



## The Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc.

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### **SUBMISSION FOR MY PLACE AVALON PLAN**

The Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc represents the residents and businesses of a particularly beautiful part of the Northern Beaches LGA and it welcomes the opportunity to put forward its views on the Draft My Place Avalon Plan.

Avalon Beach Village is for our members, their local shopping, amenities and service centre. They greatly value its casual, informal atmosphere, its pedestrian-friendly nature and the various facilities it provides. Like many people, they really treasure what the Plan calls the “distinctive style” of Avalon - difficult to define until it is damaged. Two factors are critical to that style – the fact that the Village is not on a through traffic route and the priority given to pedestrians throughout the Village.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Guiding Principles provide an acceptable framework for the detailed proposals that follow but do not mention the context of the population profile of the catchment area. Importantly this comprises above Sydney average proportions of seniors and younger families with children (and, most likely, dogs).

#### OMISSIONS – ZONING & BUILT ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY

The Plan does not attach sufficient importance to (i) preservation of the existing zoning and height limits; (ii) the built environment which provides the stage on which the local culture develops and (iii) the importance and fragility of the local economy which does not exist just for the benefit of the locals but also to provide an added attraction for, and service to, visitors to this beautiful part of Sydney. It is a fragile economy and it is a destination economy – it is the last village on the Peninsula. It is critical that any changes made to the village enhance its appeal as a destination.

#### COMMENTS

We have structured our comments around the three precincts defined in the Plan and have sought to deal succinctly with the more important issues, rather than deal with every single element of the Plan.

##### **VILLAGE HUB PRECINCT**

- *CYCLEWAYS*

These are totally objectionable because they: -

- Cut the village into four separate quadrants, damaging the Village atmosphere and making access from one to another more dangerous;
- Reduce the road widths by 2.5m, reducing the width of the roadways to the narrowest width permitted by the Australian Road Safety Design Standards;
- Are dangerous to pedestrians, particularly in shared zone, and removes the pedestrian friendly nature of the village; this danger will increase if electric bikes become available as they are faster and less controllable;
- Are dangerous to passengers alighting from parked cars and cyclists, made even worse because of the 250mm separating wall between the cycleway and parked cars which will be a trip hazard. Although there will be breaks in the wall every 50 metre for pedestrian access, these will cause a further significant loss of parking spaces, again without any replacement elsewhere in the Village;
- Put the children at the Primary School at risk because it goes directly past the main gates of the school;
- Have no supporting evidence of any public demand for cycleways – only 0.8% of total LGA population use bikes for commuting;
- Are damaging to atmosphere and culture of village; one of its critical characteristics is that it does not have a through traffic route running through the middle of it – the cycleways would change this fundamentally. The mental picture of a crowd of recreational cyclists riding through the Village Hub on a Saturday morning shows how totally inappropriate this is;
- Because the cycleways are through routes, they will not bring any of the benefits claimed for them in the Plan. Local residents will not switch to bikes for their normal shopping requirements so there will be no reduction in either traffic or emissions (until electric cars become the norm, at least); the cyclists will be from out of the area, will interfere with the usual pedestrian and car transport in the Village Hub and produce additional hazards;
- Will cost “\$\$\$\$” which means \$5 million and upwards – this makes it one of the most expensive elements of the Plan and there is nothing to suggest that the cost can be recovered in any way from any balancing benefits to the Village;
- The distinct disadvantages of dedicated cycle zones as demonstrated in Sydney CBD and Inner West and in other global cities has resulted in recognition that they are underutilised over a 24-hour period and restrict other traffic to narrow road lanes with resulting traffic dislocation; a number of them are therefore being discontinued;
- In short, there is no demonstrable advantage to be gained for the village from cycleways and lots of downsides; it is not clear that there is any advantage for cyclists either. Through cyclists should be therefore encouraged to remain on Barrenjoey Road.
- *ALTERNATIVE BIKE PLAN*

The alternative bike plan put forward by the Avalon Preservation Association and supported by the Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association and the Clareville & Bilgola Plateau Residents’ Association, would divert the bike traffic, which principally comprises schoolchildren, along the laneways, Patterson Lane/Wickham Lane and Edmund Hock Avenue. These should be used as informal bike paths, appropriately signed, which would be safer for the children, reduce the present bike traffic through the village and hence the impact on pedestrians and make better use of an under-utilised asset. The lanes would benefit from a lower speed limit, which could be as low as 10 km/h and the lighting must be improved.

This plan would remove the need to delete loading zones on Avalon Parade and Old Barrenjoey Road and this would reduce the need for trucks to use the lanes at all; this use should be further discouraged by the lower speed limit and perhaps a ban for trucks unless the site for a delivery has its own delivery bay on the lane.

- *USE OF LANEWAYS*

- The use of Patterson Lane as spelled out in the Plan is fully supported but it should also be available as an informal cycle route for schoolchildren to and from the schools.
- The new community plaza is an excellent idea but would however benefit from more tree canopy because it is open to the north. Similar plans should be developed for Wickham Lane and part of Simmonds Lane;
- Lighting in all the laneways requires upgrading, in the interests of safety, use by pedestrians and the prevention of use for anti-social behaviour.
- Both Patterson Lane and Wickham Lane get some present use by parents and children going to or from the school but for safety Wickham Lane requires upgrading of the surface, a 10km/h speed limit and lighting

- *SHARED PEDESTRIAN ZONE – OLD BARRENJOEY ROAD*

- This would produce no practical benefits if the cycleway is introduced because by its nature it is an exclusive zone (assuming that there is any active use of it which is doubtful). The shared zone will only cover a short stretch of Old Barrenjoey Road and may require removal of the pedestrian crossing opposite the Community Centre (which we oppose as it is well used).
- This proposal requires removal of the bus stop and re-routing of local bus routes;
- It should be combined with relocation of the entrance to the Woolworths car park to beside the exit; this would also extend the shared zone (without cycleways) and make it a meaningful space;
- Without the cycleway, we would not oppose a trial.

- *PARKING AND AVALON BEACH PARKING STUDY*

- Twenty-four parking spaces removed on Old Barrenjoey Road and on Avalon Parade plus 2 loading zones and 1 bus stop – none are replaced elsewhere;
- The loss of loading bays will make deliveries to local shops more difficult and will damage the local economy;
- The cycleway on Avalon Parade extends on the northern side of the road all the way to the Old Wharf; access to and from residential properties along Avalon Parade will be more difficult and dangerous, especially for the retirement village;
- The introduction of openings for access every 50 metres along the cycleways would reduce the number of parking spaces even further;
- There is already a parking shortage in the Village as borne out by the Avalon Parking Study.

- *INTERSECTION*

- Narrowing of the road lanes and building out the corners of the intersection will make turning at the intersection more difficult for the buses and will further slow down traffic.
- It will be difficult to persuade or force people to stop crossing Avalon Parade at the intersection and use the new crossing some distance away, making the intersection more dangerous.

- *WOOLWORTHS CAR PARK ENTRY*
- A proposal, which PBWBA supports, has been put forward a number of times to move the vehicle entrance to the Woolworths from its present site to next to the exit. This would (i) reduce the interaction with pedestrians and traffic delays at the present pedestrian crossing outside the Community Centre (which must be retained), (ii) produce a more logical traffic flow within the car park and (iii) provide a net two much needed extra parking spaces. This proposal should be incorporated into the Plan.
- The Plan should make provision for a charging station within the car park.
  
- *FOOTPATHS, WALKWAYS, STREET FURNITURE AND LIGHTING*
- The proposed changes to pavements through resurfacing will be very welcome – the existing surfaces are uneven, inconsistent in heights and treatment and wear has increased the likelihood of tripping and accidents. A unified treatment throughout the village would reinforce the village feel.
- Similarly new street furniture represents an opportunity to update and unify the appearance of the Village Hub and is welcomed.
- The introduction of cycleways totally prevents any widening of the footpaths for community and commercial use.
- Distinctive lighting which is uniform throughout the village would reinforce the “village feel” and unify the village.
  
- *MOVEMENT OF PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS*
- There is at present a “natural” and well-used walkway from the Bowling Club, the RSL, Dunbar Park and the proposed new plaza at the end of Patterson Lane to the Community Centre, then via a crossing on Old Barrenjoey Road to Woolworths and thence to the Surf Club and the Beach. Moving the crossing away from the Community Centre and Woolworths serves no useful purpose and it will most likely be ignored, creating pedestrian risk.
- Moving one of the crossings over Avalon Parade eastwards away from the intersection will also interrupt a normal pedestrian flow and will also be ignored unless barriers are installed at the intersection to block pedestrians. There is much more pedestrian traffic north/south on Old Barrenjoey Road across the intersection than there is east/west along Avalon Parade.
  
- *GREEN CANOPY*
- **“Objective – to increase the urban tree canopy and create quality green streets ...” (p.22).** The reality is that the Plan would (i) delete the “green spine gateway” on Old Barrenjoey Road (p.19); and (ii) remove a substantial amount of valued tree planting on the western side of Old Barrenjoey Road between Amor Restaurant and the Telstra Building in order to accommodate the unwanted cycleway in a strip nearly 2.5 metres wide.
- Otherwise the proposals for greening the Village Hub are good and will be welcomed.
- There is no mention of the built environment of the Village Hub other than a reference on p.37. This environment is “the bones” of the Village around which everything can take place. Its modest stature – i.e., many small shops and two and three storey height, are one of the key elements of the “Avalon style”. This needs to be explicitly recognised and preserved in the Plan.
- There is no reference to zoning in the Plan other than a reference to “maintain the integrity of the existing land zoned B2 Local Centre” – it is not clear what that means. The zoning of the Village Hub and the height limits should also be explicitly preserved.

- The Village has few heritage buildings and those few should be explicitly preserved. The cinema should be added to the list – it fulfils a most important community role and should be preserved. The bus shelter on the eastern side of Barrenjoey Road also has some heritage value and should be preserved.
- *DUNBAR PARK*
- Generally we support the proposals for Dunbar Park but we oppose siting the performance space along the footpath on Old Barrenjoey Road. This will cause disruption of the normal pedestrian and traffic flow on Old Barrenjoey Road. It will also funnel noise up the valley into residential areas, such as the retirement village. Moving this to the opposite (western) side of Dunbar Park will channel the noise towards the beach and out to sea.
- *MONTHLY MARKET DAYS*
- We strongly support the idea of monthly market days and suggest that Dunbar Park would be the ideal venue.

### **COASTAL FRINGE PRECINCT**

- *NORTH AVALON*
- The proposals for North Avalon are sensible, modest and attractive. The cost is put at “\$\$\$\$” which means “\$5 million and upwards” – this seems surprisingly high.
- *BEACHFRONT*
- The wider pathway to the beach is sensible but could be improved by (i) lowering the crest so that a view of the water is available from the bus stop; and (ii) moving the children’s playground closer to the Surf Club so that it doesn’t intrude on sight lines.
- *BUS STOP*
- Moving the bus stop further away from the pedestrian crossing on Barrenjoey Road is very sensible but the existing bus shelter has a certain heritage value and should be preserved – it provides better shelter than the proposed new design which has no sides and ignores the fact that rain does not always fall vertically.
- *GATEWAY*
- The proposed stonework seating for the gateway is not a sensible use of money – it might look nice but it would serve no useful purpose and is very expensive to install. However the planting at the Gateway could be much improved.
- *CYCLEWAY*
- Extending the cycleway across Barrenjoey Road will introduce a source of danger for both cyclists and motorists. Cyclists should be required to dismount and walk their bikes across Barrenjoey Road as a safety matter and as an example to younger cyclists.
- *ROCK POOL AREA*
- Whilst additional bench seating (p.76) would be welcome and in keeping, concrete seating as shown on p.77 would be extremely ugly and out of character

### **SOUTHERN PRECINCT**

- *GOLF COURSE*
- It is critical that the golf course be preserved as Open Space, whatever happens to the golf club.
- *BIKE TRACK*

- Much of the natural fringe of the golf course is degraded bushland. Many noxious weeds such as lantana require removal. Remediation of the bushland could be combined with a cycle track near the perimeter for young cyclists or a mountain bike track. (Grants are available for remediation and have been successfully applied for in the past).
- *SPORTING FIELDS*
- Giving part of the playing fields along Old Barrenjoey Road over to a cycle track seems a dubious expenditure but if it is supported by the parents of the primary school, we would have no objection.

## PRIORITIES

There are no funds earmarked for implementation of any of the action items in the Plan in either the current year's budget or the following four years but we are advised that funds will be found, at least for low-cost items, once the Plan is adopted. However there would be considerable benefit from giving priority to one of the high-cost items – the resurfacing of footpaths which would greatly benefit the appearance of the Village and provide a safer environment for pedestrians.

An approach which “cherry-picks” the cheaper actions as and when money becomes available will not help achieve the coherent village plan which this proposal aims to achieve. It will take, as the priorities make clear, a program over a number of years to implement the plan and it will be extremely important during that period to keep the community involved and supportive. The Plan should be seen as a “living project” with regular consultation with the community – perhaps annually. The Council would find this beneficial in planning and implementing village/town plans for other areas of the LGA.

## COSTINGS

There are three high-cost items in the Plan - (i) resurfacing roads and footpaths, (ii) “naturalising” the Careel Creek watercourse; and (iii) the cycleway. We have commented just above on resurfacing – at least of footpaths. We would suggest that the naturalising of Careel Creek would be nice to have but provide little tangible other benefit to the Village. We would delete the cycleways entirely from the Plan, freeing up resources for other more beneficial projects.

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We greatly appreciate the opportunity to put forward our comments on the Plan and commend them to the Council.

Yours truly

A/Prof Richard West

President

Palm Beach & Whale Beach Association Inc.

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