

42 ASHCOMBE STREET, RESERVOIR

The *Ashcombe* Optimisation.

Where the three townhouses at 42 Ashcombe Street could cost less, and what it would take to reach the owner's budget.

Prepared for the project owner by the BuilderHQ estimating team, from the working drawings and the BuilderHQ estimate of September 2026.

GAP TO THE BUDGET

\$228,820

10% of the Most Likely estimate of \$2,228,820, including GST

SAVINGS IDENTIFIED

\$233,000

to \$340,000

across 25 options, including GST

AFTER THE CHANGES

about \$1,993,000

Most Likely cost with the recommended changes of \$190,000 to \$281,000, including GST

00 COST OPTIMISATION

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The answer first, then the options and our recommendation. The register at the back holds the detail of every option.

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About this review. A cost optimisation is advice on how the project could reach its target, prepared from the documents supplied. It is not a redesign and not a quote; builders' tendered prices will vary. Savings are read from the drawings and the BuilderHQ estimate of September 2026. They include GST, are shown as ranges, and may not all be achievable together. Figures valid until 7 January 2027.

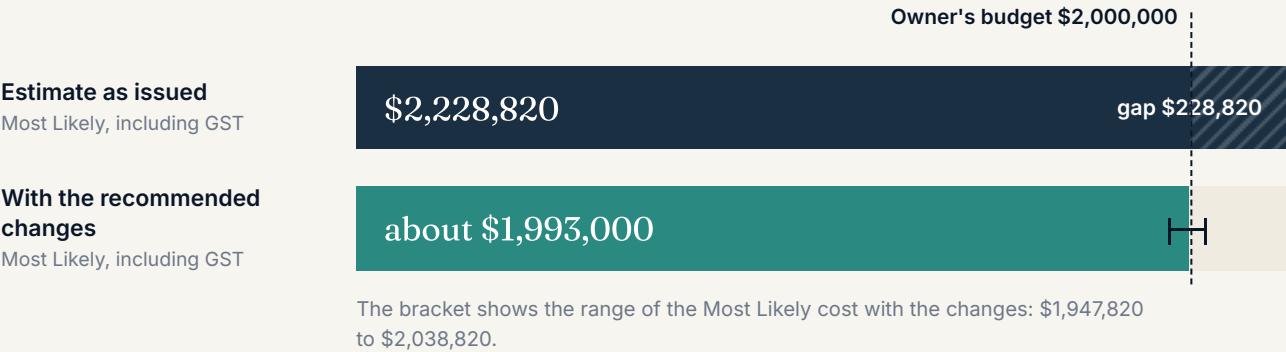
01 THE SHORT ANSWER

Summary

Can the three Ashcombe townhouses be built within the owner's budget of \$2,000,000?

The target is reachable.

The Most Likely estimate is \$2,228,820 including GST, \$228,820 over the budget. The recommended changes bring it to **about \$1,993,000**: at the budget, with little to spare.



THREE CHANGES DO MOST OF THE WORK

1D1	2ST2	3D8, D9, S1, S8
Simplify the roofs	Offer the fireplaces as upgrades	Confirm four savings by investigation
\$38,000 to \$52,000 saving	\$24,000 to \$31,000 saving	\$41,000 to \$66,000 saving
Skillion roofs with eaves gutters replace the parapets and box gutters.	The fireplaces and media walls become options that purchasers can buy.	Steel, retaining, stormwater and slabs. Each holds only if the investigation confirms it.

+	Twelve smaller changes we rate worth considering	\$88,000 to \$133,000
-	The decorative lighting, which is in both S4 and M1, counted once	\$1,000
=	The recommended changes	\$190,000 to \$281,000

All figures include GST. The result assumes all twelve smaller changes; the owner can swap any of them for other options of similar value (Section 04, page 7).

02 STARTING POINT

The Brief and the Starting Point

The owner's budget is \$2,000,000. The estimate came in above it.

	LOW	MOST LIKELY	HIGH
Estimate, including GST	\$1,774,190	\$2,228,820	\$2,860,440
Against the budget	\$225,810 under	\$228,820 over	\$860,440 over

The Low estimate is under the budget only if the ground, the stormwater connection and the selections all go well, so it is not a safe basis for the budget.

What cannot change

- Three double-storey townhouses, each with four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a WC or powder room.
- The floor areas in the area schedule (A102), and a garage to each dwelling as drawn.
- All-electric services, with heat-pump hot water and solar PV to each dwelling.
- A 7-star energy rating at the all-electric re-rate, with Whole-of-Home compliance.
- No new planning permit: external changes go to Darebin as a secondary consent to the endorsed plans.
- The permit's landscape plan, tree protection and the screening that limits overlooking.
- A mid-range finish overall.

About the estimate

The estimate has twenty-five trade lines, each including a builder's overheads and margin. It holds \$251,500, excluding GST, in provisional sums for work not yet measured, and prime cost allowances for products not yet chosen.

Its Low and High figures reflect what could go better or worse, from favourable ground and controlled selections to rock, authority requirements and premium finishes.

This review does not re-price the estimate. Every saving is taken from one of its lines, and every figure includes GST.

03 ALL OPTIONS

Options at a Glance

All twenty-five options, with the saving and our view of each.

● Recommended ○ Worth considering ⊗ Not recommended

INVESTIGATION-DEPENDENT holds only if an investigation confirms it

OPTION		SAVING, INCL. GST	OUR VIEW
The roofs Choose one approach. D2, D3 and S6 all keep the flat roofs, so they can be taken together.			
D1	Skillion roofs with eaves gutters, no parapets	\$38,000 to \$52,000	● Recommended
D2	Parapets to the street only	\$15,000 to \$22,000	○ Worth considering
D3	Rainheads through the parapets, not sumps	\$4,000 to \$6,500	○ Worth considering
S6	Exposed-fix roof sheeting	\$4,500 to \$7,000	○ Worth considering
Design Changes to what is built. Eight options.			
D4	Lower the ground-floor ceilings to 2.7 m	\$22,000 to \$29,000	⊗ Not recommended
D5	Four skylights in place of nine	\$13,500 to \$17,500	○ Worth considering
D6	Narrow the three large sliding doors	\$4,500 to \$7,000	○ Worth considering
D7	Feature battens to the street only	\$8,000 to \$12,500	○ Worth considering
D8	Stack the upper walls and reduce the steel INVESTIGATION-DEPENDENT	\$12,000 to \$20,000	● Recommended
D9	Regrade the rear and reduce the retaining INVESTIGATION-DEPENDENT	\$6,000 to \$10,000	● Recommended
D10	Built-in baths, not freestanding	\$4,000 to \$6,500	○ Worth considering
D11	Open shelving in the walk-in pantries	\$5,000 to \$8,000	○ Worth considering

OPTIONS AT A GLANCE CONTINUED

OPTION		SAVING, INCL. GST	OUR VIEW
Specification Changes to materials and finishes. Eight options.			
S1	Gravity stormwater in place of the pump pit INVESTIGATION-DEPENDENT	\$18,000 to \$27,000	● Recommended
S2	Stone to the kitchens only	\$10,000 to \$14,000	○ Worth considering
S3	Hybrid plank flooring on the ground floors	\$5,000 to \$7,000	⊗ Not recommended
S4	Standard-range light fittings and hardware	\$4,000 to \$5,500	○ Worth considering
S5	Split systems in place of ducted	\$18,000 to \$27,000	○ Worth considering
S7	Standard-range face brick	\$7,500 to \$11,000	○ Worth considering
S8	Slabs designed to site class M INVESTIGATION-DEPENDENT	\$5,000 to \$9,000	● Recommended
S9	Standard-module kitchen cabinetry	\$12,000 to \$18,000	○ Worth considering

Construction method and staging How the work is bought and staged. Five options.

M1	Owner supplies appliances and light fittings	\$3,000 to \$4,500	○ Worth considering
M2	Owner engages demolition and asbestos work	\$3,500 to \$6,500	⊗ Not recommended
M3	Use a garage as the site office and store	\$3,000 to \$5,500	○ Worth considering
ST1	Offer the pergolas as purchaser options	\$9,000 to \$13,500	○ Worth considering
ST2	Offer the fireplaces and media walls as upgrades	\$24,000 to \$31,000	● Recommended

Together, the options reach \$233,000 to \$340,000 of savings.

The total counts one roof option, D1, and counts overlaps between options once. Recommended marks the three changes that matter; the twelve smaller changes in our recommendation are all worth considering (Section 04, page 7). The Option Register (Appendix A, page 10) describes each option in full.

04 OUR RECOMMENDATION

Our Recommendation

Make the three changes that matter, then take the twelve smaller savings.

-
- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| 1 | Simplify the roofs D1
About a fifth of the recommended savings, and the box gutters go. It needs Darebin's consent. Keeping the flat roofs with street parapets only (D2) saves about \$15,000 to \$22,000. | \$38,000 to \$52,000
<small>saving, incl. GST</small> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 2 | Offer the fireplaces as upgrades ST2
The fireplaces and media walls become an upgrade purchasers can buy before handover. Each living room keeps the power and blocking for it. | \$24,000 to \$31,000
<small>saving, incl. GST</small> |
| <hr/> | | |
| 3 | Confirm four savings by investigation D8, D9, S1, S8
Reduce the steel, regrade the rear gardens, drain the stormwater by gravity and design the slabs to site class M. Each holds only if the engineer, the survey, council or the geotechnical report confirms it. | \$41,000 to \$66,000
<small>saving, incl. GST</small> |
| <hr/> | | |
| + | Then choose the smaller changes
Each is rated worth considering, and the result assumes all twelve. The owner can swap any of them for options of similar value in Section 03.
D6 · D7 · D10 · D11 · S2 · S4 · S5 · S7 · S9 · M1 · M3 · ST1 | \$88,000 to \$133,000
<small>together, incl. GST</small> |
| <hr/> | | |
| = | The recommended changes
The decorative lighting is in both S4 and M1, so \$1,000 is counted once. | \$190,000 to \$281,000
<small>together, incl. GST</small> |
-

THE RESULT

about **\$1,993,000**

Most Likely cost with the recommended changes, including GST. Across the range of savings: \$1,947,820 to \$2,038,820.

IF THE INVESTIGATIONS COME BACK POOR

Without the four investigation-dependent savings, the other recommended changes bring the Most Likely cost to about \$2,047,000, some \$47,000 over the budget. Fewer skylights (D5) and two of the options we do not recommend (D4, S3) can close most of that gap.

05 BASIS

Basis of the Review

A cost optimisation is advice on how the project could reach its target, prepared from the documents supplied. It is not a redesign and not a quote; builders' tendered prices will vary.

Documents

- Working drawings A101 to A116, Rev A, 21 July 2026: plans, elevations, sections, the area schedule (A102) and the window schedules.
- Structural drawings S01 to S05 (P1, 14 August 2026), the civil drainage and pump design (P1) and the draft NatHERS report (11 August 2026).
- BuilderHQ Preliminary Cost Estimate BHQ-EX-2026, Issue One, September 2026, used as issued.
- The request of 5 October 2026: three townhouses, working drawings stage, mid-range finish, owner's construction budget of \$2,000,000.

How the savings are measured

- Every saving is taken from a named line of the estimate and checked against the line total.
- Quantities are measured from the drawings at 1:100 and from the area schedule (A102).
- Savings include the builder's overheads and margin in the line, the site running costs saved where the build is shorter, and GST at 10%. Each range allows for uncertainty in the amounts taken out and in what must be built instead.

VALIDITY

Figures valid until 7 January 2027.

After 7 January 2027, or if the drawings or the estimate change, the options should be re-read against the new figures. Issued 9 October 2026. Rates are the estimate's: Melbourne, third quarter 2026, projected to a 2027 build. Prepared by the BuilderHQ estimating team for the project owner. BuilderHQ is not the builder and does not hold a price for the work; builders' tendered prices will vary.

BASIS OF THE REVIEW CONTINUED

Assumptions

STANDARD

- 1 Savings are read from the drawings supplied and the price the project carries now; they are not a quote.
- 2 Savings are shown as a range in today's dollars, including GST, and may not all be achievable together.
- 3 The effect on the outcome is our reading of the design intent; the designer and the client decide what to keep.
- 4 Approvals, engineering and any redesign the options need are not included in the savings.

THIS PROJECT

- 5 The target is the owner's construction budget of \$2,000,000 including GST. Fees, permits, authority charges and the other owner costs sit outside it, as they do in the estimate.
- 6 The planning permit is issued and the plans are endorsed (the owner to confirm). Changes to the external appearance (D1, D2, D7, S7) go to Darebin as one request for secondary consent. If council treats any of them as more than minor, it becomes an amendment to the permit under section 72 of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.
- 7 The energy report is being re-rated for all-electric services. The roof, skylight and glazing options chosen (D1, D5, D6) go into that re-rate, which must still reach 7 stars. The eaves in D1 add shade; fewer skylights (D5) can move the rating either way.
- 8 The investigations are outstanding. D8 stands only if the engineer agrees the new spans, D9 only if the feature and level survey supports the regrade, S1 only if council confirms a drain deep enough for gravity, and S8 only if the geotechnical report classes the site as M. Until then they are shown with their investigations outstanding.
- 9 Where an option moves cost to the owner (M1), only the builder's margin counts as a saving. Where an item becomes a purchaser's option (ST1, ST2), the provisions kept for it, such as power, blocking and fixing points, are counted as costs that come back.
- 10 Darebin has not been asked about the roof form or the changes to the facades. D1, D2, D7 and S7 need that conversation before they are relied on.
- 11 Unit rates are worked back from the estimate's lines using the quantities it states. Where a quantity could not be measured, the range is wider.

A APPENDIX

Option Register

Every option as recorded in BuilderHQ, for checking. Savings are in whole dollars, including GST.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
D1 Design Replace the flat roofs, parapets and box gutters with skillion roofs and eaves gutters	Now: tray-deck roofing at 2° behind parapets on all three dwellings and garages, about 380 m ² , draining to box gutters and sumps (line 08). About 110 m of parapet is framed, wrapped and finished in EPS render (lines 05 and 07). Instead: single-pitch skillion roofs at 5° in Colorbond, with eaves gutters and 450 mm eaves to the high and low sides. No parapets, box gutters or sumps. The nine skylights stay, flashed to the new pitch. The roofs must stay within the permit's maximum building height.	38,000 to 52,000	The houses read as three pitched forms rather than flat-topped boxes. The eaves shade the upper windows and keep rain off the render. Floor areas, rooms and ceiling heights are unchanged.	The crisp parapet line is part of the design and of the endorsed plans, so the change needs Darebin's consent and may need new shadow diagrams. Box gutters behind parapets are a frequent source of leaks, so the long-term maintenance risk falls.
D2 Design Keep the flat roofs, with parapets to the street elevations only and eaves gutters elsewhere	Now: parapets on every elevation of all three dwellings (line 08, and the EPS render in line 07). Instead: the parapets stay on the elevations facing Ashcombe Street and the common driveway. The side and rear roofs finish at a fascia with eaves gutters, and the box gutters on those sides go.	15,000 to 22,000	From the street the houses look as drawn. From the neighbours and the rear gardens, the roofs show a fascia and gutter rather than a parapet.	Half the change of D1 for less than half its saving. The parapet returns need a careful detail at the corners where the two roof edges meet.
D3 Design Drain the box gutters through the parapets to rainheads instead of internal sumps	Now: box gutters draining to internal sumps, with overflows and downpipes inside the walls (line 08). Instead: the box gutters drain through the parapets to external rainheads and downpipes, with overflow spitters in the parapet walls.	4,000 to 6,500	The roofs and parapets stay as drawn. Rainheads and downpipes appear on the side and rear elevations.	Downpipes on the rendered walls must be set out with the windows and the battens. Overflows become visible, which makes a blockage easier to see.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
D4 Design Lower the ground-floor ceilings from 3.0 m to 2.7 m	Now: 3.0 m ceilings to the ground floor of all three dwellings, with the face brick, frames and linings to suit, and most windows and doors 2.7 m high (lines 05, 06, 09 and 11). Instead: 2.7 m ceilings, with 2.4 m windows and doors, about 0.3 m less brickwork, frame and lining to every ground-floor wall, and a shorter flight to each staircase.	22,000 to 29,000	The living rooms lose some of their sense of volume, and the glazing to the gardens is shorter. The houses sit 0.3 m lower, which reduces overshadowing.	A permanent loss in the quality of the main rooms. Generous ground-floor ceilings are one of the features that set these townhouses apart from project homes, and buyers notice the difference.
D5 Design Four skylights in place of nine	Now: nine Velux FCM skylights, one to Dwelling 1, five to Dwelling 2 and three to Dwelling 3, each flashed, shafted and lined (line 09). Instead: Dwelling 1 keeps its one, Dwelling 2 keeps two, over the stair and the main bathroom, and Dwelling 3 keeps one over the stair. The roofs and ceilings close over the rest.	13,500 to 17,500	The stairs and the darkest rooms keep their daylight. The upstairs halls and ensuites in Dwellings 2 and 3 rely on their windows.	Dwelling 2 is attached and has the least side light, which is why it has five skylights. It loses the most. The energy re-rate must be checked with the skylights removed.
D6 Design Narrow the three large sliding doors from 4.2 to 4.5 m down to 3.6 m	Now: three aluminium sliding doors of 4.2 to 4.5 m, 2.7 m high, from the living rooms to the gardens (line 09), each under a steel lintel. Instead: three-panel sliding doors 3.6 m wide, with face brick filling the difference and lighter lintels.	4,500 to 7,000	Each living room still opens to its garden through a wide opening. Daylight in the living rooms reduces a little.	The full-width opening to the garden is part of the design. A narrower door changes how the living room and the garden work together in summer.
D7 Design Aluminium feature battens to the street elevations only	Now: aluminium battens and screens to the street elevations, the common driveway elevations and the upper windows (line 21), with three open pergolas. Instead: the feature battens stay on the elevations facing Ashcombe Street. The battens on the driveway elevations go, except where the permit requires screening to limit overlooking. The pergolas are dealt with under ST1.	8,000 to 12,500	From the street the houses look as drawn. Along the common driveway, the walls show render and brick without battens.	The battens soften the long driveway walls of Dwellings 2 and 3, and they appear on the endorsed elevations, so the change needs Darebin's consent.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
D8 Design Stack the upper walls over the lower walls and replace most of the steel with timber beams	Now: 35 first-floor beams on the engineer's schedule, in steel UB and PFC sections of 200 to 310 mm with LVL and F17 timber, plus steel columns and roof beams: about 4 to 5 tonnes of galvanised steel (line 05). Instead: upper bedroom and bathroom walls move, by up to 600 mm, to sit over ground-floor walls where the plans allow, so more of the floor spans onto walls. LVL beams replace steel where the spans then allow, and steel stays at the large openings and the garages. An engineer must confirm the spans.	12,000 to 20,000	The number and size of rooms are unchanged; some upstairs rooms change shape slightly. The large openings to the gardens keep their steel.	Moving walls means redrawing the upper floor plans before the construction drawings. The saving depends entirely on the engineer agreeing the new spans, which is why it is shown with its investigation outstanding.
D9 Design Regrade the rear gardens to reduce the retaining walls	Now: TRW1 sleeper retaining along the rear boundaries, up to 800 mm high, carried as a provisional sum of \$24,000 (line 03), with floor levels stepping from FL 98.40 to FL 99.25. Instead: the rear gardens are regraded to a gentle fall with a low sleeper edge, and retaining is kept only where the levels must change at the boundary. Surface drains collect the water before the back doors.	6,000 to 10,000	The gardens slope gently rather than stepping. The usable garden areas are about the same.	Depends on the feature and level survey and on the neighbours' levels. A fall towards the houses needs careful drainage at the thresholds.
D10 Design Built-in baths in place of freestanding baths	Now: freestanding baths in the three main bathrooms (line 15; sanitaryware prime cost \$9,000 per dwelling). Instead: built-in baths with a tiled hob in the same positions, with the floor waste and tiling to suit.	4,000 to 6,500	The bathrooms keep a bath. They look more conventional, and the tiled hob gives a shelf.	A freestanding bath is a selling feature in bathrooms at this level. The saving is modest for a visible change.
D11 Design Open shelving in the walk-in pantries instead of cabinetry and stone	Now: a walk-in pantry to each kitchen with cabinetry, a stone bench and a splashback (line 14). Instead: painted open shelving over a laminate bench, with the power and plumbing points kept.	5,000 to 8,000	The pantries work the same way and hold as much. They look plainer with the door open.	Buyers notice the finish of a walk-in pantry, and open shelves gather dust.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
S1 Specification Connect the stormwater by gravity instead of through the pumped pit	Now: a pit at the street, 1,800 by 2,300 mm deep, with dual 4.7 L/s pumps, carried as a provisional sum of \$38,000 (line 18), because the civil design assumes council's drain is too shallow for gravity. Instead: if council confirms a legal point of discharge deep enough, the site drains by gravity to the street through a standard connection and a silt pit. The rainwater tanks stay.	18,000 to 27,000	No change to the houses. There are no pumps to power, maintain or replace, and no shared cost for them after the dwellings are sold.	Entirely dependent on council's answer. If the drain is shallow, the pumped pit stays, and if council asks for on-site detention, part of the saving goes to a detention tank.
S2 Specification Stone to the kitchens and islands only; laminate to the vanities and laundries	Now: natural stone or porcelain benchtops to the kitchen, island, walk-in pantry, vanities and laundry, a prime cost of \$10,500 per dwelling. Instead: stone stays on the kitchen benches and islands. The vanities and laundries take compact laminate tops. The pantry is dealt with under D11.	10,000 to 14,000	The kitchens look as specified. The bathroom and laundry tops are plainer and less hard-wearing.	Laminate marks more easily and reads as a lower specification in the ensuites, where buyers look closely.
S3 Specification Hybrid plank flooring in place of engineered timber on the ground floors	Now: engineered timber flooring to the ground-floor living rooms, kitchens and entries, about 150 m ² , at a prime cost rate of \$75 per m ² plus laying (line 13). Instead: hybrid plank flooring at about \$40 per m ² plus laying.	5,000 to 7,000	A durable, water-resistant floor with a timber look.	The floor is the first thing buyers walk on. Hybrid plank feels and sounds different underfoot, and the saving is small for the change in resale appeal.
S4 Specification Standard-range light fittings and door hardware	Now: decorative lighting at a prime cost of \$2,000 per dwelling and door furniture at \$1,600 per dwelling; the downlights are priced in line 19. Instead: a standard range at about \$1,100 and \$1,000 per dwelling, with the same light points and doors.	4,000 to 5,500	The fittings are plainer. Lighting positions and door function are unchanged.	Feature pendants and matching hardware are part of a mid-range finish. The difference is visible but modest.
S5 Specification Split systems in place of ducted heating and cooling	Now: ducted reverse-cycle heating and cooling, two zones per dwelling, carried as a provisional sum of \$54,000 (line 20). Instead: in each dwelling, a large split system in the living room and smaller ones in the main bedroom and the upstairs hall, about \$10,000 per dwelling installed.	18,000 to 27,000	The living areas and the main bedrooms are heated and cooled as before. The other bedrooms rely on the hall unit with their doors open, so they respond more slowly.	Ducted systems are expected in townhouses at this price, and wall units show in each room. The houses stay all-electric.
S6 Specification Exposed-fix roof sheeting in place of concealed-fix tray deck	Now: concealed-fix tray-deck roofing, about 380 m ² across the dwellings and garages (line 08). Instead: exposed-fix trapezoidal sheeting in the same colour, at the same 2° fall, with the same flashings and cappings.	4,500 to 7,000	Not visible from the ground behind the parapets.	Exposed fixings need checking over time. At 2° the sheeting is at its minimum pitch, so the laps and fixings must be done well.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
S7 Specification Standard-range face brick in place of PGH Blanco	Now: PGH Blanco face brick to the ground-floor walls, at a prime cost of \$1,650 per 1,000 (line 06). Instead: a standard-range light-coloured face brick at about \$1,050 per 1,000, laid the same way.	7,500 to 11,000	The ground floor reads in a similar colour, with less of the texture and variation of the specified brick.	The brick is named on the endorsed materials schedule, so the change needs Darebin's consent. The saving is only the difference in the brick; the laying cost is the same.
S8 Specification Waffle-pod slabs designed to site class M	Now: waffle-pod footings and slabs to 371 m ² (line 04), priced on the engineer's preliminary design for reactive clay at the upper end of the M to H range the estimate assumes. Instead: if the geotechnical report classes the site as M, the engineer designs the slabs for class M, with shallower ribs, less reinforcement and less concrete.	5,000 to 9,000	No change to the houses.	Entirely dependent on the geotechnical report. Rock in the footings, the estimate's other ground risk, is not part of this saving.
S9 Specification Standard-module kitchen cabinetry in place of custom joinery	Now: custom joinery to the three kitchens and islands (line 14, about \$105,000 with the appliances and stone). Instead: standard-module cabinetry from a volume kitchen supplier, with two-pack doors, assembled to the same layouts with filler panels at the walls.	12,000 to 18,000	The same layouts, appliances and benchtops. Cabinet widths follow standard modules, so filler panels appear at the walls, and door and drawer details come from a catalogue.	Less tailored joinery in the room buyers judge most closely. Bespoke details such as integrated handles and timber veneer fall away.
M1 Construction method Owner supplies the appliances and decorative light fittings	Now: the appliances (prime cost \$7,500 per dwelling) and the decorative lighting (\$2,000 per dwelling) are supplied through the builder, with the builder's margin added. Instead: the owner buys these items and has them delivered to site on the builder's schedule; the builder installs them. The contract price falls by the full prime cost sums, but the owner still pays for the items, so only the builder's margin counts as a saving.	3,000 to 4,500	No change to the finished houses.	The owner carries warranty claims, damaged deliveries and late items. Builders usually exclude owner-supplied items from their defects obligations, and may still charge for handling.
M2 Construction method Owner engages the demolition and asbestos removal directly before the builder starts	Now: demolition of the existing weatherboard house and outbuildings (line 02) and asbestos removal (a provisional sum of \$9,000), carried out under the builder. Instead: the owner engages a demolition contractor and a licensed asbestos removalist first, then hands a cleared site to the builder.	3,500 to 6,500	No change to the finished houses.	The owner takes on the asbestos clearance certificate, the demolition permit and the gap between the two contracts. Builders often add a make-good item when they inherit someone else's demolition, which erodes the saving.

OPTION	WHAT CHANGES	SAVING \$	EFFECT ON THE OUTCOME	TRADE-OFF
M3 Construction method Builder uses a garage as site office and secure store once it is locked up	Now: the preliminaries (line 01) carry a hired site office and a lockable container for the 52 to 60 weeks on site, with delivery and removal. Instead: once the Dwelling 1 garage is at lock-up, about halfway through the programme, the builder moves the office and store into it and returns the hired units. The garage is cleaned, patched and painted last.	3,000 to 5,500	No change to the finished houses. The Dwelling 1 garage is finished last in the programme.	Wear on the garage slab and walls, and the garage door and fit-off wait until late in the job. Some builders will not work without their own sheds, so the saving stands only where the tender documents invite it.
ST1 Staging Offer the open pergolas as purchaser options rather than building them now	Now: three open aluminium pergolas over the outdoor areas (line 21). Instead: the pergolas are left out of this contract and offered to purchasers as an option. The paving under them and the fixing points in the walls are built now.	9,000 to 13,500	The outdoor areas are handed over open to the sky. Purchasers who want shade can buy the pergola.	The pergolas appear on the endorsed plans and in the marketing renders, so the houses look less finished without them. Built later, each costs more than it would as part of this contract.
ST2 Staging Offer the electric fireplaces and feature media walls as purchaser upgrades	Now: an electric fireplace insert (prime cost \$3,500 per dwelling) set in a feature bar, fireplace and media wall in each living room (lines 16 and 19). Instead: each living room is handed over with a plain wall, blocking for future joinery and a dedicated power circuit. The fireplace and media wall become an upgrade purchasers can buy before handover.	24,000 to 31,000	The living rooms are plainer as built. A purchaser who wants the feature wall can have it, at their own cost.	The feature wall is a focal point of each living room and of the display renders. Fitted after handover it costs more and disturbs a finished room, so it is best sold before handover. The blocking and power kept for it are counted as costs that come back.

OPTION REGISTER REVIEW FIELDS

The review-level fields as recorded in BuilderHQ.

TARGET REACHABLE	The target is reachable
RANGE REACHED TOGETHER	Together, the options reach \$233,000 to \$340,000 of savings. Low 233,000; high 340,000. D2, D3 and S6 are alternatives to D1 and are not added, and the overlaps between S4 and M1 (decorative lighting) and between D4 and D6 (the sliding doors) are counted once.
VALID UNTIL	Figures valid until 7 January 2027. Issued 9 October 2026.
ASSUMPTIONS	The four standard and seven project assumptions on page 9.
NOTE FROM THE ESTIMATING TEAM	Floor area is not the cost driver here. The three houses are a sensible size for the site, and the money sits in the flat roofs and parapets, the structural steel, the stormwater pit and the features repeated three times. The roofs and the fireplaces are the largest changes the owner controls, and the recommended changes sit at the target with little to spare. Four options depend on investigations; order the geotechnical report and the feature survey, and ask council for the point of discharge, first. D5, D4 and S3 are the reserves.
SUMMARY	The Ashcombe estimate as issued is \$2,228,820 including GST (Most Likely). The owner's budget is \$2,000,000, so the gap is \$228,820, or 10% of the estimate. The Low estimate (\$1,774,190) is under the budget, but only if the ground, the stormwater connection and the selections all go well, so it is not a safe basis for the budget. The target is reachable, but only by simplifying the roofs, offering the fireplaces as upgrades and confirming four savings that depend on investigations. Together, the options reach \$233,000 to \$340,000 of savings. We recommend: replace the flat roofs and parapets with skillion roofs (D1); offer the fireplaces and media walls as purchaser upgrades (ST2); narrow the sliding doors and keep the feature battens to the street (D6, D7); trim the fit-out (D10, D11, S2, S4, S9); use split systems in place of ducted heating and cooling (S5) and a standard-range face brick (S7); use a garage as the site office (M3); have the owner buy the appliances and light fittings, and offer the pergolas as purchaser options (M1, ST1); and confirm four investigation-dependent savings (D8 steel, D9 retaining, S1 stormwater, S8 slabs). Together these changes save \$190,000 to \$281,000 and bring the Most Likely estimate to about \$1,993,000, in a range of \$1,947,820 to \$2,038,820. That reaches the target with little to spare. The result assumes all twelve smaller changes; the owner can swap any of them for others of similar value, and D5 and two of the options we do not recommend (D4, S3) remain available. Without the four investigation-dependent options, the other recommended changes bring the Most Likely estimate to about \$2,047,000. Unchanged throughout: three four-bedroom townhouses; the floor areas and the garages as drawn; all-electric services with solar PV; the 7-star energy rating; and the permit's landscape plan and screening. No cost moved to the owner is counted as a saving. The investigations come first. The decision then sits with the owner, advised by the architect, and the external changes go to Darebin as one request for secondary consent before the construction drawings are finalised.

This cost optimisation was prepared for the project owner by the BuilderHQ estimating team, from the working drawings and the BuilderHQ estimate for 42 Ashcombe Street. Once the owner has chosen the changes and the drawings are revised, an updated estimate confirms where the project has come out before it goes to tender.

PREPARED BY

Team
The BuilderHQ estimating team

For
The project owner

Validity
Figures valid until 7 January 2027.

PROJECT REFERENCE

BHQ-EX-2026-CO

RESERVOIR · DAREBIN · OCTOBER 2026

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