

Expert Witness Statement - Heritage

for

2-8 Oxford Street, Box Hill

Whitehorse Planning Scheme Amendment C194 and Planning Permit Application WH/2016/1196



*View of the subject site from the corner of Oxford and Station Streets, looking north-west.
Source: Google, 2017*

Prepared for and under instruction of Terrain Consulting Group
on behalf of Wesley Uniting Church Box Hill, headed by Nilesn Gaikwad (chairman) and members of the
Church Council

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1. Understanding

1.1 Introduction

THE NAME AND ADDRESS OF THE EXPERT

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THE EXPERT'S QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- [02] A statement of my qualifications and experience with respect to heritage and urban conservation issues is appended (Appendix A) to this report.

A STATEMENT IDENTIFYING THE EXPERT'S AREA OF EXPERTISE TO MAKE THE REPORT

- [03] I have provided expert heritage advice to numerous private individuals and municipal councils for sites listed at both the Local and State level, have extensive experience working with the Planning Scheme and an understanding of the Planning Amendment process. I have provided expert witness evidence on similar matters before VCAT, and have been retained in such matters variously by municipal councils, property owners and objectors to planning amendments and proposals.

A STATEMENT IDENTIFYING ANY OTHER SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTORS TO THE REPORT AND WHERE NECESSARY OUTLINING THEIR EXPERTISE

- [04] The study team for this statement of evidence comprised me (director, heritage consultant) and Claire Miller, research assistant.

ALL INSTRUCTIONS THAT DEFINE THE SCOPE OF THE REPORT

- [05] This statement of evidence has been prepared under the instructions of Terrain Consulting Group on behalf of The Wesley Uniting Church (headed by Nilesn Gaikwad (chairman) and members of the Church Council), the occupiers of the land at 2-8 Oxford Street, Box Hill, submitter to Amendment C194 to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme. The Amendment relates to a number of planning matters including the rezoning of land owned by the Wesley Uniting Church at 2-8 Oxford Street, Box Hill, from Residential Growth Zone Schedule 2 (RGZ2) to a Mixed Use Zone; rezoning adjoining land at 517 and 519-521 Station Street from Public Use Zone Schedule 6 (PUZ6) to Mixed use Zone and including it in an Incorporated Document in the Whitehorse Planning Scheme; and proposed development of land at 517 and 519-521 Station Street.
- [06] I have been asked to provide independent expert heritage evidence to the Panel in relation to Amendment C194 and the associated planning permit application WH/2016/1196, as it relates to the properties at 2-8 Oxford Street, Box Hill, hereafter referred to as the subject site.

The subject site contains the *Former Wesleyan Methodist Church*, which is in Heritage Overlay HO77 and the Willis Pipe Organ, which is on the Victorian Heritage Register. Both these heritage elements get referred to as the 'Heritage Place'.

AN UNAMBIGUOUS REFERENCE TO THE REPORT, OR REPORTS THAT THE EXPERT RELIES UPON

- [07] This statement draws upon the information related to the subject site and to Amendment C194, primarily:

- Whitehorse C194 Incorporated Document 517 and 519-521 Station Street, Box Hill, December 2016
- Whitehorse Planning Scheme Amendment C194, Planning Permit Application WH/2016/1196 Explanatory Report
- Whitehorse C194 Draft Planning Permit exhibition
- WH/2016/1196 Application Documents including architectural drawings and urban design report, prepared by DKO Architects, December 2016
- *Station Street, Box Hill: Section 96A Application Planning Report* by Urbis, December 2016.
- Heritage Act 1995.
- *Former Wesleyan Methodist Church* Building Citation. HO77. City of Whitehorse Heritage Review, Allom Lovell & Associates. 1999.
- Willis Pipe Organ Citation. VHR-H2156. Heritage Building Council.
- *Applying the Heritage Overlay*. Planning Practice Note 1. July 2015.

A STATEMENT IDENTIFYING THE ROLE THAT THE EXPERT HAD IN PREPARING OR OVERSEEING THE EXHIBITED REPORT(S)

[08] I confirm I had no role in the preparation or overseeing of the exhibited report(s).

ANY QUESTIONS FALLING OUTSIDE THE EXPERT'S EXPERTISE

[09] No questions were raised that fall outside my expertise.

ANY KEY ASSUMPTIONS MADE IN PREPARING THE REPORT

[10] In the preparation of this statement, it was assumed that all documents referred to, including both Amendment documents and reference documents utilised by the aforementioned Amendment documents, were current and correct in the information they contained at the time of completion of this statement.

WHETHER THE EXHIBITED REPORTS ARE INCOMPLETE OR INACCURATE IN ANY RESPECT.

[11] All the supporting and Amendment documentation are considered incomplete as none sufficiently assesses or responds to the impact of the proposal against the significance of the adjacent Heritage Place.

1.2 The Subject Site and Context

1.2.1 Description and Location

[12] The subject site comprises a collection of five buildings (refer Figure 1 below) on Lots with frontages to both Oxford and Station Streets. The subject site is owned and occupied by The Wesley Uniting Church which uses the buildings for various Church and community functions. While five buildings are present on the site, it is only two buildings that are of interest from a heritage perspective - Oxford Hall and the Main Sanctuary, the remaining buildings are of a later date and ancillary to these two main structures.

[13] The subject site contains a number of different addresses:

- a) Oxford Hall (*Former Wesleyan Methodist Church*) 2-6 Oxford Street. Also referred to as 515 Station Street in some documentation.
- b) Main Sanctuary and other ancillary buildings 2-6 Oxford Street
- c) Manse, 8 Oxford Street.



Figure 1: Aerial view of the subject site, outlined in red. Note the various buildings occupying the site. The proposed development site at 517 and 519-521 Station Street is to the north of the subject site. Source: Google Maps, 2017.

- [14] Oxford Hall (refer to figure 2), the *Former Wesleyan Methodist Church*, is a late Victorian polychromatic brick Gothic Revival Church building in red brick with cream brick quoins and alternating red and cream pointing arches. The building is in the form of a rectangular hall with a lower, parapeted front porch and buttressed side elevations. The staged buttresses have rendered copings and pinnacles. The steep gabled roof is clad in slate with gabled roof vents. All windows, including the rose window in the east elevation, have been replaced. The building sits on an elevated site within its own setting. A raised concrete forecourt to the east and low red brick and chain boundary wall provides a setback from Station Street. Despite the loss of the original windows the substantial building is externally intact and in good condition.



Figure 2: View of Oxford Hall as seen from Station Street looking north. Main façade of the building. Source: Google and Trethowan Architecture, 2017.

- [15] The Main Sanctuary (refer to figure 3 and 4) is located to the west of Oxford Hall and is used as the main church on the site. The building is executed in the Gothic Revival style from the interwar period. Constructed of red brick with detailed render detailing, the cross-plan form is read through the central apex and gables centrally located on each elevation. Single-storey corner extensions are topped by a render parapet displaying various quatrefoil details. A range of rendered clamp buttresses feature on the main elevation to Oxford Street with recessed lancet details. Pointed arched windows with rendered quoins surrounds contain clear and stained glass. A single storey lean-to is to the rear (west) and abuts a larger gabled form that houses the Willis Pipe Organ (refer to figure 4), which is of State significance. The building presents in good condition and has a high level of integrity.



Figure 3: View of the Main Sanctuary building. The Oxford Hall is visible to the right of the image. The ancillary buildings and manse are to the left, out of shot. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2017.



Figure 4: View of the rear (west) of the Main Sanctuary building with the extension housing the Willis Pipe organ to the rhs of the image. Internal image of the Willis Pipe Organ. Source: Trethowan Architecture, 2017.

- [16] The two buildings are connected via a mid-century single-storey section that possess little architectural or historical merit.
- [17] The subject site is located between a largely residential area to the south and a commercial area to the north. Box Hill Central shopping centre, incorporating the Box Hill train station (Belgrave and Lilydale lines) is located

further north of the site. Beyond this is Whitehorse Road / Maroondah Highway arterial road and a large local shopping precinct.

- [18] To the north of the subject site is the Box Hill Central Children's Service Centre at 517 Station Street and a public car park at 519-521 Station Street. Both of these sites are Council owned and are proposed to be rezoned and redeveloped. Areas to the east and west of the site are predominantly residential.
- [19] The residential area to the south comprises mainly detached single storey dwellings and later two-storey dwellings in a garden setting. Some walk-up flats of four-storey are present further west along Oxford Street. Materials are mainly of red brick, render and tiled roofs. The commercial area comprises shop and office developments ranging from single to four-storeys. Modern architectural forms sit alongside interwar shops with materials ranging from highly reflective glossy surfaces to more traditional red brick and render detailing.

1.3 History

- [20] The first Wesleyan Methodist service was held in the Box Hill centre in the Barkly Hall, on 13 May 1883. Tenders were called for what is now known as Oxford Hall on 17 November 1885, and the foundation stone was laid on 11 February 1886. The first service was held on 13 June 1886. Box Hill became an independent circuit in 1889 and in 1926, a new church; now known as the Main Sanctuary, was built immediately to the west to replace the earlier building (refer to figure 5). The two buildings are connected by a single storey section of building which appears to date from the 1960s. In the 1990s Oxford Hall was known as Oxford Theatre.¹

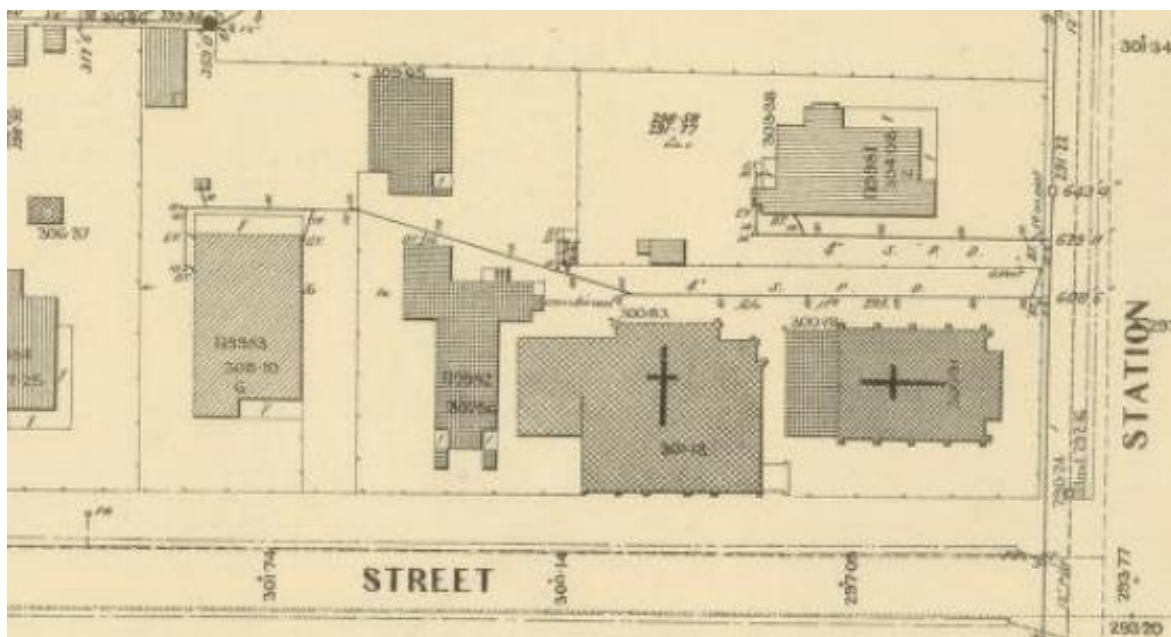


Figure 5: Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works map of the subject site in 1930. Source: State Library of Victoria, accessed September 2017.

- [21] The Willis Pipe Organ was built in 1877 by the notable London organ builder Henry 'Father' Willis (1821-1901) for the Hon. Henry Miller, a parliamentarian and one of Victoria's wealthiest men at that time. Willis was one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders. This organ was the only one exported by Willis to Victoria and was a prestigious example of his work. The organ was installed at the end of the large ballroom at *Findon*, Miller's house at Kew (refer to Figure 6). No expense was spared in the construction of the organ, with superlative materials and lavish finishes being freely employed. After 1908 it was moved to the ballroom of *Whernside* in Toorak, owned by Albert Miller and later his son Edward. After the sale of *Whernside* in 1928, the

¹ Allom Lovell & Associates, *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Building Citations*. 1999.

organ was installed in the Methodist Church at Box Hill in 1930, where it survives today with little alteration from the original. It was subject to maintenance and restoration in 1969 and 1983.

[22]

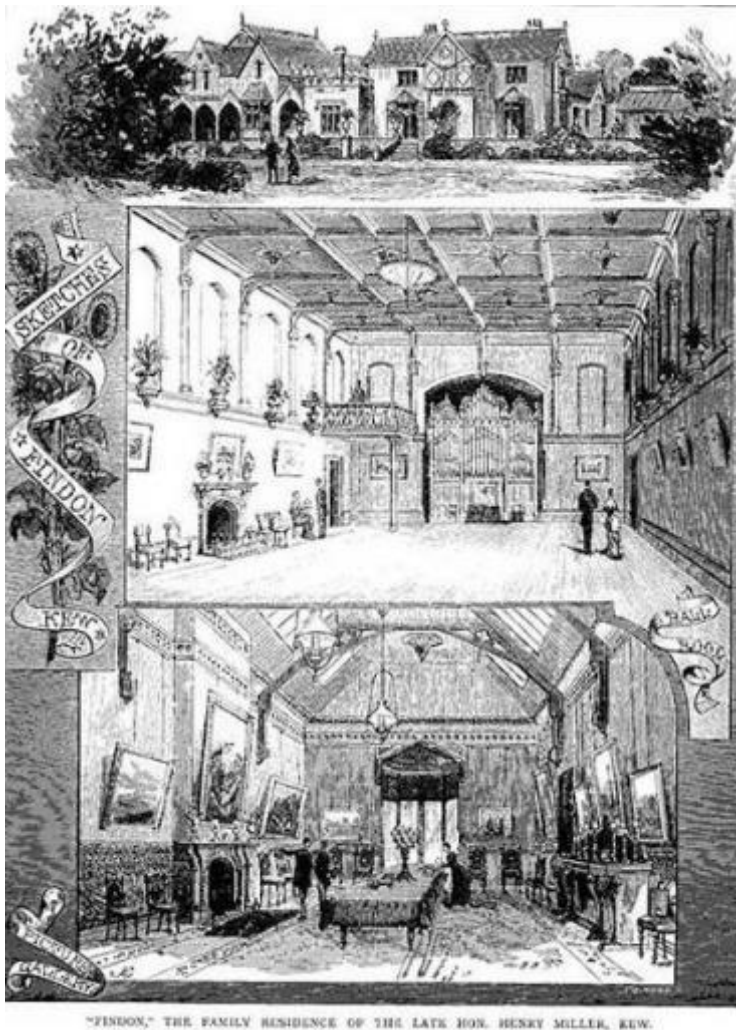


Figure 6: Image showing the Willis Pipe Organ in its original location inside 'Findon', the home of the Hon. Henry Miller.
Source: *Victoria and Its Metropolis: Past and Present*.

1.4 Statutory Framework

The subject site contains two relevant statutory controls – a local level Heritage Overlay and State level registration.

1.4.1 Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999

National and Commonwealth Heritage Lists

[23] The subject site, neither in its entirety or any of the Heritage Places within, are included on either the National or Commonwealth Heritage Lists maintained by the Australian Heritage Council.

1.4.2 Heritage Act 1995

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR)

- [24] The subject site is not itself listed on the VHR, however the registered heritage object Willis Pipe Organ (H2156) is located inside the Main Sanctuary building, to the west of the Heritage Place. While the listing relates to the Organ and not the building in which it is housed, it should be noted that the organ is attached to the Sanctuary building and dependant on it for its own future preservation. Any works, therefore, that impact on the Main Sanctuary should be considered to also impact on the Willis Pipe Organ (the Heritage Object).
- [25] The Statement of Significance for the Willis Pipe Organ is as follows:

What is significant?

This pipe organ was built in 1877 by the notable London organ builder Henry 'Father' Willis (1821-1901) for the Hon. Henry Miller, a parliamentarian and one of Victoria's wealthiest men at that time. Willis was one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders, and was called 'Father' Willis both to distinguish him from his organ builder descendants and because of his contribution to the art and science of organ building. This organ was the only one exported by Father Willis to Victoria and was a prestigious example of his work. The organ was installed at the end of the large ballroom at Findon, Miller's house at Kew, where it was depicted in an illustration in Victoria and its Metropolis (1888). No expense was spared in the construction of the organ, with superlative materials and lavish finishes being freely employed. After 1908 it was moved to the ballroom of Whernside in Toorak, owned by Albert Miller and later Edward Miller, sons of Henry Miller, and the central pipe on the organ facade may then have been slightly cut down for a reduced ceiling height. Whernside was sold in 1928 and in 1930 the organ was installed in the Methodist Church at Box Hill, where it survives today with little alteration from the original. It was subject to maintenance and restoration in 1969 and 1983.

The Willis organ is an impressive instrument with a fine quality oak console, ornately decorated pipes, turned solid ivory and rosewood draw stops, thick ivory keys and immaculately finished internal components. It has two manuals, seventeen speaking stops, three couplers and has a mechanical action. The place and date of manufacture are recorded on one of the bellows ribs and the instrument has a brass plate above the keyboard bearing the builder's name, probably added after its arrival in Victoria. The fine Willis sound has been preserved and the casework is unaltered except for the addition of the lower left- and right-hand panels.

How is it significant?

The Henry Willis organ in the Wesley Uniting Church is of historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Willis organ is historically significant as an outstanding and intact example of English organ building of the nineteenth century. It is a fine example of the work of Henry 'Father' Willis, one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders, and is the only example of a nineteenth century Willis organ in Victoria. The instrument is notable for its superlative workmanship and materials, together with its excellent sound. It demonstrates the wealth and domestic aspirations of Henry, nicknamed 'Money', Miller, a notable resident of Boom-period Melbourne.

- [26] The Heritage Act 1995 (The Act) outlines permits and covenants related to Heritage Objects. The Act defines an **object** as any fixed or non-fixed object. Part 4, Division 1, Section 64 prohibits the removal, demolition, damage, despoiling or alteration of a registered object. Exemptions are allowed for liturgical purposes – notably, a person may carry out any alteration to a registered object which is in a church or in the precincts of a church for liturgical purposes without a permit provided certain conditions are met. Furthermore, a person must not relocate or disturb the position of a fixed registered object. In the case of the Willis Organ, it is a Heritage Object that is fixed to the Main Sanctuary building this Section affects what can be done to that building if it may affect the Organ. Part 8, Division 2, Section 160 of The Act further notes that the owner of a registered object must not allow that object to fall into disrepair or fail to maintain that object to the extent that its conservation is threatened.
- [27] Further to this, there is an anomaly with the VHR listing in that it should automatically confer a local Heritage Overlay, which it currently doesn't. It is noted that the VHR citation (see Appendix B) places the organ within the Former Wesley Uniting Church, 515 Station Street (otherwise known as Oxford Hall) and not the Main Sanctuary, where it is currently located. Interestingly, the citation links the organ with Heritage Overlay HO77 which is also

misleading because neither the Heritage Overlay Map nor the *Schedule to the Heritage Overlay*, Clause 43.01 of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme identify this.

1.4.3 Planning and Environment Act 1987

Whitehorse Planning Scheme

- [28] Places of heritage significance to a local area can be protected by a Heritage Overlay as part of local council planning schemes. Heritage Overlays include places of local significance as well as places included in the VHR. The subject site does not, in its entirety, fall within a Heritage Overlay. However, part of the site, the Oxford Hall 2-6 Oxford Street is covered by HO77 *Former Wesleyan Methodist Church* (the Heritage Place). The building citation lists the Heritage Place as 'B' level significance. Clause 22.01-1 of the Whitehorse Planning Scheme defines levels of significance according to *Significant, Contributory Heritage Places* and *Non-contributory places*. It is not clear how a 'B' level grading translates, although as the site is individually listed it is probable that it is graded as *significant*. Clause 22.01-1 defines *Significant Heritage Places* as follows:

Significant Heritage Places which are places (buildings and surrounds, structures, trees, etc.) that have cultural heritage significance independent of their context. Within a Heritage Overlay applying to a precinct each individually significant place may also contribute to the significance of the precinct.

- [29] The *City of Whitehorse Heritage Review: Building Citation* provides the following Statement of Significance for Oxford Hall (see Appendix B):

The former Wesleyan Methodist Church, Box Hill, is of aesthetic and historic significance. It is the largest polychromatic brick church in the municipality, and a good and substantially externally intact example of a metropolitan Gothic Revival church building. Historically, the church is integral to the history of Methodism within the municipality. The church building remains a key structure in the Station Street streetscape.

- [30] As highlighted above, an anomaly exists between the VHR listing and the local Heritage Overlay. If correctly linked, the Heritage Overlay should include the VHR extent in its mapping, list it in the *Schedule to the Heritage Overlay*, and ideally include it within the statement of significance. Currently, the Heritage Overlay map and the Schedule do not indicate that the VHR registration exists. The extent of HO77 is shown in figure 7, below.



Figure 7: Extract of Heritage Overlay Map 01 (LHS) showing the extent of HO77: Oxford Hall. The approximate location of the Willis Pipe Organ is indicated by the arrow. The location of the Organ is shown in the Hermes Map (rhs) in blue, and clarifies that the registration is not included in the HO77. Source: Whitehorse Planning Scheme and Hermes: Heritage Victoria's Database, accessed September 2017.

1.4.4 Non-Statutory Heritage Controls.

National Trust

- [31] The subject site is not classified by the National Trust. However, the Willis Pipe Organ, located in the Main Sanctuary Building, is classified as being of State significance by the National Trust (Victoria). The National Trust is not a regulatory body, so this listing provides recognition of the Organ's importance but no statutory control.
- [32] Non-statutory heritage controls relate to property listings that have no formal or legal weight in the planning scheme. While having no legal recourse, such listings are customarily considered when making planning decisions and are representative of heritage values in the community by local authorities.
- [33] The Statement of Significance for the Henry Willis Pipe Organ is as follows (see Appendix B):

This organ was built in 1877 by the major English organ builder, Henry Willis, for Findon, Kew, the mansion of the Hon. Henry "Money" Miller. Here it stood at the end of a large ballroom where it was depicted in Victoria and its Metropolis (1888). No expense was spared in the construction of the organ, with superlative materials and lavish finishes being freely employed. The instrument well exemplifies the domestic aspirations of a notable resident on Marvellous Melbourne. It is the only example of Willis' work in Victoria. In 1929 the organ was moved to the Methodist Church, Box Hill, where it survives today with little alteration from the original. Restoration work was carried out in 1969 and 1983. The fine Willis sound has been preserved, and the casework, incorporating ornately diapered pipes, is unaltered except for the lower left-and right-hand panels.

2. Discussion

- [35] There are two parts for discussion, the heritage listing anomaly and Amendment C194 and associated permit; the latter being the larger and more relevant section to the purpose of this report.

2.1 Heritage Anomaly

- [36] As highlighted above an anomaly exists between the VHR listing in that it should automatically confer a local Heritage Overlay, which it currently doesn't. If correctly linked the Heritage Overlay should include the VHR extent in its mapping, list it in the *Schedule to the Heritage Overlay*, and ideally be included the statement of significance. Currently, the Heritage Overlay Map, the Schedule and the statement of significance do not indicate that the VHR registration exists.

- [37] When dealing with Heritage Places and managing change, Article 6.1 and 6.2 of the *Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter, 2013* direct that:

6.1. The *cultural significance* of a *place* and other issues affecting its future are best understood by a sequence of collecting and analysing information before making decisions. Understanding cultural significance comes first, then development of policy and finally management of the place in accordance with the policy. This is the Burra Charter Process.

6.2. Policy for managing a *place* must be based on an understanding of its *cultural significance*.

- [38] To ensure best heritage practice is undertaken and understanding is obtained of what is important about a Heritage Place, the information held by Heritage Victoria and Local Council's is very important and should be correct. Without correct base information, it is difficult to gain full appreciation of the site and its heritage values, and can mislead any assessment that uses this information.
- [39] A statement of significance and accompanying citation document is the most important document in this process and should clearly inform on what, how and why the Heritage Place is of significance. The citation for the *Former Wesleyan Methodist Church (Oxford Hall)* that supports HO77 is currently inadequate in that it doesn't recognise the historical and architectural contribution the Main Sanctuary makes to the site, or the fact it houses the Willis Pipe Organ, which is of State significance.
- [40] Section 48 of the Heritage Act 1995 requires that the Minister of Planning must '*prepare and approve an amendment to any planning scheme applying to a place which is included in the Heritage Register to identify the inclusion of the place in the Heritage Register*' This is intended to alert planning scheme users of restrictions that may apply to the land under the Heritage Act.²
- [41] In light of the above, it is recommended that an Amendment to the Whitehorse Planning Scheme be undertaken to remove the anomaly and correct the mapping and schedule issue. This Amendment should be informed by a revised statement of significance for HO77, and potentially VHR H2156, to ensure all heritage aspects are included and properly assessed.

2.2 Amendment C194 and Associated Permit.

- [42] Amendment C194 is a combined planning scheme amendment and planning permit application under Section 96A of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. The planning scheme amendment proposes three things:
- Rezone land at the subject site from Residential Growth Zone Schedule 2 (RGZ2) to Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) amending Planning Scheme Map No. 1
 - Rezone land adjoining the subject site at 517 and 519-521 Station Street from Public Use Zone Schedule 6 (PUZ6) to Mixed Use Zone (MUZ) amending Planning Scheme Map No. 1.
 - Amend the Schedules to Clauses 52.03 and 81.01 to include the Incorporated Document entitled "517 and 519-521 Station Street, Box Hill, December 2016"

² *Applying the Heritage Overlay*. Planning Practice Note 1. July 2015.

- [43] The planning permit application (WH/2016/1196) applies to a proposed development at 517 and 519-521 Station Street only.
- [44] The Wesley Uniting Church (headed by Nilesn Gaikwad (chairman) and members of the Church Council) has raised several grounds of objection to the various aspects of Amendment C194. This Statement will address those heritage issues related to the proposed planning scheme amendment and proposed development on the subject site.

2.2.1 Rezoning of the subject site

- [45] The inclusion of the subject site into a Mixed Use Zone is not necessary to provide the holistic and integrated approach to land use that is being sought by the Amendment. The purpose of changing the zone is stated to “provide for an appropriate transition in built form at the southern edge of the commercial core of the Box Hill Metropolitan Activity Centre (MAC)”. The built forms of Oxford Hall and Main Sanctuary currently provide an appropriate transition between the low rise/density residences to the south and the taller denser development seen around the activity centre, through their scale and in part their open space contribution. The scale of the two main buildings currently provide a visual and physical buffer to the commercial forms as viewed from the south. The open spaces around Oxford Hall and Main Sanctuary, while limited, provide an attractive setting not only to the Heritage Place but also provides a breathing space, before entering into the high-density area and lack of open space seen in the commercial area.
- [46] The statement of significance for HO77 identifies the importance of Oxford Hall and its aesthetic and historic significance associated with its size and the fact it forms a key structure within the Station Street streetscape, giving it a landmark quality that needs to be recognised and respected.
- [47] By placing the subject site into a Mixed Use Zone encourages a greater variety of use types and building forms that are currently not permitted under the Residential Growth Zone (Schedule 2). This greater variety will increase the development potential of the site thus increasing its value, resulting in pressure to redevelop the site in a manner that is not akin to the Heritage Place or values ascribed to Oxford Hall and the Main Sanctuary. The typical building forms associated with some of the uses applicable under a Mixed Use Zone would not be appropriate adjacent to the Heritage Place, and has the potential to detract and adversely impact on those heritage values.
- [48] The Church site has been part of the streetscape for the last 131 years, and moves to accommodate new development needs to acknowledge and respect this to ensure that the site continues to play a part in the streetscape and progress of the area. Amending the zone is not only unnecessary but also places the subject site at risk from inappropriate development that is not in the best interests of protecting a site that is identified to have historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

2.2.2 Rezoning of adjoining land at 517 and 519-521 Station Street and application of an Incorporated Document

- [49] The rezoning of the land at 517 Station Street will not have an adverse impact on the significance of the place, providing the development proposed on the site does not detract or dominate over the Heritage Place. From a heritage perspective, the further away the proposed development is located the less impact is placed on the subject site and its heritage values.
- [50] The rezoning of the land at 519-521 Station Street is of no concern, providing the proposal is sympathetic in form, scale and materials to the Heritage Place.

2.2.3 Heritage Issues Regarding the Incorporated Document

- [51] The Incorporated Document applies to 517-521 Station Street and provides Design Objectives and Built Form Guidelines that relate to the subject site. It also provides a series of Decision Guidelines that the responsible

authority must be considered before deciding on an application that relates to the land covered by the Incorporated Document.

- [52] The Design Objectives seek to ensure that the scale of the development and the built form response provides a transition and appropriate built form to the subject site. In reviewing these objectives, they are not strong or detailed enough to provide clear direction on how the subject site should be referenced / treated when faced with a large-scale proposal. The objectives should also identify what is of aesthetic and historical significance to the subject site and inform on its importance to the Station Street streetscape.
- [53] The Built Form Guidelines that make reference to the subject site include building heights, setbacks, form and design, and landscaping. Each one is discussed below:

- a) The preferred maximum building heights to the south-east corner should be subservient to the height of Oxford Hall to prevent the new development from dominating and detracting from the lower scale form of the Heritage Place. The allowable 3 storeys at the south-east corner will not achieve the built form objective to provide a low scale form at the street and boundary interfaces. The 3-storey form in this sensitive location is too high and will negatively impact on the Heritage Place by being too dominant, especially when placed on an incline and accompanied by a larger tower above. A 2-storey form in this location would achieve a better scale and built form response, and therefore deliver on the Design Objectives in a more appropriate manner. Where there is a direct reference to an interface with the subject site: such as the south-east corner, the Built Form Objective should also reference the need to sympathetically integrate and not overwhelm the adjoining Heritage Place.
- b) Setbacks are important to prevent the proposed building heights from visually and physically impacting on a Heritage Place. In general, the greater the setback the less impact will occur. Setbacks can be located at the ground and subsequent floor(s) above. Consideration of both a greater ground floor and subsequent upper floor(s) setback can sometimes permit a greater building height to be achieved.

The Built Form Objective that requires a line of sight to Oxford Hall from the intersection of Station and Cambridge Street, for the Station Street interface, is welcomed as it partially recognises the aesthetic and historical significance of the Heritage Place and the fact it's a key structure in the streetscape of Station Street. However, the minimum 2.4m setback for the podium does not achieve a clear sight line from the intersection to the main façade of Oxford Hall, due to the position of the proposed western façade at the upper ground floor level. The setback should be increased so the western façade sits along gridline P, which is 5m from property boundary (refer to figure 8).

The preferred minimum setback for the podium is stated at 5m and 6m for 18 storeys, Tower A. At 5m the podium is too close and doesn't provide for a sufficient deep planting landscape buffer to be created between the south elevation of the podium and Oxford Hall. A landscape buffer will provide an acceptable separation and setting to the Heritage Place. To achieve a landscape buffer the southern edge of the podium will need to be sufficiently setback to allow this to be accommodated. In reviewing the other deep planting landscaped areas, along the southern edge of the proposed development site, an additional 2m should be accommodated, which requires the podium setback to be 7m. The southern 6m setback for an 18m tower will result in an adverse impact on the Heritage Place. The south elevation of Tower A overwhelms the subject site and will not achieve the Built form objective of providing a transition between the surrounding lower scale and the proposed built form. To achieve a more appropriate response and transition of scale, the south elevation of Tower A should be setback 12m from the boundary.

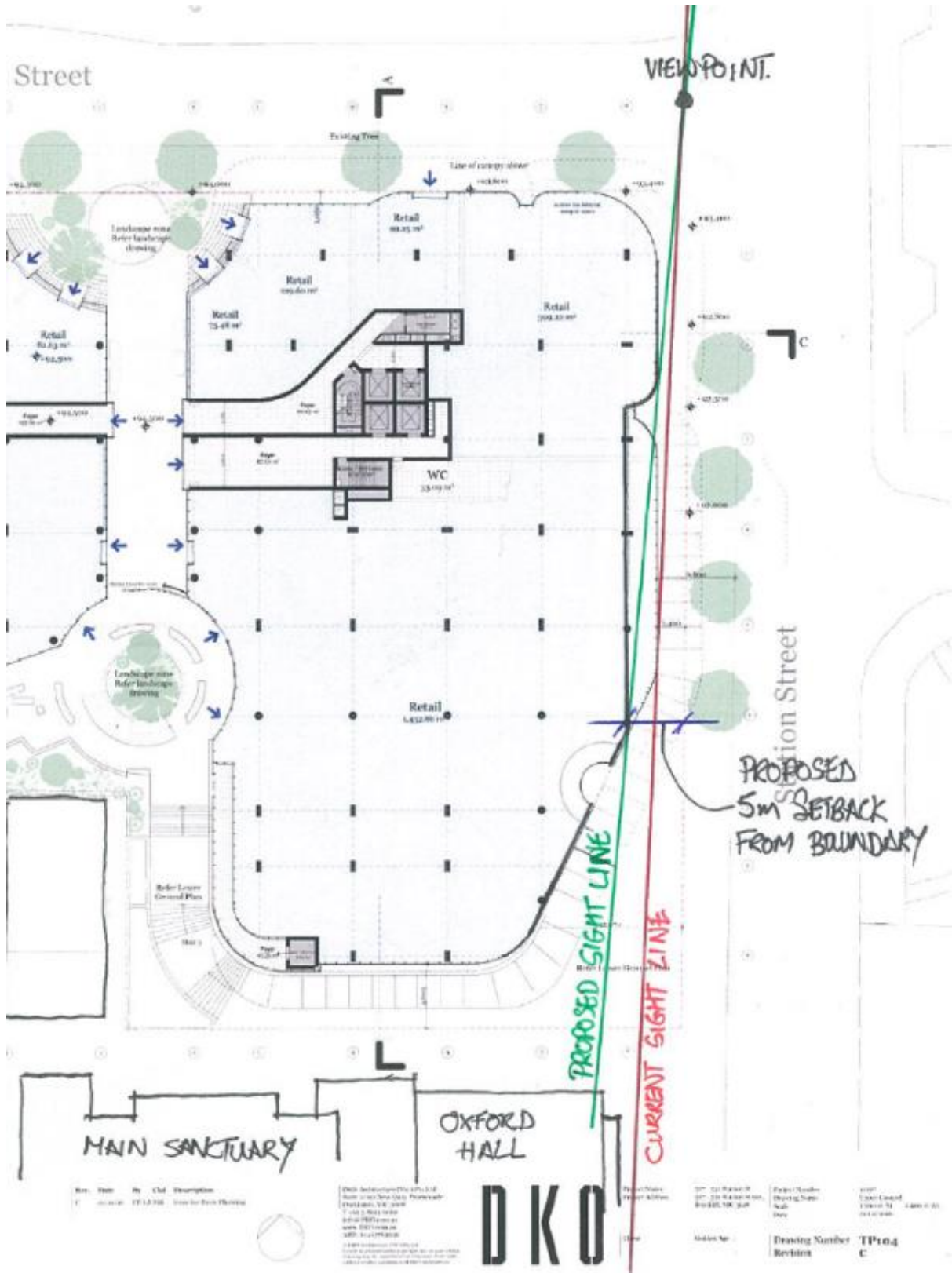


Figure 8: Showing how the current sightline (red) does not achieve the Build Form Objective of providing a sightline from the intersection to the façade of Oxford Hall. To enable this objective to be achieved it is proposed the façade be setback 5m from the property boundary. It is interesting to note that the subject site was not indicated on the plans at this level, which is suggestive of how much regard has been given to the Heritage Place. Source: Trethowan mark-up of DKO drawing TP104 rev C.

Western Interface of Tower A with the subject site will have negligible impact on the proposed 8m setback. This interface will be less important, especially where the 12m southern interface of Tower A is applied.

The Southern Interface of Tower B with the subject site will have negligible impact given the proposed 28m setback.

The 6m setback of Tower C to the subject site will have no impact on the Heritage Place given the separation between the two objects and the low scale, transitional form that is proposed.

- c) The Built form and design section of the guidelines reinforces the need for appropriate setbacks and a line of sight to the Heritage Place from the intersection. This repetition of the earlier guidelines enforces the importance to get the subject site more prominent in the streetscape and not be overwhelmed by a large development.

The requirement to provide a design that incorporates a sense of openness at the ground floor southern interface to provide an opportunity for integration with the Oxford Hall forecourt is an interesting proposition. On the plus side this direction allows Oxford Hall to become more integrated and delivers on the holistic approach that forms the justification for the rezoning of the subject site. On the negative side it appears that the Incorporated Document is seeking to use the forecourt as a way to visually increase the open space for the site and therefore justify an increased development. It is noted that the proposal fails to deliver this requirement by placing a boundary wall between the two sites.

The tower to Station Street is required to transition at the upper levels to provide a positive relationship with the subject site. This requirement has not been appropriately translated into the building height and setback guidelines, tables or figures. While the height may be acceptable with the insertion of suitable setbacks; pulling the massing of the proposed form away from the Heritage Place, the preferred minimum setback of 6m results in an adverse impact as previously discussed. In requesting that the upper levels be transitioned will result in a good heritage outcome, however the adverse impact comes from the proximity of the lower levels, and their dominating affect. It is therefore important to pull the tower back at the lower level in the first instance and then reach a better heritage outcome by transitioning the upper levels.

The requirement to orientate the tower with its narrow interface facing the subject site, prevents further impact from occurring to the Heritage Place.

- d) The landscaping requirement informs that any proposed development must *contemplate possible future complementary development outcome[s]* on the subject site *with opportunity for a through block connection*. This rather suggestive requirement is ill conceived and extremely problematic to the heritage values attributed to the subject site. Such a requirement would firstly and inappropriately require the subject site to be included in the Incorporated Document. Given the purpose of the document is to provide for the development of a major mixed-use precinct that encourages a large scale / landmark design, the result would be detrimental to the significance of the site and its setting. Secondly, it provides direction that ensures *future complementary development* and provides for *opportunity for a through block connection* but doesn't provide direction on how it is to be undertaken so it will not adversely impact on the significance of the Heritage Place. Considering the problematic nature of this direction, it should be removed from the Incorporated Document allowing the subject site to remain independent from the proposed development.

[54] Considering the Incorporated Document includes references and requirements that appear to protect the significance of the adjoining Heritage Place, it is interesting to note that the Decision Guidelines do not require the responsible authority to consider the significance of the site or whether the proposal impacts on the Heritage Place. With the attempts to integrate the subject site and provide for a holistic approach, it is important that these considerations be undertaken by the responsible authority. It will also bring those heritage matters to the forefront and ensure they are appropriately considered.

2.2.4 Development Proposed at 517 and 519-521 Station Street

- [55] Overall the proposal is out of context to the surrounding area due to its height, scale and bulk. In addition, the building's proposed external appearance including the choice of external materials does not sufficiently refer to the surrounding urban fabric in such a way to allow the new building to compatibly integrate with the architectural character of the subject site. The proposal will have a detrimental impact on the Heritage Place because it is not sensitively designed to maintain the character, scale and heritage value of the subject site. It will overwhelm Oxford Hall and the Main Sanctuary. Specific concern relates to the southern portion of the podium and Tower A, with their interface towards the subject site, and the proximity of the basement to the subject site.
- [56] The height of the podium in the south-east corner and along the southern boundary should be subservient to the height of Oxford Hall to prevent the new development from dominating and detracting from the lower scale form of the Heritage Place. The 3-storey form in this sensitive location is too high and will negatively impact on the Heritage Place by being too dominant, especially when the effect will be exacerbated by the topography of the development site. A 2-storey form in this location would achieve a better scale and built form response that respects the significance of the Heritage Place and enhances the contribution it makes to the streetscape.
- [57] The height of Tower A is also major concern, especially at the southern end where the narrow portion of the building interacts with the subject site. The proposed height produces a sheer wall of structure that overwhelms and is detrimental to the low scale of the Heritage Place. The height issue is also exacerbated by the topography of the development site resulting in an inappropriate and amplified physical mass that detracts from the Heritage Place.
- [58] The setback from the boundary varies depending upon the level to which it is attributed to. From lower ground to Level 9 the setback fluctuates from 5.072 to 5.628m, which is insufficient to prevent the Heritage Place from being impact upon. The setback of the podium would be acceptable, providing it remained at 2 storeys but the continuation of the façade up to Level 9 before it transitions back, contributes to the overwhelming effect. While an increase in the podium setback and further setting back the upper floors along the southern elevation will not totally remove the impact (due to the overall scale of the development), the impact will be lessened through the visual recessing of the form as it rises. Incorporation of greater setbacks to this aspect of the proposal is therefore essential to allow the subject site to be appropriately treated and enable the required transition in built form to be successful.
- [59] Part of the setback issue at podium level is the lack of landscaping, which if introduced would provide a landscape buffer, separation and greater setting for the Heritage Place. To be successful the landscaping would have to support larger trees to initially screen the building at street level.
- [60] The siting of the building up to the eastern boundary, at the northern end of Station Street, restricts the current important and significant views down to Oxford Hall and these need to be retained especially when a development of this scale is being proposed and encouraged through an Incorporated Document. The views are currently being obscured, approximately half way along Station Street façade, by the forward placement of the eastern elevation. This elevation should be setback to enable the Heritage Place to maintain its visual connection with the northern end of Station Street. Further improvement could be made by integrating the proposed landscape, noted in the southeast corner, with the forecourt of the subject site. The removal of boundary treatments and the placement of trees will assist with providing a greater sense of setting to the Heritage Place, whilst visually minimising the street façade of the building. Greater consideration of this corner, will improve and enhance the streetscape contribution of the Heritage Place.
- [61] In reviewing the design, it delivers on the landmark qualities required by the built form objective. The design is clearly a statement piece that has little regard to the context in which it is located. This lack of context consideration has led to the detrimental impact on the Heritage Place. The strong horizontal lines, enhanced by the application of contrasting dark and light-coloured materials forms no relationship with the Heritage Place. The use of large areas of glazing, coloured and clear, produces a glossy rather than recessive response, which detracts from the Heritage Place. While nothing much can be done about the overall design approach, a revision of the design to the podium, especially at the south-eastern end, could easily incorporate a revised design and palette of materials that better relate to the Heritage Place and soften the proposed visual impact that currently is being proposed.

- [62] Excavation of a three-level basement immediately abutting the boundary to the subject site raises concerns to the structural integrity of Oxford Hall, the Main Sanctuary, and potential effect the works could have on the Willis Pipe Organ.
- [63] The insertion of a three-level basement is going to involve a significant degree of construction works and potential dewatering of the development site, which could have structural implications on the two structures and by association, the organ. From the information reviewed, no consideration to these aspects have been identified and correct measures should be put in place to ensure the heritage assets are properly protected against damage resulting from the works.
- [64] While all heritage aspects are important, the protection and maintenance of the Willis Pipe Organ is of high priority given its inclusion on the VHR and is afforded the protection of The Act. The Act, places certain responsibilities to maintain and protect those objects listed in the register on the owner of the building, and this further highlights the need for correct measures to be put in place to ensure the organ is properly protected against damage resulting from the works.

3. Recommendations

[66] It is recommended that the following is to occur:

3.1 Heritage Anomaly

[67] Undertake a heritage review of the whole site to determine the collective significance of Oxford Hall, Main Sanctuary and the Willis Pipe Organ. Revise the statement of significance accordingly and accurately map and schedule both the VHR and the Heritage Overlay within the Whitehorse Planning Scheme.

3.2 Amendment C194

3.2.1 Rezoning

[68] Cancel the proposal to rezone the land at 2-8 Oxford Street in order to protect the site that is identified to have historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Whitehorse.

3.2.2 Incorporated Document

[69] In following the format of the proposed Incorporated Document, the sections listed below should be revised to read as follows:

a) 4. Design Objectives

Amend to provide further detail on how the proposed design is to respond to the significance of the Heritage Place. It needs to inform on the aesthetic and historical aspects that make up the significance of the Heritage Place, and provide greater emphasis on the building's importance to the Station Street streetscape.

b) 5. Built Form Guidelines

Amend as follows:

Table 1 Building Heights (refer Figures 1 and 2)

Building	Preferred maximum height	Built form objective
Podium	2 storeys	To provide a low scale podium form and human scale at the street and boundary interfaces to provide a sympathetic integration with the historic Oxford Hall.

c) Building Setbacks

Amend as follows:

Table 2 Building Setbacks (refer Figures 1 and 2)

Location	Preferred minimum setback	Built form objective
Station Street Interface	5m -15m to Podium 22m to Tower A	To provide an improved pedestrian realm. To provide a form that holds the prominent corner.

		To provide a building setback to the south that provides a clear and contextual line of sight to the Church from the intersection of Station and Cambridge Street.
Southern Interface to 2-6 Oxford Street [Church building]	7m to Podium 12m to Tower A	To provide a transition between the surrounding lower scale existing and anticipated built forms and higher scale development within the precinct.
Western Interface to 2-6 Oxford Street	8m to Tower A	

d) Public Realm, Site Layout and Landscaping

Delete - *Ensure site design contemplates possible future complementary development outcome on the land to the south at 2-8 Oxford Street with opportunity for a through block connection.*

e) 6. Decision Guidelines

Add - *Whether the proposal adversely impacts on the church buildings at 2-8 Oxford Street.*

3.3 Planning permit application (WH/2016/1196) informing on the development as proposed at 517 and 519-521 Station Street

[70] The planning permit should be revised in the following manner:

- a) Reduce the height of the podium to 2 storeys at the southern end of the Station Street façade and return along the south boundary where the new development interacts with the Heritage Place.
- b) Remove the sheer wall effect of the proposed southern elevation of Tower A.
- c) Increase the setback of the Station Street interface 5-15m to the podium.
- d) Increase the setback of the southern interface to 2-6 Oxford Street 7m to the podium.
- e) Increase the setback of the southern interface to 2-6 Oxford Street 12m to Tower A.
- f) Insert a deep planting landscape buffer between the southern interface and 2-6 Oxford Street.
- g) Incorporate a sympathetic design and palette of materials to the south-eastern end of the podium to integrate the proposal with the Heritage Place.

[71] The following conditions should be placed on any approved permit:

- a) *All excavation and dewatering techniques to be undertaken within proximity of Oxford Hall and the Main Sanctuary should be completed in a manner that ensures the heritage assets, in particular the Willis Pipe Organ (located within the Main Sanctuary) are properly protected against damage resulting from the works. Where damage does occur, repairs need to be undertaken at the expense of others and in accordance with Heritage Victoria's permit requirements and good heritage practice.*

4. Declaration

DECLARATION

I have made all the inquiries that I believe are desirable and appropriate and that no matters of significance which I regard as relevant have to my knowledge been withheld from the Panel.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.A. Stephenson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a hand-drawn triangular shape.

Mark Stephenson
21 September, 2017

5. Appendices

5.1 Appendix A

Mark Stephenson CV

Senior Heritage Consultant

Mark Stephenson

EDUCATION

BSc (Hons) in Architectural and Building Conservation, University of Glamorgan, UK, 2002 - 2004
BTEC National and Higher National Diplomas in Building Studies. Suffolk, UK, 1992 – 1996

MEMBERSHIP

Member, ICOMOS, 2009 – Current
Member of the National Trust of Victoria
Member of the Coburg Historical Society.

POSITION

Senior Heritage Consultant	Trethowan Architecture, Melbourne, 2010 - Current
Built Heritage Consultant	HLCD, Melbourne, 2009 - 2010
Conservation Officer	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Wales, UK, 2007-2009
Technical Associate	Stone Ecclesiastical, UK. 2005 – 2007
Architectural Technician	Andrew Parker Associates, UK, 2003 – 2
Assistant Quantity Surveyor, Street Works Co-ordinator and Planner	Lawrence Civil and Mechanical Engineering Ltd., UK 1998 - 2001
Project Assistant	B & M Babbage and Co., Cheltenham, UK 1996 – 1998.

EXPERIENCE

With experience in architecture, building industry and heritage, Mark has broad experience in undertaking research, assessment and analysis of the built environment and specialises in heritage planning and practical restoration guidance.

Mark's architectural technician roles have included the execution of detailed site surveys, the initiation and development of design proposals including CAD and hand drawing, and the formulation of planning and building applications. All positions permitted active liaison with clients, professional bodies and contractors and projects ranged from ecclesiastical and community buildings, barn conversions to individual residential or housing schemes and commercial property. Mark's experience includes contract administration and project management.

As the full time Conservation Officer for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council in Wales, Mark's role was to raise awareness of the historic environment while providing detailed advice and guidance relating to planning proposals affecting heritage buildings and their settings, conservation areas, historic landscapes and other historic assets. Mark formulated and delivered in house training to fellow officers and to Councilors and undertook presentations to local historical societies and community groups.

In this Local Government role Mark was involved at both statutory and strategic levels, liaising with property owners, other council departments and external agencies to revitalise historic buildings and areas. Strategically, he has written guidelines, strategies, management plans, undertaken character appraisals and contributed to town centre regeneration studies and action plans. On a practical level he has monitored restoration work and was the heritage advisor for a Townscape Heritage Initiative scheme. Mark was involved in enforcement actions and provided written evidence at planning appeals. Through training and presentations to others, Mark has promoted good practice and quality design in the maintenance, restoration and refurbishment of heritage buildings.

Since arriving in Melbourne Mark has worked in private practice on a range of heritage projects from single properties to complex industrial sites. He has compiled a number of heritage impact statements to accompany planning applications for heritage properties, provided assessment and design guidance for a redevelopment and written a two part strategic heritage overview document that provided guidance to State Government.

Mark can undertake research, assessment and analysis to compile citations and statements of significance for new or review of existing heritage places. He can deliver written guidance and strategies and formulate management plans which assist in the understanding and appropriate management of a heritage place. All guidance is based on an appreciation of the Burra Charter and sound conservation practices.

Mark has worked for the following Melbourne Councils in the capacity of heritage advisor consultant:

- City of Whitehorse - Working one day a week from October 2009 till January 2011.
- Shire of Nillumbik - Working on an as needs basis from October 2009 till October 2010.
- City of Boroondara – Working one to two days a week from October 2011 to October 2015.

Working alongside the statutory planners, Mark took part in pre-application meetings to provide heritage advice and carried out site visits in order to provide timely expert and detailed advice relating to planning proposals affecting heritage overlays. Strategic heritage projects involved the completion of Urgent Heritage Citations, providing advice on future heritage overlays, formulation of statements of significance and assisting in the adoption of a new heritage precinct. Mark has advised Council on corporate projects for new developments that affect or were adjacent to a heritage overlay. The role also formulated and delivered presentations to Councillors' and historical societies.

Working with architects and private clients in developing schemes with heritage considerations. Giving heritage, design and technical advice, and compiling reports to accompany Planning and VHR permits. Collating and co-ordinating permit applications and liaising with Council and Heritage Victoria.

Mark has experience with representing Council and private clients at Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal (VCAT) hearings on heritage matters.

SELECTION OF WORKS

Review of Rhondda Cynon Taf's Conservation Areas (UK).

Conservation and Management Plan for Aberdare Town Centre (UK).

Draft: Heritage Guidelines for Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas (UK).

Draft: Historic Environment for Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (UK).

Heritage Advising for Councils (UK and AU).

Extensive Heritage Impact Statements and Heritage Reports (AU).

Various Conservation and Management Plans including: Essendon Airport, Government House, Treasury, and Forum Theatre (AU).

Extensive number of permit submissions and co-ordination/ liaison with statutory bodies.

Various Heritage Studies (AU).

Bourke Hill Heritage Review (AU).

Number of VCAT hearings for Council and private clients (AU).

5.2 Appendix B

Citations and Statement of Significances for the State, Local and National Trust listings associated with the subject site.

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated 06/09/17

HERITAGE
COUNCIL
VICTORIA
HERITAGE
COUNCIL
VICTORIA

WILLIS PIPE ORGAN



Willis organ_Wesley Uniting Church_Box Hill_16 Jan 2008



Wesley Uniting Church_Box Hill_16 Jan 08

Location

WESLEY UNITING CHURCH, 515 STATION STREET BOX HILL, WHITEHORSE CITY

Municipality

WHITEHORSE CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H2156

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO77

VHR Registration

May 8, 2008

Heritage Listing

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - February 6, 2008

What is significant?

This pipe organ was built in 1877 by the notable London organbuilder Henry 'Father' Willis (1821-1901) for the Hon. Henry Miller, a parliamentarian and one of Victoria's wealthiest men at that time. Willis was one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders, and was called 'Father' Willis both to distinguish him from his organbuilder descendants and because of his contribution to the art and science of organ building. This organ was the only one exported by Father Willis to Victoria and was a prestigious example of his work. The organ was installed at the end of the large ballroom at Findon, Miller's house at Kew, where it was depicted in an illustration in *Victoria and its Metropolis* (1888). No expense was spared in the construction of the organ, with superlative materials and lavish finishes being freely employed. After 1908 it was moved to the ballroom of Whernside in Toorak, owned by Albert Miller and later Edward Miller, sons of Henry Miller, and the central pipe on the organ facade may then have been slightly cut down for a reduced ceiling height. Whernside was sold in 1928 and in 1930 the organ was installed in the Methodist Church at Box Hill, where it survives today with little alteration from the original. It was subject to maintenance and restoration in 1969 and 1983.

The Willis organ is an impressive instrument with a fine quality oak console, ornately decorated pipes, turned solid ivory and rosewood drawstops, thick ivory keys and immaculately finished internal components. It has two manuals, seventeen speaking stops, three couplers and has a mechanical action. The place and date of manufacture are recorded on one of the bellows ribs and the instrument has a brass plate above the keyboard bearing the builder's name, probably added after its arrival in Victoria. The fine Willis sound has been preserved and the casework is unaltered except for the addition of the lower left- and right-hand panels.

How is it significant?

The Henry Willis organ in the Wesley Uniting Church is of historical significance to the state of Victoria.

Why is it significant?

The Willis organ is historically significant as an outstanding and intact example of English organ building of the nineteenth century. It is a fine example of the work of Henry 'Father' Willis, one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders, and is the only example of a nineteenth century Willis organ in Victoria. The instrument is notable for its superlative workmanship and materials, together with its excellent sound. It demonstrates the wealth and domestic aspirations of Henry, nicknamed 'Money', Miller, a notable resident of Boom-period Melbourne.

Permit Exemptions

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of works that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such works shall cease and Heritage Victoria shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan endorsed by the Executive Director, all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: The existence of a Conservation Management Plan or a Heritage Action Plan endorsed by the Executive Director, Heritage Victoria provides guidance for the management of the heritage values associated with the site. It may not be necessary to obtain a heritage permit for certain works specified in the management plan. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this determination prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions.

Routine maintenance: Pipe Organs require regular servicing particularly tuning and attendance to action problems. Such procedures usually take place monthly, quarterly, half yearly or annually. Such activities would not impact in any way on the heritage status of the instrument provided they are carried out by appropriate firms, and would not require a permit.

Construction dates 1877,
Heritage Act Categories Heritage object/s,
Other Names WESLEY UNITING CHURCH,
Hermes Number 26897
Property Number

History

CONTEXTUAL HISTORY

(Adapted from the entry in the Organ Historical Trust of Australia website at www.ohta.org.au)

Pipe organs were brought to Victoria by British settlers throughout the nineteenth century, some commissioned specifically from British firms, and from 1840 they were also made in Australia. By the end of the nineteenth century Australia possessed some of the finest contemporary examples of the organbuilder's craft to be found anywhere in the world. All of the illustrious English organbuilders of the period were represented by instruments in Australia, including J W Walker & Sons (fifty-four instruments) and Hill & Son (thirty-four instruments), together with many regional builders from Birmingham, Bristol, Huddersfield, Hull and Manchester. Principal imports included the town hall organs in Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, all built by Hill & Son. A number of organs also arrived from continental Europe, the largest coming from such firms as Merklin SchÄtze of Brussels, E F Walcker of Ludwigsburg, R A Randebrock of Paderborn, and Theodore Puget of Toulouse. Many of these surviving instruments are now of international significance.

Many of the old organs have been lost and the significance of others substantially eroded by insensitive rebuilding, particularly the introduction of electric actions and tonal modifications.

Henry Willis (1821-1901), also known as 'Father' Willis

[Entry for Henry Willis from *Wikipedia* at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Willis_&_Sons]

Henry Willis & Sons is a firm of pipe organ builders founded in 1845 in the UK, examples of whose work can also be found in other countries. Four generations of the Willis family continued the family tradition of organ building until 1997 when Henry Willis IV retired and the first non-family Managing Director (David Wyld) was appointed. On the 28th November 1998 the total shareholding of all of the Willis family members was acquired.

The charismatic founder of the company, the eponymous Henry Willis, was nicknamed "Father Willis" because of his contribution to the art and science of organ building, and to distinguish him from his younger relatives working in the firm.

Willis's are regarded as the leading organ builders of the Victorian era, itself a time when both civic and religious commitment led to the erection of a large number of impressive buildings and other public works. During the Industrial Revolution any town worth its salt would want an imposing Town Hall, preferably with a Willis organ, and a substantial (and similarly equipped) church. Industrialists competed to endow the most lavish halls and instruments.

The result was a convergence of both a very fine and technically proficient organ builder, and a substantial number of commissions for really exceptional instruments. This heritage has, fortunately, lived on.

The most famous 'Father' Willis organs are probably those in the Royal Albert Hall, St Paul's, Salisbury and Truro Cathedrals, but there are many more including the cathedrals in Aberdeen, Calcutta, Canterbury, Durham,

Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hereford, Lincoln, Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, and the town church of Inverness, the Old High Church. Windsor Castle had a Willis until it was destroyed by a fire in November 1992, as do Blenheim Palace and several town halls (e.g. Reading), the Sheldonian Theatre and the Royal Academy of Music. The famous organ in London's Alexandra Palace, built by Father Willis in 1875-6 and rebuilt by his grandson in 1929 following damage at the end of the First World War, was again damaged in 1944, has only partly been repaired and still awaits final restoration. Although Willis are mostly remembered for organs on the grand scale they also built smaller instruments, including the 1881 'organ on wheels' at St Paul's Cathedral which has been referred to as 'one of the most outstanding small organs of all time' (Clutter 1982, p 90). His workmanship has been described as 'without rival' and that he 'never produced an organ which was not a masterpiece' (ibid, p 91).

Henry Miller (1809-1888)

[From *ADB* entry]

Henry Miller was born in Ireland, migrated to Sydney in 1823 and to Van Diemen's Land in 1826 with his family, was later educated in Paris and Glasgow, and settled in Melbourne in 1839. He began business as a financier and merchant, established an insurance company and a series of building societies in the 1840s, and acquired many pastoral and city properties. He became a member of Victoria's first Legislative Council and was made Minister for Trade and Customs in 1858, vice-president of the Board of Lands and Works and Commissioner of Railways and Roads in 1866. Miller was an opportunist and a brilliant investor, and dedicated himself to making money, thereby earning the nickname 'Money Miller'. He died at his thirty-acre property Findon at Kew in 1888, leaving an estate in Victoria valued at £1,456,680.

HISTORY OF PLACE

[From OHTA website, entry for 'Wesley Uniting (former Methodist) Church, Box Hill']

The instrument was built in 1877 by the notable London organbuilder Henry Willis for the ballroom of 'Findon', Kew, the residence of The Hon. Henry Miller, a parliamentarian, and one of Victoria's wealthiest men. The place and date are recorded on one of the bellows ribs and the instrument unusually has a large brass plate bearing the builder's name (perhaps added after its arrival in Victoria). This was the only example of an organ exported by 'Father' Willis to Victoria and was a prestigious example of his work with turned solid ivory drawstops, thick ivory keys and immaculately finished internal components. It is likely that it was erected at 'Findon' by Robert Mackenzie as the local organbuilder George Fincham had not succeeded in delivering an earlier instrument ordered by Miller by the due date and it remained in Fincham's factory for some time before going to John Knox Presbyterian Church, Gardenvale.

We have copies of two schemes submitted to the Hon. Henry Miller for the organ at 'Findon', Kew, Victoria. The organ that was built was a conflation of the two schemes. The organ and the mansion Findon was shown in the 1888 work *Victoria and Its Metropolis*.

In 1901 and 1908 the organ was cleaned and later restored by Fincham & Son. After 1908 it was moved to the ballroom of 'Whernside', in Toorak, owned by Albert and later Edward Miller, sons of Henry Miller, where the central pipe on the facade may have been slightly cut down for a reduced ceiling height. The property was sold in 1928 to Sir Colin Fraser and it is likely that the organ was removed at this time. It was installed in 1930 at a cost of £650 in the Methodist Church, Box Hill by W.L. Roberts. It remains unaltered apart from the introduction of electric blowing, tuning slides, a balanced swell pedal and a swell tremulant. Classified by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria) as a significant organ, there are currently plans for a careful restoration. Restoration work was carried out by Hill, Norman & Beard in 1966; no essential alterations were made at this time. In 1983 further cleaning and maintenance work was carried out by Parker & Welsh of Burwood.

Assessment Against Criteria

a. *The historical importance, association with or relationship to Victoria's history of the place or object*

The Willis organ demonstrates the wealth and domestic aspirations of the wealthy citizens of Boom-period Melbourne, in particular of Henry, nicknamed 'Money', Miller, who had arrived in Melbourne in 1839, began business as a financier and merchant, and became one of Victoria's wealthiest men and a prominent parliamentarian. The organ was commissioned for the ballroom of Findon, Miller's mansion in Kew.

b. *The importance of a place or object in demonstrating rarity or uniqueness*

The organ is the only example of a nineteenth century Willis organ in Victoria. In England Willis' organs are located in such prestigious places as the Royal Albert Hall, St Paul's Cathedral and many cathedrals, Blenheim Palace, the Alexandra Palace, and formerly in Windsor Castle (now destroyed).

c. *The place or object's potential to educate, illustrate or provide further scientific investigation in relation to Victoria's cultural heritage*

d. *The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as part of a class or type of places or objects*

e. *The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features*

The Willis organ is a fine and prestigious example of the work of Henry 'Father' Willis, one of Europe's leading nineteenth century organ builders, and is an outstanding and intact example of English organ building of the nineteenth century. The instrument is notable for its superlative workmanship and materials, together with its excellent sound.

f. *The importance of the place or object in demonstrating or being associated with scientific or technical innovations or achievements*

g. *The importance of the place or object in demonstrating social or cultural associations*

h. *Any other matter which the Council deems relevant to the determination of cultural heritage significance*

Plaque Citation

This outstanding example of English organ building was made in 1877 by Henry 'Father' Willis for Henry 'Money' Miller, one of Victoria's wealthiest men, for the ballroom of Miller's house Findon at Kew.

Extent of Registration

The object described as the Henry Willis Pipe Organ, currently located in the Wesley Uniting Church, 2-6 Oxford Street, Box Hill.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 1995. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place data owner.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>

