

9 June 2016

Colin Charman  
Planning Officer  
City of Melbourne  
PO Box 1603  
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

**RE: Objection to Permit Application no. TP-2016-384 90-92 Gatehouse Street, Parkville Vic 3002**

Dear Mr Charman,

I am writing to object to the above permit application. The National Trust believes the works proposed for 90-92 Gatehouse Street (Saunders House), negatively impacts the heritage significance of the property as specified in our classification report (see attachment). Saunders House was classified by the National Trust at State Level in 2009. In 2010, the National Trust nominated the property to the Victorian Heritage Register. This nomination remains unassessed. The National Trust has now been in contact with Heritage Victoria to indicate the urgency in determining the outcome of this nomination. Saunders House was specified in the heritage study '*Survey of post-war built heritage in Victoria: State One*', a report prepared by Heritage Alliance for Heritage Victoria in April 2008 'to identify places across Victoria from the post-second World War period that were considered to be of potential significance at a state level'. Although included in the South Parkville heritage overlay precinct H04, Saunders House has no specific grading. The National Trust considers Saunders House to be historically and architecturally significant at the State level.

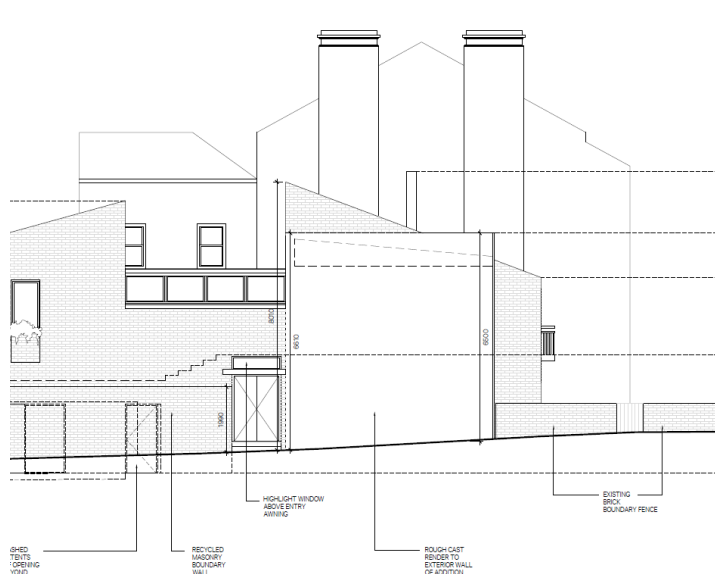
The contribution of architect/owner David Saunders to the architectural discourse in Australia was substantial. Saunders was a lecturer in architecture at the University of Melbourne, and was one of the first academics in Victoria to actively research and appreciate nineteenth century architecture in Australia during the post war years. Saunders went on to become a leading figure in architectural education, successively establishing architectural history as a discipline at the University of Melbourne, the University of Sydney, and the University of Adelaide. Saunders was also the first president of Australia ICOMOS.

Architecturally, Saunders House is one of the earliest expressions of the principles of the relatively new English 'brutalist' movement in Australia, characterised by Philip Goad in *Melbourne Architecture* as 'the first convincing Brutalist house designs in Melbourne' (2009). The design also references the historic architectural forms and materials suitable to a nineteenth century Melbourne terrace house context. The house was a singular design that was dramatically divergent from the architectural norms in Australia at the time, pre-figuring many design elements that would much later, in a modified form, become the norm.

## Comments on Kennedy Nolan's 'Response to Built form & Design Policy' (2016)

Kennedy Nolan contends that the *'proposed form attempts to mediate the significance of the subject building with the dominant development pattern of the largely intact Victorian Streetscape of Parkville. Whilst there is not a great deal of new form, the most prominent element is a two storey masonry wall which engages with Morrah Street with a zero setback.'* As specified in the National Trust Classification Report, the significance of the Morrah Street façade featuring 'only a few small white painted timber framed windows and central door' is indicated. The form and appearance of this façade most prominently reflects the significance of the house 'as one of the earliest expressions of the principles of the relatively new English brutalist architecture in Australia' with its blocky and bulky expression and angularity. The Trust submits the addition of the curved white masonry wall detracts from this expression by dominating the symmetry and softening the angularity of the Morrah Street façade.

The Morrah Street two-storey masonry wall addition will also undermine the terrace-inspired Gatehouse Street façade. While there is no artist impression of how the masonry-wall extension will appear from Gatehouse Street, the width and height of the expression is expected to undermine the viewpoint from Gatehouse Street. From this perspective, the curved masonry wall would appear awkward and 'out of place', and undermine Saunders' original design inspiration to re-interpret the terrace house within the Victorian streetscape. In 1967 David Saunders remarked that while the intention was to build a new home, he did not 'want it to look out of place', referring specifically to the design of the steeply sloped slate roof 'to match the other houses in the back and front' (*Australians Women's Weekly*, 1967). A section of the plans below emphasise this mirrored sloping. The curved masonry-wall addition would undermine this significant original roof-line structure by partially obscuring the original slope and providing a horizontal juxtaposition to the diagonal. As highlighted in the National Trust Classification Report, a key element of the property's significance is the reference to 'historic architectural forms and materials suitable to a 19<sup>th</sup> century Melbourne terrace house context'. While the building itself is largely a modernist and Brutalist architectural design, this reference to the terrace house should not be underestimated.



Plan extract, Morrah Street façade (Kennedy Nolan Architects, 2016)

The National Trust acknowledges the need for undercover parking on the levers Reserve side, yet questions the need for the balustrade walkway, and high masonry wall that separates the property from its neighbour (86-88 Gatehouse Street, Parkville). The appearance of this wall and balustrade can be seen from Morrah Street, undermining the symmetry and form of the Morrah Street façade. The intact balconies are a fundamental element remaining of the original design, with the proposed walk-way entry off the lever Reserve side balcony disrupting the bookended symmetry with the Gatehouse Street façade.

### **Façade Pattern and Colours (Kennedy Nolan Architects, 2016)**

Kennedy Nolan contends that the *‘proposed alterations which are visible are designed to make a connection to the existing building in colour and texture. Off white roughcast render has a visual link to the hand-crafted modernist palette of Brutalist but is also a surface frequently used in Edwardian domestic architecture apparent in the immediate neighbourhood. The white contrasts with the charcoal brickwork but picks upon the existing white timber fenestration’*. While the proposed white roughcast render may highlight the existing white timber fenestration, the proposed masonry wall creates a jarring addition to the Morrah Street façade, partially obstructing the dark grey concrete bricks that appear original and largely intact. As described by Philip Goad in *Melbourne Architecture* (2009), the ‘frankly expressed’ materials, such as the reconditioned slate roof and dark concrete bricks, contribute to the significance of the design and represent the Brutalist style. The link with the Edwardian domestic architecture ‘in the immediate neighbourhood’ is inappropriate, with Saunders original design intended to reflect ‘the same urban character as the surrounding terrace homes’. Regardless, the immediate area surrounding the property are predominately nineteenth century terrace houses, rather than Edwardian Bungalows.

### **City of Melbourne Planning Scheme**

The Trust believe the proposed development is contrary to a number of provisions in the City of Melbourne Planning Scheme, which supports the identification and protection of heritage places. In particular, we note the policy basis outlined in 21.06:

*Melbourne’s character is defined by its distinctive urban structure, historic street pattern, boulevards and parks, heritage precincts, and individually significant heritage buildings. Heritage Buildings, precincts and streetscapes are a large part of Melbourne’s attraction and the conservation of identified heritage places from the impact of development is crucial.*

We also note the objectives outlined in 22.05:

- *Heritage is an extremely significant component of Melbourne’s attractiveness, its character and its distinction, and therefore its appeal as a place to live, work and visit. This policy is the mechanism to conserve and enhance places and areas of architectural, social or historic significance and aboriginal archaeological sites and to encourage development which is in harmony with the existing character and appearance of designated heritage places and areas.*
- *To ensure that new development, and the construction or external alteration of buildings, make a positive contribution to the built form and amenity of the area and are respectful to*

*the architectural, social or historic character and appearance of the streetscape and the area.*

In short, the Trust believes the proposed additions to 90-92 Gatehouse Street have an unacceptable impact on the heritage significance of the property.

Thank you for considering our objection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'A. Foley'.

Anna Foley  
Acting Manager, Advocacy and Conservation

Cc: Dr Marina Larsson, Principal, Heritage Assessments, Heritage Victoria

**Attachment 1:** National Trust Classification Report – 90-92 Gatehouse Street, Parkville (2009)