
Jessamine Avenue Urban Conservation Area [Area 12.1]

Extent

The Jessamine Avenue Urban Conservation Area includes both sides of Jessamine Avenue, Kenleigh Grove and Linden Court, and the Williams Road and Dandenong Road buildings which create the entrances to this urban conservation area. Lumley Park at the northern end of Jessamine Avenue is excluded even though it appears to form part of the original sub-division design.

History

In the 1850s, the precinct bounded by High Street, Orrong Road, Dandenong Road and Williams Road, had been partially subdivided. However, there was little development except in the north-west corner, the location of the Mount Erica Hotel, and at the southern boundary along Great Dandenong Road (an early stock route and the municipal boundary) where there were several villas on large allotments.¹⁸⁰

The area developed considerably over the following 40 years. A number of streets in the northern section were intensely developed with small weatherboard houses on narrow allotments. Larger villas faced High Street while Williams Road had a sequence of major villas, the allotments becoming larger along Williams Road to Dandenong Road. There was also a number of mansion allotments. Even larger allotments faced Dandenong Road. Larnook was on its massive allotment at the corner of Orrong Road. These mansions had elaborate landscaped gardens.¹⁸¹

Today, most of the old mansions and their holdings have disappeared. Some, however, like Larnook, have survived but with much reduced allotments. New subdivisions and street patterns led to a major development in this precinct in the 1920s. A subdivisional plan dated 8 February 1927 (declared by the estate agent, E. P. Muntz) shows the creation of Jessamine Avenue. It curves from the Packington/Gooch Streets corner down to Dandenong Road. There are good-sized allotments on both the east and west sides of Jessamine Avenue. However, the southern end of the street is undeveloped except for three large allotments facing Dandenong Road.¹⁸² New streets like Linden Court, Jessamine Avenue and Lalbert Crescent have introduced buildings in stylish inter-war architectural styles. Jessamine Avenue, a subdivision with a sweeping concrete paved road, is an affluent middle class development within a nineteenth century working-class area. The new electric tramway and landscaped plantation, it is said, helped to sell this development. Nearby Kenleigh Grove shares a late 1930s flat development with the southern section of Jessamine Avenue.¹⁸³

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

181. MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

182. Lodged Plan 11971.

183. Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, pp. 45-46.

Description

The Jessamine Avenue subdivision reflects the middle class aspirations of those able to build during the inter-war period. The street curves at both ends, creating a closed and inward looking precinct filled with large, predominantly two storey houses each of an individual style. The character of the urban conservation area is largely created by this sweeping concrete roadway, the curved form of the subdivision and the well developed street plantings of Ash and Liquidambar species. The roadway appears to remain intact as a concrete road, an unusual feature within this part of the City of Prahran. Likewise the kerb and guttering, however sections of the footpath appear to have been replaced.

Architecturally the houses along the street demonstrate a diversity of the styles common in the inter-war period and demonstrate the influence of revival styles. The forms include buildings with strong Spanish Mission influences, and the modernist movement. Two blocks of flats at the south end of Jessamine Avenue are particularly well developed examples of the modern period with No. 5 retaining large curved glassed windows as does the detached dwelling opposite. In Kenleigh Grove there is also intense flat development typical of the later 1930s and comparable with the southern section of Jessamine Avenue.

Also contributory to the streetscape are the garden plantings and fences, many of which relate strongly to the design and period of the house.

Like Jessamine Avenue, Linden Court comprises interwar development along a curved concrete street lined with trees, in this instances Melaleucas and more recent Birches. It results from the subdivision of a mansion house of the same name in the 1920s and 30s.¹⁸⁴ The form of development is also detached two storey houses on somewhat smaller allotments. The houses are all rendered in rough cast and retain low fences with similar detailing. In form they approach the conventional hipped roof but are enlivened by the use of Romanesque arches reminiscent of Georgian Revival and Spanish Mission. Some of the rendered houses remain unpainted, an unusual and significant feature. Most have two storey porticos forming the main entrance, and all have entry driveways most retaining the concrete strip form. Two concrete lamp standards remain, one on Williams Road and the other at the head of the court; neither carries a lamp today.

Kenleigh Grove has been developed for flats probably in the 1930s-40 and today comprises a series of flats reflecting the modern architectural movement. These buildings combine render and clinker brick work. The streetscape is developed on one side, the east side only, with the west side heavily planted with Lilly Pillys. At the corner of Kenleigh and Dandenong Road is a block of red and cream brick flats slightly later in period.

184. Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, p. 46.

Heritage characteristics

The key heritage characteristics of the Jessamine Avenue Urban Conservation Area are:

- as an expression of a singular estate and sub-division design with a coherent street character created at the point of subdivision and reinforced by the development period of the houses
- the Ash and Liquidambar street tree plantings set within wide grassy verges in Jessamine Avenue
- the curved concrete roadways of Jessamine Avenue and Linden Court
- the large upper middle class two storey houses each of a distinctive character but collectively reflecting the styles and tastes of the inter-war period
- the gardens and fences of these houses

Analysis

The built and landscape character of these streets create a precinct of considerable cohesiveness and quality, demonstrating the design elements of the 1920-40s era.

Significance

The Jessamine Avenue Urban Conservation Area has significance as a remarkably cohesive and intact 1920s-40s precinct resulting from the development of the large mansion estates and containing an impressive grouping of substantial houses set in landscaped grounds and streetscapes of the period.

Sources

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

Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, p.45-46.

Lodged Plan 11971.

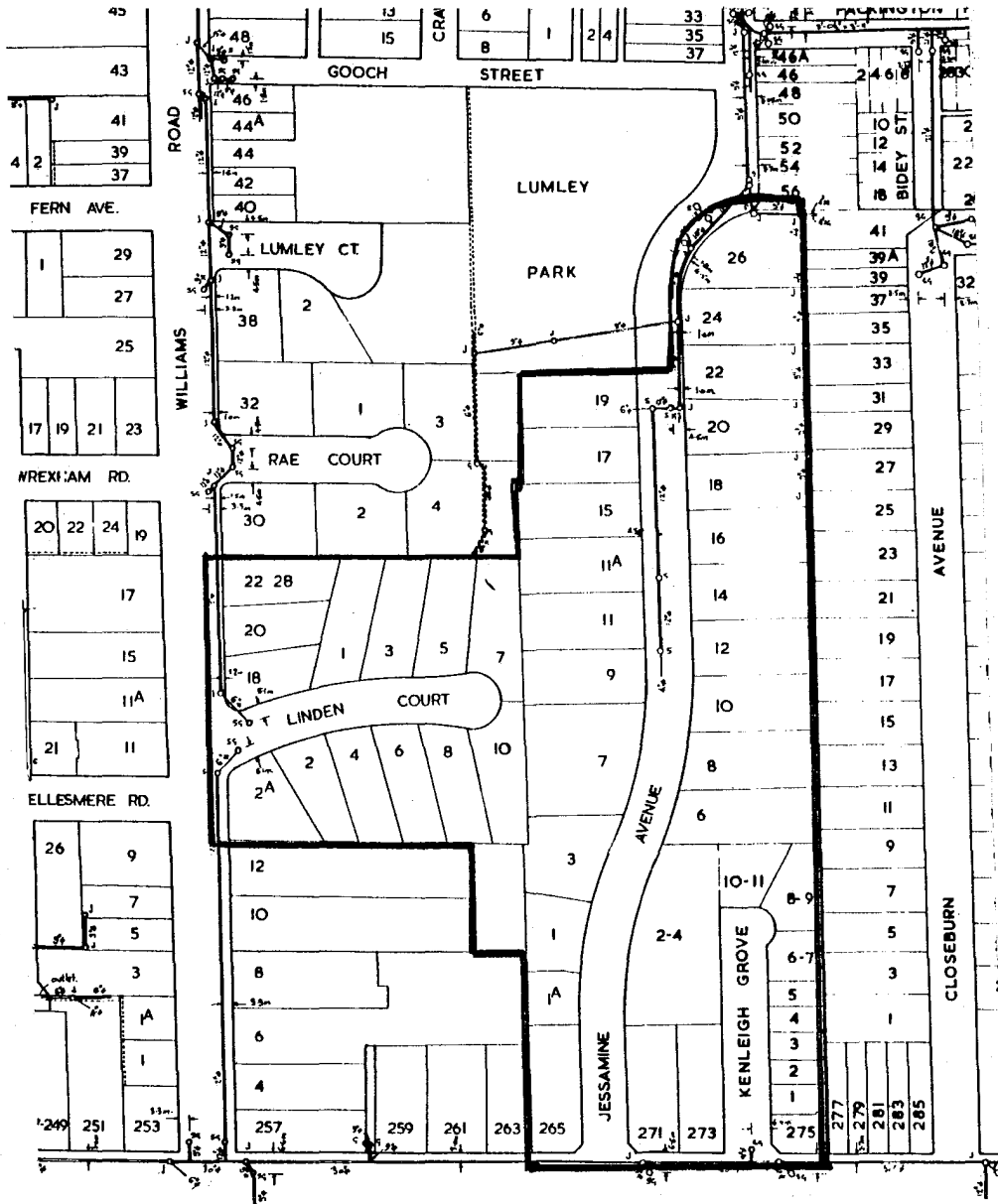
MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

Recommendations




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited.

Map

Jessamine Avenue Urban Conservation Area [Area 12.1]



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.