

POTENTIAL PLANNING PATHWAY FOR THE FUTURE ADAPTIVE RE-USE OF THE TOMAREE LODGE SHOAL BAY

Introduction

It is important that the transition to community process commence as soon as possible particularly because of:

- Site security risks having regard to the Lodge site being vacant for well over two (2) years and its current vulnerability particularly to fires, vandalism and squatters
- The existing significant security and maintenance costs
- Community expectations

There is also the growing urgency to address funding and budgetary matters particularly for:

1. Funding the relevant transition planning costs including staffing and consultants
2. Funding for administration such as site maintenance and security costs for the next five (5) years so that the site can be effectively managed, secured and allow for the planning processes to be undertaken
3. Funding for works/upgrades which will be required for the site to be secure and safe and to ensure that all services/buildings etc meet current regulations

Next Steps

As reflected in previous correspondence we would welcome the Government's guidance on their preferred uses and options particularly having regard to the community consultation process undertaken late last year. Whilst recognising that the consultation process was not definitive and was constrained by the 'unavailability' of the Conservation Management Plan, the Community strongly believes that we need to move forward as quickly as possible and therefore needs direction. (Maybe engagement and involving key community groups would be well worthwhile), in particular we should seek Government guidance on future ownership and accountability for the site now that the commitment has been given for the Tomaree Lodge to be transferred to Port Stephens for community use. This in particular includes a potential future management model such as a Management Trust.

As acknowledged in our recent meeting with the Minister, we understand the constraints and potential costs. Nevertheless, and as outlined in previous correspondence and discussions, we have recommended using

the Strategic Concept Plan (prepared by Clouston Associates – Landscape Architects and funded by PSC) as an appropriate design and planning framework for assisting the assessment and development of potential uses and a sound basis for testing and evaluating preferred options.

It is recognised that while this may not define the ‘final’ future uses, it will identify the necessary planning processes including the development of a Business Case which is essential for assessing future costs and financial sustainability of preferred uses.

Accordingly, we see the next steps as follows:

New South Wales Government decision on its preferences for the future uses of the Lodge site and the responsibility for its on-going management.

- The initial announcement on these matters could be cast in general terms with detailed proposals to be worked out in the course of subsequent planning and financial assessments. However the Government’s general guidance is a prerequisite to the commencement of the overall planning process.

Plan of Management

Plan of Management (POM) is an important document which sets out the pathway forward. This would include the vision, aims and future actions as well as a management tool **which aims to define the future operations of the Tomaree Lodge site**. It is a document that outlines what we are endeavouring to achieve and how it will be achieved. The POM will therefore ideally become a guiding document that directs the future planning and management of the Tomaree Lodge site, which will become a long-term planning document over the long term (maybe 5-10years). This plan will need to be supported by a Master Plan which in turn will provide a conceptual layout and actions required for the adaptive reuse and development of the site.

The POM could potentially be undertaken (with the assistance of consultants) by any of the following:

- PS Council
- NSW Government
- Steering Group made up of Community, Council and Government representatives which needs to have an accountability process

It would of course need to be funded.

Master Plan

A Master Plan is a long-term planning document which provides a conceptual layout to guide future growth and development. Master Planning is particularly about making the connection between buildings, cultural settings, site history, site geography and the surrounding environment. A Master Plan provides a road map which includes how we can get there. Plans should focus on ensuring facilities, concepts and resources will meet community expectations. The Master Plan should also deliver development and investment guidelines for this important and iconic community asset.

Below is a suggested potential outline of the general steps for developing and implementing the Master Plan.

- Engagement with our community particularly including key stakeholders
- Gathering and analysing the relevant information and data including site history and the Conservation Management Plan, noting that the Tomaree Lodge site's historic elements have varying degrees of heritage significance
- Identifying and narrowing down the options including identifying and managing opportunities and constraints
- Utilising the design and planning framework identified in the Clouston Associates Strategic Concept Plan
- Managing and tracking the feasibility and implementation of the relevant plan content and proposals
- Preparing and documenting an Implementation Plan for moving forward

Typically, the Master Plan will potentially forecast five (5) to ten (10) years into the future. We should of course initially endeavour to estimate the costs and feasibility of potential individual uses. At the same time, the Master Plan should also provide the opportunity for attraction of funding and investment during implementation.

We also believe that the already developed Strategic Concept Plan by Clouston Associates provides a design and planning framework as a means to the development of the future adaptive reuse of the site. It also identifies opportunities and constraints. The principles and overarching strategy that underpins the Concept Plan are robust and can be refined once access to the buildings and the Conservation

Management Plan are made available. The Concept Plan also has taken into consideration the existing zoning of C2 which prevents development that could destroy, damage or otherwise have an adverse effect on the aesthetic, ecological, scientific, and cultural values of the site.

Business Case

This can particularly be undertaken once the preferred uses have been identified for the site. It will be also important that any future adaptive re-uses will need to demonstrate and ensure long term financial sustainability.

Management Model – Management Trust Proposal

It is important to also identify the operational parameters to which is best suited to the sites long term care and control and the expertise that will be required.

Steps that may be appropriate:

- Transferring site ownership and responsibility to an organisation or authority with appropriate conditions
- Establishing some form of Management Trust under the oversight of a State authority with representation from significant stakeholder interests including but not limited to:
 - Port Stephens Council
 - Community Organizations
 - Possibly NPWS
 - The local Tourism and Business organisations
 - Local Worimi Aboriginal Land Council

Engagement and partnership with the community, particularly key community organisations are so critical and can ensure better outcomes.

Peter Clough
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