

6.3 Visual impact in views within the immediate vicinity

This section of the report assesses the potential visual impact of the proposed development on views within the immediate vicinity of the subject site (within 200 metres of the site). Much of this area forms the Double Bay town centre and some residential areas immediately surrounding the town centre.

Generally the area is flat, low lying and at the bottom of the valley between Point Piper and Darling Point. The built form in the town centre is generally dense mixed use development with high site coverage. There is little open space within 200 metres of the site. Some significant vegetation also exists within this area, which reduces the visibility and overall visual impact of the site from some parts of the town centre including large established street trees in front of the site. Views from prominent public places across the town centre have been selected for visual impact evaluation. These points selected have local significance, are a key gathering point or experience high levels of pedestrian or street level activity or define an important intersection of the town centre street network.

The visual impact on the local area has been assessed in the order below by presenting the existing view followed by a photomontage including the proposed development in the existing view. A table detailing each view is included which provides an evaluation of the visual impact of the proposed development from the nominated view and provides an assessment and commentary of the impacts. The views within the immediate vicinity include:

- View 13 – Corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay;
- View 14 – Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay;
- View 15 – Galbraith Walkway at William Street, Double Bay;
- View 16 – Corner of Cross Street and Bay Street, Double Bay;
- View 17 – Guilfoyle Park, Double Bay;
- View 18 – Cross Street, Double Bay; and
- View 19 – Galbraith Walkway, Double Bay.

The location of each of these views is illustrated in **Figure 34**.

View 13 – Corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay



Figure 68 Existing view from the corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue



Figure 69 Proposed view from the corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue

View 13 – Corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue

This section provides an assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development from the corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue. The existing view and a photomontage illustrating the proposed development are included in **Figure 68** and **Figure 69** respectively.

Viewing situation	View from the corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue looking directly at the subject site and its frontage to Cross Street.
Category of viewer	Pedestrians, shoppers and motorists.
Context of viewer	Pedestrians walking west along Cross Street or from Cross Street into Transvaal Avenue, and motorists travelling along Cross Street or into Transvaal Avenue. May also be viewed by shoppers and diners at cafés and restaurants close to this viewing point.
Likely period of view	Short-Moderate
Relative number of viewers	Moderate
Distance of view	Approximately 70 metres
Visual absorption capacity	Low
Visibility	High
Visual impact rating	High
Comment	<p>This point provides a direct view towards the subject site and proposed development. Dense street vegetation provides screening to the podium at the Cross Street frontage. The low rise retail/commercial development on the Corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue allows for increased visibility of the proposed development. This corner site is likely to be developed in the future.</p> <p>The existing site presents poorly to the east with an unarticulated blank wall of six (6) storeys (28.5 metres in height). The proposed podium height of three (3) to five (5) storeys is less height than the existing parapet line of the hotel building. The proposal has greater articulation and interest through the introduction of a step in the height of the building form and through a variety of materials such as zinc, terracotta, glazing and white concrete.</p> <p>A moderate number of viewers are likely to pass this point, passing-by, shopping or dining nearby. Overall this results in a high visibility of the site.</p> <p>Given the immediate proximity of this point from the proposed development and the low rise building and lack of significant vegetation between the subject site and this point, the visual absorption capacity is low, resulting in a clear contrast between the surrounding environment and the proposed development.</p> <p>Overall, these factors result in a high visual impact rating from this point.</p>
Comparison with the Environmental Assessment scheme	<p>The reduction in height of the eastern tower under the Preferred Project scheme significantly reduces the perceived height of the building from this viewing point. This is further enhanced by the setting back of the eastern tower by three metres from the Cross Street frontage to achieve a 4 storey street wall to Cross Street.</p> <p>Although the proposed building is still highly visible, its visual intrusiveness is significantly reduced. It is considered a favourable option compared to the Environmental Assessment scheme.</p>

View 14a– Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay



Figure 70 Existing view from Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay



Figure 71 Proposed view from Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay

View 14b– Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay



Figure 72 Existing view from Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay (looking directly at site)



Figure 73 Proposed view from Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay (looking directly at site)

View 14 – Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay

This section provides an assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development from Transvaal Avenue. Two views have been taken from Transvaal Avenue in accordance with advice from the Department of Planning, requesting that visual impact on Transvaal Avenue looking directly west to the building be assessed. This view is listed as 14b. The existing view and a photomontage illustrating the proposed development are included in **Figure 70** to **Figure 73**.

Viewing situation	a. View looking south west directly at subject site b. View looking west directly at subject site.
Category of viewer	Motorists, pedestrians, shoppers.
Context of viewer	Motorists travelling south along Transvaal Street and pedestrians and shoppers walking along Transvaal Street.
Likely period of view	Medium term
Relative number of view	Moderate
Distance of view	70 metres
Visual absorption capacity	Low to moderate.
Visibility	High
Visual impact rating	High
Comment	<p>Transvaal Avenue is a low scale retail shopping strip with historical Queen Anne period cottages. Council have recognised the significance of the streetscape as a conservation area in the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 1995. The existing hotel building presents as a monolithic form with a bland eastern elevation of six storeys. The north eastern corner of the building will be lower than the parapet of the existing building. The tower forms at 14 storeys are located towards the Cross Street frontage and furthest from the conservation area boundary. Street trees partially obscure the view of the existing and proposed development.</p> <p>Transvaal Avenue has low-moderate vehicular traffic and moderate pedestrian traffic to the various boutique stores and cafés along the street frontage. Customers to cafés as well as other shoppers and diners are likely to spend a moderate period of time at or around this viewing point, and are less likely to be quick by-passing travellers. This results in a moderate visibility of the proposed development.</p> <p>Clause 27 ('Development in the vicinity of heritage items, heritage item group, heritage conservation areas, archaeological sites or potential archaeological sites') of Woollahra LEP 1995 requires Council to take into consideration the likely effect of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the conservation area and its setting.</p> <p>Although the proposed development will have a high visual impact from this vantage point, it is not considered that the proposal will have a negative impact the significance of the conservation area. The existing building provides a blank concrete backdrop to the conservation area from this view, detracting from the heritage significance of the townscape of Transvaal Avenue. The proposed development will provide a more interesting and contemporary architectural design that will not detract from the heritage significance of the conservation area. This will clearly contrast the contemporary and historical architectural styles and does not attempt to mimic the heritage significance of the cottages.</p> <p>The proposed development is consistent with the objectives of the Double Bay Centre DCP with regards to the Transvaal Avenue Heritage Conservation Area. The proposal will result in the replacement of the existing building, considered to detract from the townscape character of Transvaal Avenue. The proposed development, through the use of high quality architectural materials and finishes will not attempt to replicate the architectural style of the cottages along Transvaal Avenue. This will enhance the appearance and heritage value of these cottages. Accordingly, the proposal will have a high visual impact from Transvaal Avenue.</p>

<p>Comparison with Environmental Assessment scheme</p>	<p>The Preferred Project scheme results in modifications to the building materials, as well the height and siting of the eastern tower.</p> <p>These modifications result in a reduction in the overall bulk of the development by providing a reduction and variation in height. The modifications to building materials, particularly in the north east corner of the site, further enhance the contrast of the contemporary architecture in its presentation to the historic buildings. From Transvaal Avenue, the three tower elements are clearly distinguishable as separate building forms which is a significant improvement from the single building mass of the existing building. The reduction in the height of the eastern tower by three storeys will provide an improvement in the transition in scale to the conservation area.</p> <p>The Preferred Project is considered a significantly improved development in terms of visual impact to the Transvaal Avenue conservation area.</p>
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View 15 – Galbraith Walkway at William Street, Double Bay



Figure 74 Existing view from Galbraith Walkway at William Street



Figure 75 Proposed view from Galbraith Walkway at William Street

View 15 – Galbraith Walkway at William Street, Double Bay

This section provides an evaluation of the visual impact of the proposed development from the Galbraith Walkway at William Street. The existing view and a photomontage illustrating the proposed development are included in **Figure 74** and **Figure 75** respectively.

Viewing situation	View looking south from the northern end of Galbraith Walkway at William Street towards the subject site.
Category of viewer	Pedestrians and limited motorists.
Context of viewer	Pedestrians walking along the Galbraith Walkway. Motorists travelling along William Street may see a brief glimpse up the Walkway towards the development.
Likely period of view	Low
Relative number of view	Low-moderate
Distance of view	Approximately 50 metres
Visual absorption capacity	Moderate
Visibility	Moderate
Visual impact rating	Moderate
Comment	<p>Despite the walkway being directly linked to the subject site, the existing development is screened by vegetation along the walkway. The layout and positioning of the higher built form elements being located towards Cross Street reduces the overall visual impact of the development from Galbraith Walkway. These factors result in a moderate visual absorption capacity and moderate visibility.</p> <p>The western (right) tower is visible behind vegetation screening in the Galbraith Walkway. The eastern tower is not visible due screening in the foreground.</p> <p>A moderate number of pedestrians are likely to walk through the walkway, and a number of motorists travelling on William Street who may gain a glimpse through the walkway. Pedestrians are likely to spend less than 1 minute walking through the walkway. This results in a moderate visibility of the proposed development.</p> <p>It is likely that the proposed development will have a moderate visual impact from Galbraith Walkway and William Street.</p>
Comparison with Environmental Assessment scheme	<p>Under the previous Environment Assessment scheme, the upper floors and plant screening of the eastern tower were visible above the vegetation screening along the walkway. Under the Preferred Project scheme, the eastern tower is not visible at all given the reduction in height. This reduces the visual obtrusiveness of the development on the walkway and completely reduces the visibility of the eastern tower, which is entirely screened by trees in the walkway.</p> <p>The Preferred Project scheme is considered favourable from this view point.</p>

View 16 – Corner of Cross Street and Bay Street



Figure 76 Existing view from corner of Cross Street and Bay Street



Figure 77 Proposed view from corner of Cross Street and Bay Street

View 16 – Corner of Cross Street and Bay Street, Double Bay

This section provides an assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development from the corner of Cross Street and Bay Street. The existing view and a photomontage illustrating the proposed development are included in **Figure 76** and **Figure 77** respectively.

Viewing situation	View from corner of Cross Street and Bay Street looking east towards the site and its frontage to Cross Street.
Category of viewer	Pedestrians, shoppers and motorists.
Context of viewer	Pedestrians walking along Cross Street or Bay Street at this intersection or shoppers of surrounding shops and motorists passing through or turning at this intersection will be capable of seeing this view.
Likely period of view	Short term
Relative number of viewers	Moderate
Distance of view	100 metres
Visual absorption capacity	Moderate
Visibility	High
Visual impact rating	High
Comment	<p>This intersection is not a key gathering point in the town centre. It provides a streetscape view of Cross Street looking east. Pedestrians or motorists at this point are most likely to be passing through or crossing at the intersection, and therefore the period of view is likely to be relatively low. A moderate number of viewers may pass through this intersection, both pedestrians and motorists.</p> <p>The visual absorption capacity is considered moderate. At street level, the view of the proposed development and the podium levels is screened by dense street trees, however clear visual contrast can be made to the upper levels of the proposed development given the lower height of development between the intersection and the subject site.</p> <p>The tower forms are visible as two forms with a gap between, with the eastern tower appearing significantly smaller than the western tower. The three metre setback of the eastern tower also reduces the bulk and intrusiveness of this building. The offset siting of the towers in this view mean the towers read as two separate forms in the streetscape with the western (foremost) building being the taller building element, and the eastern (rear) tower being appearing significantly smaller in scale.</p> <p>Accordingly, the proposed development will have a high visual impact from the corner of Cross Street and Bay Street.</p>
Comparison with the Environmental Assessment scheme	The Environmental Assessment scheme had a greater visual impact on Cross Street. Setting back the eastern tower three metres from the street frontage to 6.3 metres, and reducing its height by three storeys, significantly reduces the bulk of the building, and reduces its visual intrusiveness on the Cross Street streetscape.

View 17 – Guilfoyle Park



Figure 78 Existing view from Guilfoyle Park



Figure 79 Proposed view from Guilfoyle Park

View 17 – Guilfoyle Park, Double Bay

This section evaluates the potential visual impact of the proposed development from Guilfoyle Park on the western edge of the Double Bay town centre. The existing view and a photomontage illustrating the proposed development are included in **Figure 78** and **Figure 79** respectively.

Viewing situation	View from Guilfoyle Park looking north east towards subject site.		
Category of viewer	Visitors to park, pedestrians and motorists.		
Context of viewer	Guilfoyle Park is a small local pocket park on the western edge of the Double Bay town centre. Viewers are most likely to be users of the park, pedestrians and motorists. The park tends to be used most frequently during lunch time hours by employees.		
Likely period of view	Moderate term		
Relative number of viewers	Moderate		
Distance of view	130 metres		
Visual absorption capacity	Low to moderate		
Visibility	Moderate		
Visual impact rating			Moderate – high
Comment	<p>This pocket park is frequented by visitors to the Double Bay town centre at various times during the day but particularly during lunch time hours. Visitors to the park use the park seating or walk through the park whilst walking along Guilfoyle Street or Bay Street. Both the number of visitors and the time spent at this point are likely to be moderate, resulting in a moderate visibility of the proposed development. The gap between the two towers forms provides a sky view.</p> <p>Parts of the proposed development will be screened by existing street vegetation. Currently rooftop plant of the existing building rises above the tree canopy. Several upper levels of the proposed development will be visible from this point however the whole building is seen through vegetation canopy, reducing its visual impact. It is considered that the surrounding environment results in a low to moderate visual absorption capacity.</p> <p>It is considered that the proposed development will have a moderate-high visual impact from Guilfoyle Park given the above assessment.</p>		
Comparison with Environmental Assessment scheme	<p>As a result of vegetation screening from Guilfoyle Park, the clarity of the modifications between the Environmental Assessment and the Preferred Project schemes is not clear.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the reduction in height and alterations to the siting of the eastern tower will reduce the bulk of the eastern end of the building, reducing its overall intrusiveness on the Double Bay town centre, including Guilfoyle Park.</p>		

View 18 – Cross Street, Double Bay



Figure 80 Existing view from Cross Street



Figure 81 Proposed view from Cross Street

View 18 – Cross Street, Double Bay

This view provides a street view of the proposed development from Cross Street. This view was selected as requested by the Department of Planning in a letter dated 12 June 2009. This view was not included in the Environmental Assessment. A view looking directly north at the development from Cross Street can not show the extent of the development given the short distance between the site and the opposite side of Cross Street looking east. Accordingly, this view has been taken slightly west of the site frontage. **Figure 80** and **Figure 81** illustrate the existing and proposed view.

Viewing situation	View from Cross Street looking north east at the proposed development.
Category of viewer	Pedestrians walking along Cross Street.
Context of viewer	Pedestrians and local shoppers along Cross Street will view the development from this point.
Likely period of view	Short to Moderate term
Relative number of viewers	Moderate
Distance of view	60 metres
Visual absorption capacity	Low
Visibility	High
Visual impact rating	High
Comment	<p>The visual impact rating from this point is considered high. The building is clearly visible from Cross Street, given Cross Street is the main street address of the development.</p> <p>The proposed development is situated surrounded by lower rise residential, retail and commercial developments. The podium acts as the key address to Cross Street. The podium height of four (4) storeys maintains a human scale to the Cross Street streetscape. The taller elements of the building have been setback from the podium to reduce their obtrusiveness on the streetscape and avoid the creation of a single tower wall to the street. The separation between towers and reduced height of the eastern tower will clearly distinguish the tower forms as separate small floor plate forms.</p> <p>The building materials, street address and architectural style have been designed to ensure the building presents sympathetically to the street, whilst also creating a visually interesting development, including the tower forms.</p> <p>Although this viewing point will be highly impacted by the proposed development, the impact will provide a clear 4 storey street wall to achieve an appropriate human scale to the streetscape consistent with the Double Bay DCP.</p>

View 19 – Galbraith Walkway, Double Bay



Figure 82 Existing view from Galbraith Walkway



Figure 83 Proposed view from Galbraith Walkway

View 19 – Galbraith Walkway, Double Bay

This view from Galbraith Walkway was not included in the Environmental Assessment and has been provided following a request from the Department of Planning in advice received on 12 June 2009. This view is situated further south from View 15, assessed above. The existing and proposed views from this point of Galbraith Walkway are illustrated in **Figure 82** and **Figure 83**.

Viewing situation	View from Galbraith Walkway looking south at the proposed development.
Category of viewer	Pedestrians.
Context of viewer	Pedestrians walking south from William Street towards the proposed development.
Likely period of view	Short.
Relative number of viewers	Low-moderate.
Distance of view	Approximately 30 metres.
Visual absorption capacity	Low
Visibility	High
Visual impact rating	High
Comment	<p>The Galbraith Walkway directly links William Street and the subject site, as well as other residential properties to the east and west. The proposed development is highly visible from this point of Galbraith Walkway. From viewing point 15, assessed above, the building is screened by dense vegetation. At this point, there is less screening of the proposed development, and accordingly, the visual impact rating is higher.</p> <p>The eastern tower, fronting Cross Street is barely visible from this point, through the vegetation. The northern taller element of the podium and the western tower are clearly identifiable from this view point.</p> <p>The choice of materials and finishes and the siting of the buildings and inclusion of an open air through site link provide for a more permeable appearance to the building. As shown in the existing view, the existing building appears as an obstructive and solid built form. The proposed development will significantly enhance the appearance of the site on approach and in doing so, enhance the Galbraith Walkway through the inviting appearance of the materials and design of the building and in the active uses within the piazza.</p>

7 Summary of visual assessment and conclusion

Overall, the proposed development is likely to have a moderate to high visual impact, as demonstrated above. From a regional perspective, which includes views and visual impact on Sydney Harbour and its foreshore, the visual impact rating will be generally low. The proposed development will have a high visual impact mainly from the local area and within the Double Bay town centre.

The proposed development will generally not impact on important views of Sydney Harbour or the Central Sydney skyline from public vantage points. It is evident in the assessment of views from a residence on Edgecliff Road, that the proposed development will impact on the views of some properties, however in reducing the height of the eastern tower with the same floor plate size and maintaining a separation between the buildings, will improve the visual impact of the development compared to the Environmental Assessment scheme. From elevated views on the escarpment the proposed development will be seen in the wider context that includes taller buildings. Given the wider panoramic views of the development from these elevated locations the development is visible however water views and distance views to the North Shore will be available.

In summary, the visual impact rating from the following viewing points is as follows:

- Bradleys Head, Mosman – Low
- Clarke Island, Sydney Harbour – Low-Moderate
- Double Bay, Sydney Harbour – Low-Moderate
- Harkness Street, Woollahra – Low
- Bathurst Lane, Woollahra – Low
- 327A Edgecliff Road, Woollahra – Moderate-High
- Double Bay Wharf, Double Bay – Moderate
- Steyne Park, Double Bay – High
- Corner of William Street and New South Head Road, Double Bay – Moderate
- Bellevue Road, Double Bay – High
- Greenoaks Avenue, Darling Point – Moderate
- Corner of Cross Street and Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay – High
- 87 Ocean Avenue, Double Bay – High
- Transvaal Avenue, Double Bay – High
- Galbraith Walkway (at William Street), Double Bay – Moderate
- Corner of Cross Street and Bay Street, Double Bay – High
- Guilfoyle Park, Double Bay – Moderate–High.
- Cross Street, Double Bay – High.
- Galbraith Walkway – High.

The high quality design, materials and finishes proposed will result in a visually interesting skyline that will create a landmark development for the Double Bay town centre. The tower forms will allow for identification of the Double Bay town centre, particularly on approach from Sydney Harbour and the surrounding suburbs.

When compared to the Environmental Assessment scheme, the modifications to the height, siting, and materials and finishes of the tower forms allow for a significantly enhanced development and an improved visual impact. The lowering of the eastern tower significantly reduces the perceived bulk and scale of the building from many vantage points and provides for a better fit with the immediate surrounding context. In setting back the eastern tower from the Cross Street frontage, a continuous high rise street wall is avoided. The Preferred Project scheme provides a variety and visual interest in the Double Bay skyline.

In summary, the Preferred Project scheme will have a low visual impact on regional viewing points, however a moderate to high visual impact on local viewing points and those within the immediate vicinity of the site. Notwithstanding this, the proposed development will be of landmark signature quality and make a positive contribution to the identification and skyline of the Double Bay town centre in the context of surrounding development.