

**Name:** HO386 Chomley Street Precinct

**Street addresses:** 7-95 Chomley Street and 15-21 & 34-38 Packington Place, Prahran

**Precinct map**



**GRADING**

- Significant
- Contributory
- Non-contributory
- Precinct Boundary

**Locality history**

Prahran is located on the country of the Yalukit-willam clan, one of six Boonwurrung clans who occupied the City of Stonnington area as part of the greater Kulin nation of Aboriginal peoples. The northern boundary of the City of Stonnington, the Yarra River and Gardiners Creek, approximate the boundary between the Boonwurrung tribes and their northern neighbour, the Woiwurrung tribes, between which inter-marriage took place (City of Stonnington).

After the settlement of Melbourne was illegally established in 1835, firewood was taken from the South Yarra, Toorak and Prahran areas. At the same time squatters took over vast areas of the Port Phillip District (Victoria) for the grazing of sheep and cattle. In 1836, overlanders John Gardiner, Joseph Hawdon and John Hepburn took up a run on the south of the Yarra River that incorporated the areas of today's Hawthorn, Brighton, St Kilda, Prahran and Bulleen (Tibbits 1983:4, 6).

An 895-acre site for a government Aboriginal mission, supervised by George Langhorne, was put aside in the area in 1837. The reserve was closed in 1839 and Police Magistrate Lonsdale recommended that the reserve be subdivided into suburban allotments (City of Stonnington).

Surveyor Robert Hoddle forwarded his survey of suburban allotments on the south side of the Yarra River to Sydney on 1 February 1840. Twenty-two large narrow allotments of 20-25 acres were surveyed between the proposed government road that followed the stock route from Gardiner's Creek to the Yarra River (now Toorak Road) between today's Punt Road and Kooyong Road. These allotments were surveyed on a portion of the former Aboriginal mission station reserve (Lewis 1992:8; Wilde 2008). The first sale of allotments fronting Gardiner's Creek Road (Toorak Road) in what was to become the municipality of Prahran took place on 10 June 1840 with speculators making up a number of the buyers (Lewis 1992:8; Context 2009:37). It has been noted that subsequent subdivision of land in the area reflected the shape and orientation of these original allotments and the route of today's main east-west and north-south roads are also a legacy of Hoddle's plan (see Figure 1) (Context 2009:41, 58).

In June 1849 the land between Toorak Road and Commercial Road was sold in 50-55-acre blocks, and the remaining Crown land in what was to become the City of Prahran was sold in May 1850 (see Figure 1) (Wilde 2008).

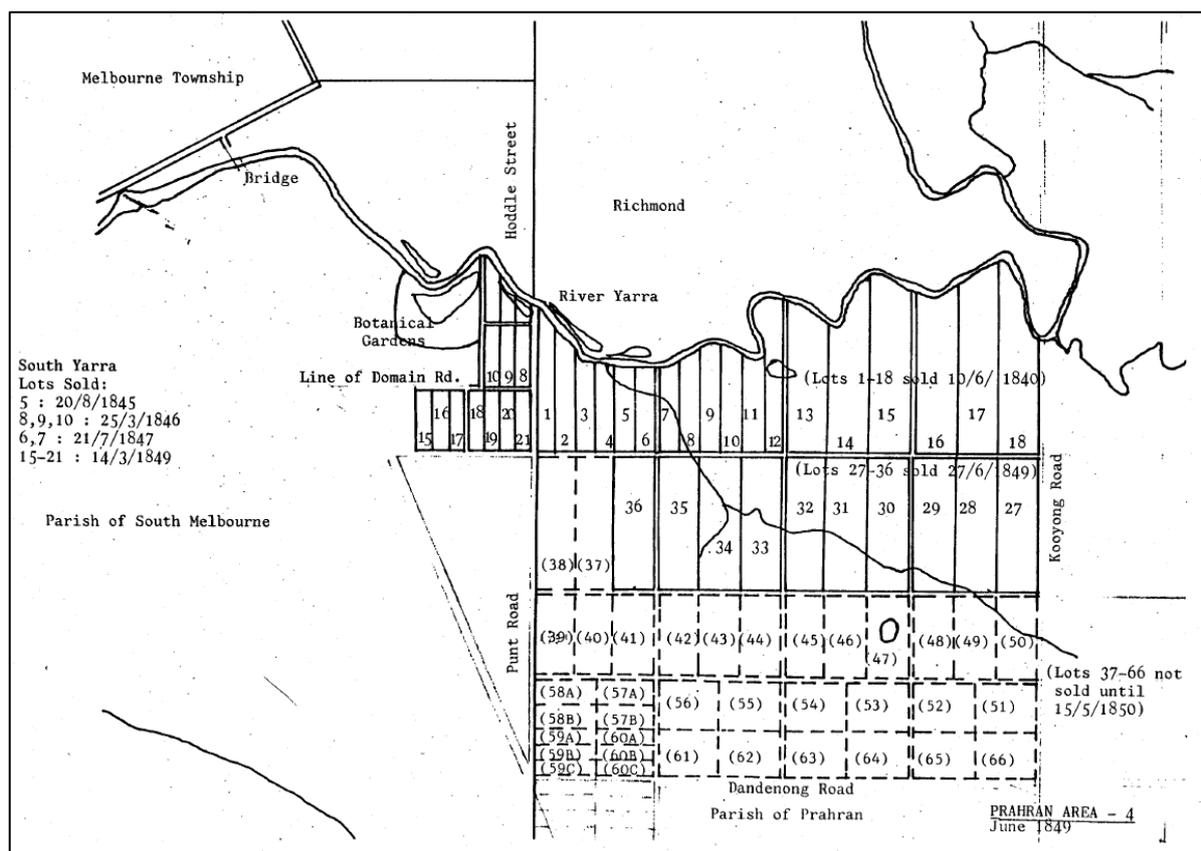


Figure 1. Showing the Prahran area in June 1849. (Source: Tibbets 1983:10-11)

Four denominational schools opened in the Prahran area between 1852 and 1854 (Victorian Places 2015).

In 1855 the Prahran municipal district was created, becoming a borough on 1 October 1863 (Victorian Places 2015).

A punt operated across the Yarra River between today's Richmond and South Yarra as early as March 1838 (Lewis 1992:8). The first road bridge across the Yarra opened in 1857, connecting Chapel Street with Church Street in Richmond (Lewis 1992:8). In 1859-60 a railway line was constructed through Prahran from Melbourne to Brighton. By 1879, the Gippsland to Melbourne line traversed the northern localities of Prahran (Victorian Places 2015). These lines stimulated development, particularly in the area south of Domain Road (Lewis 1992:8)

The Prahran Mechanics' Institute (forerunner of a technical college) was opened in 1864, and the Prahran market in 1875. In the same year the first State primary school, at Hawksburn, was opened. During the 1870s Prahran municipality's population grew by 50 per cent and Prahran was proclaimed a city in 1879 (Victorian Places 2015).

The Prahran area is hilly and the lower lying areas were notoriously swampy. Purchasers of allotments built large houses for themselves on the hills in the areas of South Yarra and Toorak, leaving the lower lying flood prone areas of Prahran, including the site of the Prahran Town Hall, which was a swamp, for working-class housing. The slightly higher land to the southwest became the suburban area of Windsor and the South Yarra end of Chapel Street began as an area of brickworks and swamps. As the brickmakers levelled the hills, factories were built. Further south, Prahran was a

centre for the rag trade, furniture-making, brewing, baking and jam-making (Wilde 2008). Coach makers also proliferated in Prahran's industrial district before World War I (Context 2009:61).

From the early twentieth century several food processing and textile industries developed in the western part of Prahran. The best known were the Australian Jam Company (later the Jam Factory shops, 1979) and Kia-ora soups and cordials (Victorian Places 2015).

These patterns of settlement created an area of considerable social diversity, which has remained an important characteristic of Prahran (Wilde 2008; Tibbets 1983:1).

The land boom years of the 1880s witnessed an almost doubling of population, with Prahran's resident numbers increasing from 21,268 in 1881 to 39,703 in 1891 (Victorian Places 2015). As a consequence, subdivision of large estates took place. Land in Prahran east of Chapel Street was intensively developed in the 1880s and 1890s (Tibbets 1983:34).

A web of public transport routes through Prahran facilitated population growth with cable trams opening in Toorak Road and Chapel Street in 1888 and 1891, along which major shopping strips developed where leading chain stores opened businesses. Chapel Street grew as a sub-metropolitan shopping centre in the 1880s and again after the 1890s Depression (Victorian Places 2015).

Development slowed during the economic depression of the 1890s.

In 1903, the Australian Municipal Handbook described Prahran as

*an important metropolitan suburban city... It is a distinct municipality... The city area is 2,320 acres, with 8,854 dwellings, 9,118 ratepayers, and rateable property of net annual value of £343,482 1s 7d rate. The main roads to Dandenong, Gippsland, and Western Port pass through Prahran, and a good road with ... an iron girder bridge over the Yarra connects it with Melbourne. There is railway communication by the Melbourne and Brighton Railway; also by the Oakleigh and Frankston lines. [There is also a] cable tramcar system ... A line of buses also runs to Malvern Shire Hall from the Prahran Town Hall ... The local town-hall is a commanding building, and has a good free library ... There are numerous other public buildings of a charitable, educational, and ecclesiastical character ... There are five State schools, handsome recreation grounds have been laid out ... [in] High Street and in Greville Street... A large area of ground close to Toorak Station has been purchased and reserved by the Corporation for a recreation reserve. Many of the streets are lined with handsome trees, such as elms, oaks, and silver poplars... The outskirts of the municipality are adorned by very many elegant private houses, the residences of merchants and others in business in Melbourne. Banks: Saving, National, Australasia, Victoria, and Commercial. Population, 41,161. The Prahran Telegraph and the Chronicle ... are the local papers (cited in Victorian Places 2015).*

Further development occurred in the first two decades of the twentieth century as the economy recovered, with the population of the Prahran municipality increasing from 39,703 in 1891 to 50,290 in 1921 (Victorian Places 2015).

## Precinct history

The subject precinct was formed as part of the subdivision of the Closeburn Estate in 1910 and smaller subdivisions undertaken in the period c1909-11. The precinct thus evidences the major phase of suburban development which took place in the Prahran municipality in the first two decades of the twentieth century as the economy recovered after the 1890s depression.

The Chomley Street Precinct is located on a part of Crown Portion 54 in the Parish of Prahran (*Prahran Parish Plan 1856*).

The block bounded by High Street, Williams Road, Dandenong Road and Orrong Road was first sold at the auction of Crown land in May 1850 as four 30-acre allotments (Lots 53, 54, 63 and 64) (Raworth 2009).

Portion 54 was purchased by Robert Pohlman. The land was subdivided and sold not long after the purchase, with the western section, bordering Williams Road, sold to Ben Chamberlain, who built the Mt Erica Hotel on the corner block in 1853 (later rebuilt) (Raworth 2009).

By 1860, the area had been cleared and let for market gardens, farms and the grazing of cattle, but little other development had occurred. Kearney's map of 1855 showed the area almost free of built form and even by 1900 substantial areas, including the subject precinct, remained undeveloped (Raworth 2009; MMBW Detail Plan No 1002 and 1003, 1900).

From the 1870s through to the early 1900s the area was referred to variously as Armadale, Windsor and East Prahran.

The northern section of Chomley Street was established c1880 and named after the Chomley family. The southern section connecting Chomley Street to Dandenong Road appears to have been laid out shortly afterwards (Raworth 2009).

Although the east side of Chomley Street was developed in the Victorian era, there were few residences in the area on the west side of Chomley Street in 1900. A street directory of 1900 lists Albert E Kermode at 65 Chomley Street while Fred Nicolo operated an asphalt yard a little to the north on the west side of Chomley Street. No evidence of these early uses survives (Raworth 2009). Further to the north, houses were listed at 77 and 79 Chomley Street in 1910, but by 1913 these houses had new addresses (No. 109 and possibly 111) and there were '5 vacant houses' just north of Closeburn Avenue (S&Mc 1910, 1913, 1914). The following year all houses in the precinct were completed, indicating that all were constructed between 1910 and 1914.

### *Closeburn Estate subdivision, 1910*

In 1884, a twenty-roomed, two-storeyed mansion fronting Dandenong Road was built for John Thomson who named it 'Closeburn'. It was constructed on about ten acres immediately to the west of Chomley Street (and demolished in the 1970s).

In 1910, Thompson's mansion Closeburn and land in Dandenong Road, Windsor, were advertised for auction on 12 November as the Closeburn Estate. The estate, described as a brick area, comprised the mansion of 20 rooms and 58 lots fronting Dandenong Road, Closeburn Avenue and Chomley Street. It was advertised as containing 'magnificent building blocks' close to the High Street electric tram and on the planned Dandenong Road tram route (*Age* 19 October 1910:5 and 11 November 1910:3). Allotments were also auctioned in the estate in Closeburn Avenue and Chomley Street in 1950 (*Age* 25 September 1950:6).

In 1911, the City of Prahran called for tenders for the construction of Closeburn Avenue (*Malvern Standard* 21 January 1911:2).

Development began immediately after the 1910 sale of allotments on the Closeburn Estate. Directories of 1911 show seven dwellings on the west side of Chomley Street between Dandenong Road and Closeburn Avenue. Four of these were vacant, indicating their recent completion (Raworth 2009).

The Sands & McDougall directory of 1914 shows that all residences at 7-97 Chomley Street were in existence by that year, with a general store operating at the corner of Closeburn Avenue (S&Mc 1915).

#### *McNaughton subdivision 1912*

The eastern end of Packington Place (numbers 2-32 and 1-13 - not in the precinct) was developed in the late 1880s, with residences in evidence from 1889 (*Argus* 29 October 1889:8).

The residences that make up the precinct at 15-21 and 34-38 Packington Place, however, were not constructed until 1912-15, likely by builder Alfred McNaughton, who lived in Chomley Street. McNaughton purchased a T-shaped parcel of land in 1911 and subdivided it, creating a broadened cul-de-sac end to Packington Place and a pedestrian laneway linking it to Chomley Street. He created four properties on the north side of the cul-de-sac, Nos. 15-21, and three on the south side, Nos. 34-38, and preceded to sell them off in 1912, with a group of identical houses on them. Number 38, for example, was sold to Janet Dargan in that year. All houses in the Packington Place portion of the precinct were built by 1915 (S&Mc 1915). It appears that McNaughton retained ownership of some the residences until the 1920s (CT:V3563 F420; CT:V3638 F575).

Apart from the pedestrian link, McNaughton's land also included what is now 87 and 89 Chomley Street. He constructed two more houses on these blocks here and sold these properties to John and Maude Lock in 1915 (CT:V3563 F420; S&Mc 1915).

#### **References**

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*Victorian Places* 2015, 'Prahran', Monash University and The University of Queensland, <https://www.victorianplaces.com.au/>, accessed 1 March 2020.

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### Description

HO386 Chomley Street Precinct, as extended in 2020, comprises the western side of Chomley Street from just north of Dandenong Road to a point slightly north of Taylor Close (which is on the eastern side of the street), as well as properties on both sides of the east end of Packington Place which sit behind the northern end of the Chomley Street row. The two streets of the precinct are linked via a pedestrian walkway created as part of the development of the east end of Packington Place in 1912.



Figure 2. Pedestrian link between Chomley Street and Packington Place (85 Chomley Street), looking west. (Source: Landmark Heritage, 2020)

The southern part of Chomley Street, between Dandenong Road and Closeburn Avenue, is wider than its northern half. Likewise, the eastern end of Packington Place is wider than the nineteenth-century section of this street, allowing for a deep nature strip on the north side. All house allotments are narrow. This combined with the modest front setbacks provides little opportunity for onsite parking. Very few tall fences have been constructed and the area is remarkably free from extensive alterations or prominent upper storey additions.



Figure 3. North side of Packington Place (Nos. 15-21) showing the wide nature strip to the enlarged cul-de-sac. (Source: Landmark Heritage, 2020)

As set out in the history, subdivision of the precinct took place in 1910 and 1912, with all houses and the corner store completed by 1914. All but one of these buildings survive, apart from 73 Chomley Street on the north corner of Closeburn Avenue.

This remarkably rapid development as well as the construction of groups of houses by a single developer, such as Alfred McNaughton, has led to highly consistent streetscapes in the precinct.



Figure 4. 19-29 Chomley Street. An asymmetrical semi-detached pair (19/21) is visible at left, while symmetrical semi-detached pairs (23/25 and 27/29) are seen at right. (Source: Landmark Heritage, 2019)

The streetscape is composed of dwellings that are modest in scale taking the form of ornamented villas or semi-detached pairs on small blocks. Residences are typically of brick frequently combining face brick with bands or other rendered devices to produce an understated domestic interpretation of the 'blood and bandages' style found more prominently in contemporary institutional buildings. However, it is the extensive use of timber for decorative elements that distinguishes and unifies the group, particularly 7-69 and 75-83 Chomley Street and the Packington Place houses. The dwellings illustrate the variety and invention of timber adornments available to the Edwardian designer, including verandah fretwork, ornamental brackets to broad eaves and strapping or other timber decoration to gable ends.



Figure 5. Semi-detached pair at 79/81 Chomley Street with extensive timber fretwork. (Source: Landmark Heritage, 2020)

The single-fronted houses and row of three attached dwellings at the north end of the precinct – 87-97 Chomley Street – are similar in form and detail to those to the south, except that they retain the use of cast-iron verandah friezes in flattened patterns typical of the 1910s.



Figure 6. Houses at the north end of the precinct, 87-95 Chomley Street. Note the use of cast-iron verandah friezes. (Source: Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd)

The seven Packington Place houses are differentiated from the others in the precinct by their timber construction and the use of a Japanese-influenced timber frieze pattern which is not seen elsewhere in the precinct. These houses are otherwise nearly identical in design to McNaughton's two brick semi-detached dwellings at 87 and 89 Chomley Street.



Figure 7. 21 Packington Place. Note Japanese-influenced verandah frieze. (Source: Landmark Heritage, 2020)

Some buildings in the street form short runs of identical buildings and appear to be the work of a single developer. These include groups at the aforementioned houses by McNaughton on and near Packington Place, and 25-35 and 75-81 Chomley Street. However, the subtle variations in form, planning and detailing across the broader streetscape suggests that much of the similarity of expression is happenstance, arising from the contemporary vogue for face brick and ornate timber detailing as well as the rapid development in this area. The shop and attached residence at 69-71 Chomley Street has serviced the street for almost a century and illustrates one approach to small Edwardian retail development and the role of the corner shop prior to the advent of the motor car and the supermarket.

Many buildings in the group have been overpainted or over-rendered, original slate and Marseilles tiles replaced with modern products, and some windows have been altered, but the original architectural expression throughout the precinct survives largely intact. The only intrusive structure in the precinct is the contemporary semi-detached units at 73 Chomley Street, on the corner of Closeburn Avenue. While its scale is out of keeping with the valued built form in the precinct, this new building has a slightly greater setback from Chomley Street than did the previous dwelling (a heavily altered Edwardian house), so does not overly interrupt views between the north and south parts of the precinct.

### Comparative analysis

Individual buildings within the precinct are generally typical of the Edwardian period and similar examples can be found in many other parts of Stonnington. However, complete Edwardian streetscapes of this type are relatively rare within Prahran and other inner suburbs of the

municipality as a consequence of intense speculative development in the 1880s. Edwardian housing in these areas more typically occurs as infill development within Victorian era subdivisions left incomplete following the 1890s depression.

Airlie Avenue and Highbury Grove within the Airlie Avenue Precinct (HO178) are examples of this theme of 'recovery and infill' with Edwardian villas and semi-detached pairs interspersed with some Victorian housing. The modestly scaled dwellings in the Chomley Street Precinct are closely comparable to the semi-detached pairs in these two streets, both the more common symmetrical pairs and the asymmetrical examples that simulate a detached villa.

Larnook Street (also in HO178) and Vail Street (HO152) were created as a part of a 1912 subdivision and are more directly comparable to the Chomley Street precinct as substantially intact Edwardian streetscapes with a consistent scale and form. Larnook Street comprises symmetrical semi-detached Edwardian pairs and detached interwar houses, while Vail Street has Edwardian villas and asymmetrical semi-detached pairs. Banole Estate Precinct (HO385) also has a prevailing Edwardian character, though with a substantial admixture of early interwar dwellings along Banole Avenue and substantial interwar bungalows along High Street. Each of the precincts under comparison includes groups of similar houses, but each has a different over-riding character. In the case of the Chomley Street Precinct, this is the very consistent narrow single-fronted dwelling form (mostly in semi-detached pairs) and shallow front setbacks, bringing the architectural rhythm to the fore in forming the character of these streets.

Corner shops and small retail groups illustrating the theme 7.1 Serving Local Communities are reasonably common in the Municipality. The shop at 71 Chomley Street is somewhat more unusual in that it was built in conjunction with a housing development which remains highly intact to its original state.

### **Statement of significance**

#### *What is significant?*

The Chomley Street Precinct, comprising 7-95 Chomley Street and 15-21 & 34-38 Packington Place, Prahran, is significant.

It is an Edwardian residential streetscape developed in a remarkably short period of time between c1911 and c1913. This period marked a renewed surge of development across the broader municipality following the hiatus in building activity caused by the 1890s depression. Building stock in the precinct mainly comprises semi-detached cottage pairs, a smaller number of single-fronted detached cottages, and also includes a reasonably rare hybrid example of an Edwardian corner store and attached residence.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include (but are not limited to):

- high degree of intactness of the area to its c1913 state arising from the near absence of modern infill;
- all Edwardian building stock including the shop and attached residence at 69-71 Chomley Street;
- the extent to which the development over a single time period is apparent;
- the overall regularity of the built form, including groups of houses by a single developer, and subtle variety in the character and expression of individual housing stock;

- the public domain elements created in relation to Packington Place, including the widened cul-de-sac at its east end and the pedestrian link to Chomley Street;
- intactness of individual buildings to their original states. Dwellings typically survive with their presentation to the street largely unaltered retaining verandahs and decorative render and timber detailing;
- the consistent, modest single-storey scale of the built form;
- the generally uniform front setbacks and modest side setbacks;
- red face brick, render and timber materiality, with some cast-iron verandah ornament typical of the 1910s, and gabled or hipped roofscapes with chimneys and terracotta or slate tile cladding;
- the almost complete absence of on-site vehicle accommodation; and
- consistent low front fence height in most sections of the streetscape.

*How is it significant?*

The Chomley Street Precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

*Why is it significant?*

The Chomley Street Precinct is of historical significance as evidence of the major phase of suburban development which took place in the municipality in the first two decades of the twentieth century as the economy recovered after the 1890s depression (Historical theme: 3.3.5 Recovery and Infill 1900-1940). The precinct also demonstrates a rare pattern of settlement in Prahran as a complete and uninterrupted Edwardian streetscape resulting from a 1910s subdivision. This includes unusual aspects of private subdivision including the widened cul-de-sac of Packington Place and pedestrian link between it and Chomley Street. In this part of the municipality, Edwardian dwellings more typically occur as infill development in partially complete 1880s subdivisions. In addition, the precinct highlights the important role of the corner shop in serving local neighbourhoods prior to the advent of the motor car and supermarkets (Historical theme: 7.1 Serving local communities). (Criterion A)

The precinct is of aesthetic significance for its remarkably intact and cohesive collection of Edwardian semi-detached and villa housing. While individual buildings are reasonably typical of the period, the repetitive rhythm established by the concentration of broadly similar facade designs is of particular significance. (Criterion E)

**Schedule of gradings**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Street</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Description</b>
7	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian villa, over-rendered and two-storey rear extension
9/11	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, verandah of 9 altered
13/15	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
17/19	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, windows and door of 19 altered
21/23	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
25/27	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
29/31	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, windows of 31 altered
33/35	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, windows altered
37/39	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
41	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian villa
43/45	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
47/49	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
51/53	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, 51 over-rendered
55/57	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
59/61	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair, 59 with upper storey additions
63	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian villa, windows altered
65/67	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
69-71	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian villa and attached shop
73	Chomley Street	Non-contributory	Contemporary two-storey units
75/77	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
79/81	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
83	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
85	Chomley Street	Contributory	Pedestrian link
87/89	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian semi-detached pair
91/93/95	Chomley Street	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian terrace row
15	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
17	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
19	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
21	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
34	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
36	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house
38	Packington Place	Contributory	Single-storey Edwardian house