

---

## Balston Street Precinct

Places of individual significance within the precinct that have a separate citation in the Port Phillip Heritage Review with additional descriptive and historical information are indicated in **bold**.

### 1.0 Thematic Context

#### Victoria's framework of historical themes

6. Building towns, cities and the garden state: 6.3 Shaping the suburbs, 6.7 Making homes for Victorians

#### Port Phillip thematic environmental history

5. Buildings and cultural landscapes: 5.2 Shaping the suburbs (5.2.2 Private development), 5.3 Diverse Housing (5.3.2 Workers and artisans housing, 5.3.3 Suburban bungalows)

### 2.0 History

The Balston Street Precinct formed parts of Crown portions 158A and 159A, each of 4 acres. The former (which relates to the northern half of Balston Street) was purchased by Henry Balston in September 1857 and the latter (which relates to the southern half of Balston street) by F Dingle and William Gilmour Murray in December 1857.

In early 1859, Henry Balston subdivided Crown portion 158A, creating allotments in the northern half of Balston Street and fronting the south side of Inkerman Street; in March, these allotments were advertised for sale for 20 shillings a foot (*Argus* 1 Mar 1859 p8). The 1859 rate book (dated March) indicates that a few of the allotments had been purchased.

The first houses in Balston Street were built during 1859, including one by May for John Wildbar (*Argus* 18 May 1859 p3). The 1860 rate book (dated March) records nine houses in Balston Street, mostly 2-roomed and either of 'wood and slate' or 'lath, plaster, and shingles' (possibly, wattle and daub walls with timber roof shingles). One dwelling was described as a one-roomed 'hut'. The surviving house at 16 Balston Street had been built by 1862 (RB March 1862 no. 1676) as a two-roomed wood house, with a net annual value of £6, owned and occupied by John Baggs. The April 1864 rate book records that most of the Balston Street houses were owner occupied. The occupations of the residents included labourer, bricklayer, milkman and gardener.

Also in 1859, the beginnings of a commercial zone were established in the nearby section of Inkerman Street, including the Inkerman Hotel on the west corner of Balston Street and shops at the corner of Malakoff Street. Also, the new Balaclava railway station was opened, located within a few minutes' walk from Balston Street.

Meanwhile, Crown portion 159A to the south was divided lengthways to create two 2-acre allotments, upon which substantial villas were erected fronting Carlisle Street by the early 1860s. The villa to the west, *Westbourne*, (Figure 1) was the home of William Gilmour Murray (one of the purchasers of Crown portion 159A), a merchant and one time mayor of St Kilda (1872-1873) (*Australian Town and Country Journal* 12 May 1888 p45). In 1879, following Murray's relocation to Sydney, *Westbourne* was sold and for a period thereafter it was used as a school. The villa to the east, *Woodslee*, was owned by George Rolfe, a successful merchant of Rolfe and Co., member of the Legislative Council, and owner of several properties in St Kilda.



*Figure 1 - Westbourne 1860s-1870s (Source: State Library of Victoria, accession no. H87.91/4)*

The 1873 Vardy plan (Figure 2) shows eleven residences (10 timber and one brick) and two vacant allotments in Balston Street which at that time was still a dead-end street ending at the southern boundary of the original Crown portion 158A. The allotment sizes were varied, with frontages ranging between 29 feet and 147 feet. The earliest surviving house in the precinct, **16 Balston Street** (c.1862) can be seen on the plan. By this time

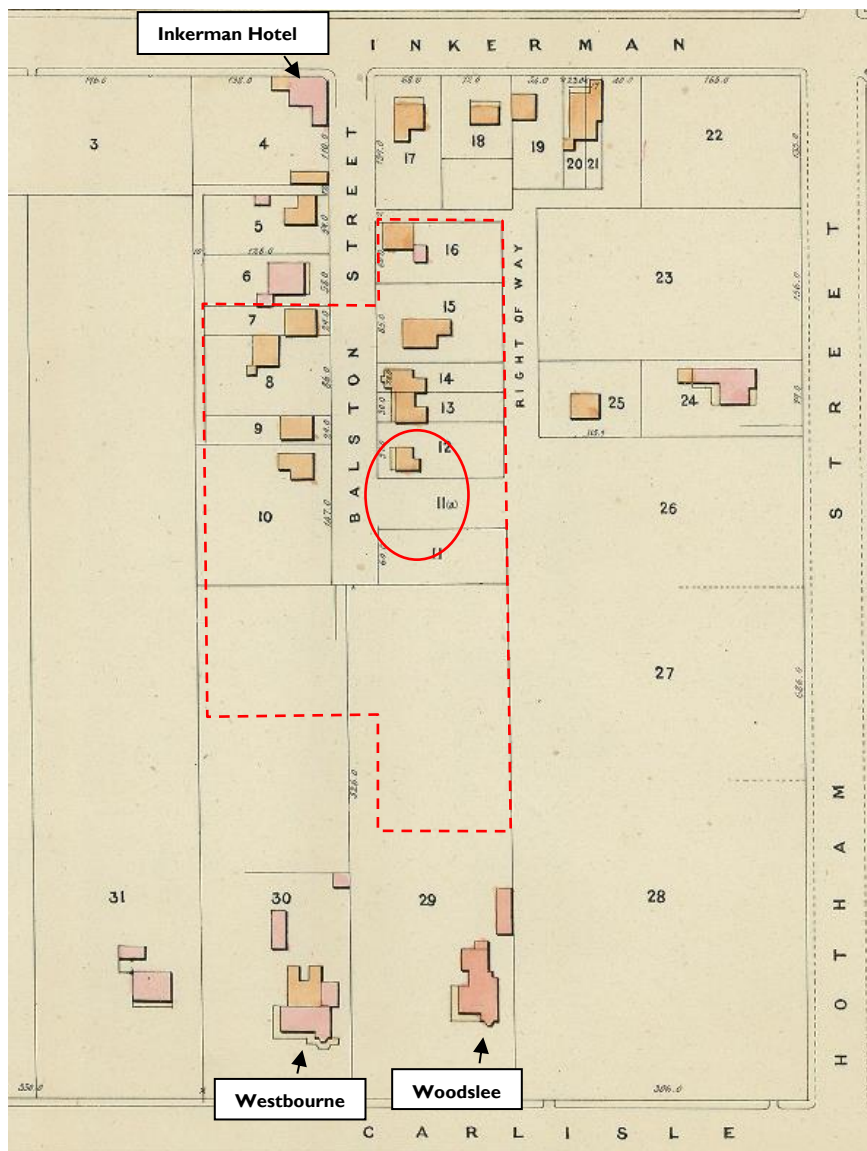


Figure 2 - Plan of the Borough of St Kilda, South Ward No. 3 (J.E.S. Vardy, 1873). Showing the north side of Inkerman Street, with the extent of the precinct indicated. Note, masonry buildings are shaded pink and timber buildings are shaded orange. The earliest surviving house, 16 Balston Street, is circled.

In August 1888, the grounds of Westbourne were subdivided, and Balston Street was extended (but it still did not continue through to Carlisle Street). Twelve allotments on the west side of Balston Street (southern half) and three to Carlisle Street, together with the villa Westbourne, were offered for sale (Age 25 August 1888 p.2). This sale coincided with the impending opening of two nearby tramlines: one along Chapel Street (from Carlisle Street) and the other along Brighton Road (from Brunning Street). The twelve Balston Street allotments were purchased by the one owner but remained undeveloped into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The 1898 MMBW plan (Figure 3) shows thirteen buildings in the northern half of Balston Street, including some which replaced earlier houses shown on the 1873 Vardy plan. Five houses which survive today (nos. 4, 10, 14, 16 and 18) are shown on the plan. The southern section of Balston Street created by the 1888 Westbourne subdivision had a different alignment to the current (further to the west, with a dog-leg) and still did not continue through to Carlisle Street and contained no houses.

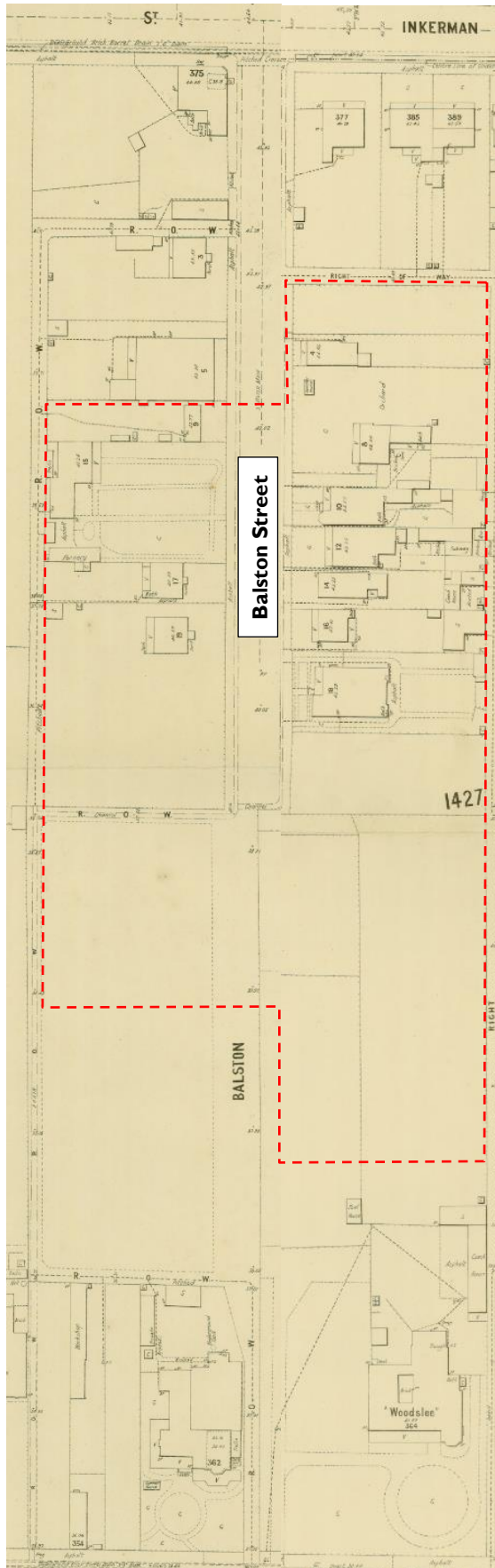


Figure 3 - MMBW Detail Plans 1426 and 1427 dated 1898



---

From about 1914, development of the southern half of Balston Street began and was well advanced by 1925 (Figure 4). During the interwar period some of the earlier houses in the northern part of Balston Street were replaced (for example it appears the duplexes at 6/6a and 8/8a replaced four c.1917 brick cottages) and by 1945 an aerial photograph (Figure 5) shows the precinct fully developed.

While Balston Street was predominantly residential, other industrial/commercial/agricultural activities were also carried out. During the 1890s, there was a Chinese market garden in the vicinity of no. 21 (*Argus* 13 December 1894 p.5) and a dairy at no. 14, while during the 1910s there was an electric joinery works at no. 20.

In the 1930s or early 1940s, *Westbourne* was demolished. Subsequently, *Woodslee* was demolished around the 1950s. Both were replaced with apartment buildings.



Figure 4 - Aerial Photograph showing part of Balston Street from the west c.1925 (W R Garrett). (Source: State Library of Victoria, H98.129/21)



Figure 5 - 1945 Proj No 5, Melbourne and Metropolitan Area Project, Run 17E, Frame 58014

## References

Melbourne & Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) Detail Plans nos. 1426 and 1427.

Newspapers, various

---

Port Phillip Heritage Review citation 2303 (16 Balston Street)

*Port Phillip Thematic Environmental History* (TEH), February 2021

Practice Note 1 'Applying the Heritage Overlay' (August 2018)

Rate Books for St Kilda 1859-1900

St Kilda Council building permits (BP): 243 (1904, weatherboard and brick villa, 2 Balston Street); 3347 (1917, 2 brick villas, 24 and 26 Balston Street).

Sands and McDougall's Directory (SM)

### 3.0 Description

The Balston Street Precinct is comprised of 41 residences from the late Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods. Overall, the housing is consistently modest, both timber-framed (earlier) and masonry (later), and all are single storey. There is a mix of freestanding houses, pairs, and groups.

The grassed nature strips are planted with various native trees, planted within the last few decades (there are no street trees evident in the 1945 aerial photograph). Earlier basalt kerbing and channelling survives, and the carriageway and footpaths are asphalt. About a third of properties have crossovers which are either asphalt or concrete. There are few surviving original front fences.

The roof forms are usually hipped or gabled, with some having a combination. Roofs are clad in corrugated sheet metal (sometimes a replacement for earlier slate), terracotta tiles (glazed, unglazed) and concrete tiles. Most retain original chimneys. Windows are usually timber-framed sashes, with casements being employed during the Federation period.

The precinct contains five Victorian period houses, all of which are timber-framed (ashlar boards or weatherboards). No. 16 is the oldest and the only one evident on the 1873 Vardy Plan; however, it has been altered at the front. Nos. 4, 10, 14 and 18 are evident on the MMBW plans (1897-98). Windows are timber framed double hung sashes and doors are panelled.

The Federation period houses include a few timber, or partially timber, examples (nos. 2, 12, 18, 22, 29) but most are masonry (red brick and render) and reflect the Arts and Crafts style or modest versions of the Queen Anne style, both derived from vernacular English building traditions and exhibiting picturesque and asymmetric qualities. There are some pairs and groups, with the terrace at nos. 28-34 designed by Arthur Plaisted being a distinctive example of the Arts and Crafts style. Gable ends have roughcast finish and battens, and chimneys are tall with corbelled and/or rendered caps. Windows are timber framed and either double hung sashes or casements. Doors are often panelled with glazing to the upper part.



Most of the Interwar houses are semi-detached pairs (nos. 6/6A, 8/8A, 9/11, 13/15, 17/19, 23/25). As was commonly the approach at the time, most of the semi-detached pairs are designed to give the impression of a single house by sharing the same roof. The examples from this period are red or clinker brick, or a combination of both. The timber framed windows typically have differentiated upper sashes (leadlight or multi-paned). Many are in the Bungalow style, characterised by informal design reflective of the influence of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, especially in their combination of 'natural materials', and typically feature broad simple roofs, exposed rafter ends to timber lined soffits, gable ends with battening (giving a half-timbered effect) or timber shingles, and the walls and other elements are commonly expressed in contrasting brick and render.

The precinct is intact to its c.1937 state, although some houses have been altered to varying degrees and there are a few upper-level additions which are visible. The Federation period houses at 20, 27 and 31 have been altered to the extent that their original format/presentation can no longer be interpreted.

Details	Image
East Side	

Details	Image
<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Federation (c.1904)</p> <p>Weatherboard façade with brick side walls, shingled boards to upper part of wall, verandah with turned timber posts and geometric frieze, roughcast sheeting and timber battens to gable end, bracketed hood above window, corbelled brick chimneys with terracotta pots.</p>	
<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Late Victorian (c.1890)</p> <p>Weatherboard, timber brackets to cornice, verandah with timber posts and frieze, chimneys.</p>	
<p><b>6 and 6A (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1935)</p> <p>Symmetrical, tiled hipped roof, rendered walls with tuckpointed clinker brick lintels and random quoining, side entry porches, concrete window boxes, Art Deco leadlighting, chimneys.</p> <p>Builder: VV Borelace.</p> <p>Building Permit no. 8859 (11 April 1935)</p>	
<p><b>8 and 8A (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1937)</p> <p>Tudor Revival influence, asymmetrical, tiled roof, clinker brick, header/rowlock brick edging, arched entrances, projecting dogtooth detail to gable end, chimney (no.8A).</p> <p>Upper storey addition at no. 8.</p> <p>Architect: Gordon J. &amp; Bruce Sutherland</p> <p>Builder: D. Richardson</p> <p>Building Permit no. 9753 (28 July 1937)</p>	
<p><b>10</b></p> <p>Victorian (pre-1898, possibly c.1887)</p> <p>Italianate style, ashlar boarding to façade, weatherboards to sides, projecting faceted bay, verandah (timber posts, cast-iron frieze, dentillated band), cornice with timber brackets, rendered chimneys.</p>	



Details	Image
<p><b>12</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Ashlar boarding to façade, weatherboards to sides, jerkinhead roof, verandah with timber posts and cast-iron frieze, timber battening to upper part of wall.</p> <p>Some façade alterations, building extended forwards (2009).</p>	
<p><b>14</b></p> <p>Victorian (pre-1898)</p> <p>Weatherboard walls, verandah (altered), original door with sidelights, chimney.</p> <p>Building permit 3345 issued 28 July 1917 for additions to verandah.</p>	
<p><b>16</b></p> <p>Victorian (c.1862)</p> <p>Largely obscured. Symmetrical façade, transverse gable roof, rear skillion section, multi-paned windows, verandah with cast iron frieze, corbelled brick chimney.</p> <p>Façade alterations.</p> <p><b>PPHR citation 2303</b></p>	
<p><b>18</b></p> <p>Federation (pre-1898)</p> <p>Ashlar boarding to façade, weatherboards to sides, verandah with timber posts and cast-iron frieze, gable end with roughcast sheeting and timber screen, corbelled brick chimneys.</p> <p>Verandah was originally to front only (i.e. did not return).</p> <p>Cast iron frieze may not be original.</p>	
<p><b>20</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Timber house with hipped roof. Rendered chimney/s (one has been removed).</p> <p>Façade alterations.</p>	



Details	Image
<p><b>22</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Weatherboards (shingled/notched) to lower wall, roughcast sheeting (non-original odd vermiculated panels), side verandah with turned timber post.</p> <p>Façade alterations and upper-level addition.</p>	
<p><b>24</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1917)</p> <p>Bungalow, red brick and roughcast render, terracotta ridge cresting, projecting masonry porch with timber shingling in gable end, angled wall within porch, leadlight picture window, boundary wall, rendered chimney. Same footprint as no. 26.</p> <p>Owner/builder: E.W. Nicholls</p> <p>Building Permit 3347 (1 August 1917)</p>	
<p><b>26</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1917)</p> <p>Bungalow, red brick and roughcast render, gable end with timber boards and vent, projecting masonry porch with decorative timber brackets and timber shingling in gable end, angled wall within porch, gable ends with timber boards and timber shingles, gable vent, terracotta ridge cresting, rendered chimney. Same footprint as no. 24.</p> <p>Owner/builder: E.W. Nicholls</p> <p>Building Permit 3347 (1 August 1917)</p>	
<p><b>28-34 (group of four row houses)</b></p> <p>Federation (c.1913)</p> <p>Arts and Crafts style, red brick and roughcast render (nos 28+30 overpainted), sheeting to larger gable ends and timber shingling to smaller gable ends, recessed entrances with timber brackets, exposed rafter ends, multi-paned windows, highlights with coloured glass (no. 34), rendered chimneys with flat caps and terracotta pots.</p> <p>Architect: A W Plaisted</p> <p>Builder: J G Jennings</p> <p>Building Permit 2033 (1 October 1913).</p>	
<p><b>38</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1922)</p> <p>Bungalow, red brick with contrasting clinker brick and smooth render detailing, broad gable end with weatherboards (upper) and timber battens (lower), gable vent, recessed porch, original brick and metal fence, finial, brick chimneys.</p> <p>Upper-level addition.</p> <p>Owner/builder: J Wilkins</p> <p>Building Permit 5029 (23 October 1922)</p>	

Details	Image
<p><b>40 and 42 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Federation (c.1913)</p> <p>Brick and roughcast render (overpainted), broad gable end, arched gable vent with timber louvres, terracotta ridge cresting, side entrance porches, bay window with canopy (no.42), rendered chimney with wide cap and brick detailing and terracotta pots.</p> <p>Façade alterations, including front addition to no.40.</p> <p>Owner/builder: C Goodridge</p> <p>Building Permit 2070 (30 October 1913)</p>	
<p><b>44-50 (group of four row houses)</b></p> <p>Federation (c.1914)</p> <p>Red brick, verandahs under the main roof with timber posts and frieze, bay windows with hoods, gable ends (roughcast and timber battens to no.50), terracotta ridge cresting and finials, chimneys with rendered caps and terracotta pots.</p> <p>Owner/builder: C. Goodridge</p> <p>Building Permit 2109 (3 December 1913)</p>	
<b>West Side</b>	
<p><b>9 and 11 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1927)</p> <p>Bungalow, symmetrical, concrete pantiles to roof, contrasting red brick and clinker brick with tuckpointing, prominent broad gable end with timber shingles (upper) and timber battens (lower), porch with square brick piers, red brick with contrasting clinker brick detailing, leadlighting to upper sashes.</p> <p>Owner/builder: G.A. Gough</p> <p>Building Permit 6729 (25 February 1927)</p>	
<p><b>13 and 15 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1926)</p> <p>Bungalow (Craftsman type), symmetrical, transverse ridge, central dormer with slatted vent, porch with square brick piers, exposed rafter ends, timber battening in gable ends, contrasting red brick and clinker brick, leadlighting to upper sashes. Original brick fence and metal gate at no. 15.</p> <p>Owner/builder: G.A. Gough</p> <p>Building Permit 6559 (10 September 1926)</p>	
<p><b>17 and 19 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (c.1926)</p> <p>Bungalow, symmetrical, twin gable ends with timber shingling and timber brackets, contrasting red brick and clinker brick with tuckpointing, side porches with square brick piers, leadlighting to upper sashes. Original low brick fence and metal gates.</p>	



Details	Image
<p><b>21</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Faceted bay, rendered façade (may not be original), cornice with timber brackets.</p> <p>Façade alterations, chimneys removed, corrugated sheet metal roof cladding replaced slate.</p>	
<p><b>23 and 25 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Interwar (1923)</p> <p>Bungalow, asymmetrical, tiled roof, gable end with timber shingling, tuckpointing, exposed rafter ends, square brick piers to porches, multi-paned upper sashes, corbelled brick brackets beneath box-framed windows.</p> <p>No. 25 has been overpainted.</p> <p>Builder: H E Carter</p> <p>Building permit 5381 (14 July 1923)</p>	
<p><b>27</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Weatherboard, red brick chimney, gable end with timber battens and roughcast render.</p> <p>Façade alterations and upper-level addition.</p>	
<p><b>29</b></p> <p>Federation (post-1898)</p> <p>Brick side wall with a weatherboard façade, return verandah with turned timber posts and decorative frieze, gable end with timber battens and roughcast render, red brick chimneys, squared bay window across corner.</p> <p>Interwar period brick fence (rebuilt).</p>	
<p><b>33</b></p> <p>Interwar (1928)</p> <p>Brick, roughcast render, timber battens to gable end, brick chimney. Partly obscured.</p> <p>Alterations to façade/openings.</p> <p>Builder: W P Sinclair</p> <p>Building permit 7088 (14 February 1928)</p>	
<p><b>35 and 37 (semi-detached pair)</b></p> <p>Federation (1914)</p> <p>Red brick (no. 35 overpainted), separate gable roofs, decorative gable ends with elongated niches, brick chimneys with rendered caps and terracotta pots. Original low brick fence.</p> <p>Alterations to façade/openings.</p> <p>Builder: G Curry</p> <p>Building Permit 2159 (30 January 1914)</p>	



---

## 4.0 Comparative Analysis

The Balston Street Precinct is significant as a group of houses intact to its c.1937 state (that is, no replacement buildings since that time), though some have been altered. The generally modest building stock represents the key phases of development in the municipality – Victorian period beginnings, with consolidation (and replacement of earlier houses) throughout the Federation and Interwar periods. One house survives from the early pre-1870 phase. Whilst there are few distinctive buildings, the street is a microcosm of the broader development of the area, and a less common remnant of a relatively cohesive streetscape in this part of the municipality.

Although the types of housing in Balston Street are represented in other parts of the municipality, there are few intact streetscapes that survive in this area (either side of Inkerman Street in Balaclava and East St Kilda) with a similar profile of modest historic examples which had been common. The precinct demonstrates a broad architectural variety in building type (freestanding, semi-detached pairs, row houses and duplexes) and expression (roof forms and façade compositions etc.).

Modest Federation period houses are also evident in the Balaclava Flats Residential Precinct and Ripponlea Residential Precinct, generally masonry (for example, Elm Grove and Glenmark Ave) and often paired, with a few scattered timber examples (for example, Sycamore Grove, not in Heritage Overlay). There are two groups/rows of four houses in Balston Street which was a less common type during the Federation period terrace houses fell out of favour, as they were perceived as being cold and dark with limited garden space (TEH p90).

A concentrated group of Interwar period, semi-detached pairs survive in HO387 (Hammerdale Avenue Precinct), however they primarily date to the 1930s rather than 1920s. Semi-detached bungalows, of which there are several examples in Balston Street, are a less common type.

## 5.0 Statement of Significance

### What is significant?

The Balston Street precinct comprising 2-50 and 9-37 Balston Street, Balaclava is significant. Development in the northern half of Balston Street began in 1859, and the earliest surviving house dates from c.1862. The southern half of Balston Street was developed from about 1914, following the subdivision of the grounds of two villas, *Westbourne* and *Woodslee*, which fronted Carlisle Street. The contributory building stock in the precinct is comprised of modest single-storey dwellings, both timber and brick, from the Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods, constructed over a 75-year period with most built between c.1887 and c.1937.

The following features contribute to the significance of the precinct:

- Dwellings dating between c.1862 and c.1937,
- The predominant single storey scale,
- Roof forms (hipped, gabled) and roof cladding including terracotta tiles (glazed and unglazed), concrete tiles, corrugated sheet metal,
- Original chimneys (face brick or rendered), some with terracotta pots,
- Original detailing to gable ends including timber battening, roughcast finish and shingling,
- Walls of face brick (red, clinker), rendered finishes and contrasting detailing,
- Original porches and verandahs,
- Original timber windows (some with decorative glass or glazing bars) and doors,
- Original or early low front masonry fences,
- Front garden settings,

- 
- Basalt kerbing and channelling.

The Significant place within the precinct is:

- 16 Balston Street.

The Contributory places within the precinct are:

- 2, 4, 6, 6A, 8, 8A, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 38, 40, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50 Balston Street.
- 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29, 33, 35, 37 Balston Street.

The Non-contributory property within the precinct is:

- 31 Balston Street.

### How is it significant?

The Balston Street Precinct is of local historical, rarity, representative and aesthetic significance to the City of Phillip.

### Why is it significant?

The Balston Street Precinct is of historical significance as illustrative of the suburban development of Balaclava during the Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods. It is an intact remnant of modest housing in Balaclava/St Kilda East, which had previously been common, and as a streetscape where the phases of development are so interspersed. The northern part of the precinct is associated with the early development of the area from the late 1850s following the Crown land sales, while the southern part of the precinct is associated with a common settlement pattern in this part of the municipality where large Victorian properties were subdivided during the Federation period for residential and commercial development. The timber house at 16 Balston Street, constructed c.1862, is a rare surviving pre-1870 example in the municipality. (Criteria A and B)

The Balston Street Precinct is of representative significance as a residential group dating to the Victorian, Federation and Interwar periods that is intact to its c.1937 state and that forms a cohesive streetscape of similar scaled residential buildings. It is demonstrative of the key phases of development in the municipality, that is, Victorian period beginnings with consolidation throughout the Federation and Interwar periods. The precinct demonstrates a broad architectural variety in building type and expression. Whilst mainly modest representative housing, there is a concentration of semi-detached pairs from the Interwar period and, less commonly, two groups of four Federation period row houses. The Arts and Crafts style group of four row houses at nos. 28-34 is particularly distinctive. (Criteria D and E)

## 6.0 Recommendations

Include the Balston Street Precinct in the Heritage Overlay.

Transfer 16 Balston Street from individual HO395 to the new Balston Street Precinct HO.

## 7.0 Assessment

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *HO7 Elwood St Kilda Balaclava Ripponlea Precinct Heritage Review Stage 2, 2021*