

Company	Elton Consulting	Date	7 October 2020
Attention	Sonia Dalitz	This Page +	10
From	Michael Reeves	Project No.	3875
Project	Moss Vale Road North – Urban Release Area		
Subject	Visual Assessment Peer Review – Final Report		

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1. Project Background

Shoalhaven City Council is currently refining the planning and development controls applying to the yet to be developed Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area. They have requested assistance in the fields of visual impact assessment, community infrastructure and open space planning to inform Council's selection and application of land use zones and other planning and development controls for the release area.

Council identified the release area in 2006 in the Nowra-Bomaderry Structure Plan and settled the current planning controls in 2014 with the publication of Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014. The 110-hectare release area is predominantly zoned R1 General Residential and has an estimated capacity of up to 1,300 dwellings. This outcome is supported by a local retail centre, open space, and a range of environmental zones applying to riparian corridors and areas with biodiversity or scenic value. Detailed development controls and a development contributions framework are outstanding for the release area.

A group of landowners in the release area have proposed an alternative outcome for the release area, including increasing the dwelling yield to 3,000 and reducing the planned visual buffer adjacent to Moss Vale Road. This proposal is supported by several technical documents including a Visual Impact Assessment. Council is considering this proposal and is reviewing the submitted documents and building an evidence base (of relevant technical studies) to inform the preparation of a planning proposal (amending planning controls), draft development controls, and a development contributions framework.

dsb Landscape Architects as subconsultant to Elton Consulting is providing a peer review of the submitted Visual Impact Assessment and advice on

- A suitable visual buffer (size and design) between Moss Vale Road and the future development, and
- Appropriate height controls for sensitive locations to control the bulk and scale of future development.

2. Qualifications

I, Michael David REEVES, Registered Landscape Architect #486 and Director of dsb Landscape Architects, 3/14 Hannah Place Deakin ACT 2600, provide this peer review.

I visited the site and surrounds on Friday 3 April 2020 and fully informed myself of the site details necessary to undertake this peer review.

I have reviewed the proponent documentation and the listed reference documentation to fully inform myself on the proposal and the documentation supporting the proposal.

I am familiar with the site and general locality having been a Culburra Beach landowner, visitor and occasional resident since 1995.



3. References- Proponent Documentation

For the purposes of this peer review, Shoalhaven City Council have provided the following proponent documentation.

- Visual Impact Assessment – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Allen Price & Scarratts 5 April 2019. APR Ref N25830
- Landscape Study – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 4 April 2019. Reissue for Council Submission 04.04.19
- Bushfire Constraints Advice for Masterplan and DCP, Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, 9 March 2018, Eco Logical Australia March 2018. Version 1

4. References- Peer Review Documentation

For the purposes of this peer review, dsb Landscape Architects reference the following documentation

- Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment, NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services, December 2018 Version 2.1
- Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014, particularly 7.8 Scenic Protection

5. Best Practice / Process / Methodology

The NSW Government, Roads And Maritime Services Guideline methodology is suitable for strategic concept design and to guide preliminary investigations. It is a high-level reference for the conduct of visual assessments in the absence of other specific guides.

Landscape character assessment and visual impact assessment address both impact on the character of a place and the views within that place.

The purpose of landscape character and visual impact assessment is to improve design outcomes and avoid the negative impact of a proposal. This is achieved by identifying and reporting on potential impact and proposing mitigation into the design process.

NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services Guideline tasks include,

- Analyse existing landscape character and its sensitivity
- Identify landscape character zones
- Determine the magnitude of impact
- Assess landscape character impact
- Identify the extent of visibility of the proposal
- Identify existing viewpoints and their sensitivity to change
- Determine the magnitude of change for each viewpoint
- Assess visual impact
- Refine the concept designs to avoid and minimise adverse impact
- Develop a mitigation strategy to manage landscape character and visual impact.

These tasks are listed here to demonstrate best practice process and methodology for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment.

6. Statutory Compliance

Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014, 7.8 Scenic Protection

(3) In deciding whether to grant development consent for development on land to which this clause applies, the consent authority must-

- (a) consider the visual impact of the development when viewed from a public place and be satisfied that the development will involve the taking of measures that will minimise any detrimental visual impact, and
- (b) consider the number, type and location of existing trees and shrubs that are to be retained and the extent of landscaping to be carried out on the site, and
- (c) consider the siting of the proposed buildings

The proponents visual impact assessment will be reviewed for suitability of provided information against SLEP 2014 Clause 7.8 Scenic Protection 3 (a), (b) and (c) in this peer review.

7. Proponent Visual Impact Assessment / Process / Methodology

The proponents' Visual Impact Assessment – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Allen Price & Scarratts 5 April 2019. APR Ref N25830 report contents include,

- Executive Summary
- Introduction and Background
- Brief
- The Site
- Assessment of Visual Character
- Assessment of Key View Lines
- Consultation with Shoalhaven City Council
- Background Studies / Planning History
- Draft Master Plan Layout in Relation to View Lines
- Relationship with Moss Vale South
- Development Principles / Recommendations
- Conclusions

8. Proponent Visual Impact Assessment / Brief

The proponents' Visual Impact Assessment reports it's brief as provision of sufficient information to satisfy the requirements of,

- SLEP 2014 7.8 Scenic Protection
- SLEP 2014 7.6 Riparian Land and Watercourses and
- SLEP 2014 7.5 Terrestrial Biodiversity

The report identifies a methodology for the conduct of the visual impact assessment. Extract provided below.

In order to address the above, a visual impact assessment is to be prepared which:

- *Reviews available documentation.*
- *Identifies and assesses key view lines/corridors into and out of the site from relevant public vantage points such as along and from Moss Vale Road, and of the Escarpment and Cambewarra Mountain (as well as any other vantage points identified).*
- *Considers the impact of the development on the surrounding rural catchment.*
- *Considers the number, type and location of existing trees and shrubs that are to be retained and the extent of landscaping to be carried out on the site, following consultation with the Flora and Fauna Consultant, Landscape Consultant, Urban Designer and Bushfire Consultant.*
- *Provides a range of design measures/controls to enhance views from within the URA boundary and mitigate the visual impact of proposed development / buildings on key view points and key view corridors in consultation with the urban design consultant, landscape consultant and other relevant consultants. This shall be prepared in a format that can be placed into the DCP.*

It is considered that this methodology, if applied diligently and reported effectively, is capable of providing sufficient information to satisfy the requirements of the SLEP 2014 Clauses 7.5, 7.6 and 7.8.

9. Proponent Visual Impact Assessment / Report Content

Report Content ***The Site*** and ***Assessment of Visual Character*** on pages 13, 14 and 15 reviews available documentation adequately. The Assessment of Landscape Character is a list of physical characteristics of the subject site rather than an assessment of character. This is a minor issue.

Report Content ***Assessment of Key View Lines*** on pages 16 to 26 identifies the key view lines apparent when the report was prepared. This reporting of view lines is considered adequate. Since April 2019 a new view line has arisen on the new Princes Highway / Meroo Road overpass. Assessment of this view line is required to complete the assessment information. This is a significant issue.

Report Content ***Consultation with Shoalhaven City Council and Background Studies / Planning History*** adequately considers the impact of the development on the surrounding rural catchment. At page 35 the proponent report clearly identifies a strategy for the integration of the proposed development into the rural landscape. Extract below.

- *Rather than trying to reinforce existing residential subdivision patterns on the landscape through tree planting, natural patterns such as water courses should be reinforced through planting. Thereby, the natural patterns are enhanced providing some continuity in the landscape and linkages with major regional open space and the escarpment to the north west, and a transition from existing residential subdivision patterns filtering to the escarpment. Water courses traversing the site provide natural pathways through the site which then also provide some continuity with rural zoned land to the east. Therefore, dwelling density is increased but balanced with additional tree planting in riparian corridors and public streets as per the TBLA landscape masterplan.*
- *Grid pattern of subdivision is acceptable but should be located in discreet sections around riparian areas and main roads.*

- *Perimeter roads around riparian areas to reinforce connections to natural patterns in the topography.*
- *The areas of R1 in the north-western section that are in the “upper rural hills” should potentially have larger lot sizes on lots above contours of 60 – 70m.*
- *Where density is increased development to be screened where possible from major viewpoints (especially along the Moss Vale Road frontage within the E3 corridor).*
- *Dwellings should be designed to integrate with the landscape where possible using appropriate design and materials.*

This strategy is also a suitable mitigation strategy for the visual impact of the proposed development.

The first dot point above references the TBLA landscape masterplan. This is a shorthand reference to Landscape Study – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 4 April 2019. Reissue for Council Submission 04.04.19.

The Landscape Study – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 4 April 2019. Reissue for Council Submission 04.04.19, is referenced within this report content as adequate documentation for the Brief component ***Considers the number, type and location of existing trees and shrubs that are to be retained and the extent of landscaping to be carried out on the site....***

This information is adequate regarding the extent of retained and new landscaping within the proposed development.

I do not consider that the Landscape Study has been adequately coordinated with the bushfire consultant for the project.

The Landscape Study – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 4 April 2019. Reissue for Council Submission 04.04.19, is referenced within this report content as adequate documentation for satisfaction of the requirements of SLEP 2014 7.8 Scenic Protection. Extract below from page 41 of the report.

This document together with the Landscape Study prepared by Taylor Brammer has been prepared in order to address the provisions of Clause 7.8 above.

I do not believe that the visual assessment report and the landscape study together fully satisfy the requirements of SLEP 2014 7.8 Scenic Protection as there are deficiencies which require rectification.

Report Content ***Draft Master Plan Layout in Relation to View Lines*** emphasises the riparian corridors and the past rural landscape connections and view corridors relative to the rural character. No mitigation is proposed regarding views from Mt Cambewarra. Reliance is placed on the urban design and landscape strategy to mitigate visual impacts. The proposed urban design is put forward as a suitable basis for further mitigation of visual impacts.

Mitigation of views from Mt Cambewarra is possible. This would be undertaken by a review of road alignments and view lines from the lookout and modifying any road alignments which ‘line up’, to be slightly ‘off line’, to enable the street tree planting to mitigate the visual impact.

The Report Content provides only minimal contribution to satisfaction of the Brief component below.

- **Provides a range of design measures/controls to enhance views from within the URA boundary and mitigate the visual impact of proposed development / buildings on key view points and key view corridors in consultation with the urban design consultant, landscape consultant and other relevant consultants. This shall be prepared in a format that can be placed into the DCP.**

The Report Content does not provide an adequate assessment of the visual impact.

Report Content ***Relationship with Moss Vale South*** reviews the landscape corridor adjacent to Moss Vale Road between Moss Vale Road North and Moss Vale Road South Urban Release Areas. A proposal for a reduced width landscape buffer zone is presented, composed in section of a 25m vegetated buffer of trees and shrubs and a 3m high mound, 21m road and parking and 4m street tree planting.

This proposal carries significant risk as it does not factor any future upgrade works and widening of Moss Vale Road by NSW Government, Roads And Maritime Services.

This proposal also is not coordinated with the Bushfire advice provided for the project. The proposal would be assessed as a 5-10-degree downslope adjoining forest requiring a 35m to 37m Asset Protection Zone. The current proposal provides for 25m asset protection zone between the proposed buffer and adjacent housing.

The concept of a vegetated buffer and mound to mitigate views from Moss Vale Road corridor into Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area is valid. The proposal presented has not been fully coordinated and is deficient.

Report Content ***Development Principles / Recommendations*** provides a 14-point list of design principles which should be applied to the proposal for the Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area. They are not repeated here but can be found on pages 50 to 53 in the report.

An assumed but unstated recommendation / design principle is the adoption of the Taylor Brammer Landscape Architecture Landscape Study as mitigation of the visual impact. This is a significant deficiency of the report.

Comments on the 14-point list are provided here.

1. This is a valid mitigation strategy for visual impact of the proposal
2. This is a valid mitigation measure within the mitigation strategy.
3. CHALLENGE. Grid pattern of the urban street layout requires review for alignment of streets and views from Mt Cambewarra and modification where they align to allow mitigation of the visual impact by the proposed street tree planting.
4. This is a valid minor component of the mitigation strategy.
5. This is a valid mitigation strategy for integration with rural character.
6. The landscape proposal for a screen to Moss Vale Road is deficient.
7. This is a valid component of the mitigation strategy.
8. CHALLENGE. This is a motherhood statement that should be backed up with specific detail on materials, colour and reflectivity. The street tree species proposed in the Taylor Brammer Landscape Architecture Landscape Study at mature height will be taller than allowable development height, providing mitigation of building development visual impact.
9. This is a valid mitigation measure.
10. The landscape proposal for a screen to Moss Vale Road is deficient.
11. This is a valid mitigation measure of the mitigation strategy.
12. This is a valid mitigation measure of the mitigation strategy.
13. CHALLENGE. Planning proposal outside of the scope of this peer review.
14. The landscape proposal for a screen to Moss Vale Road is deficient.

10. Peer Review Conclusions

The reference documentation provided for this peer review has been thoroughly reviewed, particularly the proponent supplied reports and the NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services Guideline for Landscape Character and Visual Impact Assessment and the Shoalhaven Local Environmental Plan 2014.

As a general comment the Visual Assessment, The Landscape Study and the Bushfire Advice are poorly coordinated. The visual assessment report relies heavily on the landscape study yet does not call for the implementation of the landscape study as a recommendation to mitigate the visual impact. The proposal in the Landscape Study for a buffer to Moss Vale Road is deficient as it does not make sufficient space available for the required asset protection zone adjacent to the proposed 'forest' landscape elements. The continuous street tree canopy of the project perimeter roads as outlined in the landscape study is in conflict with the bushfire advice that warns against a continuous canopy.

These are not insurmountable design issues, rather further design development that can be resolved.

The visual assessment report included deficiencies particularly,

1. The new view location at Princes Highway /Meroo Road overpass, and
2. Review of view alignment and roads from Mt Cambewarra and modification where necessary, and
3. The buffer screen to Moss Vale Road is not coordinated with Bushfire asset protection zone requirements, and
4. The Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects Landscape Study is not formally adopted as both mitigation strategy and mitigation measures, and
5. The perimeter roads landscape street tree design is not coordinated with Bushfire asset protection zone requirements, and
6. The visual assessment report does not coherently and concisely provide a statement of visual impact, and
7. The visual assessment report does not provide a coherent and complete list of mitigation measures within a mitigation strategy.

The purpose of landscape character and visual impact assessment is to improve design outcomes and avoid the negative impact of a proposal. This is achieved by identifying and reporting on potential impact and proposing mitigation into the design process.

The resolution of the seven identified deficiencies above in a revision of Visual Impact Assessment – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, would result in a satisfactory response to SLEP 2014 Clause 7.8 Scenic Protection 3 (a), (b) and (c).

11. Advice on A Suitable Visual Buffer

Advice is required on a suitable visual buffer on the landscape corridor adjacent to Moss Vale Road between MVRN and MVRN Urban Release Areas. A proposal for a reduced width landscape buffer zone is proposed, composed in section of a 25m vegetated buffer of trees and shrubs and a 3m high mound, 21m road and parking and 4m street tree planting.

This proposal carries significant risk as it does not factor any future upgrade works and widening of Moss Vale Road by NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services.

This proposal also is not coordinated with the Bushfire advice provided for the project. The proposal would be assessed as a 5-10-degree downslope adjoining forest requiring a 35m to 37m Asset Protection Zone. The current proposal provides for 25m asset protection zone between the proposed buffer and adjacent housing.

The concept of a vegetated buffer and mound to mitigate views from Moss Vale Road corridor into Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area is valid. The proposal presented has not been fully coordinated and is deficient.

An appropriate buffer would incorporate an allowance for road widening coordinated with NSW Government, Roads and Maritime Services, plus a 25m vegetated buffer of trees and shrubs and a 3m high mound, plus an Asset Protection Zone compliant with current bushfire planning requirements for a 5-10-degree downslope adjoining forest. A land use / landscape element such as an irrigated playing field would satisfy the Asset Protection Zone requirements.

12. Advice on Appropriate Height Controls

The allowable building heights within the Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area residential areas is 10m.

Street tree species mature heights as listed in Landscape Study – Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area, Taylor Brammer Landscape Architects 4 April 2019. Reissue for Council Submission 04.04.19, pages 18-25 indicate mature heights of greater than 10m.

The proposed landscape street tree planting has the potential at maturity to fully screen the buildings of the Moss Vale Road North Urban Release Area.

If we can be of any further assistance to you in regard to the project please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,



Michael Reeves

Director dsb Landscape Architects

Registered Landscape Architect AILA #486

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE

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