

Headland Park main works submission

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing to make a submission on the main works planning application for the Barangaroo Headland Park. Through my role as a Councillor on City of Sydney Council I have been involved in extensive discussion with community members over Barangaroo and have found there to be significant community interest in the issue. Therefore, the statements below reflect the views not just of myself but of a large number of my constituents as well.

Overall, the community is very supportive of the idea of a new park on the shores of Sydney harbour, although many feel that the level of landscaping to be carried out (particularly the construction of artificial coves) is excessive. Some specific issues of concern are set out below.

Carpark

The biggest concern local residents and others have about the park is the impact that a 300 space carpark beneath it will have.

Provision of parking for 300 cars is not in keeping with the sustainable, low car ideals that are espoused for Barangaroo and City of Sydney Council. The traffic report that accompanies the EAR for the park estimates that approximately 120 two ways trips will be generated in peak hour by the carpark, asserts that these will primarily be park users and that this volume of traffic will not adversely impact the surrounding streets.

The idea that people would drive into the City specifically to use the park is at odds with the notion of it being an informal, casual recreation space. The traffic report also seems to entirely ignore the effect of traffic generated by the use of the cultural centre planned for beneath the park. If parking is provided people attending events at the centre will have more incentive to choose to drive instead of using public transport. The carpark will likely become full during large events, meaning that at least 300 more car trips along Towns Pl will be generated in the immediate lead up to an event, causing significant traffic problems. These problems will be further compounded if the carpark become full and drivers intending to use it are forced to drive around on surrounding streets to find alternative parking.

These problems would be alleviated if the only parking provided was for service vehicles and a small number of disabled parking spots as this would mean far fewer people would attempt to drive to events at the cultural centre.

Harbour heat exchange system

There is some concern about the possible use of a harbour heat exchange system to cool the carpark and cultural facility. While any measures that reduce energy use are welcomed the impacts of such initiatives on surrounding environments need to be carefully examined.

In particular, the EAR implies that an open heat exchange system will be used, which is of concern as there is some uncertainty about what effects the anti-fouling chemicals used in these systems have on the surrounding marine environments. Research on this matter is currently being undertaken by the University of Sydney and a decision on whether to use an open or closed system (or a harbour heat exchange system at all) should await the findings of this research. For more information see the November 2010 issue of Ecolibrium magazine, available at <http://www.airah.org.au/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications/Ecolibrium/default.htm>.

Sustainable energy

The suggestion that solar energy generating infrastructure may be set up on the site is a welcome one, but it is hard to see where on the site large scale facilities of this nature could be located. While the option of solar cells on the site should be seriously investigated consideration should also be given to other means of sustainable onsite energy production. The installation of a trigeneration plant in the car park would be a far more productive and environmentally friendly use of space than the few parking spots it would displace.

Wildlife habitat

The headland park creates a number of opportunities to provide valuable wildlife habitat in the heart of the City and make a positive contribution to our urban biodiversity.

The plan to capture runoff water from all but the biggest storms through bioretention swales is a positive one. However it has been suggested that in the name of improving biodiversity these swales could be built in such a way as to serve as artificial wetland habitats. Endangered species, such as the green and gold bell frog, could be introduced into the site and programs could be set up to allow local school or community groups to monitor their progress and protect these habitats.

Another species that should be considered in the planning of the park is the grey headed flying fox. Currently a colony of up to 22 000 individuals of this vulnerable species lives in the Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG), less than a kilometre from the headland park site. The managers of the RBG are concerned that the bats are causing damage to the gardens and are seeking to forcibly relocate them. However planting appropriate food and nesting trees at Barangaroo may help take some of the stress off the RBG and alleviate the perceived need to relocate the colony.

Grey headed flying foxes are an Australian icon, used to promote the country overseas as a tourist destination alongside pictures of kangaroos, koalas and Uluru. The nightly fly out of thousands of these majestic creatures from the RBG is a well known site and encouraging some of the RBG population to take up residence at Barangaroo would serve as a great way to attract visitors to the site, as well as helping to protect this important species from extinction.

Skate park

There is significant public support for the idea of a skate park being built at Barangaroo, and the headland park would be the ideal precinct for it. It is estimated that approximately 2000 skateboarders live in the City of Sydney Local Government Area and another 56 000 live in a 20km radius.

Skateboarding is a popular form of informal recreation that gels well with the idea of promoting cycling and other healthy physical activity in the park. A skate park would have a big impact on activating the site at all times of the day (and at night if lit). It would help generate the high levels of public use and feeling of public ownership of the site that the EAR states are desirable methods of reducing crime.

The image of young people performing skateboard tricks with the Harbour Bridge in the background could quickly make the site a Sydney icon and the park would likely be in high demand for international skate board events, which would attract a type of visitor to Barangaroo that is otherwise not catered for in plans for the rest of the site.

Myself and City of Sydney resident Juliet Barr, whose Facebook page advocating the construction of a skate park at Barangaroo has over 1700 fans at the time of writing, have previously made detailed submissions to the BDA on the value of a skate park at the site and copies of these can be forwarded to the Department of Planning if requested.

I hope you will be able to take on board the comments above. If you would like any further information on the matters covered here please feel free to contact me either by email on idoutney@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or by phone on 9265 9812.

Regards

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City of Sydney Council