

553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park Heritage Impact Statement

Prepared for

D&L Building Services

By



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1. Introduction

No. 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park is occupied by Makin Mattresses. They recently acquired the building, undertook works of renovation and adaptation to accommodate their new West Australian store. A Development Application was submitted to Town of Victoria Park in May 2017, with approval being granted in September 2017. All works were approved by the Town of Victoria Park except the blocking up or removal of the façade windows and no application had been submitted for signage.

Despite the Development Application Refusal for the façade windows, the owners of the place went ahead with boarding them up, but not complete removal. The owners also installed signage to three elevations, including covering up the original building name on the parapet. As a result, Town of Victoria Park issued a Non-Compliance Notice in February 2018 requesting that the windows be reinstated and an application for signage be submitted.

No. 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park is entered on the Town of Victoria Park's Municipal Heritage Inventory and as such, all alterations must be in keeping with the significance of the place. As a commercial building, any proposed works are subject to the provisions of local planning policy 17: Street Frontage Design Guidelines for District Centres and Commercial Areas along Albany Highway which contains specific provisions for heritage buildings and the requirements of Signs Local Law 2006.

The owners of the place appointed Hocking Heritage Studio to provide them with advice as to how the situation could be remedied taking into account the significance of the building and user requirements for the space.

During research into the building as part of the advice provided to the owners, it transpires that the frontage of no. 553 Albany Highway at the time of the unauthorised works is likely not to be original and has undergone significant alteration. In view of this information, the owners seek to submit an alternative solution that enables them to retain the blocked openings. This heritage impact statement seeks to assess the proposal against the documented significance of the place utilising the framework for heritage impact statements adopted by the State Heritage Office.

2. No. 553 Albany Highway

No. 553 Albany Highway is located to the east side of the main road, approximately 500m north of the intersection with Kent Street. The building is located to the north of the main commercial area of Victoria Park and south of the secondary commercial area towards the northern end of Albany Highway.

No. 553 is located in a section of Albany Highway that has experienced a large amount of redevelopment and is now situated amongst a predominance of car yards and is one of the few original buildings remaining extant in this section of Albany Highway.

The statement of significance associated with the entry for no. 553 Albany Highway, known as the United Friendly Society Chemist (fmr), on the Town of Victoria Park's Municipal Heritage Inventory states:

'This building has aesthetic, historic and social heritage significance. It is an example of an Art Deco design that maximises a corner location. Its historic significance lies in its association with the Victoria Park and Districts' United Friendly Society. It was purpose built as a dispensary for the group in 1940. The Friendly Society provided members with a range of benefits. The building has become an important part of the commercial streetscape of Albany Highway.'

The physical description in the entry reads:

'This corner shop has an Art Deco façade which encompasses a simple monopitch corrugated iron roof structure. It is a good example of how to handle a corner building in an economical manner. The rendered façade has an undulating skyline decoration over the main entry with a panel for the building title. There are two recessed string course mouldings at parapet height and one at a height of the top windows to accentuate the horizontal lines of the building. Behind the corner shop is a small hall with a gabled corrugated iron roof, and walls constructed from cement bricks.'



Figure 1: No. 553 Albany Highway - United Friendly Societies Building c. 2017

An archival search on the building did not reveal any historic photographs of the United Friendly Societies Building but original building plans were found. In the absence of any early photographs, it has to be assumed that the building was constructed as per the plans.

The building was designed by William Bennett and was described as consisting of

'a lodge hall, a dispensary and offices, a shop and residence, a lock-up, a supper room, a kitchen and convenience. The lodge hall, which measures 32ft by 24ft has seating accommodation for 150 people'

West Australian, 11 March 1940

The plans dated 1939 correspond with this description and show a façade that contained a set of double timber framed glass doors in the centre leading into the hall flanked by shops either side with traditional angled entrances and a third shop with a separate set of double doors at the northern end of the range.

The shop windows were large plated openings, either as a single pane or multi-pane depending on the length of the shop frontage, with highlights above.

All entrances were set back from the shop windows.

The stall riser below the windows was black vitrolite, the main section of the façade green vitrolite with the side elevations being cream cement render and a verandah canopy wrapped around the entire frontage with a short return onto Rathay Street.

The parapet incorporated three grooved string courses and the stepped central piece incorporating the name of the building 'Friendly Societies Building'.

The entrance into the residence was via the north elevation with a single door flanked by 1-over-1 timber framed sash windows.

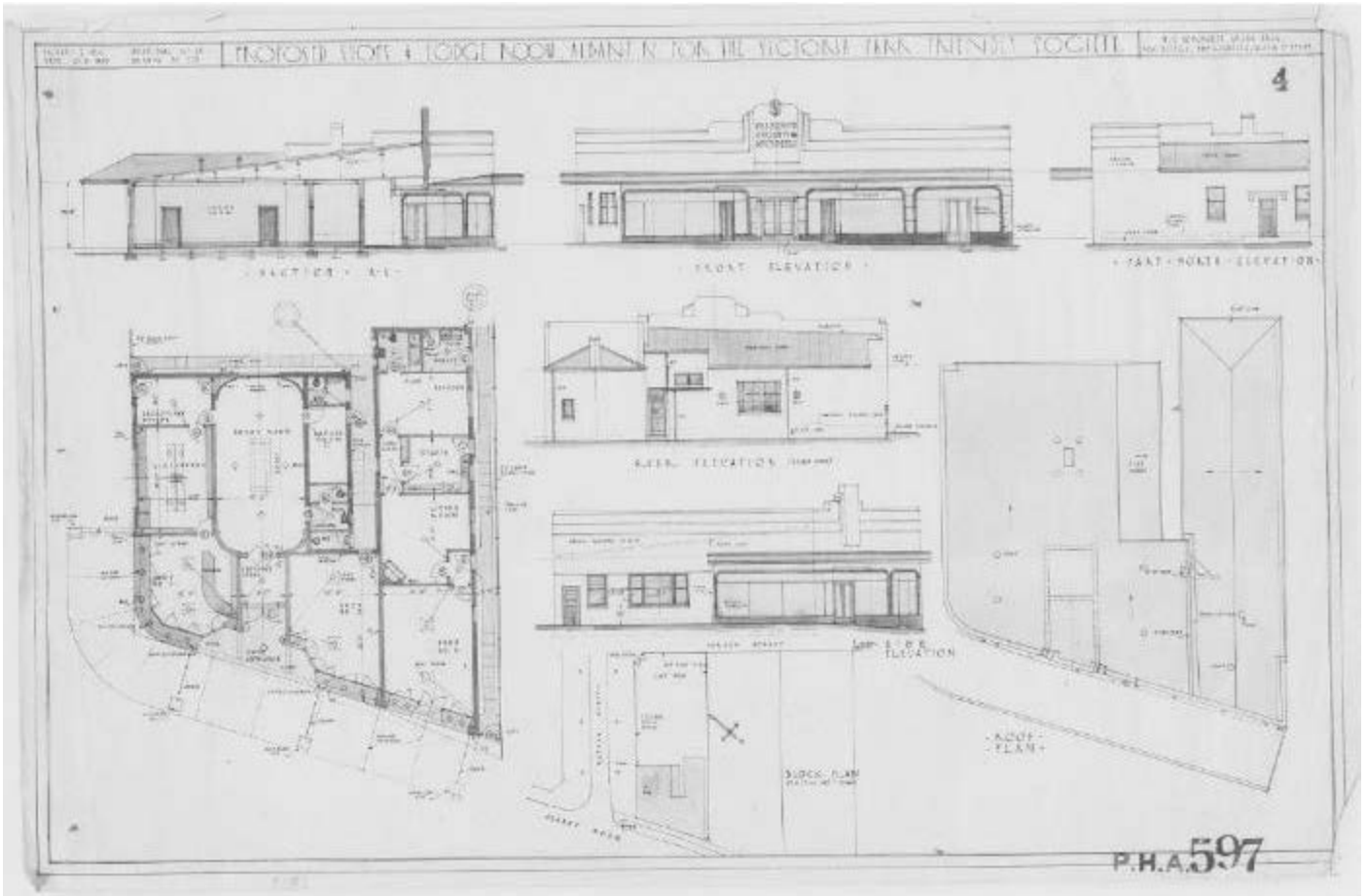


Figure 2: Original Plans for 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park - Friendly Societies Building

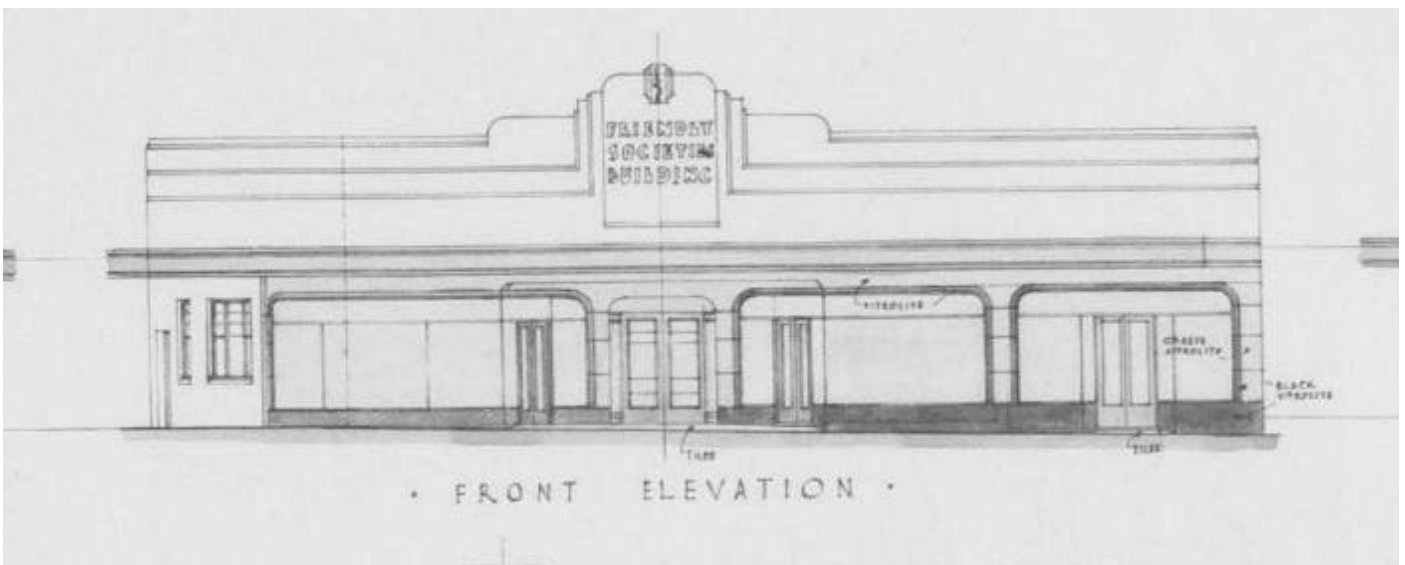


Figure 3: Original Plans for 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park - Friendly Societies Building – façade

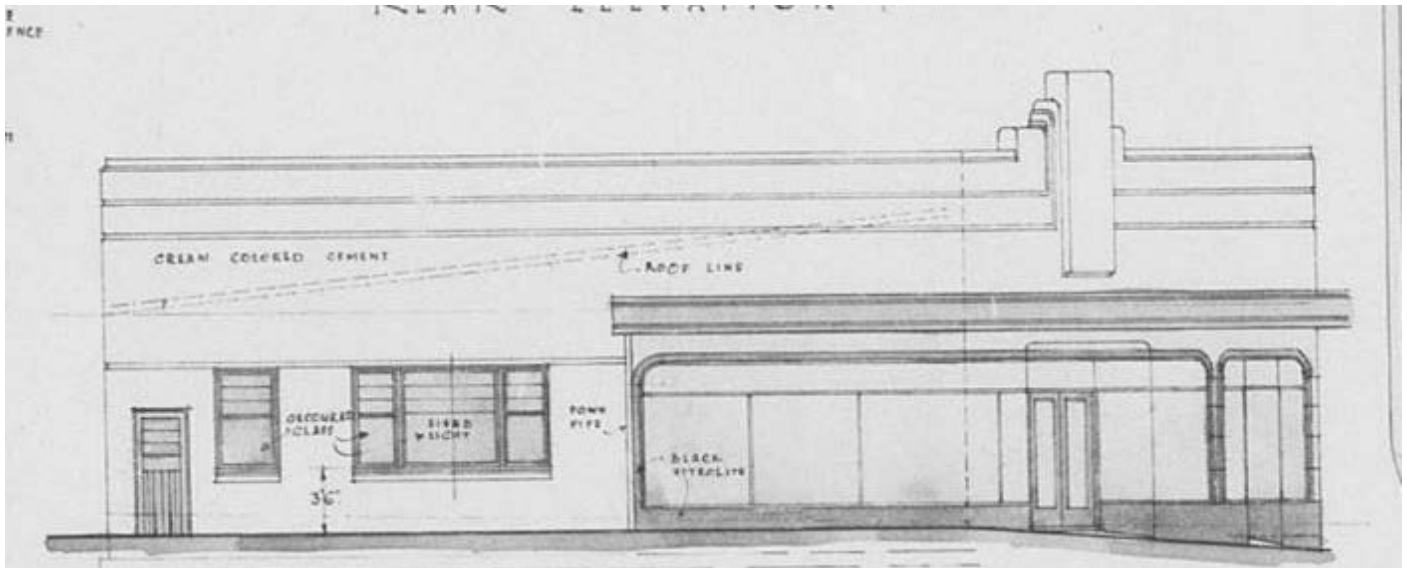


Figure 4: Original Plans for 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park - Friendly Societies Building – south elevation (Rathay Street)

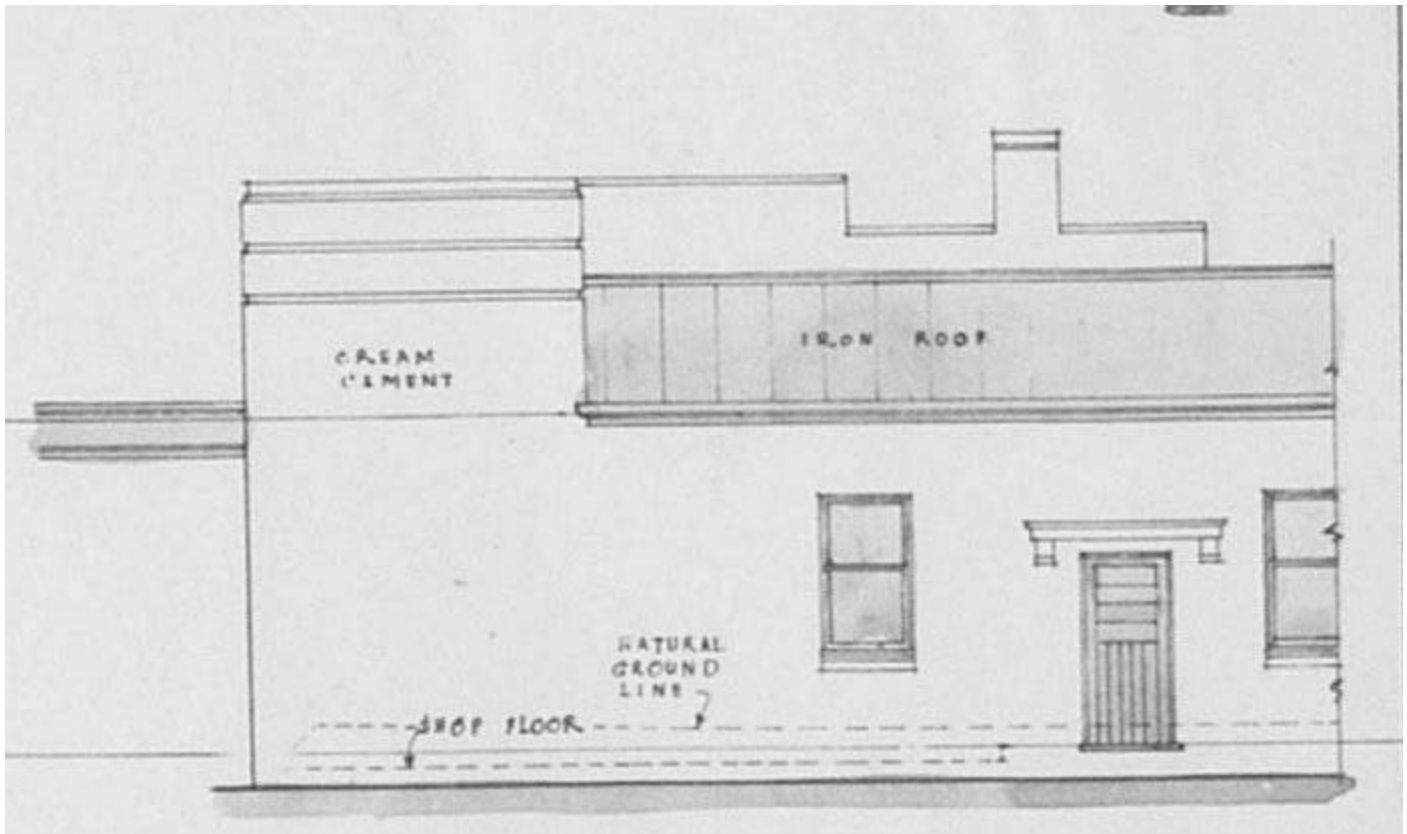


Figure 5: Original Plans for 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park - Friendly Societies Building – part north elevation

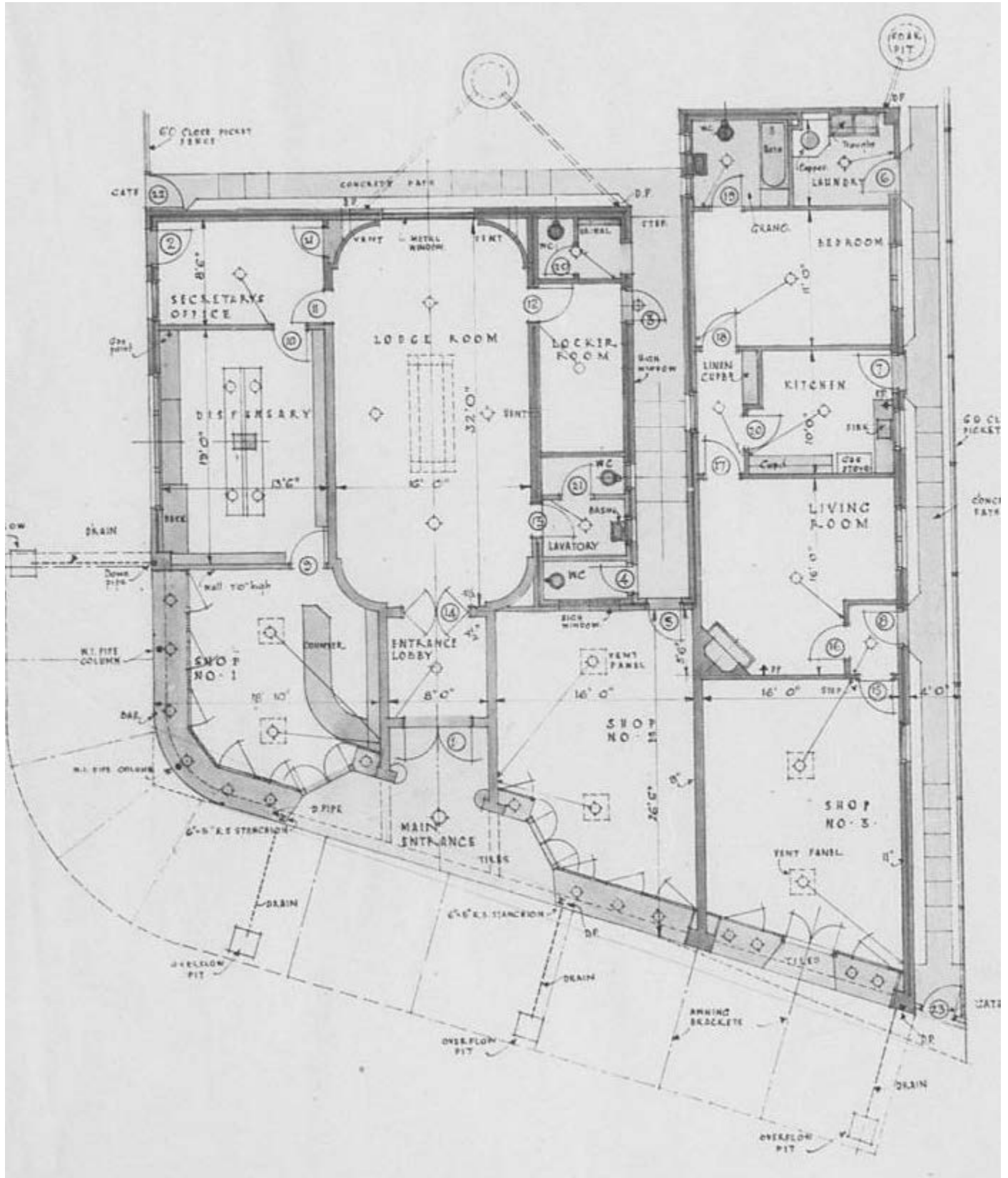


Figure 6: Original Plans for 553 Albany Highway, Victoria Park - Friendly Societies Building – Floor Plan

It is unknown when the changes occurred to the building but it is thought to be in circa the 1970s based on the replacement window framing. Archival searches at the local library and Council (including City of Perth) did not reveal any further information relating to this building.

The changes significantly altered the façade of the United Friendly Societies Building. The shop as it presented in 2017 prior to the current alteration works being undertaken, had a continuous shop frontage with the original recessed main entrance being brought forward to meet the main building line. The two retail units that were originally located to the north of the main entrance were amalgamated to make one retail unit, with the entrance into the shop via a set of double doors and the remainder of the façade comprising six blocked up windows. The corner retail unit remained extant albeit with a different entrance arrangement. The grant lobby into the former meeting hall had been removed, with a small entrance through the retail unit providing access to the former hall area. There was no evidence of the green and black vitrolite (shiny coloured structural glass) on the façade. The cement render remained extant.

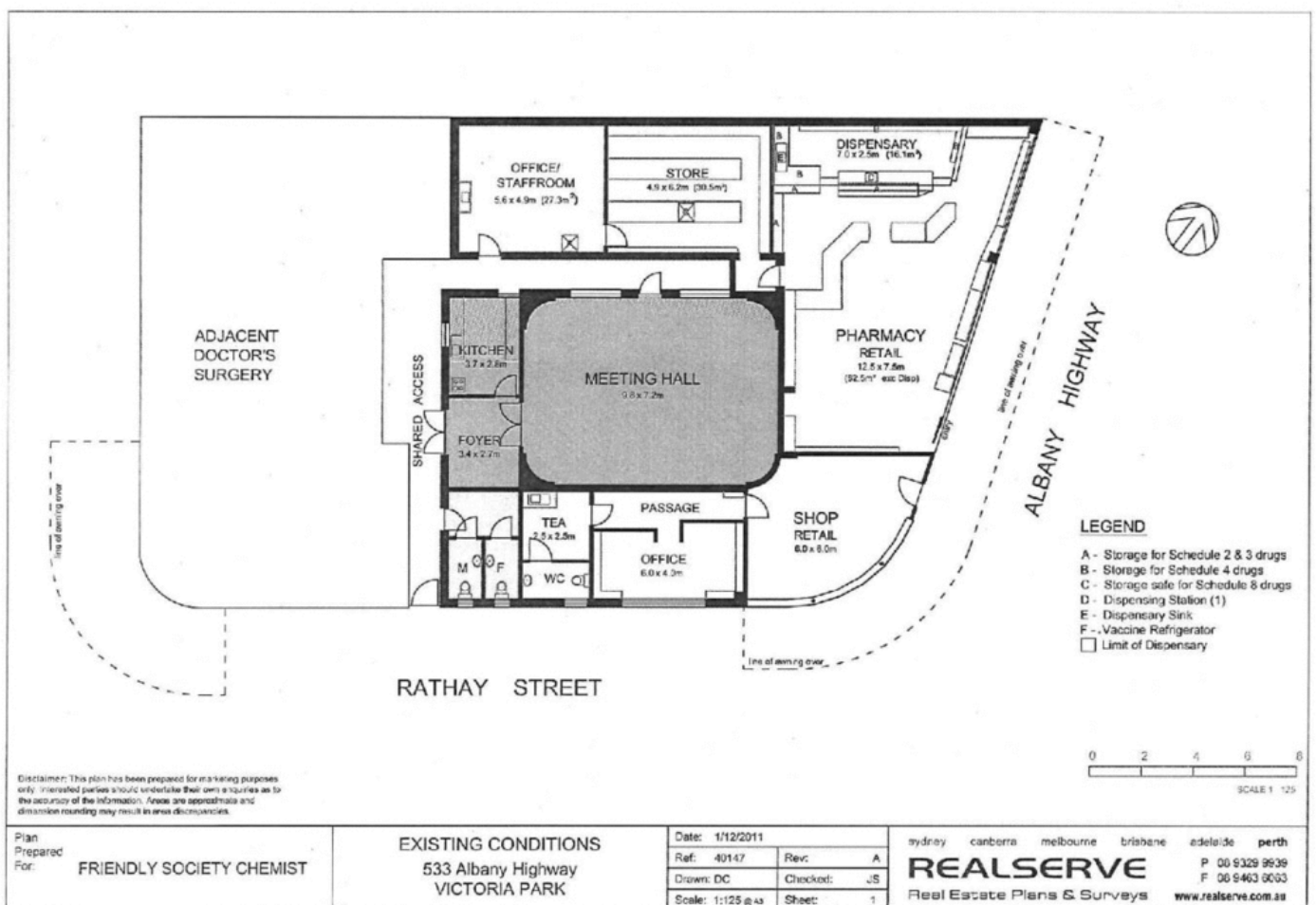


Figure 7: Floor plan at the time of sale, 2017

Above the verandah level, the shop presented in an intact manner. The stepped section of the parapet incorporating the name of the building and the date of construction was executed in a slightly different manner than shown on the original plan, but the overall intent remained the same which can be taken to imply that this section of the façade is original.

3. Unauthorised works to No. 553 Albany Highway

The development approval granted for the change of use of the premises to showroom specifically states that:

Approval was granted subject to the following conditions:

1. In relation to the existing windows facing Albany Highway:
 - 1.1. All windows are to be retained in their current size and height with no windows to be removed or boarded up as proposed.
 - 1.2. All windows are to have clear glazing, with any existing painting or obscuring of windows to be removed, and the windows not being subsequently obscured by signage or internal shelves.
 - 1.3. Those windows described in the approved plans to be boarded up or removed shall be retained as per item 1.1 but may be internally screened through curtains or blinds.
 - 1.4. The internal screening permitted in 1.3 above only relates to this planning application.
2. This approval does not include the approval of any signage. Any signage for the development to be the subject of a Development Application, in accordance with Council's Signs Local Law.

A decision was taken by the owners of the premises to block up the last three windows to the north of the entrance, contrary to the planning approval and to erect signage to all three elevations of the building.



Figure 8: Facade no. 553 Albany Highway, 2018



Figure 9: Blocked up windows to Albany Highway facade



Figure 10: Blocked up windows to facade and covered up name panel



Figure 11: Rathay Street elevation



Figure 12: Obscured store windows to corner windows



Figure 13: Signage to north elevation

4. Proposed Solution

The owners now propose various changes to the unauthorised works which aim to lessen the impact on the building but do not fully comply with the previous requirements of the Town of Victoria Park.

The proposal seeks to retain the blocked up windows, altering them to read as blind openings incorporating the window framing; rationalise the signage and change the location of remaining elements; remove the signage from the parapet and reinstate the original building name; and incorporate an additional yellow string course below the awning canopy.



Figure 14: Proposed facade alterations



Figure 15: Reduced signage to north elevation

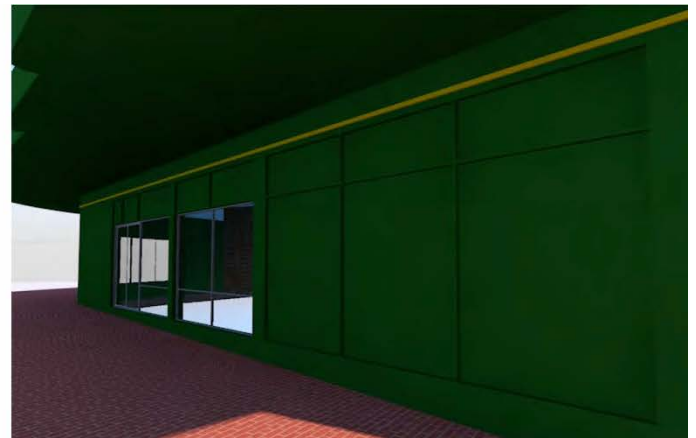
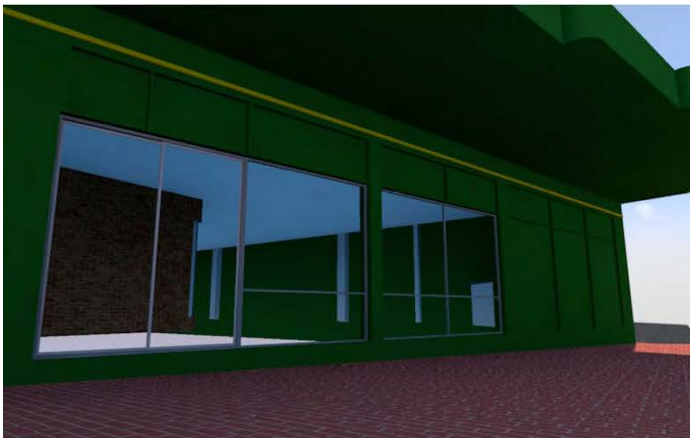


Figure 16: Blind openings to facade and additional yellow string course

5. Impact Assessment

In assessing the impact of change on a heritage building, the amount of change being proposed should be guided by the cultural significance of the place (Article 15: Change, Burra Charter).

Generally speaking, changes to a place of identified cultural heritage significance should be kept to the minimum in order to maintain that significance. The statement of Significance is often the benchmark to manage change against and in this instance, the Statement of Significance for no. 553 Albany Highway has been identified as being:

- An example of an Art Deco building which maximises its corner location
- Its historic significance lies its association with the Victoria Park and Districts' United Friendly Society
- The place was purpose built as a dispensary in 1940
- The Friendly Society provided members with a range of benefits
- The building has become an important part of the commercial streetscape of Albany highway

In terms of impact assessment of the proposed changes, the following is noted:

Statement of significance	Comment
An example of an Art Deco building on a corner location	<p>The proposed changes to the window treatment and signage do not affect this statement.</p> <p>The building is being retained in its existing footprint and retains the extant Art Deco detailing to the parapet.</p> <p>The façade of the building was changed c.1970s which removed much of the original Art Deco presentation of the place with the parapet being the only element now presenting with Art Deco detailing.</p>
Historic significance associated with the Victoria Park and Districts' United Friendly Society	<p>The proposed changes to the window detailing do not impact on this value.</p> <p>The unauthorised signage that has been placed over the building name panel is being removed as part of this proposal with the connection to the United Friendly Societies being retained.</p>
The place was purpose built as a dispensary	<p>The proposed changes to the windows and signage do not impact on this value.</p>
The Friendly Society provided members with a range of benefits	<p>The proposed changes to the window and signage do not impact on this value.</p>
The building has become an important part of the commercial streetscape of Albany Highway	<p>The proposed changes to the window and signage do not impact on this value.</p> <p>The pre-2017 footprint of the building remains extant. The prominence of the place has not been diminished as a result of the works. As one of the few remaining original buildings along this section of Albany Highway, this value is maintained with these works.</p>

Therefore, in terms of the statement of significance, the proposed changes to the windows and the signage do not harm the perceived architectural significance of the building. The historic connection to the United Friendly Society will be reinforced through retention and restoration of the original building name panel.

The place record form downloaded from the inHerit Database (place no. 12317) on the State Heritage Office website, is populated with information provided by the Town of Victoria Park, which mirrors the information contained with the Town's Municipal Heritage Inventory. The physical description for the place states:

'This corner shop has Art Deco façade which encompasses a simple monopitch corrugated iron roof structure. It is a good example of how to handle a corner building in an economical manner. The rendered façade has an undulating skyline decoration over the main entry with a panel for the building title. There are two recessed string course mouldings at parapet height and one at a height of the top of the windows to accentuate the horizontal lines of the building. Behind the shop is a small hall with a gabled corrugated iron roof, and walls constructed from cement bricks.'

Physical Description Statement	Comment
Art Deco façade with a simple monopitch corrugated iron roof structure.	<p>The proposed changes to the window treatment and signage do not affect this statement.</p> <p>The façade appears to have been changed c.1970s which removed much of the original Art Deco presentation of the place with the parapet being the only detail now presenting with Art Deco detailing. The current proposal does not seek to remove any additional fabric or detailing.</p> <p>The non-original window openings have been retained albeit now presenting as blind openings complete with the framing detail. The change is reversible and the windows can be reinstated when required. These are not original openings but the blind openings enable the façade to be read as though the windows continue across the façade.</p> <p>No changes to the roof have occurred as part of these works.</p>
It is a good example of how to handle a corner building in an economic manner.	The proposed changes do not alter this statement.
The rendered façade has an undulating skyline decoration over the main entry with a panel for the building title.	<p>The rendered façade remains extant.</p> <p>The stepped parapet remains extant and the original name panel is retained and restored.</p>
There are two recessed string course moulding at parapet height and one at a height of the top of the windows to accentuate the horizontal lines of the building.	<p>The two recessed string courses have been retained and painted a contrasting colour to highlight the feature.</p> <p>There was no evidence of a string course below the awning canopy which is likely to have been lost at the time the changes to the façade were undertaken. A painted string course is proposed to replicate this feature, which serves to tie the lower section of the building with the section above the awning, break the massing of the façade up and replicate an original feature.</p>
Behind the shop is a small hall with a gabled corrugated iron roof and walls constructed from cement bricks.	No change to this statement as part of these works.

The proposed works do not impact on the above physical description.

Art Deco buildings are often characterised by their horizontal lines and decorative elements that served no particular function. 'A Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture: Styles and Terms from 1878 to the Present'¹ is the main reference to defining architectural styles within Australia, and adopted by State Heritage Office, lists exterior characteristics as including:

'Symmetry common. Concerns for three-dimensional quality in massing and details. Vertical and horizontal fins; zigzags; stepped 'skyscraper' silhouettes; 'streamlined' effects; geometric curves; stylised decoration.

Favoured materials: faience (sometimes with colour and tone lightening from bottom to top), and especially fabricated for the particular building, polished granite, Vitrolite, textured face brickwork, sandstone. Chromium plated steel favoured for shopfronts and commercial interiors.'

The original plans drawn up by William Garnsworthy Bennett in 1939 certainly reflect this assessment of the architectural style. The building as it presented in 2017 prior to the works being undertaken did not readily represent the Art Deco style. The stepped parapet with the curved edges, the curved corner wall and the horizontal string course bands across the parapet were the only distinctive Art Deco features remaining on the façade.

Further alteration to the façade appears to have occurred after 2000 with an additional door being inserted into the façade, immediately south of the non-original sliding doors.

The building as it presented in 2017 does not appear to have been an intact example of an Art Deco style building. Therefore the proposed alterations to the windows and the signage do not alter or diminish the retained Art Deco features of the building.

In terms of the signage, heritage significance must also be considered. Rules pertaining to signage are set out in the Town of Victoria Park Signs Local Law 2006 which considers heritage significance and quality of streetscape. In determining any application for signage, Town of Victoria Park may have regard to:

- Clause 11 (2) (b) the impact of the sign on the quality of streetscape where it is to be displayed and more generally the district
- (c) whether the size of the sign appropriately relates to the architectural style, design and size of a building on which the sign is to be displayed, and in measuring the size of a sign a polygon shall be taken immediately around the text, graphics or image of the sign and not the entire background, except where finish or colour of the background differs substantially from the background against which the sign is to be displayed
 - (d) whether the colour scheme and materials of the sign are compatible with the architectural style and design of a building on which the sign is to be displayed
 - (e) whether the colour scheme and materials of the sign are compatible with the overall architectural style and design of the area or precinct in which the sign is to be displayed

Clause 34 Any signs on land, buildings, objects, structures and places included on the Register of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance contained in Schedule 6 of the Town of Victoria Park Planning Scheme No. 1 require planning approval.

The proposed signage has been rationalised from the unauthorised versions previously erected on the premises.

¹ Apperley, R., Irving, R., and Reynolds, P., 1999

The sign to the façade covering the name of the building is to be removed entirely with the original building name panel reinstated. The logo from the Rathay Street elevation has been moved to the curved corner of the façade with the slogan remaining along the Rathay Street elevation in its existing form.

The proposed location of the logo on the curved element of the façade enables the signage to be clearly seen in the street view and negates the need for additional signage on the Albany Highway frontage, thereby reducing the clutter to the parapet.



Figure 17: Rationalised signage

The advertising to the north elevation has been reduced in size and is more appropriate for the building and the locality.



Figure 18: Proposed signage to side elevations

The Signs Local Law 2006 states that the following will be considered in assessing an application for signage:

Factors taken into consideration in determining an application for signage	Comment
<p>The impact of a sign on the quality of the streetscape where it is to be displayed and the area more generally</p>	<p>The immediate locality around the subject property is predominantly car sale yards and does not present with the quintessential Victoria Park character.</p> <p>The immediate context for no. 553 Albany Highway can be taken to extend from State Street to the south and Temple Street to the north, taking into account both sides of Albany Highway.</p> <p>The majority of buildings along this section of Albany Highway are car sale yards. The buildings are set back from the street boundary with prominent advertising in various forms on the buildings or around the sites, all of which are highly visible in views along this section of the road.</p> <p>Non-car sales uses along this stretch includes a large vacant lot on the southern corner of Rathay Street opposite the subject property. Across from the subject property is a pair of more traditional single storey retail units, a larger scale retail unit set back from the street and a two storey mixed use building set back behind the street boundary.</p> <p>Beyond the intersection of State Street and Albany Highway going south, a more traditional Victoria Park character is visible with the Victoria Park Hotel on the west side of the street and a row of traditional single storey retail units, all with some level of alteration, along the eastern side of Albany Highway.</p> <p>To the north of the subject premises, there is a range of more traditional shop premises close to the junction with Temple Street on the west side of the road and more car yards, offices and a small park along the east side.</p> <p>Therefore there is no predominant streetscape character along this section of Albany Highway and it is therefore difficult to make a judgement that the signage is either appropriate or not appropriate for the area. The areas of strong Victoria Park character are much further to the south and north along Albany Highway and the area around the subject premises is not considered to contribute to this character.</p> <p>The form of the proposed signage appears to be comparable to other signage within the immediate vicinity of the subject premises.</p>
<p>Whether the colour scheme and materials are compatible with the architectural style and design of the building on which they are to be displayed</p>	<p>The subject premises was originally an Art Deco style building with a triple frontage of retail units and recessed main entrance into the hall, with a distinctive parapet above the awning canopy.</p> <p>The building now presents in a dual manner: above the awning the Art Deco style is still evident, below the canopy due to the changes to the building frontage the architectural style is indeterminate.</p> <p>Development approval was given by the Town of Victoria Park to paint the premises dark green which is an integral part of Makin Mattresses' branding and as a result, the colour scheme of the signage is not incompatible with the building.</p>
<p>Whether the colour scheme and materials of the sign are compatible with the overall architectural style and design</p>	<p>As stated above, there is no predominant architectural form along this section of Albany Highway. Although the subject premises are located within the commercial precinct of Victoria Park, there is no discernible character at this point of the road and the subject premises does not</p>

Factors taken into consideration in determining an application for signage	Comment
of the area of precinct in which the sign is to be displayed	belong to either the commercial area to the north along Albany Highway or the commercial area to the south. The predominant use in this section of the road is car sale yards and the proposed signage is no more visible than those used on the neighbouring car yards.
Any signs on land, buildings, objects, structures and places included on the Register of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance require planning approval.	<p>In assessing any development application for works to a heritage place, the impact of those works on the documented heritage significance of the place must be taken into account. Unless proven to the contrary, the subject premises as it presented in 2017 prior to the works being undertaken, was not in its original form with the frontage of the 1940s building having been replaced in the 1970s, possibly even as late as the 1980s.</p> <p>Whilst its significance as a local landmark and for its relationship with the United Friendly Societies remains extant, the contribution of the place as a good example of an Art Deco building is questionable due to the previously altered shop frontages.</p> <p>Therefore, it can be concluded that the proposed signage does not harm the adopted heritage values attributed to the building.</p>

6. Conclusion

Whilst it is accepted that unauthorised works to the subject property were carried out, some of which harmed the perceived heritage significance of the place, information discovered as part of the heritage impact statement process shows that the building in 2017 no longer presented with its original design intent.

The changes c.1970s removed the original façade to the building, creating a consistent building line along the boundary and removed all the traditional recessed entries into the retail units and the original hall. As a result, the window and door arrangement and styles were significantly altered, thus changing the emphasis of the façade.

Despite the earlier changes, the Art Deco character remained clearly visible above the awning canopy and this aesthetic remains extant in 2018.

The proposed works outlined above do not seek to reinstate either the original 1940s presentation of the building, nor the altered façade form. They seek to reach a compromise that enables the building to present in a more acceptable manner and meet the requirements of the Town. The introduction of 'blind' openings to the northern section of the façade are an interpretation of the later window. The framework in the blind openings provide a level of articulation to the façade, breaking up the massing of the render.

The façade had already been compromised due to the c1970s works but the band of non-original openings could be taken as an interpretation of the horizontal influence seen in Art Deco buildings. The blind openings will be a further interpretation of this horizontal emphasis continuing the line of the openings but will not be physical windows. The windows remain extant behind the boarding and can be reinstated at a later stage if required.

With regard to the signage, the Makin Mattresses branding is bold and is clearly visible in street views, as is other building signage in the immediate vicinity. However, the proposal to rationalise the number of signs and logos reduces clutter on the building and hence reduces the impact in the street views.

The proposed changes to both the windows and the signage are considered to be more appropriate for both the building and the locality. The heritage significance of the building is not overly impacted by the blind

openings as the original façade has long since been lost. The reinstatement of the original building name on the parapet retains the important historical connection to the original owners and function of the place.

The changes are all reversible which can be considered to be an appropriate heritage outcome.