

Objection to Application PLN19/0426

Royal Hotel, 35-41 Spensley St, Clifton Hill

The 3068 Group Inc.

July 14th, 2021

The 3068 Group Inc.

PO Box 118, Clifton Hill 3068

Incorporated 1998

ABN 61 907 325 331



Community protecting heritage for present and future generations

The overall aim of the 3068 Group is to maintain the heritage character, streetscape and amenity of the postcode area of 3068 and the City of Yarra.



Attention: Robert Galpin, robert.galpin@yarracity.vic.gov.au

Re: PLN19/0426 Objection to Planning Application, Royal Hotel, 35-41 Spensley St, Clifton Hill VIC 3068

The 3068 Group objects to this application on the following grounds:

That the unusual context of the Royal Hotel is that it is in the middle of a low rise heritage suburb located in the Clifton Hill eastern precinct and the only hotel and has provided a meeting place and hospitality since its opening in the 1890's.

If a fire burned the Royal Hotel to the ground with only the east and north facades saved, residents of Clifton Hill would be gutted. If a fire took out the three storey timber staircase, the chimneys and roof lantern, all the rooms and even the floors and ceilings, it would be reported as a heritage disaster.

**Yet this is what is being asked of the planning system by the current proposal:
TO SANCTION THE GUTTING of this most significant heritage landmark.**

Residents are outraged that this can even be contemplated. That there is even the slightest possibility that this might be approved.

The applicant does not even show the roof lantern on the demolition plans. Demolishing these highly visible landmark features is not on. It is contrary to Yarra's long standing heritage policy. Council should reject this application and require resubmission with accurate drawings including showing the iconic roof lantern.

We note that the City of Yarra required that the historic roof lantern be retained during extensive redevelopment of the Former Clifton Hill Saw Mill and Box Factory¹

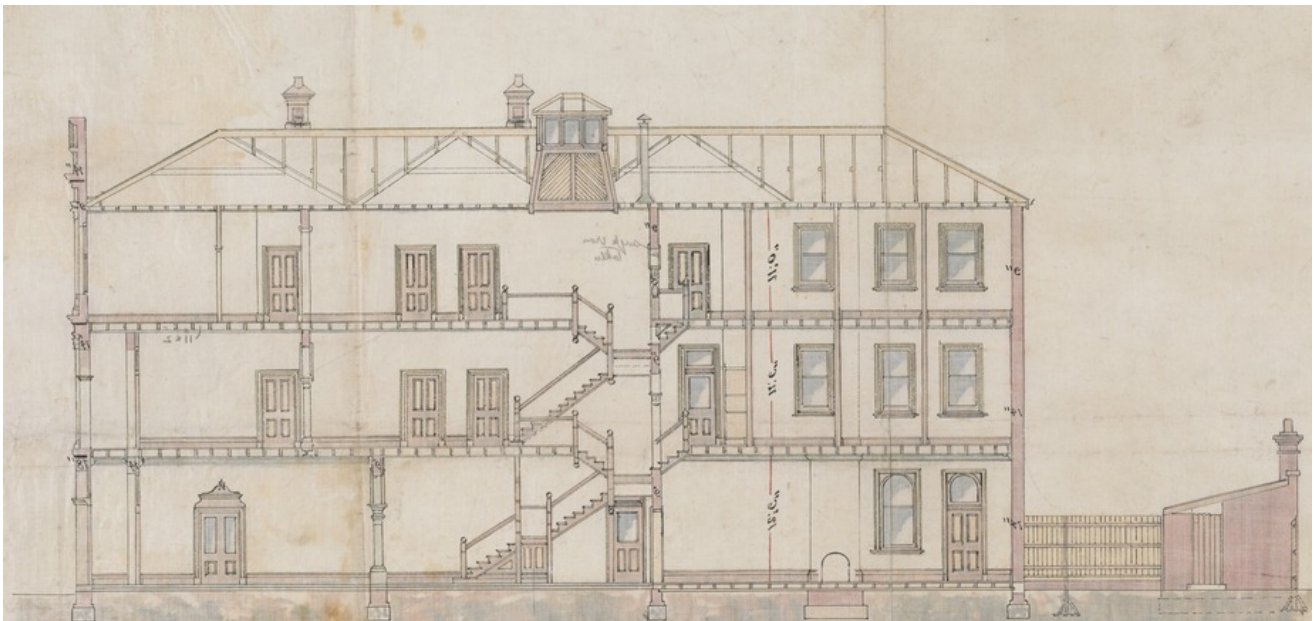


¹ 19-27 Grant Street, Clifton Hill, City of Yarra Heritage Review, [Building Citations](#).

The heritage report attached to the application is unacceptable. Not only is it biased, inaccurate, incorrect and out of date, but it refers to an earlier application. There is no Heritage Impact Statement for this application. Council should refuse this application based on its many flaws and omissions alone. It requires a resubmission with required elements.

The Royal Hotel is of local social significance as the centrepiece of the Spensley Street Neighbourhood Activity Centre and the East Clifton Hill Heritage Precinct. As the only hotel in East Clifton Hill, it has provided a meeting place and hospitality almost continuously since its opening. East Clifton Hill Village does not have an abundance of social venues. It is the tallest building in the precinct, characterised by low-rise residential punctuated by some taller former factories. In a low rise very intact heritage suburb of largely one and two storey residences, it has enormous presence and significance as one of the last of the Boom era hotels, built with a sense of high style and sophistication.

Complete demolition of an individually significant building cannot be concealed behind two facades. All four walls are currently visible from the public domain and are contributory heritage elements. They contribute to the building's high profile three dimensional form and character.



The architect's plans show the roof lantern and chimneys. This drawing is an internal section, not an elevation. So here, it has been mirrored left to right to align with the external elevation presented in the image above.

New hotel at Clifton Hill for Mrs. J. Anderson, George Jobbins 1842-1924, architect, 1889
http://search.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/f/1cl35st/SLV_VOYAGER2719913

Demolition of individually significant buildings has been non compliant with heritage policy for over twenty years. This policy is strongly supported by the community.

It is policy to *Generally discourage the demolition of part of an individually significant or contributory building or removal of contributory elements unless:...*

For individually significant buildings or works, it can be demonstrated that the removal of part of the building or works does not negatively affect the significance of the place.

The applicant has not and cannot show that the proposed demolition and works will not negatively affect the significance of the place.

The proposal does not comply with Yarra's policy *To encourage the retention of 'individually significant' and 'contributory' heritage places.*

The lack of internal demolition controls does not allow demolition of the entire building except for two facades. The building has a 3 dimensional structure that includes its walls, floor-plates and roof.

Demolition of contributory features, including chimneys, is discouraged by Yarra's heritage policy.

The proposed roof demolition will only make way for two fourth-floor apartments with their obtrusive and insensitively designed roof equipment.

The heritage roof is visible from, among other places:

- Cnr. Berry & Caroline Streets
- Cnr. Berry & Myrtle Streets.
- Cnr. Spensley and Grant Streets
- "The Dirty Apron" Cafe, 47 Ramsden St
- "Flowers of Sorrento", 58 Spensley Street.
- The Clifton Hill overpass.

The proposed rooftop services and equipment would detract from the significance of whole of the heritage place of the surrounding heritage mainly residential suburb, and their installation would damage the heritage fabric of the roof. They should be concealed inside the existing roof.

Demolition of the floor plates cannot be supported as they are integral to the heritage fabric. In particular the ground-floor public areas should retain their original floor plates to promote a commercial or hospitality use as encouraged by the zoning. The 1889 plans indicate the ground floor has a 12'6" ceiling (3.81m). The proposal's plans (See TP25, Ceiling Heights) show this reduced to 3.2m. Not only would this compromise the ground floor spaces, it places the first floor level too low for the external windows. The bottom of the second floor windows will be at head height. The relationship between the internal and external views of the building should not be interrupted by lowered ceilings. It will be exacerbated at night when internal spaces are illuminated.

Yarra argued to the Queens Parade C231 Panel that "*a staggered floor plate between retained heritage buildings and new development behind at a lower floor to floor height is not necessarily a likely or desirable outcome.*" [quoted in the C231 panel report]. Yarra's proposed heritage guidelines for Queens Parade included: "maintain the inter-floor height of the existing building and avoid new floor plates and walls cutting through historic openings."

This and other heritage guidelines did not get included in the Queens Parade DDO because of the forthcoming review of the heritage guidelines. The draft heritage guidelines exhibited in C269 include

Avoid the following in the facades of individually significant and contributory buildings:

- New floor plates, walls, columns or structural supports cutting through openings.

It is policy to "*Encourage new upper storey additions to residential heritage places or contributory elements to heritage places to: Preserve the existing roof line, chimney(s) and contributory*

architectural features that are essential components of the architectural character of the heritage place or contributory elements to the heritage place.”

The Royal Hotel proposal has a blatant non-compliance with this clause.

Plans for the original 1889 building had 29 bedrooms. To this day they provide affordable accommodation.

Despite the massive expansion of the footprint of the proposal, the new building will not accommodate any more people. While this may serve the developer's aims, it is not helping to solve the housing crisis. The destruction of heritage cannot in this case be justified by the urban consolidation clauses of the Victorian Planning Scheme.

We do not oppose any development of the site. We submit that

- The development must be contained within the heritage fabric and form of this exceptionally important heritage building. The roof and facades must be conserved.
- Retention of the original toilet block on Berry Street. In the past Yarra has required the retention of toilets at the rear of significant buildings facing remote laneways.
- The floor plates should be retained.
- Retention of the front two rooms on each floor level on each street frontage.
- Retention of floor plates to preserve the inter-floor relationships and integrity of the building.
- The new built form on the annexes can be no more than two storeys harmonising with and respecting the very intact one and two storey historic buildings of East Clifton Hill - as was done for the North Fitzroy Star conversion - to avoid degrading the surrounding heritage place.

A crucial element of the Royal Hotel is the purpose of the building. Run by just three families over its approximately 130 year history, it is a place established for the purpose of hospitality, accommodation and the social needs of its community. To celebrate, commiserate, organise, socialise and communicate, thus creating a socially bonded and therefore healthy community. It was a place to gather to identify, support and fulfil mutual needs of companionship and assistance with day-to-day needs and problems of the individual and the community. It was the essential place for the social health of a community, a place for making a community.

How does the Planning scheme then address this harmful loss? How will such a haven be replaced? For all of the above reasons, and especially for the incompleteness of the requirements of an application, the Council should dismiss this application as being incomplete and invalid. The applicant should submit a properly acquitted application with the proper requirements of an application completed and returned to the Council for its consideration.

Sincerely,

Chris Goodman, President
The 3068 Group (Inc)