

BENTLEIGH HEIGHTS ESTATE PRECINCT

Address	The Highway (all) and Centre Road (nos 519-521), Bentleigh
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	1939 to 1942
Period	Interwar Period
Date Inspected	Early 2019



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct extends along both sides of The Highway and includes the adjoining houses to Centre Road.

The following features contribute to the significance of the precinct:

- Intact dwellings dating to the late Interwar period in a range of styles,
- Intact roof forms (hipped and/or gabled) and tiling (glazed terracotta and concrete),
- Original chimneys,
- Intact walls of face brick (red, clinker, cream, tapestry) and/or rendered (roughcast and smooth finishes),
- Original brickwork detailing (primarily banding),
- Original porches,
- Intact timber windows and doors. Two houses have decorative glass – lead lighting and/or stained glass,
- Original low front brick fences,
- Original garages,

- Original concrete driveways, especially those with a central grass island, and
- Original concrete crossovers, kerbing and guttering with exposed aggregate.

Contributory places:

- 519, 519A, 521 Centre Road
- 1A, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 31, 33 The Highway.

Non-contributory places:

- 2A, 19, 21 The Highway.

How is it Significant?

The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Glen Eira.

Why is it Significant?

The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct is of historical significance as it reflects the development of Bentleigh as a suburb initially attractive to market gardeners and later to residential developers. From about the turn of the century to the late 1930s, the precinct area was probably employed, at least initially, for market gardens as the Higgins family, owners of the land from 1902 to 1938, were active in this endeavour at the time but possibly as a dairy during the 1920s and 1930s. The suburb however underwent rapid growth from about the mid-1920s stimulated by the improved railway services as a result of electrification of the system. The land associated with the precinct subsequently came to be owned and developed by the real estate agents Waters and Ennis who with their advertising were seeking to attract a relatively affluent clientele, indicating the growing desirability of the area. Unusually, the precinct was developed during a short (three year) period from 1939 to 1942. (Criterion A)

The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct is of aesthetic significance as consisting of a cohesive group of good quality and distinctive Interwar period dwellings. Generally reflecting the influence of either the Tudor Revival or Moderne styles, the design of each house varies. Though similar detailing was often employed on a few buildings, it is combined in an individual way. The building stock is largely intact and distinguished by the prevalence of tapestry bricks, reflecting attention to detail above the norm, and the 'progressive' use of concrete for canopies and window hoods. In addition, many of the ancillary elements are intact such as masonry front fences, concrete kerbing and channelling, and some concrete driveways with grassy islands. (Criterion E)

Description

The precinct includes all 30 properties with an address to The Highway, as well as three adjacent properties on Centre Road, which bookend its southern end. The Highway is an L-shaped street which gradually rises to the north where there is a turning circle. The carriageway is asphalt and the kerbing, channelling and many of the crossovers are original concrete with a high aggregate content as compared to that of the later concrete paving. A section of basalt edge adjacent to the concrete channelling is also exposed at the southern end on the east side.

Original low brick fences survive to all the original properties except 521 Centre Road. Most of the fences have glazed triangular coping bricks, and two have a crenulated/toothed profile (519/A Centre Road and no. 4)¹. A few driveways and pedestrian paths retain original concrete paving (e.g. nos 5 + 29), and some retain a central island in addition (with grass at nos 2, 4, 6, 10, 16 or partly/infilled at nos 8 + 29).² Other properties have red brick paving to the front yard. Typical of most contemporary suburban development, the houses are set in gardens with a central lawn and perimeter garden beds containing low plantings so that the houses are generally visible. One property retains edging to the front garden beds (no. 13).

The original Interwar period houses are remarkably intact and are all single-storey brick with chimneys and hip roofs, although some have prominent street facing gable ends with corbelling. Their form is asymmetric, or informal, with a porch, either a distinct element or incorporated under the main roof. The distinct porches have a flat concrete or a gable roof, and others with a parapet (including curved or crenulated profile). A few houses have a patio/deck with decorative metal balustrades (nos 4, 6, 29) and metal grilles have been introduced to several porches.

¹ When referring to particular properties in the Highway, street numbers are only provided.

² Until 2013, according to Google Street View, other properties also retained an original concrete driveway and central grass island (nos 9, 18, 31)

The roofs are generally hipped, though a few have gabled sections. The cladding is either glazed terracotta tiles (variegated, red or black) or concrete tiles (S-profile), though some of both types have been painted. Wide eaves with a soffit lined with battened sheeting are typical. Two houses have a two storey addition over the front roof section (nos 14 + 33).



519A Centre Road – Moderne style influence



1A The Highway – Old English Revival influence



4 The Highway – stepped brickwork to corners



10 The Highway – tapestry bricks to porch and grass island to driveway

Whilst there is a consistency to the designs in terms of materials palette and features, each house is different, with certain distinguishing elements typically employed to a few buildings, though in varying combinations. In regards to the walls, they are mostly face brick, in stretcher bond, in various colour combinations, with some a mixture of brick (plinth and trims) and render. The plinth is predominantly clinker brick, usually with some projecting courses, though a few buildings are mostly clinker bricks. All buildings are distinguished by the use of some decorative patterning, often banding, and/or tapestry bricks to the porch and/or openings (sills/lintels). The range of colours includes umber/manganese, glazed brown, cream, orange/red and orange/brown (variegated and often laid to create a section of herringbone). Some of the distinctive bricks are narrow/Roman and others are about 3/4 width. The detailing to the tall chimneys usually echoes the palette/distinguishing detailing of each building.

The windows are universally timber-framed with double hung sashes and some fixed panes, for instance to the main tripartite front window. One building has a horizontal glazing bar to the upper sash, relating to a Moderne influence, and two have decorative glass. Front doors are usually obscured by the porch and/or grilles, though a few are (partly) visible and are timber-framed with large areas of glazing, including a geometric pattern of glazing bars.

In terms of design, they are indicative of the late Interwar period when a range of styles were popular. Elements of some of these styles have been applied to the base type to differentiate each building. The most common influence is that of the Tudor Revival/Old English style as indicated by the presence of a Tudor arch,³ either in a corbelled gable end (nos 7, 31) or not (nos 8, 13, 33, 20). Corbelled gable ends are also characteristic of this style (e.g. no 1A) as are crenulations, which have been employed

³ A Tudor arch has a depressed profile and is also referred to as a pseudo-four-centred arch

to porches (nos 14 and 18) and fences (nos 18 and 519/519A Centre Road). No. 1A is also distinguished by a band of dogtooth brickwork.

A few houses display the influence of the Moderne style by way of a horizontal emphasis, such as banding or 'speed lines' (519/519A Centre Road, no. 16) and/or a flat concrete roof to the porch (nos 9, 11,12, 16). Nos 2 and 16 have a curved wall to the porch, also characteristic of the Moderne style. Several houses also have a concrete hood/canopy to the main windows or which extends the length of the façade (nos 16, 521 Centre Road).



16 The Highway – Moderne style, curved corner and roof porch, and thin banding



17 The Highway – corbelled openings to porch



18 The Highway – crenulated parapet to porch



22 The Highway – gabled porch with glass bricks

Some porch openings are semi-circular arch and others are squared. In regards to the latter type, two are distinguished by additional recessing, one also with a planter box (no. 10). A few places have some other distinctive brickwork such as the stepped corners (no. 4) or a brick sill with bracket outline (nos 15, 17).

Garages to the properties with an address to The Highway are universally located to the rear and are not original, though the garage to no. 20 dates to circa 1950s (between 1947 and 1963). The semi-detached pair on Centre Road however each have an original garage – with that to no. 519A being incorporated under the main roof of the building and retaining original timber doors (accessed from The Highway), and that to no. 519 being a separate but adjoining element with a modern roller-door.

The following table summarises the key details of each extant original house in The Highway and Centre Road that contribute to the precinct.

Address	Details
Centre Road	
519/519A	Only pair of semi-detached, polychrome, banding with orange and border of umber (including sills, chimneys and porch), horizontal glazing bar to upper sash, crenulated fence, garage incorporated to east

Address	Details
	side with original doors.
521	Moderne style concrete canopy, brick sills and quoining to doorway, decorative glass, only high fence
The Highway (odds)	
1A	Umber brick, gable end with band of dogtooth brickwork
1	Wide clinker brick base, concrete hood and brick pilasters
3	Tapestry bricks to windows, concrete hood
5	Tudor arch, concrete hoods, similar to no. 13
7	Tudor arch, asymmetric gable end (similar to a catslide), banding
9	Moderne influence, concrete canopy, banding with umber bricks
11	Windows with umber brick pilasters, porch with parapet
13	Tudor arch, concrete hoods, similar to no. 5
15	Porch with concrete roof, glazed brown bricks to banding and sills with bracket-like brickwork
17	Cream brickwork to lintels and sills, porch with corbelled openings
23	Largely obscured, porch with flat roof
25	Roman brick detailing to porch and windows, corner window
27	Old English Revival style influence, prominent gable ends
29	Porch included under main roof, narrow banding
31	Old English Revival style influence, prominent gable end, diamond quarrels to windows
33	Tudor arch, banded brickwork painted, prominent additions
The Highway (evens)	
2	Moderne influence, porch with parapet and curved corner, umber brick detailing
4	Porch with recessing opening, stepped corner brickwork, concrete hoods
6	Rounded arches with tapestry bricks
8	Tudor arch with tapestry bricks, concrete hoods
10	Tapestry brickwork to porch, with recessing opening and planter box
12	Polychromatic brickwork, porch with recessing opening and planter box
14	Tudor arch, concrete hoods, corner window, dogtooth brickwork to parapet of porch, prominent additions
16	Moderne style, porch with curved corner and flat concrete roof, narrow banding
18	Porch with crenulations, orange/red brickwork with banding to façade and broad chimney, corner window
20	Polychromatic brickwork, Tudor arch, possible early garage (post 1947)
22	Gabled porch with glass bricks and rounded arch

There are three early 21st century developments in the precinct, all of which are two storey: no. 2A at the south end and two adjacent houses at the north end, nos 19 and 21.

History

The Highway, like much of Bentleigh, formed part of Dendy's Special Survey known as the Brighton Estate - an 8 square mile (5,120 acres) holding in the Parish of Moorabbin acquired by Henry Dendy on 18 October 1841. Special Surveys were a particular method of survey permitted between 1840 and 1841 in which the Crown sold 8 square mile allotments and allowed the internal configuration of the land to be determined by the purchaser.⁴ Its boundaries are reflected in the existing names of the streets of North Road, East Boundary Road and South Road, with Port Phillip Bay as the western boundary.⁵

Limited development occurred in the area during the 19th century, when it was widely employed for market gardens, particularly by people of Irish descent.⁶ The railway reached Bentleigh in 1881 – initially known as East Brighton Station, it was renamed Bentleigh Station in 1907 after the Victorian Premier, Sir Thomas Bent (1838-1909), who was raised in the area. Although some subdivision occurred during the 1880s, few sites were developed until the electrification of the railways during the 1920s, which allowed for more, and faster, services.

By 1899, two local market gardeners – John Simmonds of Boundary Road, East Brighton (now Bentleigh) and William Simmonds of North Road, Caulfield – acquired two separate but large parcels of land in this part of Bentleigh consisting of nearly 18 acres in total.⁷

Three years later in 1902, Ruth Higgins, married woman of Jasper Road, East Brighton acquired the smaller holding of some 6 acres (2.3 hectares), which relates to the extent of the precinct, from her brothers.⁸ Ruth was an older sister of John and William Simmonds and married James John Clarke Higgins, with whom she had six children – four boys and two girls.⁹ Several members of the Higgins family were occupied in the local farming sector, especially market gardens, during the early part of the 20th century. By the mid-1920s, Albert William (son of Ruth) was operating a dairy opposite the recreation reserve and images survive of the family harvesting maize near St Paul's Church at the corner of Brewer and Jasper roads.¹⁰

On Ruth's death in 1923, the land was inherited by two of her sons – Ernest James Higgins, driver of East Moorabbin, and Albert William Higgins, dairyman of Jasper Road, Bentleigh.¹¹ There had been a timber house at 519 Centre Road from about 1921, which was initially occupied by James Higgins (probably James John), gardener, for about two years.¹² It was subsequently occupied by John Gillies, who from 1925 may have operated a dairy at the site.¹³ In 1927, the site was occupied by James F Convey and in 1928 it was vacant. Between 1929 and 1931 it was again occupied by James Higgins, and from 1933 to 1938, by Jonathon A Gillies (possibly the earlier Gillies/related to them).¹⁴

The original house, identified as *Oxford Glen* on a 1929 MMBW plan, is also evident on a 1931 aerial.¹⁵ A group of outbuildings were located to the rear which may have included a dairy and probably some stables, as in 1926, the following sale notice was published in the *Age*: 'Racehorse, Sir Jeneda, 5 years, sound, splendid condition, winner, placed performances, Oxford Glen, Centre-rd, Bentleigh'.¹⁶ At this time, The Highway had not been created but an earlier Methodist Chapel/Sunday School had been built adjacent on the west corner of Balmoral Avenue (523 Centre Road).

⁴ John B. Parker, 'Surveying', *The Encyclopedia of Melbourne*, eds. Andrew Brown May & Shurlee Swain, p703. It was one of only three such holdings established

⁵ Parish Plan of Moorabbin, County Bourke, VPRS 16171, P1, Plans Ma-Na

⁶ John Cribbin, *Moorabbin: A Pictorial History 1862-1994*, pp33-35. The soil, initially thought to be poor, responded well to fertilisation and careful management

⁷ Certificate of Title, vol. 2737/folio 225

⁸ Certificate of Title, vol. 2879/folio 644

⁹ Ancestry.com: Burke-Holdway Family Tree, accessed 01.05.19; Electoral rolls: 1908, 1913, 1917, 1922, 1925, and 1928. Ruth was born in Berkshire England in 1852 and her family immigrated to Australia during the following year

¹⁰ John Cribbin, *Moorabbin: A Pictorial History 1862-1994*, p43

¹¹ Certificate of Title, vol. 2879/folio 644

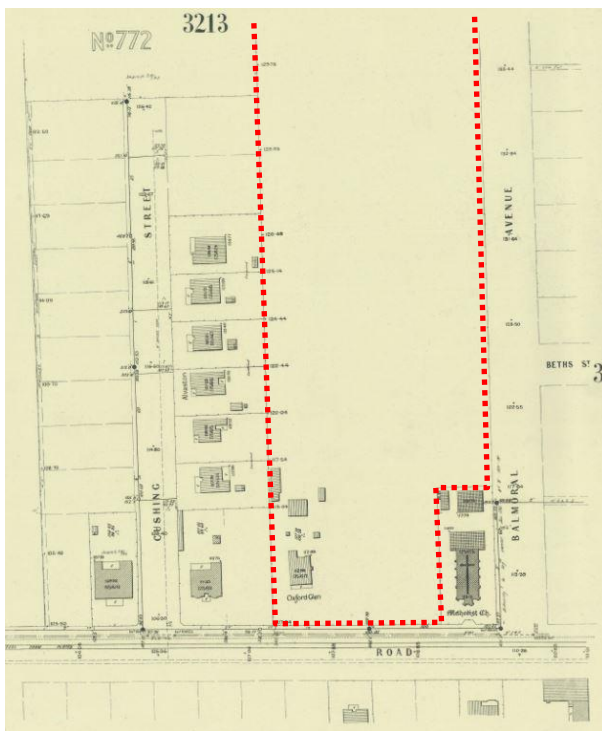
¹² Sands & McDougall's directory, 1921, 1922

¹³ Sands & McDougall's directory, 1923, 1925

¹⁴ Sands & McDougall's directory, 1933, 1938

¹⁵ 1931 aerial, Maldon Prison, Project No. 1931, Run 25, Frame 2480 (Landata)

¹⁶ 'Livestock Wanted & for Sale', *Age*, 12 June 1926, p10



Southern part of the Bentleigh Heights Estate
MMBW detail plan no. 3215, 1929
(Source: SLV)



1931 aerial photograph, approximate area of the precinct shown
(Source: Landata, Maldon Prison, Project No. 1931, Run 25, Frame 2480)

This circumstance changed with the purchase of the 2.3 acres by Charles John Waters and Richard Ennis, both of 271 Collins Street, Melbourne in July 1938.¹⁷ Waters and Ennis operated as real estate agents for about 35 years, from the early 1930s to the mid-1960s. Initially based at 271 Collins Street, they later moved their offices to 64 Elizabeth Street Melbourne.¹⁸ Although Charles John Waters died in 1946, the company's name was retained.¹⁹

A month after acquiring the land, a plan of subdivision was approved on which it was defined as Bentleigh Heights Estate.²⁰ The estate consisted of 31 allotments, 28 with an address to the Highway and three with an address to Centre Road (nos 519, 519A, and 521). At this time, the City of Moorabbin sought tenders for 'the construction of the Highway, Bentleigh'.²¹

Site preparation was underway soon after with the developers Waters and Ennis seeking tenders in November of 1938 for grading and filling land at the Bentleigh Heights Estate.²² Development was rapid. In mid-December of that year, of the 30 modern homes to be erected in the estate, four were '... started, two already sold, one now ready to occupy.' The price at this time was £995 for a house consisting of 'five rooms and furnished meal nook. Modern bathroom. Also smart lighting.'²³

¹⁷ Certificate of Title, vol. 6211, folio 117

¹⁸ The earliest and latest references are *Age*, 5 December 1931, p8 and 1 October 1966, p43

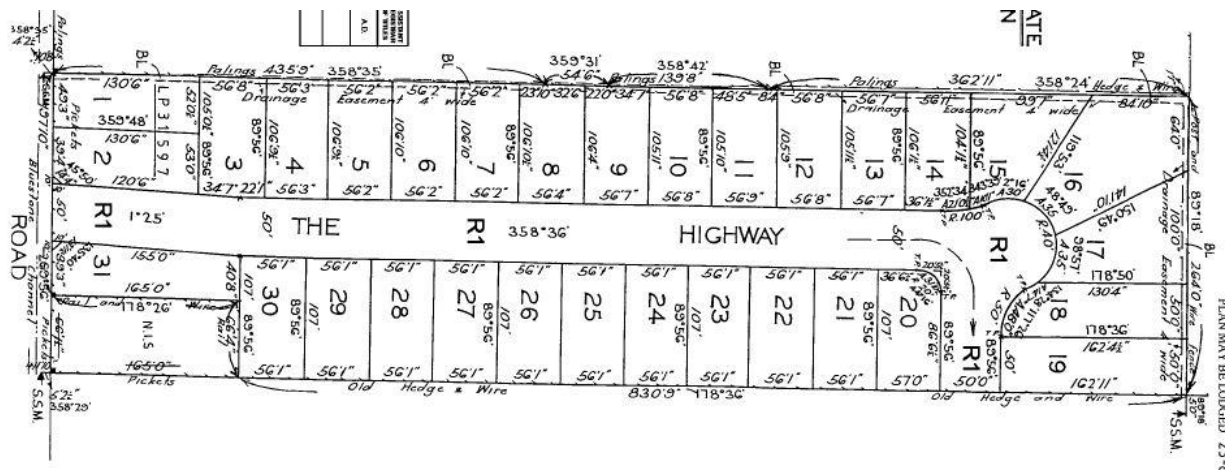
¹⁹ *Argus*, 30 August 1946, p2

²⁰ LP14776, dated 23 August 1938

²¹ 'Tenders', *Argus*, 6 August 1938, p20

²² 'Tenders', *Argus*, 12 November 1938, p8

²³ 'Houses and Land for Sale', *Argus*, 14 December 1938, p18



Subdivision Plan LP 14776
(Source: Landata)

The first lot to be sold was 3 The Highway on 11 January 1939.²⁴ By April 1939, the price of a house and land package had increased to £1035 with a deposit of £300 and weekly payments of £30. In the advertisement, the new estate of brick homes was described as 'overlooking the Dandenongs and Ocean'.²⁵ As of September of that year, 15 houses had been built 'going in spite of war. No profiteering' at a price of £1050.²⁶ Construction continued at speed as within three months, that is, by the beginning of December, another eight houses had been completed – 23 houses built in 12 months.²⁷ A week later it was noted in the *Age* that 21 houses had been sold with only 10 lots remaining.²⁸ At this time, with rising costs, the lots were being sold for £1195 including roads and paths.²⁹ By March 1940, three lots were remaining.³⁰ The last identified advertisement for new houses was in August 1940, though one house was re-advertised in March 1941 by Waters & Ennis as 'almost new all brick bungalow ... £1350... The owner has special reasons for selling'.³¹ The last of the original 31 lots, 23 The Highway, was sold on 25 November 1940. Soon after an additional allotment was created, 1A the Highway, with the subdivision of the rear part of 519-519A Centre Road, which was sold on 10 January 1941.³²

The original house on Centre Road was demolished between 1938 and 1940, and by 1942 when the existing semi-detached pair at nos 519-519A had been constructed.³³ It seems that construction commenced at the southern end of The Highway and continued evenly along both sides as in 1940, according to the directories, on the west side five houses were being occupied (nos 1, 3, 5, 7, and 13) with no. 9 being vacant. On the east side, nos 4 + 8 were occupied, nos 2 + 6 were vacant, and two others were being built.³⁴ Two years later, all 29 houses with an address to The Highway were being occupied as were the three to Centre Road, though the number for what is now no. 521 had not been defined.³⁵ The complete development of the precinct is evident on the following 1946-47 aerial.

24 Certificate of Title, vol. 6211, folio 117
 25 'Houses and Land for Sale', *Argus*, 8 April 1939, p14
 26 *Age*, 16 September 1939, p3
 27 'Houses for Sale', *Argus*, 2 December 1939, p22
 28 'Houses and Land for Sale', *Age*, 9 December 1939, p4
 29 'Houses and Land for Sale', *Herald*, 16 December 1939, p38
 30 'Houses and Land for Sale', *Age*, 9 March 1940, p4
 31 *Age*, 3 August 1940, p2 and 29 March 1941, p3
 32 Certificate of Title, vol. 6211, folio 117
 33 *Sands & McDougall's directory*, 1942
 34 *Sands & McDougall's directory*, 1940, p117
 35 *Sands & McDougall's directory*, 1942, pp114, 120



The Highway, 1946-47 aerial photograph
(Source: Ringwood 849c1c, University of Melbourne library)



The Highway, 1963 aerial photograph
(Source: Landata, Melbourne 1963 Project, Proj. No. 486, Run 20, Frame 134)

One of the earliest houses to change hands was that at no. 4, which was auctioned in 1950. In the advertisement, The Highway was described as 'Bentleigh's best street' and Waters and Ennis were the agents.³⁶

Change

The precinct probably remained intact for at least 50 years before substantial change occurred.

The rear parts of three properties on the east side of The Highway – nos 4, 8 and 12 - have been subdivided to create small allotments with an address to Balmoral Avenue (nos 5, 9 and 13 respectively). In addition, the rear part of 27 The Highway was subdivided circa 2011 to create 30 and 32 Seaview Avenue to the north.³⁷

The two storey dwelling at 2A The Highway was erected by December 2007, being subdivided from 521 Centre Road. A two storey addition to the latter was built by this time, which is visible along the east side of The Highway. By late 2007, no demolition of any original dwellings had occurred however two years later, no. 19 was demolished and replaced with a two storey dwelling. Subsequently similar change has occurred at no. 21.³⁸

Visible two storey, rear additions have been carried out to a few dwellings.

³⁶ *Herald*, 29 September 1950, p10

³⁷ According to Nearmap, the northern part was fenced off during late 2011 – between 17 November and 5 December. The land was cleared by early 2014 and a semi-detached pair were erected by September of that year

³⁸ Google Street View

Thematic Context/Comparative Analysis

City of Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan – vol. 1 (Historical Background):

- Suburban Expansion and Consolidation (1920s-1930s),
- Epilogue (1940s).

Known comparable places in the City of Glen Eira:

The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct is one of several Interwar period housing precincts in Glen Eira, reflecting the fact that the period was a major phase of development in much of the municipality. The Bentleigh Heights Estate Precinct is distinguished by being one of the more concentrated precincts in terms of building styles and for a relatively high proportion of houses displaying the influence of the Moderne idiom, in addition to the general high quality of the design as indicated by the prevalent use of tapestry bricks.

- The proposed precinct compares with the much larger nearby Bentleigh Residential Precinct (HO69), which was mainly developed throughout the Interwar period, especially the late 1920s. It features a broad array of Interwar period styles, with a similarly high proportion of bungalow style houses, some Spanish Mission and Tudor Revival, though relatively few Moderne style houses.
- The proposed Rose Hill Estate Precinct is a similar scaled precinct. It however was developed over a broader period during the Interwar period (late 1920s and mid-1940s) and most of the styles popular at that time are represented including bungalows, Old English/Tudor Revival, Spanish Mission, Georgian Revival and Moderne.
- Beauville Estate and Environs, Murrumbeena (HO12) – a precinct constructed by the A V Jennings Company during the mid to late 1930s consisting of brick houses with relatively restrained detailing including Moderne, Tudor Revival styles, etc. and other facilities (shops and tennis court). It has a cul-de-sac similar to The Highway, Bentleigh.
- Glen Huntly Park Estate and Environs (HO28) – a large, mostly 1930s development with concrete roadways and a mix of predominantly brick housing in the Spanish Mission/Mediterranean, Old English, Georgian Revival and Moderne styles. Some timber bungalows in Neville Street.
- Hillcrest Avenue and Environs, Caulfield (HO32) – a small precinct of consistent housing constructed by the A V Jennings Company during 1933 and 1934 with examples of Spanish Mission/Mediterranean and Old English styles prevailing.
- Glen Huntly Tram Depot & Glen Huntly Road Environs (HO70) – includes several brick, Interwar period houses built circa 1930.
- Glen Eira Road and Environs, Caulfield North (HO73) – a precinct consisting of commodious brick houses mostly dating to the Interwar period, but also some from the Late Federation period and a Victorian period mansion, *Nithsdale*. A range of typical styles are evident including Californian bungalows, Spanish Mission/Mediterranean, Old English, and Moderne.
- Vadhre Avenue and Balacava Road, East St Kilda (HO76) – this small precinct consists of more substantial and distinctive examples popular during the Interwar period.

Condition

Good

Integrity

Mostly intact

Previous Assessment

Nos 9 and 11 were identified as being of local interest (D grade), several were graded E grade (also local interest), and a few were not graded – Andrew Ward, Bentleigh survey, maps 2 + 5, March 1996

The area is currently included within NCO1 (neighbourhood character overlay)

Heritage Overlay Schedule Controls

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Outbuildings and/or Fences	No

Extent of Heritage Overlay

The proposed extent of the heritage overlay would be the land including:

- The Highway: nos 1A to 33 (west side and northern return) and nos 2A to 22 (east side)
- Centre Road: nos 519-521 (north side)



Recommended extent of registration
(Source: Nearmap, depicting 2019)