

## **URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT**

### **1. Proposal**

The application is to establish and operate a Z petrol station, including a shop, car wash building and associated car parking and landscaping, located between SH1 and Brookside Road in Rolleston. The application also includes the operation of the existing Rolly Inn and associated activities. The proposed activity is in the Living 1 zone of the Selwyn District Plan (the Plan). The proposed petrol station is to be placed next to the existing landuses including the “Rolly Inn” Bar, liquor store and Thai takeaway. In order to establish the proposed activity the proposal will require the removal of a residential building on site.

### **2. Context**

- **Site and surrounds**
- **Existing zoning vs. on-site environment**
- **Residential vs. commercial amenity as per plan provisions**
- **Reverse sensitivity commercial activity vs. residential neighbourhood**
- **Receiving environment and expected outcomes**

#### **Site and surrounds**

The proposed site is wedged between two road corridors; State Highway 1 to the north-west and Brookside Road to the south and has direct frontage to both. Brookside Road has a footpath running past the proposed site. The site contains a residential unit- the dwelling and accessory building being the last remaining in a row of 7 sites. To the West is the Rolleston Highway Motel and the Rolleston Fire station. Further along Chaucer Street the current landuses include: a dairy, a take away, a real estate agent and a fish’n’chip shop. The proposed site’s two-storey Rolly Inn building, currently used as a bottle store and a Thai take away, was established in the 1930s, with later additions. A large sealed car park surrounds the existing premise.

A vet operates from a L1 zoned site opposite, with another part directly opposite that is currently bare land. Surrounding sites to the south and west are dominated by residential housing, while sites to the east are a mix of commercial and communal activities, including a BP petrol station.

## **Existing zoning vs. on-site environment**

The proposed site is zoned Living 1, of which the District Plan places high emphasis on being 'the most pleasant for residential activities'.

Visiting the site and the surrounding sites of the proposal it becomes apparent that the area between Chaucer Street and the corner of Brookside Road with SH1 north of Brookside Road has transitioned over the years and now visually aligns more with a B1 zone in a local centre. The commercial 'component' is reflected in built form that is facing the street corridor along Chaucer Street.

However, the majority south of Brookside Road and beyond Chaucer Street to the west remains residential in nature. There are three sites directly opposite the proposed site, two of which contain a two-storey retro-fitted residential house currently used by a vet. Under the District Plan future development and subdivision could allow for up to four residential units that would be directly opposite the site.

*Given the observation of the site and its immediate surrounds the author concludes that the L1 zoning and the existing environment do not fully align. Potential future development under the District Plan provisions also need to be taken into account when assessing the effects.*

*It is important to note that the commercial nature along SH1 ends with Chaucer Street, with the majority of sites in the surrounding neighbourhood and in walking distance to the south and west of the proposal remaining residential in character and nature.*

## **Residential vs commercial amenity as per plan provisions**

The District Plan describes 'amenity values' as defined in the Act as "being part of the character of a place".

The District Plan's strategy is to address the issues affecting amenity values and reverse sensitivity issues via policies and rules that help to manage the effects of activities in order to maintain the character and amenity of a location. As part of that strategy, zones identify areas of similar character and amenity values. While Living 1 zones "have a character and amenity values most pleasant for living in", Business 1 zones are described as "...still pleasant for people to gather, live or work in, with good aesthetic values and few nuisance effects."

*The author considers that the B1 values are appropriate to be applied as a guide in the present context. When considering assessment matters applicable to B1, the proposal fails to meet the intent of some of these provisions, including providing and addressing active frontage and missing visual variety in built form.*

Chapter B3.4 of the District Plan addresses the issues in regard to the quality of the environment in townships and provides definitions for 'environmental quality', being the character and conditions of people's surroundings, which influence what people think or feel about a place. In particular, if an area includes activities that are perceived to affect people's health, safety, outlook or property values, it may be perceived as inappropriate as a 'living area'. Objectives B3.4.1-3 consider various amenity aspects that apply to this application.

The conditions that influence environmental quality and that are applicable in this assessment relate to the 'type of activity or building, which can affect people's perception on an area'.

*The author considers that the proposal will affect the environment in that the proposed activity will have an increase in day and night time activity on site (including vehicle/truck movements). This could lead to potential noise implications and perceived reduced perception of safety. The proposal also has visual effects including loss of open space and outlook for neighbouring properties, as well as effects on the visual amenity and character for parts of Brookside Road. The proposed built form does not add visual variety and is not addressing public space when viewed from the road.*

### **Receiving environment and expected outcomes**

The proposed commercial activity will add another service and activity to the current commercial activities on site. With the proposed development and the removal of the residential dwelling, residential land uses will be no longer present to the north between Brookside Road and Chaucer Street; an area where other commercial and communal landuses have been established in the past. Subsequent changes to the environment include the limited remaining existence of residential elements, such as residential built form (roof shapes, articulation), grassed and landscaped front and back yards and a low site coverage overall.

*The author considers that in the context of the area north of Brookside Road, which is influenced by commercial and communal landuses, the proposed changes to the current commercial landuse are in principle in keeping with the receiving environment.*

### **Potential reverse sensitivity commercial activity vs. residential neighbourhood**

The plan identifies reverse sensitivity between incompatible activities and manages this via policies and rules, including ways to mitigate visual effects. The proposal will visually replace a residential one-storey building within a landscaped section, with an elongated, flat-roofed commercial building that is set back on site, a carwash structure also setback and aligned with the road boundary; an illuminated canopy for the fuel pumps is proposed behind within the centre of the site. The proposed retail store does not incorporate architectural elements to add variety that are complementary to a residential context; however the author acknowledges that in addition to the corporate colours a more mute/natural colour and a material palette has been chosen which is in keeping with the Selwyn context. The proposal has also incorporated façade treatments in the form of a riverstone wall along both structures on site. These measures applied assists to the Brookside Road street scene and residential outlook beyond. The 25m setback from the road boundary will assist that the built form of the store is not dominant when viewed from Brookside Road. The car wash is placed along the boundary with sufficient setback, to enable landscaping. Softening landscaping measures are particularly important to contribute to an attractive street scene and retain the outlook and amenity of adjacent residential environment and affects the outlook for no 3, 5 and 7 Brookside Road in particular.

*Reviewing the proposed plans it becomes apparent that the applicant has taken measures in the form of a façade treatment and landscaping along the interface with Brookside Road, which will provide visual relief, if species are appropriate for the site and their health maintained. The greening aspect could be extended along Brookside Road with some tree planting in a reinstated berm. The larger retail store is sufficiently setback from the road boundary thus won't be visually dominating, however due to facing an internal court yard is*

*unable to address public space and contribute to the public private interface with Brookside Road.*

*Subsequent amenity and safety issues are further addressed below.*

### **3. District Plan Provisions**

The overall status of the activity is non-complying, so all relevant matters are to be considered.

### **4. Assessment framework**

The District Plan non-compliances in respect to urban design to a 'out of zone' non-residential activity in a Living 1 zone are largely limited to aspects that affect the character and amenity values of that zone; however, as discussed, given the context of the site it is considered necessary to expand the assessment and use matters that would apply to a Business 1 zone. The objective of the assessment is to reflect the District Plan's intentions in the context of the application are well addressed and that where the proposal does not represent best practise urban design, recommendations for mitigation or remedy are provided.

The following planning framework has been used to assess the application:

- Objectives and policies in relation to Living Zones
- As a guide, objectives, policies and rules applying to Business 1 zones and assessment matters under rule 16.10, which applies to development above 450m<sup>2</sup> in a Business 1(B1) zone have been used
- Commercial Design guide, which applies to Business 1 zones

### **Key Urban Design Considerations**

### **5. Site layout**

The proposal shows the petrol stations retail store aligned with the internal boundary resulting in the long side of the building facing an internalised service area, a pattern that is generally discouraged within Selwyn's commercial B1 zones. Council's policies and design guidelines seek outcomes where any new built form contributes to a high quality public space, where the architecture of a building takes priority, instead of an internalised courtyard. Although this principle is also encouraged with regard to petrol stations, the author concludes that the proposal provides an acceptable compromise between operational matters stipulated by the applicant and best practise taking into consideration the constraints of the site and less favourable alternatives.

*Although the proposal does not meet the intended best practise for placing new development of a commercial nature adjacent to public space (Brookside Road) the author acknowledges that overall and in context the placement of buildings on site achieves an acceptable outcome.*

#### **i. Interface with public space**

The current site layout does not show any interaction between the proposed shop, and the public space of Brookside Road. In the same context the proposals internally facing frontage does not provide any active frontage. When viewed from the street the 'back of house' of the petrol station shop is the dominating feature. No windows/ glass openings are proposed as this according to the applicant would cause security issues. Especially at pedestrian height windows have the important function of allowing for passive surveillance.

The fundamental principle of having the 'front' of house facing public space has been argued by the requirement of the proposed internal layout of the shop itself. The resulting external building layout is not in keeping with B1 provisions; it is also a discontinuation of the existing and proposed character of commercial activity to the west (further along Brookside Road/Chaucer Street), which has buildings addressing public space and having front doors off the respective public road. The proposal refers to landscaping and matters for softening, but these are limited to visual relief (see landscaping below).

*The proposal does not meet the matter of achieving a good public private interface and as such does not meet provisions for best practise commercial development in the Plan in general or assessment matters used as a guide under 16.9 in particular. In order to improve interaction between the proposed development and public space the internal layout should change to allow for a southern elevation that is part of 'front of house' with the ability of addressing Brookside Road.*

#### **ii. Active frontage**

Active frontage means glass doors and windows facing the street or other public spaces. The effects both in a residential and commercial context are that it increases perceived safety (eyes on the street), it creates the ability to have a relationship between the private building and public space and in particular the area in between referred to as the 'public private interface'. Rule 16.9 supported by the Council's Commercial Design Guide asks for at least 50% of active frontage to be installed and maintained.

Commercial buildings that are orientated towards the road and have active frontage create lots of visual interest (e.g. window openings) to connect the public area with the activities taking place inside the building. Active frontage is essential in creating lively, safe and interesting street scenes. It also encourages pedestrian activity.

In a residential context having houses positioned towards the road allows for a private backyard; subsequently this front yard becomes visually part of the public space and in its ideal case contributes to an open and pleasant street scene.

The proposal in its current configuration places the 'back' of the petrol station shop to the 'front' of the site. The elevation of the shop shows no ability for interaction, passive surveillance is reliant on security cameras. The footpath on the southern side is not visible from the entrance of the store.

The proposal not only compromises the District Plan's intention of creating attractive pedestrian areas, it also negatively affects perceived safety and amenity and triggers national CPTED principles in particular the ability for casual /informal surveillance.

The proposed layout diverts from the street character in the vicinity along Chaucer Road, where built form is accessed from the road and through site placement and activation is able to positively contribute to the neighbourhood.

*The applicant argues operational constraints and the internal layout of the shop for the proposed lack of active frontage. Concerns in regards to CPTED principles have been addressed by referring to the 24/7 operation of the site, security cameras and lights on the building itself and on site; however looking at the guidelines it becomes apparent that while adequate lighting and cameras are considered positive aspects they do not negate the issues that arise from the proposed footprint and in particular the 'back of house' towards public space and subsequent effect on perceived safety and amenity are considered in this context to be more than minor.*

## **6. Building Design**

### **Built form and Façade treatments**

The proposal is situated within a L1 zone, which has over the years transitioned to more of a mixed-use environment in terms of landuse. The built form in terms of scale and bulk needs to be compatible with the remaining residential neighbourhood, which in the opinion of the author, needs to be acknowledged and upheld by any new proposal.

The architecture also needs to contribute to the amenity values of the zone it is located in.

The proposal is of modest design with minimal detailing and simple forms, some Selwyn specific material choices have been incorporated in the form of natural (brown) colours and the river rock wall along the Southern elevation of the retail store and along the façade of the carwash closest to Brookside Road.

The scale of the proposal, as in height and bulk, is in keeping with the surrounding environment.

The flat roof line of the service station has not been visually broken, which would have assisted in creating visual variety when viewed from Brookside Road. The cladding is one type, one colour corrugated iron, which has a strong commercial 'feel'. A material change in parts on the façade would have been able to mitigate and would have assisted with the transition to adjoining residential areas.

Façade treatments were suggested to the applicant to visually break up the length of the buildings and add character. This recommendation has been adhered to in parts with the façade of the carwash facing Brookside Road not having any bright colouring or advertising,

but articulation in the form of an incorporated stonewall feature. Having a repeating material theme helps to visually integrate the built form with the adjacent residential environment. The proposed landscaping positioned in front of the carwash are further aspects that enable to soften the effects this structure is having on the character and the amenity of the receiving zone.

*In the opinion of the author the scale and form of the buildings in context will have no more than minor effects on the character and amenity of the receiving environments. Matters for removing the opportunity of tagging have not been addressed within the current proposal and remain an issue.*

## 7. Pedestrian routes and safety

The proposal shows the shop will have pedestrian access off Brookside Road via a new 2m wide footpath that is landscaped and which signals a clear entrance into the site. Existing and proposed commercial activity in the vicinity to the west will influence future pedestrian flow. Placement of this footpath along the internal property boundary follows a natural 'desire line', which is in keeping with CPTED principles and considered beneficial for the proposal in terms of safe, legible pedestrian access into the site.

The location of the footpath however leads to the 'back of house' (rubbish, air conditioning area etc.), where no visual is possible from the retail store. The surveillance of this area is therefore reliant on security cameras an aspect that is not ideal in creating a safe environment where people should see and be 'seen'.

The national CPTED guidelines state the seven qualities of safer places as:

1. **Access**-well-defined routes, spaces and entrances
2. **Surveillance and sightlines**: see and be seen, clear sight lines
3. **Layout**; clear and logical orientation- discourage crime enhance perception of wayfinding
4. **Activity mix**: eyes on the street- high level of human activity, increase use of public spaces
5. **Sense of ownership**: respect an community
6. **Quality environments**: well designed, managed and maintained
7. **Physical protection**

The author agrees with the applicant that pedestrian access to SH1 is not a safe or desired outcome under any circumstances.

*Summarising the effects and acknowledging the efforts of the applicant, the author considers that a direct pedestrian route off Brookside Road to the proposed shop has been provided.*

## 8. Landscaping

In order to mitigate adverse visual effects on the receiving environment, hard surface areas need to be softened via low level landscaping along the edges and footpaths and an adequate number of trees needs to be incorporated into the site. The choice of trees to be used will not only reflect the identified design vision, but also needs to meet functional aspects- in this case providing views to and from the site from public space.

The assessment of the provision of landscaping is assessed in what way it will be able to create softening elements along a residential edge and to what degree these measures have been applied successfully to create amenity to the receiving street scene and the environment beyond.

The Council's landscaping professionals will be able to comment as to appropriateness of type, height and amount of planting and specimen trees, including boundary plantings at the time.

The proposal provides for additional landscaping throughout the site, which is considered beneficial. In addition the street scene in particular would benefit from a reinstating of the grass berm as part of the new Rolly Inn Car park development and a continuation of the specimen trees used for softening the car wash structure along this boundary.

*The amount of landscaping provided is considered sufficient to provide relief for the proposed hard stand areas. In order to further assist the integration of the site with the residential edge additional tree plantings and landscaping along the Rolly Inn boundary on Brookside Road are desirable. The design and type of landscaping needs to be confirmed by Council's landscape architects, who will also provide comments on the lack of irrigation proposed.*

## **9. Signage**

Given the nature of activity on the site the proposed signage is a necessary component for attracting customers off SH1. The author appreciates the applicants' efforts to limit the overall amount of signage and that large advertising is only used along the internal/SH1 facing façade of the car wash.

However other methods of advertising, such as sandwich boards and signage flags that were not legally established should be strictly controlled in numbers and location in order to keep in particular the pedestrian routes along Brookside Road barrier free and visually free of clutter. No more than two sandwich, with 10m between them, along a road frontage are considered appropriated.

*The proposal does meet the majority of the provisions in regard to signage if advertising (sandwich boards/ flags etc.) are by way of condition of consent monitored to keep clear paths for pedestrians.*

## **10. Conclusion**

Overall in respect to the objectives, policies and provisions related to urban design in regard to this proposal, while there are negative aspects, such as lack of active frontage, passive surveillance and building articulation, the author considers that the proposals mitigation measures in particular



the site layout, the clear pedestrian access and incorporating a Selwyn vernacular adjacent to the public space of Brookside Road and adjacent residential sites are considered positive measures that will assist that the present amenity values of the zone and the character of the area remain. In this context the author considers that both the visual, physical and perceived effects of the proposal will be no more than minor.

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08 April 2020