

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

**SNL Building
Constructions Pty Ltd**

PROPOSED WHITEBRIDGE MIXED USE & RESIDENTIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT



Prepared by:

John Carr Heritage Design
Final Report Rev B
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Cover: *The public footpath crossing of the Fernleigh track at the north east corner of the site.
(Photographs in this report are by John Carr unless otherwise noted.)*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following report comprises a Statement of Heritage Impact (SoHI) for the proposed residential development of vacant land adjacent to the Whitebridge commercial centre and running beside the heritage listed Belmont Railway.

John Carr Heritage Design has been engaged by SNL Building Constructions Pty Ltd to prepare the SoHI to accompany their development application to Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC).

The Statement summarises the development proposal as described on the following drawings prepared by Kim Gerrish Building Design in association with Smith & Tzannes Architecture Urban Planning, dated 18.06.14, Project No. 14_026, Revision A, subject to further revisions being minor changes:

Sheets 012, 200, 201.

The former Belmont Railway (Fernleigh Track) is listed on the LMCC's Local Environmental Plan 2013 as being of Local heritage significance.

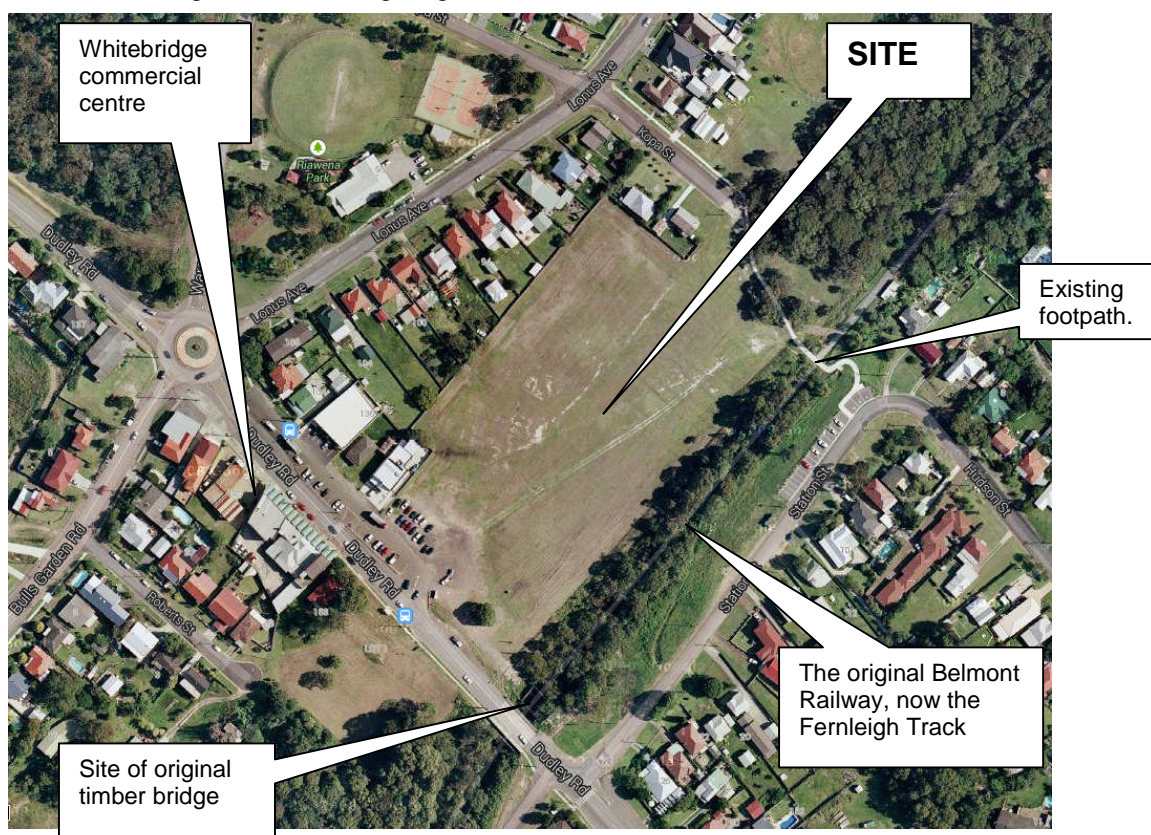


Plate 1: Aerial view of the site (Source Google)



Plate 2: The current Dudley Rd bridge over the Fernleigh Track.



Plate 3: An early view of the bridge from the Newcastle side. (Source LMCC #3123)

2.0 STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

Statement of Heritage Impact for:

A residential development adjacent to an item of heritage significance.

Date:

This Report was completed on 15th August 2014.

Reference:

The site is adjacent to the Belmont Railway, a listed item on the LMCC's LEP 2004 and draft LEP 2013 as an item of Local heritage significance.

Address & Property Description

The site is located at 142-146 Dudley Road & 2-4 Kopa Street, Whitebridge NSW 2290.

The property description is:

- Lots 1, 2 & 3 in DP 436503
- Lots 1, 2 & 3 in DP 349377
- Lot 4 in DP 663765
- Lots 2 & 3 in DP 26039

Prepared by:

John Carr, a Heritage Architect trading as John Carr Heritage Design, compiled this report.

For:

The report has been prepared for SNL Building Constructions Pty Ltd.

Right: In the vicinity of Whitebridge Station 1990, showing the remains of the former railway lines. (Source LMCC #6694)



2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Whitebridge¹

Name Origin: Said to have received this name when the bridge over the Belmont railway line was painted white.

Early Land Grants: Portion 273 (Kahibah Parish) owned by Edward Corfield.

Early Subdivisions: D.P.20241, declared on 21/2/1944 encompassed the corner section of Dudley Road and Kahibah Street.

Early Industries: Burwood Colliery was owned by the Burwood Coal Co. and opened in 1885 at Glenrock. The first shaft at Whitebridge was sunk in 1888. In 1894 the Scottish Australian Mining Co. bought it for 27,000 pounds. The Glenrock entrance was closed and a new line was built for transport. In 1896 Frank Croudace became manager. There were 5 shafts at Whitebridge, working three seams: the Borehole, Victoria Tunnel and Dudley. The workings extended for a km under the sea and as far as Gateshead, Charlestown and Merewether. It employed about 200 men who came by rail or car. A township did not develop around the mine but at the junction of the road and railway.

In 1901 a gas explosion killed three men but otherwise Burwood had a good safety record. In 1932 it was purchased by the B.H.P. and changed from steam to electricity. In almost a century of operation, it was one of the greatest coal producers in Australia.

In January 1979 a fire broke out in the workings and, as the lease was nearly worked out, the mine was closed in March 1979. It re-opened briefly and finally closed in 1982.

Early Transport: The railway to Burwood Colliery. A horse and dray track wound over the ridges to Charlestown. In 1931 a bus service to Dudley commenced and served Whitebridge.

Railway: The railway operated to Dudley Colliery and carried miners. In 1916 it was extended to Belmont and a regular passenger service operated.

First Post Office: Opened on 19 September 1927.

First School: Whitebridge Infants School opened from January 1944 until July 1962. Whitebridge High School opened in January 1963.

Water Supply: 1928.

Sewerage: 1959.



Plate 4: The former timber bridge on Dudley Rd in 1950. The missing members were damaged by termites. (Source LMCC #6646)



Plate 5: The eastern concrete headwall of the now demolished original timber bridge over the Fernleigh Track.

2.2 THE FERNLEIGH TRACK

The Fernleigh Track is a walking and cycling track constructed over the permanent way of the former Belmont railway² which ran from Newcastle to Belmont via Adamstown. Various spur lines ran off this railway to service the various mines in the area.

Stations or platforms from Adamstown were:

¹ The following information is taken from Lake Macquarie Past & Present, published by Lake Macquarie City Council, 1985.

² Belmont Railway Line - Wikipedia

- Fernleigh
- Kahibah
- Dudley Junction
- Burwood Platform
- Whitebridge
- Redhead
- Redhead South
- Jewells
- John Darling Platform
- Belmont

An act was passed in 1885 to allow the Redhead Mining Company Ltd to construct a railway six and a quarter miles long to junction with the government railway at Adamstown for the purpose of hauling coal to the Newcastle wharves. Delays were encountered and resolved by 1888 including an approval to extend the line from Redhead to Belmont.

1892 saw the line completed to Burwood No. 3 Colliery and to Redhead by 1893.

The Railway Commissioners agreed to operate a passenger service between Adamstown and Dudley for the convenience of the employees of Burwood and Dudley Collieries in 1897. Two return services a day were run initially on the line.

By 1904 there was an agreement between the Railway Commissioners and the coal companies that the Commissioners would operate the coal trains and the collieries would operate the passenger trains. By 1910, the collieries requested the Railway Commissioners to take over the passenger trains as the services were increasing to satisfy demand.

In 1915 and 1916 the railway was extended to Belmont and six return passenger trains a day ran from Newcastle to Belmont. The railway between Dudley Junction and Dudley ceased to operate in 1931 and the lines were removed in 1941.

During the 1960's passenger patronage declined and subsequently the services were reduced until the cessation of passenger services on 8th April 1971. Following the closure of the Lambton Colliery at Redhead in 1991, the Belmont branch was closed from 19th December 1991 (coinciding with a number of branch line closures under a state government policy of the day, such as the Fassifern to Toronto branch line).



Plate 6: The steam locomotive 3079 stands at Belmont Station with a passenger train on 4 August 1954. (Source - Wikipedia)



Plate 7: The Lambton Colliery mine with Redhead Township in the background and the railway link in the foreground. (Source Lambton by the Sea – photo BHP Collieries)

The Fernleigh Track³ construction was opened in 2003 from Adamstown to Kahibah. In 2004 the section from Dudley Junction to Whitebridge Station was completed and in 2005 Kahibah to Whitebridge was opened. In 2009 the section from Whitebridge to Redhead Station was completed and in 2010 Redhead Station to Jewells was completed. 2011 saw the present sections of the Fernleigh Track works fully completed and opened for use. Future works are being planned to extend the track from Belmont to Swansea.

³ The Fernleigh Track - Wikipedia



Plate 8: A corrugated iron clad shed beside the former railway track, possibly a relic from the station buildings.



Plate 9: The former Whitebridge Railway Station building in 1974. (Source LMCC #3101)

Statement of Heritage Significance:

SIGNIFICANCE - 1993: The Belmont Railway was vital for the transport of coal to Newcastle from some of the richest mines in Lake Macquarie.

It was used for coal haulage for ninety nine years.

The railway provided a much needed passenger service for many towns and villages on the east side of the Lake, which would otherwise have had no public transport.

The passenger service lasted for about 70 years and influenced the growth of Whitebridge, Dudley, Redhead and Belmont before private cars became common. The railway has excellent potential for re-use as a light rail route or as a cycleway & pedestrian path, & as part of a network of industrial heritage trails around Lake Macquarie.

LEVEL of SIGNIFICANCE - 1993: Regional Significance - high

Local Significance - very high

Group Significance - very high

LEVEL of SIGNIFICANCE - 2008: Add State Significance - high

Date significance updated: 28 May 08

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2.3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The Existing Site:

The existing site is bounded by Dudley Road to the west, Kopa Street to the east, with private housing and shops to the north and the Fernleigh Track corridor to the south. The site appears to have remained undeveloped for a number of decades despite the growth of Whitebridge accelerating in the mid twentieth century with the influx of public and private housing developments after WW2.

Background - the Previous Development Application:

The previous development was for 87 residential units and 4 commercial units that faced Dudley Road adjacent to the existing commercial area. The residential units were planned in rows across the site and ranged from two storey on the higher areas of the site to three storeys on the lower areas of the site.

The development had a combination of flat and pitched roofs to vary the visual aspect of the various rows from outside as well as inside the site, which was crisscrossed with open spaces, roads and car parks. Following lengthy negotiations with the community and LMCC the proposed plans were extensively modified to address the concerns raised by the community and LMCC.

The Proposed Development:

The proposed development application is seeking consent for a mixed use and residential development, including subdivision of land at 142-146 Dudley road and 2-4 Kopa Street, Whitebridge ("the Site").

⁴ Belmont Railway listing sheet NSW Environment & Heritage

The development will include the following:

- The demolition of 2 dwelling houses and associated outbuildings on Kopa Street;
- Construction of 20 x 2-3 storey dwellings as small lot housing;
- Construction of 6 x 3-4 storey residential flat buildings containing 49 dwellings;
- Construction of a 4-5 storey mixed use development containing 22 dwellings and 325 m2 of commercial space;
- Construction and dedication of public roads, parking and stormwater management facilities;
- Landscaping and revegetation; and
- Associated earthworks, roads, access, infrastructure and utility services.



Plate 10: Aerial perspective of the proposed development looking southwest. (Source SNL Building)



Plate 11: Site plan of the proposed development (Source SNL Building)

Landscaping:

The twenty metre conservation zone corridor adjacent to the Fernleigh Track is to contain a public path, vegetated swale, and native landscaping. Plantings will complement existing trees along the Fernleigh Track corridor. It will contain understorey planting and non-contiguous canopy that provides screening and conservation while mitigating bushfire impacts. Further screening is provided by street trees on the adjacent public road



Plate 12: A section from the Architectural Plans showing the former Belmont Railway corridor on the left and the ecological zone at Kopa Street. (Source SNL Building)

Heritage Benefits of the Revised Proposal:

The revised proposal reduces the extent of three storey development near the boundary of the ecological corridor thereby reducing the visual impact of the development on the Fernleigh Track.

The 4 units located toward the north east corner of the site at the end of Kopa Street are limited to two storeys in height and step down the site, again minimising visual impact and presenting a filtered view to the Fernleigh Track in a similar manner to existing development opposite the site in Station Street. The overall benefit of this scheme over the previous proposal is reduced visual impact due to reduced heights of the development near the Fernleigh Track.

2.4 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

The proposed mixed use community title development between Dudley Road and Kopa Street, Whitebridge is assessed as follows:

- **How is the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the Fernleigh Track to be minimised:**

The proposed development is a continuation of the residential growth of Whitebridge that has been progressing since the 1940's. The Fernleigh Track has gradually had housing developments appearing beside or near the corridor since that period, however the corridor itself has retained a substantial amount of native trees and bushes to provide a filtered view of the surrounding developments over time. This is evident on Station Street, Whitebridge where development of housing on the other side of the street has little or no buffer of natural vegetation screening development from the heritage item. Similarly, the redevelopment of the Burwood No. 3 Shaft site has housing adjoining the corridor with no buffer or screening.

The cutting provided by the natural landform beside the subject site effectively screens a significant portion of the development from the Track. Additionally, a twenty metre wide ecological corridor is maintained for additional plantings to further screen the development from visually impacting on the portion of the Track near the north eastern area of the site near Kopa Street.

- **How does the proposed development affect views to and from the heritage item? What has been done to minimise negative affects:**

The primary views to the Fernleigh Track are from Kopa Street and this view is to be maintained by the proposed siting of the unit blocks on the Kopa Street boundary. The proposed relocated access path as designed by LMCC will ensure continued access to the Track.

Views from the Track are anticipated to stay substantially the same, with the landscaped ecological corridor planted out with native trees and bushes.

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

The site is not known to have any potential archaeological deposits that would provide any additional information not already known about the Belmont Railway.

- **Is the new development sympathetic to the heritage item? In what way (eg form, siting, proportions, design)?**

The design is sympathetic to the Belmont Railway as it breaks the housing into blocks or rows of terrace style houses with view corridors between the blocks as well as internal roads and parking areas, resembling a compact suburban residential area.

The proportions of the development provide lower housing to the higher areas of the site and taller housing to the low areas of the site, thereby minimising the dominance of any particular group of buildings due to a higher site advantage.

The provision of a landscaped buffer zone provides an effective natural screening of the development from the heritage item, to provide a bush landscape continuity to the corridor.

- **Will the public still be able to view and appreciate the former Belmont Railway corridor and associated heritage site's significance?**

The access to the heritage item at Kopa Street will remain unchanged apart from a minor re-alignment of the access path as planned by LMCC.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT:

The proposed mixed use community title development between Dudley Road and Kopa Street, Whitebridge will have minimal affect on the heritage significance of the Belmont Railway as the site is located adjacent to the heritage item, but separated from it by a twenty metre ecological corridor which is to be landscaped by native trees and bushes. The Belmont Railway retains its existing corridor width which is also maintained as a native landscaped reserve as part of the cycle and walkway for the community.

3.0 CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed mixed use and residential development, has assessed as having minimal impact on the heritage significance of the heritage item, formerly the Adamstown to Belmont railway that transported coal and passengers over a 100 year period.

The Belmont Railway has seen changes all along its corridor over the last seven decades as the surrounding lands were re-developed following the changes to coal mining demand in the area, replaced by suburbs of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie as each city grew in population.

This current development follows the same trend that has been set beginning after WW2 as the region boomed in industry, manufacturing and commercial business. The site has laid vacant for at least three or possibly four decades in living memory, waiting to be re-developed.

The inclusion of an ecological zone with native tree and bush plantings will retain the separation between the heritage item and the surrounding developments on either side of the corridor, creating a continuous green corridor for the Belmont Railway and providing filtered screening to the proposed development to an extent that the heritage item will remain dominant in the area.

The heritage significance of the Belmont Railway was for the transportation of coal and passengers between Newcastle and Belmont. This significance has been maintained by adapting the Fernleigh Track for use by pedestrians and bicycle riders and maintaining railway relics along the corridor. This proposed development in no way impacts on that heritage significance of a transportation corridor.

Recommendations:

1. Landscaping and revegetation of the conservation buffer should seek to mitigate visual impacts of the development as viewed from the Belmont Railway corridor.
Reason - effective landscaping will provide a continuation of the existing native trees and bushes found along the length of the corridor as visual screening.

Yours faithfully,



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(End of Report)