

Woolwich Workshop Report

Woolwich Dock, Saturday 23rd June

Background

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust held a public workshop at its Woolwich Dock site to discuss the significance and objectives of the site, as part of its Management Planning process. Woolwich was the first site to have such a workshop, which was combined with an Open Day.

The plan of the day was:

- 11:00 Site Opened with plans on display in mess.
- 1:00 Introduction to Plans by the planning team; Q&A
- 2:00 Afternoon tea
- 2:30 Workshops on values and significance
- 3:30 report back; plenary
- 4:00 close

Publicity for the workshop included leaflets distributed throughout Hunters Hill and coverage in the Mayor's column in the local paper. The Hunters Hill Lions club provided a sausage sizzle lunch creating a café-style eating area that was appreciated. A mini-Exhibition was mounted by the Trust with material from its main Customs House Exhibition and more recent sketches.

The plan for the day allowed people to participate at three levels – by visiting and talking; by hearing the presentation and questioning, and by participating in discussion groups. Throughout the day, some 200-300 people came. The presentation had an audience of ~120, of whom about half remained for small group discussions around five tables.

For the workshop discussion groups, the Trust had prepared a draft set of values and objectives to trigger discussion. The Trust's ideas, and the additions from the community, are shown in later tables in this report.

Summary of Significant Values and Objectives

The table below shows the Significant Values identified by the Trust and the additional values suggested up by the public in the course of the Open Day/Workshop.

Values seen by Trust	Additional comments from the Community
Location	
Narrow peninsula at the meeting of Lane Cove & Parramatta Rivers – Moocooboola	Well suited for recreational uses. A structure for the community to meet.
On rim of a triangular harbour space containing 3 islands	Demolish ALL sheds. Natural bush regeneration. Views across water to the Harbour Bridge and beyond.
Well suited for maritime uses – deep water access	
Land Form /Vegetation	
Although much modified, original cliff lines and knolls still visible.	The ugly sawtooth building covers view of the natural rock escarpment – demolish it.
Small areas of native vegetation.	Maintain industrial character. Disagree with the above statement.
Planting from former uses of the site.	Goat Paddock to be retained as is.

Values seen by Trust	Additional comments from the Community
	<p>Riding for the disabled on the Horse Paddock.</p> <p>Careful and creative flora signage.</p> <p>Use planting relative to wind, shelter belts and views.</p> <p>Reinstate the knoll in its natural state.</p> <p>Relocate car park off knoll.</p> <p>Rock ledges and sandstone cliffs to be maintained. Views of rock ledges to be retained from the water.</p> <p>Vegetation more like Kelly's Bush than Clarke's Point planting.</p>
History / Traces of Former uses	
<p>Evidence of Aboriginal heritage</p> <p>Settlement and subdivision patterns relating to Clarke family occupation</p> <p>Maritime industrial uses of the site - Atlas Engineering, Mort's Dock, sea walls, slipways, original shoreline/reclaimed land</p> <p>Scale of dock cutting, major achievement and investment.</p>	<p>Include Defence in maritime industrial uses of the site.</p> <p>Social History – community action and initiatives – Kelly's Bush, Clarke's Point and Defence sites.</p> <p>The Dock impacted in the development of Woolwich, its style and the folk who lived here.</p> <p>Weekend ferry service near horse paddock.</p> <p>Car parking areas to be landscaped or under 'grass' roof style structure.</p>
Harbour Context	
<p>Opportunity to reintroduce maritime activity.</p> <p>Diversity of uses and character: industry, bush, and nearby housing.</p> <p>Connection between ridge (village) and waterfront.</p> <p>Views to and from the water.</p>	<p>Public access to the site by water for ferry and small craft.</p> <p>Public access to commercial activities.</p> <p>Water access to open the parks, eg. for fireworks.</p> <p>There is high demand for public places for ceremonies, such as weddings, around the harbour. Some of the landscape areas at Woolwich could be specifically designed for this use.</p> <p>Get rid of the asbestos danger – demolish the ugly sawtooth building at Woolwich Dock.</p> <p>Don't – response to above statement.</p> <p>The sawtooth building should be multi-purpose.</p> <p>No fixed commercial/private marinas off public space.</p> <p>Ferry access to parks. Open areas for recreation.</p> <p>Keep sawtooth building and other industrial buildings to counterbalance loss of such buildings elsewhere on the foreshore.</p> <p>Interconnection of former defence sites and other sites by water transport, ferries etc and reinstatement of ferry wharves.</p> <p>Boating access/use. Similarities – bush, industry, defence and community action.</p> <p>No industry (except maritime museum).</p>
Community	
<p>History of activism to protect Kelly's Bush and Defence lands</p> <p>Potential for range of activities for the enjoyment of the harbour foreshore.</p>	<p>Diversity- Boating use, artists, parkland.</p> <p>Access by water, access for people with guide dogs.</p> <p>To promote an educational focus for any maritime use that occurs.</p> <p>Kelly's Bush – the Green Ban.</p> <p>More car parking – maritime museum in dock.</p>

Planning Objectives

The table below summarises the Planning Objectives that reflect the Significant Values – those identified by the Trust followed by additional objectives proposed by the members of the public in the course of the Open Day / Workshop (note: the community views are those of individuals and may or may not be widely supported).

Objectives seen by Trust	Additional Objectives from the community
Location	
<p>Plan/design in the context of the harbour (Cockatoo Is, Waverton, Birkenhead Pt etc)</p> <p>Plan Horse Paddock / Goat Paddock / Clarke's Point Reserve/ Kellys Bush as a whole, break down the barriers between them.</p>	<p>Plan/design to maximise access.</p> <p>Include ferry wharf at Clarke's Point as well as Valencia St.</p> <p>Recognise the special views.</p> <p>Wharf adjacent to dock.</p> <p>Bridge across front of dock as public walkway – as well as caisson.</p> <p>Provide site interpretation.</p>
Land Form /Vegetation	
<p>Reveal and enhance former landform</p> <p>Protect and extend areas of native vegetation</p> <p>Extend bushland character of Kelly's bush to link to Dock site</p>	<p>Planting to have regard for views</p> <p>Link to Cockatoo – sensitive to really flat area.</p>
History / Traces of former uses	
<p>Interpret history of site to foster understanding of its present form to guide planning/design</p> <p>Investigate, protect and interpret Aboriginal heritage</p> <p>Highlight the experience of the dramatic qualities of the dock</p> <p>Protect, interpret, and retain use of dock</p>	<p>Include maritime museum and volunteer coastguard facility</p> <p>On site caretaker</p> <p>Reinstate tracks linking slip and dock – tourist attraction</p> <p>Transfer meeting room to horse paddock for stables, community centre, artists working on site.</p>
Harbour Context	
<p>Allow maritime uses</p> <p>Retain diversity of uses and character</p> <p>Improve link between the village and waterfront and between the village and the upper part of the Dock site</p> <p>Improve water access for diverse range of uses</p>	<p>Amend "Allow maritime uses" to "Allow sympathetic maritime uses but not denying access."</p> <p>Convert sawtooth building into studio/workshops with gallery and open views. Small cafes within building.</p> <p>Active use, not just a museum, whether it is boat building or a gym in the sawtooth.</p> <p>Any bridge should be placed near track in goat paddock to allow front of dock to be used unrestricted.</p> <p>Most important/fundamental planning principle is public access.</p> <p>Recognise a long term timeframe - 100yr context.</p> <p>Do not allow one large, single, commercial use. Plan for private ferries, school groups etc.</p>
Community	
<p>Protect and enhance views</p> <p>Recognise past and present community involvement</p> <p>Link Kellys Bush/marina/village area via walks.</p>	<p>Maintain public access to commercial activities (like glass workshops etc in Venice).</p> <p>Set aside area for community use as part of diversity of uses.</p> <p>Security issues for residents (closure at sunset) – worry of activity from pub.</p>

Objectives seen by Trust	Additional Objectives from the community
Provide a diversity of places /experiences	<p>Close goat paddock and actual dock area at sunset for a safety point of view.</p> <p>Cultural centre for visual artists. Student workshops. Artists' exhibition gallery.</p> <p>Heritage maritime museum and maritime studies in sawtooth building.</p> <p>Dental surgery in sawtooth building.</p> <p>Park and ride (ferry) commuter terminal.</p> <p>"Don't agree" with general commuter terminal.</p> <p>Access paths through parts of site and Clarke's Point lit at night.</p> <p>Abseiling for school groups etc – not commercial.</p> <p>Provide access from Hunter St to Goat Paddock at all times (no parking available).</p> <p>Sailing Club (someone else has commented "Already at Clarke's Point")</p> <p>Alcohol Free Zone</p> <p>Provide youth activities/facilities such as skateboarding and riding.</p> <p>Friends of Sydney Harbour Federation Trust or of Woolwich site.</p> <p>Move the ferry wharf to the Dock, provide more parking.</p> <p>Bridge from Goat Paddock walk exit across the Dock – i.e. Not near entrance (????)</p> <p>Ensure all sites have a local community area/building let aside for specific community use to ensure that the community is not alienated from the ultimate land use.</p> <p>Provide cycle tracks.</p> <p>Gates to be closed sunset-sunrise.</p> <p>Keep gates open but provide security.</p> <p>Community use of horse paddocks for the establishment of riding for the disabled centre. Non-commercial volunteer involvement (unsure of handwriting)</p> <p>Uninterrupted path of access – disabled access for all areas.</p> <p>The dock should become a swimming pool.</p>

Comments on Plans

The discussion at each workshop group about the Planning ideas presented by the Trust is summarised below. The comments were made by individual participants and not necessarily endorsed in the group.

Table 1

- Include all Kelly's bush in planning.
- Baillin sheds behind sawtooth building: mix of uses, must look at Sydney Heritage Fleet to include tall ships etc.
- Dock: make operational again, proceed with appropriate access bridge.
- Relocate parking off knoll or retain in a 'landscaped fashion' (refer to car park at Mt Annan, Campbelltown).
- Obligatory to rebuild/retain timber wharfs.
- Provide public access to Clarke's Point Knoll (from waterfront dockside area) but modify landform with care.
- Reinstate cutting through to Clarke's Point slipways.
- Ensure the lookout is absolutely safe - spectacular!

Table 2

- “More green than concrete”
- Dock area: Remove officers mess 34E and make as stables near horse paddock; Fish market and Fresh Produce market; Volunteer Coast Guard; Disabled parking; Picnic area and café on waterfront, general support for mixed uses.
- Sawtooth building: some boat storage; upstairs loft for artists’ studios.
- Dock: Repair dock
- Open and closing bridge: some were of the view that there should be no bridge encourage people to walk right around, could have safety issues; some thought a non-movable bridge opposite cutting would allow some interim use of dock as well as allowing access.
- Goat paddock: urgent safety fences around the dock then community can help with weed eradication, bush regeneration etc.
- Community involvement in caring/establishing area, Ryde/HH Flora and Fauna Society/Group.
- Cantilevered lookout and market square.
- End of Margaret St: trailers and boat ramp; kiosk.
- Reinstate cutting to slipways – include small train.

Table 3

- No single operator on the site – a mix of small-scale activities.
- Reinstate cutting to slipways.
- Goat Paddock: restrict vegetation to enhance views, concern with safety of Goat paddock cliff to dock – an inebriated worker once fell to his death.
- Horse paddock; low level vegetation like that in Kelly’s Bush; at curved street remove weeds, camphor laurels and bamboo to expose existing rock face.
- Sawtooth building not worth keeping for heritage reasons alone – open to alteration (concern that we were intending to seek uses for the saw tooth building rather than keeping it BECAUSE someone might want to use it).
- Support for a ferry to be able to pull in but not to replace Valentia street
- Open quality of the horse paddock and goat paddock was seen as important- there seemed to be a consensus that there should not be too much planting on areas already cleared. Not everyone agreed the horse paddock should remain open.

Table 4

- Sawtooth building: Cultural Centre for the Visual Arts, studios, cafes and an exhibition gallery, showcase. Use for maritime uses questioned by Barbara Pye. Ideal for artists colony. (Why maritime uses are appropriate for this building was explained reiterating the relevant whole harbour themes mentioned by Rod and the standard of the bunded facility. Majority of people on table seemed to agree with this. One man raised issue of removal at the beginning but several people at the table opposed him. The views of the two adjoining residents were not clear.)
- Well planned; win/win for community and visitors. Consider children/family/play ground.
- Parking – ticket parking scheme shared with Trust Lands.
- Do not compromise Woolwich development by turning it into shore base for Cockatoo Island.
- Obtain shore base for Cockatoo closer to a main road location.
- Reinstate cutting from slipways to baillin sheds.
- Top of horse paddock/ village centre: lament loss of shop selling basic commodities, sceptical whether one would survive - possibility of café/restaurant to help support this use but would need to be on Woolwich Road. Possible to ask Bardellis to expand their outdoor area in return for stocking basic commodities?
- Waterfront dock area; multi-purpose space, café/exhibition/meeting/function etc; remove building on foreshore; larger precinct in front of remaining building. Multi-purpose building by water

- Following on from Barbara Pye's ambit claim for the sawtooth building to be used for a 'cultural centre' and how she did not want pictures in a café but a proper gallery (which could have a coffee shop). There was a consensus that a building that could be used by the community on the site would be an asset, giving the community a sense of participation in the exercise and outcome. Uses could be functions/exhibitions/café/meetings. Ms Pye did relent and would be prepared to hang pictures in such a building.
- Reinstate former wharves for ship/boat mooring.
- Dock: safety around dock edge.
- Asthma weed on goat paddock, mow grass, bring back the goats to keep grass etc in order. One of adjoining residents did most of looking after of the Army's goats.
- No access to the Goat Paddock from Hunter St. The Goat Paddock should only be open sunrise to sunset except for special events. Main concerns are security and parking. If hotel were to use outdoor areas of Goat Paddock may need to project a more 'civilised' image to ensure no rowdy behaviour - hotel has to patrol site and keep it clean.
- Other parts of site may be suitable for night access.
- Light the Horse Paddock for night use? Ability to enjoy night view of harbour. Security a concern.

Outcomes

The overall impression of the community response that emerged during the workshop is summarised as follows:

General support for the planning direction

- Maximise public access and maintain access around industry and commercial activities.
- Improve public access to the site by water for a range of craft including ferries, link to other waterfront sites.
- Support for mixed use.
- Support for maritime industry.
- Reinstate the knoll in its natural state, in general express natural rock forms and ledges.
- Interpretation of social history an important part of the site.
- Reinstate cutting through to Clarke's Point slipways.
- Reinstate former wharves.
- Bring back to the Woolwich village a shop that serves everyday needs of the local community.

Issues raised

- Goat Paddock safety issues: people falling into dock, night time, in relation to 'rowdy' pub element, connection will encourage parking in Hunter St.
- Strong support both for and against retaining the sawtooth building.
- Hours of opening of the site/parts of the site.
- Degree of disabled access.

Specific suggestions of interest

- Places for public ceremonies.
- Provide youth activities/facilities such as skateboarding and riding.
- Horse riding for the disabled on the Horse paddock.
- Provide cycle tracks.
- Set aside area/building for community use as part of diversity of uses.