PUBLIC ARTWORK DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION
190-200 GEORGE STREET, SYDNEY

This Statement of Environmental Effects (SEE) is submitted to City of Sydney Council in support of a Development Application (DA) for public artwork associated with the approved commercial building (D/2012/893) presently under construction and nearing completion at 190-200 George Street and 4 Dalley Street, Sydney (the site).

The proposal involves the installation of a preserved tree as an artwork piece known as the ‘Underwood Ark Project’. The tree is proposed to be suspended directly above Underwood Street through existing support structures above the laneway.

This SEE has been prepared by JBA on behalf of the applicant, Mirvac Projects Pty Ltd (Mirvac). This report describes the site, its environs, the proposed development, and provides an assessment of the proposal in terms of the matters for consideration under Section 79C(1) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

It should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documentation appended to the report:

- The Underwood Ark Project – Concept Images, prepared by Michael McIntyre & Mirvac (Attachment A);
- Traffic Impact Memo, prepared by Colston Budd Hunt & Kafes Pty Ltd (Attachment B);
- Correspondence between the City of Sydney and Mirvac Projects (Attachment C); and
- Telstra Letter of Support (Attachment D).

1.0 BACKGROUND

Development Application D/2012/893 was determined by the Central Sydney Planning Committee on 6 December 2012. The approval granted provides for:

- Demolition of the existing improvements on the site;
- Remediation and excavation of the site;
- Construction of a 37 storey (including plant) commercial office tower, with ground level retailing, comprising a total of 43,965sqm;
- Refurbishment of up to 5 storeys of the existing building at 4 Dalley Street for the purpose of telephone exchange, substation, plant and services;
- Provision of a through-site pedestrian link between George Street and Underwood Street;
- Provision of a 4 level basement car park; and
- Public domain improvement works.

The development consent for D/2012/893 has been the subject of several previous modification applications. In addition, three (3) separate development applications D/2015/1174, D/2015/1175 and D/2015/1176 were lodged on 19 August 2015 for the fit-out and use of ground floor retail tenancies as small bars/cafes and a restaurant. These applications also remain under assessment.

2.0 SITE ANALYSIS

2.1 Site Description

200 George Street is located on the eastern side of George Street, near to its intersection with Essex Street. The site is within close proximity to Circular Quay and is surrounded by various high-density commercial and hospitality land uses. An aerial photograph of the overall 200 George Street site is shown at Figure 1 with the site location shown at Figure 2. The site is situated within the area known colloquially as the Alfred, Pitt, Dalley and George Streets site (APDG site).

Figure 1 – Aerial photograph of 200 George Street with the indicative location in yellow
Source: Nearmap
The site has an area of 3,147 m$^2$ and is an irregular hatchet shape with street frontages of approximately 66 metres along George Street, 64 metres along Underwood Street, 17 metres along Dalley Street and 34 metres along Crane Lane. The artwork will be located along the frontage to Underwood Street at the intersection with Dalley Street.

The site is bounded by properties incorporating a mix of retail, commercial, serviced apartment and hotel uses. The area is characterised by a mix of high rise and low rise developments, as outlined below. A number of these buildings incorporate high-level building identification signage.

Underwood Street has previously been the location for a temporary artwork from October 2009 until January 2010, known as the Seven Metre Bar. This artwork was part of the Laneways temporary art program, which was endorsed by the City of Sydney.

The main feature of the lane at that time was the bar, which was supported by the art piece, which included old cars, boats, building materials, traffic signs and other debris being suspended above the laneway. Refer to Figures 3 and 4 for images of the previous art installation.
Zoning and permissibility
The site is located on land zoned B8 Metropolitan Centre under the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012) and is permissible with consent under that land use zoning.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT
This DA seeks approval for the proposed public artwork along the Underwood Street frontage of the subject site. The development includes the following works (Figures 5 and 6):

- Installation of the ‘Underwood Ark Project’ public domain artwork which consists of;
  - A tree root, trunk and branch system art installation parallel to the street alignment of Underwood Street extending for approximately 35 metres; and
  - Associated supporting structures suspended from the existing building.
Along the Underwood Street frontage there are existing service bridges between the site and the neighbouring building to the east. The artwork will be suspended between these bridges.

The Underwood Ark Project provides an opportunity to incorporate an additional artwork over and above the approved Public Art and Heritage Interpretation Strategy for the site, and is proposed as a means of activating the Underwood Street laneway. Mirvac conducted an artwork competition, with five artists from the National Art School being invited to prepare an artwork proposal, with the winning artwork being Michael McIntyre’s Tree artwork, with images as follows and provided at Attachment A.
4.0 ASSESSMENT OF PLANNING ISSUES

Under Section 79C(1) of the EP&A Act, in determining a DA the consent authority has to take into account a range of matters relevant to the development including the provisions of environmental planning instruments; impacts of the built and natural environment, the social and economic impacts of the development; the suitability of the site; and whether the public interest would be served by the development.

The following assesses the environmental effects of the proposed development. The assessment includes only those matters under section 79C(1) of the EP&A Act that are relevant to the proposal. The key planning issues associated with the proposed development are addressed below.

4.1 Compliance with Environmental Planning Instruments

The following legislation, strategies and planning instruments, which are relevant to the proposed development to be addressed:

- Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012;
- Sydney Development Control Plan 2012;
- City of Sydney Public Art Strategy; and
- Interim Guidelines for Public Art in Private Developments.

The DA’s compliance with the above planning controls is discussed below.

Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012

As identified above, the subject site is located on land zoned B8 Metropolitan Centre under the Sydney LEP 2012. The proposal is permissible with consent within this zone and is consistent with objectives in that it will form a crucial element to the public domain surrounding the landmark development nearing completion at 200 George Street. This will ensure the development’s activation and contribution to the public domain within the Sydney CBD.

Sydney Development Control Plan 2012

The proposal is generally consistent with the objectives of the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 (DCP 2012) Section 3.1.5 – Public Art as the proposed art:

- Provides a high quality piece of public artwork in a private development;
- Promotes sustainability through the vision of the tree as the focal point of the art piece; and
- Provides an innovative way of showcasing the art installation by hanging it off the edge of the building, over the public domain.

It is considered that the quality of the content, design and finish of the proposal meet the relevant criterion. Clause 3.1.5.3 also specifically refers to the City of Sydney Guidelines for Public Art in Private Development and the Public Art Policy, and Clause 3.1.5.2 identifies that the site is required to have a Public Art Strategy prepared. The Interim Guidelines for Public Art in Private Developments requires that a Public Art Plan is to be prepared and submitted with the development application stage of a development.

The 200 George Artwork Strategy was submitted as part of the original development application D/2012/893, and is addressed below. This was also addressed as part of Condition 75 of the consent.

City Art Public Art Strategy

The City Art Public Art Strategy outlines key principles which will guide the development of the public art network within the city. Specifically, the most relevant principle to this proposed art piece is around the ‘3 Linked Squares’ (George Street Civic Spine) which seeks to create permanent artworks in the three linked squares (Town Hall Square and Sydney Square, including the George Street road and future light rail corridor), and other city spaces adjacent to George Street.
Street. The proposed art piece on Underwood Street provides a piece of public art adjacent to the George Street corridor, and is consistent with the principles of the Policy for the following reasons:

- The proposed public art will be delivered as part of the development of the wider 200 George Street project;
- The proposed public art is of a high quality, and provides an interesting façade feature of the Underwood Street frontage; and
- The proposal will contribute to the overall quality of the public domain within the APDG block as it undergoes comprehensive redevelopment.

200 George Artwork Policy
The 200 George Artwork Policy prepared by FJMT and endorsed by City of Sydney, seeks to identify high quality art opportunities in the public spaces around the subject site. The aim of the Policy is to recognise Aboriginal stories and heritage, and integrate these aspects into the fabric of the city.

The Artwork Policy identifies that the Underwood Street laneway presents opportunities for laneway wall art or installations. The proposed art piece is classified as laneway wall art, and will provide for interest and aesthetic appeal along the Underwood Street façade. The proposal is also consistent with the Policy in that Mirvac has selected a high-quality artwork piece via a competitive process in consultation with the City of Sydney and FJMT.

4.2 Traffic, Pedestrians and Movement Networks
The proposed artwork will not impact on traffic movements in the area. There will be a clearance to the carriageway pavement of 5.4m at the artworks lowest point. Refer to comments provided by Colston Budd Hunt and Kafes Pty Ltd at Attachment B.

The proposed artwork will act as a key way finding device in the locality. The extension of part of the art into the Dalley Street carriageway will allow for pedestrians moving along George Street to be drawn into the Underwood Street laneway. This will give greater activation to the APDG laneway network, through the new food and beverage tenancies and pocket park within the 200 George Street site and through to the north to the future public plaza adjacent to Rugby Place.

4.3 Construction Impacts
The proposed public art will be erected towards the end of the construction phase of the 200 George Street project. All work will be undertaken in conjunction with the approved Construction Management Plan for the site and surrounding laneway and in consultation with the City of Sydney.

4.4 Social and Economic Impacts
The proposal will have the positive social benefit of providing public art in a publically accessible location, in line with the Artwork Policy which makes connections with the history of the area as well as wider Sydney. The proposal will not have any adverse economic impacts.

4.5 Consultation with City of Sydney
Consultation with the City of Sydney has occurred previously in relation to this proposal. The art piece has been presented to City of Sydney, notably the Public Art Advisory Panel on several occasions, the most recent being 21 July 2015. The proposed artwork has been very well received.

Additionally, the applicant has discussed with City of Sydney the desire for this development application to be processed as an expedited application, due to the need to meet the development program completion date of May 2016. This requires approval, sourcing of the tree, felling of the tree, treatment of the tree, fabrication and installation to coincide with the broader package of works on the site.
4.6 Site Suitability

The site has previously accommodated a successful artwork installation in the form of the ‘Seven Metre Bar’. The design of the proposal has been carefully integrated with the existing structures above Underwood Street and ensures that only positive impacts on the public domain result from the proposed works.

4.7 Public Interest

The proposed public artwork is in the public interest as it:

- Is located in a prominent position around the 200 George Street site;
- Will assist in legibility and way finding within the broader APDG block; and
- Will provide visual interest to enhance the pedestrian experience and vitality of the area.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed development involves the installation of a public art display comprising an artwork of a ‘tree trunk’ parallel to the existing building façade at the southern end of Underwood Street. The proposed development is permissible with consent under the Sydney LEP 2012, is consistent with the aims and objectives of the LEP and the relevant City Art Policies and Guidelines, and the Sydney DCP 2012. The proposal will facilitate the delivery of a high quality public artwork at a prominent site within the 200 George Street development area.

In light of the merits of the proposal and in the absence of any significant adverse environmental, social or economic impacts, we recommend that the application be approved subject to standard conditions of consent.

Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 9409 4979 or dhoward@jbaurban.com.au.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Howard
Urban Planner