

House

Prepared by: GML Heritage

Address: 32 Hill Road BALWYN NORTH

Name: House	Survey Date: October 2021
Place Type: Residential	Architect: Unknown
Grading: Individually Significant	Builder: Toll Constructions
Extent of Overlay: To title boundaries	Construction Date: 1951



Figure 1 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)





Figure 2 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2021)

Historical Context

The area of Hill Road, Balwyn North, is on the traditional Country of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung.

This place is associated with the following historic themes taken from the *Boroondara Thematic Environmental History* (2012):

3.5.3 Expanding the network (the MMTB era)

6.3.3 Creating Middle class suburbs in the early twentieth century

6.3.4 Suburban infill after the Second World War

Balwyn North is a residential suburb situated 10 kilometres east of central Melbourne. To its south is Balwyn, which is separated from Balwyn North by Belmore Road. It is bounded on the north by Koonung Creek and the Eastern Freeway. The suburb was formerly part of the City of Camberwell and from 1994 has been part of the City of Boroondara.

The last pre-war addition to the tram network in Boroondara during the Melbourne & Metropolitan Tramways Board (MMTB) era, was the extension of the tram route along Doncaster Road to Balwyn North, which opened in 1938. This encouraged a burst of residential subdivision (although construction of houses was delayed by the onset of the Second World War and the consequent introduction of restrictions on private building activity) and opened the floodgates for the settlement boom that was to characterise the area in the postwar period (Built Heritage 2012:71, 132).

1940s and postwar development

There had been a scattering of new housing development in the area north of Belmore Road from the late 1930s, but this area was developed significantly from the early 1940s as the new suburb of North Balwyn. Occupied with orchards and small farms, this was the one of the last remaining expanses of undeveloped land relatively close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples building new homes in the 1940s and 1950s (a proportion of which included returned servicemen). The suburb developed as quintessentially middle class, with a high proportion of brick homes and a notable absence of industrial activity. The ridge that ran along Doncaster Road was an advantage to house blocks in the adjoining streets, providing sought-after views to the distant ranges and encouraging the building of often grandiose double-storey homes. Public transport was provided, with the extension from the electric tram from East Kew to North Balwyn in 1938, along High Street and Doncaster Road. A large shopping centre, known as North Balwyn Village, developed along Doncaster Road.

In the 1950s, the potential for large-scale residential development in North Balwyn was recognised by a private company, A.V. Jennings Pty Ltd, which proposed the Trentwood Estate on a large tract of land off Doncaster Road (Built Heritage 2015:12). From 1947, Balwyn and Balwyn North were acknowledged not only as epicentres for the Small Homes Service but also for Modernist architect-designed homes in general. A number of notable architects, including Robin Boyd, designed Modernist homes in Balwyn in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the streets east of Balwyn Road, including the elevated area around Beckett Park.

This new residential expansion in Balwyn North, which included the Greythorn area in the 1950s, in turn brought commercial development. Several local retail strips appeared in the north of the study



area, including in Bulleen Road at Dorado Avenue, in Balwyn Road between Lucifer and Echo streets, and, most notably, the prominent strip on Doncaster Road, just down from the Trentwood Estate. In 1960, G.J. Coles opened a large store on the corner of Doncaster Road and Burke Road, which was Melbourne's first American-style self-service drive-in supermarket complex. New schools and churches also appeared during this period of development. Balwyn High School, located in Balwyn North, opened in 1954, followed by Greythorn High School in 1959. Several new churches were constructed, extended or rebuilt to provide for burgeoning congregations (Built Heritage 2015:12). This included new Catholic churches at Deepdene, Balwyn and Balwyn North.

Since the 1990s, a significant influx of new immigrants into the area has seen the extensive replacement of interwar and 1940s homes with new residential development. The suburb of Balwyn North today is favoured by many new home-owners for access to Balwyn High School—a co-educational government secondary school with nearly 2000 students.

History

The land at 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, originally formed part of Elgar's Crown Special Survey purchased and surveyed by Henry Elgar in 1841. Elgar did not reside on the land as he was based in the West Indies, employing an agent to manage his investments in Australia. The survey was subdivided into small farms and grazing runs and leased out for several years.

After financial difficulties forced Elgar to sell his land, the majority was purchased by a shipowner named Brooks, while a third of the survey remained in the possession of Mrs Dyce, the widow of one of Elgar's business partners. Joseph Shilton and Thomas Brown purchased two hundred acres of Edgars Special survey in 1875. Thomas Brown died in 1878 leaving his share of the land to his widow Mary. Joseph Shilton also died in 1878 leaving his share to his widow Fanny. Mary Brown transferred her portion of the land to Fanny Shilton in 1881. Fanny Smith retained the land until she sold it to various members of the Smith family (as joint proprietors) in 1918.

The subject site is located on what was Lot 101 of the 'Rookwood Estate', which was subdivided into 66 villa allotments and created Corby Street and Rookwood Street ('Rookwood Estate', 1927). For 40 years prior to the subdivision sale, the block of land at the corner of Doncaster and Balwyn roads, Balwyn North (then within the City of Camberwell), had been owned by William Patterson Vettler, a farmer and veteran rifleman, who died in 1926 (*Weekly Times* 27 November 1926:88).

Following the 1927 subdivision, large tracts of Rookwood Estate remained unsold, and the parcel of land on the corner of Riverview and Hill roads had yet to be developed by 1945 (Melbourne 1945.).

In March 1947, a member of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve and Hawthorn resident, Alan John Hinds, purchased the present Lot 195 Subdivision No.12895 (CT V7035 F921).

The land changed ownership three times before it was purchased by Edith Lily Toll of North Balwyn in May 1951 (CT V7035 F921). Shortly after this sale a brick residence was built by Toll Constructions of North Balwyn, for £5,000. A garage was added in 1952 for the cost of £150 (BP 86214).



Figure 3 Aerial image of 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North taken not long after the completion of the garage in c1952. Note many of the current garden elements are present including the curved retaining walls, planter under the bow window, driveway which is accessed off Riverview road and curves across the front of the house to the garage and wall joining the garage to the house (Source: Young in *Victorian Places*, 2015)

It is possible that the Tolls built the house as a speculative exercise as in 1953 the relatively new property was sold to a Harry Bell Kent, used car salesman from Balwyn. Kent sold it some six years later to North Balwyn residents William Joseph Davies, a builder, and his wife Patricia Marjorie Davies, in February 1959 (CT V7035 F921).

At the time of this sale the house was described in its real estate advertisement as a 'Chance in a lifetime to obtain one of Melbourne's most beautiful homes. Must be seen to be appreciated, S.C flat, Ballroom, stage, Picture theatre with 35mm projectors equal to any cinema. Built on double block, corner position. Magnificent views, double garage' (Age 8 April 1957:11).



Figure 4 Circled area showing the parcel of land on the corner of Riverview Road and Hill Road in 1945, just prior to its sale to Alan John Hinds. Dwellings are already visible in the area, particularly south of Riverview Road. Note Hill Road has yet to be extended north of Riverview Road. (Source: Melbourne 1945)

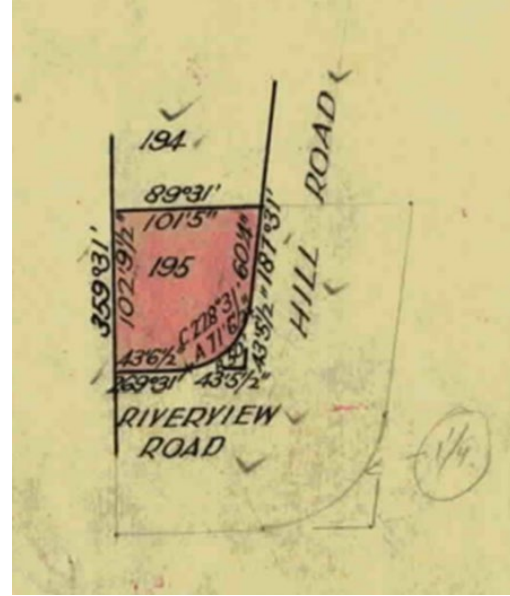


Figure 5 Detail from the Certificate of Title, showing the parcel of land Lot 195, Subdivision No. 12895, purchased by Alan John Hinds in 1947. (Source: CT V7035 F921)

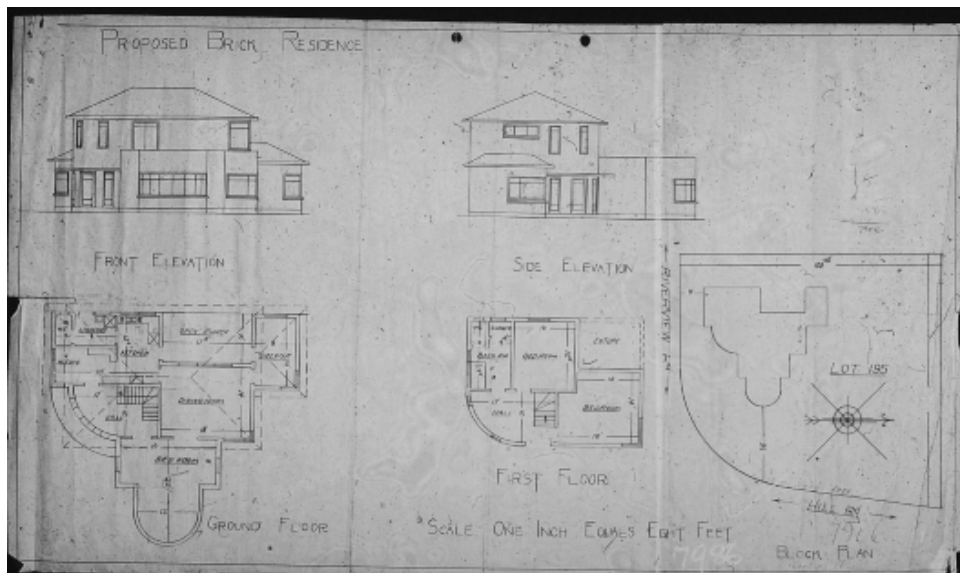


Figure 6 Architectural drawing of proposed brick residence. Note that drawing does not include the lower ground floor plan. (Source: BP 7986)

The Davies owned the property for almost 50 years, but throughout that time they experienced financial difficulties, requiring the property to be re-mortgaged several times, and leading to formal debt, sequestration or bankruptcy orders issued from the mid-1960s into the 1970s (CT V7035 F921; Australian Government Gazette 1968; 1973; *Age*, 13 June 1984:59). The property was sold to the current owners in July 2008 (CT V6467 F221).



In 2015 a building permit was issued for modifications to the first floor, including demolition of a concrete landing and internal alterations (BP 20150242/1).

An article featuring the house appears on the City of Boroondara's website, 'Boroondara News' page. Written by architecture and design writer Stephen Crafti, the article describes the house as one of 'only a handful of three-level waterfall style homes in Boroondara' (Crafti 2017). Mention is made in the same article of the intact interiors of the house which include moulded plaster ceilings, wall sconces, steel balustrading and an original colour scheme of pale salmon pink and grey with touches of gold to the ceiling of the ballroom.

Description

32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, is a three storey brick dwelling built in 1951. Positioned on an elevated allotment that falls west to east, the site is located at the corner of Riverview Road and Hill Road. The house is elevated above street level, taking advantage of the slope of the allotment to maximize views toward the Dandenong Ranges.

The house is constructed over three levels with the main living spaces elevated above street level. Access to the front door is via a flight of sweeping steps that address the street intersection. Once inside the house, the bedrooms are on the second level while a full lower ground level houses a ballroom complete with stage.

The principal façade facing Hill Road is dominated by a projecting front room with steel framed bow window that sits below a large open terrace. This bow window continues down to the ball room below and features arrow slit windows. A further elevated terrace sits above a projecting room along the northern elevation with a third wrap around terrace opening off the main living spaces at the elevated ground floor level. This terrace is supported by slender, fluted Doric columns providing an undercroft area at ground level.

Constructed of cream brick with contrasting manganese brick detailing the house sits beneath a hipped roof clad in glazed brown terracotta tiles. Windows are steel framed and the front entry door features an original or early decorative flywire screen. Several of the windows, including the porthole window near the front entrance, front door side lights, first floor bathroom and side door with porthole window, are fitted with decorative etched glass. Decorative iron balustrades with a sinuous circular motif is featured on all terraces and on either side of the sweeping flight of entrance steps that lead up from the street corner. Clad in crazy paving these steps lead to a large, recessed portico entrance, with fluted Doric columns supporting a curved concrete roof slab. The defined slab edge of the portico continues around the house at ground floor window head height, creating a strong horizontal emphasis.

The house is integrated into the site with a concrete driveway accessed off Riverview Road passing in front of the house and continuing to a freestanding double garage located in the north west corner of the site. Constructed in cream brick with manganese brick trim the garage is contemporaneous with the house and features a simple stepped parapet. To the east of the drive the garden is terraced incorporating stone clad retaining walls and steps. A semi-circular planter box, also clad in crazy paving, follows the curve of the projecting bow window. The profile of a single 'waterfall' chimney was repeated in the low cream brick boundary fence, which has largely been recently demolished. This fence originally continued along both street frontages but has been recently removed along Hill Road.

Once a popular feature or specimen tree in post-war gardens, a mature Liquidambar (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) in the front garden contributes to the setting of the place.



Figure 7 Protruding bay with large bow window and decorative balustrade. (Source: GML 2021)

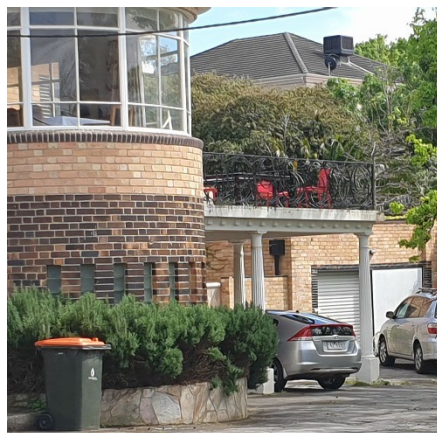


Figure 8 Carport with balcony above and double garage visible beyond the bow window and semicircular planting box. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 9 Detail of balustrade, stone stairway, porthole window and portico entrance. (Source: GML 2021)



Figure 10 Etched glass with maritime motif. (Source: GML 2021)

Integrity

32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, is largely intact with very few changes visible to original or early fabric. The building retains its original built and roof form, contrasting brickwork and window and door openings and joinery. Original details include mild steel balustrades, a large bow window with original steel framed windows, decorative etched glass elements, crazy stonework clad entrance steps, a concrete portico with supporting columns, a brick double garage, stone retaining walls and planter under bow window (shown in c.1952 aerial) and low 'waterfall' cream brick fence along its eastern boundary. .

Overall, the place has high integrity.

Comparative Analysis

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century there was rapid suburban growth around the fringes of metropolitan Melbourne. Increased access to the motor car, growing prosperity in the



postwar period, and the desire for the suburban lifestyle resulted in the push for new housing and services in the suburbs of Melbourne.

Despite various subdivisions in the late 1800s and in the early twentieth century, the vast majority of the housing stock in Balwyn North was not built until the postwar period. The area north of Belmore Road, where large tracts of land were taken up with orchards and small farms, was one of the last remaining areas of extensive undeveloped land close to the city. Balwyn North became the suburb of choice for many young married couples in the 1950s and 1960s.

While many of these couples turned to young progressive architects to design their homes in the Modernist style, houses drawing on the earlier design influences of the interwar years were still prevalent. Builder designed, these houses frequently drew on elements of interwar Moderne styling but utilised a distinctive material palette of cream bricks, with darker glazed brick bands giving them a particular postwar vernacular aesthetic. In the Balwyn/North Balwyn area many of these houses were built as 'statement pieces'. Set high above street level and taking full advantage of sweeping views to the hills, the houses were deliberately bold in their design to reflect the success and prominence or aspirations of their owners. In keeping with this status, the houses often integrated garages into their design

Commonly built on bases of manganese brick work, feature bands of the same bricks were laid under window sills and in linear bands across the otherwise plain brick walls of the house. As with the Moderne, corners were rounded, although in this instance the front façade stepped back from the street creating a waterfall effect; an effect that was often repeated in chimney and fence details. Hipped roofs were of glazed terracotta with deep eaves providing picturesque roof forms that covered complex asymmetrical floor plans below. Windows were typically steel framed and decorative interest was provided in mild steel balustrading and feature etched glass windows. Many of these design features were continued into the landscaping of the site with retaining walls of stacked stone or slate, curved steps and low front fences that mimicked the waterfall effect of the houses stepped facades.

Despite the dominance of houses built in the years following World War II, Heritage Overlay coverage of postwar houses in Balwyn and Balwyn North is limited. There are also few postwar houses on the Heritage Overlay in the broader Boroondara context. The house at 32 Hill Rd, Balwyn North can be compared broadly to the following houses in the Balwyn and Balwyn North area:



Figure 11 6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, built in 1951 (HO170). (Source: GML 2022)

6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North is of local historical and architectural significance. It is an architecturally superior residential example in the Moderne style. The house is of local historical and architectural significance.

The design utilises all of the Moderne stylistic features, including curves, layered massing, flat roofs, nautical imagery, patterned brickwork and steel-framed window joinery. It is also related to the nearby Riverside and Camberwell City heights estates.



Figure 12 3 Kalonga Road, Balwyn North, built in 1948-1955 (HO176). (Source: GML 2022)

3 Kalonga Road, Balwyn North is of local historical and architectural significance. It is a cream brick residence which reflects both Moderne and Modernist influences in its design. Moderne influences are expressed in its layered geometric massed form with a strong horizontal emphasis, the curved open terrace, contrasting brown brick banding, stone front steps, porthole windows and use of contemporary materials such as steel framed windows. The fenestration pattern and flat roof on the upper storey reflect a more Modernist approach.



Figure 13 21 Riverview Road, Balwyn North. (Source: GML 2022)

21 Riverview Road, Balwyn North is a double storey cream brick house built in the early postwar vernacular style that incorporates elements of the interwar Moderne. Elevated above the street, the house utilises a standard asymmetric building form with hipped roof enlivened by a curved entry porch and projecting semi-circular front room with curved glass.

Interwar houses on the Heritage Overlay in the broader Boroondara context that are comparable to 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North include:



Figure 14 44 Studley Avenue, Kew (Significant within HO530). (Source: GML 2022)

44 Studley Avenue, Kew, is a double storey brick dwelling within the Yarra Boulevard Precinct, Kew. The asymmetrical massing of this substantial dwelling takes advantage of the sloping site, with a large bow window with steel framed windows and an open terrace with metal balustrade. A modern extension at the rear of the property has somewhat compromised the integrity of the place, however the original dwelling remains largely intact.



Figure 15 2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris, built in 1940 (HO370). (Source: Lovell Chen 2005)

2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris, is of local historical and architectural significance as a good example of a Moderne house of the late interwar period. The asymmetrical massing of forms takes advantage of the prominent corner siting to address both frontages, a context which sets it apart from the more traditional planning and form of the neighbouring properties. While the integrity of the building has been compromised to a degree by the alterations to windows and a door, the overall composition remains unaltered.



Figure 16 2 Belvedere Street, Kew, built in 1944 (HO313). (Source: Hermes)

2 Belvedere Street, Kew (also known as 28 Holroyd Street, Kew) is of local historical and architectural significance. It is a single storey triple-fronted brick house in the interwar Streamline Moderne style. Situated on a prominent corner site, the house features cream face brick on a manganese brick plinth, tapestry brick string lines and curved steel-framed picture windows. Fluted Doric columns support a concrete roof slab above a recessed entrance porch. The house retains relatively high integrity, with minor cosmetic changes undertaken in the mid-1960s.

32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, compares well to the above examples, through its incorporation of key elements of interwar Moderne styling expressed using a distinctive material palette and detailing that is typical of builder-designed postwar vernacular houses.

It compares well to 6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North and 2 Belvedere Street, Kew, in its use of cream face brick, contrasting manganese brown brick banding, curved corner elements and steel-framed



windows. It shares the asymmetrical massing and defined slab edges of 2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris, 6 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn and 3 Kalonga Road, North Balwyn. Like 6 Bulleen Road, Balwyn North, 44 Studley Avenue, Kew and 21 Riverview Road, Balwyn North the house incorporates a prominent curved bay window and open terrace with decorative steel balustrade. The hipped tile roof reflects a move away from the desired flat roofs commonly seen in more overt expressions of the Moderne style, where the roof is completely hidden behind a parapet (2 Beatrice Street, Glen Iris and 6 Bulleen Road, North Balwyn).

Architecturally and aesthetically, 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North is one of the more striking examples of post-war residential architecture in Balwyn North. It is a competently designed, detailed and highly intact example of a substantial three-storey dwelling built in the early postwar years. While Moderne influences can be seen in its layered geometric massed form, strong horizontal emphasis, curved corners and open upper terraces, its design reflects a distinctive postwar aesthetic, which includes sheer walls of cream brick broken up by bands of Manganese brick work, a dominant glazed terracotta tiled roof, flat concrete roofed entry porch supported by stylised fluted classical columns and decorative details such as etched glass feature windows and sinuous mild steel balustrading.

Taking full advantage of its elevated site the house confidently addresses both street frontages and features integrated landscape elements and complementary garage design, and is situated within a mature garden setting.

Assessment Against Criteria

Criteria referred to in *Practice Note 1: Applying the Heritage Overlay*, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, August 2018, modified for the local context.

CRITERION A: Importance to the course or pattern of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (historical significance).

32 Hill Road, Balwyn North is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of the settlement boom that was to characterise the area in the postwar period. The settlement boom was spurred on by the extension of the electric tram route along Doncaster Road to Balwyn North, which opened in 1938, but which was delayed by the onset of WWII and associated restrictions on private building activity. Although the land, purchased in 1947, was part of the 1927 Rookwood Estate subdivision, the success of this and other 1920s and 1930s subdivisions in the area were delayed because of the sheer distance from useful public transport links.

Although not designed by an architect, the house represents the skilful execution of a highly original and complex design. As such, the house exemplifies the concentration of high quality individually designed houses built in Balwyn and Balwyn North during the 1950s and 1960s.

CRITERION B: Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (rarity).

N/A

CRITERION C: Potential to yield information that will contribute understanding the City of Boroondara's cultural or natural history (research potential).



N/A

CRITERION D: Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or environments (representativeness).

Architecturally, 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North is a particularly well executed and intact representative example of vernacular domestic architecture popular in the immediate postwar period. The house skilfully utilises standard built forms, seen in the hip roof, steel framed windows and sheer brick walls and enlivens them by articulating its elevations with a dominant projecting bow window, elevated terraces, sweeping entrance steepers and flat concrete roofed porch. Built by a local building company Toll Constructions, the house is finely detailed and showcases the builder's skill in providing a 'statement house' that reflected the affluence and aspirations of property owners of the area.

CRITERION E: Importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics (aesthetic significance).

N/A

CRITERION F: Importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement at a particular period (technical significance).

N/A

CRITERION G: Strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons. This includes the significance of a place to Indigenous peoples as part of their continuing and developing cultural traditions (social significance).

N/A

CRITERION H: Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in the City of Boroondara's history (associative significance).

N/A



Statement of Significance

What is significant?

The house at 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, is significant.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include:

- original built form and materials of the house, including cream face brick walls manganese brick base and detailing
- pattern of fenestration and original window and door joinery, including the large steel framed bow window, porthole windows and etched glazing, and decorative flywire screen door
- hipped tiled roof
- a defined slab edge extending to curved portico entrance
- three open upper terraces
- recessed porch, front entry steps and crazy stonework cladding
- decorative balustrades with circular motifs
- front fence on east street boundary, garden bed and crazy stonework clad retaining walls and steps in the front garden.

How is it significant?

The house at 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North, is of local historical and representative significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

32 Hill Road, Balwyn North is of local historical significance for the evidence it provides of the settlement boom that was to characterise the area in the postwar period. The settlement boom was spurred on by the extension of the electric tram route along Doncaster Road to Balwyn North, which opened in 1938, but which was delayed by the onset of WWII and associated restrictions on private building activity. Although the land, purchased in 1947, was part of the 1927 Rookwood Estate subdivision, the success of this and other 1920s and 1930s subdivisions in the area were delayed because of the sheer distance from useful public transport links. (Criterion A)

Although not designed by an architect, the house represents the skilful execution of a highly original and complex design. As such, the house exemplifies the concentration of high quality individually designed houses built in Balwyn and Balwyn North during the 1950s and 1960s. (Criterion A)

Architecturally, 32 Hill Road, Balwyn North is a particularly well executed and intact representative example of vernacular domestic architecture popular in the immediate postwar period. The house skilfully utilises standard built forms, seen in the hip roof, steel framed windows and sheer brick walls and enlivens them by articulating its elevations with a dominant projecting bow window, elevated terraces, sweeping entrance steps and flat concrete roofed porch. Built by a local building company Toll Constructions, the house is finely detailed and showcases the builder's skill in providing a

'statement house' that reflected the affluence and aspirations of property owners of the area. (Criterion D)

Grading and Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme as an Individually Significant place.

Recommendations for the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay (Clause 43.01) in the Boroondara Planning Scheme:

External paint controls	
<i>Is a permit required to paint an already painted surface?</i>	No
Internal alteration controls	
<i>Is a permit required for internal alterations?</i>	No
Tree controls	
<i>Is a permit required to remove a tree?</i>	No
Solar energy system controls apply?	
<i>Is a permit required for Solar energy systems?</i>	Yes
Outbuildings and fences exemptions	
<i>Are there outbuildings or fences which are not exempt from notice and review?</i>	Yes, curved stone retaining walls in front yard; front steps and semi-circular planter box under the bow window clad in crazy paving; original cream brick double garage and garden wall that links garage to main house.
Victorian Heritage Register	
<i>Is the place included on the Victorian Heritage Register?</i>	No
Prohibited uses may be permitted	
<i>Can a permit be granted to use the place for a use which would otherwise be prohibited?</i>	No
Aboriginal heritage place	
<i>Is the place an Aboriginal heritage place which is subject to the requirements of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006?</i>	No



Incorporated plan

Does an incorporated plan apply to the site?

No

Identified by:

GML Heritage, 2021.



References

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