

2 Old George Place - Alterations to a Designated Property in the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District - Refusal

Date: June 16, 2025

To: Toronto Preservation Board

Toronto and East York Community Council

From: Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning

Wards: University - Rosedale - Ward 11

SUMMARY

This report recommends that City Council refuse the alterations to the designated property at 2 Old George Place under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

The subject site is an 'unrated' property located in the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District (NRHCD). The applicant is requesting approval to demolish the existing second storey and construct a new two storey addition on the existing ground floor of the building. The proposed addition has not been designed so that the apparent height and form of the roof is compatible with that of the streetscape. In addition, staff are of the opinion that the addition is not compatible with heritage-rated buildings in the District (as required) with regard to materiality. As a result, the proposal does not comply with the North Rosedale HCD Plan and Official Plan and staff are recommending that this application be refused.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Senior Manager, Heritage Planning, Urban Design, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council refuse the application for the additions and alterations to the designated property at 2 Old George Place, in accordance with Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act, as outlined in the report prepared by WND Associates, dated April 2025.
2. If the owner appeals City Council's decision to refuse the application for the additions and alterations to the designated property at 2 Old George Place under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act, City Council authorize the City Solicitor and the necessary City staff to attend the Ontario Land Tribunal hearing to oppose the appeal.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

DECISION HISTORY

Council adopted the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District (NRHCD) on May 3, 2004 (By-law 749-2004) and was enacted by September 30, 2004:

https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/9536-CityPlanning_North-Rosedale-HCD.pdf

BACKGROUND

The property at 2 Old George Place is located within the North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District (NRHCD). It is located within the cul-de-sac of Old George Place.

2 Old George Place is a Modernist building that is clad in brick with a second storey addition that is stepped back from the front façade of the original building. It was constructed in 1968 and designed by William G. Grierson, a well-known residential architect. The NRHCD Plan classifies the property as "unrated". Unrated properties are defined as "Buildings which are not of national, provincial, citywide or contextual significance and do not contribute to the heritage character of the HCD or buildings which are too recent to be accurately evaluated for their heritage value".

The subject property is situated within Zone 1 of the NRHCD, otherwise known as the Ravine Lands. This area is characterized by its ravine edge topography with large trees and leafy canopy. The NRHCD Plan notes that one of the architectural characteristics of this area is the "complementary mix of inter-war and modern styles in ravines". The existing building at 2 Old George Place is an example of one of these modern styles in the Ravine Lands.

Permission is required under Section 42 (1) 1 of the Ontario Heritage Act to alter any part of a property other than the interior of any structure or building on the property within a heritage conservation district.

Application History

In June 2024, the applicant contacted Heritage Planning and the heritage advisory committee in North Rosedale - the North Rosedale Ratepayers Association - to discuss proposed additions and alterations to 2 Old George Place.

In March 2025, after reviewing preliminary plans and material, Heritage Planning informed the applicant that a heritage permit application was required under S.42 of the OHA and that staff would need to write a report for consideration to the Toronto Preservation Board and City Council.

Heritage Policy Framework

Official Plan

The City of Toronto Official Plan provides the policy framework for heritage conservation in the City. The following Official Plan policies apply to heritage conservation districts and properties on the Heritage Register:

3.1.6.4: Properties on the Heritage Register will be conserved and maintained consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, as revised from time to time and adopted by Council.

3.1.6.5: Proposed alterations, development, and/or public works on or adjacent to, a property on the Heritage Register will ensure that the integrity of the heritage property's cultural heritage value and attributes will be retained, prior to work commencing on the property and to the satisfaction of the City.

3.1.6.33. Heritage Conservation Districts should be managed and conserved by approving only those alterations, additions, new development, demolitions, removals and public works in accordance with respective Heritage Conservation District plans.

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada

The Parks Canada Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada (Standards and Guidelines) is the official document guiding planning, stewardship and conservation approach for all listed and designated heritage resources within the City of Toronto.

Section 4.1.4 states:

"In urban heritage districts, land use, buildings, streets and topography often define or influence spatial organization"

The Guidelines with respect to Spatial Organization recommends:

- Designing a new feature when required by a new use that is compatible with the character-defining spatial organization. (4.1.4.13)

They do not recommend:

- Introducing a new feature that is incompatible in size, scale or design with the spatial organization. (4.1.4.13)

Section 4.1.5 states:

"These guidelines provide direction when visual relationships have been identified as a character-defining element of an historic place" and how "visual relationships between elements of natural or designed landscapes, or heritage districts, can influence the user experience. For example, a tall building in a low-rise heritage district may be perceived as out of scale."

The Guidelines with respect to Visual Relationships recommends:

Protecting and maintaining the features that define the visual relationships by using non-destructive methods in daily, seasonal and cyclical tasks, such as pruning, to retain sight lines. This could also include maintaining the size and massing of vegetation and built features that contribute to the overall scale of the historic place (4.1.5.6)

Designing a new feature when required by a new use that respects the historic visual relationships in the cultural landscape. This can include matching established proportions and densities. (4.1.5.15)

They do not recommend:

Allowing visual relationships to be altered by incompatible development or neglect. (4.1.5.6)

Introducing a new feature that alters or obscures the visual relationships in the cultural landscape. (4.1.5.15)

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes.aspx>

North Rosedale Heritage Conservation District

Section 6.3 of the NRHCD Plan says, "When a Heritage Permit application does not, in the view of City staff, comply with the district design guidelines.... City Council will decide on the application. In making its decision, Council will be provided with the advice of the City's Heritage Preservation Services [now known as Heritage Planning] Section".

Section 7.3 of the NRHCD Plan contains the following guidelines which are applicable to this application:

1. New buildings and alterations and additions to unrated buildings should contribute to and not detract from the heritage character of the District.
2. New buildings and alterations and additions to unrated buildings should be designed to be compatible with the heritage buildings, in terms of scale, massing height, setback, entry level, materials and fenestration.

3. The roof profile and the location of the eaves lines or the roof parapet should be designed so that the apparent height and form of the roof is compatible with that of the streetscape.

COMMENTS

Heritage Planning Staff have reviewed the proposed additions and alterations to the existing building at 2 Old George Place which include the demolition of the existing second storey addition, and construction of a new two-storey addition with a "semi-circular apse" and "pitched roof" as noted in the submission package. The new second storey addition is proposed to be flush with the existing front facade. The third storey addition includes a semi-circular apse with a pitched roof and clerestory windows that will project above the third storey addition approximately 1.9 metres. The semi-circular apse is proposed to be stepped back from the front wall approximately 1.47 metres. As noted in the submitted drawings, the applicant is proposing to install stone posts connected by stone lintels at the third storey, which will be flush with the front and side facades and extend rearward to the top of the third storey addition where the pitched roof begins.

Staff are of the opinion that the application does not comply with the NRHCD Plan. First, the proposed height and absence of a step back adds to the visual perception of the new massing and therefore the proposed addition does not comply with the relevant policy in the NRHCD Plan which states "the roof profile and location of the eaves line or the roof parapet should be designed so that the apparent height and form of the roof is compatible with that of the streetscape".

In addition, Old George Place is a cul-de-sac with a tight, unified architectural character. The proposed design and massing of the second and third storey addition with its stone posts, semi-circular apse, and projecting pitched roof is not compatible with the existing streetscape of Old George Place, which consists of Modernist-style homes with an apparent height of 1-2 storeys and flat roof forms when viewed from the street. Staff note that some of the existing homes on Old George Place have second storeys that were later additions which were significantly stepped back from the front facades, allowing the additions to have a height and form that is more in keeping with the character of the streetscape. The absence of step back for the proposed second storey addition exacerbates the overwhelming visual perception of massing of the proposed three-storey building. The overall effect is of an addition that has not been designed to have an apparent height and form and which is therefore incompatible with the streetscape of Old George Place.

In their submission package, the applicant makes note of "the existing condition of secondary facades facing the public realm in the immediate context". The applicant refers to 63 and 65 Highland Avenue, a pair of 2-storey buildings that front onto Highland Avenue but have their rear elevations and garages fronting onto a portion of Roxborough Drive, a street which intersects with Old George Place. The applicant uses these 2-storey buildings - which appear to be taller when viewed from Roxborough Drive due to changes in grade that expose the lower levels of the house and rear yard garages - as the basis of their compatibility analysis in relation to the relevant HCD

policy. The application states, "the properties at the foot of Old George Place (with Highland Avenue addresses) form part of the immediate context, and they contend that this interpretation is consistent with the language within the HCD Plan which notes "Generally, 'streetscape' means the architectural and landscape character of the immediate streets, and defines the qualities of elements such as landform, landscape and tree canopy, building form, proportion and scale, separation, setbacks and materiality". It is important to note that in the above guidance, reference is made to "streets" meaning there is an understanding within the Plan that the immediate context area can include the visual context of a property not located on the same specific street".

In contrast, staff's interpretation of Section 5.2 of the NRHCD Plan, which defines 'streetscape' as *generally* referring to the immediate streets, is that the Plan's use of the word "generally" is an acknowledgement that there may be properties that front onto or are significantly visible from multiple adjacent streets or corners, and those properties can be considered within a determination of compatibility. However, this is not the case with 2 Old George Place, which is located within a cul-de-sac that has a tight, unified architectural character defined by its modest-scale, Modernist styles and low-profile homes, and buildings on Highland Avenue are in staff's opinion not relevant candidates for compatibility analysis.

Old George Place was one of the last developed areas in North Rosedale. The George Estate was subdivided into several properties and developed in the 1960s. All the houses were completed in a modern or post-modern architectural style. The NRHCD Plan includes statements of important heritage character that apply directly to this streetscape and property. The NRHCD Plan states "...many of these lots have striking aspects on the ravines and are designed to maximize the ravine topography (modern houses... are good examples of this). This topography presented an opportunity for architectural drama that the modernist architects of the 1960s and after pursued with aplomb." Section 5.0 of the NRHCD Plan states "Residential streets in any neighbourhood have a unique character. This character is a function of age, location, setbacks and lot size, periods of construction, landscape character, topography and socio-economic history". Old George Place maintains a unique and cohesive character, scale and form. As stated, this character is evidenced by its predominant era of development in the 1960s, its Modernist architectural styles, and the low-profile of homes.

In contrast, the existing buildings at 63 and 65 Highland Avenue were constructed in 1911 and do not reflect or relate to the architectural style, character or era of development of Old George Place. For this additional reason, the existing buildings on Highland Avenue have limited comparative value and should not negate the clear emphasis on compatibility within the existing streetscape of Old George Place, articulated in policy 7.3.1 that states "The roof profile and the location of the eaves lines or the roof parapet should be designed so that the apparent height and form of the roof is compatible with that of the streetscape". The proposed 2-storey addition has not been designed to allow the apparent height and form of the roof to be compatible with the existing streetscape of Old George Place. In addition, the pitched roof proposes to incorporate metal roofing, a material that has not been demonstrated to be present or compatible with heritage-rated buildings in the District and as such, does not comply

with the relevant policy in the NRHCD Plan which states " New buildings and alterations and additions to unrated buildings should be designed to be compatible with the heritage buildings, in terms of scale, massing height, setback, entry level, materials and fenestration".

Heritage Planning staff are therefore of the opinion that the 2-storey addition to the designated property at 2 Old George Place does not comply with the NRHCD Plan and the Official Plan which states "Heritage Conservation Districts should be managed and conserved by approving only those alterations, additions, new development, demolitions, removals and public works in accordance with respective Heritage Conservation District plans". As such it is recommended that permission under Section 42 of the Ontario Heritage Act be refused by City Council.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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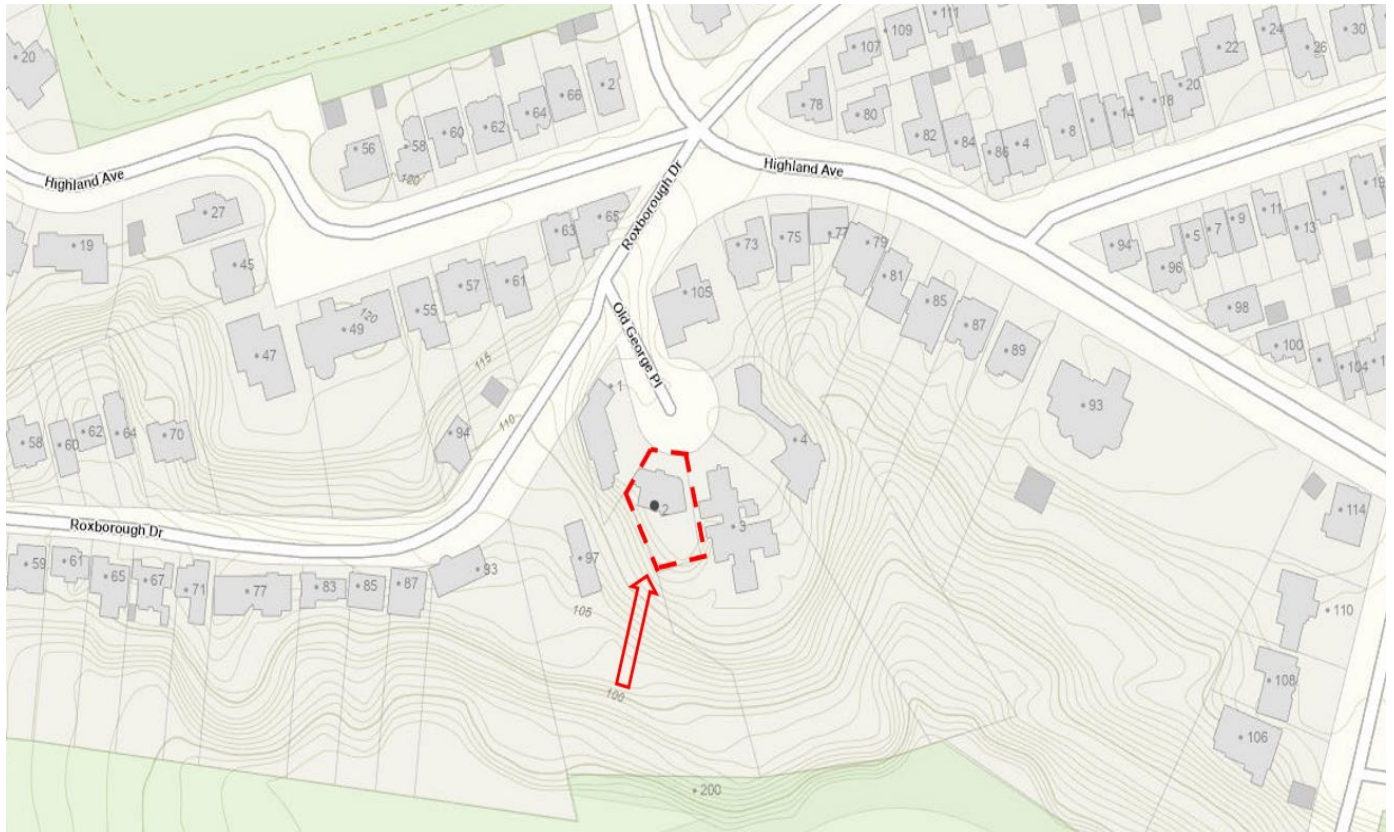
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 - Location Map
Attachment 2 - Photographs
Attachment 3 - Plans

LOCATION MAP

2 Old George Place

ATTACHMENT 1



Map showing the subject property's location outlined in red at 2 Old George Place located in cul-de-sac of Old George Place. This location map is for information purposes only; the exact boundaries of the property are not shown (City of Toronto Mapping).

PHOTOGRAPHS

ATTACHMENT 2

2 Old George Place



Photo of the north elevation of the existing building at 2 Old George Place (Google Maps, 2009)



Contextual photo of the existing streetscape of Old George Place. 4 Old George Place is not shown (Google Maps, 2015)

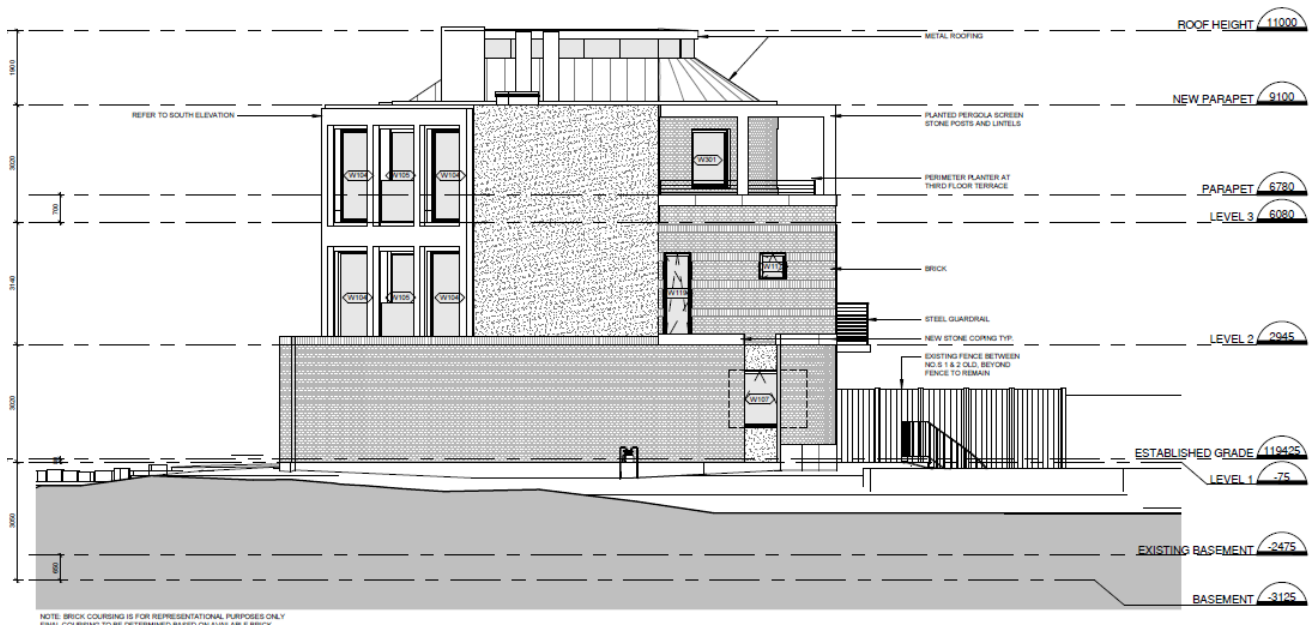
PLANS

2 Old George Place

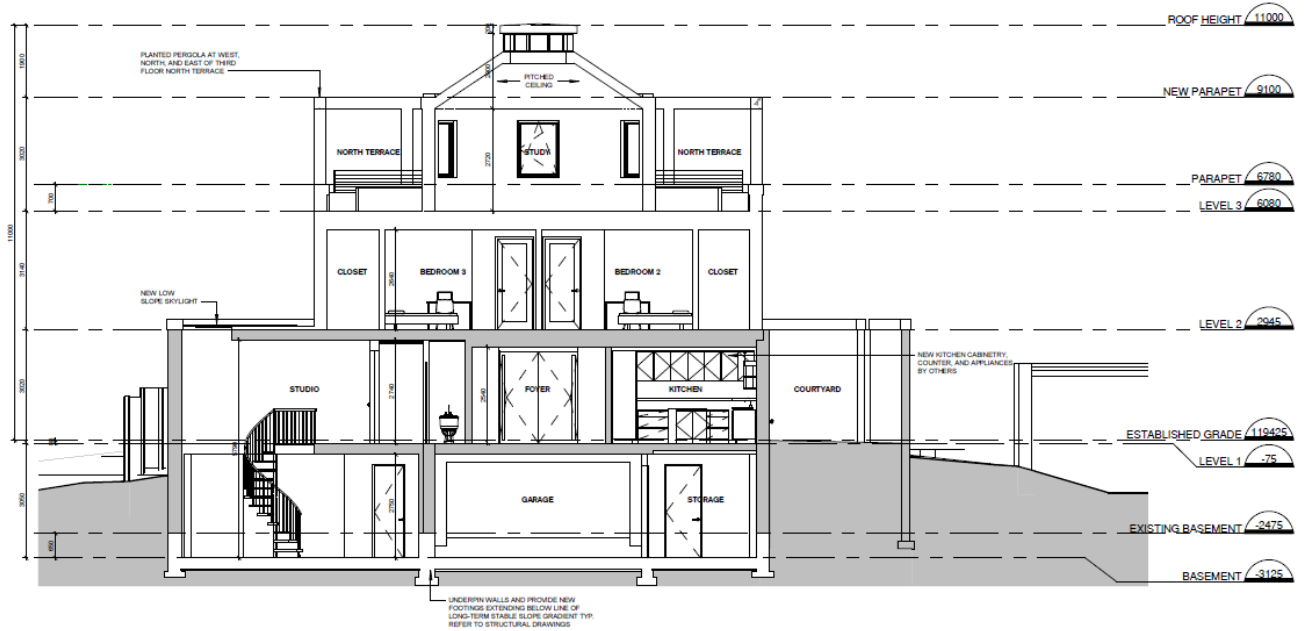
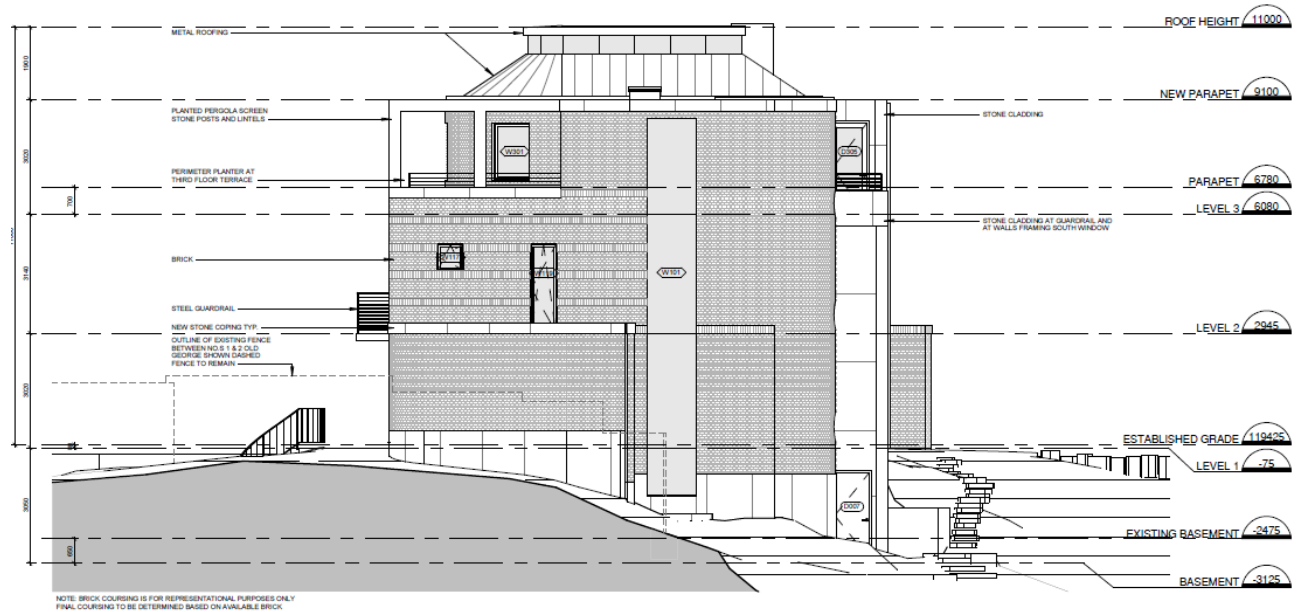
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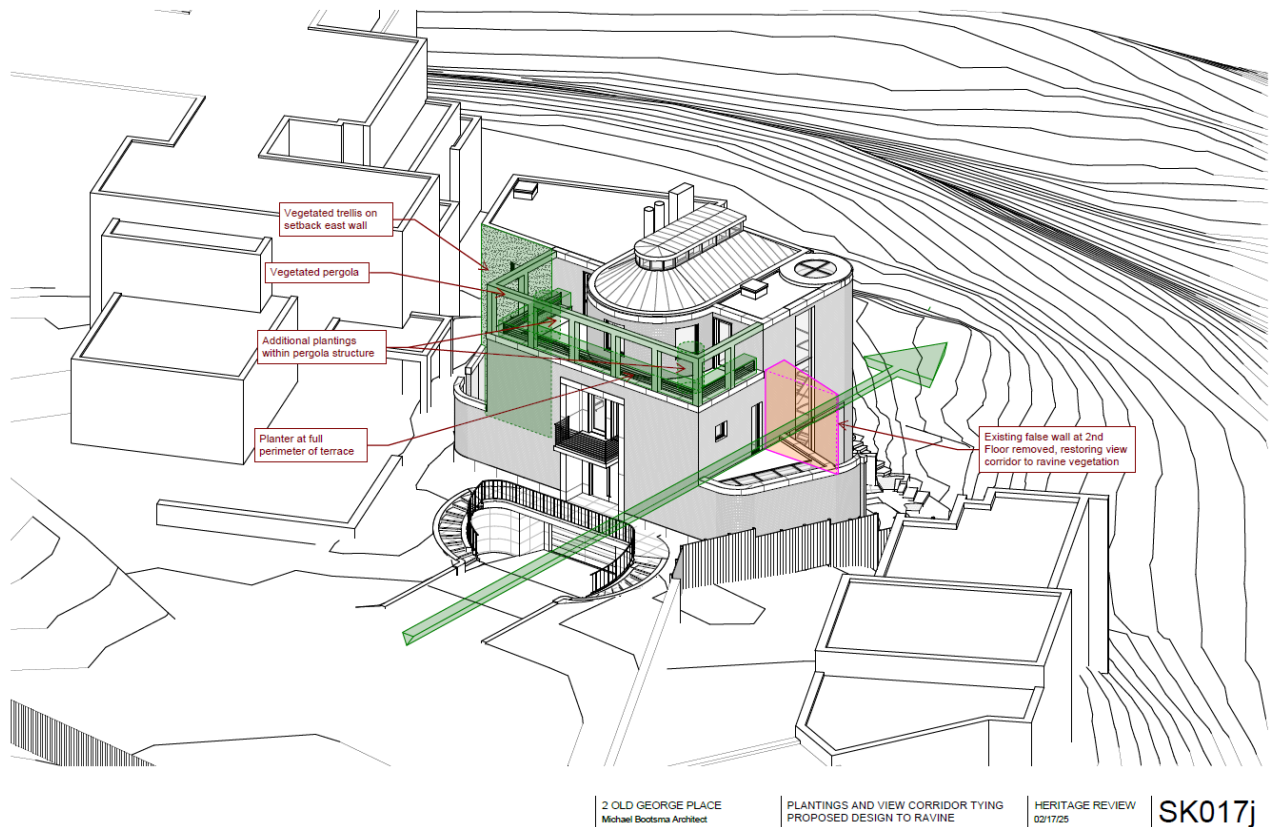


Proposed front elevation of 2 Old George Place (Michael Bootsma Architect, 2025)



Proposed side east elevation of 2 Old George Place (Michael Bootsma Architect, 2025)





Proposed massing diagram of 2 Old George Place (Michael Bootsma Architect, 2025)



Proposed rendering of 2 Old George Place (Michael Bootsma Architect, 2025)