Loose Space and Place:

Finding Sense of Place within an Industrial City Fringe Site

Written by Anthony Sephton

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Outline

The following section provides an introduction to the following explanatory document in support of a design scheme. An outline of the of the key concepts are defined and explained and context for the design process established.

**Problem:** This paper argues that urban renewal within Auckland City leads to the loss of "place" a concept highlighted by Edward Relph in 1976 as the city pursues development strategies that result in homogeneity. Urban renewal is responsible for producing placeless environments in areas which hold significant value to communities and individuals. Urban change is constantly affecting our city. It is an ongoing process within the built environment meaning urban areas are never static; they are constantly changing systems of interconnected parts. As the city continues to change, the conservation of key areas becomes all the more important. These environments need to be conserved in the hope of retaining meaningful places within Auckland's urban landscape and reducing placeless development.

**Purpose:** The project aims to identify tools that advance architectural design practices in relation to retaining a sites existing “sense of place,” despite the redevelopment of an area, thereby reducing further “placeless” development in a unique area of the city. As this paper aims to provide an insight into possibilities of addressing placelessness due to the market-led process of physical urban renewal, an architectural scheme is proposed using Auckland City as a case in point. This scheme will act as a test to determine whether the intervention can in fact reduce the associated effects of urban renewal which lead to the spread of placelessness within an urban environment.

**Method:** This project uses a standard scientific method to carry out research within the context of architecture. Research through literature, site analysis and design will provide the basis for a critical appraisal to be carried out on a final design scheme.

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**Hypothesis:** By broadening strategies associated with “conservation” to encompass existing social aspects of a site (the way in which the site is used by a community) the retention of a site’s “sense of place” can be retained during the renewal of an existing urban environment thus reducing the spread of placelessness within our cities. Loose space involves the adaptability of a site for various human activities to occur. It is created when people recognise the potential in a space and use it for an activity they want to partake in. As loose space created sense of place within the chosen site, a hypothesis was also formulated in direct relation to the chosen site. It stated: By conserving loose space within this particular site, as well as physical features, the sense of place experienced within the site, can be retained therefore minimising the effects of placelessness.

**Results and conclusions:** A review and search of literature suggests that large scale comprehensive “urban change” known as “urban renewal” has potential negative impact on a site's “sense of place”. A primary relative consequence of such renewal is “placelessness” and serves as the key focus of this project. Secondary issues also affect the site's sense of place, such as “beautification” and “gentrification”. These two issues prove to be troublesome aspects of urban renewal, and are therefore also addressed within this project. Furthermore, it is noted that within the site examined, one of the key aspects which allowed the creation of a “sense of place” was the “loose space” associated with the site. The idea of “loose space” becomes the a focal point in adversity to the problem of placelessness. The concept of conservation is also utilised and together these concepts guide decisions made during the design process leading to the production of the finalised design scheme.

**Key words and themes:** “urban change”, “urban renewal”, “sense of place” and “placelessness”, “conservation” and “preservation” and “loose space”.

### 1.2 Key Definitions

Within the context of this paper, the following definitions apply:

- **Urban Change:** Any kind of transformation at any scale imposed on an existing built environment.

- **Urban Renewal:** Large scale comprehensive urban change where large plots of the built environment is often demolished to make way for new infrastructure. In addition to this “for our purposes, urban
change is seen as the physical change, or change in use or intensity of use of land and buildings, that is the inevitable outcome of the action of economic social forces upon urban areas.”

- **Urban Regeneration:** Small scale incremental urban change imposed on the built environment. Urban regeneration will often demonstrate “the process in which the state or local community is seeking to bring back investment, employment and consumption and enhance the quality of life within an urban area.”

- **Sense of Place:** is the personality of a location generated through social and physical characteristics. Two quotes support this definition: as T.F. Gieryn notes "place has physicality" and secondly "places become what they are through the people who live there, it is the people that integrate the features of topography, natural conditions, symbolic meanings and built form through their value systems, to form a sense of place.”

- **Placelessness:** Placelessness does not describe a place with no sense of place; rather it refers to places which are ubiquitous and monotonous. “Placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude, which does not acknowledge significance in places...As an unselfconscious attitude placelessness is particularly associated with mass culture – the adoption of fashions and ideas about landscapes and places that are coined by few ‘experts’ and disseminated to the people through mass media. The products of these two attitudes are combined in uniform, sterile other-directed and kitschy places – places which have few

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3 Ibid.p.3


significances and symbols only more or less gaudy signs and things performing functions with greater or lesser efficiency."\(^6\)

- **Beautification**: Beautification is the process of making visual improvements to urban areas. If not carried out well it may lead to Kitch or Disneyfication. “City beautification as a way to improve the living conditions and civic virtues of urban dwellers. Proponents of the movement advocated for sizable public investments in monumental public spaces, street beautification, and classical architecture, with an emphasis on aesthetic and recreational values.”\(^7\)

- **Urban conservation**: Urban conservation is retaining the existing character of a built environment. It is about the continuity of qualities and is often done through the use of designated conservation areas. “Conservation Area might well be defined as one where the character of the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, for it is the character of the ensemble that is most important, and such an area need not include any individual buildings of special architectural or historic interest, although many do.”\(^8\)

- **Loose Space**: Loose space refers to a person having and realizing the ability to carry out a significant activity which is not specifically meant to occur in any given space. A space becomes loose when it is used for something other than what it was designed for. For example, when a parking lot is used as a market place the car park exhibits the quality of loose space. Loose space is made up of four parts: Appropriation, Tention, Resistance and Discovery. "These themes and there sequence indicate different kinds of relationships between acts of looseness and

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their wider social context: that is their relation to the more orderly, and expected uses of various settings.”

1.3 The Problem: Placelessness as a Result of Urban Renewal

In the following section it will be argued that placelessness is a problem which requires attention within city environment. Created through the process of urban renewal, placelessness leaves our cities lacking significant meaning to the occupants living within them. This section then goes on to introduce a chosen site which is facing urban renewal.

Urban renewal is a bulldozer approach to the redevelopment of city areas and in this way is unsympathetic towards the existing built environment. Chris Couch defines urban renewal in “Urban Renewal Theory and Practice”, “Urban renewal is seen as the physical change, or change in the use or intensity of use of land and buildings, that is the inevitable outcome of action of economic and social forces upon urban areas.”\(^\text{10}\) Urban renewal means spatial alterations (refurbishment, change of use in building or demolition and construction) are employed to allow intensification of land use in some areas or reduction of use in other areas.

Let us first consider the positive effects Urban renewal can have. Replenished housing stock may increase density and reduce sprawl; it might have economic benefits and improve the global economic competitiveness of a city's centre. It may, in some instances, improve cultural and social amenity, and it may also improve opportunities for safety and surveillance. Urban renewal is also often used by city councils to produce motorways and other infrastructures in the hope of reducing city congestion.

Despite these positive effects there are also major negative consequences to urban renewal, one of these being the creation of placelessness. Change to the urban fabric is carried out with physical demolition, knocking down aged buildings and landscape. One extreme example of urban renewal is that of the Newton gully motorway project in Auckland. Situated between the retail areas of Karangahape Road and Symonds Street, Newton was once a densely populated suburb, mainly of a working class nature. The suburb had many boarding houses and was the location of several primary and intermediate level schools as well as about six churches. In the 1960s, this area faced urban renewal due to the Auckland city council proposing a motorway through the area. As the motorway was constructed, much of the housing was lost or changed to industrial use. The process of a poorer social

\(^\text{10}\) Couch, Urban Renewal Theory and Practice, p.2
class moved to other suburbs (Gentrification) occurred and beautification of the site resulted in a change in physical characteristics. Due to the loss of these social and physical characteristics this redevelopment of the site ultimately destroyed the sense of place which existed in the city fringe area and produced 'placelessness'.

The placelessness referred to in this sense does not mean the given location has no longer a sense of place; rather, the sense of place resembles that of thousands of places across the world. To further draw upon the Newton gully example, the unique sense of place generated by the local community of Newton over decades of development has been replaced by a monotonous motorway which exhibits the same sense of place as thousands of motorways around the world. This is only one example of how placelessness can demonstrate “both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude, which does not acknowledge significance in places”\(^\text{11}\), though there are many other ways in which placelessness could be created.

The trends and issues of globalisation, technique and technology mean renewed urban environments often result in placelessness. Globalisation describes phenomena where regional economies and cultures around the globe are increasingly becoming integrated through a global network of communication, transportation, and trade. Globalisation has meant techniques have been appropriated and shared resulting in similarities around the world. ‘Technique’ is defined by Edward Relph as “self-conscious, yet inauthentic, response to places, which often manifested in forms of physical planning.\(^\text{12}\) The technique by which authorities go about demolition and the technique they employ to rebuild in any given location has homogenizing effects. In addition to this, increasingly ubiquitous technology has meant places become increasingly similar. Therefore, placelessness typically becomes apparent when large scale comprehensive urban change such as this is carried out for new infrastructure.

Placelessness is also associated with inauthentic beautification of urban environments. Architecture and urban design which is criticised for being inauthentic to a place exhibits traits of historical illusion or ‘Disneyfication’ and bears no direct connection to the history of the area. The legitimacy of a proposed urban scheme is very important to the

\(^{11}\) Relph, *Place and Placelessness*.p.90

\(^{12}\) Ibid.p.87
redevelopment of an existing urban area and there is no necessity to beautify a scheme to the extent to which it becomes a fraudulent tourist attraction. Relph's description for these types of places is 'kitsch'. This is where an architectural scheme would be considered an inferior, tasteless copy of an existing architectural style.

The ideas surrounding the theory of placelessness and why it occurs are not new but placelessness continues to be problematic within redevelopment projects. It is not possible to simply stop urban renewal. The way human societies function create the need for urban change and sometimes parts of our cities simply have to be rebuilt.

Urban change is an ongoing process within the built environment meaning urban areas are never static; they are constantly changing systems of interconnected parts. Considering urban change as a continuum, at one end it may be a door to a shop being painted, on the other, it may be urban renewal leading to the demolition of an entire neighbourhood.

It is therefore important to note that the need for urban renewal is often brought about by shifts in urban conditions. Economic and social forces create a need for cities to adapt and these are in fact the major drivers behind urban renewal. These factors are an inherent part of the society we live in and therefore urban renewal will always be considered an option to address these forces.

As architects we can therefore take on the problem of placelessness as we play a major role in shaping the urban fabric of where people live.

This project focuses on the city fringe area of Auckland which is about to face small scale urban renewal over the following 10 years, and argues that as architects and urban planners we can provide schemes which retain aspects of an existing site’s “sense of place”.

The city fringe of Auckland is made up of buildings which are generally mundane and detestable to the general public. These areas which typically comprise of warehouses, car parks and old factories are, however, essential to the functioning of a city due to a requirement by inhabitants of the city for functional, low cost buildings close to the city centre.

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14 Couch, City of Change and Challenge : Urban Planning and Regeneration in Liverpool. p.4
The accumulation of these types of buildings generates a strong industrial sense of place which is often deemed ugly, uninhabitable and lifeless. However, many of these urban environments have a deep and meaningful sense of place associated with their historic industrial past and despite their ugly and dangerous appearance they often have a more meaningful “sense of place” than many of the shopping precincts and suburban developments generated to support mainstream culture.

Many of these areas are also an integral part of the greater urban environment where “loose space” allows buildings and public open space to be appropriated by people for various activities. The activities carried out, specifically art related, (exhibitions, fashion shows and studio spaces) are often made possible due to the low cost of such space and the “looseness” these areas offer. This “loose space” in turn brings vibrancy and life to the aged urban landscape and helps to generate an interesting “sense of place” where people carry out day to day life.

These places are often marked for “urban regeneration” or “renewal” and face destruction of their unique physical and social characteristics. The particular site chosen for this project is a good example of how a wonderful piece of the industrial heritage on the western fringe of Auckland city is facing this type of destruction. The site is located in what is known as “Victoria Quarter” which is the historic warehouse and industrial area bordering the western side of Auckland's CBD. It is enclosed by Fanshawe, Union, and Hobson Streets, as well as the Southern Motorway, it also includes Victoria Park. This area has a well documented history as it served as the industrial hub to early Auckland. It is now a diverse combination of historic buildings and commercial industry and exhibits a rough vibrancy as many people use this industrial site for various activities.\footnote{Auckland City Council, "Victoria Quarter Plan," http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/projects/cbdproject/victoriaquarter.asp.}
This site in Victoria Quarter is to undergo “urban renewal,” as construction in 2011 will begin for stage one of the “Rhubarb lane” development. The rejuvenation of Victoria Quarter as a place to live has become an objective for local council. On the Auckland City council's website, ideas were conveyed stating that Victoria Quarter is a piece of city fringe real estate with promising economic return and that research into the area showed overwhelming support among businesses and residents for change. The website also noted that in the area there was no sense of community and it was considered an unattractive and bleak place for pedestrians, with little street-level activity or ambience. They finish by saying “We aim to make the quarter into the CBD's dynamic western fringe, providing a diverse choice of alternative, intensive inner city urban living and working opportunities.”

This paper rejects much of the statements made on the web-site and this projects justification stems from the change about to happen within this city fringe area, due to the effects this redevelopment will have on the site. Many of the architectural outcomes

16 Ibid.
these developments have are “placeless”, as are many of the other developer led developments around Auckland. This paper aims to provide an insight into possibilities of addressing “placelessness” due to the market-led process of physical urban renewal in the Auckland city fringe.

1.4 The Architectural Question

*How can the problematic issue of placeless development, due to urban renewal in Auckland City, be addressed through the conservation of loose space within a city fringe site?*

1.5 Aim and Key Objectives

The aim of this project is to provide for architects, and other associated professions partaking in redevelopment projects, an insight into how the concept of loose space can be drawn on to retain an urban environment’s unique sense of place.

The key objectives for this project include

- Define problems associated with urban renewal which effect a sites sense of place as new (placeless) development occurs.
- Investigate the potential of loose space as a solution to the problems associated with urban renewal
- Collate design strategies which use loose space as a key principle and apply these to an architectural scheme to accompany this explanatory document.
• Evaluate the scheme and test hypotheses formulated through preliminary research.
2. Methodology

This project uses a standard scientific method to carry out research within the context of architecture. Research through both literature and site analysis serve as the basis from which a hypothesis is proposed. Research through design is then carried out to test this hypothesis. Results and conclusions from this research are then documented in a critical appraisal of the finished design proposal.

This explanatory document used various methods of research to answer the primary research question. These methods can be broken down into three distinct areas: research through literature, research through site analysis and research through design.

2.1 Research through Literature

In order to develop a hypotheses which could be tested through a design scheme, analysis and critical reading of existing, relevant texts was carried out through various architecture and urban design theoretical frameworks contained in books, web articles and other research papers. The literature covered, is expressed in this explanatory document through the review of current knowledge. Three key themes: urban renewal, sense of place and placelessness, urban conservation and loose space are presented as individual topics under separate headings. Information gained through the research into these topics was collected to develop a hypothesis, tested and argued through a design proposal. This literature was also used to generate visual qualities and building use which are worked into the supporting architectural proposal.

2.2 Research through Site Analysis

Rigorous site investigations and review of documentation was necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of the site and its wider context. This meant extensive time was spent on site and within the wider western fringe area to gain an in depth understanding of the social and physical characteristics of the site. Interviews with relevant people were conducted to gain further understanding of the site. In addition to interviews,
Council plans, historical documents and a range of other sources have been utilized to gain a detailed knowledge of the site and its surrounding environment.

Research into the “Rhubarb Lane” development was also conducted, as this is a major redevelopment proposed for the site. This serves as a problematic instance of small scale urban renewal. A range of advertising collateral and marketing documentation available through the internet, and from their display suite in Auckland, provided valuable insights and more than sufficient information on this project. Also utilised were various media articles on the development and a radio interview.17

2.3 Research through Precedent

A number of built architectural schemes which relate to the themes investigated through the research conducted have been used as architectural precedent. These supplemented literature and site analysis to formulate a design. These works are exhibited as an appendix to this explanatory document.

2.4 Research through Design

The design itself is the most fundamental part of this project as it serves as the test within this scientific method. It involves the critical understanding and translation of theories into a piece of architecture. The architectural process carried out to produce the proposal involved applying strategies derived from literature, site analysis and precedent to prove the expressed hypotheses. It also involved resolving common issues experienced during the production of any piece of architecture. This means key design issues such as planning, site massing, materiality and robustness all helped to produce the architectural outcome presented in the final examination. A combination of physical and digital modelling as well as drawing has been used to carry out the design experiment.

17 Douglas Rikard-Bell (Rhubarb Lane & Shed 5 Developer) interview by Murry Sweetpants
http://www.ustream.tv/recorded/9005683
3. Review of Current Knowledge

The following text positions this research in its relevant theoretical framework and discusses topics which have been useful in developing hypotheses towards the problems of urban renewal. The primary research question is explored in depth through several topics linked with both architecture and urban design. This explanatory document draws on these topics and the associated theory in order to develop hypotheses. Themes which have been investigated through a literature search include urban renewal, place, urban conservation, and loose space. Through this research subsequent concepts have been discovered, these are also explained in the following writing. The findings from these topics are expressed under the following headings with particular reference to the chosen site.

3.1 Literature surrounding Urban Renewal

Urban renewal was the first topic covered in this literature search. As this paper deals with the re-development of a city fringe site it was important to gain an understanding of the theory related to urban renewal. In particular, it was important to gain an understanding of large scale urban change and the implications connected with it, thus setting the context in which this project is based. Urban renewal is seen by many people, particularly planners and developers, as a positive act of revitalisation, generating economic wealth and revamping run down areas. This paper notes that there are several issues associated with urban renewal. One of the main commentators on the topic is Chris Couch. Couch brings to light several problems in his work “Urban renewal: Theory and Practice” in which he writes “Urban renewal is clearly a multi-faceted and complex process... responses need to be based upon a multi-disciplinary understanding of the social and economic forces affecting urban areas; the nature of government and organisations and the physical nature of towns and cities”. This explanatory project draws mostly on two of these areas, those being the social and physical elements.

3.2 Literature surrounding Sense of Place

Sense of place and placelessness is the next topic to be addressed. These two terms are addressed under the same heading because according to Relph placelessness is a
sense of place.\textsuperscript{18} Therefore this component of the research requires a theoretical understanding of sense of place in order to address placelessness. Christian Norburg-Schulz (1976) interprets place theory from an architectural point of view which popularised the topic in architectural and urban design fields in the 1970’s. In his book \textit{Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture} (Norberg-Schulz, 1980) he uses the term, \textit{genius loci} to describe a sense people have of a place, Norberg-Schulz goes on to note four thematic levels by which this genius loci can be characterised by, the topography of the earth’s surface, The cosmological light conditions and the sky as natural conditions, Buildings and Symbolic and existential meanings in the cultural landscape.\textsuperscript{19}

The idea of “place making” began to be used by architects and urban designers in an effort to achieve design schemes that leave people with an agreeable feeling generated by a particular built environment. These efforts came in the bid to counter monotonous developments which had become prevalent due to the effects of globalisation, technique and technology. The ideologies associated with sense of place are based on ones perceptions of a location or the characteristics of a certain environment which evoke or arouse feelings. David Canter defined sense of place as the “relationship between actions, conceptions and physical attributes.”\textsuperscript{20}

Placelessness and monotony concerning the general built environment became prevalent at around the same time as the theory of “sense of place” became popular. The various commentaries on built environments becoming monotonous often became prevalent due to the critique on modern design and in particular the “international style”, where no vernacular style of any country is reflected. “Modernism of the early and mid-1900s was clearly against keeping heritage areas as they were perceived to hinder future developments. Postmodernist thinking in later years was more sympathetic to heritage as a means of countering the ‘placelessness’ of the modern city”\textsuperscript{21} Mahyar Arefi writes: “Modernism

\textsuperscript{18} Relph, \textit{Place and Placelessness}.p.90
disrupts the emotional attachment to place. Implicitly, sense of place spawns the seeds of placelessness. As a conscious act and a legacy of modernism, sense of place is often considered a romantic, nostalgic approach toward identity formation. “One of the more noted writers on placelessness, Edward Relph writes in his book Place and Placelessness: “Placelessness describes both an environment without significant places and the underlying attitude, which does not acknowledge significance in places. It reaches back into the deepest levels of place cutting roots, eroding symbols, replacing diversity with uniformity and experiential order with conceptual order”. Placelessness is an effect of globalization, which generates standardized environments and in authenticity which spreads due to redevelopment during urban change.

3.3 Literature surrounding Conservation

Concepts of urban conservation have also been researched in this project. These concepts are introduced as the associated principles of urban conservation is used to argue for the conservation of a site’s unique sense of place. Firstly, a distinction between the terms conservation and preservation is made. This is because the application of conservation theory to a design would differ greatly to the application of preservation theory despite the similarity in meaning of the terms. Both terms are to do with sentimental attachment to the past. Preservation is concerned with keeping a building or townscape in its exact state. Conservation conversely allows some change permitting the building to evolve slightly while retaining its most important characteristics. “There is no statutory definition of what is sufficient by way of appearance or otherwise to constitute conservation nor what features there should be to make it in some way special; nevertheless it must be of special interest and it must also be one the character of which it is desirable to maintain or enhance” However, preservation is not concerned with allowing buildings to change and asserts that a conserved building be left as is in a static state. “Historic preservation’s sense of history is not aimed at


24 Dix, "Character, Conservation and Change: The Place of Preservation in the City.”
telling dynamic stories in which urban life is constructing itself, but instead is aimed at establishing a static Past When Things Were Nicer.”

There has been little research into the conservation of building use and in particular the conservation of loose space. A leading commentator in this field Nahoum Cohen asserts “Successful urban conservation is significantly more than merely preserving a few buildings. Unless a comprehensive approach to conservation is taken, more cities will lose their battle against urban blight.” This move towards conservation which focuses on more than just singular buildings should be taken further in an attempt to gain a better understanding on what needs to be conserved within our cities. A comprehensive approach should also seek to conserve building use and its associated culture. This project researches a standard approach to conservation by retaining certain physical qualities but also looks at a more comprehensive approach by conserving social characteristics of a site as well. Karl Kropf, James H. Carr and Dolores Hayden give good insight into the place creation due to social and cultural aspects of a site. Conservation of urban landscape which allows cultural aspects of a site to become more apparent became a decisive point in answering the research question. Dolores Hayden’s view is that gender, race and ethnicity as well as the practice of public history and public art, enlarge urban conservation and move the ideologies of the topic towards a social matter. In the paper "Vernacular Culture and Urban Economic Development" by James Carr states: "If local policy makers and planners care about preserving the diverse urban fabric of their neighbourhoods, they must integrate the maintenance of vernacular culture into their larger economic development plans."

3.4 Literature surrounding Loose Space

Loose space forms a key focus of this project. Authors Karen Franck and Quentin Stevens are called upon to support the hypotheses that loose space can benefit urban environments and should be conserved within our cities. The term, loose space does not imply looseness in terms of spatial quality; instead the term loose space implies looseness

within a functional sense, meaning the space is loosely available and easily inhabitable for various needs. “Accessibility, freedom of choice and physical elements that occupants can appropriate all contributes to the emergence of a loose space, but they are not sufficient. For a site to become loose, people themselves must recognise the possibilities inherent in it and make use of those possibilities for their own ends, facing the potential risks of doing so.”

Studies by Jan Gehl have been executed on public spaces which demonstrate the use of loose space in everyday life. These studies provide valuable insight into the conditions of urban space allowing various activities to be carried out and make an important point that in urban environments "people and human activity are the greatest object of attention and interest".

In urban environments the activities of people are the most interesting aspect. The built environment is subservient to the hustle and bustle of city life.

Literature surrounding looseness as an architectural tool has also been discussed by various authors. Such research is important to this project as it provides insight into how loose space can relate to interior architectural space rather than only public open space. Some of the earlier literature on loose space was written by Alex Gordon (1977), in his paper "Architects and Recourse Conservation". Gordon coined the phrase “Long life, low energy, loose fit”, where the meaning of "loose fit" describes the idea of looseness in architecture and the loose fit building typology. According to Gordon, this typology uses flexibility and adaptability in terms of building use. This allows various functions to occur over the buildings life span thus prolonging the longevity of a building. The idea of loose space is specifically related to urban design though it is clear to see the similarities between looseness, loose fit and loose space through their ability to allow different activities to occur.

Robustness was also covered in this wide ranging literature review and is a quality of design referred to in the book "Responsive Environments". When this quality is produced within a scheme, the ways in which the scheme can be used is increased, meaning people have the ability to use a building or public space as they need or want. "Robustness - Places which can be used for many different purposes offer their users more choice than places whose design limits them to a single fixed use. Environments which offer this choice have a quality we call robustness...our objective is to make their spatial and constructional

28 Franck and Stevens, Loose Space : Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life.p2
organisation suitable for the widest possible range of likely activities and future uses, both in short and long term."\textsuperscript{31} Robustness is an important quality in many of the same respects as loose space because these two terms are very similar in meaning. However, the authors of "Responsive environments" talk about the added issues of patronage, where the person paying for the development is often not interested in user choice. The patron is only interested in their own benefit generated through the actual user as a rent payer (paying rent), shopper (buying items) or worker (maximising production within factories or offices). This often means that within architectural projects the architect is limited to providing a very monotonous program and scheme." given that patrons have the power, and will use it to further their own interests, there is still nearly always some room for manoeuvre in designing for robustness, even when patrons are not prepared to pay extra for it."\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.p.56
4. Research Findings

The following chapter highlights findings from research noted within the methodology section. The chosen site and its surrounding urban context is described in detail. This is followed by the theory of loose space, as loose space has been noted as a key sociological aspect within the site, due to the way it is used by people. Conservation of sense of place is introduced to argue that conserving such social aspects (like loose space) can result in a more accurate representation of the sites sense of place. Following this is the findings from research into the Rhubarb Lane development are discussed highlighting the placelessness it will cause.

4.1 Site Description

To provide a description of how the above theory relates to the chosen site the following site description is provided.

Having carried out research on various topics relating to my primary research question, a physical site was in need in order to test my theory around loose space having the ability to retain a sites sense of place. In order to develop a design proposal that is attuned to the sites sense of place, a comprehensive site investigation took place over the course of this project. These studies are the foundation upon which urban schemes programme and design are formed and have influenced the choice of key design issues. Having studied various relevant sites for this project one stood out due to its relevance to all the topics studied in the literature review: urban change and renewal, sense of place, conservation and loose space. This chapter gives a concise overview of the site containing a description of the site uses and activity, a description of the sites physical characteristics, followed by a description of how these elements combine to create the sites sense of place.

The site is situated within the same city block as the old Cook Street council depot. Entered from 61-87 Cook St & 105 Nelson Street the 2.8ha block is bound by Cook Street on the south, Nelson Street on the east, Wellesley Street and Sale Street to the North and Morton Street on the west. From the late 1800s to the 1960s, this part of Freeman’s Bay
was considered Auckland’s slum. In the 1950s the city council started an urban renewal scheme in this area. Many of its old houses were demolished and replaced. On this particular block the Council built a large depot containing workshops and warehouses, this was sold and used by the Courier Post Company in the 1990's. Recently, this block has been bought by property development company Pelago. As they wait for the pending development to occur, Pelago has allowed the site to be appropriated for various activities. Tournament Parking Company currently leases most of the area, meaning the primary use for this site is currently car parking, this provides paid parking for local businesses in the surrounding blocks.

Council building on the site is used for far different purposes to what it was originally and has been broken into “Sheds” numbered from 1 through to 10 with varying activities carried out in each. Shed 10, the biggest open section of the old building is typically used as an internal car park during office hours. Shed 5 is a popular cafe and motorcycle work shop running through the middle of the building from north to south with the cafe being situated in the area just inside the entrance. Opened in Auckland late in 2009, the cafe ‘Deus Ex Machina’, offers a place where people can relax with breakfast or lunch and later shop for motorbikes. It is a unique situation that has proven to be popular with both casual diners and as a venue for large-scale events. There are always motorbikes out the front parked there by
the patrons who love this place, not only for the cafe, but also the enormous store dedicated to motorcycling. Inside there are many retro custom bikes and a glassed-in workshop where you can watch the gleaming Deus bikes being built.

As well as their intended purposes, the sheds have played host to various art exhibitions and fashion shows over the past few years. In 2009, parts of New Zealand Fashion week were held in Shed 10 which saw 16 local and international fashion designers exhibit 2010 clothing collections to live music followed by a lavish after-party. The Auckland Triennial used shed 6 (part of the depot building) as one of the venues to exhibit and view art as part of the 2010 celebrations. This cornerstone exhibition of international contemporary art
in New Zealand is a hallmark for contemporary art and dialogue in the Asia pacific region. The other sheds in the building are used for various purposes including art studios, a performing arts school and storage. The large covered parking space beneath the sheds was used at one stage as a flower market.

These various uses of the sheds are made possible through the physical characteristics of the site. The large industrial building is rough, and robust, loose fit and cheap. These properties exhibited by the built environment are what allow people to inhabit and use the site for day to day activity. The rough nature of the building allows creation to take place without second thought for the buildings well being. In an interview with "shed 8's" artist Mathew Arbuckle he stated "we love the rough nature of the space, being made of concrete and metal we can't really damage the building, it's a real work shop in that sense. Having those roller doors means we can back a car right in and load it up as well."33 This rough nature could also be the reason the motorcycle workshop, store and cafe has been situated on such a site. As you enter the cafe it is as though the cafe is themed in some industrial workshop setting. This however is no theme, the rough industrial aesthetic is authentic in the sense it is actually an industrial building and it does house a working

motorcycle shop. The notion of loose fit can be noted in this building as well. The spaces in and around the building are of varying size and demonstrate that they can be used for a number of activities for either the long and short term occupation. The low-cost and affordability of the building is another characteristic of notable importance. As the building is far from new and in a less than desirable condition for most tenants, there are no high rents to pay for the occupants of the sheds.

It can be noted that both the activities occurring within the sheds and the physical characteristics of the building and site together create the sense of place within this site. It can also be noted that the qualities of space and activities currently carried out within the existing site echo the exact merits of loose space. Loose space in this case, is therefore associated with creating a sense of place in this particular site. The sense of place experienced
within the site shows the three features of place according to T.F. Gieryn's definition. It is a unique place within the universe and it has both physical and social attributes reflecting the personality of the site. The sense of place in this case exhibits a “messy vitality of the metropolitan condition with its unpredictable intermingling of classes, races and social and cultural forms”. However, as with a lot of sites, this sense of place is not totally obvious at first glance. In fact many people dismissed this site and contend that the site is in severe need of being redeveloped. In an internet forum where users can comment on the rhubarb lane development comments include, "Wow it really is a big giant hole in the middle of the city... Exactly what we need, and a good way to revitalise a pretty crap part of the CBD."  

Despite the fact this great building contains a unique sense of place and allows occupants to carry out various activities, future redevelopment will see displacement and demolition of various site characteristics. As a consequence the sense of place which these artists, performers and retailers create will be lost. This paper argues for the conservation of a sites loose space and that the concept of loose architecture needs to be implemented within

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34 Gieryn, "A Space for Place in Sociology."
schemes to allow more freedom of expression from the occupying community. With the tank farm situated 2 kilometres from this site at the water’s edge also facing redevelopment in the near future, the entire city’s western fringe is going to face beautification. This will see much of the city’s historic industrial past replaced with new buildings holding no historical or cultural meaning to the people of Auckland. It is essential that urban conservation be used as a technique to retain the existing loose space or to at the very least provide an architectural intervention which recreates the existing loose space. This in turn, will address the problematic issues surrounding gentrification, beautification and loss of place. Urban schemes and the surrounding architecture should therefore allow for sporadic use of public space that will bring about a social ambiance and vitality, bringing with it a sense of place.
4.2 Loose Space Theory

Through research by site analysis, loose space became the focus of this project. The original interest which precedes this assignment was in the relationship between sense of place and building use. The ability for loose space to create a sense of place became apparent when a secondary question was asked; how exactly is a sense of place generated within the chosen site? The answer to this question lay in the way the building and the surrounding site was used. Loose space facilitated various activities together with the physical characteristics of the site creating a sense of place. Sense of place, in this instance, is defined as the personality of a location generated through social and physical characteristics.

Loose space becomes apparent when a space is used in a way which is unintended as the spaces primary function. The possibility of loose space developing depends on place type. Place types; any sort of space made up of many qualities, allow people to carry out different activities depending on the characteristics of the type. "What one does and how one does it differ significantly according to the type one is occupying, with some types allowing for more freedom of choice of activities and more means of carrying them out."36 Take for example a prison cell. This type of space is hard and restricting and the possibility for a large variety of activities to be carried out is very low. This is due to the many qualities acting on the space suppressing the ability to conduct different activity. However, a garage, for example, is a very loose space as it has qualities which allow many activities to occur besides its primary function. In addition to parking a car, you can also hang some washing up, fix a bike, play the drums and many other activities which illustrate the versatility of the space.

High density urban areas provide good place types for loose space to become apparent. Cities offer many privately owned hard spaces such as banks, hotels, apartment buildings, and office towers. However, in between these spaces lie various types of public space openly accessible for various needs. "Here is the breathing space of city life, offering opportunities for exploration and discovery, for the unexpected, the unregulated, the spontaneous and the risky."37 Streets, parks, plazas, and other infrastructure offer people the ability to carry out needs and desires. The activities created in doing so are placed on display

36 Franck and Stevens, Loose Space : Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life.p.2
37 Ibid.p.3
for other people to notice and be a part of. These activities can be diverse in nature and occur at any time. People may sunbathe on street furniture, a market may be held with permission from local authorities, or a teenager may graffiti a wall.

Many spaces in the city are used for their intended primary function only part of the day. For example, car parks which are used during the nine to five business hours often lay empty during latter hours. This offers usable space which often goes unused during much of the buildings life cycle. Loose space can utilise this space maximising the buildings potential for use.

"Loose spaces give cities life and vitality...Loose spaces allow for the chance encounter, the spontaneous event, the enjoyment of diversity and the discovery of the unexpected."38 Having found loose space within the chosen site it is of foremost importance to retain this vital aspect. An unsympathetic approach to Urban renewal of this area will destroy the loose quality of this site, therefore conservation strategies must be implemented.

The focus of this paper looks at the possibilities for architects to find existing loose spaces within a site facing redevelopment and use it to establish a design concept which promotes the sense of place that the existing loose space originally created. It is through the application of these concepts that sense of place can be built upon. By bringing to attention loose space and emphasizing its positive attributes, loose space can be a great place-making device and retain a sites sense of place as it undergoes urban renewal. Different types of space within the city allow for different activities to take place, whether the activity is intended or not. Urban design schemes and the accompanying architecture should embrace this random use of the public domain instead of forcing people to inhabit a scheme as preconceived or dictated by the architect.

It is this realization and execution of any random activity, not predetermined by design, which creates loose space. This activity may never actually occur in the square, but any other activity will become evident on numerous occasions, markets, art, advertising may be some more common activities which contribute to the square becoming loose space. " The creation of a brief for a given site and the prime uses for which it is designed are the absent prelude to the cycle of loosening or re-use... At the beginning, uses are carefully

38 Ibid.p.4
conceived and defined. then things loosen up.” Town squares are “soft” in nature and allow easily for loose space to occur, though lose space can also be carried out in any space including “hard” spaces such as café’s and libraries.

4.3 Conservation of a Sense of Place

As discussed earlier, Urban Renewal generates placelessness, a problem that needs to be addressed. This section argues that conservation and sense of place are linked ideas and through conservation people in place making professions do not always achieve a good sense of place as architects too commonly focus their attention on physical qualities. It is then argued that the focus on sociological aspects of a site such as the way people use a particular site should also be considered in the retention of place.

Urban conservation and sense of place are two ideas which often occur in the same discussion due to the fact that conservation is frequently applied to an area in the hope of retaining its sense of place. These two ideas are therefore related through practice which is commonly known as character conservation. Urban conservation is often regulated through council policy and applied to small areas of the town which are deemed to have a quality worth retaining. These areas are generally older parts of the greater metropolitan area which exhibit qualities of urban antiquity. For example, Auckland’s suburb of Ponsonby is under a tight conservation act as this area was one of the first suburbs to be established in Auckland and consists of many late 19th century villas and bungalows establishing its sense of place. Conservation has therefore been employed to protect this area through conservation policies. This idea of conservation serving a means of retaining a sense of place is supported in Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary where Gunila Jive'n and Peter J. Larkham (2003) write "In some contemporary planning documents the need to create, reinforce or celebrate ‘character’ or ‘sense of place’, whether for historic places (which are already palimpsests) or for newly created places, has been highlighted... ‘character’ and ‘appearance’ are key elements to consider when designating a conservation area, although they are hardly defined. “

39 Ibid.p.28
40 JivÈN and Larkham, “Sense of Place, Authenticity and Character: A Commentary.”
Architects, urban designers and planners use predominately physical characteristics when place making and therefore the resulting schemes do not always exhibit a true sense of place. As noted earlier, places are made up of more than just physical qualities, simply representing the characteristics of existing built form, or using construction materials rooted within a site does not present a total picture of the existing sense of place in many situations. "To use Norberg-Schulz’s [genius loci] schema, the contributions of topography, natural conditions and variations, and symbolic meanings, tend to be given less weight than built form."\textsuperscript{41}

Sense of place is made up of many elements; therefore the expansive scope conservation entails should be broadened. The scope should also incorporate cultural and social aspects within a site to reflect its true sense of place. As Karl Kropf points out: "this underlines the need to put any account of physical characteristics within the context of other aspects such as activities and intentions in order to move towards a better account of character"\textsuperscript{42}. Despite an approach to place that solely seeks to represent physical characteristics being a valid response to place making, it could also prove worthwhile to incorporate characteristics surrounding individual people and communities who make use of such physical characteristics, to gain a better grasp of a site's true sense of place,

As commercial development takes place and architectural efforts fail to protect Auckland's identity as a city, architects, urban designers and planners must look for new tools and techniques to help preserve the unique sense of place parts of our city offer. "Many writers have pointed out increasing privatisation, commodification and sanitization of quasi-public space in cities. These forces do indeed prescribe and homogenise urban activities and identities, placing people in the role of passive consumer rather than active creator or participant. They pose serious threats to the continued existence of loose space but they have not eradicated it."\textsuperscript{43} The vernacular culture which emerges through functions within and around such dilapidated buildings bring immense cultural values to the local community, providing reason as to why these should be retained during redevelopment of such a site. This paper is therefore looking for ways in which the ideologies of urban conservation can change

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Franck and Stevens, \textit{Loose Space : Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life}.p.4
and make better places through the conservation of loose space that fosters vernacular culture.

4.4 Rhubarb Lane

The Rhubarb Lane development proposed for the site under exploration is a good example of the way urban renewal can affect a city fringe site. This development has many positive aspects which will result in beneficial effects for Auckland city, but there are also issues which will more than likely have negative consequences for Auckland city. These issues are mainly bought about through urban change. As noted earlier, certain aspects of urban change and renewal including displacement and purification have a negative effect on a sites sense of place as they strip key sociological and physical characteristics from a site undergoing redevelopment and replace them with placeless urban schemes. In this chapter a description of the Rhubarb Lane development will be presented followed by a case study of the scheme. The case study will show how the proposed scheme will inevitably affect the sites sense of place and highlight the impact of such development on the sites existing sense of place.

Rhubarb Lane is a commercial urban scheme about to commence construction on the site of which this paper is exploring. Once complete, the mixed-use redevelopment will contain 147,876m² of gross floor area. Pelago (the company responsible for the development) has proposed erecting: 20 new buildings containing basement parking & loading areas for occupants, tenants & visitors, 1084 residential units, 360 residential/office spaces, 3793m² of retail, food & beverage and service activities, 2530 ancillary & 560 public short-term parking spaces. All facilities are to be located in accordance with a comprehensive master plan of the 2.8 hectare site, including through-site pedestrian links, internal streets, landscaping & open spaces available for public use. Under the council’s plan change 1 for the Victoria Park Quarter, the proposal will also need consent for some buildings exceeding the maximum permitted heights of 24m & 35m above defined contour levels, bonus floor area for through-site links exceeding the maximum total floor-area ratio and the provision of short-term public visitor parking. This will see the demolition of existing buildings, and industrial structures for the establishment of the new mixed-use buildings. This in turn causes not only the existing physical characteristics of the site to be demolished but also the
sociological characteristics to be removed; the sites existing sense of place is therefore erased.  

Rhubarb Lane is set to create displacement of sociological groups using the site. As noted earlier in this paper, one negative consequence of urban change is gentrification, or displacement of social groups from within the area of which these groups of people live and work. The Rhubarb Lane development shows clearly that this gentrification is inevitable and even goes as far as to boast about it stating “a gentrified town plan has now provided for the city dweller in a most considered way”. The Rhubarb Lane development

will further gentrify the city block on which it is situated by demolishing the buildings which currently facilitate artists, performing art groups, retailers, and car park users.

Purification and beautification is also generated by the Rhubarb Lane development. “Rhubarb Lane is set to transform the area, offering a style of urban living so desired internationally, but until now unavailable in Auckland… What is exciting people is the opportunity to get in on the ground floor of an up-and-coming revitalization of the entire area. There is a strong underground vibe – Auckland is ready for this kind of property offer”. Despite this type of development bringing about revitalization and beautification that appeal to so many people, the true nature of Auckland’s identity with its working port and historical appeal is not represented. The idea of refraining from cleansing a city of its “ugly parts” is supported in previous research which suggests parts of a city should retain its true aesthetic rather than generating an artificial aesthetic which appeals to mass culture.

"Learning tolerance, a sign of cosmopolitanism, depends on a certain amount of controlled “anarchy”, absent in “Disneyland cities” that are clean-up, tidy, purified... where nothing shocks, nothing disgusts”. 47

The Rhubarb Lane development seeks to renew the entire city block, which will therefore create a new a sense of place. The new sense of place is generated through different physical and sociological characteristics, a new community within a new purified and sterile environment no different to new and purified developments anywhere else in the world. This is the creation of placelessness where the surrounding characteristics of the scheme are devoid of social and cultural meaning. This redevelopment of the site inevitably produces placelessness, “cutting roots, eroding symbols, replacing diversity with uniformity and experiential order with conceptual order.” Relph also argues that “The current scale of the destruction and replacement of the distinctive places of the world suggests that placeless geography is increasingly the more forceful of these, even though a considerable diversity of places persists.” 48 With this in mind, the importance of conserving the loose space of this site becomes pertinent to combating the creation of placelessness.

47 Franck and Stevens, Loose Space : Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life. p.22

48 Relph, Place and Placelessness. p141
5. Project Development

This chapter will present a brief review of the design process which has been utilised, resulting in the final design scheme. To validate the research which has been performed during the course of this project, a design scheme has been also been developed on the chosen site of which the paper is based. This design proposal supports this document and acts as an experiment to test the hypothesis stated at the beginning of this paper. As the chosen site is occupied in a way which does not maximise land use value and arguably requires redevelopment due to economic pressures, a scheme has been proposed to act as one stage of the rhubarb lane master plan.

5.1 Key Planning Issues

The development of this project is broken down into seven sections. These sections act as steps in the design process carried out to produce the final scheme. The key planning issues as they have been named, act as an exploration into design possibilities. The issues include, program, permeability, site massing and form, materiality, and robustness.

5.2 Brief

The chosen site, through massing and permeability investigations was basically split in half, creating eastern and western ends. At the eastern end of the site generated in response to the current site uses, a brief has been proposed that creates an events centre or expo centre, with loose space allowing people to occupy spaces within the building for different activities of various proportions at different times. This will act as the main brief of the eastern end of the site. At the western end, a mixed-use development has been proposed to investigate whether looseness can retain a sites sense of place within a more common means of redevelopment. This acts as a secondary brief providing support to the main brief within the site.
As a result of the site research the following conclusions were drawn

- There are various interesting activities carried out by diverse groups of people,
- The industrial nature of the site and building allow these people to go about these activities,
- It is both the activity and the physical environment that creates sense of place within the site,
- An architectural development which takes into account these qualities can conserve the sites sense of place as the site is redeveloped.

5.2.1 Home for Contemporary Arts and Culture

Based on these conclusions it was recognized that the site would be suitable for a multi-use building that offered use of the facilities for creative means but also spaces suitable for exhibition or conference type events. With this approach the new building will act as an extension to the existing "Sheds" and serve as "a cultural quarter of available space". This space will contain different rooms and spaces that can be adapted to suit any occasion - from small intimate gatherings to some of this country's biggest indoor and outdoor events. Built on a vision of a vibrant cultural life for our people and artists, it is a place for creativity and innovation to take place, where artists are given the opportunity to conceive, develop and present their work in an inspiring and creative atmosphere.

The project will be developed in conjunction with three main share holders being the original developer of the site Palago, Auckland Super City and The Arts Foundation. It is seen that paid car parking will be integrated into this scheme to provide financial return on the building and act as an instigator for loose space.

The event centre will contain

- A multi-venue centre focused on the creation and presentation of contemporary art and culture. There are large flexible theatre spaces, gallery and exhibition spaces, rehearsal rooms, and studio space for
practicing artists. It will provide a working hub for practitioners and audiences from the small to large arts sector.

- This venue will also have the ability to hold trade shows, expos, festivals, product launches and even large scale corporate seminars.
- Retail spaces to promote and sell the occupying artists work to the public and increase vitality within the scheme.
- An easily accessible café area drawing the public into the facility and better use of the available space.

It is hoped that this event centre will function as a working environment and the vibrancy of this day to day activity, and appropriation of space by people occupying the environment, will create vitality and a strong sense of place in the same way "the sheds" have done. It is hoped that the general public will also produce loose space through the appropriation of space for their own purposes. Changing activities and loose space experienced in the site is somewhat contagious to others who are moving through the site but are not necessarily associated formally with the site.

This brief is a realistic development based on CarriageWorks in Sydney Australia. More information is provided on the CarriageWorks scheme in the appendix 9.2 on page 47.
5.2.2 Mixed Use Development

The second part of the scheme uses a mixed use type development to test the hypotheses on loose space. Mixed-use is a logical building type to use as the site has been zoned for mixed use development by the Auckland City Council. This brief also came about through research into locations and types of space which created loose space. Research showed that through the implementation of various building uses a more dynamic atmosphere
can be created leading to loosening. "Mixed-use neighbourhoods with buildings of different sizes and ages and short blocks are robust and long-lasting because they do not have a tight, singular relation of form to function; they are loose and adaptable."\textsuperscript{49} This type of dynamic mixed use brief allows people to experience a vibrant atmosphere as they move through such spaces. As they notice people using spaces for different things it is hoped that they are encouraged to use spaces for their own needs and desires.

Mixed use development is defined by an urban plot consisting of retail, commercial and residential uses. In this project however, there has been a move made to incorporate some light industrial program into the scheme to retain the sites industrial sense of place. It is felt light industrial activity does not pose the health risk it once did with today's environmental awareness. The active environments this type of activity creates will be beneficial to creating a loose environment. Industrial environments are often deemed unsightly but a certain amount of industrial space can help to encourage inventive new uses in the space. In the book \textit{Loose Space} it is noted that "a certain amount of physical disorder can encourage new and inventive uses...because it provides spaces and material that expand the potential scope of actions."\textsuperscript{50}

The program situated in this development will consist of:

- Medium density residential accommodation, in the form of multi level flats,
- Commercial offices,
- Individual retail stores servicing residents who live in close proximity,
- Light industrial workshops and warehouses providing services and goods to the surrounding area.

\section*{5.3 Site Permeability}

The council building and surrounding site is of some historical importance as well as of functional value therefore the site deserves to be more publicly permeable. By allowing for good permeability, the site will be better integrated with the rest of Victoria Quarter in a more cohesive pedestrian orientated manner. With more public access to the site,

\textsuperscript{49} Franck and Stevens, \textit{Loose Space : Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life}.p.6

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.p.9
its sense of place can be exhibited and the promotion of people who currently occupy the site and their vernacular culture can also occur.

Permeability also helps loose space to occur by offering people choice. The quality of permeability is the number of different ways available for people to navigate through an urban environment. With a higher amount of access into an area there is more movement and encounters between people within the area. "The easy availability of different kinds of places and people, doing what they choose, give people the chance to enact particular individual and collective identities, to learn and to find others like themselves"\textsuperscript{51}. With a higher amount of occupants moving through and using the site, a more diverse crowd is created within the environment providing the basis for a more diverse range of activities to occur.

Pedestrian links have been created from east to west through the site as well as from north to south. Vehicle access is also provided from north to south though the site though this access will be restricted to goods and services vehicles and resident's cars to reduce the amount of traffic through the site and ensure its pedestrian orientated nature.

5.4 Site Massing and Form

The massing of the proposed project is determined by various factors, these include:

- Free space on the site, respective of the future Rhubarb Lane development and structures that currently exist in and around the site
- The need to provide different qualities of space
- The need to respond to environmental conditions such as sunlight and wind
- Legibility through extended views

The site massing takes into account the master plan of Rhubarb Lane and my proposed scheme seeks to develop one part of the Rhubarb Lane master plan which will stand in contrast to the their scheme, showing that the renewal of a site does not have to create a placeless environment. A southern strip running along Cook Street between Morton and Nelson streets serves as the area of Rhubarb Lane where I have placed my proposed scheme.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.p.20
Parts of the site were identified where development could occur. This development of massing was explored through sketches and modelling.

The need to provide different qualities of space also influenced the design of built form within the site. "Looseness depends in part on the overall structure of the urban environment. Some kinds of urban layouts generate more complex spatial interconnections and interrelations and offer more choices than others. A greater variety of streets and land uses simulate the emergence of loose space."\(^{52}\) One of the main aims to be achieved through site massing was a diverse range of spatial characteristics. Through massing, streets, alley ways, large and small squares, roof top gardens, other spaces become prevalent. Each of these spaces exhibited a range of qualities which included enclosure, exposure, light, dark and so on. Through these differing spaces people can find the right type of space to suit their activity, furthering the schemes ability to host loose space.

These new forms responded to the established buildings on the site by speaking a similar industrial language. "Many aspects of urban form help to shape a person's impression of a city."\(^{53}\) By emphasizing the existing form through representation, the physical character of the existing site is maintained. In turn, the sites sense of place is conserved.

Legibility in terms of the relationship between the site and its wider context was also worked into the scheme through site massing. This was done by providing framed views of key characteristics within the surrounding environment such as the Sky Tower, Ponsonby Ridge and the Waitamata Harbour.

### 5.5 Materiality

The Materiality of the proposed scheme was also determined by the existing material featured within the site. The council sheds have a great pallet of materials to represent a proposed neighbouring architectural scheme. These consist of steel I sections, glass panels, long run steel cladding, plywood flooring and concrete, all of which have been used throughout the proposed scheme to reflect the existing characteristics within the chosen site. Through the design process, what has been aimed between the new and the old buildings

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\(^{52}\) Ibid.

\(^{53}\) Dix, "Character, Conservation and Change: The Place of Preservation in the City."
is an “agreement to differ within a recognised tolerance of behaviour... Within the commonly accepted framework- one that produces lucidity and not anarchy-we can manipulate the nuances of scale and style, of texture and colour, and of the character and individuality juxtaposing them in order to create collective benefits.”

By drawing a commonality between the new and the old through the materials used it is hoped that the industrial sense of place is conserved. This will reduce the placelessness imposed on the site by the other Rhubarb Lane buildings which do not acknowledge the physical characteristics existing on site.

The industrial atmosphere emphasised through the use of materials will also help with loosening. As the site stands, it was this industrial nature which allowed many of the current occupants the ability to appropriate this space as they did due to its rough nature and its affordability.

### 5.6 Robustness

Large scale robustness has also been worked into this scheme through the design process. As noted in the literature review, robustness is the ability to provide a building for multiple uses.

“Experience suggests that there are three key factors which support long-term robustness: building depth, access, and height.”

Most building uses require natural sunlight and ventilation which best occurs by having a shallow building depth. Buildings which are deep, struggle to get sunlight into the middle of their plans while natural ventilation struggles to pass across the entire floor plate. Plenty of access in and out of the building is another characteristic which makes a building more robust. Having many access points allow for more usability. Building heights were also considered in the design process as taller buildings have greater difficulty of being accessed. Therefore the higher the building the less usable the top floors are for various functions.

The changing building uses, which robustness allows for, reflects the way in which the site has been used over many years, thus reflecting the site’s ability to be used for

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54 Gordon Cullen, *Concise Townscape* ([S.l.]: Architectural Press, 1971). p.4


56 Ibid.
many activities. Adding to this, urban change will continue to generate the need for urban renewal. Robustness allows the change of building use to take place without the need for demolition which ultimately wrecks a site’s sense of place. In this quality the ability to retain physical characteristics, while a building use changes, becomes possible. This therefore reduces the need for urban renewal which produces placelessness development.


The finished design project represents an example of architecture which has identified and used design tools in the hope of retaining a site’s existing “sense of place”. In doing so, “placeless” development in a unique area of the city was minimised. This piece of design comes in the bid to counter the increasing homogeneity of urban areas and in particular focuses on a site within the western fringe of Auckland City.

The hypothesis that was carried through this text consisted of two parts. The first was concerned with theory and stated: By broadening strategies associated with conservation to encompass existing social aspects of a site (the way in which the site is used by a community) the retention of a site’s sense of place can be retained during the renewal of an existing urban environment reducing the impact of placelessness within Auckland’s western city fringe area.

The second part of this hypothesis relates directly to the chosen site. Loose space involves the adaptability of a site for various human activities to occur. It is created when people recognise the potential in a space and use it for an activity they want to partake in. As loose space created sense of place within the chosen site, the hypothesis formulated stated: By conserving loose space within this particular site as well as physical features, the sense of place experienced within the site, can be retained therefore minimising the effects of loose space.

Through the research process several points in relation to the city fringe site and the looming urban renewal projects were uncovered. A literature search suggested several points: Large scale comprehensive “urban change” known as “urban renewal” has a negative impact on a site’s “sense of place”. A primary consequence of such renewal is
“placelessness.” Therefore, steps need to be made in order to provide a non-placeless environment for people when a site is due to undergo urban renewal.

Further research into the topic of sense of place suggested that architects generally focus on the physical characteristics when considering sense of place and therefore do not always capture the true essence of a sites sense of place. Literature suggested that social aspects of a location are also characteristics of place. The conservation should also consider retaining cultural aspects of a site leading to a better representation of a sites sense of place.

Site analysis suggested that within the chosen site, one of the key aspects creating the sites sense of place was loose space. Loose space therefore became the key focus for conservation and guided the design process resulting in the final design scheme.

The design process and its resulting final design is somewhat capable of retaining the sites sense of place. This highlights the fact that despite Auckland's urban fabric having to change, (due to economical and social pressures) new buildings do not have to damage a location’s sense of place. The design scheme presented achieves this in two ways. Firstly, the sense of place is retained by representing the current physical conditions through the new development. Secondly, the sites sense of place is retained by using the existing social activities and building uses as a means of generating a brief for the new development.

As noted earlier, sense of place is made of physical and social characteristics; therefore the design scheme looked at ways to conserve the sense of place by representing existing physical and social characteristics within new buildings. As the key factor creating the sites sense of place was loose space, the characteristics which created loose space were represented. Design aspects which have assisted in the retention of loose space and therefore the sites sense of place are; program, permeability, site massing, materiality and robustness.

This conservation of the sites sense of place was achieved through the strategic formulation of the proposed brief. The brief which was generated for the design scheme, is a social aspect as it involves people and the activities they carry out within the proposed buildings. The brief was separated into two parts. On the eastern side of the site an event centre was proposed which mimicked the way in which the council sheds are currently used, and on the western side, a mixed use development mimics the mixed use nature of the greater area.
Permeability is another social aspect worked into the design. However, it does not help to retain the site's sense of place. Instead, this design element brings outsiders into the scheme increasing the diversity of the social group within the site. Diversity proves to be a positive aspect within the urban realm and increases the chance for different people to partake in activity, thus increasing the vitality within the scheme.

Site massing is a physical characteristic of the proposed scheme which firstly provides for loose space and secondly, acts to retain the site's sense of place. The massing on the site is set in a way to provide many different exterior spatial qualities such as lanes, alleys, and squares. This is done so that there are many different types of space available to be appropriated. This mixture of space creates a higher chance of someone recognising the potential in any given space for an activity they wish to carry out. The form of this massing mimics the forms of the existing council sheds. Through this representation of form, the existing sense of place is built upon in a physical manner.

Materiality was another physical characteristic which helped to retain the site's sense of place. This was probably the most successful design element because of its explicit representation of the existing materials. The idea of robustness was also included into the design scheme to provide ongoing usability during future urban change in this area.

As a result of this design process, the proposed scheme somewhat proves the stated hypotheses to be correct: It is possible to retain this particular site's sense of place by the conservation of loose space. Despite the success achieved through the design, there are issues associated with this research, they require further investigation. Having provided many of the characteristics that allow loose space to eventuate, it is uncertain whether it actually would in reality. This could only be proven through testing the occurrence of activity within an actual built scheme. Loose space relies on relaxed regulations and bylaws permitting certain activities to occur. As this project is carried out on privately owned land there is a good chance that regulations and security would be imposed on the site suppressing many activities which happen to arise. Further research needs to be presented showing the positive aspects of loose space. Through this research, loose space could be fostered by loosening laws and security in both council-owned and privately owned open space, encouraging people to use space for positive activity.

The use of social characteristics within a given site to conserve a site's sense of place during redevelopment also needs further research. Very little available literature spoke
specifically of existing social characteristics contributing to an architectural scheme. This paper serves as one of the first to show worked examples of how such social aspects of a site can be worked into a piece of architecture and is a novice piece of research.

7. Bibliography

   This paper includes a study which explored how over recent years the way in which we design and construct our built environment has seen a transformation from place to non-place and placelessness. The intended audience, would consist of academics or architectural designers interested in the concept of place. This work is similar to the concepts of Edward Relph with photographic examples of placelessness. this work basically provided a deeper understanding on placelessness.

   This book is a guide book to urban design. It surrounds seven key design principles that lead to a responsive environment. these are permeability, variety, legibility, variety, visual appropriateness and richness. These are universal concepts that can be applied across a wide range urban environments. Ian Bentley is the main author who is accompanied by four others all of which have mixed backgrounds. This book provided insight into gesign stategies for the proposed scheme.

3. Blomfield, Paul. "Rhubarb Lane Set to Redefine Auckland's Historic Western Cbd."  
   This is simply a the website of a company who acts as the personal relations manager to rhubabrb lane. it gave insight into the way rhubabr lane was being presented to the public despite the neggitive effects which may result due to its completion.

   *The Psychology of Place* is a book which gives a wide ranging discription of place for the disipline of pyschology, but makes links to geography and architectural professions. It is an older book and was published when place as a topic was first becoming popular. It provided a comprehensive view of place as a topic.

   The article provides a discussion on how the beautification of a city increases population and growth of employment in metropolitan areas within the United States in the 1990s. This provided insight into the process of beautification which can lead to the result of placelessness if not done carefully.

7. Cohen, Nahoum. *Urban Conservation*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999. Through this book Cohen presents an argument for conservation and provides insight into the way conservation can be carried out. It did not provide insight into the conservation of social aspects within a site so further information was needed in the regard.


9. ———. *Urban Renewal Theory and Practice*, Macmillan Building and Surveying Series. London: Macmillan Education, 1990. This book is intended for students and provides an introduction into the theory and practical experience of urban renewal. It is not based on a strong hypotheses towards the topic rather it presents a comprehensive view for those who wish to intervene in the market-led process of urban renewal to produce a better outcome. This was a key reference to this text.

10. Council, Auckland City. "Victoria Quarter Plan." http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/projects/cbdproject/victoriaquarter.asp. This website is run by the Auckland City Council and gave information on the urban environment in which the chosen site was located. The text produced as a result of certain research dismissed much of the statements made on this website and therefore poses as a contradiction to this paper.


13. A classic book based in the context of urban design produced information on the principles of creating place through drawing on certain physical elements within an urban environment. This was used in the project to produce a piece of urban design that spoke of the place in which the project was located.

14. Dey, Bob. "Comprehensive Redevelopment for Old Cook St Depot." Bob Dey Publishing Ltd, http://www.bdcentral.co.nz/afa.asp?idWebPage=8338&idBobDeyProperty_Articles=6051&SID=957186880. This reference was a website which provided facts on the rhubarb lane development which is going to be constructed. It gave quantitative insight into the size of the scheme and how much demolition of the sites existing feature is to be carried out.

Dix addresses appropriateness of planning and architectural policies relating to urban change and how it can be fixed with conservation, citing relationships between buildings and their environments. This provided insight into the ideologies surrounding the conservation.


This document discusses the meaning of heritage architecture and the approaches towards it through different architectural styles. The research paper takes the stand that urban planners and designers face cycles of higher or lower urban quality instead of neglect and upgrade cycles in the future of urban heritage areas.


Loose Space served as the key text to support this research paper. It provided the essential information into the topic of loose space and helped to support the an argument for conservation of social activity. there was no other texts on loose space.


This book is based on the research behind urban planning. It is not of urban design, but rather what happen in urban design and how spaces are actually used. This book provided essential information on the activities that are carried out by people within urban areas on a day to day basis


The point of this writing indicates that sociologists have an interest in place no matter what they study. Thomas Gieryn asks How do places come to be the way they are, and how do places matter for social practices and historical change? this provided a deep understanding of place from a sociological point of view


This writing is perhaps some of the first writing on the subject of sustainability. It is a review of Gordons speach where he talks about the principles of long life loose fit low energy. this was a starting point for this project when looking at the term loose fit.


This commentary provides a the theoretical framework for sense of place. this was a key texts as it makes the point that social characteristics are also a major part of a sites sense of place. the paper states "Conservationists and urban designers in particular need to revisit the theoretical underpinnings of the terms and concepts that they employ, in order fully to understand the potential contributions of sense of place, authenticity and character."
22. Kropf, Karl. "Urban Tissue and the Character of Towns." *URBAN DESIGN International* 1, no. 3 (1996): 247 - 63. This paper was very important as it noted the necessity of seeing character as a process involving humans and their environment is noted. This underlines the need to put any account of physical characteristics within the context of other aspects such as activities and intentions in order to move towards a better account of character of place.


24. Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci : Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. London: Academy Editions, 1980. Norberg-Schulz draws on Heidegger’s essay 'Building, Thinking, and Dwelling to explain place in architectural terms. This has not been one of the main texts used for this paper but never the less was very insightful. It uncovered ideas surrounding genius loci and the way in which architects generally focus on physical qualities.

25. Relph, E. C. *Place and Placelessness*. London: Pion, 1976. This book was the main text used in this paper. As he states at the start of the book, his research method is “a phenomenology of place”. Phenomenology is the interpretive study of human experience. The aim is to examine and to clarify human situations, events, meanings, and experiences as they are known in everyday life but typically unnoticed beneath the level of conscious awareness. Relph begins *Place and Placelessness* with a review of space and its relationship to place. This book was a fundamental starting point in realising a problem which could be fixed in through architecture and the book obviously provided essential insight into the theory of placelessness.


27. Salah Ouf, Ahmed M. "Authenticity and the Sense of Place in Urban Design." *Journal of Urban Design* 6, no. 1 (2001): 73-86. This paper talks of the relevancy of authenticity to the processes of conservation in urban design. this paper provided valuable insight into the relationship between conservation and sense of place.
9. Appendix

9.1 Appendix A : Declaration

Name of candidate: Anthony Sephton

This Research Project (Design and Explanatory Document) entitled:

Loose Space and Place: Finding a Sense of Place within an Industrial City Fringe Site

is submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the Unitec degree of Master of Architecture (Professional)

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

I confirm that:

• This Research Project represents my own work;
• The contribution of supervisors and others to this work was consistent with the Unitec Regulations and Policies.
• Research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: Candidate Signature:

…………………………………………………

Date: 30/09/10 Student number: 125-7137
This project is named 1111 Lincoln Road, the building incorporates 300 parking spaces. Eleven shops and three restaurants are located at ground level, with further shopping on the fifth floor and another restaurant on the roof. The scheme is designed by Herzog & de Meuron and represents the collaboration of renowned architects, landscape architects, artists and designers to create a unique shopping, dining, residential and parking experience in Miami’s. This project was of value because it highlighted and prominent scheme which uses functional parking space for other uses when parking is not required therefore exhibiting the trait of loose space.
CarriageWorks
Eveleigh, Sydney, NSW, Australia
Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Architects

Opened in January 2007, CarriageWorks is the new home for contemporary arts and culture in Sydney. The complex was built on a vision of a vibrant cultural life for artists, it’s a place for creativity and innovation, where artists are given the opportunity to conceive, develop and present their work in an inspiring and creative atmosphere. The scheme is an adaptive reuse project situated in the old Eveleigh Rail Yards in Redfern Waterloo precinct. This centre was developed by the NSW State Government through Arts NSW and serves as architectural precedent to my scheme as a similar is programme used to form one aspect of the urban scheme.
9.3 Appendix C - Site Context
9.3 Appendix D - Presentation Pictures