



MEMO

TO: Statutory Planning (Michelle King)

FROM: Social Strategy (Julia Bennett-Mitrovski, Malcolm McCall)

DATE: 17 December 2021

ADDRESS: 147 – 161 Elizabeth Street, Richmond VIC 3121

DESCRIPTION: The Victorian Government's Big Build Project – Richmond Housing Estate

Social Strategy have been requested to comment on the proposal from a social planning perspective.

COMMENTS (17 December 2021)

- Yarra City Council has a longstanding interest in and commitment to increasing and improving social and affordable housing and will continue to position itself as a leading local government in this space.
- Social Strategy supports the provision of additional social housing, including in its capacity as a partner and facilitator and through strategic advocacy to State and Commonwealth governments.
- Council's overarching strategy related to social and affordable housing is to ensure a diverse population by increasing the supply of social and affordable housing suitable to households at various income levels and requirements.
- In relation to the proposal at Richmond, Social Strategy suggest the following for consideration and further investigation:
 - The redevelopment should ensure an adequate mixture of dwelling types are included in the new build, including in relation to bedrooms, to secure suitability for a range of occupants, from single households through to large families.
 - Adequate design and layout of each dwelling should meet and exceed minimum accessibility requirements. It is also strongly advocated that each dwelling should be equipped with an area of private open space, a laundry situated within the dwelling, access to at least one onsite car space* per dwelling, adequate access to daylight and be responsive to best practice environmentally sustainable design (including with regard to climate control).
 - When considering the integration of the development and site with the peripheral and wider Richmond community, consideration should be made to the provision of community spaces and whether they are intended to be accessible to the general public.

- It remains unclear as to the mixture of uses intended for the identified 'non-housing use' floor areas included in the ground floor of each new building – i.e. if some of the objectives of the project include greater integration of the use and built form with the surrounds, improved opportunities for interaction, and improved general accessibility and permeability, it is recommended that these uses be available to be accessed by the entire surrounding community.
- The proposed wayfinding through the site appears unfulfilled and potentially a missed opportunity to promote greater integration, passive surveillance and the generation of positive activity throughout the site and general precinct. Restricted permeability (and accessibility) to the site poses some concern from a community safety perspective. The design appears to have given minimal attention to improving or 'opening up' sightlines throughout the site from surrounding streets into the internal courtyard, with lots of hard and narrow edges remaining, minimising the opportunity for peripheral views (and potentially detrimentally impacting upon perceptions of safety).
- It remains unclear as to the proposed wayfinding/peripheral views and passive surveillance opportunities when considering the passageway through the entire site, for example, if meandering through the development site from the southeast (Elizabeth Street) to the north-west (Williams Court). It is noted that the passage through the site between Building B1 (pink) and B2 (orange) appears to be quite narrow and without opportunity to see who is approaching/who is located in the central courtyard, which poses a concern from a community safety perspective. It is recommended that a design response be considered - at the very least at the ground floor level - to improve this sightline as pedestrians approach the internal courtyard from the south. The red lines below indicate a potential improved sightline through the passageway through to the central courtyard, while recognising the need to reconfigure the floor plans of these dwellings.



- There is a missed opportunity with the proposed positioning of the internal courtyard and narrow passageways providing access – as the centre point remains almost entirely concealed from the public realm (behind the new buildings). It is recommended that through increasing the long views through the design (perhaps similar to the suggestion

above), this could enable positive 'glimpses' of these spaces from the streets surrounding the site, with the potential generation of positive sentiment from the visual perception of activity in these spaces.

- The current proposal misses some opportunities to facilitate positive activity, interactions, passive long-view surveillance through the site, and general social cohesion through its approach to design, way-finding and place-making. It appears that it is quite an insular and privatised design with minimal focus on the wider context including integration with the precinct and surrounding community, which may miss an opportunity to foster community connection and cohesion.