

2 April, 2019

Mr Jim Betts
Secretary
NSW Department of Environment and Planning
GPO Box 39,
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Mr Betts,

SSD 8993 SCEGGS Darlinghurst Concept Development Application and Stage 1, 165-215 Forbes Street, 159-163 Forbes Street, 224-226 Bourke Street, 217 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) lodges a strong objection to the proposed demolition of the Emil Sodersten designed Gwydir Flats (Wilkinson House) at 165 Forbes Street, Darlinghurst, which forms part of the State Significant Development Proposal (SSD 8993) for the SCEGGS Darlinghurst Concept Development Application.

The entire SCEGGS site is within the **East Sydney / Darlinghurst Urban Conservation Area** listed on the National Trust Register in April, 1981.

Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School Group (including Barham, Church Building and Wilkinson House and their interiors and grounds) is listed as a Heritage Item on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012 (Item 301). The National Trust emphasises that Wilkinson House (the former Gwydir Flats) and its interiors and grounds is listed as a Heritage Item on the Sydney City Council LEP 2012 Schedule of Items of Environmental Heritage.

The Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School and Wilkinson House are also within the East Sydney Heritage Conservation Area (C13) listed on the Sydney City Council Local Environmental Plan 2012 Schedule of Items of Environmental Heritage.

The Statement of Significance for the Heritage Listing of Wilkinson House sets out the following: -

Wilkinson House: 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. (Information sourced from Godden Mackay Logan Pty Ltd, "Conservation Management Plan for Wilkinson House")

Wilkinson House is significant for its continuous use since it was built for accommodation and for the long association with SCEGGS boarders and their strong attachment to the building as their 'home'. The building has historic social significance for its association with SCEGGS boarders. The building is historically significant for its association with Emil Sodersten, a key architect of the inter-war period in Sydney. Significant elements include original plaster ceilings to the majority of the building and ability to interpret the original apartment configuration, the intact entry foyer and lobby. (Information sourced from Tanner & Associates Pty Ltd, "Heritage Assessment SCEGGS Darlinghurst")

In the light of the above Statement of Significance, the Trust is currently considering the listing of Wilkinson House (Gwydir Flats) on the National Trust Register.

The National Trust has consistently opposed the use of State Significant Development designation to override existing heritage protection provisions. The Trust maintains that there should be a proper balance between development and heritage conservation and that balance certainly does not exist in terms of State Significant Development proposals.

The National Trust strongly objects to the proposed demolition of Wilkinson House.

The Trust is also concerned that the broader development proposal will impact on the sight lines to the 1833 John Verge designed "Barham" which was listed on the National Trust Register in October, 1974, is listed as a Heritage Item on the Sydney Local Environmental Plan 2012, and, in the National Trust's view should be listed on the State Heritage Register.

In the National Trust's view this Concept Design should be seriously re-thought with an emphasis on the recognition, better protection and conservation of the heritage of the site which is an important element of the broader heritage of the Darlinghurst area.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Quint
Director Conservation