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City of Melbourne, Council Meeting Room, Melbourne Town Hall Administration Building
22 Nov 2016, 5.30pm – Meeting No.2
Agenda Item 6.3 Ministerial Referral TPM-2016-17, 135-139 Sturt Street, Southbank

Submission to Future Melbourne Committee

If the proposed development in Sturt Street proceeds, the Southbank Residents Association has grave concerns for the character, ambience and overall appeal of this special area of Southbank: an area which has a special place in the hearts of all Melburnians.

The predominant character of this area is its low-density and as such this is recognized in the overlay through a 40 metre height limit.

We are appalled that the applicant, Hayball, an award-winning design firm, with an outstanding reputation has the audacity to propose such an overdevelopment. Hayballs' own offices have been situated on this site for over 10 years and therefore the company are acutely aware of what this precinct represents. With such an overdevelopment, offering very little to the precinct, we can't help but be cynical that Hayball is selling their reputation short in the pursuit of excessive profits.

However of greater concern is the Councils' own officers making a recommendation that a three storey reduction would be acceptable. This development application is already at 67 metres, 27 meters (or 67%) greater than the 40 metre height limit. A three storey, or roughly 10 metre, reduction would still allow for a 17 metre (or 42%) over-development. How can our Officers consider this remotely acceptable?

SRA does not agree with a reduced setback. The overlay has a 10 metre minimum, thereby allowing a 20 metre separation from potential future adjoining developments. While C270 has a five metre minimum, this application is not being assessed against the C270 overlay. Therefore 10 metres should be the expectation. Although a 10 metre separation is desirable at minimum we concur with the Council Officers' recommendation of a one metre increase.

SRA also has concern with the public realm provisions. We concur with the Officers' view that it is not pedestrian-friendly and inactive. The arts precinct blueprint talks extensively about the importance of street activation. We feel the design of this development will not add much to street activation.

It is our view that the proposed offsets are hardly appropriate for what is being considered. An urban design firm with the reputation of Hayball should be able to identify creative and fitting offsets for such a development. Their inability to propose any credible offsets leaves one wondering what Hayballs' concern about their legacy to this precinct is.

The existing character of this area should be preserved and developments on any space within the precinct must be fitting for the arts precinct environ. This is an opportunity to truly provide something great to the precinct which will add to the area and not detract from it.

If this development is approved then it will be a very sad day for the Southbank Village and Arts Precinct. The precedent this will set for all the remaining undeveloped sites will be catastrophic to the precinct.

We trust our Council will heed the concerns of the residents and concur with the views of SRA and object to this application.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Penna', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tony Penna
President
Southbank Residents Association