

INDEPENDENT URBAN DESIGN ADVICE

171 STAWELL STREET & 7-9 KENNEDY STREET RICHMOND

May 2018



Image: Google Maps

Prepared by

Robert McGauran

B. Arch. (Hons. Melb), B.A. (Fine Arts Melb.), P.D.M. (Melb.), LFRAIA, FVEPLA, Architect

Our ref: 18010

Directors
Eli Giannini
Chris Jones
Cameron Lacy
Robert McGauran
Mun Soon
Joshua Wheeler

BACKGROUND

1. In January 2018, I was asked by the City of Yarra to provide independent urban design advice for the development of the central and southern portion of the site at 171 Stawell Street and 7-9 Kennedy Street, Richmond (formerly 22 Bendigo Street, Richmond – former GTV9 site).
2. I previously gave the Council urban design advice on this site in 2012, 2014 and then again in late 2017 for the current application.
3. This application seeks approval to amend the approved Development Plan (2012) for 22 Bendigo Street, Richmond to incorporate a range of changes, including:
 - a) An increase in building height from six to nine storeys in the Central Precinct (the area bounded by Khartoum Street, Kennedy Avenue, Barnet Way) and use of the building as a retirement village.
 - b) A building of up to four-storeys at the North-East corner of the Central Precinct (Bendigo and Khartoum Streets) for the use as a retirement village.
 - c) A residential aged care facility of up to six storeys in the South Precinct (south of Khartoum Street)
 - d) A building for the use of affordable housing of up to three storeys in the South Precinct (Stawell Street).
 - e) Increase heights of townhouses across Stawell Street, the extended Kennedy Avenue and at the South-East corner of Khartoum Street from two and three storeys to three storeys.
4. My comments are made with regard to the resolution of the scheme in relation to its strategic context and principles of good urban design.

SITE CONTEXT

5. The subject site refers to the area bounded by Stawell Street to the west, Wertheim Street and Jago Street to the north, Bendigo Street to the east and south of Khartoum Street.
6. The subject site is well-located and in close proximity to Major Activity Centres and multi-modal public transport, located between two Major Activity Centres with Swan Street approximately 200m to the south and Bridge Road approximately 600m to the north.
7. In addition to a Mixed Use Zone (MUZ), the subject site is affected by a number of planning overlays of which one is relevant to this application, the Development Plan Overlay – Schedule 5 (Clause 43.04-5 of the Yarra Planning Scheme):
8. The purpose of the Development Plan Overlay is to:
 - a) To implement the State Planning Policy Framework and the Local Planning Policy Framework, including the Municipal Strategic Statement and local planning policies.
 - b) To identify areas which require the form and conditions of future use and development to be shown on a development plan before a permit can be granted to use or develop the land.
 - c) To exempt an application from notice and review if it is generally in accordance with a development plan.
9. The approved Development Plan (2012) divides the site into four distinct precincts; Northern Precinct, Central Precinct, Southern Precinct and Heritage Precinct.
10. The Northern Precinct has been fully developed. The Heritage Precinct is fully developed north of Deakin Lane.
11. The application seeks to amend the approved Development Plan concerning the undeveloped portions of the site including:
 - a) Central Precinct – the area bounded by Studio Walk, Stawell Street, Barnet Way and Khartoum Street. Noting the application seeks to transfer a portion of the Heritage Precinct to the Central Precinct, the parcel of land bounded by Bendigo Street, Deakin Lane and Khartoum Street. A temporary outbuilding and on-grade car park currently occupies this site.
 - b) Southern Precinct – the area bounded by Stawell Street and south of Khartoum Street.

STRATEGIC PLANNING CONTEXT

12. Within *Plan Melbourne*, there are a number of outcomes, directions and policies that need to be considered when reviewing this proposal from an urban design perspective.
13. *Plan Melbourne* outlines a vision of Melbourne as a 'global city of opportunity and choice'. This vision is guided by seven key outcomes, each supported by directions and policies towards their implementation.
14. Outcomes relevant to the land-use and built-form changes sought by this proposal include the following:
 - a) Outcome 2: Melbourne provides housing choice in locations close to jobs and services
 - b) Outcome 4: Melbourne is a distinctive and liveable city with quality design and amenity
 - c) Outcome 5: Melbourne is a city of inclusive, vibrant and healthy neighbourhoods
15. **Directions 2.1 & 2.2** both seek to increase the supply of housing in established locations close to services, jobs and public transport to support the creation of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
 - a) Policy 2.2.2 seeks to direct new housing and mixed-use developments to urban renewal areas in Melbourne towards increasing the diversity of housing, including affordable and social housing, as well as facilitating an increase in jobs and community services in these areas. It is also noted here that urban renewal areas will be key sources of medium- to higher-density development.
 - b) Policy 2.2.3 note the role of activity centres and other places that offer good access to jobs, services and public transport in accommodating an increased supply of medium- to higher-density housing.
16. **Direction 2.3** seeks to *"increase the supply of social and affordable housing."*
 - a) Policy 2.3.3 outlines the need to *"strengthen the role of planning in facilitating and delivering the supply of social and affordable housing."* It is expected that new planning provisions and tools will be developed to this goal.
17. **Direction 4.1** advocates a place-making approach to urban design to create *"more great public places across Melbourne."*
 - a) Policy 4.3.1 seeks to integrate place-making practices into road-space management to ensure the design of streets encourages the use of active transport and facilitates a greater degree of and encounter and interaction between people and places.
18. **Direction 5.1** outlines the ambition of creating a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods by encouraging the development of vibrant, mixed-use neighbourhoods linked by a network of activity centres. 'Walkability', 'housing diversity', 'ability to age in place' are identified here as key characteristics of 20-minute neighbourhoods.
19. **Direction 5.3** notes the importance of social infrastructure in supporting strong communities. Delivery and co-location of social infrastructure in accessible locations in close proximity to public transport is a key policy under this direction.
20. Policy guidelines to consider where relevant include:
 - a) *Urban Design Guidelines* for Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017).
 - b) *Apartment Design Guidelines* for Victoria (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2017).
 - c) *Safer Design Guidelines* for Victoria (Crime Prevention Victoria and Department of Sustainability and Environment, 2005).
 - d) *Urban Design Charter* for Victoria (Department of Planning and Community Development 2009).

STATE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

State planning provisions relevant to this application are set out below:

21. There are a substantial number of state planning provisions supportive of change, in my area of expertise, **Clause 15 – Urban Environment** is particularly relevant to this proposal.
22. **Clause 15.01-1 – Urban Design** notes as its objective the goal *“to create urban environments that are safe, functional and provide good quality environments with a sense of place and cultural identity.”* Relevant urban design strategies include the following:
 - a) Promote good urban design to make the environment more liveable and attractive.
 - b) Ensure new development or redevelopment contributes to community and cultural life by improving safety, diversity and choice, the quality of living and working environments, accessibility and inclusiveness and environmental sustainability.
23. **Clause 15.01-4 – Design for safety** seeks to improve community safety and encourage neighbourhood design that makes people feel safe. Relevant design for safety strategies include the following:
 - a) Ensure the design of buildings, public spaces and the mix of activities contribute to safety and perceptions of safety
 - b) Support initiatives that provide safer walking and cycling routes and improved safety for people using public transport.
24. **Clause 15.01-6 – Healthy neighbourhoods** outline the objective to design neighbourhoods that fosters community well-being, active living and community interaction for people of all ages and abilities by providing the following:
 - a) Connected walking and cycling networks.
 - b) Streets with direct, safe and convenient access to destinations.
 - c) Conveniently located public spaces for active recreation and leisure.
25. **Clause 15.02 – Sustainable development** seeks to: *“encourage land use and development that is consistent with the efficient use of energy and the minimisation of greenhouse gas emissions.”* Relevant sustainable development strategies include the following:
 - a) Promote consolidation of urban development and integration of land use and transport
 - b) Support low energy forms of transport such as walking and cycling.
26. **Clause 16 – Housing** aims to ensure that planning provides for housing diversity and the efficient provision of supporting infrastructure. In addition to this, new housing should be planned in a manner that ensures its long-term sustainability in relation to access to services, walkability to activity centres, public transport, schools and open space. Noting the following relevant objective:
 - a) Ensure that the planning system supports the appropriate quantity, quality and type of housing, including the provision of aged care facilities
27. **Clause 16.01-5 – Housing affordability** sets out to deliver *“more affordable housing closer to jobs, transport and services.”* Relevant strategies seeking to improve housing affordability include the following:
 - a) Increase choice in housing type, tenure and cost to meet the needs of households as the move through life cycle changes and to support diverse communities.
 - b) Encourage a significant proportion of new development to be affordable for households on low to moderate incomes.
 - c) Facilitate a mix of private, affordable and social housing in activity centres and urban renewal precincts.
28. **Clause 18.02 – Movement networks** seeks to promote the use of sustainable personal transport, outlining strategies of which a number are relevant to this proposal:
 - a) Develop high quality pedestrian environments that are accessible to footpath-bound vehicles such as wheelchairs, prams and scooters.

- b) Ensure development provides opportunities to create more sustainable transport options such as walking, cycling and public transport.
29. **Clause 19.02 – Community infrastructure** outline the strategy to facilitate the location of health-related facilities (including aged care and community care facilities) with consideration given to the demographic trends and the integration of services into communities.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Local planning provisions relevant to this application are set out below:

30. **Clause 21.04 – Land Use** acknowledges the need for Yarra to accommodate its share of Melbourne’s population growth, noting the need to direct higher density residential development to strategic re-development sites. The subject site has been identified as such a site in Clause 21.08. It is also noted under this clause that: *“as the population ages, disabilities are becoming more prevalent and a wider range of housing is required. Provision needs to be made for housing that can be adapted to cater for people with disabilities and older persons.”*

In addition, strategies relevant to this application include:

- a) Provide affordable housing for people of all abilities in strategic redevelopment sites.
 - b) Encourage residential development that allows people to age in place by supporting a range of housing types.
 - c) Support the development of new residential care facilities.
31. **Clause 21.05 – Built Form** contain objectives and strategies considering heritage, urban design, built form character and the public environment. It seeks to reinforce the existing urban framework of Yarra of a *‘low-rise urban form punctuated by pockets of higher development’*. Objectives and strategies under this clause relevant to this application include the following:
- a) Developments on strategic redevelopment sites should generally be no more than 5-6 storeys unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal provide community benefits such as the provision of affordable housing or a positive contribution to the enhancement of the public domain.
 - b) Retain, enhance and extend Yarra’s fine grain urban fabric by ensuring new developments are designed with particular regard to its surrounding urban context and fabric, including the re-establishment of historical streets and laneways.
 - c) Provide a public environment that encourages community interaction and activity
32. **Clause 21.06 – Transport** seeks to reduce car dependency by promoting active and public transport by improving the quality of walking and cycling infrastructure. It is explicitly noted that ‘walking’ includes people who use wheelchairs and other mobility devices. Strategies relevant to this application include:
- a) Improve pedestrian and cycling links in association with new development where possible.
 - b) Require all new large developments to prepare and implement integrated transport plans to reduce the use of private cars and to encourage walking, cycling and public transport.
33. **Clause 21.07 – Environmental sustainability** promotes environmentally sustainable development.
34. **Clause 21.08 – Neighbourhoods** sets out objectives and strategies for specific neighbourhoods. The subject site is located in the Central Richmond neighbourhood and is identified as a strategic re-development site under this clause.
35. **Clause 22.07 – Development abutting laneways** seeks to ensure that laneways and their interfaces are considered as an important part of the public realm and the lanes an important shared movement network that should enjoy informal surveillance and activation from development.
36. **Clause 22.17 – Environmentally sustainable development** builds upon Clause 21.07 by setting out a aspirational framework to encourage developments that incorporate best practice in environmentally sustainable development from design through to construction.

37. **Clause 22.10 – Built form and design policy** outline the objective to ensure that new development positively responds to and contributes to the surrounding context, including streetscape and built form character, whilst having minimal impact on the amenity of the surrounding land. Its design objectives and guidelines include (but are not limited to) the following:
- a) To ensure ground level façade and boundary treatments interface positively with the street
 - b) To provide pedestrian/human scaled design at street level
 - c) Use appropriate materials, finishes and colours, which add visual interest and, assist in breaking up the mass and bulk of new development
 - d) Matching ground floor level with street level
 - e) New development provides an appropriate level of natural daylight into internal communal spaces and habitable rooms
 - f) To minimise the use of energy and natural resources in the construction and operation of buildings
 - g) To ensure that new residential development provides private and/ or communal open space that is well designed, functional, safe, solar oriented, well ventilated and meets the needs of residents.
38. Recent amendments to the Planning and Environment Act 1987 have established the delivery of affordable housing as a key purpose of planning policy and have defined affordable housing as housing available for very low, low and moderate income earners.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

39. Given the context and location of the subject site as strategic urban renewal site, the merits of this proposal needs to be assessed with respect to the achievement of the outcomes set out in *Plan Melbourne* alongside local planning policies.
40. The provision of social infrastructure in the form of a retirement village and aged care facility of a substantial size has much merit and this change in use should be supported on the principles of aging in place and the co-location of social infrastructure with Major Activity Centres and public transport. The delivery of housing diversity within the municipality has been long seen as a key ambition of the urban renewal strategy and the shortfall in housing for an ageing community has been well demonstrated in other submissions as well as this one to council. This is consistent with principles of inclusive, resilient and diverse communities. The proposed scale of development aligns with industry standard models that enable a high level of on-site services to be provided within the proposal.
41. The inclusion of new affordable housing for Women’s Housing Ltd. in the southern end of the site is also supported as a very positive inclusion and demonstrable community benefit arising from the revised response. Again this form of housing meets established chronic shortfalls in housing supply for older women and women and children in particular within a rapidly gentrifying inner urban area.
42. The transitioning of height and scale of buildings to lower forms on the periphery is an appropriate response to its immediate context and is consistent with the endorsed plans.
43. This combined with strategic support for much needed social infrastructure, underpins the applicants submission for the increase in built form. This is generally supported save for the south and eastern portion of the aged care facility (block E).
44. The increase in height of townhouses from a mixture of two and three storeys to three storeys with alternating frontages and varied street level relationship is generally supported.
45. Upon review of the amended development plan, I note a range of key changes in addition to increases in height:
- a) Consolidated building footprints for the retirement village and aged care facility are a departure from the smaller footprints put forth in endorsed plans.
 - b) Addition of two porte cochere sections for vehicular access on Khartoum Street directly opposite each other at main entrances of the proposed retirement village and aged care facility.
 - c) Removal of two public laneways in alignment with existing Moore Street and another perpendicular to this at the south-eastern corner to make space for a private covered car-park and private access road.

- d) Widening of the eastern portion of Studio Walk.
- e) Addition of public open space abutting Studio Walk, partially shared with private open space with the retirement living village.

46. In other aspects, the proposal is generally consistent with the intentions of the approved development plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 47. The proposal presents a number of design issues that require further consideration before it can be supported in its totality. Recommendations set out below are primarily focused on ensuring the design and detail of the public realm and the streetscape provide for a high level of amenity and accessibility for residents, workers and visitors of the proposed retirement village and aged care facility and for those traversing the neighbourhood and seeking to enjoy the amenity of public spaces within the broader urban renewal area.
- 48. A visit to subject site and the existing condition of the developed portion of the site revealed a number of issues which underscore the need for an improved development plan.
- 49. The increase in building height and scale of the proposed aged care facility (block E) combined with a larger footprint has resulted in offsite overshadowing of adjoining dwellings that in my view is excessive and should be ameliorated. Shadow studies display significant overshadowing of abutting residences on Moore Street at 3pm.

Recommendation 1

- a) Review the scale of development along the south and eastern portion of block E to ensure there is no overshadowing of adjoining residential neighbourhoods arising from the development before 3pm at the spring equinox.
- 50. The plan notes the opportunity for the project to “improve permeability, connectivity through the site and with the broader neighbourhood, **prioritising pedestrians, mobility needs and cyclists over cars.** *[emphasis theirs]*”
 - 51. In the earlier discussions with the applicant, daytime access through the central north south common area spine was proposed as a means by which the development could stay connected to the community but where it would provide safety and security for residents after hours.
 - 52. Given the change in use as a retirement village and aged care, there is a need for further ambition, consideration and subsequent detail in the amended development plan towards achieving this aspect and the outcomes of *Plan Melbourne* and as provided for in the earlier development plan.
 - 53. The provision of on-grade private car park south of the proposed aged care facility with a retail component is a clear departure from a basement car park in the endorsed plans and should be discouraged.
 - 54. The removal of two public laneways in the endorsed plans for a private vehicle access road leading to a private car park is a response that diminishes public permeability of the site and community dividend, bounding a large portion of the site away from the public, pedestrians and cyclists. The applicant should review how measures might be taken to offset this loss of public open space with other measures.

Recommendation 2

- a) Remove the on-grade private car park south of the aged care facility to ensure all off-street car parking requirements are consolidated to basement carparks.
 - b) Amend the plans to honour the original intention of the endorsed plans and provide two public laneways with priority given to pedestrians/cyclists and consider a continuance of Moore Street for pedestrians or provide commensurate community benefit through other facility and/or open space responses within the project.
- 55. The extension of Studio Walk needs further detail on how conflict between pedestrians and vehicles are resolved at the Kennedy Avenue intersection with clear priority given to pedestrians.

Recommendation 3

- a) Provide detail on how priority is granted to pedestrians at Kennedy Avenue, for example, a raised surface continuing the level and materiality of existing Studio Walk requiring vehicles to give way to pedestrians.
56. The proposal to provide a connection to the existing basement car park in the Northern Precinct is a logical response. New basement parking and underground structures of new buildings should be designed towards resolving grade level variances to address universal access requirements and to ensure sufficient growing medium for trees and landscaping planned.

Recommendation 4

- a) Align building ground floor with the streetscape and provide on-grade pedestrian access at all publicly accessible points of entry and avoid the use of platform lifts and stairs at private entrances.
 - b) Provide a minimum of 1 metre soil depth above basement and all underground structures for all landscaped areas inclusive of street canopy trees.
57. The continuance of a narrow 0.7m wide combined crossover/footpath along the western edge of Kennedy Avenue is not supported on the basis on ensuring accessibility for people of all ages and abilities.
58. The use of heritage bluestone cobblestones on the raised central carriageway along Khartoum Street between Barnet and Kennedy Avenue is not appropriate, while this may have the effect of slowing down vehicular traffic, users of wheelchairs and other mobility devices would also be impeded. Other measures incorporating bluestone can be successfully used including raising the zone for universal access but a fitness for purpose for a potentially older and less mobile resident community should be manifested too in public realm responses.
59. Similarly, the use of rough-cut bluestone cobblestones down the median of local roads with an inward cross-fall (as per existing roads in the developed portion of the site – see image attached) should be reviewed against these concerns and modified for universal access best practice.



Recommendation 5

- a) Provide for a minimum 1.2m (recommended 1.5m) wide footpath along the western edge of Kennedy Avenue and all footpaths in accordance with AS 1428.2 (1992). Amend the plans to alter the design and material specification of roads, footpaths and other ground surfaces to ensure full compliance with AS1428.1 (2009) and AS1428.2 (1992).
60. There is a need to consider the location of utility poles in the development plan. The below attached images of constructed portions of the site demonstrate how light poles and signposts on narrow footpaths significantly constrain walkability and accessibility. The new development must improve on this disappointing outcome.



Recommendation 6

- a) Demonstrate or provide detailed guidelines on the placement of poles and signposts to ensure they do not constrain access for users with wheelchairs or mobility devices.
61. I have long been a public advocate for higher levels of amenity and articulation in corridors and lobby spaces. This is particularly important given the use of building as a retirement village and aged facility, it is encouraged that minimum widths are specified in building design guidelines beyond the Gold Level standard.

Recommendation 7

- a) Amend the guidelines to specify a minimum 1600mm with 1800mm threshold depth at entries to apartments as a minimum response and 2100mm as the lift lobby arrangement at each level.
62. The proposal appears to be modest in its ambition for environmental sustainability with a view of meeting only the minimum requirements put forth in the Yarra Planning Scheme. Provided the opportunity of a development of this size and scale, it is encouraged that the applicant look at strengthening this aspect further. In particular, there is a need to ensure reduced levels of cost and maintenance for Women's Housing. This can be achieved through ESD measures such as provision of solar panels, instead of provision of space allocation only.
63. While it is noted in the proposals' affordable housing quality, diversity and building design guidelines that design and the materiality of Women's Housing will be consistent with those of adjoining townhouses north of affordable housing, there is a clear lack of detail with these guidelines when compared with other buildings.

Recommendation 8

- a) Ensure the provision of solar panels and other energy saving measures to reduce long-term cost and maintenance for Women's Housing (affordable housing).
 - b) It is encouraged that the applicant provide further detail in materiality and typical floor plans for Women's Housing to ensure stated design objectives are met.
64. The plan notes that bicycle storage facilities will not be provided for employees of the aged care facility on the basis of early shifts and thus the requirements of Clause 52.34 are not met. This argument is not supported given the subject site's location and is at odds with the plan's stated ambition to promote use of active transport. It is encouraged that bicycle parking and end of destination facilities for employees be provided at a minimum.

Recommendation 9

- a) Provide bicycle parking and end of destination facilities for the aged care facility, inclusive of shower and change, in accordance with those outlined in Clause 52.34.

65. It is noted that the consolidation of building footprints for the retirement village and aged care facility require an careful response to ensure a diversity of fine grain at ground level to ensure the project integrate well with the neighbourhood.

CONCLUSION

66. Subject to a satisfactory response to the design issues outlined above, this proposal should be supported.

DOCUMENTS FORMING THE BASIS OF THIS REPORT

- > 2012 endorsed plans
- > 2017 Development Plan – Bates Smart – October 2017
- > Town Planning Report – Contour Town Planers – October 2017
- > Arborist Report
- > Community Facilities Analysis Plan
- > Environmental Report
- > Heritage Impact Statement
- > Infrastructure Service Report
- > Sustainability Management Report
- > Traffic Assessment Report
- > Waste Management Plan
- > Wind Impact Assessment



Prepared By

Robert McGauran

B. Arch. (Hons. Melb), B.A. (Fine Arts Melb.), P.D.M. (Melb.), LFRAIA, Architect

Dated

May 2018