Heritage Impact Assessment – Peer Review

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From:	Andrew Barsby Dunedin Manager/ Building Surveyor, Origin Heritage andrew@originteam.co.nz
Project Name:	RMA/2025/115 Briscoes Building, 104-106 Dee Street, Invercargill
Date:	5 June 2026
Subject:	Review of the addendum to the Heritage Impact Assessment (A6026288), Memorandum Assessing the Effects on Heritage Values – Revised Scope of Works, Heritage Properties Ltd

Introduction

Origin Heritage has been engaged by Invercargill City Council ('ICC') to undertake an independent heritage peer review of the application for resource consent to demolish the building at 104-106 Dee Street, Invercargill, known as the Briscoes Building. The focus of this review is the addendum to an initial Heritage Impact Assessment ('the HIA') report submitted by New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd ('Heritage Properties'), titled *Memorandum Assessing the Effects on Heritage Values – Revised Scope of Works* ('the addendum').

I previously reviewed the initial HIA submitted by NZHP, and that review was submitted to ICC on 23 September 2025. The initial 'HIA' was undertaken before the decision was made to demolish the building and so was not a heritage impact assessment that assessed the effects of the current proposal. This latest assessment on behalf of the applicant is in response to Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga's (HNZPT) request and my recommendation (in my initial review) for a Heritage Impact Assessment to be prepared that assesses the effects of demolition on the historic heritage values of the building and the Heritage Precinct in which it lies.

The following documents were provided with the request for this latest heritage peer review:

1. Memorandum Assessing the Effects on Heritage Values – Revised Scope of Works, by New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd, received on 21 May 2026.

As part of my previous review, submitted on 23 September 2025.

I carried out a site inspection on the 08 September 2025. However, in undertaking this review I have not returned to the site. Nor have I undertaken any additional research into the history of the site/surrounding area.

Qualifications and Experience to Undertake this Review

- My current role with Origin Heritage is as a building surveyor where I carry out heritage assessments and condition assessments of heritage buildings and sites, making recommendations for remedial works and

formulating schedules of works including maintenance plans. I also project manage restoration and conservation projects.

- I have over 20 years' experience working in stonemasonry, specialising in heritage conservation and restoration – as both a stonemason and project manager. I have worked on many projects that were recognised and protected heritage buildings, both here in NZ and in Australia. Current projects include the Dunedin Town Hall, First Church, Cargills Castle and Waikouaiti Museum. Cairns Apartments in East Melbourne is a relevant project that I worked on where a burnt-out former church had been transformed into apartments.

- Prior to joining Origin Heritage, I held the position of Heritage Advisor in the Dunedin office of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga giving advice on remedial works to built heritage and assessing resource consent applications for affected party approval.

Site Details

The Briscoe's Building is scheduled in the Invercargill City Council Operative District Plan (ICCODP) Historic Record under **APP3-2** 'Sites Registered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga'. It is an ICC Class 2 Heritage Building and a Category II Historic Place in the New Zealand Heritage List/Rārangi Kōrero (ref: #2448). In respect to the latter, the building is listed for its Historical and Architectural values.

Brief Summary of the Proposal

The complete demolition of 104-106 Dee Street, Invercargill, known as the Briscoes Building.

Invercargill City Council Operative District Plan Provisions

Under **Rule HH-R9** of the Operative Plan, the relocation or demolition of any building or structure listed in **APP3.2** – Appendix 3.2 Sites Registered by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga is a **non-complying activity**.

As the building is also located in the Dee Street Historic Area, which is a Class 1 Historic Area (**APP3-3** 'Sites of Local Significance' **Rule HH-R6** states 'The relocation or demolition of any building listed in APP3.3 – Appendix 3.3 Sites of Local Significance other than listed in HH-R3 and HH-R4 above, is a **discretionary activity**.'

Overall, therefore, the proposal to demolish is a **non-complying activity**.

Rule **HH-R10** states that applications made under Rules **HH-R6 – HH-R9** shall address the following matters, which will be among those taken into account by the Council:

1. *The extent to which the heritage values including the design of any buildings and the context of heritage are likely to be retained, protected and/or enhanced*
2. *Whether the activity is likely to have cumulative adverse effects on heritage values*
3. *In the case of relocation of a heritage building, measures that may be necessary to protect the fabric of the building during relocation*
4. *Potential for the re-use and/or recycling of any material or heritage features from the historic building*
5. *Consideration of any relevant Invercargill City Council heritage design guidelines*
6. *The extent and effect of any earthworks, tunnelling, digging, vibration or excavation that may destabilise the site, structure, place or area*
7. *The results of consultation undertaken including any written advice obtained as follows: a. In the case of the site having identified tangata whenua values, comment from the relevant iwi b. Any recommendations of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, and the New Zealand Archaeological Association File Keeper c. Where the site history indicates that there may be historical artefacts or other physical remains, any advice obtained from a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist.*
   ***Note:** All advice obtained is to be provided to the Council with the resource consent application.*

8. *The reasons for the proposed activity and reasons why alternative less adverse options for achieving the same or similar outcome have been discounted. For clarification, reasons for discounting alternative options can include amongst other matters financial cost, natural hazards, safety and technical feasibility*
9. *The creation and maintenance of a record of heritage features of the building on its original site (e.g. photos of existing vistas for public record of the history of the site)*
10. *Any proposals to strengthen the structural integrity and heritage value of the building, including the benefits of alterations for the purpose of implementing Building Code upgrades for seismic, fire and access purposes*
11. *Any proposals to strengthen or replace high risk elements, such as parapets, façade decoration and chimneys, with high quality light weight material*
12. *The extent to which the proposed alterations, additions to or demolition of a listed heritage building have been informed by the advice of qualified professionals such as conservation architects, heritage consultants, engineers and quantity surveyors as appropriate. Such advice should include a thorough analysis of the alternative options available, and the extent of professional advice obtained and should be proportional to the scale and intensity of the effects of the works being undertaken.*
    ***Note:** The Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 makes it unlawful for any person to modify or destroy, or cause to be modified or destroyed, the whole or any part of a recorded, suspected or unrecorded archaeological site without the prior authority of Heritage New Zealand. Before commencing any activity that may affect an archaeological site, an authority from Heritage New Zealand must be obtained.*

Furthermore, 'Heritage' is defined in the Definitions section of the Operative Plan (Part 1, page 20) and is stated to be derived from the following qualities:

1. Archaeological
2. Architectural
3. Cultural
4. Historic
5. Scientific
6. Technological

Discussion

I have reviewed the documentation sent to me regarding the assessment of effects of the proposed demolition of the building on its heritage values. Where items are omitted, I either agree with what is said or have found it irrelevant for the purposes of this review. My findings are:

1. Expert Comment.
   Heritage Properties prefaces their assessment with an acknowledgement of the submissions made by both Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) and Origin Heritage, made in response to their initial HIA. The addendum summarises these expert findings and recommendations, as follows:

   HNZPT Submission:
   - The view that the facades should be able to be retained, with a new development constructed within.
   - Full demolition would result in more than minor adverse effects and would be inconsistent with the objectives and policies of the District Plan and the heritage provisions of the RMA.
   - Demolition would have a cumulative negative effect for the heritage precinct as a whole.
   - Options for retention and restoration had not been fully explored.

   Origin Heritage Submission:

   - The HIA by Heritage Properties was largely an assessment of heritage values and did not assess the effect of demolition on those heritage values.

- The HIA by Heritage Properties did not assess the effects of demolition on the heritage values of the heritage precinct in which the Briscoes Building lies, including the cumulative effect of removing a prominent corner building from the Dee St Historic Area.
- Alternative options to demolition had not been adequately explored, including more cost effective and lower-impact stabilisation measures.
- Cost estimates for retention focused on full-scale earthquake strengthening rather than lower impact stabilisation and weatherproofing.
- Demolition was inconsistent with the District Plan's heritage objectives and policies.
- The effects on heritage values would be major or potentially critical.
- Based on Andrew Barsby's professional experience with heritage masonry buildings, structures in significantly worse condition than the Briscoes building had been successfully stabilised, repaired and adaptively reused. Fire damage is not uncommon in heritage buildings and does not necessarily preclude restoration and redevelopment.
- Demolition would result in a vacant site for an indeterminate period, raising concerns about the long-term impact on the streetscape and vitality of the area. Façade retention, supported by interim stabilisation and protection measures, such as bracing against wind loads, was identified as a preferable approach which would allow for the clean-up of the site and removal of barriers and fencing.

The addendum stated that Heritage Properties was unable to comment on any alternative options for stabilising and protecting the facades as 'no relevant estimates have been provided' and that 'in the absence of supporting technical information and costings, it is not possible to assess the alternative approach.' I consider that this statement is mis-guided as the purpose of a heritage impact assessment is to assess the effects of the proposal and, as the District Plan Assessment Matters state, to include alternative options. An assessment of cost and feasibility should not be the focus of a heritage impact assessment. My view is that the addendum has missed commenting that alternative options have not been fully investigated by the applicant and included in their application. In my first peer review, I suggested an alternative outcome that would satisfy the dangerous and unsanitary classification as opposed to earthquake strengthening.

2. Assessment of Effects.
I agree with the conclusion of the addendum that the building has high aesthetic, architectural, historic and archaeological values, resulting in overall **high** heritage value.
Below I have commented on Heritage Properties' assessment of effects the proposal will have on the attributed values:

Aesthetic Value – The addendum states that the building has 'considerable' aesthetic value and that demolition would result in the total loss of its aesthetic values. I agree that demolition will result in total loss of aesthetic value. I also believe that it has potential to have **high** aesthetic value once restored. I also agree with Heritage Properties' view that demolition would 'detract from the cohesion and heritage character of the surrounding commercial and retail area' i.e. the Heritage Precinct and its surrounds.

Archaeological Value – The addendum purports that the loss of archaeological fabric is mitigated by the opportunity to uncover further evidence and information relating to the existing building and an earlier structure that was on the site. I disagree and believe that the loss of the existing building will not be adequately mitigated by future archaeological excavations. This is not a heritage-informed argument but rather one based upon a narrow archaeological view that the loss of built heritage can adequately be mitigated by the (uncertain) opportunity that something could be found of more

importance if only the building could be knocked down. I consider that the archaeological value of the design and materials of the existing building being retained is of far greater importance than the speculative opportunity to record it and excavate the site.

Architectural Value – I disagree with Heritage Properties' view that there is 'potential to enhance understanding of the building's architectural values and construction methods through building recording which would be required as a condition of a HNZPT archaeological authority for its demolition'. I have commented on this above. Any further understanding gained would be insignificant when considering the complete loss of the building through demolition. Again, the argument that the recording done through the archaeological authority process is adequate mitigation for the loss of heritage value is not a heritage argument.
In support of this argument, I refer to Clause 17 of the ICOMOS NZ Charter: 'Degrees of intervention for conservation purposes' states "Following research, recording, assessment, and planning, intervention for conservation purposes may include, in increasing degrees of intervention: (i) preservation, through stabilisation, maintenance, or repair; (ii) (iii) (iv) restoration, through reassembly, reinstatement, or removal; reconstruction; and adaptation."
Clause 17 goes on to further state that "Any intervention which would reduce or compromise cultural heritage value is undesirable and should not occur. Preference should be given to the least degree of intervention, consistent with this charter." The opportunity to demolish a heritage building in the interests of archaeological recording does not feature in New Zealand's guiding document on the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value.

Historic Value – I agree that the loss of physical fabric erases a tangible link to Invercargill's commercial and business history.

Social & Technological Value – I agree with Heritage Properties' assessment that these values are low. Again, Heritage Properties refer to building recording as a mitigation. As above, I do not consider this to be appropriate.

3. Summary of Overall Assessment of Potential Effects on Heritage Values.
   Heritage Properties assesses that demolition would have an overall 'major adverse impact' on the site's heritage values. According to the significance matrix (Table 3-1), the identified high heritage value and major adverse impact correspond to a significance of effects rating of 'Large-Very large.'
   I agree that the overall impact of the effects of demolition of the site should be considered as being very high. The combined impact of demolition to the site and to the heritage precinct could, in my opinion, be considered to be greater than 'Large-Very Large'.

4. Summary of the Effects on the Dee Street Historic Area.
   Heritage Properties assesses the demolition of the building as having a moderate adverse impact on the heritage values of the historic area. I disagree with this assessment and consider the effects as having a major adverse impact. The building occupies a prominent corner site, giving it a greater degree of visual prominence and streetscape value. As a corner building, it contributes to the historic area through two public-facing elevations rather than one, making its loss more readily apparent within the streetscape and resulting in a more substantial adverse effect on the character of the historic area. Heritage Properties also identifies the heritage value of the historic area as high. While acknowledging this assessment, I believe that the heritage value should instead be regarded as very high as the area is one of only two identified historic areas in Invercargill.

However, the addendum does recognise that demolition will contribute to the cumulative erosion of heritage values within the city centre. I agree.

Furthermore, the risk that the empty site might remain as the long-term outcome is also recognised. This will have a lasting detrimental effect on the vitality and character of the centre city. I agree.

I have provided some images to support my view. These appear as Appendix 1 at the rear of this report. The visualisations are of the site with the building standing and contrasting visualisations of the site with the building entirely removed. The intention is to show the full visual impact that demolition will have on the site and the Heritage Precinct as a whole. There is a very real danger that the impact could be long-term.

5. Assessment Under the District Plan Rules.
I have reproduced the tabulated format of Heritage Properties' assessment (Table 3-3) of these matters. I have not reproduced their assessment statements, rather I have inserted my own comments/commentary on whether the proposal aligns.

Rule 3.8.10	
A	**The extent to which the heritage values including the design of any buildings and the context of heritage are likely to be retained. Protected and/ or enhanced**. Reference to mid to late twentieth century alterations are not relevant as the recognised heritage value is of the building's current (pre-fire) state; reference to building recording is misplaced and cannot be seen to retain, protect and/ or enhance heritage values.
B	**Whether the activity is likely to have cumulative adverse effects on heritage values.** Heritage Properties does recognise that demolition will contribute to the cumulative erosion of heritage values within the city centre – a view shared by me.
C	**Relocation.** I agree that this is not relevant to this proposal
D	**Potential for the reuse and/or recycling of any material or heritage features from the historic building.** Heritage Properties is of the view that there is clear potential for the reuse of heritage fabric following demolition. My view is that there will be limited potential for reuse or recycling. As was the case with the development of the Invercargill City Centre redevelopment, much of the heritage fabric was unable to be reused as it did not comply with the New Zealand Building Code for use in new construction. Water and fire damage will also limit what is salvageable from the interior and the masonry elements of the façade will be difficult to reuse in any meaningful way.
E	**Consideration of any relevant Invercargill City Council heritage guidelines.** Heritage Properties states these guidelines don't apply in the case of demolition. They are mistaken as the ICC Heritage Design Guidelines does address the issue of demolition, stating 'the demolition of a site or building that holds heritage value or contributes positively to a heritage precinct is not supported unless it proven to be structurally unsound and/or beyond repair'. Heritage Properties should state here whether they believe the structure is beyond repair.

F	**The extent and effect of any earthworks, tunnelling, digging vibration or excavation that may destabilise the site, structure, place or area.** Heritage Properties recognises that these concerns are more relevant to the surrounding properties than the site itself.
G	**The results of consultation undertaken including any written advice obtained.** Heritage Properties simply states that they understand that the owners have consulted with HNZPT and structural engineers. They do not discuss any concerns or recommendations made.
H	**The reasons for the proposed activity and reasons why alternative less adverse options for achieving the same or similar outcome have been discounted.** Heritage Properties states that 'less adverse options for retaining the building appear to have been largely exhausted'. I believe that alternative less adverse options have not been properly assessed and so reasons for discounting them have not been established. This is an important omission in the addendum.
I	**The creation and maintenance of a record of heritage features of the building on its original site.** Heritage Properties states that building recording will take place under an archaeological authority when demolition occurs. Again, this is advocating for archaeology over the heritage rules in the District Plan.
J	**Any proposals to strengthen the structural integrity and heritage value of the building, including the benefits of alterations for the purpose of implementing Building Code upgrades for seismic, fire and access purposes.** Heritage Properties states 'As demolition is now proposed, proposals regarding structural integrity of the building and its heritage values are no longer applicable'. I do not understand the logic of this statement. This is simply a matter to be addressed (HH-R10). The Resource Consent application needs to include looking into alternative options to demolition, of which façade retention, stabilisation and new development behind the façade is the most obvious. Heritage Properties appears to be mis-understanding the matter to be considered, and the use of the word "proposal" in the above.
K	**Any proposals to strengthen or replace high risk elements, such as parapets, façade decoration and chimneys, with high quality light-weight material.** As with **J** above, Heritage Properties states that this is not applicable. See comments above.
L	**The extent to which the proposed alterations, additions to or demolition of a listed heritage building have been informed by the advice of qualified professionals such as conservation architects, heritage consultants, engineers and quantity surveyors as appropriate. Such advice should include a thorough analysis of the alternative options available, and the extent of professional advice obtained and should be proportional to the scale and intensity of the effects of the works being undertaken.** Heritage Properties states **'**In addition to engaging NZHP as heritage consultants, the owners have consulted with HNZPT and structural engineers. While NZHP is not aware of the most recent engineering assessments or cost estimates, it is understood that the owners have undertaken appropriate due diligence in seeking professional

	advice'. In my view, this section has not been dealt with adequately. As with G above, Heritage Properties have ~~simply~~ assumed that appropriate advice has been given to the applicant without investigating and assessing the process, and making a heritage-focus assessment, including an evaluation of alternative options. It is debateable that the extent of professional advice obtained has been proportional to the scale and intensity of the effects of the works being undertaken.

6. Conclusions and recommendations:

In their conclusion, Heritage Properties states that whilst the building is capable of repair, the cost of such works is a key consideration in assessing the appropriateness of demolition. They go on to say that demolition is not the preferred outcome, and that demolition may be the last resort if less adverse options have been appropriately investigated. However, they do not conclude that such appropriate investigations have indeed taken place. Instead, they go on to say that the owners have undertaken 'a range' of investigations into alternative approaches, yet the report does not identify what those alternatives are, nor explain why they were found to be unsuitable. They note that the applicant sought advice from structural engineers but provide no detail regarding the scope or outcomes of that consultation. At the same time, the conclusion acknowledges that the option of basic stabilisation and weatherproofing, may not yet have been fully costed. In my view, Heritage Properties has not demonstrated that less adverse heritage options have been appropriately investigated. If basic stabilisation and weatherproofing has not been thoroughly assessed, it cannot be reasonably concluded that all alternative approaches have been properly considered (in line with Rule 3.8.10 above). Furthermore, while reliance is placed on the cost implications of repair in justifying demolition, the absence of clear costing of alternatives undermines that position. Heritage Properties appears to recognise that a potentially viable alternative remains insufficiently explored, yet this uncertainty is not reflected in the conclusions of their assessment.

Furthermore, I disagree with the statement that 'redevelopment of the site could support local business activity and improve amenity by removing a structure that is currently visually intrusive.' For one, without a thorough investigation of alternative options it has not been shown that redevelopment of the site cannot reasonably occur within the existing facades. This would also support local business and improve amenity value in the streetscape.

Secondly, I disagree that the current structure is visually intrusive. The visual damage to the external masonry is largely cosmetic. The facades could easily be restored and painted, in my opinion.

Finally, the summary of the effects on heritage shown earlier in the two tables is not discussed in the conclusion. Rather, the remainder of Heritage Properties' conclusion is a lengthy description of the conditions and methodology of the Archaeological Authority process that would be required for the demolition under their recommendations – an area of work that Heritage Properties specialises in. I see this as, simply, advocacy for archaeological work rather than compliance with the District Plan heritage rules. This archaeological-focused work, if put into effect, would come with its own unspecified cost – money that, in my view, would be more beneficially put towards stabilisation and retention of the facades for future new development behind.

Summary of the RC Application to Demolish the Briscoe's Building, including the Addendum

Much of this summary is repeated from my concluding remarks for the peer review: *Review of Heritage Impact Assessment (A6026288), Heritage Properties Ltd*, submitted on 23 September 2025, but with added comments following the peer review of the Addendum above. An assumption has been made, as recommended by ICC, that the information that has been received and reviewed to date forms the totality of the owner's application for resource consent to demolish the Briscoe's Building.

The HIA and the Addendum by Heritage Properties has assessed that demolition would have an overall 'major adverse impact' on the site's heritage values and would have a 'moderate adverse impact' on the heritage values of the historic area. I agree with the assessment of the impact on the site but would go further to attribute the adverse impact of losing a corner building in the historic area as greater than 'moderate'.

Overall, in my opinion, the HIA and Addendum do not adequately address what, if any, examination of alternative options to demolition have been.

The extent to which the proposal to demolish the building has been informed by the advice of qualified professionals, and whether that advice was proportional to the scale and intensity of the effects of the works proposed is in my view, questionable. While Heritage Properties state that they have been engaged as heritage consultants by the owners and that the advice of structural engineers has been sought, no supporting material is provided or referenced in the addendum. In my view, a properly informed assessment would include a thorough evaluation of feasible alternatives, including less intrusive propping or stabilisation measures aimed at making it safe under the Dangerous and Unsanitary section of the Building Act rather than focusing on long-term earthquake strengthening. The omission of any clear evidence that such options were explored is a significant gap in the assessment.

Given that cost is suggested to be the primary driving factor in the decision making by the applicant, most cost-effective means of bracing should be explored. The cost of bracing the structure for the short-medium term can then be weighed up against the cost of demolition and the ensuing archaeological recording as required by the HNZPT Act. Some good questions to put to the structural engineers and quantity surveyor would be – what is the minimal propping or bracing that would be appropriate against high wind? How would these costs differ from the costs presented for long-term earthquake strengthening? What conclusions can be made from the fact that the existing facades survived some of the strongest recorded winds to hit Invercargill, in October last year?

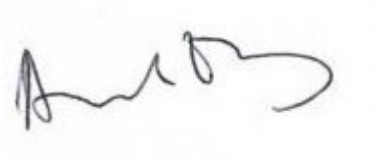
I believe public perception is likely to be a driving factor in the push to demolish the site in the name of 'clearing' it up and removing the fencing and walk-thru container. Council should be satisfied that there isn't another means of achieving the same outcome before granting resource consent.

I do not agree with the conclusion of the AEE which states "overall the demolition and proposed rebuild is assessed as being generally consistent with the District Plan's Historic Heritage Objectives and Policies." The effect on heritage value in my opinion should be defined as "major" or "critical" rather than merely "adverse."

The only certain outcome of the proposal is a vacant corner site. The Council must be cognisant that it could remain this way for years to come. Two visualisations of the vacant site have been prepared by Origin to assist in the evaluation of the effects that demolition will have on the site and the Heritage Precinct.

In my 20 years of experience working on heritage masonry buildings as a stonemason and project manager, I can confirm that many of these were in far worse condition than the facades of the Briscoes Building, and yet they have been successfully restored and strengthened and are now valued assets. It is common to see evidence of fires having occurred in heritage masonry buildings. Fires do not necessarily preclude restoration and redevelopment. I have provided images of two buildings that I am familiar with in Appendix 2 & 3 as examples of successful rebuilding after a fire.

Please let me know if you have any questions or queries.



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APPENDIX 1: Visualisations of the Dee St Historic Area

Figure 1 - A view of the Briscoe's Building intact as the corner site of the Dee St Historic Area.

Figure 2 - Visualisation of the vacant corner site.

Figure 3 – A view of the Dee St Historic Area with the Briscoe's Building intact.

Figure 4 - Visualisation of a vacant site where the Briscoe's Building currently stands.

Appendix 2 : Bracken Court – 480 Moray Place / Moray Place - Dowling Street Commercial Heritage Precinct, Dunedin

The following images are provided as an example of a successful rebuild after a major fire. Bracken Court shares similarities with the Briscoe's Building in that both are scheduled heritage buildings located in a heritage precinct.
A devasting fire occurred in 2005. The owner was under insured and felt under pressure to demolish the building but made the decision to borrow money and rebuild and add an extra storey. The building is now an asset for the owner and the community.

Figure 5 - Bracken Court, Dunedin - fire in 2005

Figure 6 - The interior gutted by fire.

Figure 7 - Aerial photo of fire damage

Figure 8 - Front elevation after fire

Figure 9 - Bracken Court in 2026 (building in the centre)

Appendix 3: Cairns Apartments, 131 Hotham St, East Melbourne

The image below shows 131 Hotham St in East Melbourne. It is another example of a successful rebuild after fire. The former church was entirely gutted. It now houses multiple apartments. I was a project manger for masonry restoration works to this building in 2018.

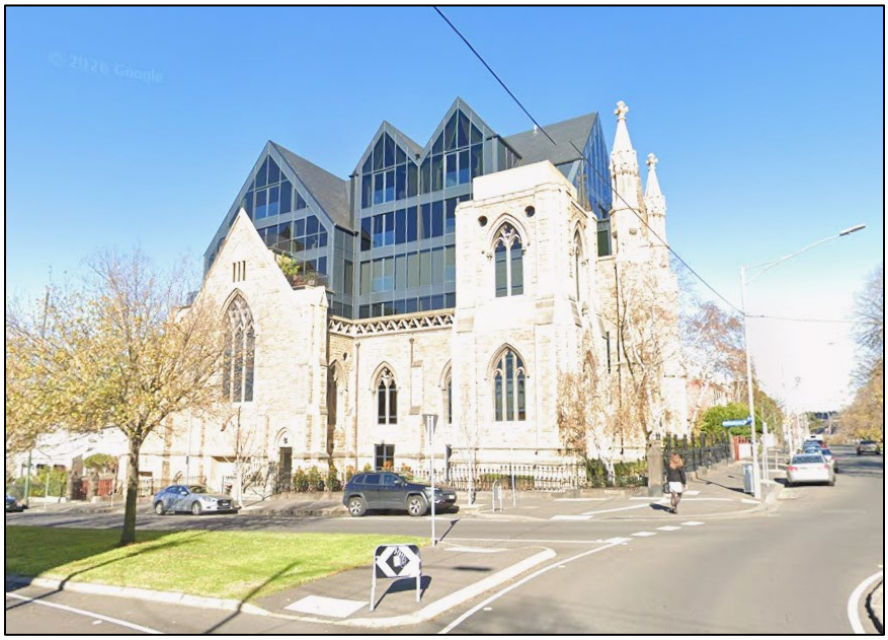

Figure 10 - Cairns Apartments in Melbourne