



**Australian
Institute of
Architects**



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

PARRAMATTA NORTH URBAN TRANSFORMATION PRECINCT

DRAFT DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION DA/1124/2016

JOINT SUBMISSION BY THE NSW CHAPTERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS AND AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

INTRODUCTION

The Parramatta North Urban Transformation Precinct is significant on many levels: state and national level heritage, urban renewal, heritage and community landscape, public benefit.

As described in more detail below, the Institutes are concerned that the current proposal requires further consideration if the heritage significance of this site is to be enhanced. We appreciate that a balance between conservation and development is required for a sustainable long term outcome. The current proposal however, specifically the quantum of demolition and lack of a detailed consideration of future built form, does not demonstrate such a balance.

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Institutes recognise the quality of the comprehensive and detailed analysis of the heritage significance of this site in the Parramatta North Historic Sites Consolidated Conservation Management Plan.

With Gladesville and Callan Park Parramatta North is one of a collection of globally unique colonial mental health sites linked by the Parramatta River.

The Institutes agree that the site is of national heritage significance; there is also sufficient evidence to mount an argument that it may be worthy of World Heritage listing.

A SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE LANDSCAPE

The Institutes endorse the statement in the Executive Summary of the Consolidated Conservation Management Plan that:

‘As the second oldest British settlement on mainland Australia, the Parramatta North Historic Sites can tell us much about the early development of the colony, Parramatta, New South Wales and Australia as well as

changing community attitudes to moral and social reform, gender, sectarianism, humanitarianism, authority, discipline, punishment, social welfare and mental health care’.

The future development of the site must therefore be based on the conservation, interpretation and enhancement of its heritage significance as a whole. The site should still be capable of being ‘read’ as a colonial heritage landscape when new development has been added.

The documentation is equivocal in this regard. While for development purposes the whole site is referred to as a precinct, both the conservation management plan and the development control plan refer to a collection of historic sites. This is further emphasised by reference to development lots F6, F7 and F8 as the ‘historic core’.

The landscape of the site tells the story of successions of estate managers and the botanical fashions and collections of each period. It also links the site with Parramatta Park and the early 18th and 19th century landscape design philosophies. This relationship between the landscape and built form is intimate and critical to the quality of the site. There is insufficient attention and consideration of this in the proposal.

THE SYDNEY / GLOBAL CONTEXT

This site should also be considered in the context of the family of government sites along Parramatta River. These places are unique, highly interesting and have incredible potential to add to Sydney’s and Australia’s value and desirability as a place to live.

They tell the story of Sydney and the country’s origins and development, its colonial architecture, its relationship with Aboriginal people and its early thinking about the well-being of the country.

This is not to say that they should become museums, but their adaptation and growth into vibrant, creative places needs careful management (not dissimilar to how the heritage of Bath, Cambridge or Harrogate are considered in the UK).

In time and if dealt with wisely, this family of sites could become a vital, and economically valuable, part of the city and therefore should not be considered or planned in isolation.

THE FUTURE OF THE SITE

The Institutes consider that the key considerations in relation to this site are:

- Maintaining the significance of the landscape setting
- Maintaining the significance of the building setting
- Developing new built form that supports the significance of both

EARLY WORKS DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

The Institutes note that the development application aims to:

- Maintain built and landscaped heritage elements which are exceptional and high significance
- Create new walkways and cycleways through the site

- Undertake extensive landscaping around the site
- Upgrade and install underground services
- Rehabilitate Parramatta River foreshore
- Create three new children's play spaces, one with interpretive heritage elements
- Highlight and interpret the heritage water channel through the site
- Demolish intrusive buildings and those of moderate or low significance
- Subdivide the site to create lots for future mixed-use development, open space and the heritage core

We support most of these objectives. In view of our comments below, however, we consider it is too early to determine whether retaining one third of the site for public open space is sufficient.

We object to the proposed demolition of buildings of moderate significance. We note that the conservation management plan specifically proposes that 'buildings and structures of moderate heritage significance should be retained and adapted for appropriate new uses' (Page 133). The statement of heritage impact provides inadequate justification for the demolition of these structures. The assessment of moderate heritage significance for buildings on a site of national significance should have a greater weight than on sites that are of lesser significance.

While this DA is only proposing subdivision, the GFA tables and individual envelope studies indicate that the built form constructed in accordance with the present proposal may significantly erode the quality and character of the place. We consider that a masterplan and a public domain plan, including a road and lane network, must be prepared prior to the subdivision of the site.

The proposal does not explain why development lots A1-A3 and H1-H5 are included in the PNUT site. What is their relationship to the historic precinct between Fleet Street and the Parramatta River?

ADAPTIVE REUSE

The Institutes have been advised that the future uses of the retained heritage buildings are to be left to the market to determine. We strongly advise the preparation of guidelines and recommendations on appropriate new uses based on the social and economic needs of the local community and the City of Parramatta. Proposals for the retention or replacement of interior building fabric should be graded in strength in accordance with each building's level of significance.

THE PARRAMATTA CONTEXT

The future development of a site of this size and significance must be related to the potential population density and economic development of North Parramatta and of the City of Parramatta as a whole. Connections to the east and west are particularly important.

The Institutes are concerned that the proposals for this site have been prepared as though it is an autonomous precinct outside a broader planning context. There do not appear to have been discussions with the City of Parramatta Council and the local community regarding the potential for medium and high density housing and commercial development in the area adjacent to the PNUT site, particularly along Church Street leading into the city.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

The Institutes question whether intensive residential development is the most appropriate way of breathing new life into this site. How has the total of 2,700 new dwellings been determined?

Has an institutional or 'campus' model been considered for this site? Are there overseas precedents that would provide some guidance towards a better solution?

The proposed GFA for new development lacks coherence and logic. Many of the blocks are ungainly and are incompatible with the clarity, simplicity and grain of the existing buildings.

A key concern is that the new development dominates the scale and character of the site rather than respecting what is there and fitting sensitively into the place.

The visual impact of the new building forms has not been clearly indicated. What are the height principles? What sort of streets will result from these developments? The individual block studies in the GFA report appear disjointed.

A comprehensive independent visual impact analysis should be prepared as part of the current application. Certified views of the indicative envelopes from all agreed relevant public areas should be included. While the current application is for subdivision only, the subdivision plan will dictate much of the future public domain.

A high quality public domain results from the integration of streets, open space and built form being considered and developed together. If the subdivision pattern, with a predetermined density pre-empts the detailed development of built form, a quality result cannot be assured. There should be a composite 3D model showing the cumulative impact of new development and its relationship to place.

CONCLUSION

The Institutes consider that the proposed subdivision does not adequately recognise and enhance the outstanding heritage significance of this site. The potential impacts of the proposed built form are so significant and of such concern that subdivision should not be considered until a masterplan, public domain plan and a more comprehensive and credible envelope strategy have been developed. A good outcome cannot be achieved without them.



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