MAYDAY HILLS

BEECHWORTH

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Victorian Heritage Register Number: H1189

Prepared by:

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Prepared for:

Indigo Shire Council

Date 20 April 2023

Heritage Impact Statement for:

The Pines, Mayday Hills, Albert Road, Beechworth

Victorian Heritage Register

H1189

Heritage Overlay

HO7

This Heritage Impact Statement forms part of a permit application for:

The installation of two rows of solar panels of standard dimensions. Each panel is 1000mm wide x 1700mm height. The extent is proposed to be 45metres.

A 1500mm high fence constructed from black tubular steel with top and bottom plate is proposed as part of the installation. The fence will encircle the solar array.

The construction of a wall mounted Inverter (next to Meter Box).

Trenching from Inverter to the solar array.

Pre-application meeting number: P36301

The pre-application meeting (via Zoom) discussed the following potential impacts of this proposal:

- There are little if any physical impacts as the array is a freestanding development and is set back from the building and is behind the carpark.

- There will be varying visual impacts from the following view lines: three roadways – Kurrajong Way, Park Avenue, Oak Avenue and views from the side and rear of the Linaker Art Deco Hotel.

Address and location description:

The registered heritage place is Mayday Hills, Albert Road, Beechworth.

The proposed works are at the Indigo Shire Council offices, The Pines (within the Mayday Hills complex), 2 Kurrajong Way, Beechworth.

See Figure 1

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1.0 Cultural Heritage Significance

What is significant?

Mayday Hills Hospital, consisting of a variety of buildings constructed since the establishment of the institution in 1864. The majority of these buildings are contained within a landscape setting which includes part of original brick walls and associated ha-ha. A small group of farm buildings, including a cob building, are located to the south-east of the site.

History Summary

The Mayday Hills Hospital was constructed as the Beechworth Lunatic Asylum between 1864 and 1867 to designs by the Public Works Department (PWD). Together with asylums at Kew and Ararat, the design of the asylum was based on administrative, planning and medical principles developed in Britain. The original asylum building was contained within a fenced compound, with ha-ha, and the grounds were developed to create an attractive and functional landscape. Active work was considered imperative for patients and workshops were located near the male accommodation and laundries and drying yards near the female accommodation. Farm land located south of the compound also provided patients with productive work. Extensive additions were made to the main building in 1873 and detached cottages with enclosed courtyards were constructed in the late 1880s. In the post-war era the treatment of the mentally ill underwent radical change and many buildings were added to the hospital and earlier buildings were modernised. Mayday Hills Hospital closed in 1995, and the complex was sold to La Trobe University, with various community and commercial organisations occupying parts of the site. The university campus was closed in 2011 and the site sold to a private owner.

Description Summary

The Mayday Hills Hospital site comprises buildings constructed in a number of periods: the initial construction phase (1864-79); subsequent expansion (1880-90); modernisation, including a nurses' hostel and ward by PWD architect Percy Everett (1921-50); later development (1951-95) and the period of occupation by La Trobe University (1996-2012). The first phase included a large E-shaped cement rendered building, designed in an Italianate style with corner towers, and a separate

morgue constructed to the west in 1868. The main building contained accommodation, administration, laundry, kitchens, stores and a recreation hall. This and later buildings are set within what is now an extensive parkland containing mature exotic and native trees. Parts of the original surrounding wall and ha-ha and one of two entrance lodges remain on the site. Farm land associated with the asylum contains stables (1873), a barn and a small building of earth construction.

How is it significant?

Mayday Hills Hospital is of historical, architectural, technical and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion B
Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.
Criterion D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.
Criterion E
Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.
Criterion F
Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.

Why is it significant?

Mayday Hills Hospital is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

Mayday Hills Hospital is historically significant for its physical manifestation of the changing approaches to the treatment of mental illness in Victoria from institutional confinement to treatment and rehabilitation. The asylum at Beechworth was a key component in a larger system

of nineteenth century state asylums in Victoria which included those at Kew and Ararat. [Criterion A]

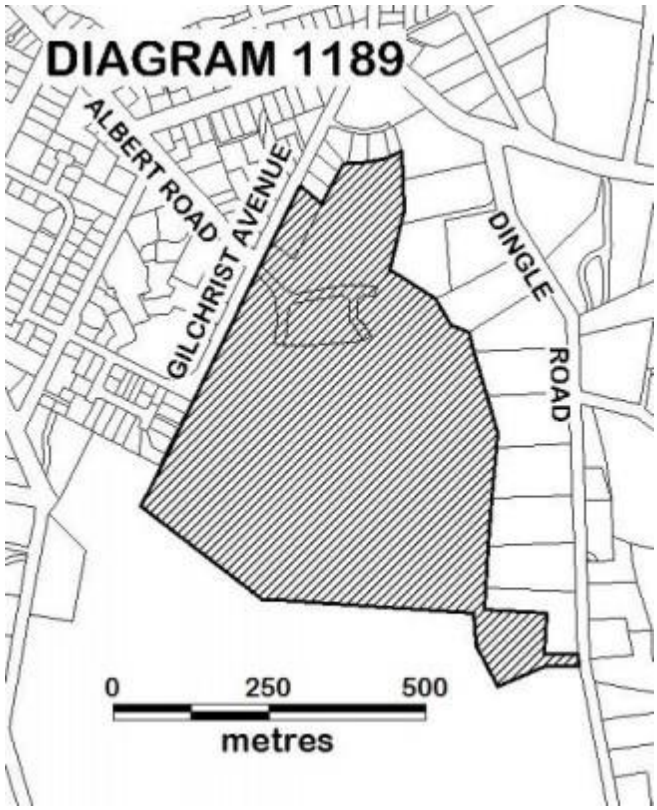
The cob farm building at Mayday Hills Hospital is a rare surviving example of cob construction in Victoria. It is one of few known surviving examples in Victoria. [Criterion B]

Mayday Hills Hospital is architecturally significant as a particularly fine example of an extensive complex of Italianate asylum buildings dating from the 1860s, and in the case of the cottages, the 1880s. The design is based on an influential asylum at Colney Hatch in England and, in common with other contemporary institutions notably Willsmere in Kew and Aradale at Ararat, displays key characteristic features such as the E shaped plan of the main administration, kitchen and dormitory block with its airing courts and covered walkways, as well as the gatehouse, mortuary and ha-ha wall. The design of the 1860s buildings has been attributed to Public Works Department architect, J J Clark. [Criterion D]

Mayday Hills Hospital is aesthetically important for the beauty of its picturesque setting on a prominent hill among extensive parklands, which comprises native and introduced trees and shrubs. The curved drive with its avenue of large oaks is particularly noteworthy. [Criterion E]

The cob farm building at Mayday Hills Hospital is technically significant for the unusual use of cob construction for a small farm building on the site. Double roof construction was used with the inner walls constructed of earth. The technique uses puddled clay, mixed with straw and water, which is laid in courses in a plastic state, without formwork, and pared down once dry. [Criterion F]

Source https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/ accessed 18 June 2022



Extent of Registration

Source https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/ accessed 18 June 2022

The Mayday Hills Beechworth, Landscape Management & Maintenance Plan, 2017 prepared by Deborah Kemp and John Hawker, was referred to in the preparation of this Heritage Impact Statement.

See Attachment A

The works are proposed for the area identified as ***Precinct 4*** *The Pines, Reservoir and Nurses' Hostel Precinct*. This is found at p 17/18 in the Landscape Plan.

See below for extract:

Landscape elements of cultural heritage significance

The mature remnant eucalypts, notably the Brittle Gums (Eucalyptus mannifera) on the top of the hill, which provide a strong visual element to this part of the site. In addition the indigenous Black Cypress Pine (Callitris endlicheri) and Blackwood (Acacia melanoxylon) and [unidentified] ground flora contribute to the natural environment of this particular section of the Precinct.

The mature Canary Island Pines that form an appropriately scaled setting to the facades of Building 12 and 14.

The group of mature conifers to the east of the zone including Deodar Cedar (Cedrus deodara), Monterey Pine (Pinus radiata) and Big Tree (Sequoiadendron giganteum) planted as a landscape group.

Shrubberies [garden beds]

The garden beds and shrubbery at the entrance (and around to the west) of the Pines office and, through the inclusion of a number of key species such as: Rhododendrons; Camellias and Azealas, contributes to the aesthetic character and cultural significance of the landscape.

Replacement Plantings

It is recommended that a replacement program for the top of the hill be considered. This will include the replacement of any Brittle Gums that are removed. The replanting of a low density understory could be considered but is not essential for this stage of works.

The Pines

The Pines was constructed during the early 20th century during the early stages of the 20th century modernisation of Mayday Hills. It was constructed at a similar period to the nearby nurses' hostel, Linaker, which is now a hotel. It was designed by the Public Works Architect (PWD) Percy Everett (1921-50). Everett is noted for his early 20th century contribution to architectural discourse. Many of his works are included on the Victorian Heritage Register.

The Pines has retained its integrity and is largely intact and there have been no changes to its original footprint. Its conversion to council offices has not markedly compromised its architectural

integrity and the original architectural intent is readily appreciated. Externally it is largely unaltered. The internal alterations have not markedly altered significant features. The subdivision of the internal spaces is largely achieved through the introduction of lightweight partitions and these have been installed without any structural changes. Significant services such as the early hydronic heating are extant (de-commissioned).

The external landscaping is unaltered and the pine trees that are located to the front and adjacent to Park Avenue contribute to the overall aesthetics. Two of the original pines have been replaced but the remaining trees are striking landscape features.

The condition of The Pines building is good and it is well maintained.

Current use of the place:

The Pines is now the Beechworth office of the Indigo Shire Council.

Constraints and opportunities resulting from the significance of the place

The primary constraint is that The Pines is located within a culturally significant landscape. Both the building and the landscape are significant. The location of the building near the entrance to the site, and with visual access to the place from two roadways, means that development opportunities and change are more difficult to manage as the building is in a highly visible location and occupies a prominent landmark position within a significant area of the gardens. Any external change to either the front and/or the sides of the building will be visible and could become a dominant feature.

However, the rear area through its topography (and adjacent buildings) does provide some opportunities as the ground rises up steeply behind The Pines building and is vegetated with trees and shrubs. This provides a discrete area which is largely unseen from the wider cultural landscape areas. The large corrugated metal clad shed which is used for water storage and the Linaker Hotel also shield this rear area. This area has traditionally been used for services and carparking.

The primary significant landscape values of this area[1] lie with the large brittle gums, native grasses and shrubs, and these provide a backdrop to the service activities.

This area provides the most logical and appropriate place for further changes to this particular area of Mayday Hills. It is relatively discrete, the topography and built fabric provide visual barriers, and its use is largely service driven.

PROPOSAL

The proposed works

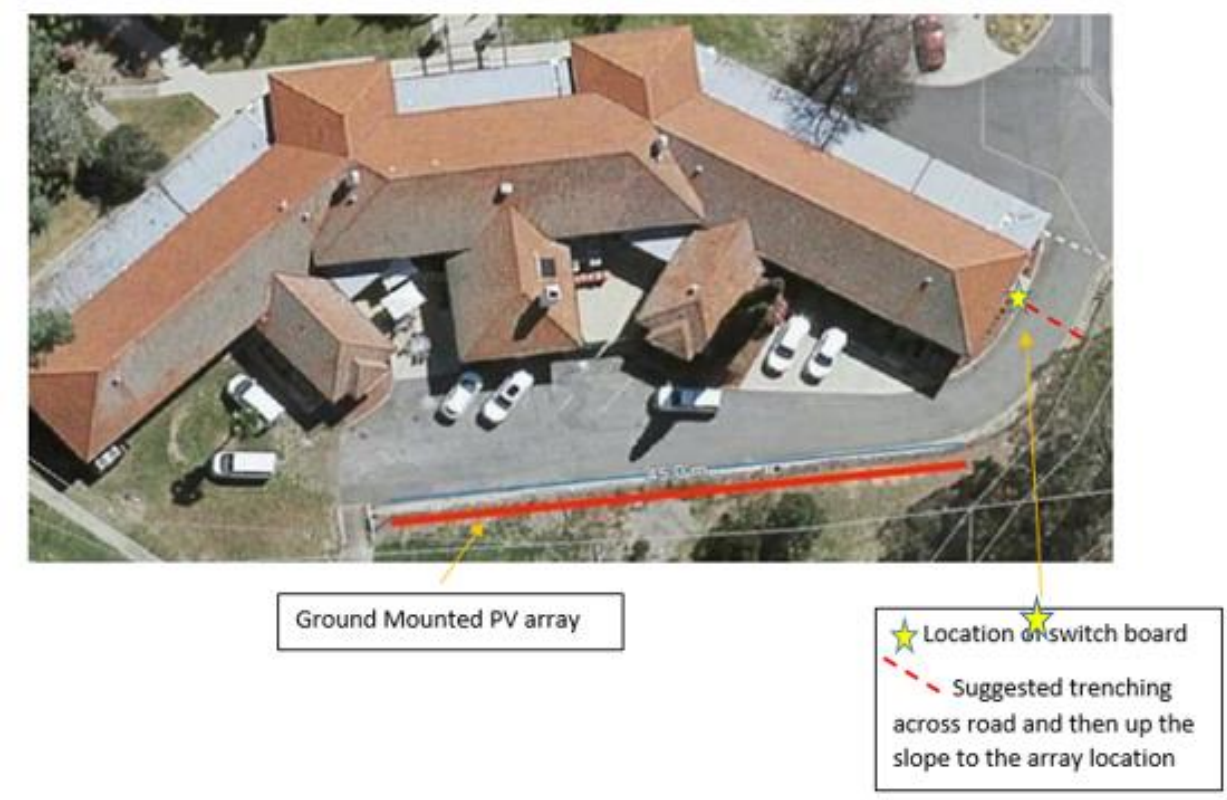


Figure 1 Site Plan

[1] D Kemp, J Hawker, *Landscape Management Plan, Mayday Hills, Albert Road Beechworth*, 2017, pp17-18

Figure 2 Facing west – Red line is indicative of the location of solar array – ground mounted PV system

Figure 3 Facing east (red line is indicative of the location of the solar array - ground mounted PV System.

The proposed construction of the solar array includes two rows of solar panels of standard dimensions. Each panel is 1000mm width x 1700mm height. The extent of the array is proposed

to be 45 metres in length. This includes a 1500mm high black tubular steel fence and gate that will enclose the solar array.

The total height of the solar array if stacked up vertically is 3400mm. However, the ground mounted system is to be tilted at an optimal latitude angle of 36% - hence the height from ground will be approximately 2000mm maximum with some reduction with this height where the ground slopes.

The proposed system is to be a 30kW system. This is the required size to produce sufficient solar energy and reduce electricity bills at the site. A smaller system was initially considered – a single row of panels but was not viable. The proposed system is the minimal size in terms of use and economy.

The site plan shows the proposed location of the solar panels – noting that the development area has an approximate average width of 2.5 metres – between the edge of the cutting and the title boundary.

The construction of the solar panels will also include the construction of a 1500mm black tubular steel fence (to the perimeter of the solar panels), an Inverter and trenching for wiring.

Options Considered

The only other feasible option for the location of the solar panels is to locate the array on the terracotta tiled roof. This would compromise a significant feature of this building. The terracotta tiling is integral to the architectural significance of this place. These are the original tiles and are in fair condition albeit they are now over 100 years old. While they have retained their physical integrity, any future construction works that could impact on the integrity the tiles, and this includes dead and live loads, could compromise the future life of the tiles. This is not an ideal outcome. In addition, there is insufficient roof area to achieve the desired environmental and economic outcome of this project and roof panels would still need to be located on the ground to achieve the required sustainability.

Any other potential location within the site would contribute to a marked diminishment of the cultural values of the immediate area of The Pines, as well as the overall May Day Hills registered area. In summary, the areas to the east and west are limited in scope, the terrain is not ideal, and they would have a high and broad visibility from many areas in addition to primary view lines. The area to the north is the primary setting for The Pines and includes the significant pine trees and any works here would have a detrimental impact on the significance of the whole place.

The site

The Pines

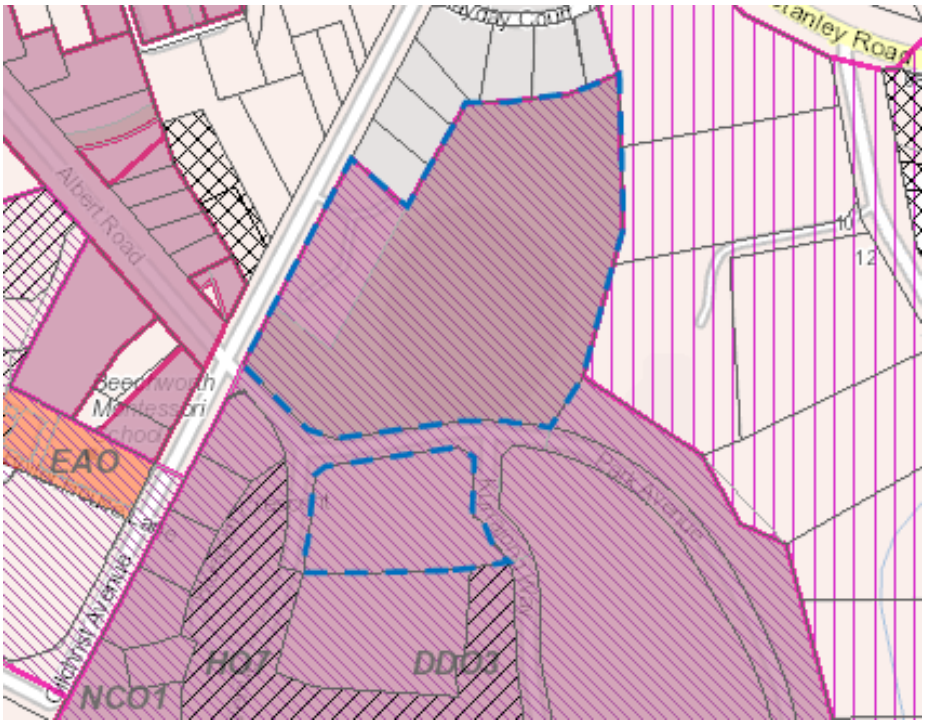


Figure 4

The area outlined with the dotted blue line is the extent of The Pines as a title area. Noting the area to the south of Kurrajong Way is the location of The Pines, the area to the north is the oval.

The site

The title area has little available area that can be redeveloped. The majority of open area (not utilised by buildings and carparks) is found to the north and this is a primary significant area as it provides the setting for the main façade of The Pines.

The most optimal area is to the rear, and set back from Kurrajong Road and Oak Avenue. However, this area is limited by topography and use. The level area to the rear of The Pines has been cut into a steeply sloping hill and this provides a carpark for Council staff. The area above the carpark is limited and varies in width (2-3 metres grassed area). This grassed band of land includes native grasses and some small herbaceous plants. This narrow band of land is the most optimal area in terms of minimising any impact on the cultural values of the place as well as providing scope for the proposed extent of the solar array.

Figure 4 Aerial of the site showing the relationships between the roads, Linaker Hotel and The Pines.

Impact of the proposal on the cultural heritage significance of the place or object

What will be the effect on the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or object if the proposal were to be approved [s101(2)(a)]?

Physical and Visual Impacts

Physical Impacts

Installation of solar panels

There will be little, if any physical impact to significant features in the registered area. All works are to the rear of the building and located on the grassed area at the the boundary of the title area. The works will include the construction of the solar panels and tubular steel fencing. The primary impact will be to any native grasses that are found in this specific area. The works are all reversible and can be easily remediated. The native grasses will re-repropagate if impacted, and earthworks are minimal and can be repaired.

Installation of the switchboard

It is proposed to install a switchboard to the east wall of The Pines building. This will include minor penetrations to the masonry wall as part of the installation process with connections back to the switchboard. The switchboard dimensions are 725H x 510W x 225mm (depth of the board). The Inverter will match the finish and colour of the extant switchboard.

Trenching

It is proposed to construct a trench across the access road to the rear and then to continue the trenching up the slope for connection to the solar array. See Figure 1

As part of the mitigation planning the trenching will be supervised by a qualified arborist - noting that the trenching will not impact on any structural root zones.

Visual Impacts

The solar panels will have low visibility from Oak Avenue. However, a section of the solar panels will be visible from limited vantage points from this road. The view line catchment area is defined by the landscaping that is adjacent to The Pines and the Linaker building. There are a number of large trees and shrubs that will partially visually shield the solar array. However, there is an access pathway, and the panels will be visible from this path. This is a relatively narrow view line and while there is visibility it will not allow the solar panels to become the dominant feature in the landscape. Noting that the full array will not be visible from any vantage point, what will be visible are the edges of the solar array as the view lines are oblique.

The visual impact from Kurrajong Way will be controlled and the solar panels will only be seen from a defined position. This relatively narrow view line corridor will help ameliorate the visual impacts. The low shrubbery will also provide some scope to shield the array. If necessary the height of this shrubbery could be increased to further reduce any impact.

The view to the solar array from the carpark behind Linaker will be largely unimpeded and it is from this service area that the full visual impact is found. However, this is the service area, with a carpark and a large Nissen Hut (this houses the water supply). The location of infrastructure to this rear area is an appropriate place as this is the area that has a number of similar utilitarian uses and services are a compatible use. There will be views to the solar array from a pedestrian level (from the carpark and adjacent footpaths), as well as a view from the Linaker rooms that face onto the service yard.

The 1500mm black tubular fencing will to a degree provide a visual barrier for the solar array, and black can be recessive when viewed from a distance. However, the visual impact provided by the fencing and combined with the panels, will have the same degree of intrusiveness as the panels - which is low.

The works are proposed for the area identified as ***Precinct 4*** *The Pines, Reservoir and Nurses' Hostel Precinct*, in the Mayday Hills Beechworth, Landscape Management Plan [2] The proposed works will have limited impact in the identified cultural values of this particular landscape precinct. The large brittle gums will not be impacted on and neither will any remnant vegetation. The native grasses will be able to grow around the installation and will not be impacted on.

As noted the proposed location is largely defined by services and carparking. While there are some views to this area they are not primary view lines and on this basis will have only a limited impact. The trenching will have no long-term visual impacts.

[2] D Kemp, J Hawker, *Mayday Hills Beechworth, Landscape Management Plan*, p 17

Summary

The solar panels and fencing, will be visible from limited places within the registered area. These view lines are not from primary vantage points, instead they are generally from areas that are characterised as utilitarian, or from pathways associated with the more peripheral areas of this particular section of Mayday Hills. These view lines will not allow the solar array to become a dominant feature within the registered area and will have a minimal aesthetic impact on the overall landscape qualities found at Mayday Hills.

The area that is most significantly impacted upon in terms of visual impact is the service yard and carpark. There are many views to the solar array from the service yard and from the rooms at the rear of the Linaker Hotel. However, as the service yard is an area that has other infrastructure – car parking, bins and service equipment, the presence of solar panels will largely be appreciated as contributing to the existing service use of this area.

There will be little, if any visibility from Park Avenue, as the shrubs and the treed area of the arboretum and the slope of the land inhibits view lines.

The construction of the solar array and fencing will have only minor impact on the extant physical features and these can be readily remediated.

The construction of the Inverter to the base of the existing window and adjacent to the switchboard on the eastern side wall will reduce any visual impacts. This location is set back from the front edge of the building. This will ensure that there is no visibility from the primary view lines.

This proposal will have a minor physical impact as per its attachment to the masonry wall. Its proximity to the extant switchboard is necessary for its function and on this basis this location is a preferred outcome.

The works are proposed for the area identified as ***Precinct 4*** *The Pines, Reservoir and Nurses' Hostel Precinct*, p 17. The overall impact is not considered to be such that it diminishes the cultural heritage significance of the Precinct 4 and/or the whole of the registered site for the reasons already set out.

Provide reasons why the proposed works should be supported. Reasons must address the matters which the Executive Director is to consider under s101(2) including:

What will be the effect on the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or object if the proposal were to be refused [s101(2)(b)]?

The refusal of this application will have an impact on the economic use of the registered place. Like many heritage places The Pines has not been designed with sustainability as its core governing design principle. This means that it costs more to heat and cool and therefore is a greater cost to Council than a purpose-built building. In addition to the economic costs, there are also environmental costs that Council seeks to modify as part of its overall climate strategy. Council currently sources its power from sustainable sources. The Pines, has 100% renewable energy via the Victorian Electricity Collaboration (VECO) and this is through Red Energy via wind energy from Western Victoria.

However, these are all added costs and while Council is seeking to be more sustainable and to reduce its carbon footprint it is also looking to reduce its running costs. The Pines is Council's most expensive building / facility to run:
- Total electricity cost in 2019/20 was $44,311;
- Total electricity cost in 2020/21 was $40,744;
- Total electricity cost in 2021/22 was $35,393;
- Total electricity cost is 2022/23 is currently $26,156 (up to the end of Feb 2023).

Council has declared a Climate Emergency (2019), set a net zero by 2035 target and has developed an emissions reduction plan (ERP). The installation of solar PV systems and batteries on Council buildings continues to be a key action to reduce emissions and lower running costs, by generating local renewable energy via the sun.

In summary the proposed solar panel system will significantly reduce the cost of running the building, enabling Council to redirect savings into other important services - this includes further climate mitigation and adaptation work. Moreover, Council has in its portfolio a number of heritage buildings, many of which are listed on the VHR and this includes The Pines. Like most

small rural councils balancing the costs of preservation and conservation with other council budgetary claims is always a balance. The cost savings associated with the installation of solar panels provides additional resources for council to maintain The Pines as well as its other listed buildings.

If the applicant is a public authority what will be the effect on the ability of the public authority to perform a statutory duty specified in the application if the proposal were to be refused [s101(2)(d)].

A refusal of this application will not have an impact on the ability of this public authority to perform a statutory duty.

Matters which the Executive Director may consider under s101(3)

The Pines is located within the registered area for the whole of the Mayday Hills. This is a very large complex and The Pines is located well within the boundaries of the extent of registration. On this basis, the impacts on any adjacent or neighbouring places have already been assessed as the neighbouring places lie within the extent of registration for Mayday Hills.

Indigo Shire Planning Scheme

Mayday Hills is included in the Indigo Planning Scheme as HO7 – **Beechworth Conservation Precinct (Mayday Hills)**

Statement of Significance

The residential area adjacent to Mayday Hills illustrates the pattern of development along the roads leading to adjacent gold fields -Stanley, Hurdle Flat and others. It is a mix of modest cottages dating from the mid 19th century. Former hotels, stores etc can also be identified and this mix of building types illustrate developments in response to the needs of the miner and later the farming, and horticultural communities. The architecture and landscape of the precinct is remarkably intact and it has a high integrity.

The Beechworth Conservation Precinct 8 is of historical, architectural, social, archaeological and aesthetic significance. All places, structures and items of cultural heritage significance and all individual items listed in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay are integral to the significance of this precinct.

The proposal as assessed against the Statement of Significance will have little if any impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Summary of impacts and conclusion

The immediate area to the rear of The Pines is the service area for offices. This area sits within the registered area of Mayday Hills and the significant features of this place include built fabric and the 19th century landscape. The service area to the rear and the immediate landscape (including the Linaker Hotel rear yard area and common property) is identified as being a contributory feature within Precinct 4 and the significant features as identified in the Landscape Plan are:

The mature remnant eucalypts, notably the Brittle Gums on the top of the hill, which provide a strong visual element to this part of the site. In addition, the indigenous Black Cypress Pine (Callitris endlicheri) and Blackwood (Acacia melanoxylon) and [unidentified] ground flora contribute to the natural environment of this particular section of the Precinct. [3]

The installation of solar panels and fencing, will not compromise any of these landscape and/or botanical features. The ground flora in the subject area is native grasses and these will be minimally impacted on and tend to recover well. The installation of the solar panels will not destroy the grasses as they can co-exist around the solar panels.

Due to the relative discrete character of this area, which is surrounded by built fabric, carparks, utility buildings (Nissen Hut) and the slope of the vegetated hillside, it is considered that the proposed changes will have a minimal impact on the primary significant features which surround this area. As noted, there will be limited visual impacts and these impacts are largely confined to restricted view line corridors. The development will not become a dominant feature within the

[3] D Kemp, J Hawker, *Mayday Hills Beechworth, Landscape Management Plan*, p 17

primary significant areas and will not be included in the broader view lines within this cultural landscape.

In terms of mitigation, the Landscape Plan has recommended that a replanting of a low-density understorey to this area could be considered.[4] This is a general recommendation and not driven by development. It was considered that this area was an area that still retained some of the original vegetation and this could be supplemented as required.

If this recommendation was followed a low scale planting would not conceal the solar panels but could provide a visual interference and potentially reduce any perceived visual s impact.

See below for extract from the Landscape Management Plan:

Replacement Plantings

It is recommended that a replacement program for the top of the hill be considered. This will include the replacement of any Brittle Gums that are removed. The replanting of a low-density understory could be considered but is not essential for this stage of works. (p18)

In summary, the overall impacts are low and are essentially managed by the limited view lines. In terms of positive outcomes, the increased sustainability of any heritage place is always ideal as many function with low sustainability. The introduction of additional solar panels will be of an economic benefit to council and will, if not directly, provide increased budget for the conservation of The Pines.

In addition, and taking a long view of the rationale behind reducing carbon footprints, Mayday Hills has a significant landscape and the consequences of climate change will have further impacts on this place. By reducing carbon footprint this project will contribute to the overall objectives of reducing the risks of climate change and this action will help foster a better climate for the protection of this highly significant place.

[4] D Kemp, J Hawker, *Mayday Hills Beechworth, Landscape Management Plan*, p 18

It is the professional opinion of the author of this assessment that the changes to the place will have a minimal impact on the cultural heritage values of this significant place and can be supported.

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