

2 July 2025

Your Ref: DA 25/7220 (PAN-536078)  
Our Ref: R/2025/10  
File No: 2025/387638

Daniel Gorgioski  
Senior Planner, Transport Assessments  
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Via NSW Planning Portal

Dear Daniel,

**DA 25/7220 – Digital Advertising Sign – George Street Rail Overpass, The Rocks**

Thank you for your correspondence dated 5 June 2025 inviting the City of Sydney (the City) to comment on the abovementioned development application.

The development application involves the removal of two existing illuminated static third-party advertising signs and replacement with a digital advertising sign on the southern side of the George Street rail overpass.

The proposed digital advertising sign measures 8m x 2.2m and is illuminated using LEDs. Advertisements will have a dwell time of 25s and instantaneous transition time.

The City has reviewed the documents submitted with the development application and **objects** to the proposed development.

**1. Public Benefit**

The consent authority cannot be satisfied, and therefore must not grant consent, as required by subsection 3.11(2)(b) of SEPP (Industry and Employment) 2021 (the SEPP), that the proposed advertisement is acceptable in terms of *“(iii) the public benefits to be provided in connection with the display of the advertisement.”*

The public benefit statement submitted with the application relies on benefits to Sydney Trains, in addition to the projected revenue stream generated through the display of advertising. This includes the use of the proposed signage to display Sydney Trains information in various circumstances. The operation of the rail network is a core responsibility of government. The generation of additional revenue to supplement operational funding is not considered a public benefit.

Additionally, new third-party signs and advertisements are generally not permitted in the City in accordance with Provision 3.16.7.1(1) of Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 (SDCP 2012). Section 3.16.7.2 of SDCP 2012 outlines that new advertising signs and third-party advertisements are generally only appropriate when converting an existing billboard sign to a digital billboard.

When this occurs, Provision 9 specifies that the sign must provide a public benefit, being 10% of the advertising time being made available to the City to display public information, community messages or promotion of Council events and initiatives. Alternatively, this provision also allows for other public benefits in lieu of advertising time.

Provision 3.16.7.2(9) of the DCP is to be applied through the consideration of the SEPP and is entitled to significant weight. The City considers that compliance with both Section 3.11(2)(b)(iii) of the SEPP and Provision 3.16.7.2(9) of the DCP should be demonstrated simultaneously. This has not been considered in the current proposal.

## **Heritage Impacts**

Whilst it is noted that an approval has been issued under s60 of the Heritage Act by the City, as delegate of Heritage NSW, the scope of the matters for consideration in issuing this approval were limited under the Act. The assessment did not consider the broader impact to the Circular Quay and Rocks precincts.

The proposed digital advertising signage is located at the gateway into The Rocks precinct, a historic precinct, with a significant number of State listed heritage items. The proposed digital advertising signage is inconsistent with the appearance of the precinct and would have a detrimental impact on the contextual significance of the precincts.

## **SEPP (Industry and Employment) 2021 Assessment Criteria**

Having regard to the assessment criteria in Schedule 5 to SEPP as required by Subsection 3.11(1)(b), the proposed signage is not considered to be acceptable in terms of its impact for the following reasons:

- Regarding criteria 2 *Special areas*, as above, the proposed signage is located at the gateway to The Rocks, a historic precinct, and would have a detrimental impact on the contextual heritage significance of the area.
- Regarding criteria 3 *Views and vistas*, the proposed signage would reduce the quality of existing views through the precinct, noting the signage is backdropped by The Rocks, First Fleet Park and Sydney Harbour.
- Regarding criteria 4 *Streetscape, setting and landscape*, the proposed signage would not contribute to the visual interest of the streetscape. The proposed signage would detract from the quality of the urban environment, significant given the recent George Street public domain upgrade, and contemporary architecture and historic precincts.

## **Energy Consumption**

Provision 3.16.4 (6) of SDCP 2012 states: “*Where the consent authority is of the opinion that an illuminated sign or advertisement is expected to generate high levels of energy use based on size, hours of operation or illumination source, the signage is to be powered by:*

- (a) *onsite renewable energy of a capacity to provide the energy required to illuminate the sign; or*
- (b) *the purchase of a renewable energy product offered by an electricity supplier equivalent to the estimated annual amount of electricity used.”*

The SEE does not clarify the proposed power supply for the signage. The application should be amended to address this provision of SDCP 2012 and ensure ESD principles are met.

Should you wish to speak with a Council officer about the above, please contact Michael Stephens, Senior Planner on 9265 9040 or at [mjstephens@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mjstephens@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'GJahn', written in a cursive style.

**Graham Jahn** AM LFRAIA Hon FPIA  
**Chief Planner / Executive Director**  
City Planning | Development | Transport