

Identification and location

Name of place:

Other Name

Address

Place Identifier

Heritage Significance:

Creation date(s): **Map (Melway)**

Boundary description

Local Government Area:

Ownership Type:

Description

Site Type

Physical Description

This estate extends across Duke St, from Sunshine (City of Brimbank) into Braybrook (City of Maribyrnong). The estate is characterised in plan by the curving street forms, cul-de-sacs and the provision of integrated parkland. The 1945 aerial photograph shows the estate development clearly, with large vacant grassed areas surrounding a regularly and distinctively planned housing group. The aerial view shows the estate commencing on the east at Yewers St and including the relatively large internal park enclosed by Lowe Cr, Nixon and Baker streets. The housing extended south along Correy and Duke Streets and crossed over into Braybrook in an area bordered on the south by Myalla St, on the east by Dobson and part of Ravenhall and on the north by Lily St. Within these loose boundaries is a series of cul-de-sacs or courts which include Treloar, Dobson, Dedrick and Watson.

On the ground, the houses typically are single storey, have hipped or gabled and Marseilles pattern terracotta tiled roofs, red or clinker brick walls, timber framed windows (some replaced with aluminium) and a duplex or paired configuration. There are some concrete houses in the estate but these are mainly in Sunshine and can be distinguished from the Housing Commission of Victoria housing of the 1950s and onwards, which surround the estate, by their detached form, thicker wall construction and smaller windows (eg. 11 Baker St). Related planting includes Italian cypress and privet in gardens and ash street trees while kerb and channel is concrete with grassed

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

medians, some concrete road paving. Concrete road paving is rare in the metropolitan area and is often associated with sustenance labour schemes initiated by local councils.

Contributory streets and sites in the City of Maribyrnong include (using City base plan house numbers- see following plan):

Myalla St, 1-27 duplexes (HCV concrete 36-32)

Duke St east side 70 -124 (contributory houses 74-76, 78-80, 82-4)

Dobson Crt 1-25;

Ravenhall St. 2-18 no concrete road

Lily St south side 67-57 (HCV nearby);

Devonshire Rd 140-148, 155, 157;

Treloar Crescent & Crt. 1-29, 2-46 (1-6 all duplexes), concrete road

Dedrick Gr. 1-19, all duplexes concrete road (10 is new two storey dual occupancy); and

Watson Gr. 1-5- west side only, east is reserve, concrete road.

The Sunshine section of the estate has a higher integrity and is generally in better condition. The internal park and mature street trees lend more diversity to representation of the development period and a higher amenity but it is likely that these were developed over a number of years. There are more concrete houses than in the Braybrook section.

The following description comes from the City of Brimbank heritage study:

`...an estate of concrete houses and brick semi-detached houses built by the Commonwealth to house munitions workers, a total of 234 houses. The development extends across Duke Street with a substantial number of houses in Braybrook, now the City of Maribyrnong (58%). The Brimbank precinct (98 houses) comprises houses in Baker Street, Nixon Street, Yewers Street, Cobrey Street, Duke Street, Devonshire Road and around Lowe Crescent. A characteristic of the area is the concrete roads and the curving Lowe Crescent on a small irregular shaped square with landscaping of contemporary date and also later periods. The houses themselves are generally hipped roof with overhanging eaves. The Nixon Street, Baker Street, Yewers Street and Lowe Crescent houses are concrete-walled, while the others are generally red brick, with a series of long duplexes in Duke Street and Cobrey Street. The larger part of this same development occurs across Duke Street in the City of Maribyrnong' {COB}.

Condition

good (partially disturbed, well preserved) - retaining much of the original character of the area due to the retention of original fence, concrete roads and planting.

Integrity

substantially intact/some intrusions

Context

The estate is surrounded by largely post WW2 housing both private and government.

Threats:

Given the high homogeneity of the group, minor external changes have a large impact, including erection of carports and new fences. Potential road maintenance which does not relate to the existing concrete construction.

History

The concentration of war-related industries in the Footscray-Maribyrnong -Sunshine area during the Second World War led to a pressing need for suitable local housing. In 1941 the Minister for Labour and National Service, Harold Holt, acknowledged the problems experienced by many munitions workers who had to travel long distances to their work and recommended that the Government purchase land in the area to build 'up to 1,000 low-cost houses' to rent to munitions workers . The Federal Government initiated a Munition Workers' Housing Scheme and compulsorily acquired land in the Sunshine-Braybrook area. A total of 235 houses were constructed. While some of these houses are now located within the City of Brimbank, a large proportion are in the City of Maribyrnong, bounded by Duke, Lily, Darnley and Myalla Streets. Some houses were detached and others were built in maisonette style. There was a mixture of brick and concrete housing on the estate. The houses were rented to munitions workers during the war, but were made available for purchase sometime after the war had ended . There is some evidence, also, that at least four brick houses in Cordite Avenue Maribyrnong were built at the time of the establishment of the Cordite Factory for use by employees { Barnard, 2000 }.

The 1945 aerial photograph shows the finished estate development, with large vacant grassed areas surrounding a regularly and distinctively planned housing group.

The following history comes from the City of Brimbank heritage study:

These houses were built in 1942 by the Commonwealth Government, to house workers employed in the munitions industry in the Maribyrnong-Footscray area, the largest concentration of defence production establishments in the whole of Australia. The munitions industry had been established in the Footscray-Maribyrnong area from the late nineteenth century with the Colonial Ammunition Factory. It expanded following Federation, and during significant periods such as the two World Wars. By the 1940s there were several thousand workers employed in the Ammunition, Explosives and Ordnance Factories, and other related industries. Particularly during World War Two, the need for mobilising a vast civil workforce, concentrated in a small area, put extra pressures on local services, and particularly housing. In an attempt to deal with this, the Commonwealth Government purchased land just outside of Footscray for housing for munitions workers. Altogether 235 houses were constructed, of which 42% (or 98 houses) are on the Brimbank side of Duke Street. The design of the estate was in part

contributed to by Melbourne University architecture students. On 30 April 1941 Harold Holt, then Minister for Labour and National Service, wrote a Cabinet memorandum referring to the issue of housing for munition workers and urged consideration of the problem by the full cabinet. He reported that the establishment of new munitions factories and the extension of existing establishments had resulted in an abnormal influx of workers into certain areas. This influx had brought in its train serious problems in connection with housing, transport and essential services to meet the needs of the growing army of munition workers (NAA, MP180/2/0, CM/4). He pointed out that there were difficulties at Footscray, which needed to be faced, 'without delay'. The housing problem there was causing 'much dissatisfaction' and a large proportion of the 18,000 workers at the Government munition factories in the vicinity were travelling considerable distances to their work. He tabled a report which pointed out that one of the first provisions made by the United States in launching its armaments program was the erection of suitable accommodation for munitions workers in expanding armaments industries. The United States experience in the previous war had shown that poor housing reduced the output of major munition plants and its government was therefore allocating \$60 million for defence housing in World War Two. In Australia the same foresight had not been shown. One of the recommendations in the report tabled by Mr Holt was that consideration be given to a scheme to provide funds, 'if necessary out of Defence moneys', for acquiring land and building 'up to 1,000 low-cost houses in the Footscray-Braybrook-Sunshine-Essendon area for letting to munitions workers, the houses to be controlled by the Department of the Interior and the actual work carried out under the direction of the Victorian Housing Commission or the War Service Homes Commission or both'. The report stressed that it seemed essential that 'early action should be taken to improve the housing position in the Footscray area' and suggested that 'immediate steps might be taken to erect, as a first instalment, 300 cottages'. It noted that the Footscray-Maribyrnong area was highly industrialised and included some of Australia's largest munition factories'. It saw the Footscray, Braybrook, Sunshine and Essendon area as a safe building investment and commented that: 'These homes are urgently required but ... it is not likely they will be erected without assistance from the Government'. The report noted that there was 'any amount of suitable building land in Footscray, Braybrook, Sunshine and Essendon'. Within five months of Holt's memo to Cabinet, the Commonwealth Government was acquiring land for their Munitions Workers Housing Scheme by compulsory acquisition, in the Sunshine-Braybrook area. One of the blocks they acquired was an area of 18 acres 3 roods 23 perches, within Section 18, Parish of Cut Paw Paw, purchased from I.G.Heap and K.G.Hooper (NAA MP268/1/0, CL 15837, Commonwealth of Australia Gazette, No.197, 2 October 1941) This was within the present City of Brimbank, and was the area bounded by Monash Street, Cobrey Street, Duke Street, and Devonshire Road, and extending just beyond Yewers Street. The precinct includes Nixon Street, Yewers Street, Baker Street and Lowe Crescent, concrete roads which were constructed as part of the estate and which encircle a small recreation reserve. (Melway 41 A1) The total unimproved value of the

land was £10, 600. 19 shillings and this appears to have been the amount paid by the Commonwealth to the owners.

Another portion of the War Worker Housing area developed by the Commonwealth was on the east side of Duke Street, bounded by Duke, Lily, Darnley and Myalla Streets, at the top end of Devonshire Road. This section of the estate is outside the boundaries of the City of Brimbank, but was once within the City of Sunshine. It is the largest part of the total scheme. The War Workers Housing Scheme estate appears to have survived virtually intact, with only two houses demolished and replaced by modern dwellings. A number of the houses are brick, most of them semi-detached residences or 'maisonettes', quite different in design from anything else in the municipality. The design of the houses in pairs, was probably a cost-cutting measure, since the dividing wall extends only to the ceiling and not the roof. The brick houses are mainly on the western side of Duke Street, the eastern side of Cobrey Street and a section of the south side of Devonshire Road.

Most of the remaining houses are concrete, detached residences, especially in Yewers Street, Lowe Crescent, Baker Street and Nixon Street. All the houses have tiled roofs. It appears that a total of 97 houses are remaining out of the original 98).

The houses are as follows:- 47-77 Duke Street, west side (16 houses) - brick 2-22 Cobrey Street, east side (11 houses) - brick 112-138 Devonshire Road, south side (14 houses) - some brick, some concrete 2-32 Nixon Street, south side (16 houses) - some brick, some concrete 1-27 Lowe Crescent, north side (14 houses) - some concrete, some brick 2-16 Yewers Street, east side (8 houses) - concrete 1-7, 11-15 Yewers Street, west side (7 houses) - concrete 1-15 Baker Street west side (8 houses) - concrete 14-16 Baker Street (2 houses) - concrete 10 Monash Street (1 house) - brick

Don Webster, a Sunshine resident and a member of the Sunshine & District Historical Society, has recalled coming to Sunshine and living in one of these houses. He refers to them in a 'Memories' section of the Sunshine Primary School history:- During 1942/43 a housing estate of 250 houses was established in East Sunshine to house the families of people involved in the defence industry. I was one of these children, transferring from Ararat to commence Grade 5 in Sunshine at the start of the 1943 school year.

A photograph of the houses appears in the book, 'Sunshine Cavalcade', published in 1951. The caption reads: 'A sample of the 235 Commonwealth Government Houses constructed in the Devonshire Road Estate'. Don Webster has recalled that the design of the houses on the estate was the work of architecture students at the University of Melbourne. One of these, Bruce Robinson, son of H.E. Robinson, the Shire Engineer, later became an architect. The small reserve at the centre of the estate (adjoining Lowe Crescent) was an important recreational resource for the children of the estate and also the venue for end-of-the year picnics and social gatherings. The houses were let to the munition workers, at a weekly rate of 27/6d for a three-bed-roomed house and 25/- for a two bed-roomed house. The houses were not available for purchase until some time after the end of World War Two. The original sub-division of the area from Duke Street and Devonshire Road to Hampshire Road and Ballarat Road goes back to a far earlier period,

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

the early 1850s, when a group of developers bought two square miles of land (Sections 18 and 19) in the Parish of Cut Paw Paw and subdivided it into small allotments, naming the roads after English counties' {COB}.

Thematic context

Australian Principal Theme:

PAHT Subtheme: Local Theme(s):

Cultural Significance

Munition Workers' Housing precinct is significant to Victoria because:

- it is part of a Federal Government-initiated housing scheme for workers in the munitions industry in the Maribyrnong-Footscray area, then the largest concentration of defence production establishments in Australia, when World War Two began, as exemplified by the high integrity of the estate with its uniformity of house design, siting, lot layout, early landscape and concrete road construction (Criterion A4, B2) .
- it was among the first major Commonwealth war housing schemes to be undertaken and was one of the few large-scale housing schemes undertaken in Victoria during World War Two (Criterion B2); and
- it is a good exemplar of contemporary mass house planning and estate layout principles, as indicated by the provision of parklands, curvilinear street patterns, street trees and cul-de-sacs (Criterion F1).

Comparative Examples:

Munition Worker Housing is confined to limited number of on-site housing at the various munitions complexes and does not take this estate form. The Housing Commission of Victoria (HCV) Estate housing around this estate is typically set on grid block layouts, with some exceptions, and can be compared with many estates in Broadmeadows and Ashburton. The closest comparison in the Western Region is the HCV estates in Newport South and West Williamstown which have curving streets facing onto parklands, with duplex construction. There is also Garden City which is on the State register but this has different historical associations.

The distinctive layout of the estate can also be compared with grid-form private estates as a continuation of typical speculative residential planning and its desire to obtain an efficient yield from the land. In the 1920s, the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission tried to influence the form of private and public residential estates by promoting the curved street forms and cul-development-sac planning seen in this estate.

Recommendations

Heritage Victoria Register:

Register of the National Estate:

National Trust Register:

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

Other Heritage Listings:

Planning Scheme Protection:

External Paint Controls Apply?:

Internal Alteration Controls Apply?:

Tree Controls Apply?:

Included on the Victorian Heritage Register under the Act:

Are there Outbuildings or Fences not Exempt?:

Prohibited Uses may be Permitted?:

Recommendations:

The following objectives have been drawn from the Statement of Significance where contributory places or elements are generally those which derive from the Second War era (c1939-45) and include:

- detached and duplex brick and concrete houses, with common front and side setbacks and originally fronted with wire fabric or hedges;
- regular block sizes, as shown in LP69426;
- surviving early garden trees (Italian cypress);
- the provision of parks, street trees (ash), curving street forms and cul-de-sac planning;
- garaging set at the back of the block accessed by side drives; and
- concrete footpaths, roadways, kerb and channelling.

It is recommended:

- to conserve and enhance the contributory elements in the precinct and individually significant places, as an expression of war time housing in the City, where elements include buildings, objects, street trees, private landscape specimens (Italian cypress), land and street works, and where enhancement would include reinstatement of missing original elements;
- to conserve and enhance the visual relationship between contributory elements in the precinct;
- to conserve and enhance the public view of these contributory elements;
- to conserve and enhance the amenity of the precinct to aid in its heritage conservation;
- to ensure that new planting, works or elements within the precinct are visually recessive and related to the precinct's contributory elements in landscape character, roof and plan form, external materials, front and side setbacks from property boundaries, and building bulk as viewed from the street;
- to maintain and promote the link with the precinct's munition worker wartime history by ongoing oral and record research and publication of the findings; and
- that Council, in collaboration with the City of Brimbank, investigate preparation of an

Historic Places - Non-industrial places in former City of Sunshine (Maribyrnong, Maidstone, Braybrook and Tottenham)

incorporated plan for the precinct which will embody the above objectives and provide exemptions form planning applications based on an agreed performance standard of conservation measures.

Australian Heritage Commission Criteria

A4 Importance for their association with events, developments or cultural phases which have had a significant role in the human occupation and evolution of the nation, state, region or community.

it is part of a Federal Government-initiated housing scheme for workers in the munitions industry in the Maribyrnong-Footscray area when World War Two began, as exemplified by the high integrity of the estate with its uniformity of house design, siting, lot layout, early landscape and concrete road construction

B2 Importance in demonstrating a distinctive way of life, custom, process, land-use, function or design no longer practiced, in danger of being lost, or of exceptional interest.

it is part of a Federal Government-initiated housing scheme for workers in the munitions industry in the Maribyrnong-Footscray area, then the largest concentration of defence production establishments in Australia, when World War Two began, as exemplified by the high integrity of the estate with it uniformity of house design, siting, lot layout, early landscape and concrete road construction; it was among the first major Commonwealth war housing schemes to be undertaken and was one of the few large-scale housing schemes undertaken in Victoria during World War Two

F1 Importance for their technical, creative, design or artistic excellence, innovation or achievement.

it is a good exemplar of contemporary mass house planning and estate layout principles, as indicated by the provision of parklands, curvilinear street patterns and cul-de-sacs

historical significance architectural significance social significance scientific significance

Documentation

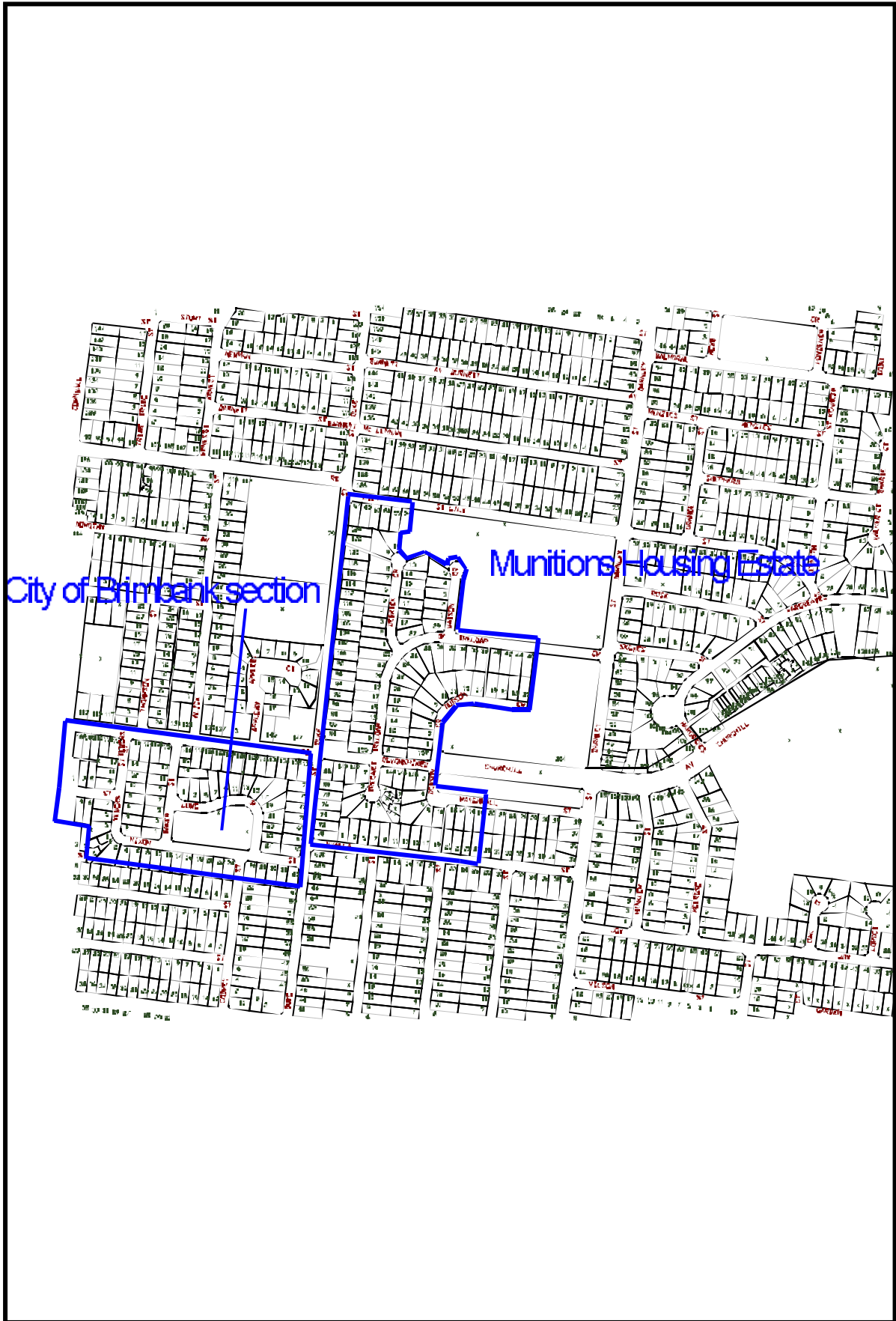
References

Landinfo Aerial photograph 1945;
Ford, Olwen and Vines, Gary, Melbourne's Living Museum of the West, in association with Graeme Butler and Francine Gilfedder, 1997. City of Brimbank, Draft Post-Contact Cultural Heritage (COB) cites:
- Lodged Plan 69426 Australian Archives (Defence Department,)
- Sands & McDougall Melbourne Directories 1939,1946, 1948
- National Archives of Australia, NAA, MP180/2/0, Cm/4; MP268/1/0, CL 15837
- `Sunshine Advocate', 18 November 1949 (reference to purchase of homes by residents)
- Pauline Ashton & Joan Murray (eds.) 1991, `History of School 3113 Sunshine'. Melbourne.
- C.G.Carlton (ed.), 1951. `Sunshine Cavalcade', Melbourne: 36.
- Don Webster, 1997. personal comment;
Barnard, 2000. Environmental History (Project 1, Vol 2 of this report)

Data recording

Assessed By:

Assessed Date:



Munition Housing precinct