

Melbourne Planning Scheme

Incorporated Document

HO3 North & West Melbourne Precinct Statement of Significance July 2022

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

Statement of Significance

Heritage place:	North and West Melbourne Precinct	PS ref no:	HO3
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What is significant?

North and West Melbourne Precinct was developed from the mid-nineteenth century as part of the extension of Melbourne to its north and west during a period of significant population growth. Significant and contributory development in the precinct dates from the mid nineteenth century through to the interwar period, although Victorian development predominates, particularly from the late nineteenth century. Some places of heritage value may also be outside this date range. The precinct is mainly residential, but with diversity of building form and uses within streets, and several commercial streetscapes. Mature street plantings and rows are also part of the significant development of the precinct.

The following are the identified 'key attributes' of the precinct, which support the assessed significance:

- Typical nineteenth century building characteristics including:
 - Use of face brick and rendered masonry building materials, with timber and bluestone indicating earlier buildings.
 - Hipped roof forms with chimneys and parapets; verandahs which are simply detailed or have more decorative cast iron work; iron palisade fences on stone plinths; and limited or no front and side setbacks.
- Comparatively high number of buildings of the 1850s and 1860s.
- Modest workers' cottages as the common housing type, often in consistent and repetitive terrace rows, with simple forms and detailing.
- Other development including larger Victorian dwellings and two-storey terrace houses; Edwardian and interwar dwellings on the site of the former Benevolent Asylum; and other Edwardian and interwar buildings located throughout the precinct.
- Typically low scale character, of one and two-storeys, with some larger three-storey buildings.
- Streets of consistent scale, or with greater scale diversity and contrasting modest and larger buildings.
- Nineteenth century residential development influenced by the precinct's topography, with more substantial built form located in elevated areas of both suburbs, particularly Hotham Hill and between Spencer and King streets
- Streets which display a diversity of uses including residential, commercial, manufacturing and industrial.
- Nineteenth and twentieth century hotel buildings and shops located on corners and within residential street blocks.
- Secondary or 'little' streets, including named lanes, with workers cottages, warehouses and workshops, occasional stables and small scale early twentieth century commercial and industrial development.
- Building forms with elevated entrances, and building rows which step up or down, following the topography and grade of streetscapes.
- Importance of Errol, Victoria and Queensberry streets, being some of inner Melbourne's most extensive and intact commercial streetscapes.

- Remarkable 1870s-80s civic development at the corner of Errol and Queensberry streets, with the town hall tower being a local landmark.
- Views from lanes to early outbuildings and rears of properties, providing evidence of historical property layouts.
- Undulating topography which has allowed for views and vistas of prominent elements such as the town hall tower and church spires.
- Important role of religion as demonstrated in the large and prominent ecclesiastical buildings and complexes.
- Evidence of change and evolution in the precinct, with streets having buildings from different periods, and early buildings such as former factories and warehouses adapted and converted to new uses.
- Nineteenth century planning and subdivisions as evidenced in:
 - Hierarchy of principal streets and secondary streets and lanes.
 - Regular grid of straight north-south and east-west streets in the centre of the precinct.
 - Contrasting street alignments in the north of the precinct, where streets angle east to meet Flemington Road; and in the south of the precinct, where the CBD streets extend to meet the precinct.
 - Large and irregular street intersections including three or more streets meeting at oblique angles.
 - Lanes which provide access to rears of properties and act as important minor thoroughfares.
- Principal streets characterised by their width and open character, with vistas available along their length; these are sometimes distinguished by street tree plantings including planes, elms and eucalypts.
- Importance of major roads and thoroughfares which border or traverse the precinct including Flemington Road, once a grand Victorian boulevard that marked the route to the goldfields; and Victoria, Peel and Elizabeth streets.
- Historical street materials including bluestone kerbs and channels, and lanes with original or relayed bluestone pitches and central drains.
- Vehicle accommodation is generally not visible from principal streets, but more common at the rears of properties, with lane access.

Within the broader HO3 precinct, the following are the key attributes of the following areas (refer to Figure 1):

Hotham Hill Residential Area:

- Elevated location, with generous streets, central medians and centreline plantings.
- Streetscapes demonstrate generally high level of intactness.
- Largely freestanding single and double-storey villas dating from the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century.
- Dwellings range in scale from modest cottages to more substantial villas.
- Terrace rows of various sizes are present throughout.
- Residences with defined setbacks, presenting modest gardens to the street.

- Dwellings are typically of masonry construction in face brick often incorporating complex arrangements of bichrome and polychrome brickwork.
- Other masonry buildings are rendered and incorporate straightforward Italianate detailing such as urns, classical pediments and balustraded parapets.

Benevolent Asylum Estate Area:

- Early twentieth century residential subdivision, with dwellings constructed from the mid-1910s.
- Larger allotments and deeper front setbacks.
- Area noted for uniformity of architectural expression.
- Predominantly single-storey Edwardian villas and interwar bungalows, including freestanding houses and semi-detached pairs.
- Dwellings of face red brick, with prominent gabled roofs.
- Small numbers of other interwar buildings on consolidated allotments, typically in the form of workshops, small factories and flats.

Victoria and Errol streets Civic and Commercial Area

- Commercial heart of precinct.
- Varied building scales, includes modest allotments to north of Queensberry Street, with larger remises between Victoria and Queensberry Streets.
- Early (from 1860s) retail development to Queensberry Street.
- Two-storey commercial premises of typical form for the Victorian period.
- A number of notable substantial commercial buildings are also present, dating from Victorian and Edwardian periods.
- Residential development at its northern and eastern ends.

West Melbourne Residential Area:

- Substantially intact mid-late nineteenth century residential streetscapes.
- South section is typically two-storey villas and semi-detached pairs with Italianate detailing, with some buildings of architectural distinction.
- North section comprised of late nineteenth century single-storey cottages and semi-detached pairs, with notable groups of two-storey villas and some long terrace rows.

How is it significant?

North and West Melbourne Precinct is of historical, social and aesthetic significance to the City of Melbourne.

Why is it significant?

The North and West Melbourne Precinct is of **historical significance**, as a predominantly Victorian-era precinct associated with the nineteenth century growth of Melbourne to the north and west of the city and for its ability to demonstrate that period of development. The surviving layout and building stock are important for their ability to reflect on particular aspects of this history. As early as 1852, streets in the centre of the precinct, and north of Victoria Street, were laid down in a rigorous grid and this pattern remains. Early development of the 1850s and 1860s also reflects local involvement in servicing the goldfields traffic and migration of people from Melbourne to the gold rush centres to the north-west. Hotham Hill, in the north of the precinct, was a

notable development from the 1860s, its elevated position attracting grander residential development. West Melbourne also developed its own identity in the nineteenth century, being an early residential suburb with mixed housing types, which was later largely transformed including through the expansion of industry and manufacturing. Major roads and streets which traverse or border the precinct, including Victoria, Peel and Elizabeth streets, and Flemington Road, were historically important early Melbourne thoroughfares and boulevards. Flemington Road in particular was an early route out of Melbourne, its status confirmed in the *Roads Act* of 1853. (Criterion A)

The working-class history of the precinct is particularly significant, and is demonstrated in the characteristically modest dwellings and historically diverse development, including the proximity of houses to commercial, manufacturing and industrial buildings, nineteenth century corner shops and hotels, and churches and schools. The Catholic Church was a particularly prominent local denomination. Residents of the precinct were employed in some of Melbourne's most important nineteenth and early twentieth century industries, located close to the precinct, including markets, abattoirs, railways and the port at Victoria Dock. Residents were also politically active, forming various associations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and being prominent in the women's suffrage and World War I anti-conscription movements. Welfare and community groups also established a strong presence in the suburb, providing services to the unemployed, women and children. (Criterion A)

The North and West Melbourne Precinct is of **social** significance. Residents value the early character of its streetscapes, its 'walkability', and its notable commercial development and village character centred on Errol, Victoria and Queensberry streets. Proximity to the nearby Queen Victoria Market, Arden Street Oval and the city, is also highly valued. Places such as churches, pubs, schools and other places of gathering are also valued by the community. (Criterion G)

The North and West Melbourne Precinct is of aesthetic significance, particularly for the architectural expression of its key buildings and streetscapes, largely for its Victorian-era development including workers' cottages, rows of simply detailed modest dwellings, and two-storey terrace houses. These are complemented by larger Victorian dwellings, Edwardian and interwar development on the site of the former Benevolent Asylum, and commercial and industrial buildings, with the latter often located in residential streets. There is also some variety in building and allotment sizes, and building heights, styles, materials and setbacks. In the Hotham Hill area, residential streets are wide and elevated, and the building stock is comparatively intact, and features generally larger residences. In the precinct's south, development is finer grained. Large brick warehouses, from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, are located in the east of the precinct near Queen Victoria Market. The precinct also has some of inner Melbourne's most extensive and intact commercial streetscapes, including significant concentrations on Errol, Victoria and Queensberry streets. Errol Street is particularly distinguished by the remarkable 1870s civic development, with the town hall tower an important local landmark. Throughout the precinct, principal streets connect with secondary or 'little' streets, reflecting typical nineteenth century planning. These secondary streets reinforce the 'permeable' character and pedestrian nature of the precinct, enhanced by the network of lanes which are demonstrably of nineteenth century origin and function, and continue to provide access to the rears of properties. The lanes were also historically used to access small scale commercial and industrial operations, concentrated in the secondary streets of the precinct. Aesthetically, the precinct also has an open character, and internal views and vistas, deriving from the long and wide streets and several large and sometimes irregular intersections. Principal streets are also distinguished by street plantings of planes, elms and eucalypts. (Criterion E)

Primary source

North Melbourne Heritage Review, Lovell Chen and Extent Heritage, 2022

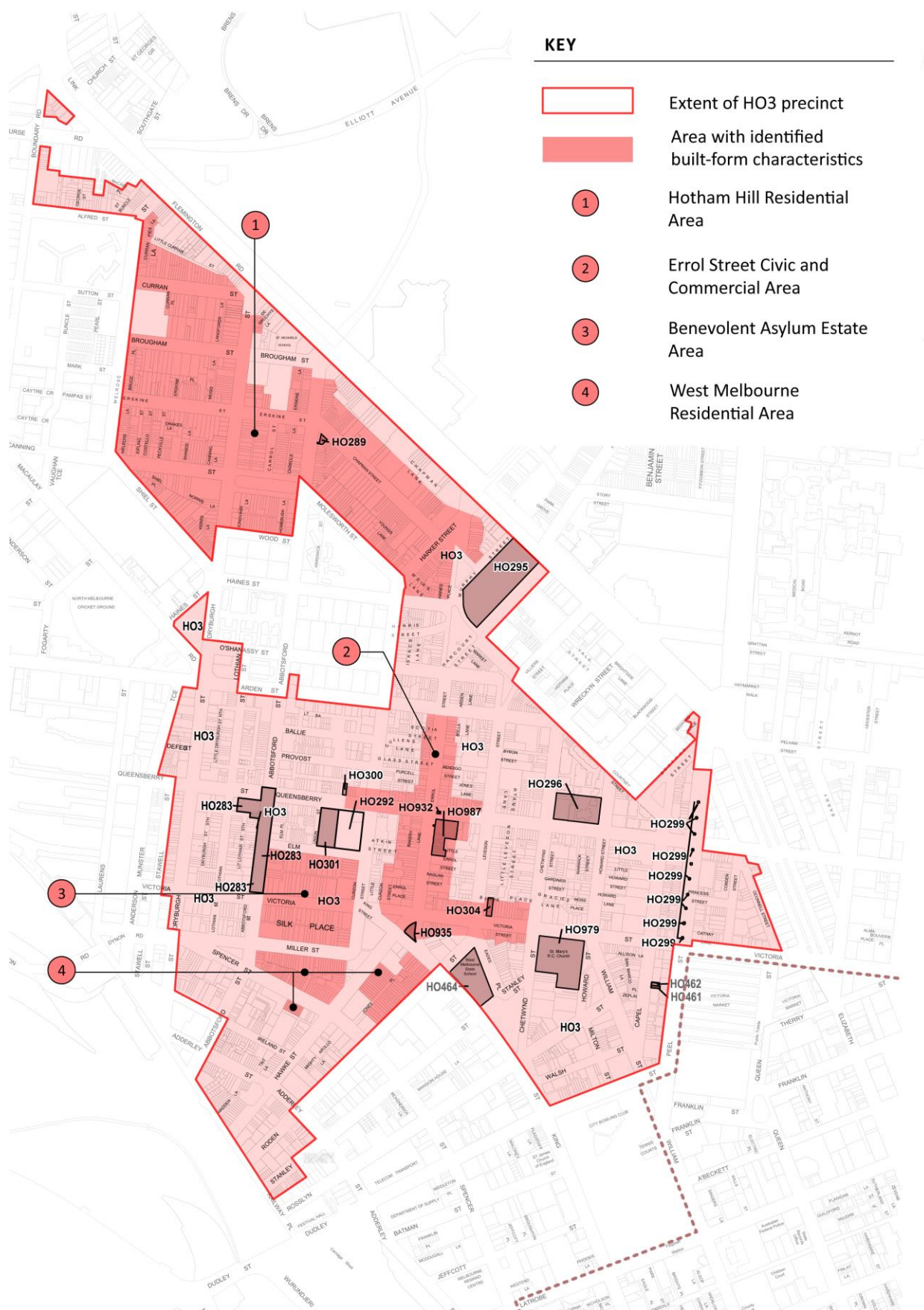


Figure 1: Map of HO3 North & West Melbourne Precinct