

Heritage Referral (2). DA 2022/00130

4 Rawson Street /15 Watson Street, Bellingen.

1. Background

Referral advice dated January 2023 reviewed the proposal with regard to the character of the local area having regard to the established site context, heritage items, and the adjoining Heritage Conservation Area and provided several recommendations.

This referral reviews the additional information in a letter dated 31 January 2023 from Geolink to Bellingen Shire Council, and an accompanying SOHI prepared by Tim Hill, Heritage Management and Planning Pty Ltd on behalf of the applicant Royal Freemasons Benevolent Institute (RFBI). This advice should be read in conjunction with the first referral

2. Discussion of Issues raised

2.1 Roof form and height

The SOHI argues that the proposed building are consistent with the roof form and height of buildings in St Marys Primary School, and commercial buildings in Hyde Street.

Comment

Neither the St Mary's school buildings or the commercial precinct in Hyde Street are located within the visual context of the subject site. The church and educational buildings are within an ecclesiastical precinct where larger buildings are typically set in generous grounds with large setbacks. Whilst they have height from steep roof pitches, none of these buildings are three storey. The commercial buildings are in an entirely different non-residential precinct and also of one and two storeys.

The proposed three storey building is considered to be inconsistent with the character of this residential locality, and its bulk and scale far exceed what would normally be permitted under normal planning requirements as illustrated by the building height plane envelope drawings.

Other than the recently approved two storey Bellorana development Stage 1 on the adjoining site, the surrounding streetscape is characterised by predominantly low density single storey dwellings. A two storey building would acceptably fit within the BHP and is considered reasonable on this site.

2.2 Materials and exterior palette

A proposed three-storey, white brick building will sit in contrast with the predominantly lightweight, timber clad residential buildings in the vicinity of the site, and earthy toned brick buildings, hence the suggestion for incorporation of lightweight materials into the design and a warmer colour palette which reflects the fire-resistant character of the locality. There are numerous materials available such as fire resistant cement boards in modern profiles which would assist in breaking up the facades and 'weight' of the building, at least to address the two street frontages.

2.3 Design

The SOHI has made various recommendations and a revised design concept has been submitted which reflects these points.

- *replacement of the gable roof form with a hip and ridge form equivalent to Stage 1 to remove the long ridge and vertical lines extending above the walls (see Figure 15)*
- *articulation of the patios forward to add depth to the front facade of the buildings and provide for decorative gable roofs above each patio which will break up the horizontal line of the facade and gutter (see Figure 15 and Figure 16)*
- *installation of tall and narrow windows on the bedroom walls to break up the rectangular brick wall visible on each side of the apartment blocks (see Figure 15)*
- *planting taller native palm trees that will extend up to the first and second floors to partially obscure the face brick bedroom walls (see Figure 15), and*
- *Use of a darker grey mortar to break up the monotone colour of the 'Chillingham White' face brick walls (Figure 17).*

The amended design reduces some of the bulk of the roof with the hipped ends, and has added more interest to the façade. The overall bulk scale and density of the 3 x three-storey buildings with fairly small setbacks however, remains an issue in conflict with the character of the locality.



2.4 Removal of 2nd floor

The arguments put forward to retain the second floor/ third storey are based more on economic and social grounds, rather than on design or character context. These issues are not considerations for this referral, which is addressing the issue of whether ;

'the design of the residential development is compatible with—
a) the desirable elements of the character of the local area, or
b) for precincts undergoing transition—the desired future character of the precinct.'

2.5 Skillion Roof

It is agreed that a skillion roof form is out of character with the predominant pattern of built form in the local precinct, which has hipped and gabled roofs and a skillion roof form is not considered to be an option for reducing the proposed height of the building.

3. Conclusion.

The economic and social issues of the application are acknowledged, however, in terms of meeting the legal provisions of the SEPP (Housing) 2021 ,the key issue remains of whether

the design of the residential development is compatible with—
a) the desirable elements of the character of the local area, or ,
b) for precincts undergoing transition—the desired future character of the precinct.

with regard to point b), the planning controls for redevelopment in this area anticipate a maximum development illustrated in the BHP, and the proposed building considerably exceeds this.

Whilst the amended plans offer a more appealing façade, the bulk, scale and density of the development is still considered to be out of character with the established character of the locality. A two-storey development would be more appropriate on this site.

It is noted that the site lies within 450m of the main street precinct, and that the applicant has lodged a simultaneous DA 2022/00156 for a two-storey development of seniors housing at 6 Bowra Street, Bellingen, on the site of the former bowling club. 6 Bowra St. This large site lies approx. 550m distance from the main street and has a backdrop of hillside and vegetation, which could potentially accommodate a three-storey development with less impact.

Given that both proposals are currently being considered, it is suggested that discussions are held to consider options for relocation of a three storey development to the rear of the Bowra Street site and reduce the Rawson Street development to a more compatible bulk and scale.

14/02/23

CLARENCE HERITAGE

Deborah Wray B.A Hons, M.P.I.A. M. ICOMOS

clarenceheritage@hotmail.com

PO Box 1759, GRAFTON, NSW 2460 | M: 0427 425558 | P 0266 444 000