

Third Submission of objections SSD15_7056

Objection on the Grounds of Overdevelopment of the Site

The site of the proposed four-storey glass building, is the area of land bounded by the northern elevation of Campbell's Stores, Hickson Road, the southern edge of the pedestrian access adjacent to the Park Hyatt Hotel and an extension of the eastern elevation of Campbell's Stores. A space with dimensions of approximately 15m x 10m and an area of about 150m² (it is difficult to be more exact as the plans submitted with the SSD are not dimensioned).

The priorities for what has to be achieved from this relatively small space are both obvious and simple:

- To protect, preserve and enhance the heritage significance of Campbell's Stores.
- To facilitate and enhance non-stair pedestrian access to the foreshore of Campbell's Cove.
- To enhance the visual connection and views between Hickson Road, the Harbour and the Opera House.
- To retain and protect the significant Hill's Fig located immediately to the east of the site.

The necessity to meet these site priorities has presented the architects with a difficult task in the design of a building that could be considered suitable for the site. The resultant design, compromised by the necessity to achieve a commercially viable floor area and meet these objectives, fails to meet any of the objectives. The result is that the proposed structure is unsuitable for the site.

The height and bulk of the building will dominate the Stores building and dramatically change its setting. The basement for the building effectively 'buries' the ground floor of the Stores to a height of approximately 2m and visually screens the entire northern elevation of the Stores. The negative impacts on the heritage significance of the Stores has been raised in my previous submission.

Between Circular Quay and the northern end of the Park Hyatt Hotel, there are only two areas that provide pedestrians with non-stair access to the foreshore - Argyle St and the area between Campbell's Stores and the Park Hyatt Hotel.

The foreshore of west Circular Quay frequently accommodates hundreds of thousands of people during big events focused on the harbour. The need for additional stroller and wheelchair access is significant and obvious to anyone who has observed the bottleneck that currently occurs at the access adjacent to the Park Hyatt Hotel.

Due to restrictions to the pedestrian access on Argyle St., vehicular access to the Overseas Passenger Terminal and the curtilage and open space to Cadman's Cottage, there is only one option for improved foreshore access, the area that is the subject of this application, between the Stores and the Park Hyatt Hotel.

The basement for the proposed glass building requires raising the ground level by almost 2m. This will make it impossible to provide a non-stair access at this location. The proposed stair access is an unacceptable compromise that will not meet the significant access needs of the large numbers of people who have to use a stroller or wheelchair. The development will result

in the permanent loss of the opportunity to provide this much needed access to all who might need it.

The visual connection to the harbour is reduced not enhanced as a consequence of the low height (2.5m) of the open undercroft to the building. The inappropriate pavilion building and the unsuitable species of tree next to it have to be removed regardless of this development proposal. The removal of these inappropriate elements will substantially enhance the visual connection from Hickson Road to the waterfront providing no new structure is erected there.

Substantial fig trees, such as this significant tree, are planted with plenty of space around them in areas such as the Botanic Gardens, Observatory Hill, Hyde Park and Bennelong Park. The proposed building will be located to the immediate west and slightly within its existing canopy. This will compromise the space needed to create an appropriate landscape setting for the tree.

The reality is that just too much is being asked of this relatively small space with the consequence that the most significant priorities of the site are irreparably compromised.

Objection on the Grounds that the Building is Out of Character with the Area.

The predominant architectural feature of buildings in The Rocks, regardless of the era when they were designed and built, is their strong connection to the ground. They have a solid architectural base that truly anchors them to the land. The very name 'The Rocks', originating in the early days of European settlement, reflects the natural landform of the rocky outcrop on the western side of Circular Quay. Along with the predominance of 19th and early 20th century architecture, this is the architectural feature which gives the area its particular character.

In an attempt to meet the specific site priorities, of enhanced pedestrian access and visual connectivity to the foreshore, the architects had to elevate (if not levitate) the building above ground level by 2.5m.

The elevated, floating, building form is totally unsuitable to this location and results in a design that is dramatically out of character with the area. The building lacks any element of 'local' character that integrates it into the urban fabric of The Rocks. While there is a very valid place for international style architecture within the busy urban centre of a city's CBD, and elsewhere, new buildings within conservation areas need to maintain a local character even within a modern architectural form.

The proposed building clearly does not do this.

What makes this even more unacceptable in this particular application is that the site priorities that have dictated the architectural form have not been satisfactorily met. Not only is the building out of character but the consequent proposed access and visual connectivity are very poor.

The applicant and land owner are simply attempting to achieve too much out of a highly significant, highly sensitive site. The result is in an unsatisfactory building design and lost opportunities to enhance the clearly appropriate heritage, access and visual connectivity outcomes.

