
20 Willis Street, Prahran

Location

20 WILLIS STREET PRAHRAN, STONNINGTON CITY

Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area contributory

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO178

Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - August 23, 2023

What is significant?

The Airlie Avenue Precinct, comprising 1-51 & 2-44 Airlie Avenue, 74-94 Chomley Street, 566-614 High Street, 1-67 & 2-46 Highbury Grove, 27-35 & 30-48 Irving Avenue, 2-18 Kelvin Grove, 1-21 & 236 Larnook Street, and 1-5 & 2-28 Willis Street, Prahran, is significant.

Streets and allotments in the precinct were created by successive subdivisions of the Merville Estate and Victoria Estate from 1879 to 1910. The earliest house in the precinct is the bichrome brick villa 'Cathcart' at 568 High Street of 1880. Residential development dating from 1880-90 characterises the northern half of the precinct, as well as two rows of shops of this era on High Street. Federation/Edwardian era residential predominates in the southern half, in keeping with its later subdivision dates.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The high degree of intactness of the precinct to its c1930 state, due to the low level of later redevelopment;
- The intactness of the buildings to their original state, with buildings typically retaining with their street presentation largely unaltered, apart from some changes to verandahs and windows;
- The single-storey scale of the residential streets, and the mixed single- and double-storey scale of the High Street section;
- The use of hipped roofs, timber, bichrome face brick or cement-render cladding to Victorian era buildings, with a shift to gable-fronts and red face brick in the Federation and early interwar periods;

- The irregular subdivision pattern which demonstrates the piecemeal creation and extension of streets over a 30 year period, and whose boundaries are often indicated by east-west running laneways;
- The presence of laneways, many of them retaining their bluestone pitches, which not only provided access to nightsoil carts prior to the introduction of sewers c1900, but also provided pedestrian access between the cul-de-sacs;
- Mature street trees, particularly the London Planes in Larnook Street.

How is it significant?

The Airlie Avenue Precinct, Prahran, is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The precinct is of historical significance for its illustration of the ad hoc nature of late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century subdivisions of large estates into suburban streets and allotments, resulting in an irregular street pattern and a number of cul-de-sacs linked by pedestrian laneways. The successive subdivisions are readily apparent due to the almost complete physical separation of the two principle eras – Victorian and Federation – sometimes at either end of a single street. The relatively modest means of many of Prahran's residents are illustrated by the many timber Victorian single-fronted cottages, as well as semi-detached Federation dwellings. These are interspersed with a number of more substantial, double-fronted houses of both eras. The need for local shops in preautomobile residential areas is illustrated by two rows of Victorian shops on High Street. (Criterion A)

The precinct is of aesthetic significance due to the regular rhythms created by identical rows of detached houses – for example Victorian timber cottages on Willis Street and rendered and timber villas on Airlie Avenue – and rows of asymmetrical semi-detached and symmetrical Edwardian and early interwar dwellings – for example on Highbury Grove, Airlie Avenue, Larnook Street and Irving Avenue. This rhythm is supported by the very consistent use of red face brick for both the Federation era and inter-war era dwellings in the precinct. The aesthetic significance of the precinct is further enhanced by dwellings with unusual forms of ornamentation, such as the row of timber Victorian houses with pedimented front windows at 5-9 & 15 Airlie Avenue, and the single-fronted Victorian house at 84 Chomley Street with highly decorative cast-cement enrichments. The two rows of Victorian shops on High Street are enhanced by their shopfronts: with the original timber shopfronts at 602-610 High Street and Federation-era Brooks & Robinson shopfronts with Art Nouveau leadlights at 546-552 High Street. (Criterion E)

Hermes Number 210019

Property Number

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>