

House and garden

Prepared by: Context

Address:

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North

Name: House and Garden	Survey Date: October 2018
Place Type: Residential	Architect:
Grading: Significant	Builder: L J Adam
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1941



Figure 1. View of 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North. (Source: Context, October 2017)

Historical Context

Balwyn North is a residential suburb situated 10 kilometres east of central Melbourne. To its south is Balwyn, which is separated from Balwyn North by Belmore Road. It is bounded on the north by the Eastern Freeway.

1940s and postwar development

There had been a scattering of new housing development in the area north of Belmore Road from the late 1930s, but this area was developed significantly from the early 1940s as the new suburb of North Balwyn. Occupied with orchards and small farms, this was the one of the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land relatively close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples building new homes in the 1940s and 1950s (a proportion of which included returned servicemen). The suburb developed as quintessentially middle class, with a high proportion of brick homes and a notable absence of industrial activity. The ridge that ran along Doncaster Road was an advantage to house blocks in the adjoining streets, providing sought-after views to the distant ranges and encouraging the building of often grandiose double-storey homes. Public transport was provided with the extension from the electric tram from East Kew to North Balwyn in 1938, along High Street and Doncaster Road. A large shopping centre, known as 'North Balwyn Village', developed along Doncaster Road. An image of Balwyn North c1950 can be seen in Figure 2.

In the 1950s, the potential for large-scale residential development in North Balwyn was recognised by a private company, A.V. Jennings Pty Ltd, which proposed the Trentwood Estate on a large tract of land off Doncaster Road (Built Heritage 2015:12). From 1947, Balwyn and Balwyn North were acknowledged not only as epicentres for the Small Homes Service but also for modern-architect designed homes in general. A number of notable architects, including Robin Boyd, designed Modernist homes in Balwyn in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the streets east of Balwyn Road, including the elevated area around Beckett Park.

This new residential expansion in Balwyn North, which included the Greythorn area in the 1950s, in turn brought commercial development. Several local retail strips appeared in the north of the study area, including in Bulleen Road at Dorado Avenue, in Balwyn Road between Lucifer and Echo streets, and, most notably, the prominent strip on Doncaster Road, just down from the Trentwood Estate. In 1960, G.J. Coles opened a large store on the corner of Doncaster Road and Burke Road, which was Melbourne's first American-style self-service drive-in supermarket complex. New schools and churches also appeared during this period of development. Balwyn High School, located in Balwyn North, opened in 1954, followed by Greythorn High School in 1959. Several new churches were constructed, extended or rebuilt to provide for burgeoning congregations (Built Heritage 2015:12). This included new Catholic churches at Deepdene, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

Since the 1990s, a significant influx of new immigrants into the area has seen the extensive replacement of interwar and 1940s homes with new residential development. The suburb of Balwyn North today is favoured by many new home-owners, especially Chinese buyers, for access to Balwyn High School – a co-educational government secondary school with nearly 2000 students.

History

The subject site is located on what was allotment 17 of the 'Rookwood Estate', which was subdivided into 66 villa allotments and sold in December 1927 ('Rookwood Estate', 1927). For 40 years prior to the subdivisional sale, the block of land at the corner of Doncaster and Balwyn roads, Balwyn North (then City of Camberwell), had been owned by William Patterson Vettler, a farmer and veteran rifleman, who died in 1926 (*Weekly Times* 27 November 1926:88).

Following the 1927 subdivision, the subject site remained unoccupied until 1940 (Figure 2).

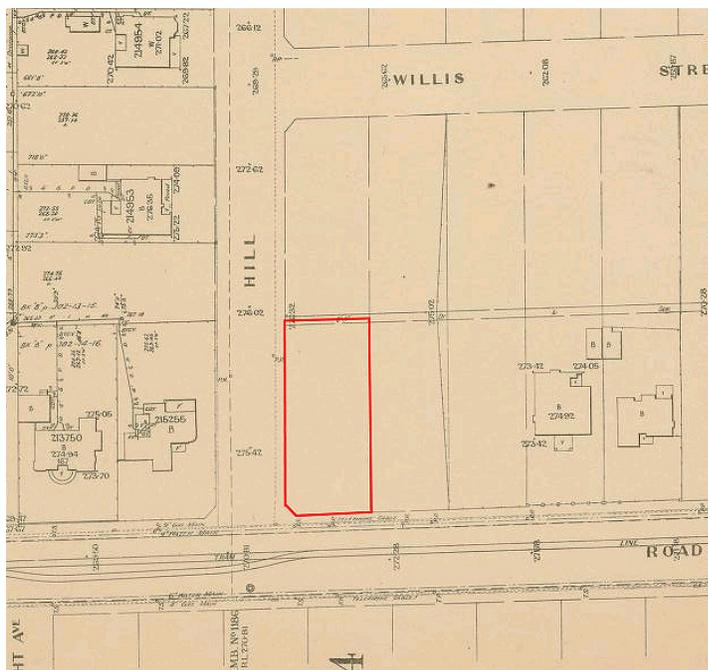


Figure 2. Subject site shown on the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works detail plan no. 4846, 1940. (Source: SLV)

Because of the rapid development of the new suburb of North Balwyn starting from the early 1940s, many previously unoccupied allotments were developed. In 1941, an eight-roomed brick house was erected on the land currently known as 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, for owner Alexander Cameron, sawmiller, by builder L J Adam (BP; S&Mc 1942). The residence and a garage were constructed at a cost of £2350. In August 1941, a septic tank was constructed on the site for £50, indicating the house was near completion, and by 1947, most of the properties in the Rookwood Estate, including the subject property, were connected to the sewers (BP; *Argus* 29 October 1947:18).

Born in Wallan, Alexander Cameron was a prominent figure in the timber milling industry centred around the Shire of Healesville. With his life-long friend F J Barton of Marysville, he was co-founder of a timber-milling settlement 'Cambarville' outside Marysville. The name was derived from a combination of their two names. The Cambarville sawmilling settlement became Cambarville township and is now part of the Shire of Yarra Ranges (*Healesville Guardian* 13 September 1947:1).

As advocates for the progress and development of the Toolangi-Healesville-Marysville area, Cameron and Barton both served as councillors on the Healesville Shire Council. Cameron was Shire President for four successive terms and held the longest record of service. One of his most significant works as Shire President was the annexation of West Healesville from the Eltham Shire to Healesville. Until shortly before moving to Balwyn, he had been the proprietor of the Toolangi Hotel for 30 years (*Healesville Guardian* 13 September 1947:1; *Healesville Guardian* 9 March 1953:1).

The builder of the subject house at 171 Doncaster Road, L J Adam, is likely to be Leslie John Adam, a builder and contractor who moved from East Kew to Healesville c1937, or possibly his son Leslie James, who was also a builder. L John Adam formerly traded with his brother as Adam Brothers until 1910, and possibly continued his practice with his two sons, a builder and a draftsman (*Age* 31 October 1910:11; ER 1921, 1925, 1937 & 1943).

In March 1953, A Cameron died at 171 Doncaster Road. His widow, Donna Cameron, became the owner of 171 Doncaster Road until 1957 when the property was granted to their only surviving daughter, Donna Margaret (Peggy) Jents. Peggy Jents and her husband Leonard Stanley remained as owner-occupiers through to the 1980s (ER 1980).

No additions or alterations were made to the house during their ownership (BP).

Description & Integrity

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, is a substantial two-storey brick dwelling constructed in 1941. Positioned on the north-east corner of Doncaster and Hill roads, the house is located on an elevated allotment which slopes gently down from north to south. Constructed in clinker brick with a roof of glazed terracotta tiles, the house has Moderne stylistic characteristics, especially emphasising horizontal elements within its elevations and the use of smooth curves to parapets and walls.

A primary hip roof runs north to south with a secondary hip intersecting at its mid-point, creating a T-shaped roof plan. Lower flat-roofed sections project from the intersection of the two hips and mark the entry porch and stairwell to Doncaster Road, and allow for trafficable decks at the upper level. Clad in glazed terracotta tiles, the ridgelines have concealed transverse flashings under the tiles, removing the need for ridge capping adding a note of simplicity and elegance.

Asymmetrically massed, the principal southern elevation, facing Doncaster Road, features a pair of cascading flat-roofed projections housing the entry portico and stairwell beyond. Three slightly incongruous Corinthian columns support the entry portico with curved corner. Under the entrance

portico is a single glazed entry door with glazed side lights. A painted reinforced concrete lintel supports clinker brickwork above and features a subtle decorative panel created using contrasting blonde tapestry brick banding. This panel detail is repeated on the stairwell rising behind and wraps around its curved corner. An ornate mild-steel railing sits on top of the brickwork. Access to a balcony above the portico is through a single glazed door. Tripartite timber framed windows feature fixed central glazed panels with double hung sash sidelights broken by horizontal glazing bars. A timber-framed hood to the front upper window may be original or an early addition to conceal a window blind.

The western elevation, facing Hill Road, replicates the dominant features of the southern elevation exploiting the house's prominent corner position. Creating a unified effect with its counterpart, the elevation is distinguished by the cascading, almost waterfall-like treatment of the stairwell and entry portico wall heights. A slender steel-framed double-height leaded stair window introduces a contrasting vertical element to the otherwise horizontal tripartite windows, and hints of the proportions of the entry hall within. A decorative mild-steel panel sits between the first and ground floor timber-framed tripartite windows.

The rear northern elevation features an upper deck above a covered porch. Accessed off a flat-roofed sunroom, a simple mild-steel rail, painted reinforced concrete lintel and single band of contrasting tapestry bricks emphasises the horizontality of the design. An upper corner window is positioned at the north-east corner.

The eastern elevation is punctuated with a number of vertical timber-framed double hung sash windows. Expressed chimney breasts, positioned towards each end of the elevation, pierce the roof and culminate in simple corbeled tops.

The property sits within a highly intact setting. A distinctive low fence of rough-faced ferruginous brown and slate runs along the eastern and southern boundaries with a decorative mild-steel pedestrian gate at its south-east corner and drive gates at each of its ends off Hill and Doncaster roads. Substantial piers demarcate these entry points with unusual slab and half round capings fashioned out of the stone. A single garage of clinker brick is accessed off Hill Road. Flat roofed with a parapet that steps up to a central point, the garage echoes detailing on the house including banding of cream tapestry bricks and a contrasting painted reinforced concrete lintel. Potentially early garden elements including slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls and unusual zig zag infill detailing to the front path further complement the suburban comfort of the property and its North Balwyn location. It is not clear if the crazy paving to the curved driveway itself is original or a replacement. Certainly the crazy paved hardstand at the top of the driveway was not unusual for the era. There is an Olive Mellor garden design from *Australian Home Beautiful* of 1948, for example, that shows a driveway terminating in a large crazy paved area, geared towards the motor car (Cuffley, 1993:140).

The garden is interesting for its restrained foliage colours (mostly dark greens) and a structure provided by lushly planted dark leaved evergreen trees and shrubs (cypress, camellias, azaleas, holly) which are all typical of the house's era. It will also erupt seasonally into quite colourful displays of azalea, camellia and rose, to create what Peter Cuffley characterises as "featuristic" in Australian suburban gardens of the '40s and '50s, where bright flowers and bold colours were also part of the scene (Cuffley 1993:141). Plantings in the front garden that appear typical for the era (and popular) and consistent with the period and style of the house are:

- Conical cypresses (*Cupressus sempervirens*)
- There appears to be another evergreen conifer with cypress-like foliage as well, less clipped/conical in shape.
- Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica 'glauca'*), as a specimen tree
- Camellias (probably cultivars of *Camellia reticulata* and *Camellia japonica*)
- Azaleas
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolia*) which looks quite mature.

- Climbing Rose (to first floor sundeck), of a salmon pink colour. Climbing roses were also in interwar gardens, as were standard roses. While consistent with period, it is not clear if this is an early planting or a later one.

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North is of very high integrity with no visible alterations to original or early elements of the place. The building retains its original building and roof forms and fenestrations.

The integrity of the house is greatly enhanced by the unusually high level of intactness of these main elements, which include the glazed terracotta roof with concealed transverse flashings to the ridge lines, clinker brick walls, glazed wall vents with hoods, chimneys, curved entry porch with columns, painted concrete lintel and blonde tapestry brick details, curved stairwell with blonde tapestry brick detailing and steel framed window with leaded panes, original glazed door with glazed side-lights and window joinery including a timber hood to the upper window on the southern elevation, mild-steel balustrades and decorative mild-steel panel on the western elevation.

The integrity of the place is greatly enhanced by original or early elements including the low fence of rough-faced stone, mild steel gates, clinker brick garage, slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls, distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps, and the mature garden plantings of evergreen trees and shrubs, many of them bearing bright flowers.

Comparative Analysis

The Moderne style was to architecture what Art Deco was to the decorative arts - a modern break from past styles, escapist rather than intellectual, inherently decorative rather than stridently functional.

The Moderne style straddled the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s, when simple lines held the promise of reduced cost and decoration was an achievable form of home improvement, an economical sentiment that carried through to the years of World War II.

Moderne architecture favoured geometric forms, especially sheer wall planes, curved corners and copings, interpenetration of volumes and surfaces, and a beguilingly brisk articulation of forms, often emphasising horizontal, vertical, or diagonal lines in a pleasing blend of fluidity and starkness.

Frosted and opaque glass, chromium or nickel plating, decorative mild steel, colourful accents of glazed tapestry bricks or tiles, contrasting colours and patterns were all part of the Moderne architectural vocabulary.

In Australia, whilst initially taken up for use on commercial buildings, the Moderne idiom started to be adopted by a number of architects for use on residential commissions in the early 1930s. By the mid-1930s the style was becoming more widely embraced by the broader community, gaining popularity amongst middle-class home owners. As demonstrated by 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, many adopted a two-storey form with a basically rectilinear plan but with the introduction of some conspicuous curved or streamlined elements.

The various styles and idioms of the interwar period, of which Moderne is one, are well represented in the Heritage Overlay in Boroondara. Displaying a high level of intactness and integrity, contributory examples within the Heritage Overlay display a consistency of built form and a cohesive garden suburb character enhanced by original low front fences and outbuildings. Individually significant examples include detached houses, duplexes and flats.

Currently only four Moderne-style places are identified as being individually significant in Balwyn/Balwyn North. The values expressed in these buildings suggest a confident and progressive modernity, representing the unique nature of the area as a new affluent suburb.

The following places are of the interwar Moderne style and are of individual significance within the City of Boroondara Heritage Overlay and can be compared to 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North.



HO419 136 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn (1938)
(Source: VHD)

136 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn is of local historical and architectural significance as a relatively intact example of a Modern Movement house design as it appeared in Boroondara in the late interwar period. Historically, it relates to the Modern Movement's early 1930s 'popular revolution' as Robin Boyd described it. Though it has a hipped, rather than flat, roof, the building features geometric massing and modern devices such as corner windows with the new standard metal window fittings. Alterations and additions are relatively minor and sympathetic in their design.



HO170 6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North (1951)
(Source: Google Maps)

6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North is an architecturally superior residential example in the Moderne style. The house is of local historical and architectural significance.

The design utilises all of the Moderne stylistic trappings, including curves, layered massing, flat roofs, nautical imagery, patterned brickwork and steel-framed window joinery. It is also related to the nearby Riverside and Camberwell City Heights estates.



HO385 177 Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris, (1935)
(Source: Lovell Chen Architects & Heritage Consultants)

The Roy Newton House is historically and architecturally significant as a two-storey prototype for what is now known as the 'Postwar Vernacular' housing that dominated Australian suburbs after World War II. It is one of the earliest and key examples within Boroondara which demonstrate the adoption of this new direction in suburban housing style. Architecturally, the Newton house design is skilled in balancing the inherent weight of tile and brick cavity wall construction with a series of robust details and solid scaling. The design shows a sense for the richness of its contemporary materials and exploits this in a vivid manner.



HO370 2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris (1940)
(Source: Lovell Chen Architects & Heritage Consultants)

2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris, is of local historical and architectural significance as a good example of a Moderne house of the late interwar period. The asymmetrical massing of forms takes advantage of the prominent corner siting to address both frontages, a context which sets it apart from the more traditional planning and form of the neighbouring properties. While the integrity of the building has been compromised to a degree by the alterations to windows and a door, the overall composition remains unaltered.



HO279 1205 Burke Road, Kew (1939)
(Source: Lovell Chen Architects & Heritage Consultants)

1205 Burke Road, Kew, is of local historical and architectural significance. It is one of a number of houses constructed in the Boroondara area and elsewhere in the late 1930s and early 1940s which fused Modern Movement architectural imagery with more standard building techniques. This is an interesting example which simultaneously demonstrates an intense and particular care and direction in its construction, the machine aesthetic, and the new, unornamented or relatively unornamented modern architecture.



HO189 15 Walbundry Avenue, Balwyn North,
Individually significant in Riverside Estate and Environs (Source: Google Maps)

15 Walbundry Avenue, Balwyn North is of local aesthetic significance. The house is a superb Streamlined Moderne stuccoed two-storey house with corner steel-framed windows, port holes, window slits, a curved flat-roofed porch and a vertical feature on its east elevation. The roofline is both parapeted and hipped with tiles to the pitched section. The fence is part of the design, and notable, and the landscape is empathetic to the period.



HO192 19 Maleela Avenue, Balwyn, Individually significant in Reid Estate (Source: realestate.com.au)

19 Maleela Avenue, Balwyn is of local architectural and historical significance demonstrating key stylistic elements of the Moderne style. It incorporates a blend of layered asymmetrical massing, a distinctive curved corner band of ribbon windows, defined slab edge, and an open upper terrace. Largely sitting under a hipped tiled roof, the flat roofed upper terrace breaks up the hipped roof form into a combination of both hip and parapeted elements.

Discussion

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North compares well to the above examples. It demonstrates key design elements of the Moderne style. This includes a layered geometric massed form, a strong horizontal emphasis, open upper terraces and the use of contemporary materials such as corner and steel framed windows and patterned brick work.

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North compares particularly closely to 177 Glen Iris Road, Glen Iris. This house was published in *Home Beautiful* in 1937 and became a prototype for what became known as the 'Postwar Vernacular' housing that dominated Australian housing after World War II. It is likely that the designer of 171 Doncaster Road would have been aware of its design. Its use of face brick with contrasting highlights and the introduction of curved elements in an otherwise rectilinear plan are key stylistic features of the Moderne type. How 171 Doncaster Road differs to 177 Glen Iris Road is its combination of a visible hipped roof with parapeted sections. Whilst later Moderne houses frequently completely hid their roofs behind parapets (2 Beatrice Street Glen Iris, HO370 and 6 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn, HO170) others, as seen at 171 Doncaster Road, combine a visible hipped roof with parapeted sections/elements (136 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn, HO 419, 1205 Burke Road, HO279, Kew, 19 Maleela Avenue, Balwyn and 15 Walbundry Avenue, Balwyn North, HO 189).

Whilst 6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North and 2 Beatrice Street Glen Iris are more sophisticated and superior residential examples of the Moderne style, 171 Doncaster Road displays similar characteristics such as the strong massing, defined slab edges and curves and intact details such as steel framed windows and mild steel balustrades. As seen in these examples the subject site also takes advantage of its prominent corner position and has been designed with multiple primary elevations providing a context that sets it apart from more traditional planning forms of the time.

171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North is a representative and externally intact example of a two-storey Moderne dwelling. It is a well-designed and detailed example of the style that is carefully sited to take advantage of its prominent corner position. Constructed in clinker brick with a roof of glazed terracotta tiles, the house has subtle Moderne stylistic characteristics, especially emphasising horizontal and curved elements within its elevations. It is further distinguished and enhanced by its highly intact setting. Not only have original hard landscaping elements survived, as well as the garage, but also the mature front garden plantings of evergreen trees and flowering shrubs typical of the 1940s and '50s.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Planning and Community Development, revised August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

N/A

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

N/A

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).

N/A

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

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, are significant as externally intact examples of a two-storey Moderne dwelling, carefully sited to take advantage of its prominent corner position within what appears to be an original garden. The house demonstrates key design elements of the Moderne style including a layered geometric massed form, a strong horizontal emphasis, open upper terraces and the use of contemporary materials such as corner and steel framed windows and patterned brickwork. Like many Moderne houses of its era, it juxtaposes a traditional hipped roof with parapeted and curved elements. The garage is an original part of the design and echoes the materiality – clinker bricks with tapestry brick accents – and parapeted form of the house. These elements are complemented and enhanced by the retention of a highly intact setting including both original hard landscaping and plantings. Hard landscaping includes a low fence of rough-faced slate, ornate mild-steel gates, a slate crazy paved hardstand in front of the house (and possibly the curved drive as well), stone retaining walls and distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps. Front garden plantings are of interest as an example of the “featuristic” Australian garden popular in the 1940s and ‘50s, characterised by the use of dark-foliaged evergreen trees and shrubs which serve as the backdrop for a colourful seasonal display of flowers.

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

N/A

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

N/A

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

N/A

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

N/A

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, built in 1941 by L J Adam on the Rookwood Estate, is significant.

Significant elements of its setting include the low fence of rough-faced stone, mild steel gates, clinker brick garage, slate crazy paving, stone retaining walls and distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps. In addition, early or original plantings including cypresses, including the conical *Cupressus sempervirens*, a Blue Atlas Cedar (*Cedrus atlantica 'glauca'*), camellias, azaleas and holly. The climbing rose is in keeping with the period, but its age is unknown.

How is it significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North is of local architectural (representative) significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

The house and garden at 171 Doncaster Road, Balwyn North, are significant as externally intact examples of a two-storey Moderne dwelling, carefully sited to take advantage of its prominent corner position within what appears to be an original garden. The house demonstrates key design elements of the Moderne style including a layered geometric massed form, a strong horizontal emphasis, open upper terraces and the use of contemporary materials such as corner and steel framed windows and patterned brickwork. Like many Moderne houses of its era, it juxtaposes a traditional hipped roof with parapeted and curved elements. The garage is an original part of the design and echoes the materiality – clinker bricks with tapestry brick accents – and parapeted form of the house. These elements are complemented and enhanced by the retention of a highly intact setting including both original hard landscaping and plantings. Hard landscaping includes a low fence of rough-faced slate, ornate mild-steel gates, a slate crazy paved hardstand in front of the house (and possibly the curved drive as well), stone retaining walls and distinctive zig-zag infill detailing in the front path and steps. Front garden plantings are of interest as an example of the “featuristic” Australian garden popular in the 1940s and ‘50s, characterised by the use of dark-foliaged evergreen trees and shrubs which serve as the backdrop for a colourful seasonal display of flowers. (Criterion D)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an individually Significant place.

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

External Paint Colours <i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal Alteration Controls <i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree Controls <i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	Yes—mature cypresses and cedar in front garden
Victorian Heritage Register <i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Incorporated Plan	No

<i>Does an Incorporated Plan apply to the site?</i>	
Outbuildings and fences exemptions <i>Are there outbuildings and fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	Yes—front fence and garage
Prohibited uses may be permitted <i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal Heritage Place <i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No

Identified By

Built Heritage Pty Ltd, 'Balwyn and Balwyn North Heritage Study (incorporating Deepdene & Greythorn)', August 2015

References

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