

Heritage Citation



Key details

Addresses	At 8 Brighton Road, Sandgate, Queensland 4017
Type of place	Office building
Period	Interwar 1919-1939
Lot plan	L2_RP64194
Key dates	Significant Development — 1920-1947 Local Heritage Place Since — 29 November 2022 Date of Citation — November 2022
Criterion for listing	(A) Historical; (E) Aesthetic; (H) Historical association

Built by 1920 and remodelled in 1947, the Decker Building is significant for its association with the Decker family, who are a prominent business family in Sandgate. Eric Paul Decker, who established the premises to house his auctioneer and commission agent's business, became an Alderman of Brisbane City Council (1931 to 1941) and

then a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly (1941 to 1953). The building, which makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of Brighton Road, also demonstrates the continued commercial development and growth of Brighton Road as the main shopping street in Sandgate. The original single-story imitation masonry building accommodated an auctioneer and commission agent's office that was extended after the Second World War with the addition of shops and a second storey office. Sited on a wide, angled allotment and with a façade that has a tall and visually prominent parapet, the building is highly visible from the Town Hall, Memorial Park and adjacent streets.

History

A history of Sandgate

Sandgate, including the suburb of Shorncliffe, is located 17 kilometres from central Brisbane. The first land sales in the Sandgate area occurred during the 1850s and much of the early development centred on the area now known as Shorncliffe. On 29 April 1880, Sandgate was declared a constituted municipality. During the 1880s, the area around Pier Avenue and Yundah Street became the town's communal and civic centre. The first Town Hall, constructed in 1882, the Court House, and the first two police stations were located in this area.

From the 1880s onwards, Sandgate became increasingly popular as a residential and seaside resort town. The opening of the train line to Brisbane in 1882 (extended to Shorncliffe in 1897), and the construction of the Sandgate Pier boosted the development of Sandgate. The train line to Sandgate was the first suburban line built solely for passengers in the Brisbane area. The train line provided a quick and efficient service for the growing number of residents commuting to Brisbane, and holidaymakers and day-trippers. Numerous attractions catering for visitors were also developed around this time. For example, separate bathing areas, dressing sheds, a caretaker's cottage, office and licensed area were built close to the already established Sandgate Pier. In the 1930s, an enclosed area protected by railway lines, shark net and stone wall was constructed as a shark-proof swimming enclosure, which was lit at night. Additionally, Flinders Parade (then known as Brighton Esplanade), between First Avenue and Gladstone Street (now Twelfth Avenue), was dotted with cafes, refreshment rooms, flats and boarding houses. Attractions on the foreshores included sand-garden competitions, donkey, goat and gig rides, canoe hire and a miniature railway.

In 1910, a fire destroyed the original Sandgate Town Hall. Subsequently, a new Town Hall opened on Deagon Street (now Brighton Road) in 1912. This opening of the new Town Hall, alongside the relocation of Sandgate Rail Station to its current site in 1911, marked a shift in the location of Sandgate's town centre away from the Shorncliffe area to the vicinity of the present-day Rainbow Street, Brighton Road and Bowser Parade. This area proved to be more accessible for residents of neighbouring Deagon and Brighton.

The 1920s saw another period of prosperity for Sandgate. In 1925, Sandgate became a founding ward of the newly created Greater Brisbane City Council. While Shorncliffe continued to be a popular destination, the Sandgate and Brighton foreshores also drew crowds of holidaymakers. However, the building of the Hornibrook Highway Bridge in 1935 brought mixed blessings for Sandgate. This was because while the highway brought more passing trade to the area, it also enabled visitors to travel further north, typically by public transport, to the Redcliffe Peninsula for holidays rather than vacationing in Sandgate as had traditionally been the case. After the Second World War, increased car ownership also led to a further decline in the area's popularity as people were able to travel further beyond Brisbane's city limits for a holiday. Car ownership also brought the expansion of Brighton, Deagon and Nashville as outer suburbs became more attractive. The development of Brighton Road, Sandgate.

The development of Brighton Road, Sandgate

During the 1920s, while Sandgate enjoyed another boom as a seaside resort, the Brighton Road developed to become the town's leading commercial and shopping area. In 1920, when Eric Paul Decker's auction mart was first recorded as residing on Deagon Street, as Brighton Road was then known, the *Post Office Directory* recorded that the street also had, for example, six stores, a café, a fruiterer, a bootmaker, a confectioner, a plumber, and two butchers. In comparison, in 1930, the *Post Office Directory* recorded the Brighton Road as having around 35 businesses of various types operating along the street. In addition to Decker's auction mart, these included, for example, two fruiterers, two butchers, two cafés, a draper, a plumber, two grocers, two dentists and a music store. Notable buildings built on the Brighton Road before the Second World War included Nugent's Buildings on the corner of Fourth Avenue. Several buildings, such as the former Bank of New South Wales, were built on the Brighton Road in the 1960s. These buildings broke up Brighton Road's traditional streetscape.

The development of the Decker Building, 8 Brighton Road

Between 1920 and 1944, local businessperson and politician Eric Paul Decker owned and operated a business at 8 Brighton Road that from the 1940s onwards has been passed on to other members of the Decker family.

Decker was born on 22 November 1896 in Roma, Queensland and educated at Brisbane Grammar School. Decker came from a well-known family in the Sandgate area; Decker's father, Edward Hermann Decker, had worked as an estate agent in the Sandgate area since around 1905 as well as having an office in central Brisbane. During the First World War, Decker joined the Australian Imperial Force and served with the 15th Battalion in France.

On returning from the First World War, by 1920, Decker had opened an 'auction mart' on Brighton Road. From this site, Decker sold and rented houses in the Sandgate area. Decker continued to own the building and site until 1944, when it was transferred to his brother, George Shirley Decker. George was recorded as working at the business on Brighton Road in the 1930s after Eric entered politics in 1931.

In 1931, Decker was elected an Alderman of Brisbane City Council for the Sandgate Ward. He served as an Alderman until 1941 at which point, he was elected to the Queensland Parliament as the Member for Sandgate. During his time as an Alderman, Decker, served initially on the Executive Committee before becoming a member of the Works and Finance Committees, and served on the Establishment & Co-ordination Committee from 1940. In 1941, when Decker was elected to Parliament, he purchased the house *Torquay* on the corner of Flinders Parade and Second Avenue.

Decker served as Member for Sandgate in the Queensland Parliament until 1953 when in a surprise result, he lost his seat to Herbert Robinson. As *The Courier Mail* recorded that year:

MR HERBERT FREMONT ROBINSON, a railway guard, caused one of the most surprising swings in the metropolitan area when he defeated Mr. E.P. Decker, the Liberal sitting member for Sandgate.

In 1946, after the site had transferred to George's ownership, a building application was received by Brisbane City Council to add shops and offices to the building. The application was approved in 1947. It was at this point that the building was remodelled and took its current form. The remodelled building included the addition of a second storey and a visually prominent stepped parapet.

The Decker family have continued to play a prominent role in the Sandgate community. For example, in 1991, John Decker, George's son, became the President of the Sandgate and District Chamber of Commerce, an organisation that promotes and represents the business interest of the local area. John took over the family business in 1969 when his father retired.

Description

Constructed in two stages by 1920 and 1947, the Decker Building, fronting Brighton Road, comprises a two-storey building with a hipped roof, parapet façade, and a single-storey gable roofed wing at the rear. The building backs onto a hardstand concrete carpark that extends to the north-east, south-east and north-west boundaries of the property.

General description

The Brighton Road façade is built to the property boundary and is comprised of a light-weight frame construction lined with overpainted render. The façade is divided into three bays delineated by pilasters; the outer two pilasters extend to the stepped, fibre-cement clad parapet, which conceals the corrugated sheet metal hipped roof behind. The central pilaster is truncated, having formerly terminated at the underside of a sun awning, since removed, that originally extended above the first-floor windows. A series of highlighted, diamond-shaped medallions to the pilasters are original features. At ground floor level, the original arrangement of windows and doors has been altered.

The original timber-framed shopfronts of the 1920 building were retained as part of the 1947 alterations and replaced by aluminium-framed windows in subsequent alterations. The 1920 entrance, at right of the façade, and the 1947 first floor entrance, retain their original locations and dimensions, however the original joinery has been replaced with non-original aluminium-framed windows and doors. At first-floor level, the arrangement of windows is original, however, no original window joinery remains. The corresponding overhead canvas awnings appear contemporary with these later works. The verandah at ground floor level, extending the length of the façade, appears original, with minor alterations including the replacement of original timber verandah posts and the addition of a modern lattice valance to the underside of the roof line. The original fibre-cement sheet and batten soffit remains extant.

At the rear of the building, early wall linings and window opening configurations remain at ground floor level. On the side (north-east) and rear (north-east) elevations, timber cladding simulating ashlar stonework and window openings from the original 1920s building are evident. At first-floor level, the 1947-addition retains painted fibre-cement sheet and battened wall linings and original window openings, albeit with modern aluminium framed glazing and canvas awnings. A series of cantilevered pop-outs with skillion roofs extend above the side (north-west) setback, accommodating a modern open riser flight of stairs with concrete treads. The single-storey wing at the rear is a low-slung gable-built form, constructed on concrete piers with a timber batten valance. The walls are lined with painted fibre-cement sheet and battens, and the roof with a corrugated sheet metal. The original window arrangement to the elevations remains evident, albeit with later aluminium louvres to the openings. The wing is contemporary with the 1947 additions to the building, with later minor alterations including an overpainted brick addition to the south-east boundary and changes to the roof pitch to accommodate this addition. The original angle of the roof pitch remains legible on the rear elevation.

The interior of the building was not inspected.

The Decker Building is a visually prominent and significant building along this part of Brighton Road and makes a strong contribution to the character of Sandgate's civic precinct, including the Sandgate Town Hall and Sandgate War Memorial Park.

There are significant views to the place from Brighton Road, Seymour Street and Sandgate Memorial Park.

Significant features

Features of cultural heritage significance include:

- Original built form and composition, including:
 - The rendered and fibre-cement sheet clad building, including all rendered and fibre-cement and decorative details (for example, mouldings, diamond medallions, parapet capping) extending to parapet level
 - The hipped corrugated sheet metal roof concealed behind a parapet which is visually prominent to the side and rear
 - Original window locations and arrangements and door openings on the façade (south-west), rear (north-east) and side (north-west and south-east) elevations.
- Verandah details, including:
 - The verandah, including all original details associated with the 1947 additions (for example, sheet and batten soffit, roof structure).
- Exterior design details, including:
 - The stepped parapet, consisting of pilasters and pediments with diamond medallion decoration
 - The c.1920 timber imitation ashlar and 1947 fibre-cement sheet and batten wall linings
 - The corrugated sheet metal roofing.
- Views to and from the place

Non-significant features

Non-significant features include:

- Single-storey rear wing
- Brick addition to the rear wing
- Aluminium-framed shopfronts and casement windows
- Canvas sun awnings
- Concrete tread external stairs
- Additions to the original verandah, including, fascia signage and lattice valance
- Non-original externally mounted services, including roof top air conditioning plant, wall mounted wiring conduits and wiring, etc.
- Concrete hardstand carpark.

Statement of significance

Relevant assessment criteria

This is a place of local heritage significance and meets one or more of the local heritage criteria under the Heritage planning scheme policy of the *Brisbane City Plan 2014*. It is significant because:

Historical

CRITERION A

The place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the city's or local area's history

Built by 1920 and remodelled in 1947, the Decker Building demonstrates the continued commercial development and growth of Brighton Road as the main shopping street in Sandgate. The first building to be built on the site was a single-story imitation masonry premises to accommodate an auctioneer and commission agent's office, which was extended in the post-Second World War period to accommodate a second storey of offices.

Aesthetic

CRITERION E

The place is important because of its aesthetic significance

The Decker Building makes a significant contribution to the streetscape of the Brighton Road shopping strip. Sited on a wide, angled allotment, the building's façade has a tall and visually prominent stepped parapet. Lined with sheeting, battens and part rendered, the parapet has diamond-shaped, low-relief, decorative ornamentation on expressed pilasters and a painted, stylised building name. The building is highly visible with long view lines to it and from the Town Hall, Memorial Park and adjacent streets. A continuous verandah is a feature of the streetscape at pedestrian level.

Historical association

CRITERION H

The place has a special association with the life or work of a particular person, group or organization of importance in the city's or local area's history

The Decker Building is significant for its association with the Decker family, who are a prominent business family in Sandgate. Eric Paul Decker, who established the premises to house his auctioneer and commission agent's business, became an Alderman of Brisbane City Council (1931 to 1941) and then a Member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly (1941 to 1953). During his time in public office, Eric P. Decker continued to operate his business from the building. In later years, building ownership was transferred to other family members and has remained in the ownership of the Decker family and operated as an estate agent for almost all of that period.

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Note: This citation has been prepared on the basis of evidence available at the time including an external examination of the building. The statement of significance is a summary of the most culturally important aspects of the property based on the available evidence, and may be re-assessed if further information becomes available. The purpose of this citation is to provide an informed evaluation for heritage registration and information. This does not negate the necessity for a thorough conservation study by a qualified practitioner, before any action is taken which may affect its heritage significance.

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