Chapter 8

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The aim of this chapter is to arrive at an urban design proposal for the site. This will done by considering the inclusive site reading, the design methodology and programmatic recommendations of chapters 5 and 6 respectively.

Recap: Site reading & Design Methodology

Chapter 5 concluded by arriving at an inclusive site reading encompassing a reading of the site and surrounding context from the 3 main user groups previously identified. This mapping exercise reproduced below, drew the following conclusions:

- Views from the M1 Motorway, northwest, northeast, southwest and southeast corners of the site formed important perspectives. These related physically to how the 3 groups viewed the site depending on their approach and passing movement routes.

- Views approaching the vehicular entrance on the western boundary related to the approach by the visiting dignitary as well as the ordinary local approaching the site in a taxi or bus.

- The Bree Street spine was of primary importance to the ordinary local, was seen as a secondary vehicular route to the politically powerful elite and was avoided altogether by visiting dignitaries.

- Two major pedestrian routes were identified, the first adjacent to the site on the western boundary, and the second across the road on the eastern boundary.

- Because of the high retaining earth slopes & the presence of the railway on the northern boundary of the site, the site essentially functions as a valley in cross section and as a cove in plan. This topographical constraint has meant that the site has remained largely undeveloped even though it sits within a commercially viable urban environment.

Above: Reproduced final site reading of chapter 5
Additionally, the following recommendations pertaining to the site have also been discussed previously:

- In order to facilitate sustainable levels of interaction, the site should not function exclusively as a destination.
- In order to continue to attract pedestrian activity onto the site, it is recommended that the existing taxi rank is retained.

Important to the urban design are the following recommendations discussed previously:

- Pedestrian activity flanking the site should be carefully considered channeling it either onto the site or articulating the functions on the periphery and central regions of the site to attract pedestrians. This would facilitate and stimulate retail activity and contribute to the awareness of and participation in the work of the PAP.
- A vibrant mixed use environment is recommended. This would comprise of office, residential, commercial, hotel and parliamentary functions. It is also recommended that this precinct should extend the public open space of the existing taxi rank across the site. This collectively would result in a 24 hour active precinct.
- The precinct should also be able to accommodate auxiliary functions relating to the needs of the three main user groups.
- From the design explorations of chapter 7, it is recommended that the urban design should seek to form additional connections into the surrounding urban fabric in order to reconnect this valley-cove site into the rest of the urban network.

**Urban Design Intention**

Taking this into consideration the following overall urban design intention has been developed. This is represented by the diagram on the following page.

The strategy is to firstly link the two pedestrian routes thus creating a ‘shortcut’ of the pedestrian routes at an urban scale [a]. This would also serve as a shortcut to the on site taxi rank. Secondly, the intention is to create an additional pedestrian link that would cross over the railways to Braamfontein [b]. This would link the Park & Gautrain Station precincts and work/trade/study opportunities across to the site and onto the Metromall public transport interchange and Bree Street spine. This would form a major pedestrian link simplifying pedestrian routes from the Newtown to the Braamfontein public transport interchanges.
Above: Urban Design Intention map
Thirdly, the intention is to link the site circulation into the current Metromall circulation system [c], seeking to create a seamless transition between the site and this existing well used public transport interchange.

These three strategies achieve the following:

- At an urban scale facilitate clear, simplified pedestrian movement between public transport interchanges and work/trade/study/live opportunities on either side of the railway divide.
- It affirms the commitment to the concept of a pedestrian friendly city, providing a large scale boost to the existing pedestrian infrastructure.
- By creating simplified shortcuts, its brings a large expected frequency of pedestrians across the site creating retail opportunities along these paths.
- It also brings the maximum amount of people into contact with the PAP along their daily commute facilitating awareness of, and if appropriately dealt with at an architectural level, participation in the workings of the PAP.
- It extends the site beyond the current isolatedness of the valley-cove topographical constraint. This links Metromall and the Bree Street spine across the site and railway to the Braamfontein public transport interchanges and the De Korte and Jorrison Street spines.

- It provides the largely non-directional site with a system of spatial priority, dividing the site into zones of intervention. This could easily translate into a phasing site development model.

**Urban Design: Zones of Intervention**

From this urban design intention the process of zoning the site can commence. From chapter 6 the following functions needs to be accommodated:

- The parliamentary chamber
- The parliamentary offices
- The all African consulate building
- An intercontinental hotel
- Sectional title offices
- Residential upper floor apartments
- Large scale retail stores
- Smaller to medium scale convenience-related retail, ranging from the informal, semiformal and formal denominations
- Retained and extended public open space (taxi rank)
- Civic open space.
Looking at the urban design intention, the primary intervention is the two pedestrian link axes seen in the diagram below.

Portion D and E are occupied by the existing taxi rank.

This links onto the Metromall circulation grid dividing the site into five portions marked A to D on the diagram.

The best location for the retail activity would be along the east-west axis, as it serves as a shortcut between the two busy pedestrian routes flanking the site and it faces the taxi rank.
From the lessons learned in chapter 7 ('urban gradient concept') the best location for the parliamentary chamber is along the southwest to northeast axis. However citing chapter 5’s recommendation this should be conceived as a void as opposed to a monumental icon.

For this to be a void it needs to be tightly packed against on the eastern and western sides. The buildings with the closest related functions are the parliamentary offices [q] and the all Africa consulate building [r]. The all Africa consulate building is located on the eastern boundary since it would benefit more from the busy street exposure.

The northern most extent of portion A could be used for offices citing the recommendation made in chapter 6 that the office function would be best suited to this location since it does not necessarily rely on passing trade.
The hotel could be accommodated on the northern edge, adjacent to the proposed parliamentary void since it relates to the parliamentary chamber and the parliamentary void.

Finally, as previously stated residential use will be spread across the site in the form of upper floor apartments. As such, the following diagram is arrived at setting basic parameters the location and relationship of functions across the site.

The remaining portion C could be used as an extension of the public open space (taxi rank). This could form a differentiated public space fronting onto the taxi rank.
Urban Design: Step by step process

Having now established appropriate zones the next step is to arrive at a massing model. This exploration will follow the step by step account of how this is arrived at.

The two major pedestrian axes
Sizing

In the previous exploration two main axes were identified as major pedestrian linkages to the surrounding urban context. The first of these is the southwest to the northeast ‘corridor’ that links the site and Metromall circulation systems to the Braamfontein street circulation system. For this link to be an improvement to the existing pedestrian infrastructure it needs to be easily recognizable and wide enough to allow for the free flow of pedestrians. Secondly, for it to be a definite commitment to the ideal of the pedestrian friendly city, pedestrians need to be at least considered of equal importance as motor traffic. As such the recommended width of this connector needs to at least match the adjacent Queen Elizabeth Bridge. This width would allow the center or edges to be zoned for retail and other activities. The transverse axis could be similarly sized and this could accommodate formal and informal traders, as this would be the busier of the two axes, since it forms a shortcut between the two major pedestrian routes flanking the site. Given the topography of the site, this transverse link would exist at a higher level as the rest of the site, allowing for large scale retail activities beneath it. The possibility exists to drop circulation stairs down to the ground level. The most likely position for this is at the intersection point of the pedestrian connectors. This would allow the pedestrian to change direction or join onto the alternative pedestrian connector.

Sketch: The two pedestrian connectors in relation to Queen Elizabeth Bridge