

Heritage Assessment

May 2016



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1 Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

Urbis has been engaged by Taronga Zoo to prepare the following report, which contains further justification for the proposed demotion of the Former Staff Amenities Building (FSAB).

The FSAB is located within the grounds of Taronga Zoological Gardens ('Taronga Zoo'). It is proposed for demolition under an existing State Significant Development (SSD) application (SSD 7311) for construction of the new Taronga Institute of Science and Learning (TISL).

A heritage impact statement (HIS) was prepared by Jean Rice, Architect, in 2015 to assess the potential heritage impacts associated with the proposed new TISL. As part of this HIS, the demolition of the FSAB was assessed, and it was determined that:

"There is some negative impact in the demolition of the former Staff Amenities building. This is a later building of limited heritage significance (some) and was never integral to the public face of the Zoo and the display of animals. The Zoo advises it is obsolete and no longer useful. Attempts were made to design the proposal to retain building 78B (FSAB) however the required functionality was not possible and there would have been more negative heritage impact on more significant heritage items in the vicinity – the Koala House and the remnant natural areas. The heritage advisor considers that overall conservation of the building is not warranted and proposes mitigative measures."

However, the Department of Planning and Environment (DoPE) have requested that further justification for the demolition of the FSAB, including consideration of options for the retention and re-use of this building within the proposal, is required to complete their assessment of the SSD application.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The subject building, being the FSAB, is located within the grounds of Taronga Zoo in the suburb of Mosman, NSW (Figure 1).

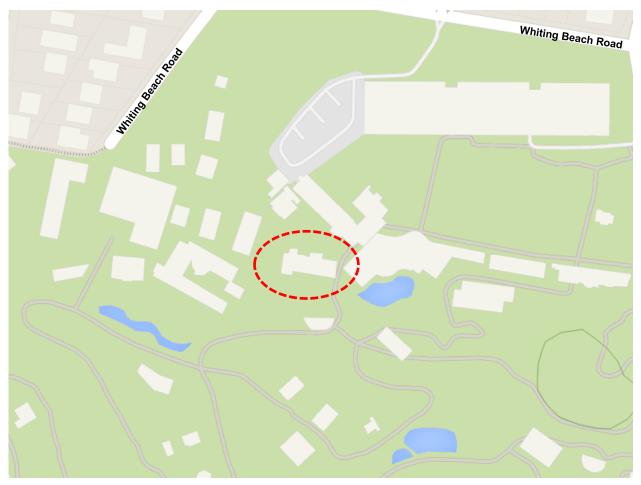


FIGURE 1 - LOCATION MAP, TARONGA ZOO INDICATED BY FLAG

[SOURCE: SIXMAPS 2016]

The location of the building within the Zoo grounds is shown in Figure 1, below.

FIGURE 2 - LOCATION OF THE SUBJECT BUILDING WITHIN ZOO GROUNDS



[SOURCE: HTTPS://TARONGA.ORG.AU/TARONGA-ZOO/ZOO-MAP/TARONGA-ZOO-MAP]

1.3 **METHODOLOGY**

This Heritage Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the NSW Heritage Branch guideline 'Assessing Heritage Significance' (2001). The philosophy and process adopted is that guided by the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter 1999 (revised 2013).

Site constraints and opportunities have been considered with reference to relevant controls and provisions contained within the Mosman Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012. The Taronga Zoo Conservation Management Strategy, prepared by Godden Mackay Logan in 2002, has also been referenced in the preparation of this report.

The HIS (2015) previously prepared by Jean Rice to assess the currently proposed works has also been referenced.

1.4 **AUTHOR IDENTIFICATION**

The following report has been prepared by Karyn Virgin (Heritage Consultant/Archaeologist). Stephen Davies (Director) has reviewed and endorsed its content.

Unless otherwise stated, all drawings, illustrations and photographs are the work of Urbis.

2 Site Description

The subject building is located within the grounds of Taronga Zoo, as shown in the aerial view provided at Figure 3, below. The following site description, which has been independently verified by Urbis, has been sourced from the previous HIS prepared for the currently proposed works (Rice 2015).

FIGURE 3 - AERIAL VIEW OF THE FSAB



[SOURCE: SIXMAPS 2016]

2.1 **BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

The FSAB (now retail offices and archives) is a later example and part of a series of buildings and exhibits on the site finished in "mock rock" to blend with the landscape. In this case the mock rock render is low relief and is only on the south face and sides, presumably intended to make it recessive when viewed from the public pathway below. It was never a prominent building or public exhibit and is a utilitarian structure rather than a design of high technical or aesthetic value. Design drawings have not been located. Early photos indicate it was built after 1943 and potentially c. 1950, and was initially painted in camouflage colours.

It is a single storey brick building with a skillion roof sloping to the north and now roofed in modern corrugated pre-finished metal sheeting. There is a parapet on the south and side walls hiding the roof from public areas. The double-hung timber windows are set within brick-edged window surrounds. Each window has horizontal glazing bars dividing each sash into two. There are modern crude security screens on the windows. The windows in the projecting bay of the south wall have a window hood over.

The floors are timber and there is a subfloor space, with access to the subfloor from doors on the south side. Ground levels have been raised around the building on the north and east partly blocking subfloor vents. Internally, the building has undergone some renovations. Some of the original features such as the high plaster dados remain intact. The wet areas, toilets and showers, have concrete floors.

The building structure is substantial and is generally sound and watertight. Parts of the render, rusted ferrous metal embedments (such as arch bars) and the window hood are in poor condition. The building is damp and musty due to blocked sub-floor ventilation and inadequate or blocked stormwater drains.

FIGURE 4 - PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FSAB



PICTURE 1 - VIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL (SOUTHERN) FAÇADE, FACING EAST



PICTURE 2 - VIEW OF THE PRINCIPAL (SOUTHERN) FAÇADE, FACING EAST AND SHOWING ASSOCIATED VEGETATION COVER



PICTURE 3 - VIEW OF THE REAR (NORTHERN) FAÇADE OF THE BUILDING, FACING SOUTHWEST



PICTURE 4 - VIEW OF THE EASTERN FAÇADE OF THE BUILDING, FACING SOUTHWEST



PICTURE 5 – VIEW OF THE REAR (NORTHERN) FAÇADE OF THE FSAB AND ADJOINING 'FEMALE AMENITIES BUILDING', FACING WEST



PICTURE 6 – VIEW OF THE REAR FAÇADE OF THE 'FEMALE AMENITIES BUILDING'

2.2 CURRENT USE

The building is currently used primarily as offices, with only a single room within the building currently used for record and archival storage. Currently, records held in this building are being catalogued for redistribution to more appropriate facilities, including the Government Records Repository; this process is already well under-way.

The wet areas are no longer used and are blocked off. The Zoo have specifically identified that the building is not suitable for continued use due to the abovementioned issues associated with damp; further to this, identified damp issues mean that the building's current partial use as an archive and record storage facility is not appropriate.

FIGURE 5 - INTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE FSAB



PICTURE 7 – VIEW OF THE MALE TOILETS (BLOCKED OFF FROM USE)



PICTURE 8 – VIEW OF A FORMER LOCKER ROOM, WITH MOULD GROWTH EVIDENT



PICTURE 9 – VIEW OF FORMER SHOWERS (BLOCKED OFF FROM USE)



PICTURE 10 – CURRENT ARCHIVE/RECORDS STORAGE ROOM

3 **Historical Overview**

The following historical overview, which has been independently verified by Urbis, has been sourced from the previous HIS prepared for the currently proposed works (Rice 2015).

"There are five key phases of historical development at Taronga Zoo since its initial construction began in 1913. These key phases correspond to tenures of key zoo Directors or Superintendents and generally reflect each director's philosophy of zoo management. The FSAB was constructed around 1950, and during the 'Hallstrom Era 1941 - 1967', as referred to in the HIS.

During the period of Sir Edward Hallstrom's association with the Zoo, the refurbishment of many of the existing enclosures and the design of new animal enclosures continued to move away from the original design concept for the zoo, with the provision of functional enclosures with concrete floors and walls. This approach, while seen to be practicable, was not always sensitive, particularly by today's standards.

FIGURE 6 - EXTRACT FROM THE 1943 AERIAL SHOWING THE RESERVOIR, NOTE THE FSAB HAS NOT YET BEEN BUILT



[SOURCE: SIXMAPS]

By c. 1950 a new building had been erected to the west of the reservoir, designed to blend into the surroundings. Although listed in the S170 register as dating from the 1930s or 40s, the building known as the former staff amenities block does not appear on plans until 1956 and is not on the 1943 aerial.

Its purpose is not labelled so it was not built to house exhibits. A photograph at Mosman Local studies shows camouflage paint on roof, indicating that the building dated from the war (or utilised available materials). Other facilities at George's Heights and Bradleys Head were also painted with camouflage paint, including the Degaussing Station.

The possibility that the building had a military function is not supported by research. There are no file references indicating that sections of the Zoo had been requisitioned though the Army had utilised part of Ashton Park.

In 1982 a female amenities building was constructed to the west of the former Staff Amenities Building."

FIGURE 7 – VIEW FROM THE LOOKOUT IN ASHTON PARK ABOVE THE ZOO SHOWING THE FSAB WITH ITS CAMOUFLAGE-PAINTED ROOF – DATE UNKNOWN BUT AFTER 1943.



[SOURCE: MOSMAN LOCAL STUDIES]

4 Heritage Listings and Significance

APPLICABLE HERITAGE LISTINGS 4.1

Mosman Local Environmental Plan 2012

Taronga Zoo in its entirety is listed as an item of local heritage significance in the Mosman Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2012 (Item No. I34). Although the listing description is limited to specific individual elements within the Zoo (Rainforest Aviary, Elephant House, bus shelter and office, floral clock and upper and lower entrance gates), the listing itself extends across the entire legal allotment in which these elements are located, and therefore across the entire Zoo.

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ATHOL BAY

LITTLE SIRIUS

FIGURE 8 - MOSMAN LEP HERITAGE MAP, ZOO INDICATED IN RED

[SOURCE: MOSMAN LEP 2012]

Section 170 Heritage and Conservation Register

Section 170 of the Heritage Act 1977 (NSW) requires agencies to identify, conserve and manage heritage assets owned, occupied or managed by that agency. Section 170 also requires government agencies to keep a register of heritage items, which is called a Heritage and Conservation Register or more commonly, a s170 Register. A s170 Register is a record of the heritage assets owned or managed by a NSW government agency.

In addition to the above local listing, the Zoo is also subject to a s170 Register (Zoological Parks Board of NSW, Heritage and Conservation Register - Taronga Zoo), which includes the FSAB (Heritage No. 78B).

Further Justification for Demolition 5

Urbis have independently reviewed the content and conclusions of the HIS previously prepared by Rice (2015) for the proposed demolition of the FSAB, and are generally in agreement with the conclusions made therein.

Further justification for the demolition of the building, which builds on the conclusions contained within the previously prepared HIS and responds directly the request for further justification from DoPE, are provided below.

JUSTIFICATION ON THE BASIS OF SIGNIFICANCE 5.1

As discussed, the building has previously been identified as significant, both in the s170 Register listing for the item as well as the Taronga Zoo Conservation Strategy (GML 2002). These documents attribute the significance of the building to:

- Its historical association with the Zoo;
- Its provision of social amenity to Zoo staff; and
- Its aesthetic representation of the 'Zoo vernacular' and use of 'rendered detailing to create a more "natural" appearance'.

Historical Significance

In terms of its identified historical significance, both the s170 Register and Conservation Strategy identify the building as being constructed c. 1926-1950 or late 1930s-early 1940s respectively, with the exact year of construction listed as 'unknown'. However, as evidenced in the previous HIS and verified as part of the current assessment, historical research suggests that the FSAB was not constructed until c. 1950; the building does not appear on any available plans until c. 1956, and is not visible in the 1943 aerial.

The construction of the FSAB later than originally identified means that it is further disassociated from the earliest phases of the development of the Zoo. The majority of significant buildings and enclosures identified in the Conservation Strategy date from the period 1916-1940, and are therefore representative of the establishment and early development of the Zoo. Other buildings that date from the 1940s onwards are identified as significant on the basis of:

- Being clearly representative of Hallstrom's design influence;
- Representing a significant phase of development, such as the shift towards an emphasis on the Australian animal collection in the 1970s, or the shift in the presentation of exhibits to show animals in a more 'natural' environment in the 1980s; or
- Being particularly significant examples of an architectural style, such as the Sydney School architectural style of the 1970s.

Although the building was constructed under the trusteeship of Hallstrom, it is not particularly representative of his historical or architectural contribution to the Zoo, which is predominately associated with his financial contributions and donations, and his influence on the design and materiality of animal enclosures specifically. The FSAB reflects a utilitarian building from the period of Hallstrom's trusteeship, rather than a specific historical initiative in the function, use or presentation of the zoo.

More representative examples of Hallstrom's design influence are available within the Zoo, including the Reptile House (Item 92B) and the Jungle Cats Enclosure (Item 32B), both of which were constructed after his trusteeship in the 1970s. Additionally, other buildings which more clearly demonstrate an historical association with Hallstrom's trusteeship, particularly being 'Hallstrom House' (Item 16B) which was named for the Trustee, are also present within the Zoo.

The FSAB, by comparison, does not demonstrate any particularly strong associations with Hallstrom himself, the 'Hallstrom Era' of development, or any particularly significant phase of historical development generally. Though loosely representative of the historical development of the Zoo over time, the FSAB does not strongly contribute to an overall understanding of the Zoo's history, phases of development, or evolution of design and focus.

Social Significance

The s170 Register listing identifies the FSAB to have social significance at a local level, on the basis that it provided 'social amenity to Zoo staff. This is discussed in greater detail below, however it is noted in summary that the building no longer provides amenity to Zoo staff, as its original use has been discontinued. There is also no evidence to suggest that whilst it provided the function, that it would have had value to staff beyond the provision of a needed functional amenity.

In addition to this, the overall amenity of the building generally has been compromised through increasing issues related to condition (especially damp), as well as the preference for more contemporary and convenient buildings available for use elsewhere within the Zoo site; at present, the building is retained largely in preference to a proposed alternative.

Based on this, it is considered that the FSAB does not meet the criteria for social significance on any level, either local or state.

Aesthetic Significance

In terms of its identified aesthetic significance, the s170 Register and Conservation Strategy attribute this to the FSAB being representative of the 'Zoo vernacular' and to the use of 'rendered detailing to create a more "natural" appearance', respectively.

Based on a comparison with other buildings within the Zoo, the description of the FSAB as 'representative of the "zoo vernacular" appears to be vested in the use of textured render or ferro-cement on the exterior of the building rather than the building's specific architectural typology. The building itself is a utilitarian structure rather than a design of high technical or aesthetic value, and though it possesses some elements that are representative of the Art Deco style it is not a particularly strong or significant example of this style. Having been constructed after 1940; it would also demonstrate a comparatively late example of the style (which was popularised in the inter-war period 1915-1940) and therefore is somewhat anachronistic.

Additionally, the FSAB is not representative of any architectural style acknowledged to have had a significant impact on the Zoo, being primarily the 'Edwardian Baroque' style, the 'Sydney School' style, and the more recent 'Contemporary Modern' style (GML 2002: 75).

The use of ferro-cement is a common design feature within the Zoo. It was, and continues to be, used to create a more 'natural' appearance, most commonly in the form of 'mock rock' but also imitation log cabin design. The most effective uses of ferro-cement within the Zoo are in association with animal enclosures and exhibits including:

- The Kodiak Bear Exhibit (1915-1915, modified in 2000, significance grading high);
- The Upper Seal Pond (1915, significance grading exceptional);
- Tahr Mountain/Mountain Goat Enclosure (1920, significance grading exceptional);
- The Aquarium (1929);
- Pygmy Hippo Enclosure (1920s, significance grading some);
- Giraffe House (1940, significance grading exceptional).

In addition to this, ferro-cement has also been effectively used on publicly accessible features and built landscape elements that are specifically designed for visitor use, such as:

The former Koala House (now a refreshment kiosk);

- Numerous stone seats located throughout the Zoo;
- The Rustic Bridge;
- The Aquarium Building:
- The former Deer Shelter;

In comparison to the above listed elements, the FSAB was never intended to be a publicly accessible facility, a prominent building or public exhibit. The 'mock rock' render used on this building is low relief, and is not as aesthetically distinctive as the 'mock rock' render used on more prominent enclosures and publicly used buildings within the Zoo.

Based on the buildings historic use and location, it is considered likely that the use of render in this instance was intended, in conjunction with the application of camouflage paint, to make the building appear unobtrusive and recessive within the Zoo grounds, rather than to create a sense of aesthetic distinctiveness.

Moreover, many of the other built elements of the Zoo that incorporate 'mock rock' are earlier, and have been identified in the Conservation Strategy as having a significantly higher degree of heritage significance than the FSAB, in terms of both historical and aesthetic significance.

Based on the above discussion, it is therefore considered that the FSAB does not represent a significant architectural style within the context of the Zoo, and does not provide a particularly significant example of the historic use of ferro-cement as a design feature. Other buildings within the Zoo, which have been identified in the Conservation Strategy has having a greater degree of heritage significance, provide considerably better examples of the 'zoo vernacular' and the use of ferro-cement to achieve this.

5.2 JUSTIFICATION ON THE BASIS OF USE

The s170 Register listing for the FSAB specifically states that its identified social significance is derived from it having 'continued to be a facility for providing social amenity to Zoo staff'. It is noted, however, that the FSAB is no longer used for the purpose of providing staff amenity as originally intended.

With regards to the buildings current use, the following points are made:

- The building is no longer used for the provision of staff amenity. Management methods within the Zoo have changed since construction of the FSAB, and staff amenities/facilities are now predominately provided closer to animal exhibits and in association with newer facilities; and
- The building is currently not used to capacity, due to the above described issues associated with damp and general condition;
- Parts of the building, being particularly wet areas, are permanently cordoned off and disused due to poor amenity;
- The use of a single room in the building for the purposes of archival storage is now redundant, with all files in the process of being catalogued and relocated for off-site storage;
- The remainder of the building is currently used as office space.

As its original use has been discontinued, and as its ongoing use is at a limited capacity due to the condition of the building, it is considered that any significance the FSAB may have had with regards to use is now redundant. The building does not derive any significance from its current, limited use, and it is further noted that more contemporary and usable staff amenity facilities are available elsewhere within the Zoo.

5.3 POTENTIAL FOR RETENTION AND DISCUSSION OF TISL DESIGN SCHEME RESOLUTIONS

The potential for retention of the FSAB is considered below in the context of the evolution of the TISL design scheme. The following discussion has been prepared in association with Jean Rice, who is the Senior Project Manager - Heritage for the Zoo, as well as the author of the HIS previously prepared for the TISL project (2015).

"The developed scheme submitted for approval is based on the revision of draft concepts and has been designed so as to keep the roof of the proposed TISL no higher than the level of the existing carpark roof, so retaining views over the building and not impacting on existing views. The site is also restricted by adjacent elements such as the existing theatre, roads and natural areas. These restrictions and the detailed resolution of the vehicle and pedestrian access were found to be critical in the vicinity of the FSAB.

A detailed level survey was carried out of the site. The path adjacent to the Koala House is very steep and for compliant access to the Zoo paths below needs to be at a much more gradual gradient. This, and the existing theatre, set the level of the lower foyer and then access to the upper ground level and building levels is achieved via a lift and stairs.

Vehicle access from the existing back of house area to the lower level could only be achieved by utilising the lowest point on the existing access road adjacent and west of the site. Vehicle access to the lower level of the building could only be achieved by excavating in the area of the FSAB. This access is required so the services section of the building housing labs and facilities that need to be separate from the education sections. The required grades and levels could not be achieved with vehicle access routes in other parts of the site.

Options to realign the design have been further considered but that it is not possible to retain the FSAB and achieve the required spaces and access to the facility. The site is limited by the existing buildings around it, such as the theatre, which are being retained and by the access road to the west, which is one of the main back of house entries to the Zoo and can't be realigned because of the steep grades. Vehicle access is needed to the lower back of house level of the proposal from the existing road. To the north the site is limited by the remnant natural area 105L. The facility needs to be near the Zoo main entrance and to straddle the Zoo boundary with access from the exterior bus parking area and public walkway and from within the Zoo and there are no other suitable sites.

The proposal provides DDA access from the Education facility to the Zoo proper from the building entry at lower ground level. This access is currently too steep and non-compliant and achieving DDA compliant access through the sire is an over-riding aim at Taronga. The demolition of the FSAB is necessary for the lower level of the proposed building and the DDA compliant access path.

Though the FSAB itself, if it were located elsewhere, might be able to be retained and reused, DDA and vehicle access cannot be achieved without excavating in the area of the FSAB and 1986 Female Amenities Building, requiring their demolition. Given this the reuse of the building was not pursued.

The FSAB was intended to be camouflaged and hidden from the public who could only view it from the path below. Subsequent development in the vicinity and the proposed TISL development mean that, if retained, the FSAB will be viewed from above and from the rear, which was never designed to be visible to the general public and is aesthetically crude and clearly the back of the building."

Conclusion and Recommendations 6

It is acknowledged that the FSAB has a degree of contributory significance within the immediate context of the Zoo, having been previously recognised on the s170 Register for the Zoo as well as within the Zoo's Conservation Strategy. However, based on a visual inspection of the building and a review of its historical development, this significance is considered to be relatively limited, particularly in comparison with other buildings, enclosures and elements within the Zoo; in comparison, the FSAB is not considered to make a particularly strong contribution to the overall heritage significance of the Zoo.

As such, it is considered that the retention of the FSAB will not act to significantly preserve the overall heritage significance of the Zoo, which is predominately derived from earlier and more architecturally significant buildings, or from buildings more closely associated with significant phases of development, significant functions (i.e. zoological) and significant historical figures associated with the Zoo. As discussed above, the FSAB is currently functioning at a limited capacity due to its general condition as well as the availability of more contemporary and convenient amenity facilities and office space elsewhere within the Zoo grounds.

Although the adaptive re-use of the FSAB is possible, this would be at the expense of the creation of a contemporary, high-quality and architecturally designed facility that will form part of the ongoing strategic development of the Zoo to a contemporary standard. The retention of the FSAB, which has a comparatively limited degree of usability and functionality, would significantly prohibit the construction of the TISL, which will, upon completion, be a centre of excellence for conservation science and learning at the Zoo, and which will significantly contribute to the overall amenity and service offerings of the Zoo going forward.

In addition to the above, the HIS previously prepared for the TISL project specifically identified that the demolition of the FSAB was supportable on heritage grounds, given the relatively limited heritage significance of the building as well issues associated with its condition. For these reasons, the retention and adaptive re-use of the FSAB at the expense of the TISL is not considered to be warranted.

Further, earlier design schemes that attempted to retain the building as part of the new development were unable to be resolved due to the site constraints discussed in Section 5.3 above, as well as the FSAB's limited suitability for the provision of educational and learning facilities to the required contemporary standard. Though the building could potentially be re-used, this would be of little overall benefit in terms of heritage, amenity and the overall program of strategic development.

The Conservation Strategy clearly identifies one of the key architectural values of the Zoo as being associated with the 'contemporary modern style', which is characterised as follows:

"Most recently, exhibits have been planned to provide the animals and keepers with the most modern design, providing state of the art animal dens, wet whether exercise yards and keeper safety features. At the same time opportunities to educate the visitors have been utilised in order to provide a richer experience." (GML 2002: 111)

Additionally, the Conservation Strategy also identifies the contribution of contemporary facilities to the overall scientific and zoological value of the Zoo as follows:

"Taronga Zoo exists in an international context of zoos that continue to evolve in order to serve the community as highly effective conservation and learning centres." (GML 2002:

If constructed, the TISL will act as a significant example of the 'contemporary modern style' within the Zoo, whilst also contributing strongly to the overall scientific, zoological and educational values the Zoo embodies through the provision of a world-class learning facility. The TISL will also be representative of the latest phase of the Zoo's development, which is characterised by a contemporary high quality design as well as an increased focus on education and conservation science. In comparison, the FSAB is of limited aesthetic distinctiveness and historical significance, and is redundant in terms of the provision of staff amenity and archival/record storage facilities.

Although the FSAB is acknowledged to have a limited degree of contributory significance within the context of the Zoo, particularly based on previous assessments of the building (s170 Register and the Conservation Strategy), it is considered that the benefits of the TISL significantly outweigh any potential negative heritage impacts associated with the removal of the FSAB.

This further assessment, prepared by Urbis Heritage, has verified the findings of the previous HIS prepared by Rice, and has built on the arguments for the removal of the FSAB provided therein. Urbis Heritage are in agreement with the conclusions made by Rice, and similarly find the removal of the FSAB to be supportable on heritage grounds for the reasons discussed above.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to adequately record and document the FSAB, it is recommended that a full archival recording of the building is undertaken prior to demolition works. It is considered that a comprehensive archival recording will adequately document the building's architectural features, development, and historical uses in perpetuity.

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[Note: Some government departments have changed their names over time and the above publications state the name at the time of publication.]

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