

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

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General Manager,
Camden Council
70 Central Avenue
Oran Park NSW 2570
10 July 2023

Dear Sir,

Re: DA 2023/284/1

Camden Civic Centre

40-46 Oxley Street CAMDEN

Alterations and additions to Camden Civic Centre, including construction of a new building entry, extension of the building foyer, internal refurbishment and reconfiguration, removal of six trees and landscaping within the building curtilage and Memorial Garden.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above DA which conceptually aims to elevate the competitive position of the venue, reorientate its main entry through a John Street walk and build on the cultural heritage and heart of Camden (MAAT 2022, Concept Approach). As the Statement of Environmental Effects (SEE) reports we are a most active community group in Camden and are to be involved in formal consultation during the DA assessment (SEE, Table 1.1, p. 3).

Our initial comments follow.

Tree Canopy and Vegetation

- The tree canopy and leafiness of the Civic Centre site currently effectively screen the building thus integrating it into the Heritage Conservation Area (HCA).

The planned palette, signage and additions to the building do not attempt to make it more sympathetic within the HCA, so landscaping and screening remain critical to conserving Camden's sense of place.

Source: The Ents Tree Consultancy 24 March 2023
 Arbicultural Impact Assessment & Tree Protection
 Plan



PLANT SCHEDULE

BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	HEIGHT	POT SIZE	QTY
TREES				
<i>Acer rubrum</i> 'October Glory'	October Glory	10M	400L	as shown
<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i> 'Summer Beauty'	Summer Beauty Flowering Gum	6M	200L	as shown
<i>Corymbia ficifolia</i> 'Wildfire'	Wildfire Flowering Gum	6M	200L	as shown
<i>Ginkgo biloba</i>	Ginkgo	11M	400L	as shown
<i>Harpullia pendula</i>	Tulipwood	9M	200L	as shown
<i>Pyrus calleryana</i> 'Capital'	Capital Pear	8M	400L	as shown
<i>Tristaniaopsis laurina</i> 'Luscious'	Luscious Water Gum	8M	200L	as shown
<i>Waterhousea</i> 'Green Avenue'	Green Avenue	10M	200L	as shown
SHRUBS AND CLIMBERS				
<i>Agave parryi</i>	Artichoke Agave	0.7M	200MM	2/m2
<i>Anemone x hybrida</i>	Japanese Wind Flower	1M	150MM	3/m2
<i>Clivea miniata</i>	Clivea	0.6M	salvage	5/m2
<i>Dianella</i> 'Green Goddess'	Green Goddess Flax Lily	0.6M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Doryanthes excelsa</i>	Gynea Lily	2M	300MM	2/m2
<i>Gardenia augusta</i>	Gardenia	1.2M	200MM	2/m2
<i>Gazania</i> 'Double Gold'	Double Gold Treasure Flower	0.2M	150MM	7/m2
<i>Liriope</i> 'Evergreen Giant'	Evergreen Giant	0.7M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Lomandra</i> 'Katrinus Deluxe'	Katrinus Matt Rush	0.7M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Lomandra longifolia</i> 'Nyalla'	Nyalla Matt Rush	0.7M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Lomandra</i> 'Tanika'	Tanika Matt Rush	0.7M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i> '	Creeping boobialla	0.2M	150MM	7/m2
<i>Neomarcia gracilis</i>	Walking Iris	0.7M	150MM	5/m2
<i>Photinia x fraseri</i> 'Little Red Robin'	Photinia	2M	300MM	2/m2
<i>Rhaphiolepis</i> 'Oriental Pearl'	Oriental Pearl	1M	300MM	2/m2
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> 'Prostratus'	Prostrate Rosemary	0.3M	150MM	5/m2

We are concerned about three Tallowood trees (numbered 1, 2 and 3 in the Arborist’s Report), all with high landscape ratings, on the corner of Mitchell and Oxley Streets, as pictured above. Tree 1 is intended to be retained but its TPZ will be severely disturbed. Trees 2 and 3 are deemed incompatible with the planned works.

Trees 2 and 3 are currently 18m and 19m high with large canopies. We would like to see the planned works examined to determine if there is any way that these trees can be fully protected and all three retained. Loss of canopy in this location would be detrimental to the streetscape and HCA.

There does not appear to be a plan to fully replace the trees that are proposed to be lost. As shown in the above table, tree pot sizes are not maximised and their full-grown heights after many years are not conducive to providing significant tree canopy. We submit that much larger mature replacement plantings are needed to aesthetically enhance the site and HCA. From an environmental perspective we believe that a better outcome, one minimising heat island effect and carbon footprint, is possible.

RSL Memorial

- We trust that the community will be appropriately advised about the RSL response to the repositioning of the cairn and plans for the memorial garden.
- We trust that the RSL will be given the opportunity to supervise and have the final say in the appropriateness of the finished work.

Memorial Garden; Signage

- John Street is to become the main entrance to the Civic Centre. We could find no artist's impression of the interface of the garden with John Street. As this is a highly significant area of the HCA, the community needs to know how it will present within the streetscape. Ideally it will be aesthetically welcoming and contribute to Camden's leafiness and country town heritage.

The interface should not reflect the aesthetic of the civic centre itself; with its form simply following function, it could be anywhere. As evident in the artist's impression below, it is not planned to be intrinsically sympathetic to Camden's heritage building stock in terms of design, scale, materials, colour and signage.



Source: Melocco and Moore 2 May 2023 *Architectural Plans*

The entrance to the garden must contribute appropriately to the heritage town by reflecting its settled and old country town character. A stark and modernistic entrance to the garden is not appropriate.

- We feel that the awning signage in the above artist's impression is too stark and overpowering.

The signage report (MAAT Studio) states: *The neutral colour palette, majority of signs are black & white, have also been considered in relation to the heritage setting.* Our understanding is that black and white are not considered traditional heritage colours. The basis for this choice is not provided.

As prescribed in the Camden DCP, Camden Council Material and Colour Guide (2023) and recommended in the adopted Camden Town Centre Urban Design Framework (UDF) signage should be restrained and material and colour palette should be traditional.

It is also not clearly explained as to how the proposed totem opposite, which is understood to be located at the memorial garden entrance in John Street, and to indicate the main entrance to the Civic Centre, is reflective of or contributory to Camden's significant heritage.

It is also not clear whether or how the memorial garden and cairn are to be signed.



Source: MAAT Studio 1 December 2022 *Signage and Graphics*

- The garden currently contains old sandstone flagging but we find no mention of how it is to be reused. We maintain that the flagging should be re-used in the garden or used elsewhere in the HCA, in which hand-cut sandstone is a feature.
- The garden also currently accommodates reproduction Victorian bench seating. Whilst the current trend is to replace the traditional with minimalist utilitarian street furniture, this trend can be argued to replace the distinctive with the generic and detract from sense of place. Again, if the current seating is to be replaced, it should be located elsewhere in the HCA.

Overall, of course we see the refurbishment and promoting the Civic Centre as a cultural hub to be greatly beneficial and in the community's interest. It is the detail that the community needs to understand and accept as the best outcome possible.

Camden is renowned for its community groups, their understanding of the old town, designed by the Macarthurs in 1836, and their fierce protection of Camden's unique heritage. It is important to get it right and respect the community as the major and highly invested stakeholder. We suggest that not only us, but also at least the Camden Historical Society be formally consulted in assessing and finalising the detail of this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Glenda Davis

President