

Camden Local Planning Panel 16 April 2019

DA RE: DA 2018/775/1

18 and 20 Broughton Street

*Alterations, extensions and use of an existing building as a child care facility, display of a sign and associated site works*

The original DA was for a 99 place child care facility, which was found to be in excess of what the site could accommodate. The proposal is now reduced to 88 child care places. The staff report also includes other modifications and consent conditions associated with proposed tree removal, parking, noise mitigation and heritage impacts, all of which suggest that the proposed location of the child care centre is essentially problematic.

We commend and agree with all of the modifications in the report but still have serious concerns in relation to the constraints of the site and its location in a busy part of the heritage conservation area.

The site area of 2 024 sq., even at 88 places, remains too small to reasonably accommodate the proposal.

In particular, to comply with National Regulations of indoor and outdoor space requirements per child the front setback of the building to the street must be used as a play area, which will be part of the public domain interface of this proposal. Special conditions and arguments as to how the public domain interface and play area will be managed and landscaped are presented to bring it within the CCPG framework. However, it remains very problematic.

- Children will be visible from any passer-by in the street even if the front play area is restricted to the smaller children. The general public frequent the street as it is home to many professional practices. The site is also close to main retail areas. Whilst the use of front setbacks as play areas is not specifically prohibited everywhere, common sense would indicate that it is not a good idea in this location. Whilst Broughton Street is not necessarily a place to linger, there is nothing to prevent anyone doing so. It is difficult to understand how parents would be comfortable with this potentially unsafe situation. Staff are unlikely to be comfortable with the added responsibility and expected extent of passive surveillance of the street. Certainly, many questions will need to be answered if a child goes missing.
- The public domain interface requires very significant softening and hedging to blend at all with the domestic cottage character of the streetscape and restore the amenity of neighbours. It is also not clear what play equipment will be visible. It will be many years before the tree canopy and expected leafiness of the site is restored. Even so the frontage is likely to present as an anomaly.
- The public domain interface also does not meet the CCPG quality framework because it does not enhance the heritage and cultural qualities and identity of adjacent sites, the streetscape or heritage conservation area. The CCPG specifically requires that developments consider heritage impacts.

The Burra Charter which has been adopted by Camden Council, advocates a cautious and minimalistic approach to adaptive reuse of sites.

The site size is very problematic because it requires use of the street set back which is an intrinsic character element of the original cottage character and cultural identity of the street, and of the B4 zone of the conservation area.

The site area is also too small to accommodate easy and safe vehicle manoeuvrability.

- The driveway is constrained by the position of the existing building and the required pedestrian access path. The dedicated turning bay will help but the vehicle area is small and parents will be tempted to wait on site for a spot instead of turning and exiting if no parking is available, especially during the morning rush.
- Concerns remain about the safety of small children with vehicles, especially large four-wheel drives, reversing out of parking spaces.
- Broughton Street offers unrestricted on-street parking but it is at a premium. Although staff will be required to park in the stacked spaces if on site it is likely that they will park in Broughton Street for convenience. Parking may have to be timed and monitored to encourage staff to park on site. Otherwise, early morning starts for staff of the Child Care facility is likely to reduce parking that is later available to the public who expect to quickly come and go from the various businesses in the street.

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Whilst it is up to proponents to establish the economics of their proposal clearly the public interest would be served by this child care centre being located in new areas where there are more young families and fewer site constraints.