

Identification and location

Name of Place: Pilkington ACI

Other Name Besters Sweets, Bester Brothers, OCAL Industries

Address 234 Ballarat Road

Braybrook

Place Identifier 491

Heritage Significance regional

Creation date(s): 1962

Map (Melway) 27 E11

Boundary description The extent of the current allotment including the front office building and rear factory structures.

Local Government Area: City of Maribyrnong

Ownership Type

Description

Site Type: factory

Physical Description

Brick facade for offices with concrete and steel framed structures behind. A multi-storey reinforced concrete process building is a striking feature of the functional part of the site and a glass enclosed spiral stair case in the south west corner of the offices is a very distinctive architectural folly giving the building a feature to break the otherwise monotonous facade. The front office section has a stepped brick parapet with steel hopper sash windows framed by raised concrete sections and narrow sills. The brickwork has been painted white and trim has been repainted in a gaudy scheme in recent years.

The rear industrial section is of off-form concrete, steel and corrugated iron, with a particularly functional/utilitarian design reminiscent of the Brutalist style.

Condition

In good and externally original condition apart from the paint. Internally, plant has been removed and production spaces altered as a consequence.

Integrity

Intact although most original machinery and equipment has been removed.

Context

On a major arterial road in an industrial area originally focussing on noxious trades but increasingly of manufacturing industry from the 1930s.

Threats

Currently underutilised, which may put pressure on the site for redevelopment.

History

This site first appears in the Sands and McDougall Directory for 1947 as a “factory being built” on the corner of Ballarat Road and Evans Street. This factory appears to be the Novelty Confectionery company which was listed here in 1949. By 1956 the numbering system had changed, and number 234 Ballarat Road, on the corner of Evans Street, was occupied by Besters Sweets, Manufacturing Confectioners, who are listed at the site until 1961. Bester Brothers were described as confectionery manufacturers having large premises in 1951 (Carleton 1951:62). It is possible that some of the existing works dates from the period of the confectionery works, although most is clearly of post 1960s origin.

From 1962 to 1974 the occupant was listed as OCAL Industries, Builders Supplies Manufacturers. It appears that OCAL was a division of Overseas Corporation and it was with this firm that glass manufacture for industrial, commercial and residential glazing began, with the existing factory being dramatically enlarged and reconstructed.

Pilkingtons are believed to have commenced operations on this site in the late 1960s or 70s - OCAL may have been the original trading name of the glass maker, or the directories have a time lag before the works was recorded under the Pilkington name. It operated primarily as a manufacturer of architectural glazing, with the curtain wall and window division located here up to the 1980s. Following restructure of the firm, the plant closed and has been used for a variety of commercial activities since, including a go-cart and amusement centre, resulting in the gaudy painting scheme.

According to published sources Pilkington glass, an English firm and major glass manufacturer in world terms, established their first factory in Australia in Adelaide in 1935, their safety glass factory was opened at Geelong in 1937 and the joint concern of Pilkington ACI started making sheet glass at Dandenong in 1962, where they had their head office in 1980. While the Pilkington history *The Glass Ribbon*, published 1988, makes no mention of any association with the Braybrook factory, it is probable that Pilkington took over OCAL about this time. By the late 1960s ‘ACI - Pilkington Glass’ was displayed on the facade in shaped steel letters, while they were also described as the ‘Window Glass Division’ (Ron Angwin, local resident, pers.com.) Pilkington ACI acquired Oliver-Davey in 1985.

The only reference to glass manufacturing in the area is in Sunshine Cavalcade, 1951, which mentions that Australian Glass Manufacturing Co has purchased 12 acres in Braybrook. This company had connections with ACI, which was then at Spotswood, but it is unclear where the 12 acre site in the City of Sunshine (which then included Braybrook) was located.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme

PAHT Subtheme:

Local Theme

Cultural Significance

Pilkington Glass is of historical and architectural significance at the regional level as an elaborate and unusual factory which demonstrates the role of industry and application of the International Modern architectural style to an industrial setting. (Criterion A3).

Architecturally an unusual facade with its distinctive spiral staircase tower. (Criterion E1)
 Otherwise the front office buildings follow the typical Moderne style although at a subdued level, featuring strong horizontal lines. Behind, an ordinary section of sawtooth roof and an unusual reinforced concrete three and four storey building provide the contrasting functional side of the complex. The factory demonstrates the expansion of industry in the Braybrook to West Footscray area which was characteristic of the 1935 to 1945 period. (Criterion A4)

Comparative Examples

The design can be compared with the other Modernistic style industrial designs in Geelong Rd, most evocative of the industrial expansion during the isolation of WW2, and offers a mannered comparison with the more Minimalist ETA factory nearby. The bold geometric forms are typical of the influence of the European Modernists such as Mendelssohn and Dudock where function generated expressionist forms for the sake of the composition. The front office section compares with the earlier Southern Cans in Geelong Road in its Moderne geometric composition, however, the off-cast concrete forms present a Brutalist style not generally seen in this form of industrial setting.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register

Register of the National Estate

National Trust Register

Other Heritage Listings

Planning Scheme Protection

External Paint Controls Apply?

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?

Tree Controls Apply?

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?

Recommendations

The following objectives relate to the Statement of Significance and the cited fabric or contributory elements.
 To conserve and enhance the significant elements of the place.
 To conserve and enhance the public view of these elements.
 To ensure that new or altered elements within the place are visually recessive and related to the contributory elements. To prepare a conservation management plan which embodies the above objectives.
 This would include, but not be limited to recovery of the original unpainted brick and complementary trim colours.
 To encourage continuation of the original use of the place.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A3 Importance in exhibiting unusual richness or diversity of flora, fauna, landscape or cultural features.

The distinctive architectural form which represents the place's function and products, in the form and materials provides a distinctive streetscape feature .

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

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The factory demonstrates the expansion of industry in the Braybrook to West Footscray area which was characteristic of the 1935 to 1945 period.

E1 Importance for a community for aesthetic characteristics held in high esteem or otherwise valued by the community.

The unusual combination of forms from the glass-enclosed spiral staircase, Moderne office facade and towering Brutalist off-form concrete process building with its monumental forms provide a unique aesthetical form.

Documentation

References

Sands & McDougall Directories.

Carleton, C.G. Sunshine Cavalcade, City of Sunshine 1951.

Data recording

Assessed By

Assessed Date: