



17th September 2014

HAND DELIVERED

Mr Ron Moore
General Manager
Camden Council
PO Box 183
Camden NSW 2570

Re: Camden Town Centre Enhancement Strategy

Dear Ron

The Camden Chamber Commerce and Industry Inc. (Chamber) thanks Camden Council and the Councillors for the opportunity to put forward our views that address the proposed interventions endorsed for public exhibition and comment as invited by Council on 8 July 2014.

Our submission will communicate the major and general concerns that Chamber has should these interventions progress as proposed.

This submission is a starting point for discussion, ideas generation and application to create a framework enabling the economic, social, environmental objectives as outlined in our submission to be realised.

We would welcome the opportunity to work collaboratively with Council to develop a strategic vision for Camden Town Centre to help deliver on those objectives for the benefit of the Camden business community.

Yours in co-operation

Miriam Roberts
President

Camden Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc. submission re Camden Town Centre Enhancement Strategy

This submission will address the proposed interventions endorsed for public exhibition and comment as invited by Council on 8 July 2014. This submission will communicate major and general concerns the Camden Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Chamber) has should the two immediate interventions progress as proposed. Chamber notes no further funds are available. Does this distribution of funds provide the best outcome for all the businesses in the Camden Town Centre? This submission communicates concerns about the proposals presented and is given by Chamber, as a representative for business in Camden, to Council. Chamber's officers are available for further clarification, if necessary, of the points raised herein.

The discussions raised about the Camden Town Centre Upgrades, and the community interest generated, can provide a springboard for action for Council to explore comprehensive strategies with stakeholders, enabling creation of a structure plan against which potential developments and changes to Camden Town Centre can be measured. The proposed interventions appear fragmented and to some degree ad-hoc and so perhaps do not feed into a strategic vision for the whole of Camden Town Centre. It is considered that *Community Life* is the focus of town centres – a concept endorsed by the State Government¹. Therefore it is suggested that any proposed interventions need to be measured against the desired outcomes of centres and be able to demonstratively contribute to these outcomes.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION - DECKED CARPARK LOCATED IN OXLEY STREET (LOCATION 2A)

- The Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study by Brown Smart Consulting (2013) is a comprehensive document examining the whole of the Town Centre. It does not however support the necessity of a decked carpark facility. Noted is that 2/3 of the available parking is closer than 400m walk distance (p34).
- The occupation of a large proportion of the block seemingly by an unnecessary carpark impedes further considered and thoughtful long-term development potential in the middle of the town centre.
- The occupation of a large proportion of the block by an unnecessary carpark negatively affects the amenity of the Civic Centre—*“Option 2a.....will have a negative aesthetic impact”* (Brown, 2014).
- The Town Centre is in a general conservation area, with the ‘country’ amenity valued by residents and visitors. The proposed carpark will impact adversely on the streetscape. (Brown, 2014, p.42), subsequently reducing Camden’s points of difference with other destinations in the Sydney Basin.
- The number of spaces ‘gained’ (min 58, max 86) does not seem to be justified by cost – a greater number of parking spots can be ‘gained’ by reconfiguration of the main streets in the Town Centre (current 90, potential increase to 166)(File ref: 78 14-120375 Nov 2013).
- \$3 million in ‘forward-funding’ of s94 contributions (CCP 2011)(confirmed by Mayor 3.9.14) on an unnecessary multi-deck carpark is considered perhaps not the best financial strategy or outcome; especially due to the long ‘repayment’ period and particularly in light of the prohibitive CCP levels set by Camden Council (Brown, 2013, p.8). There is currently an ability to provide additional parking by reconfiguration of existing parking assets. Restructuring of the s94 as suggested in Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study, (Brown,2013, p8), will be beneficial to the whole of the town centre.

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- The CCP (2011) LEP map does not demonstrate Oxley St. location. Will this require an amendment of the LEP to proceed?
- Genuine consideration needs to be given to disabled parking and its location (Brown, 2013). Again, as part of an overall strategy, location can be considered that is appropriate and beneficial to both residents who require disabled parking, as well as the whole of the commercial/retail precinct.

Council is proposing spending money we don't seemingly have, on a structure that has been reportedly not required from a comprehensive study and without seemingly addressing existing parking inconsistencies and failures that currently negatively impact upon Argyle Street and Camden Town Centre businesses. Long term parking strategies, which may include decked carpark structures in the future, require further consultation with stakeholders prior to design and implementation.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION – TRAFFIC LIGHTS AND PEDESTRIAN LIGHTS ON ARGYLE STREET

- The *Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study* by Brown Smart Consulting (2013) is a comprehensive document examining the whole of the Town Centre. It highlights intersections requiring intervention based on level of service (LOS). This is subject to traffic waiting times. There is one intersection in Camden that requires intervention (LOS D) – the intersection of Murray and Broughton Streets. Traffic lights at Argyle and Oxley Sts however don't appear to be supported by the document.
- Traffic lights will adversely affect the streetscape of Camden and detract from tourism potential.
- The proposed traffic lights will feed the (unnecessary) decked carpark (Brown, 2013) and are not a response to traffic volume need.
- The relocation of the pedestrian crossing, in Stage 1 works, therefore a single action only and not part of a comprehensive suite of interventions, will not support overall pedestrian safety enhancement in Argyle St. or the whole of the Town Centre.
- RMS correspondence (GIPA – 116 14-120403) does not support the relocation of the pedestrian crossing closer to Hill Street (not part of stage 1 works).
- RMS does not support a 40km zone whilst Argyle Street remains 2 travel lanes in each direction with a parking lane (GIPA 84 14-120405 March 2014). The opportunity to investigate alternate parking strategies/alternate through routes/alternate lane configurations exists within a possible comprehensive integrated pedestrian and traffic strategic plan for Camden Town Centre – a strategic plan that could support a High Pedestrian Activity Area in Argyle Street.

Camden Chamber supports addressing parking strategies and pedestrian safety strategies within the whole of the Camden Town Centre, and particularly Argyle, John and Oxley Streets. It is suggested that a more comprehensive approach to pedestrian safety is required than is being proposed, currently staging of introduction of traffic lights and increasing separation distance between crossings. Further separation of existing crossings by relocation will not enhance the pedestrian or visitation experience in Camden and will impact negatively on existing businesses. A tacit acknowledgement that crossing relocation is likely to fail is seen by Council's proposal to retain the existing desire lines in the median (Mayor, 3.9.14). Maximising where pedestrians can cross safely, incorporating a 'grid within a grid' as described by the RMS, needs to be the focus of pedestrian interventions.

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Camden Chamber members and business owners complain of all day parking by persons in Argyle and John Streets. This assertion is supported by *Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study* (Brown, 2013, p.39). Optimisation and monitoring of street parking and reconfiguration of the street will greatly improve both quantity and availability of short-term parking. It is strongly suggested that better management of employee and owner parking can be further explored – Chamber and Council can collaborate and seek to address this with a bipartisan approach in the immediate future.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION - FOOTPATH PAVING MATERIAL

- Proposed granite paving material – is suggested as too dark for Camden, particularly in summer when temperatures are consistently high. The absorptive qualities and thermal mass will provide an unpleasant amenity for both footpath diners and walkers. Please refer to Appendix A for temperature differential.
- Proposed granite material – Camden is on Wiannamatta shale and not granite bedrock. Granite material does not reference the locality and therefore does not enhance the streetscape nor contribute positively to a sense of place. Camden is a town that can focus on its history and the rural-urban interface for potential tourism generation; placement of non-place, generic dark granite paving detracts from positive place-making and its multiplier economic benefits to local businesses and residents.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION - STREET FURNITURE

- Avoid faux
- Utilise opportunity to develop street furniture that is site specific and crafted, rather than generic 'off the shelf'.

PROPOSED INTERVENTION - REDUCED TRAFFIC LANES AND INCREASED FOOTPATH WIDTH

- Current configuration of Argyle Street, where single lanes entering Camden evolve into double lanes for the length of Argyle St, encourages speeding up whilst travelling through a heavily pedestrianised area.
- The footpath repaving and widening will occur over one small section of Argyle Street only. There is no funding for further works; this has the potential to disadvantage the majority of businesses within the Town Centre.
- Accordingly, road lane width reduction will occur in one section only – this will provide inconsistent and unclear driving conditions along Argyle Street – and possibly raise safety concerns.
- Footpath widening has not considered future landscaping which addresses aging tree stock, nor successional planting for pedestrian amenity.

Road configuration and footpath design need to be addressed in an integrated manner that responds to a strategic vision. Consideration of potential adjunct pedestrian access (laneways and pedestrian pathways) that link carparking areas to Argyle, John, Hill and Oxley Sts should be identified and considered within the overall strategy. Easements can be secured.

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FURTHER CONCERNS OF CAMDEN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

- Consideration should be given to developing a core strategic vision for the whole Camden Town Centre which provides framework principles and guidance for interventions. Documents and transcripts obtained by Chamber under GIPA appear to reveal confusion within Council and senior staff about which 'driving documents' will inform decision making for Camden Town Centre (GIPA 80 14 48845, GIPA 92 14-60524). This appears to have resulted in a piecemeal approach to interventions within Camden Town Centre without solid underpinning framework, which is what is truly required for an enduring future and vision.
- Consideration should be given to addressing the whole of the pedestrian domain as part of a comprehensive intervention. Supported by Camden Town Centre Traffic and Transport Study (Brown, 2013, p88).
- There appears no succession planting planned – median jacarandas are >100 years old – need to create amenity for pedestrians and businesses planning (and planting) needs to be considered as part of footpath renewal program and pedestrian framework.
- Chamber's concern is if council decides to sell off or swap part or some of the block in the form of carpark, or the existing council assets (Brown 2013, GIPA 51 13 62045 Sep 2013), it would diminish the opportunity for considered and thoughtful development in the middle of the town centre.
- The cost opportunity to a large component of town centre if a single-use carpark is built over proposed site 2a –precludes incremental development, residential, commercial, and mixed use development. Future development opportunities on this block should be maximised within a strategic vision framework established from evidence-based evaluation, following best practice.
- In the best longer term interests for Camden retention of Council/community assets to provide a Return on Equity for ratepayers, providing possible business incubation, start-up opportunities, variety of work spaces, museum and library expansion, tourism generators, flexible adaptation to changing community and local needs, and providing flexibility for future potentials. These uses are best provided with local government ownership of the land and buildings and we would fully support this.
- The current level of s94 contributions are a current disincentive to business establishment within Camden Town Centre, particularly the type and style of businesses that might be attracted to the unique locality of Camden, eg. those of unique professions, boutique retail, research and business incubation, social procurement etc. Business and employment growth within Camden Town Centre has been lower than expected (Brown, 2013) and combined with the proposed down-grading of Camden Town in the centres hierarchy (Camden Council Minutes 24 June 2014), it is imperative that a collaborative, comprehensive and integrative approach to strategic visioning is adopted that embraces all stakeholders.

This submission primarily addresses the endorsed proposed initiatives passed by Council on 8 July 2014, for public exhibition and comment. It does not present the myriad of ideas and opportunities that exist within Chamber to contribute to the continual development and economic growth possibilities within Camden Town Centre. These require further collaborative exploration with Council and other major stakeholders in an ongoing manner.

Camden Chamber of Commerce & Industry Inc. submission re Camden Town Centre Enhancement Strategy

Camden Chamber welcomes the opportunity to work collaboratively with Council to develop a strategic vision for Camden Town Centre. This submission is a starting point for discussions, ideas generation and application to create a framework enabling the economic, social, environmental objectives outlined below to be realised.

Economic objectives:

- Strengthen: the town economy
- Diversify: a place for local businesses
- Attractive: high public amenity
- Stimulate private entrepreneurial investment by public investment in the public domain

Social objectives:

- A place of the young and old
- Affordable living
- A safe and secure place
- Have more people in the town centre; visiting and living

Environmental objectives:

- Beautiful, comfortable- shady in summer, sunshine in winter

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http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Portals/0/StrategicPlanning/draft%20Centres%20Design%20Guidelines%20March%202011_LO%20RES.pdf

Appendix A:

