City of
STONNINGTON

Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: Cromwell Crescent and Surrey Road, South Yarra

Name:	Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent 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):**	c1890



Figure 1. 6 Cromwell Crescent, South Yarra



Figure 2. 8 Cromwell Crescent, South Yarra



Figure 3. 10 Cromwell Road, South Yarra



Figure 4. 12 Cromwell Crescent, South Yarra

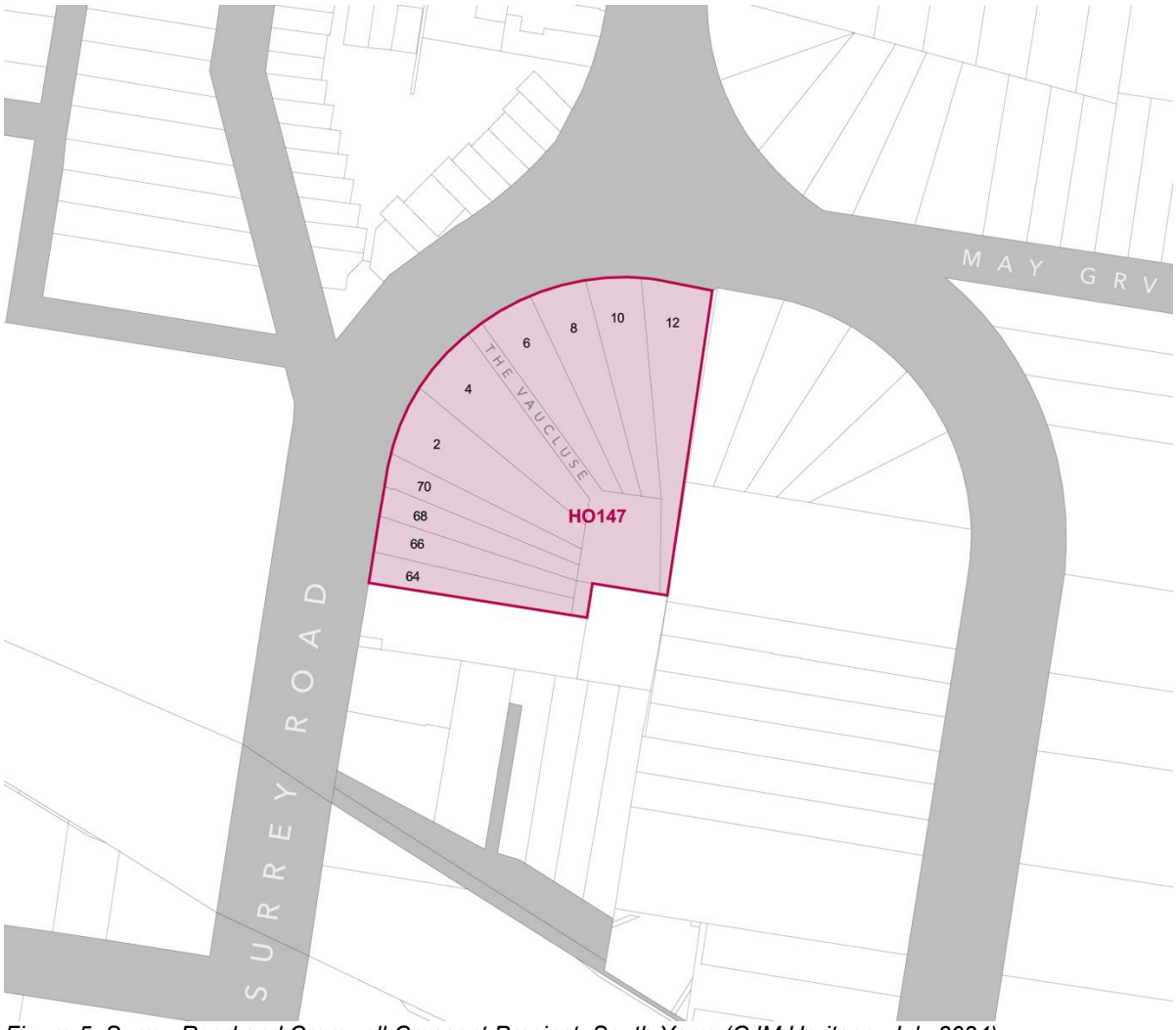


Figure 5. Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, July 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct, a late-Victorian residential precinct containing a collection of Victorian houses constructed in c1890.

The precinct includes:

- Cromwell Crescent (nos. 2-12 even only)
- Surrey Road (nos. 64-70 even only)

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- Single and two-storey predominantly brick houses of the Victorian period
- Polychromatic brickwork (some overpainted)
- Rectangular forms with slate or corrugated sheet metal-clad hipped roofs with bracketed eaves
- Front verandahs with decorative cast iron valences, brackets and balustrading
- Prominent brick chimneys, typically with polychromatic brick detailing
- Timber-framed sash windows, a number in tripartite sets with narrow side windows
- Wedge-shaped lots responding to the curve of the crescent.

Later front fences, rear additions, overpainting of brickwork and concrete tiled roof finishes do not contribute to the significance of the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct, South Yarra, is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and early 1890s, when land was subdivided and sold for middle-class residential development. As a highly intact precinct of houses constructed in the late-nineteenth century, the Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct contains a cohesive collection of fine and substantially intact representative examples of Victorian houses. They display typical characteristics of the period, including polychromatic brick or timber construction, hipped roofs clad in slate or corrugated sheet metal, front verandahs with decorative cast iron valences, brackets and balustrading, and prominent polychromatic brick chimneys (Criterion D).

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct forms a unified group of residences dating to the Victorian period and constructed in a Victorian style. The consistent materials, setbacks and detailing of the buildings creates a cohesive streetscape with a distinctive architectural character. The street design represents an uncommon typology within municipality, and the building forms chosen emphasise the sweeping curve, creating a grouping of strong aesthetic quality (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

- 3.3.3 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 Prahran Conservation Review, prepared by Context Pty Ltd in 1993, with additional information as cited.

The land on which the Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct is located formed part of Lot 34 in the Parish of Prahran (Figure 6). Comprising approximately 52 acres, the lot was offered for sale at the Crown Land sales in June 1849. 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 inaccessible after rains. Beset with drainage problems, the lot attracted a comparatively lower price. It was purchased by the Estate of the late Dr E B Hobson.

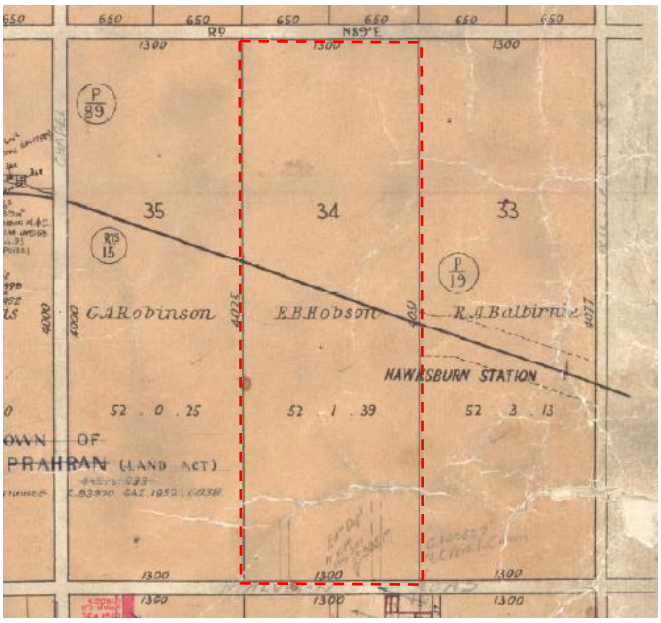


Figure 6. Detail of parish plan, showing Lot 34 (outlined in red); plan dates to c1880 (Source: Public Record Office Victoria)

While Prahran more broadly developed rapidly during the 1850s and 1860s, little attempt was made to develop Hobson's Lot 34. By 1855 the southern sections had been cleared and Kearney's map of the same year showed some subdivision into farming allotments. However, the central section of Lot 34 remained largely vacant. A handful of grander houses, including *Vaucluse House,* had been constructed on the higher ground a distance from the creeks (Figure 7).

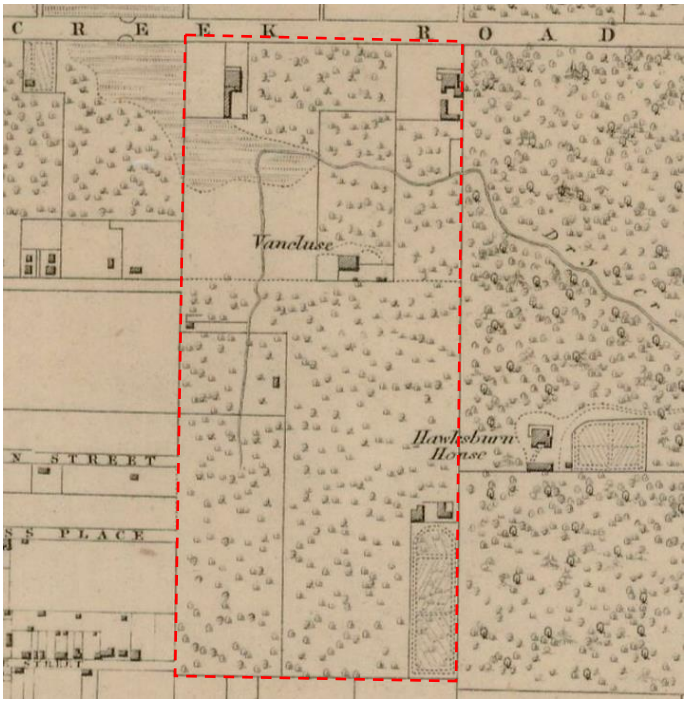


Figure 7. Detail of plan of Melbourne and its suburbs, compiled by James Kearney, 1855. Lot 34 approximately indicated in red (Source: State Library of Victoria)

Improvements to drainage were made in the 1860s, at which time Cromwell and Surrey Roads were laid out and surfaced. The roads extended northwards from Malvern Road, terminating at the southern boundary of *Vaucluse House*. The roads are likely to have followed the routes of earlier bush tracks.

The Dunster Estate, which included land along both Surrey and Cromwell roads extending between Commercial Road and Toorak Road, was first offered for sale in 1871. The subdivision plan shows that

the distinctive curved design of Surrey and Cromwell roads had been laid out by this time and the land on which the precinct is occupied formed Lot 89 of this subdivision (Figure 8). 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).

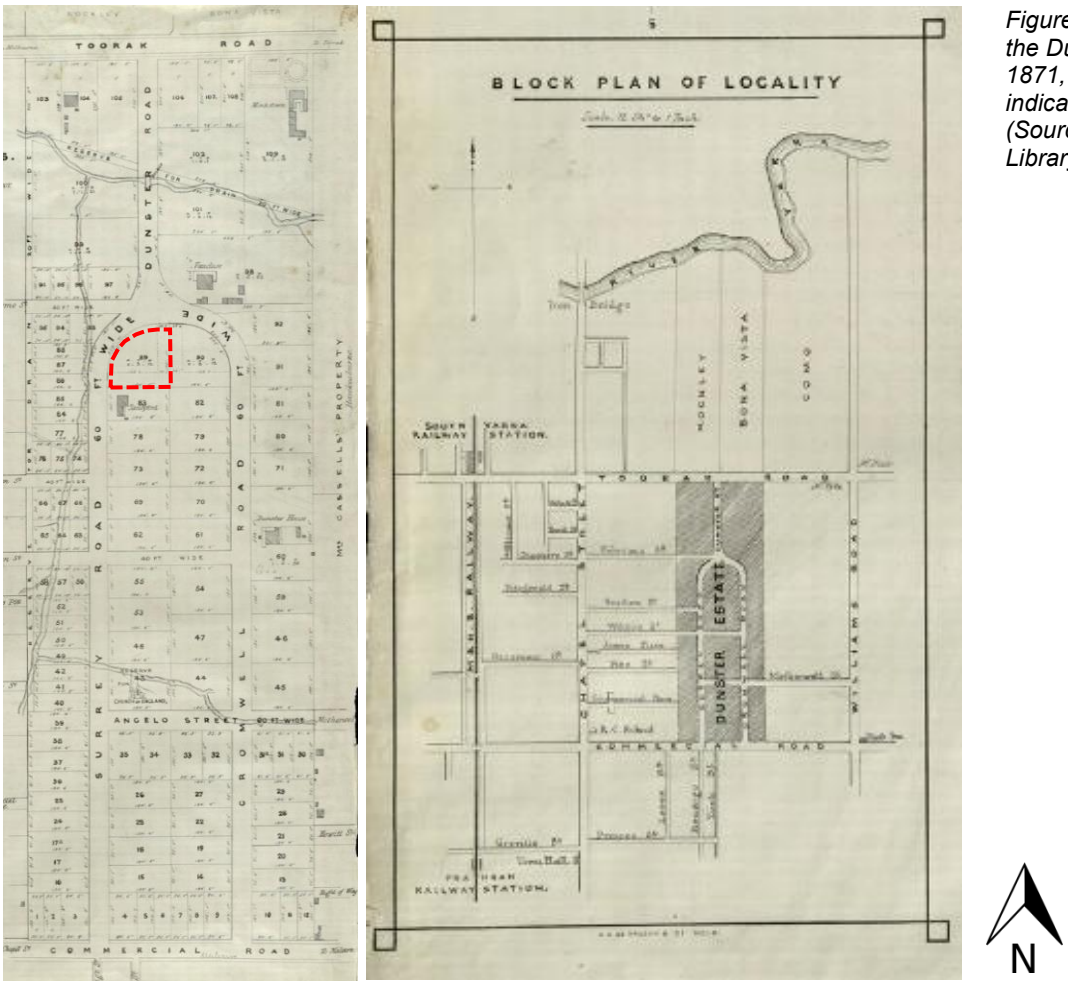


Figure 8. Plan of the Dunster Estate, 1871, Lot 89 indicated in red (Source: State Library of Victoria)

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 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. With the advent of the railway, the construction of St Martin's Church and the Presbyterian Church and the 1880s boom more generally, development of the area commenced in earnest. Large allotments, unsold since their release during the 1870s, were purchased and subdivided.

An 1886 subdivision plan of the Dunster Estate shows that the land on which the precinct is located remained undeveloped at this time (Figure 9). The Prahran Rate Books and Sands and McDougall street directory indicate that the houses had all been constructed by 1890 (S&M; RB 1890). Originally all addressed to Surrey Road, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan (MMBW) Detail Plan shows these houses in 1895 (Figure 10). The footprints of the houses can be seen in a 1945 aerial photograph of the area (Figure 11).



Figure 9. Subdivision plan of the Dunster Estate, 1886; area of precinct indicated (Source: State Library of Victoria)

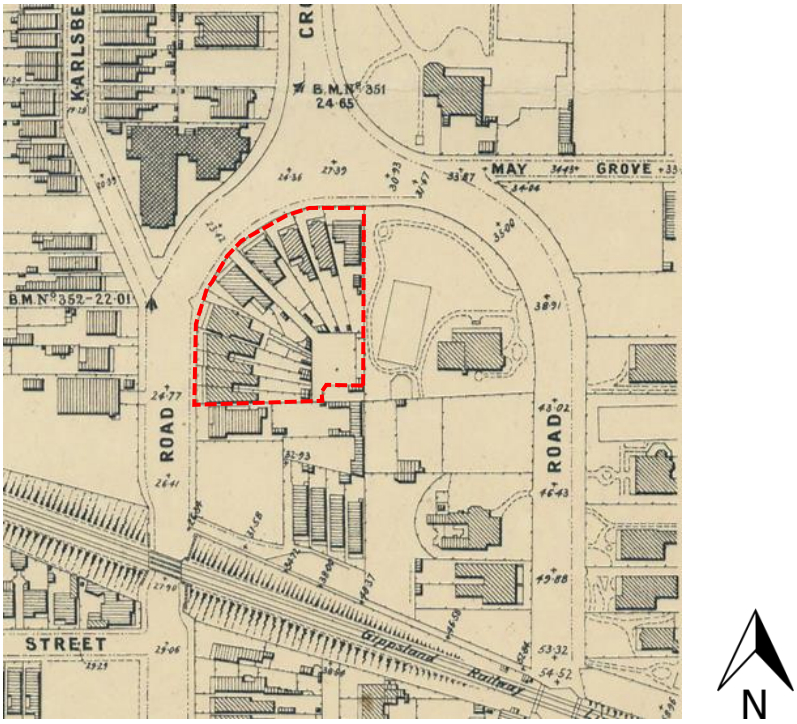


Figure 10. Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan No 37, Portion of Richmond, Hawthorn and Prahran, 1895; area of precinct indicated (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 11. Aerial photograph showing the Cromwell and Surrey Roads Precinct 1945; area of precinct indicated (Source: Landata Victoria)

Description

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct comprises ten (10) adjacent properties on the south-west side of a curved crescent addressed at 2-12 Cromwell Crescent and 64-70 Surrey Road (even numbers only). All houses are located on irregular wedge-shaped sites and have shallow setbacks from the street boundary.

This precinct consists of eight single-storey and two two-storey Victorian houses. Nine of these houses are of brick and polychromatic brick construction (some overpainted), including the two-storey houses, three detached single-storey houses and two pairs of single-storey houses. The remaining property (12 Cromwell Crescent) is of timber construction. Houses are of rectangular form with slate or corrugated sheet metal-clad hipped roofs, bracketed eaves and prominent brick or rendered brick chimneys. They typically have polychromatic brick detailing and front verandahs with decorative cast iron valences and brackets (and balustrading to the two-storey houses). Front sash windows are timber-framed and a number are in tripartite sets with narrow side windows.

Within the precinct, some front elevations have been overpainted or rendered and two roofs have been reclad. Additions are located to the rear of all properties and the front boundaries of all properties are lined with later high fences of various materials.

Key Features:

- Single and two-storey predominantly brick houses of the Victorian period
- Polychromatic brickwork (some overpainted)
- Rectangular forms with slate or corrugated sheet metal-clad hipped roofs with bracketed eaves
- Front verandahs with decorative cast iron valences, brackets and balustrading
- Prominent brick chimneys, typically with polychromatic brick detailing
- Timber-framed sash windows, a number in tripartite sets with narrow side windows
- Wedge-shaped lots responding to the curve of the crescent.



Figure 12. 2 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 13. 4 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 14. 6 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 15. 8 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 16. 10 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 17. 12 Cromwell Crescent



Figure 18. 64 Surrey Road



Figure 19. 66 Surrey Road



Figure 20. 68 Surrey Road



Figure 21. 70 Surrey Road

Intactness and Integrity

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct remains highly intact to its period of construction and retains a high degree of integrity to the Victorian period in fabric, form and detail. While individual residences have undergone some alterations (including overpainting or rendering of brickwork) and rear additions, these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a cohesive precinct of residences dating to the late Victorian period.

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 Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct has strong associations with the development of South Yarra in the boom-years of the 1880s and early 1890s, when land was subdivided and sold for middle-class residential development. As a highly intact precinct of houses constructed in the late-nineteenth century, the Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

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 Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct contains a cohesive collection of fine and substantially intact representative examples of Victorian houses. They display typical characteristics of the period, including polychromatic brick or timber construction, hipped roofs clad in slate or corrugated sheet metal, front verandahs with decorative cast iron valences, brackets and balustrading, and prominent polychromatic brick chimneys (Criterion D).

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

The Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct forms a unified group of residences dating to the Victorian period and constructed in a Victorian style. The consistent materials, setbacks and detailing of the buildings creates a cohesive streetscape with a distinctive architectural character The street design represents an uncommon typology within municipality, and the building forms chosen emphasise the sweeping curve, creating a grouping of strong aesthetic quality (Criterion E).

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

Gradings and Recommendations

8 The Vaucluse, South Yarra is a recently constructed property that is currently partially included within HO147. As this building is on the edge of the precinct and does not fall within the development period of significance for the precinct, it is recommended that it be removed from HO147 (see Figure 22).



Figure 22. Recommended changes to extent of HO147

It is recommended that the balance of the properties remain in the Heritage Overlay as a Heritage Precinct (HO147).

As the precinct captures properties fronting Cromwell Crescent, rather than Cromwell Road, it is recommended that the 'Heritage place name' column within the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay be updated to:

Surrey Road and Cromwell Crescent Precinct
South Yarra

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 23:

No.	Address	Grading
2	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
4	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
6	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
8	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
10	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
12	Cromwell Crescent	Contributory
64	Surrey Road	Contributory
66	Surrey Road	Contributory
68	Surrey Road	Contributory
70	Surrey Road	Contributory

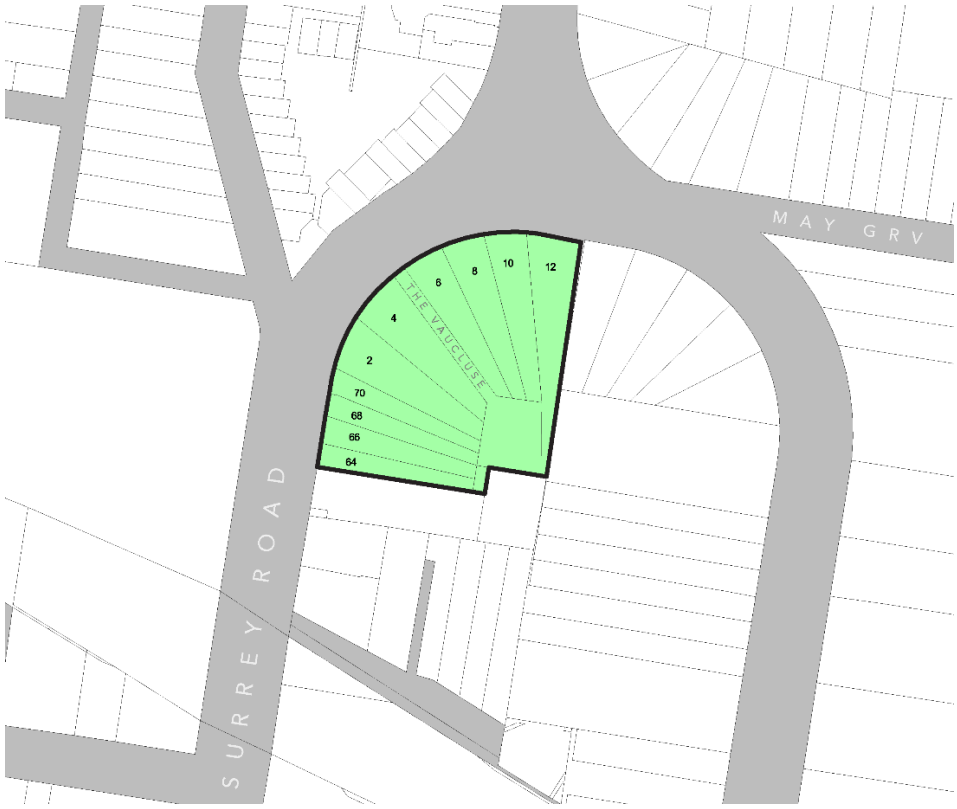


Figure 23. Grading map.

Previous Assessments

Prahran Conservation Review, Context Pty Ltd, 1993.

References

Argus.

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.

Prahran Rate Books (RB), as cited.

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

Sands and McDougall (S&M) Directories, various.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.