

## ST BENEDICT'S CONVENT (FORMER)

2 St Benedicts Street, Newton



Figure 1: Former St Benedict's Convent, 2 St Benedicts Street, Newton (C. O'Neil, 4 March 2022).

## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

This evaluation assesses the historic heritage values of the former St Benedict's Convent. The purpose of this document is to evaluate the place against the Auckland Unitary Plan (Operative in Part) (AUP) and recommend, based on its known heritage values, whether the place meets the thresholds for inclusion in Schedule 14.1 Schedule of Historic Heritage of the AUP.

The Regional Policy Statement section of the AUP identifies the criteria and thresholds for historic heritage places and areas. The evaluation criteria are historical, social, Mana Whenua, knowledge, technology, physical attributes, aesthetic, and context<sup>1</sup>. The thresholds are included in Policy B5.2.2(3), which states that places or areas may be included in the schedule if:

- (a) *the place has considerable or outstanding value in relation to one or more of the evaluation criteria in Policy B5.2.2 (1); and*
- (b) *the place has considerable or outstanding overall significance to the locality or greater geographic area.*

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<sup>1</sup> Unitary Plan B5.2.2(1)

## Background & constraints

Information on the history of the place and a physical description are sourced from Auckland Council Heritage Unit's property files and any other sources as noted. The information in the files is not exhaustive and additional research may yield new information about the place.

This evaluation does not include an assessment of archaeological values or an assessment of the importance of the place to Mana Whenua. This evaluation does not include a structural evaluation or condition report.

A site visit was conducted on 4 March 2022. Access was limited to the exterior of the place and to the publicly accessible ground floor of the interior, which is currently in use as a second-hand bookstore.

## IDENTIFICATION

<b>Site address(es) and/or location</b>	2 St Benedicts Street, Newton, Auckland 1010
<b>Legal description(s)</b>	Pt Lot 25 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 22 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 23 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 24 Deeds Reg 1332
<b>AUP zone</b>	Business - Town Centre Zone
<b>AUP overlays</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Special Character Areas Overlay – Business Upper Symonds Street</li> <li>▪ Regionally Significant Volcanic Viewshafts and Height Sensitive Areas Overlay [rcp/dp] – E10 Mount Eden, Viewshafts</li> <li>▪ Regionally Significant Volcanic Viewshafts and Height Sensitive Areas Overlay [rcp/dp] – E16 Mount Eden, Viewshafts</li> </ul>
<b>New Zealand Heritage List / Rārangī Kōrero details</b>	Upper Symonds Street Historic Area (No. 7367)
<b>Archaeological site (Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act [HNZPTA] 2014, Section 6)</b>	Yes. The place is the site of human activity before 1900. A pre-1900 cottage occupied part of the site. It was removed when the convent was extended.
<b>Cultural Heritage Inventory (CHI) reference(s)</b>	N/A
<b>New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) site record number(s)</b>	N/A

## Location



**Figure 2:** Location map for 2 St Benedicts Street, Newton (blue outline) (Auckland Council GeoMaps, 2017).

The site is located to the south east of the St Benedict's Church and Presbytery complex and directly south of the site of the former St Benedict's School.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY AND PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### History

Refer also to **Appendix 1** for supplementary historic images and **Appendix 2** for architectural drawings.

### Early site history

The land upon which the former St Benedict's Convent stands formed part of original Allotment 4 Section 7 Suburbs of Auckland, which was issued as a Crown Grant to an individual named Hunt in 1844.<sup>2</sup> The four-acre allotment was located just outside the boundary of the new colonial capital of Auckland and to the south of the Catholic portion of the settlement's main burial ground (Symonds Street Cemetery), which was consecrated that same year.<sup>3</sup> The allotment changed hands several times before being subdivided by Maunsell (possibly Robert Maunsell) from 1860 onwards.<sup>4</sup> Lots 22, 23, 24 and 25 of the subdivision (present-day 2 St Benedicts Street) were conveyed to W. S. Laurie in 1862, and subsequent on-selling occurred.<sup>5</sup>

### St Benedict's Church and the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart

On the opposite side of Albert (now St Benedicts) Street, a number of Maunsell's subdivided lots were purchased by the Catholic Church in c.1880 for the headquarters of the first Benedictine mission in New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> The Benedictine Order was an important monastic movement that had experienced a resurgence in nineteenth century Europe and was progressively expanding its activity in the New World. The intention was that the newly created Newton Parish, a rapidly growing settlement to the south and west of the city,

<sup>2</sup> Deeds index 1A 534, Archives New Zealand.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'St Benedict's Church and Presbytery Complex (Catholic)', List entry No. 640, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/640>

<sup>4</sup> Deeds index 1A 534, Archives New Zealand; Deed plan 1332, Land Information New Zealand records.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; deeds indexes 10A 67 and 14 152, Archives New Zealand.

<sup>6</sup> Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'St Benedict's Church and Presbytery Complex (Catholic)', List entry No. 640, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/640>

would be run from the site.<sup>7</sup> The first St Benedict's Church, an imposing timber structure, was completed in 1882. It was replaced in 1888 by a similarly impressive Gothic church and presbytery designed by architect Thomas Mahoney of E. Mahoney & Sons, but was this time built of brick.<sup>8</sup>

In November 1882, just after the completion of the first church, the Benedictine priest, John Edmund Luck (1840-1896) replaced Bishop Walter Steins as Bishop of Auckland.<sup>9</sup> The new bishop sought to extend the influence of Catholicism in the diocese, particularly through the promotion of education. With the development of state education systems, he recognised the need for schools that provided both secular and religious teaching for children. As a result, Bishop Luck promoted the introduction of several new religious orders to the diocese, the first of which was the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart.<sup>10</sup>

A pontifical institute of the Roman Catholic Church, the Sisters of St Joseph was founded in Penola, South Australia in 1866 by Father Julian E. Tenison Woods (1832-1889) and Sister Mary MacKillop (later Saint Mary of the Cross<sup>11</sup>) (1842-1909).<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the order was to respond to the needs and welfare of those struggling in the colony, with particular emphasis placed on the education of the rural poor. It expanded to New Zealand in 1883, arriving first in the Canterbury town of Temuka, and then in Auckland.<sup>13</sup>

### The first North Island foundation

The arrival of three Sisters of St Joseph in Auckland in 1884 had been prompted by one of St Benedict's early priests, Lord Abbot Alcock (c.1831-1882), who had reportedly written to Mary MacKillop a couple of years earlier for assistance with staffing new schools proposed in the new Newton Parish<sup>14</sup>.<sup>15</sup>

Between March 1884 and June 1885, Sisters Teresa Maginnes, Ignatius Griffen and Casimir Meskill lived opposite St Benedict's Church in a single-storey, three-bedroomed timber cottage located on lot 22 (the southern portion of present-day 2 St Benedicts Street).<sup>16</sup> At the time, the property was in the ownership of an individual named Sullivan, suggesting it was tenanted by the Sisters during their initial residence.<sup>17</sup> Upon arrival, they immediately opened their first school in a converted shop on Karangahape Road. In 1885, the Sisters relocated to a property at 2 Sussex Street, Grey Lynn, still part of St Benedict's parish, where a church school was subsequently built.<sup>18</sup>

When Mary MacKillop first visited New Zealand in 1894, there were four Sisters of St Joseph communities in the North Island – two of which were in Auckland (Sussex Street, Grey Lynn and Middleton Road, Remuera<sup>19</sup>) – and a further four in the South Island. By this time, New Zealand women had also joined the sisterhood.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; Newton Catholic Church, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume XVIII, issue 6186, 12 September 1881, Papers Past.

<sup>9</sup> Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'St Benedict's Church and Presbytery Complex (Catholic)', List entry No. 640, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/640>; Hugh Laracy, 'Luck, John Edmund', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published 1993. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2119/luck-john-edmund>

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Laracy, 'Luck, John Edmund', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published 1993. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2119/luck-john-edmund>

<sup>11</sup> Mary MacKillop was canonised on 17 October 2010, making her the first Australian to be recognised by the Catholic Church as a saint.

<sup>12</sup> Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, 'Our Story', <https://www.sosi.org.au/our-story/our-founders/>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Newton Parish at the time was extensive, incorporating districts as far west as Helensville.

<sup>15</sup> Sister Anne Marie Power, *Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart New Zealand Story 1883-1983*, Auckland, 1983; Diane Strevens, *MacKillop Women: The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Aotearoa New Zealand 1883-2006*, Auckland, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> St Joseph's School, 'Our Josphite and School History', <https://www.st-joseph.school.nz/our-josphite-and-school-history/>; Mary MacKillop Place, 'Auckland Pilgrimage', <https://www.marymackillopplace.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/04.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Deeds index 14A 152, Archives New Zealand.

<sup>18</sup> St Joseph's School, 'Our Josphite and School History', <https://www.st-joseph.school.nz/our-josphite-and-school-history/>

<sup>19</sup> The building still stands at 21 Middleton Road, as of 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Faith Central: Religious Education Resource, 'Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart', <https://www.faithcentral.org.nz/classroom/year-9/9f-beginnings-of-the-church-in-aotearoanew-zealand/sisters-of-st-joseph-of-the-sacred-heart-rsj>

After much fundraising, a new St Benedict's School, staffed by the Sisters of St Joseph, was opened by the Church in 1898.<sup>21</sup> Constructed on the corner of Gladstone<sup>22</sup> (now St Benedicts) Street and Alex Evans Street on land once occupied by Newton Kirk<sup>23</sup>, the purpose-built school stood directly opposite St Benedict's Church. Like other schools run by the Sisters, it attracted students from across Auckland and became known for its educational achievements.

The establishment of a new school on Gladstone (St Benedict's) Street, next to the cottage in which the Sisters had first resided when they arrived in Auckland, most likely instigated their return to the property. In 1901, the cottage and associated landholding (lots 22-25) were acquired by Mary MacKillop for ongoing use by the order.<sup>24</sup> And it was at this property that she stayed during her visit to New Zealand that same year.<sup>25</sup>

### A new convent

With the growth of the neighbouring school, the cottage no longer offered the space needed to accommodate the Sisters of St Joseph. A new purpose-built convent was thereby proposed next to the dwelling. The notable architectural practice of E. Mahoney & Son was engaged to prepare the plans (most likely undertaken by Thomas Mahoney, who had, by this time, taken over the practice) and well-known builder, J. J. Holland was contracted to construct the convent.<sup>26</sup> Both firms had worked together on a number of prominent Auckland buildings, including the neighbouring St Benedict's Church almost twenty years earlier.<sup>27</sup>

On 6 May 1906, the foundation stone of the new convent for the Sisters was laid by the Right Reverend Dr. G. M. Lenihan<sup>28</sup> (1858-1910), the fifth Catholic Bishop of Auckland.<sup>29</sup> A large number of people were in attendance, including parish priests, the building's architect<sup>30</sup>, and dignitaries such as the Mayor of Auckland, A. M. Myers (1867-1926), and prominent lawyer and politician, F. E. Baume (1862-1910), who was then Chairman of the parliamentary Education Committee.<sup>31</sup> Several of the guests gave speeches commending the work undertaken and progress made by the Sisters, and a collection in aid of the convent building fund amounting to over £100 was taken.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>21</sup> G. Ardley, *The Church of St Benedict, Newton Auckland: A Centennial Narrative*, Tiola: Auckland, 1988; A. Neven and P. Thompson, *The Educational Mission of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart in Aotearoa New Zealand: 1880s-2010*, International Studies in Catholic Education, 2011 (both cited in Laura Everett, *St Benedict's Former Convent, Newton*, 2018).

<sup>22</sup> Formerly Albert Street.

<sup>23</sup> A Presbyterian Church built in 1870.

<sup>24</sup> Deeds indexes 10A 67 and 14 152, Archives New Zealand.

<sup>25</sup> Mary MacKillop Place, 'Auckland Pilgrimage', <https://www.marymackillopplace.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/04.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> St Benedict's Convent, *Auckland Star*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 108, 7 May 1906; St Benedict's Convent, Auckland, *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXIV, Issue 20, 17 May 1906, Papers Past.

<sup>27</sup> Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'St Benedict's Church and Presbytery Complex (Catholic)', List entry No. 640, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/640>

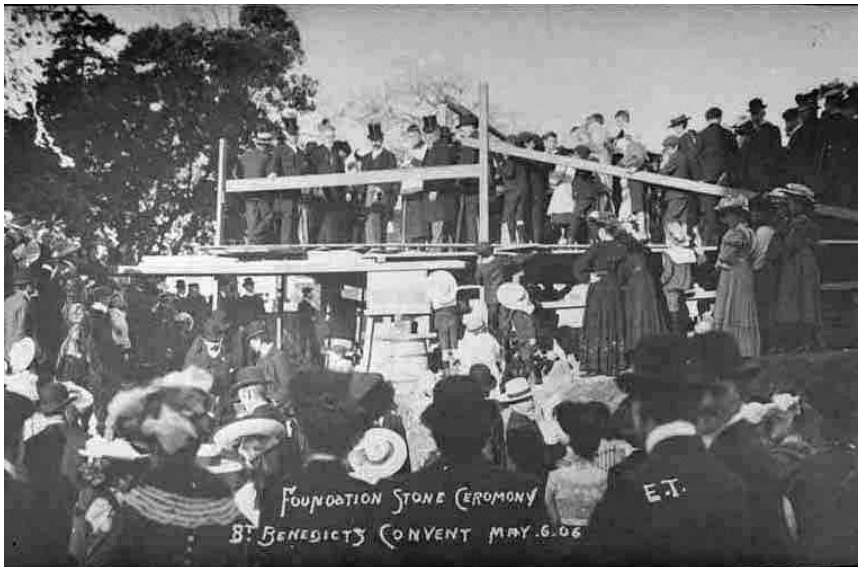
<sup>28</sup> In 1900, Bishop Lenihan made St Benedict's a Diocesan responsibility.

<sup>29</sup> St Benedict's Convent, *Auckland Star*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 108, 7 May 1906, Papers Past; Cyclopaedia Company Limited, 'The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Auckland Provincial District] - The Right Rev. George Michael Lenihan', Christchurch, 1902.

<sup>30</sup> The newspaper article refers to Mr E. Mahoney (being Edward Mahoney) giving a speech at the event, but he had died by this time, suggesting that it would have been his son, Thomas Mahoney, who was in attendance and architect for the project.

<sup>31</sup> St Benedict's Convent, *Auckland Star*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 108, 7 May 1906, Papers Past.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



**Figure 3:** Showing the crowd gathered for the ceremony of the laying of the Foundation stone of the new convent on Gladstone (now St Benedicts) Street (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 7-A10676).

Designed as a two-storey structure and initially planned to accommodate a refectory, classrooms, community room, dormitories and a chapel, the new convent would be the second<sup>33</sup> purpose-built Sisters of St Joseph convent in Auckland.<sup>34</sup> It was formally opened and blessed by Bishop Lenihan on 16 December 1906 in the presence of another large gathering, and became the Provincial House for the Province of Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>35</sup> The grand, symmetrically-fronted brick residence stood in contrast to the more modest timber cottage located alongside and featured a distinctive central entrance porch and a two-storey side verandah with decorative stained glass windows.



**Figure 4:** The new convent for the Sisters of St Joseph on Gladstone Street with a large gathering of pupils on 7 September 1910. Note also the early cottage in which the Sisters originally resided to the right (edited image from the New Zealand Graphic, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZG-19100907-21-1).

By the time the convent was built in 1906, the area of Newton had undergone a period of industrial and commercial expansion following the revival of the country's economy in the mid-1890s and the arrival of the electric trams in Auckland from 1902. Symonds Street had become a main arterial route and popular shopping destination, putting pressure on what was once a predominantly residential neighbourhood of grand merchant houses.<sup>36</sup> With the exception of St Benedict's Church, School and Convent, D. Arkell's Bottling Store/Brewery and the Catholic Apostolic Church, however, Gladstone (St Benedicts) Street

<sup>33</sup> The first was a two-storey timber building on Sussex Street, which was built in 1902 and destroyed by fire in 1921.

<sup>34</sup> St Benedict's Convent, Auckland, *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXIV, Issue 20, 17 May 1906, Papers Past.

<sup>35</sup> Untitled, *Auckland Star*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 294, 17 December 1906, Papers Past; Diane Strevens, *MacKillop Women: The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Aotearoa New Zealand 1883-2006*, 2008.

<sup>36</sup> Boffa Miskell et al., *Character & Heritage Study: Upper Symonds Street*, April 2004.

retained much of its residential character, with rows of villas and cottages located along the length of the road.<sup>37</sup>

### **The chapel wing**

Following Mary MacKillop's death in 1909, ownership of St Benedict's Convent remained with the Sisters of St Joseph, who continued to support the expansion of their educational mission in New Zealand.<sup>38</sup> In 1910, a new, larger school was built on the neighbouring site providing accommodation for almost 530 children, which would have likely prompted the need for greater levels of staffing.<sup>39</sup>

In May 1918, tenders were sought and plans were drawn up by E. Mahoney & Son (likely Thomas Mahoney) for additions to the convent.<sup>40</sup> The existing cottage was demolished to make way for the two-storey brick addition, which included a chapel and refectory on the ground floor with a staircase leading to a study and dormitory on the first floor. The street boundary wall was also extended south in front of the new addition.<sup>41</sup> At that time, the original part of the building was shown as comprising a parlour, community room, music room and kitchen on the ground floor with a staircase leading to dormitories, an oratory, a cell, and a bathroom on the first floor. The estimated cost of the work was £1,340.<sup>42</sup>

The foundation stone of the new wing was laid by the Right Reverend Dr H. W. Cleary (1859-1929), Bishop of Auckland on 30 June 1918, in memory of Sister Raymond, one of the first Josephites to arrive in New Zealand and the first Provincial of New Zealand.<sup>43</sup> The chapel was later named after the institute's founder, Saint Mary MacKillop.<sup>44</sup>

### **Later changes**

Only a small number of recorded physical changes were made to the convent over subsequent years. By c.1920, the iron railings on the front boundary wall had been replaced by plastered panels.<sup>45</sup> In 1927, a first floor verandah was proposed to the east (rear) of the convent, which partly extended along the south elevation.<sup>46</sup> Supported on square timber posts, the bullnose verandah was designed to be partially enclosed with timber weatherboards.

Twenty years later, in 1957, plans were drawn up by Auckland architect, Frank O. Jones for alterations and renovations to the building.<sup>47</sup> The proposed works included modifications to the first-floor layout by inserting partitions in existing spaces to create a greater number of smaller rooms and toilet facilities and the installation of a set of smaller louvred windows to the south elevation.

Further works followed in 1962, following proposals that involved the construction of a new laundry and storeroom at the south-eastern corner of the convent. The single-storey timber structure with monopitch roof was designed as a modest example of the solo work of James Hackshaw who had, by this time, gained a reputation as a founding member of Group Architects. The building replaced an earlier laundry structure located at the eastern (rear) boundary of the site.

### **The expansion of the Sisters of St Joseph**

The growth of the St Benedict's Convent occurred alongside the ongoing expansion of the Sisters of St Joseph. Whilst the first primary care of the Sisters was the education of Catholic children in provincial

<sup>37</sup> City of Auckland Map 1908 (Civic Isthmus), Auckland Council GeoMaps.

<sup>38</sup> Deeds indexes 10A 67 and 14 152, Archives New Zealand; Certificate of title NA548/201, Land Information New Zealand records.

<sup>39</sup> The Realisation of Catholic Education – Schooling the Future Generation, *The Weekly Graphic and New Zealand Mail*, 7 September 1910, from New Zealand Graphic, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZG-19100907-21-1).

<sup>40</sup> Page 10 Advertisements Column 2, *Auckland Star*, Volume XLIX, Issue 122, 23 May 1918, Papers Past.

<sup>41</sup> Refer to **Appendix 2** for architectural drawings.

<sup>42</sup> Building permit document B-1918-171, Auckland Council property records (Accord) for 2 St Benedicts Street.

<sup>43</sup> First Josephites in Temuka, 'Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Sacred Heart', <https://www.sosj.org.au/first-josephites-temuka-20/>

<sup>44</sup> On-site interpretation.

<sup>45</sup> Refer to **Appendix 1** for historic images.

<sup>46</sup> Building consent plan B-1927-678, Auckland Council property files (Accord) for 2 St Benedicts Street.

<sup>47</sup> Building consent plan B-1957-2799, Auckland Council property files (Accord) for 2 St Benedicts Street.

schools and the teaching of music, they later diversified into roles including social welfare, nursing, counselling and parish ministry.

From the founding of the institute in Auckland (at present-day 2 St Benedicts Street) in 1884, and subsequent early communities in Remuera and Grey Lynn, the influence of the Sisters of Joseph grew with the establishment of further foundations in Balmoral (1912), St Heliers (1927), Point Chevalier (1930), Three Kings (1946), Mission Bay (1949), Owairaka (1954), Mt Roskill (1987), Onehunga (1992) and Glenfield (1995).<sup>48</sup>

### A change of use

The Sisters of St Joseph retained ownership of St Benedict's Convent until 1984 when it was transferred to the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Auckland.<sup>49</sup> By this time, St Benedict's School roll numbers had declined, most likely brought on by the construction of the southern motorway in the 1960s, which physically separated the Newton suburb from the city and resulted in the removal of the established residential community away from the services that provided for it.<sup>50</sup> The school eventually closed in 1982 and its buildings were subsequently demolished.<sup>51</sup> The site is now used as a car park.

Following the Sisters of St Joseph's departure from the convent, the building was unused for some time. By 2004, it was in use as a hostel named 'Hurley House'.<sup>52</sup> In 2009, alterations were carried out to the two-storey verandah located to the north elevation as part of a refurbishment project. Before this time, the original stained-glass windows had been removed and the verandah partially enclosed. The works involved the removal of the enclosure at both ground and first floor levels, a new lower deck and the installation of more traditional features, such as turned balusters and fretwork.<sup>53</sup>

Since 2018, the former convent has been in use as a second-hand bookstore, named 'Hard to find bookshop'. The ground floor is used as the publicly accessible book shop, while the first floor is used for private storage.

### Physical description

Refer also to **Appendix 3** for phases of development and **Appendix 4** for a photographic record.

The former St Benedict's Convent is a striking Edwardian building designed by E. Mahoney & Son and built by J. J. Holland. Located at the northern end of St Benedicts Street in the small-inner city suburb of Newton, the building is situated near St Benedict's Church and Presbytery, a complex with which it retains a close historical and visual relationship.

The former convent is a two-storey structure of predominantly brick construction with a timber-framed hipped roof covered in corrugated metal, and three brick corbelled chimneys. The external buff brick walls have a rendered base and feature a series of banded red brickwork. Timber elements include an open, two-storey side verandah with turned balusters and an enclosed upper-storey rear and side verandah, supported on square posts and clad with weatherboards.

Constructed over two key stages, the building retains a high degree of physical integrity. The original part of the convent has a classically inspired symmetrical frontage, which features double-height faceted bays

<sup>48</sup> The Community Archive, 'Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart (New Zealand Province) (cited in C. O'Neil, *Heritage Assessment: Former Sisters of St Joseph Convent, 28 Telford Avenue, Balmoral*, September 2013).

<sup>49</sup> Certificate of title NA548/201, Land Information New Zealand records.

<sup>50</sup> Boffa Miskell et al., *Character & Heritage Study: Upper Symonds Street*, April 2004.

<sup>51</sup> G. Ardley, *The Church of St Benedict, Newton Auckland: A Centennial Narrative*, 1988 (cited in Laura Everett, *St Benedict's Former Convent, Newton*, 2018).

<sup>52</sup> Compliance Schedule WOF L-COM-1994-1748, Auckland Council property records (Accord) for 2 St Benedicts Street.

<sup>53</sup> Building Consent cover letter (dated 11 January 2011) and plans B-2009-5478, Auckland Council property records (Accord) for 2 St Benedicts Street.



with segmental arched window openings, set either side of a central doorway and gabled porch. A key architectural element of the building, the porch is supported on brick pillars and features decorative timberwork, including turned posts, frieze and fretwork, and is surmounted by a timber cross. To the south is a two-storey addition with single-storey faceted bay, principally built to house the convent's chapel. With its banded brickwork, bay window and similar detailing, it closely responds to the earlier portion of the building in design and construction.

Traditional timber joinery features throughout, comprising double-hung sash windows, one of which has leaded lights and stained glass; French doors; and a panelled entrance door with side and top lights. To the rear, the slightly later additions incorporate a mixture of fixed and casement timber windows, some of which feature top-lights.

Internally, the ground floor layout appears largely unchanged. A central hall provides access to two front rooms, two rear rooms and a staircase. A passage leads to two larger rooms and a second staircase. In the front room, there is a difference in floor levels between what was once the chapel and the altar. Evidence of early fabric and features exist throughout, including original architraves, skirting boards, board and batten ceilings, ceiling roses and fireplaces. The decorative plastered archway and ceiling in the former chapel are of particular note. Access to the first floor was not made, but records<sup>54</sup> suggest that only minor changes have occurred to the internal layout.

Occupying its original 1368m<sup>2</sup> site, the former convent stands on elevated ground, is orientated to the north-west and set back from the street. A lawned garden with trees, shrubs and low-level planting slopes down to the front boundary, which features a traditional rendered brick wall and a metal double gate. A set of access steps with rendered brick stringers lead to the front entrance of the building.

At the south-eastern corner of the building is a modest single-storey timber structure, originally built as a laundry and storeroom. Designed by architect, James Hackshaw, its walls are clad in weatherboards, its monopitch roof in corrugated metal and windows comprise both timber casement and fixed units.

### **E. Mahoney & Son(s)**

E. Mahoney & Sons was one of Auckland's most well-known and prolific architectural practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was founded by Irish-born architect, Edward Mahoney (1824-1895) in 1870 after working periodically as a builder, timber merchant and architect in Auckland since his arrival in New Zealand in 1855.<sup>55</sup> A founding member of the Auckland Institute of Architects, he later became its president. By the early 1880s, his two sons, Thomas (1855-1923) and Robert (1862-1895), had joined him in practice.<sup>56</sup>

The firm made a significant contribution to the commercial, residential, public and ecclesiastical architecture of the province, especially during the building boom of Victorian times. For many years E. Mahoney & Sons was architect to the Bank of New Zealand and the Auckland Education and Grammar School Boards.<sup>57</sup> Some of the practice's most prominent surviving buildings include the Pah Homestead, Hillsborough (1879)<sup>58</sup>; Holy Sepulchre Church, Grafton (1881)<sup>59</sup>; the former Old Customs House, Auckland Central Business District (1889)<sup>60</sup>; and Dilworth Terrace Houses, Parnell (1899)<sup>61</sup>. These examples exhibit a

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Death of Mr Edward Mahoney, *Auckland Star*, Volume XXVI, Issue 101, 29 April 1896, Papers Past, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>; The Church in New Zealand, *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 14, 8 April 1909, Papers Past, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals>; Peter Shaw, 'Mahoney, Edward and Mahoney, Thomas', Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, first published in 1993. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m26/mahoney-edward>

<sup>56</sup> The Church in New Zealand, *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 14, 8 April 1909, Papers Past, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals>; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'St Benedict's Church and Presbytery Complex (Catholic)', List entry No. 640, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/640>

<sup>57</sup> The Church in New Zealand, *New Zealand Tablet*, Volume XXXVII, Issue 14, 8 April 1909, Papers Past, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/periodicals>

<sup>58</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01695

<sup>59</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01709

<sup>60</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01946

<sup>61</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01634

range of architectural influences employed by the practice, including Italianate, Queen Anne and the style for which they were probably best known, Gothic Revival.

The firm also established a close working relationship with the Catholic Church, and, for more than half a century, was responsible for designing many of their most prestigious Auckland buildings. Examples include St Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland CBD (1885 and 1907)<sup>62</sup>; St Benedict's Church and Presbytery, Newton (1888)<sup>63</sup>; and the Church of the Assumption, Onehunga (1889)<sup>64, 65</sup>.

Following the death of Edward and Robert in 1895, Thomas Mahoney carried on the practice, changing its name to E. Mahoney & Son. In 1907, he became president of the Auckland Institute of Architects and in 1913-14 was president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.<sup>66</sup> The early twentieth century saw the firm continue to be responsible for a wide range of notable buildings. In addition to the subject building, works during this time included extensions to St Patrick's Cathedral (1907); Duchesne Building, Baradene College, Remuera (1910)<sup>67</sup>; the Wright's Building, Auckland CBD (1911)<sup>68</sup>; and St Joseph's Convent, Grey Lynn (1922).<sup>69</sup>

At the time of his death in 1923, Thomas Mahoney was given the title 'Father of Architecture'<sup>70</sup>. The firm of E. Mahoney & Son was eventually dissolved in 1926.

### J. J. Holland

James Job Holland (1841-1922) was a prominent Auckland builder and contractor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Born in England, Holland learnt his trade as a builder under his father before immigrating to New Zealand in 1860. Following a period in the Otago goldfields, he served as a sergeant in the Waikato Wars. In 1864, Holland set up business in Auckland and established himself as a proficient builder and contractor.<sup>71</sup>

Over the following decades he worked on projects with some of the most well-known architects of the time, such as R. Keals and Son, Edward Bartley, and E. Mahoney & Son(s).<sup>72</sup> Some of his notable surviving buildings include the Baptist Tabernacle, Auckland CBD (1884); St Benedict's Church and Presbytery, Newton (1888); and the Shakespeare Hotel, Auckland CBD (1898).<sup>73</sup> By the turn of the century, he was president of the Auckland Builders and Contractors Union of Employers.<sup>74</sup> Works after this time included St Benedict's Convent, Newton (1906) and additions to the Smith and Caughey's Building (1910).<sup>75</sup>

In addition to his business endeavours, J. J. Holland also took a prominent role in the public life of Auckland. In 1893, he was elected Mayor of Auckland, serving for three terms and was subsequently a Member of Parliament for the City of Auckland.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>62</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 02054

<sup>63</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01596

<sup>64</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01620

<sup>65</sup> G. E. O'Leary, *The Churches of E. Mahoney & Son 1858-1919*, MA thesis, Auckland, 1982.

<sup>66</sup> Peter Shaw. 'Mahoney, Edward and Mahoney, Thomas', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, first published in 1993. Te Ara – the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m26/mahoney-edward>

<sup>67</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01897

<sup>68</sup> AUP Schedule 14.1 – ID 01958

<sup>69</sup> G. E. O'Leary, *The Churches of E. Mahoney & Son 1858-1919*, MA thesis, Auckland, 1982.

<sup>70</sup> *Journal of New Zealand Architects*, Volume II, No. 4, new series, September 1923, Obituary, p.1014 (cited in O'Leary, 1983, p.26).

<sup>71</sup> Obituary, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume LIX, Issue 18184, 1 September 1922, Papers Past; Local and General, *Evening Star*, Issue 18066, 6 September 1922, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

<sup>72</sup> Untitled, *Auckland Star*, Volume XII, Issue 3454, 30 August 1881, Papers Past; Unknow[sic] and Things, *Observer*, Volume XI, Issue 669, 24 October 1891, Papers Past; The New Zealand Herald and Daily Southern Cross, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume XXIX, Issue 8805, 19 February 1892, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

<sup>73</sup> Fifty years ago, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume LXXI, Issue 21740, 3 March 1934, Papers Past; News in brief, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume XXIV, Issue 7979, 20 June 1887, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, 'Shakespeare Hotel', List entry No. 654, <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/654>

<sup>74</sup> Trades and labour, *Otago Daily Times*, Issue 11947, 22 January 1901, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

<sup>75</sup> The progress of the city, *Auckland Star*, Volume XLI, Issue 221, 17 September 1910, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

<sup>76</sup> Obituary, *New Zealand Herald*, Volume LIX, Issue 18184, 1 September 1922, Papers Past; Local and General, *Evening Star*, Issue 18066, 6 September 1922, Papers Past <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/>

## SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

### Historical

*The place reflects important or representative aspects of national, regional or local history, or is associated with an important event, person, group of people, or with an idea or early period of settlement within New Zealand, the region or locality.*

The former St Benedict's Convent has historical value for reflecting important aspects of local and regional history, representing the development of the Catholic Church in Auckland and demonstrating the greater emphasis placed on its role in the provision of the religious teaching, secular education and social welfare of children in the emerging suburbs. It also has a close connection with St Benedict's Church, the headquarters of the first Benedictine mission in New Zealand.

The place is significant for its intimate association with the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart. A pontifical institute of the Catholic Church founded in New Zealand in 1883 and established in Auckland a year later, it played an integral part in the religious, spiritual, educational and social development of communities across the country. Located on the site of the first North Island foundation of the Sisters of St Joseph, the former St Benedict's Convent has particular value as one of the earliest surviving purpose-built convents for the order in Auckland and as its place of residence and teaching for nearly 80 years.

These important associations are supported by notable, yet less direct, connections with individuals who made crucial contributions to the advancement of Catholic education and the welfare of children in Auckland, and without whom, the convent would not have been built. The place has loose connections with Bishop J. E. Luck, who was instrumental in the introduction of the religious order of the Sisters of St Joseph into the diocese, and Mary MacKillop (later Saint), the co-founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, who purchased the land upon which the convent was built.

The former Convent is also of interest for reflecting changing patterns of historical and social development in the locality. The opening of the building in 1906, and its extension in 1918, occurred following a period of population growth and expansion in the suburb, resulting in the need for larger education facilities and staffing. The disestablishment of the convent in 1982 followed a period of decline in Newton after the completion of the southern motorway and reflects changes in social and educational attitudes at that time.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **considerable local** and **regional** historical values.

### Social

*The place has a strong or special association with, or is held in high esteem by, a particular community or cultural group for its symbolic, spiritual, commemorative, traditional or other cultural value.*

The former St Benedict's Convent possesses symbolic and spiritual value as a place of worship and commemoration for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, with whom it has a special association. This includes the broader Sisters of St Joseph community who continue the traditional customs, pastoral care and education of their predecessors, and likely holds the place in high esteem as a marker of the institute's early establishment and growth in New Zealand.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **moderate local** social values.

### Mana Whenua

*The place has a strong or special association with, or is held in high esteem by, mana whenua for its symbolic, spiritual, commemorative, traditional or other cultural value.*

The St Benedict's Convent (former) is not identified in the AUP Schedule 12 Sites or Places of Significance to Mana Whenua (**Schedule 12**). This place has been evaluated primarily for its built heritage values.

Council has a process for assessing sites and places of significance to Mana Whenua. The first step in this process is for iwi to nominate sites. If a site or place is evaluated as significant to Mana Whenua against the factors set in the AUP, it will be considered for inclusion in Schedule 12 and/or, if it has additional values, Schedule 14. No nomination has been received by iwi for this place for its inclusion in Schedule 12.

From what we currently understand about this place, it is located within the extent of a large cultural landscape of value to Mana Whenua, although a formal nomination for this landscape has not been received at this time. The St Benedict's Convent (former) specifically is unlikely to have value to Mana Whenua in accordance with the factors or criteria set out in the AUP. However, this is not to say that the place does not have value to Mana Whenua or that the site or landscape may not be nominated by iwi at a future time.

Mana Whenua are required to be consulted during the preparation of any future plan change to consider the addition of this place to the AUP. If / when Mana Whenua values are identified this evaluation will be amended.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **no known** Mana Whenua values.

### **Knowledge**

*The place has potential to provide knowledge through scientific or scholarly study or to contribute to an understanding of the cultural or natural history of the nation, region or locality.*

As a publicly accessible place, the former St Benedict's Convent has value for its potential to provide knowledge about important aspects of local history and activities of religious life. Retaining a high level of physical integrity, the building has the ability to demonstrate the distinctive way of life of the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart and represent a religious and spiritual custom less common in modern Catholic society. Whilst opportunities exist to educate the public through greater levels of on-site interpretation, this has been realised, to a degree, by the historical account and photographs currently displayed inside the building.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **moderate local** knowledge values.

### **Technology**

*The place demonstrates technical accomplishment, innovation or achievement in its structure, construction, components or use of materials.*

Built using materials and methods common during the early twentieth century, the former St Benedict's Convent is not known to be associated with a creative or technical accomplishment, innovation or achievement.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **no known** technology values.

### **Physical attributes**

*The place is a notable or representative example of*

- (i) a type, design or style;*
- (ii) a method of construction, craftsmanship or use of materials; or*
- (iii) the work of a notable architect, designer, engineer or builder.*

The former St Benedict's Convent is significant as a notable and well-preserved surviving example of its type. Purpose-built as a convent, the two-storey brick structure retains a high level of physical integrity in

its design, construction, layout, and architectural detailing both internally and externally, which enables the relationship between the building's original form and function to remain evident.

The place is notable as the work of E. Mahoney & Son, one of Auckland's most prominent and prolific architectural practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and J. J. Holland, a prominent Auckland builder and contractor. Likely designed by Thomas Mahoney, who was responsible for some of Auckland's most prestigious buildings, some of which were built by J. J. Holland, the place is a good representative example of their later work. It is of value for reflecting the enduring professional relationship between the architect, builder and the Catholic Church and the range and execution of building types and styles that were commissioned, designed and constructed during that time.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **considerable local** physical attributes values.

### **Aesthetic**

*The place is notable or distinctive for its aesthetic, visual, or landmark qualities.*

Built on elevated land, the former St Benedict's Convent has value as a conspicuous structure on St Benedicts Street. With its Edwardian aesthetic, banded brickwork and decorative detailing, the place is significant for its strong visual appeal and street presence. These qualities are enhanced by its relationship with the neighbouring St Benedict's Church and Presbytery complex, which are, collectively, a visually distinctive group of buildings within the local landscape.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **considerable local** aesthetic values.

### **Context**

*The place contributes to or is associated with a wider historical or cultural context, streetscape, townscape, landscape or setting.*

Occupying its original site since 1906, the former St Benedict's Convent is notable for retaining its predominantly intact garden setting. Located opposite St Benedict's Church and Presbytery, with which it shares strong historical and physical associations, the place has value as part of a group of inter-related buildings that collectively play a defining role in the streetscape. Together they stand as a remnant of a historic landscape in an otherwise highly changed urban environment.

The place is also of value as a primary example of a dispersed group of convent buildings associated with the Sisters of St Joseph that span an extended period in Auckland's history.

St Benedict's Convent (former) has **considerable local** context values.

## **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Built in 1906 to a design by E. Mahoney & Sons, the former St Benedict's Convent was established for the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart on the site of its first North Island foundation. The two-storey brick structure was erected by J. J. Holland at the northern end of present-day St Benedicts Street, where it accompanied a complex of buildings associated with St Benedict's Church. A two-storey addition incorporating a chapel was built in 1918, again to a design by E. Mahoney & Sons. The convent remained in its original use until 1982.

The place is significant for its intimate and long-standing association with the Sisters of St Joseph who were important for playing an integral part in the religious, spiritual, educational and social development of communities across the country. It also reflects the development of the Catholic Church and is of note for demonstrating the greater emphasis placed on its role in the provision of education and social welfare of children in the emerging Auckland suburbs.

The former St Benedict's Convent is significant as the work of E. Mahoney & Sons, one of Auckland's most notable and prolific architectural practices during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and J. J. Holland, a prominent contractor at that time. As a purpose-built convent, the place has a high degree of authenticity in form, fabric and interior detailing, making it significant as a good representative example of its type. Standing on elevated land, the place is a conspicuous structure on St Benedict's Street. With its Edwardian aesthetic, banded brickwork and decorative detailing, it is significant for its strong visual appeal and streetscape presence and for maintaining an important historical, visual and contextual relationship with the neighbouring ecclesiastical buildings.

## TABLE OF HERITAGE VALUES

Significance Criteria (A-H)	Value	Geographic context
A- Historical	Considerable	Local and regional
B- Social	Moderate	Local
C- Mana Whenua	No known	N/A
D- Knowledge	Moderate	Local
E- Technology	No known	N/A
F- Physical Attributes	Considerable	Local
G- Aesthetic	Considerable	Local
H- Context	Considerable	Local

## CATEGORY RECOMMENDATION

The former St Benedict's Convent meets the thresholds in the AUP for scheduling as a historic heritage place. It is recommended that the place is included in Schedule 14.1 as a Category B place.

## RECOMMENDATION BASED ON HERITAGE VALUE

### Schedule 14.1

ID	Place name and/or description	Verified location	Verified legal description	Category	Primary features	Heritage values	Extent of place	Exclusions	Additional rules for archaeological sites or features	Place of Maori interest or significance
xxxx	St Benedict's Convent (former)	2 St Benedicts Street, Newton	Pt Lot 25 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 22 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 23 Deeds Reg 1332, Lot 24 Deeds Reg 1332	B	Convent building	A, F, G, H	Refer to planning maps	Laundry building (1962)		

### Planning maps

Refer also to **Appendix 5** for supporting historic maps.

The proposed extent of place for the former St Benedict's Convent is the area that contains the historic heritage values of the place and is relevant to an understanding of the function, meaning and relationships of these values.

The geographic area that illustrates the identified values of the place is shown in **Figure 5**. It captures the portion of the Certificate of Title boundary that encompasses the features that contribute to the values of

the place. These features include the entire subject building (primary feature) and its garden setting, including entrance steps, metal gate and rendered brick boundary wall (other features).

The single-storey building, built as a laundry and storeroom (c.1962) and located at the south-eastern corner of the corner of the primary feature, is identified as an exclusion. Although designed by a well-known architect of the period, the modest structure replaced an earlier laundry building on the site and is not considered to contribute to the identified historic heritage values of the place.



**Figure 5:** Showing the proposed extent of place of the former St Benedict's Convent (purple hatching) relative to the Certificate of Title boundary (blue), and the exclusion (red outline) (Auckland Council GeoMaps, 2017).

#### **Evaluator**

Carolyn O'Neil, Heritage Consultant on behalf of Auckland Council  
May 2022

#### **Peer Reviewer**

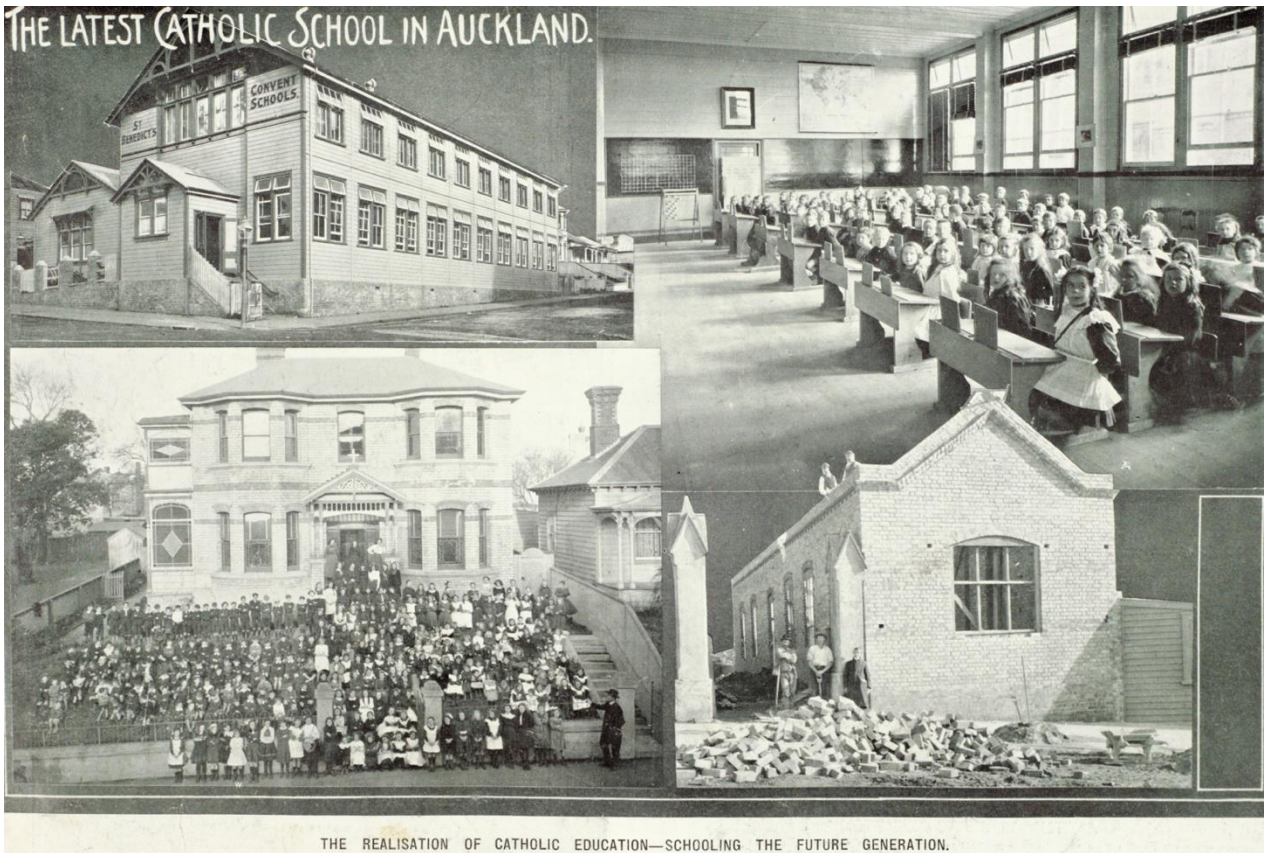
Megan Walker, Specialist Built Heritage – Policy  
5 April 2022

#### **Managerial Sign-Off**

Megan Patrick  
Team Leader Heritage Policy  
10 May 2022

## APPENDIX 1

### Supplementary historic images



Original image from which Figure 4 is taken, showing the newly constructed St Benedict's School and classroom (top left and right), St Benedict's Convent (bottom left) and the social club for the old boys of the school (bottom right), built next to St Benedict's Church (The new Sisters of St Joseph convent on Gladstone Street with a large gathering of pupils on 7 September 1910. Note also the early cottage in which the Sisters originally resided to the right (edited image from the New Zealand Graphic, Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, NZG-19100907-21-1).



Showing St Benedict's Convent and the early cottage sometime between 1906 and 1918 (Mary MacKillop Place, 'Auckland Pilgrimage').





Showing St Benedict's Convent in c.1920, following the addition of the chapel wing. Note how the railings on the front boundary wall (shown in the previous image) have been replaced by plastered panels that still exist today (Diane Strevens, *MacKillop Women: The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart Aotearoa New Zealand 1883-2006*, 2008, p.78).



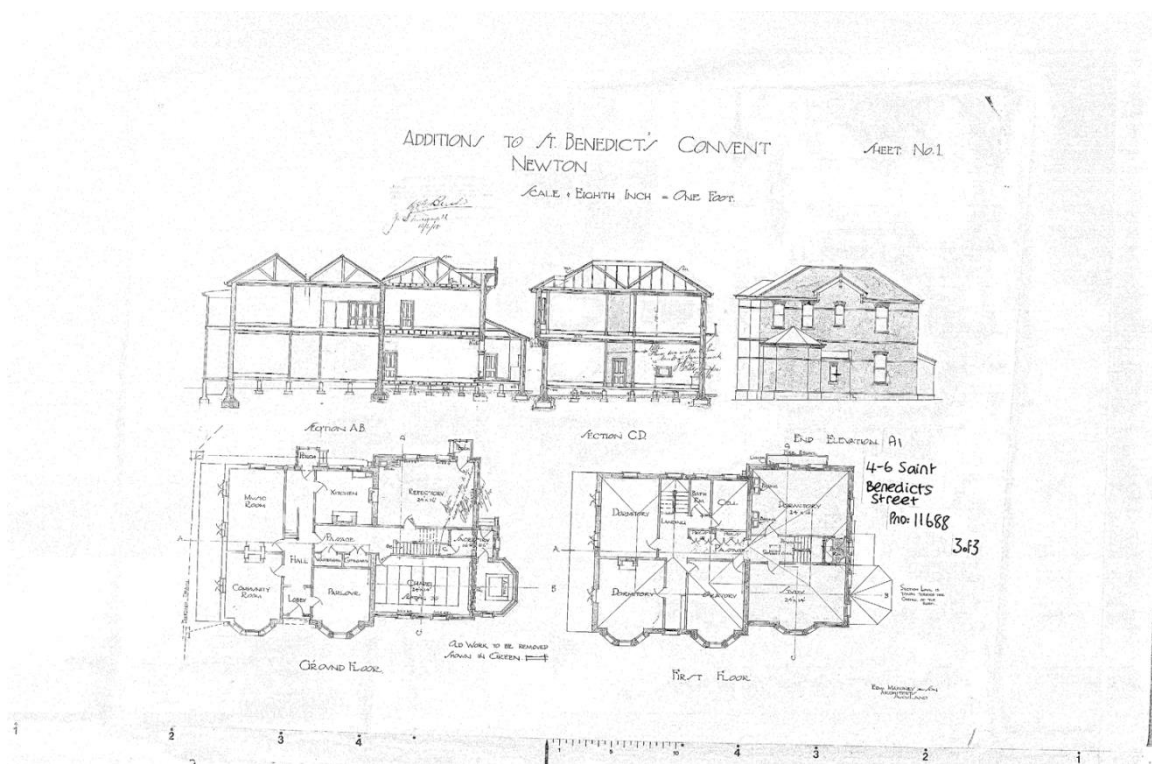
Top: An aerial photograph dated 1957 showing parts of Symonds Street, St Benedict's Street and surrounding area viewed from the south west (PA-Group-00080: Whites Aviation Ltd: Photographs, WA-44305-G, Alexander Turnbull Library).

Above: Close-up of top image, showing St Benedict's Convent (centre right) within the context of the former St Benedict's School (centre), St Benedict's Church and Presbytery (centre left). Note the close proximity to Symonds Street Cemetery (Catholic section), which was removed to make way for the construction of the southern motorway in the 1960s.

**APPENDIX 2**  
**Architectural drawings**



Architectural drawings (elevations and site plan) prepared by E. Mahoney and Son showing St Benedict's Convent and its proposed addition in 1918 (Building Consent plan B-1918-171, Auckland Council property records (Accord)).



Architectural drawings (sections and floor plans) prepared by E. Mahoney and Son showing St Benedict's Convent and its proposed addition in 1918 (Building Consent plan B-1918-171, Auckland Council property records (Accord)).

**APPENDIX 3**  
**Phases of development**



## APPENDIX 4

### Photographic record (C O'Neil, dated 4 March 2022)



West (front) elevation showing entrance gates and steps.



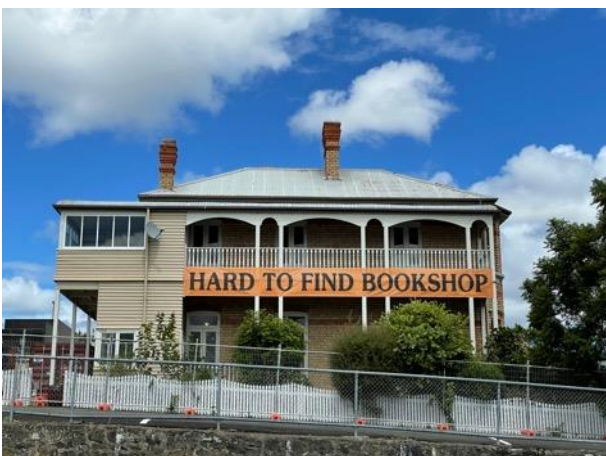
West elevation of the original portion of the convent (1906).



West elevation of the chapel addition (1918).



Part south and west elevations, viewed from St Benedicts Street.



North elevation showing the modified two storey verandah, viewed from neighbouring car park.



East (rear) elevation showing timber addition, viewed from neighbouring car park.



Front entrance porch with decorative timber detailing, front door with top and side lights and double-hung sash windows.



Front entrance steps and plastered brick stringer.



Foundation stone of the chapel addition laid in 1918.



Front boundary plastered brick wall with top panel (replacing earlier railings possibly when the addition was built).



Street view looking north, showing the former Convent (right) and the Presbytery and St Benedict's Church (left).



St Benedict's Church (1887-8) also designed by E. Mahoney & Sons and built by J. J. Holland.

## APPENDIX 5

### Historic maps



City map (1908) showing the Convent and neighbouring cottage (now demolished), the proposed extent of place (purple outline) and indicative Certificate of Title boundary (blue) (Auckland Council GeoMaps).



Historic aerial (1940) showing the Convent and chapel addition, the proposed extent of the place (purple outline) and indicative Certificate of Title boundary (blue) (Auckland Council GeoMaps).