

2.0 THE SITE



Figure 6 Aerial photograph of site.

2.1 PROJECT SITE AND EXTENT

The Precinct is situated between two important headlands and culturally significant sites; the new Barangaroo Headland Park and Dawes Point Park. The site is bounded by water - Pier 4/5 and wharf apron to the west and Pier 2/3 and wharf apron to the east. Accessed solely by Hickson Road, the topography and location of the site presents challenges for access and legibility.

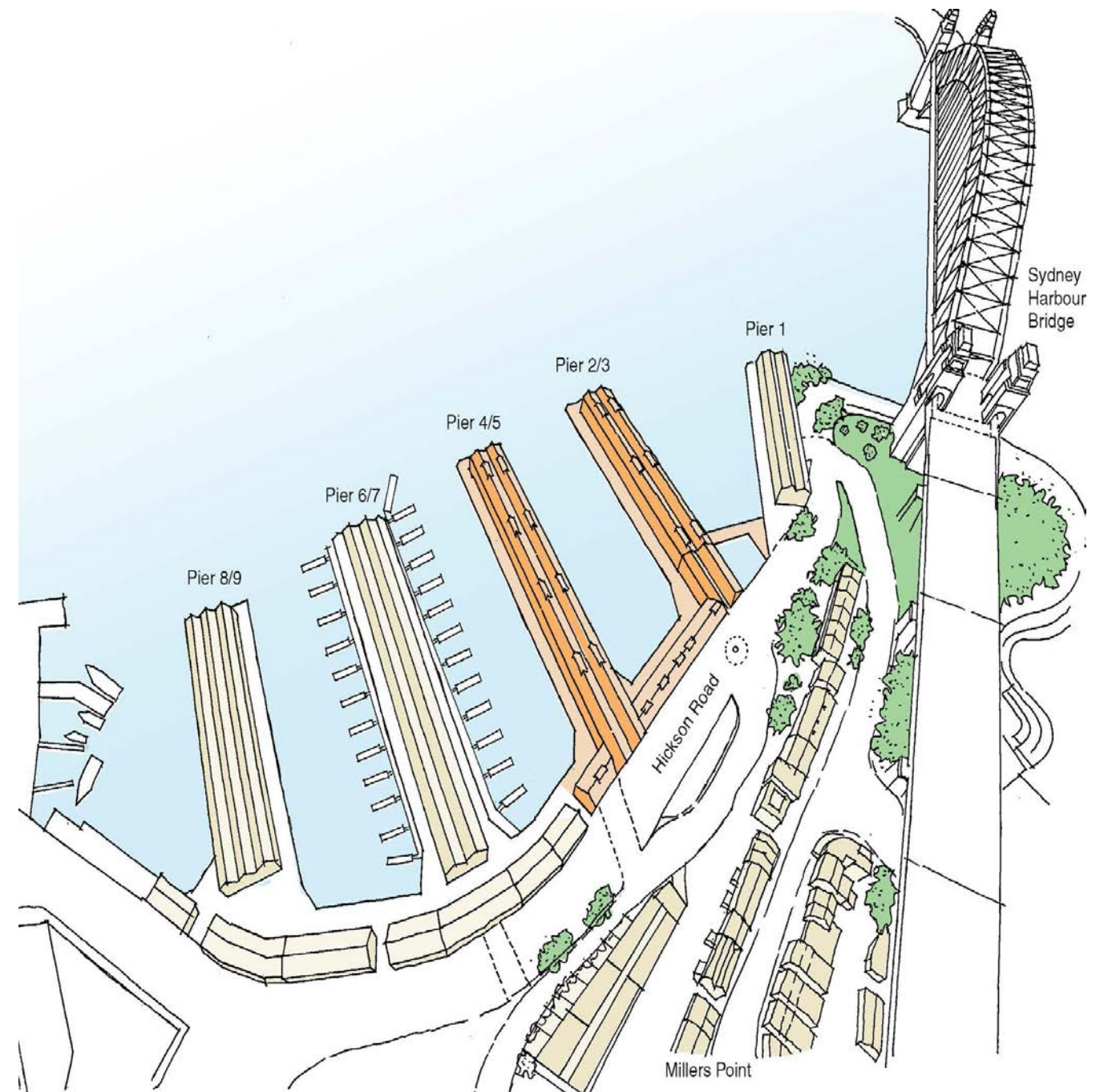


Figure 7 Aerial view of site. BatesSmart, 2014.

The site comprises Pier 2/3 and Pier 4/5 at Walsh Bay including the wharf aprons and the shore sheds to the south fronting Hickson Road. The adjacent wharves at Walsh Bay include the Sebel Pier One Hotel, Pier 6/7 which has been redeveloped for apartments, and Pier 8/9 which has been redeveloped for office use.

South of the site, across Hickson Road, climbs the steep hillside of Millers Point. Immediately to the East of Walsh Bay is Dawes Point at the base of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and to the west is the emerging Barangaroo Headland Park.

2.2 STRATEGIC PRECINCT LOCATION

THE CULTURAL RIBBON

The Walsh Bay Arts Precinct will be a key arts and performance destination on Sydney Harbour, and a key component of Sydney’s emerging ‘Cultural Ribbon’.

Existing arts organisations in the precinct including The Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP), Sydney Dance Company (SDC), Sydney Theatre Company (STC) and Bangarra Dance Theatre along with a series of choirs, including Gondwana Children’s Choir, the Philharmonia Choir and The Song Company, have developed a strong cultural focus for the area which is currently supported by a small, but growing, number of restaurants and bars.

The precinct is well placed to become one of the world’s great cultural precincts with the addition of the Bell Shakespeare (Bell) and the Australian Chamber Orchestra (ACO) to the mix.

The precinct is an iconic, waterfront, north facing site with great opportunities for visual and physical access to the water. It is uniquely placed to enhance the activation and legibility of the Walsh Bay area as a desirable destination that changes with each visit.

Central to the success of the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct is the public domain, which will become a platform for display and performance, as well as a destination in its own right for both events and daily use. The public domain will become the central, cultural hub of the precinct, and perform a vital role in connecting the resident arts organisations together.



Figure 8 Sydney's Cultural Ribbon, Aspect Studios,

2.3 SITE ANALYSIS

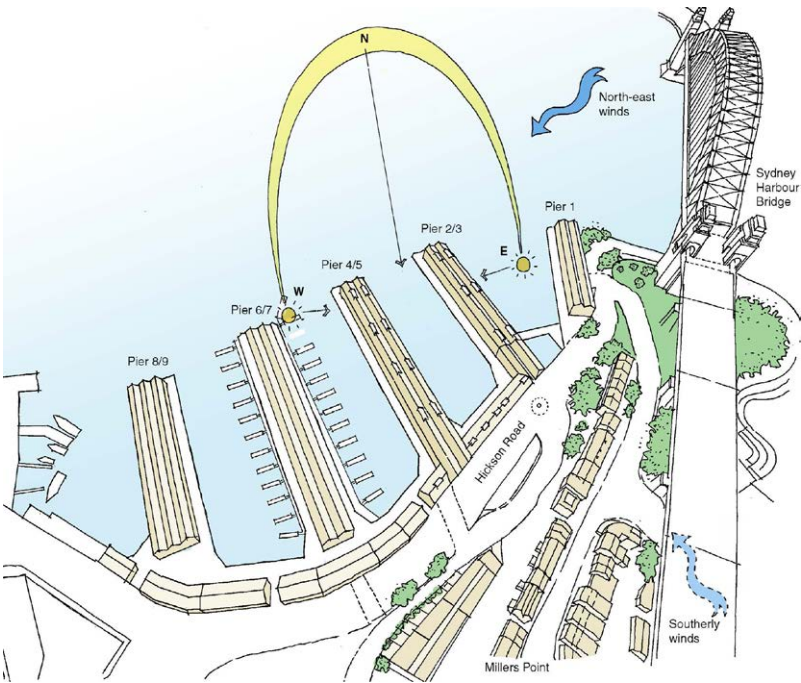


Figure 9 Solar orientation and wind. BatesSmart.

SOLAR ORIENTATION AND WIND

The existing finger wharves are oriented north/south and thus the long elevations of the buildings are highly exposed to low angle morning and afternoon sun. Between the piers, the apron in front of the shore sheds faces has a northerly frontage. The site is exposed to prevailing summer winds from the north east and partially protected from southerly winter winds by the Millers Point hillside and CBD beyond.

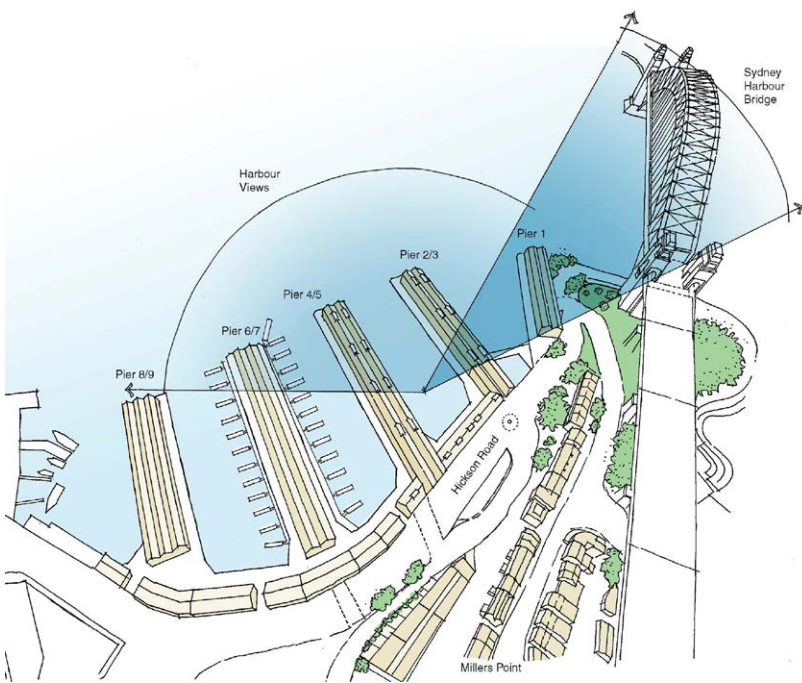


Figure 10 Views. BatesSmart.

VIEWS

The site offers panoramic views of Sydney Harbour to the north and west while immediately to the east the Sydney Harbour Bridge rises in the foreground.

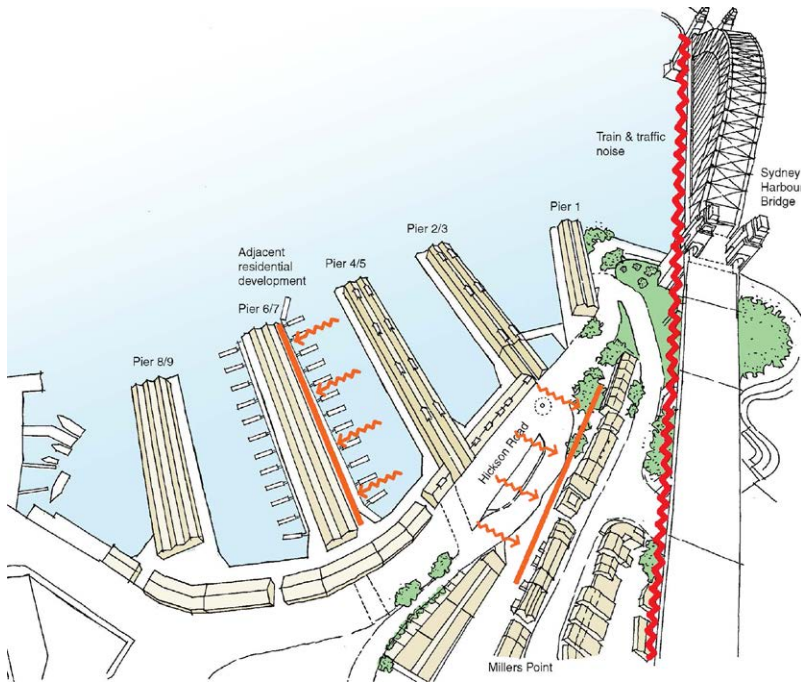


Figure 11 Noise. BatesSmart.

NOISE

The train line and adjacent traffic on the Sydney Harbour Bridge are an existing source of background noise, as are helicopters and ships on the Harbour. Surrounding residential development on Pier 6/7 and in Millers Point are particularly sensitive to any additional noise that the development may create.

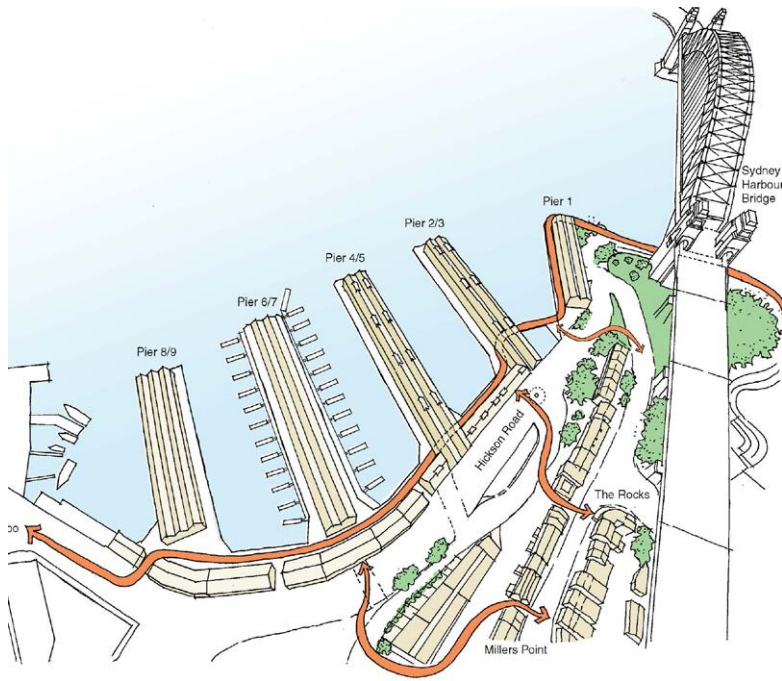


Figure 12 Pedestrian movement.

PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT

Located on the Harbour Foreshore, the site is a potential destination on the planned Cultural Ribbon, connecting Circular Quay to the East and Barangaroo to the West. Pedestrians can also gain access to the site from the Rocks and the CBD via the stairs that wind their way through Millers Point.

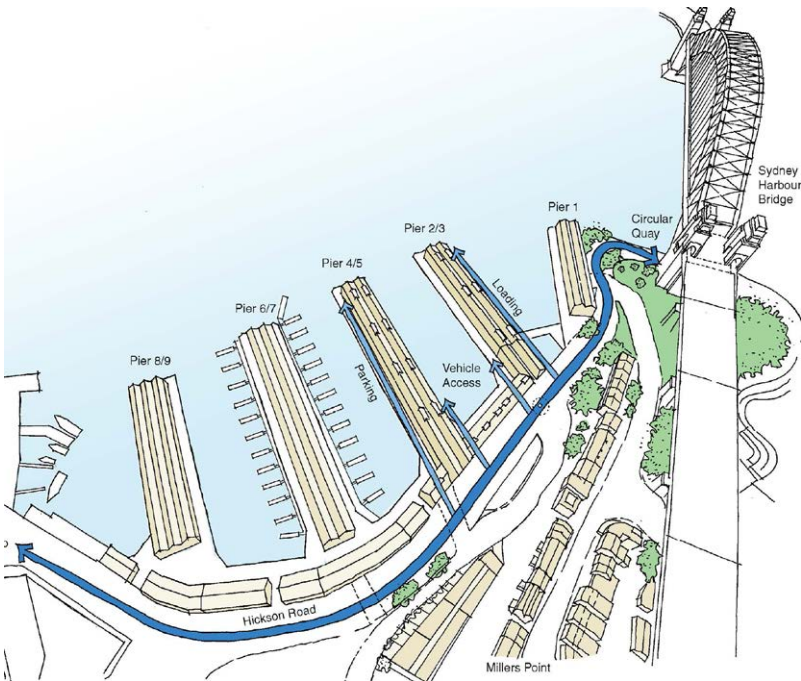


Figure 13 Vehicular Movement. BatesSmart.

VEHICULAR MOVEMENT

All vehicles access the site from Hickson Road which has several taxi ranks, bus stops and parking stations. Currently there is controlled vehicle access to the wharf aprons for loading.

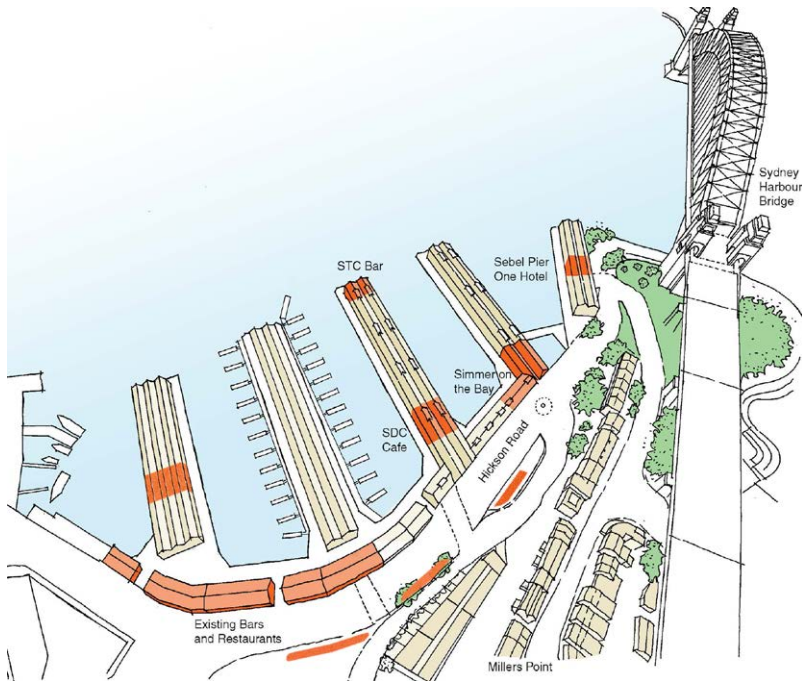


Figure 14 Existing activation. BatesSmart.

EXISTING ACTIVATION

Currently the wharves and shore sheds contain a range of restaurants and commercial tenancies alongside the arts tenants and other uses. While these public facing uses provide active frontages, the development offers significant opportunity to improve the level of activation.

2.4 HERITAGE CONTEXT

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The whole of Walsh Bay is listed on the State Heritage Register. The proposal is accompanied by a Statement of Heritage Impact prepared by Tropman & Tropman Architects.



Figure 15 General cargo, Pier 2/3

PIER 2/3 - STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The endorsed Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for Wharf 2/3, by Tropman and Tropman Architects (November 2000, pg 20), contains the following Statement of Significance:

"While it is significant in its own right, Wharf 2/3's primary significance is concerned with it being a part of the Walsh Bay complex. Wharf 2/3 is of State significance in the context of the Walsh Bay wharfage precinct, on the following counts.

7.2.1 On the site of wharf and maritime activity since the 1820's, Wharf 2/3 forms part of a decisive attempt to remodel Sydney's port facilities. It is thus a part of the historical development of Walsh Bay and of Sydney Harbour generally.

7.2.2 Wharf 2/3 forms part of a deliberate design plan for wharf construction. Its regularity, symmetry and clarity of design reveal aesthetic features of a high order. This is accentuated by the Wharf's place in the overall design of Walsh Bay.

7.2.3 The site, individually and as part of the Walsh Bay complex, has a strong architectural presence that contributes to the overall urban landscape of the southern shore of Port Jackson. It provides a prominent and historically rich landmark and contributes to create significant views and vistas. These include the existing vistas through the piling grid and building.

7.2.4 Wharf 2/3 constitutes a good example of a Federation Period 1912-1922, Edwardian Maritime Engineering style of architecture.

7.2.5 Pier 2/3 contains special design features such as exceptionally long timber piles (due to particularly deep water) and the two-level apron.

7.2.6 The southern (Hickson Road) brick and stone shore shed facade has a strong architectural presence and contributes to the streetscape and overall character of the area. It also contributes to create significant views and vistas from both street level and overhead bridges. In addition, the Walsh Bay shore shed facades to Hickson Road frontage, unusual in the Sydney Harbour Trust wharves, constitute today, after the demolition of berths 2 to 6 at Darling Harbour, the largest extant group.

7.2.7 The Wharf, and its predecessors, back to the 1830's, were a place for employment in an area and were connected with the development of upper and working class housing. This process continued with the Harbour Trust's association with Millers Point development. It is held in high local and heritage esteem.

7.2.8 Wharf 2/3 provides powerful evidence of wharf construction of its time, especially in its use of harbour piles. It exhibits the carefully contrived arrangement for the cooperation of transport and storage.

7.2.9 The site retains a number of associated industrial items and artefacts that contribute to illustrate former uses, operations and technologies at the site.

7.2.10 The whole site has archaeological potential to reveal new information about former structures, operations and life styles."

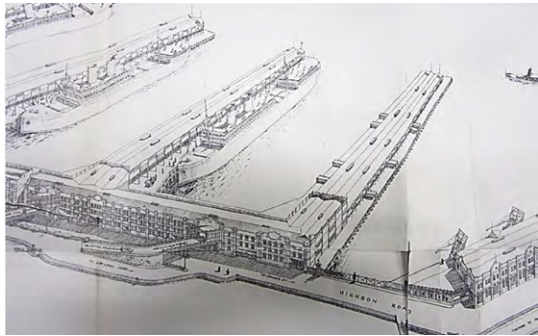


Figure 16 Sketch of Walsh Bay 1918



Figure 17 Historic aerial view of Walsh Bay showing gantries



Figure 18 Historic aerial view of Walsh Bay

WHARF 4/5 - STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following Statement of Significance is contained in the Graham Brooks Conservation Management Plan (2007). This CMP has not been endorsed by the Heritage Branch but it is the only CMP prepared specifically for Wharf 4/5.

"Wharf 4/5 and its associated shore sheds have heritage significance for their architectural, historical, technological and visual values. The subject buildings are located within the Walsh Bay Wharves Precinct- that is equally significant in the history of maritime trade in New South Wales. The site has historic value for its ability to demonstrate advancements in commercial shipping facilities during the early twentieth century. The subject buildings were part of a greater wharf resumption and development program that took place throughout Port Jackson during the early 1900s by the Sydney Harbour Trust. Its conversion into a performing arts precinct during the mid-1980s was heralded as an important achievement in the adaptive reuse of industrial buildings. Site has links with H.D. Walsh, Robert Hickson, Vivian Fraser and various internationally and nationally renowned artists and arts organisations. Wharf 4/5 is an integral part of the Walsh Bay Wharves Precinct. It has a strong distinctive character, owing to the materials used, its building form and scale. It possesses landmark qualities and is easily visible from North Sydney, Millers Point, Observatory Hill and on the waters of Port Jackson. The building is a rare example of timber finger wharves constructed by the Sydney Harbour Trust during the early twentieth century. Although it has been converted into a performing arts precinct, this has not diminished the building's relationship with its industrial past. The conversion of the wharf demonstrates a sensitive reuse of original building fabric which respects the integrity of the structure."

HISTORICAL LAYERS

As the sequence of maps in the adjoining diagrams shows, the pre 1788 shoreline of Walsh Bay has been successively modified to accomodate the intensive shipping uses of the wharves throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with infill and new sea walls constructed continuously along the shore, and extensive over-water piled timber structures supporting Hickson and Walsh's infrastructure for the Sydney Harbour Trust.

Wharf 2/3 was constructed between 1912 and 1922, whilst Wharf 4/5 was built between 1913 and 1922. Shipping use ceased in Walsh Bay in the 1970s.

In 1983, Wharf 4/5 was converted to accommodate Sydney Theatre Company, Sydney Dance Company, the Australian Theatre for Young People and the Philharmonia Choirs. The adaptive reuse won the Sulman Prize for public architecture.

Pier 2/3 was restored in 2003 and has been used as a venue for the Sydney Writers Festival, Biennale and Vivid amongst other events. The Wharf 2/3 Shore Sheds currently houses a range of commercial tenants.

The current proposal will add a distinctive but relatively modest new layer to identify and support the renewal of the precinct as a major cultural and tourism destination.



Figure 19 Walsh Bay 1844



Figure 20 Walsh Bay 1870

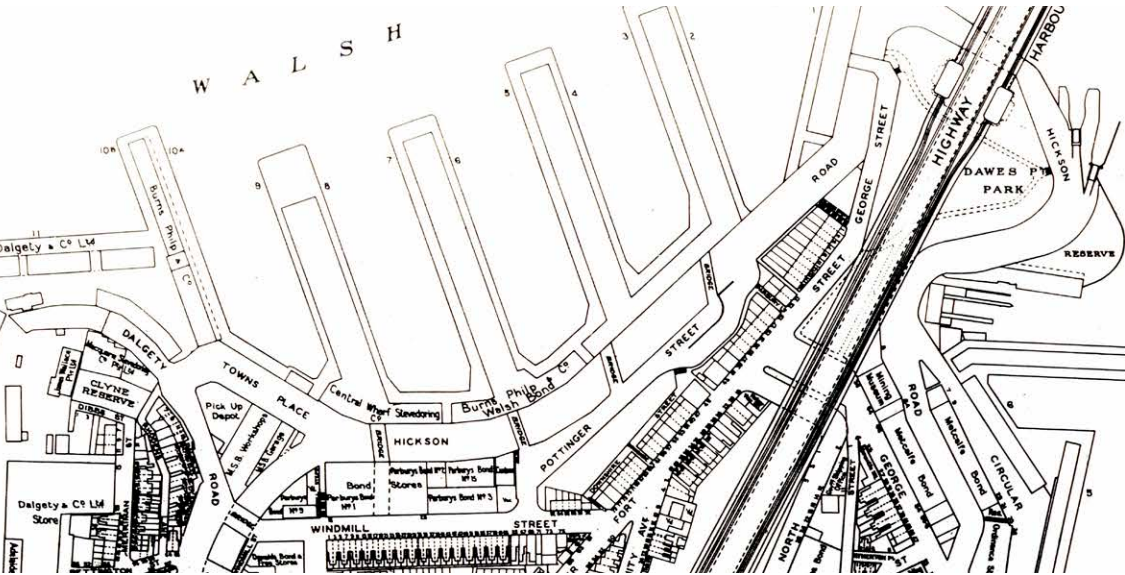


Figure 21 Walsh Bay 1957

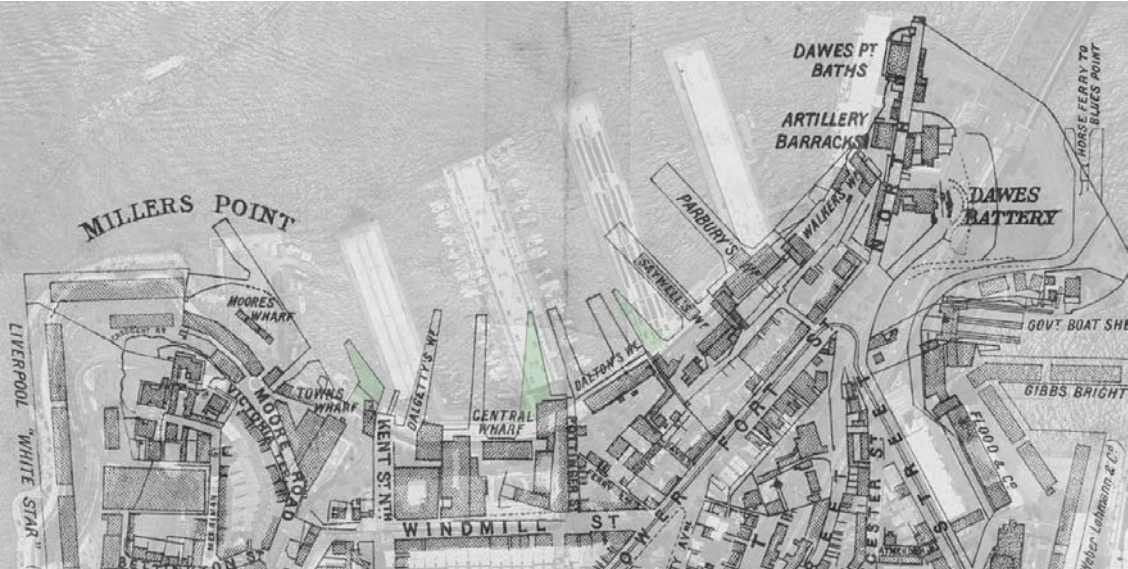


Figure 22 Walsh Bay 1903 with 1956 overlay