CITY OF BALLARAT

Sustaining growth. Strengthening communities.

Ballarat Civic Hall Development Brief for the Community led Engagement Process

April 2012

Introduction

On March 28, 2012, Council endorsed a new engagement process for the Ballarat Civic Hall site. The aim of this new process is to enable the participation of Ballarat's highly engaged community to generate viable redevelopment concepts for the site.

Unlike many other parts of the Municipality, the precinct enjoys a comparatively rich transport and employment context, including convenient access to the Ballarat railway station and direct abuttal to two major road networks which support both public and private transport. The site is not only a strategically important site in terms of the future growth of Ballarat and its CBD , but the site is also one of prime community importance as evidenced through the most recent redevelopment proposal.

The previous master plan for the site which was endorsed by Council in November 2010 was based upon maximising commercial development outcomes on the site. Following community backlash regarding the previous development proposal, Council resolved in December 2011 that it also no longer supported this approach.

It is therefore proposed that this new community led process will identify a supported vision for the site which includes a range of parameters which go beyond purely commercial and economic in nature.

Background

The 3,567m² Civic Hall was constructed in 1956 and is located on an 'island' allotment at the northern edge of Ballarat's CBD. It was designed by Melbourne architect Gordon Murphy, and by Herbert Coburn, an architect and Ballarat Councillor.

There has been substantial planning work undertaken in respect of the Civic Hall site, largely through the development of the CBD Strategy and the previous development project which was terminated in December 2011. This work includes:

- Identifying preferred land uses for the site, through the Ballarat CBD Strategy;
- Identifying preferred building heights and urban design principles that should apply to any redevelopment, through the Ballarat CBD Strategy;
- Preparing a notional visualisation of how the site's redevelopment could look, through the Ballarat CBD Strategy;
- Identifying preferred building heights and urban design principles that should apply to any redevelopment through the Ballarat CBD Strategy;
- Identifying urban design and architectural design principles that should apply to the site, having regard to the location of the site in the Heritage Overlay area;
- Assessing the heritage significance of the Civic Hall Building;
- Assessing the physical capacity of the site to accommodate office floor space, having regard to the CBD Strategy;
- Assessing the requirements for additional public car parking on the site; and
- Assessing car parking options for the site.

The purpose of the current consultation process is to gauge community support for the various pieces of work undertaken in relation to the site to date, and understand the opportunities that should be pursued on the site in the process moving forward.

Subject Site

The subject site is one of the largest commercial (Business 1 Zone) landholdings within the Ballarat CBD with an overall site area of 12,565 square metres (not including the library building) subdivided into four crown allotments. It is effectively an island site exposed on all sides by broad road reservations including:

- Market Street (to the north)
- Armstrong Street (to the east)
- Mair Street (to the south)
- Midland Highway/Doveton Street North (to the west)

The site slopes gradually from the south west corner of the site to the north east corner. The northern most section of the site presently contains the Municipal Library located at the North West corner of the site and a two level car parking facility immediately to the east.

The southern allotment contains the Ballarat Civic Hall which was constructed in the interwar period (completed in 1956) positioned centrally on the site separated from property boundaries by extensive car parking areas and some landscaping.

FIGURE 1 – VIEW OF EXISTING SITE FRONTAGE FROM MAIR STREET

The building itself is clad in yellow toned brick with limited architectural detailing with the exception of banding, parapet capping and doors/windows surrounds treated with a contrasting pale yellow render.

The Civic Hall has an irregular L shaped arrangement with two performances spaces, one in each wing of the building with the dominant feature being the 'fly tower' located at the northern end of the main hall.

FIGURE 2 – VIEW OF CIVIC HALL FROM ARMSTRONG STREET LOOKING WEST

A skate park is presently located on the south east corner of the site and the extensive car parking facilities around Civic Hall are available for commuter parking with some short term parking located nearer to the Library (which is located at the North West corner of the site).

Access to car parking areas are from a number of vehicular crossings across the site including:

- Three double width crossings to Market Street including one that provides access to the multi-deck car park.
- Two double width crossings to Armstrong Street.
- Two double width crossings to Mair Street.
- A single and double width crossing to the Midland Highway/Doveton Street North.

The Civic Hall building has been disused since 2002 and is now somewhat dilapidated and Council is undertaking a structural assessment of the building.

The immediate site interfaces are as follows:

NORTH (MARKET STREET)

To the north of the site is Market Street which is a local road that extends from Lydiard Street to the east to the Midland Highway/Doveton Street North. On the northern side of Market Street is a relatively recent two level commercial building which has been constructed to the site boundary. To the west of this development is a cluster of trade oriented retail facilities which benefit from exposure to the Midland Highway/Doveton Street North which is a key gateway to the Ballarat CBD.

EAST (ARMSTRONG STREET) To the east of the site is Armstrong Street which is a local road with predominantly 45 degree kerbside parking. On the opposite side of Armstrong Street are a mix of uses including the Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-Operative, a stationary store, gallery and some open lot car parking.

SOUTH (MAIR STREET) To the south is Mair Street which is a Road Zone Category 1 with centralised and kerbside parking in parallel. Notably, Mair Street has been earmarked for an upgrade to introduce indented kerbside parking and a landscaped central median (amongst other things).

On the opposite side of Mair Street are a row of single and double storey shops some with weather protection canopies that overhang the footway.

WEST (MIDLAND HIGHWAY/DOVETON STREET NORTH)

To the west of the site is a large 4 level office building presently tenanted by the State Government. This building has raised office floor plates treated with a skin of reflective glazing with a largely unrelieved building base which houses the car parking areas. Further to the north of the State Government office are a car tyre retailer and a row of single and double storey shops.

Development Brief

This community engagement process has been developed to create significant community interest in a concerted attempt to have the community involved and engaged in the design and realisation of any future development project on this site.

An overwhelming feature of the community input to the previous project was the diversity of views and opinions of exactly what should be done with the site and with the Civic Hall. This new process will attempt to capture this diversity and expose these visions to a constructive community engagement process.

The critical first step of this process is to invite submissions, proposals and ideas for the redevelopment of the site from all sectors of our community.

As part of this process, a range of methods and mediums will have been made available to ensure that this process is as accessible as possible for all members of the community. This process will include a Concept and Visualisation Team made up of a small number of Ballarat based Architects external to Council. The role of this team will be to interpret submissions and ideas that are put forward and develop imagery, basic design responses and add narrative to community submissions. This will enable the whole community to better visualise the ideas being put forward. This group will work with Council at each stage of the engagement process and assist in creating the various publications that will be produced for the community. This group will also be able to work directly with the community during the workshops and plenary sessions.

Whilst not intended to constrain the nature of submissions nor act as criteria, the themes outlined below are intended to act as a stimulus for discussion and provide some context for consideration and act as a starting point for further narrative around these themes.

These themes include:

1. Community value;
2. Urban form;
3. Heritage;
4. Economic contribution; and
5. Financial viability.

1. Community Value

Council has prepared a range of strategies which are intended for delivery across either the entire municipality, or more specifically within sites across the Ballarat CBD. It should be noted that these documents and policies provide guidance, but are not binding upon this process. Council at a future stage of the process will need to consider how the various community inputs can best be accommodated, and the implications for existing Council policies.

Ballarat CBD Strategy

The Ballarat CBD Strategy, adopted by Council, sets clear directions for the use and development of the Ballarat CBD including the Civic Hall site. The CBD strategy envisages that the site would be redeveloped as a high quality corporate office precinct, with complementary retail uses at the ground level.

Key recommendations for the Mair Street Corridor from the CBD Strategy state that the Civic Hall Site Master Plan should address:

- Development of the Corridor as a core office / commercial area
- Provision for buildings of 4-6 storeys in height generally
- Up-grade Mair Street as the CBD by-pass route
- Improve street scaping along Mair Street.

Guidelines for the redevelopment of the Civic Hall site contained in the CBD Strategy that the Site Master Plan should consider include:

- Potential to improve the appearance of the site and its surrounds
- Activate street frontages, build to street edges, provide weather protection along streets
- Allow setbacks from the street for public space. Provide a range of spaces within the site.
- A maximum of 4 storey buildings at the street edge. Up to 6 to 10 storeys buildings possible in the centre of the site.
- Maintain views to heritage towers (Town Hall, Station and Post Office) from public spaces and roads.
- Potential for Campus style development.
- Incorporate state of the art Environmental Sustainable Design.
- Provide for improved pedestrian connections through the site to the station and CBD.
- Provide more public car parking in the redevelopment.

Ballarat Open Space Strategy

The Ballarat Open Space Strategy (BOSS) was adopted by Council in April 2008 after 16 months of extensive research, workshops, surveys, submissions and community consultation.

Ballarat's diverse open space network of more than 250 parks, sportsgrounds, lakes, linear reserves, urban spaces and conservation parklands provides a range of benefits for the community including; using a playground, walking and cycling, playing sports, environmental protection and providing for healthy connected communities. The Ballarat Open Space Strategy considers these broad community values and

needs and will guide the future provision, development and management of open space in the municipality until 2025.

The Ballarat Open Space Strategy includes many strategic directions and recommendations for improving Ballarat's Open Space to achieve the Strategies vision of:

> *"Providing a sustainable network of accessible open space which supports the recreational, environmental, social and health needs of the community and connects Ballarat to its past present and future".*

The BOSS does not make specific recommendations for 'individual' pieces of open space but alternatively assesses the major generic issues affecting the provision, development, management and use of Ballarat's open space. It recommends major policy and strategic directions for the future of the open space network

Some of the Key Strategic Directions of the BOSS include:

- Categorising open space areas according to their hierarchy and function.
- Mapping to identify of parts of the City that do not have sufficient and safe access to 'Recreational' open space.
- Providing minimum size parks within maximum accessible walking distances from residential areas and with standardised development levels according to their category.
- Recommendations for increased open space developer contributions in some major growth areas of the City.
- Recommendations for better linkages and connections of open spaces to improve access and promote community health and wellbeing.
- Prioritising the development, review and implementation of master plans for major open space areas such as the Lakes, Botanical Gardens, sports grounds, linear reserves and key urban open spaces.
- Recognition of the value of partnerships to collectively manage a range of open space areas the municipality.
- Encouraging biodiversity and the retention of areas of natural vegetation and cultural significance within the open space network.
- Rationalising irrigation use in open space management and developing a landscape and planting vision aimed at responding to the impact of climate change.

Ballarat Cultural Diversity Strategy 2009-2014

The City of Ballarat Cultural Diversity Strategy provides direction to Council to guide effective planning, partnership development and community participation and engagement. It reinforces Council's commitment to advocate, strengthen, support and engage its multicultural communities.

In 2009, Council identified the need to develop a Cultural Diversity Strategy and action plan to sustain and strengthen its continuously growing multicultural communities. The Strategy is about effective planning and providing culturally appropriate services that will meet the diverse needs of the community.

This Strategy has been developed in response to Ballarat becoming increasingly a culturally diverse community. The Strategy and cultural diversity is considered an important part of Council's ongoing services because:

- cultural diversity enriches a community by promoting social justice, equality and new ideas;
- cultural diversity encourages individuals to be adaptive to change and boosts economic prosperity; and
- evidence indicates that people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities experience inequalities in health and social exclusion.

A whole-of-Council approach was taken in the development of this Strategy which aims to:

- articulate a vision and set goals for the Ballarat community;
- acknowledge the importance of diversity within the municipality;
- provide leadership and direction to Council by identifying opportunities to enhance / promote inclusiveness and wellbeing of CALD communities;
- guide effective planning, partnership development and community participation / engagement; and

- reinforce Council's commitment to advocate, strengthen, support and engage CALD communities.

The Cultural Diversity Strategy affirms Council's commitment to multicultural communities. It demonstrates Council's acknowledgement of the significant contributions made by successive waves of old and new migrants to the municipality. Council recognises it has an important role to play in promoting wellbeing and providing opportunities for everyone regardless of their cultural, linguistic, or religious backgrounds. In effect, the Strategy will guide Council in facilitating inclusion and intercultural communication, celebrating diversity and welcoming people of all cultures.

The Strategy was developed through research and an extensive and integrated process of community engagement. Community members and stakeholders, together with Council staff provided input into setting key priorities and corresponding actions. Through this process, the Strategy is built on four priority areas:

- responsive service delivery
- leadership and advocacy
- celebrating and valuing diversity
- sustaining the intercultural city

The City of Ballarat's Cultural Diversity Strategy 2009-14 provides a comprehensive roadmap to encourage an inclusive, harmonious, intercultural community that welcomes people from all walks of life. It provides the practical steps to ensure sustained growth and strengthened communities both now and into the future.

2. Urban Form

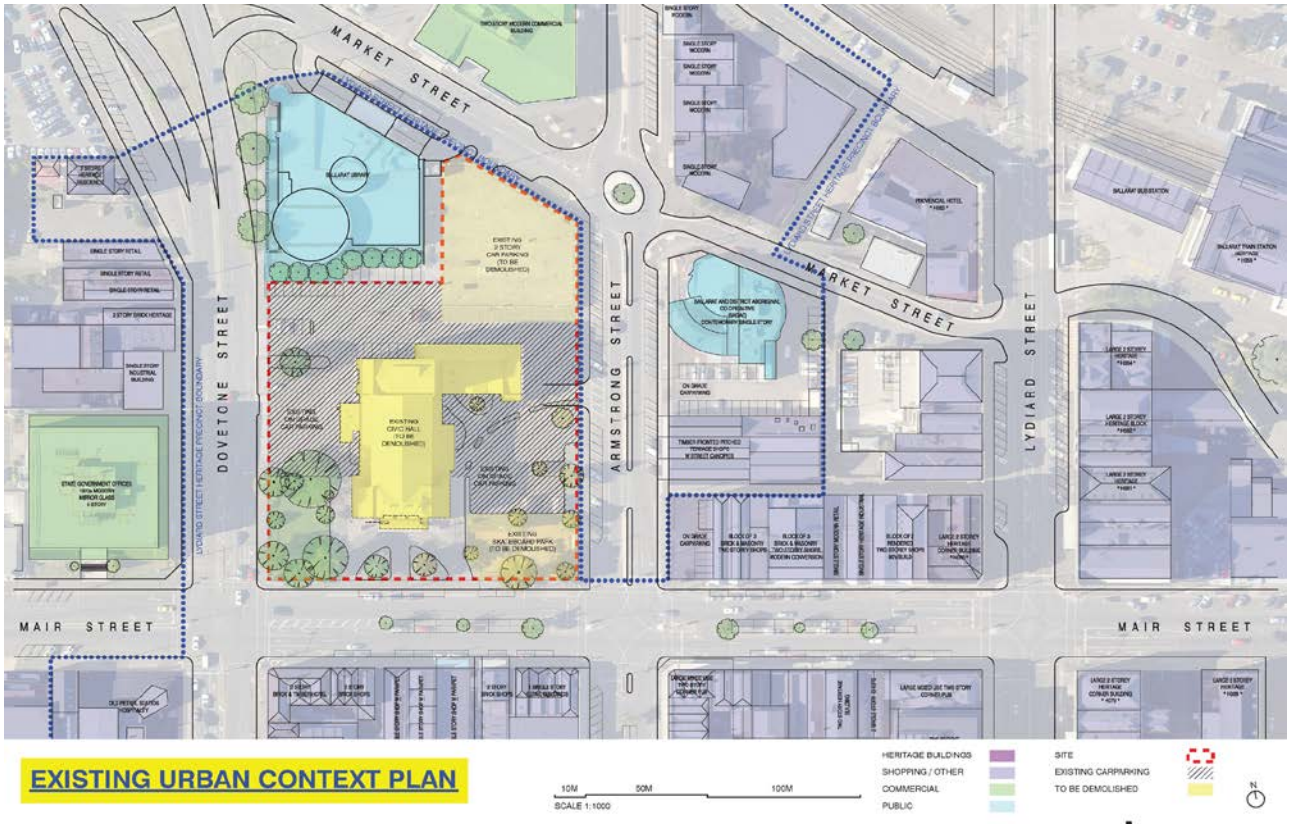
The site is a contributing element to the Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct which extends throughout the Ballarat CBD and is valued for single and double storey Victorian-era shops and some specific species of street tree.

Notwithstanding this, the site is not heritage listed and the surrounds are highly mixed both in terms of building forms and land use typology.

The key characteristics of the site and surrounds are as follows:

- Building forms typically comprise single and double storey attached commercial buildings built to the street with some larger sites being able to accommodate buildings of up to 6 levels.
- Buildings, particularly those within the Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct to the south of the site are typically fully attached and hold the street frontage with a fine grain and varied subdivision and development pattern.
- In contrast, to the north of Mair Street, the subdivision and development pattern is more coarse and diverse. Open lot car parking and large hardstand areas are also a feature of the part of area the Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct.
- Streets and footways are wide with street tree plantings generally limited to central medians.
- Many buildings comprise awnings that shelter the footway and provide a refuge for pedestrians.
- Towers of landmark buildings can be viewed from the site and provide a reference point that aids navigation within the Ballarat CBD.

FIGURE 3 – SITE CONTEXT PLAN



3. Heritage

The existing building is clearly significant from a social and cultural heritage point of view. Submissions should consider how the existing built form can relate to proposed uses, and whether the building should be fully retained, partially retained or even potentially fully removed. Similarly, respondents should consider how the building or proposed alterations to the building can be accommodated within the existing significance of the site.

The Ballarat Civic Hall is not included in the Victorian Heritage Register; has not been classified by The National Trust of Australia (Victoria); and is not included in the National Heritage List.

Official notification was received from the Heritage Council of Victoria on 27 May, 2011 that the Ballarat Civic Hall building is not of State Significance and therefore would not be added the Victorian Stage Heritage Register and instead should be referred to the relevant planning authority for a possible amendment to the Ballarat Planning scheme.

The Civic Hall is of historical and social significance at a local level; although it is not of architectural significance. The Civic Hall is also not one of the significant individual properties within the Lydiard Street precinct, nor one of the principal contributors to the heritage values of the precinct, particularly the identified state-level values.

Ballarat Planning Scheme

Ballarat Civic Hall is included in the Heritage Overlay of the Ballarat Planning Scheme through its inclusion in the large Lydiard Street Heritage Overlay Precinct (HO 171). The building is not referred to in the statements of significance for the precinct. However, as per Ballarat's Clause 22.05 'Heritage Conservation', it is policy that all buildings other than those specifically listed as 'not of heritage significance' within the *Ballarat Heritage Precincts – Statements of Significance* (2006) are considered to be *prima facie* contributory to the significance of the heritage precinct in which they are located. The Civic Hall is not listed under 'Buildings Not Significant to a Precinct' in the Lydiard Street Heritage Precinct citation in the 2006 study.

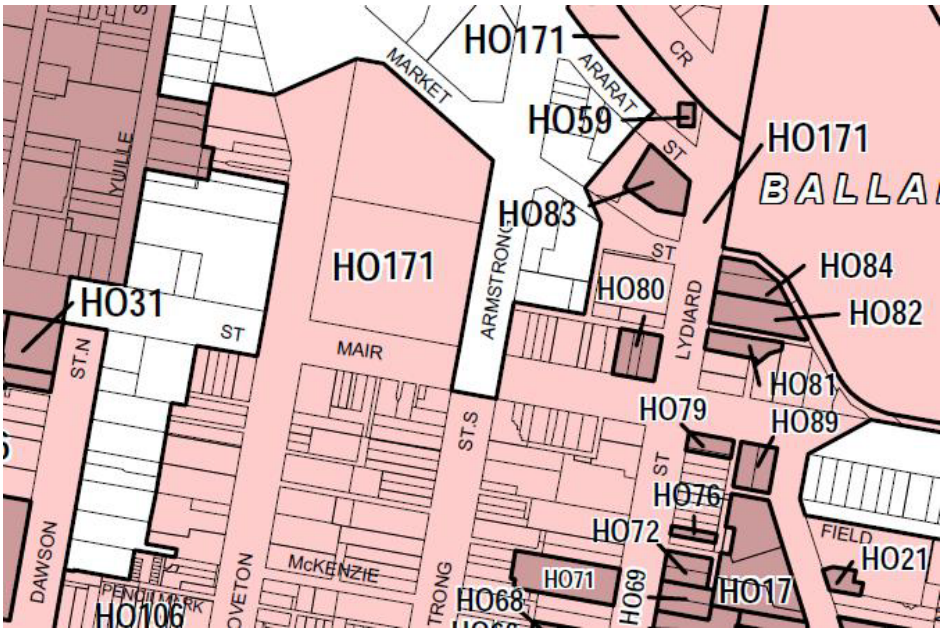


FIGURE 4 HERITAGE OVERLAY MAP SHOWING THE LYDIARD STREET PRECINCT (HO171).

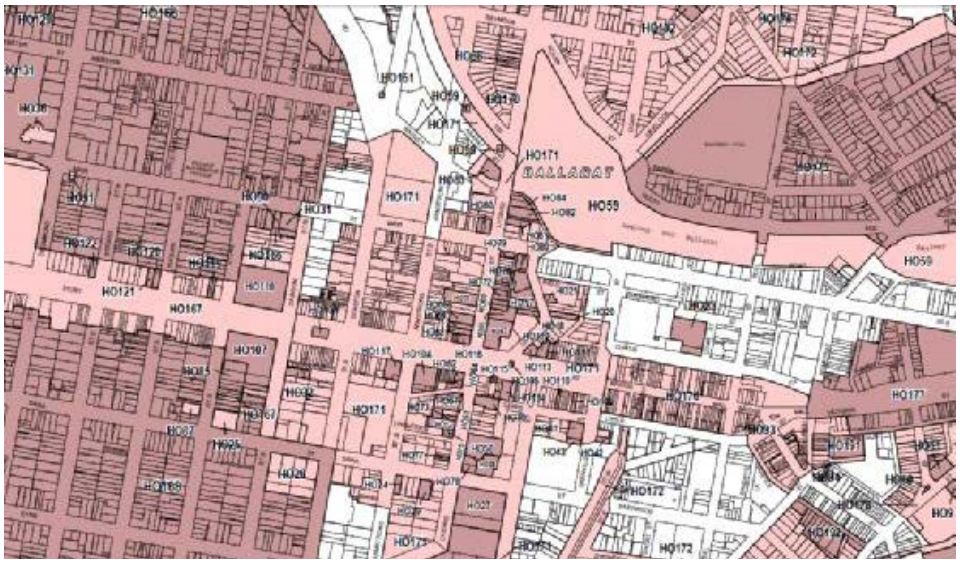


FIGURE 5 LARGER MAP OF THE HERITAGE OVERLAY.

Source: Ballarat Planning Scheme.

4. Economic contribution

The Economic Strategy 2010-2014 sets out a 20-year vision for the Ballarat economy. It outlines the role of Council, businesses, industry, government and other stakeholders to achieve this vision.

The Strategy will help Council and stakeholders to deliver economic development outcomes to ensure Ballarat can meet the employment and service needs of the city's growing population and prepare for the changing industry structure.

In developing the Economic Strategy, Council engaged local industry experts to provide their input and buy-in to the overall vision and the Strategy itself.

The vision, as outlined in the Strategy, is for Ballarat to become:

1. **The Capital of Western Victoria** - By building on existing services, facilities and infrastructure linkages, Ballarat will consolidate its position as the capital of Western Victoria over the next 20 years.
2. **Australia's premier high tech and knowledge based regional economy** - Ballarat's diversified knowledge based economy – defined by higher education, health services, research, manufacturing, information technology and business services - will grow, integrate and evolve to generate significant new investment and employment.
3. **A bigger and more diverse community** - As the local economy grows and diversifies, Ballarat will accommodate a much larger and more diverse population.

The research and consultation that was undertaken to inform the Economic Strategy identified seven key industry sectors that are significant to the Ballarat economy. The sectors identified are:

- Business Services (including property, finance and insurance)
- Health and Community Services
- Education
- Tourism
- Retail
- Manufacturing and Information
- Communications and Technology (ICT)

The Strategy also identifies two economy wide priority areas that are vital to the growth of the Ballarat economy - a skilled workforce and business development and innovation capabilities.

The Economic Strategy clearly identifies the need to accommodate an additional 60,000m² of floor space to meet future economic growth, with most of this requirement directed to the Ballarat CBD.

The key question for the community is to determine the extent that office based activities should be delivered as part of the possible re-use/redevelopment of the site.

5. Financial Viability

When developing site proposals, some consideration should be given to development proposals that are commercially viable and do not become a financial liability to rate payers.

- Land uses and development proposals should be commercially viable and not rely on public sector financial subsidies either for the development or ongoing operations;
- The Site Master Plan should aim to incorporate development envelopes that will either be commercially attractive to the private sector, in terms of their area, configuration and site areas or contain open spaces as outlined in the BOSS;
- The Site Master Plan should provide for some flexibility to cater to expressed demand from the private sector for commercial development.

The Existing Building

Exterior

The Civic Hall (built 1953-56) is a late example of Stripped Classicism, a style commonly applied to Australian public and commercial buildings during the interwar period. It has a steel frame construction, in filled with yellow-toned face brick walls with contrasting pale rendered bands, including to the parapets and window surrounds. The roof is clad with steel sheeting. The large building is an irregular configuration of cubic masses in an L-shaped arrangement. It comprises two main wings: the Main Hall (capacity c. 1,600) on the south of the allotment, and the Lower Hall which extends to the east side of the allotment but is entered on the west side, facing Doveton Street. A fly tower – the tallest element of the complex – rises at the north end of the Main Hall.

The south facade of the Civic Hall (Main Hall) is the primary public interface. It has a symmetrical façade with the elevated entrance located centrally, accessed via a short flight of steps with low-height brick wing walls. The entrance has three sets of deeply recessed timber-framed glazed doors, with engraved granite commemorative panels attached to the walls between the door bays, and a boxed awning above; a 'CIVIC HALL' sign is affixed to the awning. At first floor level are three large window bays, also recessed, with multi-paned windows; and medallions in the spandrels above. To the upper level of the facade, on alignment with the door and window openings, is a row of three small square openings within a rendered band, expressing an attic storey. The words 'CIVIC HALL' are affixed to the brickwork above the square windows, and below a simple rendered parapet. Lower flanking wings are located to either side of the central section of the façade, with regular rectilinear openings in the west and east elevations.

The Lower Hall, located at right angles to the north end of the Main Hall, has an entrance and foyer which addresses Doveton Street, with the hall pavilion extending to the east, towards Armstrong Street. The foyer to the Lower Hall is situated below the stage of the Main Hall, an arrangement facilitated by the sloping site. The entrance has non-original metal folding doors, beneath an original bay of small windows and spandrel. The words 'LOWER HALL' are affixed to the brickwork below a simple rendered parapet. Both halls are self-contained, including separate heating and ventilation systems.

Other elevations incorporate large areas of face brickwork with rendered parapets; and similar, albeit more simply detailed versions of the windows to the main south façade repeated to the east and west. The visible elevations of the fly tower, including the high north elevation, are principally sheer face brickwork unrelieved by openings or architectural detailing, save for some openings in the lower portion of the north elevation. The east elevation of the Lower Hall is also face brickwork, with the north elevation having a series of small window openings. The north presentation and character of the Civic Hall generally is of the rear or 'back end' of the building; this area of the building also a high level of public visibility and exposure.

(Refer attached floor plans and building elevations).

Interior

Internally, the Main Hall comprises the foyer leading from the Mair Street entrance. The foyer includes ticket boxes, refreshment bars, male and female cloak rooms and toilets and staircases to the dress circle foyer on the upper level either side of the main entrance doors.

There are toilets and ancillary spaces (stores and offices) adjacent to the foyers on both levels. The Main Hall auditorium has a timber floor, east and west galleries, a raised stage at the north end flanked by staircases, a proscenium with fly tower above, and associated storage and utility areas, including a kitchen.

The dress circle retains it original timber seating. No equipment remains in the bio-box. The entrance lobby to the Lower Hall is a long rectangular space, with a refreshments counter, toilets and cloak rooms. The lower auditorium has a raised stage at its eastern end, a kitchen area, and associated dressing rooms.

Intactness/Modifications

The Civic Hall is largely intact to its original 1950s plan and fabric. Works and modifications carried out during the 1990s include the re-tiling of the main foyer; the addition of disabled toilets on the ground floor adjacent to the Main Hall foyer; a kitchen with cool room was added to the west side of the auditorium in c. 1980 and a store for chairs added to the east in 1996. Works have also been undertaken to service areas and fire escapes; as noted above, the entrance doors to the Lower Hall are not original.

Setting

The Main Hall is set back from Mair Street with a semi-circular driveway sweeping around in front of the building, accessed from the street. There is also a central driveway bisecting the semi-circular lawn. Plantings in this area include mixed eucalypts, with the south-west corner more densely planted. While not of a formal landscape character, the space provides a setting for the south façade of the building. Two statues are located to the east and west of the stepped entrance. On the east is a statue of William Shakespeare (sculptor A Meszaros), and on the west of the entrance is a statue of Sir Walter Scott (sculptor Stanley Hammond). These statues are believed to have been placed here in the 1960s. The open space on the south-east of the allotment is currently used as a skate park, while other open space on the east and west elevations of the Civic Hall are mostly taken up with car parking.

Civic Hall History

Since the Civic Hall was opened in 1956, competition from other venues and social factors has resulted in its decline as a community facility for Ballarat. This resulted in the forced closure of the venue in 2002. Similarly, various attempts over the last decade to re-adapt the building for viable alternatives have also been unsuccessful.

This is demonstrated by the following timeline of events:

1947 – Ballarat City Council engaged two Melbourne architectural companies to investigate the redevelopment of the Town Hall site in Sturt St for a new hall. Schemes were developed but difficulties in obtaining firm estimates for the work at this time (shortly after World War II) prevented the project's progression.

1950 – Council agreed on a site for a new Civic Hall - the Haymarket Reserve - bounded by Mair, Doveton, Market and Armstrong Streets. Under terms of its government grant, the area which had once been the site of the Ballarat saleyards, was restricted for 'market purposes' and various processes were required to re-zone it as a 'site for a Civic Hall'. Buildings on the Haymarket Reserve included Council's store yard, office buildings, a service station and two weighbridges

1952 – Architects Gordon Murphy of Melbourne, and HL and LJ Coburn of Ballarat were appointed to work in conjunction to design and administer the construction of the Civic Hall.

1953 – Local builder Walter Trahar won the tender to build the Civic Hall. Work began in November.

1956 - The Civic Hall was officially opened on 20 August.

1977-78 – Steady decline in public use of the Civic Hall prompted this comment from the Mayor of the day in his annual report.

> *'In 1956 the Civic hall was built to serve as the principal public hall of the City. Shortly after opening, its designed use was affected by two changes in patterns of social life – television and the advent of cabaret balls as opposed to the traditional style of balls for which the hall had been designed. Television greatly affected the requirements for concerts and similar public entertainments'.*

1979 – In an effort to increase use of the Civic Hall a new kitchen annexe was added to the west side of the building.

1990 – The Civic Hall came under the management of the Director of Her Majesty's Theatre.

1994 – A skateboard park was built on the corner of Mair and Armstrong streets, adjacent to the Civic Hall.

1995-97 – Approximately $166,000 was spent on work to upgrade the Civic Hall including construction of a store room, installation of showers and hot water backstage, re-painting, construction of the rear fire exit, re-tiling of the entrance foyer, additional lighting, disabled toilet facilities, repairing and re-tiling the front steps, re-upholstering chairs, improvements to heating and repairs to stormwater drains.

1995 – A feasibility study of the Civic Hall was undertaken by Wilson, Sayer and Core and submissions on the future of the building were invited from the public.

1997 – Morton Dunn Architects undertook an evaluation and confirmed that a 150 room hotel and convention centre could be developed on the site. The evaluation assumed that the Civic Hall building would need to be demolished.

1999 – Patronage continued to decline and in 1999 the Civic Hall was only used 40 times, less than once a week, throughout the entire year.

2000 - Report to Council indicated Council faces major 'budgetary impacts' if the Civic Hall was to be retained as multi-functional public hall. It said:

- Use of the hall by external hirers has declined significantly due to competition from newer venues;
- The standard of facilities and level of amenity offered at the Civic Hall no longer meets many of the basic requirements of hiring organisations; and
- If the Civic Hall is to remain viable over the long term Council would need to undertake a substantial upgrade of the building at a minimum cost of $1 million plus.

2000 – Council called for Expressions of Interest for the development of a 'high quality hotel and convention centre' on the site. The development was described as 'essential to Ballarat's economic future'.

2001 – Council signed a Memorandum of Understanding with its preferred developer following the appraisal of the six EOI's.

2002 – Civic Hall hosted its last event - a speech night for Ballarat Grammar School.

2004 – The preferred developer withdrew from the project, citing difficulty in sourcing an 'end owner for the convention centre' prompting a revised Expression of Interest (EOI) process which was later abandoned. Council in conjunction with State Department of Treasury and Finance engaged Sinclair, Knight Metrz (SKM) to produce a development brief for the site.

2005 – Ballarat residents were invited to provide input into the future of the site and to comment on the six options put forward by SKM and following that a fresh EOI process was commenced with the support of the State Government. As of November that year, Council had received eight EOI's for the site.

2006 – Council refined development outcomes based on EOI submission process and undertook a restricted tender process inviting all 8 submitters to tender.

2007-08 – Council began negotiations with two companies for the development of separate options for the site and in August Council announced its 'preferred proponent' for the redevelopment of the site.

2009 – In February, following the withdrawal of a joint venture partner of the 'preferred proponent', Council resolved to terminate the tender process followed an exhaustive financial capability and financial viability review undertaken by the Civic Hall Project Steering Committee. In December that year Council resolved to prepare a detailed Council accommodation brief.

2010 – The Civic Hall Site Master Plan was developed. This included a master plan for the site which included three options for the Civic Hall site.

2011 – Following an EOI and design competition process, Lyons Architects were appointed to design Council's new municipal office based on the master plan.

December 2011 – A planning permit application for a new Council accommodation building which called for the demolition of the existing Civic Hall was formally withdrawn from Council, following a resolution of Council to terminate the project in its current form.