

Attention: Marcus Jennejohn
Submission for Powerhouse Parramatta
Application number: SSD-10416
Assessment Type: State significant Development
Development Type: Museum, Gardens and Zoos
Local Government Area: City of Parramatta

I object to the Powerhouse Parramatta project

Reasons for the objection.

1) Inappropriate site

- 1.1 p7 of the **EIS Executive Summary** refers to *‘Parramatta’s developing culture and arts precinct’*. This does not tally with the destruction of two significant heritage sites, Willow Grove and St George’s Terraces. The area under consideration is no culture or arts precinct. Rather it is a commercial area of shops, eateries, offices and apartments. The only arts centre is the Riverside Theatre diagonally opposite on the other side of the Parramatta River.
- 1.2 The site is subject to flooding so is unsuitable for the proposed development.

A more appropriate site for a new museum would be either the Female Factory Precinct in North Parramatta, taking into account the heritage values of that site or an expansion of the Castle Hill site now occupied by the Discovery Centre.

The construction of the light rail corridor from Westmead to Parramatta would make the Female Factory Precinct the better of the two above options.

2) Destruction of the heritage properties; Willow Grove and St George’s Terraces

- 2.1 p34 of the EIS refers to St George’s Terraces as the *‘only remaining two-storey terrace group in Parramatta’* and Willow Grove, as *‘one of four remaining buildings of its type in the Parramatta Council area’* (p34). Despite this, their demolition is recommended. Photographs and the odd piece of the fabric of the building do not compensate for the destruction of these buildings. Salvaged pieces either languish in storage or, if on display, lack any relevance due to the lack of context which can only truly be achieved in the actual buildings.
- 2.2 p92 refers to the *‘engagement of a Powerhouse Parramatta historian-in-residence as part of the Powerhouse research library and archive’*. This does not replace the heritage of the two buildings slated for destruction. Rather it shows the lack of education and understanding of the value of the built form of heritage.
- 2.3 p92 refers to a *‘detailed Heritage Interpretation Plan’* that will *‘identify and interpret the key heritage values of the heritage items to be demolished’*. In this statement we see the hypocrisy of the development. Willow Grove and St George’s Terraces are valuable enough to have a plan to identify values but of no value to the proponents of a ‘museum’, so can be demolished.
At the very least the two buildings should be incorporated into the development design so visitors can experience them. They would be valuable exhibition spaces for the domestic artefacts that are in the Powerhouse Museum collections. These artefacts could be displayed in a relevant context rather than on shelves in a bland context-less space.
- 2.4 p93 refers to *‘exploring the potential acquisition of significant fabric from demolished heritage items into the Powerhouse Collection, for future research, interpretation and display’*. This does not even

guarantee that any items will be salvaged. The reference to *'interpretation'* is misleading as the best form of interpretation is to retain the buildings.

- 2.5 p93 mentions the construction of the Parramatta Light Rail, the Sydney Metro West and Civic Link as having the potential to *'impact on heritage items'*. This has already been seen with the destruction of a heritage hotel on Church Street, Parramatta. This was an inexcusable action as the hotel had previously been saved when Church Street was widened, by a realignment of the road. The excuse that heritage could be lost on those projects is no excuse for the loss of heritage on this one. Rather it emphasises the continuing destruction of the heritage of the Parramatta region and underlines the contempt held by the proponents of this project for the people and heritage of Parramatta and the Western Sydney Region.
- 2.6 p93 refers to the proposed development as having *'a minimal cumulative impact'* referring to *'interpretation of the heritage on the site and (the) connect(ing of) people to local histories of the site pre and post – contact. The salvage of movable heritage on the site and the implementation of a comprehensive Heritage Interpretation Plan will assist in minimising and mitigating the identified impacts.'* This is at odds with the earlier statements referred to in 2.4 of this submission. None of this replaces the lost heritage. In the 21st Century development proposals should have progressed beyond the mind set of destruction of heritage to its incorporation into proposed developments.
- 2.7 The mitigation measures listed on p93/94 are not good enough. They do not adequately replace the actual structures.
- 2.8 No consideration has been given in the EIS documentation to the value of Willow Grove to Women's history. This building was once a Maternity Hospital. Few local Maternity Hospitals survive. This building is a rare example in the area of one such structure. It is also a good example of adaptive reuse of buildings. Again we see the complete ignoring of the history of over 50% of the population.

For these reasons I oppose the destruction of these heritage properties and the construction of a 'Museum' on the site called Powerhouse Parramatta.

3) Appendix I – Archaeological Research Design,

3.1 p20 2.5 Non-Statutory Heritage Listing

2.5.1 Parramatta Historical and Archaeological Landscape Management Plan.

- a) This document makes reference to the following: AMU 3083 (42-56 Phillip Street, Parramatta) Willow Grove. To quote *'This AMU is considered to have exceptional archaeological research potential'*. p 77 references the AMU 3083 as being *'of State significance'* and having *'exceptional archaeological potential'*
- b) AMU 2882 (Church Street Parramatta) includes St George's Terraces which are not on Church Street but rather on Phillip Street a block away from Church Street. This is *'considered to have high archaeological research potential'*.
- c) 2.6.1 Conservation Management Plan: Willow Grove, 34 Phillip Street, Parramatta (p20) refers to the local heritage significance of this structure in the Parramatta LEP 2011.

Despite these assessments the proponents are intending to destroy these significant heritage items. Once the built structures are destroyed they are gone for ever. The archaeological excavations, if carried out in the traditional method of dig and remove, also destroys the site forever denying future researchers the opportunity to use more advanced methods of investigation that do not require destruction.

On these grounds I oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

4) Appendix G - Statement of Heritage Impact

- 4.1 p9 of the Statement of Heritage Impact states *'demolition would result in the total irreversible loss of the conservation values that constitute heritage significance'* This does not tally with the assertions that the salvaged fabric of the building could be researched, displayed, interpreted as asserted on p93 of the EIS.
- 4.2 I refute that *'salvaging, archiving, reuse and/or interpretation of significant fabric at the site'* would *'contribute to the cultural significance of the place'* (dot point 4). The items salvaged, archived, reused etc would lose all context and therefore value and significance outside their context in the buildings they came from.
- 4.3 Dot point 7 states that the *'proposal is considered to have a minor cumulative impact on the loss of heritage in the Parramatta area'*. As already stated in the EIS the properties under threat of demolition are rare, if not the only example of their type in the area. Are the people of Parramatta and the western areas of the Greater Sydney Metropolitan Area to be deprived of their scarce early European heritage? This heritage is more important than ever in explaining what happened with colonisation in the context of the time. We see our heritage, both indigenous and colonial, being destroyed and the narrative of the First Nations Peoples and early European settlement being distorted to fit other peoples' narratives.
- 4.4 The Social History of Parramatta and the loss of sense of place and character of Parramatta have not been adequately studied or reported in the EIS. Parramatta has unique heritage dating from pre-Colonial to the present day. However this heritage is slowly being destroyed by projects such as this one. The blatant denial of the importance of local history is evident in the documentation with the dismissal of the impact as *'minor'*.
- The proponents have no right to dismiss the local history of Parramatta and its region as *'minor'*. They display a complete failure to understand heritage and history. History is not just big men and big buildings. This style of history distorts reality. History is about ordinary people and their lives. A 'museum' purporting to be about culture and history cannot be supported as it is contributing to the destruction of history.
- 4.5 Dot point 5 *'demolition of these (Willow Grove and St George's Terraces) heritage items would have a major impact on the representation of these representative architectural styles in the Phillip Street streetscape and Parramatta CBD townscape'*. Again this is inconsistent with the proponents desire to destroy these heritage items. It is also in conflict with the dismissal of the impact as *'minor'* (dot point 7) as referred to above in 4.3
- 4.6 p51 refers to Willow Grove as being a *'rare example of one of the earliest notable Victorian style houses within the Parramatta region'* and refers to St George's Terraces as having *'historical significance'* *'aesthetically significance'*, *'representative'* yet the proponents are prepared to destroy them. This again conflicts with the use of the word *'minor'* in dot point 7 on p9 of the Statement of Heritage Impact.
- 4.7 **9.4.1.1 Comparative Analysis** states that the destruction of Willow Grove will have a *'major impact on the representation of this architecture style in the Phillip Street streetscape and Parramatta CBD townscape'*. The same assessment applies to St George's Terraces.

The above are in stark contrast with the proponent's desire that the heritage items be demolished.

I oppose and object to the destruction of Willow Grove and St George's Terraces. I believe that the retention of these properties is in the best interest of the wider community of both the Parramatta and Western Sydney region and the future generations who will be deprived of access to their heritage should the buildings be destroyed.

I therefore oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

5) I support the Heritage Council submission re the retention of Willow Grove and St George's Terraces.

6) The Museum Building

This is not a museum.

Analysis of the plans for the proposed Museum shows that contrary to public statements that it will be larger than the Ultimo site this is not so. Rather the exhibition spaces is 75% smaller than the current Powerhouse.

Less than 50% of the 'Presentation space' meets International museum standard environmental conditions. The proposed Powerhouse Parramatta has only 25% of the Powerhouse Museum's international museum standard controlled exhibition space.

There is no museum specific exhibition spaces in the plans rather there is a concept that the areas will also do duty as performance, function, event and commercial areas. In other words an expensive, fancy Community Centre.

None of the spaces are suitable for the large items housed in Ultimo. There is no adequate way of displaying them in the buildings even if spaces were available as the access areas for exhibits is inadequate for these items. Nor is there the controlled environments they require.

Museum items need to be displayed in context. The proposed constant cycling through of display items devalues the items and removes them from any contextual understanding. A museum is not a display place similar to a Woolworths Supermarket where constant change is designed to force customers to search all aisles for the items they want. Rather it is a place where an understanding of the item is explored in relation to similar items and in context.

The poor design and lack of proper museum conditions mean that it will be unlikely to attract overseas exhibitions as their owners will not be willing to risk their items on such a poorly thought out site with inadequate provisions to protect and display their vulnerable items.

I therefore oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

7) Location

The location is totally unsuited for a museum.

If there was to be a proper museum in Parramatta, it would not be proposed for a flood zone claimed to be a 1 in 100 year zone which the facts tell us is not true.

The design plans acknowledge the flood risks with the design of an undercroft open to the river which will be flooded whenever there is heavy rain. Meteorologists and climatologists predict that, with the changing climate, when rain does fall it will be a lot heavier. This will mean the Parramatta River will flood more than it already does. Witness February 2020 flooding.

Are we to see the demolition of the heritage Lennox Bridge in Church Street so the water can flow downstream? While the documents claim that the Bridge is outside the proposal there have been previous attempts to demolish the bridge to mitigate flooding. Must we, who care about our heritage,

remain eternally vigilant to protect our heritage from the Philistines and Vandals who are ignorant of the values of history?

If the State Government was serious about providing a museum for Western Sydney it would have looked for a more suitable site. The Female Factory precinct is one such site.

I therefore oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

8) Use by educational institutions

As a retired Secondary History teacher I have had over 30 years' experience of organising Faculty-wide History excursions over the Sydney region. The proposed museum, in my opinion, is not suitable for such visits.

If I was planning to bring groups to Sydney I would not be staying in Parramatta. Rather excursions taking students to a variety of sites including the Harbour Bridge, Sydney Harbour, and the Quarantine Station on North Head among others would expose those students to the diverse history of Australia. Many Western Sydney and Regional students do not have the opportunity to travel into the Sydney CBD so have no knowledge of these sites.

History excursions should be designed to expose students to heritage; be it European, Indigenous or migrant. Excursions should not be worksheets, pens and hundreds of questions to answer, they should be experiential. This will not be the experience in the Powerhouse Parramatta. With little or no local heritage to explore an overnight excursion staying in the proposed dormitories would be unviable. Retention of the heritage buildings proposed for destruction, fitted out with relevant items would be a more valuable experience. Along with the other remaining heritage items in Parramatta students would have an enriching experience.

I therefore oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.

9) The name Powerhouse Parramatta.

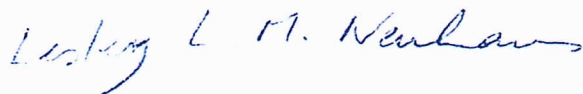
This cannot be the name of the proposed building.

While it is in Parramatta it is not a powerhouse. Using this name is misleading people of Sydney and NSW into believing that the proposed development is on the same scale as the Ultimo site. This is deceitful. The proposal is neither as big as the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo nor a proper museum.

Parramatta and Western Sydney are again being denied the facilities they deserve.

What is being proposed is an expensive Parramatta Community Centre.

I therefore oppose the Powerhouse Parramatta project.



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