

Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Turner Housing Precinct, Turner) Notice 2013

Notifiable Instrument NI2013—337

made under the

Heritage Act 2004 s34 Notice of decision about Provisional Registration

1. Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Provisional Registration of the Turner Housing Precinct, Turner) Notice 2013*.

2. Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after notification.

3. Notice of Decision

Pursuant to Section 32 of the *Heritage Act 2004* the ACT Heritage Council has decided not to provisionally register the Turner Housing Precinct, Turner to the ACT Heritage Register.

Jennifer O'Connell
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council

25 July 2013



ACT Heritage Council

STATEMENT OF REASONS

DECISION NOT TO PROVISIONALLY REGISTER TURNER HOUSING PRECINCT (Blocks 1-24 Section 47, Blocks 1, 5-13 and 16-22 Section 48 and Sections 49 & 50, Turner) IN THE ACT HERITAGE REGISTER

BACKGROUND

In August 2012 the Turner Residents Association submitted an urgent nomination for Sections 47, 48 (excluding Block 24), 49 and 50, Turner (Turner Housing Precinct). The Turner Housing Precinct (the Precinct) was nominated for its Garden City planning principles and associations with Lindsay Pryor and Trevor Gibson.

All residents of the Precinct and the ACT Planning and Land Authority were subsequently advised of the nomination. The Heritage Council (the Council) received five responses from and on behalf of residents; five opposing the nomination and nil in support.

Under the Territory Plan the Precinct is located within a RZ3 Urban Residential Zone which allows the construction of secondary residences and multi-unit housing.

In 2001 the Council made a decision not to provisionally register Section 47, Turner.

In 2004 a nomination by the National Trust ACT for Sections 46 – 50, Turner, did not proceed as the nominator did not provide supplementary information requested by the Council.

In order to assist with the assessment of the nomination, the Heritage Council commissioned an assessment of the Precinct by Philip Leeson Architects. The Council took this work into account when assessing the nomination for the Precinct, but reached a different conclusion about the nature and strength of the values involved.

The Council discussed the nomination of the Precinct at its meeting of 9 July and 25 July 2013, and prior to these discussions some Council members conducted walking inspections of the Precinct.

ASSESSMENT

In assessing the nomination for the Precinct, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- supplementary documentary evidence supplied by the nominator;
- five responses to the nomination received from and on behalf of residents;
- the report by Philip Leeson Architects titled '*Heritage Assessment Sections 47, 48, 49 & 50 Turner, ACT*';
- the report by the ACT Heritage Unit titled '*Background Information Turner Housing Precinct*', July 2013, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity;
- the ACT Heritage Council Statement of Reasons for Section 47 Turner (2001);
- the physical evidence and surrounding context (including Block 24 Section 48) as ascertained from walking inspections; and
- experience and knowledge gained by the Council through the listing and management of 11 existing residential precincts within the ACT, in various ways comparable to the Turner Housing Precinct (see References in '*Background Information Turner Housing Precinct*', July 2013).

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows:

Criterion (a) *it demonstrates a high degree of technical or creative achievement (or both), by showing qualities of innovation, discovery, invention or an exceptionally fine level of application of existing techniques or approaches*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The planning of the Precinct displays some Garden City qualities but it is a late example of such planning and does not demonstrate the technical or creative achievement required to meet this criterion. Better and earlier examples of Garden City planning (with consideration of the housing) can be found in the Garden City heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens. Another late expression of Garden City planning (without consideration of the housing), but with more extensive and better evidence of the evolved style, can be found in the Garden City heritage precinct of Blandfordia 4 which is registered for its Garden City planning layout and landscape philosophy.

The majority of dwellings are standard Department of the Interior designs, predominantly red face brick with hipped roof forms, typical of designs from the late 1930s-50s. Of the remaining original houses the designs reflect a unity of style, detailing and material however they are modest houses of a utilitarian design and do not demonstrate a high degree of technical or creative achievement.

Furthermore a significant number have had modifications ranging from sympathetically altered to unsympathetically altered or redeveloped which compromises the precinct's original housing stock integrity.

Criterion (b) *it exhibits outstanding design or aesthetic qualities valued by the community or a cultural group*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The dwellings are standard Department of the Interior designs, predominantly red face brick with hipped roof forms, typical of designs from the late 1930s-50s. The designs reflect a unity of style, detailing and material however they do not exhibit outstanding design or aesthetic qualities. For example, the houses lack the acknowledged aesthetic value of the rendered and even timber Federal Capital Commission designs from the 1920s.

While the basic streetscape, landscape and viewscape may be considered pleasing, there is insufficient evidence on which to conclude that this criterion is met.

Criterion (c) *it is important as evidence of a distinctive way of life, taste, tradition, religion, land use, custom, process, design or function that is no longer practiced, is in danger of being lost or is of exceptional interest*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

While the planning of the Precinct displays a number of Garden City qualities, it is a late and undistinguished example. Better and earlier examples of Garden City planning can be found in the Garden City heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 4 and 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens.

The attributes of Garden City planning the Precinct does demonstrate include:

- the street layout including curved corners, pedestrian walkways across common areas, Holder Street laybys and the pocket parks (Sections 49 and 50);
- uniform street furniture, including original NCPDC era lampposts and fire hydrants;

- mature verge plantings;
- paired verge crossings;
- large verges;
- houses set diagonally to the corners (Section 47 only);
- alternating front setbacks and varied building orientation and front entry;
- generous side setbacks to allow for landscaping on all sides;
- power lines relegated to the sides and rear of blocks; and
- garages sited to the rear of the block.

However, the Precinct is diminished by:

- its small size and the current lack of a distinct physical and social entity;
- the absence of road hierarchy;
- the presence of fences to some front boundaries;
- its original utilitarian housing;
- the degradation of the pocket parks (Section 49 and 50);
- the presence of high hedge lines to some front boundaries;
- garages in front of some dwellings;
- predominantly single verge crossings; and
- the degradation of the stylistic consistency of housing through unsympathetic alterations and redevelopment.

The Precinct is an example of a modified expression of a Garden City precinct, as espoused by John Sulman, and as implemented under constrained circumstances arising from WWII. The two modifications relate to the utilitarian housing and the suggestion that block sizes in the Precinct are smaller, in both cases compared to other Garden City precincts. The original housing is considered more an erosion of Garden City qualities through its utilitarian character rather than as important evidence of a distinctive design. In any event, the integrity of the housing, especially in Section 48, has been substantially diminished. In the case of the block sizes, the difference compared to comparable 1920s Garden City precincts is marginal, the development of the Precinct also pre-dates the formal adoption of reduced block sizes in Canberra, and there is no clear link to this policy.

To the extent that evidence of the austerity arising from WWII is important, this is well represented by the Tocomwal Housing Precinct and the Beaufort Steel House in the Wakefield Gardens precinct.

Accordingly, the Precinct is not considered to be important as evidence of a distinctive design no longer practised, in danger of being lost or of exceptional interest.

Criterion (d) *it is highly valued by the community or a cultural group for reasons of strong or special religious, spiritual, cultural, educational or social associations*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Whilst the Precinct is valued by some of its residents for its cultural and social associations there is insufficient evidence at this time to demonstrate that these values are shared by the broader ACT community.

Criterion (e) *it is significant to the ACT because of its importance as part of local Aboriginal tradition*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (f) *it is a rare or unique example of its kind, or is rare or unique in its comparative intactness*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The Precinct is an example of a modified expression of a Garden City precinct, as espoused by John Sulman, and as implemented under constrained circumstances arising from WWII. However, the Precinct is diminished by the absence or degradation of key Garden City features (as outlined under Criterion (c)) and is not considered to be a rare or unique example of its kind or in its comparative intactness.

In addition, Block 24 of Section 48 is a large multi-dwelling development covering what was formerly three blocks. Whilst not included in the original nomination, as it is located within Section 48 which forms part of the Precinct, the Council took it into consideration when conducting its assessment. The presence of the large multi-dwelling development has a significant impact on the intactness of the Precinct as the original layout is less intact and its integrity has been diminished.

Better and earlier examples of Garden City planning can be found in the Garden City heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 4 and 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens.

Furthermore, a better example of a precinct implemented under constrained circumstances arising from WWII exists in the Tocomwal Housing Precinct.

Criterion (g) *it is a notable example of a kind of place or object and demonstrates the main characteristics of that kind.*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

The Precinct is an example of a modified expression of a Garden City precinct, as espoused by John Sulman, and as implemented under constrained circumstances arising from WWII. However, the Precinct is diminished by the absence or degradation of key Garden City features (as outlined under Criterion (c)) and is not considered to be a notable example demonstrating the main characteristics of Garden City precincts.

Better and earlier examples of Garden City planning can be found in the Garden City heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 4 and 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens.

The two modifications relate to the utilitarian housing and the suggestion that block sizes in the Turner precinct are smaller, in both cases compared to other Garden City precincts. The original housing is considered more an erosion of Garden City qualities through its utilitarian character rather than contributing to its qualities as a notable example. In any event, the integrity of the housing, especially in Section 48, has been substantially diminished. In the case of the block sizes, the difference compared to comparable 1920s Garden City precincts is marginal, the development of the Turner precinct also pre-dates the formal adoption of reduced block sizes in Canberra, and there is no clear link to this policy.

To the extent that evidence of the austerity arising from WWII is important, this is well represented by the Tocomwal Housing Precinct and the Beaufort Steel House in the Wakefield Gardens precinct.

Criterion (h) *it has strong or special associations with a person, group, event, development or cultural phase in local or national history*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Associations have been identified with Trevor Gibson, Head of Town Planning, Department of Works and Housing (1949-1958), Lindsay Pryor, Director of Parks and Gardens (1944-58), Percy Sheaffe, Commonwealth Surveyor (1910-1948) and John Sulman, Town Planner.

Gibson lived at 18 Greenway Street from mid 1949 until 1980 however planning of the Precinct predates his involvement and this association is neither strong nor special.

Planting of the Precinct occurred during Pryor's tenure and demonstrates some of the attributes of his work such as experimentation with Eucalyptus species, however this is typical of many inner Canberra suburbs at the time and this association is neither strong nor special.

Sheaffe was involved in the planning and layout of the larger Turner suburban area in the late 1930s, under the NCPDC, however there is no evidence at this time to suggest that Sheaffe's work as a Development Surveyor is particularly associated with this Precinct.

The Precinct has an association with John Sulman as a modified expression of a Garden City precinct, and it is associated with an important phase in Canberra's development. The Council assessed the Precinct in the context of the development phase which relied upon Garden City planning principles in Canberra. Examples of Garden City planning exist in the heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 4 and 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens. While the Precinct shows some evidence of this development phase it is a weaker example in comparison to the other Garden City precincts. In this context, the Turner precinct does not have a strong or special association with either Sulman or this phase of Canberra's development.

Furthermore, places may fit into a context of evolving design or technical development that is represented by many other examples (as in the case of different suburbs reflecting evolving planning concepts). In applying the criteria the Council has to determine which, if any, of the places in that evolving context merit registration. Nearly every building in the ACT could be said to fit into a story of a particular design or planning context, or historical trend, but this does not mean that every place meets the threshold imposed by the criteria. An entry on the Heritage Register is valid to the extent that it establishes a level of significance that is strong and special that is therefore above the ordinary.

Criterion (i) *it is significant for understanding the evolution of natural landscapes, including significant geological features, landforms, biota or natural processes*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (j) *it has provided, or is likely to provide, information that will contribute significantly to a wider understanding of the natural or cultural history of the ACT because of its use or potential use as a research site or object, teaching site or object, type locality or benchmark site*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (k) *for a place—it exhibits unusual richness, diversity or significant transitions of flora, fauna or natural landscapes and their elements*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

Criterion (l) *for a place—it is a significant ecological community, habitat or locality for any of the following:*

- (i) the life cycle of native species;*
- (ii) rare, threatened or uncommon species;*
- (iii) species at the limits of their natural range;*
- (iv) distinct occurrences of species*

Turner Housing Precinct does not meet this criterion.

CONCLUSION

The Council acknowledges that the Precinct is an example of a modified expression of a Garden City precinct, as espoused by John Sulman, and as implemented under constrained circumstances arising from WWII.

The planning of the Precinct does display a number of Garden City qualities but it is a late and undistinguished example, diminished by the absence or degradation of qualities. Better and earlier examples of Garden City planning can be found in the Garden City heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 4 and 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens.

To the extent that evidence of the austerity arising from WWII is important, this is well represented by the Tocumwal Housing Precinct and the Beaufort Steel House in the Wakefield Gardens precinct.

This Statement of Reasons provides an assessment of the Turner Housing Precinct and finds that the place does not meet any of the criteria specified in section 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.