Annexure W:
Design Excellence Policy

SydneyOlympicPark

Sydney Olympic Park Authority

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Design Excellence Policy

Sydney Olympic Park

April 2026





Acknowledgement of Country

The Sydney Olympic Park Authority acknowledges the Traditional Owners, Knowledge-holders and Custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise First Nations Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and the rich contribution made to society.

Published by Sydney Olympic Park Authority

sopa.nsw.gov.au

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First published: April 2026

Document Reference: POL26/8

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TMP-MC-R-WC-V1.2

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1 About the Policy

The Sydney Olympic Park Design Excellence Policy (the Policy) establishes the process an applicant is required to undertake to demonstrate that a proposed development can achieve design excellence.

The Policy sets out the approved processes for delivering design excellence through:

1. Design Competitions
2. Design Review Panel

Sydney Olympic Park Authority (the Authority) actively promotes a high quality of design for the future development of Sydney Olympic Park. The Authority envisages a diverse, liveable and inclusive town centre that seamlessly integrates residential, commercial, retail and educational development with the existing major event venues and network of public spaces.

Exemplary design is a fundamental consideration in the assessment of all development proposals within Sydney Olympic Park. New built forms and connecting urban spaces need to respond sensitively to their context while also demonstrating innovation, sustainability, exceptional public amenity and visual attractiveness.

The Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2050 (Master Plan 2050) strives to promote developments achieving a high standard of architectural design, built form and materiality. It aims to provide a diversity of architectural styles and built expression throughout the precinct.

Clause 30 of Appendix 4 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts - Central River City) 2021* (CRC SEPP 2021) specifies the types of development that are required to undertake a design competition.

For winners of a design competition, a bonus floor space allocation of up to 10 per cent (10%) may be recommended if design excellence can be demonstrated to be able to be delivered on a proposal. The quantum of bonus floor space would be subject to assessment based on urban design and amenity impacts of any increase, which means the full 10% bonus may not be recommended in all circumstances.

This Policy was adopted by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority on 1 April 2026 and came into effect on 1 April 2026.

1.1 Policy objectives

The objectives of the Policy are to:

1. outline the steps an Applicant is to undertake for a design competition
2. clarify the responsibilities and timing of design processes in relation to the development application process
3. establish the requirements for further assessment by the Authority's Design Review Panel and/or alternative design processes
4. detail the approach for assessment, decision-making and dispute resolution within the design processes
5. ensure high quality design outcomes are achieved for proposals on key sites within Sydney Olympic Park
6. support innovative design options to achieve design excellence
7. ensure that design excellence integrity is continued into the detailed design and construction of proposals
8. clarify the rationale for granting an additional 10% additional floor space if design excellence is achieved

1.2 Relationship to other Policies

This Policy supersedes *Sydney Olympic Park Design Excellence Policy* (POL17/05) (endorsed February 2018).

1.3 Where does this Policy apply

The Master Plan 2050 requires a design competition is held for a proposed development involving:

- the erection of a new building with a building height greater than 42m above ground level (existing) on any site, or
- the erection of a new building on a design competition site identified in **Figure 1**, or
- an Applicant has elected to undertake a design competition.



Figure 1: Design Competition Sites *(Source: SOP Master Plan 2050, SOPA, 2025)*

2 Design Competitions

2.1 Design Competition Guidelines

As outlined in clause 30 of Appendix 4 of the CRC SEPP 2021, all design competitions must be held in accordance with the *Design Competition Guidelines* (Government Architect NSW, 2023).

For all design competitions held within Sydney Olympic Park, the Authority will assume the role of Council where specified within the *Design Competition Guidelines*.

3 Design Review Panel

3.1 Role of the Design Review Panel

3.1.1 The Design Review Panel (DRP) has been established to provide credible and independent expert advice during the review of project proposals to ensure high quality development and a high quality cohesive, safe and easily legible public domain at Sydney Olympic Park in line with Master Plan 2050.

3.1.2 The role of the DRP is to provide expert advice to the Authority and the Board on urban design, landscape, architecture, sustainability and other general design issues and to evaluate proposals objectively.

3.1.3 Specifically, the DRP will:

- review design proposals for major projects in accordance with the criteria outlined in this Policy within Sydney Olympic Park (intended to be undertaken by either the private sector or the Authority) to ensure that design excellence and high-quality buildings and public domain are achieved
- review design proposals for consistency with the design excellence objectives and intent of the Master Plan 2050 and relevant planning policies
- offer feedback and recommend refinement to design proposals to improve the outcome (and not to re-design projects)
- participate as a jury member of the design competition process from time to time; and
- monitor the implementation of design principles particularly in the public domain.

3.1.4 The DRP is an advisory panel and does not play a development assessment approval role.

3.1.5 No member of the DRP has the delegation of power or functions of the Authority.

3.2 Proposals Subject to Design Review

3.2.1 The following proposals must be assessed by the DRP:

- winning ‘Design Competition’ designs where the Authority is the consent authority
- new buildings with a height of more than 12m and less than 42m

- Authority projects as identified and nominated by the Director, Urban Renewal and Environment.

3.2.2 For winning 'Design Competition' designs, the same jury from the Competition is to be used for the DRP, subject to availability.

3.2.3 At the detailed design stage of a proposal that has been through a Design Competition, and prior to lodging a development application, the proposal must be referred to the DRP to ensure that the design integrity of the winning design has been maintained. If there is a significant divergence from the winning design intent, the DRP may recommend to the Chief Executive Officer, Sydney Olympic Park Authority, that the design be rejected.

3.2.4 The Authority may also require other projects, not included above, to be referred to the DRP for advice and assessment. This will be at the discretion of the Director, Urban Renewal and Environment.

3.2.5 Projects should be presented to the DRP prior to lodgement of a development application. An Applicant may be required to attend more than one Panel review meeting depending on the significance of the project and the recommendations of the DRP.

3.2.6 Generally, a project should not require more than two Panel meetings, unless the recommendations of the Panel are not being addressed adequately by the Applicant.

3.3 DRP Members

3.3.1 The DRP is made up of a pool of 25 experts from varying built design professions from which a sitting panel will be drawn for each project review.

3.3.2 The Authority is responsible for determining whether a quorum of three (3) or five (5) members is required depending on the project. The quorum is to be drawn from the 'pool' and chaired by the Government Architect or their nominee.

3.3.3 A Panel Facilitator for each project will be assigned. The Panel Facilitator will be a staff member from the Authority. The role of the Facilitator is to ensure site visits and Panel meetings are conducted in an orderly and efficient manner, document recommendations and decisions and provide a record of meeting minutes to the Panel members for endorsement prior to distributing to the Applicant.

3.3.4 The Government Architect (or delegate) will be nominated as the Panel Chair for each project. The Chair is responsible for leading the meetings, ensuring all agenda items are addressed and summarising the views of the Panel. The Chair will also approve the final minutes of the meeting.

3.4 Assessment

3.4.1 Submission requirements

The following documentation must be provided in electronic PDF form only, to the Authority ten (10) days prior to the DRP meeting:

- Survey plan
- Architectural plans (or sketches at pre- development application)
- Landscape plans (or sketches at pre- development application)
- An assessment / justification against relevant Design Quality principles
- A compliance table addressing the relevant planning controls including the Authority's relevant policies and guidelines.

3.4.2 Site Visit

If required, the Panel Facilitator will arrange a site inspection for the project prior to the Panel meeting. This will generally occur after the submission has been received and just prior to the Panel meeting.

3.4.3 Project Presentation

The Panel meeting requires the Applicant and/ or their representatives to present the project to the Panel members. The Applicant's architect or designer must attend this meeting.

The Applicant must present their project to the Panel and provide rationale for the design and justification for the outcomes. This enables the Panel to understand the design process and allows an opportunity for the exchange of information and ideas.

Typically, a Panel meeting will have four stages:

- Applicant to present for 30 minutes
- Panel questions for 10 minutes
- Panel to discuss project privately for 20 minutes
- Panel to provide feedback to Applicant (20 minutes).

3.5 Recommendation

3.5.1 The DRP advice sheet must be finalised within 14 days of the Panel meeting.

3.5.2 The final recommendations and any further actions required must be clearly outlined and the advice sheet is to be signed by the DRP Chair following agreement from all Panel members.