



PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

PO Box 85, HUNTERS HILL, NSW 2110
www.huntershilltrust.org.au

Mr Steve Kourepis
Director, Town Planning
Hunters Hill Council
Email: customerservice@huntershill.nsw.gov.au

14 July 2024

Dear Mr Kourepis

Re DA – 20101105-4 15 Hunter Street Woolwich

I write on behalf of Hunters Hill Trust to object and convey our utter bewilderment to the Development Application lodged on Council's DA Tracker system dated 3 July, 2024 that seemingly seeks approval to **remove a significant *Ficus Macrophylla* (Moreton Bay Fig) from the back of the above site** even though this same ***Ficus Macrophylla* (Moreton Bay Fig) no longer exists**. This tree was **protected** as a condition of the previous development approval for this site with a **\$20,000 bond** paid as part of the **Conditions of Consent**.

Condition 9. *A bond in the sum of \$20,000 being paid to Council prior to the issue of the Construction Certificate to ensure protection of the Fig Tree during demolition, excavation and construction.....refundable after a period of 18months from the issue of the Occupation Certificate on condition that the tree is inspected by Council's Parks & Landscape Coordinator who is to be satisfied that the tree is healthy and viable at that time.*

It would seem the issuing of an **Occupation Certificate** may now be in jeopardy as there is **'no tree to inspect'** given it's removal by the owner on 28th December 2023 in front of a group of onlookers including neighbours and locals walking along pathways in the adjoining "Goat Paddock" parkland.

- How can you retrospectively seek approval to cut down a tree that no longer exists? You can't.
- It is simply incredible that a development application can be made (and accepted) to remove such a tree seven months after its deliberate removal.

This tree was described by the owner's Arborist, Russell Kingdom, in his report dated 7 December 2023 as dating from early settlement, 3 metres in diameter at breast height with a radial crown of at least 20 metres with descriptor **"a magnificent specimen"** and **"feature of this area for many years"**.

We note such a description flies directly in the face of the only new report to accompany this latest development application by **Polaris Planning & Development**, who suggest 'the removal of the dead tree does not compromise the primary garden character of the HCA'. Further, their inaccurate observation states: 'This visual obstruction and health status of the tree means the tree does not

contribute to the streetscape or the overall garden character visible to the public, reducing its significance with the HCA'. It can no longer contribute if it no longer exists!

The *Ficus Macrophylla* (Moreton Bay Fig) at 15 Hunter Street was part of our protected natural environmental heritage, a distinctive landmark tree within the landscape of a heritage conservation area that adjoins the heritage listed Woolwich Parklands as viewed both from the waters of Sydney Harbour and by locals walking in the adjoining parkland. To suggest its removal was '**justified given the tree's lack of heritage significance**' is not only disingenuous but, ignorant of the heritage values, aims and objectives in Hunters Hill's Local Environmental Plan.

On this occasion, Hunters Hill Trust strongly recommends the following:

- Insist on the **replanting in same location another Moreton Bay Fig or similar tree in size, stature and significance** to replace this once protected landmark tree that no longer exists.
- **Allocate to a related purpose the \$20,000 Bond monies** paid to council to ensure protection during demolition, excavation and construction given the Conditions of Consent have not been met.
- **Refuse to issue the Occupation Certificate** for this development given the Conditions of Consent have not been met.
- In future, negotiate harsher penalties and more appropriate Bond amounts on such trees in line with community expectations given the size and significance of a tree at the maturity of this ***Ficus Macrophylla* (Moreton Bay Fig)** which stood on this block of land since early settlement until 28 December 2023. We would suggest several hundreds of thousands of dollars be required as a deterrent.
- The proposed plantings under Conditions 5,6, and cannot be considered as a **recompensing replacement**.

To conclude, the suggestion of Polaris Planning & Development that the removal of the dead *Ficus macrophylla* is '**justified based on factors such as the tree's lack of heritage significance and its obscured visibility**' is inaccurate and demeaning when clearly residents and visitors alike have been able to view this tree from the water and surrounding parkland.

Our green heritage and tree canopy belongs to all and is of concern to all residents, whether it be on private or public lands. Many members of our community mourned the tragic loss of this tree at 15 Hunter Street. An adequate replacement tree of similar stature, like a Moreton Bay Fig must be secured by Council as compensation for this dreadful loss.

Yours sincerely



Karyn Raisin
President
Hunters Hill Trust

E: huntershilltrust@gmail.com