

HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT - DEMOLITION

Place: 61 Neville Street, Middle Park
For: All Extensions Design
Date: 20 September 2016

Introduction

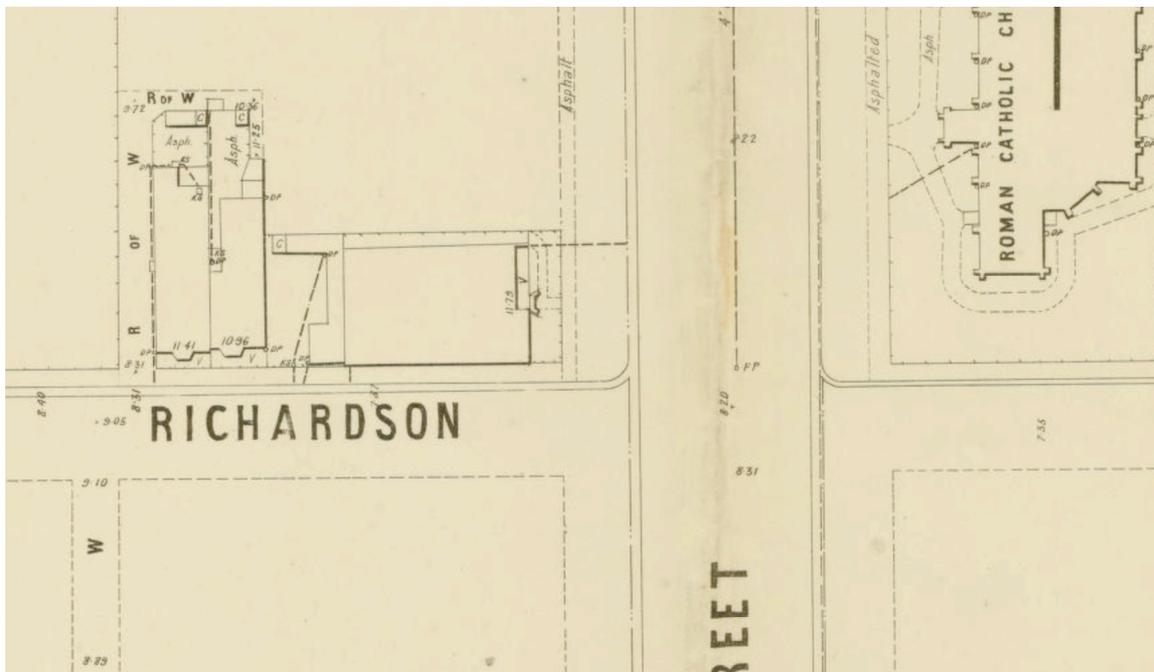
I have been asked to provide comment on the heritage value of the house at the subject property as demolition of the house is proposed to make way for redevelopment of the site. Having inspected the property from the public domain and in consideration of the context of the house in which it is isolated from any group of similar building I conclude that the heritage value of the house is sufficiently low that the redevelopment of the land can be accepted.

Description

The subject site is the last property on the north side of Neville Street before Neville Street turns the corner to become a lane that runs along the southeastern boundary of the Middle Park Primary School. The long axis of the property runs at approximately 30° east of north away from the Neville Street frontage. The subject property is separated from the school by the cobbled lane that runs along the northwest side boundary of the land. The property, and the vacant neighbour at no. 63 extends behind the no's 80 and 82 Wright Street, both which are occupied by double fronted villas. Opposite the subject property is the modern garage at the rear of no. 84 Wright Street. Other than an interwar substation on the western arm of Neville Street, halfway from the corner along the lane from Page Street there is no heritage character to the lane other than its pitched paving stones. The lane frontage is the rear frontage of the Wright Street properties. To the southwest of Page Street the lane continues as the service lane to the properties of Wright Street to end at Ashworth Street. The subject property is located within the wider Heritage Overlay HO444, the Middle Park and West St Kilda Heritage Precinct, is across the lane from the individual Heritage Overlay, HO239, Primary School No 2815. There is however a modern toilet block in the school grounds adjacent to the lane along the side

of the subject property which isolates the subject house from any heritage presence of the early school.

The subject house is a single fronted, single storey timber cottage with two rooms under the principal red painted corrugated iron roof and with the hall along the right side. The third room behind the second rendered chimney has a skillion roof. The side of the house onto the lane is weatherboard and the front, below the verandah, remains the faux ashlar timber paneling. Above the verandah, which is of post war origin mounted on 50mm steel posts, the cladding has been replaced or over clad with a sheet material. Below the window the cladding is also modern. The window and door to the front façade have been replaced in the post war, and the concrete porch and steps of the frontage of the building has been enclosed with a low, cream and brown, brick fence.



MMBW Detail Plan No. 585 of 1895 show the house, and its demolished neighbour

Assessment

The house is not a part of a group or row of similar buildings and is not located in a setting having any prevailing or cohesive heritage character or presence. At the end of Neville Street abutting the rear of the school yard and at the rear of the Wright Street properties in a lane that is without supportive heritage presence the property is not readily seen to be in a heritage streetscape, lanescape, or heritage setting.

For a property to be 'contributory' it should have heritage characteristics or attributes and should share those with other buildings to establish a heritage context to which it contributes. Having little or no immediate heritage context of other related buildings or heritage fabric beyond the cobbles stones of the lane, the building also has a very compromised heritage character. Whilst it could not be said that the cottage has been altered beyond recognition of its origins, it has been altered to the extent that it has no notable aesthetic value and minimal historic value. In its present state with replaced window, door, veranda, and part of the cladding to its frontage, the cottage presents more a disregard, rather than respect, for heritage character, appearance and significance.

Based on other examples of this relatively common Victorian typology of humble cottage, it would be possible to reconstruct the lost elements of the frontage, on a conjectural basis, to present the building as an complete early cottage. The MMBW Detail Plan No. 585 of 1895 show the house, and its demolished neighbour, had a bay window to its frontage, and also shows that Neville Street was called "Little Richardson Street". Whilst reconstruction is generally possible with some fidelity based upon knowledge offered by the MMBW maps this course of action should be at owners discretion rather than being a compulsion.

Conclusion

Whilst the subject site is within a heritage overlay and is from a period that is of significance in the history of the development of the wider heritage place, it now a building so altered that there is little incentive to undertake what would be a quite substantial exercise in reconstruction that would need to be carefully conducted if not to distort the heritage value it was seeking to recreate. The house does not form a part of a group of similar buildings to which it contributes significance and which might otherwise have amplified its own significance. The house is certainly not of itself outstanding as a representative of any particular style and could not attract individual recognition. The house is isolated and forlorn and I concluded that there is no longer attributes or features of the house that give it a level of heritage value to establish either its own heritage context or to support any perception of a surrounding heritage streetscape or place.

Although the property is surrounded by the colour red on the heritage map, in actuality it is the rear of heritage places that front onto this locality without imparting any sense of heritage presence or of heritage place. As a property coloured green and so graded 'contributory' it is formally heritage policy to encourage its conservation. This is however in my view a situation where the contribution is so low that it is reasonable to accept that the altered, isolated and very humble cottage can be replaced without concern of any heritage impact on the wider heritage place.

I conclude that with an appropriately designed development the demolition of the house will have no adverse affect upon the appreciation of the heritage significance of the locality or the precinct and accordingly recommend that demolition in principle be supported. No demolition permit should be issued until such time that a replacement building of appropriate contextual design quality has been approved.



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