

20 April 2023

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 Purpose

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 place)—a highly modified interwar commercial building, 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 ground-floor retail fit-out and provides the consent authority, the Northern Beaches Council, with an expert assessment of the new work's projected heritage impact.

The author of this report is an experienced built heritage consultant and accredited professional historian and the assessment, opinion, and recommendations are 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 based on sound heritage management approaches, namely as expressed by *The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance*, *The Burra Charter* (rev. 2013), the *NSW Heritage Manual* (various revisions), and *Better Placed: Design Guide for Heritage* (2019). A visual inspection of the site and its setting was undertaken in November 2021.

2 Heritage Management Framework

The subject place (CP/SP67337) is located on the north side of The Corso. It is flanked by the late 20th-century ANZ Bank (no. 59) in the west and interwar period New Brighton Hotel (no. 69-71) in the east. The rear of the place abuts Market Place.

The place is identified as an individual heritage item under Schedule 5 of the *Manly Local Environmental Plan 2013* (MLEP). The manner of its inclusion is part of a serial heritage listing that applies to most buildings on either side of The Corso (refer to HER_005):

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

A council-endorsed Statement of Significance for the place is not known to exist. This report provides a brief discussion of the subject building's heritage value in Section 3.

The *Manly Development Control Plan 2013* (MDCP) provides a broad Statement of Significance for The Corso (5.1.2), which is considered pertinent to the place and follows:

- 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 19th century to early 20th 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 also situated within the Town Centre Heritage Conservation Area (HCA) (C2). 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 local 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.

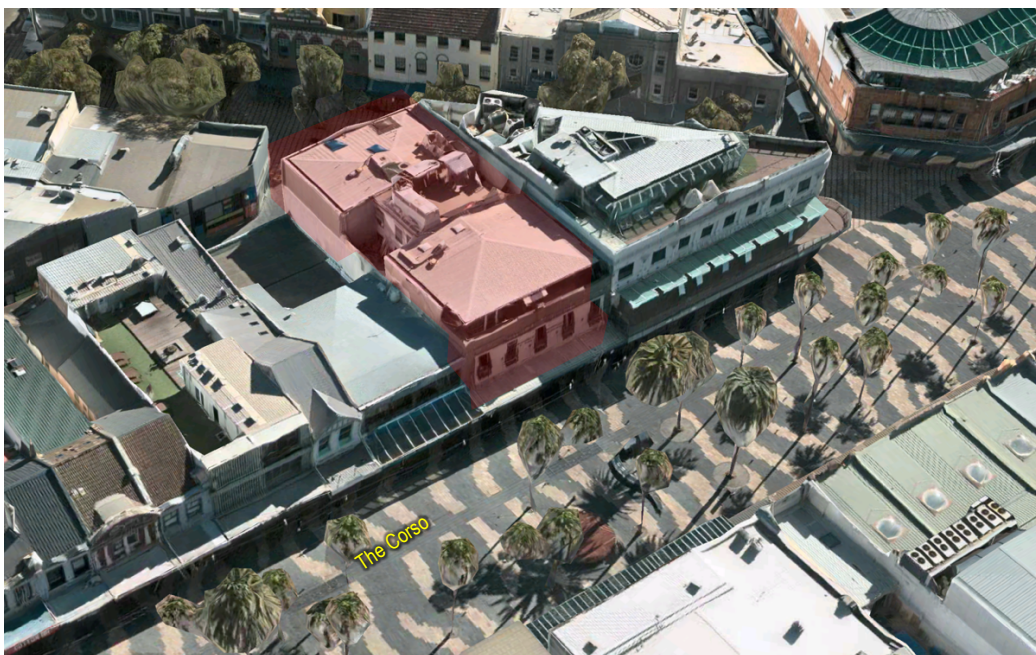
The hotel is of major significance due to its contribution to the streetscape, its visual/textural interest and its association with early 20th century development of the resort.

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 Road 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 cl. 5.10), the key objective of heritage management is to sustain a 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 likely 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 Place Summary

The three-storey subject building, stretching between The Corso and Market Place, was constructed in 1935 as a purpose-built premise for Woolworths, presumably to the design of an in-house architect.

Originating in Sydney in 1924, Woolworths was inspired by (but unconnected from) the American Woolworths chain. By the late 1930s, it had developed a multitude of suburban variety stores in both NSW and Victoria. During the postwar years, Woolworths evolved into a national supermarket and discount department store. Initially, the subject building was one storey. The existing second storey was added around 1939. Woolworth's remained the occupant until the mid-1990s.¹

The proposed location of the new work is the ground floor section of the subject building that addresses The Corso. It has accommodated a single commercial tenant for at least several years. The ground floor section accessed from Market Place is comprised of three shopfronts. The first and second floor of the subject building—above the canopy—are utilised for backpacker accommodation.

The subject building is a substantial late interwar commercial building designed in the Moderne style, which was typical for the Woolworths chain at the time; its 'clean' and streamlined design language being readily associated with modernity and hygiene—desirable qualities for a still consolidating brand.

The building has a hipped roof clad in corrugated sheet metal, which is concealed by a rendered parapet in both the north and south. The parapet to The Corso was initially stepped in profile but has been modified, 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 primary façade and featured an elaborate interwar shopfront with four recessed openings and projecting curved display windows (see historical photographs below). This fine element has been lost, replaced with a contemporary shopfront of glazing set within narrow piers. There is also a fire door at the western end of the shopfront.

Some original remnant features remain to the upper facade, including rendered banding (smooth or with streamlined moulding) and the middle band of rectangular recessed windows (originally multipaned, above the canopy). The suspended awning may be original (with the decorative soffit concealed) or is a generally sympathetic contemporary element. The upper balconies with double-leafed openings are a later alteration. No historic signage survives.

The interior of the ground floor back from The Corso is a spacious, completely modernised area. 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 the building's heritage value follows.

As a former purpose-built retail premise for Woolworths—an important commercial venture—constructed in the district's then preeminent commercial strip, the subject building would likely satisfy the requisite threshold for historical significance (Criterion A). Its scale and original, exuberant likely architect-prepared design expression (albeit diminished by modifications) attest to the volume of interwar trade conducted along The Corso and contemporary shopping patterns at the local level.

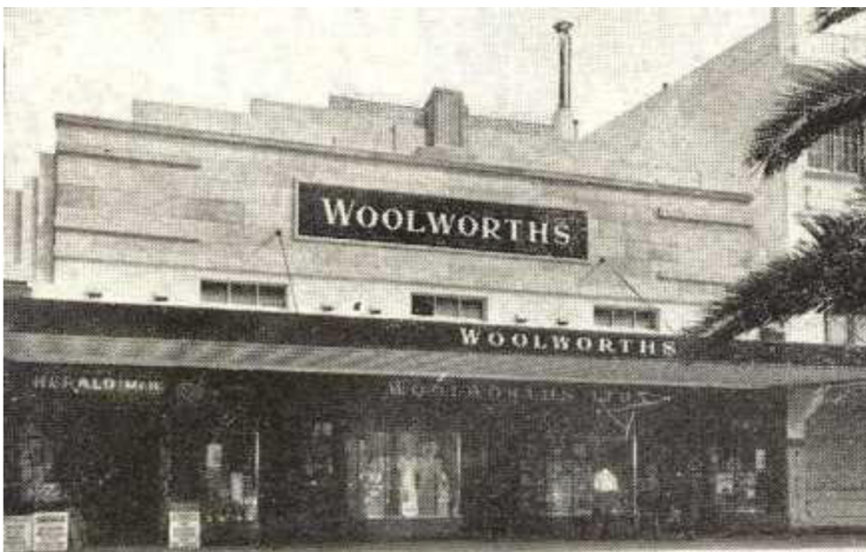
¹ Wool's, Corso, no 63-67, Manly Local Studies via History hub

The subject building is a good and prominent example of a late interwar period commercial building; however, accumulative alterations to the upper façade and the complete replacement of the original facade shopfront have dramatically reduced its intactness and architectural integrity. The loss or obfuscation of its original pared-down and sleek Moderne//Art Deco detailing and changes to the stepped parapet, in particular, have diminished its finesse and aesthetic or representative potential. Further consideration and a municipality-wide comparative study would be required to establish whether the place still meets the requisite threshold for the aesthetic (E) or representative (G) criteria.

Regardless, the subject place is viewed as making a generally positive contribution to the Town Centre HCA as a somewhat legible interwar commercial building.



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



Close-up of the 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 showing the non-original ground-floor shopfront.



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



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



Subject ground floor from The Corso, east section.



Subject ground floor from The Corso, west section.



Subject place, ground floor interior.

4 Proposal

The proposal is outlined in a set of development application drawings prepared by Grain Architects, dated 16 August 2022. These plans should be referred to for a complete understanding of the proposed activities, which can be summarised as a retail fit-out establishing three commercial tenancies requiring replacement shopfronts and internal works.

It is proposed to replace the non-original ground-floor shopfront with three nearly floor-to-ceiling slim metal-framed storefronts, of various sizes. A small section of wall would be introduced above the shopfronts (rendered and painted). The retained canopy fascia would be utilised for signage and existing suspended signage boxes re-used. The existing floor space would be subdivided and refurbished.

5 Review of Heritage Impact

The following section examines the projected impact of the proposal on the subject place and streetscape of The Corso, which forms the core of the Town Centre HCA. While adopting a performance-based model, the assessment considers the pertinent statutory 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 a building situated within a heritage conservation area, the MLEP at cl. 5.10(2) (a)(i)(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.

The proposed continuation of the subject place's retail use at its ground floor is highly compatible with the building's significance and would actively contribute to the commercial character and dynamism of the streetscape, which is integral to the heritage value of the encompassing HCA.

The new work would not physically impact any original or significant fabric at the subject place or in the Town Centre HCA.

From a heritage management perspective, the optimal course of action would be to reconstruct the original shopfront. While some photographic evidence is available to inform such an option, the necessary fine-grain evidence/information to allow for the serious consideration of this option has not come to light. It is also acknowledged that reinstating the relatively complex original shopfront, with four entrances and numerous curved components, would prove problematic for incoming or future potential commercial tenants.

As an alternative to reconstruction, a shopfront design interpretive of the original interwar version could be proposed. This occurred with an earlier scheme reviewed by the author of this report when only two tenancies were proposed. It included recessed entrances and low-tiled stall boards. From a heritage impact perspective, it was preferable.

Nonetheless, considering the plethora of late 20th-century or recently installed fully glazed shopfronts in the vicinity of the place, the proposed ground-floor design is determined as an appropriately distinguishable, minimalist, and reversible addition to the commercial shopfronts of The Corso. It would not present as discordant with the established conditions of The Corso.

The interior of the subject place—which now manifests as a wholly contemporary space—is not specified in its Schedule 5 listing. A site inspection has confirmed that no elements of significance remain internally. Accepting

that, the proposed internal refurbishment would not have an adverse impact. It is also noted that this area would also be secondary built/architectural interest to users or passers-by relative to the proposed shopfront and extant canopy and upper facade. Commensurate with the controls of the MDCP, the proposed interiors would be interpreted as having a 'logical' layout (section 5.1.2.2).

New signage would utilise existing mounts attached to the underside of the canopy or be provided to its fascia, which conforms with traditional signage locations.

In sum, the shopfront design would not have an undue impact on the significance of the subject place, HCA, or in the vicinity items and would support an ongoing compatible commercial use. The new work is broadly in compliance with the heritage clauses of the MLEP and controls of the MDCP.

Accordingly, it is recommended that the Council support the proposal on heritage grounds.

Yours faithfully,

Patrick Wilson

Director — Principal Heritage Consultant

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M. ICOMOS, Pro. Hist. PHA (NSW & ACT + VIC), SAHANZ, APT, IAIA, APT, Interps Aus, Nat. Trust (NSW)