

## **Amendment C271 to Yarra Planning Scheme**

### **Fitzroy and Collingwood**

Initial submission by the Yarra Planning Coalition, Collingwood Historical Society, Fitzroy Residents Association, People of Gertrude Street, Protect Fitzroy North and The 3068 Group

5 October 2022

The Yarra Planning Coalition, Collingwood Historical Society, Fitzroy Residents Association, People of Gertrude Street, Protect Fitzroy North and The 3068 Group have come together to contribute to Amendment C271 to the Yarra Planning Scheme. Many of us have previously been involved with Amendments C231 (Queens Parade) and C269 (Yarra Planning Scheme Re-write) and we particularly welcome and appreciate the opportunity to provide input prior to the formal exhibition phase of the amendment process. We want the amendment to proceed but believe there is more work to be done before the 12 DDOs are exhibited.

#### **Timetable**

We are aware that the current timetable is driven by the perceived need to get interim DDOs approved by the Minister for Planning prior to the expiration of the existing interim DDOs in March and April 2023. However, we understand that this timeframe will be practically impossible to meet, in which case the City of Yarra should adopt an alternative approach. We suggest that, as a matter of urgency, Yarra should apply to the Minister to have the existing interim DDOs extended to the end of 2023.

#### **Opportunities**

The extended timetable presents Yarra with opportunities to better refine the DDOs prior to exhibition and by so doing, save the City substantial money through a smoother and shorter Planning Panel process.

We ask that Yarra commit to further rounds of community consultation and revision of the DDOs with the aim of building wide support for the amendment. We believe that this will result in a smoother, more efficient panel hearing process with consequent savings in time as well as legal and expert consultancy fees. We note that the City of Moreland undertook multiple rounds of consultation and revision of a planning scheme amendment prior to exhibition and were commended by the Planning Panel for their efforts.

#### **Issues**

Regarding the DDOs themselves, our main concerns relate to commercial viability, building heights and upper-level set backs in the high street shopping strips and the conflict between the DDOs and the Heritage Overlay.

1. We are concerned that the proposed building height limits appear to be based on plot size, particularly depth (and hence residential yield) with little consideration for the context of the sites or for neighbourhood character. We are also concerned about the maintenance of the

commercial viability of the fine-grained shopping strips, about visitation and tourism and the retention of the night-time economy. We note that the Inner Melbourne Metro Framework Plan – Chapter 4 Productivity, the Yarra Economic Strategy 2020-2025, and Yarra’s 2018 Spatial Economic and Employment Strategy (SEES), all flag the opportunity for key Yarra high streets that are included in C271 to be locations for economic growth in retail, hospitality, cultural, entertainment, tourism and/or the creative economy, rather than as urban renewal residential development precincts. We believe that more work is required to address these issues before the amendment can be exhibited.

2. We note that these DDOs were developed prior to the resolution of Amendment C231 (Queens Parade) and that many of the issues raised during that amendment are relevant to the high streets of Fitzroy and Collingwood. There is work to be done to bring across some of the understandings and outcomes of C231 as well as the Yarra Planning Scheme Re-write (Amendment C269) into the DDOs. For example, we note the C269 Report recommendation “that Council undertake further activity centre planning for those centres not covered by a DDO to ensure valued character is protected as incremental change occurs”.

3. We are concerned about the conflict between the building envelopes defined in the DDOs and the Heritage Overlay. This issue is not limited to this amendment, but as we are dealing with ‘some of the coolest streets in the world’ (Brunswick, Gertrude, Johnston and Smith Streets) it is critical that we achieve an appropriate resolution through this amendment. The cross sections in the DDOs show heritage as consisting of only the first six or eight metres of buildings when their primary rooms are generally much larger. Reducing heritage buildings to shallow remnants is tokenistic façadism, which is to be avoided at all costs. Upper-level setbacks behind heritage buildings should be a minimum of 10m or the depth of the principal roof form, whichever is the greater.

4. We understand that the City of Yarra has undertaken studies on the traditional and contemporary Aboriginal heritage of the city and note that Fitzroy is an area of particular significance to Aboriginal people. We feel that it would be very regrettable for council to be progressing this amendment in 2022–2023 without incorporating appropriate recognition of Aboriginal heritage.

5. The background reports prepared during the preparation of the DDOs have identified a range of anomalies in zoning and in the Heritage Overlay. This has been reinforced by small teams from our various groups who have walked the DDOs. It is important that these anomalies are addressed prior to exhibition so that they can be resolved through the amendment process.

## **Recommendations**

A. The City of Yarra should urgently write to the Minister of Planning seeking extension of the expiry dates of the existing interim DDOs through to the end of 2023.

B. The City should commit to further rounds of revision and consultation before the details of the amendment are finalised, so that broad agreement can be reached.

C. To address the issues identified in the numbered points above, we recommend that Yarra Council should undertake or commission the following work:

- a peer-review of the built form framework and heritage analysis reports;
- assessment and integration of neighbourhood character and the need to maintain commercial roles, including tourism and the night-time economy;
- incorporation of the findings of the C231 and C269 Panel Reports;
- seeking to resolve the conflict between the DDOs and the Heritage Overlay;
- consultation with community group representatives and other stakeholders; and
- resulting changes to the DDOs.

We suggest that this work should principally focus on the high streets (Brunswick, Gertrude, Johnston and Smith Streets) but expect that there will be flow-on of some aspects into the other DDOs.

We recommend that Council consider engaging a place-making consultant, such as Leanne Hodyl (Hodyl & Co), or Rob McGauran (MGS Architects) to undertake the peer review work, the neighbourhood character assessments and the consideration of commercial aspects.

We look forward to a constructive engagement with Councillors and staff in the evolution of this amendment, so that it can best serve the people of Yarra and visitors to this city in managing the future of these internationally-renowned streets.

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Cc: Mayor, Councillors and CEO of the City of Yarra