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Visual Impact Assessment

Digital Advertising Signage Raw Square Overpass, Strathfield



Prepared for JCDecaux on behalf of Sydney Trains
Submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and
Environment

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Cover image: Photomontage of the proposed sign (Source: JCDecaux)

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1 Introduction

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared by *Keylan Consulting Pty Ltd* (Keylan) on behalf of JCDcaux to accompany a Development Application (DA) for the digital conversion of an existing static advertising sign on the Raw Square Overpass, Strathfield.

The proposed development comprises the removal of an existing static advertising sign on the southwest elevation of the Raw Square Overpass and its replacement with a digital advertising sign. The new digital advertising sign provides:

- an advertising display area of 17.79m² (including logo)
- a visual screen size of 16.25m²
- the continued display of illuminated advertisements
- a minimum dwell time of 10 seconds for message changes
- a maximum luminance of 350 cd/m² during the night time period
- webcam mounted on a safety arm to monitor visual content

The proposed digital advertising sign is 62% smaller than the existing 42.411m² illuminated static sign and will improve the overall visual appearance of the Raw Square overpass.

The VIA describes, analyses and assesses the potential visual impacts associated with the proposal. The relevant legislation and planning instruments are addressed in detail within the *Statement of Environmental Effects* (SEE) prepared to accompany the development application and have been informed by the findings of this VIA.

1.1 Report Structure

The VIA has been prepared in accordance with the following document structure:

Section	Overview
Executive Summary	An overarching summary of the findings and conclusions of the assessment contained within this VIA.
1 Introduction	Introduction to the VIA and the proposed development.
2 Site and Locality	A description of the site, the context and an assessment of the opportunities and constraints presented by the site.
3 The Proposal	A detailed description of the proposed development application
4 Methodology	A description of the methodology undertaken including any limitations encountered during the assessment.
5 Assessment	An in-depth visual impact assessment of the existing environment, proposal and potential impacts on the surrounding area.
6 Conclusion	A concluding statement taking into account the assessment of the proposal.

Table 1: Report Structure

2 The site and locality

2.1 Site description

The subject site is in the Strathfield Local Government Area (LGA) and is approximately 10km west of the Sydney Central Business District (CBD) and 3km south-east of Sydney Olympic Park. The site is located at the fringe of the Strathfield Town Centre and is 180 metres northwest of Strathfield station.

Raw Square is a Classified Road (Main Road 668) and is frequented by drivers travelling north from The Boulevard and the Hume Highway to connect with the M4 Motorway, Parramatta Road and Concord Road.

Raw Square is the primary crossing points for vehicular traffic across the rail line to connect the northern and southern portions of Strathfield. The railway bridge is occupied by tracks for the T1, T2 and T9 train lines.

There is an existing static sign on the southwest elevation of the Raw Square Overpass. The existing sign has dimensions of 12.66m x 3.35m and is front lit from dusk to dawn. There is also a low clearance sign on the same elevation.

The subject site in context to the surrounding area is shown in Figure 1. The Raw Square Overpass and existing signage as viewed from Raw Square (northbound) is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 1: Site context (Base source: Six Maps)



Figure 2: Raw Square Overpass (existing signage) – view northbound (Source: Google Maps)

2.2 Surrounding locality

The proposed digital advertising sign will be located on Raw Square Overpass, along a Sydney Trains rail corridor visible to northbound traffic. The surrounding locality is highly transitional and has a low to high-density mixed-use character that is highly trafficked by vehicles.

Development surrounding the site includes:

- residential and commercial dwellings to the east and west, the nearest residential dwelling is approximately 20 metres from the subject site
- retail and commercial uses located 80 metres to the south
- there are no bus stops located in close proximity of the site

Within the visual catchment of the site are approximately 4 high-density residential towers, a 2-storey residential flat building and a dwelling house. Commercial uses surrounding the site include a petrol station, convenience store, massage parlour, a club (the Russian Club) and a restaurant.



Figure 3: Surrounding locality - taken from the northeast corner of Raw Square and Albert Street



Figure 4: Surrounding locality - taken from Albert Road looking northeast



Figure 5: Surrounding locality - taken from corner of Raw Square and Albert Road looking north

2.3 Existing Signage Environment

Signage in the immediate vicinity of the existing sign (visible northbound) primarily relates to road traffic signage and includes a roundabout sign, clearway sign and signage associated with the Coles Shell petrol station. The low clearance sign currently on the southwest elevation of the Raw Square Overpass is to be retained.

The Raw Square Overpass and immediate vicinity is not currently visually cluttered by signage.

3 The Proposal

The proposal involves the digital conversion and reduction in visual screen size of an existing static advertising sign on the southwest elevation of the Raw Square Overpass from 42.41m² to 16.25m² (62% smaller). The development is summarised in Table 2 below.

Development Aspect	Description
Development summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> digital conversion of existing static advertising sign
Associated works	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the existing advertising sign, cladding, support steel and walkway are to be removed and replaced with a new perforated mesh cladding with an access walkway behind the new cladding and parts of the existing support structure which are to be retained will be painted to blend in with the Raw Square Overpass
Signage location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sign is proposed on the southwest elevation of the Raw Square Overpass (visible to northbound traffic along Raw Square)
Advertising display area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 17.79m² (7.986m x 2.198m + logo)
Visual screen size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 16.25m² (7.936m x 2.048m)
Dwell time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimum dwell time of 10 seconds
Signage exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visibility and readability is from a distance of 110 metres and 60 metres from the road respectively
Illumination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the digital signage is illuminated using LEDs installed within the front face 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
Existing signage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing static advertising sign to be removed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the existing static advertising sign is significantly larger than the proposed sign (12.66m x 3.35m, 42.411m²) the existing static advertising sign is illuminated from dusk to dawn existing low clearance sign on the overpass is not required to be removed or relocated

Table 2: Development summary

Indicative image of the sign, as viewed from Raw Square is provided at Figure 6.



Figure 6: Indicative view from Raw Square northeast bound (Source: JCDecaux)

4 Methodology

This VIA has been informed by a site visit undertaken on 26 October 2021 and utilises photographs taken on this date. This VIA has been informed by the relevant NSW Land & Environment Court Planning Principles relating to visual impacts.

The VIA identifies the visual catchment of the proposed sign and identifies the existing, emerging, and desired future character of the area to understand any sensitive receivers and likely visual impacts.

Several viewpoints have then been selected for detailed analysis based on their visibility to the proposal, the identification of key existing viewpoints and the sensitivity of each viewpoint. Each viewpoint has been assessed in accordance with the following points which are summarised in Section 5.4 of this report:

1. Existing visual character and likely extent of change to locality and surrounds.
2. Visual sensitivity, based on existing visual character, key views and other significant visual features.
3. Visual exposure of site under current situation and following development of the site.
4. Likely visibility of proposed development – including location, type and number of viewers and duration of impact.
5. Level of visual impact (low, moderate or high).

The following limitations have been encountered while preparing this VIA:

- the photographs taken cannot replicate the experience of viewing the proposal with the human eye
- photographs have only been able to be taken from public areas and therefore viewpoints cannot provide an exact analysis of impacts to private property

Additionally, as the DA is accompanied by a specialist Lighting Impact Assessment, visual impacts associated with the illumination of the proposed sign has not been considered as part of this VIA.

5 Assessment

The assessment within this Section has been undertaken in accordance with the methodology outlined at Section 4.

5.1 State Environmental Planning Policy No 64 – Advertising and Signage

State Environmental Planning Policy 64 - Advertising and Signage (SEPP 64) aims to ensure that advertising and signage is well located, compatible with the desired amenity of an area and of high quality. Schedule 1 of SEPP 64 provides assessment criteria which guides the assessment of visual impacts arising from signage.

Schedule 1 of SEPP 64 is addressed in detail within the SEE. Key points from the Schedule 1 assessment relevant to the VIA include:

- the proposal is compatible with the existing and desired future character of the area as it reduces the advertising area of an existing sign and improves the quality of the advertising structure
- the proposal is consistent with outdoor advertising in the area being a mixed use area with various types of commercial signage
- the proposal is not visible from any important views
- the proposal does not dominate the skyline as it sits within the soffit of the bridge structure and does not protrude above the structural boundaries of the bridge
- the proposal is compatible with the scale, proportion and characteristics of the site as it reduces the area of existing signage
- the proposal respects and improves the features of the Raw Square Overpass

5.2 Visual Catchment

The proposed sign faces Raw Square and will be visible from vehicular traffic and pedestrians travelling along Raw Square and Albert Road. The proposed sign will also be visible from approximately 4 high-density residential towers, ground floor commercial tenancies, a 2-storey residential flat building and a dwelling house.

The visual catchment of the sign is identified at Figure 7. Note, this is limited to identifying visibility within the public domain.

The character of the visual catchment can be described as:

- mixed use comprising ground floor commercial tenancies and high density residential above
- a transport corridor being located on the southwest elevation of a railway bridge and visible from the intersection of two classified roads (Raw Square - Main Road 668 and Albert Road - Secondary Road 2057)
- transitioning with low density residential properties currently adjoining high density development



Figure 7: Visual catchment (Base source: SixMaps)

The proposal is considered to be consistent with the visual character of the area as it is a transport corridor and mixed use area with commercial uses and associated signage. The proposal will have positive visual impacts on the visual character of the area as the proposed sign is 62% smaller than the existing sign and improves the quality of the display and advertising structure.

There are several other signs located within the vicinity relating to road safety signage, the Shell Petrol Station and other businesses surrounding the Albert Road and Raw Square intersection. Despite this, existing signage is appropriately spaced and the locality does not exhibit signage clutter.

The visual catchment does not comprise any items of heritage significance or any significant view corridors. The viewpoints identified below within the visual catchment have been identified to assess visual impacts.



Figure 8: Viewpoints (Base source: SixMaps)

5.3 Assessment of Viewpoints

View 1: Raw Square (7 Albert Road)

View 1 is taken from the pedestrian path along Raw Square at the base of the closest sensitive receiver.

This viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians walking northeast bound along Raw Square and is being relied upon to estimate visual impacts on residents of 7 Albert Road, Strathfield. 7 Albert Road is a 16-storey mixed use building which appears to comprise 4 storeys of commercial uses and 12 storeys of residential uses above.

The viewpoint is dominated by the Raw Square transport corridor and has an unimpeded view of the existing static advertising sign. The verge of the road comprises a pedestrian path and landscaping including hedges and street tree planting.

The visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and an overall positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display.

The close proximity to the sign and height of the residential tower would likely result in sight lines which look above the site resulting in limited visual impacts.

Nonetheless, if residential dwellings within 7 Albert Road can view the proposed sign, the visual impacts will remain positive due to the proposed sign being significantly smaller and of a higher quality than the existing display.



Figure 9: View 1 - existing view



Figure 10: View 1 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

View 2: Albert Road and Raw Square –southeast corner (20-34 Albert Road)

View 2 is taken from the pedestrian path along Albert Road at the intersection of Albert Road and Raw Square.

This viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians waiting to cross Albert Road and views from the ground floor commercial tenancies of 20-34 Albert Road, Strathfield. This viewpoint is being relied upon to estimate visual impacts on residents of 20-34 Albert Road. 20-34 Albert Road is a 15-storey mixed use building which appears to comprise ground floor commercial uses and 14 storeys of residential uses above.

The viewpoint shows the Raw Square/Albert Road intersection and the Shell Petrol Station located at the opposite corner. The view of the existing static advertising sign is partially obstructed by street tree planting along Raw Square.

The visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and a generally positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display.

Despite this, the proposed sign will have a smaller length than the existing sign but will be in the centre of the overpass. As the existing sign is off-centre on the eastern extent of the overpass, the new centralised sign will be marginally more visible from tenancies along Albert Street. However, this change is nominal and is unlikely to be noticeable or cause any additional visual impacts.

It is anticipated corner residential units above ground floor will have views of the new sign where not obstructed by street tree planting, streetlights, road safety signage and signals associated with the intersection. Nonetheless, the visual impacts will be positive to these dwellings due to the proposed sign being 62% smaller and of a higher quality than the existing display.



Figure 11: View 2 - existing view



Figure 12: View 2 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

View 3: Albert Road and Raw Square –southwest corner (38 Albert Road)

View 3 is taken from the pedestrian path at the southwest corner of the Albert Road/Raw Square intersection.

The viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians and motorists waiting at the signalised intersection. The viewpoint also shows the view from the ground floor commercial tenancy at 38 Albert Road. This viewpoint is being relied upon to estimate visual impacts on residents of 38 Albert Road. 38 Albert Road is an 11-storey mixed use building which appears to comprise ground floor commercial uses and 10 storeys of residential uses above.

This viewpoint is dominated by the Albert Road/Raw Square intersection and views the mixed use development at 7 Albert Road and the Shell Petrol Station. This location has an unimpeded view of the existing static advertising sign.

The visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and an overall positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display.

It is anticipated units within 38 Albert Road along the Albert Road frontage will be able to view the proposed sign except where obstructed by streetlights, road safety signage and signals associated with the intersection. Nonetheless, the visual impacts will be positive to these dwellings due to the proposed sign being significantly smaller and of a higher quality than the existing display.



Figure 13: View 3 - existing view



Figure 14: View 3 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

View 4: Raw Square (25 Churchill Ave)

View 4 is taken from the pedestrian path adjacent to Raw Square on approach to the Albert Road/Raw Square intersection.

The viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians and motorists travelling north along Raw Square from the point where the proposed sign comes into view and is also adjacent to the ground floor commercial tenancies of 25 Churchill Ave. The viewpoint is being relied upon to estimate visual impacts on residents of 25 Churchill Ave. 25 Churchill Ave is a 10-storey mixed use building which comprises ground floor commercial uses and 9 storeys of residential uses above.

The viewpoint shows Raw Square and the mixed use development at 38 Albert Road and can see the Raw Square/Albert Road intersection and the Shell Petrol Station in the distance. The view to the existing static advertising sign is partially obstructed by street trees and the podium of 38 Albert Road.

The visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and an overall positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display. Additionally, the visual impact of the existing static sign is very minimal due to the distance from this viewpoint.

It is anticipated the balconies of units within 25 Churchill Ave fronting Raw Square will have some visibility to the proposed signs except where obstructed by streetlights, road safety signage and signals associated with the intersection. Additionally, given the distance from the sign, visibility is likely to be minimal. Further, the visual impacts will be positive overall due to the proposed sign being significantly smaller and of a higher quality than the existing display.



Figure 15: View 4 - existing view



Figure 16: View 4 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

View 5: Albert Road (42 & 44 Albert Road)

View 5 is taken from the pedestrian path along Albert Road and is adjacent to the only low density residential dwelling within the visual catchment of the sign.

The viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians travelling east along Albert Road and the view from the northern frontage of 42 Albert Road. 42 Albert Road is a semi-detached single storey residential dwelling.

The viewpoint shows the Raw Square/Albert Road intersection, signage associated with the Shell Petrol Station, mixed use development at 7 Albert Road and a low-rise residential flat building at 11 Albert Road. The view to the existing static advertising sign is partially obstructed by street trees and signage associated with the Shell Petrol Station.

The visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and an overall positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display. Additionally, the visual impact of the existing static sign is minimal due to obstruction from the street tree.



Figure 17: View 5 - existing view



Figure 18: View 5 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

View 6: Raw Square – Shell Petrol Station (9 Albert Road)

View 6 is taken from the pedestrian path adjacent to the Shell Petrol Station at the northwest corner of the Raw Square/Albert Road intersection.

The viewpoint shows the view of pedestrians and motorists travelling north along Raw Square and also the view from the Shell Petrol Station. Given the use of the site is a petrol station and that potential receivers from this viewpoint are transient, this viewpoint is not considered to be a sensitive receiver.

Nonetheless, the visual impact to this viewpoint is considered to represent a minor change and an overall positive impact resulting from the smaller and higher quality advertising display.



Figure 19: View 6 - existing view



Figure 20: View 6 - proposed view (Source: JCDecaux)

5.4 Assessment Matrix

The below matrix provides an overall assessment of each viewpoint based on the number of viewers, duration of view, distance and visual sensitivity.

The high number of residential dwellings within the visual catchment indicate high visual sensitivity overall. However, as the proposal seeks to decrease the advertising area of an existing sign and improves the visual appearance of the Raw Square Overpass, visual impacts of the proposal are considered to be positive/low and to most viewpoints.

Viewpoint	Distance of View	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
1	~35m	High	Low to moderate
2	~75m	High	Low
3	~95m	High	Low
4	~140m	High	Low
5	~110m	High	Low
6	~65m	Low	Low to moderate

Table 3: Assessment Matrix

Rating	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
Low/Short	Not a sensitive receiver	Little change to existing views
Moderate	Moderately sensitive receiver (e.g. a park)	Somewhat impacted
High/Long	Highly sensitive receivers (e.g. residential uses, childcare, or heritage item)	Highly impacted

Table 4: Rating definitions

6 Conclusion

The proposed digital conversion of the existing static advertising sign on the Raw Square Overpass will result in positive visual impacts.

The proposed digital sign will have a visual display area 62% smaller than the existing sign and will be accompanied by advertising structure upgrades which will improve the visual appearance of the overpass.

Following a detailed analysis of the proposal and the surrounding locality, this VIA has found the following:

- the surrounding area has high visual sensitivity due to the many residential dwellings within the visual catchment
- views to the proposed sign from many sensitive receivers will be obstructed by existing structures and street trees
- the signage is consistent with the character of the surrounding area
- the surrounding area does not exhibit visual clutter
- the proposed sign will be visible to high numbers of pedestrians and motorists reflective of its location along a classified road and proximity to the Strathfield Town Centre
- the proposal does not impact upon any heritage values, scenic views or protrude above the dominant skyline
- the proposal will reduce visual impacts overall due to its smaller size and higher quality

Following consideration of the above, the proposal is considered to result in acceptable visual impacts and will improve the visual appearance of the Raw Square Overpass.