

Submission in reply to Am. C426melb expert evidence

Prepared for: the City of Melbourne

Date: 2 November 2023

1. Introduction

I have prepared responses to two expert evidence statements lodged in regard to Amendment C426melb for cases where I have done further research in relation to issues raised in these statements.

2. Submission 45, 233-235 Domain Road (evidence of Martin Turnor)

2.1 Evolution of Elm Tree House

Taken together, information and images in the expert evidence of Martin Turnor, Mark Huntersmith, and my own provide a good understanding of the origins and evolution of Elm Tree House at 233-235 Domain Road. The key images are reproduced below:

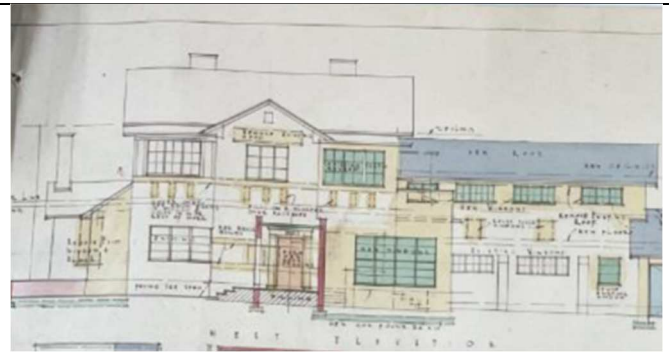
By 1876 - Two-storey gabled building facing Walsh Street (west) with single-storey gabled room facing Domain Road (north). This same configuration is also shown in the 1896 MMBW plan. The raking aerial below is a detail from Figure 1 of Mr Turnor's evidence.



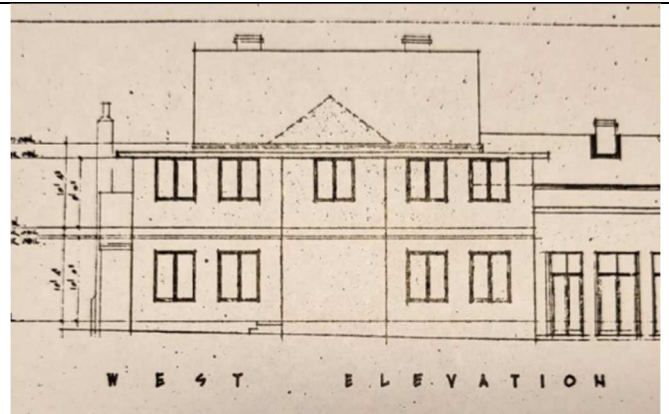
c.1923 – Some time after the 1896 MMBW plan was produced, Elm Tree House was remodelled in the Arts & Crafts style, with the addition of a central gabled bay to front (west) elevation. This work may correspond to the building application dated 21 Aug 1923 for 'Erection of new bay to sitting room' (noted in my evidence), but I have not viewed these plans to confirm this. This appearance of the house is visible in a c1937 raking aerial from Mr Turnor's evidence (Figure 4).

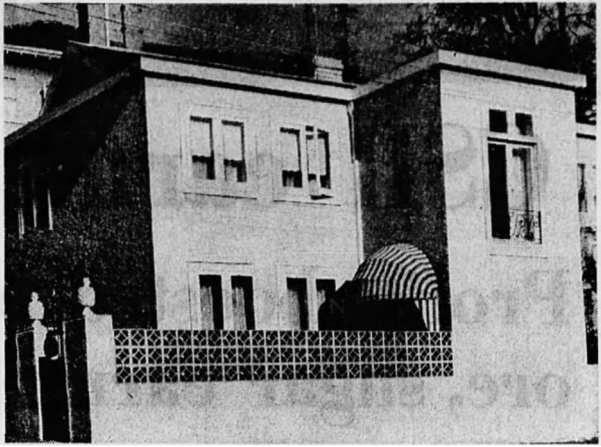



1941 – Architect Robert Bell Hamilton designed minor alterations (removal of some of the Arts & Crafts detailing) and additions when Norman and Mabel Brookes moved here during the war. The rear (west) two-storey gable was added at this time, as well as other minor additions. This is illustrated by plans in Mr Huntersmith's evidence (Figure 4-11), and a photo of the north (Domain Road) elevation in 1948 from Mr Turnor's evidence (Figure 7).



1960 – The Office of Guilford Bell was engaged to design extensions and alterations to Elm Tree House when the Brookeses returned there in 1960. The c1923 gable was removed from the front (west) façade at this time. My evidence includes floor plans and the north elevation from these plans. I have added the 1960 west (front) elevation here, as well as a photo from 1971 of the west (front) façade ('A Melbourne landmark changes hands, Elm Tree really is in fashion', *The Age*, 10 June 1971, page 17)



	
<p>2023 – West elevation of Elm Tree House today. The only visible change since 1960 is the replacement of casement windows in the projecting volume with a single fixed pane of glass.</p>	

Taken together, these photos and plans show that the two gabled volumes (two-storey and single-storey) built prior to 1876 survive, though the two-storey volume is surrounded by later additions on all sides. The c1923 Arts & Crafts remodelling is all gone, and the 1941 remodelling is mostly gone (the east gable survives). The 1960 works, however, appear to survive in full, apart from the above-mentioned change to a window.

2.2 Appropriate heritage category

Mr Turnor considers the 1960 works to have ‘detracted, very substantially, from the early character of this building’ (para.40); and opines that GML Heritage’s exclusion of only post-1980s alterations and additions from contribution to the precinct, ‘should not be taken to mean that the 1960s changes to the subject site are contributory to the precinct’ (para.41).

As noted in my evidence, the 1960 alterations and additions were the work of the Office of Guilford Bell, a respected Modernist architect.

It is also instructive to consider the intentions of the architect and client in the 1960 works. In particular, why did well-off clients such as Sir Norman and Dame Mabel Brookes decide to extend the existing house, instead of just replacing it wholesale?

Contemporary press interviews with Dame Mabel indicate that she considered Elm Tree House, as well as the eponymous elm tree, to be an important historical place:

Dame Mable and her husband will shortly move into Elm Tree House in South Yarra ... "Elm Tree House, which includes the original four rooms of the first house to be built in South Yarra, will have to be enlarged," Dame Mabel said. "About another eight rooms, including a ballroom, will have to be added on to accommodate our furniture. These additions will have to be built around the elm tree ... (The Age, 9 Aug 1960, page 11)

When the house was advertised for sale in 1970, after Sir Norman's death, it was described as:

ELM TREE HOUSE / HISTORIC SOUTH YARRA PROPERTY ... The House, which has featured in much of Melbourne's early and contemporary history, was extensively renovated during the last 10 years. (The Age, 12 Nov 1970, page 8)

Melbourne's society pages give a sense of why Dame Mabel had the house enlarged. Apart from hosting a sitting President of the United States in 1966, she chaired and hosted events such as a Lort Smith Veterinary Hospital fundraising party (*The Age*, 17 Aug 1961, p.11), a luncheon for the board of the Queen Victoria Hospital (*The Age*, 26 Sep 1962, p.11), a Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children appeal (*The Age*, 12 Dec 1962, p.19), a Red Cross appeal dance (*The Age*, 13 Mar 1963, p.12), and a luncheon for the Mission to Streets and Laneways (*The Age*, 30 May 1969, page 7). Dame Mabel's interest in history was made clear by a National Trust-affiliated open house displaying the Brookeses' 'collection of antique furniture, silver, china, old books and Napoleonic relics' (*The Age*, 28 Apr 1964, p.11), and an exhibition of the Heraldry Society opened by Prime Minister Robert Menzies (*The Age*, 7 Apr 1967, p.9), both at Elm Tree House.

In conclusion, there was recognition of the historical importance of Elm Tree House in the 1960s, so the core of the house was retained in the Brookeses' 1960 renovation.

Elm Tree House in its current form should be seen as illustrating two of the valued periods of HO6 South Yarra Precinct's history: the mid-Victorian foundational period, and the post-war period. While this is a much-changed house, the architect-designed 1960 works sought to preserve the valued early dwelling while enlarging it for use by an active socialite and charity leader. On this basis, it clearly contributes to HO6, and should retain its Contributory status.

2.3 Significant Streetscape

Mr Turnor questions whether 233-235 Domain Road should be included in a new Significant Streetscape with other properties to its east (237-239 Domain Road). He points out that this group does not meet the two definitions of a Significant Streetscape:

- 'a particularly well preserved group from a similar period' – the properties in question hold houses from the late 19th century through the interwar period.

- ‘a collection of buildings significant in their own right’ – the properties in question all have Significant status in the GML report, so this appears to be the basis for the streetscape grade.

I agree with Mr Turnor that this group appears to be a Significant Streetscape as ‘a collection of buildings significant in their own right’.

I also agree that if Elm Tree House is not categorised as Significant, and because it is on the end of the row, it should be excluded from the Significant Streetscape.

3. Submissions 4 & 19-23, 172-182 Walsh Street (evidence of Martin Turnor)

In regard to ‘Motstone’, 172-182 Walsh Street, Martin Turnor provides a number of comparative examples of other post-war flats in the City of Melbourne and in neighbouring municipalities Stonnington and Port Phillip.

The most similar of these comparators is Aminya Flats, 29 Coolullah Avenue, South Yarra, in the City of Stonnington. Like ‘Motstone’, it combines cream-brick walls with faux curtain wall infill. As Mr Turnor points out, it was built in 1957-58, shortly before ‘Motstone’ in 1959-60. He also points out that it has a Non-contributory category in HO382 Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct.

Investigating the reason these flats are Non-contributory, the precinct statement of significant indicates that “what” is significant is the ‘high degree of intactness of the area to its c1940 state and the extent to which its development in one main era is apparent’. And the ‘precinct is of aesthetic significance as a particularly intact and cohesive grouping of flats, maisonettes and villas of the interwar period’.

The high degree of intactness to a very narrow period of time is indicated by the precinct grading schedule. Nearly all graded properties are described as “interwar”, plus one ‘c1950 brick villa’ (C-grade). There are only two other properties, both Non-contributory/ungraded: the Aminya flats, and ‘Modern double storey townhouses’. The citation for this precinct is attached.

As a precinct that developed so quickly, it is reasonable that only a narrow period of development contributes to HO382. HO6 South Yarra Precinct, however, is an entirely different type of precinct as it was developed in multiple valued stages. These two precincts are not comparable.

Note that HO382 Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct was assessed in 2008-09. The City of Stonnington is currently carrying out heritage reviews suburb by suburb, looking at gaps in the heritage overlay including post-war places and Non-contributory properties in precincts (e.g. post-war places in an Edwardian precinct). South Yarra has not, however, been subject to such review work yet, so there has been no individual assessment of Aminya flats.

Sincerely,



Natica Schmeder
Landmark Heritage Pty Ltd

HERITAGE CITATION REPORT

name: Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct
Address: Coolullah Avenue, Quamby Avenue, Williams Road SOUTH YARRA
Place Type: Residential Precinct
Citation Date: 2009
Significance Level: Various



Interwar flats on the north side of Coolullah Avenue.

Recommended Heritage Protection	VHR No
	HI No
PS Yes	Architectural Style: Interwar Period (c.1919-c.1940)

History and Historical Context

The following history has been prepared to illustrate key historical themes as identified in the 'Stonnington Thematic Environmental History' (Context Pty Ltd, 2006, Addendum March 2009).

This area was first offered for sale as part of Lot 33 at the auction of Crown land in June 1849 (1). Lot 33 comprised about 52 acres of land on the west side of Williams Road, stretching north from Malvern Road to Toorak Road (then known as Gardiners Creek Road). The Toorak Road frontage occupied high ground and was seen as the most desirable land for resale. Lower ground further to the south was beset with drainage problems and attracted lower prices. A stream running east-west through swampy land in the vicinity of present day Hawksburn Close rendered all but the highest ground in lot 33 and adjacent lot 34 impenetrable after rains.

In 1851, much of lot 33 was acquired by James Horatio Nelson Cassell, Collector of Customs for the Victorian

Government (2). Shortly thereafter, Cassell built his home 'Hawksburn House' near the centre of lot 33 (just to the north of the present day railway line). James Cassell died in 1853 although his wife Martha survived into the 1880s and oversaw the gradual subdivision of their estate. The north-east corner of the lot offered the best land on high ground and was the first to be sold-off. The land further south along the creek had to wait for adequate drainage before subdivision.

Between 1858 and 1862, John Pike acquired about 5.5 acres of land with a frontage to Toorak Road, on which he built a large brick dwelling 'Vinterfield'. Martha Cassell had planned to subdivide the rest of her land holding as early as 1873 but was forced to substantially replan to accommodate the Hawksburn railway station, which built in 1879 on the South Yarra to Oakleigh line (3).

Around 1880, a residence named 'Quamby' was built on a 3.75 acre portion of the Cassell Estate, covering present day Quamby Avenue and the northern end of Oban Street. Another large house 'Coolullah' was built to the north of Quamby in the late 1880s. Early photographs show it to have been an imposing Victorian Italianate style building with a double-storey loggia and circular carriageway (5).

Prominent businessman Sir John Grice made Coolullah his home in the early twentieth century and resided there until his death in February 1935 (6). On 7 December that same year, the Coolullah estate was sold for subdivision (7). A similar pattern of subdivision was repeated on nineteenth century mansion estates throughout Toorak and South Yarra in the 1930s in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Rising labour costs in this period had made it increasingly difficult to employ sufficient domestic staff to maintain these large houses. Many were retained on smaller allotments and converted into flats or rooming houses. Others were demolished and their grounds subdivided. The estates and streets created by these subdivisions often bore the names of the original properties, as do Quamby and Coolullah Avenues.

The Coolullah Avenue roadway was completed by Council in May 1936 and by December of that year 'Staunton' flats had been erected at 1 Coolullah Avenue (8). Development of flats had begun slightly earlier on Williams Road, with Graceville Flats at no.249 and Vaughan Flats at no.251 first listed in 1929 directories. Building activity progressed rapidly so that by the end of 1938, flats had been completed at nos. 3-5, 4, 6, 7 and 19-23. In the same year prominent architectural firm Marsh and Michaelson designed the block of flats at 2 Coolullah Avenue (10). Substantial villas had also been built at 11 and 13 Collullah Avenue, the former to a design by noted architect Geoffrey Sommers (11).

Aside from a small number of detached houses, most of the buildings erected in Quamby and Coolullah Avenues were flats. Land owners in Toorak and South Yarra were well placed to take advantage of the increased demand for flats in the 1930s as the area offered tenants a fashionable address at a reasonable price with good access to public transport. In many other municipalities restrictive building codes were enacted to stop flat development, ostensibly for safety reasons, although many believed that this type of accommodation would destroy the social fabric and built character of an area. Developers in Toorak and South Yarra often responded to such concerns by building high quality flats or 'maisonettes' which were designed to emulate the appearance of a large detached house. Good examples of this type of multi-unit dwelling can be found at 15-17 Coolullah Avenue. It is also of interest to note that many of the flats in Quamby and Coolullah Avenues were built with internal stairs and corridors, possibly as a reaction to the association of poor quality flats with external staircases (12).

At the outbreak of the Second World War almost all lots on Coolullah Avenue had been built upon. Sands and McDougall directories for 1939 also list Quamby Flats and three houses under construction on Quamby Avenue. Williams Road was developed in similar fashion so that 1940 directories were able to list Graceville Flats (no.249), Vaughan Flats (no.251), Winston Flats (no.253-255), Strathuon Flats (no. 265) and Brackenlea Flats' (no. 265) as well as two unnamed flats at nos. 257 and 261-263, the latter being a modernist design by accomplished architect J H Esmond Dorney (13).

Very little development has taken place in the Quamby and Coolullah Avenues precinct since the 1940s and the

area retains its interwar character to a high degree of intactness.

- (1) Betty Malone, 'Discovering Prahran: Area 3', p.31.
- (2) Malone, p.36.
- (3) Malone, p.37
- (4) Malone, p.39.
- (5) Stonnington Local history Catalogue. Reg. no. 7110.
- (6) Judith Tyers, 'Grice, Sir John (1850 - 1935)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, Volume 9, Melbourne University Press, 1983, pp 105-106.
- (7) Stonnington Local history Catalogue. Reg. no. 13127.
- (8) MMBW plan of drainage no.198628. Held by South East Water
- (9) Sands and McDougall Directories. 1929.
- (10) Terry Sawyer, 'Residential Flats in Melbourne, The Development of a Building Type to 1950', p.107.
- (11) MMBW plan of drainage no.199034. Held by South East Water
- (12) Terry Sawyer, 'Residential Flats in Melbourne, The Development of a Building Type to 1950', p.55.
- (13) Terry Sawyer, 'Residential Flats in Melbourne, The Development of a Building Type to 1950', p.103.

Relevant Historical Australian Themes

The following themes are drawn from the *Stonnington Thematic Environmental History* (Context Pty Ltd, 2006, Addendum March 2009).

8.1.3 The end of an era - mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century

8.6.2 Developing apartment living

8.6.3 Architect designed apartments

Description

Physical Description

Coolullah and Quamby Avenues are residential cul de sacs located on the west side of Williams Road, south of the Toorak Road intersection. Building stock almost exclusively dates from the mid to late 1930s and mainly comprises double-storey blocks of flats, duplexes and masionettes. There are also a small number of freestanding villas in the precinct. The architectural character of the area is predominately derived from polite interpretations of the interwar Moderne style or from English Domestic Revival sources (popularly known as Tudor revival or Old English). There is also a block of flats at 251 Williams Road which shows the influence of Mediterranean architecture while the symmetrical design of the building at 4 Coolullah Avenue is derived from the neo-Georgian idiom.

The English Domestic Revival style buildings in the precinct are typified by the use of red or clinker brick, brick nogging, boldly modelled brick chimneys and terracotta tile roofs. The flats at 1 Coolullah Avenue also feature the type of half-timbered gable end which is a hallmark of the Tudor style. The substantial villa at 11 Coolullah

Avenue by architect Geoffrey Sommers has refined neo-Georgian sensibility with unusual paired conical turrets recalling the domestic architecture of Normandy. It is complimented by the very similar turreted facade of the nearby maisonette development at 15-17 Coolullah Avenue.

The Moderne style buildings in the precinct are typically conservative designs with curved rendered balconies set against traditional hipped roof forms and face brick walls. The pair of flats at 261-263 Williams Road by architect J H Esmond Dorney adopts a somewhat more progressive interwar functionalist design with curved bay windows, flat roofs and plain rendered surfaces.

The interwar character of the precinct is reinforced by the many low brick front fences which appear to survive from the original subdivision. Only a small number of properties have high solid masonry front fences, including two modern examples on Williams Road which were presumably erected to block out traffic noise. The precinct is also largely free of intrusive vehicle accommodation with many flats having original side driveway access to discretely sited rear garages.

The precinct is remarkable in that it was largely spared the type of intrusive flat development which disfigured much of the surrounding area in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. There are only two non-contributory buildings in the precinct, comprising a c1960 block of flats at 29 Coolullah Avenue and modern townhouse development at 9 Coolullah Avenue. The latter maintains a low-key presence to the street. The c1950 double-storey brick house at 1 Quamby Avenue was also constructed after the precinct's key interwar period of development but nevertheless has a form, scale, and architectural character sympathetic to the surrounding 1930s building stock.

Comparative Analysis

Similar concentrated groupings of interwar flats with this high level of intactness are relatively rare in the City of Stonnington. The precinct of Howard Lawson designed apartments in the Alexandra Avenue heritage overlay (HO122) stands out as the most important example in the municipality for its particularly unique combination of exotic architectural styles and dramatic siting on an escarpment above the Yarra River. The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues precinct is far less spectacular but nonetheless survives to a similar high level of intactness. It is representative of the more conservative type of development generally undertaken by flat builders in prestige suburbs such as Toorak.

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues Precinct is also unusual for its relatively high concentration of maisonette type flats. The St Georges Court heritage overlay (HO348) includes three maisonettes examples although this streetscape is quite different from Coolullah and Quamby Avenues in that it mostly comprises lower density detached housing with a relatively uniform architectural character derived almost exclusively from neo-Georgian and Mediterranean sources. Kenleigh Grove (HO141) is one of the very few streetscapes in Stonnington which is comparable to Quamby Avenue in terms of its duplex building stock and interwar Moderne architectural character.

Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues precinct, South Yarra, is an interwar residential area created from the subdivision of two large Victorian era mansion estates and mainly containing blocks of flats and double-storey duplexes and maisonettes.

Elements which contribute to the significance of the precinct include:

- high degree of intactness of the area to its c1940 state and the extent to which its development in one main era is apparent;
- the interwar building stock including blocks of flats and duplexes coexisting with a smaller number of detached villas of the period;
- the interwar maisonette type flats designed to resemble detached single dwelling villas;
- the predominantly two and three-storey scale of built form within the precinct;
- intactness of interwar built form and extent to which original detailing survives. Building stock survives largely unaltered and the area is notable for the general absence of prominent additions and alterations;
- face brick or render materiality and hipped or gabled roofscapes retaining original chimneys and terracotta or slate tiles;
- the retention of low front fences in most sections of the precinct;
- generally uniform pattern of front and side setbacks;
- landscape character resulting from garden settings and undeveloped front setbacks; and,
- discrete siting of garages and carports at the rear of properties and the absence of prominent modern car parking facilities in most sections of the precinct.

How is it significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues precinct is of local historical and aesthetic significance.

Why is it significant?

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues precinct is of local historical significance as an illustration of the surge of apartment development which took place in Toorak and South Yarra following the subdivision of large Victorian era properties in the 1930s. (*Historic Theme: 8.1.3 The end of an era - mansion estate subdivisions in the twentieth century*). This pattern of settlement transformed the built environment and social character of the area by replacing the spacious mansions of the wealthy with higher density, lower income housing (*Historic Theme: 8.6.2 Developing apartment living*). The small number of freestanding villas in the precinct provide an interesting counterpoint to the surrounding apartment development and serve to illustrate the aspirations of the upper middle class of the 1930s.

The Coolullah and Quamby Avenues precinct is of aesthetic significance as a particularly intact and cohesive grouping of flats, maisonettes and villas of the interwar period. It includes work by noted architects J H Esmond Dorney, Geoffrey Sommers and Marsh and Michaelson (*Historic Theme: 8.6.3 Architect designed apartments*). While individual buildings vary in detailing and display divergent architectural influences including the Moderne and English Domestic revival styles, they nonetheless exhibit a high degree of consistency in terms of their overall form, materiality and scale. The precinct is also of architectural significance for its relatively high proportion of maisonette residences and for the extent to which the designers worked to conceal the multi-unit

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nature of these buildings with the appearance of large single dwelling villas. The aesthetic significance of the precinct is enhanced by the survival of many original low brick front fences.

Assessment Against Criteria

Assessment of the precinct was undertaken in accordance with the processes and criteria outlined in the Australian ICOMOS (Burra) Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Significance.

Recommendations 2009

External Paint Controls	No
Internal Alteration Controls	No
Tree Controls	No
Fences & Outbuildings	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	No
Incorporated Plan	-
Aboriginal Heritage Place	No

This information is provided for guidance only and does not supersede official documents, particularly the planning scheme. Planning controls should be verified by checking the relevant municipal planning scheme.

Coolullah & Quamby Avenues Precinct

Schedule of Buildings

COOLULLAH AVENUE

Street No.	Grading	Description
North Side		
2	B	Selsdon Flats -Three storey interwar flats
4	B	Double-storey interwar flats
6	B	Double-storey interwar flats
South Side		
1A	B	Double-storey interwar flats
1	B	Staunton Flats - Double-storey interwar flats
5	B	Lynton Flats - Double-storey interwar flats
7	B	Ulcombe Flats - Double-storey interwar flats
8	B	Double-storey interwar villa.
9	Ungraded	Modern double storey townhouses
West Side		
11	B	Double-storey interwar villa
13	B	Double-storey interwar villa
15/15A/17	B	Double-storey interwar maisonettes
19/21	B	Double-storey interwar duplex
23	B	Double-storey interwar villa
25/27	B	Double-storey interwar flats
29	Ungraded	Three-storey c1960 flats

QUAMBY AVENUE

Street no.	Grading	Description
North Side		
2-2A	B	Double-storey interwar maisonettes
4-6	B	Double-storey interwar maisonettes
8-10	B	Double-storey interwar duplex
12	B	Double-storey interwar maisonettes
14	B	Double-storey interwar maisonettes
South Side		
1	C	Double-storey c1950 brick villa

WILLIAMS ROAD

Street no.	Grading	Description
249	C	'Graceville' - Double-storey interwar flats
251	B	Double-storey interwar flats
<i>Quamby Av</i>		
253-255	B	Double-storey interwar flats
257-259	C	Double-storey interwar flats
261-263	B	Double-storey interwar flats
<i>Coolullah Av</i>		
267-269	B	Double-storey interwar flats
271	B	Double-storey interwar flats