CITY OF SYDNEY

City of Sydney
Town Hall House
456 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

+61 2 9265 9333
council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
GPO Box 1591 Sydney NSW 2001
cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

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File No: 2023/113693
Your Ref: SSD-39971796

Paula Bizimis
Senior Planning Officer – Key Sites Assessments
Department of Planning and Environment

Via Major Projects Portal

Dear Paula

Chief Mechanical Engineers Building – SSD 39971796 – Advice on EIS

Thank you for your correspondence dated 18 January 2023 inviting the City of Sydney Council (the City) to comment on the proposed alterations and additions to the Chief Mechanical Engineers (CME) Building in the Redfern North Eveleigh Precinct which forms part of Tech Central Innovation Precinct.

The CME Building is listed as a State Heritage item (Item No 01139) under the Heritage Act 1977 and a heritage item in Schedule 4 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts–Eastern Harbour City) 2021.

The proposed works for which consent is sought comprise the following:

- demolition of internal elements including the suspended ceilings, dividing walls, partitions, bathroom fittings and doors
- internal and external heritage conservation works to make the building suitable for adaptive reuse, including painting, repairs and refurbishment of the existing building (primarily internally) and installation of services to support future usage for commercial premises
- building upgrades to ensure compliance with the Building Code of Australia, including accessibility and fire safety requirements
- removal of any hazardous building materials
- minor landscaping works
- new in-ground services including a new stormwater system and new sewer connection.

The City has reviewed the submitted Environmental Impact Statement and accompanying supporting documentation and do not raise a formal objection to the refurbishment of the building, however **the proposal should deliver floor space for innovation and tech related uses.** However, the following comments and recommendations are provided for your consideration.

1 Heritage

The proposal to adaptively reuse this significant state heritage listed building, which has been vacant and in a dilapidated condition, is supported in principle from a heritage perspective. Some conditions and design amendments are recommended to minimise the heritage impact arising from the proposed works.

It should be noted that the draft Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and Appendix B Schedule of Conservation Works (SCW) were not reviewed in detail due to the time constraints, however it is recommended that the final proposal be consistent with the policies of the CMP and the proposed conservation works be carried out under the supervision of a qualified heritage specialist as part of this proposal. Additionally, all heritage management documents marked DRAFT are to be finalised prior to the commencement of any works on site, including the CMP and Schedule of Conservation works.

The following comments are provided in regard to the heritage impacts of the proposal.

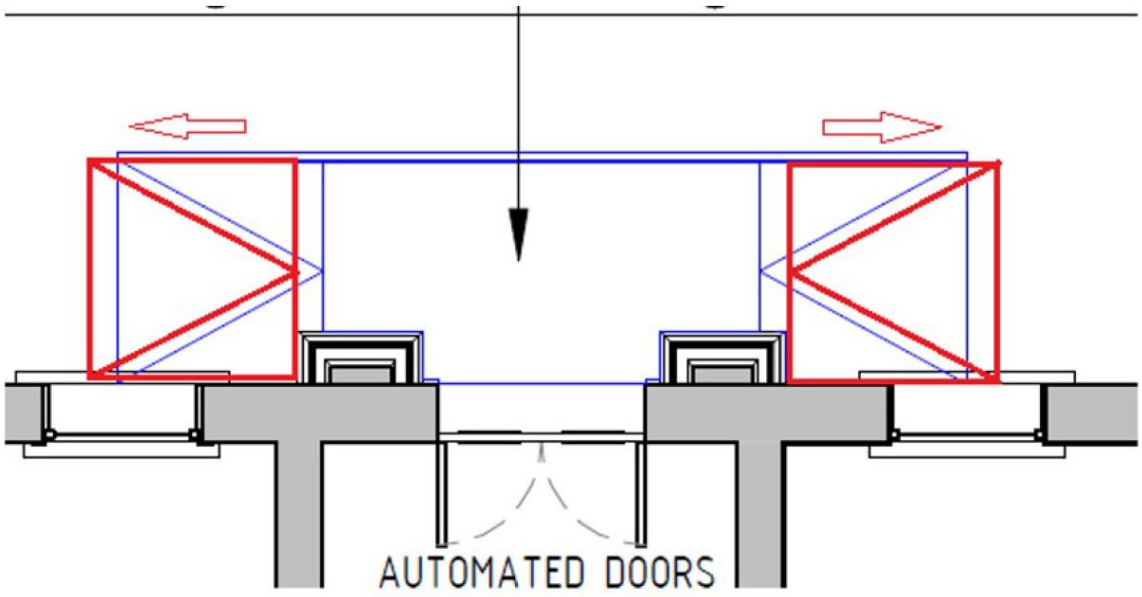
1.1 Exteriors

1.1.1 Entry ramp

A new front ramp is proposed which has been designed to be low scaled and discretely located at the northwest corner. This minor change will enable use of the building and is supported by the City. There is a 1.8m high screen proposed for the plant room but no details have been provided. The design of the screen should not detract from the heritage significance of the site.

1.1.2 Verandah

The proposed ramp in front of G9 entry can be supported subject to a minor amendment. The landing area is recommended to be increased in length slightly to align with the far edges of the moulding of the columns to avoid impact on the decorative mouldings at the base of the columns. The ramped portions are recommended to be located slightly away from the columns as per the image below. The design approach otherwise for this ramp is supported.



1.1.3 Balcony

The first-floor balconies are currently non-compliant with the BCA standards, and it is proposed to raise the balcony floor near doors for ramps to the balcony and add frameless glass balustrades. There are concerns with using glass for such extensive lengths as it would add tremendous load to the existing timber verandah. It is also unclear if a top rail will be needed on the glass for lateral support which adds a visible element to the 'frameless' balustrade. The structural details required for providing lateral stability to the glass panels is also unclear. The gap proposed between the existing and proposed balustrade leaves no room for the inside faces of the balustrades to be cleaned and maintained. Dirty, water-stained glass surface is aesthetically displeasing and visually obscuring.

Overall, the City does not support the use of a glass balustrade in this location, and it is recommended that an alternative be explored; for example, adding an additional top rail in metal or timber on top of the existing handrail or a simple freestanding railing.

1.1.4 Roof

Repair and conservation works to the roof are supported as they are in accordance with the CMP and SCW. These works should be undertaken under the supervision of a heritage consultant.

1.1.5 Landscaping and garden

The application notes the eastern garden and permanent landscape treatments on the southern and western sides of the CME building will form part of a separate future application. The proposed landscape works only include providing accessible routes to the building and the general repair and 'make good' of the existing landscape surfaces. The removal of intrusive fences is proposed and supported by the City.

The proposed like-for-like asphalt paving all around the heritage building continues the intrusive landscape treatment that currently exists. This is considered a lost opportunity. As such, no effort is made to enhance the heritage context and setting for the building. Any landscaping must be in keeping with the historic character of the site and the City believes landscaping works that enhance the setting of the building should be included in this application, albeit not to the extent of future landscape and garden restoration work. A reconsideration is required.

The proposal should include the reinstatement of the associated garden setting within its site boundaries to enhance the aesthetic and landmark quality of the site. It is recommended that an appropriate Landscape Plan and sympathetic surface treatments should be part of this application to improve the over heritage values and landscape qualities of the site.

1.1.6 Wilson Street frontage

The north-eastern accessible ramp is supported as it only has a minor adverse impact. The proposed steel fence design to replace an existing non original metal fence (which the HIS assesses as a prominent element along Wilson Street) detracts from the significance of the building as it is in very poor condition and has a heavy design that does not compliment the original Victorian style of the CME. The City concurs and support its replacement however the proposed design is not significantly different to the existing.

There is an opportunity here to improve the aesthetic values of the site by proposing a high-quality contemporary design in timber to interpret the original material or simple steel vertical blades spaced to allow visual permeability. There is also potential to

reconstruct the original picket fence in consultation with the heritage consultant based on clear historic evidence as per Burra Charter principles.

It is recommended that an appropriate fence design be proposed that will enhance the Victorian character of the site.

1.1.7 Services

The proposed air conditioning and fire sprinkler systems are generally designed to be respectful of the heritage fabric and can be supported in principle if undertaken in accordance with the submitted Condition Report and Schedule of Conservation Works prepared by Curio to minimise heritage impacts to the detailed ceilings, respecting the original ceiling gridlines. The architectural drawings, however, do not show enough details for assessment, therefore detailed comments cannot be made. Additional details and documents should be submitted prior to the commencement of works for Council's review.

All internal services should be designed in consultation with the heritage consultant and be consistent with the CMP. Any visible internal AC grilles should be of high-quality design and materials. White plastic is inappropriate and not supported. Detailed design of the fire hydrant booster and any cupboards should also be provided.

1.1.8 Moveable heritage items

The proposal aims to retain in place the built-in cabinet and safe in Room G10 to preserve the former CME Office as one of the most significant and intact rooms within the building, including opportunities for interpretive displays as per the Heritage Interpretation Plan (HIP) for the CME Building. Other moveable items that are not proposed to be reused will be incorporated in the HIP.

An audit of all SHR moveable heritage items and items identified as significant on the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Office and Scientific Services Building—Moveable Heritage Survey (OHM Consultants, 2012) should be undertaken and suitably documented.

1.2 Interiors

A tenancy fit out guideline and signage guideline should be prepared in close consultation with a qualified heritage specialist and submitted for review. The tenancy guide should provide clear guidance on lighting strategy, colours, treatments, materials, fixing methodologies and finishes appropriate for the interiors for potential tenants. A copy of the CMP, fit out and signage guidelines should be included as part of the any future sale/lease contract.

1.2.1 Main entry foyer

The floor level of the external footpath and the entry foyer is proposed to be raised to match the internal circulation, resulting in the original tessellated tiles being covered. There is an alternative suggestion in the Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) involving the reproduction of tessellated tiles to be re-laid as a reconstruction of the original tessellated tile flooring, with a clear interpretative element to explain that the original tessellated tiles remain in situ and that the new tiles are a reproduction of the original patterning. This option has least visual impact on an important place of arrival for the building and should be pursued. The raised floor must be of lightweight construction and fully reversible.

The proposal should also retain and conserve existing timber skirtings, architraves, timber door and fanlight.

In line with CMP Policy 3.15 The proposal should restore the historical importance of Wilson Street as the primary access to the site by re-establishing the main entry (G3) to the CME Building as the historical, primary entrance to the building.

1.2.2 Rear entry foyer

The City recommends the raised floor to be of lightweight construction and fully reversible should there be a need to revert to original. The proposal should retain and conserve existing timber skirtings, architraves, and 1887 timber doors.

1.2.3 Room configuration

The proposed removal of intrusive non-original partitions is supported. A small number of new partitions are proposed but these have been located in rooms that no longer have original internal features present. This approach is supported subject to all partitions being fully reversible without damage to the heritage fabric.

1.2.4 Amenities

To minimise impacts on the heritage fabric, the proposed strategy is to reuse the existing bathrooms and associated penetrations and risers to accommodate the new amenities. The former CME toilet bowl in room G8 is of heritage significance and proposed to be removed. This should remain on site, conserved and be part of the heritage interpretation. The other heritage features (floor tiles and timber partition) within this room are retained and conserved. Overall works supported are fully reversible without damage to the heritage fabric where possible.

As above, it is recommended that an audit of all moveable heritage items be undertaken and documented.

1.2.5 Lift

The HIS notes that the internal location of the lift has been chosen to minimise the physical and visual impact on the original fabric within the building whilst ensuring functionality for its future operation. External lift options were explored and found to have visual impacts on exceptional significance highly visible facades. Room G4 does not appear to have a fireplace however room F4 does but is proposed to be covered. There is also a toilet proposed in F4 and service riser proposed in G4 and F4. The lift in this room can be accepted, however the service riser and the toilet should be relocated north of the lift.

The existing door is also proposed to be removed and the opening enlarged to comply with BCA/DDA standards. The removed door is proposed to be reused to accommodate the proposed new openings. New moulding around the enlarged lift opening will be installed to ensure the works are aesthetically consistent with the building's architectural details. This can be supported provided that the moulding can be recognised as new work upon closer inspection.

The glass lift doors however are visually intrusive and not supported. It is recommended that outer leaf of the door to be aesthetically more traditional to fit into the character of the interiors, such as timber doors. Details for the interface between the lift overrun and ceiling/roof are also requested to be provided. There should be no impacts on the footings from any potential lift pit excavation.

1.2.6 Stairs

The existing balustrade appears to be missing some balusters. This is proposed to be rectified as part of conservation works. The original staircase currently does not comply

with the relevant safety codes and, therefore, it is proposed install a new handrail on top of the existing one. An alternative option to install a simple freestanding handrail next to the existing handrail has not been considered as the staircase width is inadequate.

The next best option is proposed, to attach a new handrail to the existing handrail. Detailed drawings are recommended to be conditioned for the fixing of new handrail to existing heritage balustrade. There should be no visible fixings, and any fixing should happen on the underside of existing handrail.

1.2.7 Openings and original door alterations

The existing openings have been reused as much as possible to accommodate the new layout internally. To comply with current BCA/DDA standards, including the required width along the internal circulation, the opening and closing functionality of the doors will have to be removed. The door leaves are proposed to be retained in the same locations and still attached to the jamb but pinned back in an open position instead, in order to comply with the code. The works are fully reversible and are unlikely to not impact on the physical integrity of the doors.

The City notes that minor physical alteration is proposed to the front door to install an automated security system. This is supported. The removal of an existing column in the partition of room G8 can also be supported subject to its reuse to replace the western frame that is now missing.

The reopening of an existing bricked in window is a positive outcome. The creation of new openings has been minimised and some original doors have been reused in new openings. The City considers the overall impact for these works as minor and recommends any replacement timber elements match the original species of timber.

1.2.8 Ceilings

The HIS states that the Chief Mechanical Engineers Building—Condition Report and Schedule of Conservation Works prepared by Curio in 2022 provides general remediation guidelines for each type of ceiling and includes a room-by-room schedule with specific recommendations for each room to improve their overall condition without adversely impacting the building's significance. Curio's conservation approach is supported in principle and should be adhered to.

The City recommends any original lathe and plaster ceilings be conserved and restored, including decorative cornices and ceiling roses.

1.2.9 Fireplaces

As above, the Condition Report and Schedule of Conservation Works prepared by Curio provides general remediation guidelines for the fireplaces and includes a room-by-room schedule with specific recommendations for each room to improve their overall condition without adversely impacting the building's significance. Curio's conservation approach is supported in principle and the proposal should be consistent with it.

2 Urban Design

The following design comments are provided for your consideration.

2.1 Fire hydrant

The proposed fire hydrant is only shown on the landscape drawings and the detail of the cabinet is not shown. Integration with the fence detailing should be part of the approval

drawings. Elevation drawings are requested to be updated showing the cabinet design and its integration with the fence.

2.2 Room F3B

The City recommends minor amendments to relocate the urinal, so it is not visible from outside the door.

Further justification is required for the need for the door infill as this may impact on joinery. Alternatively, it is requested that details showing how any impacts on architraves is mitigated.

2.3 Room G15

The proposed lightweight infill to the door reveal may impact on joinery (architrave and jamb). Justification is requested for the need for the door infill. Ideally, this should be the same detail as on the opposite side of the door in G16.

Further, it is recommended that the switchboard is relocated (or justification provided) to avoid the new internal wall in front of the window.

2.4 Rooms G16, G18, G20, F15, F3B typical opaque window detail

The City is not supportive of the opaque glazing detail to bathrooms as this renders the bottom sash inoperable and window glazing and joinery difficult to clean. Alternatives should be explored.

2.5 Room G16 joinery details

The kickplate height requires redesign where adjacent to existing skirting which is a greater height. The design solution may be to either separate joinery from the wall surface or increase the kickplate height to match skirting

2.6 Finishes schedule

The city recommends all cubicle finishes be neutral (i.e., not printed ‘timber-look’ which will date the upgrade in the near future.

3 Tree Management and Landscaping

The following comments and recommendations are provided in relation to tree management and landscaping within and surrounding the site.

3.1 Tree retention

A total of 20 trees have been identified for retention. This includes 11 street trees directly outside the site and nine trees within the site. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) prepared by Arterra dated 4 November 2022 outlines that all 20 trees can be retained. The report details varying levels of impact expected within the Tree Protection Zones of the 20 trees and that these can be managed through tree sensitive construction methods. These methods are supported by the City and should form part of any consent granted.

3.2 Tree Removal

Several weedy tree species within the site are noted for removal on the Landscape Plans prepared by Arterra dated 3 November 2022. The total number of trees to be removed is unknown as they have not been given unique tree identification numbers in the AIA Report and are recommended to be identified with numbers for consistency with landscape plans. The City notes that the trees are species that are exempt from the City's Development Control Plan Tree Management Controls and supports their removal.

3.3 Landscaping

The submitted Landscape Plans indicate new trees will be planted within the site between the Chief Mechanical Engineers Building and boundary fence. The plans indicate the species will be *Camellia sasanqua* with a note stating: "*pruned to small tree, umbrella form."* The City does not support the selected species or proposal to continually prune the trees to restrict their growth.

Whilst it is acknowledged that small trees along this frontage are preferred so that views are not obstructed to the historical building frontage. It is considered that an alternative species which is less dense than the Camellia could be planted without the need for ongoing pruning to be undertaken. This would ensure the City's canopy cover objectives are being contributed to through this development and providing better amenity and environmental benefits to the site rather than continuous pruning of dense foliage trees which are currently shown on the concept plans. Amended landscape plans indicating alternative tree species should be prepared.

3.4 New fence design to Wilson Street

Photographic evidence indicates the original fence on the northern frontage to Wilson Street was a low timber picket fence with no plinth at the base. The existing fence includes a low wall with metal palisade fence that was installed in the 1990s. The low wall potentially retains soil levels on the site while a 1000mm high steel fence to match City of Sydney Park Fence Design, custom manufactured and finished in dark grey micaceous iron oxide coating, mounted atop new brick wall is proposed on the Wilson Street Frontage.

The proposed fence design is based on a typical City Parks manual fence detail and not sympathetic to the heritage significance of the subject site. The design in its current form is not supported from a landscape perspective.

There is opportunity to reinstate original picket fence up to 1200mm height with no brick plinth. The proposed fence should be original heritage fence design based on photographic evidence.

4 Access and Transport

The following comments are provided regarding various transport and access aspects of the proposal.

4.1 Loading

The submitted Traffic, Transport and Accessibility Study notes that the reason loading is not able to be provided onsite is that the toilet block at the back of the CME Building would not be demolished as part of the CME Building project which restricts the area

available for any traffic to manoeuvre onsite. As such, the City is supportive of the on-street loading dock as an interim measure (noting that changes on kerbside use need to be approved by the Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee).

It is requested that details are provided that clarify what the end-state of the loading arrangement will look like once the toilet block is demolished, and the Paint Shop Sub-Precinct is redeveloped. As a building within the Paint Shop Sub-Precinct, the end-state loading arrangements of the CME Building must satisfy the criteria in the Sub-Precinct Design Guidelines, including:

a) 1 space per 3,300m^2 commercial GFA or part thereof
b) Service and waste collection vehicle zones must be sufficient size to accommodate a standard 12.5m long HRV and allow for all access and manoeuvring to occur within the zone.
c) Waste collection vehicles are assumed to be a 9.25m Council garbage truck.
d) Design of loading space must allow vehicles to enter and exit in a forward direction

4.2 Parking

It is requested that clarification is provided regarding the end-state of parking arrangements on-site. The City is supportive of the adoption of the interim zero-parking in the long-term.

4.3 Bicycle facilities

The City believes that bike parking rates have been incorrectly calculated. The application uses the rate of 1 space per 400m^2 of office GFA which is the rate for visitor parking, not employee parking. Employee bike parking must be provided at a rate of 1 space per 150m^2 of office GFA.

Consequently, the development must provide at least 9 secure bike parking spaces (Class 2) for employees, and at least 4 spaces in the form of bike rails for visitors. The submitted Transport Study only notes 4 secure spaces and doesn't quantify visitor spaces.

Further, a minimum of one shower and change cubicle must also be provided, although the drawings package shows 4 cubicles which is supported. Please note that the Transport Study and drawings should be consistent. Additionally, one locker per employee bike space also requires the increase of personal lockers to 9 and should be reflected in drawings.

It is also recommended that the Green Travel Plan be amended to reflect the correct bike parking rates as per the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012.

4.4 Construction impacts

It is recommended that should consent be granted for the development, a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) be prepared and submitted for endorsement by the City prior to the commencement of work on site. The City's standard requirements for CTMPs should apply, in particular:

a) No articulated vehicles

b) No reversing

c) No use of local roads for haulage unless there is no other option

5 Public Domain

The existing public domain elements on Wilson Street frontage are in good serviceable condition and so should be protected and retained, noting existing mature street trees, lighting, separated cycleway with planting, concrete footway and kerb and gutter, and grass verge.

The proposal includes a new driveway crossover which requires detailed submission of drawings to be in accordance with the City's Technical Specification and receive Council approval. This proposed driveway crosses both the footway and separated cycleway and site-specific construction details will need to be submitted. Additionally, if the proposal requires changes to the existing street parking and traffic signage or similar, a submission to Council's Traffic Operations Team may be required, then review and approval by Local Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee.

The proposed new low brick wall along the street frontage will most likely damage the existing concrete footway, therefore replacement works will be required to meet Council's requirements and be in accordance with the City's Technical Specifications. Excavation for the new low brick wall will also need to address potential damage to the mature existing street trees' roots, and a specific methodology will need to be approved by Council's Tree Management Team, to ensure the trees' health, stability and amenity value is not affected.

These requirements can be addressed through the recommendation of various conditions which can be provided at a later date.

5.1 On-site Detention

Although the development is only refurbishing an existing building, the development also proposes new internal stormwater system. Given this and a site area larger than 250sqm, specific on-site detention requirements may be imposed by Sydney Water. Evidence of compliance with Sydney Water's on-site detention requirements must be submitted to the City for further consideration.

5.2 Stormwater Quality

A certificate and/or report from MUSIClink and the electronic copy of the MUSIC Model must be submitted for review and approval with the stormwater quality assessment report. The City has adopted MUSIClink for assessing Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) compliance for developments. A stormwater quality assessment for the proposed development must comply with the City’s specific modelling parameters as adopted in MUSIClink.

6 Waste Management

There does not appear to be any waste storage areas marked on the plans. This needs to be addressed. Further, the Waste Management Plan (WMP) is also not clear in indicating where waste will be stored and if it is in this building or within another building on site.

The WMP provides details on demolition and construction however, the waste generation calculations are low and are not in accordance with the City's waste and recycling space calculator.

The ongoing operational waste management arrangement of the building need to be reconsidered and further detailed in the WMP as per the recommendations below:

6.1 Waste generation

a) Waste generation calculations based on GFA for the development type should be recalculated (see the City's Guidelines for Waste Management in New Developments 2018, Reference A)

b) Space must be provided to store 2 days generation of all streams. As part of Sustainable Sydney 2030 2050 plan, the City is limiting truck movements to ease road congestion. Waste collections should ideally be limited to a maximum 3 x weekly for all waste streams.

6.2 Design of waste storage space

a) Architectural plans of the proposed development are to clearly outline:

- the location and space of the designated waste storage area/s
- the number of bins required correctly scaled, distinguishing between sizes (e.g., 240L, 660L, 1100L)
- the proposed layout f bins within storage areas

based on the collection frequency of bins identified in the waste management plan.

b) Additional design considerations should be shown on the plans in relation to ensuring adequate door width for the size of the bins back of house requirements for the location and storage of additional waste storage and waste handling equipment to be used, e.g., glass crushers, compactors, balers, tugs/trolleys, glass crushers and any other equipment.

c) Identify space dedicated for storing bulky waste and problem waste for recycling (see Guidelines for Waste Management in New Developments 2018 for minimum requirements).

d) A bin for each waste stream (waste, recycling and food waste) is to be centrally located on each commercial office floor (clearly mark on the plans). Details on the changeover/servicing and maintenance of these bins is to be outlined within the waste management plan.

e) Movement of bins and bulky waste to and from the waste storage area (WSA) or the collection point is to be level, free of steps/stairs, avoid the kerb and does not exceed a grade of 1:14 at any point.

6.3 Waste collection and servicing

a) Details of the ongoing management of the storage and collection of waste, including responsibility for cleaning, transfer of bins between storage areas and collection points, maintenance of signage and security of storage areas is to be detailed in the waste management plan.

b) Onsite collection is recommended with the waste collection vehicle to enter and exit in a forward direction. Vehicle dimensions, vehicle turning/swept path and maximum slope gradient are to be incorporated into the design of the proposed development. This information is outlined within City of Sydney council Guidelines for Waste Management in New Developments 2018.

c) Waste and recycling bins must not be placed on the street for collection, services must be conducted within the property boundary or as wheel out/wheel back service. The WMP must detail where the truck will stop to facilitate collection.

d) Ideally, all bins and bulky waste are to be no more than 10 m from collection point. A mechanical aid maybe required for management staff to safely cart the bins to the loading bay/collection point.

It is requested that the applicant provide City staff access to the site for a site visit prior to the consideration of any Response to Submissions.

Should you wish to speak with a Council officer about the above, please contact Marie Burge, Senior Planner on 9288 5850 or at mburge@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely,

Graham Jahn AM LFRAIA Hon FPIA
Director
City Planning I Development I Transport