

HERITAGE CITATION:

Dixon Street Precinct, Malvern



Figure 1. Dixon Street, Malvern (GJM Heritage, November 2020).

DATE: June 2021

DIXON STREET PRECINCT, MALVERN

Place type: Residential Precinct	Architect: Various
Construction Date: 1890 - 1895	Builder: Various
Recommendation: Include in the Heritage Overlay	Extent of Overlay: See Figure 6

Locality History

The City of Stonnington stands on the Traditional Lands of the Woi wurrung and Boon Wurrung Peoples of the East Kulin Nations. Archaeologists believe that Aboriginal People have been in Victoria for more than 30,000 years. Throughout this long history their relationship with the landscape (where and how they live) has changed according to factors such as climate change, resource availability, and cultural change (Context 2006:10).

The first European settler in the Malvern district was John Gardiner in 1835, a pastoralist from New South Wales who was one of the first overlanders to Port Phillip. He pastured his stock near the junction of Gardiner's Creek and the Yarra River and is the namesake of Gardiner's Creek, Gardiner's Creek Road (now Toorak Road) and both the locality and the Shire of Gardiner (before they were re-named Malvern). The first recorded use of the name Malvern was in January 1854, when barrister Charles B. G. Skinner named his hotel on the corner of Malvern and Glenferrie roads the 'Malvern Hill' after a district in England. The name for the Shire of Malvern was derived from Malvern Hill Estate, a private subdivision in the area dating to 1856 (City of Stonnington [CoS]; Context 2006:34).

The first land sales in the area were held in 1854 and most original Crown grantees subdivided their allotments for resale (Context 2006:41; 2009:4). Gardiner's Road District was proclaimed in 1856 before Gardiner Shire was formed in 1871, which was renamed Malvern Shire in 1878 (CoS). The municipal boundary comprised the current localities of Malvern (previously Gardiner), Malvern East, Glen Iris (south of Gardiners Creek), Kooyong, Armadale (east of Kooyong Road), Toorak (east of Kooyong Road) and Chadstone (west of Warrigal Road). Early directories listed Malvern and Malvern East as the one locality, until 1910.

The former Malvern Shire saw slow population growth to 1881, by which time it totalled just under 2,000 people (Victorian Places). In 1879, the Oakleigh Railway Line was opened along the southern extent of the municipality, through Malvern, Armadale, Toorak and Hawksburn to join the existing line at South Yarra. The arrival of the Oakleigh railway coincided with the start of the land boom, which resulted in considerable urban growth. In the 1880s the district comprised substantial residences on large allotments, as well as pastoral and agricultural holdings (including market gardens and orchards) and commercial development (Context 2006:41, 65-6). During the 1880s boom period, the municipality saw a dramatic increase in population, quadrupling to approximately 8,000 by 1891, and steadily increasing to 10,000 by 1901 (Victorian Places). In the 1890s a number of timber houses were built in Malvern as an economy measure, but some residents complained that wooden houses would degenerate into slums. Concern about this development led to a slum abolition movement and subsequently, c1912, Malvern Council began to declare brick areas, where timber houses were not permitted. By 1916 the Council had also fixed a minimum area for individual housing allotments at 6000 square feet, with minimum frontages of fifty feet (Context 2006:128).

The railway line along the northern extent of the municipality was established in 1890 through the Glen Iris Valley from Burnley. Stations were established at Heyington, Kooyong, Tooronga, Gardiner, Glen Iris and Darling, however, expected residential development in their vicinity stalled during the 1890s following the economic collapse (Context 2006:66). The 1893 *Australian Handbook* (as cited in Victorian Places) described Malvern as 'an elevated residential suburb', served by a line of omnibuses from Prahran, with many leading

merchants and professional men living in the area in pleasantly situated 'dwellings of a superior class'. The entry noted that a number of notable mansions had been erected by this date, and that the market gardens and orchards were 'steadily being reduced, and cut up into building allotments, on which [were] being erected many handsome villas and business establishments' (Victorian Places). The municipality saw rapid development and urbanisation from 1900 and it was declared a Borough and then a Town in 1901. In 1911 the municipality was declared a City, with a residential population of 16,000 (Context 2006:86; Victorian Places).

The Prahran and Malvern Tramways Trust was established in 1908, with electric tramlines opening along High Street in 1910-14, Glenferrie Road in 1910-13, to the south along Wattletree Road in 1910-12, and Malvern Road in 1915. The arrival of the tramlines further drove the development of commercial centres in the immediate vicinity and residential development beyond. New train stations were built at Armadale, Hawksburn, Malvern and Toorak between 1908 and 1918, and at Malvern East in 1929 (Context 2006:70-2, 113; Victorian Places).

Residential development during the early twentieth century generally occurred on newly subdivided estates or on nineteenth century subdivisions that had remained partly or wholly undeveloped during the 1890s depression (Context 2009:5). In 1912 it was reported that 800 houses a year were being built in the (by then) City of Malvern, which boasted 'a progress unprecedented by any other suburb' (Context 2009:128). In the decade between 1911 and 1921 the population in the City of Malvern doubled, from 16,000 to 32,000 residents, and then increased steadily to 43,000 by 1933 (Victorian Places). This population growth saw development spread to the Glen Iris Valley and the outer reaches of the City, in Malvern East. The housing stock in this eastern part of the municipality was more characteristically uniform and unadorned in comparison to housing in Malvern. Kooyong's development was substantially completed by the end of the 1920s (Context 2006:128, 131).

By 1946 the Australian Blue Book (as cited in Victorian Places) stated that Malvern was one of the 'leading residential suburbs of the Metropolis'. It comprised the substantial homes of many of Melbourne's leading citizens, in what was termed 'The Garden City' due to the number of parks and public gardens. Development in the City of Malvern steadied from the 1930s, with the population averaging 45,000 until the 1990s (Victorian Places). The City of Malvern amalgamated with the City of Prahran in 1994, to form the City of Stonnington.

Precinct History

Located between High Street to the north and Wattletree Road to the south in what is now known as the suburb of Malvern, Dixon Street is situated on land first sold in the 1850s as Crown Portions 36 and 37 in the Township of Gardiner, Parish of Prahran (Figure 2).

In the 1880s, Malvern experienced a burst of suburban development as land developers busily subdivided and auctioned choice building sites on housing estates, and builders rapidly covered them with houses. Most of the residential streets running into Glenferrie Road and High Street were created at that time, along with the main high-street commercial development. In 1885, during the height of the Victorian land boom, the Stanhope Estate was subdivided, with allotments sold off in sections by auctioneers Staples, Wise & Co to owner-occupiers, investors and speculative builders (*Herald*, 16 July 1885:4). The estate was bound by High Street to the north, Tooronga Road to the east, Wattletree Road to the south, and Thanet and Stanhope streets to the west, and created Emily (now Dalny), Harvey, Fraser, Grace (the north end), Thanet, 'Dixon', Jordan, Horace and (part of) Stanhope streets (SHC). It was described as being 'close to three railway stations, [with] magnificent situations, splendid views' and comprised approximately 600 sites (*Lorgnette*, 10 February 1885: 2). Dixon (originally 'Dixon') Street, being Section K and O on the west side of the street and Section L on the east side of the street, comprised 41 allotments, each measuring 60 x 120 feet (Figure 3).

Development of the precinct commenced in 1890, when a number of brick and timber houses were constructed on the east side of the street. An additional eight houses were constructed on the west side of the street by 1895, however the economic downturn in the 1890s soon halted progress and the remainder of the street remained largely vacant at the turn of the century (Malvern Rate Books). The extent of development in Dixon Street at this time can be seen in the 1901 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) plan of the area (Figure 4), which shows a number of houses occupying both sides of the street to the north of Wattletree Road. Houses ranged in size from three to seven rooms and were variously occupied by owner-occupiers or let to tenants (Malvern Valuation Field Cards). Possession of a number of the houses had been transferred to banks and insurance companies at this time as a direct result of the 1890s Depression (Malvern Rate Books). Development of the street resumed in the early-to-mid twentieth century, as evidenced by a 1945 aerial photograph of the area which shows houses lining both the east and west sides of Dixon Street by this date (Figure 5).

The extant timber houses at 29-37 and 34-44 Dixon Street, to the north of Ray Street, form part of the original development of Dixon Street, having all been constructed by 1895.

2 37 10	20 6.2.24 1000	13.1.8 1000	RESERVE. 13.1.8 1000	13.1.8 1000	15 7.2.23 1130	101 7.2. 117
1 .28	33 7.2.32	35 15.1.24	36 15.1.24	37 15.1.24	38 8.3.10 1160	100 Bro 9.0.
2 .28	34 7.2.32	35 15.1.24	36 15.1.24	37 15.1.24	39 8.3.10 1170	99 Reil 9.0.
7 .28	45 7.2.32	44 15.1.24	43 15.1.24	42 15.1.24	40 8.3.10 1180	90 9.0. Rapt
8 .28 10	46 7.2.32 1000	44 15.1.24 1000	43 15.1.24 1000	42 15.1.24 1000	41 9.0.26 1200	89 9.0. 117
6 .0	58 10.0.0	60 10.0.0	62 10.0.0	65 10.0.0	68 12.0.0	88 11.2.0

Figure 2. Parish Plan of Prahran, showing the Crown portions bounded by High Street and Glenferrie Wattletree and Tooronga roads (SLV)

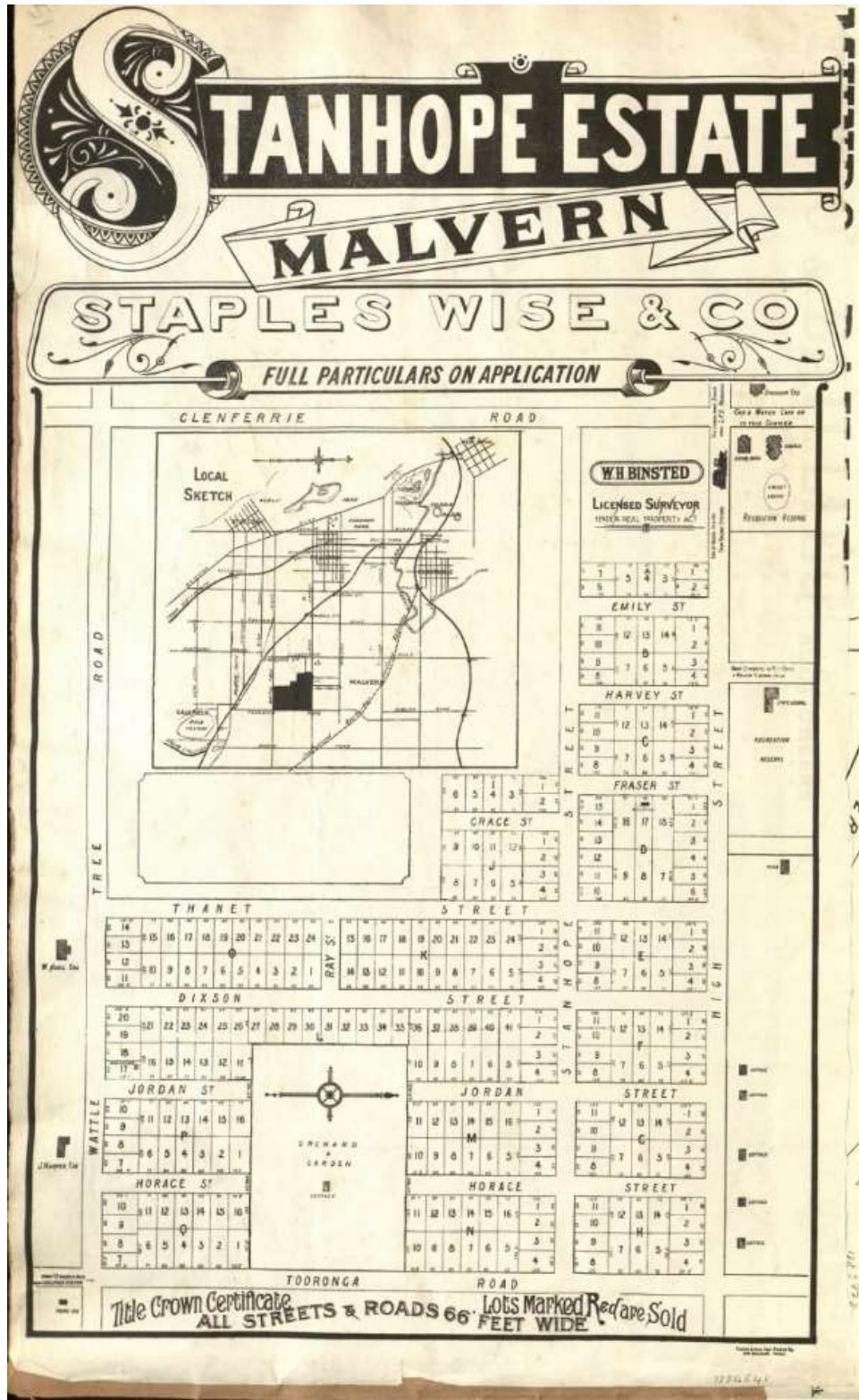


Figure 3. Auction notice for the subdivision of the Stanhope Estate, 1885 (SLV)



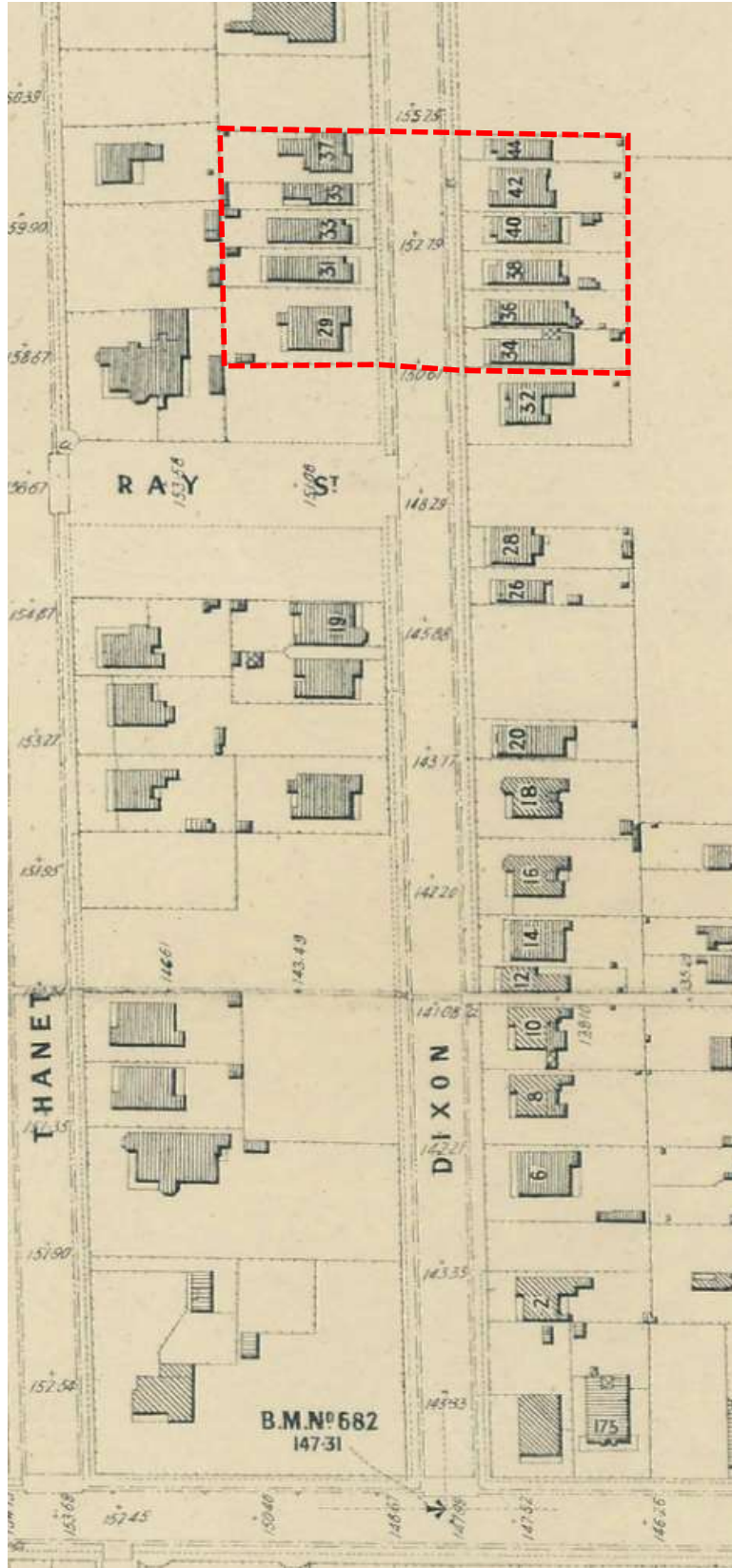


Figure 4. MMBW Plan No 61 showing development on Dixon Street to the north of Wattletree Road, 1901. The Dixon Street Precinct boundary is indicated (SLV)



Figure 5. Detail of 1945 aerial showing houses on the west and east sides of Dixon Street. The approximate outline of the Dixon Street Precinct is indicated (Landata Victoria)

Description

The Dixon Street Precinct, Malvern is situated to the west of Tooronga Road, between High Street and Wattletree Road. The precinct includes 11 houses – five on the west side and six on the east side of Dixon Street – situated to the north of Ray Street. The allotments vary in size but the houses are all modest single-storey dwellings which display typical characteristics of the Victorian period. Houses are similar in scale, display similar detailing and have consistent setbacks from the street, resulting in a consistency within the streetscape.

The precinct comprises small single-storey timber Italianate houses with block-fronted principal elevations. Roofs are clad with either slate or corrugated metal (except No 44 which has a later tile-clad roof) and all eaves are bracketed. The majority of houses are single fronted with a single hipped roof to the street, however three houses are double-fronted with U-shaped hipped roofs and projecting side bays. A pair of houses at the south end (Nos 34 and 36) present single gables to the street front which are infilled with block-fronted cladding. All houses display at least one simple rendered chimney with corniced capping.

All principal elevations have corrugated steel-clad front verandahs, either undecorated or with cast iron frieze and brackets. Single fronted houses contain one principal double hung window with narrow sidelights and an adjacent entry door, while double-fronted houses contain an additional window (or windows) in the projecting side bay.

Non-original timber picket fences have been constructed at the front boundaries of all properties and rear additions appear to have been made to all properties. Two storey additions at the rear of Nos 33 and 35 are visible from the street and a gablet has been added to the front hip roof of No 35.

Wide grassed verges and established trees line the street. Kerbs and gutters are generally lined with bluestone except where later concrete crossovers have been inserted.

Key Features:

- Strong Victorian character
- Consistent single-storey scale
- Modest-sized allotments with consistent front setbacks within the streetscape
- Detached houses with either single-fronted principal elevations or double-fronted elevations with projecting side bay
- Timber block-fronted walls to principal elevations and weatherboard walls to other elevations
- Corrugated steel and slate-clad roofs
- Hipped roof forms, with two gabled roof forms to Nos 34 and 36
- Asymmetrical front elevations
- Front verandahs
- Decorative cast ironwork to some verandahs
- Prominent chimneys with corniced capping
- Double hung windows with narrow sidelights
- Bluestone kerbs and gutters
- Tree-lined street with wide grassed verges.

Intactness/Integrity

The residences within the Dixon Street Precinct are highly intact to their original construction in the early-1890s and retain a high degree of integrity to the Victorian period in fabric, form and detail.

Comparative Analysis

The Dixon Street Precinct is of note as a highly intact grouping of 11 modest Victorian houses dating to the 1890s, typical of suburban development that occurred in suburbs such as Malvern, Malvern East, and Armadale in the late nineteenth century. Built within a five-year period from 1890 to 1895, the single-storey timber houses display a consistency of scale and architectural character and together present as a highly consistent grouping of Victorian houses.

A number of houses dating to the Victorian period remain within the City of Stonnington and numerous examples of these are currently included in heritage precincts throughout the municipality. They demonstrate a range of types, from elaborately detailed single and two-storey terraces designed for the upper and middle classes in the Victorian Italianate style, to more modest single-storey workers' cottages.

There are a number of comparable precincts included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme. These precincts contain streets of highly intact houses, generally constructed for the working and middle-classes, that date predominantly to the Victorian period. Examples of these precincts include Bowen Street Precinct, Prahran (HO124), Cambridge Street Precinct, Armadale (HO125), Aberdeen Street Precinct, Prahran (HO121), Edsall Street Precinct, Malvern (HO374), Tyrone Street Precinct, South Yarra (HO151), Portland Place Precinct, South Yarra (HO131) and the Moore and Hardy Streets Precinct, South Yarra (HO144)

Bowen Street Precinct, Prahran (HO124)

Bowen Street Precinct comprises a highly consistent streetscape of single-storey timber cottages constructed in the late nineteenth century for the working class. The high level of intactness and stylistic consistency of the cottages contributes to the significance of the place as a 'cohesive and characteristic nineteenth century working class street'.

Cambridge Street Precinct, Armadale (HO125)

Cambridge Street comprises 32 allotments that were developed simultaneously in 1887-88 with the construction of rows of identical single-storey detached timber cottages. The precinct is significant for its extremely high level of architectural cohesion, which is uncommon in the municipality, and for its high level of intactness and consistency in fabric, form and detail.

Aberdeen Street Precinct, Prahran (HO121)

The Aberdeen Street Precinct developed rapidly from c.1887, as part of the surge of development through Prahran as a result of the Victorian land boom. The precinct, comprising modest workers' cottages constructed around a narrow cul de sac, is highly intact to its nineteenth century character, with all dwellings from the original development remaining extant. The precinct is significant as a highly intact collection of late nineteenth century houses that are highly consistent in fabric, form, detail, and architectural character, and for its clear association with suburban development in the municipality in the Victorian period.

Edsall Street Precinct, Malvern (HO374)

Edsall Street developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The precinct, with the earliest dwellings dating to the 1880s land boom and later dwellings dating from the 1910s, comprises a substantially intact streetscape of Victorian timber cottages and villas and Federation-era red brick semi-detached pairs. The place is significant for its clear association with two major phases of suburban development in Malvern and for the high level of intactness and consistency in architectural character, form, scale and setbacks.

Tyrone Street Precinct, South Yarra (HO151)

Tyrone Street formed part of one of the earliest subdivisions in the area, though development within the street did not commence until the late-1880s. The street comprises a row of single-storey working class residences that are typical examples of small Victorian cottages within the City of Stonnington. The precinct is primarily significant as a reminder of the types of housing and street patterns that were once common throughout the suburb of Prahran.

Portland Place Precinct, South Yarra (HO131)

Portland Place Precinct is located in South Yarra alongside the Sandringham railway line cutting. Developed during the 1880s land boom, the precinct comprises a varied collection of late-nineteenth century houses that are typical of the Victorian period in which they were constructed. The unusual street layout and diversity of housing stock contributes to the significance of the place.

Moore and Hardy Streets Precinct, South Yarra (HO144)

The Moore and Hardy Streets Precinct is a residential area that developed from the 1850s through to the 1890s. It retains a collection of relatively intact single-storey, single-fronted cottages that were once common throughout the municipality. The consistency in form, scale and setback of the houses within the precinct contributes to the significance of the place.

Conclusion

The above comparative examples all contain streets of generally highly intact houses dating to the Victorian period, which illustrate significant suburban development in the City of Stonnington in the late nineteenth century. These houses display characteristics typical of the Victorian period. The resulting Victorian streetscapes in these precincts display a high degree of integrity and are generally consistent in both scale and architectural character. The Cambridge Street Precinct, Bowen Street Precinct and Aberdeen Street Precinct are of particular note for their high degree of architectural cohesion.

The Dixon Street Precinct is comparable in quality to these precincts. The Dixon Street Precinct comprises a grouping of 11 highly intact houses which were built in the early 1890s as part of the earliest development of Dixon Street and contribute to a streetscape of high integrity, uniformity of scale and distinctive architectural character.

Assessment against Criteria

Following is an assessment of the place against the recognised heritage criteria set out in *Planning Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay* (August 2018).

Criterion A: Importance to the course or pattern of our cultural or natural history

The Dixon Street Precinct is illustrative of the suburban development of Malvern during the boom period of the 1880s and early 1890s. In this period, extensive tracts of land in Malvern – and throughout Stonnington more broadly – were subdivided into suburban residential estates, and allotments were purchased for the construction of working and middle-class housing. Constructed as part of the Stanhope Estate subdivision, the Dixon Street Precinct clearly illustrates this important phase of development in the City of Stonnington.

Criterion D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments

The Dixon Street Precinct forms a fine and highly intact representative group of residences built in the 1890s. Together these houses display typical features of the Italianate architectural style popular in Malvern and across Victoria more broadly in the Victorian period, including a consistent use of materials and elements, such

as timber construction with timber block-fronted walls to principal elevations, hipped or gable-end roofs clad in slate or metal sheeting, post-supported hipped roof verandahs, some with decorative cast ironwork, and prominent chimneys with corniced cappings.

Criterion E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics

The Dixon Street Precinct forms a unified group of residences dating to the Victorian period. Comprising a small group of 11 modest timber block-fronted houses, the consistent application of materials and the variety of detailing – such as hipped or gable-ended roof forms, post-supported verandahs, decorative cast-iron friezes and brackets, prominent chimneys, and double hung windows with narrow sidelights – in conjunction with their garden settings and the tree-lined street, presents a highly picturesque grouping of Victorian houses.

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the precinct be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme.

The gradings of properties within the precinct are as follows:

Address	Grading
29 Dixon Street	Contributory
31 Dixon Street	Contributory
33 Dixon Street	Contributory
35 Dixon Street	Contributory
37 Dixon Street	Contributory
34 Dixon Street	Contributory
36 Dixon Street	Contributory
38 Dixon Street	Contributory
40 Dixon Street	Contributory
42 Dixon Street	Contributory
44 Dixon Street	Contributory

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Stonnington Planning Scheme:

External Paint Controls?	No
Internal Alteration Controls?	No
Tree Controls?	No
Outbuildings or Fences not exempt under Clause 43.01-3?	No
Prohibited Uses Permitted?	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place?	No



Extent of the Recommended Heritage Overlay

To the extent of the property boundaries, as shown in Figure 6 below.



Figure 6. Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay and proposed gradings

References

- Context Pty Ltd, Stonnington Thematic Environmental History, 2006 & 2009 addendum.
- J B Cooper, *The History of Malvern, From its First Settlement to a City*, Melbourne, 1935.
- Landata Historical Aerial Photograph Library.
- Malvern Rate Books.
- Malvern Valuation Books.
- Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works Plan No 61, Malvern, 1901.
- N Lewis & Associates, *City of Malvern Heritage Study*, 1992.
- Stanhope Estate Plan of Subdivision, 1885.
- Stonnington History Centre (SHC).
- The Herald*.
- The Lorgnette*.
- Victorian Places, 'Malvern' & 'Malvern East', <http://www.victorianplaces.com.au>.