

19 December 2016

Mr Steve Kozlowski
Chief Executive Officer
Maroondah City Council
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Re: Ringwood Uniting Church, 30-32 Station Street, Ringwood

Dear Mr Kozlowski,

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) has recently received a copy of the revised heritage citation for the Ringwood Uniting Church, prepared by the Maroondah Council Heritage Advisor W. Keeble in August 2016 (see copy attached). As outlined in this report and draft citation, Ms Keeble has determined that the Ringwood Uniting Church reaches the threshold for local significance as a 'large, intact and visually commanding Modernist Church erected in 1963 for the Methodist Church, designed by architect F.C. Armstrong,' possessing historical, architectural and social significance.

We understand that the Ringwood Uniting Church closely abuts the boundaries of Ringwood's Metropolitan Activity Centre, and therefore strongly urge Council to request interim protection for the Church with a view to progressing a Planning Scheme Amendment for the site in the near future, so that the established heritage significance of this important building can be considered in any future planning for the site.

The recognition of postwar architecture, particularly in middle and outer-ring suburbs, has progressed significantly in the past few years. Neighbouring Whitehorse Council has recently implemented a comprehensive postwar heritage study, which we were pleased to support at a recent planning panel hearing. The National Trust encourages Maroondah Council to develop a similar strategy for identifying and protecting significance post-war architecture in its own municipality.

The preparation of a Planning Scheme Amendment for the Ringwood Uniting Church, and the development of a broader strategy to identify and protect postwar heritage is supported by the provisions in clause 15 of the Planning Scheme. The state planning policy for heritage at Clause 15.03-1 seeks to ensure the conservation of places of heritage significance. To achieve this objective, it includes the following strategy:

Identify, assess and document places of natural and cultural heritage significance as a basis for their inclusion in the planning scheme.

As noted in the Ringwood Uniting Church heritage citation, ten twentieth-century religious buildings were identified in the 1998 Maroondah heritage Identification Study and 2003 Maroondah Heritage Study as having heritage significance at the local level. Of these, only four were protected by the

heritage overlay, leaving a balance of six religious buildings without statutory protection. Specifically, as noted in the Comparative Analysis prepared by Ms Keeble, St James Anglican Church at 21 Bemboka Road, Croydon Hills (built 1968), is 'an exciting Modernist design by architect Phil Harmer with a strong streetscape presence', yet has no statutory protection under the heritage overlay.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss the possibility of progressing a planning amendment for the Ringwood Uniting Church, or the City of Maroondah's broader strategy for the identification and protection of heritage, both postwar and otherwise. For further information, or to discuss this in more detail, please don't hesitate to contact Community Advocate Caitlin Mitropoulos on 9656 9837.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Watson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Felicity Watson
Advocacy Manager (Acting)
National Trust of Australia (Victoria)

CC: Cr Tony Dib JP. Mayor
Cr Nora Lamont MPA, Deputy Mayor
Diana Siomos, Senior Strategic Urban Planner
Ringwood Uniting Church
Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania
Karen Heywood, Jubilee Park Residents' Group

Revised heritage citation by W. Keeble, Maroondah Council Heritage Advisor, August 2016

**Ringwood Uniting Church
30-32 Station St., Ringwood**

Description

A visually commanding Modernist Uniting Church on an elevated site opposite the railway station, set above a rock retaining wall. The large gabled nave has a shallow prow facade, split down the centre by a glazed panel fronted by a muscular full height pre-cast concrete cross. The leadlight panel is a dynamic abstract composition with a coloured sunburst forming a Celtic cross. Left of the nave is a low flat roofed entrance in stacked Castlemaine stone with a band of clerestory windows. It has an elevated stone walled terrace with a zig-zag steel balustrade. The large mass of the nave is counterpointed by a brick column five storeys high, surmounted by a three metre high bronze Celtic cross. The column, also cross shaped, marks the junction of the entrance lobby and side chapel. The church is intact except for a new doorway in the side wall of the nave associated with the 1984 glazed entrance addition on the west. The nave is portal framed with six bays narrowing to the ambo, behind which there is a concealed organ space above a vestry and office.

History

The Ringwood Uniting Church was built for the Methodist Church in 1963 and replaced an earlier church on the site. Methodism in Ringwood had its beginnings in a small converted cottage in Whitehorse Road, near Sherbrooke Avenue, when Andrew Kennedy and George Fuller opened a Sunday School in 1872. A church was built in Whitehorse Road between Mount Dandenong Road and Ringwood Lake, and later a church was moved from Blackburn and erected closer to Ringwood station. The present site was purchased in 1916 and a church was constructed in 1918, from the funds raised by local children who sold bricks for the church at sixpence each.

The 1963 church was the final stage of a master plan of the site developed over ten years. In 1954 the Church Hall was built, with a small hall at the rear. In 1956 a new residence for the caretaker was completed. The third stage of the development was the completion of the Fellowship Block and Church Office in 1957 and the following year the kindergarten was constructed. The church was designed by the architect F.C. Armstrong and built by Bernard Wigley. It incorporates foundation stones, memorial windows and tablets from the 1918 church building. The silver trowel used to lay the earlier church's foundation stone was also used in laying this church's stone. (Taken from Peterson and Barrett, Citation for Ringwood Uniting Church, Maroondah Heritage Study, 2003)

The 1984 glazed entrance attached to the west wall of the nave was designed by architect Keith Butler. The 1963 salmon brick nave wall survives within the addition with minor alterations.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Ringwood Uniting Church at 30-32 Station Street, Ringwood is a large, intact and visually commanding Modernist church erected in 1963 for the Methodist Church, designed by architect F.C.Armstrong.

The church is sited above a rock retaining wall opposite the Ringwood railway station. Its façade is dominated by a large salmon brick prow-shaped gable bisected by a tall leadlight window and a massive, full height concrete cross. The leadlight has a sunburst forming an abstract Celtic cross. Counterpointing the large mass of the nave there is a low flat-roofed entrance and chapel section partly faced in Castlemaine stone, with a cross-shaped brick column five storeys high, surmounted by a bronze Celtic cross.

The rear three bays of the church, the 1984 addition, and the other church buildings on the site have less significance.

How is it significant?

The 1963 Ringwood Uniting Church is significant at a local level to the City of Maroondah.

Why is it significant?

The church is historically significant for its association with Ringwood's Methodist (later Uniting) church congregation during an important phase of Ringwood's suburban development after World War Two.

The church is architecturally significant as an intact and striking Modernist building and as a prominent landmark of Ringwood's railway station precinct. The façade is notable for its massing and expression of the Celtic cross symbol with giant sculptural elements. The main leadlight panel is aesthetically significant for its depiction of the symbol in a fine abstract composition.

The church is socially significant as a urban landmark, traditional community focus, meeting place and repository of memories and spiritual sentiment.

Comparative analysis/background

The 1998 Maroondah Heritage Identification Study and 2003 Maroondah Heritage Study identified ten religious buildings within the municipality as having heritage significance at the local level. Of these, four are now protected by the heritage overlay:

HO14 Gifford Memorial Church, 20 Croydon Road. Croydon, built in 1930, architecturally significant as the only building representative of the Gothic style in the municipality. This former church is an important visual element in the streetscape although its integrity is marred by later additions on each side.

HO46 Sacred Heart Monastery, 35 Wicklow Avenue, built in 1939, architecturally significant for its fine eclectic Romanesque style, particularly intact and in good condition, and as a major work of the

significant, yet little known inter-war Catholic architect L.D. San Miguel. The Chapel has a high level of integrity although altered by an extension at the rear.

HO118 St. John the Divine Anglican Church, 5-9 Toorak Avenue, Croydon, built 1956. Architecturally significant as an early work of respected church architect Keith Reid, as an early Modernist building in Croydon and for the fine craftsmanship of the artworks it contains including the stained glass windows. The church has an exceptionally high façade with a central upper window superimposed by a concrete cross. It is on a corner site near the railway station and visually prominent although deeply set back within a lawned frontage. Verandahs have been unsympathetically added to the façade.

HO118 Holy Trinity Anglican Church, 47-49 Patterson Street, Ringwood East, built in 1964. Architecturally significant as a fine exemplar of Modernist design in an organic idiom with a battered, curved solid wall on the west and a full height glazed rear wall of coloured glass blocks. Later additions to the street façade are sympathetic. The church is not a strong streetscape element although close to Ringwood East station.

Of the six identified churches not currently protected in the heritage overlay, all have historic value in demonstrating the development of their denominations within Maroondah, and have social significance for their present congregations. However two have a low level of architectural significance. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints at 58-62 Hewish Rd. Croydon is not architecturally significant. The Catholic church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Wilana Street Ringwood, has no architectural significance except for its interior, remodelled in 1990.

Croydon Central Uniting Church at 185 Mount Dandenong Road is a Modernist building (1968, altered as offices in 2000). It is prominent in the streetscape but the exterior has little religious identity or symbolism. It was included in Council's list of properties proposed for the heritage overlay in Amendment C42 but discarded by the Panel for this reason.

The remaining three churches were recommended for the heritage overlay for their historic, architectural and social significance but for unknown reasons were omitted from the Amendment C42 list of proposed places.

St Pauls Anglican Church at 40 Warrandyte Road Ringwood, built c1970, is a small Modernist pavilion church with a hipped steel roof extending up to a central skylight over the altar. It has now been swamped by an extensive addition (completed August 2016) and is no longer worthy of the heritage overlay.

St. James Anglican Church at 21 Bemboka Road, Croydon Hills, built 1998, is an exciting Modernist design by architect Phil Harmer with a strong streetscape presence.

Ringwood Uniting Church at 30-32 Station Street, Ringwood, the subject of this revised citation.

NB There may be other churches of potential heritage significance in Maroondah that were not identified in the 1998 or 2003 Heritage Studies.