
Sent: 8/02/2021 11:05:20 AM

Subject: Submission re: DA2020/1489 - 8 Forest Road, Warriewood, NSW, 2102

February 8, 2021

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RE: DA2020/1489 - 8 Forest Road, Warriewood, NSW, 2102

I am writing to oppose the above DA, in particular the proposal to demolish the 1920s farmhouse "Oaklands", which lies on the block, and clearing of bushland surrounding it. This house should be retained and restored for public use – perhaps as an environmental museum/centre or to record and display the history of Warriewood and Ingleside.

I also call for the 2017 Land and Environment Court decision requiring restoration of the house to be enforced – if the development approved in the earlier DA N0440/15 goes ahead.

Finally, given the changed circumstances since the original DA was approved, I believe the council should revisit plans for the site and consider acquiring it for incorporation in Ingleside Chase Reserve.

Land and Environment Court Ruling on Oaklands Farmhouse

The original Land and Environment Court decision regarding this development, from May 3, 2017, in Annexure B, part A, stated that the development was to be undertaken in accordance with a number of plans and documents, including the *"Heritage Assessment & Statement of Heritage Impact prepared by NBRS & Partners dated May 2016"*.

That document, prepared by NBRS & Partners states that:

"The structure of the house appears to be sound and is capable of renovation to meet contemporary living standards while maintaining the overall character and without any significant additions. Required works include a new roof, new guttering and downpipes, New bathrooms and Kitchen, new wiring and general maintenance works to the existing internal and external building fabric."

And yet, Weir Phillips Heritage Planning in their November 2020 heritage report stated that: "the house is in very poor condition having been left vacant for some time". This begs the question: given the court's direction for restoration of the house, why did the developer

Warriewood Vale Pty Ltd evict the former tenants once development approval was gained and fail to secure the site?

The developer should not be rewarded for this demolition by neglect – rather forced to restore the house in line with the Land and Environment Court ruling.

Heritage Value of Oaklands

The Land and Environment Court in its ruling for restoration of the farmhouse in 2017 acknowledged its heritage value.

The house is associated with the significant farming activity in Warriewood during the 20th century and post-World War Two migration to the area. This was characterised in particular by the development and growth of tomatoes (now regarded as "heirloom varieties") to suit local conditions, which were sold throughout Sydney. As Virginia Macleod reported in her June 2010 article, "Warriewood", in the **Sydney Journal** (and quoted in the NBRS & Partners heritage report):

"Warriewood became known as 'Glass City', because at one time there were 3,500 glasshouses there. Production was at its peak in the period between 1947 and 1954, and 100 pounds (45 kilograms) of tomatoes per glass house each year was a profitable return. Field crops such as beans, potatoes, lettuce, carrots, peas, cabbage, marrow, beetroot and capsicum were also grown, but not under glass," MacLeod wrote.

“Typically, market gardeners are recent migrants. This was certainly the case for Warriewood, which became home to Italians and people from the country then called Yugoslavia. Some Yugoslav families would offer work to newly arrived fellow-countrymen, and it is no surprise that the first Yugoslav club in Australia was started at Warriewood in 1939, at the corner of Vineyard Street and Warriewood Road. Several migrant families came from Broken Hill after the depression in the mining industry in 1932. Today street names in the new subdivisions – Apollo, Daydream, Jubilee and Ponderosa – are tributes to the varieties of tomatoes which once grew on the same land.”

That heritage value, if anything, has increased since 2017 - with the further loss of farmland and glasshouses to development in the area.

By contrast, I believe Warriewood Vale Pty Ltd director Albert Wong appears to show indifference to the house’s local heritage value in an ABC story of February 3, 2021, “Historic 'Oaklands' home in Warriewood at risk of demolition after vandals move in,”

where he is quoted as saying:

“We could provide a brand new facility for the community instead of a rundown, almost falling down farmhouse that has no historical significance,” Mr Wong said.

“It wasn't occupied by Captain Cook.”

Weir Phillips, the company that prepared the latest heritage report for Warriewood Vale Pty Ltd, does not actually include an assessment of the house’s cultural significance – although its author does provide a few paragraphs of history related to its ownership.

In fact, Weir Phillips on its website appears to be primarily an architectural firm, with a division specialising in built heritage. In an internet search I could find no reference to it holding membership with the peak cultural heritage conservation body in Australia - Australia ICAMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites). Neither could I find any references to membership for the report’s author, James Phillips, whose credentials on the firm’s website don’t appear to include training in cultural or social history.

However, for the people of the Northern Beaches, and particularly Pittwater, the associations of Oaklands’ built heritage with the area’s social and economic history are significant and I believe the council should move to have it heritage listed.

Environment vs heritage protection

The Weir Phillips Heritage report sets up a conflict between heritage and environmental values, saying the house’s *“immediate environmental context would be destroyed to make it useable”* because of the need to clear vegetation from around the house for bushfire prevention.

The report determines that *“the ecological impacts will outweigh any heritage value of the house”*.

However, as mentioned by former Pittwater Mayor David James in his submission on this DA, the NSW Rural Fire Service’s guide for councils, “Planning for Bushfire Protection”, indicates a way to resolve the conflict between these two considerations.

Regarding historic buildings, it states in Section 8.2.3:

“In relation to land identified as having heritage significance, the usual requirements for bush fire protection may conflict with the conservation of significant heritage fabric and/or its setting.

Development affecting heritage places, and involving the intensification of residential uses, should be considered on an individual basis.

“The application of PBP (Planning for Bushfire Protection) is to be considered in the context of the conservation principles, processes and practices of the Illustrated Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 2013).”

Thus, the developer should not be allowed to undertake clearing of vegetation around the old house during its restoration.

Rethinking the original DA.

I believe the original DA (N0440/15) for the construction of a residential development, comprising 81

dwellings at 8 Forest Road, Warriewood, should be revisited by Northern Beaches Council given the changed conditions since the Land and Environment Court decision in 2017.

The 1994 bushfires had already severely burnt Ingleside Chase Reserve which this property borders, razing houses in comparable positions, before the court approved the original DA. However, as the 2019-2020 bushfires demonstrated, the risk to this site has since increased. The farmhouse and land escaped burning during last year's fires. But with their location at the terminus of continuous bushland extending through national parks from the Central Coast and through Ku-ring-gai Chase, more frequent and severe fires expected in the future, as well as bushland surrounding the proposed new buildings on three sides, I believe 8 Forest Road is totally inappropriate for development. Given the council's current work on a resilience plan for the Northern Beaches, I believe we should not allow new homes in areas of increasing danger as global warming progresses.

This risk is exacerbated by the road traffic gridlock that afflicts Warriewood during peak periods, including along Jubilee Avenue.

Furthermore, the current open land previously occupied by glasshouses at the site currently forms an Asset Protection Zone between the bushland of Ingleside Chase Reserve and the homes on Bert Close. It should be retained this way – perhaps as open parkland to complement a museum or other community facility in the old farmhouse. A community garden could also be established there, including a glasshouse with some of the vegetables that were grown during the area's market garden history, and open to public visitors.

Northern Beaches Council should consult with the developer about a way forward on this issue so that this land can be added to Ingleside Chase, protecting the green buffer that forms the backdrop to Pittwater.

Miranda Korzy