

Heritage Impact Statement

2-10 Clarke Street, Abbotsford
(Abbotsford Convent)

Permit Application

Revised 21 May 2025



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1.0 Introduction

The following assessment of heritage impacts has been prepared on behalf of the owner of the subject site at 2-10 Clarke Street, Abbotsford. It relates to a proposal to demolish the existing built form on the site, construct a four storey, contemporary residential development and subdivide the portion of land on which it is located. The site is located in located within a registered place, the Abbotsford Convent [H0951] and also a Heritage Overlay [HO9] within the *Yarra Planning Scheme*. This report has been prepared for the consideration of both Yarra Council and Heritage Victoria. It follows Heritage Victoria's guidelines for preparing heritage impact statements (June 2021) and includes a detailed assessment of the scheme against relevant Council heritage policies.

It is noted that a consultative preapplication meetings have been held with Council and with Heritage Victoria on 16 May 2024. This revised Heritage Impact Statement has been updated in response to matters raised in a Request for Further Information (RFI) issued by Heritage Victoria (dated 24/03/2025).

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the drawings by Life Architecture and other documentation submitted with respect to this application.

2.0 Methodology

This heritage impact statement has been prepared with regard for the *Burra Charter* and its guidelines, as amended in 2013, and in general accordance with Heritage Victoria's guidelines. It responds to several key matters that are set out on page 3 of that document:

- *Why a place or object is of cultural heritage significance to the State of Victoria*
- *What options were considered in developing the proposal*
- *What impact (positive and/or negative) the proposed works will have on that significance,*
- *If a negative impact is proposed, why the proposed option was chosen and why other more sympathetic options were not feasible, and*
- *What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts.*

3.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon multiple site visits and a review of relevant Council documentation and *Victorian Heritage Register* citations for the adjacent registered components of the subject site. It also draws upon the following additional sources.

- *Victorian Heritage Database*, <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au>
- *The Burra Charter: The Australia ICOMOS Charter for Places of Cultural Significance (2013)*, Australia ICOMOS Incorporated Internal Council on Monuments and Sites.
- “Former Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford, Conservation Management Plan”, (commissioned by the Abbotsford Convent), Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd, June 2005.
- Heritage Council Determination, (Amendment to Victorian Heritage Register - Abbotsford Convent), 6 February 2025.
- City of Yarra Building files (for 2-10 Clarke Street and 1 St Heliers Street, Abbotsford).
- *Victorian Government Gazette*, <https://gazette.slv.vic.gov.au>
- Historic MMBW Plans (various), State Library of Victoria, <https://www.slv.vic.gov.au>
- Historic newspapers (various), accessed via Trove Online, <https://trove.nla.gov.au>
- Historic photographs (various), accessed via Trove Online, <https://trove.nla.gov.au>

In preparing this report, the authors have also made reference to the Heritage Overlay provisions and local heritage policy, as set out under *Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay* and *Clause 15.03 Heritage of the Yarra Planning Scheme*.

4.0 History

What is now 2-10 Clarke Street was originally part of a larger portion of land was historically part of the Abbotsford Convent. This land was sold early in the colony's history and initially contained several residences that were the focal point of small farmlets. The historic evolution of the site, from its initial rural-like occupation through to its occupation by Convent of the Good Shepherd and the early twentieth century shas been examined in detail in the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) prepared by Nigel Lewis (2001). The following chronology has been drawn from that document and provides a broad overview.

- 1839 Future convent site first sold as Allotments 64 and 77 in Crown Land sales to Henry Smyth.
- 1842 Crown Allotments 64 and 77 sold to James Murray, whose subdivision created what is now St Heliers Street. Murray built *St Heliers* villa on the east side of the site.
- c.1843 Samuel Orr constructs a villa known as *Abbotsford House* on the west side of this site adjacent the Clarke Street frontage as part of a farming estate.
- 1863 2-storey additions made to *Abbotsford House* designed by architect Lloyd Tayler.
- 1863-70 Farmlet south of St Heliers Street including west to boundary with Clarke Street purchased by the Good Shepherd Order to house sisters and women. Industrial school established.
- c.1870 *Abbotsford House* expanded with 2 storey enclosing wing along Clarke Street, creating a C-shaped building footprint.
- 1870-72 Church constructed adjacent St Heliers Street, north-east of *Abbotsford House*. This was subsequently enlarged. (Now the Good Shepherd Chapel).
- 1870s New Magdalen Asylum built to replace *St Heliers*. A substantial complex develops on the Good Shepherd Order's site over later decades.
- 1875-5 St Joseph's school erected south-east corner Clarke & St Heliers Streets.
- 1900-03 Large 3-storey convent completed adjacent east of the subject site to a design by Reed, Smart & Tappin. Original portion of *Abbotsford House* subsequently demolished.
- 1977-78 Convent site divided into three parts and partially sold, with Good Shepherd Order retaining land along Clarke Street. St Josephs School and associated structures demolished. Existing Good Shepherd Nursing Home constructed.



Figure 1 Undated mid-nineteenth century photograph of Abbotsford House, located on the south side of 2-10 Clarke Street. The topography suggests this view is from the south.
Source: https://www.picturevictoria.vic.gov.au/site/yarra_melbourne/Collingwood/9047.html

The 1901 MMBW Plan (see *Figure 2*) shows in detail the built form along the Clarke Street frontage south of St Heliers Street (then spelt 'St Helliers') by this time. The St Josephs school complex comprised two buildings that were C-shaped in plan, enclosing central courtyards, with an additional schoolroom further east along St Heliers Street. Both western buildings abutted the Clarke Street boundary, with a triangular curtilage of space at the northern street corner. The northern schoolroom almost abutted the Good Shepherd Chapel. The southern building was skirted by verandahs along its eastern and southern elevations. Historic photographs indicate these buildings were largely double storey with pitched roof forms.

The complex was concentrated on the eastern side of the site where there was a 'Magdalen Asylum', with open garden areas intersected by paths in between. (The existing adjacent 3-storey convent had not yet been built). Immediately south of the school was a primary entry from Clarke Street, which lead to the main internal driveway or road. The convent property was inward looking, with built form along the street boundaries enclosing the site from public view and providing security. The western side of Clarke Street and the north side of St Heliers Street were partially developed, containing dwellings of various sizes and vacant land.

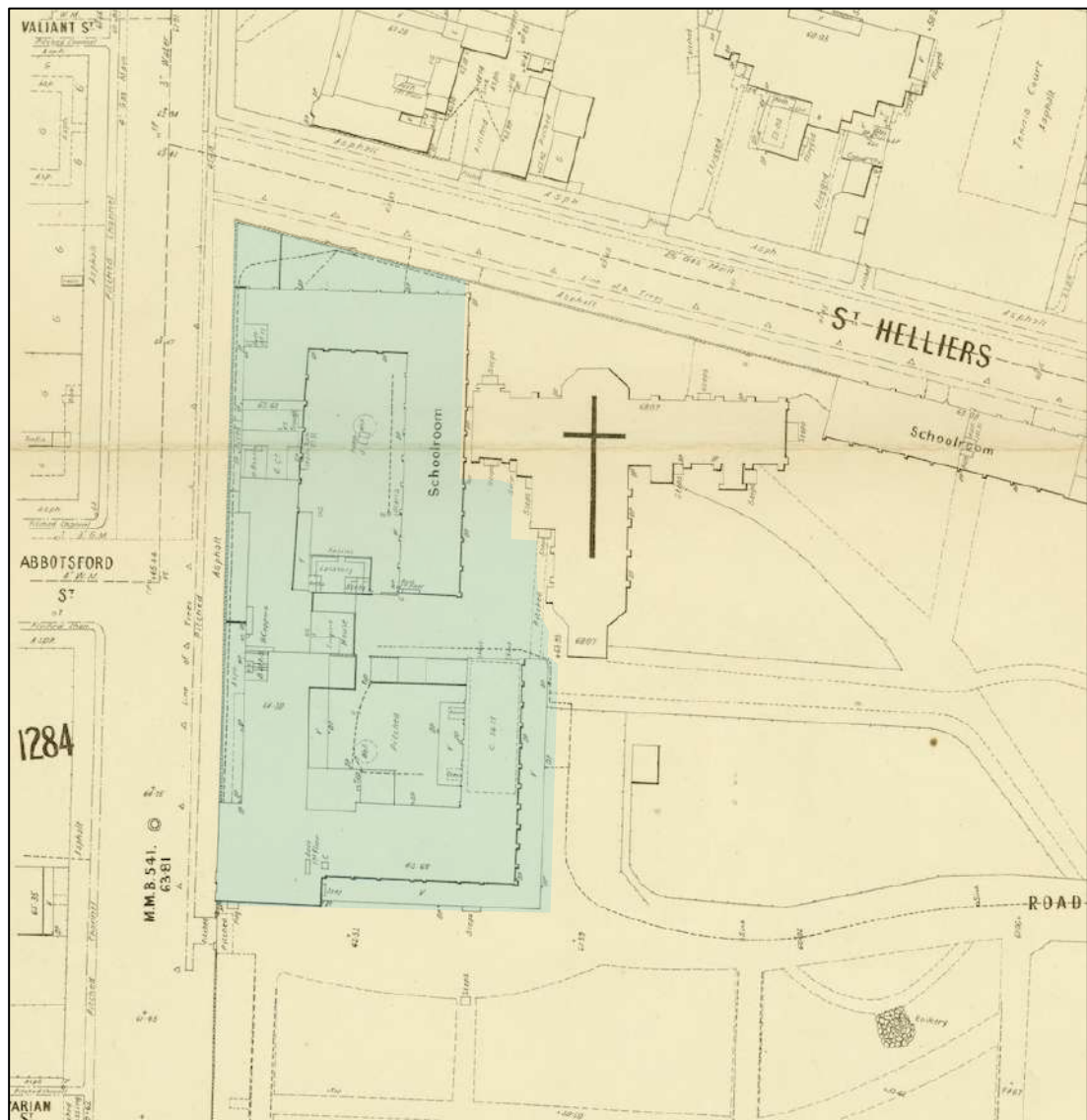


Figure 2 1901 MMBW Plan extract showing the footprint of the structures then on the subject site (shaded blue) and the adjacent church, prior to the construction of the imposing convent to the east in the 1900s. The wing with the verandah wrapping around the south-east corner is believed to be part of Abbotsford House. Source: <http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/117696>

The construction of the main three-storey convent complex commencing in 1902 changed the eastern context of St Josephs School (see Figure 4 and Figure 5). Its western wing ran parallel to the south side of the school, with an entry at the base of a spire at the south end of the west elevation. An imposing, monumental building, the convent was never viewed directly west from Clarke Street across a curtilage of open space, though it was diagonally visible across the gardens from the south-west. It also triggered the introduction of new landscaping to the area immediately to the south, with a sweeping curved formal driveway entering the site from the existing Clarke Street entry adjacent the school. The formerly geometric layout of adjacent gardens and orchards was replaced with a more parklike grassed setting with plantings of ornamental trees.



Figure 3 *Undated late nineteenth century view looking west with nuns walking towards the single-store Abbotsford House component of St Josephs School, with Clarke Street located behind the brick fence centre left.*
Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/7849945@N02/47322834962/in/photostream/>



Figure 4 *c.1926 view towards the convent with the Clarke Street entry gates at centre, and the southern portion of St Joseph's school at left showing its double-storey scale, with the three-storey convent at right. Source: CMP, Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd.*

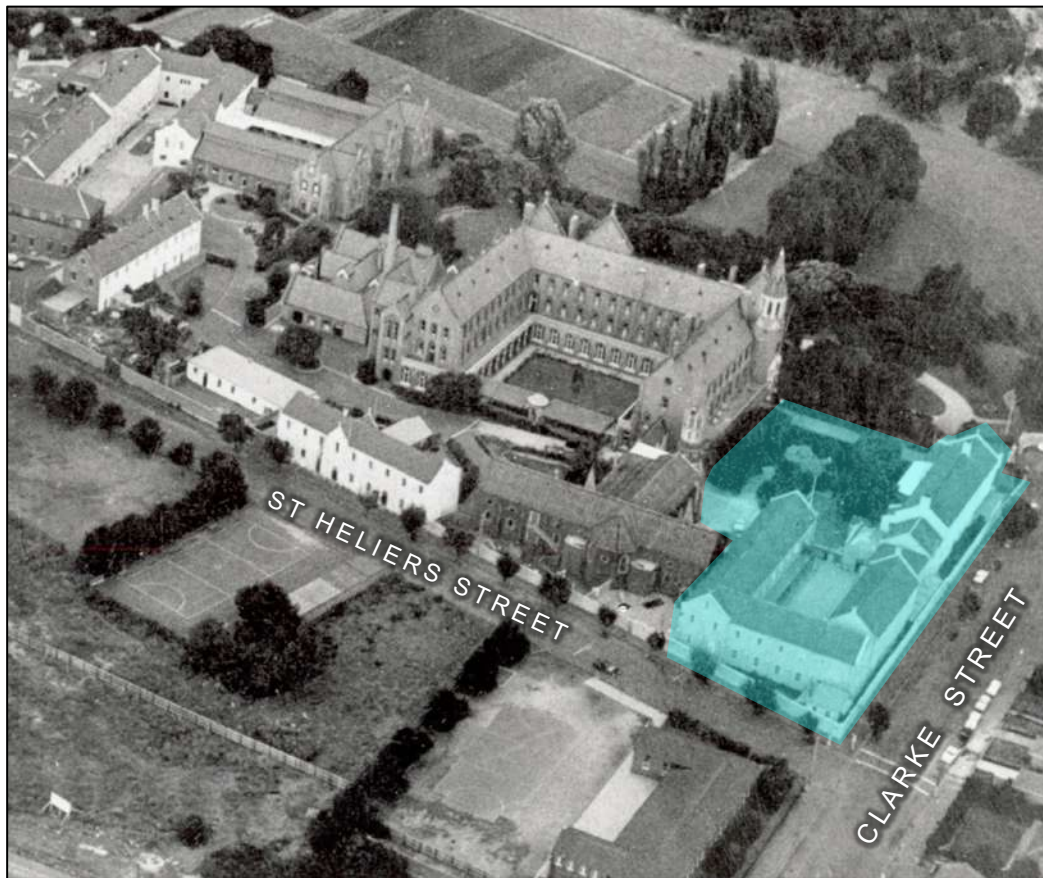


Figure 5 1963 aerial image showing St Joseph's school on the subject site (shaded blue).
Source: CMP, Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd.

The St Josephs School complex remained on the site until the 1970s. Volume 4 of the CMP examines the gardens and grounds, and it divides the curtilage of the convent site into a series of zones, with 2-10 Clarke Street identified as part of Zone Q (Church and St Joseph Grounds). It describes the changes to this area since this time.

With the sale of the convent complex in 1975, the sisters retained possession of this zone. The arcade, St Joseph's and associated garden areas were demolished to allow construction of a new nursing home in the 1970s. This still retains a small courtyard on the west side of the Church, which has some remnant character of the previous much larger garden area in this location. This building, together with the Church, are now separated from the remaining convent complex by a cyclone wire fence along the Church's eastern boundary and a high solid wall along the north-western boundary of the Contemplative Garden. This zone contains remnant plantings of camellias and Chinese windmill palms, popular plantings throughout wider complex.

Mercy Health acquired the Abbotsford Hostel and Nursing Home in 2015 as part of its national network of aged care homes. Mercy Place Abbotsford as it was subsequently known, was licenced for 92 beds. It closed in April 2023.



Source: City of Yarra Building Files.

5.0 Description

2-10 Clarke Street comprises an irregularly shaped portion of land occupying the south-east corner of the intersection of St Heliers Street to the north and Clarke Street to the west along its longer dimension. (The land forms part of a larger area of title that includes the Good Shepherd Chapel to the east.) Clarke Street is a generously proportioned two-way street with parking, broad asphalted footpaths and streets trees on each side. Electricity poles run along its east side. St Helier is more narrowly proportioned, but of a similar character, albeit without street parking.

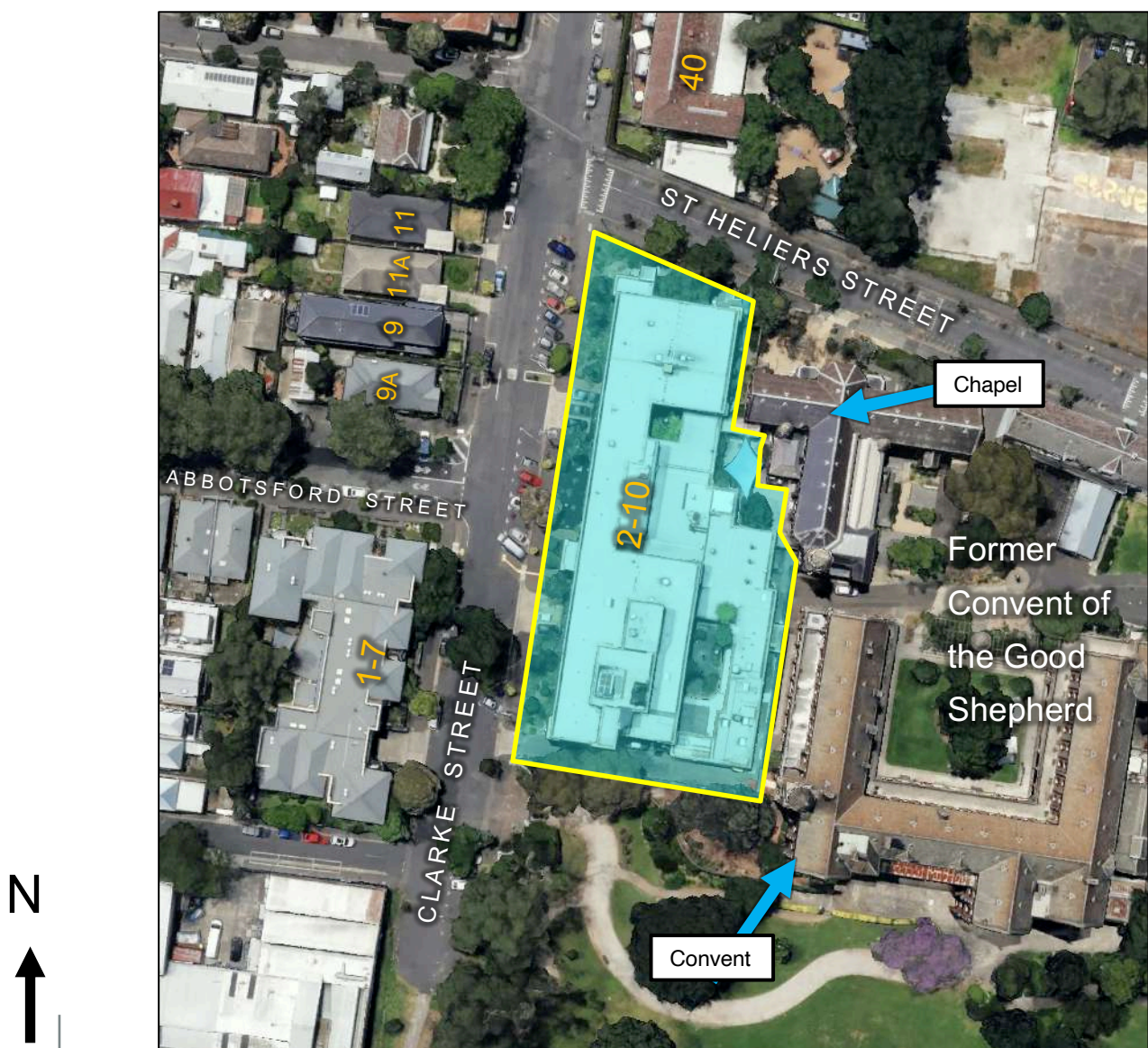


Figure 7

Annotated aerial image showing the location of the subject development site (shaded blue) in relation to the former convent and adjacent streets and properties. Source: Google Maps.

The subject site contains no heritage elements. It is occupied by a single double-storey brown brick and concrete former aged care facility constructed in 1977. The building presents a continuous double-storey façade to Clarke and St Heliers Streets and has a flat roof form. It is set back from the street boundaries behind gardens. A narrow curtilage along the south side contains a driveway and is enclosed from the adjacent convent gardens further south and to the south-east by a high bluestone fence which also dates from the 1970s. A narrow setback is maintained between the east side of the building and the adjacent convent and chapel, with the exception of an enclosed walkway linking the former aged care building with the chapel.

The key heritage interface of the site is with the Abbotsford Convent complex to the east, where there are two large adjacent significant heritage buildings. On the north side is the bluestone Good Shepherd Chapel, a double-storey scale bluestone Gothic inspired church with a primary entry from St Heliers Street. On the south side is an adjacent wing of the former Convent, a rendered masonry Gothic inspired rendered masonry building comprising three generously proportioned storeys, with a steeply pitched roof. These structures are higher in scale than the existing building on the subject site. Both buildings include spires, the top portions of which are visible from adjacent streets to varying degrees.

The urban context to the north comprises the single-storey brick building occupied by the University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre. The east side of Clarke Street is residential. 13 Clarke Street on the south-west corner with Valient Street contains a single-storey Victorian dwelling set within a generous garden. 9A, 9, 11A and 11 Clarke Street further south to the corner with Abbotsford Street contain freestanding one and double-storey dwellings. 1-9 Clarke Street is a double-storey c.1980s brick residential complex occupying the street frontage between Abbotsford and Yarra Streets.



Figure 8 View of the subject site at 2-10 Clarke Street from the corner of Clarke Street (right) and St Heliers Street (left).



Figure 9 *The north elevation of the existing double-storey c.1970s building.*



Figure 10 *The Good Shepherd Chapel adjacent the subject site to the east as seen from St Heliers Street. This is not included in the extent of registration of the former convent.*



Figure 11 View of the interface between the Good Shepherd Chapel (left) and the existing building on the subject site (right) showing the narrow separation.



Figure 12 The narrow space on the north side between the two buildings includes a path and is landscaped.



Figure 13 Full width view of the western Clarke Street elevation of the existing building from the intersection with Abbotsford Street, showing the degree of visibility of the spires and convent roof behind.



Figure 14 More detailed view of the north side of the Clarke Street elevation.



Figure 15 More detailed view of the south side of the Clarke Street elevation.



Figure 16 View of the southern interface of the subject site (left) with the gardens to the former convent at right.



Figure 17 The view along the southern curtilage of the site with the existing building (left), the c.1970s bluestone fence (right) and the spire of the former Convent forming a dramatic termination view (centre).



Figure 18 The c.1970s bluestone wall partially screens views of the entry to the former Convent. .



Figure 19 View north along the eastern side of the existing building, with the Good Shepherd Chapel at centre.



Figure 20 View from the south towards the interface between the existing building (left) and the Good Shepherd Chapel (right).



Figure 21 View west towards the subject site (centre) with the former Convent at left and the Good Shepherd Chapel at right.



Figure 22 40 Clarke Street on the opposite north-east corner with Heliers Street contains a single-storey building occupied by the University of Melbourne's Early Learning Centre.



Figure 23 View south-west towards the intersection of Clarke Street with Abbotsford Street (left), showing the single and double-storey residential development opposite the subject site.



Figure 24 The western Clarke Street frontage south of the intersection with Abbotsford Street contains a double-storey residential complex at 1-7 Clarke Street.

6.0 Heritage Listings

City of Yarra

2-10 Clarke Street is included within a Heritage Overlay Precinct (HO9) in the *Yarra Planning Scheme*. The Schedule to the Heritage Overlay indicates that the land mapped as located within HO9 is included on the *Victorian Heritage Register* [H951] as part of the Abbotsford Convent complex, with Heritage Victoria the permit authority.

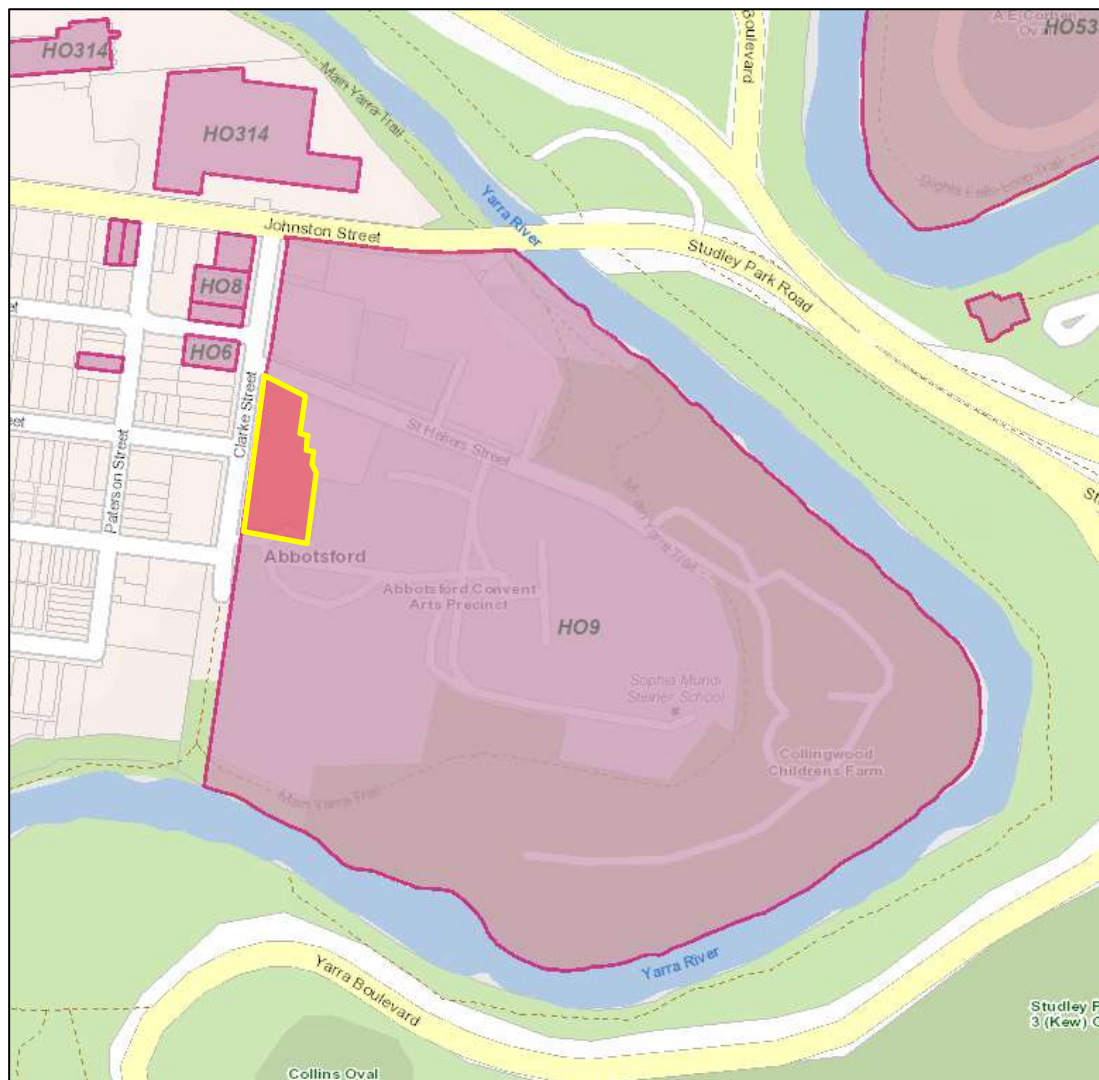


Figure 25 Heritage Overlay Map extract, showing the location of the subject site (shaded red and outlined in yellow) and the extent of HO9. Some smaller individual Heritage Overlays (HO6 and HO8) address the west side of Clarke Street north of the subject site.

Victorian Heritage Register

The extent of registration of the Abbotsford Convent [H951] has recently been revised to include 2-10 Clarke Street and the Good Shepherd Chapel. The Heritage Council's determination of 6 February 2025 defined the revised extent of registration as follows –

All of the place shown hatched on Diagram 951 encompassing all of Crown Allotments 2026, 2030, 2031, 2844, 2845, 2810, 77F, 77E and 77J Parish of Jika Jika, all of Lot 1 on Title Plan 116127 and part of Crown Allotment 2330 Parish of Jika Jika and all of the road casement of St Heliers Street.

The extent of registration comprises all land associated with the former Convent of the Good Shepherd, including the site of the Convent Chapel and the demolished Abbotsford House. It also unites those parts of the former Convent located on the north and south sides of St Helier Street by including the street and includes the unformed section of the road casement which has been integrated with the grounds. [...]

The extent of registration includes all the land, all soft and hard landscape features, plantings, all buildings (exteriors, interiors and fixtures), and any historical archaeological features, deposits and artefacts.

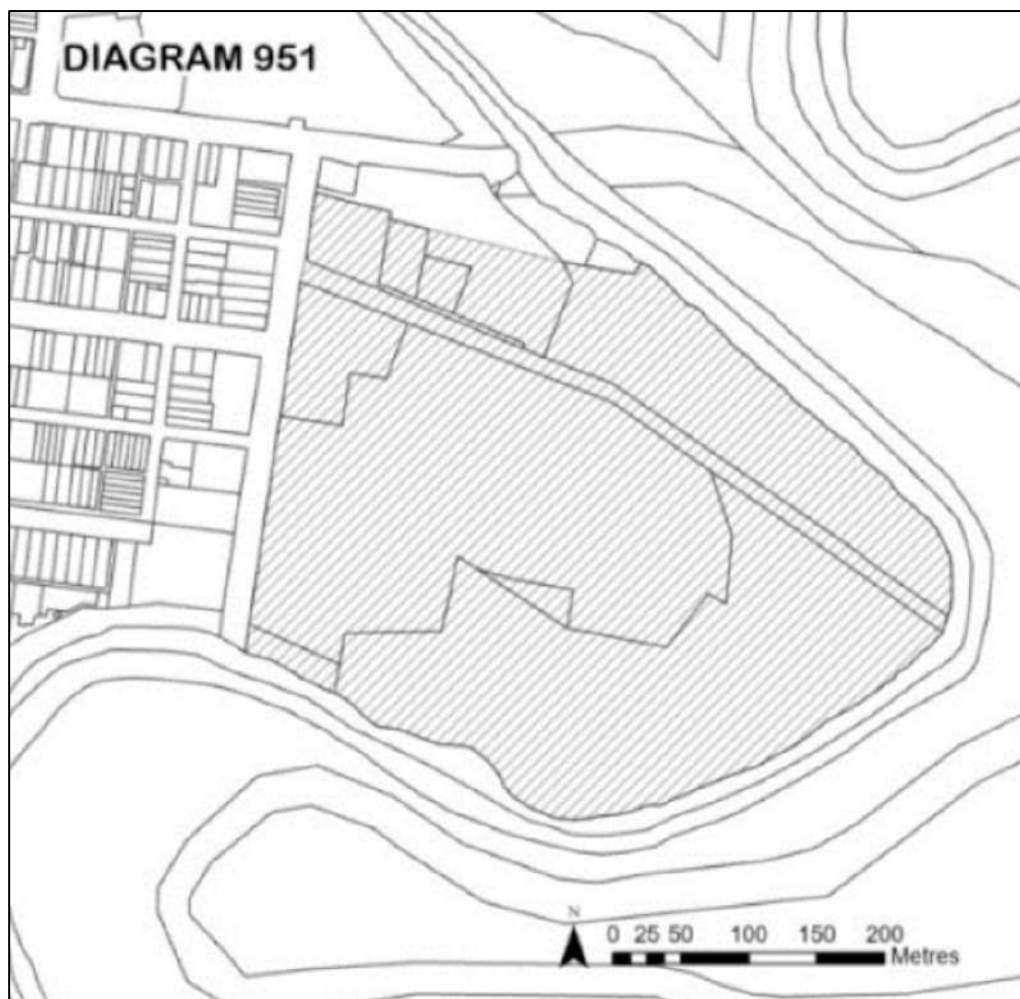


Figure 26 Diagram 951 showing Heritage Victoria's recently revised extent of registration for the Abbotsford Convent (H0951) shaded with cross hatching, which includes the subject site.

7.0 Significance

2-10 Clarke Street does not have an individual citation in the *Victorian Heritage Database* and no citations or datasheets have been prepared for it in any previous heritage studies.

The *Victorian Heritage Register* provides the following Statement of Significance for the Abbotsford Convent complex:

What is Significant?

The Abbotsford Convent (former Convent of the Good Shepherd) is a large and architecturally distinctive example of a Catholic convent complex. The complex was constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in a rural setting on a bend of the Yarra River. It includes ecclesiastical, residential, educational and utilitarian buildings, designed by architects Thomas Kelly and later, William B Tappin, of the firm Reed Smart and Tappin.

The place reflects the lengthy occupation of the site by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, and includes simple functional structures and notable architectural compositions including the Kreitmeyer House (c.1853) and another residence (c.1850s) which are the earliest structures on the site and predate its use by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd; the Cemetery (1866); the Sacred Heart complex (Magdalen Asylum) consists of the two-storey brick Industrial School for neglected children (1867), the Sacred Heart building (1877), the North and South Laundries (1920-1926 and 1907 respectively), St Anne's (1905) which completed the enclosure of the Magdalen Asylum courtyard, and Rosina (1908), designed in the Baroque Revival style; the remains of the 1870s convent walls; the Convent Chapel (1872); St Euphrasia's Convent Day School (c.1878); Mercator (c.1887) the main laundry building; Providence (c.1887) built as school accommodation; the Convent (c.1902); St Mary's Preservation Class (1910) also in the Baroque Revival style, and the Junior School (c.1935).

To the south of the convent is a picturesque garden with a central lawn and surrounded by shrubberies, a timber rotunda, curved paths and formal paths lined with elm and oak avenue plantings. The lower garden contains a former orchard area, and to the east is former grazing and farm land. The site retains remnant River Red Gums and vistas to the indigenous bushland of Yarra Bend Park and the Yarra River.

How is it Significant?

The Abbotsford Convent is of historical, archaeological, architectural, and aesthetic significance to the State of Victoria. It satisfies the following criterion for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register:

Criterion A

Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C

Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D

Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects

Criterion E

Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics.

Why is it significant?

Abbotsford Convent is historically significant as the only extant former monastic or convent farm surviving in a substantial manner within a city in Australia. It is the site of the largest self-sufficient convent and monastic building and farm complex in the state, with extensive vegetable gardens, orchards and grazing land. The large-scale agricultural operations were remarkable for a city location. The farm and the massive laundry buildings were major symbols of the convent and reflected the objectives of the Good Shepherd Order. (Criterion A)

Abbotsford Convent is historically significant as the birthplace in Australia of the Good Shepherd Order, one of the most important religious orders in the Catholic Church in Victoria. The Convent provided refuge, care and 'reform' activities for thousands of women and girls through a variety of welfare, rehabilitation and protection programs during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This was the Order's first convent in Australia and New Zealand, and was the Mother House and Novitiate for the Order in Australasia. (Criterion A)

Abbotsford Convent is historically significant as a demonstration of changing approaches to the institutional care and education of disadvantaged women and children in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (Criterion A)

Abbotsford Convent is historically significant for its role during the early years of church-based education after the 1872 Education Act ended state funding to Denominational schools, and the subsequent expansion of church-based education. (Criterion A)

Abbotsford Convent is of archaeological significance for its potential to contain subsurface historical archaeological features, deposits and artefacts associated with the use and occupation of the convent and two of Melbourne's earliest villa estates, Abbotsford House and St Heliers, which occupied this site from the 1840s and the St Josephs Industrial School (1874). (Criterion C)

Abbotsford Convent is architecturally significant as an outstanding example of a nineteenth century religious complex, with buildings constructed in various periods but in a consistent Gothic Revival style, reflecting the contemporary interest in Medievalism and strong influence by the French Mother House. These include the early buildings designed by Thomas Kelly, and those designed in the major building campaign of 1900-1911, mainly by William Tappin, with others by Reed, Smart & Tappin, one of Victoria's major architectural firms of that period. It is significant for the intact interiors, notably in the convent buildings, kitchens and laundries. (Criterion D)

*Abbotsford Convent is of aesthetic significance for the architectural cohesion of the complex, for the designed landscape elements and natural attributes, for the bushland vistas, and for its rural setting on the Yarra River, which has been retained despite the development of surrounding areas. It is a key visual landmark in the area, and notable for the views of the site from the Johnston Street Bridge, from the Kew side of the river, and from the Children's farm. Its collection of mature shrubs and trees of considerable age, including two outstanding English Oaks (*Quercus robur*), a fine Holm Oak (*Quercus ilex*) remnant River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), some rare plants including *Dombeya tiliacea*, and *Vitex lucens* contribute to the place. (Criterion E)*

8.0 Proposal

Redevelopment

It is proposed to demolish all the existing built form and soft landscaping at 2-10 Clarke Street, including the single-storey link to the Good Shepherd Chapel. The south-east section of the bluestone fence adjacent to the convent will be removed, with the remaining portion running along the southern boundary retained. A four storey, contemporary residential development with an additional basement containing car parking will then be constructed.

The new building will incorporate the same Clarke Street setback than the existing 1970s structure, but greater setbacks on the other sides, particularly to the east, where it will provide much greater separation from the convent building and Good Shepherd Chapel than at present. The setback to the south side of the building is in part determined by the need to maintain an existing electrical substation, which will be incorporated into the new building. This allows for the retention of the existing driveway access along the southern boundary, which will provide access to the basement entry ramp in the south-east corner of the building

Internally, the building will include full a basement level with car and bike parking, and service areas. The ground floor will contain eighteen apartments, with central communal spaces. The main entry will be located mid-way along the Clarke Street frontage, with a secondary pedestrian entry at the northern end. Full height lift shafts and stairwells will be located on each side of the building. The first floor will have a similar configuration to the ground floor, with nineteen apartments, each with a balcony. It will also incorporate an indented balcony mid-way along the western elevation. At the levels above, this indent will extend though the full width of the building, creating separate floor areas. Level 2 and Level 3 will include partial setbacks relative to the levels below, and contain fifteen apartments and twelve apartments respectively, also with balconies.

The lower level indents and division of the upper levels will result in the new building massed into separate building envelopes, one on the north and one on the south side of the site. These will be fully connected at ground level where the entry and communal spaces are located. This massing has been provided in part to reduce the apparent bulk of the development in views from Clarke Street by dividing it into two smaller elements, but also to create an enhanced view of the spire of the Good Shepherd Chapel behind in views from the west. This curated view will form an axial termination focal point looking east from along Abbotsford Street.

The external treatment will have a restrained, trabeated architectural treatment that incorporates extensive articulation. The elevations will be articulated into narrow bays, with the horizontal scale moderated by two and three-storey elements. The materiality will comprise predominantly pale grey/brown brick, with smaller details in pale and mid-grey render, with narrowly proportioned, full height glazed door and window openings. Balustrades will comprise dark grey/black metal pickets. The set back portions of the upper levels will feature varied finishes including a grey diamond shingle cladding, and darker grey window shutters.

The roof form to each envelope will be flat, with the partially raked profile of Level 3 and a differentiated materiality lending a mansard-like quality to the top of the building. Each level will be 3.3 metres high, bringing the total building height to 13.2 metres, with additional rooftop service plant located at setbacks.

To the extent that the removal of the link between the existing building and the Good Shepherd Chapel will reveal altered or compromised original fabric, it is proposed to undertake any necessary repair/restoration works in this location as part of the broader works program.

Landscaping

The curtilage surrounding the new building will be landscaped on each side with planting schemes that reference those in the wider convent site. The northern corner frontage to St Heliers Street will comprise gardens, with a central footpath leading to the ground floor entry on the north elevation. A new strip format public area with paving, seating and sculpture will be installed along the footpath boundary. Each of the ground floor apartments along the western frontage of Clarke Street will contain small outdoor terraces set behind boundary gardens enclosed by visually permeable front fences, with the terraces and main central entry surfaced with sawn bluestone paving. The existing adjacent street trees will be retained.

The driveway along the southern site boundary will be surfaced with bluestone pitchers, with most of the southern boundary wall retained. The demolished section of the bluestone wall in the south-east corner of the site will be replaced with a visually permeable fence treatment to allow for improved views west from the adjacent convent doorway, and improved views of the ground floor from the south-west. A narrow strip garden will be created along the north side of the driveway adjacent the south elevation of the new building.

The eastern curtilage between the new building, the convent and the Good Shepherd Chapel will be landscaped with private courtyards in a similar manner to the western frontage. A large communal courtyard will also be provided adjacent the east-west entry corridor, with raised garden beds and integrated seating. No public access will be provided through the eastern side of the building for security reasons, though a narrow private path will extend along the western elevations to the convent and church to allow access for maintenance. The fencing will be visually permeable. The drawings illustrate an easement is to be established either side of this fencing that will ensure access to the Chapel for the purposes of maintenance and future conservation.

Conservation Works to Chapel

It is noted that the chapel went through a restoration program between 2010 and 2012. The balance of the church beyond the link area is generally in good order, with the exception of the freestone to various windows and doorways (eg the rose window to the west elevation, and the neighbouring entry to the west end of the north elevation). The slate roof appears to have been repaired in a number of stages, with various parts of the roofs presenting as replaced or partially replaced. That said, it appears to be in good order and not requiring any short term works.

The proposed conservation works primarily address the enclosed link interface with the chapel where change will occur as a result of the wider development proposal, and are specifically identified in the 'heritage drawings' provided in the amended RFI response application package. The existing modern link between the

former aged care home and west elevation of the chapel will be removed, including the ramp, enclosed walkway, adjacent landscaping and also the flashings and any conduits attached to the church. The wall will be carefully cleaned, with minor repairs undertaken to the stonework where required, matching the existing stone and mortar. Repointing of the stonework will be undertaken in this area, to match the existing detail and character of the surrounding wall.

Subdivision

As noted, the subject development site is located on a portion of land on a single title [TP 116127R] which includes the adjacent Good Shephard Chapel addressing St Heliers Street to the east. It is proposed to subdivide this title into two lots, separating the chapel and the subject site onto different titles. The new development will be on Lot 1 and the chapel on Lot 2 of PS927301S. The line of subdivision will run parallel to the western elevation of the chapel, maintaining sufficient curtilage on the new chapel title for access to the external elevations of the building.

Again, it is noted that an easement is to be provided to the immediate west of the Chapel in order to ensure future access for maintenance and conservation. The fence between the development site and the Chapel is to bisect the middle portion of this easement.

9.0 Assessment Against Council Policy

As the site is included in the Heritage Overlay, it is subject to the provisions of *Clause 43.01*, the Heritage Overlay. The purposes of the Heritage Overlay are as follows:

- 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.*

[...]

As the site is subject to the provisions of a Heritage Overlay, *Clause 15.03 Heritage* applies and is reproduced, in part, below:

15.03-1L Heritage

[...]

Objectives

To conserve and enhance Yarra's natural and cultural heritage.

To preserve the scale and pattern of streetscapes in heritage places.

To ensure the adaptation of heritage places is consistent with the principles of good conservation practices.

[...]

Strategies

New development, alterations or additions

Retain, conserve and enhance individually significant and contributory buildings as identified in the incorporated document in schedule to clause 72.04 'City of Yarra Database of Heritage Significant Areas.'

Promote development that is high quality and respectful in its design response by:

- *Maintaining the heritage character of the existing building or streetscape.*
- *Respecting the scale and massing of the existing heritage building or streetscape.*
- *Retaining the pattern and grain of streetscapes in heritage places.*
- *Not visually dominating the existing heritage building or streetscape.*
- *Not detracting from or competing with the significant elements of the existing heritage building or streetscape.*
- *Maintaining the prominence of significant and contributory elements of the heritage place.*
- *Respecting the following elements of the heritage place:*
 - *Pattern, proportion and spacing of elements on an elevation.*
 - *Orientation to the street.*
 - *Setbacks.*
 - *Street wall.*
 - *Relationship between solid and void.*
 - *Roof form.*
 - *Chimneys.*
 - *Verandahs and canopies.*
 - *Materials.*
- *Being visually recessive against the heritage fabric through:*
 - *Siting.*
 - *Mass.*

- Scale.
- Materials.
- Architectural detailing.
- Texture, colours and finishes.

Protecting and conserving the view of heritage places from the public realm (except from laneways, unless fabric visible from laneways is identified as being significant in the Statement of Significance for the place).

Maintain views to the front of an individually significant or contributory building or views to a secondary façade where the building has two street frontages by not:

- Building over the front of it.
 - Extending into the air space above the front of it.
 - Obscuring views of its principal façade/s.
- [...]

Demolition

Prioritise the conservation and adaptive reuse of a heritage place over demolition.

Prevent the demolition of individually significant or contributory buildings unless all of the following can be demonstrated:

- The building is structurally unsound rather than in poor condition.
- Alternative stabilisation works have been investigated and are not feasible.
- The replacement building and/or works is appropriate for the heritage context.

Encourage applications for demolition to be accompanied by an application for new development.

[...]

Subdivision

Retain the significant or contributory elements of a heritage place within a single lot, including buildings, outbuildings, trees or gardens.

Support subdivision that respects and responds to the significance of the heritage place including the original road and lot layout, the rhythm and pattern of building frontages and/or buildings in the streetscape.

Ensure that the subdivision of former industrial complexes reflects or interprets the historical arrangement of the heritage buildings or processes.

There are no negative heritage impacts associated with the proposed extent of demolition, which is consistent with Council policy. It involves only modern built form that does not contribute to the significance of the heritage place. The existing vegetation is of no heritage value. The section of the bluestone wall to be removed in the south-east corner of the site dates from the 1970s and is of no heritage value.

Proposed Development

Senior living accommodation on the site is a compatible ongoing use that reflects the recent presence of an aged care facility, the historic provision of social welfare on the broader convent site and the residential nature of the adjacent part of Abbotsford to the west.

The design of new building is a carefully considered response to relevant Council policies. It will have a smaller footprint than the existing double-storey 1970s institutional building on the site, with the greater eastern setbacks from the Convent and Good Shepherd Chapel. The relative visual dominance of the new building will be moderated by its restrained architectural character, sympathetic materiality, upper-level setbacks and articulation into two building envelopes. The scheme will provide enhanced visual access to the convent and chapel spires located to the east along key viewlines as discussed in more detail below.

Potential Impacts on Significant Trees

The existing trees on the subject development site dates from the late 1970s and were planted subsequent to the completion of the existing former aged care home (see *Figure 6*).

With respect to the significance of the gardens and grounds of the wider convent site, the *Former Convent of the Good Shepherd, Abbotsford, Conservation Management Plan* prepared by Nigel Lewis Pty Ltd (June 2005) states 'The changes after 1975 when the convent closed lack the outstanding cultural heritage significance of the previous site history' [p.2.2]. The trees on the development sites do not date from key significant historic phases of development of the wider Convent complex and are considered to be of no heritage significance on that basis.

An Arboricultural Assessment & Report prepared by Glenn Waters Arboriculture has been submitted as part of this application (dated 3 October 2023). It examined thirty trees including four in the neighbouring convent gardens and fourteen in the Council footpath and roadway. These trees were generally assessed to be of Low to Low-Moderate arboricultural value, with only the *Quercus ilex* or Holm Oak located in the adjacent Convent gardens to the south identified as Significant.

The report noted that the development scheme would require the demolition of all trees on the development site and that all off-site neighbouring and street trees should be retained and protected during demolition and construction. Guidelines were provided to ensure the protection of the retained trees during the construction process and these will be followed by the permit applicant.

Landscaping Scheme

The proposed landscaping will provide an attractive, compatible setting to both the new building and the adjacent former convent site and chapel, and is another positive aspect of the scheme. The thematic linkage of the scheme with existing landscaping strategies within the former convent site is a considered design approach. The new public seating and garden area at of the north side of the site will be a positive community benefit. The scheme references the historic character of the convent complex through its materiality, which will include bluestone pitchers and sawn pavers, and brick. The soft landscaping will include decorative plantings, including flowering species.

The landscaping documentation included in the application include drawings showing the full detail of the proposed fencing. The proposed perimeter and dividing fences in this area are required to provide private and secure outdoor spaces for the adjacent ground floor apartments. The upper portion of the new fences will be visually permeable character, which will allow views of the adjacent convent and chapel from the adjacent landscaped area east of the new building. (The space between the former aged care home and

chapel is not at present a public pedestrian access route.) This is a respectful, sensitive design response to the site's heritage setting.

The proposed removal of part of the 1970s bluestone wall and installation of a more open treatment to the south-east corner of the site is a change proposed as a result of dialogue with the former convent's heritage advisor that will improve the setting of the south-western convent entry. The bluestone wall currently results in a harsh visual barrier in this location that severs a key viewline at ground level.

Subdivision

The subdivision will place the historic Good Shephard Chapel within its own individual title. This will result in the future management of the chapel and of the new development being fully separated. The location of the western boundary to Lot 2 has been plotted to ensure the west elevation of the chapel can be accessed from within the chapel site. The subdivision will result in most of the curtilage of between the chapel and new development being allocated to Lot 1, where it can be landscaped, managed and used in more holistic way.

The proposed subdivision effectively formalises a configuration that has existed for nearly 50 years, whereby an open garden space has existed on the west side of the chapel that is accessed from and associated with the adjacent residential building addressing Clarke Street. The chapel formally address St Heliers Street to the north and the interior of the convent site to the east. The west side of the chapel does not contain any major entry points or other public interfaces and is effectively a secondary or rear elevation.

It is noted that increasing the curtilage on the west side of the chapel in the subdivision would reduce the area of new outdoor spaces along the east side of the new building from where residents can see and appreciate the elevations of the chapel and convent. Security considerations require a fence be installed along the boundary between the chapel and development site. Moving that boundary further west will not increase the visibility of the heritage buildings from the proposed new adjacent outdoor spaces given the need for fencing.

In conclusion, the proposed subdivision of the existing title [TP 116127R] into two lots is not considered to introduce negative heritage impacts relative to the current circumstances of the overall site.

Conservation Works to Chapel

It is again noted that the chapel went through a restoration program between 2010 and 2012. The present proposed works including the removal of the link and the restoration of the associated fabric are an additional heritage benefit arising from the scheme.

As discussed in the reasonable or economic use report, the subdivision of the site and redevelopment of the land currently occupied by the former aged care home are all factors that result in a flow of funds that will assist in financing any necessary future conservation works to the balance of the chapel.

Impacts on Adjacent Interfaces

- Convent & Good Shepherd Chapel

The scheme will result in a much improved setting to the west side of the Abbotsford Convent. This curtilage will be enlarged and activated to a much greater degree than at present by the provision of private and communal courtyard spaces, allowing a greater appreciation of views of the adjacent historic buildings.

Sightlines from the west along Clarke Street and Abbotsford Street have historically and more recently offered partial silhouette views of the upper spire of the Good Shepherd Chapel and the upper spire and roof for the former convent. These have been accidental, unstructured views, rather than formal viewlines framed and optimised by the development at 2-10 Clarke Street. The proposed scheme will provide a more sophisticated and formal axial viewline that celebrates the chapel spire.

It is noted that the *Yarra Planning Scheme* includes specific policies relating to the protection of views to an inventory of significant landmarks at *Clause 15.01-2L-02 Landmarks*. Views associated with the Abbotsford Convent are not identified in this policy. Accepting this, as noted, the spires and roofline will retain landmark qualities in views from the west.

- Convent Gardens

The south end of the new building will be visible from the adjacent open gardens to the south located within the former convent grounds. While it will be visible to a greater degree than the existing building on the site, it will be of a neutral character and be visually subservient to the adjacent convent building, a more monumental building with a roofline the equivalent of approximately two storeys higher, and a south-west corner spire that is even more substantial. The increased setback of the new building from the convent will result in enhanced views of the west elevation of the convent and Good Shepherd Chapel spire in views from within the park from the south-west.

- Clarke & St Heliers Streets

With respect to the adjacent streetscapes, potential impacts on the built form directly opposite west side of Clarke Street is of no concern given it is not subject to the Heritage Overlay. It is noted that 1-7 Clarke Street already contains a large, multi-tenancy residential building of 2 storeys extending the full width of the street frontage between Abbotsford and Yarra Streets. The proposed development is a comparable form of higher density residential development, albeit on a larger site and of greater height.

While the opposite north side of St Heliers Street is also subject to HO9, it contains no historical built form and is of a low degree of sensitivity. The greater setback of the north side of the new building will result in the Good Shepherd Chapel being more visible from the intersection with Clarke Street and have more prominent street presence in views from the west than at present.

10.0 Key Considerations

As noted, this heritage impact statement has been prepared in general accordance with Heritage Victoria's guidelines for such assessments. With respect to the permit application works, it seeks to respond to several key questions, as previously set out in Section 2.0.

The cultural heritage significance of the place

The cultural heritage significance of the Abbotsford Convent is outlined in detail above, and in particular is identified in the Statement of Significance for the place. It is identified as being of historical, architectural,

scientific (botanical), aesthetic and archaeological significance. As noted, the built form currently at 2-10 Clarke Street is modern in origin and of no significance. The site provides an adjacent setting to the significant convent and Good Shepherd Chapel buildings to the east and to associated landscaped grounds to the south. It provides context through both in the adjacent curtilage of space and in the role it plays in framing views of the silhouette of the convent and chapel in views from the east, including more distant views.

What options were considered in developing the proposal?

The current proposal has been developed in consultation with the City of Yarra and Heritage Victoria. It seeks to achieve a balance between achieving a viable development outcome with sufficient amenity for the new residents whilst providing a carefully considered and sympathetic setting to the adjacent heritage buildings.

The building footprint has been generated by the linear proportions of the site with its extensive Clarke Street frontage, which in turn reflects the historic continuous multi-storey character of the frontage of the former school on the site. Reducing the number of storeys will require reducing the setbacks of the development for it to remain financially viable as outlined below. Building massings were initially explored that did not incorporate the currently proposed side setbacks and articulated building envelopes, but were revised in the current proposal to allow enhanced key views towards to key elements within the convent site and a more sympathetic building silhouette.

What impact (positive and/or negative) will the proposed works have on the significance of the place?

Positive impacts of the proposal include the following -

- Improved visibility and context to key viewlines of the convent and Good Shepherd Chapel, including the spires (as shown in the visualisations provided in the application documentation)..
- Provision of a much larger curtilage of open space between the convent and Good Shepherd Chapel, with a sympathetic, attractive and compatible landscaping treatment to this area. This will increase the visibility and appreciation of the east elevation of the convent and chapel.
- More architecturally refined street interface than at present.
- By substantially increasing the adjacent residential population, the scheme is likely to result in increased visitation, usage and appreciation of the former Convent site.
- Conservation works will be undertaken to the area of the west elevation of the chapel where the modern link is to be demolished.

Potentially negative impacts may include -

- The development will be higher in scale than the existing building on the site, which will result in partially reduced views of the convent and chapel spires and roofs from some viewlines along Clarke Street.

What measures are proposed to minimise and mitigate negative impacts?

The key measures taken to mitigate the potential for negative impacts upon the cultural significance of the place are as follows:

- Setting the new building further back from the west elevation of the convent and Good Shepherd Chapel than the existing building.
- The provision of attractive soft and hard landscaping including traditional bluestone paving, with visually permeable fencing. In the enlarged curtilage between the two sites, this will replace an existing arrangement of service areas and obtrusive fencing.
- Incorporating greater setbacks to the north and south ends of the building to allow enhanced views to the adjacent heritage buildings.
- Separating the building into two four-storey envelopes to reduce its apparent horizontal mass and to allow for an improved formal, curated viewline to the spire of Good Shepherd Chapel from the east, including along the length of Abbotsford Street.
- Incorporation of setbacks at Levels 2 and 3 with a mansard-like roof treatment to further reduce the apparent visual dominance of the building.
- Placement of upper-level balconies at the corners of the building to allow for greater visual permeability.
- Incorporation of a restrained contemporary architectural treatment to the new building including a sympathetic brick materiality, neutral tones, and extensive articulation.
- Conservation works will be undertaken to the west elevation of the chapel, with a focus on the interface with the existing link which is to be demolished.

Reasonable or Economic Use

Applications for works to places on the *Victorian Heritage Register* are considered within the broad ambit of considerations under the *Heritage Act 2017*, which seek to conserve the significance of place, whilst also support their sustainability and taking into account economic impacts. Inter alia, the *Heritage Act* provides the following directions regarding the matters to be considered in the determination of permit applications:

101 Determination of permit applications

(1) After considering an application the Executive Director may—

(a) approve the application and—

(i) issue the permit for the proposed works or activities; or

(ii) issue the permit for some of the proposed works or activities specified in the application; or

(b) refuse the application.

(2) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director must consider the following—

(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object;

(b) the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object;

(c) any submissions made under section 95 or 100;

[...]

(f) any matters relating to the protection and conservation of the registered place or registered object that the Executive Director considers relevant.

(3) In determining whether to approve an application for a permit, the Executive Director may consider—

(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of any adjacent or neighbouring property that is—

(i) included in the Heritage Register; or

(ii) subject to a heritage requirement or control in the relevant planning scheme; or

(b) any other relevant matter.

The above considerations include the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural significance of the Abbotsford Convent, and the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place.

The development is proposed by Mercy Health on a non-profit basis. The number and type of units in the proposal address the minimum requirements for the scheme to be financially viable. The scheme will provide a substantial social benefit, with the apartments dedicated to retirement aged residents (singles and couples). A reduction in the floorspace would undermine the viability of the project and its wider community benefit. The existing building provides a sub-optimal response to its heritage setting and cannot be readily adaptably reused to the same intensity.

A detailed report addressing reasonable and economic use will be provided as part of the updated RFI response application.

11.0 Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of 2-10 Clarke Street, Abbotsford represents ongoing evolutionary change to part of the perimeter of the Abbotsford Convent site that has historically accommodated multi-storey built form. The new building will have a smaller footprint than the existing double-storey 1970s institutional building on the site, with the greater eastern setbacks from the Convent and Good Shepherd Chapel. The relative visual dominance of the new building will be moderated by its restrained architectural character, upper-level setbacks and articulation into two building envelopes. The scheme will provide enhanced visual access to the convent and chapel spires located to the east along key viewlines. The repurposing of the site for retirement accommodation is consistent with the historic provision of social welfare functions on the broader convent site. The proposed subdivision of the existing title of land will have no heritage impacts.

The proposal has been prepared in accordance with relevant Council policies, general heritage principles and the *Burra Charter*. Having regard for the above, the proposal has been developed with due consideration for the significance of the Abbotsford Convent and it is appropriate that a permit be issued.