



Boiler House Viewpoint 10: Level 1



Boiler House Viewpoint 11: Level 1



Boiler House Viewpoint 12: Level 1



Boiler House Viewpoint 13: Level 1



Boiler House Viewpoint 14: Level 1

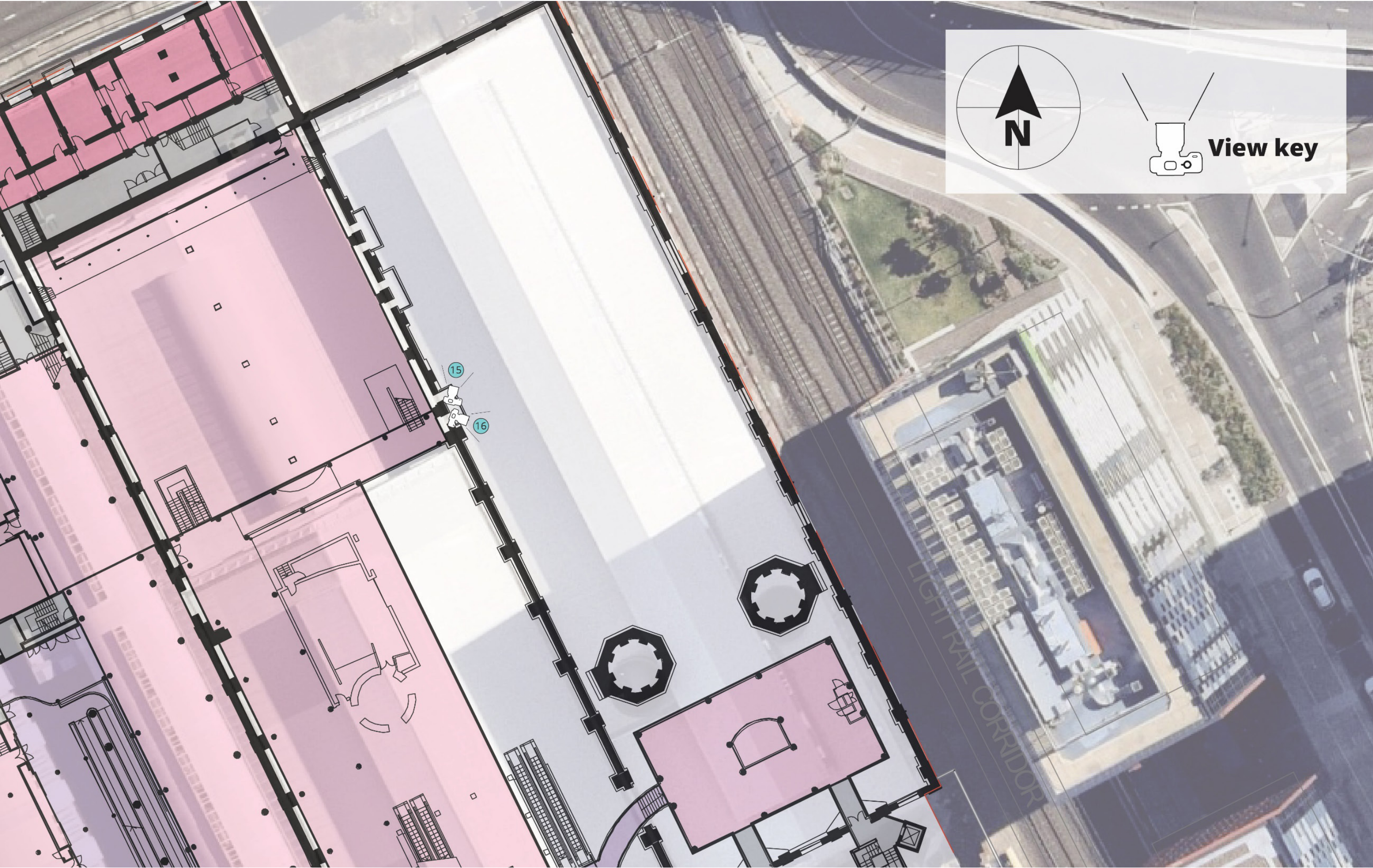


Figure 12.16 Boiler House Photo Register (View from Level 2 across open exhibition space)



Boiler House Viewpoint 15: View from Level 2



Boiler House Viewpoint 16: View from Level 2

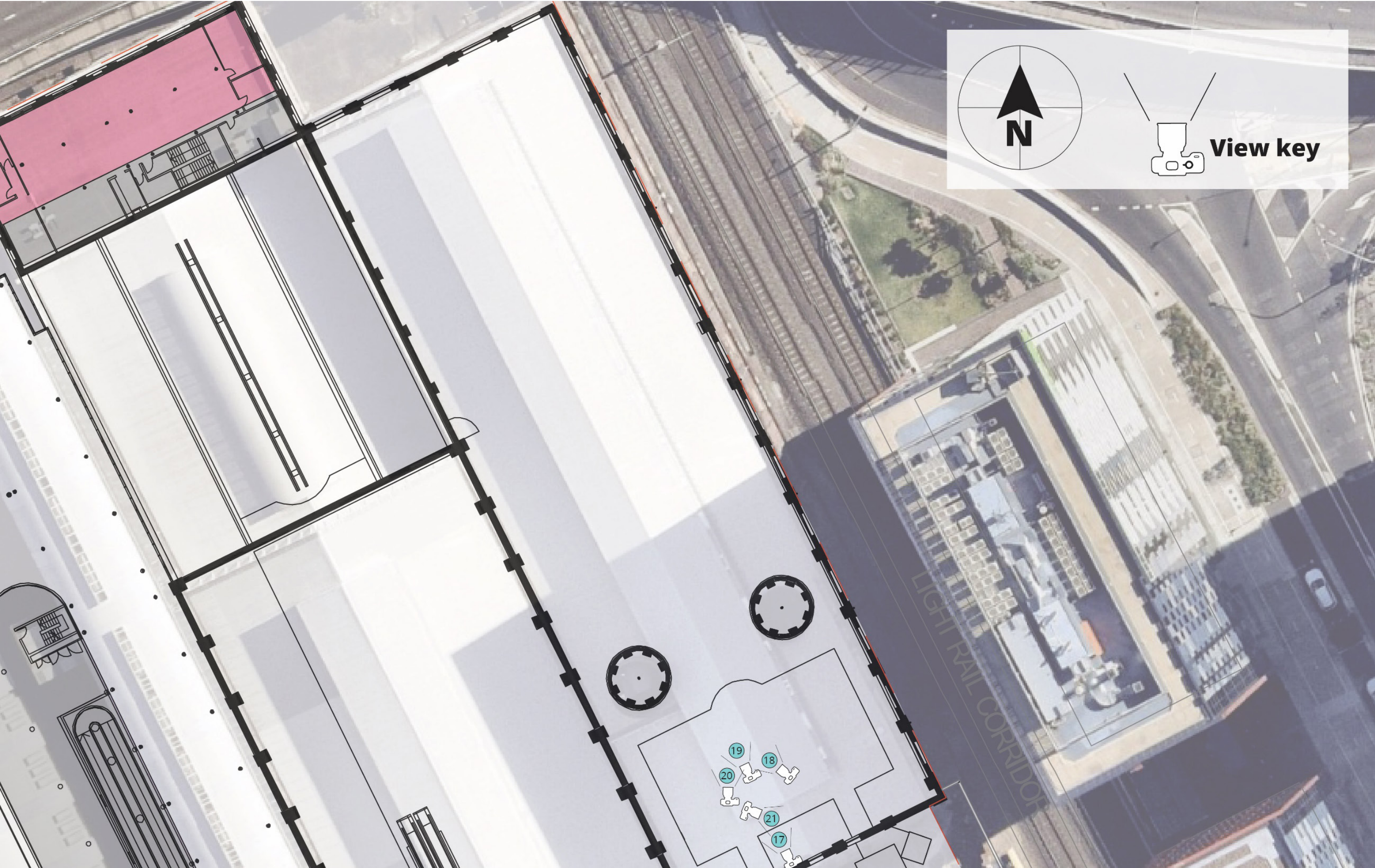
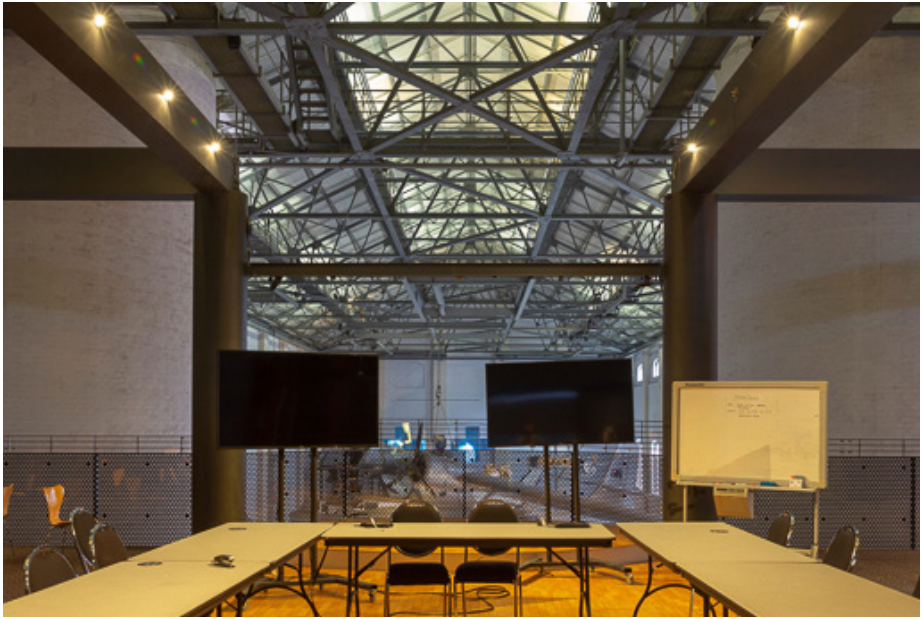


Figure 12.17 Boiler House Photo Register (View from Level 4 mezzanine)



Boiler House Viewpoint 17: Level 4



Boiler House Viewpoint 18: Level 4



Boiler House Viewpoint 19: Level 4



Boiler House Viewpoint 120: Level 4



Boiler House Viewpoint 21: Level 4

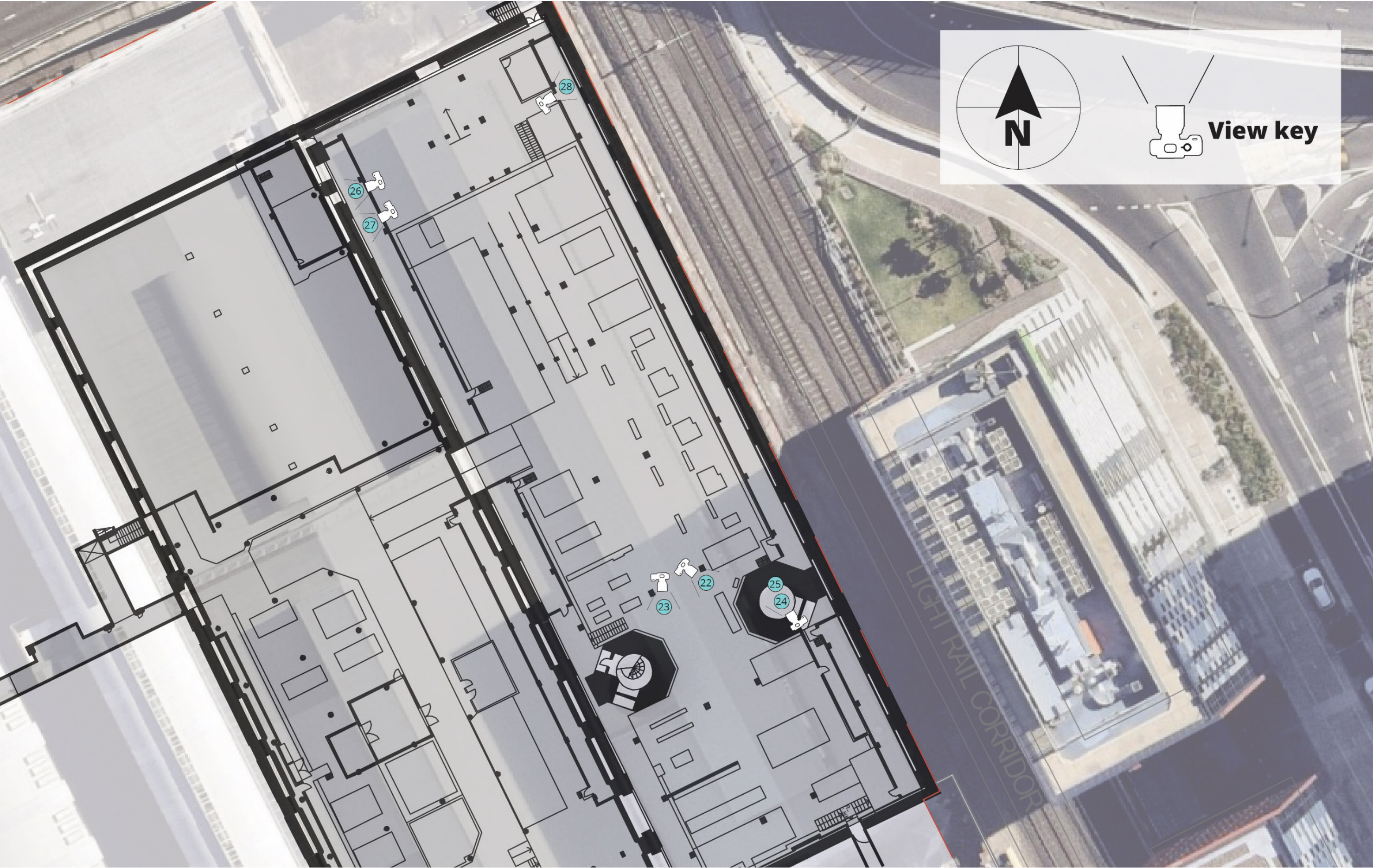


Figure 12.18 Boiler House Photo Register (Basement)



Boiler House Viewpoint 22: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 23: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 24: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 25: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 26: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 27: Basement



Boiler House Viewpoint 28: Basement

12.7 ENDNOTES

1 Godden et al, 1984, p. 105
2 ibid, p. 35.
3 ibid, p. 144.
4 Rowe, 1988, p. 12.
5 ibid, p. I
6 ibid, p. XXX.
7 Architectural Projects, 2003, p. 50.
8 Ibid, p. 59
9 State Heritage Inventory, NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, *Ultimo Power House* (State).

13 SWITCH HOUSE

13.1 HISTORY OF THE SWITCH HOUSE

The Switch House was constructed adjacent to the southern wall of the Turbine Hall between 1922 and 1927, measuring 23m wide and 61m long and 17m in height. The Switch House was purpose built to house a new control room, high tension switch gear and transformer banks required to facilitate a major upgrade to the switching gear of the Sydney tramway network, as the existing switchboard facilities in the Engine House or Turbine Hall had reached capacity for expansion. The site for the new Switch House was initially cleared and prepared for construction in 1922 with the building complete and operational by 1927.¹ Construction of the brick building included excavation for the building foundations and below ground cable trenches. A small battery house was located on the roof of the switch house.² Throughout its operation as part of the Ultimo Power House, the Switch House remained as originally constructed with minimal modifications.

When the Ultimo Power House closed on 11 October 1963, the Switch House, along with the other Power House buildings, fell into disrepair and was subsequently damaged by decay, squatters, and vandals. While the original 1980s museum design proposed demolition of the Switch House and replacement with a new building, budget constraints resulted in the retention and adaptive re-use of the building as part of the Powerhouse Museum.³

Adaptations to the Switch House as part of the adaptive reuse for the Powerhouse Museum resulted in the majority of the interior features of the building being removed and replaced with modern elements for the museum fit out. The Switch House originally had moulded concrete cabinets which carried the cables and bus-bars, yet these were removed between 1982 and 1984.⁴ A new roof annex addition was constructed as part of the adaptive reuse of the Switch House, which appears to have been initially designed to function as a café.⁵ In 1988, parts of the Switch House façade were painted yellow to match the new museum entry facade.⁶ Construction of the Harris Street forecourt as part of the 1980s museum site obstructed visibility of the lower levels of the western façade of the Switch House.

When the Sydney monorail opened in 1988, a pedestrian walkway connected the southern end of the Switch House (Figure 13.7) to the nearby monorail station- renamed the Powerhouse Museum Station in 2002.⁷ The monorail ceased operation in 2013, with demolition and removal of its associated infrastructure, including the pedestrian connection to the Switch House, completed by April 2014.

The Powerhouse Museum Revitalisation Project of 2011–2013 included works to link the Switch House with the Harris Street forecourt - initially constructed with a partial void between the Switch House and the bulk of the forecourt, affording access to the lower level of the site (Figure 13.5 and Figure 13.6). The museum exit was relocated to the Switch House at this time.⁸ In 2012 the new Museum shop was opened in the Switch House, and a new café with seating in the Harris Street forecourt in 2013.⁹ In 2022, the Switch House is used as an exhibition space, café and shop for the Powerhouse Museum as well as a Creative Residency space.

Previous Names	Switch House
Address	500 Harris Street, Ultimo
Lot & DP	Lot 1 DP631345
Built	1927
Heritage Listings	SHR 02045 “Ultimo Power House” LEP I2031, “Powerhouse Museum Former Warehouse Buildings, including interiors”
Non-Statutory Listings	Register of the National Estate (Powerhouse Museum (Stage Two), Place ID 100690 National Trust of Australia (NSW) Register (S11648, 24/10/2015)

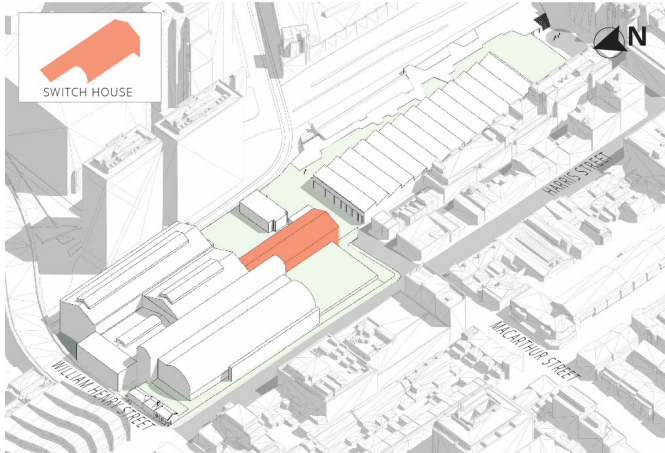


Figure 13.1 Location of the Switch Houses (Source: John Wardle Architects with Curio Projects overlay)



Figure 13.2 The Switch House (Source: Curio Projects, 2020)

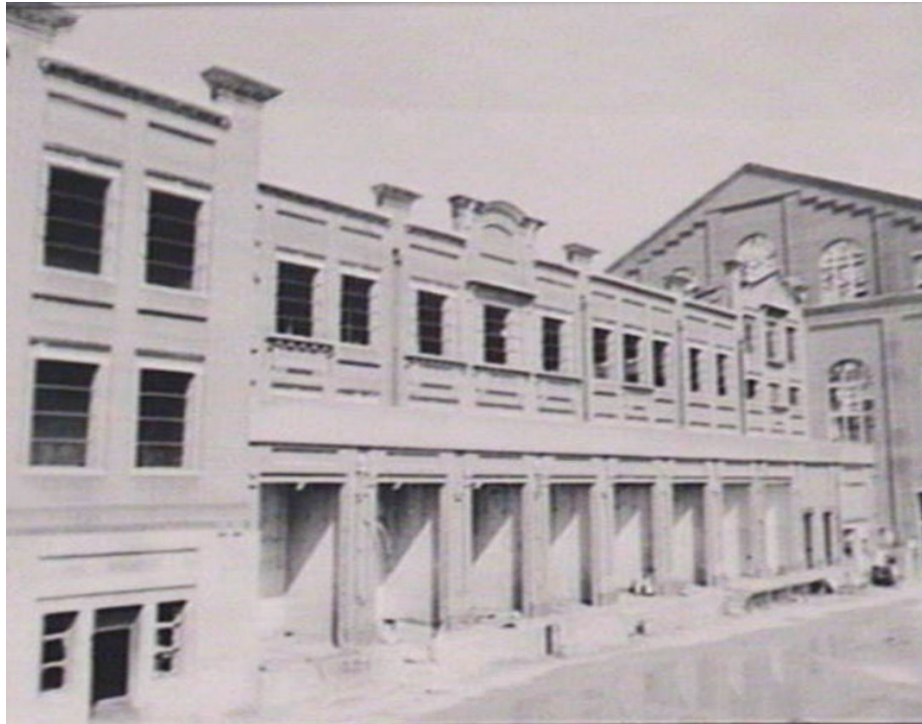


Figure 13.3 The Switch House 1980s (Source: State Library)



Figure 13.4 The Eastern façade of the Switch House c.1984 (Source Godden 1984 after p. 8)



Figure 13.5 Sunken courtyard facing south, 2011 (Source: DA D/2011/242)



Figure 13.6 Void between the forecourt and Switch House, 2011 (Source: DA D/2011/242)



Figure 13.7 Site Image showing the Pedestrian Railway Bridge prior to demolition (Source: HMUP 2014 p. 1)

13.2 PHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SWITCH HOUSE

An overall photo register and images of the Switch House as of 2020 is presented in Section 13.6.

13.2.1 Site and Setting

The Switch House forms part of the Powerhouse Ultimo Site at 500 Harris Street, Ultimo. Within the Powerhouse Ultimo site, the northern elevation of the Switch House adjoins the southern wall of the Turbine, while the eastern façade remains open to the Level 1 courtyard to the east. The southern facade faces Macarthur Street and the Level 3 forecourt and Harris Street are to the west.

13.2.2 Built Elements

The Switch House is less utilitarian than the other Power House buildings, constructed in an art deco style which is particularly evident along the western facade. The SHR listing describes the Switch House as:

The Switch House is a brick building, three stories on the east and two stories above ground level on the west. The west facade is divided into seven bays, the northernmost of which is given emphasis by means of a dentillated gable which incorporates a centrally-placed circular motif with herringbone infill. The remainder of the building features a dentillated segmented extension of the parapet. The brickwork between each pair of windows extends even higher and terminates in dentillated bracketed caps. All dressings, sills, lintels and caps are of rendered concrete.

The viewing window from the Switch House, which allowed control staff to keep watch over the generating equipment, is still in place. Decorative stonework and brickwork on the on the Switch House are still in very good condition.¹⁰

While the Switch House is a three storey building, the natural slope of the Powerhouse site towards the east means that from Harris Street, the Switch House presents as a single storey building with the modern roof top addition, whereas from the Goods Line and Hay Street, the building is visible as the full three storeys. Whilst the Switch House never fronted the street during its use as part of the Ultimo Power House, it has a highly decorative façade, part of which may have been visible above the skyline.¹¹ Along the eastern façade, the lower section of the Switch House has a simple, strong, architectural style with eight openings which once housed transformers, covered by roller shutters.



Figure 13.8 Presentation of the Switch House from the south, level change along Macarthur Street apparent (Curio 2020)



Figure 13.9 The Switch House western elevation after the extension of the Harris Street courtyard (Curio 2020)



Figure 13.10 Switch House eastern elevation, obscured by the modern covered walkway (Curio 2020)

13.3 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Switch House, as part of the Ultimo Power House, is included within the following statutory heritage register listings:

- State Heritage Register (NSW), The Ultimo Power House, SHR 02045, gazetted 04 Sep 2020.
- Sydney LEP 2012, The Powerhouse Museum Former Warehouse Buildings, including interiors, I2031.

The Switch House is also included on two non-statutory registers: the Register of the National Estate Powerhouse Museum (Stage Two) (Listing 100690); and the National Trust (NSW) Register Powerhouse Museum (Stage Two) (S11648).

13.3.1 Summary of Significance—Switch House

As one of the Ultimo Power House buildings, the Switch House is part of one of the most important and intact group of power station buildings in the State. The Switch House has aesthetic significance as the most ornate of the Power House Buildings featuring an art deco style that is unusual and rare for an industrial building. Built in 1927, the Switch house provides tangible evidence of the 1920s upgrades to the Sydney tram system. The exterior of the Switch House is relatively intact.




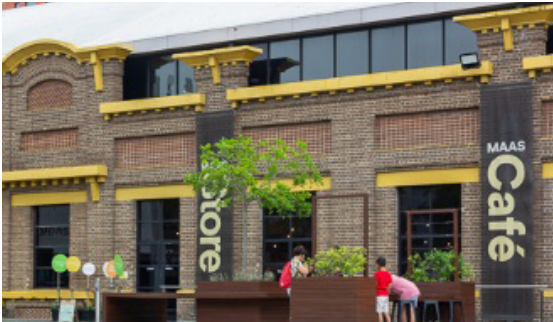
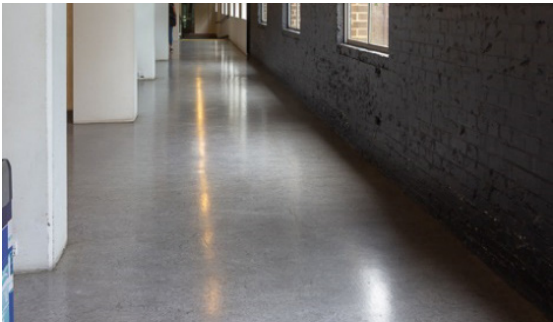
13.3.2 Views

The Switch House is visible from the south and southeast from Macarthur Street, Darling Drive, the Harwood Building and the Goods Line. The eastern wall of the Switch House is partially concealed by the covered walkway from the Harwood Building. It would be preferable to remove this obtrusive element to establish a stronger visual connection between the Switch House and the rest of the site.

13.3.3 Grading of Significant Components

The key components and elements of the fabric and form of the Switch House have been ranked accordance to the Heritage NSW criteria for assessing significance, as summarised in Table 13.1 and depicted in Figure 13.11 to Figure 13.16.

Table 13.1 Grading of Significance for the Turbine Hall

ELEMENT	IMAGE	GRADING	NOTES
Roof Finish (Original)		● EXCEPTIONAL	The roof finish is original and is of exceptional significance.
Roof Structure (Original)		● EXCEPTIONAL	The roof structure is original and is of exceptional significance.
Roof Annex		● LITTLE	The Switch House was originally constructed with a flat roof. The modern roof annex was constructed as part of the 1980s museum adaptation, and is of little significance.
External Walls (Original)		● HIGH	The external walls are original and are of exceptional significance.
Windows (Original)		● HIGH	The original windows are of high significance.
Windows (Later additions)		● LITTLE	Later windows on the 1980s annex are of little significance.
Floor		● LITTLE	The internal flooring all appears to have been modified and is of little significance.

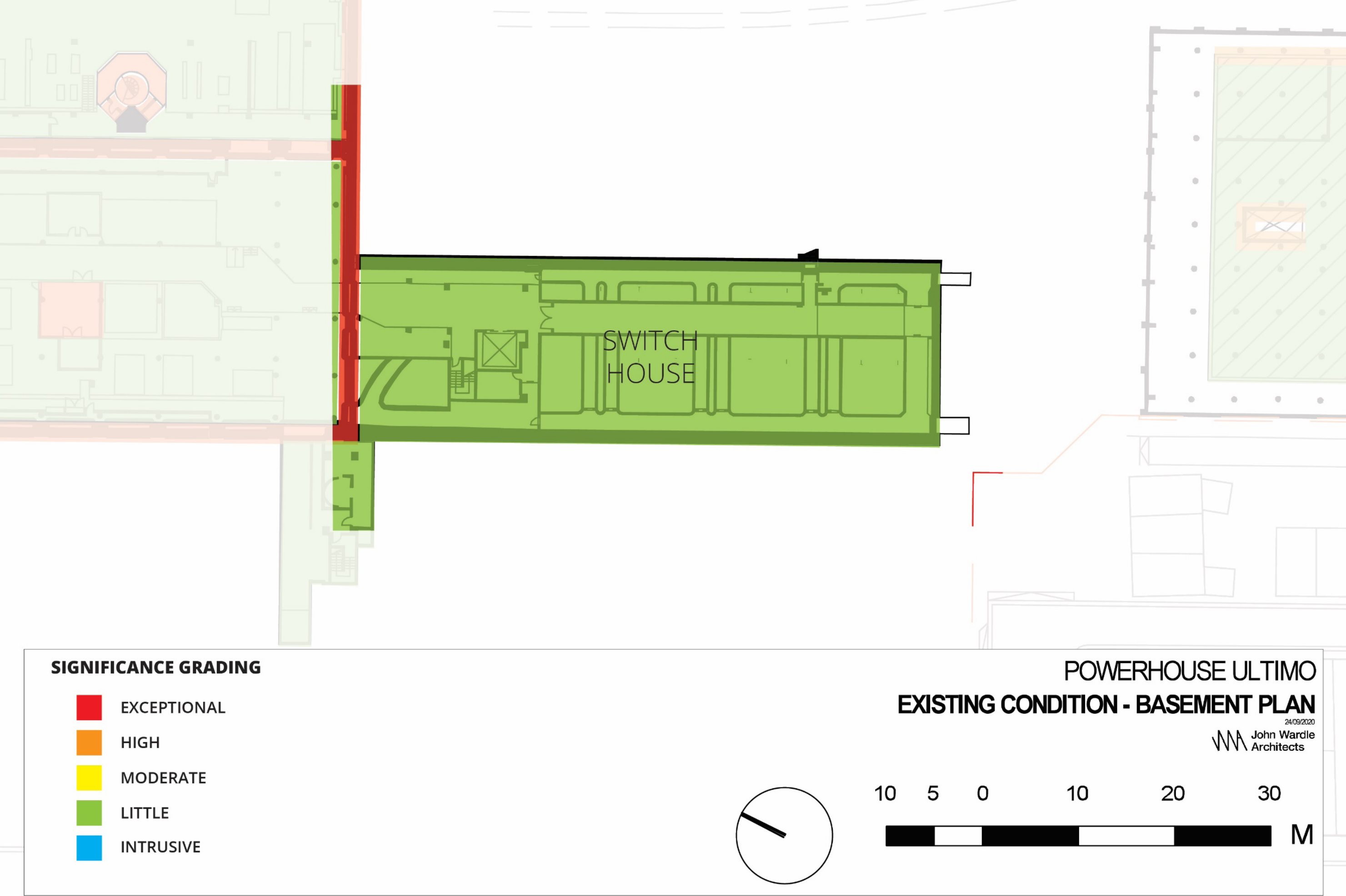


Figure 13.11 Switch House Grading of Significance (Basement) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

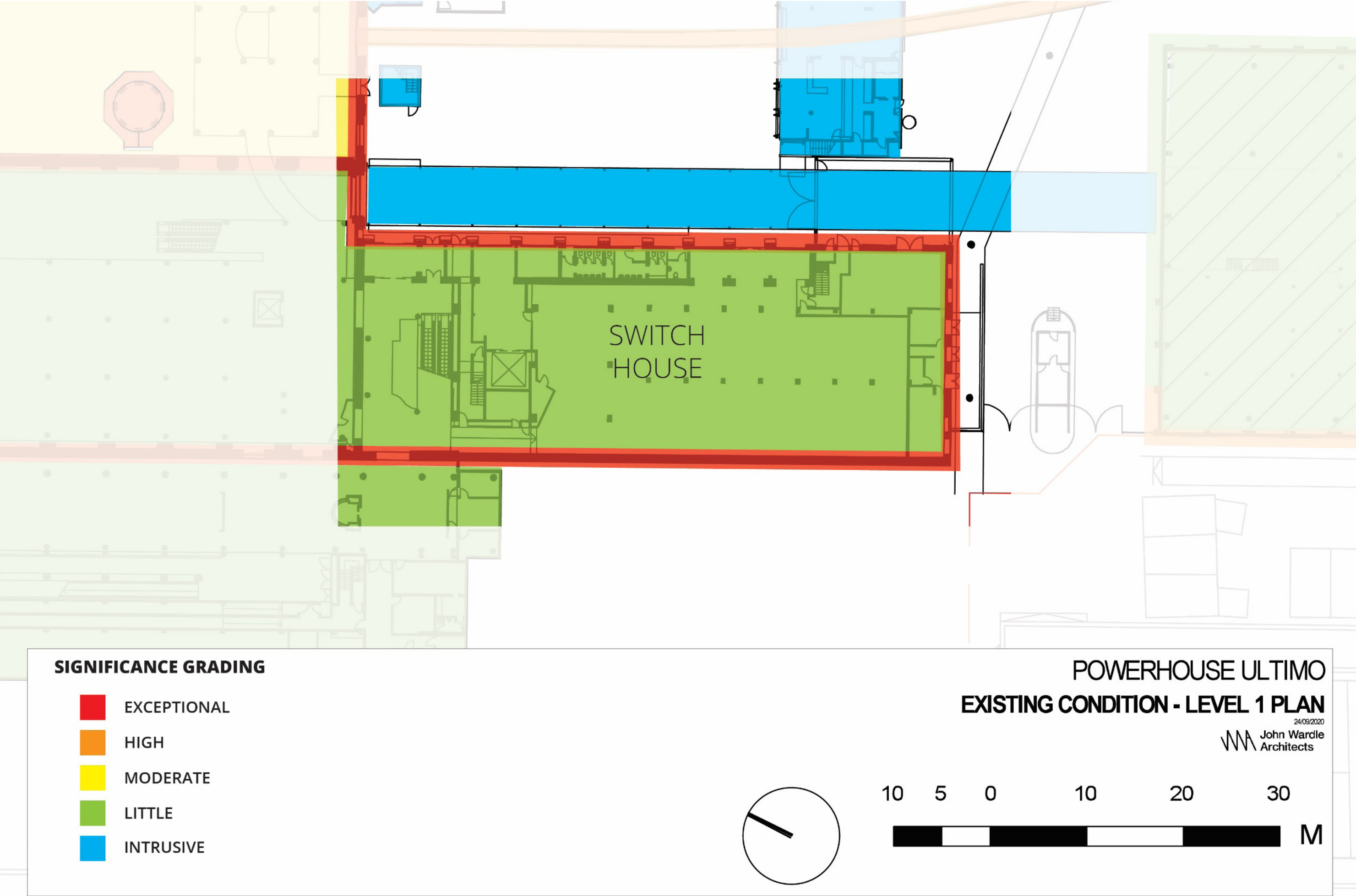


Figure 13.12 Switch House Grading of Significance (Level 1) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

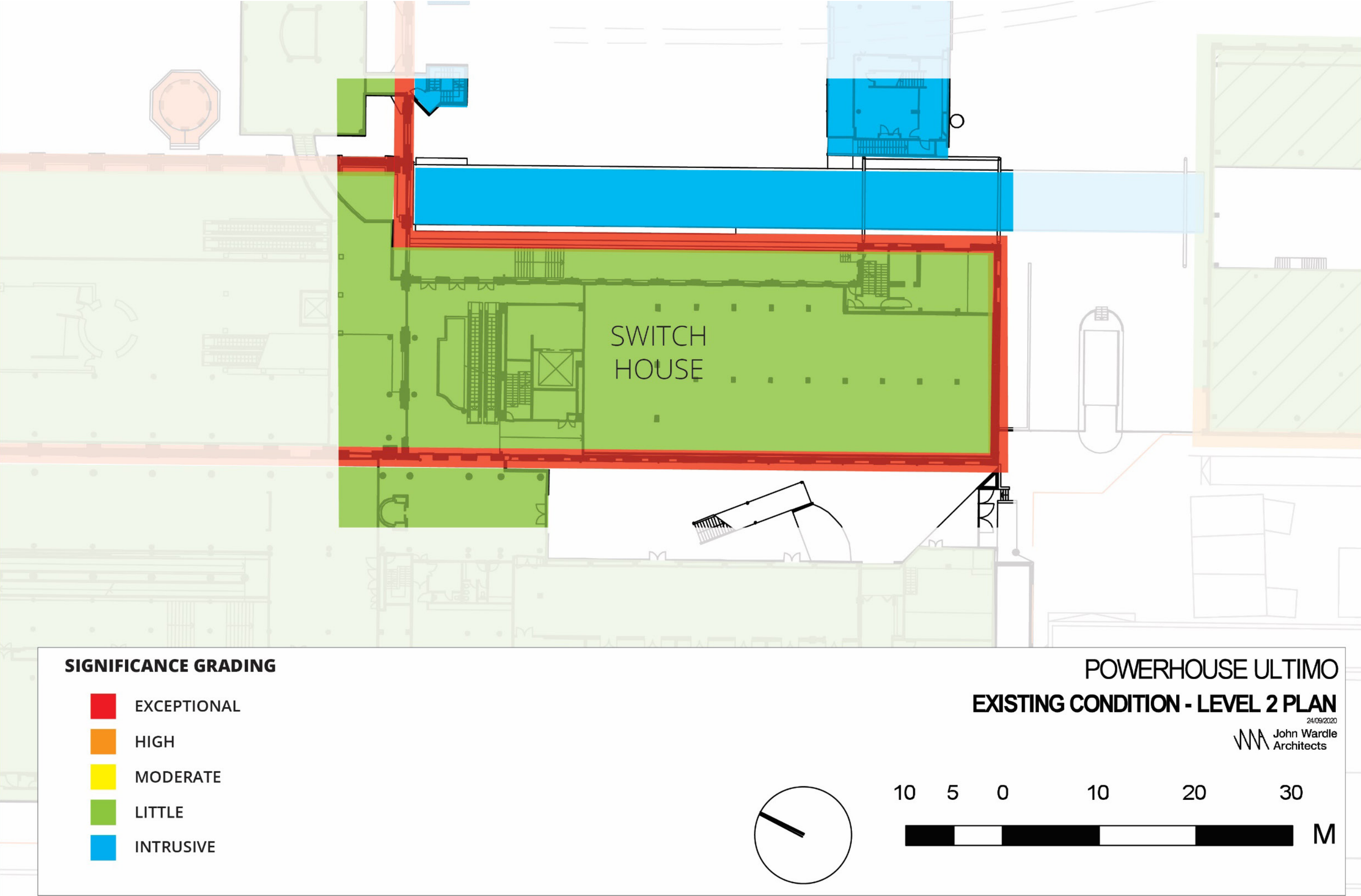


Figure 13.13 Switch House Grading of Significance (Level 2) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

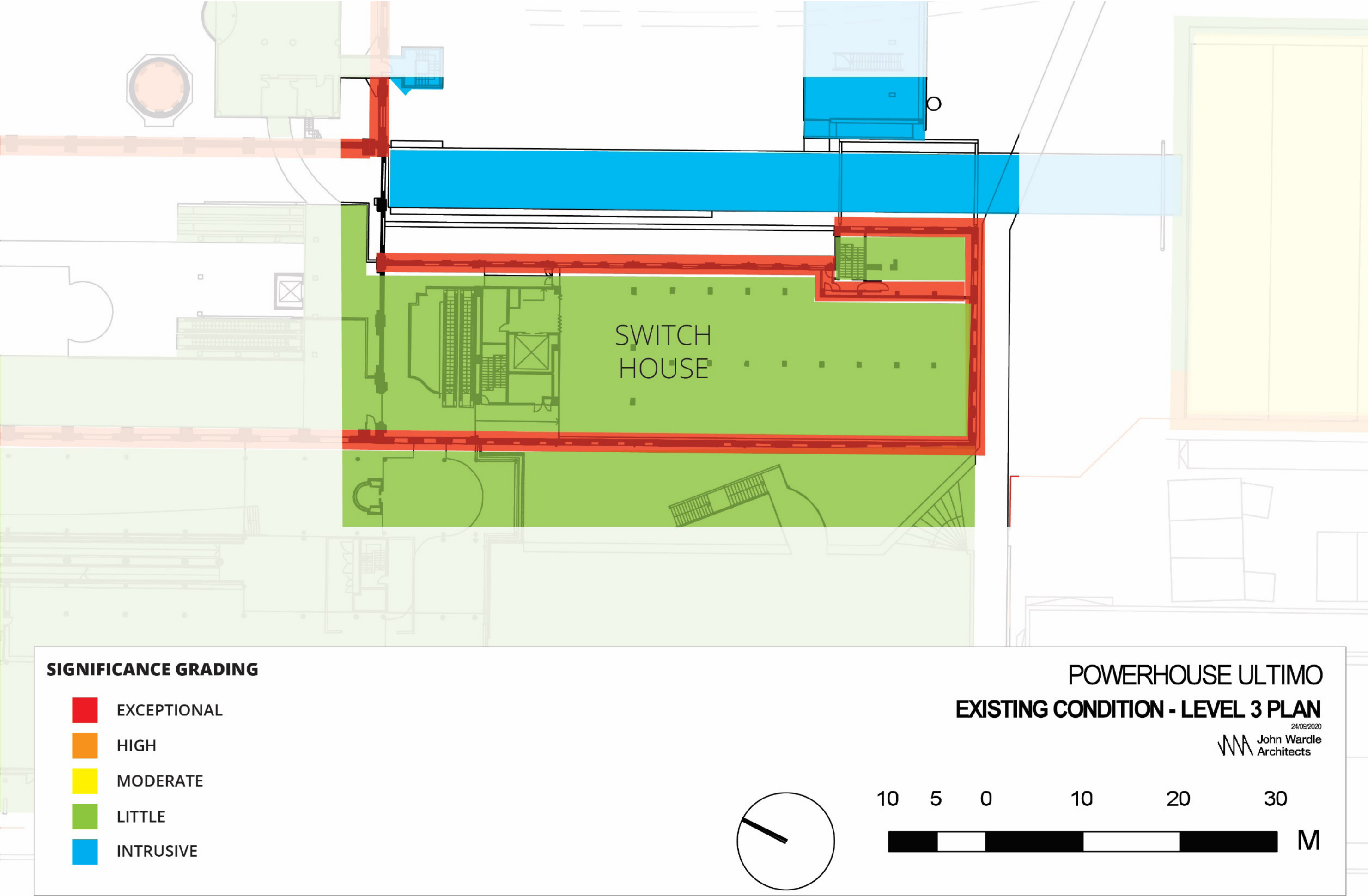


Figure 13.14 Switch House Grading of Significance (Level 3) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

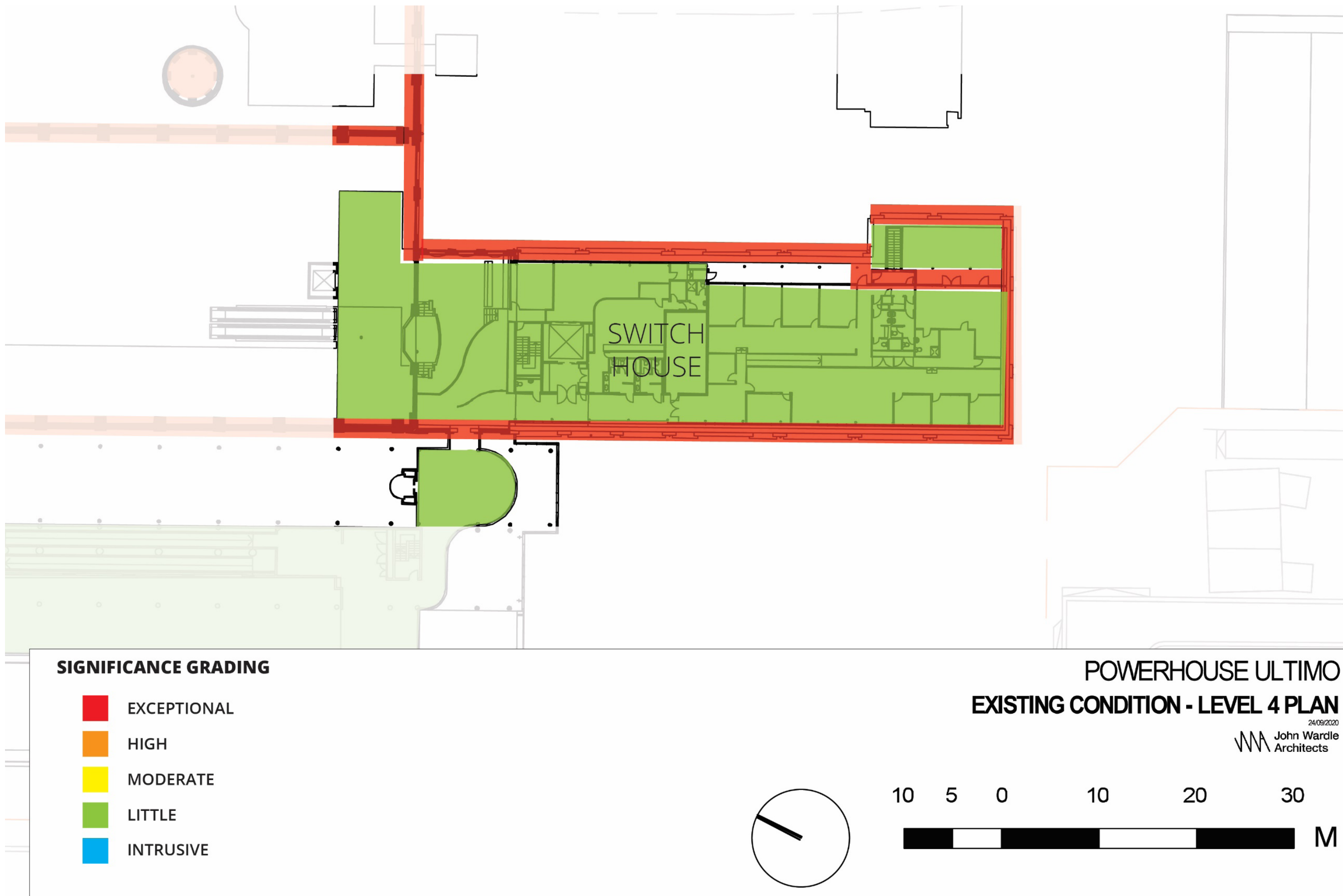


Figure 13.15 Switch House Grading of Significance (Level 4) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

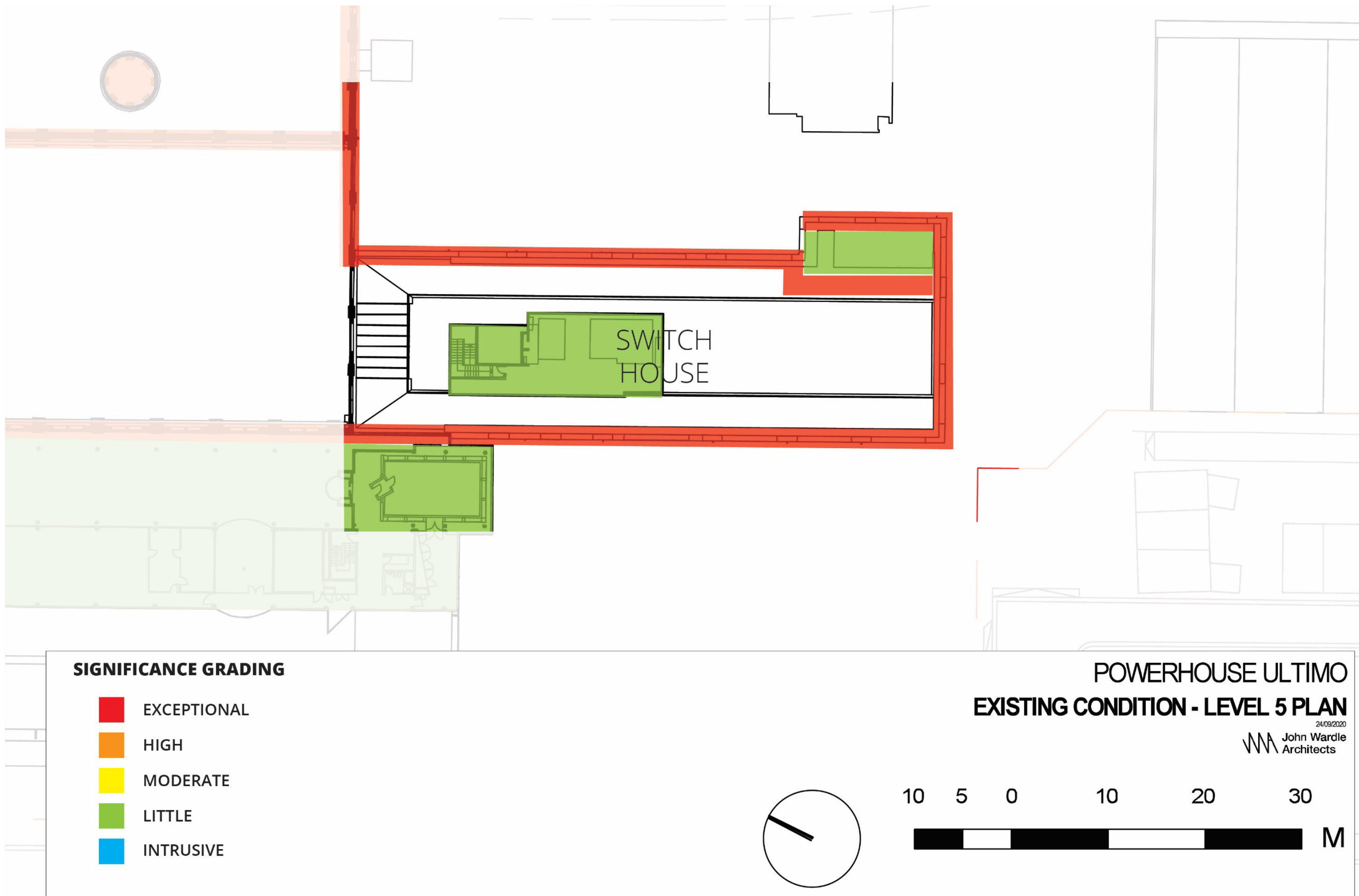


Figure 13.16 Switch House Grading of Significance (Level 5) (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

13.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Opportunities and constraints specific to the Switch House include:

- Opportunities**
- The original switch house had a flat roof. The present roof top terrace was added as part of the museum adaptations and is considered to have no historical significance. There is the opportunity to improve or replace this addition with a less visually intrusive alternative that complements the heritage building and allows its form to be understood.
 - The lower level space between the Switch House and the Wran Building beneath the Harris Street forecourt is currently underutilised. This space has the potential to be explored in improving the design of the site, possibly as an access way.
 - As the majority of the interiors of the Switch House were altered as part of the 1980s museum adaptations, the interior of the building has tolerance for change.
 - Programmatic interpretation of the original function of the Switch House and connection to its history and use.

- Constraints**
- The Switch House, including its original structure and heritage fabric should be conserved within the Ultimo Powerhouse site, with potential for further adaptive reuse.
 - The Switch House is visual obstructed along its western façade by the presence of the 1980s museum elements including the Harris Street forecourt and the Wran Building.
 - The box gutter around the perimeter of the Switch House remains prone to overflowing, causing damage to the walls.

13.5 ITEM-SPECIFIC CONSERVATION POLICIES

Policy 5—Buildings and Structures: The readability and presentation of the Switch House, including its original structure and heritage fabric should be conserved within the Ultimo Powerhouse site, with potential for further adaptive reuse.

13.6 PHOTO REGISTER FOR THE SWITCH HOUSE



Figure 13.17 Switch House Photo Register (Level 1)



Switch House Viewpoint 1: Level 1



Switch House Viewpoint 2: Level 1



Switch House Viewpoint 3: Level 1

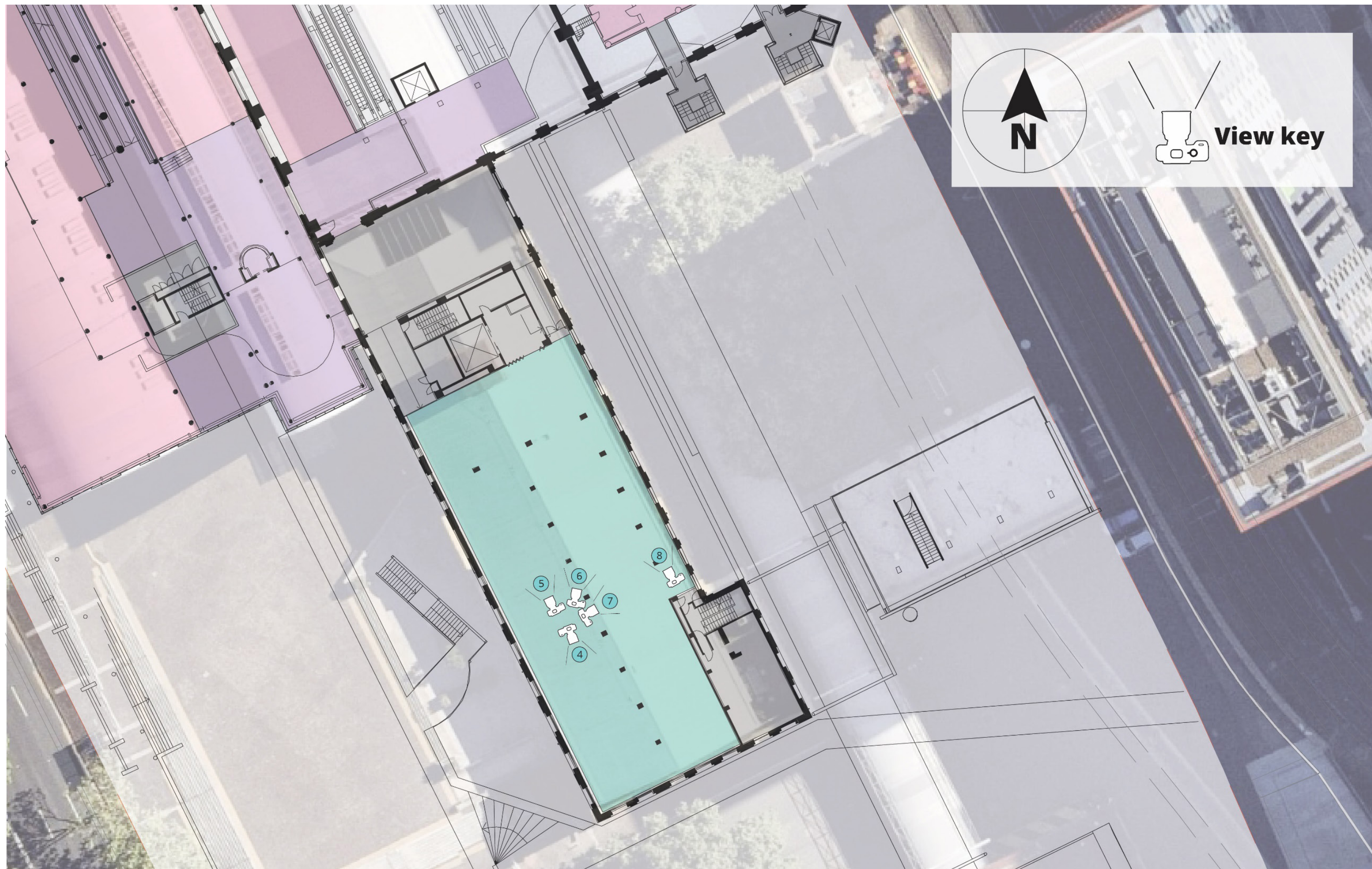


Figure 13.18 Switch House Photo Register (Level 3)



Switch House Viewpoint 4: Level 3



Switch House Viewpoint 5: Level 3



Switch House Viewpoint 6: Level 3



Switch House Viewpoint 7: Level 3



Switch House Viewpoint 8: Level 3



Figure 13.19 Switch House Photo Register (Level 4)



Switch House Viewpoint 9: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 10: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 11: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 12: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 13: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 14: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 15: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 16: Level 4



Switch House Viewpoint 17: Level 4

13.7 ENDNOTES

1 Architectural Projects, 2003, p. 25. (N.B. AP 2003 also refers to “the 1929 Switch House” and TKD Architects, 2018, p. 10 gives a completion date of December 1926)

2 *The Ultimo Power House Monographs*, 5: The Switch House, MAAS Archives, p. 11.

3 Wood, C., ‘Powerhouse’ in Design World, No.14, 1988, p. 20

4 Godden et al, 1984, p. 20.

5 Wood, 1988, p. 20.

6 Architectural Projects, 2003, p. 56.

7 Powerhouse Museum, Annual Report 2002–2003, p. 1

8 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Annual Report 2011–2012, pp. 8-9; see also Development Application D/2011/242

9 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Annual Report 2012–2013, p. 16.

10 State Heritage Inventory, NSW Office of Environment & Heritage, *Ultimo Power House* (State).

11 Architectural Projects, 2003, p. 73.

14 ULTIMO POST OFFICE

14.1 HISTORY OF THE ULTIMO POST OFFICE

The Ultimo Post Office is located at 494 Harris Street, Ultimo, on the south-east corner of Harris Street and William Henry Street, located on the land that originally formed part of Block 23 of the Ultimo Estate 1859 subdivision. (Figure 14.3), inherited by John Harris’ descendant, Margaret Harris.¹ The subdivision of the Ultimo Estate and subsequent development and increasingly population of Ultimo in the late 1800s resulted in establishment of a branch of the Government Savings Bank opening in Ultimo in rented premises in 1881. While the current Post Office site was suggested for resumption as early as 1892 (Figure 14.4), this proposal was initially rejected in favour of the leasing an existing building located a couple of doors down at 484 Harris Street. The property was leased from Mr J. Coffill for a period of five years, and in 1893, the Ultimo Post Office and Telegraph commenced official operation out of 484 Harris Street, with W. F. Burgess as the postmaster.²

The land at 494 Harris Street remained vacant until 1900, at which time government funds were finally acquired for construction of a purpose-built Post Office at Ultimo, and the land was resumed, for which Margaret Harris was compensated £600.³ The Ultimo Post Office was designed in the Federation Queen Anne style by the Public Works Department’s Government Architect’s Branch under Walter Liberty Vernon, and constructed for a cost of a little over £800 by contractor G. W. Brewer. The Ultimo Post Office was constructed with the main post office area on the corner, and postmaster’s residence adjacent to the east, and opened for occupation and operation in July 1901. Ultimo Post Office was one of a group of approximately 32 buildings erected between 1890 and 1910 to designs by W L Vernon.⁴

A Commonwealth Savings Bank operated out of the Post Office from c.1914 to the 1930s.⁵ Newspaper reports of several incidents at the Post Office over the years included the suspicious death of the postmaster, John Batty at the residence above the Post Office in September 1930,⁶ while in November 1944, there was a report of a car that crashed into the front of the Post Office, knocking the corner pillar off its base and onto the bonnet of the car⁷ (Figure 14.8). The pillar was later reconstructed.

Previous Names	Darling Harbour Child Care Centre
Address	494 Harris Street, Ultimo
Lot & DP	Lot 1 DP770031
Built	1901
Heritage Listings	SHR 00502 “Ultimo Post Office” Sydney LEP #I2030, “Former Ultimo Post Office including interior”
Non-Statutory Listings	Register of the National Estate (#2381) National Trust (NSW) (S9302)

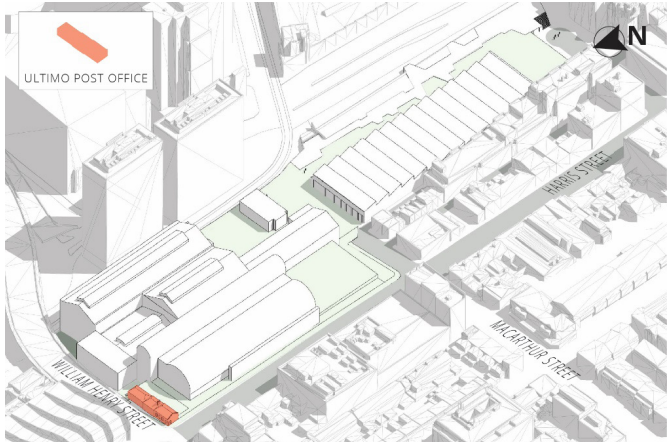


Figure 14.1 Ultimo Post Office Location Map (Source: John Wardle Architects with Curio Projects overlay)



Figure 14.2: Ultimo Post Office 2020. (Source: Curio 2020)

The Post Office continued operating until 1985, at which time it was acquired by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (MAAS) for use as a 20-place occasional child care centre. Conversion of the Post Office to the childcare centre in 1985 included alterations and additions to the building both internally and externally, including construction of new eastern addition to the building⁸ (Figure 14.10 and Figure 14.11). The childcare centre commenced operation from 1 January 1990 under a 21 year lease.⁹ Further works to the Post Office the building were undertaken in 1992, including general renovations and the installation of new amenities.¹⁰

By 2008 the Post Office no longer operated as a childcare centre, and was being used by the Powerhouse Museum. On the 10th of March, 2008 a new volunteer centre was opened in the restored Post Office building, coinciding with the 20 year anniversary of the Museum at the Ultimo site.¹¹ A modern covered walkway connecting the modern eastern addition of the Post Office building to the Wran Building to the south was constructed in 2009–2010. In 2020 the former Ultimo Post Office remains in use as the Volunteer Centre for the Powerhouse Museum volunteers.



Figure 14.3 c.1859 plan of Post Office site within Ultimo subdivision

Ultimo Post Office.

The Postmaster-General (Mr. Kidd) accompanied by Messrs. Kelly and Davis, M.L.A., visited Ultimo yesterday for the purpose of inquiring into local requirements, but more particularly to inspect the district post office, which, it was urged, was totally inadequate for the requirements of the place. Mr. Kidd fully concurred in this view of the matter, and afterwards inspected a site at the corner of William Henry and Harris streets, which is available for the erection of a new building. The Union-street branch office was also originally visited and the party then proceeded to Mr. R. Saunders's quarries, where they were entertained.

During the visit, several local grievances were brought under ministerial notice by the members, and attention thereto was promised.

Figure 14.4 Evening News, Wed 10 Aug, 1892 p. 6



Figure 14.5 Ultimo Post Office, early 1900s (Source: SANSW NRS-4481-2)

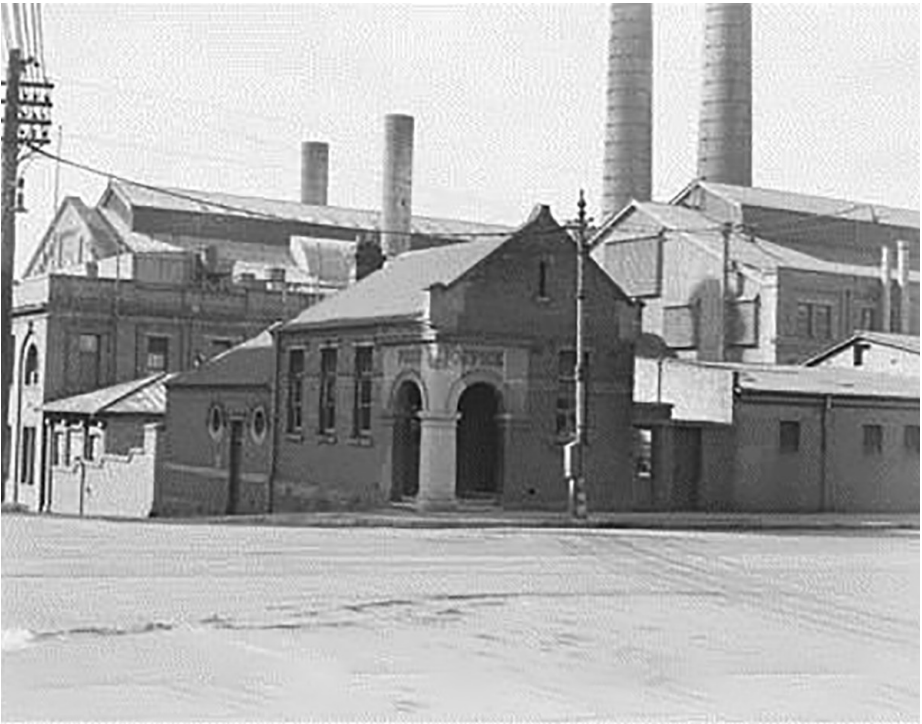


Figure 14.6 Ultimo Post Office 1947 (Source: National Archives)



Figure 14.7 Ultimo Post Office 1955 (Source: National Archives)



Figure 14.8 Daily Telegraph, 30 Nov 1944 p. 5



Figure 14.9 Ultimo Post Office in 2020 (Curio 2020)



Figure 14.10 1980s eastern addition to the Ultimo Power House as part of development for Childcare Centre (Curio 2020)



Figure 14.11 Rear of 1980s eastern addition to Ultimo Post Office, modern rear porch alterations (Source: Curio 2020)

14.2 PHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ULTIMO POST OFFICE

An overall photo register and images of the Ultimo Post Office as of 2020 is presented in Section 14.5.

14.2.1 Site and Setting

The Ultimo Post Office House, located at 494 Harris Street also forms part of the Powerhouse site- referred to by the primary address of 500 Harris Street, Ultimo. The former Post Office is located on the south-eastern corner of William Henry and Harris Streets, bounded to the east by the North Annex, and to the south by the Wran Building. The humble scale of the single storey brick Federation Post Office building, located on a prominent intersection, serves to further accentuate and emphasise the large scale of the former Power House buildings. The position of the Ultimo Post Office provides a clear visual link between the predominantly two storey residential Victorian buildings in Pyrmont, and the larger industrial buildings and function of the Ultimo Power House.

14.2.2 Built Elements

The Post Office is a single storey brick building, designed by Government Architect Walter Liberty Vernon in the Federation Queen Anne architectural style with classical and Romanesque elements. Aside from the reconstruction of the one pillar following the 1944 car crash, the Ultimo Post Office appears to have remained relatively intact with minimal modification from its completion in 1901, until its closure and acquisition by the Powerhouse in the 1980s. The SHR listing describes the Post Office as:

...a single storey brick building with ashlar and moulded stone dressings and a slate clad roof. The Harris Street (western) end has a parapeted gable which has stone coping finishing in segmental shoulders and topped with a frustum apex stone. On the gable there is a quarry faced frieze above a chink with a stone sill. At the eastern end the roof is of gabled hip form

Windows are mainly double hung sashes with highlights above. A major feature is the stone, arched entry porch on the corner. It is double faceted and has ornate impost mouldings and archivolt. Above the corner is an embellished cartouche. The eastern section of the building (lower than the post office due to the falling ground) was originally the postmaster's residence. The former entrance here is flanked by oculi each with stone reveal and label mould. This elevation continues easterly as a stepped brick wall (with stone coping) to the back yard. A corbelled chimney with two pots rises from the roof of the building.

The Ultimo Post Office consists of three main sections, stepped down along William Henry Street to the east. The western two sections of the building constitute the original, State Heritage Listed Post Office constructed in 1901. A third eastern section of the building was constructed in the 1980s as part of the conversion of the former Post Office to a childcare centre. While constructed in the 1980s, the later rear addition has been designed and constructed to be appropriately sympathetic in style, form and scale to the heritage item. A section of brick boundary wall, contemporary with the 1901 construction of the Post Office, extends from the eastern end of the original postmasters residence, stepping down east along William Henry Street, fronting the modern addition. A metal lattice security fence painted red and green has been constructed at the eastern end of the brick boundary wall, securing a minor private entry to the Powerhouse Museum via a set of concrete steps from William Henry Street between the North Annex and the Post Office site. A second metal lattice security fence is located on the eastern side of the Post Office lot along Harris Street, securing the entrance to the rear yard between the Post Office and the Wran Building.

The post office featured a hipped roof with slate tiles and a corbelled brick chimney with two terracotta pots. The slate tiles on the original building are grey, whilst they are purple slate on the 1988 addition. The brick is red-brown and the southern walls of the building have been painted cream. There is sandstone coursing, parapet capping and trim. A modern covered walkway has been constructed across the rear yard of the Post Office lot, connecting the rear modern addition to the Wran Building.

The main entry to the Post Office from Harris Street features a recessed corner porch with a stone arch and an embellished cartouche above the corner. The original ‘Post Office’ designation signage has been removed from the sandstone porch face, although the imprint of the letter is still evident. The Post Office retains original double hung sashed windows with highlights along the northern and western elevation, as well as the two bullseye windows on the northern elevation flanked the original entry to the postmaster's residence. Internally, the ceilings, cornices and fireplace in the original portions of the building appear to be original.

Overall, in despite of 1980s conversion works, the Ultimo Post Office remains in good condition with a high degree of original fabric intact. The majority of the alterations to the building have occurring internally, of which, the majority are easily reversible.¹²

14.3 HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

14.3.1 Summary of Significance

The local heritage listing for the Ultimo Post Office provides the following Statement of Significance:

The building dates from one of the key period of layers for the development of Ultimo/Pymont as a direct result of subdivision of the Harris and Macarthur Estates. It is a good example of a Federation Post Office on a prominent corner site which makes a positive contribution to the streetscape.

The former Ultimo Post Office, built in 1901, is historically significant for its associations with the development of Ultimo/Pymont as a predominantly industrial and warehouse precinct by the turn of the century. Construction of the post office helps to reflect the degree of development and consolidation by that time. The building reflects characteristics of Federation Classical and Federation Romanesque architectural styles and is important for its connection with NSW Government Architect W L Vernon. Owing to its styling and its location on a major intersection, the former post office is an important element in the Ultimo streetscape. Further, it emphasises the scale of the former Ultimo Power House (now the Power House Museum) behind.¹³

14.3.2 Views

The primary view of the Ultimo Post Office is from Harris and William Henry Streets, readily apparent within views south towards the Powerhouse site from William Henry and Harris Streets. It is important to maintain the view of the Post Office from Harris Street and William Henry Street. The views from these frontages could be improved significantly through updated fencing which allows visibility whilst ensuring the security of the corner.

Despite its prominent corner position, the connection of the Post Office building has been severed both physically and visually by the construction of the Wran Building (Figure 14.12 to Figure 14.14). Visually, the Wran Building blocks the connection of the Ultimo Post Office to the original Power House buildings, dominating the landscape around the Post Office, impacting its readability and presence on site. While the Post Office and the Power House functioned as separate entities without any formal crossover in operation, the construction of the Ultimo Post Office in its current position was directly influenced by the increasing residential population of Ultimo resulting firstly from the subdivision of the Harris land, and secondly from the increasing population of workers and residents moving to the areas following the opening of the Power House.

14.3.3 Grading of Significant Components of the Ultimo Post Office

The key components and elements of the fabric and form of the Ultimo Power House have been ranked accordance to the Heritage NSW criteria for assessing significance, as summarised in Table 14.1 and depicted in Figure 14.15.



Figure 14.12 Post Office and Power House 1964, note the smaller scale building behind the post office (Source: City of Sydney Archives NSCA CRS 47/2346)




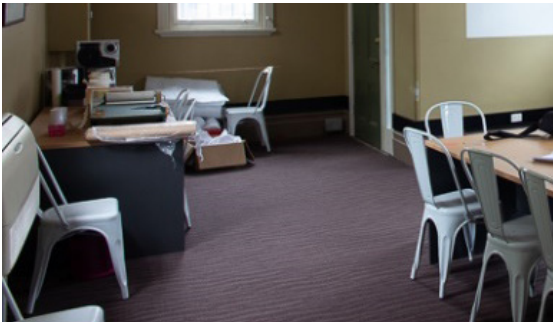







Figure 14.13 Ultimo Post Office along William Henry Street, with Wran Building as dominant background context, obscuring visual connection between the Post Office and former Power House buildings (Source: Powerhouse)

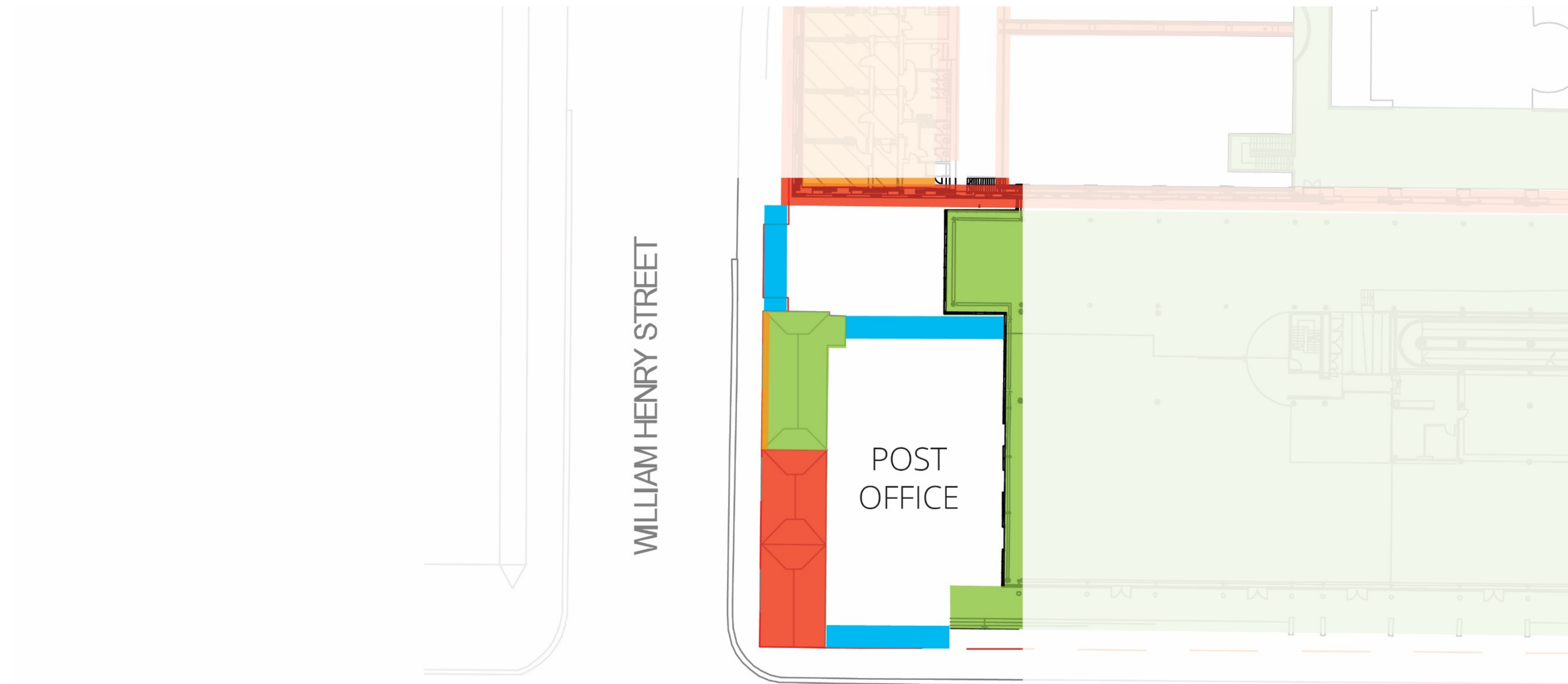


Figure 14.14 Setting of the Post Office on the corner of William Henry and Harris Streets. The position of the Ultimo Post Office provides a visual link between the predominantly two storey residential Victorian buildings in Pymont, and the larger form, scale and function of the industrial buildings of the Ultimo Power House (Source: Powerhouse)

Table 14.1 Grading of Significance for the Ultimo Post Office

ELEMENT	IMAGE	GRADING	NOTES
Roof Finish and Chimneys		● EXCEPTIONAL	<p>The original (western) sections of the building are tiled in purple slate in reasonable condition, likely original.</p> <p>The original corbelled chimney with two terracotta pots appear to be relatively intact, although a close inspection of the chimney was not undertaken.</p> <p>The internal ceiling obstructs inspection of the nature of the internal roof structure of the original Ultimo Post Office building.</p>
External Walls (Original Structure)		● EXCEPTIONAL	<p>The external brick walls of the original Post Office building are intact and in good condition. Part of the front sandstone pillar was reconstructed in the 1940s to match the original.</p>
Windows (Original)		● HIGH	<p>The original windows (double hung sash windows with highlights above/bullseye windows) have been retained, and are in relatively good condition.</p>
Floor		NOT INSPECTED	<p>At the time of the 2020 inspection, the floor was covered with modern carpet and therefore the original surface was not able to be inspected. 1955 images suggest that the original floor was constructed of wooden floor boards.</p> <p>The original or earlier floor surface may remain beneath the modern carpet.</p>
Fireplace		● HIGH	<p>The tiled fireplace in the main Post Office room appears to be original.</p>

ELEMENT	IMAGE	GRADING	NOTES
Rear Addition (1980s)		● LITTLE	While the rear (eastern) addition to the Post Office was constructed in the 1980s and is of little heritage significance, it has been designed and constructed to be appropriately sympathetic in style, form and scale to the 1901 Post Office, and presents as an overall neutral item in the context of the State heritage item.
Brick Boundary Fence (North)		● HIGH	The lower section of the exterior brick fence to the north appears to be original, although it has been modified at a later date as is evident from the brickwork.
Exterior lattice fence (East and West)		● INTRUSIVE	The modern green and red lattice security fences are visually obtrusive to the setting and visibility of the Post Office.
Rear Covered Walkway		● INTRUSIVE	The covered walkway in the rear yard of the Post Office is not commensurate with the setting of the SHR item, and is considered intrusive.



SIGNIFICANCE GRADING

- EXCEPTIONAL
- HIGH
- MODERATE
- LITTLE
- INTRUSIVE

POWERHOUSE ULTIMO EXISTING CONDITION - LEVEL 3 PLAN

24/09/2020
John Wardle
Architects

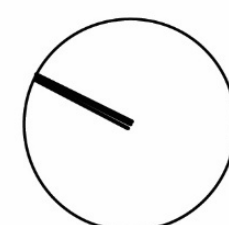


Figure 14.15 Ultimo Post Office- Grading of Significant Components (Source: John Wardle Architects plan with Curio Projects overlay)

14.4 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

Opportunities and constraints specific to the Ultimo Post Office include:

- Opportunities**
- As a SHR listed item, ideally a more appropriate curtilage should be established for the Ultimo Post Office, allowing it to be more apparent and visually appreciated in its dominant corner position, rather than overshadowed as it is at present by the dominant form of the Wran Building rising behind it. Future development could explore possibilities that would help to re-establish the visual connection between the small scale, former Ultimo Post Office and the large scale Power House buildings.
 - Incorporating opportunities for public facing activities within the building would allow for public access of this State Significant building to be restored.
 - Opportunities to reincorporate the Post Office building into the Powerhouse Ultimo site should be explored.

- Constraints**
- The location of the Ultimo Post Office at the junction of two significantly sized roads with heavy traffic flow presents a constraint to access and use associated with the primary elevation of the building.

14.5 ITEM-SPECIFIC CONSERVATION POLICIES

Policy 7—Fabric: The bars installed within the Post Office windows are an unsympathetic modern addition that should be removed/replaced with a more sympathetic option, to be more sympathetic to the heritage values and setting of the heritage item.

Policy 16—Adaptive Reuse: Adaptive reuse of the Ultimo Post Office that would allow restoration of public access to this State Significant building is recommended, such as incorporation of an active retail/commercial premises within the building.

Policy 20—Security: The visually intrusive security gates (green and red painted lattice) located to the east and west of the Ultimo Post Office are recommended for removal and replacement (and/or revision) with an element that is more sympathetic to the heritage setting and values of this State significant heritage item.

14.6 PHOTO REGISTER FOR THE
ULTIMO POST OFFICE

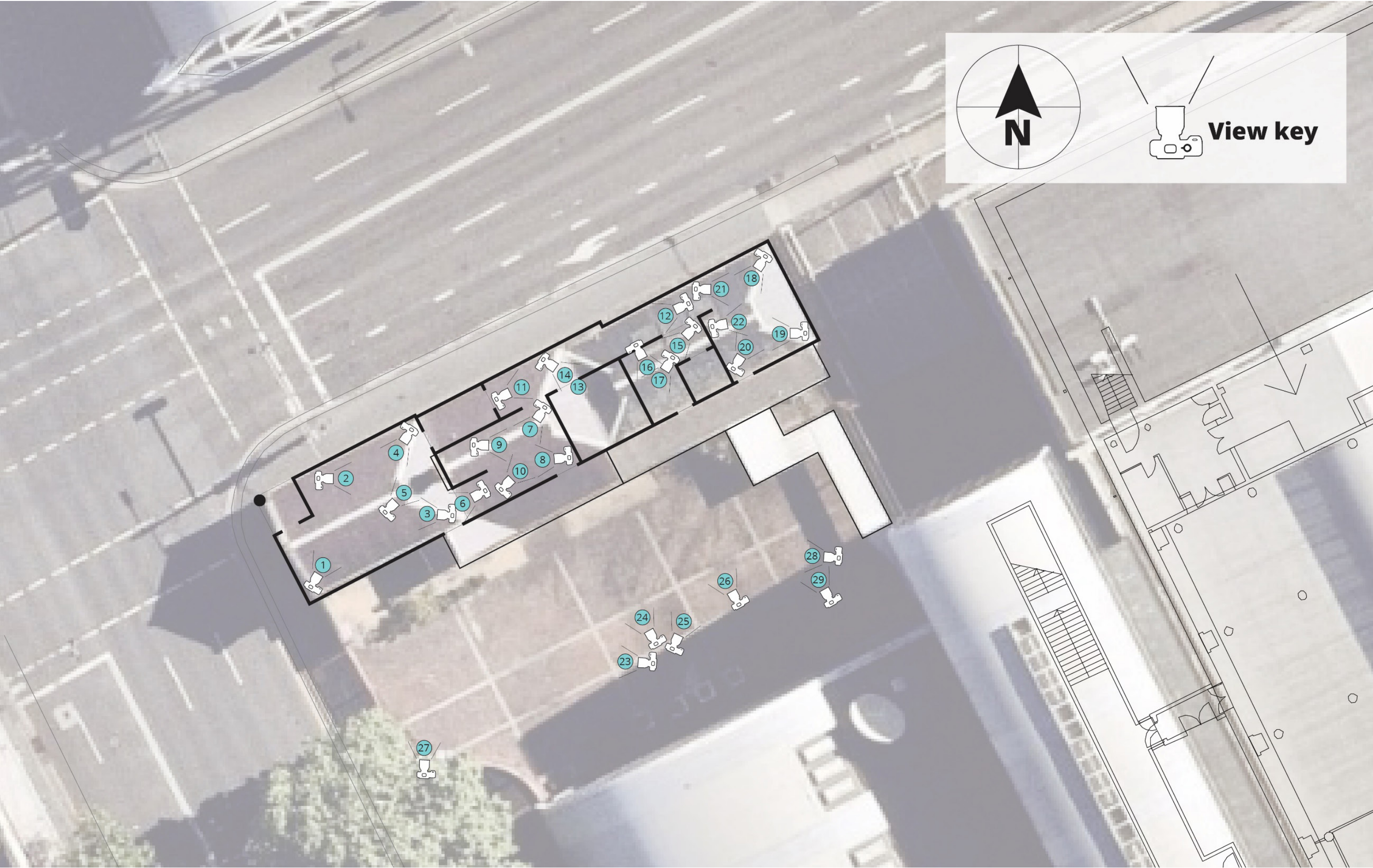


Figure 14.16 Ultimo Post Office Photo Register



Post Office Viewpoint 1



Post Office Viewpoint 2



Post Office Viewpoint 3



Post Office Viewpoint 4



Post Office Viewpoint 5



Post Office Viewpoint 6



Post Office Viewpoint 7



Post Office Viewpoint 8



Post Office Viewpoint 9



Post Office Viewpoint 10



Post Office Viewpoint 11



Post Office Viewpoint 12



Post Office Viewpoint 13



Post Office Viewpoint 14



Post Office Viewpoint 15



Post Office Viewpoint 16



Post Office Viewpoint 17



Post Office Viewpoint 18



Post Office Viewpoint 19



Post Office Viewpoint 20



Post Office Viewpoint 21



Post Office Viewpoint 22



Post Office Viewpoint 23



Post Office Viewpoint 24



Post Office Viewpoint 25



Post Office Viewpoint 26



Post Office Viewpoint 27



Post Office Viewpoint 28



Post Office Viewpoint 29

14.7 ENDNOTES

1 Godden et al 1984, p. 29
2 Architectural Projects 2003, p. 18
3 AMBS 2018, p. 13.
4 Architectural Projects 2003, p. 1
5 Sands 1931; AMBS, 2018, p. 14
6 Mudgee Guardian and North Western Representative 8 Sep 1930
7 Sun, 30 Nov 1944 p. 2
8 DA.88.0044, 14/1/1988; Motenson & Lav Pty Ltd 45.88.1112, 31/5/1988
(Planning Cards for 494 Harris St, City of Sydney Archives)
9 Government Gazette of the State of NSW, 1 May 1992
10 Public Works , 959/92, 2/10/1992 (Planning Cards for 494 Harris St,
City of Sydney Archives)
11 Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Annual Report, 2007-2008, p. 7
12 Architectural Projects 2003, p. 88.
13 State Heritage Inventory, Former Ultimo Post Office Including Interior (Local)

15 WRAN BUILDING

15.1 HISTORY OF THE WRAN BUILDING

This section is informed by research conducted by Design 5.

The Wran Building is located on Harris Street, between William Henry and Macarthur Street. In 1978, under the guidance of the Premier, Neville Wran, and Jack Ferguson, the Minister for Public Works, Jack Ferguson, Lindsay Sharpe and Lionel Glendenning created a feasibility study for the museum and the proposed site in Ultimo.¹

In about 1978, the Premier Mr. Wran went overseas and saw...the Centre Pompidou in Paris...he came back and essentially, he said ‘I want one of those’²

On the 13th of August, 1979 New South Wales Premier Neville Wran announced the Ultimo Power Station and Tram Depot was to become the new home of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. Dr Lindsay Sharp was appointed as the Director to oversee the transition to the new museum space. The William Henry to Macarthur St block was resumed by the Public Works Department in 1980.

The Wran building was purpose-built to house the Powerhouse Museum and represents the modern, built component associated with the site’s redevelopment for museum use. The 1980s design of the Powerhouse Museum was coordinated by the NSW Public Works Department in close association with the Powerhouse Museum in-house design team. According to project architect Lionel Glendenning, the design of the Wran Building responded to the ‘the golden mean proportion’ of the Turbine Hall, with Vault 1 making architectural reference to Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences’s first home in the garden palace, and Vault 2 referring to the arches of the Boiler House.³

The existing buildings, which include the former turbine, switch and boiler houses, have been stripped back to the bare essential structure. Exhibits, including airplanes, motor vehicles and helicopters, are hung in space. The new work was largely confined to the Wran Wing, a barrel-vaulted room, partially glazed with an external colonnade along Harris Street. From the entry, ramps, escalators and lifts lead the visitor to the various parts of the museum and the interactive displays.⁴

The architectural design explored the rich history of the museum from its early beginnings in the great Garden Palace exhibition in 1879. The West Building (later Wran Building) and the galleria derive from the arched form of this earlier building whilst also creating spatial sequences that expand and augment the existing great rectangular volumes of the Turbine and Boiler Halls – the Ultimo / Pyrmont ‘cliff of buildings’.⁵

Previous Names	1988 Museum Building & Courtyard Wran Building 1988 Exhibition Building
Address	500 Harris Street, Ultimo
Lot & DP	Lot 1 DP781732
Built	1988
Heritage Listings	N/A
Non-Statutory Listings	Australian Institute of Architects Register of Significant Buildings (4701884)

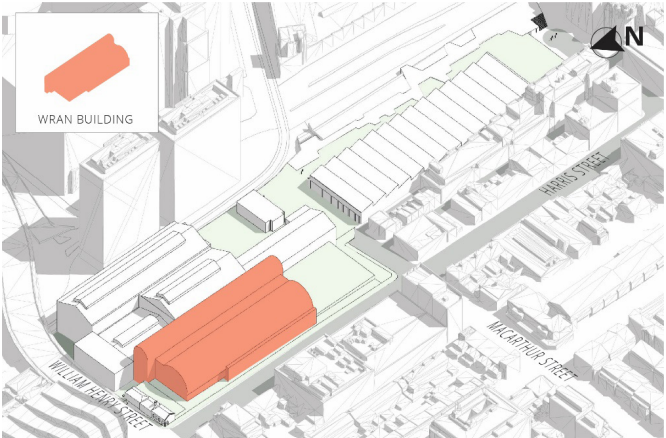


Figure 15.1 Wran Building Location Map (Source: John Wardle Architects with Curio Projects overlay)



Figure 15.2 The Wran Building 2020. (Source: Curio Projects)

Stage Two of the Powerhouse Museum at the Ultimo site opened in 1988, constituting the adaptive re-use of the former Power House buildings (Figure 15.3), along with the newly constructed Wran Building (Figure 15.4). While the original design intent for the 1988 museum included construction of high-rise office accommodation west of the Power House buildings fronting Harris Street, this vision never eventuated, and the location became the Harris Street Forecourt to the Powerhouse Museum.⁶

The re-design of the Power House into a museum won numerous awards including the Sir John Sulman Medal in 1988, the Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) National President's Award for Recycled Buildings, the NSW AIA Chapter Belle Interiors Award for Interior Design and was a finalist for the National Sir Zelman Cowen Award. The Powerhouse Museum re-purposing of a former industrial complex influenced other adaptation projects in NSW, Australia and internationally. (e.g. Casula Powerhouse, Carriageworks in NSW; Brisbane Powerhouse, Longreach Powerhouse & Historical Museum. in Queensland; Spotswood Pumping Station conversion into Scienceworks, the Malthouse Theatre in Victoria; and adaptive reuse of Blackhawk Generating Station into Beloit College Powerhouse, Wisconsin USA.)⁷

The 2003 CMP noted:

The adaptive reuse of the building was an important government initiative linked to the revitalisation of the Ultimo Pyrmont Peninsula. The building was considered at the time to be a highly innovative state of the art museum. The building is an important work by the Government Architect Branch under the direction of Lionel Glendenning.⁸

In 2005–2006 the building’s exterior was refreshed with a white façade and updated livery in order to complement the Ian Thorpe Aquatic Centre that was set to open nearby.⁹ During 2006–2007 the Level 1 courtyard café was upgraded and ‘Cog’s Playground’ was established in the Level 1 courtyard.

Significant modifications and alterations to the Wran Building occurred as part of the Powerhouse Museum Revitalisation Project between 2011–2013, including:

- Works to Harris Street forecourt.
- Blocking of glass façade on Harris Street elevation.
- Works to the southern façade of the Wran Building including removal of the original glass lift to allow relocation of the main entry, (Figure 15.5)
- Transformation of the original entrance location to a 1,800m2 Level 3 temporary gallery (Figure 15.9).¹⁰
- Demolition (and relocation) of the Level 2 toilet block to create a new exhibition space."

At present the Wran Building is used as exhibition spaces, front of house and Creative Residents for the Powerhouse Museum.



Figure 15.3 Wran Building under construction c. 1986 (Source: Powerhouse Photo Library 00220995.jpg)



Figure 15.4 Wran Building in 1988 (Source Cracknell & Lonergan p. 9)



Figure 15.5 The Galleria during and after the 2012 Revitalisation Project (Source: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences 2011–12 Annual Report)