

## Heritage Referral Memo

<b>To:</b>	Lara Huckstepp, North Sydney Council
<b>From:</b>	David Logan and Lisa Trueman, GML Heritage
<b>Date:</b>	19 December 2019
<b>Subject:</b>	DA 347/19 – North Sydney Olympic Pool Redevelopment Preliminary Heritage Comments

## Background

This referral provides a preliminary review of the heritage issues relating to DA 347/19, for the proposed redevelopment of the North Sydney Olympic Pool (NSOP) at 4 Alfred Street South, Milsons Point (the site). NSOP is listed as a heritage item of local significance in Schedule 5 of the *North Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2013* (NSLEP 2013). North Sydney Council (Council) has engaged GML Heritage Pty Ltd (GML) to provide an independent assessment of the heritage impacts of the proposed development, as the site is owned by North Sydney Council.

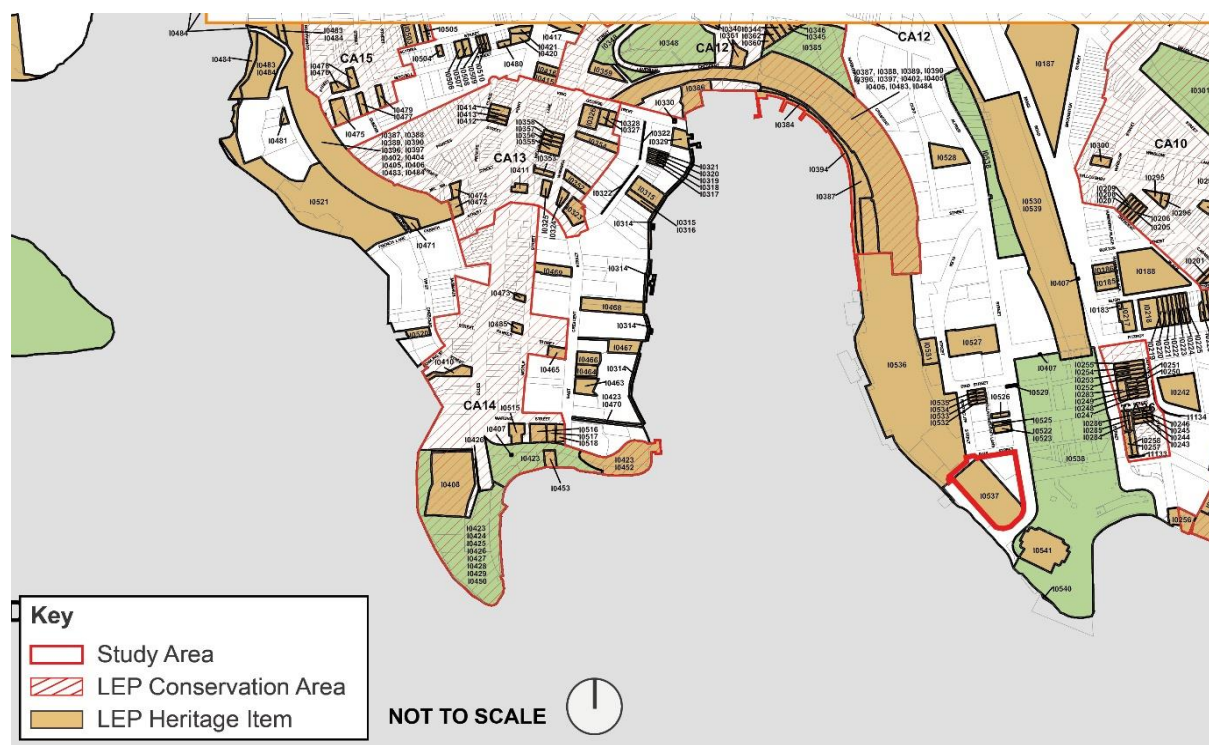


**Figure 1** The site, outlined in red. (Source: Nearmap with GML overlay)

## Heritage Context

The North Sydney Olympic Pool complex is listed as a heritage item within the NSLEP 2013. It is located directly adjacent to Luna Park, which is listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR), and within the

vicinity of several heritage items of local and state significance including the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In addition, it is located within the World Heritage Listed Sydney Opera House Buffer Zone.

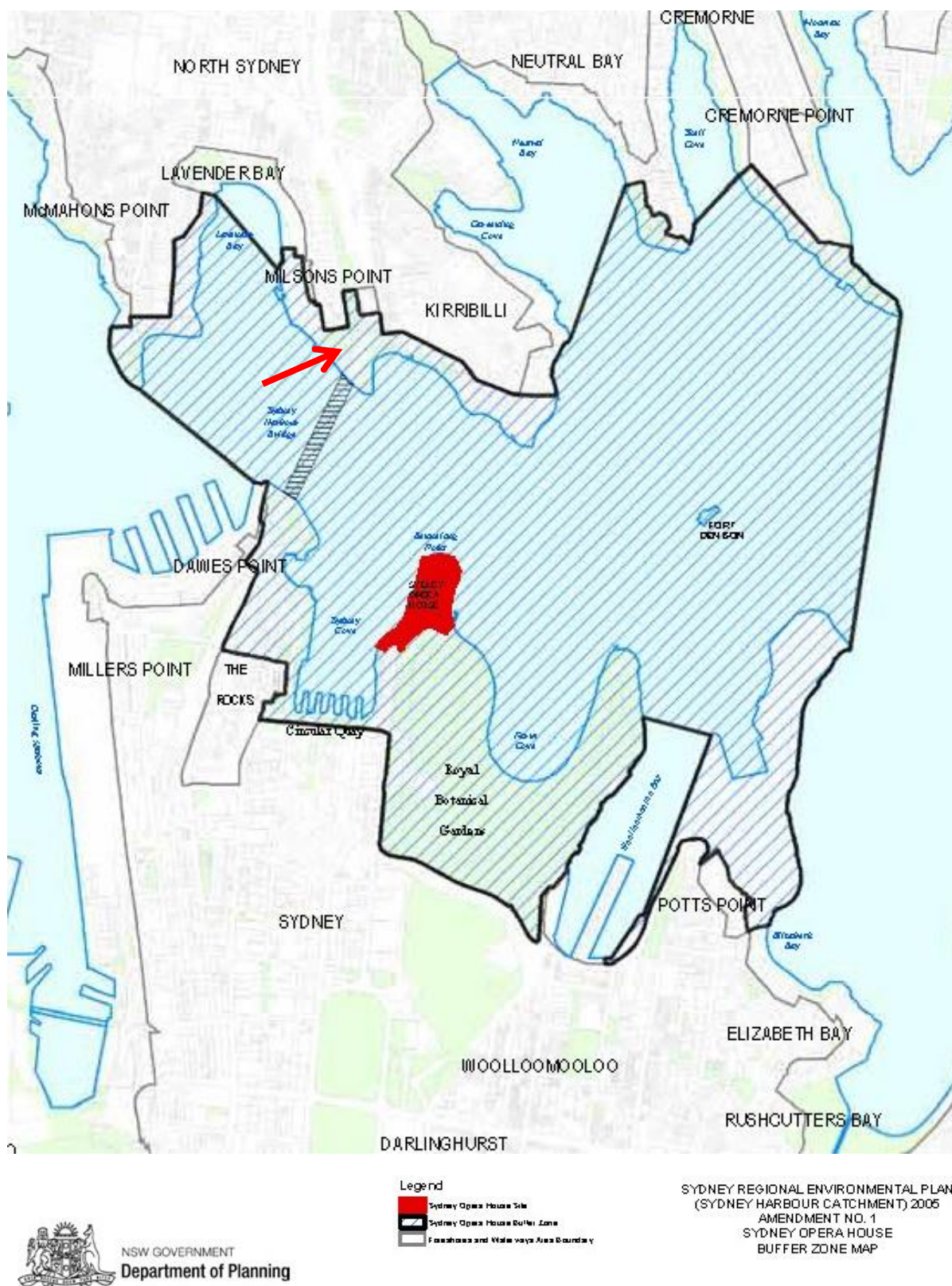


**Figure 2** NSLEP Heritage Map showing the site. (Source: NSLEP 2013 with GML overlay)

**Table 1** Heritage Items on and within the Vicinity of the NSOP.

Name	Address	Significance	Listing	Item No.
North Sydney Olympic Pool	4 Alfred Street South, Milsons Point	Local	NSLEP	I0537
Luna Park	1 Olympic Drive, Milsons Point	State	NSLEP SHR	I0536 01811
Bradfield Park	Alfred Street South, Milsons Point	Local	NSLEP	I0538
Seawall and wharf site	Milsons Point	Local	NSLEP	I0540
Sydney Harbour Bridge north Pylons	Bradfield Park, Alfred Street South, Milsons Point	Local	NSLEP	I0541
Sydney Harbour Bridge, approaches and viaducts	Bradfield Highway and North Shore Railway, Milsons Point/Dawes Point	State	SHR	00781
Sydney Opera House (Buffer Zone)	Bennelong Point	UNESCO World Heritage Site	UNESCO ANHL SHR	166rev 105738 01685





**Figure 3** Map showing the Sydney Opera House (shaded in red) and its buffer zone (hatched in black). Red arrow indicates the location of the NSOP. (Source: NSW Department of Planning and Environment)

## Statement of Significance

The following Statement of Significance is taken from the State Heritage Inventory listing for the NSOP complex:

*The North Sydney Olympic Pool is an outstanding example of a 1930s Olympic Pool, principally due to its architectural style and detailing, its integration with its magnificent harbourside setting, and the 1930s sophistication of its facilities. Historically significant as the venue for two Empire Games (1938 and 1958) and the setting for the establishment of 86 world records in swimming and diving events. Associated with adjacent Luna Park stylistically and functionally. Popular and significant recreational facility in the region, used by many from outside North Sydney.*

*Heritage Inventory sheets are often not comprehensive, and should be regarded as a general guide only. Inventory sheets are based on information available, and often do not include information on landscape significance, interiors or the social history of sites and buildings. Inventory sheets are updated by Council as further information becomes available. An inventory sheet with little information may simply indicate that there has been no building work done to the item recently: it does not mean that items are not significant. Further research is always recommended as part of preparation of development proposals for heritage items, and is necessary in preparation of Heritage Impact Assessments and Conversation Management Plans, so that the significance of heritage items can be fully assessed prior to submitting development applications.*

## North Sydney Olympic Pool Conservation Management Plan 1994

The North Sydney Olympic Pool Conservation Management Plan 1994 (NSOP CMP) is the guiding document for works to the NSOP complex. The NSOP CMP provides the gradings of significance for the various elements of the complex and detailed policies to guide future conservation and development works to the complex.

## Pre-DA Advice

GML's David Logan (Partner) and Lisa Trueman (Associate) attended a pre-DA meeting on 26 August 2019 and provided written advice as to the potential heritage impacts of the development that was proposed at pre-lodgement stage. The design was amended prior to lodgement of the current development application.

## Development Application DA 347/19

The current development application was lodged with Council on 10 December 2019. The proposed works are summarised below:

- A new 50m outdoor Olympic pool and concourse with modern, efficient and easily managed facilities.
- A new upper level indoor aquatic facility to accommodate an additional warm water pool and upgrades to the existing 25m pool. Both pools are to feature modern accessibility standards to accommodate all user requirements. Expanded steam and spa facilities are also proposed in this indoor aquatic facility.
- Excavation of the publicly accessed grassed area on the corner of Alfred Street and Paul Street, known as Hopkins Park, to a level that will be incorporated into the facility and accessed from the proposed upgraded upper level indoor aquatic facility.

- New water play area to replace the existing children's pool area for multi-functional children's use.
- Replacement of the existing eastern sundeck with new sundeck with free-standing canopy that also extends over the outdoor children's pool.
- Replacement of the corroded grandstand with a modern concrete structure.
- Expansion of the gymnasium and inclusion of multi-purpose program spaces.
- Enhanced support facilities involving upgraded changerooms, and expanded short term creche within the heritage stair tower structure along with an adjacent external play area.
- A new enclosed entry off Alfred Street containing an accessible service point and ancillary retail space. The entry will be split to provide a separate entry to the lower pool concourse. This arrangement will re-activate the original heritage entry for access to the 50m pool concourse.
- Dismantling and replacement of the 'western stairs' that extend from Paul Street to Olympic Drive with a modified layout and support structure to enable the space below the stair to be enclosed for larger usable spaces.
- Alterations and additions to food and drinks premises including relocation of an existing café.

## Grading of Significance

0. ENTRY PORCH
1. UPPER LEVEL VESTIBULE
2. MAIN STAIRS
3. LOW LEVEL VESTIBULE
- 3A. LOWER LEVEL GALLERY
4. LOBBY
- 4A. LOBBY MENS CHANGE
- 4B. LOBBY WOMENS CHANGE
- 4C. LOBBY TICKET OFFICE
5. LOW LEVEL CONCOURSE
6. MAIN POOL
7. CHILDREN'S SWIMMING
8. WINDOW BOXES
9. CAFETERIA
10. COVERED ARCADE
11. GRANDSTAND ACCESS
12. STAIR 8, 9, 10 & 11
13. GRANDSTAND SEATING
14. INTERMEDIATE
15. STAIR 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 7
16. HIGH LEVEL GALLERY
17. HANDBALL COURT
18. VOID 1
19. FORMER VOID MENS TOILET
20. VOID 2
21. STORE
22. VOID 3
23. TOILETS
24. VOID 4
25. FORMERS WOMENS CLUBROOM
26. GARBAGE TOOL ROOM
27. FORMER REFEREES AC ROOM
28. FORMER MENS CLUB ROOM
29. CLUBROOM
30. FORMER LAUNDRY
31. PLANTROOM
32. PLANTROOM
33. MEN'S DRESSING ROOM
34. FORMER MEN'S DRESSING ROOM
35. STORE
36. MEN'S TOILETS
37. MEN'S SHOWERS
38. MEN'S SAUNA
39. FORMER NO 2 LOCKER ROOM
40. FIRST AID ROOM
41. FORMER NO 2 LOCKER ROOM
42. HANDICAP CHANGING AND TOILETS
43. FORMER REFRESHMENTS MANAGER
44. FORMER NO 1 LOCKER ROOM STAFF OFFICE
45. FORMER MANAGER STAFF LOCKER ROOM
46. STORE
47. FORMER NO 1 LOCKER ROOM CIRCUIT ROOM
48. WOMEN'S SAUNA
49. WOMEN'S DRESSING ROOM
50. WOMEN'S SHOWER
51. WOMEN'S TOILETS
52. FORMER FIRST AID ROOM STORE A & B
53. FORMER ROOF SUNDECK
54. CARETAKER'S FLAT
55. CARETAKER'S GARAGE

## Outstanding



## High



## Moderate



## Don't Deduct from



## Do Deduct from

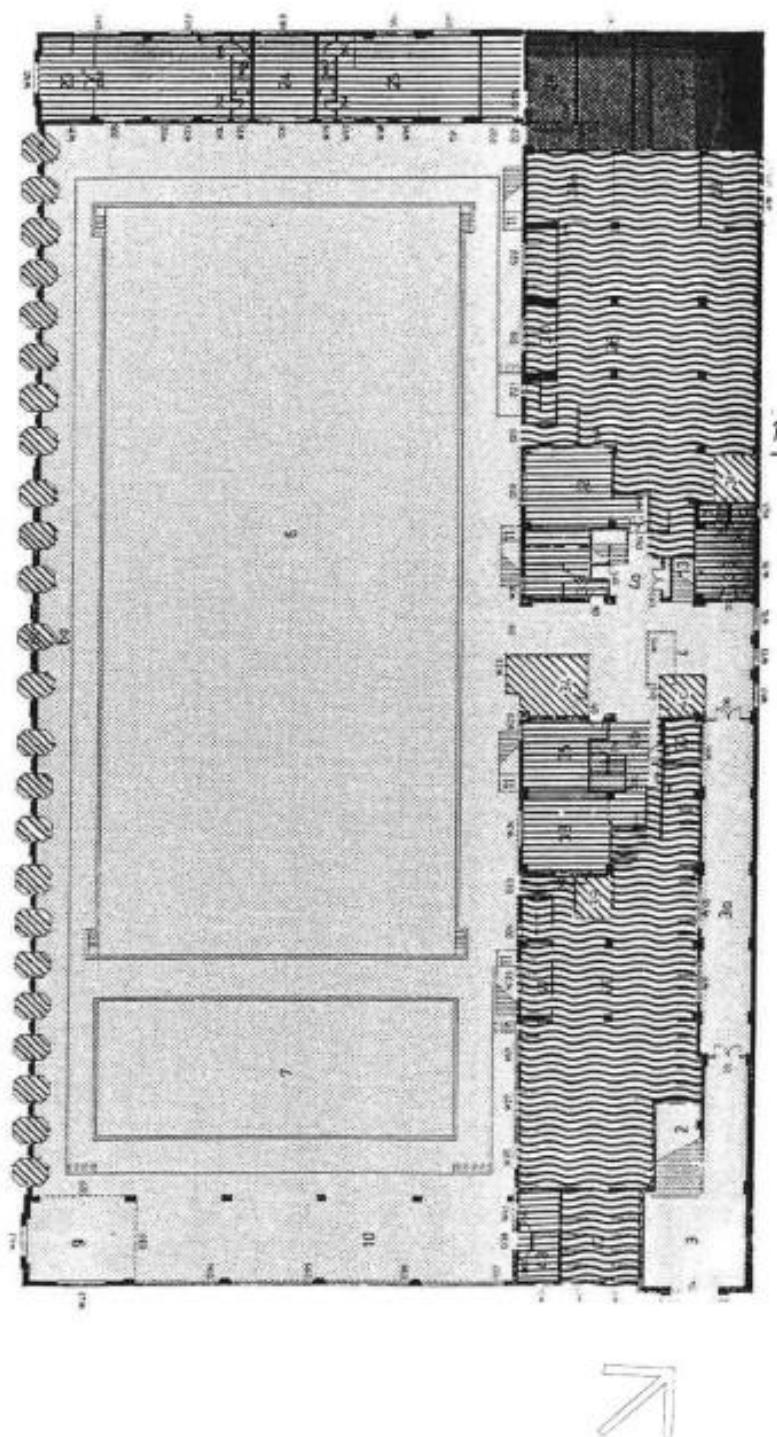


Figure 4 Degree of significance—lower level entry. (Source: NSOP CMP)

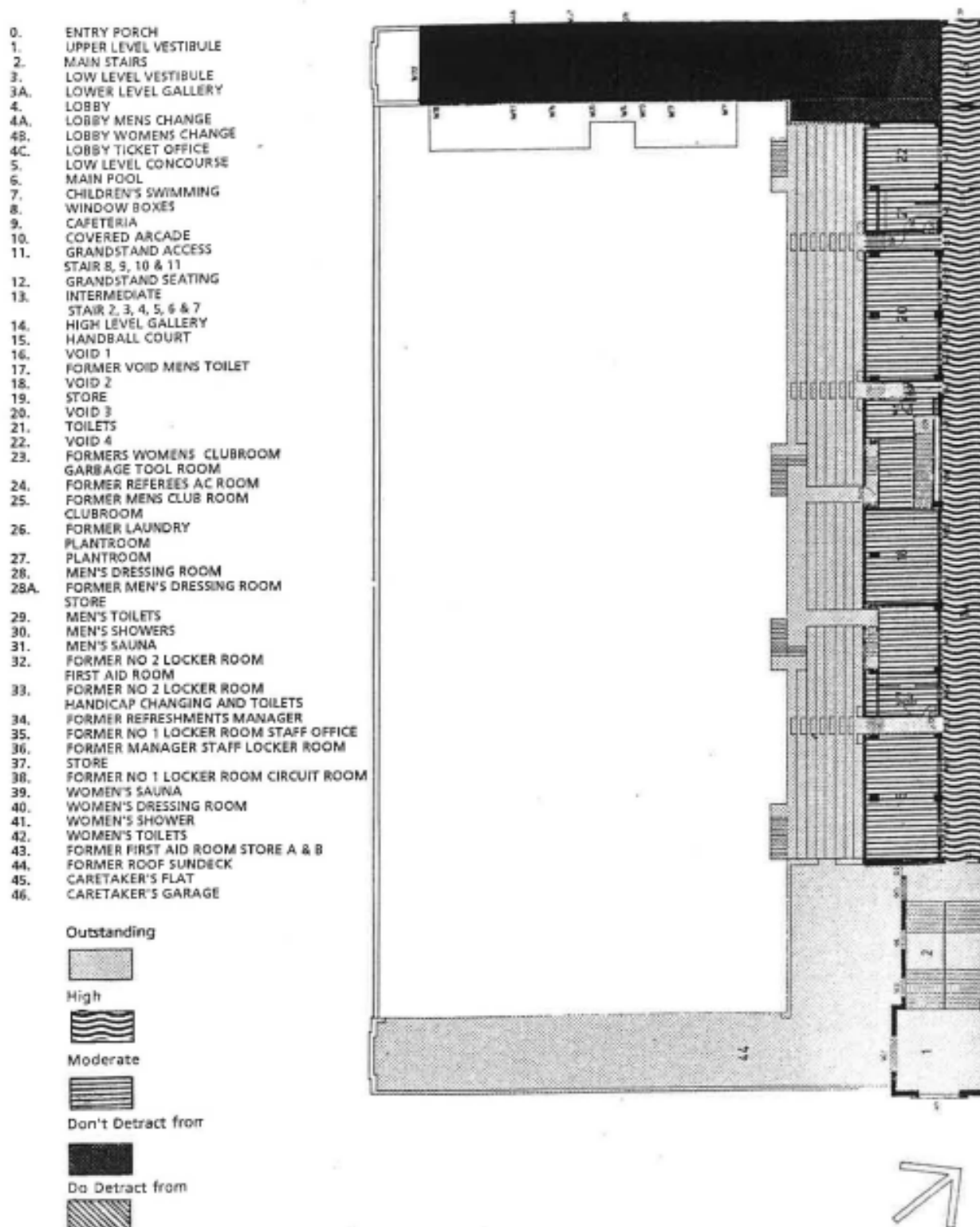


Figure 5 Degree of significance—upper level entry plan. (Source: NSOP CMP)



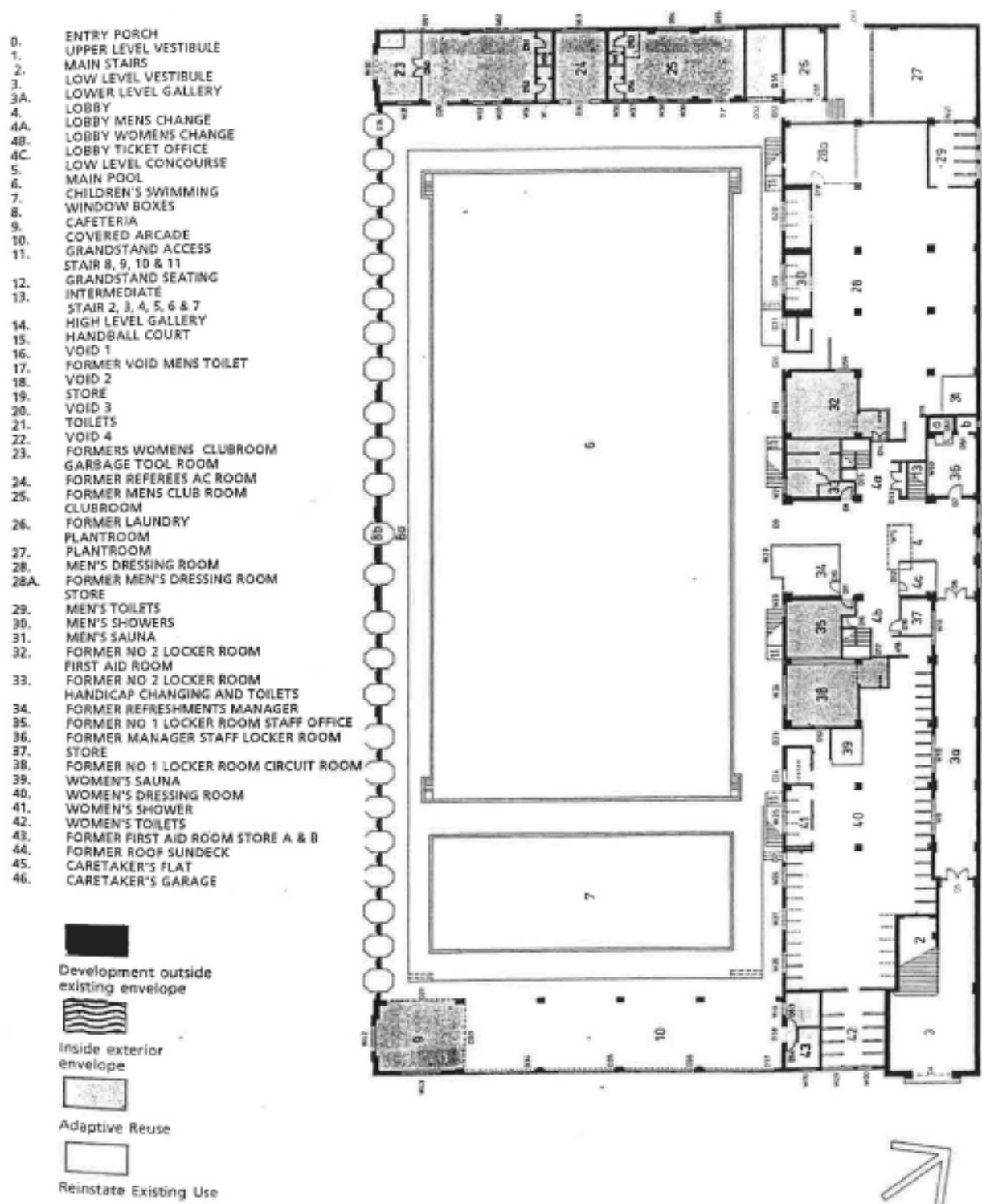


Figure 6 Areas of potential development—lower level entry. (Source: NSOP CMP)



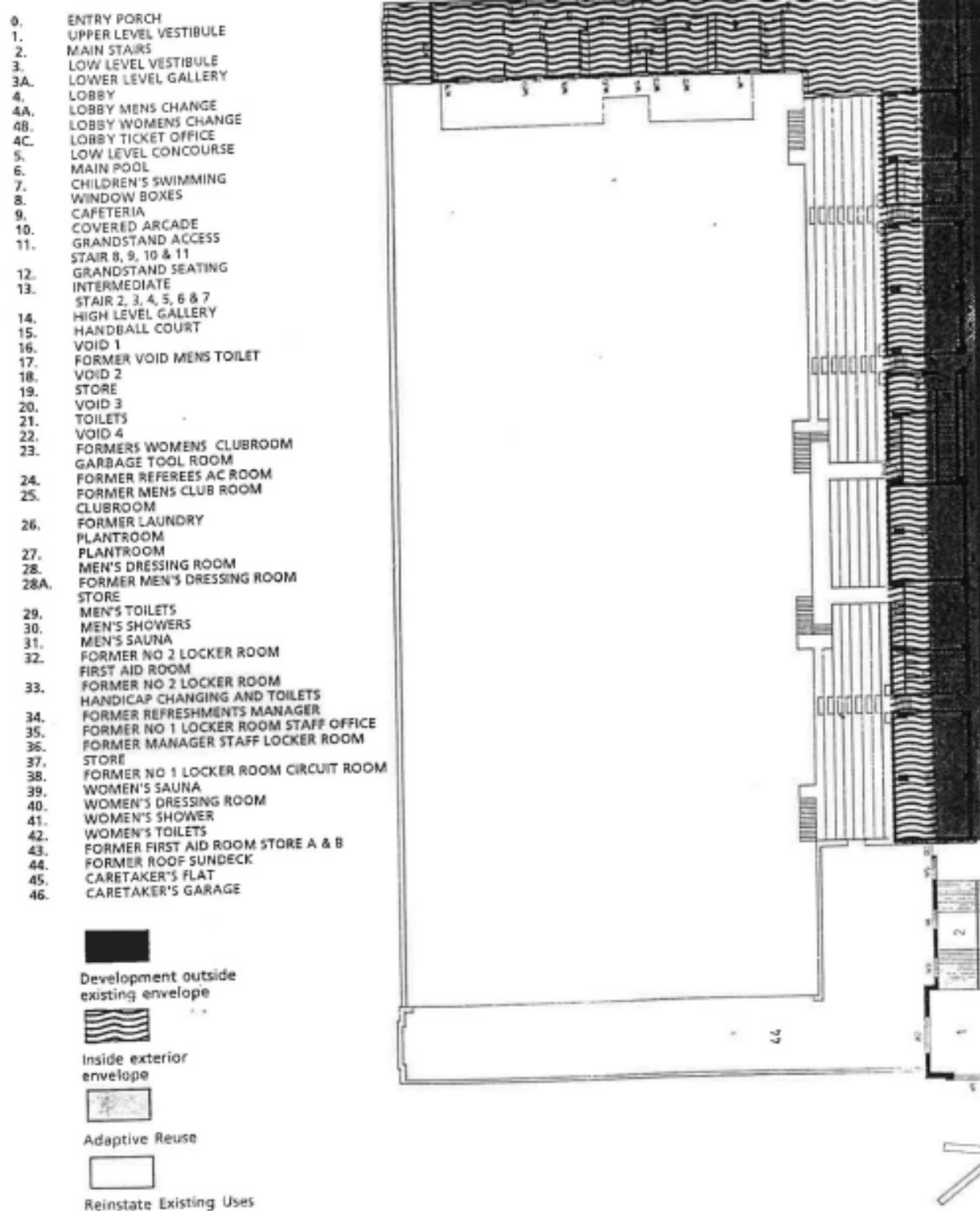
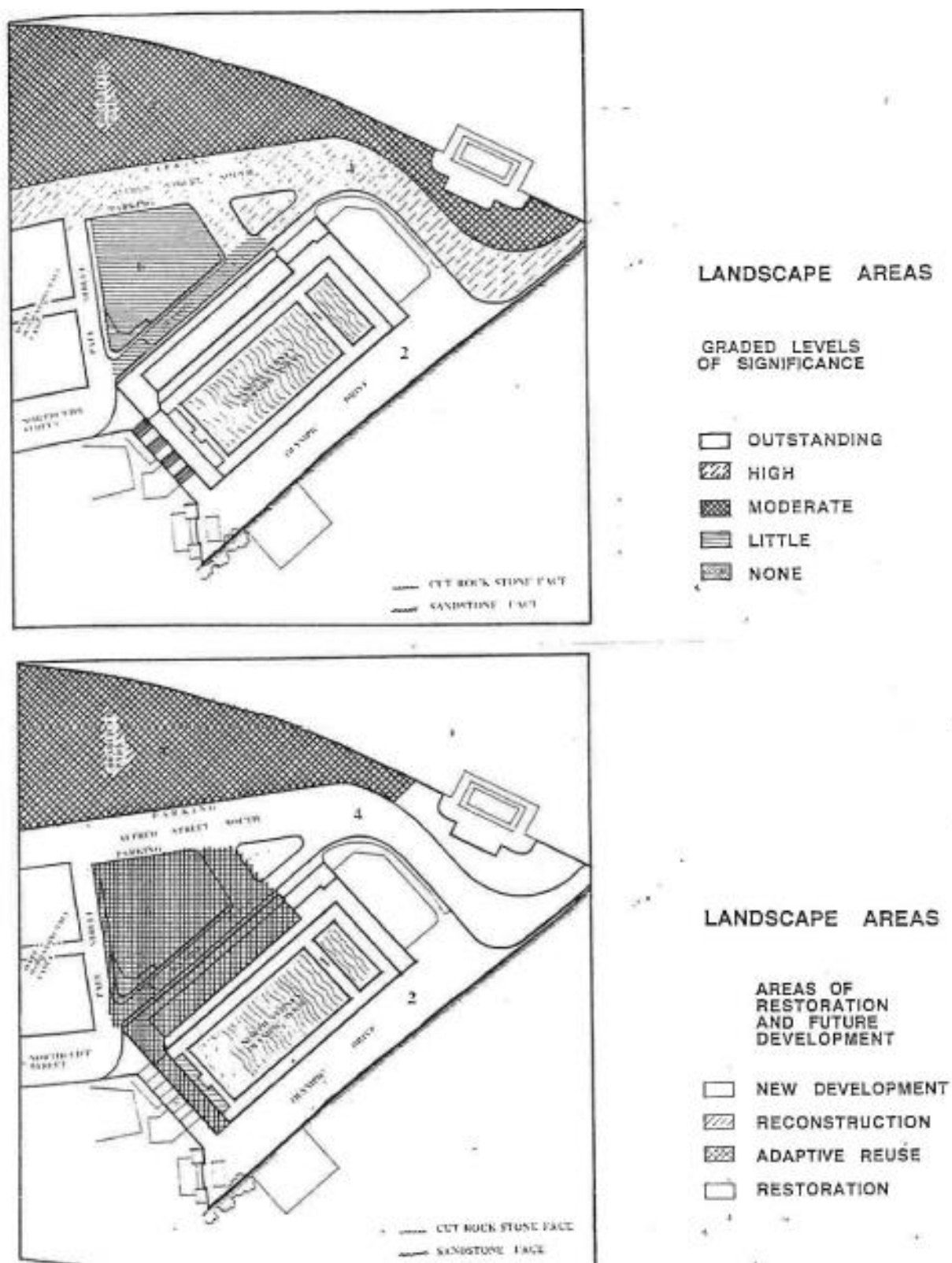


Figure 7 Areas of potential development—upper level entry. (Source: NSOP CMP)



**Figure 8** Areas of potential development/grading of significance—landscape areas. (Source: NSOP CMP)

## Revised Grading of Significance

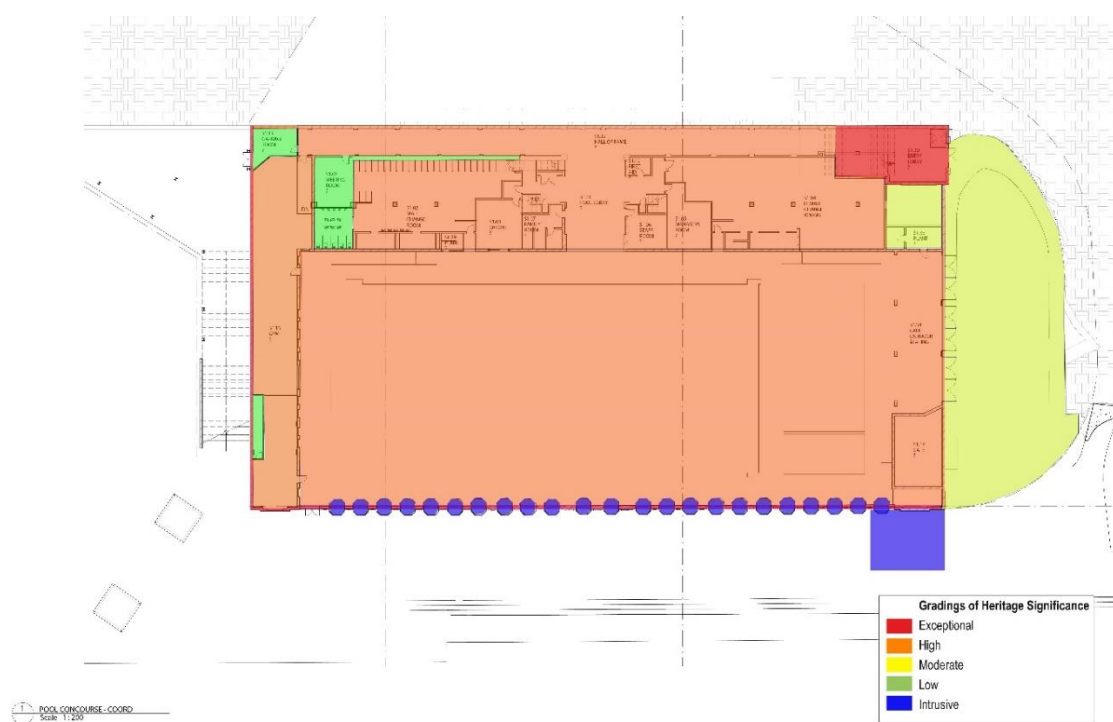
The grading of significance of the complex was revised in GML Heritage's North Sydney Olympic Pool—Heritage Issues Report, June 2015. The revised gradings were informed by original gradings of significance and also take into account changes that have occurred since the preparation of the NSOP CMP. The following diagrams indicate the revised gradings of significance.



**Figure 9** Grading of significance—entry terrace. (Source: GML 2015)



**Figure 10** Grading of significance—mezzanine level. (Source: GML 2015)



**Figure 11** Grading of significance—pool level. (Source: GML 2015)



## Preliminary Heritage Advice

A preliminary assessment of the development application has been undertaken with regard to Council's heritage controls and the CMP policies. The following comments provide preliminary advice regarding the heritage impacts of the proposal, as lodged, and identify areas where the proposal should be modified to address the heritage impacts.

The proposal to redevelop the North Sydney Olympic Pool complex to facilitate its ongoing use as a public swimming pool and place of leisure is a positive outcome in heritage terms. However, some elements of the proposal will result in an unacceptable level of heritage impact and are non-compliant with Council's controls in relation to heritage.

It is recommended that the proposal be amended to address the following issues:

- New enclosed entry:
  - The proposal includes a new glazed entry lobby in front of the original entrance building, enclosing the existing external forecourt at the entry to the pool.
  - The original brick entrance and vestibule building is identified as being of outstanding significance within the NSOP CMP and exceptional significance within the 2015 updated gradings. The proposed entry structure would enclose the original brick building and forecourt so that they become internal to the complex, altering the complex's historic relationship to the street. As the entrance to the original pool, the original entry building has landmark qualities that would be lost in the new development.
  - The roof of the proposed structure, with its deep bulkhead and motif, would block views to the entry structure from the public domain.
  - The new structure, in extending in front of the original entrance, would obscure views of the highly significant element, alter its relationship to Alfred Street and obstruct public access.
  - Policy 8.12.9 states that 'new development should not invite the re-orientation of the architectural focus of the existing main vestibule entrance to the pool'.
  - The proposal to enclose the original entrance would have a major adverse impact on the significance of the complex and is not supported on heritage grounds. Alternatives should be explored where the new lobby is set back from the original entrance, which should remain exposed. It is essential that the original entry remains unobscured and visually prominent when viewed from the public domain.
- Eastern sundeck and children's swimming pool:
  - The historic sundeck and covered arcade/colonnade that form the original eastern wall of the complex are identified as elements of outstanding significance within the NSOP CMP and high significance within the 2015 updated gradings.
  - These structures enclose the pool complex along its eastern edge and form an important component of its original enclosed building form. These elements are highly visible from the

public domain including Sydney Harbour, and form part of the recognised setting of the recreational precinct and Luna Park.

- The proposal to demolish and reconstruct only part of the original eastern wing of the complex would permanently alter the enclosed form of the complex, in a highly visible location, resulting in a major adverse impact on the complex.
- The complex must retain its enclosed form, which is intrinsic to its significance. If it is not possible to retain the eastern wall and colonnade in situ, it should be rebuilt so that the original enclosed form is retained and interpreted.
- Policy 8.12.3 of the NSOP CMP states that:

*An additional pool may be constructed on the Eastern grassed area of the building but it should be limited to a clear glazed lightweight structure which does not reduce the current views nor extend above the arcade height of the South Elevation and should not extend beyond the South East Corner Element.*

The current design is contrary to this policy and should be amended to comply.

- The new children's pool and recreation area should be re-designed with the sundeck, colonnade and children's swimming pool retained in their current location. If these elements are not able to be retained, they should be reinterpreted with similar (possibly contemporary) details at the same location. The sense of enclosure should be retained through use of solid materials that complement the original design. Consideration should be given to creating a design for the new children's recreation pool that draws on and interprets the historic character of the site.
  - The proposed steel framed shade structure over the children's pool has a scale and character that would dominate the original structures of the pool complex, in a highly visible location, resulting in an adverse impact on the pool complex and the setting of Luna Park. This structure should be reduced in scale and designed to have minimal impact.
  - The GML Luna Park CMP states that the visual and physical relationship between Luna Park, Sydney Harbour and other harbourside icons (such as the North Sydney Olympic Pool) must be maintained (GML 2019, p 75). The proposed removal of much of the polychrome brickwork finish along the eastern elevation, and replacement with a more dominating contemporary glass and steel façade and associated roof form will detract from the visual relationship between the NSOP and Luna Park, and have an adverse impact on the historical and aesthetic significance of both items.
- Additions to southeastern corner of complex:
    - Although reduced from the original pre-DA design, the proposed new roof over the café in the southeast corner is still excessively high and uncharacteristic to the complex, dominating the historic corner element, resulting in an adverse heritage impact.
    - The element is located at a critical part of the complex when viewed from the public domain and harbour, and forms part of the setting of Luna Park.

- Council's heritage controls require that new works to heritage items should be submissive in scale, so as to not dominate the original built form. The height of the new roof to the café should be set to below the original southern perimeter wall and be designed to have minimal visual impact on the corner element.
- Replacement of grandstand:
  - The height of the roof of the grandstand's upper level has been lowered, which has assisted in reducing the impact on the original scale and form of the complex.
  - Further details of the size and details of its structural supports and roofing structure are required to enable proper assessment. Larger scale cross-sections would assist.
- Heritage engineering advice:
  - The applicant has provided an engineering report in support of the Application; however, the report provided is incomplete. GML have requested that the complete report be provided for further consideration.
  - In addition, Council has engaged an independent heritage engineer to peer review the structural report. Further assessment will be provided once the complete report and peer review are available.
- Heritage NSW comments:
  - As the proposal involves works to the boundary of the Luna Park site, which is listed on the State Heritage Register, the application was referred to Heritage NSW for assessment. Heritage NSW provided the following comments on 16 December 2019:

*North Sydney Olympic Pool is listed as a local heritage item 10537 (NSLEP 213) and is adjacent to Luna Park which is listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR No. 01811). It is noted that local council will provide comments regarding impacts of the project to local heritage items and the proposed mitigation measures and the following comments are provided regarding the proposals impact to Luna Park:*

*1. The existing western stairs of NSOP, located on the southeastern boundary of Luna Park are proposed to be demolished. These stairs are visible when viewing the rear of the Luna Park entry face and tower and the rotor, both of which are graded as exceptional significance as part of Luna Park.*

*Accordingly, the reconstruction of the western stairs and western wall of the pool to match the existing, including reinstatement of the decorative brick detailing and reuse of brickwork, is supported.*

*2.. A general policy of the Luna Park Conservation Management Plan, is that the visual and physical relationship between Luna Park, Sydney Harbour and other harbourside icons (such as the North Sydney Olympic Pool) must be maintained (GML 2019, p75). The proposed removal of much of the polychrome brickwork finish along the eastern elevation, and replacement with a more dominating contemporary glass and steel façade and associated roof form will detract from the visual relationship between the NSOP and Luna Park, and have an adverse impact on the the historical and aesthetic significance of the both items.*

## Conclusion and Recommendations

The North Sydney Olympic Pool is a heritage item of significance whose public recognition extends beyond the North Sydney area. The pool complex demonstrates its cultural significance through its use, form and remaining original fabric.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal to redevelop the NSOP complex to facilitate its ongoing use as a public swimming pool and place of leisure is a positive outcome in heritage terms, some elements of the current proposal will result in an unacceptable level of heritage impact. As detailed above, there are a number of proposed elements that would result in major adverse impact to the significance of the complex, particularly the new entrance lobby, removal of the sundeck and colonnade structure, and new structures at the east and southeast of the complex (as outlined above).

In addition, the current proposal is considered to have an adverse impact on the setting of Luna Park, which is listed on the State Heritage Register. The NSOP complex forms an important part of the recreational precinct that is the historic setting of Luna Park. The proposed changes to the east and southeast of the complex will impact on iconic views of the pool and the setting of Luna Park from Sydney Harbour.

The NSOP CMP states (Section 7.1.8) that:

*the whole site should be maintained and developed as an appropriate setting for the building, Luna Park, Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Harbour foreshore as places of great cultural significance. No works or activities should be carried out in the setting that detract from, obscure or confuse the cultural significance of these structures and their relationship to the harbour.*

In conclusion, the proposal in its current form is not fully supported on heritage grounds. It is recommended that the Applicant be advised to amend the design in response to the issues raised in this memo.

Regards,



**David Logan and Lisa Trueman**

**GML Heritage**