

Attachment H

Engagement Report on Early Consultation on Alternative Heights for Sites Facing Taylor Square

Engagement report - alternative heights for sites facing Taylor Square



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Overview

Background

The City of Sydney is seeking feedback on whether the planning controls for the height of the buildings facing Taylor Square should be taller than the 2 and 4 storey options in the planning proposal for the broader Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct.

In 2020 we consulted our communities on ways to revitalise Oxford Street while recognising its cultural and community significance. Our communities identified Taylor Square as a landmark and place of significance for LGBTIQ communities. They told us Taylor Square is a special place that is underused and could become the heart of the Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct.

One approach to elevating Taylor Square as a significant destination and activated public space is to change the planning controls to allow for an increased height of buildings facing the square. Taller, well-designed buildings could better visually and physically enclose the space. Taller contemporary buildings could provide character and architectural features that are points of reference and interest. Increased height in Taylor Square could provide more floor space for commercial, health, education, entertainment, community or light industry use and more floor space for cultural and creative activity, helping to activate Taylor Square.

The height of buildings would be limited to match the height of nearby heritage apartment buildings, Belgenny and Claridges. Planning controls would protect the existing heritage fabric, features and structural integrity, and require a high standard of design for additions and new buildings. If the new planning controls are adopted, a development application would be required for development of any building.

Engagement summary

From 10 September to 5 November 2021, we asked the community for feedback on alternative heights for the sites facing Taylor Square to improve the public space.

Feedback was sought alongside consultation on the planning proposal for Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct. Activities included a letter to residents and landowners and an online survey.

This report outlines the community engagement activities that took place and summarises the key findings from the consultation.

Purpose of engagement

Summarise project objectives

- explain the options for taller buildings facing Taylor Square in plain English
- gather feedback from stakeholders and the community

Outcomes of engagement

The following is a snapshot of the outcomes from the engagement. It shows good online engagement that has reached a range of audiences.

Submissions and engagement activity

Quantity	Description of activity
466	Total submissions received
454	Survey submissions
8	Emailed submissions received from community groups / residents
4	Emailed submissions from industry
2725	Sydney Your Say webpage visits
239	Document downloads
12 000+	Letters sent
1132	Email to stakeholders
7300	Enews item sent to Sydney Your Say subscribers

Survey respondents

- 42% visit the Oxford St precinct for shopping, dining, or entertainment
- 38% live in the precinct
- 6% walk along the streets in the precinct to get somewhere else
- 4% work in the precinct
- 2% own a business in the precinct
- 1% study in the precinct
- 8% selected 'other'; these comments are captured in the submissions table below

Submissions were received for the following sites:

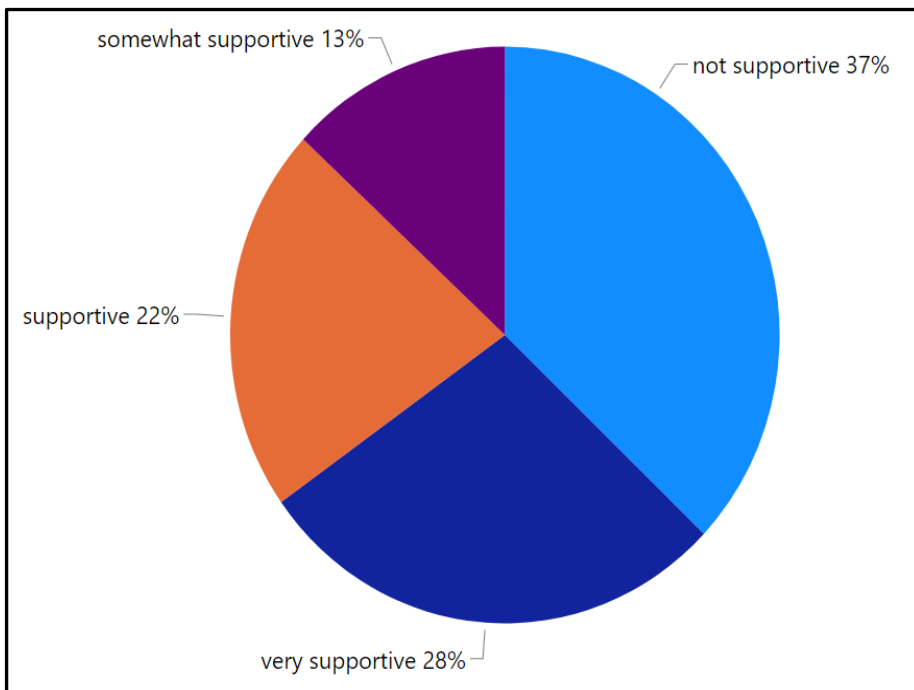
- Ethos Urban for 1-5 Flinders St
- Ethos Urban for 18 and 10-24 Flinders Street, 4-10 Taylor Street & 2 Sturt Street, Darlinghurst (Arq Site)
- Neeson Murcutt + Neille for 191-195 at Taylor Square, and the adjoining 197-199 + 201 Oxford
- Urbis on behalf of MA Hotel Management

Details of site-specific submissions are not included in this summary but are available in the post exhibition report.

Key findings

Survey results indicate clear support for the City's intention to revitalise Taylor Square and Oxford Street. There is mixed opinion on whether increasing the height of buildings facing Taylor Square will achieve this outcome.

Q: Please indicate your overall level of support for increasing the height of some of the buildings facing Taylor Square, with high-quality buildings up to 10 storeys in height, to enhance the quality of the space, elevate the square as a significant destination and provide more cultural and creative activity?¹



50%
very
supportive or
supportive
37%
not
supportive

Respondents who are supportive or very supportive of increasing the height of some buildings facing Taylor Square cited a desire to revitalise the area as the key reason. Some people expressed general support for improving the area, and some expressed specific support for creating opportunities for employment, culture, hospitality, and retail by increasing the floorspace and attracting more people to the precinct.

¹ Survey respondents were asked to select an overall level of support on a sliding scale of 0 – 100, with 0 labelled as 'not supportive', 50 labelled as 'supportive' and 100 labelled as 'very supportive'. This graph represents responses from 0-24 as 'not supportive', 25-50 as 'somewhat supportive', 51-75 as 'supportive' and 76-100 as 'very supportive'.

Concern over losing light and a sense of open space in Taylor Square was the reason most cited by respondents who were somewhat or not supportive. This concern was also raised by people who are supportive of increasing building heights.

Respondents who are not supportive are concerned that increasing height allowance will benefit developers and building owners rather than the community. They lack confidence that increasing building heights will activate the precinct on a street level and would prefer to see improvements to existing buildings.

Respondents who are somewhat supportive or supportive are open to increased heights for some buildings if the heritage character and the general character of the area are retained, and if spaces for the LGBTIQ community are protected.

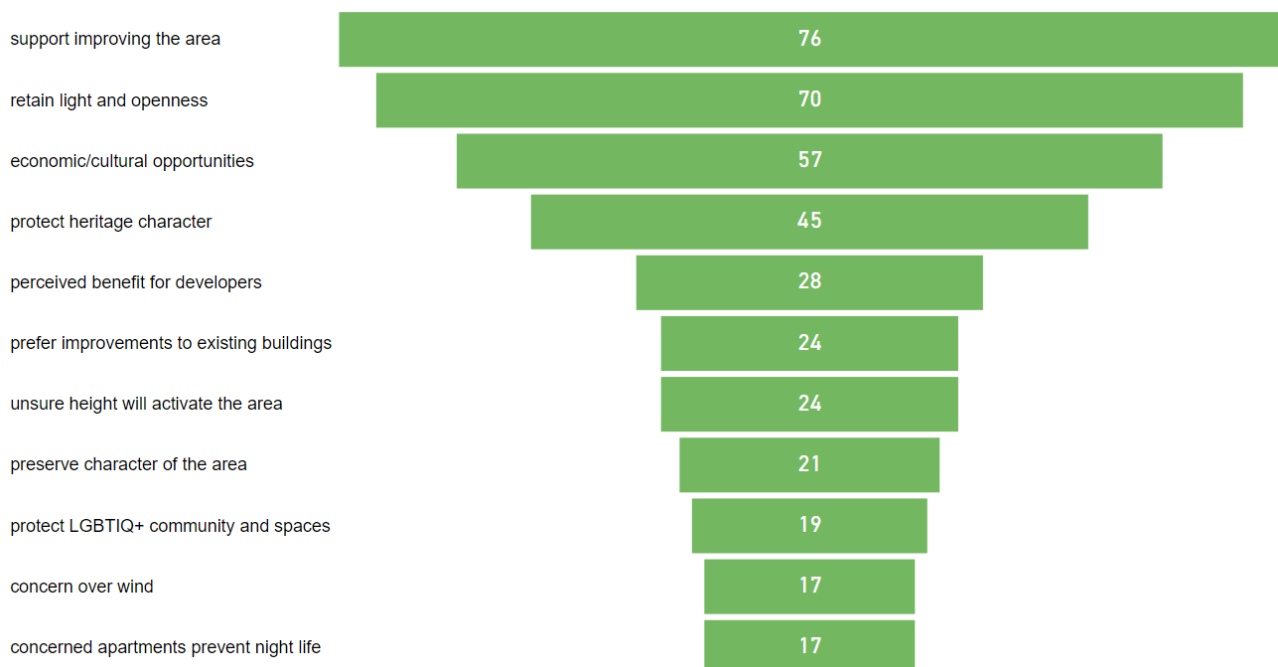
Key themes

From the 462 submissions received from community members, the most mentioned topics were:

- Support for improving the area (16%)
- Concern over the impact of tall buildings on light and openness in Taylor Square (15%)
- Enthusiasm for creating opportunities for employment, culture, hospitality, and retail (12%)
- Desire to retain the heritage character of the area (10%)

Figure 1. Top 10 topics raised in community submissions

By number of comments per topic

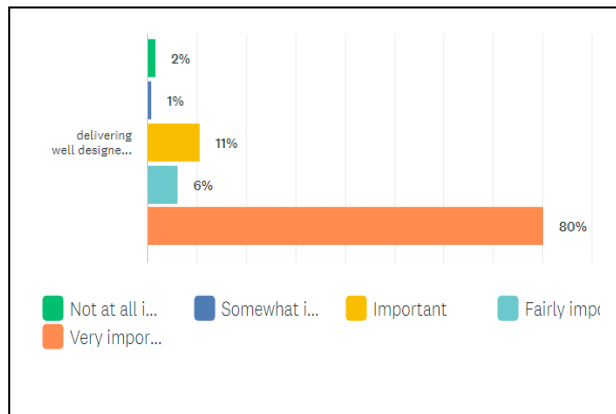


Important factors

Survey respondents were asked how important the following factors are in forming their opinion of planning controls that allow taller buildings facing Taylor Square. Most respondents think all 5 factors are important to very important. Delivering well designed, high quality, activated public spaces is considered 'very important' by most respondents (80%).

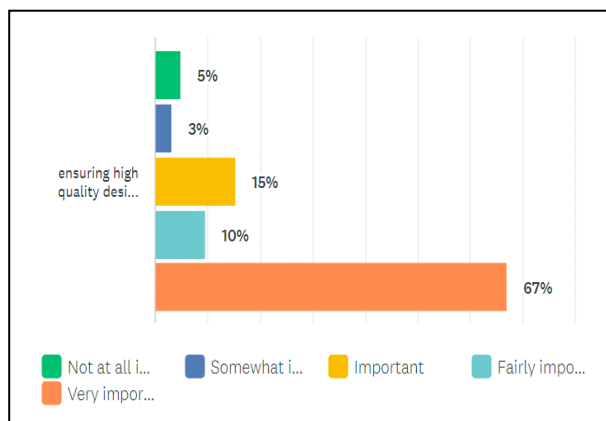
Delivering well designed high-quality activated public spaces

97%
very important
to important



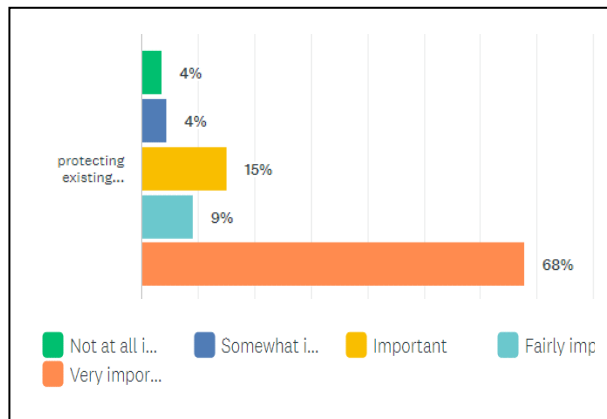
Ensuring high quality design of additions and new buildings

92%
very important
to important



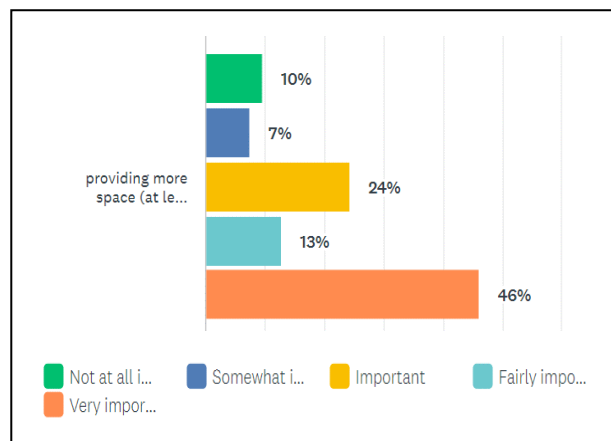
Protecting existing heritage buildings

92%
very important
to important



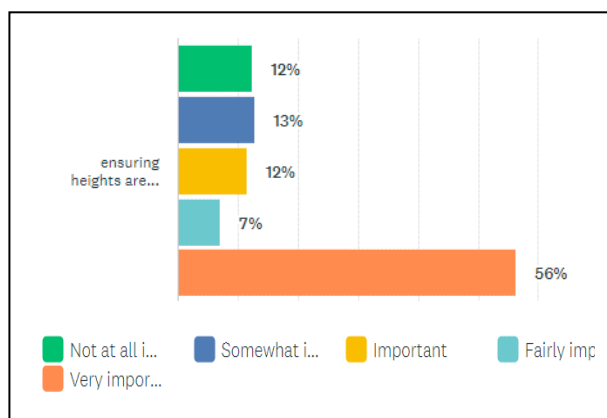
Providing more space (at least 10%) for cultural and creative activity

83%
very important
to important



Ensuring heights are limited to those of the existing heritage buildings (maximum 10 storeys)

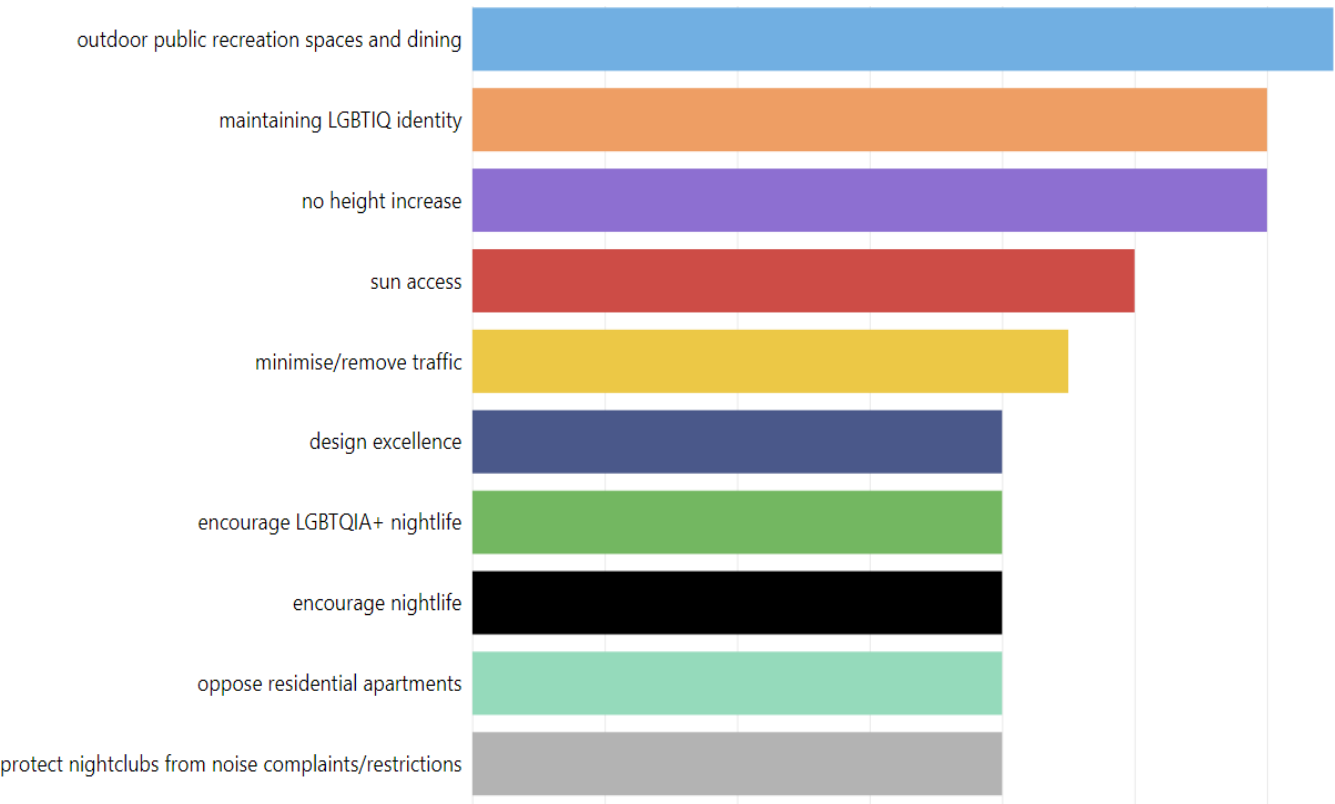
75%
very important
to important



Other factors

Survey respondents were asked if there were any other important factors in forming their opinion of planning controls that allow taller buildings facing Taylor Square. The most mentioned topics were creating outdoor public recreation and dining spaces, maintaining the LGBTIQ identity of Oxford Street, not increasing building height, maintaining sun access, and minimising traffic. 'Other factors' comments are captured in the submissions table below

Figure 2. Top 10 topics raised as other factors



Subjects/issues raised in submissions

Several subjects/topics were raised in the feedback received. These were presented as concerns, suggestions and/or requests and are summarised below.

Support for increasing the height of some buildings facing Taylor Square	Total (number of times raised)
<p>Support for improving the area</p> <p>Comments expressing general support for increasing the height of some buildings facing Taylor Square because they feel strongly that the area needs new life. Many observed that the area needs revitalising and expressed support for improving the look of Taylor Square and activating the precinct.</p>	76
<p>Opportunities for employment, culture, hospitality, and retail</p> <p>Comments that expressed support for increasing height and floorspace to make retail more viable, activate businesses, offer affordable workspace, offer more space for nightlife, more space for creative and cultural activity, more hospitality offerings (cafes, bars, dining), and more entertainment spaces. Many comments observed that allowing development will help to revitalise the precinct by improving the look of Taylor Square, encouraging investment in the precinct, bringing more people into the precinct and making Taylor Square a destination.</p>	57
Support creating space for cultural and creative activity	4

Preserving the character and feel of the area	Total (number of times raised)
<p>Retain light and openness</p> <p>Comments that talked about the importance of light and openness in Taylor Square. Most of these comments (approx. 70%) opposed taller buildings out of concern that the buildings will block sunlight and make the Square feel too enclosed. Some comments were open to or supportive of taller buildings if the design can retain sunlight on the street and create an open, inviting feel.</p>	70

Protect heritage character	45
Requests to preserve and respect the heritage buildings and character of the precinct. Some comments (24) are not supportive of increased height, while others request that any development is done sympathetically to maintain the heritage feel of the precinct and protect built heritage.	
Protect LGBTIQ community and spaces (e.g. dedicated spaces, protections for LGBTIQ nightlife, ensure the area is safe for LGBTIQ community)	19
Concern that increased height will change the character of the area in a negative way (e.g. it will lose a unique, community, village feel)	21
Concern that residential apartments will negatively impact night life venues (e.g. noise complaints or restrictions will stifle nightlife and cause bars, clubs, live music venues to close)	17
Oxford Street should remain as it is	8
Concern that development and gentrification will push out local community (LGBTQI community and business, arts community, homeless community, diverse cultural communities)	7
Prioritise nightlife	3
Concern over impact of nightlife on residents (e.g. noise, waste, antisocial behaviour)	4
Any height increased you will loose the history and uniqueness of the area.	1
A focus on residential means the area is going to take a major step away from its history.	1
I support development but i have doubts and no do not trust that the history and fabric of the area will be honoured and celebrated.	1

Concern over the quality of the outcome	Total (number of times raised)
Perceived benefit for developers	28
Comments expressing concern that this plan is motivated by generating profit, and will benefit developers and building owners more than the community	
Lack confidence that increasing the height of buildings will result in activating the street level or the precinct in general	24
Prefer to see improvements to existing buildings	24
Concern over the number of vacant premises	12
Lack trust the buildings will be used for the planned purposes (e.g. cultural and creative spaces will be replaced, use will be converted to residential)	9

Lack trust in the City's commitment to ensuring high quality designs and buildings	5
comments that architectural merit, good design and design controls are needed to ensure a high-quality outcome	3
Architecture choices and mix of cultural space are vital as if this project is poorly done or could further damage the area. Please focus on making it a human friendly show piece.	1

Concern over the impact of taller buildings	Total (number of times raised)
Concern that tall buildings create wind tunnels	17
Impact on views from existing residences	16
Impact on existing amenities (traffic, parking, public spaces, public transport)	13
Loss of sunlight and privacy for existing residences	9
Areas of Sydney with taller buildings are more unsafe in general and will deteriorate the current quality of life in the area	1

Feedback on alternative heights	Total (number of times raised)
10 storeys is too high	8
Dislike tall buildings	6
Oppose residential apartments	7
Support option A	4
Support option B	4
Prefer the original planning proposal	3
Negative change to the visual appearance	1
Allow the greater height only where the buildings are less significant	1
Limit the height to two extra stories on existing corner buildings.	1
A mix of building heights can add character but to have them all 10 storeys could be oppressive	1

I think all the suggestions are good ones	1
Along Oxford St is fine but not on Greens Road or where it's too close to Paddington	1
Do not increase the height	1
Increase of height should be set back somehow so while the space is increased, it minimises impact on existing facades and shadowing across the street.	1
I support either of the options but lean towards the option with the taller buildings on the corners if there is no significant impact to winter sunlight in the middle of the day on Taylor Square.	1
But I am not against extra height as long as done nice European style, not Meriton. And not the option where they are right on the corners of Taylor Sq.	1

Other comments	Total (number of times raised)
Suggest requirement to include affordable housing	5
Focus should be on improving the streetscape (e.g. cleaning, repairs, lighting, outdoor dining, filling vacant shops)	4
Need more information (e.g. cultural and strategic plan, policy and protections for the physical form)	4
Concern over construction noise and disruption	4
Request street level projections	2
Higher buildings don't make community	1
More needs to be done to support residents already in the area	1
More attention and support needs to be given to the creative, queer and indigenous businesses in the area	1
Don't want the area to become excessively overpriced	1
Support if there is an extremely high level of design for taller buildings as a counter point to heritage buildings. The developments should create a dialogue with the heritage buildings that puts public and semi-private spaces at the forefront of design	1
Concern that development will force out existing small businesses	1
It's an important community space in Sydney	1
Unnecessary and will create more noise and traffic for locals	1
Concern that increases in height will impact on the cultural heritage of the area	1

Devaluing the existing properties	1
As the square is the crescendo point of the Mardi Gras parade, combined with Sydney's good weather, buildings surrounding should be designed with viewing points such as public accessible large balcony's rooftop bars and floor to ceiling windows. A permanent stage/performance space in Taylor square that can be used by various artists. Oxford St should be reduced to 4 lanes, reducing traffic, enlarging sidewalks for outdoor cafes, street art performers and a bike lane.	1
Remove the cars	1
Don't want Surry Hills to turn into Alexandria	1
Only if there is an increase of natural elements incorporated in these building for the health and well-being of the people that will use these spaces. I feel the natural elements incorporated into the design will increase property value and if a rainbow of colours are chosen for the plants, it is another creative way to display support for the local community.	1
Build more things please	1
Too imposing	1
Setbacks will maintain the human scale of Taylor Square	1
Suggestion for a public transport hub going out to the east	1
The area does not need more people	1
Too many bikes will become a hazard to pedestrians	1
I'm keen on higher building limits if they come with a massive increase in Student Accommodation. Specially if it is owned and run by queer community for young queer students	1
There are too many insanely overpriced apartment blocks in Sydney	1

Other important factors in forming an opinion of planning controls that allow taller buildings facing Taylor Square	Total (number of times raised)
Creating more outdoor public recreation spaces and outdoor dining spaces	13
Maintaining the LGBTIQ identity of Taylor Square	12
No height increase	12
Maintaining sun access	10
Minimising, calming or removing traffic	9

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Design excellence	8
Encouraging LGBTIQ nightlife and nightclubs	8
Encouraging and protecting nightlife (generally)	8
Opposition to residential apartments	8
Protecting nightclubs and late-night venues from noise complaints and restrictions	8
Against taller buildings	6
Green spaces	5
Ensure that any height increases are set back from the existing facade	4
Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists	4
Replace or remove the water fountain	4
Require affordable housing	3
Parking	3
Restore/maintain heritage facades	3
Wind tunnel effect	3
Cleanliness of the streets	2
Community space, spaces for people to come together and socialise	2
Currently vacant premises	2
Increase retail/cultural/entertainment venues	2
Overdevelopment	2
Impact on residents in Belgenny	1
Tall buildings are likely to cause the Square to feel smaller and claustrophobic	1
2 storey maximum	1
4 storey maximum	1
Barriers to stop terrorists driving cars down the footpath	1
Better rates for businesses on Oxford Street	1
Build new from ground up without trying to integrate an existing facade that will be out of scale of the final development	1
Build spaces in consultation with the LGBTIQ community	1

Engagement activities

Overview of engagement undertaken

Sydney Your Say webpage

A [Sydney Your Say webpage](#) was created. The page included an urban design study, and image gallery showing alternatives to the planning proposal and an online survey. There were 2725 unique page views of the Sydney Your Say page.

Online feedback form via Survey Monkey

The community and stakeholders were able to give feedback using an online feedback form. A link to the feedback form was provided on the Sydney Your Say website.

Sydney Your Say e-news

The consultation was included in the Sydney Your Say October e-newsletters (7300 subscribers).

Consultation letter

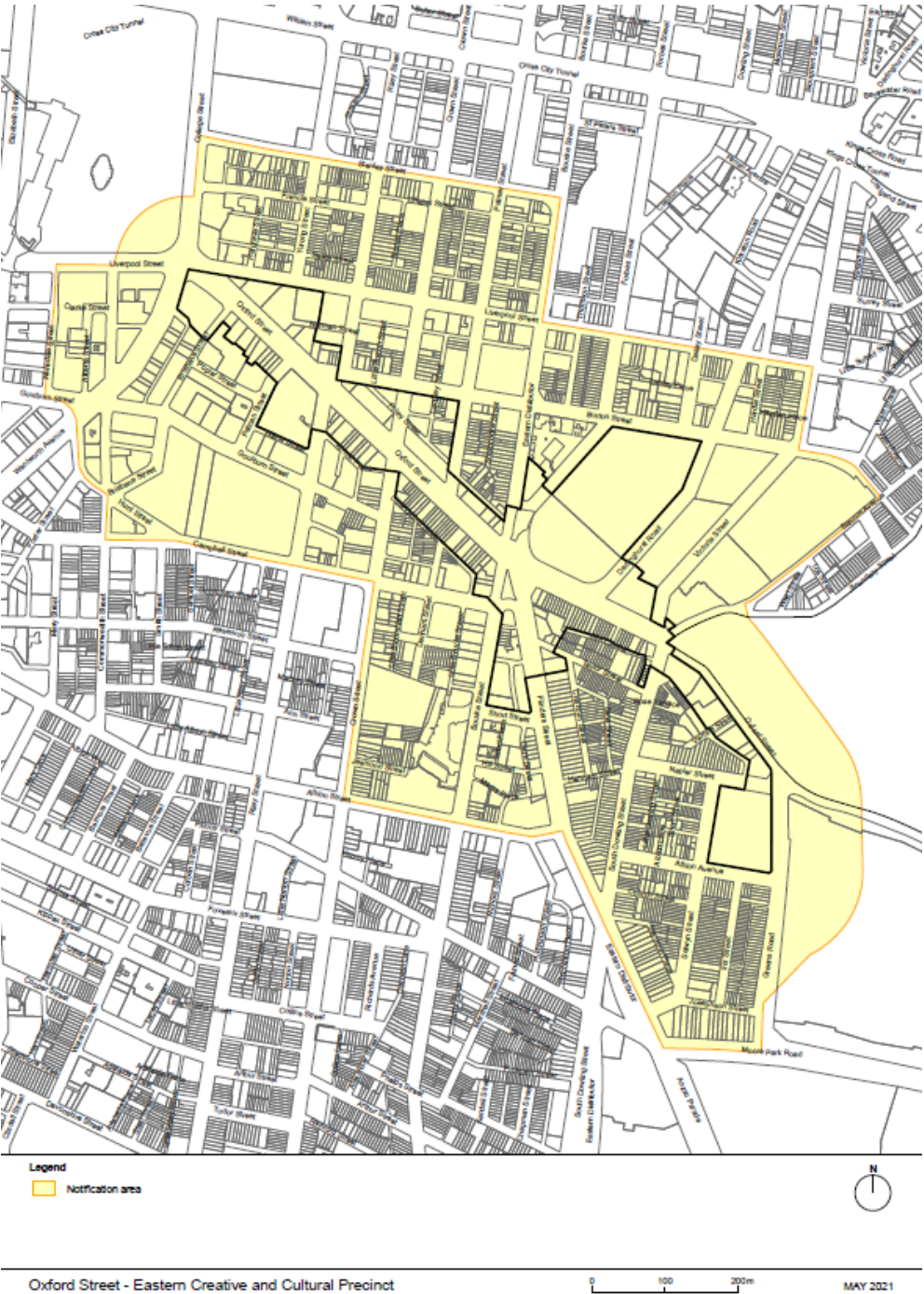
A letter was posted to residents, inviting them to give feedback on alternative heights for sites facing Taylor Square, alongside an invitation to give feedback on the Oxford Street planning proposal. Over 12 000 letters were distributed.

Stakeholder email

An email was sent to 1132 key stakeholders inviting them to give feedback on alternatives heights.

Appendix

Appendix A: letter distribution area



Appendix B: notification letter



City of Sydney
Town Hall House
455 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

+61 2 9265 8333
council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au
GPO Box 1591 Sydney NSW 2001
cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

10 September 2021

Our Ref: X026153.014
File No: 2021/231245

Your feedback on proposed planning controls for Oxford Street

The City of Sydney invites your feedback on proposed planning controls for the Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct between Hyde Park and Greens Road in Darlinghurst.

Last year we consulted the community on ways to revitalise Oxford Street while recognising its cultural and community significance.

The proposed controls allow for greater height and floor space with measures to protect heritage items, public spaces and local character and create more space for creative and cultural activities.

The new planning controls will:

- retain existing entertainment, creative and cultural floor space within the precinct
- encourage new creative and cultural floor space by allowing extra floor space and height
- encourage entertainment floor space at basement level
- protect the features, fabric and structural integrity of heritage items and provide appropriate upper level setbacks
- allow additional uses at the National Art School to support its continued educational and cultural role, and to diversify the range of supporting commercial and entertainment activities
- increase the floor space ratio at the National Art School to support its growth
- promote uses at street level to attract pedestrian traffic balanced with the need to service sites
- require large sites to activate laneways with small retail and food and drink businesses, opportunities for art and improved pedestrian amenity
- promote food and drink premises fronting key public spaces and
- expand the Oxford Street heritage conservation area to include 276-278 Crown Street.

The proposed changes are on exhibition from 10 September until 5 November 2021.

The exhibition includes a planning proposal to amend the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 and a draft development control plan to amend the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012.

We will consider all submissions and report the results to Council and the Central Sydney Planning Committee. If Council approves this planning proposal after public exhibition, the proposal will be sent to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for final approval.

Green, Global, Connected.

You can view the proposal and give your feedback at sydneyyoursay.com.au by 5pm on Friday, 5 November 2021.

You can also email submissions to jprentice@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au or post to: Chief Executive Officer, Attention: Julie Prentice, Specialist Planner, City of Sydney, GPO Box 1591, Sydney NSW 2000. Submissions should quote Reference X026153.014 – Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct.

Your feedback on spaces around Taylor Square

We are also seeking feedback on alternative heights for sites facing Taylor Square to improve the public space.

You can view these options and give your feedback by completing our online survey at sydneyyoursay.com.au by 5pm on Friday, 5 November 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Pechey', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ben Pechey
Executive Manager, Strategic Planning and Urban Design
City Planning | Development | Transport

Appendix C: stakeholder enews



Have your say on options for taller buildings facing Taylor Square

Alongside the planning proposal for Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct, we are also seeking feedback on alternative heights for sites facing Taylor Square to improve the public space.

About this consultation

In 2020 [we consulted our communities on ways to revitalise Oxford Street](#) while recognising its cultural and community significance. Our communities identified Taylor Square as a landmark and place of significance for LGBTIQ communities. They told us Taylor Square is a special place that is underused and could become the heart of the Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct.

Taller, well-designed buildings that protect heritage and enclose the space could elevate Taylor Square as a significant destination and provide more space for cultural and creative activity.

We'd like to know what you think about increasing heights for buildings facing Taylor Square above the 2 and 4 storeys in the [proposed planning controls for the Oxford Street cultural and creative precinct](#).

How you can have your say

View examples of Taylor Square alternatives at cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/consultations

You can have your say by completing an [online survey](#) by 5pm Friday 5 November 2021.

We will consider and report your feedback on increasing building heights around Taylor Square to Council.

Depending on the feedback we receive we may develop alternative detailed proposals for Taylor Square for further public consultation.

We encourage you to share this information with your friends and colleagues so that we receive a wide range of feedback.

