



16 October 2018

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Assessments
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SECTION 75W MODIFICATION REQUEST, WESTFIELD SHOPPING CENTRE,
159-175 CHURCH ST, PARRAMATTA (MP10__0068 MOD 1)

Dear Brendan,

The Government Architect NSW has been asked to provide independent design review of the Section 75W Modification Request, Westfield Shopping Centre, 159-175 Church St, Parramatta (MP10__0068 Mod 1). Please find our response below.

This review is based on the EIS prepared by Ingham Planning and urban design report prepared by Woods Bagot, public domain strategy prepared by Site Image.

Amendments to the approved commercial office tower the following issues are noted;

Submission materials

The information provided to support this application is unclear:

- The drawings showing existing development, additions already approved and proposed modifications are particularly confusing.
- Unclear if the proposal is a design or a diagram. The proposed envelope is described as indicative with some scope for articulation but is shown in perspectives as a fully rendered, completed building. The supporting GFA table also indicates that the requested GFA fully occupies the proposed building envelope.
- The comparison with similar commercial office developments is misleading – only the floor plates are shown for all 3 buildings, which have substantially less height and GFA yield than this proposal.

Tower relocation

The proposed relocation of the tower towards the west is generally supported as it better preserves the scale and character of Church Street south of the railway. However, the proposed alignment with Church St to the north is not supported. Framed by the Church St corridor, the tower will be highly prominent from the north. More significantly, it will dominate St Johns Church which is on axis with the Church St corridor.

Scale and Built form

Very little consideration appears to have been given to the impact of the overall scale and form of the tower. It fails to even meet a modest 6m setback from Argyle St which would have somewhat mitigated the scale impact on the street.

There is little urban design justification for proposed changes to tower height and volume. The suggested 'gateway' relationship with the Aspire tower is not convincing, given that tower development in the CBD is 'clustered' rather than axial.

The proposed GFA fully occupies the tower envelope (as noted above) leaving no

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opportunity for articulation of built form. To maximise opportunity for design excellence there should be greater scope to vary the tower envelope and also provide for generously scaled internal areas as shown in the supporting images.

The impact of the proposal on the view catchment of nearby precincts and landmarks has not been considered. Of particular note are the historic core of Parramatta Park, St Johns Church and Centennial Square to the north.

Sustainability and ESD considerations

The commercial rationale for enlarging the floor plate is noted, but will require more supporting evidence. The impact of the larger floor plate is that an unacceptable proportion of each floor plate will be more than 12m from an external window. The supporting documents indicate that over 80% of the floor area is within 12m of a natural light source, but this appears incorrectly calculated and should be reviewed and demonstrated with properly scaled and measured drawings.

The proposal to achieve 5-star Greenstar rating is unambitious for a premium commercial office building. A 6-star rating would be more appropriate.

Public Domain

The introduction of active uses on the Argyle street frontage is strongly supported as the existing colonnade is one of the bleakest street frontages in Parramatta. While outdoor dining is a good use along this north facing frontage, it appears to fully occupy the colonnade which serves a number of important functions:

- the most direct, sheltered pedestrian route from the station to the western edge of the CBD.
- sheltered bus stop waiting area for 4 different routes (over 200 daily services)

It also likely that the proposed tower will increase pedestrian movements along this frontage, putting the remaining footpath under considerable additional pressure.

Architecture

As noted above, with the extent of proposed GFA, there is no opportunity for envelope articulation or for spacious internal areas.

The proposed commercial lobby at the roof of the shopping centre is not supported. Dramatic and generously proportioned lobbies are important to the life of the street and more consideration should be given to re-programming a greater proportion of ground level retail to create a suitably grand entry for this proposal.

In conjunction with this proposal there is a further opportunity to open up the blank upper levels of the Argyle Street frontage – taking advantage of its north facing prospect and railway frontage to create a unique and memorable experience for shoppers and commuters alike.

In view of these opportunities a targeted Design Excellence strategy is required to mitigate the significant visual and urban impact of the proposed volume.

On the basis of the materials submitted, please note the following recommendations;

1. Specific Design Excellence requirements for the design of the tower. A review of the entire podium, and the public domain should be included in this process. A combination of Competitive Design selection processes and formal Design Review is recommended.
2. Review of tower location away from the Church St corridor and any upper level setback controls that apply to Church St.
3. In relation to the above, the proposal should be supported by a more considered urban design assessment of the proposed height and volume in the context of the Parramatta CBD. As part of this assessment the following should also be considered:
 - impact of the proposal on the view catchment of significant precincts and landmarks, eg historic core of Parramatta Park, St Johns Church, Centennial Square, Church St corridor.
 - benchmarking against height, volume and articulation of similar developments in the CBD
 - pedestrian analysis, including projected volumes and movement patterns.
4. Adjust the proposed envelope to enable greater articulation of the built form. The proposed volumes should be considered a **maximum** envelope, with GFA that occupies no more than 70% of the envelope (ie max 80,000sm GFA).
5. Floor plate should be configured so that work stations are no more than 12m from an external window. Provide properly scaled and measured drawings to accurately demonstrate that this is achieved.
6. Greenstar target should be increased to a 6-star rating.
7. Review location of the tower lobby, demonstrating how it will be integrated with ground level uses and activate the street.
8. In conjunction with the above, undertake a detailed review of the entire Argyle Street frontage, considering outdoor dining strategies, mapping projected pedestrian volumes and addressing bus operation and pedestrian amenity.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss these recommendations or require clarification.

Yours sincerely,



Lee Hillam
A / Director Design Excellence