

Fitzroy Gasworks Project – Summary of community feedback, Phase 1

July 2016

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Background and engagement process

Places Victoria is the Victorian Government's property development agency. We revitalise government land to make a responsible profit to support government policy.

Places Victoria is investigating the potential renewal of the former gasworks site at 433 Smith Street, Fitzroy North, and must consider renewal opportunities that achieve a balanced commercial outcome, due to the significant cost involved in remediating the site. There are some development aspects that are not negotiable, including residential, commercial and open space use.

Phase One of the project's consultation process involved engaging with stakeholders and the community to understand what people value in the Fitzroy North area and how the project could align with community values. It also involved feasibility and technical studies including on:

- Traffic and transport
- Soils and contamination
- Heritage and streetscape

With input from the community, we investigated opportunities such as the potential to include new community facilities, viable building design details, and open space design details. The City of Yarra Council's *Fitzroy North Gasworks Precinct Urban Design Framework* (2008) (UDF) is also being used to guide the strategic direction of any urban renewal on site.

Table 1 – Overview of the project's engagement process

PROJECT PHASE	ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES	ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
Phase 1 Towards Master Plan development May to June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish new and build on existing relationships with local communities and stakeholders • Ensure understanding and satisfaction with the consultation process • Inform community and stakeholders about the project, opportunities to be involved • Identify opportunities to be realised and/or potential impacts to be addressed • Seek community and stakeholder feedback, potentially identifying any additional project impacts and views of affected and interested stakeholders and community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop to residents / property owners • 4 fact sheets, 12 points of display/deposit including at local libraries, community centres and shops • 2 Community Information Sessions in North Fitzroy • Online engagement including Facebook page • Survey (online/hard copy) • Community Reference Group established • Interviews with key stakeholders/local groups • 11 local pop-up sessions including at farmers' markets, and local shops in Fitzroy, North Fitzroy and Clifton Hill • Presentations with various interest groups
↓		
Phase 2 Preparation and Exhibition of draft Master Plan August – December 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate how feedback received during Phase 1 has been considered • Continue engagement with communities and stakeholders to inform the final proposal, approvals and project delivery • Build relationships and trust with communities and stakeholders • Achieve positive feedback on the process 	Display Draft Masterplan through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letterbox drop to residents / property owners • Community information sessions • Online engagement • Community Reference Group meetings (bi-monthly) • Pop-up sessions at local venues • Council briefings
↓		
Phase 3 Statutory consultation on the development	The Final Draft Master Plan will be publicly exhibited and Places Victoria will seek a planning scheme amendment. Receive submissions on the planning scheme amendment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information sessions • Pop-up sessions at local venues • Council briefings
↓		
Phase 4 Remediation works	Inform the community and stakeholders about remediation works and mitigation	Remediation engagement activities will be confirmed through Phases 1-3

What we've heard so far (Phase 1)

The consultation activities undertaken during Phase 1 encouraged feedback in various forms:

- around 2,500 comments were received from stakeholders and community members
- 65 stakeholders attended two community information sessions, making around 600 comments
- over 90 surveys responses were received, mostly through online engagement
- around 1,600 online visits, over 130 facebook posts and 170 people registered for updates
- interviews were held with various residents associations, traders, artists and community services including the 3068 group, Fitzroy Residents Association and a series of City of Yarra advisory groups
- a Community Reference Group was established with 18 members, including 10 from Yarra Advisory Groups

There was strong support for the project's consultation process as well as for the UDF Objectives and Principles. The strongest aspects of agreement related to:

- improving pedestrian and bicycle connections to support and integrate activity with the surrounding area
- using tram services on Smith Street and activating street frontages along Smith Street
- accommodating community facilities to meet the needs of the wider area
- accommodating new community facilities on site
- creating new internal open space
- improving permeability through the site
- maintaining preferred and maximum heights on all frontages as per the UDF.

Some of the key points made throughout the Phase 1 consultation included:

- the desire for an indoor sports facility was identified by many community members and stakeholders
- differing opinions on preferred building heights and density
- many comments that more social or affordable housing is needed
- the importance of site permeability and enhanced access, particularly for cycles and pedestrians
- a desire for local values to be reflected in the mix of uses on site, including community facilities, artistic or creative spaces, and areas for members of the community to come together to create.

Emerging themes

Table 2 – Emerging themes from Phase 1 engagement activities

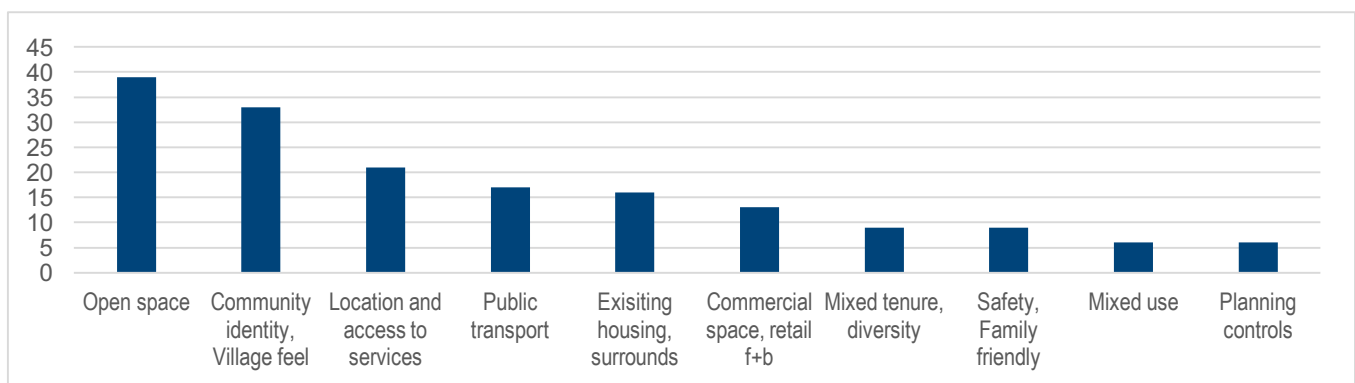
HIGH LEVEL	SPECIFIC THEMES	
Built form, housing and land use mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • affordable and social housing • architecture and design • height, density, scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management / maintenance of new buildings • mixed tenure, diversity • mixed land use, alternative uses
Community facilities and amenity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aged care • commercial space: retail, food and beverage • community identity, 'village feel' • education and child care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • library, community drop in centre etc. • galleries, studio and other artistic spaces • location and access to services • medical and associated facilities • safety, family friendly neighbourhood
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community garden • remediation concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainable design • trees
Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • construction materials • existing housing, surrounds • indigenous history 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local history • public art (including Smith Street mural) • streetscape
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • engagement activities • funding model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning controls, impact of other projects • Places Victoria role
Recreation and open space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indoor sporting facility • open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • playgrounds • skate parks
Transport and permeability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to freeways, general traffic • car parking • cycling facilities and access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public transport • site access and egress • walkability

What do people value about the North Fitzroy area?

Feedback from the North Fitzroy and surrounding area is that community facilities and amenity aspects are the most highly valued aspects of living in the area, followed by recreation and open space resources and transport options. Looking in more detail, a large number of comments identified open space as the most valued quality of the local area, recognising Edinburgh Gardens and other local parks as being extremely important.

Community identity and atmosphere was identified by many as being an important quality of the local area, identifying a sense of connectedness, diversity, involvement and belonging as unique to the local area. The inner urban location was also clearly identified as an important quality of the area, often in reference to access to services, shopping, recreation spaces, employment and the Melbourne CBD. Easy access to a variety of public transport services also emerged as a strong value for respondents.

Figure 1 – Neighbourhood values



(Source: Online Survey)

What community facilities were identified?

Participants in the online survey were asked to consider what community facilities the area might be missing. A large majority of comments (over 25) identified an indoor sports facility as a being required, often in reference to the Collingwood Basketball Club. Others mentioned library/community centres, open space, galleries/studios and other artistic spaces, playgrounds, and community gardens.

Past experiences of the site and surrounds

There were few positive comments for the site in its current state. Many described the site as an 'eyesore', inaccessible and industrial. Several recognised the importance of the Women's Mural, and noted the recent vandalism of this artwork. Others noted the significance of heritage buildings on site in particular the pump house on the corner of Alexander Parade and George Street. Many expressed optimism regarding potential site redevelopment. The following comment reflects broader sentiment of the feedback received:

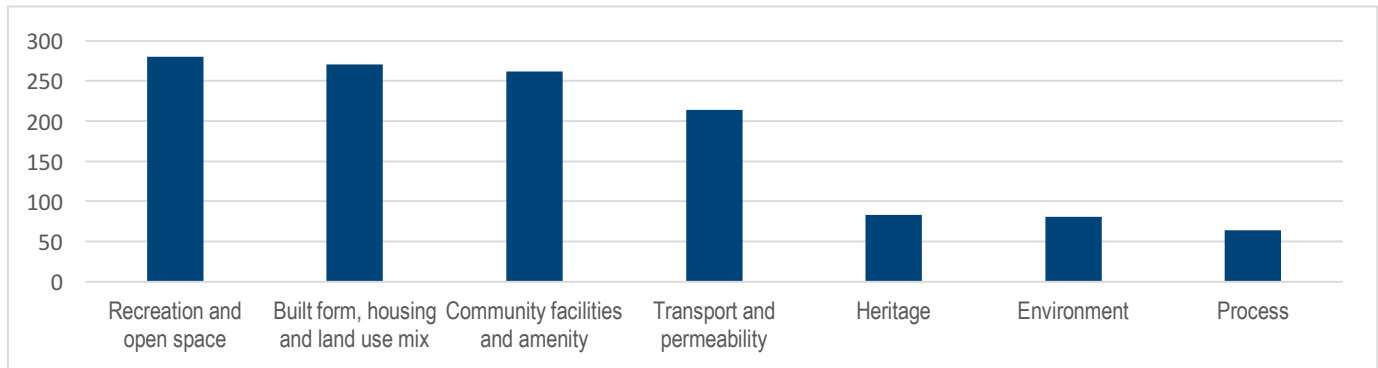
"I have never entered into the area and until now, didn't have an understanding of what was located there. It is not open and welcoming, but closed off with high brick walls and fences, and a heavy industrial feel."

When asked about site permeability and access, several important issues emerged:

- Site access and egress is a significant issue for many, both pedestrian and vehicle access around the site
- There were many suggestions for additional and improved pedestrian crossings in the area,
- There was a lot of support for improvements to bicycle infrastructure in the area
- There were several comments both in favour and against a bike path through the centre of the site, with some consensus that pedestrians and cyclists should be separated where possible
- There was general agreement with the UDF that Queens Parade would provide the best vehicular access
- Public transport connections, and Smith Street as the preferred transfer point to tram services
- Opportunity to use remediation works to provide underground car parking. Several commented on the parking requirements created by an indoor sports facility, the need to provide parking for residents, commercial and other users.

Key themes

Figure 2 – High level themes emerging



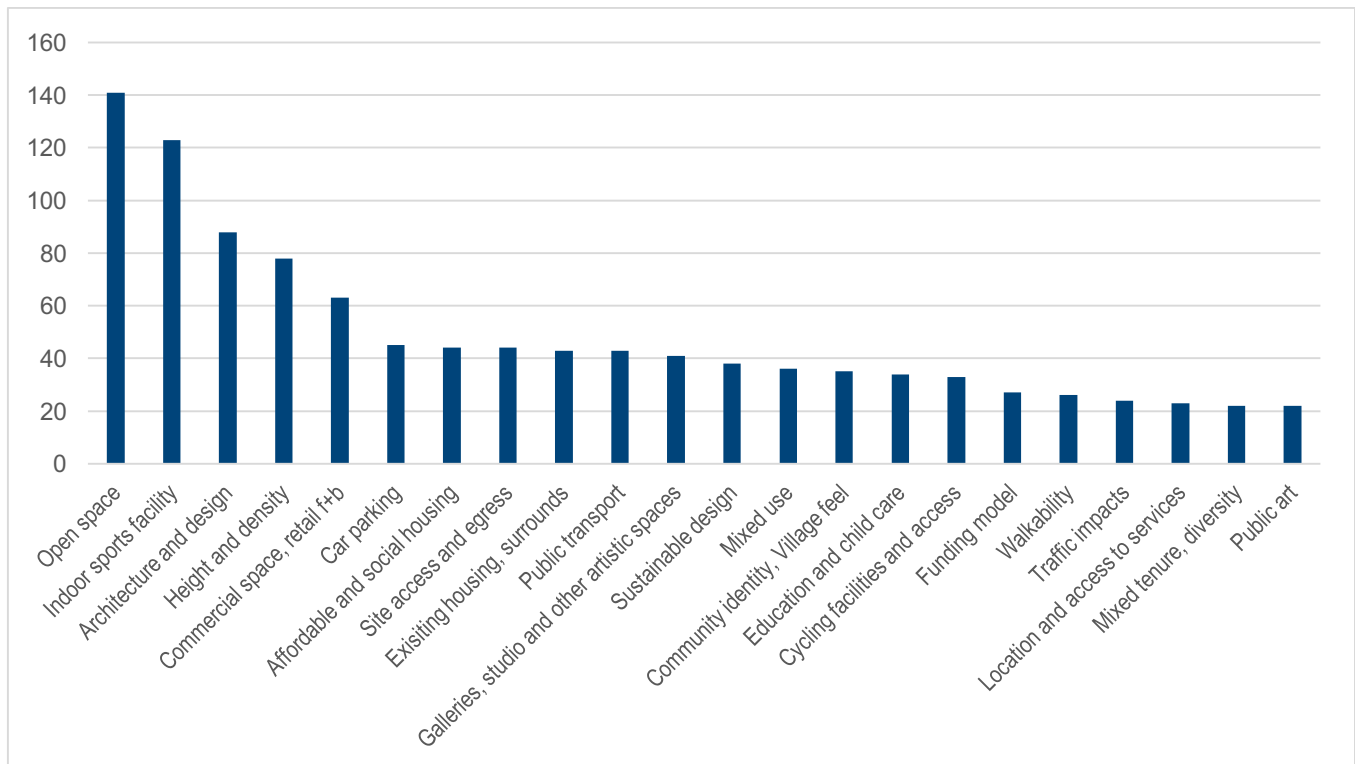
(Source: Collated engagement outcomes: All sources)

Overall key issues and themes emerging related to recreation and open space; built form, housing and land use mix; and community facilities and amenity. Transport is a key factor to be considered in any renewal and redevelopment of the site. The key aspects which concern people with the future of the site include:

1. Recreation and open space – open space, indoor sports facility
2. Built form, housing and land use mix – architecture and design, height and density, affordable and social housing, sustainable design, mixed use
3. Community facilities and amenity – galleries, studio and other artistic spaces
4. Transport and permeability – car parking, site access and egress, public transport
5. Heritage – existing formal and informal heritage aspects and reflecting the historical use of the site
6. Environment – environmentally sustainable design principles, green open space
7. Process – Planning and development and community engagement processes

More insight into the specific themes emerging through all engagement activities in Phase 1 is set out in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Specific themes emerging



(Source: Collated engagement outcomes: All sources)

Master planning – things to consider & next steps

Things to consider

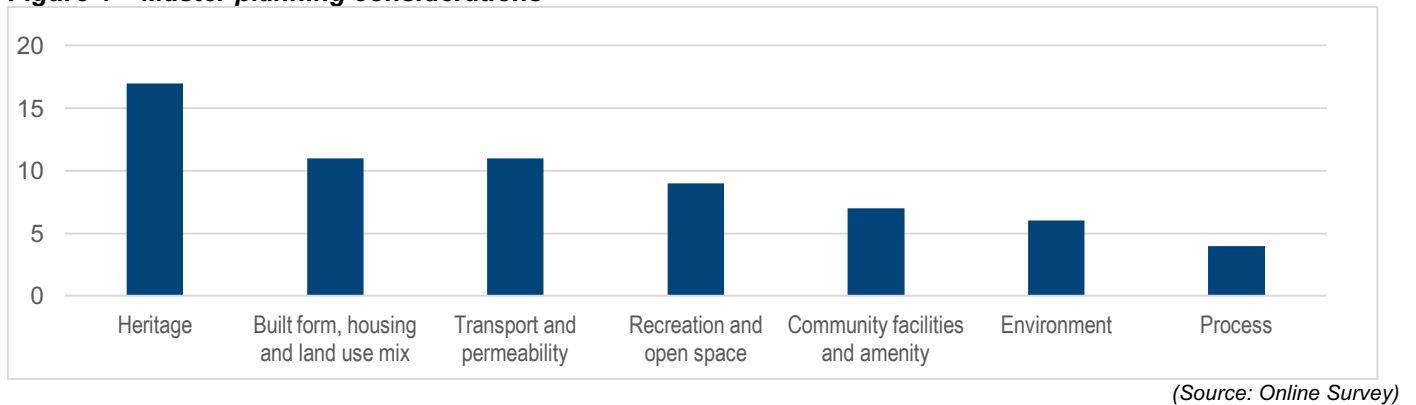
When asked to broadly reflect on considerations that should be made throughout the master planning process, top themes related to heritage, built form including housing and land use mix, transport and permeability. Typical comments on the site opportunity are captured by the following comments made:

“The site has tremendous potential as an inclusive space for the community.”

“I think that this site [is of] such a size that to some extent it can stand on its own relating to but not needing to copy or mimic the surrounding areas. It is an island site [of] significant size. I think the opportunity is to create a new semi-self-contained neighbourhood with its own character perhaps determined in part by the relatively high density proposed.”

“I believe it to be an eyesore in the neighbourhood currently, and an under-utilised expanse of land, in a council area with limited space. It is a rare opportunity to be able to make this space available for community use, for potentially huge numbers of local residents.”

Figure 4 – Master planning considerations



The project’s engagement process was generally received positively:

“It is good to see the community at work to achieve the best outcome for this site that will benefit the local community as well as wider Melbourne area”

“This is a great opportunity for Places Victoria to do something of real excellence in the inner suburbs”

Next steps



Phase 1 activities including the range of technical studies and feasibility assessments will be utilised to inform Places Victoria Board and investment committee, and for several briefings of City of Yarra Council Staff and Councillors. The outcome of these meetings (in July and early August) is helping to confirm the timing of next steps and Phase 2 engagement activities.

Attachment 1 – Key themes and community views

1. Recreation and Open Space

Over 140 comments stated a preference for additional open space to be incorporated into any development. Several comments noted the popularity of nearby Edinburgh Gardens, and suggested it may near capacity on popular sunny days. Recommendations for fine grain laneways and paths, as well as communal areas to promote interactions were common suggestions.

Various comments referenced an indoor sports facility, with the majority firmly calling for a basketball / multi-use facility to be included as part of the redevelopment, though there were some comments which objected to such a facility, suggesting it be put elsewhere.

2. Built form, housing and land use mix

Quality architecture and design

There was a great amount of optimism regarding the huge potential this project presents. Various comments referred to the need for high quality architecture and design. Several people identified the need to integrate any development into the surrounding area, including suggestions to use traditional materials including brick and stone. There was extensive support for impressive and bold architecture, and requests that a creative approach be undertaken for the precinct as a whole.

“There needs to be a major injection of innovation and creativity used to determine how to use this land. It is such an unusual opportunity given its size and location. The focus needs to be way broader than housing and recreation (this is too dull) and provides government with an opportunity to capitalise and further cement Melbourne as an arts and cultural leader and innovator.”

“Design hub - showcasing design excellence”

Concerns were raised regarding the size and diversity of housing choices. This included suggestions that there were not many good examples of a precinct precedent in Melbourne, and that the design should seek inspiration internationally.

There was criticism of “shoe-box apartments”, and calls for bold and innovative design in and development. Some expressed criticism of some new developments where there is no mixed community of social housing and other – when they’re separate, they don’t meet, which is not good for social cohesion.

“Innovative design - create a progressive environment”

“While restoration is not necessarily an option, a space/place/dedicated commitment to honouring the original intention of the mural which was to highlight the diversity and day-to-day of inner northern Melbourne”

“integration of remediation design and development design”

“Need careful consideration of existing neighbourhoods - design scale, feel, blending of factors”

“It would be a shame to build ugly cookie cutter apartments. It is an opportunity for innovative sustainable building design for housing of mixed prices combined with open space with reduced car use and some community facilities. Whilst some height is ok it should be consistent with the local area.”

Comments related to sustainable design included suggestions to incorporate green walls into building designs, use sustainable materials and include solar panels wherever possible, to reflect “serious sustainability”. There were several comments calling for a holistic approach to sustainable design across the precinct:

“How might we build a truly best practice sustainable precinct specific to local issues”

Height and density

Comments relating to height and density were frequent, however these varied significantly. There were several critical of any high density development, whilst others were in favour of increased density. Height suggestions ranged from 3 to 20 storeys, with a majority of suggestions falling in the range of 5-7 storeys. Some expressed concern that city views may be obstructed by a future development. Increased density was often linked to concerns of impacts on local traffic, parking and public transport.

“Residential essential, medium density encouraged. I enjoy living in the area and would enjoy others having the same opportunity.”

“Definitely not high density, shoe-box apartments”

“Medium to High density apartments as part of a mixed use development: increasing person density leads to increased service”

“I think the heights proposed in the UDF are at the upper limits what is appropriate and that whilst it's an island site there must be an appropriate relationship of height and well as 'style' to the surrounding areas.”

“I do not accept the concern that others expressed about some magic number of apartments or population being too great. I think the key driver must be getting the heights of the buildings right. I don't think that the visual plane argument is right because I suspect that the site might best be developed as an inward looking at the open space is obviously inside not on the outside edges. Therefore it may be that the higher buildings are on the outer edges of the buildings deeper in and closer to the open space may be lower.”

Heritage

Respondents comments indicated that heritage considerations should include the interface with existing housing stock, to ensure any development is done tastefully and retain the character of the area.

“Any development should reflect the surrounding community, as a quiet and historic enclave full of residents who value highly the character of the area.”

“Key is integration; old form and new blended”

The local history of the area should be incorporated into any development, including some reference to the previous use as a gas and fuel site.

“The site of one of Melbourne's earliest and largest gasometers should be remembered in some form.”

Additionally, several people commented on the need to incorporate public art into any development, particular with reference to street art, feminism and the Women's Mural.

“The use of public art, colourful murals and street art and designated graffiti areas would enrich the community.”

Housing and land use mix

Comments here related to some concern for increased density, and the need to maintain the character of the area. There were also comments relating to the need for affordable and social housing.

“I think any development should not try to be everything. I think the aspiration for housing at the same time as recreation facilities is a little conflicted with lots of traffic to the facility if it is worthwhile.”

“The precinct is already being surrounded by medium density apartments (Queens Parade North, Brunswick Street north, Smith Street) but this is an opportunity to provide a completely mixed-use precinct with architectural excellence, true community usage and varied housing/business use.”

“The development of this site has been avoided by both local and State government for years and years. Local children and youth have no municipal indoor sporting area and I would see this as a prime objective. There is enough space for well landscaped housing but retail should be restricted to Smith St and other

surrounding streets that are underutilised. The City of Yarra has lots of open space so this should not be a priority.”

“There needs to be so much more to the site that just residential development alone. Apart from the dearth of cheap housing that is changing the fabric of the area - services to those developments are lacking and need to be considered.”

“Maintaining the existing mature trees and other plants of the site is critical.”

“Maximum people, minimum cars.”

“Apartment development has gone ahead without adequate planning and has placed enormous strain on the communities existing facilities. A levy should be placed upon apartment development to fund the gasworks site as a community facility in order to service the increased population”

“Create an extension of the existing community rather than an island of it's own”

Social and affordable housing

Many comments related to the inclusion of either social or affordable housing, or a combination of the two. Many comments made reference to the high level of amenity in the area, and suggested the opportunity to reside be extended to those less fortunate. Other comments referenced the opportunity for greater social cohesion that social housing may invoke.

“I'd like to see this couple with a significant proportion of the housing component being reserved for affordable or ideally public housing. The area is already unaffordable for all but the most wealthy in our society and a private development is doing nothing to address this.”

“I think there should be a focus on community housing given the shortage and the desirability of the area.”

Commercial space including retail, food and beverage

This theme included a wide variety of comments relating to the future land use of the site. Several comments made reference to markets and spaces for social interaction and encounter. Others suggested opportunities for social enterprise and small business. There was significant opposition to the introduction of any large supermarkets to the area, while a few comments opposed any commercial activity whatsoever. The broader consensus seemed to be for maximising the diversity of any commercial activity in the area.

“Allow the community to run some public spaces for commercial enterprise - coffee shops, galleries, small hire rooms for tutoring, music practice milk bars etc.”

3. Community facilities and amenity

A range of comments were made relating to community facilities and general amenity of redevelopment on site:

“A space where people like to go to gather and feel comfortable”

“Outstanding community development - sport, art, education, meeting space”

“I think a child care centre with a recreation centre is a great idea.”

“I think it also should reflect the soul of North Fitzroy... the characters, the community, the people, the families, the endeavour, the passion, the inclusion, the harmony and the joy of life. Who doesn't love living in North Fitzroy/Fitzroy. We are not too cool, we participate.”

“Sporting facilities allow us to engage our children and hopefully keep them out of trouble. A multipurpose sporting facility would be ideal with open green space and a community hub to engage with our youth/young adults i.e. Drop in Centre”

“There needs to be a major injection of innovation and creativity used to determine how to use this land. It is such an unusual opportunity given its size and location. The focus needs to be way broader than housing and recreation (this is too dull) and provides government with an opportunity to capitalise and further cement Melbourne as an arts and cultural leader and innovator.”

4. Transport and permeability

Transport and Permeability

“Accessibility, car parking, and traffic flow should be considered at the outset of any development.”

“My experience with recent nearby apartment development is that there are fewer available car parking spaces. Sometimes you may have to park up to 100 metres from your home. Many City bound workers park in the immediate vicinity and then tram or walk it in.”

“Use the site to build the Tunnel, then develop it into a world class precinct.”

“With the construction of the Tunnel and removal of most Alexandra Parade traffic, the environment in that area will be conducive to any new development.”

“A lack of good east-west bicycle routes in the area means people will choose to ride along Alexandra Parade if you redevelop it to make that desirable. Be aware that a nice wide well lit footpath on the south side could see a bit of bike traffic.”

“I think a lot of basement car-parking could contribute to traffic that could cut the whole area off from the surrounds.”

Car parking

The majority of comments relating to car parking supported the idea to utilise remediation works to incorporate basement car parking into the development. Many people expressed concern that a large provision of car parking would be required, and that this is a significant issue in the area to begin with.

“I think that it may be necessary to provide two levels of basement in order to provide the appropriate number of parking spaces and other facilities such as services infrastructure below ground. In saying this I am mindful and accept reduced parking numbers.”

Site access and egress

Comments on site access and egress focused on pedestrian and cycling connections into and through the site. Many suggested the need for a pedestrian tunnel or overpass, and expressed concerns relating to the significant barriers created by busy roads:

“The site is isolated by four high volume roads that form barriers to site access. A pedestrian tunnel under Queens Parade and a pedestrian bridge over Alexandra Parade would be incredibly valuable additions

