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Bendigo

Sacred Heart Cathedral – Cathedral Square

Design Report



Artist view of the proposed building and landscape on High Street

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5 September 2024




Revision	Date	Author	Issue
A	26.03.2024	BM	Report prepared based on an early report from Studio B
B	20.06.2024	BM & CDOS	Jointly prepared by BM and CDOS
C	03.09.2024	BM & CDOS	Prepared by Johnstaff, CDOS & BM from Town Planning Letter & RFI's

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The purpose of this report is to support the architectural drawings that will be submitted as part of the planning permit application to the Greater Bendigo City Council following a meeting and discussions on Tuesday 13th August 2024 from 2pm – 3:30pm and request for information (RFI's) issued in late July 2024.



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Context

The subject site at 46-50 High Street Bendigo lies on the principal entry corridor to the Bendigo city centre, below the spectacular Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The Bendigo City Centre Plan 2020 states the following for the site's precinct:

- *Explore opportunities to connect and integrate the Sacred Heart Cathedral's public space with Wattle Square*
- *Recognise the significance of the Sacred Heart Cathedral and support its role as a landmark and destination*
- *Continue to improve the public realm presentation of High Street to enhance the arrival experience to Bendigo and the City Centre.*

The site's topography rises by 9.5m from High Street to the base of the Cathedral and a further 3m to its floor level. This steep incline provides the opportunity for the site to be thoughtfully developed without adversely impacting Cathedral views.

A large grassed public open space of crown land managed by Council sits directly to the west of the site. This is complemented by another parkland, with many mature trees, on the west side of Wattle Street. Commercial premises occupy the south side of High Street and continue into the CBD. Established residences flank the rear of the Cathedral.

Whilst the site is outside the Cathedral's heritage listing, it is commercially zoned (C1Z) and within a Design & Development Overlay (DDO20) and the Short Street Precinct Heritage Overlay (HO12). The land directly in front of the Cathedral has had a range of uses since the gold rush days of the mid 1800's. It is ready for redevelopment.



Aerial view of the Cathedral site



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Opportunity and Proposed Facility

The Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst covers north central and northeast Victoria with the central office located in Bendigo. The Catholic Education Sandhurst office, which oversees 57 schools across the Diocese, is also located in Bendigo. These two related entities would like to be co-located in a common building at the Cathedral precinct.

The Sacred Heart Cathedral parish needs an updated Parish Hall for community gatherings. The current hall built in the 1960's has little architectural merit and requires substantial refurbishment. Its location is difficult to access and restricts and compromises the extent of land available for development.

The site is Commercial 1 Zone in Council's planning scheme to encourage development and activation at the entrance to Bendigo's CBD. In response to this desire, and to enable the proposed development to be commercially viable, the Diocese has contracted with the owners of three similar successful tourist destinations who will establish the Bendigo Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery within the proposed development. In addition to commercial activation of High Street, this tenant will provide a known tourism drawcard to complement Bendigo's other tourist attractions, create demand for the hospitality industry and create new jobs.

The site also offers the opportunity for the public to enjoy the Cathedral architecture and its landscape setting, particularly as it adjoins crown land at Wattle Street. The Diocese is keen for the development to be built into the landscape below the Cathedral and provide community open space parklands to enhance the aesthetic, accessibility and use of the precinct.

Design Philosophy

Building on the theme of Bendigo being *a city wrapped around a park*, the design philosophy for this project is to wrap the landscape around the building whilst embedding the building into the topography. The intent is to provide a building with stepped and landscaped terraces that are publicly accessible as an extension of the parkland and will be subservient to the Cathedral. This is a gift to the wider community, and it is intended that it will be an attractive destination for all to enjoy. The west and north building frontages are designed for viewing the parkland and Cathedral from an elevated landscape below which the building is located.

Other elements of the Bendigo City Centre Plan have been adopted in the design including landscaping, greening, shading, stormwater re-use, pedestrian access, bicycle parking, accessibility, mixed uses and appropriate building design and mass.

To enhance the Cathedral's features and be sympathetic to its material palette, the proposed Level 3 colonnade references the Cathedral with perforated metal arches acting as shade screens to match the spring of the Cathedral's cloister arches, which provides a modern silhouette and contextual story.

The Cathedral's monolithic materiality was designed with two stone tones. The bulk of the Cathedral body is constructed of a lighter sandstone while the foundations are darker textured blocks for mass fill. The proposed development's contemporary design carries through these materials and colour palette in the building and landscaping.

The concrete horizontal bands that step down the site linking with High Street will have a pigment added to match the warmer sandstone features.

Granite and concrete paving on the belvedere will align with the darker tones of the Cathedral's textured blocks and landscaping.

The shade fins on the façade of three elevations will mimic the strata found in a rock face. Contemporary Bendigo was founded on gold mining due to the geological conditions of the anticline exposing gold-bearing quartz. The exposed gold anticline will be celebrated in elevations with a gold-coloured trim on the front edge of the shade fins, creating a strong sense of local identity. Other local new examples of shade fins are observed at the Bendigo Bank head office, Galkangu and at Bendigo Hospital.

The site is at a key intersection of commercial, residential, public open space and heritage buildings and uses. The building and landscaping design responds to each of these interfaces, resulting in all four sides of the building being designed and activated accordingly.

The four-storey side of the building facing the corner of High and Short Streets is commercially focused and shares similar mass to other nearby CBD buildings, as shown in the site analysis drawing (P003), yet it also reflects the High Street boulevard intent of high-quality mixed use, higher scale-built form, and active street frontages, as specified in the planning scheme's Design and Development Overlay (DDO20). A canopy is proposed along the street frontages, reflecting that feature in many other buildings in the precinct, as well as providing protection from the elements and separating the shop frontages at street level from the offices above.

Short Street is a steep local road that transitions to an older residential zone. The proposed building scales down to two storeys opposite the neighbouring residences, and its height remains below, and subservient to, the heritage Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The west side of the development responds to the adjacent crown land parkland and the views to and from the Cathedral. To maximise this opportunity for community use and reflection of the Cathedral, levels 1 and 2 on High Street are active retail and café spaces, including outdoor dining. The church-related offices on levels 3 and 4 are set back towards Short Street with substantial landscaped outdoor terraces and belvedere linking them to the public open parkland.

The new Parish Hall is designed to present as a stand-alone pavilion on a similar level to the base of the Cathedral. The new location provides good access and affords a better interface and views to and from the Cathedral, as well as the community open spaces.

The desire to construct the building within the existing topography provided an opportunity include an underground car park at level 2. Addressing the constraint of vehicles not accessing the site from High Street, the car park entry is achieved directly into level 2 from Short Street.

The building and landscaping materials, as described in the architectural drawings (P300, P301, P302), complement the surrounding area, including the Cathedral structure and Bendigo's urban design colour palettes. The landscaping design has been created by TCL Landscape Architects who were selected for their experience with many significant public open spaces, including Bendigo's Garden for the Future.



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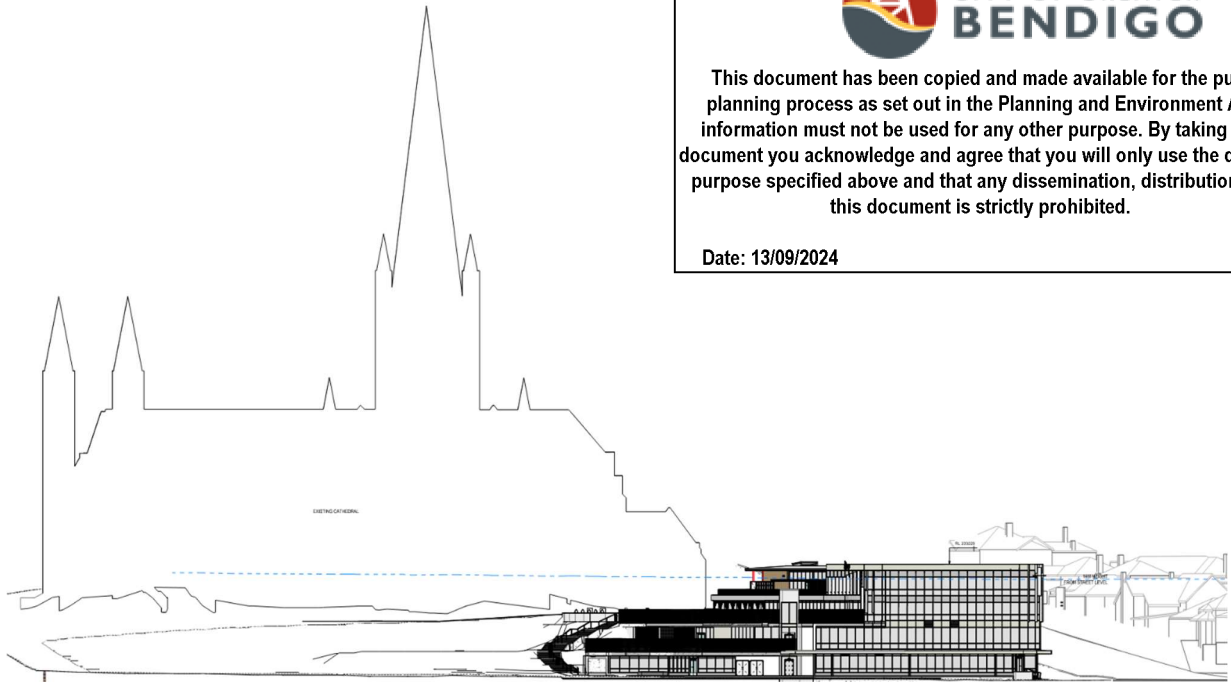
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Architectural drawing showing scale of proposed building in neighbourhood context



Artist view from Cathedral, looking towards the public terraces



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Design Description

The building and landscaping design has been carefully considered to respect its different relationships: Cathedral, public open space, High Street boulevard, CBD, and residences. To achieve this, the structure and landscaping is designed to be a single building, but with a number of purposes and “faces”:

- The commercial aspects of retail tenancies are on Level 1 addressing and activating High and Short Streets. A shade and weather protection canopy are provided over the footpaths and the façade is mostly glazed, to display activity inside.
- The café on Level 2 extends to outdoor dining overlooking the public open space, and an ice cream and coffee kiosk attracts people to the site.
- The church-related offices on Levels 3 and 4 face towards the Cathedral and are linked with expansive public open terraces and pedestrian links between the levels.
- The Parish Hall becomes very accessible from all levels, yet is subservient to the Cathedral.
- The overall building form reduces in height as it goes up Short Street to blend with the neighbouring residences.

The principal tenant for levels 1 and 2 will be the new Bendigo Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery, which is anticipated to become a premier tourist destination, as proven at the owner’s businesses in the Yarra Valley, on the surf coast and on the Mornington Peninsula. Level 1 will include a retail showroom, a chocolate-making kitchen with display window and a chocolate experience room for education. The Chocolaterie will operate a café on level 2, together with an ice-cream and coffee kiosk, an ice-cream and pastry kitchen visible to the public and another experience room. There will be café seating indoors and, on the terrace, overlooking the parkland. The café and retail space will be connected internally by a staircase and a lift, and externally by a public lift and steps.

A second retail tenant will occupy approximately 200m² on the Level 1 corner fronting both High and Short Streets.

An office tenant will occupy approximately 200m² on Level 2, also on the High and Short Streets corner.

The balance of level 2 area will include 35 secure staff car parking spaces inside accessible only from Short Street, a loading bay, waste bins storage, and end-of-trip shower and locker facilities for staff. A total of almost 50 bike spaces will be provided across three levels of the site.

Levels 3 and 4 will provide integrated, sustainable and fit-for-purpose offices for the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst and Catholic Education Sandhurst. These offices will overlook the landscaped terraces towards the Cathedral, as well as glazing providing natural light to open plan offices facing High and Short Streets. Level 4 will also include a 130 patron Parish Hall which will be fully accessible from the Cathedral driveway off Short Street, and from the terraces, public lift and landscaped steps to High Street.

A key feature of the development is to provide landscaped community open spaces that link to the Cathedral and the adjacent crown land. This is provided at all four levels with a sweeping external staircase and a public lift for accessibility. Seating and bicycle parking is provided, as well as shade trees and lower vegetation to improve the amenity. It is unavoidable for compliance to include an electrical kiosk on the site, but its visual will be diminished by appropriate vegetation screening.

Response to Design Objectives of the Design & Development Overlay (DD20)

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- *To promote High Street as a key boulevard entrance into central Bendigo that is characterised by an established avenue of street trees and is flanked by high-quality mixed-use development.*
 - Sacred Heart Cathedral and glimpses of it as people approach Bendigo's CBD along the High Street boulevard is maintained.
 - The development transitions in height from the parkland to the CBD by stepped, publicly accessible podium landscape and terraces which enhance Cathedral views and improve access.
 - The tourism generated by the Chocolaterie & Ice creamery will activate the parkland and shopfront along High Street, and the corner retail tenancy will attract more pedestrian activity from the CBD.

- *To encourage higher scale, built form that promotes diversity in land uses with active frontages along High and Short Streets.*
 - The retail tenancies and café complement the CBD retail activity and invite both respite and interpretation of the Cathedral architecture.
 - The new building has glazed shop fronts on High and Short Streets, protected by a pedestrian canopy over the footpath.
 - The building is not as high as the nearby Bendigo Bank building or the dominant Bendigo Communications Building, which are observed from many aspects at the Cathedral site.
 - The building's higher (medium, four storey) scale-built form only presents on the southeast corner of the site to tie it in with other nearby developments, respond to the commercial zoning and medium scale to reinforce the High Street boulevard character.
 - The development provides a diverse range of occupancies: retail, café, offices, public open space, internal car parking and a community hall.

- *To encourage lower scale (or transitional) development where a commercial site interfaces with a residential property or residential area, abuts a building with heritage significance, or provides protected views to the Central Deborah Poppet Head and Sacred Heart Cathedral.*
 - There are only four double-storey established residences that interface with the building, albeit on the opposite side of Short Street. They are set back on their blocks and are further separated by established garden and street trees. However, the building mass diminishes in height as it advances up Short Street, resulting in a similar height to the residences opposite.
 - The proposed development is just over one storey high at its northern end where it abuts Sacred Heart Cathedral. This connection is enhanced by the introduction of welcoming stairs and a public lift to provide connection between the Cathedral and the hall. The building's lower levels also provide a public landscaped gentle path and belvedere terrace to interface with the heritage Cathedral.
 - Views to Sacred Heart Cathedral are available from numerous vantage points across Bendigo. The building on this site is designed to step down from the High/Short Street corner, and into the landscape, to provide more viewing opportunities and open spaces that look up to the Cathedral. In particular, the main public entry point to the site along High Street, as well as the main approach from the west, provides clear direct views to the Cathedral.

- *To provide car parking that has minimal visual impact on the streetscape.*
 - Staff carparking is provided completely out of sight inside level 2. The only vehicle access to the car park is from Short Street, as Department of Transport would not entertain ingress/egress from High Street, and it

would have detracted from the pedestrian and shopfront activation at that level. Basement parking is not viable due to the underground rock, and flood levels.

- No external car parking is proposed on the site. The landscaping and façade features are more attractive than vehicles and car parks.
 - The loading bay for delivery of goods is located out of site inside the building's car park.
 - Rubbish bins for the tenancies are also stored inside the building next to the car park on Level 2.
- *To protect and enhance the avenue of street trees.*
 - Street trees will be protected.
 - Additional trees will be planted on the site to enhance the street boulevard.
 - The building form is deliberately stepped down the High Street frontage towards the public open space.

Key Design Issues Considered

In addition to the specific Design and Development Overlay objectives addressed above, the following architectural design elements have been incorporated.

- **Siting of the Development**
 - Development follows the contours and is concentrated at the eastern edge of the site to allow the focus to be across the parkland towards the Cathedral.
- **Views to the Cathedral are protected**
 - The building has been designed to step down the site to the west so that the Cathedral remains the focus from all directions.
 - The building design provides accessible public open spaces that afford more opportunities to view the Cathedral.
- **Building and landscaping achieve excellence in architecture and urban design.**

The proposed building and landscaping, while subservient to the Cathedral, provides a high-quality design. Each façade responds appropriately to its surroundings: terrace gardens face onto the open parkland to the west; to the north a single storey Parish Hall pavilion faces towards the Cathedral; the four level High Street façade lines the public boulevard; and the east façade decreases in height in response to the adjacent steep residential street. High quality finishes have been selected, befitting such an important site between the Cathedral and the entrance to Bendigo.

 - The design incorporates many Environmentally Sustainable Design (ESD) features including façade designs (shading, glazing), planning to allow future flexibility, rainwater harvesting, solar PV, motion sensor and lux limiting lighting, drought tolerant vegetation providing biophilic benefits, reduced and light-coloured hard surfaces, high insulation standards, airlocked entrances, canopies, pergolas, secure bicycle parking and end-of-trip facilities.
 - Australian Indigenous considerations are reflected in design aspects such as community gathering places, and building and landscaping shapes, selections and colours.
 - Landscape Architects T.C.L. (Taylor Cullity Lethlean) were selected for their expertise and experience in quality design. Of local note, they designed Bendigo's Garden for the Future.
 - The open forecourt and paved area around the main entrance to the Chocolaterie and Ice creamery on High Street provides a fluid set back and increased flow and access to and from the open parkland and the staircase to the belvedere and Cathedral.
 - A sheltered canopy over the High and Short Street footpaths allows activation of the ground level and tenancies.

- **The building provides a sympathetic response to the scale, form and detailing of other buildings in the Precinct.**
 - The building form addresses the High/Short Street corner as a continuum of the commercial activity from the CBD. Whilst the building is much lower than the nearby Bendigo Bank and Bendigo Communications buildings, its corner mirrors the curve and height of the former YMCA building diagonally opposite.
 - The scale of the Parish Hall is consistent with Cathedral ancillary buildings and is lower than the adjacent Cathedral sacristy.
 - The new building steps up the landscape from the west, providing a smooth interface to the crown land and the more formal landscaping directly in front of the Cathedral.
- **The proposed design responds to the existing urban precinct form and character**
 - The new building transitions from a landscape adjoining the green open space to the west to a building of similar height to the neighbouring commercial and residential buildings to the east.
 - The design flows from the more traditional Cathedral to a modern curved corner piece with contextual colours interlinking.
- **The building's mass responds to the surrounding context and pedestrian experience**
 - The pedestrian experience is enhanced by providing accessible access to the Cathedral from High Street without needing to traverse Short Street (1 in 8 slope).
 - The building height was carefully considered to enable a viable four-storey development. However, the highest point above street level is only on the High/Short Street corner.
 - The mass is further broken by designing in a solid metal transom at level 2 that separates a two storey above that uses glass spandrels at levels 3 & 4.
 - The building height tapers down going up Short Street, and steps down to two storeys part way along High Street.
 - The level 1 floor level needs to be about 700mm higher than the footpath on the corner to clear the AHD 1% (1 in 100 years) flood level.
 - A low plinth of 400mm has been added to level 1 to assist protecting the building from recently-assessed higher climate change flood levels.
- **The development promotes safe and lively public spaces**
 - The High and Short Street footpaths are activated with retail frontages and are protected by a canopy.
 - Careful consideration has been given to full accessibility across the entire site with the staircases, public lifts and ramps.
 - Lighting and CCTV will improve safety around the building and on the landscaped areas.
 - Vegetation selection is considered to eliminate hiding places and enable lines-of-sight to all areas.
 - The public terrace will provide opportunities for community to gather.
 - Seating is provided on the landscaped terraces.
 - The terraces provide quality views to the Cathedral, and across the parkland and the city.
 - The public lifts will be partially glazed for personal security and for wayfinding.
 - Glazed airlocks and tenancies provide transparent views from inside to out.
 - Careful Point of Sale and CCTV designed into the scheme and tenancies.
 - Plant rooms are flush with facade minimising hiding recesses.
- **The proposed materials relate to the urban precinct character**
 - Stone paving reflects the stone blocks of the Cathedral and are based on Council's "City Centre Palette".
 - The shade screens on the facade are articulated, like the landscape, and assist to moderate the scale of the building.
 - Concrete horizontal bands and sweeping staircase have a pigment to match the Cathedral's sandstone features.

- The Parish Hall has timber-look cladding and a CLT / glulam column and beam roof to reflect the vernacular.
- **Building setbacks**
 - The level 1 street frontages are activated with glazing under the footpath canopy.
 - The retail entrance on the corner is set back with welcoming stairs (and a nearby accessible entrance).
 - The main entrance to the Chocolaterie is setback under the overhanging terrace above.
 - The public lift entrance is recessed and highlighted for wayfinding.
 - The realignment of the Short Street footpath provides interest to its interface with the building, identifying the various staff and vehicle entries.
- **Acceptable parking arrangements and provisions**
 - 35 staff car parking spaces are provided inside the building on level 2.
 - A parking study undertaken on a Friday and Saturday identified 560 on-street parking bays available within 200m of the site. The highest-use times during those days demonstrated that the bays were only 76% occupied, leaving 136 free spaces.
 - Tourist visitors are likely to park at either end of the tramline and incorporate their Chocolaterie and Cathedral visit with other tourist attractions.
 - The previously approved planning permit for this site had no off-street parking.
 - Bicycle parking is provided at three levels outside, and within the secure staff carpark. Dedicated end-of-trip facilities are available for staff.
 - An improved accessible drop-off zone for patrons of the new parish hall is provided.



Artist view of the corner of High Street and Short Street



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Access is a Key Consideration

Sacred Heart Cathedral is prominently built on a hill with a steep rise up from High Street. Improving access between the CBD and each level of the proposed building and the Cathedral was a key consideration in the design.

The public lift on High Street provides direct accessibility between High Street and the café terrace on level 2 and the public belvedere on level 3. The belvedere in turn provides level access to the Catholic Diocese and education offices and the Cathedral.

The Chocolaterie and Ice creamery is accessed directly from High Street. It also has an internal stair and lift between its two levels, with the café opening out onto a terrace halfway up to the belvedere, overlooking the parkland.

The corner retail tenancy on Level 1 has direct access by stairs on the corner, and an accessible entrance on its shopfront less than 10m along Short Street.

The Level 3 and 4 offices are accessed by a main entrance on the Level 3 terrace via the public lift from High Street, the landscape stairs or the walkway from the Cathedral.

Employees can access Levels 1 to 4 via entrances on Short Street or from the internal carpark

The Parish Hall is accessed from the Cathedral by external steps and a lift, as well as a gentle ramp from the belvedere, or from the Level 4 offices.

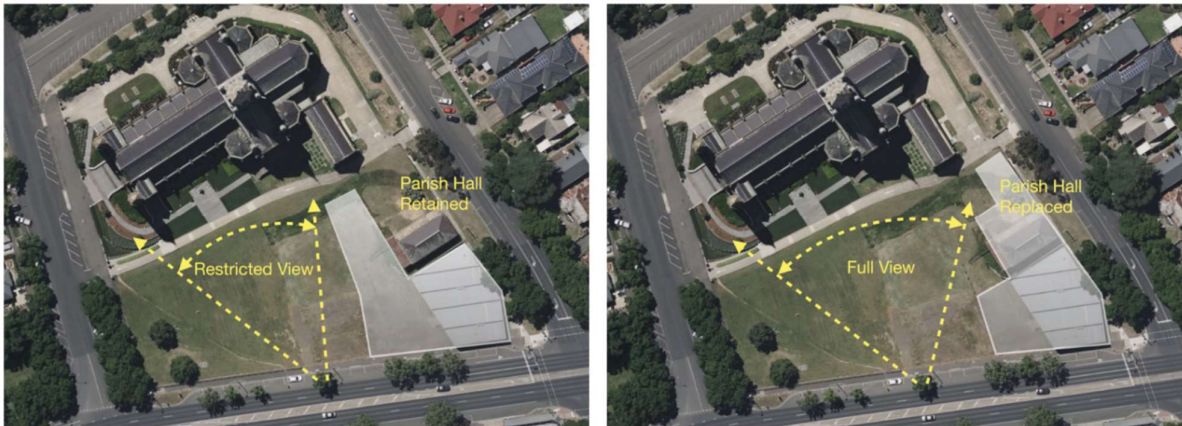
Short Street has a natural ground slope of 1 in 8 which could be hazardous for wheelchair users or parents with prams. The building will have a vehicle entry to level 2 mid-way along this frontage incorporating a transition driveway in the wide nature strip. Redirecting the footpath breaks the run, reducing its gradient and provides good visibility at the vehicle exit.

Heritage considerations

Sacred Heart Cathedral with the grassed crown land on the Wattle Street corner is listed on the Victorian Heritage Database (H1340). This development site only falls under Council's planning scheme overlay for the Short Street Precinct (HO12). Careful consideration has been given for appropriate development of the site to respect the neighbourhood and refer to the significance of the Cathedral.

The proposed building is subservient to the Cathedral and is designed to enable greater opportunity for public appreciation of the Cathedral. The public is invited to access different levels from which to view the Cathedral.

The option of retaining the 1960's Parish Hall was considered. However, as shown in the images below, this would force more of the new building towards the west of the site, restricting Cathedral views. It would also provide an awkward and difficult building around the existing hall, and eliminate the ability to provide discreet off-street car parking.



The replacement Parish Hall is better located to be accessible to and from the Cathedral and the new building and landscaping, and it is designed to stand as a separate pavilion to the main building form.

The new building and landscaping will create contemporary heritage for this significant Cathedral precinct site.

Refer to the independent Heritage Impact Statement for further explanation regarding the value of the existing Parish Hall and the history of the site.

Conclusions

The proposed Cathedral Square building and landscape's design:

- Creates an attractive and considered entry point to the central business district of the city.
- Develops the unattractive and underutilised site in front of the Sacred Heart Cathedral.
- Provides additional managed and high quality landscaped public space.
- Enables a major tourist attraction for Bendigo.
- Creates a destination and community meeting place for Bendigo residents and visitors.
- Enhances the context of the Cathedral, encouraging interpretation of its architecture by the public.
- Responds to the City's strategic urban planning guidelines.
- Extends the active CBD commercial zone along High and Short Street, as desired in Council's planning scheme.
- Enhances the High Street boulevard.
- Is a gift to the public allowing access and improving accessibility across the current steep topography, with new landscaped terraces.
- Provides safe access from High Street and Short Street, and between High Street and the Cathedral.
- Consolidates the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst and Catholic Education office into one building in the Cathedral precinct.
- Creates a fully accessible and functional Parish Hall adjacent to the Cathedral.