

HERITAGE CITATION

Flats, 5-7 Ascot Street, Malvern



Figures 1 and 2. 5-7 Ascot Street, Malvern (GJM Heritage, 2020).

DATE: June 2021

FLATS, 5-7 ASCOT STREET, MALVERN

Place type: Flats	Architect: Warmington & Matthews
Construction Date: 1961	Builder: Not known
Recommendation: Include in the Heritage Overlay	Extent of Overlay: To the extent of the property boundary

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.

Place History

The land on which 5-7 Ascot Street is located originally formed part of a larger allotment, extending from Spring Road to the west, Malvern Road to the north, Shaftesbury Street to the east and Ascot Street to the south. A 1902 Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Plan shows that this allotment remained vacant at the turn of the century, with the exception of the Wesleyan Church complex fronting Spring Road, to the north of Ascot Street (Figure 3).

In c.1906, the southern portion of the allotment was subdivided, creating lots with frontages to Ascot Street opposite the Malvern Public Gardens. The current 5-7 Ascot Street formed part of Lots 3 and 4 (Malvern Rate Books). In 1914, a timber house with four rooms was constructed at 5 Ascot Street for Leslie Richardson, sailor. In the same year, an eight roomed timber building, identified as a ‘flat conversion (F.C.H.)’, was erected at No. 7 for commercial traveller, Andrew Heath (Malvern Rate Books). The layout of the two buildings at 5 and 7 Ascot Street can be seen on a 1935 MMBW plan (Figure 4) and are also evident on a 1945 aerial photograph (Figure 5).



In 1960, the two blocks forming 5 and 7 Ascot Street were purchased by the Coppinlea Investment Company of Chetwynd Street, North Melbourne for £5000 and £8000 respectively (Malvern Valuation Field Card). The investment company demolished the existing buildings, consolidated the two titles and erected a three-storey cream brick block of flats on the expanded site the following year (Malvern Valuation Field Cards). The block of 20 OYO (Own-Your-Own) flats was designed by architects, Warmington & Matthews (SHC) and incorporated colour tile mosaic murals to its principal facades. It is possible that these mosaic murals, with initials 'A M' evident at the bottom right corner, were crafted by Matthews himself, whose first name was Anthony (Built Heritage).

'Coppinlea Gardens' comprised 20 one, two and three-bedroom flats with garages and carports, which were variously marketed as 'luxury bachelor flats' and 'luxury home units' (*Age*, 11 November 1961:44; *Age*, 10 March 1962:13; *Age*, 28 April 1962:42). The strata flats were first offered for let in 1962, with the first sales of individual units taking place in 1963-64 (*Age*, 16 June 1962:13; Malvern Valuation Field Cards). The location of the flats 'opposite parkland, quiet but close to tram and shops' attracted buyers (Malvern Valuation Field Card).

The flats have had various owners in the ensuing years and remain in use as residential units.

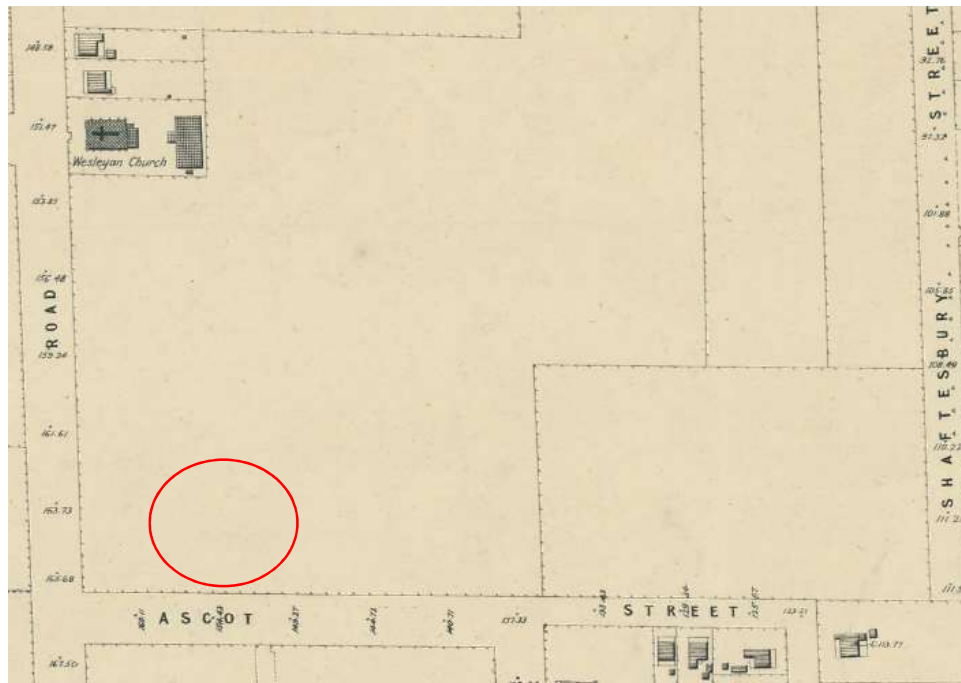


Figure 3. MMBW Base Plan No 59, Malvern, 1902 showing the approximate location of 5-7 Ascot Street, indicated by red circle (SLV)

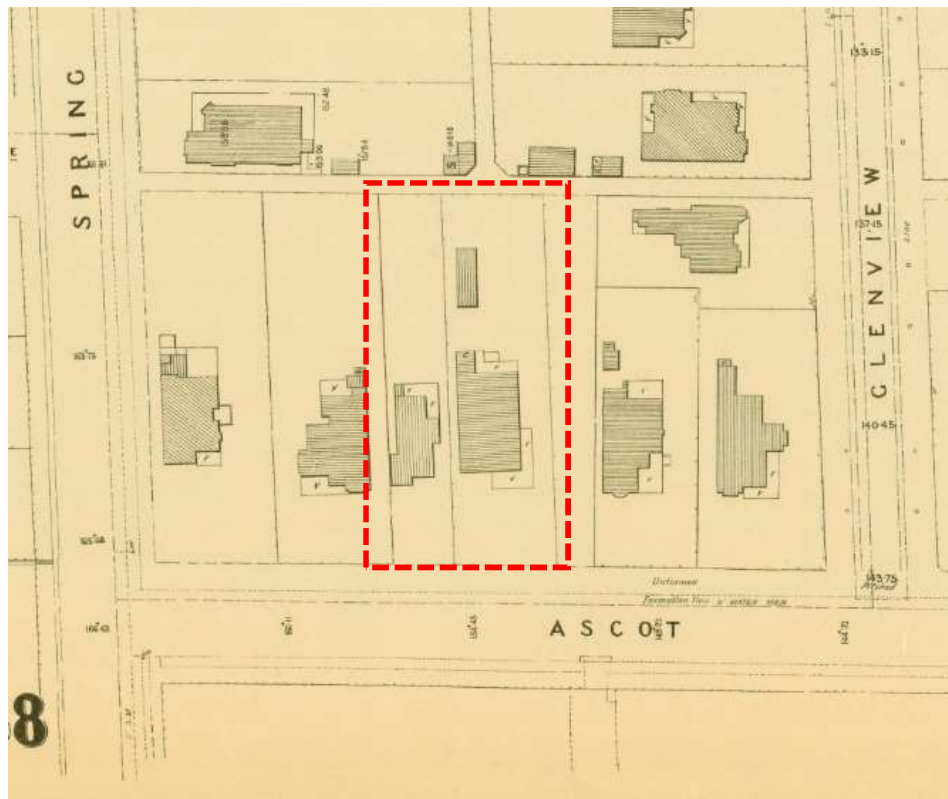


Figure 4. MMBW Detail Plan No. 1758 Malvern, 1935 showing the 1914 houses at 5 and 7 Ascot Street, prior to the construction of the existing block of flats, indicated by red outline (SLV)



Figure 5. Aerial photograph showing 5 and 7 Ascot Street, 1945 prior to the construction of the existing flats, indicated by red outline (Landata)

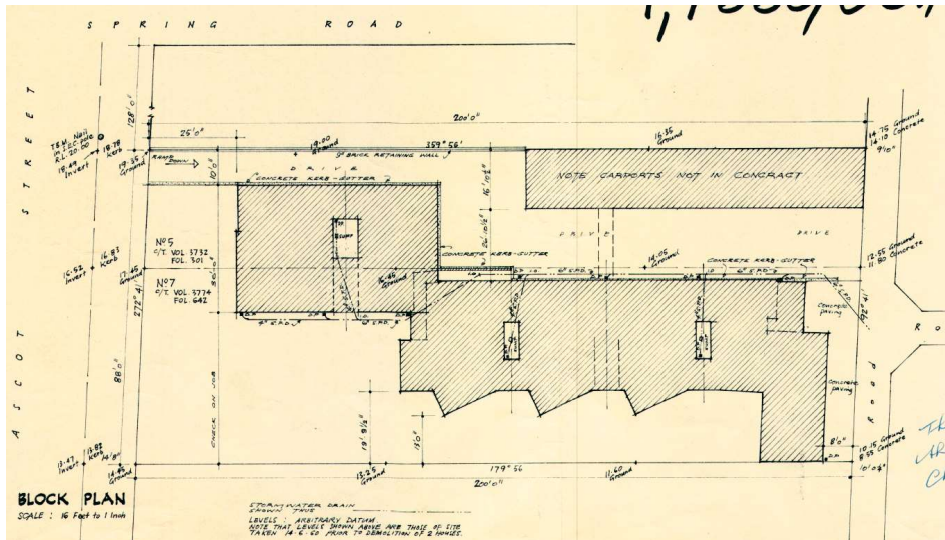


Figure 6. Architectural drawings showing the layout of the new OYO flats to be built at 5-7 Ascot Street, 1960, Note the carport did not form part of the contract (SHC)

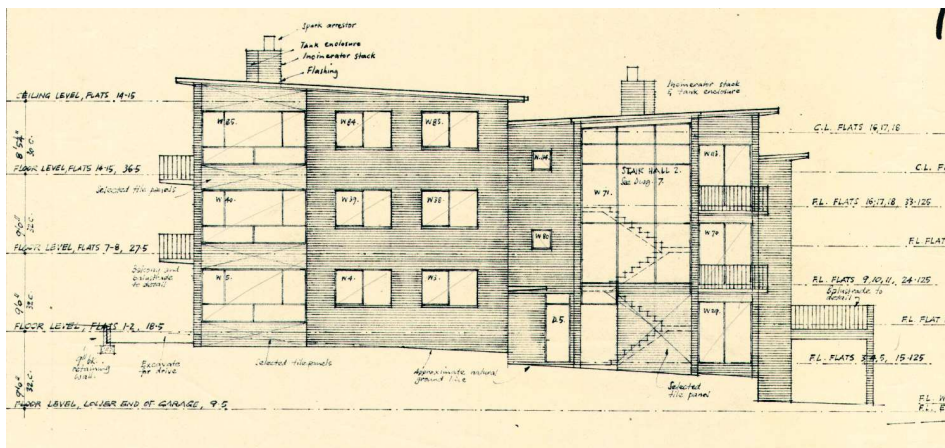


Figure 7. Front (south) elevation of the flats at 5-7 Ascot Street, 1960. Note the 'selected tile panels' annotations (SHC)

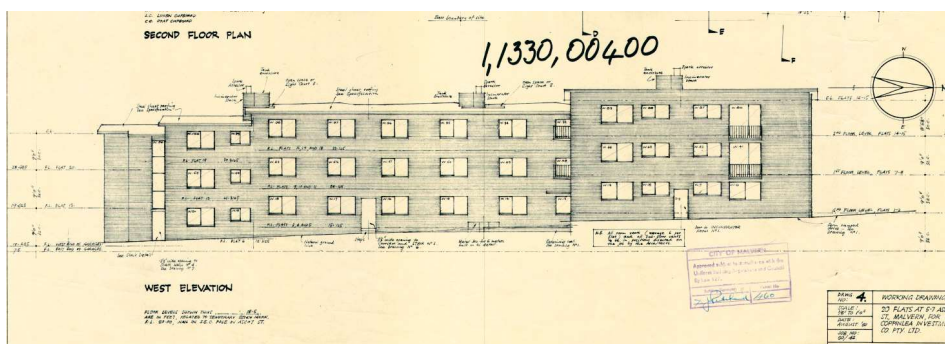


Figure 8. West elevation of the new OYO flats at 5-7 Ascot Street, Malvern, 1960 (SHC)

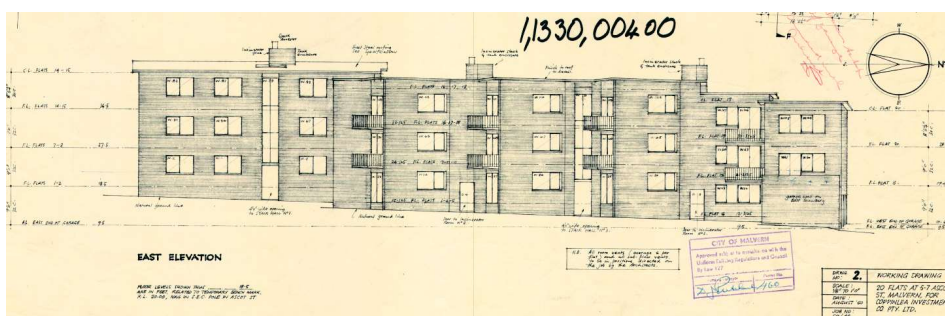


Figure 9. East elevation of the new OYO flats at 5-7 Ascot Street, Malvern, 1969 (SHC)

Warmington & Matthews, architects

The partnership of Warmington & Matthews was a short-lived architectural practice established in 1961 by G Stuart Warmington (1922-) and Anthony William Matthews (1921-2010). Lasting only a year, the partnership's small portfolio included residential commissions in the suburbs of Heidelberg, Yan Yean, Malvern, Mount Waverley and Heathmont (Built Heritage).

Warmington commenced his architectural studies at Melbourne Technical College in 1940 before enlisting with the Australian Army during World War II. He completed his studies at the University of Melbourne Architectural Atelier while simultaneously working in the office of Oakley & Parkes following discharge from the Army in 1944. He worked with John & Phyllis Murphy in the mid-1950s, before undertaking a number of individual commissions in the following years, including an ambitious masterplan for the Municipal Offices in Sunshine (HO109, Built Heritage). Following the dissolution of Warmington & Matthews, Warmington resumed sole practice, retiring in 1992 (Built Heritage).

Matthews also completed the first two years of the Melbourne Technical College architectural course before enlisting in the RAAF as a navigator. He resumed his course following the end of the war, and graduated as an architect in 1948 (*Sydney Morning Herald* 29 September 2010). Matthews moved to Canberra in c.1964 and worked with the Department of Works & Housing until his retirement in 1986.

Historical Themes

The place illustrates the following themes as outlined in *Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes*:

- 6 Building towns, cities and the garden state
- 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

Description

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street are located on the north side of Ascot Street, opposite the Malvern Public Gardens and Malvern Central School, and in close proximity to the major commercial streets of High Street to the south and Glenferrie Road to the west. The subject site is a large rectangular block of land extending from Ascot Street to an unnamed concrete laneway at the north boundary.

The flats, 20 in number, are arranged across three storeys in a single large building of cream brick masonry construction. The roof is clad in profile metal sheeting and is flat or gently raked, with projecting eaves all-round that are finished with simple metal fascias. The building comprises two intersecting rectilinear shapes in plan; the frontmost, at the southwest of the site, is a simple rectangular form while the rear portion at the site's northeast has a more complex geometry with a bay projecting forward (south) from the principal elevation and three shallow bays – at oblique angles to the rest of the building – projecting from the east elevation.

The frontmost portion of the building presents itself to Ascot Street with a highly-ordered elevation comprising six identical windows arranged in pairs per level, and a full-height decorative bay with integrated glazing at the western end. The spandrels within the decorative bay are treated with mosaic tiled murals of abstract panels in bright and muted tones. The windows within this decorative bay differ to the windows elsewhere on the building, with lower sill heights and a different fenestration pattern.

The rear portion of the building is set much further back than the elevation with the decorative bay, but is just as carefully treated with additional detail. A straight concrete pathway draws visitors/occupants to this elevation, which is almost entirely glazed with a window wall enclosing the main stair well. The stair, an otherwise standard concrete structure with steel balustrade, is highly visible through this glazing arrangement and is elevated to a sculptural device. This entry is further decorated with a large tiled mural at ground level,

in blue and white tones with red and black details and featuring a musical scene with two stylised figures and the initial 'AM' in the lower righthand corner.

Detailing across the building is highly consistent and intact, and includes aluminium-framed windows and cantilevered concrete balconies with steel balustrades. Several enclosed garages are provided in the undercroft of the main building and are accessed from the unnamed laneway, with simple tilt-up doors.

The building is set back from the front (Ascot Street) and side (east and west) boundaries, providing informal landscaped areas and a garden forecourt. The front boundary treatment is a simple, low post-and-rail fence. The western side of the site is utilitarian in character, providing paved access to the rear and a bin store. At-grade carpark occupies the northwest and north areas of the site and is accessed via the unnamed laneway.

Key Features:

- Cream brick walls, profiled metal cladding to the roof, and consistent window detailing
- Three-storey building envelope, including projecting eaves, geometric forms and offset bays with cantilevered balconies
- Decorative features including highly detailed tiled murals and window wall with stairwell beyond
- Setbacks from front and side boundaries providing a garden setting
- Integrated garages accessed from rear laneway.

Intactness/Integrity

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street retain a very high degree of integrity in fabric, form and detail. The flats are highly intact to their original construction and can be readily understood and appreciated as an early 1960s block of flats.

Comparative Analysis

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street are of note as a highly intact example of a 1960s block of flats built in the City of Stonnington. Designed by architects, Warmington & Matthews, it is one of a large number of multi-storey flats that were constructed across Victoria in the post-war period.

The introduction of Company and Stratum titles to Victorian legislation after World War II enabled flats to be sold as individual units for the first time. Advertised as 'buy your own' or 'own your own', this housing type superseded the maisonette and luxury flat types that had been popular in the interwar period. With Melbourne experiencing severe housing shortages in the wake of World War II, flats were promoted as a means of solving the crisis, leading to an explosion of multi-storey developments designed for higher density living in the post-war period.

As described in the *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria*:

While the Second World War was followed by an unprecedented demand for housing in and around Melbourne, residential expansion was hampered by a shortage of materials and labour. Until these restrictions were relaxed in the early 1950s, numerous attempts were made by government departments, organisations, companies and even individuals to solve the housing crisis.

Increased density in residential living had been popular in Melbourne since the first flats were built in the 1910s. The post-war era saw these become larger and taller, with open plans, modern facilities and sunlit balconies. Frederick Romberg, who pioneered modern flats with Stanhill (1945-50), also designed the state's first block of "own-you-own" flats at Hawthorn (1949). The

introduction of strata title legislation (by architect and Lord Mayor Bernard Evans) saw this type proliferate from the early 1950s. The same period saw the re-introduction of apartment types that were popular before the war, such as the bachelor flat, the villa unit and the cooperative development. Flats became so popular that it was reported in 1956 that “more flats are being built in Victoria than in any other state in the Commonwealth”. The total number of flats doubled every year between 1957 and 1961, and had trebled by the end of that decade (Built Heritage, 2008:23).

Post-war multi-storey developments were particularly popular in the inner suburbs of Melbourne. The first multi-storey flat development in Stonnington appears to have been Lansell Close at 46 Lansell Road, Toorak. Flats in this development were advertised for sale as early as December 1951 and the building appears to have been constructed by 1955 (Context 2012:15). The construction of other multi-storey blocks in surrounding suburbs soon followed. The proliferation of multi-storey flat development however, combined with severe shortages in materials and labour, meant that the strong patronage of prominent architects by wealthy residents that had existed in Stonnington from the late-nineteenth century and continued into the interwar period declined in the 1960s and 1970s. Flats of the post-war period were often of a lower quality and design than those of the interwar period.

A number of multi-storey flats dating to the 1960s and 1970s are included within heritage precincts in Malvern. The majority of these are typical examples of two- to three-storey brick flats, which were erected with inexpensive materials with no particular architectural input. They are generally graded ‘not significant’ within their respective precincts.

There is currently only one example of a 1960s flat building included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme on an individual basis – Carinal Flats, 3 Tahara Road, Toorak (1951). This building however, is included in the Victorian Heritage Register and is therefore not considered a useful comparative example.

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street, Malvern are of note for their high level of integrity to their period of construction and as a fine representative example of an architect-designed flat constructed in Malvern in the post-war period.

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 flats at 5-7 Ascot Street are illustrative of the suburban development of Malvern in the post-war period when a number of multi-storey residential flats were constructed across the suburb. This type of development was largely the result of housing shortages following World War II. The impetus for higher density living combined with changes to strata tile legislation, which allowed for the sale of individual flats for the first time in Victoria, led to a proliferation of multi-storey developments in the 1960s and 1970s. The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street clearly demonstrate this shift towards lower-cost, higher density living which characterised suburban development in Malvern, and across Stonnington more broadly, in the post-war period.

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

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street are a fine and highly intact representative example of a residential flat building constructed in the post-war period in the City of Stonnington. The flats display typical features of this building type from this period in Malvern and across Stonnington more broadly, including a substantial three-storey form set on a large site, communal entrances and stairs, a flat roof, regularly-spaced windows, garages to the

rear, and the use of materials such as cream brick. It is notable as a highly intact example of a 1960s residential flat designed by architects, Warmington & Matthews.

Criterion E: Importance in displaying particular aesthetic characteristics

The flats at 5-7 Ascot Street are a highly intact and well-resolved example of a residential flat building designed by architects Warmington & Matthews in the post-war period. The design, comprising two substantial geometric forms of cream brick construction with flat roofs, together with the use of distinctive architectural and decorative elements including large expanses of glazing juxtaposed with regularly spaced glazed windows with contrasting dark brick sills, angled balconies to the east, and decorative tile mosaic murals to the principal facades, all set within a garden setting, present a picturesque composition of this building type.

Grading and Recommendations

It is recommended that the place be included in the Heritage Overlay of the Stonnington Planning Scheme as a locally significant heritage place.

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 boundary as shown in Figure 10 below.



Figure 10. Recommended Extent of Heritage Overlay



References

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- State Library of Victoria.
- Stonnington History Centre (SHC).
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