

VCAT REFERENCE NO. P2113/2009

SUBMISSION BY

**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING
AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
(DPCD)**

IN SUPPORT OF

**RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT
AT
1 GROSVENOR STREET, DONCASTER**

3 February 2010

SUBMISSION BY DPCD

INTRODUCTION

1. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT – RESIDENTIAL APARTMENTS

- 1.1. The proposed development is for a 3 level, 4 level and 10 level, 185 apartment residential development.
- 1.2. It is located at 1 Grosvenor Street, Doncaster, at the north-east corner of the Doncaster Hill Activity Centre – a Principal Activity Centre under *Melbourne 2030*.

2. DPCD DEVELOPMENT FACILITATION

- 2.1. The project came to the attention of the DPCD Development Facilitation Unit in early 2009 through advice from the proponent and Council. At that stage, Council had not determined the application.
- 2.2. The State Government established the DPCD Development Facilitation Unit to assist developers and councils with significant development and planning projects. Amongst other objectives, the Development Facilitation Unit seeks to promote government planning objectives, support projects through the planning system, and promote investment and job creation in Victoria.
- 2.3. The Development Facilitation Unit provided a letter to Council in June 2009, generally in support of the application on the basis of the development's contribution to the State Government policy objectives of *Melbourne 2030* and *Melbourne @ 5 Million*. This letter also provided a response to urban design matters in accordance with the decision guideline in Schedule 1 to the Incorporated Plan Overlay, which requires the Responsible Authority to consider the views of the Minister for Planning in relation to urban design matters. (Refer to [Attachment 1](#))
- 2.4. Manningham City Council's in principle support for the proposal is welcomed. It is understood that their main concerns rest with the height of 'Building C' and a concern that this does not represent an appropriate transition to surrounding properties.
- 2.5. On this basis, this submission will focus on:
 - the implications and importance of the project to the successful implementation of State Planning objectives, and
 - an assessment of the urban design merit of the project.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3. PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE

- 3.1. **Melbourne 2030** is the State Government's blueprint for managing growth and change in metropolitan Melbourne. It established a vision to plan for population growth of approximately 1 million people, in the period to 2030, while maintaining a reputation as one of the most liveable attractive and prosperous metropolitan areas in the world for residents, business, and visitors.
- 3.2. Relevantly, a key principle of *Melbourne 2030* relates to promoting activity centres as a focus of major growth and change, and it includes specific policies to build up activity centres as a focus for business, shopping, living and recreating, and to provide a wider range of services over longer hours. It also specifically promotes the consolidation and redevelopment of strategic sites, the integration of land use and transport planning, and good urban design.
- 3.3. **Melbourne @ 5million** is the State Government's update to *Melbourne 2030*. It recognises unprecedented population growth and the importance of linking transport, jobs, and land use planning. The original *Melbourne 2030* population projections are now expected to be reached before 2020. The pace of population and economic growth combined with the challenges of climate change, housing affordability and managing transport demand, mean that delivering on the the principles and directions of *Melbourne 2030* are more relevant than ever.
- 3.4. Doncaster Hill is classified as one of 20 **Principal Activity Centres**, which are of particular strategic importance in metropolitan Melbourne. These centres have been identified as providing scope to accommodate growth and change in retail, office, service and residential markets, and are identified as priority locations for government investment. The size and location of Principal Activity Centres mean they have an especially important role to play as a focus for community activity, services and public and private investment. Moreover, the development of the network of Principal Activity Centres is seen as critical to metropolitan Melbourne's future economic performance.
- 3.5. DPCD considers that the subject site presents an excellent opportunity to deliver strongly on the objectives of Melbourne's Principal Activity Centre network and it is no longer appropriate to advocate for low rise residential developments on sites where this type of strategic support is available and off-site impacts can be minimised.

4. DONCASTER HILL STRATEGY

- 4.1. The *Doncaster Hill Strategy* (October 2002, revised October 2004) was developed by Manningham City Council to implement the objectives of *Melbourne 2030*, and builds on the principles to focus major change, diversification of activity and accommodation of housing growth into the centre. It was given effect in the Manningham Planning Scheme via Amendment C33 in February 2004 – and again through Amendment VC59 in September 2009.
- 4.2. The Executive Summary notes that *'the Strategy reinforces Doncaster Hill's role and potential as the urban heart of Manningham, the focal point for residential, commercial and community uses that intensify activity and support a vibrant and viable urban centre... The Strategy promotes land-use patterns that minimise transport demands, promotes sustainable development and enhances urban spaces. ESD, appropriate urban density and mixed land-use guidelines are of prime importance...'*
- 4.3. The Vision of the Strategy is to *'create a 'state of the art', contemporary, sustainable, high-density, mixed-use urban village...based on high quality environmental and urban design principles* – this Vision is very consistent with the objectives of *Melbourne 2030*.
- 4.4. The proposed residential development displays the characteristics that can strongly contribute to this Vision and raise the function of Doncaster Hill as a higher density precinct, creating the ability to support the increasing number of services being provided to this activity centre. In essence, the greater the population that can be provided within Doncaster Hill, the more likely the success of newly introduced public transport initiatives (eg SmartBus Network and DART program), community services and retail and commercial offerings.
- 4.5. Urban Design Objectives and Requirements, for the whole centre, as well as for each Precinct, are contained in Part D of the Strategy. The proposed development is located within Precinct 4E – known as the 'Doncaster Westfield Shoppingtown'. The Urban Design objectives for Precinct 4E is that it will contain *'A high quality built form that exists as a transitional scale between the higher intensity of other sub areas and the lower scale of existing residential areas'*.
- 4.6. In the opinion of DPCD's Urban Design Unit, the architectural massing and urban design approach are sound and provides an appropriate transition in scale between the shopping centre and adjoining residential areas.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

5. ACTIVITY CENTRE ZONE

- 5.1. Doncaster Hill also has an important role to play for the Victorian Planning System in that it is the first of five 'market ready' Principal Activity Centres that are to be the pilot locations for the new Activity Centre Zone, introduced by the State Government in September 2009 via Amendment VC59.
- 5.2. The new Activity Centre Zone has been specifically designed to support *Melbourne 2030* Activity Centre Policy. It has been designed to simplify planning in activity centres and more effectively facilitate development. It replaces most zones and overlays with one zone, bringing use and development controls together. Importantly, the purpose and objectives of the zone encourages the integration of a mix of uses, and intensive development of the activity centre. The delivery of '*a diversity of housing at higher densities to make optimum use of the facilities and services*' is a specific objective.
- 5.3. DPCD considers that the proposed development is very consistent with the intent of the zone and element of higher density housing is warranted. Turning away from these opportunities within an Activity Centre Zone is not desired.
- 5.4. A schedule to the zone is used to implement the strategic directions for a centre identified through a structure plan, such as the Doncaster Hill Strategy, and to provide a 'development framework' for an activity centre. The schedule also allows the zone provisions to be tailored to individual needs of the activity centre and to better support the type of development council is seeking to achieve for the centre.
- 5.5. Because of its facilitory nature, the application of the Activity Centre Zone at Doncaster Hill represents a commitment by Council to encourage development and can be considered to be a signal to developers and the community that Doncaster Hill is 'open for business'.
- 5.6. This is the second permit application in the ACZ to be tested at VCAT (the first related to the Crowne Plaza Hotel development – P3801/2009, heard 2 February 2010). As such, this application represents an important test of the operation of the zone and to demonstrate the ability to facilitate use and development, to implement the Doncaster Hill Strategy, and to deliver outcomes that support State and Local Planning Policy Framework.

6. WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT DELIVERY OF POLICY

- 6.1. Doncaster Hill is recognised by Council as the civic ‘hub’ of Manningham. Council has successfully sought a Whole of Government approach to delivering its \$35m (approx) Civic Community Precinct to complement private development in the centre. The Civic Precinct will house health, community, youth, cultural, educational and arts facilities, together with a public transport hub and bus modal interchange.
- 6.2. Over the last three years, the State Government has provided over \$5 million through a range of funding grants projects to help transform the vision for the Civic Precinct into a reality. This has been provided through the DPCD’s Urban Renewal, Community Support, and Living Libraries Programs, the Department of Education’s Children’s Capital Program, and Department of Transport’s Travel Smart and Local Area Access Programs. This funding has also been provided in addition to substantial funding provided by Council and the Commonwealth.
- 6.3. The proposed development is located in close proximity to the Civic Precinct. It provides an important opportunity to complement and create further synergies with the Civic Precinct by building up the intensity of community activity in this location and assisting with the ongoing viability of services offered.

PROJECT ASSESSMENT

7. STATE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK COMPLIANCE

- 7.1. Aspects of the State Planning Policy Framework most relevant to the project are those of Clause 12 Metropolitan Development, Clause 14 Settlement, Clause 17 Economic Development, Clause 18 Infrastructure, and Clause 19 Design and Built Form.
- 7.2. DPCD considers that the proposed development responds to the objectives and strategies of these clauses in that:
- It responds to the principles for sustainable growth of metropolitan Melbourne taking advantage of a strategic redevelopment opportunity for urban intensification, building appropriately on the existing settlement pattern and infrastructure. (Clause 12.01 A more compact city).
 - It will enhance the quality of the urban environment and the identity of Doncaster Hill. (Clause 12.05 A great place to be).
 - It takes advantage of recent and proposed improvements to the Principal Public Transport Network. (Clause 12.08 Better Transport Links).

- It responds to the framework for the orderly development of the area, established by the Doncaster Hill Strategy, and will assist in meeting demand for residential accommodation uses. (Clause 14 Settlement).
- It includes a range of Environmental Sustainable Design initiatives to improve the energy efficiency of the building. (Clause 15.12 Energy efficiency)
- It is well designed and makes a positive contribution to the urban environment and public realm. (Clause 19.03).

7.3. As mentioned, the delivery of this project is considered very important in terms of the contribution it will provide to housing the anticipated population growth in Melbourne and the role this Principal Activity Centre plays across the broader network. Reducing the scale of the development without sound analysis is considered to be a lost opportunity.

8. URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

8.1. The State Government seeks to support councils and developers in creating well designed activity centres, and prepared the *Activity Centre Design Guidelines* to guide urban design and built form outcomes in activity centres.

8.2. As required by the Decision Guidelines of Schedule 1 to the Incorporated Plan Overlay (Clause 43.03), the DPCD Urban Design Unit provided an assessment of the proposal to Council, taking into account the design objectives of the *Activity Centre Design Guidelines*, and the Built Form and Design provisions of Clause 19.03.

8.3. DPCD Urban Design supports the built form and massing, noting that the design provides a transition in scale between the shopping centre and the adjacent residential area. The urban design approach is considered sound. Greater height is considered acceptable (subject to further design modification).

8.4. DPCD Urban Design does note that some minor modifications could be pursued if a permit was to issue, and these matters could form part of any conditions. These matters generally relate to fencing, material selection and improved internal pedestrian environment.

8.5. DPCD Urban Design does not see any contradiction between the Doncaster Hill Strategy Plan, the design objectives of Precinct 4E, and the proposed development.

CONCLUSION

9. DPCD's conclusions in relation to the proposed residential development are that:

- The proposal responds well to the strategic context for the site established by *Melbourne 2030* and the Principal Activity Centre status of Doncaster Hill. It makes good use of a strategic redevelopment opportunity.
- Continuing to promote higher density housing within the Doncaster Hill Activity Centre is critical to achieving the increased housing requirements identified within *Melbourne @ 5 Million* and the objectives of the *Doncaster Hill Strategy* for Doncaster.
- The project makes an important contribution to accommodating population and job growth within a 'sustainable urban village'.
- The proposed use and development is consistent with the intent of the Activity Centre Zone to encourage intensive higher density residential development of the centre.
- There are a number of public transport improvements either recently or soon to be completed that will assist in encouraging sustainable transport use.
- The proposal will provide an important use and development that will complement and contribute to the Civic Precinct, located in proximity of the site.
- The proposal is consistent with relevant aspects of the State Planning Policy Framework and has substantial planning merit.
- The proposal exhibits quality urban design and responds well to the urban context of the site.

Overall, DPCD considers that the proposal is an important development for this part of Melbourne and the achievement of broader planning principles. DPCD considers that the proposed development will make a valuable contribution to the centre, while make efficient use of transport and community infrastructure in the centre. DPCD considers that the proposed development will clearly deliver a net community benefit and should be supported.

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DPCD Urban Development

03/02/10