City of STONNINGTON

Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct

Prepared by: GJM Heritage (March 2025)

Address: Coolullah Avenue, Quamby Avenue and Williams Road, South Yarra

Name:	Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct	**Review Date:**	June 2024
Place Type:	Residential Precinct	**Architect/Designer:**	Various Marsh & Michaelson (2 Coolullah Avenue) R Vernon Francis (6 Coolullah Avenue) Geoffrey Sommers (11 Coolullah Avenue)
Grading:	See grading table	**Builder:**	Not known
Extent of the Overlay:	See Figure 1	**Construction Date(s):**	1930s



Figure 1. 1 Coolullah Avenue

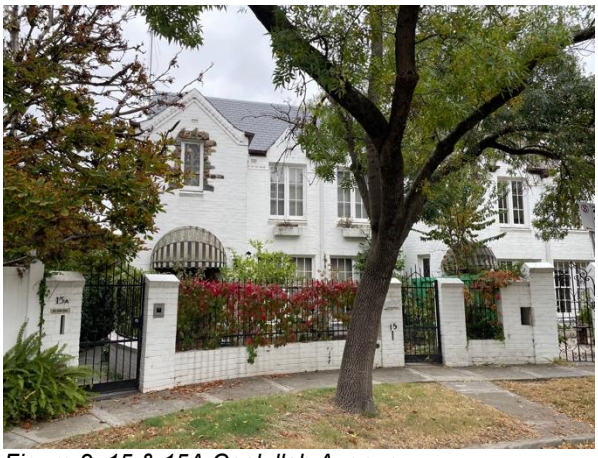


Figure 2. 15 & 15A Coolullah Avenue



Figure 3. 4-6 Quamby Avenue



Figure 4. 255 Williams Road



Figure 5. Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct, South Yarra (GJM Heritage, July 2024)

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct, South Yarra, a residential subdivision containing a collection of flats, maisonettes and houses dating to the 1930s.

The precinct includes:

- Coolullah Avenue (nos. 1/1A-27)
- Quamby Avenue (1, 2-14 even only)
- Williams Road (nos. 249-271 odd only)

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- Generally two-storey brick residential buildings, predominantly blocks of flats and maisonettes/duplexes designed to appear as single dwellings with some large, detached houses
- Predominantly English Domestic Revival and Moderne style dwellings of the interwar period
- Hipped or gabled roof forms with tile or slate cladding
- Predominantly asymmetrical front elevations, some with projecting gable-ended bays
- Variety of face brickwork including red, clinker and cream bricks

City of
STONNINGTON

- Detailing including half timbering, contrasting brickwork and render to walls, decorative recessed and projecting brickwork patterning, stepped gable ends, conical turrets and curved walls and balustrading
- Multi-paned timber-framed sash windows
- Variety of prominent brick chimneys
- Highly consistent setbacks behind landscaped frontages
- Rear or concealed vehicle accommodation
- Low brick front fences at the street boundaries of nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 Quamby Avenue; 1A, 2, 4, 6, 7, 25 and 27 Coolullah Avenue; and 253 and 255 Williams Road, South Yarra.

Later front fences, vehicle accommodation and rear additions do not contribute to the significance of the precinct. The properties at 9 Coolullah Avenue, 72 Oban Street and 1 Quamby Avenue, South Yarra are non-contributory places within the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct, South Yarra, is of local historical, representative and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct has strong associations with the development of the municipality in the interwar period. This period of development transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing the substantial Victorian-era Quamby and Coolullah mansion estates with higher density flat and apartment developments. As a highly intact precinct of residential development of the interwar period, the Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington (Criterion A).

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct contains a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of residential buildings dating to the interwar period. Predominantly constructed in the English Domestic style or the Moderne style, the buildings display typical features of these styles, including the use of face brickwork with tiled or slate-clad hipped or gabled roofs, asymmetrical front elevations, decorative brick detailing, curved walls and balustrading, multi-paned timber-framed windows and prominent brick chimneys (Criterion D).

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct forms a highly unified group of interwar residences constructed in a range of styles prevalent at the time, particularly the English Domestic Revival and Moderne. Despite the variation in architectural detailing, the consistent siting, scale, building forms and materiality – in conjunction with the garden settings and low brick front fences – presents a highly architecturally consistent and aesthetically cohesive streetscape (Criterion E).

Historical Context

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

8 Building suburbs

- 8.1.3 The end of an era – mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

- 8.2 Middle-class suburbs and the suburban ideal

- 8.6.2 Developing apartment living

- 8.6.3 Architect designed apartments

City of
STONNINGTON

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.

Coolullah Avenue and Quamby Avenue were created as part of the subdivision of two Victorian mansion estates fronting Williams Road in the interwar period.

The land on which the Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct is located formed part of Lot 33, a tract of land comprising 52 acres between Gardiner's Creek (now Toorak) Road and Malvern Road immediately to the west of Williams Road. The land was offered for sale at the Crown land sales in June 1849. It was purchased by R A Balbirnie, a wealthy Scottish gentleman, who subdivided much of Lot 33 for resale as 'portions suitable for orchards, vineyards and market gardens' in 1851.

Much of Lot 33 was acquired by James Horatio Nelson Cassell, Collector of Customs for the Victorian Government who built 'Hawksburn House' to the north of the present-day railway line. James Cassell died in 1853, however his wife Martha survived into the 1880s and oversaw the gradual subdivision of their estate. The north-east corner of the lot offered the best land on high ground and was the first to be sold-off. The land further south along the creek had to wait for adequate drainage before subdivision.

A mansion had been constructed by the early 1870s on a 3.75 acre portion of the Cassell Estate, covering present day Quamby Avenue and the northern end of Oban Street (RB; S&M). Owned by Colin Simson, a wealthy Scottish pastoralist, and known as 'St Monans' (after the Simson's birthplace in Scotland), the residence comprised a single-storey 10-roomed brick house with wrap-around verandah, extensive gardens and a tennis court (SHC; RB 1873). The house can be seen in an 1873 photograph (Figure 6). St Monans was sold to Andrew Russell Inglis in 1879, after which it became known as 'Quamby' (RB 1879, Figure 7). Inglis appears to have extended the residence from 10 rooms to 14 rooms in the mid-1880s (RB 1884).



Figure 6. St Monans (later known as Quamby), South Yarra, 1873 (Stonnington History Centre)

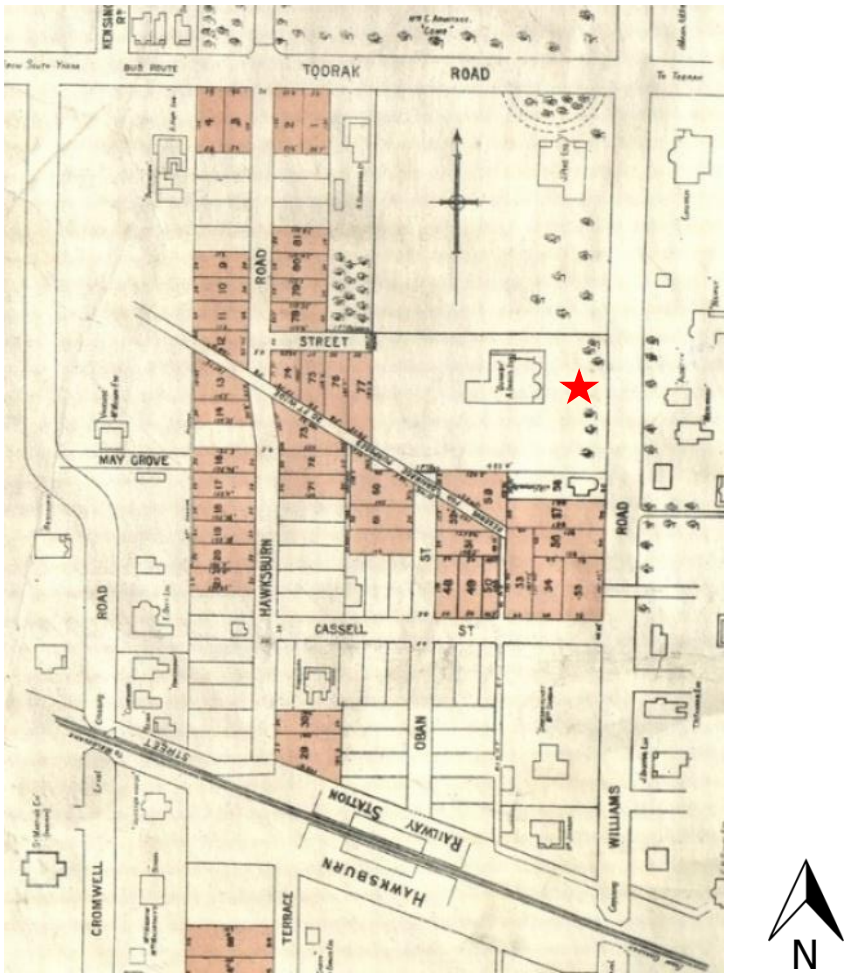


Figure 7. Plan showing the mansion 'Quamby' (indicated by red star), 1886 (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

The mansion known as 'Coolullah' was constructed for solicitor, George Bullen, to the north of 'Quamby', in 1891 (RB 1891). Comprising a two-storey mansion with 20 rooms, it later became the home of prominent Australian businessman, Sir John Grice. Early photographs show it to have been an imposing Victorian Italianate style building with a double-storey loggia and circular carriageway (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Coolullah mansion, Williams Road, c1935 prior to demolition and subdivision (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

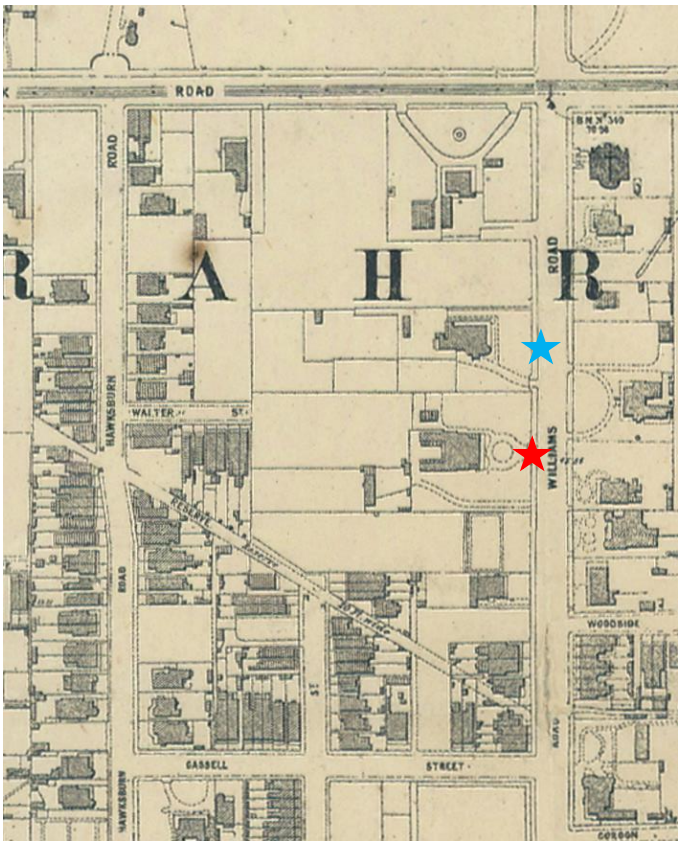


Figure 9. Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan No 13, City of Prahran, 1895 showing the Coolullah (indicated by blue star) and Quamby (indicated by red star) mansions (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Figure 10. Aerial photograph showing the Coolullah (indicated by blue star) and Quamby (indicated by red star) prior to subdivision and demolition, 1931 (Source: Landata Victoria)

Coolullah was advertised for sale in June 1931, at which time it was described as a 'two-storied, 16-roomed brick residence' (*Sun News-Pictorial*, 17 June 1931:21). The residence was passed in at auction. Four years later, in September 1935, Coolullah was sold to Mr Harold E Bastings, formerly an estate agent in South Yarra, who intended to 'demolish the buildings and subdivide the estate' (*Argus*, 16 September 1935:8). The Coolullah Estate subdivision comprised 17 lots with frontages to Williams Road and the newly created Coolullah Avenue 'within two minutes' walk of the Toorak tram and three minutes from the Hawksburn Station' (*Herald*, 4 December 1935:22). The Estate, described as 'practically the last remaining estate for subdivision in South Yarra' was auctioned on 7 December 1935 (*Herald*, 9 December 1935:6). The subdivision and subsequent sale of the Coolullah Estate was lauded as 'one of the most successful subdivisions in Toorak' (*Herald*, 10 February 1937:20).

The Coolullah Avenue roadway was completed by Council in May 1936 and by December that year '*Staunton*' flats had been erected at 1 Coolullah Avenue. Development of flats had begun slightly earlier on Williams Road, with '*Graceville*' Flats (249 Williams Road), and '*Vaughan*' Flats (251 Williams Road), listed in the 1929 Sands and McDougall Directory. Building activity progressed rapidly (see Figure 11); by the end of 1938, flats had been completed, with '*Lynton*' (3-5 Coolullah Avenue), '*Ardroy*' (4 Coolullah Avenue), '*Coolullah*' (6 Coolullah Avenue, Figure 12), '*Ulcombe*' (7 Coolullah Avenue), and 19-23 Coolullah Avenue. In the same year, prominent architectural firm Marsh and Michaelson designed '*Selsdon*; a block of flats at 2 Coolullah Avenue (Figure 13). Substantial villas had also been built at 11 (Figure 14) and 13 Coolullah Avenue, the former to a design by noted architect Geoffrey Sommers. By 1940, additional flats had been constructed on Williams Road, including *'Winston'* (253-5 Williams Road) (S&M 1940). *'Brackenlea'* (267 Williams Road) and *'Avignon'* (269-71 Williams Road) had been constructed by 1942 (S&M 1942).



Figure 11. Looking west towards Coolullah Avenue from Williams Road, 1938? (Source: Stonnington History Centre)

Several of the new residences within the Coolullah Estate were written up in newspapers soon after their construction. This included the combined maisonettes and '*Coolullah*' flats at 6 Coolullah Avenue, designed by architect, R Vernon Francis and described as 'a new type of investment building' (*Argus*, 18 March 1937:14, Figure 12); Marsh and Michaelson's '*Selsdon*' flats at 2 Coolullah Avenue, which were 'planned as sunlit dwellings, and designed to have home comfort and quietness' (*Herald*, 7 September 1938:22, Figure 9); and the home of Mr and Mrs Clive Williams at 11 Coolullah Avenue, whose French farm-inspired residence 'has the charm of the unexpected' (*Herald*, 15 December 1937:17, Figure 14).

In January 1937, following the success of the Coolullah Estate subdivision, the Quamby mansion estate was sold to Mrs R Borlace 'to be demolished and the site subdivided into six allotments (*Argus*, 23 January 1937:18). The avenue was rapidly developed with substantial maisonettes, including '*Myola*' at 12 Quamby Avenue, and '*Quamby*' at 14 Quamby Avenue.

A 1945 aerial photograph of the area (Figure 16) shows the fully developed precinct in the mid-twentieth century. Very little development has occurred since the 1940s.

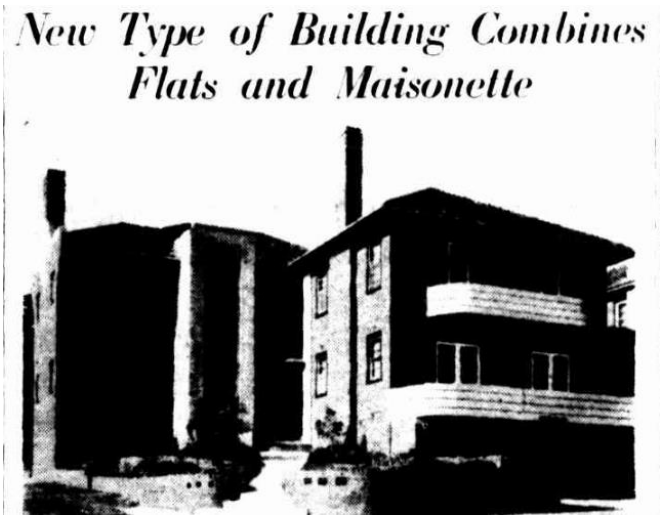


Figure 12. 6 Coolullah Avenue, 1937 (Argus, 18 March 1937:14)



Figure 13. Flats at 2 Coolullah Avenue, 1938 (Herald, 7 September 1938:22)



Figure 14. Home of Mr and Mrs Clive Williams at 11 Coolullah Avenue, 1937 (Herald, 15 December 1937:17)



Figure 15. Flats at 267 Williams Road, 1937 (Herald, 10 February 1937:20)



Figure 16. Aerial photograph showing Coolullah and Quamby subdivision (generally indicated by hatched line), 1945 (Source: Landata Victoria)

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Description

The Coolullah & Quamby Avenues Precinct is located to the south-west of the main intersection of Toorak Road and Williams Road, South Yarra. It comprises a collection of interwar residential buildings situated at the west side of Williams Road and at the cul-de-sacs Coolullah Avenue and Quamby Avenue. Numbers 9 Coolullah Avenue/72 Oban Street and 1 Quamby Avenue are postwar dwellings and are non-contributory to the precinct.

Generally situated on rectangular sites and setback from the street boundary behind front gardens, many of the buildings have side driveways and rear garages, others incorporate garages within the building footprint.

City of
STONNINGTON

This precinct consists of large two-storey residential buildings which are predominantly blocks of flats, and maisonettes/duplexes – designed to appear as single dwellings – along with a small number of large detached houses. Generally constructed in the mid to late 1930s, the buildings are highly consistent in scale and materiality and display a variety of detailing predominantly drawing on the English Domestic Revival or the Moderne styles. Walls are of face brickwork – red, clinker and cream brick (some overpainted), roofs are predominantly hipped or gabled with tile or slate-cladding and the principal elevations are predominantly asymmetrical, typically with projecting gable-ended bays. Detailing includes half-timbering, contrasting brickwork and render to walls, decorative recessed and projecting brickwork patterning, stepped gable ends, conical turrets, curved walls and balustrading, multi-paned timber-framed sash windows and a variety of prominent brick chimneys.

Original or early low brick front fences line the street boundaries at nos. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 Quamby Avenue, 1A, 2, 4, 6, 7, 25 and 27 Coolullah Avenue and 253 and 255 Williams Road.

Key Features:

- Generally two-storey brick residential buildings, predominantly blocks of flats and maisonettes/duplexes designed to appear as single dwellings with some large, detached houses
- Predominantly English Domestic Revival and Moderne style dwellings of the interwar period
- Hipped or gabled roof forms with tile or slate cladding
- Predominantly asymmetrical front elevations, some with projecting gable-ended bays
- Variety of face brickwork including red, clinker and cream bricks
- Detailing including half timbering, contrasting brickwork and render to walls, decorative recessed and projecting brickwork patterning, stepped gable ends, conical turrets and curved walls and balustrading
- Multi-paned timber-framed sash windows
- Variety of prominent brick chimneys
- Highly consistent setbacks behind landscaped frontages
- Rear or concealed vehicle accommodation
- Low brick front fences at the street boundaries.



Figure 17. 1 Coolullah Avenue


Figure 18. 2 Coolullah Avenue



Figure 19. 5 Coolullah Avenue


Figure 20. 6 Coolullah Avenue


Figure 21. 7 Coolullah Avenue


Figure 22. 13 Coolullah Avenue


Figure 23. 15 & 15A Coolullah Avenue


Figure 24. 17 Coolullah Avenue



Figure 25. 25 Coolullah Avenue



Figure 26. 2 Quamby Avenue



Figure 27. 4-6 Quamby Avenue



Figure 28. 8-10 Quamby Avenue



Figure 29. 12 Quamby Avenue



Figure 30. 14 Quamby Avenue



Figure 31. 255 Williams Road



Figure 32. 261-263 Williams Road



Figure 33. 267 Williams Road



Figure 34. 271 Williams Road

Intactness and Integrity

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct remains highly intact to its period of construction and retains a high degree of integrity as an interwar residential subdivision. Individual buildings within the precinct remain highly intact to their period of construction and retain a high degree of integrity to the interwar period in fabric, form and detail. While some residences have undergone some minor alterations (for example, to windows, garages and front fences), these changes do not diminish the ability to understand and appreciate the place as a whole as a finely detailed and cohesive precinct of flats/maisonettes and individual residences dating to the interwar 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 Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct has strong associations with the development of the municipality in the interwar period. This period of development transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing the substantial Victorian-era Quamby and Coolullah mansion estates with higher density flat and apartment developments. As a highly intact precinct of residential

development of the interwar period, the Coolullah and Quamby Avenues 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 Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct contains a cohesive collection of fine and highly intact representative examples of residential buildings dating to the interwar period. Predominantly constructed in the English Domestic style or the Moderne style, the buildings display typical features of these styles, including the use of face brickwork with tiled or slate-clad hipped or gabled roofs, asymmetrical front elevations, decorative brick detailing, curved walls and balustrading, multi-paned timber-framed windows and prominent brick chimneys (Criterion D).

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

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct forms a highly unified group of interwar residences constructed in a range of styles prevalent at the time, particularly the English Domestic Revival and Moderne. Despite the variation in architectural detailing, the consistent siting, scale, building forms and materiality – in conjunction with the garden settings and low brick front fences – presents a highly architecturally consistent and aesthetically cohesive streetscape (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

29 Coolullah Avenue is a post-war block of flats currently included within HO382. As this building is on the edge of the precinct and does not fall within the period of significance for the precinct, it is recommended that it be removed from HO382 (see Figure 35).



Figure 35. Recommended changes to extent of HO382

It is recommended that the balance of the properties remain in the Heritage Overlay as a Heritage Precinct known as *Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct* (HO382) with gradings as set out in the table below and illustrated at Figure 36.

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?*	Yes – original/early low brick fences

City of STONNINGTON

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 36:

No.	Address	Name/alternate address	Grading
1	Coolullah Avenue	*Staunton*	Contributory
1A	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
2	Coolullah Avenue	*Selsdon*	Contributory
4	Coolullah Avenue	*Ardroy*	Contributory
5	Coolullah Avenue	*Lynton*	Contributory
6	Coolullah Avenue	*Coolullah*	Contributory
7	Coolullah Avenue	*Ulcombe*	Contributory
8	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
9	Coolullah Avenue	72 Oban Street	Non-contributory
11	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
13	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
15-17	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
19-21	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
23	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
25	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
27	Coolullah Avenue		Contributory
72	Oban Street	9 Coolullah Avenue	Non-contributory
1	Quamby Avenue		Non-contributory
2	Quamby Avenue		Contributory
4-6	Quamby Avenue		Contributory
8	Quamby Avenue		Contributory
10	Quamby Avenue		Contributory
12	Quamby Avenue	*Myola*	Contributory
14	Quamby Avenue	*Quamby*	Contributory
249	Williams Road	*Graceville*	Contributory
251	Williams Road	*Vaughan*	Contributory
253	Williams Road	*Winston*	Contributory
255	Williams Road		Contributory

257-259	Williams Road		Non-contributory
261	Williams Road		Contributory
263	Williams Road		Contributory
267	Williams Road	*Brackenlea*	Contributory
269-271	Williams Road	*Avignon*	Contributory

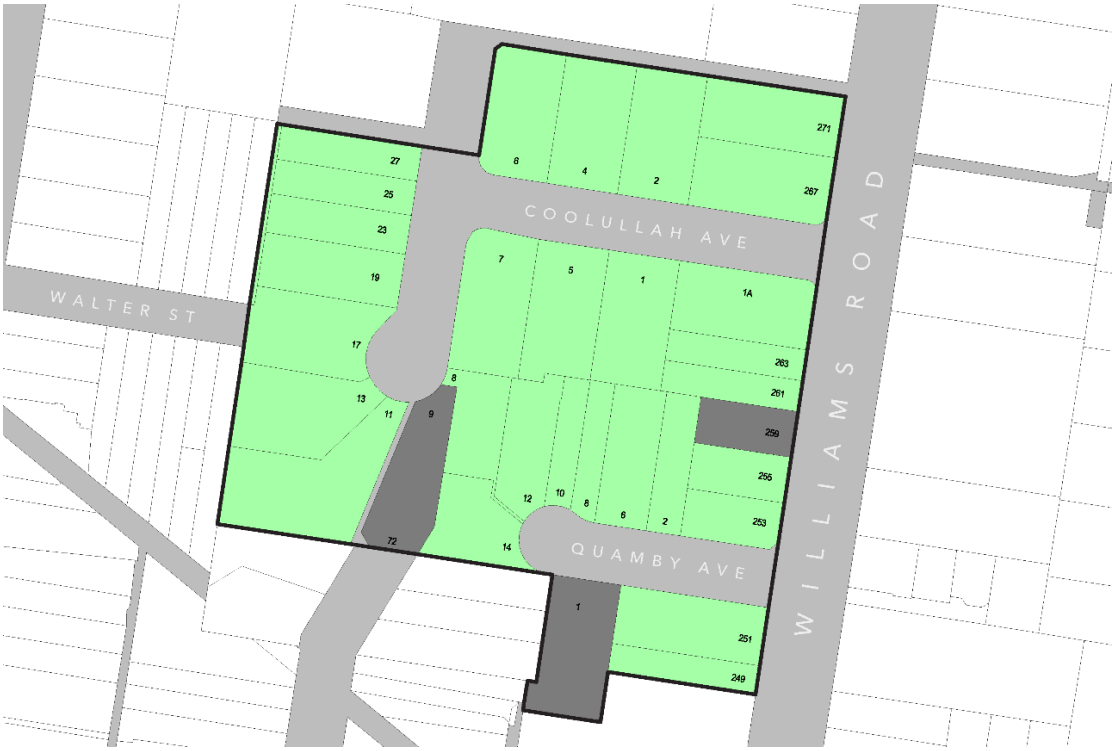


Figure 36. Grading map.

Previous Assessments

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

References

Argus.

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

Herald.

Landata Victoria, Central Plan Office, Historical Aerial Photography, 1931 & 1945.

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

Prahran Rate Books (RB), various dates.

Sands and McDougall (S&M) Street Directory.

State Library of Victoria, map collection.

Stonnington History Centre, picture collection.

Stonnington History Centre, subdivision plans.

Sun News-Pictorial.