

## **Spit Junction Master Plan**

Response to Public Exhibition of Plan from Warren Yates [REDACTED]

### **Summary of Submission**

The master plan produced by the consultants should be seen as a discussion starter as we move as a community to decide what we want to see happening at Spit Junction.

Council should now take the lead in furthering that discussion and committing to having a plan ready for adoption within a reasonably tight time frame.

A master plan is important as without it options that could bring significant long term benefits to the Mosman community will be cut-off. Instead of each development contributing to a coherent whole, there will be piecemeal development of sites under the existing restrictive zonings and controls. Spit Junction is quite unique in Mosman and has enormous potential to address some of our present and likely future challenges. Whether that potential is realised is up to the present Council

A master plan is urgent because The Greater Union site, one of the largest holdings in the area is ready for development.

It is also urgent in another sense and that is the fact the Military Road heritage shopping strip is in serious decline as a result of high rents and competition. To reverse the decline Mosman needs both more locals (a bigger population) and it needs to build a reputation as the destination of choice for high end retail. To earn such a reputation something has to be done about the very mediocre gateway to Mosman – Spit Junction and more parking needs to be provided.

The present Council appears to be putting a master plan for Spit Junction in the 'too hard' basket and concentrating its efforts on redevelopment of the Council land holdings facing Alan Border Oval. For the best possible outcome however, clearly the Master Plan should be developed first and only then should Council consider how to develop its land holding, in a way consistent with the plan.

## **Full submission**

Council is right in recognising the significance of the Spit Junction locality to Mosman's future development and thus the need for a master plan. A master plan provides incentives for site consolidation and ensures that development now does not compromise future development. Putting it more positively, as sites become available, each new development contributes in a way that ensures the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Council has taken the right approach is commissioning consultants to come up with one possible master plan without actually endorsing it. The consultant's plan should be seen as a discussion starter, a way of getting the community engaged with the long term objective being to come up with a master plan that has widespread community support.

## **Why a master plan is needed**

My first objective in making this submission is simply to urge Council to continue to put resources into developing the master plan until it considers it has sufficient community buy-in to adopt it. To go forward without a master plan for Spit Junction is not an option. This is because, more than any other part of Mosman, Spit Junction has potential to address the challenges that Mosman is likely to face over the following decades. This is because:

- a small number of owners account for a large amount of the land (Mosman Council, and the owners of the Greater Union, Garrison, Energy Australia and Toyota sites;
- the area has little heritage value and not particularly attractive at present;
- it is the highest point in Mosman, thus building up has potential for 360 degree views;
- it is a key transport interchange and thus offers potential for attracting residents who prefer not to own a car;
- it is a short flat walk to shops, café's, restaurants, the library and the art gallery and thus ideal for later life residents;
- It is a perfect site for a signature building

Not to exploit this significant potential to advance Mosman would be a gross dereliction of duty on the part of Council.

## **What a good master plan could achieve**

- Revitalisation of Mosman as one of Sydney's premier shopping destinations
- Reduced traffic congestion through provision of parking
- Enhanced public realm facilities (Library, Art Gallery etc)
- Easier access to the Spit Junction transport node for all Mosman residents through the provision of more parking for cars and cycles and better pedestrian and cycle access
- A public space for community events and gatherings worthy of Mosman

We don't have to look far to see examples of what good master planning can do

- The Totem development in Balgowlah (Stocklands)
- The Mitre 10 development in Cammeray (Stocklands)
- The Toothy brewery development in Broadway (Frasers Property)

## **What would make the master plan durable?**

To be durable, the master plan needs to not just address likely challenges, it also needs to be sufficiently adaptable to deal with both unforeseen challenges and predicted challenges that don't eventuate.

Some of the likely challenges facing Mosman are

- competition from newer shopping developments in neighbouring suburbs
- changes in the nature of bricks and mortar retail to meet the challenge of on line retail
- more people working from home as broadband technology evolves
- an aging population
- shifts in the location and types of housing that people find attractive
- rising fuel prices causing a decrease in the percentage of trips made by car
- less time spent at home and more in restaurants and cafes
- changes in Mosman demographics and consequentially the services needed
- pressure from the NSW government for Mosman to have more dwellings and more jobs

The master plan needs to accommodate three possible traffic scenarios:

- a tunnel from the Spit diverts the bulk of through traffic away from Mosman
- a light rail or rapid bus system provides much improved public transport and reduces traffic through Mosman
- Traffic through Mosman remains at its current saturation level

Since nothing is likely to happen for at least a decade it would seem prudent to plan on the basis that the through traffic is a fact of life, but have the plan adaptable should a tunnel from the Spit or a good public transport system be put in place.

## **Some fundamental issues**

Mosman has evolved as a premium shopping location offering something that no mall can emulate – quality, heritage, strip shopping. If a decline is to be avoided it must keep its current customers and attract more. The additional customers can be either additional residents or additional visitors from other areas. To attract customers from elsewhere and avoid losing Mosman residents to competitor sites Mosman can either differentiate itself from other centres, or outcompete other them on the own terms.

At present Mosman appears to be evolving down the differentiation route – by having a high proportion of shops that are one-offs (not part of a chain) and boutique in nature. The fundamental question is whether this is sustainable or whether the differentiation needs to come off a base which competes with other centres on their own terms – ie by having a big supermarket.

If the additional customers are to be Mosman residents – they will need to be accommodated somewhere. Spit Junction is the ideal location for these dwellings for all the reasons stated above.

Spit Junction offers the opportunity for increasing the diversity of housing choices available to people who want to live in Mosman

## **The crucial role of parking**

Whatever the evolutionary route chosen Mosman needs better car parking. With underground parking at Spit Junction that was directly accessible from Spit and Military Road it would be easy people in cars travelling through Mosman to stop off in Mosman. It would also make Mosman a much more attractive option for shoppers from other suburbs. By providing direct access from and too Spit and Military roads, circulating traffic in Mosman would be reduced. People would park at Spit junction and walk down the heritage strip to do their shopping. The car park at Spit Junction could serve as a park and ride hub where people could catch public transport into the city on weekdays and to the Zoo and Balmoral and weekends.

Traffic through Mosman could be further reduced by having a complementary car park in the vicinity of Centenary Circle. These two car parks, one accessible from Spit and Military Rad and the other from Rangers Ave and Avenue Road would nicely book end the heritage shopping areas

A large underground car park at Spit Junction could be used for a light rail or metro station in the future if cars became less significant as a mode of transport. It could also provide parking sufficient to meet the needs of occupants of how ever many dwellings NSW Planning deemed to be Mosman's quota (likely to be high according to a recent Grattan Institute report on the productivity of cities).

## **Where and how to build the underground car park**

It could be funded from developer levies - allowing significant height buildings on a number of the key sites around Spit Junction.

The GU cinema, the low rise shops between Spit Road and Civic Lane and the Council building are all prime candidates for demolition. With the right incentives these three sites could be demolished simultaneously creating space for diverting traffic while the underground car park was constructed.

## **Some other elements of a master plan worth considering**

- A signature building on the site between Civic lane and Spit Road such as the Fred and Ginger building in Prague
- Turning the Spit Rd shops backwards and utilising Hordern and Civic Lanes as a pedestrian circulation route like Kalverstraat in Amsterdam. Rezone the houses in Heydonstreet to allow commercial development on both sides of Hordern Lane.
- The above plus bridging over Spit Rd to make an elevated grand public space
- A high quality transport interchange
- Rethinking where the Library, Art Gallery and the Green open space are located to create a more vibrant heart of Mosman. Lots of examples of how it can be done by my favourite is Friedrichshafen in Germany

The master plan must provide the incentives to consolidate and develop sites. Only then will the funds be generated to provide the parking and high quality public spaces.

## **Bringing the Community on board**

The consultation process should start by seeking a consensus on more fundamental issues than what would you like to see at Spit Junction.

- Do we want Mosman's heritage shopping strip to be one of Sydney's premier high end shopping destinations or would we prefer it to cater only for local residents?
- If the former how much parking do we need to provide for out-of-Mosman visitors?
- If the latter do we need more local residents and hence more local dwellings to boost commercial viability of Mosman's retail sector?
- Are we happy to travel out of Mosman to get access to a state of the art supermarket in return for Mosman retaining its village character?
- Do we want to provide more variety in the size and type of dwellings available in Mosman to meet the needs of people who for example don't want to have a garden or even very much space, but do want to live where they can walk to shops, cafes restaurants and sports facilities, and have good access to public transport?
- Do we need to provide parking for residents who live in such locations?
- Are we aware of other locations through which a major traffic artery runs that have been well planned and are attractive?
- What public facilities do we want to have in Mosman – how big should the Library be and what type of facilities should it provide? Same questions re the Art gallery and Council one stop shop?
- What office space does Council need and where might it be located if not where it currently is?
- How could the master plan be crafted so that we don't cut-off options for future transport infrastructure and Spit Junctions 'works' whatever transport infrastructure we get.
- How can the master plan be crafted so that it works as technology changes over the next 25 years change how we work, shop, play and get around

By grappling with these questions community members will come to appreciate the inevitable trade-offs involved in coming up with any plan, including doing nothing. A community fully informed about the trade-offs and able to see the issue from the view point of different stakeholder groups including future residents and future generations is less likely to be resistant to any change in the status quo.

Warren Yates  
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