



22 May 2019

The Planning Department
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**Re: Request for Interim Heritage Overlay and objection to Planning Application 5/2019/43
38 Grosvenor Street, Brighton**

Dear Sir/Madam,

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) respectfully requests that Council refuses the planning permit that would see the demolition of 38 Grosvenor Street, Brighton, and also move immediately to apply an Interim Heritage Overlay.

We believe that it is clear that the house has high local significance, enough to warrant an individual Heritage Overlay. Built in 1929-30, it is unusual example of the Old English style, one that is not well represented in places covered by local HOs. It has added significance in that it was designed by the female owner-builder Esme Johnson, and featured on the front cover of the *Australian Home Beautiful* in February 1931.

1. Architectural Significance

The house is an unusual example of the Old English style, which was a popular house style during the interwar years, and into the 1950s. Typically they were picturesque designs, built of clinker brick, with prominent roofs and dormer windows, half-timbering, tall chimneys, and diamond patterned leadlight windows.

The house at 38 Grosvenor Street has all these features, but the roof is unusually steep, the chimney unusually prominent, and the half-timbering is not an applied feature, but is the structure, and visible on all sides. Another unusual feature are the dormers, which are entirely tiled, and have hipped roofs rather than the usual gable.

These features no doubt derive from the owner-builder Esme Johnson's source material of images of English 'Elizabethan' houses and Normandy farmhouses seen in magazines, rather than following the typical suburban Old English style.

The house is also very intact. The original timber shingles were replaced with tiles (of very similar appearance), the front bedroom window has been enlarged, a new (matching style) window inserted into the west wall of the lounge, and so the house looks remarkably much as it did in 1931.

2. Cultural significance

The fact that 38 Grosvenor Street was designed and built by owner-builder Esme Johnson is also rare, not only within Bayside, but within Victoria.

There are also no places from before World War II within Bayside known to have been designed by a woman, whether a trained designer or not. Female architects were extremely rare in Victoria before the 1950s, and female owner-builders even rarer, the most well known in Victoria being those by Edna Walling at the Bickley Vale village in Mooroolbark. Walling's experience in building cottages there in the 1920s may have in fact been an influence, as she is known to have been friends with Esme Johnson.

The only other known example of an owner-builder house within Bayside is the reinforced concrete house at 23 Bamfield Street, Sandringham (HO23). Built in 1921, it was designed by owner WT Sunderland, who was the City Engineer for Sandringham, and had designed other buildings and structures, whereas Esme Johnson was entirely self-taught.

3. Planning background

The significance of the place was recognised in the 1986 City of Brighton Urban Character and Conservation Study, when it was within the Normanby/Grosvenor Estates heritage precinct. The 1999 Allom Lovell City of Bayside Heritage Review also included this precinct, but after the Panel determined that it should be reduced in size, the house was not picked up as an individual place. It was then excluded from the brief for the 2008 Interwar and Post-war Heritage Study, which did not in any event proceed.

It compares well to other places within the City of Bayside, which has very few Old English houses covered by an HO.

There are only four houses in this style with an individual HO. The house at 36 Brickwood Street was built in 1912 (HO446), and is an unusual and very early example of the style, which may also employ half-timbering as the structure. The houses at 18 Deauville Street Beaumaris c1935 (HO478), 6 Bay Street Brighton 1938 (HO30), and 11 Beach Road Beaumaris 1954 (HO131), are all more typical examples of the style, constructed mostly of clinker brick, with only small areas of half-timbering, and more typically picturesque massing. No. 6 Bay Street is the closest comparison, notably the prominent rubble stone chimney.

There are two notable Old English style houses within the adjacent Grosvenor Street estate (HO656). No. 24 Grosvenor is a typical example of the style, with unusual inset balconies. The house at No. 27 Grosvenor Street, now part of Brighton Grammar, has more similarities with the Esme Johnson house, with its rectangular form, steep gabled roof, prominent chimney and shingled dormer, but is far more picturesquely massed, and is principally constructed of brick.

The proposed demolition of 38 Grosvenor Street is contrary to a number of provisions in the City of Bayside Planning Scheme, including the following objectives:

15.03-15 To ensure the conservation of places of heritage significance.

21.06-3 To protect and enhance the City's buildings, trees and structures of cultural significance for present and future generations.

4. Conclusion

The Esme Johnson house clearly has sufficient significance to warrant local protection. Its preservation also has considerable community support. We urge Council to refuse the planning application, on the grounds that it is contrary to provisions in the planning scheme requiring the conservation of places of heritage significance, and move to protect the place with an Interim Heritage Overlay as a matter of urgency.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Watson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Felicity Watson
Advocacy Manager