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Sydney Morning Herald

Demolition and relocation of historic Willow Grove given green light

(in print 17 July as: 'Willow Grove could be gone in days after court rejects appeal')

By [Linda Morris](#)

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The NSW government is free to demolish and relocate the historic villa of Willow Grove to make way for the \$915 million Parramatta Powerhouse after opponents exhausted all legal avenues to halt its construction.

The NSW Court of Appeal on Friday upheld the [judgment of the Land and Environment Court](#) that the government's environmental assessment for the museum project was sufficient.



[Willow Grove amid the site clearing for the Parramatta Powerhouse.]

North Parramatta Residents Action Group had unsuccessfully argued that Infrastructure NSW failed to meet its obligations for a state significant project when it did not properly consider alternative sites or designs incorporating the sole surviving example of a riverside mansion in the Parramatta CBD. The group immediately called for a moratorium on all demolition works while the pandemic-led lockdown was in place.

NSW health restrictions on public gatherings effectively prevent protests and pickets to enforce a union green ban, raising the prospect that the Italianate villa will be gone from the site within days.

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The judgment allows the villa to be dismantled and stored while consultation begins on a shortlist of new sites in Parramatta where it could be relocated.

Subject to structural engineering, heritage reports, and development approvals, the surviving dismantled pieces of [Willow Grove are likely to remain stored in containers for at least a year](#), if not longer, a consultant's report shows.

David Borger, executive director of the Business Western Sydney, described the judgment as a victory for "western Sydney families" given the villa's relocation was a "fair compromise that gives Willow Grove a new lease of life and Parramatta a world-class museum".

"The opponents fought strongly but now it's time to come together and make this a museum for everyone."

Residents' spokesperson Suzette Meade said the legal loss would not deter the group. "We will not lose Willow Grove," she said. "The people of Parramatta shouldn't have to choose our heritage or cultural funding – we deserve to have both, and the community will continue to fight for this."

Parramatta City Councillor Donna Davis said her community was at a loss to understand how the government had come to be given the green light to the demolition of Willow Grove to be placed in storage indefinitely. "How is that, on any level, acceptable and respectful? Heritage interpretation is a pathetic excuse for protection of our heritage places."