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REPORT: May - August 2020

Email correspondence

1 Information provided to the Heritage Advisor

Agenda – Advice requested

1. **Brief: Coedong Lane Conservation Area**

Project brief

Wagga Wagga City Council has exhibited a draft Amendment to the Wagga Wagga DCP concerning the development within the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area. Council now seeks the opinion of a heritage architect to assist in its approach to installing the Amendment to the DCP, with particular reference to Cooedong Lane.

Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area

The Conservation Area is noted within the Wagga Wagga Heritage Study for its significant streetscapes comprising established street trees, detached dwelling houses, particularly of Victorian and Edwardian styles, landscaped open space and regular fencing styles.

A large portion of the conservation area has houses that have laneway access to the rear of the property. Often fronting the laneway are outbuildings, garaging, extra living spaces, other amenities and utilities. Laneways do not receive citation for their character in the Wagga Wagga Heritage Study.

Residents of Cooedong Lane have made representations to Council that Cooedong Lane represents a greater level of heritage significance than other laneways and that provisions within the Draft DCP would be inappropriate.

Strategic context for Amendment

Council views an opportunity to provide better development outcomes in the laneways. At present, the DCP does allow development addressing the laneways, but provisions frequently result in development outcomes, which are suboptimal. Development frequently compromise on overall building design and performance, employ ungainly mimicry of heritage styling as well as falling short of providing genuine housing diversity and additional living opportunities within Central Wagga Wagga.

The intent of the draft is to satisfy the strategic need for housing diversity and infill development in Central Wagga Wagga in a manner appropriate to the findings of the Wagga Wagga Heritage Study. Heritage streetscapes and character features are to remain intact and predominant at the frontage of properties throughout the Conservation Area. Meanwhile, the Draft DCP intends to allow well-designed extensions, secondary dwellings and other outbuildings and amenities, up to two storeys, recessed to the rear of heritage dwellings.

This solution provides the appropriate pathway for buildings and property to be updated in accordance with contemporary living expectations, to provide and incentivise reinvestment into heritage properties and their upkeep, and retain the significant character dwellings and streetscape features to property frontages.

Requirements

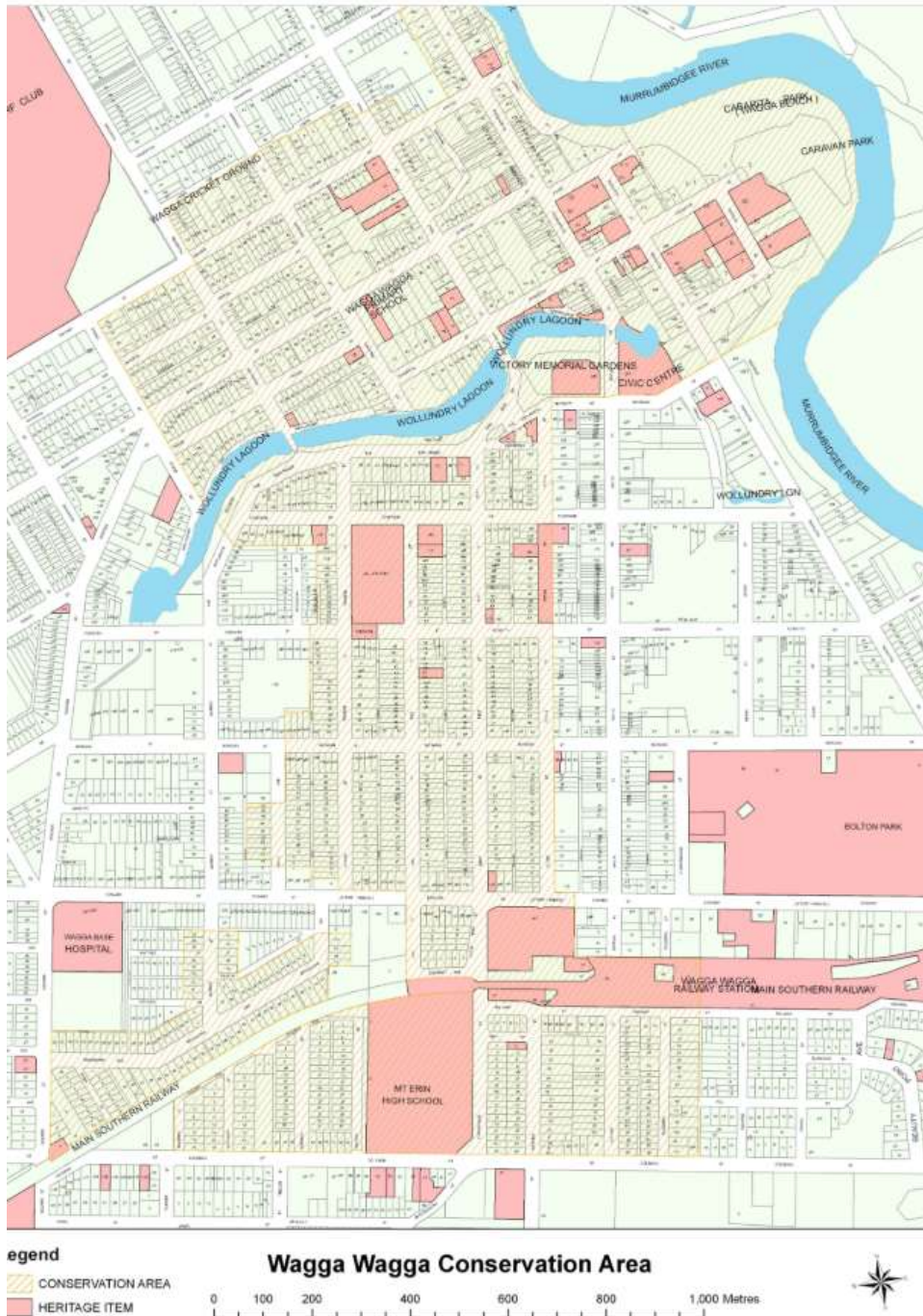
Council requests the opinion of a heritage architect to establish an independent view of the following by June 30, 2020;

1. Whether Cooedong Lane retains a greater level of heritage significance or retains greater levels of heritage integrity than other laneways within the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area, or the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area at large.
2. If Cooedong Lane is representative of a greater level of heritage significance and/or integrity than other laneways, what would a statement of significance establish as the key character features of Cooedong Lane?
3. If Cooedong Lane represents a greater level of heritage significance than other laneways, would DCP controls be required to uphold that statement of significance? Would this be prohibitive to laneway development facilitated by Council's current draft DCP?

Background Information;

- Wagga Wagga Heritage Study 2002
- Wagga Wagga DCP 2010
- Recent Development Applications and Heritage Architect reviews

1.1 Conservation Area Review: Cooedong Lane



Picture 1 Heritage Conservation Area Reference

The Brief:

1. ***Whether Cooedong Lane retains a greater level of heritage significance or retains greater levels of heritage integrity than other laneways within the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area, or the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area at large.***

The following reviews illustrate a number of Lanes within the Heritage Conservation Area as a foundation for addressing the question.

1. Tamba Lane



Figure 1 A view to the west near No.16, noting the mature trees, varied materials and two storey element.



Figure 2 The view west near 10 Jackson/119 Gurwood, noting the use of the traditional steel cladding and the dominant trees

2. Brewery Lane



Figure 3 View looking west from Best Street, noting the use of steel for the ancillary sheds and garages, tree canopies within the yards and the uncharacteristic rendered parapet faced garages to the left above.

3. Yenda Lane



Figure 4 The view looking north at 69Thomas/78 Fox Streets, noting the tree planting, fencing definition to the rear boundaries, steel materials generally, an attic and a two storey element within Forsyth Street.

4. Womboy Lane



Figure 5 View looking south at Nos. 69 Fox/78 Best Streets – south of Forsyth Street, noting the dominant tree canopies, use of steel fencing and shed materials to the ancillary structures and a taller traditional brick structure (extraordinarily not heritage listed).

5. Biroomba Lane



Figure 6 View looking south at 11A/12 Best & Peel Streets, noting the general use of steel materials for walls and roofs, the hit and miss boundary fencing where earlier boundary details have been removed and one two storey contemporary structure. On this structure, it is noted that the top edge of the face brick and the height of the ancillary first floor appears taller than for an attic style or ancillary first floor. A minor height reduction and increase in the top edge of the lower wall material to a sill level could alleviate this visual impact.

6. Cooedong Lane



Figure 7 View from the western end near Beckwith Street, looking east. Note the heritage listed building to the right and the dense planting in the vicinity.



Figure 8 View to the east, noting the red face brickwork, varied setbacks, varied boundary definition and roof forms. The visual impact of sites without boundary fencing is substantial and not characteristic.



Figure 9 View to the east, noting the pitched roofed domestic garage structure to the left and varied responses to the right and generally good tree canopies. Fencing is hit and miss to the right for the Wollundry Avenue properties. The traditional corrugated sheet profile to the right is preferable to contemporary profiles.



Figure 10 View looking east indicating varied setbacks, substantial brick structures and varied built forms.

Summary

The characteristics of Lanes in the Heritage Conservation Area, in relation to Heritage significance are as follows:

- A narrow road width, structures that are ancillary in function and/or of relatively compact design bordering the boundaries, fencing defining the boundaries, steel clad structures with minor setbacks to the boundaries and visible tree canopies

The following distinctive elements differentiate Cooedong Lane:

- The extent of new development fronting the Lane is greater than in other lanes. The use of face brick is more extensive in Cooedong Lane and is associated with owners seeking to reflect the design of their houses and not the intrinsic character of the Lane. The Lane illustrates the extended garage and vehicle accommodation through double garages and the use of built forms more reflective of house styles than ancillary buildings.

In summary, the intrinsic character of traditional ancillary buildings is less in Cooedong Lane than in the other Lanes reviewed.

2. *If Cooedong Lane is representative of a greater level of heritage significance and/or integrity than other laneways, what would a statement of significance establish as the key character features of Cooedong Lane?*

In establishing the response to the previous question regarding the possible significance of the Lane, this advice has considered the following two factors:

- Historical context of the area
Aesthetic consideration of the lane

- **Historical context considerations**

This enquiry has consulted the Wagga Wagga Heritage Study for guidance as to whether the layout or configuration of other streets, particularly Wollundry Avenue, in the area around Cooedong Lane lends additional significance to the Lane. A distinguishing feature of properties in the vicinity is the lack of a road along the frontage of the properties dividing the Lagoon from the lots. The Plan illustrates that this approach occurs to three of the street blocks out of four, which line the northern side of the Lagoon. On the southern side of the Lagoon, The Esplanade provides a road between the properties and the lagoon and associated landscapes and waterfronts.

The historical research within the Wagga Wagga Heritage Study informs that development to the southern side of the lagoon where the Esplanade exists was pursued after the original establishment of Wagga Wagga to the northern side of the lagoon.

By comparison the earlier layout north of the lagoon resulted from the overlay of the regular street grid, extending uninterrupted from the centre of the town at Fitzmaurice Street. Development continues along these grid axes until natural barriers, such as the Lagoon, have intervened. This grid abuts the more natural alignment of the watercourse at what would then have been the edge of the settlement at this time. Placement of lots provided for the greatest yield, as opposed to any higher-order urban design intent, which is understandable. The use of Lanes was however, an innovation based on the need for a 'night-soil' service and has proven to be beneficial for circulation generally.

This is in contrast to the more deliberate Esplanade-type approach, where the layout is clearly more extensively adapted to the natural constraints and opportunities of the

setting. Had this more expansive design consideration been provided for the subdivision north of the lagoon, then the number of lots created would have been reduced and the layout made more complex. It is apparent that the intent during that earlier phase of Wagga Wagga's development was for efficiency in lot layout rather than design finesse and the layout derived from the alignment of Fitzmaurice Street as the centre and focus of the emerging city.

The differentiation that results at Wollundry Avenue is that a convenience is exchanged for an amenity. This is provided in the form of the pedestrianised frontage to Wollundry Lagoon, absent of vehicle traffic and parking. The configuration of Wollundry Avenue is peculiar to this location and this frontage, and like the other streetscape frontages, should be a focus of heritage management activities for the Conservation Area.

By contrast, Cooedong Lane serves the same functional purposes as other laneways in the Conservation Area. In the present context, this principally includes mainly vehicle access and storage. Dedicated vehicle storage is a mandatory requirement placed upon all laneways within the Conservation Area. Front street access is not accepted to reduce the requirement for proper vehicle storage to be placed to the rear.

Placing this function at the rear preserves the presentation of significant streetscapes and frontages. Cooedong Lane must fulfil these requirements whether a street exists at Wollundry Avenue or not, as do all laneways. As a result, it does not follow that the peculiarity of Wollundry Avenue has lends additional significance to Cooedong Lane, which itself is not peculiar relative to other lanes in either character or function.

In summary, the Surveyor has adopted a layout, which provided the greatest yield in the situation. This necessitated the absence of a formed roadway to Wollundry Avenue adjacent this part of the Lagoon.

- **Aesthetic considerations**

There are nominally 11 residential properties on the northern side of the Lagoon with rear access to Cooedong Lane. The Wollundry Avenue pathway provides a range of views from that are in some cases limited by hedging and garden landscaping to that where the house is fully displayed with a front garden and framing planting to the sides.

Within the Lane, the treatments vary, with the extreme where no fence or boundary definition remains, to partial fencing and ancillary shed or garage and finally the complete large shed or garage with vehicle doors and side gates.

The following elements contribute to or otherwise affect the Aesthetic significance of the Cooedong residential area. Where changes and erosions of significance have occurred, these are highlighted:

- The underlying flat topography occupied by the houses with the adjoining rising land to the north on that side of the Lane and the lower riparian area, occupied by the lagoon and associated landscaping, leave the buildings to dominate the setting;
- The lagoon watercourse and the distinctive species of low, medium height and mature trees in the vicinity are the predominant landscape elements while the mature tall trees in the front and rear yards of the properties are distinctive in the upper visual catchment. The increased density of development and the concern with leaf litter from the native trees indicates that tall trees within properties are a declining element of the character. The loss of the tree canopy means that this element is often not available to mitigate the impact of increased bulk and height.

- The period and style of the buildings in the vicinity varies from the early 1900s to the 1940s with the period from the inter war era being the main category. The character and style are generally that of the Bungalow with their typical distinctive elements including the face brickwork, front verandahs, decorative gables, overlapping roofs with lower to medium pitch, brick chimneys and asymmetrical plan forms. The buildings were generally compact with indoor living and service elements to the rear, front gardens and rear yards. The major change has been rear extensions to increase accommodation, locate living spaces to adjoin the rear yard and provision of substantial built accommodation for vehicles and storage. Generally, the streetscape to Wollundry Avenue and lagoon has remained intact or if not, is capable of enhancement through conservation and landscaping including planting and fencing. The changes to the Lane have included the loss of fencing and gates, the loss of mature tree planting, the replacement of steel garages with brick structures, the replacement of gates with roller shutter doors, the increase in the number and size of garage doors and the provision of vehicle standing areas on to the Lane replacing the fenced perimeter
- The subdivision pattern has generally remained to the south fronting the Lagoon while the provision of separate dwellings to the Lane would alter the pattern and use the Lane to a degree, noting that the subject dwellings have always utilised the Lane as their primary access as opposed to the dwellings fronting Freer Street where dual access is possible
- The scale and form of buildings: the change in development has generally occurred to the rear to the Lane and not the frontage to the Lagoon. Only one property appears to have an attic scaled extension within the envelope of the traditional building. The remaining buildings and their owners have elected to take up the ground level for additional built space. This has produced a loss of outdoor open space and planting. The recent construction of a first-floor separate dwelling at the rear of 17 Wollundry Avenue has produced a two-storey envelope, which has changed the scale – height and form – width and volume across the site as presented to the Lane. Photographs 10, 11 and 12 illustrate the change
- The setbacks to Wollundry Lagoon are characterised by the angular relationship of the subdivision to the Lagoon setting while the rear Lane boundaries presents a right-angled set of structures and fencing. The setbacks of the northern properties in the Lane differ from those to the Lagoon houses through the increased level of development and redevelopment, which has occurred. The key losses are to the Lane area and include the change from boundary and near boundary fencing and sheds/garages to vehicle standing areas. While there are always practical justifications for such changes, collectively they have suburbanised the Lane and altered an earlier and significant character.
- Materials, colours, style and details within the Lane are distinguished by the replacement of traditional steel sheeting with brickwork, garage doors and styling elements associated with residential design as opposed to shed and garage design. In some cases, fencing and gates have been removed to allow space for larger vehicle circulation and storage. The traditional character of the area on the Lagoon has been eroded by the loss of traditional planting in the front gardens and the loss of fencing & gates, which defines the property and provides gates to announce the residence.

The following sequence provides views along Coosedong Lane moving from East to West. The photos are taken to represent the views from the pedestrian level, which is that pertinent to the traditional character:



Figure 11 No 7 provides a vehicle manoeuvring space off the Lane with high brick walls and garage with gabled roof. The adjoining property No.9 builds closer to the Lane boundary and offers a brick garage structure with timber doors to the Lane and traditional gabled roof facing the Lane.



Figure 12 13 & 15 Wollundry Avenue provide vehicle setbacks to the Lane and two forms of brick garage. One displays a gable frontage with red brick walls and the larger uses the linear ridge with roof and two end gables.



Figure 13 A view of the properties, which address Coosedong Lane from the northern side and have frontages to Freer Street appear to have retained a more traditional character and presentation to the Lane. The elements contributing to this Laneway character consist of fencing and buildings closer to the Lane boundary, planting and fencing is more dominant than garages and a greater amount of tree planting in the yards.



Figure 14 View to the west of the new development at No.17.

Contrasting details in more contemporary forms include horizontal windows while strong colours such as the deep red fencing may appear to suit the heritage colour range but in the Lane setting, they visually dominate the more industrial and ancillary nature of this setting.



Figure 15 View looking east to view the bulk and scale of the new set against the existing garage.

The new attic level accommodation sits within the roofscapes from a distance however on close inspection; the change in height becomes more visually dominant.



Figure 16 View looking east with the garages to the adjoining properties at Nos. 21 & 23 noting the varied impacts between a flat roof, the use of brick, the lack of fencing and the varied setbacks.

While a flat roofed structure produces less bulk and height, the visual impact on the setting is a bulk, which is uncharacteristic of traditional buildings and their details. The general impact of roof colour is notable for the differing impacts – deep colours come forward given the contrast with the sky while the traditional light colours tend to blend into the sky and not dominate their setting.

The following brief sequence of photographs commencing from the western end nearby Beckwith Street illustrates the range and the distinguishing features of this section of Wollundry Avenue:



Figure 17 21 Wollundry Lagoon is a listed heritage item with substantial gardens and mature trees. The single storey brick building with dominant hipped roof and chimneys are the main elements visible from the public realm and the building is rare and distinctive for the period.



Figure 18 19 & 21 Wollundry avenue are traditional brick bungalows typical of the period with detailing to the gables, overlapping roofs and verandahs with short front gardens.



Figure 19 17 Wollundry Avenue is a rendered bungalow typical of the period with symmetrical layout and tiled roof with central porch and chimneys.



Figure 20 No. 15 is a contemporary brick house with dormer elements in the hipped steel roof with a bulk, form and materials intended to be sympathetic with the character while No. 13 is a typical brick bungalow with symmetrical plan, gabled roofs and elaborate details to the gables and verandah.



Figure 21 Nos. 9 & 11 Wollundry Avenue are distinctive earlier brick villas with hipped iron roofs, chimneys and verandahs.



Figure 22 No.7 is the last of the traditional settings with a traditional asymmetrical brick bungalow with timber posted verandah and steel roof with able to the projecting room.

As a general observation on the contributing elements, the fencing, gates, traditional open central garden and perimeter taller planting are key elements in the composition of these heritage properties.

Summary

The heritage significance of Cooedong Lane is the interpreted character derived from the successive redevelopment of the former ancillary structures fronting the southern side of the Lane in conjunction with the more traditional ancillary structures on the northern side of the Lane. This is set within the context of the modified trees and rear garden planting evident from the overhead views available behind the combination of brick and steel fencing and gates.

As a result of these considerations, this review has been unable to establish heritage significance particular to Cooedong Lane or that this significance has been retained.

Development in the laneway does not contribute to the heritage significance of the Wollundry Avenue and Freer Street frontages, which are themselves noted as significant streetscapes for the Heritage Conservation Area. Future development in the laneway will not necessarily detract from the significance of those streetscapes and will not be impacting upon any significance supposed to attach to Cooedong Lane itself.

3. *If Cooedong Lane represents a greater level of heritage significance than other laneways, would DCP controls be required to uphold that statement of significance? Would this be prohibitive to laneway development facilitated by Council's current draft DCP?*

While redevelopment of streetscapes and dwellings in the Conservation Area should clearly respect key attributes of those streetscapes and frontages, Cooedong Lane, like other laneways, has not been noted as such a streetscape. Cooedong Lane, relative to other laneways, has a reduced level of heritage significance when considering the elements, which characterise the laneways within the Heritage Conservation Area.

Within Cooedong Lane, successive redevelopment over the long-term has seen factors including materials, colours, setbacks and detailing overcome any significant character that may have existed in the laneway previously. The dilution is such that new development, including well-designed two-storey development, may be introduced without further degradation of character attributes subject to appropriate design. Such development can also avoid adverse impacts to the key streetscapes and frontages, which define the Wagga Wagga Heritage Conservation Area, and in particular those areas with Lanes.

As this inquiry has not been able to establish additional or particular heritage significance to Cooedong Lane, there is no basis available for additional site (lane) specific heritage controls at this location. It has however been able to establish that the character of development in the context of the Lane has become associated with the residence and in so doing lost the distinctive character of the Lane. Controls and guidelines to reinstate appropriate development, which result in a character fitting the Lane, would prove beneficial in enhancing the Heritage Conservation Area.

David Scobie
Heritage Advisor to Wagga Wagga City Council

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