



Australian Institute of Architects

VIC Chapter

December 2017

**Draft Planning Scheme
Amendment GC81**

*Submission to
The Fishermans
Bend Planning
Review Panel*

SUBMISSION BY

Australian Institute of Architects
ABN 72 000 023 012

VIC Chapter
Level 1, 41 Exhibition Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000
Telephone: 03 8620 3802
Email: ruth.white@architecture.com.au

PURPOSE

- This submission is made by the Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter (Institute) to the Victorian Government, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning to provide comments on Draft Planning Scheme Amendment GC81
- Comments have been prepared with the assistance of the VIC Chapter Council.
- At the time of this submission, the VIC Chapter President of the Institute is Vanessa Bird.
- The VIC Executive Director is Ruth White.

INFORMATION

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with around 12,000 members across Australia and overseas. More than 3,000 of these are based in Victoria.

The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture.

The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

1. Introduction

The Victorian Chapter of the Institute applauds the Victorian State Government and the Fishermans Bend Taskforce for delivering its ambitious Fisherman's Bend Draft Framework. We are encouraged by the release for public information, consultative workshops and briefings and an open invitation for submissions at a public hearing, to the Planning Review Panel in February 2018.

We thank the Task Force for the opportunity to make this submission.

This is a city shaping and city defining project. The Draft Framework is a comprehensive document that provides a clear and strategic direction based on extensive and inclusive consultation processes. We understand that this includes investors, Local Government, State Government departments and community and that consultation is ongoing.

The Institute welcomes the introduction of such bold and visionary initiatives, a hallmark of a mature, intelligent and informed Government. Such actions recognise the significant challenges and opportunities of such a unique, large and complex undertaking that the Fishermans Bend project represents.

- 90% of the land is privately owned
- It is adjacent to the city centre or heart of Melbourne
- It is the largest urban renewal project in Australia
- It is a 480-hectare site. This is more than twice the size of our current CBD
- It is a project of and for the future, it is a 30-year project

As our Planning Minister, Richard Wynne states...

"Melburnians are passionate about their city and its streets and suburbs. They know its history. They love its culture and character. And they're rightly suspicious of unfettered development."

"Fishermans Bend is a golden opportunity for the government and community to work together to plan the future of this site, and our city."

"If we do it right, we can make Fishermans Bend a global benchmark for smart, sustainable development and integrated communities where people both live and work."

2. The role and relevance of the Australian Institute of Architects

The Victorian Chapter of the Institute was established in 1856 – our members are responsible for delivering the face of our marvellous city as we know it and celebrate it today. Victoria’s architectural profession has an enviable and proud tradition to uphold as we continue to make a significant contribution to Melbourne’s design and creative culture. We are regarded as the design capital of Australia, and indeed our Melbourne-based profession is well renowned on the world stage.

Melbourne on the World Stage

A case in point is Melbourne’s selection to be a partner with Hong Kong Business of Design Week to be hosted in 2018. Melbourne is the first city in the southern hemisphere to be chosen as a partner for the event following in the footsteps of previous high-profile city or country partners such as Chicago, Barcelona, Italy and Sweden.

Creative Victoria will be promoting Melbourne as a centre of design capability and leadership. Melbourne’s architecture and architects will figure prominently.

3. Endorsement of the Fishermans Bend Draft Framework

Strategic Directions

The Institute firmly supports the 10 Strategic Directions that inform the Draft Framework.

Sustainability Goals

We firmly support the notion of the 8 Sustainability Goals, where sustainability is applied in its broadest sense, as the main structural objectives and strategies underpinning the Draft Framework.

Catalyst Projects and Precincts

We understand the requirement to consider models for reducing the overall scale of Fishermans Bend by dividing the land mass into 5 precincts. However we have concern with the division and theming of the precincts as a mechanism to address diversity. This becomes an arbitrary tool from an urban planning perspective and can generate disparate outcomes.

In order for Fishermans bend to work successfully as a masterplan and holistic precinct it is imperative that the mix of precincts and varying programs are dispersed across the entire site not as silos or in isolation. Successful communities and places of vibrancy are ones where there is a conscious integration and mixing of programs in order to develop a strong and cohesive community. This prevents the “office park” model and its surrounding environment from becoming a place that is only unutilised during office hours.

Successful communities are ones where there is a conscious understanding that activation and crossover of program assists with the building of diverse and rich communities.

We would like to work closely with the collaborating parties in order to address this issue particularly given the significance of the project and the lasting impact it will have for the growth of Melbourne as a city.

Caring for Country

We strongly support the Caring for Country as positive recognition of first people and origin of the natural landscape of Fishermans Bend. Care for Country needs to be applied holistically in the context of a complete urban ecology for the site. We would advocate that this value requires embedding in each objective to realise its full potential.

Affordable and Social Housing

The Institute supports the recognition for integrated social and affordable housing in Fishermans Bend identified in Objective 3.5.

However, given the urgent need and the ambition for Melbourne's 20-minute city, the proposed 6% of dwellings should be significantly increased to enable provision for keyworkers and families better access to the inner city. The recently initiated vacancy tax, and the State's proposed future definition of affordable housing provides significant opportunity for Fishermans Bend to meet the target of 30,000 units for the State.

The provision of social and affordable housing should be increased in line with other jurisdictions such as Ireland (20%) and the UK as a mandated requirement, decoupled from the proposed Floor Area Uplift.

We support the establishment of a Fishermans Bend Affordable Housing Trust to enable and oversee this in conjunction with the other initiatives proposed.

Integrated Open Space, Landscape, Biodiversity and Water Sensitivity

The Institute supports the recognition of the value of landscape and diverse open spaces to meet the future needs of the Fishermans Bend community.

The strategies for various open spaces across the area, linked by linear corridors will assist in determining the character of the precincts, and offer opportunities for integrated Caring for Country approach. Not only will they contribute to the overall health and wellbeing, but can be integrated in a manner to mitigate the impacts of the heat island effect.

There is further opportunity for integrated landscape to assist in mitigating impacts from flood inundation and sea level rise. Landscape as a holistic natural retention system, similar to the landscaped canals of Elwood and Johnston Park in Geelong, could potentially reduce the requirements of raised ground floor planes that deactivate the public realm.

Masterplan and Governance

The Framework represents much thinking about the future development of Fishermans Bend, its challenges and opportunities. However, changes to the planning scheme alone will not meet the ambitions without implementation through a master plan.

Benchmark examples of successful and healthy cities consistently show that they evolve through integrated processes inclusive of good design. The development of a master plan is required as a holistic directive to address critical issues such as flooding, contaminated soil conditions, interconnectivity through public and active transport and landscape strategies.

A master plan will maximize opportunities for the innovation sought in the area, integrate affordable housing and a universally accessible environment for aging and future populations within active and vibrant neighbourhoods.

To enable flexibility and agile responses to the future conditions, a governance structure should be established incorporating a steering authority that can assist in ensuring the objective and ambitions for Fishermans Bend are being achieved.

4. The Place of Architecture

We are encouraged to see that the role of architecture is referenced 7 times in the Draft Framework – with reference to ensuring architectural diversity, protecting architectural heritage and to delivering architectural excellence and support of architectural design in Objective 1.9.6

Our industry knowledge and expertise are referenced against Sustainability Goal 1, A Connected and Liveable Community and against Sustainability Goal 3, An Inclusive and Healthy Community.

We note that under Sustainability Goal 1 (A Connected and Liveable Community) key targets for 2050 are:

“FISHERMANS BEND IS WIDELY ACKNOWLEDGED AS A PLACE OF ARCHITECTURAL EXCELLENCE”.

As a peak body, we propose an integrated consultation process, this would be in collaboration with our fellow city-shaping design professionals in the Planning Institute of Australia, Urban Development Institute of Australia and Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

It is imperative that we have a strong and workable collaborative framework model with the Property Council of Australia (Developers). This will ensure that there is a clear path and reasonable mechanisms to achieve win-win outcomes for all parties including the greater and longer-term good of the State of Victoria.

5. Mandating Excellence

How do we define and measure architectural excellence?

What is architecture and where does it begin and end?

Architecture is the design of the built environment, inclusive of buildings, their functions and relationship to site and context. It contributes to the economic, environmental and cultural outcomes of place.

Good quality design and design excellence will ensure the longevity of the architectural intervention. Not only in terms of building fabric, but also, that the architecture will have enduring appeal – a human connection that can pass from generation to generation.

We strongly urge the State Government to actively and directly consult with the Institute in the ongoing development of the Fishermans Bend Framework. This will ensure that the aspirations of the project to achieve world class architectural excellence and to uphold our ‘liveability’ fame can be achieved through real and measurable means.

6. Eight Tools to Support and Promote Architectural Excellence

The Institute promotes policies and reforms that advance our urban environments and enhance our lives. As a minimum, the Institute would be advocating the inclusion within the

Fishermans Bend policy and implementation documents and the following “tools” more actively support and promote architectural excellence in a real and measurable way.

Design Reviews.

Ongoing OVGA involvement in precinct and project design reviews, particularly those which are developer-led. A dedicated Fishermans Bend Design Review Panel may be formed. Criteria should be set and pre-determined to identify projects to be reviewed. It could be a nominated percentage of projects, size or budget of the project, it could be the visibility and/or location of the project, or of significant impact on precinct ambitions. The Government would ideally set ambitious targets for the number of projects to be subject to design reviews.

Design Competitions (under Institute endorsed competition guidelines).

Competitions may be open or by invitation. Key sites and key projects should be identified by industry experts, including design professionals. Competitions open to international architects should mandate the partnering with local architectural practices. The Government ideally would set ambitious targets for the number of sites required to be designed through competition.

Emerging Architects.

Procurement models, where possible should mandate the inclusion of small and emerging practices to be part of the design teams. This will ensure the fostering and promotion of design talent that may otherwise have limited opportunity to work on projects of such scale and significance. This would be a genuine gesture toward architectural diversity.

Victorian Schools of Architecture.

Our young, energetic architects and thought leaders-in-training, should be encouraged to participate in ideas competitions through their course curriculum and other relevant forums. Young minds are full of fresh ideas which should be acknowledged and encouraged to open up dialogue for innovation and future thinking.

Innovative Building Materials and Construction Techniques.

This is an important consideration not only in light of the 8 Sustainability Goals, including Care of Country, but also in relation to the on-site challenges relating to soil contamination and reclaimed land.

Alternative Procurement Models.

Apply socially and economically innovative policies for urban inclusion. For example, intergenerational housing, co-housing, co-located housing developments within cultural precincts, activity centres and such like. Furthermore, as stated previously the provision of

social and affordable housing should be more ambitious and aligned with other benchmarked jurisdictions – a healthier target of 20%, rather than the current 6%.

Evidence Based Metrics.

Development and implementation of evidenced based metrics, based on credible research, that can be applied on an as needs basis to make decisions about the built environment.

Benchmarking.

Exemplary precedents should be referenced in the Fishermans Bend policy and implementation documents. We understand that the Task Force has undertaken extensive research on similar urban renewal projects in places such as Sweden, Denmark, Barcelona, Germany. Lessons learnt, where applicable, should be readily available and form part of the Fishermans Bend policy and implementation documents.

7. Built Environment – Diversity vs Coherency

While the Institute champions architectural diversity we are also aware of the value of strong and robust design ideas that will provide an overarching coherency and consistency to the entire scheme. Strong and robust design ideas will drive change, push innovation and capture the value of shared identity and meaning for the wider population.

8. Streamlined Development and Assessment Tools

Design is an agent of change. Design touches every aspect of our lives, shaping our homes and cities, and defining how we live and connect with the world. Our built environment is a designed environment and design is about people and for people - good design benefits everyone. Good design and exceptional design is valuable, and it endures.

Design though, is not just about the built environment, objects and things. It is also about ideas, processes and policies.

The Institute would strongly advocate that the mandating of architectural excellence through the inclusion of tools to support and promote excellence can be implemented so that they assist and streamline the planning process - and should not be viewed as potentially adding “red tape”.

Planning system design review panels can help to streamline approvals and design quality requirements when embedded in planning legislation.

9. Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects Submission

The Victorian Chapter of the Institute is unquestionably a key stakeholder in shaping the face of Fishermans Bend 2050.

We look forward to the opportunity to present our submission in further detail in February 2018.

Should you have any questions in the interim regarding our submission please do not hesitate to contact me.

Ruth White – Executive Director Vic

Prepared by Victorian Chapter Council.

Reference Documents

Australian Institute of Architects. *Creating Australia's Towns and Cities of the Future*. July 2013

Australian Institute of Architects. *Guidelines for the Conduct of Architectural Competitions*. April 2015

City of Sydney. *Design Competition Policy*. December 2013

Government of Western Australia, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. Development

Assessment Panels and Design Advisory Committees; [https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/About-](https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/About-DAPs.aspx)

DAPs.aspx

Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (UK). *Cost of Bad Design*. January 2006