

Response to the Arden Structural Plan - October 2021

Whilst the Kensington Association 'field of action' is primarily in the Macaulay precinct we have a strong 'field of interest' which extends easily into what happens in the Arden precinct. We look at the Arden Structural Plan (ASP) as a foreshadowing of what can happen in Macaulay.

Public Transport

In relation to public transport, the Association is supportive of the way in which the ASP opens up public transport options and we can see how the connections between and through our precincts will be facilitated.

Open Space

The extra open space, particularly west of Arden St Oval is very welcome, however that land is not government land. What guarantees or assurances are there (or will there be) in relation to the acquisition of that land? If there is none, it becomes a kind of mirage.

Housing

Any mention of affordable housing provision is expressed as 'aims' or 'recommendations' rather than 'requirements'. That is totally unsatisfactory for such a significant new residential development. The same applies to the lack of a firm provision for new public housing.

Public infrastructure

Provision for the development of public infrastructure is insufficient, particularly for education. Land set aside for one primary school is inadequate for a development of this magnitude. While there is recognition that a secondary school will be required into the future, there appears to be no detailed planning about where that might be located. With secondary schools in particular the need for a significant block of land is obvious. There should at least be some forward planning that would indicate the location of a school and how such it could have access to open space.

Buildings and built-form

For some period of time the Association has been reflecting on the ramification of the FAR as a built-form control, and we have been broadly supportive of the 'tool'. However, there appears to have been little discussion on the *setting* of FAR's. The planning documents seem to indicate that setting of the FAR has been arbitrary and been used to inflate the size and bulk of the buildings, particularly in Arden Central. In our view, because of this arbitrary setting of the FAR (which had the potential to put the limit on developer profit expectations and guard against bulky CBD type development), it has been transformed from a 'tool' to help foster liveability into a 'trick' to preserve profits for developers.

Moonee Ponds Creek

One of the biggest disappointments of the ASP is the failure of the VPA to include (or incorporate) any details of planning developments of Moonee Ponds Creek for which it is responsible. As well as being inexcusable, this feels like a 'slap in the face' for those of us in Kensington who have been advocating for funding and progress in development of the Creek corridor between Racecourse Rd and Arden St for more than 20 years. There has been no substantive 'in good faith' consultation with the community on this issue. This section remains a weed infested rubbish trap, but is 'counted' as our public open space!

Population (residential-employment balance)

Arden Central is named as a Mixed-Use zone with the 'population' as two thirds *employment* and one third *residential*. From our reading of the ASP there is no reason to believe that such a balance is going to be achieved. Population, with infrastructure to match, are critical

variables into future which will determine the liveability of both Arden and Macaulay. We are concerned that this purported balance will be reversed without further attention to the details of planning for employment and innovation.

Sustainability

Finally a somewhat general, but essential observation, in relation to sustainability aspirations which above all will determine the success or otherwise of this development into the future. The VPA has expressed high aspirations for sustainability aspects of the development, which in themselves are praiseworthy. One example, in Objective 9:- *'the aim to establish strong environmental governance in Arden that provides certainty, accountability and transparency'*. The problem is, not through want of trying, I cannot trace any line of the proposal that would indicate how this governance would be carried out and coordinated with different community stakeholders. Without this being clarified and spelt out there is no way the aspirations will be realised, and no way that Arden will become an *'exemplar of sustainable urban renewal'*.

Simon Harvey - on behalf of The Kensington Association