

18 December 2024

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Jennie Yuan
Planning Officer
Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

Via Major Projects Portal

Dear Jennie

Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation – 494 Harris Street, Ultimo – SSD-67588459 – Advice on Response to Submissions

Thank you for your correspondence dated 25 November 2024 inviting the City of Sydney (the City) to make further comment on the additional information submitted for the State Significant Development (SSD) relating to the Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation.

The City understands that the proponent has undertaken additional technical studies in relation to flooding, trees and transport in response to submissions raised during the secondary exhibition of the proposal. It is noted that no further design changes have been proposed.

In our previous letter (Advice on Response to Submissions dated 1 October 2024), the City raised concern with the discrepancy between existing gross floor area (GFA) plans submitted for the proposal, and the reduction of GFA in the amended proposal. The City also raised a number of outstanding issues relating to heritage, urban design, stormwater and flooding, landscaping, transport, waste, public art and contamination.

The following comments are provided for your consideration.

1. Heritage

Since the City's last submission, the City commissioned an independent assessment of the heritage significance of the Powerhouse Museum site by Lovell Chen. The draft planning proposal to extend the local heritage listing of the site was reported to Council at its meeting held on 2 December 2024. Council resolved to defer the extended local heritage listing (to match the area of the State listing) at its meeting on 16 December 2024. For your information, a copy of the Lovell Chen heritage assessment report accompanies this submission at Attachment B.

The State Heritage Register (SHR) listing of the Powerhouse Museum site was revised in July 2024, to expand the listing to include the Wran and Harwood buildings. The Powerhouse Museum Complex is now State heritage listed for its historic, associative, aesthetic and social significance. As noted, the State's expanded listing is consistent with the City's proposed expanded local listing, which has been deferred.

The Response to Submissions report notes that the listing of the Complex focuses on use rather than fabric. This is not consistent with standard practices dealing with development of built heritage.

The heritage assessment by Lovell Chen provides an overall assessment of the complex as an 'interrelated' group of buildings, with an emphasis on the conception and inspiration for the design of the Powerhouse Museum Complex, and the design of the Wran Building when the former Powerhouse complex was adaptively reused to become the Powerhouse Museum between 1978 and 1988. The assessment documents that the fabric of the complex is of considerable significance.

The City's previous comments and requests for further and better information relating to the heritage impact of the proposed development remain unchanged. The gradings provided in the Conservation Management Plan and Heritage Impact Statement are not considered satisfactory and it is recommended that a more detailed assessment of fabric be provided for the entire site.

This includes gradings of elevations, sections, interiors and individual components of buildings, which would ensure a more thorough understanding of significant elements to be retained and conserved. Concern is raised with regard to the significant fabric and components of the place not being identified prior to proceeding with new design for the Powerhouse Museum, and the change in fabric to re-clad the Wran Building with brick as being incongruous with the existing lightweight contemporary structure.

Notwithstanding the above, the City recommends that conditions be imposed to address conservation works, the structural support of the Wran Building and archival recording of the existing buildings. Please see Attachment A.

2. Gross floor area

The City notes community concern regarding the quantum of existing exhibition space (approximately 20,000sqm) differing from the Proponent's existing and proposed gross floor area (GFA) calculation. It is recommended that the Department review this aspect of the proposal carefully to ensure that exhibition and programming spaces are not reduced. It would be useful if a typical fitout of an exhibition space could be conceptualised.

3. Urban Design

The City acknowledges that the Proponent is willing to accept conditions in relation to the legibility of the 'front door' from the Goods Line, and accepts the information provided to address the retention of the Wran Building and the creative spaces to Harris Street.

The proposed lightweight roofing and use of aluminium foam to diffuse the light in the Galleria is supported. It is recommended that the sections accompanying the Response to Submissions report are stamped as part of any approval.

Appropriate conditions are recommended in Attachment A to address the concerns raised regarding the retention of the existing structure of the Wran Building, the path of travel to the Goods Line and the projection over the Harris Street footpath.

4. Public Domain

The width of footway in Harris Street continues to be reduced in width, which will have impacts for pedestrians given likely increased numbers following the redevelopment of

the site. Approximately 25% of the footway width has been lost due to the repositioning of the facade along the boundary.

Levels for the footway along Harris Street are to be submitted to determine the impact of the reduced width.

A stormwater and flooding response has been submitted by the Proponent that generally addresses the flooding issues raised by the City. The response notes that entrance 11a is not compliant, and that compliance can be achieved with an amended floor level that has not been captured in the architectural drawings.

The City recommends that the drawings be amended to ensure that Entrance 11a complies with the applicable flood planning level noted in Table 3 of the stormwater and flooding response.

5. Landscaping and Tree Canopy

The Response to Submissions report acknowledges that the Proponent is willing to accept conditions in relation to retention of trees, excessive pruning concerns and root investigations. The City is supportive of such conditions being imposed, which are provided in Attachment A to our correspondence.

Further consideration is to be made for additional canopy tree planting to achieve a minimum of 15% for the site. An appropriate condition is recommended, as per Attachment A.

With regard to landscaping, whilst additional information has not been provided to resolve previous issues raised, the design intent can be supported in principle subject to a modified condition of consent for landscaping of the site.

6. City Access and Transport

The City accepts the Proponent's response to queries raised with regard to the grading of the loading dock ramp, vertical clearance and bicycle parking.

7. Cleansing and Waste

The architectural plans demonstrate that there is a 4.7 metre height clearance within the loading dock for a hook lift waste collection arrangement.

8. Public Art

The City notes that the Proponent will not be incorporating Public Art into the proposal.

Notwithstanding, the opportunity to create a high quality public artwork of this kind that is free, accessible and visible to all audiences outside of opening hours is a once in a generation opportunity which could transform the site and provide a benchmark for programming at the Museum.

Should you wish to speak with a Council officer about the above, please contact Jessica Symons, Senior Planner, on 9265 9333 or at jsymons@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Jahn', with a large loop at the end of the name.

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

Attachment A: Draft Conditions - Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation - SSD-67588459
Attachment B: Powerhouse Museum Heritage Assessment Report (Lovell Chen)