

# Heritage Impact Assessment for Redevelopment of St Catherine's Aged Care Facility Bathurst NSW 2795



**Date:** 11 January 2024

**Heritage ID:** Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area

**Address and property description:**

50 Busby Street  
Bathurst NSW 2795  
Lot 212 DP 1289265

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**For:**

Allera

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## Introduction

High Ground Consulting has been engaged by Kirana Bathurst Pty Ltd to provide a Statement of Heritage Impact for the proposed redevelopment of the site of the former St Catherine’s Aged Care Facility at 50 Busby Street, Bathurst. A Statement of Heritage Impact is required as the property is located within the Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area. It is also adjacent to the former St Joseph’s Mount Convent & Novitiate, which is also located in Busby Street.

The cultural heritage significance of St Joseph’s Mount has been assessed as follows:

*St Joseph’s Mount has a multi-faceted history that reflects aspects of the development of Bathurst since 1877. Logan Brae is a grand Victorian mansion that retains a high level of integrity. The place has also served as an agricultural college and as the headquarters and novitiate of the Sisters of Mercy in the Bathurst Diocese. It was also one of the first nongovernment teacher training facilities accredited in New South Wales. The place was involved in celebrations surrounding the Bathurst People’s Federal Convention of 1896. The place has direct associations with the outstanding educational and social work of the Sisters of Mercy in Western NSW. It also has direct associations with Bathurst architect Edward Gell, physician George Busby and with the works of entrepreneur John Meagher. Logan Brae is a fine example of the work of architect Edward Gell. The original mansion is generally intact. Extensions and renovations have largely respected the original form and fabric of the building and maintained a high level of aesthetic integrity. The house retains the form of its original gardens and landscaping. St Joseph’s Mount and Logan Brae are important elements of the social and spiritual fabric of Bathurst. The place is directly associated with the works of the Sisters of Mercy. The charitable and visionary mission of this organisation is still being developed and implemented around the fabric and the place. Logan Brae was used as part of the first Experimental Farm in Bathurst and served as an agricultural college for some years. It has also been a place of teacher training and learning. The intact 19th and early 20th century buildings of St Joseph’s Mount provide opportunities to explore the construction methods and social customs of these eras. St Joseph’s Mount was the only convent and novitiate of its kind in the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst. St Joseph’s Mount is representative of the successful adaptive re-use and effective management of large 19th century mansions.*

This report will address the following:

- Compliance of the proposed development with the guidelines of the Bathurst HCA;
- Potential impact of the proposed works on the cultural heritage significance of St Joseph’s Mount;
- What measures can be used to mitigate negative impacts;
- Why more sympathetic solutions were not viable.

## Location

The proposed development is located at 50 Busby Street, Bathurst. It comprises Lot 212 DP 1289265.

## Author of this report

This report was prepared by Ray Christison BA (Hons), historical archaeologist of High Ground Consulting. Ray is an acknowledged expert in the history of the Australian iron and steel industry, the Australian coal industry and the history of Lithgow. Ray is principal heritage consultant to the Australian Rail Track Corporation and Heritage Advisor to Hilltops LGA and Narrabri Shire. He has provided heritage management advice to the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst and the Sisters of Mercy for the past 20 years, and regularly provides advice on other conservation and development projects in Bathurst.

## Limitations

The former aged care facility buildings have been secured against entry, preventing access to the interior. The site inspection conducted on 24 October 2023 covered the exterior of buildings only. Historical research to date has been limited by a number of factors:

1. The Catholic Diocese of Bathurst Archives contain almost no material on the buildings constructed and managed by the Sisters of Mercy.
2. The archives of the Institute of Sisters of Mercy of Australia & Papua New Guinea are maintained in Sydney. A research request has resulted in provision of a brief timeline of the facility. This information has been incorporated into this report.

## Description of the place

The former St Catherine’s Aged Care Facility was developed from 1964 to accommodate elderly Sisters of Mercy close to the order’s main convent. The buildings housing the aged care facility were constructed on the north-western corner of the lot on which the St Joseph’s Mount Convent and Novitiate was located. The story of St Catherine’s is inextricably linked to the story of the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst, and the first of the St Catherine’s buildings reflects the design of the Novitiate Wing added to St Joseph’s Mount in 1962.

## Historical timeline

- 1862 The property was part of Lot 6, a 100acre block that was originally granted to Sir John Jamison. It was transferred to John Busby.
- 1866 The first group of Sisters of Mercy arrived in Bathurst, establishing the former Deanery in Keppell Street.
- 1869 The Convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary and St Mary’s College were constructed in William Street.
- 1877 Logan Brae was constructed for John Busby and his family.
- 1891 John Busby died and his wife relocated to Sydney.
- 1896 Logan Brae was purchased by Mrs Joseph Smith and leased by the NSW Government and used to accommodate students at the Bathurst Experimental Farm.
- 1897 Lot 6 had been subdivided along western boundary to create Prospect Street, Brilliant Road & Queens Street. All small blocks for housing development.
- 1908 Logan Brae was purchased by local retailer John Meagher for the Sisters of Mercy.
- 1916 A chapel was built adjacent to the convent.
- 1959 Science Room and classroom were built south of the chapel.
- 1962 A new accommodation wing (Novitiate Wing) was constructed on the northern side of the Mount St Joseph Convent (Logan Brae).
- 1964 The Bathurst Sisters of Mercy decided to establish a nursing home for elderly sisters at Bathurst to ensure these sisters did not have to move away from a familiar environment.
- 1966 St Catherine’s Aged Care was built as a 24 bed nursing home for the Sisters of Mercy. This facility was blessed and officially opened in October 1966.
- 1967 The first sisters moved into the new facility in January 1967.
- 1980 Major improvements were undertaken to comply with fire regulations.
- 1999 The 23 bed St Catherine’s Hostel was opened.
- 1999 The name of the facility was changed from St Catherine’s Nursing Home Bathurst Limited to St Catherine’s Aged Care Facility Bathurst Limited.
- 2002 A 15 bed Dementia unit with provision for respite care was opened.
- 2003 Catholic Health Care took over management of St Catherine’s
- 2007 St Catherine’s Aged Care Facility was transferred to Catholic Healthcare, which also acquired the land on which the facility was located.
- 2017 A new St Catherine’s Aged Care facility was opened at 51 Gormans Hill Road, Bathurst and the original facility was abandoned.

## Physical evidence

The former St Catherine’s Aged Care comprised two building complexes, both of which appear to have been extended during their life. These are:

- 1966 – 24 bed nursing home,
- 1999 – 23 bed hostel. This appears to have been extended in 2002 to house a 15 bed Dementia unit and respite care.

The 1966 building was constructed in a variation of the Post War International style consistent with the Novitiate Wing constructed for the St Joseph’s Mount Complex in 1962. Some key characteristics of this style are:

- Cubiform design,
- Structural frame expressed,
- Curtain walls,



- Overhangs for shade,
- Plain smooth wall surface.<sup>1</sup>

Given its style, it is highly likely that this building was designed by D. Trevor Jones & Associates of Bathurst. Like the Novitiate Wing, it was constructed with face brick walls with rendered concrete columns and spandrels. The brick colour harmonises with the Logan Brae/St Joseph’s Mount complex.

Northern frontage of the 1966 St Catherine’s nursing home. A statue of The Virgin Mary is set in the garden to the right. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)



North-eastern corner of the 1966 St Catherine’s nursing home. The tower appears to be a lift tower constructed when the facility was extended in 1999. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)



The rear (southern) side of the 1966 St Catherine’s nursing home. The 1999 extensions are on the right. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)

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<sup>1</sup> Apperly, R., Irving, R. & Reynolds, P., 1995. Identifying Australian Architecture p.216

The 1999 and subsequent extensions are located between the original St Catherine’s Nursing Home and St Joseph’s Mount. These are built in a late 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic style in what appears to be at least three stages of construction. The complex is unified by the use of two colours of face brick, featuring lower walls in red brick similar to the original buildings and a lighter brick above. These buildings feature hipped roofs clad in light grey corrugated steel.



Pedestrian entrance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century additions to St Catherine’s Nursing Home. This faces Busby Street. The building on the right is the 23 bed hostel constructed in 1999 and the left side is possibly the 2002 Dementia Unit. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)



The 1999 Hostel viewed from the south. This also shows the transition between the original St Catherine’s Nursing Home and later additions. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)





View along the eastern side of St Catherine’s Nursing Home showing the relationship of these buildings to St Joseph’s Mount/Logan Brae. Logan Brae can be seen in the left background. (Ray Christison 24.10.2023)



## Cultural Heritage Significance

### Statement of significance

#### NSW Heritage Assessment Criteria

Criterion (a)	An item is important in the course, or pattern, of NSW’s cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
Criterion (b)	An item has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in NSW’s cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
Criterion (c)	An item is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in NSW (or the local area).
Criterion (d)	An item has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in NSW (or the local area) for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.
Criterion (e)	An item has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of NSW’s cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
Criterion (f)	An item possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of NSW’s cultural or natural history (or the cultural or natural history of the local area).
Criterion (g)	An item is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of NSW’s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural or natural places; or</li> <li>• Cultural or natural environments</li> </ul> (or a class of the local area’s <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural or natural places; or</li> <li>• Cultural or natural environments.)</li> </ul>

#### Cultural Heritage Significance

NSW Heritage Assessment Criterion	Significance	Reasons
<b>Historical significance</b> Criterion (a)	Local	St Catherine’s Nursing Home was constructed from 1966 as an adjunct to the St Joseph’s Mount Convent & Novitiate to provide accommodation for aging Sisters of Mercy. Over time the facility was extended to provide general aged care services. The complex functioned as a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, eventually become part of the larger Catholic aged care service. The complex has local historical significance as part of the work of the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst.
<b>Historical association significance</b> Criterion (b)	Local	The complex is associated with the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy in the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst.
<b>Aesthetic significance</b> Criterion (c)	Local	The 1966 St Catherine’s Nursing Home is quite possibly part of the body of work of local architects D. Trevor Jones & Associates.
<b>Social significance</b> Criterion (d)	Local	The nursing home served the community of Bathurst for more than 50 years and has associations with the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst.
<b>Technical/ Research significance</b> Criterion (e)	-	-
<b>Rarity</b> Criterion (f)	-	-
<b>Representativeness</b> Criterion (g)	Local	The former St Catherine’s Nursing Home is representative of developments in church led aged care in the City of Bathurst.
<b>Integrity</b>	The complex appears to have a high degree of integrity.	

## Summary Statement of Significance

The significance of the former St Catherine’s Nursing Home is summarised as follows:

*St Catherine’s Nursing Home was constructed from 1966 as an adjunct to the St Joseph’s Mount Convent & Novitiate to provide accommodation for aging Sisters of Mercy. Over time the facility was extended to provide general aged care services. The complex functioned as a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy, eventually becoming part of the larger Catholic aged care service. The complex has local historical significance as part of the work of the Sisters of Mercy in Bathurst. The complex is associated with the ministry of the Sisters of Mercy in the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst. The 1966 St Catherine’s Nursing Home is quite possibly part of the body of work of local architects D. Trevor Jones & Associates. The nursing home served the community of Bathurst for more than 50 years and has associations with the ministries of the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Diocese of Bathurst. The complex appears to have a high degree of integrity.*

## Conservation Policies

All work should be undertaken in accordance with the principles of the Burra Charter, which guides all cultural heritage management practices in Australia. It establishes the following principles for the management of heritage places, including heritage buildings:

### *Burra Charter Hierarchy of interventions*

The Burra Charter recommends the following hierarchy of interventions in the management of heritage places:

- *Conservation* is the preferred option. *Conservation* means all the processes of looking after a *place* so as to retain its *cultural significance*. It generally involves taking efforts to retain the existing fabric of the place or building.
- *Maintenance* means the continuous protective care of the *fabric* and *setting* of a *place*, and is to be distinguished from repair. Repair involves *restoration* or *reconstruction*.
- *Preservation* means maintaining the *fabric* of a *place* in its existing state and retarding deterioration.
- *Restoration* means returning the existing *fabric* of a *place* to a known earlier state by removing accretions or by reassembling existing components without the introduction of new material.
- *Reconstruction* means returning a *place* to a known earlier state and is distinguished from *restoration* by the introduction of new material into the *fabric*.
- *Adaptation* means modifying a *place* to suit the existing use or proposed use.

The fundamental principle is to do as much as necessary, as little as possible.

## Conservation of cultural heritage significance

The former St Catherine’s buildings are no longer fit for purpose as they do not comply with current standards for aged care accommodation. As purpose-built structures, they would be extremely difficult to adapt to another use. Demolition of the buildings and redevelopment of the site appears to be the most practical option for the place.

It is proposed that cultural heritage significance can be conserved by:

1. Preparing an archival record of the buildings prior to demolition. This should include;
  - a. Preparation of plans and elevations of the existing buildings and their context on the site.
  - b. Preparation of a photographic record of the complex.
2. Incorporation of interpretations of the history of the place within the landscaping of any proposed development.
3. Where possible, materials such as bricks should be recovered and re-used within new landscaping or structures.

Conservation of the relationship to the neighbouring Logan Brae/St Joseph’s Mount by:

1. Ensuring sufficient setbacks from the eastern boundary of the site to preserve site lines to Logan Brae from Busby Street.
2. Ensuring the buildings on the eastern side of the block are sympathetic to the surrounding neighbours, in particular helping to avoid overshadowing of the neighbouring St Joseph’s Mount.

## Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area

The property is located within the Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area (HCA). New developments on the block should comply with the guidelines of the HCA, particularly in relation to:

- Scale and form of new buildings.
- Colours and textures of external materials and finishes to complement the character of the HCA.

### Archaeology - unexpected finds

The following protocols should be observed during excavation and in the case of the unanticipated discovery of substantial potentially significant relics:

- **Unanticipated discovery of substantial or potentially significant relics.** The unanticipated discovery of substantial or potentially significant relics should be reported immediately to a designated archaeologist. Work should cease in the affected area until it can be inspected and recorded by the archaeologist. Note: Section 146 of the Heritage Act 1977 states that the accidental discovery of relics should be reported immediately to the NSW Heritage Office (Heritage Act 1977, section 146).
- **Identification of Aboriginal artefacts.** The identification of any Aboriginal artefacts, or deposits likely to contain Aboriginal artefacts, during the archaeological investigation or otherwise, will be reported to the Director General of the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage (National Parks & Wildlife Service) and the relevant permits should be obtained under section 91 of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Act 1974.



## Proposed works and guidelines

There is a consensus that the former St Catherine’s buildings are no longer fit for purpose as they do not comply with current standards for aged care accommodation, or the requirements of the Building Code of Australia. As purpose-built structures, they would be extremely difficult to adapt to another use. Demolition of the buildings and redevelopment of the site appears to be the most practical option for the place. The process of redevelopment should be guided by the Conservation Policies identified within this Statement of Heritage Impact.

The current owner proposes to demolish all structures on site and redevelop it for residences. The design vision for this space is as follows:

*We aim to create a unique place that can build and foster a diverse sustainable community. A place that takes inspiration from local history and architecture. And, a place that connects it community through green, open and landscaped spaces.<sup>2</sup>*

This process should be guided by the Conservation Policies identified within this Statement of Heritage Impact.

A design proposal has been prepared for the site by Clarke Hopkins Clarke. The masterplan for the site has been guided by the following parameters:

- Provision of appropriate setbacks,
- A sympathetic transition to neighbouring residential properties and Logan Brae (St Joseph’s Mount),
- Improving the streetscape and introducing communal green spaces within the property,
- Developments orientated to maximise views of the surrounding region.

To achieve this, new developments are to be located in three distinct zones:

1. Apartments to be located on the northwest corner of the property (Corner of Busby & Prospect Streets).
2. Multiple dwellings to be located along the southern side of the property.
3. Multiple dwellings to be located along the eastern side of the property.

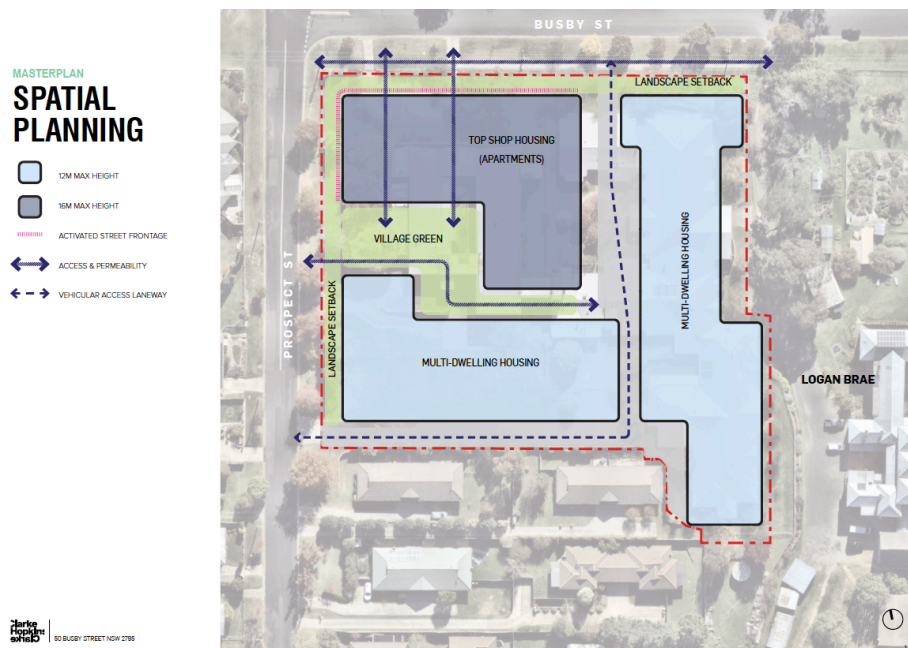


Figure 1: Spatial Planning, showing the location of three zones of housing. (Clarke Hopkins Clarke November 2023)

<sup>2</sup> Clarke Hopkins Clarke, 2023. 50 Busby Street, South Bathurst NSW 2795 Preliminary Design Pack 02 Our Vision



**Figure 2:** Representation of the proposed Busby Street alignment, showing lower building heights near the boundary with Logan Brae (St Joseph’s Mount). (Clarke Hopkins Clarke November 2023)



**Figure 3:** Representation of the proposed Prospect Street alignment. (Clarke Hopkins Clarke November 2023)

It is proposed that taller apartment style buildings will be constructed on the highest point of the block, which is located on the corner of Busby and Prospect Streets. A 12metre height limit has been proposed for buildings constructed in the southern and eastern sections of the block.

Buildings aligning the eastern boundary with Logan Brae (St Joseph’s Mount) are planned to be set back from the boundary. This should ensure that the presence of new buildings is no more intrusive than the former St Catherine’s Aged Care buildings currently located along this alignment.

In accordance with conservation recommendations, it is strongly suggested that the colours of materials used reflect the prevailing colour palette of buildings located on the Logan Brae site and within the Busby Street alignment of the Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area.

## Heritage Impact Assessment

### Matters for consideration

The following issues have been considered in relation to the proposed works and relevant assessments provided.

#### Demolition of a heritage item

Matter considered	Assessment
If demolition is proposed, why is it necessary?	The existing buildings were constructed between 1966 and 2002 to host aged care facilities, including high dependency care. The complex was vacated in 2017 as it no longer met standards for aged care and did not comply with the Building Code of Australia. As purpose-built structures, the buildings would be very difficult and costly to adapt for another purpose. The site presents an opportunity for much-needed medium density residential development within the central area of Bathurst.
Have options for retention and adaptive re-use been explored? If yes, set out why these options have been discarded.	Any attempt to adaptively re-use buildings that no longer meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia will possibly entail complete reconstruction of certain sections and extensive modification of others. Options for retention have been discarded as adaptive re-use would be expensive and difficult. There is also little aesthetic argument to justify retention of the existing buildings. Bathurst currently has a need for medium density residential development. The site is considered very suitable for such development.
Has technical advice for demolition been obtained?	Technical advice for demolition has not yet been obtained.
Identify and include about how significant elements, if removed by the proposal, will be salvaged and re-used.	Where possible building materials will be conserved for re-use within a new development. It has been recommended that the statue of Mary located near the 1966 Nursing Home should be conserved and incorporated into new landscaping.

#### Works adjacent to a heritage item or within a heritage conservation area (listed on an LEP)

Matter considered	Assessment
Will the proposed works affect the heritage significance of the adjacent heritage item or the heritage conservation area?	The proposed demolition and redevelopment works will be confined to Lot 212 DP 1289265 and will have no direct impact on the heritage item or heritage conservation area.
Will the proposed works affect views to, and from, the heritage item? If yes, how will the impact be mitigated?	The development site is located on the brow of a hill. Development of this site will not affect views to or from the adjacent heritage item. Conservation guidelines recommend sufficient setbacks from the eastern boundary of Lot 212 DP 1289265, and height restrictions, to protect site lines between the adjacent heritage item and to Busby Street.
Will the proposed works impact on the integrity or streetscape of the heritage conservation area?	The property is located on the southern edge of the Bathurst HCA. The proposed works will have no direct impact on the integrity or streetscape of this area. It has been proposed that colours of buildings reflect the prevailing colour palette of the neighbouring heritage items

Matter considered	Assessment
	and Busby Street alignment of the Bathurst Heritage Conservation Area.



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