

tim williams architects



29th October 2008,

Peter Thomas
Manager Development Assessment
Lane Cove Council
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CUNNINGHAM

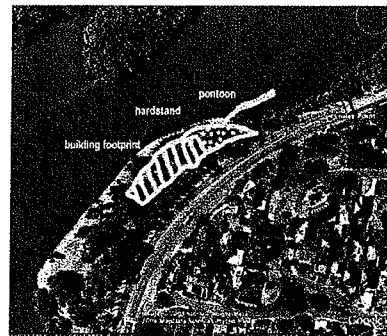
Dear Mr Thomas,

RE: PROPOSED ROWING FACILITY AT CUNNINGHAM'S REACH, LINLEY POINT

I have reviewed the plans of the proposed rowing club and visited the site as well as the model which is in your offices. The following is my urban design comment of the proposal.

1. Site observations

Cunningham's reach at Linley Point is a surprisingly tranquil sliver of harbour foreshore with a north westerly aspect. It looks up the Lane Cove River and is quite unique for it's outlook over uninhabited mangroves and bushland. The site itself is well below Burns Bay Road and is thereby sheltered from much of the road noise. The narrow parklands are planted with mature stands of Casuarinas, eucalypts of various species, Port Jackson figs and many other native species that are being nurtured on the site. Sandstone cliffs form a south-east wall to the site giving the site a sense of enclosure and shelter.



The site is publicly accessible by foot and by road via a one way access road under Burns Bay Road. There appears to be ample carparking for a park of this size. A formal path exists along the sandstone wall foreshore edge which is popular with joggers, walkers and fisherpeople. Informal paths appear to continue from the northern end of the park into the bushland. The usable area of the park is a relatively flat grassy area with generous amounts of shade. It is an ideal place for a picnic and is relatively safe for children.

It is also a desirable location for a rowing facility as it accesses a sheltered part of the harbour and is realively remote from housing.



2. The Proposal

The proposal is for a 2 storey boat shed and rowing club with pontoon and jetty facilities. The club house will have a large gymnasium and café with a terrace on the upper level. The proposed building is approximately 60 meters long and 25 meters wide at its widest point. The building would predominantly be made of concrete blockwork and metal deck roofing with metal louvres and sunshading.

3. Siting

The proposed building is to be sited at the northern end, up against the sandstone cliff face. The pontoon and jetty is proposed at the northern end of the building. Large doors at the northern end of the building would enable easy access to the pontoon from the boat storage area in the building. A large hardstand area is proposed north of the building for washing the boats down.

The facility would occupy the northern sector of the park which is in my view the most attractive and desirable part of the park today due to its shelter, mature stands of trees, northerly aspect and view up the river it is also the widest part of the park. The proposed building would reduce the accessible part of the park from about 22m width to about 4m in some areas.

The proposed building and its associated hardstand area will effectively cut the northern half of the park off from public use.

4. Access

The facility will be accessed via the existing one way road system which arrives from the south under the Burns Bay Road Bridge. Parking will be provided by the existing car park to the south of the building site. The upper level of the facility will be accessed via the access road which rises along the top of the cliff face mentioned above. A lift is proposed to link the upper and lower levels.

Public access will be provided all around the proposed facility, however it is not clear if access will be permitted onto the proposed jetty and pontoon. It is also not clear how the loading and unloading of boats will affect the public accessibility to the park or how it might affect vehicular movements around the access road.

5. Built form

The proposed building comprises of a ground floor area that houses the rowing boats and changing facilities, the plan of which is moulded to the available land area alongside the cliff face and stepped along the water's edge to allow water side access. The plan is unnecessarily complicated. The northern end of the building has large garage style doors that open to the north where the pontoon is. The structure is of steel and concrete block. Most of the ground floor has a solid appearance being either concrete blockwork, garage doors or metal louvers.



The second level is massed towards the north of the site to benefit from the natural change in levels. A rounded balcony area overlooks the north western corner of the site the form of which is incongruous with the rest of the building.

The building has a complicated roof form for what should be a fairly simple building typology. And makes the building appear to have more levels than it does.

6. Scale

The proposed building takes up a large proportion of the park and its two storey form will conceal the cliff edge and the legibility of the topography. The building is too large for the site and will dominate what is a fairly small park, transforming the site into a dedicated rowing club at the exclusion of most other activities.

7. Landscape

One of the biggest impacts the facility will have is on the landscape. Some thirty mature trees are to be removed and will be replaced by a building which will effectively break the continuity of the bush along the foreshore in what is an otherwise uninterrupted line of foreshore bushland. The northern end of the site is proposed to be largely concreted in order to provide hardstand areas for the purposes of cleaning the boats.

The sandstone cliffs which currently form the 'back wall' of the park will be concealed by the building.

A considerable amount of new planting has occurred in the area to generate a rich bio-diversity of local species. There is clear evidence that the plantings are regularly maintained and nurtured. The proposed facility will cause severe damage to the work that is being done here. The voluntary workforce that is responsible for this work would see much of it destroyed.

8. Social impact

A rowing club facility will bring a new kind of activity to the area. Whilst rowing occurs on the river already, the activities relating to the facility itself will impact on the way the area is used. The club will be used in the mornings mostly but once in place, such a facility would be a popular venue for other events such as parties. Even if the applicants have no intention of using it for such purposes, there is no guarantee that such activities would not occur in the future, causing parking, traffic and noise impacts.

The scale and dominance the building would intimidate current users of the park. It will be perceived that the rowing club has ownership of the park. Access around the waterside of the building will be severely restricted due to the narrow passage along the water side. The park will be so changed that far less people will be inclined to use the park for passive activities such as picnicking.



The users of the Rowing facility will be coming for a specific activity at specific times. They will most likely not be local. The current users are mostly local. This facility will impact negatively on their local recreation space.

The building fabric itself has a closed, bunker like appearance with largely concrete block walls. These walls are susceptible to graffiti, the appearance of which would be most unfortunate in this currently un-vandalized natural park setting.

The stepping form of the building will also provide potential hiding places which would impact on the real and perceived sense of personal security.

9. Colour and Materiality

The bright reds, blues and creams selected for the proposed building are a strong contrast to bushland setting. No attempt has been made to make a building that is sympathetic to its location. The building will be a highly intrusive visual element along the foreshore.

10. Environment

Whilst water tanks, skylights and solar panels are indicated on the drawings, (which is to be expected in this day and age,) the impact the building has on the environment in other respects outweighs these initiatives.

11. Conclusion

The accessible foreshore parklands that have been retained, reclaimed, improved, connected together and nurtured, are one of the attributes that make Sydney Harbour and its tributaries so unique and special. They foster bio-diversity, democratic access to the waterfront, and provide a wonderful array of places for passive recreation.

This precious piece of that landscape would be severely compromised by such a development of public parkland. The proposed facility will totally dominate Cunningham's Reach, changing its nature and its use completely.

The proposed building does not acknowledge the special qualities of the place. It is, in my view too large for the site and its form and colour palate are not at all recessive as would be more appropriate in such a location.

The ground floor is almost totally blank and closed which does not provide any possibility of active use or interaction with the community.

The loss of thirty trees, of a tranquil connecting piece of foreshore bushland seems too high a price to pay for a facility that would not benefit the locals. The exclusive monoculture of the facility is not an appropriate use of this public parkland. The facility would alienate other users of the park.

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I do not believe this development should be given approval in its current form.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further comment or information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Williams', with a long, sweeping underline.

Tim Williams,
Architect