

01 April 2019

Karl Fetterplace
Planning Officer,
Key Sites Assessments
NSW Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

by email: karl.fetterplace@planning.nsw.gov.au

RE: RE: SSD 8665 – The Mercantile Hotel, 25-27 George Street, The Rocks

Dear Karl,

We refer to the above project and the additional information requested by the Department of Planning to address comments from Place Management NSW, the Heritage Council and the City of Sydney. We have reviewed the issues raised regarding the heritage impact of the proposed alterations and additions and have also had a further discussion with City of Sydney to clarify their comments. Our comments and clarifications are as follows:

GFA Calculations

GFA calculation drawings of each level have been provided showing the breakdown by use.

Lift size and excavation

The proposed lift has been further investigated and further detail design undertaken to confirm the size in relation to current BCA and other regulatory requirements. The vertical rise from the lower ground floor level to the proposed rooftop is 12.25 m, requiring that the lift car be of a size to accommodate a stretcher. In addition the lift is required to have openings on both the south and the east to provide access to all levels of the building, which then necessitates internal clearances for wheelchair circulation and door access at 90 degrees. The resulting minimum lift car size has been used to determine the minimum lift shaft size, overrun and 1500mm excavation depth as indicated on the drawings.

In order to reduce the visual bulk and scale of the lift shaft it has been designed to be partially glazed for transparency and articulated by concertina glazed and zinc cladding panels to as to create shadows across the surface of the lift shaft. The key view of the lift is from the northern approach along Gloucester Walk. From this view the glazed face of the lift is seen, allowing views through the lift shaft to the existing building wall beyond. From the southern approach along Gloucester Walk the lift is screen by the existing hotel building, including the rear chimney. When pedestrians on Gloucester Walk progress past the chimney, the zinc clad lift shaft wall is then setback between 1.4 and 1.2m from the face of the original masonry wall and viewed in elevation from only a small section of Nurses Walk.

Rooftop additions

The form and overhang of the proposed rooftop enclosure has been developed in consultation with Place Management NSW to address the important views to and from the Harbour Bridge. The highlight glazing when viewed from the Harbour Bridge pedestrian walkway provides clear views through the roof structure, creating a sense of lightness and transparency for the new structure. Likewise, the view through the highlight glazing from within the rooftop enclosure are directed to the unique of the Harbour Bridge structure from below. The large overhangs of the roof structure are designed to shade the majority of the north facing glass from summer to the solstice so as to minimise reflectivity when viewed from the bridge and reduce heat load within the rooftop enclosed area.

Kitchen Mechanical Exhaust

The kitchen mechanical exhaust has been further investigated and further detail design undertaken to confirm the minimum sizes required and internal ducting routes. The duct pathway from the kitchen on the first floor is shown on the architectural drawings, with the vertical riser located so as to minimise impact on significant heritage building fabric. On the rooftop the exhaust is approximately 1.2x1.2m in plan and 1.2m high. The overall height of the exhaust is contained to be less than the height of the brick chimney located approximately 4m away. It should be noted that

exemption will need to be sought at Construction Certificate stage on the basis of minimising heritage impact for the exhaust to be located at this lower height and within 6m of the boundary of the property.

Rooftop planters

Consideration has been given to the Heritage Office concerns regarding the impact of the planters on the rooftop. The proposed planters on the rooftop terrace area have been removed from the proposal in order to maintain the robust character of the rooftop. A small area of planting has been maintained on the western edge of the rooftop to provide an element of privacy to the adjacent residential site on Gloucester Walk and given the setback between the original façade and the new rooftop further depth.

Materials, Finishes and colours

Coloured external elevations and a sample board of materials have been provided detailing the proposed materials and indicating their relationship with the existing building fabric.

The new ground floor amenities at the rear of the hotel comprises a concrete addition with green roof and a glazed roof separation to the adjacent early sandstone retaining wall. The glass roof strip is proposed to visually separate the new structure and provide natural light along the face of the sandstone wall. The use of concrete is proposed to be distinctly contemporary in contrast to the existing hotel building and contrasting in texture to the face brickwork of the existing facades.

The new lift is designed as a steel and glass structure, visually separate from the main building, with a vertical articulation of cladding to play against the horizontal masonry elements of the original building. The northern elevation of the lift shaft is the principal view of the lift from the approach along Gloucester Walk. Here glazing is proposed to both the lift shaft and the lift so that the existing masonry wall of the original hotel building beyond is visible. The glazing to the lift shaft is set in a concertina layout, to minimise the visual bulk and allow for the glazing to always be partially in shade. The pre-weathered matt zinc metal cladding proposed to the western blade wall is also articulated in a concertina to create a play of light and shadow across the facade viewed from Nurses Walk. Zinc cladding creates a subtle reference to the metal cladding often used building additions, with the pre-weathered matt finish proposed so as to be subdued against the dominant masonry materiality of the existing building.

The materials of the roof top bar and restaurant additions have been selected to be visually distinct from the main building, allowing the original heritage structure to read as the principal and dominant building in both form and material. Externally the rooftop addition comprises three main components - the amenities / coolroom area on the roof of No.27 George Street; the enclosed patron bar and restaurant area on 25 George Street; and the fire stair enclosure located at the northern end of the building.

The amenities/coolroom area and the northern are proposed to be clad in standing seam pre-weathered matt zinc metal cladding. The pre-weathered finish provides a subdued, non-reflective finish which will be further broken up by the shadows of the standing seam detailing, further reducing the perceived scale of the additions.

The main patron bar and restaurant area is proposed as a steel and glass addition to create a visually open and largely transparent structure. Steel is used to create a fine edge to the roof structure and reduce the size of structural members. Glass to the northern highlight windows and the eastern edge is shaded up to and including the solstice to minimise reflectivity, particularly when viewed from the bridge.

To the western elevation, the two mesh fence panels in the parapet wall are to be infilled to match the profile of the existing parapet wall to the eastern and northern facades. The infill panels are proposed to be rendered and painted to distinguish them from the original face brick detail on the other facades with the rendered panels painted cream to match other rendered bands on the building. Beyond the masonry parapet wall the new addition wall is set behind a proposed planter and broken into a series of steel and glass panels. The steel panels and structure are to be painted with mid-grey micaceous oxide paint to reference to the dominant form of the adjacent Harbour Bridge.

The rooftop terrace paving, partially visible from the Harbour Bridge, is proposed to be a concrete paver in a mid to light warm tone. This material will be non-reflective with a lighter tone selected to minimise heat absorption.

Services Integration

Further investigated and detail design has been undertaken to clarify the integration of services in the building so as to minimise the extent of heritage impacts. Services coordination drawings of each level are provided showing proposed horizontal and vertical service runs. These have been developed in consultation with Urbis Heritage, including

methodologies for services penetrations. Further details are also provided additional drawings showing typical 1:50 plan and sections of bathrooms, kitchens and rooftop areas.

Construction of Ensuite Pods, Kitchen + Rooftop Addition

Further drawings have been provided showing typical 1:50 plan and sections of bathrooms, kitchens and rooftop areas as required to describe the support and construction of these elements, and how the design minimises the impacts on the existing building fabric including plaster decoration and joinery.

Signage

Further drawings have been provided showing the proposed new signage to the hotel, particularly relating to the statutory signage requirements. The existing painted signage on the hotel and awning is proposed to be retained. The original painted signage graphic that is proposed to be restored is shown on the South Elevation.

The design of the proposed alterations and additional to the Mercantile Hotel has been carefully considered and developed in close consultation with Place Management NSW in order to minimize negative impacts, enhance the appreciation and understanding of the building and context, and to provide long term viable options for the ongoing operation of the hotel, including the ongoing use for residential accommodation. We believe that the final design solution adopted achieves these goals and will create an enriched experience for the users of the Mercantile Hotel and visitors to The Rocks area generally.

Yours Sincerely,

Chris Major