

12 October 2015

The Chief Executive Officer
Whitsunday Regional Council
PO Box 104
PROSERPINE QLD 4800

Attention: Strategic Planning Department

Dear Sir/Madam;

**RE: Objection to the Draft Whitsunday Regional Council Planning Scheme
Regarding the Proposed Building Heights within the Airlie Beach Local Plan**

I (**insert submitters name**) of (**insert residential or business address of submitter**), refer to the proposed designation of height provisions for land within the Airlie Beach Local Plan of the Draft Whitsunday Regional Council Planning Scheme (the draft planning scheme).

The draft planning scheme was released for public exhibition and consultation on the 21 August 2015, and this period runs until 16 October 2015. Throughout this time, the general community has been invited to make a formal submission about the draft planning scheme.

We hereby submit that the way the draft planning scheme proposes to deal with the land within the Airlie Beach Local Plan is not appropriate, and we recommend that the draft be changed to rectify this.

Background

The Whitsundays is a world renowned holiday destination, with Whitsunday icons like the Great Barrier Reef, Heart Reef and Whitehaven Beach at the top of millions of bucket lists around the world. Airlie Beach is the hub of the Whitsundays region, being the largest town on the Whitsunday Coast, almost entirely focused on tourism.

Travellers to Airlie Beach are offered a great variety of accommodation from backpacker hostels to 5 star luxury hotels and resorts and everything in between. Being the hub of the Whitsunday Coast, Airlie Beach is the ideal location for a Whitsunday holiday as it provides freedom and flexibility in choice of activities within the small scaled tourist locality.

Airlie Beach contains a populated and small scaled beach character that is maintained through the existing built form and associated facilities.

Current Planning Scheme

The current planning scheme is the Whitsunday Shire Planning Scheme 2009 (the current planning scheme). Within the current planning scheme the Airlie Beach Locality contains majority of Commercial, Residential House, Residential Multiple Dwelling and Tourism zoning.

An excerpt of the zoning map for the site is included as Figure 1 below.

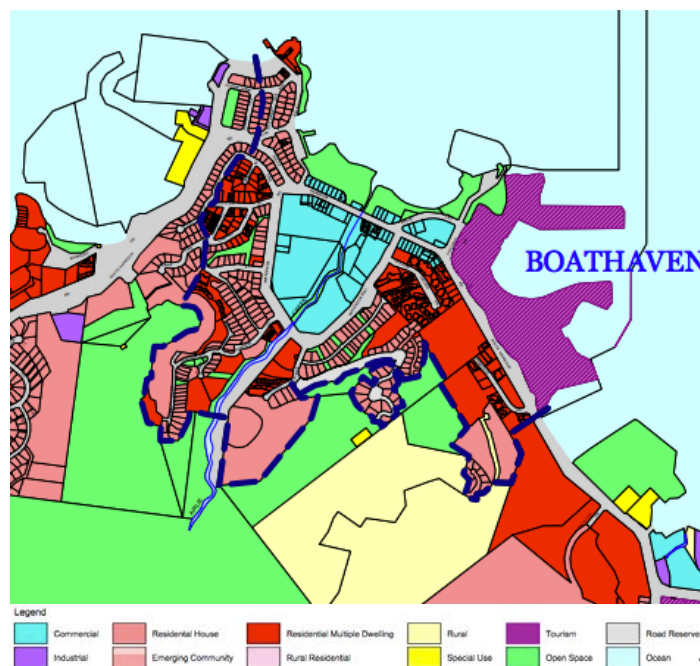


Figure 1: Current Planning Scheme Designation

Commercial Zone

The Commercial zone is provided to allow for commercial development which is located central to Airlie Beach. The Commercial Zone is essential to ensure convenient goods and services can be provided for both residents and tourists to the region.

The Commercial Zone Code details a number of Overall Outcomes which provide direction for future development to achieve the requirements of the zone. In particular, 4.14.2 (s) states *significant environmental, cultural and landscape values and features are maintained and protected against adverse impacts.*

It is noted that section 4.14.2 (j) states *in Airlie Beach, the height of development is a maximum of three storeys to the street, and on the southern side of Shute Harbour Road, and where set back from street and public access areas, up to five storeys high.*

This provision has been provided to ensure the natural values of the area can be maintained and protected from intrusive development.

Tourism Zone

The Tourism Zone is provided to allow for tourism related development which is located within close proximity to the Port of Airlie. This zone is essential to ensure convenient services and accommodation can be provided for tourists visiting the region.

The Tourism Zone Code provides overall outcomes for which requirements are detailed to ensure standards throughout the zone. In particular, we note 4.20.2 (g) states *development complements the local landscape and responds to opportunities to create or protect views and vistas.*

It is noted that building heights within this zone range from two to Five storeys. In order to achieve the overall outcomes detailed within this code and to maintain the protect views and vistas, the building heights have been set to the appropriate heights.

Residential Multiple Dwelling Zone

The Residential Multiple Dwelling Zone is provided to ensure suitable residential densities can be provided within the Airlie Beach locality within suitable locations.

In particular, the code provides Overall Outcomes which provide further direction for this zone. In particular, we note section 4.8.2 (c) provides for *buildings to contribute positively to the local streetscape and reinforce local character and identity.*

The planning scheme allows for development to be constructed to three stories in height within this zone. Given the locality, cost of infrastructure and need for carparking required within this zone, three stories is considered appropriate for these areas.

The planning scheme further identifies a need for maintaining *significant environmental, cultural and landscape values and features by providing buildings that contribute positively to the local streetscape and reinforce the local character and identity.*

The Airlie Beach locality maintains values as part of the designation for commercial, residential and tourism purposes.

Therefore, the current development heights of the locality provide appropriate development scale to ensure the values of Airlie Beach can be maintained as well as suitable growth be encouraged for the region.

Draft Planning Scheme

Under the draft planning scheme, the Airlie Beach locality is identified within the (i) Mixed Use Zone, (ii) District Centre Zone and (iii) Low-Medium Density Residential Zone. The locality is further nominated within the draft planning schemes Airlie Beach Local Plan designation.

Strategic Framework

The draft planning scheme's strategic framework outlines the city's strategic intent for the life of the planning scheme. The framework provides policy direction for the planning scheme and forms the basis for ensuring appropriate development occurs in the planning scheme area for the life of the planning scheme. The draft planning scheme identifies Airlie Beach Main Street and the Esplanade area to be a major regional function facility. The strategic framework fails to identify the existing values of Airlie Beach to ensure the long term survival of the popular locality.

It is recommended that the existing values of Airlie Beach be included within the strategic framework to ensure the character and outlook of the locality survives.

Draft Planning Scheme Zoning

The Draft Whitsunday Regional Council Planning Scheme (the draft planning scheme) changes the zoning of the Airlie Beach locality to contain Mixed Use and District Centre zoning. It is noted that the Airlie Beach area is located within the Airlie Beach Local Plan, which details requirements specific to this area.

An excerpt of the zoning map for the site is included as Figure 2 below.

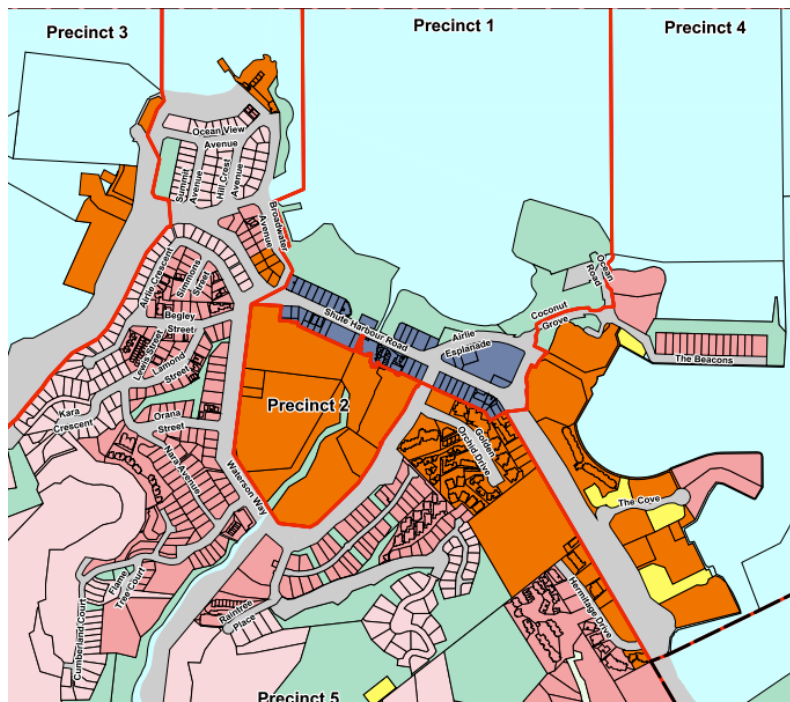


Figure 2: Draft Planning Scheme Designation

Airlie Beach Local Plan

The purpose of the Airlie Beach Local Plan Code is to provide a *development framework that facilitates growth to sustain and strengthen the economy, while retaining valuable community and natural assets.*

The Airlie Beach Local Plan provides Overall Outcomes which detail requirements for future development within this zone. In particular, we note 7.2.1.2 (c) states that the *character of Airlie Beach, which includes its vital, small town scale, tropical climate, pedestrian neighbourhoods, compact Main Street form, blue views to the sea and green views to Airlie Hill, visually penetrable buildings and heights and lush landscape elements, is maintained.*

Furthermore, it is noted that building heights within the Airlie Beach Local Plan have been increased to provide for significant growth. By increasing the building heights throughout the Airlie Beach area, it contradicts the Overall Outcomes for the local plan. In particular, the ‘small town scale’ will be lost with the proposed building heights.

An excerpt of the draft planning scheme building height map is included as Figure 3 below.

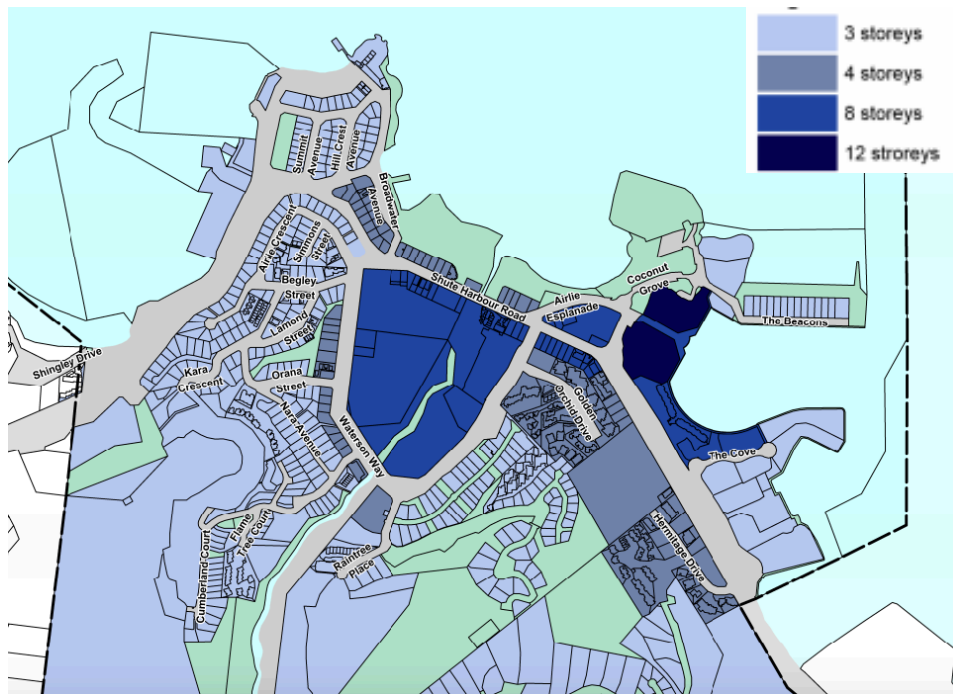


Figure 3: Airlie Beach Local Plan Building Heights

In particular, it is noted that the proposed building heights will create a significant shift in feel and scale of the locality. As detailed within the Overall Outcomes of the code, the ‘small town scale’ is nominated as important to maintain the character of Airlie Beach. Therefore, the building heights are contradictory to the Overall Outcomes of the code, and require further consideration prior to finalising the draft planning scheme.

Representations

It is considered that the building heights supported by the Airlie Beach Local Plan are excessive, to the extent that they are inconsistent with the strategic framework and the Overall Outcomes associated with the Airlie Beach Local Plan Code. In particular:

- (i) It is intended that the Airlie Beach locality is at 'a small town scale' that provides a unique populated tourist destination.
- (ii) Airlie Beach is known for its existing character as a natural tourist destination, without being overpopulated and over developed.
- (iii) Airlie Beach contains visual appealing outlooks to both the Whitsunday Islands and Airlie Hill, and development at the scale proposed will detract from this natural amenity;
- (iv) The code requires new development to maintain the tropical climate and compliment the existing small scale development, which is obviously unachievable at the heights proposed;
- (v) All new development is required to be designed and operated to minimise adverse impacts upon the amenity of surrounding residential neighbourhoods. Again, at the heights nominated, it will be difficult to minimise any impact upon residential and scenic amenity.

Given the above, we suggest that the building heights be reduced within the Airlie Beach Local Plan. Particularly, we recommend that the locality be reconsidered for its unique small scale tourism orientated development. It should be noted that the proposed increase in building height will not achieve the overall outcomes listed within the Airlie Beach Local Plan Code 7.2.1.2.

Furthermore, high rise development within the Airlie Beach Local Plan will significantly compromise the character and appeal of the locality, potentially crippling the tourism sector of Airlie Beach and the surrounding Whitsunday Region.

In summary, the land cannot be effectively developed to achieve the outcomes of the Airlie Beach Local Plan given its current character and setting. However, it is rational to designate the site with the proposed zoning, with reduced building heights to ensure the character and outlook is maintained for the locality.

Recommendations

On the basis of the above representations, as an imperative we request that Whitsunday Regional Council amend its draft planning scheme to reduce the building heights within the Airlie Beach Local Plan to ensure the values of the area can be maintained.

Proceeding

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the Council to discuss the content of these representations in detail. It would be appreciated if Council could please confirm its availability for such a meeting once it has reviewed the submission.

Please contact the undersigned with questions, as necessary.

Yours sincerely

(Submitters Name)

(Submitters residential or business address)

(Submitters Postal Address and email)

(Submitters phone number)