

26 June 2023

**198-202 GORDON RD, Morningside, Durban**

**HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT : ILLEGAL WORK AND PROPOSED CHANGES TO EXISTING  
TOWNHOUSES (AND CONVERSION TO BUSINESS)**



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## **1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Lindsay Napier Architect was appointed by the property owner to prepare a Heritage Impact Assessment of Illegal and proposed Work for the property at the request of Amafa to supplement the application for the unauthorised and proposed alterations to 198-202 Gordon Rd, Morningside, Durban.

## **2. TERMS OF REFERENCE :**

The report refers to KZN Amafa and Research Institute Act no.5 of 2018 and the National Heritage Resources Act (25/1999), which aim to protect heritage resources in Kwa Zulu Natal.

The property is protected by Clause 37 : General Protection : *“Structures – No structure which is, or which may reasonably be expected to be older than 60 years, may be demolished, altered or added to without prior written approval of the Council having been obtained on written application to the Council.”*

## **3. METHODOLOGY :**

Lindsay Napier is an architect experienced in assessment of protected buildings in KZN. She has previous experience in recording historic buildings, surveying townscapes and designing for protected buildings.

The properties was inspected by Lindsay Napier on the 9 June 2023.

SG diagrams and building plan records were used to analyse the history of the property boundaries and age of structures.

The Amafa application documents dated 15-04-2023 prepared by Wayne Malgas Arc were reviewed. Google-streetview history was used to establish approximate dates of changes made to the property.

## **4. LOCALITY :**

The property is situated in the suburb of Morningside, Durban on the Western side of Gordon Rd, between Florida and Montpelier Roads.

## 7. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE :

### ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE :

The town houses were designed and built in 1911 as a matching pair with entrance verandas and gables. The units were divided by a firewall down the centre. The gables are the main feature of the elevation, featuring brick detailing around the rectangular roof vent, a saw-tooth brick course at wall plate level and contrasting brick quoining detail on the corners. The roof is steeply pitched (originally slate) and the ground floor bay windows in the gables were roofed with a “lean-to” roof that ran the full width of the façade. The roof was supported by decorative timber brackets off timber veranda posts.

The architectural features and fittings were characteristic of the Edwardian period ie. timber panel doors, sash windows, lead-light glazing, face-brick gables.

Over time, the first floor balconies were enclosed (date unknown) for additional bedrooms and bathrooms added on the balcony – a common alteration to houses in the area. Sash windows were changed to louvre windows and aluminium top-hung windows. Internal alterations had been made over many years to keep up with modern living standards. Sadly, this has weakened the historical integrity of the building.

By the early 2000’s, the town houses were mostly screened from the road by ugly walls, fences and trees. Veranda walls and parts of the facebrick gable had been painted to suit the taste of various owners.

The building is an unusual example, but not unique, of Edwardian townhouses. Other examples with similar brick detailing, proportions and form can be seen in Montpelier Rd and Gordon Rd (North).



### HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The building was designed and built for Mr.Cobishley (?) in 1911 (ref. Ethekwini plans records).

SOCIAL/ SPIRITUAL/ LINGUISTIC SIGNIFICANCE : Nil

SCIENTIFIC/ TECHNOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE :

All materials and construction methods were typical of that period and are prevalent in other houses in the area.

**ENVIRONMENTAL/ CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE :**

The area is rich in houses dating from 1900 to 1930's, intermixed with modern buildings. The property is in close proximity to Florida Rd which is the dominant business and entertainment hub of Morningside. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic has increased in Gordon rd and the Lanes as a result of the Florida Rd developments. Gordon Rd is lined with trees and a pavement on the North East side and a fenced public park occupies the property to the South West.

**CONTEXTUAL PHOTOS**



South neighbour, corner of Montpelier Rd



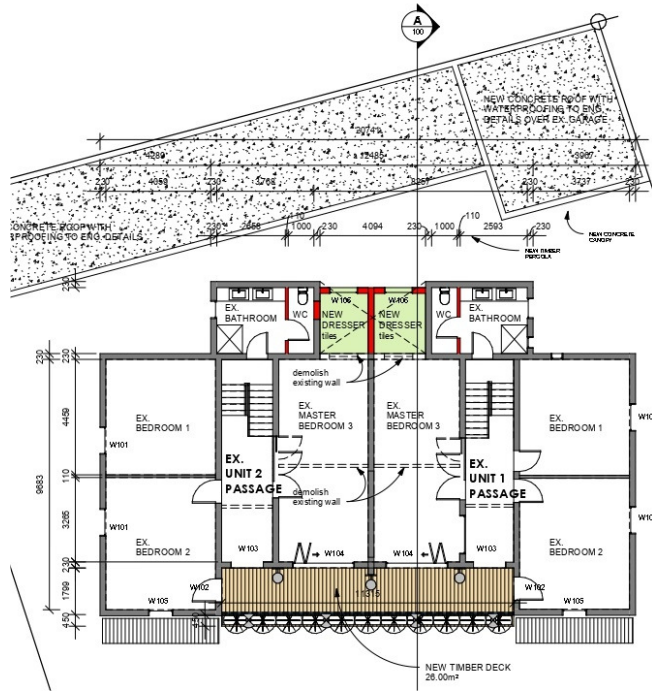
North neighbour (Lane)



Looking South East (public park)

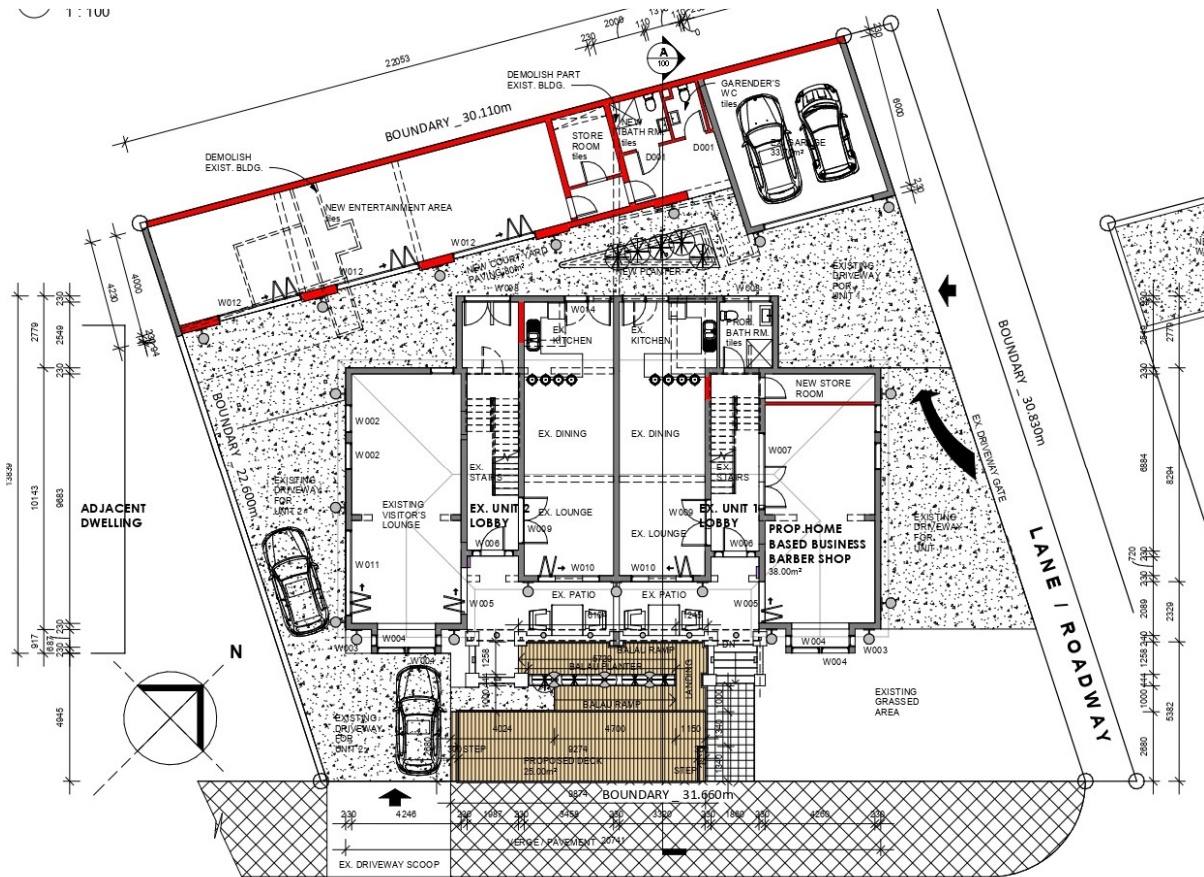
Archive drawing (1911) :





FIRST FLOOR PLAN

1 : 100



Site Plan & Ground Floor Plan

GORDON ROAD

GROUND FLOOR PLAN  
Architects Plans : 2023.

## 7. ILLEGAL WORK

Unauthorised work as surveyed in June 2023 :

1. Windows : Existing windows replaced with aluminium, windows replaced with door, windows bricked up, removal of window cills on bay windows
2. Doors : Removal of front doors and sidelights, new openings made for doors
3. Facebrick : Painted facebrick
4. Floors : Removal of timber floors (ground floor) and replacement with concrete slab on fill.
5. First floor balcony : Replacement of first floor balcony and roof
6. Roofs : Removal of ground floor veranda roof overhang
7. First floor extension
8. Internal alterations
9. External : Demolition of outbuildings, demolition of veranda steps (198) and addition of new deck and ramp

Some of the work pre-dates 2009 (the last photographic record), therefore it cannot be assessed fully. Internal work is not visible in the photographic record, therefore assumptions are made in the table below. The assessment is of the two units together as they form a symmetrical building designed to work together.

Table 1

Unauthorised work	Date	Impact	Mitigation
1. Windows : Existing windows replaced with aluminium; windows replaced with a door; windows bricked up; removal of window cills on bay windows.	2009-2023	Only two original windows remain (high level above the toilet doors) – to be shown on the plans. At the time of transfer, the existing windows were a mixture of louvre windows and new aluminium and timber sash windows.	New windows that retain the original size and proportion are acceptable, but detail on the bay window facades should be reinstated for integrity.
2. Doors : Removal of front doors and sidelights.  3. New openings made for doors  4. Insertion of doors in place of windows	2023	The “entrance” is no longer apparent, which was an important element in the historical layering. New openings have impacted the structure, but necessary for change from residential to commercial. Low impact, the lintols have remained intact and visible.	Final proposals for entrance doors and gates to be assessed.  Nil – methods used for construction of openings to be checked.
5. Facebrick : Painted facebrick	Pre-2009-2023	The painted facebrick substantially changes the historical architectural	Motivation for the paintwork to be assessed.

		detail. The original facebrick is characteristic of the area and can be seen in adjacent buildings.	
6. Floors : Removal of timber floors (ground floor) and replacement with concrete slab on fill.	2023	The problem of termites and borer damage is noted, but the new concrete slab on fill will have an impact on damp-proofing of the walls.	Walls are to be protected from rising damp – methods or maintenance proposals to be assessed.
7. First floor balcony : Replacement of first floor balcony and roof. 8. Re-design of the balcony	Pre-2009 2023	The balcony was altered with the addition of a room and bathroom pre-2009. The timber balcony details were removed. The problem of insect damage to the floor structure was noted. The balcony has been redesigned, due to new requirements of the brief ie. commercial use rather than residential use.	The design of the balcony (materials, proportion and form) should work as part of the whole new design proposal.
9. Roofs : Removal of ground floor veranda roof overhang.  10. Decorative gable barge board removed	2023	The veranda roof is an architectural element that has been changed as part of the design of the balcony.  The barge board detail has been lost.	(As above) plus the new ground floor veranda posts should correspond with the position of the original veranda posts. The replacement of bargeboards with modern material is to be motivated.
11. First floor extension	2023	A change in external form on the back elevation – which had been altered and changed previously (pre-2009)	Proposed additions to be assessed as part of the whole proposal.
12. External : Demolition of outbuilding.	2023	Minimal impact to the back yard area.	Nil



13. Demolition of veranda steps (198) and addition of new deck and ramp	2023	Loss of symmetrical elements on the street elevation.	Alternative design solution for the ramp and stairs to be considered.
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**Google Streetview photography records :**



**2009**



**2013**



**2017**

## 8. ASSESSMENT AND GRADING :

The NHRA clause 3(3) lists the following criteria for assessment of Heritage significance :

1. Highly significant association with a:
  - a. historic person
  - b. social grouping
  - c. historic events
  - d. historical activities or roles
  - e. public memory
2. Historical and/or visual-spatial landmark within a place
3. High architectural quality, well-constructed and of fine materials
4. Historical fabric is mostly intact (this fabric may be layered historically and/or past damage should be easily reversible)
5. Fabric dates to the early origins of a place
6. Fabric clearly illustrates an historical period in the evolution of a place
7. Fabric clearly illustrates the key uses and roles of a place over time

## 9. SUMMARY :

The two townhouses assessed as a pair score high on architectural quality for their construction detailing (3) and the historical fabric illustrates an historical period (6) and the roles of the place over time (7).

Therefore, the property is recommended as a **Grade 3B** Heritage Grading (refer Annexure A).

The investigation notes that the As-Built plans that were used at the beginning of the project were inaccurate in recording the structure and windows and doors. It is not a reliable source of information and was discounted. The original plans were only found late in the process.

The site was inspected while building work had been started and not completed, therefore assessment of the final intent of the developer was limited. Areas were noted that appeared to have deviated from the proposed plan that was submitted.

Since the Heritage assessment is largely focused on the exterior and the streetscape, more attention is paid to the impacts to the “public face” :

1. Painted facebrick : The practice of “re-decoration” is a current “trend”, especially where a house is converted to a business. Buildings are often painted in the popular Charcoal grey to unify the buildings on the site and to project a corporate or business image. This has been done all over Durban and in other cities.  
The trend has affected plastered and facebrick buildings, the practice has successfully integrated residential structures within commercial zones. Re-decoration and a change of external paint colour is not commonly regarded as “alteration”. Buildings that undergo

maintenance and redecoration are not required to submit plans to the municipality, whereas the work does require a permit under the Heritage Act (see the definition of “alteration” in NHA and KZNARIA).

Where a building has facebrick patterns as part of the architectural features, this should be conserved and not covered up.

2. Entrance stairways and external works : The two stairways are a prominent symmetrical feature and are characteristic of verandas in the area. The right-hand stair has been preserved and successfully contributes to the character, but the left hand stair has been altered and therefore, no longer matches the pair. The need for universal access and activating the street-frontage is recognised, but a design solution that preserves the stair and walls should be considered.
3. Loss of “veranda roof eaves” and the redesign of the balcony : the central elements of the ground floor veranda and the balcony are substantially changed from the original (1911). The proposal chooses to redesign these elements as part of the whole re-design and conversion to commercial use – the design should be read in the context of the whole. The memory of the central roof is retained by the remaining roofs over the bay windows. The manner in which the junctions are articulated is important.

Other changes that have impacted or will impact the building (listed in Table 1 above) should be assessed according to the merits of the proposal.

The Heritage authority is advised to reconsider the application in the light of the findings above. Should there be any revisions to the proposals required, this must be communicated with the owner and the designer.

The Heritage authority must confirm the Heritage Grading and inform the property owner of any restrictions the Grading has on the property for the future.

ANNEXURE A :

An **Heritage Grading** is compiled based on the Grading system of the National Heritage Resources Act (NHRA) Chapter 1:3(3) and 7 and the Western Cape Heritage Grading guidelines :

Grade I (National Heritage Resources)

Grade II (KZN Provincial Landmarks)

Listed in Schedule 2 of the KZN Amafa and Research Institute Act 2018.

Grade IIIA (KZN Heritage Landmarks) Listed in the municipal Town Planning Scheme

IIIB Generally protected by age (over 60 years of age)

IIIC Generally protected by age (over 60 years of age) (Chapter 8. clause 37)

With contextual significance

(Grade) NCW : Not Conservation Worthy: if the property is not worthy of protection in the above categories.



