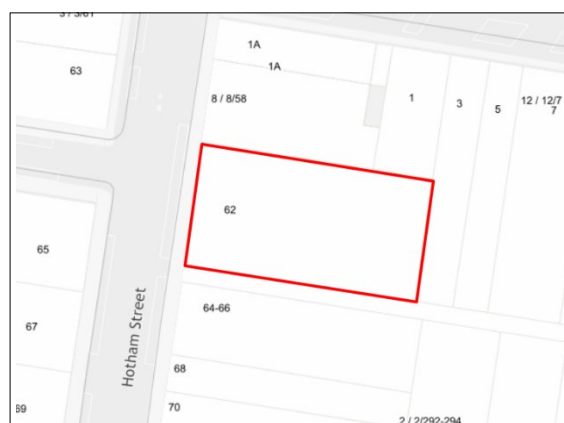
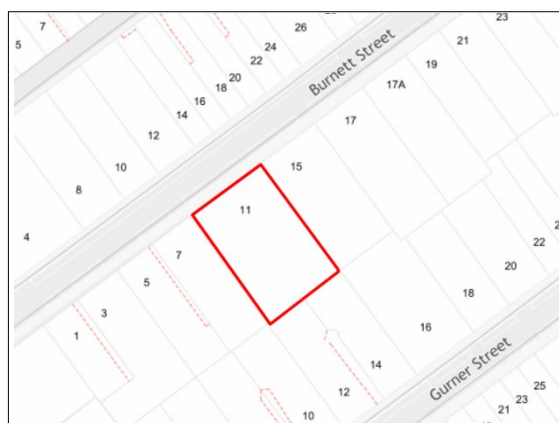


Statement of Significance: Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1

Address:	289 Barkly Street & 11 Burnett Street, St Kilda 62 Hotham Street & 38 Westbury Street, St Kilda East	Name:	Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1 (1948-1954)
Place type:	Residential: Flats	Grading:	Significant
PS ref no:	HO35	Constructed:	Late 1940s to early 1950s
Heritage precinct:	Not applicable	Citation No.:	2444



What is significant?

The Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1 (1948-1954) comprising four separate blocks of flats, constructed during the late 1940s to early 1950s, at 289 Barkly Street & 11 Burnett Street, St Kilda and 62 Hotham Street & 38 Westbury Street, St Kilda East—all designed by the émigré architect Mordecai Benshemesh (or, in the case of 62 Hotham Street, presumed to have been designed by Benshemesh)—is significant.

All four buildings are intact, are three storey, and have (predominantly) cream brick walls, cuboid forms, and steel-framed openings. The flat roofs are concealed by parapets and are partly or fully

traversable. Three (62 Hotham Street, 289 Barkly Street, 11 Burnett Street) retain original low front fences, and 38 Westbury Street has a likely original brick bay with letterboxes.

62 Hotham Street (Francelaw Flats), comprised of 12 flats, was designed in 1948 and constructed by Harry Kinsman in 1948-49. It is comprised of two offset blocks. There is a taller stairwell bay with an elongated, vertically orientated window. Horizontally is emphasised by rendered banding and the wide windows, including corner windows, which have horizontal glazing bars. There are also porthole windows at the front. Corner balconies supported by steel poles have a cantilevered concrete deck and brick balustrade.

38 Westbury Street, comprised of 23 flats, was designed in 1951 and constructed by Harry Kinsman in 1951-52. It has a T-shaped footprint, with the greater part of the building positioned to the rear of the site. The entry bays are recessed and do not project above the main parapet. The balconies have a concrete deck and brick balustrade with a metal rail.

11 Burnett Street (Burnett Lodge), comprised of 20 flats, was designed in 1951 and constructed by G Trencher in 1951-52. It has a broadly 'U' shaped footprint. The prominent taller stairwell bay has narrow horizontal bands of windows. The long walkways have brick balustrades and concrete decks.

289 Barkly Street, comprised of 19 flats, was designed in 1953 and constructed by J Trencher in 1953-54. It has a rectangular footprint. There is a taller stairwell bay with an elongated, vertically orientated window. The balconies and galleries have concrete decks and metal balustrades with vertical balusters, the latter also have steel poles.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

How is it significant?

The Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1 (1948-1954) is of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

Why is it significant?

The Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1 (1948-1954) is historically significant as part of the extensive flat building program that has characterised much of the 20th century history of the municipality but especially this part of St Kilda East/St Kilda and which gained pace after World War II with the introduction of the Own-Your-Own (OYO) option. As was common, the flats either replaced earlier Victorian period houses or were built in excised sections of their grounds. The flat typology evolved with the work of several émigré architects, who were responsible for a high proportion of the architect-designed examples and who often worked with Jewish developers. These imbued the area with a more progressive, International character, and which was supported by the local, often Jewish, community. The group also have associations with the architect Mordecai Beshemesh, 'Mr Highrise', who was prolific in this domain but also at the forefront of flat design. (Criterion A)

The Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 1 (1948-1954) is of aesthetic significance as a distinctive group of flats by the Palestinian born émigré architect Mordecai Benshemesh. They are fine examples of the Functionalist style and are distinguished from the work of other architects in the municipality, particularly in terms of the boldness of their massing. There is a slight shift in the external palette to the four blocks over the time period, with the two earlier buildings (1948 and 1951) being partly red brick, whereas the two later buildings (1953 and 1954) are completely cream brick, possibly reflecting the higher cost of cream bricks, especially in the immediate post war years when materials were rationed. The three surviving original front fences contribute to the setting of the flats. (Criterion E)

Primary source

RBA Architects & Conservation Consultants, *Review of Heritage Precinct HO7 – Elwood, St Kilda, Balaclava, Ripponlea - Stage 2 Report (2022)*

Place schedule

Name	Address	Grading
Flats	289 Barkly Street, St Kilda	Significant
Flats (Burnett Lodge)	11 Burnett Street, St Kilda	Significant
Flats (Francelaw Flats)	62 Hotham Street, St Kilda East	Significant
Flats	38 Westbury Street, St Kilda East	Significant