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For the attention of the State Commission Assessment Panel

## **Buckingham Arms Hotel – new scheme 1-9 Walkerville Terrace, Gilberton**

The following advice is in relation to Development Application 24029287. In my capacity as a referral body for advice, I would like to offer the following comments for your consideration.

The proposal (new scheme) was presented to the Design Review panel on one occasion. It is acknowledged the design drivers for the proposal have been developed to address the State Commission Assessment Panel's (SCAP's) reasons for refusal for the previous 10 storey tall mixed use scheme for the same site.

I recognise the significant opportunity this unique site presents due to its size and gateway location. I support the aspiration to deliver a high quality mixed use development with increased density in this location. I strongly support the project team's due considerations of the SCAP's concerns and recognise the significant improvements made in terms of built form massing and composition, architectural expression and the relationship to the Local Heritage Place (LHP). I also acknowledge the amendments to the ground floor configuration and level two terrace void size to address concerns raised at the Design Review session.

### **Site context**

The triangular shaped site is 6,249 square metres in area and located on the prominent corner of Walkerville and Northcote Terraces, which forms part of a major five-way intersection comprising the City Ring Route and north-south connector roads.

Existing site attributes include:

- street frontage to Walkerville Terrace (approximately 108 metres wide)
- street frontage to Northcote Terrace (approximately 130 metres wide)
- former Buckingham Arms Hotel building (LHP), and a historic lean-to structure located in the southern corner of the site (proposed to be retained and redeveloped)
- associated later additions to the hotel building (proposed to be demolished)
- a shed, services enclosures and bituminised at-grade car parking to the

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remainder of the site (proposed to be demolished), accessed via two single lane crossovers on Walkerville Terrace and one dual lane crossover on Northcote Terrace

- trees, including Significant and Regulated Trees (all trees on site are proposed to be removed, with the exception of the trees along the north/northeast boundary).

Existing locality attributes include:

- single storey residential units and townhouses to the northeast of the site ('Buckingham Close')
- single storey commercial building with associated at-grade car parking presenting to Northcote Terrace to the north
- area to the west of Northcote Terrace located within the 'Historic Area Overlay' – characterised by low scale and density dwellings from the 19th and early 20th Century.

### **Built Form and Building Height**

The proposal includes a 10 storey (approximately 31.8 metre) tall (excluding the rooftop plant) mixed use building to the rear of the retained hotel building and a cluster of two storey tall townhouses along the north/northeast boundary, connected by a communal terrace on level two. The two built forms are separated by an internal roadway below the terrace level.

The main 10 storey building is V-shaped in plan, in response to the triangular corner geometry of the site. The building includes a two storey tall podium/plinth treatment along the entire street frontages, including the arch vehicular entries to the internal roadway. The building is set back from the retained hotel building, creating a publicly accessible forecourt to the north of the hotel building connecting two street frontages. Above the podium, the built form is articulated into a five level mid-section and a three level set back top section. The western wing of the main building extends over the internal roadway and townhouses above the terrace level.

Two storey tall townhouses are proposed as a continuous built form along the north/northeastern boundary, with the intent to provide a built form transition to the adjoining smaller properties within the Established Neighbourhood Zone. Above the townhouses, a communal terrace and pool is proposed. The townhouses present to the internal roadway via an enclosed corridor along this frontage. The back yards (private open spaces) are proposed along the north/northeastern boundary with narrow balconies on the first floor.

While I acknowledge the challenge of locating a large new development adjacent a small scale heritage building in terms of scale imbalance, I recognise and support the successful modulation of the built form and breaking down of mass and scale of the development through articulation. In my opinion, this is particularly successful when viewed from the Walkerville Terrace/Northcott Terrace corner, compared to the previous refused scheme. I also support the built form separation between the new development and the retained hotel building and acknowledge the proposed building height is consistent with the maximum allowable height for this site in metres. However, I note the volumetric distribution across the site has resulted in extension of the built form towards the rear as the development quantum and programming remain generally consistent with the original scheme. In my view, this has impacted on the residential amenity for some of the dwellings, as discussed below.

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### Site Configuration

The proposal includes a two storey tall partially enclosed dual lane internal roadway through the site between the main 10 storey tall building and townhouses, connecting the two street frontages. The roadway provides access to short term parking spaces, the loading bay and ramp access to the basement car parking levels. Pedestrian access is envisaged on footpaths on both sides of the internal roadway and a courtyard adjacent the car parking ramp.

The ground floor of the main building includes four hospitality tenancies along the street frontages. A hospitality tenancy is also envisaged within the retained hotel building. A centrally located lobby is shared between the apartment residents and serviced apartment guests, and is accessible from Walkerville Terrace, Northcote Terrace and the internal roadway via the central courtyard. The lobby includes a concierge desk and a feature stair to the upper basement car parking level. Back of house functions, including waste room and loading area, are located adjacent the central courtyard to be accessed from the internal roadway. The wall lines of the main building are set back from the street boundaries to provide perimeter soft landscaping and outdoor dining areas.

I support the provision of hospitality tenancies to optimise activation of the public realm. I also note the amendments to the ground floor configuration following the Design Review to address concerns regarding serviceability and user amenity, including the following:

- Walkerville Terrace tenancies reduced in footprint to allow for an enlarged forecourt to the central entry lobby and increased separation between the podium and the LHP
- alfresco dining removed from the central courtyard to create a primarily pedestrian throughfare and landscape area (no dwell space adjacent the internal roadway and vehicle ramp)
- back of house areas at the centre of the site enlarged, consolidated and rationalised
- central lobby reconfigured to create rectilinear space with a direct stair connection to the basement car parking level and a concierge desk.

I consider these amendments to the ground floor generally positive, as they have contributed to increased legibility and functionality, and a more respectful built form relationship with the LHP.

### Public Realm and Landscaping

I strongly support the provision of below ground car parking to reduce the detrimental urban design impacts of at-grade car parking.

Public open spaces include a space to the north of the retained hotel building and a courtyard at the centre of the site adjacent the internal roadway. In principle, I support the inclusion of public open spaces. In terms of the open space to the north of LHP, I remain concerned by the amenity of the open space on the Northcote Terrace frontage due to its adjacency to the busy arterial road. However, I recognise the provision of a substantial entry plaza to the Walkerville Terrace frontage and support the consolidated open space arrangement on balance. For the central courtyard, I support the improved solar access due to the increased size of the terrace void above.

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I support the inclusion of deep soil zones to the perimeter of the site, achieved by the setback basement arrangement. I recommend capitalising on the benefits of the deep soil zones by planting mature trees to deliver generous and meaningful landscaping along the public realm interface.

A terrace with a raised pool on level two is proposed as a communal open space. I acknowledge the potential for the level two open space due to the northern aspect and note the central void has increased in size following Design Review to improve solar access to the levels below. I remain concerned by the detrimental impact of the terrace extension on the residential amenity of the level one inward facing serviced apartments and the townhouses, including access to quality natural light and outlook. However, I accept the arrangement on balance as I acknowledge the apartments on level one are serviced apartments (temporary use). While I remain concerned by the enclosed arrangement for the townhouses that do not benefit from the terrace void, I recognise that the internal planning has been amended, and the townhouses are considered as two-storey single aspect apartments.

I continue to recommend further design development of the terrace arrangement to improve functionality and achieve the high level communal amenity envisaged. In particular, the raised pool arrangement will require detailed accessibility considerations.

#### **Internal Layout and Residential Amenity**

Within the main building, 57 serviced apartments are proposed on levels one and two. 116 residential apartments are proposed on levels three to nine, including 20 affordable housing units and 13 NDIS apartments. The residential apartments range between one and four bedroom offerings. 14 townhouses are proposed in a cluster along the north/northeast boundary.

Generally, I support the diversity in housing typologies and inclusion of affordable housing and NDIS apartments.

While I generally do not support low floor-to-floor heights due to amenity impacts, I acknowledge the proposed design considerations to maximise ceiling heights for habitable rooms. I urge ongoing design refinement to ensure sufficient ceiling heights are maintained, as this is critical to my support for the proposed building height in terms of the number of floor levels.

In relation to the main building, I support the generous lift lobby arrangement with access to natural light and outlook. I also support consolidation of services. I recommend consideration is given to articulation of the narrow corridors to breakdown the lengths. I support the general apartment layouts, which offer access to natural light and ventilation to all habitable rooms.

In relation to the townhouses, I acknowledge the internal planning has been amended following the Design Review session to locate non-habitable uses facing the internal roadway. However, in my view, the townhouse arrangement would benefit from further review to address the following remaining issues, with the view to ensuring high level residential amenity for all dwelling types:

- pedestrian entry sequence via an enclosed corridor, which further exacerbates the internalised condition
- conflict between the entry/lift lobby and the waste management path
- lack of convenient stair access from the basement car parking floor.

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### **Architectural Expression and Materiality**

Contrasting materiality is proposed for the podium/plinth, middle and top elements of the proposal, which all include curved corners. The two storey base is expressed as a masonry element with light earthy tones utilising sandstone blocks and concrete. The two storey townhouses are proposed with cream coloured brickwork. The middle section is proposed with textured render in a maroon colour to columns, slab edges and soffits, and steel balustrades (matching colour). The top element is proposed with light coloured wall cladding with a reflective finish to support the design intent for a recessive character. While the podium is expressed as a continuous two storey element along the street frontages, the middle and top elements include vertical recesses to articulate the long street elevations into three sections.

Generally, I support the design intent for a clear definition between the base, middle and top elements. In particular, I support the masonry materiality of the podium as a building base and the depth of the colonnades created by the large and angled feature columns. I also support the continuation of the podium treatment to turn the corner behind the retained hotel building, as it assists in improving the new building's relationship with the heritage fabric and creating a clear entry point for the overall development. While I support the deliberate bold design approach, including the use of a distinct colour for the middle element, I am of the opinion the architectural expression would benefit from further development including the following:

- further analysis of the retained hotel building to inform the architectural expression of the podium in a contemporary manner, including the consideration of datum lines, rhythm and proportions
- review of the materiality and finishes of the middle element, with the view to reflecting the design intent for lightweight construction and authentically expressing the materiality
- confirmation of the materiality of the top element, with consideration given to glare management.

### **Heritage response**

I strongly support the retention and revitalisation of the former Buckingham Arms Hotel building as part of the development, supported by detailed analysis of the heritage building and development of a considered restoration strategy. While I defer advice relating to the LHP to the Local Heritage Advisor, in my view, the built form relationship of the new development with the retained hotel building has improved significantly compared with the previous refused scheme.

### **Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)**

I support the proposed ESD initiatives including:

- retention and adaptive reuse of the existing heritage building
- consolidation of services on the roof
- provision of solar panels
- deep balconies to manage solar loads
- provision of ample bicycle parking (public and private)
- allowance for ride share and electric vehicle chargers.

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**Advice summary**

To ensure the most successful design outcome is achieved the State Commission Assessment Panel may like to consider particular aspects of the project, which would benefit from protection as part of the planning permission, such as:

- planting of mature trees to the perimeter deep soil zones to deliver generous and meaningful landscaping along the public realm interface
- further design development of the level two terrace configuration, including the raised pool arrangement, to improve functionality and accessibility
- articulation of the narrow corridors on the apartment floors to breakdown the lengths
- further review of the townhouse arrangement, including the enclosed corridor, waste transfer path and stair access to the basement
- refinement of the architectural expression and confirmation of the final external material selections, with consideration given to high-quality integral finishes (including physical samples).

Yours sincerely



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