

Ashburton Uniting Church, 3-7 Ashburn Grove, Ashburton Statement of Significance, December 2021

Heritage Place: Ashburton Uniting Church

PS ref no: HO919



What is significant?

The Ashburton Uniting Church complex, 3-7 Ashburn Grove, Ashburton including the church designed by Bates Smart & McCutcheon in 1961 is significant. The 1935 church hall, the 1939 kindergarten (designed by RM & MH King), and the 1952 timber hall contribute to the historical and social significance of the place. Additions and alterations after 1961 are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Ashburton Uniting Church is historically, architecturally, aesthetically and socially significant to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The Ashburton Uniting Church complex is historically significant for its demonstration of the evolution and growth of the Methodist (later Uniting) Church in Ashburton, reflecting the establishment of the suburb in the interwar period and its substantial growth in the post-war period. The old church (1935) and kindergarten (1939) were designed by prolific Melbourne architects RM & MH King to facilitate the growing congregation and their families early in Ashburton's establishment as a suburb. Post-war expansion is demonstrated in the construction of the timber hall by local volunteer labour (1952). The imposing modern church (1961) demonstrates the status of Ashburton as a booming post-war suburb in the municipality. As one of a set of post-war modernist churches built for the Methodists, the 1961 church represents the development of the outer ring suburbs in general and the embrace of

modernism by their congregations during the period. The development of the site over its history since 1935 is evident in the fabric of the place. (Criterion A)

The Ashburton Uniting Church complex is significant as an intact church complex demonstrating the evolution of the local church and its involvement in the community over time, from its original interwar church and hall, kindergarten, post-war hall and modern church. (Criterion D)

The 1961 Church is architecturally significant as a Late Twentieth Century Ecclesiastic design by prominent architectural firm Bates Smart & McCutcheon. It is an intact and architecturally distinguished example among a set of churches designed by the renowned architectural firm in growing post-war suburbs in Melbourne. (Criterion D)

The 1961 Church is aesthetically significant for its demonstration of modern functionalist principles applied to a church design. Late Twentieth Century Ecclesiastic features include the emphasis on simplicity of form and materials, with cream brick and minimal ornamentation. The low-pitched, steel framed roof emphasises the dominant verticality of the tower. The interiors, underneath exposed steel frames, feature exposed cream brick, simple square windows including a rectangular band of clerestory windows over the choir. The simple timber screen, altar and furnishings contribute to the austere functionality and open 'democratic' nature of the space. (Criterion E)

The Ashburton Uniting Church complex is of social significance for its ongoing use as a place of worship and for community purposes under the auspices of the Methodist and (from 1977) Uniting Churches since the first church and hall were built on the site in 1935. The various buildings on the site illustrate the evolution of the church congregation over time and demonstrate its spiritual and social values within the one site. (Criterion G)

Primary source

City of Boroondara Municipal-Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 8: Ashburton (Context Pty Ltd, December 2021)

This document is an incorporated document in the Boroondara Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*