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Mr Alan Bright
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Sydney NSW 2001
Attention: Mark Brown
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Dear Mr Bright

PART 3A DEVELOPMENT – AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, STRATHFIELD CAMPUS – 25B BARKER ROAD (OR 179 ALBERT ROAD) AND 167 ALBERT ROAD, STRATHFIELD – ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT – CONCEPT PLAN FOR FOUR DEVELOPMENT SITES AND PARKING – MAJOR PROJECT 10_0231

I refer to your letter dated 16 January 2012 requesting comments on the environmental assessment for the above concept plan. Thank you for providing an extension to the Heritage Council for submitting these comments.

The Heritage Council has reviewed the exhibited Environmental Assessment for this proposal prepared by Hassell dated December 2011 with specific reference to the Statement of Heritage Impact prepared by Weir Phillips dated December 2011. The Heritage Council has also reviewed community representations it has received concerned about heritage impacts and Godden Mackay Logan's heritage comments on the proposal. The following comments are accordingly provided with regard to heritage issues.

It is noted the concept plan proposes:

- four development precincts (south eastern, eastern, western and central) for a new library and education buildings with a maximum of three to four storeys and total gross floor area of 14,850 square metres
- a new underground car park under the existing playing fields and two basement parking areas for a total of 674 cars
- demolition of the existing handball court building and temporary buildings in the central western extent of the campus for construction of a new service and storage buildings
- two new access gates along Barker Road and associated changes to external road intersections
- new landscaping and internal circulation
- tree removal and transplantation
- local council approved changes to existing buildings

Heritage Significance

The Heritage Council notes that the site is not currently listed on the State Heritage Register as a heritage item of state heritage significance. However, it is noted that the submitted environmental assessment has assessed the site as having a high level of heritage significance. An assessment of high heritage significance equates to a state level of heritage significance by current heritage

assessment standards. The following comments are provided on this basis.

According to the submitted environmental assessment, it is noted that the significance of the site relates to its connection to the state-wide pattern of Catholic education and specifically for its strong association with the Christian Brothers order for most of the 20th century as its national headquarters and consequently the history of the Christian Brothers order in Australia.

The site is also significant aesthetically and historically for its fine collection of works from a single, prominent architectural firm, Sheerin & Hennessy (later Hennessy, Hennessy & Co) over approximately 60 years, and for its extant buildings of high architectural and historical merit. Significant heritage buildings and features identified and graded in the environmental assessment are noted as the:

Victorian villas period (1887-1907):

- Victorian villa "Mount Royal" dating from 1887, now known as the "Edmund Rice Building", built for wool broker, John Hinchcliff, once the residence of NSW Premier and Australian Prime Minister, Sir George Reid. It is assessed as a fine and early example of Queen Anne architecture, one of the most important early examples of the style in NSW, credited as Sydney's first of this style to be designed by an Australian-born architect, Harry Chamber Kent. The villa is considered one of Kent's finest residential commissions and now forms one his most recognised works. It is also assessed as one of the few Victorian mansions in the area to retain some understanding of its original grounds. (Graded significance: *Exceptional*)
- Former Mount Royal stables outbuildings, now the Ceramics Building (graded significance: *High*)
- Mount Royal gates on Albert Road frontage (graded significance: *Exceptional*)
- Bunya Pines associated with the demolished Victorian villa (graded significance: *High*)
- Avenue of trees (palms and gums) lining drive to Mount Royal associated with both Christian Brothers and street trees of former road alignment (graded significance: *Exceptional*)
- Brick edging to Albert Road driveway possibly contemporary with Mount Royal (graded significance: *High*)
- Potential archaeological relics of the Victorian villas known as "Ardross" and "Ovalau" which have not been assessed

Christian Brothers period (1907-1992):

- Chapel and wing built onto the "Edmund Rice Building", both designed by Sheerin & Hennessy dating from 1909 (graded significance: *Exceptional-high*)
- 1923-25 "Barron Memorial Chapel", a strong symbol of the association of the site with the Christian Brothers and identified as a fine and significant example of the Inter-war Romanesque Style and the work of Sheerin & Hennessy retaining a high degree of integrity, awarded the Master Architect's Gold Medal in the Turin Exhibition of 1923 (graded significance: *Exceptional*)
- 1930s Mullens Building and brick arcades designed as a suite by Sheerin & Hennessy in the same style as the Chapel (graded significance: *Exceptional*)
- Original handball courts, now used as a store, as the more intact of two former courts (graded significance: *High*)
- 1960s St. Edmunds Building and Brother Stewart Library, examples of simple well-detailed modernist buildings (graded significance: *Moderate*)
- Palm trees indicative of brothers occupation (graded significance: *High*)

Comments on proposal

Submitted Environmental Assessment for heritage

The submitted environmental assessment for heritage prepared by Weir Phillips is generally considered a sound assessment of the heritage issues and impacts. The exceptions are:

- the limited assessment of the significance of the site's layout and grounds;
- an existing site plan was not provided to indicate historic alignments and paths of significance to compare with the proposal;
- an archaeological assessment has not been provided as recommended in this Weir Phillips assessment for areas of proposed excavation.

With the conditions recommended below to address these omissions, the Heritage Council believes the Director General's Requirement for the environmental assessment of heritage issues (no. 11) has been satisfied.

State heritage significance

As noted above, the Weir Phillips assessment supports a state level of heritage significance for the site, making the site eligible for listing on the State Heritage Register under the Heritage Act 1977. While State Heritage Register listing has no legal affect for applications declared Part 3A developments, it is considered that the concept planning process should incorporate appropriate recognition of the elevated heritage significance of this site. Therefore, a nomination for listing the site on the State Heritage Register should form part of the planning for the next major stage of the site's development, consistent with the recommendation of the submitted environmental assessment to "*encourage an appropriate level of heritage listing*" (p.197). An additional Statement of Commitment or condition is accordingly recommended for the proponent to complete a nomination for listing the site on the State Heritage Register as part of this stage of redevelopment.

Impacts of new infill development

It is noted that the new buildings and underground parking, while substantial in size and reducing existing open space, will generally be situated in locations of least impact on historic buildings, landscape features, vistas and view lines to historic buildings, with some exceptions noted in the following comments.

The proposed development site with the greatest potential to impact on the setting and views to principle historic buildings is Precinct 1 where a new library building is proposed in a prominent corner position of the site. Godden Mackay Logan's heritage comments recommending a height reduction at the western end of this building are supported so that the future building will not exceed three storeys in the location nearest to the principle heritage buildings. This reduced height and other increased set-backs recommended below will minimise the visual dominance of the new building and the interruption of views to the principle heritage buildings.

The Heritage Council notes that part of the heritage significance of the site is its high degree of consistency, integrity and quality in both the architecture and landscape design across most of the site. This reflects the consistent use of a single distinguished architectural firm, the elevated importance of the site to, and its long association with, the Christian Brothers.

It is therefore considered important that new infill buildings and alterations to the site reinforce this consistency, integrity and quality of design to continue the significant historic pattern of

development and to maintain the cohesion of the site generally. The recommendations of the submitted environmental assessment are supported in this regard as follows:

- *New development should maintain overall character of the site and be sensitive to heritage significant elements with regards to scale, density, form and siting, including consideration of significant view corridors and spatial relationships (p.198)*
- *Maintain the garden-like surrounds, including the courtyards formed by major buildings and the prevalence of Canary Island Date Palms” (p.198)*

It is noted that the proposed concept plan only provides quantitative figures, such as floor area yields, building heights and set-backs without proposing statements of commitment for qualitative measures equivalent to the above recommendations to guide the future form of this development. Development to the full extent of these building envelopes will not necessarily satisfy the above quoted recommendations. The character statements referenced in the proposed Statement of Commitments are not sufficiently detailed to guide appropriate infill development in this historic context. The proposed figures do not clearly allow for reductions, such as to modulate building forms and set-backs, to ensure the above recommendations are achieved at the next stage of design resolution.

The Heritage Council therefore recommends that the above quoted recommendations and further conditions are included in the Concept Plan approval to facilitate an appropriate form of infill development within an agreed maximum extent of building envelopes. Reference to the Heritage Council's guideline for infill development, known as “Design in Context”, is also recommended in these conditions. This guideline provides established qualitative criteria for measuring the sensitivity of new infill development in terms of the character, scale, form, siting, materials and detailing of new buildings and landscaping. Including both qualitative and quantitative conditions for infill development recommended below will provide greater assurance that the final building designs will be compatible with the significant historic development of the site.

Impact on significant trees

The proposed building envelope for the library building in Precinct 1 will encroach on significant trees. Impacted trees include two mature Bunya Pines and the significant avenue of trees leading from Albert Road to Mount Royal. The Bunya Pines are rare surviving evidence of gardens from the demolished Victorian villa graded as highly significant in the submitted assessment. Their height and age would also give them landmark significance in the district. The avenue of brushbox and palm trees is graded as exceptionally significant for defining an important vista to Mount Royal containing both remnant street trees which record the original line of Albert Road and significant date palms associated with the Christian Brothers.

The building envelopes propose insufficient setback from the Bunya Pines and avenue of trees, requiring the relocation of most trees on one side of the avenue and possibly impacting on the Bunya Pines (the documentation is unclear on the proposal for the two Bunya Pines). This will detrimentally impact on the heritage significance of the site in terms of its Victorian period landscaping, layout and original road alignment and the historic framing of important vistas to Mount Royal from the entrance to the site. No information has been submitted on the age or health of these trees and appropriate set-backs to protect root and drip zones and tree canopies. Retention of these trees in their existing location and increased building set-backs on the north and north-eastern extent of the building proposed for Precinct 1 are therefore recommended.

Impact on historic site layout and landscape

As noted above, the environmental assessment for heritage does not map or grade the significance of open spaces and historic site alignments to enable the heritage impact of the proposed paths and other landscaping works to be assessed. Such works include the proposed northern promenade, green rooms, service area enhancement and alterations to the university commons and bus drop-off zone. These works could entail significant changes to the site and its landscaped setting, yet insufficient details are provided with this application to assess either the significance of the affected grounds or the likely impact of the works.

It is therefore recommended that site works outside of the proposed building envelopes are not approved as part of the concept plan but are submitted for approval with the necessary heritage assessment of the site at the next stage of the development.

Impact of demolition – former handball courts

The proposed demolition of former handball courts dating from 1908 will remove a building graded as of high significance. From an external inspection, Heritage Branch staff observed that the building is relatively modest located at the rear of the site facing the green space of the playing fields. The assessment notes that the building's purpose-built use for handball is significant because the sport is closely associated with the use of the site by an Irish monastic order. It further notes that adaptive re-use of this building is difficult and its social significance can be recognised in other ways such as interpretation.

While the removal of this building will have a negative heritage impact, the conclusions of the submitted environmental assessment are accepted with conditions for archival photographic recording, interpretation and conservation works for other historic buildings on the site to balance this negative heritage impact on the site as a whole.

Other demolition works such as proposed removal of the demountables will impact on structures that have not been assessed as significant. These works are therefore considered acceptable.

Archaeological impacts

The Part 3A development approvals process removes the legal requirement to obtain a separate excavation permit from the Heritage Council for disturbance of archaeological relics of local or state heritage significance under the provisions of the Heritage Act 1977. This means that the excavation requirements of the Heritage Act need to instead be addressed as part of the consolidated Part 3A development assessment process.

The potential for archaeological relics and the significance of these relics in areas proposed for substantial excavation have not been assessed in the submitted environmental assessment, as recommended by the Weir Phillips assessment (pp.199, 207).

The heritage assessment identifies at least one precinct development that will impact on potential relics. These are relics of "Ardross" located in the proposed Precinct 1 development site for the library. The existing open car park use and history of this site suggest that potential relics in this location are relatively undisturbed. "Ardross" has been identified as Victorian villa contemporary with the surviving "Mount Royal", however its relative level of significance has not been assessed.

The further archaeological assessment recommended by Weir Phillips is therefore recommended as a condition, together with other conditions to manage the excavation of potential

archaeological relics. This assessment should take place as early in the planning process as feasible to establish appropriate mitigation strategies before excavation is approved, consistent with the intent of the Heritage Act provisions for excavation permits.

Conservation management

It is noted that the Statement of Heritage Impact refers to a Conservation Management Plan for the site. However this plan was not received with the referred concept plan documentation. To balance the impact of the proposed new development, it is recommended that the Conservation Management Plan include recommendations for conservation works and interpretation for the site to the satisfaction of the Heritage Council. These conservation and interpretation works should form part of future detailed development applications following Concept Plan approval. Conditions are recommended below to this effect.

Recommendations

To minimise the potential heritage impacts on the significant cohesion, features, setting, landscape and vistas of the Australian Catholic University, the Heritage Council recommends the Department of Planning include the following conditions of consent for the Concept Plan:

Infill development

1. The western end of the building envelope for Precinct 1 shall be reduced to a maximum of three storeys. (Reason: to minimise visual dominance of new development in the vicinity of principle historic buildings)
2. No approval is granted or implied for surface car parking in the location of the existing playing fields, which shall be contained wholly under the existing ground level. (Reason: to minimise loss of historic setting and because some submitted documentation suggests potential surface car parking on these playing fields)
3. In the event of any inconsistency between approved figures for floor space yields, building heights and envelopes and other development indicated in the concept plan, the smaller figure will prevail. (Reason: to ensure the final scale of development is no larger than indicated, as modified by the conditions of consent, in the event of calculation errors)
4. Building envelopes, heights, footprint and floor area yields, as modified by these conditions, are the maximum approved with capacity for a reduction in the next stage of design resolution to accommodate modulation of new building forms, articulation of buildings addressing open space, maximum landscaping and protection of existing trees. (Reason: to maximise compatibility of new building forms when the detail design is proposed).
5. New development shall reinforce the character of the site and be sensitive to heritage significant elements with regards to scale, density, form and siting, including consideration of significant view corridors and spatial relationships consistent with the Heritage Council guidelines for infill development "Design in Context". An assessment against the checklist criteria contained in the guideline "Design in Context" shall accompany future development applications to demonstrate compliance with this condition.
6. New development shall maintain the garden-like surrounds, including the courtyards formed by major buildings and the prevalence of Canary Island Date Palms

Significant trees

7. The existing avenue of trees between Albert Road the Edmund Rice Building and the two historic Bunya Pines shall be retained in their existing position. (Reason: to maintain landscape features of assessed heritage significance)

8. The north and north-eastern building set-backs for the development in Precinct 1 shall be increased to ensure development does not encroach near the root and drip zones of these trees. (Reason: to maintain and reinforce significant landscape features and vistas)

Site works

9. No approval is granted or implied in this concept plan approval for new site works outside of the approved building envelopes including, but not limited to, the northern promenade, changes to the university commons and southern service area enhancement. These and other site works shall be the subject of a future application to be accompanied by a detailed heritage assessment of the significance of the site features and historic alignments and a statement of heritage impact detailing how impacts on these features have been minimised.

Conservation management

10. The proponent shall submit a completed nomination form for consideration of the site for listing the site on the State Heritage Register by the Heritage Council as one of the measures to recognise the heritage significance of this site in the planning for its redevelopment. The nomination should be submitted to the Heritage Council prior to the determination of application after Concept Plan approval, noting that listing under the Heritage Act has no legal affect for Part 3A developments.
11. The Conservation Management Plan for this site shall be lodged with the Heritage Council for review prior to the determination of applications after Concept Plan approval.
12. The Conservation Management Plan shall include a schedule of prioritised conservation works on the site with set timeframes for completion of these works to the satisfaction of the Heritage Council.
13. An Interpretation Plan for works to interpret the heritage significance of the site shall be submitted to the satisfaction of the Heritage Council prior to the determination of applications after Concept Plan approval.
14. An archival photographic recording of the site shall be prepared prior to the commencement of works to the satisfaction of the Heritage Council. The recording shall be prepared in accordance with the Heritage Council guideline *Photographic Recording of Heritage Items using Film or Digital Capture*. The recording shall document the existing layout, buildings, other structures, views and landscape of the site, concentrating on features and vistas identified as significant in the Weir Phillips environmental assessment and areas of the site affected by the works. This shall include the interiors, exteriors and views to the former handball courts to be demolished. The original copy of the archival record shall be lodged with the Heritage Council. An additional copy shall be provided to Strathfield Council.

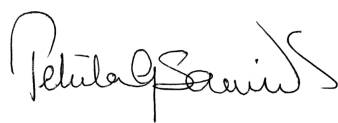
Archaeological relics

15. Before excavation commences on site, the Applicant must engage a suitably qualified historical archaeologist to undertake an archaeological assessment to determine the likelihood and significance of any archaeological relics in areas proposed for excavation. This assessment must contain an appropriate methodology for any archaeological works required and an appropriate research design to guide the archeological works. This archaeological assessment must be submitted to the Heritage Branch, Office of Environment and Heritage, for comment prior to any archaeological works commencing on site.

16. All demolition and excavation works on the site of the former villa known as 'Ardross' or other significant relics identified in the archaeological assessment must be monitored by a suitably qualified historical archaeologist. Details of this archaeologist must be forwarded to the Heritage Council for sign off prior to works commencing.
17. Should archaeological evidence related to this villa or other relics be revealed during works, all works must stop and the archaeologist must be given adequate resources to allow full and detailed recording of this archaeology to be undertaken to the satisfaction of the NSW Heritage Council.
18. The Applicant must ensure that the site under archaeological investigation is made secure and that the un-excavated artefacts, structures and features are not subject to deterioration, damage or destruction.
19. The Applicant is responsible for the safe-keeping of all relics recovered from the site.
20. The Applicant must ensure that the approved Excavation Director or an appropriate specialist, cleans, stabilises, labels, analyses, catalogues and stores any artefacts recovered from the site in a way that allows them to be retrieved according to both type and provenance.
21. The Applicant must ensure that a summary of the results of the field work, up to 500 words in length, prepared by the approved Excavation Director is submitted to the Heritage Council of NSW for approval within one (1) month of completion of archaeological field work.
22. The Applicant must ensure that a final excavation report is written by the approved Excavation Director to publication standard, within one (1) year of the completion of the field based archaeological activity. This report must include an assessment of the significance of the archaeology, statement(s) on how archaeological investigations at this site have contributed to the community's understanding of Ardross and other comparative sites in the area and recommendations for the future management of the site.

For any enquiries regarding this matter, please contact Claudine Loffi or Katrina Stankowski, archaeologist, at the Heritage Branch on (02) 9873 8590 or (02) 9873 8569.

Yours sincerely



Petula Samios **22 March 2012**
Director
Heritage Branch
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As delegate of the Heritage Council of NSW