
Aberdeen Street Urban Conservation Area [Area 11.4]

Extent

The Aberdeen Street Urban Conservation Area comprises a small group of buildings at the eastern end of Aberdeen Street and extending along both sides of the street.

History

Development in the Aberdeen Street area, a small street off the east side of Williams Road, began as early as 1855. Although much of the precinct bounded by Commercial (now Malvern) Road, Orrong Road, High Street and Williams Road, remained as wooded, undeveloped land, an area in the south-west corner close to Williams Road and High Street, already displayed a pattern of narrow streets with small allotments and some housing in the 1850s. Aberdeen Street was one of those narrow early streets.¹⁷⁵

By the 1890s, this early development had increased rapidly, as the pattern of narrow streets and small detached houses in the south-east corner of the precinct spread north to Spring Road. Groups of weatherboard houses without front gardens line both sides of the eastern end of Aberdeen Street in an 1895 MMBW drainage plan of the area. At a later date, Rinoldi's Spaghetti Factory, founded in 1894 and located at first off Williams Road, was moved to Aberdeen Street. In 1955, it was the largest macaroni manufacturer in Australia.¹⁷⁶

The Aberdeen Street area remains today as a cul-de-sac with a small group of unusual and elaborately detailed single-storey weatherboard houses without front gardens at the eastern end. They illustrate the early history of this area as a place where Prahran's artisans lived with their families.

Description

This small group of houses may be unique within the City of Prahran. On the north side of the street are four small brick houses - two double fronted and two single fronted, each in the form of a terrace with a single brick fire wall, but detached. Several have timber side and rear walls. Their original brickwork comprising red and cream bricks, has been painted in three of the four examples although the bi-chromatic brickwork in the chimneys remains exposed.

On the south side of the street are a series of timber houses each with a small gable in the verandah over the entry. No. 80 has a typical Victorian parapet, but in timber rather than the typical brick rendered construction.

At the eastern end are two houses with only part of their frontage exposed to the street. On the south side no. 82 faces the side wall of its neighbour, while on the north side that house faces west with only half its facade visible from the street.

This form of intense and somewhat unplanned urban development is now rare within the metropolitan area, most of the densely settled precincts having been cleared by

175. James Kearney, *Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs*, 1855.

176. S. Wilde, *The History of Prahran. 1925-1990*, 1993.

the Housing Commission after the Second World War as part of their 'slum clearance programme'.

This group of houses are set on the front property line with the balustrading on their verandahs forms their 'front fences'. The eastern end of Aberdeen Street is narrower than the remainder of the street, suggesting the housing relates to the subdivision of a single allotment.

The street remains in an early form with asphalt footpath, bluestone kerb and guttering on the southern side. On the north this has been replaced with concrete.

Analysis

This area comprises a grouping of buildings of very special form and content. Its history should be researched, particularly in relation to property ownership, subdivision, builders and owners/occupiers.

Heritage characteristics

The key heritage characteristics of the Aberdeen Street Urban Conservation Area are:

- the form and scale of development, comprising a nineteenth century precinct of an unusually dense and 'unplanned' character set on the property boundary without front gardens.
- the retention of traditional street materials on the south side of the street.

Significance

The Aberdeen Street Urban Conservation Area has significance as a rare type of nineteenth century precinct, illustrating the density and unplanned character once common in the inner city areas of Melbourne but substantially removed in the 1960s and 70s through the slum clearance programs of the Housing Commission.

Sources

Kearney, James, *Map of Melbourne and its Suburbs*, 1855.

Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, p.42.

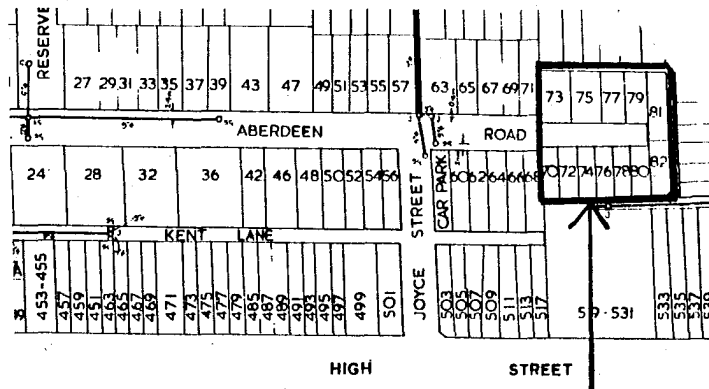
Wilde, S. *The History of Prahran 1925-1990*, 1993.

Recommendations




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited.
2. Undertake further research into the Area to more clearly define its level of significance, and if warranted nominate the Area to the Register of the National Estate.

Map

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Legend

-  Recommended UC1 Area
-  Remove from UC1 Area proposed in Amendment L24
-  Possible future extension

NOTE: Where UC1 Area proposed in Am. L24 coincides with the Recommended UC1 Area, only the latter is shown.