

DESIGN EXCELLENCE PANEL

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**DA No:** DA355/2022

**PAN:** PAN-282624

**ADDRESS:** 3-5 Morton Street, Wollstonecraft

**PROPOSAL:** Demolition of Two Strata Residential Flat Buildings and Construction of a New Residential Flat Building containing 29 Apartments, over two levels of basement parking, associated works and landscaping.

**DATE** 13 December 2022

**ATTENDANCE**

*Chair* *David Tordoff*

*Panel Members* *Kylie Legge, Louise Pearson, Professor Peter Webber*

*Council staff* *Jim Davies - Executive Planner, David Hoy – Team Leader Assessments, Kim Rothe - Senior Assessment Officer*

*Applicant* *Paul Buljevic - PBS Architects*  
*Andrew Darroch – Mersonn Planners*

**PANEL COMMENTS****Principle 1: Context and local character**

The immediate locality is of very mixed character, with existing buildings of differing style, height and forms. Development on adjoining sites is exemplified by post war flat buildings and does not provide any overarching precedent as to desirable character on the subject site. The sloping site, and the very different character of each of the surrounding streets, suggests that new development should respond to the topography, and contribute to the existing landscaped setting of the locality.

The stepping of the building across the site responds well to topography and the use of articulated dry pressed brick façade provides depth and character. Additional vegetation and additional street trees should be considered in the final design.

**Principle 2: Built form, scale and public domain/ urban design response**

Except for a minor exceedance of the height, the building appears to generally conform with the relevant height limit and setback controls. The stepped building form addresses the sloping topography of the site.

Level changes on the northeast side of the site should ensure that apartments do not sit too far below the existing topography of the site. Apartments G04, G05 and G06 are however not supported as their habitable floor levels are significantly below natural ground level.

**Principle 3: Density**

The Panel notes the limited dwelling mix comprising two and three bedroom dwellings. a greater mix of dwellings should be considered to promote housing variety and affordability.

Dwellings significantly below the existing topography should reconsider their depth below the stratum. As a guide dwellings should not be proposed more than 1m below the existing ground level.

**Principle 4: Sustainability, building performance and adaptability**Energy and water efficiency initiatives

- Consideration should be given to incorporating more solar panels on the roof (in addition to those already proposed), as well as rainwater collection and recycling.

Passive environmental design

- The Panel notes that all apartments should achieve satisfactory solar access and natural cross ventilation in accordance with Council's DCP requirements. Apartments in the northeastern corner of the site could be improved by bringing the levels closer to the existing topography of the site and exhibit levels that do not exceed 1 metre below the topography of the site.

**Principle 5: Landscape Integration**

- In general the landscape character should relate better to the geology and character of the site with a native and endemic planting pallet including large eucalypts with a supporting mid and understorey providing habitat for native species.
- *Tristaniopsis laurene* 'Luscious' is supported however the Magnolias should be replaced with appropriate large endemic Eucalypts
- Further opportunity to embrace unique 'bush qualities' and approach the space in a less formal manner.

Consideration should be given to the design of the rear landscape that results in 2m wide corridors of unusable shared open space and the vertical separation of shared/private open space to increase useability and manage level changes more sympathetically.

- Direct access from the ground floor entry to the landscape space to the northeast should be considered
- New planting of advanced specimens is required, particularly at boundaries to assist in maintaining the existing landscaped setting of the site and locality. Trees should be a minimum of 200L bags.
- The ground floor dwellings should be provided with direct access and a raked transition to the landscape zone to the northeast
- The proposed communal gathering space within the front setback is supported, however it would benefit from being raised slightly relative to the street.
- Further details should be submitted to confirm the proposed on-structure landscaping arrangements including soil depths, irrigation systems and maintenance plans.



## Principle 6: Building configuration, planning, and amenity

### Building Entry / Circulation

- The stepping of the built form in response to level changes is supported however the entry experience could be improved.
- Opportunities to enhance the entry experience with views through a more generous foyer- (with increased width) and views to the rear of the site should be explored- perhaps allowing for a communal space connecting to an outdoor space.
- Excellent lighting will be critical for the success of this space and integrating natural lighting where possible is encouraged.
- Significant corridor lengths (inclusive of internal unit corridors) should be reconsidered.
- Open stair access to both wings of the apartment building would improve the circulation areas dramatically.
- The panel questioned the limited fire egress paths and common circulation areas and suggest further review be undertaken with appropriately qualified experts. Where improvements to the circulation area can be made, they should be provided without conflicting with fire safety or isolation requirements.

### Private open space and balconies

- The proposed balconies and courtyard are suitably located and dimensioned.
- Consideration to be given to the provision of a small, enclosed space on the rooftop balcony open space area to provide for wind and rain protection for users of the communal open space.
- Ensure planters allow for appropriate soil volumes to enable thriving vegetation. Include irrigation and maintenance strategies.

### Subterranean spaces and excavation

- Notwithstanding other comments here within regarding levels, subterranean habitable living rooms are to be avoided, or limited to 1m below grade. Concern is maintained regarding dwellings G04, G05 and G06.

### Visual Privacy

- The relationship to the adjoining residential flat buildings is generally accepted.
- Screening to northern dwelling balconies should be considered.

### Shadow impacts

- Whilst the amenity of some subterranean apartments is addressed through the provision of open side setback areas that would receive reasonable solar access, nevertheless some bedrooms would have a poor outlook and are very close to retaining walls resulting in compromised amenity. Consideration should be given to raising the levels in this area.

**Principle 7: Safety**Entry and security

- The location of the internal circulation areas and lift access is problematic and requires replanning, as noted under Principle 6.

**Principle 8: Housing diversity and social interaction**Apartment Mix

- A greater mix of apartment sizes should be considered. A mix of dwelling sizes is desirable to support diversity of housing choices.

**Principle 9: Architectural expression and materiality**Material palette and facade treatment

The architectural character appears to be well considered and of a high quality. The articulation of the form and the play of shadow and light is appreciated. It is important that the proponent retain high quality brick and refined detailing to ensure the design intent is carried through to construction.

Roof form

- The non-compliances with the upper-level setback provision for buildings with flat roofs may be acceptable, provided associated impacts are found to be satisfactory.

**Recommendations to Achieve Design Excellence**

The Panel provides qualified support for the proposal, subject to resolution of the identified issues as detailed under each Principle.

**Development Services Manager's Note**

The outcome of this review by the Design Excellence Panel is not determinative and is but one of many inputs into the assessment process. Applicants are urged to have high regard to the Panels input and respond accordingly.