

Camden Residents' Action Group

Camden – Still a Country Town

(Incorporation reservation No. 8477 under the *Associations Incorporation Act 2009*)

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The General Manager
Camden Council
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22 April 2016

Dear Mr Moore,

RE: DA 169/2016

Demolition, alterations, additions to the existing Camden Vale Milk buildings for five new restaurants and a function centre, provision of car parking, associated tree removal, landscaping and site works

Camden Residents' Action Group (CRAG), established in 1973 as a non-political, non-profit community organization, is objecting to the proposed development of Camden Vale Milk Depot building and site, as set out in the above application.

CRAG is concerned that this very large and costly development (approximately \$9m), modifying the Camden Vale Milk Depot, a heritage listed building located at a signature entrance to the town, and within the conservation area has not been notified to the general public. If this proposal goes ahead it would change the character of Camden, much-loved by residents and visitors and irrevocably destroy our valued heritage. Details should be on the front page of every paper and be appropriately exhibited.

Please do this and extend the advertising period to allow residents and interested parties time to understand and comment on the proposal.

CRAG strongly objects to the above DA for the following reasons:

Impact on heritage value of the building

The physical and social impact of the development on the heritage value of one of Camden's most significant heritage landmarks, the Camden Vale Milk Depot that dates back to 1921 is unacceptable.

In 1920 the Macarthur family set up the Camden Vale Milk Company, a milk processing and distribution company, with the aim of competing in the Sydney market. Between 1920 and 1922 Camden Vale Milk, which became a cooperative in 1921, had 162 milk suppliers and 289 cream suppliers. In 1926 fire destroyed the original timber building in Edward Street, Camden and in the same year the foundation stone of the bigger brick building, the Camden Vale Milk Company depot and processing plant was laid, by the wife of Francis Arthur Macarthur-Onslow, the company's Managing Director and Mayor of Camden (and son of Elizabeth, granddaughter of John Macarthur (1767- 1834)).

The extant Milk Depot opened in January 1927. Milk was delivered daily to the Depot and tramway by horse and cart up until the 1940s. Camden Vale Milk with the Golden Cap was at a premium in Sydney, and won many prizes at the Camden Show, Maitland Show and Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Macarthur family followed the latest scientific methods of pasture management, herd breeding and TB testing, and milk pasteurisation. By 1965 Camden Park Estate was known as the Australia's largest dairy. Camden Park's dairy interests were the life blood for the district and centred on this processing plant and depot in Edward Street. For further information refer to The District Reporter – 'Back then', dated 19 September 2011, 1 April, 2016, and 8 April 2016 as researched by Janice Johnson.

The heritage listed factory building and its rail siding are tangible markers of history on the corner of Edward and Argyle Streets, and this development proposal will undermine the heritage value of the building and site and the town.

The following proposed changes are totally inappropriate for the Camden Vale heritage building:

- the proposed veranda and associated new door on the façade facing Argyle Street;
- the removal of the metal awning fronting Argyle Street, which was used to cover the trains – refer to attached photograph of train using siding;
- the raising of the roof of the eastern side building and removal of roof vents, which are integral to the heritage interpretation of the building and site;
- changes to the Edward Street façade with the removal of all the windows and replaced with two new vertical windows and two new doors. The proposed door into the foyer may be justified as reasonable variation;
- the complete revamping of the eastern façade with openings along its total length at ground level, and door and windows and veranda on the new first floor, which again has not been highlighted as a major change to the heritage building's fabric. This is not appropriate or acceptable.

The removal of the ramp off Edward Street and the attached garage to the east of the main buildings, fronting Argyle Street are considered appropriate for removal as they are recent additions.

Please see the appended referral advice from the Heritage Council when a previous application for a much smaller scale development was lodged for the site (24 January 2008, File s90/07457/005, HC ref HRL 48723, Council ref DA 21/2008). Note that this advice predated the legislation of the conservation area of the township in 2010, so presumably the advice would be more prescriptive in relation to any negative impact on conservation of the township itself if given today. Nevertheless the advice is for active conservation of the

landmark site, which is reiterated in the Fairfax newspaper article of 2 July 2008 as appended. The advice would seem to preclude the possibility of this proposal which would dwarf the site, reduce the depot's landmark quality and destroy vistas of the town.

Impact on townscape

Our second objection is to the positioning and scale of the proposed modern building that would dominate both the entrance to and the townscape of Camden. This modernistic design would possibly be at home in a new area but it is completely inappropriate in the only extant early colonial private town in NSW and probably Australia. It is totally unsympathetic and detrimental to the human scale and village profile of the town as designed by James and William Macarthur on Camden Park and surveyed in 1836 by Surveyor-General Thomas Mitchell to Governor Darling's 1829 regulations, the first town planning principles in Australia.

The town of Camden described in tourism information as the best preserved country town on the Cumberland Plain and its surrounding floodplain currently remain intact as tangible evidence of the pattern of NSW's cultural and natural history. The vistas of Camden from the floodplain and the intact material fabric of the country town are the basis of the rural narrative behind Camden community's identity and sense of place. Camden is rare as a surviving representation of early colonial settlement through federation to current times. The NSW Land and Environment Court (April 1996) ruled against a development application in the vicinity of St John's Church. The Honourable Justice M L Pearlman AM, stated *"It is abundantly clear that the Camden Township represents a particularly significant and sensitive heritage site in which conservation, involving reuse of buildings or land, must necessarily be approached with considerable care."*

The human-scale of the town, combined with its visually detached built forms screened by exotic and native vegetation, with the focus of St John's Church and its spire rising clearly visible from the verdant floodplain of the Nepean, presents an inviting profile of rare character in Australia. James (1798-1867) and William (1800-1882) Macarthur were educated high-minded men who unambiguously envisioned their village as the area's social and moral centre. They showed a sophisticated sensibility and an advanced opinion of the value of native flora, especially species resembling English oaks and familiar trees 'of home.' They understood landscape design, the distant vistas and lines of sight that could be created by selective clearing and tree planting and the symbolism of clear lines of viewing to St John's Church. The high visual and aesthetic landscape quality of Camden is the result of a unique combination of natural and cultural heritage. Framed vistas are apparent today and contribute to the Arcadian reputation of the area and the township.

Camden's rural past is evidenced within or at the very edge of the 1836 street plan. Camden is unusual in the abruptness with which it opens into farmland, now community spaces, at the end of Mitchell Street and along Exeter Streets with Onslow Park (Camden Show Ground), the Bicentennial Park (an old dairy farm) and equestrian centre and the Camden Town Farm (another old dairy farm). The Camden saleyards and farming supply outlets (both still operational today) are in Edward Street. Another major notable rural feature is the Camden Town Farm, a 55 hectare dairy bequeathed in 2000 to the local community, by Llewella Davies, a beloved Camden identity who, accompanied by her dog Tess, contributed greatly to the community life of the town throughout her long life. Her final act of generosity and

community spirit and one that makes a lasting contribution was her bequest to Camden Council of her family's dairy farm. According to the 2007 Council Property Report, the land is representative of both Camden's dairy heritage, and also of Camden's heritage character as a town immediately surrounded by agricultural land.

Another icon of Camden's rural identity is Macarthurs' old Camden Vale milk factory, on the corner of Argyle and Edward Streets, and the subject of this objection.

In 2004 Camden's history and its heritage status was officially researched and acknowledged in the Camden Draft Heritage Plan, which recommended the adoption of the Camden Township Conservation Area encompassing its original intact 1836 street plan. It was noted that the historical development of the town is evident in its colonial buildings, its mix of residential, commercial, retail and industrial activities, the rural properties on the town's edge and Nepean River floodplain wrapping around three sides. The research identified a number of special qualities including its reputation as one of the very few if any original Cumberland Plain country towns still intact; the town's association with the Macarthur family; the layout of the town that still reflects its original purpose; the arrangement of the town which took advantage of the views and vistas of St John's Church on the hill; the area's large early colonial landed estates and the town's early farming and settlement history.

As the proposal is at the entrance to Camden, this magnifies the inappropriateness of this new building. Also as clearly shown in Figure 10 in the Brown report, page 38, showing the first view into Camden, the heritage building is lost and not seen for its significance. Camden is a highly historic and unique town and it is almost unbelievable that this design could be considered appropriate as it comparatively diminishes the shape and fabric of the town and dominates the Milk Depot.

An important theme in the development of the Camden aesthetic is the romanticism associated with the colonial landscapes created by the Cowpasture patriarchs. The township's idyllic quality is emphasised by the surrounding landscapes and hill tops influenced by Loudon's Gardenesque principles set within the historic pattern of the colonial estates of Camden's "gentry" including the verdant floodplain surrounding the town on three sides. Loudon landscape principles inspired the historic plantings in Camden township and surrounds. Featuring both newly discovered native trees as well as introduced species, these plantings continue to endow the area with a distinctive character which emphasises its townscape and are central to its unique aesthetic and the point of difference.

However, while the 'Arboricultural Assessment and Impact Report' for the Proposed Development acknowledges that "Cowpasture Bridge to Argyle St is identified in Camden Council's 'Significant Tree Register' (1993)... as having European cultural significance" and indicates at table 10.0 'Tree Identification Assessment Summary' that the three 18m tall Lombardy Poplars on the site are mature trees of good health and good structure, it concludes they are not to be retained, as they are "located within proposed car park hence removal is required".

The distinctive role played in the Cowpasture approach to Camden by the tall verticals of the poplars against the predominant horizontals of the floodplain and the historic built environment, is incontestable. On leaving Camden via this route, the three poplars behind the roofline of the Milk Depot serve the same function aesthetically and marry, in a line of sight with those in the distance, contributing the very particular spatial relationship.

The importance of Camden's poplars to the town and its surrounds has been reflected in previous Councils' valued commitment to replacing lost specimens as well as 'future proofing' this landscape feature by planting young poplars, between mature ones or paralleling old stands, to give them time to become established as replacements. Yet on the issues of Heritage and Ecological Significance the above mentioned 'Assessment Summary' concludes "Nil" value on both accounts, ostensibly on the premise alone that none of these three trees "have been directly identified" and "no mention of Camden Vale Milk Company was referenced" in the Significant Tree Register.

It is entirely disingenuous and unacceptable to cite the lack of a specific mention of individual trees and the lack of very precise description of their location as evidence of their "nil" value and justification for their removal and the consequent loss to Camden's heritage environment.

The proposed landscape plan is completely inadequate and inappropriate for this key position at the entry to Camden. Despite the objective of 'incorporating iconic elements of Camden's rural charm' this is merely lip service. The Argyle Street frontage has no proposed tree plantings and features only a low (presumably hedge) planting of Buxus and Indian Hawthorn. The plan should at least consider continuing the established Chinese Tallow (*Sapium sebiferum*) trees that currently exist between this location and the Cowpastures Bridge. The plan is largely made up of generic landscaping plants and only includes one Jacaranda and one English Oak.

As well as the other very significant heritage issues and objections the landscape plan needs a complete revision and closer consideration of presenting a unified and sympathetic streetscape at this important entry point.

Height

Thirdly, the request to vary the height level for the new building further compounds its inappropriateness to the heritage value of Camden's townscape. The human scale of the town must be preserved as fundamental to its nineteenth century heritage.

Traffic

Fourthly, to envisage the building of a separate toilet block and lift on the current vehicular access off Edward Street is to create unnecessary pressure on traffic in Argyle Street. Both the toilets and lift should be relocated to keep vehicular access available to both street frontages.

Argyle Street safety should not be compromised, for instance by only allowing left turns in and out. In particular vehicular access to Argyle Street should be restricted, similar to vehicular access to Rotary Cowpasture Reserve, which is that exiting cars can only make a left turn. It is also noted that cars leaving the car wash can use the exit onto Argyle Street.

Advertising

Fifthly, no direct reference has been made to on-site advertising. Figure 10 on page 38 shows the only reference to business identification, which would be ideal and it is therefore assumed that there would be no other on-site advertising as it has not been part of the DA. Please see the 2008 Heritage Council advice on signage.

Floodplain development

Sixthly, the proposed development is within Camden's flood plain. To extend into the floodplain by proposing to increase the height legislated in the LEP in this way is absolutely contrary to the conservation area's aim of retaining the heritage character of the town and its village profile.

The simple solution would be to relocate the car park so that the function centre was above the car park and only one storey so that it did not go over the towns height restriction and located away from Argyle Street so that it also didn't impinge on the heritage value of the milk depot building.

The proposal for an over height building on the floodplain sets a dangerous precedent for the aesthetics of the town which were carefully planned by James and William Macarthur using symbolism with the positioning of St John's Church and Loudon landscaping and romantic principles brought from England to create vistas and what is in Australia a rare village profile.

Moreover the floodplain is no place to build and can only create problems in the future for owners and tenants.

Conclusion

The application does not address planning issues satisfactorily, particularly heritage and height and overall dominance at a gateway into a highly significant town. It does not address traffic and problems of location on the floodplain.

CRAG totally objects to the above development proposal for the many reasons outlined above. The Camden Vale Milk Depot building needs to be protected from this ill conceived development proposal and remain as an iconic statement of Camden's past, its dairying industry and as a significant heritage statement at the entrance into Camden. It should not be overshadowed by a modern building of incompatible size and scale.

Please see the accompanying statements from renowned historians about the value of Camden and why it should not be subject to this type of development.

Yours faithfully,

per 

Hon. Secretary CRAG



THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

13 April 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have been asked to say something about the importance of the original town of Camden from a heritage point of view.

The town plan of Camden was drawn up in 1836. Though the town was a private foundation, the plan came from the office of the Surveyor-General, who was the explorer Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell. It was therefore a part of Mitchell's complex design for the entire colony of New South Wales, which included a great variety of beautifully designed towns and villages, carefully interconnected.

Adelaide, in South Australia, is famous for its town-plan, which dates from 1837, but Mitchell's planning was more ambitious and more intricate. Camden is one of the best preserved aspects of it. Camden was, of course, designed with the understanding that its buildings would not go beyond two or three floors, which was the normal limit for country towns in that period. From a visual point of view, the dimensions on the ground are tied to that presumed height. The relationship between horizontal and vertical determines the visual effect, and also the charm, of such country villages – and is no less important for the fact that it is unconscious.

Equally important is its positioning within a particular landscape. Mitchell, as a geographer and explorer, was highly sensitive to the human and natural dimensions of landscape, and in that respect Camden is a small masterpiece.

Camden was also a creation of the Macarthur family, and as such it was the home of an engineered community, and the most successful such community during that period in colonial Australia. The sense of community was integral with the physical layout, and to some extent still is.

From a historical and heritage point of view then, Camden is a profoundly important place. For some, its importance may be hard to appreciate at a casual glance. It is the sort of place which cannot be preserved, for its present inhabitants, for tourists and for the future, without a good deal of dedication, imagination, expertise and ongoing care.

Emeritus Professor Alan Atkinson MA, MEd, DLitt, PhD, FAHA, FRAHS
Author of *Camden: Farm and Village Life in Early New South Wales*

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School of Humanities and Languages

10 April 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing to express my strong support for the Camden Residents Action Group's nomination of the town of Camden for State Heritage listing.

I am a historian specialising in Australia's early colonial period, particularly the history of the Cumberland Plain and the Sydney region. A constant theme of my work is the legacy of the past in the present and historical consciousness of place.

It is clear to me that, given the rapid expansion of Sydney over the past sixty years especially, Camden is an astonishingly intact survival of early colonial Australia. And it is not just a collection of historic buildings, but a living, working place with a strong sense of community and identity.

Camden and its surrounding rural landscape clearly have national as well as state significance because of their links with vital developments in the early colony, including foundational contacts between Aboriginal people and settlers, early breakthroughs in the cattle industry, the strong association with the illustrious Macarthur family and the wool industry, and the way this landscape – which you can still see today - was so much admired by settlers. The town itself is beautiful. It remains in its 1836 planned form and is also important for its early history as a private town. In addition, there are rare surviving stands of Cumberland Plain Woodland and of endangered River Flat Forest.

Camden is precious. Its historic, natural, social and aesthetic significance should be acknowledged and protected from unsympathetic development.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Grace Karskens FAHA



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File: S90/07457/005
Our Ref: HRL 48723
Your Ref: DA 21/2008

The General Manager
Camden Council
PO Box 183
CAMDEN NSW 2570

Attention: David Carey

Dear Mr Carey

DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION REFERRAL

RE: Old Dairy Farmers Co-op Depot 11 Argyle Street Camden

Proposal: Demolition of additions; Additions to existing building; Use of existing building; Construction of car wash facility; and Two lot subdivision

Development Application No: 21/2008 referred to the NSW Heritage Council on 15th January 2008

Information received with application:

- Drawings 01-08, Amendment C dated 1st November 2007, De Angelis Taylor and Associates;
- Statement of Environmental Effects prepared by Michael Brown Planning Strategies, dated December 2007;
- Statement of Heritage Impacts prepared by Banksia Heritage and Archaeology, dated December 2007.

Additional information requested: None Requested

Date additional information received: N/A

It is noted that the Camden LEP identifies the Old Dairy Farmers Co Op Depot as a heritage item, and that Council has assessed the Old Dairy Farmers Co Op Depot as having local heritage significance. It is understood that Camden Council has referred the application to the Heritage Office to seek our comments in light of this assessed level of significance. It should be noted that as the Old Dairy Farmers Co Op Depot is not currently listed on the State Heritage Register, the Heritage Office is not the consent authority for this Development Application and does not therefore have a statutory role in the planning process in this instance. Accordingly, these comments are provided to assist Camden Council in making its decision.

As delegate of the NSW Heritage Council, I have considered the above application and recommend that Camden Council give consideration to the following conditions:

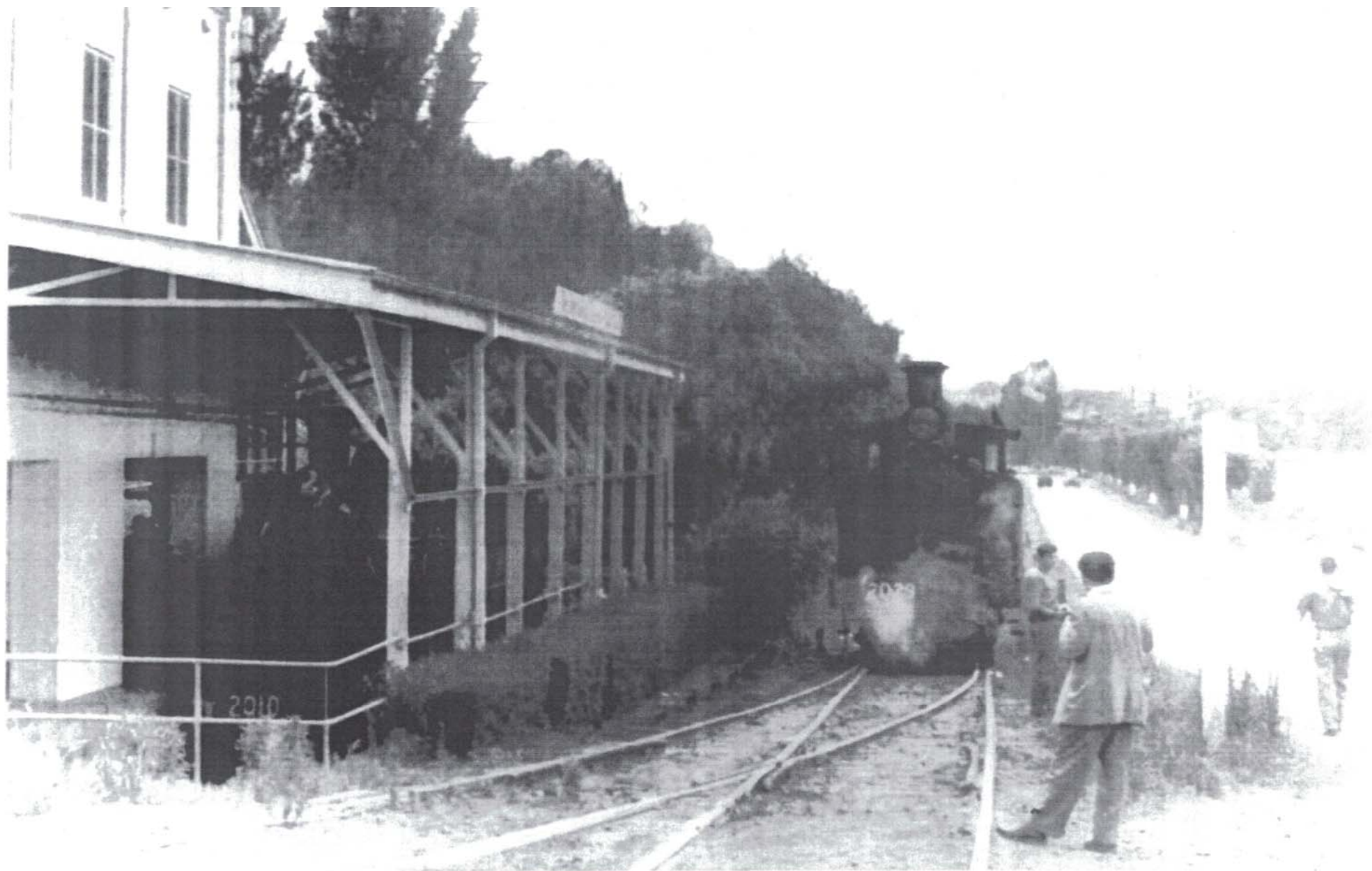
- 1) Existing original door and window fabric on the southern elevation of the Milk Depot building shall be retained in-situ and actively conserved.
- 2) Any other original fabric that is to be removed must be retained onsite until a suitable reuse can be found.
- 3) Intrusive elements that are to be removed should be removed by hand rather than by machine demolition to preserve the significant fabric of the site.
- 4) A thorough assessment of the archaeological potential of the site shall be undertaken prior to any subsurface disturbance associated with the development. This assessment should include strategies to investigate and interpret any in situ archaeological resources and to mitigate the effects of the development on any such resources.
- 5) The archaeological assessment (Condition 4) should be submitted to the Heritage Office for review prior to any works being undertaken.
- 6) Modern signage on the Milk Depot building should be reviewed and minimised where possible to not detract from its landmarks qualities.
- 7) The landmark qualities of the building could be further enhanced by recreating the early 'CAMDEN VALE MILK COMPANY' signage on the front. This would serve as a prominent reminder of the building's history and its link to Camden's rural history.

If you have any questions regarding the above matter please contact Gary Estcourt at the Heritage Office on (02) 9873 8562.

Yours sincerely

 24/01/08

Vincent Sicari
Manager
Conservation Team
Heritage Office
Department of Planning



JOE MAURICI (Proprietor)
 CAMDEN ADVERTISER 2.7.2008
 Fairfax Community Newspapers

News

Years of neglect will wash away

By Alicia Bowie

IT WILL be a case of the new complementing the old when a car wash is built next to the former Camden Vale Milk Company depot on the corner of Argyle and Edward streets.

Camden Council approved the construction of the car wash and refurbishment of the old depot at last week's meeting.

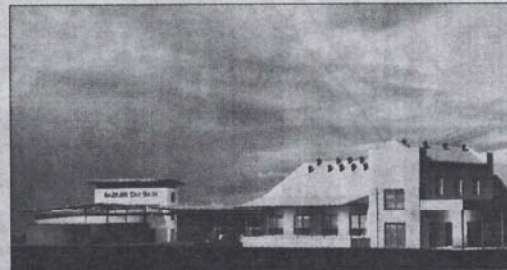
Paul Wakeling, of the Paul Wakeling Motor Group that owns the land, said they had worked with the council and heritage officers for a long time to get the best outcome for "what is very much a derelict building".

"It's our intention to bring it to a very attractive entry at that end of town," he said.

"Now that we've got the approval we're anxious to get on with it."

The car wash will be called Dazzlers at Camden and is being built by the locally-owned Carwash Builders Australia run by Joe Maurici.

Vice-president of the Camden Historical Society,



Transition area: An artist's impression of the car wash and alterations from the old milk depot, as viewed from Edward Street.

Image courtesy de angells taylor + associates

'It's our intention to bring it to a very attractive entry at that end of town.'

Paul Wakeling

John Wrigley, said the society was pleased the proposal included substantial heritage conservation work on the milk depot building that was built in 1929. A council report said the demolition of brick additions to the building and concrete ramp, added in the

1960s, would help return the building to its original form.

"It's considered that the proposed conservation work to the former milk depot building and the high quality architecture of the proposed car wash facility will support the heritage value of the land and protect the visual prominence of the eastern entry into Camden," the report said.

Consent conditions state the building's original doors and windows must be retained.