Kelvin Grove Precinct

Heritage Place: Kelvin Grove Precinct
Address: 20-40 Kelvin Grove, Precinct

HO Reference: HO139
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 5 April 2024

Designer: N/A
Builder: N/A

Year of Construction: 1890s-1913



Photograph of 38 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



Location map and extent of HO139.

Heritage Group: Residential buildings
Heritage Type: Residential precinct

Key Theme: Building suburbs
Key Sub-theme: The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

Significance Level: Local

Controls:	☐	External paint controls	☐	Internal alteration controls	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Include on Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences not exempt
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place	■	Solar energy systems controls

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Kelvin Grove Precinct, comprising a group of Edwardian and Federation style dwellings on Kelvin Grove, Prahran, is locally significant.

The precinct is wholly characterised by contributory graded buildings.

Character elements that contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- The distinctive pattern of the 1890s-1910 development;
- A relatively high degree of integrity arising from the same construction period and absence of modern infill within the curtilage;
- The regularity and harmony of the single-storey detached and semi-detached Edwardian and Federation era houses primarily characterised by single or double fronted façades, projecting gable ends with half timbering, face red brick, terracotta Marseilles tiled hipped roofs- some with crested terracotta ridge capping and finials, verandahs embellished with timber fretwork, brackets and valance, brick chimneys – some with terracotta pots and harling render, and timber framed triple casement windows; and
- The uniformity of allotments, siting, setbacks and building heights across the precinct;

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant, including unsympathetic and obscuring fences.

How is it significant?

The Kelvin Grove Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Kelvin Grove Precinct is historically significant as a fine collection of Edwardian and Federation era houses that were developed following the 1887 subdivision of the Merville Estate, which continued the initial Boom-Era urban development of the metropolitan area with character changes that precipitated Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks and Victorian era mansion estates to a suburban middle-class enclave. However, though part of the late nineteenth century subdivisions in the City of Stonnington, on account of the economic crash of the 1890s, the development of the precinct was delayed. All the dwellings within this precinct were erected during this delayed developmental phase from the 1890s to 1910s, representing the historical early twentieth century recovery from the 1890s economic crash. With this, the Kelvin Grove Precinct forms a tangible link to this seminal transitional period of suburban development in Prahran. (Criterion A)

The Kelvin Grove Precinct is aesthetically significant as a visually cohesive area characterised by single-storey freestanding and duplex Edwardian and Federation era dwellings. The buildings retain a high degree of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through consistency in built form, materials, fenestration, detailing, heights, scale, allotment sizes and setbacks. Physical elements which contribute to the aesthetic significance of the precinct include: the repeated roof forms; use of Marseille terracotta tiling; the form and scale of the dwellings, the use of timber fenestration and render; intact chimneys with repeated designs; projecting decorative gable ends and intact verandahs. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Kelvin Grove Precinct is historically significant as a fine collection of Edwardian and Federation era houses that were developed following the 1887 subdivision of the Merville Estate, which continued the initial Boom-Era urban development of the metropolitan area with character changes that precipitated Prahran's shift from sparsely developed paddocks and Victorian era mansion estates to a suburban middle-class enclave. However, though part of the late nineteenth century subdivisions in the City of Stonnington, on account of the economic crash of the 1890s, the development of the precinct was delayed. All the dwellings within this precinct were erected during this delayed developmental phase from the 1890s to 1910s, representing the historical early twentieth century recovery from the 1890s economic crash. With this, the Kelvin Grove Precinct forms a tangible link to this seminal transitional period of suburban development in Prahran.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	This place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	This place does not meet this criterion.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The Kelvin Grove Precinct is aesthetically significant as a visually cohesive area characterised by single-storey freestanding and duplex Edwardian and Federation era dwellings. The buildings retain a high degree of integrity as a group and demonstrate stylistic cohesion through consistency in built form, materials, fenestration, detailing, heights,

		scale, allotment sizes and setbacks. Physical elements which contribute to the aesthetic significance of the precinct include: the repeated roof forms; use of Marseille terracotta tiling; the form and scale of the dwellings, the use of timber fenestration and render; intact chimneys with repeated designs; projecting decorative gable ends and intact verandahs.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	This place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions*	This place does not meet this criterion.
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	This place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- ### Physical Analysis

The Kelvin Grove Precinct consists of eleven residences located on the western side of Kelvin Grove. Kelvin Grove is a bi-directional street with street parking on both sides, oriented on a north-south axis. Kelvin Grove is laid with bitumen with concrete kerb, guttering and footpaths. A narrow nature strip is planted with a variety of mature trees including Lilly Pilly (*Syzygium*), White Cedar (*Melia*) and Ash (*Fraxinus*) trees.

The residences within the Kelvin Grove Precinct consist of single-storey freestanding and semi-detached Edwardian and Federation style houses. The semi-detached residences can be seen at 24-38 Kelvin Grove and the freestanding residences at 20, 22 and 40. The residences generally consists of face red brick construction laid with a stretcher bond. The hipped and gable roofs are typically clad with a terracotta Marseilles tile with crested ridge capping. Tall, corbelled chimneys with a rendered at the top of the stack extend from the roofs.

20 and 22 Kelvin Grove are a similar pair of freestanding residences presenting a double fronted open gable façade. 40 Kelvin Grove is distinct as a finely detailed residence with strong Queen Anne influences seen in its open gable form, wide bay windows, deep return verandah and complex hipped roof.

The semi-detached residences present varied front façade layouts and roof profiles. This includes mirrored open gable front facades with recessed centred main entrances at 36-38 and single fronted façades at 28-30 Kelvin Grove. 24-26 and 30-34 Kelvin Grove consist of an asymmetrical façade with the right side presenting a projecting open gable and the adjacent side also including a single fronted verandah. This creates an overall form that is otherwise similar to the freestanding double-fronted residences. The semi-detached residences include a party wall projecting above the roof.

The residences have a mostly consistent set back from the street allowing for a narrow front garden. The street front boundaries originally consisted of timber picket fencing but have since been largely replaced with timber paling fencing or rendered masonry walls. The residences generally include a single storey rear extension opening to the backyard space. Residences that have retained its original form and most of its original detailing include 24, 36 and 40 Kelvin Grove.

The Kelvin Grove Precinct presents a group of cohesive Edwardian and Federation style residences. The residences present varied front façade layouts and roof profiles. However, other elements including overall form, massing, setback, materiality, and detailing are visually cohesive when viewed as a group. Most residences include rear extensions, which are generally obscured from street view. Alterations that remain highly visible within the group include the rendering and painting of original face red brickwork (at 22 and 32 Kelvin Grove) and front fence alterations. The Kelvin Grove Urban Conservation Area is considered with overall good condition and with high integrity.

- ### Alterations and Additions

- Residences generally include single-storey back extensions.
- Altered front fencing to include timber paling and rendered masonry walls at 20, 22, 26, 30 Kelvin Grove.
- Rendering and repainting of original face red brickwork at 22, 32 Kelvin Grove.
- Second storey addition visible from the public domain at 22 Kelvin Grove.
- Skylight added to the roof visible from the public domain at 24 Kelvin Grove.
- Bay window at 38 Kelvin Grove likely a subsequent alteration.

History

- ### Historical Context

The area presently known as Stonnington is the traditional home of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nation. Formerly characterised by pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyongkoot) and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), this once thriving habitat provided Traditional Owners access to a range of water, plant, and animal resources integral to their way of life. The onset of colonialism not only saw the transformation of these landscapes, but also Woi wurrung and Bunurong displacement through violence and land dispossession, as is evident in the establishment of George Langhorne's Aboriginal Mission Station Reserve along the southern banks of the Yarra River in present day Prahran and Toorak. Operating under the guise of 'protection', this reserve ultimately became a focal point for segregation, dislocation, and colonial control of Aboriginal people's lives (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31).

Despite decades of ongoing dispossession, the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners in Stonnington has an enduring presence to this day. Through continued resistance and the passing down of Indigenous knowledge, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong people maintain an ongoing connection to, and care for Country.

European settlement in what would become the suburb of Prahran grew gradually following the 1849-1850 Crown Land Sales, which saw the subdivision of land bounded by present day Toorak Road, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Punt Road into fifty-one allotments (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 39). George Langhorne, the Commissioner of an 1837 Aboriginal mission in the area south of the Yarra River around Punt Hill, called this area 'Pura-ra-ran', a compound of two Bunurong words believed to mean land partially surrounded by water (O'Callaghan 1922, 54). In 1840 the name was changed to Prahran for official use.

While higher ground overlooking the Yarra to the north of Prahran was quickly acquired and settled by the colonial elite following the 1840 Crown Land Sales, the majority of present-day Prahran, being of poorly drained low-lying land characterised by wetlands, was primarily purchased by land speculators. These areas were subsequently and re-sold for farming, industry and housing the working classes. The high level of natural deposits of alluvial clay in the area meant that pockets of low-lying land were used as brickyards (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 17). By 1856, the land encompassing Prahran was primarily characterised by a scattered series of timber and brick workers cottages set on narrow allotments to the west of Williams Road, while land to the east and south remained undeveloped or in use as paddocks (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The area was also distinguished by its strong market garden character during this period, with much of the land awaiting development being used for cultivation during the 1850s and 1860s (Malone 1983, 12).

The area underwent a period of rapid change following the 1880s land boom, which spurred the replacement of many small, mid-nineteenth century cottages with more ornate, single-fronted Victorian and Edwardian style terraces that could house the influx of factory workers as part of the area's growing brick manufacturing, food processing and textiles industries around Chapel Street and Commercial Road. Additionally, upper-middle class enclaves and mansion estates in the formerly undeveloped area of eastern Prahran were also developed to house the wealthy settling adjacent to the suburb of Armadale (Malone 2000, 20). Comprising higher ground with no major drainage problems, this area attracted comparably wealthier residents (Malone 2003, 1). These transformations were also compounded by the construction of impressively detailed shops along Chapel Street, solidifying the strip as a popular retail and commercial centre by the late nineteenth century (Allom Lovell 2000, 45).

Pockets of the suburb continued to be used as a centre for small-scale manufacturing into the early- and mid-twentieth centuries. Although business restructuring and trade liberalisation in the late twentieth century ultimately resulted in the closure and demolition of many of these factories, built remnants of this era can be seen at the c.1910 Former Kia-Ora Cordial factory chimney at 181-187 High Street, Prahran and at the former milliner factory at Grattan Street, Prahran (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 95). Today, Prahran's working-class history is best represented through the relatively modest late nineteenth and early twentieth century single fronted cottages and dwellings that dominate the suburb's building stock. Meanwhile, traces of late nineteenth century middle-class residential development are best seen in the grand Victorian dwellings adjacent to Armadale along Grandview Grove.

• Place History

The Kelvin Grove Precinct comprised Crown Portion 53 and 64 during the 1849-50 Crown Land Sales (Surveyor-General's Department 1849). Portion 53 comprised approximately thirty and a half acres bounded by Orrong Road and High Street, the line of Barnato Grove and the line of Michie Mews, while portion 64 comprised 30.5 acres bounded by the line of Barnato Grove, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and the line of Michie Mews (Malone 2003, 22). While portion 53 was purchased by Mary Chomley of the prominent early colonial Griffith family as a residential estate, portion 64 was purchased as an investment for merchant James Rae (Malone 2003, 22).

Comprised of fairly level land that drained naturally to the bay rather than to the Yarra, both of these allotments were considered prime residential and commercial land that was distinct from the poorly drained land that dominated a significant portion of what is now present-day Prahan. Despite the quality of the land, its distance from the city centre meant that the area was slow to develop. Consequently, although a scattering of working-class timber dwellings on small allotments had been erected west of the subject area further to the west by 1856, portion 53 and 64 remained largely undeveloped (Surveyor-General's Department 1856). The only exception to this was Mary Chomley's Merville Estate, which was situated east of present-day Kelvin Grove at the centre of portion 53 (Surveyor-General's Department 1856) (see Figure 1). In sharp contrast to the working-class character of Prahran situated further to the west, Merville Estate did importantly foreshadow the distinct middle-class demographic that would come to characterise the area by the turn of the century.



Figure 1. 1856 map showing the approximate location of present day Kelvin Grove Precinct (then vacant) in red, and Merville Estate to the east. *Source:* Public Record Office Victoria.

Residential development at the northern end of Kelvin Grove gradually took place following the sale of the Merville Estate from 1868 onwards. The subdivision of the twenty one acre estate was slow, and the formation of Kelvin Grove only took place following an 1887 subdivision, which resulted in the sale of seven allotments fronting the west side of Kelvin Grove (Muntz & Bage 1887) (see Figure 2).

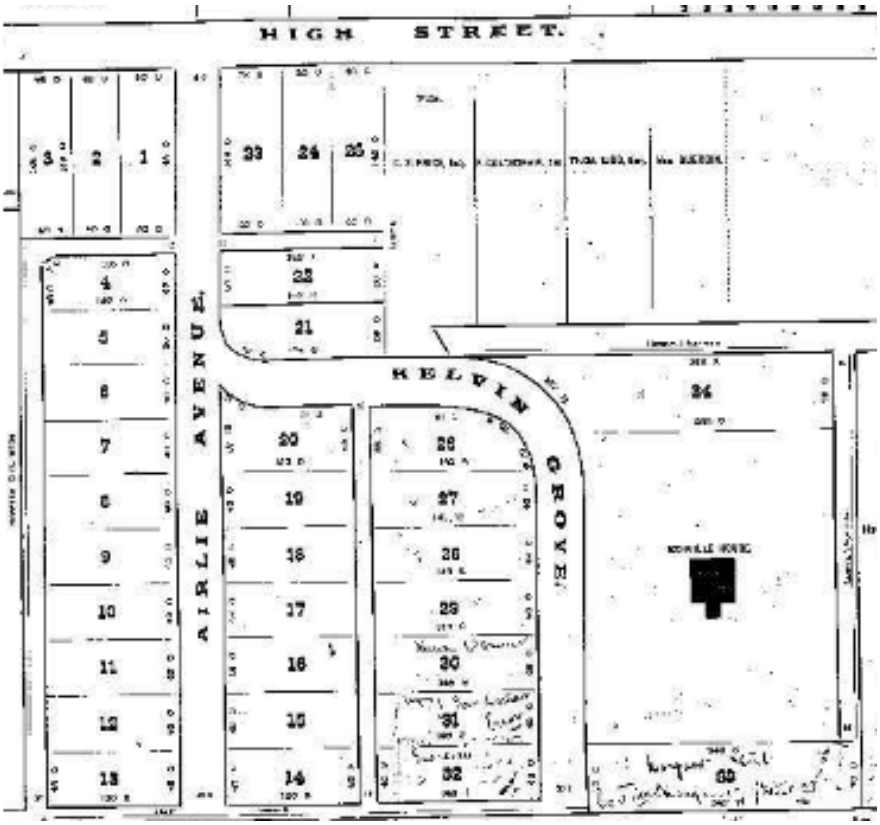


Figure 2. 1887 subdivision plan showing available alltoments on the northern end of Kelvin Grove (note: this is north of Kelvin Grove Precinct). *Source*: Stonnington History Centre.

Meanwhile, Merville Estate remained on a significantly smaller allotment on the east side of Kelvin Grove bounded by present day Florence Street, Orrong Road and roughly Lalbert Crescent (Muntz & Bage 1887). Despite this subdivision, the allotments fronting Kelvin Grove were not developed until the late 1890s and early 1900s as a result of the land crash (Context Pty Ltd 2009, 31). Moreover, the southern half of Kelvin Grove that presently comprises the majority of the Kelvin Grove Precinct primarily consisted of undeveloped pastoral land surrounded by boom time middle-class properties on larger allotments, including lawyer and politician's Sir Archibald Michie's 1883 Killara on Dandenong Road and judge Thomas a'Beckett's 1881-2 Karbarook Estate bounded by Stawell Street, Dandenong Road and Orrong Road (Malone 2003, 38-39).

The construction on Kelvin Grove eventually took place in the late 1890s, which saw the erection of two dwellings at 6 and 10 Kelvin Grove respectively (MMBW 1900). Further changes

also took place when Kelvin Grove was extended south to meet Larnook Street following the 1910 subdivision of previously undeveloped farming land, which resulted in the sale of allotments on the southern end of the west side of Kelvin Grove (Context Pty Ltd 1993). Subdivided for development by estate agent E.P. Muntz, the land was gradually sold over the next few years, and by 1912-13, single-storey freestanding Edwardian and Federation style dwellings had been erected within the present-day Kelvin Grove Precinct at 20-40 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (City of Prahan Rate Books, Windsor Ward; Muntz & Muntz c.1910s) (see Figure 3).

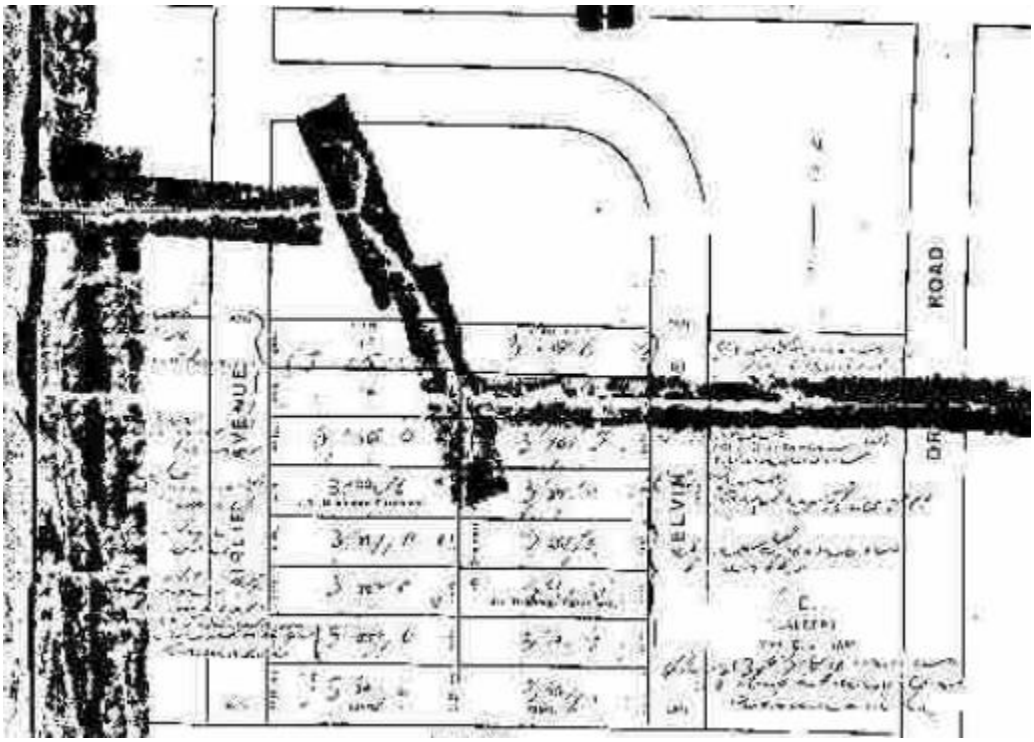


Figure 3. c.1910 subdivision plan showing available allotments on the southern end of Kelvin Grove. *Source:* Stonnington History Centre.

Reflecting the economic recovery of the early twentieth century following the 1890s recession, the speed in which these residences were constructed spoke to a new period of growth and optimism. Occupied by members of the middle classes, the dwellings were primarily rented out. Known tenants during the initial 1912-1913 period include clerk Arthur Nelson at Number 34, accountant Daniel Kerney at Number 32, clerk Daniel McCullagh at Number 30, traveller Henry Hewitt at Number 24 and salesman Allan Groule at Number 20 (City of Prahran Rate Books, Windsor Ward). Notably, all the dwellings within this precinct have survived intact against the pressures of interwar and postwar development. Today, they continue to be used as private residential properties.

Comparative Analysis

The Kelvin Grove Precinct comprises a highly intact collection of detached and semi-detached Edwardian and Federation style dwellings constructed in the early twentieth century. All constructed during the 1910s, the Kelvin Grove Precinct is noted for strong architectural similarities, and relation to the 1910 subdivision of the street. There are several residential areas in Prahran that also followed a similar developmental trajectory. These include:

- **Banole Estate Precinct, Prahran (HO385).** The Banole Estate Precinct is directly comparable to the Kelvin Grove Precinct as an early twentieth century precinct, made up of residential building stock constructed in the early twentieth century following the economic collapse of the 1890s. It draws comparisons through its clear Federation style architectural character, including front facing gable ends, face red brickwork with flush joints, verandahs embellished with timber fretwork, half-timbering, terracotta tiled roofs and asymmetrical composition. Other similar features include the streetscape rhythm, predominance of brick and picket fencing, consistency in terms of siting, forms and setbacks, intactness of individual buildings to their original states with some minor alterations, and combination of semi-detached and freestanding dwellings. Differences however include embellishment and scale – with the Kelvin Grove structures observing larger scale
- **Vail Street Precinct, Prahran (HO152).** Constructed during the 1910s, the Vail Street Precinct comprises a group of Edwardian style dwellings. While larger than the Kelvin Grove Precinct, it is nevertheless synonymous in terms of its clear late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Edwardian and Federation architectural aesthetic. Built features that are comparable include: front facing gable ends; face red brickwork with flush joints and tuckpointing; verandahs embellished with timber fretwork; Marseille terracotta tiled roofs and asymmetrical composition. Other similar features include the streetscape rhythm, predominance of brick and picket fencing, consistency in terms of sitting, forms and setbacks, and intactness of individual buildings to their original states with some minor alterations. However, as the dwellings within the Vail Street Precinct predominantly encompass Federation style elements, they are somewhat less embellished than the housing stock within the Kelvin Grove Precinct.
- **Wrights Terrace Precinct, Prahran (HO369).** Constructed over two major phases during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the Wrights Terrace Precinct comprises a group of late Victorian and Federation dwellings. While less stylistically cohesive than the Kelvin Grove Precinct owing to its mixture of both Victorian and Federation architectural styles, the Wrights Terrace Precinct is nevertheless comparable in terms of its streetscape rhythm and consistency in terms of setbacks, forms and setbacks. The present Federation architecture is stylistically comparable, and noted shared features include front facing gables, face red brickwork, Marseille terracotta tiled roofs with terracotta finials, and verandahs embellished with timber fretwork.

The Kelvin Grove Precinct comprises a cohesive and intact and streetscape with structures of good condition, demonstrative of the pattern of early twentieth century residential development in Prahran. Though smaller than some other examples, it is still directly comparable to existing Federation style Precincts within the suburb when comparing its clear architectural character and aesthetics.

Precinct Map



Grading Table

* S: Significant

C: Contributory

NC: Non-contributory

Refer to Heritage Victoria's Model brief for consultants (p.6) for explanation of designations.

Note: the Style/era column follows the architectural style categories set out in Heritage Victoria's HERMES Orion heritage database and does not necessarily reflect the date of construction. For details on construction era(s) where available, refer to the Place History section.

Street address	*Place type*	*Style/era*	*Grading*
20 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
22 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
24 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
26 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C

Street address	Place type	Style/era	Grading
28 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
30 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
32 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
34 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
36 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
38 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C
40 Kelvin Grove, Prahran	Residential	Federation/Edwardian Period (1902 – c.1918)	C

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Limitations

1. Access to all heritage places was limited to a visual inspection from the public domain. The interiors of buildings and inaccessible areas such as rear gardens were not accessed as part of this heritage study.
2. Condition and site modification assessment was limited to a visual inspection undertaken from the public domain as well as desktop resources.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

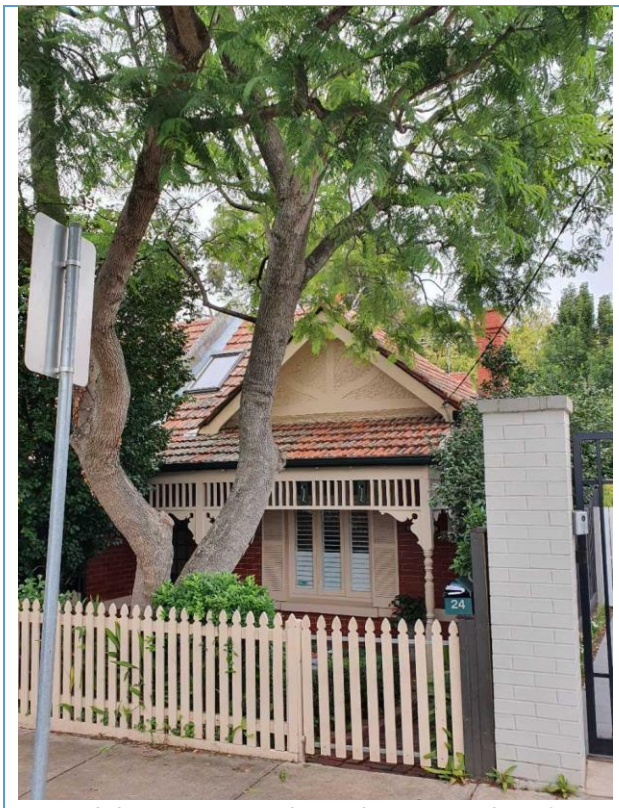
Images



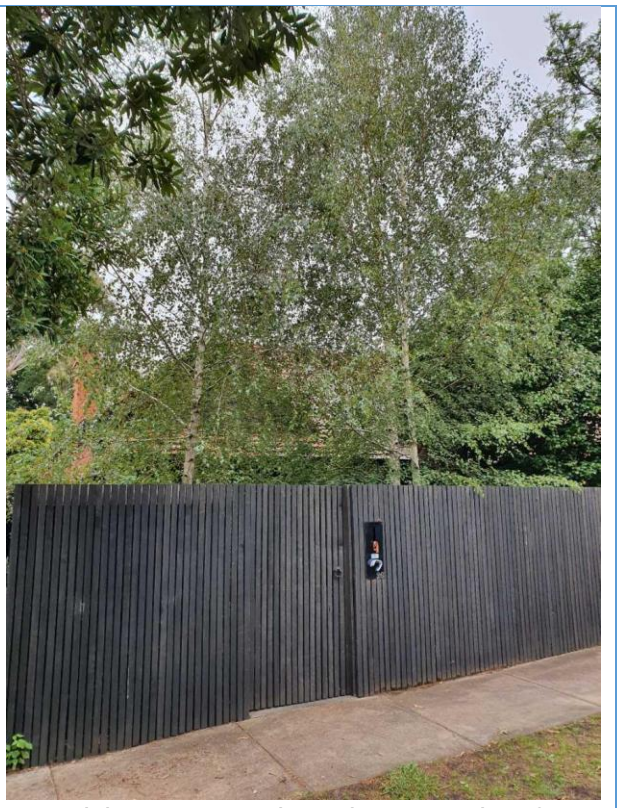
20 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



22 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



24 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



26 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



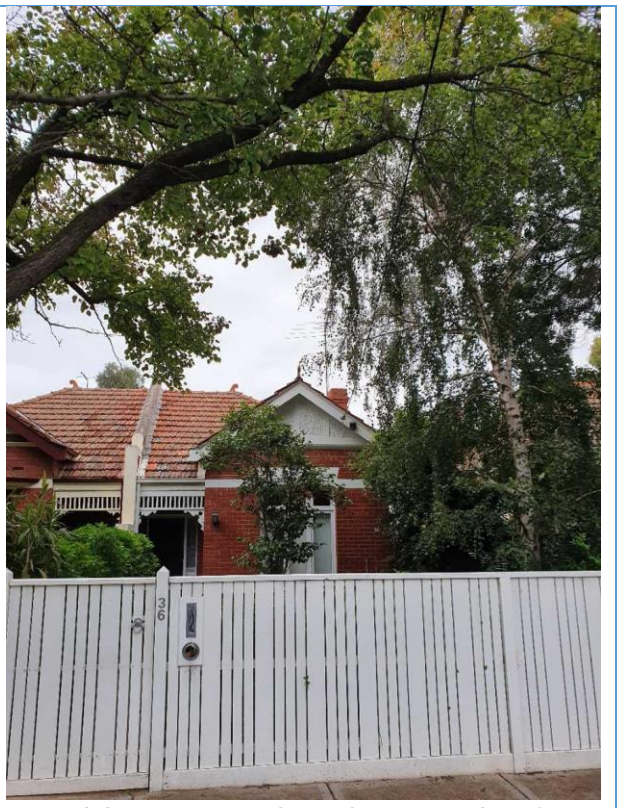
28 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



30 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



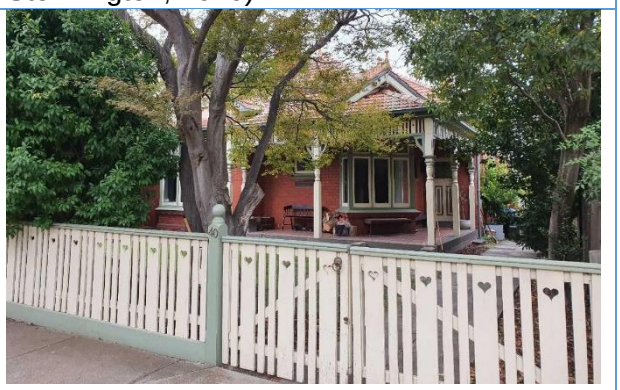
32-34 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



36 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



38 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).



40 Kelvin Grove, Prahran (source: City of Stonnington, 2020).

Authors

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