



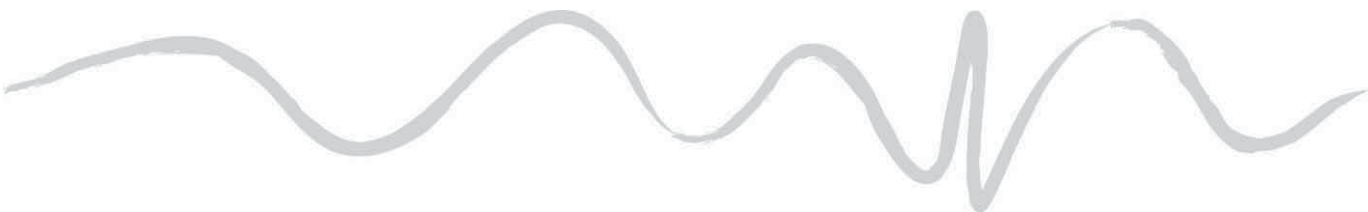
# Appendix L

## Visual Assessment

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# Visual Assessment

Riverside Tourist Cabins  
South West Rocks



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# Visual Assessment

## Riverside Tourist Cabins

### South West Rocks

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Date: May 2011  
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<i><b>Version History</b></i>				
<i><b>UPR</b></i>	<i><b>Description</b></i>	<i><b>Date Issued</b></i>	<i><b>Issued By</b></i>	<i><b>Reviewed By</b></i>
1291548	Changes to original report	08/11/2010	SJW	SJW
1291227	DoP amendments to report	07/06/2011	JTS	SJW

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# Introduction

The purpose of this assessment is to identify and measure the existing visual attributes of the site and to determine the likely impacts on these attributes resulting from the proposed tourist cabin development on the site. The assessment also identifies the measures that are proposed to mitigate these impacts and how these will result in the enhancement of the landscape setting as a whole. A site layout of the development is shown as **Illustration 1.1**.

The visual assessment involved a detailed site inspection to identify the site's intrinsic characteristics, the influences of the surrounding environment onto the site, and conversely, the contribution of the site's character onto its setting.

On this basis, an assessment has been prepared under the following key headings:

## **Section 2: Site Context and Existing Landscape Character**

Identifies the characteristics of the overall setting and the contribution of the site in this context. It also identifies the key features within the site and how they combine to generate its particular visual character at a local scale;

## **Section 3 Visual Catchment**

An assessment of the exposure and visual catchment of the site from outside areas particularly from significant viewing sources on private land such as residential areas and key public vantage points;

## **Section 4 Visual Impact of Proposed Development**

A description of the likely impacts of the development on the existing visual character of the site;

## **Section 5 Mitigation of Impacts**

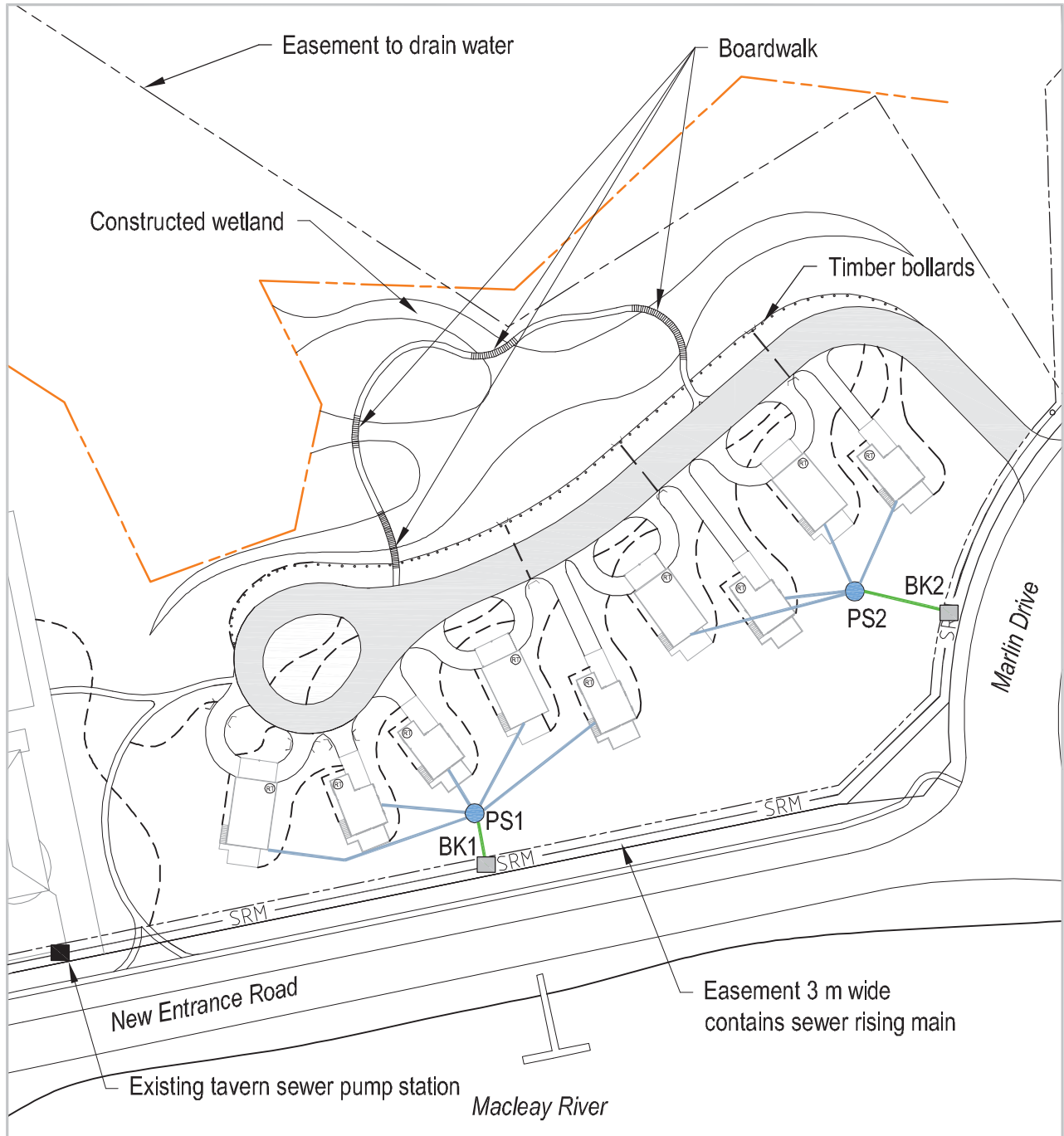
A list of landscape and urban design measures that are proposed as part of the development that aim to mitigate visual impacts and maintain or enhance the existing site attributes.

## **Section 6 Conclusions**

A description of the outcomes of the assessment.

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Information shown is for illustrative purposes only



## LEGEND

- |                                      |                                     |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Sealed road                          | SRM – Sewer rising main             |
| Re-surveyed SEPP 14 wetland boundary | Proposed sewer rising main          |
| Easement to drain water              | Proposed gravity sewer pipeline     |
| Timber edge                          | Proposed boundary sewer kit         |
| Rainwater tank                       | Proposed package sewer pump station |
| Timber bollards                      |                                     |
| Boardwalk                            |                                     |



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## Site Context and Existing Landscape Character

The study area is located on the flat, low lying and poorly drained eastern foreshores of the Macleay River approximately 2.5 kilometres west of the township of South West Rocks and approximately the same distance from the river mouth to the north. **Illustration 2.1** shows the locality of the subject site identifying the subject land and its relationship to adjoining land uses.

The site is primarily covered in grass that is actively managed by slashing. It forms part of a riparian estuary environment consisting of a range of vegetation communities including swamp oak forest which dominates the immediate vicinity of the site. Many of the natural features throughout this area have been disturbed either by removal, modification or fragmentation of the original vegetation. Areas of cleared vegetation now support a ground cover of grasses, sedges or weed growth interspersed with remnant native trees. Large areas of native vegetation also remain intact to the north and east of the site which incorporate a SEPP 14 Wetland Community. This vegetation forms a significant buffer to suburban development further east.



**Plate 2.1** North-eastern view onto the site across Marlin Drive / New Entrance Road junction



**Plate 2.2** Southerly view across the site toward the Riverside Tavern

The Riverside Tavern is an established and relatively isolated built element that separates the two parts of the development site along New Entrance Road. The tavern has a well maintained landscaped frontage and a large paved carpark at its rear which is surrounded by screen planting.

Residential development of detached housing covers rising land to the east and south of the site while the wide open expanse of the Macleay River creates a dominant and highly attractive visual and recreation focus to the west.

A number of structures have been installed along the river foreshore immediately adjacent to the site including pontoons and moorings associated with the coastal patrol. A boat shed, moorings and a number of community amenities are also located some 500 metres further south along the foreshore.

The combination of the riverside location, the surrounding predominantly natural landscape and availability of elevated panoramic views across the Macleay River produce an overall setting of high scenic quality.



**Plate 2.3** Actively maintained grassland dominates the site with remnant wetland plants following drainage lines



**Plate 2.4** Coastal patrol mooring on the rivers edge adjacent to the site

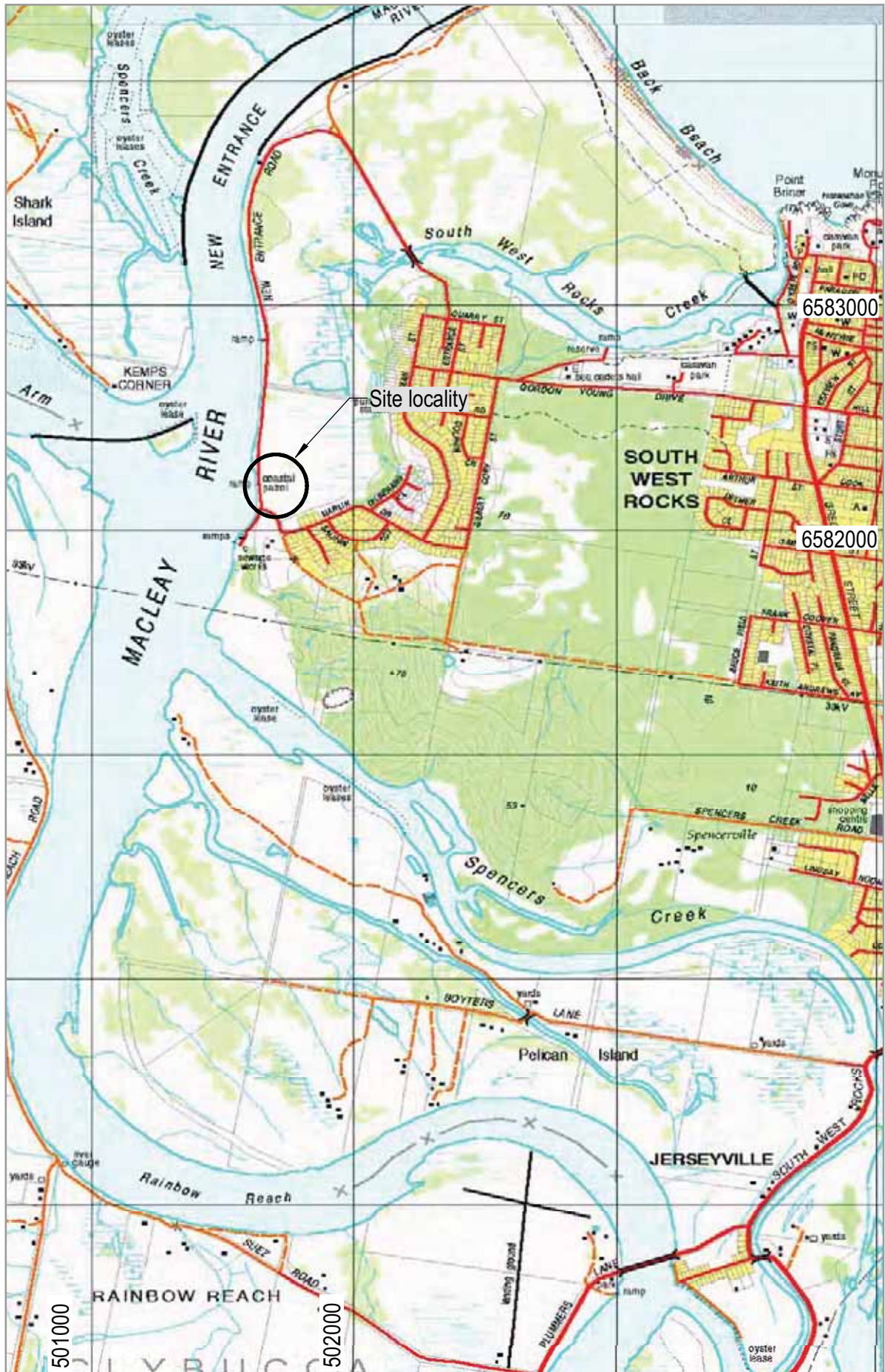


**Plate 2.5** Native Swamp Oak Forest within a SEPP 14 Wetland borders the site to the east



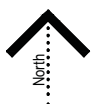
**Plate 2.6** Low key picnic facilities and Riverside Tavern located adjacent to the site





NOTE: Grid lines shown are based on the Geocentric Datum of Australia

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## Visual Catchment

**Illustration 3.1** provides a visual analysis of the subject site. As can be identified from this illustration, the visual catchment of the site, due to its flat, low lying terrain, is restricted to a local setting which extends to nearby rising topography and the surrounding swamp oak forest.

Downward views onto the site are available from houses and vantage points on the upper slopes of residential areas to the southeast of the site. From here, views of the site tend to be interrupted by intervening vegetation and buildings and form only a small, insignificant component of a panoramic outlook that encompasses the Macleay River system and extends to the distant north-western to south-western horizons.



**Plate 3.1**      **Elevated northerly view from Riverview Place across the site toward the Macleay River from upper level**



**Plate 3.2**      **Nearby dwellings have unimpeded visual access across the site**



**Plate 3.3**      **Northerly views across the site from the western end of Marlin Drive**



**Plate 3.4 View south across the site (left), New Entrance Road, Macleay River and foreshore**

A number of lower level houses along the western end of Marlin Drive have views that extend across the site to the river in the distance. These views rely on the retention of the open grass cover across the site and an absence of obstruction, including trees, to enable a visual corridor to be maintained.







Views of the site from all other residential areas across the hillside are constrained by the intervening swamp forest vegetation and lower level houses.

The most significant and direct views into the site are available in close proximity from the surrounding streets, the river and its edge. The site is particularly exposed to elevated private land immediately south of the Marlin Drive / New Entrance Road junction. The lack of vegetation within the site and along the adjoining riverfront contributes to this high level of exposure. Views become less significant over distance, however, due to the low, flat terrain and the resultant low angle of view.

The closest nearby foreshore reserve/ picnic area is located directly opposite the Tavern. This reserve/ picnic area has low to moderate visual exposure toward the site as the Tavern and nearby vegetation limits full view of the site. Other areas of the Macleay River foreshore are limited to narrow verges located along the western edge of New Entrance Road, directly opposite the site (as seen in the photo above). Although such areas would have direct visual exposure to the site, such areas would have negligible recreational use and are at times subject to informal car parking.

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# LEGEND

-  Subject site
-  Views from the majority of residential area blocked by vegetation and built form
-  Proposed location for riverside tourist cabins
-  Medium / distant views filtered through trees from lower level houses and public streets on the hillside
-  Elevated panoramic views that incorporate a glimpse of the site as part of the view composition
-  Direct close range views across entire site from surrounding streets



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## Visual Impact of Proposed Development

Potential adverse visual impact of proposed future site development may be experienced from areas identified within the visual catchment described above. It is anticipated that this may occur because:

- Development will adversely affect the existing open green character of the site. Of particular concern may be the intrusive impact of built form;
- Distant views across the existing open landscape toward the river or wetland areas will be impeded by development on the site;
- Increased people and car movement will change the existing quiet, passive character of the river edge setting;
- Site development will appear to be a further encroachment into a predominantly natural environment and will introduce further physical impacts to the detriment of natural values; and
- Significant, though temporary visual impact will occur during and following development construction until proposed new vegetation matures and achieves desired effect.

Sketches of the proposed development in its finished form, with the inclusion of landscaping and mature vegetation have been prepared and are provided in **Plates 4.1 and 4.2** along with photomontages in **Plates 4.3 and 4.4**. These illustrations have been prepared to portray the anticipated character of the development in its final form and help to demonstrate the level of visual impact that would be experienced by nearby residents and recreational areas identified in the visual catchment as described in the preceding chapter.

The sketches and photomontages show that a considerable change to the site's form, texture and character would occur as the site is currently maintained grassland adjacent to the surrounding swamp oak forest. However, although the above visual impacts may be experienced by residents and those using the surrounding areas and recreational attributes of the locality, the development would blend into the context of the area as landscaping and vegetation would screen and filter it from direct views and soften visual intrusion. The development and associated landscape vegetation would strike a balance between built form and the natural environment, supporting a continued pleasant outlook for both nearby residents and recreational uses of the Macleay River and its foreshore in the long term.

Despite the obstruction of river views for lower residential areas located southeast of the site and visual changes experienced from the recreational outlooks of the river and its foreshore, the development would not be considered to be out of character with the locality which is generally comprised of interweaving vegetation amongst residential housing. The development of the cabins along with landscape plantings would generally be a continuation of the area's existing visual character. That is: low density urban development within a quality natural and scenic setting. However the urban bulk and form of the development would be lower in scale and more suited to the immediate surrounding environment compared to that of nearby residential development, supporting the development's appropriateness and its consideration for visual amenity.

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**Plate 4.1**      **Sketch – foreshore view southwest of site**



**Plate 4.2**      **Sketch – foreshore view northwest of site**



**Plate 4.3**      **Photomontage – foreshore view northwest of site**



**Plate 4.4**      **Photomontage – view from southeast residential area**



## Mitigation of Impacts

The proposed development includes nine modest scaled one and two bedroom single storey tourist cabins along the New Entrance Road and Marlin Drive frontages of the site (refer **Illustration 1.1** and **Appendix A**). A driveway will provide vehicle access to the rear of the cabins from Marline Drive.

Concerns for the visual impact of the cabins and associated infrastructure have been well considered in the layout and design of the structures and landscape setting as a whole. The key features that underpin the design and their likely benefit to the site and surrounding area are described as follows:

- Cabins will have a light-weight, contemporary appearance incorporating pitched metal roofs and timber cladding to generate an easy going holiday ambience that will complement the visual character of the surrounding natural landscape. The cabins will be elevated to satisfy council's minimum flood level requirements creating an open undercroft that will accentuate the buildings as floating objects on the landscape. This sense of openness will be further enhanced by the use of timber handrails with wire balustrades, louvre windows, wide eaves and a large covered veranda along the cabin front that will cast deep shadows into the building facades.
- Cabin footprints will occupy only a small proportion of the overall site with the vast majority of the area retained for open space. Cabins will have a narrow frontage to the street and each structure will be approximately 10 metres apart providing optimal scope for extensive new planting. Cabins to the west of the tavern will also have alternating setbacks to minimise the visual prominence of building facades to the street;
- Proposed new vegetation will incorporate a dominance of locally indigenous native plants to ensure that the existing landscape character prevails. Planting of casuarinas in particular will envelope the site and integrate it with the surrounding remnant forest.
- Planting of trees and shrubs will be strategically located around cabins to create a dominant canopy above roof lines that will help disguise and visually absorb the structures. Planting will also create private spaces between cabins, screen unwanted views and provide shelter to the front verandas from undesirable south-western summer sun;
- Surface drainage will be facilitated by open swales to provide opportunity for passive treatment through a bioretention system prior to discharging into the natural wetland area further east. The most significant swale will align with the southern access road and adjoining parking areas to prevent undesirable vehicle access into the wetland area further east;
- The existing undeveloped area east of the swale will be rehabilitated to restore the natural values of the original wetland environment. New tree planting within this area will incorporate buffer zones and clearances between canopies as required to satisfy bushfire regulations; and
- The proposed colour scheme for the cabins (outlined in **Appendix A**) has given consideration to the site, environment and current trends in 'eco tourist' accommodation aesthetics. The concept behind the colour design is to keep aspects of all the cabins consistent, such as roofing, guttering, downpipes and window and door frames; whilst allowing for variation of exterior wall colour in order to avoid an overly manufactured and institutional appearance. It is considered that if the proposed colour scheme will assist in ensuring that the visual impact of the cabins will not be significant.

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## Conclusion

Under the design proposals outlined in this report, it is clear that the existing visual character of the site and therefore the views of it from surrounding areas will change as a result of the development. While there will be no loss of views from public places, a handful of residents on the lower slopes of the adjoining residential area may experience some loss of visual access across the site to the river beyond.

It is considered inevitable, however, that any change to the existing open landscape will have some level of impact in this regard.

The proposed tourist cabin development is small in scale and will represent only a relatively minor intervention on the site. More significantly, however, it will provide an opportunity to re-establish the native vegetation cover as a dominant landscape element. Once established, this new planting will screen the new cabins from public view and create a natural, heavily vegetated setting that will form an integral part of the surrounding swamp forest vegetation. Other design features such as the bioretention swale will also complement and protect the existing sensitive wetland environment adjacent to the site. This will be significantly more desirable than the existing maintained grassland that has minimal visual or environmental benefit. The new planting will, therefore, greatly enhance the visual amenity of the area as a whole.

The installation of cabins is also considered to be highly complementary with the existing low key recreational use of the river foreshore. The small increase in people enjoying the facilities and riverside experience will have a positive influence on the character and ambience of this setting.

These conclusions are substantiated by the sketches and photomontages presented in **Plates 4.1 to 4.4** which portray the development in its final form. These illustrations show that the site would experience considerable modification to its current state and that of the outlook of lower residential and recreational areas. However it is also demonstrated that, despite some residential views being impeded and recreational views being altered, the visual modification of the locality would not be inappropriate for the character or context of the setting. The built form would not be intrusive and the surrounding vegetation would screen/filter the development, softening its impact and subsequently complement the surrounding natural environment and recreational uses without inappropriately contributing to cumulative visual amenity impacts within the locality.



# Project Team

The project team members included:

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Senior Planner

**Richard Elliott**  
Landscape Designer / Illustrator

**Peter Edegley**  
Illustrator

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# Appendix A

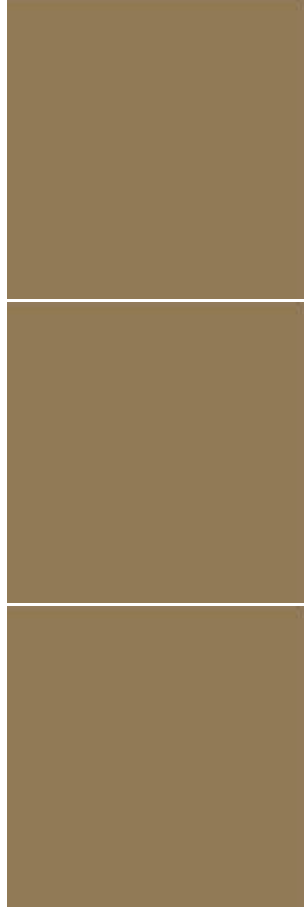
## Colour Scheme

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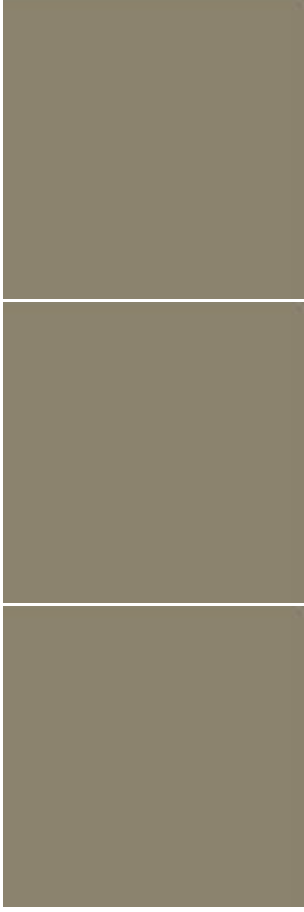




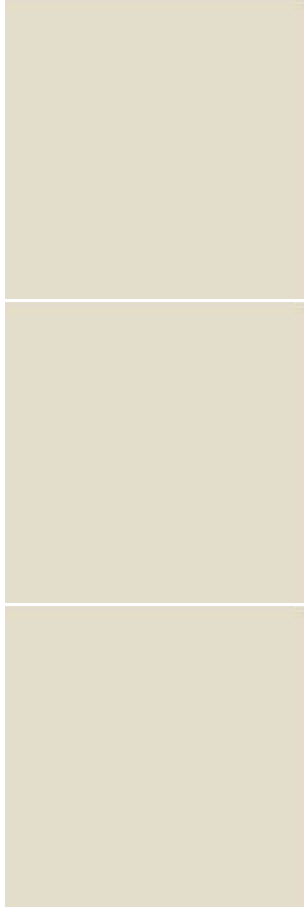
**Dulux: Stonecrop: Cabins 1, 5, & 8**



**Dulux: Old Ruin: Cabins 3 & 7**



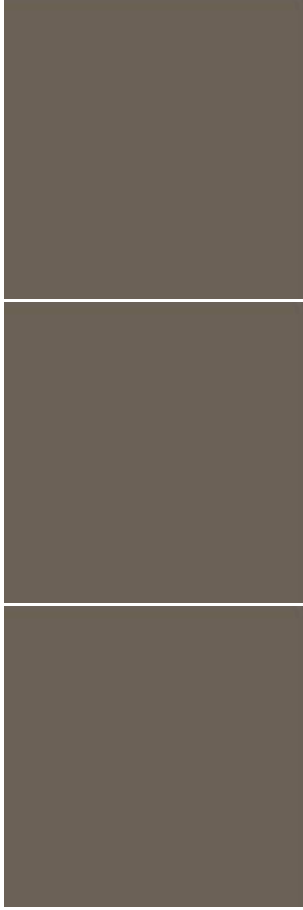
**Dulux: Antique: Cabins: 2, 4, 6 & 9**



**Dulux: Hog Bristle Half: All eaves and  
interior walls**



**Colorbond Sandbank: Roofing Orb on all Cabins**

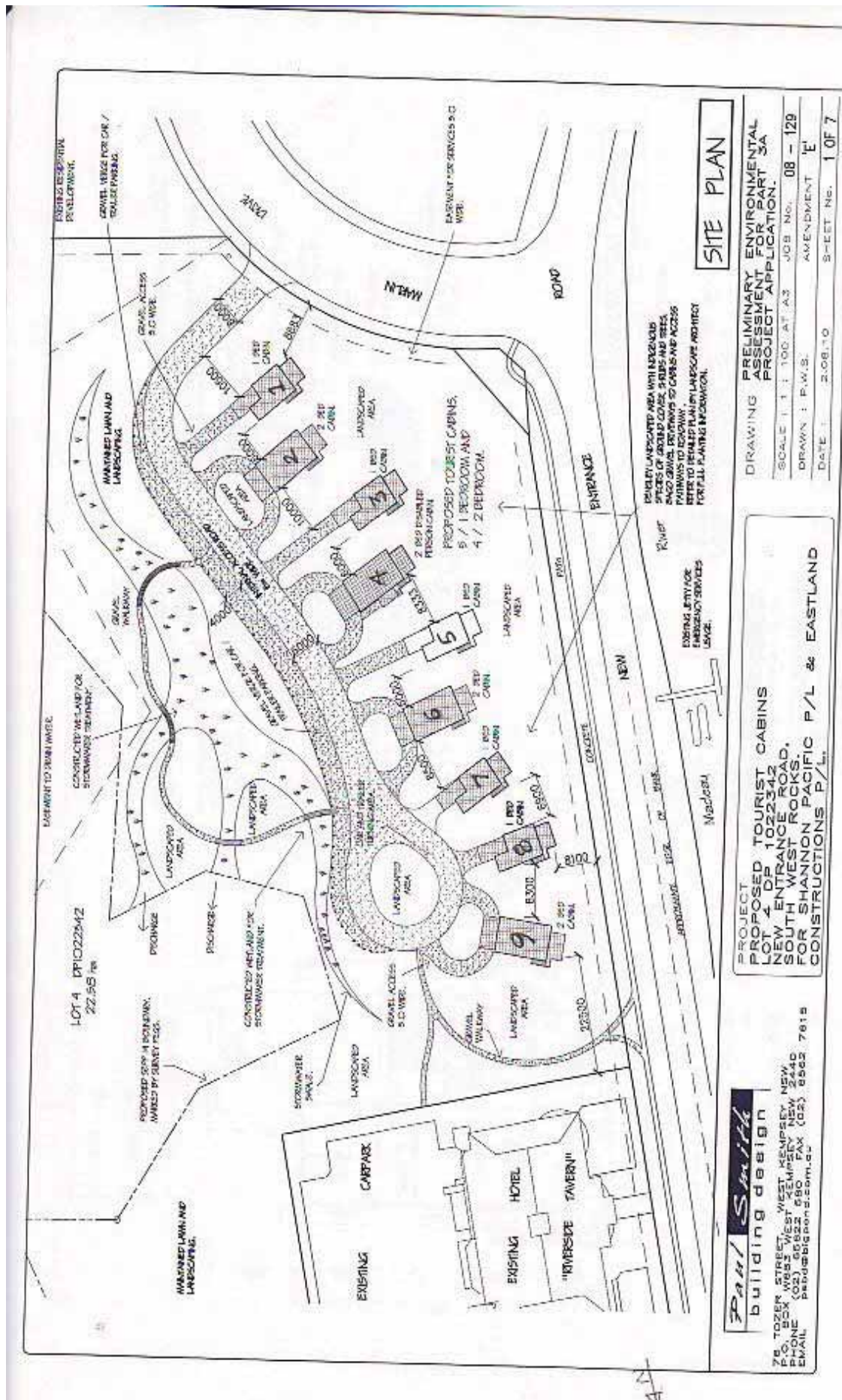


**Powdercoat/Colorbond Jasper  
Windows & door frames, Guttering &  
down pipes.**





<http://www.duspec.com.au/duspec/file/AUDW0769.pdf>



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PROJECT  
PROPOSED TOURIST CABINS  
LOT 4 DP 1022342  
NEW ENTRANCE ROAD,  
SOUTH WEST ROCKS,  
FOR SHANNON PACIFIC P/L & EASTLAND  
CONSTRUCTIONS P/L

DRAWING PRELIMINARY ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR PART 3A PROJECT APPLICATION  
SCALE 1:100 AT A3 JOB NO. 08 - 129  
DRAWN: P.W.S. AMENDMENT 'E'  
DATE: 2.08.10 SHEET No. 1 OF 7