

Camden Residents' Action Group

Incorporated

Camden – Still a Country Town

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4 April 2024

Dear Charmaine,

RE: Signage and Wayfinding Project Camden Town Centre

Thank you for contacting our group for input on the above project. We are very interested in promoting the historic and rural attractions of the old town so that everyone can understand and appreciate its unique heritage and character. On Thursday last week before Easter, members were alerted to the Your Voice survey and also asked for their responses to the project for this submission.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We feel this project is very important for a number of reasons including:

- the town's heritage listing in Camden Local Environmental Plan (LEP),
- acknowledgement by NSW Heritage of its high cultural significance and support for its state listing by our local MP and the Minister for Heritage and Environment,
- its large number of both local and state heritage listed properties,
- statements in the Camden Local Strategic Planning Statement including that Camden continue to capitalise in tourism on its heritage and rural values, that a key component of the overarching District Plan is *recognising the importance of heritage for an area's identity* and that *Camden Town Centre was established as part of the agricultural expansion of the early settlement of Sydney, being one of Sydney's oldest towns. The local community holds the Camden Town Centre in high regard for its attractive streets, beautiful heritage buildings, and rural village*

feel... Camden Town Centre with its unique heritage and cultural facilities provides a key opportunity for further enhancement to celebrate Camden's unique and culturally rich local history.

We therefore see the signage and wayfinding project for the town centre to be a foundational opportunity for enhancement of its unique aesthetics and history and to tell its story for residents and visitors.

Responses demonstrated an understanding that the original essence of the 1840 Macarthur town is comprised of both country town urban and intergrading river and rural areas with the following elements relevant to materials and colours for appropriate signage:

Urban: exotic trees, wood, sandstone and sandstock brick;

River and rural: native trees, weathered wooden fencing, pastureland and open spaces adjacent to the Nepean River, including within the town farm.

Our conclusions about signage and wayfinding, which are covered and explained with examples in more detail below under headings for street, building and heritage trails signage, are summarised as:

- Street signage in metal and traditional colours (deep Brunswick green and cream or lime white suggested);
- Traditional metal plaques with raised relief on significant built heritage;
- Creative re-use of original sandstone kerbstones or other original hand-cut sandstone removed during town centre works, to mark significant areas;
- Wayfinding information signage of similar design to that used in heritage listed mining town of Broken Hill but using traditional colours suitable for agricultural mid-Victorian Camden;
- More elaborate iron signage used for more significant places such as cemeteries, Macarthur Park etc;
- Wooden wayfinding signposts for river and rural spaces interfacing with the urban area;
- Traditional metal footpath plaques where they would help in wayfinding in the more urban area of the town.

We would be more than happy to discuss these and other options on the table with the team.

Feedback on project survey and mood boards

The Project survey provided mood boards of colours capturing particular elements of the town as it exists today and some suggested signs and materials that may suit Camden as well as asking for points of interest to be placed on an interactive map.

It was felt that the whole town is of interest with so many heritage-listed items and connections to its founding Macarthur family and its agricultural history such as the sale yards, milk depot and town farm. Responses included that it was difficult to include so much on the map and also to “like” items and comments already on the map over Easter (as they need to be moderated). It was hoped that the survey could be kept open for another week or so.

It was considered that our written submission could be more flexible in covering the many points and places of interest and in allowing a greater number of options on colour, materials and design to be considered in enhancing the character of Camden as a heritage rural town. The latitude of a written submission would allow us to focus more on what type of signs would be most appropriate for different uses such as street signs, information and wayfinding signage in the more urban town, and also information and wayfinding signage in the more rural town farm, equestrian centre and river paths.

It was also hoped that Camden’s Heritage Advisory Committee and Camden Historical Society will provide similar detailed input into the signage project.

Responses referred to the Camden Council Material and Colour Guide¹ as an authoritative resource and we refer to it hereafter as the Guide. Feedback was that the Macaria photo on the mood board captured the sandstone and sandstock colours. However, its roof colour is faded and the original red colour of its Victorian period would have been deep Indian or Venetian red as shown at colour D on the mood board and in the colour matrix of the Guide (p.34). Red oxide was used prior to 1850 and a similar paint colour of a deep brownish shade of red remained popular through to at least 1910. As the town developed, paint colours and building materials became increasingly available.

As also covered in more detail below, feedback was that colours and materials for signage should reflect the heritage and rural character of the town. It was noted that the Guide provides definitive advice on signage in Argyle Street (p. 37) and John Street (p. 39) and refers to DCP 2.17.4 *Signage on Heritage Items or in Heritage Conservation Areas*, which is also further addressed below.

Traditional materials in Camden were noted as including sandstone, timber, brass, cast iron and later, wrought iron.

Although sign example B was thought to come closest to representing Camden’s character, it was felt that it does not entirely capture and enhance the essence of the old town.

¹ Camden Council 2023 *Camden Material and Colour Guide* <https://www.camden.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/Camden-Council-Material-and-Colour-Guide-2023-17.06.23-Final-Version.PDF>

Street Signage

We suggest a return to traditional colours and lettering design of street signage. Prior to the current blue and white street signage of the town (blue is not a colour in use prior to Federation), the colour scheme used was cream and deep Brunswick green which like cream and deep Indian red is a very traditional colour combination (as per matrix and cover of the Guide) which accentuates the town's heritage.

Iron is a traditional material that could complement more urban areas of the old town.



Building Signage

Objectives of Camden DCP 2.17.4 *Signage on Heritage Items or in Heritage Conservation Areas*² are well-designed signage that complements and enhances the visual quality and character of heritage items and heritage conservation areas and references traditional advertising methods such as painted signage, lettering style, location and style and spot lit illumination.

DCP 2.17.4 reiterates the objectives with controls on private building signage including that

- *The design of new signs should be in harmony with the character of the heritage item and heritage conservation area.*
- *The design should incorporate traditional materials, colours, fonts and size, with a high standard of materials, construction and graphics.*
- *Materials for new signage should be sympathetic to the character of the heritage item and heritage conservation area, and preferably be of a painted surface finish.*

The National Trust³ position paper on signage is consistent with these DCPs. Although it is also mainly aimed at commercial advertisements, its principles about impacts on landscapes, urban character and historic streetscapes apply to all signage on buildings, places and landscapes of heritage significance.

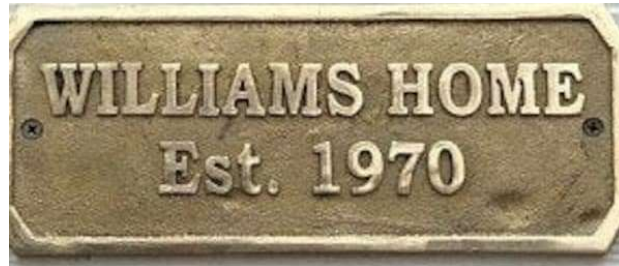
As well as the need for signs to be clear and easy to read, the National Trust's position embraces the usual design principle that such signage should be of a scale, style and design which does not negatively impact on heritage values. It will also provide advice on signage on buildings and landscapes of heritage significance, and this may be a source of further input.

We therefore believe that public identifying signage on buildings should follow the design principles set out in Camden DCP and the Guide, but not compete with permitted commercial signage.

Our preferred option is metal plaques attached to the building. We understand that the existing engraved bicentennial brass plaques on heritage items are showing signs of age. Perhaps these engraved plaques describing the buildings could be replaced with metal relief plaques of more robust quality.

² Camden Council 2019 *Camden Development Control Plan* <https://dcp.camden.nsw.gov.au/general-land-use-controls/signage/signage-on-heritage-items-or-in-heritage-conservation-areas/#:~:text=The%20design%20should%20incorporate%20traditional,of%20a%20painted%20surface%20finish.>

³ National Trust 29 October 2014 *Position Paper: Signage* <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Signage-1.pdf>



Similarly, a possibility also would be plaques explaining additional historic places (for example the site of the Camden Show which has been held since 1886⁴). Such plaques contribute to wayfinding in heritage trails (such as the existing Camden Heritage Walking Tour⁵).

Additional historic places and listed properties in Camden as per Camden LEP Schedule 5 (see appendix) could be considered for plaques. Some historic places may need more information than others and additional signage could be included in wayfinding as covered below under Heritage Trails.

⁴ The Camden Show Still a Country Show *History* <https://www.camdenshow.com/2015-04-23-09-21-17/history>

⁵ Camden Council 2023 *Camden Heritage Walking Tour* <https://www.camden.nsw.gov.au/assets/Uploads/Camden-Heritage-Walking-Tour-2023.pdf>

Heritage Trails

Wayfinding signage is important not only for direction but also in attracting visitors, educating and providing information and enhancing the overall experience of the place. NSW Heritage⁶ has published Guidelines for Heritage Trails, which it describes as established routes linking significant items of an area's heritage which are often promoted in tourist material (such as Camden Heritage Walking Tour) and are often supplemented with building plaques and information as covered above or other wayfinding signage to provide additional information such as along the Camden's bike path at Kings Bush.



The cultural contributions of such trails are seen as substantial and are noted in the NSW Guidelines as increasing awareness of the local heritage and stimulating an interest in conservation, promoting the area's history to visitors, publicly acknowledging significant conservation activity and providing ready-made recreational and educational excursions. The map markers placed by project respondents will help but it is unlikely that all contributors would be familiar with the deeper historic significance of many places in 1840 Camden township. As one member responded on the call for input:

My first reactions on looking at the survey were, What value is a survey of folk who don't know the history? and, How will ages affect the weighting given the response? The essence of it all is, education is key, and so many newcomers are very interested BUT they don't have much idea at all, and signs of the town's heritage have been disappearing...First noted, with distress, when the so-called 'upgrade' of John Street saw the removal of much-loved street furniture and the community donated information signs on the bank corner. These signs gave a 'story', an overview of Camden's foundation (back to non-access across the river to protect the cattle

⁶ NSW Heritage 1995 *Guidelines for Heritage Trails*
<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/heritageoffice/HeritageTrails.pdf>

that had bred from the First Fleet escapees) ...through the Macarthur grant and ultimate role in the establishment of Camden and their donations etc. One of the signs had been donated by Apex. I'm not sure about the other. I wonder if some more 'then and now' photos could be dotted about...Many folk have missed the large photos that used to be a feature of the Camden Arcade.

The NSW Guidelines set out steps for establishing trails which include deciding what is special or unique about the area's heritage and compiling a list of possible items for inclusion in them.

Camden, holding a seminal place in NSW and Australian European history provides a unique window into our colonial past and offers a great deal that is special and unique. As well as its long story and built heritage as defined in the town's heritage listing and LEP (schedule 5), special features include its English village design by the Macarthur brothers and Sir Thomas Mitchell with St John's Anglican Church Precinct as its aesthetic and cultural focus, its setting within the verdant floodplain of the Nepean river, the Cowpasture Bridge, Kings Bush, Little Sandy Bridge, the artifacts and displays within the Camden Museum, railway sidings and tracks, Chinese gardens, its open spaces such as Macarthur Park, the Town Farm, Bicentennial Equestrian Centre and its walking and bike paths particularly through the heritage listed town farm and along the Nepean River.

The next step suggested in the NSW Guidelines is to compile a list of possible items for inclusion in heritage trails. Camden's history is unique in Australia and a valuable and interesting source of information for heritage trails. Please see our Heritage Study⁷ which is based on fully referenced sources of decades of original research about Camden, including Camden History Notes which are continually added to and easily accessible online⁸.

There are 27 items in the Camden Heritage Walking Tour but there are at least 75 listed heritage items within its few streets and small heritage conservation area as covered in the appendix. This list highlights that concentrations of heritage items are within the original street grid surveyed in 1836 for the village of Camden which was named after Colonial Secretary Lord Camden, Macarthur's early patron.

The town's street and park names continue to reflect the its early foundation with John, Elizabeth and Edward (Macarthur) streets, Oxley street (named after John Oxley, early explorer, Camden land grantee and NSW Surveyor General), Mitchell street (named after Surveyor General of Camden, Sir Thomas Mitchell), Murray street (named after Macarthur's surveyor), Exeter street (named after John Macarthur's home town in Devonshire, Broughton street (named after the Bishop who laid the foundation stone of St John's Church), and parks named Macarthur Park and (Macarthur) Onslow Park. The Nepean River is named after Lord Evan Nepean, British Undersecretary for the Home Department who was involved in the despatch of the first fleet and administration of the NSW penal colony. Oxley Cottage at Elderslie, a typical workers cottage, thought to have been built as part of a row of similar

⁷ Camden Residents' Action Group Inc November 2023 *Camden Heritage Study* <https://www.crag.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Camden-Township-Heritage-Study-November-2023-ed.pdf>

⁸ Dr Ian Willis *Camden History Notes* <https://camdenhistorynotes.com/>

Hand cut sandstone was a common material used in Camden’s kerbstones, flagging, fountains, building foundations and cornerstones etc. It is understood that original sandstone kerbstones were pulled up and stored by Camden Council during the works it undertook in the old town at the time of moving to Oran Park. Perhaps these could be repurposed for inclusion in wayfinding signage. Machine sawn sandstone, whilst a beautiful material, is not traditional and does not complement the original sandstone of the town or enhance its historic character.



The examples below are too rustic but a creative use of the hand-cut sandstone slabs, including perhaps a plaque, would be appropriate and enhance the town. These could be placed at strategic places of most significance such as the entrance to the town farm, bike track and Milk Depot or perhaps the View Street Cottages conservation area.



We suggest that this type of sign used in Broken Hill, now a heritage listed city, is an excellent wayfinding prototype. It is angled and positioned so that it is easy to read when walking, there are no sharp edges for children to hurt themselves on and it provides historic information. The edging colour is appropriate for the mining town of Broken Hill but we think a heritage colour such as deep Brunswick green would be appropriate for both Camden town wayfinding and also river and farm walks. Its design would allow a seamless transition in the connection between the town and more rural settings such as the equestrian park and town farm and bike track.



A similar concept was used at Camden wetlands (bike track).



Iron would be suitable for more elaborate signage for cemeteries and heritage spaces such as Macarthur Park and Onslow Oval that were donated by the Macarthur family.

Camden's rural history and current character makes wood an appropriate choice for wayfinding in more rural spaces.



Wayfinding could also include plaques in urban walks.



There are many opportunities in Camden to establish shorter and longer heritage trails, some taking in only built heritage or rural heritage and others taking in some combination of them. The existing Camden Heritage Walking Tour is a start, with much more potential for recreational and educational trails. For instance, a member provided this input:

There is a lovely walk from Argyle Street to the bike track, along past the wetlands and Kings Bush, over Little Sandy Bridge (when it is repaired), across the floodplain with its dog park, up to River Road, left into and along Purcell Street and left into Macarthur Road and back to Argyle Street. As well as the wetlands, Kings Bush and the Nepean River itself, views include open green farmland, lines of poplar trees and vistas across the river to St John's Church and the village profile of Camden.

Suggestions of various and possible heritage trails is beyond the scope of this submission, but we would be happy to provide input into them including the four-kilometre extension to the walking trail though Camden Town Farm and Fergusons Land Cricket Facility.

Marking the town's historic and special places helps us more easily identify with and value its uniqueness so that it is more likely to be properly conserved for future generations to learn from and enjoy. We trust this submission has shared how we believe signage and wayfinding can pay respect to our history, as well as inform and educate residents and visitors of the town's acknowledged high cultural significance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Glenda Davis".

Glenda Davis

President

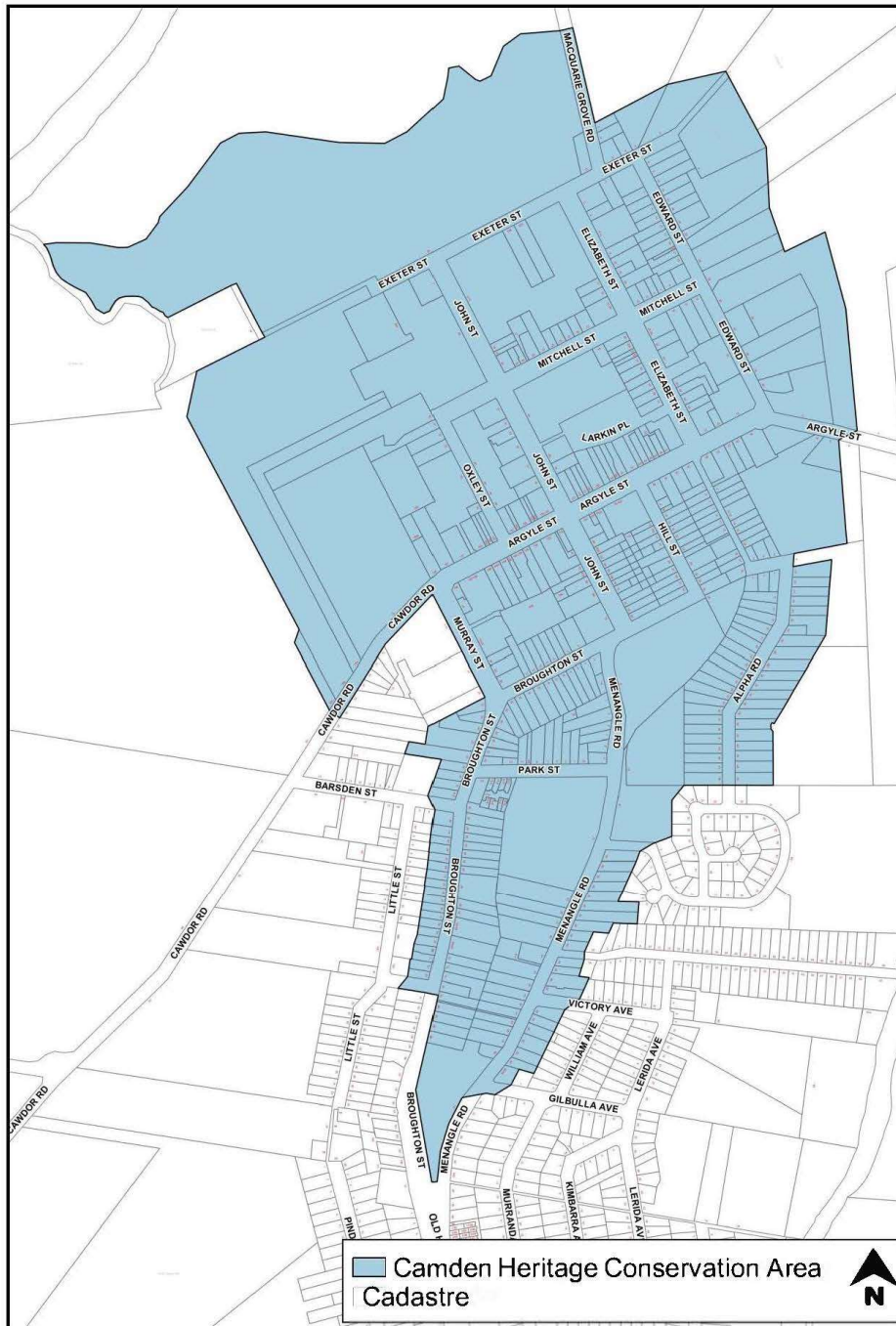
Appendix: Camden LEP Extract Schedule 5⁹

Old Dairy Farmers Co-op Depot	11 Argyle Street
Former Clinton's Motor Garage	16 Argyle Street
Former First Camden Bank	23 Argyle Street
House	44 Argyle Street
Corner commercial building	64 Argyle Street
Former Plough & Harrow Inn	75–79 Argyle Street
Commercial building "Whiteman's"	76–100 Argyle Street
Corner shop	110 Argyle Street
Bank	121 Argyle Street
Bank	125 Argyle Street
Post Office	135 Argyle Street
Former Foresters' Hall	147 Argyle Street
Corner Shop	151 Argyle Street
Agricultural Hall	195 Argyle Street
Bungalow	10 Barsden Street
	Corner Broughton Street and Menangle Road, Camden
Mural and Wishing Well	
Camden Showground (including grounds, obelisk, pavilion, fencing, tiered seating and memorial gates) and Onslow Park	10A Cawdor Road
	30, 32 and 34 Edward Street
Stockyard (including auction ring, buildings and cattle chutes)	
Cottage	17 Elizabeth Street
"Chesham's Cottage"	19 Elizabeth Street
Inter-war flat building	33 Elizabeth Street
House weatherboard	34 Elizabeth Street
	33A and 33B Exeter Street
"Nant Gwylan" (including house and garden)	
Camden Town Farm (including cottage, dairy, milking parlor, barn, rustic storage sheds and out buildings, fences and views to Nepean River and hinterland)	40 Exeter Street and 75 and 75A Macquarie Grove Road
House	12 Hill Street
House	14 Hill Street
House	18 Hill Street
House	20 Hill Street
House	21 Hill Street
House	22 Hill Street
House	24 Hill Street
House	25 Hill Street
House	27 Hill Street
House (former presbytery)	28 Hill Street
House	29 Hill Street

⁹ Camden Council *Camden LEP Schedule 5* <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/epi-2010-0514#sch.5-pt.1>

House	30 Hill Street
House	32 Hill Street
House	33 Hill Street
Masonic Lodge	36 Hill Street
Camden Public School (including early 20th century brick garage and store, archaeological potential of the acquired allotments, and early road reserves/alignment, but excluding all other buildings and grounds)	John Street
St Paul's Church	26–36 John Street
Court House	33 John Street
Police Station and Residence	35 John Street
"Macaria"	37 John Street
Cottage	39 John Street
Camden Library and Former Fire Station	40–42 John Street
St Andrews Church	44 John Street
Cottage	62 John Street
Cottage	64 John Street
Archaeological Site	66 John Street
Archaeological Site	68 John Street
House	70 John Street
House	72 John Street
Cottage	74 John Street
House	75 John Street
Cottage	76 John Street
Cottage	78 John Street
Cottage	80 John Street
Bungalow	1 Menangle Road
Cottage	3 Menangle Road
Cottage	5 Menangle Road
St John's Church (including church and grounds, rectory, stables, lych gates, grassed slopes and cemetery)	6–22 Menangle Road
Cottage	7 Menangle Road
House	9 Menangle Road
Macarthur Park	13–13A Menangle Road
Camden District Hospital (part of hospital site)	61 Menangle Road
"Nepean House"	1–3 Mitchell Street
Cottage	7 Mitchell Street
Cottage	9 Mitchell Street
"Taplin"	17 Mitchell Street
"Edithville"	18 Mitchell Street
"Mitchell House"	29–31 Mitchell Street
Cottage	9 Park Street
View Street Worker's Cottages	5–13 View Street
View Street Worker's cottages	6–20 View Street

Appendix: DCP map of Camden Town Centre Conservation Area ¹⁰



¹⁰ Camden Council 2019 DCP 2.16.4 *Camden Heritage Conservation Area*
<https://dcp.camden.nsw.gov.au/general-land-use-controls/environmental-heritage/camden-heritage-conservation-area/>