

CITY OF RYDE COUNCIL

SUBMISSION TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC HERITAGE PLACES

The City of Ryde has 174 heritage items and 4 heritage conservation areas listed in its local planning instrument, the Ryde Planning Scheme Ordinance as amended. This submission to the Productivity Commission responds to the scope of the inquiry, and specifically the 6 points listed in the terms of reference, through the use of a current example of heritage conservation in the City of Ryde.

The example is the conservation of the Outlook Estate and Contiguous Areas - known for the purposes of this submission as the proposed Denistone Heritage Conservation Area. Refer to the attached map.

This place is a suburban area largely developed during the Inter-War period. The impetus for the conservation of the area resulted from community action when residents became concerned about unsympathetic development in the area.

The issues listed in the scope of the inquiry are addressed separately.

1. The main pressures on the conservation of historic heritage places

1. The need for Council to identify places of heritage significance.
 - As a result of community concern about the protection of the potential Denistone Heritage Conservation Area, Council's heritage officer researched and examined the area to determine if it had heritage values sufficient to consider it a potential conservation area.
 - It was considered important that the heritage listing of the proposed conservation area could be justified. A heritage study of the area, using guidelines prepared by the NSW Heritage Office, was therefore commissioned from a heritage consultant. However heritage studies are time consuming and costly. The cost of undertaking the studies in the subject area was \$15,000 and took up to 12 months to complete.
2. The importance of heritage places is not always understood or the places are not valued.
 - It was asked that the heritage study be written in plain English so that the 'lay' person could readily understand it.
 - To help the community understand the heritage values of the area a comprehensive programme of community consultation has been and will continue to be undertaken. The program includes councillor information session and a series of community workshops (with a maximum of 10 participants).
 - However some owners have already expressed concern about not being able to demolish their homes and possible limitations on the kind of alterations and additions they can make to their homes.
 - The process of promoting awareness and understanding of the heritage significance of an area is time consuming and resource intensive. It was considered important that each step in the study process, and proposals to introduce controls to protect the heritage importance of an area, requires the support of the community. The process has taken several years and continues.

3. The making of planning controls to protect heritage significant places.
 - One of the aims of the community workshops is to develop with the community a set of planning controls for the area. This will be time consuming and difficult but the aim is to develop controls that have community acceptance.
 - The local planning instrument to amend the Ryde Planning Scheme Ordinance (RPSO) will need to be updated to provide for the listing of the conservation area. This process requires the approval of the State government. (Agreement of the State Government cannot be assumed. The Council proposed in 2004 to amend the RPSO to include a conservation area comprising the Outlook Estate. The State Government advised Council that they would not support an amendment to the RPSO at this time due to current State initiatives – in particular the Metropolitan Strategy. The area remains unprotected because of this.)
 - The time it takes from recognising that an area has potential heritage significance, to the time when it is protected through listing in a local planning instrument is lengthy (up to 5 years) and during this time the assessment of the impacts of any future development within the area is complicated. Council's heritage advisor has generally to rely on persuasion of the applicant and the Council planners, rather than written controls. This creates difficulty and frustrations both for Council officers assessing development applications and for property owners. The Denistone Heritage Conservation area has been in such a state for about 2 years.

4. Ownership of heritage properties
 - Making the area a conservation area may mean that residents will have additional local development consent requirements which increase costs eg heritage impact statements, advice from a heritage architect.
 - The making of the conservation area could restrict the demolition of existing structures and the type of changes possible to a building.
 - Property owners often feel that a heritage listing will affect the values of their property and its saleability. Council staff do not have the data to refute this belief, and rely on anecdotal evidence.

The economic, social and environmental benefits and costs of the conservation of historic heritage places in Australia

ECONOMIC

Benefits

- The listing of the Denistone Heritage Conservation Area will ensure that the unique character of the area is protected. This can make the area more desirable as there is a level of certainty about the future character of the area (ie unsympathetic development such as standard project homes, and townhouses would not be permitted). This in turn can be reflected in higher property prices compared to an area where its visual character is not so carefully protected. Council has not undertaken any research to support this theory in the proposed conservation area (but this would be a worthwhile study if funding were available).

Costs

- Heritage studies - the cost to undertake the studies in the Outlook Estate and Contiguous areas was \$15 000.

- Employment of a heritage officer. Council has one part time officer who does both strategic and development assessment work in relation to this project. In relation to the proposed Denistone Heritage Conservation Area this officer will manage the community consultation programme, write the development control plan and assess development applications received for properties within the proposed conservation area.
- Additional costs can occur to a property owner due to the associated research and assessment requirements of lodging development applications for heritage affected properties.

SOCIAL

Benefits

- Community heritage workshops and community heritage groups provide the opportunity for social contact with neighbours and other residents, thereby building community connections.
- As a result of concern about unsympathetic development, a community heritage group known as the Denistone Heritage and Environment Preservation Group was formed. This also builds community connections and enable residents to strongly influence the future development in the area in which they live.
- The preparation of the development control plan for the proposed Denistone Heritage Conservation area provides the opportunity for residents to contribute to an aspect of their community, which they value.
- The recognition of the values of the proposed conservation area can result in a feeling of community pride.
- The retention of heritage buildings provides a physical demonstration of the community's past and provides for an understanding of the past to be gained through interpretation of its history. This is important for future generations.
- The proposed conservation area has potential educational value. In the past, Council's heritage officer has prepared school curriculum materials that helped students learn about the history of the City of Ryde. The heritage officer arranged visits to various heritage places within the City of Ryde, prepared worksheets for the school students and organised a colouring competition (with prize of a family pass to the local aquatic centre). This was done through liaison and collaboration with a local primary school. This pilot project built connections between the local school and Council, and created the possibility for further connections.

Costs

- Property owners can be distressed when the demolition of their dwelling or part of their dwelling is not supported or when proposed alterations and additions are not supported. This has occurred with several development applications in the subject area due to the uncertain status of the area - on relation to its heritage significance.
- The making of a conservation area can result in community due to the range of community view regarding the future character and protection of an area.

ENVIRONMENTAL

Benefit

- Retention of existing buildings in most of the conservation area will have an environmental benefit because energy and resources will not be expended in new construction materials and work.
- Heritage buildings and streetscapes contribute in a positive way to the aesthetic character of their environments. The proposed conservation area is an attractive suburban area with mature gardens, street trees, architecturally interesting houses, delightful details, good views and changing vistas.

Costs

- Some owners of heritage-affected properties can effectively demolish their building by allowing it to deteriorate through lack of maintenance so that eventually there is no reasonable alternative but to demolish. (The NSW State Government does not have legislation to prevent this happening.) Dilapidated buildings can detract from the aesthetic character of the environment.

The positive and/or negative impacts of regulatory, taxation and institutional arrangements on the conservation of historic heritage places, and other impediments and incentives that affect outcomes.

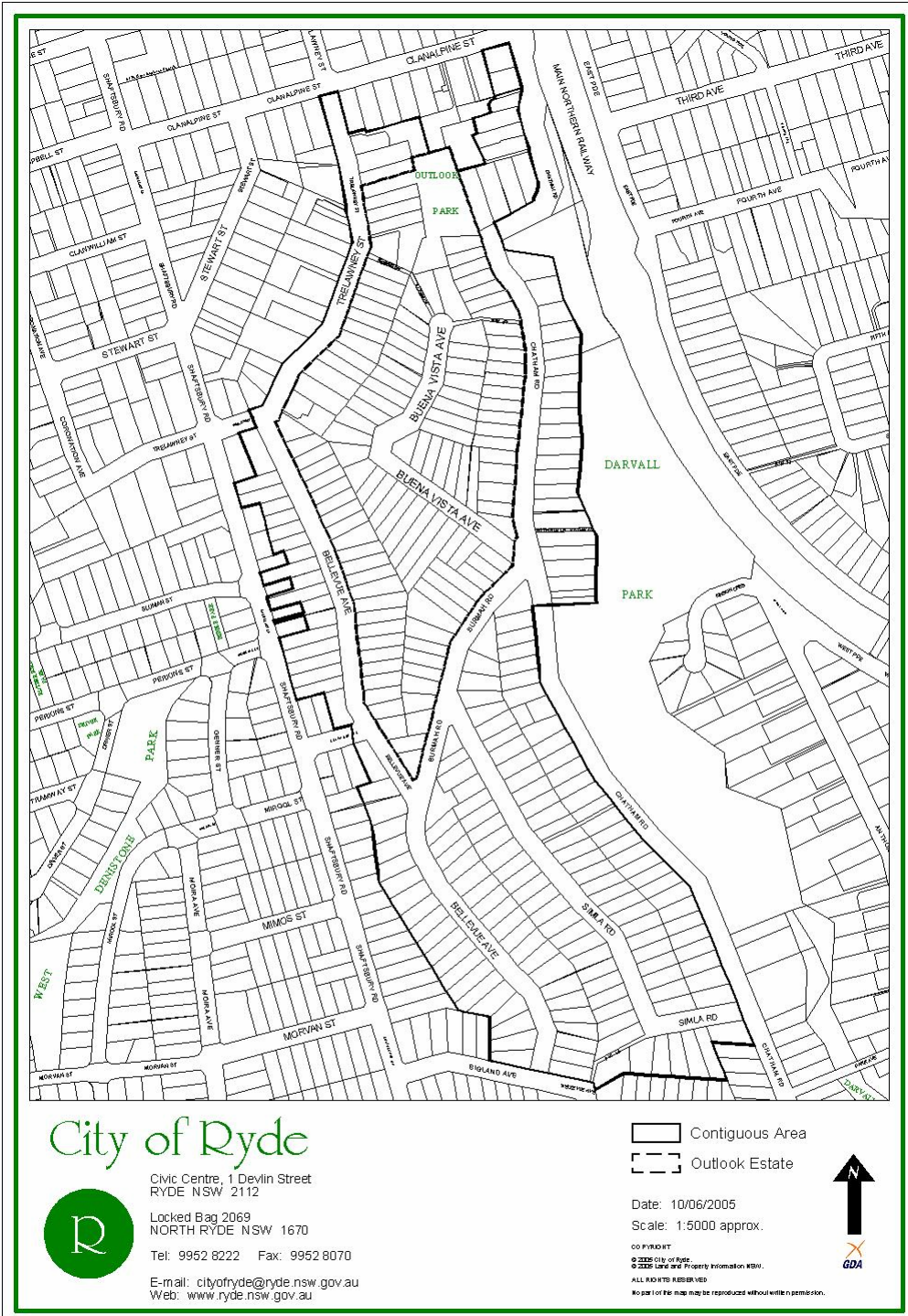
Council does not have a policy where it offers incentives for owners of heritage properties or for owners of properties within conservation areas. Incentives that could be considered include waiving of development application fees, grants for conservation work, advice regarding conservation work, and assistance with applying for State or Federal government grants.

Emerging technological, economic, demographic, environmental and social trends that offer potential new approaches to the conservation of historic heritage places

The growing awareness of environmental issues associated with re-use of existing building elements and the alternative environmental costs of new building materials and work, has the potential to protect heritage places by encouraging the retention of existing buildings, and adapting and re-using places rather than demolishing and rebuilding.

Possible policy and programme approaches for managing the conservation of Australia's historic heritage places and competing objectives and interests.

- Actively assisting local government in undertaking community consultation for heritage matters.
- Actively assisting local government with raising awareness of the heritage values of a place eg through interpretation and education.
- Funding for conservation works to heritage places.
- Funding for studies of building or places of heritage significance
- Funding for studies of National historic themes. Local studies could use these studies to inform studies of local historic themes eg post WWII suburban growth. Studies of Aboriginal places would be particularly useful. This could reduce the cost of heritage studies and make the studies more useful by providing examples for comparison. Local studies would also provide detail to support the wider study.
- Easy access to national studies and images on a searchable database would be useful.
- Department heritage webpage which has links to other website databases, publications, reports etc ie a central reference website.
- Easy access to a Federal Govt body which could positively influence the State Government with regard to heritage matters.



City of Ryde



Civic Centre, 1 Devlin Street
 RYDE NSW 2112
 Locked Bag 2069
 NORTH RYDE NSW 1670
 Tel: 9952 8222 Fax: 9952 8070
 E-mail: cityofryde@ryde.nsw.gov.au
 Web: www.ryde.nsw.gov.au

- Contiguous Area
- Outlook Estate

Date: 10/06/2005
 Scale: 1:5000 approx.

© 2005 City of Ryde.
 © 2005 Land and Property Information NSW.
 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
 No part of this map may be reproduced without written permission.



The proposed Denistone Conservation Area is made up of 2 parts. The inner area which was the original Outlook Estate subdivision, and the outer contiguous areas.