

17 May, 2021

Independent Planning Commission,  
ipcn@ipcn.nsw.gov.au

To whom it may concern

Harbourside Shopping Centre Redevelopment, SSD 7874 – Response to IPC

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the concerns of the IPCN in relation to this project. We do so in the context of our continuing objection to the development on the grounds that it represents the privatization of public assets as part of the Darling Harbour precinct whose earlier development was dedicated to the people of Sydney as a place to enjoy public spaces in a harbourside setting, providing recreational, cultural and retail experiences available to all who visited. We challenge the concerns raised by Mirvac's consultants, and also provide comments on the changes proposed by Mirvac in response to concerns outlined by the IPCN.

## **Developer's Claims**

1. *Loss of more than 40% of employment generating floor space* – With proposals circulating within the NSW Government proposing conversion of office space to residential uses as a response to the popular trend of working from home, it is highly likely that any new office space in or near the CBD may be redundant for years to come. Offices in a recently completed office building in Pyrmont designed to accommodate 2,000 workers remain unoccupied after over 12 months, including a work-based childcare centre included in the development to serve workers and locals.
2. *Loss of more than 100 homes* – With the conversion of CBD office space to residential use, as discussed above, a reduction of private residential space in the Harbourside development will have little, or no impact on the ability of middle- to high-income people to find an appropriate home near the centre of Sydney CBD. It would be more concerning if the project had included a substantial number of public Social and Affordable Housing for which there is a huge unmet demand.
3. *Undermining the site's state significance* – The actual redevelopment of this valuable site as proposed will destroy its significance and value to the people of Sydney and NSW through its privatization. As for contributing to planning objectives, the proposal is actually in opposition to most of the 10 Directions set out in the *Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy*, including Direction 2 – Development that complements or enhances the area; Direction 5 – A tapestry of greener public spaces and experiences; Direction 6 – Creativity, culture and heritage; Direction 7 – Making it Easier to move around; Direction 9 – Great homes that can suit the needs of more people (including a boost to social and affordable housing); Direction 10 – A collaborative voice (when clearly this development has not produced "a cohesive, agreed approach to bring the best outcomes for



- Pymont Peninsula” and certainly has not “increased participation by women and children in the design process and the built form outcomes” PPPS p34).
4. *Project's Viability* – The proponent provides no evidence to support the statement that the proposed amendments will put the project's viability at stake. If the changes mean that Mirvac will actually make no profit, then, perhaps, it should shelve the project altogether.
  5. *Compromise delivery of public benefit* – The optimum public benefit would be if the Harbourside building is retained or rebuilt within its current envelope, as a retail and restaurant facility to serve both the Pymont community and visitors to Darling Harbour. If the site is redeveloped as proposed by Mirvac, the people of Sydney and visitors will be robbed of the popular ferris wheel.

## Proposed Changes

6. *General Comment* – These changes represent an improvement on the proposal approved by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.
7. *Reduction of the Northern Podium to 11.8m* – The IPCN public hearing heard from Barbara Doig, a resident of 50 Murray Street, of the severe impact the proposed height of the podium would have on her life – loss of sunlight, loss of views, loss of privacy with the presence of offices so close to her apartment. We support the lowering of the height of the northern podium to 11.8m if this ensures that she retains her existing amenity. We also recommend that the whole area of the northern podium be public open space but closed to the public after 10pm. We reject the proponent's claim that such a reduction would be inconsistent with the prevailing character of podium buildings fronting Cockle Bay. Once again, the site's relationship with the built form of the Pymont Peninsula is completely disregarded.
8. *Reduction in Tower Envelope* – We support the reduction of the building envelope of the tower to 1,000 sqm as recommended by the IPCN. As currently envisaged the tower will loom over the water and what's left of the public walkway and the proposed setback will lessen its impact on public space.
9. *Public Open Space* – We support the reduction in height of the northern podium as proposed by IPCN. The Mirvac alternative proposal will still block views and extending the area of the proposed Guardian Square will expand opportunities for passive and active recreational activities beyond the very minimal 1500 sqm currently proposed. We also strongly support retention of the existing open space in front of Harbourside to enable the continued operation of the very popular ferris wheel. We do not consider the 20m continuous pathway as proposed by Mirvac as anything other than a route from A to B, reducing the current wider plaza area outside the shopping complex to a mere pathway, not useful public open space.

It should be noted that the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, in developing its *Pymont Peninsula Place Strategy* was presented with a *fait accompli* in that they were required to incorporate the building parameters such as maximum height in what was designated a Key Site, as incorporated in the Concept DA approved by another arm of DPIE, as it was a development in an advanced stage of assessment.



We urge the IPCN to require Mirvac to incorporate its proposed changes in the building footprint, as it is the very least required to maintain some public benefit to the people of Sydney and NSW. If this means that the project can't proceed, the people to whom Darling Harbour was dedicated as a Place for the People of Sydney will have one small corner of this precinct to call their own.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Elenius, Convenor

