

File No:  
2022/09186/01

15 November 2024

Ref No:  
22438194

Daniel Marotti  
Planning Officer  
Commission Assessment  
Planning and Land Use Services  
Department for Housing and Urban Development  
Level 10, 83 Pirie Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

daniel.marotti@sa.gov.au

For the attention of the State Commission Assessment Panel

## 42-46 Unley Road, Unley

The following advice is in relation to Development Application 23012013. In my capacity as a referral body for advice, I would like to offer the following comments for your consideration.

The proposal was presented to the Design Review panel on two occasions. The following advice has been informed by the panel's recommendations. I acknowledge the proponent's early engagement with the Design Review process, and the genuine response to the recommendations.

The proposal is for a seven-storey tall mixed use development comprising ground floor commercial tenancy, six levels of residential apartments, and at-grade car parking. The proposal is one of the first developments in the locality of a greater scale achieving the ambition for medium density urban renewal, and with this comes a responsibility to achieve design excellence and a positive contribution to the local area.

I acknowledge the significant opportunities presented by this site for increased residential amenity and the potential of this development to transform this area of Unley. My support for a development of this scale that exceeds the maximum envisaged height limit is contingent on achieving a high-quality design outcome.

I support the proposed use and high-quality aspiration for this project as demonstrated in the level of amenity, apartment sizes, and proposed level of finish and materiality. As such, I am pleased to offer my support to the planning application.

### Site context

The site is located on the western side of Unley Road, between Greenhill Road and Young Street. It extends from Unley Road to Irwin Lane at the rear, with a depth of approximately 61 metres, and a width of approximately 18 metres.

The site is located within the Urban Corridor Zone, with the boundary of the adjacent Established Neighbourhood Zone lying along the centre of Irwin Lane. The local context along Unley Road includes a mix of one to two storey tall commercial buildings, including some with historical character.

91 Halifax Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1533  
Adelaide SA 5001

DX 171

T- +61(0)8 7133 3235  
E- odasa@sa.gov.au



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Irwin Lane is a narrow service lane without footpath, characterised by single storey dwellings along the western side and garaging and rear service access for Unley Road commercial properties along the eastern side.

### **Built Form and Building Height**

The proposed building is seven storeys tall (25.4 metres including rooftop plant), which exceeds the five storey/18.5 metre maximum height envisaged in the Planning and Design Code.

The ground floor built form extends to the north, east and south boundaries. Above the ground floor, the main built form is positioned at the front portion of the site with the intent to manage the development's impact on the smaller scale residential context to the west. While the proposal exceeds the maximum envisaged height, I acknowledge the proposal is predominantly within the 30-degree building envelope required by its adjacency to the Established Neighbourhood Zone to the west, with a minor encroachment to levels five and six. I support the consideration of the impact of the encroachment, including provision of an overlooking analysis, that in my view demonstrates limited interface impacts on the adjacent zone.

Levels one to six are proposed on the southern boundary with the intent to maximise the northern aspect. The first-floor level building line is set back from the north, east and west boundaries with perimeter concrete grid framing to these edges that create a two storey tall podium form. The framing is built to the east and north site boundaries and includes varied stepped setbacks above the podium. Thinner grid framing is proposed for the levels above the podium. The penthouse level is set back from all edges with the view to minimising its visual impact. Two full height vertical recesses are proposed to the south elevation with the intent to provide natural light and ventilation.

I support the proposed two storey tall podium height, acknowledging the intent to define a building base, and the consideration given to the podium's scale relationship within the Unley Road streetscape. I also acknowledge the distinction between the podium and the upper framing, with the view to achieving improved legibility of the podium form.

My support for a development of this scale that exceeds the maximum envisaged height limit is contingent on achieving a high-quality design outcome. I acknowledge the proposal is seeking to justify the additional building height with its intended high-quality materiality, apartment amenity and management of overlooking. However, I am not yet convinced the proposal has fully optimised Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) strategies and the development's public realm contribution.

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I recognise that future development of the sites immediately north and south of the subject site may impact the residential amenity of the proposal. I acknowledge the small number of apartments per level and that the apartments are dual aspect.

### **Architectural Expression and Materiality**

The design is characterised by an externally expressed precast concrete grid which defines the built form and creates a singular expression. Varying setbacks of the grid form create outdoor spaces, shading and arbours. The two storey podium is emphasised by a thickening of the grid form on the ground and first floor levels on the Unley Road frontage.



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It is proposed that the concrete structure of the podium levels will have an etched finish to expose some of the concrete aggregate, providing greater differentiation of the podium form.

I recognise the potential of the design approach for an ordered grid with singular high-quality materiality to achieve a distinctive architectural expression with three-dimensional articulation. I acknowledge the design details and material selections will add textural and tonal interest. However, I remain of the view an opportunity exists to further refine the grid form to achieve a more consistent rhythm and expression.

In my view, the quality and detailing of the materiality will be critical to the success of the project, in particular, the colour and high-quality finish of the precast concrete and infill materials in delivery of the distinctive architectural expression. I recommend consideration of the detailing of grid connections and joints, infill soffits and cladding materials during the next phase of design development to reinforce the rhythm and expression.

#### **Ground Floor and Public Realm**

The ground floor comprises the residential entry and a commercial tenancy on the Unley Road frontage. Secure residential car parking and open visitor car parking spaces are accessed from Irwin Lane.

I support the intent for a commercial tenancy at ground level as an opportunity for streetscape activation, and the provision of canopies over the Unley Road footpath to provide shade, shelter and amenity.

I also support the intent to provide high quality materiality and detailing to the facade facing Irwin Lane and the proposed landscaping. I acknowledge the proposal to remove one Significant Tree to Irwin Lane however note the arborist's advice and proposal for 'replacement' trees adjacent the Irwin Lane frontage. I continue to recommend consideration of screening of the transformer (to the Irwin Lane frontage) with the view to maintaining a positive interface with the rear neighbourhood zone.

#### **Internal Planning**

The proposal comprises 15 apartments and a mix of apartment types and layouts, including two and three-bedroom apartments, and a four-bedroom penthouse on level six.

A central lift and stair core is proposed on the southern boundary, with centralised lobby with full height slot windows. Each apartment is provided with outdoor terrace space, the size of which varies by floor and apartment type. Light wells on either side of the lift core are open to the south, enabling natural ventilation and light access to the adjacent rooms. I support the introduction of natural light and outlook to the lift lobbies and recommend consideration of natural ventilation to these spaces. In general, I support the generous apartment sizes and layouts and private open space allowances that offer a high level of amenity for residents.

#### **Landscape**

I support the soft landscaping proposed within the open visitor car parking area, and on each of the terraces on the apartment levels. I also support the inclusion of soft landscaping, as indicated in the visualisations, which has the potential to provide shade, amenity, biophilia and soften the built form. I also strongly support the inclusion of a landscaped roof terrace to the rear of the apartments.

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I recommend consideration of the following aspects of the design through the next stage of design development:

- provision of access to the proposed roof garden for maintenance
- confirmation of the screening treatment to the transformer.

#### **Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)**

I support the proposed ESD initiatives including:

- solar shading to the north and west by way of large terrace overhangs, external blinds and overhead arbors with climbing plants
- all electric development
- energy efficient fixtures and lighting
- EV futureproofing
- natural light and ventilation to all habitable rooms.

I recommend further exploration of integrated sustainability initiatives, including confirmation of targets for the project and details of sustainability gains, to ensure ESD initiatives are embedded and integrated within all areas of the development, to achieve a high-quality design and sustainability outcome. I also recommend ongoing consideration of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles to support the proposed landscape and planting elements, including the roof garden.

#### **Advice summary**

To ensure the most successful design outcome is achieved the State Commission Assessment Panel may like to consider particular aspects of the project, which would benefit from protection as part of the planning permission, such as:

- final external material selections, including confirmation of high-quality integral finishes supported by the provision of physical samples
- confirmation of all Environmentally Sustainable Design principles, including measurable targets, and integration with the proposal
- confirmation of the screening treatment of the transformer
- detailing of grid connections and joints, infill soffits and cladding materials to reinforce the rhythm and expression.

Yours sincerely



Kirsteen Mackay  
Government Architect

91 Halifax Street  
Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1533  
Adelaide SA 5001

DX 171

T- +61(0)8 7133 3235  
E- odasa@sa.gov.au

cc Belinda Chan

ODASA

belinda.chan@sa.gov.au

