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ECHUCA LAW COURT - URBAN CONTEXT REPORT

OCTOBER 2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

This Urban Design Context Report has been prepared in support of a planning application for the proposed single-storey law courtroom at 161 Sturt Street, Echuca, within the Campaspe Shire.

The purpose of this report is to outline the development proposal in relation to its strategic context, surrounding land uses, accessibility and connectivity, and to describe the proposed building form, height, and materials. The report also provides a rationale for the proposed scheme, demonstrating that the design responds appropriately to the site's setting and contributes positively to the urban environment. The proposed development aims to deliver a functional, civic-scale building that provides accessible and secure court facilities for the Echuca community while respecting the established character and scale of the surrounding built form.

The Echuca Law Court, one of ten in the Loddon Mallee Region, operates from a site shared with the Campaspe Shire Council (CSC) under a lease that began in April 2024. It offers regular court services, including weekly hearings and monthly sittings for the Koori Court, Children's Court, and (from May 2025) VCAT.

The CSV Strategic Asset Plan confirms the need for a long-term court presence in Echuca, given ongoing demand and the distance to the nearest court in Bendigo (over an hour away). While the overall caseload has remained steady, a notable increase in criminal and Koori Court matters highlights the need for a purpose-built facility that can support future service delivery.

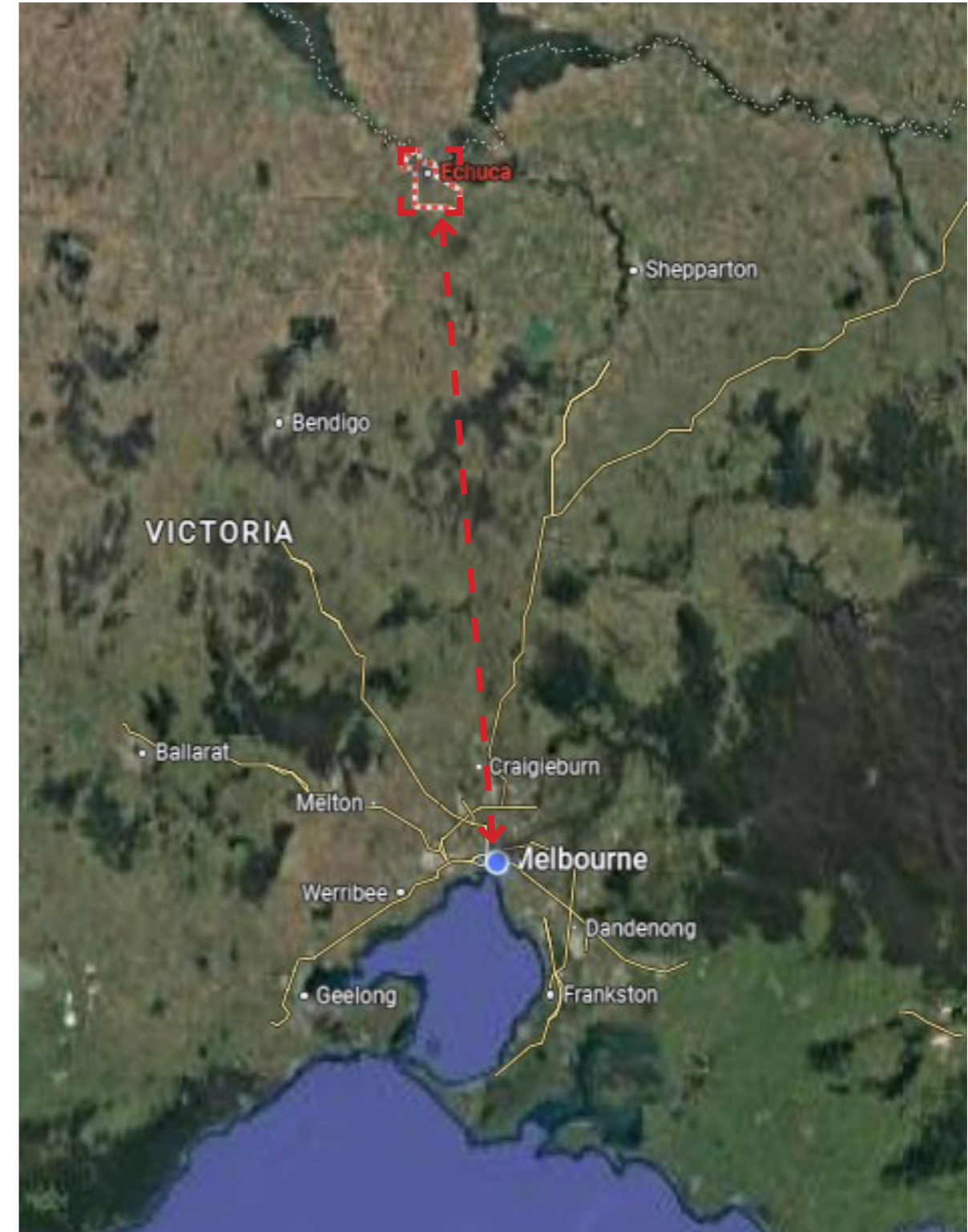
Project Objectives:

- Deliver a modern, safe, inclusive, and compliant court facility that serves the judiciary, staff, users—including vulnerable persons and the community.
- Acknowledge and collaborate with the Yorta Yorta People, as Traditional Owners of the land on which the Echuca Law Court will stand, to create a culturally safe court environment.
- Improve justice outcomes and access by providing appropriate onsite facilities for key government agencies and local support services.
- Promote environmental sustainability through the use of sustainable materials and efficient building operations.

Scope of Works:

Construction of a new building to include:

- Courtroom and support spaces
- Custody infrastructure
- Amenities
- External areas, including staff and judiciary car park, secure outdoor space for Koori Court Elders and Respected Persons, and the public entry forecourt



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2. Site Location and Description

Echuca is a regional centre in northern Victoria, located on the southern bank of the Murray River. It serves as the administrative, civic, and commercial hub for the Campaspe Shire and surrounding rural areas, supporting tourism, agriculture, and community services.

The site at 161 Sturt Street is located close to the Echuca Police Station, allowing for efficient and secure court operations.

It sits within a diverse urban setting that includes civic, commercial, and residential buildings. The site faces Sturt Street to the east, providing a clear and accessible street presence. The eastern side of Sturt Street is mainly residential, contributing to the neighbourhood's varied character.

To the west, the site is bordered by a rail line, with shops, commercial land, and recreational facilities beyond. A public parking area is located to the south, providing convenient access for visitors.

A site survey undertaken during the schematic design phase recorded site boundaries, levels, existing features, and in-ground infrastructure to support accurate coordination of the building layout and external works.

The site is relatively flat, sloping gently from west to east, with minimal earthworks required. Several small trees and an existing concrete slab within the proposed building footprint will require removal. Historical aerial imagery indicates a previous structure was demolished between 2011–2014, leaving a foundation or slab that must also be cleared.

Buildings nearby are generally one or two storeys with pitched or low-slope roofs and simple forms. Common materials include brick, render, and metal cladding in neutral colors. The proposed development fits this context by keeping a low scale, modest height, and appropriate civic materials, blending with the surrounding buildings. The site's wide street frontage allows for a clear public entry and a landscaped area that enhances the street scape.

2.1 Zoning and Overlays

The subject site is located within the TRZ1 – State Transport Infrastructure Zone, as defined by the Campaspe Planning Scheme. The site is also affected by the following overlays:

- BMO - Bushfire Management Overlay (northern portion)

While the northern portion of the land parcel is affected by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO), the subject site lies outside the BMO extent.

- DDO 4- Design and Development Overlay

Outlines built form and design requirements to ensure new developments respect the character of the area.

- ESO - Environmental Significance Overlay

The site is affected by the Environmental Significance Overlay, which seeks to protect the Murray River environment for its biodiversity, cultural significance, flood risk, recreation, and tourism value.

- LSIO - Land Subject to Inundation Overlay

The site is located within a Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO), which requires new buildings to be elevated above median flood level to mitigate flood risk.



- Commercial Zoning
- Existing Train Track
- Existing Parking
- Existing Police Station
- General Residential Zoning

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- Designated Bushfire Prone Areas

The site is located within a designated Bushfire Prone Area. The proposed building will be designed to comply with all relevant bushfire protection requirements.

The above identifies the zoning and overlays affecting the site. Please note that the design response to these planning zone and overlay requirements is detailed in the Planning Report.

3. Design Rationale and Response to Context

The design follows the Campaspe Urban Design Guidelines and the Shire's future design direction. It:

- Encourages walking and cycling with safe, wide, and continuous paths connecting to nearby destinations.
- Provides well-planned landscaping that is visually attractive and accessible to all age groups.
- Incorporates Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) to manage stormwater sustainably.
- Ensures the building and landscape fit the town's character, improve the public realm, and create a safe, accessible, and enjoyable environment.

The proposal also addresses the Design and Development Overlay (DDO) objectives by:

- Promoting a vibrant, well-landscaped business precinct with large-scale buildings suited to commercial and retail uses.
- Encouraging contemporary, high-quality architecture that enhances the town's gateway.
- Avoiding excessive signage and visual clutter.
- Providing landscaping that strengthens the boulevard character and softens views from nearby residential areas.

The following section outlines how these objectives have been achieved in the design of the proposed building.

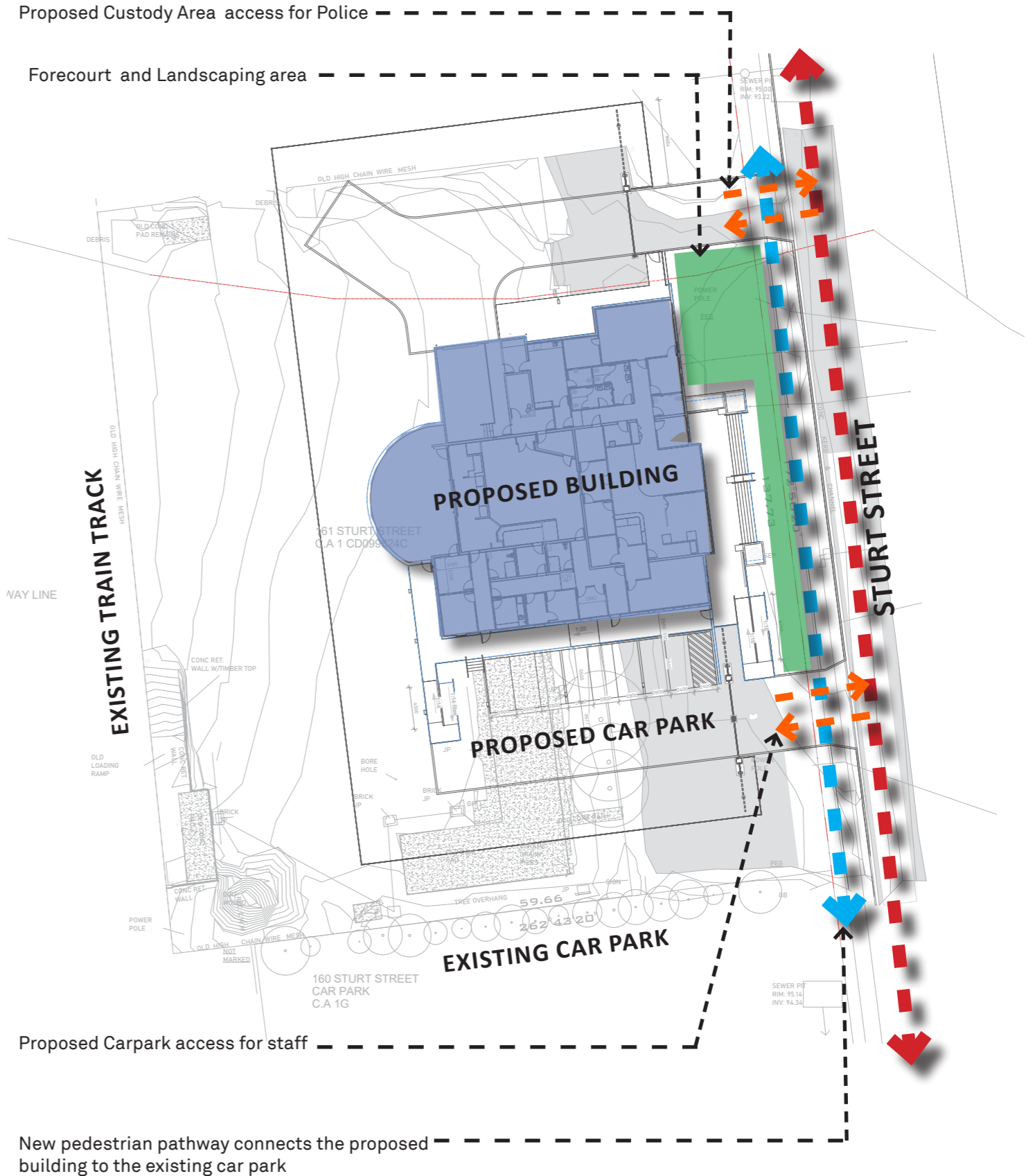
3.1 Connectivity and Accessibility

The site is well connected within Echuca's established street grid. Vehicle access is provided directly from Sturt Street, a local collector road, offering convenient entry and exit for staff. A public car park immediately to the south of the site provides ample parking for court visitors.

- Pedestrian connections are available via continuous footpaths linking the site to nearby Parking.
- Public transport access to the site is available via local bus routes operating along nearby streets within a short walking distance.
- The site and building have been designed to provide accessibility for people using wheelchairs. The building includes accessible entries, clear wayfinding, and compliant gradients throughout, ensuring inclusivity and easy movement across the site.

The proposal strengthens connectivity and accessibility by improving links within the site and to the surrounding public realm:

- Wide, continuous footpaths are provided to accommodate prams, wheelchairs, and shared use by cyclists.
- Clear sight lines and high visibility ensure safety and comfort for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists.
- Universal design principles are applied to create an inclusive and legible environment for all users.



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3.2 Landscaping

The proposed landscaping is designed to improve the civic character of the site. It creates functional and welcoming outdoor spaces. A mix of formal and informal planting provides shade and visual interest. Durable, low-maintenance native plants support biodiversity and reflect Echuca's regional identity. Planting is arranged to maintain clear sightlines and good visibility, keeping the area safe and comfortable for everyone.

3.3 Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD)

The proposal integrates sustainable stormwater management measures as part of its landscape and building design, including:

- Rain gardens that filter runoff and improve water quality before discharge.
- Rainwater tanks for collection and reuse in landscape irrigation and building services.
- Integration of WSUD features within the landscape to enhance environmental performance while contributing to the aesthetic quality of the site.

4. Proposed Building Form, Height and Materials

The proposed development comprises a single-storey law court building accommodating a courtroom, support spaces, and associated facilities. The design focuses on creating a welcoming, inclusive, and accessible environment for all users, ensuring calm and intuitive circulation throughout the building. Public and staff areas are arranged around a central zone, providing a clear hierarchy of spaces and promoting legibility. Within the courtroom, features such as rounded bar tables, curved gallery seating, and a human-scaled spatial approach contribute to a more calming and inviting atmosphere that supports the comfort and dignity of all court users.

Building Form and Scale

The building adopts a simple, rectilinear form that reads as a low-lying civic pavilion within the site. The modest height reinforces compatibility with surrounding development and minimizes visual impact from adjoining streets. The overall massing is broken into articulated volumes to provide legibility and a sense of human scale.

Height

At one storey, the proposed height is consistent with the predominant built form in the immediate context. Roof lines are low and horizontal, reinforcing the civic typology while maintaining a clear visual relationship with the street.

Materials and Finishes

The architectural character is defined by durable, low-maintenance materials suitable for public use. The proposed palette includes:

- Precast concrete panels with subtle articulation and neutral tones;
- Face brickwork to reinforce texture and contextual warmth;
- Metal cladding for lightweight roof and fascia elements; and
- Glazing to enhance transparency and passive surveillance at the public entry.

These materials were chosen to be sustainable, durable, visually appealing, and suitable for a civic building, while fitting in with nearby public structures.



5. Conclusion

The design has been guided by the principles of contextual sensitivity, civic identity, accessibility, and sustainability.

Contextual Response:

The building's height, proportions and materials are directly informed by the established character of the precinct. Its simple geometry and restrained articulation create a dignified civic form without dominating the street scape.

Civic Identity:

The composition of the facade and clearly defined entry emphasis openness and accessibility while maintaining the authority expected of a public institution.

Accessibility and Functionality:

The single-level plan ensures barrier-free access and efficient internal circulation. Generous glazing and open spaces provide visibility, safety, and comfort for users.

Environmental Responsiveness:

The design incorporates passive environmental strategies such as natural daylighting, shading, and cross-ventilation. Materials are selected for thermal performance and durability in the local climate.

Overall, the proposal presents a balanced civic expression that integrates sensitively within its context and aligns with the planning and design expectations for Echuca's urban area.

The proposed single-storey law courtroom at 161 Sturt Street, Echuca represents a contextually appropriate and well-considered development that responds to the site's strategic setting, surrounding land uses, and accessibility framework.

The building's form, height, and materials respect the established character of the area, while the design rationale ensures functional efficiency, accessibility, and civic quality.

The proposal will contribute positively to Echuca's built environment by delivering a durable, inclusive, and high-quality public facility consistent with the objectives of the Campaspe Planning Scheme and relevant urban design guidelines.

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Appendices

Material Board



External Walls
• Brick inlay onto precast concrete panel



External Floor
• Anston reconstituted concrete pavers



External Walls
• Precast Concrete Panel



Roof 1
• Lysaght KLIP-LOK 700 CLASSIC®
• Colour: Monument



External Wall- East Elevation
• Extruded Brick Texture



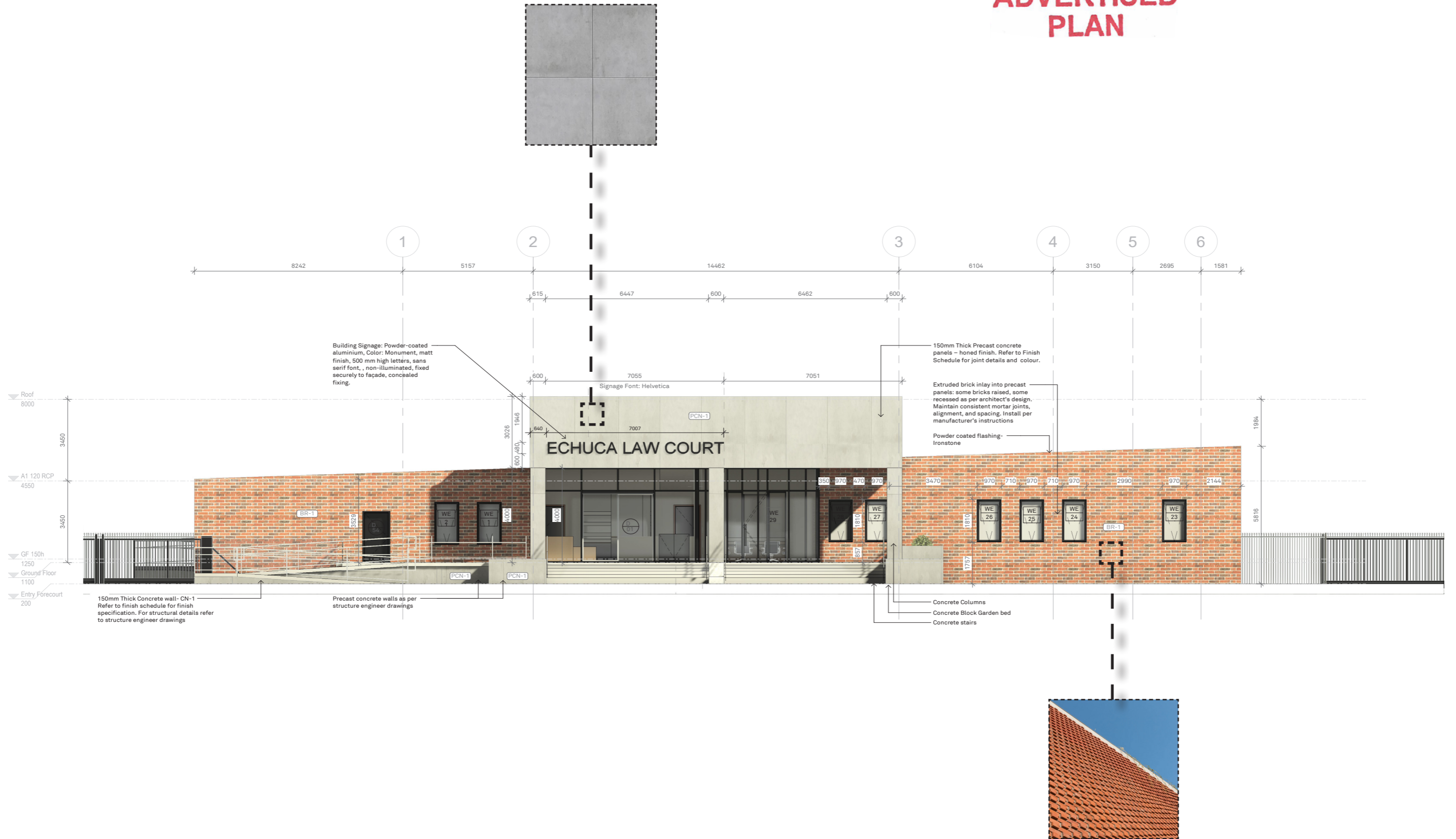
Roof 2
• Lysaght KLIP-LOK 700 CLASSIC®
• Colour: Dune

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Appendices

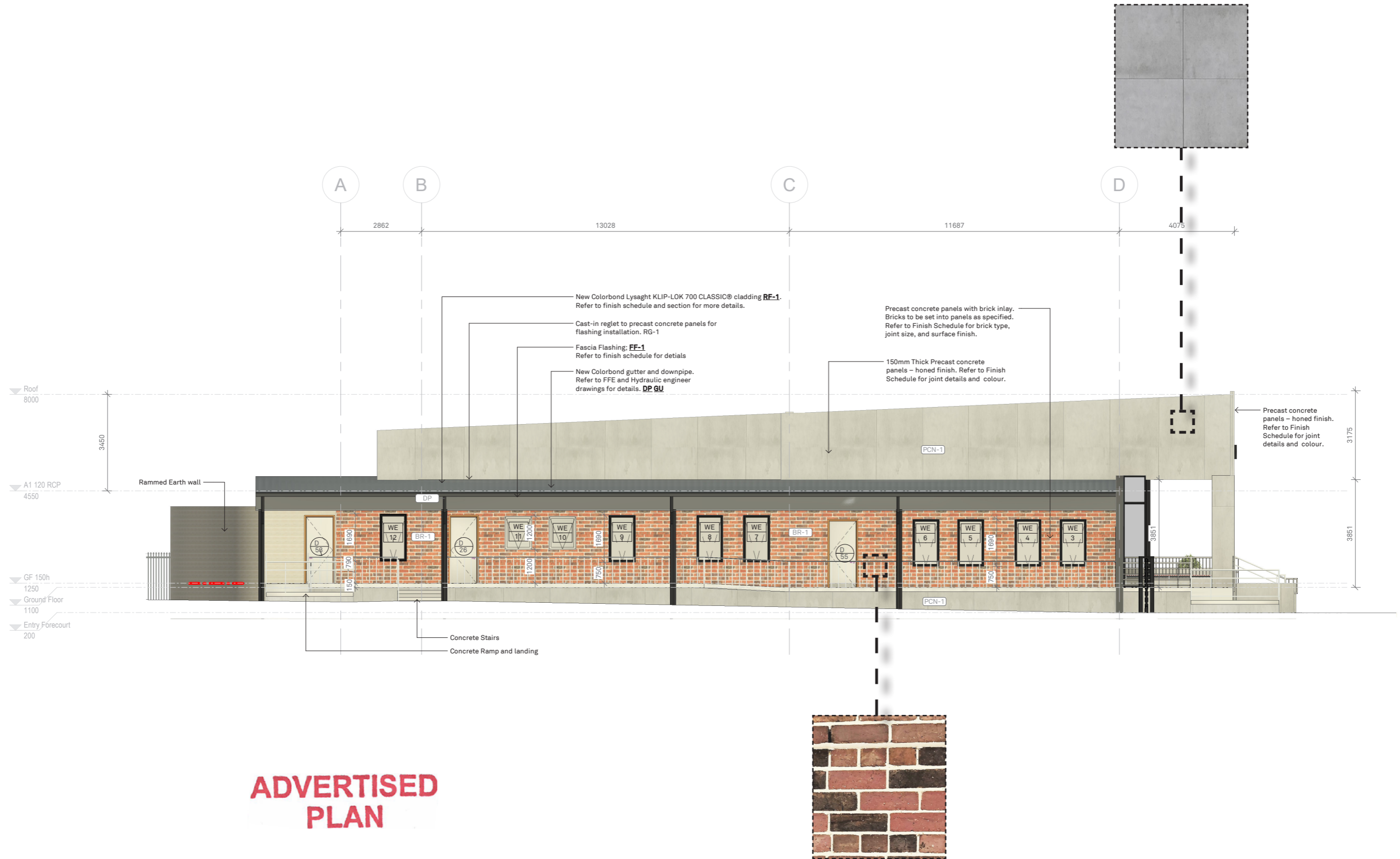
Architectural Drawings - East Elevation

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Appendices

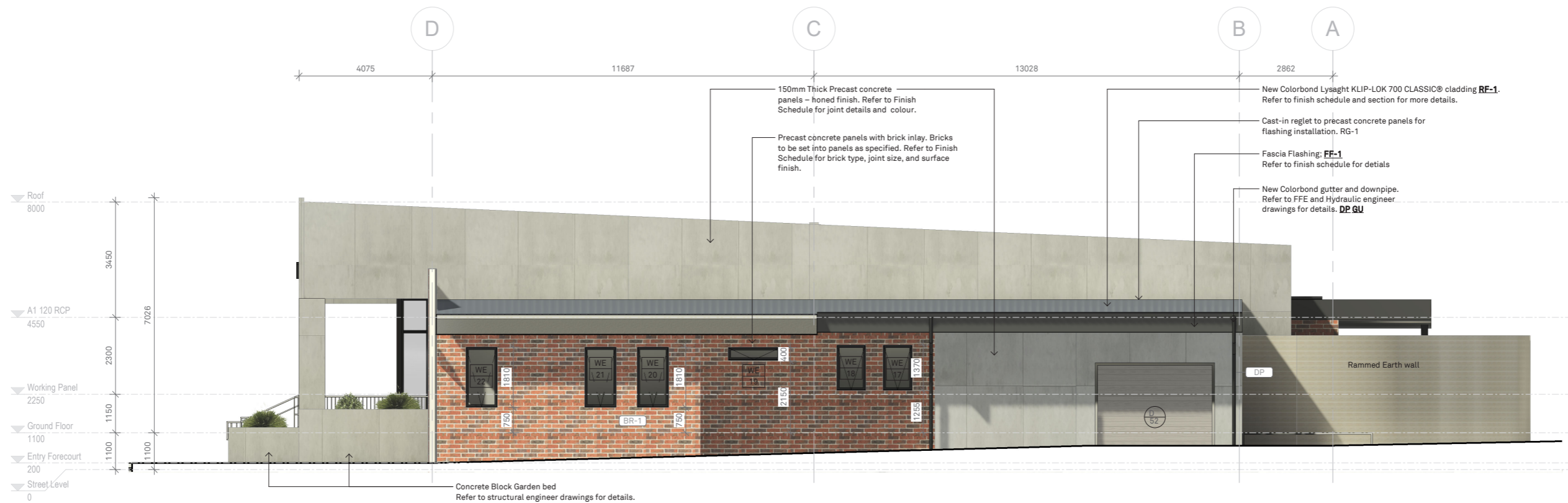
Architectural Drawings - South Elevation



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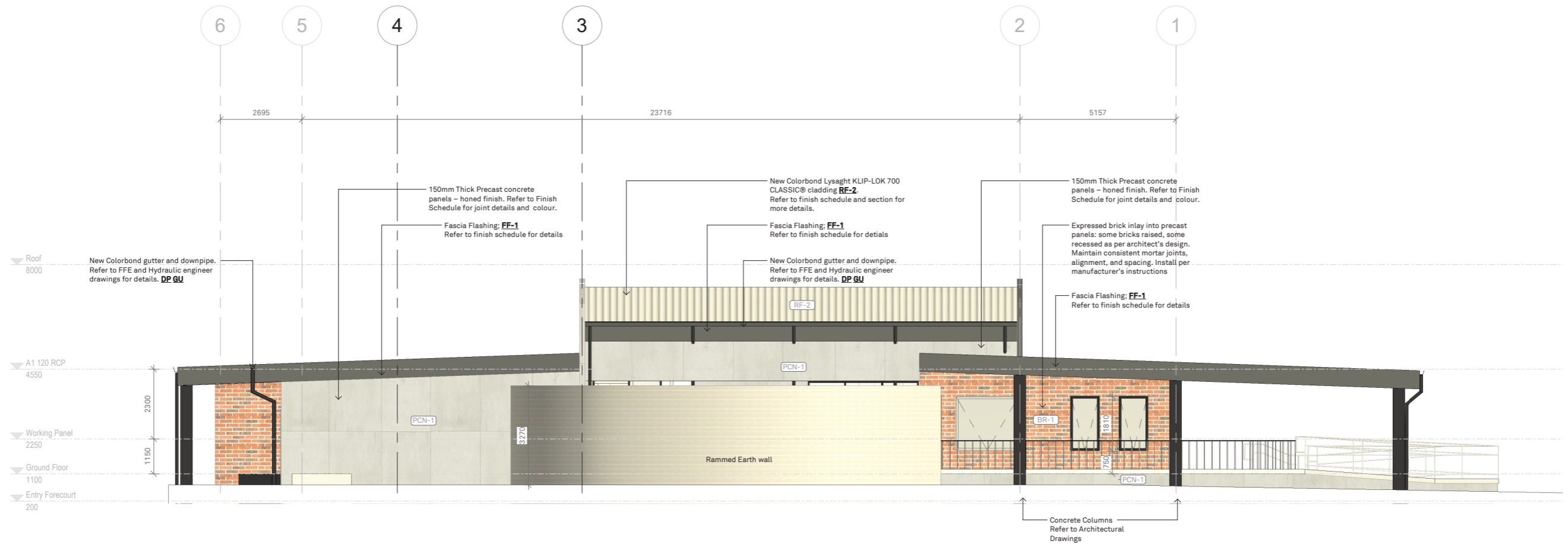
Appendices

Architectural Drawings - North Elevation



Appendices

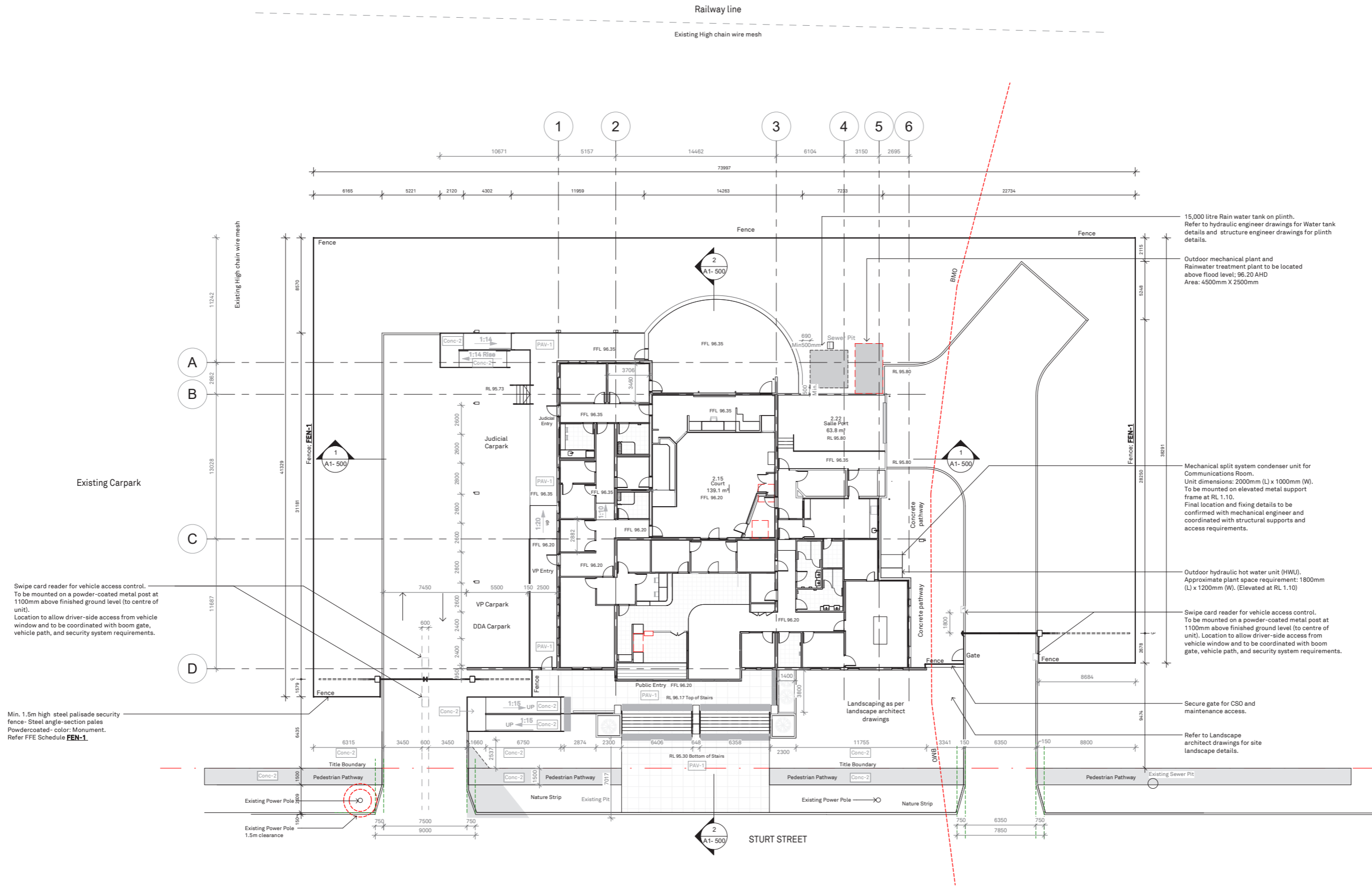
Architectural Drawings - West Elevation



Appendices

Architectural Drawings - Proposed Site Plan

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Swipe card reader for vehicle access control. To be mounted on a powder-coated metal post at 1100mm above finished ground level (to centre of unit). Location to allow driver-side access from vehicle window and to be coordinated with boom gate, vehicle path, and security system requirements.

Min. 1.5m high steel palisade security fence- Steel angle-section pales Powdercoated- color: Monument. Refer FFE Schedule **FEN-1**.

15,000 litre Rain water tank on plinth. Refer to hydraulic engineer drawings for Water tank details and structure engineer drawings for plinth details.

Outdoor mechanical plant and Rainwater treatment plant to be located above flood level: 96.20 AHD Area: 4500mm X 2500mm

Mechanical split system condenser unit for Communications Room. Unit dimensions: 2000mm (L) x 1000mm (W). To be mounted on elevated metal support frame at RL 1.10. Final location and fixing details to be confirmed with mechanical engineer and coordinated with structural supports and access requirements.

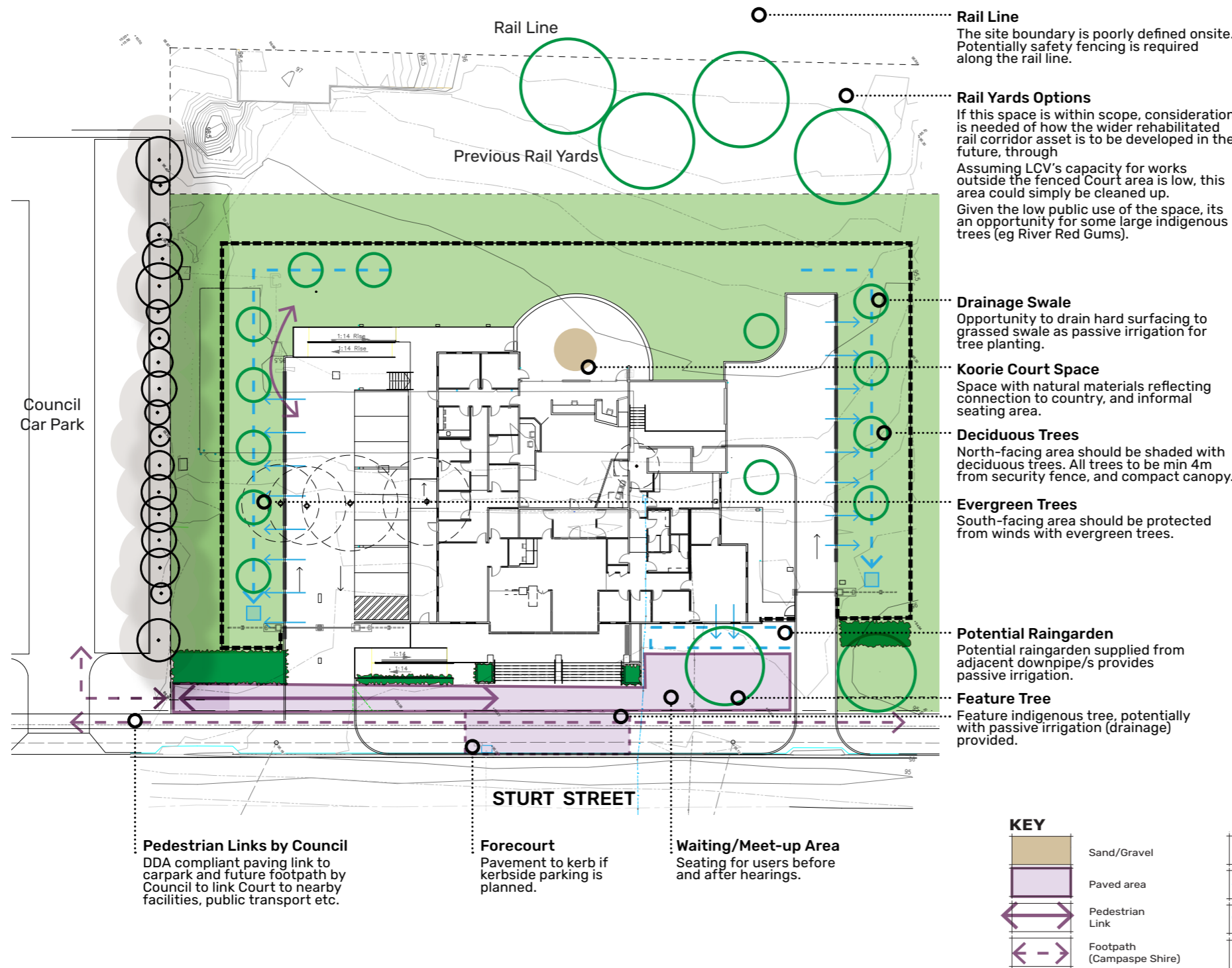
Outdoor hydraulic hot water unit (HWU). Approximate plant space requirement: 1800mm (L) x 1200mm (W). (Elevated at RL 1.10)

Swipe card reader for vehicle access control. To be mounted on a powder-coated metal post at 1100mm above finished ground level (to centre of unit). Location to allow driver-side access from vehicle window and to be coordinated with boom gate, vehicle path, and security system requirements.

Secure gate for CSO and maintenance access.

Refer to Landscape architect drawings for site landscape details.

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SITE ANALYSIS

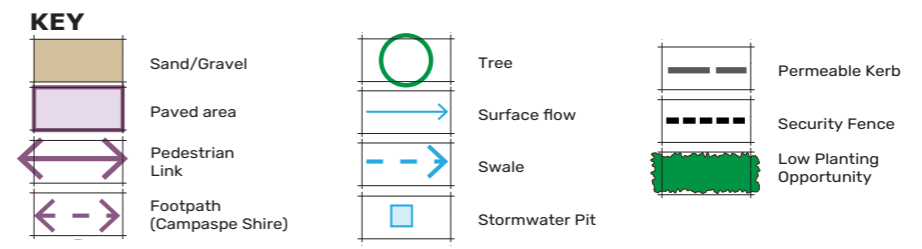
Site soils are gravel/sand over founding clay at only 200mm depth, indicating limited/no topsoil and poor conditions for growth.
 Soil classification is P due to uncontrolled fill >0.4m and 'proximity of trees that may cause abnormal moisture conditions across the site'.
 Soil Contamination report indicates low-level Category D contamination (arsenic, lead, copper) in top 100mm, however soils meet standards for use onsite or reuse as fill.
 Site is within flood overlay, and minimum building FLL is 96.20 AHD

DESIGN BRIEF

Design must be guided by the following design principles:

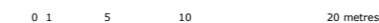
- **Human-centred** - must consider users with solutions that use natural and locally inspired materials, such as wood and stone in a cultural and physical context;
- **Legible** - must be distinctive, easy to find and navigate, site responsive and with calm transitions and simple navigation;
- **Functional** - spaces that are fit for purpose;
- **Safe** - using CPTED and noting the priority of the public, staff, custodial/police zoning;
- **Sustainable** - supporting local enterprise, creating flexible spaces for evolving service models, water and energy saving, waste reduction, long term durability, land ow maintenance.

In addition, following consultation, the landscaping generally and specifically the Koorie Court are to embody Yorta Yorta voices and culture through design, artwork, language, Indigenous landscaping, and dedicated Koorie Court facilities.



SITE ANALYSIS & OPPORTUNITIES

ECHUCA LAW COURTS
 161 Sturt Street, Echuca
 Yort Yorta Country

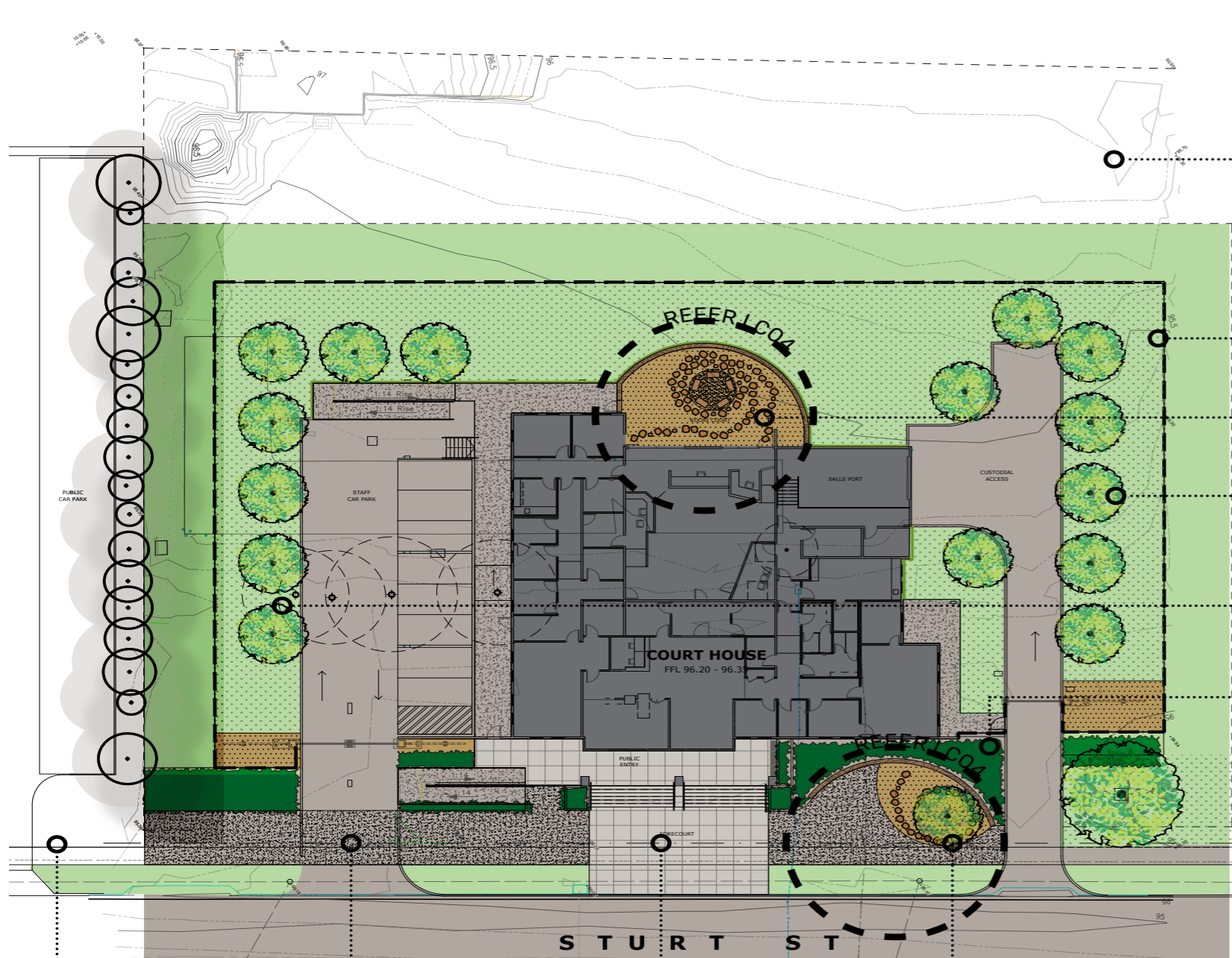


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 DATE: Aug 2025
 SCALE: 1:400 @ A3



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Pedestrian Links

Council will need to provide DDA compliant paving link to carpark and future footpath to link the Court to nearby facilities, public transport etc.

Footpaths

Exposed aggregate concrete pavement indicates link to public carpark, with pedestrian priority at staff carpark entry.

Forecourt Paving

Provide subtle wayfinding by continuing the pavement style used at the entry below the steps (potentially to back of kerb).

Forecourt Landscaping

Curved low sitting wall with a feature indigenous Weeping Myall tree (*Acacia pendula*) planted into compacted granitic gravel surface. Potential for passive irrigation & drainage. Refer LC04.

Rail Yards Area

Trim and grade to make area safe and maintainable, with a groomed gravel surface.

Drainage Swale

Paved surfaces to drain to bio-infiltration swale to provide passive irrigation for tree planting.

Koorie Court Space

Space with natural materials reflecting connection to country, and informal seating area. Refer LC04

Shade Trees

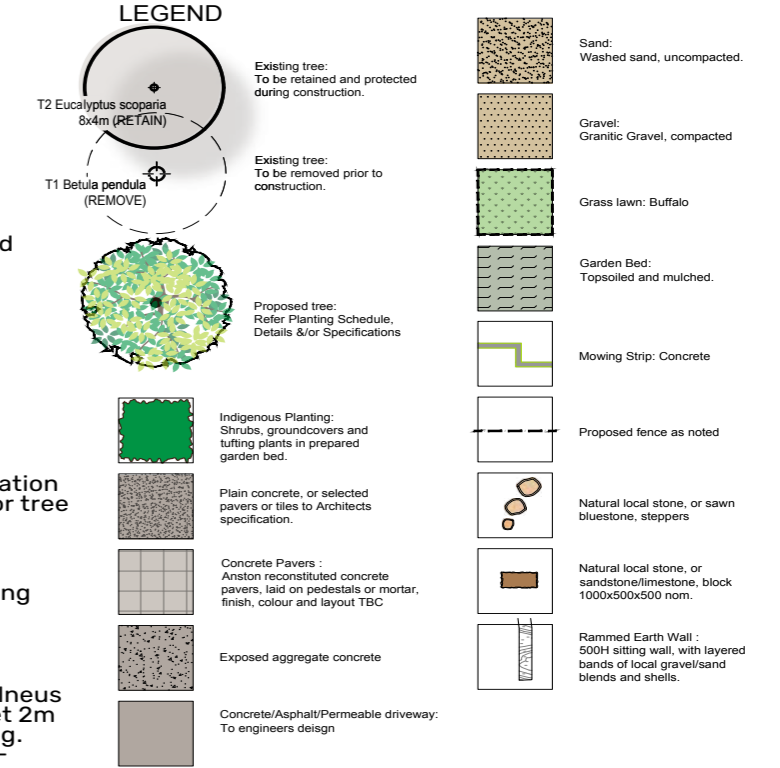
Black Kurrajong (*Brachychiton populneus* 'Jerilderie Red') provide shade, offset 2m from BOK, 4m from perimeter fencing. Trees are drought tolerant, and high-branching with an upright habit.

Evergreen Trees

South-facing area should be protected from winds with evergreen Native Frangipani trees (*Hymenosporum flavum*).

Potential Raingarden

Potential raingarden supplied from adjacent downpipe/s provides passive irrigation.



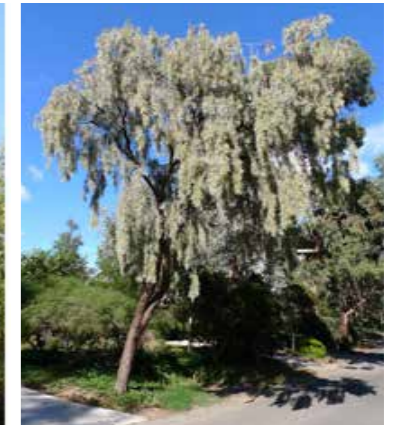
Black Kurrajong
Brachychiton populneus
'Jerilderie Red'



Native Frangipanni
Hymenosporum flavum

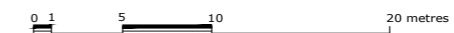


Weeping Myall
Acacia pendula



LANDSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN

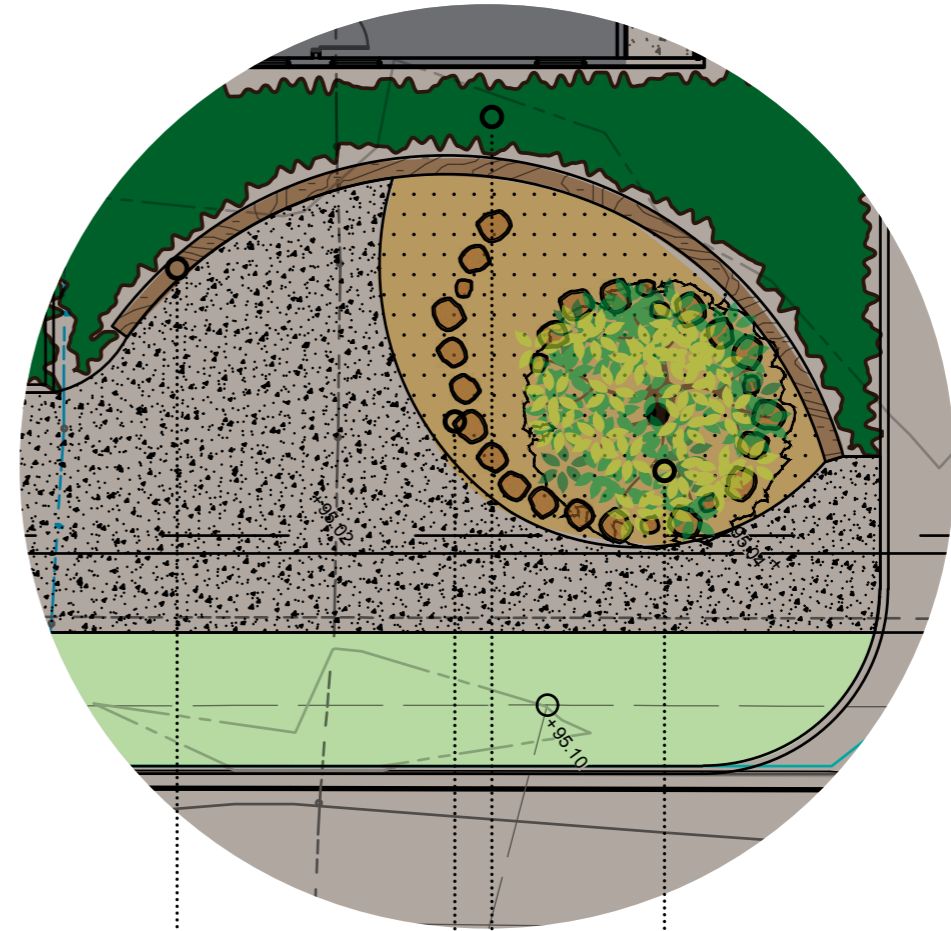
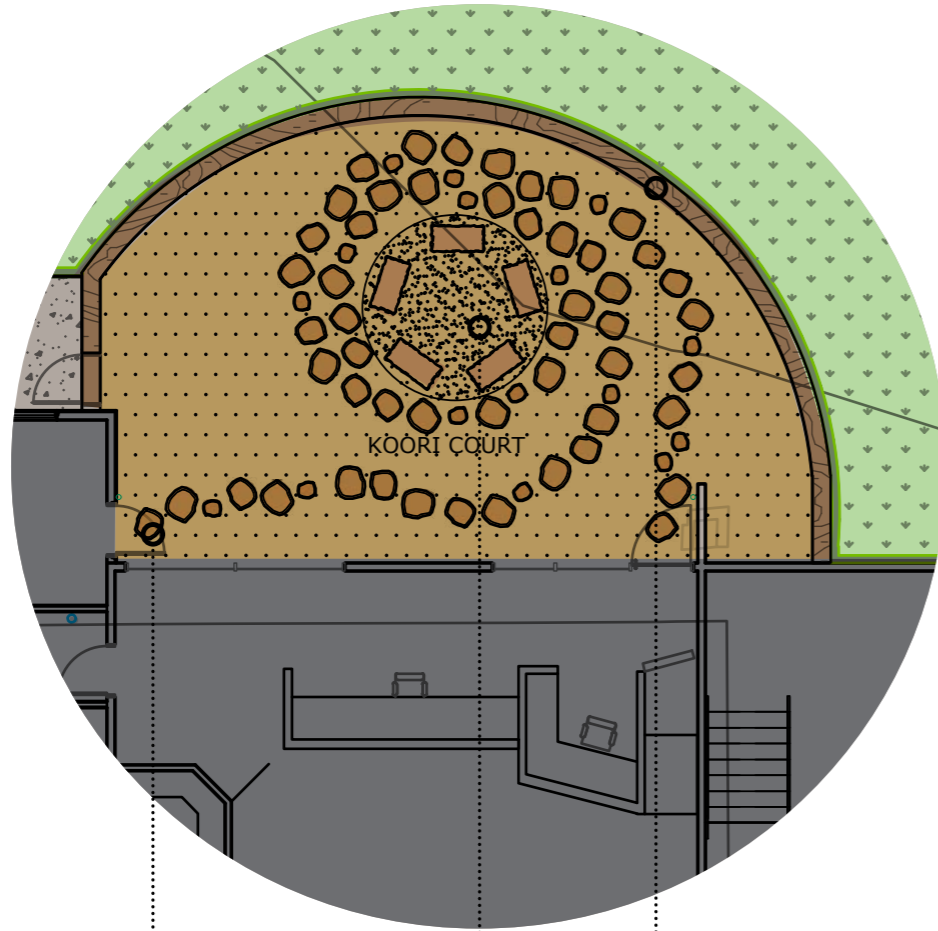
ECHUCA LAW COURTS
161 Sturt Street, Echuca
Yort Yorta Country



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REV: A
DATE: Aug 2025
SCALE: 1:400 @ A3



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Stepping Stones

Local stone or sawn bluestone steppers suggesting movement and reflection, two paths coming together and resolving around a central place for discussion.

Central Sitting Area

Local stone or roughly squared limestone/sandstone quarry rock in a circle with sand surfacing.

Rammed Earth Wall

Layered earth materials including locally sourced gravels and sands, potentially including drifts of shell, bones, charcoal etc. Layering indicates the deep historical habitation in the land.

Rammed Earth Sitting Wall

Uses the same contractor, formwork and materials as for the Koorie Courtyard.

Stepping Stones

Spiral arrangement encircling the tree.

Potential Rain Garden

Indigenous plant species using harvested rainwater or passive irrigation.

Weeping Myall

Acacia pendula



Note that design suggestions are subject to consultation with Traditional Owners. There is the opportunity for Yorta Yorta collaboration on directing the meaning and symbolism of the landscape elements, and for a local artist/craftsperson to design and produce some elements, eg the sitting stones.

DETAIL AREAS & IMAGES

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161 Sturt Street, Echuca
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DWG #: 2516 LC04
REV: A



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