



HEBDEN ARCHITECTS

ADAPTABLE

SUSTAINABLE

ARCHITECTURE

A NEW HOME

After seven years in our old office, it was time for a move and we did... 3 doors down! The new premises holds much promise: a Victorian era shop, recently renovated inside & out with designer light fittings, high ceilings & a bit of old world charm. It's opposite the Summer Hill train station, so we are a part of the busy local community, servicing the Inner West and the Sydney metropolitan area.



ICONIC BUILDING: THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

Designed in 1956 & opened in 1973, major renovations have recently been completed in time for its 50th anniversary. This includes an extensive refurbishment of the concert hall with improved acoustics, lighting & access: a modern 20th Century architectural masterpiece updated for a new millennia! Practice principal Andrew Hebden is newly appointed to the Australian Institute of Architects Heritage Committee and will take part in a special back-of-house tour in the coming weeks.



5 TIPS FOR DEVELOPING HERITAGE HOUSES

Be aware of the level of heritage conservation control over your property

You should be made aware of this at the time of purchase. However, zoning or classifications to individual properties can be revised without notice, so get a planning certificate to confirm. Heritage controls can vary from “streetscape” preservation (not very comprehensive) to “Class 1” preservation of individual houses (protects most of the house, including some interiors). This usually requires a report from a separate accredited Heritage consultant about the house and the works proposed. Many controls are “area specific” and info should be available from your local council.

Original Character

It’s understood that if you want to develop a heritage house you want to preserve its original character. Councils and heritage conservation organisations can offer broad guidelines about this and what characterises a particular style. It is not just an external application of details and colours but, a whole philosophy which is also reflected in the planning. New details should be true to the original character or be simple and understated so as not to detract from it. It’s encouraged by council and will be reflected in re-sale values.

Scale

It’s usually not possible to build a second storey on top of a heritage house or an addition significantly larger than it. However, building into roof spaces with an addition to the rear can provide sufficient space for a master suite and /or study/rumpus room, etc. Extending the rear at ground level is common but, it’s preferred not doing so at the side to preserve the existing character particularly from the street. The areas at the back are typically a dark “maze” of small spaces that reflect the practical operation of the house at the time of building. Of course, they don’t reflect contemporary domestic life so opening them up and connecting to the rear private open space is good practice but, controlling the scale helps to reinforce the original character.

IN PROGRESS: POLISH HOUSE

This Victorian era grand residence was originally designed as a doctor’s consulting rooms as well as a family house. It has been a centre for the Polish Community since the 1960’s. Minor internal renovations commenced in 2022 but, with recent certifier approval, more extensive works have started. This includes repointing of brickwork, refurbishment of original windows etc. Extensive landscaping will create a pedestrian link to the new Polish Club building behind: the new tying in with the old. Building works are scheduled for completion later in the year and we look forward to the revival of this grand old sleeping beauty!



Site coverage and Floor space ratio

Some precincts have strict controls of the area of landscaping, as it’s usually part of the original character and design. This also affects scale, together with floor/space ratio (the percentage of floor area allowed as a ratio of the site area). So, a 50% soft landscaping control can mean anything hard that won’t allow plants to grow e.g. paths, driveways, walls of planter beds, etc. In some circumstances building into the roof space will give you the additional area you want.

Cost

Renovating old houses is a labour of love and requires passion and dedication and “going the extra mile” financially. It may seem easy to justify the cost of some items like fireplaces but, be aware of the need to repair latent site conditions like rotten timber floor boards, roofing, etc. Some of these old places seem solid until you start removing walls and finding out how fragile they are.

We trust this info has helped and for more insights, feel free to contact us!

Andrew Hebden, B. Arch
Hebden Architects



FEATURE PROJECT – CREMORNE DUPLEX

The brief was for a pair of duplexes for “down-sizing empty-nesters”. It had to fit on a relatively small site in a steep rocky setting with access issues and exploit water views to the north. It was situated adjacent a view corridor with many neighbouring properties overlooking. We were also required to retain a large native tree at the south end of the site and create the appearance of a single dwelling with a shared entry point.

The unit on the north end allowed for a large balcony, fully embracing the water view. However, it was exposed and so it was screened with vertical battens that turn with the curved edge. Other design elements included high banks of glass louvre windows for cross ventilation, casual living areas at ground level opening up to combine with the covered patios adjacent and connect with the green spaces beyond. Also two banks of vertical gardens at the entry and a large array of PV panels on the roof.

The unit on the south “peaks” past the other to get the view. It incorporates a hi-lite or cupola roof, increasing light, ventilation and sense of space. Stone is incorporated into the façade, picking up on the sandstone retaining wall on the east boundary. The first floor balcony is large with extensive planter boxes.

Ultimately, this scheme is about connection with this limited site to private spaces at ground level and light and views to the north, while filtering overlooking from multiple neighbours for privacy. Bulk, scale and finishes were considered to allow the building to be a good neighbour and a positive addition to the street.

CLIENT TESTIMONIAL – CREMORNE DUPLEX

“We are...moved to write to you to express the almost daily delight we get from increasingly appreciating the sheer cleverness of your design of our new home. It sometimes takes quite a while and different seasons to fully appreciate the skills of the architect. The various thoughtful nuances you included have made this an absolutely delightful home to live in. The various “windows” on to many different aspects has to be lived to be fully appreciated. So, this is really to just say thanks directly to you.

We look forward to being able to share some time together at our home with you... in the meantime we wish you every success. Warmest wishes.” – Sue & Jeff

Contact us today about making your dream home a reality with our unique approach and depth of knowledge. We look forward to hearing from you soon!



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