

'Noorie'

56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern

Place type: Residential Buildings (private), Villa

Significance level: Local



Recommended protection: Planning Scheme

Architectural style: Victorian (1851-1901) Queen Anne Revival

Locality history

Malvern was originally named Gardiner after the early settler John Gardiner, but was renamed Malvern after the property 'Malvern Hills Estate', which had in turn been named for its perceived likeness to the Malvern Hills in Hertfordshire, England. This was pleasant, rolling country on the southern bank of the Gardiners Creek, or *Kooyong Koot*, which was its Aboriginal name. Many praised the picturesque character of the area in the early settlement period (Strahan 1989: 1-3). Journalist William Kelly wrote in 1858 of 'the one-time undulating stretches of green bushland of Malvern' (Art Portfolio Ltd 1911). Early settlers made use of a fresh water spring in High Street that inspired the naming of the Spring Gardens; in the 1880s this local water supply was encased in a rustic rockery and became an ornamental feature of the public gardens.

Like Prahran, Malvern was the name of a municipality as well as a suburb. The Shire of Malvern was established in 1876 from the earlier Gardiner Road District. In the 1870s the higher areas were taken up for gentlemen's estates, while small farmers, market gardeners and orchardists occupied the lower land near the Creek.

The railway attracted new settlers to the area and land was subdivided at a great rate through the boom years of the 1880s and early 1890s. Large areas of open paddocks and market gardens were rapidly transformed into pleasantly sited homes and gardens. Malvern in the 1880s epitomised the ideal suburb, providing a pleasant refuge for the affluent middle class, away from the bustle and noise of the city.

From its foundation Malvern was regarded as solidly respectable. This was reflected by a consistency in good quality homes, ranging from Victorian to interwar styles. The famed Gascoigne and Waverley estates, developed from 1885, were some of the most celebrated subdivisions in the area. Housing was mostly detached and it was one of a group of new suburbs with a higher rate of home ownership compared to the older inner areas of Melbourne (Davison 1978: 181). Malvern was comfortably and solidly middle class. While there were several large mansions dating from the 1870s and 1880s, the suburb generally lacked the excessive wealth and flamboyance of Toorak. The north-west corner of Malvern, however, was comparable with Toorak in terms of elevation and grand homes. Here, on the east side of Glenferrie Road, John Wagner of Cobb & Co. erected the mansion 'Stonington' (1890). A short distance away was another mansion, 'Moorakyne' (1889). In 1901 'Stonington' became the official residence of the Governor of Victoria, after the newly appointed Governor-General took up residency in Melbourne's existing Government House in the Domain. This gave Malvern an added cachet of importance, and its residents valued proximity to wealth and influence.

Malvern was almost entirely residential, with major shopping strips established on Malvern Road and Glenferrie Road. There was barely any industry, though in 1879 there was a ropeworks and a tile factory (Whitworth 1879: 305). There was also a brickworks and clay pits near the corner of Elizabeth Street and Henderson Avenue. The population of Malvern was largely conservative and had a high rate of church attendance (McCalman 1995: 7).

Malvern's rapid rate of growth led to the Shire being replaced by the City of Malvern in 1911. The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust had been established in Malvern the year before. Large estates continued to be subdivided in the early 1900s, and many streets in Malvern are lined with Edwardian-era houses.

Place history

Elizabeth Street in Malvern was developed for suburban allotments in the late 1880s and early 1890s, as part of Malvern's emergence at that time as a fashionable middle-class suburb. In 1890, Lots 14-16 in Elizabeth Street, Malvern, were purchased by Catherine Taylor (Foster, n.d.) and in 1891 a double-storey brick villa was erected at what is now 56 Elizabeth Street. In 1891, Catherine Taylor was the owner/occupant of a 9-roomed brick house (Foster, research notes, SHC). In February 1892, Catherine F. Taylor was rated as the owner/occupier of a 9-roomed brick house, on an allotment measuring 160 x 150 feet (Shire of Malvern, RB 1892).

Catherine Fortay Taylor née Morton (1839–1924) had immigrated to Victoria from Scotland with her parents in 1853. In 1859 she had married English-born Richard Taylor (d.1927) and they lived for a long period in Beechworth. (VBDM), where Richard Taylor was 'a well known merchant' (*Ovens and Murray Advertiser*, 31 March 1883:4). It is unclear why Catherine Taylor and not her husband Richard Taylor is rated as the owner/occupier of the property at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern.

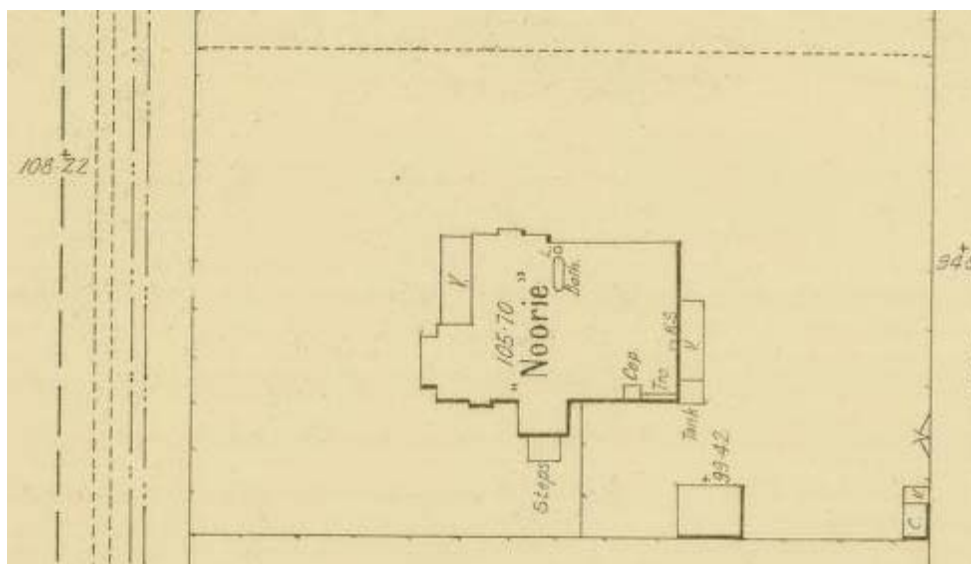


Figure 1. MMBW Detail Plan No. 1777, dated 1907, with the house 'Noorie' facing west, fronting Elizabeth Street (source: SLV)

In 1898, Catherine Taylor was still rated for a 9-roomed brick house in the Shire of Malvern (Shire of Malvern RB 1898). The Commonwealth Electoral Roll of 1903 lists the following members of the Taylor family as residing in Elizabeth Street, Malvern (with no street number given): Richard Taylor, 'independent means'; Catherine Fortay Taylor, 'home duties'; and Frank Taylor, clerk (ER 1903).

In the 1905 Melbourne Post Office Directory, the occupant was given as James Johnstone (S&Mc 1905). James Johnstone, a civil engineer, was the husband of Emily Jane (née Taylor), the daughter of Catherine and Richard Taylor (*Argus*, 30 May 1894:1; VBDM). In 1906 the property was still owned by the Taylors (Foster, n.d.).

On the MMBW plan of 1907, the house is called 'Noorie', and is shown as occupying a large suburban block. The house faces west to Elizabeth Street, but the main entrance is on the south side, indicated by 'Steps'. There is an outside water closet marked on the rear boundary, as well as an inside bath and lavatory. The laundry is within the house and includes a trough and copper (MMBW Detail Plan No. 1777, 1907, SLV).

In c.1906 the occupant was listed as Mrs A. Dobbs (S&Mc 1907). Di Foster's research notes the owners at this time being Frank Dobbs and Mrs A. Dobbs (Foster, n.d.).

In 1909, accountant Henry Spondley was listed as the occupant of 'Noorie' in Elizabeth Street, Malvern (S&McD 1910). The property at that time was reportedly owned by the Estate of A. Morris, which may be an error (City of Malvern, RB 1909). In 1919 the rate notice specified the owner as being the Estate of Dobbs (RB 1920). Henry Spondley continued to reside at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, until c.1920 (S&Mc 1920).

In 1925 the house was occupied by John F. Brame (S&Mc 1925).

By 1930, the house was owned and occupied by John Richards and his family (S&M 1930; correspondence, MH 4111, SHC). Richards was a public servant (*Age*, 25 February 1955:13). In 1937 the electoral roll listed the following Richards family members as residing at 56 Elizabeth Street: John Richards, clerk; Florence Richards, home duties; Henrietta Florence Richards, teacher; and John Richards Jun., clerk (ER 1937). Photographs of members of the Richards family outside the family home at 56 Elizabeth Street in the 1950s are in the collection of the Stonnington History Centre (see images below).



Figure 2. John Richards and his wife Florence Richards at home at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, in 1954 (source: MP 12304, Stonnington History Centre)



Figure 3. Richards family group photographed outside the family home at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, at Christmas, 1952 (source: MP 12887, Stonnington History Centre)

The Richards family owned and occupied the house until 1960 when it was sold by auction. It was advertised at this time as a 'Mansion' with land measuring 100 x 150 feet (*Age*, 30 July 1960:33). The Melbourne actor Michael Duffield purchased the house for £10,600 (Foster, n.d.; *Age*, 12 Sept 1981:47). Duffield lived in the house with his wife and three children until selling the property in 1981 (*Age*, 5 Sept 1981:45).

At some time prior to 1981, the original verandah detail was removed and replaced with plain timber posts and standard Victorian cast-iron frieze and brackets, as well as cast-iron cresting to the front window bay. Early photos held by the current owners shown that the original verandah detail was in keeping with the early Queen Anne style, with turned timber posts, strut-like corner brackets, a ladder-back timber frieze to the ground floor, and a balustrade with turned-timber members to the first floor.

Prior to its sale in 1981, the house was profiled in the *Age* newspaper, in which it was described as a comfortable 10-roomed residence with its main entrance on the side. There are five bedrooms upstairs and downstairs there is a drawing room (games room), sitting room and dining room with cellar. The stairway was described as 'curiously steep and lacking in landings'

and the article cites a story about the architect forgetting to make room for the staircase in the plans (*Age*, 12 Sept 1981:47).

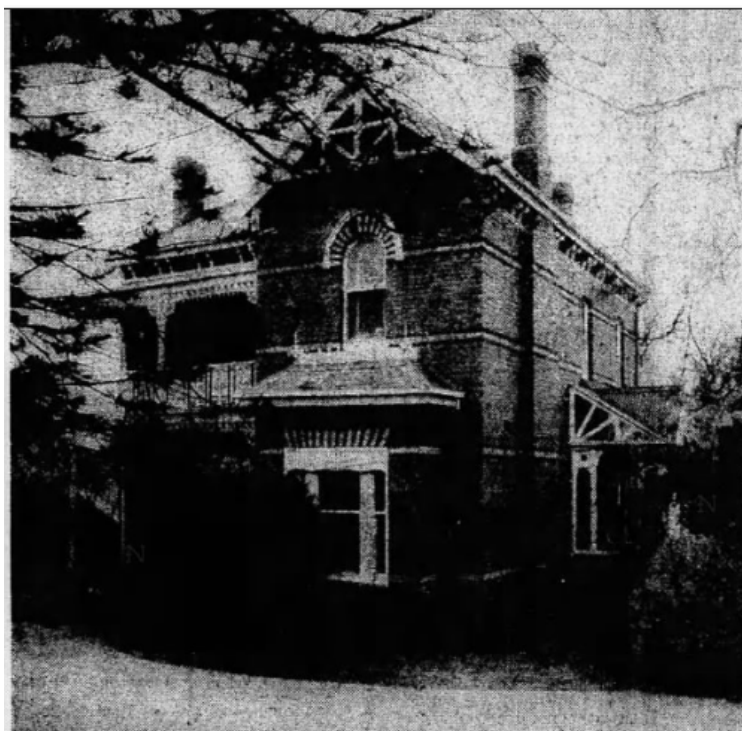


Figure 4. The house at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, in 1981 (*Age*, 12 September 1981, p. 47)

Sources

Age, 25 February 1955, p. 13 (Probate notice, John Richards).

Age, 5 December 1959, p. 21 (death notice, Florence Richards).

Age, 30 July 1960, p. 33 (sale notice for 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern).

Age, 5 September 1981, p. 45 (auction notice).

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Physical description

'Noorie', at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, sits behind a deep front garden on a relatively large block of land with a large side garden setback on the north side. It stands on the east side of Elizabeth Street, just south of Mary Street, and is clearly visible in the streetscape due to its size. Along the front boundary is a sympathetic timber picket fence. The front garden is densely grown with shrubs and a mature Cedar and a Norfolk Island Pine tree.



Figure 5. 'Noorie' as viewed from the north. Note the Cedar (centre) and Norfolk Island Pine (right) trees. (source: *Context* 2016)

It is a two-storey Victorian house which is an early example of the Queen Anne style. The roof is finished in slate, the walls and chimneys are of red brick (tuckpointed to the walls), with cream and black brick banding to the walls and window voussoirs. The banding continues around the side walls. Window sills are of bluestone.

The hipped roof has a complex M-profile also seen on Italianate houses of this era, as well as paired brackets to the eaves, also typical of that style. This is combined with a medieval influence which signals a transition to the Federation period, including a projecting gabled front bay with decorative trusswork at its apex, a Venetian Gothic arch to the window below it, and heavy corbelling to the brick chimneys. Other details of note include a bay window with a slate-clad hipped roof. The window below has a banded flat brick arch, side lights, and retains a rare timber roller-blind cover with an applied lozenge pattern on it.



Figure 6. Detail of the front projecting gable, with the timber trusswork, Venetian Gothic window. The cast-iron crest to the bay window below is not an original feature. (source: Context 2016)



Figure 7. Detail of the front bay window. Note the timber cover to conceal external roller blinds. (source: Context 2016)

The northern half of the front façade sits behind a two-storey verandah. Windows are long rectangular double-hung sashes. As noted in the History, the simple timber posts, cast-iron integrated frieze and brackets, and balustrade panels are replacements installed prior to 1981, while all original verandah detail was timber.

The front entrance is on the south side of the house, and is not easily visible from the street behind garden plantings. It is sheltered by a projecting porch structure, which has a bluestone and brick base, and timber super-structure supported on paired timber posts. The roof is complex in form, like a large hood supported on decorative timber brackets with a projecting gable at its centre.

The footprint of the house has been enlarged since it was recorded in the 1907 MMBW plan, with a large rear extension and outbuilding constructed (both only visible in aerials). No other external alterations were noted.

Comparative analysis

Victoria's economic crash of the early 1890s creates an obvious boundary between the excesses of the ornate 'Boom-style' architecture, characterised by exuberant cement-coated facades and cast-iron detail which draw upon classical forms, and the simpler Federation-era houses with their more natural palette of face brick and timber fretwork influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement. In fact, some architects had already been experimenting with this materials palette and new forms of massing in the late 1880s.

The residential style known in Australia as Queen Anne Revival was dominant by the turn of the century, and formed the builder's vernacular by 1915. The origins of the Queen Anne Revival style, in its more traditional form as well as its transformation into the recognisably Australian Federation villa, were English Domestic Revival designs by English architects Richard Norman Shaw and William Eden Nesfield. They drew their inspiration from traditional English rural buildings and Tudor architecture (Tibbits 1989:52).

The first Queen Anne Revival houses in Australia, dating from the late 1880s to mid-1890s, were mostly architect designed and show a more direct British influence as well as a greater stylistic eclecticism than the Federation Queen Anne houses that filled Melbourne's suburbs after 1900. These houses often had a pronounced vertical massing and gabled roofs, showing a strong medieval influence. This contrasts with later sprawling Federation bungalows with hipped roofs extending over encircling verandahs. Apart from medieval (mainly Gothic and Tudor) influences, architects of this period drew upon styles as diverse as Romanesque (with muscular round arches and banded voussoirs), Scottish Baronial (with its pointed towers and crow-stepped parapets), Anglo-Dutch (with curvilinear gable parapets), Art Nouveau (with its sinuous ornament), and Japanese design (with overlapping line patterns of verandah fretwork). A correct, 'academic' use of historical forms was rare, instead they were employed and combined to suit the architect's fancy in a manner often referred to as 'Free Style'.

One of the biggest changes from Victorian Italianate to Queen Anne houses was in the form of the roof and verandah. The low-line M-profile hipped roof was supplanted by high gabled and hipped roofs with complex forms, turrets and gablets at the top. Tall chimneys of corbelled red brick, often with roughcast detail, were another distinguishing feature. Eventually the separate verandah structure, set below the eaves, was replaced by an unbroken roofline that swooped down to incorporate the verandah. Another transition seen in the late 1880s and 1890s was in cladding materials, moving from brown Hawthorn and cream brickwork to simpler red face brick with render bands, and from slate roofs to terracotta Marseille tiles with decorative ridgescaping and finials. Red brick combined with lighter bands, of cream brick or smooth render, is referred to colloquially as 'blood and bandages'. Howells (1989:16) believes this wall treatment was derived from the polychromy of English Gothic Revival architects.

More modest early examples displaying a Queen Anne Revival influence often retained the Italianate M-profile hipped roof and asymmetric façade, but the projecting hipped roof bay, typical of the Italianate, was replaced with a gabled bay with half-timbering or decorative trusses at its peak. One of the earliest (and easiest) elements to change from the Italianate model was the verandah detail. The iron-roofed verandah set below the eaves was retained from the Italianate, but slender cast-iron columns were replaced with chunky turned timber posts. Often the cast-iron verandah frieze and brackets were superseded by timber fretwork, though new flatter patterns of cast-iron that emulated fretwork were still used until the 1910s.

Examples of these early Federation houses of the late 1880s and 1890s graded Significant in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay can be divided into several groups according to size and stylistic advancement. The largest are mansions such as 'Redcourt' at 506 Orrong Road, Armadale (HO166), 6 Mayfield Avenue, Malvern (HO275), 'Edzell' at 76 St Georges Road, Toorak (VHR H691), and 'Illawarra' at 1 Illawarra Court, Toorak (VHR H701).

The greatest number are large houses, some on tighter inner-suburban blocks and others on sprawling sites where the building could be designed 'in the round', with more than one main facade. Significant examples include the duplex at 3 & 5 Mercer Road, Armadale (HO327), 15 Avondale Road, Armadale (in HO123), 190-192 Wattletree Road, Malvern (in HO156), 10 Manning Road, Malvern (in HO133), 92 Finch Street, Malvern East (in HO133), 3 Forster Avenue, Malvern East (HO260), 15 Forster Avenue, Malvern East (HO310), 33, 45 & 49 Grandview Grove, Prahran (in HO135), 59 Kensington Road, South Yarra (HO64), 280 Domain Road, South Yarra (in HO122), 18 & 20 Hawksburn Road, South Yarra (in HO137), and 70 Clendon Road, Toorak (in HO143).

Finally, there are the modest single-storey villas that exhibit the transition from the Victorian Italianate to Edwardian Queen Anne. Often they retain the Italianate M-profile hipped roof and cast-iron verandah detail, but with a gabled projecting bay to the façade instead of the hipped bay seen on Italianate houses, and they are always finished in the newly fashionable red face brick. Significant examples of this type include 103 Kooyong Road, Armadale (in HO130), 12-16 Mercer Road, Armadale (HO328-330), and 38 Gladstone Street, Windsor (in HO134).

'Noorie' compares most closely with a number of substantial early Queen Anne houses, including 92 Finch Street, 70 Clendon Road and 45 Grandview Grove.



Figure 8. 92 Finch Street, Malvern East, individually significant in HO133. (source: Google Streetview)

It is most similar in scale to the houses at 92 Finch Street and 70 Clendon Road. It shares the use of medieval decorative forms with 92 Finch Street, here expressed in crenellation to a bay window as well as half-timbering and trusswork to the front gables. It is also similar to 70 Clendon Road in its massing and roof form, though 70 Clendon Road had cast-iron verandah detail from the Italianate style.



Figure 9. 70 Clendon Road, Toorak, individually significant in HO143. (source: Context 2016)

Its material palette and the use of decorative trusses are comparable to those of the larger 45 Grandview Grove.



Figure 10: 45 Grandview Grove, Prahran, individually significant in HO135. (source: walkingmelbourne.com)

The early Queen Anne designs which retain some of the Victorian Italianate massing along with the Federation eclecticism is illustrated by all of these houses, each of which differ in their decorative details. ‘Noorie’ contributes to this variety, with details not seen on the other examples, such as the Venetian Gothic window and detailing to the bay window.

While ‘Noorie’ has lost its original verandah detail, and is thus less intact than these three comparators, it is not alone amongst individually significant Victorian-era houses that are in the Stonnington Heritage Overlay. Others include 15 Forster Avenue, Malvern East, of 1890 (HO310); 20 Darling Street, South Yarra (HO459); 38 Huntingtower Road, Armadale (HO367); 49 Grandview Grove, Prahran (Significant in HO135); and 1257 High Street, Malvern (HO59).

Thematic context

This place illustrates the following themes, as identified in the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, rev. 2009):

8.2.1 ‘Country in the city’ - Suburban development in Malvern before WWI

8.3.2 Gardens

8.4.1 Houses as a symbol of wealth, status and fashion

Assessment against criteria

Assessment of this place was carried out in relation to the HERCON model criteria as set out in the VPP Practice Note ‘Applying the Heritage Overlay’ (2015).

Statement of significance

What is significant?

‘Noorie’ at 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern, is significant. It was built in 1891 for Catherine Taylor as her family home.

It is an early Federation Queen Anne two-storey polychrome brick house with an asymmetrical façade and a double-storey verandah. Walls are of red face brick with cream and black banding. Chimneys are of red brick with corbelled tops.

The house is significant to the extent of its nineteenth-century external form and fabric, particularly the elevations visible from the public domain (west, north and south), and the slate-covered hipped and gabled roof and chimneys.

The verandah posts and cast-iron detail, cast-iron crest to the bay window, front picket fence, the twentieth-century rear extension and outbuilding are not significant.

How is it significant?

'Noorie' is of local architectural and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

Architecturally, it is a largely intact example of a polychrome brick villa that demonstrates the emergence of the Federation Queen Anne Revival. The low M-profile hipped roof, clad in slate, survives from the Italianate, while a medieval influence characteristic of the Queen Anne style, is seen in the use of a gable to the projecting bay, the decorative truss and pendant-finial in this gable, the use of red face brick, and the corbelled brick chimneys. (Criterion D)

Aesthetically, 'Noorie' is important both as a local landmark and for its retention of many fine details. Its landmark value is created by its substantial size in the Elizabeth Street context, making it visible from many vantage points, and is enhanced by the tall mature trees in its front garden. The house is notable for its eclectic details, such as a Venetian Gothic window with a banded arch, the front bay window which retains a timber roller-blind cover with an applied lozenge pattern, and the entrance porch structure on the south side with a complex roof supported on timber posts. (Criterion E)

Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Heritage Overlay to the extent of the whole property as defined by the title boundaries.

HO Schedule controls: None

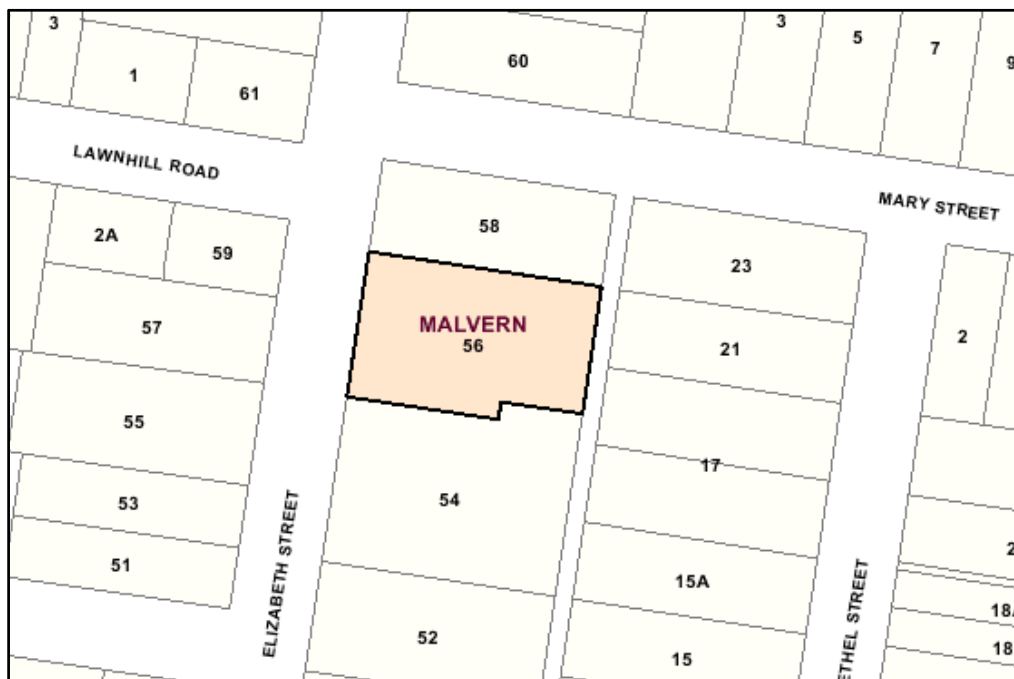


Figure 11: Recommended extent of heritage overlay for 56 Elizabeth Street, Malvern (source: www.land.vic.gov.au).

Recommended grading: A2