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Maleny Community Precinct Project
Strategic Planning and Policy Unit
Caloundra City Council
Caloundra QLD 4551

Re: Maleny Community Precinct Draft Concept Plan August 2007

Dear Planning Team,

Firstly, I would like to congratulate staff in the SPPU for the dedicated and professional manner in which you have undertaken the entire public consultation process regarding the Maleny Community Precinct.

I shall structure my submission to firstly deal with the information you sought via the public feedback form. I shall then provide further information on what direction I believe Council should take when determining the best use for this land.

Introduction

Since my arrival as a permanent resident property owner and rate payer in the Maleny region in 1999 I have taken a keen interest in our town. I became an active member of the 'Retain Maleny's Character' group in 2002 and I was one of the community members of the CCC Maleny Community Precinct Task Force in 2003. I have always supported Council in the decision to acquire the western portion of this property, albeit with a perhaps less than desirable contractual arrangement.

I have subsequently maintained an active interest in the Maleny Community Precinct land since that time. Over the past 5 years I have also become familiar with the Maleny and Environs Development Control Plan, subsequent City Plan and more recently the South East Queensland (SEQ) Regional Plan.

My background as a professional hydrographic surveyor with extensive geo-spatial information system (GIS) and cartographic, cadastral and information technology skills stands me in good stead when commenting on proposals such as the plan presented as Council's preferred option for the MCP land.

Council's Preferred Option - Feedback

Do you agree with the overall mix of uses proposed on the draft Concept Plan? No

I do not agree with the inclusion of an 18-hole golf course on the precinct land. The requirements for level land for greens dictates where the greens can be placed. The requirements to avoid cross-slopes on fairways and tees, and the nature of the precinct land leaves little choice but to occupy a significant area of riparian land, and most of the level land for golf course use. This has resulted in the Council plan giving over much of the useful land for the golf course.

Inadequate community purpose land close to town, reduced riparian buffers, and problems in siting suitable public access walking pathways and trails will significantly exclude public access from much of the precinct land in this concept plan.

Do you agree with the proposal for a Hinterland Park and Gardens? Yes

Do you agree with the proposed location/s? No

A majority of the Council plan for park and gardens is on steep land. Whilst a measure of contoured pathways can be incorporated, much of this land will be too steep for meaningful community use. The design shows a lot of this land being left as open grass with some trees. This will not address adequately the issue of land slump-age, erosion, will not provide significant habitat, and will not create any significant wetland habitat. In addition, the Council plan provides absolutely no public access to the minimal wetland areas in the precinct. These appear to merely be golf course water hazards. The steep grassed slopes will present a grass mowing challenge, and the significant in-ground seed bank of both native and weed seeds will entail a long lasting and expensive maintenance issue for Council.

Do you agree with the proposal for an 18 Hole Community Golf Course? No

Do you agree with the proposed location? No

I do not agree with the incorporation of a golf course on the Maleny Community Precinct land. I am of the opinion that the land has the potential for more inclusive, environmentally sensitive, and economically viable uses. The requirement to restore riparian land along Obi Obi Creek, the importance of managing the very significant catchment and run-off of storm water from the site, and the potential for the establishment of wetland systems of considerable significance far outweighs the benefit that a golf course will provide to a small group of recreational users. The need for large quantities of water for irrigation in dry times, fertilizers, and sprays for weed control are all significant issues.

I am not opposed to golf as a sport and in fact I fully support the establishment of a modest community golf course on OTHER LAND in the Maleny plateau area, away from the Obi Obi Creek catchment.

The precinct has limited land suited to infrastructure construction, limited land adjacent to services, limited access opportunities, significant water run-off issues, some erosion and slumping problems and this combination reduces choices for what can go where.

To accommodate the other potential uses for this land and still fit in an 18 hole golf course invites compromise, second best solutions, adds to expense for infrastructure, and creates substantial ecological degradation issues. It is just not a sustainable solution for the site.

Do you agree with the areas identified for Community Facilities? No

Do you agree with the proposed facilities/groups to be accommodated in those areas? No

The areas indicated in yellow for community purpose appear to be inadequate in size. Barung Landcare (whom I fully support being located within the precinct) has advised of their requirements in order to become viable as a native tree and plant propagator and retailer, and a large number of community groups and organisations in Maleny have indicated that they wish to apply for some of the precinct land. The community facilities land needs to be significantly expanded - and located on ground suited to infrastructure, near services, and with good road access and car parking. The golf course unfortunately takes up all this land. The solution is to remove provision for a golf course from the draft concept plan.

Do you agree with the areas identified for Landcare and other Eco-businesses (i.e. Within the community facilities area on Porters Lane)? Yes

Do you agree with these uses being accommodated on the site? Yes

I fully support the inclusion of land within the community facilities area on Porters Lane for Barung Landcare and other eco-businesses. Barung Landcare have a history with this land and have identified the specific site that they wish to occupy to optimise their operations, ensure their success into the future, and to allow for potential expansion. I fully support and endorse the independent submission made to Council by Barung Landcare in response to this draft concept feedback process.

The area designated for community purposes directly to the north-east of Porter's private property and west of the 65 year old regrowth rainforest stand will be in deep shadow in winter in the mornings. This should be factored into the use of this land. I recommend relocating some of the community purposes land elsewhere and extending the rainforest into this area.

Do you agree with the proposal for Residential Development? No

Do you agree with the proposed locations? No

I do not agree with the concept plan proposal, however I agree with the need for some residential housing within the precinct to help pay for the land purchase, to fund the access and infrastructure costs, and to construct some of the amenities and facilities within the precinct.

I agree with the quantity and location of the 'residential (detached housing)' pink component to the far west of the precinct - the only sensible and suitable location for housing within the precinct, as an extension of the adjacent 'Cloudwalk' subdivision.

I agree with the proposed quantity and location of the 'residential (detached housing)' pink component to the far north (North Maleny Road) of the precinct. I understand the necessity to raise funds.

I agree with the proposed rural residential designation for the land to the far north east of the precinct (orange), and for the sale of this land providing it is accorded the same planning consideration as the land within the North Maleny rural settlement area, i.e. minimum 5,000 sq m per lot. **I strongly recommend that this land - in the first instance - should be offered directly to a not-for-profit organisation** at current market valuation for the purpose of a best-practice showcase sustainable housing project. Should this land be offered directly to the public - the most likely result will be bland inappropriate mansions as is very evident in other recent constructions in the North Maleny area.

I agree with the designation of the Porter private property as rural residential providing there is no implied possibility of further subdivision of the lot.

I disagree with the proposed 'residential (low rise attached housing)' purple component - I feel this land is better utilised for aged persons housing and perhaps it should be two story to improve the yield. In addition, this component in this location occupies too much of the best flat land close to town.

I very strongly disagree with any further residential development (beyond that shown in the draft concept plan) to raise funds for community sporting and recreational facilities. I very strongly disagree with any residential development in order to fund development or construction of the golf course or a combined sporting club house.

Prior inappropriate and poor planning scheme alterations, developer greed and the general SEQ housing boom have led to large scale inappropriate residential developments in the Maleny township area in the past 6 years. Council has seemed to me to have been unable to deal with this issue in a satisfactory manner. Parking in the commercial area and through-traffic in Maple Street are already an issue. Approvals for subdivision and lots where construction has not yet taken place clearly show the number of cars in town will reach crisis point within the next 5 to 8 years.

Teak Street and North Maleny Road are the bottleneck access points for the precinct. The lack of an alternative access for all activities and uses proposed for the site is an area of major concern. Whilst the inclusion of a proposed bridge over Obi Obi Creek and thus alternate access from the Landsborough Road to North Maleny is welcomed, the high cost of construction of such a bridge will see construction deferred for many years.

Site limitations and constraints are poorly understood by the Maleny public in my opinion. In addition, the difficulties of vehicular access have not been adequately understood by the public, or many of the sporting and recreational groups seeking 'their slice of the pie'. I will go one step further, and state my belief that the Councillors and Mayor in this specific regard have no better understanding of the issues of access, the impact on traffic flow and parking in the town resultant in any development of the Maleny Community Precinct than the general public.

I feel that this aspect of public consultation, relating to site access, traffic impact, and parking needs to be revisited if the amount of residential development in the precinct alters from that currently proposed.

Do you think sufficient and appropriate areas have been identified for Environmental Protection and Restoration? No

The southern palustrine wetland has insufficient buffer to the north west and should be better connected to the Obi Obi Creek riparian buffer zone. A rigorous minimum 40m buffer should be applied along the length of Obi Obi Creek. I note that the proposed buffer in the south western area (across the creek from the primary school) seems too narrow. I assume the direction by Councillors to 'shoehorn' golf fairways into this area has resulted in this compromise. I am opposed to the narrowing of the riparian area. I am opposed to the proposed location for the 'future golf club house'. I believe that this location is too close to Obi Obi Creek and inevitable runoff from car park hard surfaces and cleaning agents and sewage treatment in the club house.

The northern wetland is all but ignored as environmentally significant in the proposed concept plan. This is very disappointing. The northern wetland area has a very significant and substantial number of springs flowing through it, and the cupola catchment harnesses enormous quantities of rainwater during storm events. Minimal landscaping intervention would see a significant wetland created in this area. (Documentary photographic evidence is available demonstrating the amount of water flow generated in this area during heavy rain in August 2007). I see the current concept plan as really having missed the point here. This is a lost opportunity for a significant wetland.

Do you agree with the provision of Recreational Trails on the site? Yes
Do you agree with the proposed location/s? No

The provision of recreational trails is to be applauded. Particularly the trail in the vicinity of Obi Obi Creek. I assume that this will be constructed as an all abilities concrete pathway? The proposed pathway along Obi Obi Creek is quite long. Due to the golf course fairways there is no opportunity to have a shorter, more direct, route between Maleny township and Gardners Falls. This is a real pity and yet another reason to remove the golf course from the concept plan.

At one point, the public pathway appears to be perilously close to a golf fairway. In order to prevent injury to pedestrians this area will require the relocation of the fairway or installation of expensive and unsightly golf fence netting.

The pathways along the steeper hill-slopes will need to be cut into the hillsides, this will require careful on-contour design and run-off stabilisation works to prevent erosion and slip hazard. Bridges and boardwalks will be required in some places.

What about mountain bike tracks for recreation? What about an equestrian trail through the forest lands? I guess the golf course prevents these uses.

There is no public access to the wetland areas. These will be for the exclusive use of the golf club members as mere water hazards... **I am very much opposed to the complete lack of public access to the wetland areas.**

Are there any uses not shown on the draft Concept Plan which you believe should be included? If so what are they?

There is very little in the proposed draft concept plan which is likely to attract additional tourist visitors to Maleny. Less than 5% of visitors to the hinterland have indicated that they would play golf whilst here, and a majority of those would like to play (whilst on holiday) on a resort style course, not just another basic country-town public course. Many more visitors - in fact over 40% of visitors - indicate that they enjoy the opportunity to visit natural attractions, wetlands, waterfalls, national parks etc. These people enjoy walking through natural settings. This is very evident by the high annual visitor numbers to Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve.

We have the opportunity here to create a significant tourist draw-card to Maleny by creating a natural parkland with creek side walks, wetland areas and forested hillsides. This land will not be 'locked up' but will in fact form a large area for recreation enjoyed by more people than any other sporting or recreational activity. This is an indisputable fact backed up by many independent studies and surveys.

Maleny like many other small regional towns has a lack of jobs for local residents. Every morning and afternoon a procession of cars takes those who work off the range to their places of employment. Lack of public transport and diversity of destination dictates that many of these cars have but one occupant. Totally unsustainable, and a poor lifestyle choice many are forced by necessity to make.

With the exception of Barung, the current Maleny Community Precinct draft concept plan has little in the way of job creation prospects, beyond initial construction. Why has the inclusion of potential job creation activities been overlooked in the indecent haste to install a golf course in Maleny?

I support the alteration of the concept plan to create areas where jobs could be created. The Obi Obi Parklands proposed concept plan, which has been submitted under this consultation process, details a range of innovative job creating opportunities with elements such as an environmental/ecologically sustainable business park, a horticultural activities processing facility, a community market garden project, a commercial display garden centre, not to mention the massive spin-off in jobs that increased tourism visitors will have to local accommodation, and hospitality and catering businesses.

I support the restoration of far more of the precinct land to as close as is possible to its pre clearing natural state. Few areas of the plateau are in public ownership. Many (but not all) landholders with significant areas of land seem reluctant to undertake meaningful restoration of their land. This is borne out by Barung Landcare recently being unable to locate a large property in the Walkers Creek catchment to undertake \$100,000 worth of restoration work. The money is now being spent in the grounds of Erowal and the state schools. We, the collective people of Maleny, have the opportunity here to undertake a substantial, meaningful, achievable and lasting restoration project which will be nationally significant as an example, of what can be achieved.

Riparian zone restoration and rehabilitation is of importance for bank stabilisation, to improve water quality, to provide habitat and corridor linkages, and to improve in-ground water retention and reduce water flow in times of storm events. I commend the restoration of an area of the community precinct as detailed in the Obi Obi Parklands concept plan submitted to Council as part of this consultation process.

Conclusion

I would like to once again thank Council for the opportunity to provide a submission of comment on the draft Maleny Community Precinct Concept Plan. I believe that the directive given by Councillors to planning staff to produce a concept plan integrating an 18 hole golf course into the precinct concept plan was flawed, due to the many reasons given in the preceding paragraphs.

If this public consultation process and feedback is to be in any way meaningful, Council must completely rethink the currently proposed plan, consider the wider ramifications of their actions, and take into account looming problems with State Government intervention if the current plan proceeds towards the draft Structure Plan stage with little in the way of significant amendment.

I am available to meet with planning staff to further amplify any of the comments I have provided in this document. I am available to walk over the precinct land with planning staff and show precisely what I am writing about, just let me know if you'd like to.

I encourage all the Councillors and the Mayor to actually take the time to walk over the proposed golf course and see for themselves the substantial earthworks required to achieve the proposed course layout.

I strongly suggest that an accurate 0.5m contour survey of the entire precinct be undertaken at the earliest opportunity, and that a qualified soil hydrologist be employed to produce a report BEFORE Council progresses to the draft Structure Plan stage of this process.

Yours faithfully,



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