SANDY BAY/MOUNT NELSON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DISCUSSION PAPER RESPONSES

prepared by Prue Slatyer and Peter Bicevskis

Idea 1 Enhance and protect areas of high biodiversity value

Suggestions

Restore rivulets to their natural forms (no concrete, daylighted) where possible in the strategic green corridors, and rewild these corridors with plants which provide food and habitat. Incrementally introduce WSUD to HCC capital and maintenance works. Enable the lowest sports field at UTAS to function as a stormwater detention basin in the event of heavy rain. Respect the Biodiversity Protection Area in the upper campus at UTAS and protect the whole upper campus from increased development (including services).

Note that if the UTAS Master Plan proceeds, there would be decades of construction which would impact on flora and fauna.

Idea 2 Create an urban environment that is leafy and green

Suggestions

Develop street design strategies to manage conflicting needs for services, street trees and transport, and introduce more street tree planting. Increase tree planting in HCC parks and green spaces e.g. Lower Sandy Bay near the change rooms.

UTAS campus is a significant green space and should be retained and enhanced with further planting. A green environment is important for an educational setting with green spaces demonstrated to increase well-being, creativity and productivity. Preserve the Central Mall on the UTAS middle campus and prevent further tree removal at UTAS. Replant recently removed trees on the lower campus.

Idea 3 Respond to climate change and environmental constraints, including flooding, bushfire and coastal hazards

Suggestions

Climate change mitigation is as important as adaptation. In the introductory 'Climate Safe Communities' of the Discussion Paper (p 5), it states that 'emissions generated from waste and demolition of buildings.... are adding to the problem'..... and 'we need to .....retrofit ....buildings.... and avoid demolition as well as reduce waste'. Therefore the UTAS buildings, the majority of which are fit for purpose and in good condition (UTAS Building Condition Report 2018) should be kept as university buildings and renovated where necessary. This will have much lower carbon emissions than demolition, rebuild and extensive renovation associated with change of use which occurs with relocation of UTAS.

The lower campus of UTAS is in a flood prone hazard area (that is why the sports fields are located there), and is susceptible to sea level rise. The lower campus should not be built on. The upper campus is in a bushfire prone zone, and landslip hazard area and also should not be built on.

A large area of Lower Sandy Bay is also in a flood prone hazard area.

Idea 4 Understand and celebrate connections to Country

Suggestions

Idea 5 Strengthen the economic role of Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay and maintain the local convenience offer

Suggestions

UTAS is the second largest employer in the state, and the UTAS campus in Sandy Bay plays a major economic role in the neighbourhood, both as employer for a diverse range of services (ranging from academia to hospitality) and providing a customer base (students and staff) to support local shops and businesses. Whilst this has been downgraded in the last couple of years, the UTAS move to the city will destroy the economic role UTAS should be playing in the neighbourhood. The proposed move will take a number of decades to complete impacting negatively on the local economy in the process.

Idea 6 Celebrate local historic heritage values

Suggestions

The UTAS campus is a significant cultural landscape associated with being the 'premier university campus' in Tasmania and as such has its own Particular Purpose Zone in the planning scheme (HIPS15). It exemplifies twentieth century (C20) approaches to site planning, landscape architecture and architecture. The campus contains the largest collection of mid-late C20 buildings by Tasmanian architects, and also has a collection of sculpture by notable Tasmanian artists. Two UTAS buildings (Arts Lecture Theatre and Christ College) are listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register and others are architectural award winners. A C20 architectural heritage trial through the campus could be extended to include the many mid C20 houses and other buildings in the neighbourhood by significant Tasmanian architects (e.g. Bob Nation, Mike Viney, Esmond Dorney, Barry McNeill). Wrest Point casino tower is also a great example of architectural heritage and was designed by Melbourne architect Sir Roy Grounds in the 1970s. The Dorney house at Porter Hill could be a small heritage museum focusing on C20 heritage of Sandy Bay and Mount Nelson.

Idea 7 Identify opportunities to facilitate a diverse range of housing

Suggestions

The figure for the increase in number of new residents and hence new dwellings is questionable. This is an increase of 48% from the current population.

Firstly the high number of vacant dwellings needs to be investigated and reduced. For example, severe financial penalties imposed on owners of vacant dwellings who do not have a valid reason, and higher council rates or other disincentives for owners of short stay accommodation.

Pursue 'gentle density' options as stated, rather than mass redevelopment areas. This involves small scale incremental and infill development, such as granny flats, subdivision of large properties and development of vacant sites with medium density housing. Apartment blocks of maximum 3 storeys surrounded by green space will be a more attractive and higher density solution than the current trend of a scattering small detached units in a sea of concrete driveways. Nightingale Housing in Melbourne is an excellent example of socially and environmentally sustainable medium density housing. Another idea from a Melbourne council is council producing a design pattern book for small incremental development and reducing the planning application process for those using these patterns as an incentive.

The current UTAS Master Plan (Feb 2023) and financial feasibility modelling undertaken by Deloittes (Feb 2023) which would form the basis for the UTAS redevelopment does not include any affordable or social housing and has replaced the aged care facility with more housing - all in order to maximise profit.

There are better areas in Hobart than this neighbourhood for the development of medium density housing. UTAS currently owns the large and vacant Websters site and the K and D site both of which would be ideal for medium density housing where greater heights would be acceptable than in Sandy Bay/Mount Nelson. UTAS has also not realised the development potential of the Forestry/Freedom Furniture site which could have been a higher building, accommodating better university facilities and/or student housing.

Idea 8 Identify key redevelopment areas that have the capacity to accommodate growth

Suggestions

Pursuing 'gentle density' does not require key redevelopment areas.

Of the five proposed key redevelopment areas two are on the UTAS campus and would require a planning scheme amendment to change the use of the site. The first UTAS attempt at a planning scheme amendment was rejected by the Tasmanian Planning Commission. This was appealed in the Supreme Court by UTAS, and was again rejected. The second attempt at a planning scheme amendment was withdrawn after UTAS was unable to answer the approximately 155 questions asked by HCC relating to deficiencies in the master plan.

Also as mentioned in the responses to Ideas 1 and 3, due to biodiversity, flooding, bushfire and landslip risk and the additional constraint of steep topography, much of the upper campus has environmental constraints which make it totally unsuitable as a key redevelopment area.

Given this history of failed attempts at amending the planning scheme to support the UTAS move, the fact that 74% of ratepayers in Hobart do not support the UTAS relocation, the serious environmental constraints and the questionable figure used for population increase, why is the UTAS campus identified as comprising two of the five key redevelopment areas?

There are very few opportunities to redevelop Wrest Point without a change of use which also requires a planning scheme amendment. How realistic is this and has the Federal Group agreed? Why change an excellent convention centre? The multi-storey car park is necessary for those visiting Wrest Point, many of whom are tourists travelling by car. The green space on Sandy Bay Road with a beautiful stand of Eucalypts should not be included as part of any key redevelopment area, and its inclusion is inconsistent with Idea 2.

The shopping areas at Sandy Bay and Lower Sandy Bay have some potential for redevelopment. Note that the Lower Sandy Bay shopping area and adjacent housing are in a flood prone hazard area. Suggestions include shop top living or office space, conversion of Magnet Court's central car park area to a treed urban space with food stalls, infill housing at Lower Sandy Bay (excluding the old Antarctic Division flats and heritage listed houses, but including the old service station site).

Idea 9 Improve the waterfront for recreation to optimise spaces for public enjoyment

Suggestions

Great idea but much of the waterfront is privately owned and/or inaccessible at high tide. It would be very expensive to acquire land which is currently privately owned and not a good use of council funds. There are very few opportunities to develop a foreshore trail, except perhaps at Wrest Point.

Idea 10 Provide increased public access and recreation opportunities from the coast to Mount Nelson Lookout.

Suggestions

There are a number of informal tracks through the Truganini Conservation Area, Bicentennial Park and Lambert Gully. These could be formalised with connections to surrounding streets maximised, and include tracks suitable for bikes. The ends of the Mount Nelson bends need good tracks and improved, safer pedestrian access. Improve the tracks through the upper campus of UTAS to Mount Nelson.

Idea 11 Celebrate the special places of Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay by improving the open space network.

Suggestions

Maximise the opportunity of the UTAS site for passive and active recreation.

Connect open spaces to residential areas with good pedestrian and bike access.

There are many sports facilities in the Sandy Bay/Mt Nelson area - UTAS, HCC, schools. Consider sharing these to make them available to a wider range of users, and using them more efficiently. This may result in a re-assessment of the provision of facilities with some becoming redundant, and available for other uses.

Idea 12 Increase the sustainable travel choices in Mount Nelson and Sandy Bay

Suggestions

Increasing density on the scale proposed will put increased pressure on existing roads, reducing opportunities for bike routes as a sustainable travel choice.

A ferry network connecting the Eastern Shore, CBD and Kingston with Sandy Bay with a wharf at Wrest Point providing good access to UTAS. Provision of wharves may provide opportunities for water taxis using solar powered electric boats.

The bike route from the city to Lower Sandy Bay needs huge improvement. Ideally it should connect to the city via a Battery Point walkway (the latest version as proposed by Jim Gandy et al) and a continuous route using the Copenhagen model (kerb separating bikes from traffic). This will require removal of some roadside parking. Use Grosvenor Street (mostly very wide and quiet) to connect UTAS with Sandy Bay for bikes and connect through to the Hobart Rivulet bike track. Connectivity and continuity of bicycle paths is essential.

Smaller, more frequent buses will make public transport more attractive. Smaller buses are essential on the Mount Nelson bends.

HCC should work with the Tasmanian Government to develop creative ways (financial disincentives?) to discourage SUVs - they are more dangerous and less sustainable than smaller cars.

Idea 13 Improve the walkability and pedestrian amenity across the study area

Suggestions

Ensure new developments have active edges to streets to make walking more attractive and safe (through passive surveillance). Ensure street lighting is good on major pedestrian routes so that everyone feels safe walking in the dark. Provide seating at regular intervals along popular footpaths.

Ensure pedestrians routes to schools are safe and convenient to encourage children to walk to school.

Construct the Battery Point walkway as proposed by Jim Gandy et al.

Develop a plan to identify and prioritise key pedestrian routes and focus on making them convenient, attractive and safe.

Idea 14 Investigate road network and other improvements to prioritise public transport

Suggestions

Increasing density on the scale proposed will put increased pressure on existing roads.

The construction of redevelopment projects, including the UTAS move if it proceeds, would impact negatively on the road network for decades.

See suggestions for Idea 12.

Other

The disclaimer on the inside cover of the Discussion Paper states that it 'is not an endorsement of the UTAS intention to relocate from the Sandy Bay campus, and should not be taken as such.'

This statement is inconsistent with two areas of the UTAS campus being identified as key redevelopment areas and with the plans colour coded to show the central and part of the lower campus as 'renewal sites for mixed use infill'. This statement is therefore incorrect.