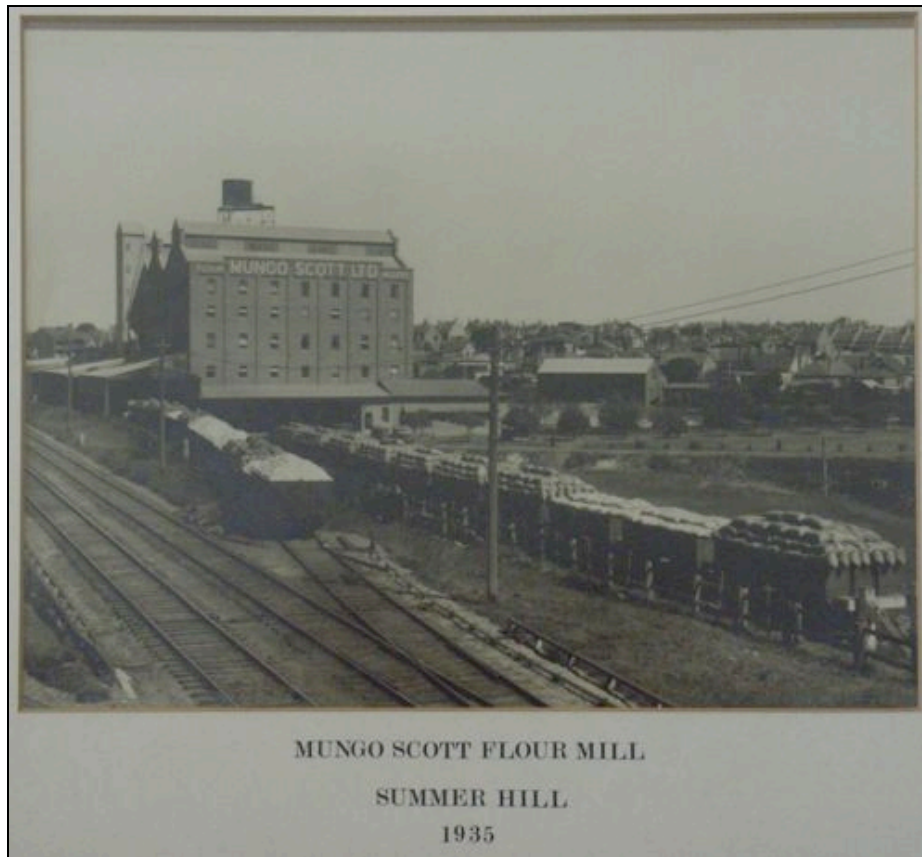


# Flour Mill 2-32 Smith Street, Summer Hill

*Heritage Impact Assessment  
Of proposed  
Rezoning and redevelopment of the site*



Prepared for  
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26 July 2010

## Purpose of this assessment

This document accompanies an application prepared by SJB Planning and HASSELL on behalf of EG Funds Management to rezone the former Allied Mills flourmilling site to facilitate its redevelopment for residential and commercial purposes. In addition to the site of the flourmill, the application deals with an adjoining parcel of land to the southeast, a further parcel to the south as well as the Hawthorne Canal and a Goods Railway Line that traverses the area. The assessment is designed to provide an understanding of the significance of the place and the impact of works associated with the rezoning and redevelopment on its cultural significance.

## The site



**Figure 1: Site plan**

*Photo: Google Earth*

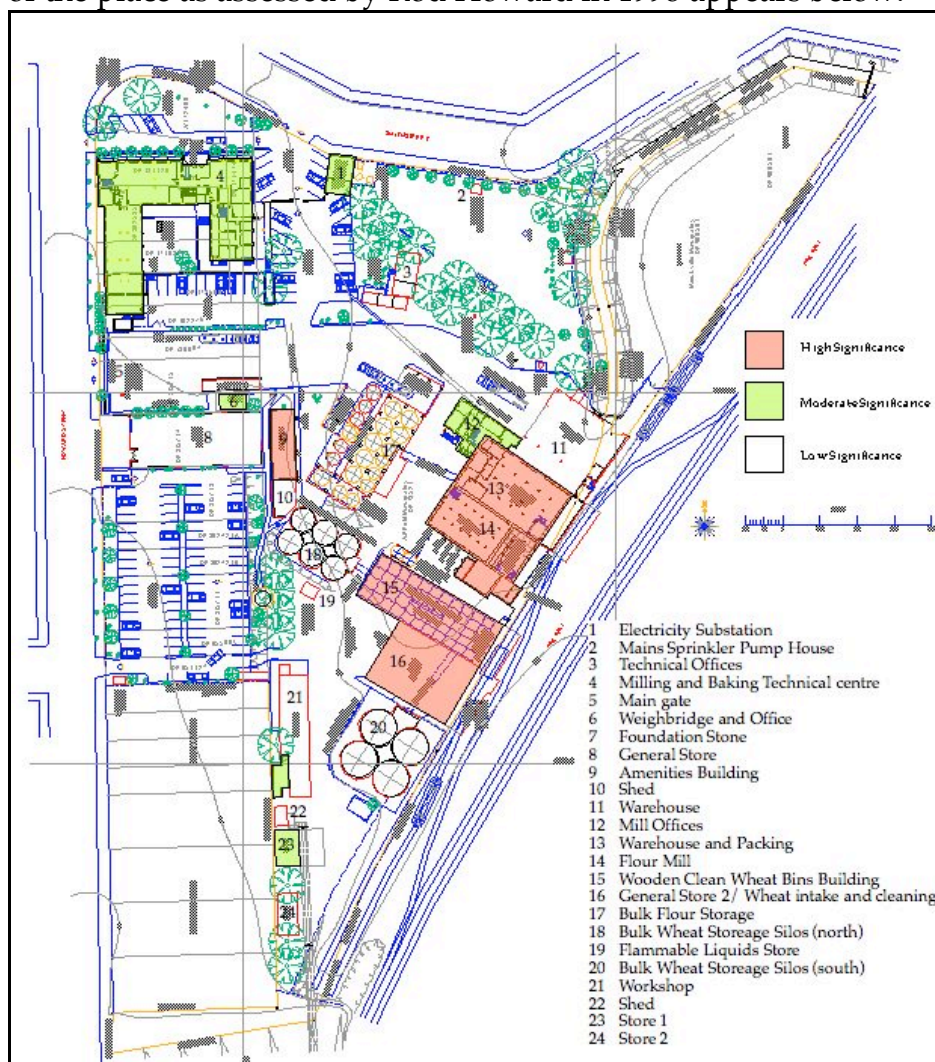
The mill occupies part of an industrial precinct located mid-way between Summer Hill and Lewisham railway stations on the Inner West line. The precinct is bisected by a goods railway line that follows the route of the Hawthorne Canal. The goods line is now disused but the reservation is proposed to be developed for use by light rail. The site is bounded to the west by late nineteenth and early twentieth century dwellings of more or less uniformly consistent urban grain. The main body of the site is within the Local Government Area of Ashfield. A small portion to the north, currently vacant land, lies within Marrickville LGA.



## Existing Heritage Status

Consideration of 2-32 Smith Street as a heritage item has been deferred under Section 68(5) of the Local Government Act. It is not within a Heritage Conservation Area. The Quarantine Ground Conservation Area lies to west. Neither the adjoining site on Edward Street to the south, nor the site to the southeast on the far side of the railway tracks contain items of cultural significance but the Hawthorne Canal is listed as a heritage item in the Ashfield LEP.

An assessment of the cultural significance of the flourmill site carried out for Ashfield Council by Rod Howard Conservation Pty Ltd in 1998, and its subsequent review in 2005, provides a sound analysis of the cultural significance of the various items on the site. Ashfield Council's "Heritage Study Review of Areas Zoned 2(a) of 2003 assessed the site as being of *Rare* aesthetic and scientific significance and having *Associative* historic and social significance. A plan showing the cultural significance of the component fabric of the place as assessed by Rod Howard in 1998 appears below.



**Figure 2: Site Plan showing levels of cultural significance of buildings on the site. (Adapted from information contained in Rod Howard's Heritage Assessment Survey February 1998. Base survey provided by Allied Mills)**

Rod Howard 's statement of significance of the site is as follows:  
The Mungo Scott Flour Mill is considered to be significant for the following reasons:

- The Mill is historically associated as one of a number of flour mills constructed throughout New South Wales during the 1920s as a response to economic circumstances and scientific advances in wheat-growing. It also represents the increasingly centralised infrastructure which increased the prominence of Sydney at the expense of rural localities.
- The Mill has significance in the locality as a prominent visual landmark and, at an historical level, its site is significant because of its long and continuous association with industry and processing.
- Components of the Mill have some aesthetic significance. The Warehouse and Packing and Flour Mill buildings have associations with prominent early twentieth century architect Arthur William Anderson, whilst the Milling and Baking Technical Centre and the small office adjacent to the Weighbridge are very representative of commercial architecture from the first half of the 1960s.
- The landscaping and planting has aesthetic significance for its landmark form represented by the mature Brushbox, Camphor Laurel and Ficus Hillii trees. The line of Wine Glass palms is also of some note because this species is normally planted as an individual specimen within a park surround. The landscaping is representative of the expression of several eras, particularly that of the interwar period and the 1960s.
- The landscaping is an important contribution to the locality, forming the setting for a major commercial enterprise having long associations with the area.

### **A brief history of the site**

The site forms part of a 30 acre grant made to Henry Cable in 1804. It formed part of John Fyle's brickworks in the nineteenth century and in the early part of the twentieth century was acquired by the Railways & Tramways Construction Authority for works associated with the construction of the Glebe Island/Darling Island goods railway line. Those parts not required for railway purposes were acquired by Mungo Scott between 1916 and 1918.<sup>1</sup> The first buildings erected on the site are illustrated on the cover of this document.

### **A simplified description of the process**

Wheat was delivered from the farm to the site from a railway siding to the east of the wooden clean wheat bins. Railway cars entered the siding across a weighbridge and opened a hopper in the base of the car, allowing the wheat to discharge onto a grillage. From here it dropped through a chute to the basement before being conveyed to the top of the bins for storage. It was cleaned, tested for moisture content etc. along the way. The empty railway car was weighed again on exit to determine the quantity of wheat delivered.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ashfield Heritage Study Review of Areas Zoned 2(a) Reference No 3 19 02*

A second siding outside the Mungo Scott building was used for despatching finished product. Two sets of doors opened onto the platform, which was elevated above the tracks for convenient loading. Sets of points provided flexibility for the movement of rolling stock.

Both siding(s) are on the east side of the site. They consist of covered lean-to structures attached to the mill and the wooden clean wheat bins and contain various tracks and mechanisms. The sidings are located on land belonging to RailCorp and are partially built over the Hawthorne Canal.



**Figure 3: The siding outside the wooden clean wheat bins**

*Photo: JGA Jan 2008*



**Figure 4: The siding to the east of the wooden clean wheat bins. There are weighbridges on each side of the discharge grillage.**

*Photo: JGA May 2010*





**Figure 5: The siding to the east of the Mungo Scott building used for loading finished product.**

*Photo: JGA Jan 2008*



**Figure 6: The Mungo Scott siding (for the despatch of finished product) looking towards the Clean Wheat siding.**

*Photo: JGA May 2010*



**Figure 7: Milling machinery (now removed)**

*Photo: JGA 2007*

Wheat was conveyed from the silos or bins to the top of the adjacent brick mill building, from where it was fed into machines that reduced it to flour. The flour was packaged on the ground floor of the main building and despatched from the siding attached to its eastern side. A number of ancillary buildings were needed to support the operation. These included:

- Stables for horses (later adapted for use as staff amenities)
- Sheds for maintenance
- Offices
- An electricity sub station

As the operation expanded, additional silos were constructed to the west of the main building and the warehouse facilities were enhanced. At first new silos were made of concrete, later ones were made of steel. In the 1960s a new technical centre for milling and baking was established on the northwest corner of the site, and land was acquired on Edward Street for staff parking and general storage.

### **Buildings of High cultural significance**

#### *Warehouse and packing (Building 13)*

The warehouse and packing building is the most prominent building on the site and is particularly visible from the Inner West train line. It has five main floors with a sixth floor under a raised clerestory, a pitched corrugated iron roof and metal framed windows with high sills. The exterior is enclosed by substantial brick walls. Mill offices are attached to its northwest corner and a corrugated iron railway siding to its eastern end. It has an internal structure of timber storey posts and beams, and timber floors.

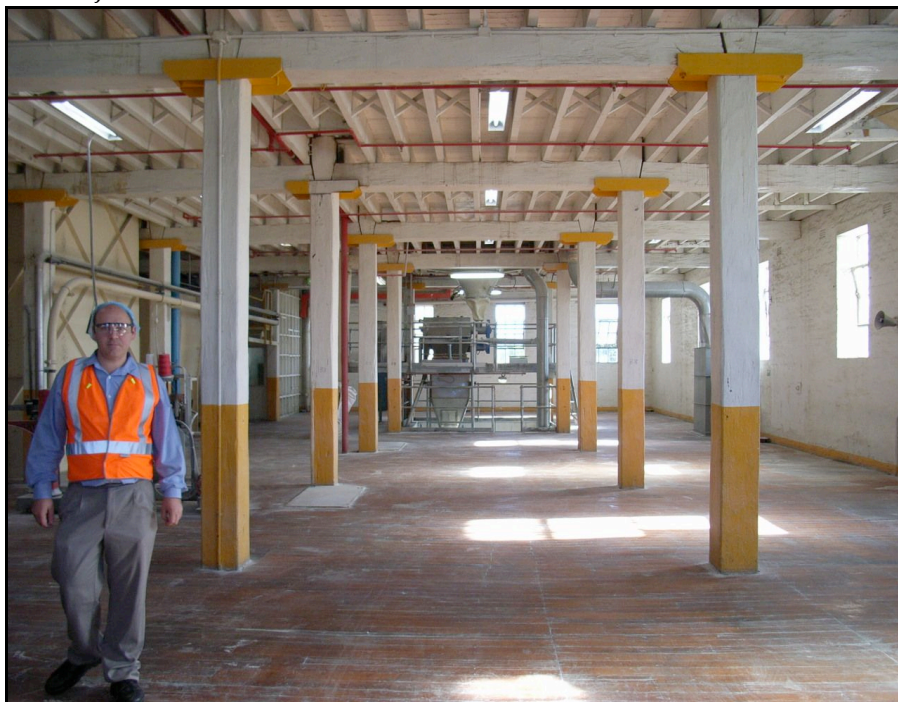


It was constructed in 1922 but extensively rebuilt to the design of the architect Arthur William Anderson following a fire in 1927.<sup>2</sup>



**Figure 8: The exterior of the warehouse and packing building from the east.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*



**Figure 9: The interior of the warehouse and packing building.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*

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<sup>2</sup> Rod Howard Conservation Pty Ltd Heritage Assessment Survey 1998, p7  
07.018-A1 8 26 July 2010  
Rezoning 2-32 Smith Street, Heritage Impact Statement  
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Rod Howard identifies it as “one of the most significant buildings on the site, because of its early date of construction and its intact fabric”.

#### *Flour Mill (Building 14)*

The flourmill is similar in construction to the adjacent warehouse and packing building but has more closely spaced columns and its windows are timber framed. Contemporary drawings suggest it survived the 1927 fire. The milling machinery has been removed as the site is no longer operational.



**Figure 10: The flour milling building from the east. The warehouse and packing building is on the right. The annexe on the left is a later addition.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*

#### *Wooden Clean Wheat Bins (Building 15)*

The bins are arrayed in two groups. The group of 35 bins on the eastern side are about 3.2m x 2.4m in plan. The group of 16 bins on the western side are about 3.2m x 3.0m in plan. Both groups are a little over 19 metres in height, are similarly constructed of *Oregon* in an interlocked “log cabin” arrangement and are supported on a forest of hardwood trunks. The whole arrangement is enclosed by corrugated iron, is connected to the siding by an underground conveyor system and to adjacent silos by overhead conveyors. A report by MacDonald Wagner and Priddle dated December 1979 highlighted numerous fractured planks in the bins, which resulted in a reduction of their recommended capacity.



**Figure 11: The wooden clean wheat bins and siding from the east.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*



**Figure 12: The forest of hardwood posts supporting the wooden bins. Photo taken from within General Store 2 (Building 16)**

*Photo: JGA 2007*





**Figure 13: A wooden clean wheat bin at the upper levels, showing the typical "log cabin" construction.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*



**Figure 14: The bottom of a wooden clean wheat bin showing the Oregon (Douglas Fir) timber of its construction.**

*Photo: JGA 2007*

### *General Store 2 (Building 16)*

The single storey, skillion roofed store is attached to the side of the wooden clean wheat bins and is ancillary to the use of the site as a flourmill. A mezzanine that occupies the southern part of the space is supported on hardwood posts.

### *Amenities (Building 9)*

The amenities building initially served as a stable associated with horse drawn vehicles and formed part of the initial building program in 1922. By 1944 the fleet had become motorized, a second storey was added and it was converted to use as an amenities block. The alterations included rearrangement of the external openings and the removal of visible evidence of its former use. It has brick walls and a gabled roof clad with corrugated iron.



**Figure 15: Amenities block (Building 9) from the north**

*Photo: JGA 2007*



**Figure 16: First floor of Building 9**

*Photo: JGA 2007*



## **The heritage impact of works associated with the proposed rezoning and redevelopment of the site to facilitate its use for residential and commercial purposes.**

An outline of the proposed works is described below in plain text. The heritage impact of the works and any comment is provided in italics.

### **Generally**

Allied Mills' flour milling activities were transferred to a new facility at Picton on the outskirts of Sydney in March 2009, enabling more efficient production and distribution of its products and rendering the operation at Summer Hill redundant. Over the next 12 months the milling machinery was removed from the old site in Summer Hill and as Allied Mills was the last user of the goods rail line, it too was decommissioned. *Although the site has no active heritage listing, it contains several structures that are important to the local community. It is proposed to retain these, and as much of the infrastructure of the former flourmill as is practical. The site also contains several structures particular to its former industrial use that are of cultural significance but for which it is not possible to devise an alternative use. It is proposed to demolish and either recycle or provide appropriate interpretation of these elements. Separate from the proposed change of use of the site, the NSW State Government plans to reactivate the easement occupied by the goods rail line and use it as a route for an extension of Sydney's light rail and bicycle systems.*

Among the structures of cultural significance proposed for demolition are the wooden clean wheat bins and the rail sidings. The reason for their demolition, and a strategy for their interpretation, is set out below.

### *Wooden Clean Wheat Bins and General Store*

The wooden clean wheat bins formed an integral part of the original mill. The structure in which they are contained is approximately 9 storeys high and constructed from timber (clad in corrugated iron for durability). The bins themselves are also timber and are of 2 sizes. They have an area of between 7 and 9 square metres each and run vertically through the building in one volume. They are illustrated in Figures 11-14 inclusive.

The small cross sectional area of the bins, their flammable construction and great height precludes their adaptation for new uses. They are likewise difficult to preserve and to interpret insitu in a meaningful way. *The proposal to dismantle the bins and recycle their timber in the proposed new development, or as furniture, is considered an appropriate response to a difficult problem. The proposal to construct a new building in the same position as the bins, of the same height and proportion, is also considered an appropriate response that will aid interpretation of the site at large.* Their close association with the adjoining rail siding is discussed below.

### *The rail sidings*

The sidings consist of covered lean-to structures attached to the wooden clean wheat bins and the mill. Like the wooden clean wheat bins, they are visible in the photo on the cover of this document. They provide shelter from the elements for the shipping in of wheat and the shipping out of flour. The lean-to structures cover the tracks and contain various mechanisms. The sidings are located on land belonging to RailCorp and are partially built over the

Hawthorne Canal. They had separate functions. The one adjacent to the wooden clean wheat bins provided a point for delivery of wheat from the farm. Railway cars entered the siding across a weighbridge. The car and its load having been weighed, the car was drawn forward, and its load was discharged onto a grillage, through which the wheat fell by gravity into a hopper below ground. The wheat was cleaned, its moisture content etc. was sampled and the type of grain was confirmed before it was conveyed to an appropriate bin for conditioning and storage. The empty car was weighed again on exit to determine the quantity of wheat delivered and the process repeated.



**Figure 17: The weighbridges each side of the discharge grillage, in the siding to the east of the wooden clean wheat bins.**

*Photo: JGA May 2010*

There are various pieces of machinery within the siding, such as capstans and winches, that suggest the unloading operation could take place without the locomotive being used for shunting.



**Figure 18: Capstan in the Clean Wheat Siding**

*Photo: JGA May 2010*





**Figure 19: The Mungo Scott (despatch) siding looking towards the Clean Wheat (delivery) siding.**

*Photo: JGA May 2010*

The siding outside the Mungo Scott building was used for despatching finished product. Two sets of doors opened onto the platform, which was elevated above the tracks for convenient loading. Sets of points provided flexibility for the movement of rolling stock.

It is not proposed to retain the sidings for the following reasons:

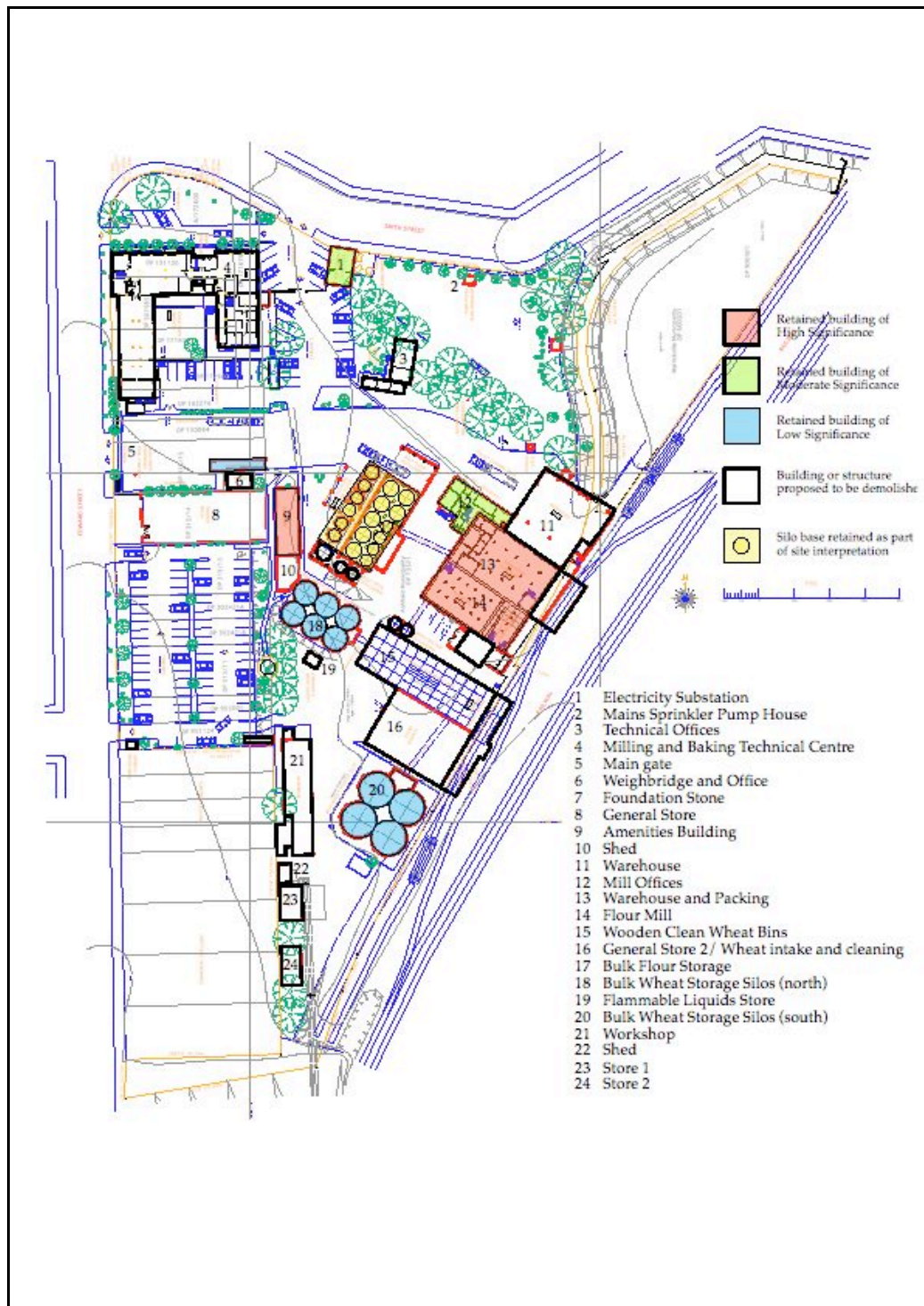
1. They do not form part of the site of the former mill but occupy part of a reservation for drainage and rail lines that is in the control of others.
2. Their former function will be obscured by both the removal of the railway line and the (necessary) demolition of the wooden clean wheat bins.

*Retention of the roof over the delivery siding is not considered desirable as the replacement building will have a new and different use. The chute, grillage and weighbridges could be left in place but are likely to deteriorate due to their exposure to the elements. Their removal is recommended if a suitable program of interpretation that describes the process of receiving wheat and despatching flour is developed. Prior to any demolition, an archival record of the place will be made.*

*While demolition of the roofed siding adjacent to the Mill is also proposed, the platform itself will be retained as it does not encroach on land owned by RailCorp and its retention will aid interpretation of the method of despatch.*

### ***Amenities (Building 9)***

It is proposed to adaptively reuse the amenities building (former stables) as a focal point for site interpretation. The adjacent weighbridge, that was constructed in response to the shipment of bulk flour by road, will also be retained.



**Figure 20: Site Plan showing buildings and structures to be retained or demolished. (Adapted from a survey provided by Allied Mills)**

### Strategy for developing the site

It is intended to develop the site using distinct architectural strategies.

The western part, which faces the Quarantine Ground Conservation Area, will be developed in an orthogonal manner that relates to the established subdivision pattern of the main part of the Summer Hill town. It will be



primarily residential and scaled to complement the Conservation Area. The rezoning application incorporates a parcel at the southern end of Edward Street that does not form part of the site of the flourmill. The proposal to develop it at a similar density and with a similar orthogonal form will ensure it is integrated into the established subdivision pattern of the town. The western part of the site contains the c1964 Milling and Baking Technical Centre which is located on the corner of Smith and Edward Streets. It is representative of institutional and administrative architecture from the first half of the 1960s and provides evidence of the consolidation of the mill in this period but is otherwise of little significance. Its demolition will permit the extension of residential development along the full length of Edward Street.

The eastern part, which faces Hawthorne Canal and the railway easement, will adopt the alignment of the mill, which is at an angle of about 30 degrees to the Summer Hill grid. It will be a mixed use development that incorporates as much of the old mill structure as practical. This includes retention of the original brick Mungo Scott mill buildings and the concrete silos used for bulk wheat and bulk flour storage. The wooden clean wheat bins and the adjoining General Store 2, will be demolished but replaced with a new building of fire-proof construction having a similar bulk and footprint. The steel silos used for storage of bulk flour will be demolished as their form and material preclude adaptive reuse, however the steel fabric will be recycled. Their footprint will be exposed and form part of the interpretation. Several small sheds in the southern part of the site, will be demolished.

New development proposed in the northern end of the site (east of Hawthorne Canal) will be separated from the rest of the site by 20<sup>th</sup> century plantings of Wine Glass palms, Brushbox, Ficus Hillii and Camphor Laurel that line Smith Street. These plantings will be retained and used to form a pocket park at the heart of the development.

The Hawthorne Canal itself will not be impacted by the rezoning or redevelopment.

*The strategy maximizes the retention of fabric related to the former mill use and reinforces the established built form.*

## **Conclusion**

The approach taken by HASSELL on behalf of EG Funds Management in the planned redevelopment of the site of the former Allied Mills site at Summer Hill is, in the author's opinion, exemplary in the understanding and respect it pays to the culturally significant fabric of the place. Little fabric of significance will be lost. The remaining fabric will ensure the former use of the place will remain evident after rezoning.



John Graham