

Department of Planning and Environment  
22-33 Bridge Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2001



## **O'CONNELL STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL**

### **O'Connell Street, Parramatta – SSD 15\_7372**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Australian Garden History Society is the leader in concern for, and conservation of, significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. It has three branches in NSW and this submission is made on behalf of the Sydney and Northern NSW (i.e., the local) branch (the Branch).

We are pleased to provide this letter of support for the adaptive reuse of the old King's School site in Parramatta as a new public school and commend the design overall for its consideration of the comprehensive Conservation Management Plan and its addendum of the site.

We would however like to object to the removal of Tree 74, a mature *Ceratonia siliqua* (Carob Tree) located at the southwest corner of the main façade of the school. The reasons for our objection are as follows,

#### **1. The prominent location of Tree 74**

The tree is one of a pair that flanks the southern main façade of the school. The matching pair (Tree no. 2), located on the southeast corner of the building, is proposed to be retained. The two ornamental evergreen trees are prominent in many historic views of the main façade and provide a horticulturally sympathetic contribution to the setting when viewed from the south.

#### **2. The significant age and species of Tree 74**

The tree is one of several trees on the site that have been identified as being over 100 years old. The carob bean tree is rare in Sydney and is possibly a remnant of the School Gardens (p57, Statement of Heritage Impact, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Heritage, 1/06/16). There is a specimen of a similar age and size (planted c1820s – 1830s) at *Denbigh* at Cobbitty. A comprehensive arboricultural assessment of the tree in 2010 for Mr Makegood Pty Ltd, considered that in consideration of its heritage significance, the life of the tree could be extended by 'improvement to the cultural (growing) conditions surrounding the tree, including improving the soil fertility and moisture holding capacity and undertaking General Crown Maintenance will improve

the general appearance of the tree, its health and vigour and structural integrity' (p8, Tree Health and Hazard Report, Earthscape Horticultural, June 2010).

**3. Tree 74 is identified as having High Significance in the Statement of Heritage Impact**

The tree is identified as of High Significance on the Levels of Significance Diagram (Figure 93, Statement of Heritage Impact, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Heritage, 1/06/16). All other trees of high significance are proposed to be retained.

**4. An alternative path design would retain Tree 74**

The tree is proposed to be removed for the widening of an existing perimeter path to the building. The path widening at this location is not considered reasonable justification for the removal of such a significant tree and it is possible for alternative design solutions to be found where this tree can be kept within a generous garden bed.

In addition we would provide the following comments,

- The existing small-leaved privet hedge (graded as moderate significance) along the main façade of the school should be replaced with a similar non-invasive small leaved species that can be maintained at under 1 metre in height in association with an arris rail timber fence (1.2m).
- Interpretation of the tradition of cultivation of plants on the site with the Parramatta Agricultural and Horticultural Society and its experimental fruit garden on the site should be provided. The proposed 'Learning Garden' (6.11.6, Statement of Heritage Impact, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer Heritage, 1/06/16) should include fruit tree plantings however this area cannot be seen on the landscape plan.

In conclusion, we request that the proposal not be approved in the current form. The proposal should recognise and preserve the significance of its rich landscape heritage including retention of visually prominent landscape features such as Tree 74 and the privet hedge and reference to its earliest use by the Parramatta Agricultural and Horticultural Society.

We would be happy to discuss points made in this letter if that is of assistance. Please contact me at the address below.

Yours sincerely

**Susan North**

Executive Committee, Sydney & Northern NSW Branch  
Australian Garden History Society

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August 2016