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10 October 2025

104–106 St Georges Road, Toorak

Urban Design Memo

Introduction

This memo has been prepared by Urbis on behalf of Blood Diamond Group Pty Ltd in relation to a proposed development of an apartment building at 104–106 St Georges Rd Toorak (the Site). The Town Planning plans prepared by Charles Wright Architects (dated 15 Sept 2025) were reviewed from an urban design perspective.

Context

The 3,744m² (approx.) Site sits on the southern edge of the Yarra River. It is comprised of two lots fronting St Georges Road. The Site and adjacent properties on the northern side of St Georges Road all slope steeply down to the Yarra River. The character of the surrounding area is dominated by large, detached dwellings with leafy surrounds.

The Site is zoned General Residential Zone – Schedule 11 (GRZ11) which encourages a diversity of housing types with development that is responsive to the character of the area. The Site is also subject to Design and Development Overlay – Schedule 3A Yarra (Birrarung) River Corridor (DDO3-A) which defines built form expectations along the river's edge.

State and local policy (Clause 15.01-2L-01) seeks to ensure that development respects the existing grain within the street, matching the alignment of buildings and providing front and side setbacks that allow for sufficient planting of canopy trees. Policy also encourages low, transparent fencing along property frontages; however, this is contrary to the existing character of St Georges Road.

The steep slope across the Site and river frontage demands a nuanced design response that responds to each of the Site's interfaces and the different characteristics of the Yarra River and St Georges Road frontages. Additionally, the large site area provides opportunities for significant

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softening of any potential visual bulk to neighbouring development through setbacks and landscaping.

There is a 'live' planning permit for 106 St Georges Road which the proposed development mirrors closely in its form.

Assessment of the proposal

Yarra River interface

Building height

The proposal adopts a stepped built form that follows the underlying topography of the Site. This complies with the mandatory height requirement of DDO3-A, maintaining a maximum height of 10 metres or less. The resulting stepped appearance presents a variety of heights as sought by DDO3.

The location of the Site on the south side of the river means that it will not cast any shadow on the riverbank.

Building breadth

The proposed building is relatively long, as viewed from the river, given the Site is an amalgamation of two lots. To reduce the visual impact of this breadth in views from the opposite bank of the river, a deep vertical recess is proposed in the centre of the building. As a result, the proposal will present as two structures rather than a single horizontal mass, each of which reflects the scale of dwellings along the river. This will contribute to the avoidance of visual bulk, as sought by the DDO.

Building setback

The proposal is compliant with the DDO3-A mandatory 30m setback from the bank of the Yarra River, in which no built form is allowed.

Materiality

DDO3-A seeks "buildings... (to) use colours and finishes which do not contrast with the natural landscape setting". The proposal adopts a muted colour scheme consisting of off-form concrete and substantial landscaping. We consider that the proposed materials palette is consistent with this objective.

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St Georges Road interface

Building height

The proposal is compliant with the DDO height requirement along St Georges Road.

Building breadth

Policy calls for development to respect the existing subdivision grain and rhythm of the area.

The site comprises two properties. In line with policy requirements, a 3.4m wide separation is proposed between the two building forms, with each designed to reflect the scale of existing dwellings in the street. A glazed bridge will link the two forms at Level 6; its transparency allowing it to blend with the sky behind and provide separation which will create an impression of two distinct parts.

Architectural style and materiality

The existing architectural character within St Georges Road is highly varied, including buildings from a range of eras with a mix of styles and materiality.

The proposed building is unashamedly contemporary and consists primarily of a concrete finish and extensive glazing visible from St Georges Road. This will contribute to the varied architectural character of the street.

Off-site amenity impacts

Overlooking of habitable spaces of adjacent properties (108 St Georges Road and 102 St Georges Road) is proposed to be mitigated through the use of setbacks and screens. Where screening is proposed, timber battens with 25% transparency will mitigate overlooking.

Overshadowing of adjacent SPOS (at 102 St Georges Road) will be minimal, with impacts limited to after 2pm.

The proposal will present as 2-storeys from the side boundaries due to the steep slope across the Site. This is consistent with existing dwellings in the street. Section diagrams and elevations illustrate how the proposal has sought to further reduce visual bulk with views from neighbouring properties filtered through landscaping.

Landscaping and Fencing

DDO3 seeks “sufficient space ... between buildings to ... allow for the planting and growth of vegetation, including large canopy trees”. Policy seeks appropriate front, side and rear setbacks to allow for deep soil planting to maintain the natural character of St Georges Road and the Yarra River.

The rear setback to the Yarra River is sufficient to allow for significant planting along this interface. The side setbacks are proposed to have a 2m wide planter within the retaining wall which will allow for significant tree canopy cover along the side boundaries. Within the front setback a considered palette of landscaping is proposed with trees and planting that will contribute to the character of the Garden River precinct.

To the street edge a 1.5m high, permeable fence is proposed. The proposed height and design will allow for passive surveillance of the public realm and to provide views to a ‘well-planted, spacious garden’. This is consistent with the intention of policy.

Conclusion

We support the proposal’s response to both the river and St Georges Road from an urban design perspective, as its height, massing, materials and landscaping is consistent with the DDO and local policy.

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