

Townhouses, 17 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern – Statement of Significance, June 2021

Heritage place: Townhouses, 17 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern (1-9/17 Sorrett Avenue)

PS ref no.: HO685



Figure 1. 17 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern (November 2020)

What is significant?

The townhouses at 17 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern, constructed in 1967.

Elements that contribute to the significance of the place include (but are not limited to):

- The original external form, materials and detailing of the townhouses
- The high level of integrity to their original design
- 9x detached townhouses sharing communal private laneway
- A distinct identity for each individual townhouse based on a T- or L-shaped plan type
- ‘Overall harmony of form and material’, including:
 - pale brown brick and dark-brown painted timber elements
 - building forms that are to be appreciated in three-dimensions, including skillion- or flat-roofed volumes
 - door and glazing arrangements and detailing

- Visual and physical connections between each townhouse and its setting, with particular focus on these connections to private open space (courtyards, backyards and entries)
- Open carports
- Landscaped setting, including mature trees, private laneway and contemporaneous hard landscaping treatments.

Later alterations and additions, including the metal gates and masonry pillars, are not significant.

How is it significant?

The townhouses at 17 Sorrett Avenue, Malvern are of local historical, representative (architectural) and aesthetic significance to the City of Stonnington.

Why is it significant?

The townhouses at 17 Sorrett Avenue have a clear association with the project homes industry in Victoria in the post-war period. Designed by influential project home building company, Merchant Builders, in 1967, 17 Sorrett Avenue is an early example of townhouse developments which became widespread across Victoria in the late 1960s and 1970s following changes to the *Strata Title Act 1967*. The townhouses demonstrate the shift towards more affordable housing and higher density living, which characterised suburban development throughout Melbourne in the late-twentieth century (Criterion A).

The townhouses at 17 Sorrett Avenue are fine and highly intact representative examples of Modernist suburban housing built in the City of Stonnington in the postwar period. They display typical characteristics of Modernist housing from this period including simple, geometric compositions with low-pitched or flat roof forms, broad eaves, areas of expansive glazing, a neutral colour palette, and the use of “natural” materials such as brick and timber (Criterion D).

The townhouses at 17 Sorrett Avenue are a well-resolved and carefully-designed example of an architect-designed townhouse development of the 1960s and 1970s. Designed by architect Graeme Gunn for Merchant Builders, the townhouses – comprising a series of low-profile buildings built to simple standardised designs and sited to take advantage of natural light – are set within an integrated landscaped setting and present a picturesque composition of this housing typology (Criterion E).

Primary sources:

Malvern Heritage Review, GJM Heritage (June 2021)