

Mr Bob Chambers
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8 November 2019

Dear Bob

TSC STEVENSON LIBRARY MAJOR REFURBISHMENT SSD 8922

We write in response to the submission prepared by the Heritage Council, correspondence dated 3 October 2018 in respect to the project above.

It recommends five conditions for consideration and the first of those: *'the roof design shall be simplified to avoid visual competition with the Aspinall House'* is of concern to us.

As they note several items within the College campus are listed in the Woollahra LEP. As the listing authority a Heritage Officer from Council visited and inspected the site to better understand the context & assess the likely impact of the proposal on the heritage item. Under the *Heritage* heading of their report dated 2 October 2018 it states: ***'No objections are raised to the proposed Scottish Baronial style'***, they acknowledge that it has a ***'direct link to the local significance of the school'***.

The College has no record of officers from the Heritage Council visiting or inspecting the site or buildings. It appears that the assessment & the recommendations which followed were made from a desktop assessment only, they have not benefited from nor been informed by a site visit.

The Heritage Councils' assessment offers a series of criticisms set out in paragraph five, it provides no documentation in support of their claims.

Two points are factually incorrect:

- Firstly the claim that the proposed roof is higher than Aspinall House. We refer to drawing SSD1.02/17-212 S1 of the east elevation which describes the levels & roof form in context with Aspinall House, the proposed ridge line is below that of Aspinall's.

- Secondly that the proposal will overshadow Aspinall House. Given the location of the Library to the south east of Aspinall & its siting on the Oval at lower level this is not possible, we refer to the shadow diagram study drawings SSD1.02/17-412 S1 to SSD1.02/17-423 S1 which demonstrate both the existing shadow arrangements and the proposed shadow impacts. No new shadows are cast across Aspinall House as a result of the proposal.

Other criticisms use language which is more descriptive than substantive:

Complex

Oversized

High turrets

Diminish

Heavy ornate

They create a general impression that Aspinall will be adversely impacted by the proposal, without providing compelling or measurable evidence to support that proposition.

While a '*number of view points*' are referred to, the submission is silent as to their location nor does it define the actual impacts.

The SSD application considered view impacts on Aspinall House from public vantage points and prepared an analysis, which includes views to the House from Victoria Rd directly to the west and also at the service entry gates onto the Oval off Cranbrook Lane to the south east.

The *before* and *after* impacts are described in the following drawings:

SSD1.02/17-405 S1

SSD1.02/17-406 S1

and

SSD1.02/17-410 S1

The view analysis demonstrates that the Library is not and will not be visible beyond Aspinall House from Victoria Rd.

Both its north & west elevations are considered the primary frontages and the proposal doesn't detract from or impact views to Aspinall from these public vantage points, as it is not visible from these positions, is set back further from Victoria Road at a lower level to front the Oval.

Aspinall House is largely obscured by the current library structure when viewed at the public vantage point off Cranbrook Lane, with only part of the tower and a portion of ridge line visible beyond it.

While the partial view of the ridge line is lost in the proposal it is largely immaterial given that Aspinall is not visible beyond the Library in any case.

An assessment of view impact has also been prepared by the project heritage consultant JOHN OULTRAM HERITAGE AND DESIGN who notes:

'The library is set to the southwest following the footprint of the existing library and the replacement building will have a similar relationship to Aspinall House. From the oval there will be no greater intrusion into views to Aspinall than currently exist and views to Aspinall House from the east and northeast will be retained.'

Other matters raised by the Heritage Council have also been considered & Oultram's response is attached below for your consideration.

In summary the analysis demonstrates that the primary views towards Aspinall from public vantage points are unaffected by the proposal.

The first condition proposes that the roof design be simplified to avoid *'competition with Aspinall House'*.

We note that the proposed roof form follows the Scots Baronial style as an intrinsic and important part of the composition, unifying and completing the massing below into a coherent, articulated form.

Modifying or simplifying it will not benefit the proposal nor have any measurable effect on Aspinall, as demonstrated above.

This matter has been dealt with in more detail by DR ALASTAIR DISLEY, the architectural historian who has been collaborating on the project: *'without the confident expression of the towers and roofline elements, the treatment of the lower elements becomes incoherent, and the massing tends back towards the ponderous failings of the current building. The complex elements do not weigh down the roof massing – they lighten it.'*

His detailed response to the Heritage Councils' correspondence is attached below.

We have no comment on the other four conditions proposed.

Thank you

Yours sincerely



John Cockings

