
Fawkner Street & Davis Avenue Urban Conservation Area [Area 2.1]

Extent

The Fawkner Street & Davis Avenue Urban Conservation Area includes a group of two storey shops and associated dwellings in Punt Road, both sides of Fawkner Street between Punt Road and Osborne Street, and a section of Davis Street from Fawkner Street to the intersection of Davis and Alexandra Streets. A short section on the southern side of Fawkner Street from the shop at No. 60 to 62 to Osborne Street is excluded.

History

One of the earliest subdivisions in the western section of the Prahran municipality south of Toorak Road was made in the area between Punt Road and Chapel Street. The three lots in this area were bought by Peter Davis who subdivided them and at first advertised them as smaller farm allotments. Some of these farm allotments were then subdivided for close residential development with narrow streets and small house lots. One of the areas which developed rapidly was around the corner of Punt Road and Toorak Road within the area now marked by Fawkner Street and Powell Street.¹²

By 1855, there were already some small streets, branching off from Punt Road. The flat terrain had proved suitable for providing cheap housing on small allotments. Many of the cottages built in this area came to be occupied by local artisans and their families.¹³ However, neither Fawkner Street nor Davis Avenue were shown on Kearney's 1855 map of the area.¹⁴

Later, in the 1880s, both streets were indicated on an 1885-86 map, but there is no suggestion of the distinctive design that now characterises Davis Avenue.¹⁵ The exact date of this design is unknown.¹⁶

An 1895 MMBW drainage plan shows the form of these streets as they are today. Both streets are among the widest in the locality with larger houses shown along Fawkner Street behind a group of shops in Punt Road. The dwellings lining the western side of the curved section of Davis Avenue (shown as Great Davis Street) feature paired houses at the north end and a group of detached houses at the south.¹⁷ A lodged plan dated May 1919 suggests that, at that time, at least some of the Victorian housing in that section of Davis Street had gone. This was presumably to make way for later housing. However, at least six detached brick houses with paling

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12. George Tibbits, *History of Prahran*, p.41
 13. Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, p.14.
 14. James Kearney. *Map of Melbourne and its Suburbs*, 1855.
 15. Sands & McDougall's *Directory Map of Prahran*. 1885-86.
 16. A search of Titles Office lodged plans has failed to provide an answer
 17. MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

side fences are shown as remaining.¹⁸ No earlier lodged plan of the area has been found, despite an exhaustive search at the Titles Office Plan Room.

Today, Fawkner Street and Davis Avenue are still important within the locality as wider streets containing more substantial detached houses than in the narrower streets closer to Commercial Road. The group of shops in Punt Road at the entrance to Fawkner Street, the number of single storey Victorian houses in the Fawkner Street/Davis Avenue area, and the tree-lined curves of Davis Avenue give this locality a distinctive character.

Description

The area is distinguished by the street layout pattern, in particular Davis Avenue which curves northwards from Fawkner Street towards Toorak Road. The form of Davis Avenue, shown as Great Davis Street on the 1895 MMBW Plan suggests that the street was subdivided in at least two sections.

The area is predominantly semi-detached terraces or small detached villas with narrow side boundaries to their neighbours. The majority of the buildings are in brick with some rendered and many recently painted. The house on the corner of Davis Avenue and Fawkner Street at No. 2 Davis Street, is a key focal point within the Area. It is set on an unusually shaped block, and its form and the layout of the buildings on the site reflect the form of the allotment.

Davis Street contains medium-large Plane trees set into the road reserve on both sides of the street. They provide a partial canopy across the street, creating a distinctive character and emphasising the curve of the street. Plane trees have been recently planted as a parallel avenue within the footpath of Fawkner Street.

High front fences, many in brick, are becoming an unfortunate characteristic of the area. Given the closeness of the houses to the street, the high fences restrict views of the dwellings and have an adverse impact on the quality of the streetscape.

The houses within the area are typical rather than outstanding in form, however collectively they represent an important element of the nineteenth century development of Prahran.

Heritage characteristics

The key characteristics of the Fawkner Street and Davis Avenue area are:

- the consistent scale, form and period of the buildings within the area creating a precinct characteristic of nineteenth century Prahran
- the street pattern, especially the curved alignment of Davis Avenue, which is unusual and reflects the history of the development of the locality
- the Plane trees in Davis Avenue which create a picturesque avenue.

18. Plan of Subdivision of Part of Crown Portion 37 Lodged Plan 7572

Analysis

Based on the fieldwork it is difficult to understand why the shop at no. 60 Fawkner Street has been excluded. It abuts the edge of the area and is listed on the individual list of significant buildings. Equally it is difficult to understand why the group of buildings from the shop along the southside of Fawkner Street to the attached terrace facing Osborne Street have also not been included. While most of the buildings in this section have been more altered, two date from the Edwardian rather than the Victorian period, and one is recent, nevertheless this section forms a logical part of the precinct. It is also one of the entrances to the precinct.

Further consideration should be given to adding these buildings to this UC Area. Priority should be given to either including the shop, or researching it so that it can be listed as a separate item.

Significance

The Fawkner Street and Davis Avenue Urban Conservation Area has significance for its unusual street layout and its grouping of small Victorian villas, terraces and shops which collectively represent an important aspect of the nineteenth century development of Prahran. The fine avenue of Planes along Davis Avenue contributes to the quality of this streetscape.

Sources

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

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

MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

Plan of Subdivision of Part of Crown Portion 37 Lodged Plan 7572.

Sands & McDougall's Directory Map of Prahran. 1885-86.

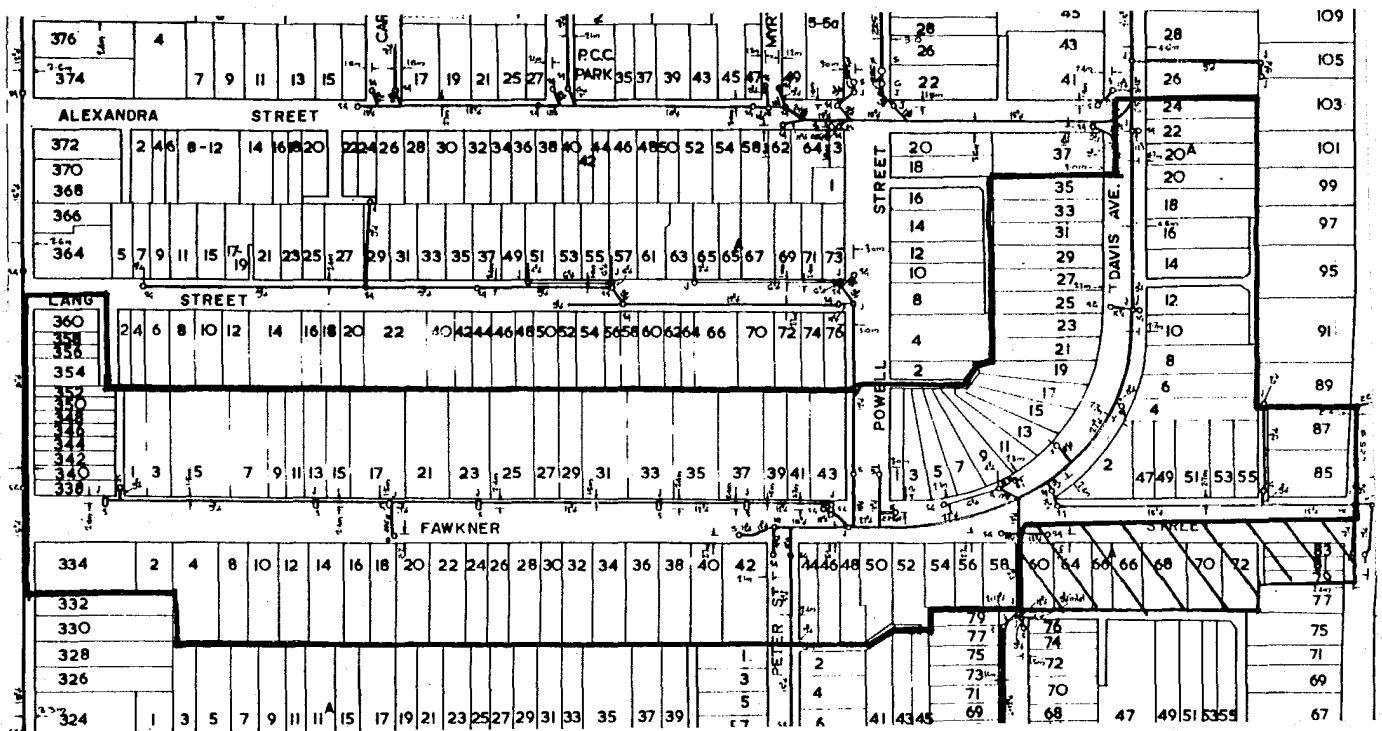
Tibbits, George *History of Prahran*.

Recommendations




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited.
2. Review the extent of the UC1 Area to consider including the properties on the south side of Fawkner Street between no. 60 and Osborne 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.