
Newtown Housing Project



Newtown

Location

406 Barkers Road HAWTHORN EAST, BOROONDARA CITY

Municipality

BOROONDARA CITY

Level of significance

Incl in HO area indiv sig

Heritage Overlay Numbers

HO849

Heritage Listing

Boroondara City

Statement of Significance

Last updated on - May 30, 2022

What is significant?

Newtown Housing Project at 406 Barkers Road, Hawthorn East, a set of three modern terrace houses designed by renowned architect, Kevin Borland for project builder Habitat Pty Ltd, is significant. Constructed in 1967, the terrace houses also feature Besser block forecourts to each house, contributing to the setting and continuing the design aesthetic.

How is it significant?

Newtown Housing Project, the modern terrace houses at 406 Barkers Road, Hawthorn East are of local architectural, aesthetic and associational significance to the City of Boroondara.

Why is it significant?

406 Barkers Road, Hawthorn East are an important example of late twentieth-century domestic architecture, inspired by the terrace housing typology, and designed by renowned Victorian architect Kevin Borland. The design of the terrace housing, for project builder Habitat Pty Ltd, belongs stylistically to the Brutalist mode, made popular by the local examples seen at the Harold Hold Memorial Swim Centre in Malvern (VHR H0069) and the Plumbers and Gasfitter Union Building (VHR H2307), both built after the subject site. It should be noted that the modern terrace houses are also significant as one of the first examples inspired by the Brutalist movement, preceding both above mentioned examples, and other listed examples within the municipality (Merchant Builder Townhouses HO325 and MLC Resource Centre HO204).

Further, the houses demonstrate the continued development and refinement of the terrace house typology following the post-war period. It is an outstanding example of the typology from this time, within the municipality. (Criterion D)

The modern terrace houses derive their aesthetic appeal from the boldly composed and functionalist expression of the set of three houses. The strong rectilinear forms of the building are further seen in the general expression of materiality including the textured concrete blockwork and exemplified by the boxed, projecting built in robes. This aesthetic is also utilised to create forecourts of Besser block to each of the terrace houses. (Criterion E)

'Newtown Housing Project' is significant for its association with architect Kevin Borland whose innovative designs in both domestic and public architecture make him notable amongst Melbourne architects of the second half of the twentieth century. Borland, himself a former resident of Kew, along with Daryl Jackson and others formed Habitat Pty Ltd and invested in the local area by choosing to build this, their first development in Hawthorn East. He was also a member of the design team for the Olympic Swimming Pool (1952, VHR H1977) and, with Jackson, designed the Harold Holt Swim Centre (1968, VHR H0069). Along with Borland's buildings at Preshil School (1962–72, VHR H0072), his residential work includes the experimental Rice House (1953-4, VHR H0123) and the former McDonald Smith House (1969). (Criterion H)

Heritage Study/Consultant	Boroondara - Municipal-Wide Heritage Gap Study Volume 6: Hawthorn East, Context, 2018;
Construction dates	1967,
Architect/Designer	Borland, Kevin, Jackson, Daryl,
Hermes Number	208874
Property Number	

Physical Description 1

Description & Integrity

The subject site comprises a set of three two-storey concrete block modernist terrace houses with Brutalist overtones. The dwellings are arranged A, B and C west to east across the site. Situated on the south side of Barkers Road, the houses face north with a site sloping away from the street to the rear access lane. The setback from the street creates three private gardens for the homes, with car access provided down the western boundary of the site to the rear garages. Each dwelling is comprised of a living space and combined kitchen/dining area on the ground floor, and four bedrooms (or three and a study) and two bathrooms on the first floor.

The set of attached houses appear under a single flat metal deck roof, with each home containing a set of five 'Atlas' vented skylights centrally placed giving light to the innermost spaces of the first floor (bathrooms and stair landing). From the street the roofline is again visually one element with a 15-inch timber fascia wrapping around its entirety.

The prominent blade walls which divide each of the row houses are of double concrete block work, expressed both externally and internally. The facades of each house are set back from the tips of these to create a narrow terrace, with the projected built in robes above. These functional and Brutalist projections are clad in a masonry veneer, reducing weight and tying back into the expressed brickwork throughout. Originally timber and coated with walnut finish, the windows and doors were a mix of operable sash and fixed glazing elements, providing much more light than the typical Victorian terrace house. Nos. 406A & C have been altered recently and have replaced the original glazing and frames for new, however these works do not detract from the bold forms of the houses and reinstate a similar arrangement of the windows.

The rear of the terraces has a similar arrangement of glazed openings on the ground floor and projecting robes to the first. Although not shown on the working drawings, a cross beam supports all robes at its outer mark, with house A and C utilising this element for a new uncovered timber patio.

Internally, A and B have the same layout with C being a mirror image of the plan. Materials are expressed, with deep unpainted Oregon beams extruding to the exterior and expressed or painted brickwork throughout. Services are generally concealed through their internal placement in the plan, freeing up both north and south elevations from clutter and allowing integration into the front and rear gardens.

Each dwelling is provided with a semi-private concrete block walled front garden, with the central house adopting kinked walls to make up for additional space provided to both adjacent homes. This again occurs at the rear, which then transitions into the carport / garage. All three properties are planted extensively, 406A in particular, contains an established melaleuca in the front setback and jacaranda in the backyard.

Overall, the set of row houses are intact and in good condition, with the few exceptions outlined above.

This place/object may be included in the Victorian Heritage Register pursuant to the Heritage Act 2017. Check the Victorian Heritage Database, selecting 'Heritage Victoria' as the place source.

For further details about Heritage Overlay places, contact the relevant local council or go to Planning Schemes Online <http://planningschemes.dpcd.vic.gov.au/>