

EMERITUS PROFESSOR G.P.(Peter) WEBBER  
PLANNING ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN  
6 SPRUSON STREET, NEUTRAL BAY 2089  
ABN 50 342 516 946 PH/FAX 02 9955 4294  
E mail peterwebber@bigpond.com

## **7 RAILWAY STREET, CHATSWOOD PEDESTRIAN LINKS AND OPEN SPACE ISSUES**

**I have been requested by the applicant to provide an independent evaluation of these issues. My background experience in planning, urban design and architecture includes extensive experience in designing of major projects, consulting and teaching in urban design in particular, with numerous research and conference paper as Professor of Architecture at Sydney University and previously NSW Government Architect, and Commissioner in the former Planning and Environment Commission. A summary c.v. is attached.**

### **Introduction**

This report addresses the issues relating to pedestrian movement and open space involved with development of this site, and in particular the following two matters which are required by the Director-General to be included in the Environmental Assessment:-

- . Options for the provision of a through site pedestrian access under the railway enclosure*
- . Options for the provision of public open space on top of the railway enclosure structure*

It is noted that the applicant does not intend to proceed with the previously approved commercial development which straddled the railway structure (Section 96 No. DA2001/600/B (D)). The report is based on the assumption that instead a high-rise development will be constructed on the corner site on the western side of the line and will contain commercial/retail activities at least at ground level, with residential units above. It is also noted that it is no longer required by the Director-General and Willoughby City Council that a public pedestrian over-bridge be constructed across Help Street (Clause 4 p.164 of DCP). Both these changes have a considerable influence on the best resolution of the various issues.

### **Process**

Following a number of site inspections and review of the current context a range of options were considered. There are various difficulties to be overcome on what is a very challenging site, given the physical and environmental constraints, but it is considered that there is potential for creating some excellent spaces and amenities. It was necessary to consider a number of possible design solutions to be sure that there were feasible outcomes and a diagrammatic plan was prepared to indicate what appear to be the most desirable directions. These are summarized below in the form of a series of three 'priorities'.

### **Outcomes/Suggestions**

#### **Priority 1**

EMERITUS PROFESSOR G.P.(Peter) WEBBER  
PLANNING ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN  
6 SPRUSON STREET, NEUTRAL BAY 2089  
ABN 50 342 516 946 PH/FAX 02 9955 4294  
E mail peterwebber@bigpond.com

1(a) The existing pedestrian path on Help Street under the railway is currently used consistently but by a relatively small number of pedestrians. It is not a very attractive route, but could be enhanced with good night lighting.

1(b) This proposed new public space between the rail line and Railway Street is potentially a very attractive asset, despite the negative environmental conditions to be overcome such as the large

blank wall of the rail structure, and limited amount of winter sunlight. The diagram indicates a range of possible initiatives:-

- . Fountain/sculpture/artwork where shown terminating vistas along Railway Street and McIntosh Street.
- . Generous provision of seating in the sunniest location
- . Extensive landscaping and winding path linking to the podium level of the existing 'Epica' residential development, screening both the railway structure and the 'Epica' boundary wall.
- . Gently sloping grade to the pedestrian underpass.

1(c) The public open space potentially extending the existing area to the east of railway is problematic. It is relatively exposed and receives very limited winter sunlight, and in addition is dominated by the high wall enclosing the railway. A viable commercial use appears difficult to sustain. Certainly intensive and dense shade-tolerant planting could be pleasant visually but would need to screen the full height of the wall. An 'art-wall' with illumination, even possibly with changing works over time might enliven the space and attract visitors and locals. Any solution should be designed to maximize visibility of the pedestrian underpass as indicated in the diagram.

### Priority 2

2(a) The pedestrian underpass could well be a very pleasant and even enticing route if some creative thought is given to detail, for example good lighting and durable surfaces. There must be good sight-lines to the entrances on both sides allowing unhindered passive surveillance from buildings and spaces around. Gentle gradient for disabled access should be readily achievable and the new development should include active ground-level retail uses immediately adjacent. Although inspection of the link in its present condition raised questions as to its potential value, further investigation suggests that it could be a major asset which would also help activate the open spaces on both sides, rather than these being 'dead-end' spaces. With careful design and appropriate management it should be available as a safe route 24 hours/day.

2(b) The existing space at the southern end at the podium level of 'Epica' is presently a 'dead-end' space and should benefit if it were to be connected to the new open space by a graded path of the sort indicated, together with extensive planting and good night lighting.

### Priority 3

EMERITUS PROFESSOR G.P.(Peter) WEBBER  
PLANNING ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN  
6 SPRUSON STREET, NEUTRAL BAY 2089  
ABN 50 342 516 946 PH/FAX 02 9955 4294  
E mail peterwebber@bigpond.com

The deck level above the rail structure could potentially be developed as public open space, or communal space available to residents in the new unit block and the existing Pacific Place community, or a combination of both. It is presently accessible by an elevator on the eastern side, but if it were to be dedicated as public space it would need to also be accessible by a combination of steps and path from the west as indicated on the diagram. As public space it would have limited use no matter how well landscaped and would almost certainly need to be secured after dark in accordance with a management plan. As communal space it could without doubt be a very attractive amenity for existing and future residents who could have ready access from the third or fourth level of the proposed new apartment building, with the precedent of the successful communal area serving the existing new developments to the north in mind. Communal use appears to be the most sensible option, -a valuable facility accessible to the entire population of Pacific Place, being approximately 2,500 residents, rather than a public space of limited value.

### **Recommendations**

The report above makes a range of proposals, but in relation to the two specific matters required by the Director-General to be addressed it is recommended that:-

- 1. The development should include a through-site pedestrian link under the railway in the location already constructed having in mind the detailed design considerations discussed above.*
- 2. The space on top of the railway enclosure structure would be best utilized as communal open space serving exclusively the proposed new residential units and existing Pacific Place Community, however, the space could also have some limited value as public open space subject to a new access point on its western side being provided, and with an appropriate management plan in place.*

Professor G.P.Webber

February 2009

EMERITUS PROFESSOR G.P.(Peter) WEBBER  
PLANNING ARCHITECTURE URBAN DESIGN  
6 SPRUSON STREET, NEUTRAL BAY 2089  
ABN 50 342 516 946 PH/FAX 02 9955 4294  
E mail [peterwebber@bigpond.com](mailto:peterwebber@bigpond.com)

**Professor G.P. (Peter) Webber****Summary Curriculum Vitae**

Emeritus Professor University of Sydney, and consultant on a wide range of planning, urban design and architectural issues. Full-time roles have included Commissioner former NSW Planning and Environment Commission, Government Architect of NSW, Professor & Head of Department of Architecture & pro-Dean University of Sydney.

**Qualifications/Professional Memberships**

Architecture B.Arch (Hons 1 & University Medal), Sydney University; M.S.,Columbia University in City of New York, Ford Foundation Fellowship, Fullbright Travel Scholarship, Byera Hadley Traveling Scholarship, Life Fellow AIA, member RIBA, architect NSW  
Planning M.T &CP Sydney University  
Fellow Planning Institute of Australia  
Management Australian Management College (Melbourne Business School) Mt Eliza, -advanced course

**Appointments**

Has served or continues to serve in many part-time statutory and other capacities, including:-

Heritage Council of New South Wales  
Traffic Authority of New South Wales  
Councilor and Hon.Life Member of National Trust (NSW)  
National Trust NSW Architectural Advisory, and Property Committees chair  
Australian Council of National Trusts-deputy chair  
Board of Sydney Cove Authority  
Hunter Regional Planning Committee-chair  
University of Sydney Planning Research Centre-chair  
University of Sydney I B Fell Housing Centre- chair  
Council of Sydney Kindergarten Teachers College  
Capital Works Research Committee, NSW Dept of Health  
Hospitals Planning Advisory Centre-chair  
Urban Design Advisory Committee- NSW Dept of Planning  
Civic Design Committee, Sydney City Council  
Olympic Games Site Homebush Bay, Advisory Committee  
Hall Bowe & Webber, architects and planners partner  
Henry Parkes Foundation-deputy chair  
Heights of Buildings Advisory Committee-chair  
Urban Design Advisory Committees, Newcastle (SEPP 65-chair), and Rockdale/Kogarah/Hurstville (SEPP 65), North Sydney Council Urban Design & Design Excellence Panels, Botany Council Design Review Panel, Sydney Olympic Park Authority Design Review Panel.

**Miscellanea**

Books: *Design of Sydney: Three Decades of Change in the City Centre* (Law Book Company 1988), *E.H Rembert: Life and Work of the Sydney Architect*, (NSW Public Works Dept.1982): numerous journal papers 1970-2008: Editorial Board *New European* (MCB University Press), *Architectural Theory Review* (Sydney University), *Urban Design International* (Liverpool John Moores University): winner national competition for Queens Square: NSW Government Volunteer Heritage Award: assessor for competitions First Government House site, Newcastle Harbour Foreshores, Newcastle Civic Centre, Rouse Hill Town Centre (Landcom): expert witness NSW Land & Environment Court: designer and consultant numerous major public and private sector projects, and statutory and regional planning programmes: Urban Design Consultant to Councils of City of Sydney, and City of Newcastle. Jury member/chair Design Excellence project juries City of Sydney and Newcastle City: International conference papers Glasgow International Centre for Urban Design Studies 1990, Design Review Conference Cincinnati 1992, UIA/IIA India 1998, ACSA Prague 1993 and Lisbon 1995, CAA/WSE India 1995, IMCL Freiberg 1995, Savannah 2001, Salzburg 2002 and London 2004.

