

Address
253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick Road

Project No
2732

Date
25 February 2025

Cable Tram Engine House

253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick
Town Planning Report

âBensons hayball

Introduction

The project presents an opportunity to create a unique development that highlights the heritage value of the Brunswick Cable Tram Engine House, while balancing it with a contemporary re-imagining of the site.

This report has been prepared by Contour and Hayball on behalf of Bensons, the permit applicant. The proposal seeks approval for the redevelopment of the Cable Tram Engine House at 253-259 Brunswick Road, Brunswick for student accommodation.

The project vision to create a special development of appropriate character and interest is supported by a high-quality architectural design response that will see the development unfold as a benchmark project for the Merri-bek City Council.

The project is also of strategic importance in terms of the scale of redevelopment opportunity it presents in a vibrant and rapidly evolving precinct bounded by Sydney Road and Brunswick Road. Coupled with its location in an area that enjoys outstanding transport, urban amenity and access to tertiary institutions, the site is ideally positioned to make a major contribution to the future student accommodation needs of Merri-bek City Council.

The project will be a major catalyst in the ongoing transformation of this precinct, replacing an existing vacant Cable Tram Engine House with a student accommodation, adding to a vibrant, genuinely mixed-use precinct that aims to set a new benchmark of respecting and enhancing heritage architecture in Melbourne.

One of the hallmarks of the design vision lies in the integration of the Cable Tram Engine House into the design, respecting the early transport history of the site and its context within the evolution of Melbourne's public transport network. The heritage façade of the typical late Victorian Industrial building on the ground plane is substantially retained while at high level the proposed building forms are aligned with the heritage façade. The new facade is sculpturally veiled in lightweight steel, subtly referencing the linearity of the heritage building below, acting as an urban marker sitting comfortably within the neighbourhood skyline.

In doing so the proposal advances a concept that combines both urban gravitas and symbolic power.

In Summary, The Proposal:

- Responds to an evident and growing metropolitan need for student accommodation.
- Has been developed around fundamentally sound principles of quality urban and respect for heritage impact.
- Can be accommodated without amenity impacts on the surrounding area.

In every respect it is considered to represent an exemplar for a successful residential development.

The report herein sets out in detail:

- The urban context of the site.
- The planning policy framework for assessment of the project.
- The proposed heritage response.
- The proposal in detail, including the design rationale.
- The proposed tra c, parking and waste management strategies; and
- An ESD Assessment Of The Project.

The report is accompanied by specific specialist reports which include:

Planning	Contour
Heritage	Bryce Rayworth
Landscape	Enlocus
Traffic	Ratio
ESD	Ecoresults
Waste Management	Ratio
Acoustic	Acoustic Logic

Additional consultant advice has been incorporated from:

Structure	TTW
Services	WRAP
DDA	Architecture and Access
Fire Engineer	Red Fire Engineers
Archeology	Ochre Imprints



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Appendix



01

Architectural Statement

“Wherever in the world, the best architecture, the architecture that withstood time, has always been those buildings that have left a testimony of their age to future generations. They hand down a sign, a code, convey a sense of their contemporary, but also how they saw the future.”

01 Architectural Statement

01 Design Drivers

The proposed design for the Cable Tram Engine House has been driven by a set of core principles prioritising the heritage value of the site in scale and finish.

1. Retaining the presence of the existing building at street level

The proposed design for the new built form respects and enhances the heritage building's visibility and presence at street level with an appropriate scaled extension that emphasizes the horizontal proportions of the existing building and presents a regulated, complementary 'industrial' finish to the facade that does not compete with the base.

2. Retaining a majority of the exterior facade

95% of the total existing façade will be retained in the proposed concept. Minor insertions are proposed on the north east and south east corners to permit servicing and egress. The main entry will be retained in its current form

3. Re-instating the building facade to its original finish

The concept proposes the re-instatement of the original brick finish and bluestone base of the façade, allowing it to align with the original finish of the existing substation on Black Street.

4. Retaining a strong sense of the internal volume and ambiance of the original interior.

1. Core Position: The building's core has been located centrally within the floor plate allowing effective internal circulation while preserving internal ambiance of the heritage volume. This strategy retains the majority of the high-value heritage floor area and roof zone, minimising disruption to the existing structure.

2. Structural Strategy: Introduced supporting structure for the units above are placed around the perimeter of the existing walls. This strategic placement ensures that the new additions do not unduly interfere with the heritage character of the interior space, ground floor and mezzanine levels.

3. Roof Truss Preservation: By placement of the new structural elements to the perimeter of the existing internal volume, a majority of the roof trusses in the southern portion of the Engine House are preserved. This allows the full spatial experience of the building to be maintained, showcasing its historical and architectural significance.

The concept has been reasonably tested for compliance with specialist consultant advice from WRAP (services engineering) and RED Fire (fire engineering).

5. Built Form Vision

1. Height Compliance and Setbacks: The importance of maintaining the visual prominence of the Cable Tram Engine House heritage listed facades on Brunswick Road and Black Street has been one of the principal drivers of the proposed design. A sense of proportional equivalence at street level is retained between the new and existing built forms by introducing a uniform 5 storey element with lightweight cladding over the existing building.

2. Enhanced Façade Presence: The street wall facades are designed to complement the horizontal linearity of the heritage building's facade along the ground plane. This ensures that the new and original architectural features sit comfortably together in a balanced facade composition.

3. Visibility from Key Intersection: The unified built form strategy, purposefully avoiding a convoluted stepped built form, ensures the building still holds its form at its boundaries, retaining its presence when viewed obliquely from the intersection of Sydney Road and Brunswick Road. This view is important for maintaining the building's historical and architectural significance while acknowledging the value of its contemporary re-imagining in the urban landscape

Bryce Rayworth (heritage) and Ochre Imprints (archeology) have provided heritage advice and feedback at key milestones in the design process.

As the design has evolved we've proactively sought feedback from Heritage Victoria and responded to their commentary with design revision to enhance retention of the existing building form and fabric.

In summary, the proposed design strategy effectively,

1. Balances the necessity for modernisation with the preservation of the Cable Tram Engine House's principle internal and external heritage features.

2. Leverages a unified built form solution to balance new construction with the preservation of the heritage building's external visual and architectural integrity, particularly addressing key sight lines from surrounding streets.



02

Urban Context

02 Urban Context

01 District Views and Surrounding Landmarks



AERIAL VIEW OF THE GREATER BRUNSWICK AREA

02 Urban Context

02 Key Urban and Architectural Landmarks

This area of Brunswick, located in Melbourne's inner north, is a vibrant and diverse community known for its eclectic mix of cultures, arts, and historic charm. Renowned for its lively Sydney Road, Brunswick boasts an array of cafes, restaurants, and boutique shops, reflecting its rich multicultural heritage.

The area is a hub for artists and musicians, with numerous studios, galleries, and live music venues. Green spaces like Princes Park offer residents a respite from urban life. Brunswick's historic buildings, many of which are heritage-listed, contribute to its unique character, making it a dynamic and appealing place to live and visit.

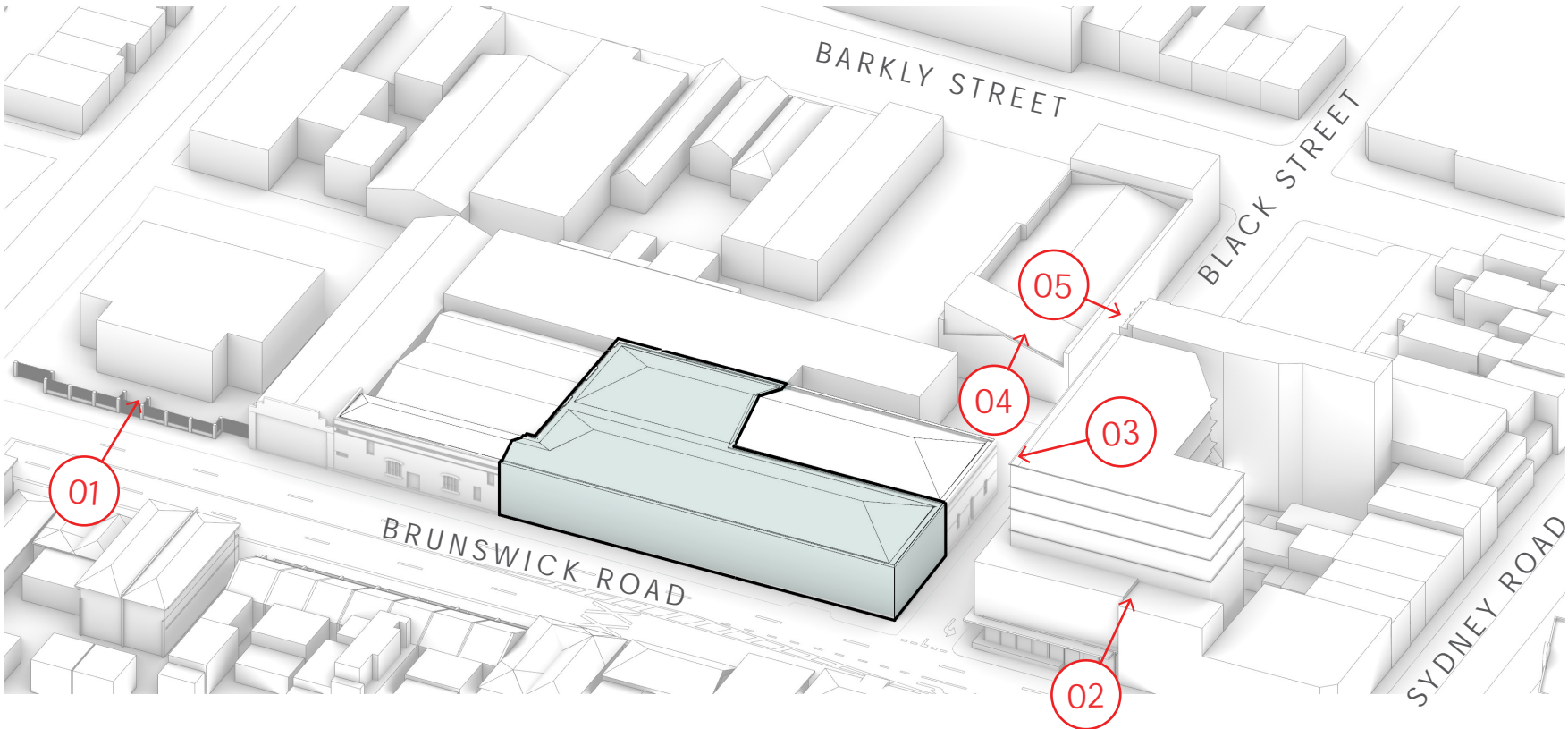
The subjects site is located within a cluster of blocks experiencing significant residential and community evolution between Jewell Station and Barkly Square. It is ideally located to access public transport, tertiary education hubs, community and retail activity centers.



AERIAL VIEW FROM THE SOUTH

02 Urban Context

03 Surrounding Neighbourhood Character



01

KINGDOM HALL OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES
265 BRUNSWICK ROAD, BRUNSWICK



02

MID RISE RESIDENTIAL
251 BRUNSWICK ROAD, BRUNSWICK



03

FORMER TRAM SUBSTATION
1 BLACK STREET, BRUNSWICK



04

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING.
3 11 BLACK STREET, BRUNSWICK



05

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING
47 SYDNEY ROAD, BRUNSWICK

02 Urban Context

04 Street Interface



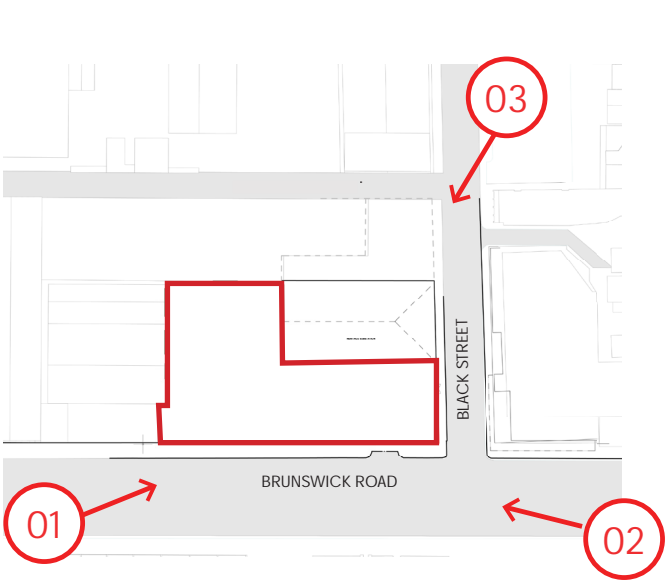
01 VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST



02 VIEW FROM SOUTH EAST



03 VIEW FROM NORTH EAST
(SITE OBSCURED BY EXISTING SUBSTATION)



03

Heritage Significance & Existing Site Conditions

03 Heritage Significance & Existing Site Conditions

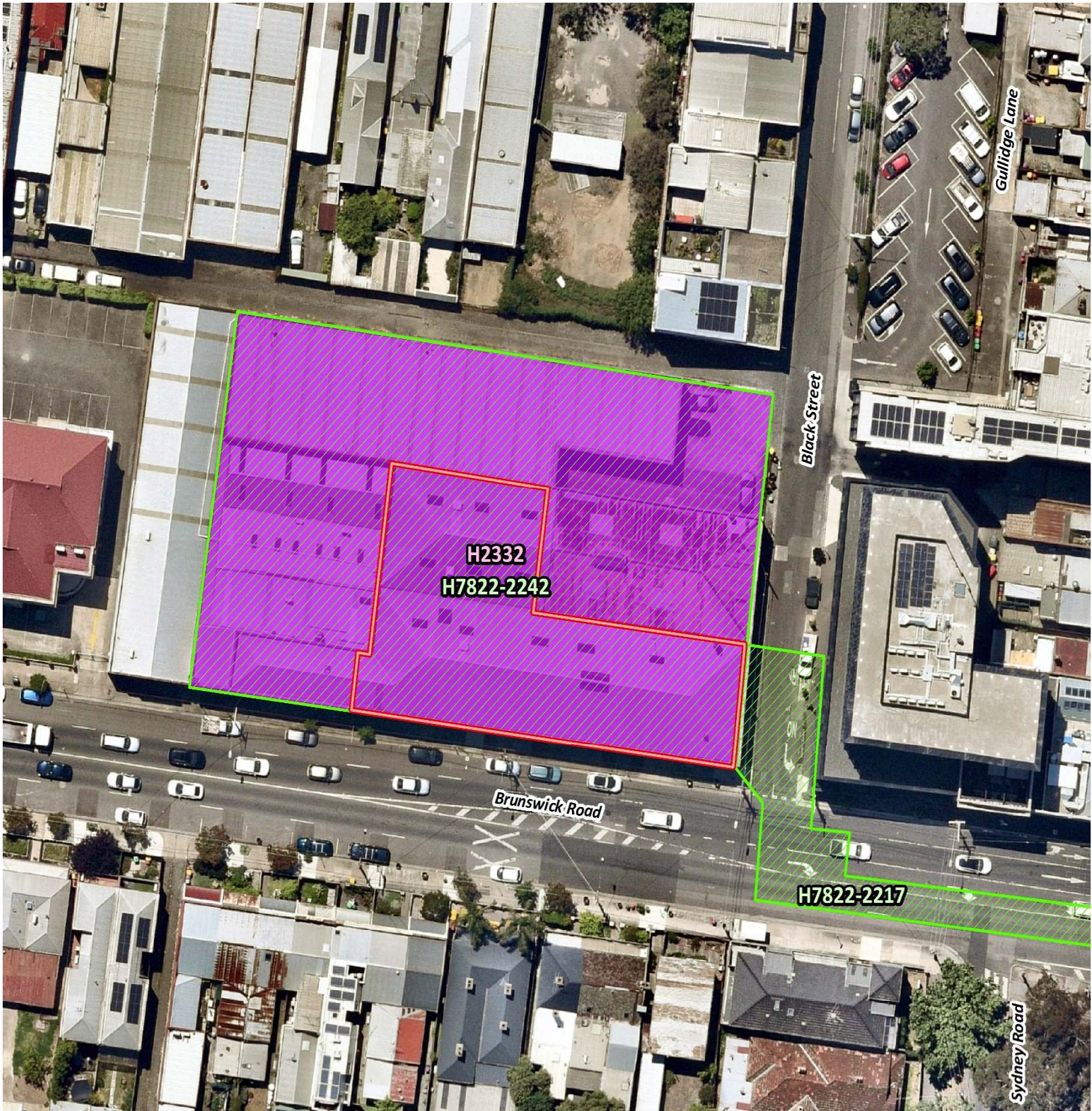
01 Subject Site: Study Area and Heritage Condition

The subject site is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), known as the Former Cable Tram Engine House and Tram Substation (VHR H2332). Accordingly, the subject site is subject to the Heritage Act 2017 and a permit is required to undertake works.

The subject site is also individually identified as HO41 253-263 Brunswick Road, Brunswick - Former Cable Engine House & Tram Substation in the Merri-bek Planning Scheme.

As per Clause 43.01 a planning permit is not required under the HO to develop a place in the VHR (with the exception of subdivision).

- SITE AREA
- VICTORIAN HERITAGE INVENTORY
- VICTORIAN HERITAGE REGISTER



03 Heritage Significance & Existing Site Conditions

02 Original Plan MMBW From 1904

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.

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.

