

HERITAGE REPORT

**HERITAGE PROPERTIES
82 & 84 Fitzroy Street, Warwick
PROPOSED WORKS**

For
MCCONAGHY GROUP PTY LTD

Prepared by
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

McConaghy Group Pty Ltd. are the developers of the Rose City Shoppingworld and there is now a requirement to enlarge the existing shopping Centre. Rose City is unusual in that although it a typical modern multi-unit shopping centre with underground parking it is sited very centrally in the Town of Warwick. In fact the main entrance to the shopping Mall is directly across the street from the 1887 Town Hall which figures strongly in Warwick's list of State listed heritage buildings

Warwick founded in the 1840's and once considered as a possible capital of the newly established independent Queensland, is now home to a one of the largest selection of Period Heritage buildings for a small [Population 12,000] country town. There has been an active policy of maintaining and expanding the listing of heritage properties and this represents a real tourist draw to the town.

By contrast the shopping centre by being so centrally located, unlike much other edge of town malls, draws business to the town centre and is an important anchor for the remainder of the town's commercial concerns. Without such a strong vibrant business at the centre of the town there is little doubt other business occupying traditional buildings in the town centre would be weaker leading to more empty and unused older traditional buildings.

Rose City having been a very successful retail centre now needs to expand to maintain it's role as major centre. Warwick is now recognised by the major retailers of the likes of Woolworths and Coles as a location for more retail space and unless Rose City can respond there will be real pressure for out of town centres with the inevitable impact on the town's commercial building stock. What is proposed in the expansion of Rose city will impact two existing state listed heritage buildings, but a very careful weighing of the impact on the town as a whole needs to be considered when considering this proposal.

To expand the existing Rose City complex, surrounding space is naturally very limited in an established town of this nature. A particular need is to expand a now undersized Coles supermarket to a 3200-3500 SQM unit within the mall and to enhance delivery areas to allow the style and number of typical delivery vehicles to access commercial units in a useable and safe manner.

At present delivery vehicles must manoeuvre in Fitzroy Street rather than in the confines of the centre and Warwick planners are keen to see this practice end and to incorporate adequate space within the centre for the safe movement of these vehicles. There is also a need for additional underground parking provision and this site will assist in that provision.

2.0 THE SITE

The sites available to the McConaghy Group, the developer, are numbers 82 & 84 Fitzroy Street. These are both state listed Heritage buildings but have been in a derelict state for a number of years. For a detailed description of the two buildings condition I refer you to the reports of 2005 and June 2007 from Andrew Farr of Farr Structural Engineers who has been monitoring the buildings condition over the past few years.

In summary however it will be evident in reading the Structural Engineers survey report that both building are in very poor condition. Having been very simply constructed in the 19th century with largely timber interiors much internal structure has been destroyed due to termite attack. Further the external walls of the local sandstone have been founded on minimal footings on strongly reactive clay soils resulting in massive movement of some sections relative to others. Andrew Farr records that some walls are in very real danger of collapse, such is the degree of their movement. The only

realistic manner to stabilise is to underpin some while others will require rebuilding to ensure their future stability.

The buildings are situated on the south side of Fitzroy Street facing north towards the park opposite. To their south are a variety of moderate quality 20th century buildings all of which are to be demolished to make way for the proposed development right down to the corner with Palmerin street and indeed along the west side of Palmerin Street. Immediately to the west of the site is another State heritage listed building, the stone built Warwick Police Station.

To the rear of the site in a southerly direction, these properties border the existing Rose City shopping Centre a portion of which is also to be demolished to allow for the proposed expansion of the centre.

The proposal as it stands for this development requires the demolition of the more easterly of the two buildings [No 82] and the removal of later rear additions of the more westerly [No. 84] but the retention and reinforcement of some structural elements to stabilise & avoid further damage from structural movement

3.0 THE BUILDINGS

On this site there are two separate buildings the more eastern building and the smaller of the two[No 82] and the western building the larger of the pair[no. 84]. Again I refer to the two structural reports prepared by Andrew Farr of Farr structural Engineers for a detailed report on the exact state and condition of the two structures at the time of their last inspection.

3.1 The eastern building

Andrew Farr says of the number 82 that the building is of indeterminate age. My opinion that this building's appearance suggests to me, a building of the late nineteenth century and therefore over one hundred years old. It was simply constructed in a manner typical of its time as commercial premises on the ground floor with living accommodation provided on the first floor. It takes the form of a modest semidetached design giving commercial accommodation with a "shop window" and front door on each side.

Construction is of largely local brick on the ground floor with a timber framed first floor above. Typical of its type the front of the main part of the property is on the pavement line with a good sized timber framed verandah at first floor constructed over the pavement with a simple lean to iron roof over. At some time in the buildings past the verandah, which faces north, has been largely filled in to screen the verandah from the direct sun from the north. The first floor accommodation is generally of timber framing with external timber weatherboards. A brick chimney rises at the rear at ground level to well above the simple hipped roof with ridge running east west. A chimney is provided to each side presumably serving each former commercial unit.

The first floor verandah facing north is carried on 4 timber posts supporting a timber bearer above. Each post sits on a small plinth base at pavement level. Across the top of the posts suspended from the timber bearer is a decorative timber screen in three bays of which one the eastern is missing. Timber doors and casements of all of a simple style typical of the period. To the rear of the premises are a number of brick built single storey additions all with simple north south ridged timber roofs. These are likely to be have been added at a latter date as the commercial life of the building grew but this cannot be verified at this time.

All of the brick masonry supporting walls were built off minimal brick spreader foundations of no great depth and as such are highly susceptible to the

movement of the local highly reactive clay soils. The result is that the structure has undergone considerable movement and this is detailed in the structural report of Andrew Farr. In addition little was allowed for in the construction at the time to allow for the moisture content of the soils at times at very high levels. As a result this property suffers from extreme rising damp which has all but destroyed any internal wall finishes and has also lead to the deterioration of the mortar within the wall construction.

As a further result of the simple construction and moisture in the soils all timber members in close proximity to or in contact with the soil are liable to rot and termite infestation. This has been proved to be the case in this building with almost all low level timber virtually destroyed by either form of attack. The result is the timber floors are virtually non existent and the attack has spread to all of the minor timber sections including floor boards, door linings and architraves.

Andrew Farr concludes his report 2007 " *the building is essentially at the end of its structural life*" and sadly I concur with this view. There is little structural integrity in the building and the overall rate of deterioration is so great that demolition is the only realistic future of the building. Were rebuilding an option the building would require to be rebuilt from its foundation up and the result would be a brand new building constructed in accordance with 21st century construction methods and as required by current building codes.

3.2 The western building

The second building is No. 84 the more westerly building. This is a larger building and built of different materials suggesting a different developer and probably constructed at a different time although in a similar period towards the end of the nineteenth century. This is a more solidly constructed building being generally of two storey local stone construction under a timber framed roof with simple hipped iron clad roof with the ridge again running east west parallel with Fitzroy Street. Once again for a detailed structural appraisal we

should refer to the reports of Andrew Farr prepared in September of this year (to reflect updated report).

The form of construction using largely local stone suggests a big budget and greater longevity for the structure however we will see the building is again afflicted with similar problems to its neighbour due to the simplified construction methods of the period and the ravages of the harsh Australian environment.

The building was probably again constructed as commercial premises with living accommodation over. The large scale "shop windows" and more than one front door hint at the commercial nature of the ground floor which like the adjoining property is set right on the pavement line once again with a timber framed verandah over the pavement. In this case the first floor roof is not just a lean to arrangement but a continuous part of the whole roof structure projected over the verandah. A large stone chimney on the western external wall penetrates the simple iron covered roof form.

The verandah and indeed the roof above are carried on 6 timber posts set on the edge of the pavement line each with base mouldings. At roof level the 6 posts have timber capital details supporting the spreader beam above. There would likely have been timber balustrades at first floor but these are currently finished with a flat sheet material masking the original detail. Below the verandah beams a simple painted wooden filigree screen remains as a sun breaker to the pavement below.

The form of the building is largely two storey of stone construction but the stone extends rearwards to form a single storey element under a monopitch iron roof. This has been extended further rearwards with a timber framed rear addition probably at a later date to allow for extension of the commercial activities on site. Internally the construction is typical of the period with timber floors at ground and first floor levels. The roof is also framed in timber with timber ceiling joists.

As in the case of number 82 next door, all the timber construction has been ravaged by rot and insect infestation particularly at ground floor level where timber floors are so close to ground level, where floors are on the point of complete collapse. The deterioration is so great that access internally is limited to ground floor areas. There is ample evidence of termite activity and rot in floors, joinery timbers, verandah decks and roof structure. In addition soil movement due to clay soils has also impacted the brick interior as well as the stone exterior walls. Andrew Farr records relative movement between various structural elements as much as 25mm leading to massive cracking and some instability. What is more worrying is that between the two inspections in 2005 and 2007 this damage has worsened considerably.

Of particular note is the western external wall which had previously reinforced with iron rods passed through the structure terminating in flat bar cross reinforcement to external walls. This has bowed by a considerably degree and in my opinion represents a real threat to the structural integrity of the wall. This has been caused, as in the adjoining property, by a lack of understanding at the time of construction of the movement in clay soils causing shrinking and expansion dependant upon moisture levels. The only way to combat these changes is to found the walls at depth below that where this movement occurs. Today the only recourse is to underpin the walls with concrete foundations taken down to suitable depths.

The deterioration in the stability of the western wall requires urgent attention either in the form of propping or repair. Andrew Farr is preparing recommendations for this course of action on behalf of the developer. The condition may be so bad as to require rebuilding of the stone structure but this will need to be determined by structural analysis.

What becomes clear from the inspection of these two buildings is their extremely parlous state which has developed over the years but is now accelerating as their structural integrity reaches a critical point. Their owners have been unable to let the buildings because of their poor state and without income there have been no funds for repair and restoration and so a vicious

circle has continued. With no real government funds for repair on this kind of scale for Heritage listed building the scene is set for a terminal situation of collapse and demolition.

4.0 CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BUILDINGS

Both buildings although of different forms of construction are built I believe for a common purpose, furthering commercial activity in this agricultural based country town. The form of architecture was a typical form of the time commercial units with living accommodation over. And the town had many similar buildings during the early part of the twentieth century. But patterns change and as standards rose families no longer wanted to live over the business and business premises became larger as products were bought and sold in larger and larger quantities. Deliveries originally be horse drawn vehicles were made by larger and larger vehicles requiring more storage space.

And so the moderate commercial premises with living accommodation became outdated and less used. The site of these two premises situated as they are around the corner from the main commercial street of Palmerin Street would also have been less popular out of sight and out of mind. The next building to the west was of course the Police Station and next to that the Courthouse, so there was no commercial draw to support these isolated buildings.

For whatever related reason these buildings have fallen out of use and failed to be adequately maintained and now appear to be in terminal decline.

There cultural significance relates not to their construction which is typical of so many but more because they represent a form of building significant in its time as representing trading methods of their day.

In the case of No.82 its condition is so poor the only manner the form can be saved is as reported above. Is by replacement by a new building, which negates its value as a Heritage building.

In the case of the No.84 there is a tremendous amount of work to be done including rebuilding of foundations to save existing stone and brick supporting walls and the complete replacement of the interior timber sections and refinishing the entire interior, in order to make the building re-usable in the future.

There are problems with replacing the interior elements as the timber floors can not be replaced in their present form due to lack of air space and the avoidance of the reoccurrence of rot. In similar manner the existing staircase to the first floor is too steep and narrow for use under present building regulations and thus considerable internal change will be required. Once again the degree of deterioration and consequent replacement brings into question the remaining cultural significance in fabric that will require such large scale replacement.

We therefore need to also need to consider the benefit to Warwick's other Heritage building fabric should this development not proceed and out of town development proceed in its stead. It is my view this will have very real negative impact and cause the long term loss of further older buildings and their environs.

5.0 SUMMARY

It is clear from the Structural engineers report that Number 82 Fitzroy Street has now passed its useful life and should be allowed to be demolished in order to allow the required development to proceed.

What remains in question is the extent of work that should be carried out to number 84 Fitzroy Street. The rearmost timber sections, most probably added

later, could I suggest reasonable be demolished without impacting the heritage significance of the remaining building. Structural walls will need to stabilised which is currently being investigated but there needs to be debate as to how much further work or repair and replacement should be undertaken without further impacting the heritage quality of the building.

I would recommend a meeting of the interested parties including Warwick Council development officers, the EPA's representative and the developer and their consultants should be called to attempt to reach agreement on the best way forward to reach a solution that can benefit all parties aims.

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