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Development standards to protect Catherine Hill Bay heritage and environment

The important heritage values and environmental attributes of Catherine Hill Bay in the Lower Hunter will be protected under new development standards approved for the proposed residential area south of the existing village.

The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure has approved a development control plan (DCP) for the Coastal Hamlets site which establishes a vision, objectives and development standards to guide future residential development.

A residential subdivision for up to 550 lots at Catherine Hill Bay, proposed by Coastal Hamlets Pty Ltd, was approved by the independent Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) on 13 May 2011. However the PAC recommended that the draft DCP which accompanied the application be amended.

A revised DCP was publicly exhibited earlier this year, attracting some 70 submissions.

The department's Director-General Sam Haddad said the public submissions and feedback from Lake Macquarie Council had been carefully considered in finalising the DCP.

"The submissions highlighted a strong desire from the community to protect the heritage and environmental qualities of the site and ensure that future development considers the constraints of the site," Mr Haddad said.

"In response to this feedback, the department has made a number of amendments to the DCP which will promote quality urban design and recognise the important attributes of this area."

The changes include:

- Revising the development objectives to encourage development which is sympathetic to, rather than mimics, the heritage values of the existing village;
- Additional standards to ensure existing site constraints, such as mine subsidence and slope, are appropriately addressed in future development applications;
- Additional standards to ensure the impacts on heritage values are appropriately addressed in future development applications; and
- Including standards to guide things such as landscaping, building materials and colours to achieve development which is sympathetic to the environmental and heritage values of the site.

In addition to the DCP, the department has also recommended that the Coastal Hamlets site and a second nearby site at Middle Camp be excluded from the complying development provisions in the State Environment Planning Policy (Exempt and Complying Development Codes).

If adopted, the change will give greater power to the local council, requiring proposed dwellings for the Catherine Hill Bay area to be subject to a full development application and

assessment by Council against the site-specific DCP. Homes would not be eligible for a fast-tracked approval as complying development under the NSW Housing Code.

“The public exhibition highlighted the community’s strong support for the exclusion, to ensure each application will be individually assessed by council and carefully considered against the DCP,” Mr Haddad said.

The SEPP amendment will now be referred to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Brad Hazzard for consideration.

The DCP is available on the department’s website at www.planning.nsw.gov.au

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