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Dear Lisa,

## **URBAN DESIGN STATEMENT – MIXED USE AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS AT BRANDON PARK SHOPPING CENTRE**

This letter summarises Urbis' urban design review of the proposed developments at Brandon Park Shopping Centre, undertaken on behalf of Newmark Capital Pty Ltd, which include a mixed-use development and a residential development.

It is intended to be read in conjunction with the associated documents which form the two separate development applications (DA), including the Urban Context Report (UCR) prepared by Urbis, the Architectural Plans, prepared by Leffler Simes Architects, and the Town Planning Reports, prepared by Urbis. Please refer to these documents for comprehensive information about the physical and policy context of the site and proposed developments.

### **POLICY CONTEXT**

The key policies and strategies which guide the urban design outcomes for this site are:

- Monash Planning Scheme:
  - Clause 34.01 – Commercial 1 Zone
  - Clause 43.02 – Design & Development Overlay (Schedule 8)
  - Clause 21.06 – Major Activity & Neighbourhood Centres
  - Clause 21.17 – Brandon Park Major Activity Centre Structure Plan
- Brandon Park Major Activity Centre Structure Plan (October 2013)

In the context of the urban development changes in the area, the existing BPMAC Structure Plan (2013) is in need of refresh to reflect the site's current context and its development capabilities. Given the DDO8 is bolstered by this structure plan, this planning control is also deemed to be somewhat outdated given the amount of time it spent awaiting gazettal by the Minister for Planning and needs to reflect the site's current context and development capabilities.



Contextually, we see the shopping centre site as being a focal point of the BPMAC, therefore the currently applicable 4 storey / 17 metre discretionary height control is considered to notably undercut a strategic opportunity to deliver development outcomes that take advantage of the Major Activity Centre context and that add value and vitality to the centre itself, and the City of Monash more broadly. Brandon Park Shopping Centre is considered to be well positioned both strategically and physically to accommodate higher scaled development than currently anticipated by the DDO8.

The current controls are not considered to reflect the building height capabilities of the shopping centre site, particularly when considered in the context of heights allowed within the immediate surrounds, which include:

- South (GRZ2) = 3 storeys
- East (GRZ10) = 5 storeys
- North (DDO8) = 4-6 storeys
- West (DDO8) = 5 storeys

We have considered these in our assessment, along with the contextual analysis as provided in the UCR and Planning Reports.

This Urban Design Statement discusses how the proposed developments align with the overarching strategic directions and urban design aspirations for the Brandon Park Shopping Centre site, as detailed in sections below.

## **INTEGRATION OF DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTRE**

The Brandon Park Major Activity Centre (BPMAC), within which Brandon Park Shopping Centre is identified as Precinct 1, is one of four major activity centres in the City of Monash. The shopping centre is located at the intersection of Springvale Road and Ferntree Gully Road. It is bound by Brandon Park Drive to the east and Magid Avenue to the south.

Currently, the site's Brandon Park Drive interface consists of car parking, back of house services and loading areas with some periphery tree planting, which overall presents as a poor and somewhat neglected urban interface. Similarly, the Ferntree Gully Road site frontage is an average urban interface, with low-scale landscaping within a narrow garden bed along the site frontage, extensive hardstand associated with at-grade car parking which leads into an undercroft parking area beyond – overall, a very inactive and uninteresting treatment to the main road context.

Within the shopping centre site, the proposed mixed-use development is to be located along the Brandon Park Drive interface and will require a portion of the existing shopping centre building to be demolished to accommodate the development, with Brandon Park Drive being the primary frontage and access point for the development. The mixed-use development is proposed to integrate with the existing shopping centre built form and will comprised of medical centre tenancies, commercial office space, and service apartments.

The proposed residential development is to be located at the corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Brandon Park Drive and will also require partial demolition of the existing centre to accommodate the development, which will have generous building interfaces to both street frontages.

Together, these two developments will help transform Brandon Park Shopping Centre from a low-scale and highly underutilised retail focused centre, into an integrated mixed-use activity centre within the larger BPMAC. The proposed developments will provide opportunities for the precinct to host a



variety of new residential population, new employment opportunities, and new land uses that will support both the local residential and business communities.

## **BUILDING MASSING, HEIGHTS & SETBACKS**

A contextual analysis of the site's interfaces and surrounding built form controls has informed the proposed scale and massing of the developments. When considered holistically within the physical and strategic contexts of the site, the developments are considered to appropriately respond to the built form environment, by way of transitioning the proposed building scale down from the northern edge of the site to the eastern mid-point of the site where the mixed-use development ends.

The proposals represent an opportunity to revitalise and better activate these urban interfaces and are considered to achieve this through setback and massing strategies that ensure the new buildings are suitably scaled and have non-dominant relationships with the respective streetscapes and broader surrounding context. These are discussed below:

### **Ferntree Gully Road**

The Ferntree Gully Road interface is recognised as one of the two the least sensitive site interfaces and noting the breadth of the road reserve, is deemed best suited to accommodate the tallest built form and will provide a benchmark to appropriately scale and transition other developments within the site. The north-western portion of the site, being nearest to the major intersection, is considered well-positioned to accommodate greater building height and create a visual marker for the site and precinct, whilst the north-eastern corner should respond to the lower scale character of Brandon Park Drive and set the tone for development further south along the eastern interface.

Overall, the residential development is 9-storeys in scale (i.e. (GF, Mezz + L1 – L7), however will present as 8-storeys to the public realm given the 'Ground Floor' level is concealed beneath natural grade and will barely be perceived (other than at the southern-most end of the development) from the surrounding public realm due to the site's topography. All pedestrian lobby access occurs at 'Mezzanine' level.

Accordingly, the building presents as 8-storeys at its western-most end, which purposefully transitions down as it moves east to present a 5-storey form with recessed upper levels to the prominent corner of Ferntree Gully Road and Brandon Park Drive. To the north and north-east corner, the building will present as a 5-storey podium form with upper levels setback above to create a visual break in the height, which is effectively emphasised through differing architectural treatments between the podium form and the levels above.

The northern façade of the building is punctuated by a generous central break, comprising full-height vertical glazing with a width of 2.91 metres, which effectively breaks-up the breadth of this façade and emphasises the additional 2.99m setback increase that applies to the western portion of the residential building in direct response to the irregular front boundary alignment. The segmentation of built form is further enhanced by the composition of the façade, which includes balconies and a variety of materials and finishes implemented to further articulate the form.

The inclusion of vertically oriented rectangular architectural framing features applied to the podium form (between Levels 2 and 4) is effective in breaking up the horizontal massing of the podium form whilst also defining the top edge of the podium. To the north, the upper levels (above podium) are also architectural defined by precast concrete (white / monument) framing features which tie into the balustrade detail at Level 5 and extend up to the top of Level 7, aligning with the central glazed break to further accentuate this break in the form.

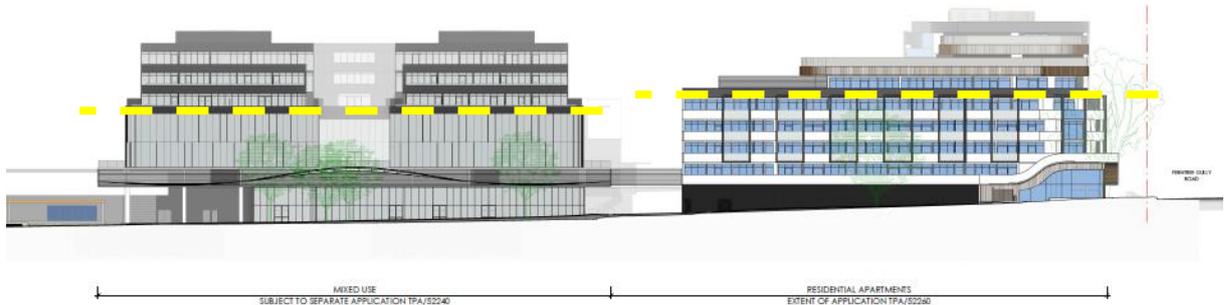
Taking into account the existing street setback conditions along the Ferntree Gully Road interface, the proposal, whilst not entirely compliant with the DDO8 setback aspirations, is considered to provide a significantly improved outcome in comparison. Between Ground Floor and Level 4 (i.e. the podium), the street setbacks to the building edge / balcony balustrades range from 3.31m to 6.06m due to the irregular northern boundary alignment. Importantly, north-facing apartments at Level 1 – Level 4 have apartment facades setback further beyond the balustrade edge, creating a sense of depth in the façade and enhancing the perceived setbacks. These street setbacks, whilst varied, will facilitate a generous landscaping treatment along the site frontage. Above the podium, apartments at Level 5 – Level 7 have apartment facade setbacks ranging between 8.65m – 12.21m, creating a clear delineation between the podium form and the upper levels, which is further enhanced through the differing architectural treatments.



Figure 1 – Proposed presentation to Ferntree Gully Road (view from north-west)

### Brandon Park Drive

The Brandon Park Drive interface is recognised as a lower scale environment and therefore warrants a lesser building height. The residential proposal presents to the east as a 5 to 6-storey podium form with recessed upper levels, with the podium height sitting within the 17m height limit prescribed by the DDO8. Similarly, further south the mixed-use proposal also implements a 4-storey podium height, which also sits within the 17m height limit, with the overall building height being 7-storeys. Noting the downward slope of the site from north to south, both the podium forms and overall building heights present a site responsive height transition along the eastern interface.



The proposed building form above the podium levels also progressively step back from the street for both developments, limiting the visual impact to the eastern interface. For the residential development, the building height transition that occurs from west to east is also continued along the eastern interface, with the form above the podium continuing to transition down as it moves south to provide a consistent building language and a recognisable transition to the mixed-use building to the south. For the mixed-use development, the form above the podium progressively steps back as the height increases, which effectively mitigates bulk, and when coupled with the intuitive ‘U-shaped’ building form which introduces a generous central void, the overall massing of the proposal is considered to be very well-balanced.



**Figure 2 – Proposed podium presentation to north-eastern corner of the site**

Both developments implement 10m+ setbacks along this eastern interface to create a consistent setback character along this streetscape which will further emphasise the architectural link between the two proposals. In considering the how the proposals respond to the Brandon Park Drive interface in the context of the DDO8 discretionary height and setback controls, the proposals are considered to highly align with the objectives of the control.

## PUBLIC REALM & LANDSCAPING

The topographic profile of the shopping centre site comprises a cross-fall from the high point at Ferntree Gully Road (at +96.52m) and the low point at Magid Avenue (at +83.03m), with a relative level difference of approximately 13.5 metres.

The residential development lobby is provided at 'Mezzanine' level which sits at +95.36m to largely align with the level of the public realm at the northern edge and north-eastern corner of the site, creating a seamless transition between public and private realms for both residential lobby entrances. The Ground Floor car parking sits at a level of +93.16m, meaning it is concealed beneath natural grade along the Ferntree Gully Road interface and partially concealed along the Brandon Park Drive interface.

The residential lobby provides a strong sense of address to the north-eastern corner of the site, providing an entry forecourt to the development beneath the existing significant tree, which will provide a pleasant contribution to the public realm. The glazed treatment to the lobby allows interaction between private and public realms, however it is considered this glazed treatment could extend further along the Ferntree Gully Road interface to increase the degree of activation and transparency to the north. The mezzanine car parking facing Brandon Park Drive, whilst not an active interface, will adopt a high-quality patterned / textured charcoal tile treatment with generous tree planting and landscaping provided in the foreground to soften this interface and contribute to the overall quality of the pedestrian environment.

Further to the south, the ground plane of the mixed-use development will sit at +92.8m, which is a level generally consistent with the existing public realm adjacent to the site. The ground floor plane is highly glazed to align with the function of the medical centre tenancies and the office and serviced apartment lobby entrances, creating a high degree of interaction and activation along this frontage.

The generous street setbacks to both developments along both street frontages will allow for existing mature tree retention and provide significant opportunities to deliver revitalised landscape treatments along these streetscapes, which is reflected in the respective landscape concept plans.



Figure 3 – Proposed landscape treatments to key street interfaces

For the residential development, the Ferntree Gully Road setbacks will accommodate a row of new tree plantings and associated low-scale landscaping beneath, whilst along the Brandon Park Drive setback is almost totally dedicated to new tree planting and low-scale landscaping, both of which are treatments which go above and beyond the 3m landscape buffer requirement of the DDO8. For the mixed-use development, the area between the porte cochere and the title boundary will be dedicated to tree planting and landscaping and will range from 4.55m – 6.85m in width. Evidently, the proposals have been designed with landscaping treatments front of mind to ensure a suitable response to the Monash Garden City Character is achieved.

The integration of landscaping into the proposed built forms, within private balconies and communal terraces throughout, also assists greatly in softening the presentation of the buildings and forces eyes from the public realm to be drawn to these areas of the development.

Overall, both proposals are considered to make positive contributions to the public realm and landscape character within the Brandon Park MAC and will represent significant improvements to the conditions that currently exist on-site.

## **DESIGN DETAIL**

There is a clear difference in the architectural expressions of the two developments, however there are components of both forms which effectively communicate a consistent building language. Key design details are discussed below:

### **Residential:**

- The curvilinear canopy above the north-eastern residential lobby entry is an effective continuation of the white horizontal precast concrete banding which extends to the west and south of the entry lobby. This banding aligns with the canopy detailing of the mixed-use development further to the south to create a consistent architectural language.
- The use of timber-look aluminium battens for the residential lobby entrance and canopy soffit creates a warm and inviting entry environment and ties into the material treatments of levels above the podium form.
- The integration of planters in the residential balconies will allow landscaping to soften these edges and add to visual interest.
- The vertically oriented rectangular framing features assist in defining the podium form and breaking up the horizontality of the form to both street interfaces.
- The palette of external materials and finishes is considered high-quality and will complement the contemporary architectural expression of the building, ensuring it presents as a visually interesting form.
- The adoption of high-quality tiled façade treatments to the otherwise blank walls at Mezzanine Level and at the western-most and south-most façades of the building, will ensure these interfaces will present well to the public realm and contribute to the building language.

### **Mixed Use:**

- The extensive use of glazing for the commercial façade treatment presents as a quality finish, particularly with the curved edges, and this treatment aligns with the nature of these uses (medical / office) and will enhance passive surveillance over Brandon Park Drive.

- The curvilinear canopy creates a strong sense of address and effectively provides weather protection whilst also disguising the inactive car parking use provided at Level 1.
- The 'U-shaped' form above the podium creates a sense of depth in the façade treatment and the inclusion of communal terraces within the central void will positively contribute to passive surveillance and activation of the streetscape.

Overall, the use of extensive tinted silver glazing, textured concrete, painted concrete slab edges and powdercoated aluminium louvres will combine to create a high-quality commercial building which presents appropriately to the streetscape.

## **ARRANGEMENT OF USES**

The proposed development has an appropriate mix and arrangement of internal uses. Most notably:

- The residential apartment use will introduce a new resident population into the area, naturally adding to the degree of activity and overall vitality of the centre. The residential lobby access points at the north-eastern corner and along the northern interface will contribute to this activation of the ground plane.
- The ground floor frontage of the mixed-use development along Brandon Park Drive comprises medical centre tenancies and lobby spaces for the serviced apartments and office spaces, all of which enjoy glazed façade treatments and provide a strong sense of address for the various uses. These uses will assist in activating the Brandon Park Drive public realm, whilst the highlight glazed façade treatments and street-facing terraces for uses above will introduce significant passive surveillance opportunities over the public realm, increasing safety.
- Both developments seek to effectively conceal / sleeve the car parking areas within the buildings or behind appropriately treated building facades to create improved streetscape interfaces devoid of at-grade hardstand parking. For the mixed-use development, the application of a powdercoated louvre treatment to the Level 1 front façade, together with the architectural canopy, will effectively disguise the car parking area at this level, whilst maintaining functional car park ventilation. For the residential development, the use of high-quality tiled façade treatments and robust landscaping in the foreground will suitably disguise the blank wall associated with the car parking area.
- The provision of landscaping within the elevated communal areas proposed in both developments for the various uses will punctuate these common areas and allow them to contribute to the overall design quality of the developments. These will also provide important outdoor areas for the enjoyment of residents, visitors and staff of the developments.

## **ACCESS & MOVEMENT**

Brandon Park Drive will be the primary access street for the developments, with vehicle access to the sites facilitated by the existing crossovers along the eastern frontage, which importantly mitigates additional intervention into the landscaping treatment for the purpose of vehicle access.

Pedestrian access to the respective developments is clearly identifiable from the public realm and the proposed lobby spaces and commercial entries have been designed to generally align with the adjacent public footpath levels to ensure DDA access is available and there is seamless transition between public and private realms.

The proposed mixed use porte cochere runs along the full width of that development site frontage and facilitates pick-up / drop-off movements for all uses within the development. The porte cochere lane maintains an appropriately proportioned setback from the eastern boundary to accommodate



landscaping in front of the porte cochere lane and associated short term parking spaces. Improvements to the paving treatments and retail centre entrance adjacent to the mixed use development will also enhance the pedestrian access experience to the site and centre.

The provision of visitor bicycle parking adjacent to key pedestrian entry points of both developments will ensure ease of access for cyclists visiting the sites. Dedicated long term bicycle parking for residents and staff of the respective developments are provided internally and are conveniently accessible from the primary lobby spaces.

Overall, vehicle and pedestrian access and connectivity is considered to represent a functional outcome.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the BPMAC is considered to represent a significant opportunity to deliver true mixed-use outcomes, which the proposed developments seek to achieve, albeit in a manner that goes slightly beyond the conservative DDO8 built form controls. The proposals are considered responsive to the site's current context and its future development capabilities.

The proposed developments represent a significant opportunity to improve and better activate this urban interface, providing well-articulated and visually interesting forms that respect the pedestrian scale and the respective streetscape interfaces. A considered approach has been taken to ensure the two developments speak to each other in terms of height transition and setbacks, and to ensure both developments can suitably accommodate generous landscaping to contribute to the Garden City Character.

The proposals will also enhance passive surveillance at the periphery of the precinct and will contribute positively to the quality of the public realm and pedestrian experience. In summary, the catalytic developments proposed for the Brandon Park Shopping Centre Precinct provide good urban outcomes this site.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shrijan Joshi".

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CC Fidel Freijah