

STATEMENT OF SOCIO ECONOMIC CONTEXT

PROPOSED REZONING GLACKEN STREET, HARRINGTON

INTRODUCTION

ADW Johnson has been retained by Roche Group Pty Limited to consider the socio economic context and impacts arising from the proposal to rezone land off Glacken Street, Harrington to a mix of 2(a) Residential, 6(a) and 6 (b) Open Space and 7(a) Environmental Protection Habitat.

This statement will consider the elements of the Net Community Benefit Test (NCBT) given Council's indication that any planning proposal that has a benefit or impact on the wider community should consider the Net Community Benefit principles.

BACKGROUND

It is understood the original application to rezone the subject land was lodged in 1997. Since that time a wide range of specialist investigations have been undertaken. As a consequence a mix of land uses have been proposed for the site with approximately 3.27 hectares deemed suitable to be rezoned for residential purposes. The remaining portions of the land will be retained for conservation or open space.

The proposed rezoning and residential area adjoins an existing subdivision and will form a logical extension of the Harrington urban area. Through the time since the lodgement of the original rezoning application the land has been identified for potential residential land use in the Harrington Settlement Strategy (1998); the Greater Taree Draft Conservation and Development Strategy (2005); and the Mid North Coast Regional Strategy prepared by the Department of Planning and released in March 2009. Based on the consistency of these strategies the expectation that the land in this area will be rezoned for residential development is likely to be high.

SOCIO ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS

The investigations in relation to the circumstances concerned with this rezoning have been exhaustive. The basis of the current planning proposal already accounts for land uses for non residential zones including conservation (7(a)) and open space (6(a) and (b)). This accords with the recommendations of various studies concerned with the environmental and engineering constraints on and around the subject land. Furthermore it is understood the land intended to be zoned 6(a) will be dedicated to Council under a Voluntary Planning Agreement and will become public land. The 6(b) open space zoned land will remain in private ownership, however provide a fire trail as part of any future subdivision proposal improving fire security to surrounding properties.

The proposal also includes the dredging works that will create opportunities for recreational boating and fishing by facilitating access to the Manning River. The dredging will provide improved navigation depths to a recognised and highly regarded back channel and the proposal has gained significant support from the community as a consequence. It is also understood that the material to be dredged will be utilised to supplement a beach nourishment program at Harrington which provides a wider community benefit including the ongoing promotion of this area for its beach beauty and tourism potential.

These outcomes already assign a qualitative benefit in terms of an assessment under the NCBT guidelines. The actual proposal pre dates the concept of the NCBT and has already been tested in terms of community support and expectation by virtue of the proposal; being in the 'public realm' for such a long time. Anecdotally, there is favourable support for the proposal.

Notwithstanding this, there is an opportunity to consider other elements under the evaluation criteria on the NCBT guidelines and these matters can be noted as follows:

Will the LEP be compatible with agreed state and regional strategic direction for development in the area?

Yes. The proposal is consistent with a number of historical development and land release strategies produced for the Greater Taree LGA and more importantly the recently released Mid North Coast Regional Strategy prepared by the Department of Planning.

Is the LEP likely to create a precedent or change the expectations of the land owner or other land owners?

The proposal has been in the public realm since 1997. Anecdotally there is a considerable amount of knowledge concerning the proposed rezoning and already the material changes concerned with the 6(a) and 6(b) and 7(a) land have been publicised. The benefits of additional land being available for public use as well as the outcomes achieved as a consequence of the proposed dredging works has been well supported and accepted by the community.

Adjacent land owners will be well aware of the circumstances concerned with the land given the consistent treatment under the series of local and regional strategies.

Have the cumulative affects of other spot rezoning proposals in the locality been considered? What was the outcome of these considerations?

The area of land proposed for rezoning is likely to yield around 30 lots. The area around Harrington is tightly held and there are physical limits on the ability for the further consideration of rezoning for residential land use. The cumulative effects of this and other rezoning are likely to continue to add support and gravity to the local community by allowing Harrington to develop a critical mass which in turn is supportive of non residential land uses such as shops and commercial uses.

The considerations of cumulative impact in terms of the environment have been well documented within the various environmental reports prepared in relation to the proposed rezoning.

Will the LEP facilitate a permanent employment generating activity or result in a loss of employment lands?

No, there are no impacts in terms of employment land as a consequence of the rezoning.

Will the LEP impact upon the supply of residential land and therefore housing supply and affordability?

Yes, the proposed rezoning will increase the supply of residential land in the local area. Whilst this will represent only a small increment, it is a relatively large subdivision in the context of the Harrington local area as opposed to the Greater Taree Local Government Area. The land is not being produced or intended to be marketed to a particular section of the market. However, by virtue of an increase in supply in this tightly held area it is likely that the land will assist in moderating prices within Harrington for the short to medium term.

At this point in time the land will be developed and sold for either use in land only or house and land packages. This will facilitate a broadening of choice available in the local market for the potential owner occupiers as well as those investors wishing to develop to expand the availability of tourism accommodation within this popular area.

Is the existing public infrastructure capable of servicing the proposed site?

The investigations concerned with the rezoning have established that there is sufficient servicing capacity to accommodate the proposed development. The internal and local road upgrading and provision will be provided as a consequence of the proposed development.

Are there significant government investments in infrastructural services in the area whose patronage will be affected by the proposal? If so what is the expected impact?

The level of government investment in infrastructure within the immediate area has not been established. However, the Greater Taree Council and NSW State Government have a stake holding in tourism investment in this local area. This proposed rezoning will facilitate the further expansion of residential land use which has the capacity to accommodate not only local urban expansion but also the expansion of tourism by potentially providing additional accommodation.

Furthermore the government has invested heavily in the upgrading and renewal of road infrastructure along the north coast. This investment is paying dividends by improving the access and safety for those travelling to areas like Taree and Harrington. The opening up of these areas by facilitating better transport links will create increased demand and the proposal will have the capacity to service this demand.

Taree is also one of the few main centres in the Mid North Coast region that also has access to a local airport. This higher order pulse can also facilitate further tourism demand and therefore areas around Taree could benefit in the longer term. The opportunity for these areas to expand and respond to any change is therefore important to plan so that respective infrastructure investment achieves an appropriate dividend.

Will the proposal impact on land that the government has identified a need to protect? Is the land constrained by environmental factors such as flooding?

The environmental assessment reports completed in relation to the proposed rezoning over the last 12 years have identified the respective environmental and flood issues. As a consequence sections of the land have been reserved for non development or non residential use and classified 6(a), 6(b) or 7(a) respectively. This response addresses the requirements of the respective reports and therefore the concept of protecting lands that are vulnerable for environmental reasons.

Will the LEP be capable/complementary with surrounding land uses? What is the impact on the amenity in the location and wider community? Will the public domain improve?

The LEP will be compatible with surrounding land uses. The impacts on adjoining areas have been minimised to the extent that the land use provision by virtue of the residential zoning is the same as those adjacent areas.

Furthermore land is being intended to be dedicated for conservation and open space uses which have the potential to increase the public domain. The concept of dredging the back channels of the Manning River also extend and expand the use and utility of the public domain in a way considerate of local users and context. This is delivered not by providing hard stand areas, but rather facilitating the use of local waterways and therefore augmenting the attraction of recreational fishing and boating enhancing the appeal of the area and its tourist potential.

What are the public interest reasons for preparing the draft plan? What are the implications of not proceeding at this time?

The plan realises a long stated objective under respective population growth strategies that the land is suitable for consideration to be rezoned residential. As a consequence the land has been subject to studies that have identified the potential as well as a range of constraints. These are considered to have been addressed in the current rezoning or land plan.

The considerations and implications for not proceeding have broader impacts in relation to the integrity of the respective land use strategies. There is considerable community expectation that this land will be rezoned and subsequently developed and this is being demonstrated by the high acceptance of the open space components and other VPA initiatives. However, delay on rezoning and the subsequent inability to produce further residential land within the area will diminish the urban sustainability within the Harrington area.

Over the last 15 years there have been modest improvements to the local retail provision which in part relies on continued growth in the catchment to support ongoing investment in these facilities. Where there is failure to deliver on the expectations created by the strategic regional plans, there is a diminution of the dividend on public and private infrastructure investment and a negative outcome in terms of consideration for future investment in the area.

The original genre of the NCBT related to the Department of Planning draft Centres Policy. At the heart of this policy was a desire to develop sustainable centres to ensure that the community and growth strategies interest aligned. The draft policy sought to ensure that local centres remain viable whilst discouraged outer centre or edge of town development. The NCBT applied predominantly to commercial and retail centres.

Harrington plays a very small part in this matrix however the concept is useful. This rezoning is not about retail land. However, the residential component has the capacity to generate household growth which in turn will reinforce the viability of the small community provision in Harrington. The contribution from the additional households will be modest yet this increment is important in terms of the context of the Harrington community.

SUMMARY

The proposal has a long history and has been subjected to exhaustive investigation and analysis since the time the original application was lodged. It is consistent with successive local and regional growth strategies. It provides for conservation and open space outcomes that will augment the network and provisions already established in the local area.

An assessment under the Net Community Benefit Test criteria indicate that the potential qualitative benefits arising from this proposal far outweigh any negative outcomes. It is likely to be well accepted in the community and the 'offsets' already contemplated have received a high degree of support and thus expectation of delivery within the local area.

On this basis it is considered the application should be supported and should proceed.
