



SCEGGS Darlinghurst
Stage 1 Detailed Design Proposal (SSD 893)
Wilkinson House Options Analysis

Prepared for



SCEGGS Darlinghurst

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose of the report

This options analysis has been prepared to support a State Significant Development Application for the proposed masterplan and redevelopment of the Sydney Church of England Girls’ Grammar School (SCEGGS), Darlinghurst.

The masterplan seeks to realise the School’s objective to provide improved learning facilities to meet contemporary educational standards. As part of the masterplan, Wilkinson House — located at the northern end of the site on Forbes Street — is proposed to be replaced with a purpose-built school building.

The purpose of this study is to assess the alternatives considered for the redevelopment of Wilkinson House.

The study has been prepared by Tanner Kibble Denton Architects on behalf of SCEGGS Darlinghurst.

1.2 Wilkinson House

Wilkinson House, originally Gwydir Flats, was constructed in 1926 as a block of flats to the design of architect Emil Soderston. The building was acquired by SCEGGS in 1960 and converted into a student boarding house and staff accommodation. From 2001, with the cessation of boarding at Darlinghurst, the building was converted for the use by staff and students. Today, the building consists of domestic-sized spaces adapted to provide classrooms and offices.

As part of its commitment to providing a high standard of girls’ education, SCEGGS has identified the need to upgrade its learning facilities across the campus. Development opportunities over the last twenty years within the constrained inner city campus have largely been realised, guided by the 1999 Masterplan. The School’s 2040 Masterplan — this application — has identified the remaining areas of the campus that are no longer suitable for the requirements of the School, and where opportunities exist to upgrade its educational facilities.

Wilkinson House is a key component of the 2040 Masterplan. Since 2011, the School has investigated options to upgrade and improve the functioning of the building, having regard for its heritage status and the limitations of its structure and planning. The residential nature and design of the building restricts the ability to accommodate contemporary educational facilities, and in particular the provision of large, flexible learning spaces.

This report outlines the School’s current and future educational objectives and provides an assessment of the options considered for the redevelopment of the building.

1.3 Options

As part of the masterplan process, three broad options were developed that represent the range of possible alternatives for redeveloping Wilkinson House in accordance with the School’s requirements for flexible learning spaces:

- A) refurbishing of the building;
- B) redeveloping the building with the principal facades retained; and
- C) replacing Wilkinson House with a new building.

Each option was developed with input from a specialist consultant team to a level of detail that allows the impact and implications of each option to be understood. Each option is described in detail at sections 5, 6 and 7.

Section 8 provides a comparative analysis of the options to determine the optimum outcome, having regard for the School’s requirements, the constraints of the structure and heritage considerations.

Drawings of the three options are included at Appendix A, and structural drawings are included at Appendix B.



Wilkinson House, corner Forbes Street and St Peter’s Lane, Darlinghurst.
Source: TKD Architects.

1.4 Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements

The State Significant Development for SCEGGS Darlinghurst comprises:

- > a **Masterplan Concept Development Application** for building envelopes, building locations and land uses across the campus, to guide development over the next 20 years, and;
- > a **Stage 1 Detailed Design Proposal** for the first stage of works, comprising the replacement of Wilkinson House with a new building.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has provided Secretary’s Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed development. The assessment requirements for the Stage 1 Detailed Design relating to heritage are as follows:

- > *A Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) must be prepared in accordance with the guidelines in the NSW Heritage Manual that addresses the significance of, and provides an assessment of the proposal’s impact on the heritage significance of heritage items on, and in the vicinity of the development site and includes strategies to avoid and mitigate any adverse impacts.*
- > *Prepare an options analysis considering alternative options for the demolition of Wilkinson House.*

1.5 Author identification

This report has been prepared by Tanner Kibble Denton Architects with the input from the following consultants:

Architect	Tanner Kibble Denton Architects
Heritage Consultant	Tanner Kibble Denton Architects
Structural / Civil Engineer	Taylor Thomson Whitting
Services Consultant	Erbas
BCA / Access	Design Confidence
Acoustic Engineer	Wilkinson Murray
Quantity Surveyor	Altus Group

1.6 About SCEGGS

SCEGGS is a non-selective Anglican school for girls from Kindergarten to Year 12 with a school population of approximately 900 girls.

Located near the centre of Sydney, it attracts students from all over the metropolitan area and is able to utilise the educational resources of the city.

SCEGGS aims to educate its students to become confident, competent and articulate young women in an environment which values diversity and individuality.

SCEGGS was established on the site in 1901 and has been providing high quality education to girls for well over 100 years. Its excellent academic record makes it one of Sydney's leading Independent Girls' Schools.

1.7 Site location

SCEGGS Darlinghurst is located east of the Sydney CBD in the inner-city suburb of Darlinghurst, in a predominately residential area largely comprising Victorian terrace houses and interwar apartments.

The campus is bound by St Peter's Lane to the north, Forbes Street to the east and Bourke Street to the west. The campus is intersected by St Peter's Street, which is used by the school as a thoroughfare during school hours to access the *Diana Bowman Performing Arts Centre* and the School's *Great Hall* (formerly St Peter's Church).

Wilkinson House, is located on a prominent corner position at the intersection of Forbes and St Peter's Streets. The adjacent buildings to its south and west are recent School buildings built in 1995 (the *Centenary Sports Hall*) and 2011 (the *Joan Freeman Science and Technology Centre*). Wilkinson House is connected to these buildings through bridge links. To the north on the opposite side of St Peter's Street is the state heritage listed St Peter's Church Precinct and the contemporary *Diana Bowman Performing Arts Centre*. To the east is the Horizon Building complex designed by Harry Seidler.

1.8 Masterplan 2040

SCEGGS Darlinghurst has existed in its present location as a functioning school for girls since 1901.

Development of the campus over the last 20 years has been guided by the schools 1999 Masterplan. The opportunities for developing the campus in this Masterplan have now largely been realised and successfully integrated into the urban fabric.

SCEGGS now proposes an updated Masterplan 2040 that responds to the remaining areas of the campus that are no longer suitable for the current and projected requirements of the school.

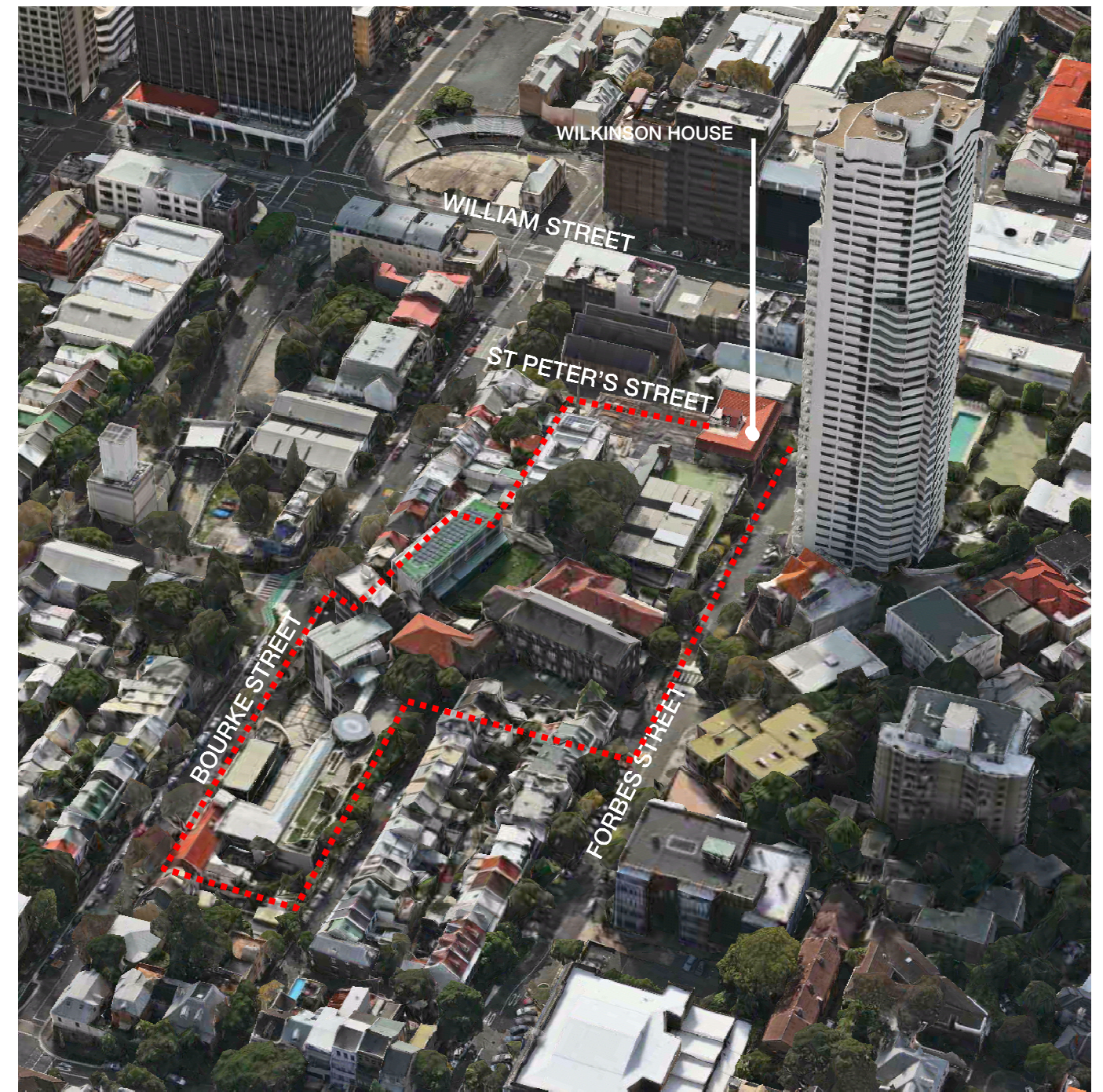
This Masterplan is a response to the current state of the facilities at SCEGGS and outlines the framework within which the school intends to upgrade its existing facilities and integrate new facilities within its unique context over the next 20 years.

A key component of the Masterplan is the redevelopment of Wilkinson House. The School has identified that Wilkinson House does not meet their requirements and needs to provide larger flexible spaces for learning and meeting.

The redeveloped Wilkinson House is to accommodate:

- > Large flexible learning spaces associated with the Joan Freeman Science and Technology Centre and the Centenary Sports Hall.
- > Large flat flexible multi-purpose space suitable for meetings, music and drama rehearsals, examinations, etc.
- > Larger flexible learning space connected to the Centenary Sports Hall, to accommodate ancillary sporting activities and functions.
- > Existing administrative functions.

The School wishes to continue to offer the high standard of education for which it is well regarded. The School must be able to provide appropriate teaching and learning environments that include up to date facilities and allow it the flexibility to further develop and upgrade these facilities into the future.



Site location plan, not to scale. site boundary outlined in red.



2 Wilkinson House: History and Significance

2.1 Historical outline

In 1926, City of Sydney Council received a building application to demolish the four terrace houses at 165-171 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst and constructed a new residential flat building on the site. Upon approval for the demolition of the terraces, plans were submitted to Council for the new residential flat building to replace them.

The proposed flat building was commissioned by Kenneth S Williams and designed by Emil Sodersten, who was to rise to eminence in Sydney's architectural profession. Construction of the flats was completed in 1928. The City of Sydney Council rate and assessment books for the Denison Ward (the boundaries for the Council changed in 1931 and the property was then listed as being in Fitzroy Ward) listed Gwydir Flats at 165-171 Forbes Street in that year. The completed building was a three-storey brick building with twenty residential flats and four basement garages.

The building comprised an eclectic mix of architectural styles, mostly classical in origin, with a relatively plain outcome compared to Sodersten's later works. The building most strongly reflects the influence of Mediterranean style and classical Georgian Revival influences, which were prevalent at the time.

After their completion, the Gwydir Flats saw a succession of owners but underwent little change until the sale of the entire building to the Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS Darlinghurst) in 1960. The only exterior change was in November 1944 with the creation of a new door at the basement level, facing St Peters Street.

In 1960, to meet the demand for extra room, SCEGGS Darlinghurst purchased the Gwydir Flats, on the southeast corner of the school site. The flats were used to accommodate boarders and some staff, including Barbara Chisholm, who was headmistress from 1947. Following the purchase, the residential flats were renamed 'Wilkinson House' after Dorothy Wilkinson, the School' (second) headmistress from 1921-1947.

Upon completion of the work to Wilkinson House, 60 boarders and 6 staff moved into the building with the number of boarders peaking at just over 100 in 1968. Since then there has been a steady decline to 25 in 2001. The move to Wilkinson House was also a change in style of accommodation, reflecting new expectations of boarding life, from verandah dormitories in the original Barham to smaller, more autonomous groups living in Wilkinson House shared flat-like accommodation.

In order to prepare the building to accommodate boarding students, the School undertook some minor internal changes, mainly in the form of some new doorways on the ground floor, and the renovation and replacement of fittings in the bathrooms.

In 1984, major work was undertaken in the basement level of Wilkinson House. The basement level, which had been previously converted from garages in the late-1960s into workshops for the art department, was converted again, this time into meeting and recreation rooms. Upstairs, work was also carried out to upgrade the fire system, including the installation of fire doors, exit signs and emergency lighting.

In April 2001, the Board of SCEGGS Darlinghurst Limited made a decision to close down the boarding school on the basis that given such a small number of boarders, it was no longer viable either in relation to the students' social needs or financially. This brings to an end a tradition of boarding on site that has been part of the School since its inception in 1895.

With reduced requirements for boarders and increased demands on the school for learning spaces, Wilkinson House was adapted and upgraded by the school in 2001 to create additional staff and student learning spaces. The school now accommodates a small number of boarders at St Vincent's College, Potts Point.



Gwydir Flats, 1926 elevations

Source: City of Sydney Council Development Application Plans.



Wilkinson House, formerly Gwydir Flats, after its purchase and conversion into a boarding house for the School, c1965.

Source: SCEGGS Darlinghurst Archives.

2.2 Heritage significance

The following statement of significance is extracted from the 2001 Conservation Management Plan by Godden Mackay Logan.

Originally named the Gwydir Flats, Wilkinson House is significant at a local level primary for its historic, aesthetic and social values. In a prominent location, the building makes a positive contribution to Forbes and St Peters Streets and to the Heritage Conservation Area. It is notable for its continuing residential use over the last 75 years and provides evidence of the residential flat building boom of the 1920s that permanently changed the residential pattern of Darlinghurst.

Wilkinson House is associated with the early stages of the career of the prominent early twentieth-century architect, Emil Sodersten, and could be, if not the first commission, then perhaps the last remaining of his early buildings in Sydney.

As a boarding house, the building has been associated with the historical development of SCEGGS Darlinghurst over a forty year period, playing an important role in the life of past and present boarders and staff. It continues to provide a focus of memories of their time at the school as well as being associated with traditions that contribute to the continually developing sense of the School's identity.

Although not constructed to the original level of detail, Wilkinson House is representative of the construction of apartment buildings during the 1920s and of the use of an eclectic collection of architectural styles, displaying references to Inter-war Mediterranean, Spanish Mission and Georgian Revival influences.

2.3 Heritage Planning Framework

The SCEGGS Darlinghurst campus is a locally listed heritage item under the City of Sydney LEP 2012 (item I301) and is located within the C13 East Sydney Special Character and Conservation Area. The listing includes Wilkinson House (as well as Barham and the Chapel Building). Wilkinson House is identified as a contributory item within the Conservation Area in the City of Sydney DCP 2012.

Within the vicinity of Wilkinson House is a number of heritage items of both local and state heritage significance. These include the state-listed St Peter's Precinct.



Relationship of Wilkinson House (shaded in red) to the adjacent heritage items and Heritage Conservation Areas.

Source: Nearmaps with TKD Architects overlay, 2017

3 Wilkinson House: existing conditions

3.1 Building description

Wilkinson House is a three storey inter-war apartment building with an additional basement level. The building was upgraded in 2001 to create some additional larger learning spaces and address some of the BCA non-compliances with the building.

Structure

Wilkinson House is a load-bearing masonry building with timber framed floors and roof structure. The central circulation stair and external balconies are of concrete construction.

The current structure does not meet current standards for earthquake loads.

Current use

The building was adapted in 2001 to accommodate additional staff and student spaces. Owing to the constraints of the former flats function, the building was refurbished to accommodate functions to suit the smaller residential sized spaces:

- > Staff Offices
- > School Counsellor
- > Careers Office
- > Quiet Student Study Spaces
- > Senior Student Common Room
- > Storage

With a deficiency in learning spaces across the campus, a number of walls were also removed to create five larger learning spaces at level 2:

Existing Wilkinson House Learning Spaces	Area m²
Level 2	
Classroom	40.8
Classroom	43.4
Classroom	54.0
Classroom	54.9
Classroom	57.4
Total	250.5



Wilkinson House as seen from Forbes Street



Entry foyer



Stair hall



Typical classroom interior, showing location of former partition walls in ceiling.