

Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) Advice – 2nd April 2015

This advice is provided by a sub-committee of the UDAP, formed at short notice to review the proposal for the development of a site at Yaroomba by Sekisui House.

The involvement of the UDAP, leading to the provision of written advice to Council progressed based on the following meetings:

- 28th March 2014 – visit to local area to inspect the subject site, followed by a background briefing and workshop;
- 20th June 2014 – second briefing and workshop.
- 2nd April 2015 – third briefing and review of additional information supplied by KHA Development Managers, on behalf of Sekisui House.

The following points represent a summary of UDAP's response, based on the concept submitted to council on the 31st March 2015.

Feedback on the Proposal:

The Master Plan

- a) The Master plan proposes 15 residential buildings, 1 Hotel and 1 serviced apartment building ranging from 60m to 120m in length and 4 to 10 stories in height.
- b) The buildings are long, bulky and separated by relatively small gaps. The site planning has buildings arranged in 3 'walls' running north/south through the site with only the eastern-most line of buildings gaining reasonable sea views - and then only where high enough to extend above the vegetation. Sea views from the 2nd and 3rd lines of buildings would be obstructed. Sekisui House justify increased building heights on the grounds that sea views are critical for a 5 star resort to be economically viable although the building heights would appear to deliver density and not sea views beyond the first wall of buildings.
- c) Generally there is a lack of identity and a sense of place: it doesn't appear to have a strong character that makes it relate to the site or reflect the Sunshine Coast.
- d) A single entry through to a roundabout arrival point within the site does not provide the quality destination aspirations or establish any sort of unique arrival experience.
- e) The siting of the buildings has been described, in the proposal, to be orientated to maximize the views and not for solar or thermal efficiencies. This should be tested further to achieve both outcomes and provide a more sustainable development.
- f) The Hotel entrance is lacking a quality 5 star approach and misses the opportunity to integrate the lake.
- g) The retail boardwalk area apparently lacks parking and has an undefined linear layout dominated by adjoining buildings. There is little to suggest a form which will provide a memorable or distinctive public precinct.
- h) Staging should deliver a welcoming public precinct in the early years; it isn't clear how this will be achieved.
- i) It would appear that the concept hasn't utilized the inherent opportunities this site has for a 5 star hotel and high density residential development. The concept seems to struggle in offering a unique destination and it is not clear what would make this an exciting tourism destination worthy of 5 stars or capable of delivering sustainable long-term economic success.

Building Heights

- a) Visually the built form will be seen from sections of the eastern beach and clearly evident from Point Arkwright and the iconic view from Mt. Coolum. This should be understood as a significant impact upon the existing natural character of the region and not in keeping with the Sunshine Coast's identity as a natural destination.
- b) The photomontage from Mt Coolum appears to be incorrect. The renderings do not show the impact of sunlight on wall surfaces or glazing and even painted green the visual impact would be significantly higher than that presented. The vegetation in the montage does not appear to be accurately positioned and there is concern that it is misleading in its ability to screen the buildings. For example, building 4 is shown as hidden with the exception of its roof although there is no space for trees or buffer shown on the master plan due to an internal access road and the access road to the adjoining southern residential development.

Landscape and Public Realm

- a) There is no overall landscape strategy linking remnant dunal landscapes, the lakes, the proposed buffer planting and the building environments into a coherent network.
- b) The public green is poorly integrated with the resort and appears to be token. It is not clear what public benefit the Public Green Area contributes to the community. It does not relate to the retail strip or to the pool and outdoor facilities of the Hotel. Access is provided by foot or bicycle and there is no public car access. There is no public car parking shown near the public green or elsewhere within the development (although this is assumed to be provided in building basements).
- c) There is poor integration of existing community facilities (e.g. the community centre and beach club) to the rest of the development and public spaces.
- d) There is no clear and legible public cycle or pedestrian way through the resort.
- e) The internal pedestrian network is similarly poorly designed and appears to respond to allotment boundaries rather than a desire to connect nodes with desire lines. Again there is no demonstrated intent for an integrated tourism destination.
- f) The boardwalk within the hotel complex is a dead-end and will be an unsuccessful piece of commercial development as it breaks all retail rules; there is far too little retail to provide a vibe required both for tourists and/or residents.

Infrastructure

- a) There appears to be poor provision for emergency/service access or indeed definition of different user types using the hierarchy of movement networks (e.g. service vehicles and hotel visitors all using the same access and circulation routes).
- b) The street network will deliver poor way-finding and confusing internal circulation. It is unlikely to function appropriately in its present suggested form and will not provide a quality journey either for visitors to the site or those moving within the site.
- c) The location of the entries to the retirement and residential precincts directly off the entry road, in proximity to the David Low Way roundabout access, is unlikely to work, and will create the need for a new junction or roundabout immediately within the site. The impact is unlikely to help improve the arrival.
- d) The extent of hard surfacing and land take is likely to be significantly different to that shown, resulting in less landscape and open space.
- e) There is no clear provision within the concept identifying the space required for the proposed sustainable infrastructure such as district heating plant, recycling station, storm water treatment.

Recommendations:

The Master Plan

- a) The concept presents as an enclave generally discouraging public access to the beach where as public beach access should be fundamental to this concept. As well as beach access a minimum of two vehicle entrances to the site should be provided so as to encourage a solution that is permeable and contributes to good circulation.
- b) A better concept would promote a vibrant main street, an approach that provides a beach side community where people can have coffee, go to restaurants, go fashion shopping, a pharmacy etc. that interact and contribute to the site. The concept hasn't embraced this ideal. An important public realm should be a central to the development.
- c) There are many existing examples on the Sunshine Coast of successful beachside retail precincts, which have a distinct arrival/destination, parking, open space and movement structure. These examples promote usage by locals and tourist and create a destination and sense of place.
- d) For the hotel to be successful there is a need to provide a destination that is worthy of people journeying to this location for something special, the current concept does not appear to provide this.
- e) The sustainable building practice statements stand to be questioned as possible additions to the buildings. Sustainable design needs to start from the ground up starting with landscape and building orientation etc. The practicalities of the proposed 'Other Initiatives' is seen as unlikely as the cost of these initiatives compared to this scale of development would most likely render these options unfeasible.

Building Heights

- a) There is a need for detailed cross sections along the full profile of the beach, indicating the cross sections at all the low points through the dunes. This will inform on the actual visual impact of the development to the beach.
- b) In general, building heights should not exceed 8 levels in the middle of the site tapering down either side to between 3 and 4 stories. Buildings should generally consist of smaller modules that do not exceed 30 metres in length with a preference of 20 metres in length. This will enable sight lines through the site.
- c) The height of the dunes and the vegetation will preclude views to the ocean from the hotel for the first 3-4 stories. The hotel's views of the ocean will not benefit by being located closer to the dune. The hotel could be as effective at the centre of the site and could look over other development. This would result in the same ocean views that the current proposal achieves without the buildings visually impacting on the beach.
- d) The principle of ensuring building form is not visible from the beach or breaking the beach line from Mt Coolum needs to be maintained.

Landscape and Public Realm

- a) There appears to be no clear landscape strategy proposed. There is a need for a clear landscape strategy to integrate this site into the sensitive surrounding landscape. The concept has indicated straight lines around the boundary of the site. It would be preferable for there to be bleeding of the various landscape elements into the development, making the boundary between the pristine surrounding environments less identifiable.
- b) The concept indicates separate precincts that would not promote social interaction. The addition of food and entertainment facilities would be better provided as an integrated street facility where the community can gather and interact as compared to those facilities being provided within a hotel development. Public recreation spaces that promote active living should be included in the proposal.

Infrastructure

- a) It would be preferable for there to be at least two vehicle entrances to the development from the David Low Way that would support a through traffic circulation system. The proposed road network is seen as inadequate as the location of the new entry road from the main roundabout is shown to be only as wide as the internal roads thus providing no proper circulation to the development at all. There appears also to be no roundabouts at dead ends or to the entrances of the particular stages. The new entrance roundabout essentially includes through traffic along the David Low Way and due to the scale of the roadway and the nominated traffic volume, this entrance would be impractical.
- b) A fully integrated traffic network system that harmonises with pedestrian and bike pathways as well as public parking should be resolved to promote ease of access to the public, residences, service providers and emergency vehicles.

In summary the proposal does not provide the community with the opportunities that this site has to offer. The concept doesn't provide an ease of access to the beach, through the site or offer a high quality destination. The success of a high quality tourism destination within this unique site would require a design that encourages community activity within a sustainable and inclusive development that reflects its location and environment.

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