



22 December 2017

James Groundwater  
Senior Planning Officer  
Key Sites Assessments  
Department of Planning and  
Environment

cc Ben Luscher

MOD 2\_6-30 Artarmon Road, Willoughby - former Channel 9 Site

Dear James,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Modification 2 for the former Channel 9 site.

We understand the principle changes from MOD 1 to MOD 2 to be:

- the removal from the masterplan of the proposed development sites adjacent to Scott Street;
- the relocation west of the corner square;
- the creation of a larger, publicly accessible garden square in the North-Eastern quadrant of the site and consequent retention of a large canopy tree;
- introduction of new uses including a child care centre.

We understand the reason for the removal of the Scott Street development to be a land owners consent issue.

The other changes to the masterplan are consistent with MOD 1 and in the case of the larger publicly accessible garden square and introduction of childcare uses, represent an improvement. The changes are supported, subject to addressing the concerns raised in our review of MOD 1 – attached to this email.

It is not clear what impact on GFA the MOD 2 changes make. Generally, however we understand the proposed GFA to remain significantly over the quantity that has been approved. Our comments on this matter remain as per our comments in regards to MOD 1.

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The GA supports the masterplan competition process the Proponent chose to undertake and would recommend retention of the masterplan competition winning architects as the lead masterplan architects for the project. A proposed approach to the delivery of design excellence and diversity for subsequent stages should be requested as part of any MOD approval, to be developed in consultation with GANSW. This is consistent with recent SEARs requirements on other sites.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Olivia Hyde".

Kind regards,

Olivia Hyde  
Director of Design Excellence  
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**RE: MP 10\_0198 MOD 1**

**OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT RESPONSE - REQUEST TO MODIFY THE CONCEPT  
PLAN APPROVAL FOR 6-30 ARTARMON ROAD, WILLOUGHBY (FORMER CHANNEL 9 SITE)**

## **Background**

On 1<sup>ST</sup> August 2016 the Department of Planning requested the Office of the Government Architect (OGA) provide an independent design review of the modification to the Concept Approval for 6-30 Artarmon Road, Willoughby (former Channel 9 site).

In providing this advice OGA has reviewed the documentation submitted by JBA in July 2016 S75W Modification Application Concept Plan MP10\_0198 and undertaken a site visit on the 13th September 2016.

The following commentary is a summary review of the Concept Plan focusing primarily on the design aspects of the plan including urban design, architecture and landscaping.

This commentary has not reviewed other aspects of the plan in any depth, nor have in-depth comparisons been made between previous plans, community consultation or any other specialist reports.

Recommendations are provided indicated in *italics*, that may be used as conditions of consent.

## Proposed Modifications

In summary the proposal seeks to modify the Concept Plan Approval as follows:

- Replace the approved residential master plan with the revised CHROFI master plan for 510 dwellings across eight residential flat buildings ranging in height from 4 to 9 storeys, two buildings being up to 11 and 12 storeys and small scale local commercial uses such as cafes;
- Amend the configuration and layout of public open space within the Site, resulting in a 28% increase in area, improved connectivity and additional potential for deep soil planting;
- Include a new public benefit offer that provides \$3 million towards the upgrade of the Willoughby Road/ Artarmon Road/ Small Street intersection and \$1 million contribution toward bushland regeneration and access upgrades to Walter Street Reserve; and
- Provide a simpler internal road network, providing for on-street visitor parking within a new loop road and a new roundabout access point to Artarmon Rd;
- Allow for small-scale non-residential uses such as local retail, office, community or child-care uses to cater to demand generated predominately by the new residential population of the site.

One of the images in the revised concept plan is shown below.



## Previous Government Architect Comments (21st June 2013)

In 2013 the Government Architects Office provided comments on the Major Projects Application (DoPI 2013/173).

The previous comments were based on the Concept Plan prepared by SJB and an EAS by JBA.

Since 2013 a new design team; CHOFI, has developed a new concept plan which is the subject of this desktop summary review.

The majority of the previous comments and recommendations have been addressed in the current concept plan, with the exception of the following two issues:

- Height: The previous comments recommended a maximum of 10 storeys. The current scheme indicates 11 and 12 storey buildings located centrally within the site. This is discussed in more detail in *Building Massing and Height*.
- Carpark Entries: The previous comments recommended more, and small carpark entries dispersed across the site. The concept plan indicates one entry and exit. As per previous advice, *it is likely that such a large development would benefit from a number of smaller exits and entries particularly to ease congestion at peak times. Advice should be sought from a traffic engineer for specific recommendations.*

## Design Review Summary

### Site Planning

Many aspects of the Concept Plan provide improved outcomes for the site and surrounding local area and the design has addressed many of the comments raised previously by GAO.

The following items are of particular note in the new concept plan and should be embedded into subsequent and more detailed planning and design proposals:

- The location, configuration and interconnectedness of open spaces including parks, gardens and streets.
- The intent and positioning of a cliff top reserve park, with district views providing a green 'ridge' extension to Artarmon Reserve and a publicly accessible pedestrian link/bush track to Artarmon Reserve from the new through street.
- The green central open space which provides an extension of the view corridor down Edward Street, opening up an expansive district view to the street and creating a community focal point and outlook for apartments.
- Basement car parking footprints, which sit directly under building footprints and do not extend under open spaces, streets or street setback areas.
- The location of the access street which provides a new public street, linking Artarmon Road to Richmond Avenue.
- The location of small scale retail and commercial premises along Artarmon Road.
- The location of a small urban square on the corner of Artarmon Road and the new street.

- The design of smaller footprint buildings, resulting in the potential for better internal amenity, opportunities for more garden apartments and shorter wall lengths along streets.

#### *Comments*

One of the most significant improvements in the concept plan is the structure planning of the site and the location and amount of public domain provided. Under the Concept Plan the system of streets and open spaces is indicated as part of the public domain and is in public ownership.

This is an essential aspect of the plan and should be a key feature of the project going forward. As such, it is important that the configuration, location and size of public spaces is clearly agreed at the Concept Plan stage of the project so that the quality of public space is not compromised as the project goes forward into detailed design development.

*It is recommended that a dimensioned plan is provided that defines and articulates the boundaries between private and public space. It should include the location, size, key guidelines and configuration of each space to match the intended programming.*

*This is to ensure that there is a definitive location for public areas and that buildings and other private areas are not increased in scale or height such that they impinge on the proposed system of public open spaces and streets.*

#### **Building Massing and Height**

The building massing appears to respond appropriately to the surrounding context with particular note to:

- The general massing arrangement of smaller, more broken up and deeply articulated building forms along both Artarmon Road and Richmond Avenue that provide a transition in scale to detached houses along both street frontages.
- The 4 storey podium datum across the site and vertical articulation of towers which breaks down building bulk and provides a consistent lower, street wall scale around open spaces and along streets.
- The additional height positioned centrally within the site in the form of two narrow footprint towers works well to ameliorate impacts on the surrounding existing residential areas and streets and allows for lower scale buildings along Artarmon Road and Richmond Avenue.
- The concept of three building types. The street buildings and mid-rise towers both appear to be appropriate building types that result in high quality residential amenity and address the urban context.

#### *Comments*

The bush build type (buildings H and J) is less successful. These two buildings are not dissimilar to standard slab residential flat buildings. Further solar studies are required to establish whether building J in particular will overshadow, the rear of Walter Street buildings when fully developed under the current zoning, which allows for residential flat buildings. Walter street lots are located

significantly lower level than building J, which results in an overall height of building J, of 2 or more levels above its actual height and Walter Street lots are located to the south of the subject site.

Walter Street is currently in transition from detached dwellings to residential flat buildings up to 4 storeys. The WDCP controls will result in residential flat buildings with much smaller rear gardens as well as much narrower setbacks than the current houses.

*It is important that Building J does not impede the design quality of future residential flat buildings on Walter Street lots, taking into account the significant level change.*

*It is recommended that further design development is undertaken to refine building J in response to the future medium density context along Walter Street (Recently lodged DA's for Walter street lots are now available from Willoughby Council) including:*

- *the orientation of apartments to the east and west, with less apartments looking down into Walter Street lots,*
- *deeper setbacks to the rear boundary,*
- *a smaller building footprint or a different building type , rather than an east-west oriented slab building.*

The position of buildings G is much close to the side boundary than the previous scheme resulting in a reduced setback by as much as 18m less. It appears that the majority of dwellings in the neighbouring buildings are oriented to the east, north and south rather than towards the subject site. Therefore this is not likely to be an issue.

### **Additional Built Form**

The increase in the number of apartments is around 27.5% above the previous scheme and the increase in height in the order of 1 to 4 storeys. The FSR increase is from 1.2: to 1.50:1 representing a 25% increase.

This increase in density appears to have been achieved through some additional height in the tower buildings and by providing a 'sunken floor' on buildings A, B, C.

The additional height, number of apartments and FSR combine to result in a significant departure from the approved scheme and the previous PAC and LEC determinations in 2014.

*Careful consideration and evaluation should occur to ensure that any approved increase manages impacts on public space, open space, neighbouring sites and streets..*

#### *Comments*

'Sunken' level

The generic section of the 'sunken' design and imagery provided in the Concept Plan documentation is unconventional; although not necessarily problematic if well designed.

*The drawings indicate that the 'sunken' apartments have a 6m wide sunken garden area. This dimension is required to be documented in the concept plan to ensure the garden spaces do not get*

*reduced in width during the design development phase, such that apartment amenity is compromised.*

The intended level change has not been demonstrated to be coordinated with pedestrian and vehicular circulation, privacy and the functionality of ground level external public, communal and private spaces. Creating a significant level change in the form of retaining walls around building boundaries creates an additional level of design complexity that must be resolved.

*Given the significant natural and man-made topographic changes across the site, it may be appropriate for parts of the buildings frontages to be sunken, however key frontages such as those along the central park may not result in a quality park edge if sunken below the park level.*

*It is recommended that the 'sunken' level is further explored, dimensioned and detailed to ensure that the generic section provided in the Concept Plan documentation functions across all building edge conditions, topographic conditions and various transitional/sectional arrangements between public space, communal space, private open space and dwelling interiors as well as common circulation routes into buildings and vehicular entries. This study should determine typical and maximum depths of the sunken level across the site.*

Access to services and Public Transport

*Further investigation into how the increase in population will be accommodated with regard to access to essential services should be undertaken to ensure that public transport options match demand and the increase in built form is accompanied by public transport initiatives such as a bus service linking the community to trains and services.*

## **Ground Plane**

There is limited information in the concept plan regarding how the buildings are resolved at ground level in section.

This is important as the significant topographic variations (both natural and man-made) across the site combined with the 'sunken floor' level and the variety of open spaces may result in disconnection between interior and external spaces, circuitous circulation routes and ramps for pedestrian and vehicles.

The quality of the public domain and open spaces; including parks, streets and communal areas will be influenced by the interface design of buildings at ground level

*It is recommended that more design detail is provided on:*

- *The interface between (street section) ground level apartments and streets, parks and other exterior spaces.*
- *The resolution of level changes throughout the site on all buildings.*





### **Resolution of Building Articulation and Materials**

The precedent imagery in the Concept Plan includes perspectives of well-articulated buildings that use a palette of complementary materials.

However there is limited detailed design information in the Concept Plan on how each building is resolved in elevation and specific information on materials and detailing. Given the number of buildings and the size and scale of buildings it is desirable that there is more information provided in the Concept Plan as to how variety is to be provided between buildings, how materials and detailing is used to break down the scale of buildings and how the new buildings complement the character of surrounding existing streets and buildings.

*It is recommended that additional information is provided on:*

- *Articulation of buildings and building elevations,*
- *The intended palette of materials and variety of materials/detailing between buildings.*

### **Further matter for Considerations**

The site is not within walking distance to local services such a supermarket and there is no train station. There is a bus to Chatswood which requires walking down the steep hill to Willoughby Road and a 20-30 minute bus ride. As such it is expected residents will mainly drive to access essential services, with potential public domain impacts.

*Some assessment of pedestrian access and connectivity from the site to essential daily and weekly services ie. such as shopping, entertainment, child care etc. is recommended.*

### **Conditions of Consent**

The conditions of consent recommended by OGA are provided under each topic within this review and are identified in *italics*.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Poulet', written in a cursive style.

Peter Poulet

Date: 23rd September 2016