

**Expert Witness Report
Proposed Development
6 Paine Street,
Newport**

27.8.12

Andrew Hutson

23 Young Street, Kew

Qualifications and Experience

1. I hold a Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture from the University of Melbourne. I was, until 2004, the Head of Architecture at the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning at the University of Melbourne and am currently Chairperson of the Architects Registration Board of Victoria (ARBV). I graduated in 1980 and registered as an architect in 1982. I established a private practice in 1986 and continue to provide architectural consultant services. My professional experience entails the design and procurement of a range of building types from large to small scale.

Area of Expertise

2. I have lectured in the discipline of architectural design for fourteen years. In this period I have established design studios and reviewed architectural and urban design projects within the course. I have frequently been a guest reviewer of design projects at other tertiary institutions and a judge for industry awards in architectural design. My research areas include contemporary design and architectural practice. Over the previous ten years I have presented expert evidence on urban design and architectural merit for numerous projects that have been before VCAT.
3. I believe that my experience in matters of architectural design gives me sufficient expertise to report on the architectural merit of this proposal.

Instructions and Scope of Report

4. I have been instructed by Maddocks lawyers on behalf of City of Hobsons Bay to provide an architectural assessment of the proposal in relation to the following:
 - The impact of the proposed development within the context of the local neighbourhood.
 - The design quality of the proposed development.
 - The appropriateness of the proposed style of design for this locality.
5. The report is based on the following application drawings prepared by Kavellaris Urban Design :

Site and Ground Floor Plan
First Floor Plan

TP02 rev B
TP03 rev B

Second Floor Plan	TP04 rev B
Roof Plan/Roof Terraces	TP05 rev B
Shadow Diagrams	TP06
Shadow Diagrams	TP07
Shadow Diagrams	TP08
Elevations	TP09 rev B
Elevations and Sections	TP10 rev B
Elevations and Section	TP11 rev B
Landscape Plans	LS4
Landscape Plans	LS5

Summary of Opinion

Introduction

6. The proposed application is for a three storey residential development with integrated car parking.
7. This opinion addresses a range of design and urban design aspects including those relevant aspects contained within Clause 15: Built Environment and Heritage of the State Planning Policy Framework and clauses 21.06: Residential, 21.07 Heritage, 22.01: Heritage Policy, 22.10 Neighbourhood Character and 43.01: Heritage Overlay.

Context

8. The subject site is irregular bounded by Armstrong Reserve to the north, Crawford Street to the east, Paine Street to the south and Latrobe Street to the west.
9. The subject site is a large parcel of land the scale of which is unusual within the residential context in the vicinity.
10. The general neighbourhood within which the subject site is located is characterised by low scale residential properties. The site is in the hinterland two blocks east of Melbourne Road. This arterial has a number of larger footprint buildings facing the road but the scale of the properties past this line is consistently one and two storey houses on individual properties.
11. The streetscape of Crawford Street to the east of the subject site consists of mostly single storey houses from the Victorian period and the 1960s. These houses are detached and on individual sites. Two of the properties opposite the site have rear yards fronting Crawford Street. The only two storey house in this block is at the north corner of Crawford Street opposite the reserve.
12. Paine Street to the south has free-standing single storey Victorian houses addressing the road opposite the subject site. Paine Street is on an angle to the orthogonal pattern of the streets and block alignments. Due to this geometry the houses front the street at an angle. This pattern is continued along the length of Paine Street.

13. Latrobe Street to the west of the block that contains the subject site and reserve is similarly characterised by single storey individually sited houses with a single two storey house near Wilkins Street to the north.
14. The northern boundary of the subject site abuts the reserve which is a typical suburban resource containing play facilities and a scattering of mature trees.
15. In summary the subject site sits within a context of predominantly low scale, single storey, individually sited houses. The pattern of the residential context is modest in comparison with the footprint of the subject site. The streetscape character is of small forms of houses with mostly hip roofs. The older houses from the Victorian area tend to have timber cladding. The existing streetscapes are defined by the rhythm of house frontages and gaps of varying sizes between.

Proposed Design Response

16. Given the context for the subject site the design response should address the following issues concerning neighbourhood and streetscape character:
 - How to present to the immediate context in a manner that diminishes the physical scale and length of the subject site so as to not dominate the surrounding streets
 - How to design a proposal at an appropriate scale, incorporating variety and rhythm to respond appropriately to the neighbourhood character and urban grain of the streetscapes.

In my opinion the proposed development fails to deliver on these counts.

17. The general approach to the design is to present the development with a consistent rectilinear architectural language and repetitive formal composition. The model for the development is the perimeter block which in this case is established through a series of three storey terraces surrounding the site interior which contains a small cluster of units. The proposed three storey terrace form does not match the scale of buildings found in the broader vicinity of the subject site and has no relationship to neighbourhood character.
18. The difference between the proposed design and the existing neighbourhood character is not just one of typology but also of physical scale. The lengths of the forms facing the boundaries of the site substantially exceed the width of houses and site frontages the within the streets. The width of the terrace facing Paine Street is approximately 55 metres and the central form facing Crawford Street is approximately 33 metres. The terrace form facing the reserve is approximately 48 metres (this relationship will be further discussed). The impact would be that the wide alien terrace forms of the proposed development would dominate the existing scale and pattern of the streetscapes in the vicinity.
19. The proposed elevation to Paine Street presents a consistent expression over its width of 55 metres. There is little variety of form within the design with the change in materials being horizontally, and not vertically, stratified. The result

is a singular reading of a three storey form across the site. It appears that there have been attempts to insert breaks along the length with strangely shaped arrow-like indentations. But while these articulate the box elements for the individual units they do not reduce the sense of continuity. The visual appearance is of a series of repetitive elements marching along the site boundary.

20. The siting of existing houses along Paine Street demonstrates the character of the frontages set obliquely to the street alignment. This reflects the angle of Paine Street relative to the orthogonal subdivision and is a distinct feature of the streetscape. The proposed design does not reflect this street character with the unit fronts being parallel to the street.
21. This architectural treatment of the proposal is similar on the Crawford Street elevation with repetitive rectilinear elements aligned along the street. The proposed elevation consists of the ends of the terraces facing Paine Street and the Reserve with a 33 metre wide central bank of terraces. As in the case for Paine Street the width would be at odds with the character of the street.
22. The elevation to Latrobe Street faces the shortest boundary of the subject site and is broken into three forms the lengths of which would more closely resemble the footprints of the residential character.
23. The proposed design has a number of breaks with stairs that lead up to the interior of the site. These entries are at or near the corners of the site. These entries could not be considered similar to the character of breaks between houses found in the streets as they have substantial stairs to rise approximately 3.5 metres above the parking level. The stair elements do not offer the opportunity to sight through the openings as the stairs would form a visual and physical barrier at pedestrian level similar to a single storey building.
24. The three storey height of the proposed design would make these forms substantially higher than the prevailing scale of the residential context. While the physical scale is an issue the perceived scale could be reduced through design techniques that incorporated set-backs and formal variety to reduce the visual mass. Unfortunately the consistent treatment along the elevations would result in the three storey height of the proposal being dominant within the lower scale of the streets. The design treatment of repetitive unit along what is essentially a single façade does little to break down the vertical visual mass.
25. There has been a treatment of the upper level in different and darker toned materials to try and bring greater visual prominence to the first floor level. The difficulty here is that the setback of the upper form is insufficient to achieve this visual break. Similarly the lack of variety inserts what would appear as substantial three storey residential containers into the modest scale of the streets.

26. The elevation treatment facing the reserve is similar to the street facades in scale and material treatment. In this instance the elevation would be more comfortable adjacent to the scale of the open public reserve. While the form may be appropriate in this case the end conditions should be designed to enable a transition of scale from the street to park condition. Care should be taken in the landscaping for this elevation to ensure that the outcome does not present a proprietorial impression over the public domain.
27. The architectural treatment of the proposal is reasonably well resolved with some exceptions. The indentations between the units facing the street elevations above the ground floor plan seem to serve no purpose other than to attempt to visually separate the units. If the desire was to visually break down the elevations it would be better to work with greater formal variety than to rely on the awkward indents which due to the shape and narrowness may cause problems in construction and maintenance.
28. In summary the design of the proposed development engages with a perimeter typology for the overall site form incorporating long terrace forms facing the streets and reserve. These three storey forms are at odds with the prevailing neighbourhood character of lower scaled discrete houses and would dominate the streetscapes in breadth and height. Given the length of the street elevations and expanse of the subject site it should be reasonable to expect that the design proposal incorporate greater variety of form and scale and to respond effectively to the pattern and rhythm of the streetscapes. The current proposal also fails to adequately ameliorate the visual mass of the three storeys through sufficient set-backs and material variety. The elevation facing the park is more acceptable provided the landscaping and boundary treatment are such to clearly separate the development from the park. The design should not appear to treat the reserve as a forecourt to the development.

Public Realm and Pedestrian Spaces

29. The proposal provides clear entries for pedestrians to the interior of the site but doesn't provide identifiable doors to the street at ground level with the entries to the units being from the rear. It would be better if the units had 'front doors' to the street to engage with the public realm.

Landmarks Views and Vistas

30. I do not believe that the proposed development will impact on significant landmark views or vistas.

Light and Shade

31. The orientation of the subject site would result in some additional shade to the public realm of the surrounding streets but I do not consider this overshadowing to be significant.

Energy and Resource Efficiency

32. I have not sighted an ESD report but see nothing in the proposal that would preclude a high energy star rating.

Site planning

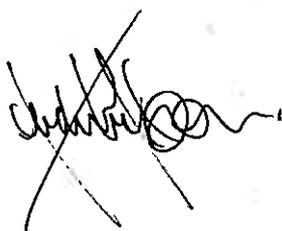
33. The site planning is generally sensible in regard to entry and clear pedestrian access from the street. Having car access from Paine Street would appear appropriate.
34. The layout of the units is reasonable and provides acceptable light and ventilation to the units.

Conclusion

35. In my opinion the scale, visual bulk and architectural treatment of the proposed development is inappropriate for the broader and specific residential context. The proposal would insert a substantial development that would dominate in scale and breadth the existing neighbourhood character.

Declaration

36. I have made all the inquiries 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 Tribunal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Hutson', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Hutson