

Helen Mulcahy - Lewisham Estate - modification of consent

From: Sustainable Urbanism <sustainable.urbanism@gmail.com>
To: <Helen.Mulcahy@planning.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 4/3/2013 3:20 PM
Subject: Lewisham Estate - modification of consent
Attachments: 78-90 old canterbury rd, lewisham - photomontage 2.pdf

Dear Helen,

I am a resident of Lewisham, at the southern end of the Boulevarde, and have been assisting the No Lewisham Towers Action Group.

I am an expert Urban Designer, former chair of the Urban Design Chapter of PIA, and I represent the Planning and Urban Design professions on Australia's peak body for design, the Australian Design Alliance. I also teach urban design at UWS, as well as overseas, being a practitioner-expert for the Eco-City Laboratory at the Technical University of Berlin. I mention these so that you might understand that I do know what I am speaking about in regard to design.

I am writing to you because I am deeply concerned about design quality and the Lewisham proposals, especially Meriton's request to exempt from the Design Competition approach for individual buildings.

I note that there is no Design Review Panel for Marrickville Council, hence there is no mechanism/"group" at all to assess Design Quality for this development. Thus the condition, regarding Design Quality/design competitions for each building/different architects, is the only mechanism that is currently available to address Design Quality. It is a good condition, as it stands between no real means to assess, and even enforce design quality, and a means to ensure that there is some degree of design quality in the development. It is essential to be retained.

Victorian Park is a good precedent, where different buildings by different architects created a sense of diversity across a large estate. Internationally, it is becoming more and more standard for design competitions to ensure design quality and a better quality urban environment that has a sense of diversity, not sameness. For example, across much of Europe, and many parts of Asia, this is standard for any development the size of Lewisham.

If the Development Application lodged with Marrickville Council is the example we need to judge by, having all the buildings the same will produce a monotonous poor quality urban landscape. From my international experience, I can attest that the design as lodged to Marrickville Council would not meet any international design quality standards for either urban design, landscape design, nor architecture. The buildings do not activate the streets in an interesting and effective manner. The facades lack detail, and patterned/coloured panels does not represent good design. The differentiation between public and private space is incredibly poor.

Further, the montages, especially the one showing the perspective from the Light Rail stop (attached), shows that there is no understanding of Transit-Oriented design, which the proposal was approved on the basis of. Any reasonable urban design can inform that you never place a roundabout at a light rail stop, because of the need of kiss and ride/taxi drop-off, and you need a high quality pedestrian path/shared zoned through to any public space/footpath. The montage shows that there are plants all along the light rail, with no paths or connections, hence they are ignoring the light rail stop, as well as the wider landscape connectivity through to the proposed open space at the Mills development. Even the raised lip for the cafe area shows that there is no idea of connecting this for how people will come from the light rail. This is very bad design quality. I point this

example out to emphasis the need for the design quality condition to remain.

I could go on for pages about the lack of design quality exhibited in what has been lodged with Marrickville Council.

Further, for such a large development, Public Art is a good idea to create some interest in the public spaces, and add some value to the wider community. This condition should not be deleted, but perhaps could be modified to ensure that Meriton give the funding for this and dedicated spaces to Marrickville Council.

It is also incredibly disappointing to read that Meriton also seek to stay at the minimum BASIX level for sustainability. BASIX has not changed in years, and how the world sees sustainability has advanced considerably. It is not rocket science to design good sustainable buildings, nor does it necessarily cost more. It just takes a good architectural team to develop the design so that good sensible sustainability is embedded in the design, and is not a whizz-bang expense add-on. All the reports for the Australian Government on the sustainability has indicated that energy efficiency in buildings is one of the lowest hanging fruit to achieve a lower carbon emissions, and better urban outcomes. It is not difficult to design a low-energy building, even a passive building of this scale. Thus it comes down to getting the right architect, rather selecting any old architect who has no or little understanding of good sustainability. It is not hard to achieve a better standard of water use. It is not hard to select more sustainable materials. It is not an unreasonable ask to require Meriton to go above and beyond BASIX, and I would urge the Department to retain this condition.

Also, the change of car park entry, a long ramp along the western boundary of the development will effect the ground floor units of block A and B and I understand that it will be the only entry to the underground car park, which means more traffic on Hudson Street, and it will mean that there will excessive traffic in the roundabout already mentioned which will affect the attractiveness of the light rail, and will create significant pedestrian/car conflicts for those using the light rail, and open space.

Overall, I urge the Department to not change these conditions, especially the Design Quality condition, as they are what will make this development better than poor-average. I would be happy to elaborate further on my comments, should that be necessary.

Yours,

Peter Robinson

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