

25 October 2016

Re: *Australian Catholic University
Development Plan PLN16-0085 as amended, October 2016*

The following discussion has been prepared at the request of Urbis on behalf of the Australian Catholic University. It comments upon heritage considerations in relation to the amended form of the proposed Development Plan (DP) for the St Patrick's Campus of the Australian Catholic University (ACU) in Fitzroy (drawings dated October 2016), which has been prepared in consultation with Council and the community. It sets out relevant heritage considerations that have informed the design and location of new works anticipated through the amended DP, drawing largely upon an earlier letter that addressed the DP documentation submitted to Council in December 2015. The DP and proposed Development Plan Overlay (DPO) are intended to guide future planning permit applications for development at this campus, within the DPO area. The campus is located in the block bounded by Brunswick Street, Napier Street, Victoria Parade and Gertrude Street.

In the amended DP the proposed envelope has been altered to decrease the associated impacts upon views within the South Fitzroy Heritage Overlay precinct, and more specifically to decrease the visual impact associated with its height and bulk as seen from the north within Napier Street and the immediate environs of the site. The changes include a reduction in height by two storeys and increases to setbacks to the upper levels of the proposal relative to the Napier Street frontage. These changes are discussed in more detail on page 5 below.

The focus of future change countenanced in the DP is to be located at the Victoria Parade frontage of the site, away from residential properties further north. New buildings are anticipated at 115B Victoria Parade (corner of Napier Street) and 81-89 Victoria Parade (corner of Brunswick Street) – not part of the DP land. The Mary Glowrey building, the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Building, will be refurbished and extended. The site of the current car park site at 28-42 Young Street will also be redeveloped, and the amended DP includes some indication of what is proposed for that site.

This commentary draws upon inspections of the site and its surrounds and a review of relevant heritage studies and planning scheme documents including the City of Yarra's heritage policy at clause 22.02. In addition, regard has been had for the buildings and streetscapes adjacent this site, which is within the South Fitzroy Heritage Overlay precinct, HO334, and for the building gradings found in Council's heritage database. A copy of heritage advice provided to Council by its heritage advisor has also been reviewed and has informed the amendments to the DP.

The heritage overlay precinct that includes the subject land and the land to the north, east and west, the South Fitzroy precinct, is a key consideration in the development of the ACU land, and it is important that new built form acknowledge the sensitivity of the South Fitzroy precinct and nearby heritage buildings. Development of the ACU land is subject to the heritage overlay and will be assessed against the relevant heritage policies.

The statement of significance for HO334 in the *City of Yarra Heritage Review* (2007) states that:

The South Fitzroy Heritage Overlay Area is significant:

- *As the earliest urban area outside the Melbourne City grid to be settled in the Melbourne municipality, with several buildings from the mid nineteenth century surviving as testimony to its early establishment;*
- *For the unusually high number of early Victorian-era and some Regency period buildings, being generally simply detailed and a clear reflection of the early date of Fitzroy's settlement.*
- *As evidence of early government planning controls or Acts of Parliament, from the 1850s, that aimed to solve street alignment problems in this privately planned suburb, arising from a hitherto lack of co-ordination between neighbouring allotment owners;*
- *As a good example of the successful application of the Act for Regulating Buildings and Party Walls, and for Preventing Mischiefs by Fire in the City of Melbourne (Melbourne Building Act 1849), which forced the use of fireproof construction and gave South Fitzroy a character distinct from other inner suburbs such as Richmond and Collingwood, that have a greater proportion of Victorian-era timber buildings.*
- *As a substantially intact collection of predominantly mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century building stock, interspersed with well preserved inter-war residential, commercial, retail and industrial buildings that contribute to the historical character of the area.*
- *For the relatively large number of individually significant buildings, being predominantly solid masonry rather than clad with timber, largely as a result of the Melbourne Building Act, 1849.*
- *For the ornate and exuberant detail of many late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings in the suburb, reflecting the affluence of many of the inhabitants of this area, particularly in the late 19th century.*
- *For the early street, lane and allotment layouts, some original bluestone kerbs, paving and guttering, and some mature exotic street trees, providing an appropriate setting for this collection of residential, retail, commercial and industrial buildings.*
- *For the landmark qualities of some large factory and warehouse buildings from the late 19th and earlier 20th century, such as the MacRobertson confectionary complex which are significant features in the skyline of this predominantly low rise suburb; and*
- *For the major early institutions that developed on its fringes, in particular, St Vincent's Hospital and The Convent of Mercy, as closely linked with the area's history, education and welfare within the metropolitan area.*

The statement of significance for the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Building at 115 Victoria Parade (now known as the Mary Glowrey building) is as follows:

What is significant?

The Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing department ... was created in 1929-1931 for the Australian Commonwealth Government and has close historical associations with that important function.

The place has a fair integrity to its creation date (now altered cosmetically, as conversion to university; car park at rear and side).

Fabric from the creation date at the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing department, former is locally significant within the City of Yarra, compared to other similar places from a similar era.

How is it significant?

The Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing department, former at 115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy is historically significant to the locality of Fitzroy and the City of Yarra.

Why is it significant?

The Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing department is significant as the former origin of all legal tender in Australia, receiving extensive publicity on its completion and with suitably monumental Greek Revival styling.

It is to be noted that alterations to the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Building have been somewhat more than cosmetic – this statement of significance seems to predate a number of works that have been completed within the site, the additions to the southern facade and to the east elevation of the main, southern wing in particular. In addition, most of the windows have been replaced with simple modern glazing in place of the original steel framed windows. The northern wing has been similarly altered.

Yarra's heritage policy at Clause 22.02-5.7.1 provides detailed guidelines for new development and alterations and additions heritage overlay areas, with key policy including the following:

Encourage the design of new development and alterations and additions to a heritage place or a contributory element to a heritage place to:

- *Respect the pattern, rhythm, orientation to the street, spatial characteristics, fenestration, roof form, materials and heritage character of the surrounding historic streetscape.*
- *Be articulated and massed to correspond with the prevailing building form of the heritage place or contributory elements to the heritage place.*
- *Be visually recessive and not dominate the heritage place.*
- *Be distinguishable from the original historic fabric.*
- *Not remove, cover, damage or change original historic fabric.*
- *Not obscure views of principle façades.*
- *Consider the architectural integrity and context of the heritage place or contributory element.*

Encourage setbacks from the principal street frontage to be similar to those of adjoining contributory buildings; where there are differing adjoining setbacks, the greater setback will apply.

Encourage similar façade heights to the adjoining contributory elements in the street. Where there are differing façade heights, the design should adopt the lesser height.

Clause 22.02-5.7.2 encourages the following specific requirements with regard to corner sites and sites with dual frontages:

Encourage new building and additions on a site with frontages to two streets, being either a corner site or a site with dual street frontages, to respect the built form and character of the heritage place and adjoining or adjacent contributory elements to the heritage place.

Encourage new buildings on corner sites to reflect the setbacks of buildings that occupy other corners of the intersection.

This Clause also includes specific requirements for upper level additions to Industrial, Commercial and Retail Heritage Places or Contributory Elements:

Encourage new upper level additions and works to:

- *Respect the scale and form of the existing heritage place or contributory elements to the heritage place by being set back from the lower built form elements. Each higher element should be set further back from lower heritage built forms.*
- *Incorporate treatments which make them less apparent.*

The extent of development proposed under the DP is substantial and will lead to appreciable change in the built form of the campus and associated change to views and character within adjoining streets. This said, the DP seeks to realise this substantial change in such a manner as to achieve an acceptable level of compliance with the heritage policy.

The VCAT approval for a fourteen storey development at the corner of Brunswick Street and Victoria Parade, ie 81-89 Victoria Parade (Premier Projects Pty Ltd v Yarra CC [2007]; VCAT reference no. P2540/2006), establishes a relevant benchmark for redevelopment along this part of Victoria Parade and within the ACU campus. While there are buildings along Victoria Parade within the context of the site that are of individual heritage significance, the streetscape to this part of Victoria Parade is of mixed character, is not of particular significance, and lends itself to higher development. The scale of current and proposed development to the west of ACU along Victoria Parade, at the St Vincent Hospital sites, and the scale of buildings to the south side of Victoria Parade, also suggest that built form of substantial scale may be considered in the Victoria Parade context.

The amended DP contemplates a new building of 12 storeys on the carpark site at the corner of Victoria Parade and Napier Street, known as 115B Victoria Parade. This is to be attached to the east side of the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building at 115 Victoria Parade, and also to the south side of the northern wing of the Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building.

The new building is to provide a new major point of entry to the campus, and will utilize the lift and stair 'core' attached to the east side of the heritage building. The existing glazed entry and disabled access ramp addition to the front of 115 Victoria Parade will be removed and that part of the facade reinstated.

The residential streetscapes to Napier Street to the east and north of the site at 115B Victoria Parade include heritage buildings of one and two storeys, with two storeys being predominant. It is a fine heritage street, particularly to the north of ACU. On this basis it is appropriate that new built form be very carefully designed to limit impact upon the character, appearance and significance of the streetscapes to Napier Street.

Young Street, located more centrally in relation to the ACU land holdings, is less significant at its southern end, already containing built form of scale, but includes a heritage building at the Victoria Parade corner, west side, and the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building on the east corner.

The DP concept for ACU at 115B Victoria Parade proposes to:

- Remove the existing glazed entry and disabled access ramp from the front facade of 115 Victoria Parade.
- Consolidate the entry for both 115 and 117 Victoria Parade to create an active and prominent entry.
- Angle the entry and south elevation to 115B Victoria Parade back from the alignment of 115 Victoria Parade in order to reveal the robust corner detailing of 115 Victoria Parade. This corner will remain visible in views from Victoria Parade, with the angled form of the new works providing a 'setback' against the heritage building.
- Use a similar strategy to provide views to the eastern wing of the Mary Glowrey building (former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department).
- Integrate the floor plans of 115 Victoria Parade and 115B Victoria Parade, the new building being attached to a side of 115 Victoria Parade that has already been the subject of considerable modification and additions.
- The new built form will in part overhang 115 Victoria Parade, albeit with a degree of vertical separation that will enable the two forms to read separately.
- The building adopts a stepped profile to create a height relationship with the built form along Napier Street.
- An addition of three levels to the rear part of the northern wing of the Mary Glowrey building (former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department), well set back from Napier Street in accordance with heritage policy for upper level additions to industrial buildings.

The existing car park building at 28-42 Young Street will be demolished and replaced with a low rise building that incorporates an open plaza or community space at ground level. The development of this part of the campus is not seen to raise heritage issues insofar as it is in a highly altered environment with negligible heritage fabric to its streetscape.

Having regard for the DP, it is apparent that the anticipated works will result in substantial change and to some extent impacts upon heritage values and views, relative to both the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building and the streetscapes extending to the north along Napier Street and to the east along Victoria Parade. This said, the DP seeks to limit these impacts through focusing change within the already altered environment of Victoria Parade, at the very southern edge of the South Fitzroy precinct.

As noted, a number of changes introduced in the amended design seek to limit the appearance of scale and bulk in terms of views from the north, particularly in Napier Street. The view analysis provided for the amended DP compares the massing of the form as originally contemplated in 2015, the massing of the form as revised in September 2016, and a indication of the architectural treatment that may accompany the revised massing.

The key amendments to the DP scheme in relation to heritage considerations are as follows.

Reduction in height

The DP scheme submitted to Council in December 2015 was of 14 storeys plus plant. The present scheme is reduced to 12 storeys plus plant. The reduction in height result in a lessening of the visibility and visual impact of the proposal in terms of the view analysis provided in the DP documentation. This is apparent in each of the views assessed within the documentation, including views along Napier Street from the north. The documentation shows that in these views from the north the building is not only apparently lower in terms of the number of storeys per se, but that the plant level is also less visible, further diminishing the apparent bulk of the envelope in these views.

Podium design along Napier Street

The podium to Napier Street is effectively of 6 storeys, albeit with the Ground and Lower Ground floors being relatively open and setback. The treatment of the podium to Napier Street is not substantially changed, although the setback has increased at ground floor relative to the south face of the northern wing of the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building, and marginally decreased at the floors above. However, it is acknowledged that the podium should respond to some degree to the streetscape condition of buildings that are aligned with the property boundaries.

Setbacks of higher levels from Napier Street

The upper levels of the proposal have generally been increased relative to Napier Street, particularly in terms of levels 6 & 7 (and above). At levels 6 & 7 the setbacks are essentially twice those of levels 7-9 in the previous concept, with the minimum dimension from Napier Street increasing from 8.28m to 17.1m. The various alignments of the faces of the upper levels have also changed, further reducing the visual bulk in terms of views along Napier Street. The built form remains visible, but is viewed as being appreciably further from the alignment of the street than in the earlier scheme.

Additional structure to support new levels above northern wing of the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building

The DP concept has consistently included an addition of 3 storeys (plus plant and undercroft space) above the northern wing of the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Building. The setbacks of this built form have been increased relative to Napier Street, and the modelling has altered. These changes help limit visual impact in terms of views from the north.

This said, an element of the scheme that was not previously contemplated is the provision of additional structure to the exterior of the host building to assist in supporting the new levels. The additional structure will comprise new piers or columns that will be attached to the existing vertical structure of the host building, in a manner that is intended to complement rather than disrupt the articulation and character of that building. The easternmost pier carries angled struts that support an overhanging section of the new envelope. This new structure is to be sited well back from Napier Street and will result in minimal change to the character and appearance of the additions as seen from the north within Napier Street.

Details and materials

The DP scheme includes an indication of how the architecture of the proposal might be resolved. This is essentially limited to an indicative arrangement of glazing and walls, with some suggestion of a pale colour or white as the primary finish to greater part of the building. The architects have documented a range of indicative materials illustrating options that may be considered as the design is further refined. This said, the materials, finishes and colours have not been determined at this stage, and will be subject to further amendment and refinement as part of a future permit application process.

Conclusion

The original DP scheme of December 2015 was developed having regard for the potential for impacts upon the setting of the former Commonwealth Note and Stamp Printing Department Buildings and upon views within Napier Street and Victoria Parade, having regard for the location at Victoria Parade and taking a ‘whole of planning’ view that accepts the importance of ACU within this precinct and within the City of Yarra. In the present amendments to the form and scale of the built form anticipated in the DP, a concerted attempt has been made to further limit impacts upon buildings, views and the broader heritage overlay precinct, while still seeking to achieve ACU’s requirements.

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