

**H1286 Former North Park
69 Woodland Street, Essendon
Permit Application P29647**

Why is the former North Park of cultural heritage significance?

Former North Park is included in the Victorian Heritage Register under the provisions of the *Heritage Act 2017* for its architectural, historic and aesthetic importance to the State of Victoria.

North Park is important for its association with renowned brewer and sportsman, Alexander McCracken (1856-1915), with its imposing massing and design reflecting his position and achievement in Melbourne's industry and standing in society. North Park has served as the Australian headquarters of the St Columbans Mission Society since 1923.

The mansion at North Park is a pioneering example of the Queen Anne Revival domestic architecture in Australia. The grounds of North Park are an outstanding example of the Gardenesque style with three curved terraces, wide drive, and evergreen trees and large conifers that contribute to the picturesque composition.

What was the permit application for?

In December 2019 Heritage Victoria received a permit application to subdivide Former North Park into four allotments; demolish the existing 1960s St Columbans Mission Society's administration building; construct a new three level residential and administration building; and construct 25 dwellings of two and three levels within the site's open garden space.

The proposed development seeks to provide and finance new accommodation for the St Columbans Mission Society.

The permit application was advertised between 15 January 2020 and 31 January 2020 with 44 submissions received.

Why has the permit been refused?

The *Heritage Act 2017* requires the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria ('the Executive Director') to consider various matters in determining a permit application including the extent that the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the place; the extent that refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the place; and any submissions received in response to public notice of the permit application.

On 16 September 2020, the Executive Director refused the permit application for the following reasons:

- If the application were approved it would result in unacceptable and irreversible detrimental impact on the cultural heritage significance of the registered place.
- The subdivision and development would adversely affect the cultural heritage significance and setting of the registered place by:

- physically and legally dividing the site, leaving the mansion separated and isolated from its wider landscape setting.
 - erasing the legibility of the place through intensive townhouse development, with associated fencing on separate lots, and separating the mansion from the coach house by subdivision and construction of accessways and fencing
 - adopting an architectural design that is at odds with the setting and architecture of the mansion, and is visually dominant in relation to the existing buildings and site, due to its scale, bulk and materiality.
 - erasing the appreciation of the Gardenesque style of the garden and jeopardising the remaining trees and vegetation.
- Refusal of the permit application will prevent the works as proposed from being realised. Heritage Victoria accepts that providing for the contemporary needs of the St Columbans Mission Society on the site may be appropriate. However, it has not been sufficiently demonstrated that the requirements of the society could not be met without having such a significant and irreversible impact on the registered place.
 - The negative impacts of the proposal are not outweighed by the benefits, including the economic benefits.

Can the applicant appeal the decision?

The applicant can choose to apply to the Heritage Council of Victoria for a review of the Executive Director's decision within 60 days of receiving the refusal notice. The Heritage Council is an independent statutory authority established under the *Heritage Act 2017*