

VCAT Reference :	P11991/2021
Address :	173 – 177 Barkly Avenue, Burnley. 3121

Statement of Objection

This development, as proposed, amended by Yarra Council and now appealed to VCAT, will create an unenviable new standard for the Burnley Pocket.

It can be viewed via its constituent parts – and these will be addressed briefly below – but its impact on the largely residential Pocket can only truly be seen in overview. What is proposed is clearly not the sort of development the Burnley Pocket needs, on just about every level.

It is an eight storey office block being essentially parachuted in to an area where the only remotely comparable structure is the silos of the Burnley Maltings. With that will come, inevitably, much increased traffic in the area, along with a good deal of additional noise from its proposed entertainment zone.

It will sit as comfortably in the built environment as a pimple on a pumpkin, greatly over-massing all its neighbours for streets around and, importantly for residents of the Pocket, will set a standard which will be rapidly emulated – or exceeded – by development(s) on the other, similarly-zoned, plots in the immediate vicinity.

Height

The proposed eight storey height will dwarf the surrounding residential properties.

The Pocket has no buildings outside the Maltings of over four levels, and residents were only recently affirmed by the Tribunal in their objection to a similarly-sized proposal for the Maltings development, which is now slated to go ahead at a suitably-scaled three storeys, with broad community support

Implicitly, the developers nod to this incongruity when they highlight – as a feature – the fact that the façade is designed to look at first glance as if it is a four storey building.

Acknowledging there are no zoned height restrictions for this plot, common sense should also come into play. Height restrictions for all residential plots in the Pocket are three storeys, or current height. Three storeys may not be the appropriate number, but it is hard to see that eight storeys is, either. This is especially true given the Swan Street Activity Precinct is less than 500m to the north. That is the place for major developments.

Urban Design

As proposed, the building's mass will dominate Adam Street.

What was previously a quiet inner city street with a bit of low-level commercial activity at the south end will become the home to a thriving office (and more) precinct.

Adam Street – the proposed entrance for all non-maintenance traffic – will be completely transformed.

Set backs were discussed at some length in the Yarra Council Planning Decisions Committee meeting. Does it really matter if an eight storey building is set back two or three metres from the adjoining Victorian cottage? Is it really good urban design to have a busy car park entrance within a couple of metres of that cottage's boundary, whilst the building itself has terraces which overlook that neighbour's back yard?

On every level, the proposed development fails the "good neighbour" test. Badly.

Noise

The proposal for a cafe will add significant noise to a currently largely residential area.

Traffic

The development will create significant additional traffic through what are now residential streets.

Traffic reports as presented do not begin to understand the traffic topology of the Pocket. They seem to make the assumption that most traffic will come from the Monash Freeway and thence via the south end of Adam Street. That is naïve, not to say disingenuous. In fact, traffic will come via Madden Grove from both directions and will be behaviourally directed via the streets of the pocket.

What is now a peaceful and safe Pocket for pedestrian use of all ages will become considerably more busy and dangerous.

In Conclusion

Residents of the inner city understand – or should – that they will be subject to infill development. Most, if not all, of the residents of the Pocket understand that, and actively seek to engage with developers to ensure that what development occurs enhances the area.

Yarra Council proposed amendments to the initial proposal. The Tribunal should use those proposed amendments as representing the bare acceptable minimum - at best.