

Sydney Opera House - Lower Concourse Operational Area Report

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Sydney Opera House - Lower Concourse Operational Area Report

Report to partially fulfil condition E11 of the Sydney Opera House Lower Concourse development consent (SSD 9794) under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Version	Date of Issue	Issued by	Issued for
1	06/11/2020	Kya Blondin	The Certifier, Planning Secretary, City of Sydney Council and Heritage NSW
1.1	12/02/2021	Hugh Lamberton	The Certifier, Planning Secretary, City of Sydney Council and Heritage NSW



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Report has been prepared in accordance with SSD 9794, approved by the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces on 8 May 2020 for minor works and uses at the Lower Concourse of the Sydney Opera House (SOH). Condition E11 of the consent requires a review and revision of the Lower Concourse operational areas to minimise encroachments onto public walkways and improve access through the Lower Concourse.

In accordance with the condition, the Report will be submitted to the Certifier, Planning Secretary, City of Sydney Council and Heritage NSW within six months of the date of this consent by 8 November 2020.

1.2 Description

1.2.1 General

The Lower Concourse at the Sydney Opera House was completed in 1988. It provides covered and accessible pedestrian pathways to the Sydney Opera House below the western edge of the Forecourt, connecting East Circular Quay with the Lower Concourse visitor amenities, the Covered Concourse (under the Monumental Steps) and the parking station.

The Lower Concourse includes food and beverage venues, a retail outlet, a welcome and interpretation centre and other visitor amenities such as lavatories.

Two pedestrian pathways are located in the Lower Concourse. An accessible pathway is located adjacent to the sea wall on the western extent of the Lower Concourse. A covered pathway is located at the eastern side of the Lower Concourse, underneath the Forecourt parapet and bounded on the east by the food and beverage venue bars and kitchens and on the west in proximity to a line of mushroom shaped columns that mark the edge of the Forecourt parapet.

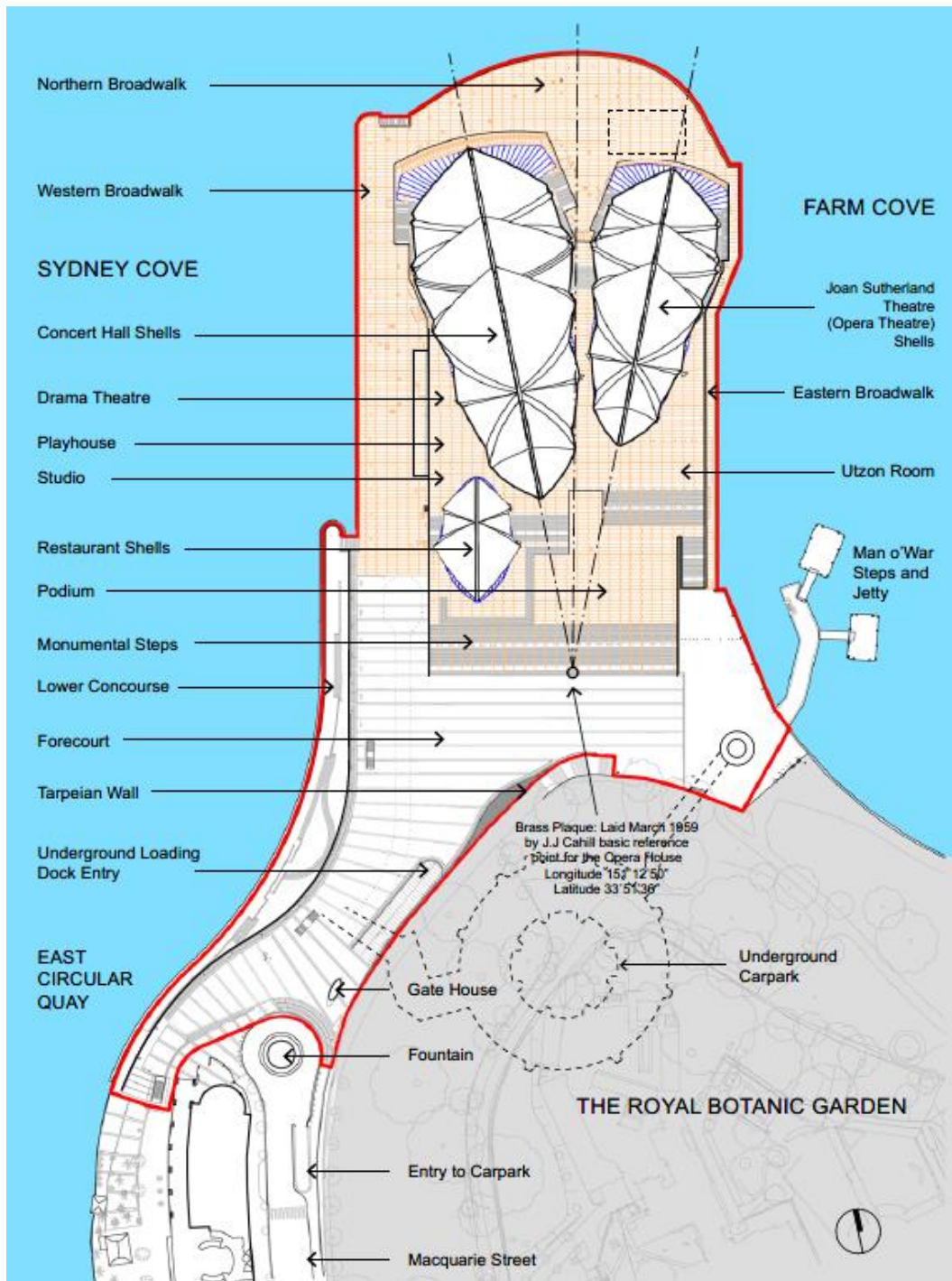


Figure 1: Sydney Opera House Site Plan - property boundary shown in red line.

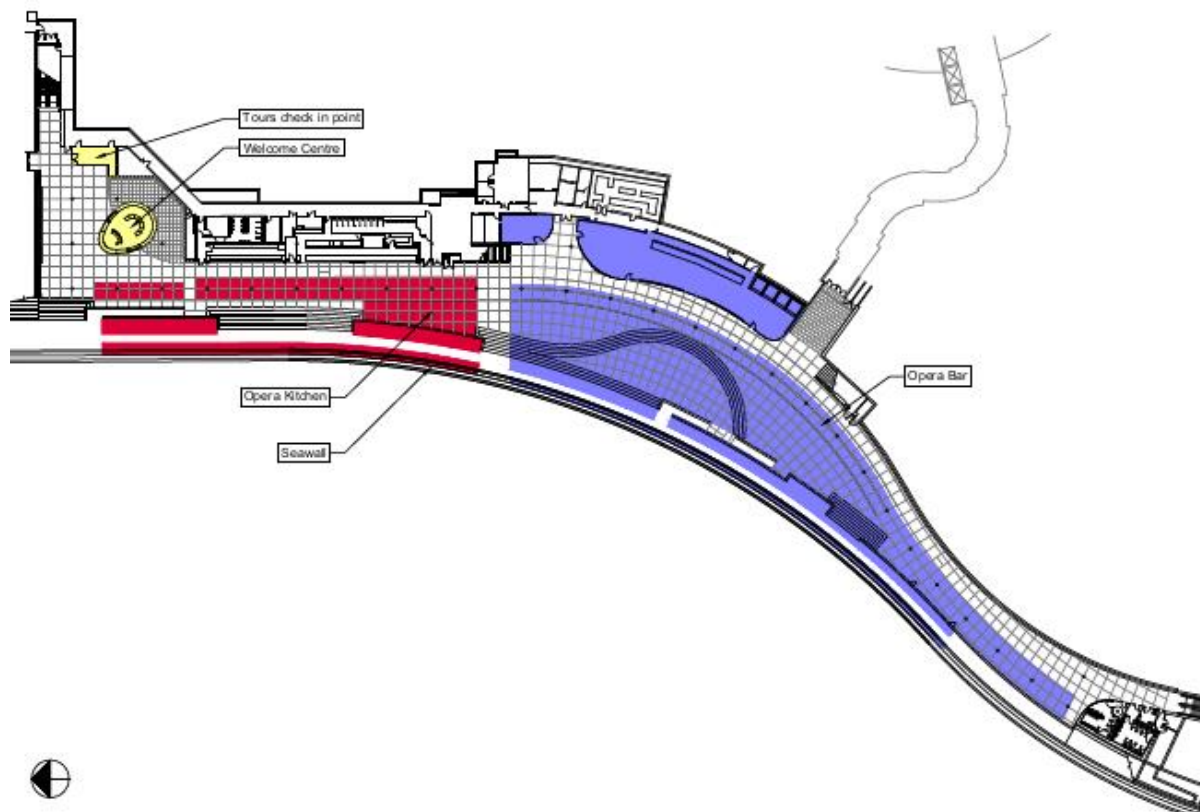


Figure 2: Plan of Lower Concourse

1.2.2 Opera Bar

'Opera Bar' (OB) is a current food and beverage venue that occupies a leased area at the southern end of the Lower Concourse. The OB occupies a licensed premises with a capacity for up to 1,800 patrons, which alongside its food and beverage offering also hosts regular live entertainment (Image 1).

The leased service area to OB consists of both an internal area (between the carpark entrance and the centre stairwell of the Lower Concourse) and a large, partly undercover area which extends from the southern end of the Lower Concourse to the area adjacent to the centre stairwell of the Lower Concourse. The operational area, part of the Opera Bar leased service area, is shown in Figure 2.





Image 1: Opera Bar, view from the southern end of the Forecourt showing the sea wall pedestrian pathway to the right; tables, chairs and umbrellas for the OB patrons in the centre; and the curve of the Forecourt parapet on the right.

1.2.3 Opera Kitchen

'Opera Kitchen' (OK) is a current food and beverage venue that occupies a leased area at the northern end of the Lower Concourse. The OK occupies a licensed premises with a capacity for up to 570 patrons (Image 2 and 3). No live music is permitted in OK.

The leased service area to OK has no fully enclosed internal area and is partially covered by the Forecourt above. This area occupies the space between Opera Bar and the northern stairwell which connects the Lower Concourse to the Forecourt. The operational area, part of the OK leased service area, is shown in Figure 2.



Image 2 (left): Opera Kitchen viewed from the covered pedestrian passageway looking north with the mushroom columns visible on the left.

Image 3 (right): Opera Kitchen, viewed from the covered pedestrian passageway looking south with the mushroom columns and edge of the Forecourt parapet on the right.

1.2.4 Welcome Centre

In 2015, a new Welcome Centre was opened at the northern end of the Lower Concourse, providing tour and ticketing facilities as well as interpretation and Opera House related retail. The Welcome Centre won the 2016 National Trust Heritage Award for Interpretation for its "absolutely fantastic, primarily visual interpretation of the Opera House". The operations of the Welcome Centre are largely contained within the centre itself, a small queueing area for ticketing and tours is used on a temporary basis (Image 4 and 5).



Image 4 (left): Welcome Centre ticket counter, viewed from the northern end of the Lower Concourse looking south.

Image 5 (right): Welcome Centre shop, viewed from the southern side of the Welcome Centre looking east.



2 Planning and Heritage Context

In November 2019, the SOH submitted a DA for the Lower Concourse, covering existing uses and minor physical works.

Mr. Alan Croker (Director, Design 5 Architects and nominated heritage consultant) prepared a Heritage Impact Statement dated 29 January 2020 (HIS) for the DA uses and works. The HIS concluded that:

The works are supported with the condition:

Sydney Opera House to review existing lease and operational areas, including furniture and infrastructure placement, and where necessary revise them when the opportunity arises to minimise encroachments onto public walkways and circulation spaces and retain the intended open and uncluttered character of the Lower Concourse. Any revisions and ongoing management are to be in accordance with the CMP [conservation management plan] policies, (the edition current at the time).

The current edition of the CMP is *Respecting the Vision: Sydney Opera House - a conservation management plan, fourth edition, 2017*.

As recommended in the HIS, the following condition (E11) is required to be met by 8 November 2020:

“The Applicant must conduct a review of the operational areas (including loose furniture and other infrastructure), including along the sea wall and main restaurant/bar areas, and revise this to minimise encroachments onto public walkways and improve access through the lower concourse. A report shall be produced, and a copy submitted to the Certifier, Planning Secretary, [City of Sydney] Council and Heritage NSW within six months of the date of this consent.”

In addition, condition B13 of the DA consent requires the development of a section 60 application in accordance with the *Heritage Act 1977* including:

“d) demonstration that the recommended conditions within the Heritage Impact Statement prepared by Design 5 Architects dated 29/1/20 will be adhered to”.

This Report will form part of the section 60 application for the Lower Concourse DA uses and minor works.

3 Review of Existing Lower Concourse Operational Areas

3.1 Opera Kitchen

The current operational area for the OK is shown in attachment 1. This operational area partially encroaches on the covered pedestrian pathway and the accessible pathway adjacent to the sea wall.

The revised operational area is shown in attachment 2. The revised operational area for OK is supported by the nominated heritage consultant for the project (Mr. Croker, Design 5 Architects), the Sydney Opera House Trust Conservation Council and the Sydney Opera House Design Advisory Panel (DAP). The revised scenario:

- Complies with CMP Policies 6.3, 7.17 and 20.3;
- Reinstates the full width of the only undercover pedestrian route to the Opera House – the original purpose for the Lower Concourse;
- Removes the bar located partly in the covered pedestrian route, which is a positive heritage outcome improving access through the Lower Concourse;



- Minimises visual obstruction of the mushroom columns, a key architectural feature of the Lower Concourse, by setting the eastern extent of the operational boundary to the eastern face of the mushroom columns;
- Brings consistency with the preferred line of the lease boundary for Opera Bar (which presently minimally intrudes into this walkway); and
Improves access to the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the sea wall by increasing the egress width by 600mm.

The procurement process for Lower Concourse operators and any change to fit-out and loose furniture in the area requires operators to submit furniture plans and seating layouts to SOH for review and approval. SOH's review is guided by advice from SOH's nominated heritage consultant, DAP and Conservation Council.

3.2 Opera Bar

The current operational area for the OB is shown in attachment 3. This operational area minimally encroaches on the covered pedestrian pathway and the accessible pathway adjacent to the sea wall but is significantly more aligned to the CMP policies relative to the current OK operational area. The lease arrangements for OB do not provide an immediate opportunity to make the minor revisions required to achieve full compliance.

The current OB operational area extends slightly beyond the east face of the mushroom columns. When the lease expires or terminates, SOH will revise the eastern operational area boundary as outlined in Attachment 3 for consistency with the CMP policies and OK, and to minimise encroachment on the covered public pathway. At this time, the pedestrian and accessible pathway adjacent to the sea wall will also be reviewed to ensure consistency with the policies of the CMP.

3.3 Welcome Centre

The current operational area for the Welcome Centre is shown in Figure 2. It comprises temporary operational areas for the SOH tours (ticketing and queuing) during the day and removed in the evening.

The current temporary operational area for Tours minimises encroachment on the covered public pathway and does not encroach on the pedestrian pathway adjacent to the sea wall.

No revision of the temporary operational area is recommended.

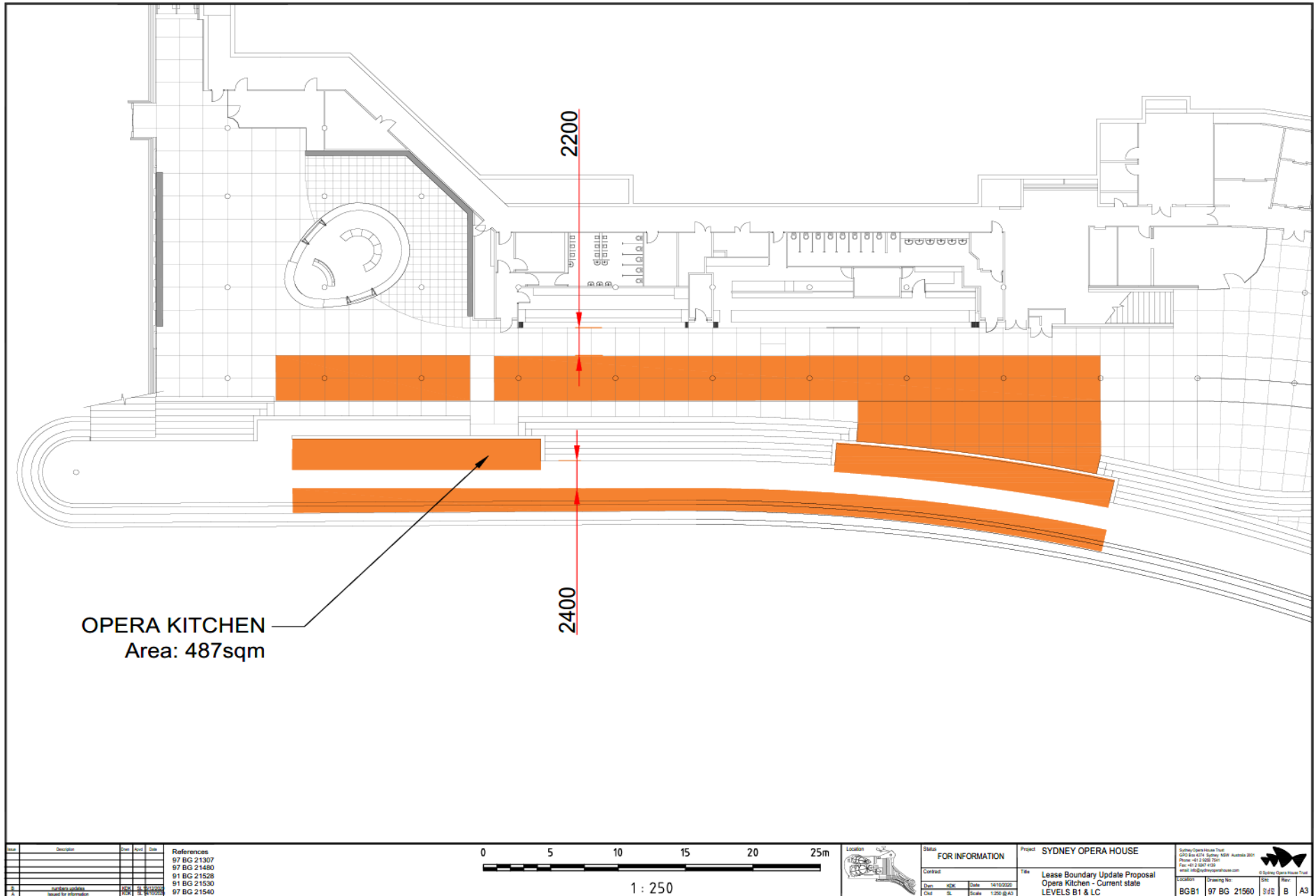
4 Timeframes for implementation

The revised operational areas identified in this Report will be implemented:

- Prior to permitting an operator to change its loose furniture, fit-out or layouts at the Lower Concourse, and
- At the grant of any new leases following expiry or termination of the existing operations, and in the course of any public tender for the OB and OK leased premises.

The revised operational areas will reflect the approach outlined in this report, aligned with the recommendations of the HIS to minimise encroachments onto public walkways, improve access through the Lower Concourse and align to relevant CMP policies.

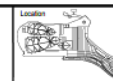
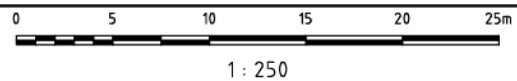
All loose furniture, other infrastructure and layouts will be developed with the advice and guidance of the nominated heritage consultant, Conservation Council and DAP, and meet the relevant CMP policies.



Rev	Description	Date	By	Check
1	Issue for information	14/10/2020	MM	SL

References
 97 BG 21307
 97 BG 21480
 91 BG 21528
 91 BG 21530
 97 BG 21540

Rev	Description	Date	By	Check
1	Issue for information	14/10/2020	MM	SL



Status
FOR INFORMATION

Contract
 Drawn: MM Date: 14/10/2020
 Check: SL Scale: 1:250 @ A3

Project
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

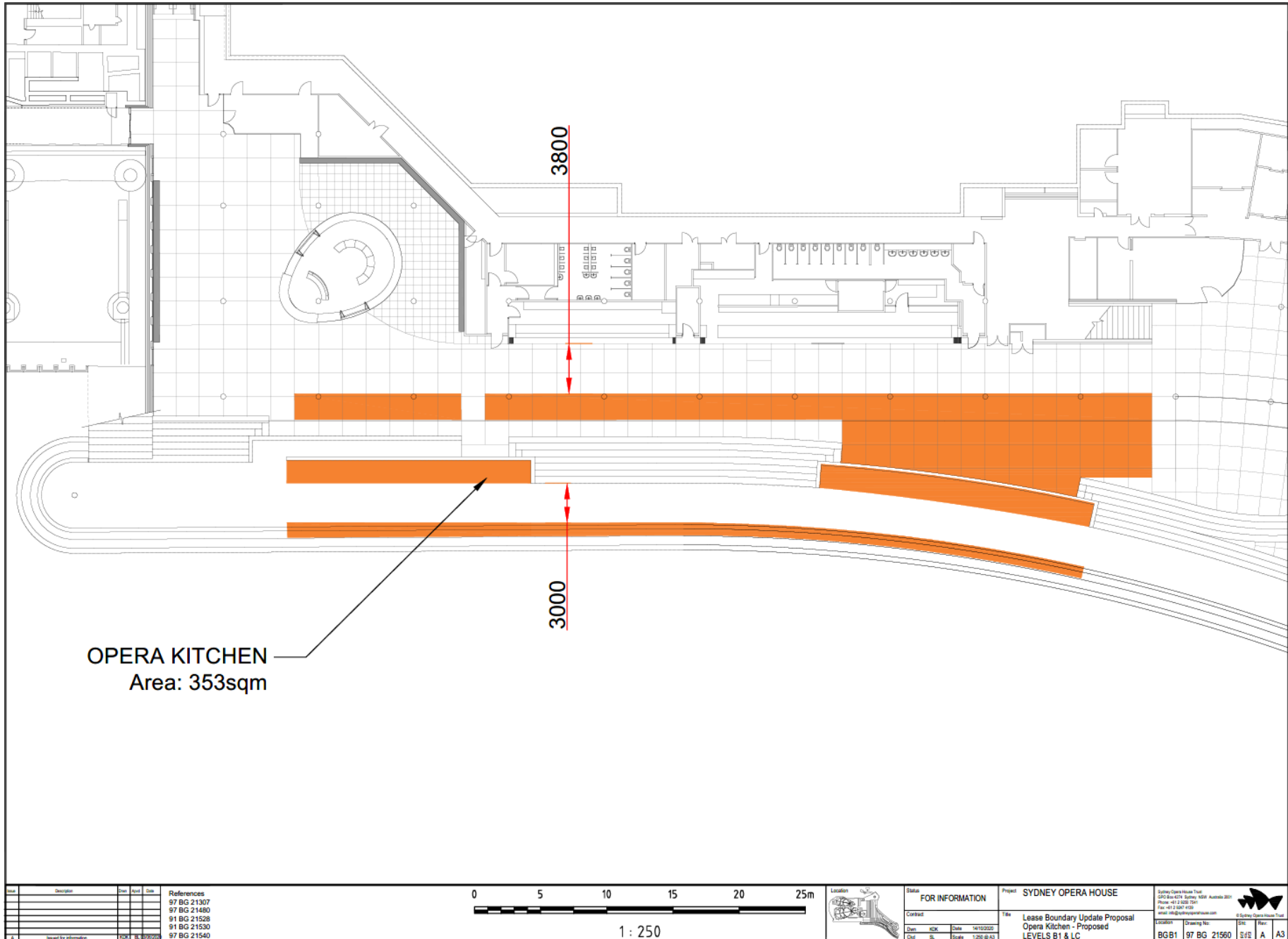
Title
 Lease Boundary Update Proposal
 Opera Kitchen - Current state
 LEVELS B1 & LC

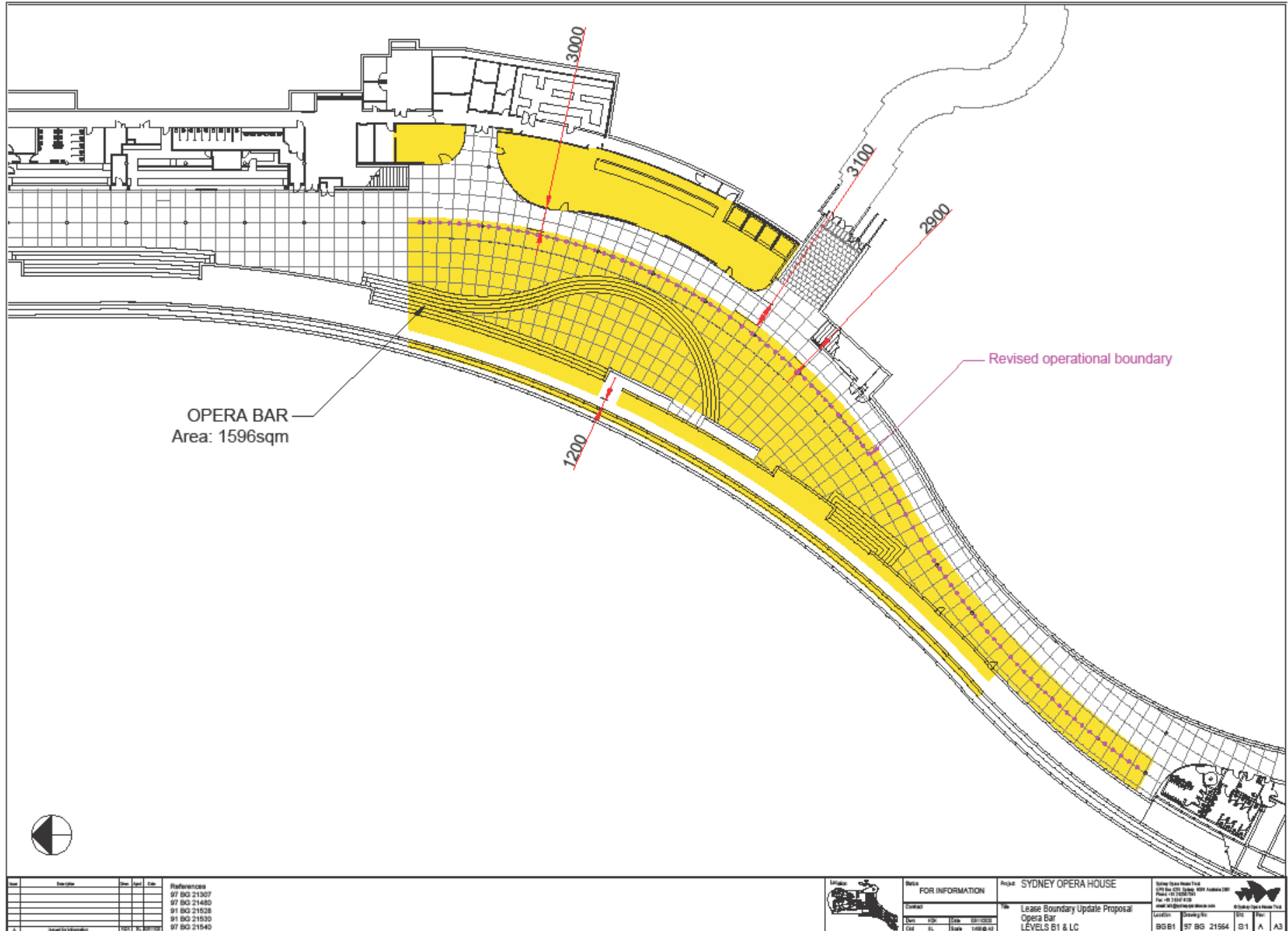
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Location Drawing No: B1/LC
 Date: 14/10/2020
 Scale: 1:250 @ A3

BGB1	97 BG 21560	3/10	B	A3
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OPERA BAR
Area: 1596sqm

Revised operational boundary

Date	Revised	Drawn	Check	Rev

Reference
97 BG 21507
97 BG 21480
91 BG 21528
91 BG 21530
97 BG 21540



FOR INFORMATION			
Date	Rev	Drawn	Check
Col	SL	Scale	Setting

Project	Title
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE	Lease Boundary Update Proposal Opera Bar LEVELS B1 & LC

Location	Drawing No.	Site	Rev.
	96B1	97 BG 21564	B1 A A3