

10th August 2017

DESIGN REVIEW: PEMULWUY DEVELOPMENT (Precinct 3) - Col James Student Accommodation

This report has been prepared by the Design Review Panel (DRP) for the Pemulwuy Development (Precinct 3) – Col James Student Accommodation.

The DRP endorses the proposed development by Turner and Scott Carver and confirm that in the view of the Panel, design excellence has been achieved.

Background

A concept design was created for the Pemulwuy site on the behalf of the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC). The Pemulwuy site contains three mixed use precincts which aimed to deliver quality affordable housing for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) community.

The Original Concept Plan Approval (No.MP06_0101) and Project Approval (No.MP11_0093) were issued by the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) on the 21st December 2012. The approved development for the Pemulwuy site included:

- The construction of a 3/part 6-storey mixed use building containing 1,100m² of retail/commercial space, a 475m² gallery and student housing accommodating a total of 154 beds in 42 units with a manager's flat.

Subsequently, the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEAR's) were sought on the 6th December 2016 for a modified Concept Plan Approval. The submission proposed a 16 storey tower, an increase in GFA to 17,080m² and a total of 522 rooms along with a reference scheme that proposed a stepped proposed building envelope of max 16 storeys. The SEARs for this modified Concept Plan required that a Design Review Panel (DRP) be established for the purpose of delivering design excellence. The SEARs also approved the proposed building envelope.

The DRP held monthly meetings to discuss the Pemulwuy Development. The DRP terms from the SEARs included consideration of the following:

- Building and urban design elements of the proposal and treatment of the public domain
- Opportunities to integrate best practice Ecologically Sustainable Design (ESD) into the architectural design
- Activation at ground level spaces and links between proposed buildings and other existing public facilities

- The architectural language of the building to ensure high quality integration with surrounding context and the existing traditional architecture that dominates Carline, Lawson, Louis and Eveleigh Streets and the southern side of Vine Street
- Evidence of engagement with relevant Aboriginal stakeholders regarding cultural design elements, including motifs, public art and place and building naming.
- Details of clear building entries and adequate pedestrian, vehicle and residential access

Summary of Design Issues

Initially, Turner Architects presented a scheme that kept within the SEARs reference scheme envelope. The shortcomings of this scheme included wide floor plates with limited capacity for natural ventilation, limited solar access, a high proportion of student rooms directly overlooking the rail line with its associated noise impacts, a bulky overall form and student rooms on the lower levels where communal spaces would be more desirable.

The DRP encouraged the design team to explore alternative massing arrangements from those in the SEAR's, including increases in height, to yield better amenity and internal relationships. A more elegant overall massing of the built form was also sought. Many versions of the building form were tested and reviewed by the DRP.

The following modifications to the SEARs envelope are proposed in the current scheme and supported by the Panel:

- An increase of the maximum building height from 16 storeys to 24 storeys. This increase in height storeys results in better cross ventilation, light to internal corridors, better amenity to shared spaces and reduced noise impacts for residents from the rail line.
- Reduction in the GFA yield. This reduction is due to more efficient planning arrangements, more efficient distribution of built form, different mix and size of student accommodation rooms, a more effective relationship and use of space associated with the communal areas. – details provided below.
- 84% of student rooms have an aspect that is not across the rail lines, as opposed to 57.4% in the original SEARs proposal.
- 79% of the student rooms receive solar access for a minimum of 2 hours, as opposed to 47.4% in the original SEARs proposal.
- The consistent SEARs building depth of 17m over 16 storeys in the SEARs scheme have been revised to a varied depth between 8.5m to 16.5m over 24 stories.

- The number of rooms (522) remains the same as the SEARs proposal, however the number of students housed increases from 522 to 596 due to an increase in shared rooms.
- Decrease in GFA from SEARs 17,080m² to a proposed 16,530m² resulting in an average 77% efficiency across all floors.

Key design elements supported by the Panel:

- Façade materiality and composition is supported including the use of a range of textures with an emphasis on verticality.
- The referencing of existing terrace scale, proportion and verticality on lower Eveleigh Street terraces.
- Improved protected entrances at the South of Pemulwuy and the intersection of Caroline Street.
- A Public art strategy for the precinct. Engagement with relevant Aboriginal stakeholders regarding cultural design elements, public art and place.
- Shared use of the proposed Meeting Place (intersection of Eveleigh St, and Lawson St).

Increase in height.

The increase in height from the SEARs 16 stories to 24 stories results in a slab form tower with very slender north orientation and an east-west wall broadly parallel to the rail line. Whilst it was noted by the panel that the formal expression of the additional height was at odds with the intent of the stepped form of the SEARs reference scheme, the stepped (waterfall) effect in the SEARs was considered to be neither the optimum, nor the only solution for the built form for this site. A break-up of the mass of the tower has been achieved through the varied treatment of the façade and emphasis on verticality.

The minimal increase in overshadowing created by the additional height has little impact, with shadowing occurring over the rail lines and Gibbons St. The commercial tower on Gibbons street has very limited additional overshadowing, while the existing residential tower on Regent Street is unaffected.

Recommendations

The revised scheme is supported with the following key points of recommendation:

- The retention of the existing art wall along the rail tracks is supported – removal of metal fencing above is strongly recommended.
- Change the Level 17 Landscape Courtyard (adjacent to the FS02) and two Studio type A to match the layout (including corridor) of Studio type A and type F in the same location on Level 15.

- The use of texture to the final pre-cast panel surface finishes is supported. The panel also strongly supports the use of naturally irregularly pigmented terracotta tiling on the façade, as proposed.
- A considered approach to the integration of art into the precincts is encouraged. The art should not be secondary or simply a texture, relief or emboss - rather it should feature prominently in its chosen location.
- Eveleigh Street being made one way to allow for planting (for example in dimples between parking bays) and the widening of the footpath, whilst acknowledging there may be challenges due to existing sub terrain services.
- Soft landscaping elements to be introduced to the 'Meeting Place' adjacent to precinct 3.
- Roof Tops gardens to be added to all rooftops.
- Louvers to be added to the roof of all the external plant rooms – as the accommodation above will be able to see into the plant from above.

DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

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