

OAK BERWICK

Brick Inlay delivers a refined contemporary façade and cohesive form at Oak Berwick



Oak Berwick is a unique mixed-use development sitting more than comfortably in Gloucester Avenue, its built form drawing on the well-defined scale and rhythm of nearby Berwick Village. True to its namesake, Oak Berwick is beautifully framed by a magnificent Oak tree—one of the many established trees on the street—so it naturally became the hero of this remarkable development.

Everything about Telha Clarke's thoughtful design is seamless, from the design development to material choice and execution:

"When we saw the Oak tree, we saw a lovely landscape opportunity, a hero out front in an area where brickwork is used most predominantly. So it was very easy to decide that brick is the right place to start, and from the very first sketch, we considered brick. Then, our design approach was 'What's the rhythm of the street? What's a reasonable way to adjust and articulate the façade to get it to respond to the tree?'" recalls Tim Clarke, Director, Telha Clarke.

Sitting between Berwick train station and High Street, the context is a mix of small retail and residential properties, along with a shopping centre car park and local school. At the time, Oak Berwick was only the second apartment development to grace the street, so a thoughtful design was critical to ensure it sat well within that context.

On that, Telha Clarke more than delivered.

Oak Berwick has a cohesive architectural form subtly divided between a commercial space upstairs and a retail space below to the north, along with 20 residential apartments to the south (18 two bedroom, and two, three bedroom residences). Paying full respect to the tree is central to the design. The building has a large gesture, set back significantly from the street, so no branches had to be cut back or adjusted. They simply frame the entry to the residential apartments, stretching out across the façade, allowing the building to create its own expression of where to walk in.

Undoubtedly, the building's subtle scale and unique typology sets Oak Berwick apart.



With a narrow frontage and incredibly long depth, from the street it presents as a strong, low scale form, snuggled neatly behind the Oak tree. It then seamlessly transitions to a much higher scale at the rear, set back and falling steeply from east to west across the side. What appears as two storeys from the front steps back to three and four storeys at the rear on the residential side; the third level is heavily recessed from the street, concealing its large form with the two-storey streetscape.

According to Tim, “It has these little historical scale references and materiality that make it feel comfortable, and while there’s a much larger building behind, to the everyday pedestrian it feels like a comfortable approach.”

A subdued, minimal palette of brick, steel and concrete helps to temper the building’s scale. Brick choice subtly identifies the commercial and residential sides. While muted red

tones of Antico Casale Mattone brick tiles define the forward portion facing the street on the northern commercial side, Mottoncino Grande Bianco brick tiles mark the residential entry recessed behind it on the south. Antico Casale Nero brick tiles then tie the two sides together forming small foundational walls.

Brick Inlay was used to build the textured brick façade, wrapping the materials down the sides of the building to create a holistic design. The Brick Inlay system was particularly effective with Oak Berwick not only in terms of construction speed and reduced disruption on site, but also minimising the construction challenges faced in a contemporary design, enabling brickwork to be placed in challenging spaces: along a boundary, running along the parapet and above glass windows.

“Brick Inlay gives you ease of construction, which makes it a simpler choice to have really nice boundary walls that can sometimes be an afterthought. So we can say we’ll have brick inlaid into a concrete panel and then present a side elevation in a really cost-effective and high quality design. Otherwise it would be blank concrete, which isn’t an ideal outcome,” explains Tim.

Contrasting with the beautifully rustic brickwork, a black steel frame forms an arbour in front of the apartments, which will soften the entrance with vines growing on the frame.



Telha Clarke is to be congratulated for delivering a refined contemporary development that perfectly complements its historical surrounds, and maintains the character of Gloucester Avenue. Most fulfilling for Tim was seeing the design come to spectacular life after four years in the making, the scale of it feeling perfect to place and, most importantly, seeing his original vision realised.

Developer: Field Group
Architect: Telha Clarke
Product: Brick Inlay with Antico Casale Mattone and Nero brick tiles, and Mottoncino Grande Bianco brick tiles
Builder: Markscon
Precaster: Macquarie Precast
Photography: Timothy Kaye