



Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry
into the
Public Housing Renewal Program

City of Stonnington
October 2017

26 October 2017

Ms Margaret Fitzherbert
Committee Chair
Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Mr Fitzherbert

City of Stonnington Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program

Thank you for the opportunity for City of Stonnington to make a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program (PHRP).

This submission has been prepared in a manner that is consistent with Council's existing policy position and resolution, and proactively addresses the City's strategic priority to advocate to government to fundamentally improve public housing infrastructure, quality and amenity to help our most vulnerable residents.

In December 2016, Council welcomed the Victorian Government announcement to increase the state's public housing stock by launching the \$185 million Public Housing Renewal Program (PHRP) to redevelop public housing sites across Melbourne. Despite the demand for public housing, Council understands that the Bangs Street redevelopment in Stonnington will only deliver a 10 per cent increase in public housing stock, a significantly limited housing choice and from our experience, poor liveability outcomes.

It is unfathomable that the Victorian Government can designate Stonnington housing estates as critically valuable sites that warrant accelerated public housing upgrades. Yet, on the other hand, fail to recognise their strategic importance to meet the immediate (and growing) demand for public housing and their proximity to employment centres, services and transport. The PHRP for existing sites presents a "once in a generation" opportunity to deliver a legacy of high-quality housing opportunities for vulnerable people in the setting of well-established communities.

The City and our community will bear the after-effects of the government's and its department's deliberate disregard to gazetted planning policy. Based on our experience with the Surrey/Malvern Roads public housing development catastrophe, Council has little faith that the Victorian Government and its departments can deliver quality public housing that contributes to individual housing needs or to broader community liveability outcomes.

Council calls on the government to fundamentally rethink the PHRP and immediately put the Bangs Street (Prahran) redevelopment on hold to firstly resolve the City of Stonnington's concerns and secondly, consider the Parliamentary Inquiry findings.

To summarise Council's key submission points:

1. Opportunities at existing sites must be maximised to meet the growing housing crisis demand and to cater for a wider range of housing options close to jobs, transport and services.
2. The purported 10 per cent increase in public housing stock and significantly limited housing choice is entirely inadequate to meet the growing housing crisis close to jobs, transport and services;
3. It is improper and a conflict of interest that the Minister for Planning makes himself the responsible authority for the site and removes any third party rights to object or appeal. This process excludes Council and the community from the normal transparent planning process.
4. It is imperative that the PHRP integrates and is consistent with the *City of Stonnington Planning Scheme* and gazetted Chapel reVision, including respecting existing context, neighbourhood character and public realm, providing adequate internal amenity, and managing off-site amenity impacts, pedestrian connectivity and access to open space.
5. Redevelopments must achieve quality public realm and urban design outcomes that are respectful of neighbourhood character.
6. Where private stock is incorporated, integration of public and private dwellings is essential to reduce marginalisation of those living in public dwellings.

The submission elaborates on these key points. Please contact Mr Stuart Draffin, General Manager Planning & Amenity on [REDACTED] if you require any clarification.

Yours sincerely



Cr Jami Klisaris, GAICD

*Mayor of the City of Stonnington
Councillor for East Ward*

Background

Council acknowledges that Victoria is facing a housing crisis with more than 33,000 Victorians currently on the public housing waiting list.

In December 2016, Council welcomed the Victorian Government announcement to increase the state's public housing stock by launching the \$185 million Public Housing Renewal Program (PHRP) to redevelop public housing sites across Melbourne. The PHRP was seen to grow and sustain the supply of public housing and improve the quality and suitability of homes in public housing estates. The renewal program involves partnerships with the private sector to achieve a mix of public and private dwellings and will involve significant intensification of the estates.

In Stonnington, Bangs Street (Prahran) will be the first to be developed. Bangs Street, built in the 1970's, occupies 1.33Ha and has 120 public housing dwellings (40 one-bedroom and 80 three-bedroom dwellings).

Council understands that the proposed PHRP development in Stonnington will deliver approximately 482-682 mixed public and private dwellings. For public housing, 59 one-bedroom and 61 two-bedroom and 12 three-bedroom dwellings will be provided. It is suggested that the site will only deliver 12 new public housing dwellings, meeting the target 10 per cent uplift. In actual fact, the 10 per cent increase is not real in absolute terms and uses 'creative accounting'; the department has claimed housing credit' from the recent redevelopment disaster on the corner of Surrey and Malvern Roads some years ago.

Furthermore, the overall number of persons accommodated in public housing could potentially be reduced due to the loss of three-bedroom, family-sized dwellings (conservatively up to 63 people). Approximately 350-450 private dwellings are proposed. Public housing will only form 29 per cent of the total housing mix.

Dwellings	Before	After	Net change
1 Bedroom	40	59	19
2 bedroom	0	61	61
3 bedroom	80	12	-68
Public Housing Total	120	132	12
Private Housing Total	0	350-450	350-450

Stonnington Community Context

While the City of Stonnington residents generally enjoy a high level of health and wellbeing compared to the rest of Victoria, the City has pockets of significant disadvantage. The municipality has a unique demographic make-up, with many people living at the very lowest end of the socio-economic scale and many at the highest end of the scale. This brings specific challenges for housing affordability, inclusion and participation.

In the City, 40.8% of our residents rent privately, 3.0% live in social housing and 46% are purchasing or fully own their home. The City has a significantly higher rental population compared to greater Melbourne, 25.8% private and 2.6% social respectively. Given the cost of land acquisition and rate of population growth, housing affordability in Stonnington will continue to decline.

Estate populations are substantially different to the surrounding community, in terms of household composition, age structure, and socioeconomic status. More specifically, Prahran has the greatest concentration of households at the 'low income end' and combined with other complex social and community influences, is recognised as a substantial disadvantaged community in an affluent area (reflected by a significantly low Socio Economic (SEIFA) index). The four existing estates in Prahran score 535, 595, 659 and 832 on the index, situating them in lowest 0.3% to 4.5% of all Victorian small areas (SA1s) compared to 1084 Stonnington SEIFA.

Furthermore, our recently adopted Health Plan highlights:

- <1% of dwellings are affordable to Centrelink recipients
- 10.3% of young people aged 20 to 24 receive youth allowance
- 3,800 dwellings receive rent assistance

Many residents value their home and have a strong connection to their local neighbourhood and community. However, the estates are also subject to substantial place stigma contributed to by poor quality housing and infrastructure, weak social environments, and elevated levels of antisocial behaviour and crime.

The government's own social impact report for the Prahran masterplan¹ found that estate residents were less likely to rate their neighbourhood as a good place to live, when compared with the neighbouring community. Residents suggested that they are stereotyped and alienated by the broader community. The report states '*There is a reputation and stigma associated with living at the estates that weighs heavily on some residents. Students are also exposed to this and are called 'flat rats' by their peers*'.

Neighbouring residents describe the estates as 'ugly, dated and dirty and an eyesore lacking a strong sense of place'. However, there is not complete despondency, with locals and residents seeing potential to better the estates through colour and improved amenities to make it 'more attractive and less gloomy'. A member of the surrounding community stated: '*Turn the estates into a modern looking facility which fits with the surrounding houses and services. Make it look presentable and I believe this will make community members accept it and the people there more*'.

Our concerns

Council puts to the Committee the following:

1. Council calls on the government to fundamentally rethink the PHRP and to put the Bangs Street redevelopment on hold pending the resolution of our concerns and findings of the Parliamentary Inquiry.
2. Net community benefit should be the driving principle of the PHRP. We want these sites to be a place of pride for the current and future community.
3. The purported 10 per cent increase in public housing is entirely inadequate to meet the growing housing crisis close to jobs, transport and services.
4. Existing public housing land should be maximised to create additional public housing stock. As inner city land becomes scarcer, the PHRP presents a "once in a generation" opportunity to deliver a

¹ http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/907955/Social-Impact-Assessment-Baseline-Report-May-2014.pdf

legacy of high-quality housing opportunities for vulnerable people that integrates with the setting of well-established communities. This plan is 'privatisation by stealth.'

5. The PHRP dwelling configuration will mean that fewer people will have access to public housing accommodation.
6. PHRP sites should cater for all demographics, not just singles, so that families have an opportunity to access jobs and services.
7. Where private stock is incorporated, integration of public and private dwellings is essential to reduce marginalisation and stigmatisation of those living in public dwellings. Housing design must not differentiate public housing from other forms of ownership.
8. The City is a known leader in planning for change and has significantly advanced a comprehensive land use and strategic planning policy agenda to plan for areas around place and activity, including residential growth areas and activity centres. Chapel reVision recognised the important role of housing, and the need to increase dwelling diversity and affordability to support the needs of a diverse population. However, there is significant difference between Council's adopted Chapel reVision and the preliminary plans for Bangs Street, most notably inconsistencies on public realm and amenity, pedestrian connectivity and access to open space provisions;
9. It is a concern that the proposed controls seek to exempt significantly larger buildings from needing a planning permit. It is improper and a conflict of interest that the Minister for Planning makes himself the responsible authority for the site and removes any third party rights to object or appeal. This process excludes Council and the community from the normal, transparent planning process.
10. In the absence of needing a planning permit, it is not clear what development controls will apply to these buildings and this is a significant concern from a number of perspectives – including integration into the existing context and respecting the neighbourhood character, providing adequate internal amenity, as well as managing any off-site amenity impacts;
11. Redevelopments should achieve quality public realm and urban design outcomes that are respectful of neighbourhood character. The PHRP must redress and reintegrate the estate with neighbouring areas. Road, bike, open space and pedestrian networks need to be connected to promote the health, wellbeing and quality of life for existing and future residents;
12. Redevelopments should not result in the loss of public land;
13. Redevelopments should not limit the potential opportunity for future public housing;
14. Engagement with local government is essential to achieve strategic city shaping / place making opportunities;
15. PHRP must take into consideration future community support needs and integrate long-term support services and facilities into the developments;
16. The timing of works to be undertaken as part of the redevelopment should be scheduled to minimise disruption to public housing residents; and
17. If, into the future, the Department of Health and Human Services expects Council to enter into an MOU to provide surplus land for the creation of public housing, the request will be in conflict with the Council's priority to create open space, as expressed in the Council Plan 2017-21 and Strategies for Creating Open Space.

In addition, Council further resolved that the PHRP must:

18. Replace all old and outdated public housing dwellings, including the Y buildings on the Horace Petty Estate, which have poor internal amenity and contribute to the stigmatisation of residents;
19. Not limit the potential for future public housing development through the privatisation of public land;
20. Provide tangible and quantifiable benefits to public housing tenants;
21. Detail how it will provide for 'affordable' housing in the precinct and how this will be managed and retained in perpetuity;
22. Be consistent with all local planning policy, in particular Chapel reVision, to avoid excessive heights and to achieve urban design outcomes that are respectful of neighbourhood character;
23. Avoid the removal of significant trees to achieve a quality public realm;
24. Be developed in partnership with the local community through genuine consultation;
25. Clarify who will be responsible for building, funding and maintaining all infrastructure associated with the renewal including the public road network and open space;
26. Account for how the substantial funds generated from the sale of private dwellings will be used;
27. Provide adequate on-site parking for public housing residents and avoid detrimental impacts such as overshadowing;
28. Retain valued existing community infrastructure such as the Adventure Playground at the Horace Petty Estate;
29. Proactively provide additional infrastructure to support an increase in population, such as improved public transport, education facilities and public open space.
30. Ensure that any new buildings are constructed of higher quality materials than those used on the most recent development on the corner of Surrey and Malvern Roads.