

Item 9.

Public Exhibition - Planning Proposal - Chinatown Heritage Items - Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 Amendment

File No: X099927

Summary

The Haymarket and Chinatown Revitalisation Strategy was adopted by Council on 11 December 2023, including an action to recognise the cultural heritage of Chinatown through investigating 3 buildings (50-54 Dixon Street, 90-100 Hay Street and 75-77 Ultimo Road, Haymarket) to better understand their history and heritage significance.

The heritage assessments prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok provide detailed information on the history of each building and conclude that all three have local significance for varying reasons. The assessments conclude:

- (a) The building at 50-54 Dixon Street was jointly funded and purpose-built in 1916 by the leaders of the Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) and Tung Koon (Dongguan) counties as clubhouses for 3 Tongs. The Tongs played a vital role in the Chinese Australian community by offering services to assist with settling in Sydney or returning to China. The building has local significance for its historic significance, historical association, aesthetic / creative / technical achievement, social, cultural and spiritual, rare, and representative attributes.
- (b) The building at 90-100 Hay Street was constructed as municipal stores for the markets and were occupied by Chinese Australian firms which played a role in pioneering the processes of the banana and commercial vegetable growing industries in Australia. It meets the threshold for local significance in terms of its historic significance, historical association, aesthetic / creative / technical achievement, social, cultural and spiritual, research potential and rare attributes.
- (c) The building at 75-77 Ultimo Road was constructed for and has served continuously as the headquarters of the Chinese Nationalist Party of Australasia (Kuo Min Tang or KMT) since 1921. It meets the threshold for local significance in terms of its historic significance, historical association, aesthetic / creative / technical achievement, social, cultural and spiritual, research potential and rare attributes.

A planning proposal to amend the City's local environmental plan (LEP) has been prepared to list the 3 buildings as heritage items.

This report recommends the planning proposal be approved to seek a gateway determination and carry out public authority consultation and public exhibition.

Recommendation

It is resolved that:

- (A) the Central Sydney Planning Committee approve the Planning Proposal - Chinatown Heritage Items, Haymarket as shown at Attachment A to the subject report for submission to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with a request for gateway determination;
- (B) the Central Sydney Planning Committee approve the Planning Proposal - Chinatown Heritage Items, Haymarket as shown at Attachment A for public authority consultation and public exhibition in accordance with any conditions imposed under the gateway determination;
- (C) the Central Sydney Planning Committee note the recommendation to Council's Transport, Heritage and Planning Committee on 11 November 2024 that Council seek authority from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure 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 Items - Chinatown to correct any drafting errors or to ensure consistency with the gateway determination.

Attachments

- Attachment A.** Planning Proposal - Chinatown Heritage Items, Haymarket
- Attachment B.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Heritage Assessment Report - 50-54 Dixon Street
- Attachment C.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Heritage Assessment Report - 90-100 Hay Street
- Attachment D.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Heritage Assessment Report - 75-77 Ultimo Road
- Attachment E.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Draft Inventory Sheet - 50-54 Dixon Street
- Attachment F.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Draft Inventory Sheet - 90-100 Hay Street
- Attachment G.** Hector Abrahams Architects - Draft Inventory Sheet - 75-77 Ultimo Road

Background

1. The Haymarket and Chinatown Revitalisation Strategy (the Strategy) was adopted by Council on 11 December 2023.
2. The Strategy provides a coordinated response to the community vision and evidence-based studies. It identifies actions in 5 areas:
 - (a) renewal of the heart
 - (b) planning and heritage
 - (c) public domain and public art
 - (d) culture, events, and activations, and
 - (e) collaboration and partnerships.
3. The Strategy includes an action to recognise the cultural heritage of Chinatown through investigating three buildings to better understand their history and significance:
 - (a) 75-77 Ultimo Road, Kuo Min Tang building
 - (b) 90-100 Hay Street, Former Municipal Stores
 - (c) 50-54 Dixon Street, Goon Yee, Loong Yee and Loon Fook Tongs building.
4. Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok were commissioned to undertake the project. The first stages were to undertake historic research of the 3 sites and engagement with community and landowners.
5. A community workshop was held on 5 April 2024 to discuss the draft historic research and get feedback. The workshop was attended by 20 attendees including academics, historians, community representatives and former residents or people with connections to the buildings.
6. The landowners were also invited via letter and email for a meeting to hear about the draft historic research and to discuss their building. Of the 8 landowners, 6 attended, one declined the meeting, and one did not respond.
7. The feedback from both the community workshop and the landowner meetings helped to inform the historic research and the initial assessment of significance.
8. With the City's instruction, Hector Abrahams Architects then carried out heritage assessments for each of the three buildings, which are summarised below.

50-54 Dixon Street, Goon Yee, Loong Yee and Loon Fook Tongs building

9. The building at 50-54 Dixon Street was jointly funded and purpose-built in 1916 by the leaders of the Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) and Tung Koon (Dongguan) counties as clubhouses for 3 Tongs. The Tongs played a vital role in the Chinese Australian community by offering services to assist with settling in Sydney or returning to China.

10. The heritage assessment concluded that the building meets the threshold for local significance in terms of:
- (a) Criterion (a) Historic significance: The building at 50-54 Dixon Street is a purpose-built 3-storey building for the Tung Koon (Dongguan) and Tsang Shing (Zengcheng) associations, which are key social organisations for the Chinese Australian community in Sydney. The role of the associations was significant in maintaining the Chinese Australian community's links with their hometown and facilitated the settlement of Chinese immigrants in Australia. The building also housed several other historically significant Chinese Australian organisations, The Tung Wah Times Newspaper, the NSW Chinese Chamber of Commerce, and a number of restaurants which were instrumental in developing the restaurant culture of Dixon Street.
 - (b) Criterion (b) Historical association: The 3-storey building at 50-54 Dixon Street has historical association with the "Loon Fook Tong", "Loong Yee Tong" and "Goon Yee Tong" District Associations of the Tsang Shing and Tung Koon Counties. The place is also associated with the Chinese newspaper 'Tung Wah Times' (publishing address at 52 Dixon Street from 1918 until at least 1933 but likely until 1936) and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce (headquartered at 52 Dixon Street from 1918 to 1965). The place is associated with a number of prominent figures in the Chinese Australian community, particularly Ping Nam and Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy.
 - (c) Criterion (c) Aesthetic / creative / technical achievement: The building at 50-54 Dixon Street is aesthetically significant in providing an understanding of the historical streetscape of Dixon Street. It is a good example of a late Federation building and it is this style that represents the founding architectural character of Dixon Street.
 - (d) Criterion (d) Social, cultural and spiritual: The Loon Fook Tong, Goon Yee Tong and Loong Yee Tong district associations have owned and/or used 50-54 Dixon Street for over 100 years and has ongoing social significance for members of the Tsang Shing County and Tung Koon districts. Although many of the historical functions of the district associations have ceased, such as bone repatriation, the district associations continue to hold sociable and charitable activities at the place.

The place is symbolic of Chinese migration and settlement in Australia and is also evidence of the Chinese diaspora's practice of maintaining, over many generations, strong ties to their home country. The building contributes to the local identity of the 2 communities within Sydney.
 - (e) Criterion (f) Rare: A small number of purpose-built district association buildings are known to have been erected in several parts of Australia since the late 19th century. The building at 50-54 Dixon Street is one of a handful of buildings in the country that continue to exist and function as district associations and have done so for over 100 years.
 - (f) Criterion (g) Representative: The late Federation building at 50-54 Dixon Street is one of a handful of buildings on Dixon Street that is representative of the historical scale, materiality and composition of the old Chinatown streetscape.

11. The heritage assessment concluded that the building at 50-54 Dixon Street, Haymarket meets the threshold for local heritage significance and warrants potential listing as a heritage item on the local environmental plan.
12. In terms of future development, the report advised that vertical additions and alterations to 50-54 Dixon Street are acceptable but must incorporate appropriate setbacks and scale, be sympathetic to the existing building in terms of style, colour and materiality and ensure retention of the façade and any significant interiors (if existing).
13. The full heritage assessment report is at Attachment B.

90-100 Hay Street, Former Municipal Stores

14. The buildings at 90-100 Hay Street were constructed as municipal stores for the markets and were occupied by Chinese Australian firms which played a role in pioneering the processes of the banana and commercial vegetable growing industries in Australia.
15. The heritage assessment concluded that the building meets the threshold for local significance in terms of:
 - (a) Criterion (a) Historic significance: The banana industry was a major industry developed by Chinese Australian entrepreneurs in Australia and Fiji in the 1880s and 1890s, and firms such as Wing Sang based their headquarters in Sydney's Haymarket area. When the new Municipal markets opened at Haymarket in 1912, firms such as Wing Sang and its subsidiaries, leased stores at 90-100 Hay Street. Their businesses and premises are distinct places in NSW for understanding the banana industry and key destinations on this trade route. They provide a cultural history of the role of Chinese Australians in the fruit and vegetable industries, and their adaptation over time, particularly in the face of challenges posed under White Australia legislation.
 - (b) Criterion (b) Historical association: The former municipal stores at 90-100 Hay Street are associated with the Chinese merchant community who leased the buildings and operated out of them successful businesses such as Wing Sang & Co., Lee Sang & Co., Wing Tiy & Co., and Gee Ick & Co. These businesses were significant in development of the banana and vegetable produce industries of NSW and Australia. The buildings are also associated with notable individuals including Gilbert Yet Ting Quoy, the Lee family and Stanley Yee who were influential figures amongst the Chinese Australian community
 - (c) Criterion (c) Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement: The municipal stores at 90-100 Hay Street contribute to the townscape of Haymarket, particularly along Hay Street and the southern entrance to Dixon Street which is marked by its chamfered corner. The former Municipal Markets are located opposite and were once both part of the market's daily operation. Now the buildings, both of which are contemporaries of each other and designed by the City Architect, form a contextual relationship that defines the area's market character.
 - (d) Criterion (d) Social, cultural and spiritual: Members of the Chinese Australian community who were born and grew up in 90-100 Hay Street, whose parents, grandparents or great-grandparents worked in the stores hold deep connections to the buildings. For this community, the buildings are well remembered as stores which are symbolic of the hard work of the producers and the adaptability, resilience and achievements of the Chinese Australian firms.

- (e) Criterion (e) Research potential: There is some potential for evidence of the processes and operations of the banana and produce stores.
 - (f) Criterion (f) Rare: The place is a rare surviving example of stores occupied by multiple major Chinese Australian firms including Wing Sang and Co., Lee Sang and Co., Wing Tiy and Co., and Gee Ick and Co.
16. The heritage assessment concluded that the Former Municipal Stores at 90-100 Hay Street, Haymarket meet the threshold for local heritage significance and potential listing as a heritage item on the local environmental plan.
17. In terms of future development, the report advised that vertical additions and alterations to 90-100 Hay Street are appropriate but must ensure retention of the whole form and original detailing of the exterior of the principal building. Any future development is to be of a sympathetic design.
18. The full heritage assessment report is at Attachment C.

75-77 Ultimo Road, Kuo Min Tang building

19. The building at 75-77 Ultimo Road was constructed for and served continuously as the headquarters of the Chinese Nationalist Party of Australasia (Kuo Min Tang or KMT) since 1921.
20. The building and its archival collection are a key site of Chinese history in NSW and Australia, directly related to the 20th century political history of China and Taiwan, and the social and economic affairs of Chinese Australians during the operation of the white Australia policy.
21. The heritage assessment concluded that the threshold is met for local significance for:
- (a) Criterion (a) Historic significance: The KMT was globally a major political party in the 20th century and 75-77 Ultimo Road was the headquarters of the KMT in Australasia for over 100 years. It has been the locus of the Chinese Nationalist Party political activity since it was built in 1921. The building was also the publishing office for the Chinese Times newspaper (1925-1949) which was an organ of the Australasian KMT.
 - (b) Criterion (b) Historical association: 75-77 Ultimo Road is associated with the Australasian KMT who have owned and occupied the purpose-built building for over 100 years. Prominent individuals from the Chinese Australian community affiliated with the building include Charles (Peter) Yee Wing, Samuel Wong, Mar Leong Wah and Eugene Seeto. The place is also associated with the notable architect Francis Ernest Stowe and Robert Wall & Sons, a significant building company in the 19th and 20th centuries in Sydney
 - (c) Criterion (c) Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement: The composition and detailing including arch, fenestration, brick mullions, pilasters, parapet and Chinese Characters make a notable contribution to the streetscape and demonstrates aesthetic characteristics associated with Haymarket's redevelopment in the early 20th century.

- (d) Criterion (d) Social, cultural and spiritual: As a community hub where political, social and educational activities were located, 75-77 Ultimo Road continues to be highly valued by the Chinese Australian community. It is one of the major political venues of Chinatown and represents the political and social lives of the Chinese Australian community in Chinatown and NSW during the 20th century.
 - (e) Criterion (e) Research potential: 75-77 Ultimo Road is home to what is probably the largest collection of documents on the activities of the overseas KMT branches outside of China and Taiwan. The collection is an invaluable record of administrative records, publications and photographs not only of the Sydney branch but of those throughout Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands. The archival collection has extensive interpretive value and potential to further our understanding of the history of the KMT.
 - (f) Criterion (f) Rare: 75-77 Ultimo Road is a rare surviving example of early Chinese Australian commissioned buildings and it is a rare example of a building purpose built for the KMT. The archival collection of the Sydney branch housed on-site, is likely a rare collection on the activities of the KMT's overseas branches.
22. The heritage assessment concluded that the headquarters of the Chinese Nationalist Party of Australasia at 75-77 Ultimo Road meets the threshold for local heritage significance and potential listing as a heritage item on the local environmental plan.
23. In terms of future management, much of the building's significance lies with its direct relationship with the KMT and associated archival and movable heritage collection. It is recommended that future use of the building maintain these ties and continues to ensure the retention of significant internal and external features and appropriate conservation of its archival collection.
24. The full heritage assessment report is at Attachment D.

Proposal for heritage listing

A planning proposal to amend the City of Sydney's Local Environmental Plan (LEP) is required to list the 3 buildings on Schedule 5 of the LEP. The planning proposal is at Attachment A to the report. The planning proposal is supported by the 3 heritage assessments prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects and Dr Juanita Kwok (Attachments B, C and D) as well as the draft Inventory Sheets for the site (Attachments E, F and G).

Key Implications

Strategic Alignment - Sustainable Sydney 2030-2050 Continuing the Vision

25. 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 3 Chinatown buildings 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

26. Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

Public Consultation

27. Should the planning proposal at Attachment A be approved, it will be forwarded to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with a request for a gateway determination to allow public exhibition.
28. The public consultation process for the planning proposal will be subject to the conditions of the gateway determination issued by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. Exhibition documents will be made available for viewing and comment on the City's Have Your Say website.

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