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|------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|-------|
| Building: | Vermont Park | Significance: | B |
| Address: | 531 Burwood Highway, Vermont South | Melway Map Ref: | 62 H7 |

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|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Building Type: | Residences | Construction Date: | 1976 onwards |
| Architect: | Merchant Design Pty Ltd, with Tract Consultants (landscape) | Builder: | Merchant Builders |



Intactness:
G F P

Condition:
G F P

Existing Heritage Listings:

Victorian Heritage Register
Register of the National Estate
National Trust

Recommended Heritage Listings:

Victorian Heritage Register
Register of the National Estate
Heritage Overlay Controls

History

Merchant Builders was a progressive building company, founded in Melbourne in 1965 by two businessmen who held no formal qualifications in architecture, planning, construction or real estate.¹ The firm developed a project housing arm which embodied a concern for social and environmental issues. Their first display estate, at Glen Waverley, began in 1965 with Graeme Gunn as architect. Other estates followed in the late 1960s, including Elliston in Rosanna and Winter Park in Doncaster. The latter consisted of houses arranged in clusters around communal driveways, and the designs were characterised by modular planning, zoning, attention to the interior/exterior relationships, and a concern for passive energy features. The Vermont Park estate, which was strongly influenced by Winter Park, began in the mid-1970s.² It received a citation in the Group Housing category of the 1976 RAI A Awards.

The individual houses within Vermont Park were built over a number of years from 1976. Terry Dorrrough, a Sydney-based architect with Merchant Design, designed a prototype called the Open House, intended as a system-built dwelling that would be conducive to project building, prefabrication and mass production. In 1977, five variations of the Open House were built at Vermont, and the design won a medal at the 1978 RAI A Awards in the Project Housing Category.³ Another Terry Dorrrough prototype at Vermont Park, the Pavilion House, also received a citation at the same awards.

Description

Vermont Park comprises forty-five houses arranged around numerous concrete-paved *culs de sac* that form communal driveways. The houses vary in composition, with most being single-storey or split-level. They are all similar in use of materials, being typically of bagged brickwork construction, with flat or low pitched steel-deck roofs. The houses maintain a high degree of openness through the use of full-height timber-framed awning windows, and fully glazed exterior sliding doors. The houses have various permutations of pergolas, carports, verandahs and balconies which are timber-framed with square posts and deep rectangular beams.

In the centre of the site is a communal swimming pool and barbecue area surrounded by lawn. The setting is otherwise densely landscaped with native planting, and a series of pathways connect the various clusters of housing.

Comparative Examples

Winter Park, 137-147 High Street, Doncaster (Merchant Builders, 1969-81)

Significance

Vermont Park is of aesthetic significance as an award-winning complex of architect-designed cluster housing from the 1970s. At that time, Vermont Park was an innovative and influential experiment in terms of planning, prefabrication and energy efficient design. As an early example of its type, Vermont Park is unique in the municipality.

Source

Context Pty Ltd. *City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project*. 1994. (Graded C+)

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- 1 Anne Gartner. 'Death of the Project House? Reflections on the History of Merchant Builders.' in Graeme Davison et al (eds.). *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*. Melbourne, 1995. p 108.
 - 2 Anne Gartner. 'Death of the Project House? Reflections on the History of Merchant Builders.' in Graeme Davison et al (eds.). *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*. Melbourne, 1995. p 133.
 - 3 'Merchant Builders Open House.' *Architecture Australia*, LXVII, 5 (Oct-Nov 1978), p 71.

2.5 Vermont Park

Location

531-545 Burwood Highway
19-31 Woodleigh Crescent
All of Citriodora Walk
Cornuta Walk
Maculata Walk
Miniata Walk
Nicholi Walk
Saligna Walk

Review

Vermont Park was identified as an individual building in Context's *City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project*, in which was graded C+. It was subsequently assessed as a B grade building by Allom Lovell & Associates. In recognition of the extent of the estate, and the number of individual streets and residences it incorporates, it has been recommended for Heritage Overlay protection as a precinct.

History

Merchant Builders was a progressive building company, founded in Melbourne in 1965 by John Ridge and David Yencken, two businessmen who held no formal qualifications in architecture, planning, construction or real estate.¹ The firm developed a project housing arm which embodied a concern for social and environmental issues, and worked with a number of noted architects including Robin Boyd and Graeme Gunn. Their first display estate, at Glen Waverley, began in 1965 with Graeme Gunn as architect. Other estates followed in the late 1960s, including Elliston in Rosanna and Winter Park in Doncaster. The latter consisted of houses arranged in clusters around communal driveways, and the designs were characterised by modular planning, zoning, attention to the interior / exterior relationships, and a concern for passive energy features.²

The Vermont Park estate, which was strongly influenced by Winter Park, began construction in the mid-1970s. The individual houses within Vermont Park were built over a number of years from 1976, with project architects Terry Dorrrough, a Sydney-based architect, and Leo de Jong. The estate comprised houses built to several standard designs including the Open House and the Pavilion House.³

Five variations of the prototype Open House, which won a medal at the 1978 RAIA Awards in the Project Housing Category, were built at Vermont Park by 1977. The Open House was intended as a system-built dwelling which would be conducive to project building, prefabrication and mass production, and the prototypes ranged in size from 113 to 167 square metres. The basic design was suitable for either steel or timber wall framing, and concrete slab or timber floors. For maximum internal flexibility, only the longitudinal walls were load-bearing, and the plan was based on a 1200mm module, which was expressed in the spacing of exposed rafters, windows and doors, and in the extensive use of generous 1200mm wide sliding doors. The energy efficiency of the houses was

1 Anne Gartner. 'Death of the Project House? Reflections on the History of Merchant Builders' in Graeme Davison et al (eds.). *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*. Melbourne, 1995. p 108.

2 Anne Gartner. 'Death of the Project House? Reflections on the History of Merchant Builders' in Graeme Davison et al (eds.). *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*. Melbourne, 1995. pp 108-139.

3 'Merchant Builders Open House' in *Architecture Australia*, October/November 1978, pp 71-72.

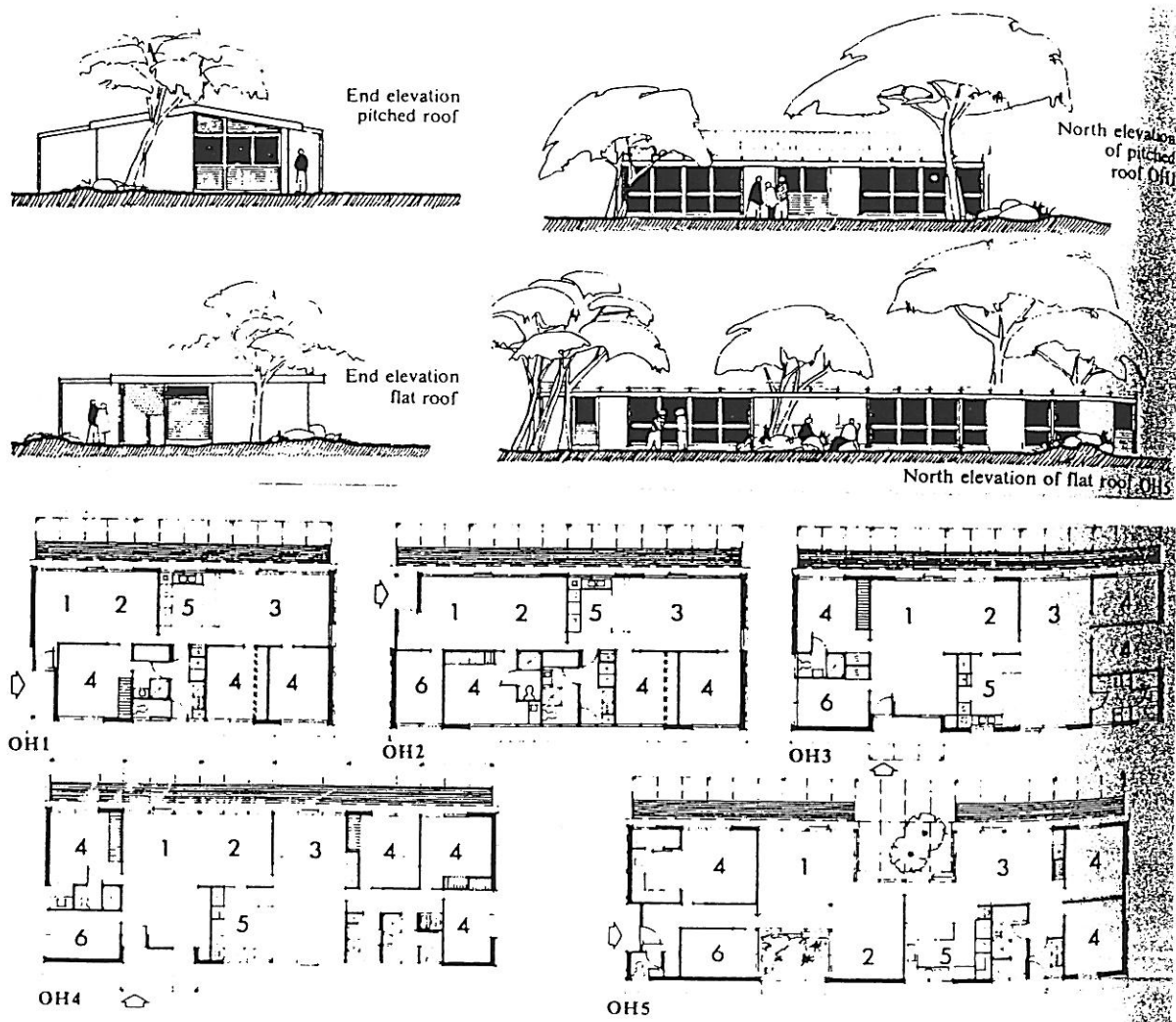


Figure 23 Elevations and plans of the Open House at Vermont Park, 1977
 Source: *Architecture Australia*, October/November 1978.

assessed using a computer program, TEMPAL, developed in the Department of Architecture and Building at the University of Melbourne.⁴

In keeping with Merchant Builders' association with prominent landscape designers, the landscape design at Vermont Park was by Tract Consultants, who had taken over from Ellis Stones in the 1970s. The interiors were designed by Nexus Designs, and the structural engineers were S Ramchen & Associates.⁵

Vermont Park received a citation in the Group Housing category of the 1976 RAIA Awards, and the Pavilion House also received a citation at the same awards.

Description

Vermont Park comprises forty-five houses arranged around numerous concrete-paved *culs de sac* which form communal driveways. The houses vary in composition, with most being single-storey or split-level. They are all similar in use of materials, being typically of bagged brick veneer

4 Anne Gartner. 'Death of the Project House? Reflections on the History of Merchant Builders' in Graeme Davison et al (eds.). *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*. Melbourne, 1995. p 133.

5 'Merchant Builders Open House' in *Architecture Australia*, October/November 1978, pp 71-72.

construction, with low pitched steel-deck roofs. The houses maintain a high degree of openness through the use of full-height western red cedar awning windows, and fully glazed exterior sliding doors. The houses have various permutations of pergolas, carports, verandahs and balconies which are timber-framed with square posts and deep rectangular beams. Internally, ceilings are pine lined with exposed oregon roof framing.

In the centre of the site is a communal swimming pool and barbecue area surrounded by lawn. The setting is otherwise densely landscaped with native planting, and a series of pathways connect the various clusters of housing.

Comparative Examples

Winter Park, 137-147 High Street, Doncaster (Merchant Builders, 1969-81)

Individually Significant Buildings

No buildings within the Vermont Park Precinct are recommended for individual Heritage Overlay Protection.

Significance

Vermont Park is of aesthetic significance as an award-winning complex of architect-designed cluster housing from the 1970s. At that time, Vermont Park was an innovative and influential experiment in terms of planning, prefabrication and energy efficient design. As an early example of its type, Vermont Park is unique in the municipality.

Source

Context Pty Ltd. *City of Nunawading Heritage Survey Project*. 1994. (Graded C+ as an individual building)

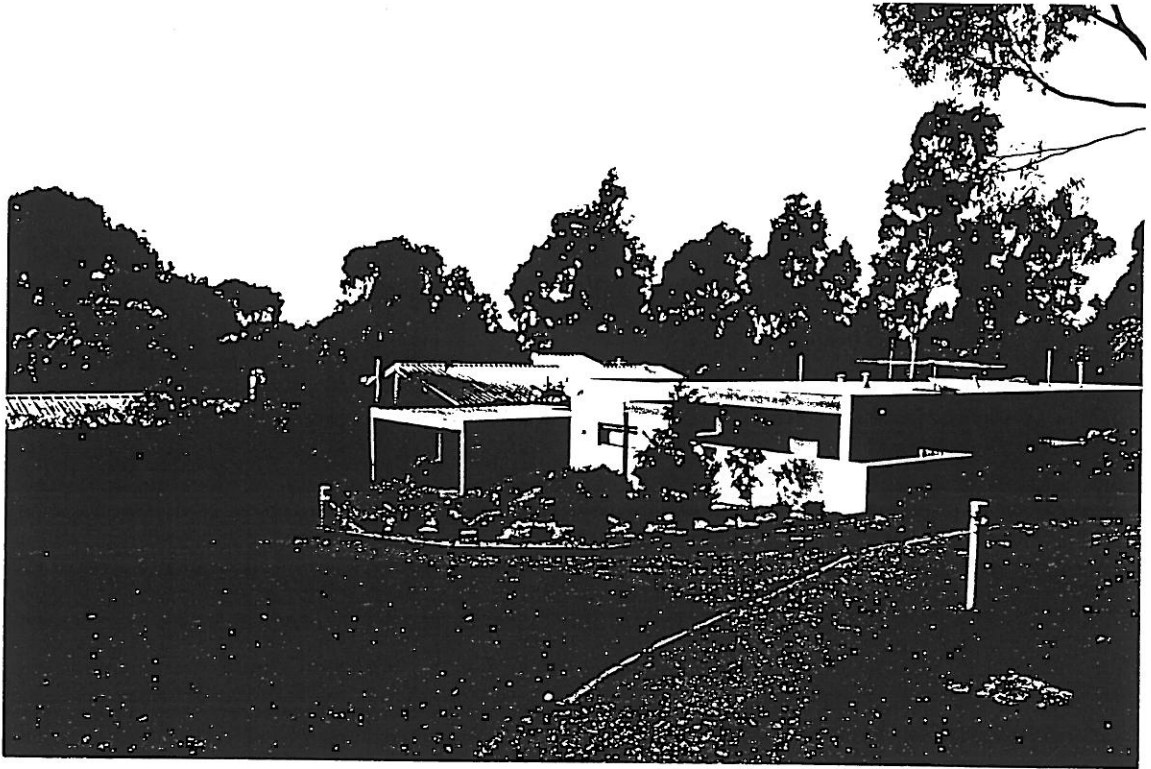


Figure 24 Vermont Park, showing communal open space

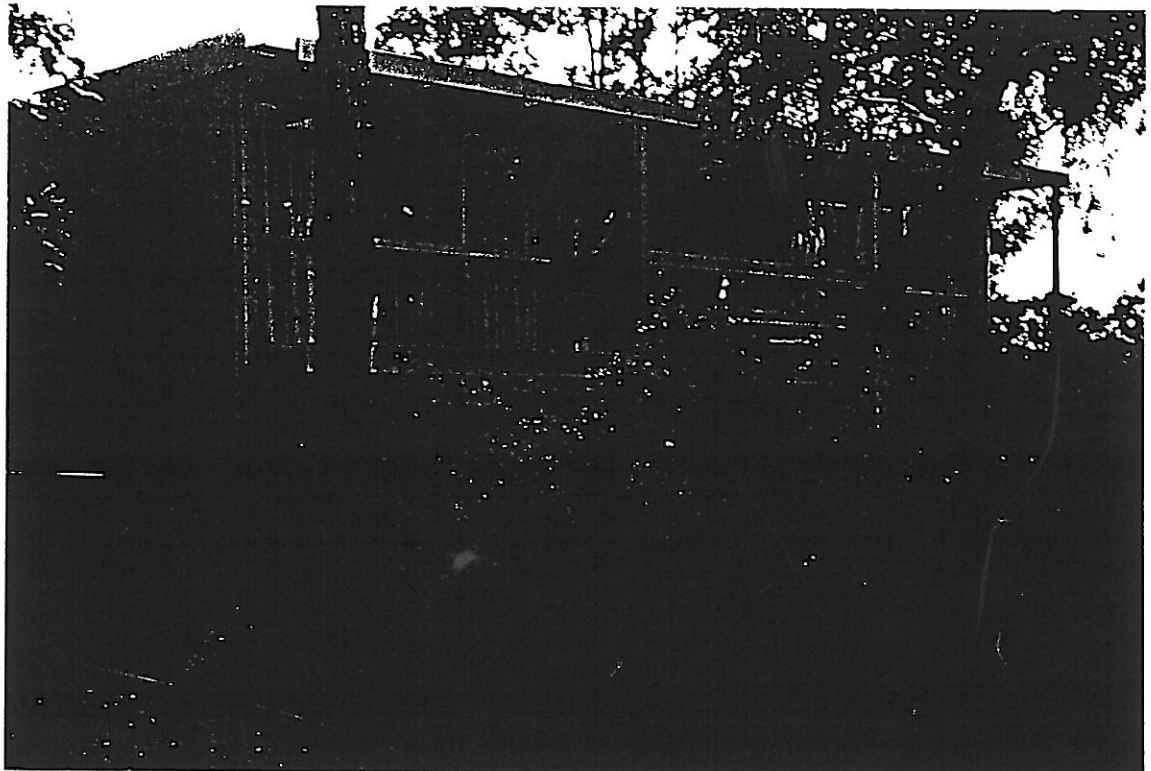


Figure 25 Double-storey house at Vermont Park