



NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service
middlehead.masterplan@environment.nsw.gov.au

**Sydney Harbour National Park
Draft MIDDLE HEAD & GEORGES HEAD MASTERPLAN**

Founded in 1964 to protect and preserve the parks, bushland and open space of Mosman, the objectives of the Mosman Parks & Bushland Association remain the same today. Mosman is blessed with a headland of spectacular beauty and national heritage significance right in its midst - a headland *in* Mosman but *for* all its visitors to appreciate and enjoy.

Middle Head - a Sydney Harbour "jewel" and a national asset
Mosman Parks and Bushland offers congratulations on the recognition given by the draft masterplan to the qualities of Middle Head and Georges Head. The landscape, natural features and bushland, the aboriginal heritage and the particularly rich defence heritage make Middle Head a place of national significance. Good planning for its conservation and interpretation is essential for the creation a lasting legacy for future generations.

POSITIVES:

Sydney Harbour Scenic Walk

We commend the stated first priority of the Masterplan - making the link to the Sydney Harbour Scenic Walk and developing further connections to the heritage and visual attractions that are spread throughout the site. The proposal to link Middle Head with Chowder Bay and to link to Cobblers Beach and the Harbour Trust lands will add to the public enjoyment of Middle Head.

Interpretation

The scenic walk and associated links will pass by the various fortifications round the headland. These will be signed and interpreted.

In the Arrivals precinct

Proposals for the defensive ditch and the wooden pedestrian bridge are excellent examples of on site interpretation.

The Guardhouse is well positioned for an entry/orientation centre. Information obtained here will add value to the visitor's experience. We are unsure whether *new* annex proposed for the cafe and deck at the Guardhouse is a replacement of an existing extension of the Guardhouse or a new extension. We agree that a cafe would be a pleasant facility for visitors

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to the orientation centre, but we are against increasing the built environment in the park.

We note the intention to use the whole park as well as the Guardhouse for educational purposes.

Collaboration with the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

We heartily endorse the proposal for a whole of headland approach to management and the objective of giving visitors a seamless experience over both land tenures. Cooperation in the broad areas of environmental management, access and interpretation is highly desirable for the protection of natural and heritage values of the headland and for visitor enjoyment. We are pleased that parking, traffic, and drainage issues. We are particularly pleased about the collaboration on the defensive ditch.

Retention of existing community and cultural uses

The Soldiers' Institute provides a base for community and volunteer activity which creates a sense of ownership, belonging and pride in the park. We are pleased that its current function is to be retained.

CONCERNS

The emphasis of the draft Masterplan is unfortunate

The Masterplan Summary says "The combination of natural and cultural qualities at Middle and Georges Heads is unique to Sydney and indeed Australia. Intrinsic to this is a sense of retreat and release from urban Sydney.....This masterplan seeks to reconcile these fundamental values with a level of access that can increase visitation and usage"

Mosman Parks & Bushland is concerned that the emphasis of the draft masterplan seems to be on adapting the area for more tourists and visitors rather than on the conservation of the natural environment, buildings and heritage. We are not opposed to increased visitation of this wonderful site and agree that increased numbers will need facilities, but the provision multiple viewing platforms, amphitheatres and event spaces should not be the priority.

Objective 7

Potential future revenue generating activities of the site

Mosman Parks & Bushland does not consider revenue generation to be an appropriate objective for a national park.

Is the purpose of the revenue generation to increase visitation to the park?

Is the revenue generated to be spent on Middle Head and Georges Head?

Is it to be spent on the core functions of environmental protection and heritage conservation?

Is the revenue to go into NSW treasury?

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Environmental strategy not given the weight it deserves

Although the Sydney Harbour Plan of Management 2012 treats the aims and outcomes for the natural environment in greater depth, we would like to see it given a core position in the Masterplan. The natural heritage is a key value of the park. Environmental management and conservation of threatened species should receive attention in the plan.

The use of heritage places for events

Events which relate to or interpret the environmental, heritage and aesthetic values of the headland have merit, but if their sole or main purpose is to increase visitation they do not. An increased headcount of visitors for its own sake has no purpose without visitor appreciation of the intrinsic values of the site. The Plan of Management for Sydney Harbour National Park 2012 says, "We will pursue opportunities to adaptively use heritage places for events, performances, accommodation and festivals. **Appropriate uses are those which promote the conservation of the core values of the site, are sympathetic to the context of the site and which retain social relevance**".

Types of events

The type of events is not explained in the draft Masterplan.. There is a significant difference between a skinny dipping charity event and a major event such as a rock concert on the Barracks Green.

Adaptive reuse of heritage places

1. The Middle Head Fortifications are unsuitable for events because the critically endangered bent-wing bat roosts in them.
2. Adapting historic military structures such as the Casemates and the Middle Head Fortifications with bars and facilities for events and functions will detract from their heritage value. These are listed heritage structures. Mosman Parks and Bushland understands that they are not structurally sound and that the cost of stabilising and restoring them will be significant. We assume that the purpose of adapting them for events is to generate sufficient funds to do so.

Alternative suggestion

There is considerable distress in concerned sections of the community about putting such significant heritage structures to inappropriate uses and a suggestion has been made that if funds for capital works are not available from the public purse, it may be possible to obtain funding or sponsorship for restoration works from corporate or philanthropic sources in a similar way to sponsorship of the arts.

Buildings

Mosman Parks & Bushland stated in its response in June 2016 to the community engagement process prior to making the draft plan that 'A new building should only be contemplated if it is essential to the purposes of the park and only where there is no alternative.'

- **Multi-purpose shelter at the Barracks Green**

The SHNP Plan of Management 2012 does not permit new buildings at Middle Head.

Use of one of the existing buildings could fulfil the same function.

Although there was once a barracks building in this vicinity, an addition to the built environment is undesirable.

COMMENTS

Existing buildings

We are pleased that the existing buildings will be repaired and upgraded with new facilities, but that their exteriors will remain original.

Operations

The draft Masterplan plans for the possible movement of operations off site and the possible creation of picnic areas on the former tennis court and raingardens. These would be attractive, but there are advantages to having operations on site and not outsourced.

Camping

We agree that camping at Middle Head could be a beneficial visitor experience. We would not like there to be permanent structures associated with the camping, or the development of supporting infrastructure that detracts from the natural values of the park.

Bushfire Management Plan

The 2016 draft Bushfire Management Plan identifies the promotion of biodiversity as well as the reduction of the risk of wildfires in its regime of mosaic burning. This is good. Too often hazard reduction seems to outweigh the consideration of biodiversity.

Recent planning of possible relevance to planning for Middle Head

The Draft Coastal SEPP in which metropolitan littoral rainforests are now at last included.

The Greater Sydney Commission's Draft North District Plan and its planning for Green Grids.

We consider that it is important for the Masterplan for Middle Head and Georges Heights to address and respect the objectives of these two plans.

This sends a clear message that planning for Middle Head respects its place within Northern Sydney and beyond.

Thank you

The Draft Masterplan for Middle Head and Georges Heights reveals instances where the community's views have been heard and responded to. The Mosman Parks & Bushland Association has appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the planning process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Eccles". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Kate Eccles

President

12th December, 2016