

**PORT PHILLIP PLANNING SCHEME AMENDMENT C189
540 - 542 & 544 – 546 CITY ROAD, SOUTH MELBOURNE**

HERITAGE EXPERT WITNESS STATEMENT

by

JOHN BRIGGS

Instructed by

JMPLANNING

On behalf of the owners

ALAN STACKPOOL & GRAHAM DUCAS

29 SEPTEMBER 2020

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EXPERT WITNESS STATEMENT JOHN BRIGGS

AMENDMENT C189 PORT PHILLIP 540-542 & 544-546 City Rd, South Melbourne

I am the Principal of John Briggs Architects Pty Ltd, Architect and Conservation Consultant at 331A Bay Street, Port Melbourne. This Evidence Statement addresses the heritage significance of the pair of subject properties proposed for permanent inclusion in an expanded Montague Commercial Precinct, HO513.

I am a Registered Architect, No. 4972, a member of the RAlA and hold a Bachelor of Architecture, University of Melbourne.

Of the 34 years that I have worked in the practice of Architecture, the last 30 years have been predominantly in the field of Conservation Architecture. My training in conservation architecture was in my employment with the firm Allom Lovell and Associates over 8 years where I was the Project Architect responsible for the heritage works at both the Regent Theatre and at the Gothic Bank at 380 Collins Street. I left Allom Lovell and Associates in 1998 to pursue practice in architecture and as a heritage consultant.

My work has provided me with broad experience in all aspects of heritage architecture including historical research, preparation and production of conservation reports and conservation plans for projects at all scales, as well as the preparation and presentation of submissions to Councils, Heritage Victoria, Planning Panels and to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I am a heritage advisor to the City of Melbourne. I have significant experience in the design, documentation and administration of restoration works, works to reconstruct missing historic elements and works to facilitate the adaptation of historic buildings for new use.

In preparing this statement I have been instructed by JMPlanning on behalf of the owners Alan Stackpool and Graham Ducas.

I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate, and no matters of significance, which I regard as relevant, have to my knowledge been withheld from the Tribunal.



John Briggs

29 September 2020

John Briggs Architects Pty Ltd



Introduction

This submission addresses two shops that Port Phillip Council has proposed for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay as contributory and significant places respectively. The two properties have been included in the interim controls of the Heritage Overlay HO442, the Albert Park Residential Precinct / Part Montague.

The inclusion of these interwar property's, amongst others, has required amendment of the citation and it is proposed to provide a separate precinct and citation for the Montague Commercial Precinct.

This evidence is essentially a restatement of the submission to Port Phillip Council prepared 3 March 2020, and is informed by the Montague Commercial Precinct Statement of Significance, and the Fishermans Bend Heritage Review: Montague Commercial Precinct (2019) prepared by RBA on behalf of the City of Port Phillip. I have inspected the properties in March and pass these properties regularly as my office is within a kilometre of the site. In reviewing the heritage assessment I have had regard to the Planning Practice Note No. 1 *Applying the Heritage Overlay*.

Summary of Opinion


Critically these two buildings that are proposed to be included in the extension to the precinct have no visual or historical connection with the 42 metres of earlier building form that occupies City Road between 540 City Road, with its entirely modern expression, and the Montague Street corner. Whilst the brick construction of the building at 546 presents as older character the pair of properties have no other elements of period character or appearance and are not a part of an identifiable place that has any cohesive heritage value. Accordingly there appears on clearly established heritage importance for this pair of buildings that might justify their inclusions in the Montague Commercial Precinct.

Description

The building at 546 City Road is constructed of red brick and has rendered panels to the parapet above each of a pair of shops. Along with the expression of some piers in the parapet the sense of the age of the shops is largely derived from the sandblasted surface of the bricks resultant for paint removal in the 1980s. The shopfronts whilst timber date only from the 1980s and are without heritage value or refence.

The history of the subject pair of shops is provided in October 2019 heritage review of the precinct by RBA as follows:

During the Interwar period, several single storey shops replaced earlier buildings, including residences, within the precinct demonstrating the transition from residential to commercial and industrial that was occurring throughout Montague at that time. In Montague Street, no. 151, the pair at 153 & 155 and the group of three at 157-161 replaced earlier residences, while on City Road, the pairs at 540-42 and 544-46 replaced earlier shop buildings.

Description	Image
<p>544-546 City Road</p> <p>Single storey paired shops with wide brick parapet with rendered panels. A pier divides the façade into two parts. The shopfront is largely intact with timber window frames and doors, and rendered stallboard with vents.</p>	

Description	Image
<p>540-542 City Road</p> <p>Probably Interwar (or mid-20th century)</p> <p>Single storey shop with stepped parapet (partly obscured) characteristic of the Interwar period. Ground floor shopfront has been altered. Rendered though possibly face brick originally.</p>	

The statement of significance for the area sets out the historical value as follows:

Why is it Significant?

The Montague Commercial Precinct is historically significant as a remnant of the former Montague neighbourhood, home to a tight knit working class community since the 1860s/70s, which was designated a slum by authorities and otherwise almost entirely demolished and replaced with industrial and commercial buildings from the early 20th century onwards. It is reflective of the earlier finer subdivision pattern in Montague, which has changed due to the redevelopment of land for industry during the mid-20th century. The precinct also includes a house dating to 1914, one of few surviving in the Montague area. As such, the precinct is associated with a now disappeared aspect of South Melbourne's history. (Criteria A & B)

The precinct is significant as a representative and largely intact example of a typical small local commercial centre surrounding an intersection and on a former tram route. The precinct is defined by two prominent corner buildings, the former Hotel Nelson at 520-522 City Road and the shops and residences at 524-528 City Road. It is also distinctive within the Montague area as a remnant group of late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, encompassing the late Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods, in an area that has otherwise been redeveloped. In addition, several early 20th century shopfronts survive. (Criteria D & E)

It is submitted that whilst the interwar existed as period of change, the existence of these two building, which present very utilitarian presence, in this street is unedifying and without evident or demonstrable heritage value. Historical value cannot be attributed to this pair of properties on the basis of what they replaced. The building at 540 is without any premodern character as it expresses today other than perhaps the stepped parapet that is so hidden by the awning as to be only visible from some 30 metres away. This is a building that has been changed beyond recognition of its origins as it generally presents to the public realm. It may be advanced that the buildings of similar period on the east side of Montague Street can be appreciated as being a group or row of similar buildings and as collectively establishing a streetscape of prevailing inter-war and heritage presence, at least for some short distance. In City Road however the sand blasted brickwork of 546 City Road exists in complete isolation from any other similar character let alone heritage character from the same period.

Assessment - Guidance

The assessment of the possible heritage significance of the property is directed by the Planning Practice Note 1, Applying the Heritage Overlay. Places to be included in the Heritage Overlay are expected by PPN1 to have been shown to have significance to justify the application of the overlay.

The wording of the PPN1 includes the need to “clearly justify” the significance, and to provide documentation that “clearly establishes the importance” against the relevant heritage criteria.

As established by the Doug Wade case, heritage significance is the value of a place to the public, some or other identifiable community, past present or future for whom the place is important to their identity – their heritage. Heritage significance should not be defined by special interest groups. To achieve the intent of fair and orderly planning the attribution of heritage significance requires readily understandable reasoned explanation of how, and where, the thresholds for relevant heritage criteria are located. Most critically, so that the reasoning is accessible to understanding and verifiable, this a comparative exercise.

Where properties have evidently been previously assessed and not seen worthy of inclusion, and are now to be added to a Heritage, the onus of explanation should rest firmly on the proponent to provide the demonstration of how the place is important and to whom the place has this heritage importance.

All too often in heritage decision making the exercise is treated as the realm of some special expertise, assertion or assumption rather than being made accessible and understandable on the basis of comparative analysis and explanation.

The application of the Heritage Overlay may impose significant constraints upon the use of the property and upon the cost of, and capacity for development. It is for this reason that the application of the Heritage Overlay should be undertaken with clear and verifiable demonstration of the value and importance of the properties on the basis of comparative assessment.

Gradings

In the City of Port Phillip buildings have been graded either 'Significant' 'Contributory' or 'Non-Contributory' according to their contribution to the heritage values of the precinct. The gradings are defined at Clause 22.04 of the Port Phillip Planning Scheme, as follows:

Significant heritage places include buildings and surrounds that are individually important places of either State, regional or local heritage significance and are places that together within an identified area, are part of the significance of a Heritage Overlay. These places are included in a Heritage Overlay either as an area or as an individually listed heritage place and are coloured “red” on the City of Port Phillip Heritage Policy Map in the Port Phillip Heritage Review, Volume 1-6.

Contributory heritage places include buildings and surrounds that are representative heritage places of local significance which contribute to the significance of the Heritage Overlay area. They may have been considerably altered but have the potential to be conserved. They are included in a Heritage Overlay and are coloured “green” on the City of Port Phillip Heritage Policy Map, in the Port Phillip Heritage Review, Volume 1-6.

Comment upon proposed Heritage Overlay Extension

The pair shops from 540 to 546 City Road present out evident heritage character other than perhaps the sand blasted brick. Neither shop front is original and both are evidently late 20th Century in origin.

That the shopfront of 546 City Road is described as “*largely intact*” might be understood to suggest that “*timber window frames and doors, and rendered stallboard with vents*” were thought to be original.

That the 1980s shopfronts of 544- 566 have been mistaken as original, is recorded in the Statement of Significance:

Statement of Significance What is significant?

The Montague Commercial Precinct, comprising 496-546 City Road and 151-163 Montague Street, South Melbourne is significant. This small precinct comprises a group of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century buildings (encompassing the Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods) situated around the intersection of City Road and Montague Street in South Melbourne. The buildings mostly comprise two storey buildings originally constructed as shops and residences, and single storey shops. There is also a former hotel and a house.

The two storey Victorian and Federation era former shops and residences are similar in form materials, finishes and detailing. All are of masonry construction and are smooth rendered with upper levels that are often enlivened by cement-rendered ornament. Some retain early or original shopfronts (Nos. 496, 498, 514, 518, 524-28, 544-546 City Road). The Interwar period shops are all single storey and masonry. The former Hotel Nelson is a typical corner hotel with a splayed corner entrance and later Interwar alterations with restrained classical detailing. The only house in the precinct at 506 City Road is a single fronted terrace with a hip roof and a projecting gabled bay in the Queen Anne style with some Victorian detailing.

The streets have basalt kerbs and channels and there are nineteenth century pitched basalt lanes with central one-pitcher drain between the Hotel Nelson and 163 Montague Street and at the rear of 153-161 Montague Street and 524-28 City Road.

The buildings at 496 & 498 (shops & residences), 506 (house), 512 & 514 (shops & residences), 516 & 518 (shops & residences), 520-522 (former Hotel Nelson), 524-528 (shops & residences), 532 & 534 & 536 & 538 (shops & residences), 544-546 (shops) City Road and 151 (shop), 163 (shop & residence) Montague Street, and the basalt kerb and channel and laneways are Significant to the precinct.

The buildings at 540-542 (shop) City Road and 153 & 155 (shops), 157-161 (shops) Montague Street are Contributory to the precinct.

The buildings at 500-502, 508-510 and 530 City Road are Non-Contributory.

How is it significant?

The Montague Commercial Precinct of local historical, aesthetic, representative and social significance to the City of Port Phillip.

While there is discussion in the above statement of the buildings being “smooth rendered” the building at 540- 542 is covered with acrylic render that entirely obscures any earlier condition.

Conclusion

Other than as assertion there is no explanation of how these two properties achieve some or other threshold to be considered either contributory or important at the local level either historically or aesthetically.

It would appear that the assessment of individual significance has been based upon the mistaken premise that the timber shopfronts at 546 City Road date from between the war rather than being late century. If the shopfronts had been intact and original it may well be that they would have imparted individual heritage significance to the property. As this is not the case it is my recommendation that both properties be excluded from the Heritage Overlay.



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