

HERITAGE MEMORANDUM

To: Jonathan Goodwill

From: Robyn Conroy

Re: Lawson Clinic - 742-748 Pacific Highway GORDON NSW
APPLICATION AS AMENDED FOLLOWING JRPP MEETING

Date: 18 December 2014

BACKGROUND

Proposal

- Demolition of three houses at 742, 746 and 746A Pacific Highway.
- Consolidation and re-subdivision of lots including the excision of part of the curtilage of the heritage item at 748 Pacific Highway.
- Erection of a 2-3 storey building to be used as a mental health care facility including consulting and in-patient residential accommodation.
- Alterations to the grounds of the heritage item at 748 Pacific Highway as part of the proposed development and continuing to use the existing building on this site for outpatient mental health services by the Lawson Centre.

Status of the application

- Amended plans have been submitted in response to the recommendations of the JRPP (received by Council 27 November 2014).
- The amended plans were accompanied by a letter from NBRSP+Partners that addresses the heritage impacts of the amended proposal.
- This memo focuses on the heritage impacts of the current proposal. See the earlier assessments for information about the heritage values of the items and HCA and heritage provisions in the LEP etc.

Summary of amendments as they relate to heritage issues

- The height of the building at the northern end (in the vicinity of the heritage items at 748 Pacific Highway and the St John's Church Group) has been reduced from 3 to 2 storeys
- The setback of the northern end of the building from the boundary to the St John's Church group has been increased slightly (by c500mm-1000mm)
- Details of landscaping in this area have been amended
- The façade detailing and finishes have been amended
- Further information/clarification has been provided about the design of the driveway between 744 and 748 Pacific Highway

DEGREE TO WHICH THE AMENDED PROPOSAL WILL ADDRESS PREVIOUSLY IDENTIFIED HERITAGE CONCERNS

Previous heritage assessments revealed that the proposed development will have significant heritage impacts on both the item at 748 Pacific Highway (which is part of the development site) and the adjoining St Johns Church Group. The Church group includes two heritage items; the church and its site (including the hall and op-shop) and the adjacent cemetery. The two parcels read as a cohesive and consistent cultural landscape with shared curtilage and visual setting.

Impacts on the heritage values of St Johns Church and Cemetery and the St Johns Avenue HCA, including the significant visual curtilage and setting of the Church group

The impacts of the earlier proposal on the Church and Cemetery were largely due to the scale, bulk and siting of the proposed building and the lack of space to support landscaping that would be capable of screening these impacts on the setting of the heritage items and the St Johns Avenue HCA.

The most recent amendment has reduced the height of the northern end of the building from 3 storeys to 2. The reduced height is lower than the ridge of the adjacent buildings in the church grounds (the hall and op-shop) and will read as being of a sympathetic scale in context of views to, from and over the setting of the church and cemetery. Its commercial form is now better screened by the op-shop (and will be readily able to continue to be screened should the op-shop ever be replaced).

The setback from the boundary with St Johns is narrow but has been increased slightly in the amended proposal. This will help to improve sight-lines from the church and cemetery as well as allowing slightly more open space on the site for outdoor use by patients. Further setback of the footprint towards the south of the site would allow even better planting, but the lower height and the landscaping of the setback area will do much to ameliorate the impacts of the proposed development on the aesthetic and historic values of the setting of St Johns and the Cemetery.

Some of the planting proposed in this setback area will be visible above the fence from within the Church group and will provide a degree of softening and depth to the relationship between the two buildings.

It is noted that setting the building footprint even further to the south (as requested by Council at the JRPP meeting) would allow even more landscaped area along the environmentally favourable northern elevation; and extending the footprint would potentially allow the whole of the building to be reduced to 2 storeys in order to further reduce impacts on the adjoining residence/s.

The design and detailing of the northern façade does not appear to be as carefully resolved as the version considered by the JRPP, but due to the reduced height, increased setback and planting its impact on the setting of the Church group and HCA will be acceptable.

Impacts on the heritage significance of the heritage item at 748 Pacific Highway

The amended proposal will have a more acceptable impact on the setting of the heritage item at 748 Pacific Highway than the previous proposal. The reduction in building height and

increase in the setback from the northern boundary will help to ensure that the new building will be a visually recessive element in views down the pathway on the northern side of the historic building. It will also no longer be intrusive in views over the roof of the item from the Highway.

The alignment of the proposed re-subdivision has not altered in the current proposal although the plans now make clear that the proposed excavation and eastern wall of the new building will sit wholly within the new lot.

The northernmost part of the new building will still be visible in the background of views over the heritage item from the Highway (along the pathway along the northern and the driveway on the southern boundary) but the vegetation and setbacks will help to create an appropriate sense of spatial separation. The lower building height will also minimise the potential for the new development to be visible in the background of the roofscape of 748.

The plans suggest that the fence between 748 and the shared driveway will be removed and new planting along the edge of the driveway. This will not significantly affect the heritage significance of the Item.

No information was found about the proposed location of required infrastructure such as hydrant booster pump or electricity infrastructure. This should be located on the side of the driveway away from the heritage item; and preferably at the southern driveway (see also below re 744 Pacific Highway).

Part of the eastern façade in the vicinity of the heritage item is now confirmed as a supporting trellis for a vertical garden and trellis-covered walkway, rather than a green wall. A well-planted trellis and arbour will still help to soften the façade of the building when viewed from the carpark (which is an unsympathetic existing element within the heritage item). A proper green wall design would also be acceptable.

The development as amended will have an acceptable impact on the heritage significance of 748 Pacific Highway.

Impacts relating to the potential inclusion of the property 744 Pacific Highway within the development site

It is understood that an offer has recently been made by the applicant to purchase the adjoining property at 744 Pacific Highway. No information has been provided about how this purchase will alter the project. If the existing dwelling is retained, either as a residence or as part of the health care facility, no new heritage issues are likely to arise. If the site is to be redeveloped as part of the project, or in the future, a further heritage assessment will be required. A positive outcome could arise if the existing carpark behind 748 Pacific Highway could be relocated to the rear of 744 and a garden reinstated behind the heritage item.

In any case, it is recommended that if 744 is included in the development that street frontage infrastructure such as identifying signage, fire hydrant boosters and electricity substations (if required) should be located within this property and not in the curtilage of the heritage item.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The evolution of this application has included significant amendments to the scale and form of the proposed development that have addressed the heritage issues raised in my earlier comments.

The development as now proposed will have an acceptable level of impact on the heritage significance of the items 748 Pacific Highway and the St Johns Church group (which includes the Church buildings, grounds and the Cemetery) and on the St Johns Avenue HCA. Impacts on the other heritage items in the vicinity, including the SHR listed Tulkiyan, 738 Pacific Highway (on the corner of Bushlands Avenue) and Oberon at 2 St Johns Avenue will be negligible.

The development as amended will now satisfy the heritage provisions of the LEP and DCP.

It is recommended that:

1. Any consent be conditioned to require identification signage for the facility to be well-designed and not be internally illuminated.
2. It is also recommended that any hydrant booster and/or substation infrastructure be sited away from 748 Pacific Highway.
3. The driveway along the southern boundary of 748 Pacific Highway should be finished in dark asphalt to minimise its aesthetic impact on the setting of the heritage item.
4. If the property at 744 is included within the development site it is recommended that the sign be placed on that part of the site rather than within the curtilage of the heritage item at 748.

Robyn Conroy

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