

**Historical Heritage Constraints Assessment
Coffs Harbour Cultural and Civic Centre
23-31 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour 2144 NSW**

Coffs Harbour City Council LGA

Prepared for GeoLINK

On behalf of the Proponent: Coffs Harbour City Council

Prepared by Niche Environment and Heritage | 20 June 2019



Document control

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Project background and aims	1
1.2 Project Area location	1
1.3 Proposed development	1
1.4 Methods	2
1.5 Authorship and acknowledgements.....	2
2. Regulatory and assessment framework	3
2.1 Introduction	3
2.2 Commonwealth and National legislation	3
2.3 State legislation	3
2.4 Local government planning instruments.....	4
2.5 Historical heritage listings	4
3. Historical context	5
3.1 Preamble.....	5
3.2 Early settlement of Coffs Harbour	5
3.3 Regional development of Coffs Harbour	5
3.4 The Coffs Harbour port facilities	6
3.5 Regional rail	6
3.6 Coffs Harbour development	6
3.7 Impacts of the World Wars	7
3.8 Settlement in Gordon Street	7
4. Physical Analysis.....	10
4.1 Coffs Harbour Heritage Study.....	10
4.2 Precinct Analysis: Gordon Street Library and Gallery.....	11
5. Site inspection	12
5.1 Introduction	12
6. Conclusions and recommendations	16
6.1 Conclusion	16
6.2 Recommendations.....	16
References	17

List of Figures

Figure 1: Location of Project Area within a regional context (Source: Proponent, LPI and Niche).....	1
Figure 2: Project Area (Source: Proponent, LPI and Niche).....	2
Figure 3: Parish and Town Maps (From left to right: 1906 Parish Map, and 1971 Town Map (Source: Proponent, LPI, NSW Land Registry Services and Niche)	8
Figure 4: Historical Aerials (From left to right: 1952, and 1984 and 2019) (Source: Proponent, LPI, NSW Spatial Services and Niche).....	9

List of Plates

Plate 1: General view of Project Area facing north	13
Plate 2: General view of the Project Area facing south-west.....	13
Plate 3: General view of Project Area facing north-west, showing the central brick building.....	13
Plate 4: General view of the northern structures facing north-west	13
Plate 5: View of 23 Gordon Street.....	13
Plate 6: View of 23 Gordon Street building from Gordon Street facing west	13
Plate 7: Detail of the front entrance to the 23 Gordon Street building from the eastern side	14
Plate 8: View underneath the 23 Gordon Street building showing its brick footings, facing north	14
Plate 9: View showing the rear of the GeoLINK building with asphalt car park, facing east	14
Plate 10: View of car park behind the GeoLINK building, and also the south side of the central brick building facing north-north east.	14
Plate 11: View of the space along the central brick building facing north west	14
Plate 12: View of the space along the central brick building facing south east.....	14
Plate 13: View looking north showing the old Methodist church building located outside the Project Area to the south west.....	15
Plate 14: View showing the northern portion of the Project Area facing north-north west, also visible is the weatherboard cottage to the north, located outside of the Project Area	15

1. Introduction

1.1 Project background and aims

Niche Environment and Heritage Pty Ltd (Niche) was commissioned by GeoLINK to prepare a Historic Heritage Constraints Assessment (HHCA) for the proposed Coffs Harbour Council Project to develop a Cultural and Civic Space at 23-31 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour NSW (hereafter referred to as the 'Project Area').

1.2 Project Area location

The Project Area is situated at 23–31 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour, NSW 2450 (Lot 20/6/DP758258, Lot B//DP346105, and Lot 123//DP749233). It is situated within the Coffs Harbour region of NSW, in the Parish of Tomaree, in the County of Fitzroy, and in the Coffs Harbour City Council Local Government Area. The Project Area is approximately 0.32 hectares, and its location and extent are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

1.3 Proposed development

Council is proposing to re-develop the Project area as a Cultural & Civic Space. The proposed works would involve the following:

- The demolition of all existing buildings and infrastructure across the Project area;
- The construction of the cultural and civic centre which would include:
 - a Regional Gallery,
 - a central Library,
 - a regional Museum,
 - multipurpose meeting rooms,
 - co-working space,
 - function space (including use as Council Chambers),
 - Council staff office space,
 - A customer service area,
 - a museum shop,
 - a cafe, and
 - car parking,

The project maximises the utilisation of 23–31 Gordon Street site and enables the development of 2 Castle Street and Duke Street (Rigby House) in line with the City Centre Master Plan (including residential/mixed use). The project supports the *Coffs Harbour City Centre Masterplan 2031* vision and objectives.

The Coffs Harbour City Council (CHCC) has recently endorsed the Cultural and Civic Space project's Concept Business Case to progress the project into Schematic Design phase. Although the approval pathway for the project has yet to be determined, this HHCA has been undertaken as supporting documentation.

1.4 Methods

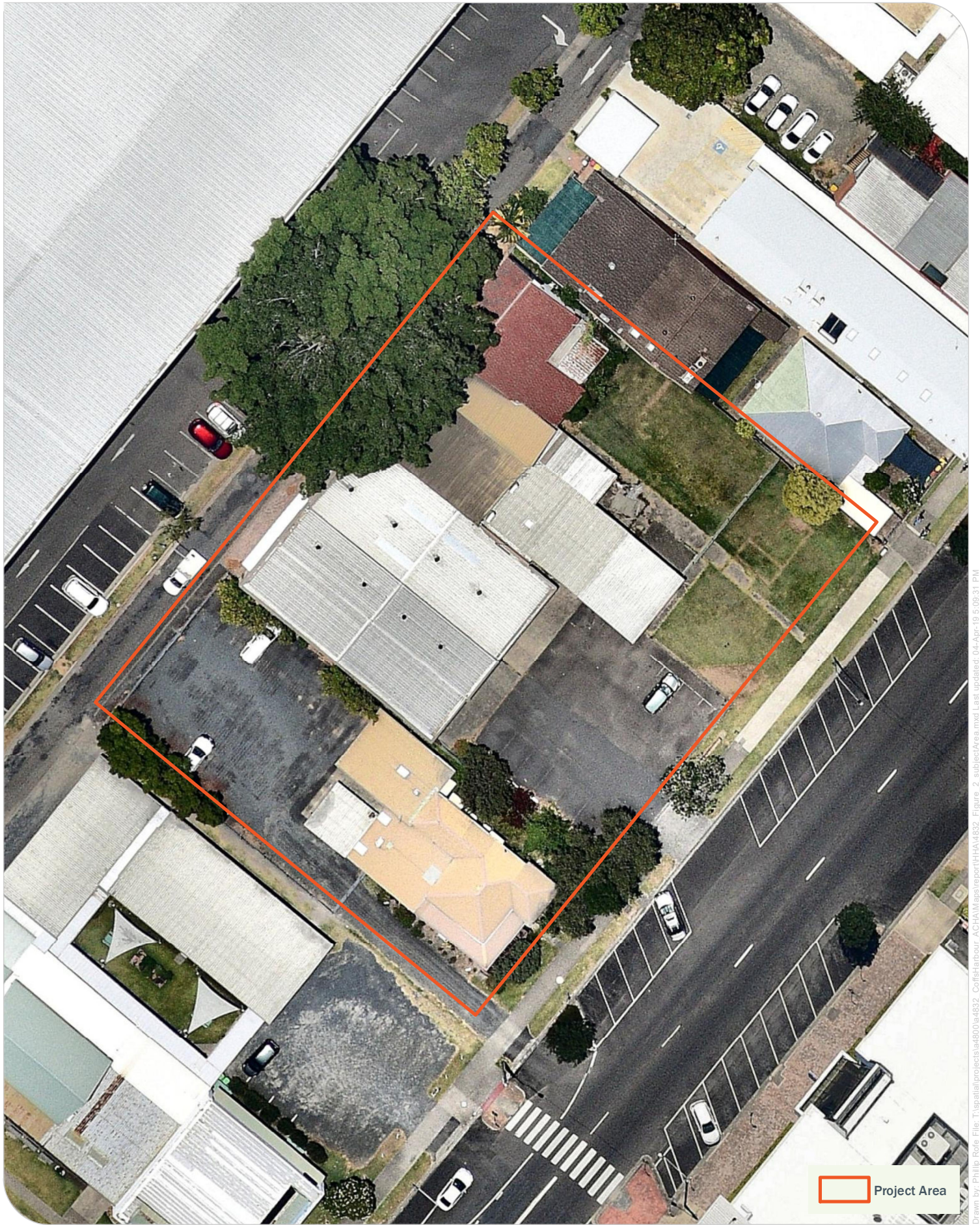
This Historic Heritage Constraints Assessment has been prepared with reference to The Burra Charter: *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance* (2013) and to the best practice standards set out by the NSW Heritage Division. The relevant best practice guidelines include 'Assessing Significance' (Heritage Office (former), 2001) and *Assessing Significance for Historical Archaeological Sites and 'Relics'* (Heritage Council, 2009). Reference is also made to the *Coffs Harbour Local Environment Plan* (LEP) 2013 and the *Coffs Harbour Development Control Plan* (DCP) 2015.

1.5 Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been prepared by Samuel Ward (Heritage Consultant, Niche) and reviewed by Joshua Madden (Team Leader – Historic Heritage, Niche). Technical assistance has been provided by Phillip Rofe (Senior GIS Consultant).



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2. Regulatory and assessment framework

2.1 Introduction

This section provides a summary of relevant legislation and associated planning instruments designed to protect and conserve significant heritage items and their values.

2.2 Commonwealth and National legislation

2.2.1 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places. Under the EPBC Act, protected heritage items of significance are listed on the National Heritage List (NHL) or the Commonwealth Heritage List (CHL). The NHL provides protection to places of cultural significance to the nation of Australia, while the CHL comprises natural, Aboriginal and historic heritage places owned and controlled by the Commonwealth.

2.3 State legislation

2.3.1 Heritage Act 1977

The Heritage Act 1977 affords statutory protection to those items identified as having heritage significance and which form part of the NSW heritage record. The Act defines a heritage item as “a place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct”. Items that are assessed as having State heritage significance are listed on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR). Proposals to alter, damage, move or destroy heritage items listed on the SHR (or protected by an Interim Heritage Order [IHO]), require an approval under s60 of the Heritage Act 1977.

Archaeological features and deposits are afforded statutory protection by the ‘relics provisions’ of the Act. A relic is defined as “any deposit, artefact, object or material evidence that relates to the settlement of the area that comprises NSW, not being Aboriginal settlement, and is of State or local heritage significance”. Land disturbance or excavation that will or is likely to result in a relic being discovered, exposed, moved, damaged or destroyed is prohibited under the provisions of the Act, unless carried out in accordance with a permit issued under s140 or s139 of the Act.

2.3.2 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) establishes the framework for cultural heritage values to be formally assessed in the land use planning process in NSW. The EP&A Act also requires local governments to prepare planning instruments, such as Local Environmental Plans to provide guidance on the level of environmental assessment required.

2.3.3 State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP)

State Environmental Planning Policies or SEPP's are environmental planning instruments that deal with matters of State or Regional environmental planning significance. The effect of a SEPP is that it can override a LEP and can prohibit certain types of development or can allow development in a certain zone. In the case of this project the development will be submitted under the State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) (2011) Schedule 1 State significant development—general (13).

2.4 Local government planning instruments

2.4.1 Local Environmental Plan

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) establishes the framework for cultural heritage values to be formally assessed in the land use planning process in NSW. The EP&A Act also requires local governments to prepare planning instruments, such as Local Environmental Plans to provide guidance on the level of environmental assessment required.

Heritage portions of the LEP are found in Part 5 Clause 5.10 of each LGA LEP. The Project area is informed by the *Coffs Harbour Local Environment Plan* (LEP) 2013. In addition, the *Coffs Harbour Development Control Plan* (DCP) 2015 and the *Coffs Harbour City Centre Masterplan 2031* are also relevant to the proposed development.

2.5 Historical heritage listings

The historic heritage places, relics and items are listed on both statutory and non-statutory registers. Depending upon the significance level ascribed heritage items are held at federal, State and local levels.

The federal heritage designations are maintained by the Commonwealth Department of Environment and include the Commonwealth Heritage List and the non-statutory National Heritage List. These lists can be searched online via the Australian Heritage Database. Historic heritage items of state significance are found on the NSW State Heritage Register (SHR) and made available on the NSW Heritage Inventory. Places of local significance are included in Local Environmental Plans.

Searches of the above databases were undertaken with no heritage items identified within a 500 metre buffer around the Project area.

3. Historical context

3.1 Preamble

This section presents a summary historical background for the Project area and has been produced from secondary sources including the *Coffs Harbour Heritage Study* (2015) among other sources.

3.2 Early settlement of Coffs Harbour

Coffs Harbour takes its name from John Korff (1799-1870) who was an early settler and shipbuilder who emigrated to NSW in 1835. While the events surrounding Korff's 'discovery' of the location which became known as Coffs Harbour are ambiguous, after Korff's visit the *NSW Government Gazette* harbour in December 1861 declared reserve 15 at the area which is now Coffs Harbour (CHHS, 2015, p10).

The early settlers of Coffs Harbour were predominately selectors who engaged in the lucrative pursuit of cedar for logging. The trees were roughly milled on site, and then floated out to waiting ships using the tidal estuary of Coffs Creek. Bongil Creek was also used and the town of Sawtell was settled at same time (CHHS, 2015: p11).

After the initial period of cedar harvesting, lands cleared by this process were gradually turned over to farming as supplies of cedar were exhausted. Coffs Harbour was still an isolated fledgling community reliant on sporadic visits by coastal trading vessels (CHHS, 2015: p15).

Settlement of Coffs Harbour was intensified by the discovery of Gold in 1881 in the Orara Valley, north-west of Coffs Harbour (CHHS, 2015: p14). While the gold rush which followed did not develop a lasting industry it stimulated the construction of infrastructure and services, and created an influx of people into the region, some of whom stayed and settled when the gold ran out.

3.3 Regional development of Coffs Harbour

As the early period of development at Coffs Harbour was drawing to a close, the economic impetus of the region was sustained by new industries and infrastructure projects. The associated building, clearing and settling as a result has shaped the landscape of the region. This period of development has continued to the present, as the differing priorities of the last century have left their mark.

One of the early replacements for Cedar-getting in the region was Dairy farming. As settlers logged all the viable timber on their selections they were often looking for new ways to produce income from the land, and due to the requirement for bullocks to move logged timber, cows for dairying were easy to acquire. The introduction of mechanised equipment for processing milk to NSW in 1884 revolutionised the industry, allowing transport of derivative products such as cream and butter to new markets further afield (CHHS, 2015: p17). The development of cooperatives (such as the Orara Dairy Farmers Cooperative Society, founded 1897 (CHHS, 2015: p18)) for collective distribution and marketing also increased the value and sustainability of this industry. As a result the dairy industry had considerable influence throughout Coffs Harbour's history.

The move from short-term industries to more sustainable land use developed as a result of increased ease of transportation allowing for greater export capabilities of produce, particularly sugar and bananas. Sugar was one of the earliest crops attempted in the Coffs region, and was successful on a small scale. The lack of a jetty and the fluctuating price of sugar in the 1880s meant that this crop was not commercially viable in the region (CHHS, 2015: p16).

The production of bananas for export was far more successful. Early production began in the 1880s, but was still a small industry by the time of the First World War. In the inter-war period, banana growing had become firmly established. By the end of the Second World War production had increased significantly with the region known for its banana farming. By the latter half of the 20th Century the industry had retracted with the repurposing of agricultural land for urban growth and tourism.

One industry which was a staple of the region in the pre-WWII period was Hardwood timber production. Although less profitable than the early Cedar-getting, the construction of the Coffs Harbour jetty and advancements in the local milling processes helped to make this industry economically viable. The industry also benefitted from the development of the Coffs regions with local hardwood utilised as a building material. The companies involved set up tram lines between Coffs Harbour Jetty and sawmills located near to the logging camps, and Coffs Harbour had several tram lines for the transfer of timber for export. When the railway was built, these some of these lines were lifted up, while others were incorporated into sidings of the railway infrastructure. The timber export industry in the Coffs region operated from the 1890s through to the period leading up to WWI, as timber stocks became depleted. It however was a major influence on growth and was a sustaining factor of Coffs Harbour's early development (CHHS, 2015: pp20-22).

3.4 The Coffs Harbour port facilities

The need to upgrade the arrangement for the loading of ships anchored off Coffs Harbour from small boats to a fixed structure was acknowledged early in Coffs Harbour's history. The construction of the jetty was begun in 1890 and completed in 1892. The jetty incorporated a narrow gauge train line along its 1641 feet length and a steam-powered crane at the seaward end (CHHS, 2015: p19). The jetty infrastructure underwent a series of modifications as the needs and capacity requirements changed.

The other major upgrade to the harbour facilities was the creation of breakwaters and sea walls linking the small islands off the coast to create a protected basin for shipping. This endeavour began in 1913 and work was completed in 1924. Later upgrades to the break wall were completed 1935, when the work was finalised and concrete stabilisation had been completed. While the development of the jetty and the surrounding breakwater did not provide immediate economic stimulus they facilitated regional trade and unlocked the potential for many businesses to exist (CHHS, 2015: pp24-25).

3.5 Regional rail

Like the port facilities, the building of the North Coast Railway through the Coffs region brought many opportunities for growth to the community. The rail line was considered as early as 1903 by the NSW parliament. With the finalisation of the rail line route construction began in 1911 with the line completed in 1922. A settlement known as Coffs Heights served the workers who were engaged in the building of the steep section of track which lead up to Red Hill, located six kilometres from Coffs Harbour. A branch line was also constructed between 1914 and 1924, which lead from Glenreagh to Dorrigo. In 1975 the lack of economic viability caused this line to be closed (CHHS, 2015: p22-24).

3.6 Coffs Harbour development

Steady population growth throughout the late 19th Century and 20th Century facilitated the development of public and communal structures.

Many church buildings were erected, and these were generally built using the prevalent hardwood out of timber in a simplified 'carpenters gothic' style (CHHS, 2015: p37). These were built in large numbers from the 1880s onwards during the early development of Coffs Harbour, with many different Christian denominations represented. While the churches who used them varied, the buildings were similar in style

and method of construction, and form a recognisable type. Surviving examples are evident throughout the region providing an understanding of the early settlement of the northern NSW coast (CHHS, 2015: p37).

From 1900, a number of community halls were constructed throughout the region, serving as venues for events, meetings and acting as social centres of their surrounding districts (CHHS, 2015: p38).

Private dwellings became more sophisticated as the region developed, and as access to materials became less difficult. Early dwellings were constructed out of available materials however, an element of temporary or shanty housing remained up to the post-WWII period. Before WWI, residences were primarily constructed of timber, with few examples of decorative features requiring imported materials. Inter-war housing utilised additional materials such as fibro, weatherboard, brick and a combination thereof. As a result, decorative features became a pattern of construction of this period (CHHS, 2015: pp42-43).

3.7 Impacts of the World Wars

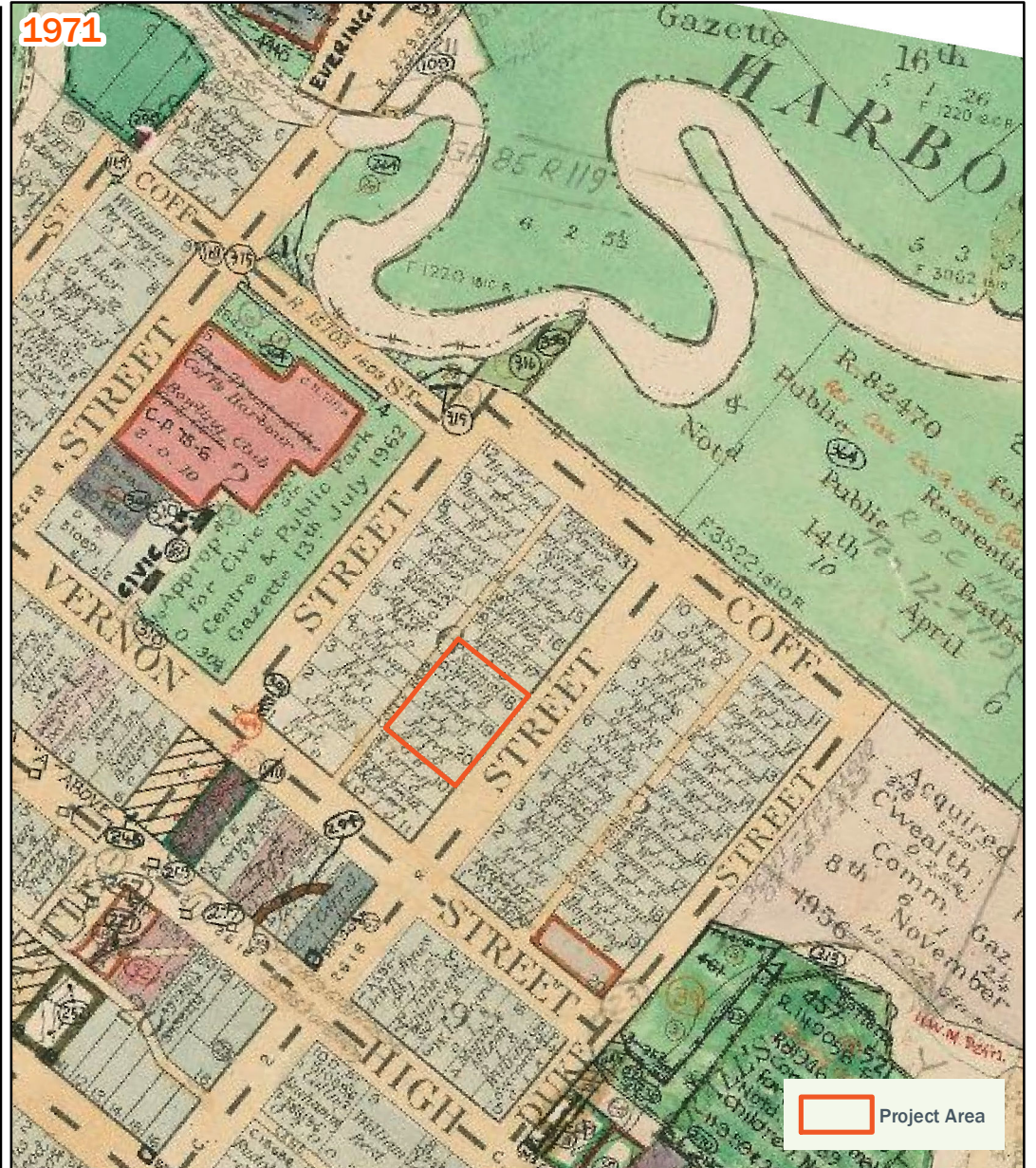
The First World War (1914-1918) created an economic impact for industry in the Coffs region, as trade was restricted, and large groups of young men enlisted. At the end of the war, the returned soldiers' movement played a role in the early 20th Century population growth in the region, with some returned soldiers resettled in Coffs Harbour (CHHS, 2015: p41).

The Second World War (1939-1945) had a far larger impact on Coffs Harbour. As a midway point between Sydney and Brisbane Coffs was used in a strategic role for coastal surveillance and as a supply base, (CHHS, 2015: p47). There was a large amount of military infrastructure, bases and defensive arrangements built during this period, with the expansion and modernising of the aerodrome one of the longer lasting examples. This remains as Coffs Harbour Airport today and has facilitated the growth of tourism in the region.

The years after WWII saw the growth of many industries, and the reduction of many of the earlier industries that played a role in the earlier development of the region. The war development allowed for regular air services, and tourism in the region benefitted as a result. In the post war era there was a drop in butter production, as smaller dairy farms were incorporated into the urban limits of Coffs Harbour. Banana production, already substantial pre-war, became the region's signature agricultural crop. There was an increase in the commercial development in the Coffs Harbour city centre, and during this time Coffs saw the settlement of several migrant communities, such as the Dutch in Coffs Harbour and the Sikh in Woolgoolga. Larger building projects were also completed during this time, using diverse materials available after the war.


3.8 Settlement in Gordon Street

With its proximity to High Street and the city centre Gordon Street has a longer history of European settlement than in many other locations in Coffs Harbour. The earliest historical reference to Gordon Street is in relation to "Carrall's Cottage" in 1880 which served as both local shop and mail distribution centre (CHHS, 2015). The historical Parish and Town Maps show residential-zones housing lots along Gordon Street from 1906 onwards (see Figure 3: Parish and Town Maps (From left to right: 1906 Parish Map, and 1971 Town Map (Source: Proponent, LPI, NSW Land Registry Services and Niche)). A Masonic Temple is also mentioned as being present at Gordon Street, however the structure has been demolished, and there is no mention of this on parish maps.



Project Area



 Project Area

4. Physical Analysis

4.1 Coffs Harbour Heritage Study

In 2015 Coffs Harbour Council developed the *Coffs Harbour Heritage Study* (2015). The aim of the study was undertaken, in part, to:

- *Provide for wide-ranging input by the local community in the identification and assessment of local heritage items and conservation areas via a Heritage Study Working Group made up of community members and council staff.*
- *Consult extensively with the Heritage Study Working Group and other community groups throughout the project.*
- *Address an expanded understanding of Coffs Harbour's cultural heritage to take in post-WWII development, iconic sites, the contribution of multicultural groups, newly identified types of heritage and newly identified historic themes.*
- *Compile a list of known and new proposed heritage items, archaeological sites and conservation areas based on existing heritage registers, previously identified sites, and new proposals.*
- *Prepare detailed inventory sheets using current SHI software for existing and new proposed heritage items, archaeological sites and conservation areas.*
- *Update existing inventory sheets to reflect changes to the Heritage Branch assessment criteria since the previous heritage studies were completed (Coffs Harbour Heritage Study (2015)).*

The following built structures were identified by the *Coffs Harbour Heritage Study* (2015) as having potential for heritage significance and could be listed on the Coffs Harbour LEP:

- 9 Gordon Street: This is the current location of St Augustine's Primary School (Roman Catholic) and with the corresponding Church building and rectory at 12 Gordon Street was created on formally private land in the wake of World War Two. The buildings are located approximately 600 meters from the Project area and have been heavily refurbished over time.
- 36 Gordon Street: Across the road from the Project area was the location of a residence which was recently demolished. It was approved for destruction by council having never been listed, and there is little information describing any historical value this structure may have possessed.
- 33 Gordon Street: Located in the lot immediately north of the boundary of the Project area is a residential structure described as a Large weatherboard house, with a porthole window as a distinctive feature. The residence has yet to be assessed for heritage value. While this structure is not within the Project area, it is within the immediate vicinity of this site.
- 19A-21: Gordon Street: This is the lot abuts the southern of the boundary of the Project area and comprises an original Methodist church building built in 1920s out of timber in the gothic-revival style as described above. This structure was moved to the back of the lot to become part of the current Uniting Church hall.
- 23 Gordon St: Currently the office of GeoLINK, this former residence is a weatherboard and fibro cottage with leadlight windows which was built in the inter-war period. It was brought to the attention of the Coffs Harbour City Council's heritage survey team by the community as of potential heritage value, however it has not been listed as of this assessment. This structure is currently located within the Project area.

4.2 Precinct Analysis: Gordon Street Library and Gallery

In April 2016 Coffs Council established a Library and Gallery Planning Advisory Group and a Council project team with the aim of facilitating research and concept planning for the development of new library and gallery facilities within the Coffs Harbour CBD (Precinct Analysis, 2017). The group identified the Project area as the most suitable location for the Cultural and Civic Centre.

In 2017 Coffs Harbour Council developed the *Precinct Analysis* (2017). The Precinct Analysis provides a future vision for the site and surrounding areas to facilitate a central cultural hub precinct comprising civic cultural facilities for the region (Precinct Analysis 2017). The analysis also investigated feasibility of other uses of the site including Council office accommodation.

The analysis found that the inter-war residence at 23 Gordon Street, although adapted, is considered to be of high local heritage significance as an early surviving, domestic residence from the interwar period. The analysis also found that the Uniting Church on the corner of Vernon and Gordon Streets (19A – 21 Gordon Street) was the original Methodist Church (1915) and the Wesley Hall (1929) which are both of local heritage significance in demonstrating the history of Methodism in Coffs Harbour and timber buildings from an early phase in the history of Coffs Harbour (Precinct Analysis, 2017).

5. Site inspection

5.1 Introduction

The lots in Gordon Street are located near to the centre of Coffs Harbour city centre in a semi-residential setting. The Project area is bounded by the Uniting Church building with its associated church hall to the south; the street: Riding Place to the west residential lots to the north; and Gordon Street itself to the east.

23 Gordon Street comprises a fibro and weatherboard cottage, built in an inter-war style, which is within the Project area (described in section 3.8), and which currently serves as the offices of GeoLINK.

Three other buildings are located within Lot B//DP346105; and Lot 123//DP749233. There is a central brick building, a single storey split-level office building and a raised residence located at the north west corner of the Project area. Asphalted and concrete surface cover much of the Project area which serves as parking lots and pathways. The remainder of the area is covered with grass lawns.

A physical inspection of the Project area was undertaken in March 2019 by Dr Morgan Disspain (Senior Heritage Consultant, Niche). There was no evidence of non-aboriginal archaeological potential.

Plates 1 of 14 below show the layout and condition of the Project area.



Plate 1: General view of Project Area facing north



Plate 2: General view of the Project Area facing south-west



Plate 3: General view of Project Area facing north-west, showing the central brick building



Plate 4: General view of the northern structures facing north-west



Plate 5: View of 23 Gordon Street



Plate 6: View of 23 Gordon Street building from Gordon Street facing west



Plate 7: Detail of the front entrance to the 23 Gordon Street building from the eastern side



Plate 8: View underneath the 23 Gordon Street building showing its brick footings, facing north



Plate 9: View showing the rear of the GeoLINK building with asphalt car park, facing east



Plate 10: View of car park behind the GeoLINK building, and also the south side of the central brick building facing north-north east.

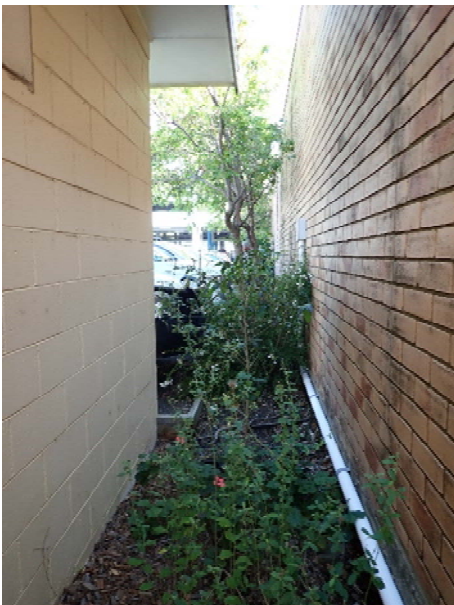


Plate 11: View of the space along the central brick building facing north west

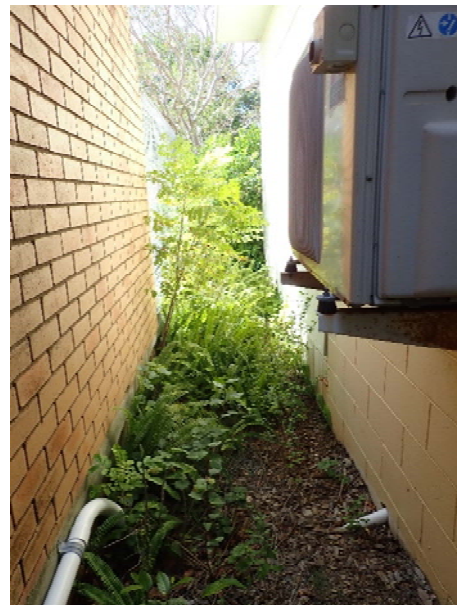


Plate 12: View of the space along the central brick building facing south east



Plate 13: View looking north showing the old Methodist church building located outside the Project Area to the south west



Plate 14: View showing the northern portion of the Project Area facing north-north west, also visible is the weatherboard cottage to the north, located outside of the Project Area

6. Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

In April 2016 Coffs Council established a Library and Gallery Planning Advisory Group identified the Project area as the most suitable location for the proposed Cultural and Civic Centre. The Project area is situated at 23–31 Gordon Street, Coffs Harbour, NSW 2450 (Lot 20/6/DP758258, Lot B//DP346105, and Lot 123//DP749233).

Council is proposing to re-develop the Project area as a Cultural & Civic Space. The proposed works would involve the demolition of the existing structures for the construction of the Space. The Cultural & Civic Space would include a Regional Gallery, a central Library, a regional Museum, multipurpose meeting rooms, co-working space, function space, Council staff office space, a customer service area and car parking facilities.

It is understood that concept and construction designs have yet to be developed.

A search of the relevant heritage databases found no heritage listed items within 500 metres of the Project area. However, in 2015 Council developed the Coffs Harbour Heritage Study which identified a number of residences within and within close proximity to the Project area that may have heritage value. These buildings included the inter-war residence at 23 Gordon Street, located within the Project area; a weatherboard residence at 3 Gordon Street, along the northern boundary of the Project area; and 19A-21 Gordon Street along the southern boundary of the Project area. The Study recommended that these buildings be listed.

In 2017 Council undertook a Precinct Analysis: Gordon Street Library and Gallery which identified the same buildings as having heritage value.

The visual inspection confirmed the location and fabric of these buildings. The assessment and visual inspection found that there is low to nil potential for archaeological remains across the project area.

6.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the results of this HHCA the following recommendations have been developed.

Upon finalisation of concept and construction designs a Statement of Heritage Impact should be undertaken for 23 Gordon Street which is located within the Project area. It is recommended that a Statement of Heritage Impact, which incorporates a visual impact assessment, be undertaken for 3 Gordon Street and 19A-21 Gordon Street.

No re-development works should be undertaken prior to the completion of the above recommended Statement of Heritage Impact assessments.

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Research and monitoring
Wildlife Schools and training

Heritage management

Aboriginal heritage
Historical heritage
Conservation management
Community consultation
Archaeological, built and landscape values

Environmental management and approvals

Impact assessments
Development and activity approvals
Rehabilitation
Stakeholder consultation and facilitation
Project management

Environmental offsetting

Offset strategy and assessment (NSW, QLD, Commonwealth)
Accredited BAM assessors (NSW)
Biodiversity Stewardship Site Agreements (NSW)
Offset site establishment and management
Offset brokerage
Advanced Offset establishment (QLD)