



# Ordinary Council

Monday 14 August 2023  
6.30pm

## Agenda



## 12. General Manager and Officer's Report

<b>Item No:</b>	12.1
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>FEEDBACK FROM THE SITE VISIT TO THE ST GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, ROSE BAY</b>
<b>Authors:</b>	Eleanor Banaag, Senior Strategic Heritage Officer Kristy Wellfare, Acting Team Leader Heritage
<b>Approvers:</b>	Anne White, Manager Strategic Planning & Place Scott Pedder, Director Planning & Place
<b>File No:</b>	23/124673
<b>Purpose of the Report:</b>	To provide Council with feedback from the site visit to the St George Greek Orthodox Church, Rose Bay. To obtain Councils approval to proceed with a planning proposal to list the St George Church, Rose Bay as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 and on the heritage maps of the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014.
<b>Alignment to Delivery Program:</b>	Strategy 4.2 Conserving our rich and diverse heritage.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	

THAT Council:

- A. Endorse the preparation of a planning proposal to list the *St George Greek Orthodox Church and war memorial complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage at 90-92 Newcastle Street, Rose Bay (Lots 15 & 16, Sec D, DP 5092)* as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 and on the Heritage Map of the *Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014* and resolve to forward this to the Department of Planning and Environment with a request for a Gateway determination to allow public exhibition.
- B. Request the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces (or delegate) authorise Council as the local plan-making authority in relation to the planning proposal, to make the local environmental plan under section 3.36 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.
- C. Endorse that the planning proposal include recommendations for the owner to prepare additional conservation management documentation (such as a Moveable Heritage Schedule or Conservation Management Plan or Strategy) to ensure that future management of the place is appropriate to the community's religious observances.

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### Executive Summary:

This report has been prepared in response to a Council resolution from 10 July 2023 that a site visit be undertaken to the St George Greek Orthodox Church in Rose Bay, prior to the consideration of the proposed local heritage listing. The purpose of the site visit was for Councillors and staff to view the internal and external areas of the church to further inform the significance assessment of the Church made in the *Places of Worship Heritage Study* prepared by Council staff.

The site visit took place on Wednesday 19 July 2023 at 4:45pm. The site visit was attended by Councillors, Woollahra Council Staff, Fr Gerasimos Koutsouras and members of the Church Parish Board. Access to internal and external areas was provided.

Having being able to inspect the site and the buildings internal features, Council staff maintain their recommendation that Council resolves to proceed with a planning proposal to list the St George War Memorial Church at 90-92 Newcastle Street Rose Bay (Lot 15 & 16, Sec D, DP 5092) as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 and on the heritage maps of the *Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014* (Woollahra LEP 2014).

## Discussion:

### Background

On 6 March 2023 the Environmental Planning Committee (EPC) considered a report on the outcomes of the Places of Public Worship Heritage Study, and the advice of the Woollahra Local Planning Panel (see **Attachment 1**). Subsequently, on 27 March 2023 Council resolved:

- A. *THAT Council note the advice provided by the Woollahra Local Planning Panel on 13 December 2022 regarding the planning proposal to list five places of worship as local heritage items in Schedule 5 and on the Heritage Map of the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014.*
- B. *THAT Council endorse the planning proposal as contained at Attachment 3 of the report to the Environmental Planning Committee to list the following five sites as local heritage items in Schedule 5 and on the Heritage Map of the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014 and resolve to forward this to the Department of Planning and Environment with a request for a Gateway determination to allow public exhibition:*
  - i. *Paddington Church of Christ complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage at 116-122 Paddington Street, Paddington (Lots 20, 21 & 22, Sec 1, DP 180)*
  - ii. *St Andrews Scots Presbyterian Church complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage at 2 Carlisle Street, Rose Bay (Lot 1 DP 724928 & Lot 1 DP 966535)*
  - iv. *Sydney Chevra Kadisha, including interiors and moveable heritage at 172-178 Oxford Street, Woollahra (Lot 1 DP 85862)*
  - v. *Vaucluse Uniting Church complex and setting - former 1909 Vaucluse Congregational Church building and former 1960 A-frame church building, including interiors and moveable heritage at 3 Russell Street, Vaucluse (Lot 6, Sec 5, DP 4400).*
- C. *THAT Council request the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces (or delegate) authorise Council as the local plan-making authority in relation to the planning proposal, to make the local environmental plan under section 3.36 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.*
- D. *THAT Council endorse a nomination to the State Heritage Register of Sydney Chevra Kadisha, including interiors and moveable heritage at 172-178 Oxford Street, Woollahra (Lot 1 DP 85862).*
- E. *THAT Council receives and notes the recommendation for the St George Greek Orthodox Church, and staff further investigate the heritage significance of the complex having regard to the issues raised regarding religious freedoms, and that the community are engaged to establish if there are elements of the building that are appropriate for heritage listing, investigates whether there is an active Development Application (DA) for the site on the corner of Old South Head Road and Newcastle Street, Rose Bay and/or if further legal advice is required.*
- F. *THAT Council request that staff update the heritage inventory sheet for this Sydney Chevra Kadisha, having considered the late correspondence from URBIS that was tabled at the Environmental Planning Committee meeting of 6 March 2023.*

In response to Parts A, B, C & F of the Council resolution, on 20 April 2023 Council staff lodged an updated planning proposal with the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE). A Gateway determination to facilitate public exhibition was provided on 6 June 2023. The exhibition of the planning proposal is from Wednesday 19 July to Friday 18 August 2023.

In response to Part D, Council staff are progressing a nomination to the State Heritage Register for the *Sydney Chevra Kadisha, including interiors and moveable heritage*.

#### Preliminary Community Engagement

In response to Part E of the Council resolution, Council implemented a community engagement strategy which took place from 24 May 2023 to Friday 9 June 2023 (inclusive). The information that was placed on exhibition is available here (which includes the original Places of Worship Heritage Study):

<https://yoursay.woollahra.nsw.gov.au/community-engagement-st-george-church-rose-bay>

In response to the engagement, we received 17 individual submissions, with 12 submissions (70%) in support of the heritage listing of the St George Church. A report on the submissions was considered by the Environmental Planning Committee on 3 July 2023 (see **Attachment 2**), and on 10 July 2023 Council resolved the following:

- A. *THAT Council defer the planning proposal to list the St George Greek Orthodox Church and war memorial complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage at 90-92 Newcastle Street, Rose Bay (Lots 15 & 16, Sec D, DP5092) as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 and on the Heritage Map of the Woollahra Local Environmental Plan 2014 pending a site visit (being conducted within one months' time) for Councillors and Council staff.*
- B. *THAT this matter be reported direct to full Council for consideration.*

#### Site Visit

The site visit was arranged for 19 July 2023 at 4.45pm. All Councillors were invited, and the meeting was attended by the following 11 (of 15) Councillors:

- Mayor Cr Wynne (Chair)
- Cr Carmichael
- Cr Jarvis
- Cr Regan
- Cr Robertson
- Cr Price
- Cr Shapiro
- Cr Shields
- Cr Silcocks
- Cr Swan
- Cr Witt

The meeting was attended by Fr Gerasimos Koutsouras and six members of the St George Parish board. The meeting was also attended by Woollahra Council staff who have been involved in the project who were: Manager – Strategic Planning and Place, Acting Team Leader - Heritage, Senior Strategic Heritage Officer.

## Discussion

Council staff would like to acknowledge and thank Fr Gerasimos and the Parish board for their time at the site visit. The orientation provided an informative update as to how the Church building has changed and evolved over time to positively respond to the community's changing needs (both internally and externally). Photos taken at the site visit are shown below in **Figures 1-6**.

The modifications made to the Church building have responded to the changing needs of the congregation, and have included necessary maintenance. With that in mind, the interiors of the church have had a number of alterations and modifications. However, staff noted that these alterations were sympathetic in nature and did not appear to have obscured original elements of the building.



Figure 1. St George interiors – iconoclasts.



Figure 2. St George interiors – entry vestibule.

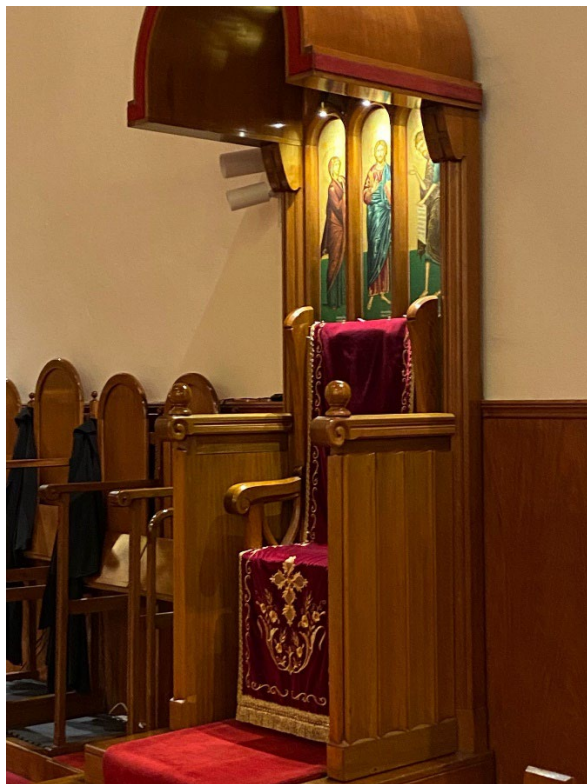


Figure 3. St George interiors – throne.



Figure 4. St George interiors – side mezzanine balcony.



Members of the Church expressed a desire to be free to adapt and expand the building as required by the congregation. In response, Council staff presented the planning and approval pathways that are inherent with local heritage listing. Council staff explained that development is a necessary part of heritage conservation, and the listing is not proposed to prevent change over time. However, with local heritage listing there is an additional “lens” of consideration that must be applied to ensure that the proposed impact to significant elements can be managed and applied sensitively. Council staff also expanded on clause 5.10(3) of the Woollahra LEP 2014, which provides a mechanism for some works to be exempt from requiring approvals (i.e. they do not need a development application), such as works that are minor or in the nature of maintenance. In response to the comments regarding the potential expansion of the Church building, it was suggested that Council Staff provide examples of major additions and expansions to Church buildings that have successfully supported the expansion of a local heritage building. Council staff have since identified the major expansion of the State-heritage listed St Patricks Cathedral in Parramatta, which has provided a new church hall connected to the original 1830s sandstone cathedral (see **Figures 7 & 8** below). The development has supported a rapidly growing community, with the historic building fully retained and restored thus maintaining its prominence on the site.



Figure 5. St George interiors – rear mezzanine.



Figure 6. St George – front of church.



*Figure 7. St Patricks Cathedral, Parramatta.  
The new church extension is positioned to the west (left)  
of the original sandstone church, and connected with an  
enclosed breezeway.*



*Figure 8. St Patricks cathedral viewed from Victoria Road  
looking east.  
Despite the new extension building being larger and  
clearly modern, it is recessive in design to the original  
cathedral.*

### Recommendation

Informed by the site inspection, the position of Council staff regarding the significance of the St George Greek Orthodox Church and its ability to meet six of the seven criteria for assessing heritage significance has not changed. Taking into consideration the Places of Worship Heritage Study, the community feedback and the further information gained from the site inspection, Council staff consider that the St George Greek Orthodox Church continues to meet the following significance criteria for inclusion into the Schedule 5 of the Woollahra LEP 2014:

- **Historical Significance** – a Church built as a war memorial commemorating Australian soldiers of Greek Heritage, as well as Australian soldiers who have died on Greek soil.
- **Associative significance** – associations with Australia's migrant communities, as well as its association with Australia's defence history.
- **Aesthetic significance** – the Church is a fine example of the work of the prominent Inter-War architectural firm Fowell, Mansfield & Maclurcan. Joseph Charles Fowell is recognised as a prominent twentieth-century Australian architect, particularly renowned for his ecclesiastical architecture. It incorporates elements of the Byzantine style typically associated with ANZAC memorials, with the traditional Greek Orthodox Church style. Within its residential setting, the Church has landmark qualities.
- **Social significance** - although social significance has not been formally assessed, it is assumed the St George Greek Orthodox Church is held in high esteem by members of the Parish and the broader Greek Orthodox community of Sydney. It also has social significance as a war memorial specifically recognising members of the Greek community in Australia that served in WW1 and WW2, as well as Australians that served and died on military campaigns in Greece.
- **Rarity** – is a rare example of a Greek Orthodox Church that is also a war memorial (there is only one other in Sydney – St Spyridon, Randwick).
- **Representativeness** - The St George Greek Orthodox Church is a fine and representative example of the ecclesiastical buildings designed by architectural practice Fowell, Mansfield & Maclurcan.

Staff have taken into consideration the orientation provided by Fr Gerasimos on the various modifications and upgrades made to the Church interiors, and whilst these have not affected the assessment of significance, we have updated the Heritage Inventory Sheet for the site (with regards to the physical description), and which would form part of the Planning Proposal. This updated Heritage Inventory Sheet is at **Attachment 3**, and the updates are identified with underline.

Having attended the site visit, Council staff maintain the recommendation that a planning proposal to list the St George Greek Orthodox Church in Rose Bay in the Woollahra LEP 2014: Schedule 5, as a local heritage item, should proceed.

#### *Moveable Heritage Schedule*

In response to the community feedback regarding moveable heritage, Council staff recommend that a Moveable Heritage Schedule is prepared for the site. The schedule would be an assessment and inventory of moveable items within the Church carried out by an experienced heritage professional in close collaboration with the Church. At the site visit there was discussion regarding the moveable elements on the site such as the iconoclasts, furniture, altar elements, and entombed relics, and it was identified that these elements are important pieces to the religious practice.

A Moveable Heritage Schedule would be prepared using detailed research into the moveable elements and artefacts of the Church, and provide appropriate recommendations for how these elements are managed into the future (this includes management for removal of these elements if found appropriate).

#### **Options:**

Having carried out a site visit and based on the Places of Public Worship Heritage Study, staff recommend progressing a planning proposal to list the *St George Greek Orthodox Church and war memorial complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage* at 90-92 Newcastle Street, Rose Bay (Lots 15 & 16, Sec D, DP 5092) as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 and on the Heritage Map of the Woollahra LEP 2014.

To streamline the plan-making process, the Minister can delegate some plan-making powers to Council for routine matters. In this case, Council may request delegation to exercise the functions of the Minister to make an LEP under section 3.36 of the Act. Part B of the recommendation for this report deals with this request. After public exhibition, the planning proposal and submissions received will be reported to Council. Alternatively, Council may decide not to progress with a planning proposal to heritage list the St George Greek Orthodox Church.

#### **Community Engagement and / or Internal Consultation:**

Refer to the Discussion section of this report, under sub-heading "Preliminary Community Engagement".

Public exhibition of the planning proposal will be undertaken in due course and in accordance with the Gateway Determination conditions and the *NSW Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

#### **Policy Implications:**

Should Council resolve to progress with a planning proposal there will be policy implications by amending the Schedule 5 and the Heritage Map of the Woollahra LEP 2014.

#### **Financial Implications:**

Should Council resolve to progress with a planning proposal, there will be financial implications to implement the advertising and community engagement process.

#### **Resourcing Implications:**

Should Council resolve to progress with a planning proposal to finalisation, staff resources will be associated with the public exhibition process, liaising with the DPE and Parliamentary Counsel.



### **Conclusion:**

In response to the Council resolution from 10 July 2023, eleven Councillors and three Council staff carried out a site visit of the St George Greek Orthodox Church on 19 July 2023. Representatives from Woollahra Council were also accompanied by six members of the Church Parish Board, including Fr Gerasimos Koutsouras.

Having carried out the site visit, staff recommend that Council resolves to proceed with a planning proposal to list the St George Greek Orthodox Church and war memorial complex and setting, including interiors and moveable heritage as a local heritage item.

### **Attachments**

1. Environmental Planning Committee - Agenda - 6 March 2023 (Attachments removed)
2. Environmental Planning Committee - Agenda - 3 July 2023 (Attachments removed)
3. St George Greek Orthodox Church Rose Bay - Heritage Inventory Sheet - July 2023