

Forster Civic Precinct Project



MIDCOAST
council



Questions & answers

Version 4

Last updated:
10 October 2017

This Q&A sheet explains the process Council has undertaken so far on this significant project, and where we are headed from here.

Q: Where is the project located?

The site, known locally as 'the old school site', is located on the southern side of the Forster town centre on the corner of Lake, West and Middle Streets.

Q: What Council facilities are being proposed at the site?

The Developer will provide the following Council facilities:

- new public library of at least 2,000m² including offices, meeting rooms and amenities
- indoor and outdoor public community space capable of accommodating at least 200 people
- a Visitor Information Centre of at least 100m² including office space for at least six staff, manager's office, storeroom and shared display/front office area with the library
- community green spaces and gardens

- car parking spaces, disabled parking spaces and associated roadworks.

The design of these works will be in accordance with the detailed functional design brief that has been prepared by Council's architect.

Q: What are the other uses proposed for the site?

Given that the site is large (approximately 12,150m²), Council wants to maximise its development potential. Accordingly, in addition to the construction of the Council facilities, the Developer will be entitled to develop the residual of the site for commercial purposes including:

- seniors living apartments
- supermarket
- retail shops
- hotel
- gymnasium

Timeline

In addition, a cinema, nightclub and child care centre may be developed if approved as part of a separate DA process. Providing a mix of commercial and public facilities helps projects such as these enhance and activate the site, retain vibrancy and increase foot traffic.

Q: Will all these facilities be constructed at once?

No, the Developer proposes to undertake the project in four stages. The first stage will include Council's facilities. It's planned to commence mid-2018 and is due to be completed by mid-2020. Subsequent stages will be undertaken by the Developer in accordance with the Developer's works program.

A Development Application (DA) lodged by the Developer for both the Council works and the Developer works was conditionally approved in September 2017.

Q: What car parking arrangements are planned for the site?

Over 180 car spaces will be constructed in the basement situated under the Council facilities for use by the general public. In total, over 500 car spaces within the site will be constructed for the benefit of users and residents of the site. In addition, existing street parking will be enhanced.

Q: Who is the Developer?

Enyoc Pty Ltd has been appointed to undertake the development of the land. The Developer (Enyoc) and its team is associated with the owners and operators of the Evermore Retirement Living facility at Bruce Street, Forster. At the appropriate time, Enyoc will seek investors and financiers to fund the project.

Q: What planning controls currently apply to the site and why did they need to change?

The site is currently zoned B4 Mixed Use under the Great Lakes Local

Environmental Plan 2014 (LEP). All the proposed uses in connection with the project are permissible under the LEP.

In order to achieve the size and scale proposed, the building heights applicable to the site under the LEP were increased (ranging from 33m to 26m) and the floor space ratio increased to 3:1.

Q: Why is Council entering into contractual arrangements with a private sector developer?

The Forster-Tuncurry area is underserved in terms of cultural and community infrastructure. The Forster School of Arts Hall was decommissioned in 2007 and has not been replaced, leaving the area without local facilities to support a range of community uses. The existing Great Lakes Library is a heavily utilised regional facility which is currently only half the NSW Library minimum recommended size for the community it serves.

To address these growing needs, Council has been assessing various options for a number of years. In December 2015, Council issued a call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) seeking responses from parties interested in providing development services to Council and the opportunity to develop the remainder of the land for private purposes.

Following the initial EOI process, Council commenced a subsequent procurement process involving a number of interested parties to identify a proposal which would not only achieve Council's goal for the delivery of its facilities, but also activate the site, generate significant employment and provide good value for money for residual land development rights. The project represents a significant development for the Forster town centre, providing high quality facilities capable of meeting the expectations and requirements of visitors and residents. Provision of Council facilities will also serve as a catalyst for further residential and commercial development, both within the site and across the broader town centre. The Project

2007
Community identifies need for community space and library

2014
Council purchases old school site

2015
Federal Government provides \$6m grant funding to match Council funding

2015-17
Procurement process to identify private sector developer

2016
Community consulted on uses for Council facilities

6 April 2017
NSW Government issue of Gateway Determination

15 May 2017
Developer lodges DA

17 May - 16 June 2017
Public exhibition of planning proposal and DA and community consultations

August - September 2017
LEP gazetted and Development Approval

August 2017
Council and Developer execute Development Agreement

2017 - 2020
Planning approvals and construction phase

2020
Stage 1 Project completion

will provide an enhanced aesthetic and more vibrant town centre.

Q: What is the community space? Is this the performance space?

The community space primarily consists of four rooms and is approximately 480m² in area. It is a flexible space which will be able to accommodate up to 200 people [indoor and outdoor] and will be available for a variety of uses including meetings, performances, conferences, social gatherings and exhibitions.

A 'community lounge' will adjoin the community space with an area of approximately 260m², which is intended to be a public gathering area incorporating informal casual seating for users to relax, socialise and access wifi.

Q: How many units are proposed to be built in the development?

A total of 139 seniors living apartments, 4 penthouse apartments and 102 hotel rooms.

Q: What's the return for Council?

Project costs for the development of the Council facilities will be approximately \$18m. This amount does not include additional monies payable by Council should we require any variations to the scope of works.

To fund the Council facilities, we have received a \$6m grant from National Stronger Regions Fund

[Federal Government] and will benefit from \$6m in works in-kind from the Developer [which represents the Developer's offering to Council to develop the residual of the site]. Council has made provision for the remaining \$6m. In addition to all the non-financial benefits generated by this project, this project represents good value for money having regard to the fact that Council originally paid \$3m for the site.

Q: What's in it for us?

In addition to providing a much needed new library, visitor information centre and community space, it is expected that the provision of the Council facilities will enhance the economic, social and recreational wellbeing of the surrounding district. In addition, development of the 'residual land' [i.e. areas of the site not required for the Council facilities] by the Developer for residential, commercial and business purposes will not only complement the Council facilities, but also boost the local economy, generate employment and activate the site.

Q: Is there a conflict of interest for Council as it owns the site?

Whilst there is no restriction on Council being both landowner and consent authority in connection with the project, we have given serious consideration to the possibility of a conflict of interest arising.

To minimise any potential conflict of interest arising, Council has appointed numerous advisors and consultants to assist with the project [including probity, legal, planning, quantity surveying, design and financial].

Importantly in connection with the development planning process [that Council would ordinarily be involved in as the consent authority], we have taken the following additional steps:

- appointment of an independent planning expert to review the Planning Proposal request from the Developer and prepare all necessary reports associated with that Planning Proposal [including the Planning Proposal itself]. The NSW Government has been responsible for making a determination in connection with the Planning Proposal and ultimately varying the relevant planning control; and
- appointment of a second independent planning expert to review any DA lodged for the project and prepare a report for consideration by the Joint Regional Planning Panel [JRPP]. The JRPP was then responsible for determining the DA and issuing the Development Approval.

Q: What are the economic benefits arising from the project?

The development will provide new Council facilities, residential, accommodation, retail, commercial and employment uses while delivering greater diversity and increased housing supply in the Forster Town Centre. It will encourage Forster to grow and provide impetus for further investment.

The development will facilitate the creation of approximately 236 jobs on site during construction and approximately 260 jobs on site on an on-going basis after completion of the whole development. Wages generated from these permanent jobs is expected to contribute around \$15.1m every year to the local economy.



Total spend in Forster-Tuncurry generated by new residents on site is expected to be around \$3.4m per annum. This development will also stimulate further interest and investment in the Forster-Tuncurry area.

Q: Why do we need a new library in Forster-Tuncurry?

Arrangements to provide a new library to service the Forster-Tuncurry area have been in train for many years (well before the merger of the three former Councils).

The existing library simply cannot meet the demands of the expanding population in the area and the option to expand the existing library is not viable.

The opportunity to develop a new library in conjunction with other public facilities including a visitor information centre and community space is being seized upon to maximise the synergies and

economies of scale created by combining those facilities.

Q: What probity considerations has Council taken into account for the project?

At the commencement of the procurement processes (back in 2015), Council engaged the services of a probity advisor to oversee the project to ensure that the process was transparent, fair, accountable and compliant with procurement requirements.

authenticity of the arrangements and that the probity considerations have been addressed.

Q: What is the planning proposal?

In mid-March, Council lodged a Planning Proposal with the NSW Department of Planning for Gateway Determination (to amend the LEP), which was received on 6 April 2017. The Developer subsequently lodged a DA for both the Council works and the Developer works.

We will continue to keep you informed as the project progresses. It's a very exciting project and we're looking forward to making it a reality, together with you.

The Planning Proposal and the DA were placed on exhibition simultaneously for the public to view and make submissions from 17 May - 16 June 2017. The amendment to the LEP was gazetted by the NSW Government on 4 August 2017.

From this point forward we will keep you informed of the project's progress as it develops. It's a very exciting project and we're looking forward to making it a reality, together with you.

Throughout the procurement arrangements, the probity advisor provided sign-off at the various milestones and confirmed the

