

Heritage Impact Statement

Former International Harvester Factory
7 Princes Highway, Dandenong South

Application for Permit – Proposed Redevelopment
June 2024

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1.0 Introduction

This report was prepared on behalf of the owners of the former International Harvester factory at 7 Princes Highway, Dandenong South. It comments on heritage issues associated with the revised proposal to redevelop the site with warehouses.

2.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below is informed by site inspections and a review of the following documents and resources:

- *7 Princes Highway, Dandenong South VIC 3175 (IVECO) Technical Due Diligence Report* (Singh Consulting, 1 March 2023)
- *Contamination and Hazardous Materials Constraints – Former IVECO Facility, Dandenong South* (JBS&G Australia Pty Ltd, 22 March 2023).
- *Structural Integrity Report – IVECO, 7 Princes Highway Dandenong South* (Spencer Group Engineering, 16 March 2003)
- Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme - Heritage Conservation (Clause 15.03-1S) & Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01).
- *International Harvester Incorporated Plan* (24 September 2003)
- *City of Greater Dandenong Heritage Study and Heritage Places* (City of Greater Dandenong, 2003)
- *City of Greater Dandenong Heritage Study Stage 1* (Graeme Butler & Associates, 1998)
- Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter Register of Twentieth Century Buildings (March 2022).
- State Library of Victoria Picture Collection
- Museum Victoria Collection
- National Archives of Australia
- *Doveton: A Brief History* (Maria Harding, 1993)
- *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria Stage One* (Heritage Alliance, 2008)
- *Architecture: an Australasian Review of Architecture and the Allied Arts and Sciences*
- *Architecture and Arts*
- *Building Lighting and Engineering*
- *Argus*
- *Dandenong Journal*

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the Conservation Management Plan for the former International Harvester Factory by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd (updated June 2024), as well as the interpretation strategy by Sue Hodges Productions, the drawings of the proposed works by Concept Y and other documents submitted with respect to this application.

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3.0 History

International Harvester was formed in 1902 by the merger of five of the leading agricultural machinery manufacturers in the United States. The company initially specialised in agricultural implements but diversified its product range by the 1910s to include combustion engines, tractors and motor vehicles.¹ A Melbourne-based subsidiary, the International Harvester Company of Australia Pty Ltd was established in 1912 to manage Australian distribution and sales of International Harvester products. In response to restrictive Commonwealth import tariffs, International Harvester established its own Australian manufacturing operations, opening a factory at Geelong in 1937 to produce agricultural equipment (and later tractors).²

In 1948, a 56 ½ acre site was chosen for a new International Harvester motor truck assembly plant in Dandenong South, at the junction of the Princes and South Gippsland Highways.³ Dandenong was able to attract substantial new factory development in the post war era because of its flat, open terrain and good road and rail links with Melbourne and the rest of Victoria. Other factories to open in the Dandenong area in the wake of the International Harvester truck plant included Heinz in 1952, and General Motors Holden in 1957.

A building permit for the International Harvester factory was granted in early 1950.⁴ Contractors A E Watts and Company moved onto the site in July 1950 and construction commenced in August.⁵ Designed by architectural firm Hassell and McConnell and erected at a cost of cost of £1,000,000, the factory initially comprised three main buildings – the administrative offices, staff amenities and main assembly plant. The latter had a working floor of 440 ft by 240 ft (134 metres x 73 metres) with an attached crane bay at the southern end measuring 240 ft x 88 ft (26 metres).⁶

The plant was constructed using a steel framework with corrugated asbestos cladding to the roof and wall cladding and a red-brick dado. Roller shutters were provided along the full length of the southern elevation so that goods to be taken in or out at any point along the building and also to allow for the whole side to be opened and ventilated in hot weather.⁷ The taller crane with its distinctive butterfly roof form was used to display company signage.

The administration block was sited close to the Princes Highway frontage and initially designed for 110 personnel but with capacity for further expansion, including a future first floor. Built in red brick with a flat concrete slab roof, the administration building had an external colour scheme featuring chrome yellow columns, white trim and a turquoise door.

¹ <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/3158>

² <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/articles/3158>

³ *City of Greater Dandenong Heritage Study*, p.273

⁴ *Dandenong Journal* 22 March 1950, p.1

⁵ *Land*, 4 July 1952, p.13

⁶ *Building*, 24 June 1954, p.42

⁷ *Building*, 24 June 1954, p.42

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The amenities block was divided into two main sections comprising the male change and washrooms/toilets and the canteen wing (housing the executives dining room, shop, kitchen and female locker room). The west elevation was screened by vertical sun baffles clad in asbestos sheet.⁸

The International Harvester factory was officially opened on 27 June 1952 by R G Casey, Minister for External Affairs.⁹ It was soon manufacturing four models of trucks suited to Australian's road conditions, at a rate of 25 per day.

By 1954 the Dandenong plant had a workforce of around 400, many of whom lived in the newly created Victorian Housing Commission estates in nearby Doveton.¹⁰ Expansion of the works became necessary by 1955 to meet growing demand for International Harvester trucks.¹¹



Figure 1 The factory under construction, 1951. Source: Museum Victoria

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⁸ *Architecture: an Australasian Review of Architecture and the Allied Arts and Sciences*, Oct-Dec 1953, p. 94.

⁹ *Farmer and Settler*, 4 July 1952, p.11

¹⁰ *Argus*, 27 April 1954, p.22

¹¹ *The Age*, 25 November 1975, p. 27

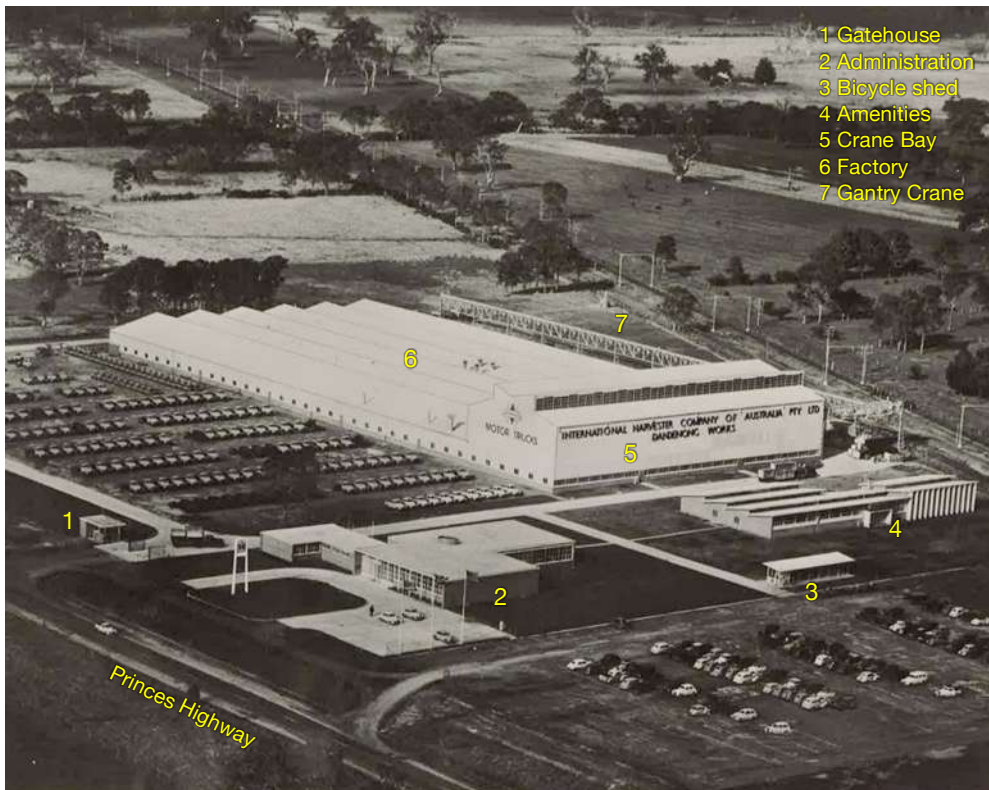


Figure 2 1953 oblique aerial photograph of the then recently completed International Harvester factory. Source: Hassell



Figure 3 The administration building, 1953. Source: State Library of Victoria.

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Figure 4 The crane bay and assembly plant, c1953. Source: State Library of Victoria.



Figure 5 The factory viewed from the south east, c1953. Source: Hassell.

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Figure 6 The gatehouse, c1953. Source: Hassell.

In 1952/53 International Harvester were approached by the Australian Army to collaborate on the design of new 2.5 tonne four wheel drive truck. The first 100 of these trucks rolled off the production line in 1959. A contract for 600 of the military trucks was awarded to International Harvester in December 1962 with an order for a further 650 placed in September the following year. The truck was adapted for civilian use and known as the ACCO – an acronym for ‘Australian A Line Over Cab’ (so called because the trucks were manufactured on assembly line ‘A’ at Dandenong).¹²

Additions to the factory were completed in September 1965 creating an extra 103,000 sq ft (9570 sq m) of floor space at a cost of £500,000.¹³ A further expansion of the plant was undertaken in 1972 providing the company with its own facilities for the forming and pressing of truck cabins and specialised bodies, bringing the total working floor area to 338,770 sq ft (31,472.76 sq metres).

Work on a \$6.5 million expansion of the factory for the production of Atkinson trucks commenced in June 1977.¹⁴ Despite this substantial investment, International Harvester was by this time suffering from declining sales and rising costs. The company was put into receivership in October 1982 with debts of \$250 million.¹⁵ The Victorian Supreme Court was told that an immediate cash injection of \$10 million was needed to keep International Harvester’s Geelong and Dandenong factories open.

¹² Lloyd Reeman, ‘Conventional Legend: The ACCO’s Rich Oz History’, www.tradetrucks.com.au, 18 October 2019.

¹³ *Doveton: A Brief History*, p.8.

¹⁴ *Herald* June 14, 1977, p.19

¹⁵ *Tribune*, 6 October 1982, p.5.

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Hundreds of factory workers began a sit-in at the Dandenong factory in early October 1982 after 117 employees were retrenched. The Dandenong plant was at this time producing only eight trucks a day, down from an average of 32 the previous year.¹⁶



Figure 7 The Princes Highway frontage, c1956. Source: State Library of Victoria.

International Harvester's Geelong and Port Melbourne factories were closed down by the mid-1980s. The Dandenong plant was acquired by European based heavy vehicle manufacturer IVECO in 1992. IVECO ceased operations at Dandenong in 2022 and the site was sold in December the same year.



Figure 8 The Princes Highway frontage, c1970s.
Source: <https://www.facebook.com/olddandenong>

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¹⁶ *Tribune*, 6 October 1982, p.5.

4.0 Description

The former International Harvester factory occupies a large, broadly triangular plan site of approximately 12.2 hectares, bounded by the Princes Highway to the north and the Pakenham railway line to the south.

The original factory building was sited towards the southern boundary to allow for future expansion. It is a large steel-framed building with sawtooth roof and red-brick dado surmounted by a band of steel framed windows. The taller crane bay at the western end of the plant has butterfly roof trusses. The external gantry crane survives to the rear of the factory. The core factory buildings dating from the 1950s are subsumed by various additions typically adopting a generic shed-like character. The crane bay which featured prominently in historical images of the site (on account of its height and branding with International Harvester signage) is now concealed from Princes Highway by a large, box-like c1968-72 addition. Original corrugated asbestos cement roof and wall cladding has been replaced with modern metal deck sheet. The interiors have been stripped of most of the machinery and equipment associated with truck manufacture apart from four large mechanical presses inside the crane bay.



Figure 9 Aerial photograph of the former International Harvester factory.

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Figure 10 The former International Harvester factory viewed from the west on the Princes Highway.



Figure 11 The west elevation of the 1950s crane bay and its c1968-72 addition (left).

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Figure 12 The north elevation of the factory, looking west.



Figure 13 The Gatehouse.

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Figure 14 *The north elevation of the main factory building.*



Figure 15 *1977 building to the north-east of main factory.*

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Figure 16 *Gantry crane to the south side of the main factory. The structure with the angled wall (to the far right of the image) is a c1984-1990 addition.*



Figure 17 *The c1957 sawtooth roof warehouse to the south of the main factory.*

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Figure 18 The c1984-1990 building to the south-east of the main factory.



Figure 19 The interior of the crane bay looking north towards the c1968-72 addition.

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Figure 20 Mechanical presses inside the crane bay.



Figure 21 The interior of the main factory building/assembly line.

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The western end (western third) of the site is occupied by the administration building, bicycle shed and staff amenities block. They were all constructed as part of the factory complex's initial 1950-52 stage of development, with the administration building having additions to the rear dating from c1954 and more recent additions to the west side. This western portion of the site also encompasses a non-descript single-storey c1990s building to the south of the administration building.

The administration building is single-storey structure designed in a modernist idiom with a concrete slab roof, red-brick walls and horizontal bands of steel-framed windows. The principal façade has been subject to a number unsympathetic alterations including the addition of an entry porch and fascia partially obscuring the original steel beam 'colonnade'. The concrete slab roof has been sheeted over in metal deck (presumably because of leaks or other defects in the slab). The brick walled rooftop plant room is also a latter addition. The interiors have been extensively refurbished and have a generic modern office fit-out.

The bicycle shed is a modest skillion roofed structure with exposed rafters supported on steel posts. The northern end is enclosed with glazing and timber panelled walls.

The amenities block is a single-storey red-brick building, originally accommodating staff facilities including a canteen, kitchen, lockers and changerooms. The northern end has a distinctive sawtooth roof with projecting eaves. The vertical sun baffles to the west elevation of the canteen give added architectural interest to the building. In terms of the condition of the amenities block, it is noted that an investigation by structural engineers has identified significant brickwork cracking and failed sections which may result in localised failure under serviceability loading.



Figure 22 Current view of the administration building's façade.

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Figure 23 The c1954 addition to the administration building, viewed from the north-east.



Figure 24 The south elevation of the c1954 addition.

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Figure 25 The bicycle shed.



Figure 26 The c1990s building to the rear of the administration building.

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Figure 27 The east elevation of the amenities block.



Figure 28 Partial view of the amenities block west elevation showing the vertical sun baffles.



Figure 29 The northern end of the amenities block.

5.0 Heritage Listings

City of Greater Dandenong

The former International Harvester factory is identified as HO56 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme. External paint controls and tree controls apply under the provisions of this overlay, but there are no internal alteration controls.



Figure 30 Aerial photograph showing the heritage overlay (HO56) applied to the full extent of the former International Harvester factory. Source: mapsare

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An Incorporated Plan applies to the subject site. It lists works which do not require a planning permit under Clause 43.01-2 of the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme, as follows:

- *emergency and safety works to secure the site and prevent damage and injury to property and the public;*
- *painting of previously painted structures provided that preparation or painting does not remove evidence of the original paint or other decorative scheme;*
- *repairs, conservation and maintenance to hard landscape elements, buildings and structures, ornaments, roads and paths, fences and gates, drainage and irrigation systems;*
- *maintenance of roads and paths and gutters to retain their existing plan layout;*
- *the process of gardening and maintenance to care for the cemetery landscape, planting themes, bulbs and shrubs and removal of dead plants;*
- *management of plants in accordance with Australian Standard AS4373 Pruning of Amenity Trees:*
- *removal of plants listed as State Prohibited or Regionally Controlled Weeds in the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994;*
- *removal of vegetation to protect monuments, paths, buildings and structures; and*
- *replanting to retain the existing landscape theme and character.*

Heritage Victoria

The former International Harvester factory is not included in the Victorian Heritage Register.

National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

The former International Harvester factory is not included in the Trust's heritage register.

Australia Institute of Architects

The former International Harvester factory is listed on the AIA (Victorian Chapter) Register of Twentieth Century Buildings. This is not a statutory heritage listing and it has no official status within the framework of the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme.

6.0 Significance

The statement of significance for the former International Harvester factory, as included in the *City of Greater Dandenong Heritage Study* is reproduced below:

The former International Harvester Company's Motor Truck Assembly Plant & red gums are significant to the City of Greater Dandenong and the Melbourne metropolitan region:

- *as the first of three large industrial complexes at Doveton during the immediate post WW2 decade, marking a new development centre for Melbourne's heavy industry. (Criteria B.2, D. 2)*
- *for the association of the 1950s parts of the complex with the award winning architects Hassell and McConnell and a major international industrial group (International Harvester). (Criteria H. 1)*
- *for the role played by the complex in the rapid urbanisation of this former farming area and the growth of Dandenong as a service centre (Criteria A. 4)*

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- *for the excellence of its overall design, as a good example of postWW2 factory planning in Victoria and the region. (Criteria F. 1)*
- *for the evidence provided by the river red gums of indigenous tree growth in the area (Criteria A.4).*

The Incorporated Plan applies for the site identifies the following elements of 'particular significance':

- *All indigenous trees on the site, in particular the River Red Gums over 100 years old.*
- *The title itself in a large contiguous parcel.*
- *The buildings on the site particularly those from the construction period of the 1950s.*

The former International Harvester factory is included in the *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria: Stage One*, indicating that the authors of that study considered it to be of potential state significance:

One of the first major factory complexes to be erected in Victoria after the Second World War, marking the beginning of the industrial boom and, more specifically the development of Dandenong as a major industrial centre.

The above notwithstanding, inclusion in the *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage* does not automatically confer state significance on the place, in that the survey does not provide a sufficiently detailed assessment to make an authoritative judgement on the level of significance. Further to this, the authors of this heritage impact statement do not believe the former International Harvester site to be of state significance, and it is not identified as such in Council's citation.

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7.0 Heritage Overlay

As the former International Harvester factory is included on the Heritage Overlay Schedule to the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme it is subject to the provisions of Clause 43.01, the Heritage Overlay. The purpose of this overlay is as follows:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- To conserve and enhance heritage places of natural or cultural significance.*
- To conserve and enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of heritage places.*
- To ensure that development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places.*
- To conserve specified heritage places by allowing a use that would otherwise be prohibited if this will demonstrably assist with the conservation of the significance of the heritage place.*

Before deciding on an application, in addition to the decision guidelines in *Clause 65*, the responsible authority must consider, as appropriate:

- *The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *The significance of the heritage place and whether the proposal will adversely affect the natural or cultural significance of the place.*
- *Any applicable statement of significance (whether or not specified in the schedule to this overlay), heritage study and any applicable conservation policy.*
- *Any applicable heritage design guideline specified in the schedule to this overlay.*

- *Whether the location, bulk, form or appearance of the proposed building will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.*
- *Whether the location, bulk, form and appearance of the proposed building is in keeping with the character and appearance of adjacent buildings and the heritage place.*
- *Whether the demolition, removal or external alteration will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.*
- *Whether the proposed works will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.*
- *Whether the proposed subdivision will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.*
- *Whether the proposed subdivision may result in development which will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place ...*

Consideration will also need to be given to the relevant heritage strategies at Clause 15.03-1S, as follows:

- *Provide for the protection of natural heritage sites and man-made resources.*
- *Provide for the conservation and enhancement of those places that are of aesthetic, archaeological, architectural, cultural, scientific or social significance.*
- *Encourage appropriate development that respects places with identified heritage values.*
- *Retain those elements that contribute to the importance of the heritage place.*
- *Encourage the conservation and restoration of contributory elements of a heritage place.*
- *Ensure an appropriate setting and context for heritage places is maintained or enhanced.*
- *Support adaptive reuse of heritage buildings where their use has become redundant.*

8.0 Proposal

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The proposal involves the demolition of almost all of the existing built form across the eastern two-thirds of the site and redevelopment of that land with three new warehouses (numbered 3A/3B/3C, 4 and 5). The front two bays of the cab shop are retained and refurbished for use as offices for the adjoining warehouse 3A. The original gatehouse is also retained.

On the western third of the site, the front wing of the administration building and north wing of the amenities building are also to be retained and refurbished for office use. The façade of the administration building would be restored to its original state by removal of the entry porch addition and non-original fascia lining. The original external colour scheme would also be reinstated. The bicycle shed is to be relocated to new landscaped open space in the south-west corner of the site.

The development to the western third of the site will introduce two new warehouse buildings (numbered 1A/1B and 2 on the plans by Concept Y), with at-grade carparking spaces and loading bays to the north and east of the site.

Integral to the proposed redevelopment, Sue Hodges Productions have been commissioned to devise a heritage interpretation strategy that will celebrate the site's proud industrial history and association with International Harvester. The interpretation strategy has been expanded and enhanced by the retention of existing fabric and other measures described below.

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9.0 Discussion

A number of revisions have been made to the redevelopment proposal resulting in improved heritage outcomes. Notably, a greater extent of original or early built form is retained and further measures for the interpretation of the history and significance of the place will be implemented.

The amenities Building is no longer demolished in full but is instead retained to the extent of the north wing (noting that the project engineer has advised that this is the only part of the amenities building that is structurally capable of retention). This change is beneficial from a heritage point of view in that it preserves the distinctive sawtooth roof profile— this being one of the most distinctive architectural features of the amenities building.

The retention of the front two bays of the cab shop will preserve that part of the manufacturing complex that is most prominent in views from the Princes Highway, and further assists in the interpretation of the early industrial character of the place.

The setback of warehouse 1A from the front façade of the administration building has been increased, and the loading bay canopy substantially reduced in extent, such that they are more visually recessive.

The gatehouse is to be retained alongside the main entrance, where it can be viewed by the public in conjunction with a section of the steel truss crane gantry, which is to be relocated from the rear of the site (refer figures 31 and 32 below). The crane gantry has an iconic industrial character that would clearly speak to the heavy manufacturing process that were carried out in the factory.

Additional forms of interpretation include the display of a vintage International Harvester truck on the Princes Highway frontage – harking back to the original practice of parking newly manufactured trucks in front of the factory. The new warehouse development is to be branded ‘Dandenong works’ – noting that this the name historically adopted for the site and which was made prominent by signage on the side of the factory (refer figure 33 below).



Figure 31 (left)
Figure 32 (right)



1950s photograph of the steel crane gantry at the rear of the site.
Render of the proposed entrance with relocated crane gantry.

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Figure 33 1953 photograph of the crane bay showing the original 'Dandenong Works' signage

The new warehouses to the eastern two thirds of the site will incorporate design elements that clearly reference the original factory buildings, including red brick faced dados and the silhouette of the archetypal sawtooth roof traced out on the walls using different coloured cladding materials. These methods for interpretation will be supplemented by displays in the foyers of new office spaces.

The bicycle shed will be relocated (if structurally feasible) or reconstructed in newly created open space in the south west corner of the site. This would maintain a sense of continuity with the existing context of the shed on the western boundary amidst parkland. Beyond this, it is appropriate that interpretation is focussed on the Princes Highway frontage, given that there will be limited opportunity for the general public to access the broader site due to operational requirements relating to safety and security.

The setback of warehouse 1A from the front façade of the administration building has been increased, and the loading bay canopy substantially reduced in extent. This will make the warehouse and canopy less visually overbearing relative to the administration building.

The front setback to the administration building has been reconfigured to increase the extent of soft landscaping and to reinstate the 'horse shoe' shaped hardstand, comparable to that which originally existed in this part of the site.

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Figure 34 (left) 1963 aerial photograph of the administration building showing horseshoe shaped hardstand to the front of the administration building.

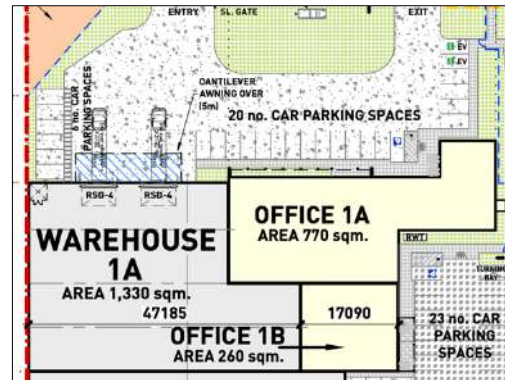


Figure 35 (right) Extract from the current site plan showing reinstatement of the horseshoe shaped hardstand to the front of the administration building (Office 1A). Note also the substantial reduction in the extent of the canopy to warehouse 1A and increased setback from the administration building façade.

Notwithstanding the positive heritage outcomes arising from the increased retention of built form, it is recognised that the proposal contemplates substantial demolition of the main factory building, and at the outset it is recognised that the extensive demolition of Heritage Overlay buildings is generally discouraged. That said, there are circumstances where such an outcome can reasonably be contemplated, and this is recognised in the heritage provisions of a number of Victorian planning schemes setting out criteria under which this might occur.

Noting that the Greater Dandenong Planning Scheme does not include any detailed heritage policies in relation to demolition, one can point to the example of Clause 22.01-4 of Brimbank Planning Scheme, wherein complete demolition of a contributory heritage place is discouraged unless:

- *The heritage place is structurally unsound and it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the responsible authority that it cannot feasibly be repaired or adapted for reuse.*
- *As appropriate, a visual record of the building is provided prior to demolition commencing.*
- *The replacement building and/or works positively supports the ongoing heritage significance of the heritage place.*

Similarly, Clause 15.03-1L of the Manningham Planning Schemes supports complete demolition of a heritage place in limited circumstances where:

- *Retention is demonstrated to be unsafe or unsound.*
- *The heritage place is beyond reasonable repair.*
- *The demolition relates to non-original fabric.*

In the present instance, the decision to demolish built form across a substantial portion of the former International Harvester site has been arrived at after careful consideration of a range of factors arising from the structural condition of the factory buildings and their adaptative reuse. Issues arising from investigations of the site by structural engineers, building surveyors and environmental consultants can summarised thus:

difficulties in inherent in
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- Structural framing exhibits deterioration due to the age of the facility and have not been constructed to current Australian Standards & BCA requirements.
- The fire hazard properties of existing building structure/materials does not comply with relevant building code.
- The building structure will be unable to support additional load requirements typical for industrial facilities including solar panel provisions, mechanical units, current wind loading requirements.
- The floor slab will not support design loading requirements for typical industrial warehouse operations and the flatness and levelness of the slab does not meet the standard requirements for these operations.
- The existing warehouse column spacing, and low clear springing to large sections heights are unsuitable for typical new industrial facilities. The required spatial configuration cannot be achieved through refurbishment/rectification works.
- The retention of any existing structures, especially where the former use was heavy industry, increases the complexity and residual contamination risks. This is due to the inability to address contamination matters holistically across a subject site.

All of which indicates that the refurbishment/rectification of the existing factory complex will involve significant capital cost, likely to exceed the cost of replacing it with a purpose designed facility.

It is not unusual for industrial sites to raise difficult issues such as these. Indeed, it is not uncommon for industrial sites to be recognised as having cultural significance, only to be demolished in substantial part or in full due to their lack of adaptability, or the fact that they are dangerous, contaminated, or otherwise difficult to work with in terms of structural and code requirements. In the case of Hobsons Bay this has led to the inclusion of strategies for industrial heritage places at Clause 15.03-1L-02 of the planning scheme that specifically anticipates the potential for partial (or even substantial) demolition of industrial sites of cultural heritage significance at a local level:

Support the conservation of the historic industrial use carried out on site where viability and occupational health and safety allow.

Conserve fabric of primary significance unless either of the following apply:

- *Its retention would jeopardise the ongoing operation of the historic use of the site.*
- *The historic use has ceased and the fabric is not suitable for adaptation.*

Support the retention of redundant equipment and fabric of primary significance in-situ for historic evidence and interpretation.

When a use is discontinued and a site is redeveloped, the development (including subdivision) is to:

- *Retain as much significant fabric as possible.*
- *Incorporate a creative interpretation of the history of the heritage place through the design and layout of the development including buildings, subdivision, landscaping, movement systems and public art.*
- *Incorporate a publicly visible historic marker that provides the history of the site.*
- *Keep a record of any significant fabric that is removed or demolished.*

Of relevance to the current application is the decision in 2023 by the City of Glen Eira to issue a permit for a mixed-use redevelopment of the former ABC Television Studios in Elsternwick, involving demolition of all of the existing built form with the exception of the broadcasting transmission tower. The permit is conditional on a comprehensive archival photographic record and implementation of a heritage interpretation/heritage art plan.

The ABC Studios are listed individually on the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Glen Eira Planning Scheme. Inter alia, the ABC Studios was recognised as being locally significant for its associations with public broadcasting by the ABC since 1956 and as the earliest ABC television studios still extant in Australia. The decision to demolish the ABC Studios resulted, in part, from the widespread contamination of the building fabric with asbestos and other hazardous materials. The highly contaminated state of the ABC buildings, and the structural and code compliance issues that they raised, were deemed to satisfy threshold considerations relevant to the Glen Eira Planning Scheme criteria for permitting demolition of contributory heritage buildings – ie if they were found to be well beyond ‘reasonable repair’.

A key element of the approved redevelopment of the ABC TV Studios is the retention of the original broadcasting transmission tower in such a manner as to maintain its prominence in views from the surrounding area. The development of the western portion of the former International Harvester factory has a similar intent in the proposal for retention of the original administration offices as a signifier of the historical use of the place.



Figure 36 (left)
Figure 37 (right)

The former ABC Television Studios, Elsternwick.
Oblique aerial view of the studios.



One of the more notable industrial buildings to be demolished in recent decades was the Yallourn power station, in Victoria’s La Trobe Valley. It was built in stages from the 1920s to the 1960s, and at one time provided the bulk of the State’s electricity. In 1994, the power station was added to the Register of Historic Buildings due to its historic, scientific and engineering significance. An application was subsequently made to have the complex demolished due to the hazardous nature of the site.

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At a hearing conducted by the Historic Buildings Council (the precursor to the Heritage Council) it was noted that there was a lack of a viable alternative uses for the buildings, as well as difficulties and hazards of public access and the huge upkeep costs to in maintaining the unused site. A number of measures were undertaken to recognize the significance of the Yallourn site prior to demolition, including the preparation of oral histories and video recordings. Demolition of the power station was approved and commenced in 1995 and the site was cleared by 1999.

Another major industrial heritage site to be demolished was the Kodak Factory, Coburg. Established in the late 1950s, the Kodak factory was the only local manufacturer of photographic films, papers and chemicals. The complex extended across some 23 hectares and contained a variety of unique and specialized factory buildings designed in a restrained modernist style. A number of the Kodak buildings were contaminated while others were purpose built structures that did not readily lend themselves to adaptive reuse.

An assessment of the Kodak site by Heritage Alliance Conservation Architects and Heritage Consultants concluded that the factory complex was of historical, architectural, aesthetic and technological significance. Despite this, Darebin Council eventually permitted demolition of all Kodak buildings. A photographic and archival documentation of the site was undertaken prior to demolition, and archival quality copies of this survey are catalogued with Museum Victoria. In addition, Kodak donated a substantial portion of its own photographic and heritage archival holdings to Museum Victoria and the State Library of Victoria.



Figure 38 (left) A 1965 aerial photograph of the Kodak Factory, Coburg. Source: Museum Victoria.
Figure 39 (right) A 2014 photograph of the Kodak offices prior to demolition.

As demonstrated in the discussion above, interpretation is not an uncommon solution for historical sites with problems of contamination and lack of viable reuse, most typically industrial buildings, and is the most appropriate means of recognising the significance of the International Harvester factory.

It is clear that the activities within, and use of, the International Harvester site have been important over a long period. Those activities and that use have now ceased. There is less importance to be attached to the industrial built form on the subject site, which is generally of little aesthetic and architectural interest.

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With reference to the statement of significance, the factory buildings do not display excellence in overall design. They would be more correctly described as having an unremarkable/generic industrial character. The post war character has been largely erased by replacement of all original corrugated asbestos wall cladding with a modern metal sheet product. The legibility of the original factory complex is further diminished by the numerous late-twentieth century additions that now define that built form character of the site as experienced from the Princes Highway. The heritage study citation describes these additions as being of *'little design interest, forming simple block shapes in the landscape'*.

The factory buildings to be demolished within the eastern two thirds of the site are not of such a high level of significance as to warrant the costly undertaking of making them fit for purpose – a process that would inevitably require substantial rebuilding and substantial loss of surviving original/early fabric.

Additional to issues pertaining to built form, it is noted that the incorporated plan for the place identifies the following elements as being of particular significance:

- *All indigenous trees on the site, in particular the River Red Gums over 100 years old.*
- *The title itself in a large contiguous parcel.*

All River Red Gums over 100 years old are to be retained and no subdivision of the land is to occur – ie it will remain on a single title.

In relation to the proposed development of the western portion of the site, the proposal for the full demolition of the c1990s building and the c1972-1990 additions to the administration building will not give rise to unacceptable heritage impacts. These structures are of no inherent architectural interest and were built long after the factory's key 1950s period of development – noting that Council's statement of significance is principally concerned with fabric from this era (refer section 3.0 of this report).

The c1954 addition to the rear of the administration building was constructed in the mid 1950s (not long after the factory's initial 1950-52 phase of development). It is classified as secondary significance in the CMP. That said, the CMP does not preclude demolition of fabric of secondary significance – it is stated in the CMP that demolition should preferably be confined to those parts of the factory complex deemed to be of little/no significance or secondary significance. To that end, the demolition of the c1954 addition accords with the CMP policy.

In the event that fabric of primary significance cannot be retained, the CMP policy recognised that the implementation of a comprehensive interpretation strategy would be an essential component of a proposal for redevelopment of the site. As noted above, Sue Hodges Productions have been commissioned to devise a heritage interpretation strategy that will celebrate the site's industrial history and associations with the International Harvester company.

The warehouses proposed for the western portion of the site are to have plainer facade treatments to provide a visually neutral backdrop to the retained administration building – the aim is not to compete with the administration building for attention.

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The warehouses would nonetheless reference the design of the original suite of 1950s factory buildings by incorporating a red-brick dado with sheet cladding above.

Further to the potential impacts of the proposed warehouses on the retained portion of the administration building, reference can be made to the policy for future development at section 7.6 of the CMP, as follows:

Future works should not detract from the legibility or appearance of any retained significant built form. New external structures should be readily distinguishable from the significant fabric.

The proposed warehouses satisfy the above policy objective. They will be readily identifiable as new fabric whilst adopting an industrial aesthetic that is compatible with original factory buildings on the site. The warehouses directly interface with the administration building's west and south elevation – areas which have already undergone substantial change and which are currently hidden by existing additions. The principal north façade of the administration building will not be obscured and the front setback remains undeveloped to maintain open sightlines from the Princes Highway.

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10.0 Conclusion

To conclude, the revised development proposal results in improved heritage outcomes. This is achieved by the increased retention of original fabric, the carefully considered and creative reuse of this fabric and the enhanced interpretation strategy. These measures provide for an appropriate recognition of the cultural heritage significance of the place.

Accepting the imperative to find a new use for the site, given that it is no longer in use, the former International Harvester factory presents an exceptional set of circumstances whereby substantial demolition can be supported as an outcome having regard for the nature of the significance associated with the site and the problems in adaptive re-use of existing factory buildings.

The proposed warehouses are commensurate with the scale and industrial character of existing factory buildings across the broader International Harvester site. The scheme retains and integrates the key elements of the former administration and amenities buildings and cab shop into the new warehouse development, such that its mid-century industrial architectural expression continues to present to the Princes Highway in a three-dimensional form, rather than as a facade or fragment.

Having regard for the above, and taking into account the objectives of Clause 43.01, the heritage overlay, and Clause 15.03-1S, the heritage conservation policy, the extent of retention, demolition and redevelopment represents a considered balance of heritage and economic outcomes and is supported in terms of heritage considerations, subject to an appropriate archival recording of the site and implementation of the interpretation strategy.