



West Melbourne Urban Character Analysis

Final Document: June 2017



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Introduction

This urban character analysis was undertaken over a two week period from 27 March and 7 April 2017 to help inform the preparation of the West Melbourne Structure Plan. It adds to the baseline work already prepared by the City of Melbourne, including the acceptance of existing defined character areas.

What is urban character?

Character is often described as the way buildings, vegetation and topography, both in the public and private domains, relate to each other. It is the way these distinctive components of an area's character combine to produce a particular visual sense of place that makes one area different from another. Some elements may be more important than others in creating this special character.

However, defining character is about more than simply presenting a list of key characteristics or facts. Often urban character is not as tangible as that – it is about how you feel in a place and why. And the articulation of 'why' is the key to understanding the qualities that contribute to an area's character, and how they are best managed.

All new development should make a positive contribution to an area's urban character, protecting and building on its valued qualities.

How is character different from heritage significance?

While all areas will have some form of character and a shared history, not all places will have heritage significance. Heritage significance is determined by the application of recognised criteria that assess whether the place or area has historic, aesthetic, scientific, technical, social or natural values.

A key difference is that cultural heritage significance is embodied in the fabric (e.g. buildings) of the place and this fabric must be retained in order to conserve heritage significance. This is why heritage controls will usually discourage demolition of buildings while character controls may allow buildings to be demolished provided that replacement buildings are consistent with the valued identified characteristics.



Methodology

Fieldwork

Preceding the documentation and analysis of the urban character of the study area, a site visit comprising detailed fieldwork was undertaken. While on site, the following character elements were considered and recorded:

- context / topography / views;
- street / block alignment;
- street characteristics / street trees;
- front and side setbacks / front setback and boundary treatments;
- architectural styles / building materials / building details;
- building height and form / roof form; and
- any other notable features.

The character areas defined in the [Understanding West Melbourne Baseline Report](#) (December 2016) have been retained due to time constraints, and because they accurately reflect the different character precincts within West Melbourne.

The character areas are:

CA1 | Dynon Road bridge/North Melb Railway Station

Transforming mixed use...

CA2 | Errol Street/Victoria Street

Historic hilltop residential and shops...

CA3 | St Mary's Star of the Sea

Landmarks, greenery and mixed use...

CA4 | Queen Victoria Market

Residential and shops near market...

CA5 | Railway Place escarpment

Diverse mixed potential...

CA6 | Dudley Street and underpass

Steep, mixed use avenue...

CA7 | Spencer Street shops

Active frontages and mixed activity...

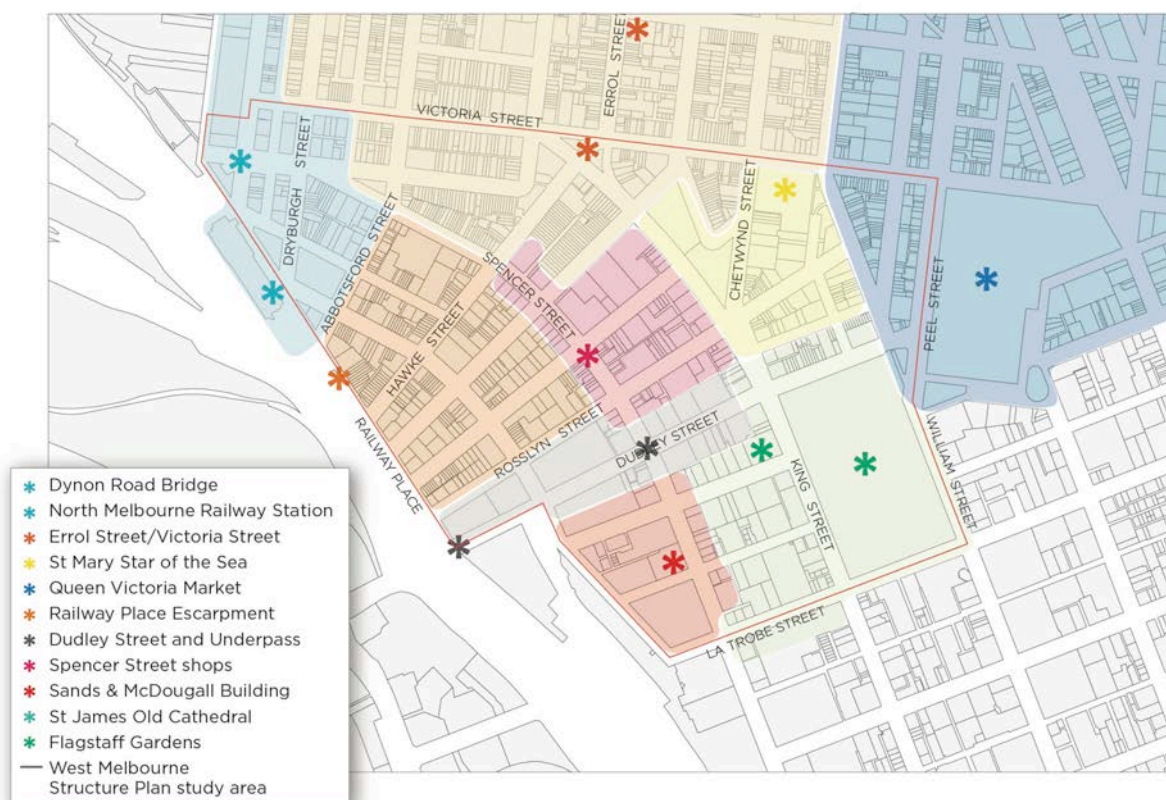
CA8 | Sands & McDougall Building

Large institutional...

CA9 | St James Old Cathedral/Flagstaff Gardens

City fringe near gardens...

A brief description of the geographical location, together with the most relevant planning controls has been noted for each character area.



West Melbourne character areas. Source: City of Melbourne

Methodology

Urban character description

An urban character description has been prepared for each of the character areas, which describes the relationship between the character elements - a synthesis of its qualities. The descriptions explain the pattern and type of development in each area and its salient features, and followed a qualitative assessment of which elements and features most determine the character of each precinct.

Threats

Observations on site and professional judgment, together with consideration of feedback from the community (from desktop sources), have been used to determine the key threats to the urban character of each of the areas. Threats are important to articulate, as together with all the other material collected, they logically lead to conclusions regarding the best measures for the management and protection of urban character.

Preferred urban character

It is important that an urban character analysis focus on the preferred character of an area in order to help shape its future development. Statements that outline the preferred urban character or 'urban character vision' for each area have therefore been prepared.

Descriptions of existing characteristics are an important part of the process and identify the 'starting point', but the desired urban character needs to be evaluated and considered in the context of other policy priorities. It may be that some areas should be encouraged to develop a new character, just as there may be some areas where critical elements need to be protected or reflected in all new development.

Furthermore, preferred urban character should be a concept that provides a broad direction rather than prescriptive detail. Strategic planning is, after all, about creating desired futures. Planning policy should be arrived at after considering existing conditions. It should not necessarily be determined by them.

Objectives and design responses

A set of objectives and design response statements has been prepared for the study area. These were initially prepared for each character area, but in order to avoid repetition, they have been consolidated. In effect, they all apply to every character area. The objectives and design response statements naturally cross over into the realms of heritage and urban design, and these elements are integral to urban character. As such, they may form the basis of policy or overlay schedules used to implement the wider study.

Depending on implementation decisions at the conclusion of the project, the objectives and design response statements can be used concurrently in different character areas, or are able to be easily translated into a set of design guidelines, or a series of objectives and decision guidelines for use in the planning scheme.

The objectives describe the desired urban character outcomes.

The design responses outline ways in which the objectives can be achieved.

Community values

Community engagement has occurred by the City of Melbourne throughout the structure planning process. Findings from the range of consultation activities are outlined in the West Melbourne Structure Plan – Phase One Community Engagement Report, April/May 2015, and various background documents. A desktop review of this material has been undertaken, with the incorporation of community concerns, in particular, in the 'threats' that are listed for each of the character areas. Consideration of community aspirations has also been undertaken in the preparation of the preferred urban character statements, and objectives.

Planning scheme considerations

At the conclusion of the report the VPP character tools are briefly described and summarized, in relation to what each tool provides and how they are best used. A number of these provisions are already in place in the Melbourne Planning Scheme, in some form.

It is not the intention of this report (nor is it possible at this juncture in the structure planning process) to provide detailed recommendations regarding how the outcomes of this study should be implemented. Consideration of the options should occur in the context of the wider structure planning objectives, at the conclusion of the process.

CA1 | Dynon Road Bridge / North Melbourne Railway Station

Transforming mixed use

Location

Character Area 1 is located in the north western corner of the study area, adjacent to North Melbourne Railway Station, and includes the southernmost section of the Arden–Macaulay urban renewal area. The area is bordered by Victoria Street to the north, Lothian and Abbotsford Streets to the east, and Laurens Street to the west.

Planning controls

The area is zoned Mixed Use throughout.

The Heritage Overlay (HO3 ‘Heritage Places Outside the Capital City Zone’) applies to all properties to the east of Stawell and Dryburgh Streets, and north of Ireland Street. An additional property - the J. Gadsden Pty. Ltd. building in Abbotsford Street is proposed to be covered by a new heritage overlay as part of Amendment C258.

The Design and Development Overlay applies to the entire character area. DDO28 (‘North Melbourne Station’) recommends a discretionary building height limit of 18 metres to the southern and eastern parts of the area, and DDO32 (‘North Melbourne peripheral’) imposes a mandatory maximum building height of 14 metres to the majority of the area affected by HO3.



Transforming mixed use

Urban character description

This mixed use area of transformation and change is laid out in a modified grid, with 30 metre wide heavily trafficked streets, and 20 metre wide secondary streets. The north-south streets run with the contours and are relatively flat, whereas the east-west streets slope steeply down towards the Dynon Road Bridge.

Lots sizes throughout the character area vary (from less than 500 square metres to over 3,000 square metres), as does the use of land and building stock, which is a mix of industrial, commercial and residential.

Built form in the westernmost part of the precinct is characterized by large brick industrial buildings of around 4 storeys, a number of which now contain apartments. This area, generally to the west of Dryburgh Street has a design studio/warehouse living character, with a number of creative industries, studios etc. interspersed among the residential buildings. This pocket is also relatively quiet, owing to very little through traffic, with street trees adding to the quality of this unique neighbourhood, tucked below the Dynon Road Bridge.

Further south towards North Melbourne Railway Station, recently constructed residential buildings of up to 7 storeys contrast with historic row housing opposite. Due largely to its width, Dryburgh Street can accommodate both, with the Victorian cottages not feeling visually overwhelmed by the recently constructed apartment blocks, and the contrast in scale adding visual interest and highlighting the different eras of development across the character area.

Throughout the precinct, street tree planting provides a unifying element within the mixed streetscapes, including areas of contemporary warehouses and commercial buildings on Abbotsford and Spencer Streets. However, many examples of partially recessed buildings (to accommodate car parking or building entrances), or contemporary buildings with blank walls or garage doors to the street in these areas, detracts from the amenity and character of the pedestrian environment.

The Dynon Road Bridge operates as a vehicular gateway to this precinct, and from this vicinity there are unique and interesting views towards the industrial heritage of the west.



Transforming mixed use

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA1 are:

- Loss of the mix of uses throughout the precinct
- Loss of older, former industrial or residential buildings that are not covered by the Heritage Overlay
- Facadism and loss of historical integrity
- Loss of the small rows of workers' cottages
- Approval and construction of built form that far exceeds the proposed discretionary height maximum of 8 storeys in the south and western areas of the precinct
- Loss of diversity of lots sizes, including the finer grain lots
- Consolidation of lots into large parcels
- Loss of bluestone laneways such as Silk Place that provides a mid block link all the way through to Curzon Street in CA2
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Lack of 'eyes on the street' i.e. windows, balconies, clearly defined entrances etc. in dead end streets or areas that are not subject to much vehicular or pedestrian use
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings, or dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street
- Groupings of non-active frontages
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss/lack of street trees
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces



Preferred urban character

#dryburghbespoke 26 posts

A thriving area of converted warehouse apartments and new residential buildings within walking or biking distance of North Melbourne Railway Station and the Metro. Former industrial buildings have been re-used, providing a visual cue to the history of the area, and views to industrial landmarks in the west strengthen this link to the past.

Small workers' cottages have also been retained, and provide a contrast in scale and a way of living, with the contemporary apartment buildings opposite. This diversity in built form and architectural eras provides an interesting and vibrant pedestrian environment that is unified with large avenues of canopy trees.

It is a mixed use area, where people both live and work, and small offices, creative industries and galleries share the same buildings as apartments. Well established street trees in Dryburgh Street and in other busy and exposed areas, have improved the pedestrian and cycling environments, and streetscape amenity.

CA2 | Errol Street / Victoria Street

Historic hilltop residential and shops

Location

Character Area 2 is located adjacent to Victoria Street in the northern part of the study area. It is bounded by Lothian Street to the west, Chetwynd Street to the east, and takes in residential areas fronting Spencer, Hawke and Roden Streets, and Eades Place.

Planning controls

The majority of the area is zoned General Residential (GRZ1). The small number of commercial properties fronting Victoria Street are zoned Commercial (CZ1) or Mixed Use.

The Heritage Overlay (HO3 'Heritage Places Outside the Capital City Zone') applies to the entire character area. In addition, two significant Elm trees in Hawke and Curzon Street Reserve and Hawke and King Street Reserve are proposed to be protected with heritage overlays as part of Amendment C258.

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO34 'Errol Street and Victoria Street') applies to properties fronting Victoria Street, between Errol and Chetwynd Streets. This imposes a mandatory maximum building height of 10.5 metres. All properties to the west of Abbotsford Street within the precinct are subject to a mandatory maximum building height limit of 14 metres under DDO32.



Urban character description

This fine grained, primarily low scale residential area is laid out in a modified grid, with a series of wide streets and some laneways. The majority of lots are under 500 square metres.

The character area contains two topographical high points, near the intersection of Chetwynd and Victoria Streets, and further west along Victoria Street near Miller Street, at the former location of the Benevolent Asylum.

The landscape, which slopes generally down to the south and west from these hills, contributes significantly to the character of the area, as the buildings and streets have responded directly to it. The apex of Chetwynd Street is enhanced by dwellings that step up the slope, and homes on the upper side of Miller Street and Eades Place, for example, are elevated above footpath level, contributing a sense of formal grandeur to the streetscapes.

This formality is further reinforced by the grand dimension of streets, which are 30 metres wide and often contain generous, central grassy medians, and in some cases, evenly spaced street trees. The Miller Street median, for example, is planted with evenly spaced Eucalypts, with smaller exotics being established in the footpaths. Elsewhere in the character area, median and street tree planting is mixed, both in species and location, but is integral to how the street environment is experienced by pedestrians.

On the northern side of Hawke Street, the paved footpath has been extended into the carriageway and is interspersed with large areas of grass and native vegetation, including canopy trees. The scent of Eucalypts is strong and birdlife abounds. The resultant 'bush land' feel is in direct contrast to Eades Street, where there is no median nor street trees on the eastern side, resulting in an open and exposed streetscape character.

Victorian era housing stock throughout the area ranges from modest workers cottages to pairs or rows of consistent, imposing and more elaborately decorated double storey terraces. There are also cohesive streetscapes of Federation era homes, which were constructed following the demolition of the Benevolent Asylum in the 1910s.

The diversity of these dwellings all contributes to the sense of residential history throughout the character area, which is further strengthened by the prevalence of bluestone kerbing, channeling and laneways, some of which are fronted by more recently constructed single dwellings, or dwelling extensions. Original or early verandah awnings and posts have been retained to commercial buildings in Victoria Street, and together with the existence of corner shops and hotels, this adds further to the historic character of the precinct.

Building materials are mostly brick, with some examples of stone and timber houses. The rows of Victorian cottages have simple corrugated iron roofs to verandahs, or in the case of double storey terraces, decorative parapets and iron lace work. The Federation style dwellings have tiled roofs, with contrasting gable ends or hipped forms. Many feature decorative front porches with brick piers and rendered columns, bay windows and timber shingles on the gable ends. While some corner dwellings present blank walls to side streets, the textured and varied nature of the historic materials adds visual interest to the footpath environment.

Front setbacks to all dwellings are minimal, with low front fences providing views to the garden settings of the houses, making a pleasant contribution to the pedestrian space. In response to the heavy traffic and relatively poor pedestrian amenity of Spencer Street however, some high front fences have been constructed, detracting further from the streetscape quality.

Due largely to the width of streets, the intersection of Victoria, Errol, King and Hawke Streets is a complex and expansive junction, and despite grassed medians and small parks with significant trees, has an open and exposed character, which is dominated by cars.



CA2 | Errol Street / Victoria Street

Historic hilltop residential and shops

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA2 are:

- Loss of significant individual heritage trees
- Loss of historic dwellings, and/or detailing
- Loss of Victorian shopfront details, such as verandah awnings and posts
- Signage clutter on Victorian commercial buildings
- Siting of buildings that doesn't adhere to the prevailing front setback in the street
- Loss of diverse and historic residential housing stock
- Approval and construction of built form that exceeds the mandatory maximum building heights that apply across the precinct
- Loss of fine grain nature of streetscapes (i.e. loss of small lots under 500 square metres)
- Consolidation of lots into larger parcels
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways
- High, solid front fences
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings, or dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees
- Irregular and inconsistent street tree planting
- Rows of street trees of mixed species



Preferred urban character #heritagerulesok 3 posts

A fine grained and historic residential area, with intact rows of workers' cottages, two storey terraces and Federation homes lining the streets. Low fences provide views into the front garden settings of the dwellings, and add to the visual amenity of the pedestrian environment.

Together with the historic homes, the bluestone laneways and intact Victorian shopfronts add to the sense of history throughout the area. Two significant Elm trees are local landmarks, and well established and consistent street tree planting elsewhere improves amenity and helps to humanise the scale of the wide streets.

Laneways such as Silk Place are well used for rear access to properties and as alternative pedestrian links. Some infill dwellings and studio buildings provide casual surveillance of these spaces. Glimpses of architecturally innovative extensions to the rear of the historic homes are possible behind the otherwise formal streetscapes.

CA3 | St Mary's Star of the Sea

Landmarks, greenery and mixed use

Location

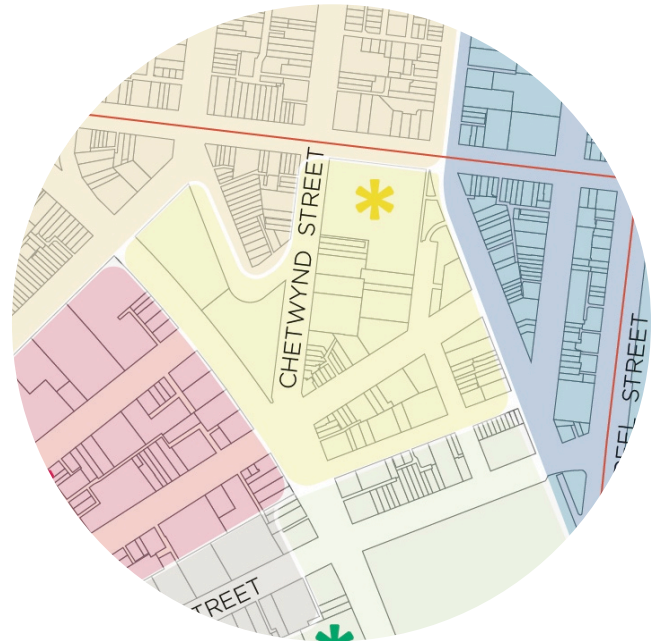
Character Area 3 is located in the north east part of the study area, with St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church abutting Victoria Street to the north, Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation and Eades Park at its western side, and William and Walsh Streets to its east and south.

Planning controls

The area is zoned Mixed Use, with the exception of the park (Public Park and Recreation Zone).

The Heritage Overlay (HO3) applies to the whole character area, with the St Mary Star of the Sea and the West Melbourne Central School (now Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation) sites being covered by individual site overlays. Two significant Canary Island Pine trees adjacent to Howard Street are proposed to be protected with individual heritage overlays as part of Amendment C258.

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO32 'North Melbourne Peripheral') applies to the whole character area and imposes a mandatory building height maximum of 14 metres.



CA3 | St Mary's Star of the Sea

Landmarks, greenery and mixed use

Urban character description

This mixed character area comprises institutional, commercial and residential buildings, and consists of a series of wide streets radiating from King Street. Lots sizes vary from under 500 square metres (smaller, historic homes) to between 500-1,500 square metres (commercial buildings and apartments), with minimal lots over 1,500 square metres.

The area includes the landmark St Mary's Star of the Sea Catholic Church (and associated college) atop the highest point in the study area, adjacent to Victoria Street. From this point, the topography slopes down towards the south west, with the change in level influencing the character of the precinct and the pedestrian experience.

Eades Park is also central to the character of this precinct - its grassy, rolling hills and established vegetation providing respite from the busy traffic of King Street, and a leafy green outlook for dwellings in adjacent streets. The consistent street tree planting on the eastern side of Chetwynd Street enhances this leafy green character and unifies the diverse buildings along it. From the park, views of the slender CBD towers are visible above the tree canopied landscape.

A mix of exotic and native street trees exist throughout the character area, with central median planting (adjacent to car parking) in both Rosslyn and Walsh Streets. As well as creating a more pleasant pedestrian environment, the canopy trees also humanise the scale of the 30 metre wide streets, and the larger 4 to 5 storey commercial and apartment buildings along them. The character of Milton Street also benefits from its avenue of Plane trees.

In contrast to elsewhere in the character area, a more intimate, human-scaled environment is experienced at the south western ends of Chetwynd and Rosslyn Streets, where rows of modest workers' cottages line the footpath with no front setback. These dwellings, and other notable buildings such as the West Melbourne Central School building (now Flagstaff Crisis Accommodation) contribute a sense of rich history to the precinct. And the combination of historic houses sitting adjacent to contemporary office buildings and re-purposed light industrial buildings elsewhere, highlights the layers of history that the precinct has experienced and provides a visually interesting clash of eras and uses, typical of the diversity of the whole study area.



CA3 | St Mary's Star of the Sea

Landmarks, greenery and mixed use

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA3 are:

- Loss of built form diversity and mix of uses
- Retention of only the facades of heritage buildings and other valued buildings, resulting in a loss of historical integrity across the whole site
- Loss of groupings of workers' cottages
- Construction of built form that exceeds the mandatory maximum buildings heights that apply to the area
- Loss of significant individual heritage trees
- Loss of fine grain nature of streetscapes
- Consolidation of lots into larger parcels
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in contemporary, non-residential buildings
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings, or dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees, and irregular and inconsistent street tree planting
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Loss of views to the city skyline, particularly from Eades Park



Preferred urban character

#eadespark 4 posts

Eades Park provides respite from the busy surrounds, and a leafy green outlook for residences opposite and nearby. Large street trees large add to this green canopy, and views of city towers are available above the treetops.

The layers of history are evident in the interesting mix of housing throughout the area, including row of old workers' cottages and more contemporary apartments in re-purposed buildings. A diverse range of uses including offices and large institutions provide further divergence in architectural styles and eras, and add visual interest from street level.

All buildings make a positive contribution to the pedestrian environment, with consistent 'wall to the street' frontages, or in the case of residential buildings, low fencing, gardens, balconies and windows providing casual surveillance.

Well established street trees (including central median planting) also add to the amenity of the pedestrian environment and provide a unifying element throughout.

CA4 | Queen Victoria Market

Residential and shops near market

Location

Character Area 4 is a triangular shaped precinct located in the north eastern corner of the study area, with Queen Victoria Market immediately to its east. It is bounded by Victoria Street to the north and Peel Street to the east, with William Street forming its western edge.

Planning controls

The character area is zoned Mixed Use, with the exception of a row of dwellings facing Capel Street, which are zoned General Residential (GRZ1).

With the exception of a small corner pocket located adjacent to Flagstaff Gardens, the whole character area is covered by the Heritage Overlay (HO3). Two significant Elm trees at the northern end of Capel Street are proposed to be covered by individual heritage overlays as part of Amendment C258.

With the exception of the residentially zoned properties and the aforementioned small corner pocket, the area is subject to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO32), imposing a mandatory height limit of 14 metres.



CA4 | Queen Victoria Market

Residential and shops near market

Urban character description

This fine grained, mixed area of primarily residential housing stock is located on relatively flat topography as the streets roughly follow the contours. The vast majority of lots are under 500 square metres in area.

The character of its Peel Street edge is heavily influenced by the Queen Victoria Market and the busy retail and entertainment uses associated with it. These retail uses also stretch around the corner into Victoria Street, where historic shopfronts with awnings over the footpath provide an intimately scaled, Victorian commercial character.

Exotic street tree planting, particularly in William Street, humanizes the scale of the wide carriageways (30 metres); however, in streets such as Capel, where consistent tree canopies are yet to establish, the character is open with the streetscape feeling less cohesive.

Built form is most consistent in William Street and the southern end of Capel Street, where rows of two storey Victorian terraces add a historic uniformity to the streetscape. Contemporary infill of a similar scale elsewhere in these streets is of varying quality, with some poor examples being dominated by crossovers and garages at the footpath edge.

Building materials throughout are mostly brickwork, with some examples of painted or rendered brick, and stone. A consistent 2 to 4 storey building height is evident throughout the character area.

Views of the city skyline are available over the row houses in Capel Street and add to the 'city edge' feel of the character area.



CA4 | Queen Victoria Market

Residential and shops near market

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA4 are:

- Loss of historic residential housing stock, and/or detailing
- Loss of significant individual heritage trees
- High, solid front fences
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Construction of built form that exceeds the mandatory maximum building heights that apply to the precinct
- Siting of buildings that doesn't adhere to the prevailing front setback in the street
- Loss of fine grain nature of streetscapes (i.e. loss of small lots under 500 square metres)
- Consolidation of lots into larger parcels
- Loss of Victorian shopfront details, such as verandah awnings and posts
- Signage clutter on Victorian commercial buildings
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings, or dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees
- Irregular and inconsistent street tree planting
- Rows of street trees of mixed species



Preferred urban character

#queenvicmarketneverdisappoints
1 post

Rows of Victorian terraces and other consistent housing provide uniformity to the streetscapes in some areas, and low fences allow views from the footpath into the small front gardens or verandahs.

Regular avenues of street trees strengthen this consistency and reinforce the visual links to the green canopies of Flagstaff Gardens. Due to the consistency of built form height, views are also available to the city skyline over the rows of housing in Capel Street.

A varied mix of contemporary architectural responses exists elsewhere, but vehicular access and garaging no longer dominates the frontages of new buildings.

Intact historic shopfronts and awnings line Victoria Street, with this thriving mix of uses continuing into Peel Street opposite the Victoria Market.

CA5 | Railway Place Escarpment

Diverse mixed potential

Location

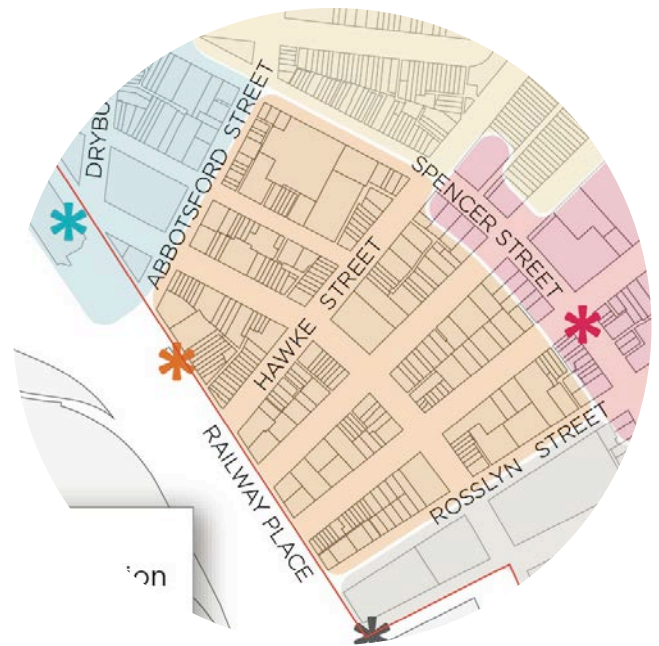
Character Area 5 is located at the central western edge of the study area, abutting the Railway Place escarpment. It is bounded generally by Spencer Street (and the properties abutting the rear of those fronting Spencer Street) to the north east, Abbotsford Street to the north west, and Rosslyn Street to the south east.

Planning controls

The area is zoned Mixed Use, with the exception of a small residentially zoned pocket around Hawke and Adderley Streets, and Railway Place (GRZ1).

The majority of the character area is covered by the Heritage Overlay (HO3), with some individual heritage overlay sites in Roden and Stanley Streets. Amendment C258 proposes the application of the heritage overlay to individual properties in Rosslyn Street (Australian Biscuit Co. Ltd. Stores) and Adderley Street (Corris or Jones House).

The six blocks bounded by Hawke, Spencer and Rosslyn Streets, and Railway Place, are subject to the Design and Development Overlay (DDO29 'West Melbourne'), which recommends a discretionary maximum building height of 14 metres. The north western part of the character area (generally the block between Ireland and Spencer Streets, and extending southwards over some properties to Adderley Street) is covered by DDO32, with a mandatory maximum height limit of 14 metres.



CA5 | Railway Place Escarpment

Diverse mixed potential

Urban character description

This precinct has a mixed and diverse urban character, and is undergoing a transformative process, with many former industrial buildings being adapted for residential use, and new apartment buildings being constructed. This results in a distinctly urban edge/converted warehouse character,

The topography of the character area slopes down from the highest point around Hawke and Spencer Streets, to the lowest point at the Dudley Street underpass. The wide streets (most are 30 metres) are arranged in a grid or modified grid, and terminate at the railway cutting at Railway Place, a relatively narrow one-way street and well-used pedestrian link through to Dudley Street.

Lot sizes are as varied as the built form, but the majority of properties range from under 500 square metres to between 500 and 1,500 square metres. A small number of larger sites (up to 3,000 square metres) are dispersed throughout the precinct.

Buildings in Hawke, Stanley and Rosslyn Streets are of mixed materials and eras, with historic brick warehouses and former industrial buildings (around 4 storeys) a strong character element. Some warehouses and former factories are embellished with interesting Art Deco detailing, and many have historic signage painted onto the brickwork. It is not unusual to see a collection of workers' cottages, or a single Victorian terrace sitting adjacent to these industrial buildings, providing a diverse and interesting story about the history of the area.

Other elements such as narrow bluestone laneways strengthen the mixed historic character, and invite the pedestrian to explore the secondary spaces to the rear of buildings.

Unfortunately, there are some examples of more contemporary buildings with recessed components, redundant space within front setbacks, large garages dominating front facades, and car parking forward of the building line, most of which detract from the established pattern of a built form 'wall to the street' or prioritise the car over the amenity of the pedestrian environment.

Due to their width, streets in this part of the precinct accommodate parking in the median as well as parallel to both footpaths. The medians are planted with large Eucalypts, and exotic street trees (when more established) will add greenery, shade and a human scale to the streetscapes.

The north western side of Hawke Street and the westernmost end of Adderley Street has a more uniform historic residential character, with rows of Victorian cottages and two storey terraces lining the footpaths. Consistently low front

fences and minimal front setbacks add to the cohesion of these streetscapes, and small front gardens combined with generous grassy nature strips and large exotic street trees, add a lush greenery to the footpath environment.

Ireland Street in this character area also has a more residential character, but housing stock comprises more contemporary apartments, townhouses, and warehouse conversions. The street is narrower (20 metres), and combined with higher built form (3 to 4 storeys), has an 'inner urban' residential feel.

This character area is relatively quiet, particularly to the south west of Adderley Street due to the termination of streets at Railway Place resulting in no through traffic. In this area wide footpaths, grassy verges and street trees enhance the 'urban oasis' character, and despite the quiet and isolated nature of Railway Place, it feels safe due to the design of residential apartments directly abutting it, with windows and balconies providing eyes on the street.



CA5 | Railway Place Escarpment

Diverse mixed potential

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA5 are:

- Loss of the mix of uses throughout the precinct
- Loss of diverse building stock
- Loss of older, former industrial buildings that are not covered by the Heritage Overlay (particularly brick buildings and those with interesting detailing)
- Retention of only the facades of heritage buildings and other valued buildings, resulting in a loss of historical integrity across the whole site
- Loss of Victorian cottages and terrace houses
- Loss of historic signage on former industrial buildings
- Construction of built form over the discretionary height recommendation of 5 storeys in the eastern part of the precinct, without significant justification
- Construction of buildings over the mandatory maximum height limits in place between Hawke and Abbotsford Streets
- Loss of diversity of lots sizes
- Loss of fine grain nature of streetscapes (i.e. loss of small lots under 500 square metres, and between 500 and 1,500 square metres)
- Consolidation of lots into large parcels
- Loss of secondary streets, laneways and pedestrian links
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Built form that is not constructed on the front boundary and deviates from the 'wall on the street' typology, or in the case of single dwellings, does not have a low front fence demarcating the front boundary
- High, solid front fences
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings, or dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees
- Irregular and inconsistent street tree planting
- Rows of street trees of mixed species
- Groupings of non-active frontages
- Excessive advertising signage on buildings
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces





Preferred urban character

#westmelbournelife 6 posts

A mixed oasis of activity where people both live and work – small offices, studios, start-ups and apartments all occupy space in buildings from a variety of eras. The retention of former industrial buildings, including many brick warehouses, contributes to the valued urban character of the area and provides visual evidence of the past history of this diverse precinct.

Where older buildings have been re-used and incorporated into new developments, their three dimensional form has been maintained, and innovative and contemporary architectural responses are clearly distinguishable.

The retention and renovation of residential buildings from all eras, including workers' cottages and Victorian terraces, together with more recent apartment buildings visually reveal the layers of history and provide eyes and people on the street, at all times of the day and night.

The historic bluestone laneways and service alleys have been retained and are more heavily used by pedestrians accessing alternative entrances to residential buildings and offices, and many are overlooked by the balconies and windows of new developments. Railway Place remains an important pedestrian link to North Melbourne Railway Station and Docklands, and the fine grain mix of lot sizes throughout the area has been retained with no consolidation of sites into large parcels.

All buildings make a positive contribution to the streetscape and pedestrian environment, and reinforce the urban, 'wall to the street' typology. Vehicular access is provided from the rear of sites via laneways, where possible, and no car parking exists within the front setback of buildings. No through traffic and large established street trees and pocket parks add to the 'urban oasis' character.

CA6 | Dudley Street & Underpass

Steep, mixed use avenue

Location

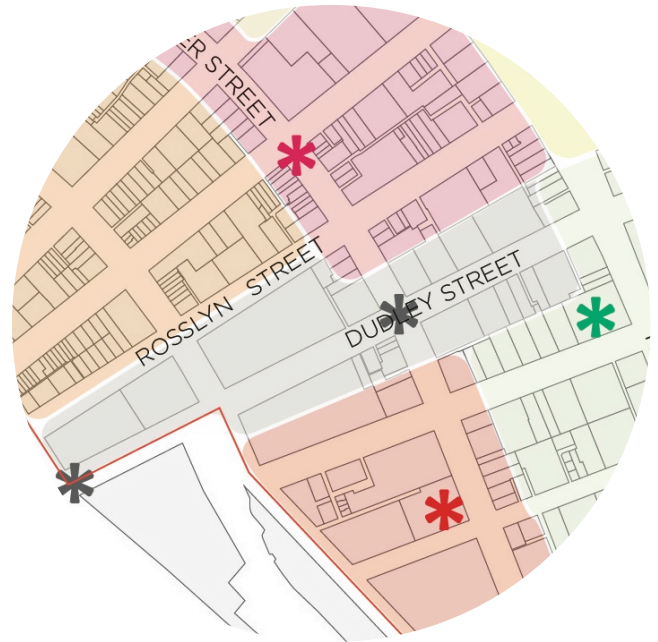
Character Area 6 takes in the properties fronting Dudley Street, which runs approximately east-west through the study area. At the south western boundary of the precinct is the Dudley Street underpass (adjacent to Festival Hall), and it is bounded by the rear of the properties facing King Street at its north eastern edge.

Planning controls

The area is zoned Mixed Use throughout, and Dudley Street itself is a Category 1 Road Zone.

A small number of individual sites are currently protected by the Heritage Overlay including 420 Spencer Street, located on the corner of Dudley Street. Amendment C258 proposes to apply the Heritage Overlay to three significant sites within the precinct, including Festival Hall, the Australian Red Cross building, and Brown's factory (later Preston Motors Pty. Ltd.).

The Design and Development Overlay applies to the whole character area. DDO29 recommends a discretionary building height maximum of 14 metres to the properties on the northern side of Dudley Street, and DDO33 ('CBD fringe area') applies a discretionary height limit of 40 metres to the properties on the southern side.



CA6 | Dudley Street & Underpass

Steep, mixed use avenue

Urban character description

This linear and steeply sloping character area comprises a mix of uses and is dominated by vehicular traffic. The topography, which falls from King Street down to the low point of the Dudley Street underpass, makes this precinct even more difficult to navigate for some pedestrians. Sites are large, with the majority land in the character area comprising lots of between 1,500-3,000 square metres, or over 3,000 square metres, and the distance between cross streets is up to 200 metres.

While Dudley Street itself is a busy, heavily trafficked street, the pedestrian environment and character of the street is improved by the consistent avenue of Plane trees running its entire length. Wide footpaths and kerbside parking also create some separation for pedestrians from the heavy volume of vehicles.

Built form is mixed, but is dominated at the south western end by large, red brick industrial heritage buildings, which have been re-purposed e.g. the Australian Red Cross building, or are soon to be incorporated into residential development e.g. the 'West End' apartments.

On the north western side of Dudley Street, between Spencer and King Streets new apartment buildings with components of up to 9 storeys prevail, and while the footpath is interrupted with occasional crossovers and car park entrances, there are also clearly defined building entrances (in some cases), balconies, windows and landscaping, which generally make a positive contribution to the character of the streetscape.

On the south eastern side of Dudley Street, near the intersection of Spencer Street, the consistent and transitional height of buildings has been interrupted by two large residential towers that far exceed the recommended discretionary height limit. The presence of the taller tower in particular is at odds with the built form character of this precinct, and dilutes the concentration of height/tower skyline of the CBD.

Elsewhere in the character area, towards King Street, a lower scale mix of smaller commercial buildings exist. Between King Street and Spencer Street these are punctuated by a series of historic bluestone laneways, which provide a glimpse into the industrial history of the precinct, and the historic hierarchy of streets and service lanes across the study area.

The topographically low, south western entry into the character area at the Dudley Street overpass has an interesting 'underground/artistic' atmosphere. A sense of 'gateway' has been strengthened by the bright orange highlighted rail bridge, and constantly changing posters add urban art to this otherwise dark and drab space. The strong social history of Festival Hall has been translated visually with pixilated

photos onto columns at the side entrance to the building, which form part of a unique and well trafficked pedestrian link from Docklands and the stadium, through to Railway Place.



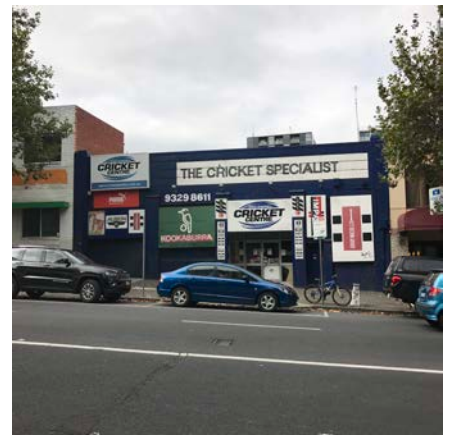
CA6 | Dudley Street & Underpass

Steep, mixed use avenue

Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA6 are:

- Approval and construction of buildings that do not adhere to the mandatory Floor Area Ratio to the south east of Dudley street
- Approval and construction of built form over the discretionary height recommendation of 8 storeys to the north west of Dudley Street, without significant reasons
- Loss of secondary streets, laneways and pedestrian links
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Built form that is not constructed on the front boundary and deviates from the 'wall on the street' typology
- Car parking, garage entrances or vehicular access dominating the front façade of residential buildings
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss of street trees
- Groupings of non-active frontages
- Excessive advertising signage on buildings
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces



Preferred urban character

#dudleystreetsdreams 58 posts

With a minimal number of exceptions, the built form is of a consistent height and bulk, and appropriate for its location at the fringe of the CBD. Large sites have reintroduced permeability to the area through vertical articulation and the separation of building forms.

The small number of fine grained sites has been retained and are adjacent to existing historic laneways that provide vehicular access and additional pedestrian access to the adjacent buildings, which are occupied by a mix of uses.

Despite the heavy traffic, the pedestrian environment provides some respite, as the footpaths are wide and well vegetated, with a distinctive avenue of trees for the entire length of Dudley Street. Balconies, and well designed building entrances in new residential buildings also provide good surveillance and activity adjacent to the street.

Older buildings have been re-purposed and incorporated into new developments, including Festival Hall, which is now provides an activated edge to Rosslyn Street.

CA7 | Spencer Street Shops

Active frontages and mixed activity

Location

Character Area 7 is located approximately centrally within the study area and lies between Spencer and King Streets (taking in those properties on the south western side of Spencer Street. It is bounded by the properties on the southern side of Rosslyn Street to the south, and Roden Street to the north west, extending to Hawke Street to include commercial properties on Spencer Street.

Planning controls

The character area is zoned Mixed Use, and Spencer Street is covered by the Road Zone – Category 1.

The Heritage Overlay (HO3) currently applies to the properties to the north west of Roden Street within the precinct. Five additional heritage overlays are proposed within the character area as part of Amendment C258. These are primarily significant industrial heritage buildings, and also include the Embassy café and service station on the corner of Spencer and Roden Streets.

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO29) applies to the whole character area and recommends a discretionary maximum building height of 14 metres.



CA7 | Spencer Street Shops

Active frontages and mixed activity

Urban character description

This largely commercial area consists of 30 metre wide streets, all with central medians, laid out in a traditional grid. The topography slopes gently down towards the south west from King to Spencer Street, where it levels off.

Block sizes vary, but the majority of land in the precinct is occupied by lots greater than 1,500 square metres, including very large properties of more than 3,000 square metres between Roden and Stanley Streets. The nature of these large blocks directly affects the character of these streets. Substantial contemporary buildings containing light industrial or commercial uses occupy these large sites, and present long blank walls, occasionally punctuated by crossovers and garage doors to the street. As a result, visual interest, pedestrian amenity and permeability is minimal.

By way of contrast, Rosslyn Street (and the southern side of Stanley Street) contains a variety of lot sizes, including pockets of sites under 500 square metres, punctuated by occasional laneways. Built form is varied and includes former industrial brick buildings, smaller warehouses and Victorian terraces from 2 to 4 storeys in height. The more 'human scale' of these frontages is further strengthened with street tree planting in the median and footpaths, which extends this intimately scaled character to the street itself.

Spencer Street between Roden and Dudley Streets (with one or two exceptions) also contains a fine grain mix of small offices, heritage shop fronts, warehouses and corner hotels.

Looking towards the north east, Stanley Street has a vista to the greenery of Eades Park and St Mary's church beyond, and a sense from within this character area that the CBD is close by is confirmed with views of the city skyline popping up behind the low scale warehouses.

Also of note are the number of large, vacant sites throughout the precinct.



CA7 | Spencer Street Shops

Active frontages and mixed activity

Threats

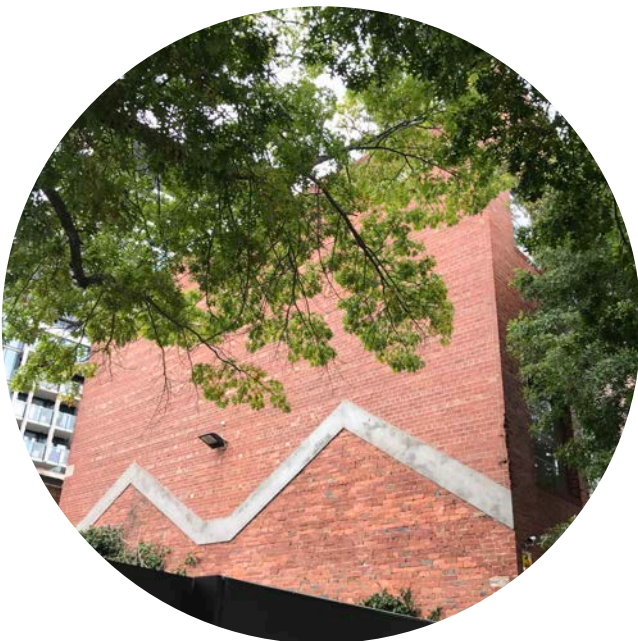
The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA7 are:

- Loss of older, former industrial buildings that are not covered by the Heritage Overlay (particularly brick buildings)
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- Car parking located within the front setback of buildings
- facadism
- Approval and construction of built form over the discretionary height recommendation of 8 storeys without good justification
- Loss of views to the greenery of Eades Park, and St Mary's church
- Loss of diversity of lots sizes (where they exist)
- Consolidation of lots into large parcels
- Loss of opportunities to retain and increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Built form that is not constructed on the front boundary and deviates from the 'wall on the street' typology
- More than one vehicular crossover per frontage
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees, irregular and inconsistent street tree planting, and rows of street trees of mixed species
- Groupings of non-active frontages
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces



CA7 | Spencer Street Shops

Active frontages and mixed activity



Preferred urban character

#spencerstreetsoul 5 posts

Large vacant sites have been developed for a mix of uses with considered and innovative design responses, and make a positive contribution to the public domain and pedestrian environment. Blank walls, vehicular access and garaging no longer detract from the aesthetics or activity of the streets.

Older buildings have been incorporated into new developments, with the retention of more than just façades adding integrity and retaining the sense of history of the precinct. Former red brick industrial buildings, and bluestone laneways and kerb and guttering, strengthen these historic links.

The finer grain areas of built form have also been retained for a mix of uses, and the overall height and bulk of buildings is consistent across the area. Laneways provide access of all types and are well activated with alternative entranceways, and building elements such as balconies and windows.

Tree planting throughout is well established and consistent, and includes large canopy trees in central medians of all streets. Views towards Eades Park and St Mary's are retained, and enhanced by these green avenues.

CA8 | Sands & McDougall Building

Large institutional

Location

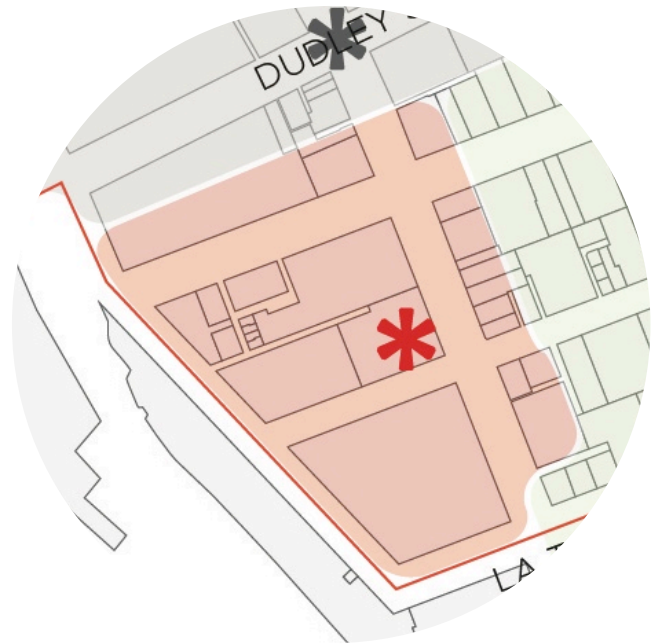
Character Area 8 is located in the south western corner of the study area adjacent to, but elevated above, the rail yards. It takes in the buildings on the north eastern side of Spencer Street, and is bordered by La Trobe Street to the south and the Australian Red Cross building on Batman Street to the north.

Planning controls

The character area is zoned Mixed Use, with the exception of the Melbourne Assessment Prison (Public Use Zone 3 'Health and Community').

A small number of sites are currently covered by individual heritage overlays, including the Sands & McDougall building on Spencer Street, which is proposed to be expanded to a larger heritage precinct as part of Amendment C258. The amendment also proposes the protection of six Elm trees in Jeffcott Street, and the application of the Heritage Overlay to the Melbourne Assessment Prison.

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO33) recommends a discretionary building height limit of 40 metres across the entire character area.



Urban character description

This commercial/institutional character area is laid out in a grid, with typically wide streets and large land parcels (the majority over 3,000 square metres) adding to the sense of spaciousness in the precinct.

The topography slopes gently from the east down to the west, and drops off suddenly at the rail yards cutting. However, due to the elevation of Railway Place, the row of angle parking on its western side and the vegetation in this area, there is little sense of being close to the rail yards.

Built form is characterised by a number of large red brick buildings in this precinct. These include the historic Sands & McDougall building, the Australian Red Cross building, and the Melbourne Assessment Prison, all of which occupy a large proportion of the blocks in which they are located.

Other smaller scale examples of former industrial, red brick buildings also exist elsewhere in the character area, and together with the aforementioned landmarks, provide a consistency and uniformity to the precinct, both in scale, materials and at the interfaces with the footpaths.

Building heights are relatively consistent at 4 to 6 storeys, but with frontage widths and building types vary significantly on the eastern side of Spencer street due to the smaller, more fine grained nature of the sites.

Regular Eucalypt planting in Spencer Street, and the avenue of large exotic street trees in Batman Street in particular, add to the consistency of the streetscapes and provide a sense of enclosure and shelter in the pedestrian environment.



Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA8 are:

- Approval and construction of buildings that do not adhere to the mandatory Floor Area Ratio
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- Loss of fine grain nature of streetscapes, where they exist e.g. Spencer Street
- Consolidation of lots into large parcels
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Built form that is not constructed on the front boundary and deviates from the 'wall on the street' typology
- Loss of significant street trees
- Irregular and inconsistent street tree planting
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces



Preferred urban character #redbricklove 585 posts

The predominant and strong character influence of large, red brick buildings remains, both historic and contemporary, and the Sands & McDougall building retains its landmark status.

The height and bulk of built form is consistent and appropriately scaled for this city fringe precinct, and every opportunity to provide additional permeability through large sites is maximised.

The smaller building frontages on Spencer Street remain, and provide a more human scaled pedestrian environment, enhanced by street trees and active frontages.

Varied and interesting views are available from the elevated edge of the railyards towards Docklands and E-Gate, between established street trees.

CA9 | St James Old Cathedral & Flagstaff Gardens

City fringe near gardens

Location

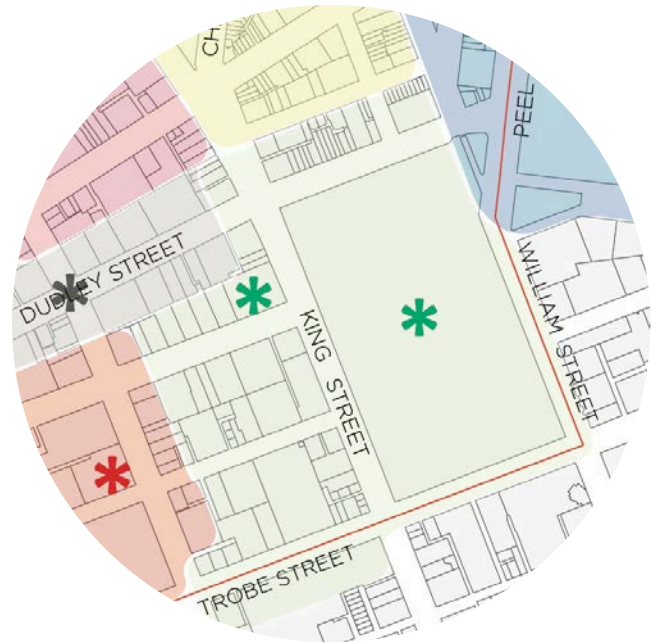
Character Area 9 is located in the south east of the study area on the CBD fringe and takes in Flagstaff Gardens, with William Street as its north eastern boundary. It is bordered by La Trobe Street to the south east, Walsh Street to the north west, and the rear of properties facing Spencer Street form its south western boundary.

Planning controls

The area is zoned Mixed Use with the exception of Flagstaff Gardens (Public Park and Recreation Zone).

The Heritage Overlay currently applies to a number of individual sites, including Flagstaff Gardens, St James Old Cathedral, and the Inter-war industrial precinct between Batman and Jeffcott Streets, which is proposed to be expanded as part of Amendment C258. A number of historic buildings fronting King Street are also currently protected with individual heritage overlays. Amendment C258 also proposes the application of the Heritage Overlay to the Molloy & Co. building in La Trobe Street.

The Design and Development Overlay DDO33 recommends a discretionary building height limit of 40 metres across the character area, excluding Flagstaff Gardens.



Urban character description

This character of this area on the CBD fringe is heavily influenced by Flagstaff Gardens, prominently located on one of the highest hills in the study area. Views to this formal, green, landscaped space and its mature canopy trees are available from every street in the precinct, and views from the gardens themselves extend across West Melbourne, with the historic landmark of St James Old Cathedral in the foreground. From the escarpment at the western edge of Flagstaff gardens the topography slopes down to the south west.

Lot sizes in the character area are mixed, but the majority are large and between 1,500 and 3,000 square metres.

The character of Batman Street is spacious and open due to the road width (30 metres) and lack of central median or planting. It has a sense of being dominated by cars, with virtually uninterrupted car parking in the centre and parallel to both footpaths.

A number of low scale (two storey) buildings on the northern side of Batman street add to the sense of openness at pedestrian level, but a contrasting built form is emerging on the southern side, comprising large residential buildings set behind historic warehouse facades, and apartment towers. The more imposing built form (up to 12 storeys) reinforces the 'city fringe' character of the precinct, but the approval of a number of 20+ storey buildings in this street does not support the CBD fringe character, and will dilute the preferred concentration of the tallest towers in the city centre.

Contrasting with the current openness of Batman Street, is the sense of enclosure that exists in Jeffcott Street due to the narrower roadway (20 metres) and central landscaped median. Established street trees in the centre, and in the south side footpath, add to the amenity and leafy green character of the pedestrian environment. The sense of containment at street level is exacerbated by the prevalence of tall residential buildings and towers (up to 12 storeys) along the street itself, and on blocks beyond.

The built form character of Latrobe and King Streets is equally imposing and mixed, with a particularly interesting clash of architectural styles in King Street, adding interest and vitality to the bustling streetscape.

Sites between Walsh and Dudley Street at the north eastern edge of the precinct are fine grained, and this is reflected in the form of the buildings, which are mixed in terms of use and architectural style.



Threats

The threats to the positive urban character attributes of CA9 are:

- Approval and construction of buildings that do not adhere to the mandatory Floor Area Ratio
- Large expanses of blank wall facing the street, particularly in new buildings
- Recessed sections of buildings, or recessed driveway entries
- Retention of only the facades of heritage buildings and other valued built form, resulting in a loss of historical integrity across the whole site
- Loss of views to the greenery of Flagstaff Gardens
- Loss of diversity of lots sizes, where they exist
- Further consolidation of lots into large parcels
- Loss of opportunities to increase permeability and through site links
- Loss of opportunities to activate laneways and building frontages
- Built form that is not constructed on the front boundary and deviates from the 'wall on the street' typology
- Loss of bluestone paving to laneways, and kerb and channelling
- Loss/lack of street trees, irregular and inconsistent street tree planting, and rows of street trees of mixed species
- Groupings of non-active frontages
- Painting of previously unpainted brick or stone surfaces



Preferred urban character

#flagstaffgardens 4,434 posts

A sense of proximity to Flagstaff Gardens permeates the area, and the streets are also sheltered and green at pedestrian level due to the avenues of canopy trees. Views to the Old St James Cathedral are also highly valued from within the area.

New buildings do not deviate significantly from the preferred building height in the area, and include the introduction of through site links made possible by a separation of building forms.

Residential apartments provide balconies, gardens and passive surveillance of the public realm, and have legible and well lit entrances. Vehicular access and garaging does not dominate the front elevation of buildings.

Historic buildings have been re-used for a variety of purposes, with the three dimensional form of these older buildings still visible from pedestrian level. The historic and fine grained nature of sites and built form in parts of King, Walsh and Dudley Streets remain and provide human scale and visually varied and interesting streetscapes.

Heritage fabric

Objectives

To ensure that the layers of history of the area are evident in built form and detailing.

To retain and strengthen the architectural and built form diversity throughout the area.

To encourage the retention of older buildings that contribute to the valued urban character of the area.

Design responses

Retain significant heritage buildings and details, including signage that is integral to the building.

Retain significant trees.

Retain bluestone laneways, kerbs and guttering.

Retain older, valued buildings that are not covered by the Heritage Overlay, where possible.

Re-use and adapt of older buildings (in good condition) that display a link to the history of the area.

Clearly distinguish new development, including additions to existing buildings, from the original built form through the use of innovative and contemporary architecture.

Avoid architectural mimicry.

Retain the three dimensional form of heritage buildings when viewed from the public realm, and avoid 'facadism'.

Building form

Objectives

To ensure that new buildings are an appropriate scale in relation to their bulk and height, relative to the scale of the street and surrounding buildings.

To ensure that buildings in the character area maintain an appropriate scale relative to the wider area, including the Melbourne CBD.

To retain and reinforce the fine grain nature of streetscapes across the character area.

Design responses

New development must not exceed the mandatory maximum building height specified in the Design and Development Overlay for the area.

New development should not exceed the preferred maximum building height specified in the Design and Development Overlay for the area.

Respect the predominant building height and roof forms in the street and nearby properties.

Highlight street corners and intersections through the considered use of building height, massing and detailing.

Avoid consolidation of small sites into large lots.

Buildings on large sites should respond to the fine grain pattern of the character area with vertical articulation and division or separation of buildings and/or building frontages.

Building design

Objectives

To encourage innovative and contemporary architectural responses that contribute a new layer of history to the area.

To ensure that new development is sustainable and legible and designed in direct response to its site, location and urban character context.

To ensure that all buildings make a positive contribution to the public domain and pedestrian environment.

Design responses

Articulate the form of new buildings and elevations through the considered composition of openings and detailing, and avoid blank walls to the street.

Orientate windows and balconies to overlook streets and laneways.

Articulate and detail the lower levels of buildings in a considered way, to provide visual interest and activity at street level.

Provide well designed entries to buildings that maximize opportunities for visibility into the building entry from the streetscape, and out of the building to the street.

Allow for the establishment of contained landscape plantings on upper level terraces, decks or balconies that make a contribution to the amenity of the public domain.

Use lighting to appropriately highlight building design features, particularly entrances.

Siting

Objectives

To maintain the consistent siting of buildings at the interface with the public domain.

To retain and strengthen the 'wall to the street' building typology, where buildings are constructed on the front boundary.

Design responses

The front setback of new buildings should be no less than the average of the adjoining two buildings.

Design the front elevation of buildings to avoid recessed areas, set backs, step-ins or garden beds in areas where buildings are constructed on the front boundary, at the footpath edge.

Materials & detailing

Objective

To complement and strengthen the historic and predominant use of brick and stone throughout the area.

Design responses

Avoid the exclusive use of timber and other non-masonry materials in new buildings.

Avoid the combination and excessive use of detailing, articulation, multiple colours and mixed materials in new buildings.

Retain unpainted brickwork or stone in its original state, and avoid painting or rendering these surfaces.

Front boundary treatments (historic dwellings)

Objectives

To maintain the garden settings of historic single dwellings.

To enhance the security of properties, and ensure views into the front gardens of historic dwellings.

Design responses

Retain canopy trees and other vegetation wherever possible.

Avoid the excessive use of paving and the use of other impervious surfaces in front gardens.

Provide a low front fence that allows views through or over the fence into the front garden.

Provide a front fence that is appropriate to the era of the building.

Access & car parking

Objective

To ensure that car parking facilities, vehicular access and loading areas do not adversely affect the visual or pedestrian amenity of the streetscape.

Design responses

Provide vehicular access from a secondary street or rear laneway if available.

Provide only one vehicular crossover per frontage, where possible.

Ensure that the front elevation of new buildings is not dominated by vehicular access or garaging.

Laneways

Objectives

To retain the laneways in the area, and encourage the creation of new laneways and pedestrian connections.

To encourage the passive surveillance of streets and laneways in the area.

To encourage activity and interaction in streets and laneways throughout the area.

Design responses

Design the upper levels of buildings to provide for the passive surveillance of laneways.

On large sites, provide separate building forms to allow for permeability in the form of new links and through connections.

Locate alternative building entrances from laneways, where they can be clearly seen from the street, and incorporate lighting into their design.

Planning scheme considerations

Which tool is best?

The Victoria Planning Provisions provides a suite of tools ranging from broad strategic objectives to detailed, non-discretionary measures for the protection and management of urban character. One of the key issues facing a planning authority is selecting the right provisions to give effect to its desired character outcomes.

The determination of existing urban character, along with an analysis of the threats to that character, the input of community values, and a determination of how that character is best protected and enhanced, should all be considered, together with the pros and cons of each of the VPP character tools, before arriving at a decision.

The following section describes and summarises what each character tool provides, and how they are best used. A number of these provisions are already in place in the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

It is not the intention of this report (nor is it possible at this juncture in the structure planning process) to provide detailed recommendations regarding how the outcomes of this study are best implemented.

Local planning policies

When urban character has been defined and objectives are clear, a local planning policy is an excellent tool for guiding decision making as it can provide greater clarity regarding how discretion will be exercised. A local policy can be used to outline a preferred character statement, set local character objectives, and include additional decision guidelines. It is obviously only of use though, when a planning permit application is required.

However, a local planning policy should not be used to replace a numerical value in a standard in Clause 54, 55 or 56. Where a numerical standard is required to be changed to give effect to a character objective, either an overlay (e.g. DDO) or a schedule to the zone should be used.

The use of a local policy together with an overlay however, can result in a 'doubling-up' of urban character objectives, and decision guidelines, and would need to be drafted in unison to avoid extraneous content.

Design and Development Overlay

The Design and Development Overlay (DDO) is already in place across the study area, its main use in the Melbourne Planning Scheme being to apply discretionary or mandatory maximum building height limits. However, the use of DDO schedules can be more far reaching than simply stipulating maximum heights.

The purpose of the DDO is to identify and guide the design and built form of new development. Design objectives are required to be included in any schedule to the overlay, and other requirements relating to setbacks, height, plot ratio, landscaping and *any other requirement relating to the design or built form of new development* can be included.

What about the NCO?

The Neighbourhood Character Overlay (NCO) is most appropriately used in exclusively residential areas i.e. low scale, suburban areas. It is also recommended that the use of the NCO and the Heritage Overlay together should be avoided.

Mixed Use Zone Schedule

The Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) enables new housing and jobs growth in mixed use areas. The zone provides for a range of uses including higher density housing that responds to the local character.

The zone is flexible because there is no default building height limit and planning authorities can specify different objectives, decision guidelines, and building and design requirements. These specifications can also vary across different areas through the use of multiple, specifically tailored schedules (e.g. MUZ1, MUZ2 etc.)

The schedules can include different standards to Clause 54 or 55 for street setbacks, site coverage, permeability, landscaping, side and rear setbacks, private open space and front fence height.

The schedule to the MUZ also allows a maximum building height to be specified that cannot be exceeded.

It is also worth noting that the contents of a zone and schedule provide a clear intention of outcomes and more certainty for the community, whereas the contents of a local policy or overlay schedule (in some circumstances) are more open to discretion. Since the introduction of the new suite of residential zones, the Department has been encouraging of the use of zone schedules to manage character.

Conclusion

A number of options and combinations exist for the implementation of the urban character findings of this study. However, they will need to be revisited at the conclusion of the structure planning process and considered within the context of other built form, heritage, density and sustainability intentions. Consideration of VPP tools that are already in place should also be given weight in the decision making process.