

20 Sep 2012

Response to RPAH North West Precinct Development (MP 10_0166)

1. Background

I am:

- A long term resident owner a Church St property two blocks from the proposed development.
- Frequent pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular traveller along Missenden Rd, Lucas St and through the nearby hospital precinct.
- Regular visitor of hospital patients.

2. Support

I support:

- The redevelopment of this site.
- Bringing together different health services into one complex that integrates previously geographically dispersed services, shares common utilities, and reduces potential stigmatisation of patients visiting particular buildings.
- The overall design principles of the building, including its modularity, natural lighting and ventilation, accessibility, diversity of exterior finishes, and massing and overall context in the built landscape.

3. Objections

While accepting that the architect has "carefully crafted [a] response to a complex and diverse functional brief" [1], without having seen either the brief or the architect's full response to it, I have considered the *Architectural Design Statement* [1] and *Drawings* [2] and object to these features:

1. Prominent white angled supporting concrete pillars

The pillars appear to have been designed as a deliberately prominent part of the building, whose prominence is enhanced by:

- Obliqueness - the angles are in sharp contrast to the horizontal-vertical planes of the rest of this building and most other surrounding built structures
- Brightness - the bright white colour is another sharp contrast to the muted tones of brick, concrete and other usual building materials
- Connectedness - the pillars form a strong zigzag at the base of the building which wraps around its sides and connects to the other white horizontal-vertical elements.

2. Facade

Like the pillars, the patterned precast concrete of the facade facing Missenden Rd appears to have been designed as a deliberately prominent part of the building, whose prominence is enhanced by the number of same-width lines at different angles and rectangular cutouts revealing the glass.

3. Triangular side features

The Lucas St base of the building appears to be faced with large grey and white triangles.

3. Suggestions

I submit that the building's diversity of prominent oblique angles presents a strong and visually discordant impact on the streetscape which may have an effect other than "ensur[ing] the patient experience is welcoming and nonthreatening" [1]. While nobody wants a hospital to be a tedious uniformity of drab rectangular concrete boxes, thoughtful design should provide a happy marriage of utility, visual interest, and soothing the anxieties often associated with hospital visits.

The proposed building is one which draws attention to itself more than fitting into the adjacent built landscape. In contrast, the nearby Cyclotron building both fits and provides visual interest without drawing undue attention to itself through a more judicious use of limited colours, textures and curved lines.

To ameliorate the strong visual impact of the proposed building without diminishing the architect's innovative use of materials I suggest as alternatives:

- Pillars - a more neutral or "invisible" colour instead of white, to increase the impression that the building "floats"; wrapping the pillars in a vine to give the impression of an organic support; or increasing the extent of the existing trellis to fill but not occlude the inter-pillar spaces.
- Facade - use of a different textured or patterned material with curved lines or sections.
- Side - use of a non-adherent vine on a close mesh trellis.

I also note that any future development built on the temporary carpark facing Missenden Rd may hide the front of the proposed building and therefore wonder whether the front treatment should be a focus or additional cost to the building at all.

Your faithfully,

References

- [1] Peckvonhartel (2012) Department of Planning Submission - Architectural Design Statement, 11 July 2012, Document Reference: 3599-0603-007, Issue: 1 (Final).
- [2] Peckvonhartel (2012) Department of Planning Submission - Architectural Drawings, Drawing Numbers DoP-000-010, Dated 11 July 2012,