

Stewart Architecture has been engaged by artsACT, Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD) to undertake a study and prepare a report which will investigate and document Planning options, Management Options and Feasibility for a new arts precinct on Section 49 Kingston.

This report will explore the requirements and options for accommodating a range of identified arts organisations on Section 49 Kingston, which would be developed into a mixed use arts precinct, and follows on from the work and ideas presented in the May 2014 Section 49 Master Plan.

Main Areas of the Study

Stewart Architecture, with the assistance of an expert sub-consultant team, is identified as the 'Project Team' and has been tasked to undertake the following studies and provide recommendations for the way forward:

- **Undertake a Functional Brief and Groundwork Study** to develop a consolidated Functional Brief for a new arts precinct which would accommodate all of the identified arts organisations in either one or more new or existing buildings. The Functional Brief identifies the types of required spaces, and calculates the total area required for the arts organisations, including area for parking, servicing, amenities and public interface spaces. This section also discusses and summarises the heritage context of the precinct which is based on a number of Conservation Management Plans and Heritage Reports which have recently been prepared by a number of different specialists.
- **Undertake a Consultation and Reuse of Existing Facilities Study**, which documents the specific needs of the various arts organisations through one-on-one interviews, identifies and documents the possible options for re-use of the existing buildings (the Former Transport Depot, the Fitters' Workshop and the Kingston Powerhouse) that are already located on the precinct.
- **Undertake a Design Options Study**, which reviewed the existing Indicative Master Plan as presented in the May 2014 Section 49 Master Plan report, exploring the potential break up of sites, traffic network, and landscape and public realm areas into a resolved urban framework and proposes a range of options for the siting of arts organisations within the precinct. A number of Design Options are explored in this study, and a recommended option, detailing the preferred arrangement for the accommodation of arts organisations on the precinct is presented.
- **Undertake a Management Model Study**, which identifies and analyses the various options for the management and governance of an arts precinct. This study compares a range of different models through case studies, discusses the pros and cons of the various management options and provides a recommendation for the most effective option for the Kingston Arts Precinct.

Key Findings of the Study

The Project Team presents the following recommendations arising from this report:

1. Functional Brief

The Functional Brief recommends that the identified arts organisations will require about 7,571sqm of floor area in office, exhibition, retail, workshop, training, meeting circulation and servicing type spaces. These spaces could be located in one or more buildings, arranged close together to ensure strong working synergies between the different arts organisations can develop.

2. Parking

The precinct needs to replace the 480 public parks that currently exist, plus provide the parking generated by new development and parking generated by the arts organisations, for operators, artists and visitors.

The parking generation for the arts organisations has been based on the Parking and Vehicular Access Guidelines Code and it is estimated that 7,571sqm of arts use will generate about 152 employee parking spaces.

This report recommends public parking be located in either 1 or 2 centrally located basements running through the middle of the site, directly underneath new arts buildings. The report calculates that up to 760 new public car parks could be provided on site in both below ground or surface parking arrangements.

3. Consultation

One-on-one consultation with the various arts organisations concludes that there is strong support for the development of an arts precinct at the Kingston Foreshore. In addition to this, there are a range of other organisations (both government and private) that have expressed an interest in being located at an arts precinct and thus indicates that a mixed use 'arts focussed' precinct at the Kingston Foreshore would have considerable support.

4. Statutory Planning

The current CZ5 Commercial Zones Development Code and Kingston Precinct Code indicates that a mixed use arts precinct would be suitable for the site and that the majority of proposed uses would be permissible.

It is the opinion of the project team that the precinct should be considered a 'special place,' unique to other parts of the Kingston Foreshore. There should be a variation to the Territory Plan to increase the flexibility of permissible uses, floor area restrictions and height restrictions to ensure that the intention of an arts precinct as described in this report be realised.

5. Design Options

The report has been prepared based on a review of the May 2014 Section 49 Master Plan. This report highlights the importance of locating arts organisations in the centre of the precinct, with the focal point of the precinct being a public quadrangle and colonnade.

This preferred arrangement is identified as Design Option 1 in this report

This arrangement can provide up to 9,120sqm of public and arts use space, and potentially up to 53,413sqm of mixed use (commercial and residential) and a large amount of quality public outdoor space.

6. Management Model

The project team recommends that a new, independent entity be established to realise the Precinct Vision. It is recommended that this entity be placed at arms-length from Government at as early a stage as practical after the process of establishment. The selection of initial board members should be recommended by artsACT, and approved by the Minister for the Arts, with consideration of the range of cultural, marketing, property management and other skills which will be appropriate to the operating entity.

Refer to Section 8 of this report for the Final Recommendations of the Study.

Conclusion

Stewart Architecture believes it has identified an exciting opportunity to re-brand an existing precinct into a world class cultural, mixed used precinct which would show case the best of local art and art making as its focal point. The precinct will combine new architecture with heritage buildings and quality public spaces building on the strong connections that already existing between the local Canberra community and the history of this important precinct.

Stewart Architecture recommends that this vision be realised, firstly through the formation of an Estate Development Plan, based on the preferred Design Option presented in this report. This would identify future development sites, and confirm the sites that should be reserved for future arts uses. In addition to this, variation to the Territory Plan should be sought to remove some of the restrictions that currently exist on this precinct, to provide greater flexibility of use, and to ensure that this precinct can be identified as a 'special place,' the future heart to the Kingston Foreshore.

Stewart Architecture recommends that the development of a public quadrangle and colonnade that will link new arts buildings and heritage buildings is pivotal in claiming this precinct as a dedicated home to the best of local arts and crafts. In addition to this, the development of a central below ground public car park will unlock future sites for development, providing safe and accessible parking without compromising the existing uses of the precinct.

It should be noted that without the work prepared, and the issues examined, in the May 2014 Section 49 Master Plan, these recommendations and conclusions would not be possible. We thank all those involved in the preparation of the May 2014 Section 49 Master Plan and we look forward to working with the ACT Government to realise this landmark project.