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Green Square Town Centre Masterplan and Draft Local Environment Plan and associated reports

Marrickville-South Sydney Bicycle Group (MASSBUG) welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Green Square Town Centre Masterplan and Draft Local Environment Plan (and associated reports). Our submission is endorsed by Bicycle New South Wales.

We are **highly supportive of developing Green Square as a transit-oriented development** for a brownfields site in the inner city. We also applaud the proponents for aiming to develop in accord with the principles of ESD.

The main focus of our submission is on transport. We are greatly concerned that the transport study has adopted a traditional approach rather than one suited to a TOD.

In the Transport Report and Masterplan, the growth and movement of motor vehicles is given prime treatment, with all other modes being given secondary and less detailed treatment. The report takes a 'predict and provide' approach to motor vehicle growth rather than the modern approach of 'predict and prevent' required for TOD and ESD.

There is no sense from the Transport Report (or components in the Masterplan) that this is truly a TOD development and the draft documents are a disappointment as they stand. There is disproportionate detail about motor vehicle issues and proposals for roads and parking compared with sustainable transport in the documents.

The Green Square development area is well served by rail and buses and is only 4.5km south of central Sydney. Green Square a comfortable fifteen minute cycle ride from Central Sydney or even less from Kensington (about the same amount of time a driver might spend looking for a parking spot in the CBD). Cycling contributes a range of the positive health and environmental benefits to the individual and the community. Provision of infrastructure to facilitate such ideal cycle commutes (for example, Mascot-Alexandra Canal-Darlinghurst), rather than greater facilitation of motor vehicle movements, would be an efficient and effective investment. However, **there are too few details to indicate that such cycling routes (and scenarios for commuter and short-trip cycling) have been seriously considered.**

We oppose both the increases in capacity of the existing road network and the excessive levels of carparking proposed in the Green Square Town Centre Masterplan and Draft Local Environment Plan. The fact that the public plazas will “connect through to ‘parking lobbies’” (Masterplan, p. 06_07) in a transit-oriented development strikes us as ironic, to say the least. In a recent submission to the RTA we opposed the extension of the one-way system in Waterloo (just one of the road-related proposals included in the Masterplan and LEP) on the grounds that it will increase private motor vehicle traffic and will not facilitate walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

It is essential that the Green Square development be a positive example of a Transit Oriented Development. To instead provide one-way streets and so assist in further creating car dependence will ruin this flagship project area. Such a car dependent urban area would also have many characteristics that would threaten the connectivity with the neighbouring areas of Alexandria, Waterloo and Redfern.

We suggest that the proponents need to obtain further advice on transport that could better support TOD rather than undermine it.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss further any of the issues in this submission. Bicycle NSW and MASSBUG request the opportunity to participate in further deliberations to gain better outcomes for cycling at these sites.

Sincerely,

Gabrielle Kuiper
for the Marrickville-South Sydney Bicycle Group

cc: Environment Protection Authority
South Sydney Development Corporation
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources

Green Square Town Centre Masterplan, LEP and supporting reports

8 August 2003

Submission from the Marrickville and South Sydney Bicycle Group (MASSBUG)

MASSBUG is the local bicycle group in the Green Square area. We are affiliated with Bicycle NSW, the key organisation working with State Government on cycling and putting into practice the intentions set out in Bike Plan 2010. MASSBUG members are users of the current roads in the Green Square development area. The group is also an advocate for urban developments that enable access by foot, bicycle and public transport to services and facilities, thus reducing the reliance on private motor vehicles. We have been working with the South Sydney Development Corporation for many years in relation to the Alexandra Canal development.

Introduction

The importance of Green Square

South Sydney City Council, South Sydney Development Corporation, Landcom and their partners have a wonderful opportunity to create an ecologically sustainable transit-oriented development (TOD) at a brownfields site at Green Square.

Ideal starting conditions

The Green Square development has every opportunity to be a sustainable transport success given that:

- Green Square station is already in use (ie it is transit-orientated development),
- South Sydney Council's DCP 11 is positively focused on encouraging walking, cycling and public transport use and discouraging car use,
- South Sydney City Council are in the process of developing a new Bike Plan and have devoted three years Roads to Recovery funding to its development and implementation, and
- there is a Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP) currently under development for parts of South Sydney (as well as the City of Sydney and Woollahrah Councils).

Specific remarks

Support for overall objectives

Bicycle NSW and MASSBUG support the overall objectives of the Masterplan and the LEP which emphasise sustainable transport, including the LEP objectives, "to facilitate the development of a new and vibrant, transit oriented, sustainable Town Centre and community with a balance of residential, recreational and employment generating activities, and that has a special sense of place that is easily recognisable as "Green Square" and "to ensure ease and convenience of access to, within and across the Green Square Town Centre for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and other vehicles".

Concerns about the traditional motor vehicle-focused approach used in the Transport report and Masterplan

The approach to transport in the Transport Report, Masterplan and LEP seems to be the traditional motor vehicle-based approach of 'predict and provide' rather than travel demand management. The proposals to increase road capacity and "kick start" development with car parking space are counterproductive. Actions to support alternatives to motor vehicle use have been a long time coming in Sydney and these need investment and speeding up, as international examples show.

The traditional nature of the Transport Report is reflected in the lack of detail about plans for walking and cycling in the Town Centre compared with the high level of detailed plans about motor vehicle infrastructure, including car parking. The fewer number of column inches (and their later placement in the transport sections) and the lower level of detail devoted to walking, cycling, light and heavy rail is very disappointing and requires rectification.

The Transport Report assumes that motor vehicle traffic will increase and that nothing can be done to moderate the rate of growth by Travel Demand Management, including the contribution of transit-oriented development (TOD). As Vuchic explained in *Transportation for Livable Cities*, in planning TODs with multifunction urban areas that provide for shorter trips, convenient walking and comfortable cycling use, reliance on mass transit rather than private motor vehicle use becomes possible. In addition, these conditions provide abundant social contact and exchange. TOD is much more in line with the goals of sustainable communities than the concept of suburban sprawl or car dependency. Many actions can be taken in urban & transport policy to support TOD as outlined by the US Transportation Research Board (Porter 1997).

The Transport Report (and in turn, the Masterplan and LEP) go further and assume that road space must be increased to respond to this 'traffic pressure'. For example, the Transport Report states "These roads provide critical linkages across the Green Square area and none can be dispensed with" (p.2) and that "in recognition of traffic pressures that will arise from intended development around Green Square station, the Road Hierarchy Study recommends that relief routes be developed around Green Square through use of Joynton Avenue as an eastern relief route and through construction of a new cross link from Botany Road to Bourke Road south of Green Square as a southern relief route." (Transport Report, p. 2).

Similarly, there are unwarranted statements related to car parking such as "Irrespective of how successful the transport plan for Green Square is in achieving high public transport usage, there will always be a need for car parking." (Transport Report, p. 12) and the completely unsustainable assumption that, "In the early years of development it would be desirable to give the centre a "kick start" by providing more casual parking so as to generate early tenant commitment and to promote the viability of initial retail outlets" (Transport report, p. 13 and also stated in the Masterplan).

These statements are made despite the recognition that the existing roads “serve to isolate the Green Railway Square Station and generate a significant measure of traffic congestion and conflict” (Masterplan, p. 05_06).

Concerns about the assumptions of the status quo in terms of travel mode

The documents assume a mix of transport by modes equivalent to the North Sydney CBD, but no further moves towards a greater mode share for walking, cycling or public transport are anticipated. In addition, while traffic modelling was conducted for the Transport Report, as far as we are aware, there was no equivalent process of assessing the demand for light rail. It appears that little change from the status quo is assumed, despite overall objectives for the project.

Concerns about the assumption that accessibility = accessible by car

The documents generally highlight the accessibility of Green Square by car and public transport, for example, “It is a highly accessible location being a point at which the arterial road network and the rail network converge” (Implementation Plan, p. 2). However, currently Green Square is not accessible for walking or cycling. We have observed the lack of cycling facilities and the poor quality of the surrounding footpaths. The Transport Report itself acknowledges the poor access to Green Square station stating, “The most pertinent issues affecting road users in the area at the moment remain the relatively poor quality access to the Green Square Station” (Masterplan, p. 05_06). Frequently people run across several lanes of motor vehicle traffic to reach the Green Square Station due to the poor phasing of the lights and lack of crossing points for people walking. Also, the noise of large volumes of heavy traffic makes this an unattractive public place aurally; and visually the expanses of asphalt surrounding the station make a mockery of the descriptor of this space as “Green”.

Objection to increase in road (motor vehicle) capacity and increases in car parking

We strongly oppose the proposal to increase road capacity (including the extension of the one-way system in Waterloo, the widening of Botany Road to 6 lanes and the development of the ‘relief routes’). Much evidence exists to show that increasing capacity of such trunk routes induces demand for motor vehicle travel which depresses walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

For the same reasons, we oppose the excessive levels of carparking proposed in the Green Square Town Centre Masterplan and Draft Local Environment Plan (illustrated vividly by the cross-section illustrations in Section 6 of the Masterplan). We support the use of DCP 11 as it stands, not the proposal in the Masterplan and Transport report to “providing more casual parking so as to generate early tenant commitment and to promote the viability of initial retail outlets”. The proposal to establish a three level 17,000m² car park as a key feature of the public plazas underneath the Town Centres is abhorrent in a transit-oriented development.

The Proposals to increase the capacity of the existing road network and carparking will increase traffic capacity, as is acknowledged in the Transport Report which states, “Early indications are that a one way arrangement would provide increased traffic capacity and such would in turn improve access to the Green Square town

centre.” (p. 4) If indeed the objective is to provide for increased traffic volumes then we do not understand how this will contribute to meeting state government targets of:

- Halting the growth in per capita VKT by 2011 (Action For Transport 2010)
- Halting the growth in total VKT by 2021 (Action For Transport 2010)
- A shift from private cars to public transport, cycling and walking (Action For Air, 1997)
- a tripling of cycling (Action For Air, 1997)

In addition, increasing traffic capacity conflicts with the ‘apple pie’ statements about walking, cycling and public transport and creating “a special sense of place” contained in both the Green Square Masterplan and the Local Environment Plan. We are disappointed that the RTA has already allocated \$80million over the next ten years for the implementation of so many measures which appear to not be in keeping with TOD nor ecologically sustainable development.

Concerns about the lack of detail/clarity about how pedestrian amenity will be increased

“A fundamental design principle of the Masterplan has been to facilitate pedestrian and cycle access to the Town Centre facilities” yet there is insufficient detail of proposed pedestrian routes and movements – especially as they connect with proposed trip generators in Green Square. This is despite the statement in the Masterplan that “The most pertinent issues affecting road users in the area at the moment remain the relatively poor quality access to the Green Square Station ...”.

How will “the divisive nature of Botany Road” (Masterplan, p. 05_07) be overcome? (especially if it is increased to six lanes?) The Masterplan simply states that “Grade separated pedestrian connections to the station across Botany Road will be required. If walking is being prioritised in this development, then detailed planning for walking must also be prioritised, even at the early stages” (Masterplan, p. 05_07). We are also concerned that the public plaza will be bisected by two large roads and would request detail as to how pedestrian movement across these roads will be prioritised.

Concerns about the lack of detail/clarity about cycling facilities

There is a lack of clarity about which is the lead document with respect to cycling infrastructure and how the respective documents relate with respect to cycling. Different things are stated in the different documents about cycling. The Transport Report states “Pedestrian and cycle arrangements have been examined separately as part of the Masterplan design” (p. 1), while the Masterplan states, “South Sydney City Council has completed a Bike Plan for Green Square which takes ... cognisance of the fact that the area is traversed by a large number of vehicles ...” (Masterplan, p. 05_08). No detail is given on this “Bike Plan for Green Square” and as the local bicycle group, we have not been consulted about its preparation.

It is unclear what standard of facilities (other than some off-road and some on-road is being provided). For example, the Masterplan simply states, “Major off-road cycle routes are provided along the East-West Boulevard and on Botany Road,

while local routes are along O’Riordan Street, Dunning Street, Merton Street and Joynton Avenue” (p. 06_026). How will the provision of an off-road cycling route along Botany Road be consistent with widening to 6 lanes? We note that such a route is in fact absent from the description of Botany Road in section 7.6 Development controls for streets.

Overall, there is a lack of clarity about how cycling will be facilitated through the development, particularly given the proposed increases in road space for motor vehicles. MASSBUG believes that the South Sydney City Council and the South Sydney Development Corporation should undertake more serious and detailed planning for both walking and cycling, especially given the detailed planning that has occurred for car parking.

We recommend the use of the soon to be released RTA Guidelines for Cycling Facilities in any future work and that Landcom consult with Bicycle NSW and local bicycle user groups (including MASSBUG) (see p. 8 of the Transport Report) in the process of managing the road design and construction process,

We support the inclusion of provision of cycle parking and showers, ‘wayfinding’, signage and ease of access as factors to be taken into account in the assessment of development applications. However, detail about cycle parking is also absent from section 7.8 on Precinct Development Controls.

Concerns about the lack of serious attention given to the potential for light rail

The Transport Report states that, “The Green Square Transport Accessibility Plan indicates that based on present costs and demand forecasts, a light rail services through the town centre is not presently feasible. However, it does indicate candidate east west and north south routes that might potentially be developed in future”. We would recommend that more serious attention be given to the potential for light rail and that funds be allocated to investigating how it might be feasible and on what timeframe.

Concerns about the lack of detail/clarity as to how bus services will be improved to meet increased demand

For example, “future consideration of bus priority measures” (Masterplan, p. 05_07) is mentioned, but no specific details as to what these might be are given and other statements are vague, such as “To serve increasing patronage due to new development in the area, the STA proposes an incremental service improvement strategy” (p. 3, Transport report).