

Explanatory Report

145 Studley Road, Heidelberg – Austin Hospital



1. Introduction

This report relates to the proposed changes to planning scheme provisions that apply to the Austin Hospital at 145 Studley Road, Heidelberg. The Austin Hospital, together with the Department of Health and Human Services has requested that the Minister for Planning consider reducing the extent of the existing Heritage Overlays 62 and 63 which currently cover the entire hospital site. Heritage assessments and feasibility studies of particular buildings within the hospital precinct have recommended that heritage protection not need to apply across all buildings and is compromising the ability of the hospital to adapt and meet changing service delivery needs.

2. Background

In March 2015 Lovell Chen conducted a heritage assessment review of the Austin Hospital. This was based on two previous heritage assessments from 1997 and 2008 which were subsequently reviewed in 2009.

The Davies Block Feasibility Study (July 2016) reported on the opportunities and challenges presented by re-use of the Davies Building which was identified by the heritage assessment as being individually significant, but may require demolition to achieve future development on the site in the long term¹.

¹ For more information see the complete Davies Block Feasibility Study, Austin Hospital Heidelberg, DesignInc July 2016, in the Fast Track Government Land Service information pack for 145 Studley Road Heidelberg.

3. The Proposal

Austin Hospital, together with the Department of Health and Human Services has requested that the Minister for Planning reduce the extent of the existing Heritage Overlays 62 and 63. Currently the overlays apply broadly across the entire hospital site. The effect of the Heritage Overlay is that works that would not normally require a planning permit within the Public Use Zone – Schedule 3 (Health and Community), such as removal or construction of a building, alterations of a building or carrying out of works, including construction of a fence, disabled access or external painting, all require a permit.

The intent of the Heritage Overlay 62 is to protect the former Marian Drummond Nurses Home, and for the Heritage Overlay 63 to protect the former Gate Lodge. However, as the overlays have been applied so broadly they also impose restrictions on new buildings such as the Olivia Newton John Cancer and Wellness Centre, and other buildings and grounds without heritage value.

It is proposed to reduce the extent of Heritage Overlay 62 to cover the Marian Drummond Building, the Edward Wilson Building, and the English Oak tree landscape. Heritage Overlay 63 would be reduced to cover Zeltner Hall, the former Gate Lodge and a limited curtilage. The Davies Block has not been included in the revised Heritage Overlay 63 as there are many limitations and challenges in retaining the existing building fabric while enabling it to be readapted to meet the service delivery needs of the hospital.

The heritage assessment by Lovell Chen recommended including the Davies Block within the Heritage Overlay 63 due to its local significance but noted the hospital master plan proposed demolition of the building, and until such time as the demolition is required the building should be kept in a secure and weatherproof state.

The subsequent Davies Block Feasibility Study found that the financial investment required to restore and adapt the building for reuse would be substantial given the current poor condition, and would also compromise the functional space and service needs outcomes. This significant outlay of funds simply to restore the building to current standards would detract from the hospital's capacity to undertake more strategic works in line with the master plan. It is noted that the works to secure the building have been undertaken and given the intention for demolition in the future, it is not suitable for a heritage overlay to apply to this building.

The underlying Public Use Zone 3 (Health and Community) will not be affected.

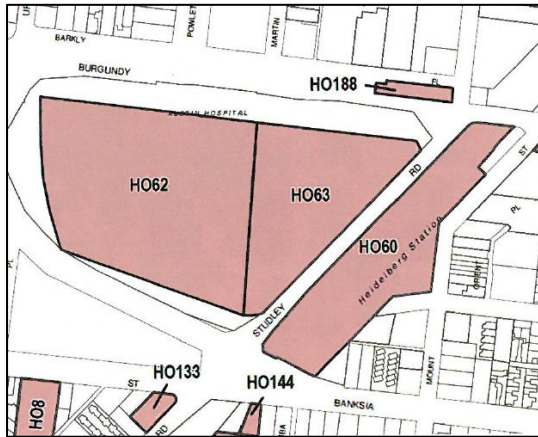


Figure 1 Current Heritage Overlays

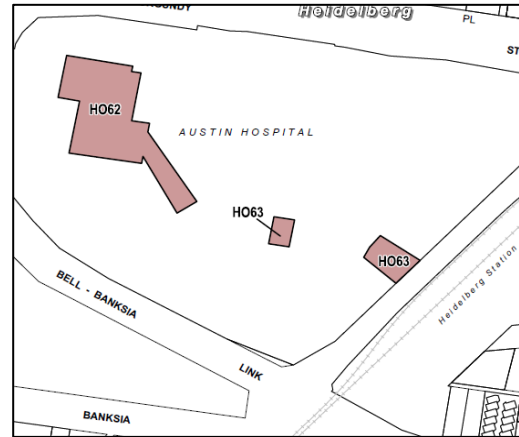


Figure 2 Proposed Heritage Overlays

4. Why is this proposal required?

Many of the buildings and associated landscaping and grounds within the Austin Hospital are modern, or have little to no heritage value. Planning for the future needs of the hospital includes considering opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing buildings, as well as replacement or addition of new buildings to meet the demands associated with growing and modernising health care provision.

The current blanket coverage of the Heritage Overlay across the site compromises the ability of the hospital to be flexible and responsive, as well as creating an additional burden on any works undertaken at the site, through the requirements for planning permits that would otherwise not be required in the underlying Public Use Zone.

5. Conclusion

The reduced extent of the heritage overlays will more accurately reflect the heritage significance of the hospital buildings and enable the hospital to adapt and strategically plan for the future, while protecting those buildings and associated landscape elements which are significant for their architectural or historical attributes and their role in the early life of the hospital.