

5 August 2011

Determination of the Bloomfield Concept Plan

Background

The Bloomfield site is currently part of the Orange Agricultural Institute, but part of it has been identified as surplus land and was rezoned for residential, mixed use and infrastructure purposes in 2009.

Concept Plan

The Concept Plan seeks approval for:

- an urban structure plan, which provides for
 - o 90.3 ha of land for agricultural research purposes;
 - o 40.6 ha of land for residential lots;
 - o 17.8 ha of land for roads and public domain;
 - o 5.6 ha of land for open space; and
 - o 3.16 ha of land for commercial/retail development;
- An increase in the maximum retail floor space cap, from 1,500 m² to 3,500 m²;
- Consolidation, subdivision and realignment of 10 lots into 5 lots;
- Plans for street layouts and typologies, staging, and utilities and servicing; and
- Development principles for the residential area.

Delegation to the Commission

On 28 May 2011 the Honourable Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure delegated his powers and functions to determine Concept Plans and Project applications to the Planning Assessment Commission. The Bloomfield Concept Plan was subsequently referred to the Planning Assessment Commission for determination under the Ministerial delegation.

The Commission consisted of Ms Janet Thomson (Chair), Mr Richard Thorp and Mr Lindsay Kelly.

The Department's Assessment Report and Recommendation

The Director-General's Environmental Assessment Report provided an assessment of the following issues:

- economic impact;
- transport and access;
- subdivision design and layout;
- land use impacts;
- ecological impacts;
- bushfire protection;
- water management; and
- development contributions.

The Department concluded that the site is suitable for the proposed development and that the application is in the public interest, subject to the recommended modifications to the concept plan, including limiting the maximum retail floor space area to 2,000 m².

Site Visit

The Commission visited the site on Friday 1 July 2011.

Meetings with the Department, Council, Submitters and the Proponent

The Commission met with staff from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure on 20 June for a briefing on the project. The background to the proposal, strategic context, permissible land-uses and emergency access arrangements were discussed.

On 1 July 2011 the Commission met with senior staff from Orange City Council. Council objected to the proposed increase in retail floor space, indicating the current retail floor space restriction of 1,500 m² should be retained. Council also noted that it could reconsider this limit in the future, once the additional space is required. Council's Sustainable Settlement Strategy and housing supply issues were also discussed, along with the access and infrastructure delivery issues for the site.

The Commission also invited those individuals and special interest groups who made submissions on the project to meet with the Commission to discuss their views on the proposal. 7 individuals from the local community attended the meeting on 1 July 2011, including representatives of the Environmentally Concerned Citizens of Orange and the Sporting Shooters Association.

One of the key concerns related to the suitability of the site for the project, particularly the residential component, including:

- potential land use conflicts with neighbouring agricultural activities;
- buffer requirements for both the electricity transmission line onsite and the adjoining rural properties;
- impacts on flora and fauna and aboriginal cultural heritage;

Other issues raised included: traffic impacts from the development of the site; impacts on the viability of the Orange Agricultural Institute, the nearby rifle range and neighbouring TAFE Campus; visual impacts and loss of views; and the management of stormwater.

On 1 July 2011 the Commission also met with the staff from the State Property Authority (the Proponent) and their consultants. Issues discussed included the proposed access arrangements, the potential upgrade of the electricity transmission lines, potential land use conflicts with the neighbouring agricultural land, the need for the additional retail floor space requested and the timing for the release of the residential stages.

Additional Information

On 28 July 2011 the Proponent provided additional information to the Department and the Commission indicating the electricity line is not likely to be upgraded until 2018 and that it is likely underground wires would be installed in residential areas. The Proponent also indicated that no residential lots created would be burdened by the current electricity easement.

The Proponent also submitted amended plans to realign the southern boundary and the Department updated the recommended conditions to accommodate the proponent's revised plans. As a result, an area originally proposed for public open space is now to be retained by the research facility (the area of land to be reserved for public open space has been reduced to 4.69 ha and the area to be retained for agricultural research purposes increased to 91.17 ha).

Commission's Comments

A number of individuals raised concerns about the suitability of the site for residential purposes, while the Commission acknowledges these concerns it notes that the site is already zoned for residential purposes and that the Concept Plan is largely permissible within the current zoning.

In relation to the concerns regarding potential land use conflicts with neighbouring rural properties, the Department has recommended requirements for future residential subdivision applications, to ensure appropriate buffers are provided to agricultural land. Consequently the Commission is satisfied this issue will be addressed in the future development applications for the relevant stages.

The Proponent has also indicated that no residential lots created shall be burdened by the current electricity easement. In order to ensure this occurs, the Commission has added this requirement as a modification to the Concept Plan.

Commission's Determination

The Commission has considered the Department's Assessment Report and associated documents, including the recommended instrument of Concept Plan approval.

The Commission has determined that the Concept Plan should be approved, subject to the recommended modifications, as amended by the Commission.



Janet Thomson
Member



Richard Thorp
Member



Lindsay Kelly
Member