

ARTHUR HEAD¹ - (WEST END OF HIGH STREET, FREMANTLE)

OBJECTIVE

Council seeks to preserve and enhance Arthur Head as it is a place of great historical and cultural significance to all Western Australians. This policy seeks to ensure that its significance is not lost by piecemeal projects. The southern end of Arthur Head should be carefully developed over a period of time as a "shopfront" for the fishing industry, under an appropriate management structure. The northern end of Arthur Head should primarily be an area for the restoration of the original vegetation. The central area, on the Marine Terrace axis, will constitute a transition zone and provide for the principal public uses, from the Esplanade to Bather's Beach and the southern arm of the Round House promontory.

POLICY

1. Significance

Arthur Head is the State's most significant historic site for all Western Australians, being the first settlement site of the Swan River Colony. It is also, therefore, an area of national importance as the focal point of European settlement of the western third of the continent. The management plan developed to implement Council policies for the area will need to give expression to that local, State and national significance.

2. Access

Arthur Head is quite small so planning for access is important as well as not overloading the vicinity with proposed developments.

In general terms, visitors should be able to walk easily (from a nearby car park) into the pedestrian-only area of Arthur Head, and enjoy the combination of beach, ocean, vegetation, landforms and historic building as a Local Area which offers physical pleasure, relaxation, information, creature comforts and - importantly - an emotional experience.

3. New Structures

The only new structures which may be considered for introduction into the Arthur Head area are:

- a public amenities building above Bathers Beach to the north of the pottery workshop, incorporating changing rooms, showers, toilets, and kiosk; and
- historic boat shelters, located parallel to the railway line in the vicinity of the Western Australian Maritime Museum.

¹Refer to UM.G.F5 Arthur Head Reserve Strategy Plan for additional information.

4. Specific Places within Arthur Head

In proposing ways of creating the Arthur Head Local Area, it is useful to see the area as having four parts:

- The Round House itself, and the row of cottages to its north east.
- The northern end, from the Reserve boundary lines to the pottery workshop.
- The Marine Terrace axis through to the beach and including the pottery workshop.
- The fishing boat harbour, which should be seen as a 'shopfront' for the fishing industry. This paper contains no proposals for that part, but it is important that the fishing boat harbour be regarded as part of the Arthur Head whole.

4.1 The Round House

It is essential to see the Round House and the row of cottages as inter-related.

As the State's oldest public building, the Round House will attract increasingly large numbers of visitors, all with their needs for information, refreshments and souvenirs of their visit. Those needs cannot, and should not, be met within the present Round House structure, or by making structural additions to the building.

The adjacent cottages, formerly the pilots' quarters, should be converted, as they become available for Council use, to meet the needs of the Round House visitors, and to fulfil any other functions Council, as the Arthur Head management authority, decides.

Locating the public amenities, including historic displays, within the cottages would remove the need to provide attendant staff for the Round House continuously during opening hours. Admission should continue to be free.

The interior spaces of the Round House, freed of detailed displays, should be left to speak directly to the visitor's imagination. It is essential not to compromise the Round House's significance, and its dramatic location on the crest of Arthur Head, by using it as a museum, or as a regular venue for public events.

4.2 The Land And Seawall Below The Round House

The limestone cliff of Arthur Head has been quarried since settlement. The area's waterfront provides a unique opportunity for Council to offer Western Australians the chance to experience the physical reality of the settlement.

Restoration of the area's original vegetation, and related landscaping, is encouraged. It is also necessary that a statement be made about the pre-settlement Aboriginal use of the area, and vegetation renewal is an essential visual part of that statement.

The present northern boundary of Reserve 1294 is close to the alignment of the Round House tunnel. Discussion with the Fremantle Port Authority concerning a rationalisation of use of some of their reserve land adjacent to the tunnel alignment is encouraged. This will also allow seaward vistas from the Round House which have been degraded to be in part restored.

Fremantle Port Authority requires only emergency vehicle access through the area, so with effective landscaping and vegetation restoration it will be possible to create a fine pedestrian environment attracting use by local people.

4.3 The Marine Terrace Axis To Bathers Beach

The southern end of Arthur Head is particularly significant. It is, at present, remarkably intact. The beach provides the only public beach access to the Indian Ocean between Port Beach and South Beach.

The Marine Terrace axis is likely to be the principal entry point to the Arthur Head area. Visitors will walk from Marine Terrace across a proposed at-grade pedestrian crossing to the fishing harbour, the beach and changing rooms, the pottery workshop and north through the landscaping up to the Round House.

The Department of Transport has plans to extend the break-water bordering the southern end of Bathers Beach. Visually clear and convenient pedestrian access to Bathers Beach is essential, so in agreeing lease boundaries in this area, it will be necessary to safeguard pedestrian access to the beach as well as guaranteeing vehicle access to the Fishermen's Co-op and the breakwater.

If it is agreed that the Western Australian Museum's outdoor display of historic boats should be incorporated in the Arthur Head area, the Marine Terrace axis is suggested as the most suitable location. Both the Museum's and Council's interests would be well served if the Commonwealth Customs and Excise Building fronting Marine Terrace (and hiding the Maritime Museum's impressive facade) was demolished and the site redeveloped as display space for historic boats.

5. Management Priorities

5.1 Arthur Head as the focal point of European settlement of the western third of the continent is also recognised as an area of national as well as local and State significance. The City of Fremantle seeks the involvement of the Federal and State Governments as partners in implementing the protection and development of the State's most significant historic site.

- 5.2 The City of Fremantle will protect the integrity of the Round House as a monument. It will not be used simply as a public building or in any way which tends to lessen its local, state and national significance.
- 5.3 The land and waterfront below the Round House will be developed to allow the physical realities of the colony's origins to be experienced. Pedestrian access and vegetation renewal are the key elements to this development.
- 5.4 Visual clarity and convenient pedestrian access to the beach on the southern arm of Arthur Head will be developed. This is a particularly significant part of the area, being the present, remarkably intact, form of the grassy, clean beach where Captain Fremantle in May 1829 established the colony's first encampment. The beach also provides the only public access to the Indian Ocean between Port Beach and South Beach.
- 5.5 The southern arm of Arthur Head, including the beach and the built environment of the fishing boat harbour, will be developed for public use in a way that expresses the area's nineteenth-century function as a port.

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