

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL (INTERIM)

THE PANEL'S ADVICE

Project:	Capitol Hotel Manuka (Block 3 and 4, Section 96 Griffith)
Date:	Wednesday 7 March 2018
Meeting location:	Quality Inn, Corner Badham and Cape Streets, Dickson, ACT
Panel members:	Catherine Townsend, ACT Government Architect
	Andrew Smith, Chief Planner, National Capital Authority
	Ric Thorp, Architect
	Annabelle Pegrum, Strategic Adviser, Elton Consulting
	Noam Maitless, Design Director, GHD Woodhead
Proponent:	Liangis Investments Pty Ltd, Cox Architecture, Canberra Town Planning
Observers:	Environment Planning and Sustainable Development, National Capital Authority
Conflicts of interest:	None

MEETING MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATION

Property address:	15 Franklin Street Griffith (Block 3 and 4, Section 96 Griffith)
Proposal:	<p>The site is bounded by Canberra Avenue (Manuka Circle), Franklin Street, and Flinders Way. The subject site (Block 3 and 4, Section 96 Griffith) is 822m², with the total area of Section 96 Griffith being 3,082m².</p> <p>The proposal is for a six storey hotel on Blocks 3 and 4 Section 96 Griffith that includes one level of basement parking (16 spaces), ground floor lobby, restaurant/cafe and five levels of hotel accommodation. The proposal is a first stage of redevelopment for the whole of Section 96 Griffith.</p> <p>The proposal is for a landmark development for the Manuka group centre as a neo-classical design inspired by European cities such as Barcelona and Paris. Stage 2 is proposed to continue the design theme and aesthetic of Stage 1.</p> <p>The proposed hotel has its primary address to Flinders Way with a new vehicle access on the Flinders Way verge to allow for pick up and drop off at a porte cochere. Service and basement entry is proposed to be accessed from a service lane from Manuka Circle and the substation is proposed on Franklin Street. The proposal assumes the removal of a registered tree (tree No. 93 on the Tree Register) that is located on Block 3, close to the Franklin Street frontage.</p>

Proponents' representative address to the panel:

Cox Architecture and Canberra Town Planning presented the proposal to the Panel as a six storey hotel redevelopment of Blocks 3 and 4 of Section 96 Griffith.

The proposal was presented as a five star boutique hotel and as part of the first stage of redevelopment for the entire Section 96 Griffith, which could include a redeveloped cinema. Timing for the second stage of development is unknown at this point in time.

The design of the development was described as a neo-classical design inspired by European cities such as Barcelona and Paris and includes 2.6m floor to ceiling heights for the hotel room floors. This takes the proposal slightly above (approximately 300mm) the 18m height limit provided in the Manuka Circle Development Control Plan.

The location of the core and internal access are deliberate to allow for the future extension of Stage 1 into Stage 2 at the upper levels. The Panel noted that the ground floor plan prevents future expansion of the foyer area.

Site visit:

07/03/2018

Recommendation:

The Panel does not support the proposal in its current form as it is not considered to meet key provisions set out in the Manuka Circle Development Control Plan or the aspirations for high quality architectural response in this prominent location. The Panel request that the design team prepare a revised scheme that demonstrates the long term development of the entire Section 96 Griffith and that considers retention of the Registered tree.

Key issues and recommendations:

The Panel appreciates the way that the design team has engaged with the design review panel and welcomes the opportunity for the proponent to continue to collaborate with the Panel.

The National Capital Design Review Panel (interim) is established as an advisory and independent panel to assist design teams to realise the full potential of development proposals. Therefore, it is important to note that the design review panel is not a regulatory body or a decision maker for approvals of the development or removal of a Registered tree.

Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review session, a site visit undertaken on Wednesday 7 March 2018, the proponents presentation and the panel's deliberations, the following advice is provided:

Site context and urban form response

- It is recommended that a more comprehensive design is undertaken for the whole of Section 96 Griffith. The current opportunities for the site appears to be limited without due consideration of the second stage. The Panel identified several issues that would benefit from a more comprehensive design resolution of Section 96 Griffith, including a better understanding of the infrastructure upgrades required for the entire section (substation as an example), consideration and response to ground floor activation on all sides, and waste and services management. In addition, the built form response to the requirements of the Development Control Plan (DCP) for Manuka Circle requires more consideration and resolution. The DCP identifies that Stage 2 will need to step the building down along the Franklin Street frontage, which results in an unacceptable design
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resolution and interface from the current proposal along Franklin Street. In its current form, it will present as a blank wall on to Franklin Street. A design proposal for the whole of Section 96 will allow for the opportunity to better resolve the issues identified above.

- The existing development on Franklin Street currently allows for and, in part, contributes to an active streetscape. An indicative view along Canberra Avenue (Manuka Circle) of the proposal was presented, but omits how Stage 1 and Stage 2 could contribute to an active frontage on to Franklin Street. A more considered and comprehensive approach to the redevelopment of Section 96 Griffith will provide the opportunity to resolve this issue prior to resolution of the current proposal in isolation.

Architectural language and building height

- The Manuka Circle Development Control Plan (DCP), under Theme 5: Design Quality, calls for development that responds to and contributes to its context. The DCP also calls for well-designed buildings that respond to and enhance the qualities and identity of the area including the adjacent sites, streetscape and neighbourhood. The Panel does not consider that the architectural language of the proposal responds to its context in the Manuka group centre and Manuka Circle precinct. The Panel requires further understanding of the rationale behind the architectural response and inspiration for this site, in context of its local context and wider urban context.
- The Manuka Circle DCP identifies the maximum building heights, including rooftop plant, for Section 96 Griffith up to RL592 (18 metres from the Canberra Avenue kerb) and includes a stepping down to RL583 to allow for a good level of solar access to Franklin Street. The proposed mansard roof is marginally above RL592 and includes a mechanical plant that is well above RL592. The Panel would be willing to consider recommending acceptance of a minor increase above the maximum building height, where a proposal is designed to a high architectural design standard and that meets the provisions outlined under the DCP. As the Panel is not convinced that the architectural language of the proposal, in its current form, responds to and enhances the qualities and identity of the area, the Panel does not support the proposed building height above RL592.

Exterior materials

- The Panel noted that while the proposed palette of materials is acceptable, the immediate and enduring appearance of the building will be largely influenced by the quality and resolution of the construction detailing of the precast and primary building elements such as windows, doors, balconies and roof. The Panel would appreciate a greater understanding of the materials and detailing in future iterations of the design and would encourage materials and finishes that provide a contextual reference to the established character of the Manuka group centre and immediate surrounds.

Registered Tree

- The Panel notes the positive contribution that the existing Registered tree offers to the Franklin Street streetscape and broader landscape setting of the area. The Panel also notes that the proponent will seek to de-register the tree on Block 3 Section 96 Griffith as part of a development application.

The panel did not consider the proponent had demonstrated that removal of the tree was warranted. While not part of the decision making process for the registered tree, the Panel expressed concern that the starting assumption of the proposal was that removal of the tree would be approved. This decision appears to have been made without consideration of other design solutions. The Panel recommends that the design team explore and demonstrate other design solutions for the site, where the Registered tree is retained in the case that approval to remove the tree is not granted. Exploration of other design solutions for the site would benefit being undertaken as part of a more comprehensive design for the whole of section 96.

Substation location

- While the site has three street frontages, it is understood by the Panel that there will need to be provision for infrastructure, services and basement entry/exit to the new development. However, the proposed location for the substation, facing Franklin Street, is not supported as it does not provide an appropriate interface to Franklin Street and is considered to negatively impact on public domain. There is an opportunity, through a more comprehensive design of the whole of Section 96, to identify a more appropriate location for the substation, where the impact on the streetscape will be reduced and allow for a more active edge to the Franklin Street frontage.

Waste

- The proposal does not include waste handling areas as part of the current proposal and it is understood from the proponent that facilities from the adjoining building will be accessed. The Panel considers that the existing facilities may not be sufficient and recommends the proponent explore an alternative approach given the waste generation of a development of this nature.
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