

## **Thornton Lot 3008 - Quest Serviced Apartments**

### **Introduction**

- 1 This opinion in relation to design excellence relates to detailed concept plans which have been prepared by DKO Architects dated January 2016.
- 2 This opinion has been provided on the understanding that proponents have received a waiver in relation to the design competition clause in the *Penrith LEP 2010*.
- 3 This opinion responds to considerations which are specified by clause 8.4 of *Penrith LEP 2010*.

### **Design excellence - in summary**

- 4 Overall, the development concept demonstrates effective responses to a difficult site, and provides creative urban design solutions in relation to a development type that typically results in buildings which are visually-uninspiring:
  - i Particular design challenges are presented by the site's irregular shape and limited lateral dimensions.
- 5 Positive urban design solutions are demonstrated by active frontages which provide a sleeve or screen to parking and servicing areas:
  - i Uses which would contribute 'visible activity' are located along the full frontage to Lord Sheffield Drive, and facing the pedestrian laneway which bisects Lot 3008:
    - The main lobby and adjacent cafe which has seating along the pedestrian lane;
    - A conference area at the eastern corner;
    - Offices at the northern corner.
  - ii Parking and servicing are accessed from a rear laneway which allows similar access to Stages 1 and 2 of the Thornton development.
  - iii The proposed location of one above-ground parking level would not compromise desired activity at street level and would not be visually-offensive:
    - The majority of parking would be located behind active uses such as a gym and apartments;
    - A relatively small carpark frontage would be exposed, but would be screened by positive architectural treatment of the facade.
- 6 Positive urban design solutions also are demonstrated by the proposed building form and by the detailed design of facades:
  - i The two distinct forms and facade treatments which are proposed for opposing facades respond to differing contexts.
  - ii Facing the city centre and station plaza, the building form comprises two broad planes which are linked by a curved corner, and a potentially-repetitive arrangement of windows is avoided by a combination of measures:

- Projecting frames which articulate each storey, and which provide effective scaling for this otherwise sheer-fronted eight storey building.
  - The mix of windows and indented balconies which create rhythmic patterns of varied-height openings that are separated by contrast-coloured panels of masonry.
  - Active uses on the ground floor are identified by an undercroft which is supported by splayed columns, together with near-continuous shop-front windows.
- iii Facing Thornton Stage Two, the building adopts a podium-and-tower configuration and displays a variety of rectilinear forms which are different to the city-centre facades, but which would be more-compatible with the adjacent Stage Two development:
- The podium element extends to the rear laneway and to the pedestrian lane, and the landscaped podium-top extends over an elevated pergola which hangs across the pedestrian lane.
  - The north-facing facade is articulated by 'interlocking' balcony elements and sunhoods which would contribute to a lively pattern of light-and-shade that moderate the scale of this otherwise-sheer facade.

### **Recommended amendments**

- 7 Minor amendments are recommended in order to deliver design excellence:
- i Landscaping between the conference room and laneway should have a minimum width of 3m in order to accommodate a substantial bed of plants that would contribute decisively to streetscape quality.
  - ii To ensure that the pedestrian lane does not become a wind tunnel, 'wind gates' or similar treatments should be added to block or break solid south-westerly winds.
- 8 Although adequacy of carparking which has been questioned by Council officers, this has no bearing upon urban design considerations.

### **Conclusions**

- 9 Concept plans demonstrate design excellence according to matters which are specified by clause 8.4 of the *Penrith LEP 2010*:
- i A high standard of architectural design is evident in relation to building forms together with the composition and detailing of facades.
  - ii Building forms and the composition of facades respond to local contextual considerations, and would achieve a high degree of compatibility with their surroundings as well as contributing to high quality streetscapes.
    - The building would provide an urbane backdrop to the station plaza and the city centre;

- It would provide an appropriate transition between the station plaza and the slightly taller buildings in Thornton Stage Two;
  - The change in design strategy which is evident for north-facing facades would provide more-appropriate 'companions' to the neighbouring Thornton Stage Two development.
- iii Having regard for the Thornton masterplan layout and permissible building heights, proposed building forms would not compromise any view corridors:
- The proposed building contains eight storeys, and is considerably lower than the 32m maximum permissible height.
- iv Shadows would not affect lands which are identified by *Penrith LEP 2010* as Area 4 (between Henry and High Streets, and some distance from the Site).
- v The proposed development would complement surrounding high density residential and mixed uses which have been approved, or which are the subject of current development applications, or which are anticipated in response to the Thornton master plan.
- vi The development concept includes public domain improvements in the form of a pedestrian laneway together with the landscaping of perimeter and overhead areas.
- vii Sustainability would be addressed by various means:
- Landscaping of the podium-top and laneway pergola would moderate summer heat and glare;
  - Summer heat gain would be managed by north-facing balconies, by small windows in the eastern elevation of the apartment tower, and by the blank north-western elevation of that tower.
- viii No adverse impacts are evident in relation to surrounding streets and public paces, or in relation to neighbouring land uses, properties or developments.



Brett Newbold  
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 Independent member, Penrith City Council's UDRP