# HISTORIC AREA CONTEXT

**79 – 85 Mary Street , Unley**

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### Introduction

The subject site is a large, irregular land parcel of around 1.14 hectares , situated within the block bounded by King William Road and Queen Street , Mary Street and Arthur Street , Unley, having frontages to both Mary and Arthur Streets . The frontage to Mary Street is open , the former dwellings thereon having been demolished in the early 1970s when the large Meeting Hall in the centre of the site was constructed . On the Arthur Street frontage there are two dwellings which date from the late 19th/early 20th Century . All of the buildings on the land are unoccupied and have been unused for some years .

This report has been commissioned to provide an understanding of the historical context of the site , and its contribution to the townscape character of its locality within the Established Neighbourhood Zone of the City of Unley .

### Overview History of the Development of the Area

The historical development of Unley has been extensively documented in the "*History of Unley 1871-1971"* by G. Payne and E. Cosh ; in the 1978 and 1985 Unley Heritage Surveys undertaken by P. Donovan ; and in the "*Unley Heritage Research Study 2006*" by McDougall & Vines . The overview which follows is derived largely from those publications , and other sources identified at the end of this report .

After laying out the City of Adelaide , Colonel Light established a basic road network linking the City with the coast and the hills , and the plains to the north and south , and surveyed the land beyond the Park Lands into 80 and mostly 134 acre Sections . Thomas Whistler , a Colonial Agent in London , acquired Sections 236 , 237 and 238 south of the City and Park Lands along the Government Road to Brownhill Creek ( now Unley Road ) and moved to the Colony in 1840 . By 1842 he had subdivided Section 238 into one acre allotments for a village to be called Unley .

The large allotments , generally 126' 9" wide x 330' deep , were arrayed along the Government Road on the eastern side of the Section , along three roads running westward therefrom named Mary , Arthur and Thomas Streets , and on the western side of the Section , along West Row ( now King William Road ) which at that time did not extend beyond the boundaries of the Section .

Early development was slow , with the limited records available indicating that around 22 scattered dwellings had been erected in the subdivision by 1843, mostly towards the north-east of the Section near the Government Road .

In 1850 , Whistler subdivided the northern part of his adjoining Section 237 into 84 allotments and in 1854 subdivided his other Section 236 to create Unley Park . Several surrounding Sections were also subdivided by others during the 1850s , creating the nearby villages of Parkside (1854) and Goodwood (1857) . However development continued to be modest , with the number of dwellings in Whistler's subdivisions having only grown to around 100 over the fifteen years before he finally returned to England in 1856 .

A financial collapse in the S.A. economy in the mid- 1850s coinciding with population loss triggered by the Victorian gold rush , retarded the further growth of the Colony , and in Unley , until the S.A. Government's extension of water , gas and sewerage facilities into the suburbs and the development of private horse tram networks servicing the expanding metropolitan area , catalysed a widespread building boom in the early 1870s .

In 1871 the villages of Unley , Unley Park and Goodwood were excised from the District Council of Mitcham to form the Township of Unley . The first Council Rate Assessment records indicate that in Section 238 there were then 20 dwellings in Mary Street , 20 dwellings in Arthur Street , 10 in Mary Street and 16 along West Row . As the building boom of the 1870s evolved , West Row was extended to the north and south and the northern side of Mary Street adjacent to Unley Road was further divided into 40 smaller allotments , no doubt in anticipation of the proposed "Adelaide Unley and Mitcham Tramway Company" service along Unley Road in 1879 . In 1880 , Section 239 abutting the northern side of Section 238 was also subdivided by the S.A. Company as North Unley , with allotments extending along King William Road , Greenhill Road facing the Park Lands and along Unley Road , no doubt also in anticipation of the proposed "Adelaide and Hyde Park Tramway Company" service along King William Road in 1881 to a terminus near Heywood Park .

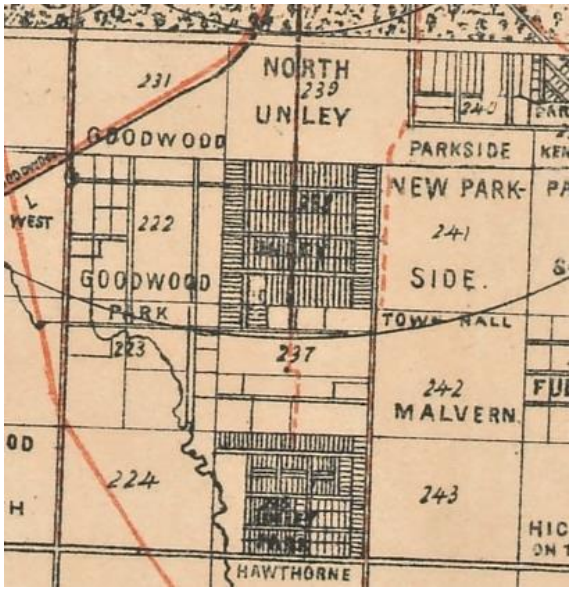


*Figure 1 : Extract from Frearson's Plan of Adelaide 1878 showing roads and subdivisions south of the Park Lands and proposed horse tram routes (Source NLA). Note extent of undeveloped land remaining at that time .*

The establishment of the tram services accelerated development along their routes and from the mid-1880s there was increased residential development along King William Road and in

the streets running off it to east and west . In response , an area of Section 238 adjacent King William Road between Arthur and Thomas Streets was further divided in 1885 to create Frances Street (now McGowan Avenue ) and 36 smaller allotments . When the onset of severe droughts and economic depression in the mid- late 1880s eventually brought the long development boom to an end, the total number of dwellings in the Unley Council area had risen from 317 in the mid-1870s to over 2000.

Council Rate Assessment Books and S.A. Directory entries of the late 1880s indicate that the dwellings in the three principal streets of Section 238 were weighted to the eastern side near Unley Road , where the civic and commercial centre of Unley had evolved . Of the 31 dwellings in Mary Street by 1890 (which had evolved as the principal of the Section's three east-west streets ) by the end of the decade , 13 were at the western end near King William Road . In Arthur Street there were 24 dwellings , 7 of which were at the western end near King William Road . In Thomas Street there were 16 Dwellings , only 3 of which were at the western end near King William Road . In Queen Street linking them , there were just 5 dwellings , all between Mary and Arthur Streets . Many of the original large allotments remained undeveloped .

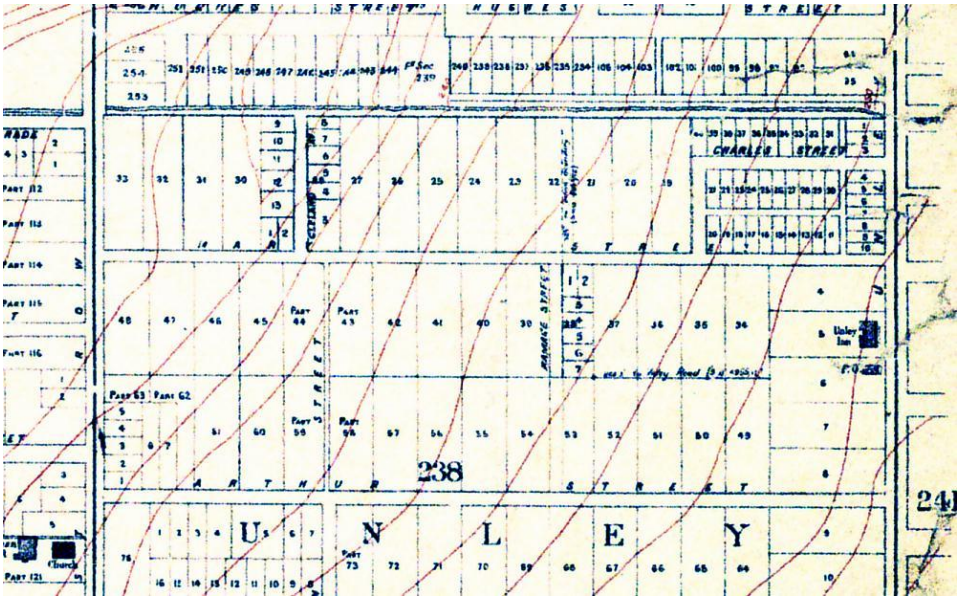


*Figure 2 : Extract from 1878 SA Water District Reticulation Plan updated to c 1920 showing original Section 238 subdivision layout with changes to that time .*

During the ensuing economic downturn, residential development continued slowly along King William Road and nearby in Mary and Arthur Streets during the 1890s , until surging again at the start of the 20th Century , and Federation of the States as the Commonwealth of Australia , which brought a new optimism and another period of economic growth and development in the years between 1901 – 13.

In 1903 , the S.A. Company completed the subdivision of the south-west corner of Section 239 with 56 allotments adjacent King William Road and Mary Street . In 1903/04 there was further dwelling development in the streets of Section 238 near King William Road as builders subdivided the remaining large allotments and erected multiple , often identical dwellings in Mary and Arthur Streets , and later in Queen Street . Elsewhere in Section 238 other

allotments were divided to create north-south streets linking Mary , Arthur and Thomas Streets , such as Oak Avenue (in 1911), Ramage Street (1913), and Ash Avenue (1914) . When the onset of WW 1 in 1914 brought the intensive development of the opening years of the new Century to a close , the western ends of Mary , Arthur and Thomas Streets in Unley West were near fully developed .

The post-war housing boom that followed brought an accelerating move away from the traditional dwelling styles of the long Victorian era to embrace the "new age" influences of the Arts and Crafts /Art Nouveau movements , and the American Bungalow , and saw an increasingly divergent character emerging in the residential streetscapes of metropolitan Adelaide . In Unley , more streets were created by the further division of allotments , such as Cleland Avenue ( in 1920) and Tyne Place (1924) and during the decade of the 1920s , most of the remaining vacant allotments in Section 238 were divided and developed . By the close of the decade , there were 15 dwellings spread along both sides of Mary Street between King William Road and Queen Street , 20 dwellings spread along both sides of Arthur Street between King William Road and Queen Street , and in Queen Street between them , 13 dwellings , most of which were on the eastern side of the street . There were also 10 new dwellings in Cleland Avenue , mostly character bungalows ( like No 76 at the corner of Mary Street ) .

The onset of worldwide economic depression in 1929 again brought development to a halt across Adelaide which , with the subsequent onset of WW 2 in 1939, would not resume until the eventual lifting of wartime rationing in the early 1950s . During the ensuing boom of the 1950s/60s , many of the older dwellings in Section 238 as elsewhere , were demolished and replaced with new and larger dwellings of increasingly diverse architectural styles , and the traditional 19th Century character of the Unley's streetscapes began to dissipate more rapidly .

One of the most significant changes to occur in the vicinity of the subject site after WW 2 was the expansion of the refrigeration manufacturing business of Vaughan Pate Ltd from their premises in Tyne Place to 82-86 Mary Street , where in 1945/46 the Company built a large factory for the production of Coldstream refrigerators . Its arrival in Mary Street dramatically changed the former residential character of the locality .

*Photographs 1 and 2 : Aerial view of Coldstream Refrigeration factory at 82-86 Mary Street in the late 1970s and the Business Park fronting Mary Street that later replaced it.*

At the beginning of the 1950s , R.H. Jones , owner of a dwelling opposite the Coldstream factory (No 83 Mary Street) began acquiring adjacent dwellings , excising the land at their

rear and consolidating it with 81 Mary Street , to create a larger parcel of land (CT 2133/167). It is unclear whether this was done for his own carrying business purposes or as an investment or both . In 1958 the consolidated land was transferred to Coldstream Adelaide Ltd (in whose ownership it would remain until 1967) .

At the rear of Jone's consolidated land parcel, the one acre Allotment 60 fronting Arthur Street had been acquired by E.A. O'Born in early 1891 (CT 544/184) , who constructed a dwelling on the site (now No 62) shortly thereafter ( the first listing in the S.A. Directories for O'Born in Arthur Street was in 1894 ) . In 1898, O'Born sold a portion of the allotment on the eastern side abutting Lot 59 to E. Osman , providing a mortgage to Osman to enable it . There are no entries in the S.A. Directories to indicate that Osman was ever a resident at the allotment. After O'Born died in 1901, No 62 was transferred to W.A.C. Markey and other members / descendants of the Markey family , in whose ownership it subsequently remained until 1954, after which it too was transferred to Coldstream Adelaide Ltd (CT 2096/16) .

Osman's vacant portion of Lot 60 ( now No 58 ) was transferred to M.A. Hennesy in 1908 (CT 641/53 ) who later that year took out a mortgage with the Savings Bank of S.A. to construct a dwelling , appearing as a resident at the address for the first time in the S.A. Directory of 1909 . Hennessy remained at the property until her death in 1943 .

In 1967, the Coldstream Company sold the consolidated land parcel and dwellings on the south side of Mary Street , and attached Company owned property at 62 Arthur Street, to representatives of the Plymouth Brethren (CT 2133/167) , a non-conformist Christian Movement which had emerged out of the Anglican Church in early 19th Century England . In the early 1970s the Plymouth Brethren erected a large Meeting Hall complex near the centre of the consolidated site . In the years following they continued to acquire the adjoining properties at 85 Mary Street , and 58 , 64 and 66 Arthur Street, by 1979 consolidating much of their land with the larger holding in Mary Street and sealing the open site area for associated off-street carparking .

*Photograph 3 : The Plymouth Brethren Meeting Hall as it is today, viewed from within the subject site .*

*Photo 4 : 62 Arthur Street, purchased by the Plymouth Brethren in 1967 . Note insensitive alterations & additions to original house .*

*Photo 5 : 58 Arthur Street c 1908 purchased by the Plymouth Brethren in 1979*

In 1974 Coldstream auctioned off the machinery and fittings in their Mary Street factory and began the process of relocating to Mile End . The factory property was eventually sold in 1983 and the land subdivided , after which the frontage to Mary Street was redeveloped as the current Business Park , with the land at the rear becoming a Depot for the Unley City Council .

The 1970s/early 1980s was a period of intense building development across Adelaide and coincided with a rapid shift to higher density /smaller scale/lower cost residential development in the form of home unit groups and apartment complexes . On underutilised large allotments such as still existed in parts of Unley , many more older dwellings were replaced at this time with higher density group dwellings. During the 1970s , the remaining 19th Century dwellings in Mary Street west of the Brethren site ( Nos 87 – 93 ) were demolished and the current two storey apartments complex was erected ( now aggregated as 87 Mary Street ) . Around the same time, the 19th Century dwellings at each end of Queen Street (54 Arthur and 71 Mary) were demolished , and their allotments subdivided and redeveloped with multiple dwellings . Numerous two storey group dwelling developments were also inserted in nearby Cleland and Queen Streets , and on excised portions of some of the large commercial allotments fronting King William Road .

The intensity of the shift to higher density living during the period , the growing trend of replacing smaller , older dwellings on generous allotments with larger modern dwellings , and consequent impact on traditional streetscapes , caused the City of Unley to commission a survey to review the historical development of the City and to identify places and areas of historic interest that should , if possible , be preserved .

The 1978 Unley Heritage Survey undertaken by P. Donovan established a provisional list of individual buildings and sites of assessed heritage value across the Council area . Amongst the places identified in the Survey were three dwellings at the western end of Mary Street (Nos 71, 74 and 75) . An Unley Heritage Areas Study followed in 1980 ( J. Chase ) which identified areas of consistent overall character within the City that possessed a concentration of historic elements exemplifying a particular stage in the development of Unley , unique architectural or historic features distinguishable from surrounding areas , and/or a concentration of individual heritage sites . Among the areas considered by the 1980 Study and specifically excluded , was the "*Mary/Arthur/Thomas Streets"* subdivision , in which it deemed "*subsequent redevelopment has diluted the historic character to such an extent that it could no*

*longer be considered a viable heritage area".* Subsequent reviews in 1985 and 1995 led finally to the establishment of a statutory schedule of Local Heritage places and a number of Historic Conservation Policy Areas being included in the Unley (City) Development Plan of 1997 .

Ten years later , the Unley Heritage Research Study (2006) undertaken by consultants McDougall & Vines provided the basis for the establishment of a Residential Historic (Conservation) Zone in the Unley (City) Development Plan (2009) , incorporating seven separate policy areas of "*particular significance to the history of Unley's settlement"*……with *"coherent streetscapes of largely intact original building stock ".* The Mary/Arthur/Thomas Streets area of Section 238 was not amongst them . Rather it was included in a large Residential Streetscape (Built Form ) Zone , in which it was deemed some character areas existed with identifiable "*streetscape attributes*" but which lacked the coherent historic streetscapes typical of areas within the Historic (Conservation) Zone .

In 2021 , the provisions of the former Unley (City) Development Plan were transitioned into the current Planning & Design Code . The subject site now sits within the very large Established Neighbourhood Zone of the City of Unley , with an Historic Area Overlay that embraces much of the residential area , incorporating a number of non-contiguous individual Historic Areas . In the vicinity of the subject site , the Historic Area Overlay extends to the south side of Mary Street , with a small extension at the north-west corner to incorporate the two adjoining cottages at 88 and 90 Mary Street , and to the rear boundary of the properties fronting King William Road on the western side . To the south and east of the subject site it extends as far as Cross Road and almost to Unley Road . The subject site is in a section of the Historic Area Overlay identified as Residential Compact Unley West and Hyde Park Historic Area Un7 .

*Figure 4 : Google Earth image showing current extent of Historic Area Overlay (dark blue) and Local Heritage Places (yellow stars) in the vicinity of the subject site (outlined in light blue)*

**The Subject Site and its Townscape Context Today**

Within the last decade , the Plymouth Brethren have relocated their religious activities to a new facility at Happy Valley and their site and buildings at 79-85 Mary Street have remained vacant , since vandalised and increasingly derelict . However being located near the centre of the large site , the former Meeting Hall building has never had any visual presence in the townscape of the locality , which is today a hybrid mix of commercial , institutional and residential uses with a diverse range of building types , forms , scales , styles and settings . The streets surrounding the subject site also now incorporate a number of contemporary and highly modernist individual residences , duplexes and group dwellings which have further dissipated their formerly traditional character .

In Mary Street the mid-1890s dwellings at both corners of King William Road (Nos 85 & 87) face onto that road and, as with their adjacent streetscapes , are outside the Historic Area Overlay and not subject to its provisions . East of the corner property on the northern side of Mary Street , are adjacent mid-1890s symmetrical bluestone cottages (Nos 88 & 90) ; beyond which is the wide frontage of the contemporary Business Park buildings (82 - 86) , deeply setback from the street ; a contemporary residential duplex building (Nos 80 & 80a) ; and the 1923 character bungalow (No 76) at the corner of Cleland Avenue . On the adjacent corner beyond is a large asymmetrical villa (No 74) which survives from the early 1880s ; and two asymmetrical sandstone villas beyond which date from 1903/04 (Nos 77 & 70) extending to Tyne Place.

On the opposing southern side of Mary Street beyond the King William Road corner is the large , two storey mid- 1970s cream brick apartments complex (No 87) ; the wide , open frontage of the subject site (79 – 85) ; c 1928 eclectic brick dwelling (No 77) ; c 1850s former workers cottages (No 75); and early 1980s townhouse group at the corner of and facing Queen Street (formerly No 71) . Beyond Queen Street is a row of very similar symmetrical stone cottages (Nos 63 -67) which were built in the early 1920s .

*Photo 6 : 88 & 90 Mary Street , c mid-1890s*

*Photo 7 :76 Mary Street c 1923 with contemporary Duplex at 80 – 80a beyond*

*Photo 8 : 74 Mary Street , c early 1880s*

*Photo 9 : Corner Mary & Queen Streets ( formerly No 71), c early 1980s*

*Photo 10 : 75 Mary Street , c 1850s*

*Photo 11 : 87 Mary Street , c mid 1970s*

In Arthur Street , the row shops buildings at both corners of King William Road (109-111 and 113) were developed in stages between 1895 – 1910 . They similarly face King William Road and lay outside the Historic Area Overlay . East of the corner property on the norther side of Arthur Street , are three single fronted workers cottages (Nos 70 – 74) which were built in 1893 ( two of which now have modernised front facades) ; a symmetrical bluestone cottage ( No 68) which also dates from 1893 ; a similar but earlier symmetrical bluestone cottage from 1870 (No 66) which is deeply set back from the street ; a c 1965 stone faced dwelling (No 64) on land excised from No 66 ; the late 19th/early 20th Century villas on the subject site at 58 and 62 ; and two late-1970s detached dwellings (54 and 56) reaching to Queen Street . Beyond Queen Street is a row of near identical symmetrical stone cottages to Oak Avenue , which date from the first decade of the 20th Century .

On the opposing southern side of Arthur Street beyond the corner shops building is a late-1880s symmetrical sandstone cottage(No 69) ; a mid-1890s asymmetrical stone villa (No 67) ; a contemporary reproduction duplex (65 & 65a) ; a contemporary duplex with undercroft parking (63 & 63a) ; a c 1893 asymmetrical sandstone villa (61) ; an early 1920s eclectic brick bungalow (59) ; a two storey group dwelling complex (57) ; a late 1950s austerity dwelling (55); a mid-1880s symmetrical bluestone cottage (53) ; and a contemporary , two storey dwelling group at the corner of Queen Street (51 & 51a). On the adjacent corner beyond , the bluestone former business premises (49) dates from the late-1870s , with the dwellings east thereof a mix of predominantly early -mid 20th Century styles .

*Photo 12 : 56 Arthur Street, c 1979*

*Photo 13 : 66 Arthur Street, c1870*

*Photo 14 : Contemporary dwellings at the south east corner of Arthur & Queen Streets*

*Photo 15 : Recently constructed group dwellings at Arthur Street*

*Photo 16 : 61 Arthur Street , c 1893*

*Photo 17 : 72 Arthur Street , c 1893 with bungalow front added in the 1920s*

In Queen Street between Arthur and Mary Streets , there is only one historic dwelling on the western side , the substantial asymmetrical sandstone villa at No 14 , which dates from 1906/07 , with adjacent dwellings in the western streetscape being mid-late 20th Century and early 21st Century . In contrast , the opposing eastern streetscape has a substantially intact traditional built form character , which includes the c 1910/11 paired symmetrical sandstone cottages at 1-3 and 7-9 Queen Street ; the c 1898 asymmetrical sandstone villa at No 13 ; three similar symmetrical cottages (Nos 15-19) which date from 1922/23; and two similar but older symmetrical cottages at 21 and 23 Queen Street (c 1910/11) . The contemporary brick dwelling at No 11 is the only intrusion in the otherwise traditional built form of the eastern streetscape .

*Photo 18 : Duplex at 7-9 Queen Street , c 1910/11*

*Photo 19 : 13 Queen Street , c1898*

*Photo 20 : 15 – 19 Queen Street , c 1922/23*

*Photo 21 : 14 Queen Street , c 1906/07*

In Queen Street beyond Arthur Street , and in Cleland Avenue , the streetscapes on both sides are a diverse mix of dwelling types , styles and eras with numerous two storey duplex and group dwellings .

**The Proposed Removal of the subject Site from the Historic Area Overlay**

When compared to the early subdivision layout visible in Figure 2 it is apparent how much the street and allotment pattern in this part of Unley West has changed in the 180 years since the subdivision was originally laid out. None of the original one acre blocks have remained intact and the introduction of new streets with reoriented smaller allotments has comprehensively diffused the area's early settlement pattern . The aggregation of other allotments to create very large sites for non-residential uses such as the subject site at 79-85 Mary Street , the group dwelling complex at 87 (-93) Mary Street , and the former Coldstream Refrigeration factory opposite (82 -86) , has further altered the finer grain historic rhythm of building setbacks and spacing in their vicinity . The more recent insertion of numerous contemporary dwellings, duplexes and group dwellings in the surrounding streets has also diminished the former visual cohesiveness of this part of Unley West .

The Un7 Historic Area Statement identifies the principal residential characteristics of Unley West as deriving from its 1880 to 1930 period of development ; the prevailing and coherent siting and setback rhythm of the Victorian and Turn-of-the-Century double-fronted , single-fronted and attached cottages , Victorian and Turn-of-the-Century symmetrical and

asymmetrical villas , and Inter-War Bungalows ; typically with hipped and gabled roof forms , prominent chimneys , open verandahs , and feature ornamentation . Other key characteristics identified are the common use of sandstone and bluestone with brick quoining for walls , timber joinery for windows and doors , mostly corrugated iron roof claddings ; and front garden settings.

This very diverse mix of characteristics reflects the many stages of the area's historical development , and the social and technological changes that have influenced them over the 180 years since Section 238 was originally subdivided . It is a composite of all the variations evident in the wider townscape , where many streetscapes are now a hybrid mix of building types , styles and eras , with little built form consistency .

In the vicinity of the subject site , the now mixed use streetscape of Mary Street between King William Road and Queen Street , having lost most of its historical built form and siting consistency , is no longer a cohesive residential townscape . Indeed it is unclear why the southern side of the street has been incorporated within the Heritage Area Overlay other than perhaps as a drafting expediency . The equivalent streetscape of Arthur Street , though having variability in the built form , siting and spacing of dwellings , remains a coherent residential townscape , and retains a number of dwellings from the key 1880-1930 development period identified in the Un7 Historic Area Statement , supporting its inclusion within the Historic Area Overlay . In Queen Street between them , the western streetscape is now predominantly contemporary in character and gains no benefit from its incorporation in the Historic Area Overlay . The traditional residential built form of the opposing eastern streetscape however supports its retention within the Historic Area Overlay .

It is noted there are several Local Heritage listed places in the vicinity of the subject site. The nearest of these are the 19th Century dwellings at 74 and 75 Mary Street . These individual dwellings have insufficient presence in the western end of Mary Street to contribute a residential streetscape character and are sufficiently separated physically and visually from the subject site to be unlikely to be affected by its future redevelopment . The provisions of the Heritage Places and Heritage Adjacency Overlays of the Planning & Design Code will continue to protect their historic settings and townscape context . The Local Heritage places in King William Road are differentiated from the residential nature of the streets leading off it by their "high street" context , and are outside the Historic Area Overlay .

**Summary**

The historical practise of dividing the large original allotments in Whistler's subdivision of Section 238 to create smaller sites , and the introduction of cross streets with differing allotment and dwelling orientations , has erased all comprehensibility of the area's early settlement . The streets surrounding the subject site now contain a diverse range of housing types and styles , and generally do not possess the collective attributes of a coherent character precinct. This is particularly evident at the western end of Mary Street between King William Road and Queen Street , and on the western side of Queen Street between Mary and Arthur Streets . Both sides of Arthur Street between Queen Street and King William Road have a roughly equal mix of dwelling types and styles from the key residential development period 1880 – 1930 and later contemporary development .

In consequence of these townscape variations , I am of the opinion that the area of Unley West incorporating the southern side of Mary Street between King William Road and Queen Street , including the subject site at 79 -85 Mary Street and group dwellings complex at 87 Mary Street , the small extension on the northern side incorporating 88 and 90 Mary Street , and the group dwellings complex at 103 King William Road , could be removed from the Historic Area Overlay without detriment to the townscape character of the locality or the wider area . I also consider the western side of Queen Street between Mary and Arthur Streets could similarly be removed from the Historic Area Overlay .

Given that the streetscapes on both sides of Arthur Street between King William Road and Queen Street have a more consistent , traditional residential character and retain a larger number of dwellings from the area's 1880-1930 development period , I consider it appropriate for the northern streetscape (and Arthur Street frontage of the subject site) to be retained within the Historic Area Overlay .

Should the proposed removal of the subject site from the provisions of the Historic Area Overlay proceed , the creation of a new road through the site linking Mary Street with Arthur Street, and creation of smaller allotments on both sides to accommodate denser residential development , would be a continuation of the historical pattern of allotment and residential densification that has occurred in Section 238 since its original subdivision.

**Bruce Harry** FAIA
24 June 2022

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