

Policy for the Management of Warehouse/Courtyard Complexes in Central Sydney



CITY
OF SYDNEY



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Central Sydney, in particular the western precinct between York and Sussex Street north of the Town Hall, contains a considerable number of late 19th and early 20th century warehouses. These buildings are evidence of a period when the city was a busy maritime trading centre, where the management of goods for import and export required the construction of warehouse facilities adjacent to the main wharfage areas of Sydney Cove and Darling Harbour (Cockle Bay).

The construction of the western precinct warehouses followed on from the earlier maritime focus upon Circular Quay, with its generally smaller scale warehouse structures. The much larger Pyrmont warehouses and woolstores in turn were developed further into the 20th century as the volume of exports, especially wool, required an major increase in storage capacity

In most cases, those warehouses that survive in Central Sydney from the period 1870 to 1910, prior to the development of Pyrmont, exhibit particular characteristics that identify them for what they are; utilitarian, robust but generally well designed and constructed buildings. In some cases, notwithstanding a measure of incremental change, these structures still exhibit the particular planning and technology characteristics that were a response to the need to effectively manage the movement and storage of bulky merchandise. The use of vertically aligned loading bays with projecting pulley beams, heavy ironbark and/or cast iron internal structures, and in later cases the use of electric lifts, demonstrates a technological response to user requirements. The use of cartways and rear courtyards is a functional planning development that allowed goods vehicles to move through the building to an off street loading/unloading space that was far more convenient than the main thoroughfare. These courtyards were often shared between two or more buildings, maximising their effectiveness, and in some cases a complex of buildings under single ownership would be constructed around a courtyard.

In order to facilitate an understanding of the heritage significance of warehouse/courtyard complexes, and to promote their proper management, the Central Sydney Planning Committee resolved in July 1995 that a study of these items should be undertaken. This document examines the extent to which these warehouse/courtyard complexes survive in Central Sydney, assesses their significance, and sets out specific and general policies for their management.

A survey was carried out in September 1995 to determine the extent to which 19th and early 20th century warehouse/courtyard complexes survive within Central Sydney. A number of authoritative references were also utilised to assist in the work, notably the 1993 Survey of Warehouses and Woolstores by Howells and O'Donnell, and that component of the 1995 Heritage Inventory Review covering warehouses carried out by Orwell and Peter Phillips. The following sub-sections summarise the results of the survey and research stage of the study. The study area did not include Ultimo, Pyrmont, Millers Point and the Rocks. Although these areas also contain a considerable number of warehouses and woolstores of varying types, the geographical terms of reference for this survey was restricted to Central Sydney.

2.1

General Typology

Approximately 45 buildings originally constructed as warehouses and/or woolstores survive within Central Sydney.

The greatest concentration of these structures occurs within the western precinct, north of Druitt Street between York and Clarence Street. A smaller number of the woolstores of a generally earlier type can be found within the Circular Quay precinct.

2.2

Extent of Change

All of the warehouses and woolstores identified within the study area have been adapted to other uses, primarily that of commercial office with a retail component. To varying degrees this adaptive reuse has incrementally removed the technical evidence of the original function of the buildings, although generally their aesthetic significance has not been affected to the same degree.

Typically, the most significant impact of this incremental change (as it relates to the terms of reference of this study) has been the infilling of the cartways that originally allowed goods vehicles to drive through the building. Moreover, it is estimated that significantly less than 50% of the surviving warehouses and woolstores originally incorporated this facility, the majority being reliant upon an internal loading and unloading space in some cases supplemented by the rear of the building being bounded by a public laneway.

A number of former warehouses and woolstores have been identified that incorporate former cartways that have been infilled and adapted, usually as commercial office foyers (refer Appendix 2). The available evidence suggests that these cartways previously connected with internal courtyards, but these have also been infilled overtime.

Examples of this type of adaptive infill are:

- > NEM House (83-85 York Street)
- > Endeavour Credit Union House (144 Clarence Street)

A number of former warehouses and woolstores also survive where the cartway remains as a vehicle access point, but now connects to an enclosed or below ground carpark rather than to an internal courtyard (refer appendix 3).

Included in this group would be:

- > John Solomon Building (1 8-20 York Street)
- > The Landmark (22-26 York Street)

2.3

Extant Warehouse/Courtyard Complexes

The survey and research work undertaken has demonstrated that, given the overall number of surviving warehouse/wool store buildings in Central Sydney, those that incorporate original courtyards accessed by cartways is rare. A total of 8 examples that to some degree fit this criteria have been identified, (refer Appendix I) comprising:

- > Letraset House/Guide House (346-348 Kent Street/201-207 Clarence Street)
- > Former Foley Bros. Warehouse (230-232 Sussex Street)
- > Subito/Guild House (340 Kent Street/ 1 97-1 99 Clarence Street)
- > Gerling House (42-44 Pitt Street)
- > Cue Clothing Building (1 52- 1 56 Clarence Street)
- > Carlton House (38-44 York Street)
- > Former Warehouse (336-338 Kent Street)
- > Carla Zampatti Building (435-441 Kent Street)

However, this group of warehouses and woolstores that comprise drive through cartways and internal courtyards is in itself somewhat disparate. The degree to which the complexes exhibit the key characteristics of the type varies considerably, especially in regard to the scale of the courtyard, and the relationship of the building or buildings to the courtyards. In some cases the courtyards are extremely cramped and have been degraded by insensitive later development (e.g. Carlton House). In one case, the open area is not a true courtyard, but an open driveway (Carla Zampatti Building). Moreover, the complexes demonstrate considerable variance in terms of original cartway/courtyard fabric, and only two examples retain the original bluestone sets and associated hardware reinforcement that once characterised the building type (Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse).

It is clear from the survey and research findings set out above that those warehouses and woolstores within Central Sydney that retain the characteristic drive through cartway and internal courtyard system are rare. It is also clear that within this select group of buildings are a smaller number that exhibit these features and their associated elements to a greater degree. These characteristic features and elements can be listed as follows

1. Cartway retains connection to courtyard;
2. Courtyard functions as commercial loading space for a number of warehouse/woolstore buildings;
3. Courtyard has not been reduced in scale or otherwise degraded by later adjacent development
4. Courtyard remains open to sky;
5. Walls of warehouses or woolstores defining courtyard retain evidence of goods handling techniques, e.g. vertically aligned loading bays, projecting pulley beams, water hoists etc.;
6. Floors of court and cartway(s) retain original fabric, usually bluestone sects (often reinforced over time with iron or steel cart tracks);
7. Associated hardware items are substantially retained e.g. bollards, corner reinforcement, iron or steel gates etc.

The extent to which each of the nominated surviving warehouse/wool store complexes exhibit these features and elements is considered to be a reasonable basis for determining their comparative significance, and ultimately for developing appropriate conservation policy i.e.

Warehouse\Woolstore

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Letraset House/Guide House	X	X	X	X		X	X
Former Foley Bros Warehouse	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Subito/Guild House	X	X	X	X			
Gerling House	X		X	X			X
Cue Clothing Building	X		X	X	X		
Carlton House	X	X		X			
Former Warehouse	X			X			
(336-338 Kent Street)							
Carla Zampatti Building	X		X	X		X	

From the above analysis of intact features and elements it is apparent that the Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse complexes constitute the most intact and qualitative surviving examples of the type. In particular, these buildings provide a high degree of interpretive significance, in their ability to demonstrate the functional and spatial characteristics of a building type that was an essential component of the commercial development of late 19th and early 20th century Sydney.

The following brief statement of significance has been prepared as a general assessment for the above group of warehouses and woolstores. The statement is based on that prepared by Orwell and Peter Phillips for Letraset House/Guide House in 1994, and endorsed by the Heritage Council. However, as noted in Section 3 above, the individual buildings within the group may vary in significance, and the statement notes in what respect individual buildings may be of particular significance. The statement of significance utilises the current State Heritage Project (SHIP) criteria.

Criteria 1 - Evolution and Association (Historic).

The history of these buildings (i.e. the Western Precinct complexes) is typical of the gradual replacement of former houses with warehouses and woolstores serving and served by the new wharves in Darling Harbour (Cockle Bay) by development companies such as Anglo-Australian formed for this purpose. The group shares with other surviving warehouses and woolstores the ability to evoke the 19th century commercial life in Central Sydney. In particular the more intact examples (i.e. Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse) are of a very high level of significance in their ability to demonstrate a form and configuration that was once typical of the type. Gerling House is a unique example of a relatively late (c.1895) warehouse/courtyard complex within the Circular Quay context of Central Sydney, and was constructed after the warehouse/woolstore focus had shifted south-west to Darling Harbour (Cockle Bay).

Criteria 2 - Creative and Technical (Aesthetic)

The group shares with other surviving warehouses and woolstores in Central Sydney a high degree of aesthetic significance in that they exhibit a robust and utilitarian simplicity that clearly demonstrate their design function. The buildings demonstrate a high degree of architectural refinement, featuring arches, parapets, bay windows, contrasting materials, (usually polychrome brickwork or face brick combined with sandstone) cornices and string courses. Many of the buildings were designed by leading Architects of the period, notably Robertson and Marks, Joeseland and Vernon, and Byera Hadley.

Criterion 3 - Research Potential (Scientific)

The group possesses a very high level of scientific significance, even by comparison with other surviving warehouses and woolstores in Central Sydney. This significance derives from the ability of the buildings within the group to demonstrate, to varying degrees the low technology system utilised in the late 19th and early 20th century for the storage of bulky merchandise, i.e. large vehicles in and out, off street loading space, necessary hardware for security and damage reduction, facilities for the vertical movement of merchandise within the courtyard space. The individual buildings within the group are of varying degrees of scientific significance in this respect, and it is obvious that the Letraset House/ Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse are of an extremely high order of scientific significance.

Criterion 4 - Other

As a substantially intact physical record of late 19th and early 20th century commercial life in Central Sydney, the group is ideally suited to public education through interpretation on site.

Criterion 5 - Rare

The group comprises a relatively rare collection of warehouses and woolstores that retain their relationship with external courtyard spaces that were essential for the function of the buildings. Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros Warehouse are extremely rare examples because of the degree to which they retain these characteristics and associated elements. The Carla Zampatti building is also extremely rare due to its unusual configuration utilising an open drive through system, although not a courtyard in the general sense that it is used to describe other complexes in the group.

Criterion 6 - Representative

The group is representative of a building type that the available evidence suggests was much more common in late 19th and early 20th century Central Sydney.

In consideration of the terms of reference for this study, particularly in terms of historic, aesthetic, scientific and rarity criteria, all of the buildings within the group must be considered to be of at least local significance. It is arguable that both Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Brothers Warehouse, due to the extent to which they retain the fundamental characteristics and elements specific to this building type, are of state significance (the 1994 Phillips report confirms this conclusion). The Cue Clothing Building (large scale courtyard and intact loading/unloading docks), Gerling House (large scale courtyard, some intact hardware and rare in the Circular Quay Precinct), Subito/Guild House (dual frontage warehouses constructed at the same time by Architects Robertson and Marks sharing a common courtyard) and Carla Zampatti (rare derivation using open drivethrough in place of a courtyard) should be considered to be of regional significance.

The fundamental tenet of conservation policy is that the degree of permissible intervention and change should be directly responsive to the established level of significance of the item in question. (Article 3 to the Burra Charter). It is also important that the opportunity to demonstrate significance and to interpret the particular functional and aesthetic nature of such buildings as warehouses and woolstores be responded to.

The following conservation policy has been set out in accordance with this methodology:

5.1

General Policy

Adaptive Reuse

All of the buildings in the group are capable of ongoing adaptive reuse without harm to their heritage significance. Further adaptive reuse would be a continuation of a process that has been underway since the buildings ceased their original function.

Preservation

To a degree, all of the buildings comprise characteristics and elements that are fundamental to their significance as rare examples of a distinctive building type. They also facilitate an understanding of the original design rationale and function of those complexes. These characteristics and elements should be preserved.

Restoration

In limited circumstances, restoration of fabric is appropriate where the fabric is significant and substantially intact, and to do so would enhance significance and interpretation.

Recording

As a general procedure, alterations and demolition of fabric that is of significance, where this is permissible, should be preceded by recording.

Heritage Listing

All of the buildings in the group, with the exception of Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Brothers Warehouse, are listed on Schedule I of the Central Sydney LEP -Conservation of Heritage Items. Such listing is appropriate and necessary, in consideration of their established significance. It is unacceptable that Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse, which on the available evidence are of state significance, should not be listed. At such time as the Heritage LEP is amended, Letraset House/Guide House (including 207 Clarence Street and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse should be placed on Schedule I of that plan.

Conservation Plan

A conservation plan should be prepared for each building prior to the development of any proposal for substantial change to the buildings.

5.2

Specific Policy

1. Preserve fundamental configuration of buildings and courtyard;
2. Courtyard to be retained at existing size, with buildings opening onto courtyard at all levels;
3. Courtyard should remain open to sky, although glazed roof structure may be acceptable if it does not obscure views in and out and minimises structural connections with existing fabric (high quality design expertise required to advise this);
4. Original significant fabric and hardware to be preserved in situ, with selective restoration where appropriate, e.g..
 - bluestone setts
 - steel and iron wheel tracks
 - loading bays
 - pulley beams
 - bollards
5. Opportunities should be developed for maximising active uses within the perimeter areas of the warehouse/woolstore defining the courtyard and within the courtyard itself,.
6. Selective adaptation of original fabric and hardware is acceptable where necessary to ensure elective function and safety, e.g. use of contemporary paving material over original bluestone setts, reversible and limited to necessary trafficable areas;
7. Original vertically aligned openings to courtyards to be preserved, and later unsympathetic openings replaced with reconstructed original or similarly proportioned openings;
8. Courtyard may be infilled with structure that is compatible in design terms with the significant warehouse/wool store form and detail;
9. Vertical extension to the warehouse/woolstore defining the courtyard may be acceptable if the height increase is less than 2-3 storeys and is carried out in the traditional manner utilising a materials, proportions and details that are identical or similar to the existing.

The following matrix sets out the specific conservation policy measures for each of the buildings within the group. As noted in the preamble to this section, the extent of intervention and change is generally a direct response to significance, i.e. high significance implies a lesser degree of acceptable intervention. As also noted above, all of the buildings have been subjected to incremental change (including change of use), and are capable of continuing adaptive reuse. However, the degree to which appropriate intervention is acceptable to facilitate change is not the same in all cases.

In summary, the appropriate policy for the most significant building/courtyard complexes within the group (i.e. Letraset House/Guide House and the former Foley Bros. Warehouse) is that the buildings, cartways and courtyards should be retained in their current configuration. Significant fabric should also be retained, although adaptive reuse is acceptable where it is consistent with this premise. At the other end of the scale, those building/courtyard complexes that have been substantially diminished in significance terms by alterations (i.e. Carlton House and 336-338 Kent Street) are capable of considerably greater alteration, possibly even enclosure of the courtyards. The remaining buildings of the group fit between these extremes. The appropriate conservation policy for these items is retention of their current configuration, but with a comparatively greater degree of alteration to fabric.

Warehouse/Woolstore

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Letraset House/Guide House	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Former Foley Bros. Warehouse	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Subito/Guild House	X	X	X	N/A	X	N/A	X		
Gerling Douse	X	X	X	X	X	N/A	X		X
Cue Clothing Building	X	X	X	X	X	N/A		X	
Carlton House				X		N/A	X		
Former Warehouse (336-338 Kent Street)				N/A		N/A	X	X	
Carla Zampatti Building	X	X	X	X	X	N/A			

Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 8107
Name: Former Foley Brothers Warehouse
Address: 230-232 Sussex Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4045/4010/4011
 Name: Letraset House/Guide House
 Address: 346-348 Kent Street/201-207 Clarence Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4043/4008
Name: Subito/Guild House
Address: 340 Kent Street/ 1 97- 1 99 Clarence Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

InventoryNº 2139
 Name: Gerling House
 Address: 42-44 Pitt Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4005
Name: Clue Clothing Company
Address: 152-156 Clarence Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4083
Name: Carlton House
Address: 38-44 York Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4042 0''
Name: Former Warehouse
Address: 336-338 Kent Street



Former Warehouses retaining intact Cartways/Courtyards

Inventory N°: 4053
Name: Caria Zampatti
Address: 435-441 Kent Street



Appendix 2

A2

Former Warehouses retaining infilled Cartways

Inventory N°: 4090
Name: NEM House
Address: 83-87 York Street



Former Warehouses retaining infilled Cartways

Inventory N°: 4003
Name: Endeavour Credit Union House
Address: 144 Clarence Street



Appendix 3

A3

Former Warehouses retaining open Cartways

Inventory N°: 2160
Name: John Solomon Building
Address: 1 8-20 York Street



Former Warehouses retaining open Cartways

Inventory N°: 2162
Name: The Landmark (No.22)
Address: 22-26 York Street

