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**HD** **Fury as Toorak 'treasure' razed**  
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**LP**

Toorak residents are furious that the owner of a landmark mansion has begun tearing it down after a failed heritage protection bid.

The front of Idylwilde at 16 St Georges Road, sold to Xiaoyan "Kylie" Bao for \$18.5 million in September 2013, has been ripped open, exposing the ornate interior.

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Built in 1913, the Queen Anne-style estate was marketed for sale as a "home for the generations" and "a rare and beautiful piece of Australian real estate", but it took Ms Bao just two months to apply to council for a permit to knock it down.

The move prompted the City of Stonnington to apply last year to then-planning minister Matthew Guy for interim heritage controls.

The property, while much loved by Toorak residents and iconic to the suburb, was deemed to not be of "sufficient architectural significance" for Mr Guy to step in and grant heritage protection.

The minister rejected a bid by the council in May last year based on advice from Heritage Victoria, the planning department said in a statement.

An application to Heritage Victoria and the Heritage Council, temporarily halted demolition, but was also declined.

Stonnington mayor Melina Sehr said that under the law, the council could not refuse the homeowner consent for demolition.

"Council works hard to ensure that the heritage of Stonnington is protected," she said. "Council is disappointed that Heritage Victoria and the [then] minister did not see fit to protect this property."

Ms Bao is the wife of Chinese billionaire-turned-Australian investor Wang Hua and is the owner of the Heritage Golf and Country Club in Chirnside Park.

An excavator continued to raze the home on Wednesday, ripping down the roof as distressed locals watched.

An irate neighbour - who did not wish to be identified - attempted to stop the works, approaching the site manager to complain.

A motorist slowed her car to scream "it's a f---ing disgrace" as she drove past the wreckage.

Longtime Toorak resident Dr Ann Singer was visibly shaken as she paused to watch the excavator gouge the old home. She described it as a "real treasure" of Toorak.

"And to just come out one day and see it knocked down is tragic, just absolutely tragic," she said.

"They don't care ... they just wipe out a home that was absolutely beautiful. Why is this house being destroyed?"

Eddie Young, president of Toorak Village Residents Action Group, said Idylwilde was a standout home on the street.

"It is not a historically valuable home, but is aesthetically a wonderful-looking home," he said. "The main concern, from my members ... is that you often find - and it is subjective - that grotesque buildings take their place.

"New zoning to a large extent has prevented the building of the sort of monoliths we have seen in the past, but there is no restriction on design.

"There will be angst when anything like this happens, because it has been happening. You only have to look around St Georges Road, and if you know the history of what has gone down; this is just another one."

Helen Elsworth, who has lived in neighbouring Orrong Road for 30 years, said the demolition was "shocking" and the home's former owners would be devastated.

"I thought it was the most beautiful house I had ever seen."

Ms Elsworth said fellow residents were concerned apartments would be built in its place.

Stonnington council confirmed no recent planning applications have been lodged by Ms Bao, who will not need a permit to construct a single dwelling.

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