

3.4 Wyong Education & Business Precinct Masterplan and Amendment to Wyong Local Environmental Plan 2013

TRIM REFERENCE: CPA/234889 - D11252795
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SUMMARY

This report seeks endorsement for the public exhibition of the Wyong Education and Business Precinct Masterplan and the formal commencement of the proposed WLEP 2013 – Amendment under Section 55 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 (EP&A Act).

RECOMMENDATION

- 1 That Council initiate the Local Environmental Plan “Gateway” process by the preparation of a Planning Proposal, pursuant to Section 55 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.**
- 2 That Council forward the Planning Proposal to the Department of Planning and Environment requesting a “Gateway” determination, pursuant to Section 56(1) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.**
- 3 That Council refer the planning proposal to appropriate public authorities for comment, subject to the determination of the Gateway Process, pursuant to Section 56(2) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.**
- 4 That Council advise the Department of Planning and Environment that it does intend to apply for plan making delegations for the planning proposal, pursuant to Section 23 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.**
- 5 That Council place the draft Wyong Education and Business Precinct Masterplan on public exhibition for a period of 28 days once a “gateway determination” has been received.**
- 6 That Council direct the General Manager to submit a further report to Council on the outcomes of the above process.**
- 7 That Council authorise the General Manager to make representations to, and seek interest from, a wide variety of education providers to be part of Councils Education and Business Precinct.**

BACKGROUND

The project comprises the development of an integrated education and business precinct located in the north of Wyong Shire. The project strategy focuses on the creation of a regionally significant integrated development which brings together major education providers, industry and business groups in one location. The initial driver for investment will focus on securing a university to anchor the development in order to attract complementary service providers and businesses.

On 22 December 2013 the Wyong Local Environmental Plan for the Shire was endorsed by the NSW Government. The Wyong Education and Business Precinct area has been zoned B7-Business Park, E2-Environmental Conservation and also SP2-Educational Establishment. This will provide an excellent platform for creating an education and business focused precinct. This further compliments the work that was undertaken as part of Precinct 7A Structure Plan and the LEP which identified this component for B7 Business Park.

Council has developed a masterplan to respond to the expected demands for additional university places within the Central Coast in a major greenfield site, which is within close proximity to major existing and proposed transport nodes. The site formally known as "Federation Park" is 455ha with an indicative development footprint of 65ha.

THE PROPOSAL

The Site Context

The site is located approximately 4km north of Wyong Town Centre and 3.5km from the M1 Motorway via Sparks Road. The site itself is expansive covering a total area of 455ha of which 65ha has been identified as the future development footprint. The site is strategically placed near Warnervale Train Station, the future residential area of Precinct 7A (which is zoned) and the new Warnervale Town Centre. The site is well serviced by Stage 1 of the Link Road and will take full advantage of the future completion of the Link Road component which would act as a catalyst infrastructure project for the Warnervale area. The developable footprint is largely confined to a dominate north-south ridge and a secondary east – west ridgeline at the northern extent of the Precinct. The Business Precinct is largely dependent upon Link Road for exposure and access



Map One: Locality Map – Wyong Education & Business Precinct (Red)

The Masterplan Project includes the following key components:

- a. University campus for ~ 7,000 students. The focus will be on domestic and international students.
- b. Residential college for ~ 1,500 student's accommodation.
- c. SMARTS Hub - Knowledge and community centre.
- d. Language centre to support International Students.
- e. Ancillary support services such as retail.
- f. Sporting and Recreational Facilities.
- g. Staff of ~ 1,500 plus support services.
- h. Co alignment with training providers and business/industry groups.
- i. Business/Industrial Park which integrates with future university campus. This work will also explore links between existing major employment generating providers in the region including research and development.
- j. Associated infrastructure requirements ancillary to education/business park providers.
- k. Hotel

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In summary the project would deliver:

1. The opportunity for major investment in Wyong.
2. The achievement of various goals in Wyong Community Strategic Plan in particular delivering a balanced sustainable development whilst providing access to higher education opportunities.
3. Complementing strategic planning initiatives by Council and the NSW Government in the region including Precinct 7A and the Warnervale Town Centre.
4. Establishment of a significant employment generator with a diverse range of job opportunities for the construction and operation of an educational precinct.
5. Create a sustainable and market-leading model for education provision in the longer term.
6. Enable greater employment opportunities for our community.

Background Studies

Council engaged the services of SGS Economics and Planning to undertake an Economic and Viability report which outlines the opportunities and challenges associated with the delivery of this important project.

The project comprised three distinct phases:

1. Background report and demand analysis
2. Quantification of economic benefits and constraints
3. Economic feasibility and viability of development of an education and business precinct.

The overarching findings of the Viability Study are:

Education Demand – Based upon benchmarking exercises conducted in relation to future population forecasts, tertiary intakes per capita and catchment areas between Northern Sydney and the Hunter Valley, there is an estimated shortfall of 7,600 University places within the Central Coast and Hunter Valley. Based on existing data on population increase and tertiary uptake it is expected that this will increase to 8,600 by 2031. This situation is causing students to travel outside the region for study (or not to study) and then they often do not return to the Shire. The overall estimated demand floor space required to accommodate the forecast demand for education/university uses is 101,546m².

Economic Impact – Construction Phase (assuming a construction project of \$246 million over 16 years from commencement):

Operational Phase	
Total Value Added	\$229.80 million
Annual Average	\$9.19 million
Annual Direct Jobs	339
Annual Indirect Jobs	125
Estimated Total Annual Jobs	464

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Project Value

University:	\$240m (339 Operational Jobs)
Student Accommodation:	\$200m (1500 beds)
Knowledge & Community Centre:	\$10m
Business Park Assets:	\$200m (1,000 jobs)

Total \$650m

Development Challenges

Key challenges are identified which require consideration and attention including:

- Cost of infrastructure
- Staging challenges between the education and business park precincts
- Strong competition in the education market
- Changing business models in the education industry
- Attracting a higher education partner (critical success factor).
- Link Road – Construction needed to create exposure/access for the Business Park.

The first step is to ensure that a masterplan is completed which has analysed appropriately the site with the expected student targets and to refine any planning controls which align with the objectives of the masterplan. As such running concurrently with the masterplan project is the need to present a planning proposal which formally seeks to amend Wyong LEP 2013 to enable height and floor space to create the iconic structures and density for a successful education provider business model as well as permit certain uses compatible with a university.

Draft Wyong Education and Business Precinct Masterplan – Key Components and Principles Applied.

The masterplan comprises of the following core elements:

- Introduction
- Context – Macro, regional and local
- The Site – desktop analysis of biophysical conditions
- Vision – goals and objectives
- Benchmarks – similar project development scenarios
- Masterplan – concepts, planning considerations, staging, illustrations, university and business park calculations
- Next Steps – Investigation of Stage 1 (community facility including library and educational space)

The key principles in the development of the masterplan are:

- Create a SMARTS Hub as the focal point and gateway to the Precinct with a presence along Link Road.
- Most efficient walkable link to existing Warnervale railway station.
- Create two linear strands of development extending off the SMARTS Hub
- Create as best a walkable grid circulation patterns (200m x 200m)

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- Locate activity nodes and open space at intervals along each of the spines
- Create a walking environment from the SMARTS Hub which includes consideration of internal circulation
- Provide parking areas next to the activity nodes and provide ground surface parking as a land bank for future development.

There are four (4) distinct sub-precincts making up the overall Wyong Education and Business Precinct:

1. A University (as a keystone tenant) including integration of student accommodation. Council recently met with senior members of the Federal Education Department and their advice is not to target specialist segment of education as it may be cost inhibitive and not in high demand, rather Council should look at the needs of the community and partners with a wide variety of education/training providers including private high schools, technical skills trainers, english language schools etc
2. Sports and Recreation Precinct including sporting fields, a sporting complex which has the capacity to contain an indoor sporting/recreation pool, gyms and fitness facilities, areas for basketball, volleyball activities etc
3. Central Core which will include SMARTS Hub, possible integration with university library uses, central university administration building, hotel, short term accommodation and food and beverage space.
4. Business Park.

Pedestrian Spines are central to each sub-precinct. As a benchmark a 200mx 200m grid structure has been incorporated to provide best use of the site which enables best circulation and clearly delineates between car and pedestrian traffic.

Planning Proposal – Schedule 1 of the Wyong Local Environmental Plan 2013

Masterplan's Relationship to Wyong LEP

Under the Masterplan some minor changes to Wyong LEP 2013 are likely to be required in relation to land use, height and density controls. The optimal planning vehicle to facilitate these adjustments is a Schedule 1 listing for the Additional Permitted Uses via a Planning Proposal, which will also deal with remapping heights and FSR.

Height

- To allow the Masterplan to be realised the existing height limit of 12m will need to be increased to 24m across the whole precinct, or to a series of selected 24m spot heights. This will allow 6 or 7 storey buildings to be accommodated flexibly, including at the Central Core of the Precinct at the northern extremity near the existing Link Road roundabout, as well as any multi-deck car parks that may be required in much later stages of development if demand for university places grows.

FSR

- At present the existing FSR across the whole site is 0.75:1. This will be required to be increased to 2.5:1 to allow for greater flexibility and alignment with the proposed land uses and to ensure that the best mechanism is in place to provide adequate density as close to the core as possible.
- The other precincts will also require varied FSR depending upon the land use type and also building height prescribed. The University and Student Housing sub-precinct will require a FSR of 1.5:1 to 2.5:1 to accommodate the ultimate level of development following numerous stages. The Student Housing sites have been modelled at 2.5:1 to achieve 1,500 student beds. Business Park will require 1.5:1 to 2.5:1 to accommodate the ultimate level of development following numerous stages and will generally be 2 to 4 storeys in height. Multi-deck car parks may be subject to FSR controls where they are in excess of "council's requirements". This may mean all, some or none of the car parks may be included in GFA. This will be dictated by what Council's existing or future requirements are in relation to the precinct. If the car parks are counted as having some form of GFA, then the FSR may need to correspondingly be revised upwards to cater for them, while at the same time not diminishing the development opportunity for the wider precinct.

Prescribed Clauses

- Clause 4.6 of the LEP can be utilised to "object" to development standards where adherence to height or FSR controls may be deemed to be unreasonable or unnecessary in the circumstances. This clause typically allows a notional +10% variation to the standard as an unwritten rule-of-thumb. This would only allow development to heights of in the order of 13.2m and a FSR of 0.825:1. Generally, this would not allow the type of in-built certainty required of the LEP to facilitate certain buildings or development of type envisaged in the Masterplan.

Land Uses

- A range of land uses presently not nominated as permitted with consent (or even currently prohibited) will require revision to the land use table for the B7 – Business Park zone. The zone objectives may also require updating to cater for the new or extended range of uses.
- Additional uses to be included in the - Permitted with Consent part of the land use table would at minimum include *Educational Establishments* (even though they would be otherwise made permissible via provision of the Infrastructure SEPP) and *Boarding Houses* (the only currently recognisable term under planning legislation covering Student Accommodation).
- Existing uses presently Prohibited that would be relocated to Permitted with Consent would include those consistent with the desired range of use under the Masterplan, namely: *Commercial Premises, Highway Centres, Industries, Tourist & Visitor Accommodation*.

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Nature of Amendment Required

- The optimal planning vehicle to facilitate these adjustments is a Schedule 1 listing in the LEP for the Additional Permitted Uses via a Planning Proposal to the Department of Planning & Environment, which will also deal with remapping heights and FSR as set out above.

Present Controls	Proposed Changes
Height : 12m	24m
FSR: 0.75: 1	Up to 2.5:1
Under B7–Business Park zone “boarding houses” prohibited.	Enable in a B7–Business Park zone “boarding houses” permissible and other uses that will maximise the Precinct’s utilisation.

Table 1: Proposed Changes to the enable development of the masterplan.

PUBLIC EXHIBITION

The draft masterplan and changes to Council’s planning instruments will be exhibited to the general public, public authorities and also key nominated stakeholders who are involved with the attracting, facilitating and commercial development of universities within Australia. Given the specialist nature of this type of project it is important that the community in general understand the rationale and demands required over the next 20 years for the development of a new integrated education precinct on the Central Coast. The following key stakeholders will be informed and requested to provide comment on this project:

A Ward Community
NSW Planning & Environment
NSW Trade & Investment
NSW Premier & Cabinet
Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)
Urban Growth NSW
Water & Sewer
Telstra (telecommunications)
Transport for NSW (TfNSW)
Council website
Central Coast Advocate
Local media outlets
Relevant Business Community

The masterplan will be able to be viewed from the following outlets:

Wyong Shire Council Chambers
Wyong Shire Website under “On Exhibition”

The community input is a critical component of the masterplan process. Unlike many of our town centre based masterplans such as Long Jetty, Budgewoi and Toukley, this masterplan is a high level conceptual plan which requires the communities input into the general ideas and any matters which should be brought to Councils attention. The consultation will be broaden in order to capture the views of the general community.

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The consultation process will start as soon as the gateway determination is provided from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. At the completion of the exhibition process Council will review the findings, make any amendments (if required) and will then report back to Council for adoption. Supplementing this masterplan for adoption will be the development of a brochure which will target national and international investors including tertiary educational providers.

OPTIONS

There are various options which present themselves to Council as the landowner:

Option 1: Do nothing and leave the site vacant

Option 2: Explore other development opportunities which align with key economic drivers for the region. In this option there are also many alternatives which will require careful consideration. This site is ideal in that:

- It will help in filling in the gap for tertiary student demand which is expected to rise in the next 20 years.
- Council is the land owner.
- It is perfectly placed close to essential transport links.
- It is a large site (455ha) which has a 65ha development footprint (constraint free land).
- It is close to future major residential land release areas.
- It enables potential educational and business investors to obtain larger parcel of land which would be required for workshops, storage areas, demonstration labs and the like. These types of facilities are best suited in well placed greenfield sites with good connection points.

STRATEGIC LINKS

Link to Community Strategic Plan (2030)

Community Strategic Plan Objective 3:

Communities have access to a diverse range of affordable and co-ordinated facilities, programs and services

The Wyong Education and Business Precinct will comprise the SMARTS Hub precinct which will be an integral part of the development of the site. A range of community learning facilities will be located at the fulcrum of the site with direct access from the existing portion of the Link Road and is earmarked as Stage 1 of the development.

Community Strategic Plan Objective 4:

The community will be well educated, innovative and creative: people will attain full, knowledge potential at all stages of life.

The Wyong Education and Business Precinct will provide the opportunities for residents to achieve full educational attainment and provide greater potential opportunities.

Community Strategic Plan Objective 5:

Areas of natural value in public and private ownership will be retained to a high level in the context of ongoing development.

The draft Masterplan has undertaken a rigorous assessment of the site and is able to establish a development footprint which is large enough to plan for the earmarked land uses whilst minimizing environmental impacts.

Community Strategic Plan Objective 7:

There will be a strong sustainable business sector and increased local employment built on the Central Coast.

The Wyong Education and Business Precinct will be planned and developed with the intention to ensure that there are avenues open which enable businesses, industrial organisations and tertiary providers to be better integrated by close proximity.

Budget Impact

There is no direct impact upon the budget for the completion of this project.

CONCLUSION

The draft Wyong Education and Business Precinct Masterplan provides a unique opportunity to develop an integrated education, business and community facility which will provide the necessary educational and employment opportunities within the Central Coast. As Council is the single landowner it enables for greater control over implementation of strategic projects on the site and is a major advantage in attracting potential future investors.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Wyong Education & Business Precinct Concept Masterplan D11680793