DELBRIDGE HOUSE, 55 CARLSBERG ROAD

EAGLEMONT

Heritage Impact Statement

Delbridge House
33 Carlsberg Road
Eaglemont

VHR H1871
Banyule HO122

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1.0 Introduction

This statement forms part of a Heritage Permit Application for the installation of a lift to the rear of the Delbridge House, construction of a new garage and pavilion in the garden to the rear of the house, and alterations to the kitchen area and roof terrace, as designed by Andy Hore of Billy Cart Architecture.

1.1 Heritage Overlays

Delbridge House, 55 Carlsberg Road is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as H1871. It is HO122 on the Banyule Planning Scheme.

The Victorian Heritage Register **Statement of Significance** is as follows:-

> Last updated on - December 14, 1999
>
> *What is significant?*
> The Delbridge House was designed and built by three brothers, all builders, Ian, Max and Malcolm, for their parents, Harold and Florence Delbridge. Max was the principle designer, and in company with his brothers and father (also a builder) undertook the actual construction as well. The site was purchased in 1957, and the house was largely completed in 1960. Mr & Mrs Delbridge lived in the house until their deaths in 1991 and 1993 respectively. At this time, the brothers decided to sell the house, and Max took the opportunity to complete some elements he intended, but never completed.
>
> The house, located high up a sloping site, is a dramatically designed and sited structure. The impression is of an extremely light weight building, an expectation heightened by the sheer all-glass floor to ceiling walls and a thin concrete cantilevered flooring system set on thin supporting steel piloti. The effect is of a house hovering above the ground with little apparent support. The structure is in reinforced concrete, supported by a cross-shaped slate clad central spine that rises up through all three levels of the building. While the house appears large, it is in fact a small two bedroom house, mainly on one floor.
>
> The ground floor is largely open, with carparking and entry lobby, and the top floor is a single sun room with access to the extensive roof. The interior of the house features numerous unusual and original decorative features largely designed by Max Delbridge, such as the cantilevered terrazzo stairs, the bent brass stair railing, the natural patterned stone on the central support, the wood-block patterning on the central corridor, the square patterned tiling in the bathroom, the coloured glass-bead light fittings in the lounge, and the chequerboard coloured concrete on the rear elevation. These features have been carefully detailed and integrated and remain substantially intact.
>
> *How is it significant?*
> The Delbridge House is architecturally and aesthetically significant to the State of Victoria.
>
> *Why is it significant?*
> Architecturally, the Delbridge House is significant as the one of the most extraordinary and intact ultra-modern homes of the period. Numerous houses survive from the 1950s and early 1960s that were designed by noted architects, embodying various structural and formal experiments, whereas the Delbridge House, not being designed by an architect, expresses popular notions of modernity, and to a remarkably refined degree. The floating structure and all-glass appearance, was achieved only by daring structural engineering. This was devised by Emery Balint, Head of Civil Engineering at RMIT, allowing the structure to largely cantilever from the central core. The large sliding floor to ceiling windows were designed and made by Ian and Max Delbridge. Unrestrained by modern architectural discourse against featurism, the interior is remarkable for including a spectacular array of decorative finishes, designed by Max. Some, such as the glass-bead light fittings and the patterned wood-block wall are highly original, while others, such as the cantilevered stairs and natural stone walling, are expressive of the period, and all

are intact. Most of the fixtures and fittings throughout the house, especially in the bathroom and kitchen, are also original.

Aesthetically, the house presents a number of dramatic and delightful effects. The extent of glass and daring structure creates a building that seems to float on its grassy hillside lot, set amongst tall mature Eucalypts. The various decorative effects in the interior are also striking and delightful, featuring natural materials, and an extensive use of colours and textures, which are also extremely rare in a domestic context.

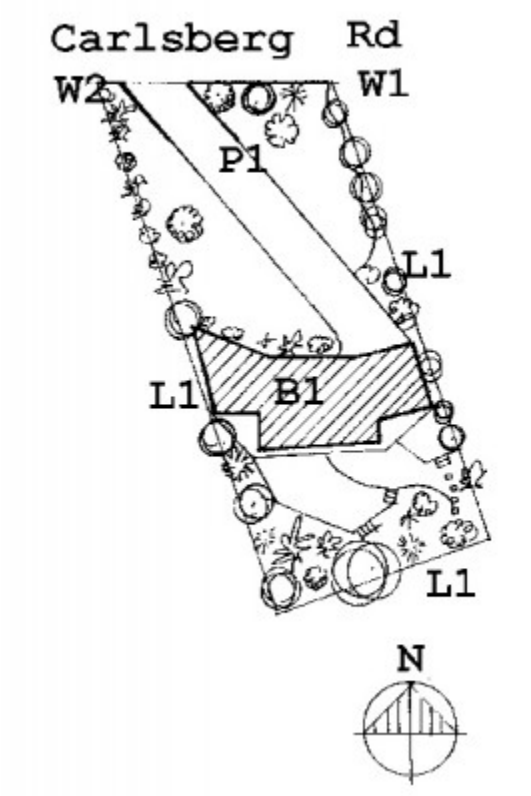

Figure 1 Diagram H1871 from the Victorian Heritage Register showing the location of the significant house (B1) and walls (W1 and W2) on the block at 55 Carlsberg Road, Eaglemont.

Current Use

The building is a single residential building lived in by the owners.

2.0 Brief History

Unusually, no further information has been located regarding the construction of the Delbridge House than is included in the Statement of Significance. Max Roland Delbridge, Builder, died on 18 May 2017.

The block of land known as 55 Carlsberg Road was part of larger block purchased by Herbert Darvall from the Eaglemont Estate Company in December 1908. Land subdivision plan LP42422 was submitted on 17 March 1958, lodged by Darvall & Co, includes the land as Lot 4. This subdivision covered a different shaped land parcel to that purchased by Darvall in 1908 so there must have been other title consolidations with adjoining blocks and subdivisions between 1908 and 1958.

A new bathroom and dressing room was added to the second floor of the house in 2016.

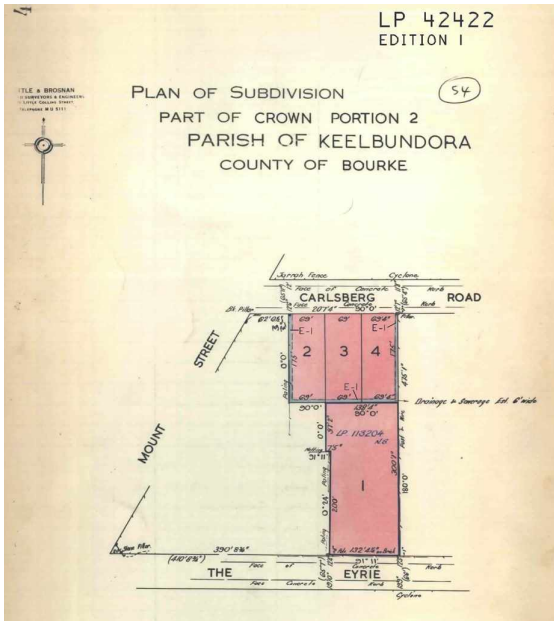

Figure 2 *The plan included in subdivision plan LP 42422, March 1958. 55 Carlsberg Road is Lot 4.*

3.0 Existing Conditions

The Delbridge House has been maintained in good overall condition. The following recent photographs illustrate the existing conditions.

Figure 3 *View of the stone retaining wall/fence along Carlsberg Road to the east of the driveway.*

Figure 4 *View up the drive from Carlsberg Road.*

Figure 5 *West part of the stone retaining wall/fence to the west of the driveway.*

Figure 6 *The Delbridge House as seen from the street.*

Figure 7 *View down the drive towards Carlsberg Road.*

Figure 8 *Part view of the Delbridge House from the driveway.*

Figure 9 *The Delbridge House from the north lawn.*

Figure 10 *The undercroft entrance to the house showing the slender steel piloti and stone clad walls supporting the first floor concrete slab.*

Figure 11 *The entrance undercroft from the west showing the simple glass box surrounding the staircase.*

Figure 12 *Rear of the undercroft showing the free form cement render on brick retaining wall with planter pockets. The retaining wall was added later to stabilise the cut slope.*

Figure 13 *View of the upper staircase.*

Figure 14 *The first floor rear wall showing the coloured square rendered cladding.*

Figure 15 *Part view of the west wall of the 2016 second storey addition with an interpretation of the original decoration on the rendered cement sheet cladding.*

Figure 16 *View from the second storey showing the south wall and garden retaining wall.*

Figure 17 *View from second storey to neighbouring property to the west.*

Figure 18 *Second storey roof deck with steel rail added in 1992.*

Figure 19 *View from the west end of the second storey terrace to the north east.*

Figure 20 *View from the roof terrace towards the south west corner of the block. The proposed pavilion will occupy the area above the retaining wall.*

Figure 21 *View from the roof terrace towards the south east corner of the block, the location of the proposed garage.*

Figure 22 *View from the roof terrace towards Carlsberg Road.*

Figure 23 *The 2016 bathroom and walk in robe addition to the original second storey pavilion.*

Figure 24 *The west boundary adjacent to the house.*

Figure 25 *View of the adjacent house to the east of 55 Carlsberg Road.*

Figure 26 *View from the staircase towards the kitchen showing the sections of wall planned to be removed.*

Figure 27 *View of the space between staircase and kitchen.*

Figure 28 *View in the kitchen.*

Figure 29 *View from the kitchen into the dining area adjacent to the staircase.*

4.0 Proposed Works

The current owners of the Delbridge House purchased the property because they love the unique 'mid-century modern' design and appearance of the house, the same reason the house was included on the Victorian Heritage Register. They want to improve the liveability of the house for their family while retaining its original appearance and character.

Following investigation into options to improve the thermal performance and safety of the windows it has been decided that the existing aluminium framed floor to ceiling windows are to be retained unaltered. Any change to the windows would have significantly altered the appearance of the primary elevation of the house, which the clients do not want to do.

The proposed changes to the house are as follows:-

Lift

A new lift in a glazed lift shaft is proposed to be installed at the rear of the house, serving the ground, first and second floors, to ease the delivery of groceries to the first floor kitchen and to enable easy access for all to all parts of the house. The lift shaft is away from the edge of the cantilevered concrete slabs. At the ground level the freeform rendered retaining wall will be modified to provide space for the lift shaft.

The roof of the 2016 upper floor addition has been extended over the lift shaft. This addition to the roof is visible on the front elevation drawing but it is impossible to see it from Carlsberg Road or the surrounding area due to the significant slope of the land. On the second storey the proposed laundry, previously discussed with Heritage Victoria, has been extended slightly to incorporate the lift lobby. It is intended to salvage the existing stone cladding from the proposed doorway opening between the Master Walk-In-Robe and the new Laundry, to be used to repair / replace missing stone from the balance of that wall.

On the first floor a linen cupboard and powder room have been added to the "lift core", and the existing toilet removed from the corner of the Study, allowing the existing Study to become a more functional room. An existing south facing window will be removed and the opening extended down to floor level to provide access from the corridor to the new lift. This window is behind the stone clad stair case core wall so is not readily visible from the north facing living rooms.

The architect has proposed to clad the new works in the same multi-coloured "patchwork" render treatment as was approved and used for the 2016 additions, however a simplified single colour tonal interpretation of the cladding pattern would be preferable to maintain the clarity of the original expression of the rear elevations of the building. (Refer Drwg H07).

Kitchen rearrangement and removal of wall sections

The existing kitchen fitout is relatively recent. It does not add anything to the house and is not convenient to use. It is proposed to remove two sections of internal wall to open up the kitchen space into the adjacent 'dining' space and install a new kitchen with large island bench with space for informal dining. Altering the kitchen area was discussed with Heritage Victoria during the pre application meeting.

Roof paving and balustrade

On the second storey roof deck it is proposed to remove the existing artificial grass matting (non-original) and replace it with tiles suspended on adjustable pedestals. Installing the tiles on pedestals allows the current roof drainage system to work unimpeded and allows easy access to repair the tanking membrane whenever necessary. The decking will not be visible from outside the building and does not damage any of the original building fabric.

It is also proposed to provide a new compliant clear glass safety balustrade to the perimeter of the decking area, set back so that the cantilevered slab edge still reads. The non-compliant 1990s steel balustrade is proposed to be removed as it is a later addition and detracts from the appearance of the house. A detail of the proposed balustrade and paving is on drawing A11.

Pavilion

It is proposed to build a pavilion on the rising slope to the south of the house with a bedroom, living room and outdoor terrace, connected to the new first floor lift lobby by a footbridge. The pavilion has been designed with mid-century aesthetics in mind but without wanting to 'compete' with the existing house. Materials proposed include natural stone, rough cast render, mild steel balustrades, timber deck, polished concrete floors and aluminium framed windows.

The pavilion has been positioned at the rear of the site, hidden behind the existing house and nestling into the slope of the land. No substantial trees are required to be removed but it is planned to plant some new native trees on the plateaus of the slope. Refer to drawings H05 and H12.

The proposed pavilion adds functionality to the house, making it more liveable by providing a third bedroom for teenager or guest use.

Garage

A single car garage is proposed to be located in the south east corner of the site. The garage will be dug into the slope and have a green roof to minimise its visibility from above. The garage will be access through the undercroft and will not be visible from the front of the house.

Gate

The owners want to install a gate across the driveway to provide security. A power operated sliding gate has been designed to close across the steeply sloping driveway at an angle (in plan) to provide a horizontal track for the gate. Care has been taken to avoid altering the stone fence and impacting the large gum tree. The existing timber sleeper retaining walls will be repaired and altered to form the base for new fabricated steel fencing between the stone walls and the new gate. The sleeper retaining wall on the west side of the driveway is in very close proximity to a very large gum tree which has damaged the driveway and caused the failure of the original stone retaining wall flanking the driveway. Reconstructing the stone wall would not be a long term solution as the continued growth of the gum tree will cause recurring damage to the retaining wall. Rebuilding the timber sleeper retaining wall will provide more flexibility to cope with the roots and movement so the entrance will remain looking good for longer. The same matching type of timber sleeper retaining wall will be constructed on the east side of the driveway to replace the existing timber retaining wall.

The design of the fencing and vehicle gates is based on part of the detailing of the existing stair balustrade inside the house. The height of the first fence panel matches the height of the existing stone wall. The panels then step up the site to match the proposed 1800mm high sliding vehicle gate. The original front fence stonework will remain intact, without the visual issues of trying to mimic it with new stonework.

Where necessary, it is proposed to replace the existing concrete driveway with new matching driveway. Concrete colour, seeded pebble aggregate, slope and position of joints are all to match the existing.

5.0 Impacts on heritage significance

The proposed changes and additions have been designed to minimise the impact on the appearance and significant heritage fabric of the Delbridge House.

The proposed lift shaft has been designed to be away from the rear of the house to minimise the physical impacts to the significant fabric. At ground level the lift is located in an area at the edge of the stone paving and the freeform retaining wall which was never fully resolved. The modification of the rendered retaining wall will not reduce its significance. The lift landings on the first and second storeys will mean that part of the rear wall of the house will be obscured from view. This is considered a minor impact to part of the house only visible from the private rear terraced garden. The lift shaft could be demolished in the future and the original appearance of this part of the house reinstated to reveal the original walls.

The alterations to the walls in the kitchen area will result in the loss of two sections of original painted plaster wall. This is considered to have little or no impact and could be reversed in future if required. The existing kitchen benchwork is not original and is not significant. Replacing it with new complementary benches will improve the liveability and the appearance of this part of the house.

The existing artificial grass on the roof terrace is not original, nor attractive. Installing tiles on pedestals will improve the appearance of the roof terrace and improve the maintainability of the roof, without any impact on the significant fabric. The existing sections of steel balustrade have never complied with Building Codes and are not safe for roof users. The installation of an all glass balustrade around the roof terrace will slightly change the appearance of the house from the street. It will probably be less visually intrusive than the existing steel balustrade is. The glass balustrade will be mostly in front of the second storey rather than standing out against the sky when viewed from the approach to the house. The glass balustrade will be more in keeping with one of the materials of primary significance in the house, glass, than the existing balustrade. Installing the glass balustrade will have little impact on the identified heritage significance of the building.

The proposed pavilion has been located so it is not visible at all from Carlsberg Road, or the front garden of the house. No significant trees need to be removed from the site. In accordance with the Burra Charter, the design is in keeping with the Delbridge house but does not mimic it. The pavilion links to the house via an uncovered footbridge connected to the new first floor lift lobby addition so does not damage any significant fabric. It will not be generally noticed from within the house as the primary views are all through the floor to ceiling windows to the north. The proposed pavilion will have little or no impact on the identified heritage significance of the site.

The proposed garage is also located so it is not visible form Carleberg Road or the front of the house. Its site is clear so there will be no loss of significant trees or heritage fabric. Construction of the garage will result in little or no impact on the identified heritage significance of the site.

The proposed installation of a powered sliding gate within the front garden area has been planned to minimise its impacts on the front stone walls and the large eucalyptus tree adjacent to the driveway. As it is set back from the street frontage, up the relatively narrow driveway, it will not be obvious from the street. The steelwork of the gate and flanking fences reference the decorative steelwork within the house, without copying it directly. The proposed gate and fences will have little or no impact on the identified heritage significance of the site.

6.0 Conclusion

The proposed installation of a passenger lift, construction of a garage and pavilion, alteration to the roof terrace balustrade and paving, alterations to the kitchen area within the house and installation of a gate across the driveway have been designed to minimise the changes to the appearance of the house and impacts on the significant heritage fabric. The proposed changes moderately increase the area of this quite small (in plan) house to provide three bedrooms and a study. The lift will make it far more convenient to live in, particularly as the owners age. Overall the liveability of the property is substantially improved by the proposed works, with almost no change visible from the front of the house.

The proposed works will have little or no impact on the significance of the house and it is recommended that they are approved.