# Site 68 Sydney Olympic Park

## Design Excellence Competition - Jury Report

June 2014

urbis

**SITE 68 SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK – DESIGN COMPETITION JURY:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bill Tsakalos (Chair) | Project Architecture |
| Caroline Pidcock | Pidcock Architecture + Sustainability |
| Nick Hubble | SOPA |
| Bassam Aflak | Ecove Group Pty Ltd |
| Boris Dragas | Studiobd |

**URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:**

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| Report Number | Final |



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TABLE OF CONTENTS



**FIGURES:**



**TABLES:**

# Executive Summary

This Jury Report has been prepared in accordance with the Design Excellence provisions of the *Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030* and the *Sydney Olympic Park Authority Design Competition Guidelines 2014*. The report describes the competition process and the design brief, provides an assessment of the design merits of each entry submission, sets out the rationale for the selection of the preferred design, describes how it demonstrates design excellence, and concludes with recommendations to the proponent, the selected Architect and the consent authority for the further development of the recommended design.

The *Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030* requires that prior to the issue of development consent for Site 68, an architectural design competition be undertaken. The Site 68 Design Excellence Competition was conducted in accordance with the endorsed Design Excellence Strategy and Design Competition Brief (**Appendix A**), which sought architectural schemes for one residential tower building and associated landscape/urban design works.

FIGURE 1 – SITE 68 SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK - INDICATIVE LOCATION OF RESIDENTIAL TOWER BUILDING


Consistent with the Design Excellence Strategy, the Design Competition was run as an invited two-stage process involving a Stage 1: Expression of Interest and Stage 2: Design Competition.

The four short listed Architectural practices presented to the Jury on Friday 6 June 2014. Consistent with the Competition Brief, the Jury decided upon a winning proposal by unanimous agreement, being the scheme presented by Bates Smart. The Bates Smart scheme achieved the highest level of consistency with the Design Brief and demonstrated Design Excellence.

The Jury has made recommendations on the Bates Smart scheme, which are to be applied by the Proponent, Architects and the Consent Authority in the preparation and assessment of the future Development Application.

# 1 Site Description

The subject site is known as Site 68 Bennelong parkway, Sydney Olympic Park and is located within the Auburn Local Government Area. The site is legally described a Part Lots 73 and 75 in DP 1134933. Refer to Figure 2.

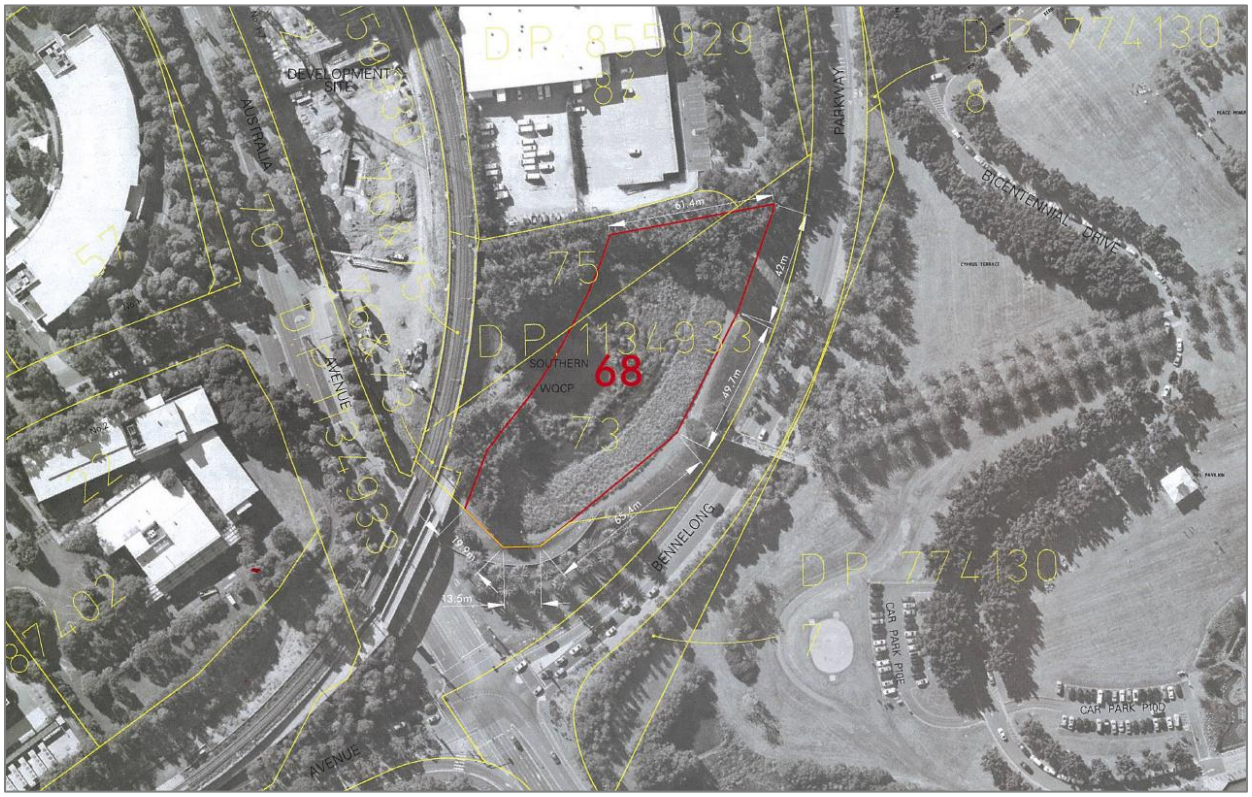
Site 68 is located on the corner of Australia Avenue and Bennelong Parkway, adjacent to Bicentennial Park. The site is approximately 500m from the Sydney Olympic Park Town Centre and is intersected by the Olympic Park Train Line.

The site currently contains a large water quality control pond and a series of pedestrian and cycle paths linking Australia Avenue to Bennelong Parkway and Bicentennial Park. Located directly north of the site is the future mixed-use precinct known as Australia Towers (or Site 3).

Site 68 is envisaged to accommodate a mixed use development comprising of a residential tower, a publically accessible landscaped ground plane, a pedestrian/cyclist underpass of the railway line, and basement and at grade car parking. In addition, the site is to include a child care centre, an on-site stormwater detention tank, and improved equitable access to Bicentennial Parklands.

The site is identified as part of the Parkview Precinct, under the *Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030*.

FIGURE 2 – SITE 68, SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK (SOURCE: SOPA)



# 2 Competitive Design Process

## 2.1 OVERVIEW

Consistent with the endorsed Design Excellence Strategy, the competition was run as an invited two-stage process, involving:

1. Expression of Interest; and

2. Design Competition.

These steps are discussed below.

**Expression of Interest (EOI)**

An EOI was sent to nine (9) architectural practices to participate in the design competition and requested the following information:

- Experience and capabilities in high rise multi-unit housing projects;
- Appreciation of the site and its context;
- Preliminary response to the competitive design objectives;
- Team Structure, including a landscape architect and other architectural firms (if applicable).

The Jury met on 16 April 2014, to evaluate the EOI submissions and shortlist the competitors.

**Design Competition**

Four (4) architectural practices were short-listed to participate in the second stage of the competition. The four teams selected were:

- Architectus;
- Bates Smart;
- Silvester Fuller; and
- Tony Caro Architecture.

Each participant submitted an A3 *'Design Report'*, which articulated their proposed architectural, urban design, and landscape scheme for the subject site. Following lodgement of the *Design Report*, an internal review was undertaken by technical advisors to the Jury.

The opportunity to present the Design Competition schemes was afforded to each of the competitors on 6 June 2014. Architectural practices were asked to describe their approach to the site and explain the benefits of their proposed scheme, as well as compliance with the design, commercial, and planning objectives outlined in the Design Brief.

The schemes were assessed by the Competition Jury, with input from the Technical Advisors, and a recommendation was made.

Copies of the Design Competition Submissions are provided at **Appendix E**- **Appendix H**.

## 2.2 COMPETITION JURY

Both the EOI and Design Competition stages were assessed by a five-person Competition Jury consisting of two members appointed by Ecove Group Pty Ltd (the Developer) and three members appointed by Sydney Olympic Park Authority.

TABLE 1 – SELECTION PANEL MEMBERS

| PANEL MEMBER | AFFILIATION | CAPACITY |
|---|---|---|
| **Bill Tsakalos** (Chair) | Project Architecture | Architect |
| **Caroline Pidcock** | Pidcock Architecture + Sustainability | Architect |
| **Nick Hubble** | Sydney Olympic Park Authority | General Manager Commercial and Corporate |
| **Bassam Aflak** | Ecove Group Pty Ltd | Developer |
| **Boris Dragas** | Studiobd | Architect |

## 2.3 TECHNICAL ADVISORS

During the Design Competition stage, the Jury was assisted by the following technical advisors:

- Structural Engineering - Ryan Campbell of Bonacci Group (NSW) Pty Ltd;
- Quantity Surveying - Brian Gavahan of Napier & Blakeley Pty Ltd; and
- Urban Planning – Murray Donaldson & Samantha Wilson of Urbis Pty Ltd.

The technical advisors provided advice and feedback to the Competition Jury during the assessment of the Design Competition submissions. Refer to **Appendix C** - **Appendix E** for Town Planning, Cost and Structural reports prepared for the competition.

## 2.4 DESIGN BRIEF

A Design Brief was prepared by Urbis (on behalf of Ecove Group) and issued to Sydney Olympic Park Authority – Design Review Panel for comment and endorsement. The architectural practices were given a copy of the endorsed Design Brief (**Appendix A**), which sought architectural schemes for one residential tower building and associated landscape/urban design works.

It is noted the urban design principles included within the endorsed Design Brief were predominantly established in the Proponent's successful tender for the purchase of the site, including the public domain and through site linkages, and the general arrangement of the residential tower and separate child care centre.

## 2.5 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

The architectural practices asked questions, sought clarification of the brief, and requested additional information throughout the Design Competition process. Responses to the RFIs were provided in the form of an addendum to the Design Brief. Refer to **Appendix B** for copies of the all addenda.

# 3 Review of Competition Schemes

An assessment of the four short-listed schemes, having regard to the design, commercial, and planning objectives of the Design Brief is provided below.

## 3.1 ARCHITECTUS

The Architectus scheme proposed a sculptural circular tower of 38 levels, with a grand 3-4 storey foyer / lobby space. The design concept proposes *"an iconic sculptural element floating above the Parkland"*.

The proposed tower form is slender and elegant, with a small residential floor plate, resulting in an overall height of 144.20RL. The additional height provides opportunities for added visual outlook, places the lowest apartments above the tree line, and creates an iconic visual statement. However, while the Jury accepts the intended design outcomes of the proposed non-compliant height, they were not convinced that the significant increase in height of 44.5m or 49.4% is justified in the context of Site 68. In addition, the proposed height represents a significant planning risk for the proponent and is unlikely to be supported by SOPA or the Consent Authority.

The proposed foyer / lobby space is grand in its proportions and scale, allowing the landscape to penetrate the building. However, the Jury was not convinced of the usability of this space within a residential context and suggested it was more suited to a commercial development due to its scale and materiality.

Aesthetically the tower's sculptural form is aided by the inclusion of articulated balconies, which expand and contract at regular intervals around the building core creating a spiral effect. However, the balcony interface between residential apartments has not been well-considered, with full height frosted glass petitions likely to be required for privacy reasons, detracting from the overall look of the building. In addition, the undulating nature of the balconies results in a number of apartments receiving very narrow and un-useable outdoor spaces.

The Architectus scheme proposed a well-considered treatment of the ground plane, with the addition of a skate park, formal resident and visitor drop-off/pick-up area, noise restricting landscaped mound, and improved pedestrian and bicycle connections. However, it appears little consideration has been given to the extensive water detention and reuse requirements on site.

From a marketability perspective for units the Architectus scheme presented a significant risk to the proponent due to the number of splayed walls. While the tower form appeared very elegant and sculptural when viewed from afar, the design concept is considered to have a significant impact on the internal apartment planning and layouts.

Overall, it was considered that in order to meet the objectives of the design brief, the scheme would have required a significant number of changes to be made which would fundamentally alter the design presented.

FIGURE 3 – ARCHITECTUS SCHEME

## 3.2 BATES SMART

The Bates Smart scheme proposed a unique triangular shaped tower of 32 levels, with soft corners reflecting the elliptical towers further along Australia Avenue (Site 3). The design concept reflects "*residential leaves"* of consistent depths surrounding a central core, with vertical slots provided adjacent to the corners to bring light and ventilation into the building.

The triangular form is considered a strong, legible and iconic response to the axes of Australia Avenue, Bicentennial Park and the intersection with Bennelong Parkway. However, the lack of activation on the ground plane results in a missed opportunity to create a junction between the Bicentennial Parklands and Sydney Olympic Park.

The tower is divided horizontally into five stacked blocks of varying heights to create an interesting juxtaposition of scale on the building. The heights relate directly to the changes in the floor plate planning types. Each stacked volume incorporates three full height vertical slots which are positioned to capture air and light from multiple orientations throughout the building. All slots incorporate vertical gardens, with two out of three providing communal open space for the use of all residents and visitors.

The Bates Smart scheme is commended for the well-considered environmental design initiatives proposed including the clever use of vertical slots to provide natural light and ventilation to the lift lobby and common areas, rainwater collection for re-use within vertical gardens and landscaped ground plane, and roof top farming opportunities.

The Bates Smart scheme proposed a highly efficient floor plate with 9-14 apartments per floor. The positioning and layout of apartments are well-considered, with larger two and three bedroom apartments located at the curved ends maximizing the 180 degree views.

While the size of the residential floor plate is generally considered large, at 1,260m², the angled sides and rounded corners create a slender and iconic presence when viewed from any angle. In addition, the triangular form provides significant benefits in terms of views, natural ventilation, and sunlight access.

Overall, the Bates Smart scheme achieved the highest level of consistency with the Design Brief and demonstrated Design Excellence. The Jury has made recommendations on the Bates Smart scheme to be applied during the preparation of the future Development Application. These are discussed at Section 4 below.

FIGURE 4 – BATES SMART SCHEME

## 3.3 SILVESTER FULLER

The Silvester Fuller scheme proposed a rectangular mixed-use tower of 32 levels. The design concept proposed a *"clustering of individual elements"* with two distinct zones defined by the plane of the surrounding tree canopy. Below the canopy at the lower levels the building is undulating, as individual apartments project at somewhat random intervals to create a sense of identity and to allow an engagement with the ground plane to occur. Above the canopy at the upper levels the tower form is arranged as a conventional grid pattern to capture views, sunlight, and ventilation.

The Silvester Fuller scheme proposed a substantial floor plate of 1,000m² - 1,500m², with an average of 11-13 apartments per floor. This has resulted in a tower that is both slender and broad, when viewed from different angles. When viewed from the north and south, the tower appears lean and well-articulated, while from the east and west, the tower appears large and stocky in the context of the surrounding development.

In addition, the rectangular form results in a substantial number of east and west facing units. While units with an easterly orientation will enjoy good access to sunlight and views, units with a westerly orientation will be affected by noise (from the railway line at lower levels) and will require extensive shading during the summer months.

The Silvester Fuller scheme is commended for its clever use and activation of the ground plane, through the incorporation of small retail uses and a bicycle hub incorporating bicycle parking, hire, and workshop facilities. The opportunity to create a junction at Site 68, connecting Bicentennial Parklands with Sydney Olympic Park has been successfully established in the Silvester Fuller scheme.

The Silvester Fuller scheme proposed well-considered apartment types, with layouts reflective of the likely target markets. However, lower level apartments appear to have been given less consideration with several bedrooms exposed to the ground plane, resulting in privacy issues. It is noted that changes in apartment configurations would be required in order to achieve solar access requirements, as sunlight is currently provided to bedrooms rather than living rooms of many apartment types.

The Silvester Fuller scheme is commended for providing a sense of address for each apartment by recessing doorways and providing storage / seating areas for the use of residents.

Overall, the Silvester Fuller scheme provided a unique design concept focused on fostering the individuality of future residents.

FIGURE 5 – SILVESTER FULLER SCHEME

## 3.4 TONY CARO ARCHITECTURE

The Tony Caro Architecture (TCA) scheme proposed a curvilinear residential tower of 39 levels, with a grand porte-cochere basement entry, and integrated landscape design and stormwater treatment system. The tower design references the shape and form of Mies van der Rohe's *Freidrichstrasse Glass Skyscraper* (1922) and the *Savoy Vase (1936)* by Alvar Aalto.

The TCA scheme proposed a highly efficient floor plate, with 29 levels of 11 apartments per floor (944m²) and 10 upper levels of 6 apartments per floor (774m²). The unique articulated tower form provides significant benefits in terms of views, natural ventilation, and sunlight access, ensuring that no two apartments on the same floor are the same shape, size, or layout.

The tower form is made up of two predominant heights at 29 (106.8RL) and 39 storeys (138.80RL). The stepped form has been designed to create a visual landmark at the entry to Sydney Olympic Park, while anchoring the tower in the context of the adjacent buildings.

While the Jury accepts the intended design outcome of the proposed non-compliant height, they were not convinced that the significant increase in height of 39.3m or 43.6% is justified in the context of Site 68. In addition, the proposed height represents a significant planning risk for the proponent and is unlikely to be supported by SOPA or the Consent Authority.

The scheme's grand porte-cochere basement pick-up / drop-off area has been well considered and provides residents and visitors with a great sense of arrival and visual connection, while allowing light and air into the basement. However, it appears the scheme's basement layout has been given less consideration with the inefficient planning resulting in a requirement to provide parking over four basement levels, with connection to the tower provided via underground 'corridors'. In addition, the at-grade driveway presents conflicts between vehicles, pedestrians and bicycles due to the culmination of existing and proposed access routes.

The renderings submitted with the entry did not convey the inherent aesthetic qualities of the façade design. Some Jury members found it difficult to get a sense of how the materiality and articulation of the façade would respond to the change in light throughout the day.

Overall, the TCA submission is commended for the well-considered and highly efficient floor plates and apartment layouts proposed. However, in order to meet the objectives of the design brief (particularly a supportable increase in height), the scheme would have required a significant number of changes to be made which would fundamentally alter the design presented.

FIGURE 6 – TONY CARO ARCHITECTURE

# 4 Preferred Scheme

The Competition Jury was satisfied that the Bates Smart scheme met the objectives of the Design Brief and is nominated as the preferred proposal having regard to the recommendations noted below. These recommendations are made by the Jury for consideration by the Proponent, the selected Architect, and the Consent Authority:

**Vertical slots**

- The design of the vertical slots is to be developed to improve the shape and width of each slot in order to provide a greater level of amenity and usability to residents and visitors.
- The third 'privatised' vertical slot is to be made 'public' similar to the other two by redistributing 'lost' residential floor space to the top of the building.

**Ground plane / basement**

- The design of the ground plane and lobby area is to be developed to activate the ground floor and create a junction between the Bicentennial Parklands and Sydney Olympic Park. It is recommended that a combination of small retail uses, bicycle parking, and other residential amenity opportunities are explored.
- Further consideration is to be given to the orientation of the lift core, with options explored to re-orientate the lift entrance to face the predominant street frontage to the north-east in order to create a greater sense of arrival for residents and visitors.
- Further consideration is to be given to the existing resident and visitor vehicle arrival sequence, with options explored to create a more accessible pick-up / drop-off area within close proximity to the "front door". Opportunities to provide a visual connection between the ground plane and basement, as well as natural light and air should also be explored.

**Façade**

- Further consideration is to be given to how the coloured terracotta is used in the façade to give the scheme warmth and distinguish it appropriate to its landmark position and achieving design excellence.

## RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with the Competition Brief and the intent of the Design Excellence requirements of the *Sydney Olympic Park Master Plan 2030*, the Jury recommends that Bates Smart be retained by the Proponent to prepare a Development Application, taking into account the recommendations identified in this section of the report.

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