

Submission Cover Sheet

Fishermans Bend Planning Review Panel

75

Request to be heard?: No

Precinct: General

Full Name: Philip John Hopkins

Organisation: No

Affected property:

Attachment 1: FishBend121217.d

Attachment 2:

Attachment 3:

Comments: I have uploaded my submission on the attachment.

FishBend121217

SUBMISSION ON THE FISHERMANS BEND FRAMEWORK Draft for Consultation

The overall thrust of the Draft is very good. There is little to quibble about. I would like to make a few observations.

1. Geotechnical conditions.

The construction material ideal for such problematic terrain is the revolutionary new approach to timber – engineered wood – as no concrete piling is required, and the buildings are lighter.

Basically, panels of timber are glued together under high pressure in a factory. The ‘panelisation’ process involves the automatic manufacturing of key building elements – floors, walls, roofs and joinery components – which are pre-finished to millimetre accuracy in the factory, then transported and assembled on the building site. The resultant building is as strong as steel and concrete, and much lighter and safer to use in construction. Importantly, studies show that engineered wood is cheaper to use than steel or concrete.

This technique has been used for a generation in Scandinavia, Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and is increasingly being used in the UK and North America. In Australia, Lendlease has pioneered this technique in neighbouring Docklands: first through the 10-storey Forte building; secondly, through the Library at the Dock; and thirdly, through International House – the first commercial building in Australia using engineered wood - at Barangaroo in Sydney. Lendlease has just announced it intends to build a second similar all-wood commercial building next door.

Library at the Dock, for example, is a three-storey building on a rectangular (1000 square-metre, 3000 sq m over the

three floors) site. Crucially, the architects found the structure of the engineered wood (known as cross-laminated timber) was two-thirds the weight of a conventional public building of the same size, and thus it could be built on the wharf. As a port, Victoria Harbour already had ironbark piles going down into the mud as it was designed for engineering and crane loads. No expensive concrete piling was required – a huge advantage given the conditions in Fishermans Bend. The architects found the timber columns and floor slabs were sufficient to carry the dead weight of the building, even with books. A concrete ground slab, however, was used to keep the timber out of the wet.

Other companies are also now building houses and apartments using engineered wood in Sydney and Brisbane. The Australian Building Code now allows “as of right” timber buildings up to eight storeys. While engineered timber buildings are now being built even higher, medium density is probably the best market for engineered wood.

Lendlease had to import their engineered timber from Austria, making the process more expensive and logistically complex, but now a New Zealand company, X-Lam, is building a CLT plant in Wodonga, which should start producing product next year. Thus local engineered wood will become increasingly available.

While competition policy does not allow a “wood first” policy, the FB plan should include a strong recommendation to use engineered timber. I notice that a large apartment project next to the North Port Oval used traditional wood stick framing in construction.

2. Liveability

The draft report emphasised the need for great liveability in Fishermans Bend. The thermal performance of engineered timber is very good; the prefabricated panels create an air-tightness that is superior to a conventional

structure. Passive house standards and thermal standards are well developed in Europe.

Observers have noted that people find Forte and The Dock library “warm, solid and cosy”. People have even been seen hugging the timber columns in the library - you don't see that in a concrete building!

A study from Planet Ark has shown that wooden interiors improve a person's emotional state, reducing blood pressure, heart rate and stress levels.

3. Sustainability and climate adaption.

Timber is the ideal material to use in a world worried about global warming. It is well recognised that growing trees absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This ‘carbon’ stays embedded in the timber products made from the felled tree, but when the tree is replanted, the CO₂ absorption process starts again. Thus a sustainable timber industry is an excellent way to take excess CO₂ out of the atmosphere; the more wood used, the more the threat of global warming can be fought. This approach has been backed by the IPCC and also the United Nations Food and Agricultural Agency.

4. Freight and Webb Dock.

It is crucial to remove Webb Dock-bound trucks from the Fishermans Bend precinct. Travelling along Graham Street and turning left into Plummer St cannot continue; trucks can't travel down the middle of a commercial and residential precinct! They will have to be forced to use Kings Way and the West Gate Freeway and enter Webb Dock through the new direct route from the freeway.

The danger is trucks will start using Williamstown Rd instead of Plummer to get to Webb Dock, by turning right into Todd Rd and then left into Webb Dock – not good for residents (like me) who live on Williamstown Rd.

However, there will always be local truck traffic servicing the FB industrial areas.

In the long term, a rail freight connection to Webb Dock will have to be built hugging the Westgate Freeway to Bolte Bridge, as is depicted in the draft plan, otherwise the truck traffic to the third stevedore will become unmanageable. The rail, particularly the bridge over the Yarra, will be expensive, however. Like the light rail bridge, the rail bridge will have to be high enough to allow yachts to pass underneath. Both, particularly rail, have the problem of not being too steep for the trains and trams. However, it is absurd to think both structures could be swing bridges, particularly the light rail due to the constant light rail traffic.

5. Public transport

It is imperative to build the planned light rail extensions, and extra bus routes, as soon as possible. The underground rail, needed in the long term, is decades away, so it's necessary to get public transport 'runs on the board' quickly. This will give people an incentive to live in FB and will show that the Government is serious. If the Yarra bridge light rail connection becomes too contentious and expensive, bringing the light rail along the 109 route and turning right at Ingles Street is still an option. While it would be longer than the Collins Street extension over the Yarra, the extra time would not be the end of the world. The 96 and 109 trams actually negotiate the complex corner at the Casino quite well.

6. Wirraway

Given the predominantly family friendly neighbourhood envisaged for Wirraway, the Garden City model should be repeated in the precinct. This would create also a connection to Garden City and even Beacon Cove, whose basic concept was inspired by Garden City.

This approach would create the extra public park space that is important to Fishermans Bend, and would be also

efficient and more speedy, as one developer could plan and build that part of the neighbourhood.

7. Ease of planning.

Consideration should be given to giving one official government body direct control of a part of Fishermans Bend, similar to the role VicUrban/Places Victoria played in the Dandenong revitalisation project. There, Places Victoria had the right to buy property and consolidate blocks to enable proper planning of the precinct. This approach may be necessary to create a viable and successful commercial hub in Fishermans Bend.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission on the Fishermans Bend project.

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