

02 SEARS

Introduction

The Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) were provided on 13 October 2015 for the Sydney Modern Project with subsequent amendments. In this section of the Architectural Statement, the following items in the SEARs will be addressed:

- Outline the design process leading to the proposal and justify the suitability of the site for the proposed expansion of the Gallery, including alternatives considered.
- Outline and address any comments provided by the design selection panel.
- Demonstrate design excellence with specific consideration to the site's landscape/ horticultural character and heritage, its layout, setbacks, architectural design, materials, articulation and detailing, amenity, views and vistas, open spaces and public domain, connectivity and street activation.
- Address the height, bulk and scale of the proposed development within the context of the locality and its surrounds.

Process

2 Stage Competition

The 2 Stage Competition for the Sydney Modern Project was launched in October 2014. Upon the evaluation by a 7 person Jury Panel, SANAA was selected as the design architect for the Sydney Modern Project.

Initial Engagement Phase

Since the appointment as the Design Architect, SANAA and the Client, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, have worked collaboratively to develop the proposed design during the Initial Engagement Phase. The Initial Engagement Phase began in May 2015 and was finalized in June 2016.

Simultaneously, a local Sydney-based Architectural firm, Architectus, was appointed as the Executive Architect and for Urban Planning services. A team of consultants was also appointed during this phase to support the Architects.

Schematic Design Phase

Subsequent to confirmation of NSW government funding, the Architects and Client reviewed the Design Brief for the project. As a result some programs were defined to remain or to be added to the existing building, reducing the overall size of the new building. At a few bench-mark points during the Schematic Design Phase, cost estimates were made to understand the cost impact of the building as well.

Through the process, the Architects engaged the consultants to make sure the building is compliant to local Australian building codes and regulations.

The Architects and Client team engaged with key stakeholders to understand the impact of the project on the public domain.

Comments Provided by the Design Selection Panel

The Competition Jury commented on SANAA's Stage 2 entry,

“The scheme responds to the beauty of the competition site through a series of pavilions that reach out to the Domain and the Royal Botanic Gardens as they cascade down to Sydney Harbour and Woolloomooloo. The low profile of the pavilions complements and preserves both the integrity and importance of the existing Gallery building and creates spaces to bring people together and foster a sense of community, imagination and openness.

Its lightness of form speaks to the new century while respecting the architecture of the previous centuries to create a harmonious and inspiring new public space for Sydney. The scheme is futurist in its thinking about art museums and the visitor experience, and will be transformative for the Gallery. The scheme elegantly places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art at its heart.

This is a 21st-century concept that has the full potential when developed to be an environmentally sensitive art museum. The scheme starts to deconstruct the classical art museum and offers opportunity for further development of new types of spaces for the display of a variety of art forms, both existing and new.

The design offers what the architects describe as ‘a clean palette’ for displaying art and staging cultural events. The scheme will invite artists to experiment and provide a curatorial challenge for the Gallery which would be profoundly invigorating for an institution transforming itself into a 21st-century art museum.”

The Competition Jury selected unanimously that SANAA be recommended to the SMS Committee as the preferred architect for the Sydney Modern Project.

Post competition, the Competition Jury was reconvened to verify that the publicly exhibited scheme displayed design excellence. The Jury confirmed that the exhibited scheme is substantially the same as the design competition winning design.

As the amendments made to the design does not substantially change the scheme, it does not warrant the Competition Jury to reconvene again for the Response to Submission.

Massing within the Context

As mentioned previously, the concept of the Sydney Modern is to make a series of pavilion-like buildings which terrace with the landscape. The intent is to keep the building low and integrated with the terrain. As a result, the building does not obstruct the tree-line of the Domain when viewed from the east and appears light and transparent when viewed from the parkland to the west.

The new building is not directly connected to the existing building. The landscape over the land bridge structure sits in between the two and becomes a very important element to connect the two galleries. Both of the galleries look over this landscape and reference each other.

Design Excellence

Landscape and Horticulture

The competition proposal for the Sydney Modern Project was to introduce a gallery which is immersed in the landscape. The visitor experience begins once in the precinct of the Gallery which is surrounded by a distinct Sydney landscape. It was always important to maintain and enhance this scenery and the landscape that currently exists on site.

The proposal for the Sydney Modern Project aims to maintain the local horticulture. The planting for the northern and southern side of the site differs according to the concept of the space, the southern side responding to the Royal Botanic Garden and the northern side responding to the native Australian bush land.

The proposed rooftop landscape is designed to improve the ecology of the landscape itself and its surroundings.

Heritage

The site for the Sydney Modern Project extension is surrounded by heritage elements such as the Royal Botanic Garden, Woolloomooloo Gate, the decommissioned Fuel Bunker, and the existing Art Gallery of New South Wales. Each element in the immediate surroundings of the site was carefully studied and considered while planning the new extension.

For example, the height of the new building is kept low below the cornice line of the existing Gallery and a plaza placed in front of the Woolloomooloo Gate for visitors approaching the site from the Royal Botanic Garden. Since the exhibition of the previous design, the Entry Plaza has been rotated and set back to provide a more open view from the Woolloomooloo Gate to the entry of the existing building.

Where possible, large significant trees within the site will remain untouched, and several smaller trees will be transplanted within the site area in order to preserve them. In general, only minor trees and bushes of recent age will be removed, with new plantings to outweigh the numbers removed.

Massing

The concept of the Sydney Modern Project extension is to make a series of pavilion-like buildings which terrace with the landscape. The intent is to keep the building low and integrated into the landscape. As a result, the building does not obstruct the tree-line of The Domain when viewed from the East and appears light and transparent when viewed from the parkland.

Materials

Building materials were investigated and studied with local consultants.

There are generally 3 types of roofing materials. The Entry Plaza canopy is made of solid glass elements which softly reflects the surrounding environment. There is a photovoltaic cell array over the Entry Pavilion. The other building roofs are finished with a mixture of native plants and hard-scape.

There are two types of façades. Transparent glass wraps around the public areas and opaque stone cladding wraps the gallery volumes.

Views

The Gallery visitors will enjoy views to the harbour and the parkland from many different levels as the site is on different levels. The proposal of the new extension provides places for visitors to rest and enjoy these views from the terraces. Along the main through-site link in the centre of the site, there are areas where visitors can rest.

There are 3 levels above the decommissioned Fuel Bunker in the new extension. From each of the levels, there are views outside for the visitors to orient themselves. For example, in the two upper level galleries, there is a glass enclosed verandah space. In this space, visitors are able to view art in the context of the landscape of Sydney.

Open Space and Public Domain

Each pavilion of the new extension is organised to create several different types of open spaces. The major open space is the Entry Plaza between the new and existing building. This plaza is accessible at all times. The majority of the land bridge will be kept open for public use and function.

The existing entrance will remain to the Vernon building. An additional new entrance will be accessible from the Entry Plaza. This will activate the outdoor spaces in between the existing and the new buildings, further connecting the gallery to the Domain, the Royal Botanic Garden, and the neighbouring precincts.

03 Sydney LEP - Design Excellence

Introduction

This section responds to the items under section Section 6.21 (4) (d) Design Excellence of Sydney Local Environmental Plan. The objective is to deliver the highest standard of architectural design.

Architectural Design

The Art Gallery of New South Wales is a Gallery to serve the public. The architectural design of the Sydney Modern Project expansion hopes to fulfil this vision and purpose of the Gallery by providing ample public space that is accessible for both Gallery visitors and people passing by. The building mass is kept as minimal as possible while still serving the Gallery's requirements. Building materials are carefully selected to blend the building into its surroundings and the context of Sydney. For more detail please refer to the Design Principles section of this report.

Improvement of Public Domain

Situated in a focal point of four key precincts - Woolloomooloo, Potts Point, Central Sydney and the Domain and Botanic Garden - the Sydney Modern Project expansion for the Art Gallery of New South Wales is ideally located to connect the different precincts. The proposal for the new extension is a plan to maintain the through-site links that are currently available to the public and enhance these connections.

The majority of the site is currently occupied by man-made structures as the decommissioned Fuel Bunker along Lincoln Crescent Road and the land bridge adjacent to the Art Gallery and Art Gallery Road. The current space above the Fuel Bunker is accessible, however, is underutilized. The new Sydney Modern Project will bring much improved public amenity and safety to everyone in this location. The outdoor space will be appropriately landscaped, improving this public space.

A significant update from the previously exhibited scheme is that the landscape continues from the Domain, through the Entry Plaza, and to the landbridge. This continuity of landscaping will bring the precinct together better. Within the Entry Plaza, many small zones with different activities are planned - for example, the open sculpture area with small waiting area around it, and shaded cafe kiosk which will activate the space.

The new extension proposal also creates a variety of public spaces that will be accessible at all times. The characteristics of these spaces vary throughout the site - some are large scale and some more intimate. We hope the visitors will be able to find spaces that they feel most comfortable in on each of their visits.

Impact on View Corridor

One of the views the Sydney Modern Project affects is from the Woolloomooloo Gate. Currently, when accessing the site from the Woolloomooloo Gate, visitors are able to see out to a line of trees beyond the steps. The new extension will replace these steps with a plaza surrounded by trees at the street level. This plaza will give visitors, accessing the Gallery from the Woolloomooloo Gate, a place to rest and enjoy the landscape before continuing their journey to the Gallery. Also from the Woolloomooloo Gate, visitors are able to see the entrance to the existing Gallery. The new extension is set back as much as possible and the canopy of the Entry Plaza is meant to be porous to maintain this view. The Sydney Modern Project building volume is set back from Art Gallery Road to maintain the view from Woolloomooloo Gate to the main facade of the existing Gallery building.

Approaching the Gallery from the south end of Art Gallery Road, the existing gallery building appears first and the Entry Plaza of the Sydney Modern Project sits behind. It is a light space with a translucent sunshade roof which disappears into the background. The Entry Pavilion and the successive pavilions behind terraces down the landscape. This will alter the view of the approach to the existing Gallery building but considering the characteristic of Sydney Modern Project, increase in pedestrian space, and reorganization of the vehicle parking in front of the existing building, the impact should be positive.

Suitability of Land for Development

The majority of the site is occupied by man-made structures such as the decommissioned Fuel Bunker along Lincoln Crescent and the land bridge adjacent to the Gallery and Art Gallery Road. As the space above the Fuel Bunker is currently underutilised, the new extension will make the space above the decommissioned Fuel Bunker more available to the public. These low quality spaces are fragmented and can only support limited low intensity usage. We will convert these spaces into high quality public Gallery space and cohesively designed hard and soft landscaped areas that are accessible, representing a significant uplift in the public utility and amenity of the overall site area.

The space above the land bridge is also difficult in terms of maintaining the landscape as demonstrated currently (landscape must be replaced every few years). This space will be partially occupied with building and a mix of hard and soft landscape.

The landscape plan identifies the proposed usage and planting of all external areas, which has been based on the preservation of existing deep soil areas and existing significant vegetation, and the rebuilding of those areas which currently have poor capacity to carry landscape of value to the public.

Massing of Buildings

As mentioned previously, the concept of the Sydney Modern Project extension is to make a series of pavilion-like buildings which terrace with the landscape. The intent is to keep the building low and integrated with the landscape. As a result, the building does not obstruct the tree-line of the Domain when viewed from the east and appears light and transparent when viewed from the parkland.

Street Frontage Heights

There are two major street frontages for the Sydney Modern Project expansion.

From Art Gallery Road, the building mass is kept low and transparent to maintain the primacy of the heritage of the existing Gallery. The tallest canopy is the Entry Plaza canopy which slopes down below the cornice line of the existing building. From there the three pavilions along Art Gallery Road terrace down following the landscape.

Since the previously exhibited scheme, the Entry Plaza has been rotated and shifted away from Art Gallery Road. This was done so the view corridor from Woolloomooloo Gate to the existing vernon facade can be maintained.

From the Lincoln Crescent side, the building appears taller as the terraced pavilions are more visible. There are 3 levels stacked and stepped back above the Fuel Bunker, although each level steps back in sympathy with the land form and the full height seen on the elevations is rarely experienced by people in the vicinity. The maximum height of the overall building above the Fuel Bunker is 22.3m. Most of the building is below the ground level from the Art Gallery Road side so there is least impact on views.

Environmental Impacts

The design of the Sydney Modern Project is kept low as it terraces with the landscape. The shadow analysis included in the DA Drawing set portrays the shadow impact on the surroundings, which is very minimal.

There are negligible privacy impacts on the apartment complex to the east as the apartment complex faces the east to open up to the harbour. Appropriate landscaping is proposed to mitigate the amount of views into the apartment complex.

Achievement of Principles of ESD

SANAA worked with the ESD consultants, Atelier 10 and WSP, to develop a sustainability strategy.

The key principles for sustainable initiatives include:

- Conservation of art collection
- Integration and multi-functionalism
- Landscaped roofs
- Fittings and fixtures
- Water efficiency / harvesting
- Passive and active design
- Whole of life objectives

Combining the above principles with design and construction initiatives, the design team aims to achieve 5-star rating under Green Star Certification.

The ESD consultants concluded:

“The principles of ecologically sustainable development have been embedded in each of the major components of the Sydney Modern Project.

The site selection has embodied the precautionary principle by selecting substantially disturbed land for the building location – straddling a motorway and embedded within historic Fuel bunker.

In this way, the serious environmental impacts of green field development are avoided and the ecological value of the precinct is enhanced. High value trees have been retained, further mitigating site impacts.

The native landscaping strategy further conserves and enhances the bio-diversity and ecological integrity of the precinct.

The built form and services support a resource- efficient strategy to enhance the whole of life resource consumption of the project. The consideration of zero-carbon energy, low-impact materials, operational waste strategy to embed zero-waste principles and making use of alternative water sources have been primary design drivers for the project. The project embeds principles for inter-generational equity, by curating, storing and enhancing the cultural environment and rehabilitating the ecological environment for the benefit of future generations.”

Circulation Requirements

Pedestrian	Vehicle
There are three major pedestrian links which run through the site connecting the lower Woolloomooloo area to the Domain and the Royal Botanic Garden. The major connection is through the land-bridge which begins at the existing stairs at the corner of Lincoln Crescent and Cowper Wharf Road. The renovated path will lead up to the land-bridge to a new paved path which connects directly to the Entry Plaza. There are two minor connections to the north of the site, along the existing substation, and another to the north of the existing building. The steps running adjacent to the substation is a direct path from Lincoln Crescent to Mrs Macquaries Road. The path to the north of the existing building brings people from the pedestrian bridge to the Entry Plaza, activating this underused space. Additionally there is a path which wraps around the pavilions on the multiple levels which provides visitors with rest points and views out to the harbour.	The public parking and drop off area in front of the existing building will be relocated to provide a more generous pedestrian safe area in front of the entrance. Art Gallery Road will be reorganized to allow for coach parking, taxi and visitor drop off, and disabled parking. Pedestrian crossings will also be relocated to provide access where heavy traffic exists and is expected with the new Sydney Modern Project. A more detailed explanation can be found in the landscape and traffic reports. Servicing Servicing to the Sydney Modern Project extension will be from Lincoln Crescent. There will be two loading dock bays - one exclusively for art and the other for goods deliveries and waste. The street median will be adjusted to accommodate the trucks.

Interface at Ground Level

At the ground level along Art Gallery Road, visitors will encounter the following spaces: the Entry Plaza, the Entry Pavilion, the glazed gallery portion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Gallery, and the land bridge. The Entry Plaza is covered with a glass roof. The roof is high and set back from the road to not obstruct views towards the existing building and surrounding landscape. The Entry Plaza canopy is open on three sides and allows unobstructed passage throughout the site. The Entry Pavilion facade is transparent glass. Few fixed volumes are located within to allow for views through the building. From the landscape, visitors can also see into interior spaces and from within the building they can see out towards the landscape. This idea is repeated throughout the building. For example visitors can see into the gallery through the verandah space on LL1. Likewise, the visitors can step out to the terrace, accessible from inside the Gallery only, to enjoy the view of the harbour. From Lincoln Crescent, visitors will be presented with the existing decommissioned fuel bunker wall. The Sydney Modern building appears to sit on top of the fuel bunker, but is set back away from the edge to provide a relief when viewed from the street.

Integration of Landscape Design

Through the process, the Architects worked closely with McGregor+Coxall, the landscape consultant to plan and design the landscape. Collectively, ideas for various areas and pockets of landscape were developed. The building mass took on its current shape to preserve many of the identified healthy significant trees around the site. Some of high value trees that could not be saved due to the building requirements will be relocated around the site (Refer to the landscape report). The roof will be a mixture of native plants and hard-scape. The different species planted will bloom at different times of year making the building appear to breathe and change with the season. Three roofs are accessible, and the landscape will be appropriately designed to provide a safe and pleasant experience.

04 Comparison with Design Competition Scheme

General

The competition program envisioned the existing building physically connected to the new building. The SANAA competition scheme covered a larger area of the site to maintain a low profile and built on the land-bridge the maximum possible loads.

The proposed design no longer physically connects to the existing building. The design maintains the concept of pavilions placed following the shape of the terrain but in contrast to the competition design, they overlap to avoid significant trees resulting in a reduced footprint and increased public domain areas with soft landscaping.

Entry

The competition scheme planned for two entrances in the new building.

Through the design process, the Client and the Architect together explored various entry options. In the proposed scheme, the existing entry is maintained and a new entrance is created. The current entry on the Vernon facade is iconic and will remain as a prominent entrance to the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The exterior space will be reorganised to create a more open space which will direct visitors to the new Entry Plaza and new entrance.

One of the emergency exit paths from the Fuel Bunker (Gallery 8) can be used occasionally as an access point from Lincoln Crescent for special events. No other entrances are envisioned at this time.

Gallery and other facilities

Gallery

The concept of large flexible gallery spaces is maintained. The number and content of the galleries in the proposed design have been re-imagined by the Gallery.

The Fuel Bunker gallery (Gallery 8) now preserves the entire southern tank of the Fuel Bunker. A spiral stair and fire exits are proposed to make a publicly accessible space. The vision which the Client and the Architects together developed is to preserve the heritage characteristics of the decommissioned Fuel Bunker.

Other Facilities

The commercial Function Space is no longer required in the proposed design.

The board rooms, Prints and Drawings Study Room, and National Art Archive, and staff offices will remain in the existing building.

A new conservation studio is located in the proposed design to accommodate large format works.

New Creative Studios are located in the proposed design.

The Multi-purpose Theatre is changed to Multi-purpose Space to accommodate more flexibility, including occasional functions.

Loading and Parking

Various parking options were explored but due to site and cost constraints the following decisions were made:

- Locate a few parking spots near the SMP loading zone for contract worker's vehicles and accessible parking.

In conclusion, the development is substantially the same and exhibits design excellence of the design competition scheme.

