

150 Brougham Street – the way forward – *feedback on the consultation*

This document outlines the response from the consultation process as to the future of 150 Brougham St and recommends that the Parish Finance Committee proceed with restoration as the preferred option.

Background

150 Brougham St is a property within the patrimony of the Catholic Parish of Wellington South. What was the St Joseph's presbytery is rented, bringing some income into the Parish. This property is described as cold and difficult to heat by tenants. The remainder of the building is uninhabitable.

Three options are available to the parish in terms of this property: demolish it, sell it, or restore it.

It is important to note at this point that future use of the building is not yet under consideration and will be subject to community and parish consultation.

The Pastoral Leadership Team (Frs David, Dennis and LPL Joe), the Parish Finance Committee and the Parish Pastoral Council are in agreement with the proposal that the building be restored to five units.

Possible funding options have been explored. These include the parish financial reserve topped up by a loan.

Concept plans and cost estimates have been obtained and a conversation had with the GM for the Archdiocese.

With that agreement in place it was timely to share the proposal to restore 150 Brougham St more widely in the parish¹.

At the same time the parish pastoral plan has been under development. This was developed primarily out of the consultative process for the amalgamation of the four parishes into one, the 2017 Synod, the stewardship day held in late 2017 and a wider parish consultative process. The plan is at the final editing and design stage.

The parish community has been regularly informed about 150 Brougham St through the parish newsletter² (which is distributed in paper format, by e mail, placed on the website and sent out through the parish app. It is also distributed by schools in the parish). There have also been less formal conversations with parishioners and groups in the parish.

Consultation

Given this previous communication and discussions, parish leadership considered face to face consultation the preferred mechanism. A document to support this was drafted, and an invitation placed in the parish newsletter. It was proposed to hold this consultation over the two Sundays 6 and 13 May 2018. Members of the Parish Finance Committee were on hand to lead the discussion and answer questions.

Parishioners could attend any of the four consultation conversations offered.

¹ The process follows Archdiocesan Norms almost exactly (page 22).

² Notifications dated 5 March, 9 April, 7 & 14 May, 2 July, 3 & 10 September, 22 & 29 October, and 5 & 11 November 2017. And 29 April and 6 & 13 May 2018.

Outcomes

In the St Francis de Sales and St Joseph's church communities, where the Parish Finance Committee member was able to put the case, lead discussion and answer questions there was general agreement that restoring the building was really the only option.

The St Bernard's community started the conversation on 6 May, which was then revisited at the monthly community meeting on 13 May. A Parish Councillor from St Bernard's reported that there was a general agreement that restoration was the only real option.

Following the consultation at St Anne's on 6 May, a group of parishioners from the community gathered at an evening meeting to take the conversation further. A group submission was then made, which is addressed in this paper.

There was a request to extend the consultation period, which the parish leadership agreed to. The document written to support the face to face consultation was placed on the parish website.

Seven written submissions were received. The time frame for a response was extended as a result of this and other feedback. The following table summarises the main points.

Point raised	Response
The invitation in the newsletter led people to believe that they were being consulted on strategic/wider property matters.	The invitation could have been more specific and was re-written for the second notice to make it clear that the consultation was limited to the three options.
Submitters commented on the wider issue of property management, the impact of market forces on property management, and, the use to which the properties might be put.	The comments on wider property management will inform the parish leadership. Submitters on the use to which the property might be put have been advised that this will be part of a larger consultative process.
Commentary on the actual consultation process: it could have been longer, more and better written communication, lack of a detailed strategic plan for property, distribution of the consultation document, that 13 May was Mothers' Day, it was not clear (in the document) the process that parish leadership had gone through to reach the conclusion they did,	The history of communication with parishioners is outlined above. The invitation could have been more specific, and the document written to support a face to face conversation might, in hindsight, have been rewritten before going on the website. 13 May was Mothers' Day, however the dates for consultation were somewhat constrained, including by the sacramental programme.
No face to face meetings at vigil and evening Masses.	This is a valid point and also informs 'lessons learnt'.
That the consultative process has not given due weight to what is seen as a 'difficult and complex' decision.	In part this submission was prepared off the written document, which I address above. The options are in fact very simple: demolish, sell or restore.
Fail to express how restoring 150 Brougham St meets the pastoral purposes of the parish.	This was at odds with the commentary from others, who seemed to see a clear link between the income stream generated and parish activity.
Support for the proposal.	Outlines below.

Even as they presented issues with the process, written submissions also expressed support for the specific proposed option to restore 150 Brougham St:

Discern with the people of the parish how parish property can best be used to help us carry out our pastoral plan (I take this as support because it assumes a usable property – which 150 Brougham can only be if restored). (Parishioner).

I support the preferred option of renovating the property back into a five-unit residential dwelling, rented at market rent, for the following reasons:

- *It will provide the greatest income which can help the most people in need (also the parish needs the \$ to support 4 churches 2 presbyteries and 2 halls),*
- *Selling it will compromise the long-term possibility of selling off the whole block of land and properties, depending on future transport needs e.g. double tunnel impacting on Patterson St and affecting the position of St Joseph's,*
- *Selling it now may result in affecting St Joseph's with unknown future building plans – e.g. high-rise buildings, more demand on parking spaces etc.(Parishioner).*

I appreciate that we need to do something with the Brougham St property as it has been empty for a year now so there has been no income from it. (Parishioner).

Finally, we echo your commitment to retaining, maintaining and utilising our existing properties as part of our vision. (St Anne's community meeting).

Leaving the building in its current state is a very poor use of resources. It is our understanding that the likely option will be the property is converted to 5 flats that will be available for rental, to earn income for the parish. We appreciate there is a pressing need for a reliable income stream for the parish and creating 5 income earning flats is a good way to securing a long term guaranteed income. (Social Justice Group).

Summary

The overwhelming impression is that parishioners find it untenable that 150 Brougham St be retained as it is, and that rather than selling or demolishing the building we should restore the building so that it can work toward enabling the parish to achieve its pastoral aims.

Exactly what that means needs to be subject to a further and extensive consultation with parishioners, and that needs to start sooner rather than later. I suggest it should be completed a short time before the building comes into use.

There are some important lessons learnt from this:

- The purpose of the consultative process needs to be clearly stated (i.e., what's in and what's not);
- The documentation needs to be very precise, and very clear, and fit for the purpose it is going to be used for. A document to support face to face communication will differ from one designed to stand alone, or designed to enable a group to reflect;
- We need to use as many consultative medium as fit the purpose (presentations, images, small group, whole of parish meeting, as well as the electronic media we use);
- The chair of the parish council has suggested a 'state of the parish' presentation – this might be arranged once the 2017/18 annual accounts are completed, and include financial, ministry, pastoral and leadership aspects;

- Some parishioners do not appear to have taken cognisance of notices in the bulletin distributed in paper and electronic forms. An overview of ‘the process to date’ would have avoided this.
- Processes need to be found that ensure that the voice of all parishioners are heard.

Fr Dennis and I suggest that the parish move forward on what is a relatively simple decision: that 150 Brougham St be restored. But that in any future consultative process we take cognisance of the lessons learnt.

Perhaps this statement about Suzanne Aubert from the Social Justice Group submission might give us some guidance:

While Suzanne Aubert was a business woman, she would also want action now! To provide support to the marginalised in our community.

In short – we have a business decision about whether to demolish, sell or restore an unusable parish property – that’s the ‘business’ part. How the property is used is the ‘support to the marginalised in our community’ part. Delaying ‘action’ will not achieve either.

Therefore, I recommend that the Parish Finance Committee pursue the restoration of 150 Brougham St, in accord with the Archdiocesan Norms.

Joe Green

Lay Pastoral Leader