

Planning Panels Victoria

Amendment C231 to the Yarra Planning Scheme

Urban Design Evidence

of

James Holdsworth

Architect and Urban Designer

for

Queens Parade Heritage, Planning and Traders Group

31 July 2019

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

1. Name and Address

James Hampden Holdsworth
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2. Qualifications and Experience

Bachelor of Architecture (University of Melbourne, 1972)
Registered Architect, Victoria (No. 12790)
Honorary Fellow, Planning Institute of Australia

Wide-ranging experience in architecture, town planning and urban design, predominantly in Victoria, as a consultant to the private sector and to local governments and State government and as a senior officer in local government.

3. Specific Areas of Expertise

Of specific relevance to this Hearing is my expertise in assessing development proposals in terms of architecture and urban design, compliance with planning policies and guidelines, compatibility with existing urban contexts and local neighbourhood character, built form and amenity.

4. Expertise relevant to this Hearing

During the last fourteen years I have given evidence at VCAT and Planning Panels Victoria in relation to the urban design and planning aspects of many development proposals, variously on behalf of Applicants, Councils or objectors. I have undertaken numerous planning and urban design studies and projects for private clients and local governments.

I have thus gained considerable experience and capacity in evaluating the design and contextual issues relating to the appropriateness of development proposals in terms of urban design and neighbourhood character.

From 1995 to 2005 I was Manager of Urban Design & Architecture at the City of Port Phillip.

Since 2005 I have been in private practice and I conduct a specialist urban design and planning consultancy.

From 2008 to 2017 I was a sessional member of Planning Panels Victoria, serving on many Panels and several Ministerial Advisory Committees.

5. Instructions

In the preparation of this Statement I have been instructed by Mr D Young, representative of the Queens Parade Heritage, Planning and Traders Group, to consider the proposed Amendment having specific regard to Precinct 4 and the proposed building heights and setbacks in that Precinct.

I was engaged by verbal agreement on 7 July.

I visited the area, and Precinct 4 in particular, on 9 and 31 July.

6. Basis of the Statement

This Statement has been prepared with the benefit of:

- Yarra Planning Scheme, Amendment C231, Explanatory Report,
- 'Clean version of Design and Development Overlay Schedule 16 – 20 May 2019',
- Screenshots of the development potential, made available by the City of Yarra.

7. Summary of Opinion

The exhibited Amendment included specific heights and setbacks for buildings in the Queens Parade corridor. Subsequently these were revised by Council, and revised heights, setbacks and other provisions have been prepared.

I have been asked to assess these revised provisions with specific reference to Precinct 4.

Following detailed consideration of these provisions I conclude that the implementation of the heights and setback controls as proposed will result in building massing and design outcomes that are detrimental to the valued existing character of this part of Queens Parade.

While the intent of the proposed controls is admirable, a more restrictive approach is required to preserve the largely intact built form and heritage character of the Precinct. Maximum building height should be three storeys, with the parts of sites where this can be achieved being based on the specific conditions on individual sites. In particular, attention should be paid to the depth of the 'primary structure' on the site and its depth or length from the Queens Parade frontage.

I consider that the Amendment should include provisions to better manage built form on corner sites and sites which are likely to accommodate new buildings. It is important that new built form abutting Queens Parade, side streets and lanes is of a scale that is compatible with the height and style of existing buildings and which thereby reinforces the valued character of the Precinct and of the Clifton Hill area more generally.

DECLARATION

I have made all the enquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and that no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the Panel.

I declare that I have no business or private relationship with my client or any other party other than as relates to my professional involvement with this matter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Holdsworth', with a long horizontal line extending to the left.

James Holdsworth

31 July 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 This Statement relates to Precinct 4 only. It addresses the heights and setbacks described in the 'Clean version of Design and Development Overlay Schedule 16 – 20 May 2019' in the context of the existing built form in the Precinct.

1.2 It also includes some discussion and recommendations regarding design guidelines for infill or new development within the Precinct.

2. What the Amendment proposes for Precinct 4

2.1 Relevant to development in Precinct 4, the 20 May 2019 version of Schedule 16 includes:

- Street wall requirements (Section 2.3)
- Upper levels requirements (Section 2.4)
- Corner site requirements (Section 2.5)
- Ground floor requirements (Section 2.6)
- Vehicular access, car parking, and loading areas requirements (Section 2.7)
- Heritage design requirements (Section 2.8).

2.2 At Section 2.9.4 Precinct 4 – Activity Centre Precinct, the Schedule sets out these design requirements:

- *Development must protect and maintain key view lines and visual prominence of the former ANZ Building from the south-west and north-east, in particular to the upper floor, roof form and chimneys. A permit cannot be granted to vary this requirement.*
- *Development must:*
 - *respect the consistent scale, grain and architectural quality of the highly intact heritage streetscapes and the heritage buildings in the precinct.*
 - *retain the visual prominence of heritage buildings, their street wall and heritage streetscape when viewed from the opposite side of Queens Parade.*
 - *facilitate the appropriate low rise infill of the sites located to the rear of commercial properties fronting Queens Parade.*
 - *ensure that any upper level development is set back from the heritage façade, is visually recessive and does not detract from the heritage streetscape.*
 - *retain the visual prominence and heritage fabric of the return facades of heritage buildings that front Queens Parade, Delbridge, Gold, Michael and Wellington Streets.*
 - *ensure that facades at ground floor incorporate verandahs which are consistent with the form and scale of adjoining verandahs.*
 - *retain chimneys visible from the public realm.*
 - *enhance the amenity and safety of laneways that provide pedestrian and vehicular access to buildings.*
 - *maintain service access from the laneways in order to facilitate commercial use of the properties fronting Queens Parade.*
 - *respect the low scale, fine grain subdivision pattern of existing development on Hodgkinson Street and McKean Street through an appropriate transition in building height and setbacks.*
 - *ensure that where sunlight to the secluded private open space of an existing dwelling is reduced, at least 75 per cent, or 40 square metres with minimum dimension of 3 metres, whichever is the lesser area, of the secluded private open space should receive a minimum of five hours of sunlight between 9 am and 3 pm on 22 September.*

If existing sunlight to the secluded private open space of an existing dwelling is less than the requirements of this standard, the amount of sunlight should not be further reduced.

2.3 Table 4 sets out Street wall height, building height and setbacks for Precinct 4:

Built Form	Mandatory requirement	Preferred requirement
Maximum building height	14 metres	None specified
Maximum and minimum street wall height on Queens Parade	Retain height of existing heritage façade Where no heritage façade exists, development must be: ☐ Minimum - 8 metres Maximum - 11 metres or where there is an adjacent heritage building, the parapet height of that building if taller than 11 metres.	None specified
Maximum and minimum street wall height in side streets	None specified	Retain height of existing heritage façade Where no heritage façade exists, development must be: - Minimum - 8 metres - Maximum - 11 metres or where there is an adjacent heritage building, the parapet height of that building if taller than 11 metres.
Minimum upper level setback on Queens Parade	8 metres	None specified
Minimum upper level setback in side streets	None specified	6 metres
Street wall setback	0 metres - built to front boundary at ground level	None specified
Rear setback (NRZ interface)	None specified	Where there is a laneway: ☐ set back at least 1 metre, plus 0.3 metres for every metre of height over 4 metres up to 7.3 metres, plus 1 metre for every metre of height over 8 metres. (See Figure 1) Where there is no laneway: ☐ set back at least 4 metres, plus 0.3 metres for every metre of height over 4 metres up to 7.3 metres, plus 1 metre for every metre of height over 8 metres. (See Figure 2)
Rear setback (C1Z interface)	None specified	3 metres above 11 metres

3. Discussion and Recommendations

Built Form

3.1 As proposed, the street wall height, building height and setbacks for Precinct 4 have the potential to adversely impact the visual amenity and heritage values of the streetscape because discordant built form would visually intrude into the streetscape, with the potential to adversely impact the valued existing scale and character of the place.

3.2 Setbacks from the street frontage of new development should be based on the existing built form, in particular the depth (or length from the street frontage) of the 'principal' roof of the existing building rather than on the proposed 8 metres, a dimension which appears to be arbitrarily determined and not a response to the varied dimensions of existing buildings. Screenshots of three-dimensional modelling that I have seen demonstrate the significant visibility of buildings constructed to the proposed height and setback.

Development potential

3.3 It is instructive to consider similar nineteenth century shopping strips in inner Melbourne and observe the extent of redevelopment that has occurred. It is evident that the extent of redevelopment is often curtailed by the narrowness of many single-fronted sites, often with widths of about 5 metres (traditionally 16'6"). The realistic potential for redevelopment is low given this narrowness of most sites and the difficulties of access for construction purposes. Where redevelopment has occurred it has tended to be on wide sites or corner sites or, rarely, on amalgamated sites.

3.4 Precinct 4 is no different. There has been little redevelopment at the rear of sites that face Queens Parade. This is fortunate as it has allowed the streetscape to substantially retain its original character. It is critical that height and setback controls, while allowing some intensification of use, do not diminish the visual prominence of building facades as the dominant element of the street environment and the built form within the Precinct.

3.5 Of potentially greater relevance to the visual amenity and impact on the existing urban character of Precinct 4 is the capacity for incompatible redevelopment of large sites and corner sites.

3.6 Many properties are narrow and redevelopment at the rear is likely to result in blank side walls and low levels of internal amenity (light and ventilation) of internal spaces, particularly habitable rooms of dwellings.

Access to new built spaces

3.7 Pedestrian access from Queens Parade to dwellings at the rear of a site would require an entry within the site's Queens Parade frontage (a space usually comprising a full width shopfront). This would have implications for redevelopment where the ground level façade is of heritage significance. In general, the introduction of a second entrance door in the retail shopfront would interfere with the rhythm of shopfronts and the primary purpose of retail frontages as display windows.

3.8 Pedestrian and vehicular access via rear lanes presents particular difficulties if this is to be the 'frontage' to new dwellings or offices. These difficulties relate to identifiable address, lack of public lighting, public safety, vehicular maneuverability, etc. These practical issues suggest that intensification of use in the Precinct is likely to focus on more readily developable sites.

Commentary on what the Amendment proposes for Precinct 4

3.9 The issues described above lead me to conclude that redevelopment within the Precinct is most likely to occur on corner sites, large sites and underdeveloped sites that are more readily accessed, including a number of ‘free-standing’ sites accessed by lanes at the rear of the frontage properties. The amendment therefore needs to be clear on the scale and form of redevelopment on such sites.

3.10 At Section 2.2 the Amendment sets out *General design requirements* for buildings and works within the area covered by the amendment. While these are supported, I consider that additional requirements should be included to ensure that developments with side boundaries to side streets or lanes in Precinct 4 are carefully designed to be compatible with and reinforce the local built form character.

3.11 The recommended changes now proposed for Precinct 4 are set out in Table 1 below, together with my suggested modifications.

3.12 I consider that the maximum height of development in the Precinct should be 3 storeys (10.5 metres).

3.13 Buildings with a height of three storeys should be set back a minimum of 10 metres rather than 8 metres from the Queens Parade frontage, to ensure visibility is minimised.

3.14 Also, such development should be set back at the rear of the existing principal roof where that roof extends further than 10 metres from the street frontage. I say this for these reasons:

- it will assist in retaining the internal character of the building,
- it would assist with achieving the Design Requirement to ‘*retain chimneys visible from the public realm*’, and
- it will reduce the visibility of new development when seen from the viewpoints that are not directly opposite the site but from the more usual viewpoints that are oblique to the development where the angle of view is lower than from directly opposite and hence more of the new structure would be visible.

3.15 In the Table below my proposed changes are highlighted in **bold font**.

Built Form	Mandatory requirement	Preferred requirement
Maximum building height	10.5 metres (3 storeys)	None specified
Maximum and minimum street wall height on Queens Parade	Retain height of existing heritage façade Where no heritage façade exists, development must be: - Minimum - 8 metres - Maximum – 10.5 metres or where there is an adjacent heritage building, the parapet height of that building if taller than 10.5 metres .	None specified
Maximum and minimum street wall height in side streets	Retain existing building fabric. No minimum height. Maximum height 10.5 metres.	Retain height of existing heritage façade Where no heritage façade exists, development must be: - Minimum - 8 metres

Built Form	Mandatory requirement	Preferred requirement
		- Maximum - 11 metres or where there is an adjacent heritage building, the parapet height of that building if taller than 11 metres.
Minimum upper level setback on Queens Parade	Above 7 metres height: 10 metres	None specified
Minimum upper level setback in side streets	None specified	6 metres
Street wall setback	0 metres - built to front boundary at ground level	None specified
Rear setback (NRZ interface)	None specified	Where there is a laneway: - set back at least 1 metre, plus 0.3 metres for every metre of height over 4 metres up to 7.3 metres, plus 1 metre for every metre of height over 8 metres. (See Figure 1) Where there is no laneway: - set back at least 4 metres, plus 0.3 metres for every metre of height over 4 metres up to 7.3 metres, plus 1 metre for every metre of height over 8 metres. (See Figure 2)
Rear setback (C1Z interface)	None specified	3 metres above 11 metres

TABLE 1: PROPOSED REVISIONS TO RECOMMENDED CHANGES

3.16 There is development potential for several sites which have no heritage protection. An example is the prominent site at the corner of Queens Parade and Turnbull Street. Guidelines to ensure redevelopments enhance these sites and locations and are responsive to the scale and characteristics of the Precinct are warranted.

3.17 Suggested additional design requirements are set out in Table 2.

TOPIC	SUGGESTED DESIGN REQUIREMENTS	NOTES
ADDITIONS TO EXISTING BUILDINGS		
Setback from side boundaries with adjacent site	0 metres (1 storey) to 3.5 metres above ground, then 1 metre for 7 metres (2 storeys) on one side boundary. 0 metres on the other side boundary.	To provide light and ventilation similarly to traditional built form of rear sections of buildings.
Setback from side boundaries with side streets or lanes	Existing built form to be retained. New wall to be of complimentary finish (materials and colours) and set back 100mm from retained façade to 10.5 metres (3 storeys) then setback 1 metre to 10.5 metres and in complimentary finish (materials and colours). Fenestration to reflect proportions and style of	The purpose is to ensure new elements are in character with the existing structure but clearly differentiated from it.

TOPIC	SUGGESTED DESIGN REQUIREMENTS	NOTES
	existing windows. Banding or string courses to reflect floor levels.	
NEW BUILDINGS		
Front setback	0 metres to average height of adjoining facades (or 11 metres maximum)	
Setback from side boundaries with adjacent site	0 metres to 1 storey (3.5 metres) above ground, then 1 metre for 10.5 metres (3 storeys) on one side, 0 metres to maximum height on other side.	
Setback from side boundaries with side streets or lanes	0 metres to 10.5 metres (3 storeys) then 1 metre to maximum height. New walls to be of masonry appearance. Fenestration to reflect proportions and style of windows in Victorian or federation buildings. Banding or string courses to reflect floor levels.	
Setback from rear boundaries	Modified Standard B17 where there is a laneway. 3 metre setback at ground level then modified Standard B17 where there is no laneway.	

TABLE 2: SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL DESIGN REQUIREMENTS