



St John's Anglican Cathedral Parramatta

Response to Independent Heritage
Advice Report

January 2019

ASPECT Studios™

Summary

1. Introduction

The author of this report is ASPECT Studios, Level 1, 78-80 George Street, Redfern. This report was prepared in January 2019 in collaboration with Paul Davies Heritage Architects. This report responds to the Independent Heritage Advice, Version V2.0 Final Submission, dated 12 December 2018, prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects.

The Independent Heritage Advice report was commissioned by The City of Parramatta to review the Planning Proposal prepared by Architectus for the redevelopment of the St John's Cathedral site. The address of the site includes land at; 195 Church Street, 38 and 45 Hunter street and 65-79 Macquarie Street, Parramatta. Architectus prepared the Planning Proposal on behalf of the Anglican Church Property Trust Diocese of Sydney as Trustee for the Parish of Parramatta and the St John's Parramatta Endowment Fund.

ASPECT Studios was engaged as the Landscape Architect consultant on the Architectus Planning Proposal team and prepared the Concept Landscape Master plan for the proposal.

The Planning Proposal includes the following documents;

- St John's Anglican Cathedral, Parramatta, Planning Proposal by Architectus. Dated May 2018.
- Urban Design Report by Architectus. Dated May 2018.
- Conservation Management Plan Draft #1 by Design 5. Dated May 2018.
- Heritage Impact Statement by Paul Davies Pty Ltd. Dated May 2018.
- Concept Landscape Master plan by ASPECT Studios. Dated May 2018.

2. Scope

This report will review only the material concerning the Cathedrals public realm and St John's Square as discussed in the Independent Heritage Advice prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects, final submission 12 December 2018.

3. Background

The Independent Heritage Advice report makes several assertions that will require further work. These include the following;

- a) The church does not need a new setting.
- b) The need for an independent study for a new square.
- c) Retrofitted urban square are notoriously difficult to be made successful.

4. Abbreviations

CMP	Cultural Management Plan
HAA	Hector Abrahams Architects
COP	City of Parramatta
LGA	Local Government Authority
CBD	Central Business District



Figure 1: St John's Cathedral 1840-50, Source; State Library of NSW by Artist William Stanley



Figure 4: St John's Cathedral 1913, Source: Cenentary Celebrations



Figure 2: St John's Cathedral Aerial 1924, Source: Parramatta Heritage Centre



Figure 3: St John's Cathedral from Church Street 1820 Source;

Public Space in Parramatta CBD

Existing Public Spaces

Parramatta currently has only a handful of urban squares and pedestrianized streets within the CBD's urban grid. Similarly, there is limited space for green refuge, events and gatherings. North of the CBD, there are a chain of linear public spaces along the Parramatta River, however, these spaces are largely constrained due to their size and flooding issues. The CBD also lacks vegetated space and the urban tree canopy is under-performing at a low 9%. This percentage is well below the best practice guidelines, which recommend 15%. In 2013, the COP undertook urban thermal imagery. This study revealed Parramatta's CBD is hotter than surrounding areas in the LGA, due to urban heat island effect. The heat urban island effect is the concentration of heat in the more densely built areas compared to green spaces, as built surfaces absorb and radiate heat, and therefore raise ambient temperatures. The consequence of these hotter temperatures has great implications on health and liveability of users in the CBD. As a major employment center for western

Sydney, high numbers of workers enter the city daily and in the future, creating additional pressure on the need for public space.

Proposed Public Spaces

Parramatta's CBD working population is expected to grow from 22,984 in 2016 to 55,000 by 2030 (Source; Parramatta CBD Planning Strategy, Adopted 2015). While it's residential population is expected to grow from 12,455 in 2016 to 34,632 by 2036 (Source: Forecast ID). This transformative growth in the city will require extensive expansion of the urban infrastructure to accommodate the new residents' and workers'. To address this issue, The City of Parramatta proposes to deliver three major public spaces over the next 20 years; Civic Link, Parramatta Square and Riverbank Square. Together, these revitalisation projects will transform Parramatta's CBD into a world-class city, as well as catalyse development and investment. St John's Cathedral Square will complement these proposed public spaces' and offer a unique historical place in the city.

EXISTING PUBLIC SPACES

1

Centenary Square



Area: 3000m²
Uses: Civic & retail

2

Phillip St Park



Area: 425m²
Uses: Passive recreation

3

Justice Precinct



Area: 1900m²
Uses: Civic & congregation

4

Willow Grove




Area: 1100m²
Uses: Historical garden

PROPOSED PUBLIC SPACES

5


Parramatta Square



Area: 7000m²
Uses: Civic & retail

6


St John's Square



Area: 1200m²
Uses: Cultural and historical

7

Parramatta Civic Link



Area: 4800m²
Uses: Connective, retail & civic

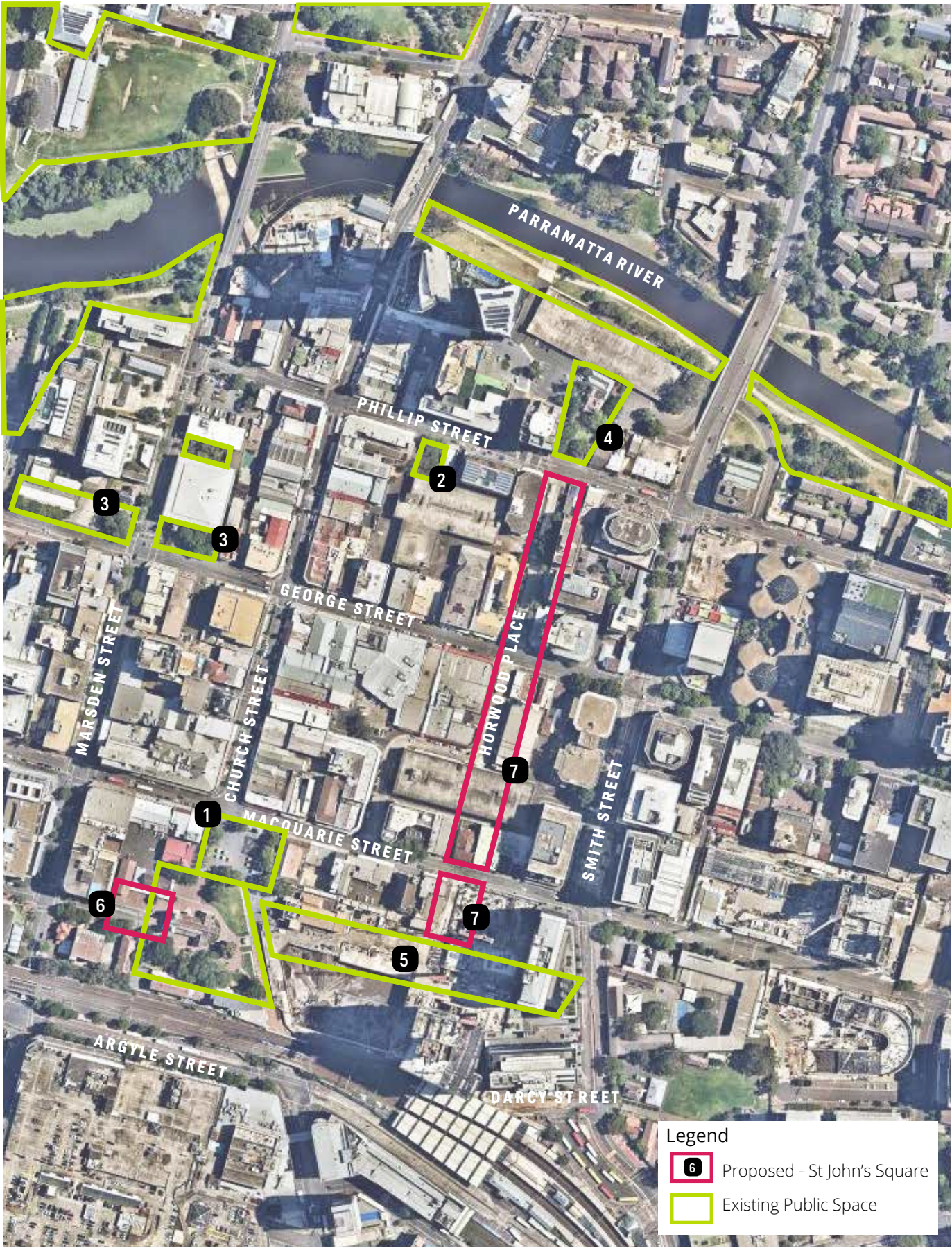


Figure 5 | Public Spaces in Parramatta CBD | 1:4000 @ A3

Key Topics

The Independent Heritage Advice prepared by Hector Abrahams Architects focuses on several themes regarding the public realm. The themes discuss the Concept Landscape Master plan's design prepared by ASPECT Studios.

Importantly, the Planning Proposal's Concept Landscape Master plan is an indicative design only. A fully developed consultation process and brief will be provided as part of a Design Competition Phase for the site. Our client has undertaken and will continue to undertake consultation with the community to achieve a design outcome befitting of the Cathedral and the surrounding precinct.

The main themes include:

- The Cathedral setting
- Interpreting the churchyard
- The square
- Planting, wind and shade
- The ground plane

THE CATHEDRAL SETTING

1.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"The first finding, which comes from an analysis of the history of the site, is that the church building doesn't need a new setting ... What it needs therefore is the reinterpretation of the historic setting, in particular the definition on the western side and the removal of car parking on ground." (5. pg2)

1.2 ASPECT'S response;

- The existing church setting, and surrounds is a culmination of multiple layers of development and setting changes since 1798.
- The current Centenary Square and Cathedral curtilage is a collaboration between Anglican Church Property Trust Diocese of Sydney and the City of Parramatta through the pedestrianization of Church Street. The Planning Proposal contemplates the history of the site and its surrounding context by maintaining important trees and reflecting the historical garden setting of the Cathedral. Further contextual studies are anticipated to be completed during the Design Competition phase of the project.
- There is an opportunity through design development to strengthen the reading of the historic setting. Additionally, the interpretation could be in the ground plane and spatially through the site design.
- The proposed public realm provides increased civic amenity as well as responding to the increased density and population in the immediate future. As growth continues there will be more pressure on Parramatta's existing public realm assets.
- The Concept Master plan advocated for the removal of the car parking on the site, to prioritize places for people in close proximity to the Cathedral.

- Vehicle access will be managed operationally and used only for ceremonial purposes.

INTERPRETING THE CHURCHYARD

2.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"All the proposed development options disrupt this historical setting by removing the defined Churchyard to the west of the cathedral." (3.1 pg. 11)

"In the authors' view, the height of the new towers is not a heritage issue if the churchyard has its heritage integrity." (8. pg. 2)

2.2 ASPECT'S response;

- The heritage integrity of the site will be further emphasized in the design development of the public realm.
- It is agreed that there is an opportunity to tell more of the story of the site history by interpreting the churchyard. This can be done by reconsidering the concept of the 'square' to the west of the Cathedral to be a less formal 'civic plaza' and a complement to the surrounding squares. Considerations are to plant additional appropriate trees and define the proportions of the churchyard through paving and a clear building curtilage.
- The intention of the St John's Square to the western side of the Cathedral is to give prominence to the western towers of the Cathedral.

3. 1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"A proposal that interprets the historical space within which the church building was set is warranted. Such a proposal would recognize;

- The historical boundary of the allotment established by

Macquarie, or before.

- The amount of space historically defined in front of the western towers, which is in proportion to the towers.

- The integrity of the churchyard or grounds that have considered networks of paths.

- Planting of appropriate trees in all parts of the grounds. (3.1 pg 11)

3.2 ASPECT'S response;

- Historical allotment boundaries could be further represented during the design development of the public realm.
- The proportion of space between the St John's towers and the historical allotment boundaries could be further represented in the ground plane. The opportunity to acquire a portion of Hunter Street will greatly benefit the connection of the through site link.
- The proposed design utilises existing site paths and aligns with the City of Parramatta CBD Pedestrian Strategy, aiming to create a more connected, legible and inclusive walking environment.
- The Concept Master plan also connects with the principles proposed by the City of Parramatta's Environmental Strategy and Urban Forest Strategy. The design proposes to increase the tree canopy of the city, as well as reducing the heat island effect by creating more green space than impervious spaces.

Key Topics

THE SQUARE

4.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

Retrofitted squares are notoriously difficult to make successful. The precedence mentioned in the heritage impact statement of Saint Andrews Cathedral and Sydney Square is a case in point, as it does not attract many people or events (7.0 pg. 2)

4.2 ASPECT'S response;

- The public realm design provides a third scale of public space to complement the hierarchy of Parramatta Square, which is large and formal and Centenary Square, which is a more casual space for everyday use. St John's proposal complements these squares by providing a more intimate, shaded green space with multiple seating areas, improving public amenity within the city centre. The space is both respectful to its historical setting and provides a place for people to dwell in shade throughout the day and seasons.

5.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

... However, it is proposed that an independent planning study into the need for the square to be undertaken, since Parramatta has two squares nearby. (7.0 pg. 2)

5.2 ASPECT'S response;

- An analysis of Parramatta's CBD reveals a lack of vegetated space with urban tree canopy underperforming at a low 9%. A tree-lined civic plaza at the Cathedral site will become a highly desirable shaded public realm that will assist in increasing the urban tree coverage in the CBD.
- As a major employment center for western Sydney, high numbers of workers enter the City of Parramatta daily. With the worker population set to increase to 55,000 by 2030 and increase of residential populations to 34,632 by 2036, the pressure on existing public spaces will increase. Existing public space will become congested,

failing to cope with this new demand. Therefore opportunities to create new public open space are critical in achieving an appropriate level of public amenity for the future population.

PLANTING, WIND AND SHADE

6.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"Also, the success of the square in its location is open to question, as it is fully shaded in winter between two rise towers and exposed to westerly winds." (7. pg.2)

6.2 ASPECT'S response;

- Parramatta's CBD is hotter than surrounding areas in the LGA due to urban heat island effect, and a hot CBD has great implications on health and livability of users. Shade in the city accompanied by significant green space is considered to be positive in terms of health and well-being.
- The best practice tree canopy coverage in central business districts is 15%. The city of Parramatta is aiming for these targets and this will create maximum amenity benefits for the city. The inclusion of the Square will assist in taking the tree canopy from as low as 9%, closer to the Parramatta target of 15%, providing more shade, assisting to reduce urban heat island effects and improving air quality.
- Due to Parramatta's distance from the influence of the ocean and cooling coastal breezes, the gap between temperatures in Western Sydney and the Eastern Suburbs has been observed to grow as the climate warms. Therefore, as trends of warmer and more extreme weather continue Parramatta CBD on average experiencing 4 times as many hot days as Sydney City.

7.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"The plentiful vegetation and particular the mature trees planted within the park and at Centenary Square;

contribute possibly to the setting." (pg. 11)

"The church in its yard has a s strong relationship to the urban plan of Paramatta, and the vegetated landscape surrounding the Cathedral is as equally important to its character." (3.1 pg. 12)

7.2 ASPECT'S response;

- ASPECT concurs with these two statements above. As such all the existing trees have been preserved in the Concept Master plan.
- Prominence should be given to the Royal Gate to the east of the Cathedral, which defines the spatial arrangement of paths and gardens.
- As Parramatta's CBD population increases, enhancing connectivity within the site is vital. Pedestrian paths should maintain universal access for all and be legible for users. The key visual and pedestrian movement corridors will be strengthened through considered design as shown in the Concept Master plan.

GROUND PLANE

8.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

"The design of the proposed square presents the church on a uniformed paved platform shared with the two high rises buildings. When placed on a shared platform, the scale difference between the high rise and the church building is most apparent and no- reconcilable. The result rendered the church as a mere small object." (3.1 pg. 12)

8.2 ASPECT'S response;

The Concept Master plan knits together three sites and several disparate spaces to increase legibility, pedestrian access and to complete the western edge of Parramatta Square. A further design of the 'civic plaza' to the west of the Cathedral could assist with welcoming change in scale of the church to surrounding built form.

- The design is consistent with the heritage view corridors and preserves views north down Church Street, west down Hunter Street, east towards the Town Hall and Parramatta Square.
- At ground level, the view is focused on the Cathedral. This focus reduces the perceived effects of the height of the towers for users in the public space. The buildings footprints have minimal encroachment on the civic plaza's ground plane.
- Views to the Town Hall from Hunter Street are expanded through the proposed removal of the Parish Hall.
- The removal of car parking and the Parish Hall at the termination of Hunter Street declutters the western side of the Cathedral with views from the west expanded and framed.

Key Topics

GROUND PLANE

9.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

“Though no longer visible from Government House, the cathedral retains its landmark status within the city of

Parramatta. Long views south down Church Street and east down Hunter Street culminate at the Cathedral is an important perspective. “ (pg. 12)

9.2 ASPECT’S response;

The design of the tree planting will highlight the axial western view of the Cathedral down Hunter Street. The views south looking from Church Street, east along Hunter Street and west from Parramatta Square have all been respected and maintained in the Planning Proposal.

10.1 Hector Abrahams Architects report;

“But an extra public square here may not be warranted, as Hunter Street currently performs the role of the back street, providing garbage, loading and car access and this may be its best use.’

10.2 ASPECT’S response;

Hunter Street and the western frontage of the St John’s Cathedral has potential to play a greater role in the rapidly transforming city centre of Parramatta, rather than simply continuing its current use as a ‘back of house service street’. There is an opportunity to be a genuine contribution to public life by creating an amenity for people as a valuable third civic space in addition to Parramatta Square and Centenary Square. Site servicing and maintenance is a larger issue that the City of Parramatta will need to address not only to this site but to other public spaces across the city. Such practical issues can be resolved in the design brief for the future Design Competition Phase.

Appendix: Existing Site

Current Use

The current condition of the St John's Cathedral challenges the current and future aspirations for the Anglican Church Property Trust and local parishioner's. The redevelopment of the site has a great opportunity to provide St John's Church with a more avid role in the public life in Parramatta CBD.

Today, the site is largely fragmented and there is scope to better connect pedestrian movement, the separate vehicle uses on site and to purchase a proportion of council-owned Hunter Street to accommodate large ceremonial events. Further opportunities include improving the aesthetics of the site, enhancing the presentation of the western entry of the cathedral, updating existing street furniture and adding vibrancy to the planting palette.

The site also includes several significant valued and mature trees which produce a dense shade and cooling, these should be preserved where possible and assessed by an arborist. The significant trees include one *Jacaranda mimosifolia*, commonly known as Blue Jacaranda. A *Liquidambar styraciflua* was commonly known as American Sweetgum next to the Verger's cottage and two *Quercus robur's*, commonly known as Common Oak next to the St John's Parish Hall.

Heritage Considerations

The key considerations regarding the heritage of the site is to maintain exceptional view lines of the Cathedral. Refer to Figure 14 key views. The view line numbered one taken from Church Street Promenade is considered of high significance. The design proposes to plant tree small to medium size tree, as to preserve the exceptional view of the Cathedral. Respectful integrating St John's Royal Gate into the design is recommended to preserve the heritage of the site and to preserve the local sacrifice of Parramatta's sailors, nurses and soldiers who fort in World War II. Additionally, the preservation of Verger's Cottage and fence line should be maintained, as to record the historical boundaries of the churchyard.



Figure 6 | View 3 From Centenary Square



Figure 7 | View 4 From Hunter Street



Figure 8 | View 2 From Town hall

Legend

	Existing tree retained		Existing white concrete seat
	Existing tree removed		Existing park bench
	Existing turf		Existing drain
	Existing garden bed		Existing sandstone fence
	Existing sandstone paving		Existing sandstone edge
	Existing brick paving		
	Existing concrete paving		
	Existing stone paving		
	Existing Verger Cottage		

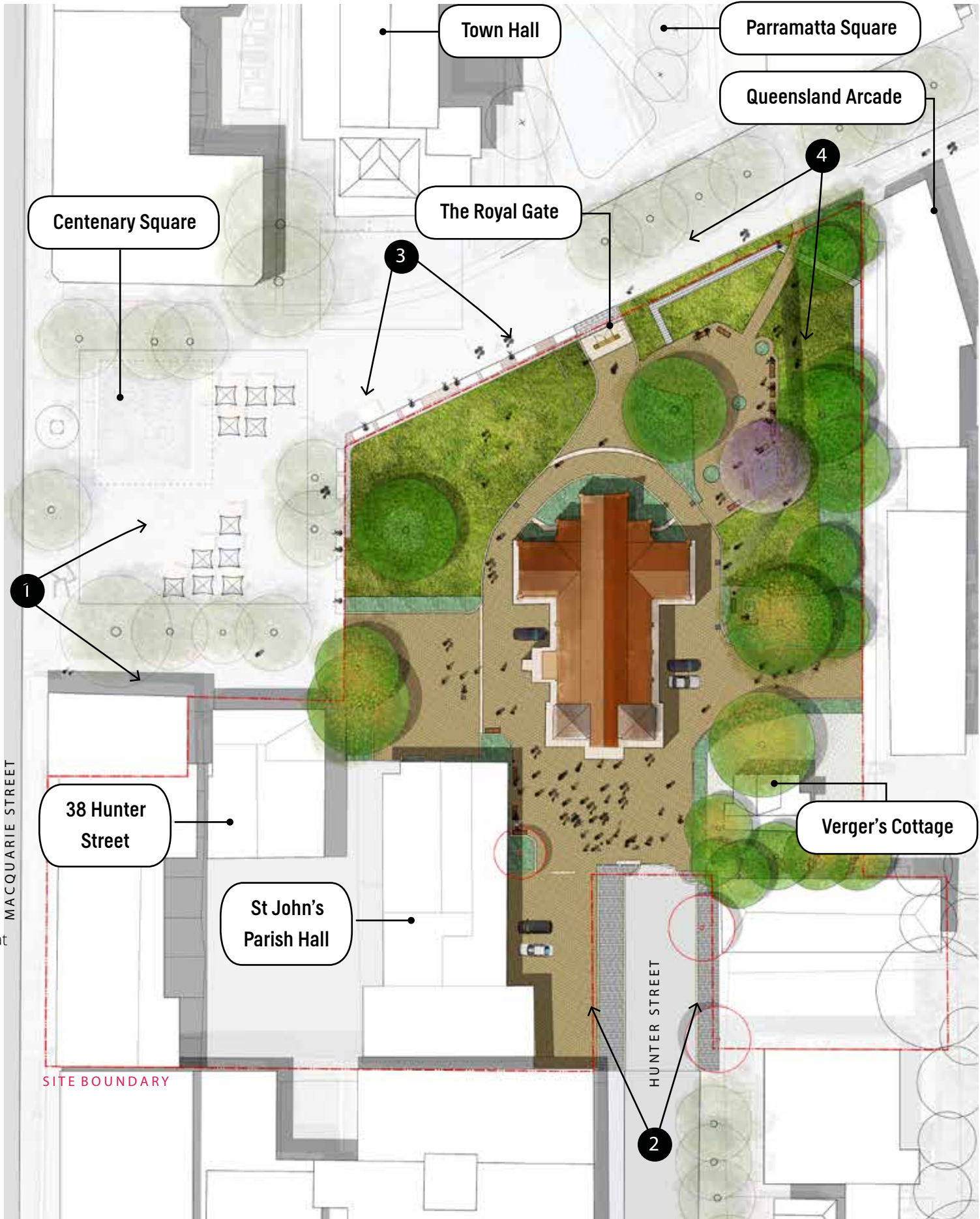












Figure 9 | Existing Site| 1:750 @ A3

Appendix: Concept Landscape Masterplan

Legend

- 1** Raised central lawn with generous seating edge facing Church Street Promenade
- 2** Intimate garden zones with existing trees retained and decorative planting incorporated with passive seating
- 3** Formal St John's Square accommodating events and ceremonies. Seating provided to edges of square under feature trees. Hunter Street will be acquired, and street will align with St Johns Lane. Managed operational vehicles will be permitted within in the square and access will be fronted with retractable bollards.
- 4** Heritage Royal Gate retained
- 5** Generous paved connection linking St John's Square with Centennial Square with seating under a cluster of trees.
- 6** Through site link catering for small scale retail and pedestrian access

-  Existing tree retained
-  Existing tree removed
-  Existing turf
-  Existing garden bed
-  Existing sandstone paving
-  Existing brick paving
-  Existing concrete paving
-  Existing stone paving
-  Existing Verger Cottage
-  Existing white concrete seat

