

23DP001	Watagan Park Cooranbong Planning proposal and revised North Cooranbong Precinct Area Plan
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Key focus area	4. Diverse economy
Objective	4.4 We have vibrant economic and neighbourhood centres
File	RZ/2/2022 - D10823921
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Executive Summary

Address: Part Lot 8450 DP 1250919, 35 McCullough St Cooranbong
Part Lot 236 DP 1273921, 30 Maguire Drive Cooranbong

Landowner: Australasian Conference Association Limited

Proponent: Johnson Property Group

This report identifies proposed amendments to the *Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP 2014)* and the revised North Cooranbong Precinct Area Plan (precinct area plan) that is part of the Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP) 2014 for Watagan Park, Cooranbong.

The planning proposal (Attachment 1) seeks to support the development of Watagan Park town centre by increasing maximum building heights in parts of the centre from 10m and 13m to 23m. These changes will help to create a vibrant mixed use centre that supports greater housing diversity, densities and better access to shops and services in line with the overarching state, regional and local planning strategies.

The planning proposal also incorporates minor adjustments to the land use zone boundaries and associated development standards to align with the location of approved parks, surrounding roads and approved subdivision pattern.

Changes to the *LMLEP 2014* are supported by the revised precinct area plan contained in the LMDCP 2014 (Attachment 2). These changes include provisions for a new green spine to enhance the amenity and visual separation between the higher density town centre buildings and the adjoining low density housing.

Recommendation

Council:

- A. requests a Gateway Determination from the Department of Planning and Environment, pursuant to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act 1979)*, in relation to the planning proposal in Attachment 1,

- B. requests the use of delegations in respect of the Minister for Planning and Homes plan making function under section 3.36 of the *EP&A Act 1979* for the planning proposal,
- C. prepares an amendment to the Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014 - Part 12 – Precinct Area Plans - North Cooranbong (Attachment 2),
- D. undertakes consultation with State government agencies and service authorities in accordance with the Gateway Determination,
- E. places the planning proposal (Attachment 1) and the amendment to the Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014 - Part 12 – Precinct Area Plans - North Cooranbong (Attachment 2) on exhibition for a period of at least 28 days, subject to the outcome of the Gateway Determination,
- F. notifies stakeholders and affected landowners of the public exhibition, and
- G. receives a report to further consider the planning proposal following state agency consultation and public exhibition.

Discussion

Watagan Park makes up the majority of the North Cooranbong Urban Release Area located in the south west of Lake Macquarie, near Cooranbong and north-west of Morisset.

In 2008, the State government issued a concept approval for the 'North Cooranbong Residential Estate' comprising areas for low and medium density housing, a new town centre, schools, public open space, community facilities and environmental conservation land. Various development approvals have been issued since that time and parts of the low density residential areas have been constructed or are under construction. Applications for subdivision and development across the urban release area continue to be lodged and considered by Council.

Since the initial concept approval in 2008, substantial change has occurred to the overarching strategic planning framework with the adoption of the Hunter Regional Plan, the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan and the Lake Macquarie Local Strategic Planning Statement. These plans all recognise the strategic goal of creating vibrant mixed use centres that support greater housing diversity, density and better access to shops and services. Changing consumer preferences and development feasibility provides a rare opportunity to reconsider the planning controls for the area to achieve a character, density and diversity of development that delivers a vibrant town centre that meets contemporary needs.

The planning proposal is consistent with the goals of the Lake Macquarie Local Strategic Planning Statement and Housing Strategy as it will facilitate a greater diversity of housing types within the future town centre. This will support a more diverse community as a variety of housing types will cater for a wider range of household types, life stages and income levels. Additional population within a walkable catchment of the future town centre will support its vibrancy and enhance liveability for residents while also contributing to the financial sustainability of local businesses.

The planning proposal aims to achieve a greater density and diversity of housing types and deliver a vibrant town centre by increasing the maximum building height in the B4 Mixed Use Zone from 13m to 23m, and in parts of the R3 Medium Density Residential Zone from 10m to 23m, as shown in Figures 2 and 3. Minor changes are also proposed to the zone boundaries and associated development standards so that these align with the location of approved parks, roads and subdivision pattern.

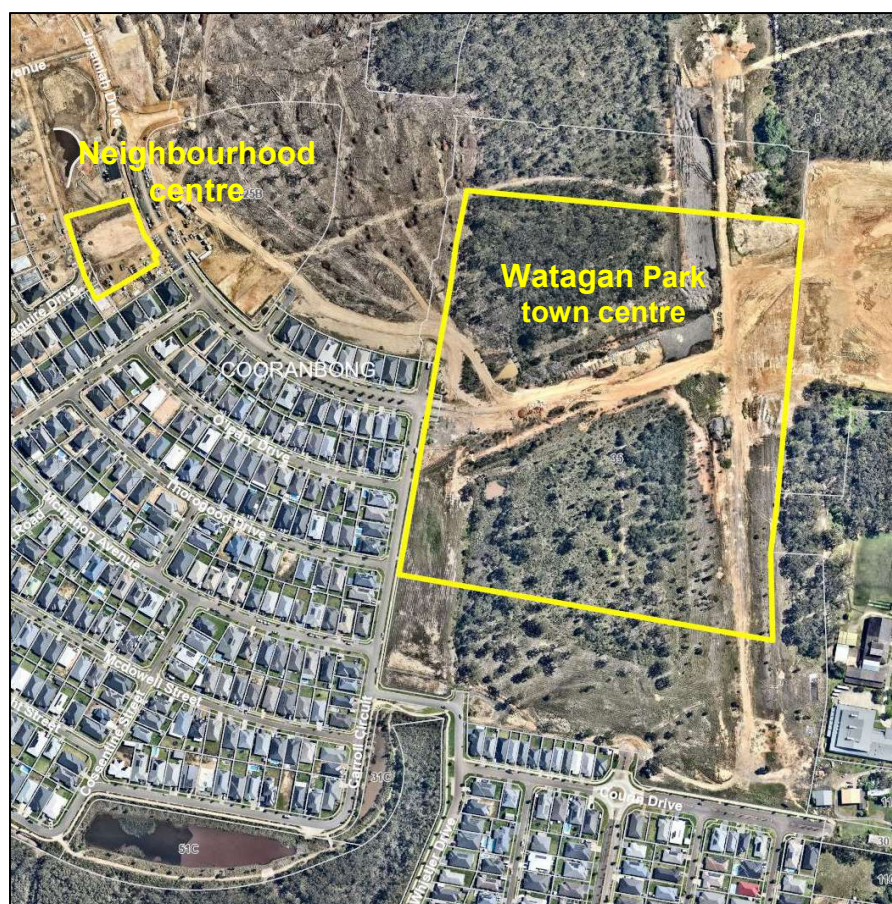


Figure 1: Subject land

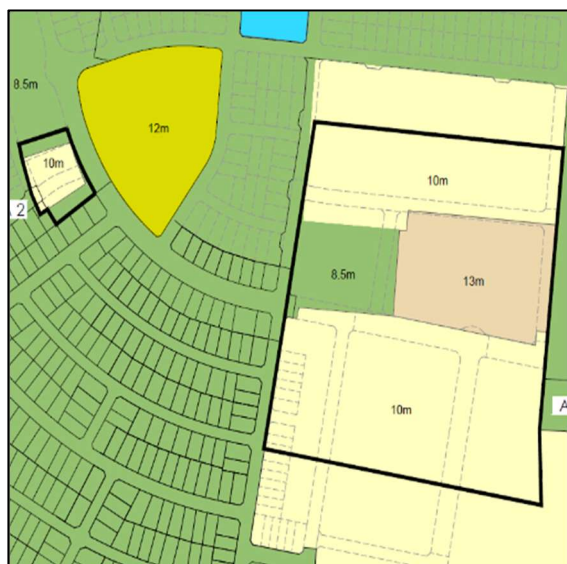


Figure 2: Existing Height of Buildings

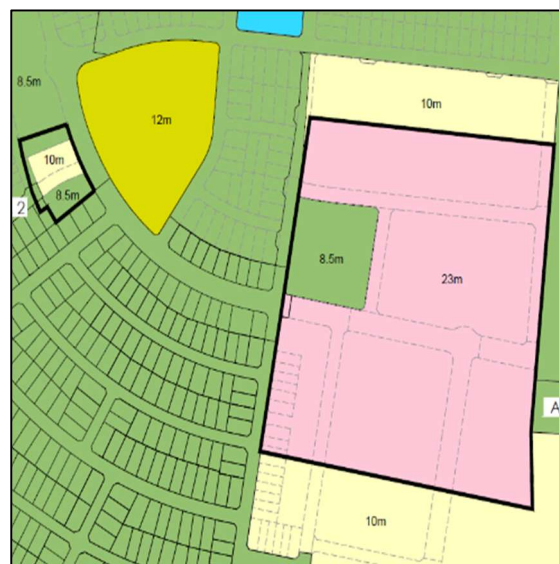


Figure 3: Proposed Height of Buildings

The development of Watagan Park is subject to the North Cooranbong Planning Agreement (March 2021). The planning agreement identifies infrastructure to be provided by the proponent including; two local parks, a neighbourhood park, sports facilities and dog exercise area, town common neighbourhood park, multi-courts, multipurpose centre, shared

pathways, and road intersection upgrades. The site is also subject to a separate planning agreement with the State government for contributions towards road intersection upgrades. To date the developer has delivered the following local infrastructure:

- town common neighbourhood park, sports facility and multi-courts (7.6 hectares),
- local park north (1.1 hectares), and
- shared pathway through Avondale University, Victory Street and Freemans Drive to Stockton Street Morisset.

The remaining on-site facilities to be delivered include a sports facility and dog exercise area (6.2 hectares) and one neighbourhood park (1.3 hectares) that directly adjoin the town centre where the increased density is proposed.

It is estimated that the planning proposal may enable the development of approximately 487 additional dwellings and an eight per cent increase in the population (approximately 625 people). Traffic modelling demonstrates that the road network (upgraded in accordance with the works committed to within the local and State planning agreements) is capable of supporting the additional traffic generated as a result of this planning proposal.

The additional population will increase demand for facilities and services. However, the additional population is not large enough to create the need for extra facilities beyond those planned within the local planning agreement or the Morisset Catchment Contributions Plan.

Despite this, some additional green open space is proposed in the revised precinct area plan in Attachment 2 as an 18m wide 'linear green spine'. The green spine will visually connect the environmental conservation areas to the north and south of Watagan Park and will incorporate the shared pedestrian and cycling pathway. It will also act as a landscaped buffer between the low density residential area and the proposed larger buildings in the town centre.

Changes to the *LMLEP 2014* are supported by the revised North Cooranbong precinct area plan contained in the *LMDCP 2014* (Attachment 2). These changes include provisions for a new green spine to enhance the amenity and visual separation between the higher density town centre buildings and the adjoining low density housing.

Assessment of options

The planning proposal and revised precinct area plan align with Council's strategic planning goals to create vibrant centres, focus development close to centres and increase housing diversity. The planning proposal is considered to be the best means of achieving the desired outcomes. Public exhibition of the planning proposal and the revised precinct area plan will enable stakeholders to review, and provide feedback, on the proposed amendments.

Alternatively, Council can choose not to proceed with the planning proposal and revised precinct area plan. This would be contrary to the strategic goals outlined in the Lake Macquarie Local Strategic Planning Statement and Housing Strategy. This is not the recommended option.

Community engagement and internal consultation

Council consulted with State agencies and authorities in the pre-lodgement stage of this planning proposal. Advice from these agencies has been considered in preparing the planning proposal. Authorities consulted were the NSW Environment Protection Authority, Department of Planning and Environment – Biodiversity and Conservation Division, Transport for NSW, NSW Rural Fire Service, Schools Infrastructure NSW, and NSW Department of Planning and Environment – Central Coast and Hunter Region.

Internal consultation has been undertaken with Development Assessment and Certification, Asset Management, Environmental Regulation and Compliance, Integrated Planning and Community Partnerships departments. Advice received has been considered and addressed in the planning proposal.

If Council resolves to proceed, the planning proposal and revised precinct area plan will be placed on public exhibition in accordance with the Gateway Determination and Council's Community Participation Plan.

Key considerations

Economic impacts	The proposed changes to building heights will support increases in development potential, economic activity and improve the viability of businesses in the future Watagan Park town centre.
Environment	<p>The planning proposal relates to land that has already been approved for urban development. Clearing of land and biodiversity impacts have been assessed through that process and subsequent development approvals.</p> <p>Biodiversity certification has been issued by the State government which confirms that biodiversity impacts and offsets have been assessed and approved and that no further biodiversity assessment or approvals are necessary.</p> <p>As such the planning proposal will not adversely affect critical habitat or threatened species, populations or ecological communities or their habitats.</p> <p>An urban design analysis was undertaken to determine appropriate building heights within the surrounding visual context. The 23m height proposed in the town centre equates to a 6-storey building which is an appropriate mid-rise typology for the surrounding generally lower scale area and provides sufficient floor space to ensure feasible development due to increased construction costs associated with buildings 4-storeys and above. Visual impact and overshadowing from future taller buildings to the surrounding lower scale areas is minimised through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retention of a 10m building height to the northern and southern edges of the town centre within the R3 Medium Density zone. This will support a step down in built form from 6-storey buildings to 3-storey buildings. • Inclusion of an 18m wide landscaped green spine along the western edge of the town centre to provide a visual buffer between the larger town centre buildings and lower scale dwellings. <p>In this locality, the terrain is gently undulating with the main town centre precinct located on part of the site that was formally used as an airfield. This undulating topography limits any view corridors to significant landscape or scenic features. As such, the introduction of 6-storey buildings within the town centre will not have any significant negative impact on views.</p>

Community	The increased density of development in the town centre will provide greater housing choice and higher population density which will improve the vibrancy of the area and better support the financial viability of local businesses. Infrastructure and facilities required to support the demand created by the additional population will be provided as contained in the local planning agreement for the North Cooranbong development and the Morisset Catchment Contributions Plan.
Civic leadership	The planning proposal and revised precinct area plan demonstrate Council's commitment to increasing housing diversity and supporting dense, vibrant centres.
Financial	<p>There is minimal financial impact to Council as the proponent has paid the relevant fees associated with progressing the planning proposal in accordance with Council's fees and charges. The planning proposal will result in more dwellings and commercial floorspace which will have a commensurate increase in rates income.</p> <p>Although the proposal may result in additional population beyond the current yield identified through the local planning agreement, additional monetary contributions will be payable in accordance with Council's Section 7.12 Contributions Plan, and Council's Morisset Catchment Contributions Plan (s7.11 plan)</p>
Infrastructure	<p>Traffic modelling demonstrates that the road network (upgraded in accordance with the works committed to within the local and State planning agreements) is capable of supporting the additional traffic generated as a result of this planning proposal.</p> <p>The revised precinct area plan identifies the provision of a 'green spine' up to 18m in width between the higher density development and the existing low density development. This will form part of the road reserve incorporating a shared cycleway/ pedestrian path and tree planting and will require ongoing maintenance once dedicated to Council.</p>
Risk and insurance	<p>The risks associated with preparing a planning proposal and precinct area plan are minimised by following the process outlined in the <i>EP&A Act 1979</i>, the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021</i>, and Council's procedures.</p> <p>Depending on Council's resolution, the proponent may seek a rezoning review that enables the Regional Planning Panel to evaluate and recommend to the Minister whether the proposal should proceed to a Gateway determination.</p>

Legislative and policy considerations

Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2021

Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014

Hunter Regional Plan 2041

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036

Lake Macquarie Local Strategic Planning Statement

Lake Macquarie Housing Strategy

Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan 2014

Attachments

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| 1. Planning Proposal - Watagan Park Town Centre | D10958556 |
| 2. DCP 2014 - Part 12 - Area Plans - North Cooranbong Precinct -
Summary of proposed changes | D10958557 |