

# Groundswell

## Waterloo Metro Quarter exhibitions: The good, the bad and the ugly round table event

18 January, 2019

### Key points discussed

<b>VENUE:</b> The Factory Community Centre, 67 Raglan St, Waterloo
<b>FACILITATOR:</b> Adam Antonelli, Counterpoint Community Services
<b>NOTE TAKER:</b> Nina Serova, Inner Sydney Voice

The Groundswell Redfern Waterloo Agencies are a coalition of non-government agencies (NGOs) listening to, working with, and assisting local residents to understand what the government plans for Waterloo and to have their say about what happens in their neighbourhood. Established in 2011, Groundswell also operates the Groundswell Redfern Waterloo Facebook page and the morning teas at 10.30am on the last Friday of the month at The Factory. Since early 2016, the coalition agencies have met monthly to push for, and guide, independent community capacity building as well as ensuring that the government be accountable during the redevelopment process of the Waterloo Estate. Groundswell's successes include securing funding from FACS to NGOs for community capacity building and community development positions during the master planning. The positions operate independently of LAHC, with NGOs employing the workers, while their work is guided by the Groundswell agencies. Groundswell agencies have also been working with academics and other agencies to support tenants and deliver the best possible outcomes.

### Document Purpose

This document is a write-up of all the notes taken during the Groundswell roundtable discussion on Friday the 18<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019. It is not intended to be a transcript. The document lays out the general discussion only, including disagreements, debates and opinions. Furthermore, any notes recorded does not indicate that those participating all agreed nor does it represent the views of any participating agency or person(s).

## Parking and traffic

- City of Sydney (City) mandates 0-427 spaces as a minimum range of available parking for the area, but this needs to be considered in the context of how the redevelopment will increase traffic in the area. Issues of traffic and parking should be considered in tandem.
- Car usage is impacted by factors other than parking availability, such as cost of petrol, registration. More cars will also create pollution.
- It is suggested that parking should be minimised, but also acknowledged that more broadly, residents' views on the issue are diverse. Parking tends to be a valorising issue in redevelopments generally.
- It is necessary to consider the cumulative traffic impact of both developments.
- The total number of vehicles from the estate is projected to be 4,200 (figure provided by UrbanGrowth NSW) – and this is likely to increase with the inflow traffic from Westconnex.
- The City has maximum car parking rates. However, these controls were not made for a site that includes a metro. If they did, the number would be lower.
- City recommends a maximum of 60 car spaces dedicated to carers', emergency and services drop offs.
- In considering traffic, it is necessary to think beyond the intersection at the metro and account for the entire estate.
- UrbanGrowth is pushing for the maximum allowance of parking that the City of Sydney mandates (427 parking spots). This has largely been pitched as responding to the local community. However, there is nothing to suggest whether even a portion of these parking spots will go to social/affordable housing tenants. Thus, it is possible that the entire capacity of parking will go to private dwellings.
- A combined traffic study would be useful – UrbanGrowth's current traffic assessment of the Botany Road intersection is that it is failing and will continue to do so following the redevelopment.
- There are 1,320 total bike spots proposed, 700 for residents. Views vary on whether it is best for this number to be as high as possible, or if this is an ambitious target.
- The bike parking types proposed will include metal racks, as well as lock up/vertical areas.
- Bike parking alone is not sufficient infrastructure to support cyclists. There needs to be comprehensive traffic routes/safety strategies in place.
- The plan suggests that the Raglan/Botany/Henderson intersection will be appropriate for pedestrians. However, crossing the arterial road traffic may take around 6 minutes for pedestrians.
- Pedestrian traffic was also raised as a concern, particularly movement across Botany road to the Technology Park.
- It will be important to separate bike paths from pedestrians – this was a concern raised by residents in the options testing for the Estate.

### **Resident views**

- Participating residents argued that parking should be minimal to reduce car usage and therefore traffic/air pollution.
- There should be as little car spaces available as possible – car spaces should only be dedicated to emergency vehicles

- Traffic on Botany Road will be too heavy

## Affordable housing

- The affordable housing dwellings are mandated to be provided as affordable housing for a minimum of ten years. This was raised as a concern by participants who would like to see a longer-term vision for affordable housing in the area given the affordability crisis in Sydney.
- The baseline investigation states that 43% of households within the Waterloo SSP are experiencing rental stress and can therefore be eligible for affordable housing under SEPP 2009 ARP SEPP if their income is lower than 120% of greater Sydney median income.
- Very low income is people who earn up to 50% of median income, low income 50-80%, moderate 80-120%. The issue with the study is that calculations on rental affordability are done with the very top of the bracket. They defined a very low income person as someone earning 50%, low income 80% and moderate income 120% when these households would be a dollar away from moving up to the next income bracket. Thus, the concern here is that the study does not use the correct income brackets.
- It is likely that the income mix will be left to the market to determine.
- It is suggested that submissions request 10% affordable housing with 5% guaranteed for Aboriginal housing.
- Social and affordable housing are expressed in the number of dwellings. However, ideally this breakdown should be reflected with a measure of the amount of bedrooms, as 70 dwellings could possibly be all studios/1 bedroom apartments.
- There was no health impact statement provided, including in relation to effects of small dwellings.
- Small apartments may increase affordability, but they also create other problems – such as health issues. There was some debate surrounding this, given that an increase in smaller dwellings may not address the needs of lower income households, while creating access for double income households/first home buyers
- Residents may find small apartments isolating (for example, family visits would be difficult) and they are not suited to those with walkers. Unregistered tenants sharing the housing currently are not properly accounted for.
- UrbanGrowth argues that its social and affordable housing allocation exceeds that of the City's. However, the City's affordable housing target is across all developments (private + public) and the Metro Quarter is public land. Thus, there is an argument that the affordable housing component of the Metro Quarter should be increased significantly.
- Social housing is referred to as '70 dwellings' in the plan. If the number of private residential dwellings should increase (and this is possible following the rezoning), so should the social housing allocation. Social housing should make up 10% of residential floor space.
- The need for social housing in NSW is 140,000 dwellings now and 76,000 in the next 20 years to keep up with growing population (AHURI). In the context of Waterloo (Metro Quarter and Estate) being potentially the biggest urban renewal project in Sydney/the state, the project will only deliver 355 additional social and affordable dwellings, which is 0.25% of immediate need in NSW. The Metro Quarter would deliver only 0.075%

- This development is paying for train infrastructure by selling public land.
- One participant argued that the move from public to Community Housing Providers CHP housing is a renouncing of responsibility and cost shifting (passing the buck of responsibility away from government). Accountability and liability will lie with private organisations.
- The regulation of CHPs is not as strict as it is for public – tenants are more protected from evictions in the public system. There is little recourse for CHPs if there is a tenancy dispute and providers are not afraid of regulators. *Please note this was an opinion shared but is debatable.*
- Under CHPs, tenants report less repair issues. Overall, the quality of tenancy management depends on the provider and therefore varies greatly.

### **Resident views**

- Some residents were vocal about their opposition to studios, as these are unhealthy small and difficult for residents with walkers.
- With no guaranteed increase in affordable and social housing, the government is withdrawing responsibility. This is a serious issue considering so many people are without homes.
- The sale of public land in this manner is 'immoral'. It was argued that if public land is sold off to developers, it should still have a substantial 'public good' element such as large increases in social/affordable housing.
- In regards to CHPs, there is concern from some that tenants can be evicted more easily. On the other hand, the providers can be more flexible

## **Community facilities**

- There are plans for a health facility – but it is important that it is accessible to those on low incomes. The plan also doesn't read as though the facility is guaranteed.
- There is a health facility in Redfern already, but it is not accessible.

### **Resident views**

- It is important that it is equitable so that residents are able to visit it ongoing (and have access to the same doctor)
- The plan does not make clear what the proposed usages for the commercial and community spaces are

## **Climate change**

- The plan focuses on how climate change is likely to impact the development – but misses how the construction and the function of the development when it is built will contribute to climate change (including waste, energy and so on).
- In Sydney, buildings account for 80% of emissions, with high rises performing worse than individual dwellings per person.
- Development should consider energy smart appliances – social tenants should not be required to purchase these themselves.
- The plan should account for adequate space, including balconies, so people can air dry washing rather than using dryers (how will this look if residential buildings open to busy and polluted Botany Road?).
- The plan should outline how it meets the City's sustainability targets.

- It should be understood that part of the burden of development is addressing climate targets.
- The study does recognise the groups vulnerable to climate change – even currently people in high rise social housing find it difficult to keep cool.

### **Resident views**

- Special allocation for washing is another argument for larger dwellings
- Plan should consider how it can allow residents to explore different energy supply models, such as solar distributed by a coop

## **Density**

- It might be difficult for tenants looking to take up their right to return to conceive of the density they will be returning to.
- The area is looking to become 3 times denser – it will be one of Australia's most dense neighbourhoods.
- The plan doesn't indicate whether residents will be facing out to Botany Road, which is busy and heavily polluted by noise and fumes. Would people be able to open a window? A way to solve this issue might be to make this office space instead – this would also encourage employment.
- The proposal for green/outdoor space is unclear. Will apartments have balconies? Will these be big enough? Are the green spaces allocated in parks likely to be overshadowed?
- UrbanGrowth has not developed their plan for the public domain and the City planners have nothing to assess. There is a view that the development application is therefore premature.

### **Resident views**

- The density of the development is a problem as it increases overall emissions
- One resident said that density is often discussed as a virtue, but their opinion was that this is misleading.

## **Employment**

- It was raised that the existing Waterloo employment figures do not seem to equate to what is projected to post-redevelopment.
- There is no employment strategy to support projected job creation.
- There are no guarantees jobs will go to local people.
- There needs to be a diversity of employment – not just construction and coffee shops.
- If the development considered greater commercial space than that allocated, this could help diversity employment.
- If employment provisions are not considered now, they may be lost down the track.
- The plan needs to consider more commercial space – is the land use correct? If the area is zoned as residential, it may remain too heavily residential as this attracts the highest market value.
- Floor space for residential vs commercial is addressed but not guaranteed.
- The SSDA has the power to override planning controls if the impact is inconsequential by asking for exemptions.
- There are two preferred tenderers, however the project is not yet approved.

### **Resident views**

- The plan should incorporate more opportunities for start-ups that could employ local residents, as well as social enterprises
- There could be participation from tenants in the tendering process

## **Social sustainability**

- Social sustainability is not defined and the report is generally superficial. It looks as though it was compiled through desktop research and doesn't engage adequately with the community 'on the ground'.
- The plan gestures towards the area having good social cohesion – but does not account for why this is the case.
- When the redevelopment was first announced, the minister used the area's economic and social disadvantage as impetus for renewal. Yet, the plan does not mention how these issues are to be addressed (i.e. poverty).
- Community facilities are not adequately accounted for.
- The demographic data used to justify disadvantage are skewed, as these take in private residences. This puts the specific needs of housing tenants at risk of being obscured.

### **Resident views**

- Social cohesion exists in Waterloo because people have been living in the area for a long time. The new development is likely to see a high turnover of private renters, as is already beginning to happen at present

## **General**

- The separation of the studies is deceptive.
- The isolation of the Metro and Estate plans is an issue which cuts across all areas of the redevelopment.
- If the SSDA/SSP receive more than 25 objections, the process will be externally referred to the independent planning commission. This may extend timelines and may make it possible to review both project projects (Metro Quarter and Estate) in tandem. However, the independent commission will still only review the over station development and not the two projects together.
- The splitting up of the project into two is a political tactic. It might be advisable to generate media interest in the area in order to press the state government to be more accountable, using an issue of resonance. This might be housing affordability and a media strategy that considers personal stories to highlight the issues could work powerfully.
- Upcoming election is unlikely to shift the redevelopment plans.
- The plan's provision of facilities is a 'concept only'. This detail will be addressed in the plan's next iteration, so it is important to submit concerns and requirements for facilities now, or they may be lost.
- Public domains should return to public land, given the size of this redevelopment.

### **Resident views**

- The separation of the plans is a tactic to diffuse their overall impact.

For further info, kindly contact:

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