

Middle Head Oval -

Proposed Amenities Building and Associated Works

Consultation Outcomes Report

Background

On 17 May 2024 Mosman Council submitted an application to demolish the existing amenities building at Middle Head Oval and replace it with a similar-sized building in a new location, and to construct an open-sided shelter, a vehicle layover bay, and landscaping. The application was for land which Mosman Council has held a valid licence since 1977 for sports and recreation purposes.

Public Exhibition

Given the high level of public interest in Middle Head generally and the proposal specifically, the Harbour Trust decided to exhibit the application to enable the community to provide feedback on the proposal to inform this assessment. This public consultation was not triggered by any assessment that the proposed action posed a significant impact on the environment.

Notices were published in print and on social media at the commencement of the exhibition, and again when revised information was published. Direct notifications were sent to key stakeholders.

Documents were available for the public to view online on the Department of Climate Change Environment Energy and Water (DCCEEW) 'Have Your Say' website, and physical copies were available at the Harbour Trust's Mosman office, and Mosman Council library.

Initially, the public exhibition opened on 28 June 2024 and was due to close on 29 July 2024. During the exhibition period on 26 July Mosman Council updated its planning application with revised information, primarily related to the place's heritage values. As such the public exhibition was extended to 23 August. Five of the 23 documents were revised, together with a letter that described the error and its impact. Council was of the view that while they had not correctly addressed the heritage values in the Heritage Report, their proposed design was unchanged.

Due to the submission of revised information, the consultation was placed on temporary hold on 25 July 2024. Consultation re-opened, with the revised information on 26 July 2024.

Stakeholders were advised that submissions about this proposal that had been made before 26 July 2024, based on the earlier consultation documents, would be considered by the Harbour Trust in its assessment of the application unless submitters wish to change their submissions given that there is now revised information.

Comments were also sought from the First Nations Advisory Group (FNAG) of the Harbour Trust and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC) of the Harbour Trust. FNAG members were advised of the proposal via email (28 June 2024) and were invited to review the proposal and to provide comments as they felt appropriate. The CAC discussed the proposal at its 28 August 2024 meeting. Minutes of the meeting note that the Committee discussed the process and elements of the proposal, and noted the high level of community interest.

Submissions Received

274 responses were received through the 'Have Your Say' portal during the consultation period. Separately, five other items of correspondence were received directly by the Harbour Trust. All issues raised as part of this consultation have been considered as part of this assessment process.

Submitters represented a diverse range of community viewpoints. Of the 274 responses via the 'Have Your Say' portal, 14 were duplicates, and 27 did not provide any comment or upload a document, resulting in 233 unique submissions. Of those 233 submissions, 75.5% were assessed by the Harbour Trust to be in support of the proposal, 23.2% were assessed to be opposed to the proposal, and 1.3% were assessed to be neutral. It is noted that of the submissions assessed to be opposed to the proposal, some submissions supported elements of the proposal but not all, while some were opposed to the entire proposal.

While these figures give an insight into broad community sentiment, it is noted that all issues raised are considered on merit and informed the assessment process.

Key issues raised by those in support of the proposal included:

- The poor condition of the existing facilities
- Lack of existing suitable changing rooms for female participants
- Lack of access to the existing facilities for the disabled
- Lack of existing shade for and rain cover for spectators
- Existing lack of a vehicle drop-off/pick-up facility

Key issues raised by those objecting to the proposal included concerns regarding:

- Heritage impacts (both First Nations and military)
- Impacts on views
- Environmental impacts
- The scale of the proposal's elements
- The proposal's urbanisation of the area
- The exclusive use of public space by sports groups
- The need for a new facility
- The proposed action posed a significant impact on the environment and the heritage values of the place and therefore should be referred to the Minister under the EPBC Act
- Community consultation and the planning process either insufficient and/or flawed.

All issues raised were considered and have informed this assessment. A summary of issues raised, and the Harbour Trust's consideration of these is provided below.

Terminology	Descriptor
Most	over 50% of submitters
Many	20% - 50% of submitters
Some	5% - 20% of submitters
A Few	under 5% of submitters

Submission Summary

Topic	Issue / Concern	Harbour Trust Consideration
Support for the Proposal	State of Existing Facilities Most submitters expressed the view that the existing facilities are inadequate and unsafe and that the proposal will correct this.	The Harbour Trust supports the provision of a replacement building with upgraded facilities for the community that are gender-equitable, accessible for people with disability, and incorporate sustainability features.
	Enhanced Experience Most submitters expressed that the proposal would enhance their experience as a user of Middle Head.	The replacement building will enhance park users' experience at Middle Head. While the proposed opensided shelter is not approved, shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
	Access Many submitters raised frustration that Middle Head Oval is currently inaccessible to wheelchair users and noted that the proposal would rectify this.	The replacement amenities building will be accessible for people with disability. New paths will provide an accessible path of travel.
	Open-sided shelter Many submitters noted that the oval lacks protection against UV exposure and adverse weather and noted that the proposal would go a long way toward improving this.	The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
	Female Change Facilities Many submitters noted the lack of suitable female change facilities in the existing	Noted, and supported by the Harbour Trust.

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	building and noted that the proposal would rectify this.	
	Heritage Appropriate Many submitters expressed the opinion that the proposed facility is sensitive to cultural heritage and appropriate for the location.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. The proposed replacement building has a comparable footprint to the existing building, but is more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct. See comments above regarding the open-sided shelter.
Heritage / Sensitivities	First Nations Heritage Some submitters raised concerns that the proposed action could erode the First	First Nations people have resided in the Sydney area since before the harbour was formed. As such, Middle Head has been documented as a location of First Nations art, shelters, and middens.
	action could erode the First Nations heritage value of the site. Of specific concern to many submitters was the proximity of the proposed action to the site of Bungaree's Farm.	The site of the proposed action has been significantly excavated and developed for agricultural, military and recreational purposes in the post-colonial period and the likelihood of finds occurring during demolition and construction works has been assessed as low in a 2024 Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment conducted by Coast History and Heritage on behalf of the Harbour Trust. The report provides recommendations that will be applied as conditions, for the appropriate actions to take, should unexpected finds occur.
		From a post-colonial perspective, Middle Head is notable as the general area of Bungaree's Farm. There has been some uncertainty about the precise location of the farm due to the lack of clear records and inconsistencies between the records that do exist. The most recent research has found that it is likely that the proposed development site does sit within the boundary of the farm, however, is not likely to be on the site of any former farm structures.
		The Aboriginal Archaeological Assessment conducted by Coast History and Heritage found that "The intangible values of Bungaree's Farm would not be adversely affected by the Masterplan proposals." These proposals include the upgrade of the amenities building.
		Considering that the open-sided shelter and layover bay are not approved, and that the landscaping will be redesigned, the potential impact on First Nations' heritage values of the place will be further minimised.
		The re-design of the landscaping will be undertaken in close consultation with the Harbour Trust's First Nation's landscape designer, to inform and incorporate First Nations interpretation.

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	Military Heritage Some submitters raised concerns that the proposed action would diminish the military heritage significance of the area. Submitters noted the value of the site as a historic military village.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. The proposed replacement building has a comparable footprint to the existing building, but is more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct. The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place
		that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
		The proposed vehicle layover bay is located on the historic former military road, and at the precinct's entry where the Harbour Trust is aiming to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. To protect the heritage values of the place, and support the aim of a pedestrian-friendly environment, the proposed vehicle layover bay is not approved. In its stead, Council will be required to provide a new entry into the adjacent Car Park 2, to facilitate drop-off/pick-up, and turning of vehicles that are exiting the precinct.
		The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand, and which will be coordinated with landscaping across the precinct. Proposed paths will connect with the broader path network.
	Ecological Sensitivity Some submitters raised concerns that the proposed action would impact the sensitive ecology of the site. Concerns included the impacts of the proposed actions on local flora and fauna.	The existing non-developed portion of the site of the proposal is generally open lawn. The proposal does not involve any significant ecological impacts. The landscaping, which will be re-designed (see comments above) will include native plantings that provided an enhanced ecological outcome.
Appropriateness / Need	Amenities Building Some submitters questioned the need for a new amenities building at Middle Head Oval. Some felt that the existing building should be refurbished while some felt that the site should not be used for local sport.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. Mosman Council is the proponent. The replacement building will provide upgraded facilities for the community that are gender-equitable, accessible for people with disability, and incorporate sustainability features.

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		The proposed replacement building is of a similar scale to the existing building, but more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct.
		The Harbour Trust's statutory plans provide for the continued use of the oval for sports purposes, and for Defence access and use. The oval was built in 1950s, and Council has had a licence to use the oval for community sports since 1977.
	Open Sided Shelter Some submitters questioned the need for a shelter as part of the proposal. Some noted that spectators tend to watch from on the field. Others noted that the shelter was an additional element and was not appropriate in a sensitive area.	The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
	Hard Stand Some submitters felt that the increase in hard stand area that would occur as part of the development was not needed or appropriate for the site.	The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand, and which will be coordinated with landscaping across the precinct. Proposed paths will connect with the broader path network.
	Landscaping Some submitters questioned the appropriateness of the proposed landscaping for the site. Some questioned appropriateness in the context of the wider proposal while others mentioned that a softer touch approach may be more appropriate.	The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand, and which will be coordinated with landscaping across the precinct. The design will include interpretation of the place's First Nations values. Proposed paths will connect with the broader path network.
Built Form / Design	Amenities Building Some submitters objected to the proposed design of the amenities building. Some questioned the choices of materials while others noted that it was not sympathetic to the surrounding heritage items.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. The proposed replacement building has a comparable footprint to the existing building, but is more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct. The external materials of the new building are considered to be unobtrusive and sympathetic with the visual qualities and heritage values of the place.

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	Open Sided Shelter Some submitters objected to the design of the open sided shelter. Comments described the design as excessive, and inappropriately modern given the context of the site.	The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
View Impacts	Amenities Building Some submitters objected to the view impacts caused by the proposed amenities building. Submitters noted that it would stand out and be highly visible from surrounding heritage buildings.	The existing building impacts views at the sensitive arrival point to the precinct. The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. The proposed replacement building has a comparable footprint to the existing building, but is more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct.
	Open Sided Shelter Some submitters objected to the view impacts caused by the proposed open sided shelter. Submitters noted that the shelter would stand out and obstruct views from Middle Head Road toward Sydney Harbour. Some noted that the shelter would be visible from nearby heritage buildings and some commented that the proposed shelter would work against the Trust's goal of creating a sense of entry to the Middle Head area.	The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
Scale	Amenities Building Some submitters objected to the scale of the proposed amenities building. Most noted that the new building appears to be larger than the existing amenities building.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans have long identified the existing building as intrusive, and provided for a replacement building in a new location more befitting of the setting. The proposed replacement building has a comparable footprint to the existing building, but is more sensitively located, which will protect heritage values, and enhance the entry point to the precinct. The existing building has a footprint of approximately 213 sq.m, and is RL 39.4 at its highest point. The
		proposed building's footprint is marginally larger at 231 sq.m, but has a lower height of RL 38.3. That is, the proposed new building's footprint is approximately

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		18 sq.m larger, but its height is 1.1 metres lower than the existing.
		This modest increase in footprint is justifiable considering that the proposed building (unlike the existing) would not have a lower level for storage. Dispensing with a lower level has enabled the height of the proposed building to be dropped, helping to reduce its scale.
	Open Sided Shelter Some submitters objected to the scale of the proposed open sided shelter. Submitters noted that the size of the shelter is not appropriate for a local sport oval, appearing to be suited to a higher order spectator oval.	The proposed open-sided shelter is located at a place that has sensitive visual and heritage values. To protect those values, the open-sided shelter is not approved. Shelter will instead be available beneath the wide eaves of the replacement amenities building, and new landscaping will be required to include trees that, with time, will provide shade.
	Hard Stand Some submitters objected to the increased amount of hard stand surface proposed as part of the development. Submitters noted that it was not in keeping the sites natural aesthetic and environment.	The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand, and which will be coordinated with landscaping across the precinct. The design will include interpretation of the place's First Nations values. Proposed paths will connect with the broader path network.
	Landscaping A few submitters objected to the scale of the landscaping proposed. Concerns centred around whether the amount of change was required.	The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand, and which will be coordinated with landscaping across the precinct. The design will include interpretation of the place's First Nations values. Proposed paths will connect with the broader path network.
Layover Bay	Appropriateness / Need Some submitters objected to the proposed layover bay that is included in the proposal. Questions were raised over whether such a measure is really need for a local sport facility.	The proposed vehicle layover bay is located on the historic former military road, and at the precinct's entry where the Harbour Trust is aiming to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment. To protect the heritage values of the place, and support the aim of a pedestrian-friendly environment, the proposed vehicle layover bay is not approved. In its stead, Council will be required to provide a new entry into the adjacent Car Park 2, to facilitate drop-off/pick-up, and turning of vehicles that are exiting the precinct.
	Location A few submitters objected to the proposed location of the	See comments above.

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	layover bay. Submitters noted the heritage value of the road network and that an alternative area might be better suited.	
Assessment Process	EPBC Act Referral A few submitters noted that in their opinion, the proposed action should be referred to Minister for the Environment for consideration under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act).	The Harbour Trust has undertaken an assessment of the proposed action and concluded that it does not present a significant impact on the environment and therefore does not require referral to the Minister under the EPBC Act.
	Exhibition Process A few submitters noted concerns regarding the exhibition process and how this process impacted upon the validity of the comments gathered. Specifically, comments noted the timing (including school holidays) as well as the availability and clarity of supporting documents.	The proposal was exhibited in accordance with the requirements set out in the Comprehensive Plan. The exhibited documents enabled the community to adequately understand the proposal, and this was evident in the well-informed nature and number of submissions received. Submissions have been carefully considered by the Harbour Trust in its assessment of the proposed action.
	Transparency Some submitters raised concerns regarding the transparency of the process. Submitters mentioned that they felt Council should have communicated its intentions to residents at an earlier stage and that residents should have been given an opportunity to comment earlier in the process. Others felt the Harbour Trust should have more widely publicised the public exhibition.	The intent to relocate the amenities building is identified in the Harbour Trust's statutory plans which were prepared following extensive community consultation. The Harbour Trust placed public notices and notified stakeholders in accordance with the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan. 279 submissions were received, which is a strong response, and importantly allowed for a range of views and issues to be raised which have been considered by the Harbour Trust in its assessment of this application. Mosman Council's public communications regarding their proposal is a matter for Mosman Council.
	Height Poles A few submitters raised concerns about the number, location and accuracy of the height poles that were placed on sight.	The purpose of the height poles was to indicate the highest point for each of the two proposed structures, rather to indicate the building footprint. They did not form part of the formal exhibition material. The publicly available plans of the proposal provided sufficient information to enable the footprints of the two proposed structures to be understood.

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	Consistency with Harbour Trust Plans and Vision Some submitters stated their opinion that the proposal went against the various plans and vision of the Harbour Trust.	The relocation of the proposed amenities building is identified as an outcome in the Harbour Trust's statutory plans for Middle Head. The proposed opensided shelter and layover bay are not approved, as discussed earlier.
Constraints	Fire Safety A few submitters raised concerns over the fire risk posed by the proposed action. Submitters enquired whether the proposed action would make the area less safe for residents and questioned the safety of the proposed public barbecue.	The proposed building replaces an existing building on adjacent land. The proposed replacement building is consistent with 'Planning for Bushfire Protection' and will comply with the Building Code of Australia. Any barbecues that may be incorporated in the redesigned landscaped area would be electrical. Considering this, the proposal will not have any adverse impact on fire risk.
	Stormwater A few submitters raised concerns over the stormwater impacts of the proposed action. Specifically, concern was raised over the impact that the additional hardstand would have.	The proposed landscaping includes substantial areas of hardstand. The Harbour Trust will require the landscaping to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand. The proposed vehicle layover bay would also have increased the area of hardstand. This component of the proposal is not approved (see earlier comments). A stormwater plan will be required as a condition of approval.
	Traffic Impacts A few submitters raised concerns over the impacts on local traffic that the proposal would generate. Concerns were raised at a local / Mosman area and also at an immediate vicinity level.	The proposal does not involve a change or intensification of use. The proposal provides for the continued use of the oval as a community sports facility, and as such is not expected to generate any additional traffic or parking demand. To protect the heritage values of the place, and support the aim of a pedestrian-friendly environment, the proposed vehicle layover bay is not approved. In its stead, Council will be required to provide a new entry into the adjacent Car Park 2, to facilitate dropoff/pick-up, and turning of vehicles that are exiting the precinct.
Planning Considerations	Urbanisation of Middle Head A few submitters noted their concerns that the proposal represented the beginning of an urbanisation of Middle Head.	The Harbour Trust's Comprehensive Plan, Management Plan and Master Plan set out a clear vision to protect and enhance the precinct's natural and heritage values, and to substantially increase the amount of open space at Middle Head. The proposed amenities building has a comparable footprint to the existing building. Other elements of the proposal, namely the open-sided shelter and the vehicle layover bay are not approved, while the landscaping will need to be re-designed with reduced areas of hardstand. By locating a replacement

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		amenities building to the north of the existing, a larger uninterrupted area of landscaped space will be able to be provided at the entry to the precinct.
	Precedent A few submitters raised concerns the approval of the proposal would set a precedent for future development in Middle Head.	The proposed amenities building would replace a similar sized existing building, which has been a long-term planning intent of the Harbour Trust. As discussed earlier, the open-sided shelter is not approved. The vision for Middle Head is set out in the Harbour Trust's Comprehensive Plan, Management Plan and Master Plan. The proposal does not set a precedent for future development at Middle Head.
	Lack of Community Access A few submitters expressed concern that the use of the oval for organised sport limits community access to the oval and the area in general.	The oval was built in the 1950s, and Council has had a licence to use the oval for community sports since 1977. The proposal does not involve a change or intensification of use. The proposal provides for the continued use of the oval as a community sports facility, and as such is not expected to have any adverse impact on broader community access to the oval and area in general.
	Should be a Shared Green Space A few submitters expressed the opinion that the oval should be converted into a shared green space.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans provide for the continued use of the oval for sports purposes, and for Defence access and use. The oval was built in 1950s, and Council has had a licence to use the oval for sports and recreation since 1977. The current situation is that when the oval is not being used for sports or Defence activity — which is the majority of the time — the general public are free to access the oval. The proposal does not involve any change to the current situation.
	Exclusivity A few submitters raised concerns that the new facility would be exclusively for the use of some community groups to the exclusion of others.	The proposed replacement building and adjoining area would be used in much the same way as currently. The replacement building will - as with the existing building - provide public toilets for all park users.
	Popularity of Organised Sport A few submitters questioned whether organised sport was popular enough to justify the oval being set aside for sport and recreational purposes.	The Harbour Trust's statutory plans provide for the continued use of the oval for sports purposes, and for Defence access and use. The oval was built in 1950s, and Council has had a licence to use the oval for sports and recreation since 1977. The oval is well used by sporting groups.
	Underquoting	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.

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Funding Considerations	A few submitters noted that they felt that the project was being underquoted by the proponent.	
	Potential for Cost Overruns A few submitters expressed concerns that, based upon other Council projects, cost overruns were likely.	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.
	Source of Council Funding A few submitters questioned the source of Council's funding for the project.	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.
	Gambling Funding A few submitters raised concerns at the influence of gambling funding in organised sport.	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.
	Funds Should Go to Other Council Facilities A few submitters expressed the opinion that the funds for the project should instead be spent on other Council facilities.	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.
	Sport is Over Funded A few submitters expressed the opinion that organised sport is over funded.	This is a matter for the proponent, Mosman Council.
Licence	Validity A few submitters questioned the ongoing validity of the 1977 licence over the site between Mosman Council and the Commonwealth of Australia.	The licence for the oval, which was made in 1977, provides for Mosman Council to use the oval for sporting and recreation purposes, and to erect buildings, structures, improvements etc with the permission of the licensor (i.e. the Harbour Trust). The licence remains valid.
	Is the Licence Being Renegotiated? A few submitters questioned whether or not the Trust and Council are in the process of renegotiating the original licence.	The licence is not being renegotiated.

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Crime Prevention	Crime Prevention Through Evironmental Design Principles	Noted, and supported by the Harbour Trust. Corresponding conditions of approval recommended.
	The design and operation should incorporate measures to minimise crime and or public nuisance.	