



Exford Homestead

HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

Lot 4B, Exford Road, Weir Views VIC 3338


July 2025

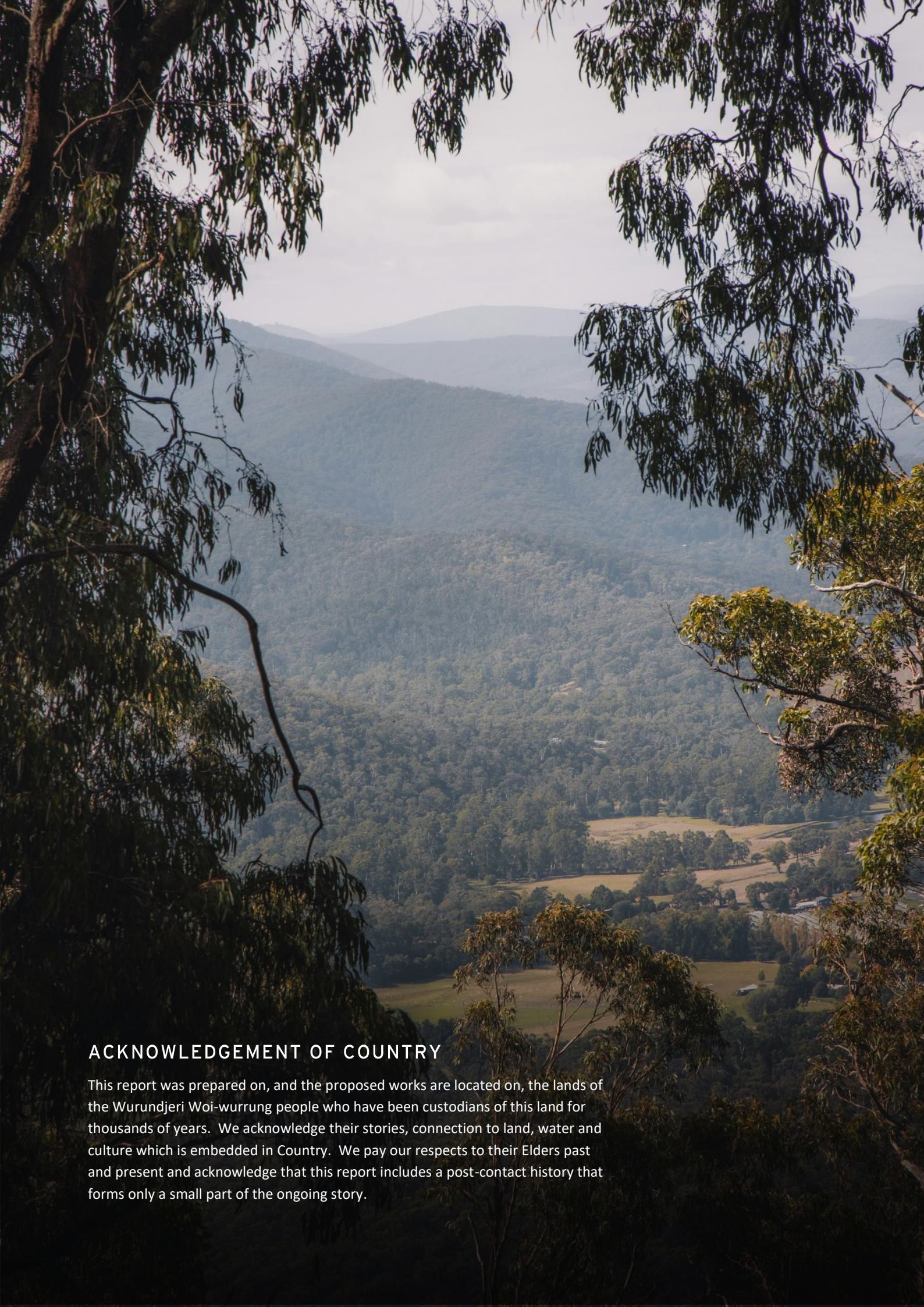
Prepared for

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

This report was prepared on, and the proposed works are located on, the lands of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who have been custodians of this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge their stories, connection to land, water and culture which is embedded in Country. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and acknowledge that this report includes a post-contact history that forms only a small part of the ongoing story.

Quality Assurance Register

The following register documents the development and issue of this report prepared by Lovell Chen Pty Ltd in accordance with our certified quality management system.



Project no.	Issue no.	Description	Issue date	Approval
7888	1	Draft Heritage Impact Statement	24/02/2025	MK
7888	2	Updated draft	31/03/2025	PL
7888	3	Final draft	23/07/2025	KW
7888	4	Issue for lodgement	31/07/2025	MK

Referencing

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Cover image: Oblique aerial image of Exford Homestead and outbuildings (homestead precinct)

Source: Nearmap, image date February 2024



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1.0 Introduction

This Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) has been prepared on behalf of Exford Waters Pty Ltd to accompany heritage and planning permit applications for the property comprising Lot 4B at 355-655 Exford Road, Weir Views (Figure 1), which is located on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country.

The subject property is Exford Homestead, a remnant of a large pastoral estate established by pastoralist Simon Staughton in 1842. The property comprises an 1840s residence, outbuildings and remnant farm buildings, and associated landscape elements including historic fences and enclosures around the homestead. Two distinct groups of heritage buildings in the property are described in this HIS as the 'homestead precinct' comprising the residence, outbuildings and fencing, and the 'farm buildings precinct' comprising a group of farm buildings at the northern end of the site.

The proposal is for subdivision of the subject property for residential development with associated services and landscaping, and a suite of conservation works to the registered buildings. The subdivision as proposed forms part of the broader Exford Waters Estate, which is a residential subdivision to the north of the registered place between Exford Road and the Werribee River.

Exford Homestead is included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), designated H0316, and comprises land, buildings and features including gateposts, a bluestone wall and the site of a former residence.

Exford Homestead is also identified as HO2 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melton Planning Scheme.

Works and activities to places included in the VHR require statutory approval in accordance with the *Heritage Act 2017*. In addition, approval is required pursuant to Clause 43.01-2 of the Melton Planning Scheme for subdivision of a heritage place which is included in the VHR. This HIS has been prepared to accompany a permit application to Heritage Victoria for subdivision and works, and a planning application separately for subdivision pursuant to Clause 43.01 (Heritage Overlay) of the Melton Planning Scheme. These matters are addressed separately in this HIS. It is noted that the subdivision of the Exford Waters Estate, beyond the VHR extent of registration for Exford Homestead, is not addressed in this HIS.



Figure 1 Location plan, subject property indicated by the arrow

Source: www.street-directory.com.au

1.1 Documentation

The following documentation is submitted with the heritage and planning permit applications:

- Subdivision plan, Lot 4B, prepared by Marshal, Revision Z, dated 17 December 2024
- Architectural drawings (conservation scope), prepared by Lovell Chen, dated 8 November 2024 and numbered:
 - A0.00 (Revision DD3)
 - A0.10 (Revision DD3)
 - A1.10 – A1.11 (Revision DD4)
 - A1.20 – A1.24 (inclusive, Revision DD2, DD3 & DD4)
 - A1.30 – A1.31 (Revision DD2 & DD3)
 - A2.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A2.20 (Revision DD1)
 - A4.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A5.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A6.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A7.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A8.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A9.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A10.10 (Revision DD3)
 - A10.20 (Revision DD3)
 - A11.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A12.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A12.20 (Revision DD1)
 - A13.10 (Revision DD1)
 - A14.10 – A14.11 (Revision DD1)
- Tree removal plan, Marshal
- Preliminary Servicing Report, 21 February 2025, Marshal
- Rodger Gibbons, Exford Waters Estate Development Report on 'Reasonable or Economic Use', July 2025

1.2 References

The following documents have been considered/are addressed in this HIS:

- *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, December 2022
- *Reasonable or economic use: Relevant matters for the consideration of section 101(2)(b) of the Heritage Act 2017*, Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, June 2021

- *Toolern: Precinct Structure Plan*, Victorian Planning Authority, July 2011 (amended December 2015 and February 2019)
- *Exford Road Conservation Area: Urban Design Framework*, City of Melton, April 2022
- Exford Waters Stage 24 & 25 Design Guidelines, 27 January 2022
- Exford Waters Estate – Lot 4B Exford Road, Melton South, Native Vegetation Assessment – *Tree Removal*, prepared by Nature Advisory, September 2024
- *Exford Estate, Exford Road, Melton South: Desktop Cultural Heritage Assessment*, prepared by Tardis Enterprises (Murphy & Rymer) in 2008
- *Historical Archaeological Assessment*, prepared by Ochre Imprints in October 2021
- *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, prepared by Lovell Chen in March 2020

1.3 Background

In August 2021, Heritage Victoria provided a response to Melton City Council following discussions regarding the preparation of an Urban Design Framework (UDF) for the land surrounding Exford Homestead. The UDF was being prepared as a requirement of the Toolern Precinct Structure Plan (PSP) (refer Section 6.1.1 of this HIS). This correspondence provided the following comments in relation to the registered place generally and provided feedback in relation to an opportunities and constraints plan for residential development of the registered place (plan reproduced at Figure 2):

Heritage Victoria agrees that the grey shaded area on the site constraints and opportunities plan... is not suitable for residential development as this would obscure views between Exford Road/Greigs Road and the Exford Homestead. We understand that Council is supportive of residential development occurring in three other areas within the Exford Homestead extent of registration. The following comments are arranged according to each of the proposed residential precincts (Areas 1, 2 and 3).

Heritage Victoria does not support development occurring in Area 1. Introducing residential development in this area would obscure the setting of the place, reducing views between the Homestead Precinct and the 'Farm Buildings Precinct', as well as views to the homestead along the section of Exford Road forming the eastern boundary of this proposed precinct.... This historical relationship between the Homestead Precinct and Farm Buildings Precinct is an important one to visually retain. Residential development proposed for the area between as Area 1 would obscure the visual connection between the homestead and outbuildings complex and as a result adversely impact the cultural heritage significance of the place as a whole.

Similarly, Heritage Victoria does not support development occurring in Area 3 in its current form. Here residential development would obscure broad views to the place from the Melton Reservoir Visitor Area. Furthermore, the level of encroachment proposed to the west and north-west sides of the homestead would have a substantial impact on its immediate setting, confusing the historical context of the place as a rare surviving 1840s farming complex. Options to reduce the size of Area 3 could be explored, with a view to limiting development beyond the southern boundary of the Conservation Open Space area, and therefore keeping broader view lines to the place relatively unobstructed.

Heritage Victoria sees Area 2 as having the greatest potential for residential development in comparison with the other proposed precincts. The introduction of residential development in this area would in essence allow what has already occurred at the Waterford Estate to the north of the Exford site to continue further south. While this development would impinge on the extent of registration, and would therefore present an impact on the place as a whole, it is

considered that this would be a reduced impact than that which would result through developing Areas 1 and/or 3. Development in Area 2 would allow the homestead to be appreciated from all visible viewpoints (with the north already slightly obscured by dense vegetation), retain the historical link between the homestead and outbuildings, and ensure an appropriate setting within which to understand the cultural heritage significance of the place.

The current extent of the Exford Homestead site is historically significant as the last remnant of what was once an extensive pastoral run. Inappropriate development that encroaches on what is left of this large rural landholding will confuse this important historical context and setting and have a detrimental impact on the cultural heritage significance of the place as a result.¹



Figure 2 Site constraints and opportunities plan provided to Heritage Victoria for comment
Source: Melton City Council

¹ Correspondence from Steven Avery, Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, re. P35074 Exford Homestead, 4 August 2021.

Subsequently, in April 2024, Heritage Victoria provided pre-application comments in response to a proposal for residential subdivision of Exford Homestead and conservation works to the registered buildings and landscape elements. These comments noted that:

- There is a level of comfort with the proposed areas of residential development and how this has responded to earlier officer feedback. It is positive that the extent of development has been reduced between Melton Reservoir and the homestead buildings, and that development previously proposed to the coach house lot has been removed.
- Any application must include further information regarding the proposed medium density sites, including the likely scale, form, massing, setbacks, materiality etc. of future development in these areas, in order to understand the potential impacts on their interface with the woodland (Lot 68) and heritage outbuildings/coach house (Lot 71).
- Any approval for the subdivision would likely include conditions for the following:
 - Design guidelines for all residential development
 - Conservation works to the heritage place
- It is understood that any application would include a package of conservation works to the heritage buildings at the place. S91 of the Act allows subdivision without a permit if the subdivision is in accordance with a planning permit, and that application was referred to the Executive Director Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. However, this does not allow for any associated works or activities (such as new development, conservation works etc). To that end, you may apply for a heritage permit for the proposed subdivision and conservation works ahead of progressing the planning process with Council to give certainty that the heritage matters have been resolved. In that instance, any response to a subdivision referred to Heritage Victoria under s55 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* would reference the relevant conditions of any approval issued under the Heritage Act 2017 (such as conservation works or design guidelines).²

The proposed subdivision, which is the subject of the current heritage and planning permit applications (refer to Section 5.0 of this HIS), has had regard to the above comments, in addition to the 2021 comments from Heritage Victoria and to the relevant PSP and UDF considerations.

The most recent comments also noted that a reasonable or economic use rationale could be included in the permit application. This is addressed at sections 6.2.3 and 7.3 of this HIS.

2.0 Statutory heritage controls

2.1 *Heritage Act 2017*

2.1.1 *Victorian Heritage Register*

Exford Homestead is included in the VHR, designated H0316, as a registered place and a registered archaeological place. The VHR extent of registration and plan are reproduced below and shown at Figure 3 and Figure 4:

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director
2. All of the buildings marked B1-B13 [sic] on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director
 - B1 House
 - B2 Kitchen

² Correspondence from Jessica Hood, Principal, Heritage Permits, Heritage Victoria re. P39339 Exford Homestead, 3 April 2024.

- B3 Servants' quarters
- B4 Stable/garage
- B5 Stable
- B6 Underground tank
- B7 & B8 Bluestone pavilions
- B9 Gardener's cottage
- B10 Barn/coach house
- B11 Underground tank
- B12 Blacksmith's forge and residence

3. All of the features marked F1-F3 on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director

- F1 Site of Dr Walton's residence
- F2 Entry Gateposts
- F3 Bluestone wall³

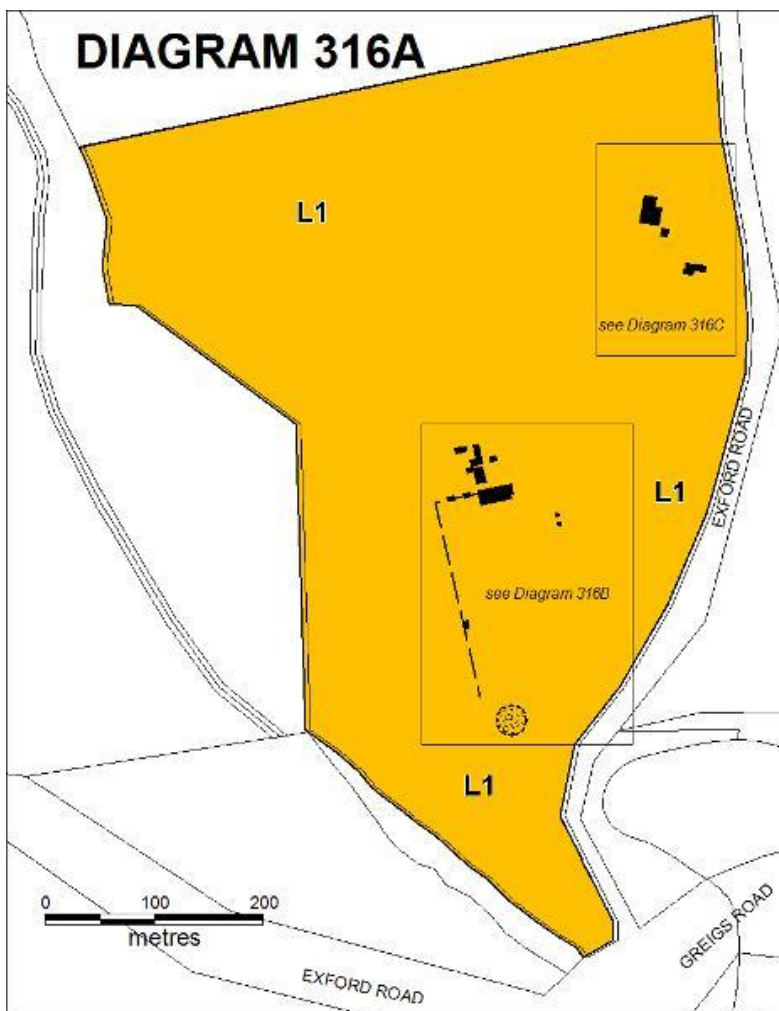


Figure 3 VHR extent of registration plan for Exford Homestead
Source: Victorian Heritage Database

³ Victorian Heritage Database, Exford Homestead <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/832> accessed 8 October 2024.

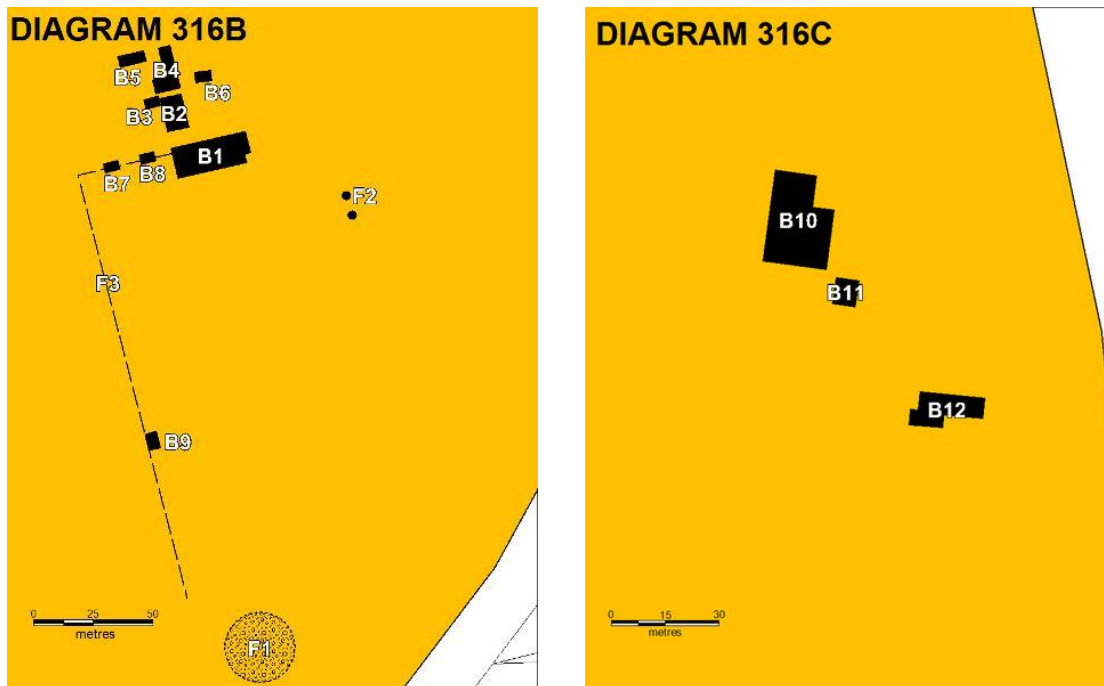


Figure 4 Detail VHR extent of registration plans for the homestead precinct (left) and the farm buildings precinct (right)

Source: Victorian Heritage Database

The VHR statement of significance is reproduced below:

What is significant?

Exford Homestead is one of the oldest residences in Victoria and part of a rare surviving 1840s homestead complex. It is a farming property now comprising approximately 30.5 hectares located 3.5km south of South Melton where sheep have been raised since the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (Victoria). The site was occupied from 1840 by Dr John Watton, a member of the Port Phillip Association, a syndicate of Van Diemens Land colonists formed in 1835 with the aim of establishing pastoral activities on the north shore of the Bass Strait. The place was then part of a large run taken up in 1842 by emigrant landowner Simon Staughton.

Eventually extending for many thousands of hectares, the run was divided into four smaller properties after Staughton's death in 1863. The place retains an early 1840s homestead building and outbuildings constructed of locally hewn timber, mud and lath rendering, brick and local stone. Subsequent additions in locally-quarried bluestone date from the mid-1850s, after security of tenure had been gained, and include a double-height store, a smithy with attached accommodation, two bluestone pavilions and bluestone fence enclosing an orchard. The Staughton 'orb' is carved into the timber posts surmounting the bluestone fence and gateposts. It is also found in the bluestone pavilions of the 1850s. The extent of Staughton's holding was marked at quarter mile intervals with posts featuring a similar carved timber orb. A suite of timber additions introduced in the 1930s demonstrate a later phase of development at the place.

Exford Homestead was a haven for Aboriginal people during the early contact period, a reflection of Simon Staughton's commitment to the well-being of the indigenous population. Local tribes-people were employed on the estate to erect fencing.

The property occupies a picturesque setting with views over the Werribee River valley to the south, and a stand of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) to the north.

How is it significant?

Exford Homestead satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register.

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Why is it significant?

Exford Homestead is of historical significance for its direct association with the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (Victoria). The site was first occupied from 1840 by Dr John Watton, a member of the Port Phillip Association, a syndicate of Van Diemonian colonists formed in 1835 with the aim of establishing pastoral activities on the north shore of the Bass Strait.

Exford Homestead is of historical significance as the last remnant of 'Exford' a once extensive run which has from its initial occupation, through acquisition by Simon Staughton in 1842 and later occupation by his descendants to the present, been in continuous operation as a sheep farm. Sheep farming was the primary reason for the settlement of the Port Phillip District and became a significant part of the Victorian economy. The mid-twentieth century shearing shed reflects the continued use of the place for sheep farming and is of contributory significance.

Exford Homestead demonstrates the political and social changes which affected the Port Phillip District and Victoria in the early years of European settlement. The difference between the early 1840s timber buildings and the more sophisticated bluestone structures reflects increasing prosperity following the gold rushes of the 1850s, and the associated influx of skilled immigrants. The construction technologies and refined materials used in the 1850s bluestone buildings demonstrate that pastoralists were by then willing to construct more permanent buildings with greater architectural pretension due to an ability to obtain secure land tenure. The distinctive bluestone fence to the west and south of the homestead is also believed to date from this phase of development. (Criterion A)

The 1840s Exford Homestead is one of the earliest residences in Victoria. The homestead and outbuildings are rare surviving examples from this period and demonstrate an unusual variety of vernacular construction technologies. Exford homestead is a rare example of a generously-proportioned homestead constructed in the pretenure period of the early-1840s. It was typical for early homestead buildings to be replaced or significantly improved as land tenure was secured and wealth increased.

The group of 1850s Picturesque Gothic structures which present as follies in the landscape are an uncommon feature. The detailing to the two pavilions and the gardener's cottage has a level of refinement seldom seen in such outbuildings. The survival of the indigenous Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand to the north of the homestead is unusual. A more typical response

to native vegetation by early settlers in Victoria was for the trees to be felled, and the land given over to pasture. (Criterion B)

The site of Dr Watton's residence is of high level potential archaeological significance as it is likely to contain features, relics and deposits related to the earliest phase of European settlement of Victoria. The area to the north of the homestead where early outbuildings are likely to have been located is also of potential archaeological significance. (Criterion C)

The isolation of early homesteads demanded self-sufficiency, resulting in the use of vernacular technologies and locally available materials and/or pre-fabricated buildings. The early outbuildings at Exford were constructed of roughly-hewn timber framing and timber slabs, and in the case of the detached kitchen, of local stone and brick. The homestead itself is constructed of eight large timber posts hewn from tree trunks. These are located at each corner of the house and flanking the front door to the south and rear door to the north. The timber framed walls are clad with horizontal timber slabs applied with mud under a later render finish. The range of materials and technologies used at Exford explains the diversity in the external presentation of the early homestead buildings.

Many early homesteads were distinguished by a sense of enclosure, with walls, hedges and tree plantings variously providing formal settings, protection from prevailing winds, a sense of security in little known and sometimes uncharted landscapes and distinction between domestic and agricultural areas. This distinction was typically reinforced by plantings, with the enclosed areas planted with European-style or exotic plantings, and natives beyond. At Exford there is very limited evidence of early plantings but a bluestone wall with an integrated timber post and rail fence was established to the north-west of the homestead returning to the south.

The typical layout of pastoral estates is demonstrated at Exford, whereby the main residence is the centrepiece, sited to optimise an aspect, with domestic amenities to the rear and/or sides. Outbuildings often included a freestanding kitchen, laundry, meat store, servants' accommodation and stabling. At Exford there is a clear distinction between the domestic precinct and the agricultural grouping a short distance to the north-east.

Common denominators between early homesteads included access to water and established roadways. This is assumed to explain the siting of Dr Watton's residence at the southern part of the place, on low-lying land presumably within the Werribee River flood plain. In contrast, Staughton built a substantial homestead and outbuildings on elevated ground to the north of the place, with views looking south over the Werribee River and Toolern Creek. Proximity to a river crossing is also likely to have been a factor in the desirability of the Exford Homestead site. The road directly to the south of the property was on one of the main routes from Melbourne to the west. (Criterion D)

Exford is significant for its long association with the Staughton family, one of the largest owners of freehold land in colonial Victoria, only rivalled in this region by the Clarke and Chirside families. (Criterion H)⁴

There is a permit exemption policy and a suite of specific permit exemptions that apply to Exford Homestead. The permit exemptions encompass works in the following categories: Regular site and building maintenance, building exteriors, building interiors (excluding buildings dating from the 1840s: homestead, kitchen and stable), homestead interior, grounds and land holding, and regular landscape maintenance and management. In addition, the General Permit Exemptions (August 2024) apply to all registered places. Albeit that the scope of works as detailed in this

⁴ Victorian Heritage Database, Exford Homestead <https://vhd.heritagecouncil.vic.gov.au/places/832> accessed 14 August 2024.

permit application include some works which are permit exempt, i.e. painting works, all proposed works are outlined in this application.

2.1.2 Victorian Heritage Inventory

The subject property is not included in the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI). As outlined above, Exford Homestead is included in the VHR as a registered place and registered archaeological place. Historical archaeological considerations are addressed at Section 7.2.3 of this HIS.

2.2 Melton Planning Scheme

2.2.1 Heritage Overlay

Exford Homestead is individually identified as HO2 in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Melton Planning Scheme. The mapped extent of HO2 is consistent with the VHR extent of registration for Exford Homestead (Figure 5).

The statement of significance for Exford Homestead as included in the *Shire of Melton Heritage Study*, prepared between 2006-2009 by David Moloney et.al, is reproduced below:

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is of State heritage significance as one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria. It is also of great importance and rarity due to its vernacular construction in pise de terre. This homestead is part of a significant complex which includes early and notable bluestone structures, in varying conditions, ranging from a large utilitarian coachhouse, small ornamented lodgings, a terrace containing servants quarters and blacksmith, and distinctive early fences. Overallly [sic], the complex constitutes a cultural heritage precinct of very high significance in an equally significant cultural landscape.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is architecturally and aesthetically significant at the State level (AHC E1). The homestead is of immense architectural importance due to its age and its vernacular construction in pise, surviving examples of which are very rare. The oldest, central part of the homestead is thought to date from c.1843 and is constructed of pise within a framework of corner tree trunks, over a stone cellar. An attic within the hipped roof (originally shingle clad) incorporates dormer windows that were added later. The homestead has had several additions, the latest being the 1920s billiard room, which contribute to its significance. A rendered rubble and pise kitchen and store building behind the homestead features timber shingles under later corrugated iron, and is likely to date to the same period as the original homestead. The complex also features a collection of 1850s era bluestone buildings. Two small cottages are distinctive and important examples of the rare picturesque Gothic style; their distinguishing features include round arched windows and doors, fan lights, and tapered bluestone pinnacles adorned with orbs. The orb is also the identifying feature of the 'Staughton' timber fence and gate posts which were placed regularly along the Exford pastoral estate boundaries. These have now virtually disappeared from across the wider Exford station, so the considerable collection of these posts on the homestead complex, of durable local grey-box, and dating to the fencing of the station probably in the 1850s, is extremely significant.

A similar design on the bluestone woolshed, now on an adjacent property, has bluestone pinnacles surmounted by fleur-de-lys in the place of orbs. Another semi-ruinous small bluestone building in the former orchard paddock has the quality of a folly, with picturesque details including pointed stone arch windows. A very large stone coachhouse, with the date 1856 inscribed above the central door, has Romanesque style arched openings, and a rear skillion addition that was formerly a dairy. A ruinous bluestone terrace comprising workers quarters and a blacksmith is a very rare type of rural building. The complex also includes:- a weatherboard meathouse; a saddlery with later garage, part of which is of primitive vertical slab construction; a weatherboard stable; and a mid twentieth century weatherboard shearing shed. Two very large

underground water tanks, with timber gable roofs, survive; they appear to have been renovated over time. To the south of the homestead, extending down to the river flat, is a rectangular paddock of approximately three acres which was a former orchard or garden. It is defined on the north and west sides by a rare, perhaps unique, style of fence which comprises a quarried stone base with mud mortar, and tall pickets atop. This enclosure is also defined by remnant rows of mature exotic plantings, primarily Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) on the west, pepper trees (*Schinus molle*) on the south, and Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*) on the east. Other mature exotic trees include cypress, fig, and mulberry trees, particularly near the homestead.

The complex retains a number of original or early internal building fittings and equipment, including ovens, remains of a blacksmith bellows, line shafting in the coachhouse lean-to, and timber wall fittings in the 1920s billiard room; there are likely to be other early or significant furnishings and fittings in the homestead, woolshed and other outbuildings. The homestead setting is integral to the significance of the place, and sets it apart from most comparable heritage places in Victoria. The homestead is situated on a picturesque bluff, enabling it to take advantage of the views over the Werribee River near its junction with Toolern Creek. The prime qualities of this site were recognised in 1841 when it was designated as the village reserve for the district; it appears also to have been selected as a dwelling site prior to the arrival of Simon Staughton. This crucial undeveloped area south and west of the homestead preserves the view from the homestead across the Werribee River, and enhances its setting. It also enables the key elevation of the homestead complex to be seen and appreciated in its rural landscape context from surrounding points including Exford Road and the Melton Reservoir park. Remnant native vegetation and exotic vegetation associated with the homestead are integral to this landscape setting.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is historically significant at the State level (AHC A4, B2). Dating from c.1843, the homestead is one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria. Exford station was a vast pastoral run of some 70,000 acres acquired by pastoralist Simon Staughton in 1842, and increased significantly by him as freehold became available in the 1850s. Staughton was also a Melbourne banker and prominent land investor whose property portfolio included hotels such as the Exford in Melbourne, the Prince of Wales in St Kilda, and the Steam Packet in Williamstown, as well as premises on Staughton Place in Melbourne, the Eastern Arcade, and the land upon which a beneficiary of his estate built the Royal Arcade. Exford also has strong historical associations with the pioneering of the Melton district. It was the first of the numerous large pastoral estates, some with mansions and grand homesteads, established by Staughton's descendant's within the Shire, including Eynesbury, Nerowie, and the former Brooklyn. Members of the Staughton family were leaders in the political, social, sporting and religious life of the district. While the homestead is early and thus comparatively restrained architecturally and in size, the prime siting and substantial size of the complex conveys the former size and wealth of one of Victoria's larger pastoral runs, situated on rich volcanic plains near to Melbourne. Early fences on the complex may be associated with an Aboriginal clan who lived and were employed on the property, and some of whom were buried there. The extensive collection of 1850s bluestone buildings is expressive of the prosperity and development of Exford in the wake of the gold-rushes. The dominance of Melton municipality by Exford and several other large pastoral estates in the nineteenth century increasingly became a source of grievance to local farmers, and contributed to the break-up of these estates in the early twentieth century. Share farming was practised on Exford at the close of the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century Exford became one of the Victorian Closer Settlement Board's high profile estates. Its subdivision into farms contributed to the growth of the nationally significant Melton chaff industry in the early twentieth century, and stimulated the construction of new community facilities and infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, a school and a hall. The mid twentieth century timber

shearing shed on the property is expressive of the rural investment which resulted from the 1950s wool boom.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is scientifically significant at the State level (AHC C2). It is an extensive complex which includes rare and significantly intact buildings and structures that have potential to provide information and education regarding early skills and materials, and the operation of an early pastoral estate in Victoria. An area of broken crockery and bottles may mark the location of huts shown on early 1850s plans which may pre-date the Exford homestead. The ruinous c.1850s bluestone terrace includes a blacksmith which has design features and artefacts with potential to provide information regarding blacksmithing and the management of an early pastoral estate. Fences and remnant stone walls have the potential to provide information regarding former pastoral property management, early skills, and relationships with Aboriginal people in the contact period.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is socially significant at the Local level (AHC G1). The homestead is widely recognised as the earliest building within the municipality; the broader complex is a substantial and prominently located landmark within the municipality. The Staughton family is commemorated in the town of Melton by the Staughton Memorial Lamp and fabric from the original Christ Church Anglican church. Graves of Aboriginal people may survive on the property, although possibly now flooded by the Exford reservoir.

Overall, Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is of State heritage significance.⁵

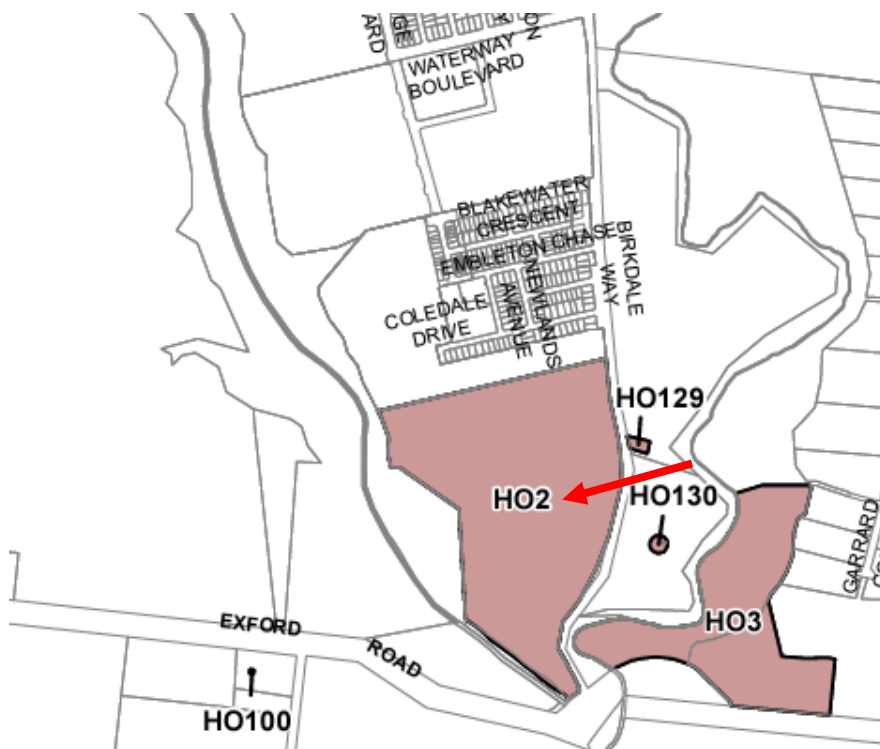


Figure 5 Detail plan of Heritage Overlay, HO2 indicated
Source: Melton Planning Scheme

⁵ David Moloney et al., *Melton Heritage Study*, Stage 2, 2007, Volume 3, Citation No, 269 Exford Homestead, <https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Building-Planning-Transport/Strategic-Planning/Studies-Strategies-Guidelines/Heritage-Planning-Documents/Melton-Heritage-Studies/Melton-Heritage-Study-2007>

2.2.2 Relevant planning considerations

In addition to the Heritage Overlay and its related policy and decision guidelines, the following zone and overlays also apply to the subject property:

- Schedule 3 to Clause 37.07 Urban Growth Zone – Toolern Precinct Structure Plan [refer Section 6.1.1 of this HIS].
- Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 to Clause 42.01 Environmental Significance Overlay
- Schedule 3 to Clause 45.06 Development Contributions Plan Overlay

3.0 History and description

3.1 Summary history

The following summary history is derived from the *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*.

Wirribi Yaluk (Werribee River) runs along the western edge of the site, marking the boundary between the traditional lands of the Woi-wurrung-speaking Gunung-willam-bulluk clan, on which the site is located, and Wadawurrung Country across the waterway.

The lands surrounding the Wirribi Yaluk (Werribee River) have been part of the territories of the Kulin nation for tens of thousands of years, with Wadawurrung Country to the west of the river and Wurundjeri Country on its eastern side. A pastoral run was established in this area in 1840, encompassing the subject site which is on the traditional lands of the Woi-wurrung-speaking Gunung-willam-bulluk clan (Wurundjeri). The pastoral run was taken up by Dr John Walton (or Watton in some accounts) and subsequently acquired by Simon Staughton in 1842, who developed his large landholding for use as a sheep station. Between the time of acquisition and the early 1850s, Staughton constructed a new house and outbuildings to the north of where the original homestead buildings had been located. By this time, the property is recorded to have included a fenced compound to the south of the house which incorporated a homestead garden and the front paddock.

Subsequent to Simon Staughton's death in 1863, the expanded pastoral holding was divided amongst his wife, sons and daughter, with his youngest son Harry Werribee inheriting the property that included the Exford Homestead site. The property continued to be used for sheep and cattle farming. By the early twentieth century, H W Staughton reduced the size of the Exford farm through the sale of land to the Victorian Closer Settlement Board, facilitating its subdivision into smaller lots. Exford Homestead was sold in 1926, with local papers identifying Mr John Sutherland as the new owner in October 1927. The balance of the Exford landholding which remained in H W Staughton's ownership was sold in December 1927, bringing the long tenure of the Staughton family to an end.

The property remained in the ownership of the Sutherland family until 1949, with the family continuing to run cattle and sheep on the property. In their ownership, the Sutherlands added a ballroom to the east end of the main house as well as a number of other small buildings across the property. The formal gardens established in the Staughton tenure were no longer extant by 1946, possibly as a result of a lessening need for self-sufficiency due to improved accessibility to Melton and Melbourne. Exford Homestead was again sold, this time to father and son graziers Basil and Bernard Lavery. The Laverys continued to run sheep and constructed the current timber shearing shed adjacent to the farm buildings to the north of the homestead complex. Apart from the shearing shed, the former pastoral property remained largely unchanged. From 1967, the property passed into the shared ownership of Bernard Lavery and his sister Thelma Crowley. The property was further subdivided, with the land to the east of Exford Road sold in 1999 and the remaining property sold to Wegg Pty Ltd. While sheep grazing continued, the property was also used for wheat, barley and canola crops and hay baling. The northern section of the property was subdivided in 2009 and the extent of VHR registration (and HO mapping) was amended to align with the current land holding of Exford Homestead. The property continues to be used for limited grazing and cropping activity.

3.2 Site description

Exford Homestead is a wedge-shaped allotment, with its western and eastern boundaries following the Werribee River and Exford Road, respectively. The northern boundary divides the subject site and the new Exford Waters residential subdivision which is located on land that was once part of the broader Exford landholding. The northern half of the site is mostly flat, aside from its edge to the riverside, and the remaining extent of the site to the south of the homestead buildings slopes steeply into the creek valley below, at the junction of Greigs and Exford roads.

The site has two groupings of buildings and structures: the homestead precinct in the centre of the site and the farm buildings precinct to the north-east (Figure 6). There is a grove of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus macrocarpa*) trees in the area to the north of the homestead precinct and west of the farm buildings precinct. The site of the original residence (F1), that of Dr Walton (or Watton), was located to the south of the homestead precinct.

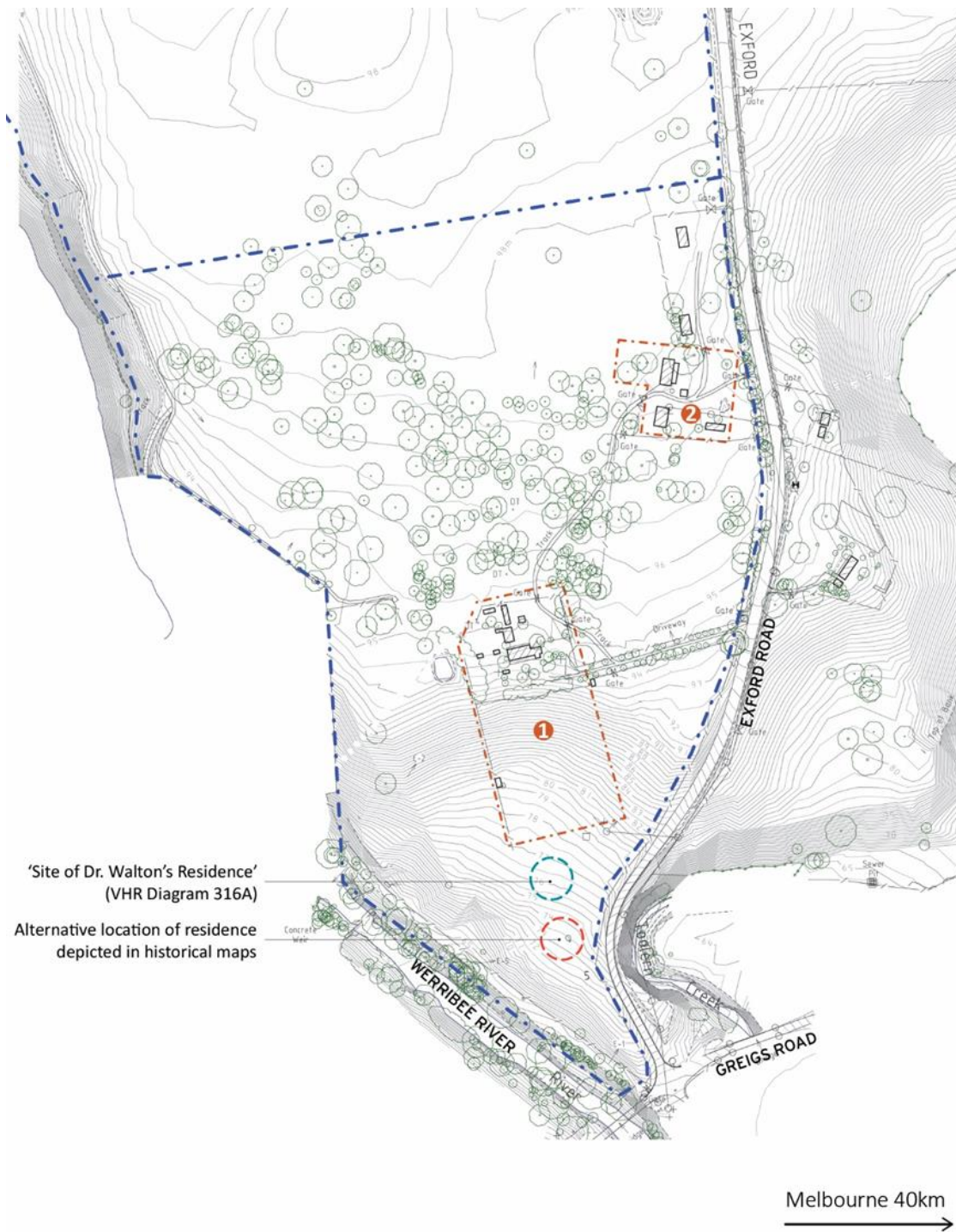
The buildings and landscape features in the homestead precinct and farm buildings precinct are indicated in the precinct plans at Figure 7 and Figure 8 respectively.

The homestead precinct comprises the homestead (B1, Figure 9) constructed in c. 1843, (extended c. 1860s and c. 1927) within an ornamental garden, with outbuildings and service yards to the north, and a front paddock to the south. The entry drive to the homestead is to the east off Exford Road. This formal drive dates from the c. mid-twentieth century and incorporates timber entry gateposts (F2, Figure 10) which may have been relocated from the earlier drive which commenced further south down Exford Road. A remnant bluestone and integrated timber post and rail fence (F3, Figure 11 & Figure 12), constructed c. 1850s, marks the north-western and western boundaries of the homestead garden and extends to the south. A carport (constructed 1956) is positioned to the west of the turning circle.

The outbuildings to the north of the homestead include those associated with the functioning of the house, being the kitchen (B2, Figure 13 & Figure 14), constructed c. 1843 and later extended, and servants' quarters (B3, Figure 15), constructed c. 1930s. Additional buildings forming part of this precinct include those associated with farm operations, including the timber stable/garage (B4, Figure 16) constructed c. 1840s, extended c. 1930s; stables (B5, Figure 17), constructed c. 1930s; underground tank (B6, Figure 18), constructed c. 1850s with an enclosure (added c. 1930s); and a pair of bluestone pavilions (B7 and B8, Figure 19 & Figure 20), constructed c. 1850s.

The front paddock to the south of the homestead garden is defined on its western boundary by a continuation of the remnant bluestone and timber fence (F3), along which is a ruin of the gardener's cottage (B9, Figure 21), constructed c. 1850s.

The farm buildings precinct, located around 200 metres to the north-east of the homestead precinct, contains a bluestone barn (B10, Figure 22), constructed 1856, extended c. late-nineteenth century; an underground tank (B11, Figure 23), constructed c. 1850s with an enclosure (added c. 1930s); the blacksmith's forge and cottage (B12, Figure 24), constructed c. 1850s and extended c. 1930s, which is in ruinous condition; and a shearing shed, constructed c. 1956. To the north of this cluster of buildings there are two farm sheds (constructed c. 1940s and c. 1980s).



Key	Site Plan
	 Victorian Heritage Register extent of registration
	 Homestead precinct
	 Farm buildings precinct

Figure 6 Site plan indicating homestead and farm buildings precincts and potential location of original residence
Source: Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 27

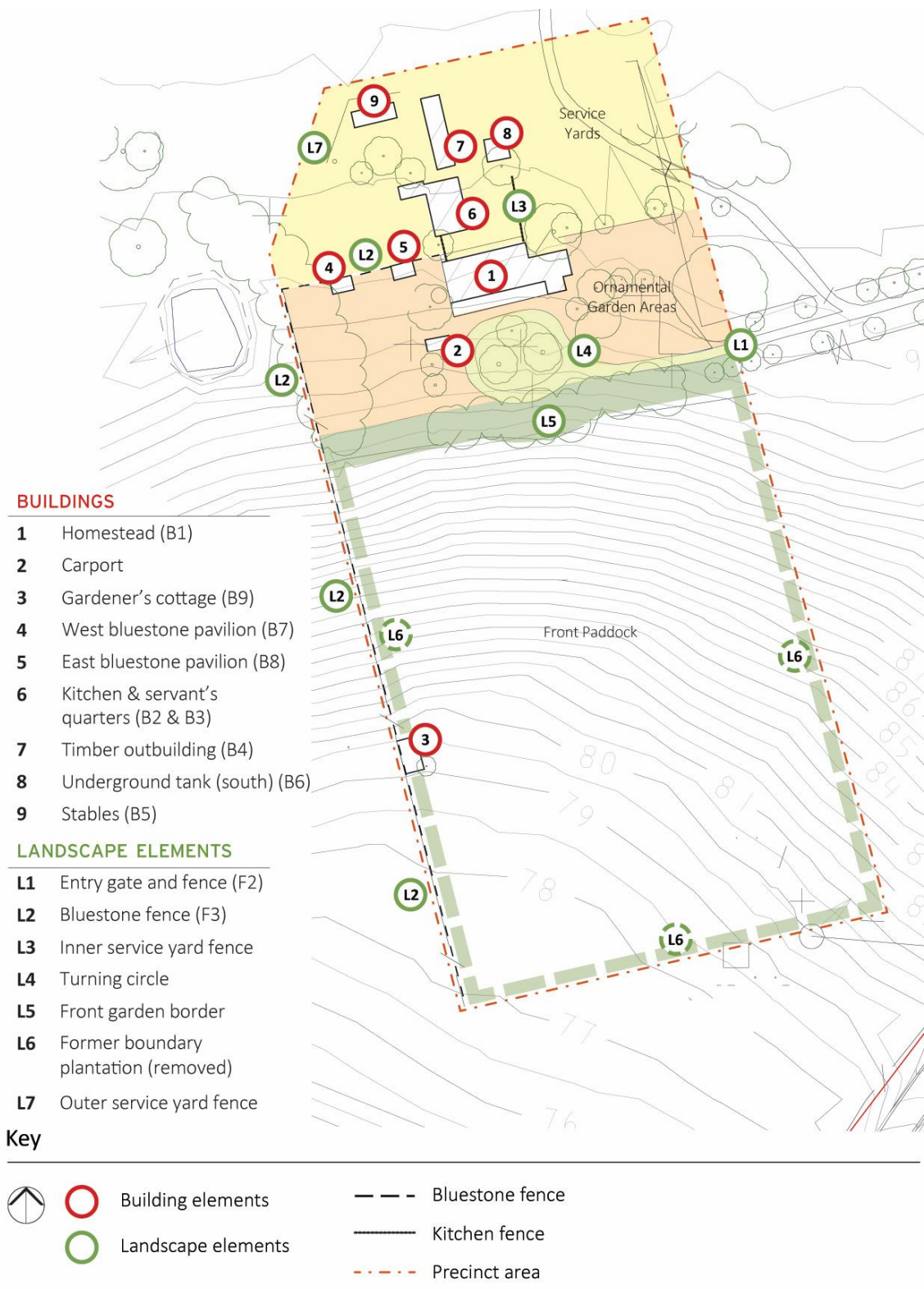


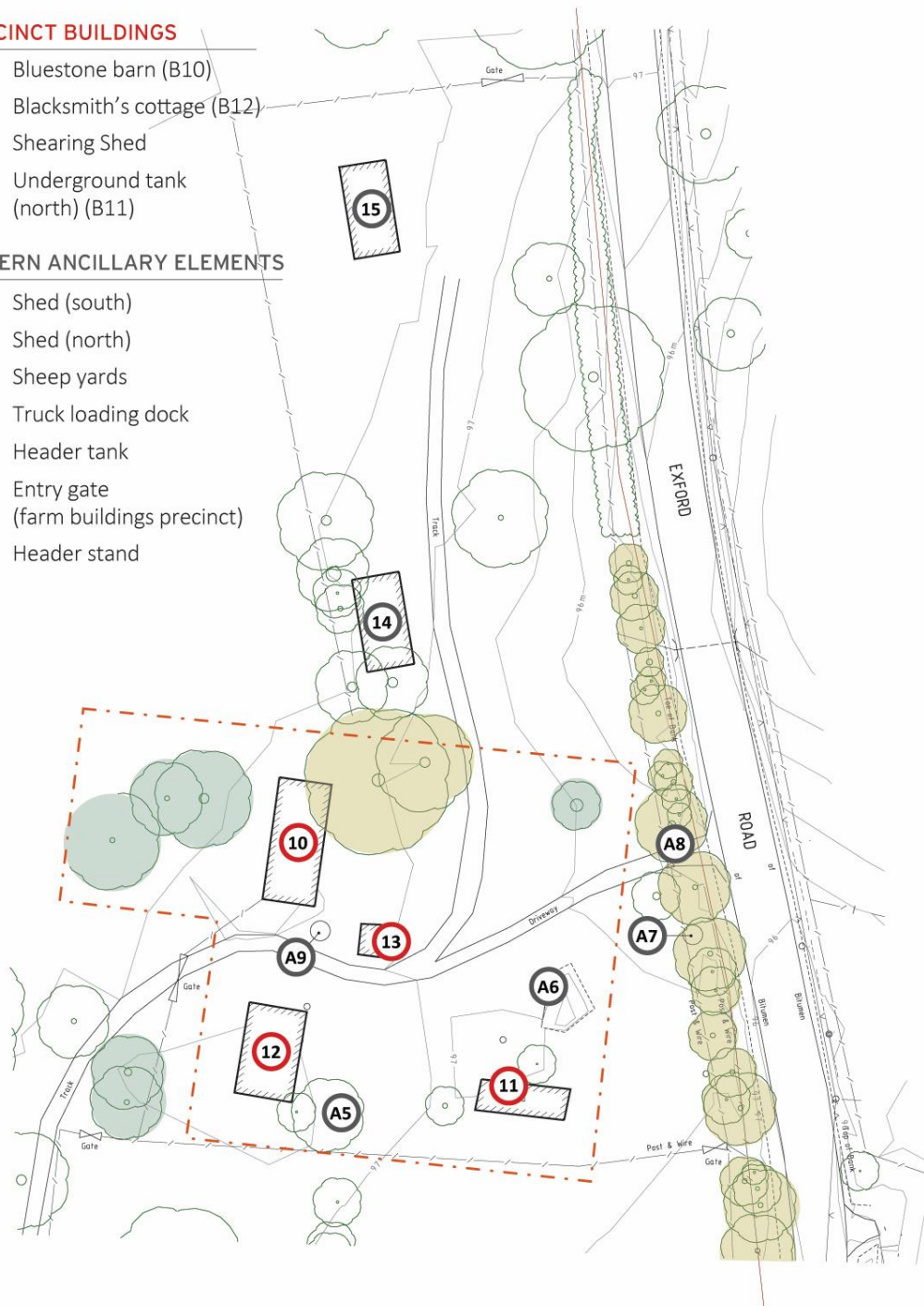
Figure 7 Homestead precinct plan
 Source: Source: Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 28

PRECINCT BUILDINGS

- 10 Bluestone barn (B10)
- 11 Blacksmith's cottage (B12)
- 12 Shearing Shed
- 13 Underground tank (north) (B11)

MODERN ANCILLARY ELEMENTS

- 14 Shed (south)
- 15 Shed (north)
- A5 Sheep yards
- A6 Truck loading dock
- A7 Header tank
- A8 Entry gate (farm buildings precinct)
- A9 Header stand



Key

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| | Precinct Buildings | Grey Box | Precinct core area |
| | Ancillary Elements | Sugar Gum | |

Figure 8 Farm buildings precinct
 Source: Source: Source: Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 29



Figure 9 Exford homestead (B1), south elevation (homestead precinct)



Figure 10 View along the driveway entry from Exford Road towards the entry gateposts (F2) (homestead precinct)



Figure 11 Bluestone wall with integrated timber post and rail fence (F3) to the north-west of the homestead (homestead precinct)



Figure 12 Southern extension of the bluestone wall with integrated timber post and rail fence (F3) (homestead precinct); some damage/loss of fabric is evident



Figure 13 East elevation of the kitchen (B2) (homestead precinct)



Figure 14 West elevation skillion addition of the kitchen (B2) (homestead precinct)



Figure 15 1930s servants' quarters adjoining the kitchen (B3) (homestead precinct)



Figure 16 East elevation of the stable/garage (B4) north of the homestead (homestead precinct)



Figure 17 North elevation of the timber stable (B5) (homestead precinct)



Figure 18 Covered top of the underground tank (B6) (homestead precinct)



Figure 19 South elevation of the bluestone pavilion (B7) (homestead precinct)



Figure 20 South elevation of the bluestone pavilion (B8) (homestead precinct)



Figure 21 View to the ruin of the gardener's cottage (B9) (homestead precinct)



Figure 22 West elevation of the barn/coach house (B10) (farm buildings precinct)



Figure 23 View to the underground tank (B11) (foreground) and south-east elevation of the barn/coach house (B10) (farm buildings precinct)



Figure 24 View to the ruin of the blacksmith's forge and residence (B12) (farm buildings precinct)

4.0 Proposed subdivision

The proposed subdivision plan for Exford Waters Lot 4B (comprising the VHR extent of registration for Exford Homestead) is provided at Figure 25 below.

STAGE UNLIFTY SEQUENCE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
STAGE No.	TOTAL	05	02	03	05	08	07	09	05	01
TOTAL SITE AREA (ha)	29.57	2.68	1.67	4.81	4.61	0.40	0.31	4.88	6.61	0.71
4-LANE ARTERIAL ROADWIDENING (ha)	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.71	0.00
WATERWAY / DRAINAGE (ha)	1.57	0.00	0.00	0.30	1.27	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CONSERVATION OPEN SPACE (ha)	2.06	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.06	0.00	0.00
CONSERVATION PASSIVE OPEN SPACE (ha)	2.86	1.42	0.86	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.86	0.00	0.00
COUNCIL RESERVES & TRZ (ha)	3.98	0.13	0.00	0.49	3.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
NET DEVELOPABLE AREA (NDA) (ha)	18.47	2.65	1.67	3.82	0.00	0.40	0.31	0.00	6.61	0.00
TOTAL NET DEVELOPABLE AREA (ha)	18.47	2.65	1.67	3.82	0.00	0.40	0.31	0.00	6.61	0.00
RESIDENTIAL HERITAGE SITE (ha)	6.61	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.61	0.00
COMMERCIAL HERITAGE SITE (ha)	3.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.13
ROAD (ha)	3.05	1.42	0.86	1.55	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
CONVENTIONAL RESIDENTIAL LOTS (ha)	4.20	1.13	0.61	2.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
MODERATE DENSITY (MD) SITES (ha)	0.71	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.40	0.31	0.00	0.00	0.00
No. LOTS (CONVENTIONAL)	77	28	18	33	0	0	0	0	0	0
ESTIMATED No. DWELLINGS (NE)	24	0	0	0	0	14	19	0	0	0
Ave. LOT SIZE (CONVENTIONAL) (m ²)	945	431	448	698	0	0	0	0	0	0
LOT DENSITY YIELD (No./NDA) (ha)	5.5	10.2	10.8	8.8	-	35.0	32.8	-	-	-

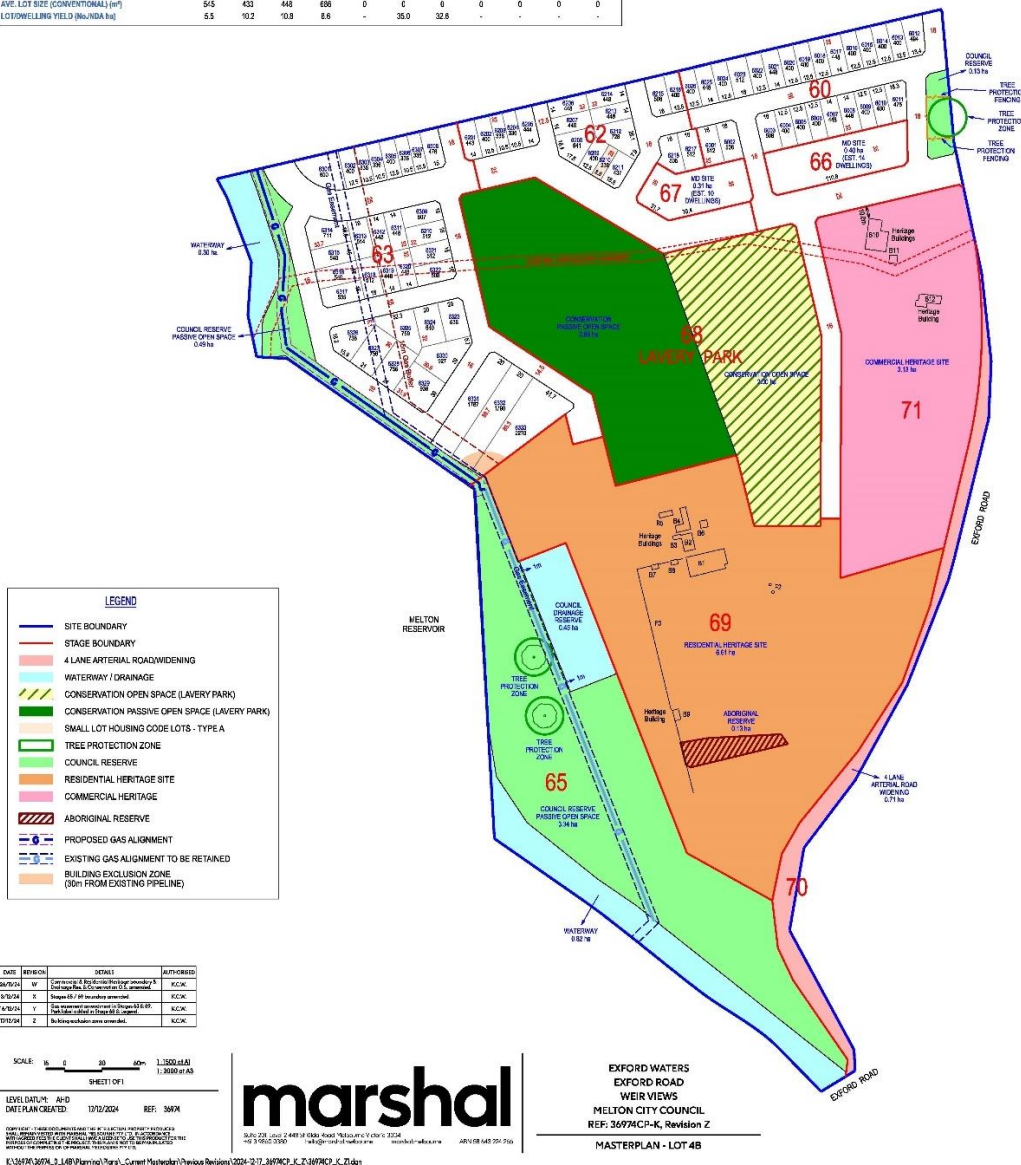


Figure 25 Proposed subdivision plan
Source: Marshal

The principal elements of the subdivision comprise the following:

Residential heritage site (Area 69)

The residential heritage site comprises a land holding of 6.61ha upon which is located the homestead precinct within a single allotment. It includes a generous open curtilage to the south, west and east and abuts the Grey Box stand (proposed Lavery Park) to the north. The site will be provided with vehicle access from the north and will no longer be accessible from Exford Road. No new development is proposed within this area as part of this application.

Commercial heritage site (Area 71)

The commercial heritage site comprises 3.13ha upon which is located the farm precinct. The farm precinct buildings are located at the northern end of the area with open space extending to the south. At its closest point the heritage barn/coach house is set 10 metres off the new east-west road which will service the northern subdivision. As with the homestead precinct no access will be possible from Exford Road and vehicles will enter the area from new roads to the north and west.

Open space (Area 68)

Combined conservation open space and conservation passive open space areas extending over some 4.86ha, are located in the centre of the northern portion of the site. These take in the Grey Box stand of trees and associated open grassland. Proposed to be known as Lavery Park, the area will provide recreation space for the residential areas to the north and a substantially visual and physical buffer between that development and the homestead precinct to the south.

Council reserves (Area 65)

To the south-west of the homestead precinct two Council reserves are to be created incorporating tree protection zones. The reserves are located within the important viewshed to the south of the homestead. No new development is proposed within this area as part of this application.

New residential lots (Areas 60, 62, 63, 66 & 67)

The new residential lots are to be located to the north and north-west of the site and continue the pattern of development occurring in the Exford Waters subdivision to the north of the registered land (Figure 26). They provide for both low and medium density development around a local road network. Development on the lots will be subject to local development/design guidelines which includes guidelines developed in consideration of the heritage setting (refer Section 6.1.2 and 6.2.2 – Future Development).

No approval is being sought as part of this application for new residential development in the subdivided lots. New development will be subject to applicable heritage and planning approval requirements, having regard to the relevant planning framework and guidelines, including the Urban Design Framework.

New internal roads

The site will be accessed in the north-east corner from Exford Road which is to be widened to a 4 lane arterial road. Existing access drives into the property off Exford Road will be removed, although the entry gateposts and fence will be retained

Physical works associated with the development, including services provision, fences, surface treatments, kerbs, channels and the like will form a future phase of works, with approval (by way of a separate application or as a condition of permit) to be sought as required under the *Heritage Act 2017* and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

In the design and development of all works, consideration has been given to the requirements of the relevant planning framework and guidelines that apply to the place, including the Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework (refer to Section 6.1.2 and 6.2.2 of this HIS).



Figure 26 Recent aerial image of the Exford Waters subdivision to the north of the Exford Homestead site (approximately indicated)
Source: Nearmap, image date January 2025

5.0 Proposed works

Concurrent with subdivision works it is proposed to undertake a comprehensive suite of stabilisation/conservation works to the heritage buildings and features. These works are identified in detail below and documented in the accompanying architectural drawings (conservation scope), dated 8 November 2024.

Landscape works are also proposed to support the proposed subdivision as outlined below.

5.1 Stabilisation/conservation works scope

5.1.1 *Homestead precinct*

House (B1)

The main house is to be restored and refurbished for use as a residence. The works include the provision of new kitchen and bathroom facilities and the upgrading of services to meet contemporary needs. Works comprise:

- Demolition of existing concrete/timber verandah including front steps to south elevation and walkway to B6
- Demolition of enclosed sunroom to north verandah
- Demolition of existing stair from north verandah to basement
- Demolition of existing ground floor bathroom and kitchen
- Demolition of existing timber stair between ground and first floors
- Localised widening of openings on ground floor
- Salvage of three existing windows for reinstatement, ground floor
- Demolition of existing floor and floor structure to billiards room, ground floor
- Removal of non-original linoleum floor, first floor
- Demolition of existing corrugated roof sheeting; note original shingles below to be retained in situ
- Demolition of existing rainwater goods
- Reconstruction of timber verandah including front steps to south elevation matching original detail, and extension of verandah around west elevation
- Reconstruction of walkway to B6
- Construction of new glazed breakfast room (G6) and laundry (G7) to north verandah
- Construction of new concrete stair from north verandah to basement
- Construction of new ensuite (G2), two new bathrooms (G3, G8), and new kitchen (G9) on ground floor
- Construction of new timber stair between ground and first floors
- Construction of new corridor (G4) running east-west between bedrooms and hallway (G12)
- Relocation of one existing window (XWG-01) to north wall of G01
- Reconstruction of timber floor and floor structure to former billiards room (G10) and reinstatement of two original windows
- Replacement of water-logged ceiling in G10
- Repair of timber floor to first floor

- Localised reconstruction of timber floor to first floor where stair reconstructed
- Hard plaster and lath and plaster repair to first floor
- Construct new bathroom (F1) to first floor
- Replacement of all corrugated roof sheeting over original shingles, including new sarking and thermal insulation to ceilings
- All new rainwater goods
- All new services connections including subsurface drainage to perimeter of homestead and trenching in precinct
- External conservation works including weatherboard repair/replacement, glazing replacement, render repair, repointing, and parging to chimneys
- Total repaint, internal and external

Kitchen and servants' quarters (B2 & B3)

The former kitchen is to be restored and made sound for a future use. The works are focused on structural stabilisation, weatherproofing and the introduction of electrical services. Works comprise:

- Demolition of partially collapsed timber extension, servant's quarters (B3) and non-original brick infill to west of original masonry structure (kitchen)
- Salvage 1 no. timber window from north skillion wall
- Demolition of existing damaged timber verandah posts, temporary propping
- Demolition of existing corrugated roof sheeting; note original shingles below to be retained in situ
- Demolition of existing rainwater goods
- Construction of new concrete slab with footings to inside of structure. Existing bluestone walls to be tied back to new footings
- Construction of new timber floor finish over slab
- Reconstruction of masonry walls to west elevation, render finish to match existing adjacent
- Install new timber verandah posts to match the original detail
- Repair of brick paving to verandah
- Replacement of all corrugated roof sheeting over original shingles
- All new rainwater goods and local installation of new timber fascia
- All new subsurface drainage
- External conservation works including render repair, stone crack repair, repointing, glazing replacement
- External painting

Stable/garage (B4)

The former stables/garage building is to be restored and made sound for a future use. The works are focused on structural stabilisation, partial recladding and weatherproofing. Works comprise:

- Removal of existing peppercorn tree to west elevation

- Demolition of non-original corrugated iron wall cladding, west elevation
- Demolition of lightweight stud framing to west elevation
- Demolition of existing corrugated roof sheeting; note original shingles below to be retained in situ
- Removal of non-original mirror to east elevation
- Lifting of timber floor, subfloor excavation, and reinstatement
- Lift and relay bluestone and brick paving
- Replacement of all corrugated roof sheeting over original shingles
- All new rainwater goods
- All new subsurface drainage
- New timber posts to north end, west elevation
- External conservation works including replacement of weatherboards, replacement of split timbers, glazing replacement, and remediation of sagging structure
- External painting

Stables (B5)

The former stables building is to be restored and made sound for a future use. The works are focused on structural stabilisation and weatherproofing. Works comprise:

- Replacement of existing corrugated roof sheeting with new to match original, including installation of safety mesh and flashings
- All new rainwater goods connecting to new subsurface drainage
- External conservation works including replacement of damaged weatherboards, reinstatement of lattice screen and timber door, glazing replacement
- Lifting of timber floor, subfloor excavation, and reinstatement
- Lift and relay bluestone and brick paving
- External painting

Underground tank (south) (B6)

The above ground enclosure to the underground tank is to be restored and made sound. The works are focused on structural stabilisation and weatherproofing. Works comprise:

- Replacement of existing corrugated roof sheeting with new to match original, including installation of safety mesh and flashings
- All new rainwater goods connecting to new subsurface drainage
- Replacement of all rotten timber weatherboards
- External painting

West bluestone pavilion (B7)

The works to the bluestone pavilions (B7 and B8) include stabilisation of the structures, new flooring, plaster repairs, drainage and weatherproofing. Works to B7 include:

- Construction of new concrete slab with footings to inside of structure. Existing bluestone walls to be tied back to new footings
- Construction of new timber floor finish over slab
- Bluestone crack repairs
- Reconstruction of bluestone chimney to match original detail
- Glazing replacements to match original detail
- Replacement of non-original timber door
- Internal hard plaster repairs to walls, new plaster ceiling
- Internal painting
- All new downpipes connecting to new subsurface drainage

East bluestone pavilion (B8)

Works to B8 include:

- Construction of new concrete slab with footings to inside of structure. Existing bluestone walls to be tied back to new footings
- Construction of partial new timber floor finish over slab
- Bluestone conservation repairs
- Reconstruction of bluestone chimney to match original detail
- Glazing replacements to match original detail
- Replacement of non-original timber doors
- Internal hard plaster repairs to walls, new plaster ceiling
- Internal painting
- All new downpipes connecting to new subsurface drainage
- Take up slate roof, install new sarking, and reinstate with new flashings
- Construction of new bathroom facility in west room including internal linings and fittings/fixtures
- All new electrical service connections

Gardener's cottage (B9)

The gardener's cottage is in a ruinous state and the works involve dismantling of the partially collapsed structure and stabilisation of retained low level fabric. Works comprise:

- Demolition of collapsed sections of wall and roof structures
- Retention of perimeter bluestone walls to nom. 800mm high (four courses), including extent window sills
- Removal of graffiti and allow to repoint substrate
- Local reconstruction of collapsed sections using salvaged stone to 800mm high
- Render parging to top surface of retained bluestone

Entry gateposts (F2)

The entry gates and fencing will be retained in-situ and restored. Works comprise:

- Retention and repair of existing timber posts
- Replacement of rotten timber orbs to posts
- Replacement of timber rails to fence structure
- Localised replacement and reinstatement of pickets
- Allow for new timber gate
- Prepare and paint

Bluestone wall (F3)

The bluestone wall and timber fence will be restored and reconstructed. Works comprise:

- Allow to rebuild bluestone plinth to full extent
- Render parging to top surface of bluestone plinth
- Salvage and reconstruct timber fence structure as required
- Localised replacement of timber items to match original
- Removal of non-original timber rails and replace with timber rails to match original
- Prepare and paint

5.1.2 Farm buildings precinct

Bluestone barn (B10)

The barn will be restored and refurbished to enable future adaptation for commercial use. The works will include reconstruction of the east side skillion. Works comprise:

- Demolition of partially collapsed timber roof structure to east skillion
- Demolition of brick trough within east skillion
- Dismantle and salvage of bluestone walls to east skillion
- Removal of non-original steel door to west elevation
- Reconstruction of bluestone east skillion using salvaged bluestone to match original, including new glazing and all new roof
- Construction of new glazed skillion to west elevation
- Construction of new concrete slab with footings to inside of structure. Existing bluestone walls to be tied back to new footings
- Lift and relay existing slate roof and all new flashings to main barn, including installation of new sarking and timber lining boards
- All new rainwater goods connecting to new subsurface drainage
- All new services connections and trenching to farm precinct
- External conservation works including bluestone crack repair, resetting of stone, repointing, new timber fascias, and glazing replacements

- Allow to remove temporary steel propping
- Painting of joinery items

Underground tank (north) (B11)

The above ground enclosure to the underground tank is to be restored externally and made sound for a future use (not for water storage). The works are focused on structural stabilisation and weatherproofing. Works comprise:

- Replacement of existing corrugated roof sheeting with new to match original, including installation of safety mesh and flashings
- All new rainwater goods connecting to new subsurface drainage
- Replacement of all rotten timber weatherboards
- External painting

Blacksmith's forge and cottage (B12)

The blacksmith's forge and cottage are in a ruinous state and the works involve dismantling of the partially collapsed structures and stabilisation of retained low level fabric. Works comprise:

- Demolition of collapsed sections of wall, timber extension, and roof structures
- Retention of perimeter bluestone walls to nom. 820mm high (three courses), including extant window sills
- Localised repointing
- Local reconstruction of collapsed sections using salvaged stone to 820mm high
- Render parging to top surface of retained bluestone

Shearing shed (not listed in VHR extent)

Works to the shearing shed are limited to securing the building.

5.2 Landscape works

5.2.1 *Tree removal*

The proposed subdivision plan establishes a conservation open space to the west of the farm buildings precinct which includes the stand of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*). The majority of the existing trees within this stand will be retained within the property and included in the conservation reserve (proposed Lavery Park). A total of five Grey Box trees are proposed to be removed to facilitate the proposed subdivision layout, comprising four large and one small tree (tree nos. 2, 24, 38, 39 and 40), variously located on the outside of the north, east and west sides of the stand of Grey Box.

Additional trees within the site and along the Exford Road property boundary are also proposed to be removed. This includes the existing Peppercorn tree to west elevation of the stable/garage (B4), to facilitate the proposed conservation works to this building. A group of eight Pepper, Cypress and Sugar Gum trees within and to the north of the proposed farm buildings precinct are also proposed to be removed (tree nos. 542, 543, 544, 545, 547, 548, 549 and 550).

Aligning the east (Exford Road) property boundary, it is also proposed to remove one Pine and a number of Sugar Gum trees (tree nos. 584-605, with the exception of tree no. 598).

5.3 Services

The accompanying Preliminary Servicing Report for Exford Waters Estate Lot 4B outlines the expected infrastructure provisions and future requirements for the proposed subdivision. These services comprise drainage, sewerage, water, electricity and telecommunications, and will be tied into the existing service provision for the Exford Waters development to the north.

The works for the provision of services will likely be undertaken progressively, according to the staged development of the subdivision. Detailed design for these works has not yet been developed.

6.0 Assessment of heritage impacts - subdivision

6.1 Melton Planning Scheme

The statutory heritage framework in relation to an application for subdivision of a place which is included in the VHR is set out within the Melton Planning Scheme. In accordance with Clause 43.01-2 of the Scheme, the following permit requirement and referral process is identified for places in the VHR:

Permit requirement

A permit is required under this overlay to subdivide a heritage place which is included in the Victorian Heritage Register. This includes the subdivision or consolidation of land including any building or airspace.

Referral of applications

An application to subdivide a heritage place which is included in the Victorian Heritage Register must be referred to the relevant referral authority under Section 55 of the Act in accordance with Clause 66 of this scheme.

Pursuant to Clause 66.01 of the Melton Planning Scheme, the Executive Director specified in the *Heritage Act 2017* is a determining referral authority for an application to subdivide a heritage place of which all or part of is included in the VHR.

Provided below is an assessment of the relevant planning considerations for the proposed subdivision plan. An assessment of the potential for heritage impacts from the subdivision on the place as included in the VHR is also provided (Section 6.2).

6.1.1 Toolern Precinct Structure Plan

As outlined in Section 2.2.2 of this HIS, the property is included in Clause 37.07 Urban Growth Zone of the Melton Planning Scheme. Schedule 3 to Clause 37.07 'Toolern Precinct Structure Plan' applies to the property. The Toolern PSP was prepared by the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) in July 2011 and subsequently amended in December 2015 and February 2019. The PSP is an Incorporated Document to the Melton Planning Scheme.⁶

The Toolern PSP is a long-term plan for urban development. In addressing precinct features related to heritage, the PSP notes as follows in relation to the subject property:

⁶ Amendment C232melt to the Melton Planning Scheme proposes to update the Toolern PSP (Amended June 2022). This amendment has been adopted by Council, but not yet gazetted. The amended PSP does not include any changes relevant to Exford Homestead.

The property is a prime example of first settlement and presents one of the principal heritage opportunities in the precinct. Consideration should be given to the viable, commercial use of these assets, provided that such use adequately protects the heritage values.⁷

Of relevance to the current application, the PSP identifies the Exford Road Conservation Area (shown in Figure 27 and comprising the whole of the registered place) and describes that place as:

... a unique area within the precinct. Features include native vegetation, heritage assets and view lines to the Melton Weir. The Exford Estate and Stables are on the Victorian Heritage Register.⁸

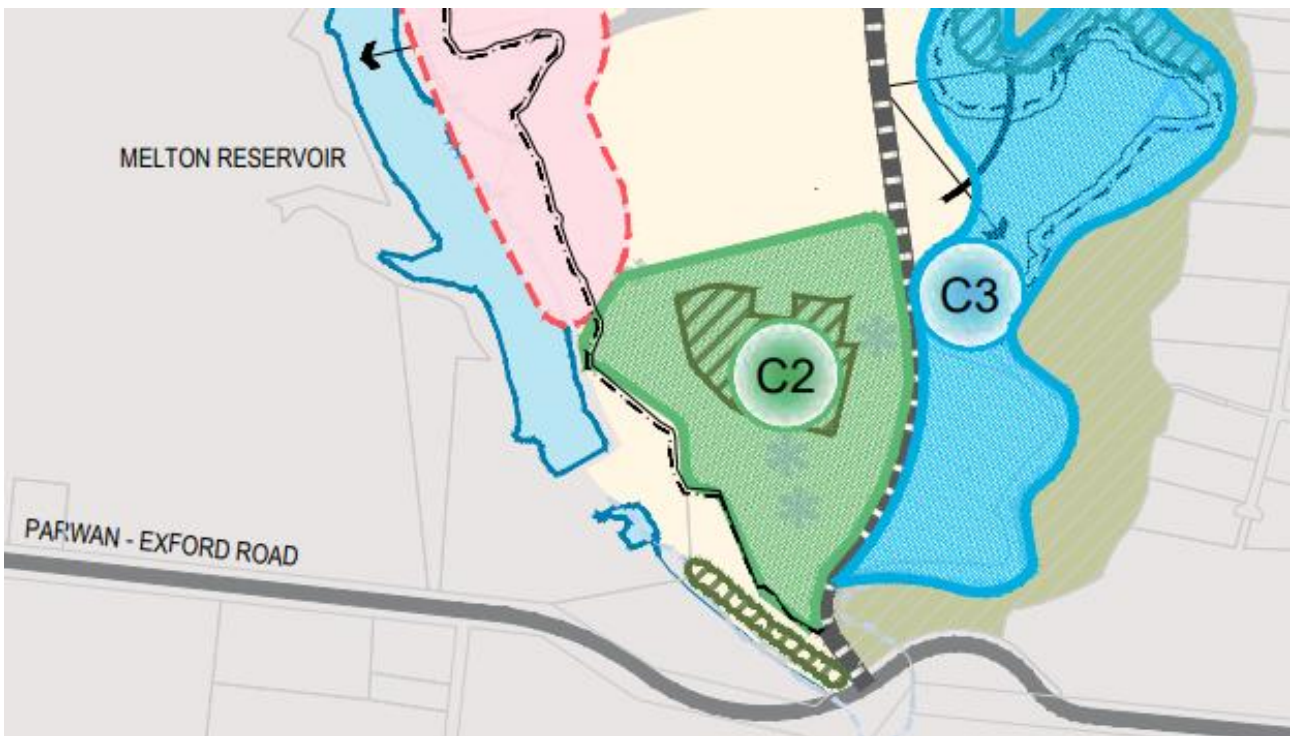


Figure 27 Exford Road Conservation Area indicated in green (C2) in the Toolern PSP
Source: Toolern Precinct Structure Plan, Amended February 2019, p. 24

The PSP sets out planning and design guidelines for the Exford Road Conservation Area (ERCA) as follows. These are considered in detail below.

C2 Exford Road Conservation Area

The following planning and design guidelines must be met:

- Commence development in accordance with an approved conservation management plan.
- Development in or adjacent to the significant Box Gum Woodland must ensure that:
 - The ecological value of the woodland is not significantly reduced.
 - The heritage character of the area is not significantly diminished.

⁷ Melton Planning Scheme Incorporated Document, Toolern Precinct Structure Plan, Amended February 2019, p. 11.

⁸ Melton Planning Scheme Incorporated Document, Toolern Precinct Structure Plan, Amended February 2019, p. 5.

- The allotment design and layout results in a high retention of trees on the site.
- Except with the consent of the Responsible Authority, a permit must not be granted to use or subdivide land, or construct a building and carry out works within the Exford Road Conservation Area until an Urban Design Framework has been approved by the Responsible Authority [refer Section 6.1.2 of this HIS].

The following planning and design guidelines should be met:

- Maintain a clear visual link between the Exford Homestead and the coach house.
- Ensure development adjacent to the Exford Homestead enhances the heritage qualities of the site and creates a focal point for the community.
- Ensure the open space network and trail network provides connections to the Exford Homestead.
- Large clusters of trees are to be protected and enhanced within a 6ha public open space reserve.
- Ensure that development appropriately integrates with the precinct to the north.⁹

Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan (CMP)

The *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan (CMP)* was prepared by Lovell Chen in 2020 to establish the nature and extent of the site's cultural heritage significance, and to ensure that the conservation, future uses, adaptation and development of the place have regard for its heritage significance. The CMP is not referenced in the Melton Planning Scheme as either an Incorporated Document or Policy Document, and there is no mechanism for the CMP to be approved by Council or Heritage Victoria except as a condition of permit. Notwithstanding, consideration of the relevant conservation policies in the CMP relating to subdivision is provided at Section 6.2.2 of this HIS. The subdivision as proposed is consistent with these policies and accordingly consistent with the relevant planning and design guideline for the ERCA.

'The Box Gum Woodland'

As related to the Grey Box woodland, the subdivision plan establishes an open space reserve (proposed Lavery Park) to the west of the farm buildings precinct which includes the stand of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*). The majority of the existing trees within this woodland are to be retained with the proposed removal of five trees only, and the open space reserve is surrounded by a road network with all new residential allotments entirely outside of this designated area. The removal of five trees forming part of the stand of Grey Box will not be perceptible in views to the stand of trees and will not compromise the nature or character of the open space reserve. The establishment of conservation open space containing this group of trees with new development outside of this area will also ensure that the ecological value is not significantly reduced and the heritage character of the Grey Box woodland will be maintained.

Urban Design Framework

An Urban Design Framework for the ERCA has been prepared and approved by Council. This framework is addressed in Section 6.1.2 below.

⁹ Melton Planning Scheme Incorporated Document, Toolern Precinct Structure Plan, Amended February 2019, p. 26.

Planning and design guidelines

In considering the planning and design guidelines set out in the PSP, the proposed subdivision plan also complies with the framework and design guidelines which should be met for the ERCA. The plan allows for the key visual connections between the Exford Homestead and the coach house to be maintained through the creation of a residential heritage site (containing the homestead precinct) and commercial heritage site (containing the farm buildings precinct). These precincts are separated only by the proposed Lavery Park conservation open space, which maintains the existing conditions, and a roadway connecting the two precincts. There is no other development proposed adjacent to the Exford Homestead as part of this permit application.

In terms of integration with the adjoining residential development to the north of the Exford Road Conservation Area (refer Figure 26), the subdivision plan continues the Exford Waters development within the portion of the site identified for residential use in the ERCA Urban Design Framework.

6.1.2 Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework

Schedule 3 of Clause 37.07 of the Melton Planning Scheme includes specific provisions for the ERCA (37.07-2.10) as follows:

Except with the consent of the Responsible Authority, a permit must not be granted to use or subdivide land, or construct a building and carry out works within [sic] shown as the Exford Rd Conservation Area (on Plan 7 “Image & Character” of the Toolern Precinct Structure Plan, [refer Figure 27]) until an Urban Design Framework has been prepared to the satisfaction of the Responsible Authority.

A permit may be granted to subdivide land or to construct a building or construct and carry out works prior to the approval of an urban design framework if, in the opinion of the responsible authority, the grant of the permit is consistent with the requirements for the Urban Design Framework for the relevant locality set out in the incorporated precinct structure plan.

The ERCA Urban Design Framework (UDF) was approved by the City of Melton in April 2022 in accordance with Clause 37.07 – Schedule 3 of the Melton Planning Scheme. ‘The purpose of the UDF is to investigate the best strategy for development of the site to incorporate residential (and other potential) land uses, while preserving the ecological and heritage value of the site.’¹⁰

The key opportunities on the site as identified in the UDF include:

- Conservation areas primarily located in the Grey Box Woodland Reserve,
- Residential housing development bordering the conservation areas designed on best practice environmental and social principles,
- Retention and reuse of the heritage homestead and gardens,
- Open space and recreation adjacent to the Melton Reservoir and Werribee River,
- Wetlands for storm water retention and additional green amenity,
- Water storage and reuse for irrigation, and
- Interpretation of indigenous and post- European settlement heritage, environment and culture.¹¹

¹⁰ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 4.

¹¹ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 4.

The Framework has been shaped by the following key elements, including:

- A Grey Box Woodland Reserve of 6.0 Ha comprised of 2.0 hectares of Conservation Open Space, and 4.0 Ha of Passive Open Space,
- A revitalised Exford Homestead with potential residential, or hospitality uses that are respectful of and celebrate its history and provenance,
- An integrated Farm Buildings precinct incorporating the opportunity for sensitive new uses (such as allied small commercial uses like a plant nursery), or possibly for local tourism uses such as a cafe focused on the users of the Toolern Creek and Werribee River shared trails,
- A new public Exford Park to the south of the Homestead with wide green open space, and direct connection to the Werribee River shared path,
- A neighbourhood character that is a clear identity for an authentic precinct of heritage and ecological value,
- An open space of 0.22 Ha incorporating the connection of the Werribee River trail through the site via a 3m shared path, which runs the length of the Melton Reservoir through new urban development,
- A network of local tree lined streets landscaped with a character respectful of the Grey Box Woodland Reserve, and
- A new residential community incorporating dwellings respectfully located in the landscape setting.¹²

The UDF also includes planning and design requirements and guidelines to implement the development strategy set out in the framework. These are addressed at Section 6.2.2 of this HIS.

Urban structure plan

The urban structure plan reproduced at Figure 28 forms part of the UDF to provide a development framework for the ERCA. This plan addresses the key elements of the heritage place (identified above) by identifying areas with greater or lesser potential for residential development as well as public open space, vegetation reserve (Grey Box Woodland Reserve), and heritage precincts containing the complex of buildings within the site.

¹² City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 18.



Urban Structure










- | | |
|---|---|
|  Heritage Precincts |  Grey Box Woodland Reserve |
|  Residential Use |  Public Open Space |
|  Sensitive Development Area |  Melton Reservoir Interface |
|  Limited or No Development Area |  Potential Public Reserve OR inclusion in the Homestead Buildings Precinct |
|  Potential Heritage Interpretation | |

Figure 28 Endorsed urban structure plan for the Exford Road Conservation Area
 Source: Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework

By way of general comment, the proposed subdivision plan for Exford Homestead is consistent with the urban structure plan, but proposes a lesser extent of residential development than is contemplated in this plan. This results in larger curtilage areas for the homestead and farm buildings precincts. Provided below is the UDF definition of the areas identified in the urban structure plan and a comment on the subdivision plan as proposed.

Heritage Precincts

Two heritage precincts are identified in the plan and defined as follows:

There are two primary heritage areas, the Homestead Buildings precinct and the Farm Building precinct. Additionally, the site's historical significance as the last remnant of 'Exford', a once extensive pastoral landholding, pertains to the wider landscape of the site and the pastoral setting surrounding the Homestead. It is important that any and all future development works in the precinct minimise the potential to obscure the historical relationship between the homestead and farm buildings and adversely impact the cultural heritage significance of the Place.¹³

Comment on subdivision plan: Consistent with the UDF, the subdivision plan incorporates the two heritage precincts, the homestead precinct and farm buildings precinct, within the residential heritage site and commercial heritage site respectively. Both heritage sites comprise a greater area than is identified for the heritage precincts in the UDF, providing a larger curtilage for the heritage buildings. The proposed commercial heritage site containing the farm buildings precinct extends to the south into areas 1A and 1B (refer below). The proposed residential heritage site containing the homestead precinct incorporates Area 3C and part of Area 3B (refer below), as well as a section of land to the south-east identified in the UDF for potential inclusion in the homestead precinct.

Residential Uses

Areas 2A, 2B and 3A at the north and north-western end of the Exford Road Conservation Area are identified in the UDF for residential use, defined as follows:

Heritage Victoria, the responsible authority for heritage matters, has indicated that they are comfortable for some residential development to occur to the north of the Grey Box Woodland, to connect to the Exford Waters development. This aligns with the zones identified as 'for development.'¹⁴

Comment on subdivision plan: Consistent with the UDF, almost all of the residential lots in the subdivision plan are located within areas 2A, 2B and 3A, with a limited extent of subdivision in area 3B only (refer below).

Sensitive Development Areas

Areas 1B and 3B to the south-east and south-west of the Grey Box Woodland Reserve are identified in the UDF as sensitive development areas. These areas are defined in the UDF as follows:

It may be possible for limited development to occur in precincts 1B and 3B. Development in these areas should provide active frontages to the Grey Box Woodland, the Farm Buildings Precinct, the Exford Homestead Buildings Precinct, Exford Road, and the Werribee River / Melton Reservoir.¹⁵

Comment on subdivision plan: A small number of larger lots (in the order of 750m² – 2270m²) are proposed in the subdivision plan in the northern extent of Area 3B only. No residential subdivision is proposed in the balance of Area

¹³ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

¹⁴ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

¹⁵ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

3B to the south or at all in Area 1B, with these areas incorporated into the larger residential and commercial heritage sites.

Limited or No Development Areas

Areas 1A and 3C to the east and west of the homestead heritage precinct are identified as limited or no development areas. These areas are defined in the UDF as follows:

Development of structures/ buildings in precincts 1A and 3C will be limited. Possible development in this area could include car parking, and minor infrastructure such as paths, landscaping and fencing less than 1.2 metres in height. Any built form must not obscure significant views or interrupt the pastoral character associated with the Homestead. Landscaping and small-scale introduced infrastructure in these precincts should be sympathetic to the pastoral character of the heritage place and be discrete.¹⁶

Comment on subdivision plan: As noted above, no residential subdivision is proposed within areas 1A or 3C. Additionally, no development within these areas as incorporated into the residential and commercial heritage sites is proposed as part of the subdivision plan.

Grey Box Woodland Reserve

The requirement for an open space reserve encompassing the Grey Box Woodland is identified in the UDF as follows

The Toolern PSP requires the provision of a 6.0 hectare reserve for the purpose of the conservation of the Grey Box woodland located on the site. The total Grey Box Woodland Reserve is comprised of:

- 4.0 ha of Conservation Passive Open Space
- 2.0 ha of Conservation Open Space¹⁷

Comment on subdivision plan: Consistent with the UDF, the subdivision plan provides a consolidated open space reserve comprising the whole of the Grey Box woodland (proposed Lavery Park). This reserve is separated from the residential lots by way of an internal road network.

Public Open Space

The Exford Park will be located in the southern part of the site, in the section abutting the Werribee River. This area will remain as open paddocks and grassland, in order to maintain the open, pastoral quality of the significant heritage space, and to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values. Sections of this area adjacent to Exford Road may be retained as part of the Homestead precinct, which may be retained in private ownership.¹⁸

Comment on subdivision plan: The proposed subdivision plan is consistent with the UDF in maintaining all of the land to the south of the homestead precinct as undeveloped open space, partly included within the residential heritage site. Services including a gas easement and Council drainage reserve are included in this area, but these will not impact on the utilisation of this land as a passive open space.

¹⁶ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

¹⁷ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

¹⁸ City of Melton, Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework, April 2022, p. 20.

6.1.3 Melton Planning Scheme - Heritage Provisions

The relevant heritage-related provisions in the Melton Planning Scheme have been considered. These include:

- Clause 02.03-5 Built Environment and Heritage
- Clause 15.03-1S Heritage Conservation
- Clause 15.03-1L-01 Heritage Conservation
- Clause 43.01 Heritage Overlay

The heritage provisions at Clauses 02.03-5 and 15.03-1S set out the strategic framework and direction for the application of the Heritage Overlay within the municipality. Clause 15.03-1L-01 and 43.01 relate specifically to the operation of the Heritage Overlay.

The relevant strategy included in Clause 15.03-1L-01 are as follows:

Support creative adaptive reuse of heritage places in precinct structure plan areas with sympathetic and imaginative designs compatible with the significance, scale, form and materials of the heritage place.

The Heritage Overlay at Clause 43.01-8 sets out decision guidelines which must be considered when deciding on an application for subdivision:

- The significance of the heritage place and whether the proposal will adversely affect the natural or cultural significance of the place.
- Any applicable statement of significance (whether or not specified in the schedule to this overlay), heritage study and any applicable conservation policy.
- Whether the proposed subdivision will adversely affect the significance of the heritage place.
- Whether the proposed subdivision may result in development which will adversely affect the significance, character or appearance of the heritage place.

The statement of significance for Exford Homestead included in the *Melton Heritage Study Stage 2, 2007*, is reproduced in part below (where relevant to consideration of subdivision):

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is of State heritage significance as one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria. It is also of great importance and rarity due to its vernacular construction in *pise de terre*. This homestead is part of a significant complex which includes early and notable bluestone structures, in varying conditions, ranging from a large utilitarian coach house, small ornamented lodgings, a terrace containing servants quarters and blacksmith, and distinctive early fences. Overallly [sic], the complex constitutes a cultural heritage precinct of very high significance in an equally significant cultural landscape.

[...]

The homestead is situated on a picturesque bluff, enabling it to take advantage of the views over the Werribee River near its junction with Toolern Creek. The prime qualities of this site were recognised in 1841 when it was designated as the village reserve for the district; it appears also to have been selected as a dwelling site prior to the arrival of Simon Staughton. This crucial undeveloped area south and west of the homestead preserves the view from the homestead across the Werribee River, and enhances its setting. It also enables the key elevation of the homestead complex to be seen and appreciated in its rural landscape context from surrounding points including Exford Road and the Melton Reservoir park. Remnant native vegetation and exotic vegetation associated with the homestead are integral to this landscape setting.

... the prime siting and substantial size of the complex conveys the former size and wealth of one of Victoria's larger pastoral runs, situated on rich volcanic plains near to Melbourne...

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is socially significant at the Local level (AHC G1). The homestead is widely recognised as the earliest building within the municipality; the broader complex is a substantial and prominently located landmark within the municipality.¹⁹

The development of the subdivision plan has been driven by the relevant guiding documents included in, or approved in accordance with, the Melton Planning Scheme, in particular the Toolern PSP and the ERCA UDF. As outlined above, these documents have had regard to the heritage values and sensitivity of the place. Accordingly, the subdivision as proposed has been developed with due consideration to the significance of the place as identified in the *Melton Heritage Study* statement of significance, particularly as related to key views and setting of the homestead. The majority of the site will be retained as either open space reserves or as part of the curtilage of the residential or commercial heritage sites, notably to the south, east and west of the homestead precinct with an open space reserve also comprising the stand of Grey Box to the north. This will maintain the existing views to the homestead from Exford Road and the Melton Reservoir Park (Figure 29), and importantly, will also maintain an understanding of the rural setting of the homestead and protect the landmark qualities of the place.

The complex of heritage buildings will be retained in the two heritage sites (the residential heritage site and commercial heritage site) with no residential subdivision proposed between or immediately surrounding the buildings, maintaining a visual connection between the homestead complex and the farm buildings to the north-east. This is an appropriate response to the significance of the site and complex of heritage buildings.

The subdivision as proposed will not result in any change to the existing complex of buildings, with a separate application being submitted under the *Heritage Act 2017* primarily for conservation works to repair, stabilise and improve the condition of these buildings (refer Section 5.1 of this HIS). While a small number of trees are proposed to be removed, the provision of an open space reserve capturing the Grey Box stand will also retain and protect this native vegetation and its contribution to the significant cultural landscape of the place.

Overall, the significance, character and appearance of the place will not be unacceptably affected by the subdivision plan as proposed, with the residential subdivision area, where change/development will be concentrated, to be located along the north and north-western boundaries of the site.

¹⁹ David Moloney et al., *Melton Heritage Study*, Stage 2, 2007, Volume 3, Citation No, 269 Exford Homestead, <https://www.melton.vic.gov.au/Services/Building-Planning-Transport/Strategic-Planning/Studies-Strategies-Guidelines/Heritage-Planning-Documents/Melton-Heritage-Studies/Melton-Heritage-Study-2007>



Figure 29 View east from Melton Reservoir park to Exford Homestead (homestead building indicated by the arrow)

6.1.4 Conclusion

The proposed subdivision of the subject property is anticipated in the local planning framework and is set within a broader strategic area context providing residential development. As specifically relevant to heritage impacts, the decision guidelines require consideration of the impact of the subdivision on the significance of the place and the potential for the subdivision to result in development which may have an adverse impact.

The subdivision plan for Exford Homestead is responsive to the significance of the place, and consistent with the urban structure plan set out in the UDF prepared and approved pursuant to Clause 37.07 – Schedule 3 of the Melton Planning Scheme. The subdivision as proposed will result in a changed residential context to part of the site, but overall will maintain an understanding and appreciation of the homestead complex in a rural setting, and an understanding of the connection between the homestead and farm buildings precincts. Importantly, it provides an opportunity for the burden of conserving the diverse heritage buildings to be shared rather than falling to a single owner and opens the potential for a range of occupancies and users which might otherwise be financially unsustainable. As such the proposal is one which accords with the relevant policies and guidelines under the Melton Planning Scheme.

6.2 Heritage Act 2017

6.2.1 Relevant considerations

Pursuant to Section 91 of the *Heritage Act 2017*, registered land can be subdivided without a heritage permit if the subdivision is in accordance with a planning permit and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director as a determining referral authority under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*. However, as outlined in Heritage Victoria's most recent pre-application response, planning approval for subdivision does not allow for any associated works or activities within the registered place, including new development, conservation works or services. Accordingly, an application is being made under the *Heritage Act 2017* for the whole of the proposal for Exford Homestead, comprising the proposed subdivision and conservation/associated works to the registered buildings/structures.

Provided below is an assessment of heritage impacts from the proposed subdivision. Consideration of the proposed works to the registered place is provided at Section 7.0 of this HIS.

The key considerations under the Heritage Act are as follows and are required to be considered by the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria in determining whether to approve an application:

- S. 101(2)(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object
- S 101(2)(b) the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object.

6.2.2 *The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place [S101(2)(a)]*

VHR statement of significance

The VHR statement of significance states that Exford Homestead satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the VHR:

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

The values relating to Criterion A are derived from the direct association of Exford Homestead with the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District; the homestead as the last remnant of a once extensive pastoral run that had been in continuous operation since the 1840s as a sheep farm; and as demonstrating in the surviving buildings and features the political and social changes which affected the Port Phillip District and Victoria in the early years of European settlement.

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

As related to rarity (Criterion B), this is demonstrated in the homestead and outbuildings as rare surviving examples from the 1840s and 1850s demonstrating an unusual variety of vernacular construction technologies and in the surviving indigenous Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand to the north of the homestead.

Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

The potential to yield information (Criterion C) relates to potential for archaeological remains at the site of Dr Watton's residence and the area to the north of the homestead where early outbuildings are likely to have been located.

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion D is demonstrated by the range of materials and technologies used in the homestead and early outbuildings; the bluestone and timber fence distinguishing the domestic and agricultural areas; the typical layout of pastoral estates as demonstrated at Exford where there is a clear distinction between the homestead precinct and the farm buildings precinct a short distance to the north-east; and proximity of the homestead to water and a river crossing, and the established roadways.

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

The special association (Criterion H) relates to the long association of the place with the Staughton family, one of the largest owners of freehold land in colonial Victoria.

Comment regarding subdivision

The impact of the proposed subdivision on these values is associated with the change in the extent of the landholding, as defined by the current heritage curtilage of the registered place. Accordingly, it is a consideration as to the degree to which this change, and prospective development, will or will not alter the heritage values. As reflective of the pastoral holdings of the Staughton family at the height of their ownership, the land holding of the registered place forms a small fraction of the original, and later expanded, land holdings. Rather than reflecting the broad acre pastoral pursuits of early European settlers, it presents as a setting for buildings and structures associated with those pursuits and effectively as a visual buffer to the surrounding urban development. Rather than a loss of open pastoral land area and the rural context, as a result of the subdivision, it is the reduction of this buffer and the consequential visual change to setting that is the key consideration.

Addressing this issue in the context of the assessed values, the following observations are provided.

As outlined, the historical significance (Criterion A) of Exford resides in the place as one which evidences the earliest phase of 'European occupation' of the Port Phillip District and in the association of the place with Dr John Watton and the Staughton family. Additionally, significance is derived from the association with sheep farming as a foundation agricultural pursuit within the colony and from the buildings and their materiality, which evidences the changing prosperity of the early settlers. As relevant to the impact of the proposed subdivision on historical significance, the land to be excised and developed is land which is to the north and north-west of the two building precincts. It is land which is not of an elevated importance as related to evidencing the functioning of the property or to the history of ownership.

In concluding as such it is recognised that there is some tension between the heritage values relevant to Criterion A and the proposed subdivision as provided for in the local planning framework. This specifically relates to the historical significance of Exford Homestead as derived from its long-term operation as a sheep farm. While this association is recognised in the statement of significance, sheep farming activity at Exford has significantly decreased in recent decades, as linked to the progressive reduction in the landholding and the introduction of cropping. While retaining some farming activity the registered property is no longer demonstrative of the large scale sheep farming for which it was once known.

Recognising that as noted at Section 6.1, the statutory planning framework anticipates new development within the registered place, the limited subdivision of land to the north presents as a balanced outcome in the context of competing aspirations for the place. In this context the reduction in the heritage curtilage as a consequence of subdivision is not an action which will alter the ability to understand the historical significance of the place.

As related to Criterion B, the 1840s homestead and outbuildings, as rare surviving examples from this period, will be maintained within the proposed subdivision with the existing nineteenth century buildings/structures to be retained within the homestead and farm building precincts. The indigenous Grey Box stand to the north of the homestead also will be retained within a designated open space reserve, with only a small number of these trees identified for removal. As such the subdivision does not present as an action which will have any adverse impact on the rarity of the place.

In terms of the archaeological significance of the place relating to Criterion C, this also will not be affected by the subdivision plan as proposed. The two areas identified in the statement of significance as being of potential archaeological significance will remain undisturbed.

In demonstrating Criterion D, the typical layout of an early pastoral estates demonstrated at Exford Homestead distinguishing domestic and agricultural areas will be maintained and remain evident, within the separate homestead and farm buildings precincts. New residential allotments will be provided to the northern extent of the property only. The demonstration of a sense of enclosure typical of early homesteads will also be maintained within the homestead precinct through the retention of the bluestone wall with integrated timber fence.

Relevant to Criterion H, the proposed subdivision of Exford Homestead also will have no effect on the association of the registered place with the Staughton family.

VHR permit exemption policy

A section of the Exford Homestead permit exemption policy is reproduced below, as relevant to the consideration of future development of the registered place.

In addressing future development the conservation of the following elements and attributes are important considerations in maintaining the heritage significance of the Exford Homestead:

The homestead precinct, comprising the homestead and its associated outbuildings and landscape areas, including the original driveway, as a self-sufficient domestic setting dating to the 1840s. The farm buildings to the north-east of the homestead precinct as a group of buildings and elements with the collective ability to demonstrate aspects of the operation of the Staughton pastoral property from the mid-nineteenth century.

The Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand as a remnant of a species that was once widespread in the area and provides a setting for the homestead and farm building precincts.

A visual connection between the homestead and farm building precincts.

An understanding of the relationship between the homestead complex and the watercourses to the south.

The subdivision plan as proposed has had due regard for the elements and attributes of significance as outlined in the permit exemption policy. This includes the retention of the homestead and farm building precincts, with a visual connection between the groups of buildings maintained, as well as the retention and protection of the Grey Box stand. The provision of all proposed new residential development to the north of the homestead precinct also helps to maintain an understanding of the historical relationship of the homestead complex with the Werribee River and Toolern Creek to the south.

Further consideration of the potential for heritage impacts from the subdivision as proposed is provided below.

Conservation Management Plan

In further informing the consideration of heritage impacts, the CMP provides more detailed guidance on the proposed action.

The CMP was prepared having regard to the anticipated development of Exford Homestead as outlined in the Toolern PSP. The conservation policies included in the CMP provide guidance in relation to the conservation, development and management of the place to retain and reinforce the heritage values in the context of such a change.

The relevant conservation policies relating to subdivision of the place are addressed below.

Heritage curtilage and setting

The heritage curtilage (illustrated at Figure 30) should be defined as:

- *The homestead precinct, including the front paddock, the homestead garden and the yards, and the buildings within this area.*
- *The farm buildings precinct, being the area including all buildings and elements of primary and contributory significance and associated land.*
- *An area of the Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand extending to the north of the homestead precinct and the west of the farm buildings precinct.*
- *The land to the south of the homestead, enclosed by the Werribee River and Exford Road, and defined to the north-west by the contours of the escarpment.*

A heritage curtilage should include all significant elements and establish an area which is managed to ensure the maintenance of heritage significance. Identification of land to be included within a heritage curtilage does not preclude change within this area. Land within a heritage curtilage does, however, need to be managed so as not to adversely impact on the setting, presentation or significance of a heritage place.

The built precincts are of primary significance, relating to their ability to demonstrate Staughton's domestic and pastoral activities at the site from the mid-nineteenth century. The recommendation for the inclusion of the shearing shed (Little or No Significance)²⁰ within the boundary of the farm buildings precinct acknowledges the presence of a shearing shed in this location since the early twentieth century.

The remnant Grey Box stand and the land to the south of the homestead provide an understanding of the property's original setting and are of contributory significance.

The largely denuded area to the east of the Grey Box stand and west of Exford Road contributes to the setting (visual catchment) of the property, but is of no significance. In the case of future development, issues of visual catchment, built form and access in this area should be addressed with reference to the policies relating to views and vistas, subdivision and new works and development.²¹

The heritage curtilage and identified heritage precincts as identified in the CMP are consistent with those identified in the approved UDF, both of which have guided the development of the subdivision plan as proposed. This plan maintains the identified heritage curtilage areas of primary and contributory significance (refer Figure 30) within the proposed residential and commercial heritage sites, including to the north, south and west of the homestead precinct

²⁰ It is noted that the current Victorian Heritage Database Report for Exford Homestead notes under 'Why is it significant?' that, 'The mid-twentieth century shearing shed reflects the continued use of the place for sheep farming and is of contributory significance.'

²¹ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, pp. 141-143.

as well as the land between the heritage precincts. The stand of Grey Box is identified in the subdivision plan as an open space reserve, while the land to the south of the homestead precinct is included in the residential heritage site or Council reserve. This will maintain these areas surrounding the heritage precincts to demonstrate the original setting of the place.

While the land to the east of the Grey Box stand, west of Exford Road, is identified in the CMP as contributing to the setting (visual catchment) of the property but being of no significance, this land forms part of the proposed commercial heritage site which contains the farm buildings precinct. The establishment of a heritage site, retaining this portion of the property free from residential subdivision, will maintain the existing setting of the place in this location and views to the heritage buildings from Exford Road.

The heritage curtilage areas as identified in the CMP have been appropriately addressed in the subdivision plan to ensure all significant elements, with a surrounding area appropriate to maintain the significant setting of the place, are maintained as part of the proposed subdivision.

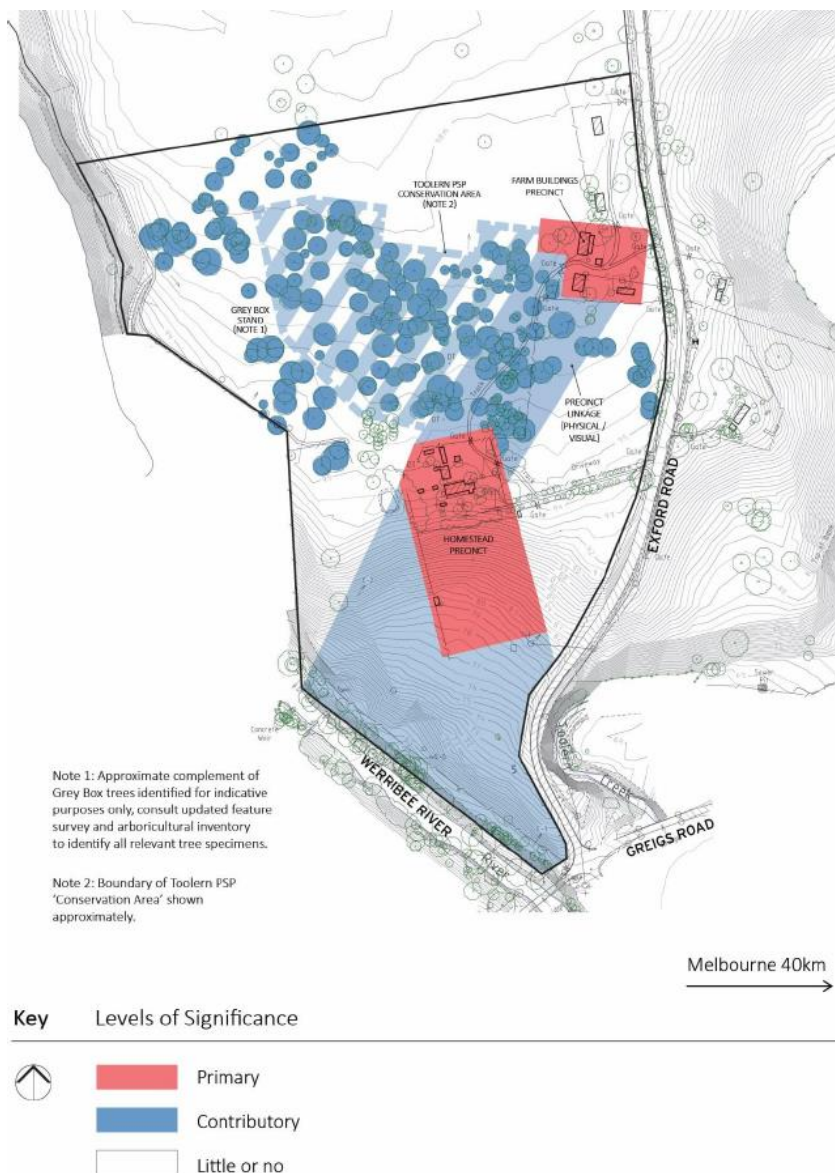


Figure 30 Heritage curtilage plan identifying areas/precincts of primary and contributory significance
 Source: *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan, 2000*, p. 142

Views and vistas

Significant views and vistas from, to and within the property should be maintained.

Views from the property

The property is prominently sited on a bluff looking south and south-east down the Werribee River valley. The view corridor looking from the homestead along the valley should remain free of structures which overly dominate and have the potential to diminish the historic relationship between the residence and the broader landscape.

Views to the property

The primary views to the property are from the roads to south-west (Exford Road) and immediate south-east of the property (Exford Road). These views are largely unchanged since the 1840s, with the land in the foreground being open space. Public views to the homestead from the south-east and south-west should be maintained.

Views within the property

There are lines of sight between the homestead and farm buildings precincts, as seen through the Grey Box stand. These views are important in providing a connection between the domestic and pastoral activities at the property from the mid-nineteenth century. The significance of these views is elevated by the Grey Box stand, which provides an understanding of the character and appearance of the setting at the time of European settlement.²²

A key consideration in the development of the subdivision plan has been the identification and retention of significant views from, to and within the registered place. The siting of the homestead complex of buildings on elevated land with views to the Werribee River and Toolern Creek is identified in the VHR statement of significance for Exford Homestead. The open space to the south of the homestead is important in maintaining the historic relationship between the residence and the broader landscape. This land is captured in the subdivision plan forming part of the residential heritage site and a Council reserve, which will retain the existing view corridor to the south of the homestead precinct. Similarly, the inclusion of this land within an open space reserve will maintain the key public views to the property from Exford Road to the south-east and south-west.

In terms of views within the property, the key view is identified between the homestead and farm buildings precincts, through part of the Grey Box stand. This important visual connection between the groups of the buildings is maintained in the subdivision plan as proposed. This land forms part of the open space reserve comprising the Grey Box stand, and part of the proposed heritage site allotments, with a separating internal roadway only.

As outlined above, the subdivision plan maintains the majority of the heritage place either as part of open space reserves or within the proposed residential or commercial heritage sites. The significant views and vistas to, from and within the property are found in these areas, which will maintain an understanding of the homestead in its historic pastoral setting.

Subdivision

Subdivision with the potential to impact on the ability of the property to demonstrate the key characteristics of a homestead established in the 1840s should not be contemplated.

Land of primary significance

The significance of the Exford Homestead derives in large part from the survival and enduring legibility of the 1840s and 1850s buildings and elements associated with the site's use and

²² Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, pp. 143-144.

operation by Simon Staughton. There is limited potential for future subdivision in areas of primary significance without unreasonably impacting on the property's identified values.

Land of contributory significance

The land to the south of the homestead extending down to the Werribee River is of contributory significance. It provides a context for an appreciation of the property in its original setting. With the exception of the archaeological site (Dr Walton's residence), this land is not known to have been developed. Subdivision of land in this area is an action that could be contemplated from a heritage perspective.

There is no potential for development within the Grey Box Woodland Reserve.

Land of little or no significance

Land of little or no significance can be subdivided without impacting on the property's heritage values.²³

Levels of significance (primary, contributory and little or no significance) are defined in the CMP as outlined in Table 1.²⁴ The levels of significance plans for the homestead and farm buildings precincts are provided at Figure 31 and Figure 32.

Table 1 Levels of significance: definitions

Level of significance	Definition
Primary (P)	<p>Buildings, elements and areas of primary significance, including landscape elements and areas, generally relate directly to the Staughton period of ownership and operation, and contribute directly to an understanding of how the property functioned as a private homestead and pastoral estate from the 1840s to 1927. Some of these elements are in a ruinous condition or have been modified.</p> <p>The landscape precincts of primary significance are valued for their historic role in providing an aesthetic context for the homestead, and for their formal planning, but not necessarily for their current plantings.</p>
Contributory (C)	<p>Buildings, elements and areas of contributory significance are typically later elements which contribute to an understanding of the evolved nature of the place and have some historical value, albeit more limited than elements and fabric of primary significance. Contributory elements, while retaining the majority of their form and fabric, may also have been altered or modified.</p> <p>At Exford, contributory elements generally include the timber additions made by the Sutherlands during the 1930s.</p> <p>The Grey Box (<i>Eucalyptus microcarpa</i>) stand contributes to an understanding of the property's original setting.</p>

²³ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 152.

²⁴ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 124.

Level of significance	Definition
Little or no (L/N)	Buildings and elements of little or no significance, including landscape elements, generally make a limited contribution to the understanding of the historic and aesthetic/architectural significance of the place. They are generally later elements, including elements that have been substantially modified or altered to the extent that their heritage significance has been substantially diminished. Elements of little or no significance may also be later additions to the property that are in a dilapidated condition.

The buildings, elements and areas of primary or contributory significance as identified in the CMP comprise the complex of buildings and later additions, hard landscape elements (fencing and gateposts), formal landscape planning (homestead garden and front paddock) and remnant native vegetation (Grey Box stand) within the property. With the exception of the Grey Box stand, which is captured within an open space reserve, all of the buildings, elements and areas of significance as identified in the CMP fall within the residential or commercial heritage sites in the proposed subdivision plan. These heritage sites incorporate the whole of the homestead and farm buildings precincts, including the associated landscape planning and yard areas in the homestead precinct and the more recent but functionally associated buildings and structures of little or no significance in the farm buildings precinct. The subdivision plan as proposed is therefore consistent with the CMP policy for subdivision, and will retain the fabric and legibility of the buildings, features, layout and elements which demonstrate the key characteristics of a homestead established in the 1840s.

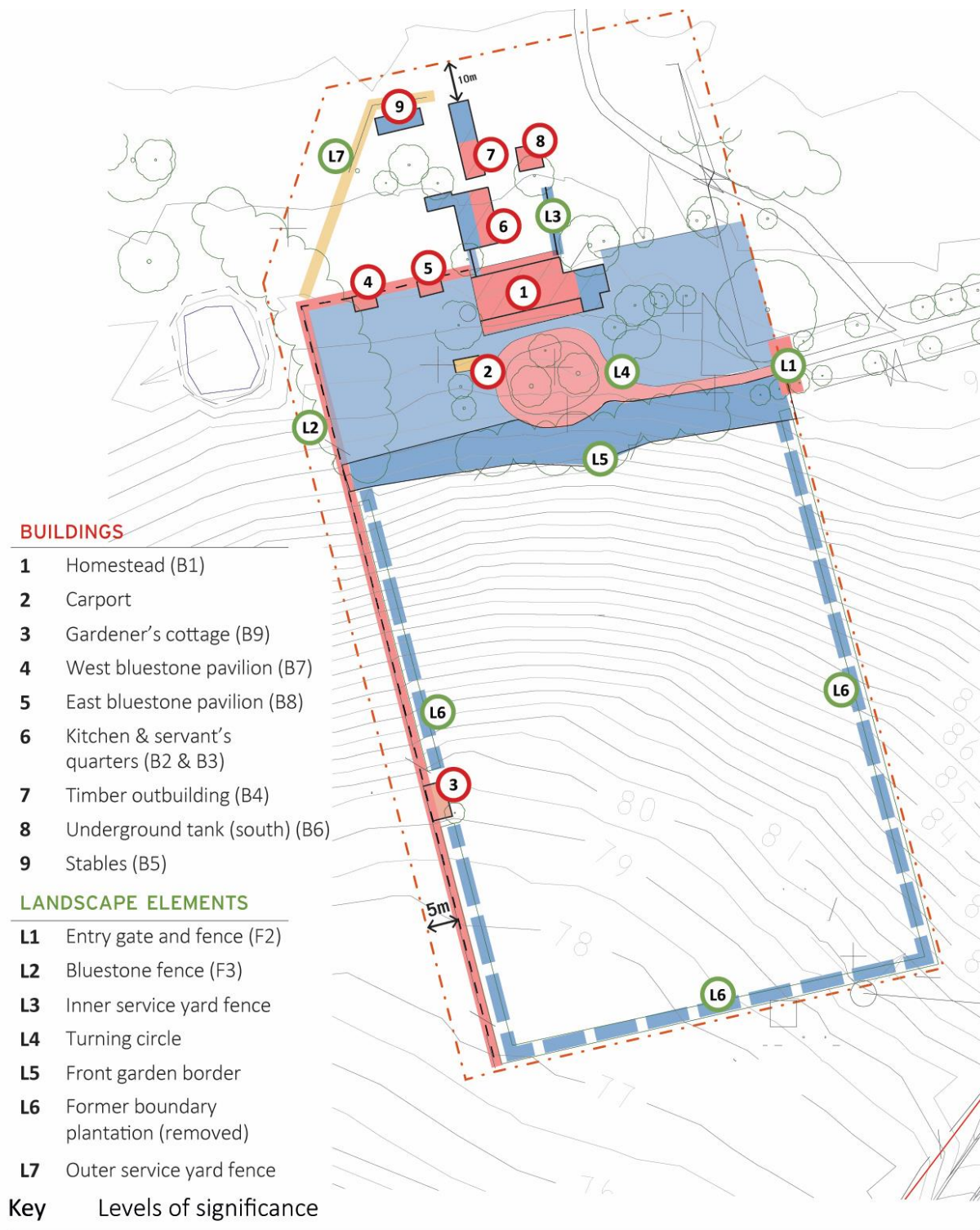


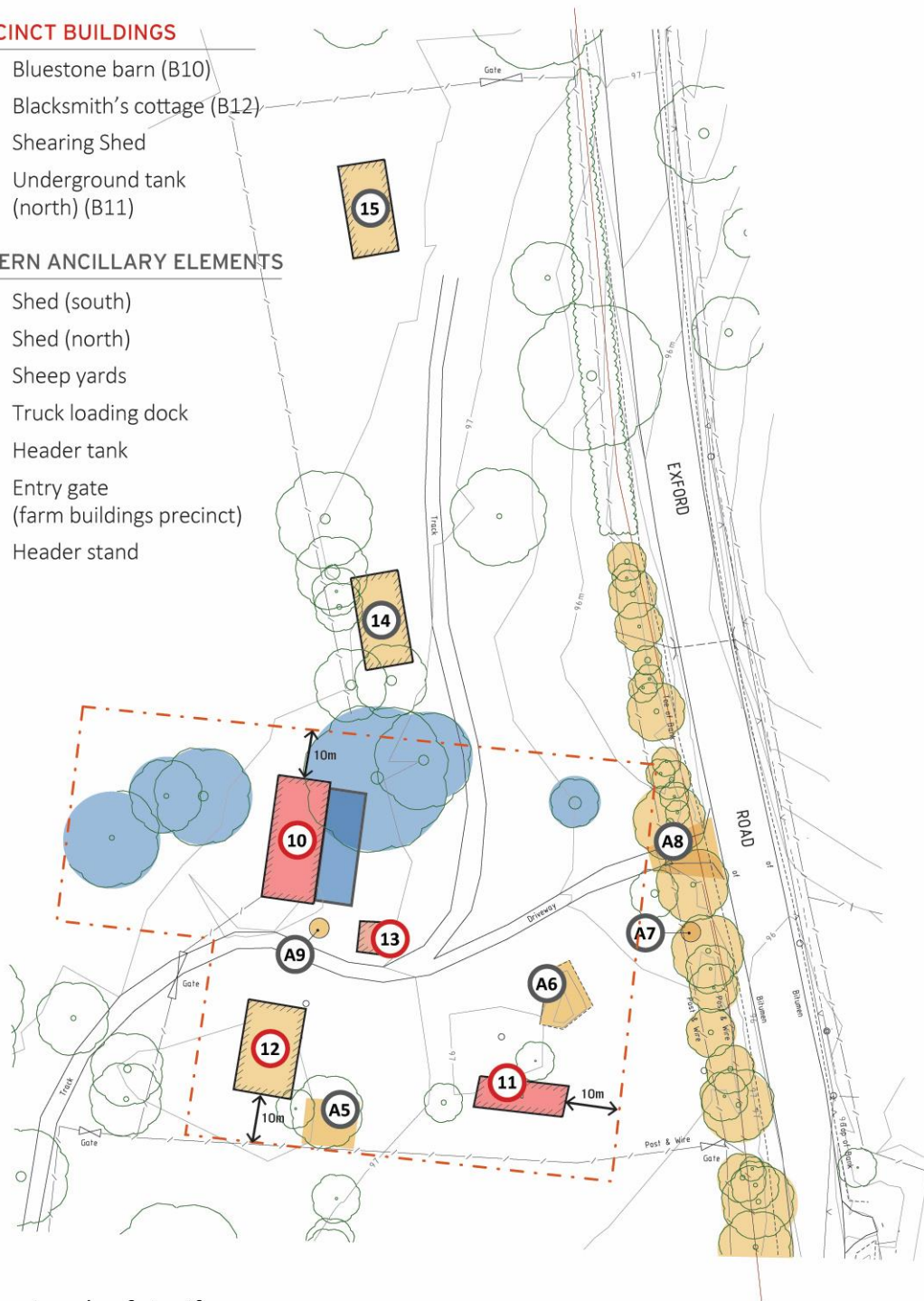
Figure 31 Levels of significance: homestead precinct
 Source: *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, 2000, p. 126

PRECINCT BUILDINGS

- 10 Bluestone barn (B10)
- 11 Blacksmith's cottage (B12)
- 12 Shearing Shed
- 13 Underground tank (north) (B11)

MODERN ANCILLARY ELEMENTS

- 14 Shed (south)
- 15 Shed (north)
- A5 Sheep yards
- A6 Truck loading dock
- A7 Header tank
- A8 Entry gate (farm buildings precinct)
- A9 Header stand



Key Levels of significance

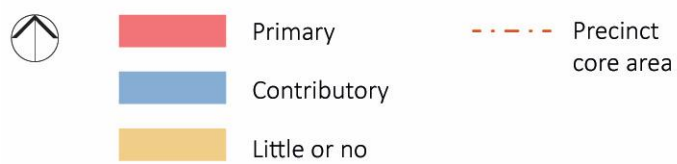


Figure 32 Levels of significance: farm buildings precinct
 Source: *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan, 2000, p. 127*

Future development

Residential development

As outlined in Heritage Victoria's *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register* in considering settings and views, 'the subdivision of land into smaller parcels is not harmful on its own. However, subdivision usually precedes the selling of lots and the construction of new buildings. This has the potential to alter the context of a place, separate visual and historic relationships, obstruct views to and from a place and impact its holistic management.'²⁵

As noted at Section 4.0, no approval is currently being sought as part of either application under the *Heritage Act 2017* or the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* for new residential development in the subdivided lots. Noting however that future development or adaptive reuse is anticipated within the subdivided lots, it is appropriate to consider the potential for adverse heritage impacts from future development resulting from an application for subdivision of Exford Homestead. This is particularly relevant where there is an interface of new residential development with identified elements or areas of significance, notably to the north and west the Grey Box stand and north of the farm buildings precinct.

New development and works within the registered place will be subject to approval under the *Heritage Act 2017*. Planning approval requirements, as relevant, will also apply. The key heritage considerations for future development within the subdivided lots includes the potential for new development to impact on the heritage values of the place.

As noted in Section 6.1.2, the Exford Road Conservation Area Urban Design Framework (ERCA UDF) was approved in accordance with Clause 37.07 – Schedule 3 of the Melton Planning Scheme. The UDF includes consideration in relation to:

- Urban structure
- Heritage and environment
- Land use and activity
- Landscape and the natural environment
- Access and movement
- Built form

For each of the above, the UDF sets out requirements and guidelines for development within the ERCA. This includes specific built form requirements for the different areas identified for residential development, including building levels (i.e. single or two-storey), setbacks, roof form, materiality and the like, and requirements/guidelines for new elements including but not limited to pedestrian pathways, residential landscaping including street trees, residential fencing and street lighting.

In addition, estate-wide design guidelines are also anticipated as a condition of subdivision planning approval, similar to other stages of the Exford Waters Estate to the north of the registered place. Such guidelines would likely be included as part of a covenant applying to all residential allotments, and be subject to approval requirements. Exford Waters Design Guidelines for existing stages of development outside of the heritage place have been approved by Council and include guidelines relating to architectural character, building materials, roof design, dwelling siting, driveways and fencing. Such, or similar, guidelines would also be anticipated to apply to future residential development within the registered place forming part of the Exford Waters estate; it is noted also that the relevant costings for the works are assumed on the existing estate design guidelines.

²⁵ Executive Director, Heritage Victoria, *Principles for considering change to places in the Victorian Heritage Register*, December 2022, p. 4.

Additionally, there are relevant conservation policies in the CMP to guide new development at Exford Homestead, including as relating to landscape (homestead garden, front paddock), uses of the place, new works and development, and boundary treatments.

These guidelines, requirements and guiding conservation policies anticipate new development within the subdivided place and provide parameters and approval requirements for sensitive new development to be contemplated and delivered.

Services provision

As outlined at Section 5.3, a preliminary assessment of future services provision for the proposed subdivision has been undertaken and accompanies this application. This report outlines the required services for the site, and the availability and potential for these services to be tied into the existing service provision for the Exford Waters development to the north or surrounding municipal services. A high-level description of the anticipated service provision and delivery is provided below.

- There is no existing drainage infrastructure on site, and the management of stormwater within the site is expected to be provided by way of a subsurface pipe network to the boundary of all lots in the subdivision, and via overland paths within the road reserves discharging towards the Werribee River.
- Sewerage will be provided by way of extensions of local sewerage assets and by extending gravity reticulation sewers.
- Drinking and recycled water supply for Lot 4B will be provided progressively by extensions of the existing mains from the north of the registered place and/or the existing water main in Exford Road on the east property boundary.
- Extensions of underground high voltage and low electrical voltage cables and provision for substation sites located will be required. These electrical assets will be provided to service residential lots.
- Telecommunication services will be provided by way of an extension of the fibre optic network to the north of the registered place.

Detailed design for these services has not yet been developed and approval (likely by way of a condition of permit) will be sought in due course as required under the *Heritage Act 2017* and the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*.

Historical archaeological considerations

As a registered archaeological place, consideration of the potential for subsurface impacts from the installation of below-ground services for the estate, and the construction of new residential development in the subdivided lots will need to form part of these subsequent approvals processes.

Historical archaeological considerations are addressed at Section 7.2.3 of this HIS.

6.2.3 *The extent to which a refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object [S101(2)(b)]*

As related to the reasonable use of the registered place, the historic and current uses of the place are relevant considerations. As noted in the VHR statement of significance, Exford formed part of an extensive farming property where sheep have been raised since the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (Victoria). Sheep farming activity at Exford has significantly decreased in recent decades, as linked to the progressive reduction in the landholding and the introduction of cropping. There is no opportunity for this or another pastoral use to be successfully and sustainably implemented and maintained within the property. The residential development of part of the registered place is anticipated in the local planning context as described in Section 6.1 above, and would provide a reasonable use for the registered place while also facilitating a beneficial heritage outcome as outlined below.

Relating to economic considerations, and of particular relevance to consideration of an application to subdivide the registered place, is the matter of the conservation, repair and stabilisation of the heritage fabric, the ongoing maintenance of the heritage place including both the building components and landscape, and funding these works. The Exford Homestead CMP notes that ‘while development in a manner consistent with the intention of the PSP may seem contrary to the maintenance of heritage values, conversely, this may contribute to the conservation and stabilisation of significant structures.’²⁶ As detailed at length in the accompanying Report on ‘Reasonable or Economic Use’, the registered place in its current state does not generate sufficient income to cover the considerable outgoings for the site, including ongoing maintenance and repair of the registered buildings and features. The proposed residential subdivision will generate the funding necessary for the documented conservation works; a refusal of the permit application or other unforeseen costs relating to this process would directly affect the availability of funding for these works.

Consideration of the proposed stabilisation and conservation works is provided at Section 7.0 of this HIS, and further details in relation to reasonable/economic use of the registered place is provided at Section 7.3.

6.2.4 *Conclusion*

The residential subdivision of Exford Homestead as proposed has had due regard to the heritage values of the place, and provides for a development outcome which recognises and responds to the surrounding urban context and planning framework, but manages and protects the elements of the place which demonstrate and contribute to its significance. The development of the subdivision plan has been informed by a process of consultation with Heritage Victoria which included consideration of the heritage sensitivities of the registered place, and progressive refinement of the proposal to address and respond to these. The subdivision as proposed will result in a changed residential context to part of the site at its northern extent, but will otherwise maintain an understanding of the 1840s homestead in a pastoral setting.

²⁶ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, 2020, pp. 138-139.

7.0 Assessment of heritage impacts - proposed works

7.1 Relevant considerations

This section addresses the proposed stabilisation and conservation works scope for the heritage buildings and features at Exford Homestead, having regard to the economic use considerations outlined at Section 6.2.3 of this HIS, as well as the landscape work and services as proposed.

As noted above, the key considerations under the Heritage Act are as follows and are required to be considered by the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria in determining whether to approve an application:

- S. 101(2)(a) the extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place or registered object
- S 101(2)(b) the extent to which the application, if refused, would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object.

7.2 The extent to which the application, if approved, would affect the cultural heritage significance of the registered place [S101(2)(a)]

7.2.1 *Stabilisation/conservation works scope*

The extensive group of buildings and structures at Exford, as has been described, are in variable condition. This is in part as a consequence, until more recently, of limited maintenance but more directly related to the fact that for years they have been peripheral to the operational farming activities of the place and largely have been unused. As a consequence a small number are ruinous and beyond repair while others are able to be conserved and protected. In responding to this situation and recognising that buildings in the farm buildings precinct at least are likely to be adapted for new commercial uses, the approach to the works is to stabilise and secure all buildings and structures, to make those that can be actively reused structurally sound and watertight and in the case of the homestead to refurbish the building such that it is provided with new kitchen, bathroom, laundry and similar facilities necessary for it to function as a residence. The works include the provision of services – power, water, sewerage, drainage and the like – to termination points from which distribution can occur as designed to suit future uses.

In designing the works the approach has been guided by the CMP which includes conservation policies for each of the structures. By way of general comment, the conservation and stabilisation works scope is directed at addressing the existing condition of the buildings and features, to maintain and repair the existing fabric where possible and replace where necessary to match the original material and/or detail. Where fabric or buildings are proposed to be removed, this is on the basis of the existing poor/ruinous condition, with mitigating works to address heritage impacts.

Relevant policies and comment on the impact of the works are addressed in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Exford Homestead CMP policies and impact assessment

Building / feature	CMP policy	Assessment of impact
B1 House	<p>There are no opportunities for significant intervention to the external fabric of the 1840s building. That said, there is a view that the building could be added to in a sensitive manner that would provide a level of modern amenity to enable the continued occupation of the place as a residence. Additions to the place could be made in the broad area to the north of the billiard room, with visually lightweight and structurally independent connection to the existing building. Preferably, connection and new openings would be made to areas of later fabric.</p> <p>Internally there is no opportunity to significantly alter the original floor plan in a manner that would diminish the appreciation of the cellular arrangement of interior. Internal walls should be retained, and there is limited potential for the introduction of new openings to internal walls to created linked spaces. Where there is a requirement to remove original internal walls for practical or functional reasons, evidence should be retained, through partial removal only and/or the retention of wall nibs. New openings to internal walls should be kept to the minimum number and dimensions required. There is opportunity for a new fit out and fixtures to the bathroom and kitchen (G6 and G7), which have previously been modified.</p>	<p>The main house is proposed to be restored and refurbished for use as a residence. There are no additions to the building proposed, which will maintain the existing overall form of the residence. Some replacement of existing fabric is proposed, including the roof cladding and rainwater goods to improve the weathertightness of the building, and the timber verandah (with extension) to match the original detail. Some reinstatement of missing details is also proposed.</p> <p>Internally, the works include the provision of new kitchen and bathroom facilities and the upgrading of services to meet contemporary needs, but consistent with the CMP policy, will generally retain the internal planning arrangement. Where new openings are proposed to support the refurbished layout of the residence, these are limited in extent and will not result in a loss of understanding of the original internal arrangement. The works additionally will provide for vertical movement by way of a new stair that addresses the spatial, safety and usability issues associated with the existing steep and narrow stair arrangement.</p> <p>Overall, the proposal will retain evidence of the evolved form of the residence, with repairs or replacement of the existing fabric (brickwork, stonework, hard plaster, timber and render), which will maintain and improve the overall presentation of the building.</p>
B2 Kitchen	<p>Retain and conserve all 1840s fabric to the kitchen and the meat safe enclosure. The contributory buildings and elements provide greater latitude for change.</p> <p>There are no opportunities for alterations to the exterior or interior of the 1840s kitchen. The C Andrews Patent Nonpareil stove should be retained in situ.</p>	<p>The 1840s kitchen is related to the establishment of the property by Simon Staughton, and is proposed to be wholly retained, with removal of the later skillion roofed addition only. The fabric to be removed is identified in the CMP as being an evolved structure of contributory significance. This fabric is not key to the significance of the 1840s building.</p> <p>The suite of conservation works is directed primarily at making the building watertight and improving water management, while retaining the original shingles beneath the new corrugated roof sheeting. The works will also remove later sections of brick infill and reconstruct the masonry wall with a rendered finish to match the</p>

Building / feature	CMP policy	Assessment of impact
		<p>existing to all non-original openings on the west elevation. The installation of new timber verandah posts to replace the damaged fabric will also support the retention of this building element.</p>
B3 Servants' quarters	<p>No separate CMP policy for the servant's quarters (included in the CMP datasheet for the detached kitchen B2). Relevant policy:</p> <p>The contributory buildings and elements provide greater latitude for change.</p>	<p>The servants' quarters was added at the northern end of the skillion addition to the kitchen in the 1930s. It is identified in the CMP as a building of contributory significance.</p> <p>Recognising that the VHR statement of significance notes that 'timber additions introduced in the 1930s demonstrate a later phase of development at the place', the servants' quarters is proposed to be removed, along with the skillion addition to the west elevation of the kitchen (addressed above). The proposed removal of the servants' quarters is on the basis of the degraded condition of this fabric and extensive building collapse.</p> <p>The removal of this building will result in the loss of some evidence of later (1930s) development at Exford and a changed presentation to the complex of buildings in the homestead precinct. This loss is mitigated somewhat by the retention and conservation of other 1930s timber buildings or additions in the homestead precinct, including B4 to the immediate north and B5 to the north-east of the servants' quarters which are both in better condition and will maintain an understanding of this phase of development within the place (refer below). The removal of this building and later additions to the 1840s kitchen will also improve the presentation and understanding of the mid-nineteenth century kitchen building.</p>
B4 Stable / garage	<p>Retention and conservation of the 1840s fabric is critical to the retaining the site's identified cultural values.</p> <p>The c. 1930s fabric and should in preference be retained and conserved, though there is greater scope to change to this component internally.</p> <p><i>Southern end (1840s)</i></p> <p>There is no opportunity for works with the potential to impact on the external presentation</p>	<p>Both the 1840s building and 1930s addition at the northern end will be retained, consistent with the CMP policy. Similar to the works proposed to B2, the replacement of the corrugated roof sheeting will address the potential for water damage while retaining the original roof shingles, with the installation of additional down pipes to manage water movement.</p> <p>The non-original corrugated iron wall cladding will be removed, and the external conservation works include the replacement of weatherboards</p>

Building / feature	CMP policy	Assessment of impact
	<p>of the 1840s section of the building. The internal floor plan should also be kept intact.</p> <p><i>Northern end (1930s)</i></p> <p>Opportunities for additions to the 1930s section are limited. This section of the building extends the form and retains the scale of the earlier section and any change to this would alter the building as a whole.</p> <p>Where works are required, they should, in preference, be concentrated to the west elevation where the corrugated steel cladding can be altered.</p> <p>There is opportunity for alterations to the interior including new flooring over the existing and new wall lining if required.</p>	<p>where required to the whole of the building, replacement of split timbers and glazing replacement to match the original fabric.</p> <p>The existing bluestone and brick floor paving will be retained, with the existing timber flooring relaid on a new timber structure. The internal floor plan will be kept intact.</p> <p>This will retain the building components of both primary and contributory significance and maintain the contribution of this building to an understanding of the homestead layout.</p>
B5 Stable	<p>In the event an alternative use is considered for this building, any changes to fabric to support a new use should be of a limited nature. There is opportunity for new openings to the south, east and west elevations. There is opportunity for alterations to the interior although the stall divisions should, in preference, be retained.</p>	<p>The stable is a building of contributory significance and as noted in the CMP, is largely intact to its original c. 1930s form. The conservation works scope includes the replacement of the corrugated roof sheeting to match the original, new rainwater goods, replacement of a small number of damaged weatherboards, a new subfloor structure and replacement of existing timber flooring, and relaying the existing bluestone and brick paving.</p> <p>Consistent with the CMP policy, the internal stall divisions will be maintained to demonstrate the original function of the building.</p>
B6 Underground tank	<p>Retain the water tank. Undertake repairs to enable usage for its original purpose, if feasible. Alternatively, infill the tank with gravel or similar, to ensure that the tank is secured for safety reasons. Repair the timber and corrugated steel enclosure.</p>	<p>Consistent with the CMP policy, the water tank will be retained to maintain an understanding of a water tank in this location from the 1840s, albeit that the CMP recognises that it is the presence and location of the water tank that is of significance, not the concrete lining fabric or timber enclosure, which are later alterations. Notwithstanding, the proposed conservation scope for the water tank includes the retention of the timber and corrugated steel enclosure and replacement where required of degraded fabric to match the existing. This will maintain the existing arrangement and presentation of fabric of the tank enclosure dating from the 1930s.</p>

Building / feature	CMP policy	Assessment of impact
B7 & B8 Bluestone pavilions	<p>The east and west pavilion buildings should be retained and conserved. There is no potential for alterations to the exterior of the pavilion or new additions.</p> <p>In preference the interior of the west pavilion should be retained as a single space. The interior of the east pavilion should be retained as two separate spaces.</p>	<p>The bluestone pavilions will be retained as existing with additional support to tie the bluestone walls back to the proposed new concrete slab and footings. No non-original external alterations or additions are proposed, however reconstruction works will include the reconstruction of bluestone chimneys to match original detail to both pavilions.</p> <p>Consistent with the CMP policy, the spatial arrangement of the interior of the pavilions will be retained as existing (i.e. as a single space for the west pavilion and as two spaces for the east pavilion).</p>
B9 Gardener's cottage	<p>In preference this building should be retained and the fabric stabilized to make the structure safe. However, determination of its future management should be based on a thorough understanding of the works required to maintain the fabric, its heritage values and opportunities for activation and use.</p>	<p>Recognising the gardener's cottage is in a ruinous state, the proposal is to dismantle the partially collapsed structure. However, the proposed works to retain, stabilise and/or reconstruct, at a low-level, the perimeter walls (including extant window sills) will allow an understanding of the structure, its fabric and heritage values to be maintained and protect this fabric into the future.</p>
B10 Barn / coach house	<p>There is limited potential for additions to the north, south or west elevations of the bluestone barn. An addition could be contemplated to the east of the building. Any structure should be no higher than eaves line of the barn and desirably should be contained within the footprint of the existing ruinous skillion addition. The space can be divided internally, using lightweight partition walls. There are limited opportunities to create new openings in the external walls without affecting the presentation and character of the place.</p>	<p>The proposal is for the restoration and refurbishment of this building for a future commercial use. These works prioritise the demolition of the partially collapsed east skillion and reconstruction of this element using salvaged bluestone to match the original. In addition, an enclosed glazed verandah is proposed on the west side of the building to facilitate the anticipated new use. Recognising that the CMP identified limited potential for new works to the barn/coach house, the proposed addition is lightweight and transparent, which will match the height and scale of the east skillion and complies with the CMP policy for a new addition to the east (i.e. no higher than eaves line of the barn matching the footprint of the existing ruinous skillion addition).</p>
B11 Underground tank	<p>Retain the water tank. Undertake repairs to enable usage for its original purpose, if feasible. Alternatively, infill the tank with gravel or similar, to ensure that the tank is secured for safety reasons. Repair the timber and corrugated steel enclosure.</p>	<p>Works proposed are consistent with those for the south underground tank (B6). These works are addressed above.</p>

Building / feature	CMP policy	Assessment of impact
B12 Blacksmith's forge and residence	In preference this building should be retained and the fabric stabilised. However, determination of its future management should be based on a thorough understanding of the works required to maintain the fabric, opportunities for activation and use and its heritage values.	In recognition of the ruinous state of this building, a similar scope of works as the gardener's cottage (B9) is proposed for this building. This includes the partial dismantling, retention, stabilisation, and/or reconstruction of the perimeter walls at a low-level (including extant window sills). As noted above for the gardener's cottage, this will allow an understanding of the layout of the blacksmith's forge and cottage, its fabric and heritage values to be maintained and protect this fabric into the future.
F2 Entry gateposts	The entry gate posts and picket fence should be retained and conserved.	Consistent with the CMP policy, the proposal includes the retention and restoration of the entry gates and fencing. Some change to the existing fabric is required as a result of the condition of this fabric, including the replacement of rotten timber orbs to the entry gate posts. New timber gates are also proposed. However, these works prioritise the retention and repair of existing fabric where possible, and replacement where required to maintain the presentation of the original entry to the property.
F3 Bluestone wall	The fence should be retained and conserved, and in preference reconstructed to the more intact section north of the gardener's cottage. Retain and reconstruct the section of bluestone fence between the flanking the east and west bluestone pavilions. Consider the feasibility of reconstructing the ruinous southern section or utilising material from this section to consolidate the more intact section along the western boundary of the home paddock.	The bluestone wall and timber fence will be retained, restored and reconstructed where required, including rebuilding the bluestone plinth to the full extent and salvage/reconstruction of the timber fence structure as required. These works will improve the condition, stability and presentation of the bluestone wall, and protect this fabric into the future.

The relevant general CMP policies relating to managing significant fabric are set out below (only relevant sections of these policies reproduced).

Care and conservation of significant fabric

The retention and conservation of significant heritage fabric should be a key consideration in the future management of the Exford Homestead and its landscape setting.

All future conservation work should be carried out by persons with relevant conservation experience and expertise.

Both individually and collectively, elements and areas of significant fabric variously demonstrate and provide evidence of the history of the homestead and farm buildings precincts, and the setting generally. Accordingly, while the policies included here provide for adaptation to some buildings and areas, the retention and conservation of significant fabric and spaces should remain a key consideration in planning such works and in the long-term management of the place.

With regard to conservation and refurbishment works, the policies in this document generally provide a guide to appropriate works, including works to fabric and elements of significance. The primary objective of any conservation or management action, and of any development or works proposal, should be to avoid or at least minimise impacts on the identified heritage values and overall significance of the place.²⁷

The complex of heritage buildings in two precincts, the visual relationship between the buildings and the surrounding fabric, elements and spaces contribute to an understanding of the arrangement of the homestead complex established in the 1840s. The retention and conservation of significant fabric has been the focus of the proposal for the stabilisation and conservation works scope forming part of the broader proposal for the subdivision and management of Exford Homestead and its landscape setting.

Maintenance and repairs

All future repairs and maintenance to buildings at the Exford Homestead should be carried out within the principles established in the Burra Charter and in a manner consistent with the assessed significance of the place and individual elements, and this conservation policy.

The essential aim of repair work should be to retain as much as possible of the historic material.

Where existing fabric needs to be renewed, the replacement generally should match the original in design, materials and construction unless there are strong overriding functional reasons for altering the original design or materials.²⁸

The VHR statement of significance notes that Exford Homestead ‘demonstrates an unusual variety of vernacular construction technologies’, utilising a variety of materials. As outlined in Section 5.1 and Table 2 above, the proposed care of this fabric prioritises works to stabilise and prevent further deterioration, as well as repair and conservation works to the buildings and elements that contribute to the heritage values of the place. This is consistent with the CMP policy for maintenance and repairs at Exford Homestead.

Ruinous elements

Undertake a thorough assessment of buildings and structures in ruinous condition to inform the ongoing management of these elements.²⁹

The two ruinous bluestone structures - the gardener’s cottage (B9) and the blacksmith’s forge and residence (B12) – have been assessed to determine an appropriate response to the existing condition of these structures. The proposal to dismantle the partially collapsed structures include works to retain, stabilise and/or reconstruct, at a low-level, the perimeter walls (including extant window sills). While this process will result in the loss of some fabric, the proposal will allow an understanding of the original form and significant fabric of the structures to remain legible within the place, and for the heritage values derived from these structures as part of a complex of nineteenth century buildings to be maintained, albeit in an altered but structurally sound form. This is an outcome contemplated in the CMP for

²⁷ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 145.

²⁸ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 146.

²⁹ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 147.

these structures, in recognition of the condition of the fabric and potential cost and safety risks associated with works to these elements.

The 1930s servant's quarters (B3) has also been assessed and identified for removal on the basis of the degraded condition of this fabric and extensive building collapse. In contrast to B9 and B12, it is proposed to entirely remove this structure along with the skillion addition to the kitchen, and prioritise the repair and conservation of the 1840s kitchen following the removal of the later (c. 1930s) additions. While the CMP notes that, in preference, the servant's quarters should be retained and conserved, the focus of the stabilisation and conservation works scope has been directed at maintaining and protecting the significant buildings and fabric which demonstrates the development of the 1840s homestead complex. It is considered that the loss of one of several 1930s structures and elements at Exford will not unacceptably impact on the group of timber buildings/additions in 'demonstrating a later phase of development at the place.'

7.2.2 Landscape works

In considering existing vegetation and proposed landscape works in the registered place, the VHR statement of significance refers only to the stand of Grey Box toward the northern end of the site. The statement notes that 'the survival of the indigenous Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand to the north of the homestead is unusual. A more typical response to native vegetation by early settlers in Victoria was for the trees to be felled, and the land given over to pasture.' No other vegetation within the property is identified as contributing to the significance of the place.

The CMP policy addressing landscape management at Exford Homestead relates to the homestead precinct and the evidence of domestic landscape planning in the front garden, front paddock and rear service yards. No tree removal or change to this homestead precinct landscape areas are proposed as part of this application.

In considering the Grey Box stand, other vegetation and proposed tree removal within the registered place, other CMP policies provide some guidance as outlined below.

Management plan

Levels of significance

Elements and landscape of contributory significance should preferably be retained and conserved, though there is some potential for considered alteration and adaptation.³⁰

Managing significant fabric

Grey Box Stand

*An ecological management program for the remnant Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) at the property should be prepared and implemented.³¹*

The Grey Box stand is identified in the CMP as being of contributory significance for its contribution to an understanding of the property's original setting.³² As outlined in Section 6.0 of this HIS, a key aspect of the subdivision plan as proposed is the retention of the Grey Box stand within an open space reserve, to retain the understanding of the historic landscape setting of the homestead. This is consistent with the relevant CMP policy for landscape of contributory significance as well as the applicable planning framework for the place (refer Section 6.1 above).

³⁰ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 151.

³¹ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 150.

³² Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 124.

While the CMP policy relating to managing significant fabric for the Grey Box stand is directed at a specific approach to conserve and manage the trees (i.e. an ecological management program), the overarching policy intent is for the maintenance of the Grey Box stand to retain the contribution of this landscape to an understanding of the historic setting of the homestead. The majority of the trees forming part of the Grey Box stand will be retained, with only five trees proposed to be removed to provide for the implementation of the subdivision as proposed. The balance of the existing trees will be retained as a group within an open space reserve and separated from the proposed residential development (refer Figure 33). Accepting that the proposal will slightly reduce the total number of Grey Box trees within the registered place, the trees to be removed are located at the edges of the stand and their removal will not unacceptably diminish the presentation or concentration of the group of trees in this location or the contribution of the trees to an understanding of the historic setting of Exford Homestead.

In considering tree removal more broadly, there are a number of trees proposed to be removed outside of the Grey Box stand (Figure 33). There will be no impact on the Grey Box stand from the removal of other tree species within the registered place.

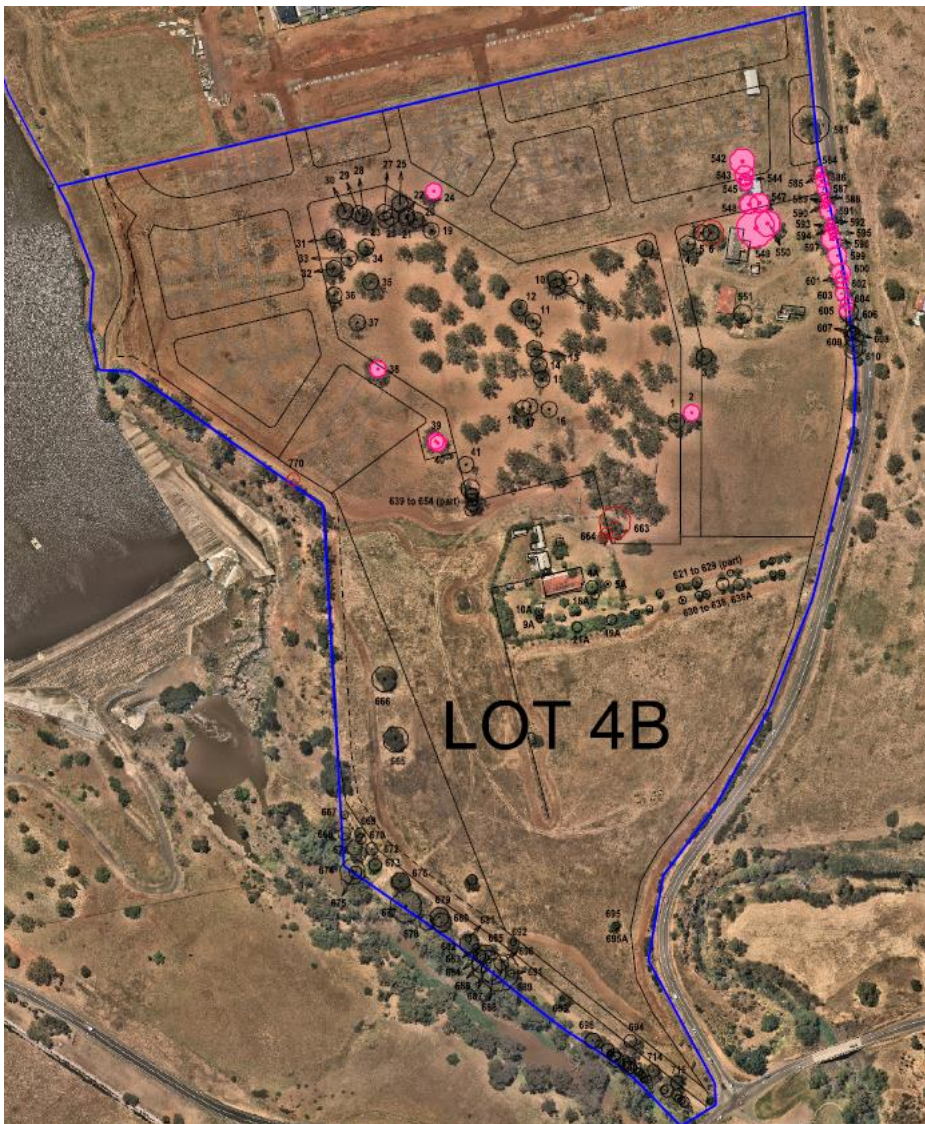


Figure 33 Aerial image of Exford Homestead overlaid with proposed subdivision layout and identifying trees to be removed (in pink)
Source: Marshal

The trees proposed to be removed outside of the Grey Box stand include two large Sugar Gum trees at the northern end of the farm buildings precinct. The CMP notes that these trees 'are likely to have been established in the nineteenth century or very early in the twentieth century. The two trees... may have been components of a longer windrow... which extended from the corner of the bluestone barn north-east to Exford Road and sheltered the core part of the precinct from the north.'³³ While these trees are identified as being of contributory significance in the CMP (refer Figure 32), the CMP also notes that these may be remnant specimens from a now removed windbreak planting. The VHR statement of significance notes there is very limited evidence of early plantings at Exford Homestead, and with no evidence on site of the balance of a windbreak planting, the remnant trees proposed to be removed provide some amenity to the place but do not evidence an early planting design or function. The other six trees proposed to be removed in this location are Cypress and smaller Sugar Gum trees. None of these trees are identified as being of significance in the CMP.

Similarly, the trees proposed to be removed along the Exford Road property boundary comprise a row of Sugar Gum trees and one Pine tree, all of which are identified in the CMP as being of little or no significance (refer Figure 32). As noted in the CMP, 'the row of Sugar Gum trees along the Exford Road boundary would have been planted after construction of the road and are of lesser interest to the precinct's state-level heritage values. The row may have some interest as a characteristic land management device, but one that has a greater association with the road (i.e. a landscape character element) than with Exford homestead.'³⁴ There will be no impact on the significance of Exford Homestead from the removal of these trees.

7.2.3 Historical archaeology

Exford Homestead is a Registered Archaeological Place. The VHR statement of significance states that the place is of archaeological significance for its potential to contain features, relics and deposits related to the earliest phase of European settlement of Victoria. This relates to the site of Dr Walton's residence (F1), as well as the area to the north of the homestead where early outbuildings are likely to have been located (Criterion C).

A number of previous historical archaeological assessments have been prepared for the Exford Homestead site, including *Exford Estate, Exford Road, Melton South: Desktop Cultural Heritage Assessment*, prepared by Tardis Enterprises (Murphy & Rymer) in 2008, a *Historical Archaeological Assessment*, prepared by Lovell Chen and Ochre Imprints in 2019 in relation to a CHMP salvage excavation, and a *Historical Archaeological Assessment*, prepared by Ochre Imprints in October 2021. This most recent assessment was undertaken as part of soil contamination and land capability testing to inform the future subdivision and use of the property (which is the subject of this permit application).

The 2008 assessment prepared by Murphy & Rymer concluded that areas of high archaeological potential for historical archaeological material 'reflecting agricultural development from first squatting to farming in the 1950s' (Murphy & Rymer 2008: 50) as being located around and within 50 metres of extant buildings, including garden features, rubbish dumps and cisterns. The remainder of the property was identified as having low historical archaeological potential for material such as rubbish dumps and portable artefacts.

Consistent with the 2008 assessment by Murphy & Rymer, the most recent assessment by Ochre Imprints (2021) considered the historical archaeological potential of the broader site outside of the homestead/ farm buildings precincts and the site of Dr Walton's residence (F1) as low.³⁵ Similarly to the previous assessment, this study by Ochre Imprints also identified the area immediately surrounding the homestead precinct complex of buildings and the land

³³ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 38.

³⁴ Lovell Chen, *Exford Homestead Conservation Management Plan*, March 2020, p. 38.

³⁵ Ochre Imprints, *Historical Archaeological Assessment*, 2021, p. 32.

surrounding the early farm buildings as being of high potential for nineteenth century archaeological material, with areas of moderate and low archaeological potential in proximity also identified.

Subsurface works and disturbance within the areas identified as being of high archaeological potential will be required as part of the conservation works scope, including for the installation of services such as storm water drains and eaves gutters to the underground tanks, as well as regrading of ground surfaces and new internal building footings. These works are identified at a high-level in the accompanying architectural drawings, but will be fully documented with specialist input, at which time the full extent and location of disturbance will be clarified. Subsurface works associated with the future installation of services for the proposed residential subdivision will also be required. These works are described at a high level at Section 6.2.2 but have not yet been fully documented for the proposed subdivision.

As the construction detail for all services associated with the proposed subdivision and conservation works scope is yet to be developed, it is anticipated that management of historical archaeological remains, should these exist in areas where disturbance works are proposed, will be included as a condition of permit to ensure the historical archaeological significance of the place is appropriately addressed.

7.3 The extent to which a refusal would affect the reasonable or economic use of the registered place or registered object [S101(2)(b)]

The proposed conservation and stabilisation works are directed at improving the condition of the heritage elements within the site. While additional works to establish a future use for the registered buildings are not generally proposed as part of this permit application (with the exception of new works to the residence (B1), a refusal would affect the program of works to secure and stabilise the buildings and structures anticipating future occupation of the place (refer Section 6.2.3 of this HIS). Any proposed works that may be required for the use or adaptive reuse of the registered buildings will be determined upon purchase of the proposed 'residential heritage site' (comprising the homestead precinct), and 'commercial heritage site' (comprising the farm buildings precinct). Any future works would be subject to approval under the *Heritage Act 2017*, unless permit exempt.

The relevant economic considerations of the proposed suite of stabilisation, conservation and repair works are addressed in detail in the accompanying Report on 'Reasonable or Economic Use', particularly in relation to the funding of these works. This includes the requirement for subdivision and staging of these works, noting 'there is no scope for programming the conservation works in advance of lot production.'³⁶

The proposed approach to the staging of subdivision and conservation works, and the requirement for these to be managed in a particular sequence is addressed below.

7.3.1 Proposed staging of works

As outlined above and in the accompanying Report on 'Reasonable or Economic Use', funding generated from the subdivision as proposed will provide for and fund the identified conservation works scope. As such, it is proposed to stage the subdivision works and tie settlement of particular stages of subdivision to each component of the conservation works scope (i.e. the homestead precinct and farm buildings precinct).

The staging of works will, by necessity, have regard for the implementation of services and other preparatory requirements for residential subdivision and development, and will be arranged to allow for these early works to occur in the preliminary stages, followed by the staged release of residential lots for sale within the registered place. Conservation works would be undertaken following settlement of the relevant stages of residential lots tied to the conservation works, funded by the sale of these lots, concurrently with settlement of the next stage/s of residential subdivision.

³⁶ Rodger Gibbons, Exford Waters Estate Development Report on 'Reasonable or Economic Use', July 2025, p. 29.

Having regard to the above considerations, a detailed staging plan will be developed for approval prior to works commencing. All conservation works would be completed prior to the finalisation of the residential subdivision of the registered place.

7.4 Conclusion

The proposal is for a comprehensive suite of stabilisation, conservation and repair works to the buildings, fabric and elements of significance at Exford Homestead, having regard to the relevant CMP policies and the existing condition of the individual elements of the place. Recognising there will be some loss of existing fabric, this is on the basis of degraded or ruinous condition, with works prioritising the retention and repair of existing fabric where possible. This will assist in ensuring the long-term protection and conservation of the registered place as part of an overall proposal for residential development and adaptive reuse.

APPENDIX A

Heritage Citations





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EXFORD HOMESTEAD



EXFORD HOMESTEAD
SOHE 2008



h00316 exford july1995



exford homestead exford
street melton south bluestone
outbuilding apr1980



exford homestead exford
street melton south rear view
homestead apr1980



exford homestead exford
street melton south verandah
apr1980



h00316 exford stables
july1995



Exford shearing shed



Exford blacksmith forge
& residence



Exford barn &
underground tank



Exford barn



Exford stable buildings



Exford kitchen



Exford east pavilion



Exford west pavilion



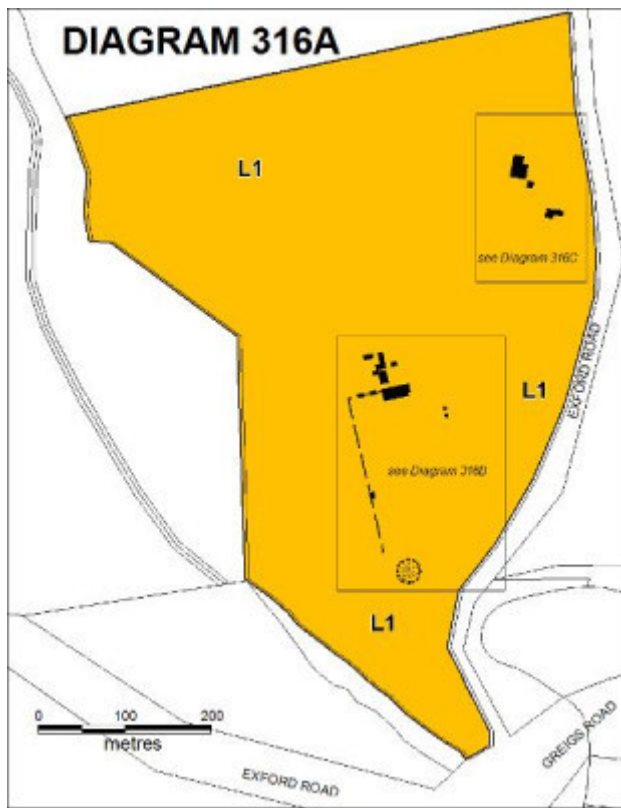
Exford gardener's cottage



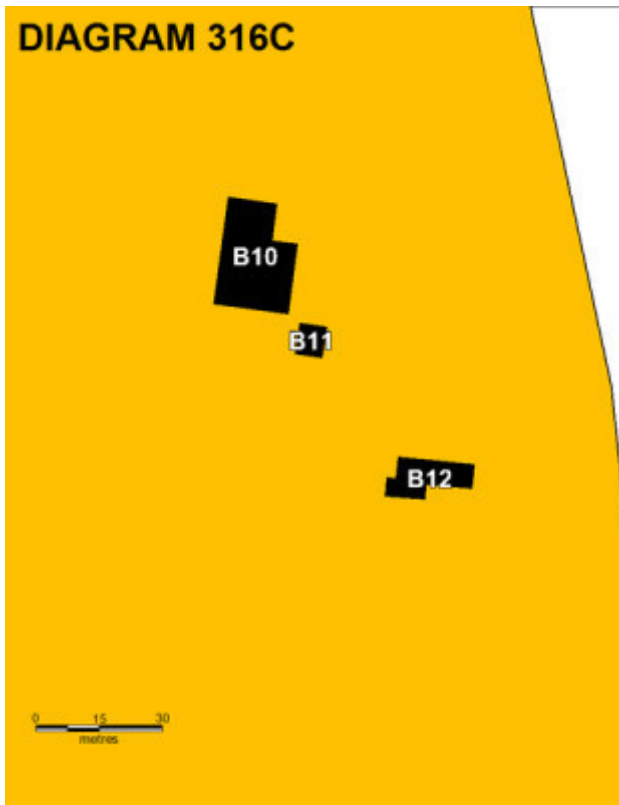
Exford house



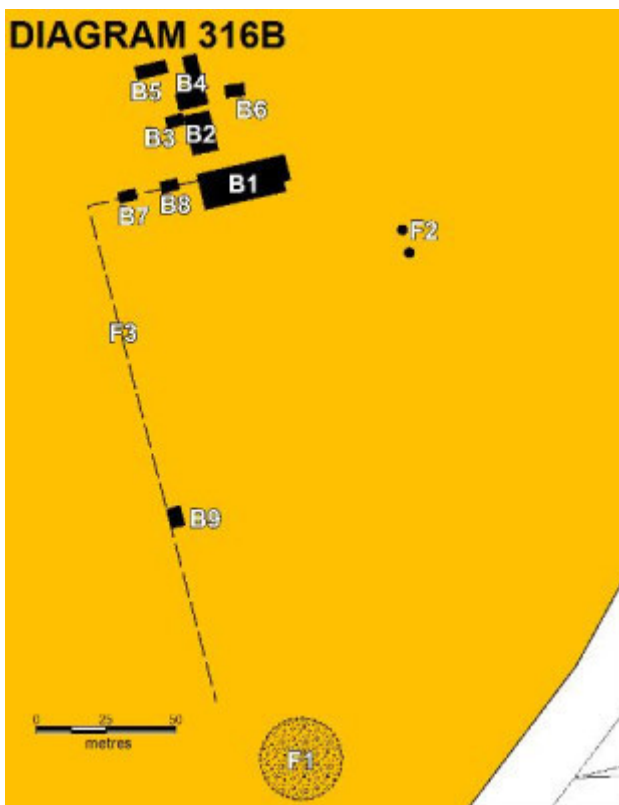
Exford verandah



exford A amended by HC.jpg



exford C amended by HC.jpg



exford B amended by HC.jpg

Location

355-455 EXFORD ROAD AND 655 EXFORD ROAD WEIR VIEWS, MELTON CITY

Municipality

MELTON CITY

Level of significance

Registered

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

H0316

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO2

VHR Registration

October 9, 1974

Amendment to Registration

December 12, 2013

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - June 4, 1999

What is significant?

Exford Homestead is one of the oldest residences in Victoria and part of a rare surviving 1840s homestead complex. It is a farming property now comprising approximately 30.5 hectares located 3.5km south of South Melton where sheep have been raised since the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (Victoria). The site was occupied from 1840 by Dr John Watton, a member of the Port Phillip Association, a syndicate of Van Diemens Land colonists formed in 1835 with the aim of establishing pastoral activities on the north shore of the Bass Strait. The place was then part of a large run taken up in 1842 by emigrant landowner Simon Staughton.

Eventually extending for many thousands of hectares, the run was divided into four smaller properties after Staughton's death in 1863. The place retains an early 1840s homestead building and outbuildings constructed of locally hewn timber, mud and lath rendering, brick and local stone. Subsequent additions in locally-quarried bluestone date from the mid 1850s, after security of tenure had been gained, and include a double-height store, a smithy with attached accommodation, two bluestone pavilions and bluestone fence enclosing an orchard. The Staughton 'orb' is carved into the timber posts surmounting the bluestone fence and gateposts. It is also found in the bluestone pavilions of the 1850s. The extent of Staughton's holding was marked at quarter mile intervals with posts featuring a similar carved timber orb. A suite of timber additions introduced in the 1930s demonstrate a later phase of development at the place.

Exford Homestead was a haven for Aboriginal people during the early contact period, a reflection of Simon Staughton's commitment to the well-being of the indigenous population. Local tribes-people were employed on the estate to erect fencing.

The property occupies a picturesque setting with views over the Werribee River valley to the south, and a stand of Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) to the north.

How is it significant?

Exford Homestead satisfies the following criteria for inclusion in the Victorian Heritage Register.

Criterion A Importance to the course, or pattern, of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion B Possession of uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion C Potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history.

Criterion D Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural places and objects.

Criterion H Special association with the life or works of a person, or group of persons, of importance in Victoria's history.

Why is it significant?

Exford Homestead is of historical significance for its direct association with the earliest phase of European occupation of the Port Phillip District (Victoria). The site was first occupied from 1840 by Dr John Watton, a member of the Port Phillip Association, a syndicate of Van Diemonian colonists formed in 1835 with the aim of establishing pastoral activities on the north shore of the Bass Strait.

Exford Homestead is of historical significance as the last remnant of 'Exford' a once extensive run which has from its initial occupation, through acquisition by Simon Staughton in 1842 and later occupation by his descendants to the present, been in continuous operation as a sheep farm. Sheep farming was the primary reason for the settlement of the Port Phillip District and became a significant part of the Victorian economy. The mid-twentieth century shearing shed reflects the continued use of the place for sheep farming and is of contributory significance.

Exford Homestead demonstrates the political and social changes which affected the Port Phillip District and Victoria in the early years of European settlement. The difference between the early 1840s timber buildings and the more sophisticated bluestone structures reflects increasing prosperity following the gold rushes of the 1850s, and the associated influx of skilled immigrants. The construction technologies and refined materials used in the 1850s bluestone buildings demonstrate that pastoralists were by then willing to construct more permanent buildings with greater architectural pretension due to an ability to obtain secure land tenure. The distinctive bluestone fence to the west and south of the homestead is also believed to date from this phase of development. (Criterion A)

The 1840s Exford Homestead is one of the earliest residences in Victoria. The homestead and outbuildings are rare surviving examples from this period and demonstrate an unusual variety of vernacular construction technologies. Exford homestead is a rare example of a generously-proportioned homestead constructed in the pretenure period of the early-1840s. It was typical for early homestead buildings to be replaced or significantly improved as land tenure was secured and wealth increased.

The group of 1850s Picturesque Gothic structures which present as follies in the landscape are an uncommon feature. The detailing to the two pavilions and the gardener's cottage has a level of refinement seldom seen in such outbuildings.

The survival of the indigenous Grey Box (*Eucalyptus microcarpa*) stand to the north of the homestead is unusual. A more typical response to native vegetation by early settlers in Victoria was for the trees to be felled, and the land given over to pasture. (Criterion B)

The site of Dr Watton's residence is of high level potential archaeological significance as it is likely to contain features, relics and deposits related to the earliest phase of European settlement of Victoria. The area to the north of the homestead where early outbuildings are likely to have been located is also of potential archaeological significance. (Criterion C)

The isolation of early homesteads demanded self-sufficiency, resulting in the use of vernacular technologies and locally available materials and/or pre-fabricated buildings. The early outbuildings at Exford were constructed of roughly-hewn timber framing and timber slabs, and in the case of the detached kitchen, of local stone and brick. The homestead itself is constructed of eight large timber posts hewn from tree trunks. These are located at each

corner of the house and flanking the front door to the south and rear door to the north. The timber framed walls are clad with horizontal timber slabs applied with mud under a later render finish. The range of materials and technologies used at Exford explains the diversity in the external presentation of the early homestead buildings.

Many early homesteads were distinguished by a sense of enclosure, with walls, hedges and tree plantings variously providing formal settings, protection from prevailing winds, a sense of security in little known and sometimes uncharted landscapes and distinction between domestic and agricultural areas. This distinction was typically reinforced by plantings, with the enclosed areas planted with European-style or exotic plantings, and natives beyond. At Exford there is very limited evidence of early plantings but a bluestone wall with an integrated timber post and rail fence was established to the north-west of the homestead returning to the south.

The typical layout of pastoral estates is demonstrated at Exford, whereby the main residence is the centrepiece, sited to optimise an aspect, with domestic amenities to the rear and/or sides. Outbuildings often included a freestanding kitchen, laundry, meat store, servants' accommodation and stabling. At Exford there is a clear distinction between the domestic precinct and the agricultural grouping a short distance to the north-east.

Common denominators between early homesteads included access to water and established roadways. This is assumed to explain the siting of Dr Watton's residence at the southern part of the place, on low-lying land presumably within the Werribee River flood plain. In contrast, Staughton built a substantial homestead and outbuildings on elevated ground to the north of the place, with views looking south over the Werribee River and Toolern Creek. Proximity to a river crossing is also likely to have been a factor in the desirability of the Exford Homestead site. The road directly to the south of the property was on one of the main routes from Melbourne to the west. (Criterion D)

Exford is significant for its long association with the Staughton family, one of the largest owners of freehold land in colonial Victoria, only rivalled in this region by the Clarke and Chirnside families. (Criterion H)

Permit Exemptions

General Exemptions:

General exemptions apply to all places and objects included in the Victorian Heritage Register (VHR). General exemptions have been designed to allow everyday activities, maintenance and changes to your property, which don't harm its cultural heritage significance, to proceed without the need to obtain approvals under the Heritage Act 2017.

Places of worship: In some circumstances, you can alter a place of worship to accommodate religious practices without a permit, but you must [notify](#) the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria before you start the works or activities at least 20 business days before the works or activities are to commence.

Subdivision/consolidation: Permit exemptions exist for some subdivisions and consolidations. If the subdivision or consolidation is in accordance with a planning permit granted under Part 4 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987* and the application for the planning permit was referred to the Executive Director of Heritage Victoria as a determining referral authority, a permit is not required.

Specific exemptions may also apply to your registered place or object. If applicable, these are listed below. Specific exemptions are tailored to the conservation and management needs of an individual registered place or object and set out works and activities that are exempt from the requirements of a permit. Specific exemptions prevail if they conflict with general exemptions.

Find out more about heritage permit exemptions [here](#).

Specific Exemptions:

General Conditions: 1. All exempted alterations are to be planned and carried out in a manner which prevents

damage to the fabric of the registered place or object. General Conditions: 2. Should it become apparent during further inspection or the carrying out of alterations that original or previously hidden or inaccessible details of the place or object are revealed which relate to the significance of the place or object, then the exemption covering such alteration shall cease and the Executive Director shall be notified as soon as possible. General Conditions: 3. If there is a conservation policy and plan all works shall be in accordance with it. Note: A Conservation Management Plan for the property was prepared by Lovell Chen Architects & Heritage Consultants in 2013. General Conditions: 4. Nothing in this declaration prevents the Executive Director from amending or rescinding all or any of the permit exemptions. General Conditions: 5. Nothing in this declaration exempts owners or their agents from the responsibility to seek relevant planning or building permits from the responsible authority where applicable.

Regular site and building maintenance

The following site maintenance works are permit exempt under Section 66 of the *Heritage Act 1995*:

Building exteriors

- . Removal of extraneous items such as pipe work, ducting, wiring, antennae and aerials, and making good.
- . Repainting all previously painted surfaces in the same colour and paint type.
- . Cleaning including the removal of organic growths, vegetation and surface deposits to built fabric.

Building interiors (excluding buildings dating from the 1840s: homestead, kitchen and stable)

- . The maintenance of an item to retain its condition or operation without the removal of or damage to the existing fabric or the introduction of new materials.
- . Repair and servicing of existing equipment and services including wiring and plumbing.
- . Installation, removal and replacement of bulk insulation in roof spaces.
- . Installation, removal and replacement of smoke detectors.
- . Installation, removal and replacement of curtain tracks, rods, blinds and other window dressings
- . Installation, removal or replacement of carpets and/or flexible floor coverings.
- . Installation, removal and replacement of hooks, nails and other devices for the hanging of mirrors, paintings and other wall mounted artworks.
- . Refurbishment of bathrooms/toilets including removal of sanitary fixtures and associated piping, and installation of new fixtures.

Homestead interior

- . Removal of fittings and finishes to the bathroom and kitchen (rooms G6 and G7) in the homestead, provided there is no damage to or alteration of original structure or fabric.

Grounds and land holding

- . Regular site maintenance provided the works do not involve the removal or destruction of any significant above-ground features or sub-surface archaeological artefacts or deposits.
- . Cleaning out gutters, drainage systems, ponds, dams and other water storage and drainage areas.
- . Maintenance and replacement of existing power cables or service pipelines or other public services located on the property where this involves no alteration to the built fabric (including archaeological values) of the place.
- . Laying of gravel/toppings to the driveways.
- . Erection or construction of roads and tracks and of fencing, gates, stockyards or any other forms of access and enclosure necessary for the continuation of agricultural activities on the property provided that the works do not

adversely affect the registered buildings and land.

Regular landscape maintenance and management

. Horticultural maintenance works that do not affect the shape, scale and layout of the front paddock, the homestead garden or the working yard, or diminish an understanding of their distinct functions.

. The removal of trees identified by an arborist as dead, dangerous or diseased, including instances where the trees pose a threat to the conservation of significant buildings and structures.

. Management of trees in accordance with Australian Standards, Pruning of Amenity Trees AS 4373-1996 and Protection of Trees on Development Sites AS 4970-2009.

. Subsurface works involving the installation, removal or replacement of watering and drainage systems or services, outside the canopy edge of significant trees in accordance with AS4970 and on the condition that works do not impact on archaeological features or deposits.

. Removal of plants listed as noxious weeds in the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

. Vegetation protection and management of possums and vermin.

Theme

2. Peopling Victoria's places and landscapes 4. Transforming and managing the land

Construction dates 1843,

Heritage Act Categories Registered place, Registered archaeological place,

Hermes Number 832

Property Number

History

The volcanic plains to the west of Melbourne were explored in the late 1830s and began to be settled from the early 1840s. The first permanent pastoralists in the district were the Pyke family, who had a sheep run between the Kororoit and Djerrivarrh Creeks, and the Staughtons, who settled at Melton south.

Simon Staughton (1797-1863) and his wife Mary arrived in Melbourne in 1841 with four young children children (sons Simon, Stephen and Samuel and daughter Mary, who was to marry into the Armitage family) and according to the *Argus* (25 September 1934, p 3) with 40,000 sovereigns. In June 1842 he purchased the pastoral licences for the Brisbane Ranges and Exford pastoral runs. This comprised 28,350 ha (he was later to control close to 40,000 ha) of grassy plains and open forest on the rich volcanic soil between the Werribee and Little Rivers, 40 km west of Melbourne. He was later to run 60,000 sheep on his Werribee properties: Exford, Eynesbury, Lindisfern and Staughton Vale, which were some of the earliest Port Phillip grazing runs.

Soon after his arrival at Exford Staughton built a single-storey homestead at the north-east corner of the run, on a bluff overlooking the junction of the Werribee River with the Toolern Creek. This is the centre section of the existing house, which was added to over the years. The original homestead had an entrance hall, five main rooms and a stone-lined cellar. (The three attic rooms with dormer windows were added later, possibly in the late nineteenth century.) A detached kitchen was built at the rear at about the same time or shortly after, and also probably two adjoining slab huts (one of which has been removed, the other forms part of the existing stables and garage). He installed hand carved wooden fence capital every quarter mile around his boundaries, some of which remain.

The 1840s was a time of depressed wool process, which meant economic hardship for the young colony and the pastoralists struggled to survive. However Staughton emerged at the end of the 1840s financially secure, and

was able to expand his flock three-fold in the 1850s. In the mid-1850s he was able to obtain freehold title over much of his land, and purchased more land adjoining. This included the adjacent Eynesbury Station.

With the prosperity of the 1850s, Staughton began a new building program, constructing a timber addition to the west of the house, as well as several bluestone outbuildings: the barn and the blacksmith's forge and residence to the north, a gardeners' cottage in the garden on the slopes towards the Werribee River to the south, two pavilions to the west of the house, and a bluestone woolshed across the river to the south (now on the adjacent Warrawong property, and included in the VHR as H2276).

On Simon's death in 1863 his vast land holdings, comprising Exford, Eynesbury, Nerowie and Staughton Vale station, were divided among his four sons. Exford, comprising 5265 ha of the original run, went to his youngest son, Harry Werribee. It remained in his ownership until the mid-1920s, when it was transferred to his son of the same name. By this time it was only about 400 ha, with most of its land, 3200 ha sold to the Closer Settlement Board in 1906.

John Sutherland, formerly of Elcho station near Lara, purchased Exford in 1927. During his ownership of the homestead the extensive weatherboard wing to the east, housing a large billiards room was added.

Plaque Citation

This rare example of an early pastoral complex was developed from 1842 by the Staughton family. It includes a c1842 homestead, one of the oldest in Victoria, and picturesque bluestone outbuildings constructed in the prosperous 1850s.

Extent of Registration

NOTICE OF REGISTRATION

As Executive Director for the purpose of the **Heritage Act 1995**, I give notice under section 46 that the Victorian Heritage Register is amended by amending Heritage Register Number H0316 in the categories described as Heritage Place and Archaeological Place.

Exford Homestead
355 Exford Road
Melton South
Melton City

EXTENT

1. All of the land marked L1 on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director
2. All of the buildings marked B1-B13 on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director
 - B1 House
 - B2 Kitchen
 - B3 Servants' quarters
 - B4 Stable/garage
 - B5 Stable
 - B6 Underground tank
 - B7 & B8 Bluestone pavilions
 - B9 Gardener's cottage
 - B10 Barn/coach house
 - B11 Underground tank
 - B12 Blacksmith's forge and residence
3. All of the features marked F1-F3 on Diagram 316 held by the Executive Director
 - F1 Site of Dr Walton's residence
 - F2 Entry Gateposts
 - F3 Bluestone wall

Dated 12 December 2013

TIM SMITH
Executive Director

[Victoria Government Gazette G 50 12 December 2013 3046]

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/>

Heritage Overlay No.: 02
Citation No.: 269
Place: Exford Homestead

Other Names of Place: None
Location: Exford Road
Critical Dates: 1843
Existing Heritage Listings: Victorian Heritage Register H316
Recommended Level of Significance: STATE

Note: This citation contains only a statement of significance. It was commissioned after the Heritage Study had been exhibited. Exford Homestead was included in the schedule to the heritage overlay prior to the Heritage Study being written.



Statement of Significance:

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is of State heritage significance as one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria. It is also of great importance and rarity due to its vernacular construction in *pise de terre*. This homestead is part of a significant complex which includes early and notable bluestone structures, in varying conditions, ranging from a large utilitarian coachhouse, small ornamented lodgings, a terrace containing servants quarters and blacksmith, and distinctive early fences. Overall, the complex constitutes a cultural heritage precinct of very high significance in an equally significant cultural landscape.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is architecturally and aesthetically significant at the State level (AHC E1). The homestead is of immense architectural importance due

to its age and its vernacular construction in pise, surviving examples of which are very rare. The oldest, central part of the homestead is thought to date from c.1843 and is constructed of pise within a framework of corner tree trunks, over a stone cellar. An attic within the hipped roof (originally shingle clad) incorporates dormer windows that were added later. The homestead has had several additions, the latest being the 1920s billiard room, which contribute to its significance. A rendered rubble and pise kitchen and store building behind the homestead features timber shingles under later corrugated iron, and is likely to date to the same period as the original homestead. The complex also features a collection of 1850s era bluestone buildings. Two small cottages are distinctive and important examples of the rare picturesque Gothic style; their distinguishing features include round arched windows and doors, fan lights, and tapered bluestone pinnacles adorned with orbs. The orb is also the identifying feature of the 'Staughton' timber fence and gate posts which were placed regularly along the *Exford* pastoral estate boundaries. These have now virtually disappeared from across the wider *Exford* station, so the considerable collection of these posts on the homestead complex, of durable local grey-box, and dating to the fencing of the station probably in the 1850s, is extremely significant.

A similar design on the bluestone woolshed, now on an adjacent property, has bluestone pinnacles surmounted by fleur-de-lys in the place of orbs. Another semi-ruinous small bluestone building in the former orchard paddock has the quality of a folly, with picturesque details including pointed stone arch windows. A very large stone coachhouse, with the date 1856 inscribed above the central door, has Romanesque style arched openings, and a rear skillion addition that was formerly a dairy. A ruinous bluestone terrace comprising workers quarters and a blacksmith is a very rare type of rural building. The complex also includes:- a weatherboard meathouse; a saddlery with later garage, part of which is of primitive vertical slab construction; a weatherboard stable; and a mid twentieth century weatherboard shearing shed. Two very large underground water tanks, with timber gable roofs, survive; they appear to have been renovated over time. To the south of the homestead, extending down to the river flat, is a rectangular paddock of approximately three acres which was a former orchard or garden. It is defined on the north and west sides by a rare, perhaps unique, style of fence which comprises a quarried stone base with mud mortar, and tall pickets atop. This enclosure is also defined by remnant rows of mature exotic plantings, primarily Aleppo pines (*Pinus halepensis*) on the west, pepper trees (*Schinus molle*) on the south, and Monterey pines (*Pinus radiata*) on the east. Other mature exotic trees include cypress, fig, and mulberry trees, particularly near the homestead.

The complex retains a number of original or early internal building fittings and equipment, including ovens, remains of a blacksmith bellows, line shafting in the coachhouse lean-to, and timber wall fittings in the 1920s billiard room; there are likely to be other early or significant furnishings and fittings in the homestead, woolshed and other outbuildings. The homestead setting is integral to the significance of the place, and sets it apart from most comparable heritage places in Victoria. The homestead is situated on a picturesque bluff, enabling it to take advantage of the views over the Werribee River near its junction with Toolern Creek. The prime qualities of this site were recognised in 1841 when it was designated as the village reserve for the district; it appears also to have been selected as a dwelling site

prior to the arrival of Simon Staughton. This crucial undeveloped area south and west of the homestead preserves the view from the homestead across the Werribee River, and enhances its setting. It also enables the key elevation of the homestead complex to be seen and appreciated in its rural landscape context from surrounding points including Exford Road and the Melton Reservoir park. Remnant native vegetation and exotic vegetation associated with the homestead are integral to this landscape setting.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is historically significant at the State level (AHC A4, B2). Dating from c.1843, the homestead is one of the earliest surviving residences in Victoria. *Exford* station was a vast pastoral run of some 70,000 acres acquired by pastoralist Simon Staughton in 1842, and increased significantly by him as freehold became available in the 1850s. Staughton was also a Melbourne banker and prominent land investor whose property portfolio included hotels such as the Exford in Melbourne, the Prince of Wales in St Kilda, and the Steam Packet in Williamstown, as well as premises on Staughton Place in Melbourne, the Eastern Arcade, and the land upon which a beneficiary of his estate built the Royal Arcade. *Exford* also has strong historical associations with the pioneering of the Melton district. It was the first of the numerous large pastoral estates, some with mansions and grand homesteads, established by Staughton's descendents within the Shire, including *Eynesbury*, *Nerowie*, and the former *Brooklyn*. Members of the Staughton family were leaders in the political, social, sporting and religious life of the district. While the homestead is early and thus comparatively restrained architecturally and in size, the prime siting and substantial size of the complex conveys the former size and wealth of one of Victoria's larger pastoral runs, situated on rich volcanic plains near to Melbourne. Early fences on the complex may be associated with an Aboriginal clan who lived and were employed on the property, and some of whom were buried there. The extensive collection of 1850s bluestone buildings is expressive of the prosperity and development of *Exford* in the wake of the gold-rushes. The dominance of Melton municipality by *Exford* and several other large pastoral estates in the nineteenth century increasingly became a source of grievance to local farmers, and contributed to the break-up of these estates in the early twentieth century. Share farming was practised on *Exford* at the close of the nineteenth century, and in the early twentieth century *Exford* became one of the Victorian Closer Settlement Board's high profile estates. Its subdivision into farms contributed to the growth of the nationally significant Melton chaff industry in the early twentieth century, and stimulated the construction of new community facilities and infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, a school and a hall. The mid twentieth century timber shearing shed on the property is expressive of the rural investment which resulted from the 1950s wool boom.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is scientifically significant at the State level (AHC C2). It is an extensive complex which includes rare and significantly intact buildings and structures that have potential to provide information and education regarding early skills and materials, and the operation of an early pastoral estate in Victoria. An area of broken crockery and bottles may mark the location of huts shown on early 1850s plans which may pre-date the *Exford* homestead. The ruinous c.1850s bluestone terrace includes a blacksmith which has design features and artefacts with potential to provide information regarding blacksmithing and the

management of an early pastoral estate. Fences and remnant stone walls have the potential to provide information regarding former pastoral property management, early skills, and relationships with Aboriginal people in the contact period.

Exford, Exford Road, Melton South, is socially significant at the Local level (AHC G1). The homestead is widely recognised as the earliest building within the municipality; the broader complex is a substantial and prominently located landmark within the municipality. The Staughton family is commemorated in the town of Melton by the Staughton Memorial Lamp and fabric from the original Christ Church Anglican church. Graves of Aboriginal people may survive on the property, although possibly now flooded by the Exford reservoir.

Overall, *Exford*, Exford Road, Melton South, is of State heritage significance.



