

25 September 2023

MUS: MTEC2 Bridge St Muswellbrook NSW 2333

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACT

Statement of heritage impact for

Muswellbrook Tertiary Education Centre Stage 2, 140 - 142 Bridge Street Muswellbrook, NSW

Architect: Collins and Turner

This statement forms part of the Heritage Impact Statement for:

Minor Amendment to add Partitions to Ground Floor of Loxton House

Reference:

SHR 00185

Address and property description:

The site is located at 142-144 Bridge St, Muswellbrook NSW 2333. The property description is currently:

- Lots 1&2 in DP11221.

Prepared by:

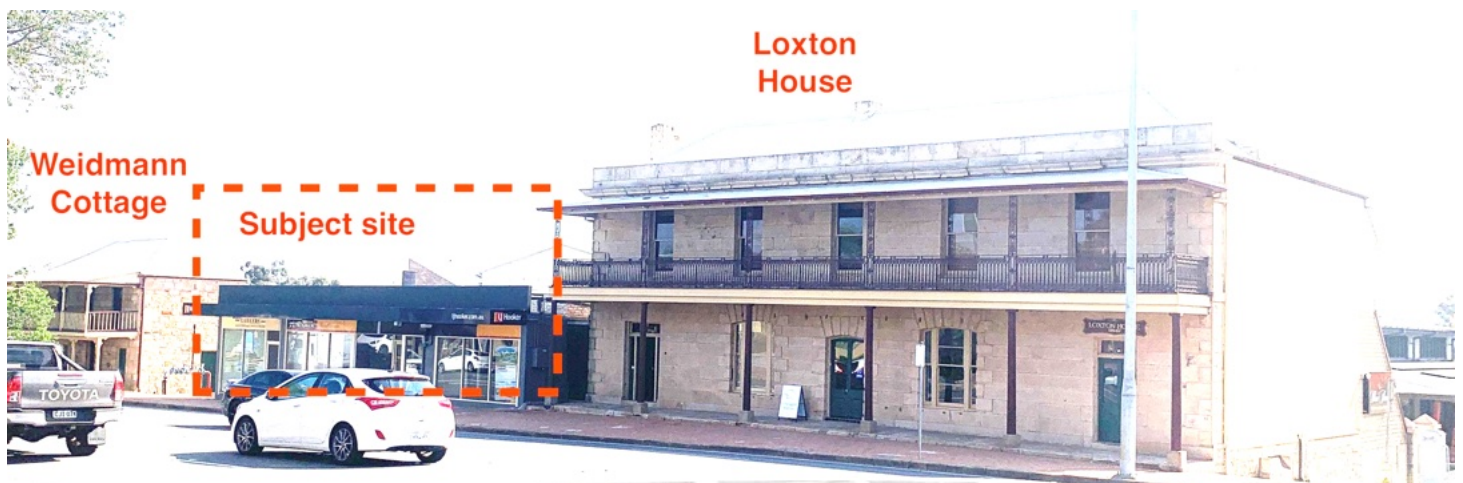
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For: Collins and Turner Architects, on behalf of Muswellbrook Shire Council

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Loxton House on Bridge St (with the MTEC2 approved project site to the left – this is a Minor Amendment to that approval)

Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement was commissioned by Muswellbrook Shire Council, to comment on the impact of the Minor Amendment to proposed emergency remedial works to Loxton House on Bridge St Muswellbrook. The current owners, Muswellbrook Shire Council, are proposing to carry out minor changes to non-original stud/plasterboard partitions on the ground floor, and add several glazed partitions. These changes are discussed in detail further of this report, and are all reversible without affecting any of the original fabric

Documentation

The report outlines a brief historical summary for the site/building, and from this, a Statement of Significance has been developed. With this information, the Heritage Impact Statement for the proposed works has been prepared.

A Heritage Impact Statement for the property was prepared in late 2018 by John Carr to accompany a DA by Stephen Rose Architects. This proposal was refused by the NSW Heritage Council in early 2019. A new application for a new MTEC2 building and works to Loxton House was approved in November 2020 by Heritage NSW (S60/2020/158). An S.140 for excavation of the new building site was approved 8 July 2021 (HMS ID 70). An archaeological S.60 (HMS ID 354) was approved 1/9/21. Subsequent details to Loxton House were approved by Heritage NSW 20/9/21 (HMS ID 83). Further items in Loxton House were covered in another application (HMS718 of 2022). This included the removal of one partition wall in the ground floor of Loxton House, some urgent structural repairs and earthquake bracing, and a concealed duct from basement to roof)

Author Identification

This report has been prepared by Genevieve Lilley, a heritage specialist architect, who has just completed a 2-year term on the NSW Heritage Committee. She also sits on the Tasmanian Heritage Council, and chairs the Work Committee for Heritage Tasmania.

Report Structure

The report follows the general structure set out in the document '*Statement of Heritage Impact*' available on the NSW Heritage website. The report also follows the methodology found in the '*Conservation Plan*' by the National Trust of Australia, and in the current Australia ICOMOS Guidelines to the Burra Charter.

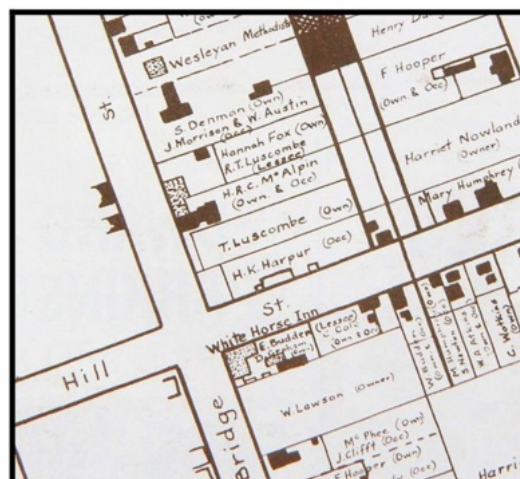
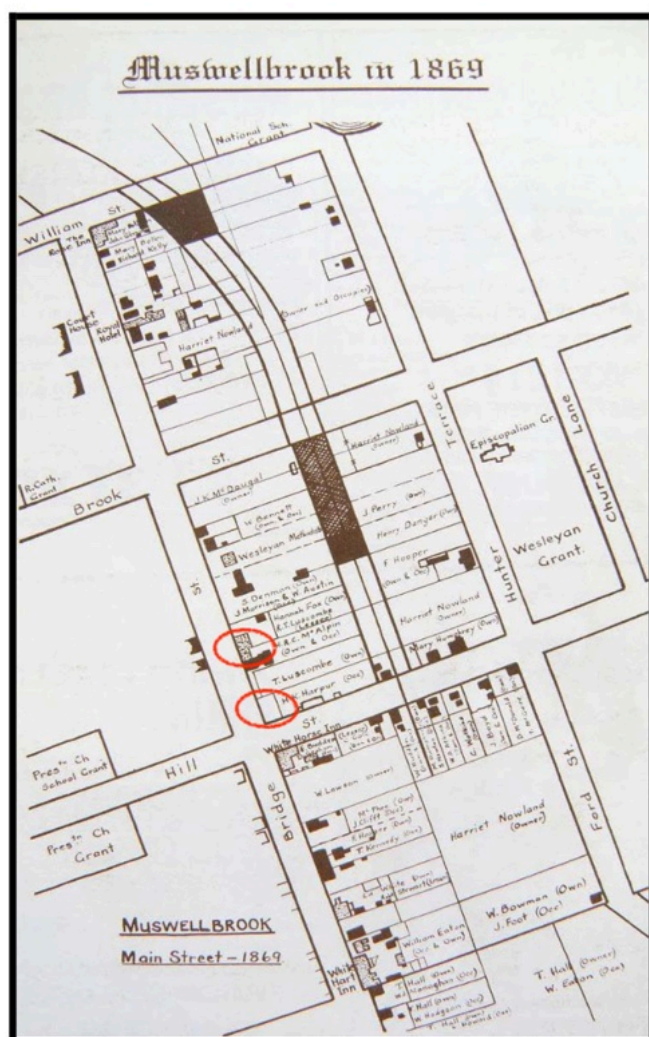
Drawings Used

Collins and Turner Architects CC Submission set, numbered 318-H-147

Historical Background

As set out in Muswellbrook Shire Council's own website, the area in which the town of Muswellbrook sits was once occupied by the Wanaruah Aboriginal people, at a junction with the southern edges of Kamilaroi people area. The two tribes had trade and ceremonial links.

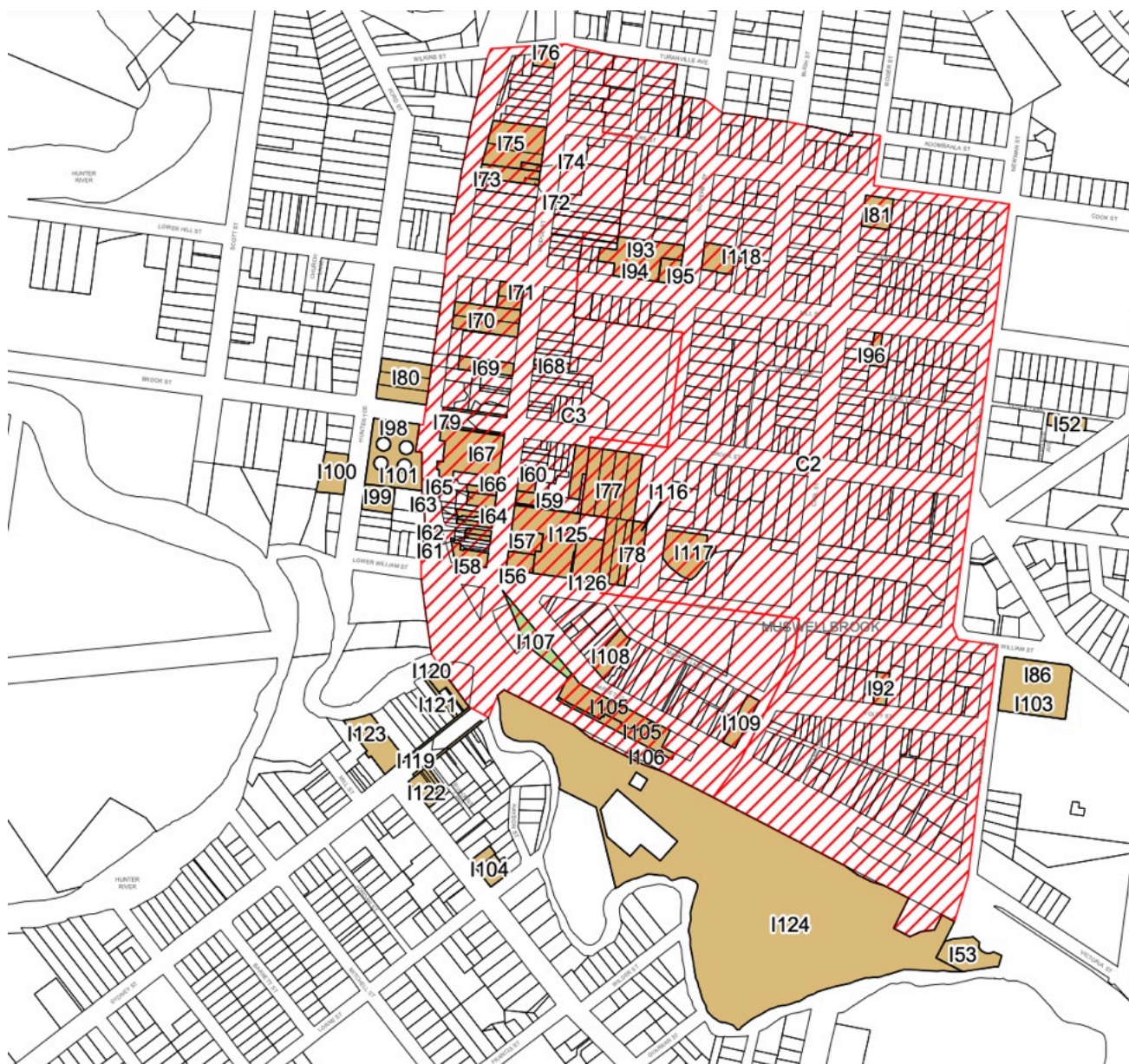
Muswellbrook was declared a township in 1833. It was discovered by Chief Constable John Howe in 1819 and in 1824 major parcels of land were surveyed by Henry Dangar along the banks of the Hunter River for allocation to early settlers. By 1840 the population was 215. There were 41 houses as well as some inns and shops and a flour mill was built around 1841. In 1842 the sons of Francis Forbes established the private village of Forbestown south of Muscle Creek (but due to confusion with the town of Forbes it was changed to South Muswellbrook in 1848). The first railway was completed in 1869 and the town expanded to 1500 soon after this period. The first coal mine in the area opened in the 1890's. The boundaries of the shire were officially defined in 1907 when Muswellbrook Shire was created from Wybong Shire area.



Plan of Muswellbrook in 1869, with Weidmann Cottage (upper) and Loxton House (lower) circled. Detailed extract shows Weidmann Cottage under ownership of HRC McAlpin (Muswellbrook Local and Family History Society)

Heritage Listings

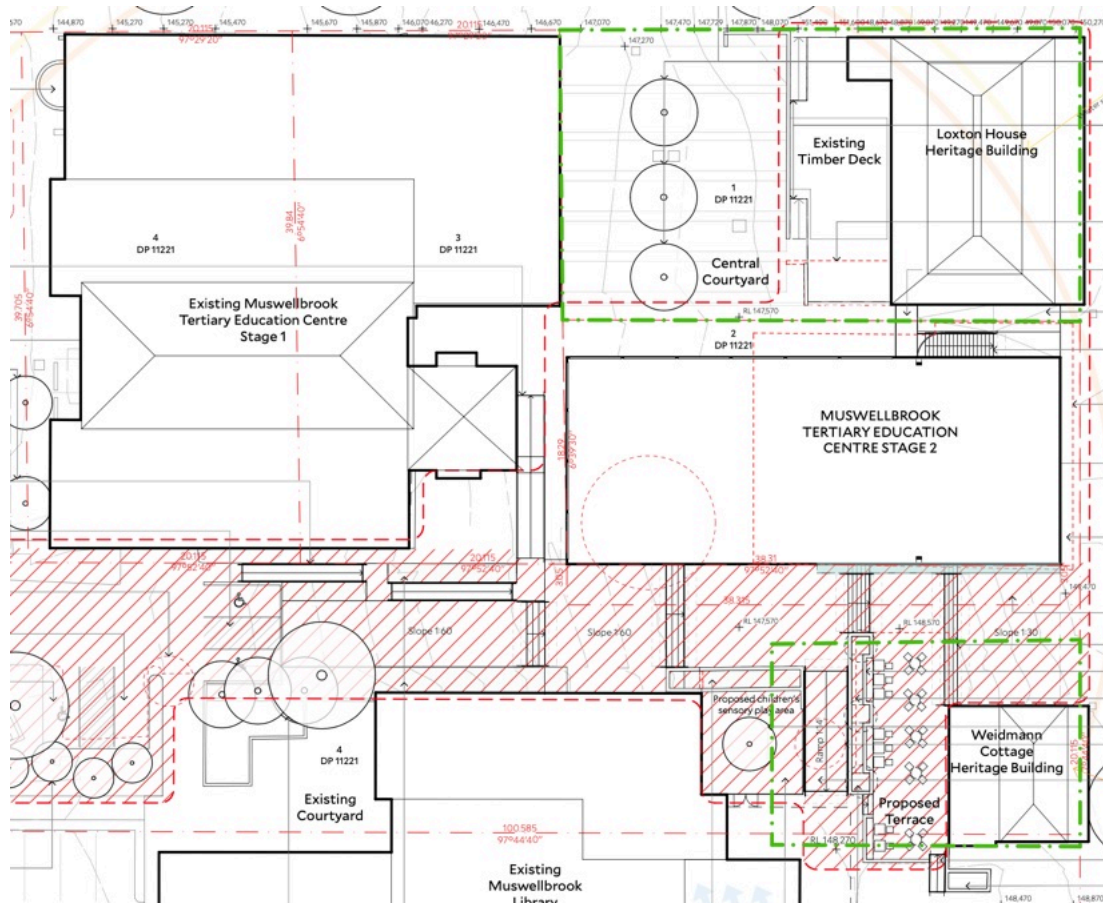
The site fronts Bridge St, and sits between two items of State heritage significance, both of which are listed as examples of early colonial architecture in Muswellbrook. The property entries on the State Heritage Register are SHR 00185 & SHR 00260, attached as Appendices 1 & 2 to this document.



An overlay showing the Heritage Listed properties of Muswellbrook, with Loxton House at 171 and Weidmann Cottage being the Bridge St side of 170 (from current Muswellbrook Shore Council LEP 2009)



Aerial photo with Loxton House and Weidmann Cottage, and the subject site, shown (from current Google maps)



Location Plan with the curtilage of Loxton House and Weidmann Cottage SHR listings shown, dotted in green

Heritage Council of New South Wales
PLAN
 Under the Heritage Act, 1977

Description LOT 1, D.P.11221 ("LOXTON HOUSE")

Municipality MUSWELLBROOK Locality MUSWELLBROOK
 Parish of ROWAN County of DURHAM

Scale 1:800

HILL ST

BRIDGE ST

COMPILED FROM INFORMATION IN D.P.11221	FILE REFERENCE H.C.32411	PLAN APPROVED <i>Genevieve Lilley</i> for SECRETARY, HERITAGE COUNCIL	PLAN NUMBER H.C. 440
BY <u>D. A. L.</u> DATE <u>17.4.80</u>			
THIS IS THE PLAN REFERRED TO IN <u>INTERIM</u> /PERMANENT CONSERVATION ORDER No.185			
N.S.W. GOVERNMENT GAZETTE No. <u>3</u> OF <u>8 JAN 1982</u>			
SUBJECT LAND SHOWN THIS: 			

Curtilage of Loxton House as SHR listing

Loxton House

The SHR entry (Item number SHR 00185) lists Loxton House as being built in c1838 as a residence, and is noted as 'a key building in the main street of Muswellbrook. It is a two- storey Colonial-Georgian building which has been claimed to be Muswellbrook's oldest remaining building'. It is further described in the same document, as below:

'The front facade is stone with projecting quoins and an upper verandah supported on fluted timber columns. The side walls are stuccoed brick and the rear wall is painted brick. The rear elevation also has a two-story verandah. The roof is iron over shingles. Joinery is cedar and floors are pit-sawn timber boards. Internally the building retains much of its original cedar joinery including a staircase with carved handrail. (Branch Managers Report to the Heritage Council 19/03/1980)'

The listing came about when, in January 1980 Muswellbrook Council requested comments from the Heritage Council regarding proposed renovations of Loxton House, for conversion of parts of the building to a restaurant. The Heritage Council recommended that an Interim Conservation Order be placed over the building as it was concerned that full compliance with Ordinance 70 of the Local Government Act would require an unacceptable sacrifice of the architectural integrity of the building (non-compliance with the relevant provisions would not unduly affect its fire safety). In recognition of its heritage significance a Permanent Conservation Order was placed over Loxton House on 8 January 1982. It was transferred to the State Heritage Register on 2 April 1999.



Loxton House from Bridge St, taken from the front of the subject site

Development and Ownership of the Heritage-Listed property in recent decades

Loxton House was partially restored and altered in 1980, when its basement was converted into a restaurant. At that time, a large brick rear wing was added, housing stairs and a lift. The ground floor areas were used as shops, with offices occupying the first floor. In 1987, approval was granted for the repaving of the basement courtyard, and in 1992 approval was granted for the repair of the timber verandah posts and for exterior repainting. The original internal staircase remains (though its current position is not the position of the original stair of the building), as do some of the windows and chimney breasts in the first floor. The property was sold to the Shire Council in May 2012, and is now a partly-used support building for the MTEC building behind it. For this use, a simple open-plan fitout was completed to upper level rooms, and a deck added to the rear of the building.

Loxton House is part of a major redevelopment for the MTEC2 building by Collins and Turner Architects. A new application for a new MTEC2 building and works to Loxton House was approved in November 2020 by Heritage NSW (S60/2020/158). An S.140 for excavation of the new building site was approved 8 July 2021 (HMS ID 70). An archaeological S.60 (HMS ID 354) was approved 1/9/21. Subsequent details to Loxton House were approved by Heritage NSW 20/9/21 (HMS ID 83). Further items in Loxton House were covered in another application (HMS718 of 2022). This included the removal of one partition wall in the ground floor of Loxton House, some urgent structural repairs and earthquake bracing, and a concealed duct from basement to roof). The new MTEC building has been completed and was opened by the Prime Minister earlier this year. Work continues slowly on the restoration of Loxton House, as previous approvals.



Opening ceremony of the MTEC2 building (Sir Donald Horne building), with Loxton House to the right. Note the clean side façade of Loxton House (which had previously had a kitchen duct running up the now-visible side wall)

Analysis of Significance: Assessments/Statements of Significance

Loxton House

The significance of Loxton House has been assessed/listed on the SHR website, as below

Statement of significance:

Loxton House, built c1838 is a key building in the main street of Muswellbrook. It is a two-storey Colonial-Georgian building which has been claimed to be Muswellbrook's oldest remaining building.

Date significance updated: 03 Oct 00

Considerable works have been proposed to this building, mostly to remove a number of additions and alterations and non-original fit-out components built 1980-2015. All of these have been approved

Loxton House is a 3-storey building constructed with a dressed sandstone facade to Bridge Street supported on sandstone basement walls. The side, rear and internal walls are brickwork laid in English Bond, with the side walls in stucco and "blocked" to represent ashlar stone. The verandah to the street level, with its stone paving and arched windows, is especially grand, and a fine contribution to the streetscape. Exterior and interior photos are annotated below.



Loxton House as viewed from Bridge St



The door to the stair hall as viewed from Bridge St (L) and the fine street level paving ®

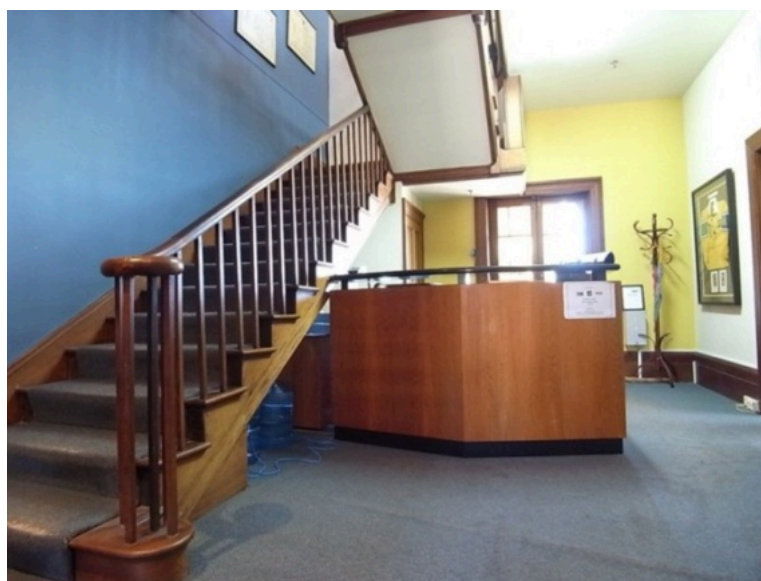


Loxton House as viewed from the Hill/Bridge St corner



Loxton House as viewed from the rear plaza, showing (in rough stone) the basement level visible on the rear side of the building. This area was occupied (in January 2020) by an Indian Restaurant, which will remain in the basement

The reworked cedar stair to the first floor, accessed via a stair hall from the left end of the building, has new stringers, and is not in an original stair location (the stringers are attached to the end wall of the building through wallpaper). Nevertheless, the balustrades are original Georgian-style remains part of the 'recycled' assembly



The stair hall as seen from the ground floor, before recent partition walls were constructed (L), top of the stair (R). The architects propose to remove the carpet from the stairs and stair lobby and sand/seal the stairs/floor

At first floor level, the Bridge Street side of the central wall was divided into five separate rooms. The first floor originally had 2-3 large rooms facing the street, so timber-framed plasterboard division walls had been added to make the extra rooms. These were able to be removed in October 2021 after approval to strip-out all linings by HNSW in Sept 2021.



Looking from and at the stair at first floor level, after strip-out



The three chimney breasts remain extant, with timber surrounds (currently safely removed and stored on site) but no fireplace inserts. There are cedar double hung windows to the verandah on Bridge Street. Some are original windows, with the unique opening 'lower doors' (like small barn doors) built to the height of the skirting (these allowed occupants to walk out onto the verandah when the lower pane of the sash window was raised). Others no longer have these low doors, and instead the 1980s skirting runs across the base of the doorway.

The western verandah access to ground and first floor levels is via double doors to all wall openings (these are poor modern replicas at first floor level, without architraves). The existing cedar joinery appears to be original but has signs of being removed and reinstated following the installation of the plasterboard linings. These cedar details have all been labelled and removed prior to gyprock strip-out, and now await re-use on site.



Details of the unusual French 'barn doors' of skirting height that enable an occupant to walk out onto the verandah when the lower sash is raised (L) Patched cedar skirtings below other windows without this original detail (R).

The ground floor rooms have, in the past remained largely untenanted. Since Muswellbrook Shire Council took possession of the building in 2012, they did have, for a while, an information booth in the ground floor spaces. Another small part of the ground floor was able to be let to a hairdresser. The ground floor rooms have a step from front rooms to rear rooms, and while original windows and some external doors remain intact, the walls and ceilings have been sheeted with plasterboard, with no remaining ceiling above the plasterboard ceiling. Additional stud/plasterboard partitions have been added over time.



Ground floor rooms after earthquake bracing



Ground floor rooms have plasterboard walls and ceilings, with no remaining original ceilings above



Evidence of plasterboard/stud partitions in ground floor rooms

Grading of the Building's Cultural Significance

Integrity & Grading of Significance: The integrity of the physical and documentary evidence must be such to enable a sound analysis of the significance of the place. Loss of integrity or condition may diminish significance. Different components of a place may make a different relative contribution to its heritage value.

The interior is generally coloured as Little as the floor, walls and ceilings are all covered with modern materials with only the cedar joinery (patched and re-applied) visible. All the cedar has been reworked/replaced in the 1980s renovation. Test holes in the plasterboard show numerous holes and prior openings in the remaining (now covered) brick internal walls

The masonry western wing addition is assessed as Intrusive due to its bulk and scale in proximity to Loxton House, the use of a different textured brick, the use of a different brick bond and the use of a different roof style that cuts into the original roof of Loxton House.

The timber clad western addition is assessed as having Little heritage significance and impact on the building due to its choice of lightweight materials common to the period, its small bulk and scale and its design using the rear verandah roof of Loxton House, stepping out at the lower levels.



Ground floor plan (L) and first floor plan (R) of Loxton House, showing Significance grading (Red = High, Blue = Moderate, Yellow = Little, Green = Intrusive)

Grading (significance)	Justification	Status
EXCEPTIONAL	Rare or outstanding element directly contributing to an item's local and State significance.	Fulfills criteria for local and State listing
HIGH	High degree of original fabric. Demonstrates a key element of the item's significance. Alterations do not detract from significance.	Fulfills criteria for local and State listing
MODERATE	Altered or modified elements. Elements with little heritage value, but which contribute to the overall significance of the item.	Fulfills criteria for local and State listing
LITTLE	Alterations detract from the significance. Difficult to interpret.	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing.
INTRUSIVE	Damaging to the item's heritage significance.	Does not fulfil criteria for local or State listing.

Grading of Elements

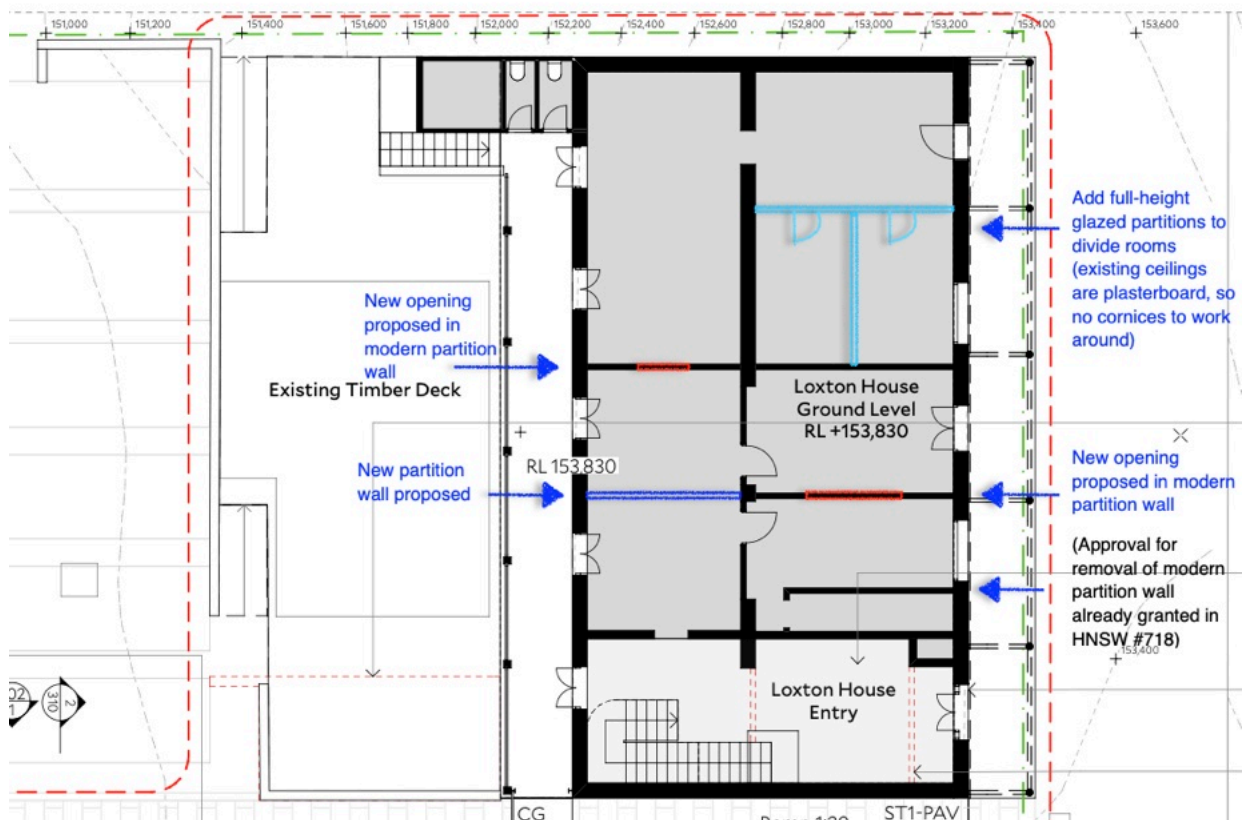
Loxton House External Elements	Grading
Building Proportions	High
Roof Shape	High
Current Roof Sheeting	Little
Timber Shingles under (existing roof sheeting)	High
Chimneys (missing caps)	High
Front Verandah (reconstructed)	High
Cast iron Balustrade & Columns	High
Fluted Timber Columns (reproduction)	Little
Flagstones to street	High
Reconstructed Rear Verandah	Moderate
Balustrade to rear verandah (aluminium replica)	Little
Side and Rear Brick Walls	High
Rear Wing Addition	Intrusive
Rear timber Addition	Little
Rear masonry Staircase	Little

Loxton House Internal Elements	Grading
Ground Floor Entry Partitions	Intrusive
First Floor introduced partitions	Little
Plasterboard ceiling and wall linings	Intrusive
Brick internal walls under plasterboard linings	Little
Internal Walls Supporting Chimneys	High
Pit sawn timber hardwood flooring (under carpet)	High
Existing floor coverings	Little
All cedar windows, doors, architraves and skirtings	High
Cedar fireplace mantles, cedar staircase	High

The proposals included in this Minor Amendment Application for Loxton House include:

1. New partition wall in rear room, ground floor (stud frame, plasterboard, no change to original fabric, reversible)
2. New openings in existing partition walls in ground floor (one to rear room, one to front room)
3. New full-height glazed partitioning/doors to large front room (no change to original fabric, reversible)

Plan of ground floor of Loxton House



Proposed adjustments to ground floor of Loxton House, showing new partitions in dark blue, new glazed partitions in pale blue, and new openings to existing non-original partitions in red

The DCP

The Muswellbrook DCP Section 15 Heritage Conservation states:

15.1.11 Council's Responsibilities

The State Government requires Council to deal with DAs affecting all heritage items listed as being of local significance, including proposals for additions and alterations to buildings. When changes are proposed to items of State Significance Council must refer the application to the NSW Heritage Office and obtain its concurrence.

As the owner of Loxton House, council will submit this proposal as a Minor Amendment application to the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage. The impact of these works will be outlined in more detail below

Conservation Policy

Generally, all proposed restoration/alteration works to Loxton House already (and will continue to) adhere rigorously to the principles of the Burra Charter, and will be proposed to increase and/or preserve the historic integrity of the building. Any new works proposed will be designed so as to make the original fabric more visible, and not in any way diminish the historic integrity of the original building.



Details of the front façade of Loxton House

Statement of Heritage Impact for this proposal

How is the impact of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the item and the surrounding conservation to be minimised?

The new partition walls match existing studwork/plasterboard partition walls. The two new openings proposed will be simple openings in the walls. The new glazed partitions have been proposed so that the large room they are in remains visible 'as a whole'. This room has been extremely difficult to let over the last 30-50 years, so its ongoing occupancy, adapted with these clear glass divisions, is a better outcome than the principal rooms of the ground floor of this significant building remaining empty for the next 30-50 years. The glazed partitions will not cause any damage to existing fabric, and can later be removed without remaining evidence of their existence

No adverse impact, indeed a much improved outcome

How does the proposed development affect views to and from the item and the surrounding conservation area? What has been done to minimise negative effects?

As the minor changes are entirely internal, they will not impact on the visibility of the building, or views around it. These changes allow ongoing tenancies (without any impact on the heritage fabric of the building), and it is better that Loxton House is used and appreciated by visitors to these tenancies, and by all people walking/driving along Bridge St, especially in the early dusk of winter afternoons.

No adverse impact, much improved outcome to have the ground floor of the building occupied and for these rooms to be visibly used and contributing to the life of the main street of Muswellbrook

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

The new partitions are utterly simple finishes, and the glazed partitions will be similarly minimal. The selection of materials and the positioning of the openings and new partitions, will not detract from the understanding of the ground floor rooms in any way. In this way, they are sympathetic insertions which allow contemporary occupancy of otherwise redundant spaces at street level

No adverse impact, much improved outcome

Will the public still be able to view and appreciate the conservation area and the listed heritage item's significance?

The public will appreciate the heritage building/area more when these ground floor spaces are occupied and welcoming

No adverse impact, proposal sympathetic as provision of partitions makes these spaces occupiable

How will the conservation area and the listed heritage item benefit from this development?

The proposed openings and new partitions to these ground floor rooms will make the spaces occupiable, and this gives a positive contribution to both Loxton House and the streetscape

Improved outcome with new tenants in a previously under-used set of ground floor rooms

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

Not applicable

Summary/Conclusion

This application is for a very minor Minor Amendment to a very large project. With the completion of the MTEC2 part of the project, and with the structural/earthquake stabilisation of Loxton House now complete, the client (Muswellbrook City Council) tenaciously continues to restore Loxton House and make it useful to the growing city it sits in.

The ground floor rooms of Loxton House have been underused for many decades. Now the owner has keen tenants, these modest partition works will allow these rooms to be used for many years going forwards. Tenants are increasingly wishing to be near the chic new completed MTEC2 building, and can now understand the value of the heritage buildings that sit within the curtilage of this project as a whole.

The architects have minimised the interventions as much as possible, to ensure the best heritage outcome for the building, while also allowing the ground floor rooms to be occupied by tenants going forward. Alternatives have been examined and debated, and the scope of these partitions have been reduced a lot.

In conclusion, these modest minimal proposals to the ground floor rooms in Loxton House will bring the building up to modern use, while also ensuring the building's longevity (by occupation and activation). The constant use of these ground floor rooms will be a positive outcome for both Loxton House and for the streetscape.

Genevieve Lilley

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(Revised document) September 2023