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Visual Impact Assessment

Conversion of a Digital Advertising Sign
Marion Street, Leichhardt

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

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Cover image: indicative photomontage of digital conversion of sign (Source: JCDecaux)

Revision	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Date	Revision Type
1	SH/PS	MW	07/02/2022	Final

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1 Introduction

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared by *Keylan Consulting Pty Ltd* (Keylan) on behalf of *JCDecaux* to accompany a development application (DA) for the digital conversion of an existing sign located on the Marion Street overpass in Leichhardt.

The proposed development comprises:

- the conversion of an existing static advertising sign on the western elevation of the Marion Street light rail overpass to a digital advertising sign
- an advertising display area of 17.79m^2 (including logo)
- a visual screen area of 16.25m^2
- the continued display of illuminated advertisements
- a 10 second dwell time for message changes
- a maximum night time luminance of 250 cd/m^2
- webcam mounted on a safety arm to monitor visual content

In addition, the application proposes to remove 7 existing poster style signs, which currently provide a total of 44.275m^2 of advertising area, located beneath the underpass helping to reduce visual clutter and rationalizing signage within the area.

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

Marion Street is a classified road that travels in a general east-west alignment (Road 2013, classified as a Secondary Road). Marion Street connects Haberfield to the west to Leichhardt to the east.

The Marion Street Overpass allows the Inner West Light Rail to traverse through one of Leichhardt's main roads without disturbing road traffic. The subject site is separated from residential areas to the west by the Hawthorne Canal. There are pedestrian pathways located on either side of Marion Street which run below the overpass.

The subject site in context to the surrounding area is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: site context (Base source: Nearmap)

The Marion Street Overpass as viewed from Marion Street (eastbound) is shown in Figure 2. There is an existing static advertising sign on the overpass, proposed for conversion to a digital sign under this application.

Figure 2: Marion Street Light Rail Overpass showing existing static signage– view eastbound (Source: Google Maps)

2.2 Surrounding locality

The advertising sign will be located within an established Sydney Trains corridor and visible from an established TfNSW Road Corridor. Development surrounding the site and in proximity to the road corridor includes:

- Hawthorne Canal located 20m west of the subject site
- residential dwellings to the west, the nearest dwelling is approximately 70 metres from the subject site
- local scout hall located 50 metres to the west
- seniors living development located 75 metres to the northeast
- Lambert Park Sportsfield located 45 metres southwest of the overpass
- car servicing workshop 30m to the northeast
- Marion Street Light Rail stop located 20m north of the overpass

2.3 Existing Signage Environment

In addition to the existing static advertising sign located on the overpass, there are 7 smaller static signs which provide 44.275m^2 of advertising area located below the overpass on either side of the support structure. These signs are regularly changed and are promotional in nature. The static signage is shown in the figure below. Sydney Trains has confirmed these signs will also be removed as part of the removal of the existing sign on the western elevation of the overpass. This will ensure that visual clutter is not an issue through the rationalisation of signage as per Schedule 1 of SEPP 64.

Figure 3: Existing static advertising signage to be removed on northern side below the overpass (Source: Keylan)

Figure 4: Existing static advertising signage to be removed on southern side below the overpass (Source: Keylan)

3 The Proposal

The proposal involves the digital conversion of an existing static advertising signage on the western elevation of the Marion Street Light Rail Overpass in Leichhardt.

The development is summarised in Table 2 below.

Development Aspect	Description
Development summary	Digital conversion of existing static advertising signage
Signage location	Sign is proposed on the western elevation of the light rail overpass (visible to eastbound traffic)
Advertising display area	17.79m^2 (7.98m x 2.2m + logo)
Visual screen	16.25m^2 (7.94m x 2.05m)
Road clearance from ground level to the sign	4.93 metres clearance to overpass
Dwell time	Minimum 10 seconds
Signage exposure	Visibility and readability is from a distance of 180 metres
Illumination	The digital signage is illuminated using LEDs installed within the front face
Consent time period	15 years
Existing signage	Existing static sign with dimensions of 8.3m x 2.2m (18.26m^2) 7 smaller static signs (providing 44.275m^2 of advertising area) located below the overpass which will be removed as part of this DA

Table 2: Development summary

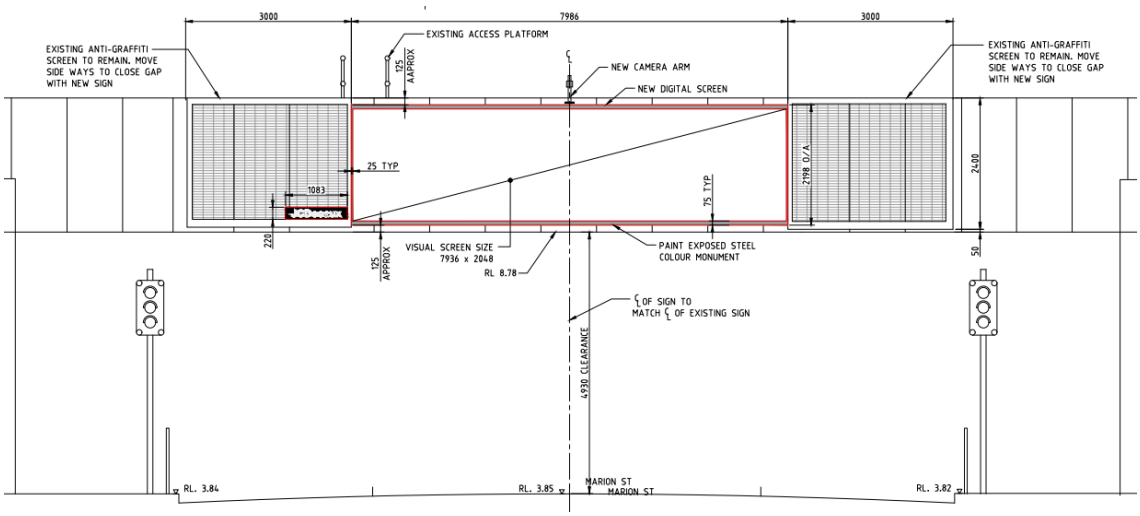

Figure 5: Architectural drawing showing proposed digital conversion (Source: Dennis Bunt Consulting Engineers)

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 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 0 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 Heritage Impact Statement and a specialist Lighting Impact Assessment, visual impacts on surrounding heritage items and impacts associated with illumination have 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 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 appropriate for the streetscape as it will not detract from the existing road corridor and will complement the surrounding area*
- *The proposal is compatible with the scale, proportion and characteristics of the site.*

5.2 Visual Catchment

The proposed sign is west facing the Haberfield residential area and adjoining public recreation area forming part of the 'GreenWay' walk, an active travel corridor which runs from Cooks River to the Iron Cove.

The character of the visual catchment can be broadly described as:

- residential, also identified as a Heritage Conservation Area (HCA)
- public recreation area
- transport corridor

The proposal is considered to be consistent with the visual character of the area as it replaces the existing signage attached to the overpass with a smaller, modern, digitised sign which is 11% smaller than the existing sign. It is also consistent with the Marion Street streetscape as outlined in the HIS (Appendix 6).

As noted previously, there are existing static advertising signs located below the overpass on either side of the supporting structure. Notwithstanding, the proposal is for the conversion of the existing static sign located on the overpass and will therefore not increase or change the existing visual clutter. To mitigate signage clutter, the Applicant will remove the existing 7 poster style signs located beneath the underpass.

The viewpoints identified below within the visual catchment have been identified to assess visual impacts.

Figure 6: Viewpoints (Base source: Nearmap)

5.3 Assessment of Viewpoints

View 1: Hawthorne Canal

View 1 was selected as it is located along a popular recreational area, forming part of the 'GreenWay' environmental and active travel corridor.

This section of the GreenWay, in proximity to Marion Street, is heavily vegetated thereby screening the pathway from adjoining development along the corridor. This provides a healthy active transport route with dense landscaping provisions despite running through an urbanised area, close to the Sydney CBD.

As demonstrated in the figure below, the view from this location towards the Marion Street overpass sign is completely screened by plantings. This screening ensures there are no visual impacts to pedestrians utilising the active transport corridor.

Figure 7: View 1 (Source: Keylan)

View 2: Hawthorne Parade

View 2 was selected as it is the closest intersection to the signage location. It is also the interface between the existing residential area and RE1 Public Recreation zone.

Given the prominence of this corner and adjoining residential development, implications of visual impact are potentially greater than those from View 3 given the orientation of the dwellings adjacent to View 2 which face directly east.

Despite being a prominent corner location and viewpoint, it is anticipated that the only residential receiver would be the dwelling located on the corner allotment at 116 Hawthorne Parade. The view from this residence would be partially obscured due to the densely vegetated RE1 zone to the east and existing plantings along Hawthorne Parade. All residential dwellings north of 116 Hawthorn Parade would not have direct sightlines toward the signage due to the screened nature of the sign.

Notwithstanding, the proposal seeks approval for digital conversion and it is unlikely there will be any additional impacts compared to those from the existing advertising sign. Potential impacts as a result of the digital conversion are limited to light spill which can be mitigated through adjustable illumination.

Figure 8: View 2

View 3: Corner of Marion Street and Hawthorne Parade South

View 3 was selected as it provides a direct line of sight to the existing signage from the closest residential receiver. It indicates the nature of the sign as it would be viewed by nearby residential development, its impact to surrounding residents as well as those utilising public transport within the locality.

Despite being the closest residential receiver, it is noted that the residential flat building is orientated with a main street frontage facing north. Given the dense vegetation along the Hawthorne Canal as shown in the background of the figure below, the signage is partially obscured from the residential receiver at 119 Hawthorne Parade. Apartments on the western elevation would be the only residents subject to sightlines toward the signage. In particular, the apartments on both ground level and the first floor at the north-eastern corner would have the most direct sightlines toward the signage, however, this would still be slightly obscured.

The bus stop at this location has direct unobscured sightlines towards the signage site. Despite this uninterrupted view, given the nature of bus stops, those utilising the stop would only temporarily be subject to the relevant visual impacts from the sign. Given the frequency of buses at this particular bus stop, facilitating bus routes 438X, 438N and 437, viewing times for bus users is relatively low.

Figure 9: Existing view 3

View 4: Haberfield Scout Hall

View 4 was selected as it acts as the interface between the residential area and RE1 zoning adjoining the transport corridor. It is also the boundary of the Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) being *Haberfield Conservation Area*.

The Scout Hall acts as the transition into the R2 Low Density Residential zone, directly west of the overpass. Given the relevant zoning and activities on site, the Hall is the closest built sensitive receiver. The Scout Hall has a primary street frontage to Marion Street with no driveway access. This means visitors must access the site by foot via the Marion Street pathway. The closest side streets are to the west of the site which means visitors travelling by car would generally park in a side street and walk in a western direction to access the Hall, subsequently directly facing the sign. The Scout Hall is currently utilised 3 nights a week for the different streams of Scouts. Overall, the signage exposure relevant to the Scout Hall is generally low but may be high during Hall usage.

It is also noted that the signage clutter located beneath the overpass on the northern side are noticeable at this location. Notwithstanding, the 7 smaller static signs on either side below the overpass are proposed to be removed as part of the DA.

As the proposal seeks approval for digital conversion of an existing sign, it is unlikely there would be any additional impacts compared to those which already exist. Figure 10 and Figure 11 below show the existing sign and proposed digital sign respectively. These figures demonstrate that the proposed conversion will not have any additional tangible impacts.

Figure 10: Existing view 4

Figure 11: 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.

Viewpoint / Location	Distance of View	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
Hawthorne Canal	50m	N/A	Low
Hawthorne Parade	80m	Residential area – highly sensitive	Medium
Corner of Marion Street and Hawthorne Parade South	80m	Closest residential dwelling – highly sensitive Bus stop – medium sensitivity as commuters are only there for a prescribed amount of time before their bus arrives	Low - Medium
Haberfield Scout Hall	45m	Residential area and HCA interface– moderately sensitive given the usage of the Scout Hall	Low-Medium

Table 3: Assessment Matrix

Rating	Visual Sensitivity	Level of Impact
Low	Not a sensitive receiver	Little change to existing views
Medium	Moderately sensitive receiver (e.g. a park)	Somewhat impacted
High	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 Marion Street Overpass will not result in any additional visual impacts to the surrounding locality, including sensitive receivers within the Haberfield residential area to the west.

The proposed digital sign will have an visual screen area 11% 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 moderate visual sensitivity due to the varying zoning and low density residential nature of the visual catchment
- the surrounding area displays some evidence of visual clutter which will be reduced due to the proposed 7 signs to be removed
- the proposed sign will be visible to a high number of pedestrians and motorists reflective of its location along a classified road and proximity to both Leichhardt and Haberfield Local Centres
- views to the proposed sign from many sensitive receivers will be obstructed by existing vegetation within the adjoining RE1 Public Recreation zone
- the proposal does not result in any additional impacts upon 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 Marion Street Overpass.