

PORT OF AIRLIE MARINA DEVELOPMENT

17. Visual Impact

17.1 Existing Conditions

The townships of Airlie Beach and Jubilee Pocket are located on a narrow coastal plain and extend inland along the Campbells and Airlie Creeks valleys. The rugged mountains of the Conway National Park provide a backdrop to the townships. Views across the water include the bright turquoise of tropical ocean scenes as well as steep forested landforms and large numbers of moored boats.

Figure 17-1 depicts the level of development in the vicinity of the proposed Port of Airlie and **Figure 17-2** shows Boathaven Bay from sea level. The photos show that development has extended up the mountain slopes in terraces, often the equivalent of five or 6 storey buildings as well as several stand alone buildings at 3-7 stories, including one on the main foreshore and another at Hermitage Drive. The photograph also shows the dominance of the Conway Range over the built environment at Airlie Beach when viewed from the sea.



■ **Figure 17-1 Site Overview – Block Model**

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■ Figure 17-2 Boathaven Bay Looking Inland

Along Shute Harbour Road and Hermitage Drive, adjacent to the development, there are several houses, hotel and unit developments. These extend up the slope away from Boathaven Bay and many have a view across part or all of Boathaven Bay and towards Mandalay Point and moored boats in the mouth of Boathaven Bay.

17.2 Potential Impacts

17.2.1 Construction

Construction activities will create a “raw” construction site across the proposed development area. The profile of the site will be at or below sea level, minimising visibility from most viewing aspects. Much of the mangrove fringe along Shute Harbour Road will be left in place and will screen some of the activity. However, some properties on the hillside sloping away from Shute Harbour Road will view parts of the construction site because these properties are elevated above the site. The construction site will be visible from the eastern end of the Airlie Beach commercial precinct, although viewers here will not be elevated and the impact will therefore be relatively minor.

Visual impact on properties along Shute Harbour Road will be low to moderate, depending on location, building height above sea level and the extent to which vegetation on the property screens views. This impact will continue for up to 18 months, by which time land reclamation, marina excavation and channel dredging will be complete and the site landscaping will be well advanced. Site landscaping will include construction of boardwalks and roadways as well as grassing of all land areas and planting of trees along the Shute Harbour Road boundary of the site.

For the next 5 years, construction of buildings around the site will be carried out. Visual impact of these activities is considered lower than the excavation. More comment on the visual impact of the buildings is provided in **Section 17.2.2**.

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17.2.2 Operation

Compatibility of Visual Form

The Port of Airlie has been designed to provide an extension of the town of Airlie Beach with buildings and open space areas that are consistent with the level and type of development in Airlie Beach while also providing a high quality commercial and open space precinct.

The Master Plan has been designed to take advantage of potential synergies between land use components within the development, as well as in the adjacent community. The heart of the development will be a semi-circular marina harbour defined on the west and south by reclaimed land extending out from Coconut Grove and Shute Harbour Roads, and on its northern edge by a new breakwater “spit”. A cross section of the development is provided in **Figure 17-3** and shows the visual openness of the development.

The spit will accommodate low-density residential development with frontage onto a new north-facing public beach, as well as a public pedestrian /cycle path leading to a small public park at its eastern end. A broad public boardwalk and promenade will define the curving western and southern edges of the marina harbour.

The public focus of the waterfront will be a wedge-shaped Arrival Plaza located at the intersection of the boardwalk promenade and a pedestrian mall on the alignment of Shute Harbour Road. The mall and plaza effectively extend the existing commercial main street of Airlie Beach to the waterfront, and are designed to integrate the new development into the existing community.

Similarly, a secondary vehicular and pedestrian access to the waterfront will occur as an extension of Airlie Esplanade to the north.

An integrated public carpark and transit facility will be located adjacent to Proserpine-Shute Harbour Road, behind the harbourfront commercial development. A tour bus and taxi interchange will be located above an underground public carpark.

Covered walkways, lined with opportunities for tour operator kiosks, will provide convenient pedestrian access from the transit interchange to the Arrival Plaza at the northern end of the interchange, and to a Sea Terminal at the southern end.

The Sea Terminal will provide direct access to tourist-oriented ferry and tour charter boats.

A public boat ramp and marine service facilities, including fuel pontoon and travel lift, will be located at the southern end of the site. Buildings in this facility will be single storey. A ship lift will be included and this may be slightly higher than the buildings. The final design and configuration of the ship lift has not been determined at this stage but is likely to be 4 to 5 metres in height.

A landscape buffer zone and service road will separate the low-rise marine services area from Proserpine-Shute Harbour Road. Orientation of buildings in this area will also be used to control views and noise.

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Mixed-use commercial and residential development is proposed around the perimeter of the boardwalk promenade and along the Shute Harbour Road pedestrian mall. Buildings will range in height from one to six storeys, and are designed to define the boardwalk and mall as a dynamic urban waterfront. Gaps in the built form around the perimeter of the harbour are designed to allow pedestrian permeability, and to frame key vistas into the site:

- ❑ the Airlie Esplanade vista is aligned with the central spine of the marina
- ❑ the Shute Harbour Road vista will terminate in the Arrival Plaza and marina basin, with the landmark hotel in the distance;
- ❑ the new entry into the site from Shute Harbour Road leads to an elevated roundabout, with views into the harbour on either side of the low-rise Sea Terminal;
- ❑ other gaps between buildings around the perimeter of the harbour will allow views to the marina basin from Shute Harbour Road;
- ❑ the low-rise buildings proposed for the Sea Terminal and marine service zone will preserve water views from sites on the hill to the west of Shute Harbour Road.

Ground floor uses on the waterfront will be slightly raised on semi-basement carparking podiums and set back from the edge of the boardwalk promenade. This will allow for outdoor dining terraces in the activated commercial waterfront located between the Arrival Plaza and the Sea Terminal, and a landscaped buffer strip in the residential areas to the north of the plaza.

The five storey buildings around the perimeter of the harbour will be designed with the three main residential floors set back from the ground level commercial base, and a top floor garden apartment level. The exclusive garden apartment level of each building will feature extensive roof terraces around a smaller building footprint, resulting in a reduction of the visual mass of the buildings.

The two landmark buildings that will visually anchor each end of the boardwalk promenade are proposed as the six-storey hotel and the six-storey residential building at the western end of the spit.

The five and six storey buildings are designed to provide a comfortable backdrop to the activated waterfront, given the scale of the marina basin.

The tops of the buildings will generally sit well below the ridge of the hills to the west.

One of the keys to establishing a successful and memorable tourist destination involves the creation of a meaningful sense of place, defined by an architectural character that draws its inspiration from local cultural and environmental context.

The architectural character of the buildings at Port of Airlie will be controlled by the developer through direct involvement or through design guidelines.

The buildings will be designed to reflect the tropical location, and a marine-based theme.

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A sense of lightness created by the use of deep roof overhangs, pergolas, shutters, fabric sails and other architectural devices designed to provide climate control and to visually break up the mass of buildings.

Landscaping, colour and graphics will be used to enhance the tropical theme and provide a festive and contemporary atmosphere.

Loss of Sea Views

The Port of Airlie development will come between properties on Shute Harbour Road and Hermitage Drive and Boathaven Bay. The views of many of these properties will be altered by the development. **Figure 17-4** shows an indicative view from the Hermitage drive area across the development and towards Mandalay point.

Clearly, while the Port of Airlie will be visible from many of these properties, views across the development to Mandalay Point and the mouth of Boathaven Bay will not be substantially interrupted.

As discussed above, the architectural character of the development is intended to create a sense of lightness instead of bulk. Views of the Port of Airlie will provide a range of visual stimuli and a pleasing blend of harbourfront activity and high quality architecture. Architectural design will need to take into consideration appearance of buildings from both the harbour and from the hinterland, thus buildings will need to have two fronts rather than a front and a back.

The marine facilities area will be screened from views from Shute Harbour Road and hinterland as follows:

- ❑ retention of the mangrove fringe along Shute Harbour Road;
- ❑ design of buildings to maximise aesthetic features and orientation of buildings to provide a screen to activities being conducted in this area; and
- ❑ planting of semi-mature trees on reclaimed land areas as soon as practicable after land reclamation.

Similarly, the spoil disposal area will be screened by retention of the mangrove fringe along Shute Harbour Road. As soon as possible, areas of the spoil disposal area will be covered with topsoil and vegetated. The height of this feature is not expected to be much above the Shute Harbour Road Grade at this location.

In the event that the Stage 2 development goes ahead, these will be relocated within 5-10 years and replaced with commercial or residential development.

On this basis, the alteration of views from properties along Shute Harbour Road and Boathaven Bay is not considered to be detrimental to these properties.

View from the Ocean

Viewed from the ocean, the development will be dwarfed by the high, steep mountains of the Conway Range. The orientation of Boathaven Bay is such that the development will not be visible from most of Pioneer Bay and the Whitsunday Passage. Heights of buildings proposed for the development are dwarfed by the existing development rising up from Shute Harbour Road. **Figure 17-5** shows a close view of the site from the breakwater looking inland.

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On this basis, impact on visual amenity of the World Heritage Area is considered to be minimal.

Litter

Litter is recognised as significantly detracting from visual quality. Stormwater drains existing the site will have gross pollutant traps installed, designed to collect litter. This may in fact reduce the overall release of litter to the marine environment since existing stormwater drains from the eastern end of the Airlie Beach commercial precinct will be re-routed through the site.

Litter bins will be provided in public access areas of the development. Queensland has anti littering legislation in place.

17.3 Recommendations

17.3.1 Design

All buildings and structures shall be designed to the highest architectural and aesthetic standards to ensure sympathy with the surrounding townscape and avoid any sense of bulk.

17.3.2 Construction

A landscaping plan should be developed for the site. Among other things, the plan should achieve the following outcomes:

- ❑ As far as possible, all mangroves along Shute Harbour Road should be left in place. Removal of those which cannot be left should be delayed as long as possible.
- ❑ The construction site should be maintained in a clean and orderly manner at all time. All waste should be collected and stored neatly and removed from site as soon as possible.
- ❑ Landscaping of the Shute Harbour Road frontage with trees should be undertaken as soon as practicable after land reclamation. The key landscaping philosophies should be to ensure that screening of the site is achieved as quickly as possible and that long distance vistas over and through the development are not lost due to tall trees. Input should be sought from affected and potentially affected landowners.
- ❑ Landscaping with trees and other appropriate plants in other locations around the site should also be carried out as soon as possible to achieve a tropical, vegetated feel.
- ❑ The remainder of the site should be grassed until it is further developed.

In addition, the construction site should be maintained in a neat and orderly condition, with all wastes properly stored and promptly removed.

17.3.3 Operation

The site should be well maintained such that it retains its high aesthetic quality. Litter receptacles should be provided and litter removed regularly. Litter traps on stormwater drains should be cleaned regularly.

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■ **Figure 17-3 Cross Section**



■ **Figure 17-4 Indicative view from Hermitage Drive**

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■ Figure 17-5 Perspective of site from Breakwater looking Inland