

LAUNCESTON CITY COUNCIL

MEMORANDUM

FILE NO: DA0894/2020

DATE: 31 May 2021

TO: Duncan Payton Town Planner

FROM: Fiona Ranson Place and Heritage Officer

**Heritage and Urban Design Report - 269 Charles Street,
Launceston - Residential - Demolish existing dwelling and
construction of two dwellings with access over adjoining right of
SUBJECT: way**

I have reviewed the application and offer the following.

Heritage Significance

The subject site is listed at local level, being included in Table E13.2 of the Launceston Interim Planning Scheme 2015 (the Scheme) and therefore is subject to assessment against the relevant provisions of the Local Historic Cultural Heritage code (Heritage Code).

The original listing of 269 Charles Street was as part of the former Charles Street Precinct only and as such the main heritage issues relevant to the listing relate to the retention of the heritage character of the surrounding streetscape. The site is also included within the broader South Central Precinct identified by Paul Davies as part of the Launceston Heritage Study 2007.

The length of Charles Street in which the site is located has substantial heritage character and significance, but the character is diverse, including colonial and classical style residential buildings from the Victorian era, Federation era dwellings, and some more contemporary architectural forms. These have a variety of setbacks, heights, roof forms, and are diverse in materiality, however the combined effect is of a historic inner urban mixed use area with a distinctive charm.

The original/early building on the subject site has been found to have been constructed around the middle of the 19th century, a house having been listed in the Assessment roll for this property from around 1865 – 1881 owned by John Atkinson. By 1886 the property had changed hands to Richard Kirkham who owned it through to around 1895. Mr and Mrs Gadsby resided her in 1904 (*Examiner*, 23 July 1904, p. 1). Other occupants include Edward Watkins (1915), Mrs D Nas (1920), J J Dell (1925), E Fowler (1930), and Lindsey Graham (1935 - 1948) - Research carried out as part of the Launceston Heritage List Review.

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Unfortunately, since this time the integrity and street presence of the building have been severely undermined by unsympathetic alterations and additions and damage due to ground movement. These changes are such that the remaining part of the building no longer resembles the hipped roof cottage it is reported to have been and offers little to the character of the surrounding streetscape which the original 'Classified Precinct' heritage listing was intended to protect.

The stone retaining wall to the Charles Street boundary is the element on the site which has the greatest impact on the character of the street, and arguably makes the most positive aesthetic contribution to the valued streetscape.

Assessment

The standards from the Heritage Code which must be considered are as follows:

- E13.6.1 Demolition
- E13.6.4 Site coverage
- E13.6.5 Height and bulk of buildings
- E13.6.6 Site of buildings and structure
- E13.6.8 Roof form and materials
- E13.6.9 Wall materials
- E13.6.12 Tree and vegetation removal

Demolition

Under the Heritage Code, any demolition proposed must meet the following performance criteria:

P1 Buildings or parts of buildings and structures may be demolished, provided there is no unreasonable impact on the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and setting, having regard to:

- a) the physical condition of the local heritage place;*
- b) the extent and rate of deterioration of the building or structure;*
- c) the safety of the building or structure;*
- d) the streetscape or setting in which the building or structure is located;*
- e) the cultural heritage values of the local heritage place;*
- f) the need for the development;*
- g) any options to reduce or mitigate deterioration;*
- h) whether demolition is the most reasonable option to secure the long-term future of a building or structure; and*
- i) any overriding economic considerations.*

(LIPS 2015 - Clause E13.6.1 Demolition)

Therefore, in order for the proposed demolition to be approved it must be considered that the elements to be removed do not embody the level of historic cultural heritage significance required of a local heritage place, and/or that the removal of these elements may be '*the most reasonable option to secure the long-term future*' of more important elements on the site. Economic considerations may also be taken onto account.

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In this case the applicant, supported by reports provided by their engineers and designers, assert that the stone retaining wall is in need of repairs and that the only feasible way to deal with these repairs is to further compromise or remove what remains of the original cottage. The following is an extract from the engineer's report (**Attachment ?**) providing a summary of the findings.

Summary

The following findings have been considered to have been the main cause of the structural failure of the house and bluestone retaining wall;

- 1. The main reason for the structural failure within the house is due to the load transfer from the building footprint proximity to the bluestone retaining wall.*
- 2. The reason of the bluestone retaining wall failure is due to the proximity of the house footprint transferring its loads into the retaining wall causing it to fail as seen within this report.*
- 3. The existing structural design was constructed to best practices of the time when the building was originally built but was positioned too close to the existing bluestone retaining wall.*

Recommendations:

- The bluestone retaining wall will need to have sections pulled down and repaired.*
- The existing building would need to be underpinned but this will not be possible due to the existing condition of the bluestone retaining wall where a service load could bring the entire bluestone retaining wall into failure along Charles Street. The only possible methods would be by demolishing the rear of the building to access the front of the house or the work to be done completely by hand which would be deemed unsafe due to the current conditions.*
- The current building condition will continue to deteriorate until it is unsafe to live in. The building is beyond future repairs and it is recommended to be demolished or replaced.*
- The replacement will need to be designed to avoid any loads transferring onto the bluestone retaining wall as to prevent any future damage to the existing bluestone retaining wall.*

It is considered that the findings of the engineer are sound and that a substantial portion of the cottage structure would need to be removed in order to deal with the structural failures of the dwelling and the retaining wall.

With the structure and appearance of the original cottage having been so severely compromised over a number of years, and with the stone retaining wall making the more significant contribution to the streetscape, it is considered that removal of the cottage and the modern extension to the rear to allow for the repairs required to the wall and construction of two new dwellings is consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.1, and to be an acceptable course of action for this property.

Development

- Site coverage -

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Buildings in this inner urban residential area are mostly built close to the street front and side boundaries, and generally occupy at least 50% of their site area. The topography of the subject site is not typical of the surrounding lots, however the density of development proposed is consistent with that of properties in the street and surrounding area. Therefore the proposed site coverage is considered to be compatible with the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.4.

- Height and bulk of buildings -
Although there are some exceptions, the buildings along this length of Charles Street are predominantly double storey residences with relatively narrow frontages.

As noted in the heritage response prepared by the designer, the building width has been limited to 6m and the height to two storeys in order to fit cohesively with the proportions of neighbouring houses. The articulation of the buildings' forms and facades, although clearly contemporary, is also considered to break down their scale in a manner similar to that achieved by the Victorian and Federation era decoration evident on surrounding buildings. Therefore the height and bulk of the proposed buildings are considered to be compatible with the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.5.

- Site of buildings and structure(s) -
As noted in regard to site coverage, dwellings in this area have generally been built close to front and side boundaries. Most are built within 2m of the street front boundary and close to, if not adjoining, at least one side boundary. Setbacks to rear boundaries are generally larger, but these have sometimes been encroached by extensions to buildings, or associated outbuildings.

Although the topography of the subject site is not typical of the surrounding lots, the boundary setbacks and layout of the proposed development is still considered to be consistent with the general pattern of development in the street and the broader area. Therefore the siting of the proposed buildings is considered to be compatible with the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.6.

- Roof form and materials -
The predominant roof forms in the area are the traditional hips and gables, usually at around a 30 pitch. The more contemporary buildings in the area mostly utilise low mono-pitch (or skillion) roofs, as do a number of extensions and outbuildings serving the older residences. The dominant roof material is clearly custom orb (corrugated) iron and steel in a variety of neutral colours, however some examples of slate roofs remain. The only example in close proximity to the site being Garthowen at number 261 Charles Street.

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Due to insensitive development in the past, the remaining part of the original cottage on the site has had a practically flat mono-pitched roof. This form was continued to cover the modern extension to the rear. The roof form proposed may then be seen to be consistent with the existing development on the site, and also to have some precedent in the newer buildings in the street (specifically the Eye Hospital at number 260-262 Charles Street and the larger hospital buildings to the south) as well as in the many extensions and outbuildings to the rear of earlier buildings. With the flat roof forms proposed, and their height above surrounding ground level, the material and colour of the roof sheeting is of little consequence in the streetscape. Therefore the proposed roof form and materials are considered to be compatible with the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.8.

- Wall materials -

The predominant wall materials and finishes in the existing streetscape include painted timber weatherboards, painted, rendered and face brickwork, and some stone which is used in foundations, the feature wall fronting the Eye Hospital building, and the large retaining wall fronting the subject site. A neutral colour palette is evident in all wall finishes in the surrounding streetscape, including weathered copper sheeting is also featured in the central drum of the Eye Hospital and traditional roof plumbing at Garthowen.

It is evident that the neutral colour and material palette specified for the proposed buildings (including face brick, stone, clear finished timber, Core-ten steel, metal mesh screening, and grey painted finishes), draws strongly from the colours and textures in the stone of the retaining wall which fronts the site as well as the finishes of surrounding development. The retention of the substantial stone retaining wall is also recognised as being of great value to the heritage and aesthetics of the site and the streetscape it is acknowledged that the work required is a significant undertaking both in practical and financial terms. Therefore the wall materials and colours proposed are considered to be compatible with the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place and its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.9.

Tree and vegetation removal

There is no vegetation on the site which is of known significance, or which makes any contribution to the streetscape. More substantial soft landscaping is also proposed as part of the development to aid the new buildings in fitting in with the surrounding streetscape. Therefore the minor vegetation removal proposed is not considered to have an unreasonable impact on the historic cultural heritage significance of the local heritage place or its setting and thus consistent with the performance criteria for clause E13.6.12.

Summary

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In regard to the proposed removal of the dwelling at 269 Charles Street, it is considered that of the damage to the house and the stone retaining wall are such that repairs are required and that the historic cultural heritage significance of the original cottage and its contribution to the streetscape have been degraded to such a degree that makes the proposal for demolition to be acceptable.

In regard to the proposed development of two houses and associated landscaping on the site, the increase in urban residential density that the proposal provides for is considered to be of benefit to the city and it is evident that the form, scale, siting and materiality of the proposal to have been considered carefully to fit with the site and fit into the surrounding context such that they may be consistent with the relevant provisions of the (Heritage Code).

The provision of substantial planting to the Charles Street frontage as indicated on the submitted drawings is encouraged to aid the development in its interface with the existing streetscape, therefore the following recommendation is made to ensure appropriate landscaping is provided and maintained for the life of the development.

Recommendations

It is recommended that a Landscape Plan condition be applied to any Planning Permit issued which requires planting and maintenance of appropriate trees and/or substantial shrubs to assist the development in fitting in with the surrounding streetscape. A draft condition has been included below for your consideration.

SITE LANDSCAPING PLAN

Prior to the commencement of any works, a landscape plan must be submitted for approval by the Manager City Development. The plan must be prepared by a suitably qualified person, must be drawn to scale and must include details of the following:

- a. Major site features such as building footprints (including roof plan), topography, contours existing vegetation and street boundaries; and
- b. The extent of all proposed garden beds, plantings, fences, gates, retaining walls, lawn, hard surfaces and pathways, noting that substantial vegetation must be provided to the Charles Street frontage in order to soften the impact of the new building on the streetscape; and
- c. A schedule of all proposed trees, shrubs and groundcovers including common name, botanical name and size at maturity, noting that a mix of deciduous and evergreen species are preferred; and
- d. Suitable irrigation or a fixed sprinkler system for the watering of all vegetated areas.

Once approved by Manager City Development the plan will be endorsed and will form part of the permit. The landscaping must be:

- a. Installed in accordance with the endorsed plan; and
- b. Completed within 3 months of the use commencing; and

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- c. Maintained as part of the development. It must not be removed, destroyed or lopped without the written consent of the Council.

Please let me know if you require anything further.

Thank you.

Fiona Ranson
Place and Heritage Officer