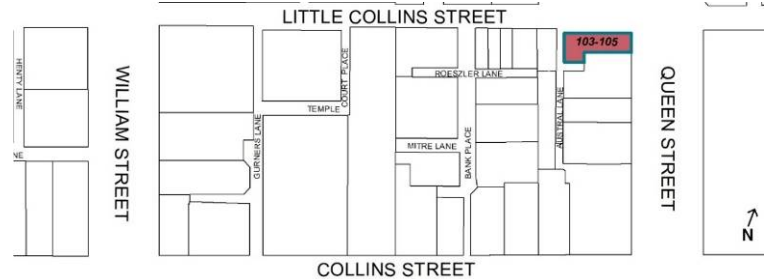


STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Former Ajax House (103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne), April 2022

Heritage Place: Former Ajax House

PS ref no: HO1367



What is significant?

Former Ajax House, at 103-105 Queen Street, Melbourne, constructed to a design by architect H.D Berry in 1956.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The building's original external form and scale

- Original pattern of fenestration, including projecting frames around and separating panels of window openings, projecting from a simple recessed masonry form, and pattern of window openings
- Original openable multipane steel frame windows.

Later alterations, particularly at street level, are not significant.

How it is significant?

The former Ajax House at 103-105 Queen Street is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why it is significant?

Former Ajax House is historically significant as a part of the postwar development and rapid growth of corporate architecture in central Melbourne of the 1950s-70s that reflected the expansion of large national and international companies opting for construction and naming rights of new city office buildings as a form of promotion and fund investment. The building was purpose-built in 1956 for Australian company Ajax Insurance Company Limited to house the company's head office (second level), and its Victorian branch (ground and first level) with the upper two floors reserved as open-plan office spaces for lease.

The Ajax Insurance Company occupied Ajax House until 1976. Located in the financial and commercial precinct of Queen Street, the building is significant historically as a reflection of the growth of insurance and assurance companies in Victoria during the 1950s-70s, cementing Melbourne's pre-eminent role in the state for financial institutions. (Criterion A)

Former Ajax House is a significant example of early postwar commercial development in central Melbourne that prevailed prior to the 1960s abolition of the 40 metre (132 foot) height control that had been in place since 1916. It retains its original form, scale and stylistic details which reflect the era in which it was constructed. It exhibits a similar design aesthetic and quality as other examples of its type, being medium-rise commercial office buildings designed to convey a modern and progressive aesthetic. Key stylistic details include the heavily articulated fenestration with projecting frames around and separating the panels of window openings. It is unusual for this articulation to have a strong vertical rather than horizontal emphasis. It also retains its original openable multipane steel frame windows to the upper commercial floors. (Criterion D)

Primary source

Hoddle Grid Heritage Review (Context & GJM Heritage, 2020) (updated March 2022)