



The Greens' response to Kensington Association questionnaire

8 October 2020

Dear Kensington Association members and Kensington residents,

As a long term Kensington resident and your lead Greens councillor candidate, I am delighted to answer your questions on behalf of the Greens team.

You asked:

We see great merit in moving towards a Floor Area Ratio basis for planning controls, on the condition that these controls are coupled with other controls that protect the objectives that the Council and the Kensington Association fought so hard for through the Arden Macaulay Structure Plan process. Will you agree to preserve these controls, including mandatory streetwall heights and setback controls and a clear definition of ground level as being the natural ground level, not the flood level?

Yes. I have worked closely with the Kensington Association and Kensington residents on Macaulay planning matters since 2012, most recently with particular attention in 2020 as the Macaulay Structure Plan refresh is debated.

I am an urban planner and I am committed to ensuring that the final version of the Structure Plan Refresh articulates proposed controls that provide clarity for everyone.

The need to retain mandatory streetwall and interface controls that complement the new Floor Area Ratio controls is something that I have already argued for at Council, internally and with Kensington residents. The community fought hard from 2012 onwards for meaningful streetwall controls and while the new Floor Area Ratio controls will almost certainly provide for built form and massing outcomes that are preferable to the current arrangement, we need to ensure that there are no unintended overshadowing and visual bulk consequences with higher built form at the street edge.

Similarly, on the definition of ground level, I was the first to raise this issue at Council: the issue is debated extensively at the 5 May 2020 Future Melbourne Committee meeting. The new controls need to provide clarity to all parties.

You asked:

What will you do to ensure community infrastructure is appropriate to meet current and future population needs?

I agree with the policy directions of the draft Macaulay Structure Plan Refresh which call for more community infrastructure in Macaulay, including in Kensington. At the same time I acknowledge that the first priority is refurbishing and expanding the North Melbourne Community Centre on Buncl Street, which requires replacement, and that the Kensington Town Hall uses and community services are still maturing. Realistically, community infrastructure in the Kensington side of Macaulay proper is a 10 year project, which is a timeline that will allow infrastructure to grow commensurate with population growth.

Public open space is another matter, however, and this must be brokered and delivered even faster – this issue is addressed below.

You asked:

How will you manage development to ensure that it doesn't erode the unique characteristics of Kensington?

As chair of Heritage at the City of Melbourne I have commissioned 7 heritage reviews and expanded 4, including in Kensington. We are undertaking more heritage work than has been undertaken in a generation and we have gone from 0 to 4 dedicated heritage planners on staff within 5 years. I also led the political facilitation of the heritage policies review, which resulted in the recent endorsement by the Planning Minister of an updated heritage policy, which makes the test to demolish the front parts of buildings that are contributory to a heritage precinct more stringent. I am proud of this work and its long lasting impact on the City of Melbourne and the retention of our heritage fabric.

You asked:

Will you commit to another consultation stage on the final terms of the Structure Plan Refresh (in relation to built form controls) to ensure the community is given a chance to opine on how these controls will work?

Yes, as I have already articulated to the Kensington Association and to officers at the City of Melbourne. It is essential that a clear account of the proposed built form controls are included in the final version of the Structure Plan: this is an issue too important to leave to any subsequent planning scheme amendment process, or we will repeat the mistakes and lawyer's picnic of amendment C190. So yes, this will require an additional final stage of community consultation.

You asked:

Covid-19 has shown us the importance of open spaces. What mechanisms will you put in place to ensure we have more open spaces in light of the significant developments planned for Kensington?

What will you do to progress the funding and implementation of the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan?

You won't find stronger advocates for new public open space than The Greens. Our *Parks For Everyone* policy¹ proposes the purchase of a new local park on both of the Kensington and North Melbourne sides of Macaulay within the next term of Council. The open space reserve is collecting funds and land contributions from developers in Macaulay, and we should spend it – especially as opportunities arise during the recession.

The final version of the Macaulay Structure Plan Refresh should also articulate clear open space mechanisms, including compulsory acquisition of strategically placed currently non-residential sites if necessary.

We also support the aspirations of the Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan and worked hard on Council to create and endorse this plan. While it requires significant funding and commitments from State Government departments and agencies, the only way our flood mitigation works are going to improve the biodiversity and public use outcomes along the creek corridor is if those in a position of influence – like the Lord Mayor – coordinate it.

A Greens Lord Mayor will make this a high priority. The most essential task for a Lord Mayor is to broker an arrangement with the State Treasurer or Premier to allow for the transfer of VicTrack land – which cannot be developed and can't voluntarily be transferred by VicTrack itself – to the Council.

You asked:

What will you do to ensure funds from Developer Contributions associated with developments in Kensington are used in Kensington?

It is already a requirement of Development Contribution Plans that the funds raised be spent on the plans they are associated with. While there are only interim levies in place, the permanent levies are due to be exhibited and consulted on after the election, and this will provide clarity about how contributions will be spent locally and on what projects.

You asked:

How will you serve the interest of Kensington and its residents?

¹ <https://melbournecitygreens.com/policy/>

As I always have done: I will work extremely hard while I have the privilege to represent the community I am a member of. I will consult with local residents, businesses and community organisations frequently and openly. And I will deliver. In my time on Council, among other outcomes, I have:

- Proposed and secured the new park next to Kensington station.²
- Proposed and secured a full review of Maribyrnong Waterfront land use and development to ensure a precinct approach, not an ad hoc approach by developers seeking to rezone each site one at a time, resulting in a comprehensive Council position “Maribyrnong Waterfront: A Way Forward”.^{3,4}
- Made the City of Melbourne adopt the Kensington Association’s policy when it comes to community impacts of Metro Rail Tunnel works, and worked closely with local residents to ensure that the Council’s Metro Tunnel liaison team is advocating strongly to the MMRA and contractors.⁵
- With Cr Cathy Oke, brought in the 40km/h speed limit on non-arterial roads, to keep our community and young people safe.⁶
- Initiated a review of Racecourse Road road safety, amenity and urban forest plans, which will come to fruition in the next term.
- Expedited heritage restoration works on the Kensington Town Hall, and secured additional acoustic treatment to enable a wider range of community uses in the hall proper.
- Stopped the Kensington pool plans from being rushed through Council, to allow time for serious consideration of the major ideas coming through community consultation, especially the indoor/outdoor flexible cafe in a park setting, an outdoor kids pool, and the ability to open the main pool hall up to the outdoors as much as possible in summer.

You asked:

What can the Council do to expand the social housing stock? Is there something that you will be advocating for as a councillor?

Addressing our housing crisis is urgent. Young people, families and essential workers are increasingly being priced out of inner Melbourne and while other cities around the world are addressing this, we are lagging behind.

² <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/east-west-plans-spur-council-to-reclaim-green-space-20130911-2tkq3.html>

³ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/MeetingAgendaItemAttachments/789/14121/AUG17%20FMC2%20AGENDA%20ITEM%207.3.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/building-and-development/urban-planning/local-area-planning/Pages/Maribyrnong-Waterfront-A-Way-Forward.aspx>

⁵ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/MeetingAgendaItemAttachments/837/14987/AGENDA%20ITEM%207.2.pdf>

⁶ https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/about-council/committees-meetings/meeting-archive/MeetingAgendaItemAttachments/695/AUG15_FMC1_CONFIRMED_MINUTES.pdf

Our plan for affordable housing is articulated in our *Homes For Everyone* policy,⁷ which includes:

- The construction of affordable housing on Council owned land, leveraging stimulus grants wherever possible, to build 256 affordable or social housing units in the coming term of Council, being 160 new units on top of the 96 already underway.
- Applying low rate inclusionary zoning across the municipality, with higher rate inclusionary zoning in urban renewal areas like Macaulay, scaled up as the recession lifts. In doing so we estimate that this will facilitate 3,000-6,000 new affordable homes within the private market by 2035.
- The establishment of a Melbourne Housing Office, potentially in collaboration with the IMAP Councils, to manage social and affordable housing contributions.
- Rewriting the Arden Structure Plan with the State Government to include the construction of 938 new public housing units by 2025, to coincide with the opening of Arden Station.
- Providing streamlined statutory planning services to fast-track amendments to existing permits to support the provision of affordable housing.

You asked:

Following the August 91 Coode Island fire, the Government Taskforce chaired by John Landy reported that the storage of toxic chemicals at the facility fell far short of international standards. Given the further residential development planned on the banks of the Maribyrnong, will you commit to the public release of the Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan?

I note that while there is no requirement in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* to publish these plans, and while Emergency Management Victoria also does not guide municipal authorities to publish their plans, some Councils publish redacted versions of their plans with emergency management officers' mobile numbers and highly sensitive operational information removed. This seems a reasonable approach and I will pursue it.

In relation to the Maribyrnong Waterfront, I proposed and secured a review of land use and development to ensure a precinct approach and the exploration of land use conflicts and suitability of new residential development in the area, resulting in the report "Maribyrnong Waterfront: A Way Forward".⁸

You asked:

Once Covid-19 Restrictions allow, would you be in favour of rotating FMC meetings in local Town Halls?

⁷ <https://melbournecitygreens.com/policy/> available online from noon Friday 9 October 2020.

⁸ <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/building-and-development/urban-planning/local-area-planning/Pages/Maribyrnong-Waterfront-A-Way-Forward.aspx>

In principle, yes. We proposed this in 2013 but were opposed. My only hesitation is the considerable staffing and live streaming infrastructure costs involved: if the cost to the ratepayer is unacceptably high, perhaps we should hold meetings of a different type in our community halls and civic spaces.

Assuming that the underlying objective is to improve the connection between Council and the communities that Councillors represent, then absolutely the City of Melbourne has a lot of work to do.

This election risks returning the lowest number of actual residents of the City of Melbourne to Council since the modern City of Melbourne Act came into force in 2001, meaning we could elect a Council that will be more aloof from our residential communities than ever.

Your Greens candidates live here. Two are resident in Kensington: David Jeffery and myself. We don't take donations from developers or gambling interests; we fight for you.

Our plan for Kensington is at www.melbournecitygreens.com/Kensington and you can call me on 0421 578 918.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rohan Leppert', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cr Rohan Leppert
Lead Greens Councillor candidate