

Department of Planning and Environment

Megan Fu
Planning Group
Department of Planning and Environment
4 Parramatta Square,
Parramatta NSW 2150

Our ref: DOC22/747958
Your ref: SSD-36778089

Subject: Advice on EIS - Ryde Hospital Redevelopment (SSD-36778089) (City of Ryde)

Dear Megan,

I refer to your email dated 22 August 2022 requesting comment from the Environment and Heritage Group (EHG) on the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Ryde Hospital Redevelopment (SSD-36778089). EHG has reviewed the exhibition materials and provides comments in relation to biodiversity and trees below. No comments are raised in relation to flooding.

The biodiversity development assessment report (BDAR) prepared by Ecological Australia, dated 22 July 2022 has been reviewed and EHG raises the following comments in relation to biodiversity impacts.

- The primary impact to biodiversity will arise from the creation of the proposed asset protection zones (APZ). The BDAR indicates that the native vegetation on the development site is very disturbed. The BDAR states that only exotic vegetation will need to be removed to achieve APZ standards, and that the proposed vegetation management plan (VMP) for the site will lead to an improvement in vegetation condition. However, EHG considers that despite these improvements, the vegetation in the development site will be incapable of being regenerated to vegetation with the typical structure and floristics of Blue Gum High Forest (BGHF), as the vegetation will need ongoing management as an APZ. EHG considers that although the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) has been applied correctly in its assessment of impact based on the current vegetation condition, it has not recognised that the proposal will result in the permanent partial loss of a patch of BGHF.
- Consideration of the permanent partial loss of a patch of BGHF is of most relevance in relation to the 'avoid' principle under the BAM. The BDAR has not adequately described the measures that have been taken to amend the layout to avoid or minimise impacts from the APZ.
- The Bushfire Assessment Report prepared by Ecological Australia dated 22 July 2022 indicates that several proposed mitigation measures to reduce APZ requirements have been supported by the NSW Rural Fire Services (RFS). EHG notes that no formal correspondence has been provided to demonstrate the proposed mitigation measures and APZ extents currently proposed are supported by the RFS.
- Section 4.3.2 of the BDAR states that as the existing buildings on site are operational buildings of the hospital, they do not provide potential habitat for threatened entities. However, threatened microbats have been known to use occupied buildings as habitat. The BDAR needs to clarify whether any of the buildings provide habitat for threatened entities.
- The 'Brief description of the proposal' (Section 1.2 of the BDAR) does not provide a description of the works proposed, only an explanation of the need for the proposal.
- The EIS notes that a separate license has been sought and approved in relation to the clearing of weeds within areas of BGHF on site. In this regard, it is unclear if the area subject to the BAM plot has been subject to clearing prior to the survey being undertaken.

Section 3.4 of the BDAR notes that PCT 1237 on site has typical characteristic species in all structural layers. Table 8 notes characteristic mid-storey and ground covers were observed across the site where dense weeds were not present. If the BAM plot had recently been cleared it is possible some ground cover and midstory species may have been removed during that process. It should be clarified if the plot location had been recently cleared and if it had, then the BDAR should include discussion of this and any impacts that the clearing may have had on the Vegetation Integrity Score (VIS) in that location.

- The BDAR states that no BGHF canopy trees will be removed because of the proposal, however the Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by Arborviews dated 12 April 2022 (AIA) indicates that the proposal will require the removal of several BGHF tree species. EHG also considers that there are additional impacts to areas mapped as BGHF that need to be further assessed by the AIA (see comments on AIA below). The BDAR should consider any findings of the AIA including any revised information arising from EHG's comments.
- The BDAR notes that surveys on site were restricted by presence of dense weeds. Based on this, it is unclear if the exclusion of the vegetation to the east of the site from the Powerful Owl polygon is reasonable. It should be demonstrated that sufficient survey has been undertaken to rule out the presence of additional hollows across the site which could result in an extension of the buffers/polygon.
- There is no map provided of patch size location (as required by Table 24 of the BAM).
- The review of the BDAR was undertaken without access to the proposal in the BAM-C and without access to spatial information. When a case is finalised in the BAM-C, the assessor should also submit the case to 'Greater Sydney – Compliance & Regulation' as the consent authority (for cases in Greater Sydney).
- The BDAR notes that a VMP will be implemented across the APZ and retained CEEC to manage the current weed infestations and to mitigate against potential edge effects arising from the development. Table 22 of the BDAR should be updated to include the preparation of a VMP as a mitigation measure.
- Given the proposed permanent loss of BGHF, impacts to Powerful Owl habitat and lack of offset obligations there is greater reliance on the proposed mitigation measures, including the implementation of the VMP, to achieve adequate biodiversity outcomes. EHG requests that the VMP be prepared and submitted prior to approval of the proposed development. Implementation of the VMP should occur prior to the commencement on any construction works.

EHG has also reviewed the AIA prepared Arborviews dated 12 April 2022 and raises the following comments in relation to impacts to individual trees.

- The AIA identifies 33 trees for removal including trees numbered 7-10, 14-18, 21-25, 27, 28, 31-39, 41-45, 84 and 85. The removal of these trees are all associated with stage 1 works and EHG notes that removal of trees associated with concept works has not been determined.
- The AIA identifies several other trees across the site that will be subject to major encroachment (according to Australian Standard 4970:2009 Protection of Trees on Development Sites) and provides recommendations, including design changes, to allow for their retention. For example, trees 26 and 74-76 are all subject to major encroachment from

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the proposal however have not been identified for removal. This approach fails to adequately assess and present the impacts associated with the proposal. Where trees are not recommended for removal, the stage 1 and the concept proposal plans should be amended to reflect the recommendations of the AIA and avoid impacts to those trees. Alternatively, the AIA should be amended to accurately account for all impacts likely to arise from the proposal. All trees that are subject to major encroachment and unable to be retained with adequate tree protection measures should be identified for removal.

- Appendix 4: Site Plans with TPZs & SRZs of the AIA does not include all structures or works associated with the proposed development. EHG also considers it likely that there are additional trees on site that have not been mapped or included in the assessment, particularly along the edges of areas mapped as BGHF.
- The EIS notes that a temporary decant building is to be located along the northern boundary of the site however stage 1 plans show this structure to be located along the edge of BGHF. It is unclear if there will be impacts to any BGHF trees associated with the construction of this building. Clarification is also sought if the temporary building will require an APZ beyond that identified for the concept proposal.
- The stage one plans show temporary at grade parking structures adjacent to buildings 1 and 16. Civil works associated with the construction of these structures have the potential to impact upon existing BGHF trees. Any trees adjacent to these proposed works should be identified in the AIA and any impacts or tree protection requirements should be discussed.
- The concept proposal includes a fire services road and community pathway/trail which encroach into areas mapped as BGHF. Whilst some impacts associated with the fire services road have been considered, it appears there will be additional impacts in the BGHF mapped areas which have not been addressed.
- An addendum to the AIA should be provided to address the above comments. A tree removal and retention plan based on the concept proposal and stage 1 layout should also be provided. Trees requiring removal and those to be retained and protection should be clearly identified on the plan. The location of any tree protection measures, such as TPZ fencing should also be identified on the plan.

Should you have any queries regarding this matter, please contact Shaun Hunt, Senior Conservation Planning Officer via shaun.hunt@environment.nsw.gov.au or 02 8275 1617.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'S. Harrison'.

20/09/22

Susan Harrison
Senior Team Leader Planning
Greater Sydney Branch
Biodiversity and Conservation