

Proposed Rezoning Munday Street Houses, Warwick Farm Additional Heritage Considerations

The following briefing notes have been prepared at the request of Liverpool Council Planning and Heritage Officers, following their review of the original Statement of Heritage Impact and a site inspection. This additional discussion has been prepared against the original Statement of Heritage Impact of 6 March 2010.

Comparative Assessment of the Munday Street Houses

The Munday Street houses were designed by Robertson and Marks Architects, as illustrated in the architectural plans contained in the original Statement of Heritage Impact.

Additional research into the comparative significance of the houses has revealed that other houses of the same design were erected within Warwick Farm Racecourse and Royal Randwick Racecourse. They supplemented a small number of existing houses that provided staff accommodation at each of the racecourses.

The house at the far south eastern extremity of the Warwick Farm Racecourse was erected as a Ranger's House. It was designed by Robertson and Marks, with the drawing dated March 1948, just a few months before the drawings for the Munday Street houses were prepared. It exhibited some of the two bedroom planning characteristics of the "T" shaped layout of the Type A model erected at Munday Street, and has the distinctive tapered chimney that was a marker of all the houses. The original two bedroom house was extended in 1955 by the addition of two additional bedrooms and the conversion of one of the original bedrooms to a Dining Room. This house remains within the Warwick Farm Racecourse, as do two other staff houses.

Two similar houses were erected at Randwick Racecourse, most probably in the late 1940s. They demonstrate the same distinctive features of the Munday Street and Warwick Farm housing, with the tapered chimney, gable end walls and white painted external face brickwork. They were identified in the Royal Randwick Racecourse draft CMP, 2006, prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, although original drawings were not included. These houses are located near the High Street frontage of the Racecourse and provided additional staff housing. They remain in current use as staff houses, due to the daily proximity of horses, and are accessed by an internal roadway.

This comparative assessment has indicated that while the Munday Street houses are not unique, the larger number of buildings than elsewhere on AJC properties is an indication that they were developed specifically for staff accommodation. It is apparent that the AJC commissioned Robertson and Marks to develop a series of standard housing and then erected them according to contemporary requirements.

Role of the Munday Street Houses within AJC Warwick Farm

The eight houses at the Munday Street site were erected by the AJC in 1948-49, specifically as staff housing. They apparently continued in that role until the late 1980s. Since that time, changes in the operational methodology of Warwick Farm Racecourse have made the staff housing redundant and they have been rented on the private market to external tenants since that time.

It is clear therefore that the Munday Street houses, while of architectural interest as a small group of purpose built houses, have made no functional contribution to the overall operational and heritage significance of the Warwick Farm Racecourse for in excess of 20 years.

The remainder of the Munday Street property has been vacant and unused since it was purchased by the AJC in the 1920s. It has never been a contributor to the heritage significance of Warwick Farm Racecourse.

Alternative Development Opportunities for Munday Street Housing

A series of alternative development scenarios for the Munday Street houses property was examined during the preparation of the Statement of Heritage Impact. These are summarised below and are supported by the additional information that accompanies this statement.

Additional stabling

Warwick Farm currently has some 800 to 900 horses in work, the majority of which are accommodated in stables either within the racecourse or in the precinct on the opposite side of Governor Macquarie Drive. Of these horses, some 300 are housed in AJC owned stables, the remainder by a series of large and small privately owned organisations. The AJC regards the current number of horses stabled and worked at Warwick Farm as above the 700 to 800 that they would prefer with the current exercising and training facilities.

The site at Munday Street, including both the area containing the houses and the adjacent vacant land cannot support additional stabling for the following reasons:

- There is insufficient demand for additional stables
- Even if additional stables were built, the racecourse facilities cannot physically sustain the wear and tear of any more horses so no license to use these facilities would be issued and the stables would be useless.
- It is relatively more remote from the underpass to the racecourse that is used daily by the hundreds of horses accommodated on the southern side of Governor Macquarie Drive.
- Munday Street carries significant volumes of traffic to the nearby Warwick Farm Railway Station and the large industrial areas behind the existing stabling areas. This would prevent the safe and peaceful movement of horses to and from their training facilities.
- Noise from the heavy traffic on the surrounding roads would be a major risk to the welfare of the horses. It would require substantial investment in acoustic barriers.

Upgrading for contemporary Warwick Farm associated housing

The existing houses could be upgraded to provide staff housing for the AJC and associated equine training. This would require substantial investment in provision of upgraded services, new sewer connections, internal fittings and improved rainwater disposal systems.

Feasibility analyses undertaken by the AJC indicate that the costs of this work are far in excess of the small increase in weekly rental that could be generated. The houses are not required for AJC staff, and have not been used for this purpose since the late 1980s. They would remain on the private rental market, contributing nothing to the overall heritage significance of the Warwick Farm Racecourse.

Upgrading and sale for contemporary private housing

Upgrading for sale in the private market would require a similar level of investment in addition to the costs of individual subdivision and connection to services. The houses would not be attractive in the market place as they remain within the 1:100 year flood zone.

Sale to individual owners would place the architectural unity of the houses at risk. They are all small but are sitting on large blocks of land. In a similar manner to the 1940s staff house on the main racecourse the eight Munday Street houses would face pressures for new additions, alterations and progressive upgrading. While these actions may be managed through a potential site specific DCP to control their unity, ultimately the architectural consistency of the group would be placed under severe pressure for change.

Sale of the houses to private owners would further weaken any remaining links with the AJC and the overall heritage significance of Warwick Farm Racecourse.

Additional housing between the existing houses

The eight houses are relatively well spaced and there is some potential for the erection of new houses between the existing. This option would only be initiated if the AJC sold the entire group to a private developer who then erected the additional houses, subdivided the lots and sold them on the private market. The rental return for private housing would not justify the investment. The new houses would need to be built at the same RLs as the current houses in order to minimise unnecessary visual disruption of the unity of the group. Flood liability would be a major impediment, given the 1 in 100 year flood (about RL 8.3m AHD) would require a habitable floor level of 0.8m to 1.0m above the existing ground levels of about RL 8.0m AHD.

For the same reasons as above, this option will contribute nothing to the overall heritage significance of Warwick Farm Racecourse.

Medium density housing (see accompanying information)

In order for medium density housing to be erected on the Munday Street site, the existing houses would need to be demolished. The new housing would be set higher to avoid the flood liability. This option is potentially attractive to residential developers given the proximity of Warwick Farm Railway Station.

Demolishing the eight houses for new medium density development would have the same effect on the significance of the conservation area that defines the houses as any other redevelopment proposal.

High density housing

This option is highly unlikely to gain support from Council as it would break the concentration of such developments out of the well established main grid of Central Liverpool.

Demolishing the eight houses for new high density development would have the same effect on the significance of the conservation area that defines the houses as any other redevelopment proposal.

Light Industrial Development (see accompanying information)

In order for light industrial development to be erected on the Munday Street site, the existing houses would need to be demolished. The new development would be set higher to avoid the flood liability. This option is potentially attractive to industrial developers given the proximity of arterial and regional roads along with Warwick Farm Station.

Retail Development

This option has already been discussed in the previous submissions. It provides the highest and best financial outcome for the AJC that will ultimately support the extensive upgrading of the facilities that directly support and sustain the heritage significance and core values of Warwick Farm Racecourse.

Partial retention and adjoining redevelopment

This option is not preferred as it reduces the unity of the eight houses for no particular gain in heritage terms.

Relevant Contributions to Operational Significance

A review of the other land held by the AJC in the Warwick Farm locality indicated the following contributions to the overall heritage significance of the place as a major centre of horse racing and the equine industry.

- Despite periodically accommodating alternative or additional uses, the main Racecourse property, which is heritage listed, has been the focus of horse racing in Warwick Farm since 1880. It provides the underlying support for the overall significance of the precinct as a major equine centre within the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- The south eastern area formerly used as the Leger area has not been actively used on race days for some 30 years, due primarily to the general change in the scale of race day operations and the crowd mix. It is used for car parking on race days and a handful of non-race day events such as Vietnamese New Year Festivals. As a result the Leger Stand has been disused for race related functions for several decades and now accommodates ground maintenance staff.
- The main race day focus now centres on the more recent grandstand and associated infrastructure. The nearby older grandstand provides some accommodation for race day staff and jockeys, but is no longer used as a grandstand. Its condition and integrity are superior to the more remote Leger Stand and the AJC is exploring ways to adaptively re-use it in the future..
- The area near the intersection of Governor Macquarie Drive and the Hume Highway currently accommodates some 130 horses and is operated by Patinack Farm, the second largest owner of thoroughbred horses in Australia.
- The land bounded by Stroud Avenue and Hope Street now accommodates some 180 horses in stables owned by AJC.
- The land to the south of the AJC Stables is the Crown Lodge complex, owned by Darley, the largest owner of thoroughbred horses in the world and accommodates some 150 horses.
- Within the overall Warwick Farm precinct there are typically some 800 to 900 horses in work. This number of horses supports a huge working population of some 400 to 500 handlers, with equine related services such as vets, farriers, equine dentists, equine health professionals, and feed merchants. The combination provides an important contribution to the Liverpool economy and a significant contribution to State revenues.

Long Term Development Opportunities for AJC Warwick Farm

Additional medium to long term development opportunities being examined for Warwick Farm include:

- Coopers Paddock, at the south east corner of the overall precinct has been used as horse trail exercise facility for many years. It has some 2 km of horse trails. This area is scheduled for rezoning and sale by AJC to fund other developments at the main racetrack. The AJC is investigating the relocation of the paddock function to the old polo ground at the northern side of the racecourse.
- The former Leger Paddock and Grandstand are under consideration by Inglis to build an equine auction centre, which will then be transferred from their existing centre at Randwick. This development will provide an enormous boost to the equine focus of the precinct, create a number of new employment opportunities and reinforce the overall heritage significance of the Racecourse. Design opportunities are still in preparation for this proposal.
- The AJC land between Shore Street and Hope Street offers the potential for the relocation of a variety of equine uses.

Conclusion

This additional assessment has explored the realities of re-use and redevelopment for the Munday Street houses and indicated that their architectural style of the houses is not unique, having been used by Robertson and Marks for staff cottages at both Warwick Farm and Royal Randwick Racecourses.

The significance of the Munday Street houses remains as outlined in Section 4.2 of the March 2010 Statement of Heritage Impact. While they have some comparative relationships with the cottages at Warwick Farm and Royal Randwick Racecourses, they lost their functional connection with the equine significance of the Racecourse in the mid 1980s.

The need to release the whole of the Munday Street site for new uses and thereby maximise the financial returns to the AJC for re-investment in equine related development within the Racecourse and the associated precinct remains as a valid imperative to permit demolition at the appropriate time.

Yours faithfully
GRAHAM BROOKS AND ASSOCIATES



Graham Brooks
Director
grahambrooks@gbaheritage.com