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URBIS

HERITAGE INTERPRETATION REVIEW AND STRATEGY

The Great Synagogue, 187A Elizabeth
Street, Sydney

Prepared for

THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

15 September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Urbis have been engaged by the Great Synagogue to prepare this Heritage Interpretation Strategy for The Great Synagogue, located at 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney. This report has been prepared to accompany a Heritage Floor Space Application and provides an overview of existing interpretation elements and media implemented across the site and consideration for future interpretation.

This report has been prepared with consideration and information sourced from the *Conservation Management Plan, The Great Synagogue, 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney*, prepared by Urbis (2023).

This report has concluded that no further heritage interpretation is recommended at this stage due to the extensive interpretation that has been implemented across the site to date and the overall condition of the building and the existing interpretation elements (refer to section 5.4).

Existing media includes:

- Markers and interpretation signage.
- The A.M Rosenblum Museum and Collections.
- Website.
- Tours and Events
- Ongoing Conservation and the reinstatement of lost characteristics and features.

Recommendations and considerations for future interpretation however has been highlighted at section 5.5.

These recommendations include the following:

- Future signage should only be proposed to mark specific occasions or anniversaries. The location, material and style of new signage should be carefully considered and in keeping with existing signage that mark special events, anniversaries or occasions.
- At this stage, due to the extensive displays in the Museum, additional didactic signage that highlights the history and significance of the place are not required. The Museum offers an appropriate place to display didactic information on the history and significance of the place, without impacting other significant spaces within the place.
- The restoration of lost historic features or finishes should be explored when alterations are proposed to the site. However, the reinstatement or restoration of lost features should be undertaken only when appropriate.
- Future Interpretation strategies could utilise digital media as an alternative to didactic signage. This could come in the form of an interactive website or display within the building or an app that further provides information on the history and significance of the place. However, due to the significant level of interpretation already implemented across the site this is not considered to be a necessity.
- All future Heritage Interpretation should be informed by Policies 127-132 outlined in the CMP (and included in section 1.4.2 of this report).

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

Urbis have been engaged by the Great Synagogue to prepare this Heritage Interpretation Strategy for The Great Synagogue, located at 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney. This report has been prepared to accompany a Heritage Floor Space Application and provides an overview of interpretation elements and media already implemented across the site and consideration for future interpretation.

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1.2. SITE LOCATION

The subject site, known as The Great Synagogue, is located at 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney and is legally described as Lot 1 or Deposited Plan 52572. The Great Synagogue is located within the centre of the Sydney Central Business District (CBD), opposite Hyde Park. The site has two frontages, one to Elizabeth Street to the east and Castlereagh Street to the west.

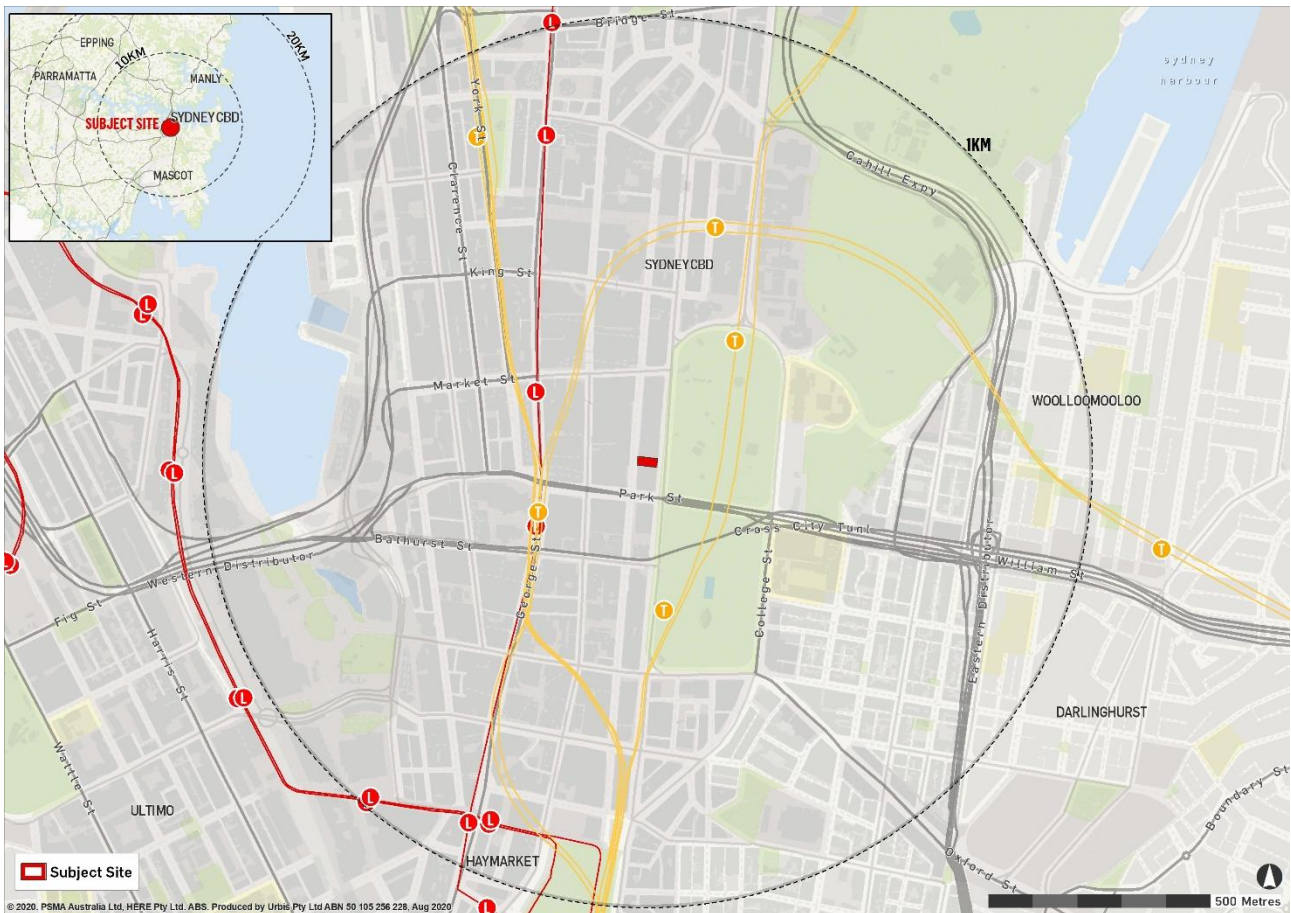


Figure 1 – Location plan with The Great Synagogue outlined in red.

1.3. HERITAGE LISTINGS

The following tables summaries the relevant heritage listings, statutory and non-statutory, applicable to The Great Synagogue

Table 1 - Heritage Listings

Type of Listing	Name of Item
<p>World Heritage List</p> <p>Under the World Heritage Convention</p> <p>(places of outstanding universal values)</p>	Not listed
<p>National Heritage List</p> <p>Under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i></p> <p>(natural and cultural places of outstanding value to the nation)</p>	Not listed
<p>Indigenous Heritage</p> <p>Under the <i>Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003</i></p> <p>(places that hold great meaning and significance to Indigenous people)</p>	Not listed
<p>Commonwealth Heritage Listing</p> <p>under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i></p> <p>(natural, Indigenous and historic heritage places on Commonwealth lands and waters or under Australian Government control)</p>	Not listed
<p>State Heritage Register (SHR)</p> <p>Under the <i>Heritage Act 1977</i></p> <p>(items of state significance)</p>	<p><i>Great Synagogue</i></p> <p>SHR No. 01710</p>
<p>Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012</p> <p>Schedule 5 Environmental Heritage, Part 1 Heritage items</p> <p>(items of local significance)</p>	<p><i>The Great Synagogue Including Interior</i></p> <p>LEP Item No. I1750</p>
<p>Movable Cultural Heritage</p> <p>under the <i>Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986</i></p>	Not listed

(objects that people create/collect that forms an important part of Australia's nation's identity)	
Register of the National Estate (not operational)	<i>The Great Synagogue</i>
Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999	Place ID 1802
(items of local, state or national significance)	
National Trust of Australia	<i>Great Synagogue</i>
(items of local, state or national significance)	6178
Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Architecture	Not listed
Institution of Engineers Australia	Not listed
(no official register by informal list of buildings that have heritage value)	
Sydney Development Control Plan 2012	Located in College Street/Hyde Park Special Character Area

In addition, The Great Synagogue is also located adjacent to and in close proximity of a number of other heritage items under the Sydney LEP 2012 and the *Heritage Act 1977*.

1.4. METHODOLOGY

This Heritage Interpretation Strategy has reviewed the existing interpretation elements and devises already implemented across the subject site. This review has taken into account the guidelines and policies in regard to Heritage Interpretation from the following documents.

1.4.1. Heritage Guidelines and the Burra Charter

Heritage conservation seeks to sustain the values of heritage landscapes, places and objects, individually and collectively, so that the community and visitors can continue to appreciate, experience and learn from them and about them, and that they may be passed on to future generations.¹ Interpretation is an integral part of the experience of significant heritage places and the conservation and management of heritage items and is relevant to other aspects of environmental and cultural management and policy. Interpretation also incorporates and provides broad access to historical research and analysis.²

This Interpretation Plan has been prepared in accordance with the *NSW Heritage Manual*, the NSW Heritage Branch *Interpreting Heritage Places and Items: Guidelines* (August 2005) and the NSW Heritage Branch's *Heritage Interpretation Policy* (endorsed by the Heritage Council August 2005) as well as the conditions of the Minister's consent as outlined above in section 1.1. The general philosophy and process adopted is guided by the Australia ICOMOS *Burra Charter 1999*.

The Burra Charter defines interpretation as "all the ways of presenting the *cultural significance* of a place" and it may be a combination of the treatment of the fabric; the use of and activities of the place; and the use of introduced material (Article 1.17).

¹ NSW Heritage Branch, Department of Planning, Heritage Information Series, Heritage Interpretation Policy , August 2005, pg 2.

² Ibid 3

Interpretation should provide and enhance understanding of the history, significance and meaning of the building. Interpretation should respect and be appropriate to the cultural significance of the building (Article 25).

The NSW Heritage Branch *Interpreting Heritage Places and Items: Guidelines* lists the following best practice “ingredients” for interpretation:

- 1) Interpretation, People and Culture – Respect for the special connections between people and items
- 2) Heritage Significance and Site Analysis – Understand the item and convey its significance
- 3) Records and Research – Use existing records of the item, research additional information and make these publicly available (subject to security and cultural protocols)
- 4) Audiences – Explore, respect and respond to the identified audience
- 5) Themes – Make reasoned choices about themes, stories and strategies
- 6) Engaging the Audience – Stimulate thought and dialogue, provoke response and enhance understanding
- 7) Context – Research the physical, historical, spiritual and contemporary context of the item, including related items, and respect local amenity and culture
- 8) Authenticity, Ambience and Sustainability – Develop interpretation methods and media which sustain the significance of the items, its character and authenticity
- 9) Conservation Planning and Works – Integrate interpretation in conservation planning and in all stages of a conservation project
- 10) Maintenance, Evaluation and Review – Include interpretation in the ongoing management of an item; provide for regular maintenance, evaluation and review
- 11) Skills and Knowledge – Involve people with relevant skills, knowledge and experience
- 12) Collaboration – Collaborate with organisations and the local community

1.4.2. Conservation Management Plan

The report, *Conservation Management Plan, Great Synagogue, 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney* prepared by Urbis (2023) has informed this Interpretation Strategy. In particular the following information, guidelines and policies have guided the management of interpretation of the subject site.

Background

Interpretation is an essential part of the conservation process. A variety of methods may be used to interpret the significant values and associations of The Great Synagogue and identified in the Historical Themes and Assessment of Significance section of this CMP. Methods of interpretation may include conserving original features and fabric, reconstructing missing or damaged elements based on documentary and/or archaeological evidence, introducing interpretative devices (such as discreet labelling), the use of historic photographs, preserving evidence of original finished and fabric (e.g. a cleaned patch of original wall colour), facilitating access for specialist study and/or presentation in publications and websites.

The heritage values of The Great Synagogue should continue to be interpreted for public education and understanding. The history, as outlined in Section 3, and the significant features, as identified in Section 6.5 and 6.6, should form the basis of this interpretation.

*The Great Synagogue has rich resources that already interprets the history and significance of the building and the Jewish Community. This includes, the A.M. Rosenblum Museum which contains many valuable items within its collection of numerous Jewish artefacts including textiles, ritual silver paintings, sacred scrolls and religious artefacts. The museum periodically hosts new exhibitions, with the current exhibition entitled *Building: The Great Synagogue in Sydney since 1878*. Which explores the history and architectural significance of the building which has become a heritage landmark and a symbol of the Jewish community's history. The Great Synagogue also includes information on the history of The Great Synagogue and the congregation on their website.*

In addition, Public tours are usually held every Thursday at 12 noon and every first and third Thursday of the month at 12 noon. Schools and interest groups are also welcome to books tours of The Great Synagogue. The Great Synagogue has also participated in the Sydney Living Museum Sydney Open and should continue to play a part in these annual events.

The Great Synagogue also hold recorded conversations and interviews with their congregation which would serve as a rich resource for future interpretation. This resource should be considered to inform future or additional heritage interpretation elements however should only be used under strict consultation with the Great Synagogue staff and congregation.

Guidelines

Interpretation should be consistent with the NSW Heritage Manual, the former NSW Heritage Division's Interpreting Heritage Places and Items: Guidelines (August 2005) and the NSW Heritage Council's Heritage Interpretation Policy (endorsed by the Heritage Council August 2005).

Policy

Policy 127. A Heritage Interpretation Plan should be developed for The Great Synagogue as an addendum to this CMP and its recommendations should be undertaken and implemented as soon as practical.

Policy 128. Interpretation of The Great Synagogue should be included as part of any future development. Interpretation of The Great Synagogue should consider the historical evolution of The Great Synagogue and the Jewish congregation of Sydney and Jewish life and history generally.

Policy 129. The highest form of interpretation is the retention and conservation of significant fabric, spaces and relationships and accordingly, significant elements should be retained, exposed and interpreted in accordance with their grading of significance.

Policy 130. Preservation, restoration and reconstruction of key significant elements, areas and fabric are the preferred method of interpreting important attributes and associations of the place. Where adaptation is part of the conservation work, measures should be incorporated to show the location, character and/or role of removed or altered elements, where appropriate.

Policy 131. Appropriate measures to interpret the history and significance of the site as a whole should be incorporated into any new work. Interpretation measures may include physical site elements which reflect past features as well as signage incorporating historic photographs and historical accounts.

Policy 132. Archaeological remains should be retained in situ where possible, to assist in interpreting the chronology of the site and the significant values. Any display or storage of archaeological material should be subject to further advice or be in conjunction with future archaeological assessment.

1.5. AIMS OF THIS INTERPRETATION PLAN

Heritage Interpretation is the art of explaining the significance of a place to the people who visit it, with the objectives of promoting an understanding of its heritage values and the need to conserve it. Interpretation also involves conveying messages including the presentation of particular points of view about places and history. Interpretative methods might include, but are not limited to, conservation, built form strategies, signage, publications, mixed media and websites.

This plan outlines interpretation elements and devices already implemented across the site and that reflects the significance of the site and its history in addition to historic themes and narratives. Due to the significant number of elements and devices already implemented across the site, this Interpretation Strategy proposes recommendations for the longevity and continuation of these elements.

The themes and narratives have been informed by the history of the site and have been informed by the CMP prepared by Urbis (2023).

1.6. AUTHOR IDENTIFICATION

The following report has been prepared by Bernice Burke (Senior Heritage Consultant) with the history sourced from the CMP (2023), prepared by Keira Kucharska (Senior Heritage Consultant) and endorsed by Jonathan Bryant (Director, Heritage).

Unless otherwise stated, all drawings, illustrations and photographs are the work of Urbis.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The following site description is a summary of the description of the building. For a full description refer to the CMP (2023).

2.1. SITE LOCATION & SETTING

The subject site, known as The Great Synagogue, is located at 187A Elizabeth Street, Sydney and is legally described as Lot 1 or Deposited Plan 52572 (Figure 2). The Great Synagogue is located within the eastern portion of the Sydney CBD, directly to the west of the Hyde Park along Elizabeth Street. The area in which The Great Synagogue is situated is centred around Hyde Park which forms a boundary between the commercial developments of the CBD and the residential areas located to the east.

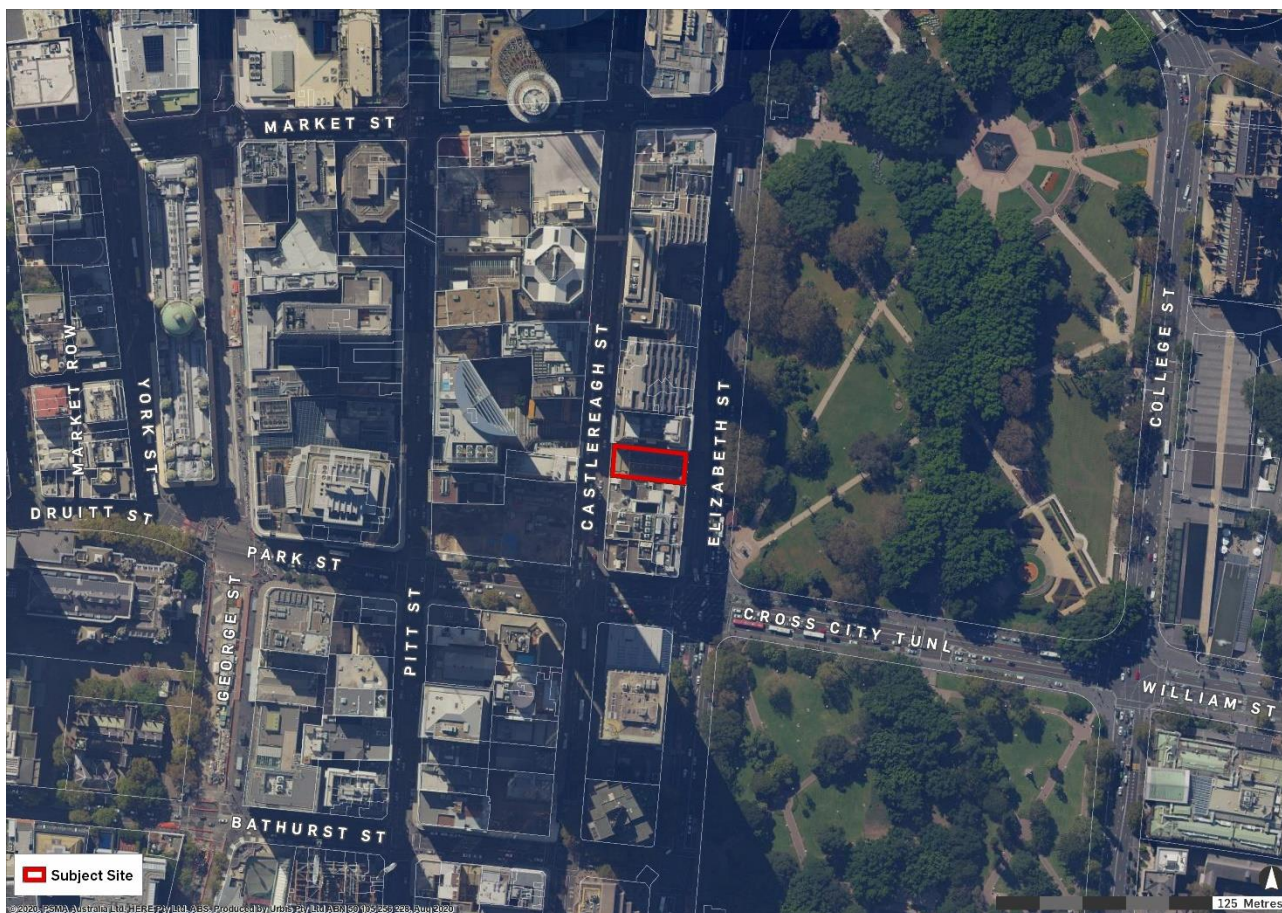


Figure 2 – Aerial image with subject site outlined in red.

The western and southern edge of Hyde Park, in which The Great Synagogue is situated, is predominated by commercial development of a large scale with strong street alignments creating a sense of enclosure to Hyde Park. The eastern and northern edge of the Hyde Park is predominated by institutional free-standing sandstone buildings and public open spaces dating from the early nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The Great Synagogue, at its Elizabeth Street frontage dating to 1878, bears closer connection historically and architecturally with the sandstone buildings located along these northern and eastern edges of Hyde Park than its immediate surrounds. Deciduous street trees also line either side of Elizabeth Street along the length of Hyde Park.

The Great Synagogue is situated in between two modified eleven and twelve-storey early twentieth century Commercial Palazzo sandstone buildings, the former Manchester Unity Building to the north (154-158 Elizabeth Street) and the former Australian Consolidated Press building to the south (189-197 Elizabeth Street). The other buildings located along Elizabeth Street between Market and Park Street are primarily similarly sized commercial and hotel buildings dating from the mid to late twentieth century which increase in height toward their rear facades at Castlereagh Street.

The secondary frontage of The Great Synagogue is situated at Castlereagh Street. The buildings located along the extent of Castlereagh Street between Market Street and Park Street are primarily commercial and hotel building of a minimum of twelve storeys in height, dating from the mid twentieth century to the present day. A few early twentieth century building are located directly opposite the Castlereagh Street rear Great Synagogue frontage. These include the NSW Masonic Club (169-173 Castlereagh Street) a twelve storey Inter War Commercial Palazzo building; the former Legion House (161-163 Castlereagh Street) a four-storey Federation Free style building; and the rear of the Australian Consolidated Press building and former Manchester Unity building. Directly to the south-west of the site is an existing dig site for the future Pitt Street North Metro Station entrance set for completion in 2024

2.2. THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE

The Great Synagogue is divided into two main components: the eastern portion consisting of the original Sanctuary at Elizabeth Street, and the western portion consisting of a five storey contemporary commercial building, known as the Education Centre, which lies behind the original façade of the former Beadle’s residence. An additional basement level also lies underneath the Sanctuary which houses the Israel Green Auditorium.

The defined heritage curtilage of The Great Synagogue aligns with the lot boundaries of the site.

Access to The Great Synagogue is provided through entrances located at Elizabeth Street and Castlereagh Street. The main entrance to The Great Synagogue is located on Elizabeth Street, via the porch. The porch gives access both through to the Sanctuary via the two vestibules and access to the staircases which are located in the north and south towers. Access to the Education Centre is located at Castlereagh Street via an entrance at the south-west corner of the building.

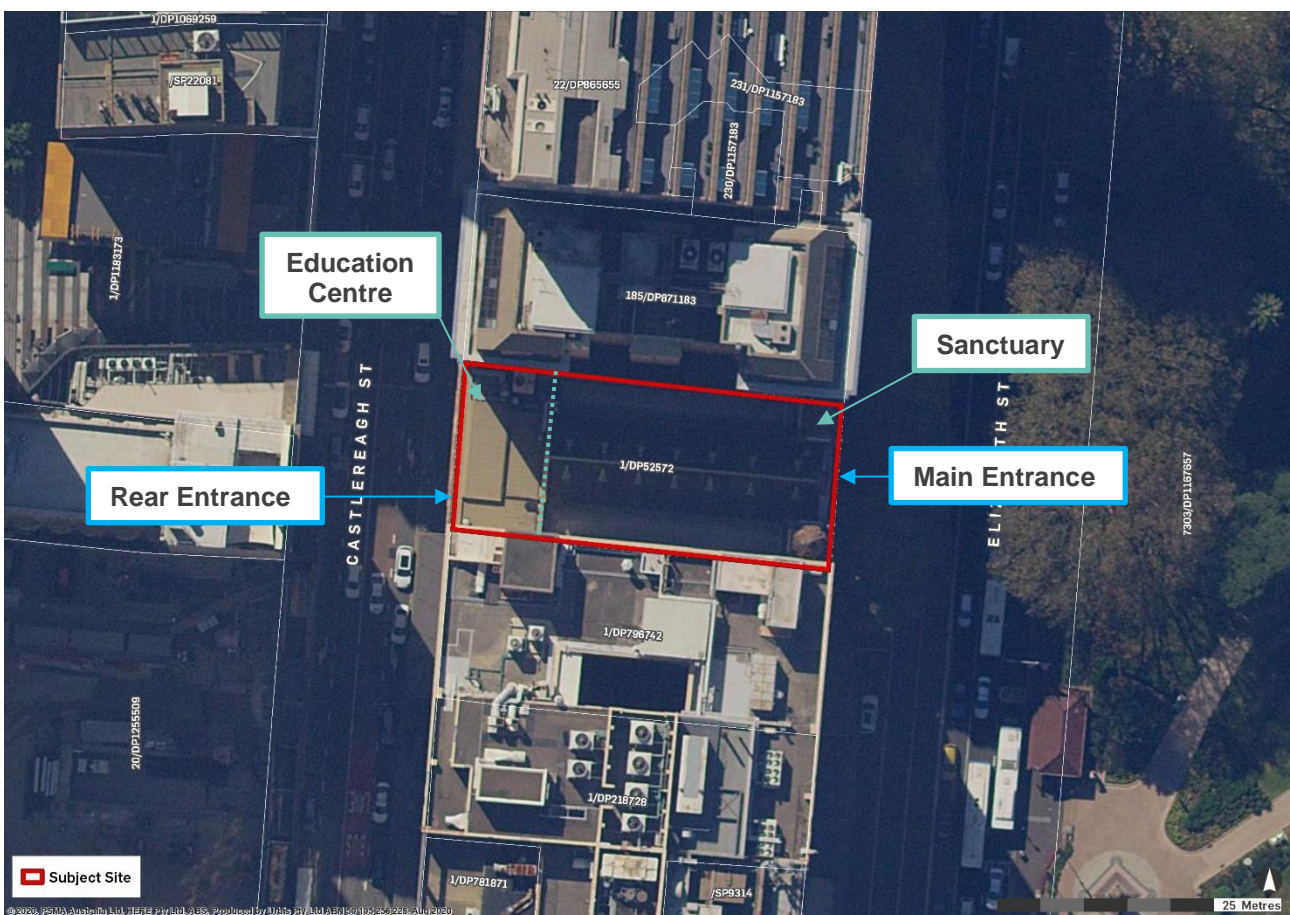


Figure 3 – Aerial image with subject site outlined in red, with components and main access points indicated.

2.2.1. Exterior

The Sanctuary portion of The Great Synagogue located at Elizabeth Street remains largely in its original condition. The Great Synagogue is a Victorian Free Gothic style completed in 1878 to the design of Thomas Rowe. The Elizabeth Street elevation features two square towers with sandstone domes that flank the central gable form with large rose window and elaborate carvings, all constructed from Pyrmont sandstone. A large porch is located in the central of the ground floor, supported by elaborately carved sandstone arches and columns and featuring encaustic floor tiles and a painted timber boarded ceiling. Detailed iron gates enclose the front of the porch from Elizabeth Street. The original Star of David finial has been placed at the entrance to the Synagogue. Leadlight windows adorn every opening of the Elizabeth Street façade, from the paired arched windows of the towers, to the leadlight windows of the porch. The Elizabeth Street façade remains in its original condition, apart from the addition of fire doors at the ground level of the two towers.

The remainder of the structure of the Sanctuary, beyond the Elizabeth Street frontage, is constructed of brick with cast iron columns and timber floors. The roof over the Sanctuary features a gabled roof clad with slate roof tiles with hooded vents, while the roofs of the galleries feature hipped roof forms clad with later aluminium cladding. At the northern elevation of the Sanctuary clerestory roof are the remains of iron-brackets which original supported an awning that has since been removed.

The Castlereagh Street façade features the original façade of the Beadle's residence. The façade features sandstone at the ground level and rendered brickwork at the first and second storeys. The third storey elevation features a glazed mansard roof which was added as part of the Education Centre in the early 1980s. At each level of the façade are two sets of three arched windows with sandstone or plaster string courses and detailing. At the southern end is a modified opening which provide entrance through to the Education Centre and Israel Green Auditorium.



Figure 4 – Elizabeth Street elevation.



Figure 5 – Detail of roof.

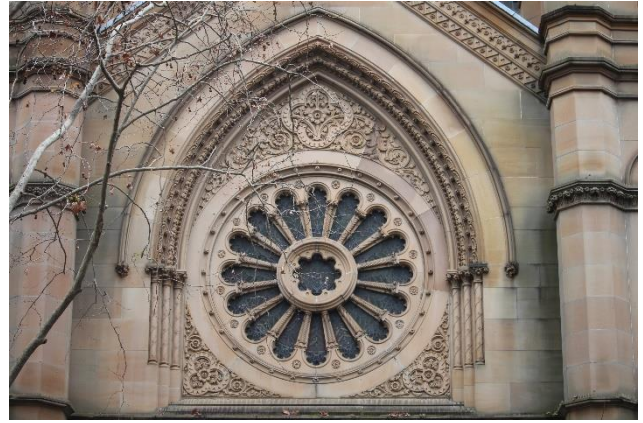


Figure 6 – View 4 – Detail of rose window.



Figure 7 – Detail of sandstone tower dome.



Figure 8 – Ground level at Elizabeth Street with original iron gates.



Figure 9 – Detail of northern tower.



Figure 10 – Detail of columns to portico.



Figure 11– Elizabeth Street porch, south



Figure 12– Elizabeth Street porch, west



Figure 13 – Castlereagh Street elevation.



Figure 14 – Detail of ground floor windows with carved sandstone detailing.



Figure 15 – Entrance at Castlereagh Street

2.2.2. Interior

The interior of The Great Synagogue is divided into three main areas, including the Sanctuary, accessed on Elizabeth Street, and the Education Centre and Israel Green Auditorium accessed off Castlereagh Street. The building is divided into seven (7) levels.

2.2.2.1. The Sanctuary

The Sanctuary is set across two levels, at ground floor (Mens Gallery) and a gallery level (Ladies Gallery), both with raked timber floors. The Sanctuary is accessed via two vestibules located to the north and south of the Elizabeth Street porch, with the upper gallery being accessed via the vestibule and stair located in the two towers. The timber staircases within each tower have strongly carved balustrades, and soffits in alternating cedar and pine boards. Sets of double lead timber doors with intricate etched glass provided entrance to the Sanctuary. At the centre of the ground floor at its western end is the Ark, with bimah set at the front of the arch on a timber platform which has been placed over the original steps to the Ark. The original location of the bimah was at the centre of the ground floor, which is surrounded by encaustic tiles similar to those of the porch. The former location of the bimah is covered with timber floorboards. The interior of the sanctuary is elaborately decorated throughout, with moulded plaster, carved timber and leadlight windows adorning the interiors. All walls and detailing are painted with gold leaf highlighting many of the intricacies of the Sanctuary. Electric gasoliers (converted from the original gas) are featured through the space with pendant, standard and wall mounted gasoliers.



Figure 16 – Sanctuary viewed from the Ladies Gallery.



Figure 17 – View from Ladies Gallery.

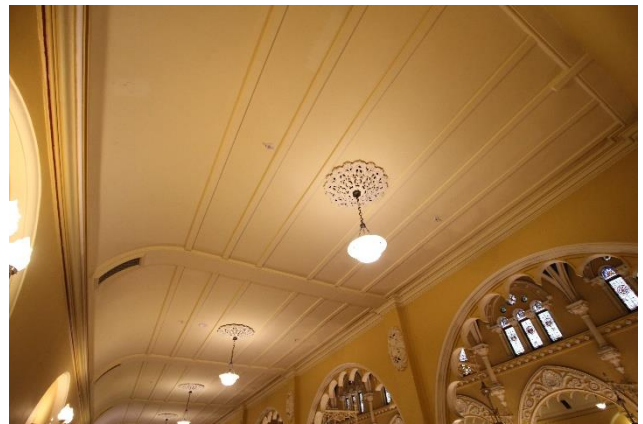


Figure 18 – Curved timber and plaster ceilings at the Ladies Gallery.



Figure 19 – Wall mounted gasoliers in Ladies Gallery.

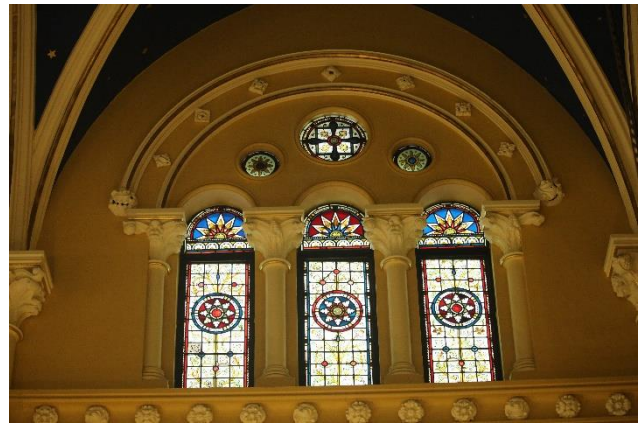


Figure 20 – Detail of leadlight clerestory windows.



Figure 21 – Original timber pews in Ladies Gallery.



Figure 22 – Ark, steps and bimah.

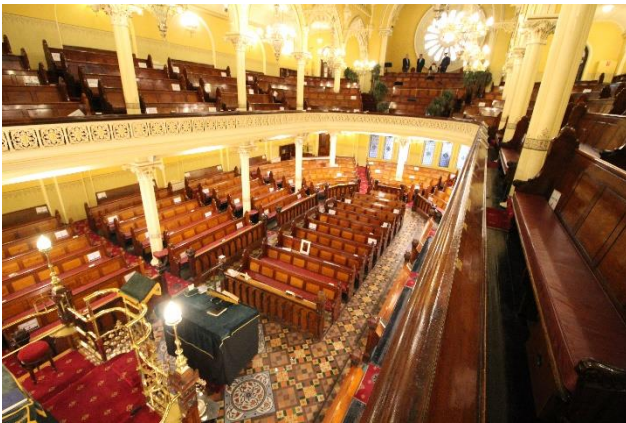


Figure 23 – View of Mens Gallery from Ladies Gallery.

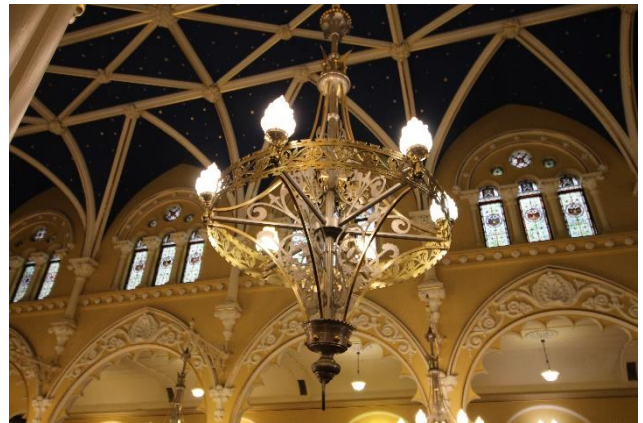


Figure 24 – Pendant gasolier.



Figure 25 – Mens Gallery



Figure 26 – Leadlight windows in Mens Gallery to porch.



Figure 27 – Centre pews in Mens Gallery in original location of bimah.

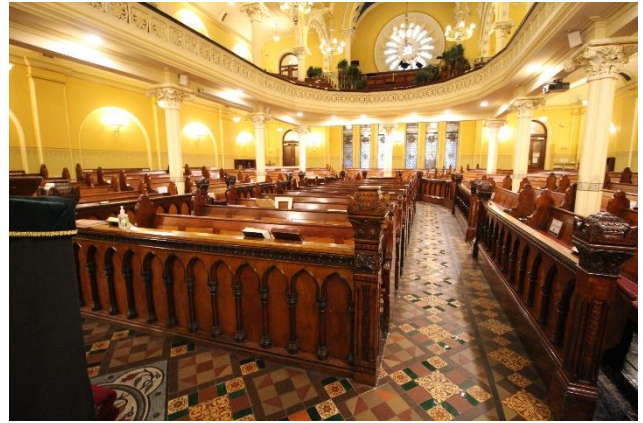


Figure 28 – Centre pews in Mens Gallery.



Figure 29 – Original stairs to Ark located under bimah.

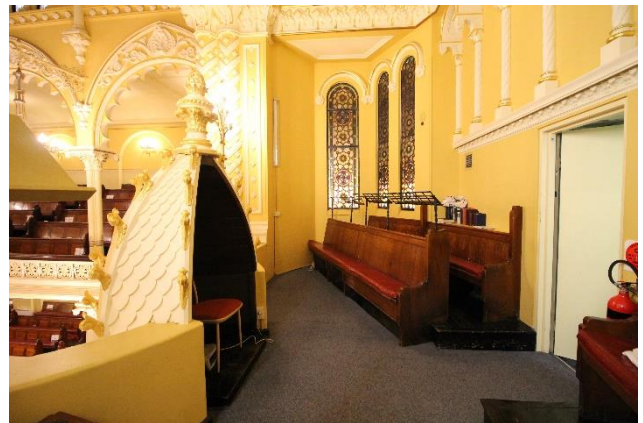


Figure 30 – Choir gallery located on top of Ark.



Figure 31 – Staircase in tower.



Figure 32 – Vestibule off Ladies Gallery.

2.2.2.2. Israel Green Auditorium

The basement underneath the Sanctuary contains the Israel Green Auditorium, which is divided into several space accessed of the central auditorium and stage. At the upper level (Level 2) is the A.M. Rosenblum Museum and Rabbi Falk Library, Mezzanine and toilets. The Museum contains a collection of numerous Jewish artefacts including textiles, ritual silver paintings, sacred scrolls and religious artefacts. The museum periodically host new exhibitions within the place. The Rabbi Falk Library houses a collection of old and rare books and is used as a reference library. At the lower level (Level 1) are kitchens, storerooms and an office. The interiors of the Israel Green Auditorium primarily date to the 1950s and was redecorated in the 1980s. Some elements from the original Beadles residence have reused in the Israel Green Auditorium, included timber balustrade from the former wester staircase, and timber framed doors with etched glass panels at the mezzanine.



Figure 33 – Foyer to Auditorium and Museum.



Figure 34 – Salvaged balustrade from former Beadles residence.



Figure 35 – Israel Green Auditorium.



Figure 36 – Israel Green Auditorium looking west toward the mezzanine.



Figure 37 – Mezzanine.



Figure 38 – Rabbi Falk Library.



Figure 39 – A.M. Rosenblum Museum



Figure 40 – A.M. Rosenblum Museum

2.2.2.3. Education Centre

The Education Centre, located behind the original façade of the Beadle’s residence at Castlereagh Street, houses five levels for various cultural, social and educational activities including offices, meetings rooms, classrooms and shop together with and fire stairs. At the top floor is the succah which features a sliding roof. All throughout, the Education Centre contains fabric dating to its construction in the 1980s. The contemporary stained glass windows at the third floor (Level 5) were designed by Louis Kahan of Melbourne.



Figure 41 – Succah with roof open.



Figure 42 – Classroom at Level 5, with contemporary stain-glass windows.



Figure 43 – Fire stairs in Education Centre.

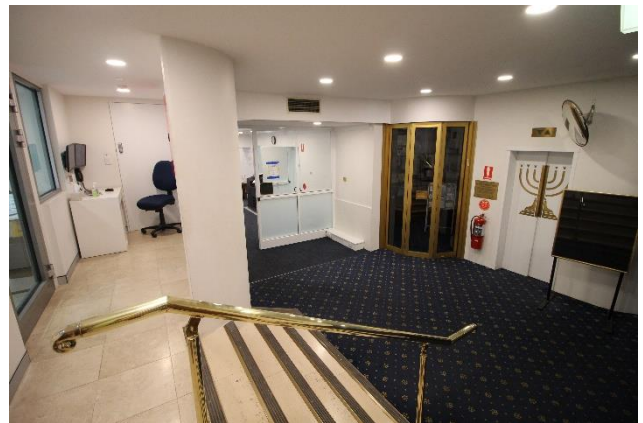


Figure 44 – Foyer of Education Centre at Level 2.



Figure 45 – Office space at Level 2.



Figure 46 – Hallway at Level 3 to classrooms and offices.

3. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The following historical timeline has been sourced from the CMP. Refer to the CMP for a full history of the site.

3.1. HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The following table contains a chronology of the significant events in the history of The Great Synagogue and its site as summarised from the CMP (2023). The development of The Great Synagogue can generally be separated into five (5) stages of development, which reflect the various stages of minor and major alterations and additions to The Great Synagogue as well as period of general repairs and maintenance:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 1. Original and Early Great Synagogue | 1874 – 1883 |
| 2. Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Century | 1884 – 1918 |
| 3. Mid Twentieth Century | 1919 - 1943 |
| 4. Israel Green Auditorium | 1944 - 1980 |
| 5. Late Twentieth to Twenty-First Century | 1981 Present |

Table 2 - Historical Timeline

Date	Description
1840	Four cottages on site owned by Thomas Taber
1844	York Street Synagogue completed
1859	Macquarie Street Synagogue established
1862	Rev. A.B. Davis arrives in Sydney
1871	Elizabeth street site bought by John Solomon
1872	Architectural competition held for design
1873	Thomas Rowe selected as architect. Tenders called.
Phase 1 – Original and Early Great Synagogue (1874-1883)	
1874	Work begins on site. Aaron Loveridge appointed as masonry contractor
1875	Foundation stone laid. Hebrew Ladies’ Bazaar held to raise funds
1876	Roof probably completed
1878	Great Synagogue opened and consecrated
1883	Decoration completed
Phase 2 - Late Nineteenth & Early Twentieth Century (1884 – 1918)	

1901	Australian Federation. Ventilation improvements
1904	Sanctuary redecorated. First electric light installed
1907	Reading desk relocated to Ark steps, centre seats installed
1911	Apse enlarged for relocation of choir gallery, additional seating added to former location of choir gallery, and opening sash in rose window
1918	Suspended gasoliers and candelabra converted to electricity
Phase 3 - Mid Twentieth Century (1919 – 1943)	
1922	Manchester Unity building constructed to the north
1923	Castlereagh Street building adapted as Rabbi's residence. Linoleum laid throughout the Synagogue . Interiors of Synagogue repainted and decorated.
1924	Interior of Synagogue redecorated
1928	Seating extended into eastern gallery (Board Room relocated)
1935	Installation of all electric lights completed including wall-mounted gasoliers. Ladies lavatories remodelled. Almehmar and seat recarpeted and re-upholstered.
1937	Alterations undertaken to schoolrooms including soundproof windows
1939	Façade stonework repaired
1942	Concrete support to rose window constructed, and Gallery ceilings strengthened. Electric lighting system updated.
Phase 4 - Israel Green Auditorium (1944 – 1980)	
1944	Centenary Rebuilding Fund established
1954	War Memorial Hall (Israel Green Auditorium) constructed including new fire exist doors to the Elizabeth Street frontage and new entrance at southern end of Castlereagh Street frontage. Side roof over galleries replaced with aluminium sheeting.
1955	Roofs over side galleries replaced
1956	Opening of the Israel Green Auditorium on 22 July
1976	Sanctuary redecorated in new colour scheme by Pamela Healey (including introduction of dark blue ceiling with gold leaf stars)
1978	Great Synagogue Centenary celebrations
Phase 5 - Late Twentieth to Twenty-First Century (1981- Present)	

1981	Education Centre completed including retention of original façade and construction of five floors of offices and classrooms with top floor function room and opening roof. Israel Green Auditorium redecorated and reused joinery from demolition of western stairs
1987	Bicentennial stonework conservation works completed
1989	Sprinklers installed, tiled floors in Sanctuary restored, main gasoliers spray painted (temporary measure), reconstruction of stencilled decorations added and other internal painting undertaken
1990	Steps to Ark altered and original tiles salvaged and reinstated
1999	Conservation management plan prepared
2000-2001	Centenary Federation conservation of tower stonework completed
2004	Brasswork to bimah conserved and photographic archival recording undertaken.
2005	Interior of Sanctuary redecorated, included reconstruction of missing pieces of decorative plaster and cast iron balustrades, rewire main light fittings and conserved polished brass Eternal Light above bimah
2007	Conservation Management Plan updated
2007	Ordered replacement tessellated tiles from UK. Replace where required in Synagogue Sanctuary
2007	Remove, refurbish and rewire suspended gasoliers
2008	Refurbish brass candelabra at steps and surrounding reading desk
2008	Installation of mechanical ventilation
2009	Replacement of lift
2015 - 2016	Security upgrade to Castlereagh Street entry including modifications at Level 2
2016	Periodic slate roof repairs and anti-bird protection
2017	Install footpath flood lights requested by City of Sydney Council
2018	Install glass balustrading to Ladies' Gallery
2018	Installation of door closers, unable to have 1870 closers re-made in UK
2018	Replace cooling tower fan and motor
2018	Refurbish Rabbi Falk library
2016-2020	Periodic guttering repairs, damp proofing and paint maintenance
2019	Replace all exit and emergency lights and general lighting with LED fittings

2019	Internal and external major security upgrade
2019	Roof safety upgrade
2019	Installation of additional fire and security doors. Connect to systems
2020	Replace reticulated water supply from meter
2020	Conservation Management Plan updated

4. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following Statement of Significance has been prepared by Urbis for the updated CMP. Refer to the CMP for the full built heritage significance assessment, comparative analysis and information regarding Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Historical Archaeology.

The Great Synagogue is the earliest surviving synagogue within the Sydney metropolitan area and one of the earliest surviving synagogues within New South Wales. The Great Synagogue has been the centre of Jewish worship and culture in Sydney since its consecration in 1878. The prominent position of The Great Synagogue, its architectural grandeur and collection of important Hebrew and other religious artefacts embodies and demonstrates the early development and importance of the Jewish faith and culture in New South Wales during the nineteenth century.

The Great Synagogue is a major landmark of Sydney and represents one of the most elaborately decorated Victorian Free Gothic style buildings internally and externally. The Great Synagogue is associated with the prominent architect Thomas Rowe who designed many other landmark buildings in Sydney and is an example of one of his finest surviving works. It is the only Synagogue of its style and age within Australia and is one of a few exemplary international synagogues designed in a similar style. It contains excellent examples of the best quality work of moulded plaster, carved stone, decorative tiling and stained glass from Australia, United Kingdom and America and is associated with builder Aaron Loveridge and notable contractors and suppliers such as Lyon and Cottier and P.N. Russell.

5. HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

The following information have been draws from information outlined in Section 3, the CMP (2023) and through stakeholder engagement with David Lewis, President at the Great Synagogue.

Urbis attended a site inspection on the 9 March 2023 to inspect the existing Interpretation Elements which are detailed in section 5.4 below. In summary, the existing interpretation elements have been assessed as sufficient at successfully interpreting the history and significance of the building at the time of preparing this report. Any new or additional interpretation elements therefore should only be implemented if they contribute more to the understanding or significance of the place and should take into consideration the rich interpretation and resources already available.

Future interpretation elements maybe required following the discovery and/or reconstruction of original or significant elements. These instances have been detailed below in section 5.5.

5.1. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Urbis have undertaken stakeholder engagement directly with David Lewis, President, on behalf of the Great Synagogue to prepare this Interpretation Strategy. David and his team have provided Urbis with information and methodologies for the existing interpretation elements undertaken across the site. These have been detailed in section 5.4 below.

Any future interpretation media or elements must include engagement with the following stakeholders during the preparation of and prior to the implementation of any new media.

- Great Synagogue; representatives and the curator of their inhouse museum.
- City of Sydney; Heritage Specialists.
- A professional Heritage Consultant should be engaged to inform any future strategies or plans for interpretation.

Liaison with these stakeholders should occur during concept discussions, design development and implementation of any new elements installed onsite to ensure the interpretation elements are in keeping with the existing interpretation present onsite while also contributing something new or different to the interpretation of the significance of the place.

5.2. AUDIENCE PROFILE

Interpretation aims to reveal meanings and connections to the subject site. To effectively achieve this, interpretation is predicated on identifying audiences and using appropriate media. It is important to identify specific audiences so that interpretation responds to the audience needs and takes into consideration literacy levels, accessibility, gender, ethnicity, and age. Accessible interpretation of heritage themes and values will ensure that the tangible significance and values of the site in general are appreciated by the occupants of the subject site and the wider community.

The subject site is a religious building that welcomes members of the congregation on a regular basis for services and for special and community events. The building has restricted access to the general public, with the exception to their involvement in special events and programmes that provides opportunities for the general public to visit.

Therefore, the audience may fall into the following categories:

- Members of the congregation and Jewish community; of varying ages and backgrounds.
- Locals; of varying ages, and cultural background attending a planned tour or open day.
- International visitors; of varying ages and cultural background attending a planned tour or open day.
- School Groups and Special interest tour groups.

5.3. INTERPRETATION THEMES AND NARRATIVES

Historical themes can be used to understand the context of a place, such as what influences have shaped that place over time. The Heritage Council of NSW established 35 historical themes relevant to the State of New South Wales. These themes correlate with National and Local historical themes. Historical themes at each level that are relevant to the place are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 - Historical Themes

Australian Theme	NSW Theme	Local Theme	Discussion
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Religion	Activities associated with particular systems of faith and worship	The Great Synagogue is associated with the first Jewish congregation in Sydney which was first established during the 1820s. The Great Synagogue has been the centre of Jewish worship and culture in Sydney since its erection in 1878 and is associated with many leading citizens and families of the Jewish faith.
8 Developing Australia's cultural life	Creative endeavour	Activities associated with the production and performance of literary, artistic, architectural and other imaginative, interpretive or inventive works; and/or associated with the production and expression of cultural phenomena; and/or environments that have inspired such creative activities	The Great Synagogue is associated with the prominent architect Thomas Rowe who designed many other landmark buildings in Sydney. The Great Synagogue is an example of one of his finest surviving works. The Great Synagogue is also associated with the builder Aaron Loveridge and other notable contractors and suppliers such as Lyon and Cottier and P.N. Russell.
9 Marking the phases of life	Persons	Activities of, and associations with, identifiable individuals, families and communal groups	<p>The Great Synagogue has been the venue for events marking the phases of life for the Jewish community in Sydney since its consecration in 1878. Events include Brit Milahs, baby naming, Pidyon Habens, bar and bat mitzvah's, engagements and weddings and funerals.</p> <p>The Israel Green Auditorium, originally the Jewish War Memorial Centre, located in the basement of The Great Synagogue was opened in 1956. The auditorium contains memorials to those who served during WWI and WWII. The auditorium is dedicated to the memory of Israel Green who was the President of The Great Synagogue Board and who had given considerable amount towards its construction.</p> <p>The Rabbi Falk Library, opened in 1957, is named after Rabbi LA Falk who served the congregation of The Great Synagogue from 1923-1956. A variety of other memorial plaques and boards exist throughout The Great Synagogue are dedicated to past and present members of the congregation.</p>

5.4. EXISTING HERITAGE INTERPRETATION


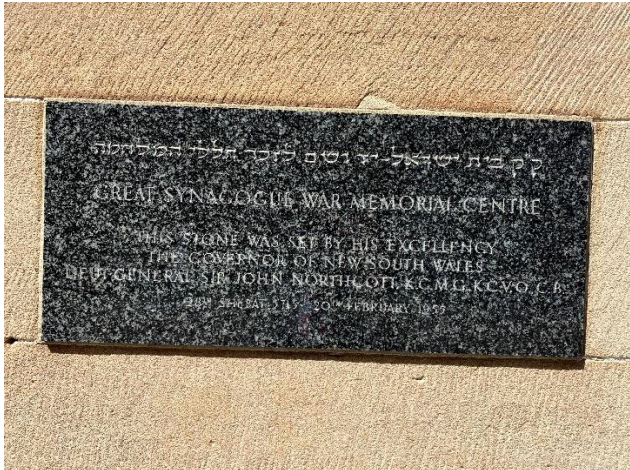
Interpretative elements and displays have already been implemented across The Great Synagogue. These elements proudly celebrates the history and significance of the site in a variety of formats.


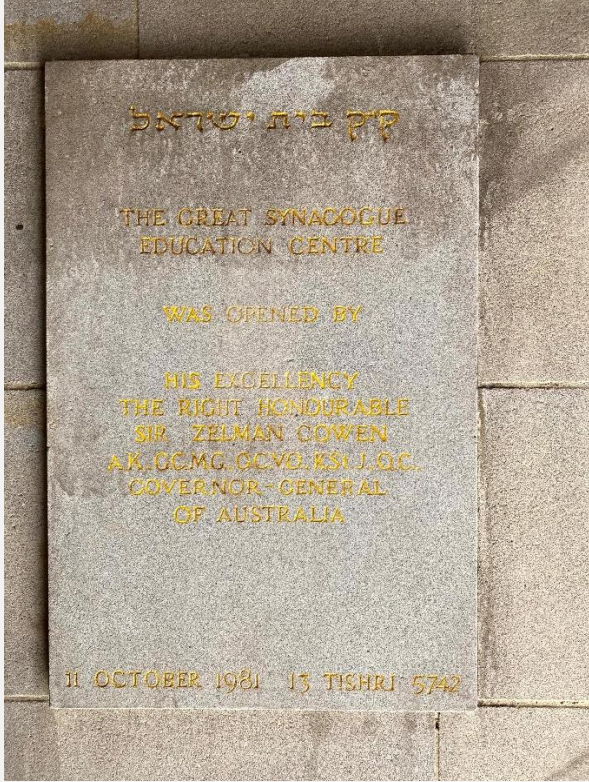
5.4.1. Existing Markers, Signage and Displays

The following table details the existing interpretation elements and reinstated features that contribute to the interpretation of the history and significance of the building. Overall, the items of heritage interpretation that exist on site are in good condition and do not need replacing at the time of preparing this report. However, their ongoing maintenance should form part of future maintenance schedules. Signage should be replaced should any signs of deterioration arise.



These signs and markers are representative of the ongoing commitment to marking special occasions, significant milestones and significant pieces of work that have been undertaken on site. This is common practice with the Synagogue.



Table 4 Existing items and elements of Heritage Interpretation located on site


Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
Heritage Marker	<p>Located on the primary façade (Elizabeth Street).</p> <p>Marble marker with the year the congregation was founded and year the Synagogue was erected.</p>	
Foundation stone	<p>Located on the western façade (Castlereagh Street).</p> <p>Stone marking the beginning of construction of the Great Synagogue War Memorial Centre (1955).</p>	

Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
Heritage Marker	<p>Located on the western façade (Castlereagh Street).</p> <p>Stone marker, marking the completion of the Great Synagogue War Memorial Centre (July 1956).</p>	
Heritage marker	<p>Located within the entrance, on the western façade (Castlereagh Street).</p> <p>Stone marker to mark the opening of the Education Centre</p>	

Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
Heritage Marker	<p>Located within the entrance portico (from Elizabeth Street).</p> <p>Bronze marker marking the completion of conservation works to the tower in 2003.</p>	
Stone plaque	<p>Located on the southern end of the entrance portico.</p> <p>Plaque celebrating the 100 year anniversary of the Synagogue and 150 years of Jewish worship in Sydney.</p>	
Brass plaques	<p>Located throughout the building.</p> <p>Small plaques that highlight generous donations and dedications to members of the congregation.</p>	 <p>Dedication plaque, located in the Sanctuary.</p>

Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
<p>Items of moveable heritage with associated plaques</p>	<p>Displays of moveable heritage, relevant to the Jewish faith and congregation on display with explanatory information.</p> <p>These are located in various locations around the site.</p>	 <p>Scroll, presented for the Golden Wedding of Diana and Theodore Freilich. On display in the Sanctuary.</p>
<p>Signage</p>	<p>Timber signage marking the naming of The Israel Green Auditorium.</p>	 <p>NAMED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND THE CONGREGATION IN RECOGNITION OF THE DEVOTED SERVICES AND GENEROUS GIFTS TO THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE BY BELLA AND ISRAEL GREEN THEIR INSPIRING LEADERSHIP OVER MANY YEARS PLAYED A PRINCIPAL PART IN THE ERECTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GREAT SYNAGOGUE WAR MEMORIAL CENTRE.</p>

Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
Signage	<p>Brass signage providing further information on the Memorial Library and the restoration of the library and rare books.</p> <p>Located on the ground floor at the entrance to the Library (on the upper levels of the Israel Auditorium).</p>	
Memorial	<p>War memorials display with accompanying bronze signage.</p> <p>Located in the Israel Auditorium upper levels.</p>	

Item/Type	Description and location	Picture
		

5.4.2. A.M Rosenblum Museum and Collections

In addition to the signage and displays included above, the Great Synagogue also displays their large moveable heritage collection in the A.M Rosenblum Museum. The Museum was founded in the 1980s and showcases the collection of Jewish artefacts including textiles, ritual silver and paintings. More information on the collection housed by the Great Synagogue is provided on their website.

The Museum is looked after by one curator who is responsible for the displays and care of the objects in the Great Synagogues' collection. Exhibitions undergo periodic changes depending on other events, tours etc. The last exhibition entitled, *Building: The Great Synagogue in Sydney since 1878*, which opened in 2018 marked the 140th Anniversary of the Great Synagogue. This exhibition has now closed and a new exhibition was being installed at the time of Urbis' site inspection.

Part of the display included signage panels that cover a wide range of themes and narratives connected to the heritage significance of the place, and to the Jewish community. Themes and narratives include:

- Architect, Thomas Rowe.
- Great Women. The contribution of Women to the congregation.
- York Street Congregation. The first purpose built Synagogue (consecrated in 1844) in York Street and the move of the Congregation to Elizabeth Street.
- Alterations from the 20th Century.
- Restoration works. Refashioning the interior of the Great Synagogue in 1906-1911.
- Everyday matters for the Jewish Community.

In addition, a sectioned model of the Synagogue is on display that shows the original interiors of the Sanctuary. This is located in a case with information about the architectural detail of the building.

The Museum does not have regular opening, or accessible hours. However, the Museum does form part of the tours for the general public and special groups (schools, special interest groups etc.) which are provided by the Staff of the Great Synagogue (information is provided on the tours through the Synagogue's website).³ Therefore, the Museum is available to visit to the general public, in addition to the congregation.

The Museum offers a good overview of the history and significance of the site and provides the congregation and general public with the opportunity to view artefacts from the Synagogue's collection.

³ Collection, *Great Synagogue*, Accessed March 2023, <<https://www.greatsynagogue.org.au/information/collection>>.



Figure 47 View inside the museum (currently undergoing a change of exhibitions).



Figure 48 Part of the displays, interpreting the architectural features and history of the place.



Figure 49 Information celebrating Great Women of the Congregation.



Figure 50 Historic information on the first locations of Jewish Congregations and worship in Sydney.



Figure 51 More display areas celebrating the history of the place and Jewish Community in Sydney.



Figure 52 Sectioned model of the Great Synagogue's Sanctuary.

In addition to significant artefacts, the Great Synagogue also holds copies of records, births, deaths and marriages from the early days of the colony. Some of these records are held at State Records. In addition, the Synagogue has recorded and holds oral interviews with members of the congregation that contributes to a broader oral history. A video that goes through the history of the congregation, including interviews with members of the congregation is shown as part of tours and school group programmes.

Many of the records have been microfilmed and copies are held at both the Synagogue and at the Australian Jewish Historical Society. These records can be viewed, with permission, at any time. Contact information is available on the website.⁴

The Great Synagogue are very conscious of the significant records and collection they hold. To share these resources, they take place in special events, have planned programmes and tours to provide access to the general public. In addition, they have specific staff available to assist members of the congregation and the general public accessing these collections and records for various use. Therefore, while there are some limitations and protection of these items, they are still made available for broader use and appreciation.

5.4.3. Website

In addition to the Museum, the Great Synagogue have made the history of the congregation and the Synagogue public through the website. This includes historic photographs and information on the Congregation, Architecture of the building and Musical History. Links are also provided for further information on Jewish History.

The website offers a high-level summary of the history and significance of the site with additional information and direction on how to access more information.

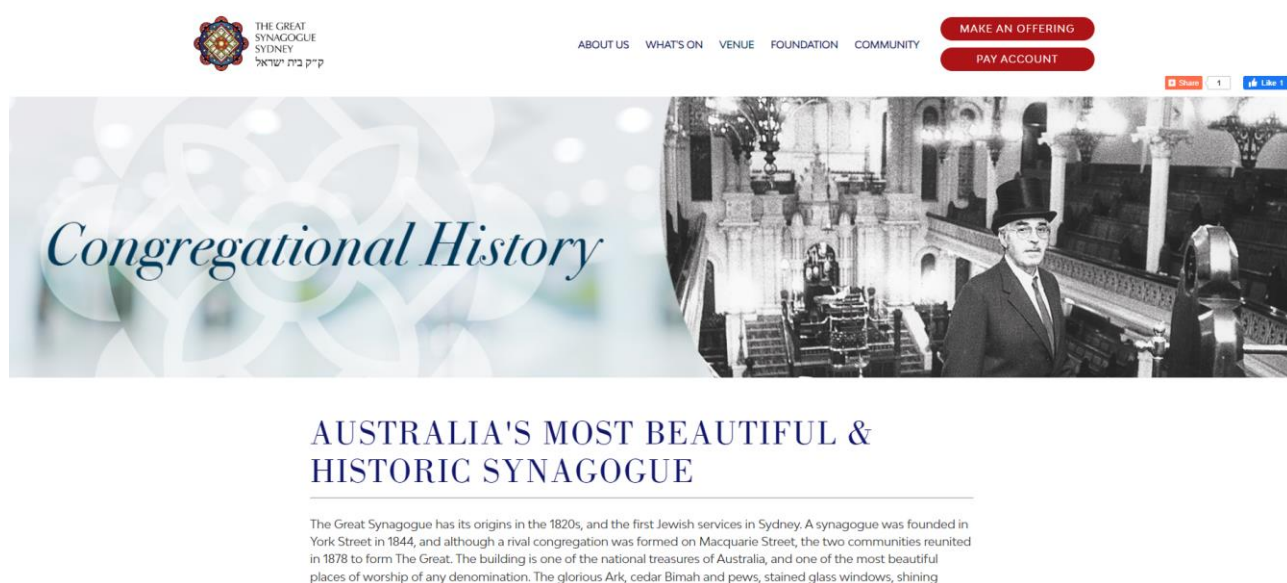


Figure 53 Snip from the history section located on the website.

Source: <https://www.greatsynagogue.org.au/aboutus.html>, Access March 2023.

5.4.4. Tours and Events

The Great Synagogue undertake special tours and programmes to share the history and significance of their site to groups beyond the Congregation. This includes school groups and programmes, tours (public and private tours) and involvement in larger events such as Sydney Open. These tours have recently been reinstated following a break during 2020-2022 due to the Global Pandemic. Refer to the website for update to date information on these tours and booking.⁵

These programmes and events provide the opportunity for the general public to gain access to the site and contribute to the overall shared knowledge and interpretation of the place. These are managed carefully by The Great Synagogue staff.

⁴ Collection, *Great Synagogue*, Accessed March 2023, <<https://www.greatsynagogue.org.au/information/collection>>.

⁵ Tours, *Tours*, Accessec 4 September 2023, <<https://www.greatsynagogue.org.au/information/tours>>.

5.4.5. Conservation works and reinstatement of lost characteristics and features

Every built form is a system of connecting links. Architecture, in this context, is the application of a number of spatial and temporal metaphors projected from bodily based experiences.”⁶ Interpretation in the built form thus refers to the treatment of the built form (being existing and adaptively reused buildings, new structures and streetscape elements) to interpret the sites significant values. A built form interpretive strategy is generally a more subtle response which emphasises and compliments the more overt interpretive media.

As discussed in detail in the CMP (2023), the Synagogue has a regular maintenance schedule that protects key architectural features of the building. In addition, the team at the Synagogue have also had specific conservation and restoration works undertaken to restore architectural features. Some of these works include:

- Stone repair works to the top towers were completed by 2001.
- In 2004, the brass work on the bimah was restored.
- In 2005, the interior of the sanctuary was repainted in the 1976 and 1989 colour scheme. In addition, a number of missing pieces of the decorative plaster and cast-iron balustrade were reconstructed.
- In 2007, replacement tessellated tiles were ordered from the UK to restore the floor in the Synagogue Sanctuary and the suspended chandeliers were refurbished and rewired.
- In 2018, the Rabbi Falk Library was refurbished.
- In 2022, the front iron gate, on the eastern façade was fully restored.

Overall, the ongoing maintenance schedule has ensured that the condition of the building has remained intact and the opportunity to restore key features of the building have been undertaken when appropriate.

5.5. FUTURE HERITAGE INTERPRETATION

Due to the extensive Heritage Interpretation and conservation works that have already been and continue to be undertaken (as detailed above), no further heritage interpretation is recommended at this stage.

The following considerations however have been included to guide any proposed future interpretation to ensure interpretation is appropriate and in keeping with the existing character and significance of the place.

- Future signage should only be proposed to mark specific occasions or anniversaries. The location, material and style of new signage should be carefully considered and in keeping with existing signage that mark special events, anniversaries or occasions.
- At this stage, due to the extensive displays in the Museum, additional didactic signage that highlights the history and significance of the place are not required. The Museum offers an appropriate place to display didactic information on the history and significance of the place, without impacting other significant spaces within the place.
- The restoration of lost historic features or finishes should be explored when alterations are proposed to the site. However, the reinstatement or restoration of lost features should be undertaken only when appropriate.
- Future Interpretation strategies could utilise digital media as an alternative to didactic signage. This could come in the form of an interactive website or display within the building or an app that further provides information on the history and significance of the place. However, due to the significant level of interpretation already implemented across the site this is not considered to be a necessity.
- All future Heritage Interpretation should be informed by Policies 127-132 outlined in the CMP (and included above in section 1.4.2).

⁶ Snodgrass and Coyne, *Interpretation in Architecture: Design as Way of Thinking* (2005) Pg. 201.

6. CONCLUSION

This report has been prepared to accompany a Heritage Floor Space application and has carefully considered the condition of the building and existing Interpretation media located across the site.

This report has concluded that no further heritage interpretation is recommended at this stage due to the extensive interpretation that has been implemented across the site to date and the overall condition of the building and these interpretation elements (refer to section 5.4). This includes the following media:

- Markers and interpretation signage.
- The A.M Rosenblum Museum and Collections.
- Website.
- Tours and Events
- Ongoing Conservation and the reinstatement of lost characteristics and features.

Recommendations and considerations for future interpretation however has been highlighted at section 5.5.

These recommendations include the following:

- Future signage should only be proposed to mark specific occasions or anniversaries. The location, material and style of new signage should be carefully considered and in keeping with existing signage that mark special events, anniversaries or occasions.
- At this stage, due to the extensive displays in the Museum, additional didactic signage that highlights the history and significance of the place are not required. The Museum offers an appropriate place to display didactic information on the history and significance of the place, without impacting other significant spaces within the place.
- The restoration of lost historic features or finishes should be explored when alterations are proposed to the site. However, the reinstatement or restoration of lost features should be undertaken only when appropriate.
- Future Interpretation strategies could utilise digital media as an alternative to didactic signage. This could come in the form of an interactive website or display within the building or an app that further provides information on the history and significance of the place. However, due to the significant level of interpretation already implemented across the site this is not considered to be a necessity.
- All future Heritage Interpretation should be informed by Policies 127-132 outlined in the CMP (and included in section 1.4.2 of this report).

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DISCLAIMER

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All surveys, forecasts, projections and recommendations contained in or associated with this report are made in good faith and on the basis of information supplied to Urbis at the date of this report, and upon which Urbis relied. Achievement of the projections and budgets set out in this report will depend, among other things, on the actions of others over which Urbis has no control.

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