

Billilla Mansion

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

26 Halifax Street, Brighton VIC 3186

June 2025

Prepared for



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.

The Billilla is located on the lands of the Bunurong 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 register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our certified quality management system.



Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
20230070	1	Draft Heritage Impact Statement	06/06/2025	KW
20230070	2	Updated Draft Heritage Impact Statement	17/06/2025	MK
20230070	3	Final Heritage Impact Statement	18/06/2025	MK

Referencing

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Cover image: Early twentieth century photograph of Billilla

Source: (0000 642, City of Bayside)

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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared for Bayside City Council to accompany a permit application to Heritage Victoria for a package of renewal works to Billilla located at 26 Halifax Street, Brighton (Figure 1). Billilla is bounded by Halifax Street to the north-west, Hall Street to the north-east and Belle Avenue to the south-west, on the land of the Bunurong People, who are acknowledged as the Traditional Custodians of Country at and surrounding the subject site.

The Billilla residence was constructed in 1878, with c. 1888 additions and major alterations and additions in c.1907. The property also incorporates a series of Victorian-era outbuildings, including a coach house, and a remnant formal Victorian/Edwardian-era garden. The whole of the site is included on the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) as place number H1155. The residence has been most recently occupied by a school, which departed the site in March 2022.

The current project proposes substantial renewal of Billilla to adapt the residence and its outbuildings and garden for use as a multi-purpose facility, managed by Bayside City Council and providing a space for creativity, culture, and the arts, hospitality and events, learning opportunities, and social enterprise and volunteer activities. The proposal incorporates a suite of conservation and restoration works to the buildings to accommodate these uses. The proposal has been developed in consideration of the heritage values of the site and with reference to the relevant policies in the *Billilla Conservation Management Plan*, prepared by Lovell Chen in July 2022.



Figure 1 Aerial image of the Billilla at 26 Halifax Street, Brighton as indicated
Source: Nearmap, captured May 2025

1.1 Form of approval sought and application documentation

The permit application seeks approval under the *Heritage Act 2017* for a masterplan approach to the renewal scope in its entirety. It is anticipated that the renewal works will be delivered in stages, over a period of approximately ten years, and subject to funding availability. Accordingly, while the masterplan documentation details the proposed renewal works, it is anticipated that, in the event a permit is granted, this would be conditional on submission of detailed documentation prior to the commencement of each stage of works, and the endorsement of this

documentation by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria. A staged approach to the renewal works has been developed to identify the scope of work in each stage (refer Section 4.0). An extended permit expiry (i.e. 10 years) would allow for the staged delivery of identified renewal works in the anticipated timeline.

1.1.1 Documentation

The following architectural drawings are lodged with the permit application and are referred to in this HIS:

- A100, A110, A111, A112, A120, A121, A130, A131, A132, A133, A134, A140 and A141 (all Revision HV1) prepared by Lovell Chen dated 3 June 2025.

1.1.2 References

This HIS has specific regard for the following reports:

- *Billilla Brighton, Conservation Management Plan (CMP)*, prepared by Lovell Chen in 2022.
- *Billilla Brighton, Predictive Archaeological Study*, prepared by Lovell Chen in April 2024.

1.2 Background

1.2.1 Pre-application discussions

Pre-application discussions were held on site with Heritage Victoria in May 2024. Subsequently, Heritage Victoria provided comments showing a level of comfort with the proposal. The relevant comments are summarised below,

- The proposed public amenities works are considered likely to meet the criteria for a permit exemption (refer below).
- The proposal for minor repair works to several outbuildings may also be considered under a permit exemption application. It should form a separate application to the public amenities (refer below).
- A Masterplan staged permit approach may be supported for the high-level scope for renewal works to Billilla.
- It is preferable that future use and activation of the place retains and conserves the heritage fabric of the place as much as possible without alteration.
- In relation to the proposed café, a new, lightweight, small pavilion structure that is recessed in the mansion ground could be considered to avoid disruption of interior scheme. A 'pop-up' coffee cart or similar could be considered.
- Potential impacts on archaeological remains relating to the establishment, use and development of Billilla may be addressed through condition of a permit (should a permit be issued).
- Any new service points in the ground should be visually recessive and sensitively placed in the garden
- There is general support for the activation of Billilla by Bayside City Council as a community arts centre provided the heritage significance of the place is sensitively retained and conserved.

In May 2025, additional pre-application advice was issued by Heritage Victoria regarding the application pathway. This advice noted that a masterplan approach would provide flexibility around the timeframe for completion of works and allow for detailed design to follow at a later stage, and be resolved by way of permit conditions. This advice also noted that any potential changes to the scope of works due to funding availability could be accommodated under the permit conditions which allow for minor changes to endorsed documentation.

The proposal for this permit application has been developed in accordance with these comments.

1.2.2 Relevant approvals

Several permit exemptions have been issued for Billilla in association with the renewal project as outlined below.

Permit exemption No.	Description	Date of Issue
P40124	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minor works to the outbuildings and coach house at Billilla.	09/09/2024
P40296	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Demolition of the existing c. 1970s public amenities block and construction of a new amenities block at the same location within the Billilla grounds.	09/10/2024
P40514	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Installation of new electrical and communications conduits for the amenities block, to be reticulated within the Billilla Mansion roof space internally and surface mounted to the external façade, in lieu of the subfloor space as previously approved under permit exemption P40296.All other works relating to the public amenities upgrade at Billilla Mansion are to be carried out in accordance with permit exemption P40296.	03/12/2024
P40548	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Archaeological investigation works within the grounds of Billilla to support the preparation of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan.	13/12/2024

2.0 Statutory Heritage Controls

2.1 Victorian Heritage Register

Billilla is included in the VHR as place number H1155. The VHR extent of registration is reproduced at Figure 2 and is described as follows:

1. All of the buildings known as 'Billilla' marked B-1 to B-7 (excluding the toilet block) on Plan 602013 endorsed by the Chair, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council.
2. All of the land as marked L-1 on Plan 602013 endorsed by the Chair, Historic Buildings Council and held by the Director, Historic Buildings Council, being all of the land described in Certificate of Title Volume 5978 Folio 462.

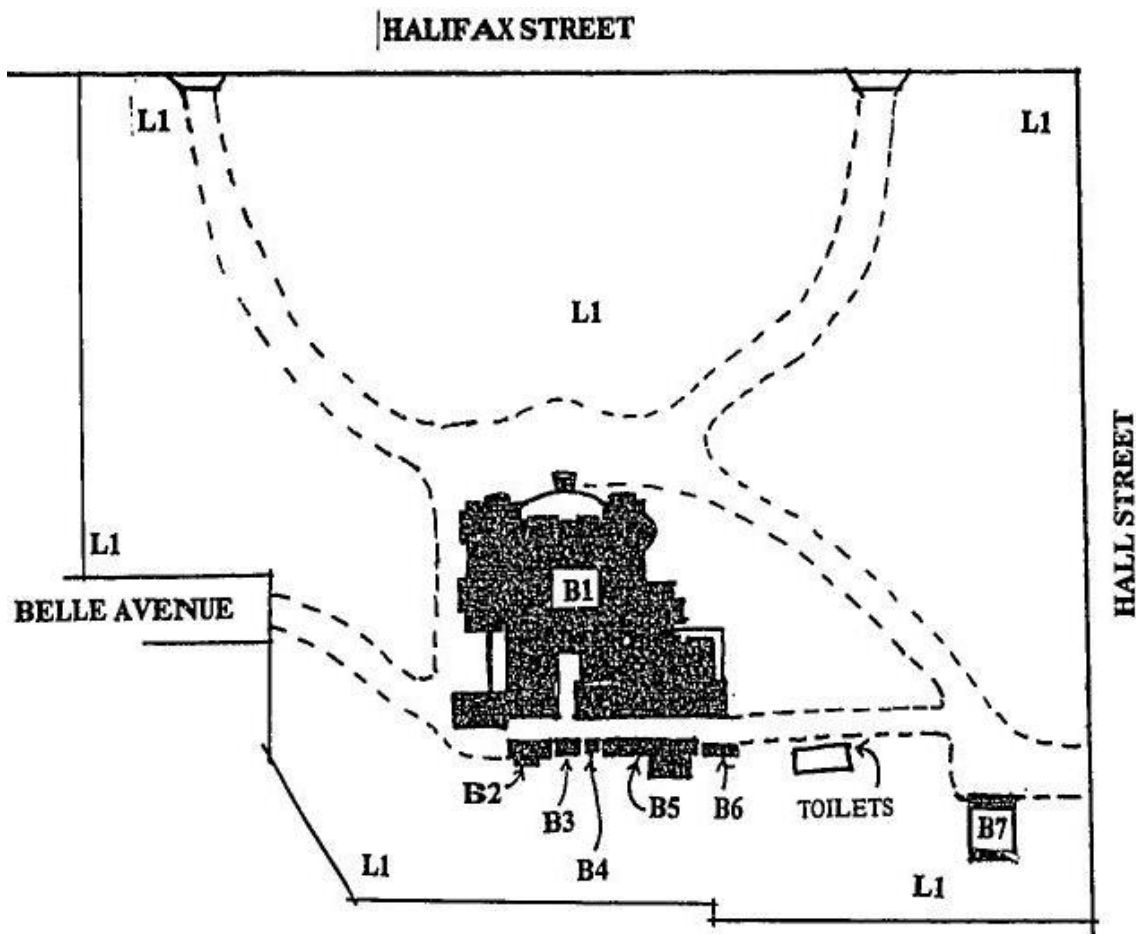


Figure 2 Extent of registration, Plan 602013

Source: Victorian Heritage Database, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/2383>, accessed 22 May 2025

The statement of significance for the place as included in the VHR documentation is reproduced below:

Billilla is a single storeyed, rendered brick mansion dominated by a three-storeyed tower. Originally constructed in 1878 and altered in 1888 to the design of prominent Melbourne architects Smith and Johnson, the character of the house was further comprehensively altered in 1907 to the design of Walter Richmond Butler. This change is evidenced by the extensive use of Art Nouveau and Jacobethan detailing around the perimeter of the Victorian house creating three totally new facades, as well as a ring of new rooms behind. Since 1977 when the former City of Brighton acquired Billilla there have been substantial changes associated with opening the house to the public and equipping it for catering functions. The house retains all its known original outbuildings except the conservatory.

Billilla is architecturally, historically and socially important to the State of Victoria.

Billilla is of architectural significance as an extraordinary stylistic example of Walter Butler's work which shows a move by Butler to an Arts and Crafts style. The exterior of Billilla stands apart as his most comprehensive essay in the mixture of Art Nouveau and Jacobethan, expressed in rendered ornamentation over a large house, with classical idioms as the main stylistic sources. This represented a prominent departure from the norm of residential architecture at that time. Internally, it is significant for the fine quality and wide stylistic variety of its architectural embellishment, particularly in the plasterwork of the ceilings, and all the associated fittings such

as door furniture, light fittings and hearths. Billilla is also important as an extraordinary example of the encasing of an earlier building. As well, Billilla is of interest for its associations with prominent Melbourne architects, Smith and Johnson who undertook the alterations of 1888.

Billilla is historically and socially important for the outstanding intact nature of its Edwardian and Victorian fabric, services and fittings, and for its outbuildings and extensive garden and grounds, all of which constitute an extraordinary example of the lifestyle and working of a wealthy Edwardian household. Billilla is also of interest for its association with William Weatherly, a close friend of Andrew Chirnside and an original shareholder in BHP, the source of his considerable fortune.

2.2 Victorian Heritage Inventory

Part of the subject site is also included in the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI). This is the Former Dresden Villa Site, which is identified as H7822-2434 and is located within the grounds of Billilla, in the north-western corner of the property (Figure 3).

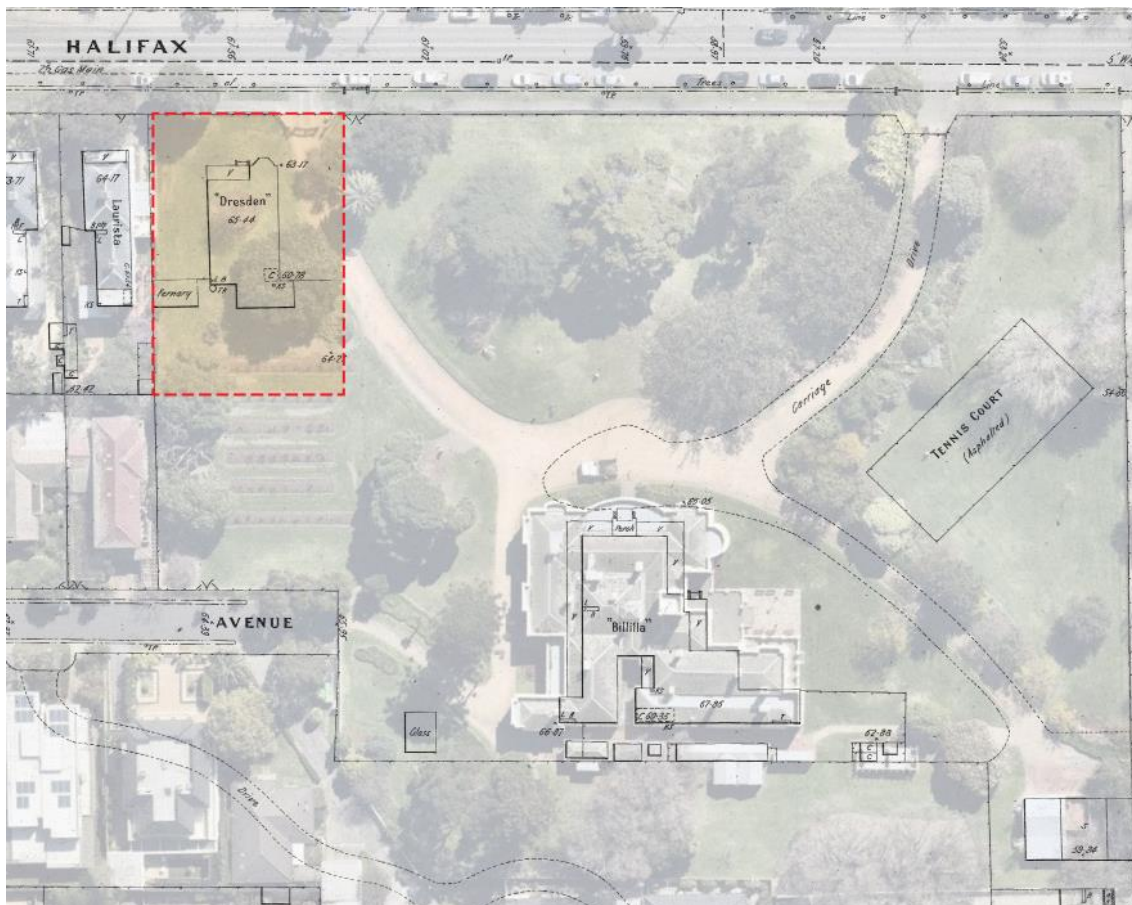


Figure 3 Recent aerial image of Billilla overlaid with 1906 MMBW Detail Plan No. 2143, showing the extent of the former Dresden villa site within the current grounds of Billilla
Source: Nearmap, base image

The statement of significance as included in the VHI is reproduced below.

What is significant?

The archaeological remains of an early nineteenth century weatherboard villa constructed between 1885 and 1887. The villa and associated land was later acquired by the adjacent mansion Billilla, before its demolition in the early twentieth century. The site has since been part of the landscaped garden at Billilla.

How is it significant?

The site is of archaeological significance.

Why is it significant?

The site is significant not for its association with the registered Billilla property but for its potential to contain earlier, largely unrelated archaeological remains of the 'Dresden' property.

2.3 Bayside Planning Scheme

2.3.1 Heritage Overlay

Billilla is individually identified as HO188 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (HO) of the Bayside Planning Scheme. The mapped extent of HO188 is consistent with the VHR extent of registration (Figure 4).

In accordance with Clause 43.01-2 of the Bayside Planning Scheme, no permit is required under the Heritage Overlay to develop a heritage place which is included in the Victorian Heritage Register, other than an application to subdivide a heritage place of which all or part is included in the Victorian Heritage Register.

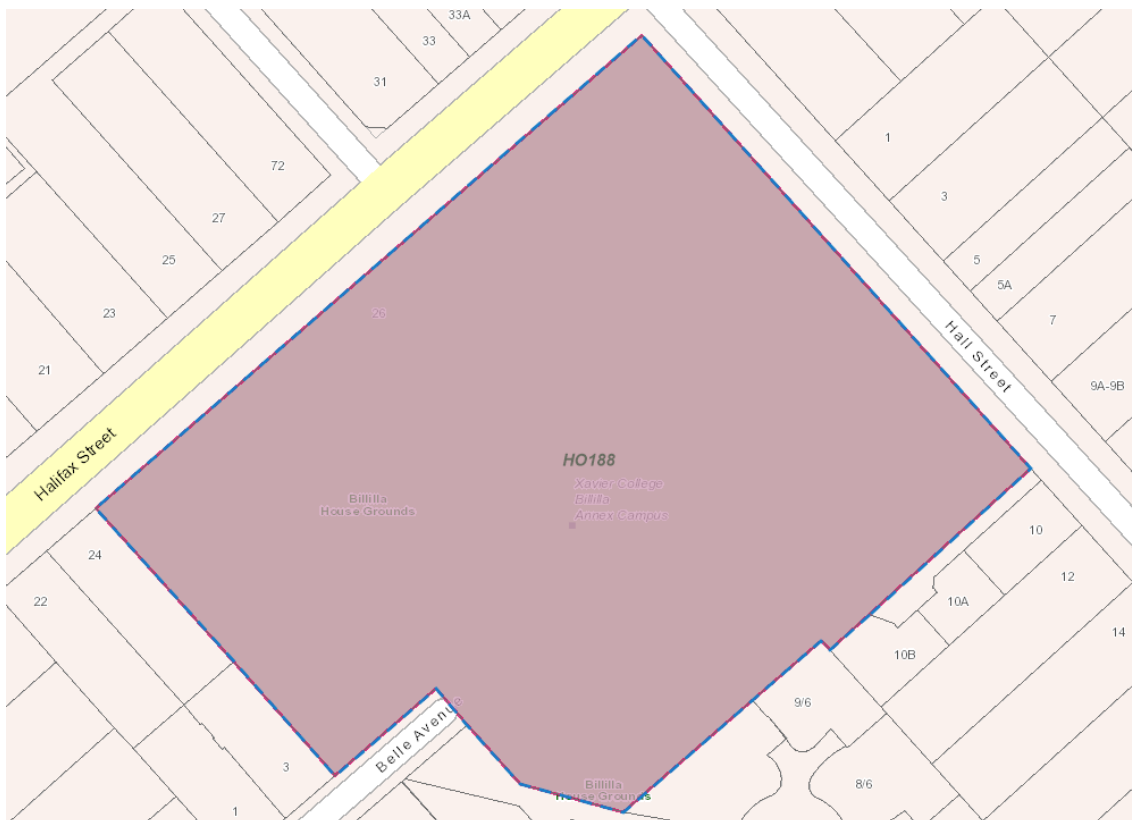


Figure 4 HO plan showing the mapped extent of Billilla, HO188
Source: Vicplan

The statement of significance for the place as included in the *City of Bayside Heritage Review Building Citations Volume 2 Part 2*, Allom Lovell & Associates, 1999 is reproduced below.

Billilla, at 26 Halifax Street, Brighton, is of outstanding aesthetic and historical significance.

Billilla, its outbuildings and garden are of cultural significance for the outstandingly intact nature of the Edwardian and Victorian fabric, services and fittings and in the manner in which they display the lifestyle and working of a wealthy Edwardian household.

Billilla is also of cultural significance for its stylistic departure within Walter Butler's varied and distinguished oeuvre. Externally it is his most comprehensive and prominent work using the Art Nouveau and classical idioms as the main stylistic sources, while internally, it is of significance for the fine quality and wide stylistic variety of its architectural embellishment, particularly in the plasterwork of the ceilings, and all the associated fittings such as door furniture, light fittings, and hearths.

Within Victoria, the house is of aesthetic significance as one of few comprehensive essays in the Art Nouveau, expressed in rendered ornamentation, over a large house, and it represents a prominent departure from the norm of residential architecture at that time.

While of little historic importance at a state or national level, the property is of historic significance to Brighton. It is one of the prominent mansions in the area and is distinctive for its Edwardian rather than Victorian appearance. Combined with its large garden, Billilla has been a landmark in the area for over one hundred years.

The garden at Billilla is of regional significance as an example of a large, late nineteenth century garden. The garden retains a number of significant mature trees and features, with the Canary Island Pine recorded on the National Trust (Victoria) Register of Significant Trees. The garden forms a suitable and contemporary setting to a significant Victorian building. The gardens contribute significantly to the heritage character of the surrounding area.

3.0 Overview history and description

3.1 Summary history of Billilla

An overview of the historical development of Billilla and key events is largely reproduced from the Billilla CMP, with additional information as indicated. A complete history of the building and site is provided in the CMP.

Year	Historical Development
1877	Construction of original single-storey Italianate villa residence with tower at the Halifax Street site for Edwin Brownscombe. ¹ The property was purchased shortly after by Robert White.
1888	1888 Purchase of property by pastoralist William Weatherly, who renamed it 'Billilla' after his sheep farm near Wilcannia, New South Wales. Architects Smith and Johnson undertake works to the property, including addition of billiard room and stables.

¹ The Argus, 17 July 1877, p. 2.

The external presentation of the residence reflects the extensive alterations undertaken by architect Walter Butler in the early twentieth century, namely the construction of additional rooms and application of Art Nouveau detailing to the facades including the parapet balustrading, front porch, tower and chimneys. The exterior is notable for its high level of intactness to these works.

The principal elevations of the residence are the north-west and north-east, both of which incorporate prominent entrances, expressed window bays and detailed parapet treatment. The main entrance is at the north-west within the curved entrance portico, facing the driveway (Figure 6). The two-storey wing at the eastern end of the building is set at a lower level than the main house, and as such presents at a similar height to the single-storey building, and allows for the continuation of the parapet detail. The east side of the residence also includes a substantial terraced porch which has been extended with a tiled plaza area (Figure 7). The south-east of the building is a single storey service wing which retains its Victorian era presentation of unrendered brick, now overpainted (Figure 8). The south-western elevation is more modest in scale and detailing (Figure 9).

The internal planning and layout of Billilla also evidences the alterations and additions that took place in the early twentieth century, however also incorporates elements of the Victorian house. Due to the evolved character of the residence, there are a number of hallways for circulation and access, which connect the central rooms of the Victorian residence, with the perimeter rooms constructed in the early twentieth century. In terms of detailing, most of the rooms have Edwardian decorative schemes, although some rooms do retain Victorian elements, with the more elaborate schemes present in the public-facing and the reception areas. The building retains the evolved internal planning arrangement which demonstrates the functions and operations of the residence, being reception, private and service areas.

The Billilla property includes a number of brick and timber outbuildings which relate to the operation of the large residence. These are located to the rear (south-east) of the residence, and are connected to the service area via a central brick-paved pathway (Figure 10). These comprise a former dairy, meat house, fuel store and garden stores. These buildings are typically domestically scaled, with picturesque timber detailing to some structures. The coach house is located in the eastern corner of the property. It dates from the nineteenth century, but appears to have been reduced by approximately half its size in the 1930s or 1940s (Figure 11).

The former residence and outbuildings at Billilla are situated within a generous and ornamental garden setting which is now publicly accessible. The site retains core elements of its evolved residential layout, including a crescent-shaped front drive from gates on Halifax Street and continued as a service drive to the coach house, ornamental shrubberies to the east drive borders (reflecting its original status as the formal carriage entrance), central ornamental lawn with specimen trees and fountain, side lawns accommodating specialised gardens and amenity features and additional gardens and service areas to the rear. Notable garden areas and features identified in the CMP are shown at Figure 12.



Figure 6 Front (north-west) elevation of Billilla
Source: Lovell Chen, 2024



Figure 7 Side (north-east) elevation of Billilla with tower, side entry and eastern terrace
Source: Lovell Chen, 2024



Figure 8 View along the south-east (service wing) elevation
Source: Lovell Chen, 2024



Figure 9 Side (south-west) elevation of Billilla
Source: Lovell Chen 2024



Figure 10 The weatherboard outbuildings located at the rear of the main mansion
Source: Lovell Chen, 2024



Figure 11 The coach house located at the north-east corner of the property near the Hall Street entrance
Source: Lovell Chen, 2024

KEY

NOTABLE TREE SPECIMENS & GROUPS

- 1 CANARY ISLAND PINE
- 2 BUNYA BUNYA PINE
- 3 DEODAR CEDAR
- 4 MONTEREY CYPRESS
- 5 ALGERIAN OAK (x2)
- 6 ORNAMENTAL SHRUBBERY BORDERS
- 7 POPLAR
- 8 BUNYA BUNYA PINE
- 9 FASTIGIATE CYPRESS
- 10 SMOOTH-BARK APPLE MYRTLE
- 11 QUEENSLAND BRUSH BOX (x2)
- 12 WYCH ELM ENCLOSURE
- 13 MORETON BAY FIG (1986 ARBOR DAY PLANTING)

GARDEN FEATURES

- 14 FOUNTAIN
- 15 FORMER STAIR BUTTRESS STONES
- 16 CAST IRON GATES (x2)
- 17 COMMEMORATIVE BIRDBATH
- 18 ROSE GARDEN



Figure 12 Billilla garden areas and features plan
Source: Billilla Conservation Management Plan, Lovell Chen, 2022

4.0 Proposed renewal works

As outlined above, the proposal is for a masterplan scope of renewal works to Billilla to be undertaken in stages over the course of approximately 10 years. At a high level, the proposal includes repair and restoration works, roof and rainwater goods replacement for the management of stormwater, services upgrades and works to improve DDA accessibility to the buildings and site. The renewal scope is directed at addressing the current condition of the building fabric and services provision to facilitate the use of the site as a multi-purpose community facility. These works are being undertaken in conjunction with the replacement of the public amenities within the site (approved by permit exemption P40296). The proposed scope of works and anticipated staging is described in more detail below.

4.1.1 Stage 1A

Site enabling works

Stage 1A comprises site enabling works, including upgrades to external underground and above ground services (hydraulic, civil, fire, electrical, lighting). This will include the existing underground services being made redundant, and installation of new in ground pipework generally surrounding the buildings and extending to the property boundaries as required by way of trenching or hydro excavation. Two above ground water tanks will be installed to the rear of the outbuildings and new AG drainage installed surrounding the outbuildings and coach house.

New service points will be installed in the lawns to support events within the site, comprising electrical points on galvanised steel posts, approximately 0.3m high.

Roof and rainwater goods

Works to the roof and rainwater goods of the residence are also proposed in Stage 1A, including the wholesale replacement of roof slates, installation of insulation and sarking membrane, and the replacement of existing corrugated steel roof sheets where required. On the internal roof slopes, it is proposed to replace the roof slates with corrugated steel roof sheets to accommodate new services and roof access systems (refer below). It is also proposed to replace all rainwater goods in steel, including downpipes, eaves gutters, box gutters, valleys and flashing and installation of new sumps and overflows where required.

The roof works include the replacement of the existing non-original skylights and removal as required of roof vents, exhausts and redundant pipes. It is also proposed to demolish and replace the existing roof access system, plant platform and walkway and to install solar panels on the inner slopes (non-visible from the ground) which are proposed to be in corrugated steel roof sheets as outlined above.

To the outbuildings, it is proposed to replace all existing downpipes in steel and connect these to the new drainage and stormwater system.

4.1.2 Stage 1B

The remainder of all enabling works described above not completed in Stage 1A will be undertaken in Stage 1B.

4.1.3 Stage 2

Stage 2 will comprise internal services upgrades and restoration works to main (north-west) rooms and internal bathrooms of Billilla.

Restoration works

Restoration works to the mansion will include the removal and repair of damaged hard plaster to the walls. The original decorative plaster ceilings will be retained, consolidated and restored. All floor coverings and non-original internal joinery will be removed, however all original wallpaper, light fittings and fireplaces will be retained and refurbished where these exist. Repair works will be undertaken to the timber window frames, all damaged glazing will be replaced, double-glazed windows will be installed to all public events rooms and draught seals will be installed to all windows and doors.

Also proposed during Stage 2 will be internal subfloor excavation works to create subfloor ventilation where required in the mansion and outbuildings. All timber floorboards will be temporarily removed to facilitate these works. There are several timber floorboard types throughout the mansion and these will be reinstated where possible, or replaced to match the existing as required. It is also proposed to install insulation and a sarking membrane between the timber floor joists to improve the thermal envelope.

Several rooms in the outbuildings, one in the residence and the coach house will all require the installation of a new slab on ground and reinstatement of salvaged brick pavers, where possible.

Services upgrades

Services upgrades will include the removal of all redundant fixtures and fittings, including lights, ceiling fans, loudspeakers and CCTV. New power outlets will be mounted to the existing skirting in the main rooms within Billilla, as well as new roller blinds to the windows and new lighting as required. Mechanical ventilation will also be installed to the plantroom on the roof and reticulated within the roof ceiling space. New ceiling vents will be installed in locations where this will not result in damage to the existing decorative ceilings.

Internal amenities

All non-original bathroom fit-outs will be removed and new compliant male, female and DDA bathrooms will be installed including new internal partitions, ceilings, floor finishes, fixtures and fittings.

DDA accessibility works

Works for DDA accessibility will be undertaken in Stage 2, including a new access ramp connecting the main driveway along the east terrace of the mansion to new DDA carparking nearby to the coach house. This ramp is proposed to be in concrete and painted to match the existing colour of the mansion. It will comprise a compacted series of step ramps and kerbs. To facilitate the access ramp, it is proposed to remove a section of the masonry parapet to the north-east terrace and to raise the level of a section of this terrace, to provide a DDA access to the mansion, with the installation of new pedestal and pavers. It is also proposed to re-level and re-grade the paving to the tiled plaza area adjoining the terrace.

Two at-grade DDA car spaces will be introduced to the south of the coach house. A new compliant concrete path will be introduced from the DDA car park to the public amenities block. The DDA path will be connected the east lawn and the main northern driveway via a new graded reinforced grass path or similar.

The brick paved laneway between the residence and outbuildings is also proposed to be upgraded to provide DDA access to the outbuildings. The existing red bricks are proposed to be lifted and stored and, following re-grading of the substrate, will be reinstated. Short fall of bricks will require the use of recycled bricks to match existing. New reinforced grass accessible paths are also proposed to provide access to the southern outbuildings (50 & 51).

New compliant handrails and nosing will be installed to the main entrance bluestone stair on the north-west elevation and to the bluestone stair on the north-east elevation from the paved area to the external terrace.

The non-compliant lightweight timber ramp on the south-west side of the building will also be removed and replaced with a compliant lightweight ramp and landings on the south-west portico.

4.1.4 Stage 3

Kitchen and cafe

Stage 3 will comprise internal services upgrades and restoration fit-out works to the internal café and kitchen spaces, including new safety flooring to kitchens and store rooms, and the installation of a new commercial kitchen and café fit-out.

4.1.5 Stage 4

Restoration works and services upgrades

Stage 4 will comprise internal services upgrades and restoration works to the remainder of rooms in Billilla (south-west and south-east). The proposed scope of works to these rooms is generally consistent with the services upgrades and restoration works to be undertaken in Stage 2 (described above) as relevant to these rooms.

External works

Externally, the preparation and painting of all previously painted surfaces, timberwork, render and metal work will also be undertaken in Stage 4.

External works also include the replacement of damaged external pressed metal ceiling soffit on the south-west entry verandahs as required to match the original details.

5.0 Assessment of heritage impacts

5.1 Information to support an assessment against sections 101(2) of the Heritage Act 2017

Section 101 of the *Heritage Act 2017* sets out the considerations which must be made in determining permit applications. As relevant to the proposal, the primary considerations of the Executive Director in determining a permit under Section 101(2) are:

- (a) The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;
- (b) The extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or object;

5.1.1 *The extent to which the cultural heritage significance of the place or object is affected by the proposal [s 101(2)(a)]*

VHR statement of significance

The VHR statement of significance for Billilla states that the place is of architectural, historical and social significance. The historical and social significance is derived from the intact nature of its Edwardian and Victorian fabric, services and fittings, and the outbuildings and extensive garden and grounds, all of which constitute an extraordinary example of the lifestyle and working of a wealthy Edwardian household. There is also historical interest for its association with William Weatherly who was responsible for remodelling the residence in the early twentieth century. The proposed renewal of Billilla for community use will not impact on the historical and social significance of the place. The residence will be retained, with repair and restoration works aiming to address the condition of the existing building fabric. The remnant Victorian-era garden and collection of nineteenth century outbuildings will also be retained, which will maintain an understanding of the lifestyle of the residents of Billilla in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The architectural significance of the place relates to Billilla as an extraordinary example Walter Butler's work comprising extensive Art Nouveau reworking of the exterior and representing a stylistic departure from many of his Arts and Crafts residential designs of the period. Billilla is also significant for its association with architects Smith and Johnson who were responsible for the earlier alterations and works. There will be no change to the architectural expression of Billilla from the proposed works, or the association of the residence with the architects responsible for its design. Internally, architectural significance is derived from the variety of fine quality architectural embellishment, all of which will be retained where this exists and repaired where required. Billilla is also important as an extraordinary example of the encasing of an earlier building, and this is demonstrated internally where the reception and private spaces reflect the Edwardian alterations, while the service areas reflect the Victorian-era construction. There will be no change to the internal planning arrangement of rooms in Billilla associated with the renewal works. The proposed adaptive use will utilise the existing layout of rooms, and recognise the hierarchy of spaces within the residence by adopting appropriate uses for each space that will retain and protect the significant fabric. This includes the provision of public events and workshop spaces in the former reception areas and private spaces, and back of house, storage and kitchen spaces in the former service areas.

Billilla Conservation Management Plan

The Billilla CMP was prepared by Lovell Chen in 2022 to guide the future management and operation of the site, particularly in relation to its change in use from school to Council-operated premises. The CMP identifies spaces, areas and elements of heritage value at Billilla and provides conservation policies to guide the management of the place.

The CMP includes an updated statement of significance for Billilla. While broadly consistent with the VHR statement, the CMP statement of significance identifies that the place is of representative (architectural) and aesthetic significance to Victoria, and of historical significance at a local level. Areas identified in the CMP which demonstrate the aesthetic significance of Billilla include spaces which demonstrate the c. 1907 decorative treatment, as follows:

- The exterior of the residence, including the whole of the Art Nouveau style detailing to walls, windows, doors and surrounds, chimneys, parapet, including:
 - Portico, with detailed columns, ceiling, floor tiling, and applied detailing to window and door surrounds
 - Tower
 - East side entry with terrace, detailed window and door openings
- The interior of the residence, including Edwardian/Art Nouveau decorative treatment, including moulded plaster ceilings, timber panelling and screening, fireplaces, light fittings, door furniture and other early twentieth century fixtures as evident in:
 - The reception areas with elaborate decorative treatment: Entrance Hall (R1), Drawing Room (R2), Sitting Room (R3), Library (R4), Vestibule (R8), Dining Room (R23), and Billiard Room (R24))
 - Private spaces with simplified Edwardian decorative treatment: the bedrooms (R5, R6, R10, R17, R18), Breakfast Room (R22), Dressing Room (R19) and Bathroom (R20)

The CMP identifies that the representative/architectural significance and local historical value at Billilla is demonstrated by its highly intact presentation and spaces to its c. 1907 construction, as evident in:

- The twentieth century form of the residence
- The substantial size of the residence constructed and altered for its wealthy owners, and the arrangement and hierarchy of internal spaces including:
 - Public-facing spaces (Entrance Hall (R1), Drawing Room (R2), Sitting Room (R3), Library (R4), Vestibule (R8), Dining Room (R23), and Billiard Room (R24))
 - Private spaces (the bedrooms (R5, R6, R10, R17, R18), Breakfast Room (R22), Dressing Room (R19) and Bathroom (R20))
 - Service areas (cellars (R26, R39, R40), Old Kitchen (R27), Work Room (R34), Laundry (R38), and the arrangement of staff rooms (R29, R30, R31, R32, R33, R35, R36, R37))
- The garden setting, with its front fence, entrance drive, major specimen trees, ornamental garden beds, fountain
- The outbuildings showing the operation of the household (R43, R44, R45, R46, R47, R48, R49, R50, R51, R52, R53, R54) and the coach house

Both the internal and external fabric, details and elements identified as contributing to the representative (architectural) and aesthetic significance of Billilla in the CMP will be retained and repaired/restored, or replaced as required by the condition of the fabric (notably to the roof), to maintain the evolved presentation of the residence and grounds. Minimal loss of existing fabric to the terrace balustrade is also required to facilitate DDA access to the building, however this is limited in extent and will not change the formal arrangement of the terrace.

Largely however, the renewal scope is directed at maintaining the existing arrangement and original fabric of internal spaces, and evidence of the historical function of the rooms, as well as the external presentation of the residence, outbuildings and garden setting to maintain the heritage values of the registered place while adapting it for use as a multi-purpose community facility.

A response to the relevant conservation policies in the CMP is provided below.

The general CMP policies for Billilla are directed at management of the State significant values of Billilla as part of the change in use and occupation of the site, including (at Policy 1):

- Retention of the prominence of the residence within the site.
- Retention of the significant internal decorative scheme.
- Retention of significant areas of landscaping, including identified trees and landscape elements.

In particular, this includes care of the fabric by way of maintenance and repair works (Policy 7) and the retention and conservation of fabric identified as being of significance to Billilla (Policy 8). The proposed renewal scope is consistent with these policies, to be undertaken in stages and directed at addressing the priority conservation works to protect and conserve the significant fabric and elements at Billilla.

The renewal scope has been informed by and is consistent with the following specific policies for the residence including external form and presentation (Policy 11), interior layout (Policy 12), decorative treatments and finishes (Policy 12 [sic]) and furniture and fittings (Policy 13) as follows:

- Retain and conserve external form and presentation of Billilla, including significant elevations and the tower.
- Retain and conserve the significant internal planning arrangement.
- Retain and conserve all 1907 decorative treatments and finishes to the significant principal reception and private rooms.
- Original furniture and fittings should be retained and conserved.

In addition, the proposed scope of works has been guided by and is consistent with Policy 14 in relation to compatible use as follows:

... it is preferable that any future use of the residence has minimal physical impact on areas of significance. This would include additions, and changes to internal layout which should be sensitive to intact spaces and circulation areas, and to significant decorative schemes. Any adaptive reuse should utilise existing circulation spaces and entries.

While the CMP contemplates and includes policies in relation to additions and alterations to the residence, there are no such works proposed as part of the renewal scope for Billilla. However, Policy 17 in relation to the outbuildings and coach house notes that the retention of a visual connection between the rear of the residence and the outbuildings is preferred, which will be maintained as part of the renewal scope.

The relevant landscape policies for Billilla relate to garden uses and accommodation of change (Policy 19), significant trees (Policy 20), significant planted features in gardens (Policy 21), supporting planted features in gardens (Policy 22), driveway (Policy 23), fountain (Policy 24), new circulation and carparking (Policy 26) and accessibility (Policy 29) as follows:

- Future uses of the Billilla gardens and property should be compatible with the assessed values, spatial organisation of the property and ongoing retention of trees and garden features which support the values.
- Mature trees which contribute to the character of the Billilla gardens should be managed to enhance the prospects for their ongoing retention.

- Where tree removal is required, a replacement plan should be developed to maintain the tree's contribution to the gardens' character and structure.
- Maintain significant planted features of the gardens which support their nineteenth and early twentieth century character.
- Maintain garden amenity throughout the site, while supporting contemporary use requirements.
- The existing driveway arrangement and materiality should generally be maintained.
- Ongoing conservation of the rockery fountain should be based on evidence of its original material details.
- New circulation preferably should be limited and situated away from the residence and the remnant formal garden. Where required, introduce car parking in areas of lower heritage sensitivity at the south and south-east of the site. New circulation and car parking areas should be finished with materials to respond to the existing landscape.
- Any update of the site should as a priority ensure that it is DDA compliant, and that equitable access is incorporated.

The proposed renewal works for the gardens and grounds of Billilla are consistent with the CMP landscape policies. The works will retain the existing landscape setting and arrangement, and will protect and retain the existing trees and features, including the driveway arrangement, fountain and brick spoon drain system. While trenching works are proposed for services upgrades and DDA accessibility works, the majority of the trenching will follow the existing alignment of paths and the entrance drive within the site to avoid impacts on the garden features. Following the completion of these works, the surface treatment will be replaced to match the existing.

The introduction of new service points in the lawns to support events within the site is consistent with the policy for future uses, and will not present as visually disruptive or dominant new elements within the landscape setting.

Recognising that a small number of DDA accessible car parks are proposed in proximity to the coach house, the relevant policies for new circulation and car parking (Policy 25) is as follows:

- New circulation preferably should be limited and situated away from the residence and the remnant formal garden. Where required, introduce car parking in areas of lower heritage sensitivity at the south and south-east of the site. New circulation and car parking areas should be finished with materials to respond to the existing landscape.

The proposed works to introduce new parking and DDA accessible ramp to the east and south-east of the mansion are consistent with this policy and will not detract from the legibility of the formal garden areas.

Historical archaeology

The VHR statement of significance does not identify that the registered place is of archaeological significance, and the CMP does not include specific policies to address historical archaeology. However, as the renewal scope includes site enabling works and upgrades to underground services within the place, it is appropriate to consider the potential for heritage impacts from trenching works.

A *Predictive Archaeological Study* of Billilla was prepared by Lovell Chen in April 2024 to inform the management and master planning for the site. This study identified some areas as having potential for archaeological sensitivity, including the site of the nineteenth century villa, Dresden which was subsequently included on the VHI (refer Section 2.2). Other areas of archaeological sensitivity were identified in this study, including the extended footprint of the nineteenth-century coach house, as well as areas of moderate/low archaeological potential including the location of now-removed features i.e. late-nineteenth-century glasshouse, former tennis court and rose garden. No other areas within the site have been included in the VHI.

As noted above, the majority of trenching works will predominantly follow the existing alignment of paths and the entrance drive within the site, which will limit the potential for impacts on identified areas of potential archaeological sensitivity (refer Figure 13). Notwithstanding, It is anticipated that in the event a permit is issued for the renewal works, a permit condition would be included requiring that all works must cease, and Heritage Victoria must be contacted if historical archaeological artefacts or deposits are discovered during any excavation or subsurface works. In considering the conclusions of the *Predictive Archaeological Study*, this is considered appropriate to address the potential for archaeological remains within the place.

Where trenching works are required within the extent of the VHI site for the Former Dresden Villa Site (H7822-2434, refer Figure 3), consent will be sought for these works as required under the *Heritage Act 2017*.



Figure 13 Aerial view of Billilla, with areas of high (red), moderate (yellow) and low (blue) archaeological potential marked (approximately), as identified in the *Predictive Archaeological Study*
Source: Base plan, Nearmap, 29 October 2023

5.1.2 Reasonable or economic use [s 101(2)(b)]

The proposal for the renewal of Billilla for community purposes is an appropriate and reasonable use of the registered place. The site has not been occupied as a private residence for more than fifty years, although evidence of the development of Billilla and the historical function and arrangement of rooms remains evident. The proposal to utilise the residence, outbuildings and grounds for a multi-purpose community facility by the Bayside City Council, while maintaining an understanding of the original use and development of Billilla, is a reasonable use of the place, and will not require works that would result in an adverse heritage impact on the registered place.

No submission is being made in relation to economic use.

6.0 Conclusion

The proposal is for a masterplan renewal scope to the buildings, fabric and elements of significance at Billilla, to be undertaken in stages over the course of ten years. The works have had appropriate regard to the relevant CMP policies and VHR statement of significance for the place. Recognising there will be some loss of existing fabric, notably to the roof, this is on the basis of the existing condition of the building fabric, with renewal works prioritising the retention and repair of existing fabric where possible. Other minimal loss of fabric is required to facilitate DDA access to the building, although the overall external presentation of the building will be maintained. The proposed community use is considered appropriate having regard to the heritage values of the place and will ensure the long-term protection and conservation of Billilla as part of an adaptive reuse scope.