



**HERITAGE GUIDELINES FOR THE MOUNT EAGLE ESTATE**



# **HERITAGE GUIDELINES FOR THE MOUNT EAGLE ESTATE, EAGLEMONT**

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## CONTENTS

1	PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHEME .....	3
2	STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE .....	3
3	DESCRIPTION.....	4
3.1	Urban Design and Infrastructure .....	4
3.2	Significant Buildings .....	5
3.3	Significant Landscapes .....	6
4	THE GUIDELINES .....	7
4.1	Demolition .....	7
4.2	New Buildings .....	7
4.3	Alterations and Additions to Existing Significant Buildings.....	10
4.4	Alterations and Additions to Existing Non Significant Buildings .....	12
4.5	Fences .....	13
4.6	Inner Reserves.....	13
4.7	Works Undertaken By Public Authorities .....	13

## 1 PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES AND RELATIONSHIP WITH SCHEME

The purpose of these Guidelines is to identify what is significant about this precinct, to provide a description of its characteristics and to guide where and how new development might be carried out without undue impact on the significant qualities of the precinct. It is proposed to include them in the Planning Scheme as a reference document as a guide to decision making.

## 2 STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Mount Eagle Estate Heritage Overlay Area (HO2) is significant historically, aesthetically, socially and for its association with an individual important within the history of the nation (Australian Heritage Commission (AHC) Criteria A, E, G and H). Its period of significance is 1914 to 1940.

The Mount Eagle Estate was planned by the American born architect Walter Burley Griffin in 1914 upon his arrival in Australia. It was a year prior to him taking charge of construction at the Federal Capital and two years before preparing plans for the Glenard Estate in Banyule and the irrigation settlement at Griffith, New South Wales. It is *historically significant* (AHC Criterion A) as a highly innovative and experimental residential subdivision espousing principles of the Garden City Movement and being designed when the planning profession in this country was in its infancy and soon after establishment of the similar Dacey Garden Suburb in Sydney in 1912. Its experimental approach coincided with the comparable Australian work of English born architect John Sulman, whose reputation as a town planning pioneer in this country was also highly influential. The Mount Eagle Estate's innovative features included:

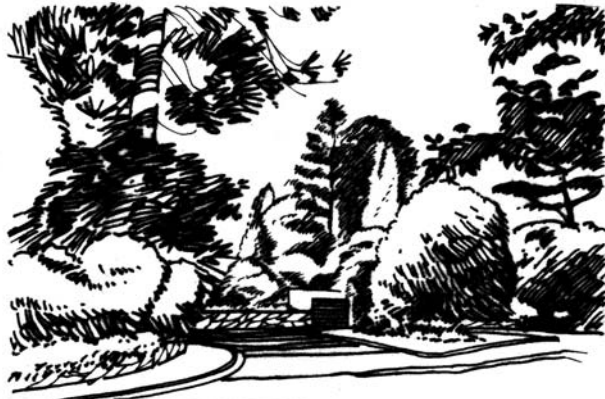
- the curvilinear road plan prepared in response to the contours of the estate, with views over the Yarra River valley. This approach rejected the grid plans of previous land subdivisions.
- the concept of individual houses being subordinate to the visually dominant surrounding natural landscape, enhanced by 'junction groves', nature strips, the absence of visual barriers between allotments, large allotment sizes and inner reserves.
- the partial segregation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic by means of a private open space network controlled by the estate owners.
- an hierarchical approach to road design wherein the residential streets were narrower than the through roads, bordering the Estate.
- the promotion of a sense of community through a neighbourly system of intercommunication achieved by interconnected common spaces set apart for the purposes of recreation, garden and parkland.

It is *aesthetically significant* (AHC Criterion E) on account of:

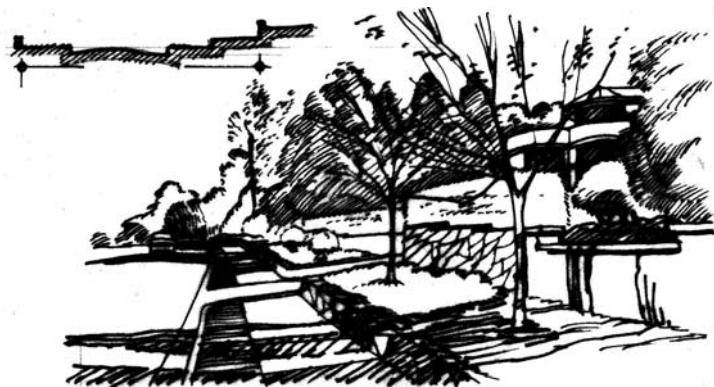
- the dominance of the indigenous and artificial garden landscape over the dwellings with isolated instances of extant pre-settlement river red gums and the relationship of both with the estate topography, strengthened by the absence of front fences joining roadside verges with private front gardens.
- the variation in the location of street verges, footpaths and retaining walls with low front fences often serving also as retaining walls merging into terraced front gardens.
- the siting of houses on allotments to obtain views, thereby providing extensive front gardens on the high sides of streets and correspondingly narrow front gardens on the low sides of streets.
- various houses within the estate erected during the Inter War period.
- the small park on Outlook Drive affording spectacular views across the Lower Heidelberg Road cutting to the Yarra River valley.
- the practice of rounding street corners with wedge shaped allotments to provide a

continuous frontage as opposed to side boundary fences.

It is *socially significant* (AHC Criterion G) locally and attracts further significance by association (AHC Criterion H) on account of the value placed on the estate by its connection with Walter Burley Griffin, the noted ex patriot American architect responsible for the strategic vision for the Federal capital.



A 'junction grove'



Maltravers Road showing juxtaposition of footpaths, verges and retaining walls

### 3 DESCRIPTION

#### 3.1 Urban Design and Infrastructure

The curvilinear roads of this subdivision climb the slope then turn to follow the contours creating five 'islands' of allotments that surround communal open space at the rear. These open spaces occupy key topographic features, the Summit Park reserve, Outlook Park reserve and Eyrie Park reserve occupying high ground affording distant views across the Yarra River valley. By contrast, the Glen Park reserve has an intimate scale.

There are no corners at the intersections, simply continuous curves with triangular traffic islands which have been described as 'junction groves'. These islands and their plantings are important parts of the design, breaking up the large areas of road at the junction and terminating vistas.

Where the road formation runs across the slope, construction has been minimised by creating the footpaths adjacent to the carriageway with the nature strip replaced by verges next to the property frontages. This limits opportunities for roadside planting but allows this part of the road reserve to rise or fall with the landform. On the upper side of the street retaining walls have usually been constructed at the back of the footpath, obviating the need for fences and with the road verge occurring at the retained level. Verges have sometimes been planted out by property owners as a continuation of the front garden and where front fences have been constructed these are usually very low. This enhances the

garden character of the Area and the visual continuity of the landscape across the street.

The northern section of Summit Drive is split level with a very narrow median comprising volcanic rock retaining wall and white post and rail fence with angle cut top rail, overgrown with deciduous creeper.

Roads are asphalt with concrete kerb, channel and footpaths. A series of 5 speed humps have been installed along Outlook Drive.

Houses have often been constructed high on the allotment to obtain views, resulting in extensive front gardens on the high side and narrow front gardens on the low side of streets.

Allotments are of generous size allowing the landscape to dominate over the built form. The key character of the Area is that of buildings placed within a treed setting with distant views where obtainable and where the landscape character dominates over the built form.

The reserves appear to have developed and continue to be managed informally. They therefore have an at times charming random character quite unlike a municipal park. However they also lack any sense of coherence and pathways are sometimes unsurfaced and not maintained.

The Outlook Park reserve has views to the north and some slot views to the east. It contains a large remnant eucalypt and the trunk of the Wurundjeri canoe tree retained as a horizontal log. This reserve has not been dominated by vehicle tracks and garages. The reserve between Glen Drive and Brooke Street is a pleasant wooded throughway but all other reserves display the impact of significant rear access use.

The Brooke Street section has a grid form, in contrast with the remainder of the Estate. The northern boundary is defined by The Eyrie, forming a significant edge on account of the partial closure east of Summit Drive and the Elm tree grove at the Lower Heidelberg Road end. Finally, Lower Heidelberg Road, forming the eastern boundary, is unusual in that it is submerged in a cutting, thereby separating the activity of this main thoroughfare from the adjoining residential properties which look across to the Yarra River and beyond. The northern and eastern edges are significant elements of the Estate.

### 3.2 Significant Buildings

As with the later Glenard Estate, the building program associated with the Mount Eagle Estate was not realized during Griffin's time in Australia, the houses being erected during the Inter War and early Post War years. Nevertheless, the following buildings are major contributors to the Area's Inter War character, thereby pointing to the estate's early date and are consequently regarded as significant.

**Table 1: Schedule of Significant Buildings: Mount Eagle Estate (HO2)**

Street	Street No.	House
Brooke Street	26	S
Burley Griffin Place	8	S
Glen Drive	11	S
	13	S
Maltravers Road	2	S
	4	S
	16	S
Outlook Drive	25-27	S
	33	S
	45	S
	49	S
	12	S
Summit Drive	5	S
	7	S

While these buildings are significant they are not typical of the Area as a whole and do not for this reason constitute a basis for the design of new houses within the estate.



**Moderne Style house**

### **3.3 Significant Landscapes**

Landscapes imparting significance to the Area include:

- the Outlook Park reserve, affording distant views over the Yarra River valley.
- the 'junction grove' streetscapes.
- the Elm groves in The Eyrie.
- The other inner reserves.
- The Summit Drive split level roadway.



## 4 THE GUIDELINES

### 4.1 Demolition

Demolition is taken to mean both partial and complete demolition of any structure, including a dwelling, garage, outbuilding or fence. Whilst the demolition of the less significant parts of a significant dwelling is acceptable and usually involves the rear portion of a dwelling, the demolition of the greater part of the place is discouraged. The demolition of non-significant buildings is in conformity with the intent of these Guidelines.

### 4.2 New Buildings

Opportunities for the construction of new buildings exist following demolition of structures as provided for above.

- **Covenants.** Most of the allotments within the Estate have covenants restricting the type and use of buildings to be erected. Furthermore, not more than one dwelling may be erected on each allotment. The further subdivision of allotments is discouraged since it results in the loss of the dual front principle wherein the majority of dwellings has an aspect both to the roadway and the inner reserve or pathway or secondary road. Where this is not the case, further subdivision is nevertheless understood to be prohibited by the covenant.
- **Significance, Character and Setting.** The intended character of the estate has been partially realized in spite of the lack of construction directly influenced by Griffin. This character is determined by the subdivision pattern and the dominance of nature over buildings. It is experienced both in the streets and in the internal reserves of the estate, essentially by the manner in which the mature native trees and gardens mask the buildings so that they become secondary elements in the streetscapes. At Castlecrag, Griffin's estate on Sydney's Middle Harbour, Griffin wrote that *the buildings must be subordinate to the landscape*<sup>1</sup> and he proposed to achieve this especially by limiting the built over area of individual allotments, by the careful siting of individual houses to take advantage of the views and by the choice of natural building materials and colours. Designers of new buildings should ensure that they are subordinate to the natural garden settings for their projects. They should also ensure that new works do not unreasonably obstruct the views of adjoining residents or obstruct established view corridors.
- **Scale.** In designing new buildings, wall heights and proportions should reflect the predominant heights and proportions of houses in the immediate vicinity, thereby mitigating against a sudden change of scale.
- **Bulk.** The size and shape of new buildings should relate sympathetically with those of houses in the immediate vicinity, thereby mitigating against a sudden change of bulk. New buildings should be recessive and be conceived together with an articulated landscape plan that affirms the natural garden theme of the estate. Care should also be taken to follow the contours of the site, stepping the building down to reduce bulk.
- **Materials, Colour, Details.** New materials should use colours and textures that harmonize with the Australian bush environment. Whilst this is not at present generally the case in the Mount Eagle Estate, it is understood to have been Griffin's intention for it, a similar approach being espoused for his earlier estate planning and domestic work in America and for his subsequent estate at

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<sup>1</sup> See Johnson, D.L. in *The Architecture of Walter Burley Griffin*, MacMillan 1977, p.84.

Castlecrag. Accordingly, the palette of materials and colours should demonstrate conformity with this guideline. The choice of materials might be at variance with it in one or two respects, but the overall impact should be one that harmonizes with the greys, browns and greens of the natural environment. Example materials include earthen colour and bagged bricks, natural stone, stained timber, terra cotta tiles and muted paint colours.

Materials regarded as not conforming with this guideline include:

- bright metallic surfaces, such as aluminium, bronze, copper or stainless steel.
- clear finished timber surfaces.
- tinted glass.
- unfinished or pre-finished zincalume or corrugated iron.

Primary colours, and other vibrant colours occupying more than 10% of an elevation attract attention at the expense of the natural environment and are discouraged. It is accordingly recommended that a colour and materials schedule be submitted with planning permit applications for assessment by Council's heritage adviser in the light of this guideline.

The historical styles of architecture were eschewed by Griffin who devoted his life work to the development of a modern architecture free from stylistic precedents. It is therefore recommended that designers of new buildings take this approach into account in the preparation of their designs. Whilst acknowledging that the guideline under *Significance, Character and Setting* places limitations on the extent to which a design can dominate its immediate surrounds, designs in historical styles that have dominant facades should be avoided. Examples include neo Classical, neo Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian (Post Federation) designs.

- **Visual Setting.** New buildings should respect existing natural garden settings and neither dominate nor obscure views or sight lines within the estate. These include:
  - views to 'junction groves' at the intersections of Glen Drive and Outlook Drive and Summit Drive and Outlook Drive.
  - distant views obtainable from the internal reserves encircled by Glen, Summit and Outlook Drives, especially including the environs of the Wurrundjerri canoe tree and shield tree which should not be intruded on by building works.
  - other distant views including views between buildings obtainable within the street system.
- **Roofs.** There are no guidelines for roof forms however the restrictive covenants which apply to land within the Estate may affect roof form or materials.
- **Openings.** There are no guidelines for door and window openings.
- **Setbacks.** Existing minimum setbacks from street frontages should not be reduced. Dwelling plans should avoid occupying the whole of the potential façade width so as to soften their impact on the street. Typically, the carport or garage and rooms of the dwelling should be set back at varying distances from the property frontage so that they merge with the garden environment. Screen walls may be used if required to create a fragmented aspect to the street. The construction of buildings close to side boundaries is discouraged since this practice confronts Griffin's philosophy of giving dominance to the natural setting for each dwelling and affording distant views.

- **Orientation.** There are no guidelines for orientation.
- **Provision for cars.** Each dwelling should only have one crossover. Existing crossovers may be replaced with new crossovers in different positions provided that they do not endanger public safety. Where new crossovers break into stone retaining walls, these walls should be returned along the edge of the driveway until they are no longer required for their purpose or for a distance not less than 4.5 metres, whichever is the lesser. Carports and garages may accommodate up to two cars but the latter should not form a primary element of the façade composition. The provision of hard standing areas for the purpose of parking vehicles or trailers within front garden setbacks is discouraged unless well concealed from public view. Pavement materials for driveways should be Lilydale toppings, asphalt or plain natural concrete. Coloured concrete with impressed patterns and cement and brick pavers that are not grey or earthen coloured respectively are discouraged. The construction of garages or carports at the rear of sites adjacent to any inner reserve is discouraged.
- **Fences.** Front fences and gates and side fences between the façade of dwellings and the street frontages are strongly discouraged as they are contrary to the design philosophy of the estate which requires structures to be visually subordinate to the natural and garden landscape and seeks to achieve visual continuity of that landscape across the street. Where the slope of the land requires terraces, consideration should be given to using volcanic stone for retaining walls similar to the street walls common to the Area. High side fences to the back yards or private spaces of allotments should be approved face brick, tea tree, brush or open wire mesh. Fence heights should not exceed 1650mm. Rear boundaries facing the inner reserves should preferably be unmarked or alternatively defined by solid fences not exceeding one metre in height or by wire mesh fences not exceeding 1650mm in height. Gates should be of the same material as the fence, or of timber finished with a subdued paint colour. Fences should not reflect Victorian and Edwardian (Post Federation) practices.

Barriers within the inner reserves should be of sawn and dressed red gum, painted buff or unpainted, the upper rail being checked into the supporting posts at 45 degrees to shed run off and conform with practices appropriate to the period of significance of the estate.



**Typical Inner Reserve environment with point of entry, rear fences and garages**

- **Ornamentation.** There are no guidelines for ornamentation further to the provisions under *Materials, Colour, Details*.
- **Project Homes.** Project Homes, packages and kit homes have generally been designed without regard being paid to the historic character of this Area. Their use may be inappropriate, although adaptations of standard designs may be acceptable. In these cases, the heritage adviser should be consulted before a commitment is made to a particular design.
- **Other Outbuildings.** Any sheds or other outbuildings should be erected using forms, materials and colours that are sympathetic with the primary building on the site. Where a change in materials and form is contemplated for reasons of economy or otherwise, designers should take care to adopt new materials and forms suggested in *Materials, Colour, Details*. Free standing garden structures such as lych gates, pergolas and trellises are the only structures regarded as being suitable within the garden frontage. They should be unostentatious, use subdued colours and natural materials, excluding brick above floor level, and not reflect Victorian or Edwardian (Post Federation) practices. Outbuildings in back gardens should not be located within 6 metres of the rear boundary unless they form a part of an approved garage, carport or other structure.
- **Landscaping.** Where new buildings are erected on existing allotments, an analysis should precede the works in order to establish whether or not any original or early elements of the garden, including mature plantings, rockeries and pathways have survived and are to be conserved. The retention of such elements, including mature native plantings, is encouraged with a view to them forming a starting point for a new sympathetic garden design. Indigenous river red gums should be retained. Extension of rock garden and native plantings into the nature strips is encouraged. Gardens designed in the spirit of Griffin's intentions should avoid artificiality and be in harmony with the neighbours where these are predominantly natural bushland gardens. Within the internal reserves, consideration should be given to planting tree groups against existing back fences to reduce their visual impacts on the natural reserve environments.

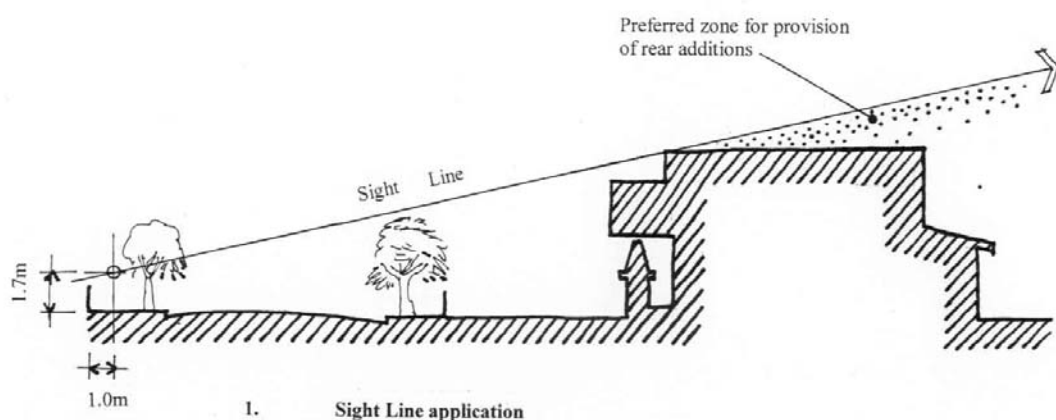
### **4.3 Alterations and Additions to Existing Significant Buildings**

Few places survive in a totally unaltered state, the majority sustaining changes as the needs of its occupants also change. Paint colours are usually the first to be altered but it is important to note that earlier paint layers are usually concealed in protected areas of a house and provide a valuable source of information concerning its original architectural character. Alterations and extensions to existing significant buildings undertaken within the period of significance of HO2 may contribute to the significance of the place, whilst changes sustained after that time are likely to contribute less to the cultural values of the Area or may even detract from them. It follows that demolition prior to undertaking additions and alterations may reasonably be concentrated in those sections of a dwelling erected following the period of significance. As a general rule, both change and expense may be minimised by avoiding unnecessary alterations to the significant elements of a place. The heritage adviser can be helpful in identifying those elements of a place which have significance.

- **Generally.** New additions should not dominate a significant place. It follows therefore that the preferred form and location for additions is single storeyed, situated at the rear of the dwelling. Designs should consider the relationship between openings such as windows, doors and solid walls as well as roof lines and the extension of living spaces into outdoor spaces. They should also pick up on shapes, mass, scale and heights above the ground of eaves lines, materials,

colours and other details. Both single and two storeyed additions, however, may also be visible, provided that they are consistent with the design of the original dwelling and do not detract from the dominance of the natural environment when seen from the public domain.

- **Alterations to facades.** These are acceptable provided that they are consistent with the design of the original dwelling, are functionally necessary, and do not detract from the dominance of the natural environment when seen from the public domain
- **Scale, Bulk, Materials, Colour, Details.** Refer to these headings under *New Buildings*.
- **Differentiating new work from existing significant fabric.** New work should be distinguishable from the old. This can be achieved by making the new material slightly recessed; a different material to the old or a different texture. It is also a good idea to date new work. The contrast, however, should not be harsh or visually intrusive.
- **Visual prominence of additions.** Sight line techniques should be applied to determine the degree of visibility of the addition or extension to the public eye. This is especially important where the new building is proposed to be of a greater height than the original building. Given the importance of ensuring that additions, particularly two storeyed additions, are understated, designers should demonstrate the extent to which proposed additions will be seen from the public environment. The application of a sight line taken from the opposite side of the street to a proposed addition, used in the manner shown above, is a useful tool, demonstrating the extent to which an addition will actually be seen from this view point. As a general rule, the further back the new development is situated, the greater the freedom a designer has to meet a client's requirements, since less of the new work will be publicly visible. Where properties back onto inner reserves, sight line diagrams should also be prepared demonstrating the visual impact closer than 10 metres from the rear property alignment or the opposite side of the reserve, whichever is the lesser.



- **Orientation.** New work should maintain the rhythm, orientation and proportions of the original, especially where visible from the street and reserves.
- **Proportion.** The proportions of void (windows) to solid (walls) when viewed from the street should be similar to those of the existing dwelling.

- **Minimization of intervention.** Wherever possible, designers should avoid unnecessary intervention with existing significant fabric. Existing openings, for example, should be used to facilitate access between the old and the new to minimize the amount of demolition required.
- **Roofs.** New roofs should relate to the existing roof form or follow traditional options for additions. New roofs of two storeyed rear additions should be articulated separately from the existing principal roof. It should be noted that the restrictive covenants which apply to land within the Estate may affect roof form or materials.
- **Conservation of vistas.** New work should preserve existing important views of a building and its setting. Typically, the most important views are of whole streets or sections of streets. It is important that their bushland character is not upset by the introduction of a dominant building mass unprotected by natural screening. Refer also to *Visual Setting* under *New Buildings*.
- **Recovery of significance.** New building work impacting on significant fabric should be reversible where possible so to avoid permanent damage. A situation should be established where, if desired, the new work could be demolished to recover the original fabric and significance of the place. The concealment of significant fabric is contrary to the objectives of these Guidelines and is discouraged. Where intervention with significant fabric is necessary, designers should always keep this to a minimum and avoid unnecessary demolition and alteration.
- **Garages.** Garages and carports should not be erected in front of significant houses but rather set back by not less than one metre on the side or at the rear out of public view including view from inner reserves. The construction of garages or carports at the rear of sites adjacent to any inner reserve is discouraged.

#### **4.4 Alterations and Additions to Existing Non Significant Buildings**

Buildings that do not contribute to the significance of the Area may be altered and extended. The design of these alterations and extensions should be approached in the same manner as the design of new buildings and the opportunity should be taken to improve the extent to which these buildings fit comfortably within the Area. The design should therefore, among other things:

- seize the opportunity, where appropriate, to use natural materials of subdued colours as noted in *Materials, Colour, Details*.
- not markedly increase, and preferably reduce, any dominance of the building in the streetscape,
- not involve additional crossovers.
- use carports instead of garages unless concealed from the street.
- ensure that new works do not unreasonably obstruct the views of adjoining residents or obstruct established view corridors.

Alterations to the façade of non-significant buildings are acceptable, especially when these alterations help conform with the approach to the design of the estate. The use of appropriate construction materials suggested for *New Building* is encouraged although it is recognised that in some cases it may be more appropriate to use materials the same or similar to those of the existing building.

#### **4.5 Fences**

Boundary treatments should conform to the guidelines in *Fences* under *New Buildings*.

#### **4.6 Inner Reserves**

It is recommended that conservation management plans be undertaken for the inner reserves in consultation with adjoining residents and prior to carrying out any further major works to the reserves. These plans would attempt to set out Griffin's original vision for the reserves and provide a framework for their development which would also accommodate current functional requirements. The plans should also examine how existing vehicular tracks could be rationalised to minimise their length, width and visual impact within the reserves.

The reserves, together with their approaching pathways, are crucial elements in Griffin's philosophy for the Estate and should not be appropriated for private purposes, concealed or rendered impassable. Where narrow pathways connect with the inner reserves, the construction of high solid fences along the lengths of pathway is discouraged. The elimination of fences is encouraged, especially along the side of front garden setbacks where planting strategies if required should substitute for the erection of structures.

#### **4.7 Works Undertaken By Public Authorities**

- **Roadworks.**

The original concrete footpaths, verges, concrete kerbs and channels, asphalt roads, retaining wall and medians should be retained and conserved. Repairs should emulate the original design and materials.

New works such as speed humps, roundabouts and traffic islands can be particularly visually intrusive in this Area where the layout and landscape character is such an important part of its significance. While the existing speed humps are of a suitable minimal design, it is suggested that the heritage adviser should be consulted should additional works be considered necessary at some time in the future.

- **Trees.**

Where there is no nature strip, extensive new planting should be avoided where this would obscure the contribution that plantings in front yards make to the streetscape. Residents should be encouraged to contribute to the streetscape as recommended in the Banyule Street Tree Strategy. Elsewhere it would be appropriate to conserve and reinforce the continuity of the character of the existing planting.