

Australian Institute of Architects ACT Chapter

Register of Significant Architecture

RSA No: R033

Name of Place: Braddon Housing Precinct

Other/Former Names: Neighbourhood No.1

Address: Area bounded by Donaldson, Elimatta, Batman & Currong Streets
Braddon ACT 2612

H13, being Blocks 1-48, Section 38 of Braddon, including pocket parks and reserves 42 and 43.

Listing Status:	Registered	Other Heritage Listings:	ACT Register
Date of Listing:	1984	Level of Significance:	Territory
Citation Revision No:	3	Category:	Residential
Citation Revision Date:	September 2022	Style:	Federation Bungalow
Date of Design:	1921	Architect/Planner:	W.B. Griffin & FCAC
Construction Period:	1921-29	Client/Owner/Lessee:	FCAC, then FCC
		Builders:	Several

Statement of Significance

The Braddon Housing Precinct is the most historically significant of the early housing precincts of Canberra which, with their landscaping, later housing and community facilities, represent the purest adaptation of garden city principles in Australia. In the 1921-24 Federal Capital Advisory Committee's plan of Canberra, the precinct, as its Neighbourhood No 1, was laid out under the FCAC Chairman Sir John Sulman, Australia's authority on town planning. It was the forerunner of Canberra's residential streetscapes.

The Braddon Housing Precinct is also important for demonstrating the principal characteristics of Garden City planning in Canberra in the 1920s. The philosophy behind it was to create healthy working and living environments for urban residents. Garden city planning has evolved to become the basis of professional town planning practice, and Canberra reflects this progressive evolution. In the 1920s the FCAC redefined the intrinsic character of Canberra as 'a garden town, with simple, but unpretentious buildings' and with 'suitably disposed cottages of permanent construction'.

Description

The Braddon Housing Precinct is the earliest of nine early Canberra places (the heritage precincts of Alt Crescent, Barton, Blandfordia 5, Braddon, Corroboree Park, Forrest, Kingston/Griffith, Reid and Wakefield Gardens), that collectively and individually demonstrate the early principles of garden city planning.

The forty-eight block precinct is bounded by Elimatta, Batman, Currong and Donaldson Streets. Walkways lead to public reserves each side of Doonkuna Street, which bisects the precinct, and there are corner pocket parks. The single-storey brick cottages are late examples of the Federation Bungalow style, being unpretentious, with homely qualities and 'natural' materials, honestly expressed. Indicators of the style are the face brickwork, simple roof planes, wide eaves, and verandahs on masonry piers.¹

The first cottages were grouped in symmetrical pairs, with front gardens originally behind low hedges. For aesthetic reasons, and to allow for avenues of street trees, power lines, sewers and water pipes were sited along back boundaries. Some cottages designed in 1925 by Federal Capital Commission architects are in the later northern half of the precinct. A notable group of FCC Type 11 cottages with classical porticos is at the intersection of Donaldson and Doonkuna Streets. Almost all cottages in the precinct survive, but have been altered. They typically have mature front gardens and extensions in their backyards.

Background/History

Canberra was selected in 1908 as the site for the Federal Capital and Walter Burley Griffin won the 1911 competition for its design. His final plan, drawn in 1918, showed this housing precinct, the only realised example of Griffin's residential intentions. 'Garden City' planning, in combination with American 'City Beautiful' principles, underpinned the initial planning of Canberra by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC 1921-24), Federal Capital Commission (FCC 1925-29) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) between 1920 and World War II.²

Garden city planning developed internationally through the early 20th century. The philosophy behind it was to create healthy working and living environments for urban residents. Garden city planning has evolved to become the basis of professional town planning practice, and Canberra reflects this progressive evolution. Canberra's heritage precincts demonstrate key characteristics of the garden city philosophy, which has followed a continuous process of rationalisation to suit changing lifestyles since WWII.

In the 1921-24 FCAC's plan of Canberra, the precinct, named Neighbourhood No 1, was laid out under the FCAC Chairman Sir John Sulman, Australia's authority on town planning. It was the forerunner of Canberra's residential streetscapes.³ Sulman had stated the special characteristics which could differentiate a garden suburb in Australia from an ordinary suburb as "the absence of congestion of dwellings and their better arrangement, the ample provision of parks, playgrounds and open spaces, the planting of trees and grass of part of the roads where not required for traffic, and the provision of greater opportunities for social intercourse".⁴ Griffin had planned reserves, screened from public view, surrounded by back yards, but the FCAC's 1921 plan had them "open to public use and inspection" along Doonkuna Street. By the late 1920s these reserves had acquired tennis courts and a children's playground, both of which have since been removed. The first North Canberra Post Office was once located in an annexe to 22 Doonkuna Street.⁵

Braddon Housing Precinct is one of the early housing precincts of Canberra which, with their landscaping, later housing and community facilities, represent the purest adaptation of garden city principles in Australia. The FCAC redefined the intrinsic character of Canberra as 'a garden town, with simple, but unpretentious buildings' and with 'suitably disposed cottages of permanent construction'. The FCAC architects designed simple brick cottages, modified from the detached cottages designed around 1918 by William Froggitt for Littleton Village at Lithgow. These had been adapted from Froggitt's 1912 designs for cottages in Dacey Garden Suburb in Sydney.⁶ The precinct's first stage, its southern portion with 32 cottages, was constructed in 1921-1922 to meet the urgent need to provide housing for lower income public servants and skilled tradesmen to facilitate the building of the civic centre and the establishment of the Capital. All those cottages were built to FCAC designs. From 1925 to 1929 the remaining 16 cottages were built, at first to FCAC designs, then to FCC 'standard type home' designs by FCC Chief Architect Henry Maitland Rolland.⁷

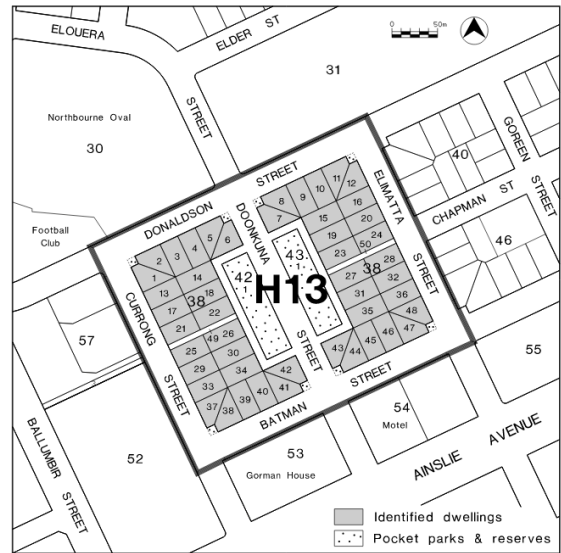
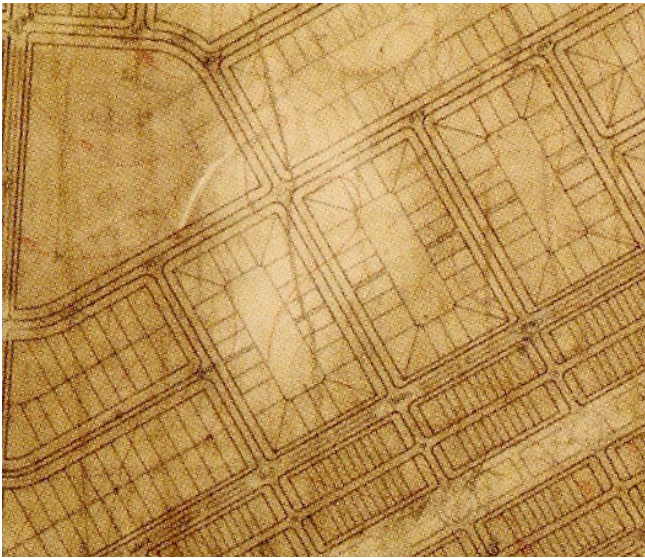
Values which meet ACT Heritage Criteria

a. Importance in the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history

The Braddon Housing Precinct, shown in Griffin's 1918 plan, is important as the earliest of nine Canberra places which collectively and individually demonstrate the principles of garden city planning. 'Garden City' planning, in combination with American 'City Beautiful' principles, underpinned the initial planning of Canberra by the Federal Capital Advisory Committee (FCAC), Federal Capital Commission (FCC) and the Department of Interior (DOI) between 1920 and World War II. The Braddon Housing Precinct, as the FCAC's Neighbourhood No.1, is the most historically significant of those places. It was the forerunner of Canberra's residential streetscapes. The precinct is associated with Walter Burley Griffin's plan for Canberra and is the only realised example of Griffin's planning intentions for the built residential environment. The first stage of the precinct was constructed 1921-1922 to meet the urgent need to provide housing for lower income public servants and workmen to facilitate the building of the civic centre and the establishment of the Capital.

d. Importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects

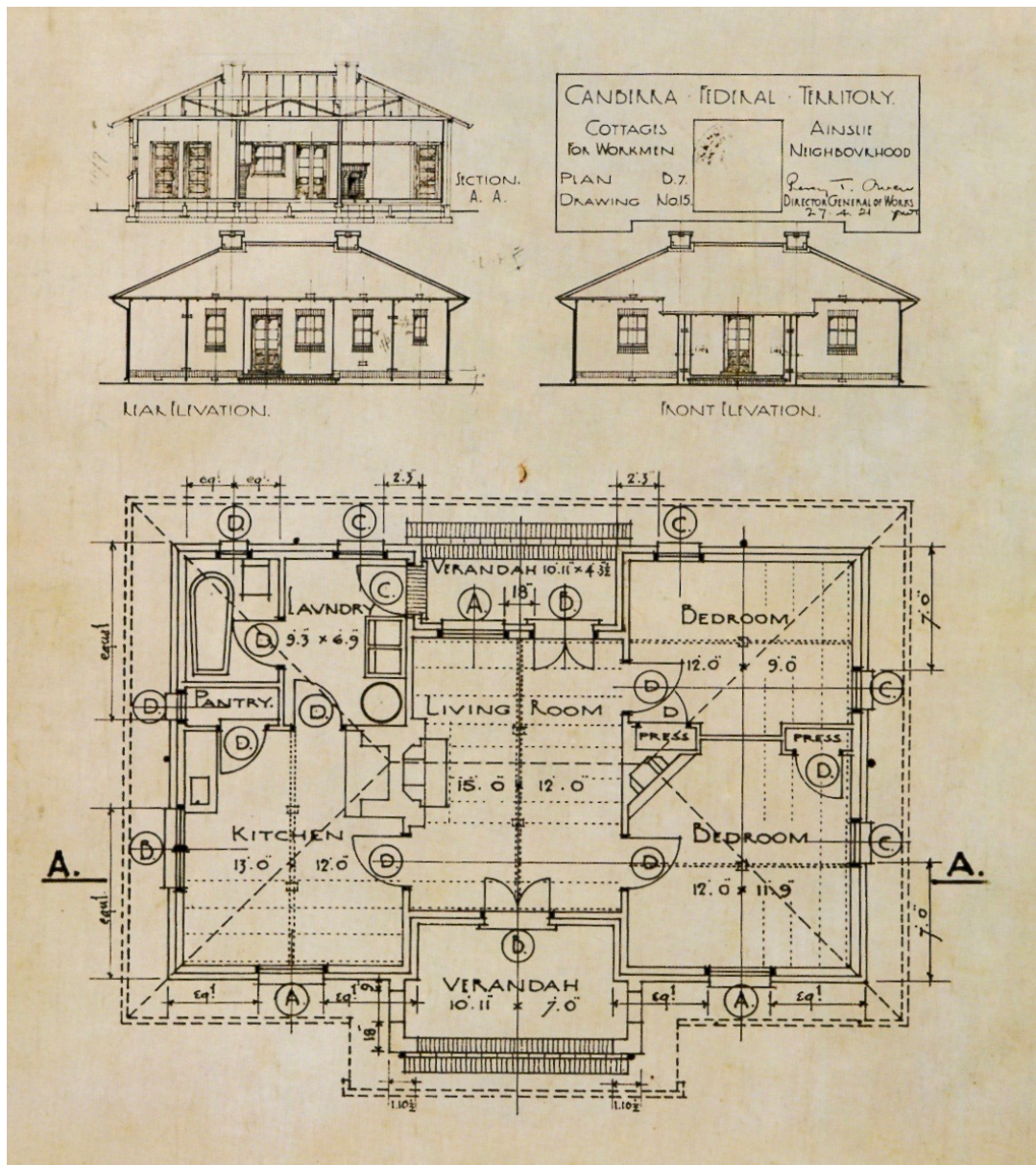
The precinct demonstrates the principal characteristics of Garden City planning in Canberra in the 1920s. Garden city planning developed internationally through the early 20th century. The philosophy behind it was to create healthy working and living environments for urban residents. Garden city planning has evolved to become the basis of professional town planning practice, and Canberra reflects this progressive evolution.



Above left: 1916 drawing of the site which became the Braddon Housing Precinct, showing W.B. Griffin's layout with reserves, screened from public view, to be accessible only from backyards or by walkways.⁸

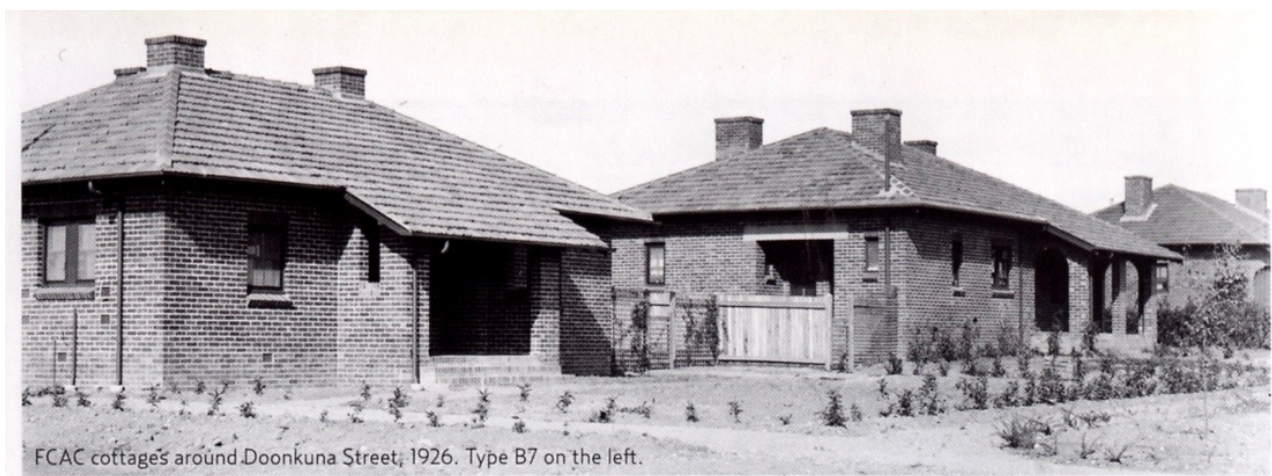
Above right and below: The Braddon Housing Precinct today. The reserves planned under Sir John Sulman are more open for public use, otherwise this is the only realised example of Griffin's planning intentions for Canberra's built residential environment. Note the carriage loops characteristic of garden city planning.⁹





FCAC Architect's drawing for Type B7 Cottage, 1921.

Source: NAA A2617, Section195/46



FCAC cottages, 62 & 60 Currong Street in 1926

Source: NAA A3560, 159

This drawing & photo are in *100 Canberra Houses A Century of Capital Architecture* by Tim Reeves and Alan Roberts
Halstead Press 2013



Cottage (1925) Type FCAC B7 62 Currong Street



Cottage (1925) Type FCAC F2 32 Doonkuna Street



Cottage (1922) Type FCAC B6 21 Batman Street



Cottage (1928) Type FCC 11 18 Donaldson Street

This citation was prepared by Ken Charlton AM LFRAIA

2022 photos by Ken Charlton

END NOTES

¹ Apperly, Irving & Reynolds, *Identifying Australian Architecture*, A&R, 1989, p144

² Braddon Housing Precinct Entry to the ACT Heritage Register, Statement of Significance.

³ Robert Freestone, 'Planning Suburban Canberra in the 1920s', in Peter Freeman Ed. *The Early Canberra House Living in Canberra 1911-1933*, RAIA ACT Chapter and The Federal Capital Press 1996.

⁴ John Sulman, *An Introduction to the study of Town Planning in Australia*, Sydney, NSW Government Printer, 1921, p. 3.

⁵ Braddon Housing Precinct Entry to the ACT Heritage Register, Statement of Significance.

⁶ Freestone, op cit.

⁷ Tim Reeves and Alan Roberts, *100 Canberra Houses A Century of Capital Architecture*, Halstead Press, 2013 p 24

⁸ J.T.H. Goodwin's manuscript map of Canberra, 1916 NLA Maps Collection, nla.map-rm3519

⁹ Braddon Housing Precinct, ACT Heritage Council and ACTPLA Aerial photograph, Feb 2022.