

Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - November 16, 2021

What is Significant?

The interwar Harp Village Commercial Precinct at 623-655 and 657-665 High Street (north side), 626-694 High Street (south side), 605-613 High Street (corner with Strathalbyn), 29-31 Valerie Street (north side), 1-3 and 5-13 Strathalbyn Street is significant. The shopping strip was developed almost entirely during the interwar period, with shops and businesses established between c.1920 and 1940.

Intact and partially intact interwar upper storey facades and parapets are significant. The intact and partially intact original shopfronts at 623, 631, 639, 657, and 663-665 High Street (north side), and 664, 666, 678, and 692 High Street (south side) are significant.

The early awnings/awning linings at 605-613, 631-633, 645, 659-661, and 663-665 High Street (north side), 658, 660, 666, 672, 678-680, 684 and 692 High Street (south side), and 1-3 and 5-13 Strathalbyn Street are significant.

Non-original alterations and additions to the shops are not significant.

Non-contributory buildings within the precinct are identified in the schedule below.

How is it significant?

Harp Village Commercial Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

Historically, Harp Village Commercial Precinct is significant for its ability to demonstrate the development of new shopping strips in the municipality in response to the interwar settlement and suburban consolidation of Kew East. Harp Village was established and grew as a shopping strip between c.1920 and 1940, in direct response to the 1920s' extension and subsequent full electrification of the tramline along High Street and the related expansion of suburban settlement. (Criterion A)

Harp Village shopping strip is highly representative of the interwar era and of the interwar settlement of Kew East. Aesthetically, the precinct is distinguished as a largely intact interwar shopping strip. High visual cohesion is provided by the integrity of the upper storey facades and parapets of the single and double storey shop buildings. The shopping strip is enhanced by the retention of some early shopfronts, including a pair of shops at 663-665 High Street where the original shopfitter, TS Gill, is identified. The precinct is further enhanced by the two former bank buildings at 623 and 657 High Street, both elegantly designed corner buildings. Visual unity is provided by a high number of pairs and groups of three or more shops that are built to similar designs. This includes the interwar Spanish Mission style shops on Strathalbyn Road. (Criterion D)

Heritage
Study/Consultant

Boroondara - Municipal-Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 5: Kew East and Mont
Albert, Context, 2018;

Hermes Number

202204

Physical Description 1

The Harp Village Commercial Precinct comprises two long rows of single and double storey interwar brick shops on both sides of High Street, a short section of Strathalbyn Street (west side), and the corner shop building at Valerie, High, and Strathalbyn streets. The Precinct extends along High Street to the north-east along a gentle slope from Harp Junction at the south-west end. Harp Junction is situated on a prominent rise (Harp Hill). The topography of this part of Kew East provides expansive views of the district along the alignment of High Street, south-southwest towards the city from Harp Hill, and northeast towards Mount Lofty from the length of High Street.

All the shops are built to the front and side boundaries, each row forming a continuous street wall with roofs concealed behind parapets; the former Bank at the corner of High and Strathalbyn streets being an exception.

The shops are built in a range of interwar architectural styles, some with modest or restrained detailing to the upper storey facades and parapets, with both face brick, and rough rendered with contrasting brick detailing represented.

The upper storey facades of the double-storey interwar shops and parapets, and the parapets of the single-storey shops are of high integrity, retaining much of their original features and detailing, and have high visual cohesion because many of them have been built to the same design: as pairs; or individually but with recurring decorative features; or as groups of varying numbers of shops. The high visual quality is enhanced by a large proportion of the shops having been constructed over a relatively short time span through the interwar decades of the 1920s and 1930s.

On High Street, there are a number of shopfronts which are largely intact at ground level:

- High Street (north side): 623, 631, 639, 657, 663-665
- High Street (south side): 664, 666, 678, 692

The most interesting of these is the pair of fine shopfronts at 663-665 High Street. The shopfitter's name is identified on the copper window frames as 'Gill'; presumably TS Gill & Son Pty Ltd Shopfitters and Glass Merchants of South Yarra, who are described in contemporary newspapers as 'Melbourne's leading shopfitters' (*Age*, 1 Sep 1932:6; *Table Talk*, 16 Dec 1926:36).

Other shopfronts have been replaced.

Original or early awnings and awning linings are retained at some shops:

- High Street (north side): 605-613, 631-633, 645, 659-665
- High Street (south side): 658, 660, 666, 672, 678, 680, 684-690, 692-694
- Strathalbyn Street: 1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 13

The earliest building in the precinct was the Harp of Erin hotel, established in 1854 at the present day 626 High Street site. A new hotel was built in c.1864. The core structure of the present-day hotel was constructed in 1956 with alterations in 1970 (drive-in), 1987 (interior) and 1988 (unspecified). It is unlikely that remains of the earlier hotel structures survive. At the part of the Harp of Erin Hotel that correlates with 626 High Street, new frontages to the High Street and Harp Road facades of the 1956 double-storey building have been added. The tiled and hipped roof form of this earlier hotel remains visible from the surrounding streets. Four adjacent two-storey interwar brick shops have been integrated into the hotel complex; a group of three shops at 638-642 High Street (built 1935-38), and the neighbouring two-storey brick shop at 644 High Street (constructed in 1925 as one of four shops at 644-650 High Street).

The precinct is enhanced by several sets of shops built to the same or similar designs. They include two former interwar bank buildings, both corner buildings at 623 and 657 High Street. 623 High Street was built in 1925-30 in the interwar Georgian revival style. It has red brick walls encircled by a contrasting band of render at second-storey windowsill height and a terra cotta tile hip roof, two tall chimneys, and small paned windows reminiscent of Georgian proportions. A brick portico with rendered parapet projects from the front elevation. The portico has been altered. 657 High Street, built in 1930-35, represents the interwar stripped classical style. It has rendered walls and roof form concealed behind a parapet with restrained detailing. The square proportioned windows have distinctive crossed upper panes. A large curved plate-glass window indicates the opening to the entry door. The former ES&A Bank at 657 High Street is strikingly similar to another former bank building in the suburb of Elsternwick (part of HO7 in the City of Port Philip Planning Scheme).

Another distinctive set of shops in the precinct are those at 5-13 Strathalbyn Street, built as a group of five in 1930-35 in the interwar Spanish Mission architectural style. Characteristic features of the style are evident in the upper storey facade, and include the twisted columns and arched openings to the balconies of 5 and 13 Strathalbyn, which bookend three shops with paired, small-paned timber sash windows. The walls are rendered, which is also characteristic.

The interwar Art Deco/Moderne shops at 659-665 High Street are also distinctive in the precinct, with characteristic features including the horizontal aesthetic of the windows and decorative features offset by the vertical central fin. Although some of the brick work is overpainted, they are largely intact with original upper-storey windows retained (except at 661) and intact high quality original shopfronts.

Three pairs of single-storey brick shops built to the same design are located at 684-694 High Street, built c.1935-38; the shops at 692-694 High Street replaced an earlier structure that housed a grocer in 1920. They are unusual in the precinct for their gabled brick parapets. Each pair of shops is topped with a face brick gabled parapet with decorative expressed brickwork in contrasting brick colours and patterns (including a herringbone-infilled rectangular pattern), and rendered rectangular panels (for shop names) above each shop. The shopfront at 692-694 is early, retaining splayed ingo, metal framed windows (overpainted), and highlight windows (overpainted). The other shopfronts in this grouping have been replaced. The awnings retain original or early pressed-metal linings.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>