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Arden Structure Plan Comments

2. Transforming Arden

The Arden Structure Plan has been presented as an opportunity to transform over a 30 year period underutilised industrial land into an innovation and employment precinct and a thriving new neighbourhood.

This plan was conceived prior to the COVID pandemic, the significant decline in the student population, countless closures of CBD businesses, increased CBD office vacancies, reduced population growth in Victoria and many Melbournians moving to regional areas and/or interstate.

Given that the Arden Structure presents as a residential, employment and innovation plan and in essence mirrors much of what is currently available in Melbourne's CBD, is there any intention to take into consideration potential long term underutilization of existing CBD buildings and infrastructure to determine how this may impact on another new and extensive development?

3. Designing a distinctive Place

In addition to the above, Melbourne City Council's draft housing policy stated "The densities of some Melbourne developments are in excess of 5000 dwellings per hectare. They are up to four times the maximum densities allowed in planning policies in other very high density cities such as Hong Kong, New York and in Sydney and ten times the densities allowed in London (see figure 3.12). Densities between 150 and 500 dwellings per hectare have been referred to as 'superdensity' in London (Design for London, 2007) with the call for high quality design and management if they are to be successful." ¹

As a long-time resident of North Melbourne, the proposed density and bulk of the Arden Structure is alarming. The proposed developments are in stark contrast to the extremely strict height and heritage requirements we must adhere to when proposing changes to our own properties. To make way for this significant increase in large and densely packed structures, heavily utilised facilities and resources such as the Lost Dogs Home and Veterinary Clinic and Bowens Hardware will disappear in addition to the spacious proportions of current and generally cool streetscapes.

5. Prioritising Active Transport

While I applaud the design of a movement network that will aim to prioritise active public transport over private vehicle movements, the reality is that until the public transport infrastructure for all of Melbourne and the regional areas is sufficiently improved, private vehicles will continue to be needed. Inadequate allocation of space for private vehicles will result in further pressure on residential streets where inadequate parking is already causing concern.

¹ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/meetingagendaitemattachments/650/11564/jun14%20fmc2%20agenda%20item%206.3%20draft%20housing%20strategy.pdf>

6. Celebrating Water

The Moonee Ponds Creek runs adjacent to a notable section of the Arden Structure Plan, without full knowledge and disclosure of the Moonee Ponds implementation plan, (which also sits squarely under VPA responsibilities), this section dealing specifically with water is incomplete and does not speak to how these two initiatives will interact and/or be linked, therefore it cannot be accurately assessed.

7. Creating Diverse Open spaces

Higher density developments not only increase pressure on internal spaces but on external spaces as well. While it is notable that there will be 12 hectares of open space, including the areas occupied by the North Melbourne Football club, the projected increase in the Arden Structure Plan indicates additional residents of around 15,000 which in effect will double North Melbourne's population, which is currently around 15,000. Despite the various graphs and diagrams prepared as part of the plan, additional high density developments that are underway such as the Community and Private Housing project in Abbotsford Street will not have been taken into account. All new projects will add several hundred more residents to North Melbourne further reducing open space available per resident.

8. Accommodating Diverse Communities

The Arden Structure Plan refers to **supporting** and **encouraging** the provision of six per cent affordable housing in new developments to be delivered at 50 per cent (or alternative method of the equivalent value) discount to a registered housing association. It also refers to listening to feedback from its consultation processes which clearly articulated that there was overwhelming support that the project **MUST** deliver on affordable housing, and that affordable housing targets should be more ambitious. Numerous references are also made to the 2020 City of Melbourne's Affordable Housing Strategy which commits to delivering up to 25 per cent of housing as affordable on residential development on Council land, and provides policy guidance for calculating and managing affordable housing.

During the community meetings held recently the question was asked, 'Of the total land being redeveloped for housing, (in the Arden Structure), what percentage of that total belongs to the City of Melbourne and where is it located?' The answer was NONE. So reference to the City of Melbourne's Affordable Housing Strategy and commitment to delivering 25% is redundant and completely misleading as is the reference to Boyd Village which is located in South Bank.

In essence, it is highly likely that the outcome will be **ZERO** affordable housing delivered as part of the Arden Structure Plan. Appendix A, City of Melbourne, Arden Social & Affordable Housing Strategy, Literature Review & Desktop Research, page 1² spells out clearly why the 'good intentions' of six per cent will not materialise where affordable housing supply is voluntary and not mandated.

² https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.vic-engage.files/7416/3123/7363/Arden_Precinct_-_Arden_Social_and_Affordable_Housing_Research_Urbis_March_2021.pdf