

Spotswood State School No. 3659

Address	598 Melbourne Road, Spotswood
Significance	Local
Style & Type	Federation School
Significant Dates	1914, 1929
Designer	Public Works Department
Builder	F E Shillabeer



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The main school building, especially the original 1914 section which forms the north, south and west sides of the courtyard. The 1929 addition adjoining the east of the original section is also of significance as is the 1929 caretakers' cottage located to the south-west corner. The Bristol building is contributory.

How is it Significant?

The Spotswood State School No. 3659 is of historic, social and aesthetic significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

The Spotswood State School is historically significant as the first purpose-built school in Spotswood. The school is one of few surviving public buildings in the Spotswood area. It was constructed at a time when the population of Spotswood rapidly increased due to the establishment of industries in the area. The later 1929 addition and caretaker's cottage as well as the surviving Bristol prefabricated unit reflect the rapid growth which continued in the area during the mid-20th century. (Criterion A)

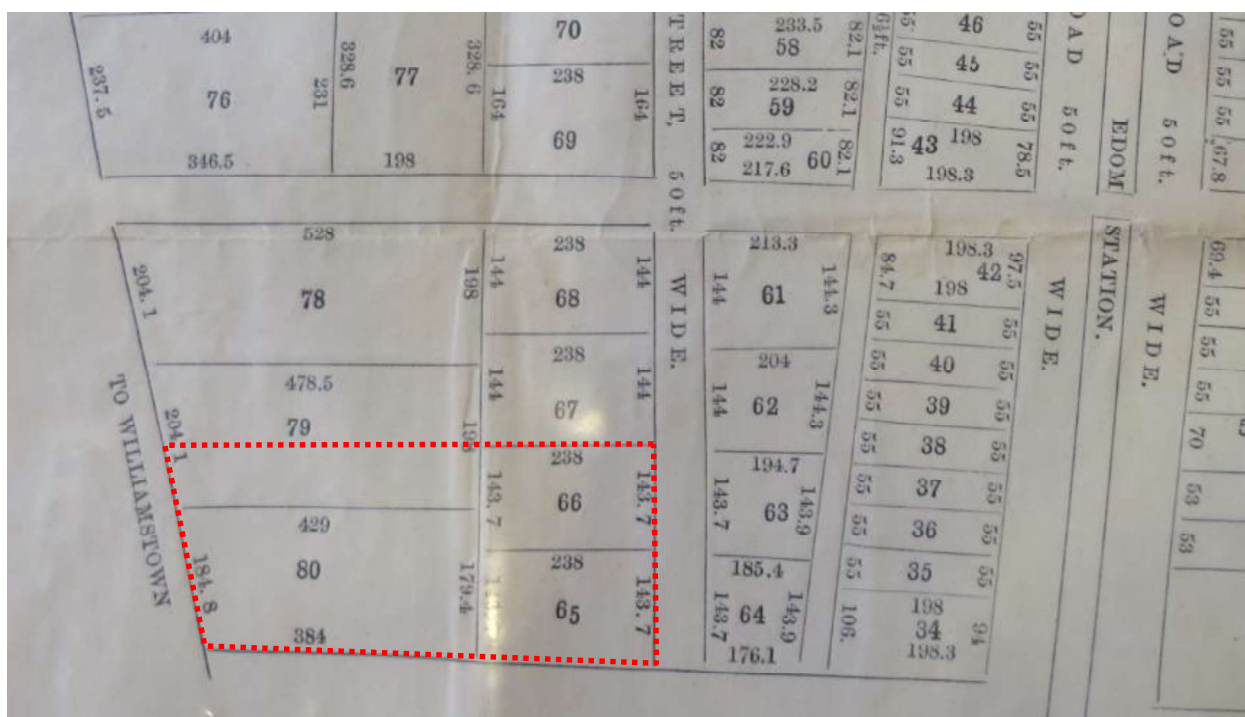
Socially, the Spotswood State School is significant for its strong connections with the Spotswood community as the main place of learning for over 100 years. Both the establishment of a school in Spotswood and the construction of the purpose-built school were a result of the local community partitioning the government of the time. (Criterion G)

The Spotswood State School is of aesthetic significance for being a relatively intact example of a modest Federation period school designed by the Public Works Department during the early 20th century. The courtyard plan of the original section as well as the banks of four large multi-pane windows were common features of schools of this period and reflect the concern at the time for a better, more hygienic school environment. The original material palette of red brick and roughcast render along with the pressed cement sign to the façade and prominent hipped and gable roof are characteristic of school buildings of the period. The design is distinguished by the relatively blank façade to Melbourne Road. The 1929 additions adopt the details of the original part reflecting the standard approach for additions to school buildings at the time. The 1929 caretaker's cottage is also an important part of the school complex and is a largely intact example of an Interwar period house. (Criterion E)

History

Area

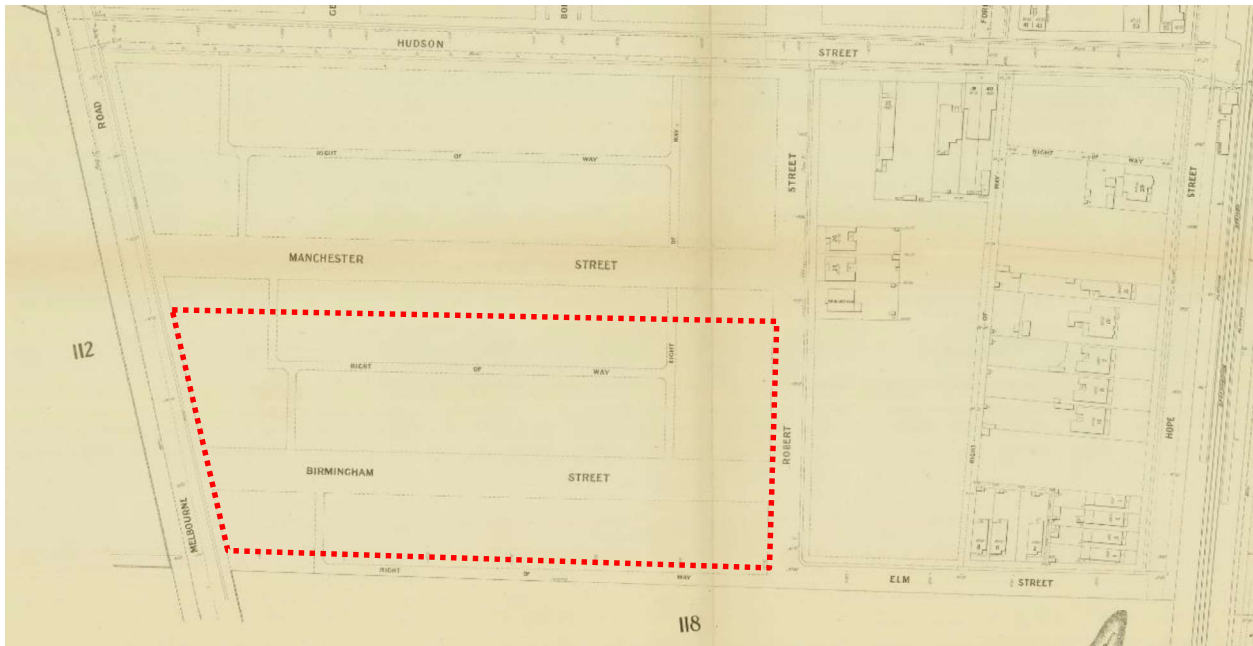
The subject site was part of a large allotment (119 acres) which extended from the Yarra River to Melbourne Road.¹ This holding was initially purchased during the early 1840s by John Stewart Spotswood who began a dairy farm.² Following John Spotswood, other owners of this land included Thomas Bent (in partnership with others) as well as Henry, Robert and William Hudson of Hudson Bros, Sydney.³ Subsequently, the land was acquired by the Spottiswoode Estate Company which was set up to purchase the land owned by the Hudsons brothers.⁴ Each of these owners gradually subdivided the land, beginning in the vicinity of the railway line. Isolated groups of houses were constructed close to the railway station which opened as Edom in 1878.⁵



Spottiswoode Estate, showing the approximate extent of school site in relation to the subdivision
(Source: SLV)

By 1904, another subdivision had been created in this part of Spotswood but remained undeveloped. In the vicinity of the station, groups of houses however had been erected in Hope and Robert streets.⁶

¹ Cut Paw-Paw Parish Plan C345 (19) – Lot 16 of portion 7
² *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study: Thematic Environmental History*, 2003, p12
³ Certificate of Title, Volume 998, Folio 593 and Volume 1511, Folio 188
⁴ 'The Spottiswoode Estate Company', *The Age*, 14 November 1893, p7
⁵ *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study: Thematic Environmental History*, 2003, p12
⁶ MMBW detail plan no. 100, 1904, State Library of Victoria



MMBW no 114 (1904), showing approximate extent of school site in relation to the contemporary subdivision
(Source: SLV)

Site Specific

During the 1890s, the need for a local school increased as Spotswood grew due to the establishment of industries in the area. At the time, the closest state school in Newport was full and most children living in Spotswood had to walk to the Yarraville State School.

In 1909, Spotswood residents signed a petition, with the help of their Local Member of Parliament John Lemmon, for the Victorian Government to build a state school in the area.⁷ As a result permission was given for a school to begin in the local Free Gardener's Hall, a leased building in Robert Street. The School opened on 18 July 1910 as an adjunct to the Williamstown State School (No. 1183).⁸

From the outset there was insufficient space for the school as the Free Gardener's Hall was only able to accommodate Grades 1, 2 and 3. Subsequently, the Local Member and local residents, assisted by the City of Williamstown Councillor William McNeillage, continued to press for a purpose-built school for all primary-aged children. Five acres of land between Robert Street and Melbourne Road was purchased for the purpose of erecting a school in 1912 for £550.⁹

The following year, the Education Department authorised the construction of a new school building.¹⁰ This building was designed by the Public Works Department, under Chief Architect George William Watson, and consisted of five classrooms, a teacher's room, Masters Room and cloakrooms. Like most schools constructed after 1904, two of the classrooms (those to the west) were separated by operable doors and could be opened up into one large room.¹¹ This building was intended as the first portion of the proposed new school site and was designed on the quadrangle plan which was considered to be the most up to date method at the time.

⁷ Helen Penrose, *Lessons in community: Spotswood Primary School 1910-2010*, Spotswood, 2010, pp1-3

⁸ L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation: a centenary history of State Education in Victoria*, vol. 3, Melbourne 1973, p20

⁹ H Penrose, *Lessons in community: Spotswood Primary School 1910-2010*, p3

¹⁰ *Williamstown Chronicle*, 12 July 1913, p2

¹¹ Laurie Burchell, *Halls for Learning: Infant School Architecture in Victoria 1900-1939*, Moreland City Council, Moreland, 1999, p34



Undated plan showing the original extent of the school buildings
(Source: PWD (BSA) drawings, PROV, SS14833)

The building was constructed by Mr F E Shillabeer of Footscray for £2968.¹² These builders were responsible for many substantial buildings in the Melbourne area during the early 20th century and were prolific contractors for the Victorian railways constructing stations such as Williamstown (1900), Williamstown Beach (1900) and Spotswood (1912).¹³

The classrooms at the Melbourne Road school were first occupied by the school's 145 pupils on 3 July 1914. Three days later, the Spotswood State School officially separated from the Williamstown State School.¹⁴

¹² Accepted tender price. 'State Schools, New Building For Spotswood', *The Age*, 3 September 1913, p14

¹³ Victorian Heritage Database

¹⁴ L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, vol. 3, p20



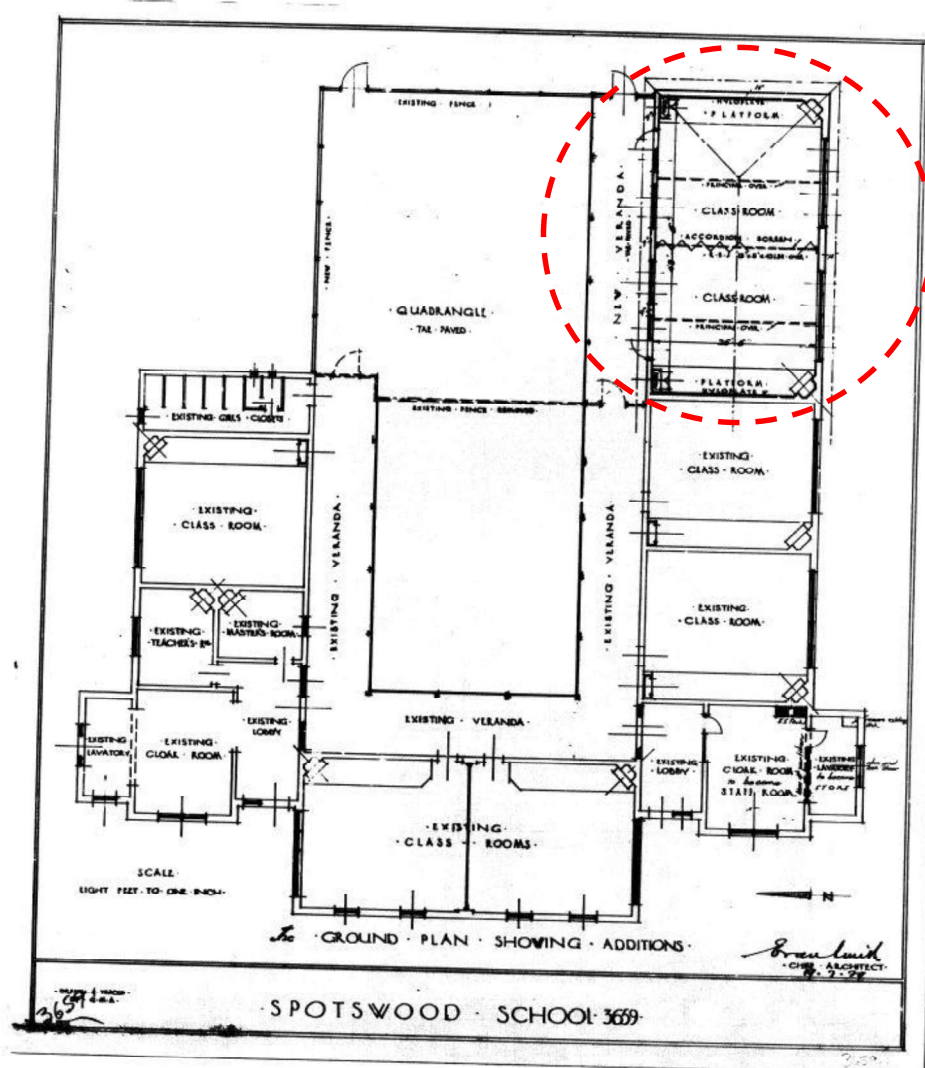
Spotswood State School, Melbourne Rd, Spotswood (circa 1940?)
(Source: State Library of Victoria H29316)

By the mid-1920s, more classrooms were required to accommodate Spotswood's growing population, which increased as a result of the expansion of industrial activity in the area. In 1927, there were 104 children in grades 1 and 2 which shared a single room.¹⁵ In 1928, with enrolment continuing to grow, the local member then Minister for Education John Lemnon approved the construction of two additional classrooms divided by an accordion screen as well as a caretakers' cottage. It was common practice at this time to provide on-site/nearby accommodation for a school caretaker. Both the classrooms and caretakers' cottage were designed by the Public Works Department under Chief Architect E Evan Smith.¹⁶

¹⁵ H Penrose, *Lessons in community: Spotswood Primary School 1910-2010*, p7

¹⁶ PWD (BSA) drawings, PROV, SSO36595

Two years later, in June 1930, the new facilities were officially opened by the Minister.¹⁷ The new classrooms adjoined the eastern end of the southern wing and were completed in the same style as the original, which was a common approach with school buildings.



Original drawings dated 1928 with the additional classrooms highlighted
(Source: PWD (BSA) drawings, PROV, SSO3659.1)

Between the end of World War Two and the mid-1950, enrolments at the school tripled. To deal with overcrowded classrooms, the Education Department promised to provide a Bristol prefabricated classroom in 1951. This unit, consisting of two classrooms, did not arrive until the following year and was not enough to relieve overcrowding. This building was one of many Bristol classrooms that were erected across the state during this period. These aluminium buildings were manufactured by the Bristol Aeroplane Company, based in England, who for a few years produced prefabricated buildings.¹⁸ The Bristol building at Spotswood is a Mark 1A type which is distinguished from a Mark 1 type by the lack of vertical sunbaffles to the elevations.¹⁹

The school site is shown on the 1945 aerial photograph reproduced below, a few years before the prefabricated Bristol Classroom was erected.



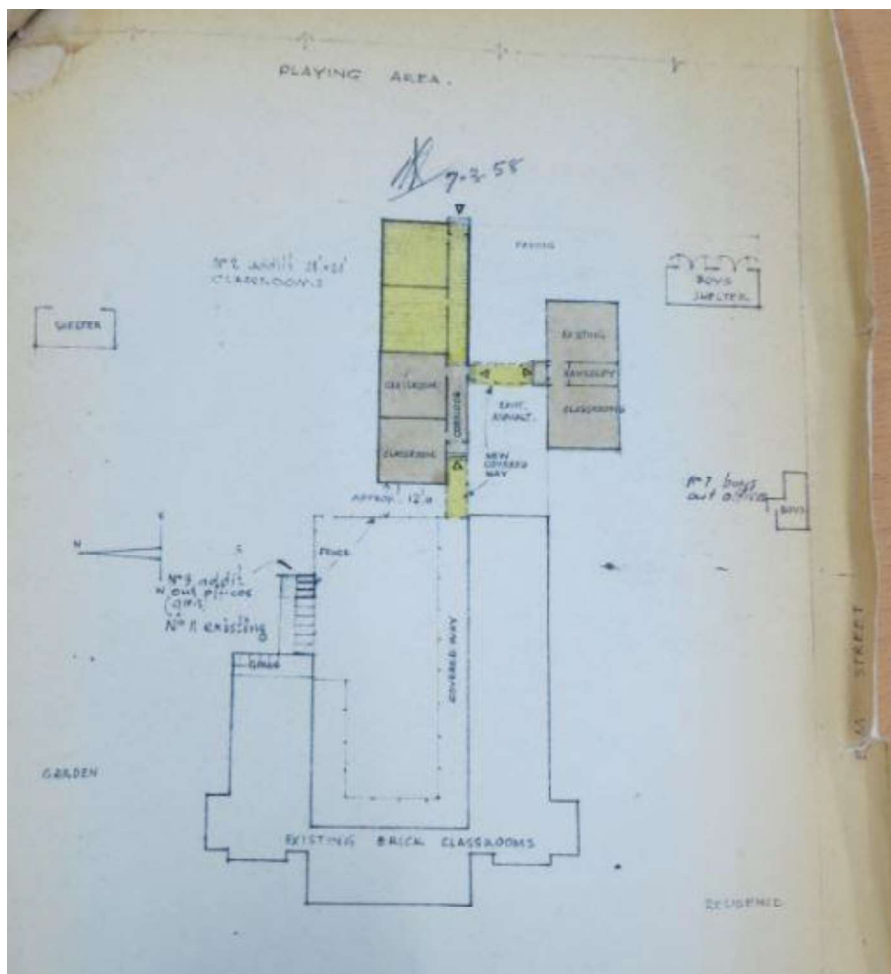
School site in 1945, Melbourne Road is to the left of the image.

(Source: Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project, Run 21, Frame 58566, Landata)

¹⁸ M Lewis, Research Database, p33.10

¹⁹ D Cassidy, 'Report on the Historic, Architectural or Industrial Historic Importance of the Bristol Classrooms and the adjacent Brick Classrooms at the former State School 4180, Everard St Ringwood East, 1994, p9

With enrolment continuing to increase, two timber classrooms were erected in 1955 to the east of the rick buildings. This was followed by an additional two classrooms in 1958,²⁰ which are shown coloured yellow on the site plan below.



1958 plan showing location of additional classrooms in yellow, Melbourne Road is to the bottom of the image (Source: VPRS8796 P1 U72)

During the late 1970s, a request was made by the school principal for a portable classroom due to continued accommodation difficulties. Additional space was not provided until the 1980s when a new canteen and multipurpose hall were constructed.²¹

20 L J Blake (ed), *Vision and Realisation*, vol. 3, p20

²¹ H Penrose, *Lessons in community: Spotswood Primary School 1910-2010*, p11

Description

The school buildings are located on the western part of the site - bound by Melbourne Road (west), Reed Street (north), Robert Street (east), and McLister Street (south) - with a large open area to the east. The original Federation period school building faces Melbourne Road with later buildings and additions primarily located to its east. The 1929 caretaker's cottage is located in the south-west corner of the school site and also faces Melbourne Road.

The main school building

The main school building was constructed in two stages: 1914 and 1929. Typical of school buildings of the period, it is constructed of red brick with a prominent hipped and gable roof. The roof is now clad in modern corrugated metal sheeting, replacing the original terracotta tiles with decorative ridge capping and finials. The main building has tall red brick chimneys with roughcast rendered caps and the original section has ventilating gambrels. Original metal vents to the roof have been removed.



Intersection of western and southern wing of original section

The original section is 'U' shaped in plan with a central courtyard bound by buildings on the north, south and west sides. This section is symmetrical to the front (west) and has a largely blank façade. The original 'Spotswood State School No. 3659' pressed cement sign is located centrally to the façade.

Original openings are timber framed and multi-paned. Windows to the north and south side consist of banks of four original double hung sashes with a toplight. Windows to the 1929 part are distinguished from the original section by the addition of vertical glazing bars to the toplights. Windows to the western façade are smaller highlight windows and those to the central part have been replaced with a modern aluminium type. All windows have rendered sills. The original door opening with multi-paned highlight and sidelight remains to the western side of the southern building, but has been removed from the northern building.



Southern wing. The rightmost bays are identifiable as the 1929 additions by the horizontal glazing bars to the toplight

The caretaker's cottage

The 1929 caretaker's cottage is a timber-framed building clad in weatherboards to the dado and roughcast sheeting above. It has a hipped roof clad in terracotta tiles and original timber boxed framed windows with multi-paned upper sashes. There is a timber porch to the front which is partially enclosed by a low wall. A later ramp has been installed to the front.



Caretakers cottage

Other buildings

Other buildings located at the site include the double Bristol unit facing McLister Street as well as several later classrooms to the east of the original building.



Double Bristol unit building facing McLister Street

External Integrity and Condition

Integrity – Good. Condition - Good

Context

The Spotswood State School is situated in a mostly residential area. It is located opposite predominantly Interwar housing to Melbourne Road and Reed Street, as well as mix of housing to Robert Street. The opposite side of McLister Street is a redevelopment site and there are various industries located beyond.

Comparative Analysis

The Spotswood State School is a largely intact Federation period school which is representative of other schools constructed in Victoria at this time. Whilst the Spotswood school lacks the decorative ventilating turrets of other schools, it is typical of school buildings of this period by way of its red brick walls, its prominent hipped and gable roof which was originally clad in terracotta tiles and its layout where classrooms were positioned around a quadrangle or hall. Other features which were typical of schools of this period, such as banks of four large windows, were a result of the new-found concern for a better, more hygienic school environment.²²

In regards to other school buildings constructed during the Federation period in the Municipality, the only direct comparison is the infants building at Williamstown Primary School which was built in 1907. Most other schools in the Municipality date to the Victorian period (such as the original Williamstown Primary School) or Interwar period (e.g. Altona Public School).

Like the Spotswood State School, the Williamstown infants building has a character consistent with other schools of the period aside from its unusual slate roof. Instead of the open quadrangle at the centre of the Spotswood State School, the infants building at Williamstown like most infants schools, has classrooms positioned around a centrally located hall.

²²

Laurie Burchell, *Halls for Learning: Infant School Architecture in Victoria 1900-1939*, Moreland City Council, Moreland, 1999.

Thematic Context

David Helms, *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study Volume 1: Environmental History*, 2003:

- 7 Educating
 - 7.3 Schools

Associations

George William Watson (Public Works Department)

Recommendations

Statutory protection

It is recommended that the Spotswood State School, excluding the sportsground to the eastern half of the allotment, be included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme.

Management objectives

Maintain and conserve significant elements. Retain face brick exterior and render finish to chimney caps (do not paint/render). Paint to rendered sills would preferably be removed.

Reinstate original features wherever possible. For example terracotta roof tiles and timber framed windows to the west elevation.

Additions and alterations should be sympathetic in terms of scale, form, materials and detailing. Although the 1929 additions maintained the same detailing as the original, it would not be necessary for new additions to reproduce original detailing. Instead, a simplified, interpretive approach is recommended.