

14 November 2012

Proposed Crowle Home Site Redevelopment – Concept Plan MP10_0110

PROPOSAL

This application seeks concept plan approval to redevelop the Crowle Home site at 74-76 Belmore Street Ryde. The site is located within the Meadowbank Employment Area and the area is currently in transition from industrial/employment uses to a high density residential land use. The Meadowbank railway station and Meadowbank ferry wharf are located approximately 1km from the site. The site is located within the Ryde Local Government Area.

Crowle Home has historically been used as a residential care facility (for persons with a disability) from the 1950s to present. The site is currently in the process of being decommissioned with remaining residents being relocated to contemporary accommodation.

The main activities associated with the project (as amended in the PPR and as further agreed to by the proponent) include:

- 5 residential building envelopes up to 7 storeys in height and a community facility building envelope;
- Maximum GFA of 35,000m² (FSR 2.17:1) including the 10% adaptable dwellings to be provided in some 430 units for the site;
- A commitment to retain 15 adaptable apartments on site for people living with a disability under the care of Achieve Australia;
- A commitment by Achieve Australia to provide 2 other dwellings in the Ryde local government area that are each capable of accommodating a minimum of 3 people with a disability;
- Basement car parking for 584 cars comprising 490 residential spaces and 94 visitor spaces;
- Retention and adaptive reuse of the local heritage items known as Tellaraga House, retention of the existing Crowle war memorial garden, circular driveway, gate posts, palisade fence, landscape hedging, and tree line fronting Belmore Street;
- Public domain works including road upgrade works to Belmore Street, dedication and construction of a public pedestrian/bicycle access way along the southern boundary and dedication and construction of a public pathway along eastern boundary; and
- Landscaping works.

A detailed background and description of the preferred project are contained in the Department's assessment report. The Proponent for this application is Achieve Australia.

DELEGATION TO THE COMMISSION

The project was referred to the Commission for determination under the terms of the Ministerial delegation dated 14 September 2011.

Jan Murrell and Donna Campbell were nominated as the Commission members for the project. Jan Murrell chaired the Commission.

DEPARTMENT'S ASSESSMENT REPORT

On 3 October 2012, the Commission received the Director-General's Environmental Assessment Report. The report provided a detailed assessment of the key issues associated with the project including:

- social impacts;
- built form;
- residential amenity;
- traffic and car parking; and
- heritage impacts.

The report also considered overshadowing, public domain works and consultation.

The Department's assessment report concluded the application should be approved subject to modifications and recommended future assessment requirements.

CONSULTATION AND SUBMISSIONS

The Department received a total of 95 submissions on the project comprising:

- six from public authorities; and
- 89 from the general public.

A petition containing 839 signatures objecting to the proposal was also received.

The majority (82 of 89) of submissions received from the general public objected to the proposal. The key areas of concern included social impacts associated with decommissioning the residential care facility, the lack of consultation undertaken by the proponent, built form, traffic, car parking and residential amenity.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Public Meeting

The Commission held a public meeting on 29 October 2012 to hear views on the Department's assessment report and recommendation. 16 people spoke at the Commission meeting (see Appendix 1). The key issues raised at the meeting include:

- non compliance with DGRs 17 and 18 regarding social impacts and consultation;
- inadequate consultation with residents;
- dissatisfaction regarding the merger process between Crowle Home and Achieve Australia;
- the need to consider other forms of accommodation, in particular cluster housing;
- the loss of housing for disabled from the Ryde LGA;
- retention of 1/3 of site for purpose built homes/cluster housing;
- the loss of the site cannot be replaced within the Ryde LGA;
- relocating residents further away from their families;
- residents have not seen transition plans/change management plans;
- a condition should be imposed to retain housing in Ryde;
- ADHC did not require social impacts to be considered during initial consultation on DGRs;
- lack of certainty/anxiety for existing residents;
- loss of amenity/services for existing residents;
- the number of units to be retained is too low;
- some existing residents would prefer to stay within the existing Crowle Home facility;
- overdevelopment of the site;
- the 15 units to be retained by Achieve Australia could not meet existing residents needs;
- the redevelopment of the site provides greater economic benefits than social benefits;
- increased travel time and cost for families to visit relocated residents;

- relocated residents will receive less care than currently provided at Crowle Home;
- cumulative traffic impacts;
- existing public transport is overcrowded;
- lack of open space;
- lack of energy efficiency measures;
- the proposal is not ecologically sustainable;
- there is an urgent need for more/alternative care and housing options that Achieve Australia could provide with the proceeds from the sale;
- examples were given of successful relocations, including from Crowle Home, into community housing.

Ryde City Council

Ryde City Council was invited to meet with the Commission however Council instead decided to present its issues at the public meeting. Council's presentation focused on: concern for the welfare of remaining residents; the adequacy of the recommended future assessment requirements to address social impacts; the need to clarify issues to be considered during future development applications; and the number of units for residents to be retained on site.

In considering the proposal the Commission also met with the Department, the Proponent and the Department of Aging, Disability and Home Care (ADHC). The Commission also visited the site and inspected the existing residential care facilities, the heritage items, adjoining development and the wider Meadow Bank employment area.

Proponent

On 25 October 2012, the Commission met with the Proponent to discuss the proposal. The Commission also met with a representative from ADHC. The discussion focused on:

- the services provided by Achieve Australia and a background of the proposal;
- the social impacts of the proposal;
- current government policy to close large residential care facilities by 2014 and recurrent funding for people to be cared for in smaller community housing projects;
- the current devolution process;
- the number of units to be retained on site;
- the level of care being provided at Crowle Home compared to the level of care provided in community housing;
- ADHC do not encourage cluster housing on the site;
- the proponent's intention with the proceeds from the sale of the site;
- the planning controls relating to site and wider Meadowbank Employment area;
- the design rationale for the site;
- height transition to Junction street;
- the need for photo montages of the PPR proposal;
- heritage impacts;
- provision of services within the basement;
- provision of public domain works and through site links; and
- terms of the recommended Concept Plan approval.

The Commission again met the Proponent on 6 November 2012. The discussion focused on issues raised at the public meeting. In particular the Commission sought a greater understanding of the level of care provided within community housing and whether the 15 units to be retained on site are suitable for those with all levels of disability.

In response to concern about a range of suitable housing forms within the Ryde local government area, Achieve Australia committed to providing two dwellings in the Ryde area with each accommodating a minimum of 3 people with disability.

Department of Planning and Infrastructure

On 6 November 2012, the Commission was briefed by officers from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The key issues discussed at the meeting include: the strength of conditions relating to social impacts; retaining housing for disabled within the Ryde LGA; the different housing options available to provide care for persons with a disability; traffic impacts; and amendments to the recommended conditions.

COMMISSION'S COMMENTS

Social Impacts

Social impacts were the key issue raised at the public meeting. Many speakers raised concern particularly regarding the welfare of Crowle Home, the process of the relocation and the loss of the housing and services for people with disabilities from the Ryde LGA.

The Commission notes that Crowle Home no longer meets the NSW Government's model for care and accommodation for persons with a disability. The Government's current policy adopts best practice and this requires the closure and deinstitutionalisation of large residential centres similar to Crowle Home and the relocation of residents into the community, either individually or in smaller groups.

The policy has an emphasis on providing assistance for independent living at the required level of need, from drop in support services to 24 hour care. The existing buildings and facilities on site no longer meet the current building standards and requirements for people with disabilities. The Commission was advised that while the facility has served its purpose in the past, it can no longer deliver an acceptable outcome for accommodating people with disabilities.

In keeping with Government policy the Crowle Home residential care facility is being decommissioned with residents already in the process of being relocated offsite into other forms of modern accommodation to provide a greater level of individualised care.

The Commission was advised that the relocation of residents is not a direct result of the Concept Plan proposal and would continue regardless of the proposal, in keeping with ADHC efforts to close large residential care facilities.

The proceeds from sale of the site will enable Achieve Australia to provide permanent and more contemporary housing options within the wider community for people with disabilities, in-line with current policy. The Commission was advised that community housing provides for greater individualised care including for those who require the highest level of care.

While the decommissioning of Crowle Home as a large residential care facility must be accepted as Government policy, nonetheless in the circumstances of this case the Commission has carefully considered the social impact on those still in residence at Crowle Home and also the need for some other form of suitable housing in the Ryde LGA apart from the 15 units to be owned by Achieve Australia in the project. From submissions made and the public meeting many people expressed concern about these and other issues including a lack of consultation in the process.

Following the public meeting and the meeting with the Commission, Achieve Australia has agreed to include within its Statement of Commitments a clearer transparent process with a defined set of criteria for the relocation of existing residents including:

- *appropriate consultation with the resident and their support network in developing the transition plan for each resident;*
- *consideration of each resident's preferences with regard to accommodation type and lifestyle;*
- *consideration of each resident's preferences including location and access to family; and*
- *consideration of each resident's support needs.*

Many residents and Council were also concerned regarding the loss of housing stock for the disabled within the Ryde LGA. Responding to this concern Achieve Australia indicated to the Commission that it is intending to provide other housing within the Ryde LGA in addition to the 15 dwellings on-site. To provide greater certainty to the community, Achieve Australia has now included the following in its Statement of Commitments at No 22.

Achieve Australia shall provide a minimum of 2 dwellings in the Ryde local government area that are each capable of accommodating a minimum of 3 people with disability. The 2 dwellings are to be subject to obtaining the necessary development consents or approvals under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 and also subject to the provision of recurrent funding by the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care.

Achieve Australia has also included the following in its Statement of Commitments at No.28 *Achieve Australia commits to using the name 'Crowle' in the name of the resultant development on the site.*

Overall, the Commission accepts that the proposal will result in wider social benefits in the region as it will allow Achieve Australia to provide more suitable community housing and standard of care and support services for people with disabilities in-line with current Government policy and best practice.

In summary the purpose of the additional and amended conditions is to provide the current residents of Crowle Home with greater clarity and certainty of the relocation process and to ensure a range of accommodation for people with disabilities is retained within the Ryde LGA.

Traffic

Concern was also raised regarding traffic impacts from the proposed redevelopment of the site and the cumulative impact associated with the broader redevelopment of the Meadow Bank employment area.

The Commission notes the Department has recommended a condition that requires the upgrade of Belmore Street by extending the right turn bay from 45m to 90m, including any necessary adjustments to the phasing of the traffic signals to manage traffic impacts associated with the proposal. The Commission accepts the Department's assessment.

With regards to cumulative traffic impacts, the Commission also accepts the Department's assessment that no further strategic level cumulative traffic impact analysis is required for the proposal. The Commission is satisfied that given the proposed density is largely consistent with the Draft RLEP 2011 controls, the anticipated traffic impacts have been factored in.

Built Form

As a part of the Commission's consideration photo-montages were requested to illustrate the built form as amended in the PPR to show the relationship of the proposed buildings in the context of the adjoining streets and buildings, in particular to Junction Street, having regard to the intent of the Draft RLEP 2011 controls.

After considering the proposed built form, the Commission is satisfied that the Concept Plan with the Department's recommended conditions and future environmental assessment requirements provides for an acceptable height transition and built form having regard to development in the surrounding area, including the existing lower scale dwellings opposite in Junction Street.

Other Conditions

The Commission notes that the Department has included a number of Council's requirements in the recommended Concept Plan approval including: the Statement of Commitments; contributions; heritage; public domain works; and the upgrade of Belmore Street. The Commission further notes that other more detailed requirements of the Council, such as the construction and dedication of footpaths, can be satisfied at the future development application stages.

The Commission has included a condition requiring the restoration and conservation of Tellaraga House be provided in or before the development application for the 150th dwelling.

With respect to the Council's concern of service vehicles to the site the Commission agrees that this is appropriate given the number of units proposed. Accordingly the determination requires that vehicles to service the residential apartments are to be accommodated in the basement area.

COMMISSION'S DETERMINATION

The Commission has carefully considered the views expressed at the public meeting, the Department's Assessment Report and agency and public submissions. The Commission has also considered the additional commitments made by the Proponent in response to issues raised at the public meeting.

A number of concerns raised by citizens during the course of exhibition and the public meeting, such as the history of the site and the merger of charitable organisations, are not matters relevant to the Commission's determination for redevelopment of the site

On balance, the Commission agrees with the Department's recommendation that the proposal should be approved subject to strengthened requirements to manage and mitigate social and other impacts associated with the proposal. The additional commitments have resulted in new requirements in the approval clarifying the relocation process for the remaining residents of Crowle Home, and providing an additional two dwellings in the Ryde local government area as an alternative form of housing to the 15 units to be provided on-site for those with a disability.



Donna Campbell
Commission Member



Jan Murrell
Commission Member

Appendix 1

List of Speakers

Planning Assessment Commission Meeting

Date & Time: **Monday 29 October 2012, from 3:00 pm**

Place: Metro Inn Ryde, 860 Victoria Road, Ryde

1. Ryde City Council
Ms Liz Coad
2. Friends of Crowle Home Inc
Ms Jenny Rollo OAM
3. Ms June Madden
4. Ms Estelle Shields
5. Ms Debra Nancarrow
6. Ms Donna White
7. Mr Barry Hadaway
8. Mr Robert Renew
9. Mr Frank Matheson
10. Ms Jane Power
11. Ms Angela Penklis
12. Mr Phillip Sutherland
13. Mr Robert Little
14. Mr Ian Turtle
15. Mr Ian Fraser
16. Ms Megan Quill