

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT



The Former Mint
280 William Street, Melbourne (VHR H770)

Replacement of the MPavilion

This Heritage Impact Statement forms part of a permit application to remove a temporary pavilion from the rear / east courtyard of the Hellenic Museum (former Mint administration and residence) and replace it with a new permanent pavilion.

The former Mint complex is located in the north-west quadrant of Melbourne's central business district. It is a large flat site facing William Street and spanning from La Trobe to Little Lonsdale Street. The site is surrounded by an imposing historic brick wall on three sides with an iron palisade fence to William Street. The three original rendered masonry buildings facing William St remain. The production buildings which wrapped around the east courtyard were largely demolished by 1969 and this area is now used as a carpark.

The original courtyard on the east side of the administration block (now the Hellenic Museum) currently hosts the inaugural MPavillion, which was erected on the site by the Hellenic Museum as a temporary structure in 2015 - 16.



Figure 1 Near Maps aerial photo of the Mint site – Pavilion located inside yellow circle

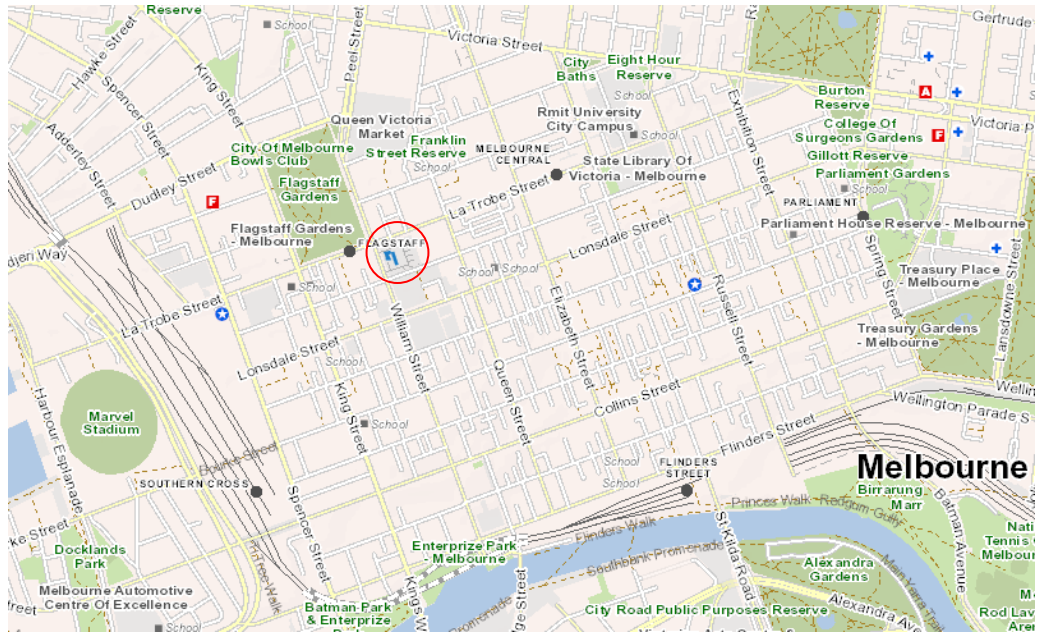


Figure 2 Location Plan

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Date April 28th2024

Prepared for The Hellenic Museum
 280 William St, Melbourne VIC 3283

1 Significance of the Place.

1.1 Statement of Significance

Victorian Heritage Register

The Former Royal Mint is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR H770) and has the following Statement of Significance:

What is significant?

The Former Royal Mint was designed by John James Clark of the Public Works Office and built during 1869-72 by contractors William Murray & Company of Emerald Hill, and Martin and Peacock of West Melbourne. The complex originally contained coin production facilities, administration and residential quarters and associated structures, but all that remains now are the two-storey office building and residence, two gate-houses, perimeter walling and palisading.

The main two storey building is a rendered brick structure on a heavy rusticated base. Unlike the Palladian norm, the piano Nobile is on the ground floor. The first floor features paired ionic columns, while an attic storey features oval windows. The perimeter wall is an imposing brick construction with large wrought iron gates and iron lamps.

How is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical significance because of its important role in the economic, financial and political development of Victoria for nearly 100 years. Lobbying for a mint to be established in Australia began soon after the discovery of gold. Such an institution was considered by its proponents not only as an efficient way of providing currency for the colonies, but as an important sign of colonial independence and maturity. As such it reflects the growing wealth and confidence of gold-rush era Melbourne. As a branch of the Royal Mint, London, it initially bought gold and minted only gold sovereigns until 1916. The first Australian silver coins were minted in 1916, after the Federal Constitution gave the Commonwealth sole powers in the minting of coinage. The first Australian pennies and halfpennies were produced in 1927. When the Sydney Mint closed in 1926, the Melbourne Royal Mint became the only mint in Australia until it ceased operations in 1968.

The Former Royal Mint is of architectural significance as one of the most impressive 19th century government buildings in Victoria, and for its associations with John James Clark.

The administration building was styled after Raphael's Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli in Rome (1515). Its restrained ornamentation and dignified portico reflect the prestigious yet functional nature of the Mint. It is one of the finest examples of conservative classicism in Australia. Clark (1838-1915), who had a distinguished career in the office of the Colonial Architect (later Public Works Department) from 1852, when he was 14, until 1878, was responsible for designing a number of important colonial government buildings including the Government Printing Office (1856) and the Treasury (1857). He later went on to design major buildings in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

Update proposed in 2013 CMP review

What is significant?

The Former Royal Mint was designed by John James Clark of the Public Works Office. Design work began in 1869 and it was built during 1871-72 by the contractors William Murray and Company of Emerald Hill, and Martin and Peacock of West Melbourne.

The complex contained coin production facilities, administration and residential quarters and associated structures, but, following demolition of the factory buildings in the 1970s, only the two-storey (plus attic) Administrative Building (originally offices and residence), two guardhouses, perimeter walling and palisade fencing remain extant. The main two storey building is a rendered brick structure on a heavy rusticated base. Unlike the Palladian norm, the piano nobile is on the ground floor. The first floor features paired ionic columns, while an attic storey features oval windows. The site occupies a terrace which was created through a combination of cut and fill for the construction of the Mint, and this lined on its north west, north east and south east sides by an imposing brick perimeter wall with large wrought iron gates and iron lamps.

Archaeological investigations confirmed that substantial subsurface remains of the factory buildings, or 'operative departments' survive, including footing walls, floors and furnace flues, and it is likely that further such remains survive across the footprint of the complex.

It is anticipated that remains relating to the earlier 1854 Exhibition Hall also survive in the site, although this has yet to be confirmed through intrusive investigation.

From 1971, the Registry of Civil Marriages occupied the Administrative Building, and in 1988 the home of the Deputy Master of the former Royal Melbourne Mint was occupied by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. In 1998 management of the site was transferred to what is now the Working Heritage Committee of Management.

How it is significant?

The Former Royal Mint is of historical and architectural significance to the State of Victoria. It is also of scientific (archaeological and technological) and social significance to at least a local level.

Why it is significant?

Historically

The former Mint has historical significance as an illustration of an important aspect of British-Australian relations, the British government's control of the colonial currency from early settlement until the opening of the Commonwealth Mint in Canberra in 1968.

The Former Royal Mint is of historical significance because of its important role in the economic, financial and political development of Victoria for nearly 100 years. Lobbying for a Mint to be established in Australia began soon after the discovery of gold. Such an institution was considered by its proponents not only as an efficient way of providing currency for the colonies, but as an important sign of colonial independence and maturity. As such it reflects the growing wealth and confidence of gold-rush era Melbourne. As a branch of the Royal Mint, London, it initially bought gold and minted only gold sovereigns until 1916. The first Australian silver coins were minted in 1916, after the Federal Constitution gave the Commonwealth sole powers in the minting of coinage. The first Australian

pennies and halfpennies were produced in 1927. When the Sydney Mint closed in 1926, the Royal Mint in Melbourne became the only Mint in Australia until it ceased operations in 1968.

The archaeological deposits which exist within the Former Royal Mint site are historically significant because they relate to the Royal Mint, but also potentially the Exhibition Hall of 1854. Therefore, they demonstrate an important stage, or stages, in the development of Melbourne as a city and Victoria as part of the Australian colony and then a state in its own right.

The Administrative Building and the guardhouses are illustrations of the policy during the 19th century, and well into the 20th century, of employers providing living accommodation for their employees. Clergymen, teachers, bank managers and policemen were housed by their employers. The grandness of the accommodation reflected the status of the employee. The difference in the furniture and furnishings of the Administrative Building's living quarters and that provided for the occupants of the guardhouses illustrates this concern with status.

Historical significance derives from their association with a number of notable people who lived and worked there. Many made significant contributions to the scientific and intellectual history of Victoria.

Architecturally

The Former Royal Mint is of architectural significance as one of the most impressive 19th century government buildings in Victoria, and for its associations with John James Clark. The Administrative Building was styled after Raphael's Palazzo Vidoni-Caffarelli in Rome (1515). Its restrained ornamentation and dignified portico reflect the prestigious yet functional nature of the Mint. It is one of the finest examples of conservative classicism in Australia. Clark (1838-1915), who had a distinguished career in the office of the Colonial Architect (later Public Works Department) from 1852, when he was 14, until 1878, was responsible for designing a number of important colonial government buildings including the Government Printing Office (1856) and the Treasury Building (1857). He later went on to design major buildings in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth.

The former Mint Buildings have state significance as surviving evidence of one of Melbourne's major 19th century public building complexes. Its key elements, the Administrative Building, North and South Guardhouses, perimeter brick wall and palisade fence along with its landscaped setting are substantially intact. The visual and physical links between the North and South Guardhouses, and the Administrative Building are important as this interaction between buildings is largely unchanged and contributes substantially to the visual interpretation of the place. Similarly, the area of landscaped open space to the east of the Administrative Building, which has a similar footprint to the courtyard of the Mint complex prior to the demolition of the operative departments, is important to the maintenance of sight lines to the rear of the Administrative Building.

Scientifically

The archaeological remains which have been revealed in the site, comprising the foundations of the Mint operative departments, provide information on the construction of this facility, and investigation has also cast light on the construction of the terrace. Both confirm the potential of the rest of the site to provide new, important information regarding the activities of the Royal Mint, and possibly relating to the 1854 and 1861 Exhibitions. From maps, plans and photographs it has been possible to trace the evolution of the site, and more meaningful information may continue to be provided by the archaeological record regarding this evolution (for example in the design and construction of buildings).

Archaeological deposits which are likely to exist elsewhere in the site may provide important information regarding the lives of the Melbourne population over an extended period that is not available from documentary sources. For example, what activities were undertaken in the area, and what was the quality of the structures? How did this vary over time? What was the material culture of the workers and how did they live? Does the collective archaeological resource confirm or challenge what we already know of this area?

Individually the site is believed to demonstrate historic civic and industrial uses, but no other excavations are known to have occurred in this city block. The site is archaeologically significant because in combination with what is known from other sites across the wider area it may provide important information relevant to the broader development of Melbourne during the early to mid-nineteenth century.

Technologically

The archaeological remains at the site has provided information on the design and construction of a civic facility that is particularly rare in the Australian context, and it has the potential to provide information concerning its use – i.e. relating to 19th and early 20th century minting practices.

Socially

The former Mint buildings have social significance as illustrations of the use of public buildings for tourist purposes, particularly during the 1880s boom years. Once the processing operations were securely in place, groups of people were encouraged to tour its premises to admire the operation of the coining, melting and assaying departments.

Given that the Mint closed in the second half of the 20th century, it is likely that there are people still living who worked at, or otherwise interacted with, the Mint, and to whom the site will be of social significance. The site will also be of social significance to the numerous people who were married at the site when it accommodated the Registry of Civil Marriages from 1971.

1.2 Existing Condition and Use

The former Mint is located on crown land managed by Working Heritage. The site is currently used for a variety of purposes with two commercial leaseholders. All of the buildings and grounds are well maintained and are in good condition.

The imposing two storey administration building has been leased to the Hellenic Museum since 2007 and operates principally as a museum dedicated to Hellenic culture. The temporary pavilion erected in the east courtyard behind the museum is owned and operated by the museum and is currently used in the summer for a range of social events and exhibitions. The pavilion was designed by Sean Godsell in 2014 as the inaugural MPavilion and is now in fair to poor condition.

The North Gatehouse operates as a bar and restaurant. The South Gatehouse is the office of Working Heritage who run a public carpark in the rear of the property

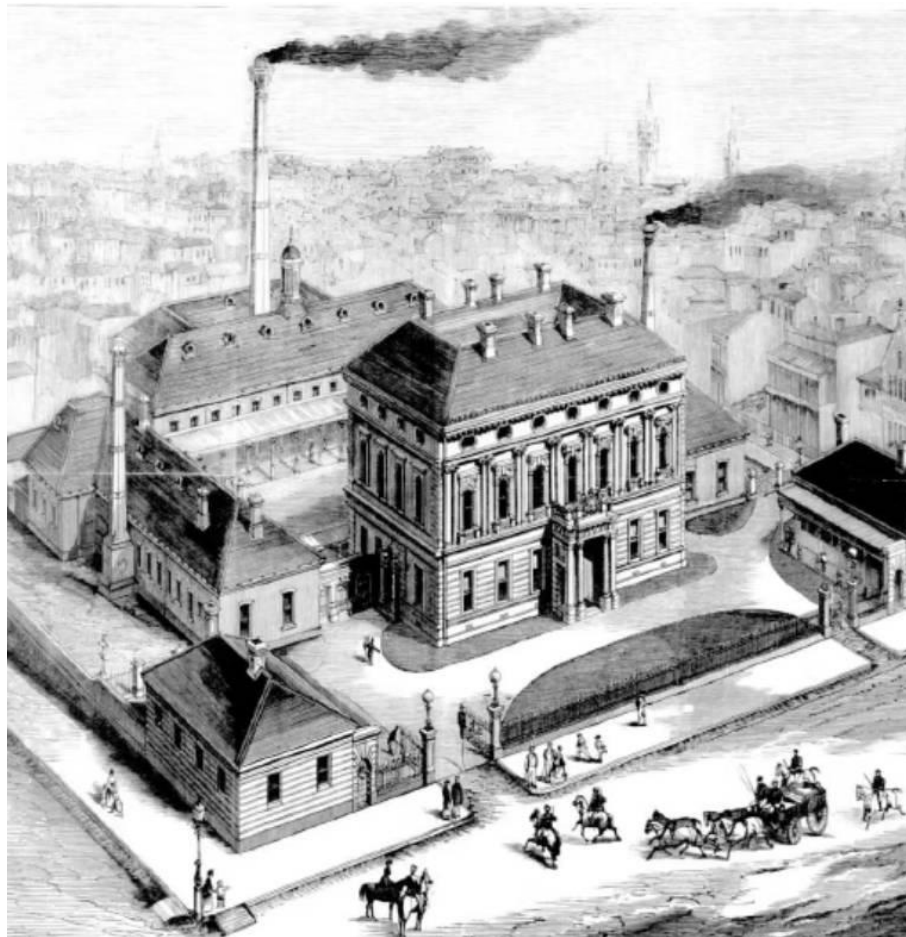


Figure 3 The Mint complex in operation. The east courtyard is visible behind the administration building, with the production buildings to the east and north. The North gatehouse is on the left, the south gatehouse on the right.

1.3 Constraints and Opportunities resulting from the significance of the former Mint complex

Constraints include the necessity to consider the setting and archaeology of the place. Opportunities include the potential to activate the courtyard as a modern hospitality space.

The character of the courtyard has clearly changed since the buildings to the north, east and west were demolished. The sense of enclosure has been lost and the use of the place has changed. Once the courtyard provided a green and manicured outlook for those travelling between the mint buildings. The Nettleton photo below shows scattered plantings rather than a lawn. It does not show any seating in the courtyard which is likely to indicate that it was designed to be looked at and walked through rather than used for sitting or entertaining. The use of outdoor spaces around buildings has changed and there is now a desire to put plazas, courtyards and gardens to more active use. The MPavilion demonstrated that the space can be activated for hospitality and exhibitions in a way which increase the use of the garden and allows for an appreciation of the courtyard and its relationship to the main building. The proposed glazed pavilion will allow people to enjoy the garden and views of the building at anytime and in any weather. The diaphanous nature of the structure will allow views along the full length of the courtyard and an appreciation of its original size and relationship to main building.



Figure 4 1873 C. Nettleton Photograph, Quadrangle looking North West toward the administration building across the courtyard. Source: SLV

The policy section of the CMP Review identifies the need to, ***Explore opportunities for more intensive uses for the lawn area at the rear of the Administrative Building, which is currently under-utilised.***

The MPavilion fulfilled this recommendation and succeeded in reinvigorating the lawn area.

The CMP Review lists the east courtyard as a significant space and contains the follow policies with immediate relevance to the east courtyard:

It is essential that the Mint be seen in an appropriate landscape setting. Any landscaping of significant open spaces on the site must acknowledge its history as a public building. Like other forecourts to public buildings in Melbourne, the Mint was an open space with few trees or gardens. There is clear documentary evidence that the site was largely lawn and hard surfaces (flagged, metal and pitched) with very few specimen trees. Most of the significant trees, including the four Oleanders along the William Street frontage, probably date from the early twentieth century.

The lawn to the east of the Administrative Building should be conserved. Consideration should be given to altering it to extend to the original size (the planting bed to the east should be returned to lawn) Archaeological evidence of former paths, edging, beds and the fishpond should be investigated and reinstated if possible.

The parterre path design of the 1870s plan, the planting visible in the 1873 photo, the current landscape set out and the review recommendations all indicate that the courtyard garden has undergone several changes in character over its 150 year life span. The pavilion will respond to the centrality of the 1870s plan while allowing for a variety of landscape approaches on either side.

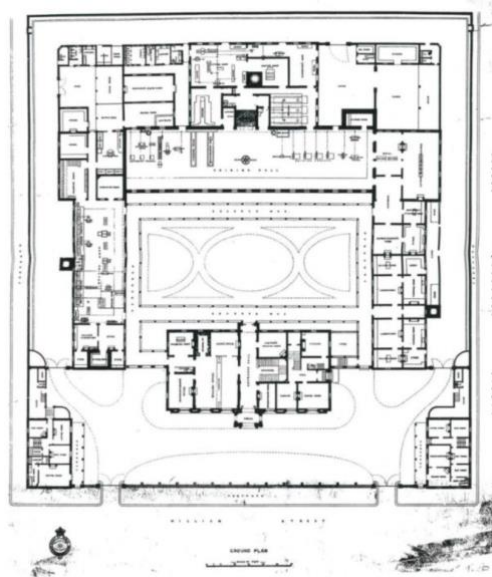


Figure 5 1870 J. J. Clark Architectural Plan - Public Works Department Archives.

The review also notes potential archaeological values and constraints which arise from them:

*Under Victoria's Heritage Act, [and Aboriginal Heritage Act] all archaeological sites are protected. Because of the number of changes to the Mint site, including buildings erected and demolished, it is possible that some archaeological remnants remain. There is the possibility of archaeological evidence of landscape features, including bed alignments, the lawn area which previously had a fish pond, and the previous paving treatments. **It is also of note that the whole site was originally built up to a higher level using fill.** It is possible that the fill has archaeological potential. For these reasons, the whole of the Mint site can be considered to be of potential archaeological value. Any disturbance to an archaeological site- including archaeological excavation- requires the written consent of the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria. All areas of high archaeological value or potential value should be managed in ways which conserve these values. During development of areas of potential significance, monitoring of potential archaeological value should take place*

The potential for archaeological finds relating to production on the site and the Exhibition Building which predated the Mint is a constraint to the demolition and construction process. This was demonstrated when the MPavilion was installed and a central circular fishpond was discovered, necessitating a modification to the footing design to leave it undisturbed.

Extent Heritage P/L have examined the architectural and engineering drawings, discussed the proposal with Heritage Victoria officers and provided archaeological advice. (Laura Cambell 25/4/25). They are comfortable that the *'archaeology works can be managed through conditions outlined on the Heritage Act Permit.'*, with the following specific recommendations: *"... remnant pond feature will be conditioned as part of a Heritage Management Plan (with a likely exclusion zone). Once the ground works are completed, a site inspection should be undertaken with a short letter report being submitted to Heritage Victoria, to confirm the location of the pond/fishpond feature and ground conditions. "*

2 The proposed works

The proposal is to carefully dismantle and remove the MPavilion and replace it with a free-standing metal and glass pavilion of similar size in the same location.

Dismantling

The MPavilion was designed to be easily constructed and demounted with minimal impact on the surrounding parklands, and this can be achieved once again at the Mint site with very little impact to the existing trees or adjacent building.

Until the pavilion is dismantled, and the demolition begins on the slab, the need to disturb the ground and/or make any changes for the new slab cannot be known. The way in which the slab can be removed with minimal impact on the ground below and no detrimental impact to the fishpond will need to be agreed with the contractor. It is recommended that a two stage

Heritage Protection Plan (HPP) be provided as a condition of the permit. Part one will provide a demolition methodology and address the risks to all surrounding heritage fabric and vegetation, designate set down areas etc as per the Heritage Victoria HPP guidelines. Part two will occur after demolition has begun and will record the condition of the fishpond and footings and confirm the structural details and construction sequence of the new slab. Extent Heritage will also provide a report at this stage.

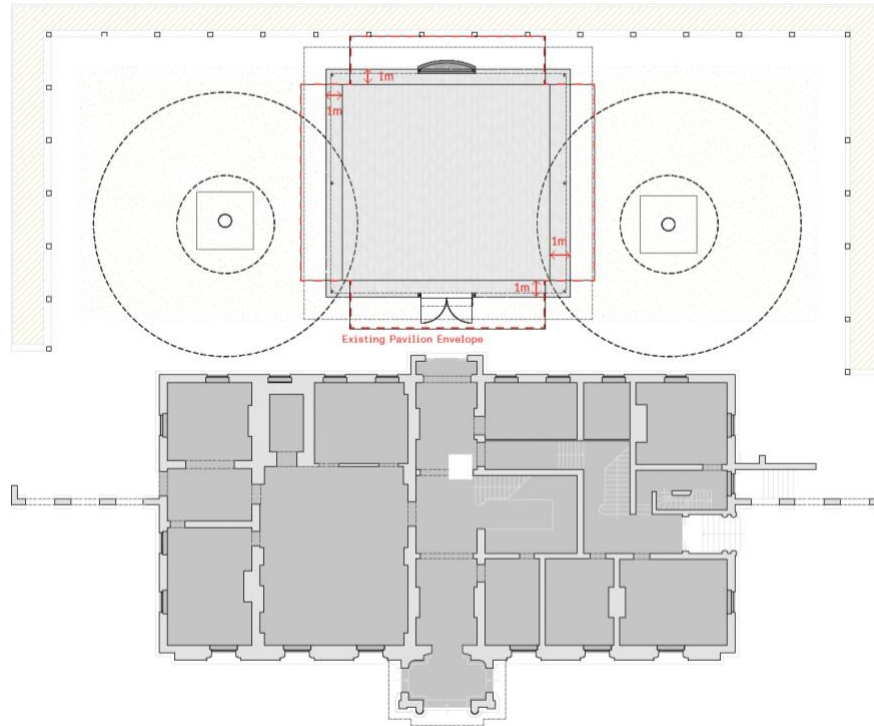


Figure 6 KUD Plan 24-016 Hellenic Museum drwg 3; showing an outline of the existing Pavilion, the new pavilion and the former administration building.

Physical impact of the proposed pavilion

The proposed pavilion will sit outside the tree protection zone of the trees at either end of the courtyard. It will have no physical impact on any known historic fabric other than the fishpond. The proposed pavilion will use the existing lattice of beams and screw piles to support the new slab which will cantilever 1m beyond the existing slab on each side. This approach is designed to avoid further archaeological disturbance to the courtyard. Bot Engineering drawing S010 L1 25032 indicates the existing and proposed footings conditions. The KUD architectural design development drawing No. 3 demonstrates how the existing footings will be reused. Construction drawings cannot be provided until the condition of the existing footings is better understood.

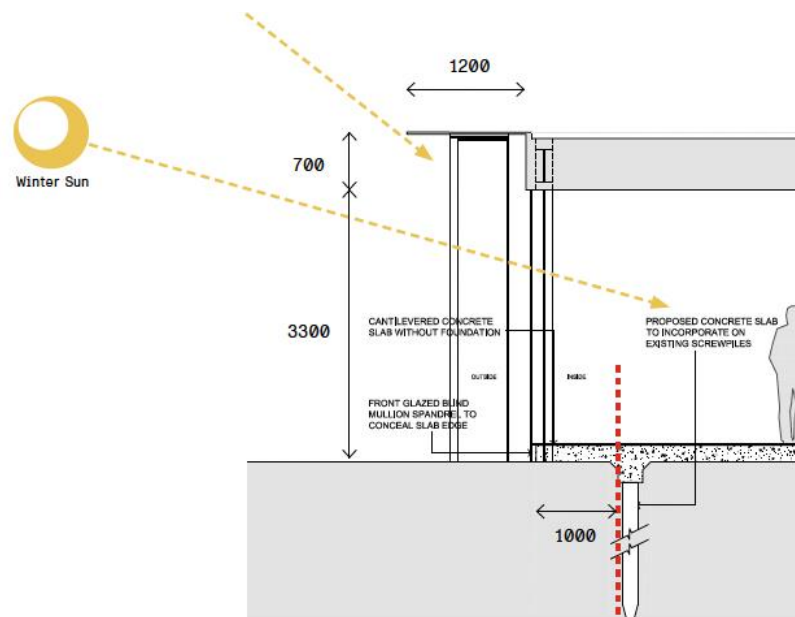


Figure 7 KUD 24-016 Hellenic Museum 3

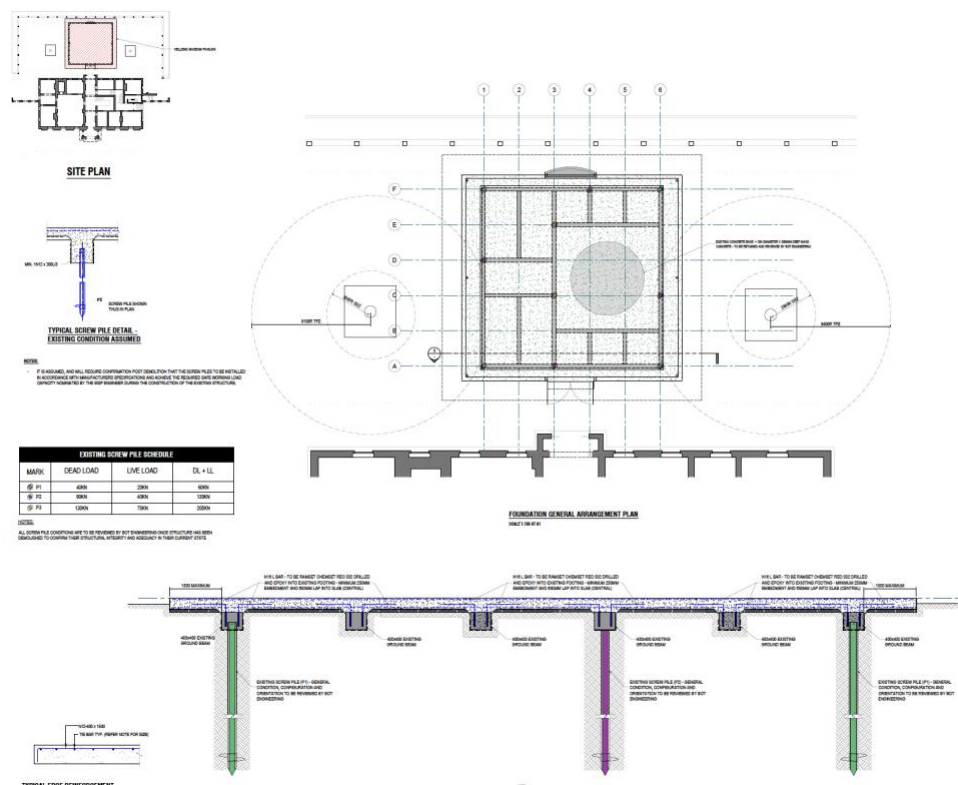


Figure 8 Bot Engineering S010 L2 25032

Views

The proposed pavilion will not be visible from William Street or from either of the guard houses. The east facing windows of the museum are covered over to control light within the exhibition spaces and therefore the pavilion will not have an impact on views from the museum to the east over the carpark. It will have a limited impact on views from the east courtyard toward the museum building. Impact on views of the museum will be mitigated by the minimalist design of the pavilion which has fully glazed walls and a narrow band of roof supported on six perimeter column. The open design will allow clear views long the full length of the courtyard as well as through to the Museum building.



Figure 9 View from William St at north gate house & south gatehouse

Architectural and aesthetic response

The proposed low glass and metal pavilion is a clearly contemporary structure which will compliment but not compete with the masonry building. The rhythm of the glazing units matches the proportions of the window bays in the historic building and the fine edge of the flared roof responds to the cornices and string courses which articulate the classical elevations of the museum and shed water from its surface.

The pavilion's arched entrance is the only direct allusion to the architectural motifs of the Museum building. The detailing is stylized but the literal and figurative connections are clear.



Figure 10 KUD 24-016 Hellenic Museum 3 – looking north across the courtyard\

Unlike the Godsell pavilion which opens up creating an ebullient, multi-winged, artichoke-like display, the proposed glass box is polite and still, not unlike the historic building. The courtyard will be activated by the movement of the people in and around the building rather than by the structure itself.



Figure 11 The MPavilion with all the flaps in operation



Figure 12 The MPavilion closed down

3 Options Considered

The opportunities to build new structures around the former administration block are limited by the need to preserve its curtilage and view lines across the site. The east courtyard provides the only opportunity for expansion. Common sense and the CMP dictate the no new structures should be placed along the William Street frontage and all of the internal spaces are required for display and administration.

The current temporary pavilion is free standing and when closed, allows good views of the east elevation of the museum building, thereby maintaining the important view lines identified in the Statement of Significance. In character, it is a garden structure rather than a solid building. The Hellenic Museum is seeking to create a more permanent building which will replicate the low, glass house like character of the MPavilion, respond to the courtyard setting and allow the classical facade

of the museum to be fully appreciated from anywhere in the courtyard, including from within the pavilion.

Consideration has been given to retaining the MPavilion which was developed as a temporary structure ten years ago (2014). The pavilion was designed for use in an open park space and has large pivoting panels clad in a perforated material. The mechanisms are becoming unreliable and the pavilion cannot be adequately heated or cooled. The interior is often inundated in heavy rain conditions as the water management system is minimal.

3.1 Risk mitigation

The visual impact of the proposed pavilion is reasonably straightforward to assess based on the impact of the current pavilion. The archeological impact is less easy to predict. The re-use of existing footings will limit excavation but where new excavation is required all holes will be dug by hand to better monitor soil content. A suitable methodology for soil disturbance will be agreed between the project manager, heritage consultant and the building contractor and presented to Heritage Victoria for approval. See section 2 above for further details.

3.2 Reasonable or economic use of the Museum site.

The Hellenic Museum leases the building and courtyard at commercial rates and needs to operate as a viable business. The proposed change will allow them to make economic use of the courtyard throughout the year and support the flow of visitors to the site. It will also increase their display space. If the permit is not granted, the Museum may need to reconsider moving to a larger building. The Museum has provided the following comprehensive economic and rational argument for its replacement.

The current MPavilion is no longer meeting our needs due to safety concerns and mounting maintenance challenges. Additionally, our expansion plans and the demand for year-round functionality necessitate a new, fit-for-purpose event space. This rationale outlines the key reasons for the proposed new temporary structure and its benefits for the Museum's future.

Safety and Maintenance Concerns

The existing MPavilion, while once an innovative solution, has begun to show signs of significant wear and tear. Over time, the structure has developed safety issues that are becoming more difficult and costly to address. Despite ongoing maintenance efforts, the MPavilion's condition is deteriorating, and ensuring its continued safety for our visitors and staff is increasingly challenging. As the structure ages, repairs are no longer sufficient to guarantee the high safety standards we require.

Expansion and increased capacity

The Museum is currently undergoing an expansion to enhance its role as a cultural hub. This growth brings with it an increased need for event space that can accommodate larger gatherings and a broader range of activities. The current MPavilion's capacity is inadequate for our expanding programming needs, limiting our ability to host larger events that are crucial for community engagement and revenue generation.

A new temporary structure is essential to support this expansion. The proposed glasshouse-style building is designed to be spacious and adaptable, providing the flexibility needed to accommodate a variety of events, from major exhibitions to large lectures and private functions. This additional capacity will enable us to better serve our growing audience and maximise the use of our facilities.

Year-Round Utilisation and Financial Sustainability

One of the significant limitations of the current MPavilion is its suitability for use only during certain times of the year. As we strive to increase the Museum's financial sustainability, it is crucial to have a structure that can be utilised throughout the year. The proposed new structure will be equipped with modern climate control systems, allowing it to be used comfortably in winter as well as summer.

By offering a versatile event space that is operational year-round, we can increase revenue opportunities through a more diverse range of events and activities. This not only enhances our financial stability but also supports our mission to engage with the community and provide valuable cultural experiences consistently throughout the year.

The replacement of the pavilion will have no impact on historic building fabric and is unlikely to have any negative impact on views to or from the former Mint administration building or on its setting. The work is unlikely to create further disturbance to sub-surface archaeological material.

4 Summary of impacts and conclusion.

The current temporary pavilion was introduced ten years ago and is not a significant component of the site. Its removal will have no impact on the heritage significance of the place. It is acknowledged that the Godsell MPavilion has some significance to the City of Melbourne. However, the MPavilion organization and Mr Godsell have been notified and support its demolition and recycling due to its condition and modifications.

The proposed pavilion is freestanding and can be removed when the Museum's lease expires – making it reversible. It will be located in the same location as the existing pavilion with a slightly greater footprint. It will maximize the potential of the courtyard lawn as recommended by the CMP

review. The visual impact of the new pavilion will be similar to the existing structure when it is closed up. It will only be visible from the rear of the site and will have a limited impact on views of the museum building from the east courtyard. The design is modern, streamlined and neutral with detailing to compliment the historic administration building. The proposed building comfortably meets article 22 of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. – New Work

22.1 New work such as additions or other changes to the place maybe acceptable where it respects and does not distort or obscure the cultural significance of the place, or detract from its interpretation and appreciation.

22.2 New work should be readily identifiable as such, but must respect and have minimal impact on the cultural significance of the place

The proposed works will contribute to the operation of the Hellenic Museum adding a high quality, contemporary garden pavilion which compliments the courtyard and continues its successful use as a versatile outdoor entertainment space.

The historic, architectural, scientific and social values of the Former Mint complex will be unaffected by the proposed change.