



FUTURE OF EPSOM CAMPUS

In accordance with Standing Orders, please place the following Notice of Motion on the agenda for the Albert-Eden Local Board meeting being to be held on Wednesday 27th February 2019

Recommendation/s

- a) That the report be received.
- b) That the Albert-Eden Local Board notes that:
 - The University of Auckland has announced that it will cease all teaching and other related activities at its Epsom Campus by the end of 2020.
 - The Epsom Campus land, which already has underlying residential zoning, will then be available for redevelopment by other parties as yet unknown.
 - there has been no public announcement about future uses of this large site, or any form of master planning to ensure that it is appropriately redeveloped.
 - that for over 40 years the Coast to Coast Walkway has passed through this site.
- c) That the Albert-Eden Local Board:
 - urges Auckland Council to master plan the Epsom campus site well before the land is sold, in consultation with the Local Board and the affected community.
 - seeks protection for the route of the Coast to Coast Walkway through the Epsom Campus site, and requests that any changes that may be required are no less direct.
 - seeks clarification of the ownership and use of the North West tip of the Epsom Campus site where part of the Epsom Campus site overlaps with Nicholson Park.
 - requests a comprehensive heritage assessment of the Epsom Campus site and appropriate protection for any heritage features identified as a result.
- d) That this resolution be addressed to the Manager of Planning and copied to the Mayor and Councillors and the University of Auckland.

Background

About six years ago The University of Auckland publicly announced its intention to move all teacher training and related functions from its Epsom Campus by the end of 2020. This has been confirmed in later statements as recently as this month. Despite being urged to respond in 2013, Council planners have not done anything to ensure that this large site is redeveloped in an orderly way.

The attached zoning map and aerial (both at the same scale) illustrate the key points in the following notes.

This large site has been used for educational purposes for over 130 years (as detailed below). While it is likely that the primary and intermediate schools will be retained, it appears that about two thirds of the site will soon be available for other purposes.

It is concerning that there has been no obvious effort to actively master plan this large and valuable site rather than passively allow ad hoc development to occur. Left to their own devices, market forces will likely develop the land with an eye to a profit rather than quality development. For example it is quite likely that in the absence of a proper master plan either the University as vendor, or the new owner (or



possibly multiple owners), will seek their own Plan Change(s) to maximize their development potential which may be to the long term detriment of the surrounding community and also to the new residents of the Epsom Campus site.

The Unitary Plan deliberately ditched the principle used in previous district plans of zoning school land expressly for educational purposes (e.g. the Special Purpose 2 Zone in the former Auckland City District Plan applied to Secondary & Tertiary Education sites), and now zones all education land for its potential alternative use. Thus the whole site is already zoned for intensified housing (a mixture of Terrace Housing and Apartment Buildings, Mixed Housing Urban and Mixed Housing Suburban as shown on the attached zoning map).

However, there is a precinct (1314 Epsom Precinct) covering 8.48 Ha of the site which states at 1314.1 that “*the purpose of the Epsom Precinct is to enable the development and operation of a range of education-focused activities,*” although this does include “*accessory business activities,*” etc. The full precinct plan is attached.

Although these are public documents it is not clear exactly what the net effect entails, but it appears that a Plan Change will most likely be required if there is any intention to build houses and apartments on the site. It would be far better that this was a Public Plan Change (initiated by Council and driven by public interest values) rather than a Private Plan Change driven primarily by the profit motive. If any Private Plan Changes are initiated for this site, it would be best for Council to reject and replace it/them with its own Public Plan Change to ensure a quality planning outcome – “*density done well*” as we were promised that the Unitary Plan would deliver.

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A Brief Potted History of the Site:

Auckland Normal Intermediate School (ANI). In 1886 a normal primary school was established on the South West corner of the Epsom site off the end of Poronui Street. It served as both a local school and a place where trainee teachers could be exposed to real classroom conditions prior to being posted as teachers. In 1945 it became a Normal intermediate school and the primary students were relocated to Mount Eden Normal School in Valley Road. The 2018 roll was 658 pupils, years 7-8 (aged 11-13). Its site area is 2.37 Ha, including several lots on the south side fronting onto Disraeli Street. It has no playing fields of its own, but has long had use of the adjoining playing fields (2.59 Ha) which are part of the Epsom Campus proper. The school site has a designation (#4703, Ministry of Education).

Kohia Terrace Primary School. In about 1926 the existing Auckland Model Country School moved from its city site to the South East corner of the Epsom site, fronting onto Gillies Avenue and Kohia Terrace. After it closed in the mid 1980s, the buildings were occupied by the Kohia Teachers’ Resource Centre for a decade. In 1996 the Kohia Terrace School opened as a primary school. It currently has 16 class rooms for year 1-8 pupils; the 2018 roll was 389 pupils. The site area is 1.52 Ha, including a modest sized playground – it makes some use of the playing fields on the Epsom Campus site when required. The school site has a designation (#4734, Ministry of Education).

The Faculty of Education (Epsom Campus of the University of Auckland.) In 1926 the Auckland Teachers Training College (established in 1881) moved to new purpose built facilities on the Epsom Campus. Over the last century it has gained several adjoining sites so the campus land, excluding the adjoining schools and the playing fields is now 9.55 Ha (if the schools and playing grounds are included the total site is 15.45 Ha in extent) with several frontages onto Epsom Avenue and one off Gillies Avenue. In the mid 1970s it absorbed several other institutions (Ardmore and North Shore Teachers Colleges, the Kindergarten Teachers College, Lorretta Hall). In 1985 it merged with the Secondary Teachers College and became known as the Auckland College of Education (ACE). Finally, in 2004 ACE was amalgamated with the University of Auckland and became the Faculty of Education.



Heritage Item - Civil Defence Headquarters. At the outset of World War II the military seconded dozens of rooms in the College of Education for the Northern Districts Combined Headquarters (Army, Navy and Airforce). After the aerial bombardment of Darwin and other Australian cities in 1942 it was decided to build a large bunker deep underground in the North West corner of the Training College site to protect vital command and control functions. Although never completed it was used for plotting movement of ships and aircraft during the latter years of the War. The military retained control for another two decades before passing the bunker to the ARA in 1964 for a Civil Defence Centre. It was used for administration and training, and was to serve as the regional command centre during civil defence emergencies. It was closed in 1976. A major fire in 1982, believed caused by squatters, gutted the interior and after another smaller fire in 1988 the entrances were permanently sealed. The remnants lie under the lower car park, some 20 metres below street level.

Other Heritage Items. There are some notable trees on the site, and several heritage stone walls. It is not clear if any of the buildings have heritage value. As part of the planning process it would be desirable to carry out a heritage assessment of the entire site, and documentation of the existing buildings and landscaping prior to any wholesale clearance to make way for comprehensive redevelopment.

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Other Concerns:

Coast to Coast Walk. The Coast to Coast Walk which traverses the subject site is one of Auckland’s premier walks, and is known internationally. It was established in the 1970s by the former Auckland City Council in collaboration with the Mount Eden, Onehunga and One Tree Hill Borough Councils. The walk runs some 16km (or about 9km as the crow flies) from the Ferry Building in the CBD to the Onehunga foreshore via Maungawhau (Mount Eden) and Maungakiekie (One Tree Hill) and takes about 5 hours to complete. The section through the Epsom Campus is about 400 metres long, running more or less North to South through the middle of the site, though it has to deviate slightly as it bends around buildings, walls, etc. If it proves necessary to relocate some or all of the existing walkway, then the guiding principle should be that the replacement route is similar in length and directness to the existing path (unduly complex or circuitous routes are harder to follow).

Nicholson Park. Just over 1,200 m² at the North East corner of Nicholson Park (a triangle about 32 metres wide by 76 metres long) is also included in the Epsom Campus site (see attached aerial). This triangle includes almost all of one bowling rink and one corner of another, plus about half of a tennis court and the northern end of a public walkway. This anomaly has existed for many years but has not been an issue as the area has been treated as part of Nicholson Park and most of the outer fringes of the Epsom Campus have been used as landscaping or buffer strips. However, now that the future ownership of the Campus site is imminent and future redevelopment is very likely, presumably at much greater density, the future status of the triangle needs to be resolved soon. From the Local Board point of view, the triangle should be transferred to or vested in Council as part of Nicholson Park.

Signatory:

Author	Graeme Easte, Board Member
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