Participant feedback to the project team

Community Drop-In Session No. 1

Participant feedback in discussions with members of the project team from Waverley Council and Elton Consulting focused on:

**Community values for the West Oxford Street Precinct**

» People like the strong sense of community and neighbourly feel of the precinct.

» Some suggested officially naming the area "Mill Hill".

**Traffic and access issues**

» Traffic is bad now – several people expressed concern about further congestion as a result of more people moving into the area.

» Several participants commented that buses are adversely impacting traffic along Oxford Street. One asked whether it is possible to send buses down Grafton Street?

» Suggested traffic improvements included:

  > Consider a grade separation for traffic from the west turning right down York Road (ie traffic to go underground between major intersection with Oxford Street and the end of the heritage building in York Road), in order to improve pedestrian connections from Oxford Street to Centennial Park. “Centennial Park then becomes a much better part of this precinct...a more active and better utilised community asset.”

  > Another member of the community was however concerned about the impact of road tunnels.

  > Create ‘no right turn’ from Oxford Street into Ruthven Street during peaks.

» There is an existing need more off-street parking options – “...there is not enough anywhere in Bondi Junction now. You can’t even park near your corner shop.” Buses currently park in St James Road and Centennial Park. Any future development must come with significant off street parking so that the already full local streets are not stretched further.

» If future development of the bus depot site occurs, create a through site link connecting St James Road to Centennial Park for pedestrians, but while retaining the heritage façade of the building fronting Centennial Park. A couple of participants commented that a visual connection from St James Road to Centennial Park would also be positive. One also suggested a wide setback for pedestrians along Oxford Street, should the bus depot site be redeveloped.

» Lots of bike riders ride on the footpath from Centennial Park to Denison (past About Life), posing a threat to pedestrian safety, but this is not ‘policed’.

» Several participants were supportive of light rail.

**Potential future development of major sites within the Precinct**

» Strong anti-high-rise sentiment. Many people said they don’t want the area to end up like the “Westfield end” of Bondi Junction.
Feedback on appropriate height limits for any future development within the West Oxford Street precinct varied, with some participants expressing a preference for 2-3 storeys and others for up to 8 storeys. Many want the maximum building heights in the current LEP maintained (particularly given that it is so new - 2012), and with higher buildings on the northern side of Oxford Street rather than the bus depot site (as in the LEP). Some noted that maintaining solar access / minimising overshadowing, is as or more important than building heights. Some expressed concern about loss of views. Some expressed concern about other ‘high rise’ development in Bondi Junction, such as a 40 storey development being sold off the plan.

Many expressed concern that the State Government could approve future development on the bus depot site (realising a significant return), without consideration for local needs / concerns. If there is a proposal for the redevelopment of the bus depot site, people want to see it.

Many commented that there is a need to preserve the heritage/history of the area. For instance, retain the historical façade of the building fronting York Road on the bus depot site.

Design quality was identified as an important consideration for any future development. Development needs to fit in with existing character of the area – no ugly buildings like those near Westfield. The Royal Women’s hospital redevelopment in Paddington was identified by a number of participants as an example of good development (at least three different people mentioned this specifically).

One participant commented on the need for any future development to be in keeping with the area and for a cohesive streetscape “...use sweet pastel colours. Paleo Café does not belong in a suburban area. Would love to see more consideration to aesthetic appeal of any future development in the precinct. It should reflect the aesthetic appeal of the area’s heritage buildings – including cottages and Sugar Cafe.”

Comments included:
- It’s important not to do high rise to the edge of the site.
- Redevelopment should include green, natural open space.
- There is a need for good, large floor plate commercial premises not just smaller offices.
- Don’t mind the idea of luxury apartments.
- Liked an earlier scheme for the bus depot site (17 years ago) which included buildings that stepped down towards the edges of the site and a four storey office block.

Some expressed concern about the potential for new development to impact on residents’ existing quality of life. Some did not like the idea of “luxury apartments” on the edge of Centennial Park. “Centennial Park was given to the government of NSW. It belongs to all of us.”

Suggested future uses for the precinct included cafes, delis and clothing stores, childcare and a school. There is existing pressure on local schools (such as Woollahra Public School which allows for 600 students). Where would greater numbers of children go to school?

Public domain and amenity issues
- The shops along the western end of Bondi Junction need to be revitalised.
- Activate the laneways on the northern side of Oxford Street with boutique restaurants and cafes.
- If the bus depot site is redeveloped, it should include a café and community facility (eg childcare centre, museum, performing arts centre, etc). This was described as a “walkable centre with somewhere to sit and have a coffee.”
- A couple of participants said the area needs “places you can go that feel safe to walk in”, like little piazzas, not like “Bondi Junction mall”. These places were described as having atmosphere, perhaps with music and a water feature. Importantly, they should feel safe.
- There are enough parks in the area – preserve the existing parklands, but there is no need for more.
There were several comments on Bondi Junction Mall – focusing on the need to improve its amenity and feeling of safety at night.

**Planning and consultation process**

- The community needs certainty about maximum building heights (ie developers shouldn’t be able to add further storeys post approval).
- Council needs to be more transparent – about who owns what, how many planning proposals have been submitted, etc.
- Many commented that the notification period for the drop-in session was inadequate and expressed the view that members of the community should be involved in stakeholder meetings/workshops and the design charrette.
Community Drop-In Session No. 2

Participant feedback in discussions with members of the project team from Waverley Council and Elton Consulting focused on:

**Community values for the West Oxford Street Precinct**

» Important to maintain the character of the conservation area to the south/adjacent to Centennial Park.
» The status quo in the area should not be decreased.
» Cafes are good in the sun - village atmosphere. Keep solar access to cafes on Oxford Street.
» Retain heritage conservation zone. Heritage houses in Grafton Street should be retained.
» Important to preserve the conservation area of the houses on Grafton Street and re-instate it as a quiet residential street.
» Keep trees next to the bus depot.
» Maintain a diversity of user groups.
» Love Centennial Park and greenery in the local area.
» Keep the bus depot – bus services in the area are great.
» Retain transport uses on bus depot site.
» Value existing “quirky” shops and village atmosphere.

**Traffic and access issues**

» Improve safety in the area particularly for children crossing the York Road from Moriah College.
» Park access is a key issue in the area. Improve pedestrian and cyclist access to Centennial Park and address existing conflicts in this location.
» Traffic congestion at Oxford Street/Syd Einfeld Drive is a huge issue. Please direct traffic down Syd Einfeld Drive to get to the Westfield rather than through Oxford Street.
» Improve parking issues and traffic congestion particularly when trying to turn right from Ruthven Street into Oxford Street.
» Leswell Street is too narrow. Need to widen the footpath and allow for improved traffic flow.
» Remove the sign to Westfield that directs traffic down Grafton Street. Send cars down Oxford Street or Syd Einfeld Drive. A couple of participants commented that they would like to see Grafton Street become a cul de sac to address the problem of speeding traffic in this location.
» Improve traffic congestion and allow cars to turn right from St James Road.
» All of the LEP Maps and project plans need to be updated to reflect that St James Road is no longer a continuous thoroughfare to Oxford Street as the park extends across the carriageway. If the road has not been officially/legally closed, Council needs to do this.
» The bus stop adjacent to the bus depot needs to be redesigned to incorporate a shelter. The footpath/road needs to make provision for a cyclist path because at the moment cyclists bypass pedestrians waiting at the bus stop and it is unsafe.
» One participant suggested relocating the bus stop/shelter near the bus depot several metres to the east – so it could be set back from the footpath, in the grassed area.
» The corner entry point at West Oxford Street is marooned by traffic flow to Syd Einfeld Drive, the bus depot and the traffic chaos of that intersection. Two participants suggested removing or reducing the size of the existing corner at the western end of Oxford Street (where the surfboards are located) to allow for
road widening and improved traffic flow in this location – ie to create two right turning lanes from Oxford Street into Bondi Junction rather than one lane as at present.

» There is a need for traffic calming measures on Grafton Street such as speed bumps to protect residential nature of street between Nelson and Leswell Street. Or even consider the option of turning Grafton Street in to a cul-de-sac.

» There is a need to address current issues first and foremost before planning for other things in the area. Current issues such as traffic flow and street hierarchy. Especially need to redesign the western intersection and making the traffic flow from the west easier in to Oxford Street. Get rid of the vegetated island.

» Need to make it safer and easier for people to cross Leswell Street. Leswell Street is too narrow to take the traffic load it currently is used for.

» Need to utilise the traffic capacity of Syd Einfeld Drive - it is currently underutilised. Especially for more trucks as they currently over utilise Denison Street and Ebley Street which should be more residential, quiet traffic streets.

» Safer crossing across York Road.

» Need for a pedestrian crossing across York Road - it currently takes too long to cross.

» No more traffic on York Road. Don’t make it possible to turn right from York Road into Oxford Street.

» Take the pedestrian crossing off West side of Oxford Street at Nelson Street intersection and move to the eastern side to allow more cars to turn right from Nelson Street in to Oxford Street. Or make it no right turn from Leswell Street in to Oxford Street.

» When approaching from the west on Syd Einfeld Drive there are always empty lanes.

» Do not redirect traffic from Newland Street to York Road because people are trying to cross York Road to get to the park.

» Cyclist and pedestrian conflicts on footpaths occur too frequently.

» Cyclist should have own cycle path to improve safety.

» Parking should be retained to support shops.

» Cycle path should have a bridge to connect to Centennial Park like the Moore Park bridge.

» Grafton Street: the ‘right hand turn’ road sign located on the corner of Oxford Street and Syd Einfeld Drive should be relocated to Leswell Street.

» Better management and enforcement to remove cyclists riding on footpaths.

» Heavy vehicles such as those serving Coles at Eastgate and Westfield should be directed down major roads not residential streets.

» Traffic and parking along Oxford Street Bondi Junction are major issues. “You can’t move.”

» One participant suggested a layover in the bus depot site to allow traffic to pass buses with greater ease.

Potential future development of major sites within the Precinct

» Appropriate services should be in line with any developments that occur. It should be a holistic approach to development.

» Retain terraces

» Retain historical facades

» Improve the issue of rubbish dumping

» Improve design quality – make the area more beautiful

» Create a cultural precinct
» Improve design standards
» Look at the cul-de-sac previously proposed by Woollahra Council
» Retain Heritage facade on bus depot
» Include design competitions in development. Use big name architects eg Renzo Piano
» Heritage conservation area to be reflected in any development to bus depot
» Nothing above the LEP height limit
» Retail at the gateway and residential to the South
» Explore option of moving the bus depot underground and utilising space above it or moving the location of the bus depot. Changes to the bus depot need to coincide with the implementation of light rail and increasing capacity of Syd Einfeld Drive.
» Anything higher than 8 Storeys will be too high because it will detrimentally affect the amenity of surrounding residents.
» More weight should be given to what the existing residents in the study area say rather than there been equal weight given to them, the wider community, businesses and government agencies.
» The building stock of West Oxford Street Precinct needs to be renewed - the buildings are overdue for redevelopment, refurbishment and a 'facelift' - especially the blocks at the Western entry point to Bondi Junction. A suitable height for this entry point may be 4 storeys.
» Need to review the heritage significance of the buildings at the Western corner entry point to Oxford Street. It is a limitation of any possible future development of the site. The corner should be considered for the opportunity to be redeveloped for an elegant well designed tower.
» The recently updated paving of West Oxford Street should continue along Oxford Street and to the adjoining side streets.
» Cafe culture is not that fantastic idea for West Oxford Street unless the traffic conditions of the road are calmed.
» Change existing commercial zoning to mixed use on Grafton Street.
» Fruit trees in the street for poor kids.
» WiFi in public areas.
» No high rise on bus depot. Keep to LEP 3 storeys - so as to not encroach upon future possibilities for public transport. No reduction to public transport.
» Weighting for concept development: residents within the study area should have greater weighting for what should happen here as they are most directly affected.
» Something needs to be done to enhance the building facades along West Oxford to bring the up to par with Bondi Junction.
» Please don’t make Bondi Junction look like Chatswood.
» New buildings should be of the highest design standard.
» The bus depot has the capacity to be 3 storeys.
» Commercial development works: cafe/ organic / cycling.
» One participant commented that any future development on the northern side of Oxford Street should be lower than the existing maximum height limits (ie should be kept to 2-3 storeys).
» One participant commented that the bus depot and Avis sites are not very attractive. They suggested development on these sites that retains the heritage character of the local area, accompanied by a park.
» Future development should not overshadow existing residential areas. “I’ve lost all my winter sun and now my house is dark and depressing. High rise development would do the same thing.”
» Support community focus - Suggested future uses: health services, school, green space, better quality shops.
» Support low rise development of up to 3 storeys.
» Support development of up to 6 storeys. Design to maintain solar access to surrounding area and traffic planning.
» Future development of bus depot site should step down from the centre towards the edge of Centennial Park to minimise impacts on the park.
» The western end of Bondi Junction should not have a commercial focus like Bondi Junction CBD.
» Put in place planning controls that are “firm” and we can “stick to”. Ie controls that offer residents a sense of security and stability. The LEP is good as it is.
» Future development of up to 5 storeys would be best.
» Support mixed use development up to 5 storeys.
» Protect the Mill Hill heritage area.

**Public domain and amenity issues**

» Too many vacant tenancies on Oxford Street between Denison Street and The Mall (including repeated vacancies in shops). Support revitalisation of this shopping strip.
» Empty shops are inviting homeless people to move in, creating an unfavourable presence on street.
» Destination type shops, or shops that are purposeful eg, the pet shop, the paint shop, the printing shop contribute to the area being alive. These type of shops also keep locals coming. It will be sad when the timber and car yard shops move as this mean taking business out of the local area and you can’t do what you want locally.
» Improve way finding and road signage.
» Artwork (surf boards) should be at a better scale. A couple of participants commented that the surfboards are ugly. One commented the entrance of Oxford Street looks “grungy”.
» Gateway artwork should be attached to the footbridge that connects Bondi Junction and Woollahra so it sits above Syd Einfeld Drive.
» Include piazza type spaces to improve the feel and atmosphere safety and enjoyment.
» More free accessible public space.
» The entry to Bondi Junction is not attractive.
» Wind tunnel effect is a major issue in Bondi Junction.
» There were several comments on Bondi Junction Mall – including one seeking for food smells around the Bronka Arcade to be addressed.

**Planning and consultation process**

» Many expressed the view that members of the community should be involved in the design charrette.