

Director,  
Urban Assessments  
Department of Planning  
GPO Box 39  
Sydney NSW 2001

## **Callan Park Draft Land Use Plan**

The Sydney City Farm and Sustainable Living Centre Incorporated, NSW, make this submission. (From here on referred to as *City Farm*)

The objectives of City Farm are included at the end of this submission.

Our organisation believes that it could contribute substantially to the achievement of the overall objectives for the future of the site as set out in the 2002 Callan Park Act and in the Draft Land Use Master Plan and the guiding principles of the SEPP 56

However the draft plan makes no provision for community based activities such as the City Farm or any other community based activity to be accommodated on the site. Additionally, despite 'open space' being the main land use, little consideration has been given to the proposed uses, activities or coherent management of this open space.

We believe that these are major shortcomings of the Draft Land Use Plan. City Farm hopes that the Master Plan that will be prepared after the exhibition will be amended to allow for other uses on the site. We hope that the refinement of the Master Plan will have a more open involvement with the community that will allow it to articulate a much clearer and precise vision for the character, use, activities and management of the 70% (a more realistic and accurate figure) of the site that will be usable open space.

It is very unfortunate that submissions are required to be stated in terms of "support" or "objection". City Farm does not believe that an adversarial process will produce the best result. City Farm is interested in developing positive, optimistic and proactive community involvement in the practice of sustainability in an urban environment.

## **Statement of support and objection.**

The Sydney City Farm:

**Supports** the principle of retaining and improving and if possible, expanding publicly accessible land and useable open space at Callan Park

**Supports** the mixed use of public land

1. **Objects** to the amount of site area to be leased to the University
2. **Objects** to the limited allowance for other community based activities
3. **Objects** to the removal of all “non-contributory” buildings without first assessing the potential for their adaptive reuse
4. **Objects** to the lack of vision for the open space, the narrow definitions of passive and active recreation that are implicit in the plan, and the poor understanding of what activates public open space and engages the local and broader community.

**In General** City Farm also **objects** to the process and definitions used in the draft that have been used to justify the draft Land Use Plan

**A.** to the extent that the consultation process has lead to these unsatisfactory results, Sydney City Farm **objects** to the process and believes it has been flawed and unnecessarily restrictive  
and

**B.** to the extent that the draft Land Use Plan diverges significantly from the intent of the 2002 Callan Park Act, it objects to the definitions of floor space, open space and public accessibility that have been used in the preparation of the draft Land Use Plan

## Reasons

### 1 **Objection** to the amount of site area to be leased to the University

#### **Reasons: Inefficient use of public land**

Nowhere in the draft Plan documentation has the area required for the University been explained or justified. The reason the Parkland Campus precinct is so extensive is that the proposed density is low (FSR 0.54:1 compared to the Wharf and Church precincts which are greater than 1.4:1) and the site coverage is very low (17%). The application of a “Princeton courtyard” model to the Callan Park site is not required by the MoU, which simply calls for a “coherent” precinct nor is it appropriate to the Callan Park site, for a number of reasons.

1 Princeton is a private institution with an endowment of US\$18.5 billion; it can do what it likes, on its own land

2 Callan Park is public land. Public open space is at a premium in Sydney. Leichhardt has a particularly low provision of open space (as recognized in the social impact assessment) therefore built form should be as dense as possible.

3 Princeton is on a relatively flat site (2-3% slope) that allows for the creation of courtyards and quadrangles, an entirely different built form is needed for the complexities of the Callan Park site. The site analysis refers to the benching of the site as providing ideal opportunities for the location of buildings, however taking advantage of the benches means spreading the buildings out, occupying more land and reducing the possibility of creating courtyards.

4 Some of the areas shown as having university buildings on them have slopes of 10% up to 16% in some areas. It is both difficult and expensive to build large floor plate buildings on slopes as steep as this and achieve a good relationship between the inside and outside, and the public domain.

A reconsideration of the proposed built form could easily **reduce the land required for the university by 30-40%** and retract it back up the slopes to the flatter more build able areas.

- 2** **Objection** to the limited allowance for community based activities in any of the precincts

**Reasons:**

Because of the highly prescriptive land uses and extremely prescriptive restrictions on footprints and floor areas for the NGO precinct, there is very little scope for City Farm or any other organisation that meets all other requirements, to establish a presence on the site in the long term if it is not associated with an NGO, or the University. The reality will be that given the highly prescriptive definition of the maximum floor area in each precinct, all community uses will effectively be in competition for floor area with other uses in the precinct, unless the amount of floor space were varied.

If the final Master Plan, (that will be the statutory instrument guiding development on the site), is based on this draft land use plan, revision to the Masterplan would be required, which would be an onerous and difficult process.

- 3** **Objection** to the removal of all “non-contributory” buildings without first assessing the potential for their adaptive reuse

**Reasons: sustainability and traces of previous use**

Buildings that have no heritage value or have been deemed “intrusive” or non- contributory does not mean they may not have an intrinsic “use value” or that heritage values are the only values that should be considered.

Many of the outlying buildings could be adapted to other uses. Some could be partly demolished and converted to shade structures, potting sheds and stalls for livestock.

The adaptive reuse of buildings and infrastructure such as roads will avoid both the cost of demolition and restoration of the site as well as the cost of new construction.

Adaptive reuse of buildings is consistent with sustainability principles. There are many examples of beautiful transformations that are possible even in derelict industrial sites in Europe (e.g. Duisburg-Nord) and as evidenced in the adaptive reuse of many humble buildings on the sites controlled by the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust.

**4** **Objection** to the lack of vision for the open space, the narrow definitions of passive and active recreation that are implicit in the plan, and the poor understanding of what activates public open space and engages the local and broader community

**Reasons: The nature and role of open space**

The Land Use Plan has a limited, outdated and simplistic view of passive and active recreation: in the draft plan passive recreation consists of strolling or sitting, active recreation is organised sport. The recreational needs of citizens are far more complex and rich than this, particularly in this part of Sydney. The cultural, social, environmental and community dimensions of recreation, and how they might inform the draft land use plan and be accommodated on the site have been ignored, and this omission can be attributed to the restricted consultation process.

Furthermore, the plan fails to recognise the importance of the amount and type of activities surrounding large areas of open space, to enliven them, make them safe and to draw people to them, when they are not being used for organised sport.

It is unlikely that institutional uses such as those proposed (health and university) would enliven the open space or provide venues for cultural and community development and activity where the general public would feel welcome.

The plan does not articulate a vision for the open space; how it will be used, by whom or for what. A substantial proportion of the open space is within the Parkland Campus and NGO precincts (18% and 13%) respectively. The university buildings and the NGO's will surround these areas. It is not clear what would attract the public to these places, or how they could be enjoyed. The only indication of intended use and public access is given in the MoU which states that the University would "reserve rights to the public for pedestrian access through Callan Park on terms similar to the terms of public access through the University's Camperdown campus": there is no mention of public use or amenity.

**In General**, City Farm also **objects** to the process and definitions used in the draft that have been used to justify the draft Land Use Plan,

- A.** to the extent that the consultation process has lead to these unsatisfactory results, Sydney city farm **objects** to the process and believes it has been flawed and unnecessarily restrictive

**Reasons: Unduly narrow focus on allocating buildings and defining sites**

The process has focused on providing sites for a range of community and educational uses and expanding the university in order to maintain the heritage buildings. The end result is a subdivision plan.

As a result little attention has been given to objectives or vision for the uses and activities that might occur in the open space even though it is the major land use.

Little consideration has been given to the coherent management of the open space. Instead the care maintenance and control, under any of the management options separates responsibility across a number of agencies with no mention of potential community involvement.

It is as though the 'open space' is simply space left over after finding sites for buildings. Sydney has an oversupply of this sort of open space.

- B.** to the extent that the draft Land Use Plan diverges significantly from the intent of the 2002 Callan Park Act, it objects to the definitions of floor space, open space and public accessibility that have been used in the preparation of the draft land Use Plan

**Reasons: Open Space definition misleading**

The Land Use Plan uses a misleading definition of open space, that is, the 90% that is referred to in the documentation includes all areas that are not built on. That is, the total site area less the actual building footprints. It is difficult not to see the use of this definition as an attempt to align the Land use Plan with the 2002 Act when in fact the plan diverges significantly form the objects of the Act. Even if this definition were accepted, the proposal increases the ground floor area from 60,750sqm to 70,242 sqm. There are an additional 59,367sqm of existing road ways and though these may be reduced in the final plan, by the provision of underground parking (expensive and not sustainable) there will need to be a substantial proportion of roads retained. So the figures are simply incorrect, and therefore, misleading.

**Appendix: Objectives of the Sydney City Farm and Sustainable Living Centre Incorporated Association**

- (a) To operate a non-profit incorporated association in accordance with the Incorporations Associations Act.
- (b) To create a green sanctuary to showcase an eco-friendly future for Sydney in the heart of our city.
- (c) To build a vibrant centre of learning and community participation through the creation and management of an urban organic garden and farm and environmental management showcase, modeled on city farm projects in New York, London and Melbourne.
- (d) To become a key centre for connecting the community and generating the shared accomplishments that build long-term neighborliness and community cohesion.
- (e) To be a focal point for strong community involvement and education in sustainable living practices as well as developing cultural, creative and recreational activities and events.
- (f) To operate as a not-for-profit Incorporated Association, ensuring the farm belongs to all its members in the community and any income generated is required to be reinvested in our ongoing work for the community.
- (g) To encourage the participation of supporters, people who don't wish to participate actively in the operation of the farm but who wish to support the venture financially and stay informed of its achievements.