

23 April, 2013

Mr Tony Reed
General Manager
Waverley Council
PO Box 9,
BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355

Forward Boot Factory – 27-33 Spring Street, Bondi Junction

Dear Mr Reed,

The National Trust was very disappointed to hear last Friday that Waverley Council had voted to demolish the heritage-listed Forward Boot Factory in Spring Street, Bondi Junction and welcomed the news that a rescission motion had been moved.

It is regrettable that this item of business has been scheduled for tonight's Council meeting giving very little time for residents and the broader concerned community, including the National Trust, to respond. This situation has been further exacerbated by the failure to publicly release the detailed engineering advice that the building is unsound.

It is also disturbing that the recent tragic death of three people in Melbourne is being cited by Councillors supporting the demolition, as this has no relevance in this situation, the wall in question being a modern wall, not heritage-listed. The adjoining three-storey heritage listed Victorian-period industrial building in Swanston Street was in no way involved in this accident.

The boot factory was listed on the National Trust Register in 1977 and a Section 130 Order under the Heritage Act was placed on the building in October, 1979 due to threatened redevelopment. It is understood that this Order was intended to remain in place until the building was listed on the Waverley Local Environmental Plan as a Heritage Item.

In 1985 a state government grant of \$150,000 was provided to the boot factory for it to be used as a museum and community meeting place. The media at the time noted that "The Old Boot Factory, in Spring Street, Bondi Junction, is understood to be one of only two remaining boot factories in Sydney and its restoration will be in recognition of the industrial past of Sydney."

The building was restored in 1985 by Clive Lucas and Partners, Architects for Waverley Council and formed part of a National Trust Women's Committee inspection.

The National Trust was cordially invited to the opening of the building on Monday 10th March, 1986 by the then Mayor of Waverley, Alderman John D. Morrison. The invitation noted "This historic building was recently extensively renovated by Waverley Municipal Council as a reminder of Sydney's Industrial past. It is one of the last remaining boot factories in Sydney, and is being retained by Council for Municipal purposes."

The restoration was funded by both State Bicentennial and Heritage Council grant funds.

The National Trust objected to Waverley Council in August 1987 to a proposed International Hotel based on its adverse impacts on the Boot Factory and adjoining Mill Hill Urban Conservation Area.

In May, 1991 the Trust wrote to Waverley Council regarding its Development Application for partitioning in the Boot Factory, following discussions with the Heritage Council, and the Trust raised no objections.

The Boot Factory was listed as a Heritage Item on Waverley Council's Local Environmental Plan on 6 December, 1996 and was noted in the Waverley Heritage Study prepared in 1990 by Perumal Murphy Pty Ltd.

The restoration work in 1985 restored the building and put it in good order and the 1991 Development Application by Waverley Council, forwarded to the National Trust for comment, gave no indication that the building was in poor condition or subject to termite attack.

The National Trust must ask Council, as the owner and body responsible for the proper maintenance, care and control of this important heritage item, how could it have deteriorated so severely since the 1991 internal works as to warrant immediate demolition?

If the building is indeed in such a dangerous condition why were the public areas adjoining the building not closed off to the public?

The Trust strongly urges Council to make public the detailed engineering advice on which it is relying and to postpone its decision until all Councillors and the public have an opportunity to examine this advice.

The Trust also urges that an Engineer with heritage experience be consulted to determine the condition of the Boot Factory and to provide advice on options for its retention. The Trust has viewed the Power Point Presentation that has been circulated today to some objectors and is not convinced that the questions raised in the Trust's submission have been addressed.

The National Trust itself, as a community organisation established in 1945 has responsibility for the care and maintenance of a whole range of buildings across NSW some as early as 1799, 1815, 1834, 1835, 1845, 1854 and 1860. These properties often suffer from termite infestation requiring treatment and constant monitoring and, as could be expected, are often subject to major structural problems.

It would be true to say that their builders did not use quality materials and would never have intended or expected that any of these buildings would survive to the 21st Century. But that is what heritage conservation is all about.

I look forward to a Council decision that sends a signal to residents of Waverley LGA and the broader community that Council values its rare heritage.

Yours sincerely,



Graham Quint
Conservation Manager