

Parramatta North Urban Transformation

Response to Questions

The Parramatta North Urban Transformation Program team and heritage consultant Sean Williams from TKD Architects, attended a meeting of the North Parramatta Residents' Action Group on the night of 17 February 2016. 37 clearly identifiable questions were asked on the night, and UrbanGrowth NSW gave an undertaking to answer them. Those questions and the answers appear below.

1. Where did you meet people during public consultation in '2013-2014'?

UrbanGrowth NSW held a number of stakeholder workshops, briefings, meetings and drop in sessions between November 2013 and December 2014 to obtain input and feedback on the proposed plans for the North Parramatta Precinct.

Engagement activities undertaken by UrbanGrowth NSW in 2013, which informed the original Framework Master Plan, included stakeholder charrettes (design workshops) on 15 and 22 November, a community drop-in session on 21 November and an industry forum on 11 December.

The first part of a three-part charrette was held at Parramatta RSL Club on 30 July 2014. The next was held there on 1 August and the third instalment was on 22 August. Drop-in sessions were advertised in two local newspapers and by 3,000 newsletters dropped to local residents. The sessions were variously held at Parramatta RSL, Parramatta Train Station, Eat Street or Parramatta Park (near the playground) on 7, 8 and 9 August.

2. Are heritage consultants constrained in what they can do with the Conservation Management Plan?

No, but heritage consultants are guided by the Heritage Council's framework for preparing Conservation Management Plans.

3. Why don't we see the Conservation Management Plan until after the rezoning decision?

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 does not require Conservation Management Plans to be prepared until after the rezoning phase. Conservation Management Plans are then required at subsequent stages of the planning process. This document is currently being prepared and will be publicly available when the first and subsequent development applications are lodged with Parramatta City Council.

4. Why have some buildings been downgraded in the heritage ratings?

Two Conservation Management Plans were previously prepared by others in 1998 and 2010 as part of earlier master plans. The two plans don't cover exactly the same site area, although there is much overlap. The heritage ratings are generally the same, although there are a few differences.

Similarly, most of the building heritage ratings of the new Conservation Management Plan (yet to be released) are also in accordance with the previous plans. The condition of some buildings has deteriorated, in some cases resulting in a change to the heritage significance.

5. Have you had Federal Government advice on how not to compromise the potential for World Heritage Listing?

UrbanGrowth NSW is working with the State Office of Environment and Heritage and the Department of the Environment (Federal Heritage Office) to ensure that works do not compromise the heritage significance of the buildings or site, or affect future heritage listings. UrbanGrowth NSW is supportive of the proposed National Heritage listing, a prerequisite to World Heritage Listing, and is assisting the Department of the Environment.

6. Why do the development at all if heritage is so important?

UrbanGrowth NSW agrees that the site contains significant heritage values and believes that heritage features should be restored and conserved. Many of the heritage elements are in need of repair and the best way to ensure they are preserved is through adaptive reuse including community uses. We believe that the development will enhance the protection and conservation of the site's heritage values.

7. Given your duty to give fearless advice, why don't you tell the government to abandon overdevelopment?

UrbanGrowth NSW believes that the proposed development is appropriate and will provide benefits to the community as well as produce good heritage and outcomes.

8. Why does UrbanGrowth NSW show limited vision for North Parramatta and not pursue tourism uses?

Creating a vibrant hub for the community and providing more housing and jobs is not inconsistent with the site also becoming a tourist destination. There are educational and tourism opportunities associated with the heritage sites, in particular the Female Factory, the Roman Catholic Orphan School and the Parramatta Girls Industrial School.

Forty-six heritage buildings and elements are to be conserved across the site. It is thought that the site's cultural and heritage significance will draw thousands of visitors every year to Parramatta North. UrbanGrowth NSW will decide possible future reuses after consultation with the community, NSW Health and other stakeholders, and in keeping with the Conservation Management Plan.

9. Why did I not get an invitation to early consultation on the transformation project?

UrbanGrowth NSW notified the public about a number of information sessions and community engagement opportunities between 2013 and 2014. These sessions were advertised via the Parramatta Advertiser, UrbanGrowth NSW's website and letterbox drops.

UrbanGrowth NSW is open to suggestions on how to better inform the public about the program, and will continue to seek feedback from the community in relation to proposals and plans for Parramatta North.

10. Can you have the Parramatta Advertiser delivered to all residents? We want to know more.

UrbanGrowth NSW provides information about all upcoming engagement with the community through a range of channels including the project webpage, email alerts, newspaper advertisements, letterbox drops and social media alerts.

11. Why was I denied access to your community charrettes [design workshops]?

UrbanGrowth NSW organised a number of consultation sessions between 2013 and 2014. Some of these sessions, to provide input into the original Framework Masterplan, were targeted towards particular individuals/stakeholders to ensure a representative sample of the community. 80 invited representatives of government landowners, other government agencies, Parramatta City Council and community and business groups attended. In addition, drop-in sessions were held and online feedback was sought from the wider community.

12. How can you continue from this point without starting over again?

NSW Government approved both the rezoning and the project finances in late 2015 so that the project could proceed.

13. Why has consultation on this project not been like that on the Sydney Bay's Precinct?

Different projects require different types of consultation. The Parramatta North Urban Transformation Program has involved various consultation opportunities up to this point. UrbanGrowth NSW will continue to engage with community, Parramatta City Council, NSW Health and other stakeholders in a number of different ways as the Program progresses.

14. What's going to happen to Parramatta Pool?

The Parramatta War Memorial Swimming Pool is owned by the Parramatta Trust and on a monthly lease to Parramatta City Council. It is not a part of the Parramatta North Urban Transformation Program.

15. Why hasn't tourism been addressed in the area?

Please see the answer to question 8 above.

16. Can tourist coaches be accommodated?

This will be addressed in future development applications.

17. Why isn't tourist parking on your draft Masterplan?

This will be addressed in future development applications.

18. Why have you decided to build an amenities building in the Gipps Yard [inside the former Female Factory]?

There are no residential or highrise buildings proposed for the Gipps Yard. There is the possibility of a new support building eg a toilets or amenities building which might be necessary if the site was used for tourism as such facilities can't easily be inserted within the heritage fabric of the existing buildings.

19. Why have you not done an archaeological dig/study at the former Female Factory?

UrbanGrowth NSW will be undertaking an archaeological study at the former Female Factory site. This is likely to be commencing in 2016 and will take at least 12 months to complete. The community will be kept informed about how these archaeological digs are proceeding.

20. Can you guarantee that the Sisters of the Mercy will have uninterrupted access to the site in future?

UrbanGrowth NSW will work to ensure there is access to the site for this group and other community groups.

21. How can NSW Health move from the site when they have no money?

UrbanGrowth NSW is working with NSW Health to find new facilities for its services. Anyone wishing to understand this gradual transition more fully should contact NSW Health.

22. Will you be keeping trees during the transformation program?

UrbanGrowth NSW has mapped the existing trees and will retain as many as possible. However, some vegetation will need to be cleared to make way for new structures, paths and roads. We will be supplementing this removal by developing extensive new parklands, including significant new tree planting and renewal. UrbanGrowth NSW is aiming to achieve a net increase in the number of trees on the site.

23. Can locals be involved in decision making about heritage conservation reuse?

UrbanGrowth NSW is planning a number of community consultation sessions in 2016 during which we will seek input from people on potential building reuse. The first three of these sessions were held in early April.

24. Why has the Government had to sell public land in order to fund conservation? -

The NSW Government believes that the best way to enhance the heritage value of the site is to conserve the heritage buildings and regenerate the site with vitality and new uses. These new uses may be best achieved with private ownership of some parts of the site.

25. Is one reason for this program the need to house more people in Sydney?

Yes, along with the Parramatta CBD, the Parramatta North site is identified in the NSW Government's 20 year growth strategy – A Plan for Growing Sydney. Over the next 20-years, the forecast number of households in Parramatta is projected to grow from 70,150 to 93,750 or a 25.2 per cent increase (Department of Planning and Environment).

26. Can you please think of North Parramatta as a heritage precinct?

UrbanGrowth NSW recognises the cultural and heritage values of this precinct.

27. What percentage of project budget is going on heritage building restoration?

Heritage conservation is a priority and major budget item of the project. Other major budget items are the relocation of NSW Health into new facilities and infrastructure including public open space. The income received from the project will not cover these costs, and significant Government investment is still required.

28. If Parramatta City Council refuses the DA(s), does that mean the heritage buildings won't be conserved?

The project budget, which includes heritage restoration works, requires revenue from the sale of super lots. If these super lots are not approved in the DAs, then the project budget would need to be reexamined.

29. How many of these DAs will be considered by Parramatta Council?

It is our intention that Parramatta City Council will be assessing all DAs relating to the Parramatta North site.

30. Why not incorporate NGOs, i.e. the Mental Health Community, in reuse of the site?

Many of the existing on site facilities are outdated and no longer fit for purpose to deliver modern mental health services. UrbanGrowth NSW is working with NSW Health on a relocation strategy which includes new facilities on the Cumberland west site

31. Will there be underground parking for visitors and residents?

It is anticipated that car parking, including future basement car parking, will be available. Future development applications from buyers of the super lots will need to explain these arrangements and comply with Council requirements.

32. Where/when will there be new schools?

UrbanGrowth NSW is working with the Department of Education and Communities and Parramatta City Council on the needs of the community, including schools and child care.

33. Is it possible to generate new places of employment in North Parramatta? i.e. an arts and culture precinct.

New opportunities for a diverse range of employment will be created through the adaptive reuse of buildings and future retail and commercial uses.

34. Can we have a whole of Government approach to future reuse, like the Sydney Bays Precinct?

UrbanGrowth NSW is leading a coordinated whole-of-government approach to this development. A number of NSW Government agencies, including Transport for NSW, NSW Heritage Council, NSW Health and Parramatta City Council, are working with us to achieve the best outcomes for Parramatta North.

35. Can we have a Community Reference group?

UrbanGrowth NSW intends to form a community reference group for the Parramatta North project.

36. Are Government stonemasons going to be involved in the heritage restoration?

UrbanGrowth NSW is intending to use heritage trained artisans whose work will be overseen by heritage architects.

37. Will tonight's presentation be available to NPRAG members?

Yes – the slides will be made available on our website.