

Heritage Impact Statement

1-7 Waterfront Place, Port Melbourne

Permit Application for Proposed Works

September 2025

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1.0 Introduction

This assessment of heritage impacts has been prepared at the request of GFM Group in its capacity as trustee of the GFM BTA Trust Sub trust No. 4, on behalf of the owners of 1-7 Waterfront Place, Port Melbourne. It concerns the proposed redevelopment of the subject site with a multi-storey mixed use building, with landscaping.

This report reviews the context of the subject site and its relationship to an adjacent registered place, whose extended curtilage impacts part of the subject site. It then comments on the proposed redevelopment of the subject site, and the land within the registered curtilage and whether it is appropriate in character and detail, and acceptable in terms of its impact upon the registered building and the character and significance of the registered place.

2.0 Methodology

This heritage impact statement has been prepared with regard to *the Burra Charter* and its guidelines, as amended in 2013, and in general accordance with Heritage Victoria *Guidelines for Preparing Heritage Impact Statements* (June 2021). As per the guidelines, this report addresses the following questions:

- *Why the place is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria*
- *What options were considered in developing the proposal*
- *What impact (positive or negative) the proposed works have on the significance of the place*
- *If a negative impact is proposed, why the proposed option was chosen and why were other more sympathetic options not feasible.*
- *What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.*

3.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon a site visit along with a review of the relevant Victorian Heritage Register documentation for the Port Melbourne Railway Station and Heritage Victoria Policy guidelines for *Reasonable or economic use* (June 2021). Reference has also been made to the *Port Phillip Heritage Review* (Version 36, December 2021).

This report has been prepared by Sally Beaton and is intended to be read in conjunction with the drawings and other documentation prepared by Woods Bagot and Oculus and submitted with respect to this application.

4.0 History & Description

The subject site is an irregular shaped parcel of land with street frontages onto Beach Street to the north, Waterfront Place to the south and the tramline associated with the historic Port Melbourne Railway Station to the west side. The former railway line is now a tram route.

In 2020, when a planning permit was lodged, the site contained a single and double storey brick building with terra cotta tile roofs along its southern and eastern sides, which were of contemporary origin. The building was fire damaged, and part demolished, and the site was enclosed by tall hoarding. The place was of no heritage significance. In late 2024 what remained of the building was demolished and the site is now vacant behind the hoarding.

To the west of the subject site is the route 109 tram stop and the historic, registered, Port Melbourne Railway Station, which has been converted into use as a medical centre and café. To the south east is the beach and Port Phillip Bay, and to the south a large outdoor shipping contained storage area. The surrounding context to the north is characterised by free standing double-storey residential development of recent origin (Beacon Cove). To the east is a traffic roundabout with contemporary multi-storey development. Further east is a series of modern multi-storey developments between five and seven storeys.

With respect for the Port Melbourne Railway Station, it was constructed between 1898-99 and although the curtilage of the railway station has been significantly altered and reduced by the removal of most of the original railway infrastructure, the station building and platform remain and have an important historical association with the first public steam railway in Australia and with the development of the Port Melbourne piers. The *Port Phillip Heritage Review* provides the following description of the station:

Port Melbourne railway station is a single-storey red brick structure with a hipped slate roof to the main block. The walls are constructed on a basalt plinth and are relieved by a band of dark-coloured bricks running above the door and window openings. The segmental arched openings, presently all sheeted up, have dressed basalt jambs and sills and dark brick arches. There is a triple-arched arcade opening off the entrance hall onto the platform. The cantilevered awning over the platform and street entrance has a scalloped ripple iron valence. The lavatory wing, returning to the north-east corner, has a double bay corrugated iron roof concealed by parapet walls, with louvred lantern vents.

Apart from substantial alterations to curtilage of the station, including the removal of the goods yard lines, the lines onto Station Pier (qv) and ancillary structures such as signalling, the footbridge and smaller buildings, the main change has been the truncation of the station platform following demolition of the Centenary Bridge. The station building itself, which was not inspected internally, is reported to have been vandalised internally, but otherwise remains largely intact.

Since the citation was written c.1995, the station has had its rear verandah enclosed by glazing. A red brick garage/storage building is constructed to its south east and a raised red brick garden bed is located to its south.

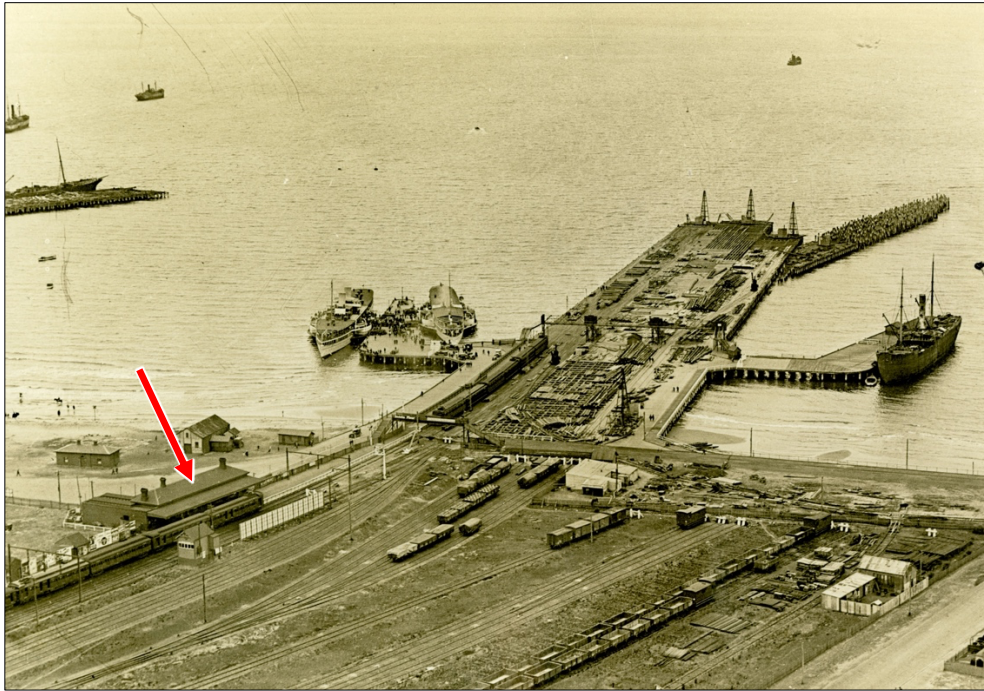


Figure 1 A 1925 oblique aerial of Station Pier under construction. Port Melbourne Railway Station is visible to the lower left of the image. Image Source: Public Record Office Victoria.

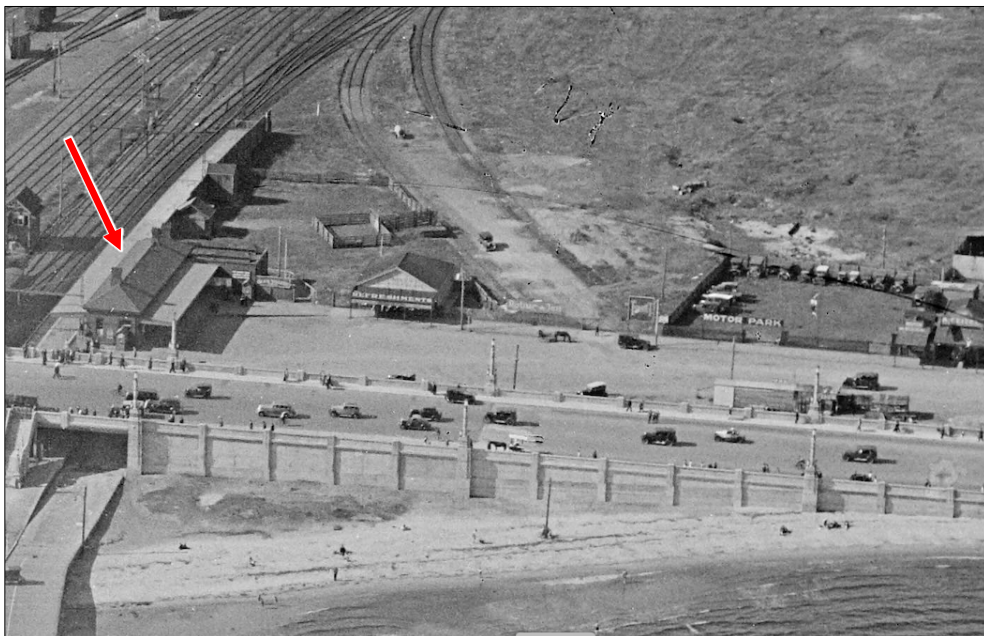


Figure 2 A c1940 oblique aerial facing north toward the subject site, with the Port Melbourne Railway Station indicated with a red arrow. The road bridge over the railway was erected in 1934. Image Source: SLV.
https://find.slv.vic.gov.au/permalink/61SLV_INST/1sev8ar/alma9939652288607636



Figure 3 Oblique image of the Port Melbourne Railway Station c.1974. Image Source: Public Records office.



Figure 4 Views north east toward the subject site, 1-7 Waterfront Place, Port Melbourne with the Port Melbourne Railway station to the left of image.



Figure 5 View facing north toward Port Melbourne Railway Station.



Figure 6 View of the red brick retaining wall/raised garden beds to the south of the station.



Figure 7 View east toward the subject site. The location of the tall hoard is approximately where landscaping works are proposed.



Figure 8 View to taller built form currently under construction at 103 Beach Street, to the west of the subject site, opposite the Port Melbourne Railway Station.

5.0 Heritage Listings and significance

Heritage Victoria

A portion of the south west corner of the subject site is identified as being within the curtilage of VHR H0983, the Port Melbourne Railway Station. The statement of significance for this place is as follows:

The former Port Melbourne Railway Station building is historically significant by association with the first public steam railway in Australia, and with the development and use of the Port Melbourne piers. The building played an important role in the history of the piers, in particular Station Pier, and in the social history of Melbourne through its association with the popular bay excursion trade.

The former Port Melbourne Railway Station building, which was rebuilt at a time when the function of the piers was expanding, is significant in demonstrating a critical change in the maritime activity of the Bayside area. Its significance is further enhanced by the fact that, unlike the piers, it has not been dramatically altered throughout the twentieth century.

The former Port Melbourne Railway Station building is of architectural and historical significance as a distinctive building type, that only representation within the metropolitan context of a small group of station buildings developed by the Victorian Railways Department following the 1890s depression. This significance is enhanced by the integrity of its building fabric.

The extent of registration is noted as:

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 983 encompassing all of Lot 1 and part of Lot 2 on Plan of Subdivision 344341 and all of Crown Allotments 2026 and 2032, City of Port Melbourne, Parish of Melbourne South.

With the above being said, it is important to note the portion of 1-7 Waterfront Place located within the Heritage Overlay curtilage does not contain any structures associated with the Port Melbourne Railway Station, but does provide a curtilage of open space along the south and south east sides of the building.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Port Melbourne Railway Station is classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as a place of state significance (File No. B4690).

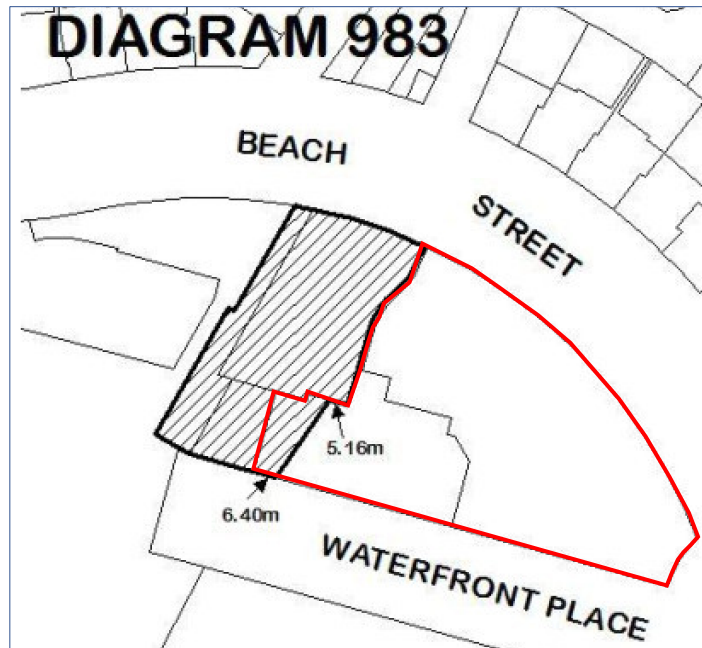


Figure 9 Plan showing the extent of registration of H0983 (please note the resolution is carried from the plan available on the Victorian Heritage Database). The subject site is highlighted red, with the south west corner of the subject site identified as being within the registered curtilage.

City of Port Phillip

Most of the development site is not subject to a Heritage Overlay. The Port Melbourne Railway Station and its associated curtilage is identified as a significant graded place within the Heritage Overlay, identified at HO46 in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme. It is nonetheless recognised that the Responsible Authority with regard to heritage matters within the extent of registration is Heritage Victoria, and the City of Port Phillip will have a role as a referral body.

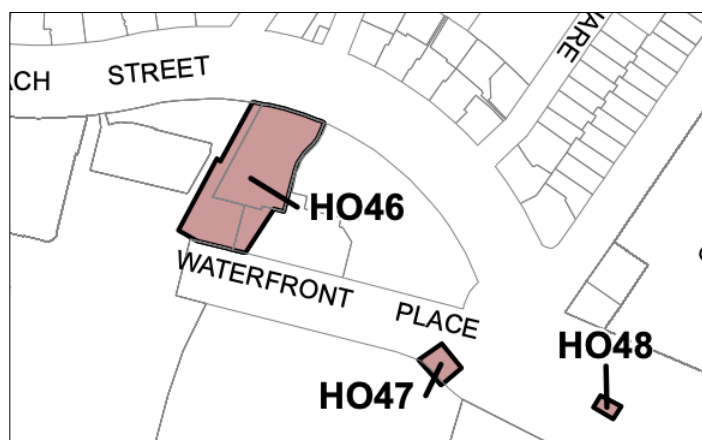


Figure 10 The development site is not subject to a Heritage Overlay, beyond the portion within the registered curtilage.

In addition to a portion of the subject site being within the curtilage of a registered place, the whole of the development site is subject to Design and Development Overlay, DDO23. The design objectives and design requirements contained within DDO23 that are relevant to heritage matters pertaining to the registered curtilage include:

Theme A – ‘engaging, accessible’

- *To increase pedestrian permeability and encourage movement through the site at ground level.*

[...]

Theme B – ‘responsive’

- *To respond positively to the heritage Railway Station building.*
- *To respond positively to the wider maritime context and heritage of the locality.*
- *To positively address the adjoining streets and spaces of the public realm.*

[...]

Theme D – ‘contributory’

- *To increase pedestrian connectivity and access through the site.*
- *To ensure the site edges enhance the streetscape amenity.*
- *To incorporate locally-appropriate landscaping and planting within built form and public open spaces on the site.*

[...]

Design requirements A1: Pedestrian connections

- *Development of the site must provide a direct pedestrian laneway linking Beach Street and Waterfront Place, between the heritage Station building and new built form on the western edge of the site.*

[...]

6.0 Proposed Development

Across the whole of the development site, it is proposed to construct a ten-storey mixed use building, with two basement levels. The building will comprise two separated three storey podium elements, connected via a central link at ground and first floor. The upper levels will have staggered setbacks from Waterfront Place. Elevations will have curvilinear profiles. Along Beach Road (northern side) will be two new crossovers leading toward a porte cochere, and basement access. Retail/shop fronts are proposal for the ground floor with residential apartments on the ground floor and levels above.

On the south western corner of the subject site, a double storey building is proposed, which will contain retail activities. This double storey building will have a similar contemporary articulation to that of the main building.

A small portion (from 2.060 metres in the south to 1.720 metres in the north) of the western side of the proposed double storey building will be constructed within the registered curtilage of the

railway station, however most of the land within the registered curtilage will be subject to landscaping works which includes concrete paving, and a curved raised garden bed, with a rendered finish. The landscaping will provide a continuation to the existing landscaping on the southern side of the railway station.

The palette of materials for the new multi-storey building includes clear glazing, polished concrete, form lined concrete with a wave like vertical pattern, glass reinforced concrete panels and timber look soffit linings to the porte cochere and lower level cantilevered balconies.

7.0 Heritage Impacts

Applications for works to places on the Victorian Heritage Register are considered within the broad ambit of considerations under the *Heritage Act 2017*, which seek to conserve the significance of place, whilst also support their sustainability and taking into account economic impacts. Inter alia, the *Heritage Act* provides the following directions regarding the matters to be considered in the determination of permit applications:

101 Determination of permit applications

(1) After considering an application the Executive Director may—

(a) approve the application and—

(i) issue the permit for the proposed works or activities; or

(ii) issue the permit for some of the proposed works or activities specified in the application; or

(b) refuse the application.

(2) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director must consider the following—

(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;

(b) the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object;

(c) any submissions made under section 95 or 100;

[...]

(f) any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place or registered object that the Executive Director considers relevant.

(3) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director may consider—

(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of any adjacent or neighbouring property that is—

(i) included in the Heritage Register; or

(ii) subject to a heritage requirement or control in the relevant planning scheme; or

(b) any other relevant matter.

The above considerations include the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural significance of the registered place, being the Port Melbourne Railway Station.

The proposed landscaping will be the primary activity occurring within the extent of registration. As identified above, a narrow portion of the proposed double storey envelope will also be constructed within the registered curtilage. The building has however been designed to ensure the majority is sited outside of the registered curtilage.

The landscaping works will be visually neutral and low key, with no intrusive built form elements. The works are positive in respect to improving the quality of the urban environment in the station curtilage and enhancing the visual connection between the station and the proposed development. With reference to matters to be considered under the *Heritage Act*, the proposed landscaping works will not adversely affect the identified significance of the registered place.

The proposed landscaping works also responds in a positive manner to Council policy objectives and guidelines, which encourage the retention and conservation of significant heritage places, and for new development to respect and be harmoniously integrated with surround character.

The landscaping works also respond in a positive manner to design objectives and guidelines of DDO23, with the pathways and landscaping in the registered curtilage designed to increase pedestrian connectivity and permeability. By incorporating landscaping to the south west corner of the site, visual connections to the Railway Station building from the south east are increased.



Figure 11 *Render of the proposed landscaping scheme. Noting the red brick raised garden beds, and palms trees to the left of image are existing. The proposed raised garden beds and concrete paths within the curtilage of the registered land are indicated by a red arrow.*

Beyond the matters of the landscaping within the registered curtilage, a narrow portion of a double storey building will also be within the curtilage. This being said, neither the built form within the curtilage, nor the overall proposed development, will have an adverse impact on the identified significance of the railway station. The place is significant, *inter alia*, for its historical associations with the first public steam railway in Australia and the development and use of the Station Pier, and as a building developed by the Victorian Railways Department following the 1890s depression. The proposed extent of landscaping to the south west of the building and the double storey scale of the closest proposed building, will ultimately not impact upon the identified significance of the place.

The broader proposal for the subject site has been prepared with appropriate regard for the potential impacts to the adjacent registered building. The developments setback, from both the adjacent registered building and Waterfront Place, its overall height, form and materiality are reasonable from a heritage perspective, bearing in mind the new building component of the development occurs outside of the extent of registration and is not assessed under the *Heritage Act*. The setbacks, massing and forms are such that the new development will not overwhelm or in any other manner adversely impact upon the significance of the railway station.

The two storey height of the envelope that slightly encroaches the registered curtilage provides an appropriate transition in height between the single storey railway station and the taller height of the proposed development. The three storey podium of the development provides an additional stepping profile to the tower and establishes a polite scale reference at the lower levels.

It is acknowledged that the new built form may be considered prominent in terms of a range of views around the site, but this is noted as an outcome that is acceptance in the circumstances, where it is understood via planning policy and an existing approval (Planning Permit 490/2020/A) that a building of scale is accepted as a generally appropriate outcome for this specific site.

In the neighbouring parts of Port Melbourne, and most notable in and around Bay Street, it is possible to see substantial contrasts of scale between heritage buildings and new development, and such contrasts are part of the emerging character of this part of Port Melbourne. This is a character that is readily understood as being different to the more consistent low rise character found in other areas such as South Melbourne, Albert Park, Middle Park and parts of St Kilda. Contrast in scale and built form character is a marked characteristic of the immediate environs of the Railway Station, which sits as a relatively isolated heritage building, notwithstanding the nearby presence of Station Peir. This being said, it is also noted a five storey development to the west of the railway station at 103 Beach Road, Port Melbourne is currently under construction.

8.0 Summary of Key Considerations

As per Heritage Victoria's guidelines for heritage impact statements, this report seeks to address the following questions:

- *Why the place is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria.*
- *What options were considered in developing the proposal.*
- *What impact (positive and / or negative) the proposed works have on the significance of the place.*
- *If a negative impact is proposed, why the proposed option was chosen and why were other more sympathetic options not feasible.*
- *What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.*

The cultural heritage significance of the place

The cultural heritage significance of the place is outlined in detail above, and in particular is identified in the Statement of Significance for the place. In considering the above, the place is identified in the Heritage Victoria statement of significance as being of historical and architectural significance.

This being said, the railway station, has previously been subject to alteration, with rear verandah having been enclosed, along with updates to the landscaping to the south. Works in the past have occurred in a manner whereby the character of the railway station, it presents to the public realm, has not been interrupted.

Consideration of options in design

The proposed landscaping has been designed to have no impact upon the heritage place, with works concentrated away from historic fabric and only physically impacting existing vacant land within the curtilage. Only a minor extent of new built form will encroach within the registered curtilage of land, with the development as a whole designed to ensure separation, visually and physically, from the former railway station.

Impacts (positive or negative) on the significance of the place

As set out in detail in sections 6 and 7 above, the proposal has no negative impacts upon the registered place. The change that will be seen in terms of the continuation of landscaping is positive.

The rationale for any negative impacts

Per the above comment, the proposal will have no negative impacts.

Measures taken to minimise and mitigate negative impacts

The impacts of the proposal are mitigated by avoiding works to significant early fabric and providing new landscape elements that will not detract from the setting of the place, albeit the historic context of the station curtilage has already been lost.

Relevant heritage requirement or control in the relevant planning scheme

The proposal has been prepared with regard for the retained heritage fabric, to protect its significant character and appearance in a manner that is in accordance not only with general heritage principles and Burra Charter principles, but also with the policies and guidelines of *Clause 43.01* of the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

9.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed landscaping, and broader multi-storey development have been developed on the basis of an appreciation of the significance of the Port Melbourne Railway Station. The landscaping works will not adversely impact upon the character, setting or significance of the registered place. Positive impacts will arise from the improved public presentation of the Railway station from Waterfront Place.

The proposal should therefore be considered appropriate having regard for the identified significance of the registered place and the provisions of the *Heritage Act*.