



Darebin Heritage Guide

27: RESIDENTIAL INFILL



Contemporary interpretation of traditional design elements – scale, setback, roof form and pitch, bay window, gable with half timbered effect and traditional materials. Inclusion of brick chimney makes the result more convincing.

This guide is intended to assist planning and development applicants in arriving at appropriate new building designs for infill sites in significant heritage areas. One of the major factors in the designation of conservation areas is the identification of the area characteristics or qualities that distinguishes it from the rest of the municipality. Accordingly, in planning for such areas, the objective is to establish controls and guidelines that help to maintain and enhance this character or quality.

In relation to new works, this involves setting guidelines for the design and development of new buildings and identifying the design considerations that should be addressed in determining an appropriate approach to be used. This guideline is not intended to restrict well designed and thought out contemporary design proposals, but rather to provide guidance to the conservation factors that should be considered in developing appropriate design solutions. New infill design should have regard to these factors to achieve an integrated and harmonious solution that maintains the heritage quality and character of the conservation areas.

While the guideline is intended to apply to typical urban residential sites, the principles apply equally to larger development sites.

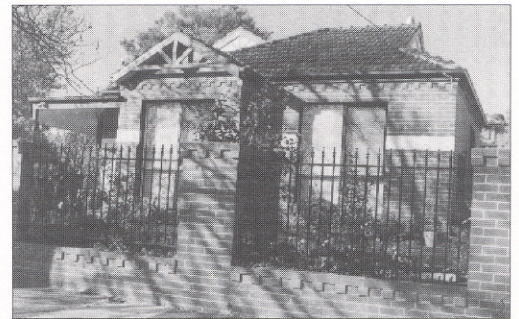
Acceptable and Unacceptable Infill

The main criteria for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable infill are whether the new development maintains the scale, harmony, cohesion and predominant character of the conservation area, as opposed to disrupting that harmony and fragmenting the particular streetscape or precinct involved. The disruption may be as obvious as the construction of a three storey block of flats in a predominantly single storey area, or the construction of imitation Federation style units in the midst of a group of interwar bungalows, or more subtle, such as the construction of a reproduction Federation house in tumbled bricks and aluminium lace in a street of intact timber Federation houses. The former example would be seen to be out of

context with the scale of adjacent buildings, while the latter examples would be considered to be inappropriate from the point of view of the materials and details used in an inaccurate attempt to copy earlier building forms. This does not mean that such structures might not be acceptable in another area. However, they do not fit into and maintain the quality of particular urban conservation areas.

In developing an infill design, there are three important considerations that require careful appraisal: the context, the design approach and detailed design considerations.

The Context



Single storey infill villa suited to Federation and early inter-war streetscape.

The context includes the surrounding buildings, as well as the buildings on the opposite side of the street, and in many cases, the streetscape setting. The most important matter to be considered in the design of a new building in an urban conservation area, is the context or setting. The design objective should be to identify the predominant features of the buildings and streetscape that contribute to the significance of the area and determine how these features can be interpreted in a new building design that fits well into the



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area and in a manner that maintains, or enhances, the physical and architectural qualities of the area or streetscape. However, this does not mean that new infill buildings should copy the features and styles of the adjacent buildings, or that they cannot be architecturally distinctive in their own right. The guiding principle should be that they harmoniously complement the streetscape as a whole.



Infill reproduction Victorian Terraces in a predominantly Victorian Terrace streetscape. Infill development should harmoniously complement the streetscape.

For example, in a street of predominantly single storey timber bungalow houses, the approach to infill might range from a copy of one of the original houses to a modern interpretation of such a house. The latter approach might retain the basic form and scale of the adjoining buildings, but otherwise be distinctly modern. In a single storey streetscape it would be important to keep any two storey building bulk to the rear of the building, or within the attic roof area, in order to preserve the single storey street facade.

In a street containing greater diversity of architectural styles, it is important to maintain the overall form, scale and character. In such instances, it is best to carefully consider the design of the new building in relation to the immediate adjoining neighbouring buildings. There may also be situations where a new infill building will adjoin a more recent, but unsympathetic and intrusive, building. In such circumstances, the design of the new building should disregard the physical characteristics of the more recent

building and refer to the earlier surrounding buildings. In other words, where local variations of building style and scale occur, it is important to examine the area surrounding the site to determine the critical features that distinguish the particular precinct. Some areas which already exhibit greater diversity may, therefore, allow greater scope for individual design expression.

Design Approaches

Several design approaches have been used in the design of infill buildings in the past with varying degrees of success. Some of those more commonly used in the municipality are identified below with comments upon their appropriateness:

New Design

Infill involving the use of contemporary design tends to produce the most interesting and successful results providing that the design is developed in a manner which takes into account the local variations and context of the site. It can result in the construction of buildings that are individually distinctive, that exhibit high degree of design excellence and that contribute to the cohesiveness of the area as a whole. Such buildings can sensitively address the critical issues of setback, height, form, massing, and the composition of facade details and materials.

The Neutral Facade

This approach to infill involves designing a facade that recedes from, or is neutral within the streetscape. Such facades might typically be simple, with little embellishment and simply maintain the basic front and side setbacks, and the height of the adjacent buildings. It is an approach that can be successful providing that it doesn't interrupt the rhythm of the streetscape by leaving a jarring gap in the street. The greatest failing of this approach, particularly on larger frontages, can be that the facade dominates the more intricate adjoining buildings and stands out rather than receding from the street, because it uses materials, colours, finishes and proportions which are not

sympathetic to the adjoining buildings.

The Period House Copy

This is a common contemporary approach to infill buildings and frequently results in unsatisfactory hybrid designs that are neither an accurate copy of an original, nor a good modern interpretation. If this approach is adopted, the copy should be as accurate as possible or, an interpretation of an original design should be used. The latter approach is generally preferred to a reproduction. In either case, Mansard roof forms, flat roof forms, and materials that simulate the appearance of early building materials, such as tumbled bricks, colonial blend bricks, aluminium lacework, and concrete or glazed terracotta roof tiles should be avoided.

The Row House

A row, or terrace, house design



Interpretation of Federation House. Traditional red brick with roughcast render has been replaced by rendered brick.

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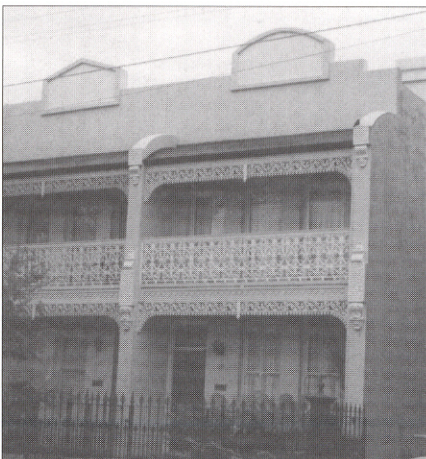
approach may be appropriate in the older parts of South Preston, particularly in the vicinity of Raglan and Hotham Streets. However, care should be taken to use this design approach only where the new building relates to existing terrace or row building types. This design approach should definitely be avoided in other parts of the municipality where dual occupancy and multiple unit developments are being proposed.

The Single Storey Suburban House

The suburban double fronted house,



Semi-detached houses using single storey late Victorian-Federation roof and verandah form.



Two storey Victorian row house copy with minor variations to original forms.

usually built in brick veneer with a tiled roof, can be adapted to fit into many parts of the municipality. With the use of single or multiple fronted designs in streets where there is a greater number of late Victorian, Edwardian or Federation villas, and early 20th century bungalows, with extensive stylistic diversity, the suburban house may be readily adapted to fit in to such areas.

Design Considerations

For all infill design, there are several factors that should be taken into account in both selecting and developing the approach to be used. These include: scale, form, roof shape, proportions of openings, setbacks, materials, paint colours, finishes, fences, provision for cars on site, outbuildings and garages. These factors are discussed below and the minimum acceptable requirements are given where relevant.

Scale

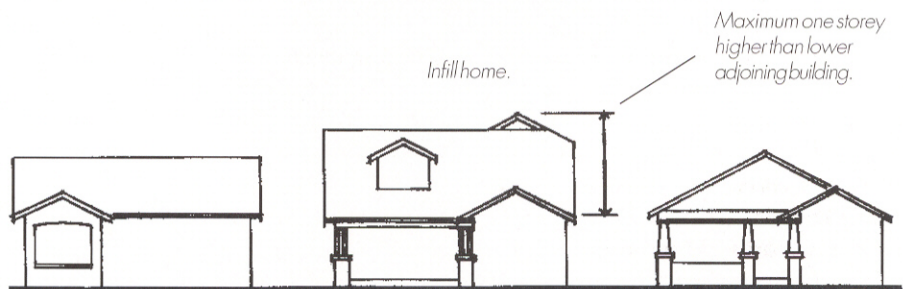
The scale of the infill building should generally relate to the predominant

height of the buildings in the street, and in particular the height of the adjoining buildings. Where such buildings are of uniform height, the infill buildings should be of the same height. In streetscapes of mixed building heights there is greater scope for variation, but in such streetscapes no infill building should not be more than one storey above the lowest of the adjoining buildings.

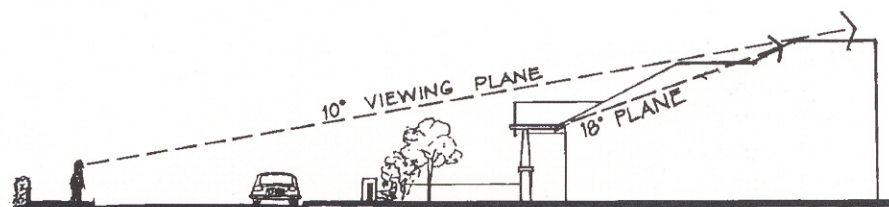
In assessing the maximum permissible height of new buildings, the visibility of the structure from a number of viewpoints should be taken into consideration. Setting back the upper storeys may be required where taller structures are likely to dominate the streetscape.

Form

The building's form, that is, its overall shape, should relate to that of the adjoining buildings and the street generally. The guiding principle should



Infill buildings should fit the scale of the streetscape.



The massing of two storey infill buildings should be arranged so that the two storey bulk is to the rear in a single storey streetscape.

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be to maintain the rhythm of the street and where buildings are narrow fronted, long facades should be broken by one or more of the following devices: stepping, balconies, verandahs, wing walls and other projections. Similarly, where the original building stock is highly embellished or decorated, flat vertical surfaces should be broken with devices such as horizontal string courses, mouldings or bands.

Where the streetscape is typically characterised by freestanding houses and villas, the new infill building should maintain and respect this pattern. In such circumstances, row house development forms and long facades should be avoided, in favour of freestanding and, perhaps, semi-detached dwelling development.

Roofs

Roof shape and materials are critical to the success of infill buildings and should be carefully related to the roofscapes of the adjacent building. The predominant roof forms found in Preston are either simple or complex hip roofs, and gable roofs. Roof pitches are generally between 25 and 40 degrees, with limited eaves overhang. Flat roofs should generally not be used other than in bungalow streetscapes to flat roof bay window projections and some verandahs, or where they are concealed behind a parapet. Their visibility from the front street as well as rear lanes, sidestreets and neighbouring properties should also be considered. In such cases, care should be taken to avoid the building appearing to have no roof in the context of the adjoining pitched roof buildings. Skillion roofs are appropriate for the rear sections of buildings and outbuildings. The pitch of these roofs should be a minimum of 10 degrees.

Preferred materials for main roofs are corrugated iron, unglazed red terracotta tiles, traditional profile cement tiles, slates, some flat concrete shingles, and terracotta shingles. Metal deck and metal tile roofing should generally be avoided.

Openings

The proportions and spacing of door and window openings should relate to the traditional vertical rectangular layout typical of Victorian, Federation, and interwar buildings. Large areas of unbroken glazing should be avoided, particularly on floor levels above ground. Horizontal windows should also be avoided, other than where they are grouped and arranged to form a substantial and distinctive pattern by themselves, or where they cannot be viewed with the windows of adjacent facades.

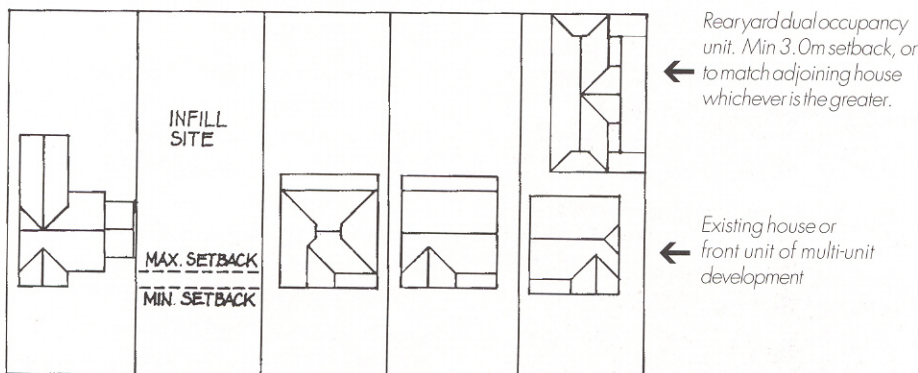
Care must also be taken to distinguish between opening proportions of the various styles of architecture found within Preston & Northcote. Typically Victorian and Federation window proportions emphasise the vertical dimension more than the interwar buildings. Victorian and Federation buildings are more likely to have single double-hung window openings or paired window openings, while interwar buildings typically have windows grouped and arranged in one larger frame, which may also be fixed to the face of the outside wall.

The distinction in opening details between front and side, or rear, walls should also be maintained.

Setbacks

The built fabric of the municipality is characterised by freestanding houses and villas, except for some of the older parts of the municipality. Front and side boundary setbacks are important design considerations. In general, the front setback should be similar to the adjacent buildings, and should not project forward from those buildings. Where the setbacks of the adjoining buildings vary, the average setback for the street should be used. Large setbacks should be avoided, particularly where they create a gap in a streetscape with basically uniform setbacks. In such a streetscape a new building should generally not be set back more than one metre behind the front wall of the adjoining building. Side setbacks are also of importance, particularly in streetscapes of detached and semi-detached buildings. The side setbacks should relate to those of the adjoining buildings.

Where two storey development is being proposed in a predominately single storey area, consideration should be given to setting back the



Appropriate setbacks for infill development. Infill buildings should maintain prevailing setbacks.

two storey section of the building at least eight metres from the ground floor facade alignment or containing it within the roof space in the manner of an attic. Site lines should be used to assess the impact of this two storey section from various locations around the building. In general the top of the upper floor should fall within a viewing plane created by projecting a line at 18 degrees from the height of the front gutter or parapet, or approximately 12 degrees from the main ridge height.

Materials

Many modern materials are unsympathetic to the character and texture of traditional building materials and the materials used in infill development should be carefully selected so that they are in harmony with surrounding materials on existing buildings.

The dominant materials of the municipality are square edged timber weatherboards, pressed red brick, cement render, terracotta roof tiles, corrugated iron roofing, and timber door and window joinery. Materials that attempt to imitate old or aged materials are generally unsuccessful and should not be used.

Paving materials in multi-unit developments should blend with traditional paving. Grey concrete, Lilydale toppings and red brick (used sparingly) paving are appropriate. Coloured and patterned concrete is generally not appropriate.

Paint Colours

The intensity and design of colour schemes used on infill buildings should be such that the building does not intrude aggressively into the streetscape. For large areas of wall that relate directly to the streetscape the preferred colours are those that have similar tonal characteristics as the traditional colours that would have been used or are used on adjacent original buildings. In general, large expanses of bright colours to wall surfaces should not be used and trim (window and door joinery, gutters, fascias and verandah posts) colours should provide some contrast to the

general background wall colour. Timber weatherboards may of course be painted light colours. Face brick and rendered brick surfaces should preferably be left in their natural state.

Front Fencing

Front fencing to infill buildings should maintain the scale and approach used in traditional fencing within the area. Generally, fencing that allows some visual transparency should be used in preference to solid fencing. Heights should not exceed 1 metre other than where original fences on adjacent buildings are higher. In such cases, or where front fences vary in height, the lower of the adjacent fences should be matched.

Carparking and Crossovers

The provision of offstreet parking is often difficult and where possible cars should be parked at either the side or rear of the property providing that access is available. New car spaces should not be placed in front of buildings and vehicle crossovers should not be created in front of properties where the streetscape is characterised by narrow frontages without car access.

Outbuildings and Garages

Outbuildings and garages should generally be located in rear yards or to the side of a building. Smaller structures, such as sheds, are best treated simply with a corrugated iron skillion roof set at a pitch of between 10 and 30 degrees.

The design of larger outbuildings should be considered in the context of the area and its characteristics, and with regard to the visibility of the building from the street and surrounding properties. Such buildings should generally have wall, roof and opening details that fit in with the original surrounding buildings. Roof pitches should generally be between 25 and 40 degrees with materials being either corrugated iron, terracotta tiles or other approved roofing materials which complement the main buildings

on the site.

Preferred materials for garage doors are vertical timber linings, particularly where the building faces a street or wide laneway.

In the case of multi-unit developments the location of driveways and garages should attempt to reflect the original period characteristics of the area.

For properties with frontages of less than 20.0m only a single vehicle crossing should be provided. The crossing width should be kept to 3.0m wherever possible to maintain a residential scale, but should not exceed 5.0m.

Where multi-unit developments are proposed on a corner site, car access should be provided from the side street, with separate crossings for each unit.

References

- Darebin Heritage Guide No. 25, *Alterations and Additions*.
- Darebin Heritage Guide No. 26, *Garages and Outbuildings*.
- B. Raworth, *Our Inter War Houses: How to recognise, restore, and extend houses of the 1920s and 1930s*. National Trust of Australia (Victoria), 1991.
- I. Evans, *Getting the Details Right: Restoring Australian Houses 1890s–1920s*. Flannel Flower Press, 1986.