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## Resource 8: Establishing local thresholds

For a place, precinct or group/thematic/serial listing (GTS) to warrant inclusion in the HO, the heritage citation should demonstrate that it meets the “threshold of local significance”. This “threshold” differs from municipality to municipality, depending on its development over time and what sort of heritage places survive within it. It will also differ for each type of place under assessment. For example, in a municipality that retains extensive Victorian-era residential development, only above-average examples of design and intactness will reach the threshold of local significance. In another, where there was little such development, or where little survives, more basic Victorian houses with some alteration may meet the threshold of local significance for that area.

The threshold of local significance for each municipality and each place-type within it requires careful and well-informed consideration by the heritage consultants carrying out new assessments or review of legacy heritage citations. To prepare a sound comparative analysis, they must identify as wide a range as possible of similar places and then compare them amongst each other to determine which rise to the top.

In general, the following aspects of a place are used to determine if it meets the threshold of local significance: rarity in the local context, degree of intactness or integrity, age, design quality/aesthetic value and its importance to the development of the municipality as documented in the thematic environmental history.

### **Tip: Testing significance thresholds**

While the work establishing the thresholds for a given municipality is a specialist skill, it is possible to get a sense of whether sufficient work has been done (and documented) in a legacy heritage study using the Auditing tool.

A place/precinct may not have any or an insufficient comparative analysis in the legacy study under review, but this does not mean that they necessarily fall below the threshold of local significance. In older heritage studies, comparative work was often not documented, or it was documented in an abbreviated manner (e.g. a single sentence, or a simple list of similar places). Often the conclusions about a place’s significance made in legacy studies are sound but need to be confirmed by a fully documented comparative analysis in the heritage study review.

A place that met the threshold of local significance when it was assessed in a legacy study may have since been negatively changed, so it may no longer meet the threshold. For example:

- Has the key building been altered or partially demolished?
- Has it been so neglected that it is falling down?
- Have its early outbuildings been removed?
- Has its setting been changed (e.g. subdivision, paving of front garden for parking)?
- In a precinct, have Significant or Contributory buildings been demolished, or have large new buildings been constructed within its boundaries?

For further information see *VLHG*