
VCAT Approves 18 Storey “Lego” Tower at St Kilda Junction!!!

Dear Resident,

As you know, our JAAG team joined with Port Phillip Council from the 4th to the 8th June in a five day VCAT Hearing to oppose a Planning Permit for this 18 storey tower, to be built on the south eastern corner, where Wellington Street enters the Junction.

In our last Newsletter No 12, we advised you of the many reasons we believed this to be a totally unacceptable and inappropriate over development of the site.

In this edition we evaluate the outcome and consider where we go from here.



2 St Kilda Road

JAAG Steering Committee

PS: We'd love to hear your answer to our survey question on the last page!!!

THE VCAT DECISION

Despite our best efforts and those of the Port Phillip Council (plus over 70 written objections), we were advised that VCAT had set aside the wishes of the people in favor of the Developer and instructed the Council to issue a Planning Permit for this project to go ahead.

We are appalled by this decision which we will now have to live with it for the rest of our lives!!

Although we lost the main game, we were able to successfully argue for a raft of changes to the building, which have been incorporated into the permit conditions, including:

- The reorientation of a number of apartments and particularly the screening of windows and balconies to minimize the effects of overlooking neighboring buildings.
- The number of units reduced from 115 to 108 (equal to a floor of units)
- An increased and equal setback to the ground level glazing fronting St Kilda Road and Wellington Street.
- The requirement for an acceptable and sustainable landscape plan to the setback.
- Changes to the parking layout to minimize congestion and provide for two off-street loading bays for delivery trucks and service vehicles.
- Increasing laneway access to improve the traffic interface with Wellington Street.

- The Developer to obtain a Wind Assessment Report and to undertake any work required to ensure acceptable wind conditions are approved by the Responsible Authority.
- Detailed specifications for the facade to provide for the prolonged retention of facade colour approvals, ongoing maintenance, inspection and, where necessary, treatment of the facade.

We are bitterly disappointed at losing this appeal, and immediately responded with a general media release. To read some results, place your cursor over the link and follow the instructions.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/st-kildas-futuristic-legoland-goes-ahead-20120822-24m52.html>

Link: <http://port-phillip-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/st-kilda-junction-high-rise-approved-by-vcat/>

JAAG's EVALUATION

When handing down their decision, VCAT made two significant observations:

1. State Government policy currently directs that higher density housing is to be provided within and around the CBD, particularly those areas that have a capacity for change and offer the highest accessibility to public transport, shops and social infrastructure.

NOTE: The site at 2 St Kilda Road ticks all these boxes.

AND,

2. No preferred character statements exist for St Kilda Junction, there are no overlays for the area, nor is there an approved urban design framework. VCAT also claimed, "the existence of such documents would assist in providing clearer, more definitive guidance in terms of providing strategically based assessment tools. The result is that we are confronted with a series of policies, objectives and strategies applying to broad areas which send out conflicting messages".

In view of these two statements, it becomes clear that Council's failure over many years to provide the necessary guidelines to manage the future development of St Kilda Junction, has greatly contributed to this latest decision handed down by VCAT.

JAAG's FRUSTRATION

For more than a year, JAAG has been fighting for recognition from Council/State Government to put into effect a stronger strategic planning policy framework for St Kilda Road South and St Kilda Junction, complemented by a streetscape planning strategy.

During this period JAAG members have made submissions at 4 VCAT Hearings and 1 Hearing by a Director of Planning for the DPCD (Minister for Planning's Office) as follows:

- 3 St Kilda Rd – Governor in Council approved permit for 26 storeys
- 25-29 Alma Rd – VCAT refused a permit for 11 storeys (now at VCAT again for 8 storeys)
- 11-15 Wellington St – VCAT approved amendments to a permit for a 10 storey building, changing the top two floors from commercial to residential.
- 35 Wellington St – VCAT refused permit for an 8 storey predominantly residential building.
- 2 St Kilda Rd – VCAT approved permit for an 18 storey predominantly residential building.

There have also been permits granted by Council for 2 other developments in St Kilda Road:

- 46-52 – 6 storey predominantly residential building and,
- 70-76 St Kilda Rd – 4 storey predominantly residential building,

JAAG members objected to both of these, thereby influencing the outcome of the final permit.

Port Phillip Council now holds Planning Permit applications re St Kilda Junction and St Kilda Rd South for:

- 126 St Kilda Rd (Backpackers Planning Permit).
- 20 St Kilda Rd (3 illuminated signs & parking dispensation) for a relocated Tattoo Parlor.
- 23-27 Wellington St. (2 Major illuminated Sky signs)

Stonnington Council is holding a planning application for:

- a 17 storey predominantly residential building at 30 Punt Rd, Windsor (now at VCAT). This site is situated at the corner of Punt Road & Albert Street, Windsor.

All of the above are within 3 blocks of each other and all will have impact on St Kilda Junction and/or St Kilda Rd South. AND, you can be sure there are many more on the way, but here we all are, without any “strategically based assessment tools” with which to make decisions!!!

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION?

We need the Port Phillip Council to take action with the State Government to put in place an approved urban design framework and preferred character statement for St. Kilda Junction, supported by overlays to provide definitive guidance in terms of strategic planning.

The lack of definitive guidelines is assisting Developers to determine the strategic direction of St Kilda Road Junction and St Kilda South, to the detriment of those who live in these areas.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Given the decision to approve the “lego tower” Permit, JAAG will now press the City of Port Phillip Council to provide the missing “strategically based assessment tools” identified by VCAT.

MEMBER GET MEMBER CAMPAIGN

Almost 250 residents have registered with JAAG to share our concerns for the community we live in, but this latest VCAT decision to set aside the wishes of the people re-enforces our “Strength in Numbers” motto!

If each of you got just one new member to sign and return our attached Registration Form, we could double our membership overnight! This is so important to ensure that our voice is heard and acted upon as we continue to work on your behalf.

Please Let Us Know You Are Still Out There!!!!!!

Thanks to those who answered the “Question” in our last newsletter – 62% indicated they felt unsafe when walking on our streets and crossing the road. We must work on that!

The question for this edition is:

“Do you agree with VCAT’s decision to grant a planning permit for the “Lego” tower?”

(To answer just hit your reply button and type ‘YES or NO’, then click ‘Send’ and feel free to include comments)

JAAG - Strength in Numbers