

6 March 2020

The General Manager  
Bayside Council  
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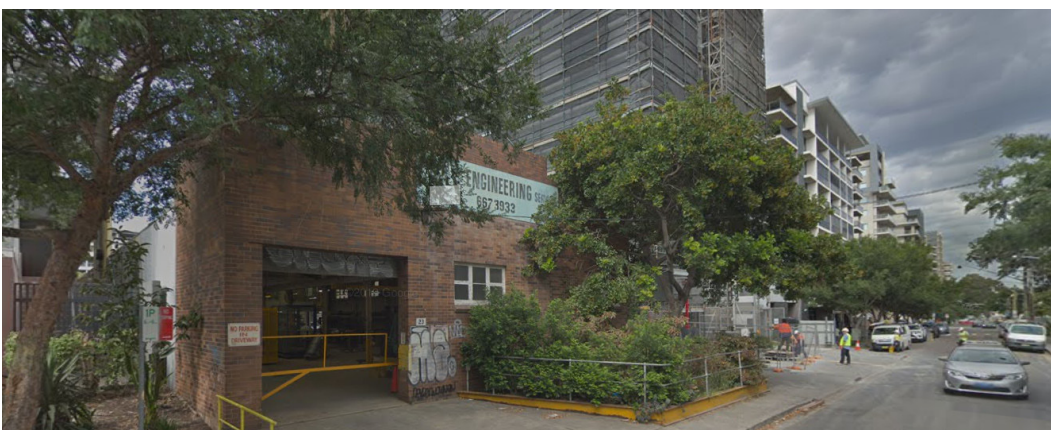
Dear Sir/Madam

## **DESIGN REVIEW - FACADE RETENTION PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT - DA2019/359 23 CHURCH AVENUE & 16-18 JOHN STREET, MASCOT**

We have been requested by the applicant to review the proposed retention of the existing masonry facade to the Church Avenue frontage. We have reviewed the applicable drawings as well as the following documents:

- Bayside Design Review Panel report, dated 20 June 2019
- Bayside Design Review Panel report, dated 12 December 2019
- Bayside Council correspondence, dated 17 February 2020

Our understanding is that the applicant proposes to retain the Church Avenue brickwork facade, not only because of its relationship to the history of the family business, but to provide a tangible memory of the Mascot area as it once was, which included an industrial component. The applicant also proposes a pedestrian through-site link to John Street, with associated retail outlets, as a public benefit and amenity for the area.



**Figure 1**

Image of the existing facade proposed to be retained. Note the line of mature trees that line the avenue

Source: *Nearmap*

It is our understanding that both the Council and Design Review Panel (DRP) have stated that they do not support the retention of the masonry facade, primarily on the grounds that it 'intrudes into the new street alignment'. However, it is our contention that the proposal of facade retention, in conjunction with a through-site link, should not be regarded as a constraint but rather as an opportunity for the precinct.



**Figure 2**

Image of the proposed development with the facade retained. Note how the masonry facade would be quite distinctive in the context of urban renewal as an architectural 'artefact', and its projection forward of the street alignment aids in providing a 'marker', not only for a retail outlet but for the through site link.

Source: Squillace Architects

The benefit of the proposal has been well articulated in the DRP report of 20/06/19, and we refer to the applicable sections under 'Design Principle':

### **Context and Neighbourhood Character**

*The proposal outlines an engaging concept that seeks to provide an expression of the current use of the site, the telling of its local story and seeks to engage the broader community through an interpretation of this within the development proposal. In addition, the proposal seeks to provide the potential for a site-through pedestrian link to enhance the connectivity between Church Avenue and John Street.*

*The above two elements of the proposal have the potential to help enhance neighborhood character.*

In spite of this positive response, the DRP report inexplicably opposes retention, primarily due to a street alignment. This raises the question as to whether a proposed anomaly in the street alignment outweighs the benefits of retaining a Mascot artefact as 'memory', and what follows from that in terms of creating an urban 'marker'.

Urbanity often comes, especially in historic precincts, in the unexpected, the interruption of view lines that draw the eye to a particular 'monument', with structures that provide a link to our earlier communities. It is also the case that a problem with urban renewal is that it 'strips' the precinct of its character in the very process of 'development'.

Rather than regarding the masonry facade as an intrusion, a more important urban concept is that it marks the entry to the pedestrian link, as well as a retail space that would otherwise be 'lost' in the uniformity of the designated street alignment. Although there is comment in the DRP report (12/12/19) on the preference for John Street as the retail area, this does not have to 'dictate' the use of the masonry facade at all, and does not preclude the Church Street frontage from being a retail use, suitable for a coffee shop or restaurant.

A retail presence at both ends of the proposed pedestrian thoroughfare aids activation, and in turn, adds to the sense of safety for the through-site link.

### **Built Form and Scale**

We have been advised that the proposal is **not** to demolish the masonry facade as the extent of the basement does not extend forward as far as the existing facade. Although the DRP is supportive of heritage interpretation, the contention that this could be achieved through the new high rise buildings is questionable, not only in practical terms but to what extent this could be 'read' by the observer in what would be an intangible manner. In heritage terms, the best method of interpretation is the retention of the tangible, in this case, an actual structure.

The DRP report appears to contradict the lack of support for the facade retention, as well as the location of a retail centre on John Street with (p.3):

*The concept of a providore use within the "retained" industrial component is supported.*

This needs to be clarified as it appears to be supportive of retention and retail use.

We note in the DRP report the importance of activation and a concern for creating 'presence' for the tower entry lobbies (p's 3-4). It is agreed that these are important concepts and that a method of creating this presence in the context of urban renewal can be readily achieved by the retention of historic elements, which not only have 'memory', but in this case, provide a contrast in form, materials and texture that attracts attention, in what will become a largely contemporary series of large buildings.

### **Design Excellence**

We refer to clause (c):

*The view corridor along Church Avenue is impacted by the intrusion and retention of the existing warehouse and is not supported.*

We question to what extent this is a concern when a view corridor is often to ensure the retention of significant distant vistas or buildings. In this case it is more important to provide a tangible marker to denote the presence of a through-site link in order to aid recognition and ease of navigation.

We refer to clause (xi):

*achieving appropriate interfaces at ground level between the building and the public domain,*

The retention of the masonry facade, not only provides for a legible artefact, but for a scaled structure set apart from the high rise development. An urban marker will improve the pedestrian interface and transition experience from Church Street through the link to the John Street site.

### Interpretation Opportunity

The masonry structure is not only a more appropriate and tangible form of interpretation, it also provides a more suitable 'background' for additional forms of interpretive panels and historic images. The existing structure provides a remnant 'memory' of what Mascot was in time, and also the scale of the previous urban landscape. It has become increasingly evident the community interest in heritage, often with increased concern at widespread demolition of the 'past'.

### Example of Facade Retention

The following example is of a residence that was a contributory item in an inner city heritage conservation area (HCA). Similar to the Church Street development, the retention of the whole structure was not viable and a compromise solution was arrived at in order to mitigate the adverse impact of complete demolition. The perspective image indicates a degree of similarity in terms of projecting a facade beyond the adjacent alignment in what is a narrow street, and the potential of creating a dynamic urban landscape.

Although the subject site does not have any heritage listings, this does not preclude a similar 'heritage' approach that can add texture to the visual environment, especially when there is such change to that environment. Modern intervention into historic precincts has been accepted, if carried out with sensitivity, adding to the texture of the urban environment, and vice versa, the retention of examples of historic buildings, whether heritage listed or not, in large scale development, continues and enriches a sense of community.



**Figure 3**  
Image of the proposed facade retention to a residence that has a 'texture' of layering  
Source: Haec Design Studio, GBA Heritage SHI



**Figure 4**  
Image of a modern intervention into the historic Police Station at The Rocks  
Source: Squillance



**Figure 5**  
Image of the intervention of Figure 4 where the masonry and contemporary co-exist successfully in the historic Rocks with historic layering  
Source: GBA Heritage



**Figure 6**

Image of the former Police Station at The Rocks, indicating the successful juxtaposition of historic fabric and modern intervention when carefully detailed

Source: GBA Heritage

## Conclusions

The proposed retention of the Church Street masonry structure:

- Should be regarded as an opportunity for a historic artefact in the urban environment rather than a constraint.
- Provides a suitable and distinct 'marker' for the community, and readily identifies an 'entrance' point to a through-site link to John Street, as well as the potential venue for retail, particularly a food and beverage outlet.
- Provides an excellent opportunity to interpret the historic background of the Mascot area as an 'artefact', not only with a tangible structure but as a background for other forms of interpretation.
- Provides for a layering of materials, structure and history that would substantially add to the urbanity of the precinct.

## Recommendation

We commend for approval by Council the proposal of the retention of the masonry facade in its present location to the Church Street frontage, to ensure added urban character and complexity to what is a rapidly changing environment where memory of the precinct can be so easily lost.

Yours faithfully,  
GBA Heritage Pty Ltd

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