
Request to be heard?: Yes

Precinct: Sandridge

Full Name: Roger Savage

Organisation: Yes

Affected property:

Attachment 1: Fishermans_Bend

Attachment 2: Fishermans_Bend

Attachment 3:

Comments: Added as attachment

Introduction

This is a submission in response to the Fisherman's Bend Draft Planning Scheme Amendment – GC81 (**Planning Scheme Amendment**), as it relates to the Land at 23-31 Fennell Street in Port Melbourne (Certificate of Title Volume 11410 Folio 427) (**Premises**).

The Registered Proprietor of the Land is Nias Nominees Pty Ltd.

The Registered Proprietor also occupies the Premises from which it operates Australia's largest independent picture and sound post production company, trading as Soundfirm.

Roger William Savage is the sole director of the Registered Proprietor, as well as the founder and CEO of Soundfirm. During his professional career he has worked with internationally renowned acts including the Rolling Stones as well as on numerous iconic Australian and international films.

Mr Savage has been recognised for his leadership, achievements and service to the film and entertainment industry through the following awards:

- Centenary Medal by the Australian Government (2001);
- Film Victoria's John Howey Award (2013);
- Screen Producers Association Lifetime Achievement Award (2016);
- Academy Award Oscar nomination;
- 2 British Academy of Film and Television Awards (BAFTA) from 5 nominations; and
- 11 Australian Film Institute Awards (AFI), including the inaugural Byron Kennedy Award from 21 nominations.

History of Soundfirm and the Premises

Soundfirm was established in 1983 and commenced business in Bank Street, South Melbourne.

In or around 1990 it relocated to Crockford Street in Port Melbourne, before it moved to the Premises in 2013.

The Premises was acquired by Nias Nominees Pty Ltd on 26 March 2013 for a purchase price of \$3,400,000.00. The property was purchased with the view to being a long-term location for the business. To that end, Soundfirm undertook an extensive refurbishment of the Premises to establish a purpose-built facility, specifically designed for local and international film and television post-production.

The Premises was also engineered to comply with the Motion Picture Association of America Content Security Program (**MPAA Accreditation**).

MPAA Accreditation enables Soundfirm to work on assignments from the United States of America, including from high-profile Hollywood and other member studios such as: Walt Disney Motion Pictures, Paramount Pictures Corporation, Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Universal City Studios LLC and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

Investment in the Premises

The cost of designing and refurbishing the 'cutting-edge' facility (including capital expenditure) is over \$3,500,000.00 and includes:

- installation of dark fibre into the building;
- 32 Kilowatt solar panels on the roof;
- Toshiba low energy and low noise air-conditioning systems;
- 5 compressors;
- 21 individual air handling units;
- the only DolbyAtmos™ sound mixing room (20m x 12m x6m); and
- installation of internal high speed integrated networks.

The total investment in the Premises has been in excess of \$7,000,000.00.

This significant investment in the Premises has undoubtedly contributed to its reputation as the most prolific and successful sound and picture post production company in Australia.

The Premises and Fishermans Bend Draft Planning Scheme Amendment - GC81

The Premises is located within the Sandridge Precinct of the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. Sandridge is the largest of the capital city zone neighbourhoods and is marketed to 'encompass a diverse range of characteristics in becoming one of Melbourne's premium office and commercial locations with diverse housing and retail'.

The Planning Scheme Amendment reflects a proposed tram route and underground metro station to be developed on the site occupied by, and adjacent to the Premises.

Soundfirm submits that the proposed construction would likely force it to cease its operation and that the cost and time involved in re-establishing the Premises would not be feasible.

Soundfirm submits that the Premises and adjacent Land should be preserved, and spared from redevelopment under the Planning Scheme Amendment on grounds including, but not limited to:

- I. The Premises, and Soundfirm already fits the profile of Sandridge's objective and amenity to become one of Melbourne's 'premium office and commercial locations'.
- II. The forced closure of the Soundfirm studio would result in an adverse economic impact on Soundfirm's employees, the community, and Victoria's economy; and
- III. The forced closure of the Soundfirm studio would result in adverse impact on the international reputation of the Australian film and television industry.

Work and Cultural Significance

Soundfirm's reputation is highlighted by its involvement in many iconic Australian and International Films, including:

- *Lion*;
- *Muriel's Wedding*;
- *Strictly Ballroom*;
- *Mad Max*;
- *Babe*;
- *Moulin Rouge*;

- the *Dressmaker*, and
- *Hacksaw Ridge* (which won an Oscar at the 2017 Academy Awards for Best Sound Mixing)

In addition to Soundfirm's demonstrated success, it is recognized by its client's as much for its technical brilliance as its personal service. To that end, Soundfirm boasts a record of flattering testimonials, including that of Sue Maslin, award winning Producer of the *Dressmaker*.

"Thank you for your extraordinary effort over the past few months... You are a truly extraordinary team and together make Soundfirm the best possible place for any filmmaker to finish their film! I am aware of the long hours you have all been putting in, and appreciate this enormously. Mostly I am just blown away by your talent and you will be a very large part of making this film successfully connect with audiences when it is finally released later this year."

It follows that Soundfirm's 24 full-time employees are among its greatest assets.

Employment

In addition to its full-time staff, Soundfirm also engages freelance operators and contractors on demand. Over the last four-years it has employed freelancers to the value of \$2,368,000.00, as follows:

- 2014 Financial Year: \$405,000.00
- 2015 Financial Year: \$542,000.00
- 2016 Financial Year: \$798,000.00
- 2017 Financial Year: \$623,000.00

These employment figures (and their economic value) further demonstrate Soundfirm's importance to the Victorian community and economy.

Given the specialist skill-set of Soundfirm's employees and the limited number of similar businesses, if Soundfirm is forced to close there is a limited prospect of its employees finding sustainable and ongoing employment.

Economic Impact

Creative Victoria, the state government body dedicated to championing, growing and supporting Victoria's creative industries estimates that creative industries contribute \$22.7 billion to Victoria (8% of the total economy).

The creative industries are undoubtedly a key contributor to the Victorian economy and Soundfirm is recognized by Creative Victoria as a key figure within the creative industries landscape.

Any forced closure of or significant adverse impact on Soundfirm is at odds with economic and public policy and community interest. Not only will it have an adverse economic impact on those employed by Soundfirm, but also those directly benefitting from the Soundfirm business or service providers.

The economic impact of a forced closure is exacerbated by the detrimental impact on the Australian film and television industry. Soundfirm submits that the studio's forced closure will likely result in the loss of the last major post-production facility in Victoria with

a consequence of reducing/removing the incentive for post-production to return to Victoria.

This again is at odds with public policy and community interest, as well as the prospect for future economic growth. Soundfirm highlights that the Parliamentary Inquiry into the growth and sustainability of the film and television industry tabled its report to Parliament on 7 December 2017. The recommendations, if adopted, will provide the Australian film and television industry, and companies like Soundfirm a stronger position from which to leverage future success.

Proposed reforms such as the introduction of a new tax on streaming services (eg. Stan and Netflix) tied to local content quotas, and investment in local scripted television production is an exciting growth prospect for the Australian film and television industry. That prospect is one which Victoria should harness by preserving Soundfirm. The proposed reforms bring with it limitless opportunities for economic success, but also for Victoria which promotes itself as the cultural capital of the Asia-Pacific region.

Collaboration with Docklands Studios

Soundfirm's standing in the creative media landscape is well recognized by the Victorian state government and it has recently been invited by Creative Victoria to consult, along with 'Big 4' professional services firm PwC and Film Victoria in relation to the viability of establishing a Creative Hub in the neighboring Docklands Precinct.

Unlocking more spaces for creative practitioners, including collaborative hubs, was a key recommendation of Victoria's Creative Industries Taskforce in 2015 and Soundfirm submits that its studio in Port Melbourne is vital to realizing the Victorian government's vision.

I. Soundfirm already fits Sandridge's desired profile as a premium office and commercial location

Soundfirm submits that the Premises should be spared from redevelopment as it already fulfils Sandridge's aspiration to become a premium office and commercial location. The high-profile nature of Soundfirm's engagements is testament to this.

II. The forced closure of the Soundfirm studio would result in an adverse economic impact on Soundfirm's employees, the community, and Victoria's economy

Given the significant cost in establishing the Premises, Soundfirm submits that it would not be feasible to move and re-establish the site in its current form. Consequently, the forced closure of Soundfirm's business would have an adverse economic impact on its employees, the community and the Victorian economy.

III. The forced closure of the Soundfirm would result in adverse impact on the reputation of the Australian film and television industry internationally

Soundfirm has been involved in some of Australia's highest profile films and it has rightly earned itself an enviable reputation as a world class post-production studio, of which there are only two currently in Australia.

The ability to attract and deliver global sensations like *Lion* and *Hacksaw Ridge* is important to the reputation and sustainability of the Australian film and television industry.

Without Soundfirm there will undoubtedly be a hole left in Australia's service offering, the casualties of which will be the reputation of the Australian film and television industry, the Victorian government and the employees.

Soundfirm reserves its right to make further submissions in relation to the Planning Scheme Amendment.

Dated 15 December 2017