

Heritage Impact Statement

Sacred Heart Cathedral Precinct
Bendigo

Application for permit –
Proposed demolition and new built form

4 August 2023



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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) was prepared under instruction from Johnstaff, on behalf of the Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst, [REDACTED] site, 46-50 High Street, Bendigo.

The report has been prepared in the context of a proposal to undertake works including the complete demolition of structures on the properties and the construction of a four storey building. It report provides an assessment of the potential heritage impacts of the proposed works on the heritage place and adjacent streetscapes.

2.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon external site visits along with a review of the relevant documents and resources including the following:

- Bendigo Planning Scheme – *Clause 15.03-1L* (Post contact heritage conservation) and *Clause 43.01* (Heritage Overlay).
- *Victorian Heritage Database*, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au>
- Picture Collection, State Library Victoria, <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au>
- Historical newspapers (various), Trove Online, <https://trove.nla.gov.au>
- *Sands & McDougall Directories*, State Library Victoria, <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au>
- Landata online, <https://www.landata.online>

This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd and is to be read in conjunction with the drawings prepared by Studio B Architects dated May 2023 and other documents submitted with respect to the current application for permit.



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3.0 Site Overview

History

Sacred Heart Cathedral is the principal church of the Diocese of Sandhurst. The church precinct is 'land locked' and occupies several properties with street frontages to High Street to the south, Wattle Street to the west, Short Street to the east and Mackenzie Street to the north. The site substantially falls in gradient towards the south. At present, Sacred Heart Cathedral occupies the northern portion of the area, with two single storey buildings to the south east and vacant land to the south and south west.

Designed by Reed, Smart and Tappin, construction on the Sacred Heart Cathedral commenced in 1896 with the foundations, aisle, nave and lantern towers having been built by 1901. Further construction was however stalled, with the *Herald* reporting in July 1913 that the main tower, spire, and chancel were yet to have been completed.¹ In 1954 the *Advocate* reported 'a donation of 5000 bricks for work on the Sacred Heart Cathedral has been received from Sandhurst Brick Co. Work began a few months ago on the apse, transepts and spire which will complete the building'.² An aerial photo from 1967 shows the church complex was largely complete by this time. Constructed in sandstone and local granite, the church is dominated by a crossing tower and spire on its east side. The west side features a series of stairs leading to the entrance, which is flanked by prominent turrets.

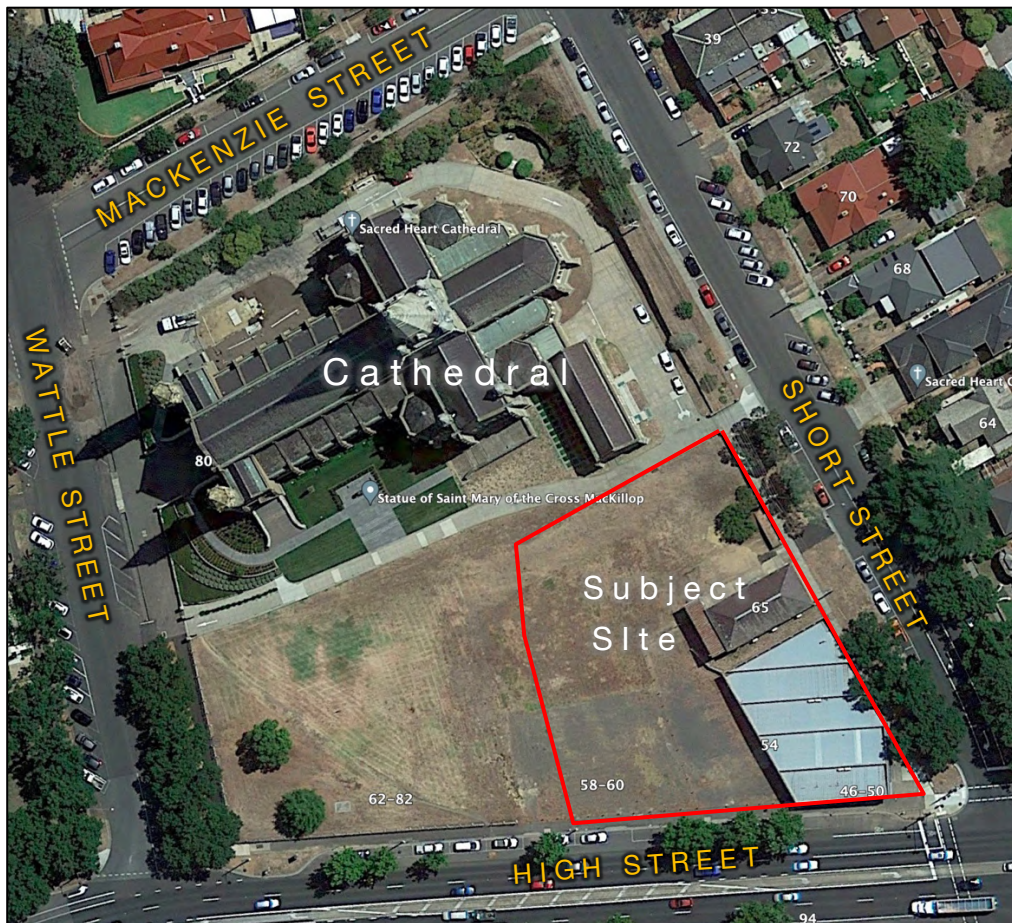


Figure 1 Annotated aerial view of the Sacred Heart Cathedral and surrounding land. The approximate area of the development site is highlighted red. Source: Google Maps.


¹ *Herald*, Monday 14 July 1913, p.4.

² *Advocate*, Thursday 13 May 1954, p.8.



Figure 2 c.1904 view of the Sacred Heart Church from the west after the completion of the nave, aisle and western lantern towers, and before the construction of the main tower, spire, and chancel. Source: State Library Victoria.

With respect for the remainder of the church land, aerial photos from the early 20th century, show the land closer to the corner of Short and High Streets (i.e., the development site) in the early 20th century was occupied by a single storey dwelling fronting Short Street, and commercial buildings fronting High Street to the south. An aerial photo from 1934 (Figure 3 below) shows a cluster of buildings where the development site is located. The *Sands and McDougall* directory from 1935 identifies a butcher, two dressmakers, a confectioner and the European Hotel, all since demolished, as the businesses occupying the buildings fronting High Street in the 1934 image. A single dwelling is referenced in the same directory on the south side of Short Street between High and MacKenzie Streets.



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Figure 3 Annotated c.1934 oblique aerial view south, showing the Cathedral as still only partially completed. The approximate development area is indicated in red, and it is noted that all of the buildings visible at this time have since been demolished. Source: State Library.

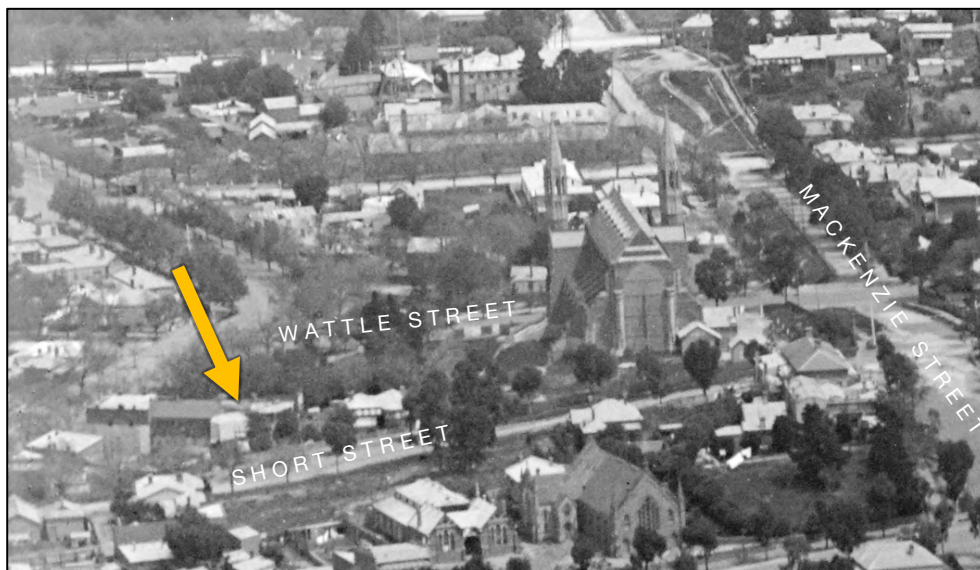


Figure 4 Annotated c.1934 oblique aerial view west, with the development site indicated by a yellow arrow. Source: State Library.



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At present, the land on the corner of Short and High Streets, contains a single storey cream brick building with a slate roof, used as a parish hall. The date of construction of this building has not been securely established, however it was not present in an aerial from 1956 but had been constructed by 1967. The *Sands and McDougall* directory from 1970 reference it as the 'Catholic Church Hall'. Further south of the hall is a single storey brick building of no heritage interest. It was constructed between the mid 1950s and mid 1960s and was listed in the 1965 *Sands and McDougall* directory as a motor accessories shop.

The balance of the church land i.e., within the south western section, is vacant.

With respect for broader context, the development site is located within both a residential streetscape and commercial streetscape. Opposite the subject site to the north east, Short Street contains single and double storey dwellings, though not all dwellings are original, with 56, 66 and 68 Short Street containing infill. High Street to the south, also known as the Midland Highway, is one of the main thoroughfares through Bendigo, with built form opposite the site to the south modern in form.



Figure 5 1945 aerial view, with the approximate boundaries of the subject site indicated. 1945 directories identify a resident in the property on the corner of Short and High Streets, a vacant allotment to its west and the European Hotel.
Source: Landata.



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Figure 6 1956 aerial image showing buildings remaining on the development site at this time.
Source: Landata.



Figure 7 1967 aerial view. The current parish hall and building on the south east corner of the site were present by this time, however other buildings have since been demolished.
Source: Landata



Figure 8 View toward the Cathedral from the south west.



Figure 9 Facing east toward the development site. The Cathedral is off to the left in the image.



Figure 10 View south toward the current parish hall.



Figure 11 View west from the development site.



Figure 12 View from the south side of the Cathedral facing south west toward the development site.



Figure 13 The current parish hall which was constructed sometime between 1956 and 1967.



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Figure 14 The existing contemporary building on the south east corner of the property, with the spire to the Cathedral partially visible at top right.

4.0 Significance and Heritage Overlay

The Church and the western side of the vacant land is registered [H1340], with the balance of the property, including the proposed development land, located within the Short Street Precinct, identified as HO12 on the Schedule to the Bendigo Heritage Overlay. No external paint controls, internal alteration controls or tree controls apply. The Short Street Precinct (HO12) is a somewhat fragmented heritage precinct, incorporating dwellings to both sides of Rowan Street, MacKenzie Street, High Street, Wattle Street, Short Street and Forest Street.

The Statement of Significance for the Short Street Precinct in the *Victoria Heritage Database* is reproduced below:

This precinct contains some of Bendigo's most prestigious private residences, typically grouped close to the city's key ecclesiastical buildings. It contains some of the first residential allotments sold in the township and some of the earliest church buildings and reserves.

The individual excellence of many of these building designs is underscored by the hilly terrain which allows spectacular prominences for both house and church siting and provides for picturesque groupings of one building type against the other, offering visually inspiring variations of scale and siting which is nevertheless unified within the language and ornamentation of the 19th and early 20th century architecture.

Combined with the contribution of individual buildings is the associated roadside detail in the form of planting and garden wall using brick and stone, and matching protrusions of natural stone often occurring at the street edge.

The corresponding Statement of Significance for the registered portion of the site containing the Cathedral is reproduced as follows:

What is significant?

It was originally intended that a Roman Catholic cathedral would one day be built on the site occupied by St Kilian's Church in McCrae Street, Bendigo. However land on one of the highest points of the city became available in Wattle Street which was part of the extensive estate of Rev. Father Dr Henry Backhaus (1811-1882), pioneer clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church, Bendigo.

Designed by Reed, Smart and Tappin, construction of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Bendigo commenced in 1896, with the foundations, and the aisle, the nave and lantern towers built by 1901. Work ceased for lack of funds in 1908, and it was not until 1954 that construction recommenced, with completion achieved in 1977. The church comprises a seven bay nave, narthex, crossing, apsidal sanctuary, three-bay transepts, and four octagonal chapels flanking the crossing. The exterior is dominated by a crossing tower and spire, and the west front with prominent flanking turrets. The interior features an oregon and kauri hammerbeam roof, west window by Hardman, and a divided organ built in 1904 by Bishop & Son, London. The floors, altars and font are crafted from a variety of marbles, and the pews are of blackwood. The twentieth century work was largely executed by sixteen craftsmen, most of whom were Italians brought to Australia expressly for the purpose.

How is it significant?

The Sacred Heart Cathedral is of architectural, historic, and aesthetic importance to the State of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Sacred Heart Cathedral is architecturally important as Australia's largest provincial church. Constructed in sandstone and local granite in an authentic Decorated Gothic style, the church is significant as the only cathedral in the State to be completed in this style this century. It closely follows the original 1895 design of William Brittain Tappin (1854-1905) and the nave is an important legacy of some of the finest Victorian period ecclesiastical architecture in this country. The interior is architecturally important for its superb spatial proportions, fine hammerbeam roof, and monumental compound piers and arched arcades.

The Cathedral is aesthetically important as a landmark building set high on a grassy knoll. The Cathedral and its setting dominates High Street.

The Cathedral is also aesthetically important for its internal and external decorative detail. Significant fixtures and fittings include carved stonework, stained glass particularly that in the west window, blackwood pews, timber panelling, and the organ. Notable external fixtures include the cast aluminium spire gargoyles, decorative cast iron balustrading and lamps, door strap-hinges, and the perimeter fence. Important movable objects include the Stations of the Cross painted by prominent nineteenth century Italian ecclesiastical artist A.F.D. Cavallaro which are framed in ornately carved walnut timber, the eagle lectern a gift of Bendigo's quartz king, George Lansell, the Bishop's Chair with its associated chairs carved by Ferdinand Stuflesser from Austrian oak, and the McCormick baptismal font.

The Cathedral is historically important for its association with Rev Dr Henry Backhaus, pioneer clergyman of the Roman Catholic Church on the Bendigo goldfields, whose estate provided the land for the building. The Cathedral has further associations with Rev Martin Crane, first Bishop of Sandhurst from 1874-1901 who initiated the building of the cathedral and donated the west window; and with Bishops Stephen Reville (1901- 1916), John McCarthy (1917-1950), and Bernard Stewart (1950-1979) who worked towards the completion of the building.



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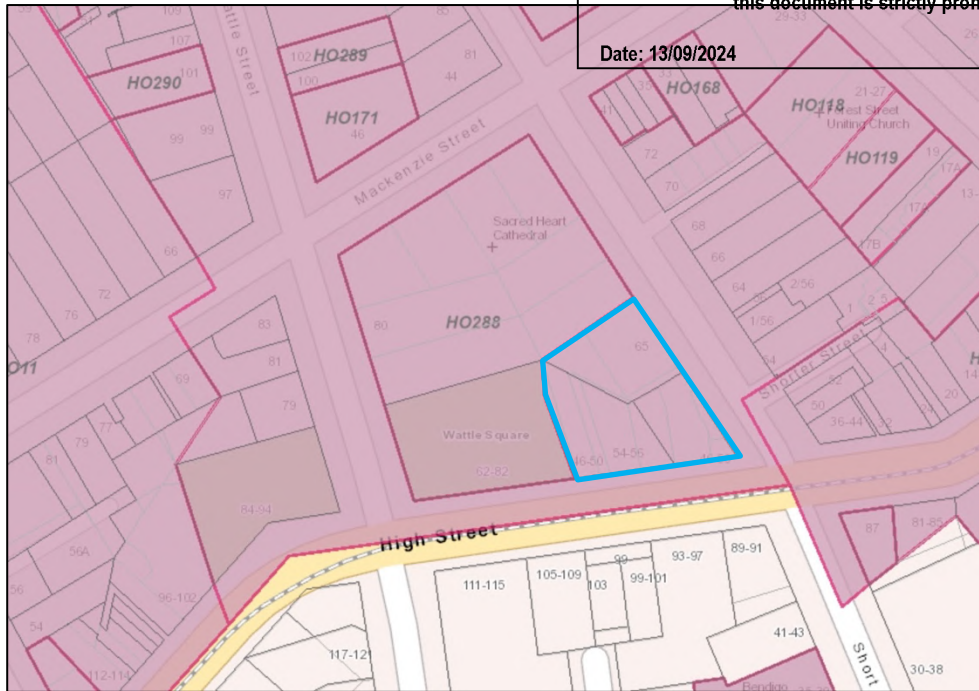


Figure 15 The property is located within HO12, the Short Street Residential Precinct. The development site is highlighted blue.

5.0 Policy Considerations

As the site is included in a Heritage Overlay, it is subject to the provisions of *Clause 43.01*, the Heritage Overlay, the purpose of which is:

- To implement the Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- To conserve and enhance heritage places of natural or cultural significance.*
- To conserve and enhance those elements which contribute to the significance of heritage places.*
- To ensure that development does not adversely affect the significance of heritage places.*
- To conserve specified heritage places by allowing a use that would otherwise be prohibited if this will demonstrably assist with the conservation of the significance of the heritage place.*

Before deciding on an application, in addition to the decision guidelines in *Clause 65*, the responsible authority must consider, as appropriate:

- *The Municipal Planning Strategy and the Planning Policy Framework.*
- *The significance of the heritage place and whether the proposal will adversely affect the natural or cultural significance of the place.*
- *Any applicable statement of significance (whether or not specified in the schedule to this overlay), heritage study and any applicable conservation policy.*
- *Any applicable heritage design guideline specified in the schedule to this overlay.*
- *Whether the location, bulk, form or appearance of the proposed building will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.*
- *Whether the location, bulk, form and appearance of the proposed building is in keeping with the character and appearance of adjacent buildings and the heritage place.*
- *Whether the demolition, removal or external alteration will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.*

- *Whether the proposed works will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.*
- [...]

Planning scheme provisions relevant to the application under review also include 15.03-1S Heritage Conservation. Clause 15.03-1L has the objective of ensuring the conservation of places of heritage significance by means of following strategies:

Demolition strategies

Support the retention of significant or contributory heritage building or places.

Retain original elements that contribute to the significance of a heritage place including but not limited to windows, doors, chimneys, verandahs, shopfronts, fences, outbuildings and trees.

Allow the demolition of non-contributory buildings in heritage precincts provided the replacement building does not adversely affect the heritage significance of the precinct.

Discourage demolition that results in the retention of only the front building façade.

Ensure any replacement building, where demolition is supported, is of high quality design and does not adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.

Allow for the partial demolition of significant and contributory buildings where either:

- *The fabric to be demolished is of no significance.*
- *The demolition reveals the original fabric of the building.*
- *The demolition will assist in the long term conservation of the heritage place.*

Retain the three dimensional form for the partial removal of a building and ensure that not just the façade is retained.

Ensure archival recording of sites by a heritage professional where demolition is supported, as appropriate.

Infill development and new building strategies

Support new buildings that do not adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage precinct, and are visually recessive.

Ensure that the design of new buildings responds to the context of the heritage precinct and nearby contributory buildings including scale, height, mass, form, siting, setbacks and materials.

Ensure that infill buildings in a heritage place or precinct do not detract from the significance or views to adjoining heritage places from the public realm.

Support new development within a heritage precinct that is contemporary in appearance and that does not mimic historic styles or details.

In addition to the Heritage Overlay, the development site is located within Design and Development Overlay 20. This DDO has the following objectives:

To promote High Street as a key boulevard entrance into central Bendigo that is characterised by an established avenue of street trees, the tramway and views to the Central Deborah Poppet Head and the Sacred Heart Cathedral, and is flanked by high quality mixed use development.

To encourage higher scale, well-designed development that promotes diversity in land uses fronting High Street, to reinforce and build on the boulevard character of the corridor.

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.

To encourage active ground level street frontages along High Street and Short Street.

To provide car parking that has minimal visual impact on the streetscape.

To protect and enhance the avenue of street trees.



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DDO 20 also promotes specified building heights, with a preferred building height (preferred rather than maximum) on the subject site to be 14 metres. The DDO also notes the following with respect to building frontages and setbacks:

- *New buildings and/or extensions to existing buildings should:*
- *At ground level:*
 - *Provide an active street frontage, particularly for sites fronting High Street and Short Street.*
 - *Set buildings to the front boundary with no side setback unless a setback is required to protect the heritage place on the site or on an adjoining site.*
 - *Avoid alcoves and recesses that may collect litter or be unsafe.*
 - *Avoid side setbacks unless a pedestrian or service laneway is required.*
- *At first floor level and above:*
 - *Provide articulation and modelling of the façade which demonstrates a sympathetic and considered response to the scale, form and detailing of other buildings in the precinct, but particularly those adjoining and in immediate visual connection to the subject site.*
 - *Where the rear or side of a building abuts a residential area, the building should be setback appropriately to respect the residential interface and protect the residential amenity of the adjoining place.*

6.0 Development Proposal

It is proposed to demolish the mid-century parish hall and the single storey envelope to the corner of Short and High Streets and all associated landscape elements.

The south east portion of the church land will then be redeveloped with a two to four storey, mixed use building. The new works will be constructed to the eastern and southern property boundaries. The corner will be splayed at ground and first floor, with a cantilevered curved profile to the upper two levels. The height will taper to two storeys to the north and west, responding to the gradient of the land. It will present a stepped profile to High Street. Of a contemporary and lightweight character, the building will be predominantly glazed with silver, grey and yellow fins/louvres highlighting the High Street frontage.

Internally, it will incorporate a retail tenancy, stores and a showroom at Level 1, while Level 2 will contain office space, a café and enclosed car parking. Level 3 will contain offices. It will have a smaller footprint and be set back on the west side relative to Level 2. Level 4 (the top floor) will contain an office area at the south-east corner, and the new parish hall on the north side at setbacks, with landscaping. The roof forms will be flat in profile, with landscaping around its circumference. Incorporating solar arrays at the south-east corner.

The scheme will include landscaping. The flat roof area above the double-storey western portion of the building will support a large public terrace with green landscaping. The interface with the adjacent grassed vacant land to the west will be carefully managed, with a curved rising stair linking the development to adjacent pathways and tree plantings. On the north side, a new pedestrian ramp will provide DDA compliant access between the Cathedral and sacristy and every level of the new building.

7.0 Discussion

Demolition

Council heritage policy supports the demolition of non-contributory buildings in heritage precincts, provided the replacement building does not adversely affect the heritage significance of the precinct. While a secure construction date for the parish hall has not been established, it was constructed sometime between 1956 and 1967. It is not specifically mentioned as an element of significance within the Short Street Precinct, within which it is located. It is also not mentioned in the registration documentation for the Cathedral – similarly, it is not within the registered curtilage of the land associated within the Cathedral.

Its demolition will not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the identified significance of the broader precinct, which is broadly considered to be associated with the late 19th and early 20th century buildings located within the precinct. Its demolition is therefore supported under heritage policy.

New Works

The site is located within a wider urban setting, between more closely subdivide and developed blocks to the east and south, and the large opening church site to the north and west, dominated by the Cathedral. The proposed scheme will provide a carefully considered infill building that will provide a transitional element between these environments.

It is acknowledged that the development will result in a large building, with broad site coverage, reaching four levels at the corner of High and Short Streets. The parcel of land is subject to a DDO and more intensive development is clearly encouraged by policy for this site. The balance of heritage considerations needs to be moderated with expectations arising from the DDO and having regard for this the exact height of the proposed building appears to be more a matter for urban design assessment than a heritage consideration. In addition to the DDO, it is also accepted that while the property is located within Short Street Residential Heritage Area, the development site is zoned as commercial property.

The Short Street Residential Area is considered significant, *inter alia*, as containing 'some of Bendigo's most prestigious private residences, typically grouped close to the city's key ecclesiastical buildings'. Council heritage policy for infill buildings is directed more to the introduction of new residential built form, rather than commercial properties. Nonetheless, policy encourages new buildings within heritage overlay areas to not adversely impact the significance, character or appearance of a heritage precinct and for new built form to respond to the context of a heritage precinct including scale, height, mass, form, siting and materiality.

The proposal broadly satisfies Council's local heritage policy. The development tapers in apparent height to either side of the tall corner envelope, providing a relatively polite context for the interface with the Cathedral, allowing for views to the Cathedral from the south and southwest to be maintained, which could be considered the 'key' views given this space is located within the registered curtilage. The north side of the development containing the new parish hall is located at sufficient separation from the sacristy and Cathedral for their existing three-dimensional form to remain clearly visible and legible.

The proposed taller element at the corner will also integrate with the High Street streetscape, which features other taller buildings, including diagonally opposite the property at 87 High Street, where a tall 2 storey face red brick building, with corner turret is located. The height of the new building envelope will not exceed the height of the roofline of the sacristy, ensuring architectural emphasis remains on that building in the overall composition.

The tapering in scale northward due to the rising elevation also assists the development to transition into the residential environs of Short Street, where the new built form will be located opposite single and double storey dwellings. The articulation to the street facades provides smaller forms that references the finer scale of heritage building stock to the east and south-east. This said, this portion of Short Street comprises several non-original dwellings, thus this area of Short Street is not a wholly intact streetscape, and the introduction of modern built form will not have any more of an adverse impact upon the significance of the broader precinct than what has already occurred. The opposite south side of High Street contains 1-2 storey commercial buildings and is not a sensitive heritage interface.

The building will present integrated street elevations, with the corner treatment presenting a partly chamfered, partly curved corner bay that celebrates the corner in visual dialogue with the similarly scale heritage building on the diagonally opposite site of the intersection. The schemes contemporary architectural expression and limited, but considered variety of finishes, is also in line with Council heritage strategies which supports new development that is contemporary in appearance and does not mimic historic styles or details. The materiality is also supported given this section of Short Street and High Street are ultimately a mixed streetscape with a variety of materials adopted for the various built form.

The proposed landscaping will provide an appropriate visual interface between the Cathedral and new parish hall, and along the adjacent church site to the west, which comprises grassed open land.

Having regard for all the above, the scheme has been prepared with appropriate consideration for heritage policy and provisions within the *Greater Bendigo Planning Scheme*. The scheme will provide a greater degree of amenity to the site and attract greater numbers of visitors to the environs of the registered Cathedral. The proposal provides a considered response to the heritage values of the site and its broader precinct and is in general accordance with the purpose of the Heritage Overlay as set out in *Clause 43.01*, and the associated policy guidelines provided within *Clause 15.03*. On this basis it is considered acceptable.



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