacts including between the two residential towers.
- Further consideration of communal open space.

In relation to the abovementioned, FJC proposed several responses which address the key issues raised in DRP 1. These were presented and discussed in DRP 2. Furthermore, the Panel raised several other matters following FJC's second presentation, which are listed below.

SUPPORTED ELEMENTS

The Panel supports:

- Noble materiality and detail that responds to the heritage context of Castlecrag.
- Through site link with connection to the local pedestrian network.
- Solar access compliance with the ADG.
- The intent to provide taller than typical ADG ceiling heights.
- Provision of diverse retail offerings with generous outdoor areas.
- Retention of trees and revitalisation for new landscape.
- Engagement of FJC and Site Image for all stages of the project up to completion.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Justification of height in relation to the local heritage and surrounding context.
- Further development of Connecting with Country Strategy.

- Adequacy of communal open space.
- Wind impacts between the two residential towers.
- Tree preservation.
- Number of affordable housing apartments and duration of tenure.
- Proposed total number of apartments. The proponent noted that if yield is reduced, the affordable housing contribution also decreases.
- The proponent raised the issue of economic feasibility which is constrained in the current environment.
- The proponent's team believe that the subject site is one of few opportunities remaining in Castlecrag to deliver density and affordability.
- Weir Phillips advise that, from a heritage perspective, density in one location rather than extending density throughout a broader area has less negative impact.

ADVICE, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER INFORMATION REQUESTED

- A detailed planning justification will be required in relation to height and scale. FJC advise that 6 storey envelopes could be proposed on both sides of Eastern Valley Way, in the vicinity of the subject site. This could be achieved by making full use of Low Medium Rise Housing and Infill Housing provisions, adding 30% to the 17.5 metre control to achieve maximum 22.75 metre height. FJC's preferred design is 11 storeys, 44 metres, to the northern Edinburgh Road frontage, more to the southern side.
- The shadow diagrams show that the proposal will create extensive shadowing, lengthened by the sloping topography to the south. The impact on surrounding properties and the effect on any future residential development needs further consideration.
- The Panel acknowledges this is an HDA application and therefore supersedes local controls. However, it notes that the "Indicative Master Plan for Castlecrag" in the "Willoughby Local Centres Plan 2036," referred to in Weir Phillips' Heritage Impact statement, indicates a development potential of 3 storeys to Edinburgh Road the 4 storeys at the corner of Eastern Valley Way. These heights are consistent with the current approved plans.
- The Panel notes that the preferred 3.4 metre floor to floor height exceeds the normal 3.2 m allowance, leading to additional overall height.
- Although the proposal's consideration of local cultural significance was largely established during its original design competition in 2019, it is recommended that further consideration be given to Connecting with Country. The proponent is encouraged to undertake further consultation with local First Nation's knowledge holders.
- The Panel supports the GA's advice that Connecting with Country is an essential element of the Design Excellence program.
- The Griffin Heritage Conservation Area adjoins the eastern and part of the southern boundaries of the site. The Panel also understands that the site is within the Willoughby C4 Environmental Living zone. The location is highly significant, and the urban design, architecture and landscape responses must be appropriate to its context and skilfully executed.

- Whilst the Panel supports the increase in public domain between the asymmetrically aligned entrances, and the inclusion of the oculus for light and ventilation, the team should continue to reconsider the planning of ground floor residential lobby to improve wayfinding and directness of travel and deliver a higher level of amenity for residents.
- The Panel recommends locating toilets on the street level ground plane to better support patrons of the retail and hospitality venues.
- Reconsider the proposed strategy for providing natural light and ventilation to the podium level residential lift lobbies and corridors. The Panel does not support the proposed three level light shaft in its current form. The Panel recommends these floors be reconfigured to afford good natural light and ventilation.
- Ensure that adequate accessibility is provided throughout all residential lobbies and circulation. Investigate whether widths are suitable and whether automatic doors should be included. Consider the needs of an aging demographic.
- Council officers advise that the site and surrounding area is within a C4 Environmental Zone. This needs to be addressed.
- Although the proponent stated that they have emailed Council to request a meeting, the Council planning officers attending the DRP had stated that they were not aware of any recent communication. The Panel recommends that a meeting be arranged at the earliest opportunity.

The Panel is confident that the team of FJC and Site Image can develop a fine architectural and landscape solution for this project, however the urban design outcomes need to be very carefully considered and assessed in the context of Castlecrag.

The Panel thanks the project team for the comprehensive submission. A further Design Review Panel may be necessary, but this could occur after official lodgement of the SSDA and following the public exhibition period.



DRP Chair Mr Paul Berkemeier

18/02/2026

Date



DRP Ms Kim Crestani

18/02/2026

Date



DRP Mr Mark Raggatt

19/02/2026

Date