

*Report by Roger Brook, Strategic Planning Co-ordinator*

## **RECOMMENDATION**

- 1. That Council note the findings of the Heritage Review of the Strathfield Synagogue at 19 Florence Street Strathfield.**
- 2. That Council prepare a Planning Proposal to commence the process to potentially amend Schedule 5 Environmental Heritage and Heritage Map of Strathfield Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 to list Strathfield Synagogue as a local heritage item.**

## PURPOSE OF REPORT

Council, at its Ordinary meeting on 9 April 2013, resolved (Minute No. 65/13):

*“That Strathfield Council conduct a heritage review of Strathfield Synagogue at 19 Florence Street, Strathfield to determine if this structure is of local heritage significance.”*

This report has been prepared in response to the resolution and to update Council on the findings of the heritage review.

## REPORT

### Selection of Preferred Consultant

Council contacted and invited three different consultants to prepare and submit fee proposals to undertake a heritage assessment review including a recommendation as to whether or not the Strathfield Synagogue at 19 Florence Street Strathfield is of local heritage significance and is worthy of being proposed as a local heritage item.

The design practice Architectural Projects were selected as the preferred consultant to undertake the review. This was based on their general experience, previous studies undertaken in Strathfield, qualifications and competitive price.

### Site Location

The Heritage Review relates to the Strathfield Synagogue at 19 Florence Street Strathfield which is located on the corner of Florence Street and Albyn Road (refer Attachment 2).

### Report Overview

The Heritage Assessment Report prepared by Architectural Projects includes an introduction, historical documentary analysis, physical analysis, assessment of cultural significance, summary and recommendations.

The key findings outlined in the report are detailed as follows:

### Historical Documentary Analysis

This section provides a timeline including details of the original land ownership, subdivision, development patterns, historical context of the area, history of the site and building, background to the Jewish community in Sydney, history of the architect and relevant historical themes up to the present.

### Physical Analysis

This section provides a physical description of the site and building including the Synagogue, kindergarten and ministers residence, the different phases of development, a comparative analysis of the post war synagogue, a history of general characteristics and comparative analysis of the post war international style.

### Assessment of Cultural Significance

The review indicates that the NSW Heritage Assessment Criteria used to assess the significance of the study area includes historical evolution, historical associations, aesthetic values, social value, technical research value, rarity, representativeness, intactness and levels of significance.

Key findings from this section of the Heritage Assessment Report include:

#### Historical Significance

- *The 1959 building and site provide evidence of expansion of Jewish population into the Sydney suburbs in post war period and contraction of Jewish population in Sydney to the east and north from the 1970s.*
- *The 1959 building provides evidence of the dramatic increase in Jewish population in the post war period as a result of migration.*
- *The 1959 building has an association with the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.*
- *The 1959 building has continuity of use by Strathfield and District Hebrew Congregation for over 60 years and illustrates the development of Strathfield as a centre for the Jewish community in Western Sydney.*
- *The site provides evidence of the importance of education in the developing Jewish Community in Western Sydney.*
- *The War Memorial Synagogue represents to the Strathfield Congregation the embodiment of collective grief felt by the people of the Jewish community at the loss of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust.*

#### Historical Associations

- *The 1959 building and memorial has historical associative significance because of its association with the Congregation including Holocaust survivors who came to live in the Strathfield District in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century.*
- *The 1959 building and site has historical associative significance because of its ability to evidence the development of the Strathfield and District Hebrew Community since the 1950s.*
- *The site has some significance for its association with the NSW Board of Jewish Education who funded the purchase of the land and construction of the Synagogue and educational facilities.*

#### Aesthetic Values

- *The 1959 building has aesthetic significance as a good example of the work of prominent émigré architect HP Oser.*
- *It also exemplifies the post war international style despite alteration.*

#### Social Value

- *The Synagogue has been the focus of Jewish communal worship and culture in Western Sydney since its construction in 1959 and has social significance for its ongoing associations with the Strathfield and District Hebrew community.*
- *The 1959 building has social significance because of its importance to the local holocaust survivors and their families at the time of construction.*
- *The petition (entitled "Save the Holocaust & War Memorial Synagogue organised by the Rabbi Dr Samuel Tov Lev and church congregation with over 12,000 signatures) and legal battle over the use of the building provides evidence of ongoing community esteem for the building within the broader Jewish community.*
- *The memorial wall provides a local focus for the commemoration of Jews who perished in the Holocaust.*

#### Rarity

- *The 1959 building provides evidence of the Jewish community in Strathfield in the post war period.*
- *The building is the only surviving purpose built synagogue from the post war period in the western suburbs of Sydney.*
- *The 1959 building is a rare surviving example of Post war international style in Strathfield.*

#### Representativeness

- *The 1959 building is part of a small group of fine International Style Synagogues designed by emigrant architects in the post war period (1958-63) that collectively illustrates a type.*

#### Intactness

- *The main form of the building and the Synagogue hall interior is substantially intact. Additions to the entry and west of the Synagogue, impact on its integrity.*
- *The 1959 building has been extended in a number of significant phases but retains its original character.*

#### Levels of Significance

- *The review indicates that due to historic, aesthetic and social significance the building reaches the threshold for local significance.*
- *The review indicates due to the level of significance within the Sydney area and the extent of alteration, the building does not reach the threshold for state significance.*

### Opportunities

- *The 1959 Oser building including memorials, has the potential to interpret the historic significance of the site, the boom of migration of Jews to Sydney after WWII, and broader patterns of settlement of Jewish communities in the post war period.*
- *The 1959 Oser building as a purpose built Synagogue for the Jewish community by a prominent architect and of quality design and with associated memorials has greater potential than any other building on the site.*
- *It has the potential to retain its social values to the Jewish Community and to recover its aesthetic significance by the reinterpretation of the original entry.*
- *It is the most appropriate building to retain on the site, even if this involves adaptive reuse.*
- *The research has not indicated that the kindergarten, ministers residence, Sunday school and additions reach a threshold for significance and there are no restrictions to their demolition or modification.*

### Recommendation From Heritage Assessment Report

- *It is recommended that the site comprising the Strathfield Synagogue and associated buildings be included in the LEP as a heritage item.*

### Next Steps

Subject to Council resolution, for Council to attempt to amend Schedule 5 Environmental heritage of Strathfield LEP 2012 to list Strathfield Synagogue as a local heritage item, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's LEP plan making process will need to be followed (refer Attachment 3).

The first step of creating a LEP amendment is the preparation of a Planning Proposal which is a document that explains the intended effect of the proposed LEP and justification for making the LEP. This process needs to be undertaken in accordance with the Department of Planning and Infrastructures "A Guide to Preparing Planning Proposals" and "A Guide to Preparing Local Environmental Plans" and involves considerable time and resources on Council's behalf.

Therefore should it be decided by Council to proceed with preparing a Planning Proposal to potentially list Strathfield Synagogue as a local heritage item in Schedule 5 of Strathfield LEP the process would involve the following major steps:

- 1) Council considers whether to initially support the proposed amendment to commence the process.
- 2) A Planning Proposal is prepared by Council or the applicant to detail and justify the proposed change and is submitted to the Department.
- 3) The Department undertakes an initial assessment and issues a gateway determination on whether or not to give Council the authority to continue the process and whether any additional studies are required.
- 4) Council publicly exhibits the Planning Proposal.
- 5) Council considers the submissions received and whether to submit the Planning Proposal to the Department to undertake its final assessment.
- 6) The Department undertakes its final assessment and forwards the LEP to the Minister who will either make or not make the LEP amendment.

Conclusion

The Heritage Review findings support the potential listing of the Strathfield Synagogue as a local heritage item. Based on the review findings and subject to Council priorities, it is recommended that Council commence the process of preparing a Planning Proposal to attempt to amend the Strathfield LEP 2012 to list Strathfield Synagogue as a local heritage item.

It should be noted that preparing the Planning Proposal and the other stages of this process such as liaison with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, organising the community consultation, assessing the submissions and reporting to Council requires a significant allocation of Council staff time and resources.

If there are any subsequent impacts on Council's operational plan targets this will be reported in Council's 6 monthly reporting.

REFERRAL FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT

No referral was required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Strathfield Synagogue Heritage Assessment by Architectural Projects.
2. Site Location Plan.
3. LEP Plan Making Process Diagram.

Note: Attachment 1 will be tabled at the Council Meeting and is available for viewing by contacting Council.

**Report approved by:**

Ash Chand	David Hazeldine
<b>A/Manager Strategic Planning</b>	<b>Director Technical Services</b>