

St John's Anglican Church, Canberra

Guidelines for Management of the St John's Precinct

June 2023

Introduction

This paper outlines a high-level framework for managing of the St John's precinct (including the heritage precinct) and is written in response to our Strategic Plan (2023-2028), where it is referred to as a 'site concept'.

Parish Council notes that significant developments on site may be conditional on approval from both the ACT and/or Commonwealth Governments owing to its classification as a heritage precinct and inclusion in a Designated Area. Accordingly, in considering potential developments Parish Council will consult as required within the Parish, the Diocese, the National Capital Authority and the ACT Government.

(NB: Where this document states that St John's 'owns' land or property, we recognise that the land or property is held in trust by the Anglican Church Property Trust for the benefit of St John's.)

Vision

St John's Mission statement is as follows:

We bear public witness to Jesus Christ through Anglican worship and pastoral ministry, loving community and outward-facing mission.

Our Strategic Plan states that 'we are custodians of a special site – a "sanctuary in the city"' and that 'any adjustments for the sake of our mission need to be consistent with St John's unique charm and character, heritage obligations, and missional imperatives.'

In 2008 the Parish Council identified three values to guide any development on the site:¹

1. Strengthen and extend the Christian ministry of the parish to meet the needs of the congregation and provide a welcoming and appealing place of worship for visitors and newcomers, including families and young people.
2. Protect, foster and communicate the heritage values of the site, both as stewards of God's church and 'terrain' and as public-spirited citizens of the national capital.
3. Use the resources ('talents') we have been given in the precinct in a sensitive and balanced way to make far-sighted provision for realising both the preceding objectives.

These values remain consistent with our mission.

¹ Precinct Development at St John's Reid: Discussion Paper for Parish Council (3 June, 2008)

Background and Context

St John's was consecrated in 1845 and the Schoolhouse was completed around the same time. The Rectory was built in 1926, with the Parish Centre being constructed in 1955.

In terms of the 4 church residences on Amaroo St, St John's understands that:

1. The Parish owns:
 - a) 1 Amaroo Street,
 - b) the land of 5 Amaroo Street, and
 - c) 7 Amaroo Street.
2. The Diocese owns:
 - a) 3 Amaroo Street,
 - b) the house of 5 Amaroo Street

1 Amaroo Street and 7 Amaroo Street are owned by St John's for use, under current lease conditions, as a presbytery, manse or rectory for 99 years from 1966.

In December 2007 a Parish Master Plan recommended multistorey commercial and residential buildings on the site. The plan, with a business case and risk analysis, was presented to the Diocese and the Parish in April 2008. The proposal was not accepted by Bishop in Council and the Diocese, and St John's decided not to proceed with the development.

In 2013 the toilets were refurbished, and a deck was built in 2014. In 2014 an extension was made to the St John's Parish Centre (containing the Hall, Parish Offices and Vestry) for use by St John's Care. An Anzac Remembrance Garden, to the north of the Church, was constructed in 2015.

In 2019 the Church's roof was replaced, and in 2021 the driveway was re-surfaced and beautified.

Some parts of the St John's precinct are included on the ACT Heritage Register:

- a) The Church and Churchyard, including:
 - i. The Church building,
 - ii. the Rectory building,
 - iii. the lychgates,
 - iv. tree planting surrounding the church and churchyard, and
 - v. graveyard.
- b) The Schoolhouse Museum:
 - i. the schoolroom and residence building, and
 - ii. the surrounding open space.

Accordingly, these are required to be conserved and appropriately maintained consistent with their heritage significance. The 2010 Conservation Management Plan (CMP) for the St John's heritage landscape and the 2015 Significant Structures Conservation Management Plan (2015 CMP) provide views that guide the management of the heritage precinct and its significant buildings.

Presently, the St John's Precinct includes parking provision for around 150 vehicles. This offers substantial revenue for the parish.

Development, Maintenance and Conservation Principles

The following principles will guide the Parish Council in its care of the site, and any proposals for new developments.

Principle 1: St John's retains control of all parish land.

- a. Land should not be sold in order to pay for current expenditure. Rather, the Parish must live within its means. Previous generations built up the parish through raising funds, not through selling assets, and their successors should continue this tradition.
- b. Any potential leasing arrangements must not detract from the precinct's unique 'sanctuary' character or limit Church activities (e.g. worship, St John's Care, bellringing).

Principle 2: St John's retains at least two clergy residences within the precinct which are both capable of comfortably housing a clergy family.

St John's has a large and complex heritage site with many regular and occasional users and frequent security issues. Multiple on-site staff/clergy are essential, and the location, size and yard space of both residences aid in the attraction and retention of clergy.

- a. The St John's Rectory should be maintained as necessary, within the terms of the ACT heritage listing, with improvements (e.g. to garaging) considered as appropriate.
- b. 1 Amaroo Street should likewise be retained and maintained, with consideration given to reasonable requests for progressive improvement.

Principle 3: The grounds surrounding the Church on the eastern and southern sides facing Anzac Parade and Constitution Ave will be maintained in accordance with the present character of the site (and ACT Heritage requirements), featuring open spaces conducive to rest and contemplation.

Principle 4: St John's will consider, as opportunities arise and subject to the applicable lease conditions, developments along the north (Amaroo Street) and west (CIT/UNSW) boundaries of the Precinct – provided such developments are consistent with the mission of the parish, the character of the site, and other principles in this document. (This could potentially include the Amaroo St car park, scout hall, and residences at 3, 5 and 7 Amaroo St).

Principle 5: Any developments should be of high quality and architectural merit that is sympathetic to the precinct's history and architectural/natural character.

Principle 6: St John's should retain the historic laneway and hedge between the Churchyard and the current Amaroo Street properties.

Principle 7: Decision-making for any potential developments will have regard to relevant sustainability and environmental protection requirements, especially as determined by relevant local authorities.

Principle 8: St John's should set aside the appropriate amount of money each year from our revenue to fund maintenance of all our property assets, including our three residences (1 & 7 Amaroo St and the Rectory), the Parish Centre, the grounds and lychgates.

Potential Parish Projects

The following projects are likely to be in accordance with the principles listed above. Further detailed review and analysis of each project will need to be undertaken as part of the development of the Strategic Plan (especially its Project Schedule).

1. Adding another columbarium unit to cater for future demand (noting that Columbarium 3 was designed with expansion in mind).
2. Better use of the Horse Paddock, provided its open character is retained. (This might for example include establishing new columbaria as part of a broader plan to turn this space into a memorial garden, open to the public and adorned with suitable gardens/trees, with a lych gate inviting pedestrian access from Constitution Ave.)
3. Restoration of various headstones and maintenance of graves in the Churchyard.
4. Progressive update of parish building assets to support the ministry needs of the parish, especially in terms of its public worship, children's ministry, office and meeting spaces and hospitality. This includes improvements for the:
 - a. St John's kitchen
 - b. Interior to the hall
 - c. Robertson Room, and
 - d. Parish office spaces.
5. The present temporary parking area (around 150 car parks) should be maintained in good order and progressively maintained or improved as appropriate (noting that future development plans may affect the current parking arrangements).

Document approved by Parish Council (June 2023)