

West Culburra Concept proposal SSD 3846

As a local Culburra resident I would like to OBJECT to this proposal on the following grounds

1. The Applicant has still provided insufficient empirical evidence to support its asserted benefits, and mitigation of economic detriments, of the Proposal.
2. The applicant has failed to consult with the community on this proposal - and any statements made by persons claiming that a certain % of Culburra residents supports the current proposal is not supported by any evidence that I am aware of.
3. That the proposal has failed to consider whether the infrastructure in and around Culburra is able to support the extra residences and traffic without negative effects on the Culburra community
4. That there are some design features which are undesirable and potentially deleterious for the community and the environment.

Dealing with these issues in order;

1 The Applicant has still provided insufficient empirical evidence to support its asserted benefits, and mitigation of economic detriments, of the Proposal.

A Increased economic activity due to more local residents

There is **NO** evidence provided that the new housing stock will contribute economic activity to the local community beyond the construction phase. The proponent has **not provided any evidence that** the development will attract significantly more local residents, that these residents will patronise the existing town centre, and that this will create new employment. Lots of demographic data, economically modelling and assumptions is not empirical evidence.

Based on current trends a significant % of the residences may be unoccupied for much of the year. The proponent states

"Informal discussions with local agents note that enquiry levels from 'out of area' prospective purchasers, particularly those from Greater Sydney, has risen dramatically in the past two quarters of 2020 "

The proponent concludes

"House prices across the South Coast have been rising significantly over the past 5 year, particularly the Shoalhaven LGA which has seen median house values rise by over 40% (CoreLogic, 2020b). This is creating significant affordability issues for local residents looking to enter the market, particularly First Home Buyers"

Taken together these statements suggests that many residences will be bought by out-of-town investors. Not only will these residences then not contribute to the housing needs of the Shoalhaven region residents, but many houses may be vacant for much of the year as they will be holiday houses.

B Rejuvenation of the town centre

Much commentary focused on the potential of the development to rejuvenate the town retail centre. It is noted that the current retail area is larger than required for the current number of residents. The proponent also notes that a series of factors have contributed to this gradual decline in trading condition in the retail centre, including:

- *Inadequate business reinvestment in both real estate and trading operations;*
- *Competition from neighbouring centres, principally the Nowra City Centre where a full spectrum of retail and services is provided.*

It is my observation that these two factors, combined with the oversupply of retail space are the reasons for the decline. I do not think that building more houses to support an oversupply of retail space is an appropriate response. Based on current trends, apart from shopping for groceries at Coles, new residents may well do most of their shopping in Nowra.

It is stated in the economic analysis that *"Culburra Beach has observed no new housing stock being brought to market in recent years."* This is not correct as there has been a steady supply of new housing stock. This includes a townhouse development along East Crescent, a number of divisions of existing large blocks, plus some knockdown - rebuilds. The fact

that this increasing habitable stock has not resulted in any increased activity in the retail sector, is due to the reasons mentioned above.

2. The applicant has failed to consult with the community on this proposal - and any statements made by persons claiming that a certain % of the Culburra residents supports the current proposal is not supported by any evidence that I am aware of.

The proposal states that the Last public exhibition was in 2013, some 8 years ago. A lot has changed in Culburra in 8 years and many new residents have move in. There has been **no open public consultation on the current proposal**. I think that such consultation should **be mandatory** for a major proposal with the potential impact on the Culburra community.

- There has been no open public meeting. The proponents conducted a meeting open only to “supporters” of the proposal at the local bowling club and people needed to preregister. Anyone who went to the meeting would find their names on a list of supporters, even if they had reservations after attending the meeting or had gone to the meeting not realising it was only for supporters.
- There has been no posters or notices placed in prominent places around Culburra notifying of the proposal. There has been no letter box drop (which would have been a very low cost as the numbers of existing properties is not high)

There has been discussions on the closed members- only Facebook page “Culburra beach is the centre of the universe”, so any discussion is not truly representative as older residents are less likely to use face book. The only thing that can be validly taken from the discussions on Facebook is the multitude of concerns expressed by people who post there. My conclusion from the discussions is the majority of Culburra residents who write on the page do NOT support the development proposal in its current form. In addition many residents are angry that Council has now supposedly supported this proposal without any attempt to establish what local residents actually think.

3. That the proposal has failed to consider whether the infrastructure in and around Culburra, is able to support the extra residences and traffic.

The bus service between Culburra beach and Nowra is very poor. Only 3-5 services a day are offered Monday to Friday with no services on the weekend. It is unlikely that the demand created by new houses (some of which will be holiday houses) will support an improved service. Therefore, any new residents will need to have a car to move around. (If there is a desire to increasing house stock in the Shoalhaven area it makes a lot more sense to have it in an area which has good existing public transport, such as the train line or regular buses)

The current roads are not designed to deal with increased traffic.

- There has been no analysis of the impacts of increased traffic between the new developments and the recreational facilities within Culburra, such as the skate park or the beach. There is very limited parking in some areas such as the skate park. The roads are not well maintained as it is. It is not fair that local residents should have their amenity decreased just to facilitate the construction of a new development that only provides profit to the developer and none for local residents.
- Increased traffic would increase the risks to both cyclist and parents with strollers. In many places there are no footpaths or cycle paths so people walk or cycle on the road. While a cycle path between key points such as the shops, the school and Warrane beach would be welcome, putting concrete foot paths (and kerbs and gutters) on all the roads would destroy the essential character of the village.
- The road between Culburra and Nowra (the only access road) is not designed to take more traffic. The road is narrow at parts, has a number of tight bends, and is even dangerous at times now. There was a fatality on this road very recently.

4 There are some design features which are undesirable and potentially deleterious for the community

There is mention in the application mention of “*three mixed-use lots facilitating construction of 2,458sqm of floorspace including a tavern and other leisure uses*”. There is already a large area of unrented floor space in the town (previously the hardware store) which could be well adapted to a number of mixed uses. Furthermore, there are plans to redevelop the old petrol station site as a tavern. Hence this development will have a negative effect on current landowners.

The plan includes an area of very small Integrated housing blocks (330 sqm) that lie between the shops, the industrial area and the sewerage plant. It is not clear what “integrated” means, but it seems to me that an area of very small blocks lying in a less attractive part of Culburra, without adequate room for parking, could result in a socio-economically depressed micro- community, which would not be positive for its residents or the Culburra community.

The roads within much of the proposed housing estate, do not have adequate width to accommodate on-street parking. People whom want to move to live permanently in Culburra, particularly young families, frequently want room for 2 cars, a boat and a yard for the kids to play in, and street parking for other families to visit. The current block sizes - plus the narrow width of many roads in the proposed development - do not support this lifestyle.

The development is not in keeping with the current nature and character of the town and will permanently destroy what residents like and love about it. Culburra has been designed in the style of Walter Burley Griffith, with wide streets and a maximum of two storey buildings. Traffic on the streets is light and many of the roads are not paved and guttered - which provides a much softer environment - quite different to just another piece of suburbia - and not requiring the concrete infrastructure needed for busier roads. Residents do not want Culburra to become just another beach side town filled with multistorey buildings.