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City Centre Masterplan Refresh  
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## **Submission on East & West Stitch as part of the City Centre Masterplan Refresh, with specific reference to Grafton Gully Boulevard.**

### **A. Overview**

Parnell is Auckland's first suburb and has an enviable setting on the city fringe. It is one of the gateways to the city centre; located from the Auckland Domain to the bays of the Waitematā. Parnell is close to a number of major facilities including the Auckland War Memorial Museum, Spark Arena, Ports of Auckland, Auckland Hospital and the University of Auckland. It has long been one of Auckland's most desirable suburbs due to its strategic location, range of restaurants, bars, parks, community facilities and employment opportunities.

Yet with all these attributes, it is topographically challenged and experiences a lack of East/West connectivity, which is hindering how the suburb develops. It is also squeezed between the CBD and Newmarket, at the mercy of SH16, the heavy traffic from Ports of Auckland and the resulting restricted access in and out of the suburb. This could be remedied with a redesign of the section of SH16, between Ports of Auckland and Stanley Street. While we support several initiatives in greater Auckland to improve our multimodal transport options, it is of no use if the existing network in and around the city fringe is not improved.

### **B. Proposal for State Highway 16/Grafton Gully/The Strand as part of the East/West Stitch.**

We understand that the refresh of the City Centre Masterplan (CCMP) is a very high level document, but are gratified after several years of ignoring the eastern city fringe, to finally see the focus on the eastern side of the city incorporating The Strand and Stanley Street, now referred to as Grafton Gully.

We are excited by the fact that this proposal represents the largest development opportunity in terms of footprint in the city centre after Wynyard Quarter and understand it requires the upgrade of the adjoining primary network as well as the release of certain key properties for its potential to be fully unlocked.

Grafton Gully, running north-south roughly between Wellesley Street and Beach Road, does form a natural barrier to the eastern extent of the city centre reinforced by State Highway 16 (SH16) as it runs northwards before stopping abruptly at Stanley Street. We agree that the 'Eastern Transformation' represents an opportunity to expand the core city centre and bring this area into more productive and connected uses. Consumers and businesses have repeatedly told us they feel 'cut off or alienated from the central city'. If this proposal can eventuate as visualised, we see the potential to stitch us to the fabric of the city.

We agree that The Strand, a historic mixed-use street connecting SH16 to Quay Street (and the Ports of Auckland) is now significantly degraded and acts as a major bottleneck for people and traffic accessing the city centre, eastern bays, and the Port.



Quay Park area is sandwiched between The Strand and Quay Park and is centred on a largely vacant triangle of rail land and this together with access to facilities such as Spark Arena represent a viable development opportunity. Early estimates suggest building developments could provide housing for 1,300 residents and commercial space for 1,500 workers.

The concept that proposes tree-lined local access streets running parallel to a central heavy vehicle carriageway dedicated to efficient through traffic to the eastern suburbs and the port area is attractive. In addition, it is proposed that access streets would provide for local parking, cycle lanes and ample pedestrian amenity whilst unlocking the mixed-use development potential of adjoining residual land owned largely by the Crown. Crossing Stanley Street and The Strand would become simpler and safer, with reduced crossing distances (widths) would help to connect Parnell to the city, the city to the Domain, the Learning Quarter to the Museum and beyond to the new Khyber Pass campus, bringing people into the area. The multi-way boulevard would support the development of Te Toangaroa Quay Park as a new mixed-use precinct.

Finally, we agree that the multiway boulevard concept also provides impetus to a private development proposition to re-open the Albert Street tunnels as a walking and cycling access, which would provide significant tourism interest in Parnell, plus the idea of more public transport closer to Beach Rd intersection could prove advantageous to Parnell.

#### **HOWEVER!**

There is a large degree of scepticism that this proposal can become a tangible reality and whether or not it will be able to address the range of current problems that exist, as well as cope with the range of traffic demands.

Any major roading upgrade needs to be informed by decisions around the long-term location of the Port. In terms of freight alone, according to our understanding, the upgrade of the Ferguson Container Wharf allows for a tripling to TEU's from one to three million p.a. Currently rail handles 7% but even with a new third heavy rail line use of rail will only reach 15%. We are unsure if this traffic demand has been accounted for in the tabled proposal.

Various businesses have also queried the timing and viability of the project as well as the potential disruption (*see comments under 'Concerns from our businesses'*)

**So we really need to see the detailed traffic modelling, not only of the SH16 corridor, but the impact of intersecting roads from Parnell and the city side in order to understand if this concept has the ability to translate into actuality.**

#### **C. Current problems with the SH16/The Strand corridor**

This particular stretch of road is fraught with several issues which impact on our businesses, and minimal efforts to date have felt like nothing more than 'band aids'. The corridor is not fit for purpose and the road network in this area was never designed for the level of freight traffic it is currently carrying. Access to several parts of Parnell are already compromised and dangerous as a result of this corridor between Tamaki Drive and the end of Stanley Street.

1. Parnell is the victim of the **overwhelming and continuous traffic from Ports of Auckland** which affects our businesses, employees and residents. Even if the Port is relocated in the long-term, the demand for these vehicle movements has to be addressed immediately and for the next two decades at least.
2. **Reducing the lanes in Quay Street** has increased the demand on this corridor. Pre the Quay Street Enhancement programme in Dec 2018, The Strand/SH16 at its inception across the railway bridge carried over 26,000 vehicles a day of which approx.



2,000 were from Ports of Auckland – without any additional vehicles turning off Tamaki Drive to The Strand.

As predicted by PBA, **several 'rat runs'** through the suburb of Parnell in order to avoid congestion such as Farnham/Earle Street have taken additional strain since Quay Street works commenced. In addition, streets such as Ayr Street and Brighton Road have been more frequently utilised by commuters from St Helliers/Mission Bay.

3. **The intersection with Tamaki Drive** and overbridge is clumsy, way beyond capacity and unsafe in order to adequately serve vehicle traffic both to and from the Ports of Auckland as well as traffic to and from the city as well as the suburbs of Mission Bay etc. It also cannot accommodate cycle traffic safely and needs a complete redesign.
4. **The Gladstone intersection** with The Strand is dangerous for turning vehicles and cyclists. We have yet to see a final design for the reconfiguration of this intersection and believe this should be done in conjunction with a long-term plan for The Strand and not in isolation.
5. **Access to businesses between 137-165 The Strand** is convoluted, complicated and dependent on the truncated footpath in order to facilitate truck deliveries to the businesses. Any changes to this footpath would make several of these businesses unviable.
6. **Public Transport serving St Georges Bay Road** is completely inadequate with only one bus travelling along The Strand. This street has seen a huge increase in development over the past 3 years and is now home to approximately 2,000 workers who either have to walk from Beach Road, Parnell Rise or Britomart.
7. **The corner of The Strand/St Georges Bay Road outside the Saatchi & Saatchi** building is a well-known site of several truck accidents as trucks overturn or lose their containers. The most recent incident narrowly missed a woman with a baby in a stroller.

Vehicle traffic exiting and entering St Georges Bay Rd, especially at rush hour, is very dangerous as the intersection is not signalised.

Even though there is a pedestrian crossing further along The Strand, many employees parking nearby often cross at the corner, placing themselves at huge risk as trucks from the Port hurtle around the corner.

8. **The bus stop outside 125 The Strand** is not safe and needs to be slightly relocated. We pointed this out when this was first proposed as it is too close to the dangerous corner.
9. **The signalised pedestrian crossing** has assisted with slowing down the truck traffic, especially serving pedestrians crossing from the residential apartments. Sadly it is not in the ideal place for employees in St Georges Bay Rd, so is not adequately utilised.
10. **Business at no 77 The Strand** experience difficulty entering and exiting their premises, saying that during peak times it is hopeless and totally reliant on the courtesy of other drivers, while those between **21 and 95 The Strand are very dependent on parking** bays and loading zones (with particular reference to the décor/home improvement related businesses), as they need the ability for customers to collect purchases, or to facilitate deliveries. The threat of reduced parking makes Parnell a far less desirable retail location. The Parnell Business Association has spent a great deal of effort building the perception of a Parnell destination design and décor experience,



which is upheld by media such as Archipro. It is also well known as the chosen location of several architects.

11. **The Strand/Beach Road intersection** is clogged in all four directions for several hours each day. Although sequencing the traffic lights has taken place, this needs further work. **Access into Parnell Rise and Carlaw Park** has been compromised for many years as a result of the demands from The Strand/SH16/Stanley Street.

**The right turn from Stanley Street into Parnell Rise** and subsequent lack of access into Carlaw Park Ave, is a further problem as the lack of a right turn into Carlaw Park Ave from Parnell Rise results in inappropriate u-turning manoeuvres and driving across private properties in order to gain access.

Similarly, when exiting Carlaw Park, the lack of a right turn into Parnell Rise, or across to Augustus Terrace creates numerous safety issues that result from motorist frustration.

12. **The lack of a right turn from the motorway into Nicholls Lane** has historically been prohibited in order to accommodate Port Traffic exiting the motorway which has resulted in undesirable consequences for Carlaw Park employees as well as creating other implications on Parnell Rise. This intersection is also now receiving additional pedestrian traffic from Parnell Station and the student campuses on Nicholls Lane. A further campus is going to be built on the site of the old Caltex petrol station, so safe student pedestrian and cycle crossings must be provided for in the future. Plans were previously tabled for a pedestrian over-bridge at this Stanley Street / Nicholls Lane intersection and we would like clarity as to whether this is still part of future planning.

#### **D. Feedback and Concerns from our businesses towards the East West Stitch proposal**

We have had varied feedback from several affected businesses in Parnell. They are attached in full at the back of the PBA response. Plus we have included some of the responses from individuals working in Parnell. Council will have received additional responses directly.

##### Augusta Capital

- *The tenants at 96 St Georges Bay Road are of a younger demographic (e.g. Xero) and will greatly enjoy the tree-lined boulevard with mixed use frontages. St Georges Bay Road has come a long way in the last few years and we think this proposed plan will continue that positive transformation.*

##### Bauhaus

- *Strongly in favour of Grafton Gully proposal.*

##### Bonn Family Trust

- *However, without Council funding for the proposals outlined in The East and West Stitch and without there being certainty to provide us with as regards to when the proposals put forward in the Masterplan will be implemented, this leaves developers such as ourselves with little desire to invest millions of dollars in undertaking underinvestment in an area historically plagued with uncertainty and long-term Council underinvestment*
- *.... we are extremely concerned about the continued level of uncertainty surrounding the timescale within which the East and West Stitch vision is to be realised and furthermore what interim measures will be put in place pending the realisation of this vision.*



#### Europlan

- *It is important for the businesses along The Strand to understand the impact on their futures- especially around disruption and ongoing client access. We don't want another Albert Street fiasco*

#### Lisa Hoskin Design

- *My personal concern is the high rise development on the railway/waterfront land that would obscure the harbour views of all buildings in our area and the lack of green spaces.*

#### Phil Jones insurance

- *My only concern is that they obviously also wish to have the traffic on both streets moving better but this will never happen unless they address the issue of the sequencing of the traffic lights at the intersection of these streets with both Beach Rd and Parnell Rise.*

*It is not uncommon in the mornings for the queues along the Strand to tail back to Tamaki drive which is ludicrous , and entering or exiting our carpark up to 10 am and again in the afternoons from about 3;30pm is hopeless and totally reliant on the courtesy of other drivers*

#### Publicis Media

- *The changes you are proposing to Stanley Street and The Strand (East West Stitch) would be the absolute worst thing you could do. It's hard enough getting through these areas mornings and evenings currently (we can easily spend 20-30 minutes on The Strand alone trying to get to SH16 between 4pm - 6:30pm currently, and often the morning traffic gets backed up to the North Western Motorway in the mornings) with two lanes for traffic, but cutting it down to one would make it impossible.*
- *Businesses would lose productivity from staff as it would mean extra commute time. Please don't make the same mistakes you have already made on Quay Street. Those works/new road layout has already resulted in lots of extra traffic through The Strand as no one trusts going along Quay Street now, and it will only get worse with more cars on the road.*
- *The new plans look "pretty" but are not practical at all! Where are all these pedestrians coming from that you need to have such a wide walkway on Stanley Street? No one walks along Stanley Street now.*
- *The overwhelming majority of our staff, and every single staff member who travels on that route to and from work on a daily basis are vehemently and strongly opposed to the proposed changes to the East West Stitch. Reducing the number of lanes for normal traffic to drive on is not the answer at all. You will not get people out of cars who don't have alternative transport options, all this will do is make local businesses and their staff suffer because staff can't get to work on time and when they do arrive, they are stressed after sitting in so much traffic.*
- *Please listen to this feedback and do not make these ridiculous proposed changes.*

#### Textile Lofts

- *The Strand and Grafton Gully is currently in bad shape and unsustainable for growth in its current form.*

#### Textilia

- *The proposal should be a significant improvement on what we have now*



Personal responses from Parnell employees such as:

- *With the traffic already congested on The Strand leading up to state highways 1 and 16 the proposal to reduce this down to one lane for cars is going to make the area impossible to go through. We are already experiencing increased pressure on The Strand due to the changes at Quay Street further changes will make the commute to Parnell even harder.*
- *Just feel it will worsen the traffic situation at The Strand road*

#### **E. The threat of interim AT plans**

We have heard that Auckland Transport are busy with 'Draft Interim Plans' for The Strand, which involves prioritising freight traffic and removing parking. We have yet to see the designs, but know this will receive serious push-back from businesses along the corridor.

We are also aware of the plans for the Gladstone intersection but have yet to see final designs.

We are totally opposed to further ad-hoc remedial treatments along this corridor that do not improve access nor add amenity.

#### **F. Conclusion**

The CCMP promotes, as an alternative to previous transport planning that proposed a motorway extension of SH16 northwards to the port, a multi-way boulevard that would act as a large vehicle corridor with improved traffic flow, whilst also delivering improved amenity, connections and development opportunities.

Council have asked if we think the idea of a multi-way boulevard is better than a motorway – and certainly yes it is. However the concept of an underpass to the Port, which would remove all freight traffic is definitely superior (albeit more expensive).

As previously stated, we really need to see the detailed traffic modelling, not only of the SH16 corridor, but the impact of intersecting roads from Parnell and the city side in order to understand if this concept has the ability to translate into actuality. Should this modelling result in compromising the design, aesthetic impact, urban amenities, public realm, opportunities for business etc. in any way, we will need to be involved in a re-consultation.

Please keep us updated.

Yours Sincerely  
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