

5 Planning Proposal for 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown - Jamisontown Uniting Church

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Outcome	<i>Shape our growing city</i>
Strategy	<i>Navigate balanced growth and plan strategically</i>
Principal Activity	<i>Ensure our strategic framework and vision are contemporary and guide land use planning to meet the needs of our community and growing population</i>

Procedural note: Section 375A of the Local Government Act 1993 requires that a division be called in relation to this matter.

Proponent: Penrith City Council

Subject Land: 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown

Executive Summary

Council initiated an investigation in May 2026 into the heritage significance of the Jamisontown Uniting Church at 185 Mulgoa Road, following community concerns about its future. The site was not identified in previous heritage studies (1987 and 2007) and is not currently listed as a heritage item. Constructed in 1889 and designed by prominent local architect William Sykes, the building has served both religious and educational purposes for over 130 years. While the site has undergone additions over time and ceased regular congregational use in May 2025, it remains largely intact and retains strong historical, social, and architectural associations.

Council Officers engaged Vanessa Holtham Heritage and Architecture (VHH&A) to undertake a Heritage Assessment in May 2026. The assessment concluded that the “United School Church Building” meets the threshold for local heritage listing, citing its historical significance, association with William Sykes, contribution to the local streetscape, and longstanding social and spiritual connection to the Jamisontown community. The site is also considered representative of 19th-century ecclesiastical and educational buildings, reflecting the historical relationship between religion and education. Three of the four land parcels associated with the site were identified as forming the heritage curtilage to ensure future development respects the setting of the item.

The Planning Proposal seeks to amend the Penrith Local Environmental Plan (PLEP) 2010 to formally list the site as a heritage item and update the Heritage Map accordingly (Attachment 1). The Planning Proposal demonstrates strong strategic merit, aligning with the Greater Sydney Region Plan, the Penrith Local Strategic Planning Statement (particularly Planning Priorities 7 and 8), and the NSW Heritage Strategy. It supports the conservation of local heritage, enhances local character, and responds to community interest in preserving culturally significant places.

The Planning Proposal has received support from both the Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) and the Penrith Local Planning Panel (LPP), which supports the recommended progression to Gateway Determination. An Interim Heritage Order (IHO) is not required at this time.

This report recommends that Council endorse the Planning Proposal being forwarded to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces with a request for a Gateway Determination and seek delegation to act as at the local plan making authority for the proposal.

Background

In early 2026, Council initiated an investigation into the heritage significance of the Jamisontown Uniting Church in response to community concerns regarding its future. Although the site was not identified in Council's 1987 or 2007 Heritage Studies, this does not preclude it from having heritage value.

Constructed in 1889 and designed by prominent 19th-century architect William Sykes, the building has historical significance within the Penrith area. It has served both educational and religious functions, initially operating as a school and more recently as a church hosting regular congregational services.

The site has been subject to several development applications over time, resulting in additions such as classrooms, a kitchen, hall, patio, and fencing (Attachment 2). A proposal for a childcare facility was also approved but did not proceed. The site has not been used for weekly services since May 2025 and, while listed for sale in January 2026, has since been withdrawn from the market. The land is zoned R3 Medium Density Residential under PLEP 2010.

Current Situation

Council Officers engaged Vanessa Holtham Heritage and Architecture (VHH&A) to undertake a Heritage Assessment of the site. Based on analysis of historical and physical evidence, and conducting a comparative analysis of similar properties in the vicinity, the Heritage Assessment concluded that *"it is evident that the United School Church Building at 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown does meet the threshold for heritage listing at a local level and should be recognised for its significance to the Penrith Local Government Area (LGA)."* The Heritage Assessment emphasises that conservation of the site through a heritage listing would add character and value to any future development of the site.

Heritage Assessment

A Heritage Assessment was carried out for the site by VHH&A in May 2026 (Attachment 3). The assessment evaluated the Jamisontown Uniting Church against the standard criteria established in the NSW Heritage Office guidelines, considered its cultural, historical and religious significance, and benchmarked it against comparable sites in the locality.

The below findings demonstrate that the site meets the criteria for local heritage significance, as outlined in the Heritage Assessment.

Criterion	Description
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<i>Criterion (a) – Historic Significance – A place or object is important in the course, or pattern, of the local area’s cultural or natural history.</i>	The Heritage Assessment states that the site has local historical significance for its association with the early development of religion and education within Jamisontown.
<i>Criterion (b) – Historical Association – A place or object has strong or special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the cultural or natural history of the local area.</i>	The site is cited as having historic associations as it is an example of the work of prominent architect William Sykes who also designed other significant buildings in Western Sydney such as the Governor Phillip Special Hospital and the Rooty Hill School of Arts.
<i>Criterion (c) – Aesthetic/Creative/Technical Achievement - A place or object is important in demonstrating aesthetic characteristics and/or a high degree of creative or technical achievement in the local area.</i>	The site makes a positive contribution to the Stuart Street streetscape. The church building is largely externally intact, and while the hall and classroom do not add any architectural merit to the site, they are also significant as a natural extension of the original building.
<i>Criterion (d) – Social, Cultural and Spiritual Significance - A place or object has strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group in the local area for social, cultural or spiritual reasons.</i>	The site has retained direct link to the Jamisontown community for over 130 years and is socially and spiritually significant as it has been used as a place of worship since its construction.
<i>Criterion (e) – Research Potential - A place or object has potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the local area’s cultural or natural history.</i>	It is not known whether the site retains any research potential.
<i>Criterion (f) – Rarity - A place or object possesses uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the local area’s cultural or natural history.</i>	The site is unique due to its association with the early historical and religious development of Jamisontown during the 19th century.
<i>Criterion (g) – Representative - A place or object is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of the local area’s: cultural or natural places OR cultural or natural environments.</i>	The site represents a typical, modest scale ecclesiastical and education building from the 19th century. The site is representative of the symbiotic operation of religion and education as the site operated as a religious and education institute for many years. The site still represents the importance of education informed by religion, which is an historic concept that continues today in modern society and in the Penrith LGA through religious based schools.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while 185 Mulgoa Road Jamisontown is comprised of four parcels of land, three (Lot 1 DP 910915, Lot 25 DP 456311, Lot 26 DP 456311) have been identified as having heritage significance within the Heritage Assessment. These three parcels of land form the curtilage of the United School Church building, ensuring that the setting of the heritage item is appropriately considered in any future development.

Based on the available historical and physical evidence, the Heritage Assessment states that the 'United School Church Building', and surrounding land meets the criteria for heritage listing at a local level due to its significance to the Penrith LGA. The Heritage Assessment justifies this recommendation stating that the retention and conservation of United School Church building would add character and value to any development than occurs on the site.

An Interim Heritage Order (IHO) is not required at this stage, as the property is not under imminent threat. However, the State Environmental Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008 indicates that a church building (or place of worship) is not eligible for demolition under complying development. This means that any demolition intent must be submitted to Council via a development application. In circumstances where an imminent threat arises, such as the lodgement of a development application for demolition or site works, an IHO administered via the General Manager's Ministerial Delegation can be considered. If this was to occur, both criteria for an IHO would be met for this site, being: the heritage item is under imminent threat, and a Heritage Assessment states it is of heritage significance.

Strategic Merit

The Planning Proposal supports and promotes the conservation and preservation of local heritage, which aligns with priorities in relevant State and Local Plans.

Greater Sydney Region Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities

The Planning Proposal is consistent with the Greater Sydney Region Plan as it promotes culturally and socially diverse communities, celebrates the character the Penrith LGA within a Sydney context and directly identifies, conserves and enhances a site which is historically important and significant within the community.

Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

The relevant Planning Priorities in the LSPS are:

- Planning Priority 7: Enrich our places
- Planning Priority 8: Recognise and celebrate our heritage

This Proposal is consistent with Planning Priority 7 and 8 of the LSPS:

- Planning Priority 7: This Planning Proposal identifies local character within Jamisontown and the wider community of the Penrith LGA. The LSPS states that local character is shaped by local people, history, built form, public places and natural features. Therefore, the heritage listing of Jamisontown Uniting Church will enhance local character as it is celebrating the history of the site.
- Planning Priority 8: This Planning Proposal directly recognises and celebrates the heritage of Penrith. In preserving the site, the historical significance of the area is emphasised, creating a source of pride for residents and helping to attract visitors. The formal heritage listing of this site helps to mitigate any future negative impacts to the site, such as demolition, and helps to achieve the best possible outcome for the community.

NSW Heritage Strategy

The relevant objectives within NSW's Heritage Strategy are:

- Objective 3: Community voices are critical to understanding heritage significance
- Objective 4: Heritage is conserved for everyone

The Planning Proposal is consistent with these objectives:

- Objective 3: This objective resonates with this Proposal due to initial community concerns regarding the future of the site which triggered the commissioning of the Heritage Assessment.
- Objective 4: Through formal heritage listing, the site and the buildings that make up Jamisontown Uniting Church will be preserved and respectfully utilised for generations to come.

Due to the recommendations provided within the Heritage Assessment, a Planning Proposal has been initiated by Council seeking to amended PLEP 2010 to:

- Add the "United School Church Building" at 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown (Lot 1 DP 910915, Lot 25 DP 456311, and Lot 26 DP 456311) to the Schedule 5 Environmental Heritage Part 1 Heritage items list, and
- Amend the Heritage Map (HER_006) to include 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown.

The matter was reported to Council's Heritage Advisory Committee (HAC) on the 24 June 2026. The HAC was informed of the recommendations provided within the Heritage Assessment and was provided with the Planning Proposal to review. Overall, the HAC supported the steps that Council are taking to preserve the heritage significance of the Site.

The proposed amendments are in line with the recommendations within the Heritage Assessment and are in line with relevant strategic State and Local plans.

Local Planning Panel Advice

On 24 June, the Planning Proposal was presented to the Penrith Local Planning Panel (LPP) for advice. The LPP considered the Planning Proposal, the assessment prepared by Council officers, and the externally prepared Heritage Assessment, and recommended that the Planning Proposal be progressed through to receive Gateway Determination, as it is consistent with state and local strategic plans. A copy of the LPP's advice is provided as Attachment 4.

Financial Implications

If supported to proceed to Gateway determination and then supported to proceed to public exhibition, the Planning Proposal will be required to proceed to public exhibition. The costs associated with the public exhibition can be supported within existing budgets adopted as part of the 2026-27 Operational Plan. Similarly, the Planning Proposal can be managed by existing Council staff. Further, the cost associated with the preparation of the supporting Heritage Study was funded from within existing budgets included in the 2025-26 Operational Plan.

Risk Implications

There are no risk implications for Council associated with this report.

Next Steps

Should Council endorse the recommendations in this report, the Planning Proposal will be forwarded to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces with a request for a Gateway Determination. The Planning Proposal will be assessed by delegated officers from the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, who will then issue a Gateway Determination which will indicate whether the proposal can proceed or not.

If the Gateway Determination allows the Planning Proposal to proceed, Council will publicly exhibit the proposal in accordance with the timeframes and conditions in the Gateway Determination and in accordance with the community consultation requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

Following public exhibition, a further report will be presented to Council on the outcomes of the public exhibition and any submissions received.

Conclusion

Council has initiated a Planning Proposal which seeks to amend Schedule 5 Environment heritage, Part 1 Heritage items of the PLEP 2010 to:

- Add the “United School Church Building” at 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown (Lot 1 DP 910915, Lot 25 DP 456311, and Lot 26 DP 456311) to the Schedule 5 Environmental Heritage Part 1 Heritage items list, and
- Amend the Heritage Map (HER_006) to include 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown.

The Planning Proposal is consistent with all relevant State and local strategic plans and is supported by the LPP and the HAC.

This report recommends that Council endorse the Planning Proposal to be forwarded to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces with a request for a Gateway Determination.

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. The information contained in the report on Planning Proposal for 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown - Jamisontown Uniting Church be received.
2. Council endorse the Planning Proposal being forwarded to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces with a request to issue a Gateway Determination. The submission will include a request to issue Council with Delegation to be the local plan making authority.
3. The General Manager be granted delegation to make any necessary changes to the Planning Proposal:
 - Prior to Council’s submission of the Planning Proposal to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces to request a Gateway Determination;
 - As a result of negotiated changes sought by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure in the lead up to issuing a Gateway Determination; and
 - Prior to public exhibition in response to the conditions of the Gateway Determination or negotiation with State agencies.
4. Council publicly exhibits the Planning Proposal for a period specified in the Gateway Determination and in accordance with the community consultation

requirements of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021.

5. A further report be presented to Council following the public exhibition.

ATTACHMENTS/APPENDICES

1. Planning Proposal Report - Jamisontown Uniting Church - 185 Mulgoa Road Jamisontown	30 Pages	Attachments Included
2. Site Context - 185 Mulgoa Road, Jamisontown	2 Pages	Attachments Included
3. Heritage Assessment - Jamisontown Uniting Church	45 Pages	Attachments Included
4. Penrith Local Planning Panel Report and Advice	7 Pages	Attachments Included