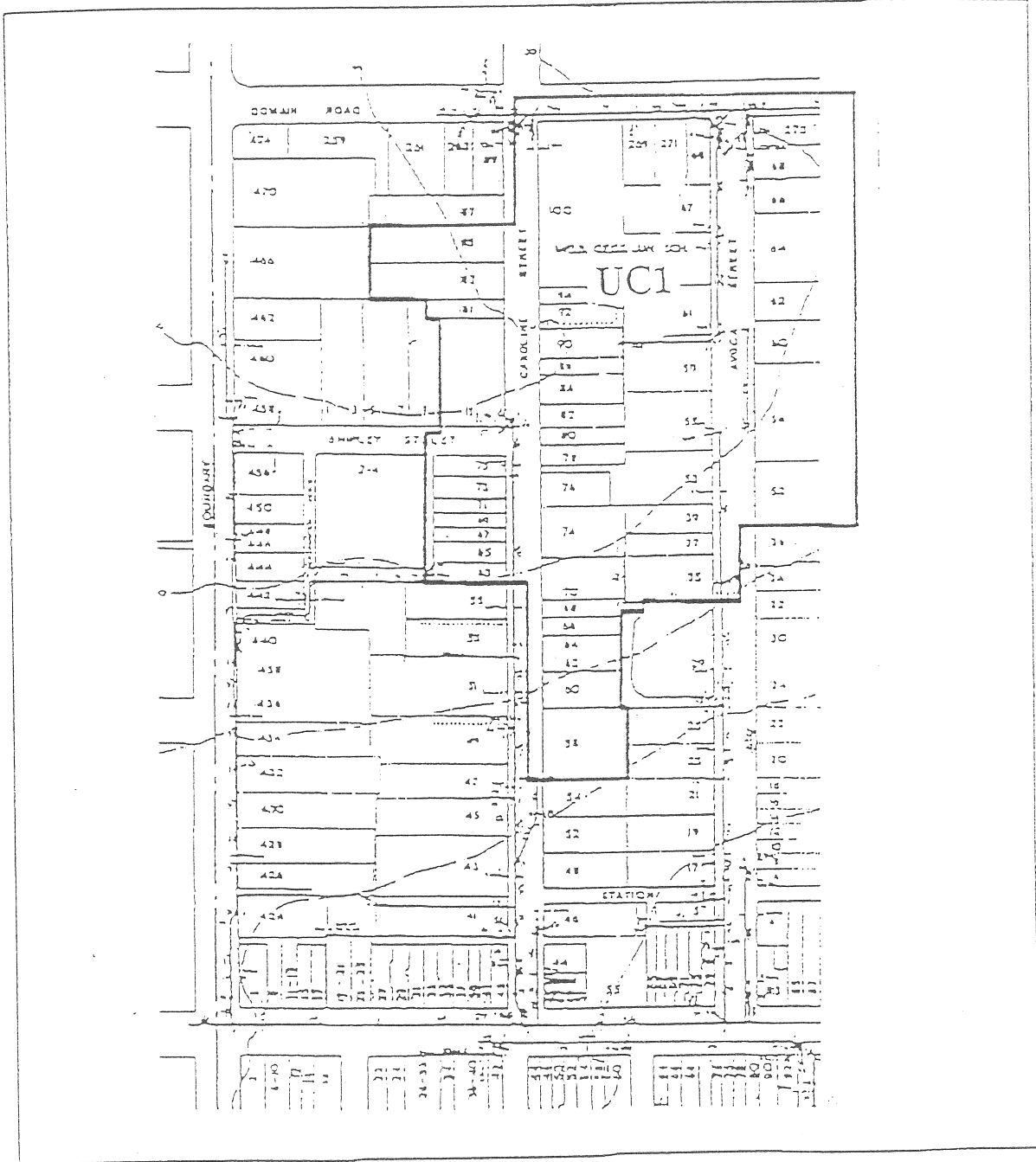


STONNINGTON PLANNING SCHEME

LOCAL SECTION

AMENDMENT L52



SCALE 1:5000

REFER PLANNING SCHEME MAP NO. 1UC

LEGEND:

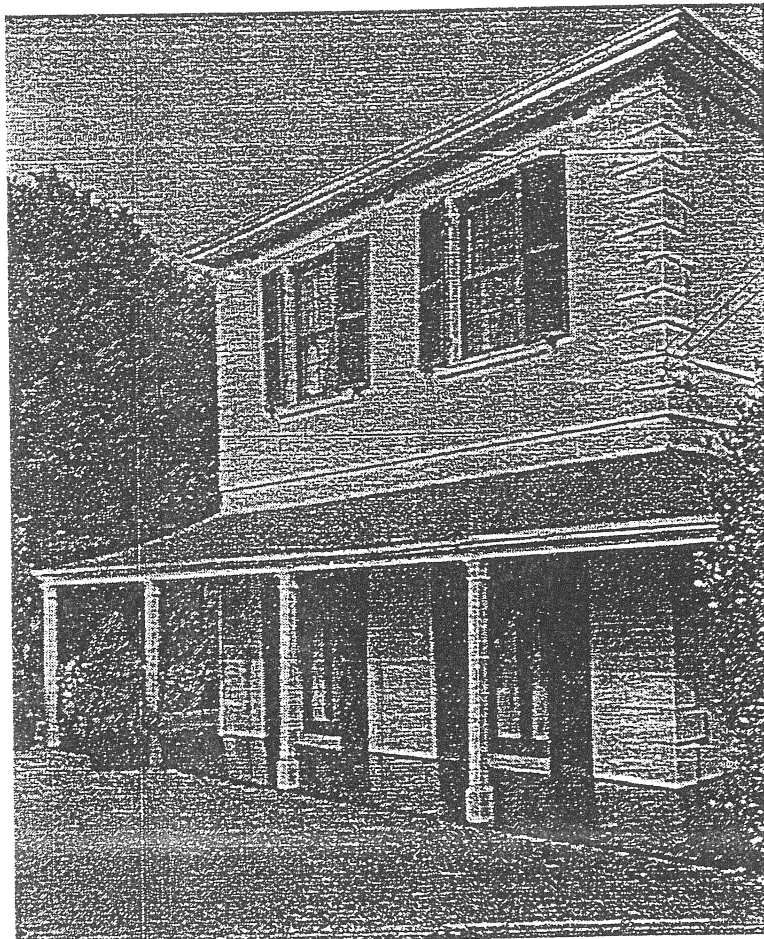
UC1

URBAN CONSERVATION AREA

*Caroline /  
Avoca St  
Area*

This Map forms part of Amendment L52  
exhibited on 21 May 1998.

# Avoca Street/Caroline Street Proposed Conservation Area



March 1998

# A VOCA STREET / CAROLINE STREET AREA, SOUTH YARRA

## INTRODUCTION

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This report has been prepared by Bryce Raworth Pty Ltd in association with Di Foster, Historian, in order to investigate the significance of the area centred on Avoca and Caroline Streets, South Yarra, between Domain Road and Toorak Road, in order to determine the appropriateness of urban conservation controls for the area.

The report builds on work carried out by Nigel Lewis Richard Aitken Pty Ltd for the *Prahran Character and Conservation Study*, 1992 and by Context Pty Ltd for the *City of Prahran Conservation Review*, 1993.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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This report finds that the area is of regional significance and warrants protection as a Heritage Place within the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Stonnington Planning Scheme.

# EXTENT OF PROPOSED CONSERVATION AREA

The area examined by the consultant team included odd numbers 41-89 and even numbers 48-100 Caroline Street, odd numbers 17-69 and even numbers 6-68 Avoca Street, and numbers 269 to 273 Domain Road.

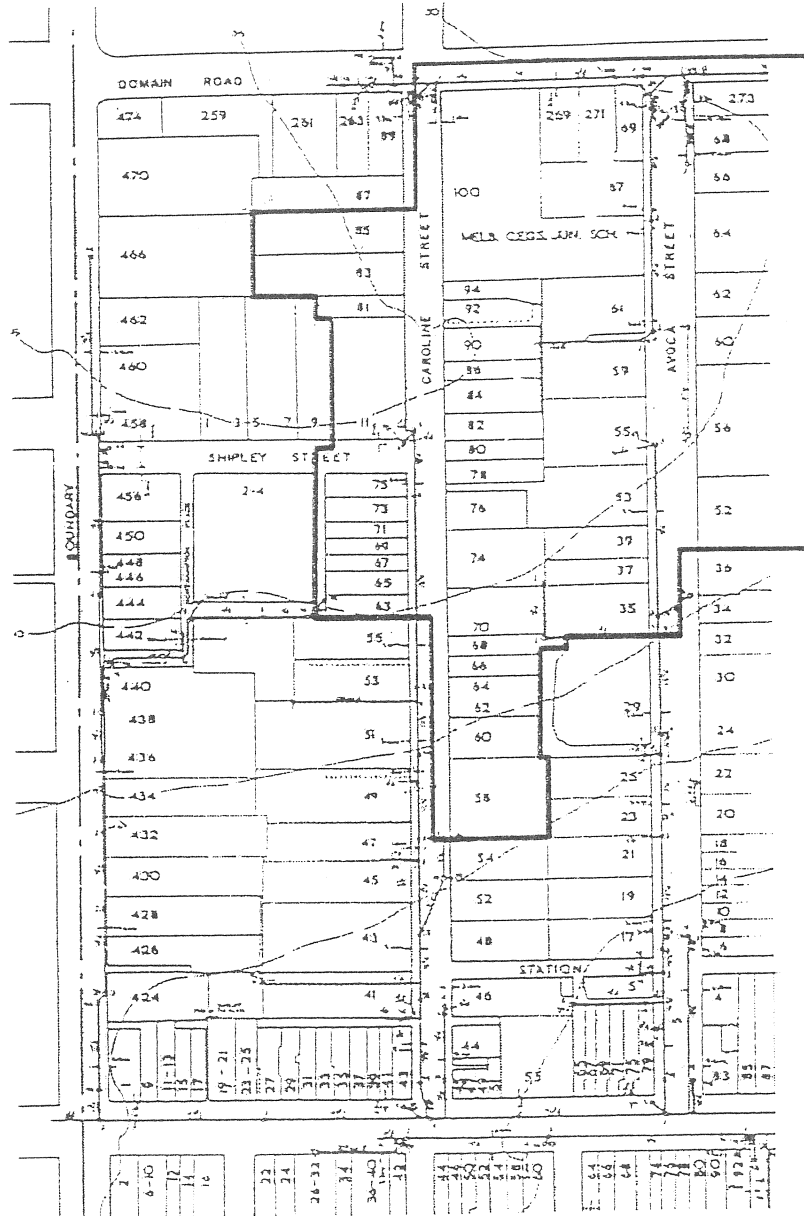


Illustration 1 Extent of proposed Conservation Area.

## HISTORY

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Six Crown allotments, bounded by the Yarra River, Gardiners Creek (now Toorak) Road, Punt Road and Chapel Street, were sold at the first Crown land sales in June 1840. Each had a frontage to Gardiners Creek Road and stretched to the Yarra River. River frontages meant prices were relatively high and most blocks were bought by speculators.<sup>1</sup>

R. A. Browne built a small villa on lot one which became the home of Major Alexander Davison, an Indian Army officer, from around 1843. The house was named Yarra Bank and Davison's daughter Caroline and her husband Captain William Acland Anderson remained there until about 1870. The estate consisted of about twelve acres of garden, orchard, vineyard and swampy scrub and pasture. Following the subdivision, Yarra Bank was located on the south side of Davison Street and was later used as a school.<sup>2</sup>

Davison sold lot 2 to William Montgomery Bell. Bell lived at Avoca, which stretched from the line of Domain Road to the Yarra. The property boasted a boathouse, stables, a coachhouse, a caretaker's lodge, a lake, a formal garden, a fernery and a conservatory. Avoca was purchased by George Kirk in 1860 and stands today at 8 Gordon Grove.<sup>3</sup>

Subdivision of these early properties in the 1850s created housing allotments between Domain Road and Toorak Road, leaving the earlier homes on large sites close to the river. Caroline Street, created as a result of Davison's 1853 subdivision of lot one, was named after his daughter. At the same time, Bell's subdivision of Avoca created Avoca Street. Kearney's map of 1855 shows Yarra Bank and Avoca with their grounds and vineyards extending to the river, and south of the line of Domain Road, the new subdivisions which featured wide streets and large allotments reflecting the area's affluence. The area developed from the 1850s and some of South Yarra's earliest houses remain in this area.<sup>4</sup> South Yarra railway station opened in 1860, further stimulating development in the area.

Allotments in Caroline Street and Avoca Streets had generous frontages and several large houses soon appeared on the high ground. However, speculators bought much of the land and from the 1870s frontages were reduced. By the 1890s, as shown in the 1895 MMBW plan, detached villas and terrace houses lined both sides of Caroline Street and Avoca Street. Development continued through to the inter-war years, but in the 1950s and 1960s many of the older houses, such as Shipley House, were replaced with modern flats. This area is historically one of the most important in Prahran.

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1 Betty Malone, 'The north-west corner of Prahran (South Yarra) Punt Hill to Daly Town. Unpublished manuscript, Prahran Archives.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Context Pty. Ltd. Conservation Review, City of Prahran, Vol. 3. 1993.

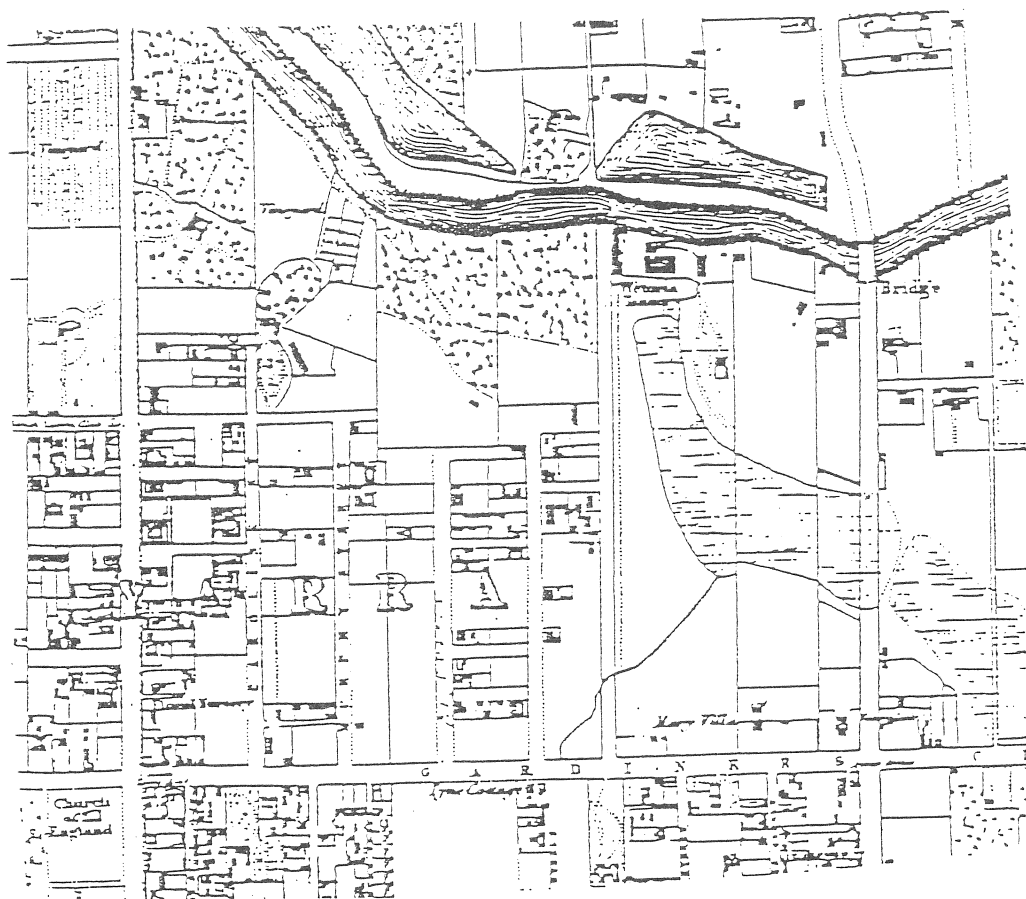
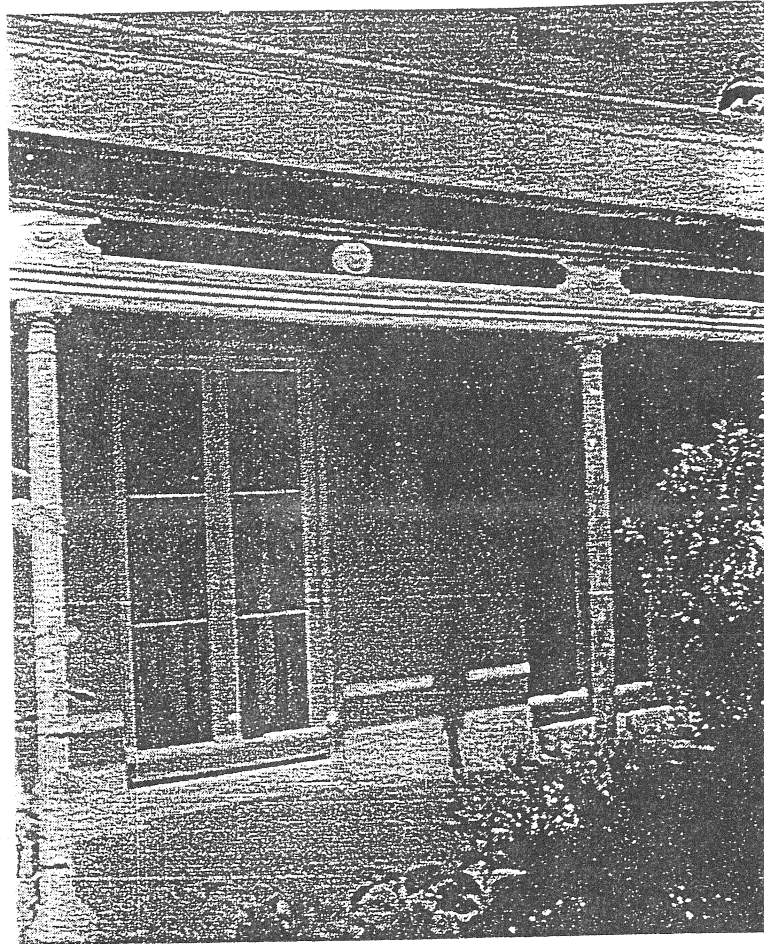


Illustration 2 *Kearney's map, c. 1895.*

Only fragments of this early character of Caroline Street survives today. Development continued through to the inter-war years, and the construction of freestanding residences in Federation, bungalow and Georgian Revival styles began to overwrite the earlier character of the streets. During this period the area retained the cachet established in its earliest days, and the quality of the building stock remained high. In particular, the study area contains a number of maisonettes designed by Marcus W Martin, perhaps the most prominent and prolific domestic architect in the Toorak and South Yarra areas during the 1930s. These include 78 Caroline Street, 269 Domain Road and the pair at 271 Domain Road and 69 Avoca Street.<sup>5</sup>

5 Other well known Marcus Martin houses in the immediate neighbourhood include 281 Domain Road, 1-3 Shipley Street, and the houses at 102 and 104 Caroline Street, the latter two of which are already protected in an extant UCA.



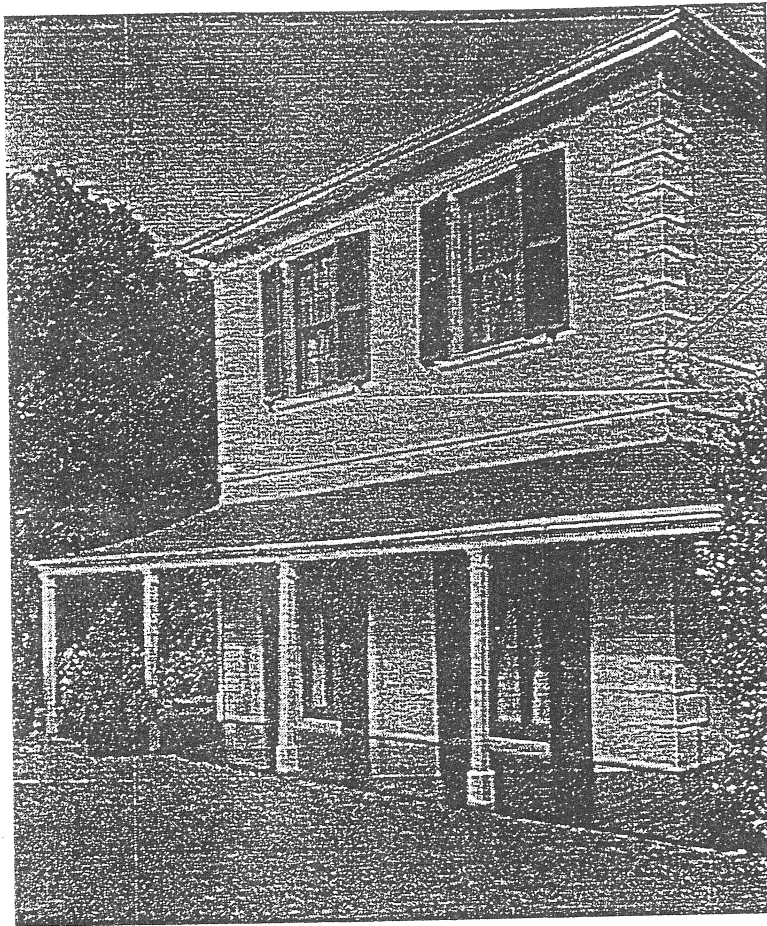
*Illustration 3 Shipley Lodge, c. 1966, now demolished.*

However, it was during the post-war years that the most dramatic changes to the area were felt, as many of the older residences, such as Shipley House, were replaced with modern flats. In 1957, Melbourne Girls' Grammar School's junior school, Morris Hall, was transferred to the large property on Domain Road with frontages to both Avoca and Caroline Streets,<sup>6</sup> in a move that would permanently alter the character of the elevated sections of both streets. One of the tragedies of this move was the associated demolition of the well known and admired house Inglesby (1918), designed by Harold Desbrowe Annear, at the corner of Domain Road and Caroline Street.

What remains is a disparate but impressive group of buildings and styles incorporating houses, flats and institutional buildings on a variety of scales. Early terraces remain at 62-68 Caroline Street, 92-94 Caroline Street and 6-18 Avoca Street, as do villas such as 74 and 76 Caroline Street that recall the early Italianate flavour of the area. A handful of residences from the early years of this century, such as the two-storey, red brick residence at 81 Caroline Street or its polychrome neighbour at 83 or the Spanish Mission fantasia at 52 Avoca Street, have survived to sit alongside more modern styles.

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<sup>6</sup> Chatham, Jane, *Across the Slate, Prahran's Schools 1850s - 1985*, Prahran Historical Series No.8, 1985.



*Illustration 4*      *Richmond House, 56 Avoca Street, South Yarra, constructed in the late 1850s.*

Flats in the area include compact, elegant interwar structures such as the Tudor-inspired group at 41 Caroline Street or the Georgian-influenced building at 35 Avoca Street but they are more typically late 1960s or early 1970s buildings of four or more stories finished in face brick. The majority of these reside at the lower reaches of the hill, the southern ends of Caroline and Avoca Streets, somewhat apart from the better quality, lower scale houses and maisonettes higher up the hill.<sup>7</sup> A spate of new multi-storey developments and refurbishments in a simple Neo-Georgian style (45, 47 and 55 Caroline Street) have generally managed to merge with the character and scale of the area to a greater extent than those of the 1960s and 1970s, and in some instances now provide a buffer between the graded buildings and the more intrusive elements to the south.

At the time of writing this report, new construction is underway in both Caroline and Avoca Streets.

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7      The most intrusive examples include 45, 51, 77 and 85-87 Caroline Street and 25, 27-29 and 55 Avoca Street.



## COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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The area under consideration is unusual in comparison to most proposed and existing conservation areas. In particular, it is heterogeneous in character and period rather than homogeneous. In this case the variety of building stock can be seen as a natural result of the area's steady progression, with later periods of development overlaying earlier periods as well as complementing neighbouring older stock.

It is especially unusual to find a small area containing so many houses built in the 1850s (56 Avoca Street, 64 Avoca Street, 75 Caroline Street, 76 Caroline Street and, in part, 83 Caroline Street).<sup>3</sup>

In this relatively small area it is possible to see exemplars of better domestic architecture from almost all periods in Melbourne's history, and this diversity can be seen to embody the character of South Yarra as a whole. Its prominent location and its proximity to Melbourne are such that it has always been a select, much sought after area, and this has encouraged high quality accommodation. This is reflected in the gradings of individual buildings - there can be few other areas in Stonnington that contain a higher concentration of A1 and A2 buildings, interspersed with high quality B grade buildings.

A further reason for the consideration of this area is that it connects the Alexandra Avenue/Caroline Street urban conservation area with the Toorak Road urban conservation area. Seen in isolation the borders of the proposed area may seem a little arbitrary, particularly the Domain Road border. But when the north side of Domain Road, with its notable interwar houses and maisonettes, and the balance of Caroline Street (with its interwar houses and the former stables to Avoca) are taken into account, it is seen that the mixed character of the area under consideration merges readily with the extant UCA to the north and, in fact, completes it.

While the west side of Caroline Street and the south end of Avoca Street have suffered in terms of flat developments in recent decades, with large buildings of a scale, modern character and, in some instances, materials which do not complement the earlier building stock, the proposed area excludes these buildings and yet still contains valued stretches of consistent, highly graded, if heterogenous, housing.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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The Avoca/Caroline Street area is of regional significance for its historical and architectural associations. Developed from the 1850s onward, it retains valuable examples of building stock from successive periods, including a very high concentration of 1850s buildings relative to that found in other parts of the greater metropolitan region. The quality of the building stock dating from the periods between 1850 and the end of the Second World War is extremely high, and many of the buildings are significant in their own right. The diversity in periods and architectural character of this stock is representative of the nature of development in this area and South Yarra in general. While the proposed area is bordered by unsympathetic modern developments, this does not detract from its value as a repository of valued housing exemplars.

The proposed area continues and extends architectural and historical themes established in the neighbouring urban conservation area to the north, and can be seen to complement and even complete that area both thematically and visually.

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## REVISED SCHEDULE OF BUILDINGS

### Avoca Street

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Street No.	Grading	Revised grading
West Side		
35	C	B
37	C	B
39	C	B
53	C	B
55	C	-
59	C	B
61	A2	A2
67	B	B
69	A2 (see also 271 Domain Road)	A2

### East Side

52	-	A2
56	A1	A1
60	A2	A2
62	-	-
64	A1	A1
66	-	-
68	-	-

### Caroline Street

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Street No.	Grading	Revised grading
West Side		
63	C	B
65	C	B
67	C	B
69	C	B
71	C	B
73	C	B
75	A1	A1
<del>83</del>	B	B
<del>85</del> 83	A1	A1
85	-	-
East Side		
58	A2	A2
60	A2	A2
62	A2	A2
64	A2	A2
66	A2	A2
68	A2	A2
70	C	B
74	A1	A1
76	A1	A1
78	B	B
80	A2	A2
82	C	C
84	C	C
86	C	demolished

90	C	C
92	B	B
94	B	B

Domain Road

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Street No.	Grading	Revised grading
South Side		
269	B	B
271	A2	A2
273	B	B