

Attachment A14

**Heritage Assessment - 19 Ithaca Road,
Elizabeth Bay - The Reef**

Name The Reef			
Address	19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay	Lot number	Lot 3 DP 226573, Lots 1-35 SP 3224
Architect	Henry L Divola & Associates	Construction date	1966-1967
Builder	Mainline Corporation		
Listings	Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012: Within the Elizabeth and Rushcutters Bays Heritage Conservation Area (C20). Identified as detracting on the Sydney Development Control Plan (DCP) building contributions map.		

Historical overview

The Cadigal people of the Eora nation have lived in the Sydney area for thousands of years and have shaped its landscape and nurtured its plants and animals. Before the arrival of the European settlers the Potts Point area was known as Kurrajeen (or Curageen) and Yarrandabbi. Governor Lachlan Macquarie set aside land near Elizabeth Bay, Potts Point and Woolloomooloo as a 'model fishing village' for Aboriginal people in 1820. At this settlement, known as Elizabeth Town, several huts were built, a patch of land was cleared for a garden, and boats were provided for use by the Aboriginal people who lived there. John Palmer's estate at nearby Woolloomooloo Bay was also an important gathering place for local Aboriginal people, and was the location of a corroboree in 1831 attended by Bungaree's son, Young Bungaree.¹

The subject site formed part of the original 54-acre property granted to Alexander Macleay, Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, by Crown grant in 1831. In 1839 Macleay constructed a stone mansion named Elizabeth Bay House on the property, as well as extensive stables, museums, and a large garden of interesting plants, featuring specimen trees, an orchard and an orangery. Financial trouble forced Alexander Macleay to submit to the foreclosure of his mortgage to his son William Sharp Macleay in 1845. When William died in 1865, the property passed to his brother George. George arranged for the subdivision of the property and sold leaseholds of portions of the estate between 1865 and 1882.

No. 19 Ithaca Road was previously occupied by a large villa residence, Lydford, built by 1878 on leasehold land from the Macleay Estate. There were various owners and tenants and the house was variously occupied as a single residence, guest house and divided into two flats. By May 1965 the building was owned by the estate of the late Marcia Evelyn Williams and occupied by a Mr Dawson.

From 1965 several speculative developers submitted plans for a residential flat building on the site. The first scheme, for a block of 84 home units, was submitted by architect Emery Nemes for Landmark Limited. The application was refused on the grounds of inadequate setbacks and site densities.

By November of the same year a new development application was submitted by George Summers for a crescent-shaped, eight-storey home unit building, comprising 3 three-bedroom flats, 9 two-bedroom flats, 13 one-bedroom flats and 35 bedsitting flats with off-street parking for 38 cars. Development permission was granted on 22 November 1965. The architect of this new design is unknown but Felix Tavener of Rudder Littlemore & Rudder, architect of the renowned Qantas House building in Chifley Square (1955-1957), is the signatory for a detailed application for a crescent-shaped building on the site one month later.

In December 1965 Bargo Pty submitted a new application for a home unit development on the subject site with plans by architects Rudder Littlemore & Rudder. In early May 1966, the City Building Surveyor's Department recommended refusal of consent on the grounds that 'the proposal is not to the same high standard of the development previously approved by Council in that it is located closer to the street alignment and would thereby have greater effect on views to and from the Harbour' (City Building Surveyor's Department, 1541/66). Development permission was, however, approved on 30 May.

¹ City of Sydney 2013, 'Aboriginal People and Place'

In July 1966 architectural firm Henry L Divola & Associates submitted the building application for a new block of 35 units to cost \$390,000. Their application kept the crescent-shaped design but altered the total number and the size of the units, namely 14 three-bedroom flats and 21 two-bedroom flats, and reduced the carparking spaces down from 38 to 35. The application was approved on 17 August 1966 and the building plans were also approved (BA 1486/66).

Development on site commenced in October 1966 by Mainline Corporation. Council approved amended plans regarding the height of the lift tower and an incinerator in February 1967. Council's Building Surveyor's Department noted the work was completed to approved plans in November 1967.

In October 1967 the *Sydney Morning Herald* described in detail The Reef, which departed from the 'conventional rectangular shape of unit buildings' with its 'curved facade'.² According to the architect Harry Divola, it was originally 'designed as a quadrant curve to give the 35 flats the best north-easterly views over the harbour' but he then modified the design to a series of straight segments. Mr Divola said: 'the many-sided elevation has many advantages, to flat owners in terms of privacy and view. It also expresses the structure in a more logical and functional manner' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1967, p 20).

In November 1967 estate agent John Dudley promoted one-, two- and three-bedroom units on strata title in The Reef, as a 'quality building', ready for occupation and superbly finished with every modern convenience and magnificent harbour views ranging in price from \$10,500 to \$30,500 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1967, p 40).

Henry L Divola & Associates

Henry (Harry) Divola, born in 1913, studied architecture at Sydney Technical College, founding his own practice in 1938. During World War II, Divola enlisted in the Engineer Corps but had already established a sufficient reputation for his small modernist houses to be employed by the Australian Legion of Ex-Servicemen's Credit Union as 'a soldier-architect, Corporal H. Divola, to design model types of homes for ex-servicemen and their families'; during the following decade Divola became one of Australia's best-known architects, his designs featured regularly in *Truth* newspaper as well as the popular home-making magazines.

From 1955 Divola concentrated on his own practice, designing hotels, clubs and less budget-conscious houses in Canberra as well as Sydney. Divola designed flats early in his career, but The Reef was a rare excursion into this field among his later work. He died in 1969, so this may also be one of his last projects.

Mainline Corporation

Mainline Corporation was founded in 1960 as an apartment builder by project manager and estimator Richard Baker and builder Laurie O'Neil. The new company was ambitious, employing high-profile architects on its suburban projects, and by 1965 was also constructing major CBD buildings including Goldfields House and the Bridge Street AMP Centre. Mainline Corporation was one of Australia's major property and construction companies by 1971, building Denison, The Reef, Mowbray and others in the Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay area.

In 1974 a combination of soaring interest rates and declining property prices saw its major creditor ANZ Bank call for the appointment of a receiver. Mainline Corporation was liquidated with debts of \$60 million, though its property holdings sold for more than \$86 million when auctioned in 1975.

Description

A site visit including the interiors of a one bedroom unit was undertaken by GML in October 2024.

Setting and context

The Reef is located on the western side of Ithaca Road, on an elevated lot. The topography slopes steeply down to the north towards Beare Park.

The site is located within the Elizabeth and Rushcutters Bays Heritage Conservation Area. The immediate vicinity of the site is characterised by a mix of interwar flat buildings and modern multistorey apartment buildings that are comparable in scale to The Reef. Due to its curved façade and site setback, The Reef has a prominent streetscape presence.

² 'Units curved to give water views', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1967.

Physical description

The Reef is a nine-storey semicircular shaped residential flat building built with 35 one-, two- and three-bedroom units. It is located centrally on an irregular shaped lot and is surrounded by concrete driveways and carparking. The Reef is constructed of an exposed reinforced concrete frame with face brickwork infill wall. The face brickwork and exposed concrete frame have been painted on all but the rear southern elevation.

The main north-facing elevation has aluminium-framed sliding windows with transoms. The main northern façade is broken by vertical bays of recessed balconies, reflecting the location of apartment living rooms. Balconies have partial brick balustrades topped with metal work. The doors to the balcony are also full-height sliding doors with transoms. Some have been replaced with full-height sliding windows.

The entrance has a concrete cantilevered M-shaped awning. The ground floor consists of a semi-open carpark with exposed columns. Garages flanking the entrance are enclosed with modern roller doors.

The eastern and western elevations have smaller sliding windows with horizontal fixed windows to the bottom and hopper windows. A separated lift and stair core is located on the southern elevation, at the western corner of the building. The units are accessed via curved semi-open galleries along the southern elevation. The balustrade of the gallery is constructed of face brickwork panels set into metal frames. This reinforces the form of the building as faceted rather than a smooth curve.

There are original patterned metal screens to apartments at the ends of the gallery and in several other locations, indicating these were once widespread. The units have horizontally proportioned aluminium-framed windows along the gallery, some of which have metal security screens. The entrance lobby has been modified with contemporary finishes.

The building contains a mix of unit sizes. In the original plans a three-bedroom unit was located at the eastern end of each floor and a one-bedroom unit at the western end with two-bedroom units between. The units are planned such that the kitchen and bathrooms are located along the gallery, providing natural ventilation, while the living rooms and bedrooms are located to the north with views to the harbour. Secondary bedrooms are located on the southern elevation with highlight windows.

The integrity of apartment interiors is unknown.

A metal building name 'The Reefs' is located on the eastern elevation facing Ithaca Road.

Landscaping

There is a stone retaining wall to the eastern side along Ithaca Road. There are some trees and low-lying plants near the northern and eastern boundaries of the site. A significant retaining wall with some areas of planting lines the southern side of the site.

Modifications/integrity

What appears to have originally been unpainted face brickwork on the northern elevation has been painted, as has the exposed concrete frame. Garage doors appear to have been added to the northern elevation.

Council records indicate the following took place:

- 2012 replacement of existing balustrades to façade, increase in height of concrete plinths and installation of additional horizontal railings.
- 2018 replacement of windows to rear and side elevations.

Condition

The building appears to be in good condition.

Comparative analysis

This section compares the subject building with other similar apartment buildings of the same period in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area, in order to determine whether the subject site has rarity and/or representative value.

The most distinctive feature of the building is its response to the site by adopting a curved form. It appears the original crescent design for the building was provided by Felix Tavener of Rudder Littlemore & Rudder. The curved form may be in reference to Tavener's highly regarded design

of Qantas House in Chifley Square, completed in 1957. However, the final design of The Reef was significantly changed, so comparison with other projects by the firm is not considered relevant.

The Reef is considered noteworthy as a design by Harry Divola; however, Divola is known for housing, primarily in the 1940s. There are no known similar apartments by Harry Divola, and as an architect he is not known for apartment designs of this period.

Several other apartment projects in the area have also adopted curved forms as a way to engage with difficult sites and maximise views—most notably 17 Wylde Street, Potts Point (1947–1950), by architect Aaron Bolot. A pioneering residential flat building in Sydney in terms of its architectural design, scale and detailing, it has a curved plan with all apartments addressing views to the northeast and circulation spaces placed at the rear of the plan. It is now considered an exemplar Post-War International style flat building and is listed on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan (LEP) as a heritage item.

Council development application files indicate The Reef was designed to limit the blocking of views from neighbouring buildings. As a result, it is arranged almost as a curved L-shape, facing the north at one end and curving to address the east at the other end, and set back from its southern and western boundaries. Unlike at 17 Wylde Street, the units are narrowest at the front and widen to the rear. This approach enabled each unit to have a major window and balcony facing the view and more space at the rear for kitchens and bathrooms. No other examples of this building form in the local area have been identified and hence it can be seen as an unusual and innovative site response.

The construction techniques and building materials of The Reef can be seen as typical of apartment buildings of the 1960s and hence the building is generally, aside from its site-responsive plan, not seen as rare.



Figure 1 Bolot's Wylde Street Cooperative flats (1947–1950). (Source: Max Dupain, courtesy of the Australian Institute of Architects)



Figure 2 Qantas House, designed by Felix Tavener of Rudder Littlemore & Rudder, completed 1975. Photo by Darren Bradley. (Source: Docomomo Australia)

Assessment of significance

Criterion A (Historic significance)

The Reef is an example of a modern mid-rise residential flat building that reflects the changing development, built environment and demographic of the Potts Point and Elizabeth Bay areas through the mid-twentieth century along with others of its type in the area. However, independently, the building is not a key example of these changes.

	The Reef does not have cultural significance at a local or state level under this criterion.
Criterion B (Historical association)	<p>The Reef has some associations with architect Harry Divola; however, it is not considered an important work of his or representative of his design principles or innovation.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at a local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion C (Aesthetic/creative/technical achievement)	<p>The Reef displays typical characteristics of modernist residential flat buildings of the 1960s including its use of a reinforced concrete frame, large aluminium-framed windows and full-width units allowing for cross-ventilation and light.</p> <p>Its curved plan, responding to a difficult site and maximising views and access to the northeast, can be seen as noteworthy and an unusual design response of this period of which few examples can be found in the local area.</p> <p>The Reef has cultural significance at a local level under this criterion.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at a state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion D (Social, cultural and spiritual significance)	<p>The Reef is not known to have special associations with a particular group or to have contemporary esteem within the local community beyond housing amenity.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion E (Research potential)	<p>The Reef is not considered to have the potential to yield significant further or new information related to Harry Divola's work not available elsewhere.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion F (Rare)	<p>The Reef is not considered a rare example of its type in Sydney or a rare example of the work of Harry Divola.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>
Criterion G (Representative)	<p>The Reef is not considered to have representative significance as an example of the work of Harry Divola. Other buildings are considered better able to demonstrate the key characteristics of the architect's work.</p> <p>The Reef displays typical elements of residential flat buildings and is not considered to be important in demonstrating this building type in this period.</p> <p>The Reef does not have cultural significance at local or state level under this criterion.</p>

Statement of significance

The Reef has heritage significance as an example of the 1960s modernist flat building in the Elizabeth Bay and Potts Point area. It displays typical characteristics of modernist residential flat buildings including its use of a reinforced concrete frame, large aluminium-framed windows and full-width units allowing for cross-ventilation and light.

Its curved plan, responding to a difficult site and maximising views and access to the northeast, can be seen as a noteworthy variation in the form of residential flat buildings of this period.

Recommendations

The Reef meets the threshold for local heritage significance under the aesthetic criterion.

Due to the aesthetic value of the place, and noting the building does meet the threshold in any other criterion, it is recommended to be managed as a contributory item within the existing Heritage Conservation Area rather than through individual heritage listing on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan.

The building is able to be adapted and upgraded to ensure it remains viable for ongoing use. A Heritage Impact Statement should outline any original features and their proposed management prior to any major works being undertaken.

Information sources

Type	Author	Title	Year	Repository
Site inspection (external)	GML		2024	GML
Written	City of Sydney	Aboriginal People and Place	2013	
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Year 1966 No. 1486 19 Ithaca Rd Elizabeth Bay Home Units	1966–1968	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Year 1966 No. 97 19 Ithaca Rd Elizabeth Bay Bagro P/L- use premises for home units	1966	City of Sydney Archives
Written	City Building Surveyor's Department	Year 1965 No. 389 19 Ithaca Rd Elizabeth Bay Landmark Ltd -use premises for residential development (home units)	1965	City of Sydney Archives
Written	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	'Units curved to give water views'	31 October 1967	Sydney Morning Herald Archive 1955–1995
Written	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>	'Elizabeth Bay, The Reef, 19 Ithaca Road'	4 November 1967	Sydney Morning Herald Archive 1955–1995

Image caption	Site plan and details for block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

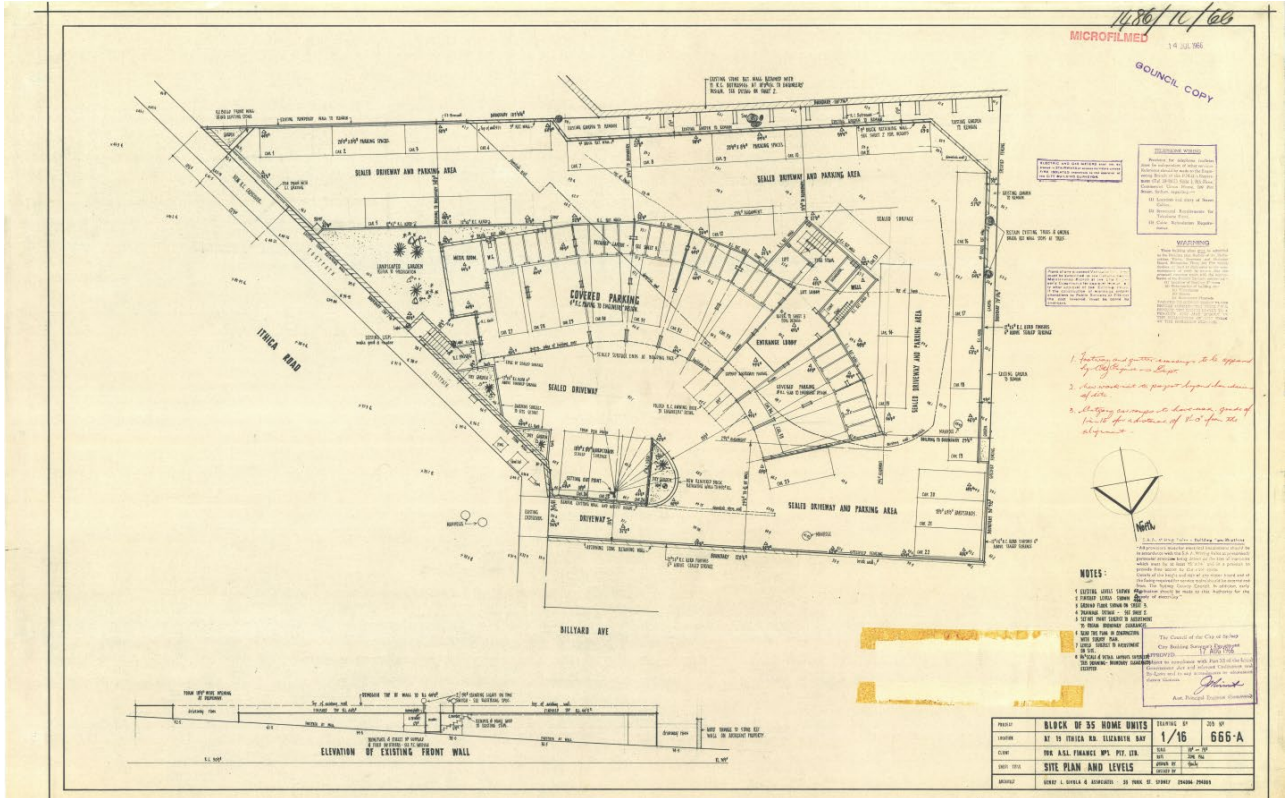


Image caption	Floor plan of the ground floor for the block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

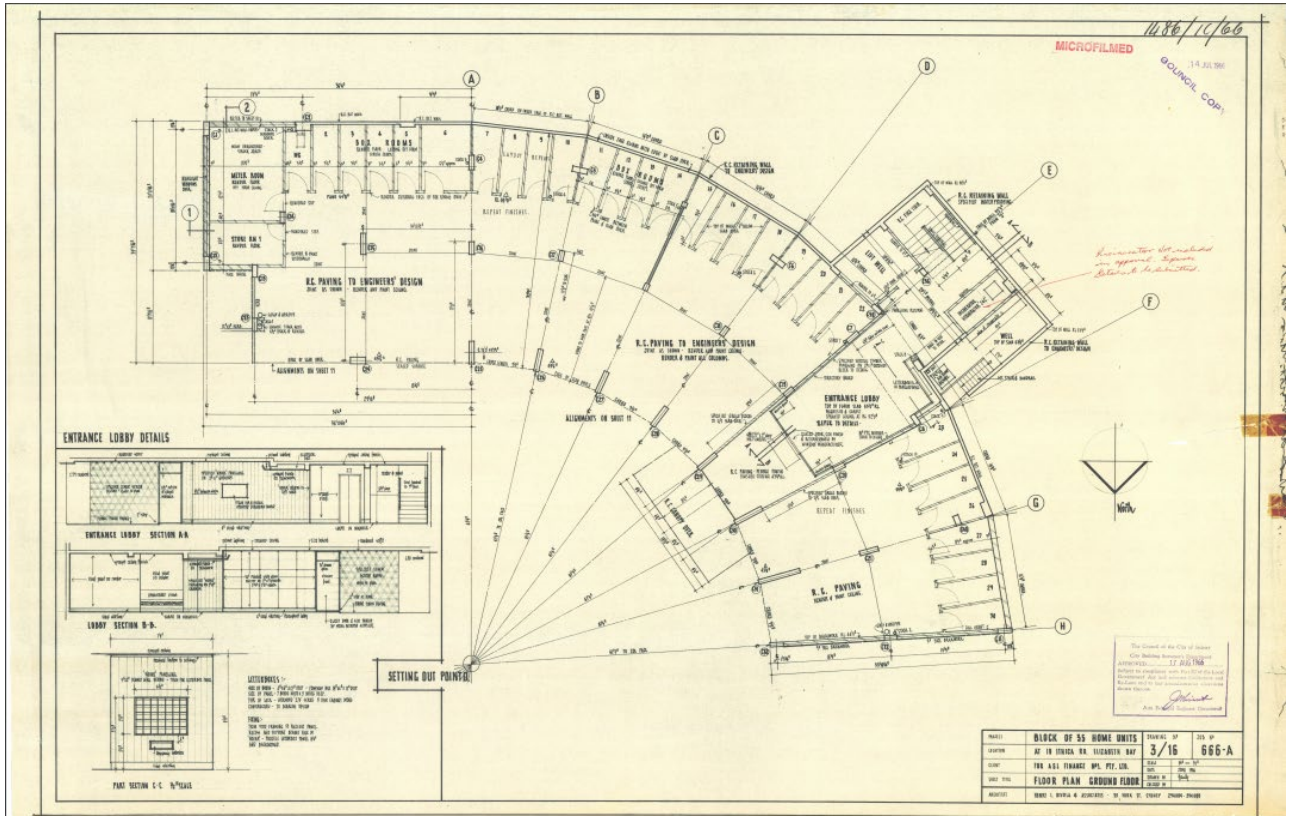


Image caption	Electrical plan showing typical floor plans and the service tower for the block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

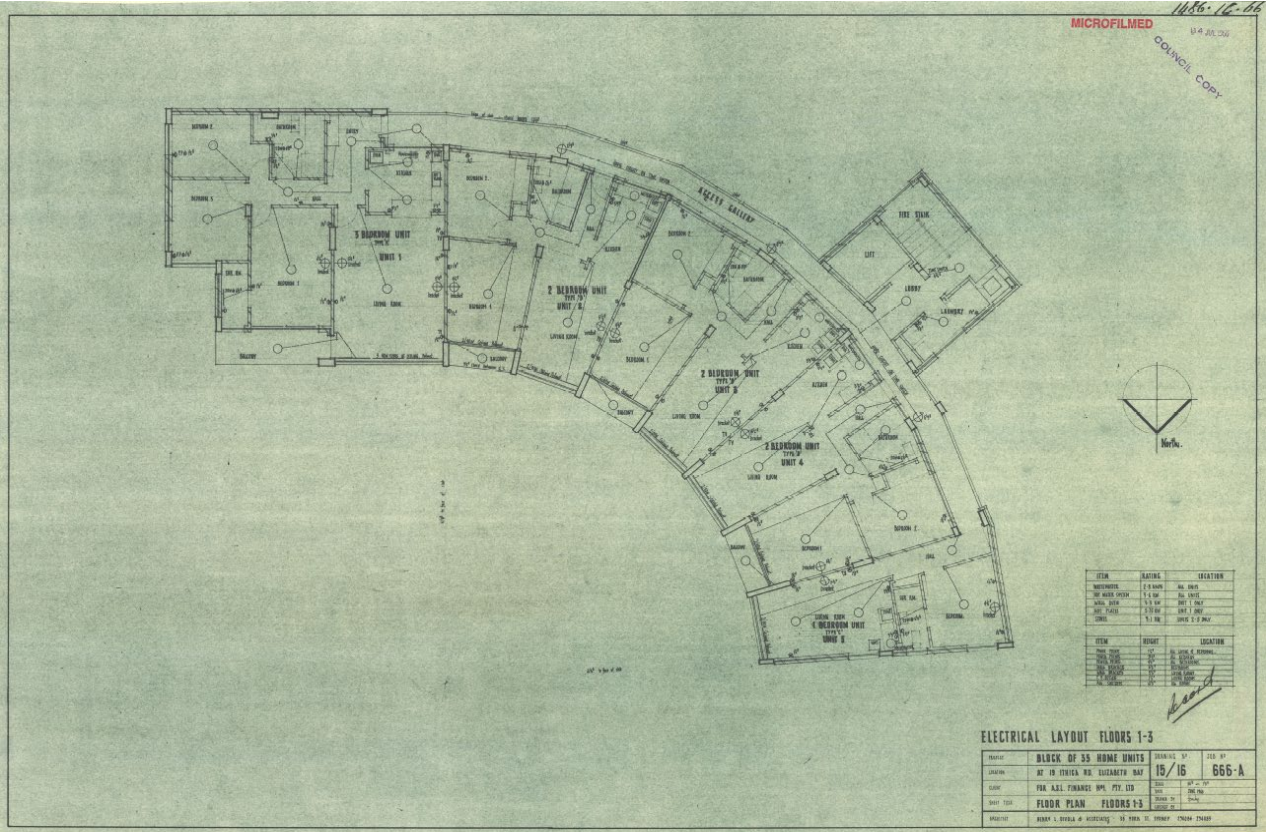


Image caption	Elevations and sections for the block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

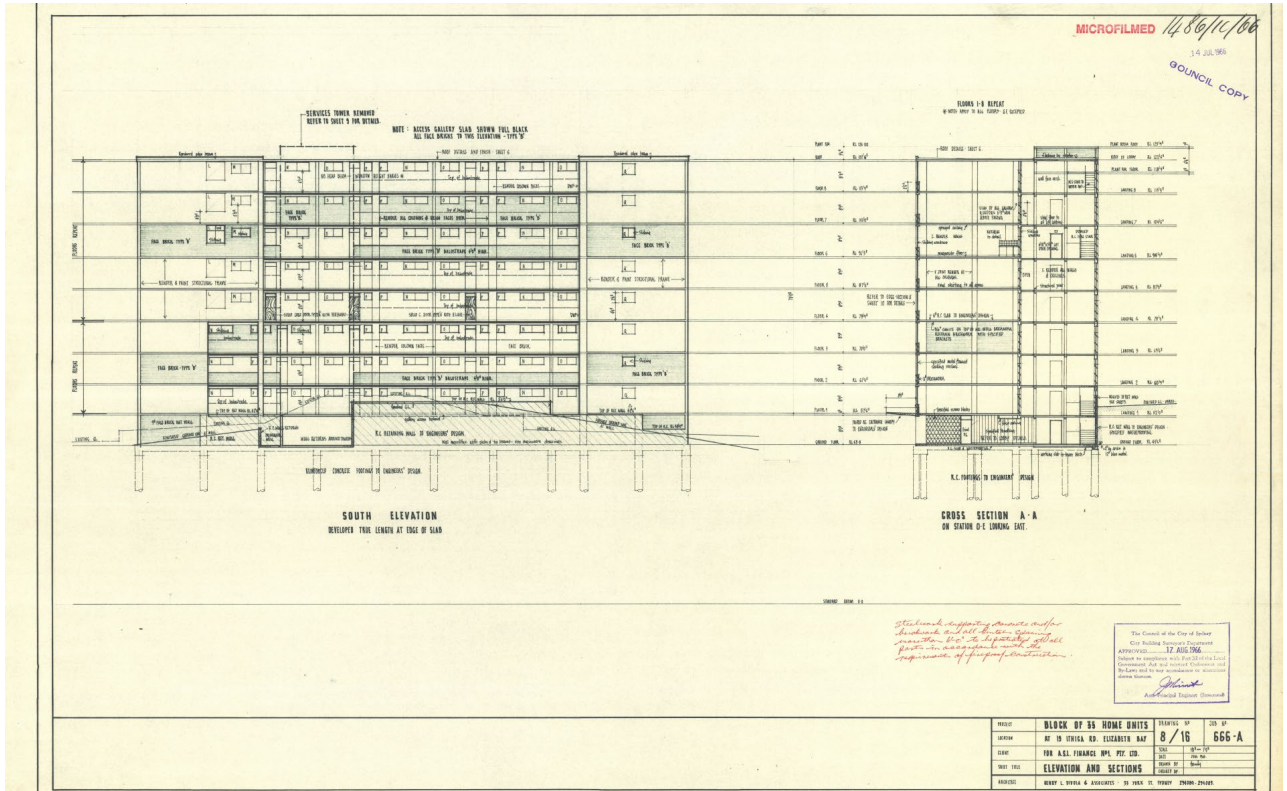


Image caption	Eastern, northeastern and northern elevations for the block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

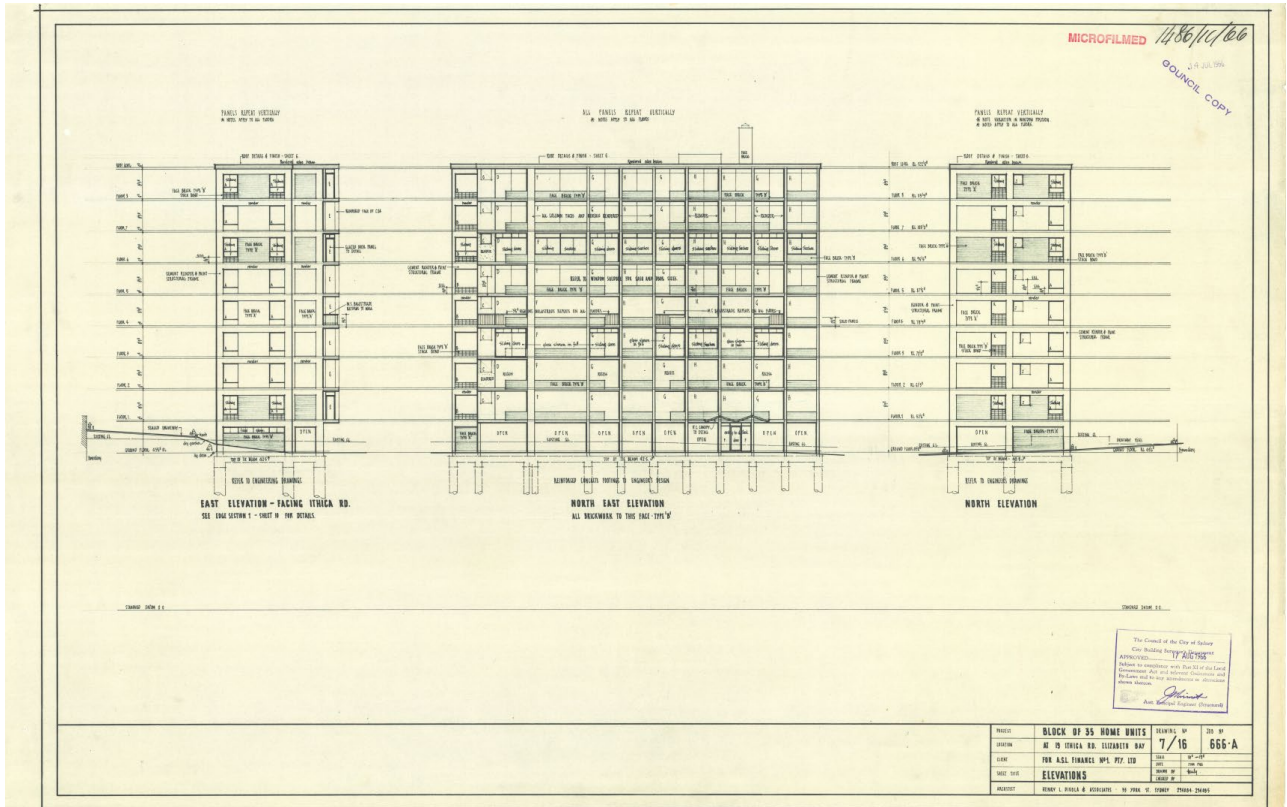


Image caption	Northwestern, southwestern and southeastern elevations for the service tower and block of 35 home units at 19 Ithaca Road, Elizabeth Bay, for ASL Finance No 1 Pty Ltd.				
Image year	1966	Image by	Henry L Divola & Associates	Image copyright holder	Henry L Divola & Associates

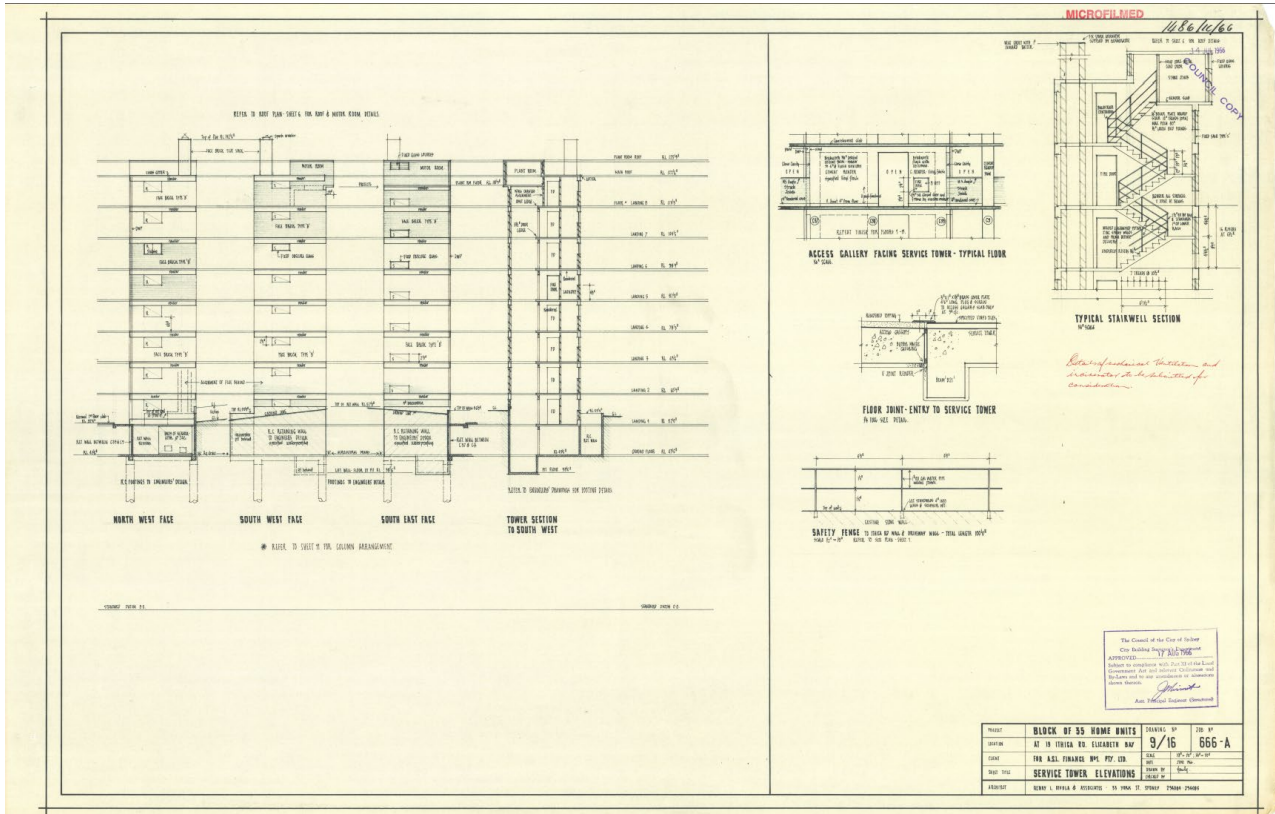


Image caption	Northern elevation of The Reef as viewed from Beare Park along Ithaca Road.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	The Reef as viewed from Ithaca Road.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	The rear of The Reef as viewed Ithaca Road.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Main entry with cantilevered awning flanked by enclosed parking spaces.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Northern elevation of The Reef.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Southern elevation of The Reef showing the lift and stair core.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Gallery along the southern elevation.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML



Image caption	Typical entry to the easternmost apartments with what appears to be an original metal screen design.				
Image year	2024	Image by	GML	Image copyright holder	GML

