City of
STONNINGTON

Wilson Street Precinct

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: Garden Street, Surrey Road and Wilson Street, South Yarra

Name:	Wilson Street Precinct	**Review Date:**	June 2024
Place Type:	Residential Precinct	**Architect/Designer:**	Not known
Grading:	See grading table	**Builder:**	Not known
Extent of the Overlay:	See Figure 5	**Construction Date(s):**	1880s-1890s, 1910



Figure 1. 26 Surrey Road



Figure 2. Surrey Terrace, 28-36 Surrey Road



Figure 3. 74 Wilson Street



Figure 4. 59 Surrey Road



Figure 5. Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, July 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra, a residential precinct containing a collection of Victorian houses, along with a small number of Edwardian houses, constructed between the 1880s and 1910.

The precinct includes:

- Garden Street (nos. 64, 66, 68)
- Surrey Road (nos. 26-50 even only, 57, 59)
- Wilson Street (nos. 59-99 odd only, 66-74 even only)

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- Single-storey brick and timber houses, predominantly in the Victorian style, with a small number of Edwardian style residences
- Two-storey brick terrace houses in the Victorian style
- Rectangular forms, typically detached and single or double-fronted, the latter with symmetrical principal elevations or asymmetrical principal elevations with projecting side bays
- Hipped roof forms clad with corrugated metal sheet or slate
- Bracketed eaves

- Verandahs to principal elevations with varied profile, typically supported on timber posts or cast-iron columns and decorated with cast-iron friezes and brackets
- Block-fronted timber and polychromatic or rendered brick principal elevations
- Red, dichromatic or rendered brick chimneys with corbelled capping
- Timber-framed sash windows either single, paired or in tripartite arrangements
- Parapeted principal elevations to two-storey houses, including loggia to 28-36 Surrey Road with rendered classical detailing.

Later front fences, vehicle accommodation and rear additions do not contribute to the significance of the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra, is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and into the first decade of the twentieth century, when land was subdivided and sold for middle-class residential development, largely due to improved drainage infrastructure and the establishment of the Oakleigh railway line and Hawksburn Railway Station in 1879. As a highly intact precinct of houses constructed in Victorian and Edwardian styles, the Wilson Street Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

The Wilson Street Precinct is a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of predominantly Victorian style houses. These houses in the precinct display typical features of the Victorian period, including brick or timber construction, hipped roofs clad in corrugated iron or slate, front verandahs with decorative cast-iron, and prominent corbelled brick chimneys (Criterion D).

The Wilson Street Precinct forms a unified group of residences dating from the 1880s to 1910. The high degree of consistency in plan forms, setbacks, materials and fine detailing of the buildings creates picturesque and cohesive streetscapes with a distinctive architectural character (Criterion E).

Historical Context

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

3 Settling the land

- 3.3.1 Crown land sales 1840-1850

- 3.3.3 Speculators and land boomers

8 Building suburbs

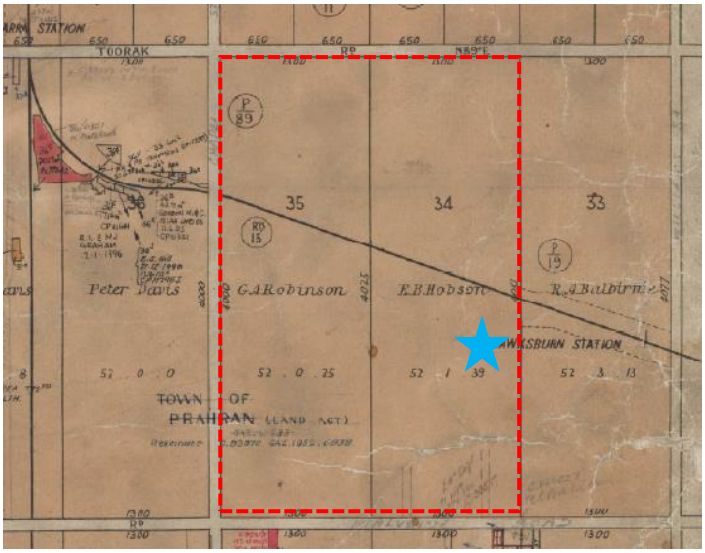
- 8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

Place History

The following history is drawn from the City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Gap Study, prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd in 2009, with additional information as cited.

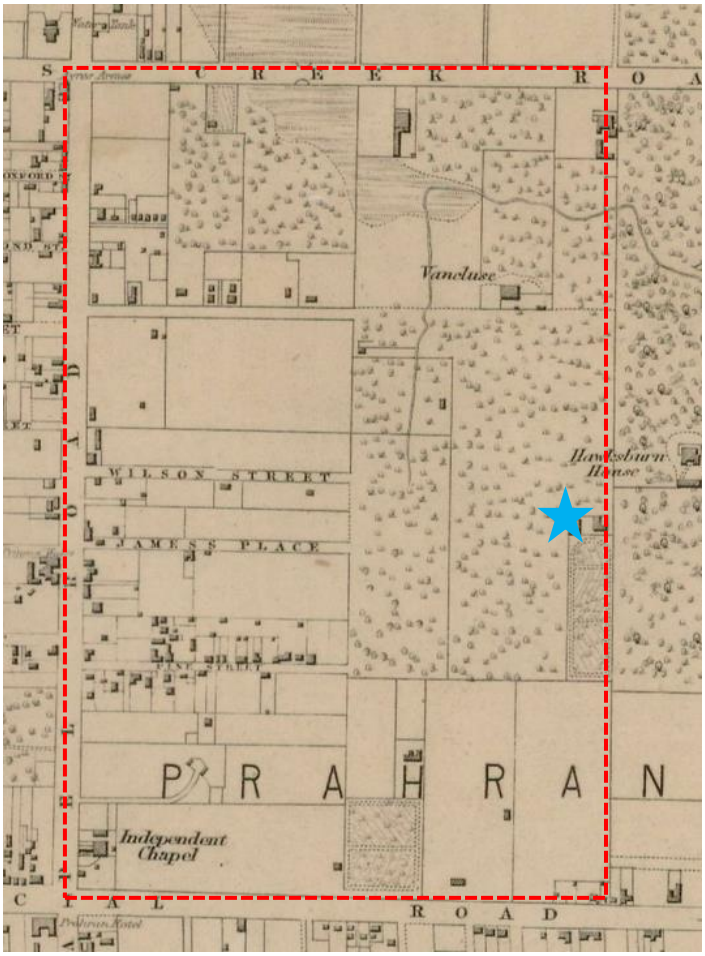
The land on which the Wilson Street Precinct is located formed part of Lots 34 and 35 in the Parish of Prahran. These lots – each comprising approximately 52 acres – were offered for sale at the Crown Land sales in June 1849.

Lot 35, the most desirable land along the eastern side of Chapel Street, attracted the highest price. It was purchased by G A Robinson, Protector of Aborigines (Figure 6). Lot 34, to the east, was beset with drainage problems and attracted the lowest price. It was purchased by the Estate of the late Dr E B Hobson. A stream running east-west through swampy land at the northern end of the lot and another running north-south in the vicinity of present-day Surrey Road rendered all but the highest ground within Lot 34 impenetrable after rains. The swampy land and streams are evident on the 1855 Kearney map of Melbourne (Figure 7).



N

Figure 6. Detail of parish plan, showing lots 34 and 35 with later notations; plan dates to c1880. Approximate location of precinct indicated by blue star (Source: Public Record Office Victoria)



N

Figure 7. Detail of plan of Melbourne and its suburbs, compiled by James Kearney, 1855 showing land comprising lots 34 and 35. Approximate location of precinct indicated by blue star (Source: State Library of Victoria)

Robinson subsequently subdivided Lot 35 into smaller lots, each with a frontage to Chapel Street. Blocks extended to the eastern boundary of the lot, adjacent to the swampy ground in Lot 34. One portion was purchased by Joseph Wilson, who ran a general store on Chapel Street. Wilson further subdivided his land in the early 1860s and Wilson Street was first listed in the *Sands and McDougall* Directory in 1864. Modest residential allotments were provided to either side of Wilson Street, which terminated at the eastern boundary of Lot 35 at this time. The allotments sold slowly; by the mid-1870s several small dwellings had been erected on either side of the narrow street.

The swamp remained the barrier to the eastward extension of Wilson Street. While Prahran more broadly developed rapidly during the 1850s and 1860s, little attempt was made to develop Hobson's Lot 34 and the area at the eastern end of Wilson Street remained largely vacant.

Improvements to drainage in the 1860s led to the creation of Cromwell and Surrey Roads and allotments along these two roads were made available for sale in 1871 as part of the Dunster Estate. The Dunster Estate subdivision plan (Figure 8) shows the extension of Wilson Street to Cromwell Road. The subdivision was described in the *Argus* as a 'very valuable estate, subdivided into business building allotments all along the frontages of the Commercial-road and also villa building plots etc…and including the three villa residences known as Monkton, Vaucluse and Dunster-house' (*Argus*, 25 September 1871:2).

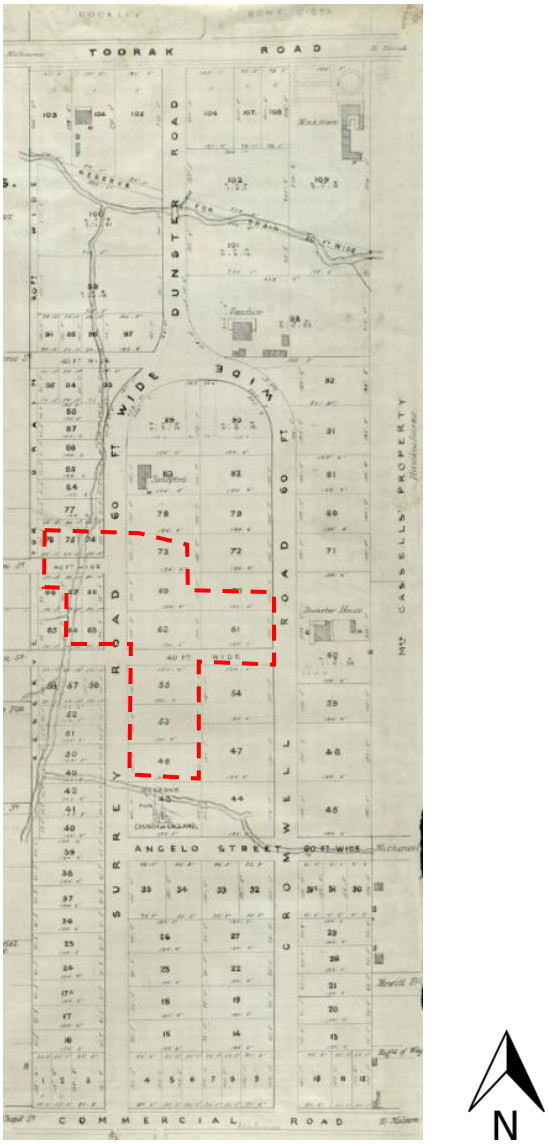


Figure 8. Dunster Estate, 1871 showing Wilson Street and surrounding area. Approximate area of precinct indicated (Source: State Library of Victoria)

Much of the land made available in the 1871 subdivision remained unsold and the Railways Department subsequently purchased a tract through the northern sections of the subdivision to allow for the construction of the Oakleigh Railway in 1879. In 1880 surplus railway lands were auctioned in Cromwell, Surrey and Barnsbury Roads. Cromwell Road was particularly slow in selling; in the early 1880s, when the Presbyterian and Anglican Churches were seeking land in the area, both found good allotments in Cromwell Road. St Martin's Anglican Church, at the intersection of Wilson Street and Cromwell Road, opened in 1883 and provided a spiritual focus for the local Anglican community.

With the advent of the railway, the construction of St Martin's Church and the Presbyterian Church, and the 1880s boom more generally, development in the central sections of Lot 34 finally commenced in earnest. Large allotments, unsold since their release during the 1870s, were purchased and subdivided (Figure 9). The area included in the Wilson Street Precinct was largely developed by the early 1890s. This is evidenced by the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) plans dating to 1895 which show the development of the majority of the lots within the precinct, with the exception of 44, 57 and 59 Surrey Road, which remained vacant at this time (Figure 10). The houses at 57 and 59 Surrey Road had been constructed by 1900; no 44 was constructed by 1910 (S&M). A 1945 aerial photograph shows the fully developed precinct in the mid-twentieth century (Figure 11).

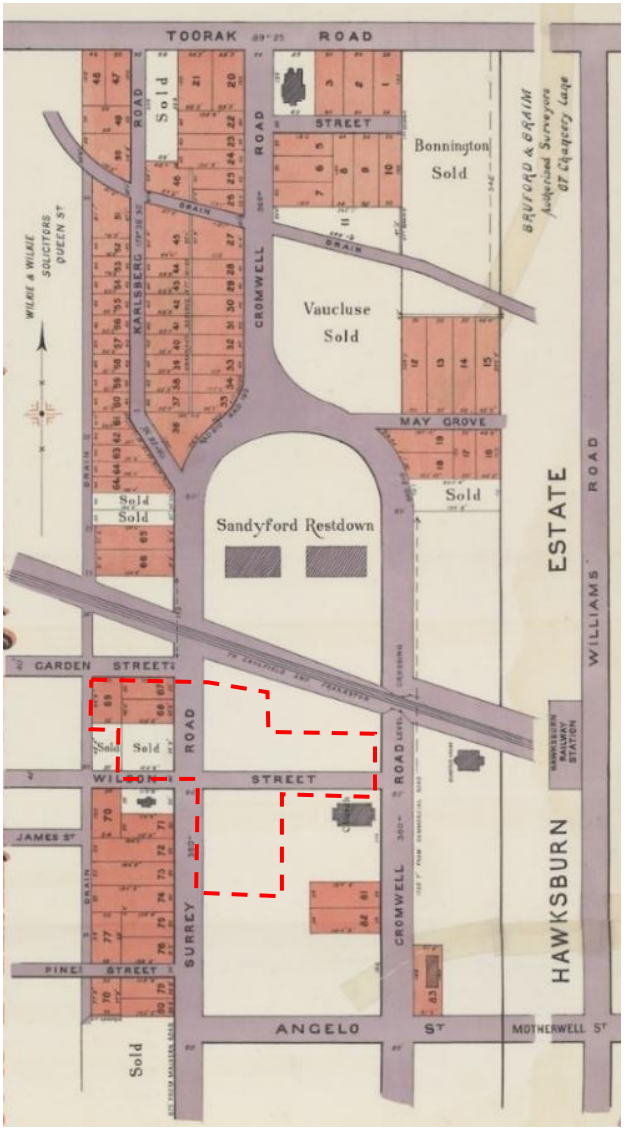


Figure 9. Dunster Estate, 1887 showing allotments in Wilson Street and surrounding area. Approximate area of precinct indicated (Source: State Library of Victoria)

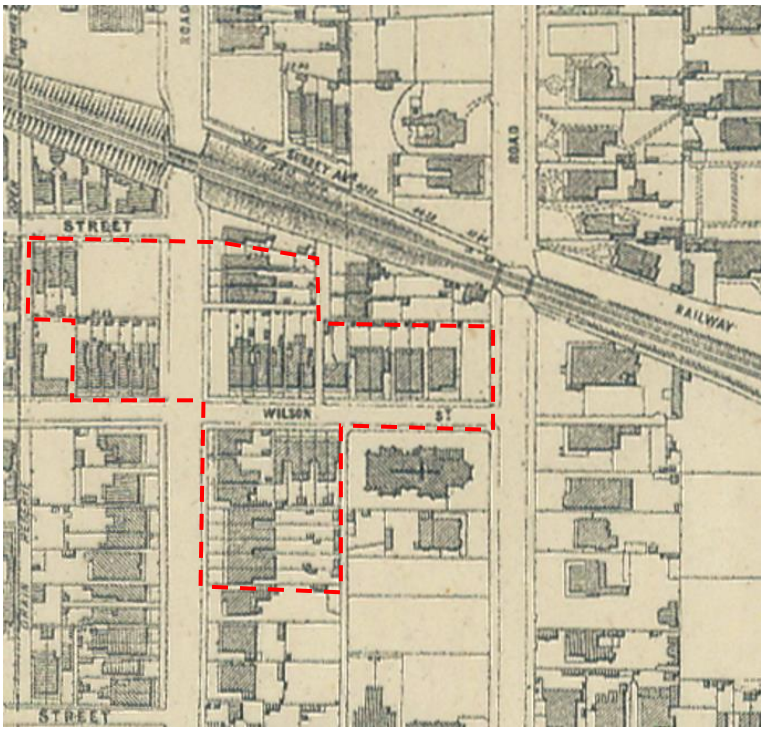


Figure 10. MMBW Plan No 13, Portion of Richmond, Hawthorn and Prahran, 1895. Precinct boundary indicated (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 11. Aerial photograph showing the Wilson Street Precinct, 1945 (Source: Landata Victoria)

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Description

The Wilson Street Precinct is located between Chapel Street and Williams Road, South Yarra, to the south of the Frankston/Pakenham railway line and west of the Hawksburn Railway Station. It comprises a collection of Victorian and Edwardian style properties with all houses located on rectangular sites, set back from street boundaries behind small to medium front gardens.

The precinct consists predominantly of single-storey brick and timber houses, dating from the Victorian period with a small number constructed in the first decade of the twentieth century. The houses are typically detached and single or double-fronted (either symmetrical, or asymmetrical with projecting side bay) and are highly consistent in scale, materiality and detailing. The precinct also includes two two-storey Victorian-era parapeted brick terrace rows – a continuous row of five terraces at 66-74 Wison Street and a row of five terraces at 28-36 Surrey Road (*Surrey Terrace*).

Houses are rectangular in form with hipped roofs, bracketed eaves and verandahs lining the principal elevations. Roofs are typically visible from the street, clad with corrugated sheet metal or slate, with front verandahs of varied profile and typically supported on timber posts or cast-iron columns and decorated with cast-iron friezes and brackets. Some principal elevations are of block-fronted timber, some are of polychromatic brickwork or rendered brick, and chimneys are of red, dichromatic or rendered brick with corbelled capping. Sash windows are timber-framed, either single, paired or in tripartite arrangements. The principal elevation of Surrey Terrace is of loggia form with rendered classical columns, arcading and balustrading to upper balconies, parapet with decorative pediments and nameplate, and decorative consoles, vermiculated rustication and festoons to the facade.

Within the precinct, some changes have been made to fenestration, roofs have been re-clad, brick walls rendered or overpainted and decorative ironwork and timberwork removed and replaced; however, the building forms are largely unaltered. Front boundaries are lined with later fences of various materials and designs, including a large number of high brick walls, and vehicle accommodation has modified the front setbacks of a number of properties.

Key Features:

- Single-storey brick and timber houses, predominantly in the Victorian style, with a small number of Edwardian style residences
- Two-storey brick terrace houses in the Victorian style
- Rectangular forms, typically detached and single or double-fronted, the latter with symmetrical principal elevations or asymmetrical principal elevations with projecting side bays
- Hipped roof forms clad with corrugated metal sheet or slate
- Bracketed eaves
- Verandahs to principal elevations with varied profile, typically supported on timber posts or cast-iron columns and decorated with cast-iron friezes and brackets
- Block-fronted timber and polychromatic or rendered brick principal elevations
- Red, dichromatic or rendered brick chimneys with corbelled capping
- Timber-framed sash windows either single, paired or in tripartite arrangements
- Parapeted principal elevations to two-storey houses, including loggia to 28-36 Surrey Road with rendered classical detailing.



Figure 8. 64 Garden Street



Figure 9. 66 Garden Street



Figure 10. 68 Garden Street



Figure 11. 26 Surrey Road



Figure 12. 28-36 Surrey Road



Figure 13. 40 Surrey Road



Figure 14. 44 Surrey Road



Figure 15. 46 Surrey Road



Figure 16. 50 Surrey Road



Figure 17. 59 Surrey Road



Figure 18. 61-69 Wilson Street



Figure 19. 64A Wilson Street



Figure 20. 68-72 Wilson Street



Figure 21. 74 Wilson Street


Figure 22. 79 Wilson Street


Figure 23. 87 Wilson Street


Figure 24. 93 Wilson Street


Figure 25. 95 Wilson Street

Intactness and Integrity

The Wilson Street Precinct remains highly intact to its period of construction in fabric, form and detail. While the residences have undergone some minor alterations – including changes to fenestration, re-cladding of roofs, rendering or overpainting of brick walls and replacement of decorative ironwork and timberwork – these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a finely detailed and cohesive precinct of residences dating from the 1880s to 1910.

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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).*

The Wilson Street Precinct, South Yarra has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and into the first decade of the twentieth century, when land was subdivided and sold for middle-class residential development, largely due to improved drainage infrastructure and the establishment of the Oakleigh railway line and Hawksburn Railway Station in 1879. As a highly intact precinct of houses constructed in the Victorian and Edwardian styles, the Wilson Street Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington.

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).*

The Wilson Street Precinct is a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of predominantly Victorian style houses. These houses in the precinct display typical features of the Victorian period, including brick or timber construction, hipped roofs clad in corrugated iron or slate, front verandahs with decorative cast-iron, and prominent corbelled brick chimneys.

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

The Wilson Street Precinct forms a unified group of residences dating from the 1880s to 1910. The high degree of consistency in plan forms, setbacks, materials and fine detailing of the buildings creates picturesque and cohesive streetscapes with a distinctive architectural character.

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).*

N/A

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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Gradings and Recommendations

Due to their shared history, it is recommended that the Vicarage and Parish Hall at 27-27B Cromwell Road be removed from HO379 and included within an extended HO28 to cover St Martin's Church, Vicarage and Parish Hall (see Figure 26).

24 Cromwell Road, South Yarra is non-contiguous with the balance of the Wilson Street Precinct, being the only property located on the east side of Cromwell Road. It is recommended that the property be removed from HO379 and be included within HO137 Hawksburn Precinct, which currently extends to the north and east boundaries of the property. Conversely, 97 and 99 Wilson Street, South Yarra currently form part of HO137 but are non-contiguous with the balance of HO137, being on the western side of Cromwell Road. Given that these properties share the same historic and architectural values as the balance of the immediately adjacent Wilson Street Precinct, it is recommended that they be included in the extent of HO131 (see Figure 26).

59-69 (odd nos. only) Wilson Street, 64-66 (even nos. only) and 57 and 59 Surrey Road, South Yarra are residential properties which share the same historic and architectural values as the balance of the immediately adjacent precinct and remain substantially intact to their period of construction. It is recommended that they be included in the extent of HO379 (see Figure 26).



Figure 26. Recommended changes to extent of HO379

It is recommended that the balance of the properties remain in the Heritage Overlay as a Heritage Precinct known as *Wilson Street Precinct* (HO379) with gradings as set out in the table below and illustrated in Figure 27.

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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

Gradings of individual properties within the precinct are recommended as follows and as shown in Figure 27:

No.	Address	Name/alternative address	Grading
64	Garden Street		Contributory
66	Garden Street		Contributory
68	Garden Street		Contributory
26	Surrey Road		Contributory
28	Surrey Road	*Surrey Terrace*	Significant
30	Surrey Road		Significant
32	Surrey Road		Significant
34	Surrey Road		Significant
36	Surrey Road		Significant
38	Surrey Road		Contributory
40	Surrey Road		Contributory

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42	Surrey Road		Contributory
44	Surrey Road		Contributory
46	Surrey Road		Contributory
48	Surrey Road		Contributory
50	Surrey Road		Contributory
57	Surrey Road		Contributory
59	Surrey Road		Contributory
59	Wilson Street		Contributory
61	Wilson Street		Contributory
63	Wilson Street		Contributory
65	Wilson Street		Contributory
66	Wilson Street		Significant
67	Wilson Street		Contributory
68	Wilson Street		Significant
69	Wilson Street		Contributory
70	Wilson Street		Significant
72	Wilson Street		Significant
73	Wilson Street		Contributory
74	Wilson Street		Significant
75	Wilson Street		Contributory
77	Wilson Street		Contributory
79	Wilson Street		Contributory
81	Wilson Street		Contributory
83	Wilson Street		Contributory
85	Wilson Street		Contributory
87	Wilson Street		Contributory
89	Wilson Street		Contributory
91	Wilson Street		Contributory
93	Wilson Street		Contributory
95	Wilson Street		Contributory
97	Wilson Street		Contributory
99	Wilson Street		Contributory



Figure 27. Grading map.

Previous Assessments

City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Gap Study, Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, 2009

References

Argus.

Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd, *City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Gap Study,* 2009.

Context Pty Ltd, *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History*, 2006.

Landata Victoria, Central Plan Office, Historical Aerial Photography, 1945.

Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plan Nos 952 & 982, City of Prahran, 1896.

Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan No 13, City of Prahran, 1895.

Public Record Office Victoria (PROV), Parish and Township plans collection.

Sands and McDougall (S&M) Street Directory, various dates.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.