

# ***A future for the St Kilda Triangle:***

**A response to the BBC Development Plan from unChain St Kilda & the Esplanade Alliance**

*7 January 2008*

1. We support a scaled back development of the site that conforms to the UDF and that achieves a modest and profitable level of commercial activity.
2. In the following we outline our position regarding the BBC proposal for the site, a proposal based on developing high volume retail, entertainment and consumption businesses.
3. We do not regard the current proposal as the best achievable outcome for the site. Instead we seek a truly visionary and innovative proposal - socially and economically inclusive, environmentally sustainable into the future, with outstanding site sensitive design and architecture, and a long-term business model firmly grounded in culture, popular and diverse entertainment and the arts.
4. However we engage in these discussions pragmatically, to bring, at the least, the current BBC proposal in line with UDF guidelines. For this to be achieved there needs to be substantial qualitative and quantitative changes to the Development Plan. We enter discussions with the Council and BBC in good faith and assume Council and BBC enter likewise.
5. Whilst we seek a revised proposal we do not discount the need to rethink the tender, should significant changes to meet the UDF fail to materialize.
6. Our position, as presented here, will need to be tested for compliance with UDF and other relevant planning schemes, and pre-empts the findings of Council's Economic Impact study and the commissioning of other appropriate expert reports. It may need to be further modified pending these reports.

This paper is organised around key elements identified in the Expression of Interest ("the brief") for the developers:

- The role of the Palais on the site and conservation of its landmark heritage status
- The intensity and nature of the commercial development and the replacement of the Palace nightclub
- Urban design impact on the iconic views from the Upper Esplanade balcony
- Value of the public space, amenities and facilities
- Parking

We conclude by articulating key measures of success necessary to position the Triangle site as a leading centre of authentic cultural and entertainment activity.

# ***Executive Summary***

## **Palais Theatre**

The Palais must be restored to enable it to play a pre-eminent role in Melbourne's arts and cultural life. We are committed, as far as possible, to the Palais as a free-standing pavilion.

## **Commercial elements**

**Retail:** We would support a retail tenancy component of 6,000 sqm only if its offers were complementary to the cultural and entertainment brief envisaged for the site. Focus on creativity, inventiveness and small-scale tenancies, including a potential fresh food / fish market.

**Nightclub and live music:** We would support a live music /nightclub space to replace the function performed by the destroyed Palace venue plus a diverse genre mix of smaller live music venues for a total capacity on the site of 2100 patrons. Focus on live music incubator role.

**Dining and food:** Good food and dining by the bay should be part of the site's appeal. We would support a variety of food styles and pricing offers to a maximum of 800 to 1000 seats, that is, just under half of the seats currently proposed.

## **Design elements**

The creation of truly landmark design & architecture sensitive to the area's history, heritage and civic potential is a major objective. A number of elements of the BBC urban design have merit, but a number do not. Integral to the Triangle site is the retention of iconic views from the Upper Esplanade belvedere, and the landmark status of the site's 'anchor' tenant, the Palais Theatre.

## **Public elements**

The BBC response to public open space is supported subject to separation of commercial and public spaces; durability of landscaping; & catering to all ages & incomes. However, the provision of public space is not a cost 'burden' to the developer.

We strongly support opportunities for outside/open-air foreshore related activities catering to all ages, including children and the elderly. Imagination rather than easy commercial options are required for the site. Activities that contain a sense of fantasy and play, stronger connections to Luna Park and its sense of seaside fun should be encouraged.

The site presents a great opportunity to enrich and enliven Melbourne's visual and performing arts scene.

## **Parking and transport elements**

An independent report must be commissioned by Council to evaluate BBC's proposed parking, traffic and transport strategies and the steps we propose here.

**PALAIS THEATRE**

| <b>Eol outputs</b>   | <b>BBC Development Plan</b>   | <b>Our view</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>The Palais Theatre (5.1.3)<br/>                     Refurbishment and conservation of Palais possibly with augmented or adaptive uses &amp; better integration with the site</p> <p>A key evaluation criterion (8.2 Palais Theatre p.28) is the extent to which any heritage and financial issues are addressed by the EOI.</p> | <p>Refurbishment of Palais with augmented or adaptive uses &amp; better integration with the site</p> <p>A new addition on the southern side ('Nolan').</p> <p>A new addition on the western side ('Green')</p> <p>A new building in the forecourt ('Linden')</p> <hr/> <p><b>MATRIX comment</b><br/> <i>Submissions relating to a loss of iconic landmarks have merit, particularly in relation to the lost aspect to the western side of the Palais theatre</i></p> | <p><b>Refurbishment</b><br/> <b>The Palais must be restored to enable it to play a pre-eminent role in Melbourne's arts and cultural life.</b></p> <p>However this aim must not be hostage to commercial drivers for rest of the site. Alternative funding models should be explored, in the first instance within the integrity of the tender that do not demand an intensive commercialisation of the neighbouring crown land site. A refurbished Palais is not a public 'burden' for the developer: Under the right theatre/venue entrepreneur, and the security of a 99-year lease, it has real revenue generating potential.</p> <p>We strongly support updating the essential services and facilities to enable an intact Palais to function and compete as a successful multi-purpose venue in Melbourne's thriving cultural scene. A connection to a building (or buildings) at its southern and/or western edges may be necessary for this to be achieved.</p> <p>The upgrade of essential services and facilities is not a rationale for the level of intense commercial development proposed. The potential synergy with other uses such as the hotel and cinemas is recognised. However these uses should not be underwritten by the Palais refurbishment.</p> <p><b>Conservation of Heritage</b><br/> <b>We are committed, as far as possible, to the Palais as a free-standing pavilion -</b> acknowledged in the UDF to be a defining feature of the St Kilda foreshore and supported by the Burra Charter guidelines for restoring and conserving heritage buildings.</p> <p>We agree with the National Trust submission that the dominance of the Palais will be greatly undermined, and that even views of its main façade will be obscured from some angles.</p> <p>Height, bulk and proximity of the proposed 'Nolan' and 'Green' buildings must be reviewed and revised to retain the Palais theatre's landmark status.</p> <p>Proposed 'Linden' building should be significantly reduced or relocated from the Palais forecourt as it diminishes / obstructs views to Palais grand façade, and impinges on bay views in public approach along the Upper Esplanade</p> |

**COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT and PALACE NIGHTCLUB**

| Eol outputs   | BBC Development Plan  | Our view   |
|---|---|--|
| <p>Commercial Developments (5.1.6)<br/>Commercial developments consistent with the planning objectives of the site and St Kilda Edge strategy are sought for the project. Possible complementary uses include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hotels</li> <li>- Eating &amp; dining</li> <li>- Cinemas</li> <li>- Live music venues</li> <li>- A nightclub*</li> <li>- A function centre</li> </ul> <p>Palace Night Club (5.1.4)<br/>In the event that the existing Palace Night Club Building is not retained, consideration is to be given to providing and operating a similar and/or complementary facility within the overall project</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>26,000 sqm*</b>of retail &amp; gym, incl 3200 sqm supermarket (35 percent of site excluding BOH &amp; parking)</li> <li>- 5 nightclubs with capacity for <b>4,600 patrons*</b></li> <li>- <b>1500 patron*</b> tavern/pub capacity</li> <li>- 2340 licensed eating &amp; dining seats</li> <li>- 6 cinemas for 750 patrons</li> <li>- 80 room 4 star hotel, bars and conference facilities</li> </ul> <p>-----</p> <p><b>*In response to objections:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- retail &amp; gym reduced to <b>25,000sqm</b></li> <li>- nightclub patrons reduced to <b>4,000</b></li> <li>- tavern/pub patrons reduced to <b>900</b></li> <li>- bowling alley and ice-skating added to the tenancy mix</li> </ul> <p><b>MATRIX comment</b><br/><i>The DP does not provide any detailed justification ... for the level of retail and commercial activity proposed</i></p> <p><i>Submissions about the effects of licensed premises are legitimate</i></p> | <p><b>Retail</b><br/><b>We would support a retail tenancy component of 6,000 sqm only if its offers were complementary to the cultural and entertainment brief envisaged for the site. Focus on creativity, inventiveness and small-scale tenancies, including a potential fresh food / fish market.</b><br/>Council's UDF and the community never remotely contemplated retail consumption on the massive scale proposed by BBC.<br/>Proposed national chains, large-scale retail tenancies, a large supermarket and second gym not supported for foreshore crown land site. Proposed suburban shopping mall model, with supermarket and other large anchor tenants at its core, not supported as the commercial model for crown land.</p> <p><b>Nightclubs, pubs and taverns</b><br/><b>We would support a live music /nightclub space to replace the function performed by the destroyed Palace venue plus a diverse genre mix of smaller live music venues for a total capacity on the site of 2100 patrons. Focus on live music incubator role.</b><br/>Alcohol dependent entertainment of the massive scale proposed was not envisaged in the UDF. What was envisaged is the replacement of 1880 capacity Palace venue, rather than the BBC offer of 4,900 patrons in equivalent venues.<br/>Late night entertainment precinct on this scale is not appropriate for crown land opposite a high-density residential area and next to open public spaces on the site, on the beach and O'Donnell Gardens.<br/>Proposed tavern and pubs, especially based on the Sydney style of drinking barn, not supported, particularly as not envisaged in the Eol.</p> <p><b>Eating and dining areas</b><br/><b>Good food and dining by the bay should be part of the site's appeal.</b> We would support a variety of food styles and pricing offers to a maximum of 800 to 1000 seats, that is, just under half of the seats currently proposed.</p> <p><b>Other proposed uses: Hotel, Cinemas</b><br/>No issue with these uses, as proposed, provided their stand-alone profitability does not require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cross-subsidy from increased commercial uses on the site</li> <li>- any compromise of the landmark status of the Palais Theatre.</li> </ul> |

**ICONIC VIEWS**

| <b>Eol outputs</b>   | <b>BBC Development Plan</b>  | <b>Our view</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Urban Design (5.2)<br/>Long lasting design, which will be a major attraction for St Kilda, Melbourne and Victoria. Enhances the St Kilda-ness of the precinct.</p> <p>Design Principles (3.2)<br/>Encourage building heights and forms that do not interfere with views to recognised iconic landmark buildings and vistas.</p> | <p><b>Named buildings</b><br/>‘Nolan’ attached to southern end of Palais<br/>‘Green’ building attached to western end of Palais<br/>‘Linden’ in front of Palais<br/>‘Ogee’ and ‘Pearl’ prominent stand-alone ‘pavilions’</p> <p><b>Un-named buildings</b><br/>Buildings rising to the full height of Upper Esplanade embankment, their roofs providing grass public areas.<br/>Buildings fronting Jacka Boulevard</p> <p><b>Public walking areas</b><br/>Building mass broken up by public square, laneways and walkways - Little Cavell, Rambles, Catani Steps</p> <p><b>MATRIX comment</b><br/><i>Submissions relating to losses of views from the public domain have considerable merit</i></p> <p><i>Submissions concerning loss of views from the Upper Esplanade towards various features have considerable merit.</i></p> | <p><b>The creation of truly landmark design &amp; architecture sensitive to the area’s history, heritage and civic potential is a major objective. A number of elements of the BBC urban design have merit, but a number do not. Integral to the Triangle site is the retention of iconic views from the Upper Esplanade belvedere, and the landmark status of the site’s ‘anchor’ tenant, the Palais Theatre.</b></p> <p>Proposals that compromise these elements are not supported. The impact of some of the proposed buildings on the Palais - ‘Nolan’, ‘Green’ and ‘Linden’ - has been addressed in the Palais Theatre section of the document.</p> <p>Here we address the impact of these and other proposed buildings on view plane and view lines from the public domain – namely from the Upper Esplanade promenade to the beach, the sea, the Palais and Luna Park.</p> <p><b>Proposed named buildings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ‘Linden’, in so far as it blocks the approach to the Palais, should be significantly reduced or relocated.</li> <li>- ‘Ogee’ supported subject to a review of the impact of its height and bulk on belvedere views.</li> <li>- ‘Pearl’ must be deleted</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><b>Proposed un-named buildings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Height of buildings proposed beneath and abutting the Upper Esplanade must be reduced to allow iconic belvedere views to remain intact.</li> <li>- Active frontage to Jacka Boulevard supported but buildings at the current height and bulk proposed not supported</li> </ul> |

**PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, AMENITIES AND FACILITIES**

| <b>Eol outputs</b>   | <b>BBC Development Plan</b>  | <b>Our view</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Public open space and amenities (5.1.1 )</p> <p>Other issues (5.4)<br/>Establishing an appropriate and viable balance between public facilities and commercial developments on the Site.</p> <p>Background (2.3)<br/>The Council seeks commercial proposals that will fund contextually appropriate and complementary public facilities, open space and pedestrian access for the Project. However some Council financial support, in cash or in kind, for such public facilities may be available for exceptional proposals.</p> | <p><b>Public open space:</b><br/>Grass areas on roof of buildings abutting Upper Esplanade<br/>Rambles walk<br/>Town Square<br/>Catani Steps</p> <p><b>Public facilities:</b><br/>Linden II art space<br/>TAFE – 300 sq m training kitchen</p> <p><b>MATRIX comment</b><br/><i>Submissions about the inadequacy of open space provision are unable to be sustained</i></p> | <p><b>Public open space</b><br/><b>BBC response to public open space supported subject to separation of commercial &amp; public spaces; durability of landscaping; &amp; catering to all ages &amp; incomes.</b></p> <p>However, we do not support the proposition that provision of public space is a cost ‘burden’ to the developer given that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The proposed ‘Grassy Slopes’ replace existing heritage grass slopes and other grass areas. They roof the commercial development below, providing a cost-effective solution</li> <li>- Proposed Town Square adds value to retail tenancies on its active edges, as well as providing additional open space for events and other crowd drawing activities.</li> <li>- Proposed Catani Steps, Rambles and other laneways, capture and move people through the commercial development, adding value to the tenancies.</li> <li>- Landscaping is an essential feature that brings public benefits and also makes the tenancies more attractive.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public amenities</b><br/><b>We strongly support opportunities for outside/open-air foreshore related activities catering to all ages, including children and the elderly.</b> Imagination rather than easy commercial options are required for the site. Activities that contain a sense of fantasy and play, stronger connections to Luna Park and its sense of seaside fun, should be encouraged. Too much of the activity within the development relies on enclosed internalised spaces - retailing, clubbing, bowling, for example – when the site offers the opportunity for more open and foreshore-related activities.</p> <p><b>Public facilities</b><br/><b>The site presents a great opportunity to enrich and enliven Melbourne’s visual and performing arts scene.</b> A significant art gallery of national stature, and/or an indigenous museum of national significance could be established on the site. Venues for cabaret and circus could be developed. These elements should be integral to the vision for the site. Expert analysis is required to further explore these options. Creative public-private partnerships are required rather than the proposed business model.</p> <p>We support hospitality and culinary training as an integrated part of the development but suggest there are ways of doing this that do not require establishing a commercially funded TAFE campus on site.</p> |

**CAR PARKING**

| <b>Eol outputs</b>   | <b>BBC Development Plan</b> | <b>Our view</b>  |
|--|-----------------------------|--|
| Car Parking 5.1.5<br>Replace 165 existing car spaces, some parking relocated from other parts of broader SKE project, adequate car parking for new development | 1200 car spaces             | <b>An independent report must be commissioned by Council to evaluate BBC's proposed parking, traffic and transport strategies, the steps proposed here</b> , and to examine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ways of establishing public transport as the primary mode of commuter access to the site</li><li>- The activity ratios used to calculate parking to meet development size</li><li>- Replacement of existing foreshore parking on the site, and the revenue impact for Council</li><li>- The scope to provide overflow parking for the precinct.</li></ul> |