

Independent Planning Commission – Harbourside Shopping Centre Redevelopment SSD 7874. Public Meeting on Wed 28 April 2021.

Comments by Ken Loudon, 502/8 Darling Island Road, Pyrmont NSW 2009.

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak about this development.

By way of introduction, I am a new resident to the Pyrmont Peninsula having purchased an off the plan apartment.

What attracted my wife and I to the Pyrmont peninsula was its wonderful mix of residential, commercial, tourism and community, its history, the old heritage wharfs, its trees and accessible parks, harbour access, its heritage buildings and the enjoyment of walking from the CBD into a very non CBD location.

What this translates to is an attractive look and feel and overall general ambiance that is close to the CBD but it isn't in the CBD.

My point here is that Darling Harbour and Pyrmont's past developments have taken into consideration their location, its mixed community and their needs, the existing residents and local land marks.

I am not sure the current Harbourside Development will preserve this environment.

I certainly recognize the developer has amended their plans from originally submitted but sense some additional changes should be considered.

When I look at the current plans and then view the existing location I sense some clashes.

Within this location, ICC (and its build form) as well as the Sofitel Hotel tower are set back and are not overly bulky nor appear a large interconnected form.

As a comparison, I understand the proposed new tower envisaged in Cockle Bay though definitely within the CBD and on the eastern side of Darling Harbour (and opposite this development) will not to my understanding encroach towards the water front and will be in keeping with its location and set back.

I have a number of general observations for the commission to take into consideration.

The tower is just too tall and will impact the community significantly into the future.

The build form is too bulky and interconnected. The podium park called Guardian Square should be reduced in size as it is too close to one of our great heritage structures and will detract from all aspects of Pyrmont Bridge.

The developer should ensure the podium parks will be safe for all.

To briefly comment on these points.

Tower

I am not against refreshing the Shopping Centre but find the residential tower of some 300 odd apartments and car spaces and high commercial /retail podiums excessive.

My sense is the apartment number and the height of the tower is the means for the developer to pay for the development.

Stating the obvious = an increased population of 300 new apartments and large commercial /retail spaces will increase traffic, noise and place pressures on our social infrastructure including health, education and most probably policing = it's the obvious legacy of any development and it is always left to the community.

This location on the western side of Darling Harbour and Pyrmont is already very busy, dense and congested.

Although I understand the height RL cap has been supported within the Pyrmont Place Strategy, I cannot reconcile why a single tall finger like tower needs not respect a more attractive shorter build form.

I also don't understand why the tower height does not step down from the Sofitel similar to how the ICC and Ribbon on the southern and western side have stepped down to create a more balanced aspect.

A shorter tower would be more attractive and in keeping with the location.

Build form is bulky and too close to Pyrmont Bridge

The overall build form of high interconnected podiums, adjoining a tall tower with a narrower promenade would appear to block, close off and wall off the western area of Darling Harbour.

I also think the podiums are overall too tall and would think a mixture of smaller podiums would also be more attractive. They also appear to continue in some height to in front of the Sofitel hotel.

From my understanding, the podiums at the northern end are suggested to be at the same height or close to the height of the walk way on Pyrmont Bridge. I recognize this podium is lower than others but will still be only 7 metres away from the bridge.

The Guardian Square Park will reside on top of this most northern podium.

The Guardian Square Park should be reduced in size so as to allow the heritage Pyrmont Bridge to be have more air space and some distance. So as to allow it to be respected and viewed independent to a modern structure. This would also counter balance on the other side of the bridge with the air space and distance afforded by the Maritime Museum.

I am mindful a reduction in park size runs counter to public space but I think the preservation around such a significant land mark should be considered.

As an alternative perhaps a pocket ground level green space could be located down the bottom.

Also, the current plan of Guardian Square's height and proximity will detract from Pymont Bridge when walking to and from the CBD.

The inter connectedness of this podium and the others will create a large block or bulk across the Western foreshore.

My sense is your sight lines should not carry on from the bridge – they certainly do not at present.

I would encourage a change so that when walking across you have the feeling of being on an old bridge, sensing its purpose and location above the water.

On all sides it should not feel or look closed in by its modern surrounding structures and should be preserved and respected for its history.

The above ground podiums parks.

My final observation relates to the overall podiums parks that appear a compromise in allowing the encroachment of the promenade 9 metres closer to the harbour from the current alignment of buildings.

These parks should have adequate access for the elderly and incapacitated, they must have adequate lighting, either security or regular closures at night and some investment by the developer to support safety in the area as it would be expected that anti-social behavior will increase.

To conclude, I am not against development rather I am in favour of good development that enhances a location, respects existing residents and its communities and invests in new social infrastructure as part of the developer and developments obligations.

As this development is the first of many under the Pymont Place Strategy, then I would be grateful if the Commission takes into consideration my observations.

Thank you.