Reduction in residential development for Sandy Beach

A $12 million residential subdivision at Sandy Beach, on the NSW north coast, has been given partial concept approval after the NSW Government slashed the number of proposed lots by more than a quarter.

Planning Minister Tony Kelly granted the approval for a scaled-back version of the concept plan for Sandy Beach North that caters for a development of a maximum 200 lots, rather than the 280-lot subdivision which the proponent had sought.

The changes represent at least an 80-lot reduction across the site, or almost 30 per cent fewer lots.

Additionally, before any project approval is granted for the 60 lots proposed for Stage 5, the proponent will need to undertake further assessment of vegetation communities along the western boundary of that precinct, to determine appropriate environmental offsets.

The concept plan approval does not permit any construction or clearing of vegetation, which will need to be addressed in future development applications and must be generally consistent with the concept plan approval.

The 49.56 hectare site is located 3km south of Woolgoolga, near Coffs Harbour. It is bounded by Coffs Harbour Regional Park to the east, Sandy Beach village to the south, the Pacific Highway to the west and Hearnes Lake and Double Crossing Creek to the north.

The majority of the site has been zoned for residential development under Coffs Harbour local environmental plans (LEP) since 1988, while the balance is zoned for environmental protection.

Department of Planning Deputy Director-General Richard Pearson said the proposal had been subjected to a rigorous assessment.

“We have taken into account a range of specialist reports that examined the significance of existing vegetation on the site and the impact of climate change and sea level rise on flooding,” Mr Pearson said.

“The concept plan approval largely reflects the areas of the site identified in an independent report prepared in 2006 by Sainty and Associates as being capable of accommodating future development.

“The Department also commissioned independent ecological and hydrological consultants, to assist in its consideration of the proposal.
“Coffs Harbour City Council’s existing and draft planning controls for the site were considered during the assessment process, and stages 1 and 3 of the concept approval are broadly consistent with the area already identified in Council’s DCP as being suitable for development.”

Mr Pearson said the concept plan approval had reduced the footprint of the subdivision to approximately 30 per cent of the site.

“Land in three precincts that are unsuitable for development will now be added to the conservation area, so it is protected from development,” Mr Pearson said.

“That includes the area proposed for development on the eastern side of Hearnes Lake, part of Stage 1 east of the Ti-Tree Road extension, and 45 lots in the north-western corner.”

A direct connection to the Pacific Highway in the north-western corner of the site was also rejected by the Department.

Mr Pearson said 28 conditions and a number of commitments by the proponent formed part of the approval.

To ensure the development is not affected by flooding and climate-change induced sea level rises, the level of the perimeter road will be required to be built up to avoid inundation from the 3.6m predicted flood level for 2100. A further condition requires the floor level of habitable rooms in future homes to be built 0.5 metres higher than the perimeter road level.

Other conditions imposed as part of the approval require the proponent to:

- Agree to dedicate six hectares of land to the Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA), prior to any construction, to add to the Coffs Coast Regional Park;
- Prepare a conservation area management plan;
- Install water quality control devices to minimise impacts on conservation areas;
- Demonstrate that road traffic noise modelling and assessment has been carried out prior to construction;
- Conduct a detailed groundwater assessment prior to development;
- Investigate the location, nature, scale and significance of Aboriginal artefacts on the site, in consultation with the local Aboriginal community, before any subdivision applications are determined.

The site was zoned for residential development by Coffs Harbour Council and the Department of Planning in 1988.

Mr Pearson said it had been important to achieve a reasonable development outcome for the site which adequately considered the site’s environmental values and excluded development from the most sensitive areas of the site.

“The Mid North Coast regional strategy highlights a need for 19,200 new homes in the Coffs Harbour area by 2031,” he said.

“This project is consistent with the strategy and will deliver some of those new homes, but the need for housing must be balanced against the environmental impact.”

NOTE: The NSW Government has been assessing and determining development proposals for major new coastal subdivisions since 2002. This proposal was assessed under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which came into operation in August 2005.

Department of Planning media contact: Laurel-Lee Roderick (02) 9228 6128