

Notice of decision

Section 2.22 and clause 20 of Schedule 1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

Application type	State significant development
Application number and project name	SSD 67588459 Powerhouse Ultimo Revitalisation
Applicant	Infrastructure NSW
Consent Authority	Minister for Planning and Public Spaces

Decision

The Minister for Planning and Public Spaces has, under section 4.38 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (**the EP&A Act**) granted consent to the development application subject to conditions.

A copy of the development consent and conditions is available [here](#).

A copy of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's (**the Department**) assessment report is available [here](#).

Date of decision

24 March 2025

Reasons for decision

The following matters were taken into consideration in making this decision:

- the relevant matters listed in section 4.15 of the EP&A Act and the additional matters listed in the statutory context section of the Department's assessment report;
- the prescribed matters under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021*;
- the objects of the EP&A Act;
- all information submitted to the Department during the assessment of the development application;
- the findings and recommendations in the Department's assessment report; and
- the views of the community about the project (see **Attachment 1**).

The findings and recommendations set out in the Department's assessment report were accepted and adopted as the reasons for making this decision.

The key reasons for granting consent to the development application are as follows:

- *[Benefits]* – the project would provide a range of benefits for the region and the State as a whole, including improvement of the Powerhouse Ultimo expanded and improved public open space and through site permeability, total estimate development cost of \$297.8 million and generate approximately 755 construction and 40 additional operational jobs;
- *[Consistent with NSW Government Policy]* – the project is permissible with development consent, and is consistent with NSW Government policies;
- *[Impacts can be managed]* - the impacts on the community and the environment can be appropriately minimised, managed or offset to an acceptable level, in accordance with applicable NSW Government policies and standards;
- *[Community views considered]* - the issues raised by the community during consultation and in submissions have been considered and adequately addressed through changes to the project and the conditions of consent. Engagement on the project is considered to be in line with *Undertaking Engagement Guidelines for State Significant Projects*, including the community participation objectives outlined in these guidelines; and
- *[Public interest]* – weighing all relevant considerations, the project is in the public interest.

Attachment 1 – Consideration of Community Views

The Applicant engaged with the community during the preparation of the environmental impact statement (**EIS**) as a requirement of the Secretary's environmental assessment requirements. The EIS detailed the findings of the engagement and how it influenced the scope and design of the project.

The proposal was publicly exhibited twice, including:

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

The Department received 124 unique submissions (109 objections, 10 comments and five in support) in response to the EIS exhibition and 91 unique submissions (84 objections, three comments and four in support) in response to the RtS.

The key issues raised by the community (including in submissions) and considered in the Department's assessment report and by the decision maker include heritage impacts, changes to museum operations, functions and collections, landscaping and open space, as well as project necessity and costs. Other issues are addressed in detail in the Department's assessment report.

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Consideration</i>
Powerhouse Museum operation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction in exhibition space • functionality of exhibition spaces • loss/relocation of collection • impact of moving objects • lack of education spaces 	<p>The revitalised Powerhouse museum will provide for a range of exhibition space typologies and capacities (including for large spaces) within a contemporary facility designed to meet international standards. The broader Powerhouse revitalisation includes extension of Castle Hill (primarily for collection storage) and construction of Parramatta Powerhouse facilities. All taken together, the three facilities result in a significant expansion of Powerhouse capacity and exhibition, program and storage space.</p> <p>The State Heritage Register (SHR) listing includes an exemption relating to the exhibits within the museum. The Applicant is required under the <i>Museum or Arts and Applied Sciences Act 1945</i> (MAAS Act) to control, manage and protect the museum collection. In addition, key/iconic items would be retained as exhibits within the museum.</p> <p>Educational spaces will be provided within the museum for schools and visitors, including dedicated learning and program spaces in the Switch House.</p>
Heritage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impact on heritage fabric • impact on Wran Building • inadequate heritage consideration • removal of mezzanines • Harwood Building and connection 	<p>The Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has identified the post-1980s internal fit-out and associated structure is of little heritage significance and the SHR includes an exclusion relating to the removal of the post-1980s fit-out. In this context, the Department considers its removal would not have an adverse heritage impact.</p> <p>The SHR listing identifies the Wran Building's distinctive roof and scale as central to its heritage significance and the proposal has been designed to retain these features. The internal/external fabric of the Wran Building has been altered over time and is not identified as being of heritage significance and its removal would not have an adverse heritage impact. The change in materiality of the Wran Building from lightweight materials to brick and concrete provides a sympathetic setting and complements the Core Buildings.</p> <p>The application does not need to provide an updated Construction Management Plan (CMP) as the existing CMP 2022 remains relevant and the changes to the SHR listing and grading of significance of the Wran Building has been addressed by the HIS.</p> <p>The Harwood Building does not form part of the application. The Harwood connection is categorised as having an 'intrusive' impact on the Core Buildings and its removal would have a positive heritage impact.</p> <p><i>Conditions</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preparation and implementation of a Heritage Interpretation Plan (HIP) and archival recording of existing buildings • preparation of schedules of work and materials/finishes • provision of details of structural support of the Wran Building • finalisation of brickwork design with the SDRP and heritage consultant • remove the Switch House rooftop annex and not brick in the southern windows of the Switch House • implementation of the HIS recommended management and mitigation measures.

Public consultation	<p>The Applicant has confirmed it undertook a range of public consultation in accordance with relevant guidelines.</p> <p>The Department exhibited the EIS and the RtS, notified the RtS and made all application documents available on the NSW Planning Portal in accordance with the requirements of the EP&A Act.</p>
Justification: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduction of public benefit • insufficient justification for project • excessive cost 	<p>The proposal would provide for a positive investment in arts and culture for NSW.</p> <p>The revitalised Powerhouse Museum would include enhanced spaces for creative industries, research, and education programs and strengthen academic links with knowledge institutions. In addition, it will create new cultural and entertainment opportunities during both day and night, providing a significant positive contribution to the diversification of the visitor and night-time economies.</p> <p>The proposal is expected to generate 755 construction and 40 operational jobs and is estimated to direct value-add to the economy of \$37.1 million per annum.</p>
Student accommodation	<p>The Applicant has confirmed the application does not seek approval for the construction of student accommodation on the site.</p>
MAAS Act	<p>The MAAS Act does not contain any relevant statutory requirements in respect of the assessment of an SSD application under the EP&A Act.</p> <p>The Applicant confirmed the proposal revitalisation of Powerhouse Ultimo would facilitate the Objects of the MAAS Act.</p>
Museum visitation	<p>The Powerhouse currently facilitates up to 800,000 visitors per annum. The Applicant predicts the revitalisation could result in an increase of up to 1,200,00 visitors (2,000,000 visitors per annum).</p> <p>Concern was raised in public submissions that the Applicant's predicted visitation calculations were unrealistic and are likely to be less.</p> <p>The Department notes planning approval is not sought for visitation numbers.</p>