

MP10_0048 - Headland Park and Northern Cove - Main Works

PUBLIC COMMENT ON DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

Submission to the NSW Department of Planning 09 December 2010

Main works for the creation of the Barangaroo Headland Park and North Cove, including:

- > **Shaping of the shoreline including creation of the Northern Cove;**
- > **Demolition or modification (yet to be determined) of the Sydney Harbour Control Tower; and**
- > **Detailed design of the Headland Park including the final landform; landscape design, stormwater strategy, services and infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, Globe Street extension, car park within headland, park amenities and heritage interpretation.**

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We submit the following comment on the **Main works for the creation of the Barangaroo Headland Park and North Cove**. This major project will have a direct long lasting and irreversible impact on the western edge of the Sydney CBD including the surrounding suburbs of Millers Point, Walsh Bay and The Rocks. As such, we believe that this project should be especially mindful of its context, both historical and contemporary, as well as its context as one of the premier waterfront developments in the world.

We submit the following in the hope that the city and the state can get the best outcome for their residents, for their money, and for all potential future users of the park. We are also mindful of the new benchmark for public foreshore parks set by the recent projects BP Park, Ballast point Park and Pirrama Park. These projects have been internationally recognised and as such, they cannot be ignored when considering a new foreshore development in their immediate context.

It is our concern that design considerations are being corrupted by the process of governance, and that ill-informed design decisions are being made based on an archaic vision of what the site should be. It is our hope that the following comments can temper this urge to be disingenuous toward the sites context and to provide a landscape more representative of its current location and its authentic history.

1. Shaping of the shoreline including creation of the Northern Cove

- a. 'Recreational craft of limited draft will be permitted to enter the Northern Cove' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 83)

There is no cross section provided through the cove. The sections provided are deceptive as the engineering drawings indicate a depth, in the area designated for recreation, shallower than -1.2m (Barangaroo Headland Park Maritime Works, Appendix A, p. 26)

- b. The Northern cove forces a disconnection between the Headland Park and South Barangaroo. This connection should be fostered to draw the headland back into the city, increase its vibrancy and enable it to sit more comfortably in its context.
- c. Creation of a 'beach' on the South Western site of the Headland Park is a questionable decision. It has no interaction with the water, and has the potential to be a significant safety concern, as dangerous material could end up in the sand, especially as one of the intended uses of the park is for special events.
- d. Ability for the Northern Cove to effectively flush water, and therefore, the ability for flush floating and suspended refuse material is questionable.
- e. Ignores 200 years of industrial heritage by removal of all sea walls and remnants of previous uses
- f. Use of water-blasted sandstone to achieve a 'natural effect' is conceptually problematic. To dig up sandstone from the site and blast it to pretend it is 'natural', is not only a waste of energy, but also entirely disingenuous to the authentic heritage of the site. In addition, although there are sediment mitigation measures to be put in place, and although the material is local, the short-term impact of large amounts of sediment flowing into the harbour should not be underestimated in terms of its impact on marine flora and fauna.
- g. *'As part of the shoreline works, the existing heritage listed sandstone seawall (western side) will be dismantled down to 4m below the high tide mark and retrieved sandstone blocks reused on site and incorporated in the Headland Park works'* (Barangaroo Headland Park - Main Works Application Heritage Impact Statement, p. 30)

The sea wall is heritage listed! Clearly it has a heritage of its own. Why spend the money and time deconstructing it when your own heritage report lists it as important. What is the point of a heritage listing?

2. Demolition or modification (yet to be determined) of the Sydney Harbour Control Tower;

- a. If the future of the Sydney Harbour Control Tower is 'yet to be determined' then there is little point in having a public exhibition.
- b. The Sydney Harbour Control Tower is not mentioned at all in the Visual Analysis and Impact Assessment. It is one of the most prominent visual features of the headland and thus needs to be considered in any visual analysis.
- c. *'The tower is not proposed to be demolished as part of this Main Works application for the Barangaroo Headland Park. As such, the works covered by this application would have no physical impact on the tower; however, its setting would be changed extensively by the removal of the remaining industrial port facilities at East Darling Harbour that justified the construction of the tower. The reconstruction of the naturalistic headland would contrast with the working life of the tower. Any changes to the Harbour Control Tower would be part of a future application. (Barangaroo Headland Park - Main Works Application Heritage Impact Statement, p. 32-33)*

This sounds very much like a justification for removal. What is the intended future use of the Tower?

- d. If there are no proposed works to the Sydney Harbour Control Tower then why is it referenced in this document? Surely there is some plan for it. Has the haste with which this application has been prepared meant that insufficient consideration has been given to this item. Are there secret future plans for it?

In the Heritage Impact Statement, in reference to the 'Statement of Significance' it is noted that *'The heritage items affected by the headland works are consistent with the above statement, though the Harbor Control Tower was a late arrival'* (Barangaroo Headland Park - Main Works Application Heritage Impact Statement, p. 22)

Again, this sounds like justification for the removal of the tower. It places it outside the 'heritage items' listed. It is an integral part of the functioning of the harbour, and Barangaroo in particular. As such, it deserves the same heritage and cultural recognition afforded the other maritime items noted in the 'Statement of Significance'.

What is the intended future use of the tower?

3. Detailed design of the Headland Park including the final landform; landscape design, stormwater strategy, services and infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, Globe Street extension, car park within headland, park amenities and heritage interpretation.

a. Landscape design

- i. *'The 'plan form' of the park has been generated from an approximation of the 1836 shoreline (i.e. from a point in time before Millers Point began to be altered by human activity). This line is marked in the design by a low wall separating the pedestrian and cycle paths which form a grand foreshore promenade linking Walsh Bay to Barangaroo Central and Barangaroo South and thence to Darling Harbour and beyond'. (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 50)*

If the park is to be a 'naturalistic park' then why is the 1836 foreshore not marked by the new foreshore. The low sandstone wall is problematic as it divides the main pathway, and serves no real purpose. There are other ways to divide a path between cyclists and pedestrians.

Surely there are more creative and inventive ways to represent the pre European foreshore than a small sandstone wall running around the entire site. This, although justified through safety concerns about conflict with cyclists, etc, creates more problems than it solves.

1. It creates a barrier between the park and the water
2. It requires very large volumes of sandstone, which may or may not be able to be salvaged from site
3. It creates the appearance of a highway around the outside of the park and seems to be out of scale with a 'naturalistic' foreshore.

- ii. 'large shade trees in irrigated grassland' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 50)

Again, if the proposal is for a naturalistic headland park representative of the landscape before 1836, what is naturalistic about 'large shade trees in irrigated grassland'?

- iii. Use of palm trees throughout the park is questionable. Again, how does this fit with the idea of a naturalistic park? Are we in the North African desert, or Sydney?
- iv. What will the treatment of the Light wells in the middle of the parkland be. Before this submission is approved, more information is needed on how these will be treated and how they will relate with the rest of the park?
- v. What is a 'spray fountain'? And what is its function in the landscape of Barangaroo. It currently seems like an object in space, rather than a well-considered landscape proposition.
- vi. The proposed amphitheatre has no relation to any other element in the park. Again it seems like nothing but an ill-conceived object in space that divides the parkland space and the experience of the amphitheatre from the main feature of this landscape, the harbour.
- vii. What is the circular element in the cultural facility forecourt plaza?
- viii. In 'APPENDIX 1 Headland Park and Northern Cove Works Drawings,' pages 3 and 4 display a different landscape design. Which one is being approved/assessed?

b. Stormwater Strategy

- i. Nowhere is the stormwater strategy represented on the landscape drawings
- ii. 'A total tank capacity of 1250kL will be installed to capture stormwater from the Headland Park site' (Barangaroo Headland Park Headland Park Main Works Package ESD Report, p. 8)

Where?

- iii. '-Provision of a network of bio-retention swales of an overall nominal width of 3.6metres inclusive of the banks at high level to contain high flows up to the 1 in 100 Year ARI event from the Upper Bluff;

-Provision of a network of half round 300mm wide dish drains and 150mm subsoil drainage with interconnecting pits and pipes as shown on Drawing MW-WSP-H-1039 to adequately drain low flow and moderate flows up to the 20 Year event within the terraced lower slopes of the park;

-Provision of a network of bio-retention swales of an overall nominal width of 3.6metres inclusive of the banks at the toe of the grass zone of the park where it meets the two level bicycle and walking paths.' (Infrastructure and Services Report, p. 4)

Not indicated anywhere on the landscape drawings. How are they integrated into the rest of the parkland?

c. Pedestrian Pathways, accessibility and movement

i. Accessibility

1. Towns Place

- a. Very undeveloped entry. The existing condition has chain link fence with no relation to Moores Wharf. How will this change?

2. Hickson Road – Barangaroo South

- a. Only entry to the top of the park for people with disabilities is via a lift that also serves 300 car spaces and 3 levels of 'cultural facility'
- b. The only other option is to travel a distance of >900m, 500 of which is up hill.
- c. The Southern entry '*grand stairways*', pages 3 and 4 (landscape) display something different to page 21 (engineering) (APPENDIX 1 Headland Park and Northern Cove Works Drawings.)
- d. The '*grand stairways*' force the construction of a retaining wall that will be a minimum of 14m at its highest point. This has the potential to be an unfriendly and unattractive space
- e. Light rail stop 150m from entrance, and no commitment to light rail has been given.

ii. Movement

- 1. Ease of movement from the main entry points of Towns Place and Hickson Road are convoluted and lengthy, especially for less mobile people.
- 2. There is a distinction, in the form of limited access, between the 'upper Bluff', which is the usable part of the park and foreshore promenade
 - a. Design could include many more informal paths through the 'bush walking' area.

iii. Tourist

1. Main preferable entry point for tourists or other parties such as weddings is likely to be from Merriman St. Likely conflict with residents
2. Towns Place has the potential to be dangerous, as it is the main entry to the car park as well as the proposed main tourist entry into the park

iv. Special Event

1. Large volume of people wanting to use the elevators.
2. Safety of extreme slope toward the southern end of the site

d. Car park within headland

- i. The idea of a car park underneath this space as an entry experience to a park is problematic.
- ii. The 'slot' entrance to the car park is very ungenerous.
- iii. There is only a single lift area servicing 300 car places, a 3 story cultural facility and the main entry to the park for less mobile people.
- iv. 'The most likely users (*of the car park*) would be visitors to the area for leisure activities in the park, or to cycle or walk along the foreshore' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 88).

We find it difficult to imagine all of these users being served by a single lift entrance.

- v. 'The basic intent of the cultural space is to express the morphology of the sandstone headland by leaving the sandstone cliff exposed similar in manner to the existing wall in The Bond building on Hickson Road. This will create a space with the potential to provide a venue as evocative as the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall or (locally) the Cockatoo Island halls.' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 51)
- vi. Western air plenum (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 61)

How does the air get out? Releasing car park fumes into parkland? No reference to emission rates in the 'Air Quality and Health Assessment'. Where are the vents for a 5 story building?

- vii. The entrances from the south and the north to the cultural facility and the car park almost meet. Why not just put the originally proposed street through?
- viii. 'The Halcrow report notes that the proposed Headland Park is to be located in a constrained traffic and parking environment similar to that of Mr Macquarie's Chair and parts of the Domain and Royal Botanic Gardens with demand for parking from these facilities being catered for along Art Gallery Road. While the traffic generation for these sites has not been evaluated it is considered that traffic volumes on a weekend will be similar to the Headland Park.' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 87).

And then...

'Analysis shows that this level of traffic generation will not have any significant impact on operations of the traffic network and that traffic generated by the car park can be accommodated at Towns Place under the RTA's environmental limit for amenity'. (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 87).

So even though the volumes of traffic will be similar to those generated by the domain and Mrs Macquarie's chair, there will be no significant impact.

- ix. 'proposed charging rates will be high to discourage all day parking' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 87).

How is this logical? People coming to use what is going to be one of Sydney's biggest and newest pieces of public open space, have to pay large sums for the privilege.

- x. The most problematic area of parking is the entry along Merriman St. This is the most logical place that tourists and people coming for special events are likely to want to enter the park. It provides the best vantage and it saves a 300m walk to reach the top of the hill. This has the potential to impact the low rise, fine grain protected tenancies of Merriman St.
- xi. It is hard to make a judgement about the car park and associated cultural facility without more information about it's use and purpose. Especially the purpose of the area that protrudes of the South Western side of the structure? Is there any visual access to the outside world?

e. Cultural Facility

- i. It is extremely disrespectful that a cultural centre, most likely, dedicated to The Aboriginal peoples of Australia who have a fundamental connection to land and country will be housed in a fabricated landscape element.
- ii. It is inappropriate and disrespectful that this cultural facility has NO physical public presence that allows its significance to be expressed in a strong, inclusive and accessible manor.
- iii. The proposed public/cultural facility lacks a generous public address and entry
- iv. The proposed cultural facility will be entirely dependent upon artificial light for its operation, except the top level indicated by the problematic and unresolved 'light wells', for its operation. This raises significant ESD issues.
- v. The proposed cultural facility should be located above ground where it can develop a strong, generous, expressive and accessible public identity.

It should be located close to the part of the site best serviced by public transport. Not isolated and marooned under a fake headland.

f. Park Amenities

- i. Only a single amenities block provided for the whole park. An elderly person or a mother with children could have to walk 300-400 m and down 14m to reach the only amenities.

g. Heritage Interpretation

- i. How is the heritage listed sea wall being interpreted?
- ii. Unclear what is happening to control tower
- iii. The interpretation of 200 years of industrial heritage through pretending it didn't happen?
- iv. 'The basic intent of the cultural space is to express the morphology of the sandstone headland by leaving the sandstone cliff exposed similar in manner to the existing wall in The Bond building on Hickson Road. This will create a space with the potential to provide a venue as evocative as the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall or (locally) the Cockatoo Island halls.' (Headland Park And Northern Cove Main Works Environmental Assessment, P. 51)

The morphology of a sandstone headland does not involve the creation of a cavernous entry to an underground building, or for that matter, an underground building at all. Perhaps a more effective solution would be to leave the sandstone wall exposed in the public domain, much the same as Pirrama park. This is potentially far more evocative and entirely more representative of a headland park.