
TO: Mary Osman (Statutory Planning)
FROM: Blake Farmar-Bowers (Urban Design)
DATE: 13 February 2018
SUBJECT: 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy
APPLICATION NO: PLN17/0991
DESCRIPTION: Construction of a multi storey building associated with the Australian Catholic University and alteration to Road Access.

COMMENTS

Urban Design comments have been sought on the above application, in particular on the proposed public realm and streetscape improvements.

(Comments refer to application drawings received on 30 January 2018)

Comments are provided below.

The Landscape Architectural proposition needs to be aligned with the 2017 Development Plan and relevant policy cited within the Planning report. The proposed public realm needs to be more responsive to the requirements of students, staff and the community. The following principles have been assembled to assist in focussing the project's design objectives.

DESIGN PRINCIPLES TO BE ACHIEVED FOR ACU SITE

Context

The design of the Public Realm needs to be cohesive, interconnected and responsive to the Victoria Parade context and campus architecture.

Both the design approach and physical form should relate to the character of the streetscape and adjacent buildings. For example, the former use of the Mary Glowery building (Commonwealth Notes and Stamps Printing Department building) conceptually offers a potential richness that has not been explored.

Inclusive and Accommodating

Provide spaces that welcome and cater for the ACU Campus Community, visitors to the site and the local community.

Design safe, inviting and seamless interfaces between the public realm and private development. Ensure the public realm is accessible and purposeful in catering for a defined range of functions. Consider both access and occupation for individuals and groups, across all times of the day and year.

Legible

Create a pedestrian focussed campus that is attentive and proactive in catering for the precinct's access and circulation requirements.

Establish a clear hierarchy of building entries and spaces. Create legible and intuitive campus wayfinding.

Green

Introduce trees and planting that improve public amenity and contribute to the local identity and context.

Select plant species that are responsive to precinct and project character, microclimate, available growing volumes and intended maintenance regimes. Prioritise tree planting where possible and plant the largest tree species appropriate for the growing conditions.

URBAN DESIGN COMMENTS IN RESPONSE TO APPLICATION

GENERAL

Kerb and footpath upgrades

Proposed building works are likely to damage the existing Victoria Parade and Napier Street footpaths (and kerb & channels). It is expected that pavements are resurfaced and replacement kerbs are upgraded to sawn bluestone kerbs and pitcher channels. All proposed streetscape materials should be as per Technical Notes: City of Yarra Public Domain Manual and Yarra Standard Drawings.

YOUNG STREET INTERFACE

The existing garden bed on Young Street bed is proposed to be retained and protected. Current planting (*Pittosporums* and *Agapanthus sp.*) is of low value and should be removed and replaced with more appropriate species.

MARY GLOWERY BUILDING INTERFACE

Improvements to Victoria Parade footpath through tree planting and street furniture is supported. Refer to sustainable transport comments in regard to Melbourne Bike Share Station.

Tree Planting

Continuation of *Robinia pseudoacacia* planting is supported. Noted the 6m spacing responds to the building articulation.

Furniture

Seating moments are supported particularly given their proximity to the existing bus stops. Given accessibility is from one side only it would be preferable if they were substituted with seats with backs and armrests. Additional seating is encouraged.

Pedestrian accessibility

The narrow strip of planting parallel with the property boundary (that contains tree planting) will inhibit pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. This planting is at risk of being trampled and should be re-considered.

Planting intricacy

Proposed hedge planting is quite intricate. Ensure ACU are willing to maintain or consider simplifying planting design.

Proposed Surface

Define the type of surface material proposed in front of the Mary Glowery Building. If this is an asphalt pavement the site boundary should be clearly demarcated along contiguous at-grade surfaces with metal circular discs or other similar products to Council's satisfaction and at the Permit Holder's cost.

ENTRY BETWEEN BUILDINGS

The design response is very pragmatic and creates a clear separation between the landscape treatments of the Mary Glowery and Mother Teresa buildings. Review the public realm to achieve an interconnected sequence of spaces.

Access point

Locate building entries on the landscape plans to ensure Landscape and Architectural layouts are co-ordinated.

Furniture offset

Consider relocating seating that faces each other across 2m wide pathway to encourage a comfortable clear path of travel. Suggest a staggered seat arrangement (anchor western seat with bicycle hoops).

MOTHER TERESA BUILDING INTERFACE

The current design at the Main Entry is composed of publicly accessible ramps, tiered gardens and private single entry courtyards. A plaza typology may be more suitable than a garden given the significance of this site and forecasted student population. The purpose and function of this space needs to be clearly defined, and where possible freely accessible.

Levels and Accessibility

Levels for the Main entry (Airlock and street) need to be noted to ascertain if levels are compliant with Australian Standards.

Water Feature

Further levels need to be provided. Given the water feature is situated under a falling entry ramp there is likely to be a sizable level difference at the Victoria Parade end. This interface, particularly due to its proximity to the entry ramp and the Victoria Street footpath will need to be enclosed to ensure pedestrian safety.

Further detail is required regarding the location of 'gentle cascade over infinity edge' to ensure its suitability (e.g. visibility). Confirm if there is any ability to interact with water. Water depth is noted as 300mm deep, this seems like an unnecessary risk and should be reviewed.

Sunken Gardens: Victoria Parade

Garden access appears to be made via buildings only, ensure entry points are shown. Given the importance of the public realm on Victoria Parade it is recommended to offer public access to these gardens as they are currently exclusive, private spaces. This would further improve the design quality of public spaces and the interfaces between private development and the public domain. (Clause 11.06 Metropolitan Melbourne: p.14 Planning Considerations)

This may be informal access (steep, non-universal access) to the street accommodating for ease of maintenance and likely desire lines. DDA access to be made via building.

Levels are not included within the submission and as such understanding the spatial relationship to informal student spaces, entry, and footpaths can't be fully understood.

Amphitheatre corner

Internal/External relationship

Clarify the relationship between the public realm and amphitheatre with inclusion of levels and details of intended use. Façade is noted as clear facade glazing. Are there any screens associated with amphitheatre that may alter permeability of facade? Anticipated behaviour needs to be considered for both viewed and viewer, both internally and externally. E.g. will students be distracted by behaviour of passers-by? Is it uncomfortable to occupy public realm knowing you are being watched? Can landscape mitigate some of these issues?

Form and Purpose

Scale and function of circular planters departs from the architectural gesture of the amphitheatre. Benches (an assumption) are outward facing which suggests space is catering for short term propping/waiting by individuals.

This function is relevant, however given the importance and size of this corner can groupings of elements be reorganised to accommodate longer stays for larger groupings?

Building undercroft planting

Ensure allowance has been made for irrigation to garden beds located under building undercrofts, particularly given proposed planting species.

Avoid locating tree planting below level 1 floorplate as this appears to allow approximately 5.5m in height clearance. Ensure trees have suitable growing volume available (given underground car parking extends to property boundary). Uncertain if these trees are on grade or located in raised planters.

Napier Street Stairway

Ensure staircase setback is generous enough to locate tactile indicators behind the property line. Ensure handrails are DDA compliant, i.e. is a central handrail required?

Napier Street Kerb Line & Existing Trees

Confirm the existing *Ulmus procera* (English Elm) tree no. 29 tree pit is not being reduced in size due to the proximity of the proposed bicycle lane.

FURTHER INFORMATION REQUIRED

- Revised Design Principles and Objectives
- Ensure all pavements and fixtures are described
- Grading and Drainage Plans (showing all proposed surface levels)
- Key Sections (at all building entries, and areas of significant level change)
- Planting Plans with proposed plant species list (include planting volumes for any podium tree planting)
- Occupation and capacity diagrams would assist in communicating intended use.