

Why is the John Darling and Son Flour Mill of cultural heritage significance?

The John Darling and Son Flour Mill is located in Albion and is of architectural and historical significance to the State of Victoria. It is one of the most notable and intact examples of a roller flour mill constructed in the twentieth century and has a strong historical association with the Darling family who had a considerable influence on the flour milling industry, not only in Victoria but also throughout Australia. The industrial complex includes a T-shaped red brick mill, a timber and iron storehouse, rail sidings, loading platform and canopy (1926-7) and reinforced concrete silo blocks (1939 and 1973). The site was established in the 1920s and ceased mill operations in the 1990s.

What has happened?

Heritage Victoria has issued a heritage permit to Rail Projects Victoria to undertake works to construct a section of a new Albion/Sunshine viaduct as part of Melbourne Airport Rail (SRL Airport), including an elevated dual track and associated landscaping works within the registration of the John Darling and Son Flour Mill. The viaduct is proposed to be located to the eastern boundary of the site, within the existing rail reserve, and adjacent to the Sunbury line rail corridor.

The heritage permit was advertised from 17 August to 30 August 2022. Eleven submissions were received during the advertising period and all were considered in the decision making process.

The heritage permit approves:

Construction of a section of the Albion/Sunshine viaduct partially within the extent of registration for the place, including elevated dual track deck structure supported on four concrete piers. The proposed works are confined to the strip of land located between the eastern edge of the mill complex and the rail corridor which includes significant features including remnant rail track/sidings, remnants of a loading platform and a canopy off the rail side of the complex, and associated land. In plan, the distance between the face of the mill buildings (excluding the canopy) to the centreline of the piers is in the order of 30m. To facilitate landscaping/public realm works, some sections of remnant rail track/sidings are required to be removed.

Conditions of the permit require the protection of heritage features on the site, a visual recording of the rail track/sidings proposed to be removed, and development of a landscaped public plaza which incorporates interpretative elements to highlight the rail history of the land and the interface of the railway with mill operations.

Why has the permit been approved?

The Heritage Act 2017 requires the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria to consider various matters in determining a permit application, including the impact of the proposal on the heritage significance of the place, the impact refusal would have on the ability of a public authority to perform their statutory duty, and any submissions received in response to public notice of the application.

While the approved works will result in physical harm to some sections of remnant rail track/sidings, and visual harm to the setting and context of the complex primarily from the east, various measures to mitigate the identified impacts have been proposed, and robust conditions have been specified on the permit to ensure the best possible outcome in terms of landscaping and interpretation. It was

determined by the Executive Director that refusal of the application would unreasonably detrimentally affect the ability of Rail Projects Victoria to deliver improved and additional rail capacity and services within the rail corridor for the benefit of the public.