



Architectural Projects ¹

1812 – 75-77 Pitt Street, Sydney
Planning Report V.03
Heritage Floor Space Application
September 2022

Architectural Projects

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1812 – 75-77 PITT STREET, SYDNEY – PLANNING REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. BACKGROUND

Architectural Projects were commissioned by Wiltshire International to prepare this Planning Report in September 2021 in support of an application seeking an endorsement of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the former Royal Exchange Assurance Building, also prepared by Architectural Projects (Appendix 1) and the Award of Heritage Floor Space (HFS) by the City of Sydney to the former Royal Exchange Assurance Building at 75-77 Pitt Street, Sydney.

The building and site are listed as a heritage item identified in the Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 (Item No. I1917). The building and site are not listed as lying within a Conservation Area identified in the Sydney LEP 2012. The significance of the site has been assessed in the CMP, which states that the former Royal Exchange Assurance Building is a rare and an outstanding example of a 1930's modernist commercial exterior of high-quality design. It is significant for its contribution to an understanding of the importance of the finance industry as an investor in modernist office accommodation. It is also of architectural significance as possibly the first international style high-rise office building in Sydney.

The application seeks an HFS awards of 949.20 m² for the site. The application also provides the total gross floor area (GFA) and height of the conserved heritage building on the site on the site to enable the placing of a restrictive covenant on the Certificate of Title to limit future development in accordance with Council's HFS planning controls and ensure the ongoing conservation of the building by regular maintenance are in accordance with the CMP.

The Heritage GFA of the building, as conserved, is 2,378 m². The height of the building, as conserved, is RL50.01m, corresponding to existing ground levels.

1.2. OUTLINE OF TASKS TO BE UNDERTAKEN IN THE BRIEF

Architectural Projects were commissioned by Wiltshire International to prepare this Planning Report in September 2021 in support of an application seeking an endorsement of the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the former Royal Exchange Assurance Building, also prepared by Architectural Projects (Appendix 1) and the Award of Heritage Floor Space (HFS) by the City of Sydney to the former Royal Exchange Assurance Building at 75-77 Pitt Street, Sydney.

1.3. HISTORY

YEAR	DATE & MONTH	DESCRIPTION
1937	31 May	Building officially opened by Premier Mr Stevens
1953		Plans for refacing the building and replacement of windows prepared by Kenneth McConnel
1965		Alterations to lower façade and interiors by Michael Powerey Smith
1973		Major upgrade of interior and new awning
1979, 1982		Internal alterations
1986		Thai Airways purchased the building
1990		Modification to lower façade and interior

1.4. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The facade of the building, originally fully clad in vitrolite panels, has been rendered and the three storey base incorporating the double height assurance chamber originally lined with a concrete screen and glass blocks, has been replaced by new glazing and ceramic tiles. The facade presents its minimalist arrangement of horizontal spandrels in contrast to the verticality of the southern office windows which are topped by a tower incorporating the caretakers flat with a flagpole above. The

glass is flush with the spandrel panel and provides a glazed corner detail to the office space on the upper levels. The original windows to the facade above the third level were replaced in 1953 with bronze glazing of a similar design. These remain in place. Internally the office space has been refitted although the original finishes to the stairs and remnants of floor finishes in the basement remain. Ceramic tiles and the setback to the glazing to the façade are intrusive. The roof level former caretakers flat retains the curved glass to the southern facade of the tower element.

1.5. PLANNING REPORT STRUCTURE

The details of the application are set out in this Planning Report in the following sections:

- Section 1 Executive Summary – provides the objective of this report.
- Section 2 The Site – provides a summary of the site, including the location, existing development and a summary of previous development consents.
- Section 3 Conservation Management Plan – provides a summary of the conservation practice at the building, including a summary of the CMP, conservation works completed, and ongoing conservation, maintenance and interpretation works.
- Section 4 Planning Framework – summarises the statutory context applying to the application.
- Section 5 Award Sought – provides detail of the HFS award being sought.
- Section 6 Assessment – provides an assessment of the application.

2. THE SITE

2.1. SUBJECT SITE

The site, Lot 1, DP86265 11916, is roughly rectangular with an angle boundary to Tank Stream Way. The site fall is generally level with a part basement floor.

2.2. EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

The facade of the building, originally fully clad in vitrolite panels, has been rendered and the three-storey base incorporating the double height assurance chamber originally lined with a concrete screen and glass blocks, has been replaced by new glazing and ceramic tiles. The facade still presents its minimalist arrangement of horizontal spandrels in contrast to the verticality of the southern office windows which are topped by a tower incorporating a flagpole above. The glass is flush with the spandrel panel and provides a glazed corner detail to the office space on the upper levels.

The modifications previously removed the luxcrete and stepped the glazing back to expose the soffit.

In general, the building form is intact externally, with the exception of the two-level base which interprets the previous character. Both the interior and exterior of the building have been refitted. The original windows to the facade above the third level were replaced in 1953 with bronze glazing of a similar design. These remain in place.

Internally, the office space has been refitted in a manner that interprets the original modernist interiors.

The original finishes to the stairs and remnants of floor finishes in the basement remain. Ceramic tiles and the setback to the glazing to the façade that were intrusive have been removed. The roof level former caretakers flat retains the curved glass to the southern facade of the tower element.

The west façade presents as the rear elevation with horizontal windows evenly spaced. On the column grid. An original luxcrete panel is retained at the lower level.

Internally the office space has been refitted on all levels but the original stairwell remains intact. Below level two the stair features a terrazzo floor, terrazzo panelling and original glass blocks to the north and south. The mezzanine space is retained but has been refitted. The former caretakers flat retains the curved glass to the southern facade of the tower element.

2.3. PREVIOUS DEVELOPMENT CONSENTS

The following table provides an overview of City of Sydney's records of development consents listed for the site. Architectural Projects understands that no awards of HFS have been awarded to the site to date.

Application No.	Lodged date	Description	Decision
D/2019/1018	12 September 2019	Alterations and additions to the former 'Royal Exchange Assurance Building', including new ground floor accessible entry, retail space, shopfronts and facade treatment, modified entry awning, signage, roof top additions, internal works, external painting and window repairs.	Approved with conditions

D/2015/58	21 January 2015	Installation of a temporary artwork; a mural art installation comprising of a new paint finish on the southern elevation adjoining Abercrombie Lane.	Approved with conditions
D/2011/1406	7 September 2011	Temporary art work consisting of a wall painting on the Tank Stream Way facade.	Approved with conditions
D/2010/1318	18 August 2010	Temporary art work consisting of two panels affixed to the walls of building.	Approved with conditions

3. CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

3.1. OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE

A CMP for the site has been prepared by Architectural Projects and is provided at Appendix A.

The purpose of the CMP is to guide the conservation and management of the significant elements of the site. It is also intended to assist the property owners to manage maintenance and new works to the site. The CMP includes a careful analysis of the site in terms of heritage significance and context, and based on the analysis, conservation policies appropriate to the subject site are provided.

The CMP has been prepared in accordance with the NSW Heritage Manual (1996), the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (2013) and The Conservation Plan by James Semple Kerr (2000).

The CMP is submitted for the approval of Council as part of this application for an award of HFS.

3.2. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the site has been assessed in the CMP, which is noted as follows:

Former Royal Exchange Assurance Building, is a twelve storey building of Inter War Functionalist style. This building is historically significant as probably the first Modernist style high-rise building to be built in Sydney. It is an important building in the professional work of the noted Melbourne-based modernist architectural partnership of Seabrook and Fildes and the only surviving commercial example in Sydney of the work of the pioneer Melbourne based firm. The building is aesthetically significant as a rare and outstanding example of a 1930's modernist commercial exterior of high quality design. It was the tallest glass facade at the time of its construction.

The building is significant for its contribution to an understanding of the importance of the finance industry as an investor in "modernist office accommodation. The building is scientifically significant as the tallest known building at the time, in Sydney, to be faced with glass 'Vitrolite'. It is significant as an early use of innovative spanning necessitated by the tank stream. It is of architectural significance as possibly the first international style high-rise office building in Sydney.

3.3. CONSERVATION WORKS COMPLETED

The façade works above the awning including repair and reconstruction of the bronze and steel windows have been completed

The façade works below the awning including interpretation of the original glazing and repair and reconstruction of the remnant glass lens windows have been completed

3.4. ONGOING CONSERVATION AND MAINTENANCE

The site has been maintained to a high standard as part of the refurbishment.

3.5. HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

The purpose of an Interpretation Strategy is to identify the most appropriate way of making the significance of the place understood to the target audience. 75 – 77 Pitt Street is significant to the local community for its associations with people and events prominent in the development of Sydney in the Interwar period. 75 – 77 Pitt Street has aesthetic significance as the first full glass façade building in Sydney.

The Heritage NSW, Department of Premier and Cabinet defines an Interpretation Plan as a document that provides the policies, strategies and detailed advice for interpreting a heritage item. It is based on research and analysis and plans to communicate the significance of the item, both during a

conservation project and in the ongoing life of the item. The plan identifies key themes, storylines and audiences and provides recommendations about interpretation media. It includes practical and specific advice about how to implement the plan. An Interpretation Policy consists of clauses and guidelines that provide an intellectual and conceptual framework for communicating the significance of an item. Policies may deal with fabric, setting, history, archaeology audiences and other people, contents, related places and objects, disturbance of fabric, research, records¹.

A Heritage Interpretation Plan has been prepared and is provided in Appendix C.

¹ NSW Heritage Office, Heritage Interpretation

4. PLANNING FRAMEWORK

4.1. SYDNEY LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN 2012

The SLEP 2012 is the principal environmental planning instrument applying to the site and provides the relevant controls for the award of HFS.

Clause 6.10(2) 'Creation of heritage floor space' of the SLEP 2012 outlines the provisions that must be met for Council to award heritage floor space in respect of a heritage item. A response to each of the provisions is provided below.

5.1.9.1 Eligibility of heritage buildings to be awarded heritage floor space

(1) To be eligible for an award of HFS, a heritage building is to be:

(a) located in the Central Sydney area;

(b) subject to conservation works in accordance with an approved Conservation Management Plan; and

(c) not subject to works that would increase the external envelope and floor space of the building, other than a minor increase to facilitate the adaptive re-use of the heritage building.

Response:

The subject site is located in the Central Sydney area.

4.1.1. Other LEP Provisions

As the proposal relates only to an award of HFS, no other relevant LEP matters have been identified.

4.2. SYDNEY DEVELOPMENT CONTROL PLAN 2012

Section 5.1.9 of the Sydney Development Control Plan 2012 (SDCP 2012) relates to the 'Award and allocation of heritage floor space'. The award and allocation procedures include (amongst others):

"the ability for the owner of a heritage building, subject to meeting certain criteria, to be awarded development potential known as Heritage Floor Space after completing conservation works to that building;"

The award of HFS is restricted to buildings that are listed in their entirety as heritage items in Schedule 5 of the Sydney LEP 2012.

A response to each of the relevant provisions at Section 5.1.9 of the SDCP 2012 is provided below:

5. AWARD SOUGHT

The proposal is limited to a request for the award of HFS for the conservation works completed to the site.

The site satisfies the requirements of the relevant planning instruments and policies, and is eligible to be awarded HSF.

Section 5.1.9.1 of the SDCP 2012 outlines the formula for calculating the amount of HSF that can be awarded to Government buildings:

Formula 1 applies to	rateable buildings in private ownership and Government buildings.
The formula is	$HFSH = 0.5AS \times FSRH$
Where	<p>HFSH is the maximum amount of Heritage Floor Space which may be awarded in sqm;</p> <p>AS is the site area in sqm occupied by the heritage building; and</p> <p>FSRH is the maximum FSR for the site of the heritage building as shown on the LEP FSR Map.</p>

5.1. CALCULATION OF HERITAGE FLOOR SPACE

A survey plans of the site has been prepared by Veris and is included at Appendix B. The relevant criteria to calculate HFS is summarised in the following table:

FORMULA 1

Criteria	Site
Site area	237.3 sqm
Site area adopted for purposed of HFS calculation*	237.3 sqm
Floor space ratio (pursuant to SLEP 2012)	8:1
Calculation of HSF	949.20 sqm (0.5 x 237.3 sqm x 8)

* Site Area is defined in accordance with the following definition from the SLEP 2012:

site area means the area of any land on which development is or is to be carried out. The land may include the whole or part of one lot, or more than one lot if they are contiguous to each other but does not include the area of any land on which development is not permitted to be carried out under this Plan.

For the purposes of calculating the HFS award, the site area adopted for the former Royal Assurance Exchange Building is the boundary identified on the SLEP 2012 Heritage Map.

The site area applied for is consistent with the assessment of significance within the CMP. The approach to determining the applicable site area was also made in consultation with the City of Sydney's Urban Design and Heritage Manager, Tony Smith.

In summary, the application seeks the award of 949.20 sqm of HFS for the site.

5.1.1. Reductions to the Maximum Award of HFS
No reductions are sought

5.2. HERITAGE GROSS FLOOR AREA

Clause 5.1.9.2(1)(a) of the SDCP 2014 requires the limiting of future development of the site to the total GFA and height of the conserved heritage building.

In accordance with the SLEP 2012, GFA is defined as:

gross floor area means the sum of the floor area of each floor of a building measured from the internal face of external walls, or from the internal face of walls separating the building from any other building, measured at a height of 1.4 metres above the floor, and includes:

- (a) the area of a mezzanine, and
 - (b) habitable rooms in a basement or an attic, and
 - (c) any shop, auditorium, cinema, and the like, in a basement or attic,
- but excludes:
- (d) any area for common vertical circulation, such as lifts and stairs, and
 - (e) any basement:
 - (i) storage, and
 - (ii) vehicular access, loading areas, garbage and services, and
 - (f) plant rooms, lift towers and other areas used exclusively for mechanical services or ducting, and
 - (g) car parking to meet any requirements of the consent authority (including access to that car parking), and
 - (h) any space used for the loading or unloading of goods (including access to it), and (i) terraces and balconies with outer walls less than 1.4 metres high, and
 - (j) voids above a floor at the level of a storey or storey above.

The GFA of 75-77 Pitt Street, Sydney is detailed in Table 1 and illustrated in the GFA Plans at Appendix D.

TABLE 1 – Heritage Gross Floor Area Calculations

Level	GFA*
B1	106 sqm
Ground Floor	149 sqm
Mezzanine Level	168 sqm
L1	168 sqm
L2	168 sqm
L3	168 sqm
L4	168 sqm
L5	168 sqm
L6	168 sqm
L7	168 sqm
L8	168 sqm
L9	168 sqm
L10	168 sqm
L11	168 sqm
L12	107 sqm
TOTAL	2,378 sqm

* GFA measured to inside face of external walls. Exclude plant, shaft, fire stairs.

The height of the overall building is RL50.01m.

6. ASSESSMENT

6.1. STATUTORY POLICY AND COMPLIANCE

The following assessment has been structured in accordance with Section 4.15(1)(a) of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

The proposal has been assessed under the relevant provisions of the SLEP 2012 and is considered to be consistent with the requirements relating to the award of HFS. The proposal does not raise any issues in relation to the other SLEP 2012 provisions. No draft environmental planning instruments have been identified in relation to the site or the proposal.

The proposal has been assessed under the relevant provisions of the SDCP 2012 and is consistent with the provisions relating to the award of HFS. The proposal does not raise any issues in relation to the other SDCP provisions.

No planning agreements relevant to the proposal have been identified.

6.2. LIKELY IMPACTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT

Not applicable. The proposal does not involve any physical works as the works are completed.

6.3. SUITABILITY OF THE SITE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT

The site has not been developed and is consistent with the requirements relating to the award of HFS under the SLEP 2012 and SDCP 2012 and is therefore eligible to be awarded HFS.

6.4. THE PUBLIC INTEREST

The proposal is in accordance with the requirements relating to the award of HFS and will provide for the ongoing conservation of the building for the benefit of the public while at the same time contributing to the provision of HFS for allocation to new development in Central Sydney in accordance with Council's policy.

7. CONCLUSION

This Planning Report supports an application seeking endorsement of the CMP and the award of HFS by the City of Sydney to the former Royal Assurance Exchange Building at 75-77 Pitt Street, Sydney.

The proposal has been assessed against the requirements of SLEP 2012 and SDCP 2012. The assessment has concluded that the proposal is:

- Eligible under the requirements for an award of HFS;
- Consistent with the relevant provisions of all applicable environmental planning instruments relating to the award of HFS;
- Suitable for the site, and fully consistent with Council's HSF policies, with no significant impacts arising out of the proposal; and
- In the public interest.

Approval of this application and the award of HFS to the site will contribute to the supply of HFS needed by new development in Central Sydney. It will also provide the City of Sydney with a new opportunity to access additional funding to continue its core conservation and heritage interpretation works, which are in the public interest.

Accordingly, it is recommended that Council approve the application.

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	Conservation Management Plan
APPENDIX B	Survey Plans
APPENDIX C	Heritage Interpretation Plan
APPENDIX D	Gross Floor Area Plans
APPENDIX E	Certification of Conservation Works
APPENDIX F	Certificate of Currency
APPENDIX G	Archival Record

APPENDIX A – CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

APPENDIX B – SURVEY PLANS

APPENDIX C – HERITAGE INTERPRETATION PLAN

APPENDIX D – GROSS FLOOR AREA PLANS

APPENDIX E – CERTIFICATION OF CONSERVATION WORKS

APPENDIX F – CERTIFICATE OF CURRENCY

APPENDIX G – ARCHIVAL RECORD

APPENDIX H – COSTING