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# Airlie Avenue Precinct

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## Location

Airlie Avenue PRAHRAN, Stonnington City

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO178

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

### 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)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Report (Stages 1-5) 1998, Bryce Raworth P/L, 1998;
Construction dates	1888,
Other Names	Centred on Airlie Avenue, Prahran,
Hermes Number	31192
Property Number	

**Physical Description 1**

The proposed Urban Conservation Area consists of Airlie Avenue and a small group of houses on Kelvin Grove. Airlie Avenue is a gently sloping *cul de sac*, located on the south side of High Street in Prahran. Kelvin Grove branches from Airlie Avenue near the intersection with High Street curving to trace a parallel course to Airlie Avenue. Both are lightly trafficked streets with a variety of mature trees and more recent plantings. Housing in both streets is generally modest stylistically; the local housing stock draws from a range of sources consistent with its development over two decades. The earliest houses located near High Street and dating from the late 1880s draw from Italianate sources. A number of identical, early dwellings are located on the western side of the avenue. These are predominantly of rendered brick construction with decorative quoins and slate roofs and are typical of much of the contemporary, speculative construction found throughout Prahran and Windsor.

Contemporary timber villas, located across the street, while also drawing their inspiration from Renaissance Revival sources, are less typical and feature ashlar boarding with unusual timber window surrounds that recall the pedimented temple fronts found in Roman or Renaissance architecture (5 and 7 Airlie Avenue). Elsewhere in the street, residences from the Federation period, with *complex*, Marseilles-tiled roofs above red brick walls and ornate, timber verandahs have survived (1 and 3 Airlie Avenue). Towards the southern end of the street, more modest red brick villas and semi detached residences from the years before WW1 predominate. The semi detached dwellings are of particular note, occurring both as symmetrical and asymmetrical residences which approximate the scale and appearance of nearby villas. Kelvin Grove is noted for its villas.

A small number of modern interventions works against the integrity and early character of Airlie Avenue. Two blocks of flats located at Nos 6 and 8 and dating from the 1970s and 1930s respectively are generally at odds with the scale, period and residential nature of the avenue, as is the 1970s block at 18 Airlie Avenue. Similarly, modern two-storey residential villas at 4 and 11 Airlie Avenue contribute little to the streetscape. Nonetheless, the remainder of the building stock remains in a high state of integrity, and it is this integrity which dominates the experience of moving south along the street. Additions are rare and are generally limited to carports and high brick fences. Extensions to houses typically occupy only a single storey and are located at the rear of properties where they produce only minimal impact on the streetscape. The most notable exception to this practice is the large first floor addition to 43 Airlie Avenue.

The sections of street proposed for a future extension to the DCA have generally survived in an even higher state of integrity than the area described above. Highbury Grove reiterates many of the features found in Airlie Avenue and Kelvin Grove; Larnook Street and Vail Street are intact examples of early local streetscapes with no modern interventions whatsoever; and the adjacent section of High Street, included for its role as a buffer rather than for its direct contribution to the area, constitutes a significant historic precinct in its own right containing a row of Victorian terrace shops which enjoy a high standard of intactness and integrity. The proposed larger DCA is unusual within Prahran for its complex arrangement of pedestrian lanes and walkways which appear to have been constructed as much for drainage control as for property access.

## **Local Historical Themes**

3.3 Land Speculation 8.2.1 Mansion estates and the high ground 3.3.4 Uncontrolled and unplanned development  
3.3.5 Recovery and infill 1900-40

*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/>*