

Visual Impact: Streetscape Analysis

Uniting Charlestown

27 Tiral Street, Charlestown



'Gura Bulga'

Liz Belanjee Cameron

'Gura Bulga' – translates to Warm Green Country. Representing New South Wales.

By using the green and blue colours to represent NSW, this painting unites the contrasting landscapes. The use of green symbolises tranquillity and health. The colour cyan, a greenish-blue, sparks feelings of calmness and reminds us of the importance of nature, while various shades of blue hues denote emotions of new beginnings and growth. The use of emerald green in this image speaks of place as a fluid moving topography of rhythmical connection, echoed by densely layered patterning and symbolic shapes which project the hypnotic vibrations of the earth, waterways and skies.

Ethos Urban acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people, of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Custodians of the land where this document was prepared, and all peoples and nations from lands affected.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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| Version No. | Date of issue | Prepared By | Approved by |
|-------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1.0 (FINAL) | 29/08/2023 | ADM | CB |

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Streetscape Analysis is submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) pursuant to Part 4 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act) in support of a State Significant Development application (SSDA-35370706) for the Uniting Charlestown Seniors Housing and Residential Development.

The purpose of this Streetscape Analysis is to provide a response to the Department's comments. The Department has requested that the following items be provided and addressed:

- *A streetscape perspective and analysis immediately east of Building A is to be provided in the VIA as the development adjoins low density residential development. In particular, the view of above ground car parking should be highlighted as well as the visual impacts of any acoustic fencing to be erected at this elevation.*

1.2 Scope

This report is to be read together with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and accompanying supporting documentation (including architectural documentation) submitted under SSDA-35370706.

This Streetscape Analysis report responds to the Department's comments in respect of the interrelationship between the Proposal and adjoining existing development – to the east of Proposed Building A.

The response is structured as follows:

- **Section 1 - Introduction:** identifies the purpose and structure of this report.
- **Section 2 - The site and its context:** provides an overview of the site and its context.
- **Section 3 - The proposal:** outlines the proposal, including its key parameters.
- **Section 4 - Planning framework:** identifies relevant parts of the planning framework against which the acceptability of visual impact is to be assessed.
- **Section 5 – Assessment against the planning framework:** outlines an assessment of the proposed scheme in respect of the relevant parts of the planning framework.
- **Section 6 – Discussion of key issues:** Provides a streetscape and urban form analysis in respect of the impact of the proposal on existing development immediately east of Building A.
- **Section 7 – Mitigation measures:** identifies the nature and extent of any mitigation measures.
- **Section 8 - Conclusion:** identifies whether the proposal can be supported on visual impact grounds.

2.0 Site Context

2.1 Site location

The Uniting Charlestown Development (the site) is located at 27 Tiral Street, Charlestown within the Lake Macquarie Local Government Area (LGA). It is located approximately 8.5km to the south-west of the Newcastle CBD and approximately 110km north of Sydney. The site is situated on the southern side of the established Charlestown Town Centre, a major commercial centre which provides a higher order retail, commercial and community facilities for Greater Newcastle and wider Hunter Region.

Figure 1 below shows the site and its surrounding context.

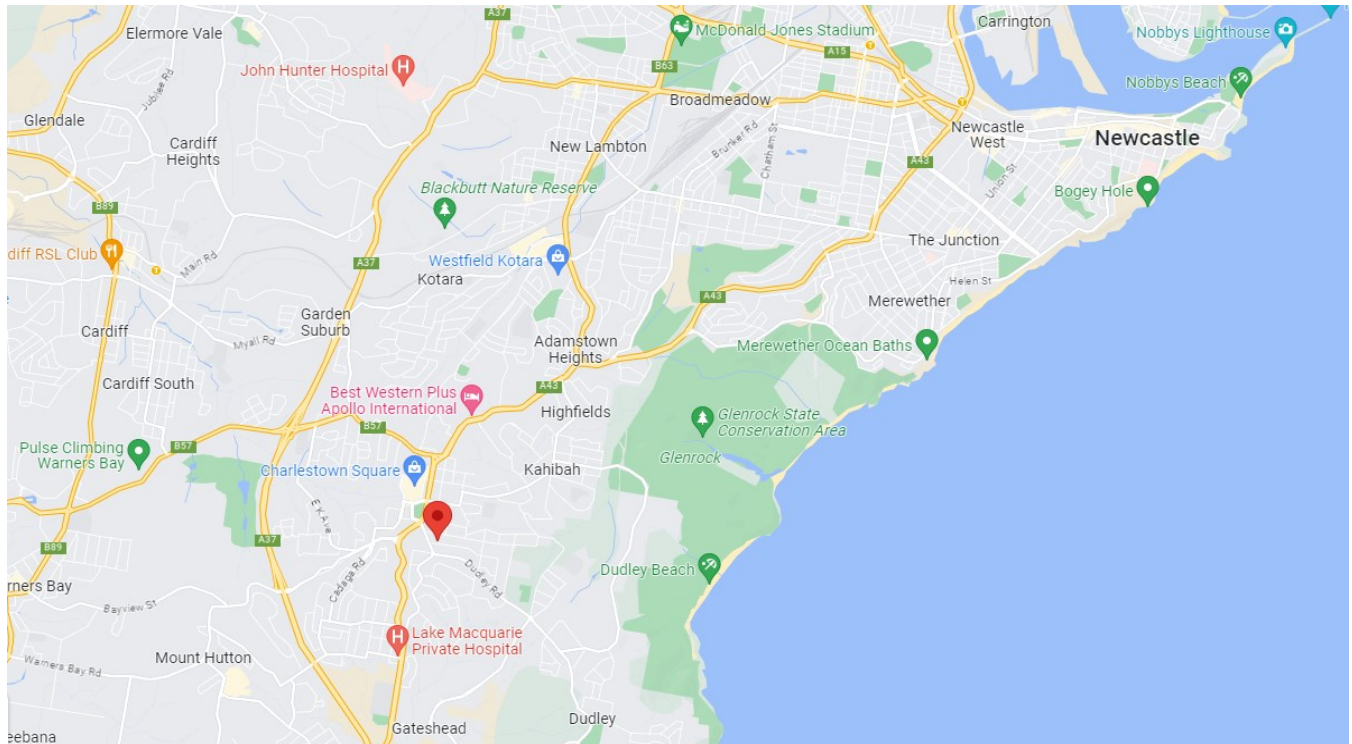


Figure 1 Site Context Maps

Source: Google Maps

2.2 Site description

The site is legally described Lot 223 DP 551260 and Lot 1 DP 1284898 (adjoining crown drainage reserve). The land is owned by The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) and has a total area of 2.11 hectares. The site is irregular in shape and has a primary address of 27 Tiral Street, Charlestown.

The site is situated on a corner of the street block and has frontages to James Street along the northern boundary, Tiral Street to the southern boundary and Dudley Street to the western boundary. The eastern boundary of the site backs on to low density residential development. It is the interrelationship between the proposal – and the low-density residential development to the east which is the subject of this response report.

The site is currently vacant and was formerly used for the purposes of a TAFE horticultural college between 1979 and 2003. The built form associated with the TAFE college has largely been removed from the site however a bowling green, one hole golf course, tennis court, garden beds, asphaltic sealed roads and building slabs and footings still remain.

An aerial photo of the site is shown at **Figure 2**.



 The Site

 NOT TO SCALE

Figure 2 *Locational Context Map*

Source: Nearmaps/Ethos Urban

2.2.1 Surrounding Development

- **East:** adjoins a 2m wide strip of land of Council-owned currently use as an informal pedestrian accessway. With low-density detached dwellings located to the east.
- **North:** adjoins James Street and further predominantly single dwellings and apartment buildings. See further details below.
- **South:** adjoins Tiral Street and further predominately low-density standalone dwellings. It is currently zoned R2 Low Density Residential and has a maximum building height of 8.5m.
- **West:** adjoins Dudley Road and further west is NSW Health Charlestown Health Facility.

2.2.2 Tiral Street: existing streetscape character

The site's surrounding context, focusing on sites to the east, is shown below.



Figure 3 *Tiral Street looking East.*

Source: Google Maps

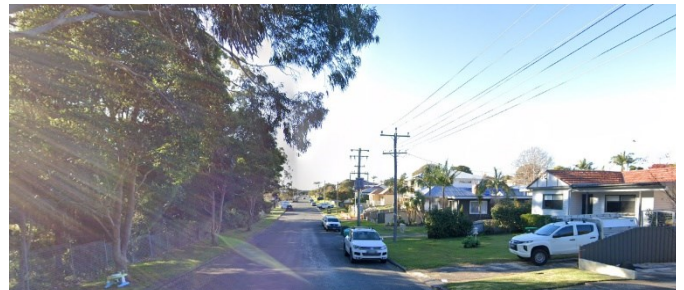


Figure 4 *Tiral Street looking East.*

Source: Google Maps



Figure 5 Tiral Street looking South.

Source: Google Maps



Figure 6 Informal pedestrian accessway looking south from James Street

Source: Google Maps

Tiral Street is characterised by rows of low-density detached dwellings, with generous front setbacks. The separation distance between buildings, across Tiral Street, is approximately 30m building face to building face. The street is also characterised by a generous carriageway width.



Figure 7 Existing and approved development – north and east of the site

3.0 Proposal

3.1 Development Proposal

The development application was lodged by the Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) (the proponent) on the 8 November 2022. The proposal was exhibited until 13 January 2023. An initial Request for a Response to Submission Report addressing submissions from the community, state and local government agencies was received from the Department on the 20 January 2023. A supplementary Request for Response to Submissions Report was received from the Department on the 27 June 2023 which detailed issues raised by the DPE in their preliminary assessment of the application.

The proposed development is for the purposes of seniors housing and residential development will comprise the following:

- Subdivision of one lot into three lots.
- Construction of a Residential Aged Care Facility Building (RAC Building) incorporating ancillary uses (Building A).
- Construction of two (2) Seniors Independent Living Unit (ILU) Buildings incorporating ancillary uses (Building B & C).
- Construction Residential Flat Building (RFB) (not intended to be limited to seniors living).

For a detailed project description refer to the Environmental Impact Statement prepared by ADW Johnson dated 8 November 2022.

The buildings range in height between 5 to 14 storeys including basement carparking, vehicular access via Tiral and James Street. An overview of the key numerical parameters of the proposed development is provided in Error! Reference source not found. **Table 1** below.

Table 1 Key Development Information

| Proposal Elements | | Numerical Overview |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Site area | | 2.11ha |
| Envelope height | <i>Building A</i> | 20.55m* (5 storeys) |
| | <i>Building B</i> | 45.8m* (13 storeys inc. basement, lower & upper ground) |
| | <i>Building C</i> | 48.3m* (14 storeys inc. lower & upper ground) |
| | <i>Building D</i> | 47.65m* (14 storeys inc. basement, lower & upper ground) |
| Envelope setbacks | Northern boundary (James Street) | 5-6 metres (Buildings A, B, C and C) |
| | Southern boundary (Tiral Street) | 12-30 metres (Buildings B, C and D) 5.6-7 metres (Building A) |
| | Eastern boundary | 6 metres |

*above ground level (existing) including lift overrun



Figure 8 Streetscape Perspective: View from south-east along Tiral Street – towards Block A

Source: ADW Johnson/Plus Architecture

3.2 Maximum Building Envelope

The site is subject to various height controls under the Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP 2014) which are also reflected in the Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP 2014). These controls are outlined in detail in **Table 3** below. Generally maximum building heights of 43m, 30m and 16.5m apply to the subject site under the LEP. While the Proposal has been designed considering these controls due to placement of building mass within the site to deliver improved urban design outcomes (including streetscape and overshadowing), the proposal exceeds the height standards. The proposed architectural design seeks to shift building mass and floor area away from the southern and eastern boundaries of the site and placing it at height adjacent to the northern boundary of the site.

Figure 9 shows development achievable under existing LMLEP 2014 height controls and following LMDCP 2014 Block Control Plan.

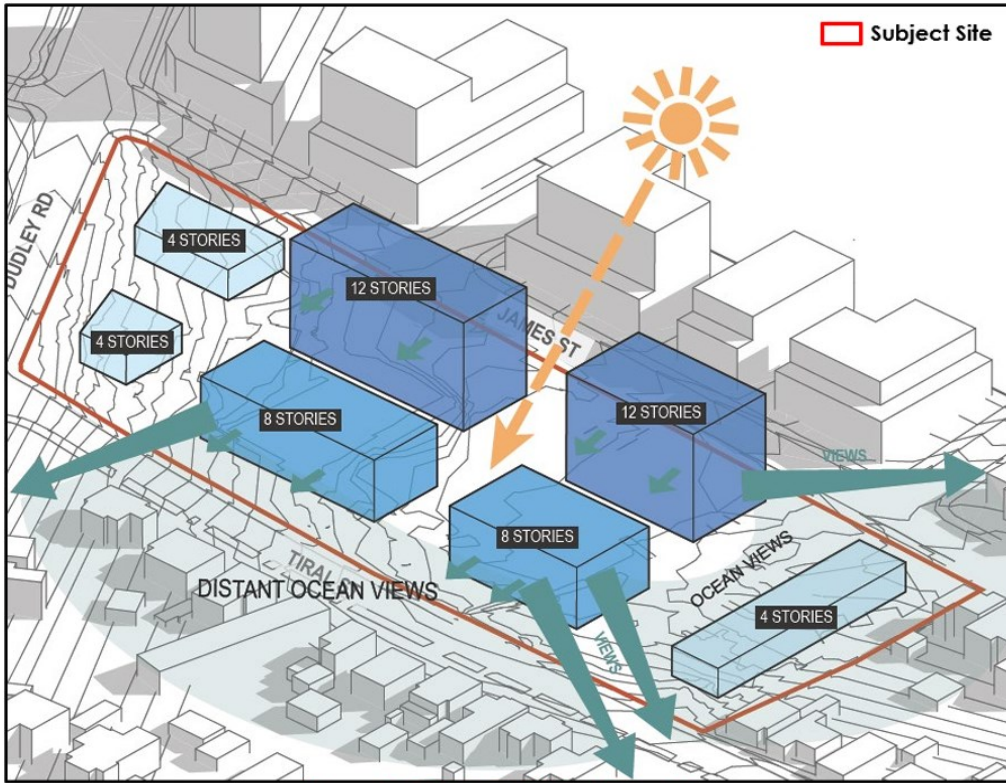


Figure 4: LMDCP 2014 Block Controls.

Figure 9 LMDCP 2014 Block Controls

Source: ADW Johnson/Plus Architecture

4.0 Planning Context

4.1 Strategic Framework

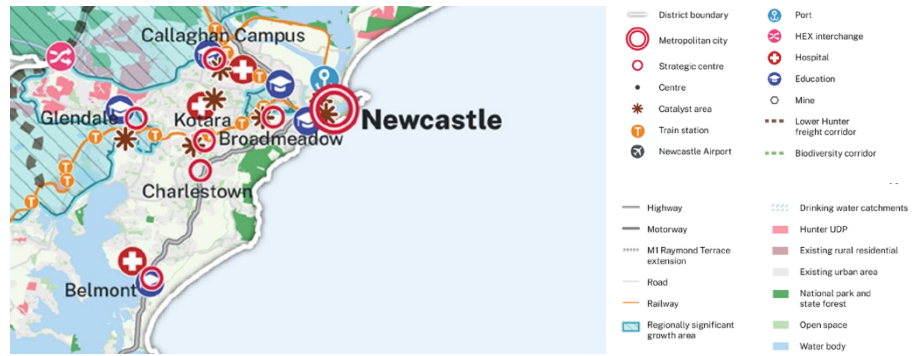
Government plans, policies, and guidelines relevant to the Project's strategic context include:

- *Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy*
- *Hunter Regional Plan 2036*
- *Draft Hunter Regional Plan 2041*
- *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036*
- *Let's Thrive – Lake Macquarie City Housing Strategy 2021*
- *Shaping the Future – Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)*

Table 2 below summarises the Project's strategic context as established by these documents.

Table 2 Summary of Strategic Context

| Strategic Plan | Strategic Context |
|---|--|
| <i>Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy</i> | Housing 2041: NSW Housing Strategy sets out the State Government's 20-year vision for housing in NSW. The strategy seeks to ensure that people, at all stages of their lives, will be able to access the right type of housing at the right time and with the best support available. The strategy prioritises supply, housing diversity, housing affordability and security and resilience of house to change. The proposed development aligns with the strategy's vision for more adaptable housing to accommodate for the growing population of older people within the NSW community. The proposal also seeks to deliver diverse dwelling typologies including residential aged care units, seniors independent living units and residential units. |
| <i>Hunter Regional Plan 2041</i> | <p>The Hunter Regional Plan 2041 seeks to guide the NSW Government's land use planning priorities and decisions over the next 20 years. It provides an overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions. The plan focuses on the delivering of housing and jobs and the concentration of growth in strategic centres near transport corridors and open space.</p> <p>Charlestown is identified as a strategic centre for Greater Newcastle and the broader Hunter region as it provides a broad range of businesses and services. The plan earmarks Charlestown as a centre to be revitalised with higher residential densities near public transport and open space. Specifically, under <i>Planning Priority 3: Grow Charlestown as a diverse, vibrant, and mixed-use strategic centre</i>, the clustering of medical activities, diverse housing and the establishment of a mixed-use retail centre is promoted. The proposed development will provide additional and diverse housing opportunities within the Charlestown Strategic Centre and is closely aligned to the directions outlined plan.</p> |



Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036

The Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan is a 20-year plan that sets out strategies and actions that will drive sustainable growth across Lake Macquarie, Newcastle, Cessnock, Maitland, and Port Stephens local government areas.

The Plan outlines four (4) outcomes for Greater Newcastle and are as follows:

- Create a workforce skilled and ready for the new economy.
- Enhance environment, amenity, and resilience for quality of life.
- Deliver housing close to jobs and services; and
- Improve connections to jobs, services, and recreation.

The plan situates Charlestown within the Metro Core which also includes the strategic centres of Newcastle City Centre, Cardiff-Glendale, Kotara, John Hunter Hospital, and Callaghan. The Metro Core (as shown below) is envisioned as a cosmopolitan area with a focus on strong local communities, jobs, and services, with a range of recreational opportunities in parks and reserves between the coast and adjoining hinterland. The plan identifies Charlestown as an area with significant redevelopment opportunities. Further it supports the improvement of public transport services along the Pacific Highway to sustain longer term corridors for renewal.



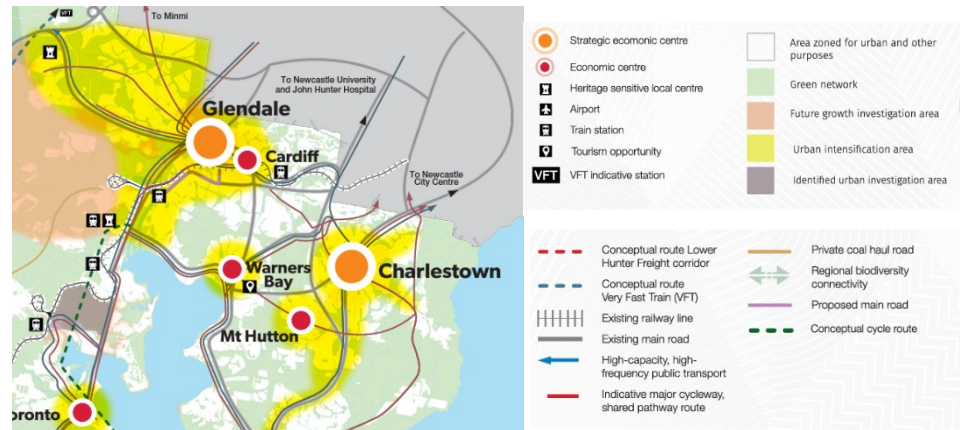
Shaping the Future – Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS)

This strategic planning document outlines Council’s vision for future land use in Lake Macquarie in line with State and Regional planning goals. The LSPS is in line with the overarching State Government strategies and recognises Charlestown as a Strategic Economic Centre within the North East Growth Area. The LSPS supports the continued growth of Charlestown and promotes investment and intensification of housing, employment, transport, services, and recreational opportunities in the area.

The following key outcomes are identified for the Charlestown as a Strategic Economic Centre within the North East Growth Area:

- *redeveloping Charlestown to attract intensive multi-storey commercial and residential development.*

- providing diverse housing to meet the needs of those wishing to live closer to jobs and services



4.2 Statutory Framework

The below summarises the Project’s planning controls as established by the following documents:

- Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan 2014 (LMLEP 2014)
- Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP 2014)

Table 3 below summarises the Project’s envelope controls as established by these planning instruments.

Table 3 Overview of Planning Controls

| LMLEP 2014 | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 2.1 – Land use zones | The subject site is zoned as R3 Medium Density Residential and B4 Mixed Use. |
| 4.1 – Minimum Subdivision Lot Size | The site is prescribed a minimum lot size of 900sqm. |
| 4.3 – Height of buildings | <p>A various maximum building heights apply to the site. The LMLEP 2014 prescribes maximum building heights of 43m in the central northern section of the site, 30m in the central southern portion of the site and 16.5m adjacent to the eastern and western site boundaries as shown in Figure 10 below.</p> <p>Figure 10 Maximum Height of Buildings Map Extract Source: LMLEP 2014</p> |

Part 10 – Town Centre Area Plans – Charlestown

1.4 Desire Future Character

The Charlestown Masterplan adopted by Council in 2008, seeks to support Charlestown becoming an 'accessible, vibrant, healthy, beautiful, and sustainable place to live, work and play'. The plan establishes a desire future character for the town centre core to the north of the subject site and surrounding built form. The subject site is in proximity to the southern gateway at the end of the Pacific Highway. The proposed development aligns with the DCP's vision for higher residential buildings in the south and incorporates setbacks from the front boundary to allow space for landscape planting that reinforces the greener character.

2.1 Block Controls

The LMDCP includes block plans for areas within the Charlestown Town Centre which outline the overall desired structure of development, and the spatial relationship between development and the street at a block-by-block view. The controls provide general building envelopes that consider site context, existing street character, and the desired future character of the town centre. The block plans do not dictate lot amalgamations or describe the design of future buildings. Block V Control Plan (*Figure 49*) applies to the subject site (shown below) with heights of 4-14 storeys and generally reflects the LEP permissible heights. To the north of the subject site, Block T and U Control Plan applies with heights ranging 3 to 15 storeys (*Figure 45*).



Figure 11 Block V Control Plan Extract

Source: LMDCP 2014

5.0 Assessment against the planning framework

The table below provided an assessment of the proposal against relevant provisions.

| LMDCP 2014 | |
|--|--|
| Matter | Response |
| Part 10 – Town Centre Area Plans – Charlestown | |
| 1.4 Desire Future Character | The Proposal is considered to align with the vision set out in the DCP for higher residential buildings at this location and incorporates setbacks from the front boundary – consistent with the character of prevailing front setback pattern established by existing development to the east of the subject site. |
| 6.3 Front Setbacks 6.4 Side and Rear Setbacks | <p>The DCP generally prescribes building setback development standards within the Block Control and Block Sections. Block V is the only block that does not include a block specific section prescribing front, side or rear setbacks however building separation, solar access and amenity requirements of SEPP 65 apply.</p> <p>The proposed scheme front setback, together with the generous established setbacks of adjoining existing development reduce the impact of the height of the Proposal on the streetscape and existing development to the east of the subject site. The setback arrangements proposed also provide a sense of visual continuity to the streetscape.</p> |
| 6.6 Building Height | <p>The Block V Control Plan prescribes maximum number of storeys for the site which are 4 storeys (16.5 metres), 8 storeys (30 metres) and 12 storeys (43 metres). Where the area plan does not specific height in storeys development must not exceed three storeys and 13m in height.</p> <p>The Proposal, while of a greater height than the existing single-storey detached properties to the east of the site – provides an appropriate level of height transition. It is considered that this transition is aligned in intent with the vision and height datum established for the eastern portion of the subject site by the Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP 2014) and Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP 2014).</p> |
| 6.7 Building Height at the street | <p>The DCP encourages the maximum height of development for corner lots to occur at the corner element and should provide a minimum of three storeys on the secondary frontage for a minimum length of 15 metres, measured from the corner.</p> <p>The Proposal's height is lowered towards the eastern boundary, in response to the reduced heights of existing development to the east.</p> |

6.0 Discussion of key issues

6.1 Urban form

A transition in scale at the eastern boundary of the subject site is envisaged, based on the controls of the Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP 2014) and Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP 2014). A building form substantially taller than that of existing properties to the east therefore has potential to come forward at this location.

The visual impact of the overall height of Block A, together with the height transition between the Proposal and existing development to the east, has been mitigated through a sophisticated combination of architectural modulation, analogous front setback, careful consideration of solid to void ratios, material palette and colour selection. Planting to the south of the proposed development, fronting onto Trial Street, provides a degree of occlusion of the Proposed development.

While from certain locations to the east the proposal will become prominent in the landscape, due to its relative difference in height, the scale of this increase in height is not considered to be non-characteristic, discordant or intrusive within the context of the desired character envisaged for this area of Charlestown, and development emerging and existing to the north of the subject site. On this basis, the proposal is consistent with the overall intent for Charlestown as articulated in the Lake Macquarie Local Environmental Plan (LMLEP 2014) and Lake Macquarie Development Control Plan (LMDCP 2014).

6.2 Contribution to streetscape character

The proposed scheme's front setback, together with the generous established setbacks of adjoining existing development reduce the impact of the height of the Proposal on the streetscape and existing development to the east of the subject site. The setback arrangements proposed also provide a sense of visual continuity to the streetscape.

Block A incorporates a base element, which is visually distinct from upper storeys. The base, and definition given to the storeys above create a single storey module repeated up the height of the building – which breaks the elevation into a series of human-scaled strata/modules. The division of the overall four storey form, into distinct single storey elements fragment the larger form of the proposed development – tying it into the established single-storey scale of existing development to the east.

The upper storeys of the southern façade of Block A incorporate recessed balconies, with balustrade and blade wall details characterised by visually permeable features – reducing the bulk of the development fronting onto Trial Street. Boundary features are envisaged to be visually recessive, in colour and through material selection.

It is noted that materiality and colour are key aspects of the Trial Street elevation – with the introduction of earthen hued elements, relating to the colours of existing buildings, including existing dwellings comprising masonry walls and terracotta roofing.

7.0 Mitigation measures

It is not considered necessary to make changes to the proposal in its current form – which is assessed as satisfactorily managing visual impact. Critical to the overall visual acceptability of the proposal are:

- The combination of architectural modulation, analogous front setback, careful consideration of solid to void ratios, material palette and colour selection.
- Planting to the south of the proposed development, fronting onto Trial Street, provides a degree of occlusion of the Proposed development.
- Front setback arrangements proposed which provide a sense of visual continuity to the streetscape.
- Incorporation of a distinct base element in respect of Block A, which is visually distinct from upper storeys.
- The reduction of the Trial Street elevation into a series of human-scaled strata/modules.
- Incorporation of recessed balconies, with balustrade and blade wall details characterised by visually permeable features, reducing the bulk of the development fronting onto Tiral Street.
- Visually recessive boundary features (through colour and material selection).

These measures should be retained.

8.0 Conclusion

Based on the assessment set out above, it is not considered necessary to make changes to the proposal in its current form to satisfactorily manage visual impact. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal in its current form has acceptable visual impact, including in respect of the impact of Block A on the streetscape along Trial Street and as such can be supported on visual grounds.