

# 60 Chandler Highway, Alphington / Urban Design Referral

<b>Council Reference</b>	PLN19/0606
<b>To</b>	Amy Hodgen – Senior Coordinator - Statutory Planning
<b>From</b>	Mark Sheppard – Principal

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In July 2020, City of Yarra requested that **kinetica** undertake an urban design assessment of a proposed development at 60 Chandler Highway, Alphington (the Site) based upon the plans prepared by Elenberg Fraser and dated 10 July 2020.

I consider that the key urban design matters raised by this proposal are:

- Site layout;
- Overall height;
- Streetwall;
- Public realm interfaces; and
- Facade design detail.

Therefore, this referral is organised under these headings.

## 2.0 ASSESSMENT

### Site layout

Clause 21.05 and DPO11 seek to enhance the public domain and promote urban legibility and public access. Further, the Development Plan specifies that a Pedestrian Priority Route is to run along the eastern edge of the Site in a north-south direction to form the 'Paper Trail' link. A Significant View Line is also sought through this link, with views to the north to Precinct 3A, and to the south to Precinct 7A.



The proposal incorporates four attached buildings stepping down the Site from north to south in line with the topography. Building D is proposed to be setback from the southern boundary to provide an east-west link to Chandler Highway.

The Paper Trail is proposed to ramp down to the south. However, it does not ramp at the same gradient as the existing levels, resulting in a convoluted arrangement at its southern end to provide access to the east. An assessment of the Paper Trail link and its interaction with the proposed and approved built form is provided in the Public Realm Interfaces Section below.

Overall, I consider the site layout to be consistent with the Development Plan and appropriate to the context.

### **Overall height**

DPO11 and the Development Plan outline a 5 storey preferred maximum height for the Site. The northern end of the Site is nominated as a gateway, where a more prominent built form response is sought. Further, a transition in the scale and intensity of buildings is sought, especially along Chandler Highway from north to south.

This is consistent with Clause 21.05, which outlines that development on strategic redevelopment sites should generally be no more than 5-6 storeys unless it can be demonstrated that the proposal can achieve specific benefits, which of relevance include significant upper level setbacks and/or architectural design excellence.

Additionally, building heights are required to consider overshadowing effects within the Site and on adjoining land, including allowing solar access to key open spaces.

The land to the north of the Site is in Precinct 3A which has a preferred maximum height of 5 storeys. The south western corner of that precinct is nominated as a gateway, where a more prominent built form response is sought. A permit application has been lodged for that land. It has not yet been determined. However, I have recommended maximum heights of 10 and 7 storeys along its chandler highway frontage.

Further north of Precinct 3A is Precinct 2A, which has a preferred maximum height of 14 storeys, with a landmark built form sought at the corner of Heidelberg Road and Chandler Highway. A development is approved on this land ranging in height from 13 to 17 storeys, with the tallest form marking the aforementioned intersection.

East of the Site is Precinct 5 which has a preferred maximum height of 5 storeys abutting the Paper Trail, and a preferred maximum height of 3 to 4 storeys further east. A development is approved on this site ranging in height from 3 to 5 storeys, with the tallest form along the Paper Trail.



South of the Site is Precinct 7A which has a preferred maximum height of 5 storeys. A permit application has been lodged for this land. However, it has not yet been determined.

The proposed development exceeds the preferred maximum height of 5 storeys in three of the four buildings:

- Building A, at the north of the Site is 8 storeys high;
- Building B, in the middle of the site to the north is 7 storeys high;
- Building C, in the middle of the site to the south is 6 storeys high; and
- Building D, at the south of the Site is 5 storeys high.

The Development Plan and DPO11 height provisions are discretionary. This indicates that there may be circumstances in which greater height is appropriate.

I consider that the most relevant planning provisions against which to assess an application for greater height are the DPO11 and Development Plan aspirations for a transition across the Site, a gateway at the northern end, and solar access to key open spaces. Further, Clause 21.05 and its strategy for buildings to generally be no more than 5-6 storeys is relevant.

The emerging built form character should also be considered when assessing an application for greater height.

I consider that the proposed height of Building A is an inappropriate response to the DPO and Development Plan. I consider that two additional levels above the preferred maximum height would create an appropriate emphasis to mark the gateway. The proposed height of Building B would then not contribute to an appropriately graduated built form transition from north to south based on the preferred maximum 5 storey height to the south. However, the 6-storey height proposed for Building C will contribute appropriately to this transition.

In this context, a height of 7 storeys for Building A and 6 storeys for Building B would be a more appropriate response that reflects the intent for a transition, whilst also marking the gateway opportunity at the northern end of the Site, as illustrated below.



Figure 1 – Built form transition from north to south along Chandler Highway with a reduction in height of one level to both Building A and Building B (Source: Elenberg Fraser with annotations)

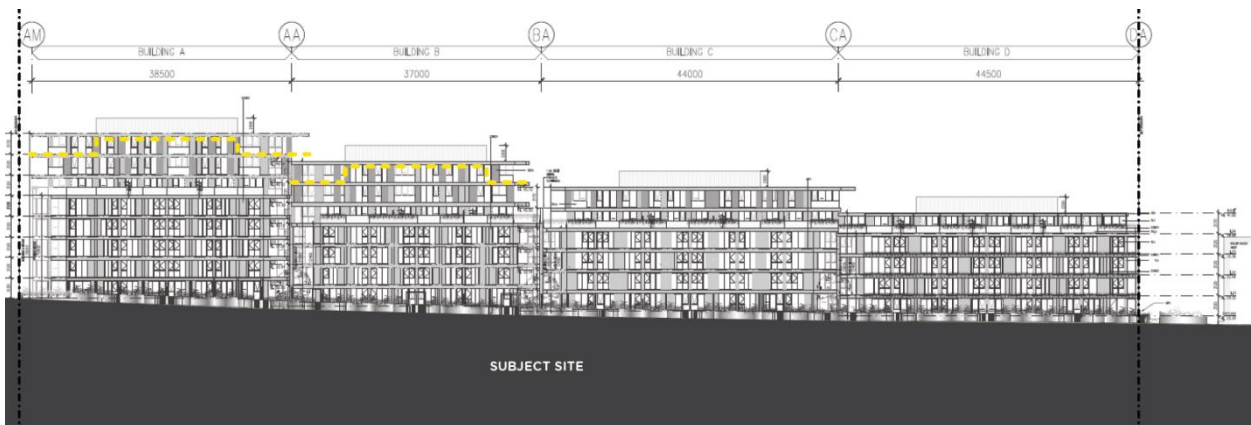


Figure 2 – West elevation showing one level removed from both Building A and Building B (Source: Elenberg Fraser with annotations)



Figure 3 – East elevation showing one level removed from both Building A and Building B (Source: Elenberg Fraser with annotations)



The recommended reduction in height of Building A and Building B will also result in a more appropriately graduated transition at the northern end of the Site from west to east, across to the 5 storey approved forms in Precinct 5, as illustrated below.

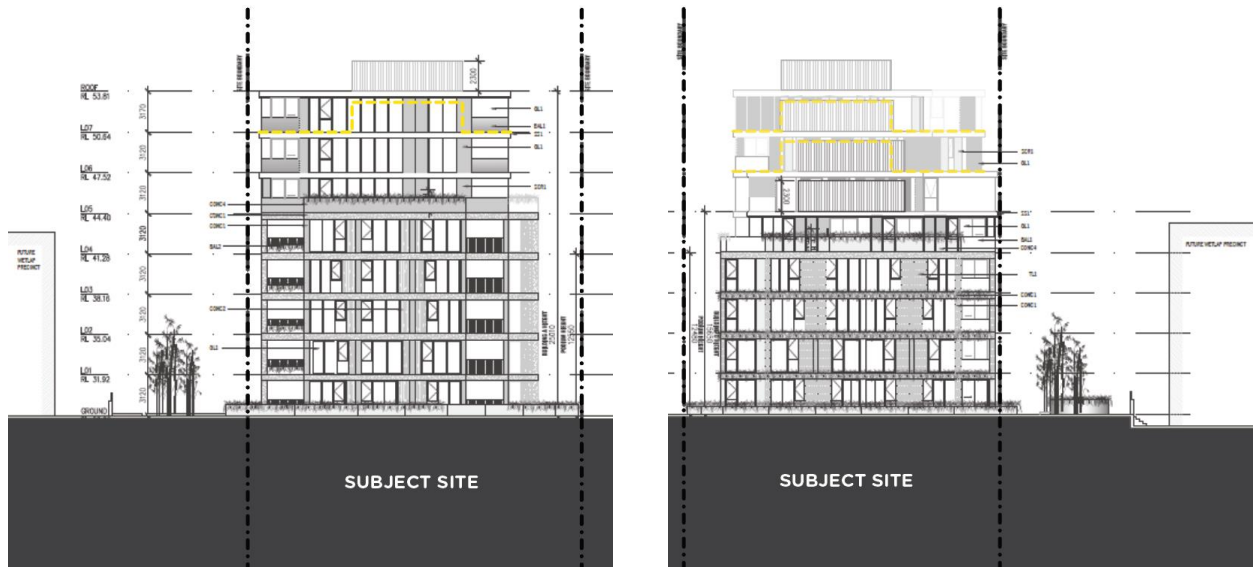


Figure 4 - North elevation (left) showing one level removed from Building A and South Elevation (right) showing one level removed from both Building A and Building B (Source: Elenberg Fraser with annotations)

The proposal meets the Development Plan objective to generally provide for solar access to the southern footpath adjacent to Precinct 5 between 11am and 2pm at the September equinox. However, importantly, a reduction in the building heights as recommended above will reduce the extent of overshadowing caused by the development on the Paper Trail.

With the recommended changes above, the proposed overall building heights will be generally consistent with Clause 21.05, DPO11 and the Development Plan.

### Streetwall

DPO11 and the Development Plan outline a 3 storey preferred maximum streetwall height for the north, south and west interfaces. At these interfaces the Development Plan further outlines that the streetwall is to have a 0m setback, with upper levels to be setback 2.2m. Along the east interface the Development Plan does not seek a streetwall and recessive upper form typology.

Building A is proposed to present to Chandler Highway and Mills Boulevard with a 5 storey streetwall setback from the boundary, with three recessed levels above. I consider the 5 storey streetwall to be an appropriate response to the gateway sought at the northern end of the Site.





Building B, Building C and Building D all present a 4 storey streetwall to Chandler Highway. I consider this to be an acceptable response given the non-sensitive nature of Chandler Highway and the context of the tall street wall heights approved to the north in Precinct 2A.

To the Paper Trail, the four proposed buildings are to be constructed sheer for their full heights. The buildings are proposed to have minimal ground level setbacks from the Paper Trail boundary, with the largest setbacks being to Building A and Building B. I consider that this is an appropriate response to what is sought in the Development Plan as it allows for larger areas of landscaping in the Paper Trail.

In summary, I consider the proposed streetwalls to Chandler Highway and Mills Boulevard to be appropriate and generally consistent with the vision of DPO11 and the Development Plan.

### **Public realm interfaces**

DPO11 and the Development Plan seek to ensure that street level interface treatments contribute to high levels of pedestrian amenity and safety, with habitable uses facing the public realm.

The proposal incorporates apartments fronting all public realm interfaces, including the street network and the Paper Trail link, enhancing their safety through passive surveillance. The privacy of the ground level apartments is assured through raised floor levels. There is also clear delineation between the private and the public realm through the use of low fences and gates.

However, I have concerns about the proposed grade of the Paper Trail, which requires a convoluted ramp at the southern end which results in a poor connection to the east-west thoroughfare.

The Paper Trail link should be redesigned to ramp down at a gradient more closely aligned with the natural ground level. This will also allow for better connectivity to Boiler House West and the approved buildings in Precinct 5, and result in clearer viewlines to the north and south along the Paper Trail as sought by DPO11 and the Development Plan.

In summary, apart from the recommendation above in relation to the Paper Trail, the proposed public realm interfaces are appropriate and are generally consistent with the vision of DPO11 and the Development Plan. However, the redesign of the Paper Trail may necessitate a reconsideration of the height of the buildings in relation to it, and the relationship of the Ground Floor apartments to it.





## Facade design detail

DPO11 and the Development Plan seek well articulated facades and natural or recessive materials, in order to manage and avoid long, continuous and visually dominant buildings.

The proposal for four distinct buildings with different designs and façade treatments is an effective way of breaking up the massing on the Site, and creating individual identities for each building.

Building A incorporates strong horizontal articulation through the emphasis of the slab edges, which is then carried through to the upper levels with the horizontal framing elements, which contribute to the building appropriately marking the entrance to Mills Boulevard. The verticality of the building is effectively expressed through angled natural concrete partitions in the streetwall, and silver satin perforated screens at the upper levels. The difference in finish at the upper levels further aids in reducing the visual impact of those levels.

Building B incorporates strong horizontal articulation through the emphasis of the slab edges, which is then carried through to the upper levels with the horizontal framing elements. The verticality of the building is effectively expressed through angled textured concrete (with black oxide) partitions in the streetwall, and perforated screens at the upper levels. The darker concrete at the lower levels aids in distinguishing this building from the adjoining Building A and Building C, which have lighter finishes at the lower levels.

Building C incorporates strong horizontal articulation through the emphasis of the slab edges, which is then carried through to the upper levels with the horizontal framing elements. The verticality of the building is effectively expressed through angled corten powdercoated partitions in the streetwall, and perforated screens at the upper levels.

Building D incorporates strong horizontal articulation through the emphasis of the slab edges. The verticality of the building is effectively expressed through angled black brick tile with black grout partitions in the streetwall.

The four buildings are joined by recessed 'seams', which are comprised of glazing and concrete. The recessed elements will create appropriate breaks within the built form. There is a clear break between Building B and Building C at upper levels that is in line with the east west street to the east, in accordance with the Development Plan.

In summary, I consider the facade design detail of all of the buildings to be appropriate as it effectively breaks up the proposed built form.



### 3.0 SUMMARY

In summary, I consider the overall site layout, design of streetwalls and facade design detail to be generally appropriate. However, the following changes are recommended for the proposal to be acceptable from an urban design perspective:

- **Delete Level 7 of Building A.**
- **Delete Level 6 of Building B.**
- **Redesign the grade of the Paper Trail link to improve its relationship with the east-west thoroughfare to its south. The redesign of the Paper Trail may necessitate a reconsideration of the height of the buildings in relation to it, and the relationship of the Ground Floor apartments to it.**

**Mark Sheppard, Principal**