

Ku-ring-gai Heritage Information Sheet—What is a Heritage Conservation Area?

What is a Heritage Conservation Area?

The Ku-ring-gai Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs) were initially identified by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) and were reviewed and assessed in a number of detailed studies commissioned by Ku-ring-gai Municipal Council (refer to Council's website).

The National Trust defines HCA¹ as 'an area of importance within those boundaries, controls are necessary to retain and enhance its character'.

HCAs should not be confused with 'Character Areas' which are based on appearance and not on value from a heritage perspective. The Ku-ring-gai HCAs are geographically defined urban areas that represent a significant historical period of the development of the Local Government Area, associated with the improvement in transport connections in Sydney, in particular with the establishment of the North Shore railway line.

How were the HCAs assessed?

The **Ku-ring-gai Heritage Inventory Sheet—What is Heritage?** outlines the standard criteria used for heritage significance assessment in New South Wales (NSW). The process determines why the HCAs are valued by the community and which elements are worthy of conservation.

These key elements generally include the urban grain; the formal appearance of buildings; the way individual buildings relate to each other and to their context, both natural and man-made; the historical uses within the HCA; and the intangible values embodied in those tangible aspects.



Figure 1 – 4: Wahroonga HCA, 2013.

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Figure 5 – 8: Wahroonga HCA, 2013.

How are the Ku-ring-gai HCAs protected?

The HCAs are granted statutory recognition and protection through listing on Council's Local Environmental Plan (LEP). The listing boundaries are shown on the Heritage Maps. The statutory listing provides an effective mechanism for managing change on an area-wide basis.

Listing on Council's LEP generally means that external and structural alterations, demolition and subdivision within a HCA need to be approved by Council so that the impacts on the HCA as a whole can be considered.

Can I make alterations or demolish a building in a HCA?

Council's Development Control Plans (DCPs) supplement the heritage controls contained in the LEP and provide more detailed guidance for new development within the HCAs.

Council is able to approve a range of works to a property in a HCA, including.

- **The demolition of buildings that do not contribute to the significance of the HCA**

Non-contributory buildings offer important opportunities for appropriately designed redevelopment within the HCAs.

Council would generally allow the removal of intrusive elements that detract from the overall character of the HCA.²

Buildings may have a neutral effect on the HCA, in which case Council would not require their retention, provided that they are replaced with a building that makes a more positive contribution to the HCA.

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- **New contemporary development that is compatible with the established and with the desired future character of the HCA**

New design in a HCA does not mean an imitation but a careful analysis of surrounding contributory elements.³

The NSW Heritage Office/RAIA (NSW), *Design in Context: Guidelines for Infill Development in the Historic Environment*, 2005, outlines the design criteria for new development in a HCA.

Having regard to this, Council would generally allow new development that is appropriate to its context in terms siting, scale, external form, materials/finishes and detailing.

Council would generally allow the construction of infill buildings that are a contemporary interpretation of the elements that are characteristic in the HCA. However, contemporary does not necessarily mean it is appropriate. What this means is that new development should be identifiable as the product of its own time but should also be compatible.

To help understand what gives a HCA its overall visual quality consider the place the building has in the streetscape. View corridors, focal points and land uses are integral to the HCAs. Consider the setbacks, landscape elements, the shape, the roof and roof features, fenestration and projections, and the exterior materials. Close range visual aspects include the surface quality of the materials such as their colour, texture, craftsmanship, detailing and other subtle aspects that cannot be perceived from the distance.



Figure 9 – 12: Wahroonga HCA, 2013.

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- **Alterations and/or additions to contributory buildings that do not detract from the significance of the HCA**

Council would generally allow additions to contributory buildings that are not visible from the street and that are smaller in height and size than the existing building. Upgrades to kitchens, bathrooms and services to meet contemporary standards are also generally acceptable.

Council would generally not allow alterations and/or additions to the front elevation of a contributory building nor modifications where substantial changes such as roof additions or facade remodelling that would alter the style of the building, are involved.

Council would allow restoration works that follow the principles contained in the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter*.

Council's approval is not required for minor external works to a contributory building such as 'like for like' repairs and periodic maintenance.

Where can I get further guidance?

Heritage conservation requires a careful process of analysis and a range of skills. Further guidance is available from Council's Heritage Advisor.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage maintains a Directory of Heritage Consultants in NSW. Before engaging a Heritage Specialist you should always check their suitability, qualifications and experience. Australia International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is the peak body for professionals with appropriate conservation experience in Australia.

References

- Australia ICOMOS, *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of cultural Significance*, 1999
- Heritage Office and Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, *Conservation Areas: Guidelines for Managing Change in Heritage Conservation Areas*, 1996
- NSW Heritage Office, *Assessing Heritage Significance*, a NSW Heritage Manual update, 2011

Endnotes

- ¹ Referred to by the National Trust as 'Urban Conservation Area'.
- ² Buildings that are uncharacteristic are not necessarily intrusive and might warrant retention and statutory protection.
- ³ 'Contributory' refers to the contribution that the element makes to the significance of the HCA as a whole.