



KT/GK
15456
9 November 2015

Ms Carolyn McNally
Secretary
Department of Planning and Environment
GPO Box 39
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Ms McNally

**NEW O'CONNELL STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL, PARRAMATTA
REQUEST FOR SECRETARY'S ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS**

We are writing on behalf of the Department of Education the proponent for the redevelopment of the Old Kings School as a new public school.

As the proposed development comprises an educational establishment and has a Capital Investment Value (CIV) in excess of \$30 million it would be State Significant Development (SSD) for the purposes of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act).

In accordance with Clause 3 of Schedule 2 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000* (EP&A Regulation) and Schedule 1 of *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* (SRD SEPP) the purpose of this letter is therefore to request the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed development. To support the request for the SEARs this letter provides an overview of the proposed development, sets out the statutory context, and identifies the key likely environmental and planning issues associated with the proposal.

1.0 BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE SITE

Parramatta is a significant growth area, and it is anticipated that the number of dwellings in the CBD, Parramatta North and Westmead will continue to increase in the near future, putting pressure on existing schools which are already at capacity. To meet this demand, the Department of Education and Communities is seeking to develop a new primary school on the Old Kings School site with capacity for 1,000 students.

The Kings School was the first large public boarding school (secondary) to be established in the colony of NSW, and developed to become one of Australia's notable private schools. The proposed development seeks to re-establish the site's original use as an educational establishment.

The first of the current Kings School buildings was built in 1834, when the site was formally donated to the Kings School by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society who operated a nursery on the site. Development of the site continued until the late 1930s, and the School continued to occupy the site until 1964 when it was sold to the NSW Department of Health.

The site was then used as a training and rehabilitation centre, known as Marsden Rehabilitation Centre. The centre gradually reduced in scope and capacity, until the Centre closed in 2002.

In 2003, the original main Building (Building B) and headmaster's residence (Building A) were conserved and refurbished for use as offices for the NSW Heritage Branch, and rented commercial offices, respectively.

The northern portion of the Kings School site was recently sold to the Catholic Church and now forms part of the adjacent St Patrick's Cathedral site. In July 2015, the Sydney West Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) approved a Development Application for demolition, tree removal and construction of an office building, Chancery building and a Parish Hall and associated basement parking on this site. The approval also gives consent for the construction of a part 5 / part 6 storey residential flat building, comprising 77 units with two levels of basement parking on the site.

2.0 THE SITE

2.1 Site Location and Description

The Old Kings School site is located to the north of the Parramatta River, on the northern outskirts of the Parramatta CBD. The site is bounded by O'Connell Street to the west and Marist Place to the east. To the north of the site lies the St Patrick's Cathedral site (subject to a DA for mixed use development) and to the south, the site adjoins the Parramatta River. A site plan is provided at **Figure 1**.



Figure 1 – Site plan

Source: Government Architect's Office

The land the subject of this application is legally described as Lot 1 in DP 1112822 and Lot 6 in DP 1182647, and has a total area of 2.47 hectares. The land is owned by the Department of Education. The site is zoned B4 Mixed Use under Parramatta City Centre Local Environmental Plan 2007 (LEP 2007). Educational establishments are permissible with consent in the zone.

2.2 Existing Development

The Old Kings School site is listed under the NSW Heritage Act in the State Heritage Register under both its original function (former Kings School Group, SHR 00771) and its later function as the Marsden Rehabilitation Centre (SHR 00826).

The site and other specific items are also listed as items of heritage significance under LEP 2007. The site currently contains eight buildings, most of which have been unoccupied for a number of years, and are in a state of disrepair. The buildings are all located in the northern part of the site, and are identified in **Figure 1**. The buildings include:

- **Building A:** Building A was constructed in 1836 as the Headmaster's Residence. It is now used as a commercial office.
- **Building B:** Building B was constructed in 1836, and was the original school building. It is now used as a commercial office by the Heritage Branch.
- **Building C:** The main components of Building C were constructed in various stages between 1900 and 1923. The buildings originally contained a dining hall and classrooms. The building is currently vacant, and is in a state of significant disrepair.
- **Building D:** Building D was constructed in 1934 as a male dormitory. The building is currently vacant, however is in sound condition.
- **Building E:** Building E was constructed in 1971 as a boiler house. The building is currently vacant, however is in sound condition.
- **Building F:** Building F was constructed in 1939 as a female dormitory. The building is currently vacant, however is in fair condition.
- **Buildings G:** Building G was constructed in the 1920s, as a 'fives court' and garages. The building is currently vacant, and is in a state of disrepair.
- **Building H:** Building H was constructed in 1921 as a gymnasium. The building is currently vacant, and is in a state of major disrepair.

A large playing field is located to the south of these buildings, adjoining the Parramatta River. The site currently has access from both O'Connell Street and Marist Place, and on site car parking.

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Objectives of the Proposed Development

During the preparation of the Masterplan for the site, a series of education and masterplan principles were developed to guide the proposed development. The key objectives of the proposed scheme are to:

- Build a strong school identity through the site's heritage character;
- Enhance the school's open spaces and waterfront setting
- Retain, enhance and increase visual links;
- Balance public and private site access and use; and
- Future proof for the school's growth.

3.2 Proposed Development

An overview of the proposed development is provided below. Preliminary concept plans prepared by TZG are attached. The works are generally confined to the refurbishment of the existing buildings, with only one new building proposed on the site's O'Connell Street frontage. The proposed works include:

- Refurbishment of Building A to accommodate administration and office spaces;
- Refurbishment of Building B to accommodate a new library / resource centre and 'home base' classrooms;

- Refurbishment of Building C to accommodate staff areas, a canteen, 'home base' classrooms and common learning areas;
- Refurbishment of Building D to accommodate 'home base' classrooms and practical activities spaces; and
- Construction of a new hall (to be made available for community uses outside of school hours) and a Covered Outdoor Learning Area (COLA).

In addition to the works described above, the development will also include:

- Services upgrades;
- A bus pick-up and drop-off area off Marist Place;
- Decontamination works; and
- Tree removal and new landscaping to accommodate passive and active recreation spaces, including covered outdoor play and learning areas.

It is noted that an early works Development Application will be lodged with Parramatta City Council to facilitate a series of enabling works. The proposed early works includes demolition of Buildings E, F, G and H, demolition of external structures including metal stairs, and the removal of an Underground Storage Tank and hazardous materials.

4.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

4.1 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The EP&A Act establishes the assessment framework for SSD. Under Section 89D of the EP&A Act the Minister for Planning and Environment is the consent authority for SSD. Section 78A(8A) requires that a development application for SSD is to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in the form prescribed by the Regulations.

4.2 State and Regional Development SEPP 2011

The State and Regional Development SEPP identifies development which is declared to be State Significant. Clause 14 of Schedule 1 of the policy provides that the proposed development as described herein is SSD, as follows:

Development for the purpose of educational establishments (including associated research facilities) that has a capital investment value of more than \$30 million.

As the proposal is for the purposes of an educational establishment and has a total estimated CIV of over \$30 million, it would be considered SSD.

4.3 Current Zoning and Development Controls

Parramatta City Centre Local Environmental Plan 2007

Parramatta City Centre Local Environmental Plan 2007 (LEP 2007) is the applicable local planning instrument for the proposed development and establishes the relevant land uses and other development standards for the site. Specifically:

- The proposed school redevelopment is permissible in the B4 Mixed Use zone.
- The proposal is consistent with the zone objectives as it will provide for a mix of compatible land uses in the zone.
- LEP 2007 sets a maximum height of 10m. The works are largely contained within the existing building envelopes. The new building will be within this height limit, however some new additions to Building C, such as the walkways within the internal courtyard, will exceed the 10m height limit. Notwithstanding this, all new works will be within the height of the existing buildings on the site.

- The FSR for this site is 0.4:1. The proposed FSR is approximately 0.31:1, and so is consistent with this development standard.
- The site is a Heritage Item under LEP 2007. The proposed works are being developed to be consistent with the site specific Conservation Management Plan.

Parramatta Development Control Plan 2007

Parramatta Development Control Plan 2007 (DCP 2007) contains detailed built form and other development controls. Whilst there are no objectives or other controls in DCP 2007 specifically relating to schools, the proposal will have regard to the general requirements to the DCP and the broader objectives for the Parramatta City Centre and Park Edge Special Area.

Whilst it is proposed that the project will have regard to the key controls outlined above, it is noted that DCP 2007 will carry no weight in the assessment due to the status of the application as a SSD DA.

5.0 PRELIMINARY IMPACT IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

The impacts and risks associated with the proposal are summarised below and will be addressed in detail in the EIS. Overall, the risks from the proposal are considered to be low, as development is returning the site to its original use, and the works are generally contained within the existing building envelopes. The development will not generate any environmental impacts that cannot be managed appropriately.

5.1 Heritage

There is a complex layering of heritage listings associated with the site. The Kings School Group comprises the Heritage Office Building, Marsden Rehabilitation Centre, Laurel House and Old Kings School, and is listed on the State heritage register.

The historical development of the site spans almost 200 years, from early agricultural activities in this area, followed by occupation of the site by the Agricultural and Horticultural Society (Australia's first) for the purposes of forming a nursery garden and introducing fruit tree species into the colony. From 1836, the history of the site is dominated by the development of the Kings School, one of the major educational institutions in NSW throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries. The site is also identified as having high archaeological potential, as well as containing a number of significant trees.

The following are some of the proposed actions to manage the heritage values of the site:

- The re-use of the site as an educational establishment is desirable for conservation of the site's heritage significance, and will require a less significant degree of intervention than other potential uses;
- The proposed development limits the impacts on buildings and spaces identified as having high or very high heritage significance, whereas elements that have little or moderate significance, or are considered intrusive, are subject to higher degrees of change, including demolition; and
- New building works have considered the heritage significance of existing buildings, as well as existing open space and views.

Given all of the above, the risks to the heritage values of the existing Kings School buildings are considered to be manageable. The EIS will be accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement.

5.2 Traffic and Parking

As there will be an increase in student and staff numbers on the site, there will be an increase in traffic volumes and parking demand in the locality. A traffic and parking study will accompany the EIS to address these matters.

5.3 Tree Removal and Landscaping

The proposal requires the removal of approximately 4 trees from the site, none of which are identified as having heritage significance. Further, the trees are not required as native fauna habitat and need to be removed as they will be impacted by the proposed development.

To compensate for this loss, new landscaping, including new tree plantings, will be accommodated on the site.

The EIS will be accompanied by an Arborist Report and a Landscape Concept Plan.

5.4 Flooding

As detailed above, the site adjoins the Parramatta River to the south. The site is broadly divided into two levels, each of which are relatively flat, with a grassed bank running east-west between the two. The existing buildings are generally located on the upper level, whilst the playing fields form the lower level. To the south of the site, a heavily planted bank falls steeply to the river.

Most of the site lies above the 1 in 20 year flood level, with the exception of the south-eastern corner. The 1 in 100 year flood level will affect most of the playing field, but does not affect any of the existing or proposed buildings.

5.5 Construction and Operational Impacts

The EIS will address and consider the construction and operational impacts of, or on:

- Noise and vibration;
- Construction and operational traffic; and
- Water and air quality impacts.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The CIV of the project is over \$30 million and in excess of the requisite SSD threshold of \$30 million for educational establishment projects. A Quantity Surveyors Statement prepared by Slattery is attached for reference.

On the basis that the project falls within the requirements of Clause 15 of Schedule 1 of the SRD SEPP being *development for the purpose of educational establishments (including associated research facilities) that has a capital investment value of more than \$30 million*. The Department of Education and Communities formally requests that the Secretary issue her Environmental Assessment Requirements for the project to facilitate the preparation of the EIS to accompany the DA for the project.

Yours faithfully,



Kate Tudehope
Principal Planner

Enc:

- QS Statement prepared by Slattery
- Concept Architectural Drawings prepared by TZG