

07 February 2011

Determination of Project Application Refurbishment of the Spectator Precinct at the Royal Randwick Racecourse

Project Application

This project application seeks approval for:

- substantial alterations and additions to the existing Queen Elizabeth (QE) II stand;
- demolition of the existing paddock stand and construction of a new paddock stand;
- construction of a new 'link building' structure between the QEII and Paddock stands;
- demolition of the Randwick Pavilion, the Tea House building and the escalator structures to the rear of the grandstands;
- construction of a parade ring with associated amphitheatre style seating to establish the theatre of the horse, in the area currently occupied by the Tea House and Pavilion;
- construction of a 3 storey building adjacent to the parade ring, known as the Owners and Trainers Pavilion;
- adaptive reuse of the existing Swab Building to accommodate a racing museum and members sign up area including a conference facility for a maximum of 100 people and a café; and
- associated services, infrastructure upgrades, civil and landscaping works.

Assessment process

On 2 August 2010, the Director-General, as delegate for the Minister for Planning, formed the opinion that the project is a major project under Clause 15 of Schedule 1 of the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Development) 2005*.

At the same time, the Director-General delegated certain of his powers and functions, including the environmental assessment of the project, to Randwick City Council (Council).

Consequently, Council has prepared the Director-General's environmental assessment report (the DG's Report) on the project.

Delegation to the Commission

As the result of the Proponent having made a reportable political donation, the Director-General of the Department of Planning referred the project application (MP 10_0097) to the Commission for determination under a delegation issued by the Minister on 18 November 2008.

The Commission consisted of Professor Kevin Sproats as chair and Ms Donna Campbell.

Meeting with Department and Council staff

The Commission met with senior Departmental and Council staff on 2 February 2011 for a briefing on the DG's Report.

In particular, Departmental and Council staff provided information on heritage and noise issues and the use of the site for non- race events.

Key Issues

The DG's Report identified the following key issues:

- built form and urban design;
- heritage;
- environmental and residential amenity;
- transport and accessibility impacts;
- ecologically sustainable development;
- flooding drainage and surface water management;
- impacts on existing operations during construction;
- contamination;
- public domain and safety;
- contributions; and
- public interest.

The DG's Report concluded that the project is "well designed and considered appropriate and compatible with the surrounding built form and character of the RRR" (Royal Randwick Racecourse). The DG's Report goes on to state:

"The proposal would maintain the site's landmark presence as a major gateway to Randwick City and provide opportunities for greater access to and enjoyment of the site by the members, visitors and the community, while recognizing the use of thoroughbred racing and heritage conservation requirements."

During the exhibition period Council received 11 submissions from agencies and 7 submissions from members of the public.

The DG's Report indicates Council is satisfied the impacts of the proposal can be suitably mitigated and managed to ensure a satisfactory level of environmental performance.

Commission Comments

Heritage

Public submissions raised concerns about the heritage impacts of the project and the Commission sought clarification on the views of the Heritage Office.

The site is not listed on the State Heritage Register, although the Australian Jockey Club nominated the site for listing in 2006. The DG's Report indicates that as Sydney's oldest and longest continually operated racecourse, much of its heritage significance comes from its ongoing use as a racecourse. This is also reflected in the submission from the NSW Heritage Office.

In relation to the proposed demolition of the Tea House, Council advised at the briefing that the proponent had explored options to retain the building in this project but had been unsuccessful in identifying a viable ongoing use. The DG's report accepts the need for demolition of the building but recommends conditions proposed by the Heritage Office requiring revised interpretation studies to be prepared for the Tea House and other heritage buildings to be demolished as well as archival recording, conservation works and interpretation.

The Commission accepts that while some items of local heritage significance will be lost, the project will facilitate the ongoing viability of the site as a racecourse ensuring it retains its broader heritage significance and its social value and links to the development of the horseracing in Sydney.

Intensification of use

Public submissions raised concerns regarding the intensification of use of the site. The DG's Report identifies 3 potential ways the use of the site could become intensified, namely:

- an increase in the frequency of non-race day events;
- an increase in patron capacity; and
- hours of operation.

The site is capable of hosting a range of large scale non- racing events, such as drive in cinema and music festivals, and that the proponent has indicated that these events may increase in the future. The DG's report advises that these events would continue to require separate development consents and this is reflected in the recommended conditions of approval for this project.

The Commission is satisfied that large scale non- race events are not part of this project and that the environmental impacts of such an event would have to be considered in the assessment process for any future application for the event.

In relation to the increase in patron capacity at the grounds, the Commission is satisfied that the increase can be accommodated by the existing transport strategy, (subject to further modeling of the intersection of Doncaster Avenue and Ascot Street) and other proposed management measures. The DG's Report confirms the site's existing operating hours are not to change.

Noise

The Commission sought clarification on how the potential noise impacts of the project would be managed. The recommended conditions require an additional noise study to be submitted - demonstrating noise and vibration from the site would satisfy the recommendations in the noise report. The Department and Council confirmed that Council would continue to be involved in ensuring compliance on site with the recommendations in the noise report and that Council had additional tools to manage noise impacts under the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997*.

Commission's Determination

The Commission has considered the DG's Report for the project as well as associated documents including submissions on the project, the proponent's response to submissions and statement of commitments and the recommended conditions of approval.

The Commission is satisfied that the project should be approved subject to the recommended conditions.



Kevin Sproats
PAC Member



Donna Campbell
PAC Member