

RPEYC Ramp and Pontoon Upgrade

Introduction

As you may be aware, the RPEYC had sought approval from Woollahra Municipal Council to install a new ramp and pontoon to replace the existing ramp and pontoon at the end of the Club's jetty as part of the Club's sailing facilities.

Whilst that application was recommended for approval by Council, it was subsequently refused by the Woollahra Local Planning Panel (LPP) after objections from local residents. The main reasons given by the LPP for the refusal relate to concerns that the Proposal was inconsistent with the Sydney Harbour Regional Environmental Plan and the Development Control Plan made under that Plan.

The RPEYC has had an opportunity to consider the decision and believes that it has grounds for obtaining approval on the basis of a review of the decision of the Panel, or failing that, a decision of the Land and Environment Court.

The purpose of this bulletin, is to provide further information regarding the Proposal and to provide members, neighbours and the community with an opportunity to provide input to the RPEYC.

Should you have any questions, comments or enquiries regarding the Proposal, please address these to secretary@rpeyc.com.au.

We thank you in advance for taking the time to consider this bulletin.

Background

Felix Bay is a small bay at the Northern end of Point Piper. It is bounded by Point Piper to the West and the Woollahra Point to the East. The southern or inland, boundary is determined by Lady Martin's Beach.

The bay is susceptible to choppy water when the wind is blowing from the North and East and is impacted by wave action when the Harbour swell rebounds off Bradley's Head and also from passing ferries and large power boats.

The yacht club was established in 1922, the land was acquired soon after and the clubhouse was built in 1924, with the original jetty following in 1927. The club was granted a Royal Charter and was renamed the Royal Prince Edward Yacht Club in 1935. The jetty was later modified in 1952 and the current 4 x 3 metre pontoon was added in 1990.

The pontoon now floats in less than 1.5 metres of water at low tide, is extremely "lively" in adverse weather conditions and presents an extremely short berthing face to approaching vessels. The pontoon has been holed and sunk at least once. The existing pontoon and ramp is also non-compliant with Australian Standards, including in relation to disability access.

The Proposal

The RPEYC is proposing that the existing pontoon and ramp be removed and replaced with a more stable design able to provide safer drop-off and casual berthing facilities for Club vessels.

International Marina Consultants and Australian Ports and Marina's (AP&M) have been retained by the RPEYC to provide advice regarding a suitable design. Both consultants are highly qualified and in particular, AP&M was selected as they had designed the new ramp and pontoon at the Old Pilot Station, Watsons Bay a location similar in wave and fetch activity as Felix Bay.

The proposed design includes a composite aluminium ramp with a pontoon of a composite structure including aluminium and timber. This new design addresses the instability of the existing structure by:

1. Positioning the pontoon in deeper water for reduced wave effects. This requires the pontoon to be moved 9 metres further into the Bay.
2. Lengthening the pontoon to enable it to "bridge" between wave crests. The optimal length to achieve this is 14 metres.
3. Widening the pontoon from 4 metres to 5 metres to enhance the lateral stability.
4. Lengthening the ramp to 16 metres to ensure that it satisfies disability access requirements and is easily and safely accessible by all users.

The proposal does not require any changes to the 93 year old jetty. The new design only replaces and extends the existing ramp and pontoon.

1. Does the Proposal meet with the requirements of the Sydney Harbour Regional Environmental Plan?

Woollahra Council assessed the Proposal in 2019 and concluded that it was satisfactory with regard to the Sydney Harbour Regional Environmental Plan, as well as the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan and Woollahra Development Control Plan. Community facilities such as the RPEYC are permitted with consent in the zone.

The Proposal is an extension of the existing ramp and pontoon and does not impact on the use and enjoyment of the waterway by others.

2. Does the Proposal meet the requirements of the Sydney Harbour Foreshores and Waterways Area Development Control Plan (DCP)?

When assessing an application, a consent authority must consider matters identified in the Sydney Harbour Development Control Plan (DCP). The DCP requires consideration of a number of matters relating to issues that may be considered under seven headings: namely, landscape impact, foreshore access, buildings and related structures, permanent berthing facilities, the minimization of dredging, general requirements and design guidelines, and private marinas and landing facilities.

As part of Council's assessment of the proposed development, it considered that the development met these requirements as summarised below.

Part	Assessment
Part 2. Ecological assessment	
Ecological communities (Aquatic) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sandy beaches - seagrass 	<i>Satisfactory</i> – The Martine Habitat Survey by Waterfront Surveys dated 19 July 2019 has assessed the impact of the proposal. The Survey references mitigation measures which are adopted as part of the recommendation. Subject to these measures, the proposal satisfies the relevant performance criteria referenced in Table 2.
Part 3. Landscape assessment	
3.2 General aims All development should aim to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimise any significant impact on views and vistas from and to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Public places o Landmarks identified on the maps accompanying the DCP; and o Heritage items - Ensure it complements the scenic character of the area - Protect the integrity of foreshores with rock outcrops, dramatic topography or distinctive visual features - Provide a high quality of built and landscape design - Contribute to the diverse character of the landscape 	<i>Satisfactory</i> – The impact on views and vistas from public places is minimal given the existing backdrop of other jetties and pontoons in this locality. <i>Satisfactory</i> <i>N/A</i> <i>Satisfactory</i> <i>Satisfactory</i>
3.4 Landscape character type 10 performance criteria	<i>Satisfactory</i> – Special natural elements (ie. beaches) will not be impacted; open nature of the bay will not be lost; and there is no increase in vessel numbers in this locality
Part 4. Design guidelines for water-based and land/water interface development	
4.2 General requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public access to waterways and public land is maintained and enhanced - Congestion of the waterway and foreshore is minimised 	<i>Satisfactory</i> <i>Satisfactory</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflicts on the waterway and foreshore are avoided - The development warrants a foreshore location - The development does not interfere with navigation, swimming or other recreational activities - The demand for the development has been established - The structure does not obstruct or affect the natural flow of tides and currents - Development does not dominate its landscape setting - The extent of development is kept to the absolute minimum necessary to provide access to the waterway - Shared usage of facilities is encourages to minimise the number of structures and their cumulative impact on the environment of the Harbour and its tributaries - Development is setback at least 2.5 metres from the division of the waterway as established by the NSW Maritime Authority and illustrated in Figure 4 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p> <p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<p>4.8 Private landing facilities (inc. jetties, ramps and pontoons)</p> <p>Location</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To minimise alienation of the public waterway, the total length of structures is restricted to the minimum needed for their function. This is generally 13 metres with a maximum length of 16 metres from the mean high water mark (MHW). The need for structures to be longer to reach an adequate depth of water is not, in itself, sufficient justification for extended structures. Where existing adjoining long structures would prevent access to a new structure of 16 metres, a length compatible with existing structures may be allowable 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pontoons are to be of minimum size and to be as unobtrusive as possible. In general pontoons should be 3.6 metres x 2.4 metres, but, where circumstances demand, pontoons up to but not greater than 6 metres x 3 metres will be considered 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ramps to pontoons shall be of such a length that the slope of the ramp at a zero tide is not steeper than 1 vertical in 2.7 horizontal 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The minimum width of ramps and jetties shall be 1.2 metres and the maximum width 1.8 metres unless there is a demonstrated demand for a greater width 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The depth of water at a pontoon or any associated vessel mooring shall conform with the requirements of the NSW Maritime Authority as a construction approval authority 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The surfaces of pontoons, ramps and jetties, including the tops of piles, are to be left untreated or stained or painted in colours compatible with the character of the area, except as required for safety reasons 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ramps should be slatted or mesh to allow light penetration into the intertidal zone 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Handrails are not acceptable 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The decks of jetties shall be 2.5 metres above Zero Fort Denison Tide Gauge (ZFDTG) (1.575 AHD) and their piles shall be cut off at or below deck level. However, those piles necessary as fenders for vessels may extend above deck level in which case such piles, together with any free-standing mooring piles, shall be cut off 3.5 metres above ZFDTG (2.575 AHD) 	<p><i>Satisfactory</i></p>

3. How will the Proposal benefit the community?

As part of its continuing Community Engagement Program, the RPEYC provides services and facilities to enable disabled members of the community, adults and children, to engage in sailing activities. These sailing activities are supported and operated by two sailing charities, namely *Sailability* and the *Making Waves Foundation*.

The Club wishes to enhance this program by providing stable docking to enable disabled sailors to safely board and disembark from moored vessels. Providing such docking facilities is part of an overall program designed to significantly enhance opportunities for those with disabilities to sail on Sydney Harbour. Another part of the program, to be actioned in 2021, will be building two new J24 yachts specifically designed to enable those with disabilities to race on the Harbour. These boats will be modified with deeper and heavy keels to provide additional stability, a raised boom to eliminate the danger of head injury, lengthened cockpit to facilitate access to winches and the installation of resuscitation equipment.

Bringing the two together, specifically modified yachts, with a specifically designed dock represents a complete, end-to-end, access package to enable those with disabilities to sail competitively on Sydney Harbour and to board and disembark their yachts in safety.

To facilitate safe boarding and disembarkation from the modified racing yachts, the Club will install C-Crane mountings on its proposed new pontoon to enable a C-Crane to be installed when needed on either side of the pontoon. The C-Crane has been specifically designed by Access Sailing Systems Pty Ltd to safely lift disabled sailors on and off racing yachts.

The C-Crane requires a clear working area of at least one (1) metre at its base for safe operation. To provide such working area and with sufficient room for a sailor in a wheelchair to be landed or lifted requires a pontoon width of five (5) metres, being an increase of 1.15 metres over the original design. The requirement for a 14 m long pontoon is based on expert advice that this length would be needed to attenuate the wave activity in Felix Bay and thus maximise the stability of the pontoon which will be of benefit to disabled sailors.

4. How does the Proposal contribute to the shared use of the Harbour?

The Proposal will enhance the recreational use of the Harbour, as well as offering safe facilities to water rescue and other emergency services vessels.

The enhancements will provide a safe and stable platform for race control officials supervising the Club's yacht races, held Wednesdays, Saturdays, and monthly on Sundays. These races attract competitors from multiple sailing clubs and often result in 30 to 40 boats competing. Supervising these events requires a start boat, and a safety boat, when competitors from *Sailability* and *Making Waves* are competing. Embarking and disembarking from these vessels requires that safe berthing facilities to be provided.

The new pontoon is designed to be stable even in severe weather conditions, and compliant with relevant Australian Standards, thus offering a place of safe refuge to marine craft that may be in difficulty.

Taken together the Proposal is of considerable community benefit.

5. Will boats be permanently moored on the new pontoon?

No. The new pontoon will not be used for permanent or long term berthing. Only casual berthing of limited duration will be permitted.

6. Will the Proposal result in pollution being introduced to the bay?

No. The proposed new pontoon will only be used for short term casual berthing. The new pontoon will not offer fueling facilities or waste disposal thus minimising the risk of inadvertent discharge or spillage into the Bay.

7. Will the Proposal result in a considerable increase in noise on the Bay?

No. The Proposal is intended only for occasional, recreational, casual berthing.

8. Will the Proposal have any adverse impact on surrounding residential amenity?

No. The Proposal is only an extension of the existing pontoon and ramp facilities. The new pontoon will protrude less than 600mm above the surface of the water and will not impact the view across the Bay in any manner. The ramp linking the pontoon to the jetty will be a slimline design with non-reflective aluminium to blend in with its surrounding.

10. Are there any heritage items of significance that will be adversely impacted by the modifications?

Both Lady Martin's Beach and Sydney Harbour are heritage items. The RPEYC has sought to ensure that the Proposal does not adversely affect the heritage significance of those items.

11. Will fish or seagrass be impacted by the Proposal?

There is no seagrass in the immediate location of the Proposal. The Department of Primary Industries has confirmed that as the proposal does not involve dredging, reclamation or blockage of fish passage that Fisheries NSW has no objections to the modifications and that the Department of Primary Industries does not require any permits to be issued.

12. Will the Proposal attract large vessels to the Bay?

No. The pontoon will largely be used by yachts competing in Club regattas and other marine craft owned by Club members and guests. The average size of craft owned by Club members is less than 10 metres overall length. Additionally, the proposed design is not one that would enable large vessels to berth. The existing mooring spacing in the Bay restricts access for large vessels.

13. Will commercial vessels use the pontoon?

No. The pontoon will not be suitable for use by commercial vessels other than the occasional use by water taxi's, picking up or dropping off passengers.

14. Will the new pontoon require recreational swimmers to swim long distances around the end of the pontoon?

No. The ramp of the proposed modifications has been designed to enable swimmers to swim between the pontoon and the jetty. The proposal also locates vessels further away from swimmers to enhance their safety.

17. Will the construction of the new pontoon require large trucks to drive through Point Piper?

No. A water based barge will be used to remove the existing ramp, pontoon and piles. Similarly, the new facility will be delivered by barge, thus eliminating the need for the land based movement of these large components.

18. Will any work be undertaken on Lady Martin’s Beach?

No. All works to be undertaken will be from the waterway. No construction work, men or machinery will need to access the beach. The existing pontoon will be disconnected from the jetty and safely removed by barge. The existing piles will be removed by a barge mounted crane and transported away.

New piles will be fabricated elsewhere and installed into the seabed by barge and the new pontoon will be manufactured offsite and floated around into its intended position. This eliminates any need for any construction activity to take place on the beach.



Photomontage of proposed development looking East



Photomontage of proposed development looking West