

6 April 2022

General Manager
Northern Beaches Council
PO Box 82
Manly NSW 1655

Dear General Manager,

SHORT-FORM HERITAGE IMPACT **STATEMENT**—1/63-67 The Corso, Manly

1 Introduction

This short-form Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of the property owner of 1/63-67 The Corso, Manly (the subject site)—a highly modified interwar period commercial edifice, which is identified as a 'local' individual heritage item and situated in the Town Centre Heritage Conservation Area. It accompanies a development application (DA) for a general bar fit-out of the ground floor and provides the consent authority, the Northern Beaches Council, with an independent assessment of the proposed work's projected heritage impact on the heritage place and wider precinct.

The author of this report is an experienced heritage consultant and accredited professional historian, and the assessment is made pursuant to the Expert Witness Code of Conduct in Schedule 7 of the *Uniform Civil Procedure Rules 2005* (NSW). Terminology and principles in this document are informed by sound conservation-planning approaches for the management of built cultural heritage, namely as expressed by *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, *The Burra Charter* (rev. 2013).

A visual inspection of the site and its setting was undertaken in November 2021.

2 Location and heritage management framework

The subject place (SP 67337) is located on the north side of The Corso and is flanked by the late 20th-century ANZ Bank (no. 59/west) and interwar New Brighton Hotel (no. 69-71/east) in the east. It is a substantial building, which abuts Market Place at the rear. As noted, the new work would be limited to its ground floor addressing The Corso.

Under Schedule 5 of *Manly Local Environmental Plan 2013* (MLEP), a serial heritage listing applies to the majority of buildings on either side of The Corso, including the subject place (see HER_005). Its details follow:

Item name	Address	Property Description	Significance	Item no.
Group of commercial buildings	All numbers, The Corso, Manly	-	Local	I106

There is no Statement of Significance for the place in the NSW Heritage Inventory. Its significance is discussed further in section 3. The *Manly Development Control Plan 2013* (MDCP) provides a Statement of Significance for The Corso (5.1.2), which is understood to be pertinent to the array of individual heritage listings that line it:

- i) The Corso is a most impressive formal street, with a central avenue planting of mature Phoenix palms and Moreton Bay figs. It has its own unique streetscape shaped by an uncommon grouping of fine late 19 century to early 20 century buildings. Despite varying levels of intactness and some less aesthetic and sympathetic development, the group as a collective whole contributes to the historic streetscape. The overall character is created by a wide vista defined on either side by pleasantly low-scaled and detailed buildings; the vertical emphasis of the plantings; monuments; pedestrian arcades; shop awnings; and framed views of the sea. The Corso has additional social significance generated by a strong collective community experience and memory of it as a visitor destination, linked to Manly's historical function as a resort.
- ii) The nature of The Corso as an important public pedestrian space means it is invariably experienced in 'serial vision' from eye-height level as one walks through the street. This experience reveals particular important attributes: an overall change in building scale from higher to lower as one moves from Manly Cove to the Ocean Beach; the particular scale and character generated by the ability to read the parapet details of the street façades (or, in some cases the related roof form) as silhouetted against the sky and background trees rather than against other buildings; and then, looking closer, building facades that are restrained but finely-detailed.
- iii) St Matthew's Church, located on the intersection of Darley Road with its tower as a focal point, together with the oblique intersection of Sydney Road are important interruptions to the linear form of The Corso. At each end The Corso is open and merges into spaces with good outward views. The gradual visual progression from Manly Cove to the Ocean Beach with the surf revealed behind a screen of Norfolk Pines is the essence of Manly's unique quality.

The place is encompassed within the Town Centre Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) (C2), which is also listed under Schedule 5. Its Statement of Significance, extracted from the NSW Heritage Inventory, reads:

The Manly Town Centre Conservation Area (TCCA) is of local heritage significance as a reflection of the early development of Manly as a peripheral harbor and beachside village in the fledgling colony of New South Wales. This significance is enhanced by its role as a day-trip and holiday destination during those early years, continuing up to the present time, and its association with H G Smith, the original designer and developer of the TCCA as it is today. The physical elements of the TCCA reflect this early development and its continued use for recreational purposes, most notably the intact promenade quality of The Corso and its turn of the century streetscape, as well as key built elements such as hotels, and remaining original commercial and small scale residential buildings.

The beautiful natural setting of the TCCA has provided a solid foundation for its picturesque qualities. The cultural landscape, including plantings, monuments and open spaces, reflects the continued enhancement of the TCCA over time, in order to attract and sustain visitors to the area, which in turn has provided great support to the local economy. The many historic vistas which remain to this day enhance the visitor experience of the TCCA and assist with providing an interpretation of the TCCA as it has changed over time.

The TCCA maintains a high level of social significance, as a popular destination for local, national and international tourists, as well as through its encapsulation of the Australian beach culture.

The New Brighton Hotel, adjacent to the place in the east, is an individual heritage item (I110). Its Statement of Significance (NSW Heritage Inventory), is reproduced below:

This building is an example of exotic Egyptian-like motifs and Inter-war Free Classical style.

The hotel is of major significance due to its contribution to the streetscape, its visual/textural interest and its association with early 20th century development of the resort.

An unusual design utilising exotic Egyptian-like motifs appropriate to the resort location such as columns faintly reminiscent of the Brighton Pavilion. The building is an important feature on the corner of Sydney Rd and the Corso and its eclectic design contributes to the rich collection of architectural styles in the streetscape of the Corso.

As per the MLEP (at Clause 5.10), the key objective for heritage management is to sustain heritage place's identified cultural heritage value. Accordingly, the council-endorsed Statements of Significance and further discussion in this document provides an essential baseline for understanding the predicated impact of new work on the subject place, HCA, and nearby heritage items—an approach in line with Article 27 ('Managing Change') of the *Burra Charter*.



Aerial photograph of the subject place, shaded red. (Source: Metromap, July 2021)



Three-dimensional model of the subject place, shaded red, facing north. (Source: Apple Maps)

3 Site Summary

The subject building, stretching between The Corso and Market Place, was constructed in 1935 as a purpose-built premise for Woolworths. Originating in Sydney in 1924, Woolworths was inspired by (but unconnected from) the American Woolworths chain. By the late 1930s, it had many suburban variety stores in NSW and Victoria and, during the postwar period, evolved as a national supermarket and discount department store. Initially, the subject building was one storey, with the existing second being provided around 1939. Woolworth's continued at the building until the mid-1990s.¹

The subject place now accommodates commercial tenancies on the ground floor with shopfront to The Corso and three to Market Place. The upper two levels have been adapted as backpacker accommodation.

It is a substantial late interwar commercial building designed in the Moderne idiom, which was typical for the Woolworths chain during the interwar years, playing off a prevalent association between the selected style and modernity/hygiene. The building has a hipped roof clad in corrugated sheet metal, which is concealed by a rendered parapet. The latter to The Corso was initially stepped but altered, although the central stepped/vertical element (note lower reeded panel) has been retained. A contemporary 'pop top' addition with high sidewalls at the centre of the primary roof is visible as a backdrop element to the parapet. The subject building is constructed of rendered brick.

The Corso elevation was designed to operate as the façade and featured an elaborate interwar shopfront with recessed openings and rounded projecting display windows (see historical photographs below). This element has been lost, replaced with a contemporary shopfront of glazing set within narrow surrounds. Remnant original features include the suspended awning, rendered banding (smooth or with streamlined moulding), framing pilasters, and the (now) middle band of rectangular recessed windows (initially multipaned glass). The upper balconies with double-leafed openings are a later addition. No historic signage survives.

The interior of the ground floor back from The Corso is a cavernous, thoroughly modernised space. No historical elements of any significance were noted.

It lies beyond the scope of this HIS to prepare a detailed assessment of the place's cultural heritage significance, nor is one considered necessary in light of the proposed work (section 4). Nonetheless, a brief discussion of heritage value follows.

As a former purpose-built retail premise for Woolworths constructed in the region's pre-eminent commercial strip, the subject building would likely satisfy the requisite threshold for historical significance (Criterion A). Its scale and original, exuberant design expression, likely architect prepared, attests to the volume of interwar trade conducted along The Corso and interwar shopping patterns at the local level. The store may have some broader historical or associational value to Woolworths.

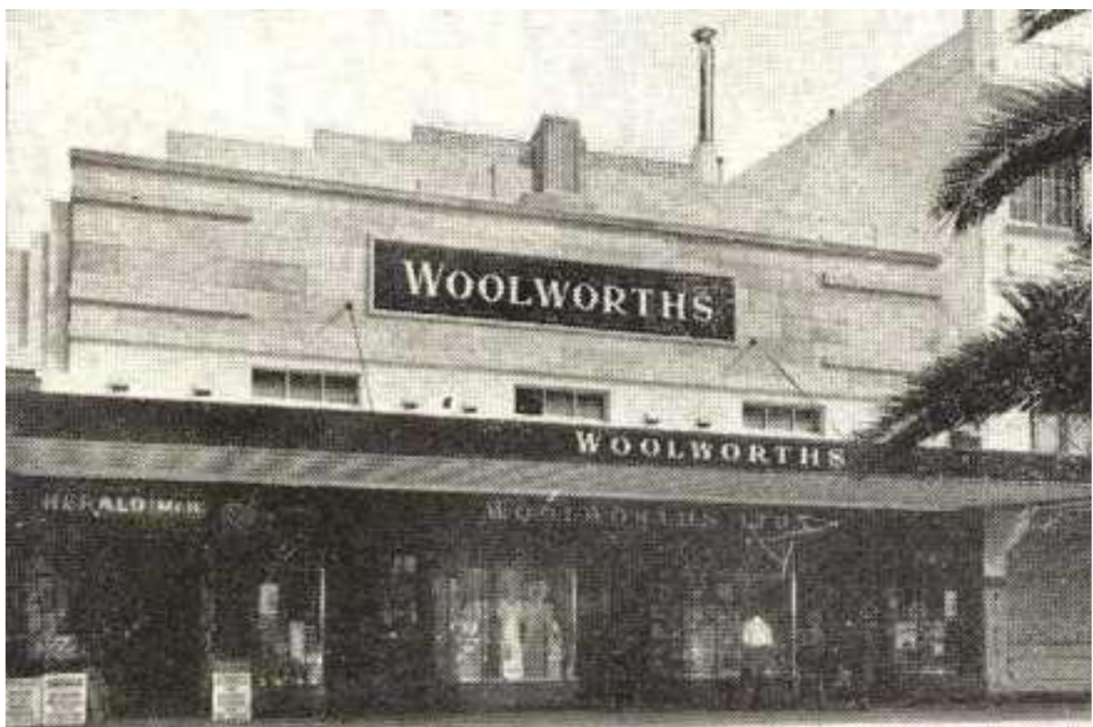
Aesthetically, the subject building is a good and large example of the late interwar period commercial building; however, culminative alterations to the upper façade and replacement of the original shopfront have greatly reduced its intactness. The loss or obfuscation of its original pared-down and sleek Moderne//Art Deco detailing and changes to the stepped parapet have consequentially diminished its ready interpretation. Further consideration and a municipality-wide comparative study would be required to establish whether the place meets the requisite threshold for aesthetic criterion (E).

Regardless, the subject place makes a positive contribution to the Town Centre HCA.

¹ Wool's, Corso, no 63-67, Manly Local Studies via History hub



Subject façade from the Corso, 1938, showing original shopfront.
(Source: *Wool's, Corso, no 63-67*, Manly Local Studies via History hub)



Close-up of subject façade from The Corso. Note what appears to be a pressed metal soffit to the underside of the awning.
Undated but likely late interwar period.
(Source: *Wool's, Corso, no 63-67*, Manly Local Studies via History hub)



Oblique view of the subject place (red arrow) from The Corso, facing north, dated 1981. Shopfront appears intact.
(Source: *Wool's, Corso, no 63-67*, Manly Local Studies via History hub)



View of the subject building (red arrow) from Sydney Road, facing east in the 1980s. Parapet since modified, paired windows altered into juliet balconies, and original façade detailing lost.
(Source: *Wool's, Corso, no 63-67*, Manly Local Studies via History hub)



Subject place from The Corso.



Subject place (red arrow) with New Brighton Hotel adjacent (east).



Subject place (red arrow) with the ANZ Bank adjacent (west).



Subject place ground floor from The Corso, east section.



Subject place ground floor from The Corso, west section.



Subject place, ground floor interior.



Subject place, ground floor interior from mezzanine.

4 The Proposal

The proposal—a general bar fit-out (Hard Rock Café) for the ground floor and mezzanine level addressing The Corso—is outlined in a set of development application drawings prepared by Grain Architects, dated 1 December 2021. These plans should be referred to for a complete understanding of the proposed activities.

In summary, those aspects of the new works pertinent to an assessment of heritage impact are:

- the replacement shopfront,
- new signage, and
- provision of a steel structural LED Guitar Sculpture to the ground floor façade.

4 Review of Heritage Impact

The following section examines the projected impact of the proposal on the subject place and streetscape of The Corso, which is affected by the Town Centre HCA and includes several nearby individual heritage items. While adopting a performance/issue-based model, the assessment considers the pertinent heritage objectives of the MLEP and heritage controls of the MDCP, including those specific to the precinct.

As the new work would alter a building identified as an individual heritage item and one situated within a heritage conservation area, the MLEP at cl. 5.10(2) (a)(iii) requires that the consent authority, Northern Beaches Council, consider the impact of the proposal on the significance of the relevant heritage places, in particular their ‘associated fabric, settings and views’. This HIS, prepared by an experienced heritage professional, constitutes the required documentation to allow the council to understand the heritage impact of the proposed activities.

N.B. The interior of the subject place—which now manifests as a wholly contemporary space—is not specified in its Schedule 5 listing. As such, it is not considered necessary to assess change proposed within the ground floor from a heritage impact perspective. This area would present to the user or passer-by (filtered/screened by the

shopfront) as a present-day commercial space, in line with the majority of street-level internal spaces along The Corso. It is noted that existing floor levels would be retained and a 'logical' layout provided, in line with the controls of the MDCP (section 5.1.2.2)

Assessment

It is proposed to replace the non-original shopfront with one largely glazed and divided into panels and set in metal frames powder coated Spotted Gum. Some service vents would also be installed to the upper section of two glazed panels. The wall surrounds retained fascia of the awning would be repainted Dulux Monument.

Optimally, from a heritage management perspective, the original shopfront would be reinstated or interpreted. While some evidence is available to inform such an option (more may be locatable), it is acknowledged that such actions, particularly reinstatement, would be onerous for the owner and commercially restrictive for the incoming tenant.

The proposed shopfront would not affect any original/significant fabric (none of which survives to the ground floor) nor present as incongruent with The Corso's existing street-level conditions. The latter is dominated by similar late 20th-century or contemporary glazed shopfronts. The new shopfront would still 'read' as comprising a 'frame' with solid ends and a slender window sill.

The new work would not affect the remnant historic bar in front of the New Brighton Hotel, adjacent to the east of the subject place. It derives some of its interpretive potency from the very fact that it is one of the few buildings addressing The Corso that maintains historic fabric at the street level. The proposal would not detract aesthetically from its already much modified setting at ground level.

The service vents would be discretely situated and have been rationalised as much as feasible. Their presence would not likely run counter to the public's expectations of services at a general bar in a historic commercial streetscape.

It is also noted that the proposed shopfront would not preclude a reinstatement or interpretive shopfront design at a later date. Such outcomes may be found to be more compatible with a future tenant or use for the place.

It is proposed to mount a moderately sized back-lit multi-coloured sign ('Hard Rock Live') at the centre of the awning's fascia. Such a location is traditional and would not obscure any sightlines to remnant original detailing in the subject façade. A multiplicity of contemporary signage types characterises the Corso; an aspect of its significance as a bustling commercial thoroughfare. Accepting that, this proposed signage would not undermine the extant character of the streetscape.

The proposal also seeks to attach an illuminated steel guitar sculpture to the west side of the ground floor façade. It would be relatively slim, project forward, and align with the top of the ground floor parapet. While this element can be described as fairly restrained in form, its illuminated presence and scale relative to The Corso would be prominent. It may be considered by the consent authority as out of keeping with the desired character of the heritage group. Tempering its potential heritage impact is its readily reversibility and the contribution it could make to the underlying commercial vitality of The Corso, which is an aspect of its heritage value.

In sum, the majority of the proposal would have a negligible impact on the subject place, Town Centre HCA, and nearby heritage items. It presents as a supportable outcome from a heritage impact perspective. It is recommended that the applicant engage with the council heritage advisor to examine options for making the guitar sculpture more palatable, such as considering a reduction in size and overall conspicuousness.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Wilson

PATRICK WILSON

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