

15 December 2017

Attention: Chris King
Planning
Department of Planning
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Redevelopment of Cockle Bay Wharf – Amended DA

I write to restate my objection to the redevelopment proposal for Cockle Bay Wharf. While the amended development application includes some improvements, it continues to represent overdevelopment of Darling Harbour's waterfront, resulting in impacts on the public domain and adjacent areas and residents.

Darling Harbour provides essential public open space on the waterfront that is a tourist and entertainment attraction and lunchtime retreat for city visitors and workers. Traditionally it has been low rise, complying with the good planning principle that requires heights to reduce as buildings approach the water.

I share widespread community alarm that Darling Harbour is losing human scale and being dotted with towers that block the skyline, create wind and overshadowing impacts, and dominate the public domain. While the revised plans reduce bulk and scale, consolidate open space to provide a new public park, and improve connections to the city, the proposal remains a tower on the public waterfront and overall it will contribute to the erosion of this important inner city public domain.

Height

At 195 metres high, the commercial tower on the existing Cockle Bay Wharf marks a massive change in scale. The community has stated over and over again that it does not want high rise towers against the public foreshore yet that is what is continuing to be proposed. The tower would dominate Cockle Bay and surrounds, including the Harbourside foreshore opposite and the heritage Pyrmont Bridge. It would add to cumulative impacts from other high rise plans and proposals in the precinct.

Views

The tower would significantly impact on views within Darling Harbour, and from Pyrmont Bridge and Pyrmont.

While the amended development proposal moves the tower further away from Pyrmont Bridge, it would continue to dominate outlooks from this heritage bridge for people travelling towards the city, blocking most city skyline views to the right of the bridge. The heavy presence of the tower adjacent to the bridge would detract from the experience of walking on this important bridge and impact on its heritage values and views.



City views from the Harbourside promenade would be severely impacted with the tower blocking the city skyline and dominating outlooks. Large portions of city views from Cockle Bay Wharf would be blocked by the tower and podium. This would have a detrimental effect on the amenity and public experience of this important public space.

I am concerned about significant loss of views from homes in the Astoria Building, some of which will be devastating. Views are important to the wellbeing of apartment residents, who live with no private open space. A view can connect someone inside an apartment with the outside world and create a sense of space.

Of great concern is that the building would block such a significant portion of the outlook from some homes that it will also result in massive loss of light and brightness inside. There is also reference to the loss of views for the 230 - 234 Sussex Street residential building that is under construction however photomontages seem to be excluded in the documents, even though there are references to them. These need to be provided to ensure transparency.

Boardwalk

I strongly object to the proposed boardwalk over water included in the amended design. The harbour continues to be incrementally reduced and this has impacts on its working harbour functions. The water is the major attraction of Darling Harbour and reducing its space impacts on the precinct's amenity. This proposal must be rejected.

Overshadowing

While overshadowing of Tumbalong Park has been removed under the revised plans, overshadowing remains a serious problem with the proposal. The eastern promenade will experience overshadowing in the morning as will parts of the water, which could reduce its environmental quality.

While there are improvements to solar impacts, the future Town Hall Square opposite Sydney Town Hall will have reduced sun access as a result of the proposed tower. Town Hall Square has long been part of the strategic plan to activate the city centre with a new civic boulevard and pedestrian hub, which will be reinforced by the light rail project on George Street. The draft Central Sydney Planning Strategy proposes a "no additional overshadowing" control for the square, and while it is not yet on public exhibition and not a required consideration, it is part of the long term vision for the city and should be respected.

Wind

Downwash wind from the tower would undermine enjoyment of the Cockle Bay Wharf promenade, particularly at the corner of buildings. The boardwalk, Pyrmont Bridge and Sussex Street will only pass the pedestrian walking test and no longer be suitable for pedestrian sitting due to wind impacts. These are important civic spaces; people need to be able to sit and linger comfortably on the promenade and Pyrmont Bridge, which are significant tourist destinations.

Traffic

The proposal for up to 150 car parking spaces should be rejected outright; it marks a small reduction from the original proposal and remains excessive and unacceptable given the building's proximity to other transport options including buses, trains and ferries and in the near future: metro and light rail. There is already serious traffic congestion in the central business district road network with queuing a frequent occurrence on Harbour Street. Parking should be limited to space for service vehicles, bicycles and car share.

The proposed Cockle Bay Wharf development would erode the amenity of Darling Harbour; the tower would impose on the precinct, contributing to cumulative loss of human scale, blocking city skyline views and creating unpleasant wind impacts.

The failure to establish a strategic plan for this part of Darling Harbour that ensures good planning principles are applied, with protection of public space and only light, low rise buildings permitted on the waterfront has meant that high rise proposals are rampant and are being assessed on an ad hoc basis. This continues to allow private gain to prevail over public benefit.

Darling Harbour provides rare but much-needed public open space and these impacts are unacceptable. The government must act as custodian of the harbour and refuse this damaging proposal.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'AG', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alex Greenwich
Member for Sydney