

# Heritage Impact Statement

Salesian College (Rupertswood)  
3-5 Macedon Street, Sunbury

Permit application - New Chapel

December 2024



# Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	2
2.0	Methodology.....	2
3.0	Sources of Information.....	2
4.0	History & Description.....	3
5.0	Heritage Listings .....	9
6.0	Significance.....	10
7.0	Proposal .....	12
8.0	Heritage Impacts .....	15
9.0	Conclusion .....	17



## 1.0 Introduction

This report has been prepared on behalf of Salesian College, the owner and occupant of Rupertswood mansion at 3-5 Macedon Street, Sunbury. It provides an assessment of the potential heritage impacts arising from the proposal to construct a chapel within Rupertswood mansion's extent of registration. The proposal is generally unchanged from the scheme for a new chapel approved under Heritage Victoria Permit P32156 (albeit that permit has now lapsed).

## 2.0 Methodology

This heritage impact statement has been prepared with regard to the *Burra Charter* and its guidelines, as amended in 2013, and in general accordance with *Heritage Victoria Guidelines for Preparing Heritage Impact Statements* (June 2021).

## 3.0 Sources of Information

The analysis below draws upon site inspections along with a review of the *Heritage Act 2017* and the registration documentation for Rupertswood (VHR H275). Regard has also been had for the following documents:

- *Principles for considering changes to places in the Victorian Heritage Register* (made and published under s19(1)(f) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, December 2022)
- *Heritage Victoria Policy: Reasonable or Economic Use* (made and published under s19(1)(f) of the *Heritage Act 2017*, June 2021)
- *Rupertswood Garden Conservation Management Plan* (Meredith Gould Architects Pty Ltd, 2004)
- *City of Hume: Heritage Study of the former Shire of Bulla District* (David Maloney & Vicki Johnson, 1998)

It is intended that this report be read in conjunction with the drawings by Branch Studio Architects and other documents submitted in respect to this application.

## 4.0 History & Description

Rupertswood mansion was built in 1874-76 for Sir William Clarke. A magnificent ballroom was constructed to the rear of the mansion in 1881 to designs by noted architect Charles Webb.

The mansion's picturesque garden was laid out by prominent landscaper and nurseryman, William Sangster. The landscaping included open space north-east of the house that was used as sports oval (this later became known as the Top Oval or Ashes Oval). In the summer of 1882-3 Rupertswood hosted a match involving the visiting English cricket team. England had previously lost to Australia, a mock obituary posted in the *Sporting Times* declaring the death of English cricket and suggesting "the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia". Lady Janet Clarke burnt a cricket ball and symbolically placed its ashes in an urn for presentation to the English team, which became the prize in the ongoing cricket series 'The Ashes' still played between England and Australia today.

A water supply plan from c.1920 provides some indication of the early garden layout (Figure 2). The curving main driveway approached the house from the west, before sweeping behind the house to the stables a short distance to the north. Immediately in front of the house was the circular round-about. East of the house towards Jackson's Creek was a semi-circular 'Kitchen Garden'. Photographs from the period indicate the house was surrounded by mature trees by this time, so was very much screened from its surrounds.

Rupertswood was acquired by the Salesian Order in 1927 and converted into a school – a use that continues to this day. The mansion retains an attractive but much reduced garden curtilage to its northern and southern sides characterised by curving gravel paths and areas of lawn planted with various mature specimen trees. The mansion's immediate garden curtilage has generally been kept free of modern structures. However, land to the north and east of the mansion has been intensively developed with a range of modern school buildings.

The proposed chapel would occupy undeveloped land north-west of the mansion, siting between 'The Ashes' oval and the existing school library. It is noted that 'The Ashes' oval originally incorporated all the land up to the main pathway shown in figures 1 and 2 below. This land is now considerably reduced by the construction of an asphalt paved carpark. Landscaping works and a cross/belltower have been completed as part of the first stage of the chapel development.

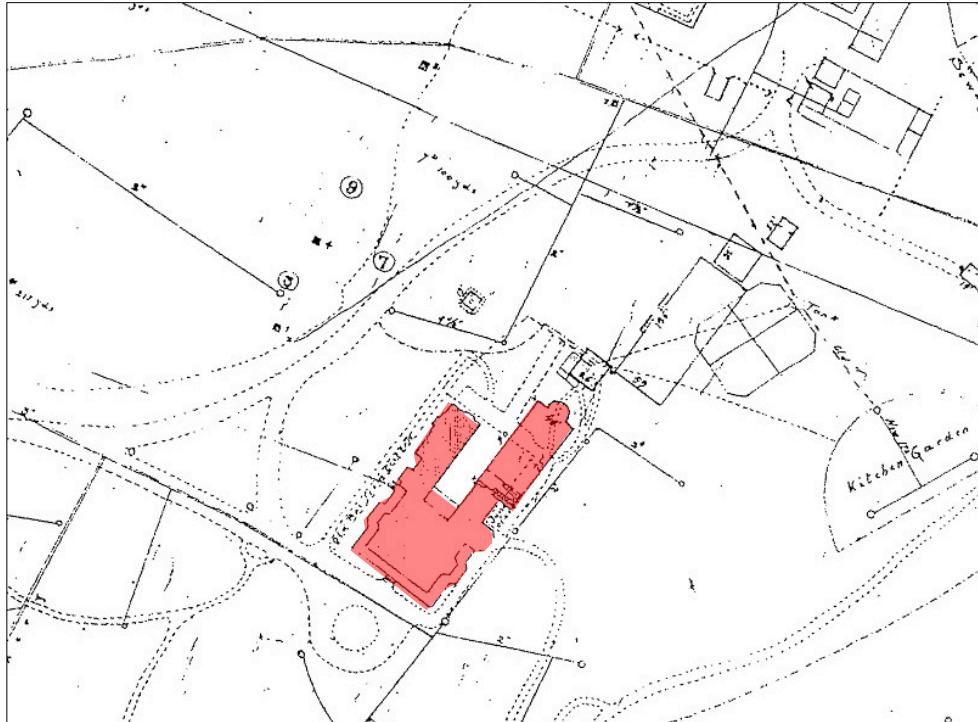


Figure 1 Extract from a c1920 water supply plan for Rupertswood. Source: Reproduced from 'Rupertswood Garden Conservation Plan'.



Figure 2 The grounds of Rupertswood during the early years of occupation by Salesian College, c1930. Source: State Library of Victoria.



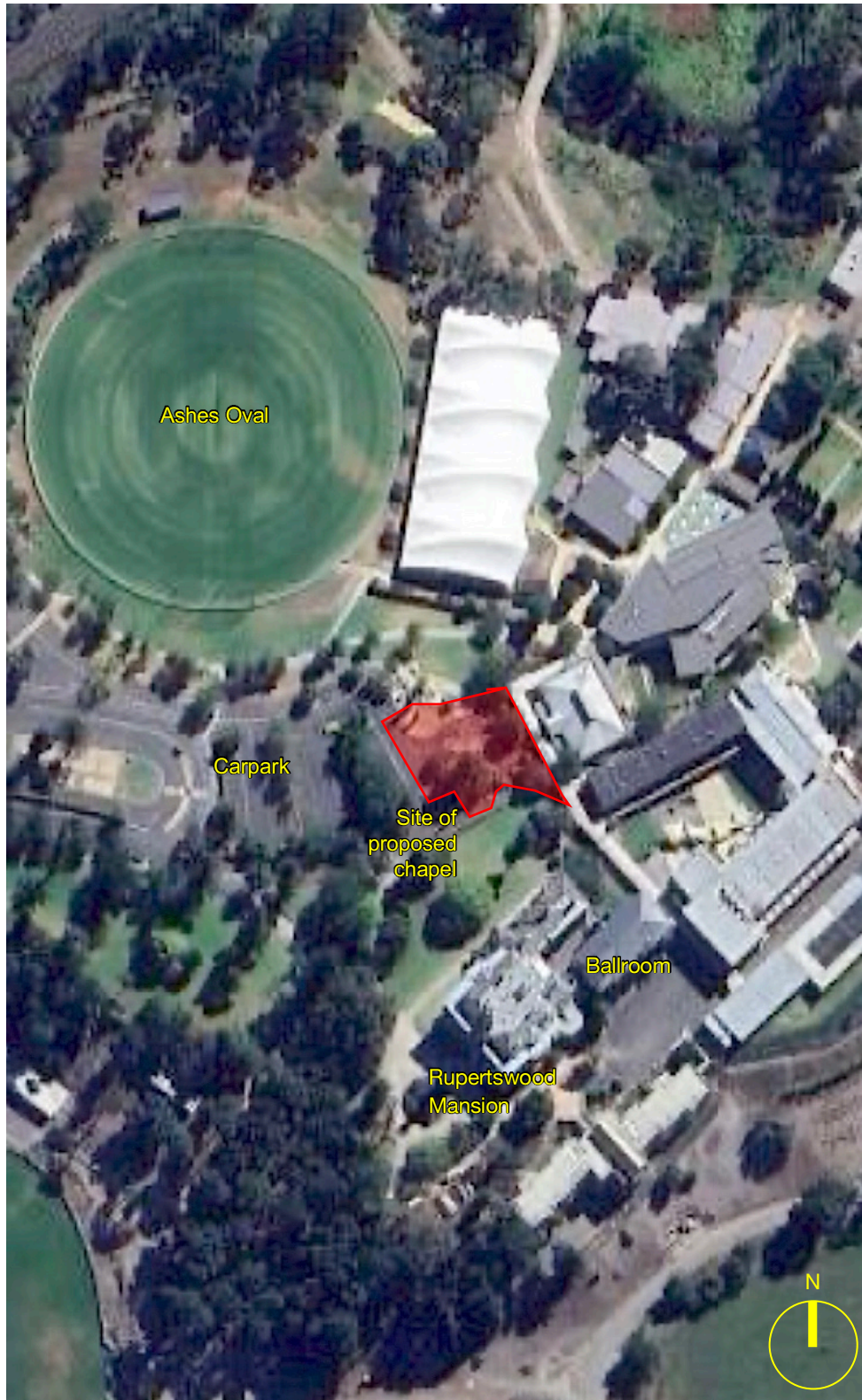


Figure 3 Recent aerial photograph of Salesian College.





Figure 4 The chapel site viewed from the north. Rupertswood mansion is partially visible behind the trees in the background.



Figure 5 The site of the proposed chapel looking north.





Figure 6 Recently completed landscaping (undertaken as stage 1 of the chapel development).



Figure 7 View from the carparking area looking east towards the chapel site.





Figure 8 Post war/modern school buildings south-east of the chapel site.



Figure 9 Modern shade structure over the sports courts to the north-east of the chapel site.



Figure 10 View from the Ashes Oval looking south-east towards the chapel site.

## 5.0 Heritage Listings

### *Heritage Victoria*

Rupertswood is included on the Victorian Heritage Register as place H0275. The extent of registration for Rupertswood is shown in figure 11 below and noted as:

#### *Extent of Registration:*

1. All the buildings and structures known as Rupertswood marked on Diagram No. 275 held by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria including:

B1 Main House including the ballroom and servants' wings

B2 Gate lodge

B3 Front fence and gates

B4 Fountain

B5 Former drill hall

B6 Bluestone retaining wall and base on east side of Blind Creek

B7 Bluestone inlet structure from Blind Creek to dam and lake

B8 Brick and bluestone outlet structure from lake, with sluice gates

B9 Water tank, including boiler

B10 Vaulted brick structure

2. All the land L1 described in Certificate of Title Vol. 5416 Folio 006 and Certificate of Title Vol. 3475 Folio 982 and part of the railway reserve marked on Diagram No. 275 held by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria.

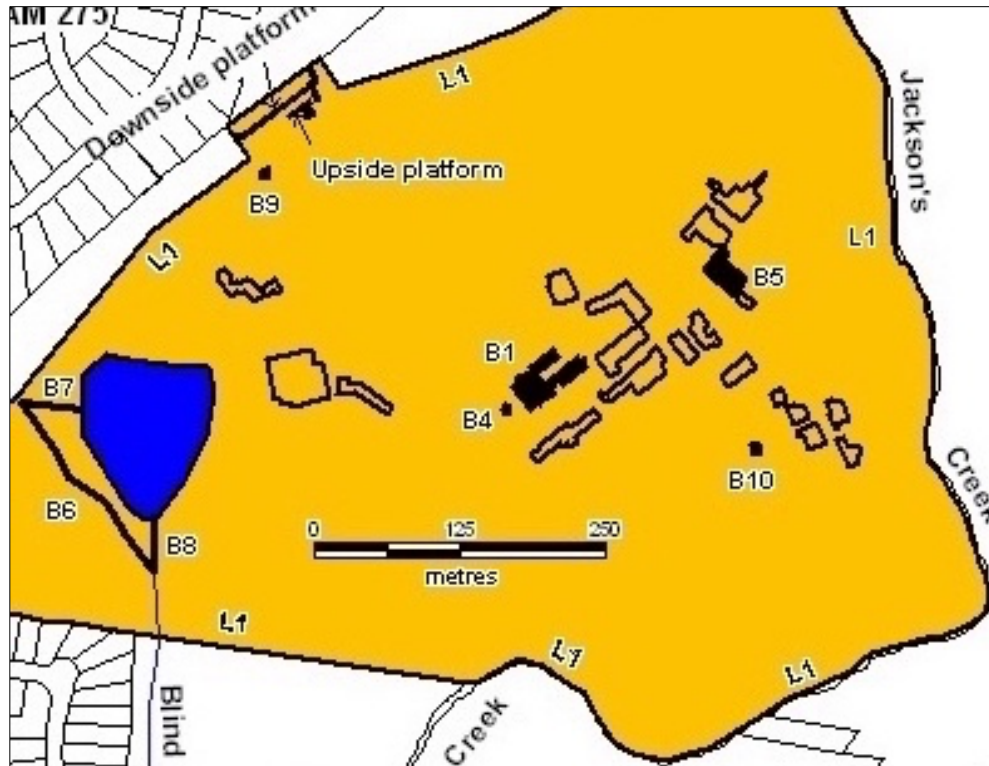


Figure 11 Extract from the diagram showing the extent of registration.

#### City of Hume

Rupertswood is listed on the Heritage Overlay Schedule to the Hume Planning Scheme as HO45. It is nonetheless recognised that the Responsible Authority with regard to heritage matters within the extent of registration is Heritage Victoria, and Hume Council will have a role as a referral body.

#### National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

Rupertswood mansion is included on the Register of the National Trust (File No. B1817). The Rupertswood lodge and gates are registered separately (B1038). Both sites are identified as being of National Significance.

## 6.0 Significance

Per the statement of significance endorsed by Heritage Victoria, Rupertswood is considered to be significant for the following reasons:

*Rupertswood, one of the largest houses built in Victoria, has historical significance as an expression of an extraordinary way of life based on great affluence. Rupertswood became one of the principal social centres in Victoria, with hundreds of guests arriving at the estate's private railway platform to attend hunt meets, balls and house parties. The railway platform has been re-built probably in the mid twentieth century but the site is part of the significance of the place.*



*The estate also had its own half battery of horse artillery when Sir William Clarke formed a small permanent force in 1885. The drill hall and the vault remain as reminders of this privately sponsored regiment.*

*Rupertswood has important historical associations with landowner, stud-breeder and philanthropist Sir William John Clarke (1831-1897). The elaborate mansion with its large estate demonstrates the important status of Clarke whose prominence as a colonist was recognised in 1882 by his appointment as a baronet.*

*Rupertswood has an historical association with Hugh Victor McKay (1865-1926) who owned the Sunshine Harvester Works, for many years the largest factory in Australia. McKay achieved his long-held ambition of owning Rupertswood in 1922 but died after only four years.*

*Rupertswood has significant historical associations with the Catholic Church in Victoria. The Salesian order of priests, who have occupied the property since 1927, was formed in Turin, Italy by Saint John Bosco who set up schools and homes for the underprivileged of the city. The order arrived in Australia in 1923 and priests and brothers were welcomed in Melbourne by Archbishop Mannix in 1925. From 1931 to 1981 Rupertswood was the site for Eucharistic Festivals, the major annual devotional event of the Catholic Church in Victoria. The ballroom was converted to a chapel and a choir loft was added in 1964 by the Salesians.*

*Rupertswood is of historical significance for its association with the history of cricket as the birthplace for the Ashes, cricket's most illustrious trophy. After a social match on the property with members of the English touring cricket team in 1882, Janet, Lady Clarke burnt a bail and presented the ashes in an urn to the victorious English captain, Ivo Bligh.*

*Rupertswood is of architectural significance as an extraordinary example of a mansion built to reflect the wealth and prominence of the Clarke family and designed by architect George Brown in an eclectic design.*

*Rupertswood is of architectural and aesthetic significance for the outstanding craftsmanship and decoration of the interior. The stained glass windows by Ferguson and Urie are particularly noteworthy.*

*Rupertswood is of aesthetic significance for the garden and parkland designed in the picturesque style by William Sangster in 1874. Despite the loss of much of the plantings and some of the pathway system the garden retains elements from the original design such as the entrance and lodge, drives, lake and rockery, the Kept Gardens around the mansion, the escarpment, remnants of the water supply system, the household produce garden and the farm.*

*The gardens are of scientific (horticultural) significance. There are two rare *Afrocarpus falcata*, unusual wisteria cultivars, camellias and conifers, especially Bunya Bunya Pines and Hoop Pines which have grown to a large size and are an important landscape feature.*

The Rupertswood Garden Conservation Management Plan (CMP) contains a separate statement of significance relating specifically to the garden and grounds of Rupertswood. The relevant sections from this statement are as follows:

*The garden design is intimately linked with the design and siting for the Mansion; its scale a reflection of the immense wealth of the Clarke family in the latter decades of the nineteenth century, and the intention of William Clarke, later Sir William, to express this wealth and its accompanying status at a country seat which would rival any other in the then Colony of Victoria.*

*The primary significance of the garden relates to the Sangster design of 1874, its adaption as the planting proceeded over the next three years, and the European inspired input from William Clarke during his time overseas in the early stages up to its resulting complete form in 1887. Despite the obvious loss of the majority of the plantings and some of the extensive pathway system, the key features of the design remain – the entrance and the lodge, Main (front) Drive and Back Drive, the Lake and Rockery, the Kept Gardens around the mansion, the escarpment, remnants of the extensive and intricate water supply system, the household produce garden, and the farm.*

## 7.0 Proposal

Salesian College are proposing to construct a single-storey chapel in the grounds of Rupertswood mansion. The chapel will be sited outside the immediate proximity of the mansion's 'kept gardens', in the area between The Ashes oval, the staff carpark and the library. The school had previously used the ballroom of Rupertswood mansion as a chapel but have since restored the ballroom under permit from Heritage Victoria for use as performing arts and theatre space.

The proposed chapel will feature a rooftop garden that integrates the building into the existing landscape. It has been designed and sited to create a natural stepped flow through to the oval, with the landscaping incorporating Aboriginal symbolism with irregular/curvilinear elements and large stone slabs protruding from the ground. The chapel is predominately constructed of charcoal coloured rammed earth with a timber soffit internally. Large sliding glass screens open onto a covered overflow area on the north elevation overlooking the oval.

The proposal generally remains consistent with the previously approved chapel scheme in terms of its overall scale, site coverage, architectural character and materiality. The principal change is a reorientation of the plan form (as illustrated in figures 12 and 13 below). The previous orientation had the chapel directly facing the recently constructed modern shade structure over the sports courts to the north-east. The new orientation improves the sense of connection and sightlines to the Ashes Oval from the proposed chapel.

To accommodate structural requirements for a column free space, all fascias and a select external walls are now proposed to be constructed of concrete. To minimise the visual impact of these new concrete features, the height of the rammed earth retaining wall on the west elevation has been increased.

There has been a minor increase in the depth of the chapel roof to accommodate mechanical and structural requirements and to also allow for sufficient depth for plantings on the green roof. For safety reasons a balustrade (with an aged brass finish) will enclose an accessible area of the roof.

A small storage area and DDA compliant toilet have been added to the east elevation and there is a new service room to the south elevation – albeit the latter is below ground.



Figure 12 (left) Endorsed site plan.

Figure 13 (right) Currently proposed site plan.

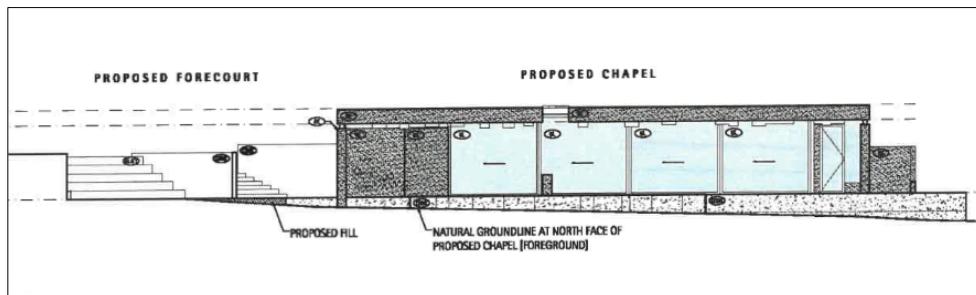


Figure 14 Endorsed north elevation.

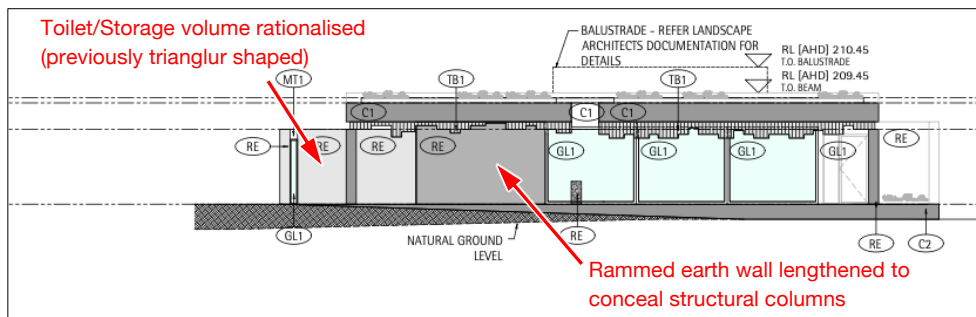


Figure 15 Currently proposed north elevation.



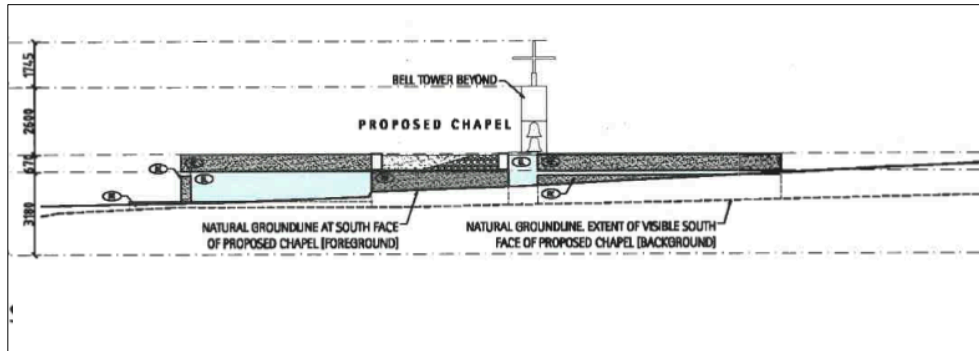


Figure 16 Endorsed south elevation.

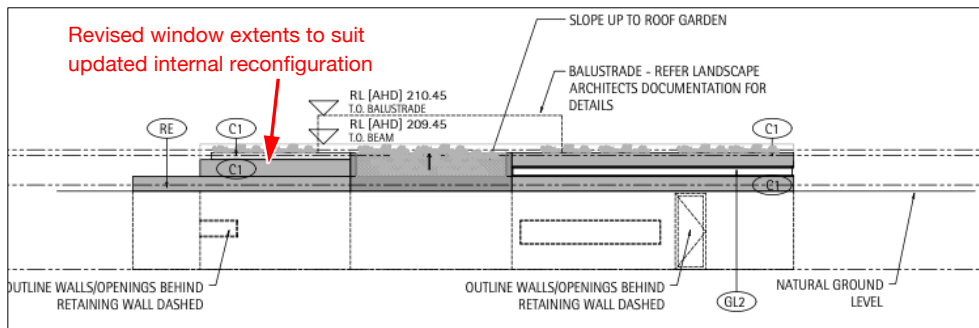


Figure 17 Proposed south elevation. Note that most of the building is below natural ground level.

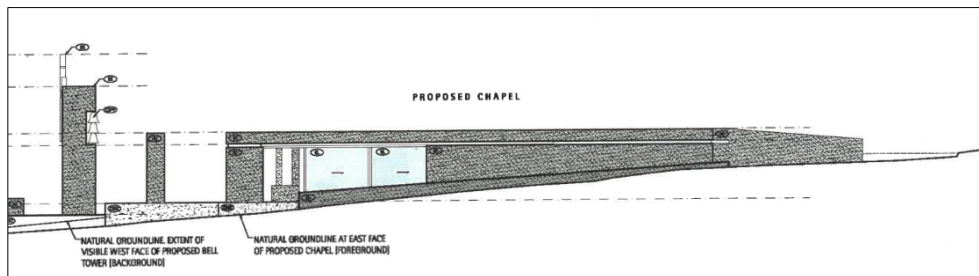


Figure 18 Endorsed west elevation.

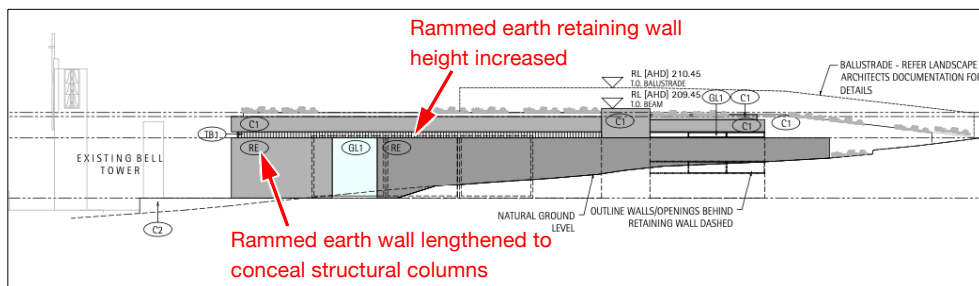


Figure 19 Currently proposed west elevation.

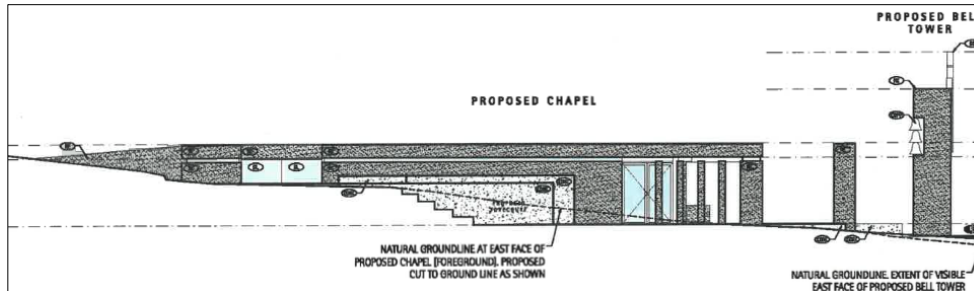


Figure 20 Endorsed east elevation.

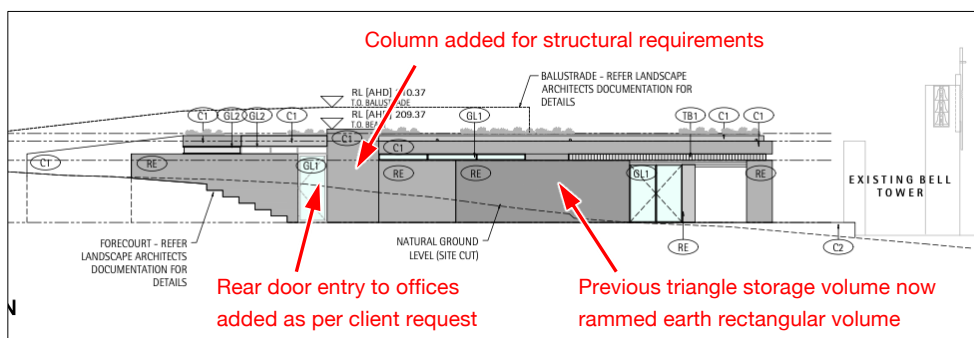


Figure 21 Currently proposed east elevation.

## 8.0 Heritage Impacts

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.*

In respect to Section 101(2)(a) of the *Heritage Act*, the proposal will have no adverse effect on the cultural heritage significance of the registered place. The key consideration is that the proposed development is essentially unchanged from the previously approved scheme, other than re-orientation of the chapel, a very minor increase in the depth of the roof, some adjustments to the plan form and the installation of a balustrade on the roof.

The proposed re-orientation of the plan form brings the chapel slightly closer to modern, non-significant built form to the east, but there is no appreciable reduction in the physical and visual separation to Rupertswood mansion. As noted, increased floor space to the south of the main chapel envelope will be concealed below ground level and integrated into the landscape treatment. The number of trees to be removed is not increased from the approved scheme. Approximately 17 new trees are to be planted to integrate the new chapel into its landscape setting.

On the basis of the above, the current proposal will exert no greater impacts on the significance character and historic garden setting of the Rupertswood mansion than would have resulted from the approved scheme. The application should therefore be seen to be acceptable with regard to heritage considerations.

Further to this, there has no change in circumstances within the registered place, or a re-appraisal of its significance that would give cause to reconsider the merits of the proposed chapel development.

In accordance with Section 101(2)(b) of the *Heritage Act*, The Executive Director must consider the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object. When considering the matter of reasonable use, the Executive Director may consider (1) the historic, recent and current uses of the registered place or object, (2) other compatible uses of the registered place or object, (3) the context and setting within which the place or object is located, and (4) other relevant matters.

The chapel site is outside what is understood to be the mansion's 'kept gardens' – ie the landscaping of heightened sensitivity. The chapel is located proximate to the historically significant 'Ashes' oval, but the oval and its environs has already experienced extensive alterations through the creation of the car park and associated roadways and modern built form, and this in itself provides a basis for introduction of modern built form and new landscaping.



The proposed chapel is compatible with its context and setting and will directly support the longstanding, significant use of the place as a Catholic school.

The ability to provide a dedicated space for religious purposes is integral to operation of Salesian College. Refusal of the application will therefore adversely impact on the reasonable use of the place.

The requirement under the Heritage Act to consider the effect of refusal on the reasonable or economic use of a place arises in practical terms only in the context of the Executive Director considering a refusal in relation to s101[2] (a), (c) or (f) of the Act. If there is no basis to consider refusal, ie refusal of the application does not arise in relation to these other matters, then consideration of the impact of refusal would be a redundant action. In the present instance, the proposal is supported on the basis that it will do no harm to the registered place, regardless of reasonable or economic use considerations.

## 9.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the current proposal for the development of a new chapel at Salesian College will give rise to no greater heritage impacts than would have resulted from the previously approved chapel design. The two schemes are largely identical in terms of the key metrics for assessing the appropriateness of new development in heritage context, including overall scale, architectural expression, materiality and setbacks from the heritage building.

The proposal supports the historically and socially significance use of the registered place by Salesian College and does not involve any loss of significant fabric. Nor do the works interfere with the historic garden setting to Rupertswood mansion. The proposal should therefore be considered appropriate having regard for the identified significance of the registered place and the provisions of the *Heritage Act*.