

6 August 2021

Jessica Symons
Council Officer
City of Sydney
GPO Box 1591
SYDNEY NSW 2001

By email: dasubmissions@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

Dear Ms Symons,

Re: Bidura, 357 Glebe Point Road

The National Trust of Australia (NSW) makes comment on Application number D/2021/711 for 357 Glebe Point Road, Glebe.

The National Trust listed the historic house, Bidura, at 357 Glebe Point Road, on its Register in February 1978. The historic significance of this house, designed and lived in by the prominent architect Edmund Blacket, has been well established.

The proposal to return this house to a single residence after many years of institutional/commercial use is supported. The building must not be left to deteriorate and the Trust agree with the Heritage Architect that having the building occupied is one of the best ways to maintain it. Any future DA for this conversion will need to be assessed on its merits.

The Trust note that the Heritage Impact Statement (p.11) for this application states:

It must be presumed that in selecting the design arising from the competition that an assessment was made of the relationship between the new form of the building - as an actual design and not a concept envelope - and Bidura House and its setting. Consequently, it is not the role of this HIS to discuss the design of the new building in detail as that has already been done and the design approved (through the competition process).

This house and its setting is too important to only presume that proper and appropriate heritage concerns were addressed in the design process. The Trust seek assurance that this was the case, and are concerned it was not. The Competitive Design Alternatives Report mentions the word "heritage" only once, and does not list the relationship between the new development and the heritage item as one of the specific requirements of the brief.

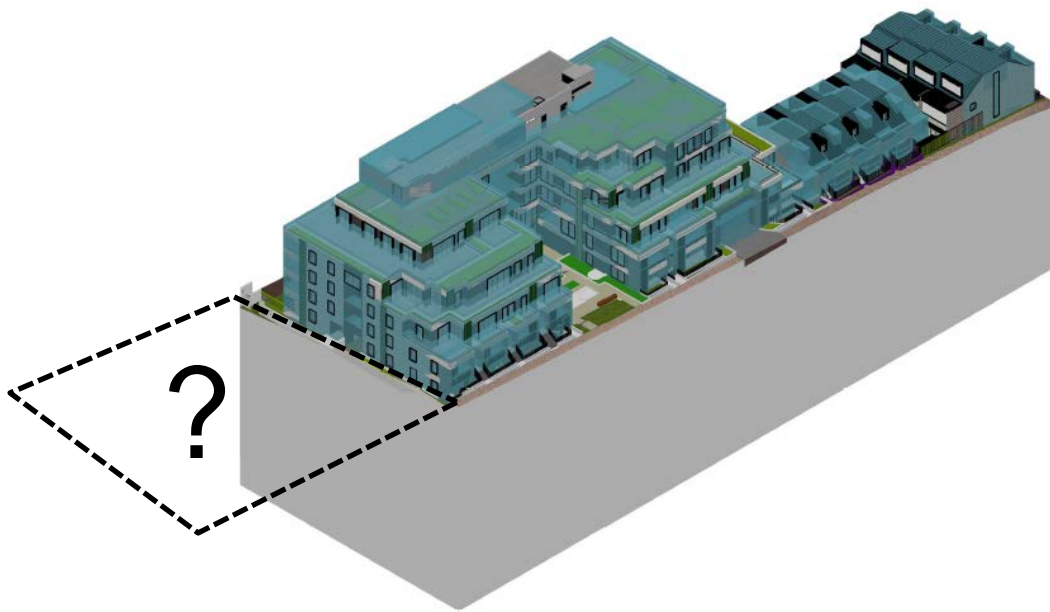
Indeed, in the assessment of the winning scheme, the report only states (p.22) that the design is capable of achieving design excellence and that specific resolution is required to achieve this:

Interface with Bidura House: *Further consideration of the interface with Bidura House should be undertaken during design development for Stage 2 DA when the use has been established. A commercial or public use may benefit from a greater interaction with the space in between the buildings – including an entry. Additional information regarding how the building engages with the public link is also required.*



It is disappointing then that there is not one complete drawing (either a plan, section, elevation, or 3D rendering) that shows the heritage item and the proposed development together. The National Trust are concerned that the development to the rear, and the restoration of the house at the front, seem to have been considered as totally separate projects. The interface between the new development and the original house is very important and must be considered as part of this application, as was noted by the Selection Panel for the competition.

The 3D renderings prepared by the architects for this application show views from Ferry Lane, Avon Street, and even from the north. But there is no view from Glebe Point Road, or one showing Bidura and the development together. This is a critical omission.



The National Trust have reviewed the Competitive Design Alternatives Report. While not passing any judgement on the schemes, we note that the Group GSA and MHNDU schemes (shown below) both showed coordinated drawings that showed the new proposals in context, while the DKO scheme did not. This makes it impossible to assess this interface for the subject of this application.



Figure 1 Photomontage of the proposal
Source: Group GSA



Figure 9 Photomontage of the proposal
Source: MHNDU

It is unclear how exactly the western elevation (in particular) of the current proposal has been specifically designed to respond to the original dwelling at 357 Glebe Point Road. This development application does not allow any interested party, or the City of Sydney staff who will assess it, to assess the true heritage impact of this proposal on the historic Bidura building.



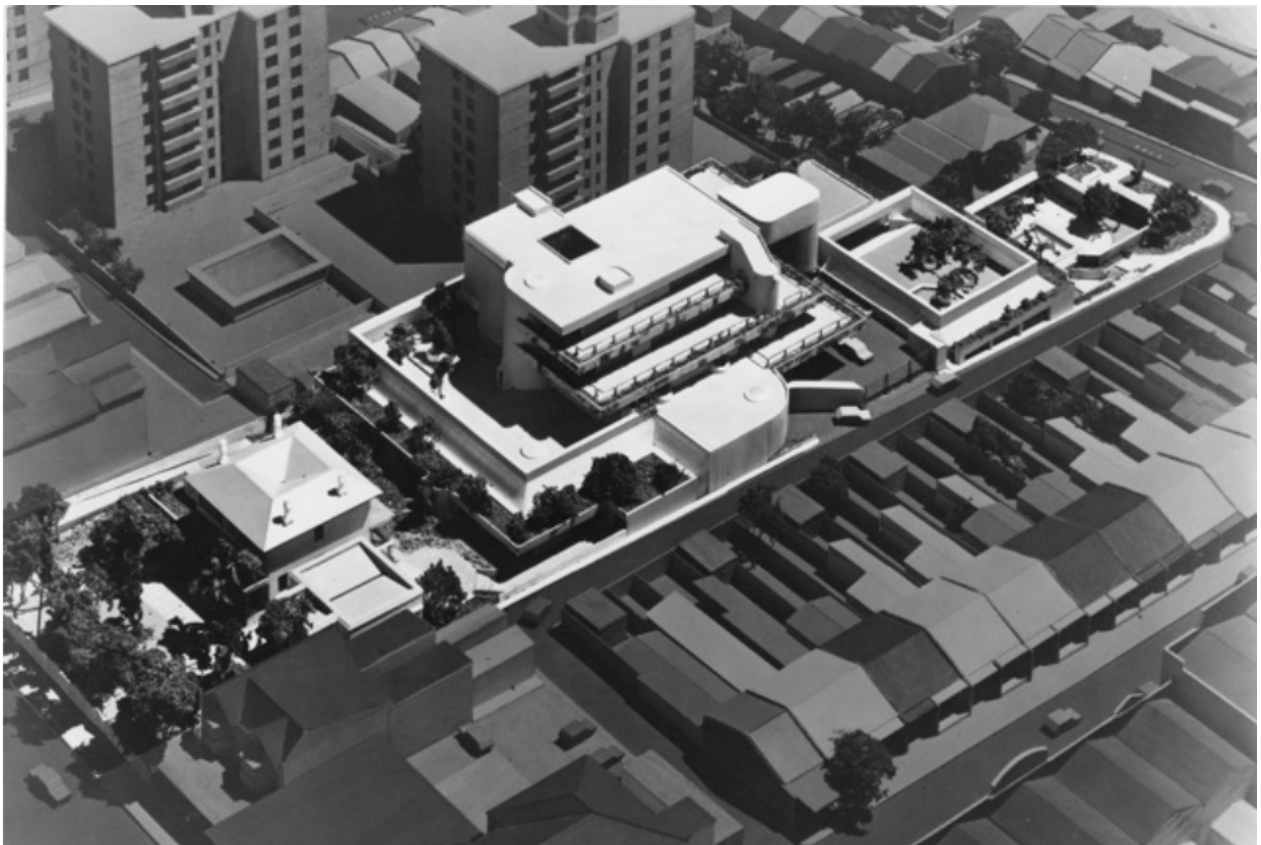
The National Trust would urge the City to condition the approval of any new development on the carrying out of the documented conservation works to ensure the original house remains in good repair.

The Trust seek assurance that the interface between the proposal and the heritage item has been subject to the further consideration in the design development stage (as required by the Selection Panel) through meaningful consultation between the architect and the heritage architect. To this end we would urge the City to request a fully coordinated set of drawings that show the scheme in its totality – that is, as a major new development that must appropriately respond to the heritage item on the site. The National Trust would naturally be pleased to review such a drawing package.

The sympathetic and considered interaction between old and new was one of the hallmarks of the original design for the Remand Centre which is to be demolished. It must be apparent in any new proposal.

Yours sincerely,

David Burdon
Director, Conservation



Model made of the Bidura Children's Court building, specifically to show how the building was designed to sit in the conservation area, respectful towards both 'Bidura' and the Victorian terraces of the conservation area. Professor John Haskell, professor of architecture at the University of NSW and the architecture critic for the Sydney Morning Herald, made the point in his review (SMH 25 June 1984) that "sensible planning and sensitive design have resulted in the harmonious integration of a fine example of current architecture into a long established neighbourhood."