

28 June 2020

Bernadette Notting
City of Greater Geelong

By email: planningstrategy@geelongcity.vic.gov.au

Dear Bernadette

Submission to the Draft Pakington Street (Geelong West) & Gordon Ave Urban Design Framework March 2020

This submission is made on behalf of the Urban Development Institute of Australia, Victoria (UDIA Victoria) and our Geelong Chapter.

We would like to congratulate the City of Greater Geelong for its preparation of the Draft Pakington Street (Geelong West) & Gordon Avenue Urban Design Framework March 2020. We understand that Council have been preparing this plan for some time and we applaud Council for finalising the draft of the framework.

Overall, we support the direction and vision of the Urban Design Framework to facilitate the growth and development of the Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue precinct.

The Urban Design Framework clearly recognises the role the Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue precinct plays within the City of Geelong from both a commercial and cultural perspective, and importantly, the future ability of the precinct to accommodate infill residential development.

Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue are ideally located, being well-served by public transport and within walking distance of Central Geelong and the waterfront. The precinct also provides a variety of commercial and retail offerings, that are increasingly becoming diverse and assisting the activity centre to operate and function both during the day and evening. These attributes strongly support the inclusion of medium-high density development.

As recognised in the framework, Geelong is expected to experience significant growth; specifically, an additional 73,400 dwellings will be required to cater for the predicted population increase. Importantly the framework acknowledges the expectation that in 2047 50 percent of all new dwellings will be provided for by infill development, noting that at present infill development is approximately 15 percent of all new development.

The Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue Precinct therefore must ensure that it can maximise its potential to accommodate dwellings in the future while at the same time protect the character and amenity of the precinct.

We support that frameworks recognition that each area of the precinct; 'Heritage Core Precinct', 'Pakington North Precinct' and 'Gordon Avenue Precinct' has the capacity to accommodate future growth.

We submit, however, that the proposed guidelines for the precincts are limiting and we are of the opinion that if the Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue area is to substantially assist in providing infill development, increased development opportunities are required.

The Urban Design Framework sets out varied building heights across the three precincts. We submit that the proposed building heights must be increased in order for the centres to grow and achieve the overall vision for the precinct. We also state that failing to meet the development potential of the centre will have a substantial impact on the city's ability to reach the desired target of 50 percent. Outlined below is our response to the proposed building heights for the three precincts of the Urban Design Framework.

Heritage Core Building Height

We submit that maximum building heights within the Heritage Core precinct should be increased (noting that the framework states that 'developments below 5 storeys are likely to be economically unfeasible' (page 5)). The framework currently states 'encourage new development at one and two storey building heights to complement the significant heritage buildings in the Precinct'. This proposed height for the precinct will significantly limit the urban renewal potential of the precinct.

We support the vision for this precinct, which includes the following statement; '...continue to play an important role as a premier shopping strip and community hub in a backdrop of heritage buildings. That said, there are a number of underutilised parcels of land within this precinct, specifically at grade car parks that have the potential to accommodate mixed use infill development at a high density. These parcels are typically set back from Pakington Street, enabling an appropriate setback from the heritage facades of the existing buildings.

This approach to providing development within an activity centre is common along traditional strip shopping streets, particularly in areas where the preservation of heritage façades is considered a key characteristic of the centre, examples include

Chapel Street, Church Street (Brighton) and Glen Huntley Road. Utilising these parcels of land will considerably assist the provision of infill development within the activity centre and still enable the vision of the precinct to be achieved.

Building heights for this precinct should not be nominated within the framework, instead a performance-based approach, measured against design excellence, contribution to the public realm, use and dwelling diversity, ESD (including WSUD, views to and from the site) and community contribution should be undertaken.

Pakington North Precinct

This precinct contains a number of large parcels which, in many cases particularly along the eastern side, do not directly adjoin any sensitive uses. These attributes, along with its proximity to a range of services and public transport, make them ideal for accommodating a greater diversity of housing and development. This notion is supported within the framework. The framework also specifies that the vision for the precinct is that it will become ‘the gateway to the Heritage Core Precinct and will be a lively retail and business village with growing residential community’.

The framework proposes the rezoning of the land currently located within the Commercial 2 Zone to the Commercial 1 Zone. We strongly support this proposal.

We submit that the proposed buildings heights for the precinct do not reflect this vision. If the precinct is to form the gateway to the activity centre, increased height enabling the opportunity for significant development marking the arrival to the centre is required. At present the precinct specifies a 12-storey maximum for sites at the northern end of the precinct. These sites are large with frontage to both Pakington Street, Church Street and the railway line. We consider that these sites be recognised as ‘strategic sites’ and, similar to the treatment of strategic sites within Central Geelong, maximum heights not be specified on these sites. Instead, similar to our submission for the Heritage Core, future approval of development for these sites should be considered through a performance based approach measured against design excellence, contribution to the public realm, use and dwelling diversity, ESD (including WSUD), views to and from the site (noting that larger built form on Mercer Street is visible from these sites) and community contribution.

We submit that parcels located at the southern end of this precinct should have a maximum building height of six storeys, as opposed to the nominated 4 storeys. For the reason set out in our commentary above with regards to the Heritage Precinct Core and the viability of development below 5 storeys.

Gordon Avenue Precinct

As set out in the framework the ‘Gordon Avenue Precinct’ contains a number of large parcels of land, and similarly to the Pakington North Precinct, these parcels do not directly adjoin any sensitive land uses. This precinct is the closest to both Geelong Station and Central Geelong.

Overall, we submit that this precinct provides the greatest potential for high-density mixed-use development opportunities.

We support the proposed rezoning of the precinct to the Commercial 1 Zone and the Residential Growth Zone to enable the vision of the precinct to be achieved. That said, in order to fully recognise the development potential for the precinct, we submit

that increased building heights across the precinct are necessary. The framework currently specifies 5-6 storeys, where key sites may be considered for a height increase of up to approximately 4 storeys. This would provide the opportunity for 10 storeys within the precinct.

We would encourage an increase to the proposed maximum 10 storey building height particularly where sites abut Latrobe Terrace. The amenity along this street is low, and similar to the Pakington Street North precinct, these parcels will provide a 'gateway' to the activity centres. As such approval of new development on these parcels should be considered from a performance-based criterion and not from mandatory control requirements.

Conclusion

Overall, we submit that if the Pakington Street (West) and Gordon Avenue Precinct is to substantially contribute to providing infill development building heights across the precinct must be increased and a performance-based approach implemented.

At this time, we also consider it important to address the proposal for the Rail Siding Yards. This site, as identified within the Urban Design Framework, is a strategic site and the future development of it provides an excellent opportunity for new development within a key location of the activity centre. We therefore propose the relocation of the rail siding yards to Waurin Ponds is a priority and is expedited.

We also propose that as part of any future rezoning of the Rail Siding Yards additional planning controls, in particular a Development Plan Overlay, be applied to the site. This would ensure a masterplan approach for the site is undertaken and that; Council, the applicant and community are provided with certainty for the future development of the site. We therefore recommend that no height controls for this site be specified within the Urban Design Framework in order for a 'whole of site' approach to be undertaken.

We support that future proposals should include ESD principles. That said, we are concerned that the framework includes ESD requirements that are a duplication of

the newly adopted ESD tools set out in Clause 22.71 of the Greater Geelong Planning Scheme. As such we submit that new proposals within the precinct be required to meet the objectives of this clause. Inclusion of ESD requirements are therefore not required to be included within the framework.

At this time, we request that the UDIA be consulted regarding the proposed planning scheme amendments to rezone land within the activity centre, including any amendments associated with the Rail Siding Yards.

We also request that the UDIA be consulted regarding any potential developer contributions plan for the precinct. We note that the Urban Design Framework identifies that a plan may be prepared in the future for the precinct and we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the preparation of the plan with you.

Overall, we congratulate Council for its extensive work on the Pakington Street and Gordon Avenue Urban Design Framework and support the overall vision for the precinct.

Should you seek to discuss this submission in greater detail please contact the UDIA Geelong Chapter Committee Chair Greg Bursill (greg@lovelybanks.com.au) or Committee Member Anna Borthwick (annaborthwick@planaplanning.com.au).

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Danni Hunter'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Danni Hunter
Chief Executive Officer
Urban Development Institute of Victoria
E: danni@udiavic.com.au