

# Heritage Formal Referral Response

## Application Information:

<b>Officer:</b>	Nish Goonetilleke
<b>Council Reference:</b>	PHRF23/0217
<b>Address:</b>	300/658 Church Street, Cremorne VIC 3121
<b>Proposal:</b>	Heritage Victoria Referral – Partial demolition, alterations, and additions to the former Richmond Power Station
<b>Relevant Overlays</b>	<b>Heritage Grade:</b> Victorian Heritage Register  Heritage Overlay – Schedule 279 (HO279) (Northern-portion): Victorian Heritage Register H1055  Design and Development Overlay – Schedules 1-J & 5 (DDO1-J & DDO5)
<b>Yarra Planning Scheme References</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clause 15.03 Heritage</li><li>• Clause 21.05-1 Built Form (Heritage)</li><li>• Clause 22.02 Development Guidelines for sites subject to the Heritage Overlay</li><li>• Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay</li><li>• Clause 59.07 Applications Under a Heritage Overlay</li></ul>
<b>Comments Sought:</b>	Heritage Victoria Referral – URGENT
<b>Disclaimer:</b>	Council’s Heritage Advisor provides the following information which is based on the information provided in the referral request memo referenced above.

## Context Images

### Street Frontage:



Figure 1. East Elevation (Hargreaves Street), Source: Google Street View 2020.

**Street Frontage:**



Figure 2. North Elevation (Electric Street). Source: Google Street View 2014.



Figure 3. West Elevation (Oddys Lane). Source: Google Street View 2020.



Figure 4. South Elevation (carpark off Hargreaves Street). Source: Google Street View 2014.



Aerial (including VHR extent of registration):

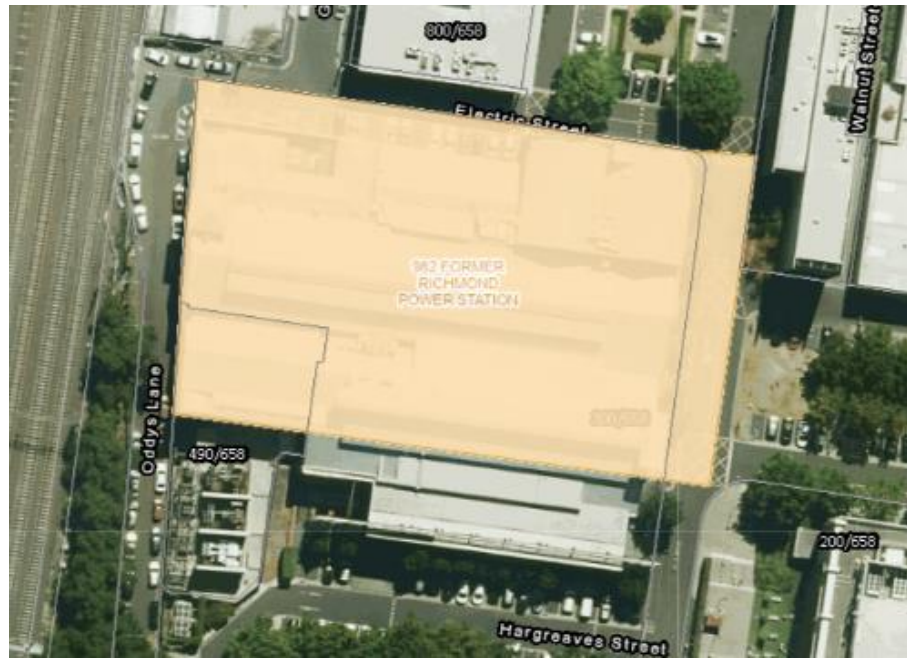


Figure 5. Aerial image of the site indicating VHR extent of registration. Source: VicPlan

Axonometric illustrations of the former Richmond Power Station

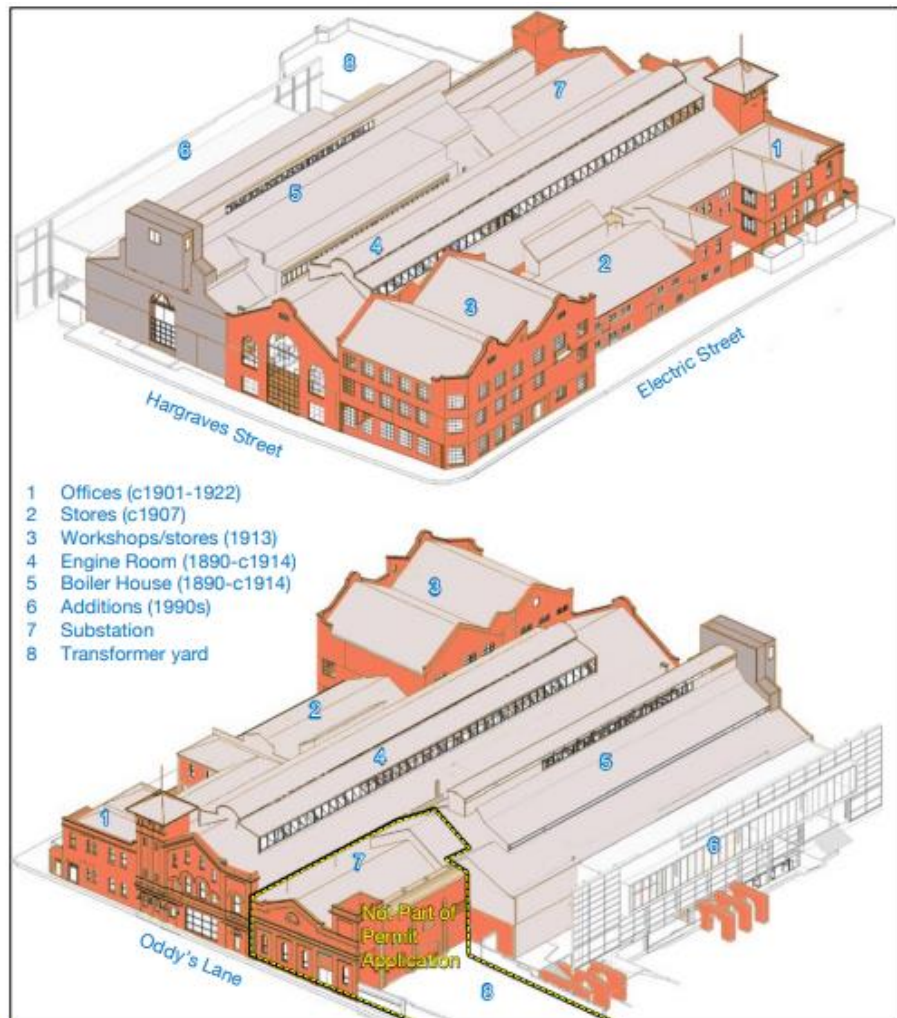


Figure 6. Axonometric illustration showing the age of the different building components. Source: Heritage Impact Statement, Former Richmond Power Station, Bryce Rawthorn November 2023.

## Assessment of Proposed Works

The proposal seeks to adaptively reuse the existing buildings associated with the Former Richmond Power Station for the development of a mixed-use innovation centre with activities across nature, design, science, technology, and art. The following is specified in the Reasonable and Economic Use Report provided with the application (prepared by the applicant Naomi Milgrom Foundation):

The composition of uses will create an iconic arts and creative industries innovation hub for the precinct which will be highly complementary to the more mainstream ICT, commercial and residential uses that currently occupy the wider Cremorne area.

The proposal requires a considerable level of intervention into the existing buildings included within the complex for this purpose. While the adaptation works would result in a positive outcome for the site to ensure an ongoing reasonable and economic use for the complex, concerns are raised regarding the level of intervention required impacting early and original fabric.

## Proposed demolition shown on plans

To begin, it is acknowledged that the complex was extensively refurbished as a modern office building in the mid-1990s, with much of the buildings' interior substantially refurbished, and the majority of industrial plant and equipment removed. The exterior remains largely intact with some key interventions mainly to windows, doorways, and some external modern cladding (e.g., to the Boiler House).

The extent of demolition proposed by this application is broadly summarised below:

- Boiler House (1890-c1914) – (*Building 5*)
  - Plans indicate removal of the Hargreaves Street elevation, much of the internal fit out and the main roof form.
- Stores (c1907) – (*Building 2*)
  - Plans indicate removal of the main roof form and internal demolition including internal floor levels. Intention is to create an open-air courtyard in this location.
- Offices (c1901-1922) – (*Building 1*)
  - Plans indicate that proposed demolition is minimal – non-original fencing and some window openings
- Workshops/stores (1913) – (*Building 3*)
  - Plans indicate that proposed demolition is minimal – alteration of some door/window openings and non-original ancillary elements.
- Engine Room (1890-c1914) – (*Building 4*)
  - Plans indicate that proposed demolition is minimal – external window and door openings, some minor internal works.
- Non-original Additions (1990s) – (*Building 6*)
  - Full demolition.

Sites located outside the VHR extent of registration:

- Substation – out of scope (*Building 7*)
- Transformer yard – out of scope (*Building 8*)

## Full Demolition or Removal of a Building

To begin, the proposed demolition of fabric associated with the 1990s adaptation of the complex are supported, noting that these elements detract from the cultural significance of the place. Similarly, the removal of other ancillary items that are non-original to the place is supported.

Noting that the 1990s adaptation of the place resulted in an extensive level of internal change, alteration of internal spaces is broadly supported, noting that it is encouraged that all remaining original fabric is maintained and opportunities for restoration and reconstruction are investigated.

Proposed external demolition associated with the Offices (1901-1922), the Workshops/stores (1913) and the Engine Room (1890-c1914) is broadly supported, although it is encouraged that required demolition of original external windows and door openings are reconsidered to ensure that the exterior of the complex can retain its current integrity and contribution to the broader Cremorne built environment. Any intervention into original fabric should be rationalised and reversible where possible. As noted above, additional opportunities for restoration and reconstruction of external elevations are encouraged to improve the overall condition and appearance of the complex as experienced from the public realm.

It is recommended that the proposed extent of demolition impacting the Boiler House (1890-c1914) (Building 5) and the Stores (c1907) (Building 2) is reconsidered. It is suggested that the level of intervention proposed for these two buildings will negatively affect the cultural heritage significance of the place. It is submitted that plans to externally re-clad the Boiler House in glass and convert the Stores into an open-air courtyard are incompatible with existing fabric and require a level of irreversible adaptation and change, particularly as experienced from the public realm.

It is recommended that proposed intervention affecting original external fabric associated with the Boiler House and the Stores is revised to ensure the integrity and significance of these buildings can be maintained. As noted in the CMP (as referenced in the HIS provided), the architectural interest of the complex primarily rests in the largely intact exteriors, principally the west and east façade. It is important that the form and architectural character of the valued facades remains legible. It is submitted that the proposed works oppose this intention.

## New development, alterations and additions

The extent of new works proposed by this application includes the following high-level summary based on HIS assessment and plans provided:

- Boiler House (1890-c1914) – (*Building 5*)
  - Remove all roof and wall cladding and associated framing elements dating from the 1990s and reimagine the building as a glass house structure with a glazed buffer zone wrapping around the east and south side of the building.
  - New external envelope to be rebuilt to match the original form
  - Upper half of the east elevation is to be clad in corrugated steel reflecting the original materiality.
  - 1990 interventions removed.
  - Commercial kitchen to occupy the western half of the ground floor, with an open multi-purpose space above.

- Stores (c1907) – (*Building 2*)
  - Removal of roof and gutting of interiors to create a landscaped courtyard, accessed via new openings in the west wall and new glazed wall to the south.
  - Construction of new building ('the Connector') to occupy the eastern third of the stores with a new glazed entry set behind the existing north façade.
  - Timber framing members associated with the Connector building projecting out to the north to form an entry portal.
  
- Offices (c1901-1922) – (*Building 1*)
  - No change to the exteriors apart from removal of 1990s interventions.
  - Conservation works to façade.
  - Interiors refurbished, including demolition of some original internal walls.
  
- Workshops/stores (1913) – (*Building 3*)
  - Exteriors to be maintained with little intervention. Some non-original fabric to be removed, particularly relating to the 1990s interventions.
  
- Engine Room (1890-c1914) – (*Building 4*)
  - No change proposed to the exteriors, apart from replacing the existing non-original ground floor window to the west elevation with a glazed entrance.
  - Conservation works.
  - Timber Connector building to adopt a 'skeletal' form where it bisects the engine room to act as the 'circulation spine'.
  - Significant early internal fabric to be retained.

### Regarding the remaining building

New works associated with the Offices (Building 1), the Workshops/stores (Building 3) and the Engine Room (Building 4) are broadly supported. In particular, proposed removal of non-original 1990s fabric and conservation works to original fabric and machinery/objects is supported.

It is recommended that proposed new works to the Boiler House (Building 5) and the Stores (Building 2) are reconsidered. It is submitted that plans to 'reimagine' the Boiler House into a glass house structure and the Stores into a landscaped courtyard requires a level of irreversible intervention that will detract from the integrity and condition of these buildings and more broadly impact the cultural heritage significance of the complex as a whole. It is recommended that a greater level of original fabric is retained associated with both buildings and a greater level of restoration and reconstruction is proposed, particularly as it relates to external elevations as experienced from the public realm.

It is recommended that the full elevations to Electric Street (north) and Hargreaves Street (east) are maintained and restored/reconstructed to the greatest extent possible, noting that there is more capacity for adaptation and change associated with the south elevation in place of the 1990s new additions. It is recommended that the full elevation of the Boiler House (fronting Hargreaves Street) is restored back to its original appearance (e.g. corrugated iron cladding) and the roof form and external windows associated with the Stores (fronting Electric Street) are maintained.

## Regarding new work

Noting how extensively internal spaces have been altered in the past, the concept of the new 'Connector' building is broadly supported on the basis that the extent of demolition required to the Stores (Building 2) can be reduced, particularly as it relates to the main roof form.

## Recommendations

While the balance of the works to adaptively reuse this significant complex are supported, it is recommended that the proposed extent of demolition associated with the Boiler House (Building 5) and the Stores (Building 2), and the proposed adaptation of these buildings which requires a high level of intervention and change, is reconsidered. It is recommended that the full elevation to Electric Street (north) and Hargreaves Street (east) are maintained and restored/reconstructed to the greatest extent possible, noting that there is more capacity for adaption and change associated with the south elevation. Noting how extensively internal spaces have been altered in the past, proposed internal works including the insertion of the Connector building are broadly supported on the basis that a greater extent of original external fabric associated with the Boiler House (Building 5) and the Stores (Building 2) can be maintained.

Heritage Advisor: Caitlin Mitropoulos

Date: 12 December 2023