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## Montalto Urban Conservation Area [Area 10.1]

### Extent

The Montalto Urban Conservation Area includes the whole of the Montalto Avenue Estate.

### History

In the 1850s, Montalto was one of the large estates located around the infant Toorak Village. Other estates in the vicinity were Tintern, Springfield, Balmerino and Leura.<sup>146</sup> An 1850s map of the area shows these properties on large allotments.<sup>147</sup> Over the following 40 years, the precinct west of Canterbury Road was developed intensely. However, there was little development east of Canterbury Road. In 1895, Montalto and Leura were still standing within their extensive garden areas, creating a rural scene with cattle paddocks and fowl houses.<sup>148</sup>

The Toorak area was the scene of intensive development in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the remaining mansion sites were subdivided. Several important new streets were constructed and became the location of large and prestigious homes. These new Toorak streets included Stradbroke Avenue, Huntingfield Road and Montalto Avenue.<sup>149</sup>

The Montalto Estate was surveyed in October 1927 by J. G. Gillespie and the plan lodged with the Titles Office on 28 February 1928. This distinctive subdivision is notable for its unusual geometrical form. Its square design, it is said, 'not only thwarted the automobile but created an unusual village-like street pattern ideal for the construction of equally distinctive architecture and landscape design'.<sup>150</sup>

The design comprised Montalto Avenue North and Montalto Avenue South with entrances to Canterbury Road on the west and Orrong Road on the east.<sup>151</sup>

Today, Montalto Avenue retains its late 1920s geometric design and contains an important group of 1930s residences. These include at least two designs by the notable architects, H. W. and F. B. Tompkins.<sup>152</sup>

### Description

The Montalto Avenue component of this Urban Conservation Area demonstrates an interesting approach to subdivision design which has created an internally focused residential precinct. The precinct is entered from the east or the west by short streets which end in a T intersection. The main road is then a square internally with houses on both sides, that is, around the perimeter as well as within the central square. At each corner of the rectangle, the road is extended in a small cul de sac. This design

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146. Cr. Bill Dane, *The Toorak Village -Past, Present and Future*, p.3.  
147. James Kearney, *Map of Melbourne and Its Suburbs*, 1855.  
148. MMBW 1895 drainage plan.  
149. John Curtis Pty. Ltd. *Toorak Residential Character Study*, 1991, 2-5.  
150. John Curtis Pty. Ltd. 2-5.  
151. Lodged Plan 12413. 2 sheets.  
152. John Curtis Pty. Ltd. 2-5.

technique is seen in the much later Housing Commission development in areas such as Doveton and Sale; the effect is to display the architectural qualities of the corner grouping of houses.

The overall character of Montalto area is created by this particular urban form combined with the strong architectural character of two storey detached inter-war houses, each individually of some interest, and some of considerable design importance. Each house is set on a larger than average allotment and each is surrounded by a leafy garden with smaller trees and shrubs predominating, although a few properties have larger specimen trees. The overall effect is of a linking between the garden setting of each house and the landscape setting created by the estate design. Many houses combine a brick fence and hedge for their front boundary. The combinations include lower brick fences with privet hedges and also some cypress hedges. A few properties have higher brick fences, presumed to date from a more recent period, and several retain timber fences which are probably original.

The architectural qualities of the buildings are vitally important in understanding and appreciating the character of the estate. The diversity of styles is remarkable given that each fit within a similar sized allotment and presumably contained a similar range and number of rooms. Many of the houses reflect the interests in revival styles during this period and include Tudor Revival houses with dark painted half timbering, Georgian Revival with rendered facades, Spanish Mission influences, and Arts and Crafts characteristics. Many of the houses are rendered but a good proportion are also face brick using the clinker bricks of the period.

Generally, the estate is remarkably intact. There has been some redevelopment along the Canterbury Road side of the estate.

The street plantings are unusual using Liquidambar, a species uncommon in street plantings, to great effect.

## **Heritage characteristics**

The heritage characteristics of Montalto Urban Conservation Area are:

- the inter-war housing character and architectural quality
- the subdivision form, reflecting an interest in different types of residential precinct and responding to the rise in popularity of the motor car
- the garden estate quality created by the settings of the individual houses and the street trees within this particular subdivision form.

## **Analysis**

Stonehaven Court is quite different in character to Montalto Avenue. While the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992* listed this area separately in Precinct 14 and describes it in detail in relation to the Toorak Road/Clendon Road Area (see Precinct 13, pages 49-50). The present consultants believe the best solution is to treat Stonehaven Court as an extension to the Toorak Road/Clendon Area. It is therefore listed as Urban Conservation Area 14.2 in this report.

The defined extent of the Montalto component is too narrow along Orrong Road, and should be extended to include the whole estate - that is, add Orrong Road

properties - the four properties on the north side of Montalto Avenue, and three properties on the south. As well as representing the full extent of the estate, these properties are of a similar character to that of the remainder of the estate.

## **Significance**

Montalto Avenue Urban Conservation Area has significance as an distinctive and unusual late 1920s subdivision form that, combined with a series of architecturally-interesting inter-war houses, successfully creates a singular residential precinct. The overall landscape design, plantings and street detailing are important attributes.

## **Sources**

John Curtis Pty. Ltd., *Toorak Residential Character Study*, 1991, 2-5.

Dane, Cr. Bill, *The Toorak Village -Past, Present and Future*, p.3.

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

Lodged Plan 12413. Two sheets.

MMBW 1895 drainage plan.

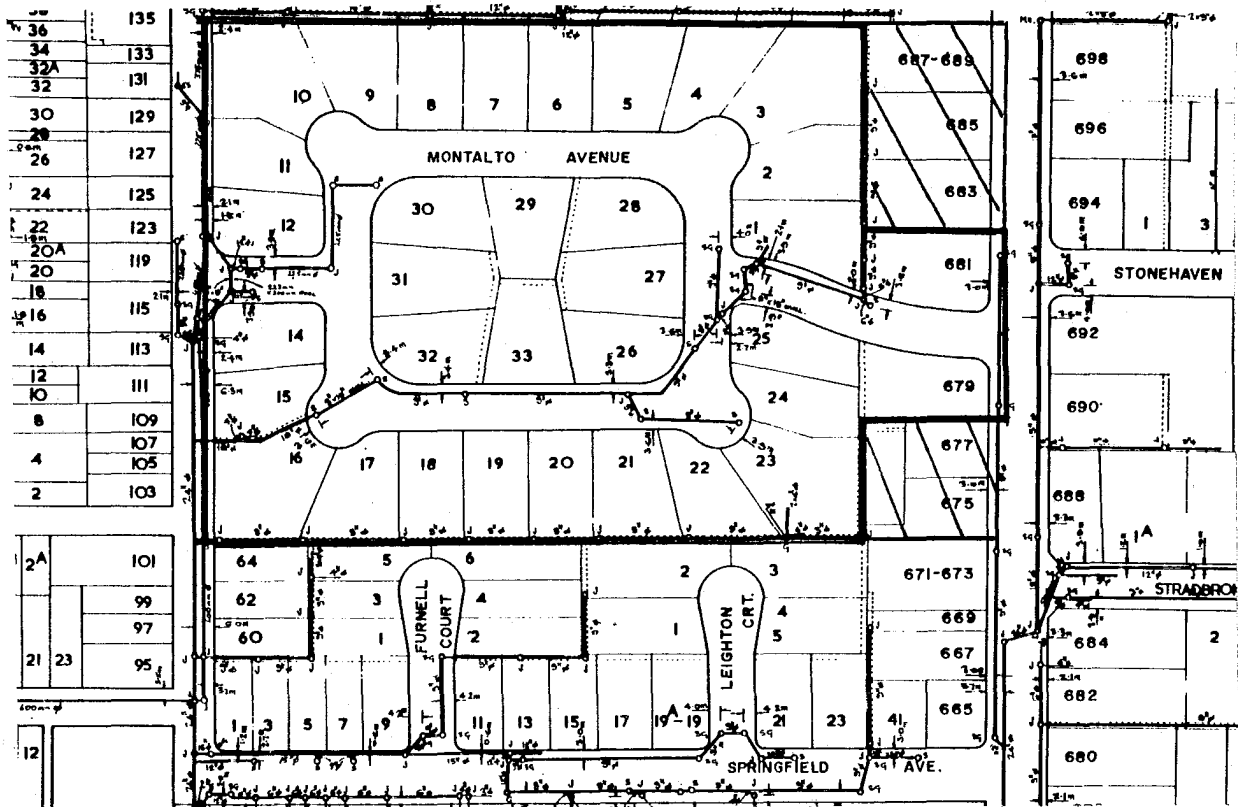
Nigel Lewis & Associates, *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*.

## **Recommendations**

1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited.
2. Seek a future extension to the Area to include the whole estate - that is to add Orrong Road properties - the four properties on the north side of Montalto Avenue, and three properties on the south.
3. Nominate the Montalto Avenue Urban Conservation Area to the Register of the National Estate.


# Map


## Montalto Urban Conservation Area [Area 10.1]



### 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.

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## Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area [Area 14.2] - Extension to add Stonehaven Court

### Extent

The extension to the Toorak/Clendon Urban Conservation Area comprises the southern side of Stonehaven Court to the corner with Orrong Road.

### History

The history of the Toorak/Clendon Urban Conservation Area is documented in the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, pages 49-51.

Stonehaven Court was created through the subdivision of Sir Francis Ormond's property ('Egoleen') at the corner of Clendon and Orrong Roads. Many large trees from the property were retained on the site of 'Mullion' at 6 Stonehaven Court. Mullion is one of several notable buildings within this small precinct. Mullion was designed by Eric Nicholls in 1927-28 for W. H. Smith.

The other key building is Robert Hamilton's 'Stonehaven Court', an important block of flats on the corner of Orrong Road.

### Description

Stonehaven Court contains several individually significant buildings, no. 6 Mullion set under a big spreading cedar tree and Stonehaven Court flats on the corner. The streetscape quality is largely created by Brush Box plantings and the garden settings of the individual properties.

The *City of Prahran Significant Tree & Garden Study* (1991) recognises the garden at Mullion as being of regional significance. The study notes the house design by architect Eric Nicholls, a partner of Walter Burley Griffin, and the garden design by Edna Walling and the garden owner, Mrs Wallace Smith. Both house and garden are described as 'one of the most rustic examples of the Prairie School' and notes the significant earlier plantings that remain as part of the garden.

### Heritage characteristics

As an extension to the Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area, the Stonehaven Court area will contribute to the 1920s-30s character of the whole area.

Specifically, the key characteristics of the Stonehaven Court area are:

- the 1920s-30s buildings of architectural significance
- the retention of trees from the earlier property
- the garden settings of the properties within the court
- the street forms and materials which are typical of the period of development.

## **Analysis**

Include Stonehaven Court as part of the Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area, rather than as part of Montalto Avenue (as shown on the maps in the 1992 study).

## **Significance**

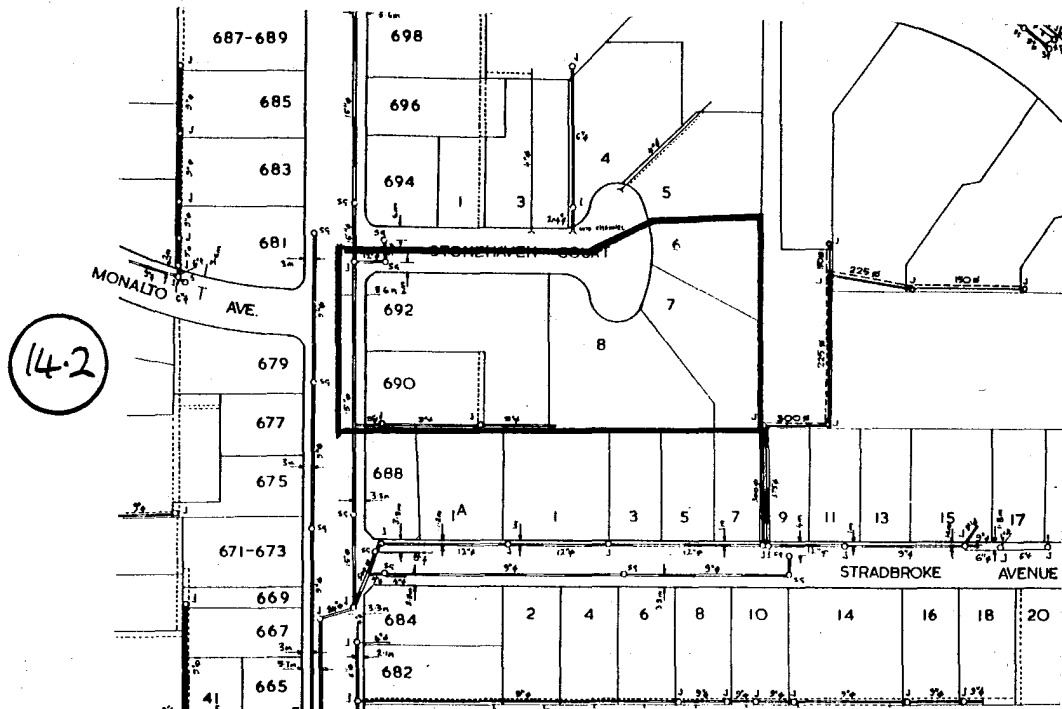
The Stonehaven Court area contributes to the significance of the whole Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area which is documented in the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study 1992*, pages 49-51.

## **Recommendations**




1. Adopt the UC1 Area as exhibited as part of the Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area.

# Map

## Toorak/Clendon Road Urban Conservation Area [Area 14.2] - Extension to add Stonehaven Court



### 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.