

Heritage Impact Assessment

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT | THE ROBERTSON HOTEL | ROBERTSON



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Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	BACKGROUND	1
1.2	METHODOLOGY	1
1.3	AUTHORSHIP	1
1.4	SOURCES	1
1.5	SITE IDENTIFICATION	1
2	Historical Outline	2
2.1	HISTORICAL CONTEXT	2
2.2	OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE PLACE	3
3	Physical Description of the Place	12
3.1	CONTEXT	12
3.2	PLACE	12
3.3	BUILDING	13
3.4	SUMMARY OF CONDITION	13
3.5	PHOTOGRAPHS	13
4	Significance of the Place	32
4.1	PRINCIPLES	32
4.2	STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	32
5	Planning Context	33
5.1	NSW HERITAGE ACT	33
5.2	WINGECARRIBEE LEP 2010	34
5.3	NATIONAL TRUST	34
6	Proposed Development	35
7	Heritage Impact of the Development	36
7.1	INTRODUCTION	36
7.2	HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	36
7.3	STATUTORY COMPLIANCE	41
7.4	CONCLUSIONS	42
8	Recommendations	43
9	Bibliography	44
10	Appendix	45

1 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

The owners of the Robertson Hotel, also known as Fountaindale Manor, in Robertson, have engaged the author to assess the heritage impact of the proposed development on the cultural significance of the heritage item, which is a unique early 20th Century hotel. The proposed development consists of alterations and addition to the main building and new residential buildings on the site outside the heritage curtilage.

This report sets out to briefly review the history of the place, state its cultural significance, assess the heritage impact of the proposed development on the heritage item in its vicinity and propose appropriate actions, if necessary.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology and terminology used in the preparation of this report has been drawn from the Australian *ICOMOS Burra Charter*, the *NSW Heritage Manual 2001 Update*, and J. S Kerr's *Conservation Plan* (rev. edn National Trust of Australia [NSW], Sydney, 1996). References to architectural styles are based on the identifications used by Apperly, R.; Irving, R. and Reynolds, P A *Pictorial Guide to Identifying Australian Architecture* (Sydney, 1989)

This Heritage Impact Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the *Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 (WLEP)*, the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter* and the NSW Heritage Guide.

1.3 AUTHORSHIP

This report has been prepared by Zoltan Kovacs, Architect & Heritage Consultant with all the photographs, unless otherwise identified, taken by the author. The author is a conservation architect with over thirty years experience in heritage conservation.

1.4 SOURCES

Some primary documentary sources were utilized in archival research for this project made available by the Berrima District Historical Society and by Mr Quentin Waters.

1.5 SITE IDENTIFICATION

The subject site is located in Robertson on the south side of the Illawarra Highway alongside Fountaindale Road.

Its address is 4575 Illawarra Highway, Robertson and it is identified as Lot 2, DP 610676.

2 Historical Outline

2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

2.1.1 Aboriginal history

The land from Goulburn to Camden which encompassed the district of Robertson was traditionally the land of the Gundungurra and Tharawal people. The Wingecarribee River and the Wombeyan Caves were of great spiritual value to the local Aboriginal population. Unable to withstand the effects of disease and development brought about by European settlement, their numbers decreased catastrophically and they withdrew from the area by the late 19th century. People of mixed descent continued to live in the district for another generation, often employed in herding, fencing or as domestics.¹

2.1.2 Early European history

Robertson is named after former Premier of New South Wales, Sir John Robertson, whose 1861 Land Act cleared the way for the establishment of the town. Before then it was called *Yarrawa Bush*.²

Development south-west of Sydney was slow, hindered by the *Bargo Bush*, which was considered impenetrable by the early colonists. The first visit to the area was by John Wilson, an ex-convict, commissioned by Governor Hunter to survey the area. In 1804 Charles Throsby found a way over the tablelands near Moss Vale and Sutton Forest. He was followed by John Oxley and the Hume brothers through the highlands. The construction of the *Great South Road* to Goulburn facilitated further exploration with Hamilton Hume discovering the country of Argyle, which now forms part of the Berrima district, in 1814 and Charles Throsby exploring the tablelands beginning in 1817.³

The country seemed fertile and promising and Governor Macquarie granted land in the area to Charles Throsby, John Oxley and nine other settlers in 1819. Oxley surveyed the future township of Bowral and for his services Governor Macquarie granted him 2,400 acres in the district. Oxley built his first house - a timber slab cottage - in 1816, named '*Wingecarribee*' (also spelled '*Wingie Karrabee*') which was replaced by the present house in 1854, built by his son, H. M. Oxley.

Extensive land clearing in the area started around 1820 and agriculture was successful, but land was concentrated in the hands of a few landholders. In the whole district there were only 1415 persons and 179 houses in 1841.⁵ The rapid development that followed the Goulburn or Bathurst goldrushes evaded the district.

In 1830 Surveyor Robert Hoddle and a gang of convicts cut a bridle path down Saddleback Mountain. It was part of a planned track from Cowpastures (now known as Camden) down the Illawarra escarpment to Kiama and Gerringong.

Agriculture which first relied on grazing cattle, sheep and horses, diversified by the 1860 with a timber industry and shale oil extraction at Joadja. But it was the coming of the railway which transformed the area and led to a population increase, as it not only made profitable industries such as mining in the Nattai Valley and brick making at Bowral, but it also brought recreational tourism from Sydney into the area with guest houses and summer residences springing up in Mittagong, Bowral and Moss Vale.⁶

The 1861 Land Act was instrumental in the establishment of Robertson. The Act encouraged free selection by offering unreserved blocks of crown land at £1 per acre. All the landowner had to do was pay a 25% down payment and live on the land for three years making certain stipulated improvements. In 1862 John Hanrahan and his brother-in-law William Davis followed Hoddle's track onto the escarpment and located prime land which they claimed and selected. In 1863 a track was cut from Albion Park, later known as Macquarie Pass.

The town site was surveyed in 1863 by Surveyor Campbell who was so impressed he reserved land for himself and built 'Rossgol', which still stands. Campbell drew up a town plan which was approved in 1865. By that time there were 1200 selectors, who had taken up thirty thousand acres of land despite the fact that it was a three-day ride for supplies and 20 miles to the nearest doctor. The first lots were sold in 1865 and initially the village was called *Yarrawa*. In 1867 the settlement was joined to the Old South Road via Kangaloon providing easy access from the Southern Highlands and Camden.

The first school was built in 1872 and the first store was opened around 1876. The Burrawang Farmers Club held its first meeting in 1878, evolving into the Robertson Agricultural and Horticultural Society, which held the first Agricultural Show at Burrawang in 1880 and Robertson in 1886. The post office opened in 1884 and by 1887 the village had a school of arts, a police station, two churches, two hotels, two bank branches, three stores, a baker, a bootmaker, a chemist and five butchers, but no connection to the railway, for which the local residents had been agitating since 1873.

After widening the Macquarie Pass in 1898 Robertson became connected to the coast. The railway finally reached the town in 1932, because of the links between the Hoskins' Port



Figure 1 | "Hoddle Street, Robertson c. 1909", an early 20th Century postcard.
(Source: RHRS Collection, Robertson)

Kembla ironworks and their limestone interests at Marulan and Berrima^x. The *Big Potato* was built in the 1970s by a local potato grower and Robertson is also where the 1995 movie *Babe* was filmed.

¹ JRC, *Wingecarribbee Heritage Study*, page 29

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robertson,_New_South_Wales

³ Jervis, J. *op. cit.*, page 15

⁴ *ibid*, page 201

⁵ Berrima District Historical & Family History Society 'Early Industries in the Berrima District' page 2

⁶ Jervis, J. *op. cit.*, page 36

SMH Robertson April 10, 2008

x JRC, *Wingecarribbee Heritage Study*, Volume 1 page 38

2.2 OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE PLACE

The land was part of a large estate first bought by Humphrey Dunster, of Shellharbour in 1867. His descendants sold 54 acres to George Abbott in April 1923. The premier Robertson landmark, the 100 room hotel, now known as *The Robertson Hotel*, (formerly *Hotel Robertson*, later *Ranelagh House* and more recently *Fountaindale Manor*) was built on this land for Melbourne auctioneer and investor George Abbott, who bought a great deal of property in Robertson, speculating that his hotel project would lead to a land boom.



Figure 2 | Hotel Robertson under construction c. 1923-24.

(Source: Berrima District Historical & Family History Society)

The building was designed by the Sydney architectural firm, Spencer & Spencer, and built by the leading local builder, Alfred Stephens of Bowral, at a then astonishing investment cost of £65,000. The hotel is set in 13.5 acres of landscaped gardens, complete with statues, swimming pool, fountains and a weir. Abbot even stocked the grounds with deer and peafowl. The hotel also included a nine hole golf course, a bowling green and three tennis courts. The aim of the development was to be the '*premier country hotel of the Commonwealth*'. The rooms offered hot and cold water, radiators and the novelty of telephone connection to

each room in addition to the healthy and magnificent setting. The hotel was opened on Friday, 21 November 1924 by the Governor of NSW, Sir Dudley de Chair, with the Premier, Sir George Fuller. Despite initial success at the first Christmas holiday, the influx of tourists failed to materialise (partly due to the lack of railway connection to the village, which was not

Quentin Waters
Linda Emery. 2008. Pp 90-91.



Figure 3 | *Hotel Robertson just after completion, c. 1924.*
(Source: Berrima District Historical & Family History Society; File 014/014912)



Figure 4 | *Postcard of Hotel Ranelagh, c. 1930*
(Source: Berrima District Historical & Family History Society; File 014/014912)

established until 1932) and by March 1925 the Hotel Robertson Company went into voluntary liquidation and closed its doors. The subject site was sold to the Hotel Ranelagh Limited in October 1925, by liquidators for just £30,000, a fraction of the building cost.

George Abbott had a large property portfolio in Robertson, which apart from the Hotel Robertson included the *Criterion Hotel* and *The Chateau*, a 32-room boarding house, but it all went under the hammer in a mortgagee sale of huge proportion in 1927 and sold to Sir Arthur Rickard.

In 1930 the hotel re-opened as the *Hotel Ranelagh and Country Club*, probably named after the famous polo club, *Ranelagh Gardens*, in London. A further £15,000 was invested in improving the grounds and a clubhouse was built, which is now the *Sentinel Farm* on the old road at the Pie Shop.



Figure 5 | View of the hotel, c. 1931, with the completed tennis courts (Source: The Robertson Hotel)



Figure 6 | Page from an advertising brochure for the hotel, c. 1929 (Source: The Robertson Hotel)



Figure 7 | Front page of another advertisement for the Hotel Ranelagh. (Source: The Robertson Hotel)



Figure 8 | The original Hotel Ranelagh logo, etched on one of the glass doors in the lounge area



Figure 9 | A rare, rear view of the hotel showing the fresh railway cutting in the foreground
(Source: The Robertson Hotel)



Figure 10 | Internal views from around 1930 (Source: The Robertson Hotel)

The club was aggressively marketed, but according to Linda Emery, *'the incessant rain that had so troubled surveyor Hoddle contributed to the downfall of the hotel yet again. Golfers could not find their balls in the thick mists that rolled up the escarpment and for days on end the dreary weather kept guests indoors'*. Within a year the new enterprise failed, no doubt hastened by the Great Depression, and the Hotel Ranelagh was sold once more, this time in part to William P. Pilling of Sydney, for £28,000 which included furnishings valued at £4,000 in 1931. The remainder was sold in parts to William Timothy O'Mara of Rose Bay in 1934 and the residue in 1935 to Sydney George Redman.

During World War II, the hotel became a training centre and barracks for 250 new recruits and leased to the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force from February 1942. The army made several alterations to the building, which included structural upgrade and enclosure of the balconies. The Red Cross also outfitted two sick bays for the army. The luxury of the 1930s soon became a memory and the young women slept in cold dormitories, on wire stretchers, six or eight to a room. Despite the improvements by the end of 1942 the army was preparing to vacate and the local MLA, William Davies, lobbied the Minister for Health to acquire the building as a convalescent hospital. Meanwhile the owner, W. T. O'Mara, applied to have the liquor licence restored, which lapsed during the military's lease, but in November 1945 he had the liquor licence transferred to *Craigieburn* in Bowral.

Between January and November 1946 the Moral Re-Armament Movement used the hotel as a training centre and hospice for returned servicemen. In March 1947 Ranelagh was bought by the Roman Catholic Church and became the St Anthony's Franciscan Friary, where students staying at the seminary prepared for the priesthood. The ballroom was converted



Figure 11 | *Aerial view of the Hotel Ranelagh and grounds in the late 1930s.*
(Source: Berrima District Historical & Family History Society)

into a chapel. As there was no Catholic Church in Robertson, the local Catholic used this chapel to attending mass. The Franciscan monks built the grotto with the statue of the Virgin Mary, they planted camellias and azaleas and constructed stone walls.

The Franciscans commissioned O'Brien Glass in Sydney to produce stained glass windows for the entrance hall and ball room. The windows were designed by Arthur Benfield, director of the O'Brien Stained Glass Department. He is best known for the windows in the Reading Room of the Mitchell Wing of the State Library.

The Roman Catholic Church sold the place in 1968 to the Aged Sick and Infirm Appeal Company Limited. The place was sold again in 1972, to W.B.B. (Canberra) Pty Ltd. The next owner was Honkay Investments Limited, buying the place in 1980. For a short while the hotel was leased to the Greek Orthodox Church. In 1972 the hotel became a guest house again and renamed *Ranelagh House* in recognition of its past.

According to Quentin Waters *"a few years later in July 1980, Ranelagh was bought at auction by Kay Jones and her husband for \$615,000. Kay Jones was from a catering background, and was in charge of the kitchen. In the ensuing years, more was added to the gardens, and an outdoor pool was built in 1982. In 1985 Joanna Gash became her business partner at Ranelagh, though Kay remained the driving force behind its operations. Having come from tourism, Jo Gash helped particularly in the marketing of Ranelagh, maintaining a relationship with Tourism Commission, State Rail, and QANTAS among others. They held the most fantastic "Christmas-in-July" from May through August, and held the record for the most turkeys bought of anyone in all the Highlands."*

In 2007 the place was sold and the hotel was renamed *Fountaindale Grand Manor*. The owners removed the blue carpet (replacing it with brown) and installed the reception desk and bar.

The hotel was sold again in 2011 to Carroll Phillips and Allen Skeer, who carried out some further repairs. They held another *"Christmas-in-July"* even installing a temporary ice rink.

In 2014 the hotel was sold once again, this time to the current owner.

2.2.1 Architect of Hotel Robertson

The building was designed by the architects, Spencer & Spencer. John Brain Spencer was born in Kent, England in 1849 and came to Australia in 1885 and established a practice in Sydney as an architect, which he carried on continuously until retirement. In 1913 he took into partnership his son, John Raymond Spencer. The firm has been responsible for some notable Sydney buildings, such as the commercial building *O'Brien House* in Young Street and the residence *Woodfordleigh* in Burwood.

Construction and Real Estate Journal (Sydney, NSW : 1930 - 1938) Wed 31 Dec 1930

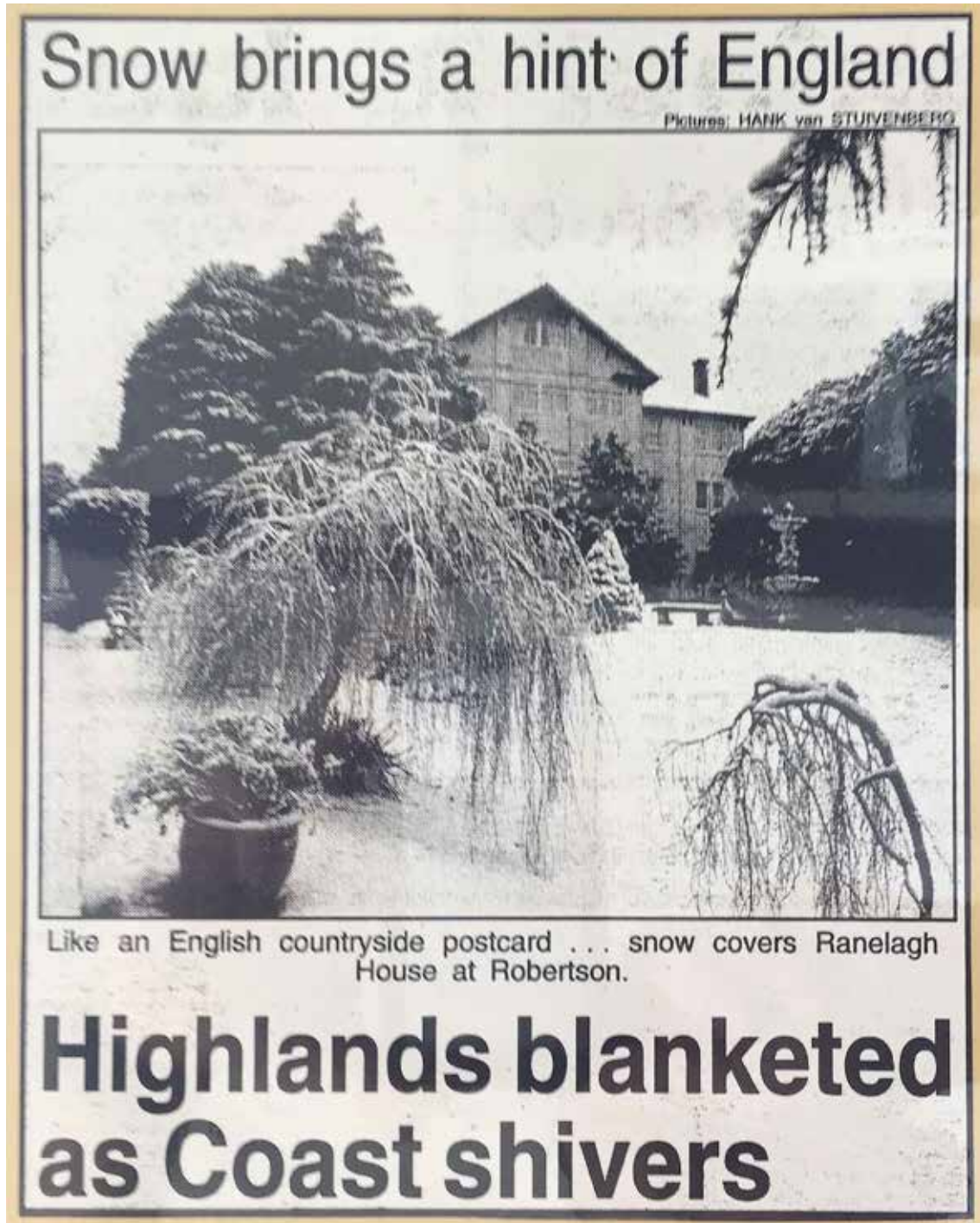


Figure 12 | *An excerpt from an article in the Illawarra Mercury reporting on the unusual heavy snowfall at Robertson on 20th August 1996.*

3 Physical Description

3.1 SITE CONTEXT

The place is located in the north-eastern part of Robertson, not far east from the town center, in a rural block bound by the Illawarra Highway and Fountaindale Road. The area is formed by open, gently undulating topography of high ground, characteristic of this part of the of Kangaloon and Robertson. The country, which originally consisted of dense rainforest, was gradually cleared for grazing and settlement following the 1861 Robertson Land Act. The dense Yarrawa Brush was vegetated by tall rainforest of sassafras, cabbage palm, lilli-pilli, messmate and giant eucalypts. The landscape pattern of this area is highly distinctive as a result of the cool mountain climate, rich basalt soils, high rainfall and the settlers' response to the natural features, where they attempted to recreate the more familiar British rural landscape. The undulating topography is complemented by the small sized paddocks with an overall intimate scale, reinforced by vegetation patterns of mixed of dairying and crops with emphasis on potatoes.

Robertson is a key village with a linear grid subdivision located in the Caalong Creek valley and enclosed to the north by east-west ridgelines. It is a mixed settlement of houses, commercial buildings and light industry and it still functions, as it did in the 19th century, servicing its surrounding rural area. In the early 20th Century boarding houses and tourist accommodations were built, but apart from the commanding magnificence of the Hotel Robertson, these were never successful and tourism did not have a decisive influence on the village's development as it did in Bundanoon.

3.2 PLACE

The site is approximately 5.06 hectares (13.5 acres) in area and it forms a rough triangle bound by the Illawarra Highway to the north, Fountaindale Road to the west and the railway line to the south-east. The site is centered around a prominent small hill crowned by the hotel, but its originally intended visually prominent position has been masked by uncontrolled growth of trees. The site is associated with a private railway station which formed the highest stop on the now largely disused Unanderra-Moss Vale Railway Line. Entrance to the site is in the north-west corner of the site, off the highway. Once through the gates a driveway loops around the hotel which occupies the highest point on the land.

The driveway loop encloses the hotel, the formal lawn in front of the hotel and the rear parking areas. North of the driveway the site is divided into a number of zones; first there is a heavily wooded landscaped area with mature planted trees, which thins out into a more open parkland, divided from the rest of the site beyond by wire fences. A small swimming pool is located in the eastern corner of this area.

On the other side of the fence there is an open paddock, a pond surrounded by woodland, then dense forest which encloses another pond; gradually the forest terminates on the northern wedge of the site. The land falls gradually towards the north away from the hotel. The eastern and southern sides of the driveway loop are formed by much steeper slopes which are also densely vegetated with irregular clearings. A grotto with a statue of the Virgin Mary of Fatima is located within the southern slope. Further east there is a small timber

cottage accessible by stone steps and fronted by a lily pond. This area also holds some dilapidated chicken coops and pheasant pens. Outside the south-east corner of the site the small disused railway station building still stands next to the railway line.

3.3 BUILDING

The hotel was designed by Spencer & Spencer in a style common to much of the colonial outposts of the British Empire where Classical and English Vernacular elements were freely mixed. The 'black-&-white' planters houses and clubs of Malaysia and Singapore owe much to this style and many similar features are noticeable in the Robertson Hotel. It reflects a typically colonial outlook, heavy with nostalgia, yet strongly focused on outdoor and leisure pursuits. While the design features of the Robertson Hotel are typical of this colonial style, the unusual feature here is the grand scale of the original enterprise. The three storey hotel with over sixty rooms and two wings is startling to behold in its splendid isolation.

Another unusual feature is the level of integrity, which belies the troubled history of the place. Essentially, the building has changed little since the Inter-war period and the alterations carried out for the Franciscan friars - stained glass windows etc. - do not impact strongly on the original character of the place.

The hotel consists of three distinct parts:

- ◆ A three storey compact - almost cubic - principal volume, which houses public rooms, such as a foyer, reception, restaurant, conference room and lounge, and service areas such as the kitchen, on the ground floor with private guest rooms on the next two floors. A large timber staircase connects these levels. The hotel entrance is through a porte-cochère which forms the base to a four storey projecting bay, the fourth being a front facing attic room under a gable roof. A smaller timber staircase accesses the attic room.
- ◆ A three, and partially four, storey rectangular wing attached to the south-east corner containing more guest rooms; and
- ◆ A single storey enclosed veranda forming the breakfast room attached to the east and northern sides.

A detailed description of the building will form part of the development application.

3.4 SUMMARY OF CONDITION

The cultural and physical integrity of the place is high, illustrated by the diagrams at the end of this section, however much of the fabric has deteriorated and in need of restoration. The troubled financial history of the place resulted in little maintenance and upgrade and the condition of the finishes are poor, although the underlying structure is sound.

3.5 PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographs on the following pages describe the site and the adjoining heritage item in its setting and existing condition.



Figure 13 | *View of the hotel from the formal front lawn*



Figure 14 | *The hotel as it first appears at arrival*



Figure 15 | *The driveway leading up to the hotel*



Figure 16 | *View of the formal lawn in front of the porte-cochère*



Figure 17 | *View of the porte-cochère fronting the entrance*



Figure 18 | *The entrance foyer.*



Figure 19 | *The conference room; the bar is just visible on the left. (Source: The Robertson Hotel)*



Figure 20 | *The lounge. (Source: The Robertson Hotel)*



Figure 21 | *The reception desk.*



Figure 22 | *The restaurant ceiling and beams.*



Figure 23 | *The restaurant. The monochrome colour scheme dates from the 1970s.*



Figure 24 | *The existing north-west corner. The ground floor side extension will be enlarged.*



Figure 25 | *External view of the breakfast area veranda. This area will remain unaffected.*



Figure 26 | *Corner of the lounge.*



Figure 27 | *The existing breakfast area forms an enclosed veranda.*



Figure 28 | *The kitchen preparation area. It struggles to meet contemporary demand.*



Figure 29 | *The cooking area of the kitchen. Most of the equipment is out of date.*



Figure 30 | *The first floor landing with stairs going to the second floor.*



Figure 31 | *The second floor landing with stairs to the attic.*



Figure 32 | A typical bedroom with a corner handbasin



Figure 33 | Typical bathroom and handbasin detail. Note the mosaic tile pattern on the floor.



Figure 34 | A typical shower recess with covered skirting tiles and mosaic floor tiles



Figure 35 | A typical bathroom with bath and shower



Figure 36 | *The formal lawn in front of the main entrance to the hotel.*



Figure 37 | *The parkland setting of the outer perimeter of the heritage curtilage. The fence, which forms its boundary, is visible in the background.*



Figure 38 | *The grotto with the statute of Our Lady of Fatima, erected by the Franciscans.*



Figure 39 | *The paddock beyond the internal fence, which is interpreted as the visible boundary of the heritage curtilage. The hotel is not visible from this area.*



Figure 40 | *The upper pond east of the hotel. New work is proposed beyond the dense vegetation in the background of the pond. The setting around the pond remains undisturbed.*



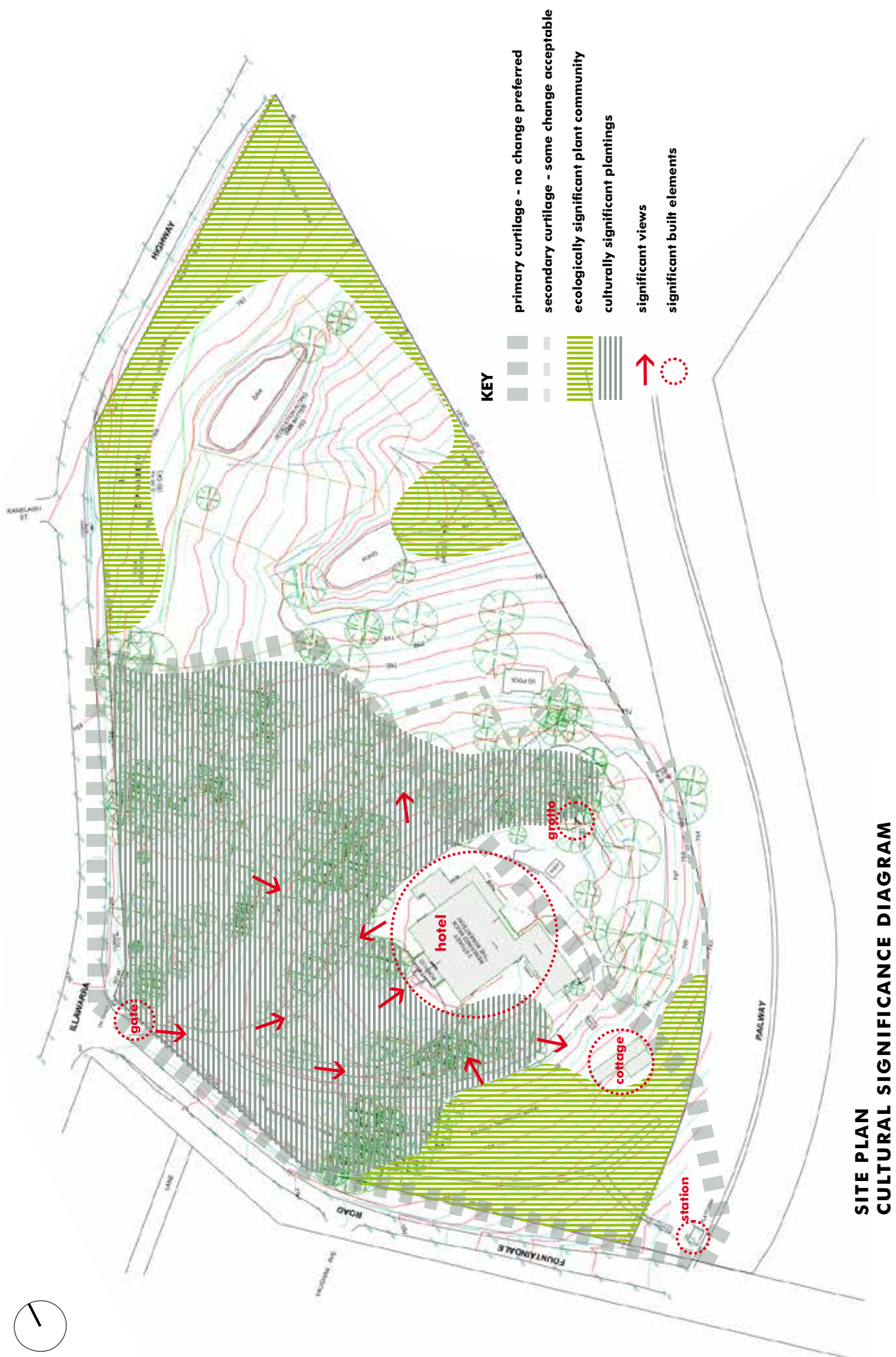
Figure 41 | *View of the south-east corner of the site above the railway line. The proposal includes some of the ancillary cottages in this area.*

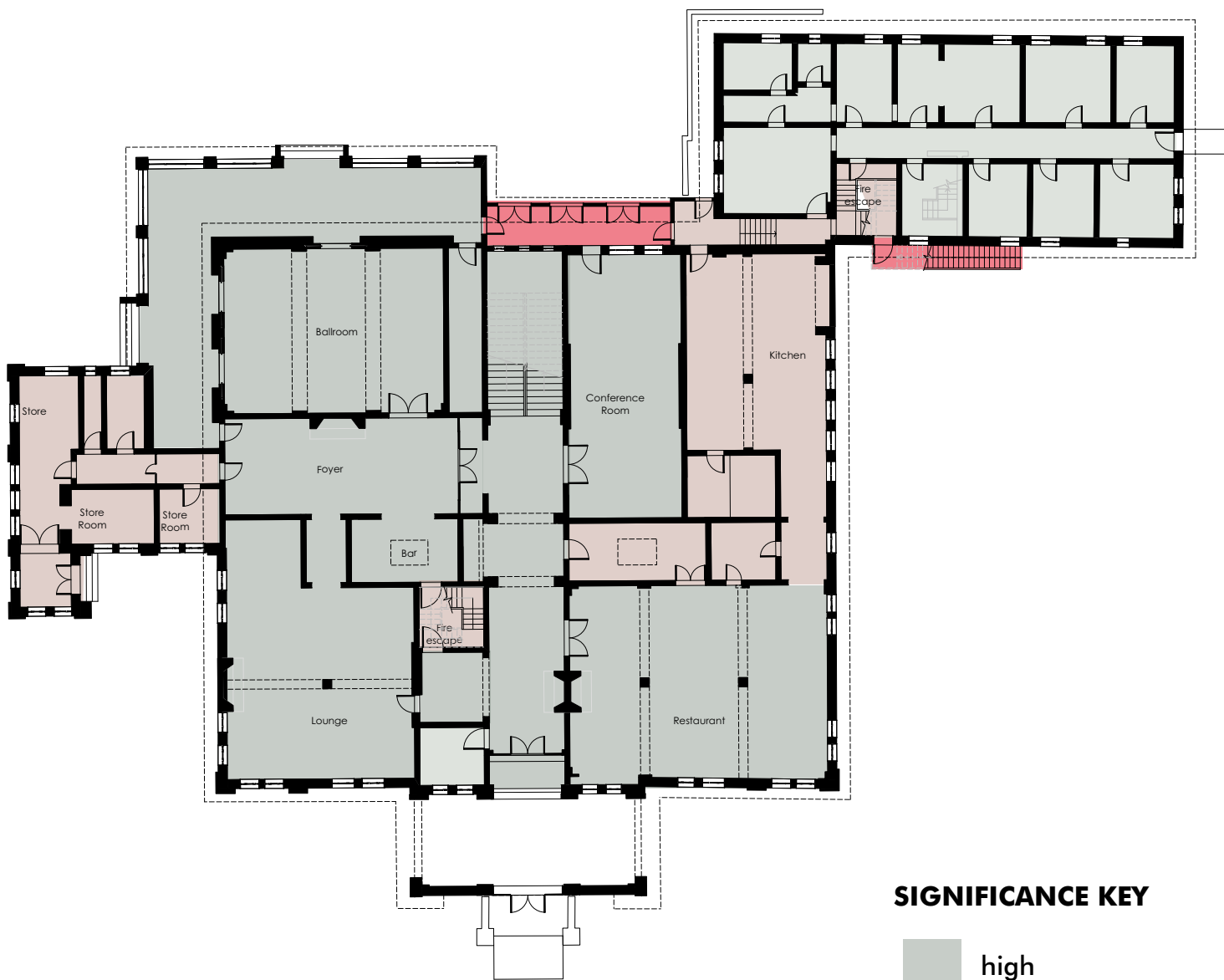


Figure 42 | *The cottage from the steps - the small lily pond in the foreground is not shown on the survey. So far no information has come to light about the circumstances of the cottage's construction or original use. The fabric appears to date from the late Inter-war period.*



Figure 43 | *North elevation of the cottage - the fabric is very degraded*

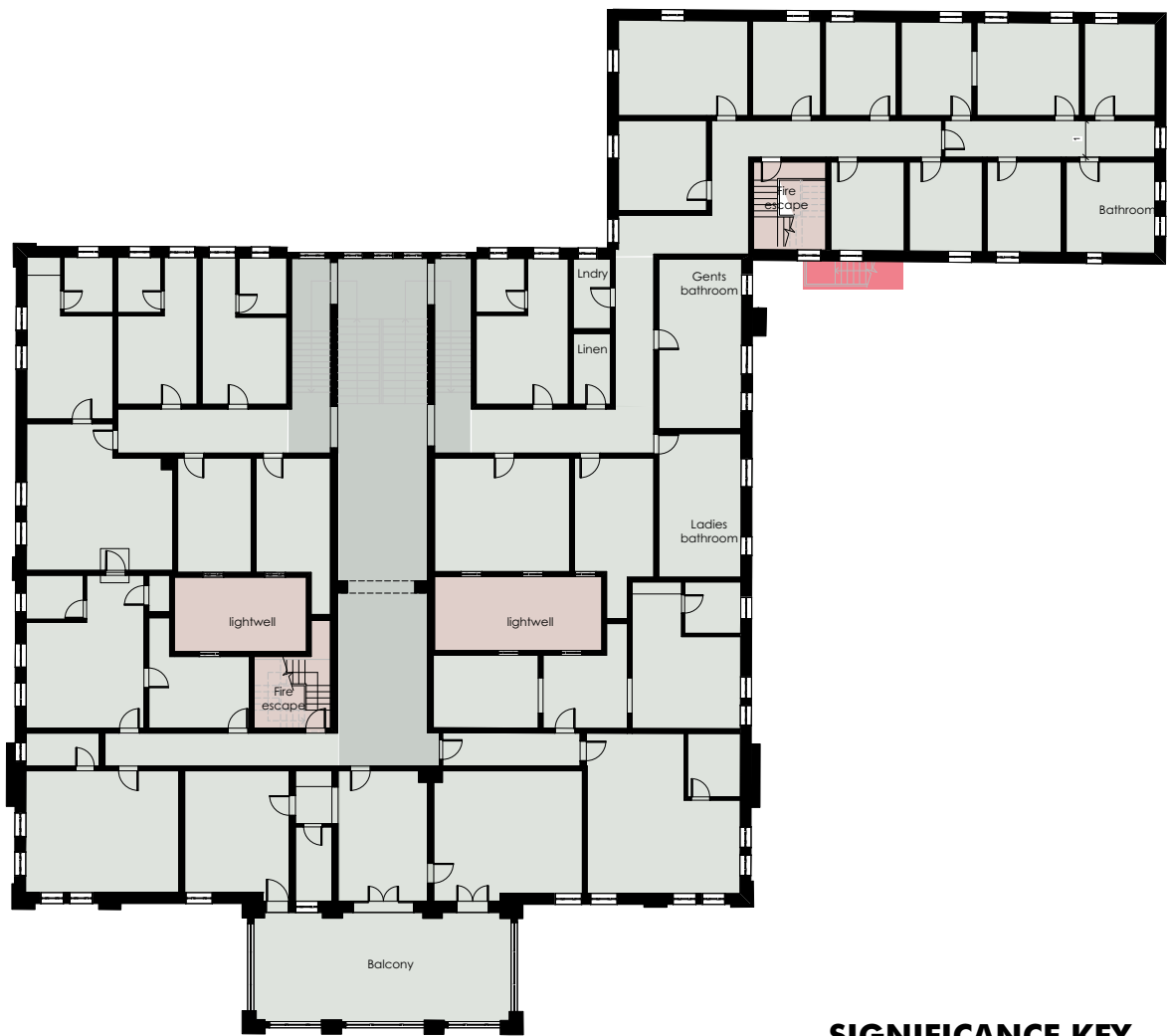




SIGNIFICANCE KEY

high	medium
little	intrusive

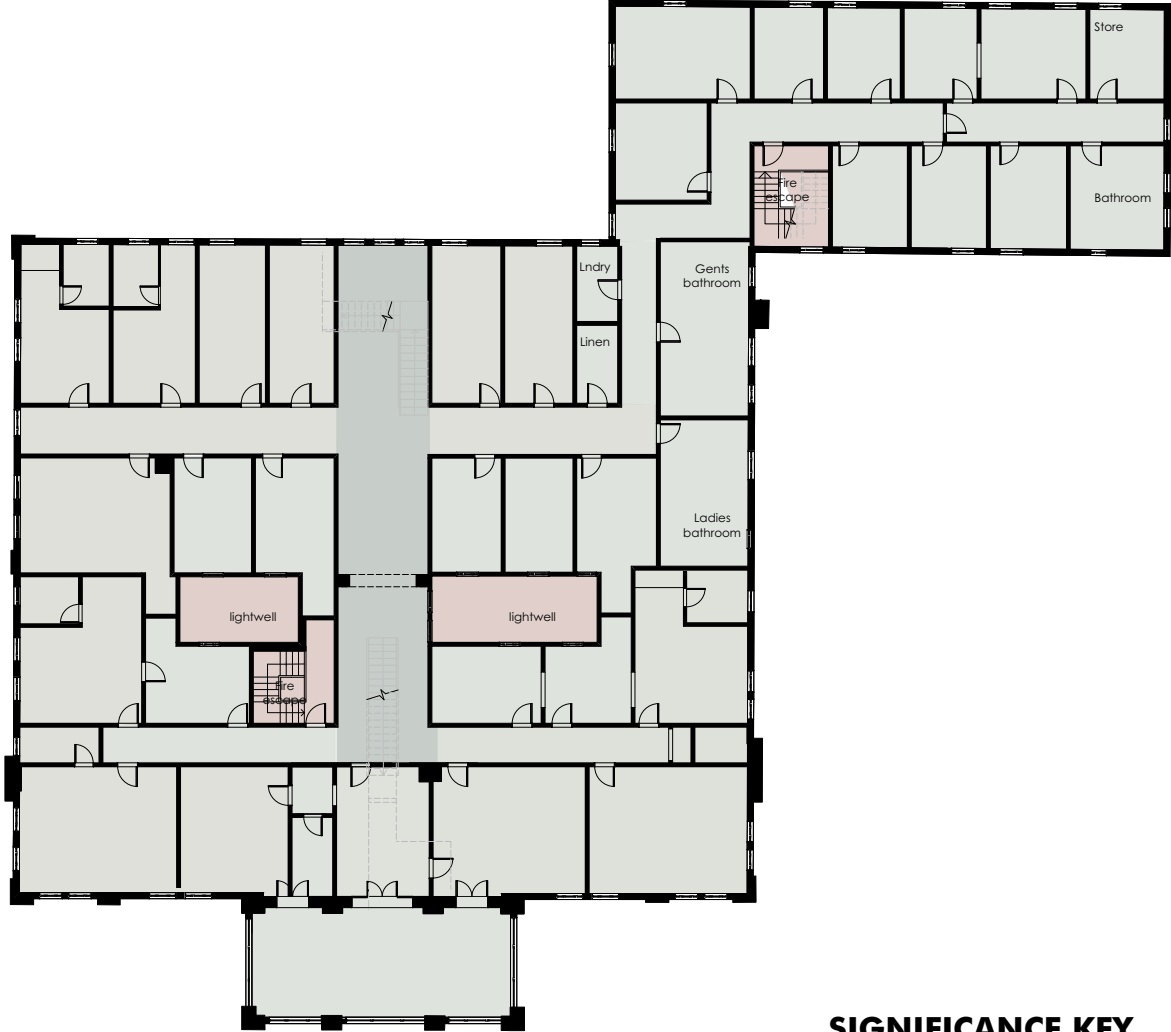
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPONENTS DIAGRAM



SIGNIFICANCE KEY

- high
- medium
- little
- intrusive

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPONENTS DIAGRAM



SIGNIFICANCE KEY

- high
- medium
- little
- intrusive

SECOND FLOOR PLAN
SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPONENTS DIAGRAM

4 Significance of the Place

4.1 BACKGROUND

The concept of 'cultural significance' or 'heritage value' recognizes the value of a place or item, which cannot be expressed in monetary terms. Assessment of cultural significance attempts to establish the foundations on the basis of which a place or an item is valued by the community. Cultural significance is embodied in the fabric of the place, in its setting and its relationship to other items, the records associated with the place and the response that the place evokes in the community.

Both the Burra Charter of Australia ICOMOS and its Guidelines for Assessment of Cultural Significance; and the NSW Heritage Manual prepared by the NSW Heritage Office recommends that significance be assessed in categories such as aesthetic, historic, scientific and social significance. The NSW Heritage Manual includes two additional criteria for assessing the comparative significance of an item.

Since the preparation of the NSW Heritage Manual, the NSW Heritage Act 1977 was amended in 1999, and again in 2000. Under this amendment the NSW Heritage Council has adopted revised criteria for assessment of heritage significance. The evaluation of cultural significance is based on the adopted approach and the results of the assessment are incorporated into a statement of significance, which is usually included in the inventory sheet of a heritage item.

The land, which forms the study area, is an unimproved block of land and as such it lacks attributes in the form of physical fabric, which could form the basis of a detailed cultural assessment of significance, therefore the process of assessment of significance as set out by the Heritage Manual is not applicable in this case.

4.2 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The statement of significance for the Robertson Hotel, identified as the *Fountaindale Manor Group (former Ranelagh House)* on the *State Heritage Inventory* is provided for reference and it reads as follows:

The hotel is significant as an example of Interwar hotel construction capitalising on the Southern Highlands' reputation as a tourist destination.

The gardens are significant as mature gardens featuring a number of cool climate plants.

*The railway platform is significant for its association with the railway and highlights the erstwhile popularity of 'Ranelagh/Fountaindale Manor' as a destination. The development of the railway was highly influential in the development of the villages of the Southern Highlands.'*¹

¹ <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?ID=6280601>

5 Planning Context

The Robertson Hotel is affected by a number of statutory and non-statutory controls, guidelines and lists that are relevant to this assessment of heritage impacts. They are as follows:

- ◆ NSW Heritage Act 1997,
- ◆ Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010
- ◆ National Trust of Australia (NSW) Register

5.1 NSW HERITAGE ACT 1977

5.1.1 State Heritage Register

The State Heritage Register is a list of heritage items of particular importance to the people of NSW. It includes items and places of state heritage significance endorsed by the Minister on the recommendation of the Heritage Council. It came into effect on 2 April 1999 and it was created under the Heritage Amendment Act 1998 and replaces the previous system of Permanent Conservation Orders as a means of protecting items of State significance.

Currently the State Heritage register includes all items formerly protected by Permanent Conservation Orders and items identified as having State significance in heritage and conservation registers prepared by State Government agencies received by the NSW Heritage Office prior to 2 April 1999. Items on the State Heritage Register require approval from the Heritage Council of NSW for certain works.

The Robertson Hotel is neither included nor proposed for inclusion in the State Heritage Register.

5.1.2 Interim Heritage Orders

Interim Heritage Orders can be made under Part 3 of the Heritage Act either by the Minister or, where authorised, a Local Government Council. Interim Heritage Orders replace the previous Interim Conservation Orders and orders made under Section 130. They are effective for a maximum period of twelve months.

The Robertson Hotel is not affected by any Interim Heritage Orders.

5.1.3 Archaeological 'Relics'

Under Division 9 of the Heritage Act, a permit is required for the excavation of relics, unless there is an applicable gazetted exemption. Pursuant to Clause 139 of the Heritage Act, an excavation permit is required where excavation is proposed and there is reasonable knowledge or likelihood that disturbance or excavation of the land will result in a relic being discovered, exposed, moved, damaged or destroyed.

There is no evidence or likelihood that excavation of the land at The Robertson Hotel may disturb relics as defined by the Act.

5.2 WINGECARRIBEE LEP 2010

The Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 is a statutory plan adopted by Wingecarribee Council. The relevant objectives of this plan are to protect the environmental heritage of the Southern Highlands, to identify heritage items and conservation areas and to provide measures for their protection, conservation and enhancement including their fabric; and to ensure that new development is undertaken in a manner sympathetic to the character of the conservation area.

The Robertson Hotel is listed as 'The Fountaindale Manor Group', a heritage item under Schedule 5 of the LEP.

5.3 NATIONAL TRUST

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) is a community-based conservation organisation. The Trust has assembled a Register of heritage items and conservation areas through the assessment work of its expert committees. While the Trust has no legal status, it is considered to be an authoritative guide to heritage significance, and the Trust acts as a lobby group for heritage conservation.

The Robertson Hotel is identified by the National Trust of Australia (NSW).

6 Proposed Development

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The proposed development was prepared in a manner consistent with the cultural significance of adjoining heritage item, while meeting the reasonable expectations of the owners of the subject site.

Advice was sought from a heritage consultant at an early stage to ensure that the cultural significance of the heritage item remains undiminished. The proposed development was the subject of a formal pre-DA application, which included a site inspection. Heritage advice provided by Council's heritage specialist has been noted and incorporated into the development proposal.

6.2 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposed development consists of the following elements:

- ◆ retention of significant fabric, internal restoration of public areas - ground floor public rooms, corridors, staircases etc.;
- ◆ upgrade of guest rooms with new bathrooms, while limiting intrusions to a minimum;
- ◆ relocation and upgrade of service areas, such as kitchen, stores and staff rooms plus upgrade of services;
- ◆ ground floor extensions to breakfast room and a new reception link connecting the existing building to a new four storey wing containing additional rooms;
- ◆ construction of twelve self-contained eco cabin pairs for additional guest accommodation outside the heritage curtilage on the east side;
- ◆ construction of twelve self-contained free standing villas outside the heritage curtilage on the north side;
- ◆ construction of a new swimming pool and leisure facility;
- ◆ restoration of the cottage and
- ◆ new site landscaping.

6.3 DOCUMENTS

The proposals are described and documented in architectural plans prepared by X.Pace Design Group. The architectural plans describe the physical aspects of the proposed development and this heritage assessment is based on the plans submitted to council for assessment.

7 Heritage Impact of Development

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The Robertson Hotel is listed as a heritage item under the existing statutory controls of the *Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010*, but it is not in the vicinity of other heritage items and it is not located within a heritage conservation area.

7.2 HERITAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The following assessment is based on the NSW Heritage Office guide to the preparation of Statements of Heritage Impacts to help identify issues associated with a proposed development affecting heritage items.

Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010

5.10 Heritage conservation

Note. Heritage items (if any) are listed and described in Schedule 5. Heritage conservation areas (if any) are shown on the Heritage Map as well as being described in Schedule 5.

(1) Objectives

The objectives of this clause are as follows:

- (a) to conserve the environmental heritage of Wingecarribee,*
- (b) to conserve the heritage significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas, including associated fabric, settings and views,*
- (c) to conserve archaeological sites,*
- (d) to conserve Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal places of heritage significance.*

The development site is subject to a heritage listing, but it is not the vicinity of other heritage items and it is not in a heritage conservation area. The development has the potential to affect the setting of the heritage item and cultural heritage of Wingecarribee.

The site has no archaeological potential and it is not an Aboriginal place of heritage significance.

The heritage item is retained and restored; its significance is conserved. Protection of the heritage curtilage around the heritage item and construction limited to areas outside the curtilage ensure that its setting is maintained.

The heritage conservation objectives are fulfilled.

(2) Requirement for consent

Development consent is required for any of the following:

- (a) demolishing or moving any of the following or altering the exterior of any of the following (including, in the case of a building, making changes to its detail, fabric, finish or appearance):*
 - (i) a heritage item,*
 - (ii) an Aboriginal object,*
 - (iii) a building, work, relic or tree within a heritage conservation area,*

- (b) *altering a heritage item that is a building by making structural changes to its interior or by making changes to anything inside the item that is specified in Schedule 5 in relation to the item,*
- (c) *disturbing or excavating an archaeological site while knowing, or having reasonable cause to suspect, that the disturbance or excavation will or is likely to result in a relic being discovered, exposed, moved, damaged or destroyed,*
- (d) *disturbing or excavating an Aboriginal place of heritage significance,*
- (e) *erecting a building on land:*
 - (i) *on which a heritage item is located or that is within a heritage conservation area, or*
 - (ii) *on which an Aboriginal object is located or that is within an Aboriginal place of heritage significance,*
- (f) *subdividing land:*
 - (i) *on which a heritage item is located or that is within a heritage conservation area, or*
 - (ii) *on which an Aboriginal object is located or that is within an Aboriginal place of heritage significance.*

The development consent needs to take heritage conservation issues into consideration. A detailed heritage assessment prepared by a recognised heritage specialist will form part of the submission representing an appropriate response to the consent requirements.

The proposed works represent negligible structural changes within the heritage item.

New buildings, which are essential to the viability of the historic use, are to be constructed outside the heritage curtilage.

The consent requirements are satisfied.

(3) When consent not required

However, development consent under this clause is not required if:

- (a) *the applicant has notified the consent authority of the proposed development and the consent authority has advised the applicant in writing before any work is carried out that it is satisfied that the proposed development:*
 - (i) *is of a minor nature or is for the maintenance of the heritage item, Aboriginal object, Aboriginal place of heritage significance or archaeological site or a building, work, relic, tree or place within the heritage conservation area, and*
 - (ii) *would not adversely affect the heritage significance of the heritage item, Aboriginal object, Aboriginal place, archaeological site or heritage conservation area, or*
- (b) *the development is in a cemetery or burial ground and the proposed development:*
 - (i) *is the creation of a new grave or monument, or excavation or disturbance of land for the purpose of conserving or repairing monuments or grave markers, and*
 - (ii) *would not cause disturbance to human remains, relics, Aboriginal objects in the form of grave goods, or to an Aboriginal place of heritage significance, or*
- (c) *the development is limited to the removal of a tree or other vegetation that the Council is satisfied is a risk to human life or property, or*
- (d) *the development is exempt development.*

This clause is not relevant to the application as consent will be required for the development.

(4) Effect of proposed development on heritage significance

The consent authority must, before granting consent under this clause in respect of a heritage item or heritage conservation area, consider the effect of the proposed development on the a heritage significance of the item or area concerned. This subclause applies regardless of whether heritage management document is prepared under subclause (5) or a heritage conservation management plan is submitted under subclause (6).

The Robertson Hotel, designed by Spencer & Spencer and built by the most prominent builder in the Southern Highlands, is a significant example of Inter-war hotel construction, capitalising on the Southern Highlands' reputation as a tourist destination, and a significant example of colonial architecture. The gardens are also significant as mature gardens featuring a number of cool climate plants. The Robertson Hotel is listed as a heritage item and its physical integrity is high.

In general terms, the proposed development will generate the following impacts:

- ◆ the development involving internal alterations generates negligible adverse impacts for the heritage item:
 - ◆ there are no structural changes;
 - ◆ changes to built elements and finishes are kept to the minimum;
 - ◆ existing fabric and original finishes are conserved;
 - ◆ new finishes are sympathetic to the original character;
 - ◆ new introduced fabric is generally designed to be reversible;
 - ◆ and the integrity of areas of high significance is maintained.
- ◆ the original fabric of the heritage item and its landscaped grounds will be restored representing a substantial investment and commitment to the local economy;
- ◆ the historic use of the place as a tourist hotel is retained;
- ◆ the proposed additions to the heritage item, involving the breakfast area extension and the linked additional guest rooms, are essential to maintain the historic function of the hotel in order to meet current hospitality requirements and amenity expectations by guests;
- ◆ a heritage curtilage around the hotel was identified and the development maintains this significant curtilage conserving the setting;
- ◆ the important ancillary buildings, and other built structures, outside the heritage curtilage - the cottage, the railway station and the grotto - will be restored contributing to the cultural value of the place;
- ◆ the existing swimming pool is of low cultural value and its replacement does not have any adverse impacts;
- ◆ the proposed additional buildings and additions are essential to provide finance for the substantial restoration costs involved in such a large building. These buildings are located outside the heritage curtilage and designed to have minimal impact on the setting.

The development will not affect the cultural significance of the heritage item.

(5) Heritage assessment

The consent authority may, before granting consent to any development:

- (a) on land on which a heritage item is located, or*
- (b) on land that is within a heritage conservation area, or*
- (c) on land that is within the vicinity of land referred to in paragraph (a) or (b),*

require a heritage management document to be prepared that assesses the extent to which the carrying out of the proposed development would affect the heritage significance of the heritage item or heritage conservation area concerned.

This heritage impact statement is submitted as part of the development application. This report addresses a property, which is identified as having heritage significance. The report is suitably detailed and follows NSW Heritage Office and *Burra Charter* guidelines and was prepared by an experienced conservation architect.

The requirement is satisfied by the provision of this report

(6) Heritage conservation management plans

The consent authority may require, after considering the heritage significance of a heritage item and the extent of change proposed to it, the submission of a heritage conservation management plan before granting consent under this clause.

This is at the discretion of council, but it needs to be pointed out that the proposal was designed to minimise heritage impacts and therefore requirement for the preparation of a conservation management document is unreasonable.

(7) Archaeological sites

The consent authority must, before granting consent under this clause to the carrying out of development on an archaeological site (other than land listed on the State Heritage Register or to which an interim heritage order under the Heritage Act 1977 applies):

- (a) notify the Heritage Council of its intention to grant consent, and*
- (b) take into consideration any response received from the Heritage Council within 28 days after the notice is sent.*

This clause is not relevant as the development site has no archaeological potential.

(8) Aboriginal places of heritage significance

The consent authority must, before granting consent under this clause to the carrying out of development in an Aboriginal place of heritage significance:

- (a) consider the effect of the proposed development on the heritage significance of the place and any Aboriginal object known or reasonably likely to be located at the place by means of an adequate investigation and assessment (which may involve consideration of a heritage impact statement), and*
- (b) notify the local Aboriginal communities, in writing or in such other manner as may be appropriate, about the application and take into consideration any response received within 28 days after the notice is sent.*

This clause is not relevant: the development site is not an Aboriginal place of significance.

Robertson Village DCP

The development site, which is identified as a heritage item, is within the boundaries of the Robertson Village DCP. The heritage related objectives of the DCP are, as follows:

(a) *Preserve and protect buildings of heritage and cultural value.*

The heritage item is retained, restored and enhanced.

(b) *Ensure that redevelopment immediately adjacent to buildings of heritage or cultural value in no way detracts from the visual quality or amenity of heritage buildings.*

New development is located outside the heritage curtilage and cultural associations including significant views and settings are maintained.

(c) *Ensure that redevelopment within or immediately adjacent to Conservation Areas reflects the high heritage value of the Area and contributes to that value.*

The development site is not in a conservation area.

The heritage objectives of the DCP are satisfied.

A7.8 Alterations to Items of Heritage

To protect and enhance the heritage value of the village, Council shall not grant consent to the carrying out of development on any land to which this Clause applies unless it is satisfied that the development:

(a) *Is sympathetic to the retained elements of the Heritage Item and its setting in terms of setback, scale, building design and form, materials, proportion and spacing of openings, in order to achieve a subtle contrast between old elements and new.*

The development generates negligible adverse impacts for the heritage item, as there are no structural changes; changes to built elements and finishes are kept to the minimum; existing fabric and original finishes are conserved; new finishes are sympathetic to the original character; new introduced fabric is generally designed to be reversible; and the integrity of areas of high significance is maintained.

New development including the four storey wing and the eco villas are located outside the heritage curtilage, designed to be recessive and they do not overwhelm the heritage item.

(b) *Where relevant, maintains the group significance of a cluster of items of environmental heritage.*

Not relevant.

(c) *Retains as much of the existing building fabric as is possible, particularly those elements which contribute towards the building's visual/heritage significance.*

Unavoidable intrusions into significant fabric are kept to a minimum in accordance with Article 15 & Article 21 of the *Burra Charter* and reflect the detailed assessment of significance prepared at the beginning of the design process.

(d) *Minimises the modification to original door or window openings, spacings and proportions.*

Modification to fenestration is negligible in its impact. The majority of existing doors openings are maintained. New openings are designed to match the proportions of the original.

(e) Removes any unsympathetic building elements, additions or accretions, including awnings on commercial buildings.

The heritage item has maintained a relatively high degree of integrity and there are few building elements of intrusive character which have had to be reversed.

(f) Reinstates the original facades and architectural elements.

The heritage item has maintained its integrity and its setting and there are few building elements on its facade which would have to be reinstated.

(g) Reconstructs original detail only when based on empirical research, and AVOID mimicry (mock detail forms).

The level of integrity allows for accurate reconstruction where required. New introduced fabric is legibly new in accordance with the principles of Article 22 of the *Burra Charter*.

(h) Retains natural surface finishes, or applies colour schemes for external painting which reflect the relevant historical period. Cladding with modern finishes is not permitted.

Existing original surface finishes are retained. The proposed colour scheme is based on an interpretation of historic precedent associated with the hotel.

(i) Where subdivision occurs ensures that an appropriate curtilage area is identified and retained.

Not relevant. Subdivision is not proposed and the integrity of the site is maintained.

(j) Ensures important elements of garden and landscape are identified and protected.

The important landscape elements of the site were investigated and established prior to the design process. The establishment of the heritage curtilage reflects these investigations. All significant landscape elements are retained.

(k) Identifies vistas both to and from the heritage item and ensure that development does not encroach upon or diminish these vistas

The principal views to and from the site have been identified. All significant views and vistas are maintained. New buildings are positioned not to impact on existing important vistas.

The heritage provisions of the DCP are satisfied.

7.3 STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

7.3.1 Heritage Act

The proposals are consistent with the provisions of the Heritage Act.

7.3.2 Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010

The Robertson Hotel is a listed heritage item - *the Fountaindale Manor Group* - under WLEP 2010, but it is not located in a heritage conservation area. The foregoing assessment demonstrates that the proposed development is not in conflict with the cultural significance of the heritage item.

The proposed development complies with the heritage provisions of the WLEP 2010.

7.4 CONCLUSION

Having examined the heritage impact of the development on the cultural significance of the heritage item, the following can be concluded:

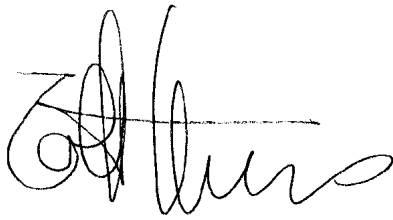
- ◆ the development involving internal alterations generates negligible adverse impacts for the heritage item;
- ◆ the additions to the heritage item are essential to maintain the historic function of the hotel reflecting current hospitality requirements;
- ◆ the development maintains the significant curtilage around the heritage item generating neutral impact;
- ◆ the fabric of the heritage item will be restored representing a substantial positive impact;
- ◆ the important cultural landscape setting within the heritage curtilage will be restored representing a substantial positive impact
- ◆ the proposed additional buildings and additions are essential to provide orderly and stable mechanism for the restoration and maintenance outlays involved in such a large and culturally significant building.

8 Recommendations

Having assessed the significance of the place and the heritage impact of the proposed development the following are recommended:

- ◆ that Council should support the proposed development in recognition of its lack of adverse heritage conservation impacts.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoltan Kovacs', written over a horizontal line.

ZOLTAN KOVACS B. Arch (Hons)
ARCHITECT

9 Bibliography

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10 Appendix