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# VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

## MP08 - 0234

## Tweed Shire



Completed by

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on

**24<sup>th</sup> of March 2009**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report builds upon and updates the findings of the Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by LVO' Architecture, dated 30th June 2006, in light of more detailed information with regard to development proposals, including the proposed basic locations of buildings exceeding three storeys in height as included in the MP08-0234 application.

The visual amenity of the existing site and of the proposed development were assessed by observation and analysis when seen from frequently and, in some cases, less frequently accessed public locations, such as roads and streets from which the site is currently visible.

Although not as important as views from public spaces, similar views would also be obtainable from private properties near to the selected streets from which the observations were made.

There are few locations from which the full extent of the site forms an important element in the viewshed and even when it does, other existing urban developments are either more visually dominant or are more apparent.

Viewed from locations where the site is quite visible, (eg. photo viewpoints 4, 5 and 6), the parts of the site which are quite obvious will remain as open space and the parts of the site which will be subject to urban development will be visually subservient or screened from those viewpoints.

From the locations where proposed structures which exceed three storeys will be visible, (e.g. from photo viewpoint 2, 3, 4, and 11), they will not negatively impact the visual landscape due to building heights being restricted to mature native tree height, neutral colour selection for building finishes and distance from Viewpoints.

In summary, the findings of this assessment indicate that, with regard to visual impact, this project should be allowed to be approved for development.

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## REFERENCES

1. *Tweed Shire Scenic Landscape Evaluation. Volume One & Volume Two and Maps. NOV 1995.*
2. *Dept. Main Roads, Road Landscape Manual (1998).*
3. *Terranora Resort Project Statement of Environmental Effect – Tweed Shire Council, Volume 1. DEC 1996.*
4. *Addendum Report, Terranora Resort Project, Tweed Shire Council, 30 APRIL 1997.*
5. *Section 96 Modification, Development Consent 96/519, Terranora Resort Project, Terranora Group Management Pty Ltd. MAY 2001.*
6. *Far North Coast Regional Strategy (FNCRS), New South Wales Department of Planning December 2006.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Scope of Report

This report focuses on the proposed development at Rise, Tweed Shire, hereafter referred to as 'the site' (refer Appendix Figure 1) as depicted in the MP08-0234 application. The report builds upon and updates the findings of the Visual Impact Assessment, prepared by LVO' Architecture, dated 30th June 2006, in light of more detailed information with regard to development proposals, including the proposed locations of buildings exceeding three storeys in height and the direction by the NSW Minister for Planning to only deal with the area of the site contained within the Far North Regional Strategy for Urban Expansion.

The report addresses matters of visual amenity as they relate to the existing site, the proposed development and its context. The following matters are considered in this report:

- i. The existing golf course and golf clubhouse are no longer to be part of the proposed development;
- ii. The visual setting of the site and the existing visual amenity;
- iii. Aspects of the existing site that affect visual amenity;
- iv. Aspects of the proposed development that affect visual amenity;
- v. A visual impact assessment of the proposed development from relevant locations within the visual catchment.

This assessment is based on those Figures listed in the Appendix to this report.

## 1.2 Description of Proposed Development

The proposed Rise development is at Bilambil Heights at the location of the existing Terranora Country Club (refer Appendix Figures 2 & 3) and includes other land, which is not presently developed as part of the golf course or country club. It is to be a master planned community,( refer Appendix Figure 4), comprising:

- Mixed Use development;
- Apartments;
- Low Density Housing;
- Private Schools;
- Retail Shops;
- Nursing Homes.
- Retirement Living areas;
- A Village Centre and Local Centre;
- Eco Village rural residential lots;
- Parkland / Community Sports Facilities;
- Extensive areas of Open Space; and

- Waterbodies & reservoir.

The development is planned to occur as a series of interconnected precincts along an undulating ridge and adjacent slopes (refer Appendix Figure 6 for the Precinct Plan and Figure 5 for the Slope Analysis Plan).

Refer to Section 5 for a description of the design criteria for proposed building structures.

The majority of development will be planned amongst extensive pockets of open space and existing vegetation. A majority of built form will generally be 2 and 3 storey housing and will be of a scale, form and character similar to that of existing development in the area bounded by:

- Terranora Road to the east and south;
- Pacific Highway from Kennedy Drive to Banora Point to the east;
- Bilambil Road and the site to the west; and
- Scenic Drive to the north and northwest.

Within limited areas of the site, the building heights will exceed three storeys (refer Appendix Figure 7). These areas will be referred to as:

- Boutique Hotel Apartments, precinct A-4; maximum 8 storeys above existing ground level;
- Hilltop Plaza Penthouses and Apartments, precincts L-1 and L-3; maximum 6 storeys above ground level at RL215;
- Hill top Apartments, precinct L-10; maximum 6 storeys above existing ground level; and
- Mid-rise Apartments, precincts N-5 and N-6; maximum 3 storeys above existing ground level.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The project methodology adopted for this report comprised the following tasks:

- Site visit to determine views from the site and external development areas likely to have views to site;
- Installation on site of survey pegs to mark the approximate locations of six proposed buildings that are to exceed three storeys in height.(refer Appendix Figure 7);
- At these peg locations, marker balloons were then flown at levels to indicate proposed building heights;
- Site visit and drive through surrounding areas to photograph the site from residential areas and road corridor vantage points with views to site;
- Information as to height of proposed built form represented on panoramic photo views, by lines placed at maximum height, in the four areas of higher elevation (refer Appendix Figures 11 - 17). The perception of building height for any structure within these four areas should not alter as ground contours do not vary significantly;
- Drive through to determine residential areas and road corridors with no views to site;
- Review of previous study "*Tweed Shire Scenic Landscape Evaluation Study*" to determine nature of surrounding landscape character;
- Review of previous Development Application to determine building mass, height and extent of development currently approved;
- Co-ordination with other consultants including information gathering; and
- Preparation of the report.

For this project the methodology we adopted to determine the degree of impact the proposed development would have from vantage points was evaluated based on the following factors:

- i. The number of people viewing from the vantage point or route;
- ii. The length of time the viewers will spend looking at the view;
- iii. The importance of the features being considered relative to the whole view;
- iv. The purpose or usage of the vantage point or route;
- v. In the case of a route, whether or not the view of the site is in the direction of travel, or at an angle to the direction of travel, or whether the normal direction of travel is towards or away from the subject;
- vi. Whether the vantage point is available to the public at large, or to customers or visitors to a private destination, or from private property;
- vii. The distance of the vantage point to the object with respect to ability to discern detail;
- viii. The visual prominence of the subject from the vantage point or route; and
- ix. The degree of screening or visual buffering between the site and the vantage point.

In this case we adopted the UBD as a guide and drove the routes marked in yellow (refer Appendix Figure 1). Additionally, Piggabeen Road and Cobaki Road (which adjoins parts of the site), Carool Road, Bilambil Road and Scenic Drive were travelled. The Hermitage and Grange (both streets within the established subdivision of Vintage Lakes) were thought to have elevated views towards the site and were visited and photographed. Although those locations are not significant on a district basis, they and Banora Hills Drive are typical of the type of view, which some small groups of residents may have of the site.

The passenger/observer established the locations from which the site could be seen. Because the site was the focus and not the general scenic amenity of the area, the observations are biased towards elevating the visual significance of the site. For this reason a more casual observer would most likely find the site and the impacts, which are likely to result from its development, to be less important with respect to visual amenity within the studied locality than would the commissioned consultants or an assessing officer.



### 3. THE VISUAL SETTING

#### 3.1 The Surrounding Context

The site is located on an elevated and undulating plateau on the site of the existing Terranora Country Club at Bilambil Heights in Tweed Shire (refer Appendix Figure 2). Surrounding land use comprises:

- Urban detached residential along the ridge span extending 2.5km east from the site to Terranora Broadwater;
- East of the Terranora Broadwater is predominantly developed areas of Tweed Shire South;
- Predominantly undulating and undeveloped rural and agricultural lands with isolated residential homes to the north, west and south; and
- A pocket of rural residential development on the northern boundary and separating two parts of the site.

Land adjacent to site boundaries comprises:

- Developed residential to the east;
- Land zoned rural and residential (refer Appendix Figures 3 and 4) to the north existing as cleared open grassland;
- Combination of vegetated slopes and gullies to the west and south that are cleared to semi cleared rural lands; and
- A pocket of rural residential development on the northern boundary and separating two parts of the site.

#### 3.2 Landscape Character

Analysis of local landscape character which includes the site and as described in the *'Tweed Shire Scenic Landscape Evaluation Report – Volume 1'* identifies the project site within "Scenic Unit 3 – Terranora" and lists the following landscape characteristics:

- "Landscape Features – Natural" - forest on hillsides and along creeks and gullies;
- "Scenic – Cultural Features and Associations" - farming/agricultural landscape on hillsides; and
- "Alterations and Degraded Areas" – extensive residential subdivisions.

The Far North Coast Regional Strategy (FNCRS) is the overriding strategic planning document for the Region. It applies to six local government areas, including Tweed for the period 2006 – 31 and is to be reviewed every five years. The majority of the site falls within the area covered by this strategy; refer to the Precinct Plan contained within the Appendix Figure 6.

The section of the 'Tweed Shire Scenic Landscape Evaluation Report – Volume 1' on settlement character and design is particularly relevant to visual impact assessment, of relevance to this report, the document states:

- *"New development should be designed to reflect and enhance the natural, cultural, visual and built character and values of the local and regional landscape.*
- *New and changing settlement areas should incorporate open space that is accessible to the public, which provides opportunities for recreation, nature conservation, social interaction, and for visual enhancement and amenity."*

Section 5 of this report sets out the architectural design criteria for the proposed building structures and Section 7 analyses mitigation measures taken in order to avoid, reduce or compensate for any foreseeable impacts. Extensive areas of open space have been provided within the proposed scheme; refer Figure 8 and Section 8 of this report.

### 3.3 The Visual Character of the Surrounding Area

The surrounding area presently has a visual character typical of many emerging and established communities in the Tweed Shire and is distinguished by the following factors:

- Low-density residential development along ridges and slopes – some land in this area, including the site, are zoned for urban expansion;
- Isolated pockets of residential interspersed with undeveloped rural land and open spaces;
- Immediately adjacent to the south and east site boundaries are hillsides of remnant forest and mixed regrowth zoned as environmental protection – 'Scenic Escarpment' in the Tweed Local Environment Plan 2000 (refer Appendix Figure 9); and
- Significant amount of open grassed slopes.

It should be noted from the Tweed Local Environment Plan 2000 (refer Appendix Figure 9) and the currently approved residential development, it is obvious that the site is scheduled for development of some type and therefore some existing visual qualities of the site are temporary.

A variety of developing cultural and natural features contributes to the visual character of the site and surrounding area. Specifically, the style, scale and type of buildings proposed for the area (which includes mostly residential development), are all indicators of the type of character that is emerging in the area. It is important to note that the Tweed Local Environment Plan protects areas of existing high visual character of all land adjacent to the south boundary and portions adjacent to the east and west boundaries due to existing zoning of 'Environmental Protection' (Scenic/Escarpment). These areas include forested gullies and hillsides.

### 3.4 Visual Sensitivity of the Existing Site

Visual sensitivity is commonly defined as a measure of how critically a site is currently viewed. The Dept of Main Roads, Road Landscape Manual (1998) explains that Visual Sensitivity is “*dependant on subjective elements of personal perceptions as well as the degree of visibility, time of viewing and distance of the viewing point from or of the proposal.*”

The general visual sensitivity of the project site is influenced by a number of factors. These factors are identified in the table below.

FACTORS WHICH INCREASE VISUAL SENSITIVITY	FACTORS WHICH DECREASE VISUAL SENSITIVITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site topography is large in area and is elevated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Its landform is generally that of a plateau with fringing slopes significantly less in area. The large area of plateau where the development will occur is generally above the sight lines.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proximity of the site to existing open space increases its visual value – this will change as the surrounding area is developed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extent of existing and proposed built form in the surrounding area from sighted vantage points and routes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing pockets of protected vegetation within the site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tracks of vegetation throughout surrounding landscape.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fact that the site is presently undeveloped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The limited visual catchment to the north, south and west.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The fact that the site fronts protected vegetated slopes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site central east boundary is adjacent to land zoned 'Urban Expansion' (refer Appendix Figure 4) that is presently open grassed slopes.</li> </ul>

Considering these factors the visual sensitivity of the site can be described as **low**.

The effect that the factors identified above will have on the visual amenity from specific vantage points in the surrounding landscape is assessed further in Section 4 of this report.

## 4. ASPECTS AFFECTING VISUAL IMPACT

### 4.1 Aspects of the Site Affecting Visual Impact

#### 4.1.1 Location & Physical Context

The site is located on an elevated and undulating plateau 2.5km west of the Terranora Broadwater. (refer Appendix Figure 2).

Because of the emerging development in the surrounding area, the visual amenity and the visual sensitivity of the site will change over time. The changes to the surrounding physical context that will affect visual amenity of the area and the visual sensitivity of the site include:

- Proposed infill residential development to existing ridge top residential adjacent to the south east boundaries; and
- Possible future residential development of the adjacent Teitzel property, which is zoned "Residential-Urban Expansion" (refer Appendix Figure 9), which is a grassed ridge and slopes strategically positioned adjacent to the central east site boundary.

All of these likely changes will affect the visual amenity of the area in ways that are difficult to specifically predict. It is obvious, however, that immediate areas to the east will develop and intensify into residential to complement existing residential areas.

The fact that the site backs on to protected vegetation to the south means that any development on the site will result in some visual impact because of the resulting contrast of appearance and function. However, development to the south and west is unlikely due to its current "Rural" zoning and that few people view the site from the direction and there are no significant roads to provide access from which the site can be seen. The vegetation and slope will hide the development from the nearby roads on the south.

#### 4.1.2 Topography

Terranora Resort Project Statement of Environmental Effect, Volume 1, summarised the site topography as:

*"Due to the sites extensive size, the topography varies substantially throughout and can be described under five (5) general headings:*

- *Escarpment;*
- *Steep slopes;*
- *Undulating golf course;*
- *Undulating/terraced farming land; and*
- *Alluvial flats near Cobaki Road".*

A Slope Analysis Map (refer Figure 5) was prepared which indicates that the majority of the site is moderately sloping, with gradients between 10% and 25% being the norm. However, certain areas of the site consist of slopes between 20% and 35%.

The proposed pattern of development, shown on the Precinct Plan (Refer Appendix Figure 6), is to integrate with existing landform and slopes by adopting the following criteria:

- Locating the majority of development within the slope range of 0% - 25% that occurs along the higher grassed slopes and lower alluvial flats; and
- Generally excluding development from areas steeper than 25% which include existing areas of vegetation and forested gullies.

#### **4.1.3 Vegetation**

It is understood that details of vegetation will be covered in a separate Flora report. Generally vegetation typologies on the site are either golf course, grass in cleared areas, or pockets of a dense shrub and tree growth on southern slopes and internal gullies (refer Appendix Figure 3). Grassing has been achieved by the past clearing of basalt boulders now left as windrows, the latter commonly defining the edge of treed areas. Treed areas also occur along the steep basalt slopes. Significant stands of mature Eucalypts exist as rows dividing golf course fairways.

#### **4.1.4 Visual Amenity of the Existing Site and Development**

The existing site and Clubhouse development contribute to visual amenity when viewed from beyond the site by:

- Height of the Clubhouse being limited to 2 storeys;
- Vegetated slopes containing stands of mature trees;
- The appearance of a vegetated "skyline" from some vantage points;
- Grassed "skyline" and hillside from Cobaki Road;
- Vegetated "skyline" with vegetated foreground and mountainous backdrop forming the real skyline; and
- Areas immediately adjacent to the site having a dominant form of similar development to when viewed from important southern and eastern viewpoints.

## 5. ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN CRITERIA FOR PROPOSED BUILDING STRUCTURES

The Product Summary shown at Appendix Figure 10 shows a detailed resolution to the site layout. Appendix Figure 9 outlines the proposed composition of all development precincts. Architectural design criteria for the overall development are to be based on the following;

- Strong masonry/ stone bottom levels;
- Covered footpath/ walkways;
- Natural earthy colours to building materials and finishes;
- Use of natural timbers;
- Articulated facades;
- Vertical elements connecting predominantly to flat roofs;
- Strong vertical and horizontal elements; and
- Use of light weight and neutral coloured cladding on upper contemporary and rustic forms.

The above design criteria would result in built form with an emphasis on neutral colours that are visually recessive and assist in their blending in with the surrounding landscape.

## 6. VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The assessment of impacts on the visual amenity of the local community is achieved by considering the proposed development from a range of vantage points that are representative of the visual catchment and thus indicative of the visual experience obtained by the local community.

No public reserves exist adjacent to the site and although views will be affected by the introduction of built form, there are no loss of views from public places.

### 6.1 Visual Catchment

A series of main vantage points have been identified that represent the visual catchment of the surrounding area.

The methodology to determine the extent of visibility of the proposed development when seen from these vantage points was outlined in Section 2 Methodology.

Appendix Figures 11 – 17 show the locations of vantage points. Below lists the visual sensitivity of the site when viewed from the following locations:

#### 6.1.1 *Travelling west along Terranora Road*

##### ROUTE SELECTION:

Terranora Road is one of the major roads within the locality and is one of only two routes which link Tweed Heads and the Rise to Bilambil and Bilambil Heights.

It is also an important route in that when travelling in a westerly direction there are a number of locations which provide views towards the site in the general direction of travel.

##### EXISTING VIEWS:

Figure 1 shows the approximate extent of Terranora Road from which views of the site are fairly continuous.

Depending on the precise vantage point, the distracting and more obvious elements than that of the proposed built form include:

- The landlocked form of the Terranora Broadwater;
- Views of the intense urban development of the Gold Coast;
- Large and scattered parcels of intense suburban development;
- Foreground views of suburban development and other obvious complexes of buildings such as large schools;
- Attractive views of rural hillside landscapes consisting of a mixture of grassland, isolated pockets of forest and farms; and

- The fairly obvious cleared and grassy hill slopes which adjoin the site to its north east (Teitzel's land) which is more obvious than the site.

The site is only recognisable at present by the existing clubhouse building. Of assistance in locating the site are the two parallel Motel like buildings which were once part of the Terranora Country Club. They are at a slightly lower elevation than the clubhouse. The site extends to each side of the clubhouse and above it.

From each studied viewpoint there is a foreground view of mostly intense suburban development which extends in many instances right to the site. From almost every location from which the site is visible, the intense suburban development is located within the foreground in relation to the site and is thus more obvious. In most instances the existing suburban development somewhere breaks the skyline. The existing views are quite complex in that they usually contain a number of distracting foreground elements in addition to the background element of the site.

At present the site contributes very little to either the quality of the views and its extent in the broad panorama of every view is quite limited.

#### VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The proposed development once completed will form a mere extension of the existing obvious suburban development which adjoins it.

Although it may extend to the skyline in some instances (at the location of precincts L-10 and A-4), they will be partly shielded from view by proposed two storey town houses and large and small pockets of vegetation which will remain as parkland. Views of Teitzel's obvious grassy hill sides will eventually change as they are zoned for residential development. This future development will visually integrate with the views of the two apartment buildings and reduce the appearance of their heights. The proposed development will hardly be noticed in either extent or obviousness due to:

- The five kilometre distance the site is from viewpoints along Terranora Road (refer photo viewpoints 1, 2 and 3 on Figures 11 and 12);
- Building heights restricted to mature tree height; and
- Visually neutral appearance of proposed building material and colour selections.

Probably the only loss from the landscape will be the removal of the existing clubhouse which does not act as an attractive landmark, contributing to views of the district, but as an indicator of the location of the site.



#### CONCLUSION:

It is difficult to locate the site when travelling along this route, and views tend to be dominated by other, more prominent forms of development and natural landscapes. Due to its distance from Terranora Road, it is likely that the proposed development will appear as an extension of the existing suburban development adjoining the site.

#### **6.1.2 Travelling north west and north east along Bilambil Road**

##### ROUTE SELECTION:

This is one of the roads which link Bilambil and Bilambil Heights and Duroby to Banora Point and the Pacific Highway via Terranora Road.

It is shown in orange as an "Alternative Traffic Route" in the UBD.

##### EXISTING VIEWS:

It is a very pleasant road leading down from Terranora Road, along Bilambil Road, until one arrives at the playing fields near Bilambil Creek. Few locations exist from which the site can be seen until the playing fields are reached.

From photo viewpoint 4 the site forms a strip on the skyline. Vegetation on the edge of the site will remain and the proposed development will be almost completely concealed by it. It will be less visible than the existing houses immediately to the right of the site.

The only visible structures would be those in precincts A-4, L-1 and L-3, which will not appear obvious due to:

- Their heights being restricted to mature tree height;
- Visually neutral appearance of proposed building material and colour selections; and
- The distance the site is from the viewpoints.

From photo viewpoint 5 the views extend across the playing fields to the creekside vegetation and then up the wooded hill slope. Vegetation which is growing on the site fills the skyline. Dead camphor laurel trees on the site appear near the skyline. These are within the area proposed as Open Space & Conservation (precinct V, refer Figure 6). The residential component of what was originally the Terranora Country Club is visible to the right of the centre of the photographs. A few existing houses are also visible.

From photo viewpoint 6, views to the south of the site are effectively screened by existing, dense (retained) vegetation.

**VISIBLE EXTENT OF DEVELOPMENT:**

Precinct I (Private Schools) will appear within the cleared area to the west of the clearly visible existing accommodation units. It may also occur that glimpses of a few of the proposed retirement village units in precinct B and G will be able to be seen.

**CONCLUSION:**

The buildings which are likely to be visible on the site will not break the skyline vegetation. They will be of compatible scale and slightly greater extent to the existing accommodation buildings.

The effect on visual amenity will be slight and the view will still be dominated by vegetation and by grassy hillsides.

**6.1.3 Travelling east along Carool Road****ROUTE SELECTION:**

It was thought possible but unlikely that views of the site may have been possible from this route.

Carool Road does not carry heavy volumes of traffic and serves only a small number of rural properties. However, it does carry some tourist/recreational traffic in that there are two wineries each with a restaurant along the route.

It was surveyed by Greg O'Brien as both the observer and the driver firstly by travelling west crossing Cobaki Creek then travelling north east to the intersection with Glengarrig Road at the Ilnam Estate Winery and Restaurant.

On the outward journey the direction of travel was generally towards the site only after Cobaki Creek was crossed. Conversely on the return the direction of travel was away from the site until Cobaki Creek was crossed and then it was towards the site.

**EXISTING VIEWS:**

The only place along the route where views towards the site were available were mere glimpses between trees near the crossing of Cobaki Creek. Otherwise views towards the site were blocked by either intervening land form or intervening vegetation. The glimpses towards the site were so fleeting that it was impossible to tell whether the views were of the site or merely towards the site. If the views were of the site, the site was indistinguishable from other similar land forms.

Any open, distant views are generally towards the south away from the site. Otherwise the views are close views of pleasant rural properties or of roadside vegetation.

**VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT:**

Even if the views were of the site it is unlikely that any buildings would be visible because wooded open space will remain between the western boundary of the site and any future buildings.

**CONCLUSION:**

The proposed development will have no impact on visual amenity when seen from Carool Road.

Other major roads within the district from which the site cannot be seen include:

- The Pacific Highway;
- All but the southernmost 100 metres of Fraser Drive;
- Tweed Valley Way;
- Tweed Coast Road; and
- Piggabeen Road.

Although no observations were made from boats, it is considered that no views of the site would be likely from the following water bodies:

- Terranora Creek;
- Tweed River (in its entirety);
- Cobaki Broadwater; and
- The ocean beaches.
- Terranora Broadwater;

Steeply sloping escarpments adjacent to these water bodies are considered to be so steep and high that they would block any views of the site. Existing vegetation on the escarpments and in intervening locations and intervening development will provide screening where the landform does not.

**6.1.4 Travelling south west along Scenic Drive towards the Site****ROUTE SELECTION:**

Scenic Road was selected because it is shown on the UBD street directory as an "*alternative Traffic Route*" and indicated in yellow. Furthermore, its name "*Scenic*" made it worthy of investigation to determine the reason for its name.

It is an important route because it is the direct connection between the localities of Bilambil and Bilambil Heights with Tweed Heads via Kennedy Drive.

**EXISTING VIEWS:**

From Kennedy Drive the road climbs steadily and there are no distant views in the direction of the site until the approximate location of photo viewpoint 7 on Figure 14.

Even from that location the site cannot be seen but the adjacent land (Teitzel's property) is quite apparent as the cleared and grassy slopes. No other locations provide views towards the site.

#### VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT:

No buildings that will be erected as a result of the proposed development will be able to be seen. Even if they were, Teitzel's land is zoned under LEP 2000 as Low Density Residential and the houses that result from that will appear in the photograph.

#### CONCLUSION:

The proposed development will have no impact on the visual amenity that is seen from Scenic Road.

#### **6.1.5 Travelling east along Cobaki Road adjacent to the Site**

##### ROUTE SELECTION:

This road links the Cobaki locality to the Tweed Heads West locality via Piggabeen Road. It is shown in the UBD as a "trafficable road" and it appears to serve only the sparsely populated Cobaki locality and is not a through road. It runs through picturesque rural landscapes beside and almost parallel to Cobaki Creek.

##### EXISTING VIEWS:

Cobaki Road separates the site into two parts. The part of the site north of Cobaki Road is flat and low lying while that to the south rises gradually at slopes of up to 5 to 10% and then becomes steeper and more elevated.

Developments which are rural residential in character occur along the flatter areas beside the road and in close proximity to the site.

The steeper more elevated land dominates the view.

##### VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:

The part of the site to the north of Cobaki Road will be sports fields (Precinct U, refer Figure 6) and views of it will not alter.

It is likely that more houses will be built near to the site in the near future which will also change the character of the immediate vicinity.

Notably photo viewpoints 12 & 13 (refer Figures 16 & 17) reveals that the Boutique Hotel Apartments (A-4), Mid-rise Apartments (N-5 & 6) and Hilltop Plaza Penthouses & Apartments (L-1, L-3 & L-10) would not be visible. The view from photo viewpoint 11 (refer Figure 15), reveals that the proposed Hilltop Plaza Penthouses and Apartments (L-1 and L-3) would be visible. The potential impacts of built form within precincts L-1 and L-3 would be minimal due to:

- Building heights not exceeding mature tree height;
- Retention of majority of existing vegetation, or if Camphor Laurel, replacement with similar vegetation which will grow to a similar height, as part of the planned environmental restoration works, between Cobaki Road and the precinct V shown as Open Space & Conservation (refer Precinct Plan, Figure 6).
- Future development of the Teitzel property obscuring views of proposed precinct L-10; and
- Use of visually neutral building material and colour selections.

It is suggested that careful planting be carried out within this area and beside Cobaki Road to try to integrate the development within the rural residential landscape setting.

Attention should also be paid to other matters such as the following to ensure the proposed development effectively integrates with the existing landscape character:

- Road verge detailing;
- Fencing;
- Housing forms, colours, and materials; and
- Extent of cuts and hill and the treatment thereof.

#### CONCLUSION:

The proposed development will modify the visual amenity of a limited extent of Cobaki Road but will not substantially change its character or significantly diminish the visual amenity.

#### **6.1.6 Viewing west from Residences which overlook Terranora Broadwater**

##### ROUTE SELECTION 1:

It was known from observations made on previous projects that views from this location towards the site would be available.

The locality is generally elevated and the street in the area that is most frequented is Hillcrest Avenue, within Banora Point.

However, views towards the site from this part of the public realm are mere glimpses. Good views are available however from photo viewpoint 8 in The Hermitage and from the end of the cul-de-sac, The Grange (photo viewpoint 9).

These two locations also give a good indication of the views that are likely from private residences within the same locality.

**EXISTING VIEWS:**

The views are very attractive with Terranora Broadwater and Big Island in the foreground and Bilambil Heights in the background. The extensive residential areas based around Lakeview Terrace and Marana Road almost break the skyline towards the left of photo viewpoint 2 in Figure 11. The site is barely visible as a strip of green above the existing residential area. Teitzel's land forms part of the grassy hillside above and to the right of the residential development. Just right of centre of photo viewpoint 2 lies the residential area near Warringa Drive. This locality breaks the skyline. Seagulls Leagues Club and its nearby residential areas appear to the right of the photograph.

**VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT:**

The developed site will appear as a minor upwards extension of the existing residential development, and perhaps a very slight extension beyond above and to the right. Teitzel's land (which is zoned Low Density Residential) will also be barely visible and will be in the foreground of the site.

**CONCLUSION:**

The visual impact caused by developing the site will be similar in extent and impact to that caused by the residential development around Warringa Drive. It will be barely noticeable above the adjacent existing residential developments and those likely on the adjacent land which is zoned residential.

**ROUTE SELECTION 2:**

From previous experience it was known that Banora Hills Drive provided extensive westerly views. These views are probably similar to those enjoyed from other residential streets in the area.

**EXISTING VIEWS:**

Refer photo viewpoint 1. There is an extensive foreground and mid ground of detached housing and the plateau on which the site and the Lakeview Terrace and Marana Street localities within Bilambil Heights are situated. Existing residential developments are prominent immediately adjacent to the site. The skyline consists of some trees on the skyline of the site. The higher, border ranges form a backdrop against the skyline of the site.

**VISIBLE EXTENT OF THE DEVELOPMENT:**

The proposed development will appear as a slight upward extension of the existing residential development.

**CONCLUSION:**

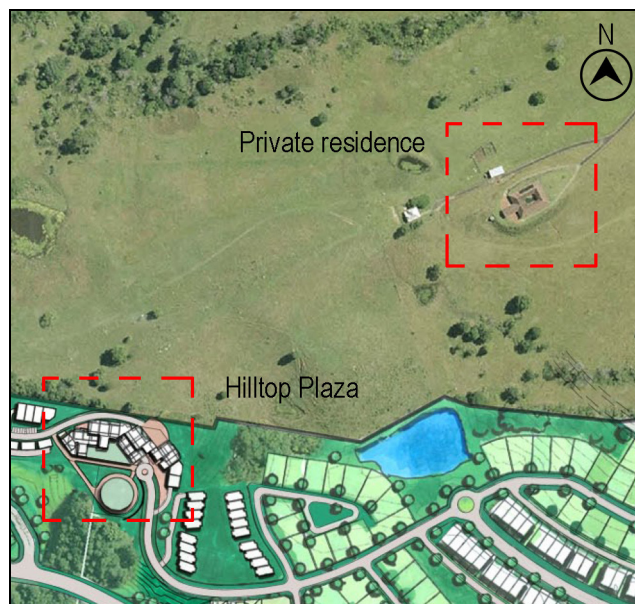
Given the prominence of existing similar residential development the development of the site will be barely noticeable.

#### **6.1.7 Viewing south west from the residence on the adjoining property (refer Figure 1)**

In terms of visual impact there will not be any loss of views from the house location. The views are not directed uphill towards the development (Hilltop Plaza). The residential views remain pronounced towards the north east along the coastal plain.

The Hilltop Plaza is 4 to 6 storeys in height. Its scale is subdued by its stepped massing and articulation, particularly viewed from the residential property (south west).

I believe there will not be any negative visual impact on the house; on the contrary the Hilltop Plaza may make a positive contribution to the view.



Appendix Figure 1: Location Plan

#### **6.1.8 Viewing the Hilltop Plaza from within the development**

Directly south of the site are views of existing forested areas and Conmurra Avenue. Looking east are seen the Rise community open spaces as well as a water body and a low to medium density housing precinct. Further east beyond the low medium density housing is seen the hotel development and from the south east is seen the retirement village.

On the whole, views from the Hilltop Plaza to visible areas within the development are in scale by the variance of storeys, the stepping formation of buildings from low to high and their articulation. Notwithstanding, vegetation, existing and introduced will on the whole make for a balanced experience in which vegetation and the built form come together.

## 6.2 Cumulative Impacts

One must always be aware of incremental effects; the combined, incremental impact of the proposed development and that of existing and approved development. Cumulative visual impacts occur when changes that are so close in time or location, or both, that the impact of one development proposal cannot be successfully mitigated prior to the next or nearby proposal taking place.

The construction phase of the site is broken down into thirty stages, plus an additional five future stages. The staging has been designed so that the project can be marketed in multiple fashion through a large range of marketing methods, so as to attract a variety of purchasers to each stage. By adopting a scenario of a range of smaller developers working under one master developer, the project program is envisaged to extend for less than ten years depending on the speed of recovery of the Australian economy from the 2009 recession and world financial crisis. The staging flows in such a way that low level built form will be in place prior to construction of the higher level buildings proposed for more elevated areas, thus softening their potential perceived impact.

The existing residential development assists in mitigating the impact of a proposal that could otherwise arguably be relatively visually sensitive. In the context of views from the surrounding area, the additional urban form of the site will be viewed in conjunction with existing housing associated with Bilambil Heights. The proposed development will be seen from most viewpoints external to the site as a minor extension to the existing urban edge, rather than a new, intrusive stand alone feature, or a large increase in the visible extent of built form. The proposed landscape mitigation measures have regard to the overall, cumulative effect of the development of the site and its effect on the wider landscape of Tweed Shire.

While altering the existing visual and physical landscape, construction of the proposed development, though it is to be spread over potentially a ten year period, is not anticipated to have a significant adverse impact on the visual amenity of the local area as the majority of works are confined well within the site and, as this report demonstrates, visual sensitivity of the site is low. The magnitude of the visual impact is assessed as low, due to the limited number and sensitivity of receptors.



## 7. MITIGATION

Mitigation of visual impacts can take the form of:

- Avoidance of adverse effects;
- Reduction of adverse effects;
- Compensation for adverse effects.

Early in the development of the scheme proposal, LVO' Architecture were involved in the assessment of likely impacts of the development, thus informing the design process; accordingly the proposals respond to visual and landscape issues as appropriate. An example of this process is that a taller building was initially proposed in a visually more obvious position, but after reviewing the impacts upon visual amenity, its position was relocated, so as not to be visible from any of the photo viewpoint locations. Note that proposed built form within precincts L-10, N-5 and N-6 are not visible from any of the photo viewpoints. The proposed development goes further than providing basic mitigation, by yielding opportunities for the enhancement of some aspects of the wider landscape and visual resources of the site.

Avoidance of:

- Built development immediately adjacent to the most visually sensitive areas such as the southern slopes, adjacent to the site's southern boundary. The more prominent built form is sensitively located, set back beyond the plateau edges;
- Unnecessary damage to existing trees and vegetation by fencing off vegetation to be retained before construction commences;
- Removal of existing trees and vegetation by incorporating them within the development open space and residential development where possible.

Reduction:

- Construction of the majority of built form at a maximum of three storeys, the layout in accordance with surrounding developments, maintaining the characteristics of the landscape, such as treed slopes;
- In the majority of cases the most prominent built form, in terms of height have lower built form on all sides, on land so zoned; that is so that there is a gradation of scale, form and bulk in the vicinity of built form of greater height than three storeys,
- Manipulation of the siting, scale, form, density and massing of proposed buildings and use of combined landscape elements including fencing, hedging and tree planting within the development to enhance the character of the site;
- The location of housing areas to utilise the sites existing compartmentalised structure based on the field pattern, site topography and retained vegetation / trees. Retained vegetation would provide green wedges separating housing areas and provide sites for new planting, incidental

open space and pedestrian links between the clusters of development, within existing parts of Tweed Shire;

- Retention and reinforcement of existing vegetation and tree planting within proposed green spaces;
- The implementation of landscape planting will be phased so that it occurs concurrently with construction work; and
- Incorporation of existing boundary treatments that integrate with the surrounding environment and help create a sense of place.

#### Compensation:

- Replacement native tree and shrub planting, and new public open space areas to compensate for any surface vegetation and habitats lost during construction;
- Improved management of retained trees and vegetation , to encourage healthy future growth;
- Reinforcement, integration, protection and enhancement of existing landscape features within the development and open space provision to replace habitats lost during construction;
- Strengthening of existing swathes of vegetation by filling existing gaps with new planting to compensate for loss of trees.

#### Enhancement Measures:

- Enhancement through a strengthened management plan for the retained vegetation;
- Existing trees, boundary vegetation and ponds to be protected within proposed green spaces, maintained and managed to ensure a healthy condition is created and sustained. This will involve some planting within existing areas of vegetation to improve the age structure and succession. Existing ponds within the application area will be restored where required and enhanced with new marginal planting to improve habitat value and ecological sustainability. These features will provide visual interest and benefits for local wildlife;
- Individual tree planting throughout the site in the form of street trees and parkland trees in areas of open space.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1 Visual Amenity

The site of the proposed development is located in an Emerging Communities precinct of Tweed Shire and reflects a visual character typical of such communities.

The site has a low visual sensitivity, due primarily to the limited visual catchment and the type and extent of built form existing or proposed in the surrounding area.

The impact of the proposed development on the visual amenity of the area will result primarily from the introduction of built form into an undeveloped site which is adjacent to pockets of grassed open spaces and vegetated slopes and gully corridors that have significant natural character. This impact is somewhat lessened because the proposed development will be generally consistent with other development occurring in the surrounding areas, and because the visual amenity provided by these vegetated areas and surrounding areas will change over time as development continues in the area, particularly as a result of likely future urban expansion on land adjacent to the site's east boundaries.

Should the site be developed as predominantly residential development (as presently proposed) the resultant impact on visual amenity of the surrounding area would be low due to the following reasons:

- Minimal visual impact when viewed from the south and west due to the proposed retention of extensive mature hilltop trees and hillside vegetation which would obscure the appearance of structures;
- Proposed built form will generally be limited to 2 and 3 storeys in height and will be of a scale, form and character similar to that of existing development in the area;
- The areas of higher level buildings (identified at Figure 7) would not have their entire structures visible due to a combination of retained vegetation, new tree planting and other proposed lower level buildings;
- The site is mostly visible from distant viewpoints where views of any higher level buildings do not dominate the view corridor;
- Architectural design criteria of the proposed development is to be based on natural and neutral colours for building design so they appear visually recessive; and
- The visual impacts of proposed development for the site form a more refined focus in this report than what would be observed by the casual observer travelling through the local area.

### 8.2 Landscape Character

There would be a noticeable change in the character of the landscape of the site area. The enclosed linear parcels of pastureland of the eastern portion of the site and the open paddock of the western portion would become residential development land, including associated infrastructure. There would be a significant

increase in activity due to the increase in residential dwellings, the proposed community facilities, Local Centres, retirement living, private schools and public open space (refer Appendix, Figure 8). As well as increasing traffic and general activity in the area, this would benefit the local community and increase available resources. Mitigation planting and management will be used to enhance an otherwise neglected landscape, thus creating an additional area of public access land; the permanent residual landscape effects upon the existing paddock landscape and golf course complex are considered to be low and not experienced by many people/receptors.

Without the development, the grassland paddocks would largely remain in agricultural use as grazed farmland, with areas of vegetation and golf course. It is unlikely that the condition of the existing landscape features, such as the large amount of encroaching camphor laurel and declining health of trees, would be substantially improved otherwise.

The landscape character as described in the "Tweed Shire Scenic Landscape Evaluation Report – Volume 1" will not alter as a result of the development because the following positive landscape characteristics will still be dominant when seen from outside the site:

- "Landscape Features – Natural" – Forest on hillsides and along creeks and gullies;
- "Scenic – Cultural Features and Associations" which is currently exemplified by farming/agricultural landscape on hillsides will be slightly modified to open space on hillsides. The less valued characteristic of residential subdivisions will be present on the site but will not be obvious from outside the site.

### **8.3 Summary**

The impact upon landscape and visual amenity would be minimal, provided that future management plans for the protection and enhancement of the existing trees and vegetation within the proposed green spaces are implemented and replacement planting carried out.

In my opinion, the proposed development is a well-developed proposal whereby significant consideration has been given to positioning development clear of steep vegetated slopes and areas of environmental protection. These considerations will significantly mitigate and minimise negative visual impacts potentially resulting from the proposed development, and will result in a development that is complimentary to the existing and developing character of the surrounding environment.

In my opinion, with regard to visual impact, this project should be allowed to be approved for development.

## APPENDIX

<b>Figure 1</b>	Location Map with Photo Viewpoints
<b>Figure 2</b>	Regional Context Aerial Photograph
<b>Figure 3</b>	Site Context Aerial Photograph
<b>Figure 4</b>	Concept Masterplan <i>Included with permission from MLDesign</i>
<b>Figure 5</b>	Slope Analysis Plan <i>Included with permission from MICHEL GROUP SERVICES</i>
<b>Figure 6</b>	Precinct Plan <i>Included with permission from MLDesign</i>
<b>Figure 7</b>	Building Heights Summary with Balloon Locations <i>Included with permission from MLDesign</i>
<b>Figure 8</b>	Community Facilities <i>Included with permission from MLDesign</i>
<b>Figure 9</b>	Tweed Local Environment Plan, 2000 <i>Tweed Shire Council</i>
<b>Figure 10</b>	Product Summary <i>Included with permission from MLDesign</i>
<b>Figures 11 – 17</b>	Views from Photo Viewpoints