

Architectural Projects*

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1599 – MIDDLE HARBOUR ROAD LINDFIELD HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREA REVIEW NOVEMBER 2017

MIDDLE HARBOUR ROAD REVIEW METHODOLOGY

In 2010, Architectural Projects surveyed the Ku ring gai South Conservation Areas. Middle Harbour Road was excluded from the Conservation Area listing. In 2015, Architectural Projects revised the survey. Between 2010 and 2015 the definition of contributory buildings was changed in the Ku ring gai DCP to no longer reflect the buildings from an identified key period. This change in definition shifted the assessment from a definable criteria, the date of the building to a subjective concept of contribution.

In re-reviewing the survey of 2010 in 2015 and again in 2017, the street which was borderline in its assessment was examined with a higher level of rigor and in response to councils DCP which does not support garages forward of the building or dominant first floor additions.

The recent report from Council suggests there is an inconsistency in the downgrading of components by Architectural Projects. Between 2010 and 2017, the reasons for a revision were related to:

- A more rigorous assessment of this borderline street being considered for listing
- Non-compliance of many of the alterations with the DCP
- the location of the garage forward of the building, which conceals views of the house behind
- highly visible first floor additions which alter the character from one storey to two storey
- buildings later than the key period that are bulky two storey buildings
- rendering of the building to remove all detail or infill of balconies.

There are still many borderline examples retained as contributory. If these were removed, the percentage of contributory items would fall even lower.

If the alterations create the dominant character, it is difficult to argue that the site be considered contributory. Rather it is neutral. If the original building is obscured, where additions dominate the original building, it is detracting.

Of the 89 buildings surveyed in Middle Harbour Road in 2010, 49 were contributory which represents a low percentage of 55% (see appendix 11 Architectural Projects review July 2017). In the 25 years during which Architectural Projects have prepared Conservation Area Assessments, 70 to 75% is a preferred percentage for listing a Conservation Area. A recent inspection of Hercules Street, Chatswood, has confirmed the justification for their listing. 70 to 75% was the basis for reviewing the Conservation Area in Willoughby Council.

Five years after the 2010 review of Middle Harbour Road Architectural Projects were asked to review their previous listing. Due to changes to contributory components and a more rigorous review, the 2015 survey indicated this percentage reduced to 41%.

PMA REVIEW

The 2015 review by PMA originally identified an area including approximately 208 houses of which approximately 106 houses were contributory being 51%. Many of these contributory components were below the threshold for listing as contributory as they had the garage forward of the building, highly visible first floor additions and removed all detail. Combined with a low threshold of 51% of the area having contributory components, the criteria seems to be set to identify Conservation Areas which creates limitation to development rather than Conservation Areas which meet an adequate threshold.

PROPOSED HCA

This assessment of 208 houses has been undermined. As a result of this only 68 houses are proposed as part of the Conservation Area.

35 are contributory components and Heritage Items representing 51% however some of the contributory listings cannot be justified.

The report to council notes one contributory component is to be removed which appears to refer to 9 Valley Road which would adjust the ratio to 34-34 or 50%. With the addition of 5 Valley Road which was left out of Council mapping the percentage remains the same at 51%.

Garages forward of the building or highly visible would normally be assessed as a neutral contribution as in the case of 9 Valley Road. On this basis 38, 46 and 52 Middle Harbour Road should also be excluded for the same reasons 9 Valley Road is excluded.

Of the 35 contributory, there are 4 items noted as contributory which incorporated highly visible garages. One of which is rendered and repaint unsympathetically. Another with verandah infill and painted brick, one has a two storey addition to Trafalgar Avenue which also faces Middle Harbour Road while another has two storey additions and alterations fronting

Trafalgar Avenue that are clearly visible from Middle Harbour Road. These buildings are 55 and 59 Trafalgar Avenue, 9 Short Street, 43 Tyron Road and 52, 46 and 38 Middle Harbour Road, and are listed in part 7 and appendix 10 of Architectural Projects' July 2017 Review.

If these were also excluded it would achieve 28 contributory buildings as components of the 68 properties or 41%.

Council's report notes under 'Recommended changes to the boundary', that "The area to proceed has clusters of contributory buildings, particularly on Middle Harbour Road that appear in continuous rows with few non-contributory intrusions".

3 of the contributory buildings having highly visible garages and additions to the street which question their contributory status. With the modification of 11 neutral items to 17 detracting items as identified in Appendix 9, the area is further degraded.

PEER REVIEWS

2 Peer reviews have been conducted by Stephen Davies from Urbis dated 13 of August of 2017, and by Brian MacDonald Don Fox Planning dated 31.08.2017

The peer reviews confirm the assessment by Architectural Projects and suggest an even more rigorous assessment could apply.

The Urbis report notes

The survey carried out by AP proves that the area has less than 40% of the dwellings that are recognised as 'contributory items' I have not redone the survey graphically however I consider that there are even more dwellings that do not meet the threshold of contributory.

The area is a very mixed one with large numbers of dwellings which have undergone alteration and change. There is little cohesion in typology and little cohesion in quality in the area.

In this regard. and having evaluated the recommendations of the Architectural Projects report, the area has lost the inherent qualities that make it a conservation area under the current professional guidelines.

One of the common attributes of ongoing heritage studies is that many more places are placed on potential lists as the surveyors work to increase the numbers. It has been my experience that many of the earlier surveys - or the first to review an area - provide a more accurate picture of the qualities that make up a conservation area.

The Brian McDonald DFP Planning notes

*I find the methodology applied to be sound and thorough. I note that every property in the area has been assessed.
The results of my field work are as follows:*

- 4 Heritage items, (approx. 2%)*
- 80 contributory items, (38%)*
- 43 detracting items, (20.7%).*

The heritage items and contributory items together account for 40% of the properties in the proposed Heritage Conservation Area.

The reason that categories 4 and 5 have been used is that the significant changes to the original buildings and street presentations of these items set a bad precedent. To include them as contributory items would be to send the wrong message, encouraging more changes of this kind that cumulatively erode the character of an area.

CONCLUSION

The assessment process started in 2010. The area was excluded in 2011 from the broad Kuringai South Conservation Area by a Council resolution. It has been revisited in 2015 and 2017. Each time the area does not meet the threshold.

A reduction in area, in an attempt to list a smaller Conservation Area and meet a minimum 50% threshold is inconsistent with the Office of Heritage methodology for defining Conservation Areas.

Even using the questionable criteria stated in the report in a consistent way would achieve approximately 40% as contributory. All these reviews confirm that the area does not reach the threshold for listing and should not be listed as a Conservation Area.

The Architectural Projects report has been reviewed 3 times. It has also been peer reviewed by Urbis and DFP.

In total, 5 reviews of the area by 3 heritage consultants who have undertaken Conservation Areas reviews for over 20 years confirm that the area doesn't reach the threshold for listing.