

National [Heritage](#)

'A win for the heritage fleet': New Harbour museum planned for North Sydney



By [Andrew Taylor](#)

March 7, 2021 – 12.00am



Save



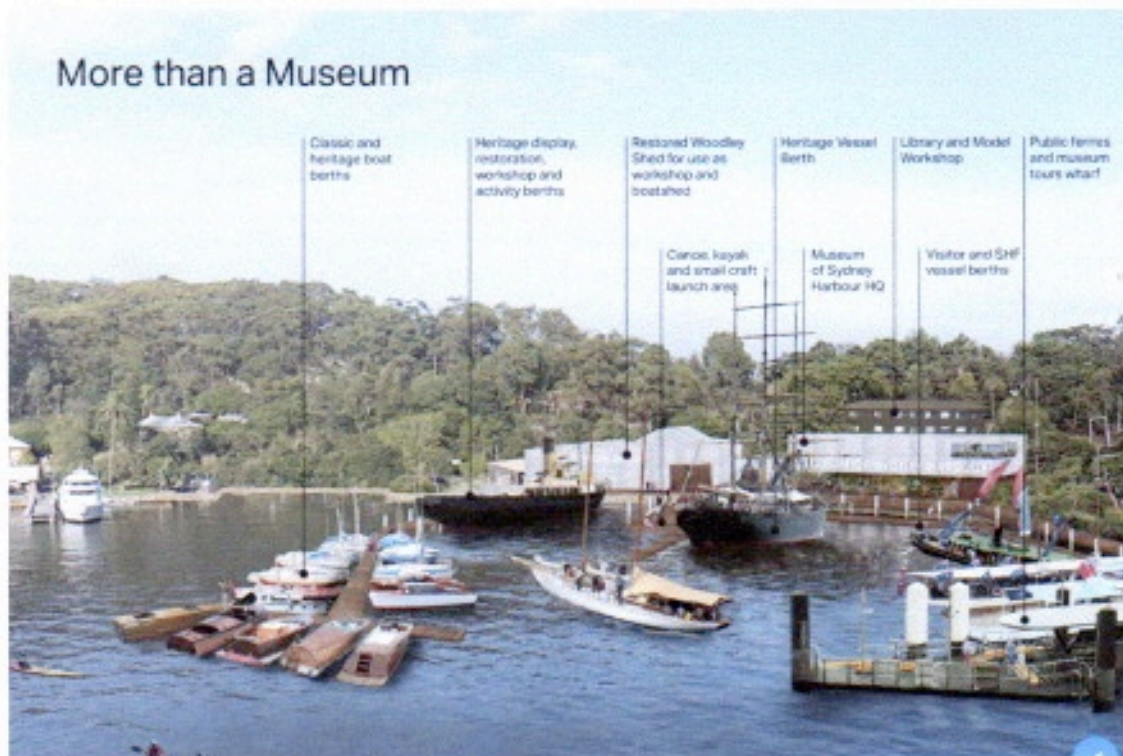
Share



A museum of Sydney Harbour is set to be built on the lower north shore after North Sydney Council voted to lobby the state government to hand over harbourside land when the Western Harbour Tunnel is completed.

The concept plan for the Berrys Bay site envisages a museum, berths for historic vessels, restoration of Woodley Shed for use as a workshop and boatshed, as well as a launch area for canoes, kayaks and small vessels and a ferry wharf.

Berrys Bay would also become the new home of the Sydney Heritage Fleet after the cancellation of a plan to house its collection of maritime heritage vessels around the Australian National Maritime Museum in Darling Harbour.



An artist's impression of the Museum of Sydney Harbour proposed for Berrys Bay.
SYDNEY HERITAGE FLEET

The plan says the Museum of Sydney Harbour would be a place for visitors to “enjoy and understand the cultural importance of the work of the Fleet” and would include exhibits, digital art installations and tours on heritage vessels.

“It will celebrate the outstanding craftsmanship of Fleet volunteers, which has ensured the preservation and maintenance of the magnificent SHF vessels,” the plan said.

SHF spokesman Alan Edenborough said the Fleet had been searching for a permanent home on Sydney Harbour, with its lease of premises at Rozelle Bay due to expire in less than 10 years.

“The Museum of Sydney Harbour is driven by the Fleet’s need to have a secure base, while at the same time providing a community benefit through the creation of an engaging new cultural tourism offering for Sydney, not least to showcase the vessels of the Sydney Heritage Fleet,” he said.

The proposal for a museum at Berrys Bay follows a [controversial proposal for a 60-metre long floating dry dock](#), which was rejected by North Sydney Council amid fierce opposition from a high-powered group of locals.

The Sydney Heritage Fleet, which operates historic vessels such as the *James Craig* was also embroiled in [controversy over complaints of bullying and prejudice](#) levelled against a senior staff member, general manager Ross Muir, which led to the resignation of several directors of the not-for-profit company.

North Sydney mayor Jilly Gibson said the council considered the museum more appropriate for the Berrys Bay than previous proposals for large-scale commercial marinas.

“When the Western Harbour Tunnel is completed, council would like to offer the Sydney Heritage Fleet a permanent home in Berrys Bay,” she said.

“Having the fleet’s iconic sailing ships moored in Berrys Bay will be a win for the heritage fleet and a win for our community.”

The construction of the new harbour tunnel is expected to take five years and Cr Gibson said the council was lobbying for state government-owned land in Berrys Bay to remain in public hands for open space that could be used for the Fleet and museum.

Cr Gibson said Berrys Bay had a rich history of boat building and maintenance “and this proposal would return the bay to its traditional use as a working waterfront”.

The Sydney Heritage Fleet and the Museum of Sydney Harbour would also add to existing attractions such as the Coal Loader, Carradah Park and Balls Head Reserve, Cr Gibson said.

A Planning Department spokeswoman said the state government had already transferred ownership of the ex-Quarantine Station site, a small portion of publicly-owned land at Berrys Bay, to North Sydney Council. “The NSW Government will work with the Waverton community to develop a future vision for the Berrys Bay site,” she said.

North Sydney councillor Ian Mutton, whose notice of motion to support the museum was unanimously backed by the council, said Berrys Bay was a “great place” to exhibit the Fleet’s collection of heritage maritime vessels.

“The Fleet wants a home and it’s a marvellous way to activate that area to bring people to utilise land and a great place to exhibit the fleet,” he said.

Cr Mutton linked the museum project to the [Sydney Harbour HighLine proposal](#) to turn the train line between Lavender Bay and Waverton into a pedestrian walkway.

“The HighLine and the Fleet into Berrys Bay will combine to greatly increase the amount of public open space within a stone’s throw from the CBD,” he said.

No price tag has been put on the project, but Cr Mutton said: “The community expects the government to step in and fund it, not the council.”



Andrew Taylor



Andrew Taylor is a Senior Reporter for The Sydney Morning Herald.