

Leichhardt Bus Depot Concept Master Plan HIA
30 October 2006

State Transit Authority
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Dear Sirs

Leichhardt Bus Depot Conservation and Development Heritage Impact Assessment

Further to our recent discussions and the completion of a Conservation Management Plan for the precinct, we have pleasure in submitting this brief review of the likely impact of the proposed conservation and development of the Leichhardt Bus Depot site for improved public transport operations. We understand that this Heritage Impact Assessment will be part of the submission of a Development Application to Leichhardt Council.

The proposed redevelopment comprises two major components:

- Development of the large portion of open land area on the eastern side of the site for a major Bus Depot, including a new range of servicing buildings along Balmain Road, a new bus entry from Balmain Road and a large area of open hard standing for bus parking.
- Retention of the existing historic buildings on the site, namely the former Tramshed, Cable Store and Traffic Office, together with the open forecourt that visually links all these buildings, for future re-use. The Tram Shed, Amenities/Office Building and Transport Office will be used as office space and the Cable Store for storage purposes, ancillary to the expanded Bus Depot.

We note that the southern portion of the overall site has now been subdivided and made available to the NSW Department of Education for the provision of playing fields associated with the adjacent High School.

Background Documentation

This current Heritage Impact Assessment has drawn on a number of earlier research and assessment reports prepared for the site, but in particular, the recently completed Conservation Management Plan for the Depot (GBA 2006):

- *SRA Land Leichhardt, Heritage and Conservation Study*. Schwager Brooks and Partners with Wendy Thorp, 1995.
- *Leichhardt Bus Depot, Review of 1995 Heritage Study*. Graham Brooks and Associates, January 2000.

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- *Annesley House, Leichhardt, Archaeological Assessment.* Ford Archaeological Services, July 2000.
- *Leichhardt Bus Depot, Heritage Management Status.* Graham Brooks and Associates, October 2002.
- *Leichhardt Bus Depot, Analysis and Review of Options for demolition or retention of annex structures.* Heritage Branch, Government Architects Office, January 2006.

In addition we have reviewed the current architectural drawings for the proposed redevelopment of the site, prepared by Woodhead Architects.

Historical Summary of the Site

The subject land was part of an original grant in 1796 to Thomas Biggers. Over the next seventy years the land changed hands on some six occasions but appears to have remained undeveloped. Annesley House was erected in about 1868 on the northern section of the overall existing site. It is possible that several additions were made to the House in the subsequent decades, particularly by the Inglis family who occupied the house for some twenty years from the late 1870s.

The property continued to change hands until it was resumed by the Crown in 1913. Annesley House was demolished soon after and the Leichhardt Tram Depot was constructed in about 1915, primarily on the western portion of the overall site. The Depot served primarily as a support, maintenance and storage depot rather than as an active running shed.

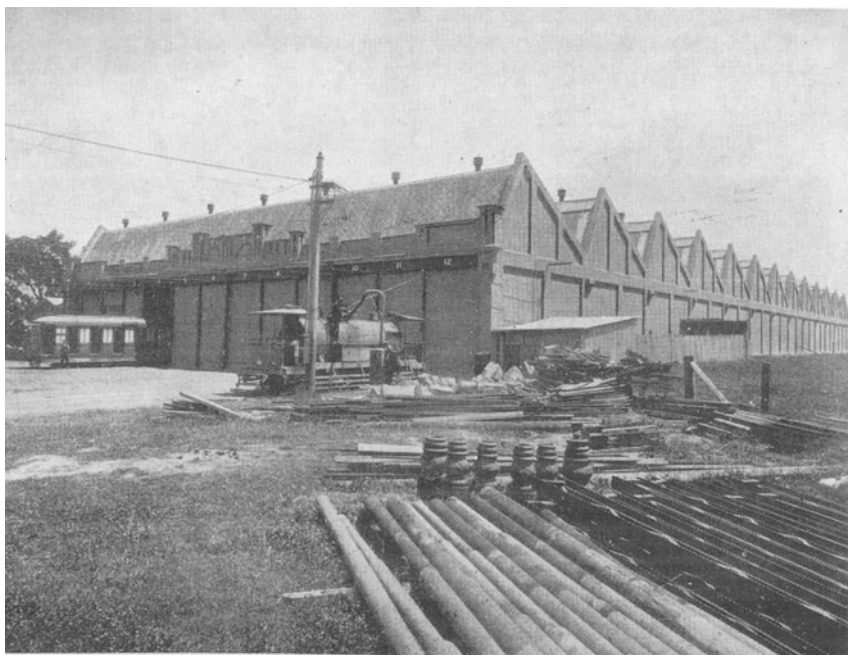
The land originally occupied by Annesley House apparently remained undeveloped until after WW2 when a series of five large, timber framed, Naval Storehouses was erected across the northern section, to the east of the Tram Depot. The lease to the Navy expired in 1984 and the storehouses were demolished soon after. This portion of the site has remained vacant ever since, while the Tram Depot was converted to a Bus Depot in the later 1930s. For a time, portions of the site and some of the buildings operated as a car yard.



1943 Aerial Photo shows the presence of the large Tram Shed, the Traffic Office and the Cable Store as well as the so-called Meal Room close to the south-west corner of the Tram Shed.

The site remains as a functioning Bus Depot, with most of the activity focused on the open area to the south of and within the former Tram Shed and adjacent office building.

The former Traffic Building and Cable Store have been disused for some decades. The condition of these two buildings has declined since they were abandoned.



c 1920s view of the Tram Shed with the ancillary buildings that were attached to the eastern elevation.



The current site, with buses occupying the open space between the historic buildings.

Heritage Significance of the Site

As set out in the Conservation Plan, the Significance of the site is as follows:

The former tram and bus depot at Leichhardt has heritage significance for its architectural, technological, historical and visual values. The property boundaries of the site follow an early nineteenth century division of land and estate; the failure of landowners to subdivide for residential development has meant the preservation of the early property throughout the process of twentieth century resumption and development. As part of this, the site has links with local personalities Walter Beames and William Ingliss, as well as more distant or abstract connections with Robert Campbell and John Piper.

The site has historical value for its demonstration of the early twentieth century layout, activities and technologies of a tram depot as well as its interconnection and unusual role as a storage depot within the Sydney context. As the last depot built in the Sydney metropolitan area, the place has value for its display of key infrastructure considered integral to depot operations. As part of a wider network of depots, substations, workshops and lines, the Leichhardt Depot contributes to an appreciation of the greater picture in terms of the reliance on public transport systems for the suburban growth and shaping of Sydney.

Extant Federation-style buildings on the site dating from the tram phase of use are representative of Tramways Department structures designed for specific purposes. The Cable Store, Amenities/Office (former Meal Room), Tram Shed and Traffic Offices have architectural significance for their demonstration of visual and structural motifs used across depot sites throughout Sydney, as well as a strong visual and aesthetic presence. Later additions to the early buildings, and the construction of freestanding supplementary structures to facilitate bus services, do not impede the readability of these core elements nor unduly interfere with their spatial relationship. The tram buildings have significance both as individual entities and as part of a group of buildings linked through their architecture, function and presence. The Tram Shed has particular visual dominance with its distinctive saw tooth roof that contributes to the landmark value of the site and the key surviving elements within its setting.

A further analysis of the archaeological significance of the site was undertaken by Ford Archaeological Services in July 2000. Their conclusions were:

The area of Annesley House and its associated outbuildings is of low archaeological significance for the following reasons:

- Research shows that the property was constructed in the second half of the 19th century (between 1868 and 1870), which is not particularly early. Previous to that it is assumed that the land was vacant or farmed. The house is therefore not significant on merit of its antiquity alone.*
- The property was of the Colonial Regency style and while a fine example was not rare in architectural style.*
- The property was demolished in or around 1913, which gives a period of function of approximately 43 years. During that time it was not associated with any known significant events or figures apart from in a local context (Walter Beames and William Inglis). The association of the land with John Piper and Robert Campbell is of note but the association is title only.*
- Since its demolition most of the site has been stripped probably removing at least 95% of the archaeological remains.*
- The lack of historical information concerning the house and its occupants further reduces the scientific or educational potential.*
- The archaeological remains that may survive are unlikely to add any significant information to what is already known of the period or to the history of the development of the Colony or the Leichhardt area.*

Heritage Management Framework

Although the current application is being made under Part 3A of the EP&A Act, it is important to clearly understand the existing heritage management framework that applies to the site.

NSW Heritage Act.

The site is not listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

The presence of known archaeological relics on the site automatically generates a requirement for those relics to be managed under the Archaeological Management provisions of the NSW Heritage Act. Essentially this means that Excavation Permit approval will be required prior to any physical intervention.

Leichhardt IDO 27

The northern portion of the overall site that contains the Tram Shed and the free-standing former Workshop Building remains within the jurisdiction of Leichhardt IDO 27, which contains no heritage protection or heritage management provisions.

Even though Leichhardt LEP 2000 identifies the adjoining former Tram Shed as a listed heritage site, it has no formal jurisdiction over the IDO 27 area.

Leichhardt LEP 2000

Leichhardt LEP 2000 applies only to the southern portion of the overall site. It applies to the existing Office/Amenities Building, former Traffic Office and Cable Store and the visual curtilage between the four historic buildings.

The western portion of the subject land, including the standing structures has been identified as a built item of state significance on Schedule 2 - Heritage Items, of the Leichhardt LEP 2000. The extent of the heritage-listed land is identified in orange on the following extract from the Leichhardt Heritage Map.

The extent of the actual listed buildings is a little unclear from the Council records. Schedule 2 of the Leichhardt LEP 2000 identifies the SRA Stores Branch Building, former Tram Depot Office, Tram Shed and Cable Store, in Balmain Road, as items. It also separately identifies the SRA Tram Shed at 25 Derbyshire Road, Leichhardt as an Item. This implies that all four of the main buildings at the centre of the site are listed heritage items, despite the jurisdiction of IDO 27 and the limitation of the area applicable under LEP 2000.

None of the subject site is located in a conservation area. There is a heritage item, being No. 243, "Rutherford House" a single storey mid 19th century Victorian Regency style house, on the eastern side of Balmain Road, opposite the north eastern quadrant of the Bus Depot site.

In accordance with Clause 16 in the heritage provisions of Leichhardt LEP 2000, prior to granting development consent Council must take into consideration the significance of the item as part of the environmental heritage of Leichhardt, and the extent of any potential impact of any proposed development. Council is also required to consider the likely impact of any development in the vicinity of a heritage item for its impact on that item.

Clause 16(3) of the LEP requires that a Conservation Management Plan be prepared prior to the granting of any development consent on land identified as being of state significance within the LEP. This document satisfies the requirement of Clause 16(3).

In accordance with instructions from the NSW Department of Planning, Leichhardt Council is preparing a consolidating LEP, which should be ready for gazettal within the next few years. It can be anticipated that Council will use the opportunity to absorb the land currently remaining in IOD 27 into the land to which the new LEP will apply.

State Transit Authority Heritage and Conservation Register

The former Leichhardt Tram Depot has been identified in the STA Heritage and Conservation Register prepared under s170 of the NSW Heritage Act. This listing places an obligation on STA to manage the asset in a manner that protects the heritage significance of the place. Demolition is strictly controlled.

S170(1) of the NSW Heritage Act requires that the responsible public agency provide a written notification to the NSW Council of any proposal to remove any item from its s170 Register, transfer ownership, cease to occupy or demolish any building or work that is entered on its register. A minimum of 14 days notice is required.

National Trust of Australia (NSW)

The whole of the former Leichhardt Tramways Storage Depot has been classified by the National Trust. It is identified as having historic, aesthetic and social significance at a State and Local level.

Classification by the National Trust does not carry with it any legislative control. However it is a clear indication of the heritage status of the item.



View of Balmain Road, with the existing bus entry driveway on the right.



Rutherford, at 243 Balmain Road, is located directly opposite the proposed new Bus Depot.

Implications Arising from Significance

The primary objectives for the project arising from the assessed significance of the site and the former Tramway buildings are as follows:

- The overall site should continue in use as a public transport facility.
- The four main historic buildings should be retained, adapted and re-used in a manner that reflects their historic associations with a major public transport facility.
- There is no heritage based requirement to retain the freestanding former workshop building to the east of the main Tram Shed.
- The spatial curtilage between the four buildings should remain visually open to ensure that the group of four buildings remain as a unified entity.
- In order to avoid unnecessary pressure on the building fabric and character of the four historic buildings, the proposed new bus depot should be erected as a stand alone, purpose designed facility on the open land in the north east quadrant of the overall site.
- Any new development should be set away sufficiently from the existing buildings to facilitate the retention of their identity with the overall site, taking into recognition the traditional presence of supporting buildings relatively close to the Tram Shed.
- The redundant open space at the southern end of the site should be redeveloped as open space, preferably for use in conjunction with the adjacent school.
- Appropriate management will be required of the known archaeological resources, particularly those associated with the former Annesley House.
- Some of the lower quality additions on the western side of the old Tram Shed and the free standing shed to the north of the site may be demolished as part of a larger development.

Management of the Curtilage of the Historic Buildings

Management of the curtilage of the four main historic Tramways buildings on the site should take into account their operational history as part of a shared industrial cultural landscape. Key issues that were identified in earlier studies included:

- All four buildings must retain their visual and historical connections with each other. In particular the open plaza at the southern end of the Tram Shed is an important spatial feature of the site.
- There should be no new buildings or major structures erected between these four buildings that would excessively erode the visual connections between them.
- Any new buildings erected in the vicinity of any of the four buildings should be sufficiently removed to allow for a clear distinction to be made between them and to not erode the architectural integrity of the older building.
- Considerable care needs to be taken with future landscaping of the curtilage to avoid obscuring the visual links between them and eroding of the traditional operational nature of the precinct.

The Redevelopment Concept

The redevelopment proposal is illustrated on the concept sketches and plans prepared by Woodhead Architects, dated July 2006.

The redevelopment of the large portion of open land area on the eastern side of the site for a major Bus Depot, will include a new range of servicing buildings along Balmain Road, a new bus entry from Balmain Road and a large area of open hard standing for bus parking.

There is one secondary, free standing building that will be demolished. This building is not considered to be of sufficient heritage significance to warrant retention in the face of such an important continuation of the key aspect of significance of the operational bus depot.

The redevelopment proposal does not contain any detailed information regarding the future of the historic buildings on the site. This will be the subject of future, more detailed Development Applications. The four existing historic buildings on the site, namely the former Tramshed, Amenities/Office Building, Traffic Office and Cable Store, together with the open forecourt that visually links all these buildings, will be retained and conserved until adapted for future uses.



The long tradition of the use of the site as a major public transport facility will continue.

The main historic buildings that have long been surrounded by active depot activities and support buildings will continue to be an integral part of public transport operations.



The view of the main Tram Shed from Balmain Road will be obscured by the new facility. Its visibility from the City West freeway will be undiminished.



The former Tram Shed, which has acted as an interim maintenance facility will continue as an integral part of the Depot.



The Amenities/Office Building, which has undergone the most radical changes over the years, will remain as a vital component of the Depot.



The Traffic Office will continue to function as an integral component of the site.

This view of the building from Balmain Road will be undiminished by the new Depot buildings.



The Cable Store will continue as a storage facility.

Current remediation works will stabilise the cracking in the south wall.



The presence of support buildings and facilities in close proximity to the main Tram Shed will continue, in the form of gas storage facilities, refuelling and bus washing buildings.



The open space between the historic buildings, in this case the Traffic Office and the Amenities/Office will continue to retain their common visual identity.



Views from the Traffic Office to the Tram Shed will be retained in the new development.



The Cable Store will remain as a valid component of the overall Depot.

Assessment of Heritage Impact

Benefits of the proposal

The following benefits will accrue from the overall proposal:

1. The long term future of the site will remain as an important component of public transport infrastructure in the inner west network. To this extent it will protect and continue the historically significant aspect of the site that has been in operation since the early decades of the 20th century.
2. The four major identified historic buildings on the overall site will be retained and re-used, although the exact nature of that re-use has not yet been resolved and is not part of the current application. The proposal protects the potential for re-use and the continuation of the existing urban role of each building.
3. There will be no new buildings or other visually intrusive structures erected in the open space that connects all of the four historic buildings as a group.
4. The visibility of the historic buildings from the residential and public open space areas to the immediate west of the site will be unaffected.
5. The visibility of the former Tram Shed from the Bus Depot will be maintained, ensuring that it retains a visual connection and relationship to the Depot.
6. The visibility of the former Transport Office from the new access road into the Bus Depot will be maintained, ensuring that it retains a visual connection and relationship to the Depot.

The NSW Heritage Office has published a series of Impact Evaluation Criteria for the assessment of new developments on or in the vicinity of heritage items.

How is the impact of the new development on the heritage significance of the item or area to be minimised?

The new bus depot and in particular the new buildings along the Balmain Road frontage are all located well away from the surviving heritage listed buildings, which are the most visible expression of the heritage significance of the site.

The new Bus Depot building is set well back from the Balmain Road frontage and is articulated in a manner that visually breaks down its massing and scale.

Why is the new development required to be adjacent to a heritage item?

The new development in fact is located on the overall site as it renews and extends the traditional and most significant use of the site.

How does the curtilage allowed around the heritage item contribute to the retention of its heritage significance?

The new Bus Depot buildings are set well away from the four surviving heritage buildings from the previous depot use. The open area that will be used for bus parking will form a natural visual buffer zone between the new buildings and the surviving heritage buildings.

The curtilage along the Balmain Road frontage will be landscaped to soften its presentation to the adjoining neighbourhood.

How does the new development affect views to, and from, the heritage item? What has been done to minimise negative effects?

There will be some loss of long distance views to the heritage buildings when standing in or moving along Balmain Road. This view was only recaptured when the post war series of Naval stores buildings were demolished several decades ago. It is not considered to be a vital or critical view.

There will be no loss of visibility from the residential or public domain areas to the west of the heritage buildings.

Views to the heritage listed house in Balmain Road will be unaffected by the proposal.

Is the development sited on any known, or potentially significant archaeological deposits? If so, have alternative sites been considered? Why were they rejected?

Yes. However the Archaeological Assessment undertaken by Ford Archaeological Services has concluded that the impact on and loss of any remnant relics in this regard is acceptable, given their low level of significance.

Is the new development sympathetic to the heritage item? In what way (e.g. form, siting, proportions, design)?

Yes. It extends indefinitely the use of the place as a Bus Depot, which is one of its most important heritage features.

It locates new structures well away from the important heritage buildings and maintains key aspects of their visibility both within the site and from the surrounding public realm. By taking the development pressures away from the important heritage buildings it allows them to be re-used for activities that are more compatible with their physical character and heritage values.

It retains the potential for the main heritage buildings to be re-used into the long term, even though the details of these uses are not actually part of the current application.

Will the additions visually dominate the heritage item? How has this been minimised?

No. The new buildings are set well away from the important surviving heritage buildings.

The scale of the building along the Balmain Road frontage will be considerably larger than the existing row of houses and small corner commercial buildings. The separation distances will ameliorate this scale difference.

Will the public, and users of the item, still be able to view and appreciate its significance?

Yes. The proposed development maintains key aspects of their visibility both within the site and from the surrounding public realm.

The travelling public in the inner west will continue to enjoy and appreciate a high level of bus transport derived from the operational continuation of the depot.

There will be no diminution of the ability of the public to view the heritage listed historic house in Balmain Road, or any of the other buildings in that locality.

Assessment of Impact for Items in the Vicinity

The heritage listed property on the eastern side of Balmain Road that is in the vicinity of the proposed development. Given the separation of the sites on either side of Balmain Road, it is unlikely that there will be any adverse impacts on the significance of the listed property.

Archaeological impact

Based on the Archaeological Assessment undertaken by Ford Archaeological Services in July 2000, there will be no adverse impacts on the known or anticipated archaeological resources associated with the former Annesley House. Nevertheless, it will be necessary to formally submit an Excavation Permit application to the NSW Heritage Office to gain approval for the destruction of any relics on the site.

Recommendations

1. On the basis that there are no adverse heritage related issues of concern associated with the proposal, and the strong on-going continuation of the significant operation of the bus depot, the Department should have no hesitation in approving the application.
2. The future adaptive re-use of each of the four historic buildings will require the preparation of a detailed and focussed Conservation Management Plan to guide the works. Heritage Impact Statements will also be required at development approval stage.
3. An application for an Excavation Permit for the destruction of the remaining relics associated with the former Annesley House must be lodged with the NSW Heritage Office and approval granted, prior to any physical intervention in the relics.

Yours faithfully,
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