Heritage Citation – Precinct

Heritage Place: Cambridge Street Precinct
Address: 1-33 Cambridge Street, Armadale

HO Reference: HO125
Citation status: Final
Date Updated: 22 March 2022

Designer: Potentially William Henry Ellerker in association with Victorian Permanent Property Investment and Building Society
Builder: Francis Sims

Year of Construction: 1887-88



Photograph (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Location map and extent of HO125.

Heritage Group: Residential Buildings
Heritage Type: Cottage

Key Theme: Building Suburbs
Key Sub-theme: Middle class suburbs and the suburban ideal

Significance Level: Local

Recommendation: Retain as a local heritage precinct on the HO; include paint controls.

Controls:	■	External paint colours	☐	Internal alterations	☐	Tree controls
	☐	Victorian Heritage Register	☐	Incorporated Plans	☐	Outbuildings and fences exemptions
	☐	Prohibited uses may be permitted	☐	Aboriginal Heritage Place		

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Cambridge Street Precinct, comprising a group of identical cottages on Cambridge Street, Armadale, is locally significant.

All properties are graded contributory to the precinct.

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

- A high degree of intactness arising from the same building date and the absence of modern infill;
- The regularity and harmony of the single-storey, freestanding Victorian era building stock;
- Intactness of individual buildings to their original designs. Dwellings typically survive with their presentation to the street largely unaltered, retaining verandahs, chimneys, window and door openings and timber detailing;
- The uniform front and side setbacks;
- The use of timber and metal lacework and gabled roofscapes with brick chimneys;
- The absence of on-site vehicle accommodation; and
- The consistent low front fence in a timber picket style.

Later alterations and additions to the properties are not significant. *How is it significant?*

The Cambridge Street Precinct is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The Cambridge Street Precinct is historically significant as an 1887 subdivision that was developed simultaneously by the erection of thirty-two identical cottages. It is likely that they were built to a standard design promoted by the Victorian Permanent Property Investment and Building Society. The dwellings form a tangible link to this historical event which resulted in a streetscape with a degree of architectural unity not found elsewhere in the municipality. (Criterion A)

Due to the architectural unity of the dwellings and clearly definable precinct curtilage over one street, the Cambridge Street Precinct is a very good representative example of a group of small, identical Victorian era timber weatherboard cottages. (Criterion D)

The Cambridge Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as one of the most intact and visually cohesive streetscapes in the City of Stonnington from this period of development. The streetscape consists of a fine, well-detailed and cohesive set of identical timber weatherboard dwellings from the Victorian era with matching timber picket fences. They retain a high level of integrity as a group, and display cohesion through form, materials, setbacks and heights. Combined, they create a harmonious and attractive streetscape free of intrusions and modern development. (Criterion E)

HERCON Criteria Assessment

A	*Importance to the course, or pattern of our cultural or natural history*	The Cambridge Street Precinct is historically significant as an 1887 subdivision that was developed simultaneously by the erection of thirty-two identical cottages. It is likely that they were built to a standard design promoted by the Victorian Permanent Property Investment and Building Society. The dwellings form a tangible link to this historical event which resulted in a streetscape with a degree of architectural unity not found elsewhere in the municipality.
B	*Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
C	*Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of our cultural or natural history*	The place does not meet this criterion.
D	*Important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments*	Due to the architectural unity of the dwellings and clearly definable precinct curtilage over one street, the Cambridge Street Precinct is a very good representative example of a group of small, identical Victorian era timber weatherboard cottages.
E	*Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics*	The Cambridge Street Precinct is aesthetically significant as one of the most intact and visually cohesive streetscapes in the City of Stonnington from this period of development. The streetscape consists of a fine, well-detailed and cohesive set of identical timber weatherboard dwellings from the Victorian era with matching timber picket fences. They retain a high level of integrity as a group, and display cohesion through form, materials, setbacks and heights. Combined, they create a harmonious and attractive streetscape free of intrusions and modern development.
F	*Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period*	The place does not meet this criterion.
G	*Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for*	The place does not meet this criterion.

	social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of the continuing and developing cultural traditions	
H	*Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in our history.*	The place does not meet this criterion.

Description

- Physical Analysis

The Cambridge Street Precinct is located in Armadale in the City of Stonnington, due southeast of the Melbourne CBD. The precinct is small and occupies the entirety of Cambridge Street, terminating at Armadale Street to the east and Sutherland Road to the west. The precinct is defined to the north by the rear of the properties bordering Armadale Reserve and to the south by residential properties occupying the same block.

The Cambridge Street Precinct is characterised by residential low-density housing. There are thirty-two properties in the precinct occupying mostly consistent and compact lots. The lots are small in relation to the average lot size in Armadale. The only exceptions are the four corner properties at 1-2 and 31-32 Cambridge Street that are situated on a slightly larger plot, as well as 20-22 and 19-21 which have slightly wider lots stemming from their housing of an open brick sewer easement in the original development of the precinct. The easement was eventually consolidated into the allotments, allowing for a side extension and on-site parking at these properties

The Victorian cottages are single-storey, single-fronted weatherboard clad structures with a low-pitched corrugated iron gable roof. The front façades are typically clad in deep ashlar planks and defined by a raised bullnosed verandah. The façades are characterised by four-panel doors framed by narrow two-panel sidelights and a double hung sash timber Venetian window. The awnings are decorated with ornamented columns and cast-iron lacework and valance. While most properties retain these features, the specific type of columns and lacework differ in design and colour. The gable ends are embellished with mouldings that create a distinct pediment form. The eaves are supported by paired brackets and have circular mouldings in between brackets. At the centre of the gable is a louvred bullseye vent with a semi-circular arched moulding that emphasises the form of the vent. Most houses retain a single polychrome brick corbelled chimney.

The cottages have a consistent setback from the street with a small front yard and verandah delineating the front of the structure. The street boundary is typically defined by a traditional low timber picket and post front fence.

Cambridge Street is a relatively wide street with two-way traffic and parking on both sides of the street. The street has concrete edging and a footpath but lacks a nature strip. The only plantings along the street are small plated squares cut into the road. There are six on each side, spaced equally with a young deciduous tree and underplanted with Lily of the Nile (*agapanthus*)

The residential streetscape of the Cambridge Street Precinct is striking in its consistency of lot sizes, setbacks, form and detailing of the Victorian weatherboard cottages. The front fences are sympathetic although they do occasionally differ in height, design and colour. While there are some visible alterations and additions amongst the cottages, they are considered to be highly intact and significant for their repetition of setting, form and detailing as a group. Restoration of uniform timber picket fences and colour schemes would dramatically enhance this significance. The integrity of the streetscape and contributing houses is high.

- ### Alterations and Additions

While most houses retain their original design, some properties have been slightly modified. Such modifications are noticeable due to the high consistency of the streetscape character. Visible modifications include:

- 6 Cambridge Street: Original chimney has been removed.
- 7 Cambridge Street: Gable reclad with shingles and unsympathetic steel verandah posts installed. The front fence has been removed and it is the only house open to the street. This house has the most modified front façade on the street.
- 9 Cambridge Street: Verandah lacework has been removed.
- 12 Cambridge Street: Original chimney has been removed.
- 13 Cambridge Street: Unsympathetic front brick wall added. Original chimney and gable vent has been removed.
- 16 Cambridge Street: Gable reclad with fibro and weatherboard. The gable detailing including the vent, brackets and moulding has been removed.
- 24 Cambridge Street: Original chimney has been removed.
- 32 Cambridge Street: New verandah awning and lacework has been removed. The chimney has been rendered.

All the properties have extensions at the rear of the main structure in varying sizes. Some properties include a second storey rear extension, some of which are visible from the street; examples include Nos. 2 and 8 Cambridge Street. The cottages all have varying colour schemes, however there is a notable consistency in the use of green on trims and other detailing such as the pediment shaped eaves, bullseye vents, verandah posts and lacework. This may represent part of the original colour scheme of the cottages. Examples of cottages that display this colour are 1, 2, 4, 6, 22, 28 and 31 Cambridge Street. Houses with inconsistent paint schemes to the era and group as a whole include 7, 11, 18 and 25 Cambridge Street.

History

- ### Historical Context

For thousands of years preceding European colonialism, the area now known as ‘Stonnington’ was the traditional home of the Woi wurrung and Boon wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nation. This environment would have provided historical traditional owners with access to pre-contact plains, grassy woodland, and floodplains on the banks of the Yarra River (Birrarung), Gardiners Creek (Kooyong Koot), and Hawksburn Creek (now channelised), in a rolling landscape on the northern shore of Port Phillip Bay. It is important to note that the rich cultural heritage of traditional owners in Stonnington did not end with colonialism—it has a rich presence to this day.

The first land sales in what would become Armadale began in 1854 following the surveying of Glenferrie Road and High Street. The suburb of Armadale was formally included in the City of Prahran and, as is the case with many suburbs in Stonnington and surrounds, it received its name from a lone but notable property. 'Armadale House' was built by one James Munro, son of the first keeper of the Prahran pound. On arriving in Australia from his home in Sutherland, Scotland, Munro would work for Fergusson and Moore—Fergusson being James Fergusson of Kooyong. Munro went on to become Premier of Victoria and, later, Attorney General, before losing it all in the economic crash of the 1890s. Following the turn of the century, many of the original nineteenth-century properties faced demolition and subdivision, encouraging growth in the early twentieth century and the interwar period. While Armadale today enjoys an affluent reputation for its association with the surrounding suburbs of Toorak, Malvern and Kooyong, traces of remnant working class houses can be seen at the small timber workers cottages present in some parts off High Street and near the border with Malvern (Cooper 1924, 268).

- Place History

The four allotments bounded by Dandenong Road, Kooyong Road, High Street and Orrong Road were sold at the Crown land sale of 15 May 1850. Allotment 66 (part of which now forms Cambridge Street) was purchased by one James Jackson. This allotment was subdivided several times, starting with a sale on 15 October 1881, with allotments becoming successively smaller until the tight layout of Cambridge Street was established.

The Certificate of Title Volume 1309 Folio 793 records Francis Edis Beaver as the registered proprietor of Crown Portion 66 in the Parish of Prahran in November 1881. The holding of almost thirty-one acres was subdivided by Beaver into large blocks and progressively sold off over the following two decades. By July 1886, the Victorian Permanent Building Society had acquired a large parcel of land described as Lots 11-14 and 23-26 of in the southern sections of Beaver's subdivision. At the time of the acquisition, no roads or rights of way had been created over the parcel. However, when a one-and-a-half-acre tract was sold to Francis Sims in August 1887, a road running east-west across the lot had been laid out and named 'Oxford or Cambridge Street' on the plan of title.

Francis Henry Sims was born in Bristol, England in 1846, son of Henry Sims and his wife Henrietta. The family emigrated to Australia in 1850. On 19 August 1887, when Sims purchased the Cambridge Street parcel, he was described as a carpenter and contractor of Wangaratta Street, Richmond. On the same day, Sims mortgaged the land to the Victorian Permanent property Investment and Building Society. Beaver died in 1887 but the development and eventual subdivision of the land was continued by his wife Emily and subsequently by their children George, Emily, and Marion.

The thirty-two allotments were all developed simultaneously by the erection in 1887-88 of identical single storey detached timber cottages. The street, known at this stage as Oxford Street, thus achieved a degree of architectural unity not found elsewhere in the municipality. Oxford Street was renamed Cambridge Street in 1892, presumably to avoid confusion with Oxford Street, South Yarra. The cottages were all designed with low pitched gable roofs having a strongly expressed gable end, circular louvred vents and uniform detailing. They largely maintain this consistency to this day.

Sands and McDougall Melbourne Directories first record Cambridge Street in 1888. At that time, most of the extant dwellings had been constructed. Nos. 2-32 on the north side of the street were described as

vacant while 7-27 were vacant on the south side. In the following year most of the cottages were occupied.

No architect for the works has been identified but it is likely that the near-identical dwellings were modelled on a standard design promoted by the Victorian Permanent Property Investment and Building Society. Noted architect William Henry Ellerker had enjoyed a long association with the Building Society after designing its Collins Street headquarters in 1869 and it is likely that he was involved in the preparation of this standard design for use by investors, homeowners and builders subscribing to the institution. The only substantial differences between the individual dwellings derive from the range of cast iron decorative elements used for the street verandahs and slightly larger building footprints to the four corner dwellings. It is likely that Francis Sims, as builder, contractor, and the owner of the site, undertook the project as a speculative development.

The land and cottages subsequently passed to William Alison Blair and eventually to John Gull Johnson who arranged to subdivide the parcel of land into 32 individual residential lots in 1900. The timber cottages were then offered for sale on freehold title. In the period from July 1902 to April 1908, twenty-seven of the thirty-two cottages were sold. Johnson died on 2 February 1909 and the remaining properties were sold by his beneficiaries.

It is of note that an open brick sewer was constructed around the time of the original development. It is shown on the MMBW Plan of 1896 as situated between 19 and 21 Cambridge Street on the north side of the street before passing under the street to emerge between 20 and 22 Cambridge Street. This easement was subsequently used as a right of way before being consolidated into the allotments at 19 and 22 Cambridge Street in 1994. This accounts for the atypical sizes of these two allotments.

Comparative Analysis

There are several notable examples in the City of Stonnington where residential development occurred within a clear stylistic period, for example: HO123 Auburn Grove, Armadale (Victorian); HO179 Inverness Avenue, Armadale (Edwardian); HO133 Gascoigne Estate, East Malvern (Edwardian); and HO355 Caroline Street Precinct (Postwar). The Cambridge Street Precinct is particularly notable, however, as the area comprises housing stock of the same building date and design located within a small and clearly defined precinct.

Comparative examples of Victorian era precincts include:

- **Auburn Grove Precinct, Armadale (HO123)**. The Auburn Grove Precinct consists of Victorian era dwellings and is largely contained to one small and clearly definable area, although with some properties spilling onto High Street and Avondale Road. Similar to Cambridge Street, the precinct is characterised by consistent open setbacks, detached built forms, single-storey construction, and a complete absence of modern infill development or prominent additions and alterations. The precincts differ in their specific Victorian era architectural style, mixture of double and single-fronted facades, consistency in front fences, as well as inconsistency of construction materials (mostly brick and render but with some timber). This precinct was also developed over a number of years as opposed to being constructed at the same time.
- **The Avenue Precinct, Windsor (HO148)**. The Avenue Precinct is a small residential area of freestanding Victorian villas developed through the 1880s (42, 44 and 46 The Avenue) and 1890s

(48-56 The Avenue). Similar to Cambridge Street, the precinct is characterised by consistent open setbacks, detached built forms, single-storey construction (with the exception of 48 The Avenue which is an Edwardian style dwelling), a complete absence of modern infill development or prominent additions and alterations, and traditional fences. The precincts differ in their specific Victorian era architectural style, as well as in consistency of construction materials (mostly brick and render but with some timber). This precinct was also developed over a number of years as opposed to being constructed at the same time.

- **Aberdeen Street Precinct, Prahran (HO121)**. The Aberdeen Street Precinct is a small group of modest worker's houses that were constructed around the same time as each other. Similar to Cambridge Street, the precinct is characterised by consistent open setbacks, detached built forms, single-storey construction, and a complete absence of modern infill development or prominent additions and alterations. Unlike the Cambridge Street Precinct, the houses were constructed in an unplanned manner and thus have varying forms of Victorian era styles building materials.

Although it is not of a Victorian era, the **Inverness Avenue Precinct (HO179)** was built as a group by the same builder in a short period of time, between 1901-03. This has clear historical comparisons with the Cambridge Street Precinct and a somewhat similar streetscape character outcome, noting that HO179 is somewhat less uniform.

Reflecting on the above examples, the Cambridge Street Precinct is one of the most, if not the most, visually and historically cohesive residential streetscape in the City of Stonnington. The precinct is striking in its consistency of the lot sizes, setbacks, form and detailing. While the houses in the study area are not individually significant, as a group they form a precinct of recognisable uniformity and significance.

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.

Street address	*Place type*	*Style/era*	*Grading*
1 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
2 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
3 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
4 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
5 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
6 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
7 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
8 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
9 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C

Street address	Place type	Style/era	Grading
10 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
11 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
12 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
13 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
14 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
15 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
16 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
17 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
18 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
19 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
20 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
21 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
22 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
23 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
24 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
25 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
26 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
27 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
28 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
29 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
31 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C
32 Cambridge Street	Cottage	Victorian Period (1851-1901)	C

References

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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.
3. The historical notes provided for this citation are not considered to be an exhaustive history of the site.

Further Images



View looking north west along Cambridge Street (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



View looking south west along Cambridge Street (Source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Example cottage – 17 Cambridge Street (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).



Example cottage –28 Cambridge Street (source: Extent Heritage Pty Ltd, 2021).

Authors

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