

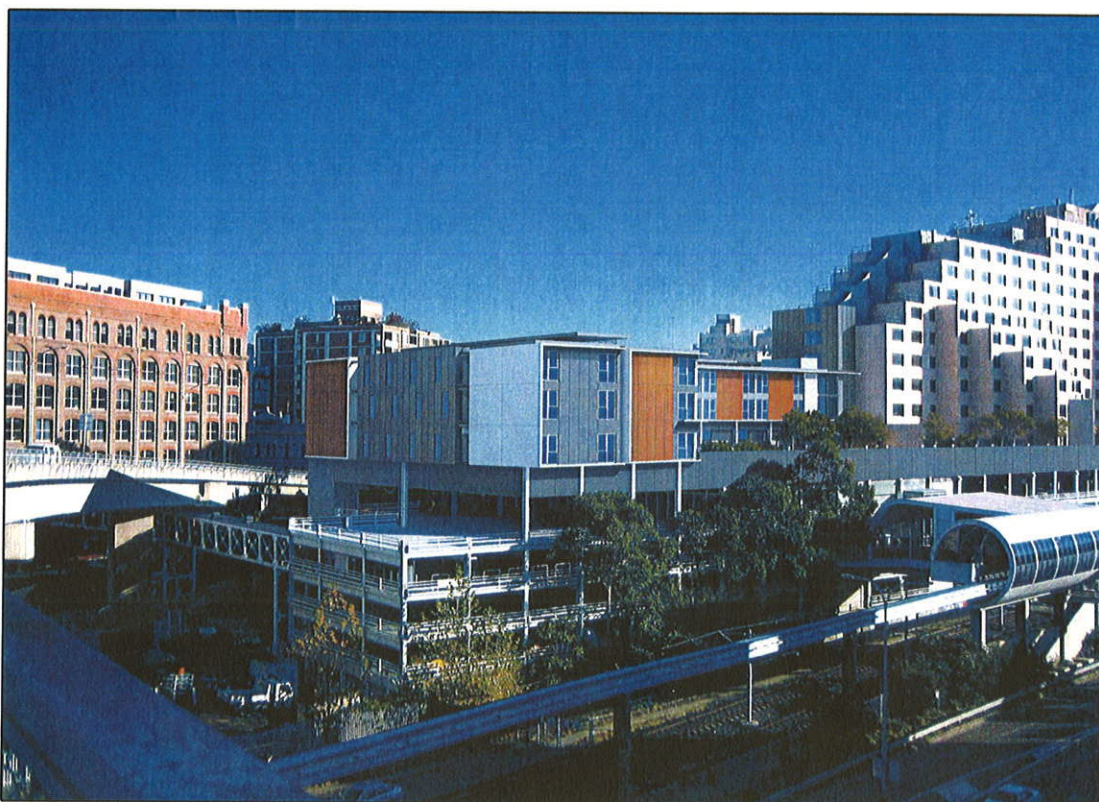


NSW GOVERNMENT
Department of Planning

***MAJOR PROJECT ASSESSMENT
NOVOTEL DARLING HARBOUR
MP08_0017***

Director General's Environmental Assessment Report
Section 75I of the
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

February 2009



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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Tourism Asset Holdings Pty Ltd have lodged a Project Application which seeks approval for the construction and operation of a new 3 storey hotel comprising 96 hotel rooms to the south of the existing Novotel Hotel at 100 Murray Street, Darling Harbour (Lot 300 in DP 836419).

The site is currently owned by Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and comprises a total area of approximately 1.1 hectares.

Proposal

The project application seeks approval for:

- **Redevelopment** of the southern section of the site for a new 3 storey hotel building
- **Demolition** of existing hotel's plaza entrance along Murray Street
- **Streetscape improvements** including new plaza entrance, reconfiguration of vehicular entrances and port cochere along Murray Street
- **Improvements to pedestrian linkages** through the site to Darling Harbour
- **Gross floor area** of 3,994m² of hotel accommodation providing 96 rooms, and an additional 356m² of reception area space for the existing hotel.
- **Internal reconfiguration** of existing hotel's lower lobby and ground floor levels
- **Removal** of 7 car parking bays

The Capital Investment Value of the proposal is **\$16 million** and the proposal will create **50** full time equivalent construction jobs and **20** full time equivalent operational jobs.

Permissibility

Darling Harbour Development Plan No 1 (DHDP) is the principal planning instrument applicable to the site. DHDP permits a range of residential, commercial and entertainment type uses. The proposed development meets the requirements of the DHDP and the proposed uses are permissible.

Public Exhibition

The proposal was exhibited for a 30 day period from 21 May to 20 June 2008. The Department received no submissions from public authorities, and 16 public submissions. Key issues included:

- View loss
- Overdevelopment of site
- Impacts on character of Darling Harbour
- Loss of parking and increase in road traffic
- Amenity impacts

Preferred Project Report

On 16 July 2008, the Proponent submitted a response to submissions to address issues raised by the public. The Department has reviewed the response and believes it adequately addresses the issues raised. The Department is satisfied that the impacts of the proposed development do not need to be addressed further in a PPR.

The Proponent's response to submissions, Draft Statement of Commitments and proposed conditions of approval will ensure that the impacts can be suitably managed to ensure an acceptable level of environmental performance.

On these grounds, the Department is satisfied that the site is suitable for the proposed development and that the proposal will provide cultural, social and economic benefits to the locality. All statutory requirements relating to the project application have been met.

Public benefits

The public benefits resulting from the proposal include:

- The development benefits from its proximity to the city and harbour foreshore, and will revitalise a currently underutilised site and contribute to continued development of Darling Harbour.
- Increased employment opportunities through the additional 20 operational jobs generated through the development.
- Improved pedestrian linkages through the site and into Darling Harbour,
- Improvements to the streetscape of Murray Street, Pyrmont which will improve the public domain, character of the area and benefit the local community.
- Provision of new hotel accommodation servicing local, interstate and overseas visitors.

The Department recommends that the Project Application be approved, subject to conditions.

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2 BACKGROUND

2.1 THE SITE

2.1.1 Site context and location

The site, known as the Novotel Darling Harbour, is located at 100 Murray Street, Darling Harbour (Lot 300 in DP 336419), within the local government area of the City of Sydney Council (Council). The site is currently owned by Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and comprises a total area of approximately 1.1 hectares. It is located on the western edge of Darling Harbour, and bounded by Grand Mecure Hotel to the north, the Western Distributor to the south, Murray Street to the west, Pyrmont Street to the south-west and light rail tracks to the east (see *Figure 1 – site location*).

The site is within walking distance to the Convention Centre Light Rail stop, local shops, bars and restaurants located in Darling Harbour. The Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre is within close proximity, located to the east and south-east of the site. Cockle Bay is located 200 metres north-east of the site.

2.1.2 Existing site features

The site is currently occupied by a hotel and facilities as follows:

- 12 storey hotel including plant room and equipment (GFA 31,020m²), comprising 10 levels of accommodation including 525 guest rooms, reception area, bars, restaurants and function rooms on the ground and mezzanine levels. The hotel complex occupies the northern two thirds of the 1.1 hectare site.
- 5 levels of public car parking which sits underneath the hotel and traverses across the entire site and extends under the Ibis and Grand Mecure Hotels. The majority of the approximate 3000 spaces are public car parking spaces with the exception of the ground floor spaces used by the hotel. The car park is on a separate stratum title.
- The existing hotel has 124 off street car parking spaces (82 in the northern section and 42 in the southern).
- South of the Novotel hotel above the car park is a courtyard area containing a tennis court, swimming pool and outdoor deck, used as part of the Hotel.

The main vehicular access to the site is via an entrance from Murray Street at the western end of the site. Pedestrian access from Murray Street through the car park to the existing pedestrian bridges of Harbourside Shopping Centre (north) and Convention Centre (south) is unclear and will be upgraded as part of the proposal.

The site has a street frontage to Murray Street, approximately 141 metres in length. The site also faces Darling Drive to the east, though existing topography ensures the site steps down 5 levels from Murray Street to Darling Drive. The Monorail and Light Rail separate the site from Darling Drive.

The site is within proximity to the residential area of Pyrmont-Ultimo and entertainment precinct of Darling Harbour, and is surrounded by a mix of land uses including residential, retail, commercial offices, bars, restaurants and nightclubs. Development to the west of the site is characterised by high density residential development.

2.1.3 Zoning / Statutory controls

The site is within the area to which Darling Harbour Development Plan No 1 (DHDP) applies. Hotels are permissible uses in the area. Darling Harbour Development Plan No 1 does not prescribe any height limits, floor space ratios or set backs. The DHDP does not otherwise contain provisions relevant to the project application.

2.2 SITE HISTORY

The site, which forms part of the Darling Harbour area, was used historically as a major industrial and goods handling precinct comprising wharfs, warehouses and goods yard.

In 1900 the NSW Government resumed Darling Harbour and the area continued to be used as a major shipping and trade port until the 1950s when road and rail transport reduced the importance of Darling Harbour as a major trade hub. By the 1970s Darling Harbour was series of empty warehouses and disused railway tracks.

In 1984 the NSW Government announced the redevelopment of Darling Harbour. Approval to redevelop the site into a 12 storey hotel development complex was granted in December 1987. Darling Harbour officially re-opened in 1988 during Australia's Bicentennial celebrations.

2.2.1 Previous applications

Since the late 1970s, significant developments include:

- Erection of a new 12 storey hotel development complex in 1988;
- Approval in 2006 (DA 446-09-03) to build a new four storey building to be used as commercial offices (total GFA 4128m²: 3,305m² – commercial floorspace; 825m² – recreational facility floorspace) over the southern end of the hotel complex above the car park. This building was never built (see figures 1, 2 & 4), and the development consent has lapsed.
- The subject project application seeks approval to build a new 3 storey hotel over the southern end of the hotel and sits broadly within the approved envelope of the commercial office building.

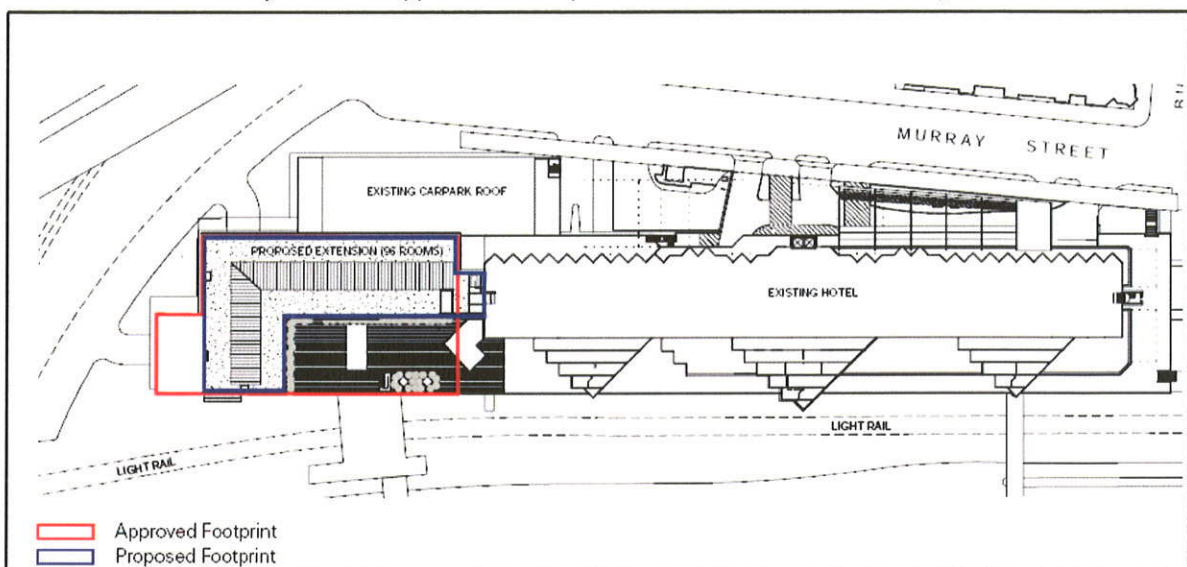


Figure 1 – Approved and proposed building envelopes

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Approval is sought for a Project Application for the development of the southern section of the Novotel Darling Harbour Hotel site. The proposal, as outlined by the EA, consists of the following:

- Construction of a new 3 storey hotel building comprising 96 hotel rooms (see Figure 5);
 - 10.9m in height (RL 30.7) with a total Gross Floor Area (GFA) of 3,994m² of hotel accommodation;
- New fire egress stair serving levels 1 to 6 of the existing hotel and levels 1-3 of the proposed hotel;
- A new lift to service all of the proposed additional guestrooms and pool area;
- New porte cochere to provide all weather protection for patrons and streetscape improvements;
- Reconfiguration of existing driveways, vehicular and pedestrian circulation with clearly defined pedestrian through-site links to Darling Harbour;
- Installation of a new ribbon window on Murray Street facade of existing hotel building;
- Expansion of ground floor entrance and guest reception of existing hotel creating an additional 356m² of floorspace to improve operational capacity.
- The creation of 50 full time equivalent construction jobs and 20 full time equivalent operational jobs, with a CIV of \$16,000,000.

This proposal does not include any provisions for new car parking spaces.

Building Heights, Envelopes and Design

The Project Application seeks consent for the provision of additional hotel accommodation housed in a 3 storey 'L' shaped building located adjacent to the existing swimming pool situated above the existing car park roof to the south of the existing Hotel.

The scale and form of the proposed building is similar to the approved commercial building and its footprint sits broadly within the previously approved envelope, although the current proposal is 1.19 metres higher.

The surrounding built environment comprises of high rise residential buildings 8-14 storeys in height to the west, south-west and north-west, and commercial buildings 12+ storeys in height to the north. The valley floor of Darling Harbour to the east contains lower level buildings.

The previous rectangular built form approved that characterised the commercial offices has not been followed. Rather, the Proponent has proposed an 'L' shaped building which meets the constraints of the car park structural grid and provides optimum configuration for rooms and improvements to the amenity of the existing pool and outdoor deck.

The new building will align with the existing western façade of the hotel and will wrap around the western and southern corner of the car park roof, leaving the existing pool area configuration untouched. The design of the building is intended to read as an independent element, with a distinctly different form, style and design to the 'ziggurat' architectural style which characterises the existing hotel building.

The building will be light weight in structure and will comprise of metal cladding, metal sheet roofing, aluminium sliding glass doors, steel balustrades and a timber framed floor on the existing slab (pool area).

The structural form of the building will consist of steel beams and columns with composite concrete decks. The building will be suspended above the roof of the existing car park, and a transfer structure will be supported off the existing car parks columns. Strengthening works to the columns will be required to support the new loads.



Figure 4 – Approved 3 storey commercial office building DA 446-09-03

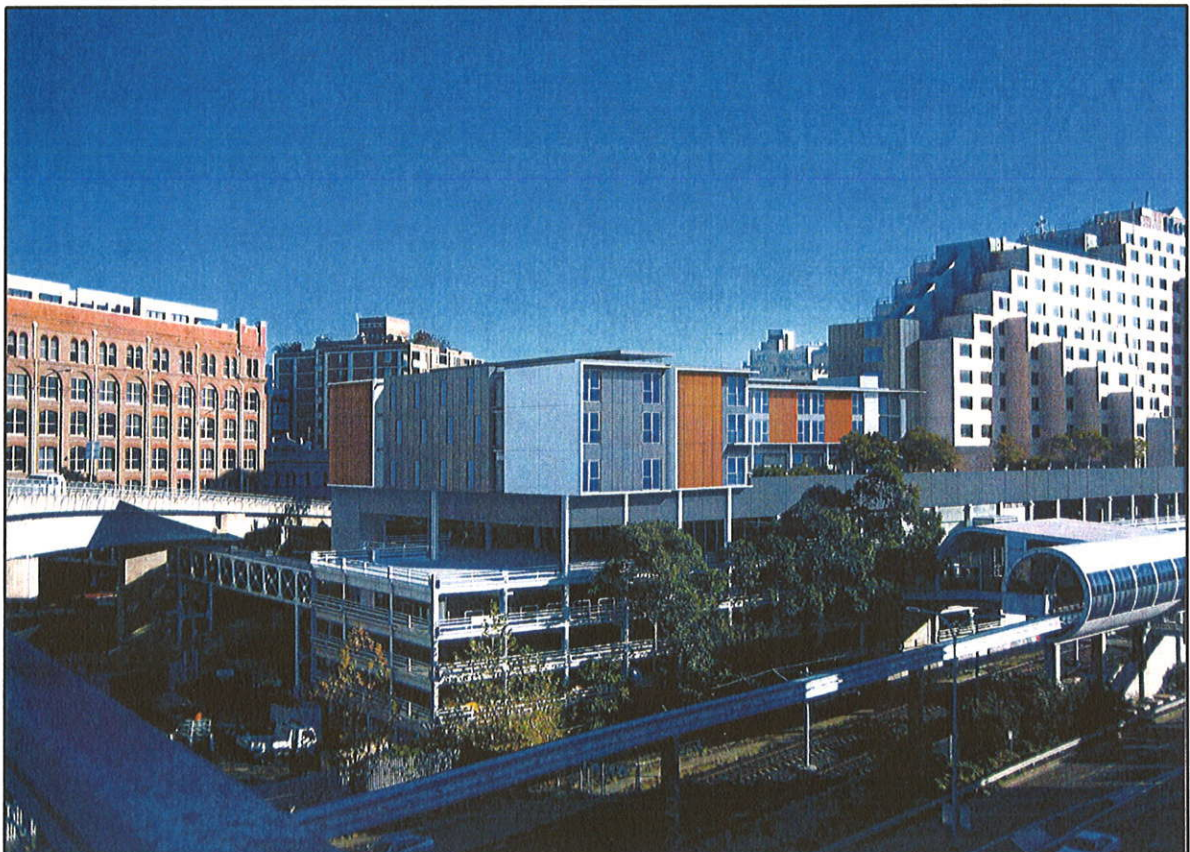


Figure 5 – Proposed 3 storey hotel building

Development Data Table

Building/Site	Height	Gross Floor Area (m ²)	Existing Floor Space Ratio (FSR)	Proposed Floor Space Ratio (FSR)
Existing site	n/a	Total Area= 1.106ha or 11,060m ²	n/a	n/a
Existing Novotel Hotel	12 storeys 41.9m (RL56.9)	31,020m ²	2.8:1	n/a
Existing ground floor lobby	n/a	365m ²	2.8:1	
Approved commercial building (DA 446-09-03)	4 storeys (2 below) 9.7m (RL 29.49)	*4,128m ² (3,305m commercial office space) *Note is not proposed to be built as consent lapsed	2.8:1	3.17:1
Proposed building & ground floor lobby	3 storeys 10.9m (RL 30.7)	3,994m ² + 721m ² *Note 365m ² is existing Total GFA= 4350m ²	n/a	n/a
Existing and proposed building and lobby extension	12 storeys (41.9m) and 3 storeys (10.9m)	31,020m ² +3,994m ² + 721m ² *Note 365m ² is existing Total GFA= 35,370m ²	2.8:1	3.19:1

Table 1 – Novotel Darling Harbour redevelopment figures

Streetscape, public domain and pedestrian access

The Murray Street frontage acts as the main entrance point into the hotel for vehicles and patrons. The Murray Street entrance and streetscape is proposed to be improved to modernise the look and aesthetic appearance of the hotel, improve vehicular circulation and promote pedestrian through site links into Darling Harbour.

The primary visual alteration to the western façade of the hotel will be a steel framed structure that will provide cover for the new porte cochere. Running in a north-south direction the structure will consist of steel framed portals, steel framed louver blades and a glazed canopy.

Realignments to the vehicular crossings, reduction of driveways crossings from 4 to 3, and reconfiguration of the coach loop to incorporate the main vehicle drop off are proposed as part of the works for the porte cochere (see Figure 6 below). The taxi rank will also be relocated to the eastern side of Street between the two coach loop driveways.

Other western façade alterations will include the installation of ribbon windows at mezzanine level and new glazed shopfront and entry doors at ground floor to accommodate the expanded reception area.

Landscaping is proposed for the porte cochere and these areas have been identified for planting. Low level shrubs will be used to maintain sight lines into and out of the hotel's ground floor entrance. Street tree planting comprising of mature *Ficus hillii* will not be removed.



Figure 6 – New Murray Street frontage including Porte Cochere

The intention of the reconfiguration of the vehicular entrance layout facilitates and promotes a clearer pedestrian path for the existing through site link. Pedestrian access and circulation will be improved through the reduction of 4 vehicular crossings to 3, removing 7 car parking spaces, widening the pedestrian footpath, and delineating the footpath using different coloured paving, tactile indicators, markings and signage.

The pedestrian link will run eastwards along the reception area to the eastern edge of the building where pedestrians can either walk south to the Convention Centre footbridge or use the Convention Centre Monorail Station or north to the Harbourside Shopping Centre footbridge.

Vehicular Access, Traffic, Transport and Parking

Vehicular access to the site is only available from Murray Street. The site does not have a frontage to Darling Drive as it is separated by the Light Rail and Monorail. Currently access is provided for coaches via a coach loop, while cars and taxis follow a one way loop around the existing reception area. It is a one way route which is undertaken in a clockwise direction. Guests of the hotel enter the car park off the loop and enter the car park via boom gates. An underground loading dock is located 30 metres to the south of the car park loop.

The new access points off Murray Street will result the car loop being removed. The northern section of the loop will be infilled to accommodate the expanded reception area. The southern section of the loop will be reconfigured and widened to allow two way access into and out of the hotel's car park (see Figure 7 below). A total of seven car parking spaces will be lost as a result of the reconfiguration and improvements to pedestrian access.

The car park used by the hotel is part of the public car park which sits underneath the Mecure, Ibis and Novotel Hotels. It has approximately 3000 public car parking spaces, of which the Novotel uses 124 spaces at ground level for guests. Based on existing demand for car parking, on-site car parking will be able to accommodate the anticipated increase in vehicles as a result of the additional 96 hotel rooms. Current agreements with the car parking operator and hotel will enable the public car park, which is used as an existing overflow area, to continue to be utilised when needed. No road improvements works are proposed as the anticipated increase in vehicles will have no impact on the capacity of the surrounding road network.