

Breaking through

Town planning in Launceston 1956-1976

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Enthusiasts in Launceston, the second biggest city in Tasmania, had pushed the virtues of town planning between 1915 and 1945 without much success because of a lack of effective legislation and of town planning expertise. The advent of the Town Planning Act 1944 and of the advice given by successive Town and County Planning Commissioners provided new impetus to discussion of town planning ideas and sometimes to action. For example, in 1956 the Launceston City Council adopted a Tentative Zoning Scheme, but did not submit the scheme for the provisional approval of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner Neil Abercrombie. This meant that the scheme could not legally be placed before the public for the statutory period of 3 months for comment and criticism. From the early 1960s, with agitation from businessmen and professionals, grew a general desire to prepare a formal Town Planning Scheme. This was begun in August 1967 after the appointment of English trained Colin J. Taylor as Town Planning Officer and was completed in 1969, but after lengthy public debate and revision was not finally adopted until 1976. In addition to the Town Planning Scheme, Council investigated the feasibility of a civic square and malls; commissioned a Launceston Area Transportation Study; planned for future recreational needs; and established an up-to-date Town Planning Department. This was an unprecedented period of town planning activity in Launceston and this paper will explain why and assess what impact the various proposals had on this important regional city.

Keywords: Launceston, town-planning scheme, zoning scheme, regional cities, Town and Country Planning Commissioner

Introduction

Few would deny that the literature on the development of Australian planning from the 1950s to the 1970s has been capital city centric and presents a skewed view of how far planning had been part of public discourse in Australia. While not enough attention has been paid by town planning historians to what occurred in regional cities and country towns in the first three decades after 1945, some

town planning activity can be discerned in those cities and towns. We know, for example, that planning schemes were produced for key regional cities such as Greater Wollongong, Greater Newcastle and Maitland and Greater Geelong in the 1940s and 1950s (Freestone 2010: 148). Harrison suggests that country towns were ideal places for town planning ideas to germinate. They were governed by one local authority, where growth was “slow” and demands were “modest” and therefore a council was “best able to integrate statutory planning with other urban responsibilities”, or at least more easily than larger cities with a “patchwork of local authorities” (Harrison 1983: 141).

This paper will test Harrison’s proposition by examining the process that led Launceston, the leading city of northern Tasmania, to finalise a town-planning scheme after sixty years of debate in 1976. That lengthy process shows that whatever the size of the city the same obstacles need to be overcome in regional cities as in capital cities: vested interests, conservative aldermen, apathy or ignorance on the part of the public, and debates over what kind of scheme would best suit a particular city’s past history and future vision were some of the issues that proponents of planning in Launceston had to deal with.

In the first seventy-five years of the twentieth century, we can identify three phases of planning in Launceston. In the first phase from 1915 to 1945 architects were the most prominent agitators for action (Petrow 2013). They worked through the Northern Tasmanian Town Planning Association, first in 1915 and then again in a revived form in 1933, to conserve the city beautiful and garden city features that characterised Launceston and had economic, health and aesthetic benefits to residents and tourists. The Launceston City Council made some effort to beautify the city, but financial constraints and a reluctance to interfere with property rights prevented the development of the city-wide or regional plan that planning enthusiasts wanted. The second phase from 1945 to 1956 was more fruitful due to powers given to municipal councils in the Town and Country Planning Act 1944 and the appointment of R.A. McInnis as Tasmania’s first Town and Country Planning Commissioner in 1945 (Petrow 2014). Before he retired in 1956 McInnis advised the Launceston City Council on developing a planning scheme and offered the services of his talented assistant Hans Westerman, who was crucial in gaining acceptance of a Tentative Zoning Scheme (TZS) for the city. Although aldermen had not formally adopted the zoning scheme under the Town Planning Act by 1956, the TZS was a necessary step on the road towards a formal Town Planning Scheme.

The third phase covering the period 1956 to 1976 will be the focus of this paper. In the postwar period Launceston experienced one of its most rapid periods of population growth from 40,499 in 1947 to 56,721 in 1961 and in 1976 to 81,636 (ABS 2006). Actual and expected population growth was one spur to town planning in Launceston, which was dominated by the business and professional elite both inside and outside the Launceston City Council. The body of the paper will examine why the TZS was not finalised, why the Town Planning Scheme devised by Colin Taylor in 1969 was not accepted and why town planning had broken through to become a key municipal function by 1976. While this process of developing a planning scheme for Launceston was underway, the Tamar Regional Master Planning Authority (TRMPA) was working on a regional plan, but I have no space to deal with that scheme here.

To unravel Launceston’s drawn out planning process, this study relies on the published and archival records of the Launceston City Council, which was responsible for producing a planning scheme; the archival records of the Town and Country Planning Commissioners, who advised the City Council on

how to improve its proposed schemes; and the Examiner newspaper, itself a proponent of a planning scheme, which was an outlet for public comment on the draft schemes and for the divergent views on what kind of planning was needed in Launceston. First, I will provide the Australian context for planning in Launceston.

The Australian Context

The 1940s and 1950s presented governments at the Federal and State level with many urban problems in the growing capital cities of Australia. Some problems, such as deteriorating housing and unregulated expansion of industry, had proved challenging before World War Two. Other problems, stemming from post-war prosperity and accelerated population growth, were new: the increasing use of the motor car, urban sprawl, ribbon development, the demand for more housing and associated infrastructure created by a baby boom and a mass migration programme and the threat to open spaces in and around cities (Alexander 2000). The declining price of cars stimulated rapid growth in car ownership; cars changed the face of Australian cities from the 1950s (Davison 2004).

Planners argued that a more co-ordinated approach to metropolitan planning would solve these problems and “created unrealistic expectations about the ability of planning to achieve radical change” (Howe 2000: 87). Alexander has argued that generally the plans of the 1950s were “top-down documents, largely concerned with facilitating development efficiently in the interests of the ruling hegemony of land-related interests” (Alexander 2000: 102). The plans emphasised “the orderly development of residential, industrial and commercial land use” and “the importance of the traditional central business district”. They provided little scope for public participation, but some “people in the community made their voices heard on specific planning issues”.

Transportation studies, often prepared separately from the metropolitan plans by consultants working with State government bureaucrats, became common from the early 1960s and recommended “extensive metropolitan freeway networks as the primary solution to urban network transportation problems” (Freestone 2010: 160). The transportation studies reflected the “automania” of the times, usually ignored public transport options and the needs of pedestrians, and had “social and environmental costs” (Alexander 2000: 110). In the 1960s metropolitan plans began to shift from “limited ... visions of the future and blueprints for the control of land use by councils” towards a more “operational role, producing and managing strategic frames of reference for metropolitan development and protection of the environment” (Morison 2000: 129). In the 1970s strategic plans brought “notable improvements in ... environmental awareness, responsiveness to issues of equity and participation and attempted to deal with the problems of fringe land development” (Huxley 2000:147).

Launceston’s Tentative Zoning Scheme 1956-1965

In March 1956 the Launceston City Council adopted the TZS in principle. The zoning scheme proposed three residential zones (closed residential, semi-residential and inner residential), three business zones (central business, inner business and suburban business), three industrial zones (light industrial, heavy industrial and noxious and hazardous) and one rural zone (LTPC 1968: 1-2). The

Launceston Town Planning Advisory Committee of community and professional bodies devised these zones after considering traffic needs, especially ring-roads and outlets; flood dangers affecting residential development; existing building regulations, including preventing “undesirable activities” in “good class” residential areas; “economy in the costs of development, particularly in the area called “the urban fringe”; the distribution of shopping centres and children’s playgrounds; zoning around “special uses” such as hospitals and racecourses; and preservation of the existing skyline from “indiscriminate building”. Zoning would be controlled by a map of zones to indicate where the zones were located; a table of use classes, which classified land and buildings into twenty-seven use-classes; and a table of zones, which indicated whether the City Council would allow a use-class in a particular zone or not.

The TZS, with some 30 “painstakingly-drawn” maps and diagrams prepared by Westerman showing “every conceivable aspect of the city’s past and future growth”, was exhibited in the Queen Victoria Museum from 20 March to 4 April 1956 (AA235/1/6; Examiner, 20 March 1956, 3). After the exhibition, the City Council moved the scheme to the Town Hall foyer for public inspection and aldermen adopted the scheme formally in May 1956 (LCC MMCC, 28 May 1956). Only Alderman Keith Darcey, a valuer, strongly objected to the TZS. Following British planner Patrick Abercrombie’s view that cities were “living organisms”, Darcey thought the TZS not “flexible enough” for a city “already showing signs of cramp” and it lacked an imaginative approach to future needs (Examiner, 22 May 1956, 5). Moreover, the TZS was “confined to political boundaries” instead of natural or economic boundaries. Mayor Dorothy Edwards stressed that the plan remained “tentative” and “should be regarded as one for discussion, information and education”.

After aldermen made the TSZ available for public comment, they used it to deal with applications for development, but made no effort to seal the scheme. In November 1958 the Examiner criticized the Council for the delay in finalizing the scheme, claiming that aldermen were “afraid” that zoning decisions would be under the control of the Town and Country Planning Commissioner (Examiner, 12 November 1958, 2). Given some of the Council’s decisions to allow dubious breaches of the zoning scheme, the Examiner saw advantages in “entrusting” administration of the TZS to “an impartial expert”. Some ratepayers believed that alterations were made to the TZS, noted Alderman Edwards, “to suit the business and other interests of aldermen” (Examiner, 25 November 1958, 6). Some aldermen were opposed to “piecemeal changes” and wanted residents affected by the changes to be “given an opportunity to state their views” (Examiner, 16 December 1958, 4).

Like the Examiner, McInnis’s successor as Town and Country Planning Commissioner Neil Abercrombie, who had finalised the Greater Wollongong scheme, thought that the City Council was waiting too long to finalise its scheme. In November 1958 he asked the Council why it had not provisionally approved the scheme under section 14 of the Act and had not submitted the scheme for his provisional approval under section 15 of the Act (AA236/1/285). Until such approval was given, the scheme could not “legally be placed before the public for the statutory period of 3 months” for comment and criticism. Thus any objections to the zoning proposals would have no legal effect. The scheme was in “an almost permanent state of flexibility ... in limbo, a sort of suspended animation”. Altering the zoning “at will” would result in continual argument, disagreement and criticism “simply because there is no finality about anything”. If the scheme was finalized, it would not be “inflexible” as section 21 of the Act allowed for amendments. Abercrombie stressed that zoning was “not an end in itself; it is the means to the end” (AA236/1/285).

In April 1959 Abercrombie advised the Council that the TZS was three years old, but many changes had occurred in the city and it needed reappraisal and revision (AA236/1/285). The Council agreed because, Mayor James McGowen said, of Launceston's "rapid expansion" in the suburbs (Examiner, 4 February 1959, 3). The TZS also prevented shops from being built in closed residential zones even when they were needed. The Council gave the task of revision to the reconvened Launceston Town Planning Advisory Committee representing a cross-section of fifteen community and professional interests (MVAADR 1960-61: 72 and 1961-62: 78). The 1961 revision included "an amended Map of Zones and variation to the Written Section". Sub-committees were appointed to deal with shopping zones for Trevallyn, re-planning West Launceston, re-zoning at King's Meadows and traffic control measures. Despite the revision, the TZS was still not formally adopted under the provisions of the Act. As Lubove (1995: 87) wrote of Pittsburgh, zoning in Launceston represented "form without substance" and Launceston had not appointed its own town planner by 1965.

Preparing a Town Planning Scheme 1965-1970

In the mid-1960s, as Launceston grew in population, momentum built for a more sophisticated approach to planning. Fuelled by civic pride, there seemed to be a desire to modernise Launceston by adopting "progressive and forward thinking" as embodied in planning systems (Shapley 2012: 317). As will be seen in the forthcoming discussion, the push for applying more progressive and long-term thinking to the planning of Launceston came from some leading businessmen and architect/planners for diverse reasons. In his annual report of 1964-65 the Mayor, Dr. R.J.D. Turnbull, noted that town planning was "assuming more and more importance in Council considerations" and that "a proper Town Planning Scheme" would soon be needed "to ensure the satisfactory development" of Launceston (MVAADR 1964-65: 19-20). The City Architect W.L. Clennett took a preliminary step by investigating town-planning developments overseas while on long service leave in 1965 (LCC MM, 14 September 1964).

A significant new development occurred in May 1965 with the emergence of the Launceston Urban Planning Group, comprised of members of the architectural, engineering, building and financial professions, after an illuminating talk on transportation in Launceston by Professor Dennis Winston of Sydney University (Examiner, 20 May 1965, 3, 6 and 21 May 1965, 11). Architect and planner Dennis Green suggested "forming a group to discuss and do something about planning" (MOE 1969-70: 165-6, 352). One early member and Green's architectural partner, Jack Thomas Newman, stressed that "the involvement of the public in planning is absolutely essential if planning is to be successful" and "acting through local government" was "probably the most successful way" of getting public participation. The Urban Planning Group was especially prominent in agitating for the formation of the TRMPA.

Another key development was the election of Clarence Gandy Pryor as Mayor in 1966. A successful architect, planner and alderman from 1963, Pryor had been a member of the Urban Planning Group. Pryor's Mayoralty signified greater commitment to a Town Planning Scheme and he received support from other aldermen. In February 1966, after Alderman McGowen moved and Alderman Michael Ferrall seconded a motion, the Council decided to abandon the TZS and prepare a Town Planning Scheme for submission to the Town and Country Planning Commissioner for provisional approval in line with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1962 (LCC MM, 1 February

1966). Ferrall thought greater planning would assist industrial development, while Alderman Green wanted greater planning for playing fields (LCC MM, 26 September 1966). Conflict arose over amendments to the TZS. Alderman Gunn thought once aldermen “talked about town planning commonsense ‘flies straight out the window’” (Examiner, 6 June 1967, 3).

The Council also decided to appoint a Town Planning Officer, which Pryor thought would result in “more active progress” (MVAADR 1965-66: 17-18). Working under Clennett, Colin J. Taylor was appointed Town Planning Officer for three years with the sole objective of preparing the scheme and he began work in August 1967 (MVAADR 1968-69: 33). Taylor was an experienced Chartered Town Planner, with a BA Honours degree in Town and Country Planning from Durham University. He had worked in England, Nigeria and Scotland, where he was County Planning Officer for Ross and Cromarty in the Scottish Highlands before migrating to Australia (ARTCPBV 1969-70: 33). Taylor prepared a number of interim reports for the consideration of the Town Planning Committee, which was formed as a Standing Committee of Council in 1968 (MVAADR 1967-68: 3, 14; LCC MM, 29 July 1969). The new committee dealt with zoning and re-zoning issues, applications for land usage, development and re-development proposals, subdivisions, street design and layout, off street parking and all traffic matters, industrial promotion and all matters relating to buildings.

On 10 November 1969, twenty-four years since the City Council had adopted the provisions of the Town and Country Planning Act, Taylor’s Town Planning Scheme was made public. Somewhat apologetically, Taylor described his report as “the best I have been able to produce within the limits of time and staff available and the Legislative framework by which such schemes are bound” (RLTPS 1969: n.p.). Planning ahead for the next twenty years, he was motivated by the Biblical Proverb “Where there is no vision, the people perish”. The plan aimed to ensure that future changes to Launceston will “never be haphazard” or result in “chaos, confusion, or ugliness” (RLTPS 1969: 1). Taylor’s scheme had a number of objectives: to ensure the “Efficient functioning of the heart of the City”; “Satisfactory and orderly growth”; “More breathing space for recreation and leisure”; “Effective communications by the simplest means”; preserving “environmental areas as places in which activities associated with a particular form of land use or related land uses can be carried on without outside interference”; “Securing more attractive living conditions by higher standards of sub-division layout and landscape preservation”; and “Providing for interim improvements and scope for further change and unforeseen circumstances” (RLTPS 1969: 11).

In drafting his report, Taylor criticised aspects of the Launceston Area Transportation Study (LATS) that had been commissioned by the City Council in conjunction with the Public Works Department and the Transport Commission. Completed by Pak Poy Associates in 1968, the LATS recommended expenditure of \$22.7 million, including 28 miles of expressways and a new four-lane Gorge Bridge (Examiner, 17 December 1968, 1). While it amassed valuable information, Taylor damned the LATS for being obsessed with the motor car and its needs, minimizing the role of public transport and devoting little attention to “the environment of the areas through which proposed main roads will pass” (RLTPS 1969: 14). Taylor suggested “a road network” that was “basically simpler and more in scale with Launceston” than the LATS envisaged and made “greater use of existing good roads and will therefore be easier to implement in a shorter time” (RLTPS 1969: 15).

Other criticisms of the LATS arose when Taylor described his plans for the centre of Launceston, where he aimed for easier pedestrian movement and removal of “non-essential through traffic”

(RLTPS 1969: 20-1). His proposals included “pedestrian ways and crossings, reducing the amount of right turning and merging and crossing streams of traffic which result in ‘collision points’, providing an inner ring route which distributes traffic around rather than through the central shopping area” and “reducing delays by eliminating traffic light signals and ‘three into one’ junctions”. Taylor proposed closing some central streets to traffic and turning them into pedestrian malls, “with seats, paved areas, nature strips and shade trees” (RLTPS 1969: 23). Taylor recommended “more detailed planning” of the central area, focusing on “parking, public transport routes, three-dimensional aspects and trends in commercial investment”.

Taylor’s scheme reduced the number of existing zones from fourteen to twelve and made the differences between them “more pronounced” (RLTPS 1969: 16, 33). He marked a number of Recreation Zones to create “a network of routes for walking where people can journey on foot for considerable distances away from motor vehicles”. Taylor’s environmental sensibility was evident in his scheme’s desire to preserve a skyline “clothed in trees and support Launceston’s claim to be “the ‘Garden City’ of Northern Tasmania” (RLTPS 1969: 16). He believed that a skyline “cluttered with buildings, poles and wires is restless, and, unless the buildings are monumental, gives no character to a City”.

Mayor F.B. King noted that Taylor had incorporated “many revolutionary and forward looking features” (MVAADR 1968-69: 11). Once the scheme was approved, King hoped it would provide an effective “blue print” for the future of Launceston (RLTPS 1969: n.p.). It would not remain “static”, but would be reviewed “at frequent intervals in the light of future development” of Launceston and the Tamar Valley Region. As Chairman of the Town Planning Committee, Alderman Pryor suggested that the public be made fully aware of the provisions of the scheme, especially “the restrictive provisions”, and that Taylor should embark on a “public education” programme over the next few weeks (LCC MM, 24 November 1969). This was needed because, once the scheme became law, “it will be binding on the Council as well as the public”.

Examiner reporter Michael Courtney provided an excellent summary of the plan, noting that putting cars behind the needs of pedestrians was “one of numerous provocative proposals” it contained (Examiner, 11 November 1969, 1). He predicted that many proposals would be “sternly opposed by various sections of the business community, and by some aldermen”. Mayor King admitted that such “a comprehensive plan” would not suit “everyone” and “somebody is going to get hurt”. He also more ominously said that, until approved, this was “Mr. Taylor’s plan” not the Council’s plan (Examiner, 12 November 1969, 5). Taylor gained influential support. Praising Taylor’s expertise, the Examiner (12 November 1969, 6) thought that he had minimized “the hurt” and gained “maximum benefit for the city as a whole”. President of the Launceston Chamber of Commerce Edmund Rouse strongly endorsed Taylor’s plan and approved its departure from the LATS in its “treatment of the central city area” (Examiner, 12 November 1969, 5). For similar reasons President of the Retail Traders’ Association R.F. Tilley declared his support for Taylor’s scheme (Examiner, 29 January 1970, 4).

Certainly, the report caused unprecedented interest in planning and “encouraged discussion and the expression of view points” from individuals and organisations (MVAADR 1969-70: 26). There seemed to be more division inside the Council than outside. Taylor complained to the Examiner (24 December 1969, 3) that his plan was likely to be “thwarted by political argument and technical

quibbling” over the four-lane Gorge Bridge and other LATS recommendations. Taylor was committed to his plans for improving the central area. At a public meeting when Taylor explained the plan to community leaders he called the car “a pampered pet” and the pedestrian was regarded as “a second-class citizen” in central Launceston (Examiner, 11 November 1969, 5). His plan sought to put the needs of pedestrians first.

But Taylor was soon shocked to be told by the Town Clerk that he should have taken into account “the LATS recommended road plan ... as the basis” for his scheme (AA236/1/285). If he had, Taylor firmly stated that it would have, especially in the central area, “the heart of the Plan”, changed “the whole basis of the Scheme” and invalidated its recommendations. By accepting the LATS recommendations, the Council had “in fact rejected the Planning Scheme”. The LATS could not be the basis of “an “alternative” planning scheme”, because it contained “many contradictions and absurdities”, such as roads that were two-way on one plan but closed on another. The LATS proposals would intensify traffic in the central area and would result in “an inevitable decline in central business prosperity, necessitating large-scale relocation of established uses” and new suburban shopping centres. Not only would that be “uneconomic and unpopular”, it would “invalidate the previously agreed parts of the highway system”.

The Town Planning Committee asked Assistant City Engineer John Walton, an adviser to the LATS, to draw up “a compromise central city traffic plan”, which kept Taylor’s malls but not his proposal to divert “everything but shopping traffic and delivery vans from the main shopping area” (Examiner, 9 April 1970, 9). The compromise plan allowed continued heavy traffic along the central routes of St. John and Charles Streets, but was unanimously endorsed by aldermen. Taylor urged Abercrombie privately to force the City Council to accept his scheme, but Abercrombie demurred. He believed that, if the body administering the scheme had no “enthusiasm and faith in its operation, then chaos results” and that body would view the scheme “as a stumbling block rather than an effective tool to aid orderly development” (AA236/1/285). Abercrombie thought a better strategy was “to select a moment when the policymakers are in an acceptable mood and then infiltrate rather than meet an unreceptive group head on”.

At a public meeting to answer questions from interested individuals and businesses, the Retail Traders Association and the Urban Planning Group about Taylor’s scheme and the compromise plan in April 1970, Taylor openly criticised Walton’s plan (AA236/1/285). According to Taylor, Walton had used his planning scheme with “a different traffic plan super-imposed on it”. Walton’s traffic pattern had a number of “defects” and did not “solve the problems of the Central Area”. It was “unrelated to zoning and other essentials of planning”, showed “no concern for pedestrians” and allowed two roads to sever “the environmental areas” (Examiner, 1 May 1970, 5). Taylor’s appointment ended in July 1970 and he became Director of Schematic Planning in Victoria. Alderman Pryor praised Taylor for preparing Launceston’s “first Statutory Planning Scheme” and for creating an “appreciation and awareness of planning among the public” (LCC MM, 6 July 1970).

In August 1970 Pryor’s motion that the scheme as modified by the LATS be provisionally approved by the Council and submitted to the Town and Country Planning Commissioner for his provisional approval was carried (LCC MM, 3 August 1970). But this was not done immediately. Evidence given to a Joint Select Committee on Town and Country Planning earlier in 1970 provides some insight into why approval was delayed. Ex-Alderman and long-time advocate of town planning, Keith Darcey,

noted that aldermen favoured the TZS because it gave them flexibility to make changes to accommodate local needs (MOE 1969-70: 76, 81). One example he cited as showing the need for flexibility was to allow Nelson's Factory at Mowbray to expand into a residential area. If they had declined and forced Nelson's Factory to move, it would have bankrupted the business. But Darcey stressed that aldermen always considered variations to the TZS "seriously" and "honestly".

Aldermen Pryor was reticent to say why Launceston had been slow to seal a plan, but thought that the TZS had "worked well" and, despite Taylor's efforts, ratepayers had not shown much interest in planning (MOE 1969-70: 123-4). Pryor thought that the interest of ratepayers was "directly proportionate to the closeness to which it comes to home, particularly when they are affected". The Administrator of the adjoining St. Leonards Municipality F.J.C. White, who had been Mayor of Launceston in 1960-61, was more revealing, acknowledging that before the mid-1960s at least some aldermen were "opposed to planning, and there was some resistance to planning as a matter of principle, not as a matter of procrastination" (MOE 1969-70: 123-4). But that attitude had changed. White stressed the "merit in taking it quietly. You have to get the people on your side, otherwise there will be appeals; let people see it and make sure they like it and it is going to work, and then seal it". People had to participate in the plan and "think it is theirs".

While Abercrombie was impressed with the amount of work that Taylor put into his scheme and thought it looked "pretty good", he advised the City Council that some parts of the plan needed reconsideration (AA236/1/285). As government departments were not bound by town planning legislation, then it seemed pointless to include controls that affected government generally. Abercrombie perceived possible "conflict" between the scheme and parts of the Local Government Act and other legislation. He was worried that there was too much detail and this opened the possibility of complicated legal argument over that detail, which would result in "endless delays". More significantly, the scheme provided "very little flexibility or "elbow-room" for Council to tackle ever-changing development problems in a growing city". Abercrombie advocated a simpler scheme, which would give Council "the power it desires and the flexibility" to control growth. He urged more consideration was needed for the central business district, the nine blocks comprising "the heart of the City", which needed "a separate study in depth". That study would encompass car-parking, traffic and pedestrian movement, the "desirable bulk of buildings" and "even an outline design to assist Council guide future development". In short, Abercrombie encouraged the Council to find ways of coping with city development "without too many restraining administrative difficulties".

Getting a positive response from the Council, Abercrombie and his new Deputy Commissioner Noel Lyneham offered to help "work out something more simple for the Council to cope with" (AA236/1/285). They suggested the Glenorchy Planning Scheme as a "simple" model that Launceston could follow when reviewing its scheme. Chairman of the Town Planning Committee Alderman Pryor favoured that suggestion. Abercrombie and Lyneham's words had some effect. In his annual report of 1969-70 Mayor R.M. Green expressed "a considerable degree of frustration" that the scheme had taken "so long to formulate", but he acknowledged problems remained (MVAADR 1969-70: 34). Some aspects of the scheme were too detailed, which would "hinder rather than benefit the implementation of the scheme and could easily be the source of conflict and litigation". He hoped that the scheme would be "streamlined" before formal approval by Parliament. He noted certain "misconceptions" about the scheme, which was more than "a zoning plan" or "a

traffic study”, but embraced “the whole of the requirements of a developing City and area”. Aldermen had yet to be convinced of the scheme’s suitability.

Breaking Through: Town Planning 1971-1976

The period from 1971 to 1976 was the most active phase of town planning in Launceston and, by way of a conclusion to this paper, this section outlines all the major changes that occurred, not least the finalising of the Town Planning Scheme and the creation of a dynamic department of town planning. The revision to Taylor’s Town Planning Scheme proved to be “complex” and “time consuming, with a great many decisions having to be made individually before proceeding with the next step” (LCC MM, 19 November 1973). The Council simplified the scheme by adopting policy codes on matters like multi-residential dwellings, building lines and on-site parking. Citizens complained that the Council was too slow and were worried about potential threats to parks, reserves and the skyline that they attributed to the lack of sealed plan (AA236/1/285; AA236/1/293). Alderman Green highlighted the “confusion and uncertainty in the community” despite the Council gazetting an Interim Order, drafted by the staff of the TRMPA, to regulate development and use of land, which became operational in July 1973 (LCC MM, 22 October 1973; MVAADR 1974-75: 6).

In November 1973 the Council adopted a revised Zoning Plan and agreed provisionally to approve the revised Town Planning Scheme (LCC MM, 19 November 1973). In January 1974 Council sent the revised City of Launceston Town Planning Scheme to Lyneham as Acting Town and Country Planning Commissioner and he gave “provisional approval subject to minor amendments”, including some re-zoning (LCC MM, 24 June 1974; MVAADR 1973-74: 13). The scheme was then placed on public exhibition for three months as laid down by statute to allow for objections to be heard. The Council received 107 objections. These were considered by a sub-committee of the Town Planning Committee and Council, which sent its recommendations to the Town and Country Planning Commissioner (MVAADR 1974-75: 11). He held hearings in August, September and October 1975 and in 96 per cent of objections found in favour of the City Council decisions (MVAADR 1975-76: 17).

Aldermen had taken seriously the “substantial objections” from the residents of Inveresk about its zoning for industrial and commercial use and decided to make Inveresk “a Special Study Zone” (MVAADR 1974-75: 6,11). Council staff led by the new City Architect and Planner Trevor Kneebone—former campus architect and planner at the Queensland Institute of Technology who had been appointed in December 1974—worked with students from the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education on the Inveresk Area Study to ascertain the views of residents (IASR 1976). This resulted in an amendment to the Town Planning Scheme known as the Inveresk Special Zone, which aimed to confirm and rehabilitate Inveresk as a residential area and to ensure that “commercial and industrial activities within Inveresk are compatible with its residential functions” (LCC MM, 15 March 1977; MVAADR 1975-76: 17).

The Town Planning Scheme was sealed on 1 September 1976 and was put into operation on 1 October 1976 (City of Launceston, Town Planning Scheme 1973). It was much simpler than Taylor’s scheme and was divided into seven parts: preliminary matters, reservation of land, use of land in zones, existing use and non-conforming use, permits, implementation of the scheme and general provisions. Mayor T.D. Room called the sealed scheme an “important step taken by the Council in establishing planning guidelines” for Launceston and praised “the commendable public participation

in the co-operative exercise undertaken in planning for the suburb of Inveresk" (MVAADR 1975-76: 21). However, in the Launceston tradition, the 1976 scheme was "as flexible as possible to accommodate Council's views on modern trends in Town Planning" and allowed for "the unending variations that could be received and adopted for development applications" (Cleaver 1979: 112-13).

Other developments also marked how much progress planning had made in Launceston. Taylor's scheme had pushed for the greater "pedestrianisation" of the central business district and the City Council accepted that, taking into account Abercrombie's advice, the central business area needed a more detailed redevelopment scheme (LCC MM, 15 March 1971). This more focused scheme would "allow for substantial future growth and ensure that both Council and Government expenditure and expenditure by private enterprise" would be "outlayed in the best interests of the City and of its citizens". In March 1971 the City Council appointed consultants Perrot, Lyon, Timlock and Kesa of Melbourne to prepare a report, which was submitted to a public meeting in 1972. The main recommendations vindicated Taylor's ideas and included "a pedestrian orientated Central Business District", extra short-term car parks and "a re-organised traffic system" (MVAADR 1971-72: 15). The public meeting supported the new plan in principle. R.F. Tilley, no longer President of the Retail Traders' Association, called the study "a most exciting project which would put Launceston in the forefront of development in Australia" (Examiner, 7 September 1972, 5).

One outcome of the Central Business District report was creating malls in Brisbane Street and the Quadrant (MVAADR 1972-73: 16-17). Work began on the Brisbane Street Mall, between St. John and Charles Streets, in February 1975 and was financed by the sale of municipal land that was not needed for municipal purposes (MVAADR 1974-75: 5-6). After the Brisbane Street Mall was opened in October 1975, Mayor D.V. Gunn described it as "a place for people" and hoped it would in the future become "alive with regular happenings of interest, like concerts, art displays and fashion parades". Plans for further malls, "semi-malls, arcades and off-street parking options were intended to revitalize "the retail core" of the central business district in the face of competition from suburban shopping areas (MVAADR 1974-75: 11).

Other major changes that modernised planning included renaming the Town Planning Committee the Planning and Policy Committee (MVAADR 1975-76: 3). Based on recommendations from management consultants, the City Architect and Town Planning Department was reorganised (MVAADR 1975-76: 17). The department began developing a Strategic Plan for Community Development in nine policy areas—housing, tourism, environment, industrial and commercial, education, recreation, culture, health and transportation—and developed 80 "strategic statements". Kneebone also prepared a Conservation Action Plan Report for the National Estate and a new "concept for the Civic Administrative Precinct" with a "plaza design", which was adopted by the Inter-Governmental Steering Committee representing different levels of government. Also noteworthy was the Launceston Recreation Concept Development Project, which was adopted in February 1975 and shaped "future development" of Launceston's "formal recreation resources" (MVAADR 1974-75: 16).

Kneebone was a very active town planner, speaking or presenting papers to school groups, the Institutes of Engineers, Builders and Management and service clubs (MVAADR 1975-76: 18). At Mayoral receptions for surveyors, planners, architects, builders, financiers, real estate agents and the Chamber of Commerce Kneebone gave short talks on the work of his Department. Mayor Room

welcomed Kneebone's more public role and held that "maintaining good communications with developers and the like is a real Departmental duty". Kneebone went on a study tour of North America and Europe, paying particular attention to recycled buildings, conservation, low cost housing, new towns, cycleways, convention centres and civic plazas. His application of this knowledge to meet Launceston's needs was, claimed noted Hobart architect and planner Barry McNeill, "unsurpassed by any similar city in Australia" (City Architect and Planner's Department Annual Report 1977-78: 2). Kneebone had achieved much before he left for the Victorian Ministry of Housing in 1979 (Examiner, 12 January 1979, 1).

Conclusion

The Launceston experience shows that instituting town planning in a regional city was not as straightforward as Harrison supposed and can be a long, drawn out process. Arguably, town planning was achieved in Launceston by what Lindblom (2012, p. 178) called the 'the method of successive limited comparisons' or 'branch method', 'continually building out from the current situation step by step and by small degrees' rather than the 'rational-comprehensive' or 'root method', 'starting from fundamentals anew each time, building on the past only as experience is embodied in a theory, and always prepared to start completely from the ground up'. Let me conclude by identifying the steps taken towards completing a planning scheme in Launceston.

First, planning will not progress very far if it is discussed in abstract terms and is not agitated for by civic groups and professionals, above all architect/planners, with support from key business interests. In Launceston the Urban Planning Group brought these groups together and became a voice for change outside the City Council. Second, another necessary step is to have aldermen on the Council prepared to champion the cause of town planning and convince doubters that planning would facilitate not hinder city development or economic growth and benefit residents. The Council then could be persuaded to see outside experts like the Town and Country Planning Commissioner as allies not enemies in achieving the best plan for Launceston.

The third crucial step in Launceston was the appointment of a town planner to draw up a planning scheme as a focus for discussion and debate by key interest groups and residents. This enabled the community to clarify what it expected from planning and to understand what impact planning would have on the city. Fourth, the Launceston experience indicated that overly detailed, comprehensive plans were more likely to delay than expedite planning because their implications were too difficult for non-planners to grasp, would create the impression that radical change would threaten vested interests and would generate resistance to details affecting individual circumstances. Launceston resolved this by adopting a plan that was more simplified and flexible so that the City Council could more easily sell its scheme and respond more readily to changing social and economic needs.

Finally, once a simplified plan is accepted there needs to be a period of consolidation and connection with broader town planning developments as reflected in more in-depth reports on particular aspects of city growth and a commitment by aldermen to use these reports to guide municipal action. Then planning can really be said to have made a breakthrough and become a key Council function as it did in Launceston in the 1970s.

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