

Urban Ideas

October 2012

A PUBLIC INTEREST MAGAZINE FROM THE URBAN TASKFORCE AUSTRALIA

ARE THESE ASSETS BEING FULLY UTILISED?

We can keep port uses and have development

Temporary exhibition space then development

Ideas from Sydney's top architects

// **Marchese Partners**
// **Fender Katsalidis Mirams**
// **Innovarchi**

Urban Taskforce
AUSTRALIA

Reworking lazy assets to maximise use

Sydney's metropolitan area has many sites that are not being fully utilised. The NSW Government has established a special taskforce to examine the issue of underutilised land.

The government owns significant land holdings for railways, health, education, ports and many other activities. While much of this land is essential for the services they provide or essential for future uses there needs to be a rigorous test, that all sites go through to ensure they must remain in government ownership. The term LAZY ASSETS has been applied to these sites. In many cases individual specialist agencies argue for the importance of holding onto land just in case it is required in the future.

The Urban Taskforce believes that all sites need to have a rigorous analysis to ensure that short, medium and long term uses are required. This is particularly so for port land in Sydney Harbour, where much of the port use has now been relocated to Botany Bay. Many people still see Sydney Harbour as a working port and are keen to see the dwindling number of port uses maintained.

The biggest change to shipping has come from the introduction of containers which have now taken over the shipping world. To be effective, container wharves require vast areas of flat tarmac and this has been provided at Port Botany where it is better connected to road and rail. So Sydney Harbour has changed its character to become the location for the growing number of cruise ships and a relatively small dry bulk terminal at Glebe Island.

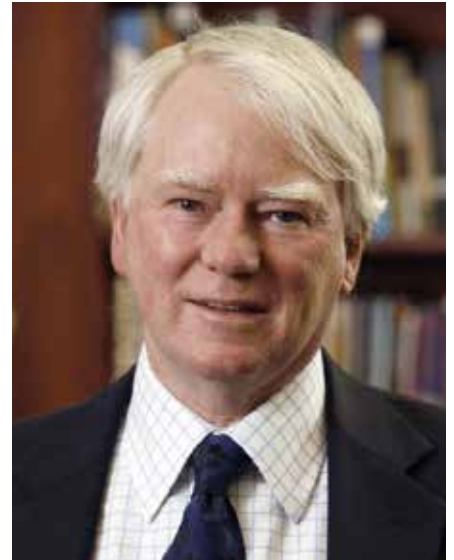
Many areas around the harbour have now changed from port to other uses. Walsh Bay has become a cultural and residential precinct and Barangaroo will be a commercial and residential precinct with a headland park. These areas now have much greater public access to the foreshore. At the end of Pyrmont the old CSR site has been developed into high rise residential towers overlooking the harbour.

The Urban Taskforce has attended a stakeholder session with the Bays Precinct Taskforce which is looking at future uses. We have also undertaken our own research into the flow of dry bulk into the port and the future projections including the proposed increase required for aggregate and sand. We believe the Glebe Island wharf adjacent to the silos can accommodate dry bulk supply into the future and free up significant lands for other development. For this issue of Urban Ideas we have asked 3 architectural teams to come up with a range of solutions.

Urban Ideas has also looked at the White Bay Power Station which has a State Heritage listing and has remained empty and decaying over the last 30 years. The long hoped for cultural facility or museum has not been funded and is highly unlikely to be funded over the next 30 years. Our concern is that the heritage listing is too rigid and will not allow the bold interventions that are needed to retain the spirit of the old building while adapting to a new use. What is needed is a new approach to heritage that frees the site up for urban renewal. Without this it is unlikely that a compatible use will be found in the next 30 years.

Anyone passing the Glebe Island site must be wondering why such a large area of empty land is sitting there unused. The only use seems to be adjacent to the silos where an occasional ship off loads dry bulk. We are told that the land is needed for port use once new leases are resolved. In the meantime, the NSW Government is constructing a temporary exhibition facility while construction of a new one is underway at Darling Harbour. However, this temporary exhibition facility will be gone in 2016 and then what will happen?

Urban Ideas has brought together 3 firms of Sydney architects and urban designers to work up schemes that keep the port use adjacent to the silos and then develop the rest of the site. The western harbour with its smaller scaled bays can become exciting mixed use urban precincts built around the water bodies. Leaving hectares of empty wasteland is not a good look for a global city like Sydney.



The Urban Taskforce is keen to have responses to the proposals illustrated in this issue of URBAN IDEAS and we welcome comments to admin@urbantaskforce.com.au

Chris Johnson AM
Chief Executive Officer
Urban Taskforce Australia

“The term LAZY ASSETS has been applied to these sites. In many cases individual specialist agencies argue for the importance of holding onto land just in case it is required in the future.”

Much of the Bays Precinct is not being used

White Bay Power Station Precinct

The White Bay Power Station ceased production on Christmas Day 1983. During the 1990's the site was decontaminated, asbestos removed and the majority of the machinery taken away. In 2000 the 4 hectare site was sold to the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority for around \$4 million. A detailed Conservation Management Plan has been produced and was endorsed by the NSW Heritage Council in 2004. The Conservation Management Plan (CMP), Second Edition, was completed in July 2011 as a 5 volume report.

The Power Station is listed on the Register of the National Estate, the NSW State Heritage Register and other registers. The CMP calls for "the retention of the full suite of structures, spaces and machinery ..." It goes on to say "In principle those changes which are minimal, with least impact, are preferred to those with greatest impact..."

Most worrying in terms of future uses is a statement that has the effect of stopping any adjacent development. "In order to retain the visibility and prominence of the White Bay Power Station as a harbourside landmark it should not be substantially obscured by any development on nearby sites." Even long distance views must be retained such that views from Observatory Hill and the Harbour Bridge "should be retained substantially unobstructed by other large elements."

The CMP also states "The rusted finish has been identified as significant." Clearly with such restrictive constraints there will be little chance of finding a new use. What is needed is a rethink of the heritage significance so that something constructive can happen on the site. It needs a bold adaptive reuse approach and it certainly needs to have other buildings built nearby.



White Bay Power Station has remained unused for 30 years. It needs less restrictive heritage controls if it is to find a new use.

Glebe Island

Ever since the cars were relocated to Port Kembla, Glebe Island has been an empty tarmac of almost 5 hectares of water front land lying idle. While there is some port use adjacent to the silos for dry bulk, even this seems to be occasional.

Temporary Use

The NSW Government has recognised this underuse and decided to construct temporary exhibition facilities on the site while the Darling Harbour exhibition and convention centre is being rebuilt. This will be removed in 2016 and planning is needed now for future uses of the site.

Bays Precinct Public Involvement

From 2009 to 2011 the NSW Government involved community and industry groups in developing ideas for what could happen at the Bays Precinct. Many submissions suggested residential and commercial development on the basis that the port use seemed to be minimal.

Bays Precinct Taskforce

In 2012 the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure established the Bays Precinct Taskforce to recommend a strategic framework for the precinct for the next 25 years and beyond. The Taskforce was guided by a statement that Glebe Island and White Bay will be used for ongoing and future port-related uses. The Taskforce is composed of government departments, council representatives and a community representative but no industry or private sector representation. The Urban Taskforce was invited to a stakeholder workshop and raised concerns about the need to balance port use with other more commercial or residential uses. This publication presents mixed use proposals.

There are important port uses related to dry bulk that need to continue at Glebe Island

Over recent decades the working port has moved from Sydney Harbour to Botany Bay. This is a result of changes to the size of ships and to the method of transporting goods. The many fractured port sites around Sydney Harbour were inefficient in terms of their size and their connections to the transport system.

For Sydney to compete with Melbourne and Brisbane a large container and wet bulk terminal was built in Botany Bay. Well over 90% of the Sydney port activity now occurs at Port Botany and this has released land for new developments like Barangaroo and adaptive reuses like Walsh Bay.

Sydney Harbour is still the destination for the growing cruise ship industry, a number of oil tankers and for dry bulk. Currently, dry bulk represents about 2.5% of the total port usage. This is mainly through salt, sugar (both very small), gypsum and cement. These are docked near the silos and generally conveyed into a silo before being transported across Sydney. The big change that is predicted is for aggregates.

Aggregate supply for Sydney

The biggest future supply appears to be for aggregate which includes sand and gravel. Current supplies at Kurnell and Penrith Lakes are running low. Predictions have been made that all of Sydney's sand and gravel aggregate will need to be shipped in through Glebe Island to supply the city's building industry. A little research however, indicates that there are other solutions. A 2006 news release indicated that a quarry at Marulan could produce



Keeping the port while realising assets for development.



Post use land



Land for development or adaptive reuse

5 million tonnes of aggregate for more than 90 years. This would be sufficient for Sydney's needs for large aggregate. For sand, a company called Sydney Marine Sand is proposing to extract sand from the ocean, as occurs in many European countries. The marine sand would be offloaded every 3 days for a period of 3 hours. Even if this was doubled it would seem that the current facilities and silos at Glebe Island could handle the load.

Cement

There are proposals to relocate some of the cement batching plants from Blackwattle Bay which will increase the amount of cement coming into Glebe Island.

Gypsum and Salt

The tonnage of these bulk materials is relatively small but interestingly, much of the gypsum is shipped from Glebe Island to Botany Bay, as is all the salt.

Conclusion

Even with the anticipated increase in aggregate supply from the sea it would seem that there is considerable capacity in the existing silos and adequate wharf area adjacent to maintain the dry bulk port in the port area between the silos and the White Bay Power station.

The port uses can continue even with future aggregate supply and still allow large areas of land to be developed

Urban Ideas asked three firms of architects to look at the potential to develop parts of the Bays precinct while maintaining the port uses for dry bulk.

The existing silos act as an edge to the port area and screen this to some extent. The three design teams took different approaches to the site. The Marchese team looked at ways to knit the new development back into the existing areas through street patterns and lower scale development. The Fender Katsalidis Mirams team

developed the south eastern edge of Glebe Island with a series of towers of a similar height to those at Jacksons Landing across the bay. Innovarchi took a bold approach to put a very tall iconic tower on the prow of Glebe Island relating back to the tall buildings of the Sydney CBD.

These three schemes illustrate that development can occur on these sites and that the dry bulk port can remain. One of the schemes looked at the Power Station and developed an adaptive reuse and built more buildings around the heritage building.

MARCHESE PARTNERS

Marchese Partners are headed up by Italian architect Eugene Marchese and they have developed many quality buildings in Sydney including apartments. The firm has also established an office in China and is undertaking a number of projects there.

FENDER KATSALIDIS MIRAMS

Fender Katsalidis Mirams Architects (FKM) is an innovative firm based in Sydney and partnered with FKA in Melbourne. The Sydney office is run by Rob Mirams who was previously an associate with Norman Foster in London.

INNOVARCHI

Innovarchi are architects renowned for their experimental approach to design. The principals, Ken McBryde and Stephanie Smith, worked with Italian architect Renzo Piano and ran the Piano office in Sydney during the design and construction of Aurora Place in Phillip Street.

Disclaimer

The views expressed on the following pages are those of the architects and urban designers not of Urban Taskforce Australia.



The large amount of unused land on Glebe Island can accommodate new uses.

Port Botany to be sold

The NSW Government has announced that it will be selling Port Botany to the private sector and will be lifting the current cap of 3.2 million TEU a year to allow future growth of the port. Infrastructure improvements around the port will be required to increase capacity including the Moorebank Intermodal Terminal that will be

connected by rail. Clearly the whole operation of the port will change with industry expecting improvements in efficiency to increase capacity. As salt and gypsum are already trucked close to Port Botany the private sector operator could well incorporate dry bulk within the Port Botany complex.

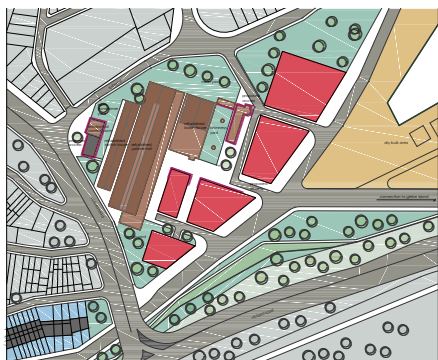
If this occurred, Glebe Island and White Bay could change to becoming a port for cruise ships and recreational boating leading to further opportunities for other forms of development.

Marchese Partners have developed a medium rise scheme in a pattern that reflects the Balmain character

Marchese Partners is headed by Sydney Architect Eugene Marchese and have designed numerous quality residential apartment buildings in Sydney. The firm also has established offices in Brisbane, Canberra and Melbourne and recently established an office in China where it is undertaking a number of large scale projects.

The port uses are retained on Glebe Island and a street system established that creates street edge residential blocks around internal landscaped courtyards. The heights range from 4 storeys to 6 with a number of 9 storey components. The eastern end of Glebe Island with its views across the harbour is made into a park with a proposed ferry wharf. Around 2,200 apartments can be accommodated within a 4 to 1 Floor Space Ratio.

For the White Bay Power Station site the proposal is to adaptively reuse the power station as a commercial hub with 10,500 square metres of space. Around the heritage building a series of new medium rise commercial buildings of 8 floors have been located. The current Conservation Management Plan would not allow these new buildings as they would interrupt the view of the power station from the Harbour Bridge.





Fender Katsalidis Mirams have focused new development on Glebe Island with a series of high rise towers

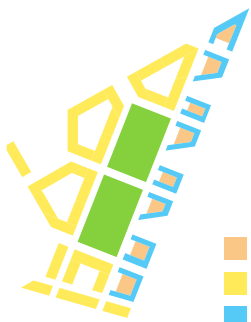
The FKM scheme develops Glebe Island with 8 high rise residential towers of 20 to 30 storeys.

This is a similar height to the residential towers across the water at Jackson's Landing. These are edged by 4 storey podiums with retail, commercial and residential uses. The podiums define a series of water inlets for mooring boats. On the Balmain side of the island the silos and the dry bulk port uses are maintained. To the east are medium rise buildings of 5 to 9 storeys around a larger boat harbour. Between these two

sides of the island is a series of 2 storey commercial buildings around large car parking areas and with parkland on top.

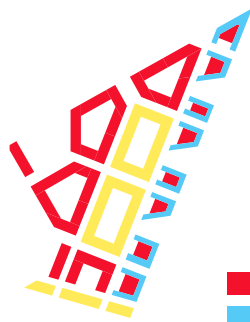
The design has positioned towers to get views of the Harbour Bridge and across to the city. The FKM scheme is a bolder intervention than the Marchese Partners approach and provides more accommodation. The taller buildings are kept well away from the dry bulk port.





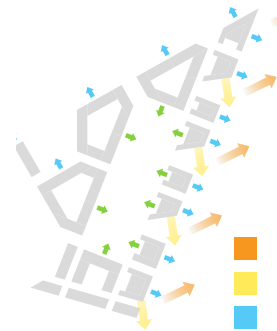
BUILDING HEIGHTS

- HIGH RISE (20-30 STOREYS)
- MEDIUM RISE (5-9 STOREYS)
- LOW RISE / PODIUM (4 STOREYS)
- 1-2 STOREYS



USE

- RESIDENTIAL
- RETAIL / RESIDENTIAL
- COMMERCIAL



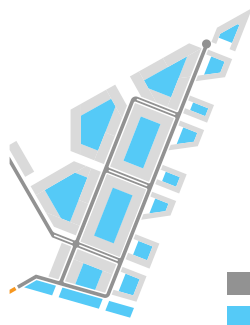
VISUAL CONNECTIONS

- HARBOUR BRIDGE VIEWS
- ANZAC BRIDGE VIEWS
- WATER VIEWS
- PARK VIEWS



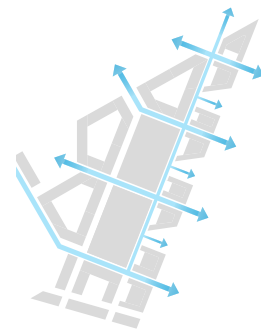
GREEN SPACE

- PUBLIC
- COMMUNAL



ROAD NETWORK AND CAR PARK

- MAIN ROADS
- CAR PARK
- CONNECTIONS TO EXISTING ROAD NETWORK



VIEW CORRIDORS

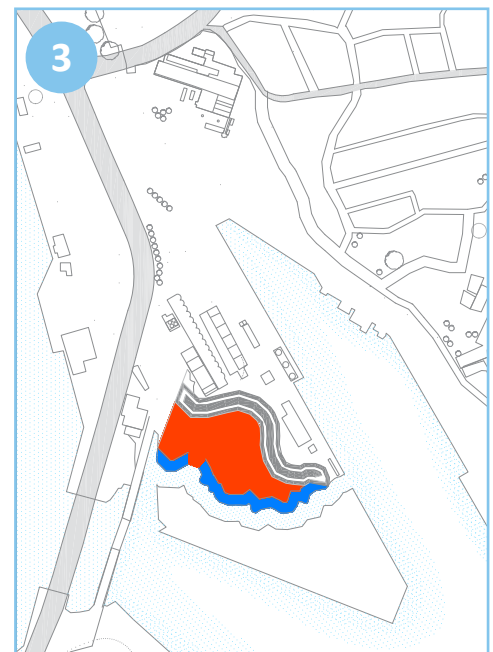
Innovarchi have made a statement with a 200 metre high “lighthouse” tower at the point of Glebe Island



Red: Port activity area. Aggregates could go up to over 5 million tonnes per year by 2040, requiring facilities expansion on the west end of the bay.

Blue: The southern and eastern edges present a unique opportunity for urban development: almost one kilometre of coastline facing Pyrmont, Glebe and Barangaroo.

On the Western edge, the old Power Station shows potential for an intervention that respects its rich history and creates new vibrancy at the same time. The edge between port use and new urban development presents an interesting design challenge.



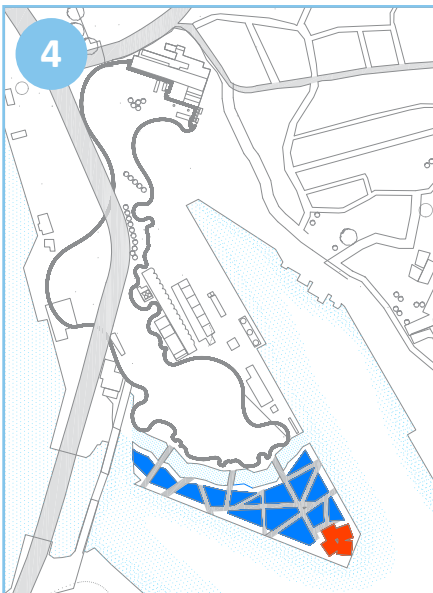
Gray: A mixed use development requires a large amount of car parking spaces. A six story high garage houses over 4000 cars, creating an adequately scaled physical limit between the port and the new development.

Blue: a residential strip consolidates the water edge. With heights ranging from 2 to 6 storeys high, this building offers over 40,000 square metres of apartments.

Red: The core of the building houses a shopping centre. With 20,000 square metres per level, it can house a typical Sydney mall.



Restore the original 1880s headline. By opening a new canal, the 19th century shoreline is recreated, defining a physical division between what used to be the natural shoreline and what is artificial land.

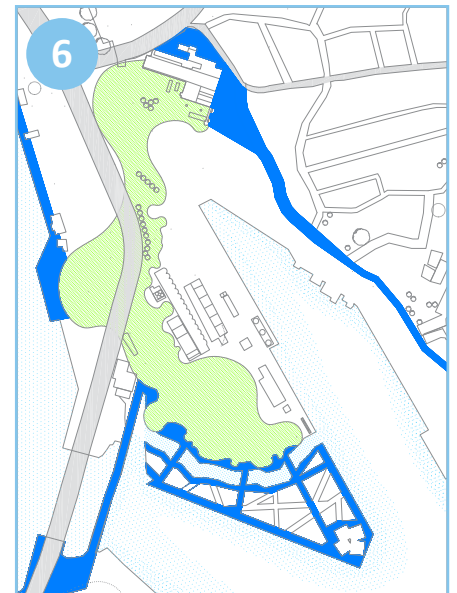


Red: A 200 metre high tower stands tall on the headland, a “lighthouse” that not only visually connects this new headland to the towers of the CBD, but establishes a new landmark in Sydney’s skyline.

Blue: Mixed use development of commercial and residential uses with park above.



Green: Create a 130,000 m² new park directly connected to Pyrmont, Glebe and Balmain.



Blue: Connect the surrounding neighbourhoods through the new park. Rehabilitate the old bridge as a pedestrian connection. Create two new waterfront leisure walks on the outer headland and by the new canal.

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This issue of Urban Ideas raises the importance of ensuring that assets are fully utilised. There are many “lazy assets” around the state of NSW that are not pulling their weight. The Urban Taskforce supports the work of the Property Asset Utilisation Taskforce of the government in focusing on these assets.
