Bryce Raworth

CONSERVATION | HERITAGE

Heritage Impact Statement

253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick
Former Cable Tram Engine House

Permit Application

Updated Version – February 2025

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1.0 Introduction

The following updated assessment of heritage impacts has been prepared on behalf of the owner of the subject site at 253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick, which is located within the extent of registration of 253-263 Brunswick Road, Brunswick- Former Cable Tram Engine House & Tram Substation (VHR H2332). It concerns a revised proposal to undertake partial demolition and new works to adaptively reuse to the building for student accommodation.

By way of background, an application was lodged with Heritage Victoria for works on the site on 18 September, 2024. A Request for Further Information (RFI) was subsequently issued on 24 September 2024, with the response period then extended to 28 February 2025.

The current amended scheme was developed in consultation with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA), with further input from Heritage Victoria, and the original HIS has been updated to reflect this proposal.

This report, prepared by Guy Murphy of Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, comments on whether the proposed works are appropriate in character and detail, and acceptable in terms of their impact upon the significance of the registered place. It is intended that it be read in conjunction with the drawings by Hayball and other documentation submitted with respect to this amended application and RFI response. These documents include an Economic Use Assessment prepared by Ethos Urban and a memorandum addressing reasonable economic use prepared by Contour.

2.0 Methodology

This heritage impact statement has been prepared with regard for the *Burra Charter* and its guidelines, as amended in 2013, and in general accordance with Heritage Victoria's guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements (June 2021). It seeks to respond to several key matters that are set out on page 3 of that document:

- *Why a place or object 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 will have on that significance,*
- *If a negative impact is proposed, why the proposed option was chosen and why other more sympathetic options were not feasible, and*
- *What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.*

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3.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon site visits and a review of the *Victorian Heritage Register* documentation for the registered components of the subject site. It also draws upon the following additional sources.

- *Victorian Heritage Database*, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au
- *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (2013),* Australia ICOMOS Incorporated Internal Council on Monuments and Sites.
- George Barry, *Time-line History of Melbourne's Government Cable and Electric Trams and Buses*, Melbourne, 1998.
- Leigh J Harding, Research Essay "Development of Tram Engine Houses', (student thesis), University of Melbourne Architecture Department, 1966. (Draft accessible online at https://victoriancollections.net.au/items/667f516b6b31c51e4e88df5d)
- Gary Vines, *Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Study*, 2011.
- Melbourne Tram Museum, https://www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/papers/substations.htm
- Historic MMBW plans (various), State Library of Victoria, https://www.slv.vic.gov.au/
- Historic newspapers (various), accessed via Trove Online, https://trove.nla.gov.au
- Historic photographs (various), accessed via Trove Online, https://trove.nla.gov.au

In preparing this report, the authors have also been mindful of the Heritage Overlay provisions and local heritage policy, as set out under *Clause 43.01* Heritage Overlay and *Clause 15.03* Heritage of the *Merri-bek Planning Scheme*.

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4.0 History

The Brunswick Cable Tram Engine House was the fourth engine house to be constructed by the Melbourne Tramways Trust in the 1880s. Heritage Victoria's citation for the site includes the following historical overview of the establishment and operation of the site.

> *The 1883 Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co. Act established the Melbourne Tramways Trust (MTT), comprising the representatives of the various municipalities. The MTT built cable lines and engine houses between 1884 and 1891 and remained owner of the lines and installations until its dissolution in June 1916. A separate company (Melbourne Tramway & Omnibus Co. Ltd.) leased and operated the system. Their successors were the Melbourne Tramway Board (c.1916-1918) and then the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tramways Board (M&MTB) from 1918. When complete, there were seventeen routes on the cable tram network. The engine houses were located near the midpoint of a route and the depots at the terminus.*
>
> *In 1887 the Cable Tram Engine House was built in Brunswick Road and a tram depot was constructed in Sydney Road. The preferred site for the Engine House was slightly further south on the north east corner of Park Street, but land prices at the time forced the Trust to purchase the present-day site. The Brunswick Cable Tram Engine House was often known as the Sarah Sands Engine House as it was near the rear of a well-known hotel of the same name. The Sydney Road tram route was the sixth cable tram route opened by the MTT. It began operation in October 1887 following the route of the previous omnibus service. This service was the longest cable on the cable tram system, extending from the Brunswick Road Engine House to Flinders Street station and return, a distance of about 9.6 km. The cable trams were powered by steam driven machinery in the Engine House.*

J Sutherland was the contractor for the works, with a tender of £9387 7s 6d.[1] The tramway cable was successfully threaded in September 1887, the Brunswick tram commencing operation the following month.[2]

The 1904 MMBW plan (*Figure 1*) shows built form on the site by this time. The main engine house occupies the south and eastern sides of the site, with an open area along the western boundary containing a large chimney. The chimney was approximately 154 feet high and topped with 4 feet of Waurn Ponds stone.[3] It formed a local landmark (see Figure 3). Along the north boundary to a laneway is a several small outbuildings including a stable. Entry gates from Black lead to a pitched internal driveway partially intersecting the north side of the site in an east-west direction. Some internal details are along shown, including the presence of cable pits along the south side of the building, and 'Pits for Driving Wheels' in the middle of the eastern side of the building. Associated infrastructure including a wheel pit was also located under the road at the corner with Black Street, with a cable tunnel extending east along Brunswick Road.

1 *Age*, 7 August 1886, p.9.
2 *Argus*, 28 September 1887, p.5.
3 *Age*, 21 April 1887, p.6.

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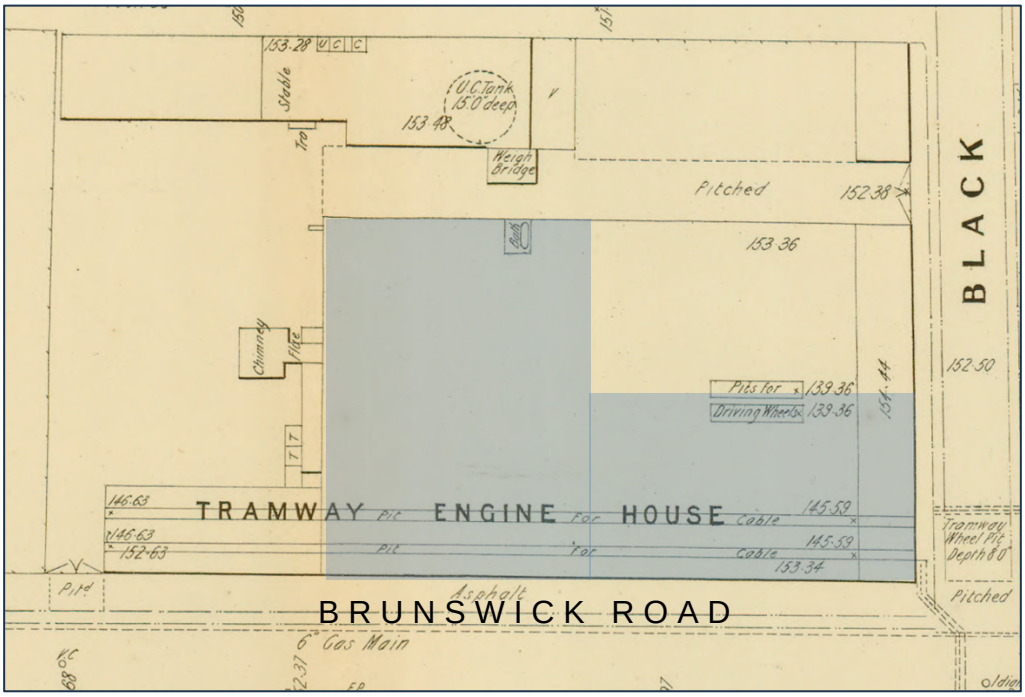

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Figure 1 *1904 MMBW plan extract showing the outline of the engine house building at this time, including the location of the chimney (on the western side).*
Source: http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/125831

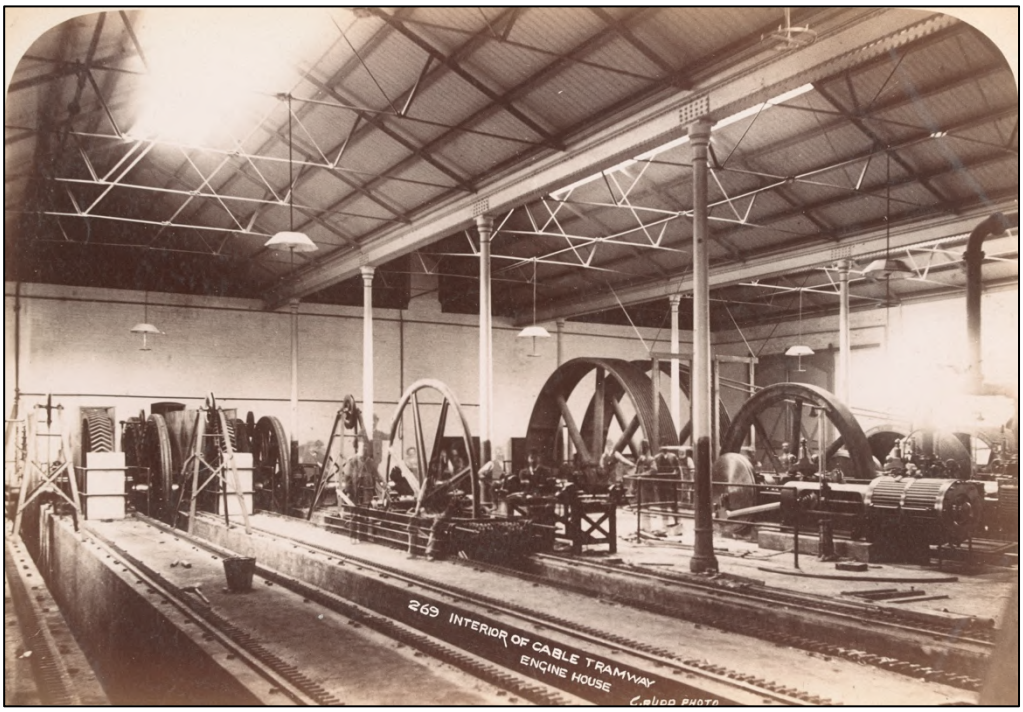

Figure 2 *Interior view of a cable tram house showing driving wheels. (This is not the subject building, but is indicative of its original internal plant).*
Source: http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/300353

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Melbourne's cable tram routes were progressively electrified from the 1920s, following the formation of the M&MTB. Its aim was to integrate, electrify and extend the existing cable and electric tram routes in Melbourne. In the 1920s the M&MTB built brick substations in the inner suburbs where the high voltage alternating current (AC) obtained from the State Electricity Commission (SEC) was converted to direct current (DC) at a lower voltage to power the new electric trams. In 1924 one 500 kW rotary converter was installed at the Brunswick Road Cable Tram Engine House. In 1925 a new substation was installed in the northern part of the Engine House with an entrance at 1 Black Street. The first rotary converter and a second 500 kW rotary converter were installed in the new substation at this time. From 1925 to 1936 the rotary converters in the substation supplied DC power to the West Coburg tramway and the steam powered engines in the engine house continued to power the Sydney Road cable trams. Other cable tram engine houses ceased operating when the cable tram lines were converted to electricity, and most were adapted to other uses.

But in the case of the Brunswick Road engine house, both cable and electric trams were powered from the same building for ten years. It is the only known engine house in Victoria which demonstrates the two major stages of the development of tram transport in Melbourne: cable and then electric traction. In 1936 the new Brunswick West Substation (VHR H2397) supplying the West Coburg tramway was completed. At the same time the Sydney Road trams were converted from cable to electrical operation using DC power supplied by the Brunswick Road substation. The long southern engine house section of the building at 253-263 Brunswick Road was then decommissioned. This section was later sold to private owners.[4]

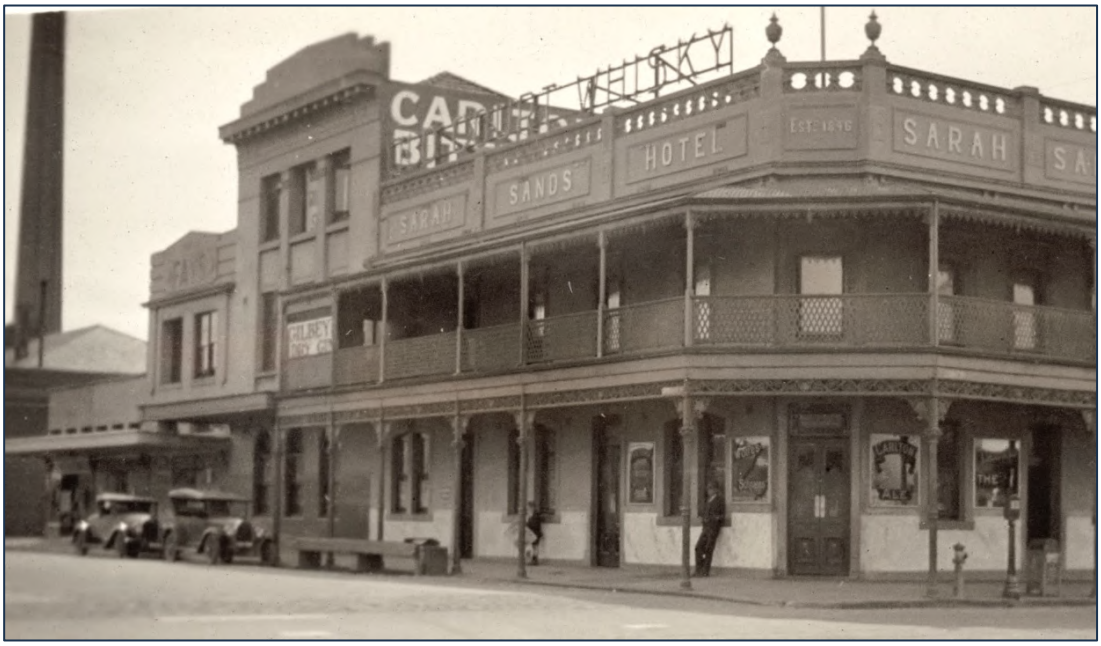

Figure 3 *c.1933-34 view of the Sarah Sands Hotel. The east end of the Engine House and associated chimney are visible far left. Source: http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/466143*

4 VHD citation, https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/2155

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Figure 4 *c.1966-71 view from the south-east showing the originally full face brick external treatment, with a greater degree of intactness to the original fenestration. The original large chimney had been removed by this time.*
Source: University of Melbourne (courtesy of Leigh Harding).

By 1950, *Sands & McDougall* directories indicate the building was occupied by McGrath Motors Pty Ltd, who remained there at least until the 1970s. Centenary Motors also had a presence there by 1960.

The earliest identified full historic view of the building dates from the late 1960s (see Figure 4) and shows the main chimney had been demolished. The building retained its face brick presentation, and close to its original configuration of external openings. A partial mezzanine with associated first floor window openings was subsequently constructed at the west end of the building behind the street facade. The site has since been subdivided onto separate titles. It is understood that the north-east corner of the original building at 1 Black Street (outside the subject site) is occupied by an electrical substation.[5]

[5] The Melbourne Tram Museum, https://www.hawthorntramdepot.org.au/papers/substations.htm

5.0 Description

Site & Context

253-259 Brunswick Road comprises an L-shaped portion of land within the wider former Cable Tram Engine House complex. The site features a primary street frontage to Brunswick Road to the south, with a secondary frontage to Black Street to the east. It was formerly part of the wider former Cable Tram Engine House complex, which extended north to an east-west laneway and west to include the adjacent site known as 263 Brunswick Road. Parts of the complex corresponding to the original engine house building volume shown in the MMBW plan remain on adjacent land titles, occupying street frontages to the north at 1 Black Street and west at 263 Brunswick Road.

The urban context is mixed. To the east across the intersection with Black Street is a six-storey contemporary mixed use development, comprising a three-storey podium to the street boundaries, with the upper levels at setbacks. Further east at the corner with Sydney Road is the Sarah Sands Hotel at 29 Sydney Road. Adjacent the engine house to the north is a long modern commercial building abutting the laneway. At the western end of the original Brunswick Road frontage to the complex is a later gabled, double height factory/warehouse addition extending along the full depth of the site to the northern laneway. Further west at 265 Brunswick Road is a free-standing, double-storey interface building occupied by a Jehovahs Witness Kingdom Hall. The opposite south side of the street is bordered by low scale, largely Victorian dwellings on narrow fronted lots. There is no above ground tramway infrastructure in the adjacent part of Brunswick or Black Streets.

Figure 5 *Annotated aerial image showing the location of the subject site (shaded blue) in relation to the wider former tramways complex and adjacent streets and properties. The area outlined in red corresponds to the original volume of cable tram engine house, parts of which are now on separate sites. Source: Google Maps.*

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Exterior

The former Cable Tram Engine House is a double-height brick structure, with a hipped, corrugated iron clad roof. In its original form, it presented primary street facades to Brunswick Road to the south and Black Street to the east and was most prominent in views from the east from the vicinity of the intersection with Sydney Road and the Sarah Sands Hotel.

Both street elevations were characterised by bi-chromatic external brickwork (now overpainted), with small, regularly spaced arched windows along each facade. The northern portion of the original elevation to Black Street (now on a separate title) remains unpainted, and shows the original character of the external masonry. This comprised exposed bluestone foundations, with the walls of red/orange face brick, with bluestone door steps, window sills and posts flanking the original entries. The arches to the openings featured alternating cream bricks, with decorative rendered imposts and keystones. Simple rendered string courses and cornices extending across the full width of both elevations, the building otherwise featuring little external decoration.

The southern Brunswick Road elevation includes a broad, arched vehicle entry point near its eastern corner, which has had its original timber door joinery replaced with modern roller door. A narrow pedestrian entry was located adjacent the corner, and has since been converted into a window. The windows west of the vehicle entry contain early timber joinery and multi-pane glazing. The Black Street elevation comprises the southern half of the original eastern side frontage to the engine house. Originally containing a central doorway flanked by two windows, the southern window has been sealed and the doorway converted into a window. The west and north elevations, and part of the east elevation of the subject portion of the building are concealed from public view by adjacent structures.

The roof is largely concealed from public view by the parapets, though is partially visible in more distant views. Over the subject site, it comprises two adjacent parallel hipped roof forms. On the south side is a single-hipped form extending the full length of the Brunswick Road frontage, continuing further west along that frontage in a narrower bay on the adjacent site. The northern side of the roof comprises the western half an identical full width hipped bay, the eastern portion of which is also now located on a separate site. The roof is clad with modern corrugated iron sheeting, with some modern skylights (not on the street facing roof plans). Several small chimneys remain along the eastern end of the building. (As noted, the original main chimney has been demolished). No historic external signage remains.

Interior

The building contains a series of large spaces of a purely utilitarian character. The floors comprise concrete slabs, with all original internal plant having been removed. The largest space occupies most of the south side of the building containing the windows opening onto Brunswick Road. The internal walls have been overpainted, this (and the other larger spaces) featuring exposed metal framed roof trusses. This is varied only by a modern single-storey office partition along the east wall, and a small double-height partitioned area in the south-west corner containing a mezzanine level accessed via a simple timber stair. The north-west area contains two secondary bays, the smaller including a mezzanine. The two main roof structures are internally supported in part by a long iron girder with cast iron columns. Small rooms are located along the eastern perimeter wall. Presumably originally office spaces, their interiors have been substantially modified.

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Figure 6 *The Brunswick Road frontage of the subject site.*

Figure 7 *View of the Brunswick Road elevation from the south-east.*

Figure 8 *263 Brunswick Road to the west includes part of the original engine house.*

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Figure 9 *The Brunswick Road elevation includes an arched vehicle entry with a modern roller door. Each original door opening includes bluestone edge posts.*

Figure 10 *Typical Brunswick Road window detail.*

Figure 11 *The overpainted east elevation of the building to Black Street originally contained three openings, the southern of which (centre left) has been infilled.*

Figure 12 *The adjacent northern bay of the complex at 1 Black Street (outside the subject site) has not been overpainted and shows the original bi-chromatic brickwork.*

Figure 13 *View west along the laneway on the north side of the registered portion of the complex, showing the contemporary warehouse development.*

Figure 14 *The northern side of the building on the subject site is concealed by adjacent buildings. This view is from the north-west.*

Figure 15 *View east across the main internal space, showing the exposed roof structure.*

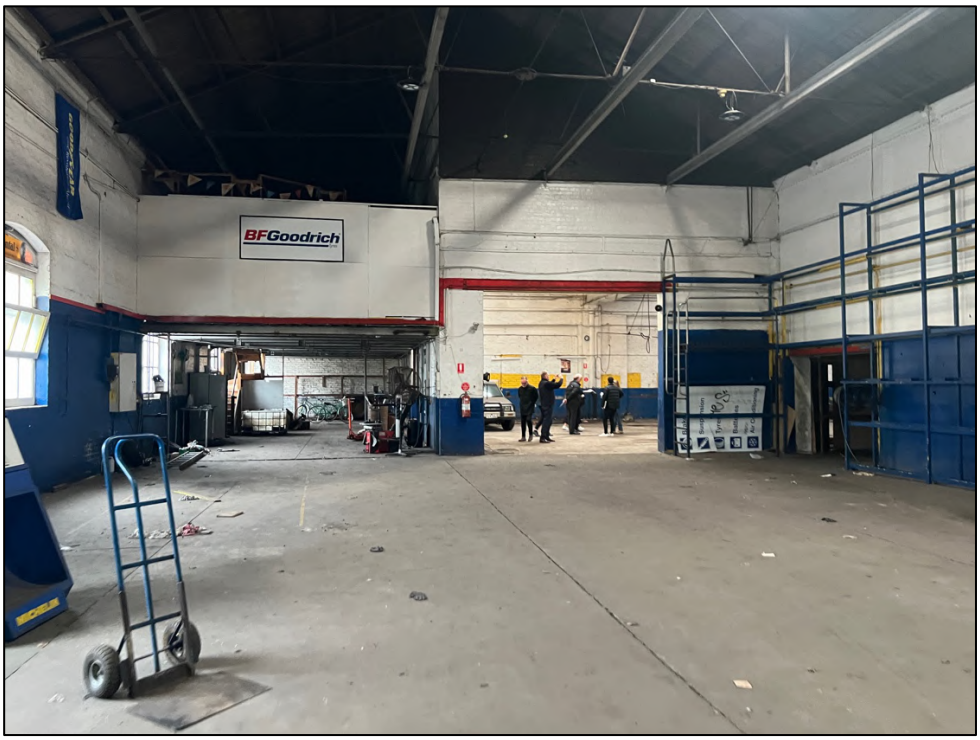

Figure 16 *Corresponding view west towards the enclosed space with the mezzanine level at left, and the link to the north-west portion of the building centre right.*

Figure 17 *Internal view within the main space showing the intact window openings along the south wall looking onto Brunswick Road.*

Figure 18 *View of the west end of the main space showing the partitioned south-west corner at left, with the entry to the north-west corner space at right.*

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Figure 19 *View inside the south-west corner room at ground level.*

Figure 20 *The timber stairs to the mezzanine.*

Figure 21 *View from the top of the stairs into the mezzanine space.*

Figure 22 *View northwards inside the space at the north-west corner of the site.*

Figure 23 *The roof across the west end of the site is in part internally supported by an iron girder on iron columns.*

Figure 24 *View west along Brunswick Road from in front of the subject site (at right).*

Figure 25 *The adjacent site to the east on the opposite corner with Black Street has received substantial contemporary development.*

Figure 26 *The adjacent site to the west at 265 Brunswick Road contains a freestanding double-storey brick interwar building, formerly a Masonic Hall.*

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6.0 Heritage Listings

Victorian Heritage Register

The subject site is located within the larger extent of registration of the Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation (see also Figure 27), which is defined as follows:

> *Heritage Act 2017 NOTICE OF REGISTRATION As Executive Director for the purpose of the Heritage Act 2017, I give notice under section 53 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by modifying a place in the Heritage Register: Number: H2332 Category: Registered Place, Registered Objects Integral to a Registered Place Place: Former Cable Tram Engine House & Tram Substation Location: 253-263 Brunswick Road, Brunswick Municipality: City of Moreland All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 2332 encompassing all of Lots 1 and 2 on Plan of Subdivision 346478 and all of Lot 2 on Lodged Plan 45051 and all of the fixed and non-fixed objects integral to the place listed in the inventory dated January 2020, held by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria.*
>
> *13 August 2020 STEVEN AVERY Executive Director*

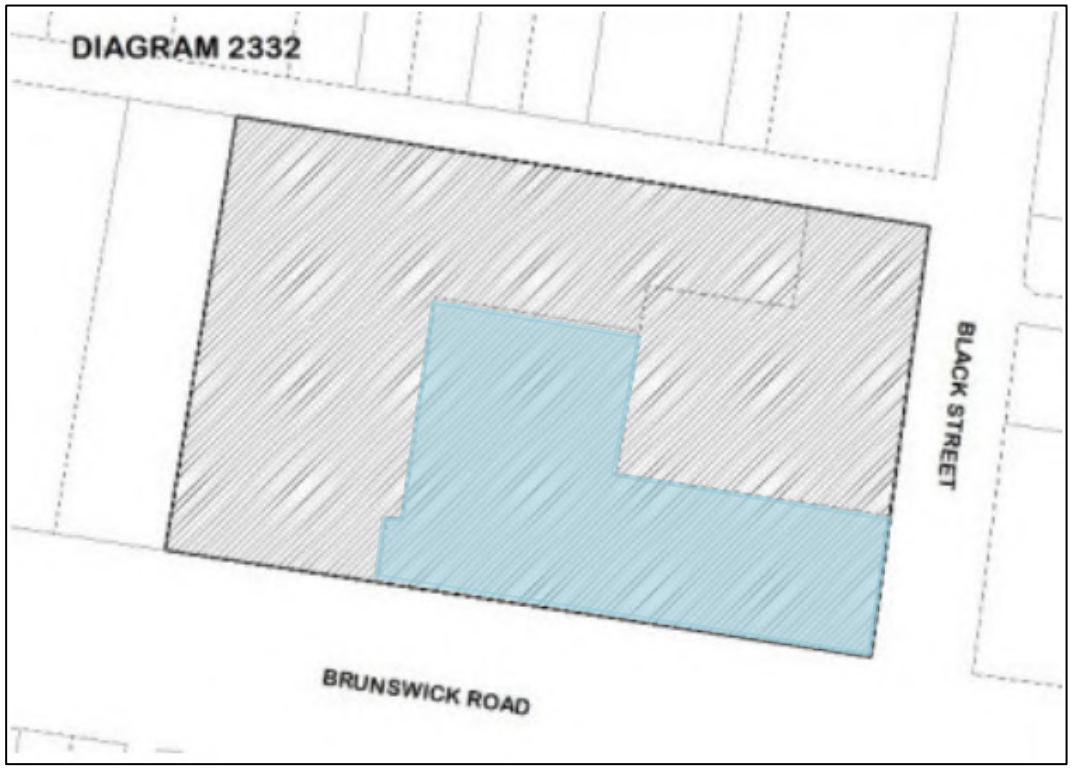

Figure 27 *Heritage Victoria's extent of registration Diagram 2332 shows the extent of registration hatched grey, with the subject development site shaded blue.*

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Merri-bek City Council

253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick is included in the Heritage Overlay identified as HO41 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the *Merri-bek Planning Scheme*, which corresponds to the boundaries of Heritage Victoria's extent of registration. Heritage Victoria is recognised in the schedule as the relevant permit authority. Council may be asked to comment on any application for works, with Heritage Victoria being the relevant authority with respect to heritage permits.

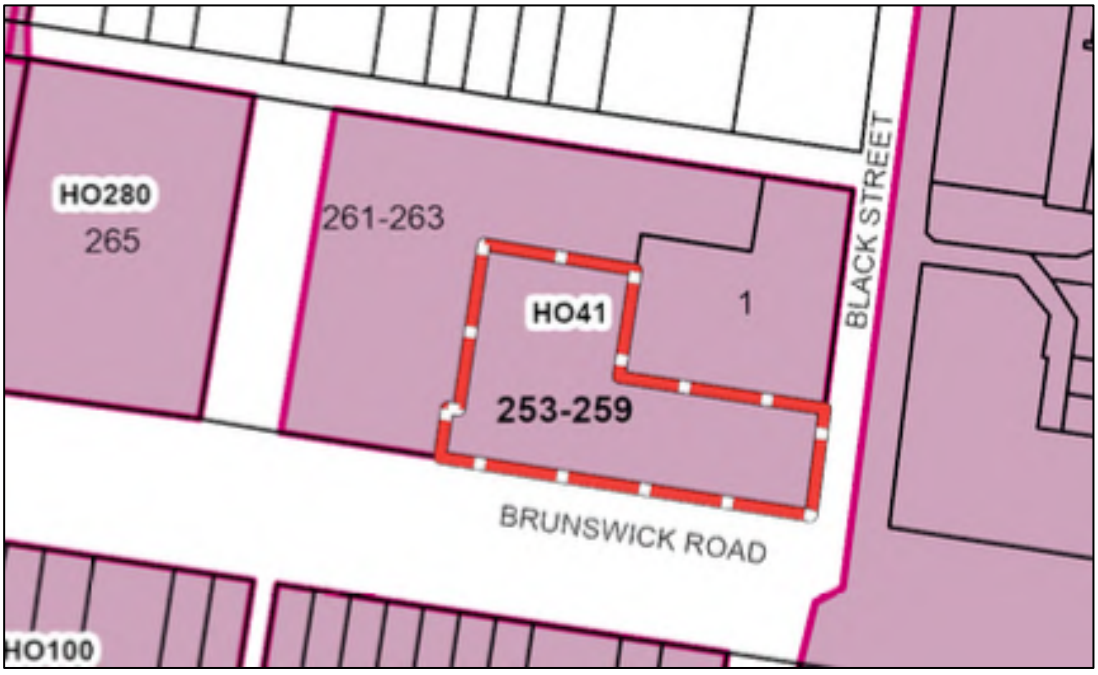

Figure 28 *Heritage Overlay Map extract, showing the location of the subject site (outlined in dotted red) and H04, which corresponds to the wide extent of registration.*

The building at 265 Brunswick Road west of the subject site is subject to an individual Heritage Overlay, HO280, though this at a separation from the subject site. Adjacent to the east across Black Street is the southern end of the Sydney Road Precinct (HO149), a linear shaped overlay extending north along Sydney Road. It presents modern built form to the streetscape interface adjacent the subject site.

7.0 Significance

The *Victorian Heritage Register* provides the following Statement of Significance for the Former Cable Tram Engine House & Tram Substation.

> *What is significant?*
> *The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation including the 1887 Cable Tram Engine House on the corner of Brunswick Road and Black Street and the 1925 Tram Substation on Black Street at Brunswick (exteriors and interiors), subsurface elements and all original rectification and associated equipment.*

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How is it significant?
The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is of historical and archaeological significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A
Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B
Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C
Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D
Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Why is it significant?
The Former Brunswick Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is significant at the State level for the following reasons:

The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is historically significant for its association with the development of Melbourne's transport system in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The building demonstrates two of the major stages in the development of Melbourne's tram system. The cable tram system developed from the 1880s and the electric tram system which began to replace it from the 1920s. The cable tram system played an important role in the development of Melbourne and its suburbs and was one of the largest and most complex in the world. The 1925 substation and its rotary converter rectification equipment were installed within the former engine house, rather than in a new free-standing building. The substation and remnant rectification equipment are associated with the electrification of the old cable tram routes from the 1920s, and the supply of power to more than one tram route. (Criterion A)

The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is a rare and relatively intact surviving element of Melbourne's cable tram system, which began to be converted to electric power in the early twentieth century. It one of the few examples of the adaption of part of an existing engine house for use as an electrical substation, thereby demonstrating two major stages in the development of Melbourne's tram system. It is one of only two substations in Victoria to retain original rotary converter equipment. (Criterion B)

The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is significant for its potential to contain significant nineteenth century archaeological remains and artefacts relating to the cable tram system, including deep brick- lined pits and cable races (tunnels) that span the length of the building. Remains of an underground tank and bath, and footings of the chimney stack and weigh bridge may still exist under the more recent buildings on the west and north of the site. Early underground cables carrying DC power between the substation and Brunswick Road and Sydney Road may also remain. (Criterion C)

The Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation is significant as a notable example of the engine houses constructed by the Melbourne Tramways Trust from the 1880s to power Melbourne's cable trams. It is largely intact and features most of the external principal architectural characteristics of a cable tram engine house including a wide doorway to allow large items of steam driven machinery to be moved in and out, high ceiling, a bluestone plinth and brick walls with polychrome decoration. Tram cables travelled from the Engine House to Sydney Road through underground brick races (tunnels) which are still present. The retention of some of the original

rectification equipment and fixtures give an indication of the original function of the substation building. (Criterion D)

The *Melbourne Metropolitan Tramway Study* also provides a Statement of Significance.

What is significant?
The Brunswick cable tram engine house is located at 253-263 Brunswick Road, Brunswick. It was constructed by the MT&OC in 1887 and unlike some of the later buildings, has a fairly plain façade, originally of polychrome brick with arched window openings. The adjoining electricity substation (in part of former cable tram engine house) was constructed in 1925on the corner of Brunswick Rd and Black St.

How is it significant?
The Brunswick cable tram engine house is of historical, architectural, aesthetic and technological significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?
The Brunswick cable tram engine house is of historical significance as and important surviving element of Melbourne's former cable tram system (which as a whole is of national Significance). Criterion A

The site is significant as one of a network of formerly twelve engine houses that were built to power the Melbourne cable tram network, itself internationally significant as the world's largest single cable tram system, i.e. it was all owned and managed as one system. Criterion D Criterion B

It reflects the importance of this transport system to the development of Brunswick and the characteristic arrangement and positioning of the buildings on the system, where large low buildings were required to house the steam engines and cable winding gear in adjoining sections. These were required to be positioned about midway along the cable runs. As such the building helps understand the unique operation and technology of the system. Criterion F

Architecturally, the Brunswick Engine House was of simpler design than many other Engine Houses in Melbourne, and reflects the earlier form of building, now mostly lost with the demolition of the Richmond engine house. Criterion E

It is noted the above statements emphasise the historical significance of the building. Its overall external form and character are considered to contribute to an understanding of the place, with no specific interior elements identified as being of significance beyond the large, double-height open spaces. The statements do not acknowledge the extent to which the external presentation has been diminished by unsympathetic overpainting. The tram cable infrastructure that connected the site with the tramway along Sydney Road was located underground. As such, the association with trams is not obviously demonstrated by the external or internal character of the place, which has a more generic industrial character.

The significant fabric is considered to be that associated with the original 1880s extent of the building, with the facades to Brunswick Road and Black Street, and the associated roof form to the southern bay of the building of primary significance.

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8.0 Proposal

The proposed scheme has been developed with extensive dialogue with Heritage Victoria, with the design paradigm adopted at the recommendation of the OVGA. It involves some demolition works, minor alterations and new works.

Demolition

It is proposed to demolish the following existing elements

- All concrete floor slabs.
- Lift well to be excavated, set back in the north-west corner of the primary internal space.
- The mezzanine areas and associated partition walls, non-original access stairs.
- Partitioning at the east end of the building.
- Non-original garage door.
- Steel beam over the large spaces at the west end of the site will be trimmed to the end columns.
- North party wall at north-western corner will be demolished and rebuilt within the title boundary.
- The north bay to the roof.
- One small chimney on the north-east side of the roof.

Additional alterations will include.

- Small changes to external openings. Along the western side of Brunswick Road, a window opening will be enlarged to allow fire egress and a new opening created to accommodate a booster cabinet. An original doorway to Black Street will be reinstated, with an additional fire egress door and another new substation door opening created.

New Works

A seven level addition will then be constructed on the site extending above and behind the retained heritage fabric, which will be integrated to form a podium. The works will enable the conversion of the building into a new student accommodation facility.

The new Ground floor and Level 1 will be entirely enclosed within the existing building envelope. A courtyard space will be created along the northern boundary wall of the northern bay. At Level 2, the existing roof structure to the southern bay along Brunswick Road will be retained (apart from where it is penetrated by the lift shaft. Level 2 will partially project into the current envelope of the roof over the northern bay, at a setback from the northern boundary.

At Level 3, the addition will fully project over the main southern wing of the building, and slightly project over the southern side of the northern bay. It will include a recessed bay located on the west side of the Brunswick Road elevation, that will be continued to the full height of the building. On the east side adjacent to 1 Black Street, the northern side will incorporate a recessed void, which will also rise to the full height of the building A communal terrace space will be created between this projection and the lightwell to the northern ground

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floor courtyard. This building envelope will be continued to Level 6. The flat roof forms will include service plant along the north side, with photovoltaic panels along the south.

The addition will have a contemporary rectilinear architectural character incorporating extensive articulation. The materiality will comprise predominantly rust/brown finished, perforated cladding. At Level 2, the elevations will include a horizontal band of perforated steel panels enclosing the retained original roof form to the southern bay. Levels 3-6 above will feature regularly spaced window openings which are offset at consecutive floors, and that are inset with angular cladding surrounds. Along Brunswick Road, the recessed bay on the west side of the facade between Levels 2 and 6 widens towards the top of the building, relieving the otherwise very broad horizonal proportions of the elevation into two narrower entities. The flat cladding treatment to the upper levels to the east and west side elevations is varied by a recessed central bay between Levels 3 and 6, which accommodates end windows to the upper level main corridors. The elevation to the northern bay overlooking the courtyard garden has a trabeated treatment at Ground floor to Level 2, this apartments above otherwise incorporating a similar window treatment to the upper levels overlooking Brunswick Road. The remainder of this elevation is finished with flat perforated cladding.

Internally, there will be no basement levels in recognition of the potential archaeological value of the site. Within the southern bay, the ground floor will contain a large open café area along the east side, with a larger open plan communal area to the west. The double-height internal ceiling with its exposed roof trusses will remain open above these areas. A series of partitioned rooms will be created along the north wall containing bicycle storage, the lift/stair core service/utility areas, toilets, a laundry and kitchen. The northern bay located will contain five studio apartments, a communal courtyard along the northern boundary, and a fire pump room with fire tanks along the western boundary.

Level 1 will include communal gym, dining and water storage areas above the partitioning along the north side of the building, with library area at the far western end. The northern bay will contain seven studion apartments overlooking the northern courtyard. This level will be accessible via spiral stairs at each end, and also from the centrally located main lift and stair core. Levels 2 will contain only seven studio apartments in the northern bay and the central lift core/stair, with an enclosed void over the retained roof structure to the south bay of the Cable Engine House. The levels above will be dedicated to apartments accessed via a primary east-west corridor.

A full suite of external conservation/restoration works to the retained street facades is proposed, which will include the removal of the paint from the originally bi-chromatic face brickwork. (It is suggested the full detail of these works be determined as a condition of permit.) It is also intended to include interpretative installations inside the proposed ground floor communal spaces.

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9.0 Heritage Impacts

As noted, the former Cable Tram Engine House is identified by Heritage Victoria as being of historical and archaeological significance. The proposal will not have any impacts on the historic significance of the place, which is not embodied in the fabric of the building in a particularly demonstrative manner. With the past removal of the original plant and demolition of the landmark western chimney, no visible evidence remains that obviously associates the building with the cable tram infrastructure, apart from its general architecture resemblance to other large tramway buildings from the same period. In its current form, it presents as a typical late Victorian industrial building, with generic large column free internal spaces that may have potentially supported a variety of activities.

The scheme retains these architectural qualities of the building. The facades to Brunswick Road and Black Street will be conserved and restored, returning them to their original face brick presentation similar to that seen in Figure 4. This represents a very positive heritage outcome. While the retained main roof structure will become concealed from public view, it will remain legible in internal views from the primary ground floor communal spaces.

There are numerous precedents of large heritage buildings successfully receiving substantial upper level additions including of a contrasting contemporary character. Some examples in Australia and internationally are illustrated on the following pages.

Figure 29 Scot's Church, Sydney [Tonkin Zulaikha Greer].

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Figure 30 *RMIT Building 9, registered building H1506 (Peter Elliott Architects).*

Figure 31 *The Brewery Yard, Irving Street, Sydney [Tzannes Associates].*

Figure 32 *Caixaforum, Madrid [Herzog de Meuron].*

Figure 33 *Philharmonic Hall, Hamburg [Herzog de Meuron].*

It is recognised that the original function of the building has no prospect of being reinstated in future. The proposed new use is compatible with conserving and celebrating the building's significant heritage values. It will introduce a substantial continuous residential population onto the site, resulting in ongoing use of the ground floor communal spaces and a greater appreciation of the interior's grand proportions and industrial character. The intensity of the proposed development should be assessed in the context of the costs associated with the proposed external conservation and restoration works, and ongoing long term maintenance of the building. The scheme supports this change of use in an manner that minimises changes to the interior, locating most of the new accommodation in the upper level addition rather than within the existing heritage envelope.

A further consideration is the potential impacts on the adjacent portions of the original Cable Tram Engine House that are located on separate titles and fall outside the scope of this application. The proposed external conservation/restoration works will substantially improve the setting of these parts of the complex as seen along Brunswick Road and Black Street, resulting in an uniform presentation along Black Street, and enhancing the legibility of the original overall character of the complex.

The portion of the original complex at 1 Black Street retains the eastern portion of the northern hipped roof bay. While the proposed works will involve the removal of the western portion of this roof bay located on the subject site, it is noted that 1 Black Street will retain a representative eastern section of this roof, accepting it is located outside the subject site. Furthermore, given its smaller size and its role in accommodating an internal electrical substation, it is likely that building will never receive upper level additions of the character proposed for the larger subject site. It is likely to retain its external heritage character to a high degree.

The new upper level addition will result in a change to the context and setting of the former Cable Tram Engine House in views from surrounding streets, though will be legible as a separate contemporary element due to its setback and differing external treatment. This change should be considered with regard for the existing context of modern six-storey development to the east, which is visible above and behind the Engine House complex in views from further west along Brunswick Road. This part of Brunswick Road is increasingly characterised by substantial contemporary forms integrated in a context of retained heritage buildings and in this context, the scheme can be seen as reflecting the emerging character of this part of Brunswick.

More intensive development may also be anticipated on nearby sites to the north, which would also result in a background setting of higher built from behind the building in views from Brunswick Street.

Additional Commentary as Requested in RFI

Heritage Victoria's issued a Request for Further Information (RFI) on 24/09/2024 in response to the initial application scheme, which canvassed a series of matters. The response to some of these issued has been a complete redesign of project with guidance from the OVGA. The extent of redesign has rendered some of the RFI items less relevant, and this response reflects that.

The requested information is listed in dot point form below, with commentary provided beneath each. It is noted that these queries were in relation to the original application scheme (not the current revised scheme).

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- *Identify and assess impacts associated with the additional reporting outlined above. (ie. Historical Archaeological Assessment, Wind Impacts Assessment, Structural Assessment)*

The archaeological assessment prepared by Ochre Imprints concluded that while it was unlikely there are archaeological remnants dating from the occupation of the site prior to its acquisition by the Melbourne Tramways Trust, there are likely to be extensive remains dating from the c.1886-c.1936 period. It mapped areas of high, high-moderate and moderate archaeological potential across the site. The proposed development has from the outset ought to minimise disturbance of archaeological remains, and the updated scheme is considered to achieve this outcome. A methodology is defined in the Ochre assessment for managing any associated archaeological disturbances.

The structural compliance strategy prepared by TWW Consulting Engineers included the following concluding summary [p.20].

> *In addition to setting out the structural strategy, this document also addresses the concerns from Heritage Victoria and outlines a road map for additional items to be investigated or confirmed, by TTW and others, in order to meet the requirements of the recommended compliance strategy.*
>
> *In conclusion, the former cable tram engine house building is generally in good condition based on the site observations and through careful design and engineering, the proposed new development will not impact the structural integrity of the existing structure.*

It is proposed to undertake the Wind Impact Assessment as a condition of permit.

- *Discussion of the two chimneys on the east side of the roof proposed for demolition, including approximate date of construction and an assessment of the impact of their proposed demolition.*

The chimney located in the south-east corner of the building has been highly altered and is the smaller of the two. It appears to date from the early decades of the twentieth century, or later. It has minimal visibility from the adjacent streets. It is not demonstrative of the original architecture of the building and is considered to have limited heritage value because of its altered condition.

The chimney located in the north-east corner of the site most likely dates from the original construction of the Engine House. Constructed of red brick with rendered capping, it is intact. (An identical chimney is located on the north side of 1 Black Street outside the development site.) It also has limited visibility from the street, though is more evident than the south-east corner chimney, particularly in longer views down Black Street from the north. Demolition of this chimney is required to allow for the construction of a required structural support column for the upper levels, with associated transfer beams in this location.

The removal of both of these changes is considered acceptable on the basis of their largely concealed location, and altered/conventional character. Both chimneys, if retained, would be fully concealed from public view by the new upper level addition, resulting in little appreciated benefit. The identical chimney located on the north side of 1 Black Street outside the development site is fully visible from the street, and this will remain demonstrative of the building's original chimney design, including of the north-east chimney for which demolition is proposed.

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In this context, any associated loss of significant fabric resultant from the demolition of both chimneys will be relatively minor, and is seen as acceptable in the context of the wider benefits of the proposal, including the conservation works to the retained heritage facades.

- *Discussion of the physical interface between the proposed tower and the heritage roofline, including but not limited to:*

– *How ongoing maintenance access will be achieved to the void on the north side of the heritage roof*

An access hatch/door will be provided within the fire stairs (pending approval by the fire safety engineer) and/or via the corridor on Level 2. This will either provide access to the entire roof or serve as access to the western portion, if separate stair access can be provided to serve the eastern side

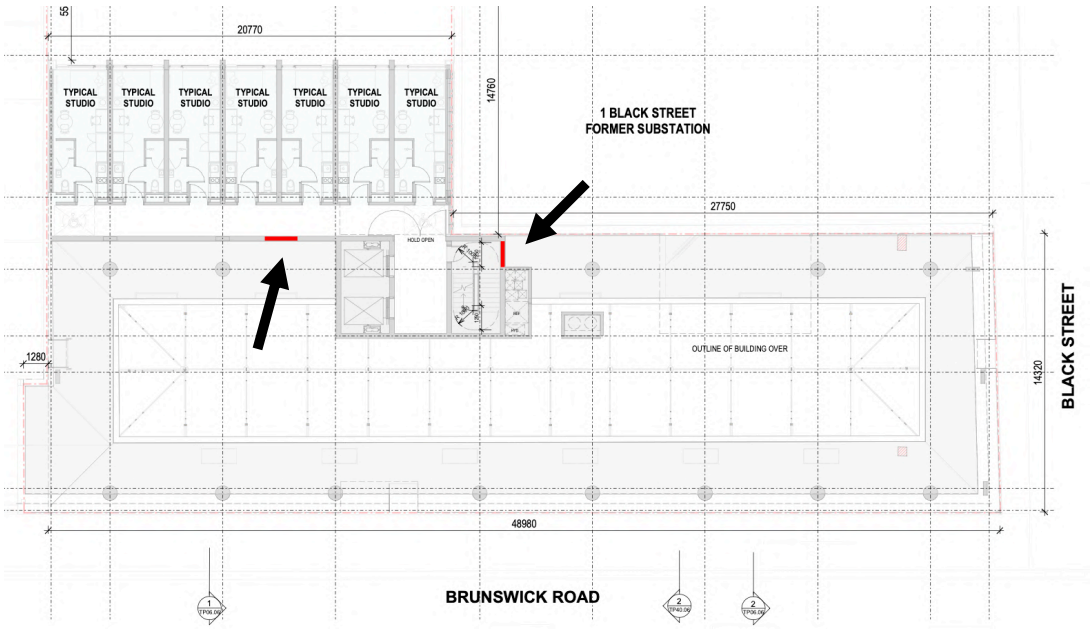

Figure 34 *Drawing extract showing the proposed location of access points to the void of the retained roof (marked with black arrows).*

– *The connection between the new built form and the top of the gable roofline*

There will be no connection between the new build form and the top of the gable roofline in the new design. Additionally, this area will be fully concealed. To account for construction tolerance, the offset of any new structure will be a minimum of 100mm. The interface between the new and existing fabric above the parapet of the brick façade is shown in the detail sketch below.

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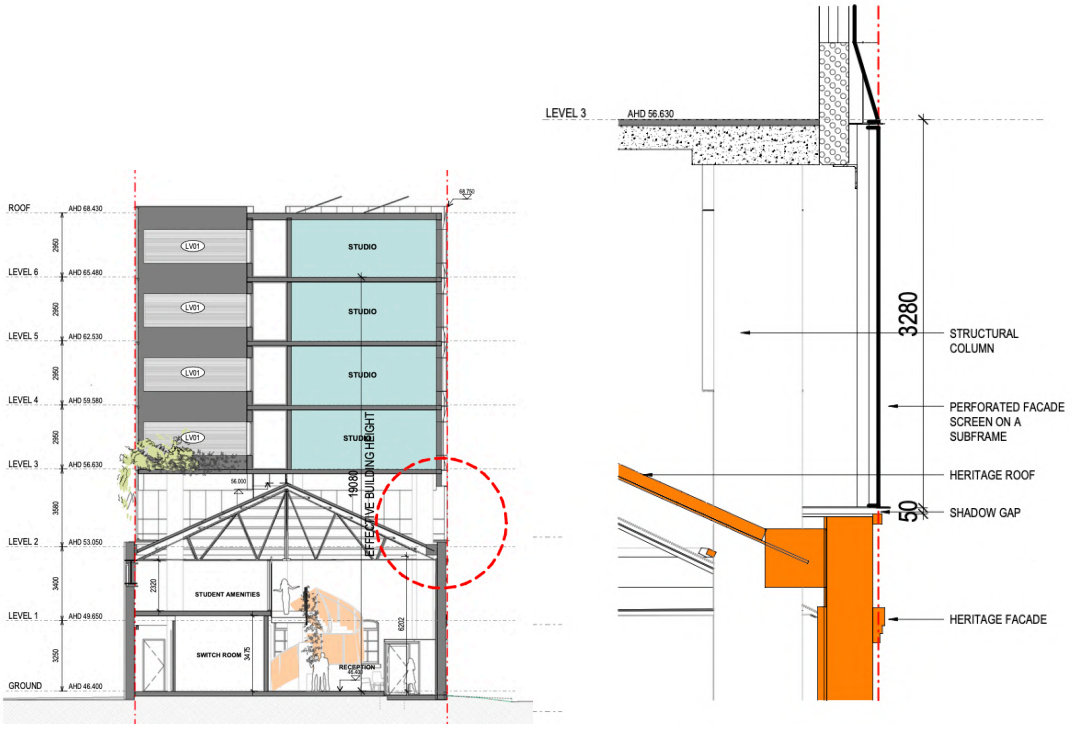

Figure 35 *Detail sketch of the interface between the street facade parapet line of the heritage building and screen above.*

– *The impact of the new built form on the performance of the heritage roof stormwater system.*

The new build form covers the existing roof surface in its entirety and will help reduce stormwater load. This ensures that the existing stormwater system has more than sufficient capacity to manage the collection of any residual water or rainwater that may penetrate through the perforated façade metal screens.

- *The extent to which the Cable Tram Engine House will be required to be dismantled and reconstructed to build the proposed development.*

There will be no dismantling of the existing roof, except in areas that need to be demolished to accommodate the construction of the core. Roof penetrations required for the structural columns can be locally removed once the trimmer beams are in place.

- *The nature and extent of structural interventions and the impacts of that work on the place.*
- *The nature and extent of building code compliance, seismic strengthening and environmentally sustainable design requirements and the impacts of that work on the place.*
- *The nature and extent of any structural design solutions required to the Cable Tram Engine House to achieve the proposed development.*

These matters have been addressed in the structural compliance strategy submitted as part of this RFI response.

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10.0 Key Considerations

As noted, this heritage impact statement has been prepared in general accordance with Heritage Victoria's guidelines for such assessments. With respect to the permit application works, it seeks to respond to several key questions, as previously set out in Section 2.0.

The cultural heritage significance of the place

The cultural heritage significance of the place, i.e. of the former Cable Tram Engine House is outlined in detail above, and in particular is identified in the Statement of Significance for the place. It is identified as being primarily of historical and archaeological significance, but also of architectural interest as a notable, externally intact example of a late nineteenth century cable tram engine house.

What options were considered in developing the proposal?

The current proposal has been developed with extensive consultation with Heritage Victoria and with guidance from the OVGA in order to minimise the potential heritage impacts of the development. The initial application concept was to construct an upper level addition at setbacks from the street interfaces, projecting over the north side of the site to a greater degree. The current design approach was adopted at the recommendation of the OVGA. In eliminating the initially proposed street setbacks, it was possible to achieve a more compact building envelope, with the deletion of a level. .

An important design decision has been to retain the original exposed roof trusses in the main southern bay of the building and avoid fully partitioning the main interior space. Its grand proportions and industrial character remain clearly evident and are a feature of the ground floor communal spaces. The location of most of the new accommodation in an upper level addition was key to making this design outcome viable.

Of the viable development options investigated, the current proposal is considered the optimal outcome in terms of providing amenity while minimising potential heritage impacts.

What impact (positive and/or negative) will the proposed works have on the significance of the place?

The scheme will have the following positive impacts on the significance of the place.

- External conservation/restoration works will be undertaken to return the exterior of the building to its original presentation.
- The above works will also improve the setting of the adjacent portions of the original building that are located on different titles outside of the subject site and were originally of a consistent character.
- Non-original internal partitioning of little/no significance will be removed.

The scheme will have the following potentially negative impacts on the significance of the place.

- The scheme will result in a change to the setting of the former Cable Tram Engine House in views from Brunswick Street and Black Street.
- Some demolition of external fabric (including potentially original fabric) will occur, though this will be in concealed locations and secondary in character.

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- New partitioning will be introduced to some currently open large interior spaces.

What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts?

The key measures taken to mitigate the potential for negative impacts upon the cultural significance of the place are as follows:

- The extent of retention includes the facades to Brunswick Road, Black Street and the main southern bay of the roof, with demolition limited to non-original, secondary or concealed fabric.
- The works will be accompanied by a suite of external conservation and restoration to the street facades, which will return the building to close to its original street presentation.
- The scheme will retain and reactivate the traditional main vehicle entry from Brunswick Road.
- The introduction of new fire egress and substation openings to the south and east facades are small scale interventions, that have been carefully located and proportioned as to minimise their potential impacts.
- The addition will be legible as non-heritage fabric of a complementary character, with the original external rectangular volume of the building remaining readily understood, and the original roof form discernible from the interior.
- The internal planning including the location of large communal areas on the ground floor will allow for the retention of expansive double-height spaces with their large internal trusses and exposed brick walls.
- It is intended to include interpretative installations in the completed development.
- To the extent that there are any perceived negative impacts associated with the scheme, these should be weighed against the enhanced community appreciation of the building that will result from its external restoration/conservation and the introduction of a substantial residential population who will use and appreciated the repurposed main double-height space on a daily basis.

Reasonable or Economic Use

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—*

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(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 former Cable Tram Engine House, and the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place.

A detailed economic analysis addressing the question of reasonable economic use has been prepared by Ethos Urban and should be referenced in relation to these matters.

11.0 Conclusion

The proposed works to the former Cable Tram Engine House achieve an appropriate balance between retaining and celebrating key aspects of the building's original external and internal presentation and adapting the building to a new compatible use. The extent of demolition is limited to concealed secondary or non-original fabric. The incorporation of the building into the new development as a podium is an appropriate development paradigm that will allow for the more intensive use of the site in an economically viable manner. The inclusion of large communal spaces on the ground floor will allow for an ongoing community appreciation of the industrial character of the double-height internal space with its exposed roof trusses. The proposed suite of external conservation and restoration will substantially improve the street presentation of the building and an understanding of its original character. The works will have no heritage impacts on the historic significance of the place.

The proposal has been prepared in accordance with general heritage principles and the *Burra Charter*. Having regard for the above, the proposal has been developed with due consideration for the significance of the registered place and the provisions of the *Heritage Act* and it is appropriate that a permit be issued.