

EP/34 Taronga Zoo Sky Safari**Responsible Officer: Urban Planning Team Coordinator**

Executive Summary

A State Significant Development Application (SSD-46807958) has been lodged with the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) for the redevelopment of the Sky Safari at Taronga Zoo. The application was on public exhibition from 24 September to 21 October 2024. The consent authority for the application is the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

The proposal involves:

- Removal of the existing cable car structure, excavation works, tree removal and pruning
- Construction of 6 new pylons ranging in height from 4.3m to 36.5m and installation of new cable car line
- Construction of two new stations to load and unload patrons at the upper and lower entrances of the Zoo
- Public facilities including accessible queueing areas, ticket booths and public amenities
- Associated mechanical plant, servicing and storage area for on-going maintenance
- Landscaping works including new pathways, plantings, shade structures and seating.

In response to the public exhibition, a submission has been made (Attachment 1) which provides general support for the Sky Safari redevelopment and identifies matters that should be taken into consideration in the assessment of the application, including the visual and noise impact of the works, impact on trees and construction traffic management.

The official closing date for submissions was 21 October and thus the attached submission was made prior to the close of the public exhibition period. Should Council wish to add to or amend this submission, an updated submission can be made and provided to the Department.

Officer's Recommendation

The Team Coordinator Urban Planning recommends that Council endorse the submission attached to this report.

Background

The former Sky Safari was installed in 1987 and upgraded in 2000. Due to significant upgrades required for it to continue to safely operate, the Sky Safari was closed in 2023.

Taronga Zoo has been in consultation with Council on replacement options for the Sky Safari since 2022. Previous replacement schemes discussed involved a significantly larger cable car system which extended around the Zoo rather than just utilising the existing cable car route.

Current Position

A State Significant Development Application (SSD-46807958) has been lodged with DPHI for the redevelopment of the Sky Safari.

In accordance with Schedule 2 of the Planning Systems SEPP, development that has an estimated development cost (EDC) of more than \$10 million on land identified on the State Significant Development Sites Map is considered State Significant Development.

The proposed works have an EDC of \$77 million and accordingly, the proposal is State Significant Development for the purposes of the Planning Systems SEPP. The consent authority for the application is the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.

The proposal involves:

- Removal of the existing cable car structure, excavation works, tree removal and pruning
- Construction of 6 new pylons ranging in height from 4.3m to 36.5m and installation of new cable car line
- Construction of two new stations to load and unload patrons at the upper and lower entrances of the Zoo
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Consultation

The State Significant Development Application was on public exhibition from 24 September to 21 October 2024. The public exhibition documentation was made available on the [NSW Planning Portal](#).

Relationship with MOSPLAN

Strategic Direction 2 - A culturally rich and vibrant community

Strategic Direction 3 - An attractive and sustainable environment

Strategic Direction 6 - A healthy and active village lifestyle

Comment

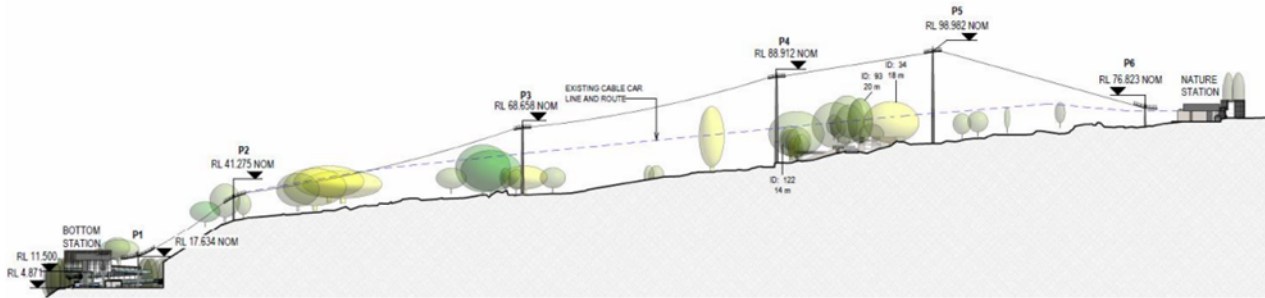
The installation of a new Sky Safari is required to replace the existing decommissioned cable car system and provide Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant access to the Zoo. The former Sky Safari did not meet current demand as cable cars and waiting areas were not DDA compliant and the system did not have sufficient capacity to move the volume of people required in peak times resulting in large queues. The proposed Sky Safari reduces the total number of pylons from nine to six, will have a much greater capacity to handle peak loads with larger accessible cable cars accommodating up to 10 people and will provide for universal accessibility and weather protected queueing areas at both the lower and upper stations.

The main assessment issues associated with the proposal are discussed below:

Visual Impact

The proposal has undergone significant design changes to reduce the scope and minimise the visual impact since originally being presented to Council through the early engagement process. While the current proposal utilises the existing cable car route rather than an expanded route around the Zoo as previously proposed, the width of the route has been increased from 9m to 12.5m to accommodate the larger cable cars. The height of the pylons has also been increased compared with the height of the existing cable line to accommodate the larger cars and to provide clearances above existing significant trees.

Cross section of the new cable car system:



As detailed in the View Impact Assessment (VIA), the proposal will have a greater visual impact than the former Sky Safari when viewed from certain vantage points outside the Zoo including Curraghbeena Point Lookout and Sydney Harbour. The VIA argues that despite this, the visual impact of the proposal is considered acceptable for the following reasons:

- *“Having been present on the site in a similar nature to that now proposed for the past 35 years, the Sky Safari is a well-established and valued part of the zoo landscape. Given this and the typical useable lifespan of such structures, it is reasonable to expect continuation of a Sky Safari within the site.*
- *While having a highly landscaped setting, the zoo itself is also inherently an urban zoo. This is evidenced by a number of buildings and structures being visible from locations outside the zoo, in particular the Function Centre, Wildlife Retreat and ferry terminal. It is also often seen, in particular from locations on the southern Sydney Harbour foreshore such as the Opera House, within the context of the highly developed lower North Shore west of Little Sirius Cove.*
- *The proposal has been subject to a comprehensive and detailed design process, including multiple State Design Review Panel sessions, with considerable reductions being made to its original scope to reduce visual impact.*
- *Remaining incursion of pylons (P2-P5) above the prevailing tree canopy line are necessary for structural safety and operational reasons, and as such are unavoidable in service of the proposal’s current intent.*
- *The proposed built form and curved architectural features of the Lower Station will further reduce visibility of the proposal, in particular when seen from more distant locations.*
- *Where visible, it is reasonable to assume that over time supplementary planting and ongoing maturation of existing vegetation will mitigate the prominence of vertical elements in views from outside the Zoo overtime.”*

Before and after view from Curraghbeena Point Lookout:



Before and after view from Sydney Harbour:



Based on the information provided in the VIA and the need to provide clearances from significant trees, it is accepted that there is justification for an increase in the height of the Sky Safari. To mitigate the visual impact of the proposal, conditions should be imposed requiring materials, finishes and colours to be used which have a dark earthy tone and low reflectivity. This should apply to the pylons, stations and supporting infrastructure as well as the cable car exteriors.

Trees

The Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) has been prepared which assessed 106 trees within proximity of the proposed works. The assessment identifies that proposal will retain 79 trees but will result in the removal of 7 trees (3 of these trees were not considered significant).

Council encourages the retention and pruning of existing trees rather than replacement. However, based on the findings of the AIA, it is accepted that the proposal has been designed to minimise tree loss.

To ensure that the site maintains the dominance of landscaping over built elements, the landscape plan should include the provision of suitable replacement trees along the route to screen the structure as well as provide for a net increase in the total number of locally indigenous large canopy trees over the whole site.

A site-specific tree protection strategy should be developed to identify tree protection measures for all trees in close proximity to the works including fencing and inspection requirements during construction.

Transport

A Transport Impact Assessment (TIA) has been prepared to assess the transport implications of the proposal. The TIA found that the re-instatement of the sky safari will not increase visitation to the Zoo beyond a minor peak following the opening of the new infrastructure. The existing road network was found to have spare capacity and no significant increases in demand for parking are expected.

The TIA identifies that the proposal will enhance public transport access to the Zoo by providing a strong level of connectivity to the adjacent ferry wharf and bus stop at the end of Athol Wharf Road. The existing cable car system required visitors accessing the lower entry to travel up 30 steps to reach the platform and did not provide for universal access from the adjacent public transport options. The proposal introduces an DDA compliant path of travel incorporating ramps and a lift.

A Green Travel Plan has been prepared as part of the TIA to encourage the use of walking, cycling and public transport to access the Zoo. While the actions identified in the Green Travel Plan are positive, it is recommended that options be explored to minimise the use of private cars by providing for the use of public transport to be incorporated with the purchase of a Zoo entry ticket.

Construction Traffic Management

The Transport and Accessibility Impact Assessment examines public transport impacts during construction and identifies that the 238 bus service will likely temporarily terminate at the upper station on Bradleys Head Road and not continue down Athol Wharf Road as the construction of the lower station will impede bus turning in the existing turning circle. The Assessment identifies that it is anticipated that a smaller minibus service would operate as a shuttle service between the lower and upper stations, allowing existing users of the 238 to continue to access Tarango Zoo ferry wharf.

It is acknowledged that the construction impacts will include disruptions to public transport options but these should be minimised as much as possible and Council would appreciate on-going consultation specifically where existing buses or ferries are impacted. It is understood shuttle buses are already being used, and Council recommends these being further utilised and available at no cost to residents and visitors affected by any temporary bus route changes or truncations.

To ensure that construction traffic impacts are appropriately managed including provision of loading/unloading facilities, provision of construction staff parking and safely managing construction and pedestrian traffic, a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) should be required to the satisfaction of Transport for NSW.

The traffic impacts associated with other construction projects being undertaken at or near the Zoo should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the CTMP. The overlap with other construction projects should be minimised to avoid a cumulative impact on the local road network and parking availability within the Zoo.

Noise

A Noise Assessment has been prepared to assess the potential noise impacts associated with the proposal including construction noise and on-going noise impacts. The Noise Assessment found that the nearest noise receivers are over 170m from the noise source and unlikely to be impacted subject to recommended noise mitigation measures being implemented.

To ensure that noise impacts from construction are kept to a minimum, conditions should be imposed requiring compliance with the NSW EPA draft Construction Noise Guideline and the mitigation measures recommended in the Noise Assessment.

Construction noise should be limited to the hours of 7am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays with no audible works at other times.

The proposed use of the Sky Safari outside of the normal Zoo operating times, i.e. for early morning and twilight sessions, should be conditional on there being no perceivable noise increases (i.e. not more than 5dBA above background noise levels) for surrounding residential properties.

Recommendation endorsed by Director Environment and Planning.

Attachments

1. Mosman Council Submission Taronga Zoo Sky Safari SSD 46807958 (1) [**EP/34.1** - 2 pages]



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21 October 2024

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Locked Bag 5022,
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Submission – Taronga Zoo Sky Safari (SSD-46807958)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment in response to the State Significant Development Application (SSD-46807958) for the Taronga Zoo Sky Safari that is on public exhibition until 21 October 2024.

Council generally supports the redevelopment of the former Sky Safari at the Zoo as it will provide improved access and an enhanced visitor experience. The design of the new cable car system represents a significant improvement from the concept plans originally discussed with Council through the early engagement process, by retaining the line of the existing cable car route. While this has overcome many of the previous concerns raised, Council recommends that the following matters be taken into consideration in the assessment of this application:

1. Visual impact

To mitigate the visual impact of the proposal, conditions should be imposed requiring materials, finishes and colours to be used which have a dark earthy tone and low reflectivity. This should apply to the pylons, stations and supporting infrastructure as well as the cable car exteriors.

2. Trees

To ensure that the site maintains the dominance of landscaping over built elements, the landscape plan should include the provision of suitable replacement trees along the route to screen the structure as well as provide for a net increase in the total number of locally indigenous large canopy trees over the whole site.

A site-specific tree protection strategy should be developed to identify tree protection measures for all trees in close proximity to the works including fencing and inspection requirements during construction. Council strongly encourages the retention and pruning of existing trees rather than replacement.

3. Green Travel Plan

To promote sustainable transport to the Zoo, a Green Travel Plan as detailed in the Traffic Impact Assessment for this project, should be implemented

In addition to this, options should be explored to minimise the use of private cars by providing for the use of public transport to be incorporated with the purchase of a Zoo entry ticket.

4. Noise

To ensure that noise impacts from construction are kept to a minimum, conditions should be imposed requiring compliance with the NSW EPA draft Construction Noise Guideline and the recommendations of the Acoustic Assessment prepared by Acoustic Studio accompanying the application. Construction noise should be limited to the hours of 7am to 5pm, Monday to Friday and 8am to 1pm on Saturdays with no audible works at other times.

The proposed use of the Sky Safari outside of the normal Zoo operating times, i.e. for "early morning and twilight sessions", should be conditional on there being no perceivable noise increases (i.e. not more than 5dBA above background noise levels) for surrounding residential properties.

5. Construction traffic management

It is acknowledged that the construction impacts will include disruptions to public transport options but these should be minimised as much as possible and Council would appreciate on-going consultation specifically where existing buses or ferries are impacted. It is understood shuttle buses are already being used, and council recommends these being further utilised and available at no cost to residents and visitors affected by any temporary bus route changes or truncations.

To ensure that construction traffic impacts are appropriately managed including provision of loading/unloading facilities, provision of construction staff parking and safely managing construction and pedestrian traffic, a detailed Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) should be required to the satisfaction of Transport for NSW.

The traffic impacts associated with other construction projects being undertaken at the Zoo should be taken into consideration in the preparation of the CTMP. Any overlap with other construction projects should be minimised to avoid a cumulative impact on the local road network and parking availability within the Zoo.

If you would like further information on Mosman Councils' position, please contact Sarah Wallace Team Coordinator Urban Planning on 9978 4019 or s.wallace@mosman.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Craig Covich
DIRECTOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING