

TO THE GENERAL MANAGER

DECISION

ITEM: D1 SUBJECT: DRAFT FORSTER CIVIC PRECINCT MASTER PLAN 2

Item: D1
Subject: Draft Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan
Index: SP-STUD-7; CS-HALL-FORS-SA
Author: Senior Strategic Planner – Alexandra Macvean

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report is to be considered in conjunction with the City Plan Urban Design presentation of the Draft Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION:

The Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan be adopted by Council with amendments outlined within this report. Council schedule a workshop to determine the land uses and facilities to be incorporated into the Precinct competition brief. Following the workshop, Council investigate funding options for the undertaking of an architectural competition as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief in the Master Plan.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

There are no cost estimates relating to the Civic Precinct Master Plan and it would be inappropriate to speculate on costs at this stage. Cost estimates could only be formulated following the specification of uses for the proposed buildings and the development of a detailed design. Once proposed uses have been established the development of a funding strategy could be commenced as the type of usage has an impact on the available sources of funding. For example a Library can utilise Section 94 Funding, and other uses may attract Federal or State Government funding.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Nil.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:

A – CD containing: original Master Plan concepts, publicly exhibited draft Master Plan, records of public meetings and related information, School Site Proposal

Due to its large size, Annexure “A” has been circulated to all Councillors and Senior Staff on CD as a paper conservation measure. However, this Annexure is publicly available on Council’s Website, copies are available at Council offices and copies are available upon request.

Copies of the submissions are available for Councillors and Senior Staff to review upon request.

BACKGROUND REPORT

In October 2006 Council appointed City Plan Services to undertake the Urban Design and Density Review of Medium and High Density Residential Zones in Tea Gardens/Hawks Nest and Forster/Tuncurry.

At the Strategic Committee meeting of 11 September 2007 City Plan presented the Urban Design & Density Review Background Report; Draft Development Control Plan Forster/Tuncurry; Draft Development Control Plan Tea Gardens/ Hawks Nest; and recommendations for Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2008.

Two Master Plan documents are annexed to the draft Development Control Plan Forster/Tuncurry, one for a site in North Street, Forster, and the other of the Old School site, Forster.

At this meeting Council resolved that:

- A. *The Urban Design & Density Review Background Report, Draft Development Control Plan Forster/Tuncurry and Draft Development Control Plan Tea Gardens/ Hawks Nest documents be adopted by Council for public exhibition and notification of the exhibition be given in the manner prescribed under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.*
- B. *The documents referred to in 'A.' along with the recommendations for Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2008 be referred to the Department of Planning in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding for this project.*
- C. *The Urban Design & Density Review recommendations for Great Lakes Local Environmental Plan 2008 be noted and referred to Edge Land Planning for consideration in the preparation of a new principal LEP 2008.*

Furthermore, it was resolved:

School of Arts Site

That given the current planning work being undertaken in relation to the Old School Site Master Plan, Forster-Tuncurry Crown Harbour Project and Forster School of Arts site, that a Master Plan be prepared for the School of Arts site incorporating West Street, Middle Street and the Old School site and the outcomes of the current community consultation process.

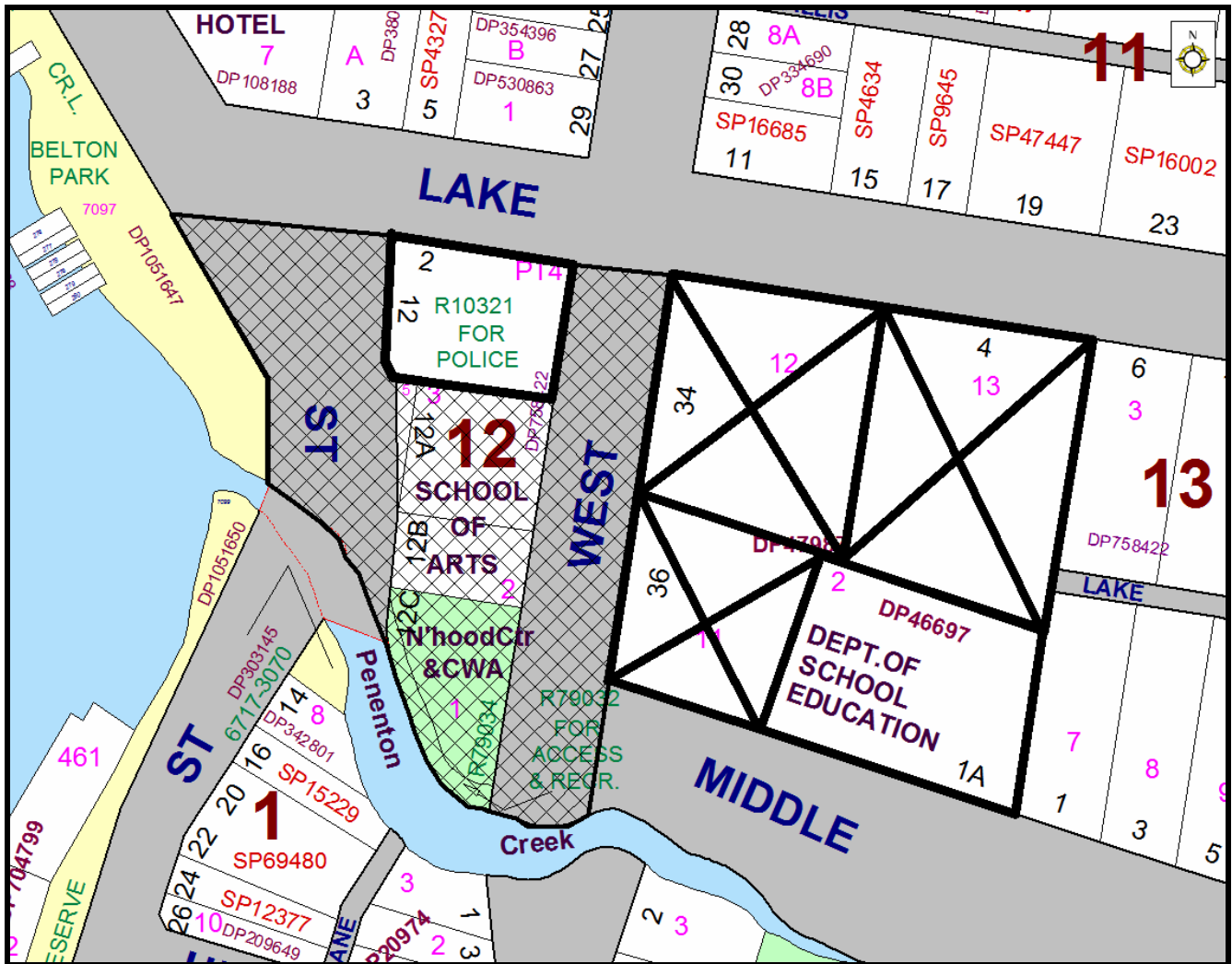
The "current community consultation process" referred to in this resolution was the survey being undertaken by Council's Corporate & Community Services section: "Future Use of the School of Arts".

Subsequently, City Plan Services have submitted a Master Plan process and fee proposal for the undertaking of a Master Plan for the Forster Civic Precinct – incorporating the Forster School of Arts site, West Street, Middle Street and the Old School site. At the Ordinary Council meeting on 30 October 2007 and Council resolved:

- A. *The Civic Precinct Master Plan proposal put forward by City Plan Services is accepted in principle in order to progress the design investigation and community consultation processes involved in establishing the future use of the Forster School of Arts site as the focus of a redeveloped Forster Civic Precinct.*
- B. *The Director Corporate and Community Services and the Director of Planning & Environmental Services are given delegations to accept the final Civic Precinct Master Plan proposal and determine the conditions of a consultancy agreement.*
- C. *The landowners of properties identified within and immediately adjoining the Civic Precinct study area, as identified in this report, are invited to participate in the Civic Precinct Master Plan process and contribute to the cost of the study.*
- D. *The Department of Lands be invited to participate in the Civic Precinct Master Plan process and requested to confirm that the properties identified in the study area, as identified in this report, shall be identified as being subject to a separate Master Plan process within the Forster-Tuncurry Crown Harbour Project brief.*

With regards to items A, B & C of the resolution, the following study area map was developed to reflect the entire land subject of the resolution and which would be considered within the Master Plan Process.

- The lands either in the care, control and management, or owned by Council are shown with the small hatch.
- The three allotments of private land known and referred to as the Old School site are shown with bold outline and a single 'X' on each allotment.
- Two other allotments have also been considered and these are identified with a bold outline only, the R10321 for Police and Department of School Education sites.



With regards to items C & D of the resolution, all land owners and all organisations involved in existing land uses on all of the affected properties were invited to attend Stakeholder Workshops, separate to the Community Workshops for the Master Plan in order to have their views clearly expressed and identified in a separate forum. No additional funding has been provided to supplement the Council funding of the Master Plan development process. The Crown Harbour Project brief incorporates reference to the Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan and a requirement for consideration of the findings and recommendations of the Master Plan in the Project.

Additional actions were outlined within the Council resolution that do not relate directly to the undertaking of the Master Plan and therefore have not been referred to or detailed within this report.

The Master Plan process was commenced shortly after the 30 October meeting and on 11 December 2007 a Stakeholder Workshop (land owners and operators of existing land uses within the study area) and a Community Workshop (open to the public) were held to discuss the structural reports on the School of Arts building, the findings of the Survey and the future options of the Forster Civic Precinct.

The response to the Master Plan process was overwhelmingly positive at these meetings and constructive input into the community needs and wants for the site were provided to the consultants for the development of preliminary concept options.

Distinct themes emerged from the community consultation. These themes directly informed the Master Plan design. Furthermore specific ideas from the community have been integrated into the Master Plan in many ways, these include:

- Community hall space can be extended into the town square. This was a specific suggestion that came from the community and connects with the identity of Forster's mild climate and outdoor focus.
- The Library is a central part of the scheme. A wide range of community members and stakeholders expressed the importance of the library in community life. Its incorporation into the master plan also supports the objective of activating the civic centre with a diversity of community members.
- Proposal does not preclude retention of the exiting community garden; the community garden was established during the progress of the master plan. In the months that have followed it has flourished. This activity is considered entirely appropriate in the context of the plan.
- Proposal is able to accommodate youth facilities. Many people expressed the importance of positive activities to engage youth in the civic centre. The plan anticipates activities such as martial arts classes and performance space as well as public seating.
- Strategies to accommodate car parking demand were considered in detail. The plan incorporates a single basement level of car parking and improved street parking. Council is also considering options for additional structured car parking nearby.
- preference for a medium scale scheme (i.e. Option 2);
- Community's connection with the water and the natural setting. The plan combines close relationship with the foreshore and the preservation of the natural setting of Penenton Creek.
- Buildings should reflect coastal town character. The plan presents a group of moderately scaled buildings with a good connection to the foreshore. The architectural expression of the civic precinct will be the subject of the stages that follow the master plan.
- Access by walking, car and sustainable transport. The plan places the civic centre of Forster on a very central and well-connected site. It preserves all circulation routes in the vicinity and proposes new pedestrian cycle links.
- Heritage and memory. The plan proposes a continuity of use of the historic site of the community hall. Furthermore the architectural design brief calls for integration and interpretation of the historic buildings and uses on the site.
- Community identity. A strong desire was expressed by many members of the community for a place to be created that is identifiable as the heart of the town and the community. The strong cluster of public buildings around an identifiable public square, closely linked to the water is a direct expression of this desire.

The notes from all Community Meetings and Workshops held since inception of this project are contained in the annexure to this report.

On 19 March 2008 a separate meeting was held between Council officers, City Plan Urban Design & the landowners of the Old School site to discuss options for the inclusion of the School site into a preliminary concept option for the study area.

The consultants developed four preliminary concept options for the study area and these were presented and discussed at Stakeholder and Community Workshops on 1 April 2008. These four options are detailed in Annexure 'A' to this report.

The workshops again were again constructive with significant input being provided from participants on both the positive and negative aspects of each option. Following the meetings City Plan has taken this input and developed a 'preferred option' for presentation to the Councillors.

All relevant information to the Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan process has been and continues to be made available on the Council's website.

A draft Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan was subsequently tabled at the Strategic Committee meeting on 8 July 2008. The draft Master Plan was annexed to the report and outlined:

- the background and consultation process that have been undertaken during the Master Plan process;
- the context and analysis of the Master Plan site;
- the preferred option, the principles behind the design and an illustrative concept of the built form and open spaces of the design;
- the architectural competition brief and Royal Australian Institute of Architects Guidelines for an Architectural Competition.

A brief description of the Preferred Design Option was also provided by City Plan Urban Design which stated:

"Forster Town Square is the primary organizing element in the design. This is the "living room" of the community. At its edges the major civic functions of Library, Community Hall, Exhibition and community offices elevate the formal role this place, while commercial activity including café and restaurants further activate the space.

The town square will serve, for special events and festivals as well as market days. On normal days it will be activated by the surrounding uses. Designed as a welcoming public space with ample places to sit, shade and places with good prospect, it will become a natural place to meet friends and stay awhile.

The community hall is located at the ground level of the building to the north of the square (2b). This position allows for a close relationship between the hall and the square. An operable wall to the square could allow for events to combine the indoor and outdoor spaces.

The Library occupies the eastern side the town square; it addresses the square and West Street. This position allows for easy street access while having a clear and direct relationship to the square and the lake beyond. The Building to the south, close to Penenton Creek is planned as an office building that would be suitable for community, government or commercial functions. This building has a West Street address, a close relationship to the mangrove forest and addresses the town square.

The building at the corner of Lake and Little Streets (building 1) occupies a very prominent position in the town. It has high exposure to the north, west and south. The envisaged function for this building is exhibition space, such as gallery or museum. Other community uses such as performance school would be well suited to this building.

The plan provides for a basement car park beneath building 2 & 3, the square and West Street to be entered from the corner of middle and West Streets. The plan also indicates the reconfiguration of adjacent streets to increase the parking in the vicinity of the site.

The scheme has carefully considered its context. Circulation patterns around the site provide for good connections along pedestrian desire lines. Two pedestrian links anticipate the redevelopment of the school site with a mixture of residential and commercial uses.

The plan proposes a landscape design in the vicinity of the site to create a high quality walking environment. A shared zone across Little Street will unify the water front with the civic precinct.”

During the Master Plan process the Police and Department of Education sites were considered and representatives from these organisations invited to participate in the process. However, due primarily to the difficulty in obtaining agreement for their inclusion in the Master Plan design, these site were excluded from the final preferred option.

Significant consideration was also given to the school site. The preferred Civic Centre Master Plan option places all the civic functions on the sites to the west of West Street and does not include the school site for the following two primary reasons:

1. The most appropriate location for the civic centre of the town is the subject site because: its water-front position; its high visibility; its relationship to the open space network and streets.
2. The high intensity of development that is permitted on the school site would make the introduction of civic uses on that site very difficult. High importance is given to allowing public and civic functions to have their own identity and primacy over domestic or commercial uses. It was considered that the introduction of civic uses onto the private land would either see those civic uses subsumed into private buildings or necessitate relocation of private development potential off the school site onto the public land.

This context makes the placement of civic functions on the old school site undesirable; however this study has identified significant potential for synergy between the sites on either side of West Street. The proposed high profile civic and recreational activities envisioned in the master plan will underpin possible future commercial and residential land uses on the school site. Likewise; significant commercial activity especially retail on the school site would provide additional attraction to bring people to the proposed public and civic facilities.

Should these circumstances change the preferred option retains sufficient flexibility to allow for any of the sites to be incorporated into both the future architectural competition and indeed, any future development proposals within the study area.

As a result, it is considered appropriate for Council to consider the draft Master Plan and in accordance with the original intent of the brief and Council resolution, progress to the public exhibition of the draft Master Plan to facilitate the next phase of community and stakeholder participation.

In regards to these issues a submission has been received on behalf of the landowners of the Old School Site (Annexure 'B') which advises that the landowners are *“seriously considering, at their discretion, engaging an appropriately qualified urban designer to undertake a parallel master planning approach to both the Old School Site and the Civic Precinct land.”* Furthermore, *“the Owners seek Council’s endorsement to engage in this process”*.

To this end, Council is not in a position to endorse these undertakings or the implementation of any findings from an alternative proposal but do wish to acknowledge the intent of the landowners to undertake their own investigation and Master Plan process at their own expense. Council also wishes to confirm that should any submissions be received during the public exhibition of the current Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan, including the submission of an alternative proposal, the content of the submissions will be given due consideration and reported back to Council.

Following consideration of these issues Council resolved:

- A. *The amended draft Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan be placed on public exhibition for a minimum of four months.*
- B. *The public exhibition includes two rounds of stakeholder and community workshops within the first and last months of the public exhibition period.*
- C. *The public submissions received during public exhibition and any amendments to the draft Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan as a result of these submissions are reported back to Council in the first quarter of 2009.*

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC EXHIBITION

The draft Master Plan was placed on public exhibition for a period of four months between 15 September 2008 and 30 January 2009. During this time the draft Master Plan document and two concept sketches were on display in the Forster Administration Building, Breese Parade Forster and available on the Council website.

Two Community Meetings were held in September and December 2008 and Information Sessions were held every week of the public exhibition period, with the exception of the week between 29 December 2008 and 2 January 2009 (Christmas – New Year Council closure). Interested parties could attend the community meetings or information sessions and provide constructive input and also clarify any information required in order to make a formal written submission for consideration by the consultants and Council.

Following the public exhibition period, all input from the workshops and submissions received during the public exhibition period were collated and referred to the consultants for comment and consideration. Copies of the submissions are available for Councillors and Senior Staff to review upon request.

Submissions reported within this report were received during the public exhibition period and through to the end of March 2009. A total of 37 submissions were received on behalf of 57 individuals and organisations; and one petition relating to the retention of the Forster Neighbourhood Centre, containing 162 signatures. These submissions have been separated by topic in order to provide a representative summary of the issues, concerns and requests included within the submissions received.

Submission 4, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29 – Master Plan, Site and Study Area

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Concern that study area is restricted to existing land parcels and road alignments. Opportunity for comprehensive replanning of area – lake frontage, pedestrian linkages to CBD and beaches, retail and community areas.	An extensive Public Domain Plan of Central Forster was not within the scope of this Master Plan. The Urban Design & Density Review Background Report does address these issues and has been utilised as a reference document in the preparation of the draft Master Plan.	No change to MP proposed.
Retention of Tourist Information Centre would connect visitors to area and local activities.	Council resolved to relocate the Visitor Information Centre to John Wright Park in 2006.	No change to MP proposed.
Concern over demolition of Forster School of Arts and construction of a foreshore complex.	The first stages of the Master Plan process included the development and community consideration of 4 Options for the site; one of which	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
	included retention, restoration and refurbishment of the Forster School of Arts building. The community feedback was more supportive of a new civic centre than retention of the School of Arts. Section 3.6 of the Master Plan also proposes <i>“the design creatively incorporate elements of the old School of Arts Building.”</i>	
Development will not service the southern end of the Great Lakes Council area.	The Master Plan states (p.iii) that <i>“The purpose of this project has been to develop a civic precinct master plan for Forster”</i> and is expected to provide (p.26) <i>“improved and enlarged civic facilities, responding to the growing needs of Great Lakes residents.”</i> While the Civic Precinct is located within Forster, the services and facilities provided within the Precinct are expected to benefit all residents and visitors to the Great Lakes.	No change to MP proposed.
Concept plans are far too ambitious and costly for small regional community. Plans and budgets need to conservatively demonstrate development will not become economic burden to community. Staged development is encouraged as it provides flexibility for potential changing need over time and address issues associated with costs and raising of capital to undertake the development. Low key development in the study area will do much to maintain the fabric of the community.	The preferred Option (2) was developed into the draft Master Plan in part, as it focussed on the provision of new facilities for existing services on the site or within Forster-Tuncurry – replace School of Arts with flexible use hall; establish new library; incorporate new community meeting rooms, administration and office facilities; relocate bus terminal; create town/market square; activate public space; upgrade public domain. In order to give appropriate consideration to funding opportunities and constraints the appropriate land uses, appropriate architectural design, and staging of any development are required to be determined. The preparation of a Master Plan in the first stage in this process.	Additional options for the staging of development (currently two stages) of the Civic Precinct may be incorporated into Section 3.5 of the MP (p.45) and be a requirement of a future Competition Brief.
Entertainment centres in Taree and Newcastle appropriate and accessible to community if public transport improved.	The flexible-use hall outlined within the MP is not expected to resemble an ‘entertainment facility’ such as those described. The community have also expressed during consultation forums, the need for	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
	local performance/entertainment venues that are accessible to our aged population.	
Local facilities already too expensive for community group hire, new centre possibly more expensive or heavily subsidised. Options are available with existing underused facilities at Clubs.	Lease and hire arrangements within a facility owned and managed by Council, cannot be determined at this time. However, provision has been made within the MP for the establishment of both retail and commercial spaces within the Precinct.	No change to MP proposed.
Revitalisation must be sensitive to character of Forster.	This is specified throughout Section 3 of the MP, particularly Section 3.2 Character – <i>“The desired future character of the precinct related to the essential characteristics of Forster”</i>	No change to MP proposed.
Inappropriate location for additional civic office space.	Submissions received and consultation feedback indicates that for some ‘civic’ Office/Community spaces are more accessible to the community in this central location e.g. Forster Neighbourhood Centre and associated service providers.	No change to MP proposed.
Inappropriate location for youth facility for ‘problem youth’ if combined with civic office space.	The plan is designed to attract and encourage all members of the community to come to the area. Deliberate design strategies have been employed in line with the principles of safety by design. These including activation through layering of land uses, preservation of lines of sight through the spaces, retaining passing vehicles to ensure 24 hour passive surveillance. These principles should carry through the design development.	No change to MP proposed.
Linking services to police station and courthouse would alienate many people.	The continued presence of the police station and courthouse is considered entirely appropriate in the civic precinct of Forster.	No change to MP proposed.
<p><u>Development will not:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality of surrounding domain; • Respond to the desired future character of the precinct; • Address demographic trends including design for an aging 	The majority of these matters are direct requirements of Section 3.6 Competition Brief.	Additional Ecologically Sustainable Design provisions shall be incorporated into Section 3.6; these are detailed in the

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
<p>population;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve environmentally sustainable design with a western orientated building 		Submissions – Sustainability & Environmental Issues table below.
This is a potential development site with many options to benefit local community and businesses in FT and recommend that flexible design, joint funding and construction proposals be invited to actively and realistically explore alternative opportunities and expedite the process.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
GLC is commended for their commitment to plan, consult and develop major and much needed civic facilities for community and visitors.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Support redevelopment and proposed library, community service office space, meeting rooms, community hall and inclusion of commercial elements including a restaurant and café.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Venues, facilities and design of public spaces need to be designed for projected population increases over next thirty years plus.	These issues are touched upon in Section 3.2 Design Strategies – Demographic Trends, within the MP.	Additional provisions regarding consideration of demographic trends within Forster-Tuncurry and the Great Lakes may be incorporated into Section 3.6 Competition Brief to ensure these matters are considered within the design of spaces and facilities.
<p><u>Points to consider:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practice architectural design creating iconic and engaging structures; • Encourage access to ground floor cafes etc to create vibrant human scale at street level; • Creative planting of trees and landscaping should be integral to architectural design. 	These issues are addressed within the Master Plan and can be expanded upon within a complete project brief should Council endorse the undertaking of an architectural competition.	No change to MP proposed.
Encourage intensive investigation into similar precinct developments – regional state, national and international.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Budget allocation of between 1 and 2% for commission of professional artist to	Section 3.3 Master Plan Design encourages incorporation of public	Expand upon opportunities for

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
produce public art and their inclusion in innovative design of public spaces. Encourage themed 'gateway' art at entrances to precinct and inclusion of aboriginal art, spaces and reflection in design.	art into the Precinct in association with landscaping elements. Section 3.6 Competition Brief also touches on the potential re-use of materials and incorporation of indigenous art within the Precinct.	incorporation of public art within Section 3.6 Competition Brief
<u>Pontoon creates opportunities for:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access, • transport, • innovative staging and performances, • local festivals, • environmental, • recreational, • income – access/hire, • integration between urban and natural environment. 	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Recommend that no change to Penenton Creek alignment.	This has not been considered as part of the Master Plan.	No change to MP proposed.
A library in the Civic space would make both facilities more accessible to young people and expand their capacity to meet community needs.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Civic Precinct could greatly assist to bring vitality to this are of Forster. Community gardens and farmers markets already do and should be retained within the Precinct.	Noted. The continued operation of both the community garden and farmer's market are expected to integrate with the increased community use of the site and Civic Precinct.	No change to MP proposed.
The high density of development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impinges upon connection of site with Breckenridge Channel and Wallis Lake • impacts on historic and environmentally sensitive precinct of adjoining Creek reserve; and • results in alienation of remaining piece of Council owned waterfront land in vicinity of town centre capable of delivering quality open space. 	The Master Plan does not propose development to the full height or density provisions of the site, and aims to activate the open spaces and connections to the water, residential and commercial areas surrounding the site.	No change to MP proposed.
Alternative sites available nearby but further from the waterfront	The School of Arts and adjoining sites were identified as the study area for investigation and development of the MP currently being considered by Council.	No change to MP proposed.
negatively impact scenic views with SEPT implementations	The term "SEPT" has not been expanded upon within the submission and it is therefore an appropriate response cannot be given.	No change to MP proposed.
adoption implies obligation to proceed with plan instead of	The future of the Master Plan may impact upon the future use and	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions – Master Plan, Site and Study Area	Response	Action/ Recommendation
consolidating/redeveloping civic centre in Breese Parade	development of the Breese Parade civic facilities primarily as a result of whether Council endorse the relocation of the existing library to the Civic site.	
Range of options limited due to consultancy constraints with no peer collaboration required by State mandate	The reference to a “State mandate” has not been expanded upon within the submission and it is therefore an appropriate response cannot be given. The purpose of the MP has been to “define a set of possible land uses, spatial arrangements and built form.” It is expected that the information contained within this preliminary document will appropriately inform future stages in the potential redevelopment of the Civic site; and each future stage will require considerable collaboration at local, regional and potentially state levels.	No change to MP proposed.
No options to incorporate adjoining lands included	The four options originally presented to the community included Option 3 which considered incorporation of all surrounding properties – Courthouse, Police Station, Old School Site and Department of Education. This Option was determined to be the least feasible, due to the complexities associated with multiple land owners. This matter has been discussed previously within this report.	No change to MP proposed.
Relocating council chambers to site is not encouraged as it conflicts with desired use by community and visitors.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions 1, 6, 8, 10, 16, 18, 22, 24 - Traffic, Access and Parking

Submissions - Traffic, Access and Parking	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Concern that pedestrian access bridge linking Short St, crossing Helen St will be removed. The bridge allows wheelchair access while avoiding footpaths and roundabouts along Lake and Little Streets.	The scheme does not propose removal of existing pedestrian bridge. On the contrary, the MP proposes an additional pedestrian bridge west of the existing one.	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions - Traffic, Access and Parking	Response	Action/ Recommendation
<p>Object to single land bridge in Little St over Penenton Creek.</p> <p><u>Reasons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-lane bridge could be dangerous given the substantial traffic flow; • High and medium density residential zones will create substantial increase traffic in Little St in the future; • Little St most direct access from apartments to Main Beach and Ocean Baths; • Better traffic calming facilities than a narrow bridge could be constructed. • Existing traffic calming devices in Little St have reduced accidents. • Two way arrangement should be maintained for emergency vehicle and public access to Little St apartments and businesses. 	<p>The scheme does not propose street closure on Little St. The MP merely proposes to narrow the existing bridge, including the width of the carriageway; however traffic implications of various options will need to be investigated separately. The scheme is part of an overall vision (see DCP51) for reducing traffic demand;</p>	<p>No change to MP proposed.</p>
<p>Any new development must accommodate predicted number of vehicles rather than impact on surrounding streets i.e. staff parking in nearby streets. New library location more central but parking is non-existent. Inadequate parking increases pedestrian-traffic conflict and limits future cycle paths in Forster CBD</p>	<p>The MP indicates the on-street parking capacity in surrounding streets in Section 2.13 (p.24-25); and parking which may be provided within the site based on the land uses being considered in Section 3.3 (p.43). There would be further consideration of parking requirements only if Council adopt the MP and determine which land uses, services and facilities shall be provided within the Precinct, to inform the Competition Brief.</p>	<p>No change to MP proposed.</p>
<p>Forster Library may be inadequate but is well placed near shopping centre which has spill-over car parking and makes library and shopping part of one trip. New library location will increase travel and therefore carbon footprint discouraging use.</p>	<p>Section 3.2 Sustainability sets out the importance of locating the Civic Centre in the Town Centre: at the centre of the transport network, central to higher density housing in order to encourage sustainable transport modes. This also permits visitors to engage in multiple activities without requiring multiple trips.</p>	<p>No change to MP proposed.</p>
<p>Retention of calmed traffic in Little St encouraged as passive surveillance strategy and expansion of pedestrian areas to and from foreshore and town centre.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>	<p>No change to MP proposed.</p>
<p>Access to and provision of accessible parking around and within precinct in consideration of projected demographics.</p>	<p>Section 3.6 Competition Brief does list as a main objective "accessibility for people of all ages".</p>	<p>Expand upon requirements for access and parking provisions for</p>

Submissions - Traffic, Access and Parking	Response	Action/ Recommendation
		disabled persons within Section 3.6 Competition Brief.
Commend consideration of alternative forms of transport and the associated access, parking and storage.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
Recommend incorporation of bike racks and spaces for motorised scooters and motorbikes around the precinct.	Noted.	Expand upon opportunities and requirements for use and storage of alternative modes of transportation within Section 3.6 Competition Brief.

Submission 17, 18, 22 – Community Garden & Farmer’s Market

Submissions – Community Garden & Farmer’s Market	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Recommend GLC expand boundary of community garden to Lions Park on Little Street and link with walking bridge on draft plan.	The provision of additional pedestrian links and access to and through the site are outlined in Section 2.12 (p.23) of the MP.	No change to MP proposed.
Recommend buildings hold 5 star enviro-rating utilising eco-design and materials, energy saving solar panels, installed water tanks, grey water usage – to act as community education facility complementing the environmental education initiatives of the community garden.	Noted.	Additional Ecologically Sustainable Design provisions shall be incorporated into Section 3.6; these are detailed in the Submissions – Sustainability & Environmental Issues table below.
Encourage retention of community garden. Draft plan does not mention or address existing Forster Community Garden, one of the most vital existing community uses of the space. The aerial view shows the building going over the existing bike/pedestrian path and onto the garden site. The community garden has already become a key community asset: enhancing community cohesion, providing cultural and aesthetic value, sustainability education and integration gardening efforts with regeneration of vegetation on Penenton Creek.	Community Garden could remain in its present position within the scheme.	Additional requirement within Section 3.6 Competition Brief, for consideration of retention of Community Garden. A separate Landscape/Public Domain/Environment heading may be appropriate within Section 3.6 to address this and other related

Submissions – Community Garden & Farmer’s Market	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Any plan should work with the community garden, make provision for the housing of tools, a propagation shade house, and be connected to a functional area of the Forster Neighbourhood Centre so they can easily continue to support the garden.		comments.
Explicit provision for the requirements of the Farmer’s Markets should also be provided in the same area. The garden’s public seating provides a public meeting place ideally placed between the pathway and creek and integrates the garden with the operations of the monthly Farmers Markets.	The Civic plan Executive Summary (p.1) states the <i>“town square will serve for special events and festivals as well as market days”</i> . The town square is attached to a flexible-use hall in which community events such as the Farmer’s Market can be held and utilise both indoor and outdoor areas.	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions 14, 16, 17, 18, 22, 25 – Sustainability & Environmental Issues

Submissions – Sustainability & Environmental Issues	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Civic precinct provides excellent opportunity for GLC to provide a vibrant and convivial community space while demonstrating best practice for sustainable development.	Noted.	No change to MP proposed.
The development should be a sustainability showcase of best practice by including clear criteria for the winning design to address: - no net increase in stormwater discharge; - best practice water sensitive urban design; - the westerly aspect of the site in regards to solar passive design; - best practice energy efficiency in embodied energy of building materials and ongoing energy input requirements; and - water collection and water storage.	Comments on ESD aspects of the building design are consistent with the aims of the Master Plan as expressed in section (3.1) and Appendix 2, however it is recognised that some of these aims haven't been articulated clearly enough in the Draft Report. It is recommended that the report be amended to include clear reference to ESD principles as a basic requirement of the architectural competition brief;	Amend Master Plan section 3.6 Competition Brief to include: Encourage best practice Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) this should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minimise energy demand (i.e. use of adjustable external shading devices, thermal insulation, double-glazing); • extensive use of solar energy systems (passive and active systems for hot water and

Submissions – Sustainability & Environmental Issues	Response	Action/ Recommendation
		electricity); • high standards of water efficiency; • use of local and recyclable building materials; • minimise traffic demand; The publication "ESD Design Guide: Office and Public Buildings", by the Department of the Environment and Water Resources should be referenced in the design brief.
No development should take place if the land is below the current 1 in 200 year flood level. The Water table will cause higher construction costs for proposed underground car park	The MP does specify, indicate and respond to the location and height of the 1 in 100yr flood line (2.28AHD) on p.14.	Amend Master Plan section 3.6 Competition Brief to include consideration of 1 in 100yr flooding, the water table and other natural hazards associated with climate change.
Underground parking on low lying land unwise given predicted sea level rise of 0.9m.	Future potential impacts of climate change, sea level rise, increased flood heights would be considered in the preparation of plans as a result of an architectural competition.	Amend Master Plan section 3.6 Competition Brief to include consideration of 1 in 100yr flood level, the water table and other natural hazards associated with climate change.
The building has the potential to create undesirable wind tunnel effects.	The moderate scale of the buildings will tend to mitigate wind effects. It is expected the design development will further develop strategies for the quality of the microclimate in the civic spaces.	No change to MP proposed.
Community gathering informally outside development – area will be affected by overshadowing and this will significantly detract from the town square area	The moderate scale of the building on the north of the town square means half the square will receive full sun in mid winter at mid day. The area of sunshine increases through the afternoon. It is expected the design development will further develop strategies for the quality of the microclimate in the civic spaces.	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions – Sustainability & Environmental Issues	Response	Action/ Recommendation
Retention and/or replacement of mature trees encouraged wherever possible.	This is specifically mentioned in Section 2.14 (p.27) " <i>The mature trees on the site are a great asset which should be retained wherever possible.</i> "	Amend Master Plan section 3.6 Competition Brief to expand upon objective " <i>Respond to the natural and built environment.</i> "
Building will overshadow the Courthouse and take away light and open space. Corner of Beach & Wallis Sts ideal public space for rest, reflection, open places to sit, and to fill with trees. Promote green space not a concrete jungle.	<p>The Courthouse and police station entry will not be overshadowed, they being oriented northwards. In the morning and afternoon, the side elevation of each building receives some shading from its neighbour including the proposed gallery building. This is considered quite acceptable.</p> <p>The plan for upgraded public open space along the waterfront and the town square creates a variety of good quality public spaces with shady places to sit. The design for these spaces will be developed in subsequent work.</p>	No change to MP proposed.

Submissions 2, 8, 13, 15, 18, 19, 20, 26, 28 - Community Groups Requesting Space and Facilities

Submissions - Community Groups Requesting Space and Facilities
Space for lapidary (gem and minerals) equipment and training.
Central meeting place for small groups including GLAN (Great Lakes Arts Network).
Large community noticeboard advertising local activities.
<p>In 1999 the need for a youth venue is identified as a priority in the Great Lakes Social Plan. In 2000 Council gave support to the establishment of a youth venue. Youth/entertainment facility, separate to public hall, large enough to accommodate up to 300, using flexible spaces for smaller groups up to 200. New youth venue would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - in central area (near/within CBD), well lit, easily accessible, distanced from residences; - large enough to accommodate permanent areas for games, computers, stage, dance floor, flexible areas for smaller gatherings - provided with appropriate security - free entry for youth except for special events; majority of activities free - managed with community, schools and Police involvement - provided with secure bike storage - able to access ongoing funding (Youth Task Force 2003 report indicated Attorney General Crime Prevention Strategy possible source of recurrent funding).
<p>Request Council to consider inclusion of facilities that provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • quality, professional, exhibition space for visual areas and crafts; • appropriately size multi-purpose performance art venue including practice rooms and storage for musical instruments and equipment; • Stage with wings, good sound and lighting and backstage facilities; • Rehearsal spaces – small flexible rooms/areas;

Submissions - Community Groups Requesting Space and Facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recording facilities; outdoor stage/performance space for meetings and performances protected from prevailing winds and with access to winter sun integrated access to services and facilities for delivery of community events, festivals and public celebration; trailer storage for travelling shows and exhibitions; quality, flexible public meeting space; for inclusion of local indigenous showcasing facilities in collaboration with Forster Local Aboriginal Lands Council and Tobwabba Arts Centre; access for aged and disabled; reflection of local culture in terms of public art, design of public space and other design inclusions; opportunities for expansion or extension to meet future growth needs.
Suggest Youth Café – fully supervised social space, avenue for training in hospitality for youth, exhibition space for young people’s art and performance space for young local bands.
Recommend leasing café in building 3 to TAFE as hospitality training venue and employment training facility for people with disabilities – appropriate kitchen facilities required in design.
Office spaces for existing outreach services wishing to establish a base in Forster-Tuncurry.
Meeting space and permanent storage facility for Spinners and Weavers – spinning wheels, looms and other equipment.
GLC should discuss building 1 gallery/exhibition space design with Manning Regional Arts Gallery and utilise this space for travelling exhibitions/music workshops and short-term community initiatives.

Response and Action/Recommendation to all Submissions by Community Groups Requesting Space and Facilities:

Form and function of spaces within the Precinct must be given further consideration by Council during preparation of the complete competition brief, as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief item 3 (p.46). This would be undertaken in more detail should Council adopt the Master Plan (as amended within this report) and determine that an architectural competition be undertaken.

Submissions 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 18, 21, 23, 27 – Library Location, Space and Facilities

Submissions – Library Location, Space and Facilities
Strong support for including a public library in the Civic Precinct to cater to the needs of the community. Current library has inadequate shelf space, parking and is no longer able to provide all of the ever expanding, multifaceted areas of service that community needs and deserves.
Library for 21 st Century with space to accommodate – quiet study, research, more computers, books, CDs, DVDs, visiting author talks, appropriate shelving, room to move, quiet spaces, nearby parking, comfortable spaces for children, young adults and adults.
New library location more central but parking is non-existent. Existing library needs more urgently is injection of funds to improve range of books, CDs, DVDs and functions.
Strongly support new library and facilities to show films (festival).
Any relocation of library should be considered in terms of combining library, public gallery and exhibition space.

Response and Action/Recommendation to all Submissions Requesting Library Location, Space and Facilities:

The form, function and design of any new library within the Precinct, must be given further consideration by Council during preparation of the complete competition brief, as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief item 3 (p.46). This would be undertaken in more detail should Council adopt the Master Plan (as amended within this report) and determine that an architectural competition be undertaken.

Submissions 25, 27 – Forster Neighbourhood Centre Location, Space and Facilities

Submissions – Forster Neighbourhood Centre Location, Space and Facilities
Forster Neighbourhood Centre should remain in central location which allows access by public transport and pedestrians, and remain connected to the Community Garden.
FNC facilities should be expanded to incorporate other services, and the future needs of these services. Co-location of complementary services would provide significant advantages to services and the community in terms of increased access, sharing of resources and partnership opportunities.
<u>Services using existing Forster Neighbourhood Centre premises or services and requesting facilities:</u> Home Base Youth Service; Forster Local Aboriginal Land Council; NSW Housing – access to 2 offices; Aboriginal Catholic Ministry; Centrelink; Manning Support Services – 1 office 3.5mx3m; access to 1 other office and 1 small group room; NSW Police – access to 1 office; Hunter Legal Aid – access to 1 office; Minimbah and District Aboriginal Elders Inc. – access to 1 office and 1 large meeting room.
FNC supports the housing of a library and hall in building 2, moving Visitor Information Centre to Tuncurry and a gallery/cultural workshop space in building 1. Suggested staging of redevelopment on this basis: 1 - move Tourist Centre to Tuncurry and house FNC in existing Tourist Centre; 2 - erect and house FNC in building 3; 3 - erect building 2; and 4 - Erect building 1.
Recommend that Council continue to house FNC in new development at minimal rent on (at least) the ground floor, given contribution to community development, provision of essential services and comprehensive information and referral service provided by FNC.
Meeting rooms in building 2 would be ideal for large community meetings – Crime prevention, Community Network Forum, Public meetings etc, but smaller meeting rooms required for FNC clients and service providers.
<u>Recommend building 3 be designed to:</u> 50% of office/interview rooms in FNC facilities include built-in storage areas to accommodate three or four different users; 1 large community meeting/activity/education rooms on ground floor 8mx8m with kitchen facilities and technical equipment facilities (additional to 8mx8m), which could open onto small meeting room; 1 small community meeting/activity/education rooms on ground floor 5mx5m; large room has separate storage for CWA, FNC and two other groups using the space regularly; 1 large office 5mx5m; 8 office/interview rooms 3.5mx3m; 1 office/reception 6mx6m minimum; 1 extra storage room; 1 demountable garden shed in association with Community Garden, managed by FNC. The room bookings and all of any FNC facility are managed by FNC. FNC is sure that they could achieve 100% utilisation of the rooms.
Petition of 162 signatures supporting “FNC in their endeavours to remain in a similar location to where

Submissions – Forster Neighbourhood Centre Location, Space and Facilities

they are housed now in Little Street, because it is imperative that the services that are provided remain central to the community and further, that the floor space available be increased by at least 100%.”

Response and Action/Recommendation to all Submissions Requesting Forster Neighbourhood Centre Location, Space and Facilities:

The form, function and design of any new Neighbourhood Centre/Office/Community spaces (indicated in both Buildings 2 and 3 of the Master Plan) within the Precinct, must be given further consideration by Council during preparation of the complete competition brief, as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief item 3 (p.46). Likewise, further consideration must be given to the staging of any Precinct development and this is dependant upon the land uses being considered and funding sources available in association with these land uses. These tasks would be undertaken in more detail should Council adopt the Master Plan (as amended within this report) and determine that an architectural competition be undertaken.

Submissions 30 & 31 - School Site Proposal

Submission - School Site Proposal	Response	Action/ Recommendation
<p>Advantages of School Site proposal:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 100% on site above ground parking relieves potential traffic/pedestrian conflict and congestion without compromising wide street features by parking 2. open space on School of Arts site benefits ambiance and complements foreshore 3. construction costs achievable and realistic 4. creek reserve preserved and enhanced 5. 1 in 100 yr flood areas not compromised 6. true civic area established 7. School Site proponents request presentation to Council for comparison and consideration. 	<p>Points (1) and (5) are recognised as positive characteristics of the scheme;</p> <p>However, points (2), (4) and are not considered valid as the increased amount of open space reduces opportunities for activation, passive surveillance and also poses increased maintenance costs;</p> <p>Contrary to claim (6), the scheme fails to provide a strong sense of public ownership and identity to the proposed civic functions.</p> <p>Furthermore the proposed urban form is inconstant with the present and envisaged urban form, and with the provisions of DCP.51. The proposed building bulk represents an FSR of 3.2:1 while DCP 51 specifies a maximum of 2.0:1.</p> <p>The self-assessment of "Option 3 revisited" as having a highly positive effect for the Image/Identity of the town centre as well as Perception of safety is incorrect.</p>	<p>No change to MP proposed.</p>

In addition to the submissions made in support of a School Site Proposal, a draft School Site Concept Plan was submitted in response to the public exhibition of the Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan. The School Site submissions are therefore discussed in more detail below.

SCHOOL SITE PROPOSAL

The School Site Proposal has been included in full within the package of information provided as attachments to this report. The proponents of this proposal are expected and have previously requested an opportunity to address the full Council. This presentation is expected to occur as part of the morning session on 12 May.

The matters raised within the proposal have therefore not been included in detail within this report. City Plan's comments regarding the proposal are however documented as follows:

We appreciate the effort by Snell Architects, to further develop preliminary option 3 of the Master Plan. However the two main deficiencies of the option remained as previously identified:

- 1. The most appropriate location for the civic centre of the town is the subject site because: its waterfront position; its high visibility; its relationship to the open space network and streets.*
- 2. The high intensity of development that is permitted on the school site would make the introduction of civic uses on that site very difficult. High importance is given to allowing public and civic functions to have their own identity and primacy over domestic or commercial uses. It was considered that the introduction of civic uses onto the private land would either see those civic uses subsumed into private buildings or necessitate relocation of private development potential off the school site onto the public land.*

Furthermore the proposed scheme has a series of other deficiencies:

- the two massive slab buildings create a powerful axis which however confusingly ends in a small residential lot. This is undesirable outcome which reduces the legibility of the urban form.
- the proposed built forms, two massive slabs of approximately 115 m length x 30 m height, is neither in a scale or form consistent with the present or planned urban form. The enormous 2,300m² floor plates are inconsistent with DCP 51 which sets the maximum floor plate size at 500m² over 5 stories.
- the 5 storey car park facing both Breckenridge Channel and Penenton Creek would fail to provide a good level of public space activation and passive surveillance.
- the scheme significantly breaches boundary setbacks heavily compromising the development potential of surrounding sites.
- the plaza between buildings appears to include public or semi-public uses however it would be wholly overshadowed in the winter months.
- The Department of Education Site appears to have been acquired and turned into green space. It is noted that the site would be entirely overshadowed in winter and is fronted by a 5 storey car park.
- The scheme leaves the most strategic public site in Forster with a low-intensity passive land-use.

INCORPORATION OF LIBRARY IN CIVIC PRECINCT

In 2000 Council recognised that the current library facility at Forster would shortly fall below the state-wide standard for floor space allocation. In response Council implemented a Section 94 Plan which aimed to collect funds needed to expand the library from its present 770 m² to the calculated 2016 requirement of 1,428 m². The plan was revised in 2006 to fund, over a longer period, the Forster District Library facilities required for the assessed ultimate population of the catchment estimated to occur around 2041.

By 2006 the library's floor space had already fallen 100 m² (12%) below standard, with the situation deteriorating each year. Failure to meet basic floor space standards can have consequences in terms of funding from the Library Council of NSW grant process. This funding has played a critical role in supporting the book stock budget. It has generated, on average over the past 10 years, \$68,000 per annum and has been critical in the establishment of such major projects as the Tea Gardens Library.

A Section 94 Plan has been put in place to address future library expansion needs, but action remains on hold as no site has yet been identified, pending the outcome of the Civic Precinct Master Plan.

While the Civic Precinct Master Plan prepared by City Plan addresses urban planning issues which support the location of the library on the site the other considerable advantage of relocating the Forster Library to the Civic Precinct is that it will resolve the current parking issues arising from conflicting uses within the Council Headquarters, Library and Community Centre precinct. This has occurred over time with increased library usage, an increase in Council staff and expansion of services operating within the Community Centre. The inadequacy of Car Parking is well known and a source of much discontent among users of these facilities.

Should the Library eventually relocate to the School of Arts site it would also provide an option to utilise the former library floor space for Council Offices and in doing so avoid the need to extend the current Council offices within the next 5 – 7 years. This would represent a significant cost saving as it would avoid a costly second floor extension to the Council Headquarters building. Relocation has a distinct advantage over extending the existing Forster Library as an extension would only place greater parking demands on the current inadequate levels.

Should Council not support the Civic Precinct site as the preferred location for the Forster Library the current challenges of an undersized library and inadequate parking to cater for library patrons will remain and a strategy to address those issues would need to be developed.

CONCLUSION

Council endorsed the undertaking of a Master Plan process for the School of Arts/Forster Civic Precinct in September 2007. The draft Master Plan has been exhibited and is now before Council for consideration and adoption.

Should Council adopt the Master Plan as presented, the next phase of the project would be the scheduling of a workshop to determine the land uses and facilities to be incorporated into the competition brief. Following this workshop Council can investigate funding options for the undertaking of an architectural competition as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief in the Master Plan.

Only after adoption of a full concept plan as a result of the competition could the detailed architectural plans be prepared; the staging of any proposal be determined; and finally, the funding of each component of such a proposal be fully researched and realised.

Therefore it is recommended that Council adopt the Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan with the amendments outlined within this report, in order to progress this project to the next phase of competition and investigation.

RECOMMENDATION: DIRECTOR PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

It is recommended that:

- A. The Forster Civic Precinct Master Plan be adopted by Council with amendments outlined within this report.
- B. Council schedule a workshop to determine the land uses and facilities to be incorporated into the Precinct competition brief.
- C. Following the workshop in item 'B', Council investigate funding options for the undertaking of an architectural competition as outlined in Section 3.6 Competition Brief in the Master Plan.

G J HANDFORD
Director
Planning & Environmental Services