

2 Project

2.1 Project overview

The application seeks approval for the redevelopment and operation of the Powerhouse Ultimo, comprising site preparation works, demolition of existing buildings and structures, alteration and adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, construction of new buildings, internal courtyards, public open spaces, and associated landscaping.

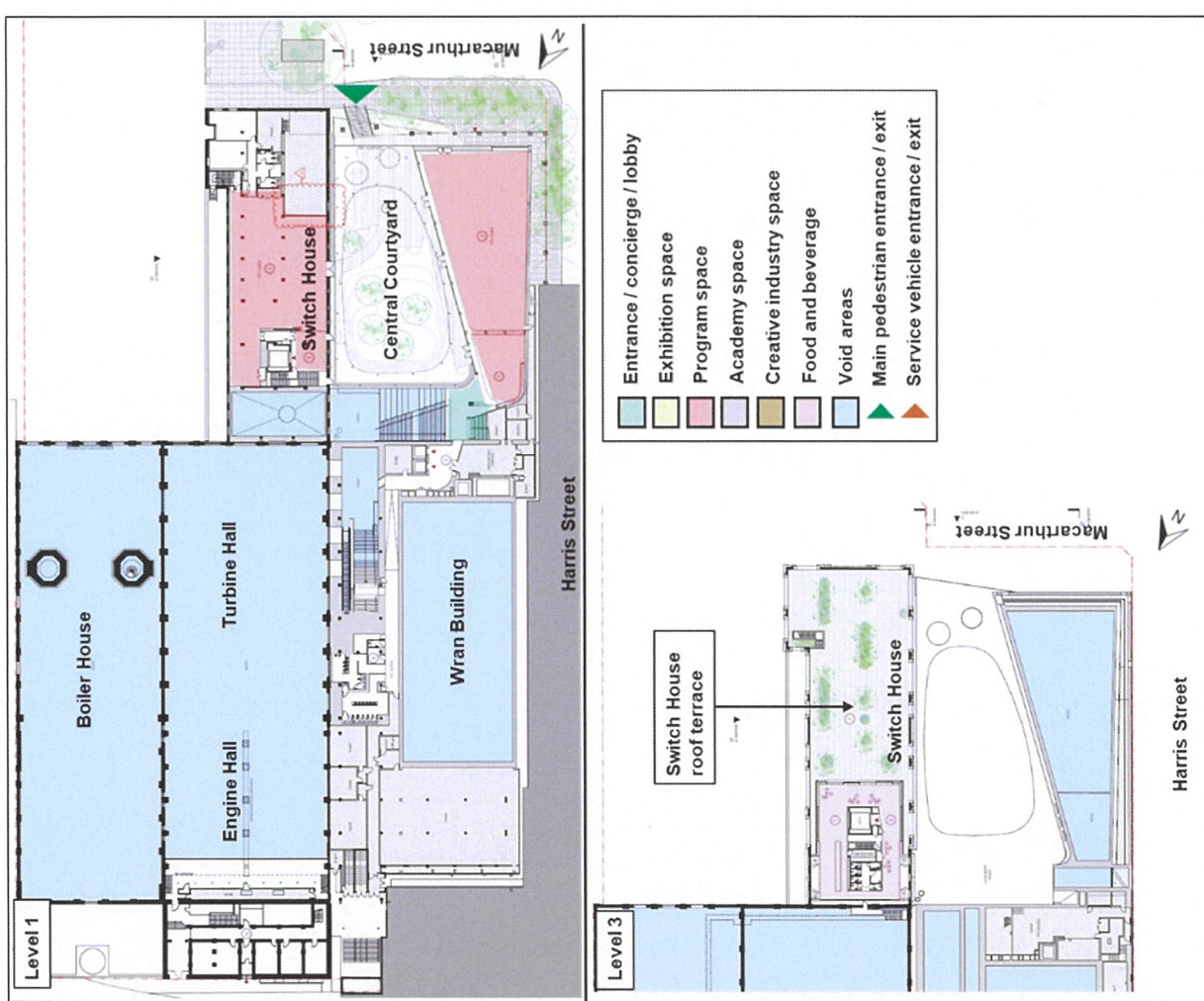
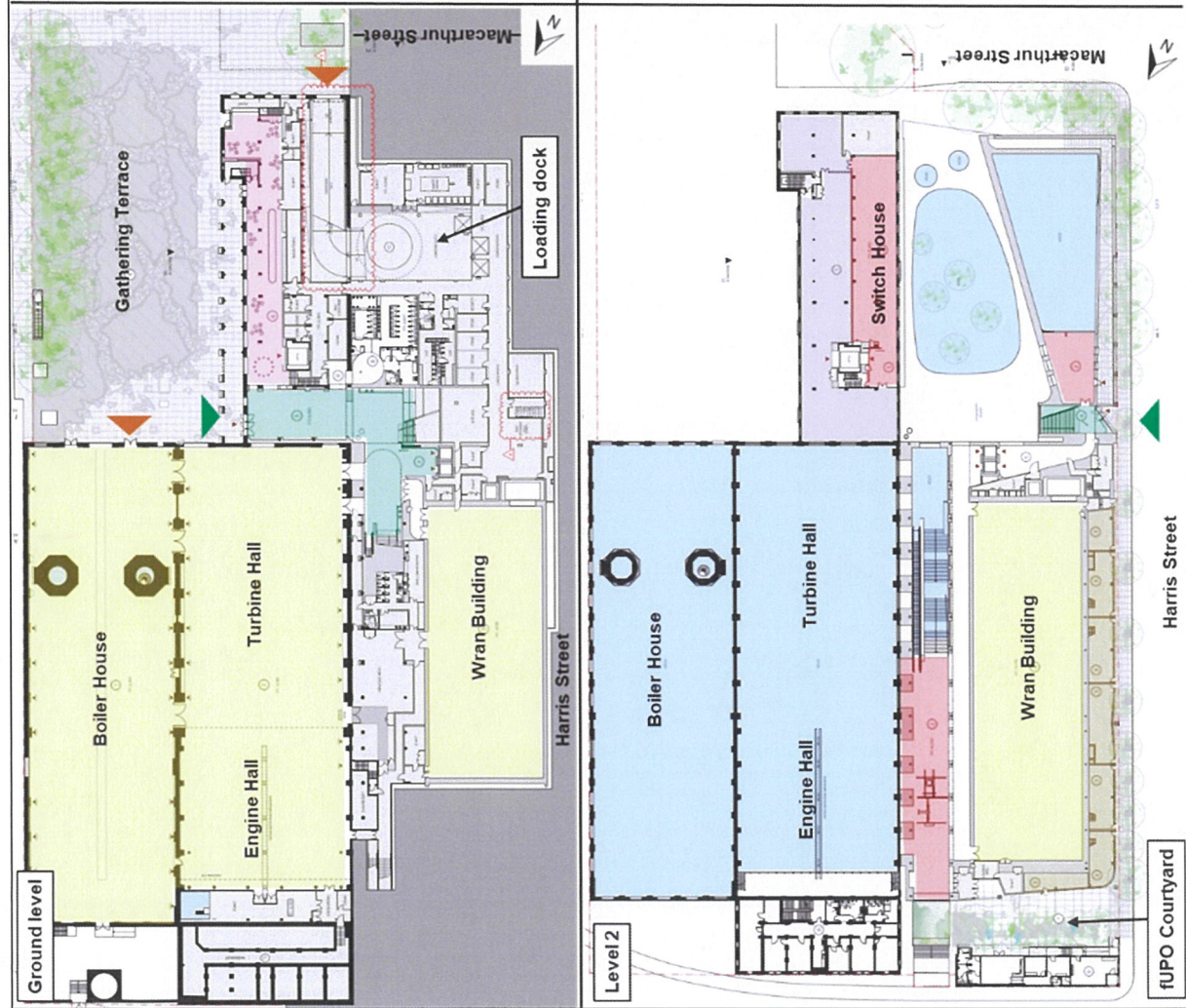
The key aspects of the project are provided in the EIS and are outlined in **Table 2** and **Figure 5** to **Figure 8**.

Table 2 | Key aspects of the project

Aspect	Description
Site preparation and demolition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site preparation works, earthworks and demolition of buildings and structures including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Harris Street forecourt and parts of the Wran Building, including facades, roof, internal columns, mezzanine floors, walls and Harris Street colonnade– the Café and structures in the Outdoor Terrace– non-heritage elements of the Core Buildings, including post 1980s mezzanines, infrastructure, roofing, brick infill, external fabric and the like.
Built form	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Construction of the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– a 2 storey extension of the Wran Building fronting Harris Street– a 2 to 3 storey new building in the location of the Harris Street Forecourt (the Wran Building extension)– single storey rooftop annex extension and rooftop terrace on the Switch House• Amendments to the façades of the Wran Building and installation of new feature brick façade• Alterations, adaptive reuse, maintenance and repair of the Core Buildings and fUPO
GFA and use	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15,226.50 m² GFA for exhibition and education / museum and ancillary uses, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Ground floor: public realm (Gathering Terrace), exhibition space (ES) 1 and 2, auditorium / ES-3, concierge, museum food and beverage, amenities, cloaking and loading dock– Level 1: program and makers space, internal courtyard and amenities– Level 2: academy, program and creative industry spaces, ES-4, fUPO Courtyard and community meeting place within the fUPO– Level 3: Switch House food and beverage and rooftop terrace and creative industry spaces– Basements and Level 4: back-of-house (BoH) and associated uses.
Vehicle servicing,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New service vehicle access point for loading/servicing on the northern side of Macarthur Street.

Aspect	Description
parking and access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of vehicle servicing facilities, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a primary loading and unloading dock on the ground floor, situated beneath the former Harris Street Forecourt, accessed from Macarthur Street with three vehicle bays (two for medium vehicles and one for a small rigid vehicle) along with a vehicle turntable. – crane and articulated vehicle access to the southern elevation of the Boiler House for very large objects across the landscaped Museum Terrace. • Retain existing coach pick-up/drop-off (PUDO) facilities on the eastern side of Harris Street, which can accommodate four coaches at a time. • No on-site staff or visitor car parking is proposed.
Pedestrian access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of multiple pedestrian entrances, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the principal museum entrance at the eastern elevation of the Switch House, which is accessed via the Goods Line / Macarthur Street and through the landscaped forecourt (the Gathering Terrace) – a secondary museum entrance from Harris Street, which is connected to the principal entrance via stairs/lift – an entrance from Harris Street to the fUPO and the fUPO Courtyard – an entrance to the internal Macarthur / Harris Street courtyard and program spaces from Macarthur Street and the Harris Street entrance – individual pedestrian access to each of the creative industry spaces/units – emergency exit and stairs onto William Henry Street at the northern elevation of the Wran Building, next to the fUPO.
Bicycle facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of 36 bicycle parking spaces, including 16 for staff and 10 for visitors
Landscaping and public domain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of internal courtyards and public open spaces with hard and soft landscaping, including a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 2,025 m² public open space adjacent to the Goods Line (Gathering Terrace), open 24/7 – 345 m² internal courtyard adjacent to the fUPO, open to the public during museum hours (fUPO Courtyard) – 1,060 m² internal Macarthur / Harris Street courtyard, which would be open to the public during museum hours (Central Courtyard). • Removal of seven trees, including five on the site and two off-site along Harris Street. • The retention of one existing tree and planting of 22 new trees on the site. • Provision of four street trees outside the Harris Street pedestrian entrance.
Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New connections and augmentation of existing utilities. • Upgrade of existing pump and heat-exchangers.
Jobs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of an estimated 755 construction and 40 additional operational jobs.

Aspect	Description
EDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$297,819,000
Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerhouse Ultimo Museum: 7 am to 12 am seven days a week. Loading dock and BoH areas: 6 am to 12 am seven days a week.



- Entrance / concierge / lobby
- Exhibition space
- Program space
- Academy space
- Creative industry space
- Food and beverage
- Void areas
- Main pedestrian entrance / exit
- Service vehicle entrance / exit

Figure 5 | Layout of buildings, spaces and proposed uses and their locations (Base Source: Applicant's SRTs)

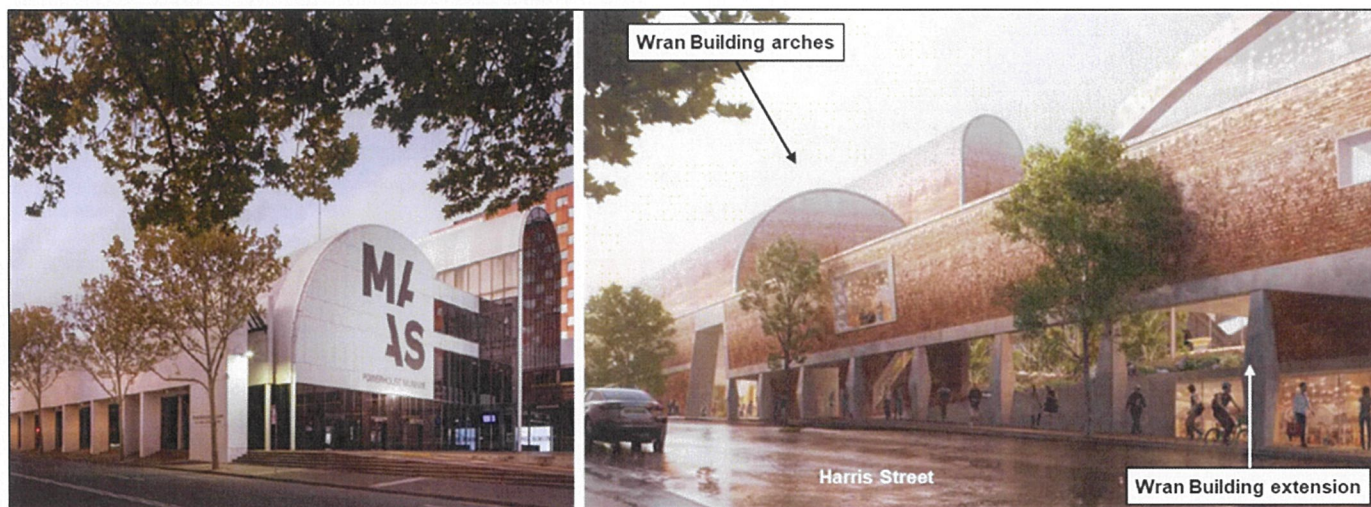


Figure 6 | Existing (left) and proposed (right) Harris Street elevation of the Wran Building (Applicant's RtS)

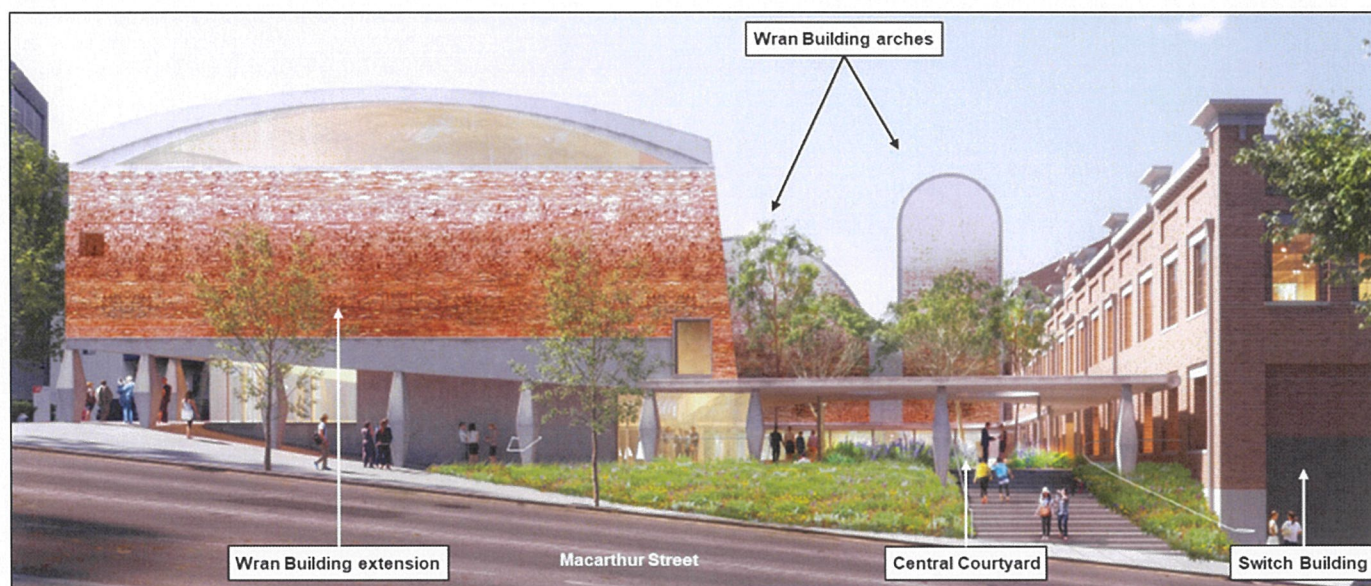


Figure 7 | Macarthur Street elevation-Wran Building, Central Courtyard and Switch house Building (Applicant's RtS)



Figure 8 | Macarthur Street /Goods Line elevation (Applicant's RtS)

3 Strategic and statutory context

3.1 Strategic context

The Department has carefully considered the proposal against all relevant strategic planning documents including the Greater Sydney Region Plan, Eastern City District Plan, Pyrmont Peninsula Place Strategy and Ultimo Sub-Precinct, Cultural Infrastructure Plan 2025+, Local Strategic Planning Statement – City Plan 2036 and Better Placed.

The Department is satisfied the proposal is consistent with the overarching objectives of the above strategies, plans and policies, as it would:

- expand and improve the existing cultural infrastructure of the Powerhouse and the wider Ultimo creative industries precinct and support the growth of creative industries in the ‘innovation corridor’
- provide a more accessible, defined and engaging public realm that can be used for a range of programs and uses that activate the city
- improve walkability within and around the site and better activate Harris Street and the Goods Line
- retain and celebrate the heritage significance of the site through conservation / adaptive reuse of buildings
- integrate the principles of CPTED and improve activation of the public domain
- integrate best practice sustainability measures, including a 5-star Green Star Buildings rating, renewable energy use, reduction in upfront carbon equivalent emissions and use of sustainable modes of transport
- exhibit design excellence across the built form and public domain, as discussed at Section 5.1.

3.2 Permissibility and assessment pathway

Details of the pathway under which consent is sought and the permissibility of the project are provided in **Table 3** below.

Table 3 | Permissibility and assessment pathway

Consideration	Description
Assessment pathway	The proposal is declared SSD under section 4.36 of the EP&A Act as it satisfies the criteria under clause 13(1)(d) of Schedule 1 of the State and Environmental Planning Policy (Planning Systems) 2021 (Systems SEPP), being development for the purposes of an ‘information and education facility’ with an EDC of more than \$30 million.
Consent authority/decision maker	The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces is the consent authority as the application has been made by a public authority and more than 50 public submissions in objections were received.
Permissibility	The site is zoned MU1 Mixed Use under the SLEP and development for the purposes of an ‘information and education facility’ is permitted with consent.

3.3 Other approvals and authorisations

The proposal will not require an environment protection licence issued by the NSW Environment Protection Authority under section 42 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.

Under section 4.41 of the EP&A Act, a number of other authorisations required under other Acts are not required for SSD and SSI. This is because all relevant issues are considered during the assessment of the SSD application.

Under section 4.42 of the EP&A Act, certain approvals cannot be refused if they are necessary to carry out the SSD (e.g. approval for any works under the Roads Act 1993). These authorisations must be substantially consistent with any SSD development consent for the project.

The Department has consulted with and considered the advice of the relevant government agencies responsible for these other authorisations in its assessment of the project (**Sections 4 and 5**). Suitable conditions have been included in the recommended conditions of consent (**Appendix E**).

3.4 Planning Secretary's environmental assessment requirements

The Department's review determined that the EIS addresses each matter set out in the Planning Secretary's environmental assessment requirements (SEARs) issued on 20 February 2024 and is sufficient to enable an adequate consideration and assessment of the project for determination purposes.

3.5 Mandatory matters for consideration

3.5.1 Matters of consideration required by the EP&A Act

Mandatory matters for consideration include:

- matters of consideration required by the EP&A Act
- Objects of the EP&A Act and ecologically sustainable development (ESD)
- biodiversity development assessment report (BDAR)
- matters of consideration required by the EP&A Regulation
- matters of consideration required by environmental planning instruments (EPIs).

The Department's consideration of these matters is summarised in **Appendix C**. As a result of this consideration, the Department is satisfied that the development meets the statutory requirements.

4 Engagement

4.1 Public exhibition

The Department publicly exhibited the proposal on the NSW planning portal on two occasions (below) and notified surrounding landowners, Council and relevant public authorities. The Department also published the Applicant’s EIS, amendment report / response to submissions (RtS) and additional information on its website and notified Council and relevant public authorities. The public exhibition of the proposal included:

- EIS: exhibited from 3 May 2024 to 30 May 2024 (28 days)
- RtS: exhibited from 10 September 2024 until 7 October 2024 (28 days).

In response to the public exhibitions, the Department received 124 submissions on the EIS and 136 on the RtS (**Table 4**). Submissions were also received from Council providing comments and advice from government agencies.

Table 4 | Summary of submissions received during the EIS and RtS exhibition periods

Public submissions in response to the EIS	Public submissions in response to the RtS
124 submissions comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 submissions from special interest groups (7 objections, 2 comments and 2 in support)• 113 submissions from individuals (102 objections, 5 comments and 3 in support)	136 (91 unique ¹) submissions comprising: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 submissions from special interest groups (6 objections, 1 comment and 1 in support)• 83 submissions (78 objections, 2 comments and 3 in support)

A summary of the matters raised in submissions, by Council and in government agency advice received during the exhibition periods is provided at **Sections 4.2** and **4.3**. A link to the submissions and advice is provided at **Appendix A**.

The Applicant has taken steps set out in **Section 4.4** to address issues raised in the submissions and advice and in response to the Department’s requests for further information, which are discussed in detail in its:

- Submissions and Amendment Report (RtS) dated 3 September 2024
- Supplementary RtS (SRtS) dated 25 November 2024
- Responses to requests for further information (RRFI’s) submitted on 16 January 18 February and 6 March 2025.

The Department has considered the comments raised by the community, Council and public authorities during the assessment of the proposal (**Section 5**) and where appropriate has recommended conditions of consent (**Appendix C**) to minimise the impacts of the proposal.

¹ Each petition or submission that contains the same or substantially the same text is counted as one submission in accordance with section 2.7(6) of the Planning System SEPP. Four of the public submissions received therefore count as one submission.

4.2 Summary of Government advice and Council submission

4.2.1 Summary of government agency advice

A summary of the agency advice received is provided in **Table 5**. This summary outlines the final position and any outstanding comments raised in each agency response to the EIS, RtS and SRtS. A link to the full copy of the advice is provided in **Appendix A**.

In addition to those listed in **Table 5**, responses were also received from the Environmental Protection Authority, Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Group of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) and Fire and Rescue NSW. However, these responses confirmed that either the initial agency comments had been addressed or the agency had no comments on the proposal.

Table 5 | Summary of the final position and any outstanding comments raised in agency advice

Agency	Summary of final advice and outstanding comments
Heritage Council, DCCEEW (Heritage)	<p>Heritage do not support the alterations to the Wran Building stating that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">the proposed brickwork / concrete cladding of the north and south facades of the Wran Building transform the character of the building, make the original design illegible and are not supportedfurther consideration of improving visual permeability and activation of the Harris Street elevation is requiredextend collaboration with Aboriginal groups to museum programs. <p>Heritage recommended non-Aboriginal archaeological conditions relating to methodology, investigations and finds and that the final design is informed by the findings of test excavations.</p>
Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Branch, DCCEEW (Heritage ACH)	<p>Heritage ACH recommended conditions requiring avoidance of harm to Aboriginal objects, consultation with Registered Aboriginal Parties and the preparation of a construction Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Plan (ACHMP).</p>
Transport for NSW (TfNSW)	<p>TfNSW's recommended conditions relating to the preparation of a Construction Pedestrian Traffic Management Plan (CPTMP), Green Travel Plan (GTP), protection of the Sydney Light Rail corridor / operation and excavation.</p>
State Emergency Service (SES)	<p>SES reviewed the RtS and recommended the design should avoid entry/exit through high hazard flood areas, not exacerbate flood risk to neighbouring properties, ensure buildings are made safe during flood events, openings are protected above the 1% AEP plus freeboard and PMF and protection of critical services during flood events.</p>
Sydney Water	<p>Sydney Water reviewed the EIS and recommended conditions relating to the provision of a section 73 compliance certificate, building plan approval and tree planting.</p>
NSW Police	<p>NSW Police reviewed the EIS and recommended consideration of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) measures, including the installation of CCTV, adequate lighting and regular security guard patrols.</p>

Agency	Summary of final advice and outstanding comments
NSW Department of Education (DoE)	DoE reviewed the EIS and recommended a condition of consent to limit construction vehicle movements during the Ultimo Public School opening and closing times.

4.2.2 Summary of Council's submissions

City of Sydney Council (Council) provided comments on the proposal and its in principle support for the amended revitalisation proposal. A summary of the issues raised by Council on the proposal is provided below and a link to Council's submissions is provided in **Appendix A**.

Council reviewed the EIS, RtS and SRtS and provided comments on heritage listing and significance, demolition, design, built form, materials and design excellence, entry points and circulation, service vehicle access and loading, coach parking, bicycle facilities and sustainable travel, public domain, landscaping, trees and soil volume, open space design, flooding and stormwater, waste, contamination, public art and archaeology.

The summary provided below outlines Council's final position and its outstanding comments raised in response to the proposal:

- the existing fabric of all buildings on the site is of heritage significance, and heritage consideration should therefore consider the heritage significance of the Wran Building's fabric, not just its use
- update the heritage gradings of the buildings and provide a more detailed assessment of the fabric
- the recladding of the Wran Building with brick is incongruous with its existing lightweight structure
- the proposal should provide equivalent or additional exhibition/programming space when compared to the existing Powerhouse development
- provide the equivalent or more exhibition/program space GFA when compared to the existing Powerhouse
- the reduced width of the Harris Street footway affects pedestrian movement, and further consideration should be given to the footway levels.
- any conversion of Macarthur Street into a shared zone requires consultation with Council.

Council recommended standard conditions relating to construction works, procedures, protections, and compliance with technical documents. Bespoke conditions were also recommended requiring:

- preparation of a Heritage Conservation Management Plan and Structural Report to protect heritage
- undertake photographic archival recording of existing buildings and prepare Heritage Interpretation Plan
- payment of a development contribution and affordable housing contribution
- provision of a clear, unobstructed path of travel between the Goods Line and museum main entry
- provision of a minimum projecting building height clearance of 3 m above Harris Street
- amendment of the floor level of entrance 11a so that it complies with the flood planning level
- provision of updated landscaping plans including planting, soil volumes, maintenance and

protection

- retention and protection of all existing street trees on Harris Street (trees T1 to T15)
- provision of additional tree planting to achieve a minimum 15% tree canopy coverage
- limit service vehicles size to 8.8 m length and preparation of a Freight and Servicing Plan
- provision of public art on the site and prepare a Public Art Plan.

4.3 Summary of public submissions

A summary of the key issues raised in submissions received from the public and special interest groups during exhibition periods is provided in **Table 6** and a link to all submissions in full is provided at **Appendix A**.

Table 6 | Submissions on the EIS and RtS

Issue raised	Percentage of 124 EIS submissions	Percentage of 91 unique RtS submissions
Reduction in exhibition space/items/purpose of MAAS	75%	63%
Inadequate public consultation process	48%	25%
Adverse impacts on heritage fabric	34%	31%
Insufficient justification for the proposal	31%	24%
Excessive/unjustified project cost	29%	42%
Reduction in public benefits for event/retail/entertainment purposes	23%	14%
Inadequate heritage significance assessment of the Wran Building	19%	27%
Adverse removal of mezzanine and internal spaces and access	17%	24%
Inadequate consideration of the heritage listing / disagree with exemptions	15%	22%
Insufficient justification for design choices	15%	4%
The proposal is contrary to previous NSW Government promises	14%	14%
Inappropriate removal of the connection with Harwood Building	12%	16%
Inadequate technical documentation / inadequate Conservation Management Plan	8%	30%
Museum management	3%	11%
Loss/relocation of museum objects	-	43%
Reduced function/change in focus of the Powerhouse museum	-	32%
Functionality of proposed exhibition spaces	-	23%

Issue raised	Percentage of 124 EIS submissions	Percentage of 91 unique RtS submissions
Use and function of public space(s)	-	9%
Environmental impact of moving objects/demolition	-	7%
Consideration of museum collection should be a planning issue	-	7%
The development should not include on-site student accommodation	7%	-
Lack of education/children's spaces	6%	-
<i>Matters raised solely in response to the EIS equalling less than 5% of total EIS submissions:</i> Concern about potential closure of Powerhouse, loss of light in Galleria and views from mezzanine, issues relating to other Powerhouse locations, insufficient / inappropriate public domain works, reduction of greenery, trees / open space, adverse traffic and transport impacts and adverse impact on tourism.	<5%	
<i>Matters raised solely in response to the RtS equalling less than 5% of total RtS submissions:</i> Accuracy of predicted visitation numbers, museum entrance location(s), ESD, loading dock impact, inappropriate use of Gathering Terrace for loading, creative industry units should be removed from development, pedestrian accessibility, overshadowing of public space, security concerns, inadequate business case or consideration of alternatives and fire safety.		<5%

4.3.1 Summary of issues raised outside of the exhibition process

A total of 30 public submissions were also received outside the public exhibition periods (26 after the EIS and 4 after the RtS exhibition periods), objecting to the proposal. The submissions did not raise any new concerns beyond what has been summarised at **Table 6** (included: exhibition spaces, heritage impact, project cost, loss/relocation of museum items, inadequate consultation, inadequate technical documentation and lack of a CMP, removal of connection to Harwood Building, focus of the museum, potential museum closure, lack of education spaces, student accommodation, tourist impact and overshadowing).

4.3.2 Summary of Local Member for Balmain submission

The Local Member for Balmain, Kobi Shetty MP objected to the proposal outside of the exhibition, raising concerns about height, museum closure, heritage impacts, accuracy of documentation, loss of exhibition space, focus of museum, loss of public benefit, development should not include student accommodation, overshadowing, cost and contrary to government promises.

4.4 Applicant's response to submissions and additional information

Following the public exhibition periods, the Department placed copies of all submissions and advice received on the NSW Planning Portal and requested the Applicant provide a response to the issues raised.

On 9 September 2024, the Proponent provided its RtS, which included additional information and justification in response to the issues raised during the public exhibition of the proposal (**Appendix A**) and responded to the revised Heritage listing of the site. The Department placed the additional information on the NSW Planning Portal and referred it to relevant government agencies. The RtS includes the following key amendments to the proposal:

- recalculation and reduction of GFA resulting in a reduction of 873.15 m² (from 15,842.95 m² to 14,969.80 m²)
- refinement of the brickwork design/pattern and façade appearance of Wran Building
- reconfiguration of proposed internal circulation and lift locations and retention of existing Switch House lift
- Switch House rooftop amendments, including provision of curved roof, extension of lift structure through roof
- updated the Heritage Impact Statement to reflect the revised Heritage listing
- reduction of loading dock size and reduction in service vehicle bays by two spaces (from five to three)
- increase in the size of creative industry space, including provision of mezzanine levels in four of the units
- Gathering Terrace amendments, including alteration to terrace pathway layout and dimensions, reduction of soft planting and provision of 1,100 m² hardstand areas and confirmation of layout of panels for service vehicle access to the Boiler House for large object loading
- Central Courtyard amendments, including an increase in soft planted and reduction in hard paved areas, provision of strata vault and set-down slab to increase soil volume, reduction of Macarthur Street stair width and alteration of pathway and paving design
- fUPO Courtyard amendments, including reconfiguration of layout and reduction of 10 trees (from 15 to five)
- confirmation of soil volumes, the removal of two street trees and provision of root protection to Tree 17
- amendments to demolition plans to further clarify works proposed.

On 25 November 2024, the Proponent provided its SRtS, which included additional information and justification in response to the issues raised during the public exhibition of the proposal (**Appendix A**). The Department placed the additional information on the NSW Planning Portal and referred it to relevant government agencies.

The SRtS included further justification and clarification of the proposed development design, layout, operation and works. The SRtS included a further review of the GFA calculation resulting in an increase of 257.70 m² (from 14,969.80 m² to 15,226.50 m²), this recalculation was administrative, and no physical changes were made to the plans. The SRtS did not include any other amendments to the proposal.

On 16 January, 18 February and 6 March 2025, the Applicant provided a response to the Department's request for further information (RRFI) relating to consideration of SES comments,

confirmation of building RL heights and the Switch House annex and roof terrace. In its RRFI the Applicant stated the application no longer proposes the construction of the Switch House rooftop annex and associated roof terrace.

5 Assessment

The Department has assessed the proposal, considering all documentation submitted by the Applicant, all issues raised in submissions and all advice provided by government agencies.

The issues below are considered by the Department to be key assessment issues and are discussed in the following sections.

- design excellence
- heritage and built form
- public domain and landscaping
- flooding.

The Department's consideration of other issues is described in **Section 5.5** and the appendices of this report.

5.1 Design excellence

Clauses 6.21C of the SLEP requires consideration of whether new buildings and external alterations to existing buildings exhibit design excellence. In addition, as the proposal has an EDC greater than \$100 million, clause 6.21D specifies a competitive design process would be required, unless a waiver has been granted.

The Applicant requested the requirement for a design competition be waived on the basis that the proposal represents a reduced scope from the scheme that won a larger design excellence competition in 2022 (**Section 1.3.1**) and the architectural design team and the key design elements of the competition winning scheme have been retained. On 19 March 2024, the NSW Government Architect (GANSW) granted the competition waiver.

The application includes a Design Excellence Strategy (DES), which seeks to establish a methodology for the Applicant to implement a design excellence process for the development of the site and demonstrate how design excellence can be achieved.

In accordance with the DES, the proposal would be subject to ongoing design review by the GANSW's State Design Review Panel (SDRP). The Applicant presented the proposal to the SDRP on two occasions (29 February and 12 August 2024) and has committed to presenting the proposal to the SDRP again following determination of the application and prior to construction certificate stage.

The SDRP provided support for Connecting with Country elements of the design, reorientation of the primary entrance to the Goods Line, the cohesive use of brick materiality across the site, the design approach to the brickwork and the proposed amendments to the design of the Wran Building and exhibition space. The SDRP recommended further refinement of the proposal in relation to:

- the main museum entrance and the functionality, consistency and safety of public domain areas
- the design of the Wran Building brickwork, Harris Street entrance, creative industry spaces, signage, rooftop structures and loading facilities
- embedding sustainability initiatives into the project.

The Applicant amended the proposal to resolve the SDRP matters (above) that form part of the current application. The Applicant confirmed it would address the remaining areas identified by the SDRP as part of the detailed design development phase, following determination. The Department has considered the SDRP comments and Applicant's responses in detail within the following sections of this report and is satisfied the SRDP comments have been addressed or can be addressed by condition.

The Department has assessed the proposal against the matters set out in clauses 6.21C of the SLEP in detail at **Appendix B**, and concludes the proposal meets the objectives of the clause. The proposal would achieve a high standard of architectural, urban, and landscape design by providing a contextually appropriate and innovative response to the site's heritage significance (see **Section 5.2** below). The design retains and enhances key heritage features while improving the museum's functionality and operational capacity. It also integrates the site into the wider precinct through enhanced public areas, improved connectivity, and the activation of the site edges.

The Department considers, subject to the ongoing involvement of the SDRP, the development will achieve design excellence and maintain design integrity. The Department recommends conditions requiring the:

- SDRP review the development at critical stages (prior to construction, any modifications and occupation)
- resolution of outstanding matters raised by the SDRP
- the lead architect be maintained throughout the life of the project.

5.2 Heritage

The site is listed as an item of State heritage significance under the SHR and the Core Buildings are listed as a local heritage item under the SLEP. The SHR indicates the site is of heritage significance for its historic, aesthetic, technical and social values, as summarised at **Section 1.3.2**.

The Application includes a Heritage Impact Statement (HIS), which provides an assessment of the impacts of the proposal on the heritage significance and fabric of the site and building/structures. The HIS indicates existing buildings comprise gradings of heritage significance ranging from 'intrusive' to 'exceptional', as shown at **Figure 9**.



Figure 9 | Built form grading of heritage significance (Source: Applicant's RtS)

The proposal seeks approval for the partial demolition, modification, extension and adaptive reuse of existing buildings, the key changes are outlined below (**Figure 5**):

- restore Core Building facades and windows, fUPO verandah, reinstate some doors and windows, repairs to gutters and roofing
- demolish post 1980s fit out including exhibition and display infrastructure, mezzanine floors, fit-outs, stairs, balconies, partition wall sections, columns, lifts, fire stairs, internal amenities and remove paint
- strengthen retained structures, construct smoke and acoustic separation of spaces, interior fit outs, service vehicle facilities and new Museum entries
- demolish and replace the Switch House rooftop annex and roof terrace, demolish the Harris Street Courtyard and the fUPO connecting canopy to the Wran Building
- retain the Wran Building's arched roof form and reclad it with brick, metal, concrete and glass fabric
- demolish the south eastern portion of the Wran Building and construct a new building at the corner of Harris and Macarthur Streets (Wran Building extension)
- use the amended Turbine Hall, Boiler and Engine Houses and Wran Building spaces as a multi-height museum exhibition and presentation spaces.

Concerns were raised in public submissions, by Council and Heritage about the impact of the proposal on the heritage fabric and significance of buildings on the site. The Department considers the key heritage assessment issues are:

- the proposed modification of and extension to the Wran Building
- the proposed Switch House rooftop annex.

5.2.1 Wran Building modifications and extension

The proposal includes significant alterations to the Wran Building, including extensive demolition of existing structures, a change in materials, and a reconfiguration of spaces.

The updated SHR listing for the site indicates that the Wran Building holds historic, social, and associative significance. It specifically highlights that the heritage significance lies in its distinctive roof form, which comprises two arches, and its overall scale (**Section 1.3.2**).

The HIS indicates that it is the roof's form and scale that attracts a 'moderate' heritage significance grading (**Figure 9**) and clarifies that all internal and external fabric of the Wran Building is graded under the category of 'little' significance as compared to other parts of the site that are considered to be of 'exceptional' and 'high' significance.

The HIS acknowledges that changes are proposed to the Wran Building. However, the HIS considers the changes would not have unacceptable heritage impacts, as (**Figure 10**):

- the SHR listing for the Wran Building highlights the distinctive arched roof form and scale as central to its heritage significance. The proposed design retains these key features, ensuring they remain prominent elements
- the fabric of the Wran Building has been heavily modified over time and the fabric for removal is not identified as being of heritage significance
- the proposed brickwork comprises a contemporary, stratified pattern (incorporating First Nations co-design) that contrasts with the brickwork of the Core Buildings and fUPO in a

sympathetic manner and allows those buildings to feature more prominently in the landscape.

The HIS recommended the proposed new roofing material and colour palette for the Wran Building be developed and finalised in consultation with the nominated project Heritage Consultant.

Concerns were raised in public submissions regarding the extent of the demolition to the Wran Building. It was argued that the Wran Building should be categorised as having exceptional heritage significance. The proposal diminishes the architectural and historic value of the building, and the removal of the southern end and Galeria has an adverse heritage impact. Additionally, the use of brick and concrete, along with the removal of lightweight structures, undermines the heritage value of the building, and the proposed reimaged internal spaces are inappropriate and less functional than the original.

Heritage NSW stated that the proposed use of brickwork and concrete, particularly on the north and south arched gables, transforms the character of the Wran Building and leads to the loss of the original intended contrast between the original heavy Core Buildings and the lighter-framed 1988 Wran Building. Heritage NSW noted that the Harris Street Wran Building facade enables framed views of the Switch House through discreet openings. Heritage NSW stated it would support improved visual permeability and activation of the Harris Street elevation. However, it accepted that enhancing views of the Core Buildings from the south and south-east would help mitigate the adverse impact of obstructing views to the Core Buildings from Harris Street.

Council requested that the Applicant justify the extent of the intervention in the Wran Building. It did not support the use of brick and concrete for the northern and southern gables and questioned the proposed brick's compatibility with the Core Buildings' heritage. Additionally, Council considered that heritage significance relates to the entire site as a connected group of buildings, and that the fabric of all buildings holds considerable significance.

The SDRP recommended refining the Wran Building's materials, including justifying the stratified brickwork and its link to Country, incorporating local and site-sourced materials, using sandstone, and enhancing the lighting and materiality of the Harris Street colonnade.

In response, the Applicant confirmed that the Wran Building's stratified brickwork has been refined to further distinguish it from the Core Buildings and to strengthen its connection to Country (**Figure 10**). In addition, the façade design and brickwork would continue to be developed during the design development stage, with a focus on reusing materials sourced from the site. To further manage overall heritage impacts, the Applicant has proposed to undertake photographic archival recording of all existing buildings and prepare a HIP for the site, as discussed at **Section 5.4**

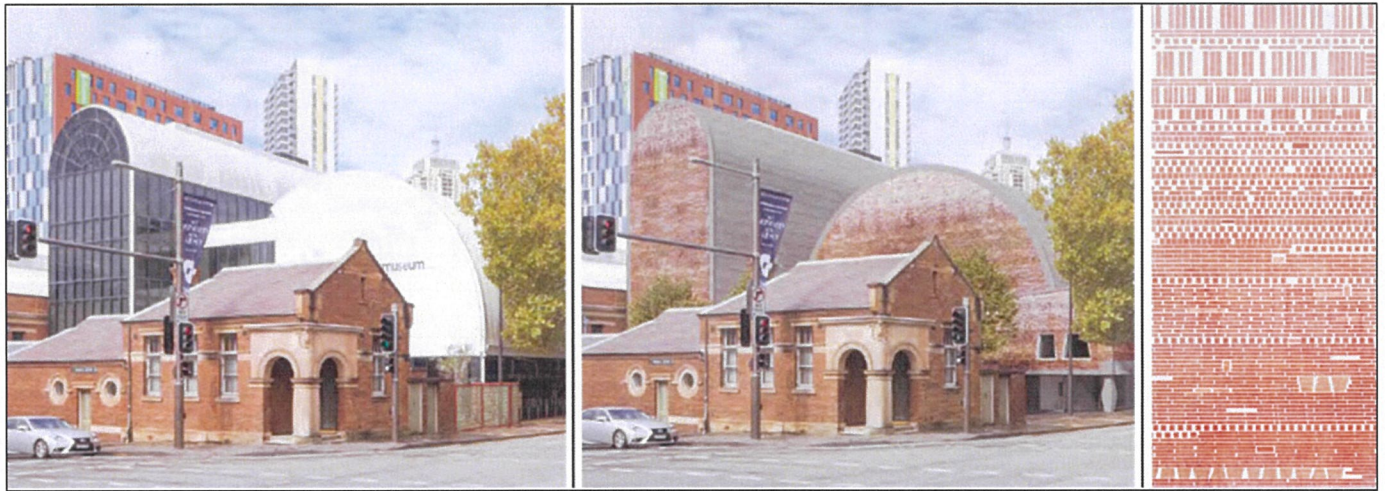


Figure 10 | View across Harris / William Henry Street intersection towards the existing (left) and proposed (centre) Wran Building arches and the proposed stratified brickwork pattern (right) (Base source: Applicant's RtS)

The Department has carefully considered the proposed changes to the Wran Building, the concerns raised in submissions and the Applicant's response. The Department considers the proposed alteration, extension and adaptive reuse of the Wran Building is acceptable as:

- the proposal retains the distinctive roof form of the Wran Building, which is central to its heritage significance and positively impacts the maintenance of its aesthetic and technical significance
- the fabric of the Wran Building has undergone significant and repeated modifications and is not recognised as having heritage significance under the SHR listing or HIS heritage significance gradings.
- retaining the Wran Building in its current state, both inside and out, would not accommodate the extensive, flexible, and adaptable spaces needed for a museum of international standard.
- the change in materiality from lightweight metal and glazing to brickwork, metal and concrete is sympathetic to the dominant materiality of the Core Buildings, fUPO and the broader precinct
- the stratified brickwork has been co-designed with Aboriginal stakeholders and has been further refined to ensure it complements, rather than competes with or detracts from, the 'exceptional' graded buildings on the site.
- the ingenuity, design, and intent of the museum in 1988 would be recognised and documented through heritage interpretation and photographic archival recording
- the SHR includes an exemption from listing relating to changes to internal layouts, fittings and furnishings, construction post 1980 to support the function of the Powerhouse Museum
- the resulting internal spaces provide high-quality, contemporary, and internationally standard exhibition areas, supporting the revitalisation of the Museum, as discussed at Section 5.5.

The Department also acknowledges that the proposal would potentially have less impact on the heritage significance of the Wran Building than the former Concept Approval. The current proposal, which seeks to retain the distinctive arched roof form of the Wran Building results in a more sensitive approach in preserving the historical value associated with the design of the Wran Building, compared to the previous proposal.

The Department recommends conditions requiring the implementation of the HIS recommendations, the stratified brickwork and Harris Street colonnade design be finalised in consultation with the SDRP, the preparation of a HIP and archival recording (as discussed at **Section 5.2.3**).

5.2.2 Switch House rooftop annex

Proposed works to the Switch House include removing all internal fit-outs from the 1980s onwards (such as exhibition infrastructure, stairs, walls, and security barriers), undertaking demolition work to remove the existing rooftop annex and structure, updating the surrounding infrastructure, adding a new rooftop annex extension, renovating the interiors, and bricking up some openings and windows while reinstating others.

The SDRP expressed concerns regarding the proposed Switch House rooftop annex potentially having a negative impact on the legibility of the heritage facades and requested that the applicant consider the possibility of incorporating the lift overrun into the volume of the roof extension.

The HIS considers the removal of post 1980s fit outs, modern infrastructure, the rooftop annex and reinstatement of bricked up windows and reopening is an extremely positive heritage outcome, both visually and physically. However, the HIS confirmed it does not support the design of the rooftop annex and the bricking in of some existing windows on the southern façade. The HIS recommends the:

- extent of built form of the roof annex to be reduced to the north, the curved roof form to be replaced with a more minimalist form and utilisation of the existing lift
- identified windows on the southern façade be retained as windows and not bricked in.

In response, the Applicant wrote to the Department to confirm that the application no longer proposes the construction of the Switch House rooftop annex and associated rooftop terrace. Additionally, it is committed to advancing the design development of the Switch House windows to address the concerns raised.

The Department considers the proposed changes to the Switch House to have an overall positive impact. The demolition of the unsympathetic roof addition will restore the building's original roof profile, while the reinstatement of original window openings will greatly enhance its heritage character. Additionally, the internal works will improve opportunities to appreciate both the internal and external fabric of the building.

The Department recommends conditions requiring the submissions of revised plans detailing the removal of the Switch House rooftop annex and terrace and that the identified windows on the southern façade not be bricked in.

5.2.3 Conservation Management Plan

A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the site, outlining the policies and conservation strategies for the ongoing upkeep of heritage items, was submitted with the Concept Approval (CMP 2022). The current application was not accompanied by a new CMP.

The HIS confirmed that the extensive work of CMP 2022 has informed its preparation and conclusions. To address heritage impacts, the HIS recommends the preparation of a Heritage