

Australian Glass Manufacturers' Housing Heritage Precinct

Address	Bernard and Robb streets, Spotswood
Significance	Local
Style & Type	Heritage precinct
Significant Dates	Circa 1954
Designer	Buchan, Laird and Buchan
Builder	Unknown



Type 1



Type 3



Type 2



Type 1

Statement of Significance

What is Significant?

The extant timber-framed residences to the west side of Bernard Street and the east side of Robb Street which were erected as workers housing for Australian Glass Manufacturers and were designed by the noted architectural firm Buchan, Laird and Buchan. Significant elements included the original tile clad (variegated terracotta or concrete) gable roofs, cream brick chimneys, timber-framed windows, and entry porches.

The contributory places are:

- Bernard Street (odd) 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 19, 21

- Robb Street (even) 2, 4, 18, 24, 26

How is it Significant?

The Australian Glass Manufacturers' Housing Heritage Precinct is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Hobsons Bay.

Why is it Significant?

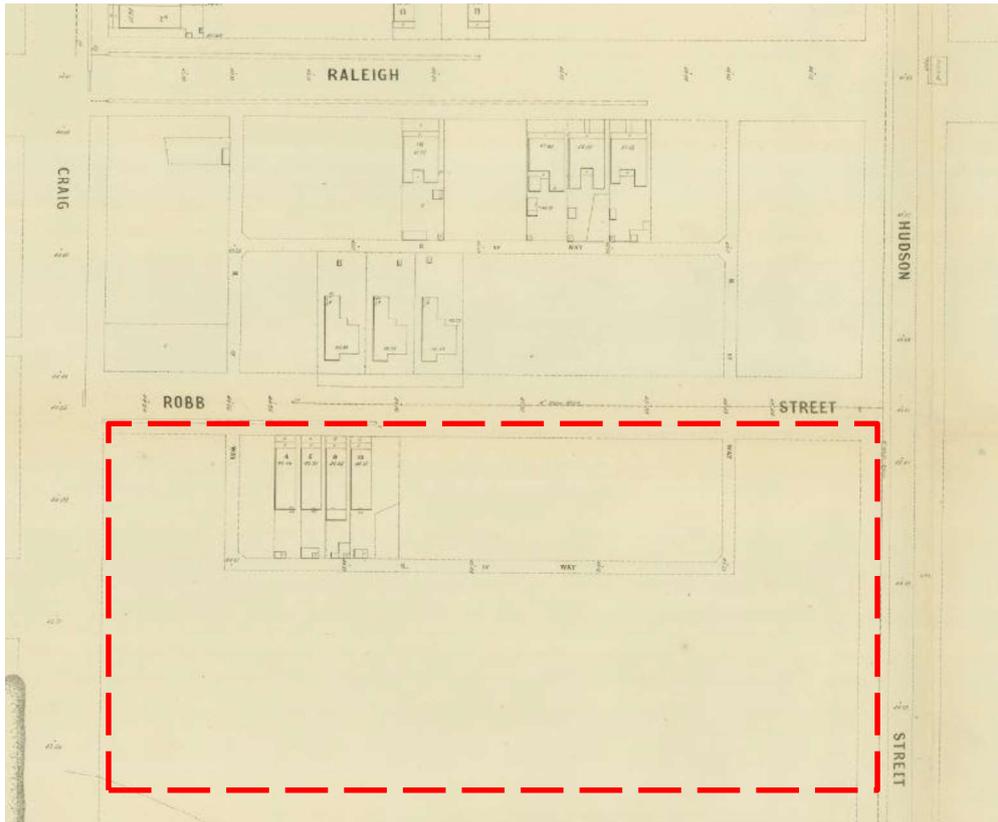
Historically the houses constructed by Australian Glass Manufacturers in the precinct are significant as purpose-built workers housing that were erected at a time when the company was undergoing rapid expansion. Australian Glass Manufacturers, initially known as Melbourne Glass Bottle Works Co Ltd and now Australian Consolidated Industries (ACI), was one of the first major industries to locate in the area and is the oldest operating industrial complex in the Municipality. It was a major source of employment in Spotswood area, and the houses, located opposite the factory, are illustrative of the facilities provided by the company for its workers. The close proximity of the housing allowed workers to quickly attend to unexpected issues including machinery breakdowns and staffing shortfalls. Designed by Buchan, Laird and Buchan architects who were interested in good quality housing, the group of houses is an unusual example of company-sponsored housing in the Municipality. (Criterion A and B)

The single storey dwellings are of aesthetic significance as a cohesive group of houses designed by noted architects Buchan, Laird and Buchan. Consisting of three different designs which are largely distinguished by their roof form and plan, the houses are unified by their scale, material palette and detailing. The relatively modest timber houses are evocative of their construction period, consisting of intersecting masses and incorporating large windows, recessed porches and cream brick chimneys. Whilst there are other similar low-cost workers housing groups in the Municipality, they are mostly constructed of brick or concrete and date to the 1940s rather than the 1950s. (Criterion D)

History

Historical background

The subject site was part of a large allotment (119 acres) which extended from the Yarra River to Melbourne Road.¹ This holding was initially purchased during the early 1840s by John Stewart Spotswood who began a dairy farm.² Following John Spotswood, other owners of this land included Thomas Bent (in partnership with others) as well as Henry, Robert and William Hudson of Hudson Bros, Sydney.³ Subsequently, the allotment was acquired by the Spottiswoode Estate Company which was set up to purchase the land owned by the Hudsons brothers.⁴ Each of these owners gradually subdivided the land, beginning in the vicinity of the railway line. Isolated groups of houses were constructed close to the railway station which opened as Edom in 1878.⁵ By 1904, groups of houses had been erected in Craig, Raleigh and Robb streets.⁶

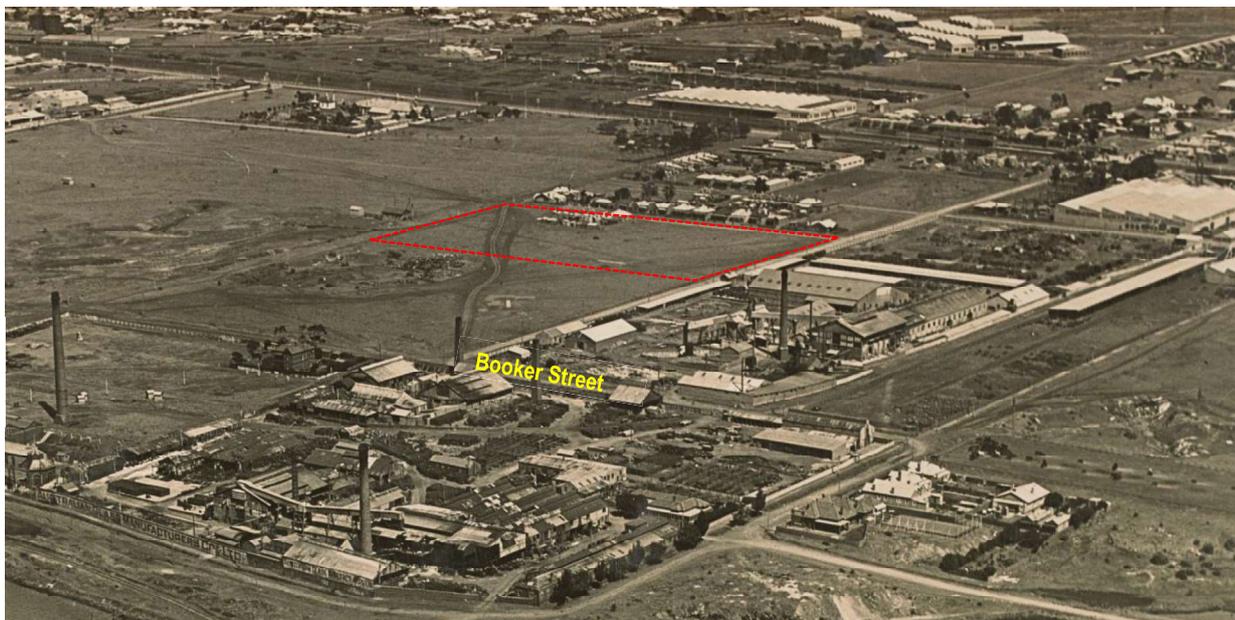


Robb Street in 1904 with some limited development. The approximate extent of the precinct is indicated (Source: MMBW detail plan no. 100, SLV)

- 1 Cut Paw-Paw Parish Plan C345 (19) – Lot 16 of portion 7
- 2 *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study: Thematic Environmental History*, 2003, p12
- 3 Certificate of Title, Volume 998, Folio 593 and Volume 1511, Folio 188
- 4 'The Spottiswoode Estate Company', *The Age*, 14 November 1893, p7
- 5 *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study: Thematic Environmental History*, 2003, p12
- 6 MMBW detail plan no. 100, 1904, State Library of Victoria

Specific history

The Melbourne Glass Bottle Works was formed in 1872 and commenced operations the following year in South Melbourne. In 1890, at time when other industries were moving to the area, the company acquired 12 acres fronting the Yarra River in Spotswood (north of where the pumping station is now located) for the manufacture of large and small glass bottles.⁷ The factory & furnaces were set up close to the river, east of Booker Street. By the 1920s, the company, then named Australian Glass Manufacturing Co. Ltd, had also began to develop land to the west of Booker Street. The rapidly expanding company, which grew to include manufacturers in other states, was said to produce a greater variety of glassware than any other in the world.⁸



'Aerial view of the MMBW pumping station at Spotswood [...] and Australian Glass Manufacturers' (C D Pratt, 1930)
The approximate location of the houses constructed for Australian Glass Manufacturers is indicated.
(Source: State Library Victoria, H29860)

An aerial photograph from 1930 shows the Australian Glass Manufacturers plant located either side of Booker Street. By 1945, additional factories had been erected further to the west, opposite the northern end of Robb Street and what is now Bernard Street. At this time, much of the block bound by Raleigh Street, Robb Street, Hudsons Road and Craig Street was occupied by residences, though the land immediately to the east of Robb Street remained vacant except for four Victorian period houses and an additional Federation period dwelling.⁹

⁷ David Moloney, *A History of the Melbourne Glass Bottle Works Site: Including its Industrial Context in Spotswood, Victoria*, Museum Victoria, 2012, pp 11-23

⁸ Graeme Butler & Associates, *Altona Laverton and Newport Heritage Study*, 2000, Stage 2, Volume 1, p433

⁹ Photo-map Melbourne 848 B4A, 1945, Melbourne University

The location of the estate is outlined in the 1945 aerial reproduced below. There had been limited development to the west side of Robb Street by that time although Bernard Street had yet to be laid.



Aerial showing the approximate boundary of the estate, the earlier development on the east side of Robb Street is evident
(Source: Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project, Run 21, Frame 58566, Landata)

In 1940-41, Australian Glass Manufacturers erected a block of two storey, two bedroom flats (now demolished) for tradesmen working at the glassworks.¹⁰ Occupants included fitters who were prepared to work shifts on the bottle manufacturing machinery.¹¹ By the early 1950s however, there was a shortage of housing for workers with the company advertising for accommodation in local private homes for British migrants who were employed in permanent positions. These young 'Britishers' were sponsored by the State Government through arrangements with the State Immigration Depot.¹² By the mid-1950s the company employed some 1,200 people at Spotswood.¹³

¹⁰ Museum Victoria, Spotswood Industrial Heritage Walk App.

¹¹ *Williamstown Chronicle*, 20 December 1951, p7

¹² *Williamstown Chronicle*, 17 February 1950, p1

¹³ David Moloney, p138

In 1954, tenders were advertised for the construction of twenty timber houses designed by Buchan, Laird & Buchan Architects for Australian Glass Manufacturers Co. Pty. Ltd. The advertisement noted that houses were to be erected in three separate contracts of nine, six and five dwellings each. In February 1954, as the company continued to expand, it advertised for fitters, noting that the positions included an offer of 'excellent family accommodation after a probationary period'.¹⁴ The company benefited from workers living nearby as they could attend to breakdowns and shortfalls in staffing with little notice. Employees who lived in these houses were typically the first to be called in to factory to work unscheduled shifts at a 'call-in' rate.¹⁵

In addition to constructing housing for the workers, Australian Glass Manufacturers appear to have also been partly responsible for the construction of Bernard Street including the road pavement, kerbing, drainage works and footpaths.¹⁶ By 1956, the houses had been completed (see image below) and Bernard Street officially become a public road in 1956.¹⁷



Employees cottages, Australian Glass Manufacturers, Spotswood (Wolfgang Sievers 1956)
(Source: National Library of Australia PIC 2471AB LOC)

¹⁴ *Argus*, 20 February 1954, p42

¹⁵ David Moloney, p133

¹⁶ *The Argus*, 20 April 1955, p15

¹⁷ Victoria Government Gazette, no.87, 31 October 1956, p5656

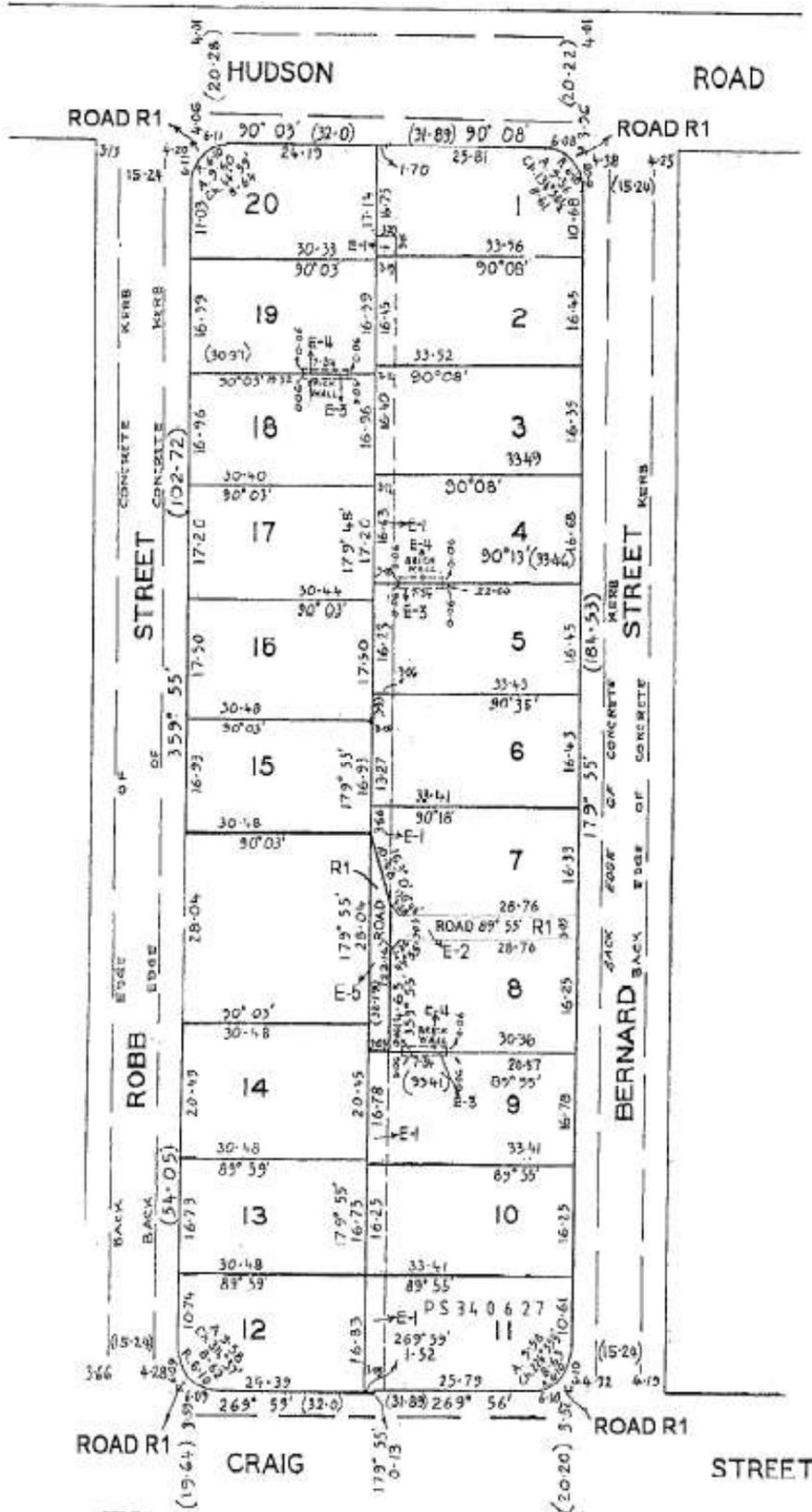
The following aerial shows the layout of the estate shortly after it was completed in 1956. Evident to the east side of Robb Street are the four narrow buildings which predate the estate.



The estate in 1956 shortly after completion (north to left)
(Source: Melbourne Outer Suburbs Project, Run 7, Frame 84, Landata)

During the 1960s, the number of people employed at the Spotswood plant peaked at around 2,500. In addition to the company built housing, by 1964, Australian Glass Manufacturers had also acquired the 19th and early 20th century houses on the east side of Robb Street, as well as 43 Hudsons Road and other residences to Craig Street. By the 1970s however, employees of the glass works were increasingly driving to work from distant suburbs and the company was no longer dependant on workers living close to the plant. Subsequently, the company's houses were sold with tenants given the first chance of purchasing the home that they had previously rented.¹⁸ The company's holdings in Bernard and Robb street were subdivided in 1980.¹⁹

¹⁸ David Moloney, pp 133-138
¹⁹ Plan of Subdivision, LP133, 263 – dated 11.09.1980



LP133,263 (1980)
 (Source: Landata)

Buchan, Laird and Buchan

The prolific architectural firm of Buchan, Laird and Buchan began in 1890 when John Angus Laird commenced practice in Geelong. The following year J. Buchan joined the practice as a junior pupil and the practice won their first major commission, a new wool store for Dalgety & Co. In 1936, the firm became Buchan, Laird & Buchan.

Buchan, Laird & Buchan undertook many significant town planning and housing projects for the Housing Commission of Victoria as well as large scale commercial and industrial projects.²⁰ Examples included the Shell building on the corner of Bourke and Williams Street which was described as 'Australia's first skyscraper, with glass and aluminium curtain walls and a high-pressure air conditioning system'.²¹

The firm's involvement with Housing Commission projects emanated from their entry in the Fishermen's Bend Housing Commission design competition in 1939 and contributed to them being appointed as 'country architects' on Commission's Architectural Panel.²² The commission was at the forefront of experimental housing during the mid-20th century, a time when Buchan, Laird and Buchan strove for the construction of high quality housing.²³ The firm were also contracted to design houses for the Soldier Settlement Commission in the late 1940s and were also responsible for the design of the Alexander Miller Homes for 'indigent and aged people' in towns throughout Victoria.²⁴

Description

Of the 20 houses erected for Australian Glass Manufacturers, 18 were located on the block bound by Hudsons Road (north), Craig Street (south), Robb Street (west) and Bernard Street (east), with the other two located at 45 and 47 Hudsons Road. Fifteen of these houses remain, fourteen of which are located on the block bound by Robb and Bernard streets. The Australian Glass Manufacturers' housing occupied most of this block with the remainder consisting of one Federation and four Victorian period houses (of which only two remain).

The original houses built for Australian Glass Manufacturers are located on relatively uniform allotments of about 550 square metres (slightly more than ¼ acre), having consistent street setbacks and a single vehicle crossover. These houses consist of three types which are largely distinguished by their roof form and plan. These consist of a transverse gable type (type 1), a type with central projecting gable to the front (type 2), and a third type which is 'T' shaped in plan (type 3).

Each of these types are unified by their scale and materials, each being clad in weatherboards and having gable roofs of uniform pitch with exposed rafter ends and timber vents to the gable ends. Each type has a squat cream brick chimney with brown tile capping and paired timber sash windows, including corner types, though houses which are "T" shaped in plan (design 3) also have a bank of three windows to the front. Original doors are a timber framed glass type with horizontal glazing bars.

Each of the three types of houses have roofs clad in variegated terracotta tiles, though there are several of the transverse gable type (type 1) which are clad with concrete tiles. This type has a glazed wall with horizontal glazing bars to the porch. Houses with a central gable to the front (type 2) have a recessed porch to one side of the projecting gable section with a glazed wall to open side. The original porches to houses with a 'T' shaped plan (type 3) are located to the side and have a flat roof supported by five timber columns which spring from a brick planter bed.

The modest houses are indicative of the 1950s construction date in both their form (gable roofs) and materials (terracotta and concrete tiles roofs, cream brick). In keeping with contemporary design, they have large windows and consist of intersecting forms (porches, planters, chimneys etc.) creating a strong volumetric expression.

Fences are now located to the front of most houses, though originally they had no fence to the street boundary. In recent years, a few of the 1950s residences have been replaced with two storey attached houses/duplexes.

Comparative Analysis

²⁰ Julie Willis in *The Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Philip Goad and Julie Willis eds, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2012, p 111

²¹ The Buchan Group, *Celebrating 125 Years*, accessed 15 August 2016 at buchan.com.au

²² Newtown West Heritage Review, 2015-16, Dr David Rowe and Wendy Jacobs, p10-11

²³ 'New Swiss Architecture', *The Age Literary Supplement*, 10 September 1949, p1

²⁴ Moria Shire Stage Two Heritage Study, Volume 2, Environmental History, Heritage Intelligence Pty Ltd, pp 144-145

As there were housing shortages in Victoria during the Post-War period, numerous housing estates were erected throughout the state by the Housing Commission of Victoria. Prior to 1949, many of the Commission's country housing estates were designed by Buchan, Laird and Buchan of Geelong.²⁵ This included the Newtown West Housing Commission Estate which consisted of five types of attached brick dwellings located on the 'U' shaped street of Churchill Avenue.²⁶ Similar schemes were also constructed in the Municipality at the Champion Road Estate, North Williamstown (HO15) between 1941 and 1945, and the Croker Street Estate, Newport (HO16) during the mid-1940s. Whilst each of these examples consist of attached houses constructed of brick, concrete or rendered, many dwellings erected by the Commission in the country were freestanding houses of timber construction.²⁷

Another housing schemes of the period which is comparable to the Australian Glass Manufacturers' Housing is the circa 1950 ICI Housing Estate Heritage Area (Brimbank City) which was one of the most substantial company housing schemes to be undertaken in Victoria. Constructed for workers of the ICI plastic and commercial explosive plants, the houses were generally weatherboard, had alternating hipped and gable roof forms and simple rectangular floor plans. The ICI Housing Estate was one of the last industry-sponsored developments in the City of Brimbank.²⁸

Other known company-built housing in Victoria includes the McKay Housing Estate in Sunshine which consists of houses constructed during the Federation and Interwar periods either by or for employees, foremen and managers of the McKay Sunshine Harvester Works. Another Federation period company sponsored housing development is the William Angliss Worker Housing in Maribyrnong which consists of single storey weatherboard houses constructed in 1912 for workers of the Angliss meat complex.²⁹

A group of houses contemporary with the Australian Glass Manufacturers housing was erected in the Municipality at Newport in Holland Court and adjacent allotments to Douglas Parade. These were completed by 1951, and were erected for Dutch migrants, though it is not known who financed them.³⁰ This group consisted of two different designs, both constructed with light-weight materials and having broad gable roofs and a squat brick chimney to the side. This group is however less intact than the Australian Glass Manufacturers housing with the houses of the former also being relatively plain.

External Integrity and Condition

Integrity – Moderate

Recent development (late 20th century and early 21st century) has involved the demolition of earlier houses and replacement with larger two storey residential buildings. This includes a few attached houses/duplexes on subdivided allotments.

There are some alterations to contributory buildings, such as modern/infilled porches, demolition of original chimneys and replacement of the original timber sash windows with aluminium types.

Thematic Context

David Helms, *Hobsons Bay Heritage Study Volume 1: Environmental History*, 2003:

- Theme 4: Building settlements, towns and cities – Twentieth Century Residential Development (4.3) and Post-Second World War (4.4)

Recommendations

Statutory protection

It is recommended that the Australian Glass Manufacturers' Housing Heritage Precinct be included in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay in the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme.

²⁵ *Tenth and Eleventh Annual Report of the Housing Commission of Victoria for the period 1 July 1947 to 30 June 1949*, Parliament of Victoria, p14

²⁶ *Newtown West Heritage Review*, Vol. 5 Newtown Housing Commission Estate, D Rowe & Wendy Jacobs, 2016

²⁷ *Fourth Annual Report of the Housing Commission of Victoria for the period 1 July 1941 to 30 June 1942*, Parliament of Victoria, p12

²⁸ Though not as large as H V McKay's housing scheme at Sunshine which was developed over a longer period. Brimbank City Council Post-contact Cultural Heritage Study, Vol. 3, Gary Vines, 2007, p71.

²⁹ Entries for the McKay Housing Estate and William Angliss Worker Housing Area, Victorian Heritage Database, accessed 30 May 2017

³⁰ *Williamstown Chronicle*, 23 November 1951, p3

Management objectives

Conserve houses built in the 1950s for Australian Glass Manufacturers, retaining original elements. Reinstate original format and detailing to porches and install sympathetic window types – double hung timber sash to match original evident at other houses. Additions should be sympathetic in terms of scale, height, form, materials and detailing. It is not necessary to reproduce original detailing, rather a simplified, interpretive approach is recommended.

Ensure that new development is sympathetic to the historic character of the precinct in accordance with the relevant articles and conservation principles, processes and practice set out in the Burra Charter. Refer to the relevant local heritage policy at Clause 15.03 of the Hobsons Bay Planning Scheme.



AUSTRALIAN GLASS MANUFACTURERS' HOUSING HERITAGE PRECINCT

Name/Address	Date/Period	Description/Notable Features	Photograph	Rec. Grading
House 1 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Partly altered Weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, brick chimney, timber vent to gable end, altered windows and porch		-
House 3 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in concrete tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, original timber windows including corner type, original glazed wall to entry porch.		C
House 5 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Largely intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, timber vent to gable end, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, altered windows (aluminium), glazed wall to entry porch.		C
House 7 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in concrete tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, original timber windows including corner window, original glazed wall to entry porch.		C
House 9 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Late 20 th /early 21 st century	2 storey house with skillion roof, clad in a variety of materials including ply, galvanised metal sheeting & vertical boards.		-

Name/Address	Date/ Period	Description/Notable Features	Photograph	Rec. Grading
House 11 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Mostly intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in concrete tiles (now painted), exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, altered windows (aluminium), original glazed wall to entry porch removed.		C
House 13 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Largely intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, timber vent to gable end, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, original timber windows including corner type, non-original door, addition to rear.		C
House 15 Bernard Street, Spotswood	2016	2 story brick & horizontal boards, mix of hipped & gable roofs.		-
Paired houses 17 & 17A Bernard Street, Spotswood	Early 21st century	2 storey to rear part, rendered, hipped & gable roofs clad in concrete tiles.		-
House 19 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in concrete tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney, original timber windows including corner type, original glazed wall to entry porch.		C
House 21 Bernard Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, timber vent to gable end, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, original timber windows, original glazed door.		C

Name/Address	Date/Period	Description/Notable Features	Photograph	Rec. Grading
36 Craig Street, Spotswood	Circa 2000	Two storey, timber-framed, gable roof, aluminium-windows		-
House 2 Robb Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Mostly intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, timber vent to gable end, porch with timber framing & later Federation style frieze, altered windows (aluminium).		C
House 4 Robb Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Fairly intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in concrete tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, original timber windows including corner window, altered entry.		C
House 18 Robb Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Mostly intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney, original porch with timber framing & cream brick planter box, altered windows (aluminium).		C
House 20 Robb Street, Spotswood	Under construction	Townhouses under construction		-
House 22 & 22A Robb Street, Spotswood	2007	2 storey, brick, render & horizontal boards, hipped roof clad in concrete tiles.		-
House 24 Robb Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Addition to front, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, timber vent to gable end, non-original porch, altered window to front. Original detailing & form		-

Name/Address	Date/ Period	Description/Notable Features	Photograph	Rec. Grading
		could be reinstated (similar to no. 18).		
House 26 Robb Street, Spotswood	Circa 1958	Largely intact, weatherboard, gable roof clad in variegated tiles, exposed rafter ends, cream brick chimney capped with brown tiles, parts of glazed wall to porch remain, original timber windows including corner type, original glazed door.		C