



THE PANEL'S ADVICE

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

Block 1 Section 49 Kingston – Second Session
Kingston Arts Precinct



Australian Government
National Capital Authority



ACT
Government

NATIONAL CAPITAL DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

THE PANEL'S ADVICE

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Project: Kingston Arts Precinct

Review date: Wednesday 17 June 2020

Meeting location: Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Site visit: Wednesday 16 October 2019

Panel members: Catherine Townsend, Chair

Andrew Smith, Co-Chair

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Proponent: Geocon

Observers: Representatives from the:

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD)

Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD)

National Capital Authority (NCA)

Suburban Land Authority (SLA)

Conflicts of interest: None

MEETING SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Property address: 11 Wentworth Avenue Kingston (Block 1 Section 49 Kingston)

Proposal:

In late 2015, Section 49 Kingston was released by the ACT Government through a Request for Tender (RFT) process seeking a design response that would consider development opportunities within the land, celebrate the presence of heritage within the site and include a visual arts precinct which facilitates the individuality of selected arts organisations.

The proposed master plan and design concepts is the response to the 2015 RFT process which required respondents to prepare a development proposal for the design and delivery of a mixed-use precinct incorporating a range of public assets, including new visual arts buildings, car parking (with approximately 500 publicly available spaces) and an outdoor events space. The Suburban Land Agency (SLA) has negotiated an agreement with Geocon (the proponent) that includes project delivery conditions, approval processes and a four year timeframe for handover of arts facilities and other public assets.

The Kingston Arts Precinct (KAP) master plan and design concepts propose a public domain designed to celebrate the site's history and context, honouring the presence of the heritage buildings. A new central square is proposed (known as the 'public canvas') to provide a green space adjacent to the fitters' workshop and the old bus depot, to accommodate events, festivals and outdoor markets. Activated streetscapes, laneways and pocket parks are proposed as the 'glue' that binds the heritage buildings and the new buildings at the edges of the site.

The proponent team intends to lodge an Estate Development Plan (EDP) with the planning and land authority at the end of 2020.

Proponents' representative address to the panel:

The proponent represented by [REDACTED] from Oculus and [REDACTED] from Fender Katsalidis Architects commenced their presentation by highlighting the continued presence of the 'public canvas' for their development proposal, being the area within the precinct that is bounded by the key cultural buildings to form the 'heritage heart'. The proponent then discussed key design concepts that have undergone further design development following the initial presentation to the Panel on 16 October 2019. Changes between the previous and this iteration were identified as follows:

- The Glassworks forecourt, particularly the view into the precinct from the south-west Wentworth Avenue aspect through to the Glassworks building has been revised. A more generous space has been provided to 'open-up' the view from Wentworth Avenue enabling the retention of a significant heritage tree. Increasing this area was also described as an opportunity for spill-out space from the proposed Arts Hub.
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- the pedestrian connection from the north-east Eastlake Parade entrance has been strengthened to celebrate the connection to the water (Lake Burley Griffin), through opening and widening the proposed laneway and offering a greater landscape gesture to provide a sense of 'green arrival'.
- the visual connection down Printers Way and Trevillian Quay has also been strengthened. Additionally, the generosity and greening of the arrival from the Trevillian Quay entrance through to the Fitters Workshop has been increased.
- Further character development of the northern aspect and substation area has occurred, with the introduction of Chapel Square. The existing substation and chapel building encapsulate a new public space that is associated with the chapel. This includes a new connection to the north terminating on the Glassworks building.
- The east-west connection has been strengthened to create a primary laneway named the 'Arts Walk'.
- Further consideration and development of the proposed car parking facility has been undertaken, noting that the proposed long form enables it to perform as a distributor of visitors to the site. Also, the proposed car park is considered a catalyst of activity and public experience with increased vertical circulation points facilitate ease of movement. Furthermore, the proposed retail and artists' studios are attached to the face fronting Arts Walk and there is a proposed rooftop venue space. Also described was the intent for the carpark to become a vertical extension of the landscape.

The key design principals for the public domain was then provided that included, a public domain lead design; with variety; activity; interfaces; compression; invitation; circulation; and intimacy and scale. The proponent also identified several 'key moments' within the scheme and noted that refining differentiated characters for these spaces has created a series of distinct places within the precinct that intends to maintain interest and life throughout.

The proponent went on to discuss the pedestrian movement experience, that is proposed to be focussed on the idea of opening-up and narrowing-down the laneway widths to create heightened interest as users travel through the various spaces across the precinct. The importance of invitation and a highly public character was also reinforced, drawing attention to 'playing-up' (i.e. greater architectural expression) corners and edges as a technique to enable legibility of invitation. Development of a hierarchy for the laneways was discussed. The proponent provided exemplar projects from Australia and New Zealand (Fort Street, Kendall Lane, Kensington Street and Scotch Row) to describe the intent for widths and corresponding laneways included in this proposal and their public domain characters.

The proponent also noted the necessity to provide areas of public space that are adaptable and generous. Highlighting the public canvas open space area of 90 metres by 60 metres, the proponent estimated its' capacity for general use at 600 persons, compared to a large scale event capacity of 7,000 persons and a minimum socially distanced capacity of 720 persons.

The Arts Hub building was presented as a singular form that will hold multiple arts organisations. The building form was described as derived from the long-shed typology that previously existed on the site when the area historically operated as an industrial use. The proponent noted that the proposed Arts Hub building is intended to have a clear overarching identity, however as users approach the building the individual identity of each organisation would emerge through detailed expression. The architecture of the building was described as having a sculptural and playful character using simple materials (glass and corten steel) that are redolent of the industrial past of the precinct. Corten steel was discussed as a material that has a popular association with cultural facilities and holds a perceived relationship with public buildings. The corten was also noted for its weathering qualities, which would enhance location specific individuality for sections of the building as it ages. The use of concrete fins along the extents of the Arts Hub was described to link and stitch together otherwise disparate elements with the intent of creating a unified whole.

Recommendation: Based on the documentation provided prior to the design review session; a site visit by the Panel on Wednesday 19 October 2019; and the proponents presentation, the following comments and recommendations are provided:

The Panel acknowledges the proponent team's willingness to engage in design review and commends the well-considered response to the Panel's Advice from the previous session. The Panel congratulates the proponent team on the extensive development of the proposal since the last design review session and is pleased to see key design concepts and principals progressing through finer grain details. The Panel is impressed by the quality and breadth of work to date and thanks the proponent for their investment in the design review process. During the session the Panel however identified several opportunities for further consideration and design development by the proponent as follows.

The Panel remains concerned that the integration of the greater external road, pedestrian and active travel networks has not yet been sufficiently resolved. The Panel notes that existing networks should influence the outcomes within the precinct. As such, the Panel requests further studies and rationalisation of vehicle, pedestrian and active travel integration, particularly regarding access points into the precinct.

The proposed ground plane strategy of 'opening-up and narrowing-down' is generally supported by the Panel. During the design review session the Panel also identified opportunities to further enhance the channelling of views and movement by intentionally harnessing and celebrating key heritage components of the heritage buildings and surrounds.

The Panel is not convinced that potential conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular movements within the laneways has been sufficiently resolved as presented. The Panel notes the early stages of development and looks forward to seeing further diagrammatic studies of overlaid vehicular movement, pedestrian movement and proposed uses (i.e. café, retail, residential) to demonstrate a clear proposal for the ground plane of the precinct. As such, the Panel also seeks further clarification regarding anticipated distribution of uses across the precinct to better understand the

public domain characters and activation strategy, particularly regarding uses interfacing the 'key moments'.

The Panel requests clear diagrams that include use and movement overlays indicative of the key operations of the precinct (e.g. general day trading versus weekends, events with available activity space, performances stages and audience areas, market stalls, outdoor seating, etc.). These diagrams should also show overlay vehicular movements within the spaces, noting that time-controlled access for service delivery or waste management vehicles, pick-up/set-down and short stay parking. The Panel suggests that these diagrams should illuminate how the precinct will work as a community and public domain.

The Wentworth Avenue/Glassworks forecourt was discussed at length. The proponent is highly commended for retaining the centrally located significant heritage tree. Although the Panel remains concerned that a suitable urban gesture has not yet been discovered for this key anchor point for the precinct. The Panel suggests that this space should be a generous area that responds to its vehicular aspect and acts as a significant gesture, suitable to welcome and to provide a vignette of the precinct greater. The Panel therefore recommends that this space undergoes further development and looks forward to seeing creative design solutions that enable the legibility of the primacy of this forecourt.

The Panel also believes that the proposed massing along the vertical axis requires further consideration. The Panel notes that the upper levels of the proposed scheme appear overburdened by built form and is concerned that this will impede on important sky views, key visual connections, privacy and access to sunlight within the precinct.

Furthermore, the Panel is not convinced that the long-shed form of the Arts Hub is best suited to enable the desired characteristics of a contemporary precinct, that celebrates the heritage context and delivers high amenity for users. The Panel therefore recommends that vertical openings be protected and celebrated and suggests that the proponent considers a redistribution or reduction of massing to best enable these outcomes.

The Panel would like to reinforce their appreciation of the proponent team's work undertaken to date and looks forward to seeing further development of the design with the response to the *Key Issues and Recommendations* of the Panel's Advice below at the next design review session for the Kingston Arts Precinct proposal.

Key Issues and Recommendations

The *Key Issues and Recommendations* provides detail advice to the proponent, consistent with the above recommendation.

To achieve the best possible design outcome for the proposal, the proponent is encouraged to consider the following issues through the next stages of the design development:

1.0 Context and character

1.1 The Panel is pleased to see further development of the visual connections to the heritage buildings from both internal and external vantages. The Panel does however request that visual connections

capture the key elements of the heritage buildings to meaningfully and intentionally celebrate these items (i.e. turning a corner or opening the built form to frame/reveal an architectural heritage component). The Panel therefore recommends that the proponent defines the key elements of the heritage buildings and looks forward to seeing creative outcomes for visual connection experiences.

- 1.2 The Panel remains concerned that the proposed Glassworks forecourt fronting Wentworth Avenue does not yet achieve an appropriate urban gesture. The Panel considers the forecourt as an important opportunity to offer a vignette to the precinct greater and define the site from this highly trafficable view. The Panel recommends that the proponent reconsiders the generosity of the opening to Wentworth Avenue and calibrates this response with vehicles that are travelling at 60 kilometres per hour. The proponent is encouraged to consider alternative configurations or the removal of the building at its southern edge to enable the recommended outcomes and suggests that this forecourt could be characterised as a 'place in waiting' rather than a busy activated space. Therefore, the Panel requests that the proponent further develops the generosity and legibility of this forecourt as a primary welcoming gesture to the precinct from this important vehicular aspect.

2.0 Landscape

- 2.1 The Panel appreciates the proponent's acknowledgement of the extent of hard surfacing for a highly trafficable precinct. The Panel notes the importance of deep root planting and ground surface permeability to address the potential for urban heat island effect, manage rainfall during storm events and provide more pleasant outdoor spaces during winter. The Panel therefore looks forward to seeing further development of landscape strategies in response to Canberra's climate and the potential for extreme conditions.
- 2.2 The Panel welcomes the increased greening of key pedestrian routes, particularly at entry points to the precinct. The Panel however notes that the proposal does not yet integrate with surrounding landscape existing in the public realm. The Panel therefore looks forward to seeing this proposals response to existing landscaping at future design review sessions.
- 2.3 The Panel commends the proponent's aspiration for providing differentiated character throughout the precinct at the finer grain. The Panel notes that landscaping will enhance this perception and looks forward to seeing the application of suitable landscape gestures that respond to developed characters of various areas within the precinct (e.g. large canopy trees to shade outdoor seating areas, gardens separating paths of movement, etc.).

3.0 Sustainability

- 3.1 The Panel appreciates the early stages of design and looks forward to seeing further development and integration of sustainability principals for this proposal at future design review sessions.
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4.0 Density and connectivity

- 4.1 The Panel remains concerned that the vehicular access strategy compromises pedestrian safety, visual amenity and traffic management outcomes. Particularly along Eastlake Parade where the proposal includes eight vehicular access points from this street. The Panel requests the proponent provides traffic studies with predicted vehicle numbers against key operations of the precinct (i.e. during weekdays, market day, events, etc.). The Panel then suggests that the proponent revisits the vehicular access strategy against these studies, ensuring that appropriate service levels are provided to existing and proposed street networks and that high-volume traffic events can be suitably managed.
- 4.2 The Panel acknowledges the development of the key pedestrian linkages into the site. The Panel however remains concerned that the integration of the greater external road, pedestrian and active travel networks have not yet been sufficiently resolved and suggests that the existing networks should influence the proposed access points for this scheme. As such, the Panel seeks further studies and rationalisation of safe traffic movements around and into the site, particularly the consolidation of vehicular cross-over points and the inclusion of signalised pedestrian access points that respond to the existing external networks.
- 4.3 The proposal to include mixed pedestrian and vehicular laneways within the precinct is generally supported by the Panel. However, a clear strategy for managing the overlay of vehicle and pedestrian movements through the site has not yet been presented. In order to ascertain the functionality of this arrangement, the Panel requests a clear diagram to be presented in the following design review session that clearly indicates the internal circulation including street level parking; carpark access points; vehicular movements (including i.e. directions of travel, access points from external roads, internal lay-bys, one-way streets, bollards, waste truck routes, etc.); and strategies for facilitating safe pedestrian movements (i.e. differentiated ground surface treatments, inclusion of landscaping, etc.) and how these arrangements can smoothly facilitate key operations of the precinct under different scenarios (i.e. during market day, large events, general trading, weekends, etc.).

5.0 Built form and scale

- 5.1 The Panel notes the reverence for the historic 'long-shed' form that has been transposed into the proposed Arts Hub building. The Panel also acknowledges potential benefits of offering long, continuous gallery spaces, particularly regarding equitable outcomes for accessibility. The Panel is however concerned that the long-shed form interrupts important visual connections, sky views and increases overshadowing that is exacerbated by the proposed density for this site. The Panel therefore suggests that the Arts Hub building form should enable the design objective outcomes for this contemporary precinct and requests that the proponent resolves the tension between the proposed form and the qualitative outcomes for the public domain.

5.2 The proposed density of the precinct concerns the Panel as the current response as presented demonstrates potential to convey a defensive character, particularly at the Wentworth Avenue edge. The Panel suggests that variation of building heights, as well as the redistribution or reduction of massing across the site could create opportunities for welcoming gestures and to offer dynamic spatial and solar access outcomes for the public domain. Therefore, the Panel looks forward to further explorations of massing by the proponent that are responsive to contextual and environmental considerations.

5.3 The Panel is also concerned that the density on upper levels will reduce privacy and cause interface issues for future occupants of these spaces. The Panel therefore recommends that use-overlays and site sections are developed for future discussions with the Panel regarding this item.

6.0 Functionality and build quality

6.1 The Panel acknowledges the proponent's further development of the car parking structure and generally supports the proposal to skin the Arts Walk elevation with artists' studios and the landscaping to enable better integration with the precinct. The Panel however questions the proposed floor to floor heights of car parking structure and suggests the proponent investigates adaptive reuse opportunities should car parking requirements be reduced in future.

6.2 The Panel notes that the car parking structure includes multiple access points and comprises both public and private spaces. The Panel recognises that wayfinding and access legibility will be key to a good user experience in order to support the public car parking as a catalyst for activation. As such, the Panel requests the proponent refines the carparking access and recommends the in-boarding and consolidation of car parking entrances to promote better public domain outcomes (particularly along Eastlake Parade) as well as promoting ease of use.

6.3 The Panel notes the challenges in providing consolidated access to the car park when completed in stages. The Panel is however concerned for ease of usability should the proposed 300 visitor overflow spaces be spread across separate basements. As such, the Panel would support a consolidated basement carpark to promote ease of wayfinding and usability within this scheme.

7.0 Community and public domain

7.1 The Panel commends the proponent in their aspirations for developing a range of characters and throughout the public domain for this proposal. The Panel is however concerned that an allocation of inactive uses (i.e. egress stairs, plant rooms) directly interface key public spaces including the public canvas. The Panel requests that the proponent coordinates the active versus inactive uses to support intended character outcomes of the public domain and produces diagrams and sections that show distribution of proposed uses in the precinct.

7.2 The Panel is not yet clear regarding the proposed public domain outcomes particularly at the ground plane as proposed uses have not

yet been allocated throughout the precinct. The Panel notes that the distribution of active uses can support key operations of the precinct. The Panel therefore requests that the proponent provides diagrams showing proposed uses to demonstrate various scenarios within the precinct (e.g. general day trading with cafes, office, retail and outdoor seating areas for quiet enjoyment; outdoor events spaces with audience areas, food and beverage outlets; market day with stall locations, storage for bump-in/out, provision for temporary seating areas, etc.). This Panel notes that this information should illuminate how the precinct will work as a community and public domain.

- 7.3 The Panel notes that this development will likely influence the renewal of adjoining areas. The Panel notes the omission of the Bus Depot building in relation to outcomes of this proposal. As such, the Panel suggests that the proponent considers the existing Bus Depot building as a renewal opportunity rather than an inactive space and recommends that the proponent explores creative ways to engage with and enable future integration with this significantly relevant structure.

8.0 Visual appearance

- 8.1 The Panel notes the early stages of the built form for this proposal and acknowledges the proponents use of the bladed expression to unify expression throughout the precinct. The Panel questions whether greater diversity in the built form could strengthen the hierarchy of the heritage items and looks forward to seeing further development of the architectural expression at the next design review session.
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