

Keep grand vista for community

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HISTORY: Domain House and, inset, releasing an alternative masterplan for the site are Roland Browne with son Tim Calwell-Browne, Denise Brown, Kerry Burns and Bob Brown. Pictures: SAM ROSEWARNE, MATT THOMPSON

Glebe residents have fought for decades to protect Domain House site and want it to be polished, not destroyed, says **Roland Browne**

MOST Hobartians would recognise the sight of Domain House and its grand sweeping gardens just up from the railway roundabout as one of the defining sights of Hobart — a sight that helps define our city as special.

Steeped in history, the site also forms a vital bridge between the hurly-burly of the city and the serenity of the Queens Domain parklands.

Less well known is how for more than 70 years the Glebe community has acted as guardians of the site, fighting off attempts to smash freeways through it, to build apartment blocks on it, to put large carparks there, and various other attempts to develop the site, destroy its heritage buildings, and turn it in just so much more square metreage of Hobart's CBD, a maw of carparks and cheaply built office blocks.

Now, Domain Campus is part of the University of Tasmania's proposed move into Hobart CBD. Without consultation with the community, the university proposed a scenario in April this year of the faculties of Law, Humanities and Social Sciences being housed on the Domain site. This would entail multiple new corporate and other buildings and carparks on the historic Domain site.

When the merit of this proposal was questioned, the university spun the line it was "just a scenario". To us, new buildings or carparks is a frightening scenario, born of a lack of consultation and of

any appreciation of the Domain Campus. And there is no suggestion that it is not going to happen.

Such a mindset typifies the university's mentality as one of Hobart's most rapacious and untrustworthy developers, reflected in the student accommodation buildings in Elizabeth and Melville streets that destroyed much and create little.

That mentality is also reflected in the new concrete and steel Brooker pedestrian bridge, which in no way complements the values and aesthetic of the historic Domain campus and University Rose Garden.

Glebe residents want to see the Domain Campus used and revitalised by UTAS, but not for the purpose of satisfying the university's insatiable appetite for overseas students and the commercial imperatives that flow from it. The Domain Campus is and must be recognised by UTAS first and foremost as a site of heritage importance with considerable community linkages.

The Domain Campus site can be a serene and beautiful campus that is a community hub, a university cultural and teaching centre, and something all Hobartians can be both proud of and a part of. Its undoubted value as a bridge to, and part of the great public park that is the Queens Domain can be greatly enhanced with imaginative landscaping. That is our vision.

To that end, the Glebe Residents Association commissioned a leading



Tasmanian architect to prepare an alternative Masterplan for the Domain campus site, showing how UTAS can transform the site into a jewel for its inner city campus without destroying its unique values.

On Sunday the Glebe

community released that vision for the site.

To us, the Domain Campus is a special place where UTAS and the broader community can come together in ways that are not possible either in the spread-out Sandy Bay campus or in the densely developed city campus.

We see the Domain Campus and adjacent spaces as an island of greenness, openness and serenity between the built roads and packed-together houses of the Glebe and the bustling activity of the highways surrounding

the Glebe. That greenness, openness and serenity can be enhanced with thoughtful development. But first it must be protected.

The Domain Campus has a rich and long history, and is accordingly a perfect place to house the university's

collections and to display exhibitions. It is a perfect place for artists and a place for teaching small groups. It is a place where the broader community and the university can meet.

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But the Glebe community has made its position clear: while it welcomes the university to manage the site and use it, while it welcomes the refurbishment of existing buildings, it will not countenance new buildings or

the proposed multi-level carpark on the site. We think UTAS should listen to the wisdom of the community whose actions have saved this site from destruction again and again for all Hobartians, rather than destroy the site with new buildings built for

commercial reasons. UTAS says it wants to be part of the community — the Domain campus is the moment where it can earn that status.

Roland Browne has been a resident of Glebe for more than 30 years and is a Hobart lawyer.