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30/12/2024

MR David Colman
205 William ST
Melbourne VIC 3000
[REDACTED]

RE: DA2024/1375 - 0 East Esplanade MANLY NSW 2095

I object to the proposal the subject of this DA, principally on the ground that it unacceptably compromises the amenity of the eastern end of the Manly Wharf in two significant ways. First, it builds over (and removes from the public domain) the attractive and important 'amphitheatre' feature at water's edge; and secondly, in the process (in order to salvage an alternative thoroughfare to replace the more direct, current, oft-used one 'stolen' by the plan), creates an unattractive, 'blunted' appearance from the adjacent harbour beach, in place of the graduated one from the beach towards, and over, the amphitheatre feature. At the point water meets path, a wall will drop at a right-angle 1.5m into the water. Instead of inviting ingress and egress to the water, it will terminate it at that point altogether. It is difficult to see how that will advance the public interest or amenity.

Put simply, by diverting the public in this way, to a less convenient route around 'Felons', it robs the public of an important design feature, and simultaneously impairs the aesthetic and utility of the adjacent section of the beach. And for what 'advance'? A 'kid's playground'? Isn't it enough the entire adjacent beach - including the amphitheatre to be lost - provides a kid's playground sufficient to meet the communities' need? The only utility of this playground is to enable parents to directly capture and supervise them whilst they imbibe - to the proprietor's profit.

The plan is probably also the thin end of the wedge, that is, the next step in the incremental taking over of all of the vicinities' useful public space and amenity.

The plan's assumption is that the amphitheatre is disposable. But no sensible study underpins that conclusion. It is doubtful the applicant or the designer have witnessed the public's use of it on a hot weekend. Further, it interacts, and is in harmony with, the stepped area in the vicinity of the (now demolished) aquarium. Not to mention the now demolished sunken amphitheatre in the Corso - the loss of which is now almost universally disesteemed. These are design features of eras worth preserving.

Further, and lamentably, this also yet another chapter in the degradation of the Wharf's original features and fabric. The plan should therefore be rejected.

I make these observations in the context of the Wharf's:

1. environmental significance as a visually prominent man-made feature;

2. cultural significance, including its emphasis on the 'arrival by ferry';
3. historical significance for its associations with the maritime activities at Manly as a tourist destination and suburb of Sydney, dependent on the ferry link to the CBD (Anglin 1990:2033). Together with Circular Quay, the wharf is the only substantial older style ferry wharf surviving in Port Jackson;
4. façade, side walls and surrounding features, that together form an important architectural design, similar to the Circular Quay ferry terminals (Blackmore, Ashton, Higginbotham, Rich, Burton, Maitland, Pike, 1985);
5. modernistic transport idiom, with typical stylistic features of the era including the play of circular and rectangular geometric forms, featuring a concrete deck to west enclosed by 'ship' railing - the latter now, under the plan, slated for demolition;
6. physical manifestation of the earliest cultural treatment of the Manly landscape; and
7. visual significance.

I believe the plan is at odds with each of these seven elements. Underlining that, Claire Ryan noted in her response to (this applicant's) DA 2024/1249 ['change of use of an existing retail tenancy to a pub and micro brewery'] that she was minded to support that proposal because the works would be almost entirely within the building and reversible. The contrast with this plan is notable. Of DA 2024/1249 Ms Ryan said:

"The proposed works are mainly within the Manly Wharf building, and the external works are minor involving the replacement of a later additions and the proposed external colours and materials are matching the existing. The proposed mechanical plant is located near the existing with similar size. Given the proposed changes are reversible, it is considered that the impact of the proposal on the State heritage building is tolerable and there will be no adverse impact upon the heritage items in the vicinity, nor upon the Manly Town Centre Conservation Area."

And, with this assessment, from a purely heritage perspective, Heritage NSW agreed[*1]. But here, in contrast, the proposed works are to the outside area; are major; are (for practical purposes) irreversible; and will adversely impact the heritage items in the immediate vicinity - if not the 'Manly Town Centre Conservation Area' generally. Further, the important 'ship' railing to the concrete deck to the west, noted by Ms Ryan as an important (and typical for the era) stylistic feature, is now, under the plan, to be lost.

Ms Ryan notes some of the more significant degradation of the Wharf over time, including by (Council approved) 'recent paving [that] detracts from the Edwardian character', and 'major alterations to the wharf wings involving a T-shaped clerestorey.' But, perhaps optimistically, Ms Ryan notes the 'open space, part beach, sandstone retaining wall and park railing, pavings and split stone edging, raised planting beds, grassed surfaces and cultural planting of Norfolk Island pine and Port Jackson figs [are] all items substantially intact.'

This plan, and any future plan involving alterations to the outside of the building and its immediate vicinity, will undermine that status. In correspondence with the Artemus Group about their long-term plans, they have not ruled out 'placing an additional floor or floors on the existing building.' One might conclude from that, and this plan, that heritage considerations

are not necessarily top-of-agenda.

That all said, and to be fair, the aesthetic of the planned landscaped area is not without its appeal; but that is not to the point. Interference with this important building's external appearance should cease. The trend over time has been to degrade it increment by increment. If this is not the point at which the Council is to draw a line in the sand, when will that be?

[*1] But that plan is still objectionable on the many grounds canvassed in the public's objections.

Kind regards,

David Colman

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