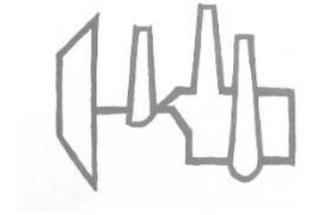


Save The Brickworks Inc



Save the Brickworks was invited to present our submission and respond to questions in an online zoom convened by Clifford Hayes MLC and Samantha Ratnam MLC, both members of the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee that is enquiring into Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework. Our submission and presentation focused on **Protecting heritage in Victoria** and was presented by Chris Johnston, Ruth Giles, Megan McDougall & Hannah Lynn.

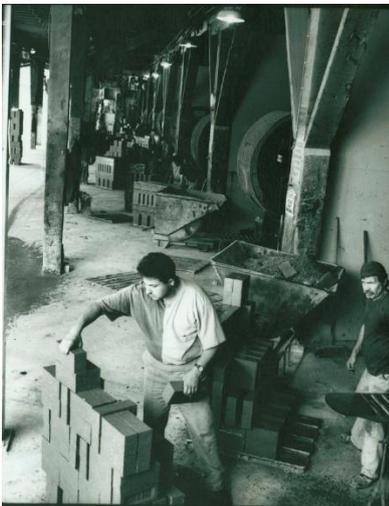
Chris Johnston introduced our submission as a founding member of Save the Brickworks Inc.

Our submission focuses on the Hoffman Brickworks in Brunswick as a case study.

The Brickworks was first recognised as an important heritage site in the 1982 *Brunswick Conservation Study*. The National Trust then classified the site in 1987 and it was added to the VHR in 1989 while still operating as a brickworks. It was recognised as of heritage significance to Victoria:

Historically as a rare surviving industrial site that illustrated the scale of Melbourne's brickmaking industry in the nineteenth & twentieth centuries and the impact of the industry on the development of Melbourne – with the kilns, brickpress shed and machinery also recognised for their **technological** innovation

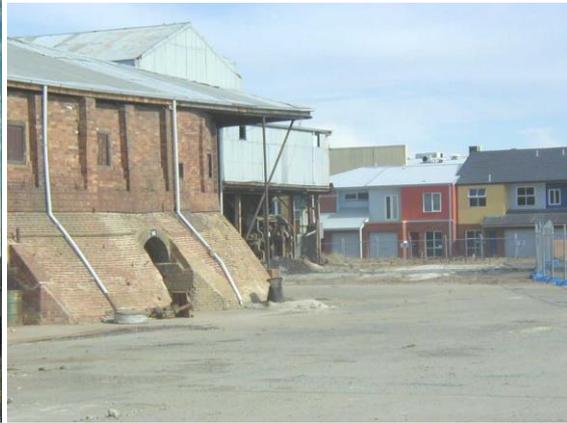
Locally, the Brickworks is at the heart of Brunswick's history – the only remnant example of the once highly important clay manufacturing industry in Brunswick and the northern suburbs.



Clifton Bricks closed the brickworks in 1993 and consolidated their operations on another site. Sungrove purchased the site soon after, proposing rezoning from general industrial to mixed use/residential. That triggered objections from local community members & organisations on heritage grounds.



The three kilns & brickpress shed (2000)

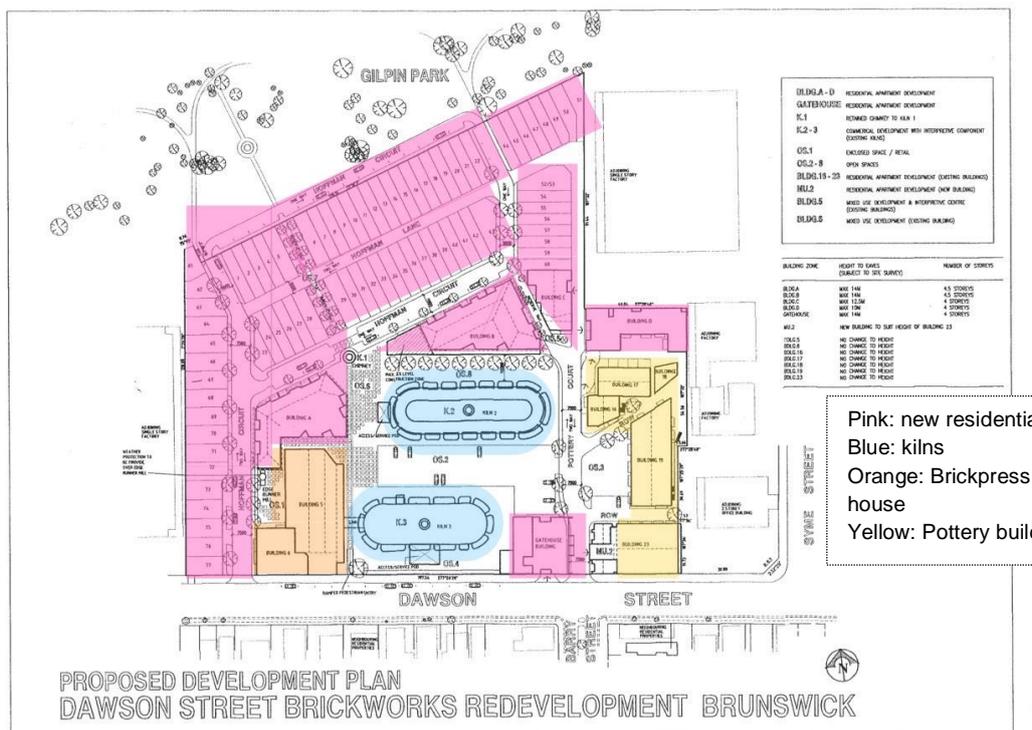


By 2002, townhouses were being built

By 1998 agreement was reached between Council, Sungrove, community, Heritage Victoria: a development plan was adopted into the local planning scheme (Amendment L52, Moreland Planning Scheme), a Conservation Management Plan was prepared by reputable heritage specialists, an initial set of design plans prepared, and a funding package provided by Council for conservation of one of the two kilns. Together with a Heritage Victoria permit, these formed an agreed development vision for the brickworks that responded to the documented heritage values. **It was a solid foundation.**

The **agreed vision** included:

- 190 dwellings on part of the site to enable reinvestment to conserve the 'heritage core'.
- Building 5 – the brickpress building - to be retained in its entirety and used primarily for the interpretation of the Hoffman Brickworks site – while allowing for other compatible uses.
- One kiln – the oldest - was allowed to be demolished as were several other buildings defined as of minimal heritage significance
- The other two kilns were proposed for adaptive reuse for commercial, community, art uses – uses designed to minimise impacts on heritage values
- The pottery buildings were allowed to be adaptively used for residential.



Pink: new residential
 Blue: kilns
 Orange: Brickpress shed & steam engine house
 Yellow: Pottery buildings

Ruth Giles, a resident on the site and member of Save the Brickworks since 2008 spoke next.

Ruth pointed out that 25 years on:

- the kilns are inaccessible to the public, turned into apartments
- the brick pressing shed has just been demolished
- a few signs are the only interpretation on site, and they are poor quality, deteriorating.



Rather than a vibrant Abbotsford-convent like space - bringing the heritage buildings to life with uses that bring people into the space, into contact with the heritage and together - local residents have watched the deterioration and eventual demolition of heritage buildings.

The heritage requirements either lapsed when permits expired or were claimed to be unfeasible - especially as buildings deteriorated. This included the adaptive re-use of the kilns and using the brick press building primarily for interpretation.

Theoretically some heritage requirements were to have been transferred to residents in the form of caveats, however this did not happen. To be viable, ongoing heritage requirements need funding and oversight. The consultants had proposed the developer establish a heritage maintenance fund. This didn't happen and an owners corporation is unlikely to be best placed to maintain and refresh conservation and interpretation over time.

Most of what made the site significant and could connect the local and wider community to our history, has been lost.

Megan McDougall then focused on four key topics that need to be addressed in heritage protection. Megan has worked as a heritage professional for over 30 years, mainly in state and local government. Now semi-retired, she has a special interest in industrial heritage and am co-convenor of the ICOMOS National Scientific Committee on Industrial Heritage.

Permit conditions

Implementation of permit conditions on a Heritage Victoria or planning permits should not be optional. They are put in place to allow changes as part of adaptive re-use, while ensuring protection of heritage values.

In this case, the developers have probably got the message over many years that conditions are optional and/or changeable. Requirements on the owner have not been able to be enforced once permits have expired.

Key conditions on the major permits allowing development of the site, such as requiring the Brick Pressing Shed to be retained and used as an interpretation centre were allowed to lapse. Other key conditions designed to preserve the 2 remaining kilns were amended in subsequent permits to allow conversion to apartments.

Subdivision permits that were granted also created problems by protecting economic benefits gained by the developer in the original development. The original intention was that the major re-development of other parts of the site would fund the heritage outcomes. This has not eventuated due to approved subdivisions leaving large parcels in separate ownership.

Requirements to comply with conditions should continue beyond the life of the permit, so that they remain enforceable. This may require legislative change.

An agreed master plan for major development at heritage sites (agreed by local and state government) should be required, enshrined by gazettal or other means, and be the basis for assessment of future permit applications.



Neglect

Importance of following up on maintenance and security of the site. HV didn't or wasn't able to enforce maintenance. Redefining neglect in relation to its impact on the heritage fabric and heritage values/significance, not in relation to the intention of the owner.

We all know buildings need regular maintenance, and if they are used and occupied, this usually ensures their long-term survival. If Building 5 had been adapted for interpretation and other compatible uses (offices, studios, gallery etc), in 2002 as proposed by the owner, as agreed by Heritage Victoria, and as expected by STB Inc and the community, it would no doubt have been maintained.

While a building is awaiting adaptation to an agreed new use, it should be maintained and secured. This is a basic requirement.

Lack of adequate securing of Building 5 over many years resulted in a fire that damaged the roof. The hole in the roof was not repaired or covered, which then allowed water ingress, and the subsequent rapid deterioration of timber structural elements.

The provisions of the Heritage Act allow for action to be taken when a building falls into disrepair to the extent that its existence is threatened. Action could have and should have been taken when it became obvious that this was the case with Building 5.

Recent 'Minimum standards for maintenance and repair of heritage places' published by Heritage Victoria in 2020 should help using these provisions in the future.

HV needs to be proactive in monitoring the condition of all the places on the Victorian Heritage Register. Adequate funding is needed for HV to undertake condition audits every 5 years of all buildings (places) on the VHR.

Enforcement

Enforcement needs to be effective and swift for HV and local government. It needs to be adequately resourced as it is critical that HV's reputation is not that of a "toothless tiger".

Condition audits need to be followed up with action where serious deterioration is reported.

Enforcement action (the Stick) should be balanced by targeted financial assistance (the carrot) for owners who are struggling to maintain properties.

For commercial developments, incentives through rebates on rates or state taxes, but only provided once the incentivised outcome is achieved.

While there was an apparent failure in enforcing conditions of heritage permits over many years, the good news is that HV and Council now appear to be working well together.

Collaboration with and support for local government

State government should not have to manage places of state significance in a vacuum.

Active collaboration between state and local government will help achieve better outcomes in the future.

We believe that leadership at state level, rather than simply management of statutory processes, is required. This needs serious strategic thinking and planning, as well as consultation and collaboration, rather than a reactive management approach.

HV used to have a local government team to assist Councils in management of local heritage issues and assets. We understand the focus is now on state level heritage places and issues.

HV needs to be adequately resourced to provide leadership and to properly engage with local government, community, and the wider heritage community, both professional and not-for-profit organisations.

In summary: We are all saddened by the appalling outcome at this site, with the undoubtable loss of significance. But if lessons can be learned, it may lead to better outcomes at other significant sites in the future.