

BEEMERY PARK PRECINCT

Address	Elsternwick: 40-44 + 47-63 Seymour Road and 57 Allison Road
Significance	Local
Construction Dates	Circa 1886 to 1901
Period	Late Victorian
Date Inspected	Late 2018 and early 2019



Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The following features contribute to the significance of the Beemery Park Precinct:

- Intact dwellings dating to the late-Victorian period,
- Intact hipped roof forms and roof cladding, predominantly slate tiles,
- Original chimneys – rendered or face brick,
- Original bi- or polychrome brickwork (brown, cream and red) with banding, quoining, contrasting lintels etc.,
- Intact rendered walls with ashlar/smooth,
- Intact timber walls (no 40),
- Intact wall detailing – cornice with brackets, etc.,
- Intact bay windows,
- Original gable end detailing – rough cast render and timber battens (53 Seymour Road),
- Intact openings – timber windows (generally double-hung sashes, with some casements), often with basalt sills, and doors, some with decorative glass,

- Original verandah detailing including cast iron or timber friezes, and tiles,
- Basalt pitchers to kerbs and channels, and
- Complementary street plantings, mainly London Plane trees (*Platanus acerifolia*).

Contributory places:

- Seymour Road (north side): 47, 51, 53, 57, 59, 61, 63
- Seymour Road (south side): 40, 42, 44
- Allison Road: 57-59

Non-contributory places:

- Seymour Road (north side): 49, 55

How is it Significant?

The Beemery Park Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance to the City of Glen Eira.

Why is it Significant?

The Beemery Park Precinct is of historical significance for its ability to illustrate the development of middle-class housing estates in Elsternwick over the late 19th century. During the 1880s, the explosive growth rate and speculative activities of wider metropolitan Melbourne stimulated a building boom across the suburb, in which many of its larger estates were subdivided and subject to a rapid construction. As demonstrated by the precinct, which consolidated between circa 1886-1901, the dwelling of choice for the relatively affluent suburbanite was that of the single family and freestanding Italianate style villa. This phase of development, curtailed by the onset of the 1890s Depression, was key in the establishment of suburban Elsternwick and solidified Seymour Road as a decidedly prosperous location.

(Criterion A)

The Beemery Park Precinct is of aesthetic significance for being comprised of a well-designed and largely intact group of Late Victorian period villas set on relatively large lots in generous garden settings. The 11 remaining houses are good examples of their type – predominantly that of the Italianate style – although its expression is varied throughout the precinct, with both asymmetric and symmetric compositions and either polychromatic, rendered or timbered examples. There is also a typical but wide range of late 19th century ornamentation. Slate clad (some replaced) hipped roofs have universally been employed. Consistent forms and a high level of detail form a cohesive streetscape that is evocative of the Late Victorian period. There is also a distinctive late 19th century/Federation transitional villa at 53 Seymour Road (constructed circa 1901). Its roughcast rendered and half-timbered gable ends, along with other elements, are interpretable as a harbinger of the emergent influence of the Arts and Crafts movement. (Criterion E)

Description

The Beemery Park Precinct consists of 13 allotments between Orrong Road and Park Street – nine to the north side of Seymour Road, three to the south side of Seymour Road and one to the north side of Allison Road. The rectangular allotments on the northern side of Seymour Road are slightly shorter in length than those to the south side – approximately 46 metres as compared to 57 metres. The allotments are approximately 24 metres in width, with the exception of allotment 57-59 Allison Road, which has been formed through the amalgamation of two larger allotments. The terrain is generally flat with a gradual incline to some of the allotments. An L-shaped section of land to the west boundary of the precinct has been excluded.

The 11 original villas date from the late 19th century and are all freestanding and single storey with landscaped front yards. The majority of the dwellings are examples of the Italianate style, while one (53 Seymour Road) is indicative of a transitional mode (Late Victorian/Federation).

Predominantly, the Italianate villas have an asymmetric arrangement formed by a projecting (mainly faceted) bay and off-set verandah, with cast iron ornamentation. There are three exceptions – 44, 51 and 61 Seymour Road – which have symmetrical façades and verandahs that span the full width of the building.

Roof forms are typically hipped and, typical of the era, medium pitched and clad with slate tiles. While 57 and 59 Seymour Road have non-original tiles, these most likely replaced earlier slate tiles. Prominent chimneys, rendered with moulded capping, are a consistent feature.

Polychromatic brickwork is indicative of the late 19th century and is evident at 44, 51, 53, 59 and 63 Seymour Road (and probably to no. 47 also), where varying hues of red, brown and cream brick have been employed. Brick details include contrasting bands, quoining, friezes and lintels. The remaining villas are rendered brick except for 40 Seymour Road is timber-framed with ashlar boards to the façade. Timber sash windows and brackets (brick or timber) to the cornice are characteristic of the Italianate style and consistently employed in the precinct.

Stylistically, the one exception is 53 Seymour Road, which exhibits a transitional character. It has a similar façade format to the other asymmetric houses in the precinct but includes a gable end with roughcast sheeting and timber battens. This type of detailing is closely associated with residential design in the Federation period and demonstrates the influence of the Queen Anne style with its Arts and Crafts undertones. While red brick with contrasting banding was a hallmark of this idiom, the intermediate quality of the residence is denoted by its use of brown bricks, double-hung sashes and cast iron detailing, all element typical of the Late Victorian period.





Original path configurations exist to the front yards of 51 Seymour Road and 57 Allison Road, and appear as unchanged (as evident in the 1902 MMBW plan, refer below). While those at 40, 42, 44, 47, 59, 61 and 63 Seymour Road generally provide an indication of the original configuration.

It is likely that no original fences remain in the precinct.




Over the 20th century, side driveways have been introduced throughout the precinct. This appears to have required the introduction of associated retaining walls to some front gardens, which are generally characterised by a gentle slope to the street boundary.




Substantial one and/or two-storey additions have typically been constructed to the rear of the villas but are not overly visible from the public domain.

Details of each house are outlined in the following table.

Address + Name ¹	Notes	Image
<p>47 Seymour Road <i>Marcola</i></p>	<p>Asymmetric form Slate roof, including hexagonal tiles Original brick chimneys, overpainted Painted brick Combination of rectangular and arched windows Decorative glass at entry, possibly not original Cast iron frieze, possibly non-original timber posts Several skillion-roofed and larger contemporary additions to the rear and garage Reproduction cast iron fence</p>	
<p>51 Seymour Road <i>Rockenstein</i></p>	<p>Symmetrical form, highly intact Slate roof with bi-chrome chimneys Polychrome brickwork Verandah with central arched portico, cast iron detailing, and unfluted columns Entry with etched glass Large two storey addition and carport at the rear Non-original low brick fence and basalt retaining wall along driveway</p>	
<p>53 Seymour Road</p>	<p>Asymmetric form, Transitional style Slate with straps to chimneys Gable end with roughcast render and timber battens Bi-chrome brickwork – cream to banding, lintels and frieze Entry with decorative glass Skillion-roofed garage addition Large two storey addition at the rear Fence with basalt plinth and cast iron palisade (reproduction)</p>	
<p>57 Seymour Road <i>Elderslie</i></p>	<p>Asymmetric form Non-original roof tiles, intact chimneys Rendered façade, face brick to side elevations Cornice with panels and circular motifs Windows – moulded architraves, brackets, and escutcheon Rear additions</p>	

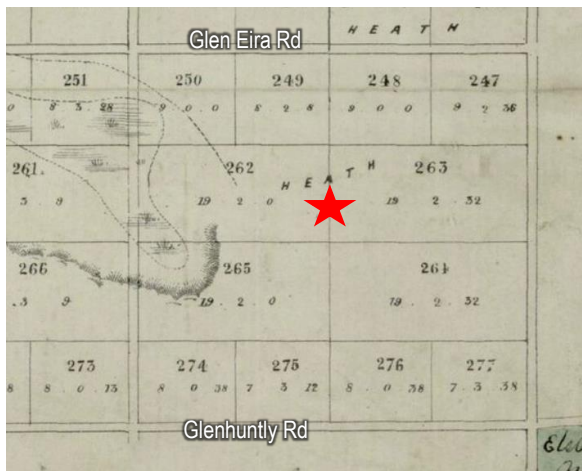
¹ MMBW detail plan no. 1457, Caulfield, dated 1902

Address + Name ¹	Notes	Image
59 Seymour Road <i>Mia Mia</i>	Asymmetric form Roof with non-original 'shingle' tiles, bi-chrome chimneys Polychrome brickwork, tuck-pointed Verandah with cast iron frieze Non-original square fronted bay window below verandah Two storey rear addition Non-original fence	
61 Seymour Road	Symmetrical form, largely obscured Slate roof, central valley infilled Full-height windows String mouldings Cast iron frieze and unfluted columns Decorative glass to entry	
63 Seymour Road <i>Rathgar</i>	Corner site, largely concealed from road Slate roof, over-painted brick chimneys Polychrome brickwork, tuck-pointed, contrasting lintels and banding Bull-nose verandah, cast iron detailing Brick garage to rear/Park Street	
40 Seymour Road <i>Kalutara</i>	Asymmetric form Slate roof with hexagonal band, intact chimneys Ashlar boarding to façade, weatherboard to side elevations Etched glass at original entry Single storey additions	

Address + Name ¹	Notes	Image
42 Seymour Road <i>Balgay</i>	Asymmetric form Slate roof and intact chimneys Rendered brick Narrow arched openings to faceted bay Full height sash windows Moulded architraves terminated by narrow horizontal moulding between windows Large two-storey rear addition	
44 Seymour Road <i>Fern Hill</i>	Symmetric form Slate roof and original chimney (overpainted), rear chimney has been modified Polychrome brickwork, diamonds to frieze Basalt sills Cast iron frieze, non-original timber posts Verandah deck altered to concrete Non-original brick fence and basalt retaining wall along driveway Single-storey rear addition	
57-59 Allison Road <i>Lone Hand</i>	Large site, partly concealed Rendered/painted brick facades and chimneys Label mouldings to windows Cornice with decorative brackets Bull-nose verandah, fluted posts, cast iron detailing Entry path configuration similar to original Non-original high rendered fence and metal gate Weatherboard building in north-west corner, constructed after 1945	

History

The Beemery Park Precinct initially formed part of Crown Allotments 262 and 263 in the Parish of Prahran. At the time of its initial survey in the mid-19th century, the landscape in this section of Elsternwick was described as heathland.²



Approximate location the precinct indicated by the star
(Source: *Map of part of Parish of Prahran, 1853, SLV*, <<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/161578>>)

While initially situated on the periphery of suburban Melbourne, beyond the more settled environs of Prahran and St Kilda, the ready availability of considerable allotments in Elsternwick and the early private establishment of its railway station (1859) proved attractive to the genteel and affluent. Alongside dairies and market gardens, a patchwork of prestige estates, 'private houses of a superior character standing in pleasure grounds',³ were erected from the 1860s. The government takeover of the railway line (1878), which improved services, and speculative activities of the land boom stimulated a more intensive phase of subdivision and development in the suburb over the 1880s. Along the major roads and across the former grounds of handsome mansions, rows of generally high-quality detached houses multiplied and dedicated shopping strips emerged. Following the general building hiatus of the 1890s Depression, a decidedly middle-class suburb consolidated with little unused land available by the early 1930s.⁴

In August 1882, the sale of 99 'magnificent mansion and villa sites' in the Beemery Park Estate was announced. This large subdivision, situated in the sparsely settled north-section part of Elsternwick, was bound by Seymour Road in the north, Allison Road in the south, Orrong Road in the west and Kooyong Road in the east. An 8-roomed villa residence (outside the precinct) was also promoted for sale. The estate was spruiked as in the vicinity:

of the magnificent mansion and beautiful grounds of Henry Ricketson, Esq, and all the estate surrounded by other fine residences, and is only FIVE MINUTES' walk from the Elsternwick Railway Station... The DOUBLE LINE OF RAILWAY will shortly be open, when trains will run to and from Melbourne every 20 minutes. Intending purchases of suburban sites will do well to secure desirable blocks in this estate, instead of helping to crowd the already over-populated suburbs of St. Kilda, Windsor, Prahran, Richmond, Fitzroy, and Carlton.

HEALTH, HAPPINESS, and PROSPERITY are secured to all who purchase and reside in this lovely estate.

The view of the bay and Melbourne is simply charming, and the exceedingly rich quality of the soil can be seen from the perfect landscape gardens attached to many of the beautiful residences in the neighbourhood... Luncheon will be provided in a marquee on the ground.⁵

The success of the auction was discussed by the *Argus* a few days later, including a description of the purchased allotments:

Seymour-road allotments from 80ft to 75ft, frontage by depths of 189 feet to 150 feet, from £2 6s. to £1 7s. per foot; Allison-road allotments from 80ft. to 70ft. frontage by 189ft. depth, from £2 28s. per ft... There was an exceedingly large attendance, and the biddings were very spirited, every lot being sold.⁶

² 'Commercial Intelligence', *Argus*, 21 August 1882, p4

³ Andrew Garran, *Picturesque atlas of Australasia*, Sydney, Picturesque Atlas Publishing Company, 1888, p148

⁴ Peter Murray and John C Wells, *From sand, swamp and health: a history of Caulfield*, Blackburn, J & D Burrows for City of Caulfield, 1980, p110

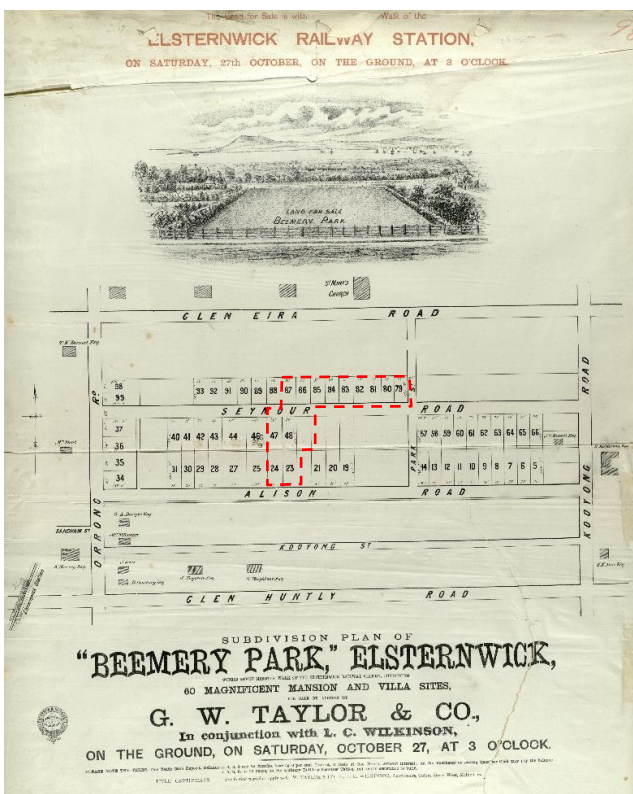
⁵ 'Auction Notice', *Argus*, 19 August 1882, p3

⁶ 'Commercial Intelligence', *Argus*, 21 August 1882, p4

Around a year later, a considerable extent of this estate (some 60 allotments) was again offered for sale.⁷ Of the offered allotments, 14 were situated in the precinct – lot 23 and 24 (refer below) to Alison' (now Allison) Road have since been consolidated.⁸ Its promotion read:

In the WELL-KNOWN BEEEMERY-PARK ESTATE, Within Seven Minutes' Walk of the Railway Station at ELSTERNWICK... To WHICH are NOW 76 TRAINS per DAY (Running every 10 and 20 Minutes). Just Half-way between Melbourne and Brighton, Positively the QUEEN of DISTRICTS For Charming Inland Scenery, beautiful Bay Views, as well as for Health and every Convenience the Heart can Desire, for here the Family may Enjoy the Best of Society, Convenient to the Various Churches and the best Scholastic Institutions of the Colony, and being within a FEW MINUTES' Ride By Rail of the Heart of the City. OUR MERCHANT PRINCES, Warehousemen, Clerks and Others can be Transferred from the Din and Roar of City Life by no less than 76 TRAINS which now Run Daily to ELSTERNWICK, to the Calm and Quiet of Country Life, to Recoup the Wasted Energies of the Day, and Inhale the Purest Air, Enjoy the Most Invigorating Atmosphere, Contemplate the GRANDEST PROSPECTS from the Heights of that Lovely Estate known as BEEEMERY Park.⁹

Hyperbole aside, promotions such as these provide insight into the strength of the suburban ideal in the period as well as the various motivations and push/pull factors that, over the 1880s, drove suburban growth in Elsternwick.



Subdivision plan for Beemery Park (Right), 1883 – with the precinct outlined

Detail of the artists depiction of the estate; the view to the bay is likely exaggerated

(Source: *Subdivision plan of Beemery Park, Elsternwick, 1883*, SLV, <<http://handle.slv.vic.gov.au/10381/162452>>)

The subject allotments to the north side of Seymour Road were slightly shallower than those on the south side of Seymour Road, measuring 150 feet in length as compared to 180 feet and were 75 or 80 feet in width. The allotments were purported to possess 'magnificent views of the bay and inland scenery' and be suitable for high-class dwellings.¹⁰ In the wake of the Beemery Park subdivisions, development in the precinct consolidated rapidly, with all contributory buildings erected between the late 1880s and early 1900s. By this time, Seymour Road 'had become a middle-class professional area, with engineers, marine surveyors, architects and so forth.'¹¹

⁷ 'Auction Notice', Age 27 October 1883, p2; and 'Auction Notice', Age 27 October 1883, p2

⁸ MMBW detail plan no. 1457, Caulfield, dated 1902

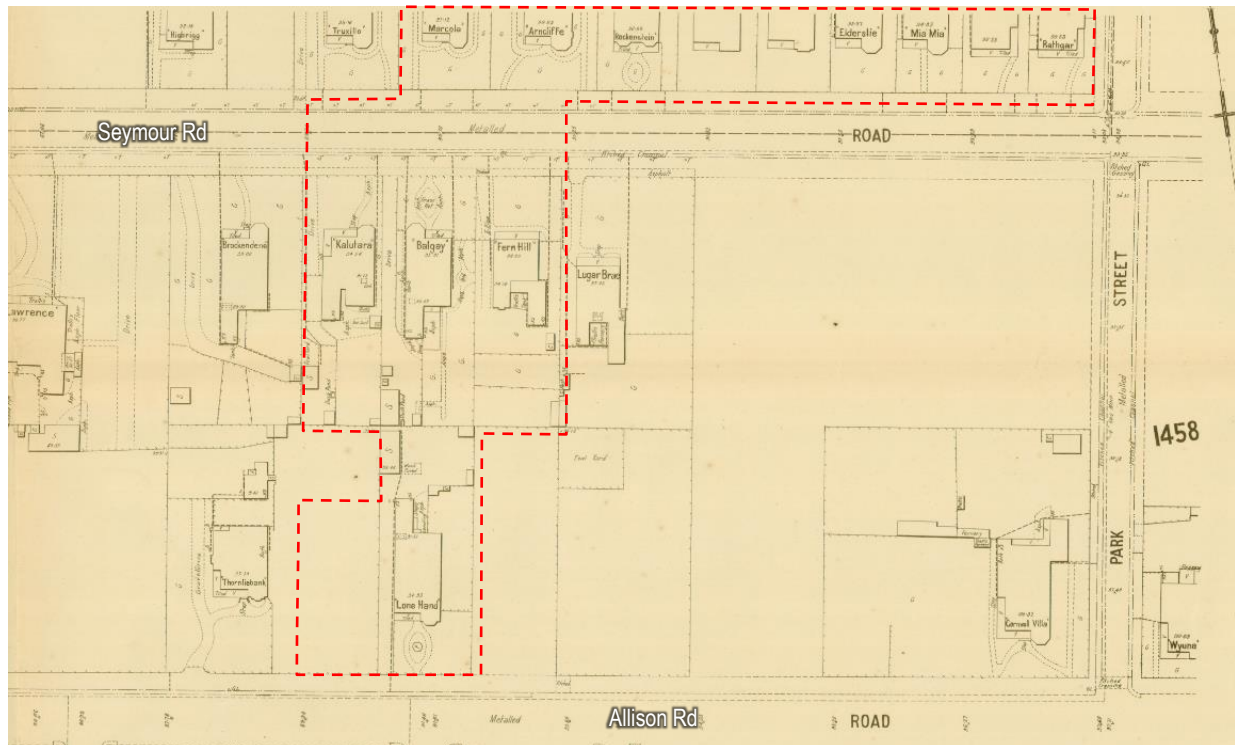
⁹ 'Advertising', Age, 27 October 1883, p2

¹⁰ 'Auction Notice', Age, 27 October 1883, p2

¹¹ Murray and Wells, *From sand, swamp and health*, p229

The first dwelling to have been constructed was *Arncliffe* at 49 Seymour Road (since demolished) in circa 1886. It was joined by a pair of villas, nos 57 and 59, in 1888. Some construction activity continued in Seymour Road over the 1890s, despite the general economic malaise of the period (perhaps indicative of the solid prosperity of the precinct's initial residents), with the building of nos 42 (circa 1890), 63 (circa 1892), 51 and 61 (both circa 1896) and 47 (circa 1898). The villa at 57 Allison Road, initially named *Lurgancanty* and later, *Lone Hand*, was also erected in this phase (circa 1892). This late 19th century layer concluded in circa 1901, with construction of the distinctive transitional dwelling at 55 Seymour Road, the timbered villa at no. 40 and polychromatic dwelling at no. 44.¹²

This layer of development is depicted in the 1902 MMBW plan, reproduced below.



MMBW plan no. 1457, Caulfield

The precinct, approximately outlined, as developed by 1902 – all contributory buildings are extant
(Source: SLV)

The 1902 MMBW plan show the location of projecting bays and verandahs ('v') as well as the original/early configuration of front garden paths. An important element in Late Victorian garden, even at the level of a private suburban domicile, these winding/circular paths are suggestive of the 'gardenesque' approach to landscape design, which was popular over the second half of the 19th century. Typically, such private gardens emphasised plant exhibition and display (with ferns, palms and 'striking' plant forms favoured) and the restrained use of urns and arches.

¹²

Sand and McDougall's Directory, review of editions 1885-1905; and Caulfield rate book, 1880s and 1900s



1931 aerial photograph of the precinct, outlined
(Source: Landata, *Maldon Prison*, Run 24, Frame 2491)

The 1931 aerial photograph (refer above) depicts the likely original/early state of the various contributory places. Various rear outbuildings are also evident. None of these appear to have survived. Only some street trees (likely London Plane) are detectable. The 1945 aerial photograph (below) shows a greater prevalence of street plantings. The absence of the existing L-shaped building in the north-west corner of 57 Allison Road means that it is a Post-WWII or later addition.



1945 aerial photograph of the precinct, outlined
(Source: Landata, *Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project*, Run 15, Frame 57786)



Late 1970s photograph of 51 Seymour Road – note mid-20th century front fence (now altered)
(Source: John T Collins, SLV, H95.200/1255)

Thematic Context/Comparative Analysis

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

- Proclamation of Shires and Land Boom (1870s-1890s),
- The Post Federation Years (1900s-1910s).

Known comparable places in the City of Glen Eira

Most precincts in the municipality date to the Interwar period except for the Elsterwick area.

Comparable places include:

- Elsterwick Estate and environs (HO72) – a large residential precinct with a good proportion of the housing stock dating to the Victorian period, but also much to the Federation period and some to the later Interwar period. There is a diverse range of housing types included in the precinct from small cottages to mansions. There are some Victorian period villas within the precinct and a group of substantial red brick Queen Anne villas to Elizabeth Street, dating 1909-12. The houses are mostly brick with few weatherboard examples.
- Gladstone Parade (HO22) – a small precinct with contributory building stock dating from the Victorian period through to the Interwar period/mid-20th century. It is distinguished by several late Victorian, two storey mansions in either the Italianate or Anglo-Dutch style as well as some two storey residences dating to the Interwar period/mid-20th century. There are two adjacent Transitional style (single storey) villas on the west side at nos 28 + 30 but no Italianate villas.
- Caulfield North Estate and Environs (HO14) – a large residential precinct with a heterogeneous group of contributory buildings (cottages, row/terrace houses, villas, flats) dating to the Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods. Whilst there are some Italianate style villas throughout the precinct, they tend to be on smaller allotments and do not form such consistent streetscapes. There are a few Transitional style villas in Carnarvon Road.

Condition

Good

Integrity

Highly intact

Previous Assessment

Eight houses were graded C or locally significant (44, 47, 51, 53, 59, 61, 63 Seymour Road and 57 Allison Road), five were graded D or E of local interest (40, 42, 45, 57, Seymour Road) and one was graded N or not significant (49 Seymour Road) – Andrew Ward, *Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan 1996*, field survey sheet 13, 1990.

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 as outlined on the following map.



Recommended extent of the heritage overlay
(Source: Nearmap, depicting February 2019)