

RESPONSE TO THE MOUNT NELSON & SANDY BAY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ONLINE SURVEY

Peter Bicevkis – 22.01.24

I refer to the HCC website below, which has links to the Discussion Paper Survey.
<https://yoursay.hobartcity.com.au/mount-nelson-sandy-bay-neighbourhood-plan>

To quote from the current website:

**“Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay
Have Your Say.
Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan**

*A Discussion Paper has been prepared to explore the future of Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay. **This Discussion Paper has been informed by site and desktop analysis, background reports and stakeholder engagement.** It is the first stage of the project and will inform the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.....*

*.....**Reference documents and background reports have been prepared to inform the ideas and directions explored in the Discussion Paper. The following reports have been prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan:***

- *Economic Analysis Report*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Report*
- *Historic Heritage Report*
- ***Discussion Paper Population Forecasts (Added 14/12/23)***

(My **bolding** of relevant text)

THE SURVEY IS INVALID.

The Survey has two serious flaws which invalidate its findings. These include late changes to the major background information provided during the Survey process, and also basing the estimate of population increase and new residences on the assumption that the UTAS relocation will proceed and not basing it on natural population growth.

The Survey documents were released in early November 2023.

Late changes were made to the Survey document’s background reference information well after it was first released (the “*Discussion Paper Population Forecasts*” was added on 14/12/23.) These changes were added 6 weeks after the Discussion Paper and Survey were released, just 2 weeks prior to the Survey responses closing. Those who had already completed surveys prior to the addition of the amended data will have based their answers on the originally supplied incorrect and misleading information.

In addition, after 14/12/23, many respondents would not have read the background reference documents and would still be basing their survey responses on the original, unchanged and incorrect information.

Projected population increases are identified by HCC as the major driving factor behind the need for this neighbourhood plan. HCC have now admitted in the document added on 14/12/23 that the initial figures used in the Discussion Paper are incorrect, are based on the assumption that UTAS will move from the Sandy Bay campus, and severely overstate potential future shortfalls in residences. Despite this acknowledgement of incorrect information, the discrepancy in anticipated population growth is still not mentioned in the text of the Discussion Paper (most particularly on P23 “*What we can expect in Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay in the future*”, which has not been changed).

It is quite obvious that one cannot change the supporting and referenced information, which is being relied on by the respondents in completing their answers, well after the survey has started and is still “live”.

As a result of the above the Survey is a seriously flawed document, and any conclusions derived from its findings cannot be relied on and should be considered invalid.

MISLEADING ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

A further quote from the HCC website regarding the Discussion Paper states:

“If you would like to know more about what a Neighbourhood Plan is, why we need it and how it will be used, you can read through the FAQs, which can be found on the right hand side of this page.”

These FAQs can be found at

<https://yoursay.hobartcity.com.au/mount-nelson-sandy-bay-neighbourhood-plan/widgets/419726/faqs#106035>

One of these FAQs was:

“How were decisions made about what is in the Discussion Paper?

A range of reference documents and background reports (that are listed in the Discussion Paper) helped inform the ideas and directions in the Discussion Paper. The following reports were prepared for the Neighbourhood Plan:

- *Aboriginal heritage report.*
- *Historic heritage report.*
- *Economic analysis report.”*

This answer has still not been changed since the start of the Survey, and does not include the additional *Discussion Paper Population Forecasts*. This is a serious omission.

Another of the FAQs was:

“What does the elector poll result mean for the Neighbourhood Plan?

The City of Hobart received a petition signed by over 1,000 electors of the Hobart Local Government Area for an elector poll to be held on the subject the UTAS relocation into Hobart’s central business district. As the petition met the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 the City was obliged to hold an elector poll.

Elector polls are not binding on a Council and as a body it cannot direct UTAS to act in a certain way.

The elector poll was held in October 2022 (alongside the Local Government elections) – the question asked was:

‘Do you support the UTAS proposal to relocate the Sandy Bay campus into Hobart’s central business district?’

The results of the elector poll were 74% voted no and 26% voted yes.

(My **bolding** of relevant text)

The statement about Council not being able to direct UTAS is misleading. Whilst Council cannot tell UTAS what to do it can influence the planning approval process in its assessment and acceptance/rejection of a Planning Scheme Amendment.

(from the same FAQ)

“While Council does not have the authority to direct UTAS on its location, its role and responsibility as a Planning Authority is to lead the strategic land use planning for the whole community and through this process, to ensure the appropriate planning controls in the planning scheme are in place to facilitate sustainable future development.”

This is also a misleading statement. As Council must endorse any change in use of the Sandy Bay campus prior to its consideration by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, Council does have the authority to reject UTAS's proposal to change its location.

(from the same FAQ)

"Conversely, this process is not directed by a singular stakeholder group such as the development industry or a particular community group."

The overwhelming results of the electoral poll (74% voting against UTAS relocating from the Sandy Bay campus) reflect the views of the total Hobart community, not just a particular community group. However, it does seem that the HCC "process" has actually been directed by a singular stakeholder group, namely UTAS as the developer of the site. Council have given tacit approval to the relocation of UTAS to the CBD by identifying and analysing the Sandy Bay site as a viable potential development site, and have rejected the views of the whole community.

(from the same FAQ)

".....As the planning authority for the whole community, it would be remiss of Council not to acknowledge some of the aging building stock and intentions of the University of Tasmania to relocate some faculties that will likely leave some of the campus underutilised."

The statement regarding the "aging building stock", is incorrect. The oldest buildings are only 60-70 years old and most are more recent. The only factual evidence available is UTAS's own Sandy Bay Building Condition Report 2018, which identifies that over 60% of the Sandy Bay buildings are in relatively good condition, and the remainder can easily be upgraded. This statement by Council also acknowledges that it accepts UTAS's intentions to relocate some faculties.

(from the same FAQ)

"In developing the Discussion Paper, Council has considered the highest and best use of the Sandy Bay campus land that considers a range of issues and stakeholder views as well as the needs of the broader community."

74% of Hobart electors disagree with this statement. Their vote was that the "highest and best use of the Sandy Bay campus land" was to remain as a university. Council has ignored this. Council should acknowledge and respect the wishes of its constituents.

COUNCIL HAS ENDORSED THE UTAS INTENTION TO RELOCATE FROM THE SANDY BAY CAMPUS

At the start of the Discussion Paper, and at the rear of the Summary, Council states:

"This discussion paper is not an endorsement of the UTAS intention to relocate from the Sandy Bay campus, and should not be taken as such."

This statement was only included after a request by Councillors at the HCC meeting of 30.10.2023. However, this statement is demonstrably not correct.

As mentioned earlier, the Discussion Paper accepts that UTAS has the intention to move from the Sandy Bay campus, and also accepts the redevelopment of the campus as proposed in the UTAS draft concept masterplan for the Sandy Bay site.

(Ref: "Population forecasts included in the Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay Neighbourhood Plan – Discussion Paper. 12 December 2023". added to the reference documents on 14.12.23).

Specifically, this added document states:

"It is important to note that when the assumptions were made for the last population forecast undertaken by .id Consulting, there appeared to be a greater level of intent by UTAS to pursue a more extensive level of residential development of the Sandy Bay campus because, at this point in time, the planning scheme amendment to rezone the land had not yet been withdrawn"

from Council. Therefore, assumptions regarding development in terms of yield were partly based on this possible outcome....

and

.... The 2500 dwellings assumed by the UTAS relocation from Sandy Bay was based upon the site capacity detailed in the UTAS draft concept masterplan for the Sandy Bay site, assuming a 100% take up rate.

The UTAS proposed Planning Scheme Amendment was withdrawn early in 2023, well before the Discussion Paper was finalised, and Council certainly had enough time to acknowledge this in the Discussion Paper. But it would appear that Council still assumes the UTAS relocation will occur. The fact that the Sandy Bay campus is considered as a major potential development site indicates that Council still accepts, and by implication “endorses” the UTAS move.

Council endorsement of the UTAS move is also reflected in its “*Central Hobart Plan (structure plan) - DRAFT April 2023*”. This plan, prepared by Council, identifies an “Innovation Precinct” including potential for the move of UTAS to the CBD. To quote:

“The blocks located between Harrington and Campbell Streets, in the Brisbane–Melville corridor are an area in transition due to the redevelopment that has occurred and is proposed by UTAS. Similarly, there is further change happening along Campbell, southeast of Melville Street, as a result of the RHH and UTAS masterplans.

Council has committed to working closely with UTAS and RHH to ensure future planning of land holdings involve considerable engagement with the community and with Council to ensure a cohesive vision for Hobart is developed.” (P70)

The detailed plan for this Precinct identifies the locations for existing and future UTAS buildings as the UTAS Campus. These locations are based on the proposed UTAS masterplan for its relocation to the CBD (P73 of the Structure Plan)

Council also has an established relationship with UTAS, which is documented on the HCC website: <https://www.hobartcity.com.au/Projects/City-shaping-projects/University-of-Tasmania-relationship>

Quotes from this site include:

“City Deal partners will continue engagement with the University of Tasmania to support the relocation of the southern campus.”

and,

“The UTAS City move forms part of the CHPP, specifically around:

City-shaping goal 1: A World Class Capital City, particularly – Idea 3: A place to learn and work

City-shaping goal 2: Public spaces to engage and enjoy

City-shaping goal 4: Connected and accessible city.”

ANTICIPATED SURVEY RESPONSE NUMBERS.

The number of responses to this survey will no doubt only be a small percentage of the total number of residents in the Mt Nelson and Sandy Bay areas, and cannot be relied on as a true indication of community sentiment. The majority of people I know are not even aware of the survey. The timing of the Survey, in the leadup to Christmas, was also very inconvenient for potential respondents. Based on previous HCC surveys, one could anticipate that the number of survey responses may be in the low 100's.

For comparison, the number of survey responses to the two other most recent neighbourhood plans were as follows:

The Central Hobart Plan online survey received 200 responses. (*p6 Discussion Paper Engagement Report*)

The North Hobart Neighbourhood Plan Discussion Paper online survey received 126 responses. (p16 of the *Community Engagement Report*)

Regarding the recent HCC elector poll asking “*Do you support the University of Tasmania’s proposal to relocate the Sandy Bay campus into Hobart’s central business district?*”, there were a total number of 32,002 votes recorded, with 22,631 (74%) opposing the move.

Surely the Council should be respecting the overwhelming (and representative of the whole of the Hobart community) results of the elector poll, and not even be considering the UTAS Sandy Bay campus as a potential development site.

In conclusion, this is a very poorly designed and structured survey, rendered invalid through late changes to its background reference information, and by accepting the possibility of UTAS vacating the Sandy Bay campus, it ignores the overwhelming wishes of the Hobart community.