

12 February 2020

The Avalon Place Project Team

Northern Beaches Council

DEE WHY

Dear Team

**AVALON PLACE PLAN AND THE BREAKSPEAR’S REPORT**

The overall observation about the Breakspear recommendations is that nowhere do they enunciate an overall village vision for Avalon. Have they considered what makes Avalon Village what it is today? In the light of the answers to that question, what can be done specifically to enhance that village character? What is detracting from that village character and what can be proposed to deal with those detractions? Instead of spelling out the answers to those questions and relating those answers to the specific recommendations they make, there is a series of recommendations put forward without an overriding vision or framework. In the process, one of the most important detractions, namely parking, gets no mention at all.

Taking their recommendations in the order they appear: -

1. Cycleway Strategy

We do not support this strategy for a number of reasons: -

* Putting cycleways through an area of high pedestrian use will cause accidents. Cyclists on a cycleway tend to ride with a sense of entitlement and disregard for all other users of public space. Pedestrians will have to cross the cycleways frequently to get to the shops they wish to visit and to get to their transport, whether it is bus or their cars. Pedestrians frequently have children and dogs in tow, increasing the dangers. Similarly, the area has a higher-than-average proportion of seniors.
* The laid-back atmosphere of the village, one of its most important and endearing characteristics, which should have been one of the defining elements of any recommendations, makes the interaction between cyclists and pedestrians more likely and more dangerous
* Continuing the cycleways across the intersection of Old Barrenjoey Road and Avalon Parade and across the intersection of Barrenjoey Road and Avalon Parade, as proposed, will increase the danger to cyclists. There was an accident last week at one of these intersections involving a young cyclist – this proposal will increase the danger considerably.
* Removal of gutters and the use of flush surfaces (under the Resurface Strategy), while attractive in appearance, would also increase these dangers by removing current dividing lines.
* Many of our members argue that pedestrians should have clear priority in Avalon (as they more or less do at present) and we support this view.
* Better education of young cyclists in the schools would produce greater benefits than cycleways. Consideration should be given to requiring all cyclists to walk their bikes through the village.
* The cycleways would further cut up the village and make it less attractive and user friendly.
* The cycleways would require some narrowing of either or both of the roadway and footpaths, reducing pedestrian friendliness and making traffic management more difficult.

1. Street Furniture Strategy

The existing street furniture could certainly be improved and new furniture would present a more attractive, revitalised and cohesive “face” for the village. Additional seating would be useful, particularly if shaded, but has to be carefully placed so as not to interfere with pavement cafes.

1. Resurface Strategy

The proposals look very attractive but expensive. How would the clean new surfaces be maintained to retain their appearance? However there is no question that many of the footpath surfaces are in a poor state and potentially dangerous and resurfacing should be a priority.

1. Street Planting Strategy

The Strategy ignores the existing planting of trees in the middle of Old Barrenjoey Road between Avalon Parade and the school. Do they propose that these should be removed? We are not sure about the regeneration of Careel Creek but it could be certainly more attractive than it is at present.

1. Art & Performance Strategy

Dunbar Park is effectively the village green for Avalon and the new structures proposed for Dunbar Park are large and will be intrusive. The idea of a performance space on Barrenjoey Road opposite the service station is ridiculous – traffic and traffic noise would kill it, for a start. An amphitheatre somewhere in the golf course precinct makes much more sense.

1. Lighting Strategy

This mostly seems to make sense and would be attractive as well as safer.

Turning to the proposals for the five key site studies, again in order: -

1. Intersection

There is no question that the intersection area can be improved. Four options are put forward as Options 1, 2, 2A and 3.

Looking first of all at the common elements between the four, these are: -

* Closure of the southern entry point to the Woolworths car park and re-siting it beside the existing exit point. We totally support this for a number of reasons. It will make the existing level crossing to the community centre, etc. much safer and substantially reduce pedestrian/car interaction and interruption of flow. It will produce a smoother and more logical traffic flow in the car park.
* Re-alignment of corner blisters on the north-west and south-east corners of the intersection – nothing hangs on these.
* All the options except I are inaccurate in the number of parking spaces deleted. Option 2 says -3 but its figures add up to -8; Option 2A is the same as is Option 3.
* All options delete the bus lay-over in Old Barrenjoey Road but do not provide an alternative site for the bus lay-over which is required. Where should it be? (In one of the cross-sections, it appears to be moved to Avalon Parade, east of the intersection)

Looking at each option separately: -

* Option 1 – retains the crossing outside the community centre – given the flow of pedestrian traffic from Dunbar Park and the community centre across this crossing, past Woolworths and heading for the surf club and beach, this crossing is essential. Retains the existing two-way traffic flow on Old Barrenjoey Road – this is important.
* Option 2 moves the crossing from outside the community centre up to the new entry/exit for the carpark. Since one of the main reasons for moving the entry to the car park was to reduce pedestrian/vehicle interaction, this move makes no sense at all. It makes Old Barrenjoey Road from the community centre to the intersection a pedestrian-shared zone but retains parallel parking – this will produce chaos, could result in more accidents, and will reduce traffic flow for no discernible advantage. At the same time, new planting at the intersection makes exit from the shared zone more difficult by blocking lines of sight. It appears to be the intention that this part of Old Barrenjoey Road would be one-way heading south but it does not spell this out.
* There appears to be no difference between Option 2 and Option 2A
* Option 3 explicitly makes Old Barrenjoey Road between the car park entry/exit and Avalon Parade a one-way street heading south. This will increase the volume of traffic using the intersection and will make access to the “Woolworths” car park more difficult, resulting in additional traffic volumes at key points, particularly turning traffic in the intersection, making the present situation much worse.

1. Wickham Lane

These ideas make a lot of sense and would improve the amenity of the village. Vertical gardens and a green lane treatment would be a better solution than more graffiti.

The same thing should be done in Simmonds Lane at least as far as the vacant block currently used for parking on the corner with Edmund Hock Avenue.

1. Beach Gateway

The improvements proposed for the north-eastern corner of the intersection of Barrenjoey Road and Avalon Parade would certainly enhance the appearance of the corner and make the bus stop more comfortable (but the new shelter has no walls so no weather protection) and perhaps it would provide an area for social interaction. However proposed use as an art or performance area do not make sense and the proposals do nothing to create a “gateway” effect for Avalon. Improvements on the ugly opposite corner where the service station is are also necessary.

1. Edges of Dunbar Park

Why the “inactive edges” of Dunbar Park are a problem is not made clear – the paths provide access to and through the park without disturbing use of its central area. As mentioned the Park is Avalon’s village green and while the proposal’s additional public seating would appreciated (particularly in the shade), public BBQ’s probably would not; the new performance platform would be in the wrong place (see below), bicycle storage is probably not required, new lighting would be good and a community information board would be useful. However the proposed new structures, in a great arc along the eastern edge of the park, would be out of scale and damaging to the “village green” atmosphere. It would be more desirable to site the performance space at the opposite end of Dunbar Park so that the noise if funnelled towards the business area and the sea; where it is proposed would funnel noise up the residential areas of the valley.

1. Old Barrenjoey Road

The proposals for Old Barrenjoey Road for cycleways and shared zones have been dealt with above. Paving has also been touched on – it only appears to apply only to the shared zone. It also appears in this section that the trees in the centre of the road south of the intersection are to be removed but there is confusion about this – the cross-section shows these trees still there. Improvement of footpaths generally and to street furniture and lighting would be desirable.

PARKING

No solutions for the village will work unless the major issue of parking is also addressed – it is an integral part of the Village. There is a need for additional parking within or on the periphery of the village. The situation would be significantly improved if employees in the village could be persuaded to park on the periphery, rather than in the centre but the surrounding roads do not have any significant additional parking capacity. Before the amalgamation, the former Pittwater Council had been considering an additional parking level over the rear lower part of the parking area on Avalon Parade adjacent to Bowling Green Lane. This could be constructed relatively economically, would not be intrusive and could be seamlessly integrated into the existing parking area. It would make a substantial difference to car traffic on Old Barrenjoey Road. It remains the most straight-forward solution to the parking issue.

Palm Beach and Whale Beach Association, Inc.

A/Prof Richard West AM

President

12.2.20