

**MEMO: Meeting with the Observatory Civic Association
Proposed Old Lion Match Factory (OLMF) Building**

Wednesday 15th July at 10am
Meeting via Zoom.

ATTENDING:

Kirstin McKenzie	Architect – Observatory Civic Association	KM
Marc Turok	Observatory Civic Association	MT
Manfred Dutschke	Observatory Civic Association	MD
Sarah Patterson	Architect – DHK	SP
Claire Abrahamse	Heritage Consultant	CA

NOTES:

CA shared the screen with the report sent to the OCA previously. She outlined the 2006 HIA for the site (to the north of the OLMF).

- In 2006 the heritage practitioner consulted the OCA and City Heritage.
- CA was approach 14 years later to assess the design development to test whether it was substantially in accordance with the previous approval.
- Aim to assess where differences are, and what the impact on heritage might be.
- Two areas of difference are along the Lower Main Road where the HPOZ is, and along the internal street proposed between the new building and the old factory.
- In terms of the internal street, the proposed building is now closer. CA outlined the comparison between the approved and further-developed schemes. She noted that in the previous scheme there were 3 levels of parking (a “parking podium”) at grade. While closer now, it is an activated edge with a double volume colonnade, retail and office, and the design of the colonnade and façade responds directly to the old factory façade in terms of materiality and proportions. The new proposal adhered more closely to the 2006 heritage indicators.
- The second area of deviation is along the Lower Main Road edge. Previously a double storey block along the road edge with pitched roofs was approved. HWC required that this edge be further developed in order to respond to the context. There was no indicator in the report that spoke to height limits along the LMR – the lower height was about responding to the height of the surrounding fabric. The elevations and sections were compared and, although higher, a colonnade is now introduced, and retail is located at ground floor. The taller elements are fragmented. This results in a more positive interface along this edge.
- Overall assessment is that the new proposal is in line with the 2006 HWC approval. CA doesn’t believe there is a strong basis in asking for a new HIA.
- The instruction has been that the development of the scheme must be within the existing land use management approvals.
- It still has to go before HWC, who would call for an HIA if they believe that any new heritage impact was introduced through the developed design.

MT: Has checked the records and there was some evidence of interaction about the building at the early stages, but there does not seem to be any evidence of OCA supporting the application. CA is having to go with what was said in the HIA, and HWC’s records on this matter.

KM read out a comment from another architect in the OCA was unable to join, and who noted that the proposal was unacceptable – will undermine the heritage resources namely the OLMF, Herbert Baker Church, Victorian fabric.

KM agrees that the internal street façade is an improvement on the parking podium, but building doesn't with the heritage resource as intended. Instead it seems to dwarf the old Factory. MD noted that the building looks like an example from a European architectural journal and doesn't speak to the language of the OLMF. It doesn't have any Observatory characteristics.

CA noted that the 3D images are from a "white model", which means materiality is now shown. But the intention is that the colonnade will be brickwork.

SP noted that they had tried not to "Disney-fy" the response, but have instead used datums, alignments and so on to create a conversation between old and new. They have specifically looked to create a building that is responsive but clearly new.

KM noted that the response to datums and alignment is not clear, and that it seems to have missed the mark.

MT sees some merit in the development of the street edge and the urban design. The entire site should be integrated in that formulation. One of the initial problems of the site was the long, solid wall along the edge, which was divisive. The colonnade idea has merit as does the investment in underground parking, which allows this to happen. In the Observatory Policy Plan, it says that new development in this area needs to respond sensitively to the surrounding fabric. This has been referred to, but it hasn't been achieved yet. Excessive bulk and the character not being in line means that the proposal does not add to the area and the street.

We're not finding the concept of there being a development a problem, but we would like to see it being a success that contributes to the area.

MK really appreciates the verticality of the building. So often the schemes are horizontal, and this is foreign to the Victorian and Edwardian architecture of the area.

MT noted that with reference to the urban design aspects, and the refinement along the street edge, there hasn't been enough focus on the actual character of the area. OCA and HWC specialists must contribute to this process for a positive outcome.

CA noted that her assessment has been focused on the previous approval and how the scheme differs from the previous scheme. But Sarah and her team have been looking at the scheme holistically. SP clarified that the client has existing rights, and the land parcel is huge compared to other properties in Observatory, and the design has had to mediate between the new towers, large masses and semi-industrial scale at the back of the site, finer grain fabric in the front. DHK took the mass and tried to break it down with a lot of verticality, to try and create the idea that there is a ground plane of the building that responds to the streetscape and street experience, not mimicking it but taking cues from it, and the piece on the top is distinctive and sets back from the base. The employment of colonnades and vertical breaks through the mass adds to this. The iron colonnade is more filigree. DHK have tried to look at the essential elements and how to integrate and respond to them: for instance the street corners are always active, there are multiple entry points, and there are overlooking features onto the street to animate that ground level. The scheme integrates all these aspects.

KM notes that a major problem in the City is that zoning rights do not speak to the HPOZs at all.

CA pointed out that they do have heritage and land use management approvals. MD wanted clarity that the approvals are still valid.

KM: the revised proposal creates a better building than the previous approval, even if it needs refinement.

SP described some of the architectural refinements that had been made, noted the precedent and that there was a landscape plan for the whole site.

MT noted the width of the pavement under the proposed colonnade should extend all the way across where the 109 surface parking bays are indicated. This would be one way of integrating the scheme into Observatory more positively. Concern that the building has a greater floor area that what this area could feasibly "hold".

KM noted streetscape sections would be useful for OCA to assess.

MT believes that while the building has merit, it is not "on point" at the moment and there are some serious concerns with it. What can be done to integrate the building better into this special, unique environment? If you are pressurized by returns etc., then you will be limited in this. But we as OCA aren't happy with it, and there should be questions about how this building impacts on this heritage area, and next to a building Graded IIIA. It feels like a problem, and we would like to help. Overall it has not yet succeeded. Maybe there is room for some adaption that will make it work. Appreciate the merits of breaking it up into portions, verticality, but it is the building in its context which is where the problem is, as well as the language of some of the façade which is not integrating and not creating the character sufficiently. I would like to see some possibility for us to make some contributions to make it a success and get the community to accept it, but we would need to see some changes to make it succeed.

CA noted that it would be useful to get something more specific from OCA to understand how they view this particular area.

OUTCOMES: CA and SP will get the following information to the OCA -

- The elevations in context to understand how the proposed building scales to the context and interacts with its neighbours;
- 3D views of the building in context with the surrounding fabric integrated and with focus on the experience from the street;
- HWC specialists input as OCA don't feel comfortable in relying on an interaction that happened a long time ago;
- 2006 OCA comment and status of approval clarified;
- Another engagement like this.

This is to be delivered in time for another engagement in 2 weeks' time.