

26th July 2021

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PROJECT: Pyrmont Key Site Masterplan – UTS, Indigenous Residential College (IRC)

RE: State Design Review Panel – Review No.2, 15th July 2021

Dear Kara,

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project a second time. Please find below a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 15th July 2021.

Overview

It is noted that the IRC project will be required to undertake a design competition in the next stage. Within this context, advice in this letter has been provided to support the establishment of optimum conditions for a successful competition. Two key matters have been considered: the proposed building envelope and the design competition process.

While the material presented in response to the first SDRP was well considered and comprehensive, a number of elements require further resolution, particularly as pertains to the proposed building envelope. As this envelope will inform the drafting of new planning controls for the site, a robust supporting rationale is required. At this stage the envelope does not assure a positive design outcome and is not considered supportable in its current form.

Given the above and the highly unique nature of the project as the first residential college for indigenous students, GANSW have consulted internally and provide the following advice on next steps:

1. Convene, at the earliest convenience, a meeting for the UTS design team with Aboriginal peers (SDRP panel members and others as proposed by the UTS design team / GANSW). The meeting should focus on the issues raised by the SDRP and the designers, with the intended outcome the development of a more nuanced mutual understanding of both perspectives and agreement on a way forward. This meeting could also include limited GANSW staff and/or current IRC SDRP panel members, as agreed with the design team.
2. Following the peer discussion, hold a third SDRP session to formally review responses to the issues raised by the SDRP to date, as listed below. GANSW will augment the current panel with a First Nations panel member for this

session, that panellist will have participated in the earlier meeting for continuity and to help ensure that the specific cultural requirements of the project are correctly represented and understood.

Design Review

The following elements of the design strategy are supported:

- The Country led thinking that underpins the project
- The commitment to Indigenous leadership and engagement thus far and in subsequent stages
- The sustainability approach and ambitious ESD targets. To further improve this approach, it is recommended:
 - to define the climate change scenario to be used for the design, from a precinct perspective
 - further specify responses to support urban heat resilience
 - promote upfront (embedded) carbon footprint to increase overall sustainability, including establishing a target.
- The commitment to deliver design excellence through a design competition with Indigenous led design teams.

The following commentary outlines key matters where further resolution is strongly recommended:

Building envelope

It is noted, and supported, that the brief has been shaped through extensive collaboration with Indigenous stakeholders. However, the proposed floor plates and building envelope currently appear oversized. The logic and rationale for the elements of the brief and how they fit together has not yet been communicated in either drawings or a clear set of performance criteria or guidance. In the absence of this information several aspects of the reference design informing the building envelope are questioned. A number of these were identified at the first SDRP session and include:

- the proximity and interface with neighbouring buildings, in particular the overshadowing and privacy impacts on the residential apartments to the south. It is noted that the envelope interface to the south would not allow meeting Apartment Design Guide objectives

- the location and amenity of IRC living spaces, with many not receiving any mid-winter sun
- the logic for how the building bulk and scale responds to the context, other than fitting the program
- the logic for the position and interfaces to circulation and shared spaces, other than being generous and providing an external gathering space
- the amount of natural light reaching some of the most recessed circulation spaces where artificial light is likely to be required
- the logic of using external façade area for lift lobbies and service rooms
- the size and location of services
- the role and relationship between the different elevated outdoor areas including the roof of the heritage building

It is necessary to demonstrate that there is flexibility in the proposed building envelope for delivering the brief in a way that is: culturally appropriate, functionally efficient, creative and cost effective. This includes demonstrating flexibility or competitive alternatives for:

- the design and location of elevated outdoor spaces
- ways to break up the building bulk and scale and be responsive to the context, in particular along Harris Street
- approaches to the interface and/or integration with the heritage building and its conservation as a heritage item (noting the Conservation Management Plan is yet to be endorsed)
- arrangements of living spaces of high internal amenity
- considered interfaces to the apartment building to the south
- reducing the height of the building which is significantly higher than similar buildings nearby
- additional building envelope further to the north, potentially overhanging or cantilevering over the heritage building, subject to heritage advice

Competition process

To support a best practice competition process, aspects recommended to be agreed upfront and clearly communicated include:

- confirming the agreed planning pathway so that competition requirements can be tailored accordingly, and the right level of detail developed
- defining which aspects of the reference design (or design requirements if the reference design is not issued with the brief) are fixed and what will be negotiable during the design competition phase
- it is noted that the intent is for the FSR to be included in the planning controls. Mechanisms that will ensure that the overall built form emerging from the competition process will be both proportionate and efficient should be clearly identified. This includes clear articulation of what will be counted as Gross Building Area and Gross Floor Area.

During the Panel debriefing time it was also suggested to:

- consider including at least one SDRP member in the competition jury, to provide continuity to the process
- consider alternative briefing mechanisms (beyond the competition brief) to communicate the project expectations, which can better capture the unique aspirations and drivers and the Indigenous perspective of the project.

Clarification is required on whether the ten percent design excellence bonus is sought in addition to or as part of the proposed envelope.

GANSW look forward to continuing to support this important project. Should you choose to proceed with the proposed process, or if you have any queries, please contact Darlene van der Breggen.



Sincerely,
Olivia Hyde
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Chair, Pyrmont Key Site Masterplan – UTS SDRP

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CC	
NSW SDRP Panel members	Rod Simpson, Digby Hall, Sophie Dyring, Penny Collins, Graham Jahn (CoS nominee) Olivia Hyde (Chair, SDRP)
GANSW Design Advisor	Melizza Morales, Darlene van der Breggen
DPIE	Thomas Watts, Sarah Waterworth, Thomas Soccio
City of Sydney	Reinah Urqueza
Hassell Studio	Thomas Hale
UTS	Kara Krason, Nigel Oliver
BVN	Kevin O'Brien
Aspect Studios	Sacha Coles
Ethos Urban	Alexis Cella
SJB Planning	Stuart Gordon
Procure Group	Vic Baueris
Ultimo Village Voice	William (Bill) d'Anthes (Community Representative)

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