

Urban Design Review Panel

Annual Report

2024



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City of
Newcastle

Acknowledgment of Country

City of Newcastle (CN) acknowledges its Local Government Area (LGA) sits within the Country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples. We acknowledge that Country for Aboriginal peoples is an interconnected set of ancient relationships. We acknowledge the custodianship of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples and the care and stewardship they have performed in this place since time immemorial. We recognise the history of truth that acknowledges the impact of invasion and colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how this still resonates today.

Enquiries

For information contact
Urban Design Review Panel (UDRP)
Phone 4974 2000

Published by
City of Newcastle
PO Box 489, Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone 4974 2000 Fax 4974 2222
planning@ncc.nsw.gov.au
newcastle.nsw.gov.au

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Foreword from the Chair

The City of Newcastle ('CN') Urban Design Review Panel ('UDRP') was requested to review an extensive array of proposals during the 2024 year, with a total value exceeding \$1.45 billion. These projects included several large, significant developments, as well as a selection of smaller projects with typologies and functions that had been identified by CN as being likely to benefit from design guidance. The UDRP agrees that good design is equally of benefit to relatively modest scaled developments such as childcare centres and group homes, as it is to larger commercial and mixed-use developments, and the UDRP equally enjoys providing input into smaller projects as much as larger, high-profile applications.

We are continuing to see the face of the City change and develop in a very exciting manner, but are mindful of the Country we are privileged to live on, and the wonderful Indigenous and colonial heritage we have inherited.

The ongoing housing shortage across NSW, and the need to ensure that the design review process contributes to added value and to optimising residential amenity, have been central in the UDRP's discussions throughout the year.

The preparedness of applicants in many instances to present designs prior to Development Application ('DA') stage is welcomed by the UDRP and indicate the value that many applicants see arising from its advice. Presentation of Pre-Application schematic designs, including design options, offers the opportunity of exploring concepts at a stage prior to developers incurring significant investments in time and consultant costs. Again in 2024, it has been common for more complex projects to be presented on several occasions as concepts are progressed.

The UDRP recognises the importance for consistency of advice throughout the progression of a proposal, and the need for consistency of advice across multiple presentations is ever present in panellists' minds.

The broad collective experience of the UDRP members, and their complementary expertise, consistently grounds the advice offered in concurrent, real-world experience with the practicalities and competing challenges of property development and construction.

Design excellence, and striving consistently for good design, are goals that are not inconsistent with achieving value for money and recognising regional cost constraints, and the UDRP continually strives to enhance the value equation in this process.

I would like to express the members' appreciation of the excellent support we have received from CN staff over the year, and I would also like to thank UDRP members for their positive contribution and diligence.

Dr Philip Pollard

Chair

Urban Design Review Panel

Understanding design review panels

A design review panel consists of expert and independent design professionals that provide constructive feedback on the design quality of development proposals and strategic design projects.

CN has a rich tradition of establishing and maintaining a design review panel. Reputedly the oldest continuously serving urban design and architectural advisory body in the state of New South Wales, the City's UDRP traces its origins back to the 1980's when it was initially formed as the Urban Design Consultative Group.

The UDRP operates in accordance with CN's Urban Design Review Panel Charter 2020 ('UDRP Charter'), and fulfils the functions of a design review panel, as set out in part 15, division 4A (Design review panels) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*, and for the purposes of section 7.5 (Design excellence) of the *Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012*.

For local government areas such as Newcastle where there is an established design review panel, development proposals are required to be reviewed by the panel when an environmental planning instrument such as a state environmental planning policy or local environmental plan ('LEP') stipulates design review. Other project types receive advice from the relevant design review panel at the request of the consent authority, as established under the UDRP Charter.

Acting in an advisory capacity, the UDRP plays a vital part in improving the design quality of new development within Newcastle by providing independent, impartial, and expert design advice.

The UDRP provides independent, expert advice to CN and applicants about the quality of the urban design and amenity of developments.



Membership

The UDRP membership comprises a specialist group of design professionals with extensive experience and appreciation of the design issues of the Newcastle Local Government Area ('LGA').

The UDRP met 13 times during 2024. The meetings are convened by three or more members chosen from the membership pool, having regard to providing a balanced representation of expertise, consistency in panel composition where a proposal requires more than one design review session, and member availability.

Details of the UDRP membership and attendance at meetings in 2024 are provided below.

UDRP membership completing their three-year term at the end of June 2024:



Dr Philip Pollard

Chair

Meetings attended: 6



Colin Brady

Member

Meetings attended: 3



Kerry Hunter

Member

Meetings attended: 5



Kristy Cianci

Member

Meetings attended: 2



David Moir

Alternate Member

Meetings attended: 0



Kelly O'Connell

Alternate Member

Meetings attended: 2

Selection of the (then) current UDRP Membership had occurred through a public Expression of Interest ('EOI') process in 2021. A Selection Panel was convened by the CEO and by consensus identified a Chair, Members, and Alternate Members recommended for appointment to the UDRP, which included selective shortlisted candidates. The recommended membership was appointed for a three-year term commencing in July 2021.

Amendments to this membership of the UDRP were made in December 2023 following the resignation of Member Justin Hamilton due to personal circumstances.

Appointment of Member and Alternate Member of the UDRP was undertaken in accordance with CN's UDRP Charter.

An EOI for (then) current Alternative Members to become a Member was conducted, resulting in Colin Brady being appointed as a Member to back fill the vacant position commencing January 2024.

Kelly O'Connell was the next candidate in the 2021 public EOI process and was appointed as an Alternate Member to back fill Colin's position commencing January 2024.

UDRP membership commencing their three-year term from the beginning of July 2024:



Dr Philip Pollard

Chair

Meetings attended: 4



Colin Brady

Member

Meetings attended: 4



David (Michael) Taylor

Member

Meetings attended: 1



Elisabeth Peet

Member

Meetings attended: 1



Kelly O'Connell

Member

Meetings attended: 1



Kerry Hunter

Member

Meetings attended: 4



Kristy Cianci

Member

Meetings attended: 5



Lachlan Seegers

Member

Meetings attended: 2

With the UDRP membership appointed in July 2021 completing their three-year term at the end of June 2024, a public tender process was undertaken in April 2024 with expressions of interest sought from suitably qualified professionals, not limited to, architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and heritage conservation, to join the UDRP for a period of three years. Overall, the quality of the applications was very high and of notable standard, with a range of experienced professionals across multiple design disciplines submitting expressions of interest.

Concurrently, amendments to the UDRP Charter were made to improve the operation of meetings and reference amendments in related legislation. Notability, the UDRP Charter was amended to remove the reference to Alternate Members was removed and the number of Members was also increased to seven Members, plus the Chairperson. Given the frequency of monthly UDRP meetings, a larger membership was necessary to meet operational demands and better manage potential conflicts of interest.

A Selection Panel convened by the CEO undertook a rigorous and competitive selection process, resulting in the recommendation of a Chair and seven Members for appointment to the UDRP. The recommended members were appointed for a three-year term which commenced in July 2024.



Render of 130 University Drive Callaghan, EJE Architecture

Applications considered by the panel

Throughout 2024, the UDRP convened for 13 meetings, undertaking a total of 67 individual design review sessions. These sessions offered guidance to CN staff and applicants on 49 different development proposals valued at over \$1.45 billion, as well as providing input on strategic projects including applicant led Planning Proposals. Key examples of significant proposals considered during 2024 are illustrated in this report.



EJE Architecture

DA2023/01044

130 University Drive Callaghan

Educational Establishment – alterations, additions and part change of use from Car Park

\$ 19.4 Million

Approved by the Development Applications Committee in August 2024

DA2023/01057

42-46 Brunker Road Broadmeadow

Residential flat building including three (3) into one (1) lot consolidation, thirty-one (32) lot strata subdivision and demolition of existing structures

\$9.8 million

Approved by the Development Applications Committee in December 2024



DA2023/01068

107 Tudor Street Hamilton

Residential flat building – including six lot strata subdivision and demolition of existing structures

\$6.1 million

Approved by the Hunter Central Coast Regional Planning Panel in August 2024





DA2023/00814

216 Maitland Road Islington

Commercial premises and residential flat building - including two (2) lot consolidation and seven (7) lot strata subdivision

\$1.9 Million

Approved by Council in August 2024

MA2024/00079

854 Hunter Street Newcastle West

Sec 4.55 (1A) Modification to DA2021/01530 – Mixed use development, including shop top housing with 352 dwellings, ground floor retail premises, commercial premises and a basement – changes to design

\$129.6 million

Approved under delegation in May 2024



DA2024/00033

93 Blue Gum Road Jesmond

Co-living housing – including demolition of existing structures

\$2.4 million

Approved by the Land & Environment Court in 2024



DA2024/00351

28 Denison Street Newcastle West

Co-living housing – 11 storey building (plus communal rooftop) consisting of 51 co-living rooms (including three accessible rooms) and demolition of existing structures

\$11.8 Million

Approved by Council in November 2024





Design Excellence

In Newcastle, the LEP requires certain developments to demonstrate 'design excellence'. Within the planning system, the term design excellence refers to both a process and an outcome. The design excellence clauses in Newcastle's LEP are applied to development within the Newcastle City Centre.



Above and left: Render of 147 Hunter Street Newcastle (East End Development Stage 2),
Photo: Brett Boardman Photography, Architect: CKDS Architecture



Render of 643 Hunter Street Newcastle West

'Design excellence' is a term used in planning instruments to group the range of requirements intended to ensure the delivery of development characterised by a high standard of design. When determining whether a proposed development exhibits design excellence, the consent authority is required to consider specific matters referenced in the relevant LEP. For Newcastle, the consent authority is required to have regard to matters set out in clause 7.5(3) of the LEP summarised as follows:

- whether a high standard of architectural design, materials and detailing appropriate to the building type and location will be achieved,
- whether the form and external appearance of the development will improve the quality and amenity of the public domain,
- whether the development detrimentally impacts on view corridors identified in the Newcastle Development Control Plan, and
- how the development addresses heritage issues and streetscape constraints, the relationship of the development with other development (separation, setbacks, amenity and urban form), bulk, massing or modulation, street frontage heights, environmental impacts (such as overshadowing, wind and reflectivity), achievement of ecologically sustainable development, access and circulation requirements (pedestrian, cycle, vehicular, service), and impact on existing and proposed public domain.

Where a development is required to exhibit design excellence, it is critical this objective drives the proposal from the earliest stages of the design process. CN strongly encourages pre-application discussion, including early input by the UDRP. Experience has shown that early UDRP advice on a schematic proposal can allow applicants to address issues early on and save time later in the DA process.

Post lodgement, all development subject to the design excellence provisions of the LEP is reviewed by the UDRP to inform the assessment of the application.

For certain developments, a design integrity process must also be established following development consent. This includes continuing design review by a 'design integrity panel' at key project milestones - including the issue of the Construction Certificate and the Occupation Certificate - to confirm that the design quality and intent of the approved design is maintained or improved through to construction completion.

For development in the Newcastle LGA, the UDRP is appointed as the design integrity panel to oversee these types of developments for their duration post development consent. In this capacity, the UDRP review and advise on the extent to which design excellence is realised to ensure the achievement of design excellence consistent with the approved development.

2024 has seen the UDRP again engage in the post development consent design integrity process for several developments commencing construction within the City.

Attachment

Determined applications considered by the UDRP in 2024

Application No	Property	Description Details
DA2023/00470	14 Bruncker Road Broadmeadow	Mixed use development – comprising ground floor commercial space, residential flat building and signage including demolition of existing structures
DA2023/00814	216 Maitland Road Islington	Commercial premises and residential flat building – including two (2) lot consolidation and seven (7) lot strata subdivision
DA2023/01044	130 University Drive Callaghan	Educational Establishment – alterations, additions and part change of use from Car Park
DA2023/01057	42–46 Bruncker Road Broadmeadow	Residential flat building including three (3) into one (1) lot consolidation, thirty-one (32) lot strata subdivision and demolition of existing structures
DA2023/01068	107 Tudor Street Hamilton	Residential flat building – including six lot strata subdivision and demolition of existing structures
DA2023/01249	31A Church Street Mayfield	Multi dwelling house – erection of sixteen (16) dwellings including sixteen (16) lot strata subdivision and demolition of existing structures
DA2024/00033	93 Blue Gum Road Jesmond	Co-living housing – including demolition of existing structures
DA2024/00189	127 Lambton Road Broadmeadow	Commercial premises – supermarket, associated commercial premises, car parking, signage and demolition
DA2024/00224	168 Park Avenue Kotara	Group Home – construction of 9 self-contained units
DA2024/00351	28 Denison Street Newcastle West	Co-living housing – 11 storey building (plus communal rooftop) consisting of 51 co-living rooms (including three accessible rooms) and demolition of existing structures
DA2024/00503	11–15 National Park Street Newcastle West	Shop top housing – alterations and additions involving an additional level on north tower increasing from 192 to 196 dwellings, four additional parking spaces and associated additional storage cages.
MA2023/00002	70 Blue Gum Jesmond	Sec 4.55(2) Modification to DA2016/00982 – Demolition of dwelling and outbuildings, erection of three storey serviced apartments (36 units), ground floor parking, associated site works – changes to design and access
MA2023/00397	10 Dangar Street Wickham	Sec 4.55 (2) Modification to DA2022/00448 for alterations and additions to approved mixed-use development (commercial, retail & shop top housing) – changes to ground floor plan, elevations and public art
MA2023/00473	810 Hunter Street Newcastle West	Sec 4.55 (2) Modification to DA2022/01424 – Demolition of existing commercial building and construction of an eleven storey commercial development – changes to design

Application No	Property	Description Details
MA2024/00062	924 Hunter Street Newcastle West	Section 4.55(2) modification to DA2021/01459 – Partial demolition of existing buildings, remediation of the land, erection of mixed use development comprising commercial premises (retail premises & business premises), two residential towers (30 storey & 28 storey) containing 191 dwellings and 242 associated car parking spaces – changes to design and an additional three levels
MA2024/00079	854 Hunter Street Newcastle West	Sec 4.55 (1A) Modification to DA2021/01530 – Mixed use development, including shop top housing with 352 dwellings, ground floor retail premises, commercial premises and a basement – changes to design
RE2024/00002	121 Hunter Street Newcastle	Section 8.2(1) Review of MA2023/00175 – Concept Development Application – Staged development comprising of retail, commercial, residential and shop top housing – changes to approved building envelopes for Stages 3 and 4

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