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SYDNEY NSW 2001

By email: [andy.nixey@planning.nsw.gov.au](mailto:andy.nixey@planning.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Mr Nixey,

**Modification 4 Design Development Application for Sydney Modern - SSD 6471**

Thank you for your referral dated 16 November 2020 inviting comments from the Heritage Council of NSW on the above State Significant Development modification proposal.

The Art Gallery NSW (AGNSW) is not listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR). However, the AGNSW is surrounded on three sides by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain (RBG&D) which is listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR No 1070) under the NSW Heritage Act 1977. Therefore, whilst the AGNSW itself is not within the RBG&D listing boundary, the proposed Sydney Modern galleries will be located within the adjoining SHR listing boundary.

The following documents for the modified proposal have been reviewed:

- Section 4.55 Modification – Art Gallery of NSW Expansion Project – Sydney Modern, prepared by Architectus, dated 6 November 2020
- Appendix A – Landscape Plans
- Appendix B – Landscape Design Narrative
- Appendix C – Landscape Statement
- Appendix D – Architectural Plans
- Appendix E – Heritage Impact Statement

The following modifications have been noted in Modification 3 of SSD 6471:

1. Addition of reflection pools either side to the front entry of the existing Gallery building;
2. Reuse and interpretation of heritage walls in front of the existing Gallery to their original alignment;
3. Enhanced pedestrian entry into The Domain from Art Gallery Road opposite the existing Gallery building;
4. Changes to the Entry Plaza, including to tree layout and addition of a “rain catcher” at ground level to capture rainwater from the glazed roof canopy of the Entry Plaza;
5. The land bridge incorporates a ‘gathering space’ with a low wall for public seating that captures sightlines to the harbour and is bounded by a circular path system and sandstone channel capturing episodic water from the glazed roof canopy of the Entry Plaza and an elevated berm (‘Crescent Hill’) as the site for a major art commission to be delivered at the Sydney Modern Project building’s opening, as well as providing an acoustic barrier to the motorway below;
6. Extant paved area on the land adjacent to the land bridge and adjoining the existing Gallery is proposed to be reinstated as a terrace area with trellis structure and planting

over, accessed predominantly internally from the existing Gallery and bounded by a water feature;

7. Security measures to Art Gallery Road frontage;
8. Design changes including planting areas, plant palette, tree numbers, path systems, retaining walls/seating, lighting, and landscape materials and finishes.

### **Heritage Impacts of the Proposal**

1. The addition of reflection pools above ground to either side of the existing Gallery building are located beyond the SHR curtilage. These above ground reflection pools are located within the Vernon curtilage which is of high significance and has remained largely unchanged since the early twentieth century. It is recommended that the pool height and footprint be reduced as much as possible to ensure that the impact upon historical views and the architect's original intent and design narrative be minimised as they may potentially appear as visual intrusions upon the Vernon Wing curtilage.
2. The dwarf sandstone walls were originally intended to be removed and interpreted as part of the proposed new paving. The modification to reinstate it to its original location is considered to have a positive heritage outcome. It is recommended that an interpretation sign/plaque be installed to create public awareness of the reinstatement of the wall and its significance.
3. Improvements to the pedestrian entry into the Domain from the Art Gallery Road is considered a positive outcome as it enhances the existing entrance and ensures that it is continued to be perceived as the primary access point into the Art gallery. The recommendations for approval regarding the pedestrian access along Art Gallery Road should be retained. It is recommended that any pedestrian control element is visually recessive and lightweight and does not impede the existing pedestrian entry to the gallery.
4. The introduction of a 'rain catcher' to the canopy roof and associated sandstone channel requires further detail. The extent, height and bulk of these element and their subsequent visual impact is unclear at this stage. It is recommended that this element be designed in consultation with the project heritage advisor to ensure the rain catcher and the sandstone channels are located and designed to be sympathetic to the character of the existing gallery.
5. As recorded in the heritage consultant's report, the proposed extension of the turf to the edge of the existing building could potentially exacerbate the impact to historic fabric due to moisture ingress. It is recommended, as per the advice of the heritage consultant, further consideration be given to the extent of turf required, reasons from the existing damp issues be identified, and mitigation measures be applied to address the damage as part of the works on site.
6. The location of the trellis garden and pergola between the existing building and the new structure would result in substantial visual intrusion upon the significant elevation of the Art Gallery Building. It is recommended that consideration be given to relocate the pergola with a substantial setback from the Art Gallery Building to allow it to be viewed in the round and to retain its open setting.
7. The large circular open area referred to as a gathering space has effectively been converted into an informal amphitheatre. While the public seating areas are considered acceptable, further consideration should be given to the extent of designed landscaping and its impact upon the symmetric formal geometry of the Vernon curtilage. Details of the design should be prepared in consultation with the heritage consultant to ensure that the landscape reflects the extension and aesthetic of the RGB&D.
8. At this time, details of the proposed security measures have not been provided. It is recommended that any security measures required in the form of bollards, pools,

retaining walls and/or plantation be introduced sparingly, in a sympathetic and recessive design, as they have a potential to be visually intrusive.

9. The proposed tree plantation located within the existing forecourt of the Art Gallery Building is expected to have substantial impact upon the existing historic and open view lines to Art Gallery building. As recommended by the heritage consultant in the supplied documentation, the potentially large and dense grove of red bloodwood trees proposed in this location should be reconsidered and further investigations be undertaken to find a more suitable species.
10. The Entry Plaza trees are proposed to be planted in pots rather than in the ground. At this time, the applicant has not provided detail on the age, height or canopy size of the trees. It is stated that these trees would be moved based on the use of the Entry Plaza and that it is unknown how the trees would fair being under-cover. This raises concern if these trees would remain as part of the Entry Plaza in the long-term and if they would satisfy the conditions of consent on tree plantation.
11. The additional retaining walls, seating, pathways proposed as part of the modification may require further consideration as they may create visual clutter across the site. It is recommended that the extent of interventions reconsidered on the advice of the applicant's heritage consultant to retain the natural landscape aesthetic and of the Art Gallery and the RBG&D.
12. Works required to improve universal accessibility on site including lifts, ramps and parking is considered acceptable.
13. Additional tree plantations, colour schemes and material finishes are considered acceptable, however, it is recommended that the detailed design be undertaken in consultation with a heritage consultant to ensure that impact to historic views, sightlines and the aesthetic of the surrounding locality is minimised.

If you have any questions regarding the above advice, please contact Mariyam Nizam, Senior Heritage Assessment Officer at Heritage NSW, on 8837 6375 or [Mariyam.Nizam@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Mariyam.Nizam@environment.nsw.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Steven Meredith**  
Regional Manager,  
South  
Heritage NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet  
**As Delegate of the Heritage Council of NSW**  
1 December 2020