

## Como House: A Vision for the Future Draft Concept for Member Consultation and Comment

November 2011



## Introduction

Constructed in 1847, Como House is our most significant heritage site. Lived in from 1864 by the Armytage family, it was acquired by the National Trust in 1959 as the National Trust's first heritage property.

Como House and Gardens presently operates as a "Museum House" with a limited number of commercial activities.

- Guided Tours of Como House, Museum Shop, Café, Education programs for schools
- A limited number of small scale private functions & larger events

In the 1970s and 1980s, Como House was a significant tourist attraction in its own right with busloads of tourists visiting the site every week.

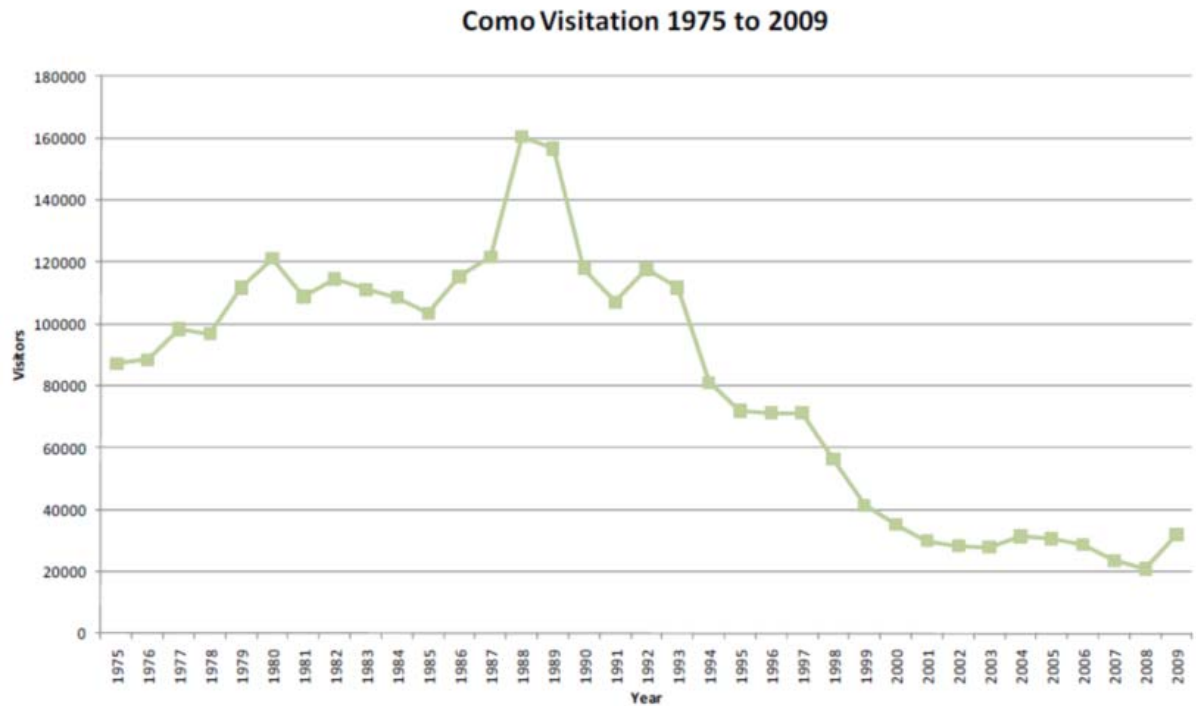
Visitation peaked at 160,000 visitors in late 80s with turnover of over \$1m per annum

The National Trust has been looking closely for some time at Como House, at how we can develop a business model that will secure its future. We are currently at a preliminary stage of concept planning, and are now seeking our member's comments.

## Key Issues

Our existing 1991 planning permit was designed to cater for the requirements of the historic site at that time. This permit severely restricts the number of activities that can be undertaken on site. The permit restricts events for over 60 people to just 4 daytime and 4 evening events per annum. In addition EPA noise requirements place additional constraints on our operation of events and functions, further limiting the use of the house and lawns.

Como has been losing money for over 20 years. The site has lost approximately one million dollars every four years. Although this rate of loss has been slowed, and we have recently established a fund dedicated to contributing to supporting the site's maintenance, the current model for operating the site is unsustainable.



The graph of visitation illustrates the change in visitation to Como since its peak in 1988.

Visitation has rebounded somewhat in recent years with a number of initiatives including costume exhibitions as part of Melbourne Fashion Festival and community events such as Paris to Provence held at the site attracting significant visitation. However the Trust is unable to expand the community events, wedding ceremonies or other functions under the current restrictive permit which it has operated within since 1991.

## **Review of Planning**

A full planning review has been undertaken at Como this year aided by external consultants Glossop Town Planning.

We have also commissioned assessment of the landscape, access, business operation, heritage significance, traffic and noise impact at the site. We have begun discussions with our neighbours, Stonnington Council, Heritage Victoria and other statutory bodies to gauge opinion and help shape our conceptual thinking.

We have also now drafted initial concepts aided by architects Formium Associates for discussion, and we would welcome our member's thoughts, comments and suggestions to assist us in the vital resolution of these issues.

## **Draft Concepts for a new Garden Pavilion and car park at Como House**

Our initial concept for Como could deliver a new planning permit, seeking;

- to retain use of the site to operate as a museum or historic house and gardens (open to the public) and for associated education and cultural appreciation purposes.
- to formalise use of the land for a Place of assembly (Function centre and Exhibition centre) by allowing events and private functions to occur.
- approval for the construction of a purpose built acoustically attenuated function and events space in the north-west corner of the site
- approval for the construction of a 72 space car park in the north east corner of the site within the grounds of Como House.
- Vary the existing vehicle access arrangements and create a new access point from Williams Road.

Attached in this document is a landscape concept plan for Como House, and two elevations showing a proposal for a garden structure in which to host functions and events.

The garden pavilion has been designed to complement the gardens and house, drawing upon the aesthetic of traditional garden structures. Its placement in the bank below and to the side of Como House is intended to minimise its visual impact.

Under current Planning guidelines, any change in permit to allow more activity at Como will now require the planning for adequate car parking. As such Formium, one of Australia's leading Landscape practices, have incorporated an environmentally sensitive car park design that works with our landscape retains our significant trees, whilst providing a new access point from Williams Road acceptable to Vic Roads.

Recognising the significance of the Como site and our role as custodian, we have sought extensive initial advice from the following experts:

- Development Plans, prepared by Formium Landscape Architects;
- Town Planning Report, prepared by Glossop Town Planning;
- Traffic Engineering Assessment, prepared by Cardno Grogan Richards;
- Acoustic Report, prepared by Marshall Day Acoustics;
- Arborist Report, prepared by Galbraith & Associates;
- Lighting Design Assessment, prepared by BRT Consulting; and
- Heritage Impact Statement, prepared by Samantha Westbrooke, Heritage Architect.

## **Member Feedback**

The National Trust is a member organisation with over 23,000 individual members in Victoria. We would welcome our member's thoughts on the proposal that has been outlined briefly in this document.

We cannot respond to all comments but please be assured that we take your opinion seriously as a valuable contribution to our planning process at this early stage in our deliberations.

**Please send you comments, views or suggestions by email or by letter addressed to "Como Comments" by 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011:**

E-mail: [comments@nattrust.com.au](mailto:comments@nattrust.com.au)

Postal Address:  
Como Comments  
National Trust Of Australia (Victoria)  
Tasma Terrace  
4 Parliament Place  
East Melbourne  
VIC 3002

| REV. | REVISED            | DATE   |
|------|--------------------|--------|
| B    | PRELIMINARY LAYOUT | JAN 08 |
| C    | PRELIMINARY LAYOUT | JAN 08 |
| D    | PLANNING PERMITS   | AUG 08 |



**PROJECT**  
**COMO HOUSE**  
**SOUTH YARRA**

**FORM**  
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NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA  
 ACTING TRUSTEES  
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PROJECT NUMBER  
 1707

DATE  
 AUG 2011

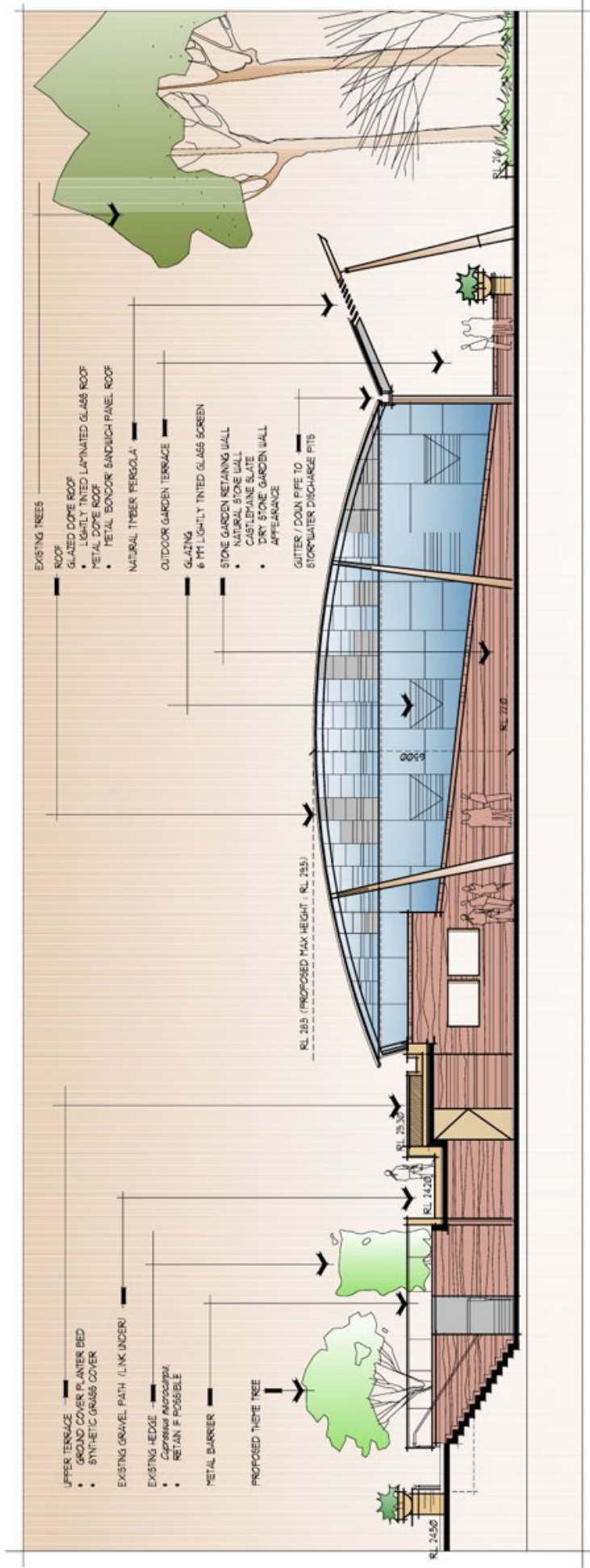
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DRAWING TITLE  
 PROPOSED SITE PLAN  
 PROPOSED GARDEN PAVILION  
 PROPOSED CARPARK  
 CAR PARK

1707 LC2  
 REV D

| REV | NO.                     | DATE     |
|-----|-------------------------|----------|
| B   | PRELIMINARY / DIRECTION | AUG 2011 |
| C   | PRELIMINARY / DIRECTION | AUG 2011 |
| D   | PLANNING NAME           | AUG 2011 |



**NORTH - SOUTH SECTION  
GARDEN PAVILION**

PROJECT  
**COMO HOUSE**  
SOUTH YARRA

PROJECT NUMBER  
1707

DATE  
AUG 2011

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COMO HISTORIC HERITAGE LAND

FORM ARCHITECTS

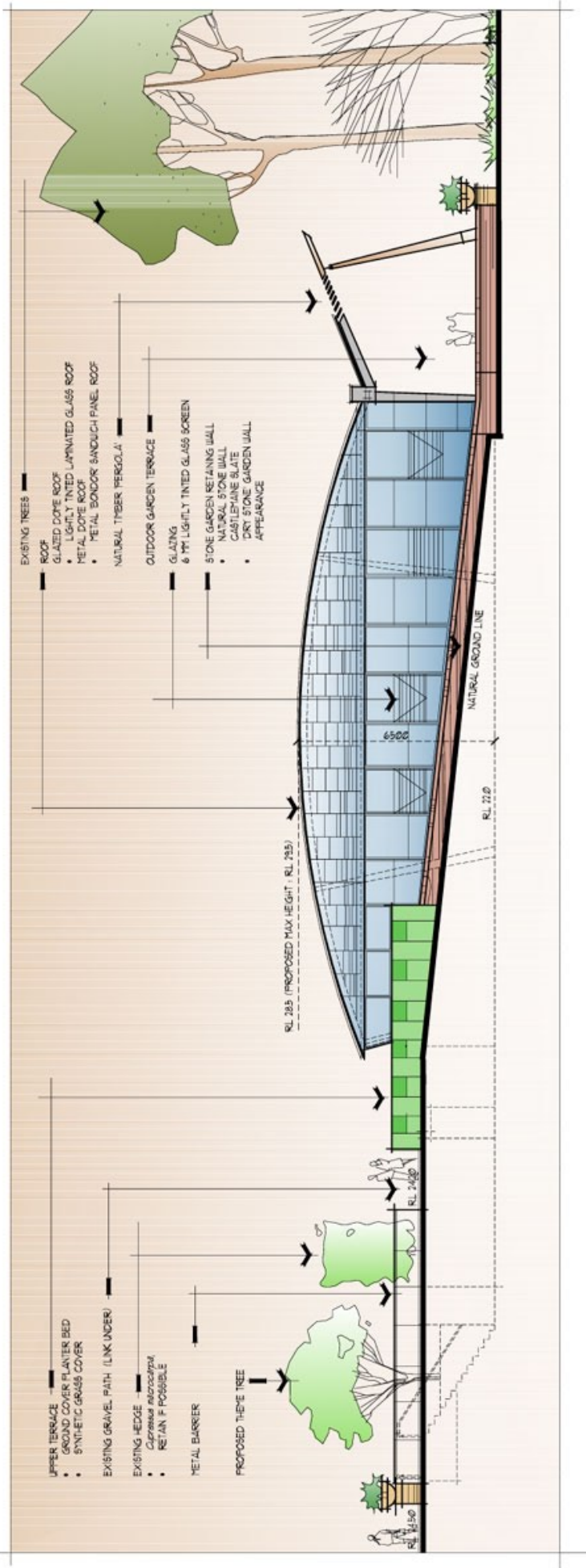
DESIGNED BY  
25 BRIDGE ROAD  
PO BOX 205  
SOUTH YARRA VIC 3176  
WWW.COMOARCHITECTS.COM

DRAWN BY  
GARDEN PAVILION  
NORTH SOUTH SECTION

PROJECT NUMBER  
1707.LC.11

REV D

| REV. | DATE     | BY  | CHKD. |
|------|----------|-----|-------|
| A    | 17/07/18 | LCB | LCB   |
| B    | 17/07/18 | LCB | LCB   |
| C    | 17/07/18 | LCB | LCB   |
| D    | 17/07/18 | LCB | LCB   |



## EAST ELEVATION GARDEN PAVILION

PROJECT: **COMO HOUSE**  
SOUTH YARRA

PROJECT NUMBER: 1707

DATE: AUG 2011

SCALE / SIZE AS SHOWN: 1:125

0 5 10M

FORMWORK ARCHITECTS

COMO HISTORICAL HERITAGE

NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

DRAWING TITLE: PROPOSED GARDEN PAVILION EAST WEST ELEVATION

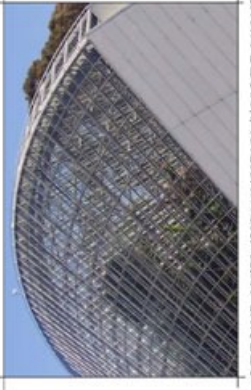
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REV D

| NO. | DATE                     | BY     | CHKD |
|-----|--------------------------|--------|------|
| A   | PRELIMINARY / DISCUSSION | JAN 08 |      |
| B   | PRELIMINARY / DISCUSSION | JAN 08 |      |
| C   | PLANNING / BIDD          | AUG 08 |      |



THEME IMAGE CONSERVATORY / GARDEN PAVILION THEME CHARACTER



THEME IMAGE CONSERVATORY / GARDEN PAVILION THEME CHARACTER



DOPE ROOF: TINTED GLAZING



DOPE ROOF: GREY ZINC METAL SANDWICH PANEL



RETAINING WALL: NATURAL 'DRYSTONE' GARDEN WALL



OUTDOOR GARDEN TERRACE CANOPY: TIMBER PERGOLA



PAVILION FLOOR: POLISHED CONCRETE WITH AN 'EARTHY' AGGREGATE



OUTDOOR GARDEN TERRACE: SAUN BLUESTONE WITH CRAZY PATTERN



UPPER TERRACE: SYNTHETIC GRASS COVER / GROUND COVER PLANTER BED



BIOSWALE



BIOSWALE GARDEN BED - STORMWATER DISCHARGE PITS



GRAVEL PATHS

THEME IMAGES + MATERIALS

