

Heritage Referral Response

Application Number:	DA2021/2539
Date:	10/05/2022
To:	Brittany Harrison
Land to be developed (Address):	Lot 113 DP 6937 , 91 Florida Road PALM BEACH NSW 2108

Officer comments

HERITAGE COMMENTS
Discussion of reason for referral
<p>The proposal has been referred to Heritage as the subject property is within a conservation area and adjoins a heritage item</p> <p>Florida Road Heritage Conservation Area -79 to 97 Florida Road</p> <p>"The Moorings" (house) - 93 Florida Road</p>
Details of heritage items affected
<p>Details of the item as contained within the Pittwater inventory is as follows:</p> <p>Florida Road Conservation Area <u>Statement of Significance</u> The Florida Road Heritage Conservation Area includes a group of houses representing an early phase of residential development in Palm Beach. The street is an anthology of local architectural styles.</p> <p>Contributory ranking: Number 91 - Contributory</p> <p><u>Physical Description</u> Florida Road in Palm Beach is a winding, leafy street with a high (west) and a low (east) side caused by the slope of the land. As a consequence of this slope, many of the houses on the low side are not clearly visible from the road.</p> <p>The houses in the street are a mix of sizes and date from a variety of periods and appear to be a mixture of holiday and permanent homes. Many are now two storey. These are generally early to mid twentieth century buildings.</p> <p>Numbers 79-97 form the Florida Road Conservation Area and include Florida House built by Lawrie Gallagher when working for Albert Verrills. The set backs of the residences from the street vary along Florida Road. The result is a combination of a series of larger open spaces and buildings close to the building alignment. This contributes to the leafiness of the area as do the many mature trees and gardens. The absence of many fences contributes to a feeling of unrestrained space. Some properties have small natural stone retaining walls at the street which creates a stepped back landscape.</p> <p>The Moorings <u>Statement of Significance</u></p>

The Moorings at 93 Florida Road in Palm Beach, completed in 1919 to the design of the well-known Sydney architect James Peddle, has historic and aesthetic significance as a holiday house typical of the early Pittwater subdivisions. The architectural heritage of the area is characterised by this house form which, in Pittwater, evolved as a structure subordinate to the landscape and which utilised natural materials to harmonise with the surroundings and lessen their visual impact. The existing thicket of palms and paperbarks in the front garden provide landscape value.

Physical Description

This house is located on an elevated site block. It is a one-storey stone house on a stone base with garage underneath featuring low pitched metal deck roof, creosoted slab and batten walls. Of notable interest is the thicket of palms and paperbarks in the front garden.

Other relevant heritage listings

Sydney Regional Environmental Plan (Sydney Harbour Catchment) 2005	No	
Australian Heritage Register	No	
NSW State Heritage Register	No	
National Trust of Aust (NSW) Register		
RAIA Register of 20th Century Buildings of Significance		
Other	N/A	

Consideration of Application

This proposal is for alterations and additions to the cottage located at 91 Florida Road, formerly known as 'Tidapa', on a site within the Florida Road Heritage Conservation Area. It is also located adjacent to the Heritage Item at No.93 Florida Road, the cottage known as "The Moorings" (Item no. 2270144), and being within the HCA, in the vicinity of other listed dwellings to the north and south of its site. The cottage has been identified as a contributory item within the HCA, and as such, the proposals for it have been the subject of discussions with the applicants and their architect. The current DA represents a re-working of an earlier proposal in DA2021/0164 which was withdrawn after Council found difficulty with the envisaged work, which in Council's assessment promised an adverse heritage outcome and impact (the Heritage Referral dated 10th June 2021).

The proposal continues to seek consent for development involving the extension and internal reworking of the house, as shown in the drawings and discussed in the HIS which accompanies the submission. This HIS is a revision of the HIS supporting the earlier application, by the same authors. The revised proposal has not been the subject of a preDA or PLM consultation on its heritage impacts, prior to its lodgement.

Under its LEP provisions, Council must again consider the impacts upon the heritage significance of the property, and of the Conservation Area, and whether or not the proposed changes can be sustained in heritage terms.

The proposed modifications as shown in the submitted plans are assessed within a Heritage Impact Statement prepared for the Architect in support of the application. The document concludes that the works can be considered appropriate and consistent with the significance of the property. The assertions of the report and its conclusion in regard to the proposal are not supported. The program of works proposed is considered to have an unacceptable level of impact upon the significance of the

house, and upon the HCA which will be adversely affected in turn by the diminishment of the heritage values of the house.

Previous advice

In the assessment of DA2021/0164, the following advice was offered :

“Background

The history of No. 89-91, earlier known as “Tidapa”, is pretty well understood, along with that of its neighbours which are together the reason for the recognition and maintenance of the Florida Road Conservation Area. The Conservation Plan prepared for No. 93 “The Moorings” by Robertson & Hindmarsh Architects provides good background and importantly, a perspective for how decisions about a place like “Tidapa” should be made.

Heritage Matters

In statutory terms the house is identified within a HCA and is therefore subject to Clause 5.10 of the LEP requiring that Council consider the impacts on the HCA from any activity arising at the property. It is also adjacent to a Heritage Item No. 93 and its impacts on that house should be considered.

No. 89-91 was reportedly recommended to be listed as an Item by the consultants who prepared the Pittwater Heritage Study (1988). Why it was not so listed may be discoverable in Council’s files, but in my opinion, having regard to what we now know about these early cottages of Palm Beach and Pittwater, and having regard to the current circumstances of many of them, the inclusion just within the HCA was not enough recognition of this house, and not enough of an indication of the need for appropriate conservation planning.

I have read the Heritage Impact Statement by Urbis supporting the proposal, and am somewhat perplexed that the heritage interest of the cottage in so many dimensions can be acknowledged, but none of it approaches a degree supporting listing as an Item. I am not comfortable with the assessment offered nor the conclusions that the proposal, which involves substantial changes to key, distinctive aspects of the cottage, is all ok.

The importance and indeed, sophistication of the cottages like No. 91 is not always understood. The article by James Peddle (quite possibly the architect who designed “Tidapa”) published in the influential magazine “The Home”, in September 1920 shows how considered and intentional the rustic design of the houses was and remains. While over the years changes have been made to many of them - including “Tidapa” - these have tended to be minor compared to what is frequently proposed now.

When major change is proposed, the affect on the heritage interest of these buildings needs to be very carefully considered. The design of the cottages is not casual, their primary features are more considered than may be apparent. The degree to which they may be adapted without cost to their significance needs to be very carefully established.

Considerations

In my opinion it is apparent that the siting of “Tidapa”, well set back for the height and view, and perched upon the live rock shelf where it emerges from the site, was very considered as were the expressed timber structural elements and materials - the cladding, lattice enclosures - with all contributing to the response of the cottage to the site, its context, and the idea behind its creation. They are features which partner its neighbours, No. 93 in particular.

The importance of the siting off the cottage, its setback and open foreground space have been appreciated and informed the current proposal, but building in front of the cottage, altering its original presentation and its siting on the rock shelf across the site is not in my opinion, consistent with its significance - its history, development, design and aesthetic intent. The conclusions reached about there being potential for development behind the cottage (the proposed garage and studio) and some limited potential concealed underneath the cottage, are in my opinion supportable. Altering the front of the cottage is not.

Similarly there is also potential for some very careful change to the interiors, as has been proposed. Kitchens and bathrooms are elements which change, but their relationship with the cottage should, again, be very carefully considered. A "large" contemporary kitchen would be greatly out of keeping with the ethos of this little building, where a priority was intentionally placed upon simplicity and modesty. These are concepts which self-evidently, are awkward when considered against the current monetary value of the property, but they are why the HCA was created, and why Council has sought to manage the diverse interest of the owners of these properties, over almost two decades since their recognition.

These circumstances have usually devolved to schemes which augment the cottages involved through discreet pavilion additions, behind the original as may be possible. These can provide extra accommodation and facilities, but leave the original, significant building minimally altered or affected. This was the conclusion for No. 93 "The Moorings", and appears preferable for "Tidapa".

Conclusions

As discussed on site and shown in the application drawings, the works as currently proposed would substantially alter the most visible and characteristic part of the house, losing features which both individualise the house and connect it with its typology. This will both diminish the house and the group of which it is part, which in turn form the backbone of the HCA. Together "Tidapa" and "The Moorings" are a very strong authentic pair, which still demonstrate their original intentions and design ethos.

An alternative proposal which avoids adverse impact must be found, to support the ongoing life of the cottage while enhancing its use for the current owners, and those who follow them."

The current application

The current application puts forward a revised proposal which still involves an alteration of the front elevation of the building and its presentation to Florida Road. The contributory value of the dwelling would be severely compromised, both externally and internally, by the impact upon its integrity, its important capacity to demonstrate its history and origins, and its obvious and immediate comparability with the other dwellings of the HCA. The assessment of the cottage is not consistent and conclusions about the significance of the building appear disconnected and directed to an outcome of support for the works.

The drawings supporting the current application are a modification of an amended set submitted to Council within the course of the previous application. Works within the body of the existing cottage are little changed in the removal of walls and spaces. Notably the terrace to the front of the house has been reduced in extent, now aligning with the proposed front gable addition ; the existing bay window to the living room is not to be altered. The projected lower level under the terrace is reduced in extent at the south-east corner. However the substantial addition to the front of the house would have the result that its character, fabric and detail would be substantially changed.

Quite how the proposed works can be concluded to be "sympathetic alterations and additions to the subject dwelling which would be consistent with the existing form, style, character and materials of

the subject dwelling and of the overall conservation area” is not explained, just asserted. In adding substantially to the front of the dwelling, the proposal could not be concluded to be consistent with its existing form, as the front elevation and detail of the cottage would be extensively changed. The way in which the house sits upon the ground of the site, set upon its sandstone piers with broad batten lattice infill, as viewed from the street below, would be lost. The qualities which individualise this dwelling and what it brings to the HCA, will disappear.

Council must consider whether or not the proposed work also affects the significance of the adjacent Heritage Item “The Moorings”. It is suggested that what it will do is diminish the support that “Tidapa” currently provides for its heritage listed-neighbour, by reducing the obvious originality of the building, which corroborates that of the Item. While “The Moorings” will retain its own significance, the stature of “Tidapa” as part of the group which has given rise to the HCA will be reduced.

The issue

Tidapa is a small cottage, now set upon a highly valuable site. In this context it is similar to other significant small buildings, like most of the Castlecrag dwellings designed by Walter and Marion Burley Griffin. To add to them without eclipsing their heritage values is difficult, and almost certainly devolves immediately to how extra accommodation to suit their current day purpose can be added as a linked or detached pavilion, that does not challenge the significance of the building or its context.

The proposed detached carport/studio behind and above the house follows this thinking and in heritage terms, could be supported as a solution for this property. It would be read behind and above the main house, and seen to defer to the original building.

Further accommodation might be possible, concealed within and below a terrace set in front of and below the house – and read from the frontage as a stone-built terrace with any fenestration to its rear. It would be sited so as not to require change in the existing cottage. As a way forward for the property, this should be discussed.

Like the earlier withdrawn scheme, the current proposal seeks to alter the house in a manner, and to an extent, that are not consistent with its contributory status in the HCA. The nature of the house, its relative modesty, integrity and its very particular style, character and individual value are such that it cannot sustain the interventions proposed without loss of its integrity, and heritage values. This would not be consistent with good conservation outcomes for the HCA or for this building.

Is a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) Required? Council could require a CMP or CMS for the property, in the context of the HCA. Its preparation should assist planning for the property.

Has a CMP been provided? Not with this proposal.

Is a Heritage Impact Statement required? Yes.

Has a Heritage Impact Statement been provided? Yes.

Further Comments

COMPLETED BY: Robert Moore

DATE: 10 May 2022

The proposal is therefore unsupported.

Note: Should you have any concerns with the referral comments above, please discuss these with the Responsible Officer.

Recommended Heritage Advisor Conditions:

Nil.