



6 July 2018

Ms Sue Gaudi
Urban Planner—Major Projects & Policy
Hobsons Bay City Council
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ALTONA VIC 3018

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East Melbourne
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T 03 9656 9818

Re: Planning Permit Application PA1839365—405 Melbourne Road, Newport

Dear Ms Gaudi,

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) objects to the above permit application, which includes the demolition of the existing Masonic Hall and construction of a new five-storey development.

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is state's largest community-based heritage advocacy organisation actively working towards conserving and protecting our heritage for future generations to enjoy, representing 28,000 members across Victoria. The National Trust's vision is that "our diverse heritage is protected and respected, contributing to strong, vibrant and prosperous communities", and our mission to "inspire the community to appreciate, conserve and celebrate its diverse natural, cultural, social and Indigenous heritage".

The subject site is affected by two heritage controls: HO22 includes the site in the Newport Civic and Commercial Heritage Precinct; and HO197 imposes a site specific control over the Masonic Temple, including external paint controls and internal alteration controls.

We submit that the proposal to demolish the Masonic Temple is contrary to provisions in the planning scheme relating to heritage places. The General Heritage Policy at Clause 22.01-1, states that it is policy to conserve heritage places and precincts by:

Discouraging the demolition of heritage places unless the demolition is only part of the heritage place and it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority that, as appropriate:

Discouraging the demolition of heritage places unless it can be demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority that the structural integrity of the heritage place has been lost;

Generally not accepting the poor condition or low integrity of a heritage place as justification for its demolition, particularly if in the opinion of the Responsible Authority the condition of the heritage place has deliberately been allowed to deteriorate.

We also note the objectives at Clause 22.01-10 regarding the Newport Civic and Commercial Heritage Precinct Policy, which has an objective to retain the distinctive cultural heritage significance of this precinct which is derived from:

The visual prominence and setting of historic landmark buildings such as the Former Masonic Temple, Newport Station complex, Newport Hotel, and the former Bank of Australasia. Significant vistas along Melbourne Road to the Masonic Temple and the Newport Hotel remain.

We note that the proposal is similar to a previous proposal for the site which was refused by Council, a decision which was upheld following an appeal at the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (*Trethowan Architecture v Hobsons Bay CC* [2013] VCAT 1), and we do not believe the application demonstrates any material change in circumstances following this decision which would warrant the approval of the current permit.

The National Trust has concerns that the condition of the current building is a case of “demolition by neglect”, and that no works have been undertaken to stabilise and maintain the building following the refusal of the earlier permit application for the site. We note the conclusion of Beauchamp Hogg Spano in the Structural Condition Assessment dated June 2016, which states “the building has received very little maintenance over the years, which is a primary contributor to the deterioration” (p 18).

While we acknowledge the significant structural issues identified in the Structural Assessment, the report does not rule out the reconstruction of the building according to *Burra Charter* principles and its incorporation in any new development, and states that “repairs of carbonated concrete are possible” (p 14). The report also notes that “the front façade is in better condition than the north, south and west elevations” (p 14).

We would expect that for a place identified as having both individual heritage significance, and contributory significance to a heritage precinct, that all possible options for restoration or reconstruction should be explored and documented in any application for a development on the site. The application provides no evidence that options for the retention of the building have been meaningfully investigated, or that restoration and reconstruction are not viable options.

We therefore respectfully call on Council to refuse the current permit application. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application. For any enquiries regarding this submission, please don't hesitate to contact me on 9656 9802 or at felicity.watson@gmail.com.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F Watson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Felicity Watson
Advocacy Manager