

Administrator's Minute-Design Quality in Tweed Shire Council

Submitted by Administrator Turnbull

Tweed Shire Council (TSC) is one of the fastest growing Local Government Areas in NSW. Forecast population growth in the next 15-20 years varies but the expected increase is in the order of 50% greater than the present population of 80,000.

To satisfy this forecast population growth, several key sites in the TSC area have been zoned for urban development. Many of these sites are located on steep land. There are proposals to rezone more land in this way. Examples include the Terranora E site, as well as the proposed subdivision on McAllister's Road, Bilambil Heights. There are others as well. This list is not exhaustive, but indicative only.

This poses a real development challenge in the TSC area as it contains some of the most beautiful and scenic landscape in NSW. Some of the land zoned for urban expansion lies on the rural / residential fringes in the northern portion of the TSC. Much of this land is of a very high scenic value which contributes greatly to the amenity of the local community, and even further because of the availability of distant views to and from the particular sites. The character and beauty of this land is a function of its hilly terrain, the richness of the soil and the quality of the natural and existing landscape.

It is important for future generations that the quality of the built environment complements the natural and existing environment, and does not destroy it. Development and subdivisions must be approved with the overall sustainability of the local area and the TSC as a whole taken into account. Destroying the natural environment by imposing upon it a built environment that fundamentally alters it by cutting and filling it is not sustainable.

Developments, and subdivisions must take into account the impacts of the hilly terrain, and heavy rainfall, and flooding impacts. In particular, subdivisions and developments which change the levels of the land so that natural water courses are destroyed and stormwater impacts are severe, especially where cutting and filling involves the construction of high retaining walls, should be discouraged, and more sustainable water management practices implemented.

In the past, many subdivisions on hilly sites have been characterised by a high degree of cutting in and filling the landscape, so as to alter the natural topography beyond recognition. Some subdivisions appear to have been built despite of, not in harmony with, the land's natural form.

With the present development pressure in the TSC area, it is important for the maintenance of the region's natural beauty that future subdivisions have the following characteristics: -

1. Complement the natural landscape and its topography and not require an excessive amount of cutting and filling and alteration to the natural landscape
2. Ensure that the built environment does not destroy or diminish the natural environment, to the maximum degree possible.
3. Promote the retention of as much natural vegetation as possible, and ensure that the built environment has built into its design from the outset, a high standard of landscaping encouraging regeneration of the natural landscape after subdivision and development has occurred.
4. Retain as much open space as possible, with maximum amount of permeable surfaces, with no excessive site coverage with hard surfaces, driveways etc.

This will require a more innovative and creative approach to subdivisions on land identified in the planning controls as appropriate for urban expansion and development. It is important that the TSC have a better understanding of best practice in the area of development and subdivision which maintains and enhances the natural environment, especially in hilly topography, and work with experts in the field of urban design and planning to ensure that TSC is a leader in the field of environmentally responsible urban design. TSC's urban expansion is must be of a high quality, and maintain a balance with the natural landscape.

RECOMMENDATION:

That:-

1. **A Design Review Committee be established to develop a list of options and recommendations to ensure best practice and best design is a feature of all subdivisions in the TSC area which will form the basis for a policy / DCP and or LEP amendment which will ensure high quality subdivision on rural land zoned for urban expansion. The Design Review Committee to consist of -**
 - i. **Administrator Turnbull; Director of Planing and Development or his nominee, a representative of the local community**
 - ii. **Consultants with expertise in urban design**
 - iii. **Representative from the Government Architect's Office**
 - iv. **Representative from DIPNR**

whose task it will be

- (a) **to achieve the objectives set out above,**

- (b) to achieve any other objectives referred to it from the Council from time to time which are directed to achieving design excellence in the TSC and retention of the natural beauty of the local environment and high quality urban design and development generally
 - (c) Provide Council with a report by 31 October with options and recommendations to ensure high quality, sustainable urban design on sites zoned for urban expansion and other reports from time to time as requested by Council.
2. Any applications for major residential rezoning and any development applications for subdivisions on hilly rural/residential or natural landscape land which is zoned for urban expansion be deferred until the Council has received and considered the report referred to in 1(c) above.
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