

Mr Marcus Jennejohn
Key Sites Assessment
Department of Planning Industry & Environment
4 Parramatta Square,
12 Darcy Street
PARRAMATTA NSW 2150

12 November 2020

Dear Mr Jennejohn,

RE: Response to Submissions and Amended Proposal Report - Powerhouse Parramatta State Significant Development SSD-10416

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Response to Submissions and Amended Proposal Report (the Response) for the Powerhouse Parramatta notified on 13 October 2020. The City of Parramatta Council (Council) is pleased to provide comment.

Council reiterates its ongoing support for the Powerhouse Parramatta project and the significant investment in a new cultural institution in Sydney's Central River City.

Following a review of the Response, Council notes that there remain a number of outstanding technical and design matters (detailed in **Appendix A**) which require further consideration. Council requests that it continue to work collaboratively with the NSW Government in resolution of these to ensure realisation of a world class Museum.

Council resolved the following at its Ordinary Meeting on 9 November 2020:

- (a) **That** Council reaffirm its support for the Powerhouse Parramatta noting the significant investment in new cultural infrastructure, jobs and the economy of Sydney's Central River City.
- (b) **That** Council note the Proponent's Response seeks to retain St George's Terraces and relocate Willow Grove, as an alternative to its demolition.
- (c) **That** Council note the Response does not include sufficient information on the method of relocation, future location or the impact of the heritage significance of Willow Grove to allow for an assessment of the proposed relocation.
- (d) **That**, if the Proponent's final submission proposes to relocate Willow Grove, then Council conditionally support the relocation of Willow Grove, rather than its demolition, subject to an assessment of the method of relocation, future location and the impact of the heritage significance of Willow Grove.

Contact us:

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- (e) **That** Council approve the letter (at **Attachment 1**) to the DPIE replying to the Response and note the letter includes:
- the conditional support set out above in paragraph (d);
 - several design concerns including flooding impacts, the undercroft, the podium landscape and the public domain;
 - other matters including Civic Link and the interface with Council land.
- (f) **That** Council acknowledges City of Parramatta long connection with heritage and our desire to retain those connections where possible.
- (g) **That** Council acknowledges and gives unconditional support in that the only current suitable location for the Powerhouse Museum is its current proposed location and no other location within the City of Parramatta has immediate connections for transport, schools, workers, businesses and the community. Any other proposed location would ensure that the Museum would be a white elephant and not reach its full potential.
- (h) **That** if we are faced with no other choice than the complete demolition and loss of Willow Grove or relocation as proposed by the NSW State Government, Council gives unconditional support to the said relocation.
- (i) **That** while Council acknowledges a number of submissions in response to the EIS against the proposed Powerhouse Museum, it should be acknowledged that the vast majority of these submissions were from outside of Parramatta LGA and while important should carry minimal weight than the submissions received from within the Parramatta LGA. It must be acknowledged that the current population of the Parramatta LGA is approximately 234,000 and that the vast majority did not provide submissions.
- (j) **That** Council congratulate and acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the NSW State Government and in particular Minister Harwin for seeing this project through to completion.
- (k) **That** Council encourages the NSW State Government works to resolve the outstanding issues raised by Council and proceed with the project as a matter of urgency to not only bring jobs to Parramatta but to deliver this world class institution to the people of Western Sydney.
- (l) **Further that**, without further delay, the proposed letter attached to the motion be amended to reflect Council's position and that this letter be signed by the Lord Mayor and CEO and the Lord Mayor also write to the parties mentioned above advising them of Council's position.

Notwithstanding the above, a Rescission Motion was subsequently lodged by Council on 10 November 2020 and will be considered at Council's next Ordinary Meeting on 30 November 2020.

In this regard, this letter is limited to Council's advice to date and feedback in respect of technical matters raised by Council following consideration of the Response, excluding matters relating to heritage. Council's position in relation to heritage will be communicated in a separate response, following Council's next Ordinary Meeting.

Given the complexity of this project, we respectfully ask that due consideration is given to the outstanding technical and design matters identified in **Appendix A**. We also respectfully request that Council be afforded the opportunity to provide comment on any proposed set of draft conditions and plans of management at the appropriate time.

Once again, Council is supportive of this significant and world-class project and we thank you for the opportunity to provide comment. We welcome further collaboration with the NSW Government to ensure realisation of an outstanding legacy and cultural facility for the Central River City.

Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 02 9806 5767.

Kind Regards,



Jennifer Concato

Executive Director
City Planning & Design
City of Parramatta

APPENDIX A – TECHNICAL FEEDBACK POWERHOUSE PARRAMATTA SSD-10416 (RESPONSE TO SUBMISSIONS AND AMENDED PROPOSAL REPORT)

Flooding and the Undercroft

Council recognises the efforts made to modify the design to align with the Competition winning visualisation that showed a landscape solution that included a sloping embankment and a seamless relationship with the Parramatta River. Notwithstanding, the reality of the design is that the undercroft remains and the embankment serves to obscure it. The primary purpose of the undercroft is to convey floodwaters and at the same time provide additional habitable floor space for use by the Museum. Council maintains its view that the undercroft is not an appropriate solution for the site.

In the Response to Submissions Report prepared by Ethos Urban on behalf of Infrastructure NSW dated 8 October 2020, it states that in response to concerns raised during the exhibition period, further detailed flood modelling was undertaken which confirmed that 'the proposed undercroft area is the best and only outcome for the site to mitigate and appropriately manage riverine flooding'. Council is contrary to this view.

While Council acknowledges that the undercroft space will have limited access by the public through the erection of moveable screens managed by the Powerhouse, Council maintains its concerns regarding the suitability of the undercroft as a flood solution where the conveyance of floodwater through the undercroft also passes through proposed habitable floor space. This is due to the potential threat to life, property and critical building services in a flood event (including evacuation via a single, limited capacity lift, which provides critical access to mobility impaired). Council considers this to be in contradiction of the Floodplain Development Manual and NSW Flood Policy. This space will have a level floor and the 1% AEP (100 year) floodwaters will flow with substantial velocity 2-3m deep extending to the back wall of this structure.

It is Council's view that there are alternative solutions, including a design that delivers an alternative means of achieving floodwater conveyance along the river through an appropriately designed landscaped riverbank. There are other reaches of the river nearby with similar river flow, river width and which have cross sections that contain this 1% (100 year) flow within the boundaries. These typically have sloping banks that enable people to safely find their way to higher ground out of the river corridor as floodwaters rise.

In this regard, Council reiterates its earlier recommendation that the undercroft be removed from the design. It also recommends the undercroft be replaced with a suitable sloping riverbank section that may be a viable solution to manage the conveyance of floodwater. This would also have the added benefit of creating a more integrated foreshore landscape interface where the 'natural' sloping riverbank profiles that existed before the existing car park was originally constructed (and which appear to be still visible on site) could be considered as the baseline for predevelopment conveyance capacity and afflux considerations.

In relation to overland flow, once riverine flooding and conveyance has been resolved safely - by changing the built form and surrounding landform, it will also be necessary to re-examine the overland flow pathways across the site and how these affect useability, public safety and risk management.

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Public Domain

Related to the undercroft and flooding, is the public domain response. The proposal includes an extensive podium that acts as a cover to the undercroft, separating the museum from the river foreshore and dividing the space into two disconnected spaces. This results in a podium landscape which is constrained in its ability to deliver an integrated flood conveyance solution. Council understands that the purpose of the podium landscape relates to museum programming in the external space, including potential exclusive use periods with fencing and ticketing dividing the site.

The implication of the proposal is that this creates:

- Sharp transition disconnecting the river foreshore from the Museum and River Square public space;
- Inability to achieve a public, accessible and connected River Square with seamless transitions to adjoining areas (as envisaged in the Parramatta City River Strategy);
- Difficulties in achieving universal access, legible and intuitive way finding to and from the River foreshore to the Powerhouse Parramatta;
- High likelihood of not being able to conserve any of the sensitive Historic or Aboriginal Archaeology on site; and
- A departure from the commitment by INSW and the original intent to deliver a free and accessible community space that is readily accessible with flexible uses

If the undercroft was removed, Council sees an opportunity to redesign the interface between the buildings and the surrounding public space, replacing significant vertical transition with a sloped or terraced landscape form more reminiscent of the competition scheme. This approach is likely to improve connections between the Museum and river foreshore, and provides opportunities for a range of civic events more in keeping with River Square public space envisioned in Parramatta City River Strategy.

Civic Link

Council recognises the proposal seeks to address many of the objectives of the Civic Link noting that the design uses a more-urban response along this river-facing block. These include providing a new pedestrianised public space, significant civic space, and cultural destination that supports public life; through its generous public space that can accommodate major events; and through its distinctive public building adjacent the river foreshore.

Council acknowledges the retention of a tree from the Willow Grove landscape along the Civic Link spine, and that a portion of the Civic Link has narrowed to 11.5m for a length of 11.3m in response to architectural requirements and that the spatial intent is of 'containment and release'. While Council acknowledges that for the greater extent of the link, a 20m width and open to the sky character is proposed, Council reinforces its aspirations for a continuous 20m wide open to sky link. Noting the proposed reductions to the building footprint to accommodate an increased setback to the river foreshore and to the Phillip Street frontage to enable retention of St George's Terraces, further flexibility in the programming of internal floor space and building footprints would enhance the cumulative benefit to the public domain and realise the aspirations for this important Civic spine.

Whilst the public domain design has been amended, Council remains concerned that the Civic Link terminates in a stair, as opposed to the gentle ramp proposed in the competition winning design. This change in design response no longer achieves a fully public and universally accessible Civic Link connecting Parramatta Square to the River foreshore. The consequences of this are that Museum access from the foreshore is limited to mechanical means (a lift accessed from within the undercroft) and non-compliant access (shared with vehicles, loading and servicing) via Dirrabarri Lane.

George Khattar Lane and Council owned land

In response to the changes to the design of the Phillip Street frontage and the incorporation of some of the vehicular drop-offs for point to point transport and accessible parking spaces via George Khattar Lane, there are a number of considerations for this design resolution, noting that the proposal relies upon retention of this Council owned vehicular access lane.

Due to the loss of the western portion of George Khattar Lane, Council requests details of a turnaround facility and confirmation that these works will be completed as part of this project and considerate of Council's aspirations to realise a well-designed river foreshore. The plans submitted as part of the response to submissions show a formal parking area for five (5) x accessible parking spaces and approximately seven (7) x drop off & pick up parking spaces. Whilst the commitment to complete the turnaround works is welcome, the proposal to create a formal parking area is not supported by Council, and not considered an acceptable solution for the provision of disabled parking. Conditions should be imposed requiring the completion of the turnaround facility and details be submitted to and approved by Council.

Council also raises more general concerns for new works proposed beyond the Powerhouse site, such as George Khattar Lane, the public domain along the river foreshore and rights of way for access. The lack of clarity regarding the interface with Council owned-land, integration with broader public domain strategies along the river foreshore, future ownership, accessibility, dedication, and maintenance of such land, is a concern for Council and requires resolution.

Bus Parking

Council acknowledges the aspirations for visitors to the museum relying upon increased patronage of public transport. However, the limited provision for bus parking raises concerns when correlated with the anticipated number of daily visitors, in particular school groups and seniors, who are less likely to rely upon mass transit options. Further consideration of the potential impact of this requested.