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<b>Name</b>	<i>E A Watts House</i>	<b>Reference No</b>	
<b>Address</b>	1291 Burke Road, Kew	<b>Survey Date</b>	6 December 2005
<b>Building Type</b>	Residence	<b>Grading</b>	B
<b>Date</b>	1930-1	<b>Previous Grading</b>	B



#### Extent of Overlay

To title boundaries.

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**Intactness**    ☒ Good    ☐ Fair    ☐ Poor

**Heritage Status**    ☐ HV    ☐ AHC    ☐ NT    ☐ Rec.    BPS Heritage Overlay

#### History

1291 Burke Road was built in 1931 by and for its first owner Ernest A Watts, a building contractor.<sup>1</sup> Watts was the managing director of E A Watts Pty Ltd, one of Victoria's most prolific building companies. Building projects for which the firm was responsible included the 1956 Olympic Stand at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the Hotel Australia, Collins Street and the Southern Cross Hotel, Exhibition Street, among many others.<sup>2</sup>

Though the house appears likely to have been architect-designed, no architect has to date been identified.

It is likely that the house's fixtures and fittings were finished to a high standard, commensurate with its construction for a prominent member of the building industry.

The Watts family only occupied the house until 1939, at which time it was sold to Ivor W Trescowthick, who owned it until 1956.<sup>3</sup> Dr Albert Piper subsequently acquired the property,<sup>4</sup> residing there until at least 1974.<sup>5</sup> A detailed description of the property was published in the *Herald*, when the property was sold in 1985. Situated on an allotment of 1500 square feet, it had views over the Yarra Valley to the Dandenong Ranges beyond. The finely detailed interiors and its proportions were also described in detail.<sup>6</sup>

The subsequent owners made a series of alterations to the rear and north elevation of the property in 1989.<sup>7</sup>

(G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded buildings study (draft), 2001, additional research by Lovell Chen, 2005)

## Description & Integrity

1291 Burke Road is a triple fronted, two-storied brick house with stucco rendering, currently painted in ochre. It has a hipped terracotta-clad roof in three main masses, simply corniced stuccoed chimneys, tiles in the Marseilles pattern and boxed eaves. In common with other 1930s designs in the Boroondara region, its plan was in three frontal steps (in this case including a projecting arcaded porch/balcony element), with a simple right angle behind them, and a garage attached as a fourth front for visual integration. The walls feature prominently sculpted quoin patterns and a set of sculpted voussoirs over the garage entry, and decorative semicircular panels across the ground floor of the main house.

The prominent entry porch and first floor balcony above have both been glazed in. The other major alteration to the house has been John Siversen's 1989 design for a new family room, conservatory, kitchen, pantry, laundry, bathroom, and storeroom, but these are all at the rear and are not visible. A swimming pool was also added in that year.<sup>8</sup> The only alterations recorded prior to 1989 were to the original kitchen in 1968 and an oil heater added in 1972.<sup>9</sup>

The garage is original but the driveway has been renewed. The fence appears to have been replaced since the 1988 Kew Conservation Study survey and the wrought iron gates noted at that time are no longer present.

## Historical Context

Originally part of Captain Edward Dumaesq's large land holding, the west side of Burke Road between Cotham and Sackville streets, surrounding the Kew reservoir, was subdivided in 1909.<sup>10</sup> The generous-sized allotments were predominantly developed during the mid-1910s with substantial villas, with additional development during the interwar years. The house was fairly close to a surviving section of the outer circle railway (East Camberwell to East Kew), but this closed soon after the house was built.

## Comparative Analysis

Mediterranean forms and detailing were gaining in popularity around Australia by the mid to late 1920s and into the 1930s. For many, the Mediterranean mode evoked a sense of grace, solidity, easeful hospitality and personal refuge as well as an element of glamour, and varied Italian and Spanish forms were adopted by many Australian architects as a cultivated domestic style. Boroondara counterparts include houses at the Golf links and Hassett Estates in Camberwell,<sup>11</sup> a run of houses in Camberwell and Toorak Roads, and individual arcaded and parapet-hipped roof designs such as 63 Cookson Street, Camberwell. 1 Fairmont Avenue, Camberwell, is a related single story type, built in 1935. It and the nearby 460 Camberwell Road<sup>12</sup> thought to be by the builder, A Mortimer McMillan, use Serlian arched windows, a motif recalled in 1291's front, though the arches there are blind. 3 Finsbury Way, also by McMillan, was a two-storied design nearby, of similar hefty proportions to No.1291 Burke Road, Kew. Surprisingly few counterparts in Kew have been noted, though 15 Studley Park Road, built in the 1920s, has similarly scales quoin patterning and similar weighty proportions.<sup>13</sup> No. 1291 Burke Road, Kew, has a simple driveway arrangement running up to a masonry side gate that integrates the garage area with the house, in ways that would be emulated in other, often architect designed houses in the Camberwell and North Balwyn areas. The plan form, in receding steps away from the street front but with a simple straight back, has parallels in later two storey designs in the Boroondara area such as 32 Hortense Street, Burwood of 1938 by Leslie Reed (q.v., B-graded), the AK Lines-Jessica MacFarlane designs for 136 Whitehorse Road, Balwyn, of 1938 (q.v.), 19 Oakdale Road and 8 City View Road, Balwyn North, of 1936 and 1939 respectively., and Clive Miller's design for 56 Riverside Avenue North Balwyn, of 1940 (q.v.).

## Assessment Against Criteria

### *Amended Heritage Victoria Criteria*

*CRITERION D: The importance of a place or object in exhibiting the principal characteristics or the representative nature of a place or object as a part of a class or type of places or objects.*

1291 Burke Road, Kew, is a handsome and externally relatively intact example of a substantial two-storey interwar residence designed in a broadly Mediterranean mode.

*CRITERION E: The importance of the place or object in exhibiting good design or aesthetic characteristics and/or in exhibiting a richness, diversity or unusual integration of features.*

1291 Burke Road, Kew, is a skillful fusion of Mediterranean styles commonly applied in larger houses of the period 1925-39, which in this case incorporates elements of the later English Baroque. The design evokes the scale, detailing, and utopian qualities of Italian *contado* villas and reflects the strong general knowledge and interest in a wide range of architecture of the client/owner, EA Watts.

### Statement of Significance

The EA Watts house, at 1291 Burke Road, Kew, is of local historical and architectural significance as a handsome and externally relatively intact example of a substantial two-storey interwar residence designed in a broadly Mediterranean mode. The design is a skillful fusion of Mediterranean styles commonly applied in larger houses of the period 1925-39, which in this case incorporates elements of the later English Baroque. The design evokes the scale, detailing, and utopian qualities of Italian *contado* villas and reflects the strong general knowledge of, and interest in, a wide range of architecture of the client/owner, EA Watts.

### Grading Review

Unchanged.

### Recommendations

Recommended for inclusion in the Schedule to the Heritage Overlay of the Boroondara Planning Scheme.

### Identified By

Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988

### References

*General:* Pru Sanderson Design Pty Ltd, Kew Urban Conservation Study, 1988, G Butler & Associates, Kew B-graded places study (draft), 2001.

*Specific:*

<sup>1</sup> City of Kew Rate books, 1930-1, #3572, nav £200.

<sup>2</sup> *The Age*, 11 January 1963.

<sup>3</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1939-40, #3566, nav £200; *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, various years.

<sup>4</sup> City of Kew Rate Books, 1957-8, rate no. 3000, nav £570).

<sup>5</sup> Pattern of occupation derived from listings in the *Sands & McDougall Directory of Victoria*, various years between 1950 and 1974.

<sup>6</sup> The *Herald*, 1985, date unknown, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Kew B-graded places study* (draft), 2001.

<sup>7</sup> Details and drawings sourced from the City of Kew Building Index, #4258, dated 8 March 1989.

<sup>8</sup> John Siversen, working drawings, showing the original plan as part of a demolition schedule: dated 3 April 1989, and sourced from Boroondara archives and City of Kew Building Index, #4258, same date. The swimming pool was #4336, dated 18 April 1989.

<sup>9</sup> City of Kew Building Index, #965, dated 19 November 1968 (kitchen) and #3397, dated 25 July 1972 (oil heater).

<sup>10</sup> LP 5064, 1909, cited in G Butler & Associates, *Kew B-graded places study* (draft), 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Discussed by Butler in his City of Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, v. 3, designated precincts 15 and 28.

<sup>12</sup> Butler, City of Camberwell Conservation Study 1991, v.4 p. 117-118.

<sup>13</sup> Pru Sanderson, City of Kew Urban Conservation Study, Designation A Citation 54.