

# WESLEY CHURCH COMPLEX THE SCHOOL HOUSE

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HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

118-148 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne

April 2024

Prepared for

Charter Hall 

Prepared by

LOVELL CHEN



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared on the lands of the Wurundjeri people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

Wesley Place is located on the lands of the Wurundjeri people, who are, and have always been the custodians of this land. We pay our respects to the Elders past and present, and acknowledge the stories, traditions and cultures of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## Quality Assurance Register

The following quality assurance register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our quality management system.

Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
8623.02	DRAFT	Heritage Impact Statement	17 April 2024	SZ
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## Referencing

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

We respectfully acknowledge that the Wesley Church Complex is located on the land of the Wurundjeri people.

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of Charter Hall to accompany a permit application for works to the School House building, part of the Wesley Church Complex, 118-148 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. The Wesley Church Complex is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as Registered Place H0012, with the School House being identified as B3 in the Extent of Registration for the place.

### 1.1 Background

The Wesley Church Complex has been redeveloped broadly in accordance with Heritage Permit P21963 (As Amended), with the permit including permit conditions in relation to the conservation, refurbishment and limited fit-out of the School House building.

Heritage Permit P21963 has since expired and a new design for the internal fit out has been developed, albeit no change to the structural works previously approved is proposed. This HIS and permit application follows from P21963 and seeks approval for works for the final fit out of the School House to enable use by the Church congregation and select user groups. The preceding approval facilitated a level of internal refurbishment that anticipated the proposed works, including electrical fit out, external conservation and investigation works and the installation of a new lift and stair in the north end of the building.

A pre-application discussion and site meeting with Heritage Victoria on 20 March 2024 has informed the design approach proposed in this permit application.

The works proposed in this permit application involve structural strengthening works, services integration, compliance and other internal works.

The design of the proposed strengthening works to the subfloor of the ground floor and inter-floor structure has been considered under P21963, with Heritage Victoria endorsing an approach and documentation under Condition 8 of the permit (January 2022, correspondence from Ann Gove 11/01/2022 with endorsed drawings). These works were not undertaken within the period of permit validity and the works are proposed in this permit application. Heritage Victoria provided advice in relation to mechanical services and other works in this correspondence.

Where relevant, this HIS refers to the *Wesley Church and Central Mission Complex 124-144 Lonsdale Street Conservation Management Plan*, prepared by Allom Lovell and Associates, August 2000, (CMP).

### 1.2 Documentation

#### *Architectural and lighting*

The proposed works are detailed in the following architectural documentation prepared by Millar Architects:

- A100 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A200 Rev P1 (dated 09.02.24); A201 Rev P1 (dated 09.02.24); A220 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A221 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A232 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A233 Rev P1 (dated 18.09.23); A240 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A241 Rev P1 (dated 18.09.24); A260 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A261 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A300 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A301 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A302 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A303 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24);

A304 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A304 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A306 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A307 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A400 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A500 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A501 Rev P1 (dated 28.03.24); A600 Rev P1 (dated 02.04.24); Appendix 02 – Internal colours & finishes schedule Rev P1, date 02.04.24.

Works to the windows are documented in the following drawing prepared by Lovell Chen:

- Timber Louvred Windows West Façade, Rev HV, dated April 2024.

*Structural*

The proposed structural strengthening works are detailed in the following structural documentation prepared by Engineering Elements, titled *Wesley School House – Change of Use*:

- General Notes, Sheet Number S001 Rev. 01, dated 28.05.2021
- Floor Strengthening Structural Plans, Sheet Number S010 Rev. 02, dated 28.05.2021
- Details and Sections 1, Sheet Number S011 Rev. 01, dated 28.05.2021
- Details and Sections 2, Sheet Number S011 Rev. 01, dated 28.05.2021.



## 2.0 STATUTORY HERITAGE CONTROLS

### 2.1 Heritage Act 2017

The Wesley Church Complex is located at 118-148 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne is included on the VHR as H0012, with the Schoolhouse, identified as B3 in the extent of registration, located in the north-west corner of the site. The mapped extent of registration is shown at Figure 1 and described as follows:

1. All the land marked L1 marked on Diagram Number 12 held by the Executive Director.
2. All the buildings marked as:
  - B1 The Wesley Church
  - B2 The Manse
  - B3 The Schoolhouse
  - B4 Nicholas Hall
  - B5 Caretakers Cottage
  - B6 Brick Structure and Stables
  - B7 Princess Mary Club.
3. All the features marked as:
  - F1 John Wesley Statue
  - F2 Olive Tree
  - F3 Lonsdale Street Fence Plinths and Gateposts
  - F4 Little Lonsdale Street Brick Wall.

Dated 9 June 2005

RAY OSBORNE

Acting Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 23 9 June 2005 p.1185]



Figure 1 Plan of the Extent of Registration for the Wesley Church Complex; note that this reflects the layout of the complex prior to the redevelopment works approved under P21963  
Source: Victorian Heritage Database, accessed 9 April 2024

The Statement of Significance for the Wesley Church Complex is as follows:<sup>1</sup>

*What is significant?*

The Wesley Church and Wesley Mission Victoria Complex in Lonsdale Street consists of ten buildings including: The Church (1858); The Manse (1859); and The School House (1859) all designed by Joseph Reed; a Caretakers Cottage (1914); the Princess Mary Club (1926), designed by AS Eggleston and Nicholas Hall (1938), designed by Harry Norris. The North Boundary wall along Little Lonsdale St (1869) incorporates remnants of a stables and also includes a section which was rebuilt in 1914 during the construction of the Caretakers Cottage. The Lonsdale Street boundary is defined by a set of basalt central gateposts, the basalt plinths of a cast iron palisade fence and the bases of a smaller set of gates which led to the Manse(1873). Standing in the forecourt of the church is a bronze statue of John Wesley by Paul Montford (1936). The Methodist Church has had a presence in Melbourne since the beginning of European occupation and the Wesley Church has been at this site since 1858 having moved from a site in Collins Street. The Wesley Church complex has been the core of Wesleyan Methodism in Victoria since this time and the headquarters of the Wesley Mission Victoria since 1893.

*How is it significant?*

The Wesley Church and Wesley Mission Victoria Complex is of historical, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria.

<sup>1</sup> Victorian Heritage Database, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/773>, accessed 9 April 2024.

*Why is it significant?*

The Wesley Church complex is of architectural and historical significance as a complete and substantial collection of related mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century ecclesiastical buildings.

The principal group of 1858-59 buildings (Church, School House and Manse) are of architectural significance as the earliest intact church complex in the state. Conceived and completed as a single building project, the 1858-59 buildings are also architecturally significant as an early and essentially intact group of ecclesiastical buildings designed in a correct Gothic Revival Style. This group of buildings is of architectural significance as being the work of noted nineteenth century Melbourne architect Joseph Reed. The School House is of architectural significance as the only known Denominational school in Victoria designed by an architect.

The Wesley church is of architectural significance as an early and highly accomplished example of Gothic Revival styling and for the unusual combination of a gallery on all sides with a cruciform floor plan. The spire is the oldest surviving, and is believed to be the first, spire built in Victoria. The spire is also significant as having been a major landmark in nineteenth century Melbourne.

The Wesley Church is of architectural significance, representing the acceptance of the Gothic Revival style into the mainstream of Wesleyan and other non-conformist churches.

Nicholas Hall is of architectural significance as a fine and intact example of a church hall designed in a Moderne style and as the work of prominent interwar architect Harry Norris.

The Wesley Church complex is of historical significance as a major focus for Methodists in Victoria. The church itself has a symbolic position and prominence in the history of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Victoria.

The site and complex are of social and historical significance for their long association with various welfare initiatives and programs since the 1850s, in particular those of the Wesley Mission Victoria.

The Wesley Church site is of historical significance for its associations with A M & G R Nicholas, founders of the Nicholas Chemical Manufacturing Company who had a longstanding philanthropic association with the Wesley Church.

The Princess Mary Club is of historical significance in the history of women's employment in Victoria as a rare surviving example of a 1920s hostel for young women coming to the city to work and study, enabling the greater inclusion of women in the workforce.

The School House is of historical significance as a representative example of a nineteenth century denominational school.

The School House is of social significance as housing the offices of the Wesley Mission Victoria when it was established in 1893.

Permits are required under the Heritage Act for all works that are not specifically identified as permit exempt or included in the General Permit Exemptions (<https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/permits-and-approvals/heritage-permit-exemptions>).

## 2.2 Planning and Environment Act (Melbourne Planning Scheme)

### 2.2.1 Heritage Overlay

The Wesley Church Complex is included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay at Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay of the Melbourne Planning Scheme identified as HO712 Wesley Church Complex, 118-148 Lonsdale Street & 117-147 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne and mapped at Figure 2.

As per the requirements of Clause 43.01, no planning permit is required under the HO to develop places included in the VHR except for those related to subdivision.

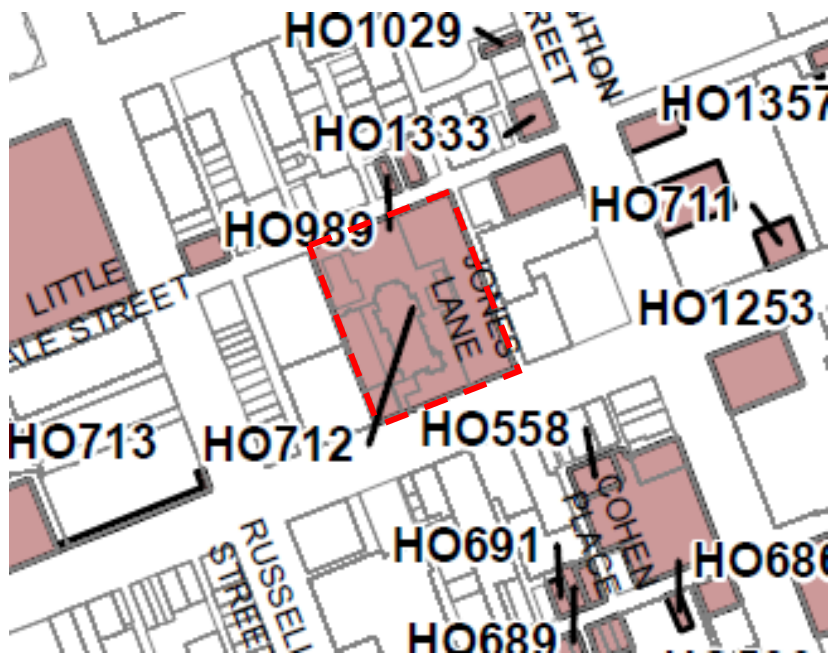


Figure 2 Detail of the HO map showing the Wesley Church Complex as HO712 (indicated)  
Source: Melbourne Planning Scheme on line, accessed 9 April 2024.

### 3.0 OVERVIEW HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION

This overview history and description is drawn from the CMP and discusses the condition of the School House since the completion of the works undertaken as part of the recent redevelopment of the site.

The Wesley church was the first major building constructed on the site, adjacent to the small school house dating to 1850; with the latter building demolished c. 1860. The church had been completed in 1858 and officially opened on 26 August of that year. The Gothic Revival style School House was constructed in 1859, along with the parsonage, largely to the design of eminent Melbourne architect Joseph Reed. The site continued to evolve over time, with the development of the now demolished conference hall (c. 1894) in the south-west part of the site, caretaker's cottage (c. 1914) to the north of the church, Princess Mary Club on the site of the original school house (c. 1926, demolished), Nicholas Hall (c. 1938) and sundry small buildings such as stables and closets. The recent redevelopment has enabled the conservation and repair of the church, school house, manse (parsonage), caretaker's cottage and Nicholas Hall in addition to the development of a modern tower complex on the site.

The bluestone and brick School House, located in the north-west part of the complex, retains its early 'T'-shaped plan form and external presentation, with the recent conservation works removing many accretions and repairing unsympathetic modifications. The expansive steeply pitched slate roof remains as do the detailed timber joinery to gable ends and dormers, doors and windows. Ground surfaces have been modernised across the site with paving and garden beds surrounding the School House. Modern changes include the introduction of a glazed air lock and door to the east side entry, infilling the pointed arch porch beneath the external stair (Figure 3), and gates to both external stairs.

Historically, the interior spaces have been variously partitioned and modified to accommodate uses from education, early Wesley Mission operations to Lifeline and associated community support functions. Internal modifications described in the CMP were removed in the recent works, realising largely open spaces to the ground and first floors. To provide for equitable internal access, the north end of the north wing accommodates a new lift and stair, these being separated from the main spaces by a full height lightweight plaster wall (Figure 4) and at the ground level north entry, a glazed wall creating a narrow access lobby. The fit out reinstated and repaired original and early treatments such as timber dadoes and ceiling linings, hard plaster finishes to walls and leadlight windows, and introduced electrical and mechanical services. The ground level contains two main spaces: the southern east-west aligned wing and the north-south aligned north wing. Dividing these is a wall with two modern openings. Both wings retain a row of centrally located cast iron columns, these supporting the floor above. The south wing is more rudimentary in finish, with the interior side of the bluestone wall visible, though overpainted (Figure 5). At first floor level, a large panel featuring an early decorative scheme remains exposed on the east wall, with the refurbished timber roof trusses, resting on modelled stone wall brackets, framing the open T-shaped space (Figure 6, Figure 7). Floors are timber to both levels, noting the flooring to the south room of ground level and all of the first floor was recently replaced.



Figure 3 View of the east side of the School House, external stair and glazed enclosure to porch



Figure 4 North wing ground floor, viewing to the north; the modern wall separates the lift/stair from this space



Figure 5 View to the east in the south wing of the ground floor; note modern openings to the dividing overpainted bluestone wall (at left) and cast iron columns



Figure 6 First floor north wing, looking north toward the lift (rear, at left); note exposed roof trusses and timber lined ceiling



Figure 7 Exposed panel displaying early decorative scheme between a refurbished window and roof truss supported on a stone bracket



## 4.0 SIGNIFICANCE

### 4.1.1 *Victorian Heritage Register*

In summary, the VHR statement of significance for the Wesley Church Complex identifies the place as being of historical, architectural and social significance to the State of Victoria, it is significant for the following reasons:

- As a complete and substantial collection of related mid to late nineteenth and early twentieth century ecclesiastical buildings designed in a Gothic Revival style by noted architect Joseph Reed
- The site generally is historically and socially significant for the long association with the Wesleyan Methodist Mission.
- The School House is of historical significance as a representative example of a nineteenth century denominational school and of social significance for housing the Wesley Mission Victoria at establishment.

Refer to Section 2.1 for the VHR Statement of Significance.

### 4.1.2 *Conservation Management Plan*

Reflecting the pre-redevelopment condition of the site, the CMP describes the School House building as being of primary significance, as related to its contribution to the significance of the whole of the Wesley Church Complex, and of primary significance in relation to the significance of component elements.<sup>2</sup>

## 5.0 PROPOSED WORKS

The proposed works, anticipated by the preceding Heritage Permit P21963 (As Amended), include the fit out of the interior to a finished standard, comprising the installation of amenities (kitchenette, toilets, furniture store), structural repair works, installation of acoustic treatments and new lighting. Relocation of some of the mechanical services installed under P21963 (As Amended) is also proposed. No change is proposed to the lift/stair arrangement.

The works are described in the architectural drawings prepared by Millar Architects, Lovell Chen and Engineering Elements referenced at Section 1.2.

### 5.1.1 *Fit out works*

#### *Amenities*

#### *Ground floor*

The ground floor fit out includes the installation of a new 'pod' housing female, male and a unisex accessible toilets and store, a new kitchen and break out area. A separate mechanical store area is also proposed. Most water supply and sewer drainage are in the subfloor and connections are proposed to new fittings as required.

The proposed pod will be in the north wing at ground floor level, against the external west wall. Largely rectangular in plan form, the pod is arranged with the toilets commencing at the west end, all accessed

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<sup>2</sup> Allom Lovell & Associates, *Wesley Church and Central Mission Complex 124-144 Lonsdale Street Conservation Management Plan*, p. 25 and pp. 65-66.

from the north side, with the store at the east end, accessed from the east. Constructed of lightweight materials, the pod will be 2955mm tall to parapet level, maintaining a separation between it and the acoustic ceiling of 500mm and the ceiling of 645mm. The internal ceiling height will be 2500mm above FFL. Services on the pod roof will be concealed by the parapet. Internal walls are arranged to accommodate a retained cast iron post in situ and services. The amenities will be completed with new finishes and fittings; floors will be tile finished on a new substrate over the existing timber floor, with paint finished plasterboard internal walls. Externally the pod will be finished with panelised timber veneer to the south side to the rear side of the kitchen, and paint finished to the balance of plasterboard walls and door joinery. At floor level, a narrow lip will extend across the three door openings to the north elevation to mediate the minor floor level difference between the retained timber floor and new internal floor levels. Where the pod is adjacent to the external west wall, this will be detailed to ensure a separation between the original and new fabric.

A small mechanical store area is proposed to the north of the pod. The pod is created through the installation of a lightweight construction wall between the lift/stair wall and north wall of the pod. This will be offset from the external west wall by approximately 1000mm, with an overall length of 1732mm and height of 2400mm. A 1000mm wide door is proposed to the new wall, hinged to the north end of the wall and opening outward. The wall and door will be paint finished.

The area to the south side of the pod will be occupied by a kitchen and breakout area. This is comprised of a joinery unit fixed to the south wall of the pod, though offset from the external west wall by 150mm (refer to drawing A501 – P02). The unit will be 900mm high, 3910mm long and 800mm deep. The joinery unit will be clad with timber veneer to the front and sides, except for the under-bench fridge unit, with honed stone finish to the benchtop and 225mm high splashback affixed to the timber veneer wall. A narrow powder coated skirting is to be applied at floor level. A freestanding table is to be installed.

#### *First floor*

A furniture store is proposed at first floor level, aligned to the south side of the lift wall and to a matching length. The store will be 1857mm wide overall, with 1376mm paired doors at the east end. Walls will be lightweight with a painted plasterboard finish. The south wall of the store will be positioned to the north side of the timber arch and stone bracket, offset by 10mm from the bracket, and with an inset caulking detail at the connection with the west external wall to create a shadow line. The new wall will follow the profile of the coved ceiling at its west end. (Refer to drawing A501 – SD7, P03)

#### *Acoustic treatment*

Acoustic treatments are proposed to both the ground and first floors and variously applied to the dado panels and ceilings throughout the main spaces. No acoustic treatment is proposed to the stairwell and lift lobby.

Ground floor level treatments are as follows:

#### North wing:

- Continuous routed acoustic panel suspended from the underside of the entire timber lined ceiling (100mm depth overall) and offset from the outer edge by 100mm. Refer to drawing A500 – SD1.
- The routed pattern will be aligned to the orientation of the extant timber lining boards.

- The sides of the ceiling mounted cassettes will be lined with painted plasterboard where these extend below the acoustic lining.

South wing (Multipurpose room): the acoustic treatment will be applied in two ways in this space.

- Lining to 1000mm above FFL of the lower section of the east and west painted bluestone walls. A new stud frame is to be constructed, offset 25mm from the wall face, and lined with perforated acoustic panels to the room side. This will be capped with a matte Laminex panel, with a narrow LED upright strip located adjacent to the wall and separated by a flexible foam strip to mediate the varied wall surface and straight edge of the capping. Refer to drawing A500 – SD4.
- The ceiling acoustic treatment is designed as a suspended system comprised of two parallel baffles finished in a light-coloured timber veneer. These are formed from acoustic material in a grid layout (2700mm wide x 13889mm long) and centrally located in each half of the ceiling. The system will be inset by 650mm at the east and west and by 710mm from the central beam and north and south wall. Refer to Figure 8 drawing A232, also A500 – SD4.



Figure 8 View of the proposed acoustic ceiling treatment to the Multipurpose room, viewed east, acoustic lining to the east wall visible in the distance  
Source: Millar Architects

First floor level treatments are as follows:

- With the exception of the stair/lift and coved upper walls, the entire current flat section of the ceiling is to be lined with a suspended lined acoustic system. The proprietary suspension system has an overall depth of 125mm, with connections to the existing ceiling being small screw fixings at regular centres.
- Ceiling lining will be inset from the junction of the coved ceiling by 20mm. Refer to drawing A501 – SD65.
- Panel pattern will align with the extant ceiling lining boards.

- Where the lining intersects with ceiling vents the detail is for an opening to the acoustic lining and the vertical edge lined with plasterboard. Refer to drawing A500 – SD5.
- Except for the north wall adjacent to the stair, all timber dadoes are to be lined with panelised acoustic treatment to the face. Narrow timber packers (10mm deep) will be fixed to the face and the acoustic lining applied, inset from upper trim and allowing for a 90mm painted skirting. Refer to drawing A501 – SD65.

#### *Mechanical services*

Basic services were installed as part of the fit out works under P21963. It is proposed to amend the location of some of the existing mechanical services and introduce new elements over both levels.

#### Ground floor:

- North wing: one cassette to be relocated to south of existing position, one cassette to be relocated to a new position in the multipurpose space.
- South wing: repositioning of two cassettes to the north side of ceiling, offset to the south-west of current positions. Relocated cassette (from north wing) to south side of the ceiling.

#### First floor:

- Introduction of three additional ceiling mounted cassettes (one in north wing, and one each at outer ends of the south wing).

Ductwork for the fresh air intake is to be installed in the proposed store space between the amenities and lift and connected to the proposed louvred infill window at ground floor. Ductwork for the new cassettes will be concealed in the ceiling space. Exhaust air will be ducted to first floor louvred window.

Installation of louvres in lieu of glazing to the west elevation, ground floor mechanical store and first floor in the furniture store (refer: A200, A201, A220, A221 and Timber Louvred Windows West Façade – Lovell Chen)

- Removal of leaded glazed panes and secure storage on site, timber frame and sill to remain.
- Installation of timber louvred fixed panel within the existing timber frames to windows noted above, installation of vermin mesh to interior side. These will be painted to match the frame.

#### *Lighting*

- New lighting is to be installed at ground and first floor levels (refer drawings A232 and A233).

#### *5.1.2 Other*

##### *General*

- Repaint and finishing to internal walls (except for section of early decorative scheme at first floor level, which will be retained as is).
- Refinishing of timber floors with clear finish.
- Install new Raven door seals to bottom of external doors.

##### *Ground level*

- The eastern opening in the ground floor wall dividing the north and south wings is proposed to be infilled. This non-original opening will be infilled with lightweight walling and a plasterboard

finish. It will be detailed with a narrow shadow line/reveal to the outer edge to distinguish this change. Refer to drawing A500 – SD2.

- Create four new openings to relocate ceiling cassettes (one in north wing, three in south wing).
- Make good timber lined ceilings where ceiling-mounted cassettes removed and relocated (four – two each in north and south wings).
- Construct a new joinery unit to conceal and enclose the exposed electrical services on the north-west wall of the south wing (Multipurpose space). The extent is constrained by the pilaster and window, and provision of a nominal depth for access. Paired doors will be installed to the south face, these to be constructed in laminated finish board.

### 5.1.3 *Strengthening works*

A number of structural strengthening works are proposed to the School House to allow for compliance with floor loading requirements. Note there are two options for the bolt detail which vary slightly depending on the joist detail and the existing condition. The strengthening works include:

#### *Ground Floor*

- Localised removal of floorboards around columns to allow for the introduction of new footings adjacent to existing footings to the base of the columns.

#### *First floor*

- Exposure of existing steel structure to determine loading capacity, strengthening of joists by bolting new supplementary timber joists to each existing joists.

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE IMPACTS

### 6.1 Heritage Act considerations

Relevant considerations that must be considered by the Executive Director under Section 101(2) of the Heritage Act and addressed in this HIS are:

- Impact on the cultural heritage significance of the registered place - s. 101(2)(a);
- Reasonable or economic use considerations (what would the effect of refusal be on the reasonable or economic use of the registered place) - s. 101(2)(b).

### 6.2 Impact on the cultural heritage significance of the registered place

In assessing impacts on the cultural heritage significance of the place, reference is made to the VHR statement of significance. The VHR registration includes permit policy and a suite of permit exemptions. Where relevant, consideration has been given to the permit policy.

#### 6.2.1 *Impacts on significant fabric*

##### *Works for amenities and store areas*

The works to the ground floor associated with the amenities pod and kitchen will necessitate some physical change to the extant building fabric, to provision for the connection of existing subfloor hydraulic services to the new fittings. In principle, the approach is one where the interventions to the timber floor are limited to only the size and position required to service the amenities (water and drainage). Co-locating the kitchen limits the requirement for additional service penetrations or the like to provision for hydraulic servicing.

The amenities pod will be a largely freestanding element in the north wing, positioned against the west external wall and connected to the floor. The design of the pod, sitting well-below the ceiling will allow for the continued appreciation of the volume of the north wing. As detailed, the connection between the west pod wall and the external wall is designed so that it will be offset, with the visible external connection detailed as a narrow flexible bead/caulk. Further, and to reinforce the reading of the pod and kitchen as modern insertions in the space, the kitchen bench is to be offset by 150mm from the external west wall (Figure 9). The extant original timber floor will be retained with a new floor finish (tile on new substrate) overlaid. As related to the column which will be partly concealed in the wall of the amenities, the lower parapet and ceiling height allows for the shaft (in part), capital, plate and connection to the beam to remain visible in the space, maintaining a visual connection to the column to the south.

At first floor level, a similar approach is proposed for the construction of the furniture store whereby the introduced stud and plaster lined wall is to be offset from the stone bracket by 10mm and with this increasing relative to the truss. At the wall face and ceiling, a gap will be retained, and the connection limited to a bead/caulk at the joint. The wall will be scribed to match the profile of the dado and covered section of the ceiling. With this approach, the original truss and bracket will be retained unaffected by the works. While proximate, there is sufficient clearance between these elements and the new wall (Figure 10) to maintain the integrity and legibility of the trusses and brackets.

As proposed, the amenities pod and store areas are detailed to minimise as far as feasible the connection and any intervention to original/early building fabric. Each of these elements can be removed without instigating damage or harm to significant fabric.

The introduced elements are designed to be legibly modern insertions, read as new elements in the space. Mimicry of early detail is not an appropriate heritage response in this instance, with the objective being to maintain an appreciation of original form and fabric and the integrity of the architectural value of the School House.

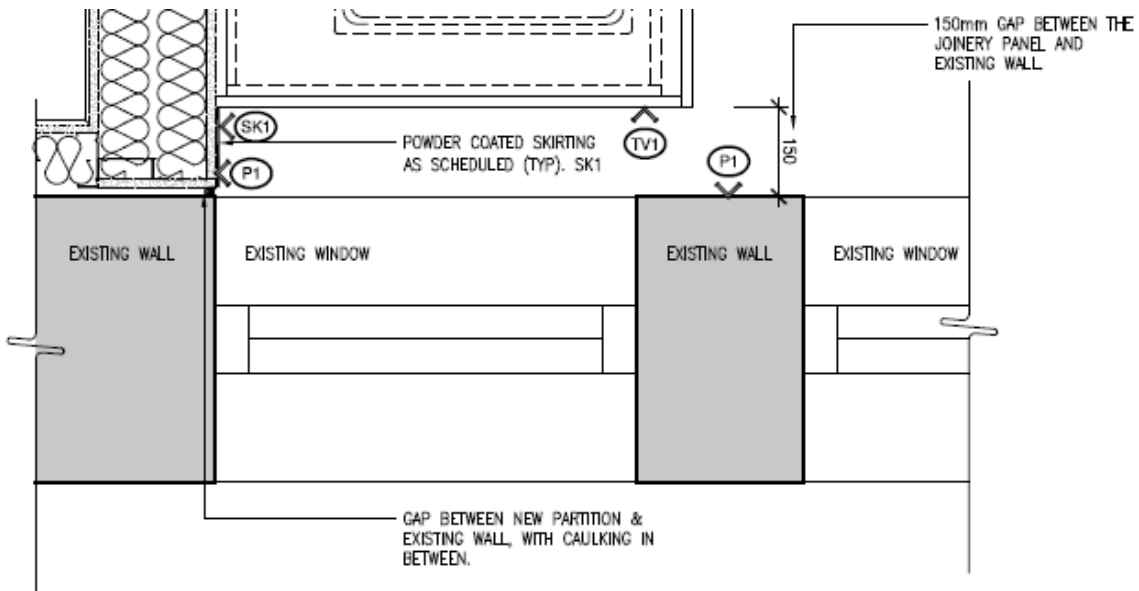


Figure 9 Detail of the proposed connection of the amenities pod and kitchen bench to the external west wall at ground level; Plan Detail P02  
 Source: Plan & Section Details, Drawing A501 Rev P1, Millar Architects

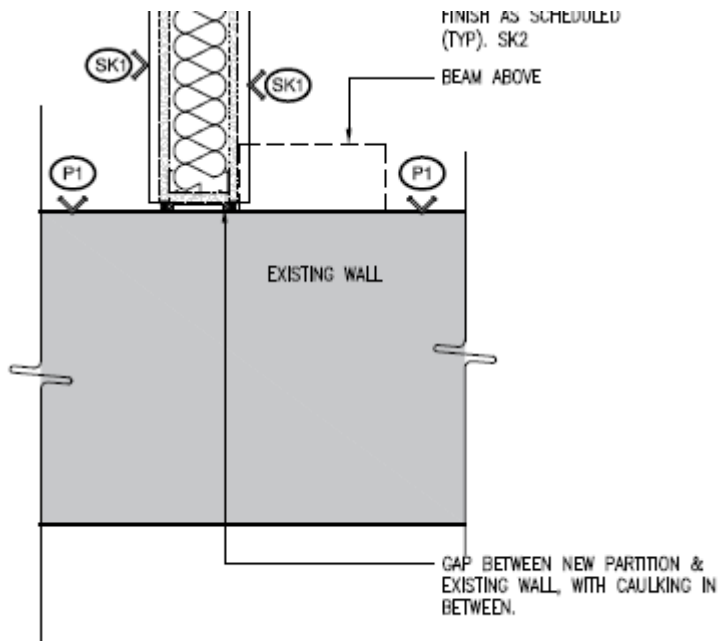


Figure 10 Detail of the proposed connection of the furniture store wall (first floor) relative to the stone bracket and truss; Plan Detail P03  
 Source: Plan & Section Details, Drawing A501 Rev P1, Millar Architects

### *Acoustic treatments*

Acoustic treatments are proposed to both the lower parts of the walls and ceilings in the School House. While these are to be applied in various forms to address the differing uses of the spaces, the singular approach is one where connections to original/early fabric is minimised as far as is feasible. Where required, connections will be small sized screw fixings at regular set outs. These are designed to enable simple repair of the timber ceiling and dado fabric in the event of removal. Where against the bluestone wall, the introduced acoustic dado will again be connected by limited mechanical fixings and a flexible joint at the upper edge to accommodate the varied surface level. Again, any fixings would be simply repaired with the application of a matching mortar if the acoustic treatment is no longer required and removed.

The proposed acoustic treatments will also introduce a level of visual change to the spaces. Accepting that any treatment would be visible, the approach is one where the material is clearly modern, and visible as an overlay to the retained original/early fabric. This is evident in the south wing of the ground floor where the applied material is finely perforated panels to the dado and an expressed suspended grid baffle. Elsewhere, a 'routed' acoustic treatment is proposed which is detailed with integral narrow panel akin to timber lining boards. While somewhat reflecting the concealed finish, the introduced offsets at the edges and application to the dados where the upper trim remains visible reinforce the legibility of this material as a new, though subtle intervention.

### *Strengthening works*

#### *Ground floor*

As a result of structural strengthening to the ground floor, there will be localised floor removal and replacement to allow for the footing supports to be introduced. The new footings will provide additional support for the ground floor, meaning that the associated columns only support the first floor and lessening the requirement for more invasive structural strengthening methods. The sections of floor to be removed to enable this work will be reinstated to minimise the physical and visual impact.

#### *First floor*

The strengthening works on this level involve the addition of supports to the underfloor structure and will have no impact to the visual presentation of the building or on the arrangement of the sub floor area, including the connection to the walls. The original structural arrangement and fabric will be wholly retained.

### *Mechanical services*

It is also proposed to remove two reconstructed windows on the west elevation, being the leaded glazed components only, (one at ground floor and one at first) to allow for the provision of exhaust and fresh air intake. The new timber exhaust and intake louvres will be incorporated within the retained frames and sill surrounds and painted to match. The removed leaded glazed panes will be securely stored on site in purpose-built boxes. While not a typically preferred heritage approach, the removal of the windows will allow the active use of the building and to meet the servicing requirements for air intake and exhaust. The modification will somewhat alter the external appearance of the building, though will be a minor change to the west elevation. The modifications will be reversible with the existing glazing able to be reinstated in future should the use change. The change is one which will have limited adverse impact on the architectural values of the School House, and Church complex.



At ground level, new plant equipment will be largely concealed from view and will be connected to the existing and proposed ceiling mounted cassettes. There will be no adverse impacts arising from these works.

### 6.3 Heritage Victoria advice

#### 6.3.1 *Previous approval and advice*

The strengthening works proposed in this permit are identical to those considered under condition 8 of P21963 and endorsed on 11 January 2022.

The proposition of the installation of mechanical services, the removal of windows and replacement of these with louvred panels to support the mechanical services was discussed in correspondence to Lovell Chen in 2022.<sup>3</sup> This advice addressed the preferred design response for the louvred panels. The advice also provided direction in relation to the position of new elements in the building interior.

#### 6.3.2 *Pre-application advice*

Advice provided at the pre-application meeting with Heritage Victoria was mostly concerned with the resolution of detailing where new elements were proposed adjacent to the windows and stone brackets/trusses and positioning of the light fixtures to the first floor ceiling in relation to visual presence within the space.

This advice has been considered and has informed the approach to the resolution the design. See Section 6.4 in relation to the consideration of design options for the arrangement of lighting to the first floor.

### 6.4 Design options explored

Provision of sufficient lighting levels is a key design issue for a public space, and the installation of a lighting array that achieves the required lux for the proposed uses introduces a number of issues. Recognising that the visible ceiling will be the suspended acoustic panel system, the dominant visual elements on the first floor are the expressed arched timber trusses and brackets. These are an important architectural feature, that strongly contribute to the architectural value of the place. The acoustic ceiling will also be punctuated by mechanical air cassettes in various locations, and these, with the trusses, sit below the ceiling line. The depth of the horizontal part of the trusses will be partly concealed by the lower ceiling, though the angled components and the connection to the wall and stone bracket will remain wholly visible.

To understand the potential for visual impact on the presentation of the space, and trusses in particular, the project architects have prepared two montages to inform the selection of a preferred approach.

The initial option explores the alignment of lighting tracks parallel and adjacent to the trusses and this is shown in the montage at Figure 11. As can be seen in the image, while offset from the face of the trusses, the track lighting will somewhat interrupt the view of these features. The light fittings would also be visible at the intersection of the diagonal trusses, an eye-catching feature in the space, and could detract from the appreciation of this.

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<sup>3</sup> Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Jessica Hood, Principal Heritage Permits correspondence to Kate Gray, Lovell Chen, dated 04 March 2022.

An alternative approach explored is for the surface mounted track lighting to be installed at the outer edge of the suspended ceilings, aligned to the outer walls (Figure 12). The lighting will mostly be aligned with the pattern of the acoustic ceiling and will sit at the edge of the field of vision, maintaining the visual prominence of the trusses in views through the north and south wings and of the intersecting trusses.

Taking into consideration the analysis above, the preferred approach is for the second option which maintains the visual prominence of the trusses. Accepting that the detail of the track lighting is to be confirmed, the proposed alignment positioned away from the trusses is an appropriate heritage response in the expression of architectural value.



Figure 11 Montage of the lighting array set out parallel to the trusses, viewed to the south  
Source: Millar Architects



Figure 12 Montage of the lighting array set out aligned to the outer walls, viewed to the south  
Source: Millar Architects

## 7.0 REASONABLE OR ECONOMIC USE

Section 101(2)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2017* allows for consideration of ‘reasonable or economic use’ by the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria when determining an application for a permit. The Policy Statement on Reasonable or Economic Use (June 2021) states:

When determining a permit application, the Executive Director balances the consideration of the extent to which approval would affect cultural heritage significance (s101(2)(a)) against the consideration of the extent to which refusal would affect reasonable or economic use (s101(2)(b)), in addition to other mandatory and discretionary considerations.

The discussion below is made specifically with a view to the ‘reasonable’ use of the place. No submissions are made in relation to the issue of economic use.

The original use of the School House has been redundant for 140 years and it subsequently was used by the Wesley Central Mission (now Wesley Mission Victoria) for various purposes including as part of its outreach programmes. This use has also now ceased, and the building has been vacant for a number of years.

The adaptation and new works to the School House to provide for a future use was contemplated and largely accepted in the consideration of the overall Wesley Place site redevelopment, and captured in Heritage Permit P21963. This included the installation of a lift and stairs, and base level mechanical services and the conditions on P21963 contemplated future fit out works and allowed for their approval under the permit as per the current application.

As noted earlier, the structural strengthening works proposed in this permit application are the same as those endorsed under the previous permit, though not implemented.

It is noted that the range of uses that can be considered for the School House is limited by compliance issues. In particular the option to introduce seismic strengthening was not pursued in the previous works and is not proposed now. This is on the basis it would require more substantial and impactful works to the building.

In terms of the use and occupation proposed for the School House, the building will be an extension to the amenities at Wesley Place and is proposed for use by only Wesley Place occupiers. This includes the congregation of the Wesley Church. The uses proposed are largely low impact, being wellness classes, such as pilates and yoga, and a meeting space on the ground floor. The location of the amenities on the ground floor services all user groups and allows for the first floor to be occupied largely by the congregation and used for Congregation and Sunday School sessions. Charter Hall would also use the building to host marketing and private events, and it will be able to be booked as an event space, noting management protocols would be established for this use.

With the confirmation of the user groups and the nature of occupation of the building, the design has been resolved more carefully in relation to the provision of amenities and mechanical services and the related compliance requirements.

Works such as the structural strengthening of the floors are required to accommodate large groups and meet current compliance requirements in relation to floor loading. Further, the provision of mechanical and hydraulic services has been determined on the basis of the use profile, occupant capacity and in response to building code. The relocation and augmentation of the existing cassette array is proposed to provide the required standard for air quality in each of the spaces. While introducing a largely reversible change to the building interior, the acoustic measures to be implemented support the occupation of the building through management of sound transmission in a space with many hard and reflective surfaces. With the anticipated occupation of the main spaces by large groups, this is critical for the ability to occupy the building for the long term.

In relation to the Executive Director's considerations under Section 101(2)(b), the proposed changes to be implemented will facilitate the ongoing and purposeful use of the School House as part of the Wesley Church Complex (including ongoing associations with the congregation) and in the broader context of Wesley Place. While the proposed changes will modify aspects of the building, these are largely designed to be reversible and are responsive to the architectural significance of the place. The proposed works are considered to support the reasonable use of the School House and refusal would detrimentally impact on this reasonable use.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed final fit out and related works will result in some change to the interior of the School House, noting this was anticipated in the approval of works under Heritage Permit P21963 and its conditions. That notwithstanding, these works have been designed to minimise physical harm to original/early fabric and to respond to the architectural significance of the School House, as part of the Wesley Church Complex, while providing the modern amenity and useability expected today. The works provide for a purposeful and ongoing use of the building, which continues to be associated with the operations of the church and needs of the congregation. The historical and social significance identified in the VHR Statement of Significance will not be affected as a result of the works.