
WASP HANGAR AND COUNCIL OWNED LAND

The Auckland Council owns several blocks of land running along the south side of Launch Road, and this includes land on which the large building housing Yachting Developments, and the former WASP helicopter hanger are sited. The Council controlled organisation, Panuku Development Auckland, produced a master plan for the development of this area. A key feature is the creation of a new 'public heart' serving Hobsonville Point – a public space adjacent to the former WASP hanger re-purposed for community sport, and recreation uses. This models what was achieved in the old Sunderland hanger at Catalina Bay, now 'Little Creatures' and the 'Hanger' innovation spaces. The remaining blocks of land are indicated for 'mixed uses' including business, commercial and housing. Given the growing population in Hobsonville Point and the surrounding areas, the creation of this new 'public heart' is necessary, along with other enhancements to the public space consistent with the high standards set for the development of Hobsonville Point.

Auckland Council has voted to proceed with the sale of these blocks of land, and this includes the one on which the WASP hanger stands. The good news is that the Council includes in its decision, a request that as the sale and purchase process goes on, staff should 'work to achieve the high-level outcomes' written into the original Master plan for Hobsonville Point. While accepting that ongoing Council ownership of the WASP hanger may be unrealistic at the present time, there remain some serious concerns for our community arising from the Council's decision to sell the land.

- Once land is sold, there is no guarantee that the WASP hanger will not be demolished, with the loss of a building that has significant historic value to Auckland as a whole. Retention of this building will need a visionary developer who can implement ideas in the master plan, or conditions of sale that will ensure its retention and appropriate refurbishment.
- The creation of a new public space adjacent to the WASP hanger has no formal status. The sale of this block already owned by the council will be an opportunity lost. If not retained in public ownership, then outcomes envisaged in the master plan will require appropriate encumbrances to ensure public access and usage.
- The master plan indicates two new north-south pedestrian access routes linking through to the Airfields development, one of which crosses the proposed public space adjunct to the WASP hanger. Regrettably, it would appear that these strategic connections are lost in the sale of the land.
- The development of the blocks potentially accommodates new business operations, positively generating new employment opportunities. However, coupled with the fact that the existing road network was originally designed for a population of 7000, we now know this is likely to exceed 11,000. Together with the potential of business activity and further higher density housing, including a

new parking garage in this area, there is no evidence showing that the resulting increase in traffic movement has been fully explored and resolved.

We strongly urge the Council in its decision to sell the blocks of land, that core principles of the master plan are retained, including:

- retention and repurposing of the WASP hanger
- the creation of the proposed new public spaces
- establishment of other strategic public amenities that enhance the quality of the public realm.
- We urge the Council to follow expert advice from their staff to 'achieve the high-level outcomes' written into the original master plan for Hobsonville Point.

Residents in a survey of Hobsonville Point by the University of Auckland¹, while expressing appreciation of the public amenities did nevertheless express the view that Hobsonville Point 'lacked a clearly identifiable 'central space', indeed a 'missing piazza' or 'plaza'. These participants conceptualised a hard surfaced public space surrounded by amenities and cafés. One participant stated, "that plaza thing is such a critical idea I think, you know where people can go and have a beer, and have some fish and chips, go for a walk or meet their friends, and you know it's not quite there yet". Residents also expressed preferences for more "cafes, small restaurants, more shops, "a theatre", a "drop-in community centre" and a swimming pool".

The WASP hanger and adjacent public space could provide the central space seen to be missing in Hobsonville Point by residents in the survey.



Image of the potential development of the WASP hanger seen from a new public square. (Ithumus)

¹ Haarhoff, E., Allen, N., Austin, P., Beattie, L., and Boarin, P. (2019). Living at Density in Hobsonville Point, Auckland: Resident Perceptions. Working Paper 19-01. Auckland, New Zealand: National Science Challenge 11: Building Better Homes, Towns and Cities.