

24th August, 2015
Job no. MHM/PT/LH

NSW Department of Planning

Letter of Objection

Crown Sydney Hotel Resort (SSD 6957), Barangaroo

We write in our capacity as part of the team that won the International Design Competition for Barangaroo in 2005/6.

We note that we have written a series of letters of objections to the Department of Planning over the intervening years, critiquing the modifications to the original approved Concept Plan and individual applications. We consider that the Department, despite empty rhetoric about consultation and 'having your say', has consistently failed to take any notice of any submission regarding the many failings of Barangaroo as it has developed since 2007.

1.0 Reasons why the Casino Application should be refused

The application for what is euphemistically called the Crown Sydney Hotel Resort, which is actually a stack of hotel and shops, casino and units, should be rejected for the following reasons;

A Location and Public Space Conflicts

- 1 It is against the public interest as it constitutes an invasive privatisation of the harbour foreshore. The proposal is at odds with more than a century of enlightened public policy by various tiers of Government and Government agencies, which has sought to reclaim the harbourfront for genuinely public purposes;
- 2 It is diametrically opposed to the principles of the 2006 International Competition Winning scheme and subsequent Approved Concept Plan, which reserved the entire foreshore, comprising continuous parkland and an edge public street, as inalienable public space;
- 3 Its placement colonises the public foreshore for its own private purposes, and narrows the foreshore promenade to a narrow, circuitous and token walkway, completely inappropriate given its place in the city;
- 4 The parkland is relegated to an inferior position away from the foreshore. This small, miserable space – inappropriately named Hickson Park – has an awkward residual shape, and is hemmed in by future tall apartment towers. Unlike every other public park (such as Macquarie Place or Wynyard Park) in the city centre, a significant proportion of its frontage is monopolised by private development, rather than by public streets. It must rank as amongst the worst public parks ever proposed in Sydney's city centre;
- 5 The tower's placement blocks the (unnamed) east-west street from opening to the harbourfront - instead it is blocked by the cavernous porte cochere;

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B The Inappropriateness of the Tower

- 6 The tower is too far north in terms of the predominant range of towers in the city, that extend in an east-west plane from The Domain to Darling Harbour. It has been placed here to claim views to the Opera House and Harbour Bridge, which is an inappropriate intrusion in the city's established form;
- 7 The tower is excessive in height, bulk and floor space, without any credible planning or urban design justification for its excesses. It is an ambit claim without sufficient justification or merit;
- 8 On its flawed location, it will overshadow the foreshore promenade to the south in the middle of the day for significant parts of the year;
- 9 Due to its flawed location and bulk, it will overshadow significant parts of Pyrmont and the waters of Darling Harbour in the morning, and other parts of the city later in the day;

C Architectural Shortcomings

- 10 The imagery in the application shows the thrusting tower competing with the Opera House and Harbour Bridge, when viewed from Circular Quay or the harbour. The building is a private development proposal, and has nothing of the public ownership, collective interest or design quality of Sydney's most prominent, and rightly famous structures. It is offensive for the proponent to make such an unwarranted intrusion on the city's form and character for purely private gain;
- 11 This is a commercial proposal like hundreds of others in the city – it should not be granted such a prominent position and its singular attributes are at odds with the city's established form. Spruiking their inflated self-interest, its developers may claim it's a 'landmark' when really it's just a 'land grab';
- 12 In my opinion its architectural expression risks being simplistically executed. References to flower imagery are not sufficient to satisfactorily demonstrate the architectural resolution of a 260+ metre tall tower of aluminium and glass where every decision will be subject to the profit motive;
- 13 The design takes little account of environmental issues, such as exterior sun shading, reflectance, down draft and the like;
- 14 At 34m high and 130m long, the block form and podium is bulky and heavy-handed. Its street presence is dominated by the over-sized porte cochere, driveways and services, with little active frontage. Such an arrangement is unacceptable anywhere in the city, but particularly regressive on a publicly-owned, foreshore site;

D Equity Issues

- 15 The proposal lacks adequate consideration of its social impacts, such as the negative impacts of gambling on the patrons, smoking on the staff and the like;
- 16 No public or affordable housing appears to be included in the application, despite many storeys of residential accommodation being sought. This is against the early requirements for a percentage of affordable housing to be provided on the Barangaroo site and similar standards imposed in other comparable locations in other global cities;

E Process Failings

- 17 This proposal arises from the flawed and secretive Unsolicited Proposal status, which lacks transparency and marginalises the genuine public interest on what is public land. The proposal has arrived at application stage without any independent planning or urban design evaluation or justification. Therefore it cannot possibly be seen as a part of any *modification* – it is clearly at odds with the planning of this crucially important public site. As it lacks due process compared to almost every other application across the state, it should not be accepted as a valid application;
- 18 How can this proposal be in any way deemed as State Significant, when it is solely for private profit comprising predominantly a Residential Flat Building with shops, a medium sized hotel and casino? The State Significant aspect is in actuality the negative precedent that it would set for the privatisation of public land - reason enough to reject it out of hand;
- 19 On prime public land on our harbour's foreshore, the terms of the agreement between the NSW Government on behalf of its citizens and the proponent have not been fully disclosed. Are the people of NSW receiving a fair deal here, in their long-term interests? The terms of the agreement for use of this public land for private development and casino uses should be made public to allow for scrutiny. Without full public disclosure, this proposal should not be accepted.

We trust that this time the Department and the Minister will give proper consideration to this scandalous development proposal at Barangaroo and **refuse it outright**.

Yours sincerely,



Philip Thalys

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