



SCEGGS REDEVELOPMENT WINS PARTIAL APPROVAL BUT HISTORIC BUILDING MUST REMAIN

22 May 2020

A Sydney school's plans to demolish a heritage-listed building as part of a major redevelopment have been blocked by the state's Independent Planning Commission.

Sydney Church of England Girls Grammar School (SCEGGS) sought approval for a revamp of its Forbes Street, Darlinghurst, campus. The application included:

- a \$49.6 million Concept Proposal providing for three new building envelopes, conservation works, vehicular and pedestrian entrances, car parking, landscaping and associated works; and
- Stage One works (valued at \$9.7 million) including demolition of the locally heritage-listed Wilkinson House and construction of a replacement four-storey building for educational use.

The Department of Planning, Industry & Environment completed its whole-of-government assessment of the state significant development (SSD) application in March this year, which concluded that the proposal was approvable subject to conditions of consent.

The SSD came to the Commission for determination because the Department received an objection from City of Sydney Council, as well as more than 50 public objections.

Commissioners Chris Wilson (Panel chair) and Helen Lochhead were appointed to consider the proposal and make a final decision. They met with the Applicant, Department and City of Sydney Council and undertook an inspection of the site and surrounding area.

Concerns raised in submissions to both the Department and Commission focused on the proposed demolition of Wilkinson House, as well as wider concerns about built form and heritage, residential amenity, parking and traffic, and noise and vibration.

The Commission, having carefully considered all the evidence, has today (Friday 22 May 2020) determined "that development consent to the Application be granted in part".

"The Concept Proposal is approved with the exception of the demolition of Wilkinson House... The Stage 1 Works (the demolition of Wilkinson House, the construction of the replacement Wilkinson House building and the temporary demountable classrooms on the Sports Hall) are not approved," it stated.

.../2

In its Statement of Reasons for Decision, the Commission found that a compelling case had not been presented to support the demolition of Wilkinson House, noting:

- the heritage significance of Wilkinson House and its status as a contributory building in the streetscape,
- the lack of evidence supporting the claims that Wilkinson House was in poor structural condition and that the costs of adaptive re-use were prohibitive, and
- the design of the replacement building which in the Commission's view would not enhance the heritage setting, streetscape or the significance of the items on the Site and the wider Conservation Area.

"The Commission is of the view that too much weight had been given to the 'circumstances of the case', being the need to demolish in order to provide contemporary education on the Site, and not enough to the actual impacts of demolition on the heritage values of the Site and the streetscape," it noted.

The Commission's Statement of Reasons for Decision can be read in full here:

<https://www.ipcn.nsw.gov.au/projects/2020/03/sceggs-darlinghurst-concept-and-stage-1-ssd-8993>

Disclaimer

This media statement has been prepared by the Commission's media unit for general information only. It does not form part of the Commission's Statement of Reasons for Decision, and should not be read as part of, or as a substitute for, that Statement of Reasons for Decision.