

METHODOLOGY REPORT

CITY OF MELBOURNE
HERITAGE GRADINGS REVIEW

Prepared for
City of Melbourne

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	2
1.1	Gradings review	2
1.2	Scope of gradings review	2
1.3	Gradings definitions	3
1.3.1	‘Significant’ places	3
1.3.2	‘Contributory’ places	3
1.3.3	‘Non-contributory’ places	3
2.0	Methodology & approach	4
2.1	Desktop research	4
2.2	Historical research	4
2.3	Field work	4
2.4	Gradings review	5
2.4.1	Properties in precincts outside the CCZ	5
2.4.2	Properties in precincts in the CCZ	6
2.4.3	Approach to gradings review	6
2.5	Excel spreadsheet	7

1.0 Introduction

This report documents the methodology and tasks undertaken in the Heritage Gradings Review study for the City of Melbourne.

The gradings review is a component of a larger heritage study undertaken by Lovell Chen for Melbourne, which is referred to as the Heritage Review, and is described and documented in a separate methodology report:

- *City of Melbourne Heritage Review: Local Heritage Policies and Precinct Statements of Significance* (Lovell Chen, September 2015)

The Heritage Review study included review and revision of the City of Melbourne's local heritage policies: Clause 22.04 Heritage Places within the Capital City Zone and Clause 22.05 Heritage Places outside the Capital City Zone. It also involved preparation of statements of significance for specific heritage precincts outside the Capital City Zone; and a programme of community and stakeholder consultation and engagement.

The Heritage Review arose out of the July 2014 study by Council, 'Review of the Local Heritage Planning Policies in the Melbourne Planning Scheme'. The latter raised issues to do with the 'content, useability and operation' of the current heritage policies. The Heritage Review also implements Council Plan Action 'Review Melbourne Planning Scheme local policies Clause 22.04 Heritage Places within the Capital City Zone and Clause 22.05 Heritage Places outside the Capital City Zone'; and Action 2.8 of the City of Melbourne Heritage Strategy 2013.¹

1.1 Gradings review

The Heritage Review also required that the consultants recommend a means of phasing out or transferring across from the current alphabetical property gradings (A-D) to a new system which utilises significant and contributory gradings. This approach is supported by the VPP Practice Note *Applying the Heritage Overlay* (revised September 2012), which recommends against the use of 'letter gradings'.

Also of relevance are several recent Planning Panels, which reviewed Melbourne Planning Scheme heritage amendments, and made recommendations on Council's grading system. These include Amendment C186 (Central City Hoddle Grid), where the Panel described the A-D grading system as being 'out dated'; and Amendment C207 (Arden Macaulay Heritage) where the Panel recommended Council undertake a review of its heritage grading system as a priority.

This current Heritage Gradings Review study, its methodology and tasks, is a direct outcome of the recommended approach to the gradings review as included in the Heritage Review.

The Heritage Review also required the consultants to prepare and recommend definitions for the new gradings. These are reproduced from the *City of Melbourne Heritage Review: Local Heritage Policies and Precinct Statements of Significance* (Lovell Chen, September 2015); see below at Section 1.3.

Council provided the consultants with an excel spreadsheet of graded properties, for updating. This is the principal output of the Heritage Gradings Review study. The spreadsheet contains property addresses, existing gradings and relevant Heritage Overlay numbers.

The Heritage Gradings Review study did not involve photographing or documenting heritage properties or places in detail.

1.2 Scope of gradings review

The review focused on graded properties in Heritage Overlay precincts (heritage precincts) in and outside the CCZ, and groups of properties which shared a single Heritage Overlay number. No review was undertaken of individual properties with an individual Heritage Overlay number, on the understanding that such properties are regarded as individually significant.

Other points to note:

- Graded properties which do not currently have a heritage control were not reviewed.
- Places of potential heritage value which are currently ungraded and not subject to heritage controls were not reviewed.
- Ungraded properties in precincts were also not reviewed, although in some instances where these properties were of potential heritage value, this was noted.
- Where it was known, or became apparent through the desktop research, that a graded property had been demolished, the spreadsheet reference to the property was updated to non-contributory. Note however that the study did not involve a comprehensive review of the status of all graded properties in regard to demolition.
- In some limited instances where a property under review was identified as having been significantly modified and changed to the degree that its contributory heritage value was lost, then the property was updated to non-contributory. Note again the study did not involve a comprehensive review of all graded properties in this regard.
- The spreadsheet provided by Council did not include properties in recently reviewed heritage precincts, and accordingly Lovell Chen did not review the gradings for these properties.

1.3 Gradings definitions

As noted, the Heritage Review study prepared and recommended new definitions for significant and contributory gradings. These definitions have informed the gradings review, and are reproduced from the *City of Melbourne Heritage Review: Local Heritage Policies and Precinct Statements of Significance* (Lovell Chen, September 2015), as follows:

1.3.1 'Significant' places

A significant heritage place:

A 'significant' heritage place is individually important at state or local level, and a heritage place in its own right. It is of historic, aesthetic, scientific, social or spiritual significance to the municipality. A 'significant' heritage place may be highly valued by the community; is typically externally intact; and/or has notable features associated with the place type, use, period, method of construction, siting or setting. When located in a heritage precinct a 'significant' heritage place can make an important contribution to the precinct.

1.3.2 'Contributory' places

A contributory heritage place:

A 'contributory' heritage place is important for its contribution to a precinct. It is of historic, aesthetic, scientific, social or spiritual significance to the precinct. A 'contributory' heritage place may be valued by the community; a representative example of a place type, period or style; and/or combines with other visually or stylistically related places to demonstrate the historic development of a precinct. 'Contributory' places are typically externally intact, but may have visible changes which do not detract from the contribution to the precinct.

1.3.3 'Non-contributory' places

A non-contributory heritage place:

A 'non-contributory' place does not make a contribution to the heritage significance or historic character of the precinct.

2.0 Methodology & approach

The Heritage Gradings Review was largely a desk-top based study, with some additional historical research. Field work was also undertaken as required. All these tasks led to the review and updating of gradings, where warranted. The final task involved updating the excel spreadsheet provided by Council.

2.1 Desktop research

The Heritage Gradings Review largely relied on existing information in relation to heritage properties and places in precincts. The review utilised the following databases/sources and existing heritage studies:

- Melbourne's i-heritage database (reproduces information contained in individual Building Identification Forms, which in turn are taken from the earlier heritage studies, plus recent property images)
- Heritage Victoria's HERMES database (reproduces the individual Building Identification Forms, extracts/citations from the Notable Buildings study, and images from the 1980s)
- Central City Heritage Study Review 1993
- Melbourne Heritage Places Inventory 2008

Comparing the 1980s (HERMES) and more recent photographs (i-Heritage database) was helpful in that it shed light on the historical gradings. For instance, a building may have been given a lower grading in the 1980s/1990s, based on modifications or a poor state of intactness. In some cases, these properties have been restored, and accordingly warranted a revised grading.

Nearmap was also utilised for current and archived aerial images. Streetview, as available in Google Maps, was additionally used for current and archived images of properties from streets.

2.2 Historical research

In terms of historical research, primary and secondary sources utilised included the following:

- Sands & McDougall directories (various dates)
- MMBW detail and 160:1 plans, State Library of Victoria
- State Library of Victoria's picture collection
- National Library of Australia's Trove website, including pictures and digitised newspapers
- City of Melbourne rate books, held at Public Record Office Victoria (digitised in series VPRS 5708/P9)
- State Library of Victoria's digitised maps and plans collections, including auction plans and Kearney's 1855 map
- City of Melbourne Building Application index, copy held by Lovell Chen
- Miles Lewis' Australian Architectural index, via <http://www.mileslewis.net/australian-architectural.html>
- *Melbourne's Marvellous Modernism: A Comparative Analysis of Post-War Modern Architecture in Melbourne's CBD 1955-1975*, National Trust, September 2014
- *Melbourne Architecture*, Phillip Goad, 2001
- *Encyclopedia of Australian Architecture*, Phillip Goad and Julie Willis, 2012
- *Survey of Post-War Built Heritage in Victoria*, Heritage Alliance, 2 volumes, 2008

2.3 Field work

Field work was undertaken to a limited extent, where the desktop sources did not provide sufficient information on a property to enable a review. This included where the available visual sources were unclear.

2.4 Gradings review

2.4.1 Properties in precincts outside the CCZ

Prior to commencing this project, an estimate was made of the numbers of A, B, C and D properties in precincts outside the CCZ (see Table 1). The estimate was based on an analysis of the data contained in the i-heritage database. The latter was searched on a suburb basis (i-heritage database cannot be searched on a precinct basis). Therefore, not all the graded properties identified in the database (and listed in the table below) are included in precincts. Some are also subject to individual Heritage Overlay controls. The numbers were informative as to the relative distribution of higher to lower graded properties in the suburbs/precincts.

Table 1 Estimates of graded properties in precincts

Precinct	A grade	B grade	C grade	D grade
East Melbourne and Jolimont	141	108	240	171
South Yarra	27	50	204	208
Parkville	44	31	368	34
Kensington	N/A	7	46	598
North and West Melbourne	30	156	423	1226
Carlton	91	80	1200	193

Lovell Chen also undertook a gradings 'sampling' exercise in precincts outside the CCZ, the purpose of which was to 'sample' or 'test' the potential for a direct transfer of alphabetical gradings to significant and contributory.

On the basis of this 'sampling' work, some additional desktop work, and the field work and investigation of precincts undertaken in preparing the statements of significance for the larger Heritage Review project, the following table was prepared. It identified an approach to the Heritage Gradings Review project which was subsequently followed, with the exception of D grade properties in Carlton. When more detailed work commenced on reviewing properties in Carlton, a decision was made to review the latter and to not directly transfer all D properties in Carlton to contributory.

In addition, Table 2 does not identify properties not included in the six precincts, such as those which were reviewed in groups of properties which share a single Heritage Overlay number.

Table 2 Recommended approach to gradings review

Precinct	A grade	B grade	C grade	D grade
East Melbourne and Jolimont	Significant	Significant	Review (240)	Contributory
South Yarra	Significant	Significant	Review (204)	Contributory
Parkville	Significant	Significant	Contributory	Contributory
Kensington	N/A	Significant	Review (46)	Review (598)
North and West Melbourne	Significant	Significant	Review (423)	Review (1226)
Carlton	Significant	Significant	Review (1200)	Contributory

The table reflects the following:

- The direct transfer to significant was recommended for all A and B properties, in all precincts (there are no A grade properties in Kensington).
- In Parkville, the direct transfer was straightforward for all alphabetical gradings, i.e. A and B to significant, C and D to contributory.
- C grade properties required review in all precincts except Parkville.
- D grade properties required review in Kensington and North and West Melbourne, although as noted, Carlton was also added to this list.

2.4.2 *Properties in precincts in the CCZ*

Again, prior to commencing this project, an estimate was made of the numbers of A, B, C and D properties in the CCZ. The following numbers were identified, although not all the graded properties are in CCZ precincts, and some are also subject to individual Heritage Overlay controls:

- 172 A grade properties
- 178 B grade properties
- 302 C grade properties
- 448 D grade properties

Out of this, the following approach was recommended:

- A and B grade properties were directly transferred to significant.
- C and D grade properties required review.

2.4.3 *Approach to gradings review*

The majority of current gradings were attributed during heritage studies undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s. Given the timeframe which has elapsed, it is reasonable to assume that some gradings are out of date. This was also an issue raised during the programme of community and stakeholder consultation and engagement, undertaken as part of the larger Heritage Review study.

Instances where this could occur include where the intactness and appearance of a place or property has changed. It could also occur where the assessment of heritage value warrants reconsideration. For example, heritage places of the interwar and post-war period are now generally more highly valued in heritage terms than they typically were in the 1980s. Early properties, such as those from the 1850s-1870s are also increasingly more highly valued due to recognition of their rarity. Intact terrace rows, even rows of very modest workers cottages, are another heritage place type more highly valued due to maintaining their original external form with little visible change.

Other examples of places deserving of a higher level grading include those with important histories, or places with recognised social values. For example, the work undertaken in preparing the precinct statements of significance, for the larger Heritage Review study, highlighted important historical themes and types of places in precincts, including places important to the community. This was another consideration in reviewing the relative significance of places.

'Significant' places

As noted, all A and B grade properties in precincts in and outside the CCZ were recommended for a direct transfer to the new significant grading. This reflects their existing highly graded status. The recommended new definition for significant places uses 'higher level' language and descriptors to emphasise the importance of these places, while conversely the definition of contributory is more inclusive and wide-ranging and deliberately set below significant.

The definition for significant also places emphasis on the individual importance of a heritage place or property. It provides for a range of place types to be considered significant, and allows for a range of attributes to be taken into consideration when assessing this higher level heritage grading.

C grade properties required review in all precincts except Parkville, although the great majority remained contributory. At the commencement of the study, the C grading was attributed to a

comparatively high number of properties from the early period of 1850-75 (in Carlton, some 425 properties); interwar properties generally (161 properties across all precincts); and the very high proportion of C grade properties relative to other gradings in Carlton and North and West Melbourne.

For the D grade properties, the problematic precincts were Kensington and North and West Melbourne (total of 1824 properties). The very high proportion of D grade properties in these precincts was not matched in the other precincts, and indicated some reconsideration of the grading was warranted. Again, while the majority remained contributory, there were for example highly intact rows or terrace groupings of early dwellings, or intact rows of more distinguished dwellings, which were considered significant as a row or group.

Approximately 660 properties in precincts outside the CCZ, which were previously graded C and D, have been recommended to be categorised as significant. This was most prevalent in Carlton (329) and North/West Melbourne (213).

In the CCZ, some 77 places in precincts which were previously graded C or D have been recommended to be categorised as significant. These included buildings of early construction dates; intact rows of commercial/retail buildings; historic hotels; and developments from the interwar and post-war period. It also included buildings which had previously been identified as 'Notable Buildings', and Modernist commercial buildings which are widely recognised for their heritage value.

'Contributory' places

This definition places emphasis on a contributory place being part of a larger place or collection of related place types, as typically occurs with a heritage precinct. As noted, the great majority of existing C and D grade properties remained in this category. This reflects their contributory heritage value to the relevant precinct; their being a representative example of a place type, period or style; and their visual or stylistic connection to, or relationship with, similar or like places in the precinct. Contributory places combine to demonstrate the historic development of a precinct.

2.5 Excel spreadsheet

As noted, Council provided the consultants with an excel spreadsheet of graded properties. The spreadsheet contained property addresses, existing gradings and relevant Heritage Overlay numbers. It is noted that there are some inconsistencies between gradings as shown in the spreadsheet, and those identified in other Council sources (such as the Heritage Places Inventory). Where the consultants identified an inconsistency, it was noted in the spreadsheet.

Where properties were re-categorised as significant, the spreadsheet was updated to identify this, with Lovell Chen entering 'upgraded' into the property record in the spreadsheet, together with a brief written explanation/rationale for its upgrade. Note the latter does not constitute a full statement of significance.

For properties that remained contributory, this was identified in the spreadsheet as 'confirmed'. No explanation or rationale was provided.

Where properties (limited in number) were downgraded to non-contributory, 'downgraded' was entered into the property record, with a brief explanation as to the downgrading. As noted, this only occurred where it was known, or became apparent through the desktop research, that a graded property had been demolished; or where a property was identified as having been significantly modified and changed to the degree that its contributory heritage value was lost.

As noted, ungraded properties in precincts were not reviewed, although in instances where these properties were identified as being of potential heritage value, this was noted as a 'query' in the spreadsheet.

The spreadsheet was not updated for existing A and B properties which were being directly transferred to significant.

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- 1 'Report to the Future Melbourne (Planning) Committee, Review of Local Heritage Policies in Melbourne Planning Scheme', Agenda Item 6.1, D Hayes, City of Melbourne, 1 July 2014. Melbourne's Heritage Strategy is Council's plan to protect the city's heritage buildings, places and objects over the next 15 years.