

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES

PROJECT: Iron Gates Residential Release, Evans Head
RE: SDRP SESSION 64 – 07.10.20

19 October 2020

Dear Graeme,

Graeme Ingles
Goldcoral Pty Ltd
PO Box 3441
Australia Fair QLD 4215
Via email –
graeme@inglesgroup.com.au

Thank you for the opportunity to review the above project. Please find a summary of advice and recommendations arising from the design review session held on 07.10.20.

GANSW acknowledges that a Development Application has been lodged with Richmond Valley Council for the subdivision of Lots 163 DP 831052, Lots 276 and 277 DP 755624, Crown Road reserve between Lots 163 DP 831052 and Lot 276 DP 755724, and Iron Gates Drive, Evans Head to establish a residential community comprising 175 lots, and that the Masterplan is currently being assessed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment under the provisions of SEPP 71. It is understood that the Master Plan does not seek approval for built form, and that approval of individual dwellings will take place by individual lot owners under standard local DA approval processes.

The master plan is proposed on a sensitive coastal site of regional significance. The presentation to the Panel lacked detail on a range of matters, however, on the basis of the information provided it is clear that a number of significant issues remain unresolved. These can be generally attributed to a lack of integrated urban and landscape design.

Cumulatively the Master Plan is does not appear to deliver appropriate urban design outcomes in its current form. Please note the following recommendations for improving the urban design and amenity of the precinct:

Place and Context

Generally, the Master Plan does not currently demonstrate a response to the special qualities of place, presenting as a generic subdivision. An opportunity exists to design a precinct that responds to the richness of the site, for example in relationship to:

- its coastal setting
- the ecological significance of its surroundings
- Aboriginal and cultural heritage
- the coastal river setting on the North Coast, which is characterised by climate, ecological and topographic conditions
- topography - drone footage provided as part of the presentation assisted with understanding of the site, however there was a lack of information provided on the existing topography and how this relates to and has informed the design outcome
- Evans Head, with the proposal currently presenting as a gated community

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
L17, 12 Darcy Street
Parramatta NSW 2150

government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
T +61(02)9860 1450

governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au



Good urban design will ensure a response to these unique qualities and enhance the preservation of Indigenous and European cultural heritage, landform and ecological systems. This will create a connection to place and a sense of identity, helping to ensure the future protection of these assets. Recommendations:

1. Provide a Vision Statement that:
 - a. includes site and context analysis, and makes reference to the special qualities of the place,
 - b. identifies design principles informed by the specific qualities of the place, and
 - c. includes a set of design evaluation criteria to ensure the design principles are achieved.
2. Articulate a clear and meaningful approach to Indigenous and European cultural heritage, including:
 - a. an understanding and acknowledgement of Country, including the local stories which could help inform the character of the precinct.
 - b. a narrative about Evans River, and its role. Overland flow and flooding can also form part of the story.
3. Revisit the subdivision pattern to demonstrate that it responds to the underlying topography and specific characteristics of the environment, natural elements, patterns and processes. Clearly identify and justify any significant changes to the topography.
4. Develop the hierarchy of structuring elements to enhance the legibility of the precinct. These should include vehicle and pedestrian networks, lot shapes and sizes and landscape treatment.
5. Provide relevant case studies and an analysis of them to inform and distil the precinct wide approach to issues such as: cultural and historic heritage, environmental protection, climate resilience and social cohesion.

**Overall Subdivision Plan including
Streets/interfaces/access/connections/lot sizes**

The overall approach to the street layout is considered to be generic and suburban in nature and appears to have been driven by an engineering approach to vehicle and standard drainage solutions, rather than an approach which seeks to balance these requirements with the needs of people on foot or bicycle.

The single access point for a scheme of this size is concerning, particularly so in the context of bushfire prone land. Whilst it is noted that the fire trail to the east of the site has RFS approval, it is considered a risk as it backs onto rear gardens. APZ requirements should not impinge on backyards.

Implementation of a singular lot size of 600m² (minimum allowable) will limit diversity in built form and response. Encouraging dual occupancy on some lots was noted and is supported.

Reconsideration of the street network and the lot sizes to respond to these issues will ensure a well-connected development. This will have the benefit of reducing risk from bushfire hazards,

encouraging active transport modes such as walking and cycling, reduce reliance on vehicles and contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents. Recommendations:

6. Ensure the access road into the site from Iron Gates Drive can accommodate active transport.
7. Ensure allowance for connections with future public transport networks.
8. Ensure and demonstrate that pedestrian connectivity through the precinct is maximised.
9. Review the lot sizes proposed and integrate a variety of sizes which relate to the street typology and conditions.
10. Review the current fire trail indicated to the east of the site, in consultation with the RFS, to ensure that no rear gardens abut this trail. Consider replacing the trail with a street and adjusting the location of development lots accordingly.

Built Form

Limited information was provided on the holistic intent for the built form across the master plan. It was indicated that design guidelines were in development to be provided as part of the contract for sale for individual lots. This is supported. A well-considered approach to a high-quality built form contributes to positive environmental outcomes, and the creation of healthy, safe and liveable communities by contributing to the character of the area, achieving an appropriate density, scale and bulk, and providing optimal safety and amenity.

Recommendations:

11. Demonstrate how aspect and orientation has been considered in the re-design of the subdivision pattern.
12. Develop Built form design guidelines to:
 - a. identify the future desired character of the area in terms of built form, include further analysis of Evans Head and surrounding north coastal housing vernacular models. Current analysis identifies general house builder dwellings but does not as yet reference design elements which characterise north coast dwellings
 - b. manage bulk through articulation and the provision of minimum setbacks
 - c. allow for spatial variety
 - d. maximise internal amenity (i.e. by establishing minimum side setbacks)
 - e. establish the desired future landscape character of the precinct through street and rear setbacks, street trees, deep soil provision, landscape species, rear private open space etc.
 - f. establish a public domain interface that supports opportunities for social interaction for street entry front fences and gates. Limit fencing extents and heights and maximise transparency
 - g. manage vehicle access including: location, form, materiality and visibility from the public domain of driveways and off-street parking,
 - h. embed high quality design, including guidance for façade and rooves (i.e. pitch, detailing), and the use of robust and durable materials and finishes

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- i. embed housing diversity i.e. identify duplex sites and where different house types might be allocated to certain locations, for example, along the riverfront, adjacent to rainforest interface and the entry to the site.

Integration with the natural environment and Green Infrastructure

The project site and the surrounding area has significant vegetation, riparian corridors and biodiversity. The current master plan compromises the preservation of the natural environment and has limited opportunities to fully celebrate it. Engaging with and protecting the natural environment provides ecosystem benefits and enhances the landscape amenity for residents and visitors. Recommendations:

13. Review the vehicular network to ensure that access roads are provided along all interfaces with existing vegetated areas. This will also assist in removing Asset Protection Zones (APZs) from within private property.
14. Enlarge the Riverfront park to increase and improve the buffer conditions between the Riparian corridor and the adjoining road.
15. Provide information on planned tree canopy coverage for the entire developable master plan both public and private open space.
16. Consider the potential for greater connectivity between protected rainforest zones and provide strategies to mitigate the impact of the east-west access road on habitat. Specifically, review the need for the western vehicular street that currently severs the central rainforest area from the larger rainforest area to the west – consider replacing with a pedestrian only pathway to facilitate connection between these two sensitive areas.
17. Provide details of the stormwater treatment basin, including an assessment of visual impacts from the public domain and how impacts to the adjoining protected rainforest zone will be mitigated.
18. Demonstrate that infrastructure, access networks and lots comply with Flood Planning requirements.
19. Provide details of the proposed sustainability mechanisms. A sustainability strategy, which exceeds baseline standards, is required.
20. Ensure generous landscape provision in the public domain, for example verges to maximise tree canopy.
21. Consider mechanisms to manage feral and domestic animals.

Ongoing Place Management

Greater clarity is required on the future management of the public domain of the site, in particular the areas of rainforest, streets and street trees. Responsibility for construction of streets and landscape planting was not clear. The approach to place and preservation management of this site over the long term is required to ensure that ecological preservation continues during the construction phase and once the scheme is complete. Recommendations:

22. An ecological and place management strategy which outlines how natural and built assets within the public domain will be preserved during construction and post completion.

A further presentation to the SDRP is recommended to allow presentation of an amended scheme to address the issues above. The following material should be provided:

1. Vision Statement
2. Updated subdivision plan and landscape strategy
3. Demonstrated approach to Indigenous and European cultural heritage
4. Large site sections illustrating how development responds to the underlying topography and specific characteristics of the environment including natural elements.
5. Analysis of precedent studies
6. Built form Design Guidelines
7. Information on planned tree canopy coverage for the precinct
8. Details of the stormwater treatment basin
9. Sustainability Strategy
10. Other items as outlined within the GANSW SDRP Precinct Requirements document.
11. Resolution of the items 1-22 noted above.

It is recommended that a design team - comprising an Urban Designer and Landscape Architect who have experience of working on this scale of development and within this setting - is engaged to carry out the review and adjustments to the Master Plan to ensure the right urban design outcome for the site. This team should present the material at any subsequent presentations to the SDRP.

Please contact GANSW Principal Design and Guidance Jane Threlfall (jane.threlfall@planning.nsw.gov.au), if you have any queries regarding this advice and to schedule the next meeting.

Sincerely,



Olivia Hyde
Director Design Excellence, Government Architect NSW

Distribution to SDRP, DPIE and Richmond Valley Council participants:

NSW SDRP Panel members	Roger Jasprizza, Kim Crestani, Tony Caro
GANSW Chair	Olivia Hyde
GANSW Design Advisor	Jane Threlfall
DPIE	Jeremy Gray, Director Northern Craig Diss, Manager Local and Regional Planning Jon Stone, Senior Planning Officer Dimitri Young, Senior Planning Officer, Biodiversity and Conservation

Statutory Authority

Government Architect
New South Wales

4 Parramatta Square
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government.architect
@planning.nsw.gov.au
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Richmond Valley Council

Angela Jones, Director of Infrastructure and
Engineering
Tony McAteer, Planning Services Co-ordinator

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New South Wales

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