

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT SECTION 96 – MLC SCHOOL BURWOOD, SENIOR SCHOOL CENTRE

1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of MLC School Burwood, to accompany the Section 96 application in relation to the proposed alterations to the approved Senior School Centre to be located on the Park Road frontage of the School site bounded by Park Road, Rowley and Grantham Streets, Burwood. It is also proposed to delete the approved additions to the Middle School which faces Grantham Street.

2.0 Background & Heritage Listing Status

MLC School Burwood currently occupies several sites located about Rowley Street. The School grew from its official opening in January 1886 and original land purchase which comprised of land on both the eastern and western side of Park Road and has continued to expand from that time. The School now features a range of buildings and facilities generally dating from the 1890s to 2010. The early buildings are generally located close to the Rowley Street frontage.

A Statement of Heritage Impact report was prepared by this office (dated March 2014) in relation to the proposed new Senior School Centre and works on the School site. The assessment was based on a Heritage Assessment prepared in early 2012 in the context of a Master Plan that was being prepared for the School.

The Heritage Assessment found that MLC Burwood, particularly the main School site bounded by Park Road, Rowley and Grantham Streets is of local historic, aesthetic and social significance as a good example of any early all girls Church run School, established in the late 1880s and as part of the early development of the Burwood area.

The Assessment identified and graded the various buildings and elements and particularly noted the Chapel, Schofield Tower and remaining wing also building containing Potts Hall on the corner of Rowley and Grantham Streets and associated fence to be of high cultural significance. Other buildings and elements were identified as being of lesser significance, representative and typical examples of educational buildings and facilities dating from later periods of the School's development.

The works proposed in 2014 including the construction of a new Senior School Centre were approved by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment on 3 March 2015.

This assessment is based on a review of the previously prepared heritage reports and current proposed works which have been assessed with reference to the Burwood Local Environmental Plan 2012, Development Control Plan and Heritage Branch criteria.

The main objective of this report is to assess the appropriateness of the proposed works and outline how any potential impacts may be reduced or are mitigated.

3.0 Historical overview & existing context

The history and development of the site, existing buildings and context has been documented in the Statement of Heritage Impact report (PMA, March 2014) prepared as part of the initial application.

The School is located in an area characterised by mixed development ranging from one and two detached residential dwellings to modern Nursing Homes and a Hospital complex is also located opposite the site on Grantham Street. The various buildings date from the late 19th century to the present and are generally enhanced by setbacks, garden settings, trees and plantings. Rowley and Grantham Streets are relatively wide and busy dual carriageways that also feature wide verges and a number of mature street trees on both sides of the street. Park Avenue to the north of Rowley Street is one way with some parking. This street is also characterised by mixed development with the historic School buildings and associated fences and plantings in particular making a positive visual contribution to the streetscape.

The documentary and physical analysis indicates that the MLC School has continued to evolve and develop since its establishment in 1886.

A large Victorian house, *Kent House*, occupied the site bounded by Park Road, Rowley Place (now Street) and Willama (later Burwood then Grantham) Street that by the 1880s was used as a private ladies' college. In three separate transfers representatives of the Wesleyan Church officially purchased land on both sides of Park Road and the house in which they established the School.¹ Altogether the property amounted to about a hectare in area, which allowed for expansion. The Wesleyan Ladies' College now known as MLC School Burwood was officially opened on 27th January 1886.²

At first the School catered for both boarders and day students who were housed in a former dwelling located on the corner of Rowley Street and Park Road. The house also had an attached cottage which was soon demolished and replaced with what was to be the first of many additions to the school which was one of the first to incorporate a kindergarten department. The increasing number of students continued to necessitate on-going expansion with the purchase of additional land which occurred as early as the 1920s. By this stage the Schofield Wing (now the Chapel, 1891-92) and Tower Wing (1919) has been constructed with frontage to Park Road. The architectural language of both with face brick facades, pointed arches, rendered details including crenellated parapets and a "tower" which has been described as being an architectural "flourish" provided architectural motifs and inspiration for buildings that followed.

The growing number of students combined with changes in educational requirements and employment of additional staff has resulted in the construction of new facilities and buildings. The School site has continued to expand to the present with north eastern section purchased and developed since the centenary of the School in 1986. Fires in the 1940s and 1970s also necessitated the replacement and evolution of some of the existing buildings and site.

The School purchased more land to the north of early main school site and buildings have been demolished to make way for new buildings and subsequent additions including the buildings to the immediate north of Chapel and Tower Wing. These buildings are largely utilitarian and incorporate standard brick and concrete construction with modern windows, louvres and screens also added to the facades for practical purposes. Building 12, has now been approved to be demolished and replaced incorporates a modern, "New Tower" constructed close to the Park Road. The structure reflects the formal detailing of the earlier 1919 Tower, in a modern manner.

¹ Land and Property Information, Old Systems Book 411 No. 975, Certificate of Titles Volumes 339 Folio 123, Volume 833 Folio 3.

² Coupe, S & R, *Walk in the Light MLC Burwood A Centenary History* (1986), p. 1.

The School has now also purchased two cottages on the Park Road frontage. No. 29 (Building 14) has been used as the Middle School reception and staff study. The building is a modified Federation period former dwelling. No. 31A has also been modified with changes including replacement of building fabric and addition of a carport in front of the building on the Park Street frontage. The buildings are examples of the late 19th and early 20th century residential development of the area, however, are not outstanding examples and are representative examples that retain no particular architectural features of note. No. 31A retains a high fence and mature garden including a large Lilli Pilli at the rear of the building which contributes to the green character of the area, however, is not a primary feature along the Park Road streetscape.

The Chapel and associated Tower (Buildings 6 and 5) and building containing Potts Hall (Building 3) were rated as being “high significance”. These buildings are located in the southern section of the main site, close to and facing Park Road. Buildings 10, 11 and 12 and associated features including the walkways and landscaping which date from the 1960s to the 1990s were considered to be of “little significance”. Building 13, the Middle School located at the northern end of the main School site was also identified as being of “little significance”.



Figure 3.1 Site plan. The approved Senior School Centre occupies the area centred around Buildings 11 and 12.

(Source: MLC School Burwood)



Figure 3.2 Current aerial photograph showing most of the School site. The Chapel, Tower and site of the approved Senior School Centre are indicated.

(Source: SIX Maps)



Figure 3.3 The main entry courtyard located at the northern corner of Rowley Street and Park Road.



Figure 3.4 The most significant features of the site are located in the southern section of the on Park Road and near the Rowley Street frontage. The Schofield Tower and Chapel are the oldest buildings on the site and survived the 1977 fire. The single storey Chapel was constructed in 1891-92. The Tower and associated wing were constructed in 1919.



Figure 3.5 The Park Road frontage. A planted garden area (the Principal's Lawn) and pedestrian entry is located between the highly significant Chapel and Tower and later School buildings to the north.



Figure 3.6 The pedestrian entry and street frontage between the Chapel and Tower and later School buildings to the north.



Figure 3.7 The existing pedestrian entry on Park Road.



Figure 3.8 The Principal's Lawn is considered to be a highly significant open space and used for various functions. The space retains a mix of trees and plantings and will be opened up and expanded to the west as part of the approved works.

4.0 The current proposed works

It is currently proposed to delete the approved alterations and additions to the existing Middle School Building and construct an additional storey to the approved three storey Senior School Centre as illustrated in the architectural drawings prepared by BVN Architects.

The current proposed works are confined to the approved new building which addresses Park Road and will face the School's car park and elevated sports and playing fields currently located on the eastern side of Park Road.

The overall aim is to provide additional teaching spaces and facilities to improve senior student accommodation on the main site.

Existing buildings in the southern section of the site and along Rowley Road including the highly significant Chapel building and Tower and Potts Hall will be retained.

The approved building footprint, proposed to be constructed along the Park Road frontage and over the amalgamated sites of Nos. 33 and 31A Park Road and architectural form and details and flat roof over the additional storey will be retained.

The new building will continue to be setback from the street frontage in the approximate alignment with the Chapel and Schofield Tower (Buildings 5 and 6) to its south. The building is also setback from the northern shared boundary with No. 31 Park Road with planted buffer to be retained between.

The Chapel and Schofield Tower will be retained as existing with a pedestrian link and entry from Park Road. The associated Principal's Lawn will also be retained. The approved removal of Building 17 and walkway link (15) will open up the space which will be extended with new landscaping, planting and steps also proposed to create an expanded courtyard area.

The proposed additional level has been detailed to match the approved building and is also contemporary in architectural style and detail and incorporates open roof terraces at the northern end. The facades have been articulated and feature a mix of lightweight walls, glass and metal screens. The approved colour scheme will also be carried through.

Existing fencing along the street frontages will largely be retained with any new fencing to match existing types as approved.

5.0 Heritage Impact Assessment

The following assessment refers to the Burwood Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 and Development Control Plan (DCP) and relevant questions contained in the guideline document prepared by the NSW Heritage Branch, Office of Environment and Heritage.

5.1 Burwood LEP 2012 and Burwood DCP

In relation to clause **5.10 Heritage conservation** of the Burwood LEP 2012:

- (4) **Effect on heritage significance**
The consent authority must, before granting consent under this clause, consider the effect of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the heritage item or heritage conservation area concerned.

- 5) **Heritage assessment**
The consent authority may, before granting consent to any development:
 - (a) *on land on which a heritage item is located, or*
 - (b) *on land that is within a heritage conservation area, or*
 - (c) *on land that is within the vicinity of land referred to in paragraph (a) or (b),*
require a heritage management document to be prepared that assesses the extent to which the carrying out of the proposed development would affect the heritage significance of the heritage item or heritage conservation area concerned.

The cultural significance of the School site largely relates to its historic and social associations, aesthetic character of the early buildings on the site and association with the growth and development of Burwood. The School has continuously served the area since 1886 and has continued to develop since that time in accordance with changing social and educational standards.

The proposed addition of another storey to the approved Senior School Centre is considered acceptable as the historic and social values will be retained and primary early features that make the greater contribution to the significance of the site, the early Chapel and Schofield Tower and also the building containing Potts Hall will be retained and continue to be highly visible and prominent elements in the Grantham and Rowley Streets and Park Road streetscapes.

The approved building has been aligned with the existing buildings along the Park Road frontage. Whilst the additional storey will increase the overall height and scale of the building, it is setback from the historic buildings, particularly the Chapel and Tower with the significant Principal's Lawn between. The lawn will be retained, enlarged and improved as part of the approved works.

The primary views to the Chapel and Tower are looking north along Park Road and from the corner of Rowley Street and School entry and will be retained. The works will have no impact on the existing form, scale, fabric and character of the highly significant buildings or any internal spaces. The pedestrian access will also be maintained along the Park Road frontage. Any potential adverse impacts are also reduced by the contemporary design which highlights the historic buildings, also the articulation of the building facades, flat roof form and lightweight materials and elements which will reduce the perceived bulk and scale of the new building.

The proposed deletion of works to the Middle School and other amendments will have no adverse heritage impacts. Any potential impacts will also be reduced by the retention of the School boundaries and improved open and landscaped spaces around the buildings.

In relation to section 4.7 of the Burwood DCP no change to the approved building setbacks and street alignment or architectural character is proposed. The proposed additional storey will increase the building height and scale on the site, however, the School currently features a number of larger scale and robust buildings. The Schofield Tower is a three storey structure that is sited above street level with a detailed parapet which will in a sense form a transition between the extended building and smaller scale Chapel to its south. The existing Chapel is single storey, however, is also elevated above street level and retains distinctive features and vertical elements which will continue to be highly visible.

The proposed contemporary character is consistent with approved and existing buildings in the mid and northern section of the site and School buildings on the eastern side of Park Road. The new storey is setback and separated from other buildings on the site and incorporates flat and low pitch roof sections and modern materials which are considered appropriate for new additions

The proposed addition is contemporary in architectural style and materials which is considered appropriate so that the historic fabric remains discernible and able to be interpreted. The School has traditionally been at the forefront in the provision of up-to-date educational facilities in the local area. Part of the significance of the site relates to its ongoing development. The new buildings significantly add a new layer in the development of the place.

The proposed additional storey is set well back from and will have no adverse impact on heritage items in the vicinity including No. 21 Grantham Street and No. 47 Park Road. A setback with planted buffer will also be retained along the northern side of the building.

5.2 Heritage Branch criteria

How is the impact of the new development on the heritage significance of the item to be minimised?

The works are proposed to improve the use and amenity of the approved Senior School Centre and School so that it can continue to be an active and up-to-date asset for the School and local area.

The fundamental form and character of the highly significant buildings and features on the site will be retained with any potential impacts minimised in the following ways:

- by the retention of the main address and highly significant components of the site;
- by the retention of the Principal's Lawn and open setback around the buildings;
- by the retention and creation of additional open space and curtilage around the Schofield Tower and other buildings on the site;
- by the provision of an addition which is contemporary in architectural style and character and do not seek to mimic the historic building stock, but rather highlight and provide another layer in the development of the place.

How does the new development affect views to and from the item? What has been done to minimise negative effects?

Views to and from the historic and highly significant buildings and elements on the site will be retained and will not be affected by the proposed additional storey to the approved Senior School Centre. Approved setbacks and spaces around the historic elements particularly Schofield Tower will be retained, opened up and improved as approved. Any negative effects are also reduced by contemporary form and character of the Senior School Centre building and retention of pedestrian links and access to the site and buildings.

Is the development sited on any known or potentially significant archaeological deposits?

The proposed additional storey will have no adverse impact on any significant archaeological resources.

Is the new development sympathetic to the item? Will the additions visually dominate the item? Will the public, and users of the item still be able to view and appreciate its significance?

The approved Senior School Centre was considered "sympathetic" and in line with a Master Plan developed for the site. The building was sited to take advantage of the fall of the site and incorporates contemporary form and character which does not seek to mimic or detract from the historic built character but rather add another contemporary layer to the development of the School.

The approved building was carefully considered so that the heritage attributes and features that contribute to the overall significance of place are retained and continue to be highly visible, interpreted and appreciated by users and public alike.

The proposed additional storey increases the height and scale of the building, however, the historic buildings will continue to be highly visible and dominate the primary address and access to the School along Rowley Street and corner of Park Road.

The eastern side of Park Road currently features larger scale School buildings which are neighboured by the open playing fields and open areas around the buildings. The approved Senior School Centre also faces the open playing courts with open, landscaped and planted open areas and setbacks around the buildings which enhance the curtilage and appreciation of the buildings and site features.

6.0 Conclusion and recommendations

In summary the proposed addition of another storey to the Senior School Centre and other amendments to the approved works at MLC School, Burwood, are considered acceptable from a heritage perspective.

The approved Senior School Centre has been aligned with the existing buildings along the Park Road frontage and makes use of the fall of this section of the site. Whilst the additional storey will increase the overall height and scale of the building, it is setback from the historic buildings, particularly the Chapel and Tower with the significant Principal's Lawn between. The lawn will be retained, enlarged and improved as part of the approved works. Schofield Tower is three storeys, however, is also elevated above street level with high decorative parapet that will also in a sense form a transition between the additional storey and lower scale School buildings to its south.

The primary views to the Chapel and Tower are looking north along Park Road and from the corner of Rowley Street and School entry. The significant brick facades and details will continue to be highly visible and views to and from the buildings will be retained. The works will have no impact on the existing form, scale, fabric and character of the highly significant buildings or any internal spaces. The pedestrian access will also be maintained along the Park Road frontage. Any potential impacts of the proposed additional storey are also reduced by articulation of the building and use of contemporary and lightweight materials and a flat roof with open terraces at the northern end of the proposed new storey, setback, retention and improvement of landscaping and planting around the building.

The proposed deletion of works to the Middle School and other amendments will have no adverse heritage impacts. Any potential impacts will also be reduced by the retention of the School boundaries and improved open and landscaped spaces around the buildings.

On this basis, Council should have no hesitation in approving the proposed works, on heritage grounds.