

Statement of Significance: Wimbledon Estate Precinct

Date of Statement: August 2020

Address:	Bickhams Court: 1, 1a, 3, 4, 9 Wimbledon Court: 2 Alexandra Street: 1/8, 2/8	Name:	-
Place Type:	Residential building (private)	Grading:	Contributory
PS ref no:	HO239	Constructed:	1960-73



Photograph by Built Heritage Pty Ltd, October 2019

What is significant?

The Wimbledon Estate Precinct comprises a group of post-WW2 houses in the cul-de-sacs of Bickhams Court and Wimbledon Court, and one adjacent block on Alexandra Street, built after the 1960 subdivision of what had been the Wimbledon Public Tennis Courts, established in 1923 by the eponymous Charles Bickham. With their stark rectilinear massing, flat roofs and large windows, the individual houses are all reflective of the prevailing modernist idiom of the time. Mostly completed during the 1960s (with a single slightly later example from 1972), the houses in the precinct were all designed for European émigré clients by architects of similar background.

The following houses (including any original garages, carports, front fences and hard landscaping where still extant) are deemed to be *contributory* elements in the precinct:

- Bickhams Court: Nos 1, 1a, 3, 4, 9
- Wimbledon Court: No 2
- Alexandra Street: Nos 1/8 and 2/8 (semi-detached pair on corner site)

(refer map on final page)

How is it significant?

The Wimbledon Estate Precinct satisfies 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.
- Criterion H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or groups of persons, of importance in our history.

This document is an incorporated document in the Glen Eira Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

Why is it significant?

The Wimbledon Estate Precinct is significant as one of very few cul-de-sac residential subdivisions in the Caulfield area that were created and developed from scratch in the post-WW2 era. By the 1950s, most of the north-western part of the present-day City of Glen Eira was already densely settled, leaving only a few atypical pockets of land for further expansion. The Wimbledon Estate, laid out in 1960 on the site of public tennis courts operated by the Bickham family since 1923, thus provided one of the last opportunities for homebuilders to establish themselves on a new subdivision within a well-established suburb. Consequently, allotments were keenly sought-after and, without exception, would be developed by wealthy European émigré families to create a residential enclave that encapsulated Caulfield's post-WW2 migrant demographic. (*Criterion A*)

The Wimbledon Estate Precinct is significant as small but excellent collection of post-WW2 modernist houses. The earlier houses, erected between 1960 and 1967 and mostly designed by European-trained émigré architects, were all conceived in a consistent hard-edged modernist style, broadly characterised by bold rectilinear massing, flat roofs with broad eaves, and expansive windows. Within this dominant modernist idiom, most of the houses incorporated a degree of embellishment (such as feature walls of stone, slate or tile) that evoked the early '60s fad for applied ornament, famously dismissed by Robin Boyd as 'Featurism'. These contrast with the later house on the south side of Bickhams Court that, of monumental and expressionistic form, demonstrates a return to a purer and more unadorned approach. (*Criterion E*)

The Wimbledon Estate Precinct is significant for associations with a number of architects of Continental European background (including Holgar & Holgar, Robert Rosh, Erwin Kaldor and Harold Shafer) who, consequent to their strong personal and professional links to Caulfield's thriving post-WW2 Jewish émigré community, are known to have been notably active in this part of the present-day City of Glen Eira during the 1950s, '60s and '70s. (*Criterion H*)

Primary sources

Heritage Citation P02, *City of Glen Eira Post-war & Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2: Citations*, prepared by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.

GLEN EIRA PLANNING SCHEME

