

1 April 2025

MUS: MTEC2 Bridge St Muswellbrook NSW 2333

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

Statement of heritage impact for

Muswellbrook Tertiary Education Centre Stage 2, 140 - 142 Bridge Street Muswellbrook, NSW

Architect: Collins and Turner

This statement forms part of the Heritage Impact Statement for:

Minor amendment for Access/asbestos-related works to Ground Floor of Loxton House

Reference:

SHR 00185

Address and property description:

The site is located at 142-144 Bridge St, Muswellbrook NSW 2333. The property description is currently:

- Lots 1&2 in DP11221.

Prepared by:

Genevieve Lilley, Genevieve Lilley Architects, PO Box 3483132 West Hobart TAS 7000

Telephone 0400 936 758, Email: gl@genevievelilley.com

For: Collins and Turner Architects, on behalf of Muswellbrook Shire Council

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Loxton House on Bridge St (with the approved Horne building in the middle. Weidmann Cottage is visible far left)



Loxton House on Bridge St (with the approved/built Donald Horne building to the left)

Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement was commissioned by Muswellbrook Shire Council, to comment on the impact of the Minor Amendment to proposed works to Loxton House on Bridge St Muswellbrook. These works relate entirely to required upgrades for access/inclusion, for fire, or for asbestos removal, so that the ground floor rooms can be occupied. These changes are discussed in detail on page 19 of this report, and are all reversible without affecting any of the original fabric

Documentation

The report outlines a brief historical summary for the site/building, and from this, a Statement of Significance has been developed. With this information, the Heritage Impact Statement for the proposed works has been prepared.

A Heritage Impact Statement for the property was prepared in late 2018 by John Carr to accompany a DA by Stephen Rose Architects. This proposal was refused by the NSW Heritage Council in early 2019. A new application for a new MTEC2 building and works to Loxton House was approved in November 2020 by Heritage NSW (S60/2020/158). An S.140 for excavation of the new building site was approved 8 July 2021 (HMS ID 70). An archaeological S.60 (HMS ID 354) was approved 1/9/21. Subsequent details to Loxton House were approved by Heritage NSW 20/9/21 (HMS ID 83). Further items in Loxton House were covered in another application (HMS718 of 2022). This included the removal of one partition wall in the ground floor of Loxton House, some urgent structural repairs and earthquake bracing, and a concealed duct from basement to roof)

Author Identification

This report has been prepared by Genevieve Lilley, a heritage specialist architect, who has sat on the NSW Heritage Committee 2017-2019. She also sat on the Tasmanian Heritage Council for 7 years (2017-2024), in the capacity of Deputy Chair for several years. She also chaired the Work /Advice Committee for Heritage Tasmania 2018-2024.

Report Structure

The report follows the general structure set out in the document '*Statement of Heritage Impact*' available on the NSW Heritage website. The report also follows the methodology found in the '*Conservation Plan*' by the National Trust of Australia, and in the current Australia ICOMOS Guidelines to the Burra Charter.

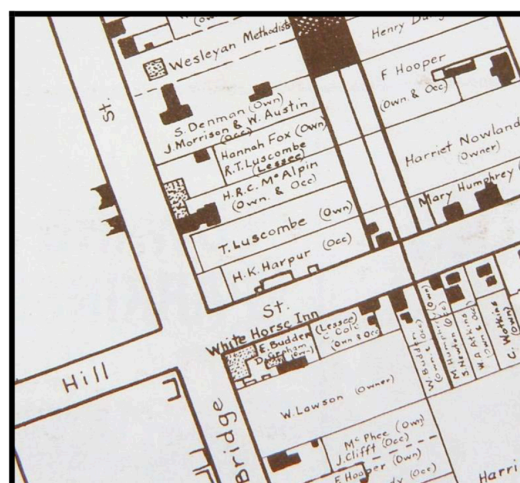
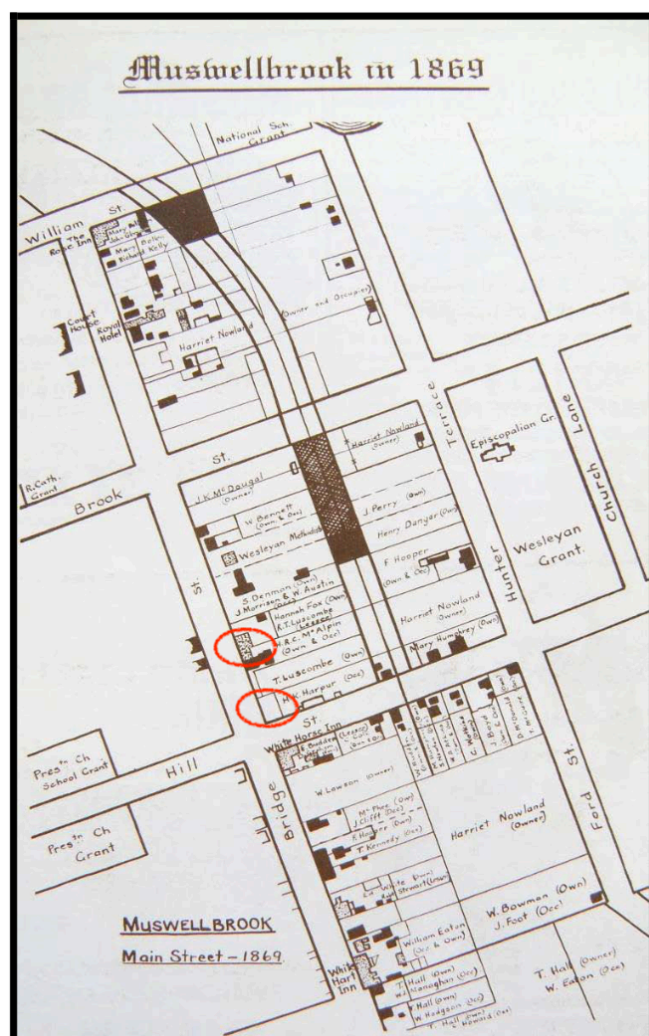
Drawings Used

Collins and Turner Architects CC Submission set, numbered 350-A-1.1.1-1.4.1

Historical Background

As set out in Muswellbrook Shire Council's own website, the area in which the town of Muswellbrook sits was once occupied by the Wanaruah Aboriginal people, at a junction with the southern edges of Kamilaroi people area. The two tribes had trade and ceremonial links.

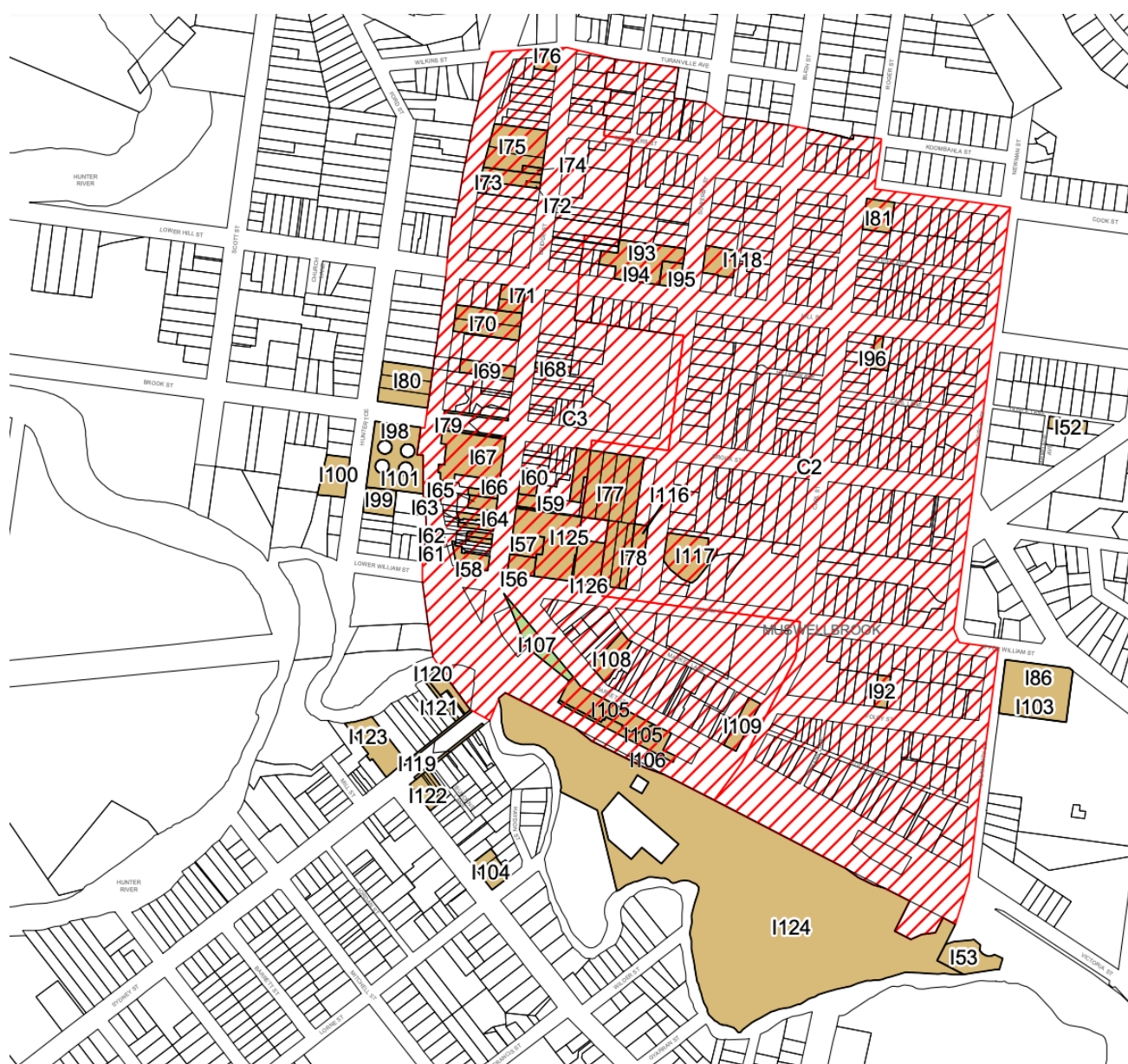
Muswellbrook was declared a township in 1833. It was discovered by Chief Constable John Howe in 1819 and in 1824 major parcels of land were surveyed by Henry Dangar along the banks of the Hunter River for allocation to early settlers. By 1840 the population was 215. There were 41 houses as well as some inns and shops and a flour mill was built around 1841. In 1842 the sons of Francis Forbes established the private village of Forbestown south of Muscle Creek (but due to confusion with the town of Forbes it was changed to South Muswellbrook in 1848). The first railway was completed in 1869 and the town expanded to 1500 soon after this period. The first coal mine in the area opened in the 1890's. The boundaries of the shire were officially defined in 1907 when Muswellbrook Shire was created from Wybong Shire area.



Plan of Muswellbrook in 1869, with Weidmann Cottage (upper) and Loxton House (lower) circled. Detailed extract shows Weidmann Cottage under ownership of HRC McAlpin (Muswellbrook Local and Family History Society)

Heritage Listings

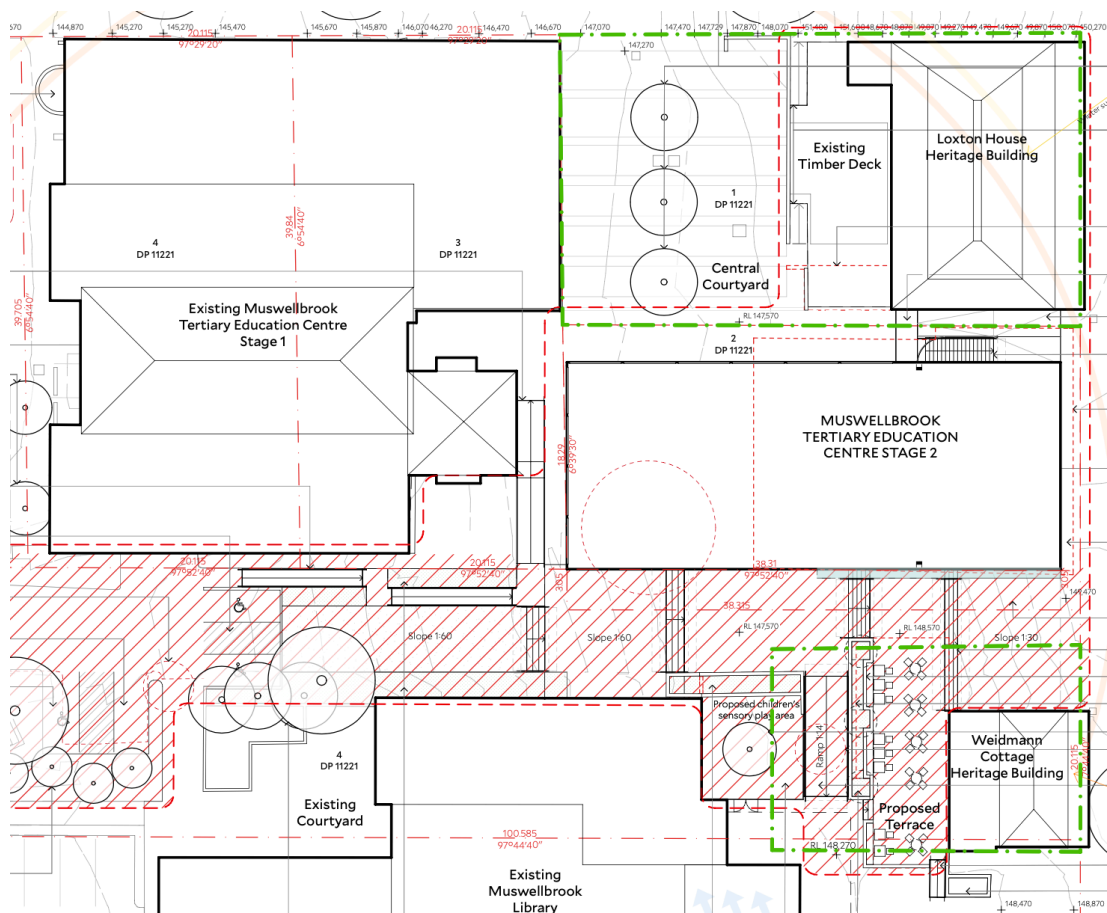
The site fronts Bridge St, and sits between two items of State heritage significance, both of which are listed as examples of early colonial architecture in Muswellbrook. The property entries on the State Heritage Register are SHR 00185 & SHR 00260, attached as Appendices 1 & 2 to this document.



An overlay showing the Heritage Listed properties of Muswellbrook, with Loxton House at 171 and Weidmann Cottage being the Bridge St side of 170 (from current Muswellbrook Shore Council LEP 2009)



Aerial photo with Loxton House and Weidmann Cottage, and the subject site, shown (from current Google maps)



Location Plan with the curtilage of Loxton House and Weidmann Cottage SHR listings shown, dotted in green

Heritage Council of New South Wales
PLAN
Under the Heritage Act, 1977

Description LOT 1, D.P.11221 ("LOXTON HOUSE")

Municipality/Shire/City MUSWELLBROOK Locality MUSWELLBROOK
Parish of ROWAN County of DURHAM

Scale 1:800

HILL ST

BRIDGE ST

COMPILED FROM INFORMATION IN D.P.11221	FILE REFERENCE H.C.32411	PLAN APPROVED <i>Genevieve Lilley</i> for SECRETARY, HERITAGE COUNCIL	PLAN NUMBER H.C. 440
BY <u>D. A. L.</u> DATE <u>17.4.80</u>	THIS IS THE PLAN REFERRED TO IN <u>INTERIM</u> /PERMANENT CONSERVATION ORDER No.185		
N. S. W. GOVERNMENT GAZETTE No. <u>3</u> OF <u>8</u> JAN 1982			
SUBJECT LAND SHOWN THUS: 			

Curtilage of Loxton House as SHR listing

Loxton House

The SHR entry (Item number SHR 00185) lists Loxton House as being built in c1838 as a residence, and is noted as 'a key building in the main street of Muswellbrook. It is a two- storey Colonial-Georgian building which has been claimed to be Muswellbrook's oldest remaining building'. It is further described in the same document, as below:

'The front facade is stone with projecting quoins and an upper verandah supported on fluted timber columns. The side walls are stuccoed brick and the rear wall is painted brick. The rear elevation also has a two-story verandah. The roof is iron over shingles. Joinery is cedar and floors are pit-sawn timber boards. Internally the building retains much of its original cedar joinery including a staircase with carved handrail. (Branch Managers Report to the Heritage Council 19/03/1980)'

The listing came about when, in January 1980 Muswellbrook Council requested comments from the Heritage Council regarding proposed renovations of Loxton House, for conversion of parts of the building to a restaurant. The Heritage Council recommended that an Interim Conservation Order be placed over the building as it was concerned that full compliance with Ordinance 70 of the Local Government Act would require an unacceptable sacrifice of the architectural integrity of the building (non-compliance with the relevant provisions would not unduly affect its fire safety). In recognition of its heritage significance a Permanent Conservation Order was placed over Loxton House on 8 January 1982. It was transferred to the State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999.



Loxton House from Bridge St, taken from the front of the subject site

Development and Ownership of the Heritage-Listed property in recent decades

Loxton House was partially restored and altered in 1980, when its basement was converted into a restaurant. At that time, a large brick rear wing was added to the northern end, housing stairs and toilets. The ground floor areas were used as shops, with offices occupying the first floor. In 1987, approval was granted for the repaving of the basement courtyard, and in 1992 approval was granted for the repair of the timber verandah posts and for exterior repainting. The original internal staircase remains (though its current position is not the position of the original stair of the building), as do some of the windows and chimney breasts on the first floor. The property was sold to the Shire Council in May 2012, and is now vacant, awaiting restoration and use.

Loxton House is part of a major redevelopment for the MTEC2 building by Collins and Turner Architects – the new building is now complete. An application for the new MTEC2 building and works to Loxton House was approved in November 2020 by Heritage NSW (S60/2020/158). An S.140 for excavation of the new building site was approved 8 July 2021 (HMS ID 70). An archaeological S.60 (HMS ID 354) was approved 1/9/21. Subsequent details to Loxton House were approved by Heritage NSW 20/9/21 (HMS ID 83). Further items in Loxton House were covered in another application (HMS718 of 2022). This included the removal of one partition wall in the ground floor of Loxton House, some urgent structural repairs and earthquake bracing, and a concealed duct from basement to roof. The new MTEC2 building (the Donald Horne Centre) was opened by the Prime Minister in early 2024. Work continues slowly on the restoration of Loxton House, as previous approvals. This modification was lodged in late 2023, then withdrawn in early 2024 while access/fire assessments continued to change fit-out requirements.



Opening ceremony of the MTEC2 building (Donald Horne building), with Loxton House to the right. Note the clean side façade of Loxton House (which had previously had a kitchen duct running up the now-visible side wall)

Analysis of Significance: Assessments/Statements of Significance

Loxton House

The significance of Loxton House has been assessed/listed on the SHR website, as below

Statement of significance:

Loxton House, built c1838 is a key building in the main street of Muswellbrook. It is a two-storey Colonial-Georgian building which has been claimed to be Muswellbrook's oldest remaining building.

Date significance updated: 03 Oct 00

Loxton House is a 3-storey building constructed with a dressed sandstone facade to Bridge Street supported on sandstone basement walls. The side, rear and internal walls are brickwork laid in English Bond, with the side walls in stucco and "blocked" to represent ashlar stone. The verandah to the street level, with its stone paving and arched windows, is especially grand, and a fine contribution to the streetscape. Exterior and interior photos are annotated below.

Considerable works have been proposed to this building, mostly to remove a range of additions and alterations and non-original fit-out components built 1980-2015. All of these have been approved



Loxton House as viewed from Bridge St



The door to the stair hall as viewed from Bridge St (L) and the fine street level paving (R). Note the step up into each doorway – this has resulted in an equal-access plan via the rear verandah of each level



Loxton House as viewed from the Hill/Bridge St corner

The rear courtyard of the building is at basement level. A modern weatherboard extension to the north rear corner houses stairs and toilets (both of which need altering for modern access compliance). In addition, the rear verandahs have a non-compliant railing height, and the verandah floors slope too much for accessible use.



Loxton House as viewed from the rear plaza, showing (in rough stone) the basement level visible on the rear of the building. The basement area was occupied (in January 2020) by an Indian Restaurant, which has been relocated while works to Loxton House take place. The (1980s) timber addition to the left (north) houses stairs and WCs



Looking at the rear of Loxton House, and the link to the new Donald Horne building. The missing verandah is where the modern brick rear addition was demolished

At first floor level, the Bridge Street side of the central wall was divided into five separate rooms. The first floor originally had 2-3 large rooms facing the street, so timber-framed plasterboard division walls had been added to make the extra rooms. These were able to be removed in October 2021 after approval to strip-out all linings by HNSW in Sept 2021.



Looking from and at the stair at first floor level, after strip-out



The three chimney breasts remain extant, with timber surrounds (currently safely removed and stored on site) but no fireplace inserts. There are cedar double hung windows to the verandah on Bridge Street. Some are original windows, with the unique opening 'lower doors' (like small barn doors) built to the height of the skirting (these allowed occupants to walk out onto the verandah when the lower pane of the sash window was raised). Others no longer have these low doors, and instead the 1980s skirting runs across the base of the doorway.

The western verandah access to ground and first floor levels is via double doors to all wall openings (these are poor modern replicas at first floor level, without architraves). The existing cedar joinery appears to be original but has signs of being removed and reinstated following the installation of the plasterboard linings. These cedar details have all been labelled and removed prior to gyprock strip-out and now await re-use on site.



Details of the unusual French 'barn doors' of skirting height that enable an occupant to walk out onto the verandah when the lower sash is raised (L) Patched cedar skirtings below other windows without this original detail (R).

The ground floor rooms have, in the past remained largely untenanted. After Muswellbrook Shire Council took possession of the building in 2012, they did have, for a while, an information booth in the ground floor spaces. Another small part of the ground floor was able to be let to a hairdresser. The ground floor rooms have a step from front rooms to rear rooms, and while original windows and some external doors remain intact on the front façade, the doors to the rear verandah are 1980s replacements and the walls and ceilings have been sheathed with plasterboard, with no remaining original ceiling above the plasterboard ceiling. Additional stud/plasterboard partitions have been added over time.



Ground floor rooms after earthquake bracing



Ground floor rooms have modern plasterboard walls and ceilings, with no remaining original ceilings above (note where skirtings were glued to board wall sheets)



Evidence of plasterboard/stud partitions in ground floor rooms

Grading of the Building's Cultural Significance

Integrity & Grading of Significance: The integrity of the physical and documentary evidence must be such to enable a sound analysis of the significance of the place. Loss of integrity or condition may diminish significance. Different components of a place may make a different relative contribution to its heritage value.

The interior is generally coloured as Little as the floor, walls and ceilings are all covered with modern materials with only the cedar joinery (patched and re-applied) visible. All the cedar has been reworked/replaced in the 1980s renovation. Test holes in the plasterboard show numerous holes and prior openings in the remaining (now covered) brick internal walls

An intrusive modern masonry western wing addition to Loxton House (with a different texture of brick, and different bond) was removed to construct the Donald Horne building, the use of a different textured brick, the use of a different brick bond and the use of a different roof style that cuts into the original roof of Loxton House.

The timber clad western addition is assessed as having Little heritage significance and impact on the building due to its choice of lightweight materials common to the period, its small bulk and scale, and its design using the rear verandah roof of Loxton House, stepping out at the lower levels.



Ground floor plan (L) and first floor plan (R) of Loxton House, showing Significance grading (Red = High, Blue = Moderate, Yellow = Little, Green = Intrusive)

Grading (significance)	Justification	Status
EXCEPTIONAL	Rare or outstanding element directly contributing to an item's local and State significance.	Fulfils criteria for local and State listing
HIGH	High degree of original fabric. Demonstrates a key element of the item's significance. Alterations do not detract from significance.	Fulfils criteria for local and State listing
MODERATE	Altered or modified elements. Elements with little heritage value, but which contribute to the overall significance of the item.	Fulfils criteria for local and State listing
LITTLE	Alterations detract from the significance. Difficult to interpret.	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing.
INTRUSIVE	Damaging to the item's heritage significance.	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing.

Grading of Elements

Loxton House External Elements	Grading
Building Proportions	High
Roof Shape	High
Current Roof Sheeting	Little
Timber Shingles under (existing roof sheeting)	High
Chimneys (missing caps)	High
Front Verandah (reconstructed)	High
Cast iron Balustrade & Columns	High
Fluted Timber Columns (reproduction)	Little
Flagstones to street	High
Reconstructed Rear Verandah	Moderate
Balustrade to rear verandah (aluminium replica)	Little
Side and Rear Brick Walls	High
Rear Wing Addition	Intrusive
Rear timber Addition	Little
Rear masonry Staircase	Little
Loxton House Internal Elements	Grading
Ground Floor Entry Partitions	Intrusive
First Floor introduced partitions	Little
Plasterboard ceiling and wall linings	Intrusive
Brick internal walls under plasterboard linings	Little
Internal Walls Supporting Chimneys	High
Pit sawn timber hardwood flooring (under carpet)	High
Existing floor coverings	Little
All cedar windows, doors, architraves and skirtings	High
Cedar fireplace mantles, cedar staircase	High

The proposals included in this Minor Amendment Application for Loxton House

The changes included in this Minor Amendment relate to three areas of required upgrades – equal access requirements, fire requirements, and asbestos removal requirements. These are detailed below

Equal Access-requirements

The need for Equal Access mean that all parts of the ground floor must be accessible to the public. As we cannot change the doors and stone sill step into the front rooms from the front, equal access must be obtained via the rear verandah. This means:

- the rear verandah floor must be relaid, so the slope is to an approved fall (it is currently 'too sloped')
- the verandah railings must have a new 'extra' inside top rail, to comply with BCA/access requirements
- the front ground floor rooms must have a new raised floor, as no step is permitted between the front/rear rooms. This means one must step up a single step when entering these rooms from the street (with an associated required handrail)
- stair in the rear timber addition to Hill St side of WC at basement level must be rebuilt to accessible code, with associated adjustments to modern WC under that stair (for it too to become accessible)
- two rear doors (from the rear rooms to the rear verandah) which currently open outwards must be altered to open inwards
- an existing opening between front/rear rooms of the ground floor must be widened marginally
- a new opening is to be made in one brick cross-wall (between rear rooms 4/5, and one existing partition (A/B)

Fire requirements

To occupy the ground floor rooms, the following measures need to be implemented:

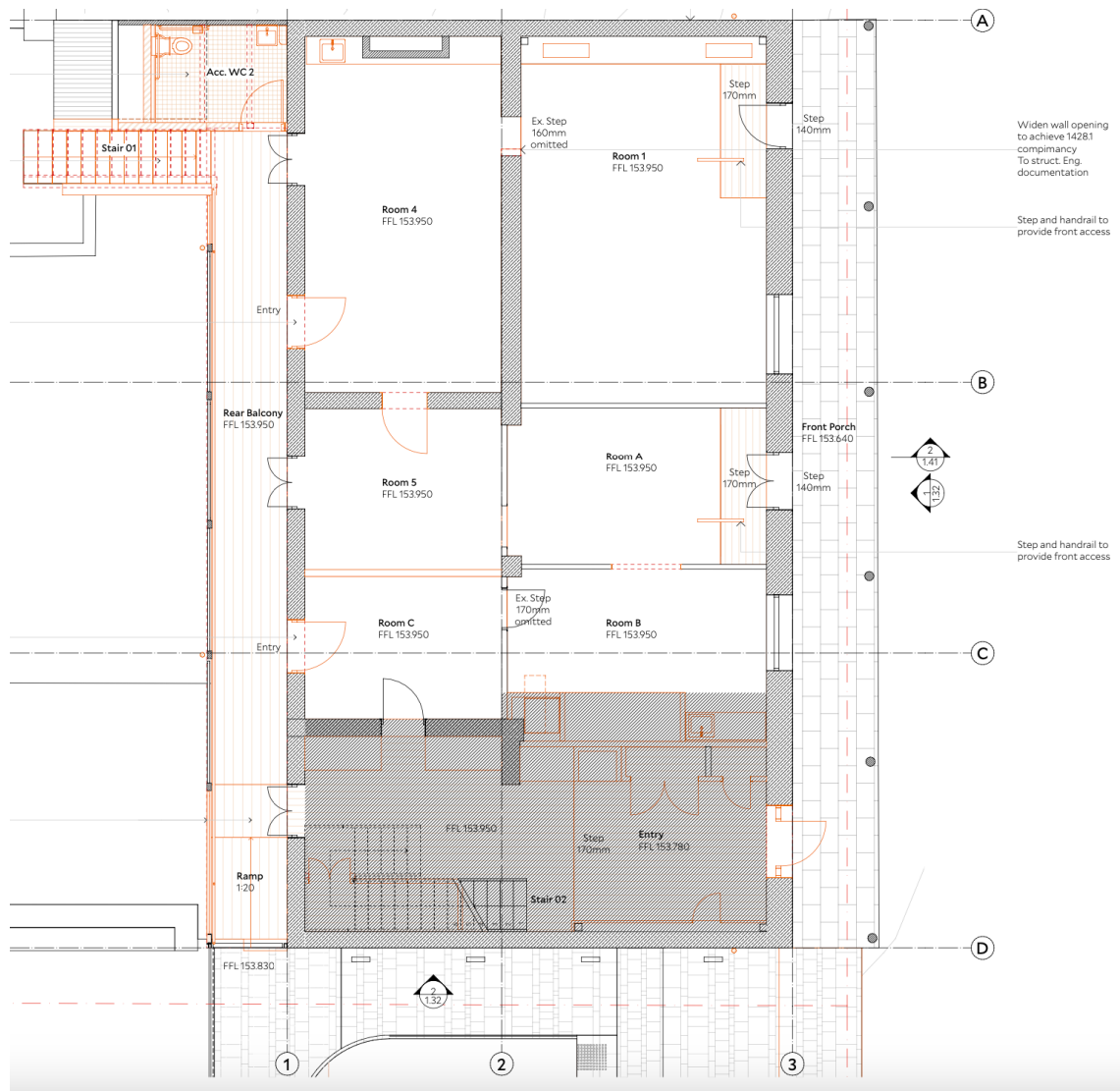
- new ceiling with sprinklers to replace the existing modern ceiling in the ground floor, no cornices
- a ceiling needs to be fitted to the soffit of the basement. With heritage advice, this has been designed to sit between the original ceiling joists, concealing required sprinklers
- false walls at each end of the ground floor will conceal/protect the steel bracing posts in the end walls
- neat metal mesh cover (or wired glass) to southern end wall first floor window

Asbestos removal requirements

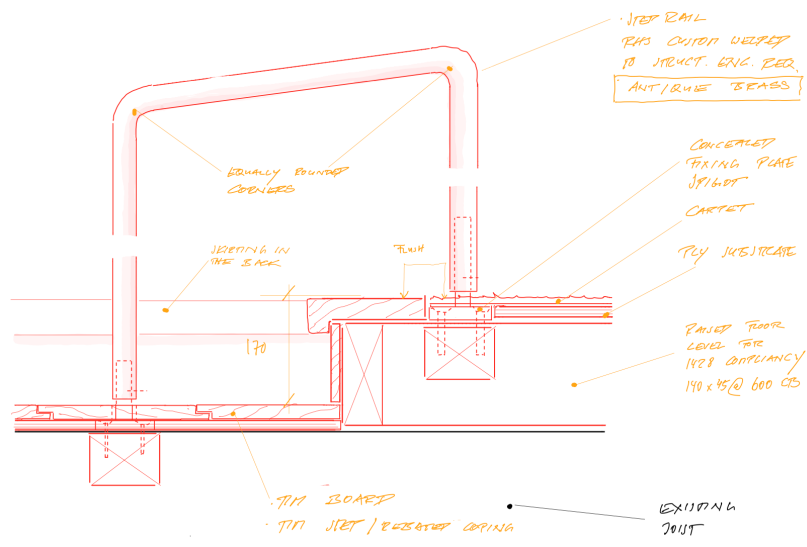
The soffits of the rear verandahs, on all 3 levels, are asbestos-lined, and this material must be removed, and replaced with tongue-and-groove lining boards

The rationale for these amendments

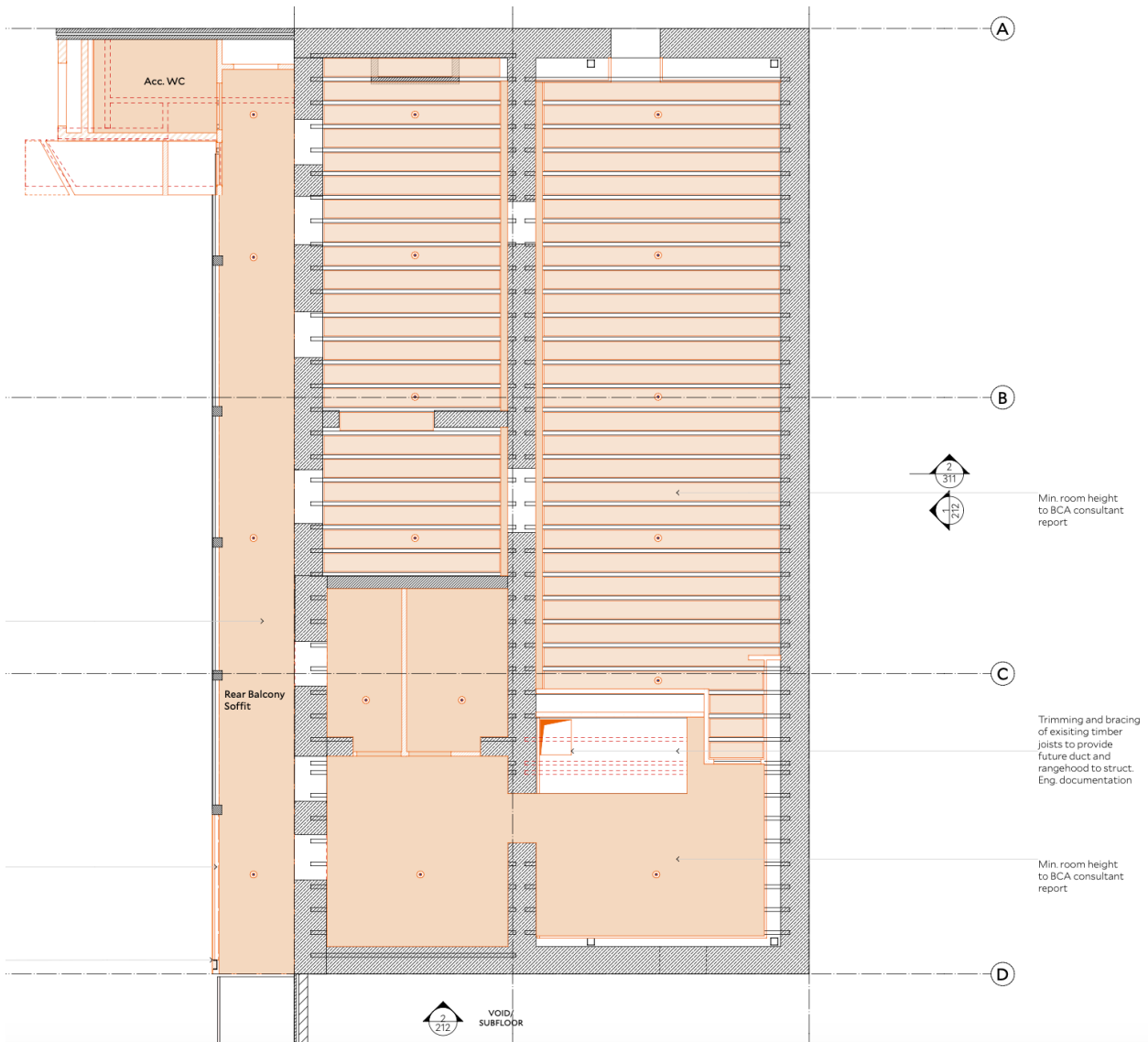
A prior amendment, covering ground floor adjustments was lodged with HNSW September 2023, and withdrawn early 2024. This was because conflicting access/fire advice was being received. As heritage consultant, the author fought hard against an access solution that requires raising the floor level of three principal ground floor rooms and argued that some other solution could be found. Nevertheless, raising the floor in the front three rooms is actually the solution with the least intervention - the step up through the doorway is followed by a further step up, with a simple antique brass rail. As all the skirtings in the ground floor rooms have already been taken off the old gyprock wall linings, these can be re-fitted to the new floor level. The single step up at the entry to these rooms allows the whole ground floor to be at one plane inside. Instead of these rooms being filled with intrusive ramps, all the access ramps/rails are all at the rear of the building, connected to the new lift in the new adjacent Donald Horne building.



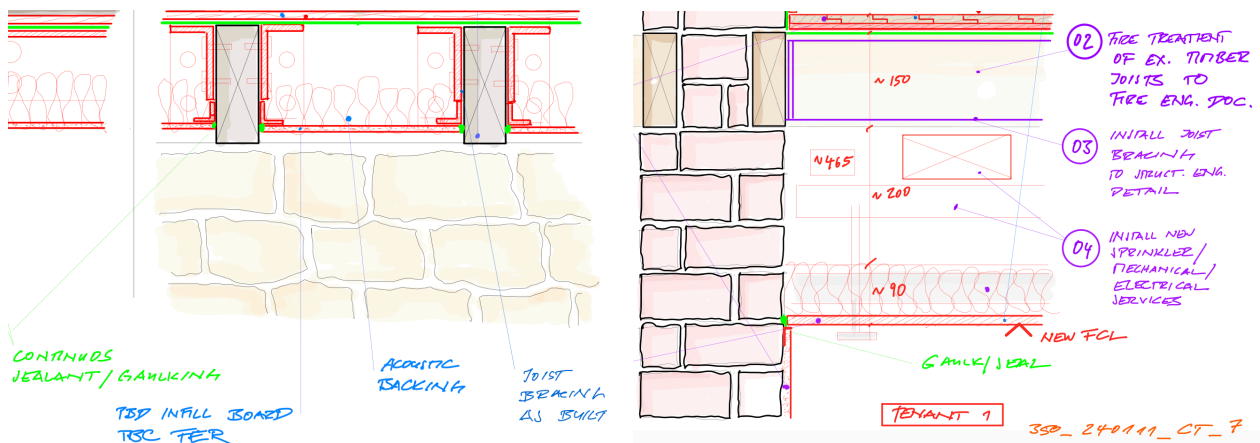
Proposed ground floor plan, showing raised floor to front three rooms, rear verandah ramp from adjacent paving



Detail section showing antique brass handrail to 'step up' inside ground floor doors



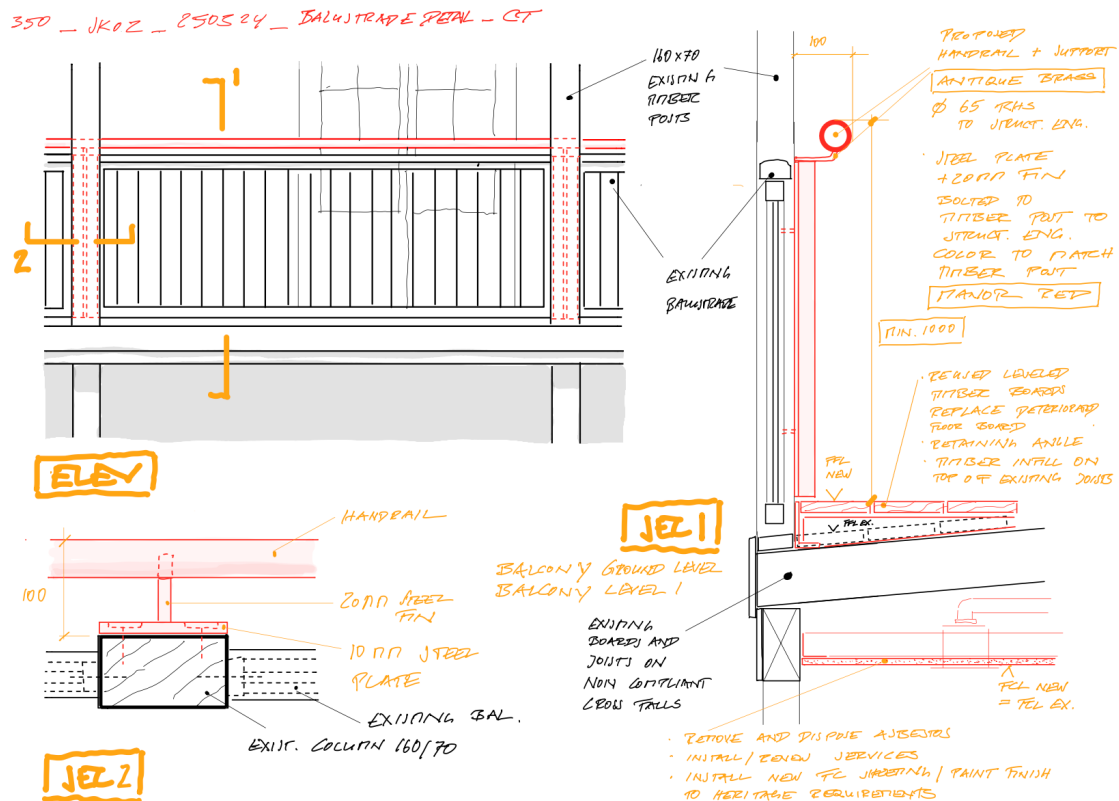
Basement soffit diagram – note NO Basement fitout works are proposed in this amendment, only fire-proofing separation for the ceiling of this unused space so that the ground floor rooms are compartmentalised for fire



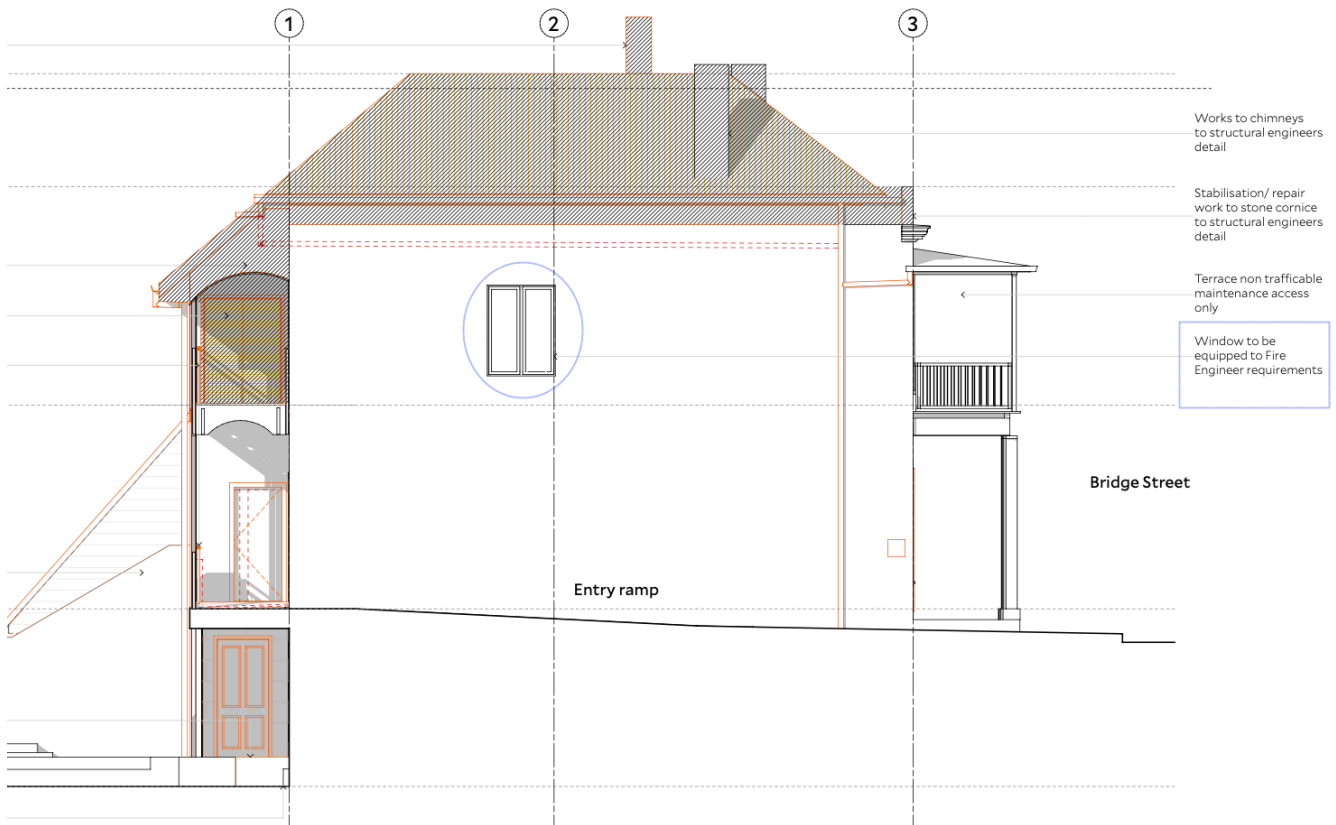
Detailed sections by the architects through the basement ceiling (left) and ground floor ceiling (right) showing fire-proofing measures. The basement ceiling solution allows the original timber joists to remain visible, while sprinklers/insulation and services are concealed between the original joists



Rear elevation, showing infill verandah where original missing (part of original HNSW approval). The rear verandah must be levelled on both ground and first floors (for access requirements) with an additional new handrail behind the existing



Architect's sketch section showing how the existing verandah will be levelled for compliance, with a new rail concealed behind the existing lacework (support mounted to inside of existing posts)



The first floor window on the southern elevation (not original)

On the southern elevation, there is a non-original window at the top of the (relocated) stairs. The current window is a rotted 1980s Stegbar-type window with stapled corners. As the window is within 6m of the adjacent building, it now needs fire protection for compliance. This could be done by any of three options:

- Blocking up the window (unfortunate as it casts beautiful daylight across the top landing)
- a fine metal mesh screen, flush with the outer face of the wall, painted to match the wall (or a shade darker)
- replacement window has a thicker fireproof frame and wired glass for FR compliance

Either the second or third option are better than the first option, for daylight. Normally we would recommend the third option, but in this case feel the architects exemplary work on site thus far indicate the screen option would be neatly/elegantly done.



The first floor window on the southern elevation (not original) from inside

The DCP

The Muswellbrook DCP Section 15 Heritage Conservation states:

15.1.11 Council's Responsibilities

The State Government requires Council to deal with DAs affecting all heritage items listed as being of local significance, including proposals for additions and alterations to buildings. When changes are proposed to items of State Significance Council must refer the application to the NSW Heritage Office and obtain its concurrence.

As the owner of Loxton House, council will submit this proposal as a Minor Amendment application to the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage. The impact of these works are outlined in more detail above and below

Conservation Policy

Generally, all proposed restoration/alteration works to Loxton House already (and will continue to) adhere rigorously to the principles of the Burra Charter, and will be proposed to increase and/or preserve the historic integrity of the building. Any new works proposed will be designed so as to make the original fabric more visible, and not in any way diminish the historic integrity of the original building.



Details of the front façade of Loxton House

Statement of Heritage Impact for this proposal

How is the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the item and the surrounding conservation to be minimised?

<i>Works area</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Basement ceiling/WC	<p>Fire solution negotiated that allows original timber beams to remain visible, while soffits between beams are concealed/insulated. Achieves required fire separation while retaining</p> <p><i>Minimal adverse impact</i></p>
Ground floor rooms, new openings, extra partition	<p>Existing opening in brick spine wall to be adjusted as little as it can to make it a compliant width (architraves can be reinstated, matched from spare original material). Additional partition in rear rooms, so less visible. Partitions of main rooms now designed out of works</p> <p><i>No adverse impact</i></p>
Ground floor rooms, raised floor	<p>Allows universal access through all ground floor rooms from rear verandah. The lack of such amenity has massively restricted rental occupancy in the last 12 years, so while this solution affects the relationship of windows/floors, it is the best outcome for the ongoing constant use of the building. The new floor will be able to be removed in the future with no adverse damage to the original fabric</p> <p><i>Minimal adverse impact</i></p>
Ground floor new fire-rated ceiling	<p>The new ceiling replaces a 1980s gyprock ceiling and allows fire separation/services to be concealed. No reinstatement of cornices/roses (as these have been absent since at least the early 1980s, type unknown)</p> <p><i>No adverse impact</i></p>
Rear verandah works (flat floor, extra balcony rail, asbestos removed from soffits, rehung doors)	<p>These works enable universal access throughout the ground/first floors. The changes are discreet, mostly hidden behind the existing posts/lacework, so are not visible from the rear courtyard</p> <p><i>Minimal adverse impact</i></p>
Rear stair/WC amendment for access compliance	<p>These works are largely unseen changes to a rear/north 1980s addition</p> <p><i>No adverse impact</i></p>
Southern first floor window fire treatment	<p>A mesh screen or wired window will not reduce the value of this non-original opening</p> <p><i>Minimal adverse impact</i></p>

**How does the proposed development affect views to and from the item and the surrounding conservation area?
What has been done to minimise negative effects?**

<i>Works area</i>	<i>Impact</i>
Basement ceiling/WC	Not visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>
Ground floor rooms, new openings, extra partition	Not visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>
Ground floor rooms, raised floor	Not visible externally, unless someone passes by and notices a person inside seems 170mm higher due to raised floor <i>No adverse impact</i>
Ground floor new fire-rated ceiling	Not visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>
Rear verandah works (flat floor, extra balcony rail, asbestos removed from soffits, rehung doors)	Barely visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>
Rear stair/WC amendment for access compliance	Not visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>
Southern first floor window fire treatment	Barely visible externally <i>No adverse impact</i>

Is the new development sympathetic to the conservation area & the heritage item? In what way (e.g. form, siting, proportions, design)?

Works area	Impact
Basement ceiling/WC	Sympathetic negotiated solution, as it allows original beams to be seen/understood, and services/insulation concealed by soffit linings <i>Sympathetic</i>
Ground floor rooms, new openings, extra partition	Once original/re-used architraves fitted around new/adjusted openings, the changes will not be noticed. They allow access compliance <i>Sympathetic, and no adverse impact</i>
Ground floor rooms, raised floor	All options were reviewed, this solution is the most deft in allowing universal access to all floor rooms, which allows them to be let/occupied consistently <i>Sympathetic, in that all other options are much more intrusive</i>
Ground floor new fire-rated ceiling	Not visible externally, replaces another prior 1980s gyprock ceiling <i>No less sympathetic than prior ceiling</i>
Rear verandah works (flat floor, extra balcony rail, asbestos removed from soffits, rehung doors)	Discreet solution allows new level floor and new rail to be concealed behind existing lacework <i>Sympathetic</i>
Rear stair/WC amendment for access compliance	Not visible externally, replacing tired facilities and uneven stair <i>Sympathetic</i>
Southern first floor window fire treatment	Not noticeable externally, replaces another prior 1980s window <i>No less sympathetic than prior window</i>

Will the public still be able to view and appreciate the conservation area and the listed heritage item's significance?

The public will appreciate the heritage building/area more when these ground floor spaces are fitted out, and fire/access upgrades completed

No adverse impact, proposal sympathetic overall

How will the conservation area and the listed heritage item benefit from this development?

The proposed works to these ground floor areas will make the spaces occupiable and fully upgraded to current BCA/access/fire compliance. The completion/use of these spaces is beneficial to both Loxton House and the streetscape

Improved outcome with new tenants in a previously under-used set of ground floor rooms

Is the development sited on any known or potentially significant archaeological deposits? If so, have alternative solutions been considered? Why were they rejected?

Not applicable

Summary/Conclusion

This application is for a very minor Minor Amendment to a very large project. With the completion of the MTEC2 part of the project, and with the structural/earthquake stabilisation of Loxton House now complete, the client (Muswellbrook City Council) tenaciously continues to restore Loxton House and make it useful to the city it sits in.

The ground floor rooms of Loxton House have been underused for many decades. These access/fire upgrade works will allow these rooms to be used for many decades going forwards. Tenants are increasingly wishing to be near the chic new completed MTEC2 building and can now understand the value of the heritage buildings that sit within the curtilage of this project as a whole.

The architects have minimised the interventions as much as possible, to ensure the best heritage outcome for the building, while also allowing the ground floor rooms to be safely occupied. Alternatives have been examined and debated (relentlessly), and the scope of the interventions have been minimised substantially.

In conclusion, these modest minimal proposals to the ground floor rooms and adjacent rear verandahs in Loxton House will bring the building up to modern use, while also ensuring the building's longevity (by occupation and activation). The constant use of these ground floor rooms will be a positive outcome for both Loxton House and for the streetscape.

Genevieve Lilley

B Arch (Hons) AIA NSW# 7494 Tas #CC611

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Loxton House (foreground) with the new Donald Horne Building (centre) and historic Weidmann Cottage (left). The three buildings, with other adjacent civic buildings (original MTEC, Library, halls etc) form and increasingly strong civic centre to Muswellbrook (photo: Richard Glover)