

16 June 2008

Executive Director  
Heritage Branch  
NSW Department of Planning  
Locked Bag 5020  
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Dear Madam,

**PROJECT: POTTS HILL RESERVOIRS SITE**  
**RE: APPLICATION FOR REVISION TO SHR BOUNDARY**

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We write on behalf of our client, Sydney Water Corporation, in the submission of this request for the revision of the SHR Boundary to the Potts Hill Reservoir Site.

### Proposal

Sydney Water Corporation seeks approval to revise the SHR boundary in accordance with the recommendations of the endorsed CMP. The proposed SHR boundary is shown on the attached drawing.

The Heritage Council of NSW considered this proposal in principle at its meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2007 and resolved "*to consider the proposal to revise the State Heritage Register curtilage for the site following the development of the DCP in consultation with the Heritage Council.*"

### Background

The whole of the Potts Hill Reservoirs Site is listed on the State Heritage Register - Item 01333. The Conservation Management Plan prepared by Sydney Water Corporation was endorsed by the Heritage Council of NSW in April 2005.

The revision of the SHR boundary is generally in accordance with the recommendations of the endorsed Conservation Management Plan.

CMP Section 6.7 Curtilage supports the reduction of the site area for the SHR:

*It is considered that part of the current site area is surplus to Sydney Water's operational requirements, having no use in the current site layout and little potential for use in the foreseeable future. There is currently no defined proposal for this area however it is anticipated that a proposal may eventually arise.*

*The existing site boundaries are of little significance and do not have to be maintained in their current form. There is thus no particular reason from the heritage point of view to indefinitely retain ownership over the areas of little significance. A future subdivision of the site is generally considered possible, subject however to a further detailed assessment of the particular proposal.*

*It is considered however that the following areas are of importance for retention of the heritage significance of the site:*

- *Reservoir No. 1 and its operational grounds*
- *Reservoir No. 2 and its operational grounds*
- *Cultural plantings area adjacent the two reservoirs*
- *North-east precinct of the Site, comprising the water pumping stations and other installations*
- *The area of remnant native bushland between the two reservoirs*

**Chairman**  
Howard Tanner

**Directors**  
Jocelyn Jackson, Robert Denton  
Megan Jones, John Rose  
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### Registration Numbers:

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*The operational grounds of the reservoirs include the minimum area necessary for operation and structural stability of the reservoirs. The operational grounds of the reservoirs include minimum area generally considered to include about 20 m from the reservoir walls, however, this may vary for practical reasons.*

*The map identifying the minimum required curtilage of the heritage item is shown in Figure 6-5. (SWC CMP 2005:226-227)*

#### **Heritage Impact Assessment of the Proposed Revision to the SHR boundary**

The proposed revised SHR boundary, which is an enlargement of the recommended SHR curtilage shown in the endorsed Conservation Management Plan (SW2005) will ensure retention of the core heritage values of the Potts Hill Reservoirs Site inclusive of:

- Reservoir No. 1 and its operational grounds
- Reservoir No. 2 and its operational grounds
- Cultural plantings area adjacent the two reservoirs
- North-east precinct of the Site, comprising the water pumping stations and other installations
- The area of remnant native bushland between the two reservoirs
- The hill between the two reservoirs with the former residential precinct
- An area of vegetation of ecological significance at the south-west corner of the site; and
- A corridor of land to the west of Reservoir No. 2 to provide a greater visual curtilage and to introduce a vegetative corridor linking the two main areas of ecological significance. This corridor includes the two rows of trees including the Canary Island Date Palms and Eucalyptus species.

The revised SHR boundary includes all of the land considered essential for the ongoing operation of the site by the Sydney Water Corporation within its cultural setting plus the area of ecologically significant vegetation to the south west of Reservoir No. 2. The setback of the SHR boundary from the edges of the reservoirs is generally greater than the dimensions recommended in the endorsed CMP to ensure the environmental and cultural plantings are included within the SHR boundary.

The revised SHR boundary will enable subdivision, redevelopment and sale of the surplus land to the east and the west of the Reservoirs. The surplus land does not contain any sites or elements with State heritage significance.

The evidence of the former railway alignments associated with the construction of Reservoir No. 2 and the operation of the steam powered water pumping station and its associated cultural plantings will not be included within the SHR boundary but will be conserved and interpreted in the redevelopment.

The boundary revision and development of the surplus land is supported by the endorsed CMP:

#### **CMP Section 7.15 Curtilage**

##### ***Policy***

*Development of the site, including further subdivision and land/asset disposals may be considered within the curtilage of the site (but outside the minimum lot curtilage required to conserve the significance of the place) where there has been no historic development or use and/or where early sites have been destroyed (as supported by evidence)*

##### ***Guidelines***

1. *The site curtilage shown in Figure 6-5 of this CMP is adopted for the protection of the State significant elements of the site.*
2. *New development within the minimum lot curtilage should only be considered if required for the essential water pumping operation of Potts Hill Reservoirs Site. Any such development should be sympathetic and comply with archaeological and natural heritage recommendations.*

3. *Land/asset disposal proposal require notification to the Heritage Council under section 170(A) of the Heritage Act 1977. (SWC CMP 2005:246)*

### **Heritage Significance of West and South Western embankments outside the revised SHR Boundary**

The following information is derived from the two Conservation Management Plans (2000 and 2005) prepared for this site, Sydney Water Archives and from site inspections undertaken by Tanner Architects.

The western fill platform and associated embankments are a by-product of the construction of Reservoir 2 in mid 1920s. The land to the South, East and West of the Reservoir is labelled on the construction drawings as “*Spoil Dump*” (Fig 2-43 Endorsed CMP 2005).

The 1922-23 Annual Report notes with reference to Reservoir 2 that “*the banks of the Reservoir have been graded, turfed and drained, and ornamental palms and trees from the State Nursery are now being planted*” (SW2005 p68). However, the 1930 aerial photograph shows no vegetation on the fill platform and embankments. The line of palms along the western edge of the Reservoir on the fill platform together with a sparse and irregular “row” of native vegetation appears to the west of the palms in the 1951, 1955 and 1961 aerial photographs. A third, more regular row of trees appears in the 1970s aerial photographs. These aerial photographs show that the embankments were very sparsely planted up until well into the 1980s.

The row of Canary Island Date palms and the less formal row of Eucalypts along the western edge of the Reservoir on the fill platform are cultural plantings of some significance as they were introduced to the site to act as windbreaks, and were part of the legacy of Joseph Maiden, Director of the Sydney Botanic Gardens between 1896 and 1924.

The vegetation was introduced to the embankments for the stabilisation of the spoil dumps rather than for the creation of a cultural landscape. The resultant landscape added to the amenity of the site. The presence of established Eucalypts on the embankments indicates the age of the spoil dump and the good choice of plant species for longevity. There are many weed species present including African olives, privet, lantana etc, which also assist with the stabilisation of the embankments.

The endorsed Conservation Management Plan prepared by Sydney Water (SW2005) states that the embankments have no heritage significance. The earlier Conservation Management Plan prepared by Godden Mackay Logan (GML2000) does not include the embankments within the heritage curtilage of the site.

Both conservation management plans prepared for the Potts Hill Reservoirs site have assessed the embankment and fill platforms to have little or no heritage significance.

### **Controls on Development of the land outside the revised SHR Boundary**

Development outside the revised SHR boundary will need to respect the heritage significance of the Reservoirs Site. The heritage parameters are shown on the attached diagrams and include:

- The historic associations of the area of the former Migrants’ Camp (now Mechanical Branch Plant warehouses in the North-East corner of the site) should be appropriately interpreted through signage, street names, etc.
- The former railway alignment and the associated cultural plantings should be conserved and interpreted in the redevelopment.
- Provide or enhance the vegetative buffers along the revised SHR boundary beside the two Reservoirs.
- Respect the visual connections through the site and the views across the whole site.

Development within the revised SHR boundary will need to be in accordance with the policy and guidelines of the endorsed CMP and be assessed in a heritage impact statement. The site is considered to provide the following opportunities for development, subject to the policy requirements of the endorsed CMP and subject to Sydney Water operational and security requirements:

- The de-watered Reservoir No. 1 could be adaptively reused for future possible water infrastructure.

- Occasional public access to the bushland and cultural plantings of the central northern precinct of the site in line with SWC's access policy for Heritage Week..
- Sympathetic adaptation of the former steam powered water pumping station for future possible water infrastructure.

#### **Heritage Impact Assessment of the Proposal for the Development of the Surplus Lands**

We have reviewed the Part 3A Concept Plan Application for the Potts Hill Reservoirs Site dated June 2008. It has been guided by the principles in the endorsed Conservation Management Plan and it gives due consideration to the heritage significance of the site and its future management, as described below.

The Indicative Concept Plan responds to the significance of the site in the following ways:

1. The understanding of the significance of the site has been guided by the endorsed Conservation Management Plan and additional research by Tanner Architects. It is appropriately referenced in the Part 3A Concept Plan.
2. The proposed revised SHR boundary, which the Part 3A Concept Plan respects, is an enlargement of the recommended SHR curtilage shown in the endorsed Conservation Management Plan (SW2005). Where possible, the SHR boundary will align with the future property boundaries and will be fenced with security fencing, where necessary.
3. The proposed uses for the surplus land are appropriate in consideration of their minimal impact on the heritage significance of the site. ie
  - Western Surplus land is designated for a mix of predominantly low scale and low density residential use, with potential medium density residential use in two locations - adjacent to Water Canal and Brunker Road. The western area of the site has been used for a variety of industrial type uses by Sydney Water. The new dwellings will be substantially screened from view from within the SHR site due to intervening screening provided by existing vegetation and new vegetation, and will relate well in scale and form to the adjacent existing residential areas;
  - Eastern and Southern Surplus land is designated for employment/ business park use. This area of the site has been used for a variety of industrial-type uses by Sydney Water since the 1940s;
  - There is significant distance separation between the key heritage components and areas of the site (principally in the north-eastern corner) and the proposed residential and employment development; and
  - The indicative street pattern in the Concept Plan adopts the principles of the original rectilinear street pattern prior to acquisition of the site by Sydney Water, with an east-west orientation and connections into the local streets to the west.

The implementation of the Structure Plan is unlikely to result in any adverse impact on the cultural significance of the Potts Hill Reservoirs Site.

The proposed revision to the SHR boundary can be supported in heritage terms.

We would appreciate your consideration of this matter at your earliest convenience.

Please direct any questions regarding this submission to Megan Jones.

Yours sincerely

TANNER ARCHITECTS



Megan Jones  
Director.

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