

Item 8.

Public Exhibition - Planning Proposal - Heritage Item - Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Haymarket - Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 Amendment

File No: X098658

Summary

Haymarket and the CBD South village area is one of Sydney's most iconic precincts and has long been recognised as a focal point for Asian food, culture, and community both locally and internationally. It is a well-known destination for entertainment and nightlife and is home to the famous Lunar New Year festival and Friday night markets.

The area is of great significance to Chinese Australian communities. Chinese people began arriving in Australia as early as 1818 and by the 1930s Haymarket became the social, cultural, and economic centre for Chinese people in Sydney. From the 1970s the Chinese population has expanded in Sydney and spread out to many different suburbs.

The precinct is home to significant landmarks including Dixon Street marked by the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Paddy's Market/Market City, the Chinese Garden of Friendship and Belmore Park.

The Chinatown Ceremonial Gates were conceived by the Dixon Street Chinese Committee as part of a broader Dixon Street Beautification Project in the late 1970s. Designed by architect Henry Tsang using traditional Chinese materials and ornamentation, they were completed in 1980 and officially handed over to the Council by the Dixon Street Chinese Committee. At its meeting on 9 March 2020, Council noted businesses in Chinatown had expressed their desire for a formal acknowledgement of the heritage significance of Chinatown Ceremonial Gates and that a heritage study would consider heritage listing for the Gates.

The heritage assessment prepared by GML Heritage, provides detailed information on the Gates and concludes the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates have local significance for their historic, associative, aesthetic, social, rarity and representative attributes.

A planning proposal to amend the City's local environmental plan (LEP) has been prepared to list the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates as a heritage item.

This report recommends the Planning Proposal to heritage list the Gates be approved to commence the process to amend the LEP by seeking a Gateway Determination and carrying out public authority consultation and public exhibition.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) Council approve the Planning Proposal - Heritage Item - Chinatown - Ceremonial Gates, Haymarket as shown at Attachment A to the subject report for submission to the Department of Planning and Environment with a request for Gateway Determination;
- (B) Council approve the Planning Proposal - Heritage Item - Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Haymarket, as shown at Attachment A for public authority consultation and public exhibition in accordance with any conditions imposed under the Gateway Determination;
- (C) Council seek authority from the Department of Planning and Environment to exercise the delegation of all the functions under section 3.36 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to make the local environmental plan and to put into effect the planning proposal; and
- (D) authority be delegated to the Chief Executive Officer to make any minor variations to the Planning Proposal - Heritage Item - Chinatown Ceremonial Gates to correct any drafting errors or to ensure consistency with the Gateway Determination.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Planning Proposal - Heritage Item - Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Haymarket.
- Attachment B.** GML Heritage - Heritage Assessment Report - Chinatown Gates, Haymarket
- Attachment C.** GML Heritage - Draft Inventory for Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Haymarket

Background

1. Haymarket and the CBD South village area is one of Sydney's most iconic precincts and has long been recognised as a focal point for Asian food, culture, and community both locally and internationally. It is a well-known destination for entertainment and nightlife and is home to the famous Lunar New Year festival and Friday night markets.
2. Haymarket offers a vibrant and unique urban experience, being both part of Central Sydney and being one of the City's densest residential neighbourhoods.
3. The area is of long standing significance to Chinese Australian communities. Chinese people began arriving in Australia as early as 1818 and by the 1930s Haymarket became the social, cultural, and economic centre for Chinese people in Sydney.
4. The precinct is home to significant landmarks including Dixon Street marked by the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, Paddy's Market/Market City, the Chinese Garden of Friendship and Belmore Park.
5. In March 2020, a Lord Mayoral Minute noted the Covid-19 pandemic was having a disproportionate impact on the Chinatown precinct, and that businesses and restaurants in Haymarket were seeing a significant downturn in trade of up to 80 per cent.
6. Senior business leaders called on the City of Sydney to develop a plan to support the local business community, drive footfall to the Haymarket precinct and to assist in reducing the spread of misinformation about Covid-19 in the community. The City was asked to investigate:
 - (a) opportunities to assist businesses across the city, such as waiving fees and charges
 - (b) street attractions and activations, including changes to signage, streetscape and traffic movements in Haymarket to reinvigorate the area and increase foot traffic and
 - (c) a heritage study for Chinatown which would include assessing the Dixon Street gateways for listing, which are of cultural significance to the Chinese community.
7. The City commissioned a heritage assessment report for the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, prepared by GML Heritage in 2023. The report concludes the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates meet the criteria for local heritage significance.

The Chinatown Ceremonial Gates

8. The Chinatown Ceremonial Gates and lions were conceived by the Dixon Street Chinese Committee as part of a broader Dixon Street Beautification Project in the late 1970s. This broader project was undertaken by the Council in collaboration with the committee, and included the trial closure of Dixon Street which was made permanent in 1979.
9. Following the success of the Dixon Street closure, the Committee retained architect Henry Tsang to design the Ceremonial Gates as a marker of the Chinese community roots in Sydney.

10. The Ceremonial Gates were designed using traditional Chinese design and ornamentation and were constructed of externally sourced traditional glazed tiles and other imported materials. Completed in 1980, the Gates were officially handed over to the Council by the Dixon Street Chinese Committee.
11. There are two Chinatown Ceremonial Gates, one each at the northern and southern ends of Dixon Street (south) in Haymarket. They act as Ceremonial archways to Chinatown. Both Gates are symmetrical and largely identical besides unique individual decorative panels. They are both accompanied by a pair of lion statues on plinths, intended to guard the entry.
12. The Gates are located on a public road designated as a shared zone and are owned by the City of Sydney Council.

Heritage assessment

13. The heritage assessment prepared by GML Heritage, provided at Attachment B, provides detailed information about the Gates and concludes the Chinatown Gates have local significance for historic, associative, aesthetic, social, rarity and representative attributes. The assessment found the Gates had significance against the following NSW Heritage Council criteria:
 - (a) *Historical significance* - the Chinatown Gates form a landmark to the Dixon Street precinct, which has been an area of Chinese migration and commerce since the early twentieth century. The Gates are recognisable as landmarks to Sydneysiders and visitors from further afield. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.
 - (b) *Associative significance* - the Chinatown Gates have association with the precinct, the Dixon Street Chinese Committee and Tsang & Lee architectural practice the designers of the Gates. Henry Tsang is a well known figure in the local community having served as a Councillor on the City of Sydney Council and his later role in NSW state politics. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.
 - (c) *Aesthetic significance* - the Chinatown Gates demonstrate the typology of a modest traditional Chinese Ceremonial gateway. The Gates have landmark qualities within the context of Haymarket and are markers within the streetscape which are well recognised by the local community. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.
 - (d) *Social significance* - the Gates are a symbol of friendship and unity across all Chinese, Australian-Chinese and local communities. They provide an important sense of place and are landmark in Chinatown. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.
 - (e) *Rarity* - these Gates are rare examples of Chinese gateways within Sydney marking an entrance into Chinatown. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.
 - (f) *Representativeness* - the Chinatown Gates are an intact example of a Chinese Ceremonial gateway and have not been altered since their construction in 1979-80. There are other similar symbolic gateways in other Australian cities including

Melbourne and Perth which are different but comparable in design to these in Haymarket. The Gates meet this criterion at the local level.

Proposal for heritage listing

14. A planning proposal to amend the City's Local Environmental Plan (LEP) is required to list the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates on Schedule 5 of the LEP. The planning proposal is at Attachment A to the report. The planning proposal is supported by the heritage assessment prepared by GML Heritage as well as a draft inventory for the site, provided at Attachments B and C respectively.
15. The Planning Proposal recommends a curtilage to protect the setting of the Gates. The curtilage extends to the north and south of each gate along Dixon Street south and is wholly within the public domain. It does not apply to properties either side of Dixon Street.

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

16. Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision renews the communities' vision for the sustainable development of the city to 2050. It includes 10 strategic directions to guide the future of the city, as well as 10 targets against which to measure progress. This report is aligned with the following strategic directions and objectives:
 - (a) Direction 8 - A thriving cultural and creative life - the acknowledgement of the importance of the Chinatown Ceremonial Gates contributes to the City's culture and creative life, with the protection of the heritage fabric and promoting the history of the site and its value to the community.

Relevant Legislation

17. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
18. Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021

Public Consultation

19. Should the planning proposal at Attachment A is approved, it will be forwarded to the Department of Planning and Environment with a request for a Gateway Determination to allow public exhibition.
20. The public consultation process for the planning proposal will be subject to the conditions of the Gateway Determination issued by the Department of Planning and Environment.
21. At a minimum the City will notify the public and local community of the proposal on the City's website, and in writing to surrounding landowners, local community groups and stakeholders. Exhibition documents will be made available for viewing on the City's Have Your Say website.

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