
Cunningham Street Urban Conservation Area [Area 6.3]

Extent

The Cunningham Street Urban Conservation Area extends from Palermo Street, adjacent to the railway line, northwards along Cunningham Street crossing Oxford Street but not extending as far as Toorak Road. It includes both sides of Cunningham Street, parts of Palermo Street and parts of Oxford Street.

History

The earliest development in the area bounded by Toorak Road, Williams Road, Malvern Road and Chapel Street, was along the east side of Chapel Street. The Independent Chapel on the corner of Chapel Street and Malvern Road gave the first street its name. By the middle 1850s, two small streets, Garden and Wilson, had been formed already running off Chapel Street. Their names appeared on Kearney's 1855 map. Two other small streets off Chapel Street near Toorak Road, Oxford and Palermo Streets, although not named, with associated modest housing, appeared on this map.⁹³

Subdivision of the Palermo and Tivoli Estates in 1882 included allotments in Cunningham and Oxford Streets. Many are shown as already sold on the Estate's auction plan.⁹⁴

The north-west corner of the block in the vicinity of Chapel Street and Toorak Road became an area of intense development by the 1890s. Detached houses and row houses were shown on an 1895 MMBW drainage plan, particularly along the north-south Cunningham Street and along the cross-streets, Oxford and Palermo. There was a long row of terrace housing indicated on the north side of Palermo Street west of Cunningham Street. The allotments in this area were more generous than those further south along the many cross-streets off Chapel Street near Malvern Road. A strong concentration of rows of tiny houses on tiny allotments typified this area.⁹⁵

Today, the Cunningham Street Area retains some of its early Victorian terrace development as well as examples of modest and substantially intact Victorian workers' housing. The historical importance of this Victorian housing is increased by the disappearance of much of the nineteenth century housing in areas to the south. The once intense concentration of such housing in the Chapel Street area near Malvern Road, for example, was consumed by the Housing Commission Estate development in the 1960s.

Description

This area, set between Toorak Road and the railway line contains workers' housing dating from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. There are several extensive terraces within the area notably that on Palermo Street backing onto the railway line, three terraces opposite in Palermo Street and other terraces and pairs in Cunningham

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

94. South Yarra 51 Splendid Building Allotments, Dec. 1882, Vale Plans, Vol. II.

95. MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

Street. There are also detached timber cottages within this streetscape. The area contains some interesting and unusual terrace house types. However, most houses are representative and typical of the period rather than outstanding examples.

The street retains its traditional materials, that is asphalt and bluestone but traffic management measures have created large kerb outstands and a small grassy park on the corner of Cunningham and Palermo Streets. The street plantings are mixed and lack the substantial character to add to the streetscape. They include some large Melaleucas and smaller Prunus probably dating from post-war plantings.

Heritage characteristics

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

- the nineteenth century artisan housing, especially terrace house forms
- the evidence of early street development provided by Palermo Street, and continuing use of asphalt and bluestone as street construction materials
- the consistent form and scale of the buildings.

Analysis

The extent of the area is supported but could be further extended particularly along the southern side of Palermo Street to include the paired Edwardian houses in that locality. Time does not permit careful examination of the other boundaries, however this would be worthwhile in future as it appears likely that this area is under considerable pressure.

Significance

The Cunningham Street Urban Conservation Area has significance as a coherent nineteenth century workers' housing area, with early and later terraces, and other forms of modest housing. It represents an important aspect of Prahran's development, of increased significance due to the loss of other areas once also containing typical nineteenth century housing.

Sources

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

MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

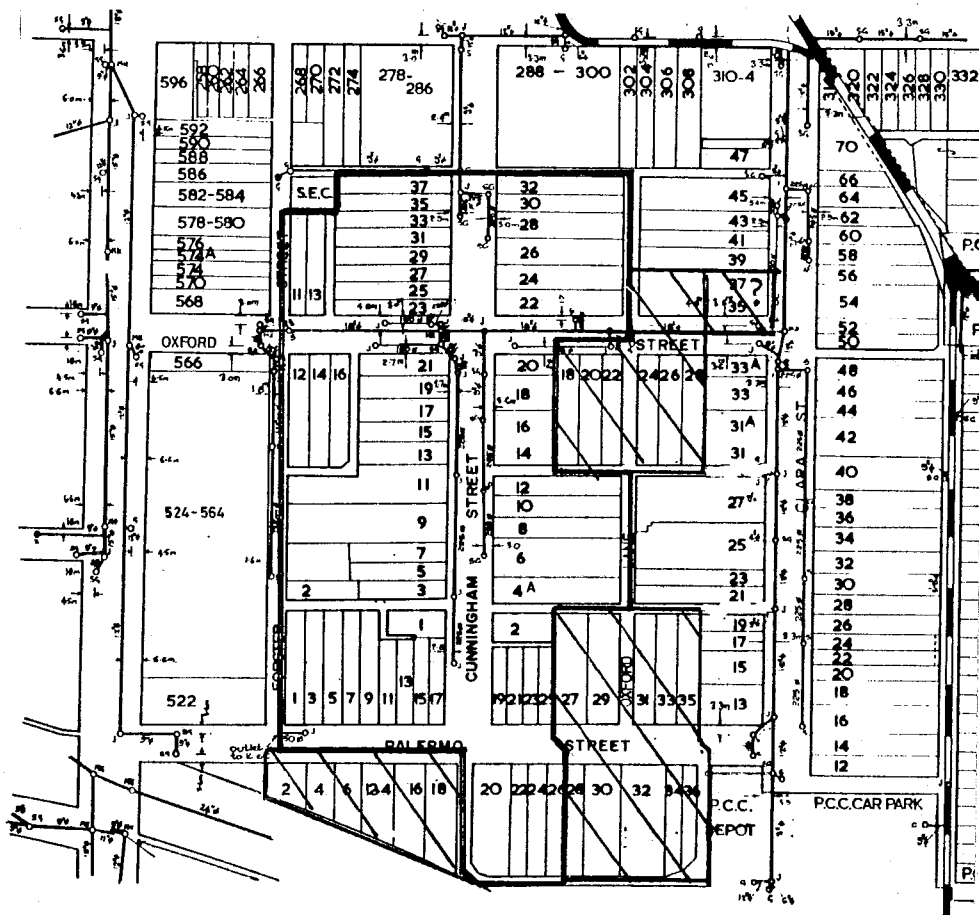
South Yarra 51 Splendid Building Allotments, Dec. 1882, Vale Plans, Vol. II

Recommendations




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited.
2. Further examine the boundaries of the UC1 Area to consider:
 - . the Edwardian pairs on the south side of Palermo Street
 - . examining the boundaries in Oxford Street and at the eastern end of Palermo Street.

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.