

HUNTERS HILL TRUST ADDRESS TO COUNCIL 9 MARCH 2015

1) INTERIM HERITAGE ORDER 10 COWELL STREET

As you'll be aware The Trust, in its submission on the original GSV DA last year, was very critical of the proposal. And one of our criticisms was that the scheme involved the demolition of 10 Cowell Street. 10 Cowell St was one of a number of heritage items identified in the Heritage Assessment of the Gladesville Shops that Council commissioned from Paul Davies, which was published in 2005.

Davies recommended that 10 Cowell St, which was then listed as a Schedule 7 contributory item, be upgraded to a Schedule 6 Heritage Item, which is now Schedule 5 under the new LEP.

Davies' inventory sheet on 10 Cowell St included the following:

- The building is well maintained
- It is of local significance
- It provides an element of townscape interest and
- Demonstrates a phase in the development of Gladesville as place of residence.
- It is a good example of a late 19th century substantial weatherboard cottage which is highly visible in the streetscape
- It is unique within the context of the Gladesville shops precinct

The Trust and Council's own Conservation Advisory Panel fully supported the Davies report and the heritage listing of No 10 Cowell St. That was ten years ago.

In The Trust's submission on that first GSV application we argued that the cottage, rather than being demolished, should have been retained and integrated into the proposal. There are many examples of developments that have successfully retained historically significant structures within their precincts.

We also argued that the retention of the cottage would have a softening affect on the bulk and scale of the scheme and would have provided a transition from the commercial, retail and high density part of the site to the much lower residential scale of the surrounding area. We still hold to these views of course.

The fact that 10 Cowell Street does not currently have a heritage listing and, for that matter is not even included as a contributory item (see note below), is perplexing and leads to a number of so far unanswered questions:

- Why, of the seven potential heritage items referred to in the Paul Davies report, was 10 Cowell St the only item that was not upgraded to a schedule 5 item in the LEP?
- Why was 10 Cowell Street's heritage status downgraded so that it was not even included as a Contributory Item in the Consolidated DCP?
- Why was Council's response to community concerns about this so inconsistent and prevaricating?
- How is the non-listing of 10 Cowell St related to the sale of Council's 25% stake in the development site?
- What was Council trying to achieve with this sale?

- Why, after 10 years, has the proposed heritage listing of 10 Cowell Street been submitted to the Department of Planning?
- And what is the significance of this going through so long after the sale of the land is a done deal?
- What happens if the current scheme is lodged as a DA before the application for heritage status of 10 Cowell St has been processed by the Department of Planning?

There are quite a lot of questions to be answered and unanswered questions can lead to wrong perceptions.

As we all know perception is everything. Outside of these chambers there's a strong feeling in the community that we've been treated like mushrooms and kept in the dark. To many of us, it appears that Council wants to push through the demolition and sale of 10 Cowell St no matter what.

Even more questions are being asked.

- Did Council decide ages ago that, despite its heritage status, 10 Cowell St was worth more as a vacant piece of land?
- Did Council ever consider the negative impact that the removal of 10 Cowell St would have on the surrounding area?
- And, if so, why was this not canvassed with the broader community and fully and openly debated before deciding to sell the property?

And there are even many other questions running around in the community. None are at all flattering to Councillors and staff alike.

The Trust fully supports Councillor **Bird's** motion because we feel

- That it will protect the property from demolition in the immediate short term.
- That it will give Council a chance to take a breath and have a re-think about the importance of retaining this item of heritage for the generations still to come.
- That, in the long term, the retention of 10 Cowell St will have a leavening affect on the adverse impacts of any development of the GSV site on the surrounding neighbourhood.

We also believe that Councillor **Bird's** motion, if successful, will help restore the community's faith in a council, which possibly has more heritage items per hectare than any other council in NSW, as a capable custodian of its own heritage.

2) CHANGES TO THE CONSOLIDATED DCP

In The Trust's submission on the DA for first GSV proposal, we objected to it because we felt it was an overdevelopment of the site. We submitted that a major reason for this overdevelopment was because Council had accepted the revisions to the LEP and DCP in the Newbold Review of 2009. The revised controls increased the maximum building heights to 34m from 27m and removed the 5m setback along Flagstaff St. We submitted that the impact of this revision on the surrounding area was massively understated, particularly via the diagrams that accompanied the Review.

At its December 2009 meeting, Council signed off on the revisions. We submitted that this was a major mistake.

The Trust therefore supports changing the DCP to include the 4m setback from Flagstaff Street and the inclusion of the new objective designed to ensure adequate landscaping and deep soil planting.

In our letter to Council in June 2014 we noted that

- The setback would ensure that any new proposal incorporates deep soil planting and the possibility of a green wall along the boundary, which would provide a softer transition from the higher density zoning of the GSV site to the lower density residential zoning in the surrounding area.
- And that it would provide pedestrian access along the western side of the street. This is clearly necessary to ensure safe pedestrian flow around and through the development site.

The Trust does not accept that any argument against the setback should be based on the loss of Gross Floor Area. Surely we are all much more interested in the creation of safe and pleasant places for people rather than the developer's bottom line.

The Trust was highly critical of the workshops organised by Place Partners so we don't place much store on the results from the workshops being used to back up any argument for the removal of the setback.

The Trust notes that rough plans for the latest development do actually include a 3.5m setback from Flagstaff St. This, of course, in no way means that they are proposing to accept a potential loss of gross floor area because their proposal has doubled the number of units and increased building heights way beyond the maximum controls.

The Report's faith in "guide vs the Bible approach in writing controls" is optimistic to say the least. It just doesn't stand up to scrutiny, particularly in the context of Council's ongoing failure to successfully enforce its own controls.

As an example, Councillors should take a look at recent developments along the the Lane Cove River. Check out how many of the new buildings have complied with the specific and really important control, that *Developments should **not** have the appearance of three habitable storeys, irrespective of numeric compliance with the maximum building height.* That's a quote from the DCP. In this vein Councillors might consider the appearance of tonight's DA for 41 Bonnefin Road. This proposal, which clearly presents more than 2 storeys to the river has been recommended by the planners for your approval.

Finally we simply reiterate our support for the setback control.

Tony Coote
President The Hunters Hill Trust

NOTES ON THE CONSOLIDATED DCP

Contributory item means a building which has been identified as making a significant contribution to identity and character of the surrounding area, but which is not located within a *heritage conservation area* or identified as a *heritage item*.
(Definition from the DCP Dictionary)

Contributory items listed in Cowell Street

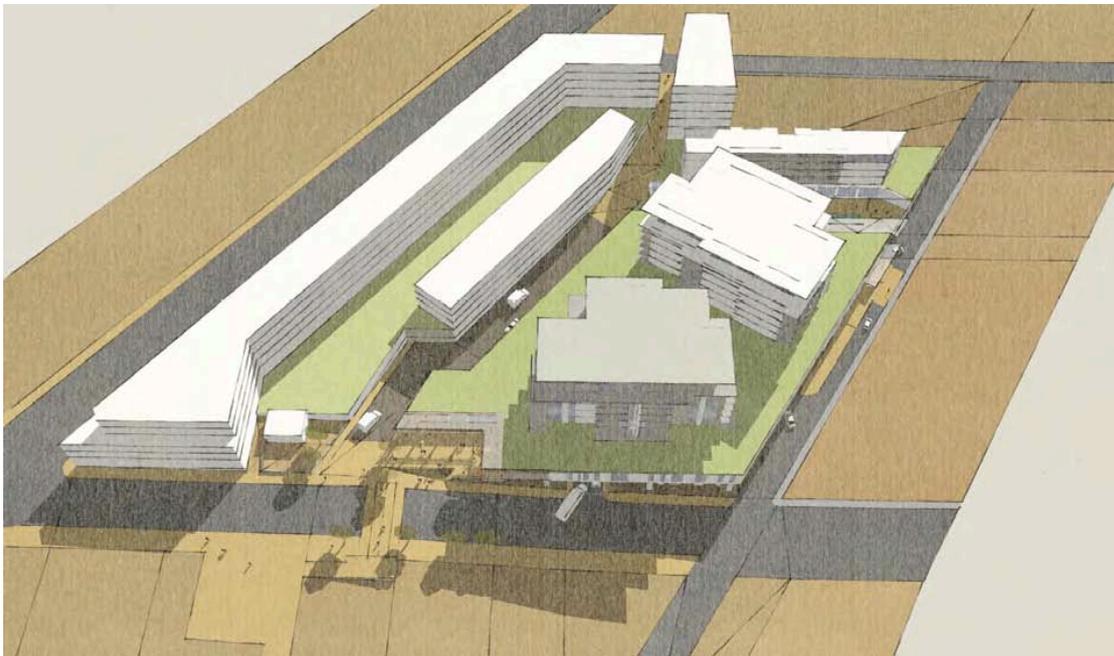
Nos 11,12,18,20,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,32,33

Where's 10 Cowell Street in the DCP?

The revised DCP came out of the Newbold Review commissioned by Council and the preferred form of development was illustrated in diagram form



Brett Newbold's sketch of the corner of Cowell and Flagstaff – 10 Cowell has gone



Brett Newbold's sketch of the overall site – 10 Cowell has gone