

PROJECT CASE STUDY

Albion Mews

22 Talmage Street, Albion VIC 3020

Sixteen-Townhouse Design & Construct Development with Integrated Third-Party Carpark Works



16

Townhouses Delivered

43

New Car Parks Constructed

100%

Pre-Sold Prior to Completion

Dec 2022

Occupancy Permit Issued

Prepared for prospective development partners
ArcAbodes Pty Ltd — Design & Construct Builder

Executive Summary

Albion Mews is a sixteen-townhouse Design & Construct development on a heritage-affected infill site in Albion, Victoria, delivered by ArcAbodes Pty Ltd for the Developer, with a separately engineered 43-space carpark for the adjoining Sunshine City Club built concurrently as Stage 3 of the works. This case study sets out, from ArcAbodes' own project records, how the build was run: why Design & Construct outperformed a construct-only alternative, value management and consultant benchmarking, resolution of a genuinely difficult dual-catchment stormwater problem, hands-on support through to a 100% pre-sale, and delivery to a December 2022 Occupancy Permit — through a period that tested the resilience of the whole construction industry.

2,000m² Townhouse Allotment	4,663m² Combined Building & Carpark Area	16 Townhouses (15 triple-storey, 1 double-storey)	43 New Car Parks Constructed
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1. The Design & Construct Advantage vs Construct-Only

Albion Mews was delivered under a Design & Construct (D&C) model, with ArcAbodes engaged from value management and consultant selection through to Occupancy Permit — not brought in after design was frozen to price and build a fixed set of drawings.

Consideration	Design & Construct (Albion Mews)	Typical Construct-Only
Consultant selection	Builder benchmarks and manages architect/engineer for cost and constructability before contract	Consultants pre-appointed by Developer; builder has no input into fee or scope
Design risk	Buildability issues (e.g. overland flow path, wall systems) resolved before contract sum is fixed	Design errors surface as variations after contract signing
Single point of responsibility	One party (ArcAbodes) accountable for design coordination and construction outcome	Split responsibility between architect/engineer and builder invites disputes over defect origin
Cost certainty	Guaranteed Maximum Cost structure with staged tender refinement before signing	Fixed price only after full documentation — later start, less scope for early value management
Programme	Staged Building Permits allow early works to commence within a coordinated design programme	Full documentation typically required before any permit stage can commence

The value of engaging ArcAbodes at value-management stage — before consultants were finalised and the design was frozen — is visible directly in this case study: consultant fee savings banked before pricing was locked in, a resolved overland flow-path risk, and a transparent, multi-revision tender process. Early contractor involvement converts design and consultant risk into managed value, rather than leaving it to surface as variations during construction.

2. Value Management: Selections, Methodology & Consultant Selection

Before construction pricing was locked in, ArcAbodes ran a structured Value Management process — a detailed construction estimate, a separate external works estimate, and active consultant management to keep design intent and cost aligned, aimed at reducing pre-construction and construction time and the risk of cost overruns from design discrepancies.

Consultant Selection — Competitive Benchmarking

As part of its agreement with the Developer, ArcAbodes ran the competitive tender process and managed consultant selection on the Developer's behalf — benchmarking multiple architectural practices and engineering firms against fee and capability. Informed by that process, the Developer elected to proceed with an alternate architectural practice to the incumbent.

Discipline	Approach	Fee Saving Secured
Architect	Five practices benchmarked before appointment	37.9% vs comparable quote
Structural / Civil Engineer	Two firms benchmarked before appointment	9.6% vs comparable quote

Building Methodology

Value Management also tested structural and cladding systems against cost and constructability before they were locked into the contract, including:

- Alternative inter-tenancy wall systems, assessed against floor space yield and structural integration
- Early identification of an overland flow-path impediment that, left undetected, would have delayed planning approval altogether
- Ground-floor cladding alternatives compared like-for-like — Smartstone, render and feature brickwork

Result

Consultant and methodology value management together demonstrate a builder engaged well upstream of the construction contract — reducing risk before it could convert into cost.

3. Lessons Learned

ArcAbodes treats every project as an opportunity to refine its own process. The points below are drawn directly from Albion Mews' own delivery record.

Geotechnical Coverage vs Rock Excavation Risk

Rock encountered during footing, drainage and detention excavation added cost beyond original allowances. The geotechnical report was provided by the Developer, not commissioned by ArcAbodes. The lesson: commission a sufficiently dense grid of boreholes, to adequate depth across footing, detention and trench zones — a modest cost against the excavation risk it can flag before pricing is fixed.

Service Authority Connections

Service authority connections and consents typically sit with the Developer and can land on the critical path — a build-over-easement consent gated one townhouse here. The lesson: initiate service authority applications as early as practical in design, well ahead of construction.

COVID-19 Resilience

Formal EOT claims were raised and documented throughout the project, with disruption absorbed in every instance without cost to the Developer. The lesson: disciplined, contemporaneous EOT documentation protects programme and cost simultaneously.

Consultant Value Management and Early Contractor Involvement

Competitive benchmarking of the architect and engineer at the outset (Section 2) delivered a design-stage saving before pricing was locked in — value management applied to the consultant team, not only construction trades, is one of the highest-leverage interventions available because it is banked before the contract sum is set. More broadly, every material outcome in this case study traces back to ArcAbodes being engaged before the design was frozen: early contractor involvement converts design and consultant risk into value, rather than leaving it to surface as variations.

Staged Building Permits

Splitting the Building Permit into three stages allowed early trades to mobilise without the entire sixteen-unit design needing sign-off first. The lesson: stage permit applications around genuine dependency points on multi-unit sites, rather than one permit for the whole scope.

4. Resolution of Complex Stormwater Engineering

Albion Mews combined two functionally different stormwater catchments — sixteen townhouses and a separate 43-space club carpark — on a site where the adjoining road sat above the finished driveway levels of the townhouses. Height restrictions fixed those driveway levels below the road, so major flows from the townhouse catchment could not simply be gravity-fed to the street in the conventional way. The design had to reconcile two on-site detention (OSD) systems and water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) treatment for both catchments without creating a flooding or discharge risk to the road or adjoining properties.

The Carpark Catchment — WSUD and Gravity Drainage

- WSUD delivered through five individually sized rain gardens using an organic filter media for higher treatment capacity, achieving a Melbourne Water STORM rating of 116% — well above the 100% threshold
- Major flows surcharge out of the rain gardens and flow by gravity across the driveways to Talmage Street

The Townhouse Catchment — OSD, WSUD and a Shallow Drainage Solution

Low, height-restricted driveway levels meant the townhouse catchment needed a shallow drainage system and an alternative approach to moving major flows.

- WSUD delivered through a combined 32,000-litre rainwater tank draining all roofs, built as a crate structure beneath the driveway to limit heavy machinery use and land-take — erected and membrane-wrapped within a single day
- A high-early-discharge OSD system, using seven long 250mm high-strength plastic pipes set in a rock matrix, allowed shallow installation within the site's limited depth, with flap valves draining it dry back to the legal point of discharge
- A dual-compartment OSD pit allows rarer, larger design-storm flows to outflow via a 300mm pipe into the carpark drainage system, surcharging through a rain garden and continuing overland to Talmage Street

ArcAbodes' civil engineering team developed the drainage strategy from first principles before handing concept sketches to the project's civil design consultants to document formally for Council approval — with the two catchments engineered independently so neither system was compromised to accommodate the other.

Why this matters to a developer

A site where the road sits above the finished driveway level is a common and genuinely constraining condition on infill sites. Without a workable solution, the townhouse development would have needed to be lifted for deeper, gravity-fed drainage — forcing a lower roofline or the loss of an entire storey. ArcAbodes resolved it instead with a compliant, council- and water authority-endorsed dual-catchment design, protecting the project's yield.

Drainage Works — Aerial Overview and Construction Sequence



Townhouse drainage works (top) and carpark drainage works (bottom), either side of the aerial overview of the completed stormwater strategy — carpark rain gardens (right) and the townhouse raintank/OSD network beneath the central driveway (left), Talmage Street.

5. Assistance with Project Sales

All sixteen townhouses were pre-sold, with ArcAbodes playing a direct, hands-on role in supporting that process alongside the Developer and their appointed real estate agent — well beyond the scope of a typical construction-only builder.

How ArcAbodes Supported Sales

- The original architect's town planning approval and 3D renders were used as the primary marketing collateral, and the finished product visually aligns with those renders
- ArcAbodes hosted the Developer, the original architect and its own interior designer in its showroom to align fixtures and finishes selections with the architect's original design intent, later producing a physical materials sample board of the actual finishes being installed



ArcAbodes selections showroom, Melbourne — where fixtures and finishes were reviewed with the Developer and architect

- ArcAbodes made its showroom and facilities available to the appointed real estate agent to show prospective buyers finishes in person, and ran a structured owner-upgrade program across two colour schemes
- Ahead of handover, the Developer separately engaged an independent building inspector to report on every one of the sixteen units, reinforcing purchaser confidence

Result

Sixteen townhouses pre-sold and settled, supported by a builder that treated sales enablement — showroom access, sample boards, upgrade management and buyer-facing quality assurance — as part of its own delivery responsibility.

6. Tender Process to Final Contract

The Design & Construct price was developed through five formally issued tender submissions before the Developer signed the final Building Contract. ArcAbodes' initial quotation was a starting point only; each subsequent revision reflected genuine design development — finalised engineering, Developer amendments, and scope corrections clarified in writing — giving the Developer full visibility of how and why the price moved before committing to a fixed sum.

Result

Five tender revisions were issued and reviewed with the Developer before contract execution — a considered, collaborative pricing process rather than a single fixed quote presented and accepted unchanged.

7. Consultants Engaged to Obtain the Building Permit

Securing a three-stage Building Permit and Occupancy Permit for a sixteen-townhouse heritage-overlay site required ArcAbodes to coordinate a specialist consultant team across eleven disciplines:

- Architect, Structural/Civil Engineer (Townhouses), Civil Engineer (Carpark), Geotechnical Engineer, Land Surveyor

- Energy/NatHERS Assessor, Fire Engineer, Stormwater/WSUD Consultant, Colour Consultant, Cladding Certifier, Relevant Building Surveyor

The architectural package progressed through five formal revisions to for-construction issue, and the Building Permit itself was issued in three deliberate stages — in-ground civils and slab-on-ground; a discrete slab stage for the final unit; and the remainder of the works — allowing early trades to mobilise without full sign-off across all sixteen units.

The geotechnical investigation relied upon for footing, slab and civil design was provided directly by the Developer ahead of design development, rather than commissioned by ArcAbodes (see Section 3).

8. Mitigating Cost & Time Delays — Planning and Adaptability Through COVID-19

Albion Mews was built through the most disruptive period the Victorian construction industry has faced in a generation. ArcAbodes raised and documented formal Extension of Time (EOT) claims covering the 2020–2021 lockdowns, national material shortages, subcontractor illness and council delays — extending time only where genuinely warranted, but in every recorded instance absorbing the disruption through its own planning without transferring additional cost to the Developer. The project reached Occupancy Permit in December 2022.



Completed townhouses — Albion Mews

Result

A disciplined, contemporaneous approach to time management meant industry-wide disruption was absorbed into the programme rather than passed on as cost or delay to the Developer.

9. Financier Oversight and Progress Claims

Construction was funded under a formal Tripartite Deed between the project's financier, the Developer (as Borrower) and ArcAbodes (as Builder), giving the financier direct, structured oversight without displacing ArcAbodes' contractual responsibility to the Developer.

- Progress claims were assessed monthly and certified by the financier's Quantity Surveyor as properly owing before funds were released
- A weekly Project Control Group, attended by the financier and Quantity Surveyor, reviewed sales, construction progress, programme, cashflow and quality assurance
- The Builder gave the financier real-time visibility of payment claims and a standing right of inspection over the site and project records

Why this matters to a developer

A monthly, independently certified claims process inside a documented Tripartite Deed gave the financier — and, by extension, the Developer — independent verification that every dollar drawn matched work actually completed. ArcAbodes operated openly within that structure rather than treating financier oversight as an obstacle to manage around.

10. Design & Consultant Cost Efficiency

Design-stage consultant fees — architect, structural and civil engineers, energy assessor, colour consultant and associated design services — represented a lean proportion of total contract value, reflecting the competitive benchmarking process in Section 2.

3.8%

Design-Stage Consultant Fees as % of Total Contract Value

Delivering the full specialist scope required to reach Building Permit for a heritage-overlay, dual-catchment site at this proportion of contract value reflects disciplined consultant management, not scope trimmed at the expense of design quality.

Summary

Albion Mews demonstrates the depth ArcAbodes brings to a Design & Construct engagement: value management that pays for itself before construction starts; genuine resolution of a difficult civil engineering constraint; hands-on support of the Developer's sales process; a transparent tender process; eleven consultant disciplines coordinated to permit; and a financier relationship built on independently certified progress claims — delivered through a period that tested the resilience of the entire construction industry.



Albion Mews townhouses at dusk