



Spit Junction Master Plan - outcomes from first round of consultation

Overview

This report provides a succinct consolidated summary of the key points and themes identified during the first round of consultation undertaken to inform development of a new Spit Junction Master Plan. This report is not intended to provide a detailed process outline or rationale for consultation activities, but provides a summary of issues raised through consultation. The report will help inform the development of a draft Master Plan for the renewal of Spit Junction.

Background

Mosman Council is in the process of developing a Master Plan for Spit Junction, which includes a feasibility study for Council owned land around the Civic Centre.

JBA Planning (JBA) has been appointed by Council to prepare the Master Plan and identify the most feasible way to redevelop the Civic Centre site. The Master Plan will provide a framework for coordinated development in Spit Junction with redevelopment of the Civic Centre serving as a catalyst for renewal.

Straight Talk, as part of the JBA team, is leading the consultation process to ensure stakeholder and community input and involvement is reflected in the Master Plan. As part of this consultation process the project team:

- Held an information stall at the Mosman Markets on 3 March 2012
- Ran two workshops for different audiences:
 - > Business Breakfast workshop on 14 March 2012 from 7.30-9am for local business owners and staff members
 - > Community workshop on 15 March 2012 from 6.30-9pm for local residents
- A series of blog posts inviting online comment.

Approximately, 80 people dropped by the market stall and either spoke to staff directly or recorded a 'vox-pop' on camera, about 50 people attended the business workshop and 40 people attended the community workshop. The blog posts attracted 26 comments via the website, which was visited a total of 856 times by 622 unique visitors in March only. There were 43 followers on The People's Junction Twitter page, 115 'likes' on the Mosman Council Facebook page and 1,868 Mosman Council Twitter followers at the end of the March consultation period.

This report summarises the feedback from all the above mentioned consultation activities. References to participants relate to all people who participated in consultation activities, not just those who attended a face to face event.

Promotion of events

Council undertook promotion of the events in the following ways:

- 1 Personally addressed letters sent to:
 - All property owners and occupants in the study area (1,344 properties)

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- Randomly selected properties throughout the Mosman Local Government Area (427 properties)
- Local community groups, schools, government departments and neighbouring councils (42 organisations)
- Commercial real estate agents in Mosman outside of the study area (six agencies).
- 2** Letters, flyers and posters hand delivered with a personal explanation to all ground floor shops and businesses along Spit and Military Roads within the study area (150 businesses).
- 3** Two advertisements in the Mosman Daily on 23 February and 8 March 2012.
- 4** Information posted online:
 - Council main website - www.mosman.nsw.gov.au
 - Council's planning webpage - www.mosmanplanning.net
 - Facebook - The Peoples Junction
 - Twitter.
- 5** Posters displayed at various locations within the study area.
- 6** Urban Planning e-newsletter (482 subscribers).

Consultation objectives

The objectives of the consultation activities were broadly to:

- Increase awareness across the community that the planning process was underway and promote opportunities for people to participate
- Provide information about the project and planning process
- Invite input and participation from a wide range of community members
- Obtain input to and feedback on draft planning principles and ideas
- Identify possible project ideas and initiatives that could be considered.

Key themes and issues

Future character

Participants were asked to think about how they desired Spit Junction to be in the future after positive change and renewal. A full comprehensive list of ideas has been given to the project team as a basis for developing a future character statement for the Junction. The word cloud below neatly summarises the 'vision' for the Junction identified through consultation.

It should be noted that a small number of participants were not convinced that positive change could be achieved through the master planning process unless traffic was diverted away from the area. Other participants felt that short term improvements should be prioritised over long term change. For example, there was a view that footpaths needed to be improved on Spit and Military Roads to remove trip hazards and that safety of pedestrian crossings needed to be improved.

Connections - Better connected community

One priority of the Master Plan is to ensure Spit Junction becomes 'better connected' for pedestrians. The project team presented an idea to provide a network of laneways that would:

- Provide a secondary network of connections away from the busy roads in the study area
- Provide new through-site pedestrian connections in conjunction with the redevelopment of key sites
- Encourage key pedestrian movement corridors through active frontages and awnings
- Reinforce a connected street network that supports the community and attracts/sustains economic activity and makes streets and lanes more attractive for walking, aesthetically appealing and comfortable to use.

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the idea of creating a network of laneways to improve accessibility. There was more support than opposition to this idea, but participants did have some concerns, specifically around the need for:

- Truck deliveries to be considered to support business needs and ensure laneway loading and deliveries can be accommodated
- Alternative parking to be provided to offset any loss of parking in laneways
- High amenity and the need for laneways to provide safe and attractive thoroughfares for pedestrians - they were identified as currently being unattractive and unsafe
- Building controls to promote activation to ensure land uses front directly onto laneways
- Laneways to 'lead somewhere' rather than just be another walking path.

There was however, overwhelming participant support for the creation of a new laneway network which would redirect pedestrian activity away from Military and Spit Roads. Suggestions included:

- Look at Vulcan Lane in Auckland, New Zealand or Row Street in Eastwood as good examples of laneways with an integrated mix of cafes and shops and quality public space
- Focus on the northern end of Mosman, which some participants believed has been cut off from the rest of the Junction - pedestrian tunnels or laneways could be established to improve connectivity
- Enable food and liquor licensing in laneway areas to compete with Neutral Bay
- Block off Clifford Street to create a new plaza with the Greater Union development
- Block off Brady Street to create a new plaza to improve connectivity and amenity around Boronia
- Make parking more convenient to encourage people to stay longer
- Upgrade Horden Place, which some participants felt had become run down - the shops could be reversed to increase laneway usage and buildings could be restored
- Develop outdoor seating and awnings to encourage active laneway usage
- Myagah Mews is used well - the other lanes could be designed to replicate it
- Restrict cars to the primary road network and dedicate laneways for cyclists and pedestrians.

Participants were also asked to identify other ideas that could improve connectivity within Spit Junction. The vast majority of comments related to improving parking and the need to significantly increase parking within the Junction. There was a common view that the lack of parking impacted people's desire to shop in the area and limited business viability. A number of people felt that addressing traffic problems had to be a priority as they felt it was a prerequisite for renewal. Many

participants also felt that new developments would bring more cars to the Junction and further aggravate the traffic problems.

In addition to suggestions about parking, it was suggested that another pedestrian overpass or underpass be built and that bus stops on Military and Spit Roads be improved. There was support to improve the pedestrian connection to Bridgepoint at street level. Other suggestions related to the need for better cycle facilities and paths through the Junction, with the preference being for cycle lanes to be established on secondary roads to not impact traffic flow on primary roads.

It was noted that the State Government was working to create Bus Rapid Transport along Spit Road to improve public transport services on the North Shore. To support rapid transit services, it was noted that Council was planning a bus interchange utilising part of the cinema site and Clifford Street. The majority of participants supported the idea of rapid transit services and the new bus interchange and thought that traffic flow would improve. However, several participants were concerned that the interchange site was not the right location with one suggestion that it should be built on the corner of Cowles and Military Roads (on the old KFC site), to ease traffic coming from the Northern Beaches as well as from Mosman.

Public Space - Better places and spaces

A key aim of the Master Plan is to create more vibrant public domain and spaces for community interaction. The project team identified an idea to increase public space by reconfiguring pedestrian crossings across Military and Spit Roads to create a 'scramble crossing' linking the north and south sides of the Junction and providing a new paved plaza area to the front of the Civic Centre. It was noted that the scramble crossing could only happen with State Government support.

Workshop participants were asked to provide feedback on the idea of creating a scramble crossing to create a useable and functional public space for people. Participants were also asked to come up with other suggestions that they believed would improve the pedestrian experience.

There was much support for the implementation of a scramble crossing as people felt it would considerably improve pedestrian safety, similar to the benefits achieved from the scramble crossing in Archer Street, Chatswood. However, there was concern that the State Government would not support the crossing idea and that nothing would be done to improve the current problem. One compromise suggestion was for a tidal flow scatter crossing to be in place only during off-peak times, with the existing traffic controls in place to optimise traffic flows during peak hours. If the scramble crossing is not viable, another suggestion was to remove the two stage crossing. In order to determine the viability of the scramble crossing, the project team need to seek in principle support from the State Government to provide direction to the master planning process.

There was also some support for another overpass or underpass to be built, possibly near Punch Street, if the scramble crossing was not developed to provide alternative pedestrian access. There was a suggestion to build a new covered upper level deck across both sides of Spit Road with shops and community facilities connecting Bridgepoint and the Civic Centre to allow pedestrian circulation above street level and away from the traffic. However, other people felt that for accessibility purposes all pedestrian access should ideally remain at ground level and did not support the idea of focussing pedestrian activity above street level. Some people felt that instead of creating new pedestrian crossings, the existing pedestrian access points could be better integrated and made more accessible and open - this comment was made in relation to the Bridgepoint overpass. It was also suggested that the appearance of the Bridgepoint overpass needed to be improved.

Other comments relating to public space included that:

- The pedestrian crossing at Brady Street could be improved
- Crossing times could be extended, to give more time for mobility impaired pedestrians to cross major roads

- Signage along Spit and Military Roads could be improved to increase pedestrian safety
- New paving could improve amenity for pedestrians
- Trip hazards on footpaths along both sides of Spit and Military roads could be reduced and footpaths could be upgraded to improve safety and amenity for pedestrians
- Planter boxes, mature trees or acoustic installations could help buffer the traffic noise along Spit Road.

Activity - Reinvesting in urban life

A key objective of the Master Plan is to enable land use change and new development within Spit Junction. To turn the tide of vacant shop fronts in the Junction, the Master Plan needs to provide a framework to encourage change through public and private investment. In an area like the Junction, with high property values, development incentives in the form of height and density need to be provided to encourage landowners to amalgamate sites and redevelop them. While a blanket approach to building height and density controls was not proposed for Spit Junction, the project team identified a number of key sites clustered around the Spit and Mosman Road intersection to underpin renewal and serve as catalysts for new development and investment. The idea was to focus development height on these landmark sites and for them to provide a new hub of activity within the Junction.

Participants, particularly community members, raised some concerns about increased building heights. However, business representatives generally were more supportive of increased heights and supported new development. The latter seemed to have a better understanding of the correlation between renewal and development and supported provision of controls for increased floor space ratios and development densities.

Participants were asked to nominate a height limit for key sites in Spit Junction. The majority of participants identified that they could accept buildings of between four and ten storeys in height with a smaller number of participants wanting either buildings no higher than two or three storey or buildings of 20 plus storeys. There was no support for blanket height controls and recognition of the need for a case by case analysis of sites to identify those suitable for higher development. The views about building heights ranged significantly:

- There was equal support by participants who identified they would be prepared to see either four to six storeys and eight to ten storeys
- A minority of participants identified that no additional height would be desirable and that heights should be capped at two to three storeys
- A smaller minority of participants suggested heights of 18 or 25 storeys on condition that such development provided land for community facilities or public space.

People that opposed increasing densities and building heights were concerned that:

- The 'village' character of the area would be lost if significant new multi-storey development was to occur
- There were already many vacant buildings and introducing new development was unnecessary as there was no demand for more retail or commercial space
- Solid high rise development over four storeys would create a canyon wind tunnel down Spit Road
- High rise development would make Mosman look like Dee Why, Bondi Junction or Chatswood
- The Junction was already dense enough and an increase in density would be unnecessary
- Increased height on select sites would set an undesirable precedent for excessive height across the whole area.

People that supported increased height on select sites suggested that:

- Heights would be acceptable as long as buildings were architecturally designed to be aesthetically pleasing
- High buildings should be orientated to take advantage of views
- Buildings should be designed to step up heights to reduce the bulk and massing of the built form
- Tangible community benefits should be provided as a trade-off for increased height
- Solar mapping needed to be undertaken to identify suitable locations for high rise development to ensure the amenity of adjoining properties was not adversely affected
- Due to economic realities that incentives should be provided to enable sites to be consolidated for renewal.

Participants were asked to identify other ideas that would encourage private investment and renewal in the area. Participants suggested that:

- A boutique hotel could be developed on the Greater Union site or the existing Civic Centre site to encourage tourism
- Shops on Spit Road to Ourimbah Road could be redeveloped
- Development controls could encourage facades along Spit Road to be upgraded to improve the visual amenity of the strip
- Opportunities to provide more residential land use to increase the number of people living in the Junction could be considered
- Incentives could be provided to contribute land or funds for community good in return for increased height
- Underground parking could be introduced at Allan Border Oval or Council site to encourage private investment because developers would know that parking issues would be resolved. If underground parking at the Oval is unfeasible, then a new public multi-storey parking centre could be considered on another Council site
- Three hour free parking could be provided
- Opportunities for mixed use development with residential uses on top of commercial or retail uses could be encouraged.

Participants generally recognised that Council needed to be at the forefront of change and provide incentives to encourage landlords to sell to private developers and that Council owned sites would be a catalyst for renewal in the area.

Participants gave feedback on the proposed key sites for renewal and on the idea of creating landmark buildings in the heart of the Junction. In principle, participants supported change and renewal and recognised that there were opportunities to achieve renewal through redevelopment of key sites. Participants identified the opportunity to reinforce the commercial and civic role of the Junction in Mosman. However, there were mixed views about significant development on key sites and no concrete feedback was received about building heights to facilitate amalgamation of sites. The following comments were made about key sites:

- General support for a new arcade or plaza linking through to improve access to Bridgepoint Shopping Centre

- General support for redevelopment of the Greater Union site, provided new parking integrated with the new development and support for creation of a new plaza and bus interchange in front of Clifford Street
- There was concern that redevelopment of key sites would aggravate the traffic issues and that the road and traffic network would need to be addressed before any development could occur
- General support for redevelopment of Civic Centre site, but there was a perception it had recently been refurbished and a view that many of the buildings were well used and functioned well. Concern that development would need to be funded through a rate rise and some participants did not support an increase in rates
- Bridgepoint Shopping Centre should be recognised as a key site and integrated with the Master Plan to recognise that the centre needed to be redeveloped
- The examples of landmark buildings identified by the project team were thought by some participants to be out of character for Spit Junction who felt the architecture needed to be more appropriate for the area.

Community - Reinventing the civic heart

The aim of redeveloping the Civic Centre is to ensure that it becomes the 'civic heart' of the community and a contemporary hub of community life and cultural activity as well as acting as a key driver of growth, change and development within the Mosman community. The project team presented an idea for financially feasible redevelopment of Council owned sites to provide a mix of new buildings with a defined active civic edge fronting onto Mosman Square and Military Road and a quieter residential edge fronting onto Mosman Park.

Participants provided feedback on how Council owned sites could be redeveloped and on the sort of facilities they believed should be part of a multi-purpose civic centre. Two examples of multi-use civic centres that participants identified were the Surry Hills Library and the Wexford Council Building in Ireland.

Community facilities

There was strong support for developing a space for public entertainment, such as a multi-use community hall with a stage, or an outdoor amphitheatre or open air theatre. It was suggested that the community hall could also be used for Council meeting rooms. There was also some support to redevelop the old town hall into a performing arts centre, to upgrade and expand the library and to retain the existing art gallery building.

Other suggestions for community facilities included provision of more public plazas, outdoor street furniture, street trees and landscaping, an arbour or awnings to provide shade to public areas, public toilets and a parents room, bike facilities and bike paths, facilities for children and teenagers, lighting, public art, automatic teller machines on both sides of the Junction and free WIFI in public areas.

Uses

There was strong support for outdoor dining and more small bars and restaurants to activate the area at night and compete with Neutral Bay and Cremorne. One suggestion was to utilise the area outside the Civic Centre for alfresco dining and to relax Council controls to enable businesses to utilise outdoor space for pavement dining. There was also interest in having a large supermarket located in the area. Some participants recognised that Fourth Village Provedore was a good use that had helped to revitalise the area.

Markets

There was concern that the public space that accommodates the Mosman Market may be reduced, which would be detrimental to stall holders. One suggestion was to open Mosman Square to Military

Road to create a better space for the markets. There was some support to ensure that redevelopment works would not unduly impact stall holders or the ongoing operation of the markets.

Council offices

There was strong support to design the new Council office building to be an inviting 'people friendly' building with connected external and internal public spaces to open up the building to the community. It was suggested that the building be designed to have a more effective ingress/egress area. It was also suggested that ground floor uses should be designed to be active and not closed off from the community.

Some participants did not feel the Civic Centre should be redeveloped and felt that it had recently been restored or that Council should reuse existing vacant buildings in the area instead of expanding commercial space at the Civic Centre.

Architecture

There were mixed views about appropriate architectural styles, with some participants thinking new development had to be sympathetic to existing heritage architectural styles and others thinking contemporary architecture would provide opportunity for more landmark, cutting-edge buildings to be established.

Car parking

There was strong support to increase the provision of public parking to drive renewal and support local businesses. The majority of participants felt that parking was key to securing positive change. There was some support to optimise the use of the space behind the Civic Centre that is currently used as an at-grade car park by providing basement parking.

Increased population

There were opposing opinions in regards to residential development being integrated with a new civic office building and some support for residential land use fronting Mosman Park.

A number of participants supported increased residential development within the Junction on key sites on the basis that additional people would support business viability and make the area more lively during the day and night. However, other participants liked the existing appeal of the area and did not think increased residential densities would improve the area.

Funding civic renewal

There was concern that public assets would have to be sold in order to fund the development of the Civic Centre. There was also concern that a rate rise would have to occur if the Civic Centre was to be redeveloped. Some participants felt very strongly about Council ensuring that no rate rise should occur. Other participants supported commercially viable redevelopment of the Civic Centre.

Conclusion and next steps

This report provides a succinct consolidated summary of the key points and themes identified during the first round of consultation to inform preparation of a draft Master Plan for Spit Junction. Consultation activities included a stall at the Mosman Markets, a business breakfast workshop, a community workshop and ongoing blog posts.

While there was consensus that the Junction had become rundown and needed renewal there were mixed views about some planning issues, specifically building heights. The paradox was that there was widespread support for renewal but limited understanding, or acceptance, of the development drivers needed to facilitate private investment and bring about positive change.

While the value of master planning was accepted, there was a widely held view that some changes, for example to improve pedestrian safety or footpath maintenance, were needed over the short term and could not be delayed until after a master plan had been adopted.

Generally, local business and landowners seemed to be more supportive of renewal in the Junction. They were prepared to see an increase in building heights and densities to secure renewal of the area. There was more opposition to increased building heights from community members, with the majority supporting building heights between four and ten storeys. Some community members felt that an increase in height would change the feel of the area and that the roads could not cope with an increase in traffic associated with significant new development.

The main issues that community members referred to were traffic and parking problems in and around the Junction and the need to improve the parking situation to underpin renewal.

A number of participants felt that increased residential development in Spit Junction would be positive and would bring more people to activate the area, which would assist renewal. While others felt that residential development would change the unique feel and character of the area.

The strong majority of participants were very supportive of the scramble crossing and thought it would work extremely well in Spit Junction, but there was some scepticism that the State Government would support implementation of the crossing. There was also support for creation of new public plazas around Brady Street and Clifford Street and to expand and improve the public space around Mosman Square.

There was majority support to redevelop laneways so that pedestrian traffic can be redirected from Spit and Military Roads and to provide a safe and aesthetically appealing secondary network for shoppers and retailers alike.

There was support for the concept of redeveloping key sites, particularly to provide an arcade link to Bridgepoint. There was provisional support for redevelopment of the Civic Centre site, subject to it not being funded through a rate rise.

All feedback identified through the consultations has been provided to the project team who will use it to help refine the concept plans and draft Master Plan for the development of Spit Junction and the Civic Centre.

The project team will present a draft Master Plan to the community in mid-2012 and another round of consultation activities will be held to ensure community participation in the next stages of the planning process. The relationship between height and renewal should be further explored through the next stage of consultation and community feedback should be sought on development controls for the area. The next round of consultation will also provide an opportunity to get feedback on concept designs for redevelopment of the Civic Centre.