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4 July 2020

Planning and Assessment

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
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Attention: Marcus Jennejohn

Dear Sir

RE Objection to proposed development for Powerhouse Parramatta

I strongly object to the proposed development of the "Powerhouse Parramatta and the demolition of Willowgrove and St Georges Terraces for the following reasons:

1. Flooding

The proposed site of the development is located on the bank of the Parramatta River within the 1 in 100 Flood zone. This site is subject to frequent flooding from the Parramatta River, the last occasion being 9 February this year. While the 1 in 100 year flood level is the maximum flood level outlined by the various Floodplain Development Manuals, it is well recognised that the maximum probable flood must be considered for any development within the Flood Zone.

This site has been subject to flooding for the whole of European history of Parramatta and the complete development of the Upper Parramatta River catchment has increase the volume of water affecting this site. No development should be permitted on this site, rather the site should be made a riverside park with appropriate floodplain mitigation controls put in place to prevent the loss of assets and infrastructure from flood damage.

The proposed use of the site as an entertainment venue, residential units and school dormitory is creating an unacceptable risk to life and property given the very short emergency warning time for this section of the Parramatta River and the lack of flood free access. In February 2020 when the site was last flooded there was only one flood free access road available in the CBD. At this time the traffic was at a standstill due to the volume of traffic moving through the CBD. All issues of the Floodplain Management Manual have required flood free access from sites affected by flooding, this development should be no different.

Further this development as proposed undermines the principles of managing floodplain risk which the Department of Planning has enforced on rural and town communities throughout New South Wales.

The State Government must follow best practise and relocate the proposed development to a Flood free site.

2. Heritage

I strongly object to the proposed demolition of Willowgrove and St George Terraces for this development.

Parramatta over the last 30 years has seen the significant loss of heritage buildings with insufficient justification. Parramatta is the second European settlement in New South Wales and the overall cumulative impacts of these demolitions is destroying the community's sense of place and history. Willowgrove and St Georges Terraces are now the only remaining examples of their types in the Parramatta CBD.

The Environmental Impact Statement for this development did not adequately address the social history of the buildings nor the community's loss of sense of place if these buildings were to be demolished. Willowgrove, in particular, as a maternity hospital is important to the social and cultural history of the Parramatta community.

The proposed design of Powerhouse Parramatta building is not significantly important enough to justify the demolition of important and rare forms of heritage buildings. Again, as mentioned in the section above, there are sites within Parramatta for the proposed building without destroying the built, social and cultural heritage of this location.

3. The Design and Proposed Use

The development has been advertised to the community of Parramatta and the state as the Powerhouse Museum west and that the collections and exhibitions from Ultimo would be relocated to Parramatta. This is not true!

The design as exhibited is not a museum, not even a museum quality exhibition space but another large entertainment venue with residential units and a school dormitory, a commercial profit-making space.

3.1 Transport and Parking

The design proposes to cater for 10,000 people per day in addition to staff, school children occupying the dormitory and the residents of 40 units. To serve this huge space there is one (1) loading dock and no onsite parking. No provision for off street staff parking has been proposed.

The lack of appropriate loading docks clearly indicates that there has been no attempt in the design to develop this site for museum quality exhibitions. How one loading dock is going to be able to cope with the volume of truck movements to and from the site has not been addressed.

Parking in Parramatta is already limited and expensive with very little all day parking. To argue that residents, workers, and visitors will travel by public transport to the site is deceptive. Most of the western suburbs this development is meant to serve does not have efficient and effective public transport. People will not use multiply forms of expensive and unreliable public transport to access the site, rather they will desire to use motor vehicles. Further, public transport struggles to manage crowds to the Parramatta Football stadium. Adding an extra 10,000 plus pedestrians to the streets in the CBD will make the area less attractive to tourists and residents alike.

With the number of venues proposed within this development, vehicular access for staff is essential. All developments are required to provide some onsite parking for staff or pay developer contributions towards additional offsite parking required to serve the development.

With most of the building proposed to be entertainment venues, cafes and restaurants which will be used at night, even less public transport will be used. A significant section of the population, women, will not use public transport at night due to safety concerns. Nor will they be happy to walk through badly lit streets to access the multi-story car parks that are major safety hazards for women. Safety of pedestrian movement has been inadequately addressed in the EIS.

The development must be required to provide some level of parking for staff and residents adequate off-street loading facilities and adequate space for bus parking for the resident students.

3.2 Proposed use of the building

The building is not a replacement for the Powerhouse Museum as the design only provides for 25 % of international museum quality exhibition space of the current Ultimo site, and none of the features required by a museum such as storage space and conservation areas. The design expects the museum to use spaces designed for entertainment and restaurants and has no access to the loading dock. This is not a museum development.

The access to public spaces is via stairs and two (2) standard lifts. This does not comply with the standard requirements for disabled access. Local councils have been required to refuse developments with poor or no disabled access, why then is the state government proposing to approve this development. Failure to comply with disabled access standards can lead to fines and orders to retrofit suitable access.

The use of the development for residential purposes raises questions concerning the activities in the entertainment spaces. Living in the development does not prevent residents from complaining about noise and invoking the environmental provisions relating to unreasonable noise at unreasonable hours. The State government cannot force residents to sign away their rights to amenity, there are several court cases confirming this.

The proposal for a school dormitory on site raises issues of security and separation of the underaged school students from the bars, restaurants, cafes, and residential

units. The lack of alternative access points to various levels reduces the security of children. The proposed use of the building to house school students is questioned.

Conclusion

The Western Sydney community were promised a museum to be located in Parramatta by this State Government. The development proposed is not a museum, is proposed to be located on highly flood prone land and requires the demolition of two (2) heritage properties.

The design as exhibited is not fit for purpose, being an entertainment venue with a few residential units and a school dormitory thrown in. The site location on the flood plain of the Parramatta River is unsuitable due to the high level of flooding and lack of flood free access to the site

I strongly object to this development as it is development on a flood plain, requires the demolition of significant heritage properties, has no off-street parking, is inadequately designed for service vehicles and is not a museum.

Declaration: I have not made any reportable political donations.

Yours Faithfully

Elizabeth Stoneman,

Fellow PIA (Retired)