North East CBD/ Little Lon and Bourke Hill.

The North East CBD in an area of contrasts. From the former slum district laneways around Little Lonsdale St., to the leafy area around Bourke Hill and stately Parliament House. A number of smaller buildings in winding lanes off Chinatown and Bourke St host intimate laneway bars, while former industrial lanes to the north, around Lonsdale St contrast with church spires and modern glass structures. Whilst ignored under current council policy, Brein lane (7), Corrs Lane (in Chinatown heritage precinct), Jones lane (4) and Exploration Lane (1) offer an exciting pedestrian through-block journey of varying scale, character and laneway types. In a similar way Ridgeway place (on SE CBD map) Liverpool St, the winding Lt Bourke Place (10) and the re-claimed laneway lobby of Urban Workshop (9) involve the intrepid urban explorer in a fascinating journey from Collins Street to the Carlton Gardens.
1. Evans and Exploration Lane (Class 3)
The first in a small precinct of lanes off Little Lon, Evans Lane (this page) has a strong lanescape character consisting of a number of historic D-graded buildings on Little Lon (pictures top left) and Russell St. A substantial Victorian Warehouse (D-graded) sits at the corner of Evans lane as it winds into Exploration lane. This warehouse has excellent adaptive re-use potential. Bluestone lines the gutters here, as it does in Exploration lane (next page), however the last of it’s surviving character filled buildings will go when a concrete apartment tower approved for the site is completed.
2. Bennetts Lane and Davidson Place (Class 3)
Bennetts lane is flanked by a heritage listed three storey Victorian era building on one side, and a single storey 1920’s factory and depression era soup kitchen (D-graded) with similar brick character on the other. This factory extends down the lane, adaptively re-used as design offices. At the end of the lane a Jazz club occupies an un-graded Edwardian building. The other side of the lane is dominated by a modern apartment tower, and will soon be dominated by another tower replacing a heritage brick structure. The lane is paved in concrete, and has a strong vista looking towards the gothic Wesley Church and postmodern skyscrapers.
Apart from another D-graded heritage building on Little Lon, Davidson Place (next page) is largely devoid of intact features apart from a re-furbished Victorian pub on the corner (D-graded) and scattered bluestone paving.
Overall these two lanes and Little Lon between them are a mix of old and new, but contain a number of interesting structures.
3. Hayward Lane (Class 3)

Hayward lane is a through-block lane from Bourke Street to Lonsdale Street but only listed as ‘Class 3’ under current policy. A number of un-protected but historic buildings lining Russell Street lend their backs and add character due to varying heights to the lanes. A row of plain, altered Victorian era terraces occupy the lane to the north of Little Lonsdale St.
4. Jones Lane and Wesley Church (Class 2)
Jones Lane is another lane feeling the pressures of development in this part of the city. An apartment tower has been approved which will see the Edwardian building on its north east corner demolished. Likewise, another large office tower has recently been approved which will result in the demolition of a historic brick factory, formerly an art gallery and now with adaptive reuse potential, on its north west corner. The Neo-Gothic Princess Mary Club on the Lonsdale St. corner is also under threat.
While technically not a lane network, the land currently used for parking around Wesley Church and its Gothic manses forms a potential future pedestrian-friendly and historically significant space, which could link Chinatown and the Greek Lonsdale precinct to the evocative remnants of Little Lon’s once extensive laneway network.
5. La Trobe Place (Class 3)
With a welcoming curved entrance from Bourke St. provided by a 1936 moderne building (currently with no grading or protection), La Trobe place forms an intimate entrance into Chinatown from busy Bourke Street. Diverse materials give the lane character, as does the sense conveyed of a ‘hidden passage’ between two busy streets.
6. Coverlid Place and Golden Fleece Alley

Another fascinating lane network with interesting names. Coverlid Place leaves Little Bourke St. behind the Japanese Brutalist inspired ‘Total Car Park’, and is lined with layers of history and character. Three separate laneway buildings (discussed in the Brein Lane section) line it’s eastern side, some bricked up and one home to a pool hall. A blue painted 1871 warehouse (D-graded) gives the lane a gritty charm, as do the backs of heritage buildings on Bourke St. with historic signage and fire escapes. Golden Fleece Alley (next page) begins around a turn, with multi-layered brick and stone walls and facades surrounding on three sides. A long vanished hotel in the lane was the place where one of Australia’s earliest Socialist parties was formed. Amongst the members standing in the lane on that day were a number of Frenchman who had taken part in the Paris Commune of 1871.
7. Brein Lane (Class 2)

Running parallel to Coverlid Place and sharing many of its lane buildings, Brein lane forms a narrow path between Victorian era and Modernist ‘Googie’ architecture on Bourke St and Little Bourke St. It then continues as Corrs lane, thus providing through-block access to Lonsdale street. Initially the lane’s western side appears as a monolithic wall, but on closer inspection four separate laneway frontages appear, each at different heights and all full of heritage character, with entrances and windows bricked up decades ago. Heritage signage down the laneway offers hints towards its previous life, with a number of manufacturers, and even a former Gospel Hall. Modern street art celebrating multiculturalism appears at ground level.
7. Croft Alley (Class 3)

This is one of Melbourne’s iconic and most loved ‘secret’ laneways, yet the historic building within which it’s name-sake bar is located, and a number of it’s tall brick walls remain unprotected. Croft Alley is the quintessential ‘hidden lane’, snaking down from little Bourke St. leading the urban explorer on a journey laden of street art and gritty brick character, before reaching the Croft Institute bar, set within an Edwardian laboratory (no heritage grading) at it’s end. A charming pre-war substation and Edwardian building next to it with main frontage onto Market street and backing on to Croft Alley fall within the Little Bourke Heritage Overlay, but have no grading, and therefore no protection.
9. Griffin Lane, Casseldon Place and Gorman Alley (Class 3)

These are remnant lanes from Little Lonsdale Street’s infamous past as a slum and have all been re-laid with blue-stone. Edwardian and 1920’s buildings facing Little Lonsdale are either D-Graded, or with no grading at all (such as the Anglo-Flemish style building at top left)
10. The Bourke Hill Precinct
Crossley and Liverpool Street, Meyers, Windsor (Class 2) and Westwood Place (Class 3)

Crossley and Liverpool Street, Meyers, Windsor (Class 2) and Westwood Place (Class 3)

The lanes running off Bourke street’s Parliament end are some of the city’s most vibrant and character filled spaces. Yet they remain completely un-protected in most cases by the Heritage Overlay covering Bourke street itself. Behind Pellegrinis and the colonial era ‘Crossley Building’, Crossley street contains a character filled 1950’s restaurant building with unique windows and evocative blue tiles. An Edwardian factory building full of bespoke shops and services, a 1920’s substation, and a Victorian era warehouse (All with the lowest possible heritage grading, a D) contribute strong character to the lanescape. One side of Liverpool St, which consists of a 1980’s office building and modern apartments, is included in the Heritage Overlay, however on the other side, two Victorian buildings have no protection at all.

Across Bourke St, Windsor Place is dominated by the soaring heritage brick wall of the Windsor Hotel on one side, replete with a network of vertical iron pipes and a multitude of windows with stone sills. A small victorian club house stands on the other side, with the unassuming rear of a moderne factory from Meyers place containing a charming laneway bar.

Towards the Lt. Collins St corner of Meyers Place, a heavily altered Victorian warehouse provides the laneway character, despite alterations to the facade. Turning around the corner past a 1950’s brick hotel and car park, Meyers Place is a hive of activity. Street art and a bluestone alcove sit next to a 1940’s modern factory (D-graded), which is home to a number of businesses. The famous Waiters Club sits next door in a spare Edwardian structure, and across the lane another two inter-war buildings give more life to the lane.

On Westwood Place, a narrow opening from Bourke St reveals a wider lane, with the heritage listed side of the Salvation Army Headquarters providing laneway frontages to restaurants and charity stores. Just before entering Lt Collins St, an alcove appears behind three historic buildings, one of which is included in the current heritage review C186. These lanes feature bluestone guttering, and are all considered ‘Class 2’ by the outdated laneway policy. This group forms a very strong case for inclusion in HO500, with each lane being essential to the character and vibrancy one of Melbourne’s most exiting heritage precincts.