



Ku-ring-gai Heritage Strategy

March 2021



Bringing the past forward, to create an understanding of the past for the future generations

Thomas Sebasio, Elder, Erub Island

Heritage places can tell stories that are relevant and meaningful to diverse groups. They help retain memory, while also creating new stories and identities as communities change

[Better Placed: Design guide for heritage \(OEH, 2018\)](#)

Acknowledgements

Ku-ring-gai Historical Society

Ku-ring-gai Heritage Reference Committee

Ku-ring-gai Council acknowledges the Traditional Owners of this country, pays tribute to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Ku-ring-gai and gives respect to Elders past and present.

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1. Introduction

The Ku-ring-gai local government area is rich in environmental heritage. This includes; Aboriginal cultural heritage with evidence of the long history of the Aboriginal people who have been in this area for thousands of years, the vast urban forest canopy, much of it being regrowth of the once great forests of this area, and the plethora of architecturally designed homes in established garden settings. Important key influencers of NSW and Australian architecture designed many of these homes.

Purpose

The purpose of this Heritage Strategy is for Council to measure, plan and report on heritage management in Ku-ring-gai. It is an important role of local government to identify, manage and protect heritage places as required by legislation, and district and local strategic plans.

Heritage defined

Heritage places managed by Ku-ring-gai Council and identified on our heritage list include heritage items and heritage conservation areas. These are remnants from the past that have been assessed and are considered worthy of keeping to share with future generations-

A local heritage item is a place, building, work, relic, moveable object or precinct assessed as having special values based upon historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic significance. Heritage items, which are deemed to have heritage significance, are listed in Schedule 5 of the Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan, which is prepared and managed by Council. Heritage studies may result in Schedule 5 of the Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan being updated.

A heritage item is assessed as having special values based upon historical, scientific, cultural, social, archaeological, architectural, natural or aesthetic significance.

A heritage conservation area (HCA) is an area recognised and valued for its special historical and aesthetic character. Important elements that contribute to the heritage significance of a HCA include the history of development, architectural style of buildings, fences, trees and gardens.

2. History of Ku-ring-gai

The area north of Sydney Harbour was occupied for many thousands of years by Aboriginal People. It was originally thought that a single language group of the 'Guringai' people inhabited the area, but in recent decades this claim has been contested, with more evidence to suggest that the Ku-ring-gai area was inhabited by a complex collection of groups with diverse clan structures and languages (Aboriginal Heritage Office, 2015). The Aboriginal populations of Ku-ring-gai were devastatingly affected by the smallpox epidemic associated with the onset of European settlement in 1788, with surviving groups progressively alienated from their lands. Links to country were not altogether severed by the dislocation of populations, with early settlers relaying the continued journeys of Koori clans throughout the region with resting places at locations like Pymble Hill. The pace of European settlement and development in Ku-ring-gai was slow in the late 18th and early 19th centuries as land was carved into several hundred-acre crown grants. Industry emerged in 19th century in the form of timber-getting, fruit growing and market gardening, which attracted an increasing number of settlers and landowners to the area. The predominately-rural character of Ku-ring-gai began to transform with news of a railway opening between Hornsby to St Leonards in the last decades of the century. This greater connectivity with Sydney prompted speculative subdivision of large landholdings to create generously-sized residential lots. Many of the newly created estates attracted prominent and wealthy businessmen who sought an escape from the pollution of the city with their families, enticed by the opportunity to acquire a large parcel of land to construct their own homes.

Following the opening of the North Shore Railway Line in 1890, the pace of development in Ku-ring-gai accelerated as the suburb began to take on the predominately residential character it possesses today. Development clustered around the sites of the original stations at Roseville, Lindfield, Killara, Gordon, Pymble, Turramurra and Wahroonga, followed by Warrawee in 1900, whilst suburbs like St Ives retained an agricultural and rural outlook. The Shire of Ku-ring-gai came into being in March 1906 in Gordon, with the swearing in of six councillors tasked with the management and planning of the fledgling locality. The opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932 served as a further trigger for the migration of city-based populations to the desirable suburbs of Ku-ring-gai, as it once more increased the connectivity of the region to the heart of the city. An increase continued and was amplified post-WWII with the major boom in population that followed. The population of Ku-ring-gai doubled between 1950 and 1980, growing to roughly 100,000 people, with it a continued increase in development. This growth had a notable impact on the suburb of St Ives and to the more distant and previously less desirable areas on the outskirts of the locality. New insights are constantly emerging about Ku-ring-gai's past and the ways it can be interpreted from the built environment, as are our priorities on what we deem worthy to keep. A commitment to conserving the unique heritage and history of Ku-ring-gai are critical to maintaining the essential character and desirability of the locality.

3. Legislative & strategic framework

PRIORITY: FULFIL OBLIGATIONS TO CONSERVE KU-RING-GAI'S HERITAGE

Ku-ring-gai Council has obligations as required by legislation and planning instruments including NSW State government strategic plans to identify, protect and conserve Ku-ring-gai's cultural heritage.

3.1 NSW Legislation

Legislation	Obligation
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW)	Objects 1.3(f) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage)
Heritage Act 1977	Objects 3. (a) to promote an understanding of the State's heritage (b) to encourage the conservation of the State's heritage
Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan 2015 and Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan (Local Centres) 2012	Aims (a) To guide the future development of land and the management of environmental, social, economic, heritage and cultural resources within Ku-ring-gai (f) To recognise, protect and conserve Ku-ring-gai's indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage

3.2 Strategic framework

Plan	Council's obligations
Regional Strategic Plan Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities (March 2018)	Objective 13 Identify, conserve and enhance environmental heritage by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging with the community early in the planning process to understand heritage values and how they contribute to the significance of the place • Applying adaptive re-use and interpreting heritage to foster distinctive local places • Managing and monitoring the cumulative impact of development on heritage values and character of places
District Strategic Plan North District Plan (March 2018)	Liveability Priority N6 Creating and renewing great places and local centres, and respecting the District's heritage requires relevant planning authorities to identify, conserve and enhance environmental heritage by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a.) Engaging with the community early in the planning process to understand heritage values and how they contribute to the significance of the place b.) Applying adaptive re-use and interpreting of heritage to foster distinctive local places c.) Managing and monitoring the cumulative impact of development on the heritage values and character of places.
Local Strategic Plan Our Ku-ring-gai 2038: Community Strategic Plan	Objectives P1.1 Ku-ring-gai's unique visual character and identity is maintained P2.1 A robust planning framework is in place to deliver quality design outcomes and maintain the identity and character of Ku-ring-gai P5.1 Ku-ring-gai's heritage is protected, promoted and responsibly managed 20 Year Vision: Our diverse indigenous and non-indigenous cultural heritage is conserved and celebrated
Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement	Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Priority K13 Identifying and conserving Ku-ring-gai's environmental heritage

4. Heritage Resources

4.1 Heritage Studies¹

Heritage studies identify and define the places in our community that have heritage significance.

PRIORITY: DEVELOP AND EXPAND ABORIGINAL HERITAGE RESOURCES

Aboriginal heritage study

- Ku-ring-gai Municipality Heritage Study: Aboriginal Sites (1988)

Prepared by Margrit Koettig the 1988 Heritage Study: Aboriginal Sites has three main aims: to identify all known Indigenous sites; to identify areas of archaeological potential; and to accordingly make recommendations on the management and conservation of these sites. It states it is not an exhaustive inventory and that no additional fieldwork was undertaken in an attempt to discover new sites. It is noted that many sites were likely still unidentified and therefore the Study needs to be expanded and updated.

PRIORITY: DEVELOP AND EXPAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Prepared by Margrit Koettig, the 1988 Heritage Study sought to identify sites with archaeological potential however was not exhaustive in this regard. Council recognises the need to build on this study to identify and protect sites with archaeological significance and potential.

PRIORITY: CONTINUE TO USE AND DRAW ON PREVIOUS HERITAGE STUDIES

A number of heritage studies have been commissioned by Ku-ring-gai Council since the 1980s and these have been used as foundational documents dating from . The studies range from covering the entire Local Government Areas to more focused and site specific heritage assessments.

¹ This section summarises only the main heritage studies influencing heritage listings in Ku-ring-gai. A list of other heritage studies can be found in Appendix 1

PRIORITY: REVIEW EXISTING AND IDENTIFY NEW HERITAGE ITEMS AND HCAs

4.2 Listing of heritage items and conservation areas (LEPs)

Listing heritage items and heritage conservation areas is how Council's significant heritage places are protected and managed, and ensures the environmental, social and economic benefits of these valuable assets are realised into the future. Heritage places are listed in Schedule 5 and on the heritage map of the [Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plan 2015](#) and the [Ku-ring Local Environmental Plan \(Local Centres\) 2012](#). HCAs were first introduced by LEP 218 in 2013.

PRIORITY: CONSERVATION OF SIGNIFICANT 20TH CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

4.3 Focus on conserving significant mid-late C 20th development

Modern-era development has received increasing recognition over the last decade and there are a number of 20th Century buildings and sites in the Ku-ring-gai Local Government Area that have been identified as having architectural significance. It is important to continue to recognise significant development relating to all eras including post-war development up to contemporary styles. Where relevant, the Heritage Conservation Area inventory sheets have been updated to reflect this and this revised information has been included on Council's website.

PRIORITY: REVIEW AND REFINE EXISTING DCP 19 CONTROLS WITH DA TEAM

4.4 Heritage policies – DCP

Ku-ring-gai Council's guiding policy documents for managing heritage are the [Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan](#) and the [Ku-ring-gai \(Local Centres\) Development Control Plan](#). The DCPs contain the development controls for the assessment of development applications. Council's staff continue to work collaboratively to refine the controls that relate to heritage to ensure that these continue to reflect the best practice guidelines for managing heritage in NSW. Ongoing feedback is sought from the wider strategic planning team and development assessment staff in this regard.

PRIORITY: FOCUS ON AREAS INTERFACING WITH HERITAGE ITEMS AND HCAS

4.5 Focus on the Interface between development and heritage assets

Ku-ring-gai's protection of heritage assets extends to the protection of their settings, views and the wider precincts surrounding them. There is a need to focus on the areas that interface with heritage items and conservation areas to ensure development within the vicinity is sympathetic and does not compromise the integrity of these important assets. Refining the current development control plan at a strategic level in conjunction with development assessment staff will ensure that the correct balance is achieved between guiding new development and respecting heritage assets.

PRIORITY: ENSURE CONTINUED AND REGULAR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HRC

4.6 Heritage Reference Committee

The Heritage Reference Committee is an advisory committee which provides recommendations to Council on the assessment, conservation and management of heritage places in Ku-ring-gai. The membership includes two Councillors, representatives from the National Trust (1), the Australia Institute of Architects (1), the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society (1), and the Ku-ring-gai community (1). The committee is managed consistent with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1993 and the Local Government (General) Regulation 2005 and with advice from the Office of Local Government that Council can form committees and determine their functions, powers, membership and voting rights. The [Council Advisory Reference Committee Guidelines](#) and the [Committee's agendas and minutes](#) are available on Council's website.

PRIORITY: ENSURE CONTINUED AND REGULAR ENGAGEMENT WITH THE KHS

4.7 Ku-ring-gai Historical Society

The [Ku-ring-gai Historical Society](#) (KHS) was formed in 1963, its members include mainly present and past Ku-ring-gai residents, and includes an active family history group. The KHS is committed to the collection, preservation and dissemination of information relating to the history of Ku-ring-gai. The KHS is a valuable resource to both Council and the community providing information on the history and heritage of Ku-ring-gai. Ku-ring-gai Council supports the work of the KHS through the Ku-ring-gai Community Grants Program.

PRIORITY: PROMOTE AND FACILITATE HERITAGE HOME GRANTS PROGRAM

4.8 Heritage Home Grants

Once every financial year Ku-ring-gai Council invites applications for [Heritage Home Grants](#). Owners of heritage items or contributory buildings in heritage conservation areas are eligible to apply. The grants provide funding for the ongoing conservation of these valuable heritage places. Grants are capped at \$5000 per property and are allocated on a dollar for dollar basis, with Council matching the amount spent by the applicant up to the funding limit. Projects of successful applicants in recent years have included roof and gutter repairs, repointing mortar joints, lead light repairs, and timber window restoration. Through the grants, Council has supported several projects for the conservation of fabric of the state heritage listed house museum Eryldene, managed by the Eryldene Trust,

PRIORITY: MAINTAIN HERITAGE PROFILE IN KU-RING-GAI DESIGN AWARDS

4.9 Architecture, Landscape and Urban Design Awards – Heritage Design

The *Ku-ring-gai Architecture, Landscape and Urban Design Awards* seek to recognise new development that supports and enriches Ku-ring-gai's quality built and landscape character. It provides the mechanism for Council to celebrate excellence in architecture and urban design and promote the professionals responsible for its delivery. Heritage Design is one of five categories recognised by the awards, which includes works to a heritage item or building contributing to a heritage conservation area.

PRIORITY: CONTINUE TO PROMOTE HERITAGE TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY

4.10 Heritage education and promotion

Tulkiyan House Museum

Tulkiyan is a Federation era house listed as an item on the NSW State Heritage Register and owned by Council. It has in the past been used as a house museum with community open days and as an educational resource for local schools.

Heritage Home Grant case studies

Several case studies detailing successful Heritage Home Grants projects can be viewed on the Heritage Home Grants webpage. Each case study describes the conservation works undertaken and illustrates before and after pictures of these works.

Local Studies – Ku-ring-gai Libraries

[Ku-ring-gai's libraries](#) have a wide range of resources for researching family history or the history of the Ku-ring-gai area. In addition, the Local Studies Librarians run workshops such as *Researching the history of your house* and local history exhibitions like the recent Ethel Turner exhibit at Gordon Library.

Council owned and managed heritage assets

Council is not just a regulator of heritage management it is also the owner of numerous heritage places including parks, gardens, community buildings, former schools, former homes and the Council Chambers.

PRIORITY: PARTICIPATE IN THE ANNUAL NATIONAL TRUST FESTIVAL

4.11 National Trust Heritage Festival

The National Trust Australian Heritage Festival is organised every year in April and May. The festival celebrates the diversity of heritage in Australia and many organisations participate in varying ways, such as through awards ceremonies, local walking tours and community events. It would be invaluable for Ku-ring-gai Council to participate in the festival in the future.

5. Heritage challenges and opportunities

Ku-ring-gai has many heritage achievements; however, there are also numerous challenges that need to be addressed. This strategy provides an opportunity to provide direction in managing some of the key heritage challenges and to inform Council's Heritage Strategy Action Plan.

PRIORITY: MAKE INTERIM HERITAGE ORDERS WHERE NECESSARY

5.1 Heritage identification and documentation

Identifying heritage places

Ku-ring-gai has undertaken several heritage reviews but none since the original 1987 study have been comprehensive or based upon the thematic history of Ku-ring-gai. In 2013, Council received delegation from the Minister of Heritage to make Interim Heritage Orders subject to the Heritage Act 1977. Since receiving delegation Council has made nine interim heritage orders, five of which resulted in a permanent heritage listing. In terms of heritage management, Interim Heritage Orders are an undesirable reactive approach to listing, and are considered as an action of last resort and must be used with prudence to identify heritage, not as a means to stop development.

The need to place Interim Heritage Orders is partially due to the absence of a recent comprehensive review, in particular a heritage review that includes architecture from the Post-war period, properties that cannot be viewed from the street such as battleaxe sites, and one that identifies potential heritage places associated with important Ku-ring-gai historical figures, such as artists, musicians, activists, academics and politicians. A community-based thematic heritage study should significantly reduce the need to implement IHOs but realistically will not completely remove the possibility of requiring an IHO in the future. A significant benefit of a community-based study is the level of involvement of the community in identifying places that have heritage value to them.

Updating documentation

The Ku-ring-gai Heritage Study (1987) predated the current NSW Heritage Division publication "Assessing heritage significance, NSW Heritage Manual (updated)" (2015) and its earliest version "Heritage assessment, NSW Heritage Manual" (1996) prepared by the Heritage Office and the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning. Consequently, the 650 heritage items identified and heritage listed have very brief inventory sheets, and require updating with an assessment of heritage significance against the assessment criteria or a Statement of Significance. Council has

been undertaking work in-house and with the assistance of Ku-ring-gai Historical Society to fill these gaps and now some 300 properties have more detailed research, however, this information is yet to be translated into updated inventory sheets. The 650 inventory sheets still require updating and the information added to the NSW Online Heritage Database.

PRIORITY: CONTINUE TO IDENTIFY AND CORRECT HERITAGE ANOMOLIES

5.2 Heritage protection

Local Environmental Plan (LEP)

Mapping inconsistencies in the Local Environmental Plan heritage map and schedule exist as a result of historic or recent subdivision. Known inconsistencies have been revised in the planning proposal for the consolidated Ku-ring-gai LEP. Diligence needs to be applied to any future subdivision or street renumbering to ensure the heritage listing remains on the property that has heritage significance; this extends beyond any lots containing buildings to the relevant setting and curtilage of the heritage place.

Development Control Plan (DCP)

The Development Control Plan is the main policy document for the management of development on or near listed heritage places. The challenge is to have controls that provide adequate protection, and are also concise and comprehensible to planning and building practitioners, and also the wider community. Recent judgments in the Land Environment Court have highlighted the need to review our controls to ensure the long-term protection of our valued heritage places.

There is a conflict between providing new and diverse housing options for the growing population and heritage conservation, particularly in our priority local centres of Lindfield, Gordon and Turramurra. The North District Plan advocates local centre rejuvenation that acknowledges and enhances local heritage values. Future masterplans and development control plans for these centres should acknowledge and accommodate the conservation of these heritage values through good design, appropriate interpretation and sympathetic adaptive re-use.

State Heritage Inventory (SHI)

The NSW Heritage Inventory website is available to the public and in many cases this website provides more detail of Ku-ring-gai's heritage items than Council's own website. However, on occasion there has been inconsistencies between the information available and where this occurs, it needs to be rectified.

5.3 Supporting heritage owners and managers

Heritage advisory service

Council does not provide heritage advice at the pre-application stage. Advice on mitigating heritage impacts can only be sought through the pre-development application pathway which includes various Council experts and a town planner, and covers all areas under consideration for the development application not just heritage conservation. For potential buyers who are trying to understand the significance of a property and future development options a heritage advisory service would offer an opportunity to seek timely advice on heritage matters.

Heritage funding

Several projects described in this strategy meet the objectives for heritage funding from the Heritage Division of the NSW Government. Council in recent years has been unsuccessful, however, having this strategy and being able to demonstrate a commitment to forward heritage planning and action will be viewed favorably. Council should therefore investigate external funding options for heritage projects.

Heritage Training and Case Studies

Heritage training and workshops would assist heritage owners in understanding the obligations of heritage management and also the skills involved in caring for heritage places. The sessions could target various types of conservation works but also how to integrate environmental efficiency and sustainability measures, and providing accessibility. These sessions can be mirrored in case studies available online which explain different conservation projects, how the work is done and the approval requirements.

5.4 Heritage education and promotion

Heritage education is acknowledged as a top priority for Council to assist owners and the wider community in understanding heritage significance and how to manage a heritage place.

Heritage App

The Ku-ring-gai Historical Society offers many opportunities for members of the community to gain a greater understanding of Ku-ring-gai's heritage through walks and talks. Ku-ring-gai Council can build on this experience with a Ku-ring-gai Heritage App to enable self-guided tours of the local area, highlighting points of interest, and thematic tours. The development of an application platform for Ku-ring-gai would not only benefit heritage education but also environmental objectives such as self guided bushwalks.

Tulkiyan House Museum

The museum has been closed since 2017 to allow for conservation works and for a review of the building's compliance. Due to numerous constraints including accessibility, Tulkiyan House Museum in Gordon has been underutilised as a resource for heritage education, particularly with school groups. Council is currently investigating options and partnerships for the future management and operation of Tulkiyan as an important educational resource for our local schools and community. Significant works will need to be undertaken to provide accessibility and a neutral (outside of the house) user space for visitors.

Other tourism

Ku-ring-gai is an area rich in environmental heritage. While there are many visitors, particularly to the National Parks, there are also many opportunities to grow tourism and have positive impact on the local economy, including economic growth and employment. This can be achieved by actively seeking to attract visitors both domestic and international to the area through events and the recognition of places in Ku-ring-gai as popular destinations.

Engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups

Ku-ring-gai is a culturally and linguistically diverse community. Making information on heritage available to various CALD groups will improve heritage conservation outcomes for the area and will also engage the wider community in the public consultation and decision making processes of Council.

Interactive history and heritage website

Ku-ring-gai's tangible heritage places are the physical remnants of Ku-ring-gai's past. Making this history meaningful and relevant to current and future Ku-ring-gai communities can be achieved by telling the stories in new and innovative ways. A more interactive website that links places to people, telling their stories through images, videos and interactive/shared activities will facilitate making connections between past and present.

6. Strategy Action Plan

Derived from the challenges and opportunities the Strategy Action Plan states how Council will deliver its heritage objectives to identify, conserve and manage Ku-ring-gai's heritage and the time frame for delivery being:

Short-term: 1-2 years

Medium-term: 2-5 years

Ongoing: continuous and as needed

The delivery of actions is contingent upon the availability of funds in the Strategy and Environment Department, Urban and Heritage Planning budget for 2019-2022.

6.1 Heritage identification and documentation		
Action 1.1	Update the inventory sheets from the Heritage Study 1987 with more detailed research and significance assessment	Short-term
Action 1.2	Provide input into the local character study being undertaken by the Urban Design Team.	Short-term
Action 1.3	Engage a consultant to prepare an Indigenous Heritage Study for the Ku-ring-gai LGA.	Short-term
Action 1.4	Engage a consultant to prepare an Archaeological study, which focusses on key areas of interest, such as Browns Forest. This may be able to be combined with the Indigenous Heritage Study.	Short-term

6.2 Heritage protection		
Action 2.1	Update the heritage controls of the Development Control Plan to ensure best practice in the heritage assessment of development applications for heritage places in Ku-ring-gai	Short-term
Action 2.2	Advocate for the consistent application of State Government legislation and strategic policies by Local and Regional Planning Panels, and the Land and Environment Court	Ongoing
Action 2.3	Prepare Conservation Management Plans for Council owned or managed heritage assets	Ongoing
Action 2.4	Seek permanent exemption from SEPP Seniors for Heritage Conservation Areas	Short-term
Action 2.5	Explore opportunities for the protection, conservation, restoration and maintenance of Council owned heritage assets.	Ongoing

6.3 Supporting heritage owners and managers		
Action 3.1	Investigate the possibility of providing a heritage advisory service	Short-term
Action 3.2	Upload updated inventory sheets on the NSW Online Heritage Database	Ongoing
Action 3.3	Investigate a local heritage consultant's directory	Short-term
Action 3.4	Seek external funding options for the Heritage Home Fund	Ongoing
Action 3.5	Provide online case studies that explain heritage conservation practice and the approval process	Short-term
Action 3.6	Explore options for engaging CALD groups and providing information on public consultations in common local languages other than English	Short-term

6.4 Heritage education and promotion		
Action 4.1	Upload updated inventory sheets on the NSW Online Heritage Database	Ongoing
Action 4.2	Explore options and partnerships for the redevelopment and reopening of Tulkiyan as house museum	Short-term
Action 4.3	Develop a Ku-ring-gai Heritage App to allow for self guided walks and exploration of Ku-ring-gai	Medium-term
Action 4.3	Work cooperatively with Sydney Living Museums, local heritage stakeholder groups and operators to establish a strategic and coordinated approach to development of year-round heritage and cultural experiences in Ku-ring-gai	Short-term
Action 4.5	Create an interactive website on the history and development of Ku-ring-gai	Short-term

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