

6 April 2022

Ms Lara Fusco
Industry Key Sites
Department of Planning & Environment
12 Darcy Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

Dear Ms Fusco,

Art Gallery of NSW Expansion Project – Sydney Modern (SSD 6471-MOD 8) for Minor External and Landscape Design changes

I refer to the above-mentioned application referred to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust (the Trust) as part of the public exhibition process.

As a significant landowner adjacent to the site, the Trust has a particular interest in this development and its potential impact on the Garden and Domain. We, therefore, welcome the opportunity to comment on the application.

We note that this application is a Modification Application only. Any future modifications to the design or by this application will require further, separate approvals, which we would also expect to be consulted.

The importance of the Domain

In considering the potential impacts of the proposed development on the Domain, it is important to understand the nature of the estate – what it is and has and how it is used.

The RBG and the Domain form one of Sydney's earliest and most significant public spaces, which has been at the centre of botanical collection and research in Australia over the last 200 years. It is of exceptional National and State heritage significance, historically and aesthetically, because of the outstanding living and preserved collections which are notable for their rarity, diversity, size and scientific value and now form part of the Governors' Domain and Civic Precinct.

With its beautiful plant and floral displays, its stunning landscape and position on Sydney Harbour and its proximity to the Sydney central business district, Circular Quay and the Sydney Opera House, the Domain (with the Royal Botanic Gardens) is one of the most visited public spaces in Sydney, receiving over a combined 11 million visitors annually.

The following documents relating to the modified proposal have been reviewed:

- Section 4.55 (1A) Modification – Art Gallery of NSW Expansion Project – Sydney Modern, prepared by Architectus, dated 3 March 2022
- Appendix A - Amended Architectural Plans
- Appendix B - Architecture Design Statement
- Appendix C - Amended Landscape Plans
- Appendix D – Landscape Statement

Comments on the Modification

The Trust has always sought to ensure a seamless integration of the design for the Sydney Modern within the precinct and the broader Domain.

The comments therefore reflect those areas that are occupied under licence by the Sydney Modern on RBGDT lands and those areas that will revert back to the RBGDT at the end of the construction

East side of Art Gallery Road – excluding Art Gallery Road itself

Landscape Statement Item 13. Stage 2 External Lighting

The Trust is not supportive at this point in time as we require further information as to how this lighting integrates within the broader precinct to allow for a seamless appearance. Feedback had been provided previously to the Project but there has not been any further confirmation of the lighting design, appearance or placement.

West side of Art Gallery Road – including Art Gallery Road itself

The area from the eastern kerb line of Art Gallery Road and to the West do not form part of the Sydney Modern licence area but for the purposes of enhancing the transition between the Domain and the Art Gallery the Trust has worked with the Gallery to redesign the “hammerhead” area shown on the Amended Architectural Plans.

For clarity the reference area is shown below



AUSTRALIAN
INSTITUTE OF
BOTANICAL
SCIENCE



The Royal
BOTANIC GARDEN
Sydney



The Australian
BOTANIC GARDEN
Mount Annan



The Blue Mountains
BOTANIC GARDEN
Mount Tomah



The Trust does not support the treatments and finishes as proposed for this area as these are at odds with the broader Domain. In addition, the Trust will be the asset owner of the works in this area and will assume the lifecycle liabilities that will arise. Specific points of note are as follows:

- **Granite steps** - Granite steps are not used throughout the Domain – the dominant material is sandstone, and the works will result in the removal of existing sandstone steps. The Trust requires that sandstone steps are used in the area defined above
- **Concrete paving and flagging** - Concrete and other flagging materials are not used in the Domain for paths or pedestrian access areas. This is due to the large numbers of figs in the space with an extensive and water seeking root system. This results in repeated lifting of slabs and materials creating trip hazards which then give rise to a public liability risk to the RBGDT. The standard material throughout the Domain is asphalt. The Trust requires that this material to the Trust's specification be installed in the affected "hammerhead" area.
- **Wombat crossing** - While the Trust agrees and supports the installation of the wombat crossing the design and profile of the crossing must be such that facilitates and minimally disrupts the movement of cyclists. The Domain has been used for significant cycling events which support the revenue and operations of the Trust and any crossing profile that ignores the need of cyclist places unnecessary pressure on Trust activities through loss of revenue.
- **Other matters** - There is insufficient detail provided to allow for a considered final approval on the affected area of the design and the Trust must (as the owner of the asset at the end of the construction work) sign off on the elements and materials proposed to be installed including but not limited to
 - Lighting
 - Security systems
 - Irrigation
 - Soil profiling including clearance from pathogens
 - Vegetation / selections and plantings
 - Positioning of the Sphinxes
 - Retaining walls / balustrading / other hard scape works

Conclusion

The Trust has been supportive of the works proposed for the Sydney Modern Project within the project boundaries and for which the Art Gallery of NSW will assume operational and maintenance responsibility.

The Trust is not supportive of the works proposed to be undertaken in the "hammerhead" area referred to in this letter and will require further detailed information before accepting the Modification as proposed.



Please direct all further enquiries regarding this matter, to our Planning Project Manager, Louise Farley, telephone 4634 7957 or email louise.farley@botanicgardens.nsw.gov.au.

Yours Sincerely



George Salouros
Director, Asset Management, Planning and Projects

