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St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra (part)

Name:	St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church	**Survey Date:**	July 2024
Place Type:	Church	**Architect/Designer:**	Theo Tsochatzis
Grading:	Significant (HO795)	**Builder:**	R J Anderson
Extent of the Overlay:	See Figure 19	**Construction Date(s):**	1969-70



Figure 1. St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, July 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church at 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra, constructed 1969-70.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

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- Church constructed in a Byzantine Revival style
- Textured walls clad in grey split-face concrete brick
- Tile-clad parapeted gabled roof form of moderate pitch to nave
- Rectangular plan
- Symmetrical principal elevation with arcaded central recessed porch set between two square towers crowned with blue-painted domes and crosses
- Extensive use of contrasting smooth, white-painted render quoining to the towers, stylised raked corbel table to the front gable, front arcade and ocular window, triple arch-headed tower vents, and surrounds to arch-headed window openings at the principal elevation and along the side walls
- Three bay arcade to central front porch with wider central arch, supported on round columns, with stylised capitals decorated with Greek crosses
- Timber entry doors with glazed semi-circular highlights
- Lower tower and nave windows of consistent size and detail, with white-painted glazing bars and coloured glass forming simple crosses.

The addition to the rear and the landscaping immediately surrounding the building do not contribute to the significance of the place.

How is it significant?

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church at 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra, is of local historical, aesthetic and social significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra has strong associations with post-war migration in the City of Stonnington and demonstrates the significant growth of the Greek community within the municipality following World War II. This period transformed the social, cultural and economic character of the municipality and a number of institutions were constructed at this time to service the social and spiritual needs of the rapidly expanding Greek population. As the only purpose-built Greek Orthodox Church in the City of Stonnington, St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church clearly demonstrates this historical phase in the City of Stonnington. It demonstrates the importance of religious and community institutions to serve as places of gathering and connection for local migrant communities at that time along with their desire to reflect their culture through an interpretation of traditional Greek religious architecture (Criterion A).

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra is a well-executed example of a postwar Byzantine Revival style church that directly draws on the architectural traditions of the migrant Greek community. The detailing, including textured concrete brick walls, symmetrical principal elevation with arcaded central porch and stylised raked corbel-table, square towers crowned with blue-painted cupolas and crosses, extensive use of contrasting smooth render highlighting and repetitive arched openings and motifs, presents a highly resolved expression of postwar migrant architecture and creates an imposing form within the streetscape (Criterion E).

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra is of social significance for its ongoing use by the local Greek community since opening in 1970. St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra continues to provide pastoral care of its parishioners and remains a focal point for the Greek community. The connection of the community to the traditional forms and practice of Greek Orthodox Christianity is expressed in the Byzantine Revival architecture of the church (Criterion G).

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Historical Context

This place is associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (2009):

3 Settling the land

- 3.5 Migrating to seek opportunity
- 3.5.2 Creating a cosmopolitan society – twentieth century immigration

10 Community and culture

- 10.2 Worshipping
- 10.2.4 Churches as a reflection of changing demographics

It is also associated with the following historic theme(s) taken from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History: Post-war Addendum (Draft, December 2024)*:

2 Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes

- 2.5 Migrating and making a home
- 2.5.1 Creating migrant communities

8 Building community life

- 8.1 Maintaining spiritual life
- 8.1.2 Post-war places of worship as a marker of ethnic origin

Contextual History

The settlement history of the City of Stonnington is tied to successive waves of immigration. Prior to World War I, immigrants settling in the area were almost entirely from Britain, Scotland and Ireland. In the interwar period, Jewish people from Eastern Europe settled in Prahran, many connecting with the local clothing industry, while some Greek migration also occurred (Context 2006:46). Later the area became host to many post-World War II immigrants from continental Europe and later still from other parts of the world, generally reflecting the waves of immigration to Australia more broadly (Context 2006:44).

The cosmopolitan character of the municipality – and the north-western part of the municipality in particular – developed in the 1950s and 1960s as immigrants arrived from all parts of Europe. They occupied the old working-class houses and newly built Housing Commission flats in the suburbs of Prahran and Windsor, with Australian-born residents generally moving out to newer suburbs. Postwar migrants provided much of the workforce for the thriving local industrial sector, then centred around Prahran.

One of the largest European immigrant communities originated from Greece. The Greek community's strong presence in the City of Stonnington is evidenced by St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church on High Street, Windsor (established c1963 in the former Mt Erica Methodist Church), the Greek Community Centre in High Street and St Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church on Epping Street, Malvern East (established in the former Peace Memorial Church) – all of which utilised churches constructed for other Christian denominations – along with the Greek Orthodox Church of St Constantine and St Helen, first established on Charles Street, then newly built for the Greek Orthodox community on Barry Street, South Yarra. By the 1980s many of the Greeks community had moved out to Malvern. This pattern of migration is demonstrated by St Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church in Epping Street, Malvern East (HO37), and the Greek Senior Citizens Club, which meets at the Malvern Town Hall.

Since the 1970s, European migrants have been joined by people from Turkey, the Middle East, Asia and South America – many of them once again escaping the effects of war and oppression (Context 2006:46).

Place History

The first Greek Orthodox Church in Prahran was the Church of St Constantine and St Helen, established in Charles Street (in a former 1850s Baptist Church) in 1960. In 1968, the roof of this church collapsed, which prompted the construction of a new church in Barry Street, South Yarra (McDougall 1985:64).

In July 1969 the Committee of the Greek Orthodox Community of Saints Constantine and Helen called for tenders for the erection of a church at 35-39 Barry Street (*Age*, 5 Jul 1969:44). The church was constructed in 1969-70 by master builder R J Anderson (Prahran Valuations; Building Permit Information). The supervising engineer was Theo Tsochatzis, who was also responsible for the drawings of the new church and the storage and toilet building along the rear boundary (Figures 2 to 7) (Stonnington Council Building Permit Files). Tsochatzis drew on the tradition of neo-Byzantine architecture responding to the immigrant nostalgia for the congregation's Greek homeland.

The specifications for the project indicated that the church was constructed of concrete brick-clad walls and piers, reinforced concrete column cores, foundations and floors, a tiled roof, fibre glass domes and spheres with enamel crosses, steel window frames and timber doors (Stonnington Council Building Permit Files). The church officially opened in 1970 (McDougall 1985:64).

Small additions were constructed off the rear elevation of the church at an unknown date. A small outbuilding was also built to the north-east of the church at an unknown date.

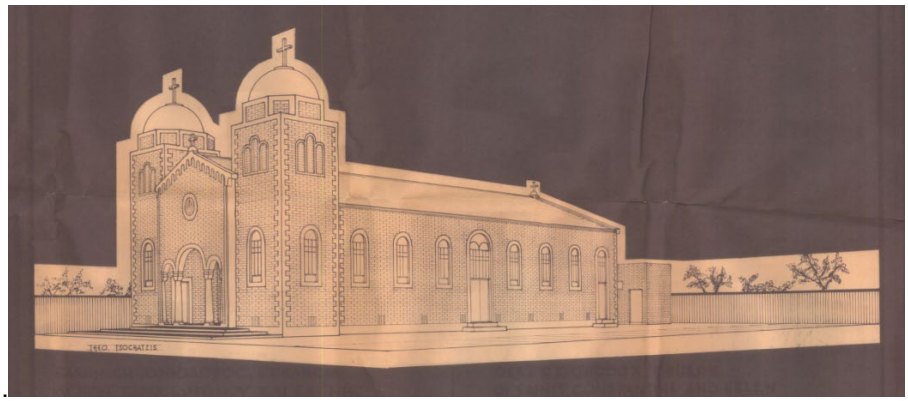


Figure 2. Illustration of the proposed church building, 1969, drawing by engineer Theo Tsocratzis (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

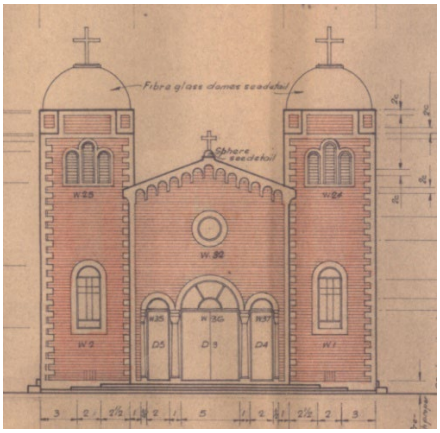


Figure 3. Southern (principal) elevation. Drawing by Theo Tsochatzis, July 1969 (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

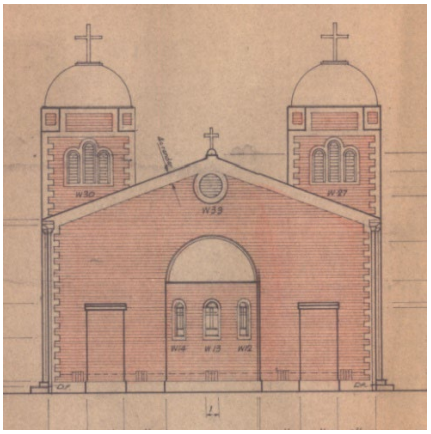


Figure 4. Northern (rear) elevation. Drawing by Theo Tsochatzis, July 1969 (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

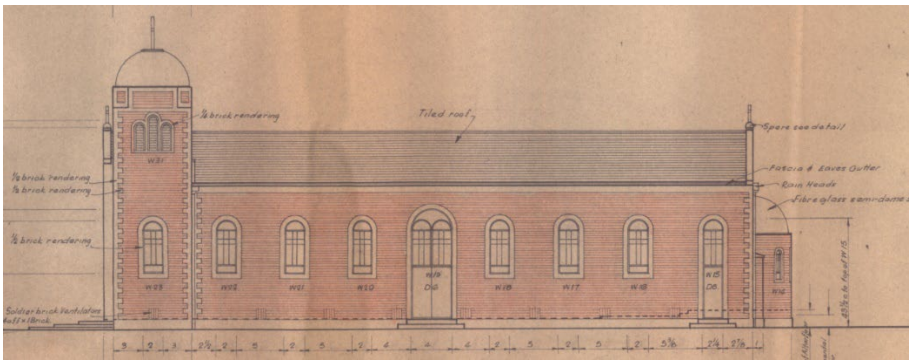


Figure 5. Eastern (side) elevation. Drawing by Theo Tsochatzis, July 1969 (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

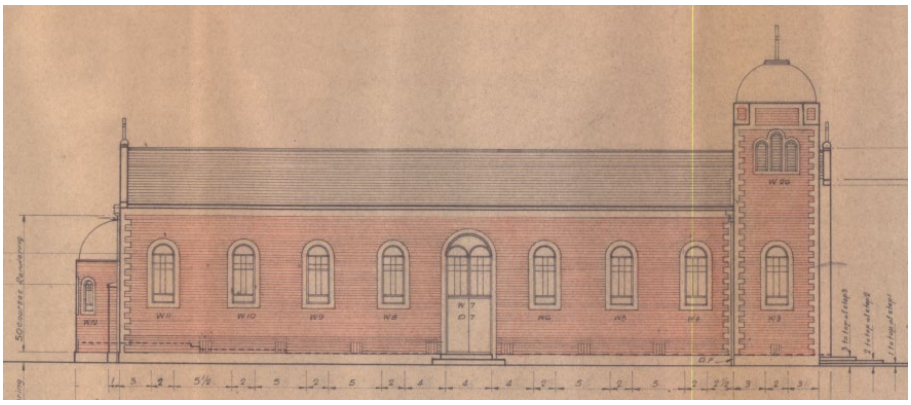


Figure 6. Western (side) elevation. Drawing by Theo Tsochatzis, July 1969 (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

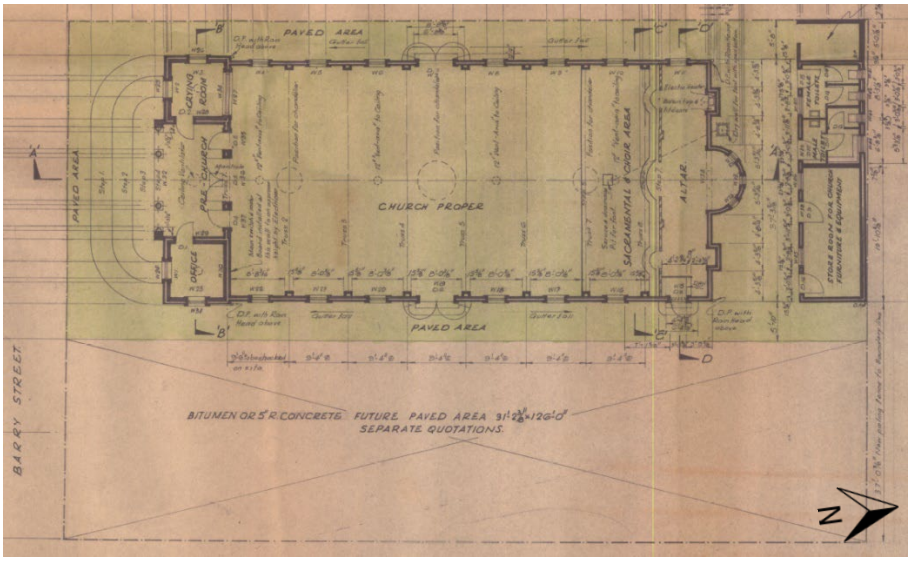


Figure 7. Floorplan of the church and the storage and toilet building on the rear boundary, drawing by Theo Tsochatzis, July 1969 (Source: Stonnington Council Building Permit Files)

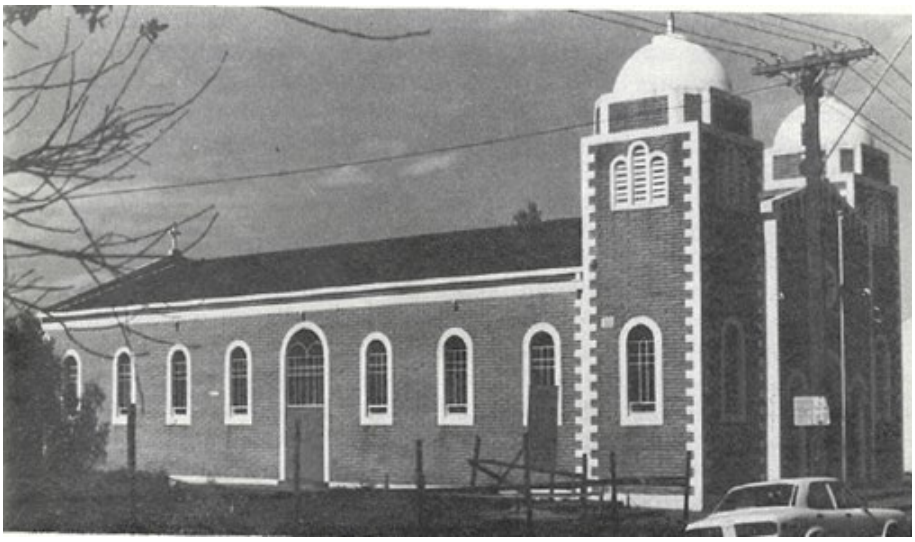


Figure 8. St. Constantine and St. Helen Greek Orthodox Church on Barry Street, c1985 (Source: McDougall 1985:65)

Description

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra is located on the north side of Barry Street, north-west of the main intersection of Chapel Street and Malvern Road and east of the Melbourne to Sandringham railway line. The site is concreted, including the carpark to the east and a later associated hall to the west. The rear of the property is accessed via Snowball Lane. Designed in the postwar period in a Byzantine Revival style, the church is of rectangular plan with long parapeted gabled tile-clad roof of moderate pitch above the nave and textured walls are clad in grey spilt-face concrete brick. The principal elevation is symmetrical with an arcaded central recessed porch set between two square towers crowned with blue-painted cupolas and crosses. Contrasting smooth, white-painted render is used extensively to highlight quoining to the towers, stylised raked corbel table to the front gable, the front arcade and circular window, triple arch-headed tower vents and surrounds to arch-headed window openings at the principal elevation and along the side walls. Broad curved steps lead to the tiled entry porch which is entered through a triple arcade with wide central arch, supported on round columns, with stylised capitals decorated with Greek crosses. The uneven triple arcade is repeated at the triple timber entry doors with glazed semicircular highlights. Windows to the lower towers and the nave are of consistent size and detail, with white-painted glazing bars and coloured glass forming simple crosses.

The church is unfenced with a metal picket gate located between the church and hall at the west side and a metal picket fence enclosing the carpark to the east.

Key Features:

- Church constructed in a Byzantine Revival style
- Textured walls clad in grey split-face concrete brick
- Tile-clad parapeted gabled roof form of moderate pitch to nave
- Rectangular plan
- Symmetrical principal elevation with arcaded central recessed porch set between two square towers crowned with blue-painted domes and crosses
- Extensive use of contrasting smooth, white-painted render quoining to the towers, stylised raked corbel table to the front gable, front arcade and ocular window, triple arch-headed tower vents, and surrounds to arch-headed window openings at the principal elevation and along the side walls
- Three bay arcade to central front porch with wider central arch, supported on round columns, with stylised capitals decorated with Greek crosses
- Timber entry doors with glazed semi-circular highlights

- Lower tower and nave windows of consistent size and detail, with white-painted glazing bars and coloured glass forming simple crosses.



Figure 9. Aerial photograph of St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra (Source: Nearmap, dated 9 October 2024)



Figure 10. Front elevation of the St. Constantine and St. Helen Greek Orthodox Church at 27-39 Barry Street (Source: GJM Heritage, November 2024)



Figure 11. Side (western) elevation (Source: GJM Heritage, November 2024)



Figure 12. Detail of towers with blue-painted domes (Source: GJM Heritage, November 2024)

Intactness and Integrity

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church at 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra remains highly intact to its period of construction. The place retains a high degree of integrity as a Byzantine Revival style church constructed in the post-war period.

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Comparative Analysis

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church at 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra is an example of a religious building purpose-built for the Greek Orthodox community in the late-twentieth century in the City of Stonnington. St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church is one of three Greek Orthodox Churches in the City of Stonnington, the others being St Catherines, Malvern East and St Demetrios, Windsor.

St Catherines Greek Orthodox Church at 3 Epping Street, Malvern East is included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme (HO37). It is significant as a church built in 1922 as the Peace Memorial Church to a design by architects North & Williams. It was later acquired by the Greek Orthodox community and continues to serve this purpose. The identified significance of this place does not relate to the Greek Orthodox community use of the place.

St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church at 362-380 High St, Windsor was established in the former Mt Erica Methodist Church and was acquired and reconsecrated by the Greek Orthodox community in 1963. It was recommended for the Heritage Overlay as part of the *Prahran and Windsor Heritage Review* undertaken in 2024. It is considered to be significant as a former nineteenth century Methodist Church and Sunday School that was later converted into a Greek Orthodox Church in the post-war period and for its association with the Greek community in Stonnington.

St Catherines (Greek Orthodox) Church (former Peace Memorial Church), 3 Epping Street, Malvern East (HO37)



Figure 13. St Catherines (Greek Orthodox) Church, Malvern East (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

St Demetrious Greek Orthodox Church, 362-380 High Street, Windsor (Recommended for HO)

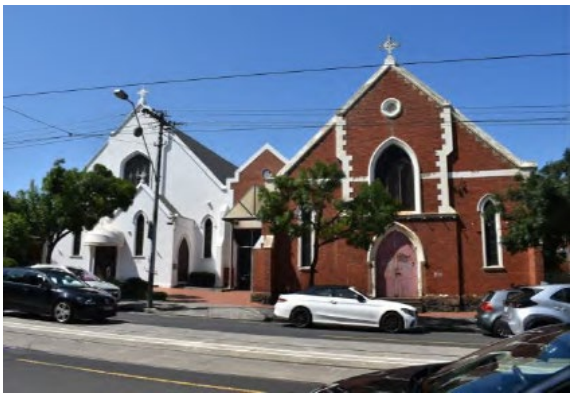


Figure 14. St Demetrious Greek Orthodox Church, Windsor (Source: Prahran and Windsor Heritage Review, 2024)

There are no examples of religious buildings purpose-built for the Greek Orthodox community included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme. Church buildings associated with other Christian denominations are well-represented in the Heritage Overlay.

A number of purpose-built Greek Orthodox Churches are included in local Heritage Overlays of other municipal planning schemes. These include:

St Nektario's Greek Orthodox Church, Fawkner (HO405, Merribek-City)

Historically and socially significant as a church that demonstrates the growth of the Greek community within Moreland after World War II. First established in an earlier church on the same site, St Nektario's demonstrates the consolidation of worship amongst migrant communities in Moreland.



Figure 15. St Nektario's Greek Orthodox Church, Fawkner (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

Parkdale Greek Orthodox Church, 56 The Corso, Parkdale (HO121, Kingston City)

Historically significant as a tangible reminder of the influx of Greek migrants into the municipality in the years after World War II. It is architecturally significant as a handsome example of the bold architectural styling which typify the buildings of the Greek Orthodox Church. The church is of social and spiritual significance for its long associations with the local Greek Orthodox community.



Figure 16. Pardale Greek Orthodox Church, 56 The Corso, Parkdale (Source: City of Kingston Heritage Study Place Identification Form, 2001)

St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Cnr Church Road & Porter Street, Templestowe (HO140, Manningham City)

A landmark with local social significance in the lives of the eastern suburbs Greek community.



Figure 17. St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church, Templestowe (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

St John the Baptist's Greek Orthodox Church, Carlton North (HO326, Yarra City – Individually Significant within precinct)

Historically significant as an outstanding example of Carlton's social role as a place for post war immigrants to settle and socialise together. It is architecturally significant as a fine example of postwar expression of immigrant community nostalgia expressed through architecture.



Figure 18. St John the Baptist's Greek Orthodox Church, Carlton North (Source: Victorian Heritage Database)

Like the examples in other municipalities included in the Heritage Overlay, St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church demonstrates the history of European – and particularly Greek – migration to metropolitan Melbourne in the post-war period. One of the largest groups of European migrants were from Greece, who established a strong presence in the City of Stonnington in the post-war period (Context 2006:44-46). Designed by a community member, the St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church demonstrates the architectural and aesthetic values of the migrant community, drawing on the Byzantine architectural traditions of their homeland. It is the only purpose-built Greek Orthodox Church in the City of Stonnington.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Planning Practice Note No. 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018), modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: *Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (historical significance).*

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra has strong associations with post-war migration in the City of Stonnington and demonstrates the significant growth of the Greek community within the municipality following World War II. This period transformed the social, cultural and economic character of the municipality and a number of institutions were constructed at this time to service the social and spiritual needs of the rapidly expanding Greek population. As the only purpose-built Greek Orthodox Church in the City of Stonnington, St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church clearly demonstrates this historical phase in the City of Stonnington. It demonstrates the importance of religious and community institutions to serve as places of gathering and connection for local migrant communities

at that time along with their desire to reflect their culture through an interpretation of traditional Greek religious architecture.

CRITERION B: *Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (rarity).*

N/A

CRITERION C: *Possession to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Stonnington's cultural or natural history (research potential).*

N/A

CRITERION D: *Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).*

N/A

CRITERION E: *Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).*

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra is a well-executed example of a postwar Byzantine Revival style church that directly draws on the architectural traditions of the migrant Greek community. The detailing, including textured concrete brick walls, symmetrical principal elevation with arcaded central porch and stylised raked corbel-table, square towers crowned with blue-painted cupolas and crosses, extensive use of contrasting smooth render highlighting and repetitive arched openings and motifs, presents a highly resolved expression of postwar migrant architecture and creates an imposing form within the streetscape.

CRITERION F: *Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period.*

N/A

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 their continuing cultural traditions (social significance).*

St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra is of social significance for its ongoing use by the local Greek community since opening in 1970. St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, South Yarra continues to provide pastoral care of its parishioners and remains a focal point for the Greek community. The connection of the community to the traditional forms and practice of Greek Orthodox Christianity is expressed in the Byzantine Revival architecture of the church.

CRITERION H: *Special association with the life or works of a period, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Stonnington's history (associative significance).*

N/A

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Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a locally significant heritage place (HO795).

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) to the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External paint controls *Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?*	No
Internal alteration controls *Is a permit required for internal alterations?*	No
Tree controls *Is a permit required to remove a tree?*	No
Solar energy system controls *Solar energy system controls apply?*	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions *Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?*	No
Victorian Heritage Register *Is this place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?*	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted *Can a permit be granted to use for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?*	No
Aboriginal heritage place *Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the* Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?	No
Incorporated Plan *Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?*	No

Extent of Overlay

The title boundary on which St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church is sited also includes a Community Assembly Hall (constructed 1985-86) to the west and an at-grade carpark to the east. These elements do not contribute to the significance of the Church. The extent of the Heritage Overlay is therefore recommended to extend to the title boundaries to the north and south, to the outer eastern edge of the Assembly Hall building line (but not including any hall fabric) and to 5m to the east of the outer eastern edge of the Church, into the carpark. This is illustrated in Figure 19 below:



Figure 19. Recommended extent of the heritage overlay for St Constantine and St Helen Greek Orthodox Church, 27-39 Barry Street, South Yarra.

References

Built Heritage, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History: Post-war Addendum (Draft),* December 2024.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006 (Amendments 2009).

Context Pty Ltd, *Victoria's Post 1940s Migration Heritage, Volume 2: Thematic History*, August 2011.

McDougall, Jill, *Church, community and change: religion in Prahran 1836-1984*, Prahran, 1985.

Nearmap.

Prahran Valuation Records.

Stonnington Council Building Permit Files.

The Age.