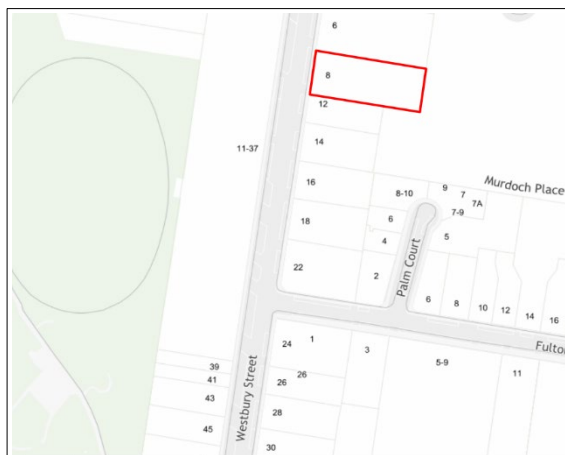
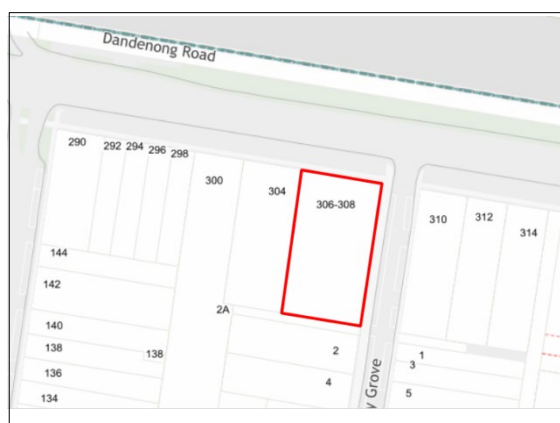


## Statement of Significance: Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 2

<b>Address:</b> 306 Dandenong Road, 16 Lansdowne Road and 8 Westbury Street, St Kilda East	<b>Name:</b> Benshemesh Flats Group Listing 2
<b>Place type:</b> Residential: Flats	<b>Grading:</b> Significant
<b>PS ref no:</b> HO560	<b>Constructed:</b> 1960
<b>Heritage precinct:</b> Not applicable	<b>Citation No.:</b> 2429



### What is significant?

The three separate blocks of flats, constructed in 1960, at 306 Dandenong Road (Leaworra), 16 Lansdowne Road and 8 Westbury Street (Wolverton), St Kilda East – all designed by the émigré architect Mordecai Benshemesh - are significant.

All three buildings are intact, are three storey, have cream brick walls and flat roofs with wide, sheet-lined soffits to the front/main elevations, and timber-framed openings. They all have balconies orientated to take best advantage of the solar access and the site configuration. The stairwells have louvred glass to provide some airflow. All retain their original low cream brick fence and associated letter box enclosures.

This is an incorporated document in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme pursuant to section 6(2)(j) of the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*

306 Dandenong Road (Leaworra), comprised of 12 flats, was designed in December 1959 but constructed in 1960 by A M & R R Gyngell P/L. It has a stepped footprint with two stair wells with a vertical strip of windows. The windows to the flats are configured in bands, including panels of grey ceramic tiles to the east elevation. The balconies have an inwardly canted front, lined with sheeting, and metal railing to the side.

16 Lansdowne Road, comprised of 18 flats, was designed in June 1960 and also constructed by A M & R R Gyngell P/L. This narrow site has a long rectangular footprint. Distinctive elements include the inverted L-shaped brick projections to the east elevation, band of white and grey ceramic tiles, and splayed balconies with metal balusters and panels.

8 Westbury Street (Wolverton), comprised of 18 flats, was designed in February 1960 and constructed by Martin Adams & Co. P/L. It also has a stepped footprint with two stair wells. The balconies are also splayed with a combination of metal balusters and panels. The front windows (north and west elevations) have a staggered configuration and there are spandrel panels to the west elevation.

Alterations and additions are not significant.

### **How is it significant?**

The flats at 8 Westbury Street (Wolverton), 16 Lansdowne Road and 306 Dandenong Road (Leaworra), are of local historic and aesthetic significance to the City of Port Phillip.

### **Why is it significant?**

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The group of three flats are historically significant as part of the extensive flat building activity that has characterised much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of the municipality but especially this part of St Kilda East and which gained pace after World War II with the introduction of the Own-Your-Own (OYO) option. These three sites are also significant as they reflect a common pattern of land development in this part of the municipality whereby the extant building replaced an earlier house/mansion, some of which had been converted to flats in the interim. The postwar 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 often local 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 postwar flat design. (Criterion A)

The group of three flats are of aesthetic significance as a distinctive group of Modernist flats designed by the Palestinian born émigré architect Mordecai Beshemesh who with this group was developing a more elaborate/articulated approach, characterised by the incorporation of balconies with angled geometry either in the vertical or horizontal plane. This aspect in particular distinguishes his work from many of his contemporaries and this phase of flat construction. In addition, there was a shift away from a 'pure', rigorous Modernism, especially as the International style variant became codified, and some architects started to include more decorative elements or treatments to provide some differentiation (in these instances, ceramic tiling, some panels to the balustrades, projecting bricks, and/or staggered glazing bars to the windows). Where possible (wider sites), he favoured a stepped plan to open up views across the building. (Criterion E)

### **Primary source**

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

**Place schedule**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Grading</b>
Leaworra	306 Dandenong Road, St Kilda East	Significant
Flats	16 Lansdowne Road, St Kilda East	Significant
Wolverton	8 Westbury Street, St Kilda East	Significant