

# Visual Impact Assessment

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**PROPOSED CONCEPT PLAN  
SUBDIVISION FOR RESIDENTIAL & TOURIST ACCOMMODATION**

at

**LOT 156 in DP 628026 (No. 34 CREEK STREET)  
HASTINGS POINT**

Prepared for

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by

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PROJECT MANAGEMENT • TOWN PLANNING • ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING • LANDSCAPE DESIGN

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## 1.0 Introduction

This assessment has been undertaken to accompany a concept approval application for a proposed subdivision for residential and tourist accommodation development, by Walter Elliot Holdings Pty Ltd at Hastings Point. The subject of this Visual Impact Assessment is the site containing Lot 156 Creek Street, Hastings Point.

The visual impact of the proposal is required to be assessed from all locations, residences and view corridors that have the potential to be affected. On-site inspections and observations have been undertaken along with observations from surrounding public areas. These observations have determined major view corridors from these external areas to the site, whilst also determining views and vistas available from within the site to external areas and areas within the site itself. These observations have been assessed alongside the form and scale of the proposed development.

## 2.0 The Site and Proposal

The land area of the site upon which the subdivision is proposed is largely zoned 2(e) Residential Tourist under the Tweed LEP 2000 whilst the remainder of the site is zoned 7(a) Environmental Protection - (Wetlands and Littoral Rainforests).

Access to the site is provided from Creek Street which connects with Coast Road.

The proposed subdivision will yield 37 residential allotments plus two (2) tourist allotments and two (2) Integrated Housing allotments. Area Specific Development Controls have been developed and it is proposed that these should be adopted within Section A1 of the Tweed DCP.

## 3.0 Existing Visual Catchment

The site is located within a well defined visual catchment. In this regard, existing residential and tourist accommodation properties adjoin the northern perimeter of the site. To the east of this visual catchment is Hastings Bridge, open spaces and the Hastings Cove development. To the south, southwest and southeast, the visual catchment is bound by natural riparian vegetation, the creeks and the hills to the south, southwest. No buildings or dwellings are located within this area to the south, southwest.

The properties along Creek Street are considered to be the most closely related to the proposed development, with other surrounding properties separated from the proposal by way of either significant vegetation or topography.

Views to the proposed developable area from within the visual catchment are constrained by three (3) key features as follows:-

1. Cudgera and Christies Creeks and the mangroves and riparian vegetation associated with these.
2. Existing properties along the northern side of Creek Street (single dwellings and the North Star Holiday Resort) impede all views to the site from those

properties located to the east of Coast road and north of the Creek Street intersection with Coast Road.

3. Existing vegetation along the south side of the Creek Street Road Reserve associated with the existing table drain in this area screens views from sites within the North Star Holiday Park into the site. .

The area of the site proposed to be developed presently has a low visual impact upon surrounding locations within the village and adjoining properties along Creek Street due to these constraints. A detailed analysis of existing viewpoints has been carried out in addition to an analysis of ameliorative measures available to the proponent to minimise potential impacts. The major view constraints identified above, in addition to the identification of available views and vistas from these areas are depicted in the plans presented in Appendix A.

## 4.0 Objectives

1. Recognise existing vistas and view corridors to existing residents of the area and future residents of the proposed development both external to the site and within the site.
2. To minimise the visual impact of the proposal upon adjoining residents and surrounding areas of Hastings Point through appropriate subdivision design.
3. To provide appropriate and achievable mitigation measures for the minimisation of any recognised areas of significant visual impact.

## 5.0 View Corridors

### 5.1 Existing Dwellings Creek Street (Lots 34-45)

The visual outlook from the existing adjoining properties on the southern side of Creek Street are considered to be those that may be most impacted upon by the proposal as these lots adjoin the site. At present these properties back onto the site however, only existing Lots 34 and 35 would adjoin what is proposed to be housing allotments (proposed Lots 32 and 41).



Existing Lots 36 - 45 will not see any developable area located adjoining the rear of these lots. This ensures that these lots will maintain existing vistas of the riparian vegetation of the creeks and existing vistas of the hills to the south.

The proposal has undergone numerous revisions from the initial design stages and the visual impact upon these properties has been a major influence upon the redesign of the subdivision. Under this design very few existing lots (two) are adjoined by proposed residential allotments. The remainder of the area adjoining these lots remains open space providing for clear and uninterrupted vistas in a southerly direction. This is true for Lots 39 – 45 which will maintain uninterrupted views across what is currently grassed paddock within the site to the mangroves and SEPP 14 Wetland area as depicted in Figure 2 below (See also the sheet containing Vantage Points 7 & 8 in Appendix A).



No lots on the proposed development site in accordance with Council's DCP shall contain dwellings greater than two storeys in height. As the dwellings that would be constructed on the proposed residential allotments will be required to comply with Section A1 Residential and Tourist Code of Tweed DCP it is considered that the outlook from Lots 34-35 will be that of standard landscaped residential dwellings with the hills in the south west remaining the distant backdrop that it presently is beyond the existing trees to the rear of these properties. These trees presently provide a high level of screening from between the rear of the dwellings on Lots 34 – 37 to the site, which maintained will provide ample significant screening to the future dwellings within the proposed subdivision. In addition, setbacks required by the Section A1 of the Tweed DCP will further provide landscaped areas for additional tree growth.

Existing Lot 34 Creek Street presently has open views from the western side of this lot across the paddock grasses of the site. These will be obstructed by any future dwelling erected on proposed Lot 41. It is recognised that the land adjacent to this Lot and adjoining Creek Street has had the potential for development in accordance with the 2(e) Tourist/Residential zoning since the land was considered appropriate for this zoning and subsequent development by the adoption of Amendment 44 to the LEP in 2002.



The subdivision design proposed is considered a reasonable design outcome maintaining reasonable views to all single dwelling properties along Creek Street. It is considered reasonable views are maintained as those lots without existing screening created by trees to the rear of their properties will clearly maintain views across to the SEPP 14 wetland areas. Those properties located closest to proposed Lots 32 and 41 presently have vistas to the site that are well screened by existing vegetation that is not proposed to be removed as part of this proposal.

In regard to mitigation measures concerning these lots it is considered that the following is sufficient considering the reasonable vistas that this proposal maintains to the majority of these existing dwellings;

- Adherence to Section A1 of the Tweed DCP.
- Rehabilitation of the degraded areas of the site as per the Rehabilitation Plan presented in the Environmental Assessment Document to enhance riparian areas and maintain natural vistas.

## **5.2 North Star Holiday Resort (Lot 41)**

The accommodation located adjacent to the southern boundary of the North Star Holiday Resort looks into a row of vegetation along the table drain on the southern fringe of the Creek Street Road Reserve. This vegetation largely screens any clear views that maybe gained from these accommodation units, across the grassed areas of the site, to the vegetation along Christies Creek, with the exception of a few short, open, clearings.



The proposal plans to retain as many of the trees along this western section of Creek Street as possible through implementation of criteria within Design Guidelines created for the residential development on the site. This will ensure the maintenance of the trees along this southern side of Creek Street with the exception of those that will be required to be removed for driveway access to proposed lots along Creek Street. It is also noted that vegetation within the site boundary of the holiday park provides additional screening to the Creek Street Road Reserve. Attention is directed to the sheets depicting Vantage Points 5 and 6 as presented in Appendix A.

Mitigation measures to ameliorate visual impacts to residents and visitors within the North Star Holiday Park are:



➤ Proposed Site Specific Development Controls to be adopted within Section A1 of the Tweed DCP. These controls would state the following:

- Driveways to lots with frontage to Creek Street are to be located and constructed such that they avoid, where possible, the removal of trees adjacent to the property boundary, both within the property boundary and within the Creek Street Road Reserve.

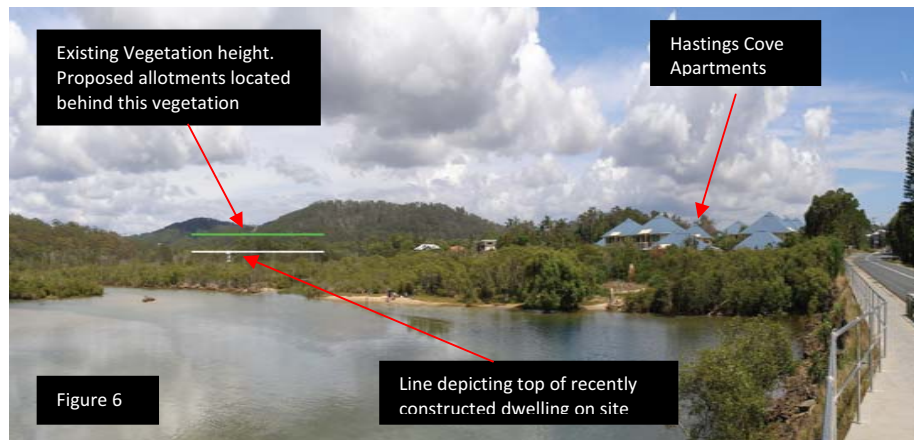
### 5.3 Hastings Bridge and South

Traffic heading in a northerly direction on the Coast Road and approaching the Hastings Bridge have a clear view of the riparian vegetation surrounding the site for a distance of approximately 150 metres. At present this view is of Cudgera Creek in the foreground, backed by mangroves and taller trees in the background. The open grasses at the centre and north of the site are not visible from the Coast Road. The upper portions of the second storey of the adjacent Hastings Cove Development can be sited through and above the mangroves lining the creeks. These same views can be obtained by pedestrians crossing the Hastings Bridge.



The building height limits for this site and surrounding sites under the LEP is three storeys with the exception of the lot containing the Hastings Cove development which has a height limit of two storeys. However, recently, Council resolved to adopt an Area Specific Development Control for Hastings Point within Section A1 of the DCP that provides a control requiring that the maximum building height is two storeys and 8m. This will apply to all dwellings and tourist development within the proposed subdivision.

It is considered desirable to minimise large areas of wall and roofing as a visual element amongst the natural backdrop that is gained from a driver's and pedestrian/cyclists perspective from the Tweed Coast Road and surrounding open space. The proposal has investigated this visual corridor at length and a design has been developed to ensure that no large bulky buildings are located within close proximity to the riparian fringe of the site and therefore closer to Tweed Coast Road. The proposed revised subdivision design provides a distance between the building line of the proposed development to the Hastings Bridge of approximately 400m (refer to Appendix A and the sheets depicting Vantage Points 1 & 2 for a detailed visual assessment, including cross sections of these view corridors).



This area is largely made up of mangroves and riparian communities providing a very significant visual buffer from the Tweed Coast Road/Hastings Bridge to the proposed residential allotments. As the maximum height for any development across the proposal will be two storeys and considering the separation distance and screening of existing vegetation to be maintained and enhanced, the visual impact of the development is considered to be minimal from this view corridor. In addition the placement of the two tourist allotments have been kept a considerable distance from the riparian areas which will further mean that the development on these allotments will not be seen from these public areas.

The above detail also applies to the site that contains the Hastings Point Caravan Park located on the south west approach to Hastings Bridge. This site is situated along Cudgera Creek and is found within the same view corridor discussed above. Those visitors staying within the caravan park are also screened by the riparian vegetation surrounding the camp sites providing significant screening between these sites and the proposed subdivision (refer to the sheets depicting Vantage Point 3).

Taking into consideration the following elements:

- separation distances from these public areas to the site and more particularly the eventual building line of future development on the site,
- The presence of significant mangrove vegetation backed by larger tree species and the maintenance and enhancement of this vegetation through a proposed rehabilitation program and
- Two storey heights limits in accordance with Section A1 of the DCP,

it is considered that the proposed development would have a minimal visual impact from public places, including the Hastings Point Caravan Park.

Proposed mitigation measures to ameliorate the impact of the development on the views across the site achieved from the Tweed Coast Road/Hastings Bridge are as follows;

- Rehabilitation of the degraded existing riparian vegetation located in the eastern area of the site.



## **5.4 Hastings Cove Apartments**

The Hastings Cove Apartments are located to the east of the site and is separated from the site by the sewer pump station. The distance from the proposed building line of any future dwellings within the proposed subdivision to the Hastings Apartments would be approximately 230m. As shown within the sheet in Appendix A depicting Vantage Point 5 the existing vegetation screens any potential views to the site. In addition and upon inspection of this area it has been determined that the buildings within the Hastings Cove development has been orientated to limit views in the direction of the site with single storey elements to the buildings adjacent to the boundary with no achievable views to the site.

The proposal is considered to have a negligible visual impact upon the Hastings Cove Apartments.

## **6.0 Cudgera and Christies Creeks – Visual Corridor**

During summer months and School Holidays the open space areas east of the Coast Road are very popular and bring a relatively high visitation to the area. Many of these visitors venture west of the Hastings Bridge either in kayaks/canoes or other small water craft. On lower tides some visitors explore the creek areas by wading through the waters. Local residents of the area also undertake similar recreational activities, including fishing. An investigation of the outlook from the creek areas below the Mean High Water Mark (MHWM) has also been undertaken.

The view (looking in a westward direction away from the Hastings Bridge and the mouth of Cudgera Creek) whether on foot or within water craft is largely of mangrove vegetation and the hills to the south, south west of the site. The proposed developable area of the site is only visible along sections of Cudgera Creek before it joins the tributary of Christies Creek. In this area the riparian vegetation is characterised by low lying mangroves. From this area the individual on the creek would be able to see the upper portions of some walls and roof tops of the proposed development only.

Further to this, is a break in the mangroves west of the Hastings Bridge. Housing allotments may be visible through this gap, which over time, through natural process, will most likely fill with mangrove regrowth. However, once moving toward and into Christies Creek the mangroves are of a greater height and are backed by taller paperback and swamp oak trees effectively screening views to the site and any of the future development proposed.



All of the existing riparian vegetation will be preserved and in some areas, rehabilitated, providing increased screening of the development as it appears to those utilising the Creek systems below the MHWM.

It is considered that the proposal will have a minimal impact upon the way visitors or local residents view the site, either from water craft on the creeks, or whilst wading through the creek systems.

Proposed mitigation measures to ensure existing vistas from Christies and Cudgera Creeks are maintained are as follows;

- Maintenance of existing riparian vegetation.
- Rehabilitation of riparian areas of the site adjoining the existing riparian zone to further enhance and maintain riparian communities and existing natural vistas.

## **7.0 Visual Outlook from Proposed Development**

It is important to consider the vistas that the proposed subdivision would provide future residents and those public who would visit the proposed open spaces. The following sections provide detail depicting available vistas from both proposed residential allotments and the proposed open space areas which are to be dedicated to the Tweed Shire Council for public access. Further to this, proposals to take advantage of the available natural vistas are outlined.

### **7.1 Vistas from Proposed Allotments**

The lot layout of any subdivision must consider and make use, where possible, of available vistas. In this instance the available vistas are the surrounding natural features of the area (hill slopes, the existing lagoon and Cudgera and Christies Creeks and associated riparian vegetation).

The proposed lot layout has been designed with orientation to the north in mind, along with the picturesque backdrop of the slopes of the hills to the south, south west. Many lots will have largely unimpeded views to this area over the lagoon. A majority of the lots will have some available view of the hills.

It is considered that two storey height limits are acceptable and may provide views into the riparian vegetation and across the waters of Christies and Cudgera Creeks for some future dwellings.

The natural features within the site and the surrounding topography provide opportunities for future residents and visitors to proposed public open space. Many of these natural vistas are presently unavailable as the lot is under private ownership and uninvited access is not legal. The dedication of the proposed open spaces of the site to the Tweed Shire Council will enable these vistas to be opened to the public and also to those future residents of the area. The lot layout allows maximum available opportunities for future dwellings to gain various degrees of aspects to these vistas.

### **7.2 Vistas from Proposed Open Space**

The existing lagoon and hills to the south, south west are natural features that should be promoted as a visual focus of the open space network. The proposed recreational open space areas have locations at which these natural vistas could be promoted. Formalised open space areas with shelters and landscaping are proposed to be developed near to the lagoon. This shall allow visitors to the area to take advantage of

these vistas and garner an understanding of the local, coastal environment of the area through physical association with the riparian zone and the woodlands that are visible on the hillsides, creating a greater legibility of the village of Hastings Point.

In addition the proposed pathway linking the open space areas with the residential component of the proposal has been designed for pedestrians and cyclists to gain a unique perspective of the riparian vegetation by bringing the path close to the interface between the natural vegetation and the proposed landscaped open space areas. This will allow visitors the ability to view Hastings Bridge through the gap in the mangroves discussed above and provide orientation in respect to the individuals' location within Hastings Point.

## 8.0 Summary of Mitigation Measures

- Adherence to Section A1 of the Tweed DCP.
- Rehabilitation of the degraded areas of the site as per the Rehabilitation Plan presented in the Environmental Assessment Document to enhance riparian areas and maintain natural vistas.
- The preservation of trees along the fringes of Creek Street to maintain the existing outlook from the accommodation units within the North Star Holiday Park and to promote the existing natural features of the Street and the location adjacent to the Cudgen Nature Reserve. This can be achieved through developed Area Specific Development Controls that can be adopted within Section A1 of the Tweed DCP (refer to Appendix E of the EA document).
- The preservation of all existing riparian vegetation within the site.

## 9.0 Utilisation of Vistas

- Appropriate location and provision of formalised active open space areas to take advantage of existing natural features of the site and surrounding areas.
- Dedication of the proposed open space areas to the Tweed Shire Council to ensure that available vistas are maintained for the public into the future.
- Lot layout that promotes the availability of vistas to natural areas through considered design.

## 10.0 Conclusion

The site provides numerous opportunities to utilise vistas of available natural features both within the site and externally to the site. The proposed subdivision and potential future development within the allotments will have some visual impact on view corridors from surrounding areas. The proposed subdivision design, in regard to location on the site and lot layout, along with proposed mitigation measures is considered to minimise the visual impact of the development to surrounding areas to an acceptable level.



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It is submitted that the proposal effectively makes use of available vistas for both future residents and visitors to the public open space areas. It is considered that the proposal will not have an unreasonable visual impact upon the locality within a site that is heavily screened from surrounding locations by existing riparian vegetation that is proposed to be preserved and in some areas on site enhanced through rehabilitation.

## Appendix

# A

## Plans - Visual Impact Assessment