

27-49A Best Street, Fitzroy North

Urban Design Statement

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From: David Lock Associates

Job Code: PIE002

Introduction

David Lock Associates (DLA) has been requested to provide an urban design assessment of a proposed development for 27-49A Best Street, Fitzroy North.

Context

The site is located on the corner of Best Street and Scotchmer Street and currently utilised as a supermarket.

It is located within the North Fitzroy Village Neighbourhood Activity Centre, and serviced by public transport services including tram route 11 along Best Street (immediately east), bus route 504 along Scotchmer Street (approx. 100m north-east), and Rushall Railway Station (approximately 800m east).

The subject site is zoned Commercial 1 Zone (C1Z) and affected by Heritage Overlay – Schedule 327 (HO327).

The purposes of the C1Z include to “*create vibrant mixed use commercial centres for retail, office, business, entertainment and community uses*” and “*to provide for residential uses at densities complementary to the role and scale of the commercial centre.*”

HO327 applies to the North Fitzroy Precinct which is a broad area. The relevant purpose of HO327 seeks “*to ensure that development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places.*”

There is substantial policy at both State and locals which seeks infill development in appropriate locations to support the development of neighbourhood activity centres (refer to Clauses 11, 11.01-1R, 11.03-1R, 17.02-1S, 21.04 and 21.05). However, these policies must be considered alongside other State and local planning policies requiring development to respond to the surrounding urban character and context (refer to Clauses 11, 15.01-1S, 21.04-2 and 21.05).

Clause 21.05-2 specifies that development within activity centres “*should generally be no more than 5-6 storeys unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal can achieve specific benefits...*”

In summary, the site is well-located with regard to public transport and other services. State and local planning policies, such as Clause 21.05, support infill development generally up to 5-6 storeys in height within such locations to support the development of neighbourhood activity centres. However, development must also consider other objectives which encourage development to respond to its context.

Laneway

The development proposes to reconfigure the northern end of the laneway to the rear of 27-45 Best Street to terminate at Egremont Street.

It is typical for north-south laneways in this area to terminate at an east-west laneway behind properties fronting Scotchmer Street. For example, the north-south laneways between Brunswick Street North and Best Street north of Scotchmer Street terminate at a laneway that runs east-west. Similarly, the north-south laneway between Rae Street and Brunswick Street North south of Scotchmer Street also follows a similar configuration.

Therefore, the proposed laneway reconfiguration is considered to be an appropriate response, from an urban design perspective.

Street Wall

The proposed street wall reaches a height of 2-storeys (approximately 9.1m to the parapet).

The street wall includes the retention of buildings on Best Street and Scotchmer Street which are of heritage value. The overall scale of the street wall responds appropriately to the scale of the retained heritage buildings while providing sufficient spatial definition of both streets.

The street wall is not setback from either street. This will reinforce the characteristic hard street edge in this part of Best Street and provide clear definition between the public and private realms.

At ground level, the Best Street frontage is activated through the use of clear glazing which occupies a significant proportion of the façade. The Scotchmer Street façade is partly interrupted by loading and access arrangements. However, this occupies only a small proportion of the frontage, whilst the remainder is activated through clear glazed shopfronts, a residential lobby and SOHO townhouses which orient towards the street.

At first floor, it is proposed to utilise the Best Street building predominantly as a café area and provide balconies that orient towards Best Street and Scotchmer Street. Additionally, the upper levels of the SOHO townhouses are designed to orient towards Best Street to provide further surveillance of the street.

The street wall reflects the singular use of the podium but incorporates columns to break up the façade. This will respond to the fine grain pattern of neighbouring commercial buildings along Best Street.

It is also proposed to provide a canopy on both streets in a scalloped form. This is a contemporary interpretation of the existing canopies and will provide an effective weather protection.

In summary, the street wall responds appropriately to the character of both streets, has been designed to maximise activation and passive surveillance and is appropriately detailed.

Upper Form

Best Street Building

The upper form above the supermarket component of the development reaches a height of 7 storeys (25.2m to the parapet).

From Best Street, Levels 02 – 04 are generally setback approximately 4.5m from the edge of the street wall below, whilst Levels 05 and 06 are generally recessed a further 6.2m. From Scotchmer Street, Levels 02 – 05 are setback approximately 3.8m from edge of the street wall below, whilst Level 06 is recessed a further 3.1m.

As noted above, Clause 21.05-2 contemplates buildings of 5-6 storeys in locations such as this, or higher if specific benefits are achieved. The upper levels have additional setbacks from both streets such that the proposal will read as a 5-storey building in closer range views on Best Street, and as a 6-storey building from Scotchmer Street. Additionally, along both street elevations the

length of the facades have been 'broken up' into 3-4 distinctive 'modules' to lessen their visual impact.

Although the 7th storey will be visible in mid-range views, it has been recessed such that it will not add to the visual presence of the building beyond that of a 6-storey form. It is also noted that the proposal is similar in height to a 6 storey office building which is contemplated by the Planning Scheme in this location (without the need for 'specific benefits').

At the northeast corner of the site (the corner of Best Street and Scotchmer Street), lesser setbacks are proposed that will create a modest accentuation of the corner. This is appropriate given the importance of these streets to the urban structure.

In summary, it is considered that the proposal delivers a number of the benefits sought by Clause 21.05-2 for higher buildings. In particular, it has significant upper level setbacks, it includes high quality restoration and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, its design is considered to achieve architectural excellence, and it will enhance the public domain through greater activation.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposed height of the Best Street upper form is appropriate.

Scotchmer Street Building

The Scotchmer Street building reaches an overall height of 5 storeys (17.3m to the parapet) which falls within the expectations for heights within activity centres, as identified in Clause 21.05-2. It will also mediate between the 7 storey form on Best Street and the lower residential dwellings to the west.

The upper form is setback a minimum of 5.5m from Scotchmer Street, and 3m from Egremont Street. This will ensure that it is visually recessive when viewed from both streets. The northern façade of the upper form is articulated by a series of vertical elements which references the finer grain of the heritage buildings below. This will help to lessen its visual impact on the street.

Summary

In summary, the upper forms above the supermarket and Scotchmer Street buildings respond appropriately to the policy and physical context.

Off-Site Amenity Impacts

The proposal is adjacent to the backyards of a number of residential properties that front onto Egremont Street. Clause 21.04 requires new development to ensure reasonable amenity for residents. However, given the activity centre location of the site, the amenity expectations of these neighbours must be tempered accordingly.

Visual Amenity

Opposite of the backyards of the neighbouring residential properties, Levels 02 – 05 are setback approximately 15.2m (including the laneway), whilst Level 06 is setback approximately 16.9m (including the laneway) from the rear boundaries of those properties. Where opposite the side boundary of 36 Egremont Street, Levels 02 – 04 are setback a minimum of 9.2m (to the balconies).

These setbacks will ensure that the 7th storey (Level 06) will be barely visible from these backyards, and the lower 6 levels will not be unreasonably dominant.

Overlooking

All habitable room windows and balconies facing the backyards of the neighbouring residential properties and the side boundary of 36 Egremont Street, are located in excess of 9m from these backyards.

This will avoid unreasonable overlooking to the neighbouring residential properties.

Overshadowing

The plans show that the proposed development will not result in any additional overshadowing beyond that cast by existing features at the September equinox.

This avoids unreasonable overshadowing of the neighbouring residential properties.

Equitable Development

The neighbouring property to the south at 23 Best Street has the potential to be redeveloped, given that it shares the same physical and policy context as the site.

The proposal incorporates a wall on the common boundary with this site and no apartments rely on this interface for their primary amenity. This will facilitate the future development of the neighbouring property by enabling it to extend to the boundary too.

This wall is proposed to be clad in brick which will add visual interest to it when viewed from public realm.

Therefore, the proposal has given sufficient consideration to future adjoining development.

Summary

In summary, the development is appropriate from an urban design perspective.

The Planning Scheme supports infill development of this scale on sites such as this within well-serviced activity centres. In addition, the proposal is massed and designed appropriately in response to its context, including the surrounding urban character.

The street wall has been designed to maximise activation and surveillance of the public realm.

The development employs materials that are familiar to this part of Fitzroy North.

The proposed laneway configuration is appropriate and responds to the character of the area.

The development avoids unreasonable off-site amenity impacts to the neighbouring residential properties, and will not prejudice future development opportunities at 23 Best Street.

Please do not hesitate to contact Vincent Pham on (03) 9682 8568 should you wish to discuss any aspect of the above further.

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