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Department of Planning and Environment  
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Sydney NSW 2000.



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10<sup>th</sup> October, 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

**Re: The University of Sydney: Camperdown-Darlington Campus**

SSD 13\_6123 Campus Improvement Program 2014-2020 for Camperdown-Darlington Campus

The Australian Garden History Society is the lead advocate in concern for, and conservation of significant cultural landscapes and historic gardens through committed, relevant and sustainable action. It has three branches in NSW; this submission is made on behalf of the Sydney and Northern NSW branch.

We write regarding the concept landscape masterplan by Clouston Associates (CLM CA), the revised Grounds Conservation Management Plan 2014 (GCMP 2014) and the Campus Improvement Program (CIP). These documents together will impact on the overall cultural landscape of the University of Sydney. We welcome these documents as a formal acknowledgement of the esteemed place this cultural landscape holds within many circles in Australia and overseas including academia, landscape architectural, architectural and planning professions, the local community and general public at large.

The AGHS values the grounds of the university and this year (27/07/14), in recognition of the importance of the historical landscape, the Branch led a successful History Garden Talk by Christine Hay, landscape architect and co author of the revised Grounds CMP. Members were delighted to explore the extent of the grounds and the Camellia collection along Science Road. The charm of the gracious gardens, cloistered courtyards and park like grounds, the stories of its broadscale landscape development and their significant influential characters were appreciated. Highlights included an overview of Professor E.G. Waterhouse's and Professor L. Wilkinson's exceptional contribution to the university's aesthetic, and the role of E. Blacket, and other Government Architects such as J. Barnet, W.L. Vernon and G. McRae in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Branch is also involved with and a supporter of the Eryldene Trust and Foundation that manages the nationally significant historic house and garden where Professor E.G. Waterhouse planted, researched and developed his propagating techniques for camellias. The direct link between Eryldene and the University of Sydney is highly regarded by the Branch. The Branch is therefore supportive of proposed plans to showcase, promote and manage the exceptional park like grounds of the university to ensure that it remains valued and relevant historically, aesthetically and scientifically.

Certainly the Branch supports that all visitors have easy access to appreciating the cultural landscape of the university and the aesthetic responses to topography and entry that directed its early design development. These fundamental sequential responses of views, vistas, and axes, underpin the visual beauty of the place today. It is strongly advised that changes proposed to the aesthetics of the place be influenced and guided by landscape heritage experts using best practice methods.

The Branch believes that the proposals in the draft landscape masterplan, focused mostly on the changes proposed by the CIP, show a limited response to the university's cultural landscape legacy and historical landscape fabric. The scale of the masterplan allows limited scope nevertheless the analysis which precedes it is more about function than opportunity. Comments include:

- We commend the principles of WSUD and ESD proposed throughout the document, also the concepts incorporating Indigenous culture and involvement, community gardens and green roofs.
- Principles that allow for a permeable and connected campus are greatly supported and could be further explored.
- The removal of roadways (bitumen roadways) for the creation of pedestrian / shared zone (with the retention of historical fabric such as kerbs) needs to be embraced. This will further enhance the park-like setting of the university.
- The proposed principles for signage, public artwork and lighting, and the document generally, lack historic interpretative objectives.
- Additional points to the principles for furniture, bicycle racks, signage and fixtures should be added to clearly state that these items need to be carefully sited and are not to be housed in landscape beds, or within the tree preservation zones (TPZ) of trees nor in the middle of lawns. Poorly located BBQ's on the campus has spoilt many landscape

spaces. The furniture palette of these elements should be reconsidered as they are drab and provide little aesthetic enhancement to the setting.

- The university has a plethora of accretions on its roofs that greatly detract from the integrity of its architecture. Harvested water (in rain water tanks), solar cells and the like should be carefully sited so as not to add to the visual pollution of the campus's rooftops.
- The Branch is highly supportive of the suggested integrated approach to the landscape management of its cultural landscape within the heritage curtilage of the university. Particularly engaging and building important partnerships with the colleges' landscape managers, the RPA hospital and the City of Sydney managers of Victoria Park. These cooperative connections need to be established for the future management and conservation of the cultural landscape.
- The use of the fig, jacaranda and brush box as the main tree palette should be enhanced and conserved. The expanded tree palette should be developed from the numerous successful existing species found on the site. The use of a local species palette and habitat corridors, as established in prior landscape schemes, should be maintained and interwoven into any new landscape proposals to maintain consistency and the introduction of new modern plant cultivars should be avoided.
- The consideration of the university at its broadest scale offers many landscape opportunities. The CIP however will have a great impact on its visual landscape character and the footprint of the place due to the sheer scale of the proposed buildings. The landscape opportunities and the park like grounds sadly will be greatly reduced should this development go ahead and the very heart of the significance of the site reduced. Therefore Policy 1, 2 and 9 (CLM CA p33) will be impossible to achieve.

The precincts and the more detailed landscape treatment around the CIP is outlined below:

#### **Precinct A: Merewether**

The proposed footprint of the building envelope impinges onto the heritage listed brick wall along Darlington Road, associated with the Institute Building. How the new building and the historical fabric of the wall will interact is yet to be understood. A wide landscape buffer zone between the wall and the new building would be desirable.

According to the visual representation in the CIP 3D plans the proposed buildings appear greatly overscaled for the site, this includes the topographical high point to the area where the University Regiment resides. As the entry to the university from City Road, this elevated site could have a generous feature landscape treatment to the apex of the property, and be made to signify the entry into the park-like setting of the place. The proposed building, across from the Noel Martin Recreation Centre, has a mean, tight alley between it and the

adjacent Bio-Chemistry and Microbiology Building. Here an opportunity to create a vista to the Old Darlington School is lost. A balance between the built and soft forms of the university is not evident generally in the CIP and contradicts the 'Precinct Identity' principle identified in the Urban Design Principles document (pg 1) which emphasises responding to 'permeable pedestrian networks'.

### **Precinct B: City Road**

An opportunity to create greater connection to Victoria Park by widening the opening between the university and the park at the intersection of Cleveland Street could be achieved by the removal of / or part of International House. The proposed configuration of new buildings along City Road although envelopes provides little inspired response to its environment. There is a missed opportunity here for an improved generous link to Victoria Park and the older sector of the campus across City Road, for permeability of buildings and the development of a park like landscape environment. The linear arrangement of the notional buildings responds to the road grid and not the larger landscape context. Sketch 42 in the CLM CA evokes pathways between these notional building footprints to City Road at ground level; this will not in fact be the case.

Another missed opportunity, to create a strong visual marker in the landscape at the apex of the triangular intersection of Maze Crescent, has not been picked up.

Also the Plaza opening onto Maze Crescent from the Engineering precinct should not be paved but be considered to be a mostly soft space of garden beds and turf repeating the same treatment of courtyards throughout the campuses. The conversion of Maze Crescent into a pedestrian friendly shared zone however is applauded. The reuse of existing heritage fabric is greatly encouraged.

The sketch on CLM CA pg 43 is distorted, this vista, showing a tree lined avenue does not correspond with the plan on pg 42

### **Precinct C: Engineering**

The permeable pedestrian networks proposed in this area need to be further developed to allow generous spaces between building as walkways / view corridors in keeping with the collegiate language of the campus grounds. The notional building footprint and the entry proposal (CLM CA sk 44) will eliminate many existing trees depleting the character of the area. The sketch from Shepherd Street CLM CA pg 45 does not accurately explain the proposal, in fact the scale of the buildings, both existing and proposed are much larger, and the entry location is shown further east than in reality. The steps adjacent to the Rose Building off the pedestrian walkway are inappropriate at that point due to the steep level change and need to be moved further west, this will also retain the existing garden bed.

There should be little to no encroachment on the central lawn and its existing trees, so the proposal of canopy cover is not agreed. Opportunities to address the P.N.Russell Memorial and Column have been ignored in the plan. These significant 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage listed elements could be juxtaposed with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Darlington School Building. The existing street trees to Shepherd Street don't need upgrading.

### **Precinct D: Health**

From the pedestrian path along Western Avenue, looking south west, in front of Wesley College, a vista up to St Andrews spire is evident, a relic of an early response by designers and custodians to the landscape of the site. This significant view and university experience needs to be addressed by the CIP proposal and retained. The urban design principles document, 'Axes and Vistas' pg 1 needs to emphasis the retention of these in a stronger and clearer statement, as it is these that create the visual significance of the place.

The opening up of a vista along Western Avenue towards Ross Street entry, by the removal of an existing building, across the ovals, is an exciting prospect. The widening of Western Avenue however, and the removal of college fences to allow for encroachment on college gardens for pedestrian access, requires further detailed consideration. Limiting vehicular entry off Carillion Avenue and proposing a shared pedestrian zone is a more appropriate response. When assessing the concept landscape masterplan on site it is evident that numerous mature trees will be removed (CLM CA sk 36) , this is not justified in the proposal. The opportunity to create a generous landscape amenity between the university and the RPA is encouraged, it being in the proximity of an original creekline.

### **Precinct E: Life Sciences**

The CIP proposes over sized building envelopes (Ross St west and Ross Street east) overhead and flanking the Ross Street entry, dwarfing and overshadowing its surrounds. The top right image on CMP CA pg39 demonstrates this dehumanizing proposal. This is the first departure from the entrance language of the university heritage curtilage established by Wilkinson. These building footprints should be greatly lowered, set back and their envelope stepped in from both the entry and boundary to allow a wide band of amenity landscape to soften their bulk.

The landscape masterplan proposes an entry plaza that fails to recognise the existing significant trees and lawn to the front of J.D. Stewart (the *Poplar deltoides* is retained), significant to the cultural landscape legacy of the place. This entry plaza solution requires more development. There is no need to remove tree planting to the periphery of the oval to form a gap, as eventually the vista will be evident through trunks. These trees are necessary to soften the entry off Ross Street.

The protection and enhancement of the green edge to the university along Parramatta Road and all its boundaries is greatly encouraged as is underground car parks.

**Precinct F: Macleay / Edgeworth David Museum**

The landscape masterplan doesn't address the proposed building envelope to the rear of the Macleay Building evident from Parramatta Road. From the CIP 3D plans this notional building footprint ignores the large trees significant to the university, and its boundary, in the vicinity. This edge is significant to the heritage curtilage of the place; any development in this area requires delicate handling, should be low key and have negligible visual impact on its significance.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Quoyale', written in a cursive style.

James Quoyale  
**Secretary**  
**Sydney & Northern NSW Branch**  
**Australian Garden History Society**

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