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For the attention of the State Commission Assessment Panel

259-269 Unley Road Malvern

The following advice is in relation to the referral for application 25036473. In my capacity as a referral body for advice, I would like to offer the following comments for your consideration. The proposal was presented to the State Design Review panel on two occasions. The following advice has been informed by the panel's recommendations.

I support the aspiration to provide a high-quality, design led and sustainable mixed-use residential proposal in this location.

The site spans between two distinct contextual conditions - a commercial corridor anticipated for intensification in planning policy, and an established low-rise residential setting requiring protection of character and amenity. Development on this site therefore needs to contribute to the emerging mixed-use streetscape of Unley Road, while transitioning and managing impacts to neighbouring houses and residential streets.

I acknowledge the positive progression of the proposal through the Design Review process, with notable improvements to built form, resident amenity, ground plane and landscaping. I am pleased to provide my support for the application, however in my view, there are aspects of the design that would benefit from further refinement to fully realise the project's design intent and achieve an improved interface condition.

Site Context

The site is located on the eastern side of Unley Road between Eton and Fisher Streets and comprises an area of 3,400 square metres with an approximate frontage of 68 metres and a depth of 50 metres. Eton Street is a no-through road with a landscaped road closure aligning with the eastern boundary of the site.

The existing land use comprises a strip mall arrangement featuring food and beverage tenancies fronted by at-grade car parking and accessed via two, double width crossovers from Unley Road. A single width crossover and several on-street car parking spaces are located along the northern (secondary) street frontage on Eton Street. Additionally, a two storey stone 'character' building is located within the site on the corner of Unley Road and Eton Street.

The local context along this section of Unley Road comprises one and two storey commercial, education and retail buildings, including some with historic character.

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The immediate context adjacent the site boundaries are as follows:

- north: carwash including a multi-vehicle crossover extending for approximately 30 metres located on the north side of Eton Street
- east: single storey private residences within an Established Neighbourhood Zone including a Local Heritage Place at 202A Fisher Street proximate the site
- south: single storey retail and car parking
- west (opposite Unley Road): Walford Anglican School for Girls and two storey row terraces (circa 1880s) operating as retail tenancies located on the western side of Unley Road and designated as Local Heritage Places.

It is acknowledged that the scale of built form along Unley Road is evolving with several recently approved mixed-use residential examples including:

- 290 Unley Road: five storeys (18.5 metres tall), approximately 60 metres to the north
- 248 Unley Road: seven storeys (24.5 metres tall), approximately 400 metres to the north (built)
- 106 - 108 Unley Road: seven storeys (24.7 metres tall)
- 42 - 46 Unley Road: seven storeys (24 metres tall).

The site is within the Urban Corridor (Main Street) Zone, where a maximum height of five levels (18.5 metres) is envisaged. However, planning policy incentives allow an uplift in height, the site being designated as a 'Significant Development Site' due to its size. An Established Neighbourhood Zone adjoins the east boundary which envisages a maximum building height of one level (5.6 metres) requiring consideration of the 30-degree planning policy building envelope and interface between the proposal and existing single storey residences.

Built Form

The proposal is for an eight storey (approximately 28.5 metre tall) mixed-use building, excluding a three metre high, recessed and screened rooftop services enclosure. The overall programming comprises:

- two levels of basement carparking with additional at-grade spaces
- ground floor retail and commercial tenancies, lobbies, services, vehicle and pedestrian access and landscaping
- level 1 – commercial tenancies, apartments, and residential amenity spaces
- levels 2 to 7 – apartments
- level 3 – residential amenity spaces, pool and outdoor area.

A total of 68 dwellings are proposed, comprising:

- 13 one-bedroom apartments
- 17 two-bedroom apartments
- 33 three-bedroom apartments
- five four-bedroom (penthouse and sub-penthouse) apartments.

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The proposal comprises an eight storey form fronting Unley Road. The ground floor glazing line is set back approximately one metre from the front boundary, while levels 1 and 2 above (terraces) extend to the boundary. At level 1, canopies (some planted) extend over the footpath providing weather protection for the ground floor commercial tenancies. Level 2 balconies extend to the boundary, while levels 3 to 5 are set back two metres, with levels 6 and 7 set further back, by approximately five metres from the front boundary.

At the southern boundary to the adjoining retail building, built form is proposed with a zero setback for the ground floor and part of level 1. Upper built form is set back approximately three metres from levels 1 to 5. Levels 6 and 7 wall lines are set back 6.5 metres, with the level 6 terrace extending to three metres from the boundary.



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Along the eastern boundary with existing residences, the proposed built form is set back the following approximate dimensions:

- ground floor (13 metres)

North Wing

- levels 1 and 2 - including pool structure (five metres)
- levels 3 to 5 – including level 6 terrace (19.6 metres)
- levels 6 and 7 (24.4 metres)

South Wing

- levels 1 to 3 – including level 4 terrace (five metres)
- levels 4 and 5 – including level 6 terrace (9.4 metres)
- levels 6 and 7 (13 metres).

The overall massing is expressed as a 'U' shaped form in plan, incorporating a central void that establishes some visual and spatial alignment with the rear gardens of adjoining dwellings to the east. The northern and southern wings step down towards the eastern interface (to varying degrees) in recognition of the adjoining low-rise residential context. Above level 4, the form consolidates into a more linear 'L' shaped configuration to establish a more open interface to the north.

In principle, this massing approach is considered appropriate as it:

- concentrates the largest building mass close to Unley Road
- provides a volume of empty space within the site, interfacing to neighbouring residential gardens
- incorporates stepped forms towards the eastern residential interface
- provides for strong built form edges to both street frontages.

While the site is considered a 'Significant Development Site' which contemplates opportunities for additional building height (up to 30 percent), the proposed building height of 28.5 metres (not including roof mounted plant) is greater than this maximum envisaged height, and taller than other approved developments nearby. While this presents challenges in relation to planning policy, in principle I support the building height, provided it is concentrated at the Unley Road frontage with recessive upper levels, incorporates a clear transition in scale to the east, and demonstrates effective strategies to mitigate off-site impacts.

I also support the following improvements to the proposed built form in response to the Design Review panel recommendations including:

- reduction in overall building height achieved through lowered floor-to-floor heights
- reduction of the north wing built form mass resulting in:
 - reduced impacts of overshadowing and visual bulk as experienced from neighbouring properties
 - improved resident amenity and solar access to central communal open spaces, apartments and private open spaces, including the addition of a new north facing landscaped pool area
 - enhanced residential outlook and views
 - gentler transition in scale to the residential setting to the east and reduced building scale to the Eton Street frontage.

While I support the reduction in mass of the north wing to achieve a three-level form at the eastern interface, the wall height at this interface (approximately 13 metres) is relatively high, partly due to the extended parapet to the planting around the pool. I acknowledge a material change from masonry to light coloured metal cladding for the parapet section and the planting strategy to soften built form. I also understand an approximately 6.4 metre high

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existing wall extending the length of the east boundary is to be retained. However, I encourage ongoing consideration of design strategies to reduce the north wing's eastern interface height to mitigate visual bulk.

In my view the extent of built form in the southeast part of the site requires further reduction and refinement, to achieve a gentler transition in response to the sensitive eastern interface. I therefore strongly recommend review of the south wing massing and profile, to more effectively mitigate direct off-site impacts, particularly the perception of visual bulk and scale. The revised north wing massing is a relevant reference, acknowledging the different conditions and implications at the south wing.

I acknowledge a change in materiality from masonry to metal cladding for the south wing level 3 elevation which I understand seeks to mitigate visual impact, however I consider that a three-level eastern interface wall is more appropriate, in alignment with the north wing, with the upper floors stepping back from that level.

While overshadowing impacts on adjacent properties appear to be appropriately managed, I recommend further consideration and demonstration of overlooking impacts and any mitigation strategies (noting the proposed full height glazed openings) acknowledging that some impacts may be anticipated at interfaces between contrasting zones.

I also recommend including more detailed information on adjacent sites (east) to comprehensively demonstrate the proposed interface conditions.

Architectural Expression

The frontage to Unley Road comprises a two storey (7.9 metre high) concrete and masonry base that closely aligns with the height of the existing two storey character building on the northwest corner of the site, which is proposed to be retained and integrated into the building frontage. I acknowledge that the retention or conservation of existing built form that positively contributes to local character is a mechanism under planning policy to support additional uplift on a Significant Development Site.

Above the building base, a four storey mid-section fronting Unley Road is expressed predominantly in masonry cladding, incorporating hit-and-miss brickwork screening and articulated with expressed floor slab banding and cantilevered off-form concrete planters to terraces, below a recessed and visually lighter two storey upper built form. The northwest (Unley Road) corner and upper levels addressing Eton Street are defined by an expressed grid structure, proposed in dark metal cladding and incorporating screening and full height glazing. Vertical recesses aligned with pedestrian entries assist in breaking down the overall mass into smaller, legible volumes.

The Eton Street frontage (and east elevation) comprises masonry and expressed floor slab banding at the lower levels, with light-toned vertical metal cladding wrapping the pool area above level 3. Off-form (pebblecrete textured) concrete canopies extend over the carpark entry and ground floor commercial tenancy. A similar masonry and exposed slab edge composition is replicated at the southern end of the Unley Road frontage and adjacent the neighbouring building to the south. The east wings present as a varied composition of masonry and light metal cladding in both vertical and flat profiles.

I support the intent to respond to context through material selection and composition, including the design response at the Eton Street frontage - coupled with reduced massing - to mitigate its visual presence adjacent to the residential setting. I also commend the level of detail proposed across the facade treatments including consideration at the lower levels of shopfront glazing, canopies and integrated soft landscaping, as in my view, these are key contributors to the streetscape and public realm.

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At the Eton Street frontage, I recommend ongoing consideration of the upper level expression (levels 3 to 5) east of the prominent corner form above the retained building, to ensure a sensitive response to the residential context to the east. I also recommend consideration of the detailing of the hit-and-miss brickwork screening to ensure adequate access for glazing maintenance and delivery of the intended design outcome.

Ground Plane and Access

Ground plane configuration and access comprises:

- commercial and retail tenancies fronting Unley Road and Eton Streets (set back one metre on Unley Road)
- recessed pedestrian entry points (residential, commercial and retail)
- Eton Street proposed public realm and on-street carparking upgrades
- landscaped pedestrian thoroughfare connecting from Unley Road to rear at-grade car parking
- deep soil perimeter planting along the east boundary
- vehicle access from Eton Street to Back Of House (BOH), services and basement ramp entry
- existing two storey character building (to be retained)
- two lobbies and vertical circulation cores serving commercial tenancies and private residences.

I support the strategy to reactivate the high street frontage by removing car parking and existing crossovers along Unley Road, clearly separating vehicle and service functions on Eton Street, from pedestrian focused frontages to both streets, and integrating the existing corner building.

I also strongly support the intent to deliver a permeable and inviting ground floor arrangement and acknowledge the improved clarity and legibility provided in relation to pedestrian access, security, servicing, and relationships between residential, commercial, and retail uses. I encourage ongoing consideration of the ground plane as it extends into the public realm to strengthen its civic and retail role.

Additionally, I support the provision of basement car parking and acknowledge the inclusion of at-grade car parking at the rear of the development for its convenience in accessing ground floor tenancies. I recommend that strategies be considered to mitigate potential acoustic impacts from vehicle movements to neighbouring properties along the east boundary acknowledging retention of the existing boundary wall.

Landscape and Public Realm

Key features of the landscape approach include:

- Eton Street public realm renewal in collaboration with the City of Unley
- green perimeters with deep soil planting to the east boundary interface
- greening opportunities to all levels including communal amenity spaces and pool area
- landscaped pedestrian thoroughfare.

I strongly support the detailed and considered approach to landscape design and planting at both the ground plane and upper levels. I also support engagement with the City of Unley with the intent for public realm upgrades along Eton Street to enhance both resident and neighbourhood amenity. To reinforce the quality and character of the proposal, I recommend the landscape design outcomes as presented are maintained and protected throughout all stages of project development.

I acknowledge the additional detail demonstrating evidence of the proposed 'Tuckeroo' trees (as proposed for the east boundary interface) success in limited areas of deep soil.

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However, I recommend ongoing consideration of potential encroachments from the basement structure (for example piles and capping beams), and the existing (6.4 metre tall) boundary wall to ensure the successful establishment and ongoing growth of the proposed trees, including resolution of any drawing inconsistencies between the architectural and landscaping documentation for clarity.

I also recommend consideration of the internal soft landscaping within the undercover lobbies, where limited natural daylight may affect plant success. Additionally, I recommend early consideration of detailing for the off-form concrete cantilevered planters that are a prominent feature for the Unley Road elevation to ensure the proposed design outcome is delivered as intended.

Internal Amenity

Acknowledging the indicative layouts for the penthouse and sub-penthouse apartments, in principle I support the proposed layouts and the strategy to optimise apartment amenity while limiting off-site impacts. I also support the range of communal amenity spaces offered by the development and provision of access to natural light, ventilation and soft landscaping.

The adjoining site to the south represents a future redevelopment opportunity, which has the potential to affect the amenity of the development's south facing apartments. I acknowledge the additional setbacks provided to the south for levels 1 and 2, as well as the reconfiguration of the main south facing private open spaces to face east and west. I also acknowledge the daylight analysis undertaken to inform and optimise internal amenity for the apartments.

Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD)

I support the engagement of a sustainability consultant for the project and the provision of a comprehensive report detailing the proposed ESD initiatives, including commitments in relation to energy performance, integrated water management, indoor environment quality, waste, transport and designing for people and nature. I also strongly support the intention to achieve higher than the minimum requirements for sustainability.

Summary

To support delivery of the project ambition and to ensure the most successful design outcome is achieved, the State Commission Assessment Panel may like consider conditions or reserve matters to protect the following elements of the proposal:

- review of the south wing massing and profile, to more effectively mitigate direct off-site impacts, particularly the perception of visual bulk and scale
- final external material selections, with consideration given to high-quality integral finishes supported by the provision of physical samples.

I trust the above comments assist with making your assessment.

Yours sincerely



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State Design Review Chair
Delegate of the Government Architect

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