

## ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND DETAIL

### DS015 - Proposed Demolition Through Subdivision of Heritage Listed Dwelling - Woorree Homestead - Lot 757 (No.22) Tamarisk Way, Woorree

The original Woorree Homestead is thought to have been built in circa 1870s (see photographs below).



*Original Woorree Homestead*

The current homestead (see photograph below) was constructed in 1950 on the site of the deteriorated original homestead and used some of the same materials, as well as stone from Moonyoonooka. The homestead is a large building located in established gardens. The palms were believed to be planted in front of the homestead sometime after 1913. Built of rendered stone, the house is of one storey and two storey height with a tiled roof. The two storey section features arches to the verandah and balcony. In 1980 the homestead was reroofed. Situated in a picturesque location, the current homestead bears little resemblance to the original homestead though it incorporates some of the construction materials.



Aside from the physical building itself the Woorree Homestead is of cultural and historical significance. This history is documented in both the Municipal Inventory Heritage List Place Record (Attachment B) and in the book “*Homesteads of the Mid West Region of Western Australia*” (Geraldton Camera Club, 1997) (Attachment C).

## HERITAGE ADVISOR ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

In considering the proposal and assessing against the relevant heritage principles of the State Planning Policy 3.5 Historic Heritage Conservation the Heritage Advisor advised that:

- *The application proposes the removal of all structures and vegetation on the subject lot and as such no evidence of the historic property will remain.*
- *The application is accompanied by a Heritage Impact Statement providing some justification for elements of the proposal (ie. demolition of the Woorree Homestead), but offers clear recommendations on how best to ameliorate the loss of the built fabric. (Refer to recommendations 4 and 5).*
- *The application appears to be maximising the lot potential of the land and hence presents as “a more attractive economic proposition”, instead of the alternative proposition of retaining the Woorree Homestead and potentially achieving less lots within the subdivision.*
- *While the condition of the Woorree Homestead shows signs of some recent deterioration due to a lack of repair and maintenance, the structural integrity of the place remains sound. The place is capable of restoration and adaptation for ongoing use.*
- *The application effectively removes any evidence of the historic property which gives its name to the surrounding suburb. The local Woorree community, and indeed the wider Geraldton community, may feel an affinity and connection with the original property; with the Woorree Homestead Precinct, inclusive of the stone fencing and mature vegetation, being the last physical evidence remaining.*

After considerable assessment and reflection of the above, the Heritage Advisor agrees with the Heritage Impact Statement which states in its conclusion that:

*“While demolition is generally discouraged for a place of some significance it does need to be recognised that the 1879 homestead no longer exists and the building is a 1950s homestead of little cultural heritage significance due to its low authenticity. In our professional opinion, the low authenticity of the homestead means that the cultural heritage value of the place is assessed as low. It is recommended that demolition be approved with conditions to recognise the historical value of the former use.” (as per the recommendations 4 and 5 contained with the Heritage Impact Statement).*

The final recommendation of the Heritage advisor is to not support the proposed subdivision and that:

- ideally the Woorree Homestead would be retained on its own lot within the new subdivision and continue to be used for residential purposes; and
- the subdivision (if demolition occurs) fails to take into account recommendations 4 and 5 of the Heritage Impact Statement. The subdivision of Lot 757, which includes the demolition of the Woorree Homestead, would only be supported in

terms of heritage considerations provided that an appropriate interpretive outcome is agreed to and elements of the existing built and landscape fabric are retained within the new subdivision, including remnants of stone wall fencing and mature Canary Island Date Palms.

## **HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT**

*“Whilst demolition is generally discouraged for a place of some significance it does need to be recognised that the 1879 homestead no longer exists and that the building is a 1950s homestead of little cultural heritage significance due to its low authenticity.*

*The low authenticity (extent of the original building fabric) of the homestead means that the cultural heritage value of the place is assessed as low. It is recommended that demolition be approved, with conditions, to recognise the historical value of the former use.”*

## **WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PLANNING COMMISSION STATE PLANNING POLICY 3.5 – HISTORIC HERITAGE CONSERVATION (SPP 3.5)**

Clause Section 2 (Introduction and Background) of SPP 3.5 states:

*“Heritage conservation can aid economic prosperity by contributing to the attractiveness of the living and working environment, and encouraging investment in a locality or region from homeowners, investors and tourists. The avoidable loss of buildings through demolition and neglect is a waste of economic as well as environmental resources.*

*As set out in the State Sustainability Strategy, heritage conservation and sustainable economic development should be seen as complementary rather than conflicting objectives. Most heritage places can be put to good economic use for commercial, residential or other purposes. Adaptation of buildings for new uses will often be the key to conservation of heritage places that no longer serve their original function, and will often require imagination and flexibility.”*

Further Clause 6.6 Policy Measure/Development Control Principles states:

*“The weight given to heritage as a consideration will vary, depending on the degree of significance of a place or area, and relevant economic, social or environmental factors that may apply.*

***• ... demolition of a local heritage place should be avoided wherever possible, although there will be circumstances where demolition is justified. The onus rests with the applicant to provide a clear justification for it.***

***• Demolition approval should not be expected simply because redevelopment is a more attractive economic proposition, or because a building has been neglected. Consideration of a demolition proposal should be based upon the significance of the building or place; the feasibility of restoring or adapting it, or incorporating it into new development; the extent to which the community would benefit from the proposed redevelopment; and any local planning policies relating to the demolition of heritage places.”***

As per the above policy it is evident that the demolition is being sought to allow redevelopment and to achieve maximum lot potential. It is considered it would be feasible to retain the dwelling on its own lot (which may reduce the lot yield from 7 to 6).

Apart from the Heritage Impact Statement the applicant has not submitted justification for the demolition or addressed any of the relevant clauses in SPP 3.5. The Heritage Impact Statement clearly states assessment has been against the *extent of original building fabric*.

No structural evidence has been provided. The Coordinator of Building Services has verbally advised (from viewing photos) that it appears to be still be in habitable condition.

### **CITY OF GREATER GERALDTON - HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT LOCAL PLANNING POLICY**

Clause 4.1 of the policy requires that a local government, in considering any applications in relation to a place on the Heritage List has regard to:

- the development control principles in State Planning Policy 3.5 (as discussed in previous section of this report);
- the structural condition of a place and whether a place is reasonably capable of conservation; and
- the level of heritage significance of that place.

In relation to the above:

- assessment against SPP 3.5 has been completed and it was considered that insufficient justification for demolition in accordance with the development control principles was provided by the applicant;
- in the absence of structural assessment it is considered likely that the place is reasonably capable of conservation – if the dwelling was structurally deficient it is logical to presume this would have been cited as grounds for demolition. It is the opinion of the City's Heritage Advisor that it would be feasible to retaining the dwelling on a separate lot but it would be a costly enterprise to restore the dwelling. Viewing of photos by the Co-ordinator of Building Services indicate the dwelling appears to be in habitable condition;
- As to the level of significance notwithstanding that the property has been assigned as a Management Category 4 on the Heritage List if it were not significant to some extent it would not be included on the MI of Heritage Places.

In addition to the above Clause 4.1.2 of the policy gives the local government consideration freedom on negotiating a suitable heritage outcome with property owners which can benefit the property owner and the community as a heritage place can be conserved and the development potential realised through collaborative and creative planning

## SUBDIVISION PROCESS

Section 157 (*When approval of subdivision deemed to be approved under planning scheme*) of the Act states that:

- (1) *“... when the Commission has approved a plan of subdivision of any land to which a planning schemes relates, that approval is to be taken to be approval by the responsible authority under the planning scheme of the carrying out of works necessary to enable the subdivision of land that are:  
(a) shown on the subdivision plan; or  
(b) required by the Commission to be carried out as a condition of approval of the plan of subdivision.*
- (2) *When approving a plan of subdivision the Commission may determine that the approval is not be taken under subsection (1) to be the approval by the responsible authority under the planning scheme of the carrying our of works specified in the determine, and the determine has effect accordingly.*

In the current application given the subdivision configuration is reliant on demolition it is unlikely that item (2) of the above would occur. Approval of the subdivision with such conditions relating to demolition of a heritage building would be invalid as it requires a future determination by another authority to an essential element in the application, where that determination could alter the proposed development significantly.