

Heritage-Led Regeneration for Underused Historic Churches using a Community-Led Approach in Aotearoa New Zealand

Jordan Vo

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Abstract

The concept of adaptive reuse has become an important strategy for addressing housing shortages, climate pressures, and the loss of obsolete heritage by repurposing existing buildings. In Aotearoa New Zealand, many historic buildings, particularly churches, are at risk of demolition by neglect, seismic vulnerability, and non-compliance with current building codes. The diversity and shift in religious beliefs have left many ecclesiastical spaces underutilised, while urban expansion has made these site's amenities increasingly inaccessible by walking.

Although adaptive reuse is discussed with growing interest in New Zealand, its acceptance and implementation are still met with considerable scepticism. Many building conversions privilege profit and focus on the development of luxury apartments, upscale retail and exclusive event venues, that serve private capital rather than public good. This thesis therefore questions how can underutilised heritage churches be adapted and repurposed through a community-led approach to promote social cohesion and collective participation with local cultural heritage?

St James Church, constructed in 1900 and listed as a Category B heritage place on Auckland Council's heritage schedule, is situated in Mount Eden and forms the focus of this study. The methodology underpinning this research adopts a heritage-led design approach and proposes a theoretical framework based on four key principles drawn from the International Council on Monuments and Sites New Zealand Charter (2010): minimum intervention, use, adaptation and risk mitigation. This framework is informed by detailed site analysis, the examination of international case studies, and a foundation of existing knowledge established through a literature review. Together, these methods inform the development of both the design and theoretical framework, enabling a rigorous iterative design process that generates a potential model for the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings.

A bottom-up approach is proposed, through a charitable trust model where residents define programmes, design priorities and important heritage elements for conservation work. The potential outcome is a resilient, mixed-income community that gathers around a democratised heritage asset. Rather than showcasing elite capital, the reactivated church becomes a shared social infrastructure that affirms collective identity, encouraging intercultural dialogue, and demonstrating that heritage conservation and social justice can coexist, reinforcing one another in the changing modern urban landscape. The proposed framework offers a transferable model for community-led adaptive reuse of underused historic churches in similar contexts.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature: _____

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Glossary

Adaptation

- Adaptation refers to the modification of a place to accommodate an existing or new use, without compromising its cultural heritage values, and may include additions or alterations undertaken where appropriate (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Authenticity

- Authenticity is the credibility of a place's cultural heritage value, expressed through its tangible and intangible elements and determined through the evaluation of relevant evidence and an understanding of its cultural context (ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Community-led

- An approach in which local communities initiate, manage, and maintain heritage and place-based projects over time, drawing on local knowledge, voluntary effort, and collective responsibility rather than formal institutional control (Perkins et al., 2023).

Compatible Use

- Compatible use refers to a use that respects and sustains a place's cultural significance through minimal impact on its significant fabric, meanings, and associations, while supporting activities that contribute to its heritage values and authenticity (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Commodification (heritage)

- The process by which places or objects are treated as market goods and assigned economic value, often diminishing their cultural significance in favour of economic potential and altering how heritage is perceived and used (Schmitt, 2022).

Conservation

- Conservation is the process of caring and understanding for places of cultural heritage value to safeguard their significance, based on respect for existing fabric while undertaking essential work with maximum restraint to pass authenticity to future generations (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Glossary

Cultural Heritage Value

- Cultural heritage values encompass the tangible and intangible qualities that give a place significance, including its aesthetic, historical, spiritual, social, architectural, and other attributes linked to human activity (ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Minimum Intervention

- The principle that conservation work should involve only the least amount of change of change required to retain a place's cultural significance, avoiding unnecessary alteration of significant fabric or meaning (ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Spirit of Place

- The spirit of place refers to a location's unique character and atmosphere, shaped by its physical form, cultural meanings, and lived experience, giving places their identity and supporting meaningful dwelling (Norberg-Schulz, 1979).

Use

- Use refers to the functions, practices, and activities occurring at a place, including social, cultural, spiritual, or traditional practices that contribute to its cultural significance (Australia ICOMOS, 2013; ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Global Challenges for Historic Churches

Globally, heritage sites are increasingly vulnerable to climate change, tourism, urbanisation and commercialisation (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019; Thuc et al., 2024). Decaying historic building fabric from air pollution is an inevitable threat along with human activities or the absence of human interventions leading to neglect (Machat & Ziesemer, 2020). Urbanisation has threatened cultural heritage through environmental pollution, commercial land use, and construction projects, which increased the vulnerability and reduced the physical integrity of heritage sites (Fu et al., 2023). Among the many heritage building typologies, religious buildings have gained attention in the discourse of heritage conservation for the lack of use and the shortage of political commitment for their protection against vandalism, theft and destruction (Bumbaru et al., 2000; Machat & Ziesemer, 2020).

Across the West, secularisation and declining institutional authority within traditional Christian denominations in the United States, Australia, and Europe have increased the number of vacant religious buildings entering the property market in 2022 (Wong, 2023). Increasing cultural and religious diversity driven by migration has further reduced congregations and contributed to church decommissioning (Wong, 2023). In the United States alone, 4,500 Protestant churches closed in 2019, even as megachurches expanded across the United States, Australia, Africa, and Asia (Wong, 2023). These shifts in worship patterns leave many older churches requiring adaptive reuse, a complex process in which inappropriate approaches, such as subdivision, can hinder architectural integrity and spiritual character (Wong, 2023).

Increasing awareness of the commodification of cultural heritage reveals how market-driven tourism and commercialisation can turn heritage into branded commodities, trivialising local meanings and creating tension between residents and visitors (Schmitt, 2022). When heritage is valued for its economic gain, community needs are often neglected in favour of financial revenue, prestige, and symbolic capital, risking the alienation of locals and denying their intangible connection to heritage values (Schmitt, 2022). Another concern is commodity fetishism, where the World Heritage title's exchange value (symbolic prestige and economic capital) is prioritised over its use value of conserving heritage, with nations turning inscription meetings into marketplaces, trading votes for diplomatic or social capital (Schmitt, 2022).

With many vacant religious spaces available, there is an opportunity to adapt and repurpose them; however, the priority should be given to consider and involve the surrounding context rather than profit-driven commercialisation that denies public benefit.

1.2 Research Driver and Responses: Local Concerns for Historic Churches

These global concerns are also evident in Auckland at a smaller scale within the real estate market rather than tourism. In 2024, 74% of heritage buildings in Auckland were privately owned, with 40% repurposed from their original use, including churches converted into private dwellings (Auckland Council, 2024). Between 2006 and 2016, houses in Special Character Areas sold for 4.3% more than those outside these areas, highlighting heritage's economic appeal (Bade et al., 2020). Heritage buildings are also used as marketing tools by luxury brands such as Louis Vuitton and Gucci on Queen Street to convey prestige (Auckland Council, 2024). While this can support ongoing conservation, it also illustrates how heritage may be commodified, prioritising market value over cultural significance (Schmitt, 2022).

This is evident in real estate trends, where heritage buildings are adapted into luxury apartments, an approach popular among developers. Examples include the Chambers & Station apartments in Mount Eden, the St James Presbyterian Church in Wellington, and the 1915 Ford Factory in Parnell, which, although not heritage-listed, was marketed for its historic value (Kiroff & Parris, 2018). Heritage churches have also been converted into private homes, such as Mornington Presbyterian Church in Dunedin and St Augustine's Church in Auckland (Hawkes, 2023, 2024).

Many of these buildings also face seismic risk, as earthquake-prone regulations impose substantial financial and technical pressures. This challenge intensified after the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, which severely damaged key heritage sites such as Christchurch Cathedral (McSaveney, 2017).

Developer-led church conversions risk eroding spiritual character, as these buildings are often used as branding devices that promote exclusivity. Yet derelict churches also present opportunities for community-centred reuse, which can strengthen shared values, increase local engagement, and support ongoing care of historic fabric, reducing the risk of neglect.

St James Church, a Category B heritage building in Mount Eden, Auckland, has been adapted from a deconsecrated church into four luxury apartments (DPA Architects Ltd, 2021). Built in 1900, it was transferred to the Cook Islands Presbyterian community in the 1970s and closed in 2012 after the adjacent Sunday School Hall received a dangerous building notice, prompting the congregation to sell the property in 2014 due to repair costs (DPA Architects Ltd, 2021).

After being purchased by a developer in 2020, St James Church began its conversion into apartments in 2022, with one unit listed for over \$3.5 million (Smith, 2024). Although the property agent claimed profit was not a motive, the pricing and typical developer interests suggest otherwise (Smith, 2024). More critically, the privatisation of heritage churches restricts both physical and intangible cultural access, reducing public engagement and weakening intergenerational ties, with the former Pasifika congregation at risk of being erased from the site's memory.

Although the church's structure has been physically preserved, permanent interventions such as multi-floor insertions and rigid installations have disrupted its heritage integrity. Conservation should enable future generations to connect with the past while maintaining ongoing relevance. Given that Mount Eden's demographic has shifted due to gentrification, now comprising predominantly Western and Asian residents, the permanent conversion of heritage churches into luxury housing raises questions about the long-term appropriateness of such adaptations for future communities.

1.3 Research Motivations

The longevity of heritage churches and buildings is threatened by neglect and lack of collective maintenance, increasing the risk of irreversible loss or demolition. To address this, robust community-led conservation is essential, moving beyond reliance on external developers. Engaging local stakeholders enables the restoration of heritage sites as valuable neighbourhood assets, fostering identity, intergenerational connection, and social cohesion. This thesis investigates how community-driven development and ownership at the St James Church site can preserve its essential character and strengthen social connection now and into the future.

1.4 Research Question

How can heritage churches be adapted and repurposed through a community-led approach to promote social cohesion and collective participation with heritage?

1.5 Sub-Question

What participatory and governance models best translate community needs into viable adaptive-reuse interventions for heritage churches?

1.6 Aims and Objectives

Proposed aims for the St James Church site

- Develop an adaptive reuse design that supports the long-term conservation of St James Church.
- Preserve the church's spirit of place and cultural significance while introducing a new use aligned with its heritage.
- Create a community-driven model of development and ownership that enables local participation in shaping, using, and caring for the site.
- Strengthen the Mount Eden community's relationship with heritage through meaningful interaction, programming, and shared stewardship.
- Introduce new architectural interventions that are minimum, reversible, and respectful of the historic fabric, allowing future generations to reinterpret the site.

Contribution to the wider context of historic churches

- Offer a transferable framework that other communities in Aotearoa can use to revitalise their heritage churches.
- Demonstrate an alternative to privatisation or ruination by foregrounding community agency, social value, and long-term stewardship.
- Highlight how adaptive reuse can add new layers of meaning without compromising spiritual or historical significance.

1.7 Scope and Limitations

Scope of the Thesis

- Focuses on the St James Church site and its immediate context along View Road and Esplanade Road.
- Prioritises conservation of the existing church, with minimum intervention to preserve historic integrity.
- Proposes a new addition on the former St James Sunday School Hall site to accommodate contemporary community needs.
- Addresses current community needs while allowing flexibility for future adaptation.
- Acknowledges seismic risk due to the church's unreinforced masonry (URM) construction, with architectural responses proposed, although full engineering analysis remains outside the scope.
- Considers both tangible and intangible heritage values, including spiritual and cultural significance.
- Employs adaptive reuse principles to develop a respectful and contextually grounded design strategy.

Limitations of the Thesis

- No invasive investigation of the historic building fabric due to heritage constraints and research scope.
- Access to the church interior is restricted because it is currently private property.
- Reliance on existing photographs and archival material to understand the original interior and exterior.
- Community consultation is limited by the timeframe of the research project.
- Limited specialist knowledge of Christian liturgical practices, although religious considerations are acknowledged and respected.
- Seismic assessment is addressed conceptually but requires expert structural input beyond this research.
- The project uses qualitative research methods, with emphasis on theory, symbolism, case study analysis, and site interpretation rather than quantitative or data-intensive methodologies.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

This literature review examines the intersections of theory, practice, and governance in heritage conservation, with a focus on the adaptive reuse of heritage churches. It is structured around three themes. The first outlines foundational theories and guiding principles shaping global conservation discourse, including ethical debates, charters, and phenomenological perspectives on place and meaning. The second addresses contemporary challenges and design strategies, with emphasis on regulatory, seismic, financial, and social factors influencing adaptation. The third investigates models of community ownership, participation, and governance that support equitable and sustainable stewardship. Collectively, these themes establish a conceptual framework for assessing adaptive reuse approaches that seek authentic conservation outcomes while enabling functional adaptation and community benefit.

2.1 Theories and Principles of Heritage Conservation

2.1.1 Foundational Theories: From Conjecture to Values-based Conservation

Western heritage conservation practices were strongly shaped by nineteenth- and early twentieth-century debates, which established conceptual tensions that continue to influence contemporary approaches. Viollet-le-Duc's advocacy for conjectural restoration, which aimed to return buildings to an imagined complete state, prioritised stylistic unity but often risked erasing material traces of use and community memory (Jokilehto, 1986; Stanley-Price et al., 1996, p. 312). In contrast, Ruskin (1849/1903) and Morris (1877/1996) promoted an anti-restoration ethos that valued age, patina and historical continuity, warning that intervention could destroy authenticity; however, their rigidity offers limited guidance for buildings that require adaptation to meet modern needs. Riegl (1903/1996) later reframed these positions by introducing a spectrum of heritage values, including age, commemorative, use and newness, which highlighted the need to balance authenticity with practicality. His framework demonstrates that privileging one value can compromise another, a challenge that is particularly evident in heritage churches where spiritual, historical and functional considerations intersect (Riegl, 1903/1996).

Overall, these three foundational conservation theories reflect the persistent tensions within heritage practice. These debates later informed the development of contemporary values-based conservation frameworks that recognise both the tangible and intangible qualities of heritage and guide current practice.

2.1.2 Patina and Palimpsest in Architectural Conservation

Heritage buildings embody layered histories expressed through material traces, captured in the concepts of patina and palimpsest. Patina, aestheticised by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artists to evoke depth and harmony, represents the physical and experiential imprint of time on surfaces (Jokilehto, 1986; Bruno, 2014). Its preservation respects a building's lived past and fosters continuity. Palimpsest, originally describing manuscripts with partially visible layers of text beneath newer writings, has been adapted to architecture to describe physical and symbolic layering within the built environment (Ren, 2021). This concept highlights how selective exposure or erasure of layers shapes heritage narratives, sometimes reinforcing dominant identities while excluding marginalised histories (Ren, 2021). Machado (1976) views buildings as “packages of sense” (as cited in Stone, 2019, p. 2), where successive interventions add meaning to existing fabric, emphasising temporal and cultural depth rather than treating structures as blank canvases.

However, these frameworks introduce tensions. The emphasis on patina and accumulated layers can conflict with practical demands for adaptation or accessibility, raising questions about how to balance authenticity with evolving use. Palimpsest approaches may also privilege dominant narratives, complicating efforts toward inclusive conservation. The redevelopment of St James Church illustrates these dilemmas, as it risks obscuring the cultural identity of the church's former Pasifika congregation.

Despite these challenges, patina and palimpsest remain crucial theoretical lenses for this thesis. They frame heritage buildings as dynamic, layered entities whose meanings evolve over time, emphasising the need for sensitive interventions that respect material authenticity and complex social histories. This focus aligns with the research aim of exploring conservation strategies that negotiate heritage value with contemporary relevance in adaptive reuse.

2.1.3 Conservation Charters

Heritage conservation charters guide current approaches to the adaptation and protection of heritage places. The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), established in 1965 with its New Zealand branch formed in 1987, provides both global and locally specific guidance for heritage management (ICOMOS, n.d.; ICOMOS New Zealand, n.d.). The 1964 Venice Charter established foundational international conservation principles, but its emphasis on tangible authenticity was later expanded by the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which recognised intangible values such as traditions, techniques, spirit, and feeling (Cefai, 2024). The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter (2010) further emphasises minimum intervention, requiring compatible and reversible changes while discouraging the removal of patina, which conveys authenticity (ICOMOS New Zealand, 2010).

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) has published guidelines for altering and developing heritage buildings, including historic churches, and for seismic strengthening, to ensure adaptive reuse meets safety, accessibility, and aesthetic requirements while new work remains honest in its use of modern materials (Bowman & Robinson, 2000; Cochran, 2000).

Phenomenological understandings of place have also influenced contemporary conservation theory. Scholars such as Relph (1976), Norberg-Schulz (1979), and Harries (2000) emphasise that place is formed through experience, memory, and identification rather than physical form alone, a perspective particularly relevant to historic churches where collective memory and community identity are deeply embedded. These ideas informed values-based conservation frameworks, most clearly articulated in the Burra Charter, which privileges cultural significance, community association, and the lived experience of place in guiding interventions (Australia ICOMOS, 2013). This emphasis provides a foundation for adaptive reuse strategies that sustain both heritage fabric and the social and cultural connections that give historic places ongoing relevance.

While these charters set high conservation standards, strict adherence to principles like minimum intervention and reversibility can restrict the integration of new uses or necessary upgrades, particularly in the context of seismic strengthening and modern facilities (Muñoz Viñas, 2005; Bowron & Richardson, 2000). Despite these challenges, conservation charters remain vital for guiding specialists in adaptation, ensuring that interventions at St James Church are sensitive, reversible, and compatible with both historic and contemporary values.

2.1.4 Reversibility

Reversibility is a fundamental principle in heritage conservation, advocating that interventions should be capable of being undone to allow future conservators to address evolving needs or correct potential issues (Feilden, 2007). Feilden (2007) emphasises that preservation actions must remain reversible to protect the integrity of heritage sites over time. However, Brückner (2010) questions the practicality of this ideal, arguing that reversibility should be applied pragmatically, as some irreversible interventions are justified when they protect significant fabric or enable meaningful new uses, like the Kulturspeicher museum in Würzburg. Similarly, Muñoz Viñas (2005) argues that true reversibility is unattainable, as it is impossible to restore an object to a previous state.

In response, Muñoz Viñas (2005) proposes alternative concepts such as removability, which accepts that some irreversible traces may remain, and “retreatability,” which ensures current interventions do not hinder future conservation efforts. While reversibility is often regarded as a “sacred tenet” of conservation (Smith, 1999, as cited in Muñoz Viñas, 2005, p. 187), strict adherence can restrict necessary adaptations, particularly when buildings require new uses or modern upgrades. Despite these critiques, the principle remains crucial, as it encourages careful, innovative solutions. Incorporating concepts such as removability and retreatability makes reversibility more practical, ensuring conservation remains both responsible and adaptable.

2.1.5 Section Conclusion

This section has outlined the foundations and ethical debates that shape heritage conservation, revealing the enduring tension between restoration and preservation exemplified by Viollet-le-Duc and Ruskin. Riegl's value spectrum offers a more nuanced framework for balancing authenticity with practical use, a challenge central to the adaptive reuse of heritage churches. Concepts such as patina and palimpsest frame heritage as a layered record of time, while phenomenological perspectives emphasise architecture's role in sustaining memory, identity, and symbolic meaning. Conservation principles such as reversibility and minimum intervention guide these tensions, though their application often exposes contradictions between theory and practical constraints. Together, these theories form the critical lens for exploring how heritage value can be negotiated with contemporary adaptation.

2.2 Adaptive Reuse Practices and Contemporary Challenges

2.2.1 Adaptive Reuse for Heritage Churches

Adaptive reuse has deep historical roots, formally recognised as a conservation principle in the 1964 Venice Charter and gaining prominence in the 1970s as a creative practice informed by philosophical and theoretical ideas (Plevoets & Cleempoel, 2019). Emerging from nineteenth-century heritage conservation, the incorporation of contemporary architecture in the 1960s propelled adaptive reuse into mainstream practice, allowing historic buildings to be recontextualised in the present. For heritage churches, adaptive reuse is not merely a design problem, but a cultural and social negotiation, balancing architectural preservation with the transformation necessary for continued relevance.

Adaptive reuse is broadly defined as the repurposing of existing buildings for new uses, offering an alternative to demolition or strict preservation by extending building life cycles and reducing demolition and construction waste, which accounts for 70% of New Zealand's total waste (Wong, 2017; Beca Limited, 2025). Wong (2017) highlights its environmental benefits, while Douglas (2011) and Bullen and Love (2011) emphasise the technical demands of modification, including internal reconfiguration, building code compliance, and external fabric restoration to maintain heritage character. Vallis et al. (2025) further connect adaptive reuse with regenerative design, which promotes reciprocal relationships between people and ecosystems through the adaptive reactivation of existing places. In this view, reused buildings facilitate positive local change in ecological, social, and cultural renewal through strategies such as placemaking, resource efficiency, and community co-design (Vallis et al., 2025). For historic churches, adaptive reuse therefore extends their functional life while contributing to broader regenerative outcomes.

Design frameworks for adaptive reuse reveal both overlap and divergence across authors. Brooker and Stone (2019) propose three primary strategies: intervention, insertion, and installation, while Bollack (2013) proposes parasite, wrap, juxtaposition, and weaving. Both recognise insertion as a key method for integrating contemporary elements within historic fabric. Brooker and Stone (2019) describe insertion as precise placement within the historic shell, whereas Bollack (2013) frames it as a dynamic exchange that strengthens the relationship between past and present. Bollack's (2013) juxtaposition framework emphasises visual and conceptual contrast, allowing historical and contemporary narratives to coexist. Installation, as defined by Brooker and Stone (2019), complements insertion through lightweight, reversible interventions that maintain future flexibility and align with conservation principles.

For heritage churches, strategies such as insertion, complemented by reversible installation, and juxtaposition offer a balanced approach that preserves historic fabric while accommodating new uses. Bollack's (2013) juxtaposition challenges conventional conservation ideals of visual harmony by fostering a more engaging dialogue with heritage, though insensitive application may overwhelm the original fabric and diminish its significance. Installation's reversibility supports insertion by enabling future adaptation, a crucial consideration for the evolving functions of heritage churches. Together, these strategies respect the layered meanings of churches, maintain their architectural and symbolic integrity, and support functional transformation without irreversible loss of historic fabric, aligning with both conservation ethics and practical demands.

2.2.2 Seismic, Regulatory, and Financial Barriers to Heritage Church Reuse

The seismic vulnerability of heritage buildings in New Zealand, notably exposed by the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch earthquake, prompted government-led efforts to strengthen earthquake-prone building (EPB) regulations. URM, prevalent in heritage churches and buildings, proved especially susceptible, with substantial losses among Christchurch Council-listed heritage sites. Previous responses, such as Auckland Council's EPB Guidance, established strict retrofit requirements even in regions of relatively low seismic hazard.

The Building (Earthquake-prone Buildings) Amendment Act (2016) framed a rigid system mandating retrofit of buildings assessed below 34% of the New Building Standard (NBS) within 35 years, with significant financial penalties reinforcing compliance (Auckland Council, n.d.). Such requirements often imposed prohibitive costs on owners, exemplified by Auckland Council's 2014 estimated retrofit cost exceeding \$270,000 (excluding inflation) for a two-storey 600m² URM building, incentivising church closures or sales, as with St James Church (Auckland Council, n.d.).

Despite the 2016 Amendment Act, challenges remain in aligning regulatory intent with owner capacity. Religious communities and private owners often lack practical financial assistance, face inconsistent engineering advice, and are sceptical of the value of retrofitting, particularly where market returns on seismic investment are limited (Egbelakin et al., 2011). These conditions can perpetuate cycles of neglect and loss, as demonstrated by the case of Carlile House.

Carlile House, a Category A heritage landmark in Grey Lynn built in 1886, exemplifies the tension between regulatory intent and financial reality (Auckland Council, n.d.; McKenzie, 2011). The building now lies derelict and was declared dangerous by Auckland Council in 2021 after being registered earthquake-prone in 2018 (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, n.d.; Williams, 2021). Owned since the 1970s by the United Church of Tonga, the site holds deep cultural significance as the origin of New Zealand's first Tongan church community (Williams, 2021). However, with restoration costs estimated between \$7–10 million, the congregation lacks the means for redevelopment (Williams, 2021). The mutual rejection of proposals by both parties including Auckland Council's proposals for public acquisition and joint redevelopment have stalled (Williams, 2021). This impasse has left the building vulnerable to demolition by neglect, symbolising the broader challenge of safeguarding heritage when public funding and private resources are both limited.

Carlile House demonstrates how regulatory frameworks that prioritise legal compliance over collaborative funding mechanisms can inadvertently result in demolition by neglect. This case indicates that, although the 2025 EPB reforms will exempt many Auckland buildings from seismic upgrade requirements due to the region's low seismic risk, longstanding structural and financial governance issues remain unresolved (Palmer, 2025). Without new funding models or shared approaches to responsibility, heritage assets such as Carlile House remain suspended between cultural value and economic infeasibility.

The 2025 amendments to New Zealand's EPB regulations introduce a risk-based system that replaces the NBS metric with assessments focused on critical collapse vulnerabilities (Palmer, 2025). Under the new framework, seismic strengthening, remediation, and warning notices are no longer mandatory for structures under three storeys in towns with populations below 10,000 (Palmer, 2025). Extension requests for seismic strengthening deadlines may be approved by councils for periods up to 15 years (Palmer, 2025). National reforms are projected to remove approximately 2,900 buildings from the earthquake-prone register, lower remediation expenses for another 1,440 structures, and restrict full retrofit requirements to nearly 80 high-risk buildings (Palmer, 2025). However, URM buildings with unsecured facades directed at public areas or neighbouring structures will remain priority risks under the new earthquake regulations, alongside concrete buildings three storeys or above (Palmer, 2025). These categories include many heritage structures, which will still require seismic retrofitting. The reforms lessen regulatory pressure but leave the core governance and funding challenges facing heritage buildings unresolved.

The seismic retrofitting completed during the St James Church conversion suggests that, had the 2025 reforms been implemented earlier, the Cook Island congregation might have avoided substantial strengthening costs. While the developer may view the work as excessive, it remains a valuable investment in the church's longevity, with benefits beyond the present regulatory context.

2.2.3 The Threat of Gentrification

Gentrification refers to the influx of wealthier residents into transitional urban areas, triggering renovation and reinvestment that raise property values but often displace existing communities (Bucher, 1996). Framed as neighbourhood revitalisation, such processes frequently prioritise investor interests over community stability. As a result, adaptive reuse and heritage-led redevelopment, though contributing to urban renewal, can also perpetuate spatial inequality through rising rents and the displacement of long-term residents.

Zukin (1987) extends the understanding of gentrification by highlighting how heritage restoration and adaptive reuse serve as catalysts for class division. Zukin (1987) argues that cultural practices such as heritage preservation are not solely aesthetic but function as part of a broader strategy of “quasi-bourgeois habitus” (Zukin, 1987, p.135), through which middle-class gentrifiers employ heritage conservation to enhance social status and cultural capital. This process, while framed as community-oriented revitalisation, often results in rising property values that displace existing residents, particularly renters. Building on this critique, Lynch (2022) examines the adaptive reuse of inner-city churches in London, demonstrating how conversions into loft apartments commodify religious heritage and contribute to urban class restructuring and privatisation. Both scholars reveal a paradox wherein adaptive reuse protects tangible historic fabric yet simultaneously fuels social exclusion and spatial inequality. These perspectives underscore the complex relationship between heritage-led development and gentrification, emphasising the need to critically assess whose interests adaptive reuse ultimately serves.

While Zukin (1987) and Lynch (2022) offer valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of heritage-led gentrification, their analyses remain limited by a focus on Western metropolitan contexts. This perspective overlooks the diversity of policy environments, community responses, and heritage frameworks elsewhere. Their emphasis on class dynamics and negative outcomes of adaptive reuse also downplays examples of inclusive projects or effective regulatory interventions. These limitations highlight the need for more nuanced research that accounts for intersecting factors such as ethnicity, gender, and local history, and assesses adaptive reuse through a broader equity lens.

Kee and Chau (2020) confirm that adaptive reuse of heritage architecture in Hong Kong produces clear economic effects, raising nearby property values by 11.7% (Blue House) and 14.8% (7 Mallory Street) after receiving heritage grading under Hong Kong's historic buildings classification system. This supports Zukin's (1987) and Lynch's (2022) claims that conservation can elevate market values and spark gentrification, though Kee and Chau (2020) argue these effects are context dependent. Kee and Chau (2020) acknowledge gentrification risks but contend that when adaptive reuse prioritises community benefit and includes inclusive, bottom-up participation, such as the Blue House project, it can instead foster equity and resilience in urban renewal.

This literature reveals the complexity of heritage-led adaptive reuse. While adaptive reuse preserves historic fabric, it often operates within market forces that raise property values and displace vulnerable communities. Zukin (1987) and Lynch (2022) critique this paradox, whereas Kee and Chau (2020) demonstrate that inclusive, community-focused approaches can mitigate such effects and strengthen social resilience. These findings suggest that adaptive reuse should be assessed not only for conservation outcomes but also for governance structures and equitable urban renewal.

2.2.4 Section Conclusion

Adaptive reuse offers a dynamic approach to preserving heritage churches by balancing cultural significance, architectural integrity, and contemporary needs. While seismic vulnerability and regulatory challenges have historically constrained such projects, recent reforms in New Zealand's EPB system enable more targeted and feasible interventions, particularly by focusing resources on higher-risk structures. St James Church demonstrate how proactive seismic retrofitting aligns with ICOMOS New Zealand standards and extends building life, while acknowledging that financial realities may require flexible adaptation strategies. Crucially, adaptive reuse must also contend with the risk of gentrification, where rising property values and redevelopment can displace existing communities. Effective heritage church reuse hinges on integrating technical, financial, cultural, and social factors within adaptive frameworks that support both conservation and equitable community outcomes.

2.3 Community Ownership, Participation, and Governance in Heritage Conservation

2.3.1 Regaining Community Ownership of Heritage

Community ownership and participatory governance have become central themes in contemporary heritage conservation discourse, particularly for promoting adaptive reuse and sustaining cultural significance. This section examines key models of community-led ownership and stewardship, including charitable trusts, community land trusts, and collective ownership frameworks. It explores how participatory governance fosters social cohesion and redistributes power by enabling community agency in heritage management. Emphasising both New Zealand and international examples, the review critically evaluates governance frameworks that support community control and retention of heritage assets, with a view to identifying pathways for restoring or promoting community agency in alignment with the thesis aims.

Kip and Oevermann (2022) identify three European-derived models that frame current understanding of community ownership in heritage adaptive reuse. These include the Heritable Building Lease (HBL), Community Land Trust (CLT), and Community Ownership (CO) (Kip and Oevermann, 2022). The HBL model, which originated in German law, separates land and building ownership by offering leaseholders long-term leases (up to 99 years) with adjustable rents (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). This arrangement enables leaseholders to develop and maintain buildings under an adjustable ground rent system, thereby facilitating long-term stewardship without transferring full land ownership (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). CLTs, originating in the United States and widely implemented in the United Kingdom (UK), place land ownership in a non-profit trust governed by a democratically elected board including residents, users, and external stakeholders, integrating affordable housing and community service objectives (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). Community ownership (CO), originating in rural Scotland and strengthened by land reforms such as the 2003 Land Reform Act, grants communities the authority to own and manage land and buildings outright, supported by financial assistance and preferential acquisition rights (Kip & Oevermann, 2022).

While each model reflects significant advances in securing community agency over heritage assets, inherent limitations emerge. HBL's reliance on informal agreements threatens continuity in neighbourhood stewardship absent vigilant oversight (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). CLTs incorporate affordability safeguards, including non-profit land ownership and price controls tied to local income levels, yet they rely on volunteer commitment and private sector partnerships that may stall projects (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). CO maximises community control but demands substantial upfront capital and put pressure on communities to make complex heritage decisions without guaranteed expertise (Kip & Oevermann, 2022). Although all models aim to resist gentrification, their technical demands often attract middle-class professionals, limiting community diversity while offering little protection against broader property market pressures (Kip & Oevermann, 2022).

2.3.2 Community Ownership through Charitable Trust Model: New Zealand and International Contexts

In New Zealand, the Charitable Trust Act 1957 underpins community governance models enabling trustees to become legal entities capable of holding property, entering contracts, and securing funding for heritage conservation (Charities Act 2005). Three case studies of St David's Memorial Church, The Village Square and The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora demonstrate how charitable trusts can acquire, conserve, and adapt heritage buildings for public benefit.

St David's Memorial Church in Grafton demonstrates the effectiveness of charitable ownership, with the trust raising \$1 million through the Art of Remembrance campaign and additional funds through the Buy St David's fundraiser to preserve and acquire the building for the community (Friends of St David's Trust, n.d.). The Village Square Trust manages the Parnell and Epsom Community Centres, including the Category A heritage-listed Jubilee Building (Auckland Council, n.d.; Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga, n.d.; The Village Square, n.d.). With over 40 years of operation, the trust sustains its heritage sites through diverse revenue streams such as childcare services, markets, venue hire, and community programmes (The Village Square, n.d.).

The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora Trust provides a large-scale example, having managed the precinct for over 40 years, including 23 buildings, most of which are scheduled heritage places in the Christchurch District Plan (Christchurch City Council, n.d.; The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora Trust, n.d.). Following severe damage in the 2011 Christchurch earthquake, the site required a \$290 million restoration (The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora Trust, n.d.). In 2024, Christchurch City Council committed \$1.5 million over two years to support ongoing operations, while the trust sought an additional \$1.8 million annually to remain viable (Burns, 2024; McDonald, 2024). While seismic damage triggered this particular crisis, this case demonstrates how unforeseen events more broadly can critically undermine the financial sustainability of charitable heritage trusts.

Internationally, community charitable trusts such as the Churches Conservation Trust in the UK and Warragul Heritage Preservation Association in Australia illustrate parallel stewardship models that reclaim and revitalise redundant heritage churches as community hubs, supporting social cohesion while preserving heritage fabric (Churches Conservation Trust [CCT], n.d.; Wesley of Warragul, n.d.).

The New Zealand charitable trust model effectively legalises community stewardship and facilitates access to funding, but it remains dependent on philanthropic support and must navigate complex restoration costs and long-term operational pressures, as demonstrated by The Arts Centre's 2024 funding uncertainties (McDonald, 2024). International counterparts such as the United Kingdom's Churches Conservation Trust benefit from government grants and protective legal frameworks, yet they also face challenges associated with demographic change, maintenance costs, and shifting community needs (Churches Conservation Trust, n.d.).

Despite these limitations, charitable trusts remain the most flexible and legally sound vehicle for New Zealand's bicultural context and funding environment, as local case studies demonstrate. However, sustained impact requires greater government financial and technical assistance, alongside mechanisms to curb property speculation.

2.3.3 Section Conclusion

Incorporating voices from diverse community groups, rather than solely relying on expert leadership, can lead to fairer and more inclusive heritage management. International examples show that strong legal protections and sustained public funding are essential to maintain heritage projects over time. Overall, combining inclusive participation, reliable funding, and measures to limit speculation helps communities take ownership of heritage sites and strengthen social bonds.

2.4 Proposed Theoretical Framework for Adaptive Reuse of Historic Churches

The learnings from the preceding literature review have informed the development of a theoretical framework to situate the adaptive reuse of heritage churches within an integrated perspective that combines the ethical and technical guidance of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, the phenomenological insights of Christian Norberg-Schulz (1979), and the community-oriented approach of Plevoets and Van Cleempoel (2019). Together, these frameworks establish a foundation for a design methodology that is both respectful of heritage values and responsive to contemporary community needs.

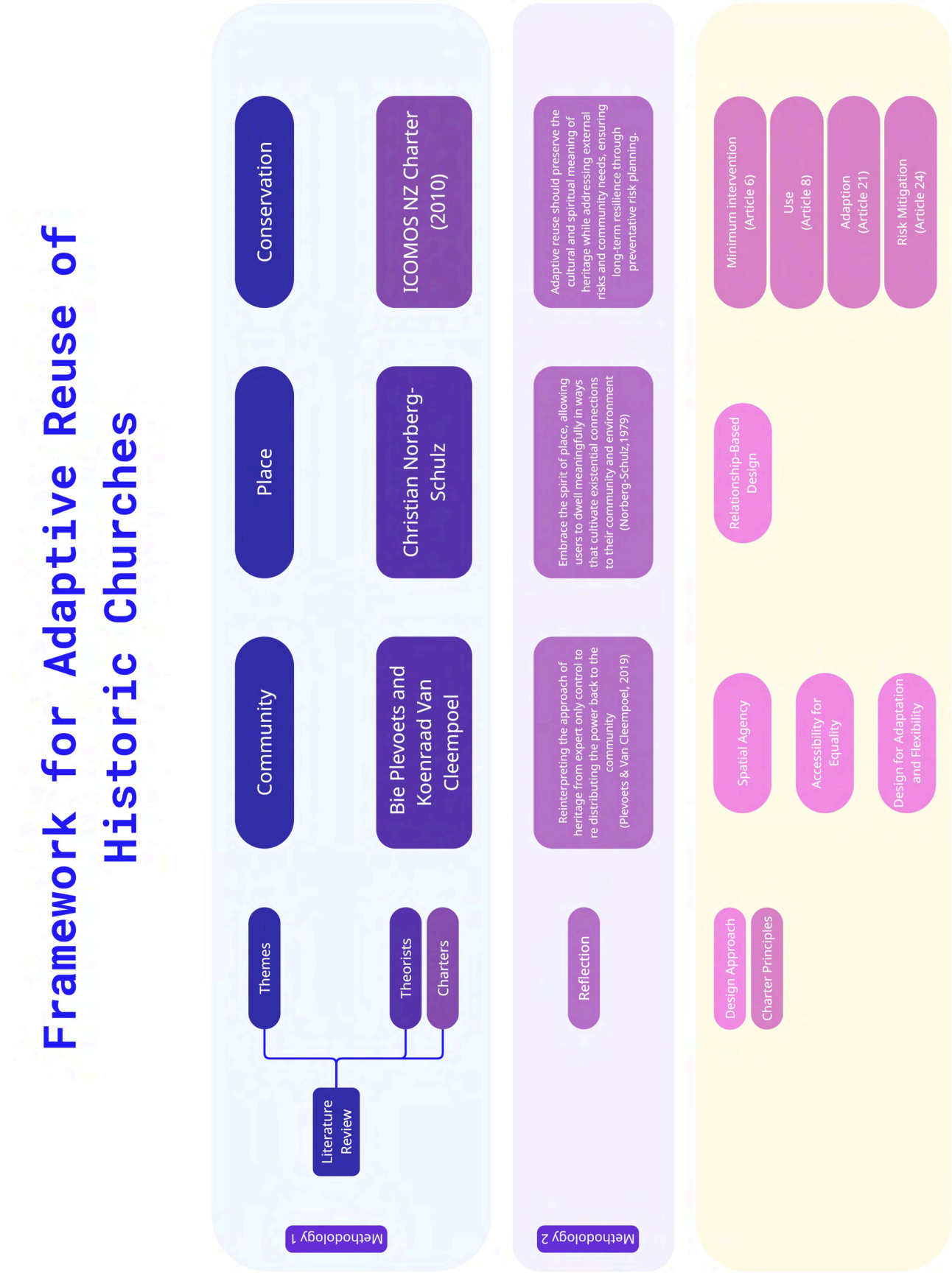
Within the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, the four principles of continuing minimum intervention (Article 6), use (Article 8), adaptation (Article 21) and risk mitigation (Article 24) form the ethical and practical foundation for the intervention proposed in this exegesis. For St James Church, maintaining meaningful use ensures that its spiritual and communal functions continue to express its cultural significance. Adaptation, when required to accommodate new uses, should respect the building's heritage values and be reversible where possible. The minimum intervention principle demands that any change be the least intrusive necessary to achieve conservation outcomes, preserving the authenticity of form, materials, and setting. Finally, mitigating seismic risk is essential to protect the place's future without undermining its integrity. Together, these principles guide a design process that upholds both the physical and intangible continuity of the church.

Drawing on Christian Norberg-Schulz's (1979) phenomenology of place, particularly his concept of spirit of place, this thesis interprets St James Church as a dwelling shaped by spiritual memory and collective identity. Preserving the church's atmospheric and symbolic qualities thus becomes integral to adaptive reuse, ensuring that new interventions foster continuity of meaning rather than visual imitation.

Complementing this phenomenological perspective, Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) framework advocates for democratic, community-led reuse practices that challenge expert-dominated heritage practices and the control of heritage by developers or influential stakeholders. This approach aligns with the thesis objective to enable community agency within the ongoing life of the building (Plevoets & Van Cleempoel, 2019). While the sacred space of the church requires sensitive adaptation rooted in its spiritual significance, the proposed new extension offers opportunities for more flexible, vernacular participation, reflecting a continuum between sacred preservation and community activation.

The theoretical framework integrates the ethical guidance of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, the experiential insights of architectural phenomenology, and the democratic ethos of community-led adaptive reuse. Together, these perspectives provide a robust foundation for guiding the adaptive reuse of St James Church, which serves as a case study to test the framework and explore its application to other sites in future research. They ensure that heritage values are preserved through sensitive intervention while embracing community agency and evolving social functions, thus supporting a respectful and sustainable future for this significant place.

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework for the Adaptive Reuse and Heritage Conservation of St James Church



Note. Diagram by author.

Chapter 3 Case Study Analysis

This chapter examines four case studies to explore how heritage buildings, particularly churches, have been adaptively reused to support community use while responding to conservation principles. Two international precedents from England were selected for the country's extensive experience in church adaptation, including permanent interior insertions and externally connected additions. Two New Zealand precedents provide local comparison within the regulatory and cultural context of Aotearoa, including a reversible internal intervention and a contemporary extension to a heritage building. Each case is analysed using the theoretical framework proposed in Chapter 2, beginning with historical context and followed by evaluation against selected ICOMOS and theoretical principles, including use, adaptation, minimum intervention, risk mitigation, community-driven reuse, and spirit of place. Each concludes with a reflective assessment using levels such as "achieved," "moderate," and "underperformed," to inform the design approach for St James Church.

3.1 All Souls Church, Bolton

All Souls Church in Bolton, England, demonstrates how adaptive reuse can reinstate a redundant historic church as a significant community asset. Built in 1881 in the Gothic Revival style by Paley and Austin and listed Grade II, the church retained its architectural and cultural value despite closing in 1987 due to a declining congregation (Brooker & Stone, 2019; Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings [SPAB], 2015). Years of neglect prompted community member Inayat Omarji to initiate a revival effort (SPAB, 2015). An independent enterprise was formed in partnership with the Churches Conservation Trust, and a total of £4.9 million was secured for restoration and reuse, including £4.3 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Heritage Fund, 2014; SPAB, 2015).

Use (Article 8) Achieved

- All Souls Church embodies the use principle by developing new community-focused functions that keep the building actively used, support long-term conservation, and maintain compatibility with its historic and sacred character. The church remains consecrated, allowing it to potentially resume use as a place of worship in the future. All Souls Church now functions as a vibrant community hub, accommodating business units, conference and event spaces, a cinema, and a café (SPAB, 2015).

Adaptation (reversibility) (Article 21) Underperformed

- The approach by OMI Architects used an insertion strategy that placed two freestanding, double-storey pods within the nave (Brooker & Stone, 2019; SPAB, 2015). This intervention retained some of the church's spatial integrity and maintained visual continuity with the historic timber ceiling and walls (Brooker & Stone, 2019). However, the pods are not fully reversible because they were designed as permanent structures. They could potentially be removed in the future, but doing so would be difficult and would leave traces on the historic fabric. The pods dominate and overlap the church's nave rather than complement it, creating a pronounced contrast in colour and form that may be deemed incompatible under ICOMOS principles.

Minimum Intervention (Article 6) Underperformed

- The intervention prioritises contemporary functionality, exemplified by the removal of pews to enable flexible community use, though this has sparked debate over appropriate alterations within a sacred interior (SPAB, 2015). The design avoids direct attachment to historic walls, preserving the nave's primary structure. However, the permanent pods, required to accommodate new uses, do not fully align with the principle of minimum intervention.

Risk Mitigation (Article 24) Achieved

- Extensive conservation work addressed long-term material deterioration. Masonry was repointed, roofs were re-slatted, leaded-glass windows were repaired, and historic carpentry was conserved (SPAB, 2015). Internal repair work also contributed to improving the building's condition. These actions align with the charter, which emphasises proactive risk mitigation to reduce vulnerabilities and safeguard heritage fabric.

Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) Community Driven Reuse Achieved

- The project is managed by the Churches Conservation Trust, a UK charity that conserves historic churches of cultural and architectural value (All Souls, n.d.). Its community-centred governance reflects Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) model of democratic adaptive reuse, placing stewardship and programming responsibilities within the community to sustain continued use.

Norberg- Schulz (1979) Spirit of Place Underperformed

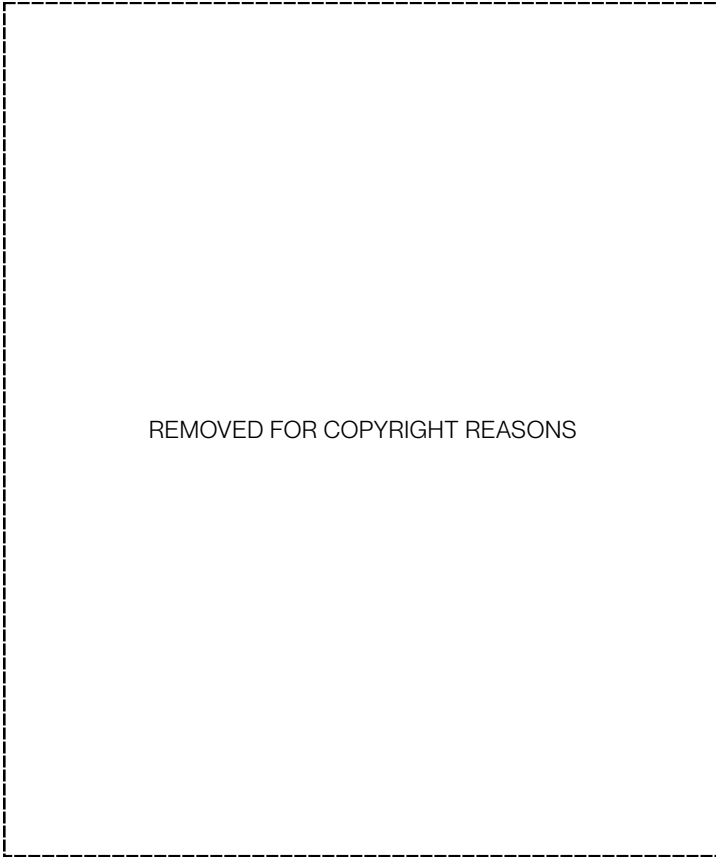
- While the intervention is functionally successful, the contrast between the contemporary pods and the historic Gothic interior raises questions about the continuity of the church's spirit of place. The new structures' dominant mass introduces a contrasting aesthetic that may reduce the traditionally sacred atmosphere. This highlights the ongoing challenge of balancing new functional requirements with the conservation of both tangible and intangible values, as well as the continuity of sacred experience.

Conclusion

All Souls Church demonstrates both the potential and the difficulties of insertion-based adaptive reuse in heritage contexts. The project incorporates key ICOMOS New Zealand Charter principles of adaptation, continued use, and risk mitigation. It also prompts critical consideration of how architectural decisions affect identity, memory, and the experience of sacred heritage. These insights are relevant to the challenges and opportunities present at St James Church.

Figure 2

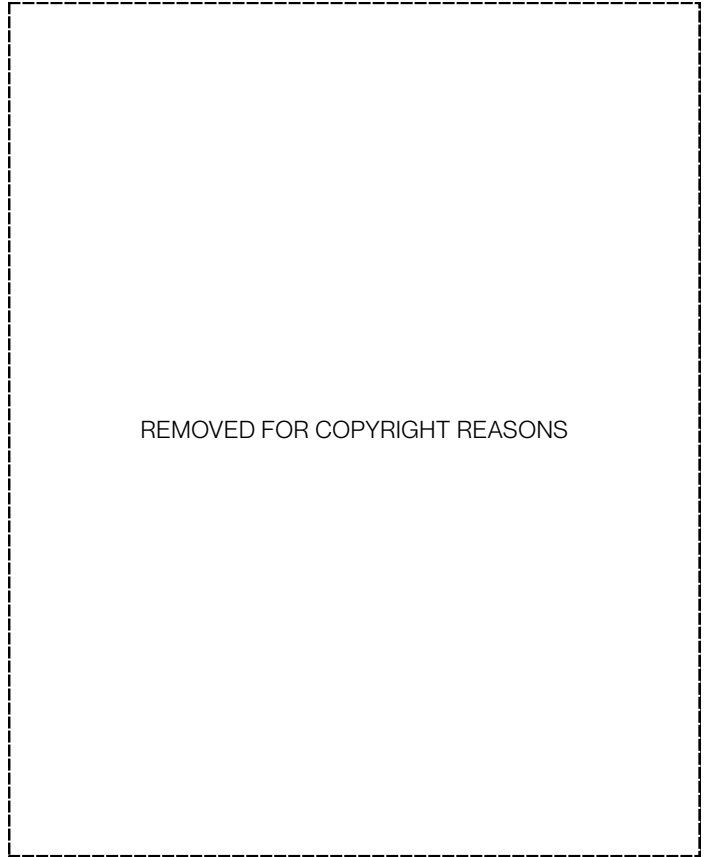
Exterior View of All Souls Church After Adaptive Reuse



Note. From *Fears over future of All Souls Church in Astley Bridge amid reports of financial struggles*, by L. Thorp, 2016, The Bolton News (<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/14873666/fears-over-future-of-all-souls-church-in-astley-bridge-amid-reports-of-financial-struggles/>). Copyright 2016 by The Bolton News.

Figure 3

Interior View of the New Addition to All Souls Church



Note. From *All Souls Bolton*, by OMI Architects, n.d. (<https://www.omiarchitects.com/works/all-souls-bolton/>). Copyright n.d. by OMI Architects.

Figure 4

Freestanding Elevated Addition to All Souls Church



Note. From *Community Space*, by All Souls Bolton, n.d. (<https://www.omiarchitects.com/works/all-souls-bolton/>). Copyright n.d. by All Souls Bolton.

Figure 5

Entrance View of All Souls Church



Note. From *All Souls Bolton*, by OMI Architects, n.d. (<https://www.omiarchitects.com/works/all-souls-bolton/>). Copyright n.d. by OMI Architects.

3.2 The Church of St Mary-at-the-Quay, Ipswich

St Mary-at-the-Quay in Ipswich, England, built between 1450 and 1550, reflects the town's maritime heritage (ArchDaily, 2017). After wartime bomb damage in 1942 and a declining congregation, the church closed in 1948 and fell into neglect (ArchDaily, 2017; Noble, 2017). It was preserved in 1958 through efforts by the Friends of Friendless Churches and the Ipswich Boys' Brigade (Noble, 2017). In 2008, Suffolk Mind, in partnership with the Churches Conservation Trust, began its adaptive reuse as a community wellbeing hub (ArchDaily, 2017; CCT, n.d.). Supported by £3.6 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund within a £5.1 million redevelopment, the building reopened as Quay Place in 2016 (Heritage Fund, 2016, 2022).

Use (Article 8) Achieved

- The project demonstrates the use principle by sustaining the church's community and spiritual role through wellbeing programmes rather than regular worship. Quay Place offered counselling, community groups, and courses, but closed in 2020 when income could not meet high operational and maintenance costs, a situation worsened by the financial impact of COVID-19 (Heritage Fund, 2022; Suffolk Mind, 2020). The building remains under the care of the Churches Conservation Trust, and River Church Ipswich became the tenant in 2021, reinstating its worship use and function (CCT, 2021).

Adaptation (reversibility) (Article 21) Moderate

- Adaptation is demonstrated through the insertion of new elements for contemporary use. Molyneux Kerr Architects introduced a two-storey southeast extension and a slender glass-and-steel mezzanine that preserves spatial integrity through transparency (ArchDaily, 2017). The extension follows Bollack's (2013) parasite strategy, attaching to the historic stonework while expressing a distinct contemporary language, with extensive glazing maintaining visual compatibility between old and new fabric (ArchDaily, 2017).
- Reversibility is partially achieved through the lightweight construction of the freestanding steel mezzanine, which uses a 150 mm thick deck, avoids direct connections to significant fabric, and could be removed with limited impact (ArchDaily, 2017). In contrast, the attached southeast extension required fabric removal, making the overall intervention not fully reversible.

Minimum Intervention (Article 6) Moderate

- This is shown in the retention of chipped plaster and exposed stone, which maintains a clear distinction between historic fabric and new elements and limits unnecessary alteration. However, the removal of church fabric required to connect the new extension does not meet the principle of minimum intervention.

Risk Mitigation (Article 24) Achieved

- Risk mitigation is demonstrated through the removal of the poorly conceived 1960s concrete buttresses on the south aisle and their replacement with a new mezzanine that provides a more refined structural and spatial resolution (ArchDaily, 2017).

Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) Community Driven Reuse Moderate

- The church is cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust and was previously operated by Suffolk Mind, a mental health charity (Heritage Fund, n.d.). Although its programming served the community, decision-making rested with external organisations, limiting local agency and long-term sustainability and potentially contributing to its closure.

Norberg- Schulz (1979) Spirit of Place Achieved

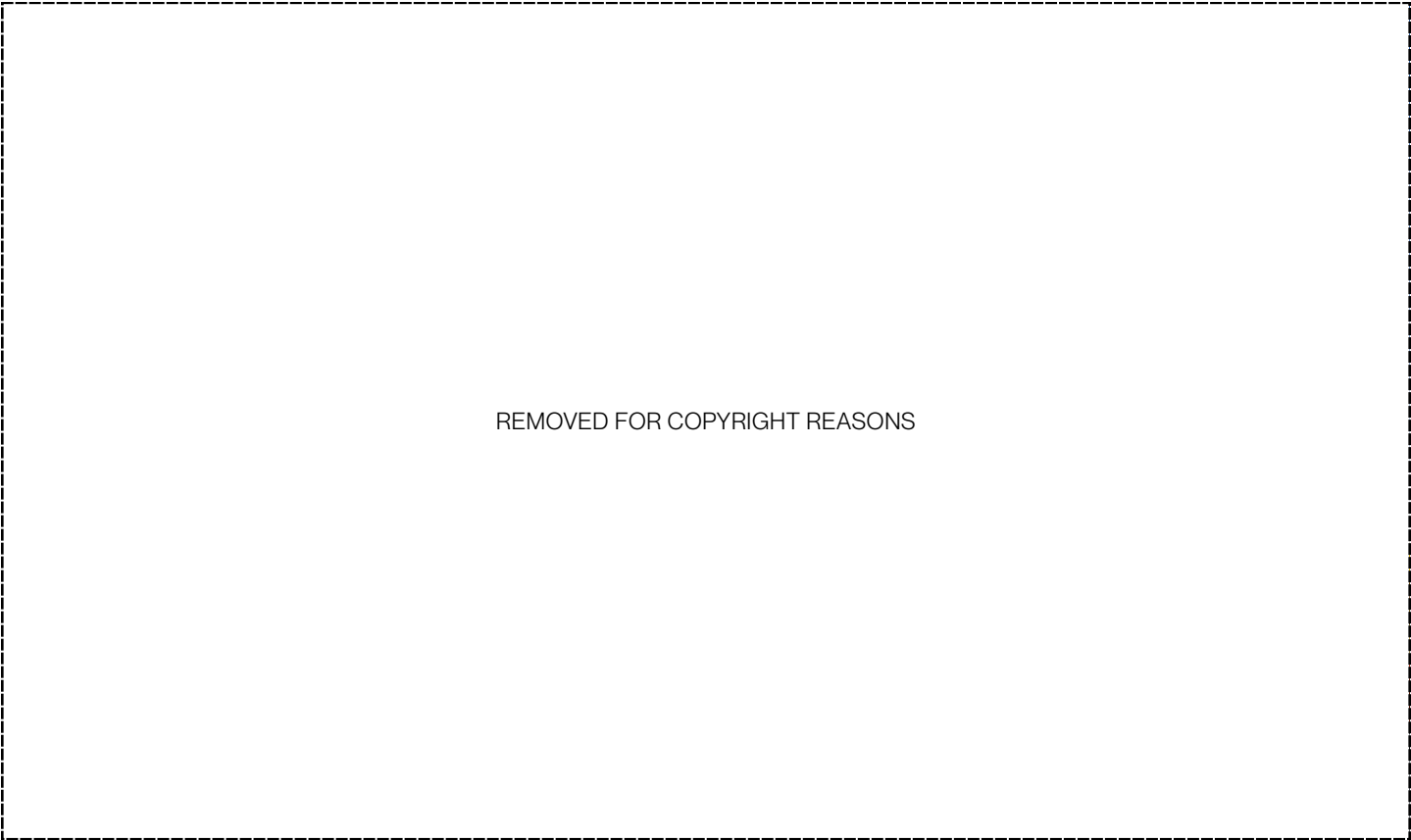
- Phenomenologically, the retention of exposed stone, material authenticity and transparent new elements help preserve the church's sacred spatial atmosphere and spirit of place.

Conclusion

Ultimately, St Mary-at-the-Quay shows how adaptive reuse guided by conservation principles can reinstate purpose and presence in sacred architecture. For St James Church, it underscores the need to balance functional change with reversibility, material authenticity, and the continuity of the church's atmosphere.

Figure 6

Exterior View of St Mary-at-the-Quay and the New Adjoining Addition



Note. From *How a medieval church is supporting mental health in Ipswich*, by R. Herod. K. Brinkley, 2022, Heritage Fund (<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/how-medieval-church-supporting-mental-health-ipswich>). Copyright n.d. by Heritage Fund.

Figure 7

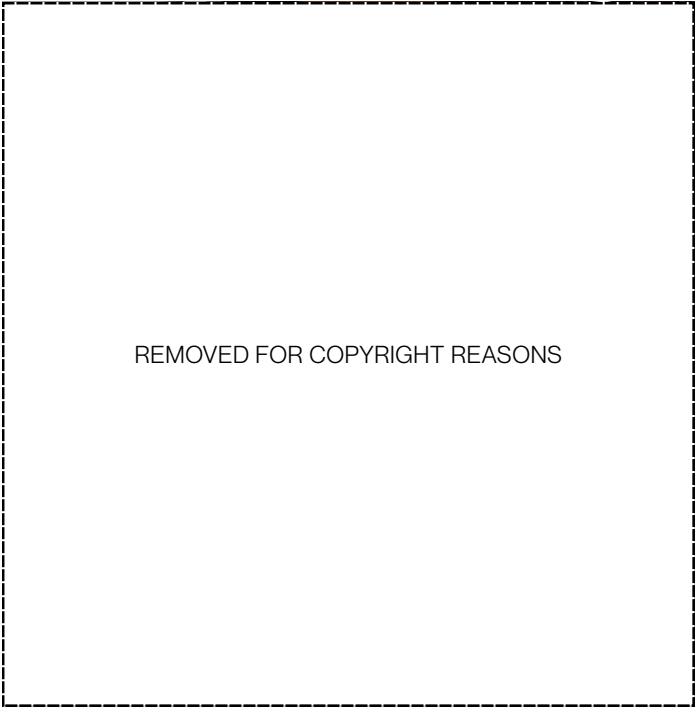
New Mezzanine Insertion



Note. From *St Mary at the Quay / Molyneux Kerr Architects*, by Molyneux Kerr Architects, 2017, ArchDaily (<https://www.archdaily.com/798740/st-mary-at-the-quay-molyneux-kerr-architects>). Copyright 2017 by Andy Marshall.

Figure 8

New Transparent Meeting Room



Note. From *St Mary at the Quay / Molyneux Kerr Architects*, by Molyneux Kerr Architects, 2017, ArchDaily (<https://www.archdaily.com/798740/st-mary-at-the-quay-molyneux-kerr-architects>). Copyright 2017 by Andy Marshall.

3.3 St Thomas' Chapel, Auckland

Completed in 2011 by Salmond Reed Architects, St Thomas' Chapel represents a refined architectural insertion within the Category A heritage-listed Gothic Revival church of St Matthew-in-the-City (Auckland Council, n.d.; Foster, 2022; Salmond Reed Architects, n.d.). The parent building, designed by Frank Pearson and constructed between 1902 and 1905 from Oamaru stone, exemplifies an Early English Gothic Revival typology in New Zealand (Foster, 2022).

The reinstated chapel has a layered history, originating from the interior of the Melanesian Mission's Southern Cross V, a missionary ship decommissioned in 1932, from which the small chapel and saloon were dismantled (St Matthew-in-the-City, n.d.). The ship's decorative oak panelling was later reused to form a Lady Chapel at St Thomas' Church in Freemans Bay until its demolition in the 1960s for the motorway (St Matthew-in-the-City, n.d.). The altar and chapel elements were then stored in St Matthew's crypt and later reconstructed in the south transept after the removal of the pipe organ (St Matthew-in-the-City, n.d.).

Use (Article 8) Achieved

- The chapel retains its original function as a place of worship, preserving a use that is important to its cultural heritage value and therefore aligning with the use principle.

Adaptation (reversibility) (Article 21) Achieved

- The chapel and adjacent kitchen and toilet are constructed as freestanding modular boxes that avoid structural contact with the existing walls, allowing future removal without damaging the heritage fabric, demonstrating reversibility. The design strategy aligns with the adaptation principle by ensuring that the new work is clearly distinguished from, yet non-intrusive to, the significant fabric, allowing the intervention to remain subordinate to the historic structure. The forms are deliberately simple, and the oak-plywood cladding provides a material transition that complements the existing timber floor (McEwan, 2011). Above, a glowing onyx halo encircles the chapel, expressing its contemporary character and signalling its newness without overwhelming the Gothic setting (New Zealand Institute of Architects, n.d.).

Minimum Intervention (Article 6) Achieved

- Minimum intervention is demonstrated through the light-touch installation approach, which sits above the existing floor system and avoids altering significant fabric.

Risk Mitigation (Article 24) Moderate

- Risk mitigation was not formally attempted, but the project achieved limited fabric-based risk reduction through freestanding construction and careful conservation.

Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) Community Driven Reuse

- While the church congregation constitutes a community in itself, the project was driven by institutional and architectural decision-making rather than a participatory, bottom-up process. It therefore does not align with Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) community-driven reuse framework, which requires broader community involvement in shaping the design and programme beyond existing institutional stakeholders.

Norberg- Schulz (1979) Spirit of Place Achieved

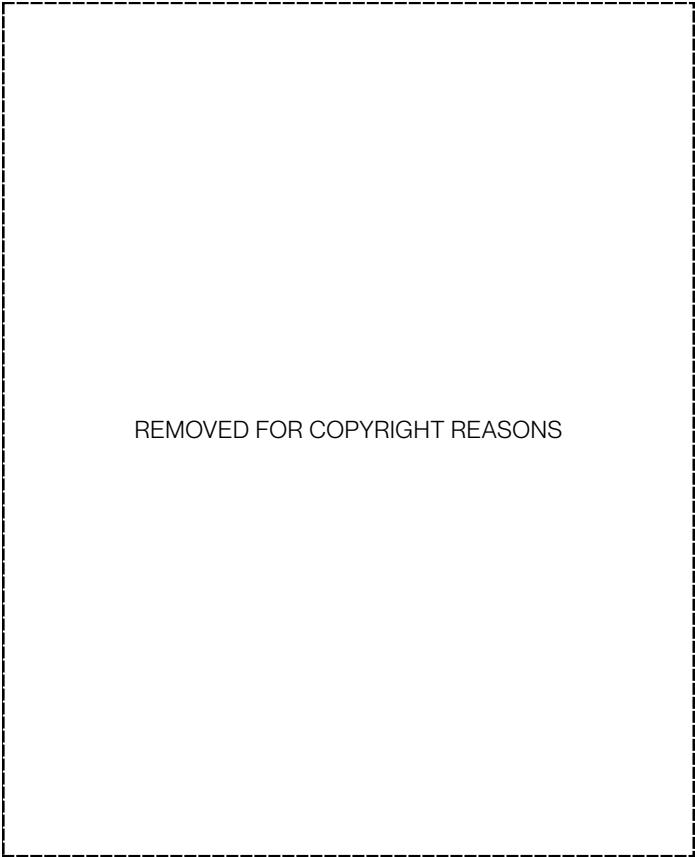
- Phenomenologically, the design supports the spirit of place by creating an intimate enclosure within the nave, offering a sense of refuge and spiritual transcendence. The use of onyx and the skylight above the kitchen introduce a subtle interplay of light and material that reinforces the church's sacred atmosphere. The project balances functional insertion with spiritual resonance, showing how contemporary design can renew meaning in a sacred space without mimicry.

Conclusion

St Thomas' Chapel underscores the importance of reversibility, material dialogue, and atmospheric continuity in adaptive reuse. It shows how minimal intervention and phenomenological awareness can deliver contemporary functionality without compromising heritage intent, providing a precedent for integrating new programmes into historic contexts while preserving spiritual integrity and historical clarity.

Figure 9

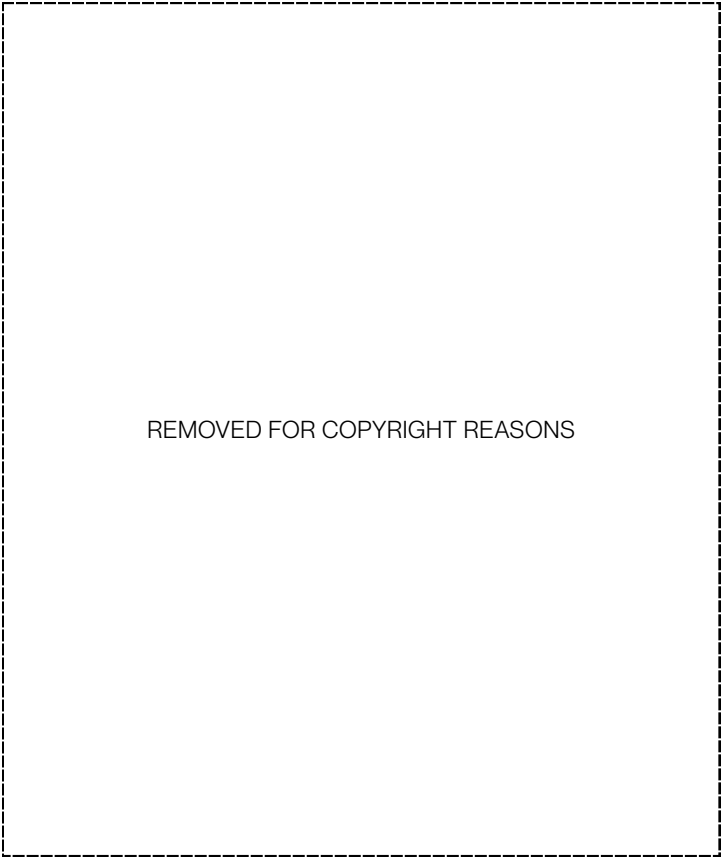
Interior View of St Matthew-in-the-City Nave with St Thomas' Chapel in the Transept



Note. From *About St Thomas Chapel St Matthew.*, by ArchiPro, n.d. (<https://archipro.co.nz/project/st-thomas-chapel-in-st-matthew-in-the-city-salmond-reed-architects>). Copyright 2026 by ArchiPro.

Figure 10

Front View of St Thomas' Chapel



Note. From *About St Thomas Chapel St Matthew.*, by ArchiPro, n.d. (<https://archipro.co.nz/project/st-thomas-chapel-in-st-matthew-in-the-city-salmond-reed-architects>). Copyright 2026 by ArchiPro.

Figure 11

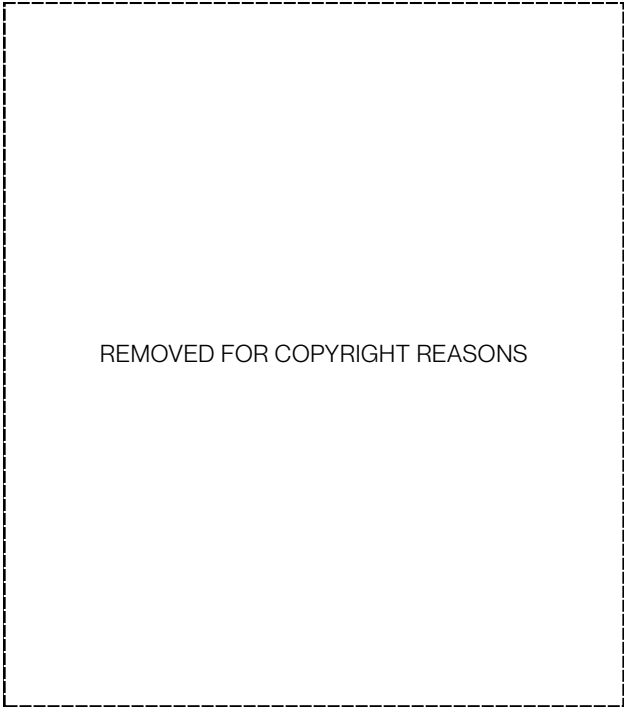
Insertion of St Thomas' Chapel and New Kitchen and Toilet Facility



Note. From *St Thomas Chapel in St Matthew in-the-City (2)*, by New Zealand Institute of Architects, n.d. (<http://www.nzia.co.nz/awards/national/award-detail/4237#!>). Copyright n.d. by New Zealand Institute of Architects.

Figure 12

Interior View of Kitchen Facility



Note. From *St Thomas Chapel in St Matthew in-the-City (2)*, by New Zealand Institute of Architects, n.d. (<http://www.nzia.co.nz/awards/national/award-detail/4237#!>). Copyright n.d. by New Zealand Institute of Architects.

3.4 Allendale House and Annexe, Auckland

Allendale House in Ponsonby, Auckland, exemplifies a balance between heritage conservation and contemporary intervention. Built in 1891 as a Victorian Italianate residence and now a Category B heritage place, it has served various functions, including a private hospital, boarding house, hostel for alcoholics, and restaurant, before becoming the headquarters of Foundation North (Auckland Council, n.d.; Harvey, 2014; Salmond Reed Architects [SRA], n.d.). Salmond Reed Architects were commissioned in 2010 to restore the villa, undertake a seismic retrofit, and design a new annexe to meet operational requirements without compromising its architectural integrity (SRA, n.d.; Wilkran Construction, n.d.).

Use (Article 8) Achieved

- The building no longer retains its original residential use, but its long history of varied programmes means that use is not integral to its heritage value; the current office function is compatible with the place and maintains its cultural significance, aligning with the use principle.

Adaptation (reversibility) (Article 21) Moderate

- Adaptation was achieved through the transformation into a contemporary office, with advanced ventilation system and technological infrastructure integrated discreetly within existing forms (Resene, n.d.). Restoration focused on removing intrusive twentieth-century alterations, including lowered ceilings, to recover the original spatial hierarchy, alongside comprehensive interior and exterior redecoration (SRA, n.d.).
- The new annexe forms a crucial part of the project's architectural dialogue. A subtle link connects it to the heritage house, establishing a nuanced relationship between old and new. While the Victorian villa asserts its presence through an ornamented masonry façade, the addition contrasts with cedar cladding, a protruding façade, and a cantilevered deck (Harvey, 2014). It maintains proportional harmony by matching floor levels and aligning the roofline with the original structure. Joining the buildings required the removal of historic fabric, making the intervention irreversible.

Minimum Intervention (Article 6) Moderate

- The building underwent necessary upgrades including fire and security systems, seismic strengthening, and modernised services to ensure its continued use and long-term retention of heritage values (Resene, n.d.). While the building continues to exhibit its significant tangible and intangible values, the removal of historic fabric to connect the annexe represents a partial departure from the principle, as the Charter discourages alteration or loss of fabric where it can be avoided.

Risk Mitigation (Article 24) Achieved

- Seismic retrofitting was undertaken on the URM villa to improve its performance in potential earthquakes. The interventions included standard bolting the roof to the walls, reinforcing the chimneys, and tying the first floor into the walls (Harvey, 2014). These measures strengthened the building's structural integrity and demonstrated a clear application of the risk mitigation principle.

Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) Community Driven Reuse

- Because the project is not community-led, it cannot be evaluated against Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) community-driven reuse framework.

Norberg- Schulz (1979) Spirit of Place Achieved

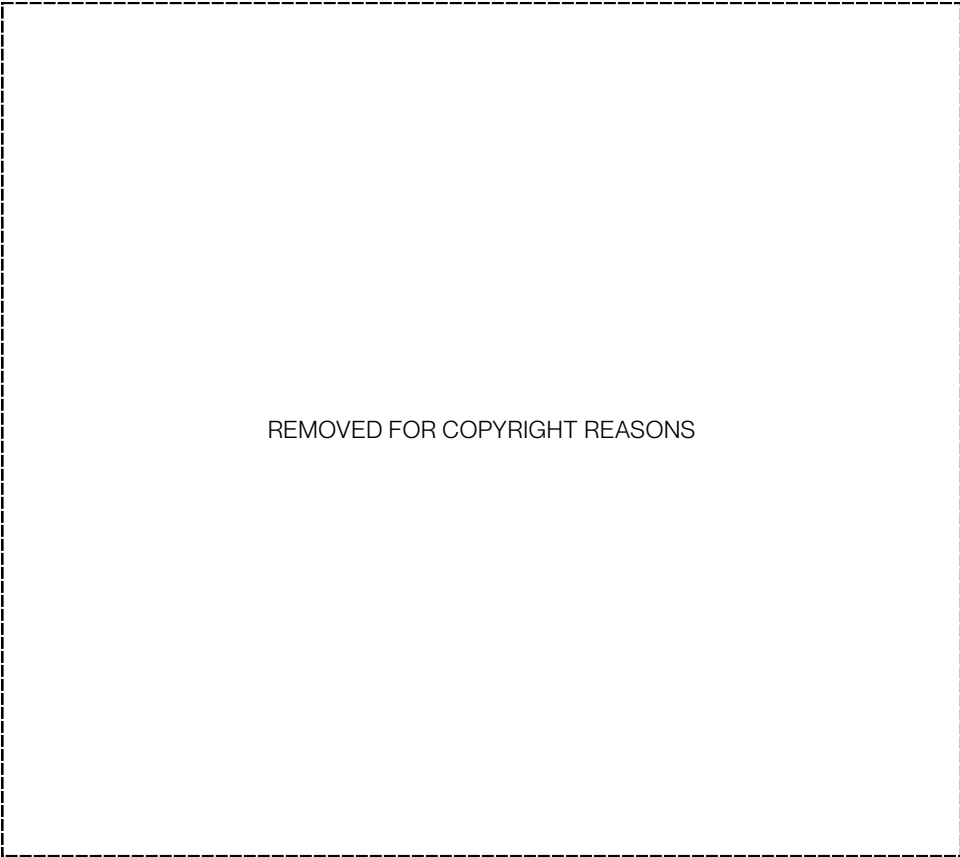
- Phenomenologically, the architects reinstated the villa's nineteenth-century colour palette through evidence-based paint analysis, using historically appropriate tones that referenced the original lime-plaster finish (SRA, n.d.). By relying on light and shadow rather than contrasting colours to articulate decorative elements, the scheme sustains aspects of the villa's original atmosphere and spirit of place within a contemporary context (SRA, n.d.).

Conclusion

Allendale House and its annexe demonstrate how thoughtful restoration and contemporary construction can revitalise a heritage building through principled design and technical precision. The project serves as a precedent for adaptive reuse by integrating seismic resilience, appropriate continued use, a cohesive colour palette, and a complementary addition aligned with ICOMOS values. For the adaptation of St James Church, it highlights the need to balance functional upgrades with conservation priorities, mitigate seismic risk, and integrate new architecture that respects the historic fabric.

Figure 13

Front View of Allendale House and Annexe



Note. From *Allendale Adaptive Reuse*, by Salmond Reed Architects, n.d. (<https://www.salmondreed.co.nz/projects/ponsonby-combining-new-with-old>). Copyright 2022 by Salmond Reed Architects

Figure 14

Connection Between New Addition and Allendale House



Note. From *Allendale House And Annexe*, by J. Harvey, 2014, Architecture Now (<https://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/allendale-house-and-annexe/>). Copyright 2026 by Architecture Now.

Figure 15

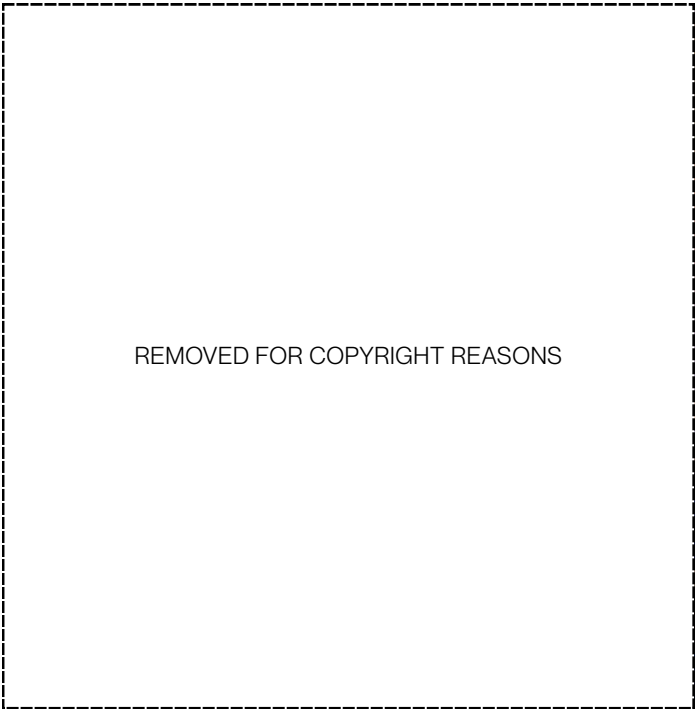
Back View of Allendale House and Annexe



Note. From *Allendale House And Annexe*, by J. Harvey, 2014, Architecture Now (<https://architecturenow.co.nz/articles/allendale-house-and-annexe/>). Copyright n.d. by Simon Devitt.

Figure 16

Interior View of Allendale House



Note. From *About Allendale House And Annexe.*, by ArchiPro, n.d. (<https://archipro.co.nz/project/allendale-house-and-annexe-salmond-reed-architects>). Copyright 2026 by ArchiPro.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This thesis uses qualitative and design-led research methods and draws only on secondary quantitative data, rather than quantitative methods, to inform the adaptive reuse design development of St James Church. This methodology follows Groat and Wang's (2013) framework, which incorporates contextual analysis, critical literature review, heritage case studies, and design-led iterative exploration within a coherent theoretical foundation. Although direct interviews with community residents were not conducted, representing a noted limitation, ongoing attention to the community's intangible heritage values ensured a responsive and sensitive design outcome.

4.1 Contextual Analysis

An extensive contextual analysis was undertaken to explore the historical, social, and spatial dynamics of the Mount Eden neighbourhood and the St James Church site. This process helped identify opportunities to integrate the church meaningfully within its surrounding environment. Archival resources, including textual records, historic images, and architectural documents sourced from online databases and Gel Architects (who led the building's transformation into luxury apartments), were used to gain a detailed understanding of the church's history and original architectural fabric.

4.2 Literature Review

A critical review of heritage conservation theory and adaptive reuse literature established the foundational knowledge guiding the research. Conservation principles articulated by ICOMOS New Zealand were applied, complemented by specific intervention guidelines from HNZPT. In addition, literature addressing seismic regulations, gentrification processes, and community ownership provided an understanding of the socio-technical challenges and intervention opportunities for heritage buildings in the New Zealand context.

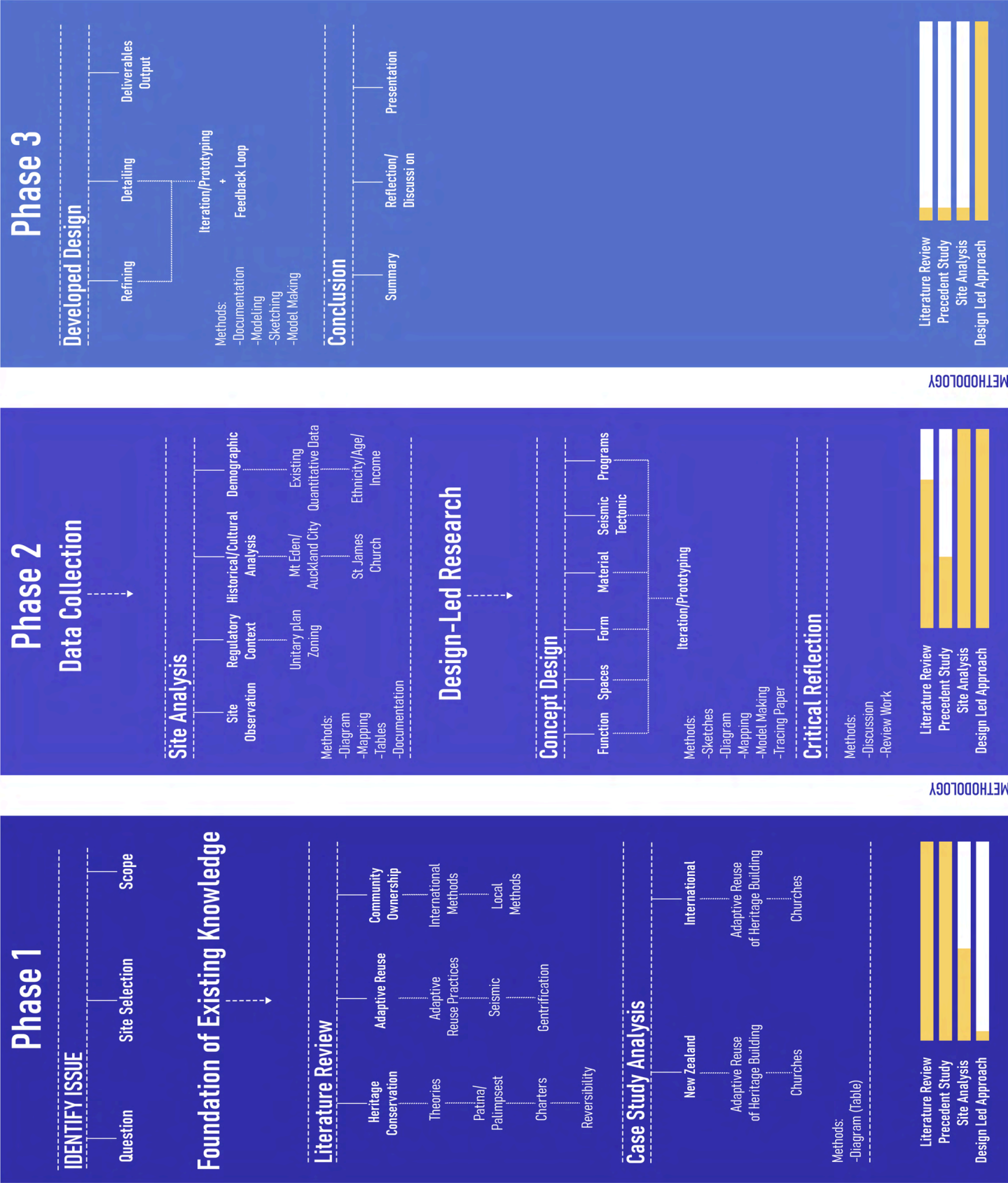
4.3 Case Studies

Multiple heritage adaptive reuse case studies were analysed, with four key projects specifically chosen for their alignment with the theoretical framework. These studies revealed varied intervention strategies and the challenges they entailed. By critically evaluating their shortcomings and missed potentials, this thesis sought to avoid common pitfalls and enhance the adaptive reuse approach developed for St James Church.

4.4 Design-Led Research

Design methods including sketching, collaging, digital and physical model making, and diagramming were systematically employed to develop and refine the proposals. The design development followed an iterative process characterised by successive refinements where each iteration was critically reflected upon and built upon. This approach allowed the exploration of multiple concepts with freedom to test ideas and learn from experimental failures before finalising the adaptive reuse design.

Figure 17
Research Methodology Timeline



Chapter 5 Site Analysis

5.1 History

5.1.1 Mount Eden History

The development of Mount Eden suburb reflects an interplay of indigenous presence, colonial urbanisation, industrial growth, and shifting social identities. The volcanic cone of Maungawhau, central to iwi settlement, functioned as both a fortified pā and a cultural landscape that sustained activities such as cultivation, weaving, and social organisation (Angelo, 1989; Smith et al., 2009). When nutrient loss led to relocation to Maungakiekie in the eighteenth century, Maungawhau remained a sacred landmark and spatial anchor within the Māori worldview (Angelo, 1989; Gibson, 2014).

Colonial expansion began when Ngāti Whātua chief Apihai Te Kawau gifted 11,000 acres to Governor Hobson between 1841 and 1842, enabling the establishment of the colonial government in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland Council, n.d.). Land use shifted from agriculture to residential development by the 1860s, with new settlements introducing churches, schools, transport, and businesses supported by infrastructure and resource extraction (Angelo, 1989; Auckland Council, n.d.). Stone quarried from Maungawhau supplied roads, Mount Eden Prison, and many boundary walls that still define the suburb, with quarrying ending in the 1940s (Angelo, 1989; Auckland Council, n.d.).

Religious institutions became key socio-spatial focal points within this transforming landscape (Angelo, 1989). The first school on Valley Road, built in 1877, also served as a Christian church (Auckland Council, n.d.). St Barnabas, the oldest church in Mount Eden, was constructed in 1849 as a Māori chapel in Mechanics Bay before being relocated to the suburb in 1877 (Angelo, 1989). The proliferation of churches throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflected a strong religious presence that later diversified through Pacific and Asian congregations and multilingual services (Angelo, 1989).

Mid-twentieth-century urban dynamics reshaped Mount Eden's identity. During the 1960s and 1970s, many older houses were subdivided or converted into rental flats to meet growing housing demand near the city (Angelo, 1989). At the same time, numerous homes, particularly along Esplanade Road, were demolished by developers for blocks of flats, altering the suburb's character through the loss of nineteenth-century Victorian villas and the introduction of multi-unit dwellings (Angelo, 1989). Nevertheless, this process also created more affordable housing close to the city and improved access for people from outside the suburb.

In the 1980s, the Mount Eden Borough Council adopted policies prioritising heritage protection and sensitive redevelopment, restoring previously subdivided houses into single dwellings and preserving remaining character villas (Angelo, 1989). This shift attracted professionals but also reduced housing accessibility for lower-income groups, a trend intensified by the 1989 restriction on cross-leasing (Angelo, 1989).

Ultimately, Mount Eden's evolution reflects the interplay of indigenous heritage, colonial legacies, industrial development, religious diversity, and local governance, shaping a multifaceted suburban identity.

5.1.2 St James Church History

St James Church was constructed in 1900 and designed by John Mitchell and Robert Watt to address the growing Mount Eden Congregational Church, whose congregation had outgrown the original adjacent church (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). The Neo-classical design emphasises symmetry, order, and repetition, and was built to seat 400 congregants (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). The structure uses unreinforced brick masonry with a plaster cement façade, a slate tiled roof, and tongue and groove timber panelling to the interior ceilings and walls (Pearson & Cooper, 2021).

St James Church became a place of remembrance for those lost in the First and Second World Wars, marked by memorials including a Roll of Honour, stained-glass window, and commemorative tablets (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2024). These memorials reflect the congregation's wartime losses and reinforce the church's spiritual and social role.

Originally named Mount Eden Congregational Church, the building was renamed St James Presbyterian Church in 1969 following the 1968 merger with St James Church on Beresford Street, Auckland (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). In 1979, it was transferred to the Cook Islands community, specifically the Pukapukas group, creating a diverse European and Cook Islands congregation (Pearson & Cooper, 2021).

In 2007, the congregation inadvertently removed a heritage-listed drystone wall along Esplanade Road, which was restored in 2009 under the supervision of a heritage architect (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). Worship services continued until 2012, when Auckland Council issued a dangerous building notice for St James Sunday School Hall (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). Both the hall and church had suffered from inadequate maintenance, with the church's rusting corrugated steel roof damaging the interior timberwork (Orsman, 2012; Pearson & Cooper, 2021). The financial burden of maintaining two heritage buildings and repairing the hall ultimately led to the church's closure.

The church and Sunday School Hall were placed on the market in 2014 and later purchased by a developer under an agreement allowing the hall's demolition (Pearson & Cooper, 2021; Smith, 2024). The proposal went through various council environmental panels before the Environment Court ruled that Auckland Council could not prevent the demolition, with final conditions to be set after consultation with the council, developer, and Civic Trust (Niall, 2019). After the initial sale fell through, the site changed hands again in 2019 and was relisted in 2020 as a mortgagee sale with resource consent to convert the church into four apartments (Niall, 2019; One Roof, 2020; Smith, 2024). It was subsequently sold to developer Arthur Adams later that year (Smith, 2024).

Gel Architects were commissioned to design the apartments, and construction began in August 2022; following three years of seismic strengthening, restoration, and conversion, the project was completed on 25 May 2025 (Gel Architects, 2022).

5.1.3 St James Sunday School and Hall History

St James Sunday School, originally built as the church for the Mount Eden Congregational Church, was constructed in 1885 in the Victorian Gothic style and designed by Welsh architect Robert Jones Roberts (Maguire, 2020). The first Congregational Church in Auckland was established in 1851, and as Mount Eden's population expanded, a new church and Sunday School were founded in 1883 in a hall at the foot of Maungawhau (Derby, n.d.; Maguire, 2020). Plans for a potential parsonage at the northern end of the site led to the church being positioned toward the southern boundary (Maguire, 2020).

The building comprised nine classrooms alongside the main nave and was designed to accommodate 300 people with generous natural light and effective ventilation (Maguire, 2020). It was planned for adaptability, with provision for additional classrooms and a timber west wall to allow future expansion (Maguire, 2020). Predominantly constructed of concrete at a cost of £1,400, financed by the sale of the High Street Congregational chapel, it featured a slate roof and pointed arch windows (Maguire, 2020; New Zealand Herald, 1884). The concrete walls incorporated four horizontal levels of wire rope reinforcement running the length of the external wall, a relatively advanced technique for 1885, as reinforced concrete only became widespread in the 1870s (Maguire, 2020).

The 134-year-old building underwent several modifications, including the addition of toilet facilities between its projecting wings and phased alterations to the western timber wall to include a kitchen and extra room (Maguire, 2020). Constructed by Rose and Clarke after the trustees approved their tender, it opened on 3 May 1885 as a Sunday School and place of worship (Maguire, 2020; New Zealand Herald, 1885; Pearson & Cooper, 2021). Following the construction of the adjacent church in 1900, it served solely as a Sunday School and hall (Maguire, 2020).

In March 2012, a heritage architect identified roof truss movement and rotting timber around the Sunday School Hall's unreinforced concrete and masonry walls, leading to a dangerous building notice on 20 April 2012 and the site being fenced off (Orsman, 2012). Both the church and hall were permanently closed due to the congregation lacking sufficient funds for restoration and structural strengthening (Smith, 2024). The Category B-listed hall was later damaged by an arson attack using a liquid accelerant on 30 December 2018, and the dangerous remains were partially demolished the following day, with complete demolition on 27 May 2019 (Taylor, 2019; Maguire, 2020).

The site remained vacant until 2025, when the developers behind the St James Church project began constructing four dwellings on the former Sunday School footprint, with Gel Architects overseeing both the church conversion and the new housings (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). The dwellings reflect the original building's form, orientation, and gabled roof, maintaining an essence of its character and continuity with the site's historical context (Pearson & Cooper, 2021).

Figure 18

Historic Photo of Mount Eden Congregational Church and Hall, ca. 1920s



Note. From *Mt Eden Congregational Church*, by Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, n.d. (<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/photos/id/67756>). In the public domain.

Figure 19

St James Hall in 2018 Before Demolition



Note. From *Church awaits Demolition – Auckland*, by M. Wallbank, 2018, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/church-awaits-demolition-auckland/>). Copyright 2018 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 20

Historic Photo of Mount Eden Congregational Church Interior, 1901



Note. From *Mount Eden Congregational Church in Auckland*, by Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections, n.d. (<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/photos/id/133115>). In the public domain.

Figure 21

Decaying St James Hall in 2018



Note. From *Church awaits Demolition – Auckland*, by M. Wallbank, 2018, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/church-awaits-demolition-auckland/>). Copyright 2018 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 23

Pigeons Resting Along the Abandoned St James Church in 2015



Note. From *St James Church & St James Hall – Mt Eden, Auckland*, by M. Wallbank, 2015, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/st-james-church-st-james-hall-mt-eden-auckland/>). Copyright 2015 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 22

St James Hall Interior, Vandalised and Decaying in 2018



Note. From *Church awaits Demolition – Auckland*, by M. Wallbank, 2018, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/church-awaits-demolition-auckland/>). Copyright 2018 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 24

Barricaded St James Hall in 2015



Note. From *St James Church & St James Hall – Mt Eden, Auckland*, by M. Wallbank, 2015, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/st-james-church-st-james-hall-mt-eden-auckland/>). Copyright 2015 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

5.1.4 2017 Site and Floor Plans

These plans were prepared prior to the fire that destroyed the hall and before the church was converted into luxury apartments. They illustrate the modifications made to both the interior and exterior of the buildings over time. Notable changes include the addition of a partitioned office within the church and the extensions added to the south and west elevations of the former hall.

Figure 25

Site Plan of St James Church and Former Hall (2017)

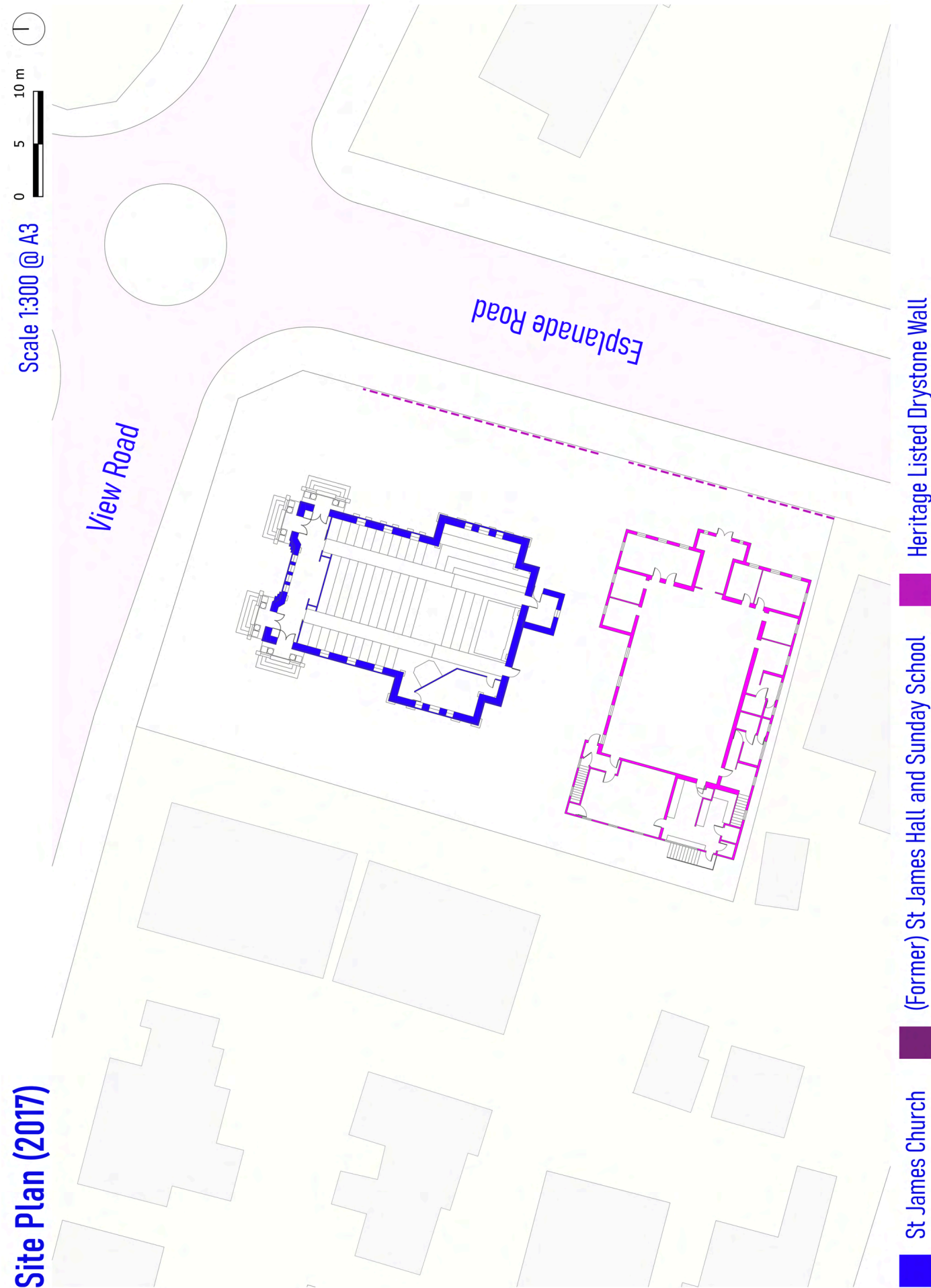
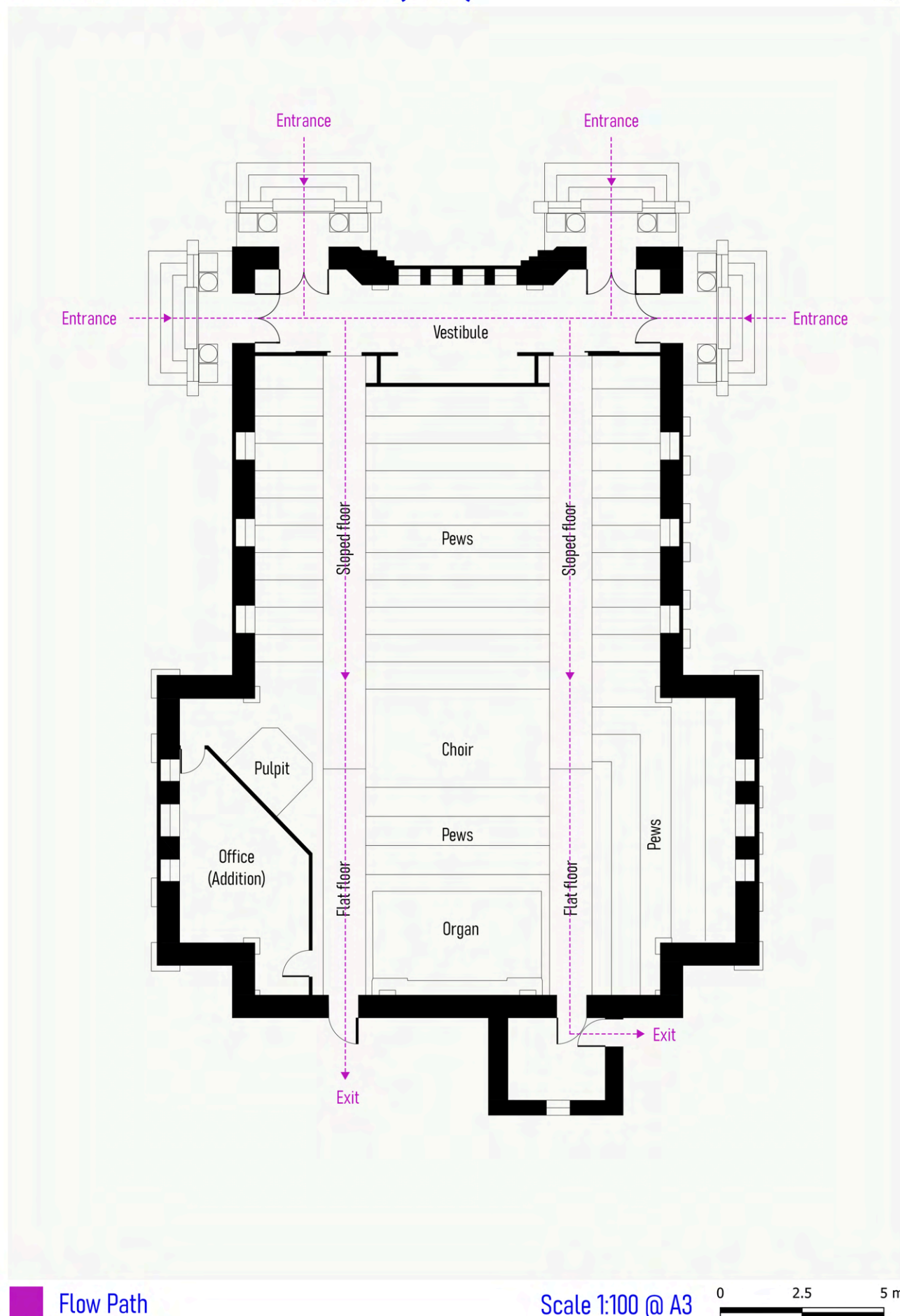


Figure 26

Floor Plan of St James Church (2017)

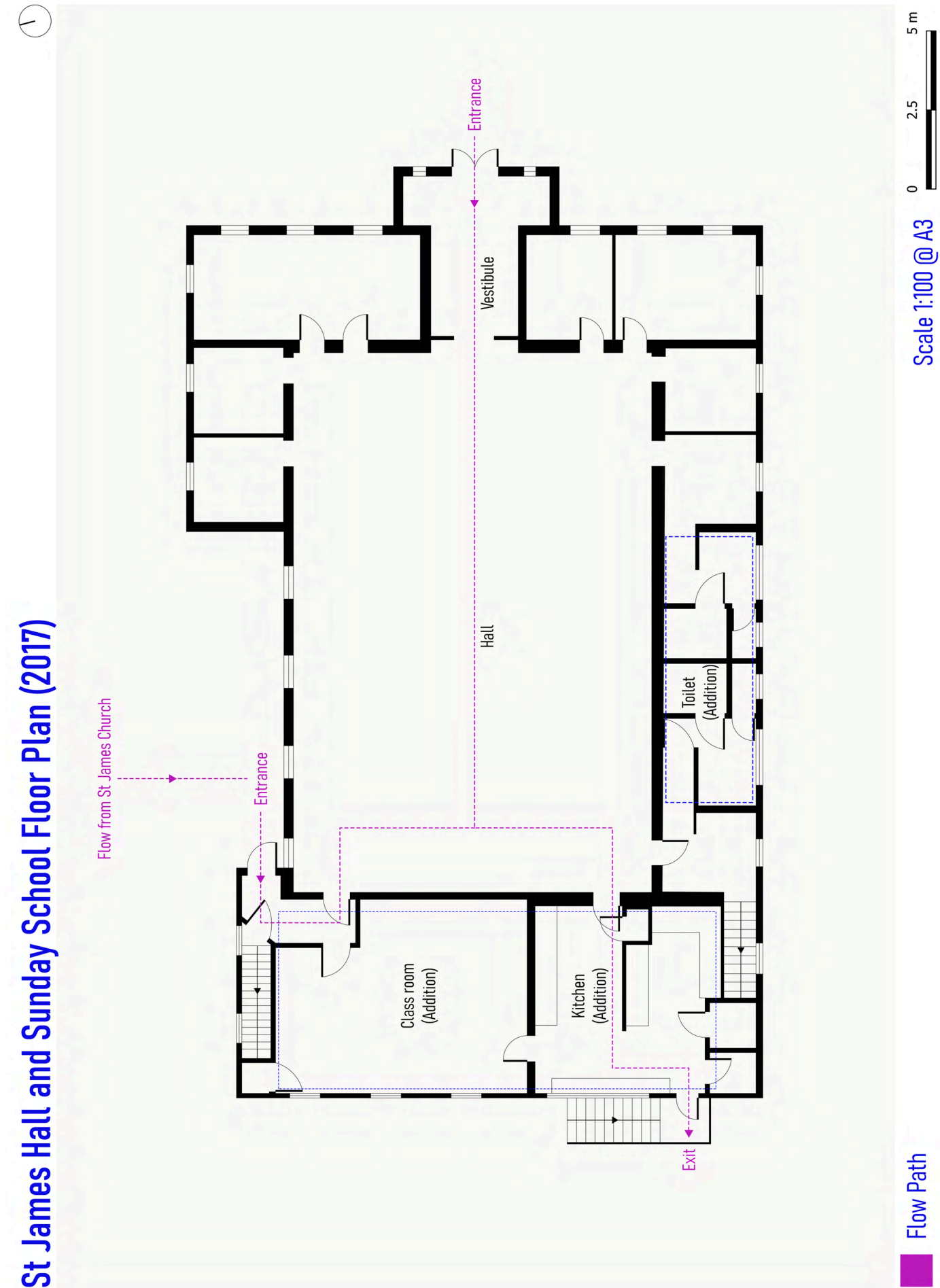
St James Church Floor Plan (2017)



Note. Floor plan layout provided by Gel Architects.

Figure 27

Floor Plan of St James Hall (2017)



Flow Path

Scale 1:100 @ A3

0 2.5 5 m

Note. Floor plan layout provided by CFG Heritage.

5.1.5 Buildings Analyses and Assessment

A building history timeline provides a clear understanding of how it has evolved and the alternative path it could have followed. This section also provides a thorough analysis of the site's existing and former fabric, focusing on the Sunday School Hall and church, highlighting original and modified elements. Following this, a comprehensive assessment table will outline features to be retained or removed and discuss their heritage impacts. A mitigation section will then propose strategies to reduce any adverse heritage effects.

Site Timeline and St James Church Building Analysis



Note. (1) From St James Church, by J. Thulasiram, 2017, Google Maps (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Gd8x8jm8o2mLPtXWA>). Copyright 2017 by Jagatjivanram Thulasiram.

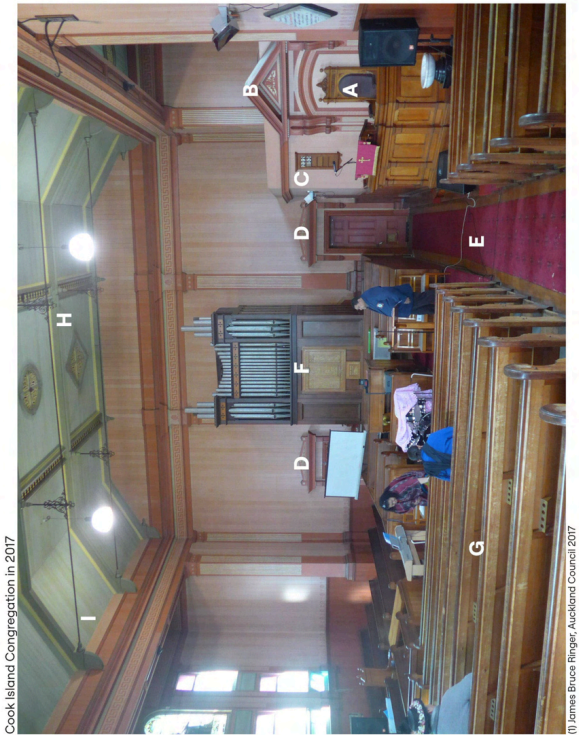
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(5) Photograph provided by Auckland Council. Copyright n.d. by Auckland Council. Reprinted with permission.

St James Church South Interior Analyses



A- Pulpit (Original) The pulpit was relocated to the west transept from the southern wall.	D- South entrance (Original) Church exit to adjacent St James Hall.	G- Pews (Original)
B- Pulpit decorative wall (Original) The decorative wall was relocated to the west transept from the southern wall and is attached to the partition office.	E- Recessed floor (Original) It begins from the front entrance vestibule and ends at the transept.	H- Ceiling fretwork (Original)
C- Partition Office (Modification) The office is not part of the original floor plan and was added to the church. It also disturbs the west transept windows and includes a suspended ceiling.	F- Organ (Original) It was originally located at the western transept and was moved to the south wall centre.	I- Steel tie rods (Original)



St James Church North Interior Analyses



A- Stained glass Window (Original)	D- Sliding doors (Modification) These are later additions that replaced the original hinged doors.	G- Timber panel doors (Original)
B- Extended wall (Modification) The wall's centre was extended toward the nave with added windows and are not original.	E- Lowered ceiling (Modification) This ceiling is not original and locks the tongue and groove timber ceiling in photos C and G.	
C- Ceiling fretwork (Original) Located at the vestibule	F- Vestibule (Original) It was used to divide the entrance from the church nave.	



Note. (1) From Mt Eden Congregational Church, interior, 2017, by J. B. Ringer, 2017, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections (<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/photos/id/128968>). Copyright 2017 by James Bruce Ringer. CC BY.

(2) From Mt Eden Congregational Church, roll of honour, 2017, by J. B. Ringer, 2017, Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections (<https://kura.aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/digital/collection/photos/id/128970/rec/9>). Copyright 2017 by James Bruce Ringer. CC BY.

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(6) Photograph by Jessamine Fraser. Copyright n.d. by Jessamine Fraser. Reprinted with permission.

(7) Photograph by Jackson Wall. Copyright n.d. by Jackson Wall. Reprinted with permission.

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(9) Photograph by Jessamine Fraser. Copyright n.d. by Jessamine Fraser. Reprinted with permission.

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(11) Photograph by Jessamine Fraser. Copyright n.d. by Jessamine Fraser. Reprinted with permission.

(12) Photograph by Jessamine Fraser. Copyright n.d. by Jessamine Fraser. Reprinted with permission.

(13) Photograph by Jessamine Fraser. Copyright n.d. by Jessamine Fraser. Reprinted with permission.

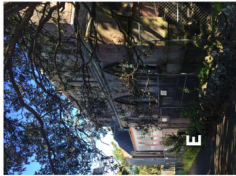
Figure 30

St James Hall Building Analysis

Former St James Hall Exterior Analyses

A- Louvered vents (Original) Used to ventilate the interior, it is positioned at the peak of the gable roof on the east and west elevations.	D- West end addition (Modification) The extension spans the ground floor and basement and was constructed in two phases. The facade is clad in horizontal weatherboard and features modern aluminium window frames.	G- Concrete plinth air vents (Original) Designed to facilitate airflow into the building's subfloor to ventilate the space.
B- Dormer-style ventilators (Original) Serving the same purpose as the louvered vents, two of these are located on the north and south sides of the slate roof.	E- South end addition (Modification) The extension is situated between two original building sections and was added to provide toilet facilities.	H- Weatherboards facade (Original) The hall is primarily a concrete structure, except for the west elevation, which is clad with horizontal rusticated weatherboards. This was done to allow for easier future extension, which has since taken place.
C- Triplet pointed arch window (Original) Located on the east elevation, this is the front of the hall facing Esplanade Road.	F- Pointed arch windows (Original) These are located all around the building, consisting of various sizes and are prominent features of the hall.	

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(1) Helen Geary, Civic Trust Auckland 2018



(3) Helen Geary, Civic Trust Auckland 2018



(4) Mark Wallbank, Paranormal New Zealand, 2015

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(5) Wesley Maguire, CFG Heritage

Former St James Hall Interior Analyses

A- Timber wainscoting (Original) This was a decorative interior feature that has been painted multiple times, with the original finish likely being lacquer or varnish.	D- Steel tie rods (Uncertain) Three steel tie rods spanned the central trusses, likely added later to reinforce the roof.
B- Ancillary roof structure (Original) Here is the exposed roof structure in one of the east ancillary rooms, featuring a timber lined ceiling.	E- Timber trusses (Original) The hall gable roof is supported by six large timber trusses with decorative braces resting on protruding cement corbels.
C- Ceiling fretwork (Original)	F- Timber dropped ceiling (Unknown) The timber ceiling conceals the upper portion of the roof truss, which is visible in the original photograph. Whether the ceiling was an original ventilation feature or a later insertion remains unknown. The timber trusses of the truss has not been able to be verified (Maguire, 2020).

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(6) Wesley Maguire, CFG Heritage



(8) Wesley Maguire, CFG Heritage



(10) Wesley Maguire, CFG Heritage

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Note. (1) From St James Church Hall Environment Court Appeal, by H. Geary, 2018, Civic Trust Auckland (<https://civictrustauckland.org.nz/st-james-church-hall-environment-court-appeal/>). Copyright 2026 by Civic Trust Auckland.

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(4) From St James Church & St James Hall – Mt Eden, Auckland, by M. Wallbank, 2015, Paranormal New Zealand (<https://hauntedauckland.com/site/st-james-church-st-james-hall-mt-eden-auckland/>). Copyright 2015 by Mark Wallbank. Reprinted with permission.

(5) From St James Church Hall, by W. Maguire, 2020, CFG Heritage (<https://www.cfgheritage.com/download/st-james-church-hall>). Copyright 2020 by Wesley Maguire.

(6) From St James Church Hall, by W. Maguire, 2020, CFG Heritage (<https://www.cfgheritage.com/download/st-james-church-hall>). Copyright 2020 by Wesley Maguire.

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(8) From St James Church Hall, by W. Maguire, 2020, CFG Heritage (<https://www.cfgheritage.com/download/st-james-church-hall>). Copyright 2020 by Wesley Maguire.

(9) From St James Church Hall, by W. Maguire, 2020, CFG Heritage (<https://www.cfgheritage.com/download/st-james-church-hall>). Copyright 2020 by Wesley Maguire.

(10) From St James Church Hall, by W. Maguire, 2020, CFG Heritage (<https://www.cfgheritage.com/download/st-james-church-hall>). Copyright 2020 by Wesley Maguire.

5.1.6 Cook Island Community and Pasifika Gentrification

The last occupants of St James Church and its former hall were the Cook Islands congregation (Pearson & Cooper, 2021). Today, Mount Eden's demographic is predominantly European and Asian, with relatively few Māori and Pasifika residents (Statistics New Zealand [Stats NZ], n.d.). However, the suburb and inner-city Auckland had a higher proportion of Pasifika residents in the mid to late twentieth century, reflecting the church's transition in the 1970s from a European to a Cook Islands congregation (Pearson & Cooper, 2021; Walrond, 2024).

Adapting St James Church into a public space risks cultural loss if the history and significance of the Cook Islands congregation are not recognised. Acknowledging the role of Cook Islands and wider Pasifika communities in central Auckland is therefore essential to an appropriate response.

Auckland is home one of the world's largest Polynesian populations, including a notable Cook Islands community (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021). Over time, however, Pasifika residency has declined in central Auckland, with many communities now concentrated in South and West Auckland (Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021). Cook Islands migration to Aotearoa increased from the 1950s, driven by transport advances and factory employment, and evolved into chain migration during the 1960s as established migrants sponsored family members (Walrond, 2024).

Many Pasifika immigrants settled in Auckland's inner-city suburbs, including Freeman's Bay, Grey Lynn, Newton, and Ponsonby (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.). This followed the relocation of many European residents to outer suburbs and the decline of inner-city living standards (Morrison & Schrader, 2010). By the 1950s and 1960s, the area had developed into a vibrant Pasifika community with stores, churches, and clubs, particularly along Karangahape Road (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.). Although housing conditions were often poor due to overcrowded subdivisions by landlords, the inner city offered affordable housing, public transport, proximity to employment, and access to the Freeman's Bay port, which enabled the exchange of goods with their homelands (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.; Morrison & Schrader, 2010).

The relocation of inner-city factories to South and West Auckland after the 1960s, driven by cheaper land, prompted Pasifika communities to move closer to employment (Hoffman, 2019; McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.). The 1973 oil crisis accelerated this shift, as rising unemployment and fuel costs drew middle-class Europeans back to the inner city, displacing established Pasifika communities (Tuiburelevu, 2020; Nixon & Yeabsley, 2010).

This period also saw the 1974–1976 Dawn Raids, during which Pasifika communities were disproportionately targeted by police for alleged overstaying, resulting in widespread deportations (Anae, 2020; Manatū Taonga — Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2025). Raids occurred in homes, streets, workplaces, and churches, undermining spaces that had served as refuge (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2025). Framed by negative media portrayals and economic instability, these actions unfairly blamed Pasifika communities for national hardship (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2025). At the same time, rising rents and discriminatory practices by European landlords further displaced Pasifika tenants (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.; Tuiburelevu, 2020). Today, the inner city is largely gentrified and predominantly European, although Pacific churches and sports clubs continue to draw Polynesian families back, sustaining cultural connections (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.; Stats NZ, n.d.).

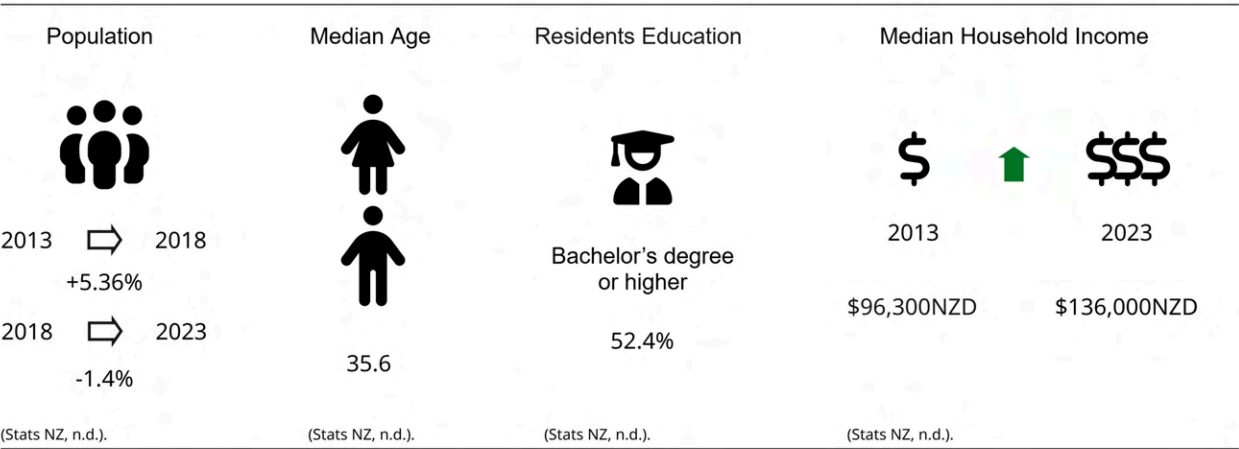
Mount Eden is not part of Auckland's inner city, but it remains linked to wider patterns of Pacific gentrification. In the 1960s and early 1970s, the borough mayor supported affordable apartments near the city, likely creating accessible housing for Pacific immigrants (Angelo, 1989). The suburb also had a notable Pasifika presence, with Mount Eden Methodist Church hosting a Fijian congregation, Dominion Road Methodist Church serving a Tongan congregation, and St James Presbyterian Church formerly serving a Cook Islands congregation (Angelo, 1989). The conversion of St James Church into prestige residences represents a small-scale form of gentrification, displacing the site's Pacific congregational history and severing the Cook Islands community's connection to the neighbourhood, risking further erasure of Pasifika presence in central Auckland.

5.2 Demographic

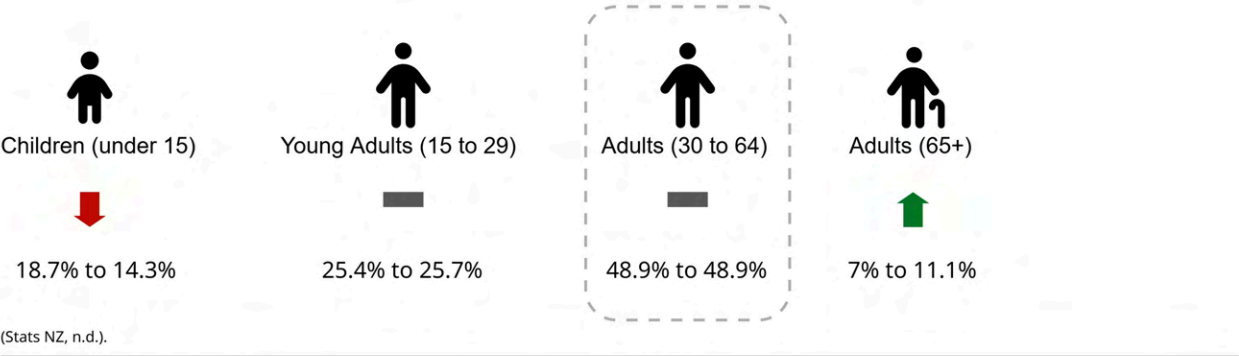
Figure 31

Mount Eden Demographic 1

Mount Eden Demographic



Age Structure Trends (2013–2023)



Family Type Shifts (2013–2023)

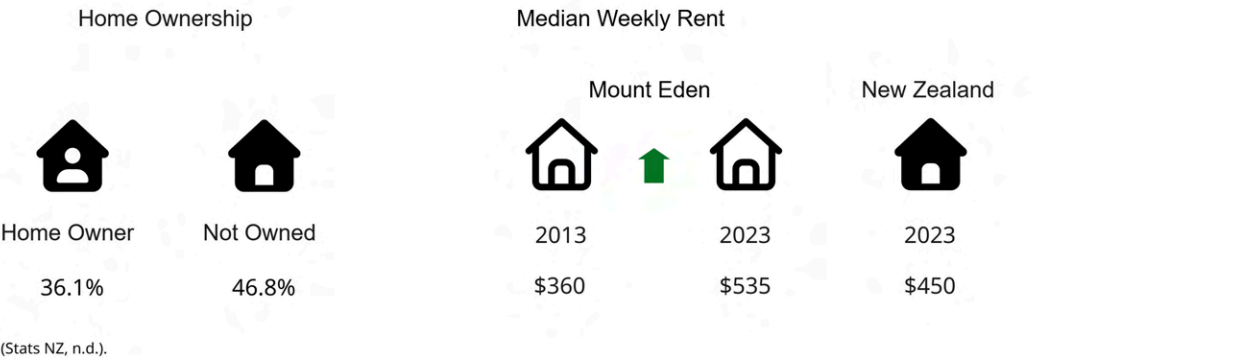
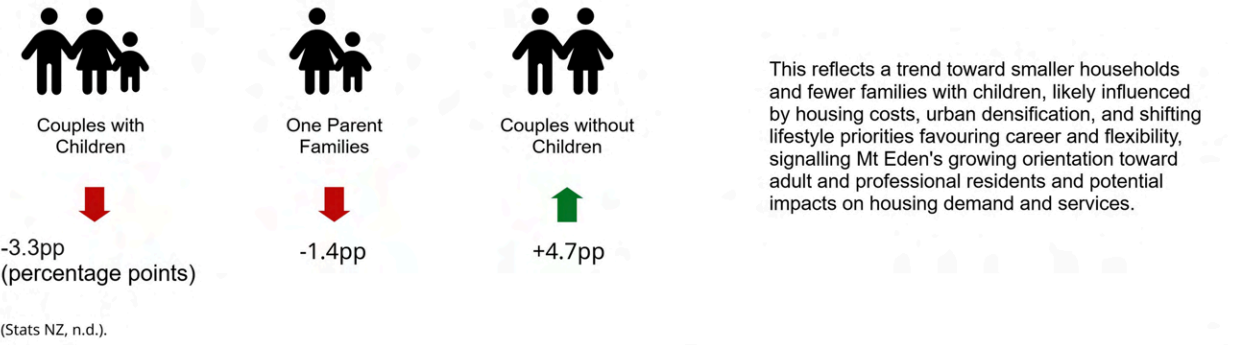
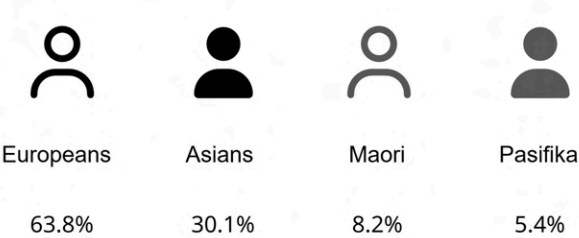


Figure 32

Mount Eden Demographic 2

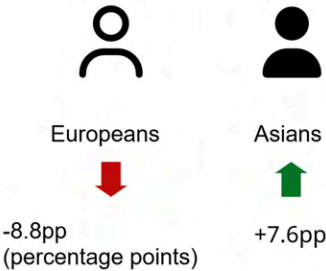
Mount Eden Demographic

Key Ethnic Groups (2023)



(Stats NZ, n.d.).

Key Ethnic Shift (2013-2023)



(Stats NZ, n.d.).

Predominant Birthplace (2023)

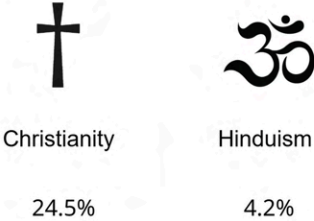


(Stats NZ, n.d.).

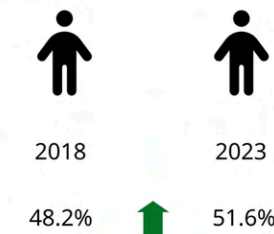
Religious Affiliation (2023)



Predominant Religion (2023)

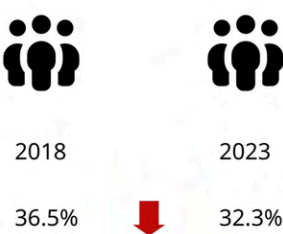


Secularism Rise (New Zealand)



(Campbell, 2024)

Decrease in Christianity (New Zealand)



(Campbell, 2024)

Mount Eden is a dynamic and evolving community characterised by a modest population growth and a relatively young demographic. The area is shifting toward smaller, child-free households, reflecting changing lifestyles influenced by economic and urban pressures. Mount Eden stands out as an affluent and well-educated suburb with a strong professional workforce and a notable growing Asian population. These demographic trends, coupled with changing religious affiliations and high housing costs, shape the local social fabric, housing demand, and service provision needs, offering important insights for adaptive reuse and community development strategies.

5.3 Site Analysis and Mapping

5.3.1 St James Church Site Visit

Figure 33

St James Church After Apartment Conversion, 2025



Figure 34

Exterior Detail and Ornamentation of St James Church, 2025



Figure 35

Pigeons Returning to Vacant Apartments After Completion, 2025



Note. Pigeons returned to the converted church apartments, which remained unsold at the time of the site visit.

Figure 36

South Side of the Church with Newly Added Windows, 2025



Figure 37*New Housing Construction on the Site of the Former Hall, 2025***Figure 38***Foundation of the New Housing Development, 2025***Figure 39***The New Division Between the Church and the New Housing, 2025*

Figure 40

1960s/70s Apartment on Esplanade Road, 2025



Figure 41

Housing Evolution from the Historical Villas to 1960s/70s Flats, 2025



Figure 42

1960s/70s Apartment on View Road, 2025



Figure 43

1960s/70s Apartment on Esplanade Road Opposite the Church, 2025



Figure 44

High Density of 1960s/70s Apartments Along Esplanade Road, 2025



Figure 45

Six Storey Apartment Opposite the Church, 2025



Figure 46

Housing Evolution on View Road, 2025



Figure 47

Modern Flat Development on View Road, 2025



Figure 48

New High-Density Housing on View Road, 2025



Figure 49

Newly Developed Apartment on View Road, 2025



The ageing mid-century apartments reveal a less affluent side of Mount Eden, contrasting with its reputation. Recently, ageing flats have been replaced by high-density townhouses, including one sold for \$1.845 million in 2025, indicating a shift toward higher-value housing rather than affordability (OneRoof, n.d.). This move toward denser, more expensive housing near St James Church heightens the need for accessible community amenities and shared spaces.

Figure 50

Saint Barnabas Church on Mount Eden Road, 2025



Figure 51

Saint Barnabas Church Offers Services to the Asian community, 2025



Figure 52

Saint Barnabas Church Sign, 2025



Figure 53

Religious Society Of Friends Church Sign, 2025



Figure 54

Religious Society Of Friends Church on Mount Eden Road, 2025



Figure 55

Eden Church on View Road, 2025



Figure 56

Eden Church Offers Services to the Asian Community, 2025



Figure 57

Life Church Signage, 2025



Figure 58

Contemporary Life Church, 2025



These images illustrate the evolution of church architecture in Mount Eden, from the historic Saint Barnabas Church to the contemporary Life Church, reflecting a shift from traditional sacred character toward industrialised design.

SITE PLAN

SCALE 1:1000 @A3

0 10 20 m



Figure 59

Site Plan of the Surrounding Area

The church is located at the corner of the roundabout at Esplanade Road and View Road. View Road connects two major roads: Dominion Road and Mount Eden Road. The adjacent preschool, school, tennis court, and apartment building generate consistent foot traffic, making the church a naturally visible landmark within the neighbourhood.

CONTEXT

SCALE 1:2500 @A2

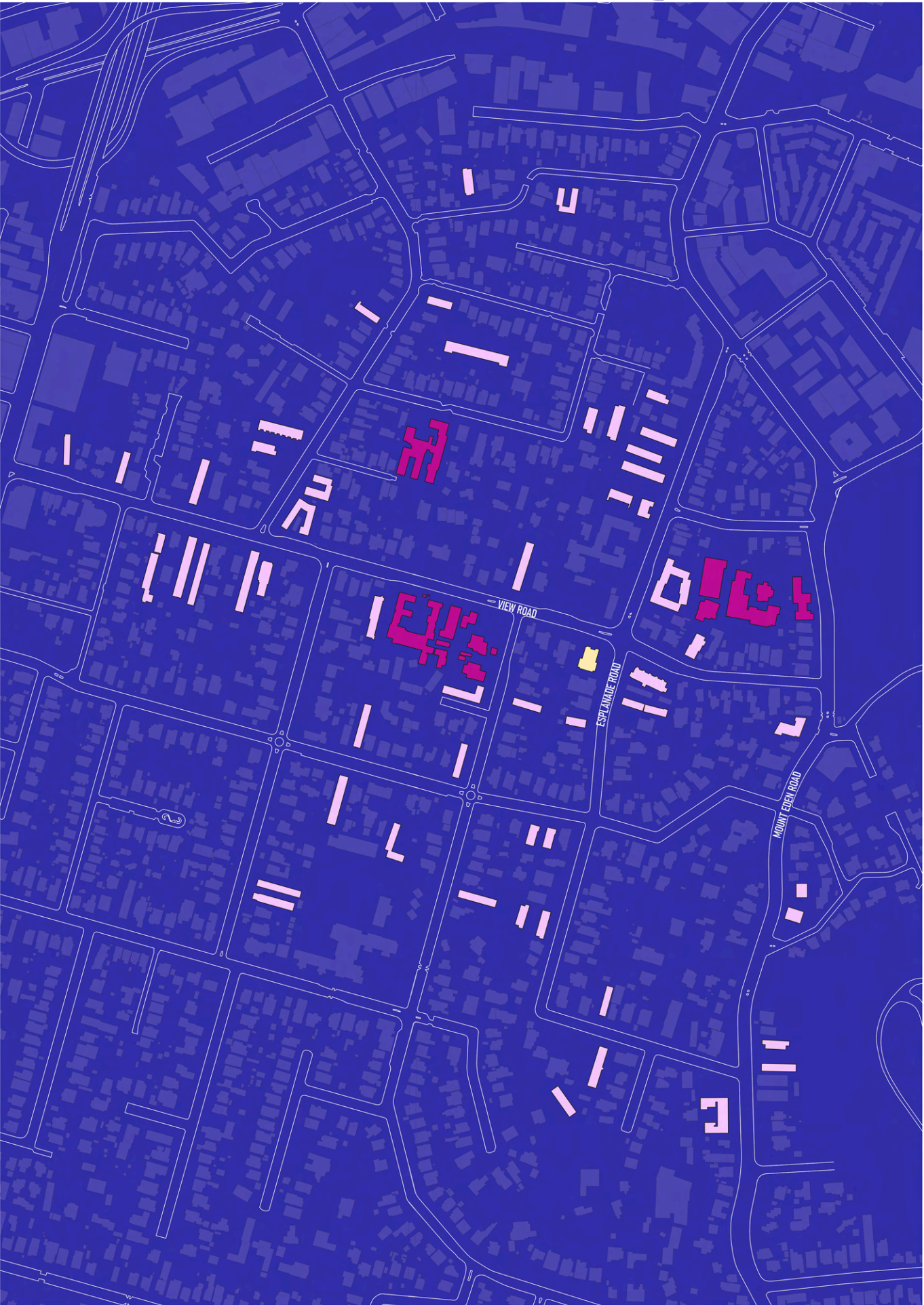


Figure 60

Context Plan of the Surrounding Area

Surrounding the church are various apartments and flats constructed in the 1960s and 70s, particularly along Esplanade and View Roads. Additionally, there are three retirement villages nearby, with two near the church, highlighting the primary user groups for the new development.

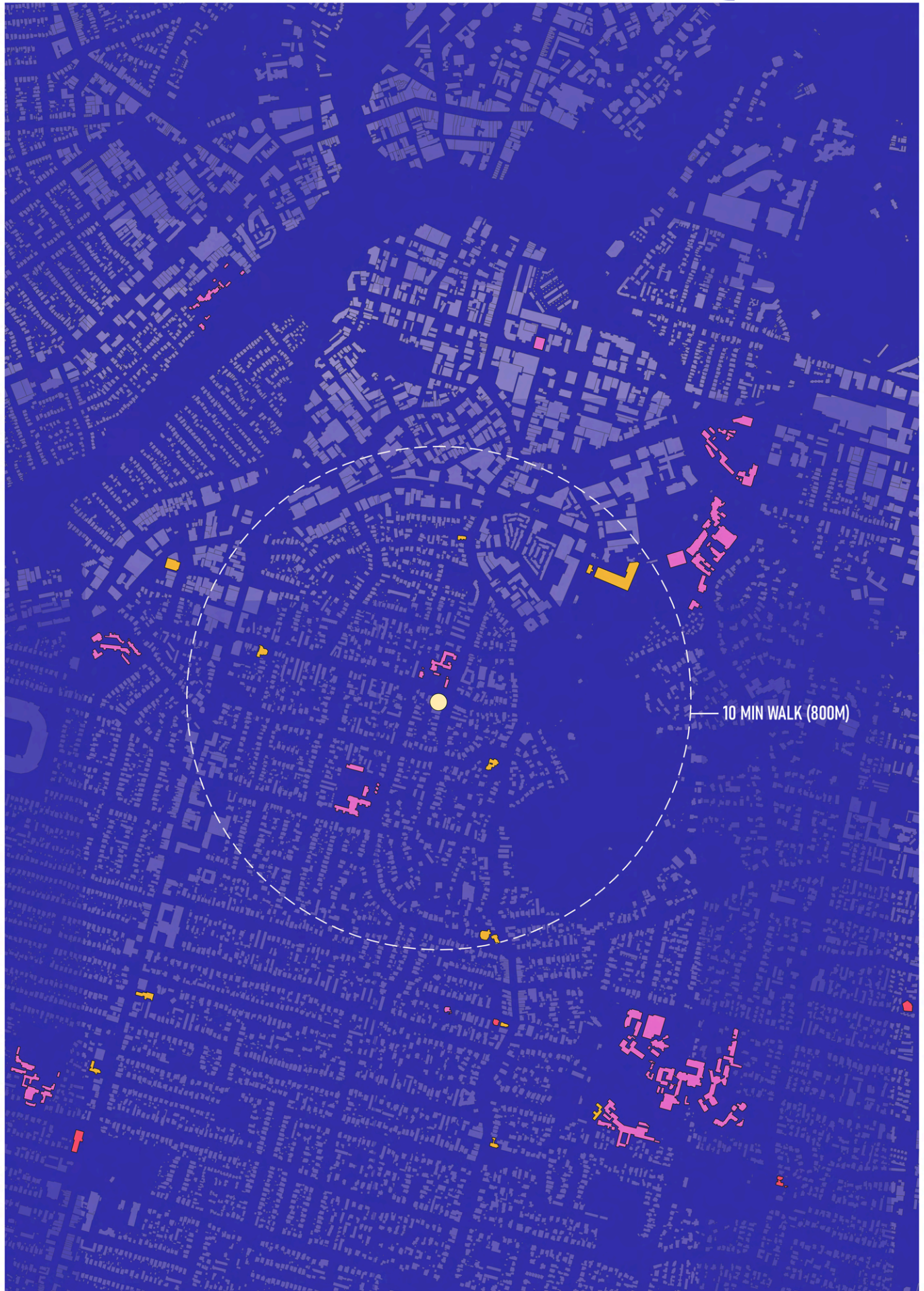


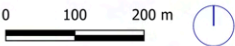
Figure 61

Context Plan of the Extended Surroundings

The church is surrounded by two schools, Ficino and Mount Eden Normal Primary School, with Auckland Grammar School located just outside the ten-minute walkable radius. Within this radius, there are five churches, highlighting the accessibility of spiritual spaces. However, there are no community centres within the radius. The closest is the Mt Eden Village Centre, which functions more as a venue for bookings rather than an open access leisure facility.

TRANSPORTATION

SCALE 1:5000 @A2



- SITE
- BUS ROUTES
- TRAIN ROUTES
- MOUNT EDEN TRAIN STATION

Figure 62
Transportation Around St James Church

The church is situated between two retail strips, Dominion Road and Mount Eden Road, with Dominion Road located closer to the site. The Mount Eden train station, which provides direct access to the city centre, is within walking distance of the church, indicating a strong demand for residential living in its vicinity. In addition, bus routes along View Road improve accessibility for those living beyond walking distance of the church, particularly elderly residents with limited mobility.

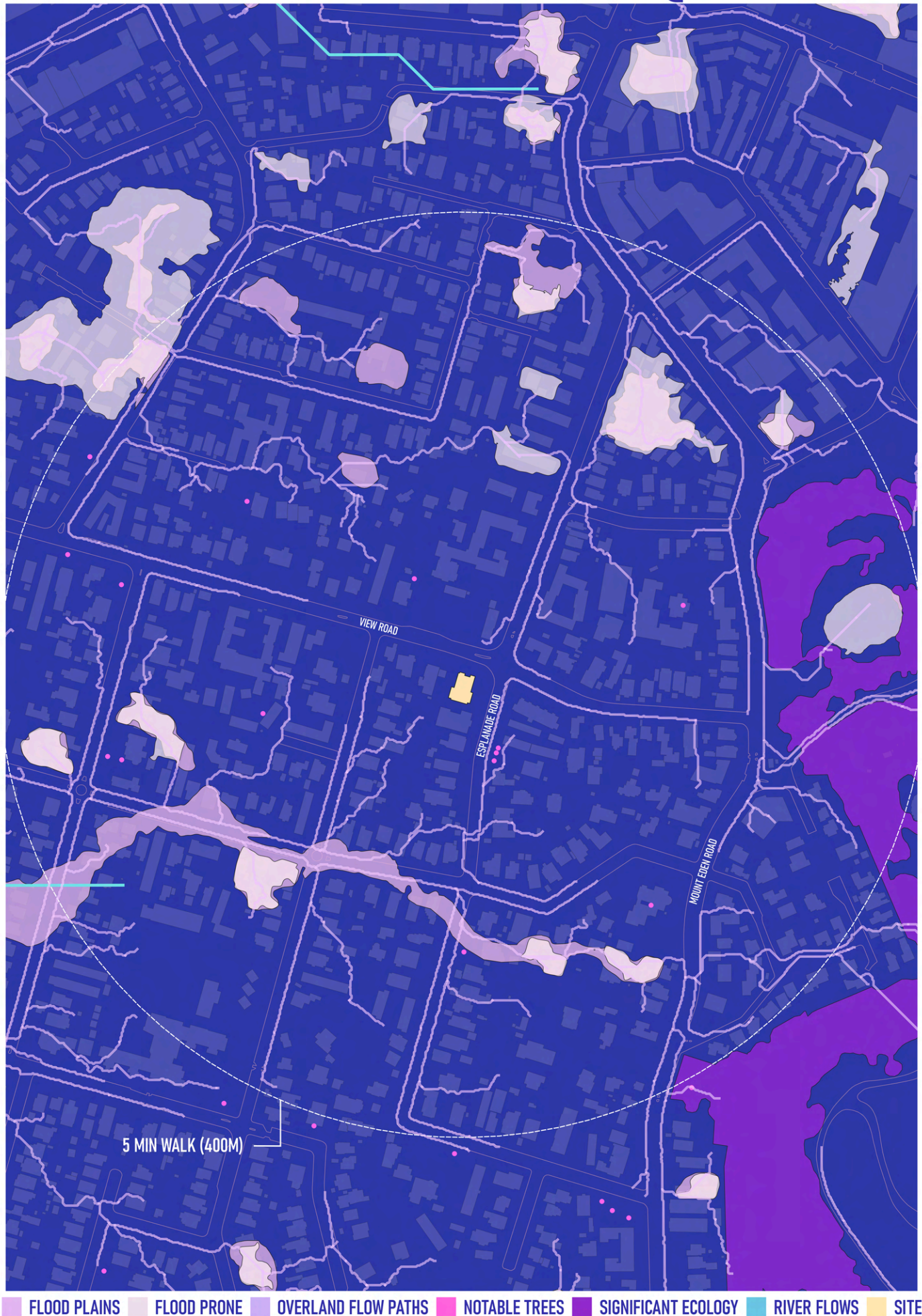


Figure 63

Flood Risk and Ecological Context Plan of St James Church Site

The site is located outside flood-prone areas, minimising exposure to flood risk. The primary natural hazard affecting the site is seismic activity; however, the overall earthquake risk in Auckland is low. No major river systems intersect the property, further reducing the likelihood of flood events.

5.4 Community and Public Space Literature

This section examines key theoretical perspectives on community space design and social interaction relevant to the adaptive reuse of St James Church. It considers Oldenburg's (1989) notion of the third place, Gehl's (2010, 2011) human-centred urbanism, and Alexander's (1977) participatory governance and structural frameworks to establish a conceptual foundation for transforming the church into an inclusive community hub.

Ray Oldenburg's (1989) concept of the third place highlights the importance of informal, neutral gathering spaces outside home and work. Places such as cafés or parks promote belonging through conversation and a welcoming atmosphere where social status is secondary, with regular visitors helping to build trust, inclusivity, and a sense of community ownership (Oldenburg, 1989). Applied to St James Church, this concept suggests programming the building as an informal social hub that supports everyday community needs alongside worship functions.

Jan Gehl (2011) emphasises human-centred public spaces that encourage lingering, observation, and interaction. Despite growing suburban and digital isolation, people continue to desire shared neighbourhood environments that support spontaneous encounters (Gehl, 2011). Gehl (2011) advocates a progression of spaces from intimate to more public scales, linking private homes to communal areas to enhance safety and cohesion, particularly for families and children. In *Cities for People*, Gehl (2010) further highlights the importance of meaningful programming, quality time in public spaces, and pedestrian-friendly environments, noting that fast-moving traffic undermines neighbourhood liveliness and sustained engagement. St James Church's location on a quiet residential street between two major roads positions it as a suitable local hub that supports walkability and community interaction.

While Oldenburg (1989) and Gehl (2010, 2011) focus on informal third places and sensory social engagement, Christopher Alexander (1977) provides a structural framework and governance model to support such interactions. For Alexander (1977), successful community centres are small-scale, visible, and embedded in daily neighbourhood life, typically serving around 500 people. They combine open public areas with adaptable project spaces to encourage local initiatives, maintain visual openness, and ensure pedestrian access (Alexander, 1977). Unlike centralised institutions, Alexander (1977) advocates grassroots governance and cooperative management to reinforce community ownership, supported by design principles such as semi-open outdoor rooms, proximity to activity nodes, visual openness, and intergenerational accessibility. These extend Gehl's (2011) interaction-focused approach by formalising spatial and social structures that support cohesion.

Despite their relevance, these theorists have limitations. Oldenburg's (1989) third place can be commodified in commercial contexts, undermining its egalitarian aims. Gehl's (2010, 2011) focus on spatial design may overlook socio-economic inequalities that shape who can access and benefit from such environments. Alexander's (1977) prescriptions for governance and spatial form provide a useful framework, though their application in contemporary cities shaped by shifting dynamics and market forces remains contested.

Although these theories often address dense urban contexts, their principles remain applicable to Mount Eden's affluent suburban setting. The area's heritage character and civic potential support community engagement, yet its affluence can also foster exclusivity that challenges the inclusive nature of informal public spaces. The work of Oldenburg (1989), Gehl (2010, 2011), and Alexander (1977) therefore requires careful adaptation to local socio-economic conditions. Together, these frameworks inform the adaptive reuse of St James Church as a multifunctional centre supporting social vitality, belonging, and shared stewardship.

5.5 Programme

The Cook Islands Presbyterian congregation never intended to leave and was forced to depart. An appropriate response would be to invite them back, given their longstanding association with the site. Although many Cook Islands and wider Pasifika families now live in South and West Auckland, they continue to travel to the inner city for Sunday worship, reflecting historic ties formed before gentrification (McGregor-Sumpter, n.d.; Raymond & Leo-Anderson, 2021).

The Dominion Road Methodist Church continues to serve its Tongan congregation, showing that Pasifika communities still travel to Mount Eden. This reinforces the importance of retaining worship at St James Church to reintegrate the Cook Islands community and counter gentrifying shifts. As services occur only on Sundays, the building can support a multifunctional programme for both past and present communities, allowing secular use during the week and generating diverse revenue for ongoing maintenance and operations.

In assessing the ongoing use-value of the church, it is important to recognise its core functions as communal gathering, worship, spiritual and social engagement, and religious education. The church also serves as a place of solace, offering refuge and emotional grounding, while extending its role outward through service and charity that support the wider community.

Given the proximity of retirement homes to the site and the emphasis this places on older users, it is important to consider the challenges they face. In Mount Eden, the most common activity limitation is memory impairment, affecting 2.3% of the population and often associated with dementia or Alzheimer's disease (Stats NZ, n.d.). Evidence from Verghese et al. (2003) demonstrates that regular engagement in cognitively stimulating activities such as reading, board games, musical instruments, and dancing can reduce dementia risk and delay memory decline among older adults. Providing spaces that support these activities is therefore valuable within an ageing population.

In 2023, professionals and managers comprised the predominant occupations of Mount Eden, indicating an affluent, career-oriented community (Stats NZ, n.d.). These demanding roles heighten stress, making accessible, sanctuary spaces important for community wellbeing.

The proposed adaptive reuse of the church establishes a multifunctional community hub that supports social interaction and wellbeing, while continuing weekly worship. The programme includes a secular sanctuary for leisure and emotional respite, study and coworking spaces, a community-donated book library, meeting rooms, and a computer station. These facilities particularly benefit elders, students and adults by providing spaces for study or remote work, reading, and respite. The new building programmes include a café on the ground floor and a recreational lounge and communal kitchen workshop.

Situated outside flood-prone zones, the site is designated as an emergency refuge, enhanced by sustainable infrastructure such as a water tank and solar panels to provide potable water and electricity during outages. Reconfigurable furnishings allow spaces to be reconfigured as temporary shelter for displaced individuals, reaffirming the church's historical role as a place of hope and safety during crises.

Effective adaptive reuse depends on meaningful community input. A limitation of this thesis is the absence of direct engagement with Mount Eden residents, creating the risk that the proposed programme may not fully reflect local needs. This was mitigated through secondary research, demographic analysis, and review of existing data. Future work should prioritise sustained community participation to validate and refine the proposal, although the thesis presents a well-considered scheme aligned with Mount Eden's demographic and social context.

5.5.1 Management of Programmes

The programmes are overseen by a charitable trust dedicated to preserving the heritage church and new addition as functional public spaces that respond to the evolving community needs. The Trust advances education and inclusion through worship functions and shared facilities such as a kitchen, library, and gathering areas that support social connection, cultural engagement, and lifelong learning.

All activities contribute to the Trust's charitable purposes of community benefit, heritage preservation, education, and relief of need. Any non-charitable activities, such as revenue generated workshops or café operations, exist solely to sustain these objectives. Operating on a not-for-profit basis, the Trust reinvests all income into building maintenance and community programmes, with no surplus providing personal benefit to trustees.

The Board of Trustees consists of seven members serving four-year terms. Quarterly meetings are held to engage with community members, who may vote to remove trustees failing to uphold the Trust's mission, while trustees retain authority to appoint new members based on the board's needs and expertise.

Funding sources include local enterprises, Auckland Council grants, donations, income from workshops and café, fundraising events, and produce sales from the communal garden. All profits support maintenance and operational costs, including staff salaries, supplemented by volunteers.

Chapter 6 Design Development

6.1 Design Framework

The design framework developed in Chapter 2 distinguishes between the existing church and the proposed addition, focusing on adaptation, minimum intervention, reversibility, and risk mitigation, informed by heritage conservation literature and charters. The intervention aims to protect the original fabric by avoiding irreversible changes that could reduce heritage significance, while allowing reinstatement if required.

The new addition is guided by the adaptable architecture framework of Schmidt III and Austin (2016), which recommends buildings designed for continuous change and evolving needs. This approach is structured around two principles: adjustability, which allows interior elements like fixtures and furniture to be reconfigured for different tasks and comfort levels, and versatility, which enables spatial layouts to accommodate varied activities and occupancy patterns. Structural column placement, room dimensions, movable partitions, and building services all influence this versatility (Schmidt III & Austin, 2016).

These principles address the dual priorities of heritage conservation and ongoing utility for both buildings. The ICOMOS New Zealand Charter was selected for its international recognition, while Schmidt III and Austin's (2016) adaptability framework aligns with contemporary conservation goals of continued use. Designing the addition for adaptability allows it to flexibly accommodate changing uses over time and reduces the risk of obsolescence.

Heritage conservation principles

- Minimum intervention (Article 6)
- Use (Article 8) (Discussed in Chapter 5 exegesis)
- Adaption (Article 21)
- Risk Mitigation (Article 24)

6.1.1 Design Criteria

St James Church (Heritage Building)

- Retain the spatial significance of the nave, including volume, light quality, and circulation patterns.
- Preserve original interior elements, finishes, and ornamentation as much as possible.
- Protect both interior and exterior building fabric with minimum intervention.
- Clearly distinguish new interventions through material or form contrast, avoiding historical mimicry.
- Ensure seismic intervention are minimally invasive.
- Maintain the clarity of the building's original function.

New Build (Addition)

- Design for adaptability with flexible spatial layouts and adjustable interior components.
- Establish a clear architectural contrast and respectful dialogue with the church's historic form.
- Reference the spatial and cultural significance of the former Sunday School and Hall through massing and orientation.
- Visually and physically highlight the transition zone between old and new.
- Design structural systems that allow for future modifications.

6.2 Design Development According to Theoretical and Design Framework

This section critically examines the implementation of theoretical and design frameworks within the project. It begins with a detailed analysis of the selected ICOMOS principles, highlighting their application throughout the design process of St James Church. Subsequently, the adaptable architecture framework and related theoretical design approaches are discussed, demonstrating how these concepts were integrated into both the church adaption and the new addition, culminating in the project's outcome.

6.2.1 Adaptation (Article 21)

The adaptation principle informed key interventions within the church. To improve natural lighting and accommodate new functions, interior elements were removed, including the vestibule, pews, and later partition office. The vestibule had previously undergone inappropriate alterations, such as an extended centre wall, new doors, an added window, and a lowered ceiling. Although it contributed to the transition into the nave, its removal is mitigated by the retention of a portion of the teal timber panel wall, indicating its former presence. Externally, the roof was replaced and the vestry removed.

The pews, which occupied considerable floor area and conflicted with the new programme, were removed, reducing the heritage significance and original worship experience, although one was retained as a reference to their historical role. The later partition office, which compromised the church's spatial integrity, was entirely removed to restore authenticity.

While some removals were irreversible, mitigation measures were applied. Timber from the pews is repurposed within the church and new building flooring, preserving elements of the original fabric. A new movable partition wall with movable louvres on the upper platform references the former vestibule, which is partially retained. The recessed floor remains reversible, as new raised platforms sit above the original sloped structure, allowing potential reinstatement of the pews with minimal impact.

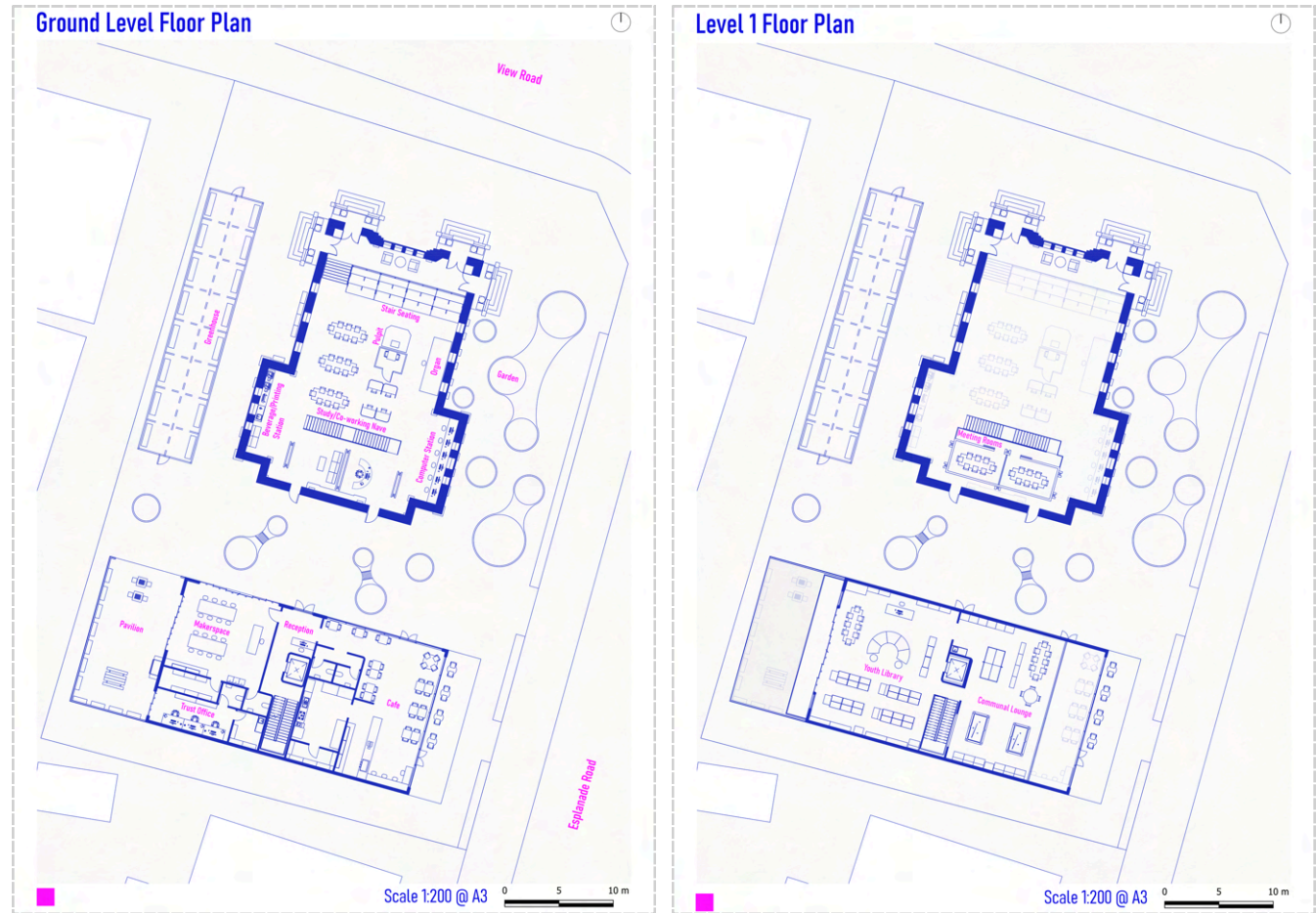
Figure 64

First Iteration: Floor Plan Development for the Church and New Addition



Figure 65

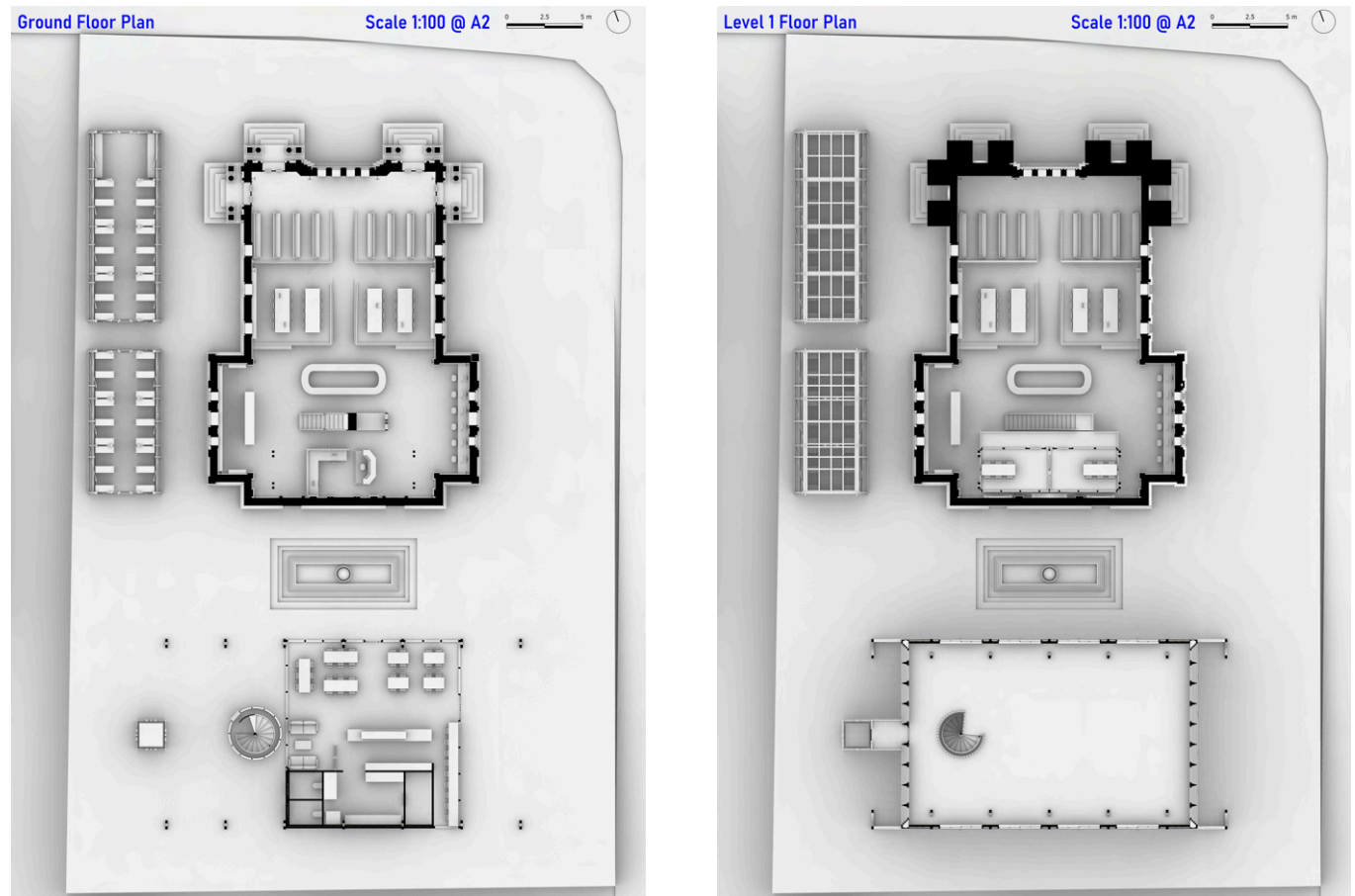
Second Iteration: Floor Plan Development for the Church and New Addition



Note. The programmes for each building evolved throughout the research process, along with the understandings of conservation. Figure 64 plans is the first iteration and it shows a direct connection between the two buildings with aspects of the church being demolished. This was avoided in the second iteration plans, as demolishing parts of the church would reduce the church's significance and future adaptation opportunities.

Figure 66

Refined Floor Plan Prior to Final Design



Note. This is the third attempt plan with most of the final programmes. The key problems faced were the spiral staircase, mezzanine staircase orientation, greenhouse design, and the church programme layout. These were acknowledged and addressed in the final plan.

Figure 67

Initial Concepts for the Addition and Church Connection



Note. These concept collages were developed at the beginning of the thesis with limited knowledge of conservation principles. They explore the connection between the buildings and the form of the new addition. These concepts did not inform the final design, as they did not respond appropriately to the conservation charters and former Hall.

6.2.2 Alterations (Adaptation, Article 21)

The recessed floor was modified to accommodate the new use by constructing two levelled platforms above the original slope. This adaptation provides a more practical spatial arrangement for the current needs while allowing for future flexibility. A continuous sloped walkway has been inserted centrally to respect and acknowledge the original transitional sequence between the vestibule and pulpit.

The insertion follows the adaptive reuse installation approach proposed by Brooker and Stone (2019). It consists of a freestanding timber mezzanine with glass windows, creating an elevated meeting space that frees the ground floor for circulation. The detachable staircase mounted on wheels allows repositioning for various uses. The exposed timber structure distinguishes itself from the church's vibrant interior while remaining visually subordinate to the original fabric. Although it partially obscures the south wall and nave ceiling, this impact is minor and reversible.

6.2.3 Minimum Intervention (Article 6)

Minimum intervention is pursued through the retention of the church's façade, interior ornamentation, and recessed floor, and by inserting a freestanding mezzanine that remains independent of the heritage fabric. However, the removal of the vestry, vestibule, and pews demonstrates that intervention was not entirely avoidable. A tension emerges between minimum intervention and risk mitigation, as the introduction of seismic strengthening required for URM construction inevitably affects the fabric. The design therefore seeks to minimise structural intrusion by limiting seismic work to essential interventions. Overall, the principle is partially achieved, balanced against risk mitigation requirements.

Figure 68

Initial Concepts for Church Insertion and External Additions



Note. This first adaptive reuse proposal explored a new use for the church. The addition responded to the former hall's form, height, and orientation through a contemporary architectural language. Later reflection highlights the excessive intervention within the church, and a reduction in the nave's grandeur. The water feature was intended to mediate between the intimate counselling space and active space.

Figure 69

Conceptual Model Studies for the Church Insertion



Note. These models explored the form and practicality of the mezzanine. The physical process of making the structure also helped consider how it could be disassembled when no longer required.

Figure 70

Conceptual Model Studies for the New Addition Form



Note. These models explored the form and structure of the addition while informing its potential construction.

Figure 71

Design Iterations of the New Addition Form and Connection



Note. This is the third attempt at adaptation. The height of the addition is lower than the former hall to reduce its dominance in relation to the church. The proportional language of the church informed the addition, alongside its own contemporary interpretation of an acroterion. Key flaws include the heavy footing of the addition on the former hall footprint and the direct connection between the two buildings, which is unsuitable in relation to seismic risk. The staircase limits the adaptability of the addition, while the centred recessed pathway within the church creates an awkward spatial arrangement for users.

6.2.4 Risk Mitigation (Article 24)

St James Church was classified as an EPB on 28 May 2018, requiring seismic retrofitting to ensure user safety (Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, n.d.). This thesis addresses seismic retrofit design principles conceptually through architectural design iteration, noting that structural engineering analysis lies beyond the scope of this study. Constructed of URM with a plastered cement façade, the building is particularly vulnerable to collapse due to its gable end walls.

The walls comprise brick cavity construction, with two brick layers separated by a ventilated cavity to allow moisture drainage (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). The outer brick leaf, prone to collapse, requires secure attachment to the inner wall (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). This is typically achieved through corrosion-resistant proprietary ties, drilled through the outer brickwork and epoxy-anchored into the inner leaf (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). Although irreversible, this method is visually discreet due to concealed drill holes and has minimal visual impact (Ingham & Griffith, 2011).

An alternative method is steel strong backs that reinforce URM walls by bolting vertical steel sections to the interior face at regular intervals (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). This reduces the width of unsupported wall panels and improves their resistance to out-of-plane forces (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). The steel members transfer loads through bending into the floor diaphragms, effectively creating a series of buttressed wall segments (Ingham & Griffith, 2011).

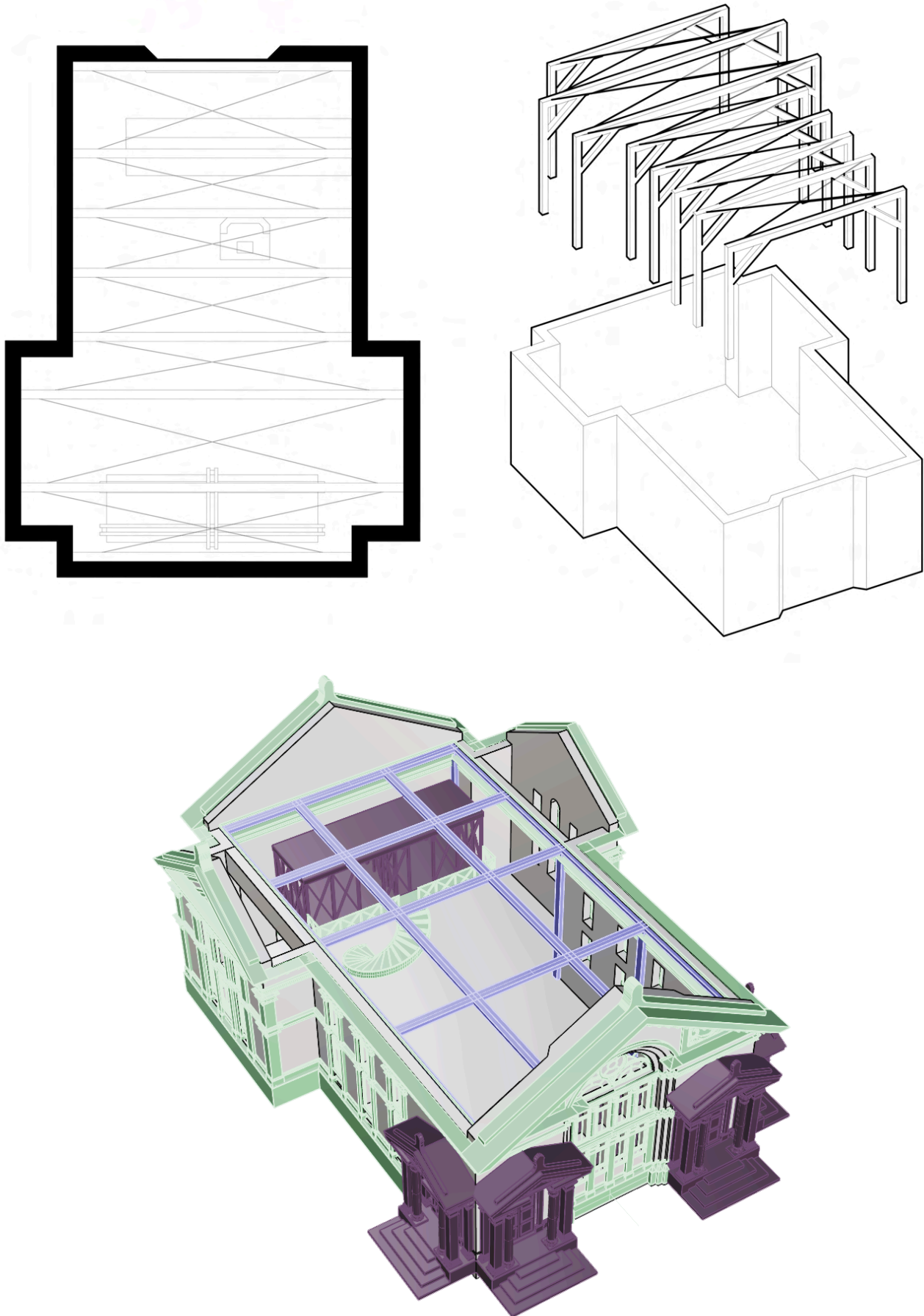
Moment frames add seismic resilience by incorporating customisable, rigidly connected beams and columns to resist horizontal forces (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). These frames minimally impact space, can be installed inside or outside masonry piers, and preserve architectural character (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). It serves as an effective strengthening solution, either reinforcing existing walls or functioning independently (Ingham & Griffith, 2011). When a steel frame is placed adjacent to a weak wall, it must be bolted into the URM or connected to the diaphragm (Ingham & Griffith, 2011).

Moment frames were chosen for St James Church's retrofit as it aligns with the International Scientific Committee on the Analysis and Restoration of Structures of Architectural Heritage principles, achieving both reinforcement and future reversibility. Its successful performance during the 2011 Christchurch earthquake demonstrates the effectiveness of this approach (Dizhur et al., 2011). Compared to steel strong backs, moment frames introduce less visual disruption due to their wider spacing and offer greater reversibility than corrosion-resistant proprietary ties (Ingham & Griffith, 2011).

The church's new use as a disaster refuge prompted the exploration of adding solar panels and stormwater collection systems to mitigate risks of power outages and water shortages during emergencies. This approach further future-proofs the church by enabling it to provide more than shelter, offering essential services to the community in times of need.

Figure 72

Iterations of Seismic Structure Development



Note. These are two different seismic retrofitting attempts. The key flaw of both include the dominance of the structures within the nave, which significantly disturbs the atmosphere. There was a limited understanding of seismic retrofitting during these two process.

Table 1

Heritage Features Assessment Table 1

Heritage Features Assessment Table #1

Features	Original			Significance:	Conservation	Rationale:	Impact on heritage fabric:		Mitigation:
	Addition/Alteration	High	Moderate	Low	Remove		High	Moderate	
Pulpit						This played a significant role in the previous church use and is reused as a reception in the new function.			The pulpit preserves liturgical integrity and craftsmanship, reinforcing the church's symbolic and spiritual values. Retaining it maintains continuity with the building's religious and cultural narrative, even when the use changes.
Organ						Although the organ is a significant interior feature of the church, its large size is incompatible with the new church programme.			The organ once served as a central element of the congregation's social engagement through music during the church's active use. Its removal will significantly affect residents' experience of the original church and diminish their sense of connection.
Steel tie rods						The steel tie rods with ornamental brackets serve a structural function and contribute to the character of the heritage ceiling.			Retaining the steel tie rods preserves the building's historic fabric and provides insight into its historic construction practices.
Pulpit decorative wall						This decorative pulpit wall feature is original to the church but has been relocated. As part of the adaptive reuse, it is returned to its original position to preserve its historical integrity.			Returning to its original position will enhance the authenticity of the space and reinforce the heritage value of the interior.
Ceiling fretwork						The ceiling fretwork is a prominent and defining element that contributes significantly to the identity of the interior. Its retention is key.			Its retention supports the interior's heritage value by preserving a key decorative feature that contributes to its historic character and authenticity.
Stained glass windows						The stained glass windows are a prominent feature of the building and contribute significantly to the church's identity and character. Their retention is essential.			The retention of the stained glass windows supports the heritage value of the church by preserving a key decorative feature that contributes to its historical character and authenticity.
Pews						The pews require removal due to the significant amount of space they occupy. Their removal will allow for greater spatial flexibility and better accommodate the functional needs of the new use.			The pews are key elements of the church's original layout and character, contributing significantly to its heritage value. Their removal would diminish the interior's authenticity and spatial integrity.
Recessed floor						The recessed floor is a key spatial element in the church, guiding users from the vestibule down the slope to the pulpit, with pews integrated into the space to support worship. It occupies significant space and contributes to the church's heritage fabric. Therefore, it is retained to preserve both spatial experience and historic integrity.			The sloped floor significantly contributes to the spatial character and physical experience of the original church interior, guiding movement and shaping the worship experience. It is a distinctive feature that is difficult to replicate if removed. Retaining it preserves the spatial authenticity and the intended user movement within this historic space.

Table 2

Heritage Features Assessment Table 2

Heritage Features Assessment Table #2

Features	Original	Significance:		Conserve Remove	Rationale:	Impact on heritage fabric:		Impact on heritage values:	Mitigation:
	Addition/ Alteration	Outstanding High Moderate Low	High Moderate Low						
Interior wall			Outstanding		The interior walls feature decorative elements including plaster, wainscoting, timber panels, a defined colour palette, and a decorative string course. These components form an important part of the church's heritage fabric and contribute to its historic character and identity. Their retention is essential to preserve the building's integrity.		Retaining the original interior wall will have a low impact on heritage values, as it preserves the historical character of the space and allows new users to share in the experience of past generations.		
Façade			Outstanding		The historic façade is a key element contributing to the church's heritage listing. Its conservation is essential to maintaining the integrity and authenticity of the site, ensuring that its cultural heritage is preserved for future generations.		The façade embodies significant architectural, aesthetic, and historical values. Conserving it without alteration will allow future generations to appreciate the church's architectural style and construction techniques of its era. The impact on heritage values will be low, as the proposal does not involve compromise of original fabric.		
Timber panel doors (exterior)			High		The original doors contribute significantly to the church's character and material integrity. They reflect the building's original design intent and play a key role in expressing its historic identity.		Retaining and sensitively modifying the original doors will have minimal impact on the heritage values, as their form, material, and contribution to the building's historic character will be preserved.	Glazed panels will be sensitively inserted into the original timber panel doors to improve visibility and openness to the street. This preserves the original fabric while making the entrance more inviting and supports the building's new use.	
Vestibule			Moderate		The vestibule has been extensively altered and retains limited original fabric. Its spatial function is no longer required for the building's new use, and its removal will enhance the interior by allowing natural light from the northern stained glass windows to filter freely into the nave.		Due to extensive alterations, the removal of the vestibule and its minor decorative elements is considered to have low impact on the heritage value. While it retains some original material, its architectural and spatial integrity have been diminished from modifications.	The vestibule wall inside the church is clad in teal timber panels, a colour that differs from the rest of the interior. This teal wall will be retained to indicate the location of the original vestibule.	
South vestry			High		The vestry, while part of the original fabric, is small and limits functional reuse. Additionally, it obstructs an accessible connection between the historic church and the new addition. Its removal will enhance spatial flow and support better integration between the old and new structures.		Removing the original vestry will result in a minor loss of authenticity; however, its impact on the church's overall heritage significance remains limited. While the vestry contributed to the historic function of the church, its visually incongruous character means its removal will support the site's adaptive reuse by improving spatial flow between the two buildings.	Unfortunately, there is no way to mitigate this loss, and its removal will diminish the church's spatial authenticity and experience.	
Partition Office			Low		The office is a later addition that intrudes on the church space, particularly by obstructing the west transept windows. While it reflects the church's interior design, its removal will open up the space for the new use and restore the natural light.		Removing the office will improve spatial flow and support a more practical layout for the building's new function. By restoring the original floor plan and reopening key architectural features, the change will have a positive impact on the building's heritage values.		
Roof			Low		The original dark grey slate roof was replaced with red corrugated steel sheeting, which has since deteriorated due to rust and now requires replacement.		Replacing the deteriorating non-original steel roof with a shake metal tile roof will result in a loss of the original material affecting its authenticity. However, the impact on the church's heritage values is moderate, as the new roof complements the original slate tile, thus preserving the building's architectural integrity while providing improved durability and protection. The slight metal reflection will signal to heritage specialists that a new material has been used, helping to avoid conjecture about the building's original fabric.	Slate tiles are sourced internationally, making them costly to transport and associated with significant carbon emissions, which contradicts the adaptive reuse objective of minimising environmental impact. The proposed dark grey metal shake tile roof references the original slate in colour and pattern, reducing visual impact. As metal roofing is locally produced and widely used in New Zealand, it lowers transport emissions and supports sustainability.	

Note: An interpretive sign will be created to educate visitors about the history of St. James Church and the former hall, the original architecture, the rationale behind the fabric changes, and the conservation approach. This will foster a deeper understanding and connection to the church's heritage, while raising awareness of the alterations.

6.3 Design Intent: New Building and Connecting Pavilion

The new building is connected to the church by a pavilion that continues the church's gabled roof form and transitions to the roof of the new building. The pavilion is a freestanding structure, separated from both buildings, providing sheltered outdoor dining. The placement of the new building follows key aspects of the former hall, including the original footprint, orientation, and gabled profile, which informed the new curved gable design. The new building is elevated on tree-like columns, acting as a metaphorical presence above the site of the former hall, destroyed by the fire and marked by the engraved outline of its footprint.

6.4 Adaptive and Inclusive Design Framework

The following section outlines the contemporary social and adaptive design approaches that inform the project beyond conservation principles. Relationship based design, accessibility for equality, and an adaptable and user responsive design (Spatial Agency, Adaptation and Flexibility, Adjustability, and Versatility) are used to guide how the church and new building are programmed, organised, and occupied. Together, they frame the project as a community-oriented, flexible environment that can support changing needs and inclusive patterns of use over time.

6.4.1 Relationship-Based Design

Three relationship-oriented spaces structure the site. First, the secular sanctuary adapts the church's front nave into a quiet, reflective environment for rest and decompression. The retained stained-glass window provides atmospheric natural light, while a louvred partition introduces privacy without full enclosure, allowing individual use alongside informal social presence.

Second, the semi-open pavilion mediates between the church and new building. This partially enclosed, two-level space enables visual connection, passive occupation, and moments of social interaction. Its elevated dining platform, green wall, and evening illumination enhance the sense of safety and encourage extended use after hours.

Third, the communal kitchen and recreation lounge integrate food, learning, and social activities. Cooking workshops, shared meals, garden-to-table programmes, and recreation support intergenerational and cross-cultural relationships. Regular food events foster community-building and reinforce the connection between nourishment, leisure, and social engagement.

6.4.2 Accessibility for Equality

Accessibility for equality ensures that all community members can participate on equal terms. The adaptive reuse of the church counters exclusive redevelopment scenarios by retaining the heritage landmark as a publicly accessible space rather than private apartments.

The users include elders, wheelchair users, and young families and, are supported through barrier-free circulation and an equitable entrance strategy. The rear entry becomes the primary access due to its grade-level condition, avoiding the northern stairs, while a recessed floor walkway connects to the raised platforms.

In the new building, an elevator, automated doors, wide circulation paths, and clear icon-based signage ensure ease of movement and cognitive legibility. The layout separates quieter contemplative spaces in the church from more active social areas in the new building to accommodate users with sensory sensitivities. Most programmes, including the recreation lounge and library workspace, remain freely accessible, with only kitchen workshops requiring a minimal fee to support operations. Together, these measures uphold dignity, independence, and equal participation.

6.4.3 Adaptable and User Responsive Design

At the structural scale, adaptation, flexibility, and the conditions that support versatility are embedded in the new building's column-and-beam grid, which allows internal partitions and ceilings to remain non-load bearing. This enables future reorganisation of rooms, subdivision of the upper level, or expansion of the ground-floor programme, where the café fit-out can be removed or replaced without structural intervention. In the church, high ceilings and simplified floor platforms maintain an open spatial volume that supports long-term reinterpretation.

On the operational scale, versatility is achieved through spatial proportions, circulation clarity, and integrated services that support multiple configurations and activities. The church nave accommodates study, reading, meetings rooms, and quiet retreat, while the recreation lounge supports both everyday leisure and programmed community events.

For everyday user scale, adjustability allows occupants to modify the environment directly. Mobile furniture, lightweight seating, and wheeled kitchen benches enable immediate reconfiguration for workshops, meals, play, or events. Movable partitions between the kitchen and lounge allow the space to expand or contract according to group size or community-led needs.

Collectively, these strategies demonstrate spatial agency, empowering users to shape and manage their environment, while also ensuring the architecture remains resilient and responsive to evolving community needs. Although co-design could not be undertaken within this thesis, the proposal is structured to support future participatory processes in which residents can influence programming and spatial arrangement.

6.4.4 Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) Community Driven Reuse

The limitations of direct community participation affected the application of this framework; however, research into local demographic needs and appropriate programmes informed the proposed design. The community centre is intended to be managed through a charitable trust, enabling democratic board election and community influence over the use of spaces. Architecturally, the new addition is designed as an adaptable structure, while the church interior remains flexible through mobile furniture and a freestanding mezzanine to support evolving programmes. This spatial adaptability, combined with community-based governance, reflects Plevoets and Van Cleempoel's (2019) model of community-driven reuse.

6.4.5 Norberg- Schulz (1979) Spirit of Place

Although several church interior elements have been removed, the interior wall ornamentation, colour palette, and recessed floor have been retained, preserving the church's spatial character. The mezzanine slightly reduces the nave, yet it maintains its spatial grandeur and atmospheric continuity. The continued use of the church, alongside new community functions, sustains its symbolic sacred and social qualities. The return of the Cook Islands congregation helps revive the Pasifika cultural presence and allows new generations to experience the church in ways similar to earlier generations.

6.5 Design Output

This section presents the final design outcome developed in response to the research questions, community needs, and the site's historical context. The drawings and visualisations illustrate how the design integrates the theoretical framework, conservation principles and adaptive reuse strategies discussed in the preceding chapters.

Figure 73

Streetscape View of St James Church



Note. The addition roof colour was selected to clearly distinguish the new intervention from the existing structure.

Figure 74

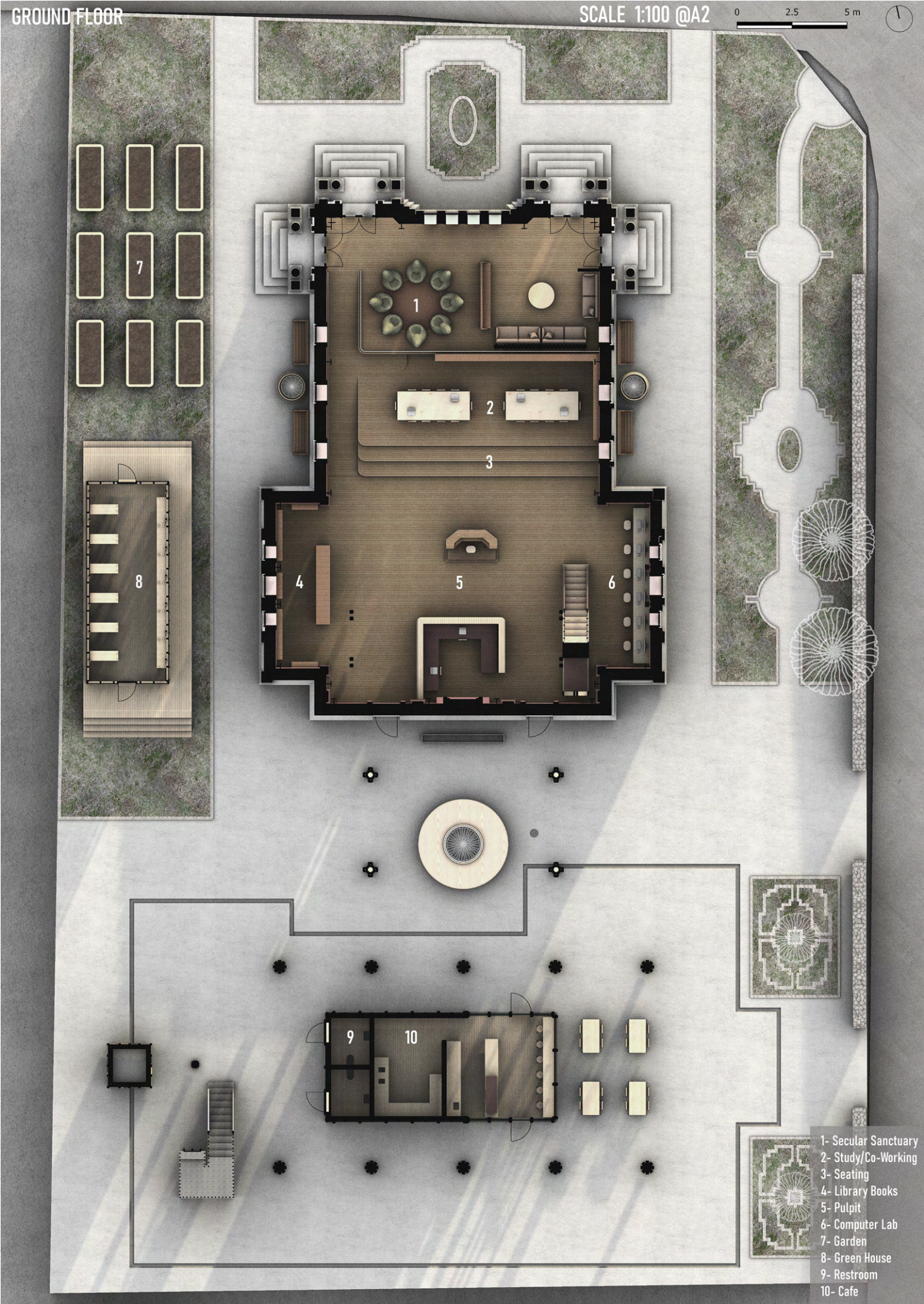
Proposed Site Plan of St James Church



Note. The church and addition sit beside an active road junction within a residential area, reinforcing the suitability of the new use and its adaptation.

Figure 75

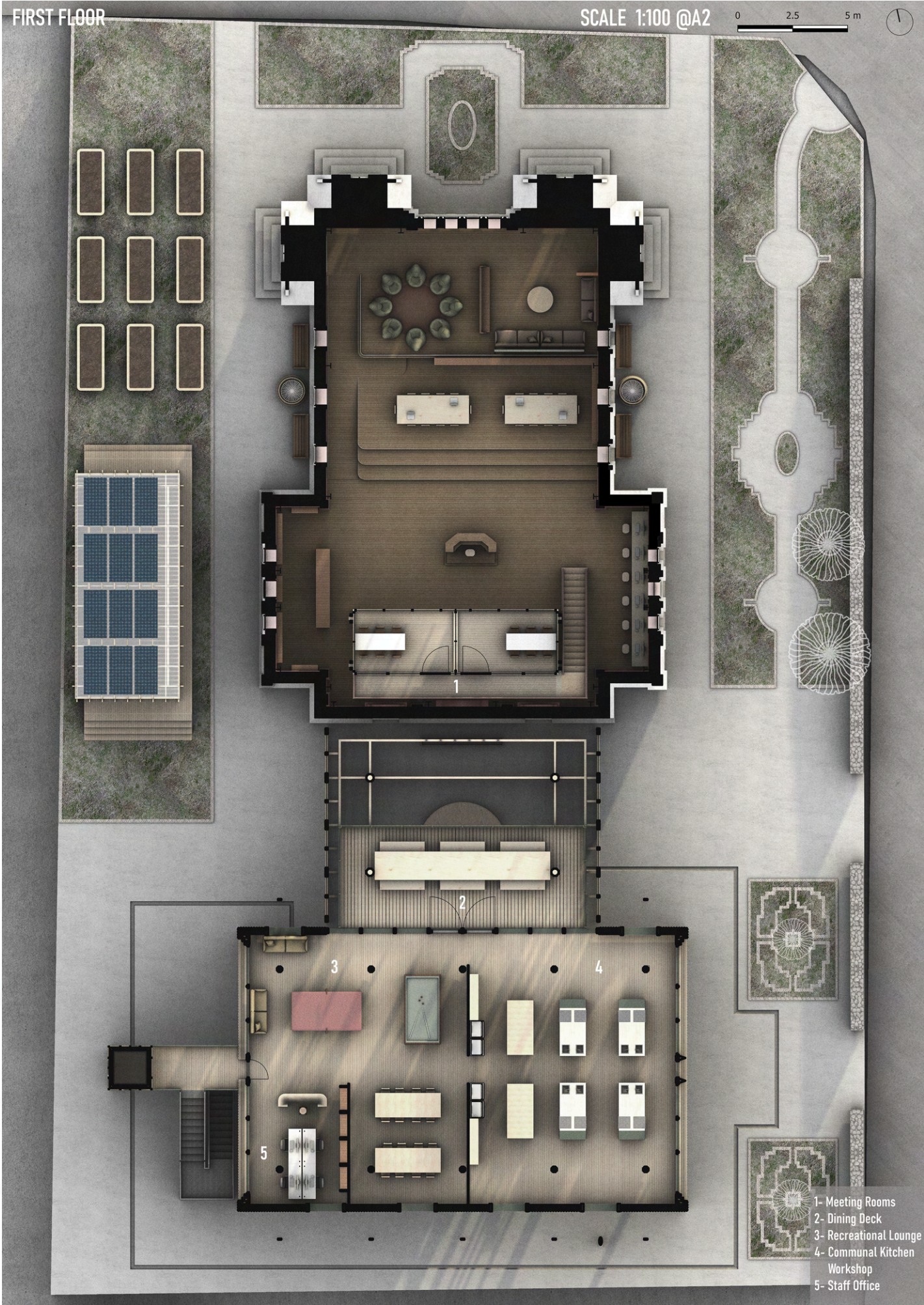
Proposed Ground Floor Layout of St James Church and New Addition



Note. This floor plan illustrates the openness of the church layout and the two platforms inserted above the original recessed floor to provide more usable space. It also highlights the lighter footprint of the new addition on the former hall site.

Figure 76

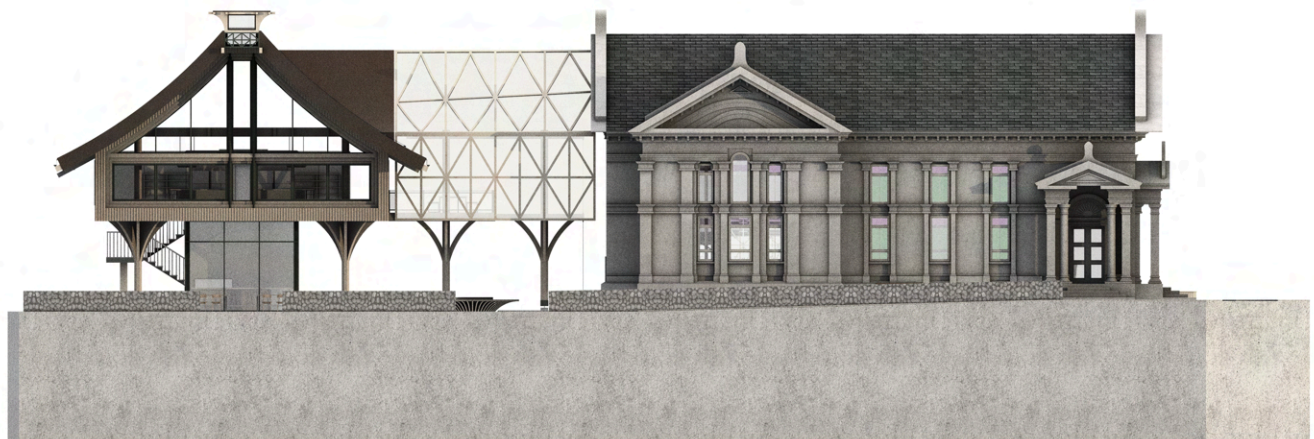
Proposed First Floor Layout of St James Church and New Addition



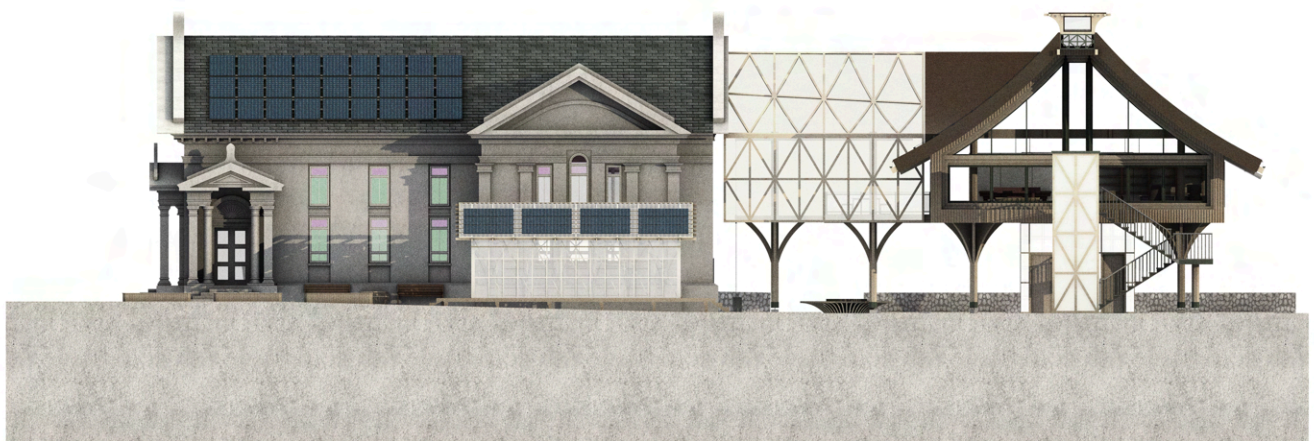
Note. This floor plan illustrates how the mezzanine is inserted to the church providing more use with minimum intervention. It also shows the addition's staircase and elevator is located outside the building to allow for potential adaptation. The freestanding walls in the addition show how spaces can be divided without fixed installations, allowing for future modifications.

Figure 77

Elevations of St James Church and New Addition



East Elevation

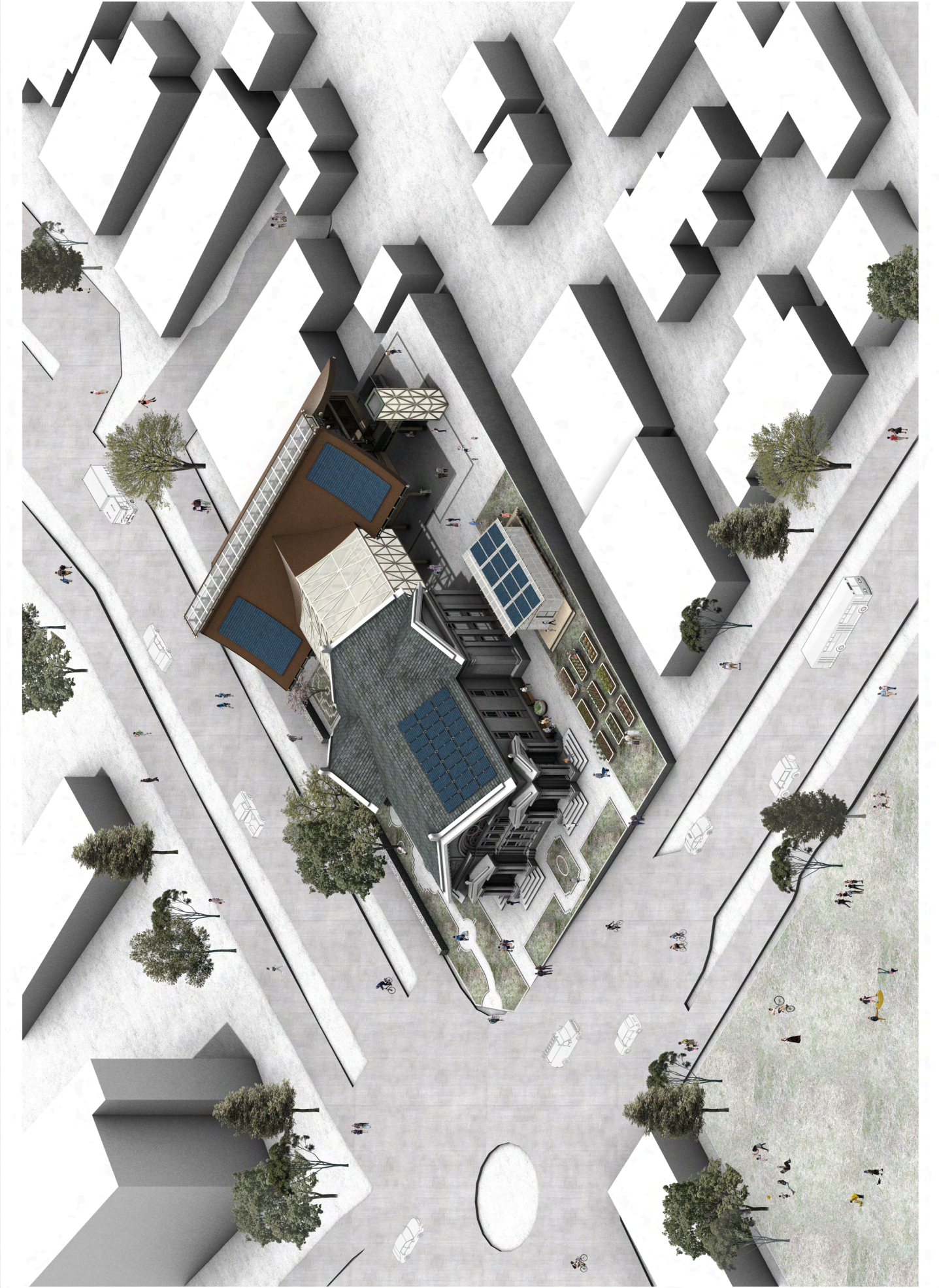


West Elevation

Note. These elevations highlight the physical separation of the three structures, keeping the original church façade dominant and sustaining its spirit of place. The untouched historic fabric reinforces minimum intervention, while the curved roof of the addition introduces a contemporary character that distinguishes it from the church and continues the massing and orientation of the former Hall.

Figure 78

Axonometric View of St James Church and New Addition



Note. The axonometric reveals the three structures and their integration within the surrounding residential fabric, demonstrating the accessibility and openness of the site and encouraging local residents to use it as a third space.

Figure 79

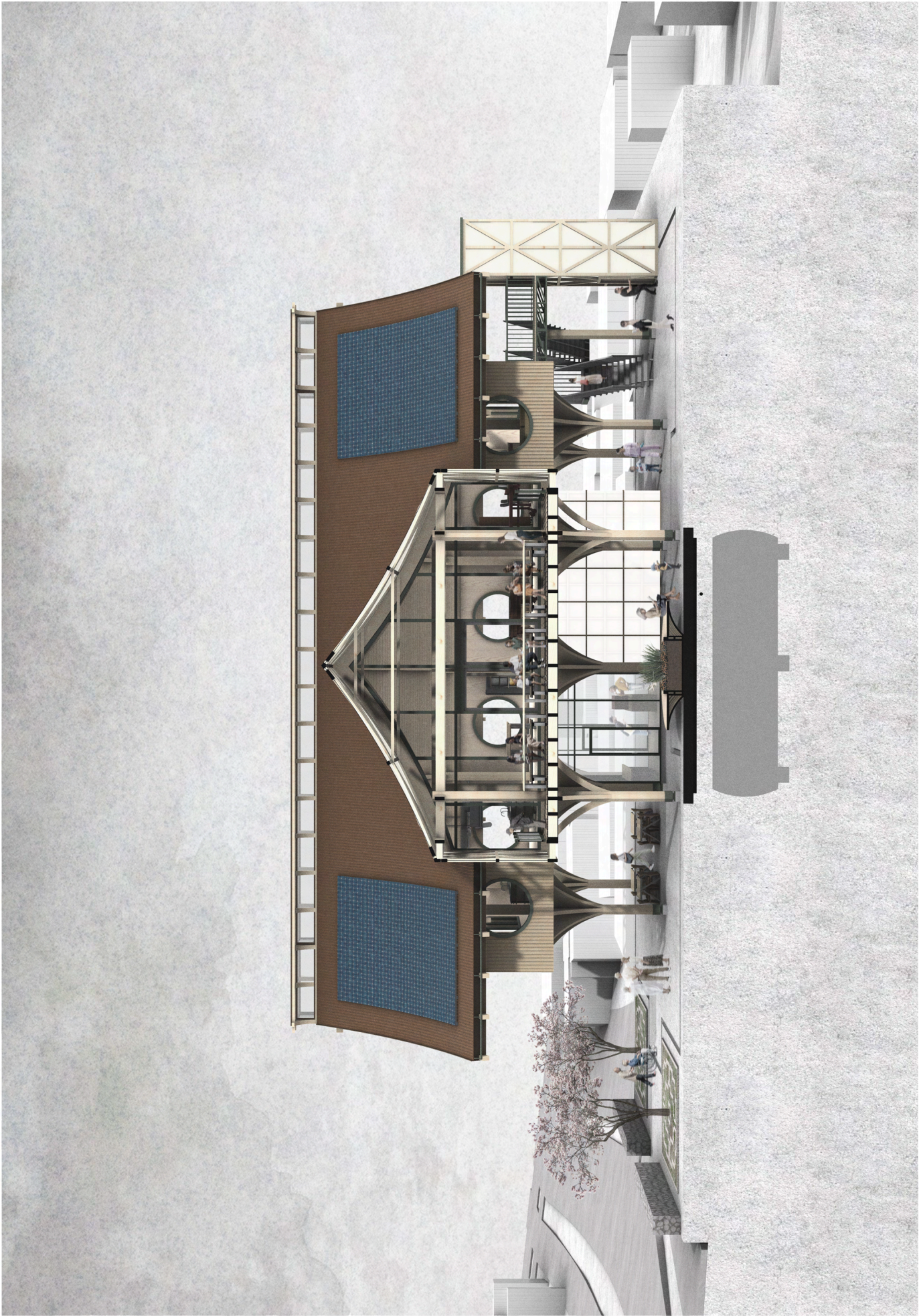
Perspective Section of St James Church



Note. This image illustrates the demountable mezzanine insertion, which sits freestanding within the nave without disturbing the historic fabric, reflecting minimum intervention and reversibility. The retained interior walls, ceiling, and colour palette sustain the church's spirit of place, while the pulpit decorative wall is reinstated to its original location.

Figure 80

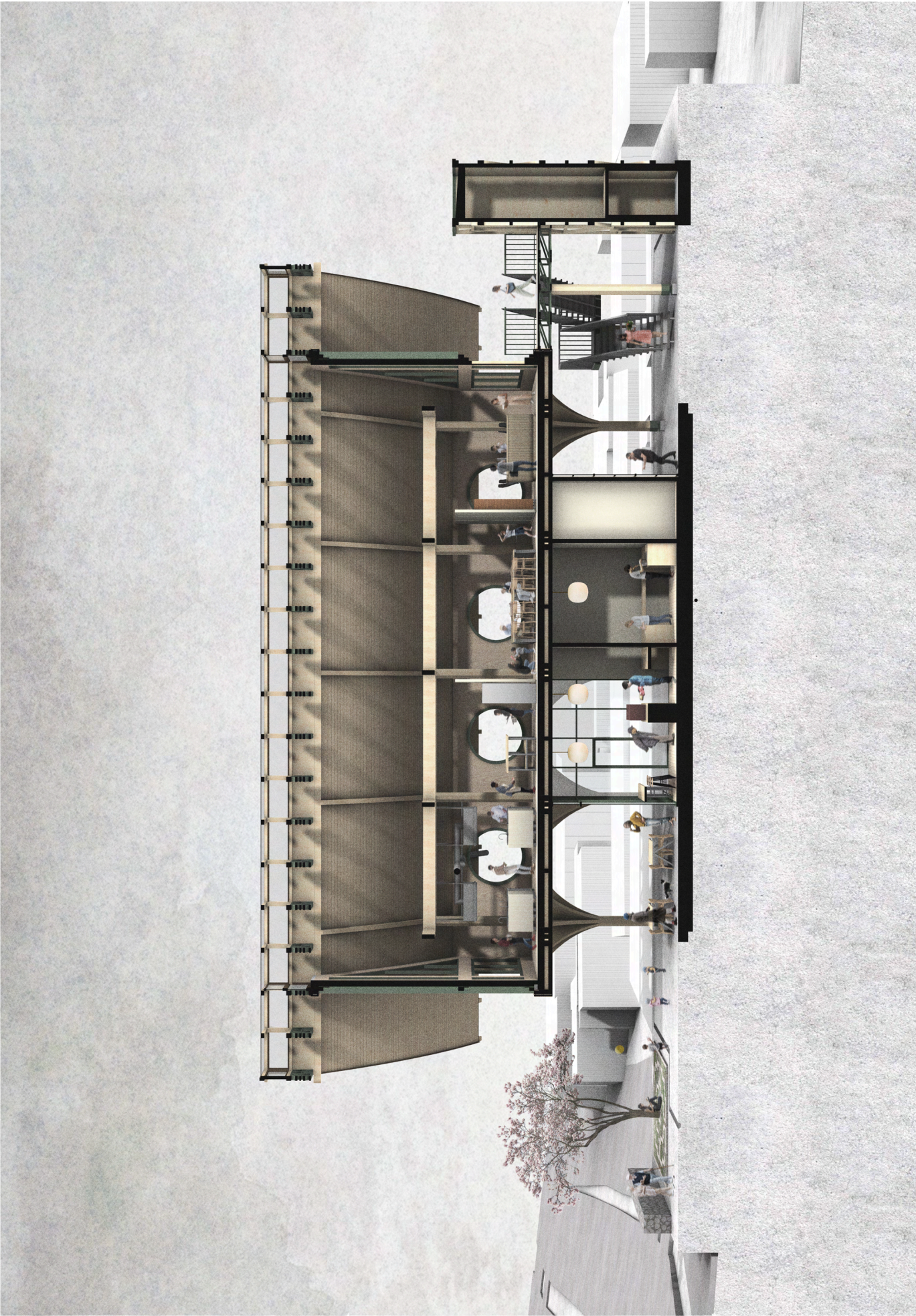
Perspective Section of the New Pavilion



Note. This section illustrates the rainwater collection tank and dining space serving the communal kitchen workshop. The pavilion provides a sheltered gathering space across both levels, supporting the community programme. The elevated deck accommodates events and mediates movement between the church and new addition.

Figure 81

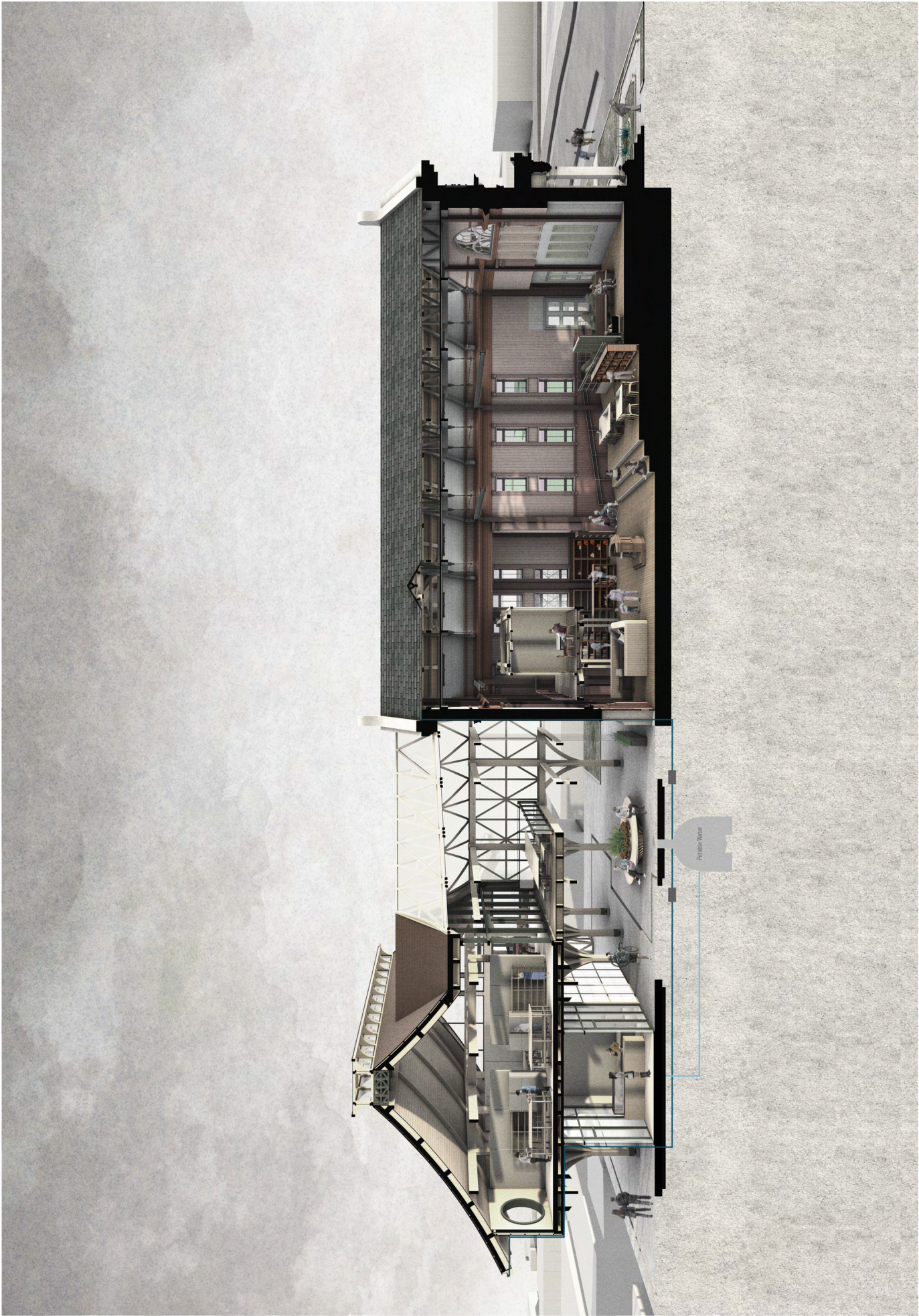
Perspective Section of the New Addition



Note. This section illustrates the programmes across the new addition, where the high curved ceiling references the grandeur of the former Hall. The demountable café and amenities are centrally placed on the ground floor, minimising their footprint on the former Hall site and reinforcing the principle of reversibility.

Figure 82

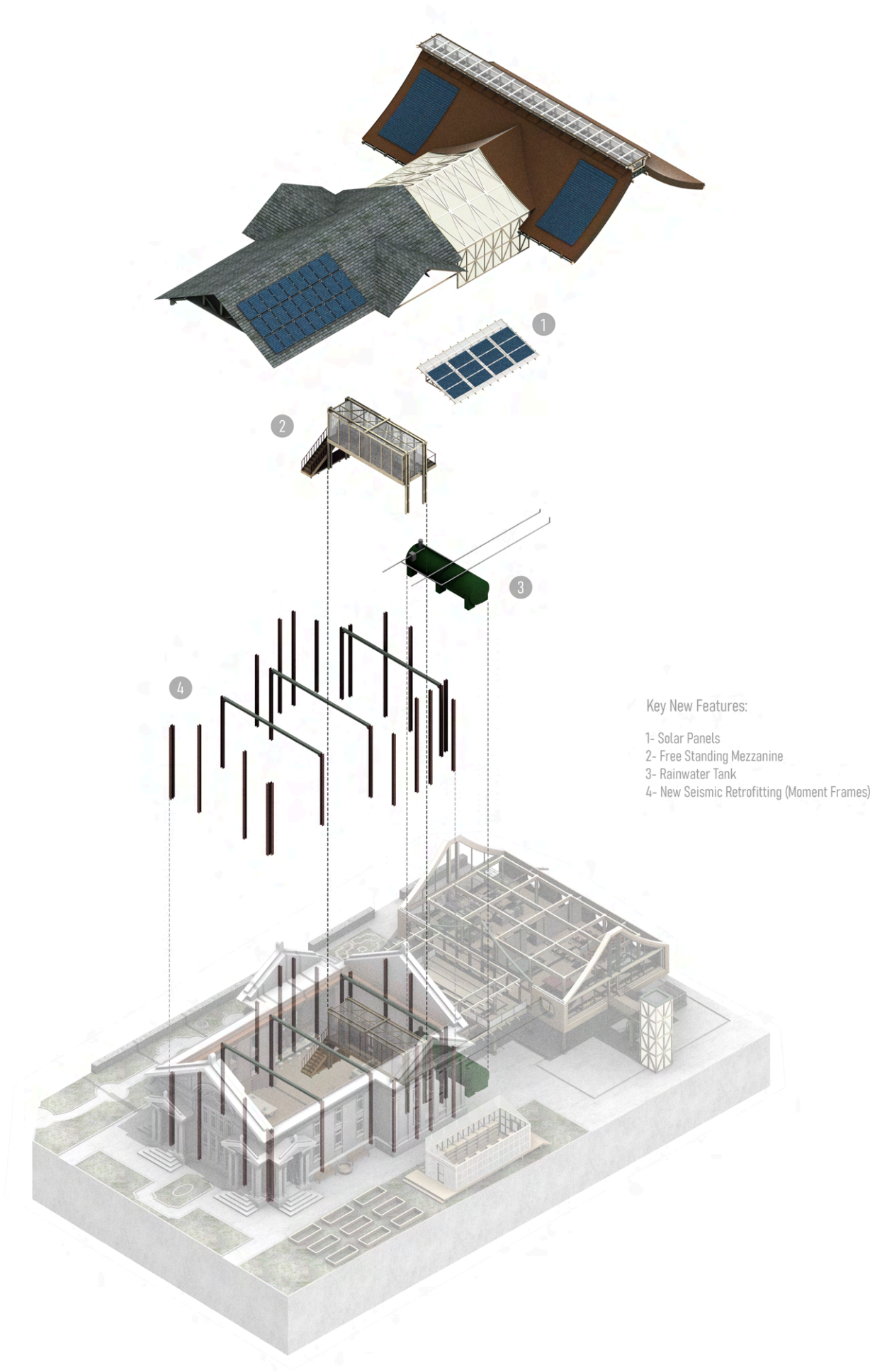
Perspective Section of St James Church and New Addition



Note. This section illustrates how the programmes work across the site. The step seating on the recessed floor references the former pews, while the portable partition wall at the secular sanctuary provides some separation between contemplative and co-working spaces. The reversible platforms above the original recessed floor and the seismic moment frames reflect the principles of reversibility and risk mitigation.

Figure 83

Exploded View of Key Features



Note. This exploded view illustrates the key new elements across the site, highlighting the layered relationship between the retained historic fabric and the new additions. The demountable solar panels on the church roof demonstrate reversibility, while the seismic strengthening structures represent the minimum intervention necessary for risk mitigation.

Figure 84

Key Elements of the Buildings

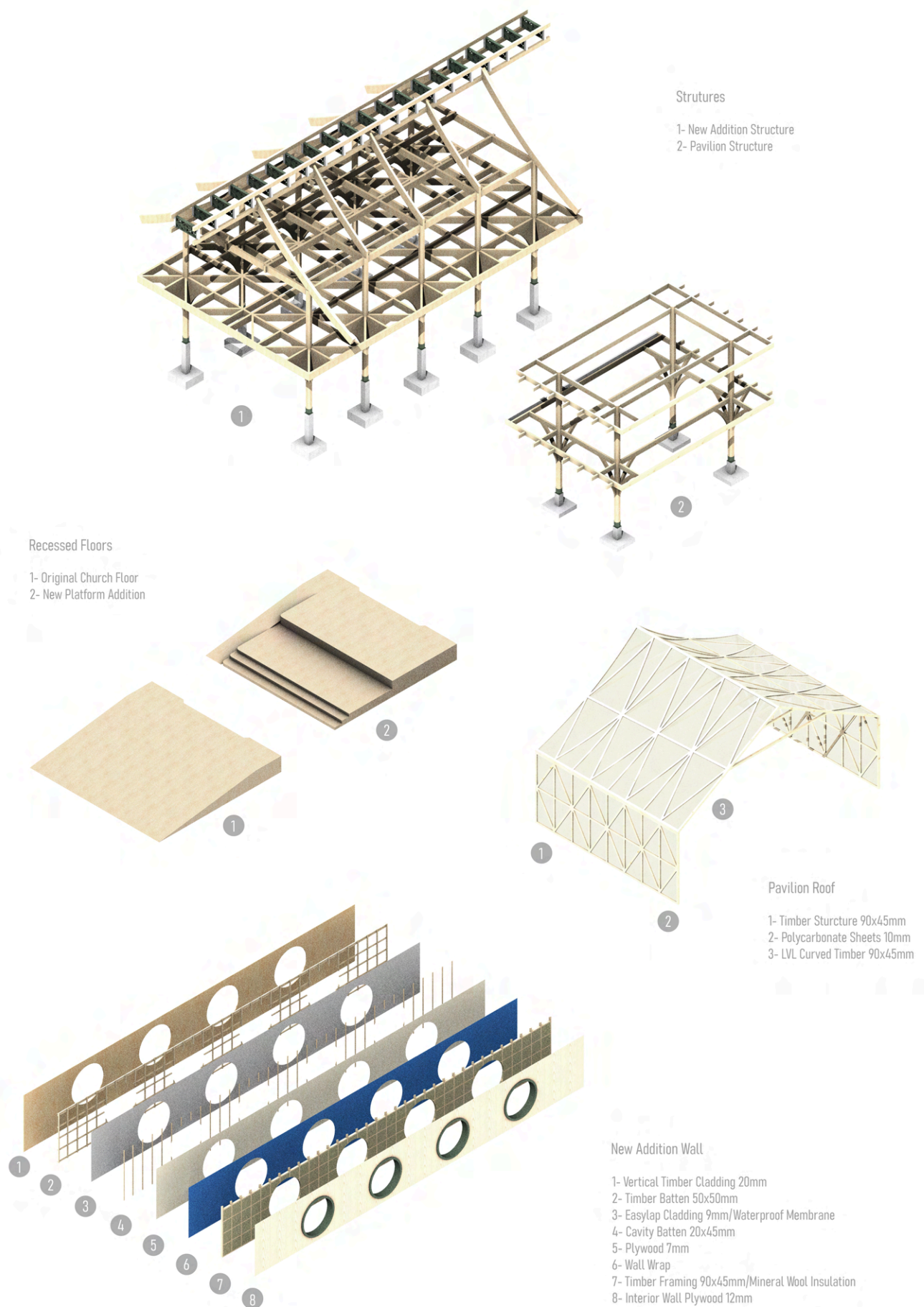
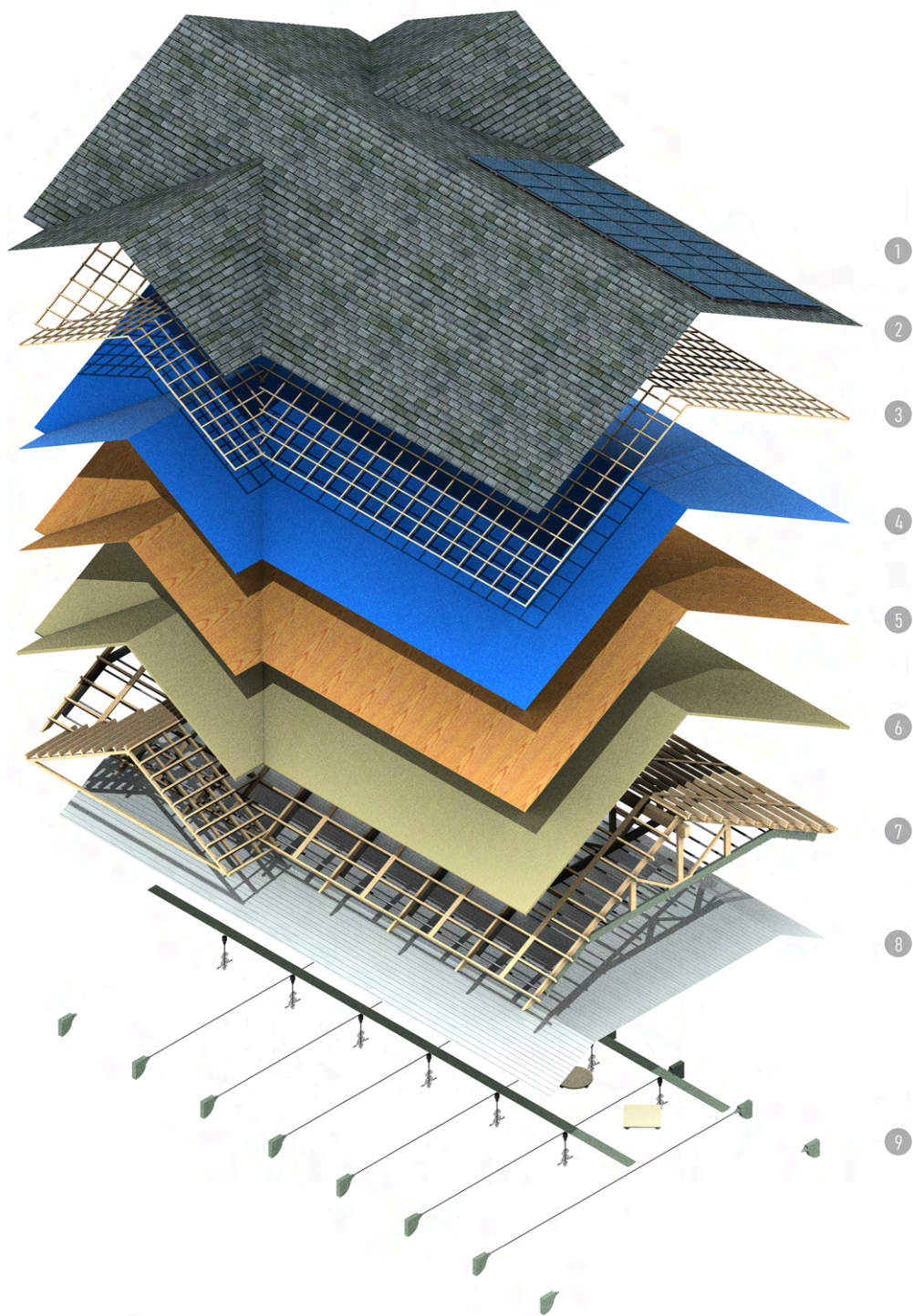


Figure 85

Exploded View of the Proposed Roof of St James Church



Roof Layers Exploded

- 1- Solar Panels (Addition)
- 2- Metal Roof Tile
- 3- Timber Batten 50x50mm
- 4- Waterproofing Membrane
- 5- Plywood 12mm
- 6- Rigid Insulation 140mm
- 7- Original Timber Roof Structure
- 8- Original Timber Groove Ceiling
- 9- Steel Tie Rods / Ceiling Ornamentation

Replaces the later added corrugated steel roof that has rusted, while referencing the original slate tile roof

Note. This exploded view illustrates the new roof elements introduced through the adaptation, including metal roof tiles, rigid insulation, and solar panels. These additions improve thermal comfort and energy self-sufficiency, supporting the long-term operational sustainability of the community programmes while remaining discreet and reversible additions to the historic fabric.

Figure 86

Perspective of Proposed Church Interior and Kitchen Workshop



Note. The upper render illustrates the vestibule removal, retaining a fragment as tribute while introducing natural light into the nave and demonstrating how worship and community programmes can coexist. The seismic moment frames blend with the existing fabric, minimising visual disruption. The lower render shows the moveable kitchen facilities within the new addition, with the addition's structure accommodating attachments and services for current and future uses, reinforcing adaptability and reversibility.

Figure 87

Perspective of Proposed Connection Between Buildings and Community Garden



Note. The upper render illustrates the connection and transition between the three structures. It shows the transparent wall of the café and amenities, which illuminates at night to bring safety and security for children and women. The lower render shows the community garden being harvested for the kitchen workshop along with the use of signage to help users find their way around the space. It illustrates the details of the church façade and its prominence within the community, reinforcing its need as a accessible public space.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

Heritage conservation and adaptive reuse provide a robust theoretical and practical foundation for this exegesis, yet a key gap lies in the limited inclusion of communities living alongside heritage places. Conservation practice remains largely specialist-driven and principle-based, with archaeologists, heritage professionals, and architects holding significant decision-making power, often alongside limited public awareness of heritage significance and the processes used to safeguard tangible and intangible values. While material fabric can be documented, intangible values such as memories and lived experiences require collective participation to be understood. As primary beneficiaries of adaptive reuse, residents must be actively involved in shaping change to ensure community needs are met and irreplaceable heritage is not lost through neglect or exclusionary redevelopment.

7.2 Critical Reflection

The proposed design outcome responds directly to the heritage conservation principles outlined in Chapter 2 by prioritising minimum intervention, reversibility, adaptation, and risk mitigation. Retention of the nave volume, protection of original ornamentation, and removal of intrusive later additions demonstrate minimum intervention and authenticity-based conservation. Reversible elements, such as raised floor platforms and a freestanding mezzanine, demonstrate the adaptation principle, while the moment-frame seismic retrofit addresses risk mitigation with minimal visual impact. The addition follows Schmidt and Austin's (2016) versatility and adjustability framework, enabling long-term adaptability without compromising the historic fabric. Together, these approaches balance ICOMOS principles with the needs of community-oriented programmes.

However, several challenges arise from this framework. The commitment to minimum intervention limits opportunities for spatial transformation, constraining programme flexibility. Irreversible removals, including the pews, vestry, and vestibule, expose tensions between heritage protection and contemporary use and diminish aspects of cultural authenticity despite mitigation measures. While the adaptable framework strengthens long-term usability, it also introduces additional structural and operational complexity that may increase maintenance demands. Despite these limitations, the approach demonstrates how conservation principles and adaptable architecture can be effectively integrated.

Previous earthquake strengthening mandates have contributed to a pattern of demolition by neglect in New Zealand, including at St James Church. Although life-safety provisions intend to protect occupants, the cost and complexity of compliance can stall intervention and threaten a building's survival. The 2025 seismic regulation changes introduced during this exegesis offer a hopeful outlook for Auckland's heritage stock, as less stringent criteria may reduce strengthening costs and improve the feasibility of reuse, particularly for less affluent communities.

At the same time, heritage has increasingly been commodified, with churches and other historic buildings converted into high-value apartments where market price eclipses collective value. This thesis argues that collective ownership models, such as charitable trusts in the New Zealand context, better align with the original civic and social role of churches and help reclaim heritage as a shared resource.

International examples, particularly in the UK, reveal both the potential and fragility of grassroots stewardship, as operating costs often exceed locally raised funds and push projects toward commercialisation. In Aotearoa New Zealand, limited government and council support intensifies these pressures. Any viable model must therefore combine community ownership with revenue-generating programmes that remain accessible and affordable, supported by neighbourhood participation and long-term commitment.

Mount Eden's association with higher socioeconomic affluence can be problematic, as it attracts wealthier professional users and risks reinforcing exclusivity; however, the same economic profile provides greater capacity to support the church and its addition's ongoing operational and maintenance costs.

7.3 Future Pathways for Research

This thesis suggests several pathways for future research. A primary next step is structured co-design with residents, mana whenua, community organisations, and other stakeholders, using the proposal as a conversational tool rather than a fixed solution. Such engagement could refine the programme, recalibrate spatial priorities, and test governance models, including charitable trusts, for long-term community use. Multidisciplinary collaboration with structural engineers and quantity surveyors would also be required to translate the conceptual seismic and spatial strategies into a staged, costed retrofit proposal.

As noted earlier in relation to Mount Eden's affluence, future research could test this framework across a wider range of settings, including deprived neighbourhoods, and explore revenue strategies that do not depend on high-income professionals. This approach may produce a more realistic and transferable model for community-led adaptive reuse.

More broadly, the adaptive and inclusive framework developed for St James could be applied to other heritage churches or community buildings facing vacancy, decay, or speculative conversion. Comparative studies could examine how demographic contexts, policy settings, and funding structures influence the viability of community-led reuse. In this way, the thesis serves as a starting point for ongoing work linking heritage conservation, social infrastructure, and community governance, rather than a definitive solution.

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