

Sydney Opera House, Bennelong Point Lower Concourse Shade Cover Improvements

VISUAL IMPACT STUDY

Analysis of the impact of proposed works from key public Viewpoints

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Preamble

This Visual Impact Study has been prepared to support an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in relation to the provision of new shade covers to external areas of the existing areas commonly known as “Opera Bar” and “Opera Kitchen” on the Lower Concourse of the Sydney Opera House.

“Urban design and visual impacts” were identified as a principle issue of consideration in relation to this application. This study has been prepared to demonstrate the proposals consideration of and response to these issues.

This study has been prepared on behalf of the Sydney Opera House, in consultation with the stakeholder tenants (Opera Bar & Opera Kitchen), and reflects the current architectural design and all associated consultant coordination at the time of the preparation of this statement.

This study has been prepared by Glenn Cunnington, Director of Humphrey & Edwards, Registered Architect # 6415.

Methodology

This study aims to demonstrate the potential impact of the proposed works on key views to and from the Sydney Opera House and its precinct. The location of vantage points for the “key” views selected is shown on the Location Plans herein.

The study presents “before” (existing photo) and “after” (photomontage) images taken looking to and from key public vantage points. The location of vantage points from which the base photography has been taken have been accurately located. The base photography has been taken by a professional photograher, Ben Guthrie.

The photomontage imagery superimposes rendered images of accurately 3D computer modelled geometry which precisely describes the proposal. The 3D computer model has been developed using Autodesk Revit building information modelling software.

The Visual Impact Study imagery has been rendered from the same platform as the architectural drawings have been generated. Accordingly the rendered geometry is an accurate representation of the proposal.

Please note that the process of photographic superimposition is not “perfect” however the author is confident that the imagery presented in this study accurately depicts the visual impacts expected in reality.

Unless otherwise stated photography included in this report was taken by Ben Guthrie Photography and all graphics, architectural drawing and details have been prepared by Humphrey & Edwards.

Overview of the proposal

The Sydney Opera House is an icon of Australia that is recognised globally. It provides a world class performing arts venue and is considered a masterpiece of late modern architecture.

The hospitality precinct that is housed in the lower concourse supports the function of the SOH. This precinct provides essential hospitality facilities for patrons of the Sydney Opera House and the public in general. Venues such as the Opera Bar & Opera Kitchen are renowned for the quality of their offer and the experience they facilitate. The SOH and their operators are committed to improving the experience for their visitors to the site whilst maintaining its cultural significance.

As part of this on ongoing commitment to improve facilities it is proposed to remove the existing shade cover and weather protection umbrellas in the Outdoor Seating areas of the Opera Bar and Opera Kitchen. It is subsequently proposed to replace them with a larger, more functional and aesthetically integrated shade and weather protective structures.

This concept and design development of this proposal has been undertaken in recognition of the design principles established by Utzon.

A complete assessment of the new structures is provided following with a comparative commentary of the differences between the existing and proposed structures.

Context

The context is established by the flowing modern form of the existing structure, the proximity to the harbour and the greater development that defines Circular Quay which includes most notably the Ferry Terminal, Cahill Expressway, Harbour Bridge and Opera House.

The existing umbrella structures are relatively insignificant in the greater context. This is particularly evident from distant vantage points across Sydney Cove and from the North Shore as can be seen from Locations 1 and 2.

The existing structures are relatively low sitting visually just above the waterline and below the parapet of the Upper Concourse.

The existing forms, however, are not complimentary to the finer context established by the Opera House forecourt, cascading concourses and adjacent sea wall. And this can be seen by review of imagery from vantage points 3, 4, 5 and 6.

In regard to the proposal, despite the increased size the proposed form remains modest in scale. In this regard, like the existing umbrellas, the proposed shade structures are insignificant in the greater context. In fact the visual impact of either the existing or proposed is barely perceptible from Locations 1 and 2.

But the proposed shade structures are designed to be more in harmony, in terms of form, detail and materiality with the finer established context that the existing umbrellas. This improved relationship is clearly illustrated by proposed views from the closer vantage points. It is also evident that the improved forms have no adverse impact on views to or from the Opera House, the Upper Concourse or Forecourt.

Form

The existing shade cover (umbrellas) are of a generic design and “umbrella like” in form. The form of the individual generic umbrellas is symmetrically balanced and lacks the dynamics reflected in the form of the Opera House and its details.

The arrangement of the individual umbrellas limits the covered area and results in joints between the umbrellas that lack design finesse and have ineffective weatherproofing. The proposed shade covers are of a custom design and profile. The proposed form is dynamic and features an offset cantilever.

The overall design is more architecturally responsive and consistent with the design quality of the Opera House and precinct in general. However the design and detailing is also simplistic and restrained so as not to compete in prominence with the architecture of the Opera House.

Visual impact

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposed shade cover represents a significant increase in covered area... Approximately 55%. The overall height is about the same and the north-south dimension increases minimally. Accordingly in the context of the site, and particularly in respect of distant views to the Opera House and surrounds this increase is insignificant.

It is clear that due to the relative size of the Opera House, other neighbouring buildings and geographic features that the impact of the new Shade Cover is insignificant and has no detrimental impact of the visual setting of the Opera House.

The proposed form reflects the horizontality of the concourses in general. It is designed such that the form of the new structure will have no detrimental impact on views to or from the Opera House and surrounding precinct. The new shade structure references the established geometry of the existing concourses including the radial grid but is an otherwise independent structure. Accordingly that new structure does not interfere with

the form and continuity of curvature of the existing concourses.

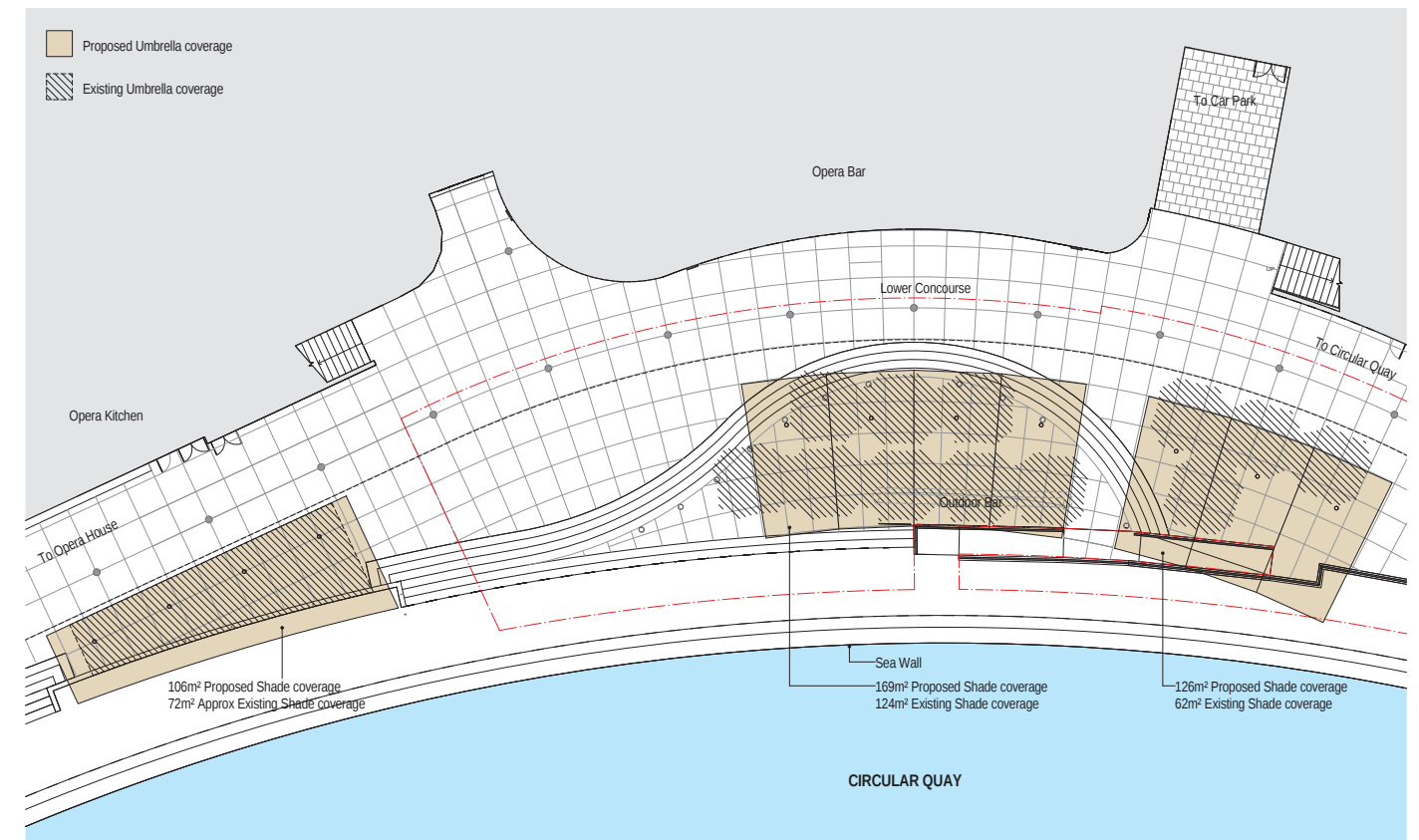
The visual connection between the forecourt and lower concourse will not be obscured. In fact despite the increase in size the new forms are expected to appear simpler, less distracting than the existing umbrellas and more harmonious with the existing super structure.

Conclusion

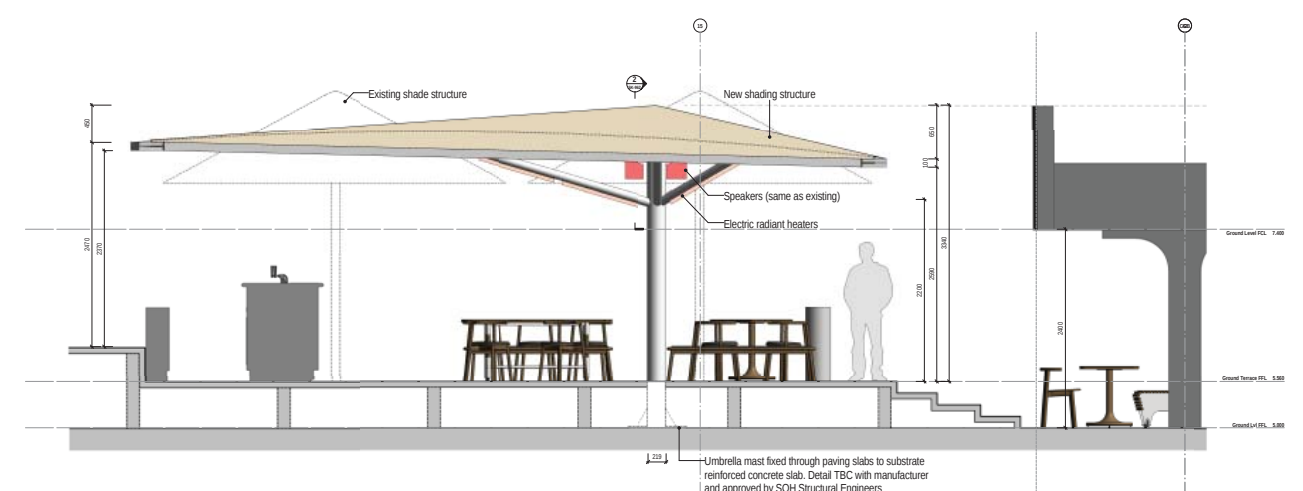
The proposed design response is the result of considerable effort to maximise the potential of the project to offer improvements in shade, weather protection acoustics etc. in a more architecturally sympathetic manner without detrimental visual impact.

The proposal has been developed with understanding of the Utzon Design Principals and provides a more appropriate design response to the existing in this regard.

By review of the “before” and “after” imagery presented in this study it is clear that the proposal provides an improved architectural and functional response without any detrimental visual impact.

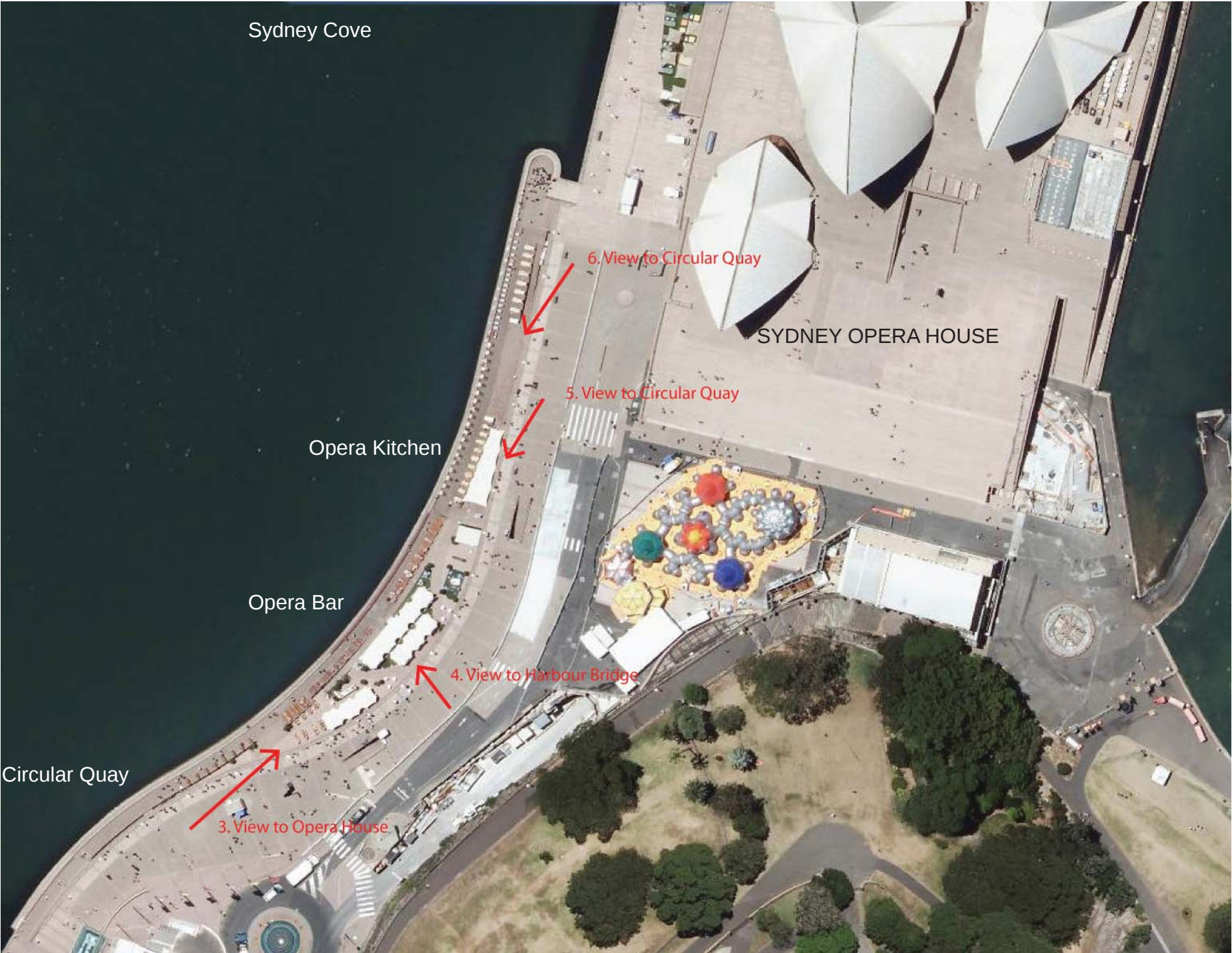


Existing and Proposed Shade Cover configurations



Indicative cross section





Location Plans showing selected key Public Viewpoints
Source: Spatial Information Exchange



1. View from North Shore - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography



1. View from North Shore - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography





2. View from West Circular Quay - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography



2. View from West Circular Quay - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography



3. View to Opera House - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography





3. View to Opera House - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography



4. View to Harbour Bridge - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography



4. View to Harbour Bridge - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography



5. View to Circular Quay - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography



5. View to Circular Quay - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography



6. View to Circular Quay - Existing
Ben Guthrie Photography



6. View to Circular Quay - Proposed
Ben Guthrie Photography