

Media release

Catholic Diocese of Sandhurst

P: (03) 5441 2544

F: (03) 5441 8278

www.sandhurst.catholic.org.au

Date: 30 January 2014

For immediate release

Bendigo Community to get nature reserve under Church development plan

The Bendigo community will be gifted a 7.15 hectare nature reserve as part of a proposal by the Diocese of Sandhurst to develop part of its land at Golden Square.

The reserve forms almost half of the 14.98 hectare church property on Aspinall Street. The Bishop of Sandhurst's residence will be preserved within the rest of the land which is earmarked for 87 residential lots.

The Diocese has submitted the development proposal to the City of Greater Bendigo Council. If accepted, the Council will own the flora and fauna reserve on behalf of the people of Bendigo. It would be protected under a Trust for Nature covenant.

The development proposal differs markedly from the earlier development plans for the land, which were rejected by the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) after Council approval.

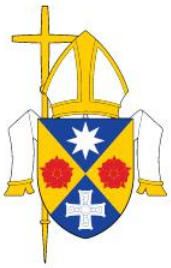
The Business Manager of the Diocese of Sandhurst, Mr Cameron Fraser, said the church and its consultants had addressed the issues raised by VCAT in 2010, including the suggestion to set aside land on the northern side.

Mr Fraser said early feedback from the local community was positive.

"We believe the proposed development is sensitive to the concerns raised by VCAT and others in 2010 and compatible with surrounding housing developments," he said. "At the same time, it will provide sorely-needed new housing stock in Bendigo, only 5 kilometres from the CBD."

The Diocese has owned the land since 1888. The land is remnant bushland and woodlands with a number of medium and large old trees and flora species ranging in significance, including the Rustyhood Orchid. Most of the significant flora is in the northern half which will become the public reserve. Another three large old trees will be retained in a smaller reserve on the south-west boundary of the development.

A key factor in the decision to proceed was Bishop Tomlinson's desire to downsize the expansive property, which is set aside as his personal residence.



Bishop Tomlinson said that while Bishops' residences were once expected to be large and stately, having a residence with 15 hectares of gardens and grounds no longer met community expectations and quoted Pope Francis' call for bishops to show austerity and be an example of humble living as part of his desire to sell the property.

The average size of the blocks in the housing development is 600 square metres, within a range of 343 square metres to 918 square metres. The size of the blocks in surrounding residential developments range from 360 to 1400 square metres. The development application includes an expert environmental report.

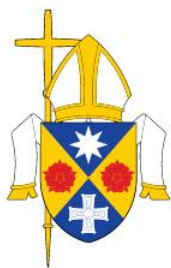
Local consultants, Tomkinson Group, are amongst a range of dedicated, experienced and specialised consultants who are assisting with the design and planning of the development.

Subject to planning approval, work would begin in 2014 and would involve three stages. The estimated value of the development is \$6 million and the income from the project would go towards promoting the Catholic faith and in other areas such as social services, education and healthcare.

Attachment: How the new Golden Square development differs from the 2009 proposal

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Media enquiries contact Michael Smith 0411 055 306



FACT SHEET

How the new Golden Square development differs from the 2009 proposal

The Diocese of Sandhurst first proposed a housing development on its Golden Square land in 2009. It was approved by Council but rejected on appeal to the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT).

VCAT member Bennett said in the ruling that the decision did not rule out future development. Member Bennett discussed how a future subdivision may seek to set aside land in the north-east corner of the property (the location of most of the Rustyhood Orchids) and focus development on the south-east side which had previously been subject to vegetation disturbance.

These are the key differences between the 2009 proposal and the new proposal:

- **A total of 7.146 hectares of high-significance vegetation will be protected. This land will include a substantial number of large old trees and native flora species.**
- **Residential development will take place on land containing introduced gardens and native vegetation of lower conservation significance.**
- **Donation of existing private land to Council as a Flora and Fauna Reserve.**
- **Placement of Trust for Nature covenant on title of Reserve to ensure ongoing protection and management of existing vegetation.**
- **Residential lots that have been designed with north-south facing yards to achieve optimal solar orientation.**
- **Improved lot size diversity, allowing a greater range of housing sizes and styles to be constructed to fit the needs of future residents.**
- **An improved subdivision layout creating rectangular lot shapes serviced by an east-west road network.**
- **The Bishop's residence will be retained and will serve as feature of the estate.**
- **Inclusion of a perimeter road will separate the residential area from vegetation to be retained. This will provide an appropriate fire protection to future dwellings and will protect the integrity of the Flora & Fauna Reserve.**
- **The subdivision has been designed to integrate with development in the surrounding area, including the character observed in the neighbourhood, the existing transport network and existing drainage patterns.**

Media enquiries: Michael Smith 0411 055 306