

40 UPPER HEIDELBERG ROAD, IVANHOE

URBAN DESIGN ASSESSMENT

PREPARED FOR

SB&G 40 UPPER HEIDELBERG ROAD, IVANHOE

04/04/2017

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1.0 INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

This Urban Design Assessment has been prepared to support the development application for a mixed use development at 40 Upper Heidelberg Road, Ivanhoe, Victoria [the subject site].

It is intended to be read in conjunction with the associated planning report and urban context report [the UCR], both prepared by Urbis, the architectural drawings prepared by John Demos Architects, and the landscape architectural drawings prepared by Oculus.

It aims to address item 6 of the Request for Information [RFI] issued by Banyule City Council on 22 December 2016. It includes a request for the assessment of:

- Built form
- Massing
- Richness of use
- Visual appropriateness
- Robustness of building footprint
- Accommodating a variety of uses over time

PLANNING CONTROLS

Development on the subject site is controlled by the Banule Planning Scheme [the Planning Scheme], the Ivanhoe Structure Plan [the Structure Plan], and Design and Development Overlay 11 [DDO11].

These are described in detail in the planning report and UCR, but to provide context for this assessment there are some key points to highlight at the outset.

Future development on the subject site is identified in the Structure Plan as being:

- Landmark building - opportunity for visual emphasis
- Mixed use development - proposed
- Preferred maximum building height - 18m

The opportunity for a landmark development, including capacity to reduce building setbacks, is described in DD011 (page 15) with the following conditions:

40 Upper Heidelberg Road is a gateway site that suggests a sense of arrival into the activity area. This site provides the opportunity for a high quality, architecturally designed landmark building. Any design should incorporate the planting of trees along the Upper Heidelberg Road elevation to contribute to a sense of arrival into a boulevard and along the eastern elevation to reduce the visual bulk of the building from across the railway line. Reduced building setbacks may be considered for 40 Upper Heidelberg Road if design can achieve:

- *A high quality, architecturally designed outcome that incorporates the planting of trees.*
- *Landscape character to Upper Heidelberg Road that contributes to a sense of 'boulevard' and reflects the treed settings of those properties opposite the subject site.*
- *Reduction in visual bulk of the building when viewed across the railway line and from Lower Heidelberg Road. A modulated façade to Upper Heidelberg Road that provides interest and relief from visual bulk on lower levels.*
- *Design excellence reflected in the design of safe entrances to residential and commercial properties directly from Upper Heidelberg Road.*

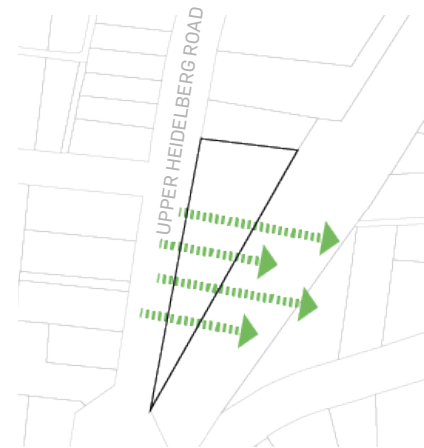
This assessment will consider how the proposed development addresses these planning controls.

2.0 PRINCIPLES

Urbis provided urban design advice to the project architects and landscape architects in the post-RFI design development phase. This was to help ensure that the revised design will provide a high quality urban design outcome. The main urban design principles are illustrated below:

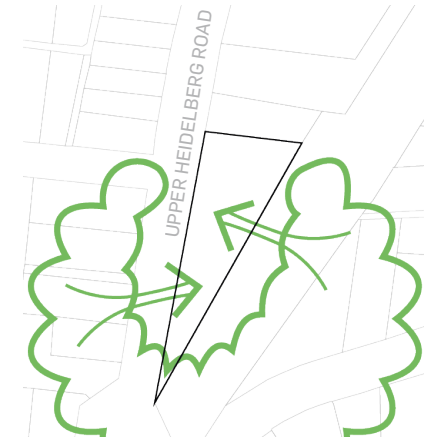
1 PROMOTE THE VIEW

Provide public amenity through an open ground level that provides views through to the hills to the east and ensure that elements at this level do not obstruct the view.



2 EMBRACE THE GREEN CONTEXT

Respond to the local green character and adjacent landscape qualities through layers of green landscape that soften the urban hardscape and connect the urban centre with its leafy context.



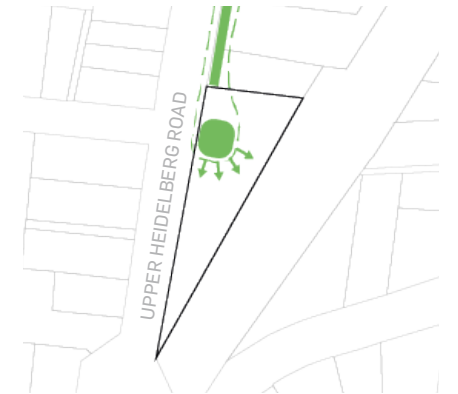
3 PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE PLAZA

Provide a publically accessible plaza / garden space at the ground level to contribute to the green character of Ivanhoe and provide a space for the wider community to enjoy.



4 ACTIVATE WITH COMMERCIAL TENANCIES

Locate commercial tenancies to the north of the site to relate to the established commercial uses along Upper Heidelberg Road. Encourage the café/restaurant and rear tenancy to actively use the plaza space by providing a dedicated outdoor dining area within the space and opportunity to 'spill out' into the space for events etc.



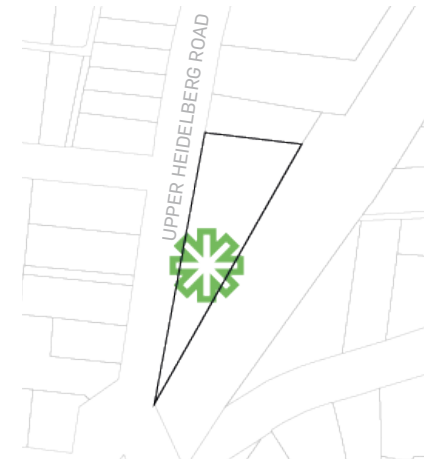
5 DRAW PEOPLE INTO THE SITE

Encourage the public and passing pedestrians to enter the site by providing pedestrian pathways through the plaza.



6 CREATE A LANDMARK

Emphasise the significance of the subject site as a key decision point for wayfinding and the southern entry to the Upper Heidelberg Road commercial strip.



7 ECHO THE FINE GRAIN

Respond to the finer grain of the surrounding low scale residential areas by providing articulation and variations in materiality and by breaking up the building into smaller parts.



8 ADOPT CPTED PRINCIPLES

Ensure the publically accessible plaza is safe by adopting CPTED principles and including passive surveillance measures and activation of the ground plane.



3.0 ASSESSMENT

3.1 HEIGHT

The Structure Plan sets out a discretionary height limit of 18m for the subject site. An additional metre is permitted in this case due to the natural ground level having a slope greater than 2.5 degrees across almost the entire the site. This brings the height limit to 19m.

Although the proposed building exceeds the preferred maximum, this can be justified for a number of reasons:

- The additional height allows the core building mass to be elevated from the ground plane in order to maximise views to the hills and to provide a publically accessible open plaza space at ground level. Figure 2 demonstrates rationale for the approach to the ground plane for the building.
- The corner with the greatest height relative to ground also has limited visibility. It faces onto the rail line and the nearest residences are well screened by vegetation and/or topography, so the exposed basement levels would not be highly visible in most cases (see Figures 3 and 4). These residences are separated from the subject site by at least 40m due to the rail reserve.
- As described in the UCR, there are a number of approved buildings in the Upper Heidelberg Road Precinct which are 4-5 storeys (approx. 13-16m) high, and one towards the northern end of the precinct which is 8 storeys (approx. 25m). There is also a 6 storey building proposed at 19-33 Upper Heidelberg Road across from the site (see Figure 9 on page 11). This means that proposed building will be slightly to moderately higher than those in close vicinity, which contributes to its status as a landmark building. At the same time, it is comparable in height to the tallest building anticipated for the area, so it would not appear out of context.
- The height of the proposed building will also not appear overly dominant when viewed from further north along Upper Heidelberg Road, where the built forms are more consistent (see Figure 5).

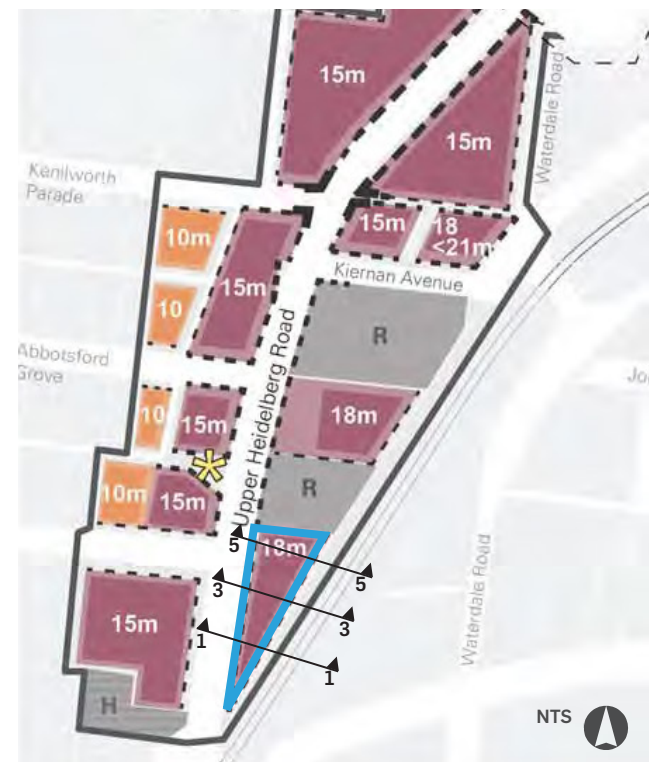


Figure 1 Built form plan (Structure Plan, p. 64)

LEGEND

	Subject site
	Podium - maximum 7.5 metres
 10	Preferred maximum building height - metres
	Podium - maximum 9 metres
 15	Preferred maximum building height - metres
 H	Heritage - limited change anticipated
 R	Recent development - no change anticipated



Figure 2 Elevated ground plane to enable views to surrounding hills



Figure 3 Elevated view of the subject site from the east (Source: Google Earth)



Figure 4 View of the proposed building along Waterdale Road (mostly concealed by trees)



Figure 5 View of proposed building from the north along Upper Heidelberg Road

3.2 USES

The proposed development caters for a variety of uses - primarily residential, but also commercial tenancies and publicly accessible open green space. This mix of uses and their positioning within the development are responsive to the context, relating to both the Upper Heidelberg Road commercial strip and the surrounding suburban context.

RESIDENTIAL

As described in the UCR, there is a growing need for more residential development, especially within Activity Centres, such as the Ivanhoe Activity Centre where the subject site is located. The proposed building will provide 111 new apartments to cater to this need.

COMMERCIAL

Regarding the local commercial context, the UCR observes:

Given that the core activated retail area is to the north, the area surrounding the site will not benefit from the passing pedestrian traffic associated with the Ivanhoe Centre. The ground floor uses within the development need to be considered so that they provide activation while not relying on high pedestrian passing traffic trade.

In response to this, commercial tenancies have been positioned as close as possible to the north. This provides some continuity with the existing commercial strip and offers the best chance of capturing some foot traffic. In this context, it is also appropriate to cater for commercial activity which does not rely on foot traffic and indeed may benefit from some degree of privacy, while still being easily accessible from the street. The commercial space on the eastern side of the proposed building provides this opportunity.

The design of the commercial spaces allows for flexibility and they can cater for a diverse range of tenants. They have generous widths and depths and the structural columns are fairly widely spaced which allow for easy customisation.

PUBLICALLY ACCESSIBLE LANDSCAPED PLAZA

The site is located within a mixed-use precinct and, in this context, the ground plane is under particular pressure to contribute to the activity and experience of the centre. The proposed development utilises the remainder of the ground plane for a publicly accessible landscaped plaza. In addition to this responding to the green context of the site, the plaza invites the public onto the site as an extension to the urban centre and complementary 'open' space. The plaza is designed to provide low lying landscape and seating as a green retreat from the centre and place of respite. It contributes to the wider network of open space within the precinct, providing a high quality, landscaped space for the community to enjoy.

The landscape plaza also works to achieve the outcomes set out within the Structure Plan. The southern edges of the site have been identified for a landscape treatment. Instead of providing this within the setback of the building, it is provided for at the ground plane (see Figure 6).

It is also an objective of the Ivanhoe Structure Plan to investigate opportunities for additional open space in or near the Activity Centre. The proposed design fulfils this vision by providing publicly accessible open green space which occupies approximately 50% of the total site area at ground level.

The ground plane plaza complements the other uses on site, providing passive recreation opportunities for residents, customers and workers. It is the intention that the ground floor tenancies extend out into the plaza, including the café use providing outdoor dining that extends into the plaza.

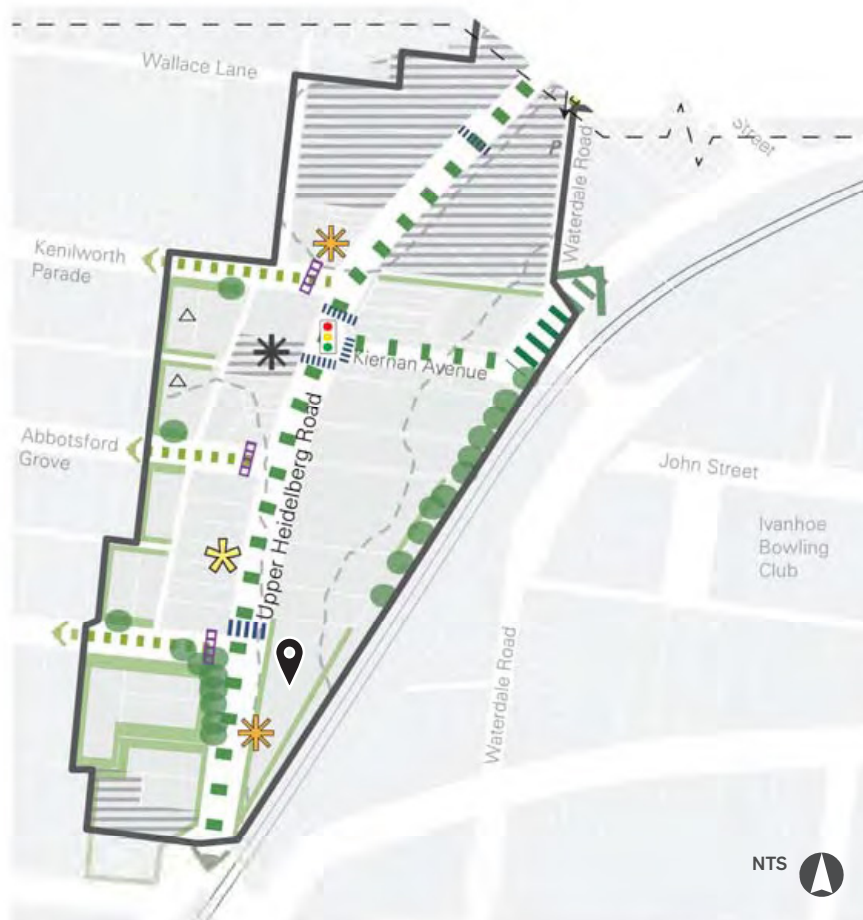
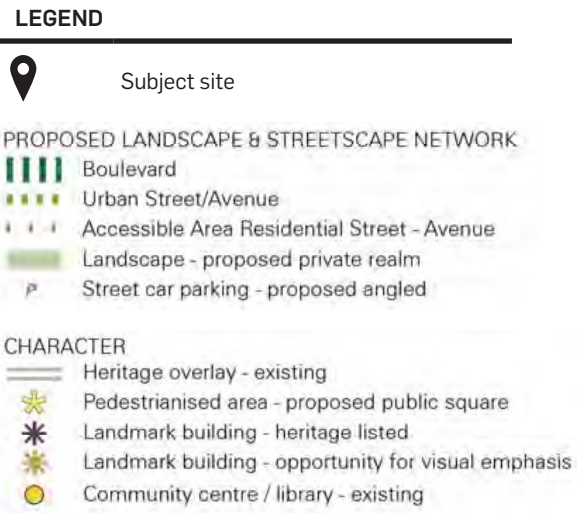


Figure 6 Sense of place & movement plan (Structure Plan, p. 66)



3.3 SETBACKS

The setbacks required by the Planning Scheme create an unworkable floor plate when applied to the subject site, due to its narrow and irregular shape. This is demonstrated in the UCR (p. 14).

The requirement for additional setback distances above a maximum podium height of 9m are particularly problematic because they are based on an assumption that the building will take a conventional 'podium and tower' form. Instead, the proposed building takes on a different form with the intention of creating a distinctive landmark and providing value in a less conventional manner. The 9m podium is less than one level above the proposed ground plane void, so to provide setbacks at this height would make the building appear disproportionate.

The setbacks for the proposed building are highly variable, but some key points to note are:

- Levels 6 and 7 are set back so they appear much less prominent than the core building mass. The distance is generally 3-4.8m on the east and west boundaries, and 2-4.8m on the north boundary. But measured from the southern tip, they are set back 28m.
- The northern interface is largely take up by an atrium void, but the habitable portions of the core building mass are built to the boundary.
- The core building mass generally has no setback along the eastern interface, but the northern corner is recessed up to 4.5m on levels 2 and above. This means that if the adjacent site is developed above 9m with compliant setbacks, the proposed building will be better aligned with it than if the corner was not recessed. It is noted that the rail line is not publically accessible and that the building along this edge would not be perceived from a close distance. The top of the building is softened by the recessive upper two levels.
- The core building mass tapers in as it rises on the western interface, ranging from 0m-2m setback. This helps to streamline the building mass so it does not appear overbearing when viewed from Upper Heidelberg Road.

The setbacks are less than those described in the Planning Scheme. However DD011 allows for reduced setbacks under certain conditions (see Introduction). Other sections of this report describe how the proposed building meets these conditions.

Reduced setbacks for the proposed building are also justified due to the following:

- Setbacks may be desirable because they allow for landscaped open space at ground level. The proposed building provides an extensive landscaped area without the need for setbacks.
- The expanded floorplate allows for atriums. These are valuable to provide additional natural light to the ground level landscape and into the building. They also allow for cross ventilation in the apartments.
- The expanded floorplate allows for inhabited frontages along all sides of the building which face the public realm. If the Planning Scheme setbacks were to be applied, the building's service core would likely need to be located on a frontage facing the public realm which is a less desirable outcome.
- The subject site is situated at a point where the consistent mainstreet urban form begins to fragment, so the proposed building would not interrupt an established rhythm of setbacks or podium heights. The adjacent buildings to the north have very small setbacks, while those opposite have fairly large but highly variable setbacks.

And as noted in the UCR:

The requirement for a traditional main street form is diluted because of the site's location outside of the traditional main street zone.

LEGEND

- Minimum ground level setbacks (Planning Scheme)
- Minimum setbacks above 9m (Planning Scheme)
- Flow with potential future development form adjacent



Figure 7 Proposed building - Level 3 floorplan with setbacks

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0 10 20

3.4 BUILT FORM

LANDMARK AND VIEWS

The Structure Plan identifies the subject site as being an appropriate location for a landmark building. There is a great opportunity for improved wayfinding since it sits at the intersection of multiple paths of movement, at the heart of the broader Ivanhoe Activity Centre, and marks the entry to the Upper Heidelberg Road commercial strip.

The Structure Plan also identifies significant views in this area. Being at a key intersection, the subject site itself is a focal point and is marked out in the Structure Plan as having a sense of arrival. The views eastward from Upper Heidelberg Road out to the ridges at Eaglemont and East Ivanhoe and distantly to the Dandenong Ranges are also identified as valuable.

The proposed building provides a compelling response to these strategic directions. The built form is a distinctive and memorable, while maintaining sensitivity to the finer grain areas.

The unusual pointed shape of the site is emphasised in the built form. It provides a dramatic marker for the intersection and angular form also complements the existing Catholic Church building which sits opposite. Together, they help to frame the entry to the Upper Heidelberg Road Precinct.

The facade features high quality materials (including zinc cladding) and there is a strong sense of rhythm. Visual interest is provided by the variations in material colours and transparency, and the articulation allows for variations in light and shadow throughout the day.

Raising the core building mass to create a plaza space at ground level has a number of benefits, but most significantly it opens up the views to the hills. This principle is reinforced in the detailing, with the structural columns kept narrow and generously spaced, and the fence which is required along the railway interface will be visually permeable.

RESPONSE TO THE FINE GRAIN

The proposed building sits within view of low scale residential areas which are not envisioned to have a high degree of change in the future. Nearby sites on Upper Heidelberg Road are also anticipated to be developed to a lower height. The proposed building strikes a balance between being of a reasonable height to be prominent as a landmark, while complementing the finer grain of the surrounds.

Particularly due to the length of the east and west frontages, there is potential for a building of this height to appear monolithic. However this has been avoided by breaking up the mass through the facade treatments.

The west facade has been segmented into smaller portions through the articulation and using different textures, materials, transparencies to distinguish the portions.

The east facade has a granularity which responds to the low scale residential buildings which sit in the foreground. Its proportions of solid to void (or window) is comparable to those of the nearby buildings and the facade is also broken up into vertical segments through the material selection.

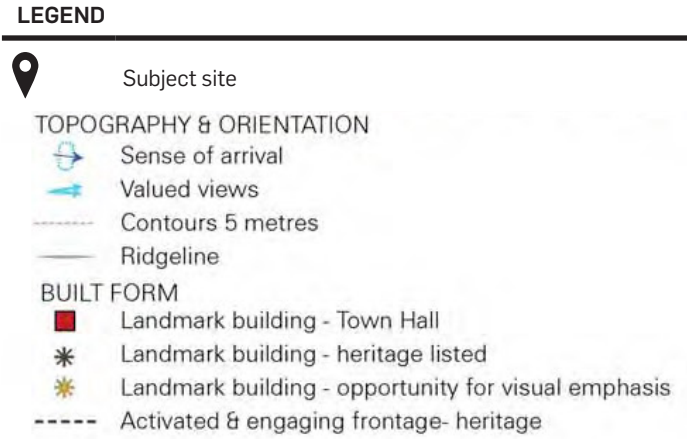
Elevating the core building mass with piers also provides a sense of lightness so overall it does not have the same bulk as a typical building of this height. The two upper floors also do not contribute greatly to the bulk of the building due to their larger setbacks and less solidity in their faades.

These factors address the following DDO11 conditions for reduced setbacks:

- A high quality, architecturally designed outcome...
- Reduction in visual bulk of the building when viewed across the railway line and from Lower Heidelberg Road. A modulated faade to Upper Heidelberg Road that provides interest and relief from visual bulk on lower levels.



Figure 8 Cultural heritage and identity plan (Structure Plan, p. 21)



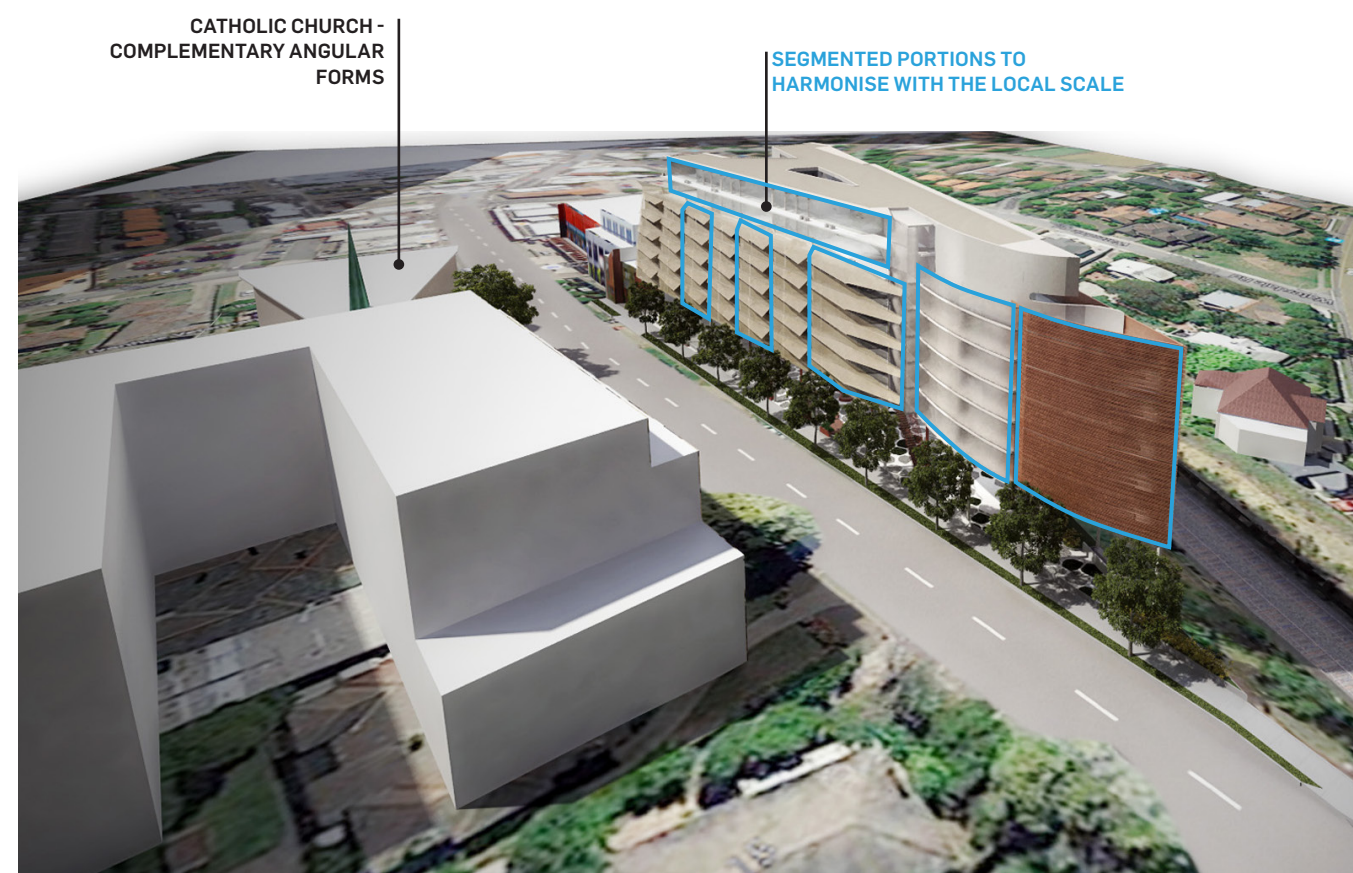


Figure 9 Proposed building view from intersection with Salisbury Avenue - eye-catching landmark which complements the surrounding character



Figure 10 View from Waterdale Road - granularity complements low scale character

3.5 LANDSCAPE

PLAZA LANDSCAPE

As described in earlier sections, elevating the building from the ground plane not only opens up significant views, it also allows around 50% of the site area to be dedicated open green space for public access. This is a well-considered response to context and will make a positive contribution to the public.

There is a lack of public open green spaces (only school ovals) within a five minute walk of the subject site, and the nearest public open spaces within a ten minute walk are large ovals and reserves. Being a smaller-scale open green space, the proposed landscape will therefore fill a gap in the local offering.

The proposed landscape contains a balance of flexible open space which could be utilised by adjacent tenants (e.g. for loose cafe furniture) along with a series of more intimately scaled spaces which cater well to individuals and small groups. This is reflective of the likely users of the space and it is anticipated that the strongest demand would be for informal, passive recreation.

The proposed landscape also features:

- High quality materials
- Shade tolerant plants in a variety of colours and textures
- Plants have a low height so they will not interrupt views through the plaza to the hills
- Integration of artistic elements on the piers
- Multiple meandering routes which create an interesting and unique experience
- Communal seating platforms
- Canopy trees in locations where they will receive some sunlight and will have adequate height for growth (atrium spaces).

STREET TREES

At present the commercial strip of Upper Heidelberg Road lacks large canopy trees, unlike the surrounding residential streets which generally have a green character. The proposed development will expand this surrounding green character, making a strong contribution to the future 'green boulevard' envisioned for Upper Heidelberg Road in the Structure Plan.

Nine new street trees have been proposed within the adjacent nature strip along Upper Heidelberg Road. Additional trees along the eastern boundary of the subject site have not been proposed since permission to plant within the rail reserve has not been granted.

The species of street trees (Pyrus calleryana 'Capital') has been selected to ensure they will not substantially restrict views through the plaza, from Upper Heidelberg Road to the hills. When young, the street trees will have a fairly compact form and at maturity, they will allow for a generous clearance below the canopy.

This landscape approach addresses the following DD011 conditions for reduced setbacks:

- **A high quality, architecturally designed outcome that incorporates the planting of trees...**
- **Landscape character to Upper Heidelberg Road that contributes to a sense of 'boulevard' and reflects the treed settings of those properties opposite the subject site.**

3.6 CPTED & MOVEMENT

The proposed development has a number of CPTED [Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design] features including:

- Planting does not rise above eye level, so viewlines are not interrupted.
- Vertical elements are relatively narrow and do not provide hiding places.
- Passive surveillance provided by the ground tenancies that have large windows and therefore strong visual connections to the outdoor areas.
- Audible passive surveillance through the atrium space to the residential areas above.
- Light poles are provided throughout the landscape to provide illumination at night and improve the sense of safety.

Many of these CPTED features also aid movement and wayfinding through the site. Pedestrian movement has also been prioritised by consolidating vehicle access to a single driveway and providing multiple points of access into the site from the footpath. The main entry point to the building is visible from multiple locations along the footpath and the permeable design offers users multiple routes to reach their destination.

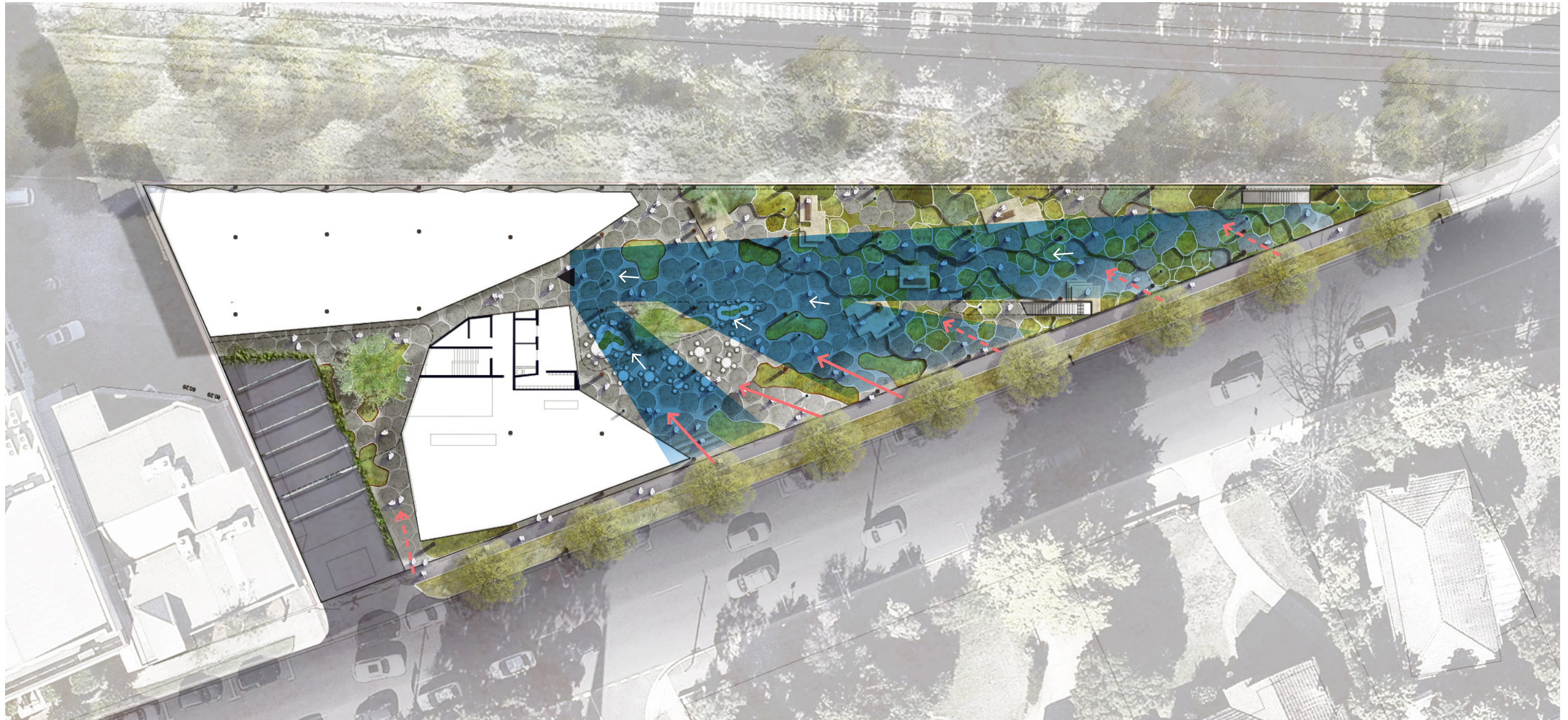






Figure 11 Proposed development - ground floor landscape plan

NTS 

LEGEND

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | Main entry to lobby |  | Main pedestrian access point into the site |
|  | Unobstructed fields of view to the main entry from the footpath |  | Secondary pedestrian access point into the site |

4.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed design offers a quality response to the site, fulfilling the vision for a landmark building. This report establishes the following with regard to the design response:

- **Height:** The increased height of the building allows for the 7.2m clearance at the ground level to provide the publically accessible plaza. Although higher than envisioned in the planning controls, the proposed building height strikes an appropriate balance between supporting its landmark status, while still being contextually appropriate given recent planning approvals. The massing and detailing also help to reduce the perceived height.
- **Uses:** The mix of uses fulfils a growing need for more residential and provides continuity with the commerical strip with flexible commercial spaces at ground level. At the same time it provides green
- **Setbacks:** The setbacks are less than prescribed in the planning controls, however DD011 allows for a reduction given the development is a high quality, landmark building. The reduced setbacks provide considerable benefit, including a workable floor plate, improved natural light access. They do not impact the available area for open green space, nor do they interrupt any established rhythm of adjacent built form. This also helps to work with the awkward shape of the site.
- **Built form:** The built form provides a dramatic and distinctive landmark for a key intersection. Raising the core building mass allows for views to the hills to be maintained and reduces the overall bulk. The design also responds to the finer grain of the surrounding buildings through its articulation, materials and fenestration.
- **Landscape:** Around 50% of the ground floor area is dedicated plaza space. It provides amenity for the public and tenants and fills a local gap in the provision of smaller scale green space. Nine new street trees will contribute to a future green boulevard along Upper Heidelberg Road.
- **CPTED & movement:** The design is made to feel safe and easy to move around by keeping sightlines open, providing passive surveillance, night time lighting, a permeable interface with the footpath and multiple route options.

The proposed design also complies with the urban design principles set out initially by Urbis:

- **Promote the view:** Provide public amenity through an open ground level that provides views through to the hills to the east and ensure that elements at this level do not obstruct the view.
- **Embrace the green context:** Respond to the local green character and adjacent landscape qualities through layers of green landscape that soften the urban hardscape and connect the urban centre with its leafy context.
- **Publically accessible plaza:** Provide a publically accessible plaza / garden space at the ground level to contribute to the green character of Ivanhoe and provide a space for the wider community to enjoy.
- **Activate with commercial tenancies:** Locate commercial tenancies to the north of the site to relate to the established commercial uses along Upper Heidelberg Road. Encourage the café/restaurant and rear tenancy to actively use the plaza space by providing a dedicated outdoor dining area within the space and opportunity to 'spill out' into the space for events etc.
- **Draw people into the site:** Encourage the public and passing pedestrians to enter the site by providing pedestrian pathways through the plaza.
- **Create a landmark:** Emphasise the significance of the subject site as a key decision point for wayfinding and the southern entry to the Upper Heidelberg Road commercial strip.
- **Echo the fine grain:** Respond to the finer grain of the surrounding low scale residential areas by providing articulation and variations in materiality and by breaking up the building into smaller parts.
- **Adopt CPTED principles:** Ensure the publically accessible plaza is safe by adopting CPTED principles and including passive surveillance measures and activation of the ground plane.



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