



STRATEGY. COMMUNICATION. ENGAGEMENT

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Community engagement report

87-131 Bell Street, Ivanhoe

Spec Property

16 April 2019

Overview

Community engagement was undertaken for Spec Property in March 2019 on preliminary plans for a mixed-use development at 87-131 Bell Street. The planned development incorporates the Evernew Caravan and Heidelberg Suzuki sites and includes apartments, offices and retail.

Engagement was undertaken to provide information to the local community about the development and obtain feedback prior to the lodgement of a planning application with Banyule City Council.

The engagement involved:

- A community information session on Thursday 14 March, from 5.30pm to 7.30pm, at the Bellfield Community Centre
- Feedback via Shaping Banyule, Banyule City Council's online engagement platform.

The engagement was facilitated by i.e. community, community engagement specialists with extensive experience working with communities, local government and developers around major developments.

Community information session

Invitations to the community information session were hand-delivered to more than 700 households and businesses around the site, in line with the catchment recommended by Banyule City Council (see Attachment 1 for a map of the catchment area).

The information session provided an opportunity for locals to learn about the proposed development, ask questions of the Spec Property team and provide feedback.

The room at Bellfield Community Centre was set up with 13 large display boards providing details about the project including preliminary artist impressions, concept plans and site context.

A total of 16 people attended the information session, including:

- Two Councillors: Deputy Mayor Alison Champion (Hawdon Ward) and Councillor Craig Langdon (Olympia Ward)
- Three Council officers
- Four local business owners
- Seven local residents.

See Attachment 2 for the attendance list.

Given the wide distribution of the invitation and scale of the development, this may be considered a relatively low turnout.

Overall, attendees responded well to the level of detail provided and appreciated the opportunity to speak directly to representatives of the developer. While having concerns about the development, attendees acknowledged Spec's effort to seek their input prior to the application being lodged.

Summary of feedback from the information session

Height

A key concern raised by attendees was the height of the proposed development. When it was explained that the preliminary plans include building heights from 4 storeys to 22 storeys, the general response was of surprise and concern.

Traffic and parking

Residents and local business owners expressed concern about the impact a development of this size will have on local traffic. They reported that traffic in the area – and Bell Street in particular – is “already a nightmare”.

Attendees were interested to know the parking provisions for the development and expressed concern that, despite underground parking, the additional residents and visitors would make it more difficult to park locally. With numerous residential projects in various stages of development in the area, there is concern as to how the streets will cope with the increasing density.

Access

Adjoining business owners expressed concern that access to the rear of their business may be impacted by the use of the lane to enter the site from Edwin Street, as it appeared to be shown as one-way on the plans. A commitment was given by Spec that it would remain two-way and that a traffic management solution would be investigated.

Attendees also expressed concern about entry and exit from the Myrtle Street, wanting it to remain closed to traffic. The view was also shared that connections between Forster and Myrtle Street shouldn't be permitted.

Construction vehicles

The movement of trucks around the area during construction was raised, including the potential impact of noise and increased traffic. Attendees were advised that construction and traffic management plans would be put in place to limit any impacts prior to work commencing on the site.

Impact on Bell Street

While entry to and from the site from Bell Street was a key area of concern, the general sense was that the development would have a positive long-term impact on Bell Street and benefit local businesses. The inclusion of an on-site access lane on Bell Street was welcomed.

Design

The response to the preliminary plans was generally positive. In particular, attendees commented on the terraced design and landscaping, green space and the look of the buildings and apartments.

Opportunity to provide input

Residents and business owners expressed appreciation for the opportunity to see the plans, provide feedback and have face-to-face conversations with the Spec team.

Shaping Banyule

The preliminary plans were published on Shaping Banyule for feedback between 9 March and 25 March 2019. As of 22 March, eight responses were received. While the opportunity to provide feedback has closed, the preliminary plans remain online.

While many of the same issues were raised, feedback received via Shaping Banyule was generally more critical than the feedback received at the community information session. Not all comments related directly to the proposed development, but expressed a more general frustration with development in Banyule.

Summary of feedback from Shaping Banyule

Height

The primary concern expressed via Shaping Banyule related to the proposed maximum height of the development. Respondents were concerned by the height and scale of the proposal, specifically in relation to potential overshadowing and perceived over-development in the area more broadly.

Parking

Respondents raised concerns in relation to parking, stating that parking in the area is already an issue, and fear it will be made more difficult with the proposed development. It was noted that parking is already a problem due to visitors to the Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital.

Traffic

Similarly, traffic and congestion is a concern. Respondents felt that a large influx of new residents would exacerbate current issues.

Character

Comments were received on the design of the development, with concerns that it will detract from the character of the neighbourhood and impact the attractiveness of the area for potential homebuyers.

Development

Much of the feedback related to concerns with the pace of development in City of Banyule. For some, the increasing density is already impacting the amenity and liveability of the area.

Attachment 1: Invitation distribution

