

Statement of Significance: Greyfriars, 53 Balaclava Road, Caulfield North

Date of Statement: August 2020

Address: 53 Balaclava Road, Caulfield North	Name: <i>Greyfriars</i>
Place Type: Residential building (private)	Grading: Significant
PS ref no: HO219	Constructed: 1949-51



Photographs by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

What is significant?

The *Greyfriars* flats at 53 Balaclava Road, Caulfield, is a development of forty-three flats in two-and three-storey hip-roofed cream brick blocks around a central garden area. The two blocks facing the street are expressed in a stark Functionalist style (linked by a garden wall), while those to the rear have angled stepped facades, exposed hipped roofs and open staircases/walkways. Erected in 1949-51 as Melbourne's first flats conceived on a co-operative system, they were designed by entrepreneurial architect Bernard Evans, who was also a director of the company that built them.

The significant fabric is defined as the entire original exterior of the flats, including the garden wall that links the two flat-roofed front blocks. The front fence is not considered to be significant.

How is it significant?

The *Greyfriars* flats satisfy the following criteria for inclusion on the heritage overlay schedule to the City of Glen Eira planning scheme:

- Criterion A: Importance to the course, or pattern, of Glen Eira's cultural history.
- Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

Why is it significant?

The *Greyfriars* flats are historically significant as a milestone in post-WW2 apartment dwelling in what is now the City of Glen Eira. Designed in 1949, this complex of 43 units was the first major block of flats to be erected in the study area in the post-WW2 era, anticipating the significant influx of higher-density living that would transform the study area (and especially the former City of Caulfield) in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Conceived on a then-innovative co-operative basis, whereby ownership was vested in a co-operative society in which each resident was a member, *Greyfriars* is historically significant as the first development of that type in Melbourne. This ushered in new modern era of own-your-own flats, which subsequently became the norm and ultimately lead to the introduction of strata title legislation in the late 1960s. (*Criterion A*)

The *Greyfriars* flats are aesthetically significant as an unusual example of post-WW2 modernist architecture. While conceived as a single development, with a consistent palette of face brickwork (mostly cream), the individual blocks are expressed in contrasting forms. The two front blocks are articulated in a stark Functionalist mode, with bold rectilinear massing, corner balconies and roofs concealed by parapets, while the rear blocks have a more traditionally domestic character with exposed hipped roofs, stepped angled facades and open stairwells and walkways. With the flats arranged in a U-shaped configuration around a pleasant central garden/carpark area, *Greyfriars* remain as a highly distinctive example of a post-WW2 apartment complex. (*Criterion E*)

Primary sources

Heritage Citation PW04, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.