

## **SALAMANDER SHORES HOTEL REDEVELOPMENT**

Soldiers Point Road, Port Stephens



## **SITE ANALYSIS & VISUAL IMPACT REPORT**

July 2010

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## **1.0 OUTLINE**

The proposed development site is on Soldiers Point Peninsula on the southern shores of Port Stephens. Soldiers Point is primarily developed with urban scale housing ranging from one to three storeys interspersed with two to five storey apartment buildings. It is located on the eastern side of the peninsula between two lengths of dense coastal residential development.

The site is unique to Soldier's Point having the following characteristics:

- It is completely surrounded by land zoned open space containing native bush land
- It is one of the few developments that is setback from the water
- It is well screened by dense vegetation and open space with the tree canopy up to RL37 but generally at RL30.
- It is contained within a green knoll which rises steeply from both Soldier's Point Road and the water's edge.
- The north and western frontages of the site facing Soldiers Point Road are buffered by public open space that aid the visual screening of the development from surrounding land-uses.

The topography and surrounding bush land help to screen the site from view particularly from the water, key public domain areas including Wanda Wanda headland, the adjoining public jetty as well as motorists traveling north along Soldiers Point Road.

## **2.0 REGIONAL AND LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Port Stephens area is a tourism destination of particular state and national importance, but primarily catering to the Sydney and Newcastle Regions. With its waterways and beaches of exceptional natural beauty it is a significant and growing tourism resource that must respond to continued development demands in a sustainable and visually sensitive manner. Previous and recent developments in the area have been piecemeal, often creating visually unattractive and overly dense outcomes that are detrimental to the area and in particular to the coast line.

## **3.0 EXISTING DEVELOPMENT AND SITE ANALYSIS**

- The existing Salamander Shores Hotel occupies a 1.2ha site setback 80 metres from the waters of Port Stephens at Soldiers Point.
- The hotel operates as a 3½ star 91 room hotel managed by the Accor group with complementary facilities such as a bar, restaurants, pool and conference areas.
- The hotel, built in 1969, is an outdated and monolithic building with limited public domain benefits. It is well screened along its sea frontage but generally does not relate well to the site being an imposing structure well setback from the street. It has no street

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presence being dominated by the car park with views from Soldiers Point Road into the open hotel corridors.

- The hotel is generally two to five storeys in height with the roof level sitting at approximately RL30.

### **3.0 EXISTING NEIGHBOURING DEVELOPMENT**

#### **3.1 Waterfront:**

- Adjoining water front development is very intrusive with little or no landscaping or screening when viewed from the water's edge.
- Former simple coastal bungalows have been demolished and replaced with large, urban style housing of up to 3 storeys high that maximize the permitted site coverage.
- The wooded open space in front of the development site provides a well needed visual break to the dense urban beachscape

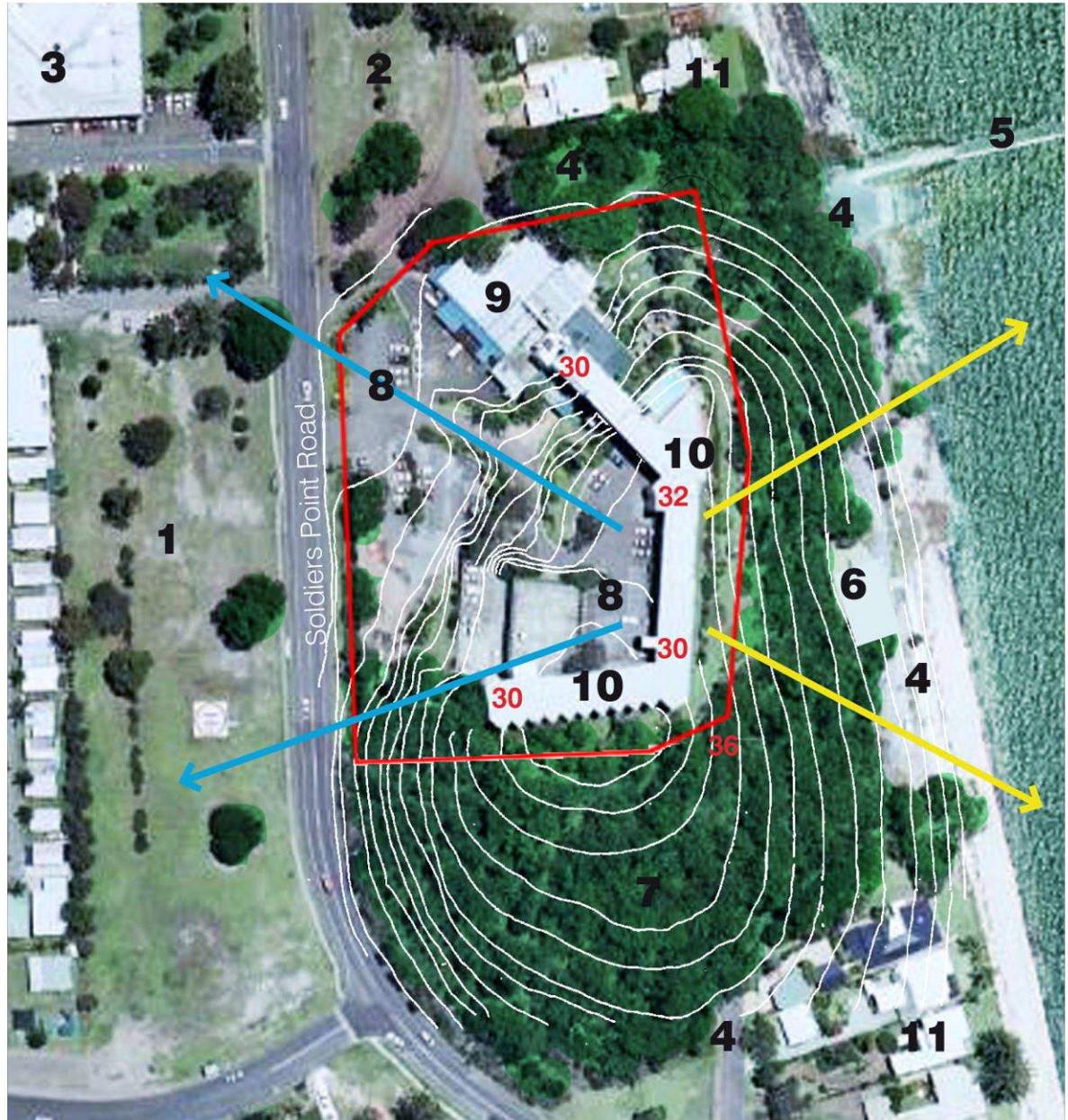
#### **3.2 Streetscape**

The development's primary streetscape frontage is along Soldiers Point Road on the eastern side, where it contrasts with existing 1-3 storey housing and unit development to the north and south along the coast. The existing development is screened from the road by street tree planting and is well set back behind open car park areas. The development is well screened when approached from the south by both pedestrians and vehicles

- The site is flanked to the south by woodland, to the west (across Soldiers Point Road) by local open space and to the north by a road reserve.
- A large bowling club facility is located diagonally opposite the site and degraded parkland directly opposite on Soldiers Point Road

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- VIEW TO EAST TOWARDS MOUTH OF PORT STEPHENS
- VIEWS TO WEST OVER SOLDIERS POINT
- SITE BOUNDARY
- 36 RELATIVE HEIGHT ABOVE SEA LEVEL IN METERS

- 1** OPEN SPACE RESERVE
- 2** ROAD RESERVE
- 3** BOWLING CLUB
- 4** ACCESS TO PIER & BOAT RAMP
- 5** PIER
- 6** SAILING CLUB
- 7** VEGETATED KNOLL (Crown)
- 8** EXISTING OPEN CAR PARKING
- 9** EXISTING BAR & DINING
- 10** EXISTING HOTEL ROOMS
- 11** ADJACENT DENSE COASTAL RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS



Salamander Shores Hotel Limited  
SAKE Pty Ltd  
Daryl Jackson Robin Dyke Architects

figure 1

## SITE ANALYSIS

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### **4.0 Existing Planning Controls**

**Zoning:**3(a) Business General under the Port Stephens LEP 2000 enabling commercial, retail uses, and dwellings. There are no controls or policies that dictate the proportion of residential to commercial uses. The LEP contains no other development standards for the business zone.

**The Port Stephens DCP 2007** contains controls for Commercial and Mixed Use Development, directed to development located in town centres and villages that are community focal points providing shopping, services and leisure facilities for local residents, visitors and businesses.

**Height Limit:** Historically the height limit was 15m which reflects the existing buildings, but has since been reduced to 8m on this site.

**FSR control** is 1.8:1 providing over 22,000sqm of floor.

### **5.0 Proposed Controls:**

Through the Part 3A process and the development of a Concept Plan, specific controls for the site will to be generated by a detailed site analysis and view impact. Principles for future development are illustrated on the attached plan and include:

- The height of future development should be 15m from natural ground level
- Future development will be contained within the height of the existing tree line and canopy surrounding the site.
- Street front retail to be minimal as the site is located in close proximity between linear strip shops to the south at Salamander Bay as well as new shops located to the north on Soldiers Point Road. It is considered that additional retail development on this site would be economically unviable and result in vacant retail space, as has been demonstrated elsewhere.
- Street front public facilities to address and activate the north west corner of the site
- Provide a 10m bush fire set back to the eastern and southern boundaries
- Provide a 15m landscape set back along Soldiers Point Road to help minimize the visual mass of the future development
- Provide car parking under the development to maximize open space/landscape adjacent to buildings
- Provide a component of permanent residential accommodation to support the viability of the project and to create a mixed use development.
- Preclude the 90 day permanent residential occupancy limit as this control is not financially viable in the Hunter region resulting in high vacancy rates

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### **6.0 Visual Impact Analysis**

The visual impact of the proposed site has been assessed from four visual catchments that may contain potentially sensitive receivers. These comprise:

- roads approaching the site
- residential neighbourhoods to the north at higher elevations
- adjoining properties
- adjacent coastal edges and their extended areas to the north and south

In general the development is sited within a wooded knoll which filters views of the development from the sea and adjoining coastal beaches. The northern and western boundaries are flanked by public open space that provides a visual buffer when the site is viewed from these directions.

#### **6.1 Land Based Visual Impact** (from roads approaching the site and from adjoining properties)

Soldiers Point Road runs adjacent to the western site boundary and is the main distributor road for the Soldiers Point peninsula running north-south. When approaching the site from the south the development is fully screened from view by the existing wooded knoll. (ref key plan and photographs below). Similarly when viewed from the north, existing large eucalypts outside the boundary on the road reserve, screen the distant approach views.

It is not until the viewer is within 100 meters of the development that the impact becomes apparent however this is softened by the upper canopy of the woodland to the east and south which protrudes above the height of the development. Similarly views of the development from roads to the south west are well filtered by the existing woodland.

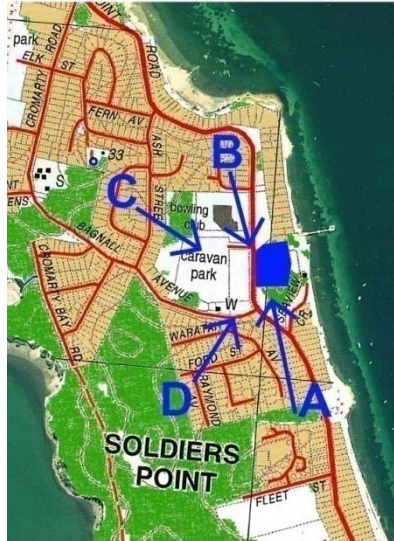
Immediately opposite the site to the west is a caravan park which is well set back by the width of the open space reserve. The proposed development is screened by existing road side vegetation and the proposed landscaped setback within the site will further mitigate the mass of the buildings when viewed from this aspect.

Visual impact will also be minimised by the proposed careful architectural articulation of the facades, the breaking up of the building massing together with the choice of recessive and appropriate colours.



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*Key Plan – Land based Impact Views*



*View A to North from Soldiers Point Road*

Travelling north along Soldiers Point Road, views to the proposed development will be almost entirely screened from view by the existing vegetation on the reserve to the south. It will have minimal impact on views from the neighbouring residential development



*View B view South from Bowling Club*

The proposed development site has extensive open space adjacent to the north and west which will provide a visual buffer to properties facing these boundaries. The

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primary address and 'publicly active' portion of the new resort will be on the north west corner which contains the entry and porte cochere of the hotel, as well the public bar and cafes. This area contains significant existing vegetation which is being preserved, thereby providing a mature landscape setting for this area. Relocating all car parking under the development and the provision of a 20m landscape set back along Soldiers Point Road for new planting, will enable the extension of the existing southern tree vegetation to sweep into the site along the western site boundary, helping to screen the development from the road.



*View B view South of proposed development from the Bowling Club*

The new resort is sited within a well landscaped setting surrounded on three sides by existing dense, mature vegetation that will ensure that the visual impact of the development will be minimum.



*View C from North West residential area*

The views from this area are dominated in the foreground by the large and reflective roofs of the Bowling Club. The existing and proposed resort development sits behind mature vegetation which mitigates its scale and visual impact.



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View D North East from Bagnall Road (South)

Similarly to View A, views to the proposed development from this location will be almost entirely screened from view by the existing vegetation on the reserve to the south. It will have minimal impact on views from the neighbouring residential development

### 6.2 Land-based Visual Impact - Conclusion

The above images demonstrate that the existing vegetated hill to the east and south of the proposed development will provide significant visual screening when it is viewed from most locations surrounding the site to the north, west and south. The proposed heights and massing of the new buildings, being controlled by the existing tree heights, will ensure that in general, the proposed development will sit within the existing vegetation and have minimal visual impact on the adjoining residential developments.

View Point	Distance Scale	Visual Impact	Visual Sensitivity	Assessment
<b>A</b> to north from Soldiers Point Rd	Middle ground	low	low	low impact as site is well screened by existing vegetation
<b>B</b> from Bowling Club entrance	Middle ground	medium	medium	Existing vegetation and proposed landscape setbacks will minimise visual impact
<b>C</b> from North west residential area	Back-ground	low	low	The development sit with the background of the existing vegetation
<b>D</b> Bagnall Road facing east	foreground	low	low	low impact as site is well screened by existing vegetation

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### 6.3 Coast Visual impact (viewed from the coastline and off shore)

In general, the coastal hill and its vegetation provides significant screening of the development when viewed from the coast and the Port.



*Key Plan – Coastal Impact Views*



*View A from Wanda Headland*

The existing vegetation on the natural reserve almost entirely screens the proposed development from view from this location. Small portions of the residential and serviced apartment blocks will be visible. The visual impact will be similar to that presented by existing resort.

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*View B from Port Stephens facing south west*

From most locations off-shore facing west, the new development will be well screened by the existing vegetation and only the upper levels of the serviced and residential apartments will be visible. The proposed massing of the buildings provides breaks in the skyline which will ensure that the new buildings will be less visually intrusive than the linear massing of the existing resort when viewed from these off shore view points.



*View C from Port Stephens facing west (refer to View B above)*



*View D from the beach facing south*

The dense existing vegetation to the north of the site in the reserve and the road corridor almost completely screens the proposed and existing resort developments from view. The existing three storey strip beach front housing dominates the coastal view at this location.



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*View E from the jetty facing west  
(refer to View B above)*



*Sketch View E of proposed development from the jetty facing west  
(refer to View B above)*

### 6.4 Coastal Views Impact - Conclusion

The above images demonstrate that the existing vegetated hill to the east and south of the proposed development will provide significant visual screening when it is viewed from along the coast, from the pier and off shore. The proposed height and massing of the new buildings, being controlled by the existing tree heights, will ensure that in general, the proposed development will have minimal visual impact on the coast line and adjoining residential developments.

View Point	Distance Scale	Visual Impact	Visual Sensitivity	Assessment
<b>A</b> Wanda Wanda	Middle ground	low	low	Low impact as view is distant and well screened



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<b>B</b> Off shore close facing SW	Middle ground	low	low	Low impact as site is well screened and housing in foreground has high impact
<b>C</b> Off shore distant facing West	Back-ground	low	low	low impact as site is well screened from this location
<b>D</b> Foreshore facing south	Back-ground	low	low	Low impact as site is well screened and housing in foreground has high impact
<b>E</b> End of Pier facing west	Fore-ground	medium	medium	Low impact, as only the upper portions of the development will be partial visible through existing vegetation