



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

# Blackwattle Bay – Precinct Planning

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Submission to  
Infrastructure NSW

Submission issued  
June 2020



NSW Chapter  
Australian Institute of Architects

## SUBMISSION BY

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## PURPOSE

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- This submission is made by the Australian Institute of Architects' NSW Chapter (the Institute) in response to proposals for revitalising Blackwattle Bay and the recent briefing by Infrastructure NSW and FJMT to representatives of the Institute's Build Environment Committee.
- Comments have been prepared with the assistance of the NSW Chapter's Built Environment Committee.
- At the time of this submission, the Chapter President of the Institute is Kathlyn Loseby.
- The State Manager is Kate Concannon.

## INFORMATION

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The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with around 12,000 members across Australia and overseas. More than 3,000 of these are based in NSW.

The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture.

The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

## 1. Introduction

The Institute appreciates the opportunity provided to the NSW Built Environment Committee to hear directly from Infrastructure NSW and FJMT about the three precinct plan scenarios for Blackwattle Bay currently open for community consultation. This is a significant revitalisation program proposed for an important Sydney precinct of high public value. Accordingly, we are very interested to work with Infrastructure NSW to ensure high quality outcomes for the built environment that deliver strong public benefit.

Our responses fall into the general categories of: yield and density; project partnership; public interest; context and amenity.

## 2. Yield and density

- Each of the three options present similar height and yield. It is unclear what the impetus is behind the proposed quantum of yield and density. We are concerned that the scale and mass of the building envelopes are excessive, both in relation to the Pyrmont peninsula and to the low scale of Glebe on the western side of the Bay.

## 3. Project partnership – development and delivery

- The project should be developed and delivered as a partnership between state and local government. Detailed decision making should be devolved to the lowest level of government possible. The City of Sydney has the skills and capacity for effective collaboration on such a project.
- Once the master plan has been finalised and the street pattern confirmed, detailed planning approval powers should be vested with the City of Sydney. The City's design excellence process provides a good model for ensuring high standards of design and public benefit.

## 4. Protecting public interest and delivering public benefit

- We are concerned that the likely path for delivery of this project will be proponent-prepared design based on an indicative master plan. Experience has shown that this would represent a conflict of interests between the public and private interests. The master plan must be developed by government and fix the street layout, block pattern, maximum building envelopes and other critical details.
- A project of this scale must deliver community infrastructure, such as health, education and cultural facilities.
- Foreshore reserve must preserve public access of sufficient width for significant tree planting, seating areas etc. A busy public promenade should be a minimum of 30 metres in width to allow the variety of users and activities to co-exist without conflict.
- The public domain, including streets and paths, must remain in public ownership and should be managed by local government.
- The quantum of public domain shown in the options is good, but not the type. The design of the public domain is too elaborate and detailed and there is no indication of who will pay.
- The master plan should include a *Developer Contribution Plan* to provide the funding for the public domain works.
- The waterfront and bay itself are important public assets. They should not be taken over by marinas and other private jetties and boating facilities.

## 5. Contextual responsiveness and amenity

- The street pattern must engage with the existing layout of Pyrmont and maximise visual connection to the harbour.
- Streets should be designed to take some local traffic or as 'shared zones.'
- The existing elevated freeway and access ramps present major challenges. The master plan must address ways of dealing with their impact.
- The block and subdivision structure must ensure good solar access to the public domain and to residential apartments.
- ANZAC bridge approaches are too noisy and polluting for residential. The only place capable of residential is the southern part where it is wide enough to shield the motorway.
- There must be a metro station nearby. This is particularly important because a large part of the site is only capable of commercial development.

We thank Infrastructure NSW for the opportunity to provide comment on this proposal for Blackwattle Bay. We consider that a well-conceived and effectively delivered project of revitalisation for the precinct can contribute significant economic, social, health, environmental and cultural value to the state and to Sydney in particular. As such, we welcome the opportunity for continued consultation as the project evolves and we offer the Institute's support in assisting Infrastructure NSW and the City of Sydney to achieve high quality, citymaking outcomes at Blackwattle Bay.