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# Villers-Bretonneux Precinct

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## Location

Karma and Nirvana Avenue MALVERN EAST, Stonnington City

## Municipality

STONNINGTON CITY

## Level of significance

Included in Heritage Overlay

## Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO358

## Heritage Listing

Stonnington City

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## Statement of Significance

Last updated on -

The War Service Homes Commission Estate at East Malvern includes Villers and Bretonneux squares, Fountain Avenue, Berrima Avenue, Nirvana Avenue, Merville Avenue, Serrell Street and the adjoining sections of adjoining streets. While supporting small homes of one storey only, the variety of housing styles and materials is a response to the community expectation of the era that each house should be distinctive, and this is also expressed through the variation in character between the individual streets. Through this careful variety the estate avoids the appearance of subsidised, institutionalised housing, and is thus normalised.

The East Malvern estate was one of the largest War Service estates in Victoria, and remains notable for the integrity of its housing stock to its interwar state, and the mature character of its street trees and gardens. The unusual layout of the estate, which includes two broad streets with substantial median reserves, appears to reflect a desire to provide a particularly high level of amenity to the estate, in a manner paralleled in later Housing Commission of Victoria estates, such as Garden City, and this contributes to the significance of the precinct.

Heritage Study/Consultant	Stonnington - City of Stonnington Heritage Overlay Report (Stages 1-5) 1998, Bryce Raworth P/L, 1998; Stonnington - City of Malvern Heritage Study, Nigel Lewis and Richard Aitken P/L, 1992;
Construction dates	1924,
Other Names	Centred on Karma and Nirvana Avenues, Malvern East,
Hermes Number	31542
Property Number	

## Physical Description 1

The East Malvern War Service Homes Commission Estate is situated immediately northwest of the intersection of Dandenong and Belgrave Roads. It includes Villers and Bretonneux Squares, Fountaine Avenue, Berrima Avenue, Nirvana Avenue, Karma Avenue, Merville Avenue, Serrell Street and the adjoining sections of Dandenong and Belgrave Roads. The review area consists of approximately 180 dwellings.

The estate comprises a range of house types including modest timber cottages bungalows and substantial interwar villas. Streetscapes are equally varied, ranging from busy arterial roads to quiet tree-lined avenues and squares. The heart of the estate is found at Nirvana Avenue and Villers and Bretonneux squares, the names of which reflect the theme of housing for returned soldiers, but the integrity of the area is also well maintained in the surrounding streets, all of which contribute to the architectural character of the estate.

With the exception of Serrell Street, which provides a major thoroughfare between Waverley and Dandenong Roads, road widths are generally narrow. Roads in the area are surfaced in bitumen. Kerbs and gutters are generally constructed of concrete, although evidence of earlier, bluestone kerbs remains in Bretonneux Square. Trafficable kerbs have been installed in sections of Karma Avenue to encourage parking on planting strips adjacent to the narrow road.

Footpaths and planting areas tend to be generous throughout the estate. All streets have grassed planting strips approximately 2 metres wide and Bretonneux and Villers squares are provided with landscaped central medians, large enough to be designated as reserves. Streets are generally lined with mature trees. Nirvana Avenue is especially noteworthy for its mature plantings representing a variety of species. Villers Square has deciduous trees on its central reserve and Bretonneux Square combines kerbside plantings of native species with coniferous plantings on the reserve. In general, streets in the review area are well-maintained with numerous old trees. Some original fences remain throughout the area but high, new fences in timber or rendered brick have become common throughout the area in recent years, in some cases obscuring the well-maintained gardens behind.

Architecturally, the estate contains examples of many of the styles popular during the interwar years. Nirvana Avenue and, to a lesser degree, Karma Avenue are noteworthy in displaying this variety. These streets include small homes derived from Tudor and Greek sources, bungalows drawing from Arts and Crafts and Californian sources and villas drawing inspiration from Spanish Mission and Italian antecedents. Other sections of are noteworthy for their consistency. The eastern portion of Berrima Street, for example, is comprised almost entirely of small weatherboard cottages inspired in varying degrees, by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Fountaine Avenue is comprised largely of timber bungalows inspired by Californian antecedents, while the squares contain more substantial brick versions of the same Californian type. The adjacent streets to the east, Warida, Hillard and Edna, maintain the interwar scale and character established in the War Service Homes estate.

## Local Historical Themes

8.2.3 'The City of Real Homes' development of Malvern after World War 1 3.4.2 War Service Homes 8.7.1 Creating leafy suburbs

*This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.*

*For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>*