

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Assessment

In relation to

Proposed Mixed Use Development Middle Street, West Street and Lake Street Forster

Forster Solaris

March 2017

Project: 16104

Tunucry Office
Suite 4, 11 Manning Street
Tuncurry NSW 2428

PO Box 568 Forster NSW 2428

Phone (02) 6555 2178

Fax (02) 6555 2741

Email forster@coastplan.com.au

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Coastplan Group Pty Ltd ACN 114 738 662

TABLE of CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
SITE DESCRIPTION.....	1
THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....	3
PURPOSE OF REPORT.....	4
SAFER BY DESIGN.....	4
AREA CONTEXT.....	4
LIKELIHOOD AND CONSEQUENCES OF RECORDED CRIME.....	5
SOCIO-ECONOMIC COMPONENT.....	6
SITE CRIME OPPORTUNITY.....	6
SURVEILLANCE.....	7
TERRITORIAL REINFORCEMENT.....	9
ACCESS CONTROL.....	10
DISCUSSION.....	11
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	13

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INTRODUCTION

Site Description

The following data is provided in relation to the site:

Title Description	Lots 11, 12 & 13 DP 47987
Property Address	34-36 West Street Forster
Site Area	Approx. 1.22 hectares
Zoning – Great Lakes LEP 2014	B4 – Mixed Use

Figures 1 and 2 show the site and locality.



Figure 1 - Site Locality Plan (Zoning)

[Source: MCC Exponare]



Figure 2 - Site Locality Plan (Zoning)

[Source: Google Earth]

The site is comprised of three (3) vacant allotments located in the southern parts of the Forster Town Centre.

The site has frontages to Lake Street, West Street and Middle Street. The site was previously utilised as a public school, and a toilet block and concrete play areas remain on the land.

Vegetation over the land is derived from previous occupation of the land, and is primarily comprised of trees in grassland areas established as part of the previous school use.

The land is flat to slightly sloping, with flat areas (grades generally 1%) in the northern parts of the site (Lots 12 and 13), with gradual slopes (2-6%) over the southern parts of the site (Lot 11), with a grade generally from north to south.

The site has access to all urban utilities, including reticulated water, sewer, electricity and telecommunications. The site is located within the Forster main town centre and is connected to all urban services and facilities.

The Proposed Development

The proposal involves the development of a mixed use development providing community/civic facilities, commercial land uses, tourist accommodation and residential accommodation. Specifically, the proposal includes:

- Library
- Visitor Centre (Tourist Information Centre)
- Community Building/rooms
- Supermarket
- Retail Shops
- Restaurants
- Cinema
- Hotel
- Nightclub
- Child Care Centre
- Gymnasium
- Residential Apartments (Seniors)

Full plans of the proposal have been included with the application presented to Council and some key plans have been included in Appendix A of this document.

Access to the development is provided to the basement and above ground parking areas off West, Lake and Middle Streets, and service access for the community and commercial land uses has been provided from West Street.

The proposed development will be carried out in four (4) stages, with the development in the north eastern corner of the site containing the library, visitor information centre and community rooms/areas and the tower of seniors housing above, developed as the first stage. Development of the commercial uses and remaining seniors housing will be developed in Stages 2 and 3, and the motel and associated uses will be developed in Stage 4.

Purpose of Report

This report has been prepared to accompany a development application. The report examines the existing environment to determine likely crime risk, examines the proposal and surrounding area to identify any areas of significant crime risk, and discusses measures to address crime risk areas identified.

Safer by Design

This report has utilised guidelines prepared by the NSW Police Service entitled 'Safer by Design'.

These guidelines provide assistance to determine crime risks and to identify design factors which may influence the likelihood of crime occurring. The guidelines deal with opportunistic crime which can be influenced by design/environmental factors which provide conditions where criminals feel they can commit crimes with a reduced chance of being caught. The guidelines identify three (3) key areas in design which can influence opportunistic crime. The three (3) factors are:

1. Surveillance;
2. Territorial Reinforcement; and
3. Access Control.

With regard to the proposed development, the guidelines have been used to put the area and its crime risk in context using statistics to provide a comparative crime risk description. The site and design features are then examined to identify possible crime risk areas within the proposed development and surrounding locality in regard to the three (3) key design influences. Finally, the issues are discussed and recommendations made to improve the crime safety aspects of the design.

AREA CONTEXT

The site is currently vacant and located among commercial, community, service provision, and tourism/residential uses. The site is located opposite the Forster Police Station in West Street.

The area context will be discussed in terms of crime statistics available which show the current levels of crime in the area and statistics looking at the comparative social economic advantage of the area. Statistics utilised are based upon ABS figures for the Great Lakes local government area.

Likelihood and Consequences of Recorded Crime

This analysis of the statistics compares the area to other areas to determine the likelihood of crime occurring and qualitatively assesses the likely consequences of the most common forms of crime.

Likelihood

To examine the likelihood of crime occurring, total crime statistics per 100,000 people were examined for the area and compared with statistics for the entire State, as well as statistics for nearby local government areas (Greater Taree, Port Macquarie/Hastings, Port Stephens and Gloucester). In this comparison, the Great Lakes local government area had the second lowest figure for recorded crime per 100,000 head of population and the likelihood of crime is Unlikely to Moderate.

Consequence

The consequence is based on typical crimes that occur in the area. Review of the Great Lakes crime statistics by offence show that the typical crime for the area involves disorderly conduct, assault, domestic assault, break & enter, and other theft, as well as vandalism and drug offences. Much of the crime is identified as alcohol-related.

Based upon the crime profile, it was considered that the qualitative assessment for crime consequence is minor with some effect on community fear; however such fear is not evident.

Based on these assessments for crime likelihood and consequence, the area rating Matrix would give a value of 2.5.

Hotspot Weighting

Certain parts of an area can be more likely to experience crime and these areas are identified as hotspots. The Forster town centre is an activity and is a local hotspot in the Great Lakes LGA for assault, robbery and malicious damage. As such, the area weighting has been increased by 5. As such, the area rating with allowance for hotspot activity for the sites locality is 7.5.

Socio-Economic Component

The socio-economic profile of an area is relevant to the area rating. To examine the comparative rating for socio economic factors, the SEIFA Index rating for the area is examined. The SEIFA Index rating for the Great Lakes local government area is 920. The Safer by Design Guidelines places the SEIFA rating in the third band. With this allowance, the adjusted area rating is 10.5, which is rated as significant.

This figure is used further in conjunction with the site crime opportunity analysis.

SITE CRIME OPPORTUNITY

The Site Crime Opportunity Assessment involves examining the area and the proposal to determine any environmental attributes which affect the three (3) key areas of surveillance, territorial reinforcement, and access control. After a survey of what positive and negative features are present, these figures are used to give an overall Site Risk Rating (out of 10) in combination with the adjusted area rating.

The environmental site features were rated as minor. When combined with the adjusted area rating, 'Safer by Design' gives a Site Risk Rating of 6, which is considered by the guidelines to be a moderate crime risk area.

It is beyond this project to modify the area context rating, however there were many site opportunity areas which were noted in the assessment which are addressed in the crime risk assessment. These matters have been discussed under the key headings of surveillance, territorial reinforcement, and access control.

There are some key positive crime safety matters relating to the proposal and area, such as:

- Increased surveillance of the area, both passive and active, as a result of the mixed uses on the site.
- Use of an otherwise unused space which is otherwise an opportunity for anti-social activities.
- The Council runs a highly successful graffiti removal program which will minimise the potential for graffiti at the site.
- The site is located in close proximity to the Police Station, which can be expected to be a deterrent to crime.

In addition there are some key limitations which will apply to this form of development, which need to be addressed, including:

- Potential poor surveillance of the underground carpark areas, especially in times outside normal operation of the community and commercial uses.
- Potential areas of poor surveillance at areas such as loading docks and fire exits.
- Given the multiple frontages and accesses, connections within the site may provide opportunities for unauthorised access and escape.

Surveillance

The existing site is currently vacant and does not have any active observation. Such areas may be attractive for anti-social activities such as underage drinking and drug use; and may also allow for predatory behaviour on persons using such areas, especially at night. There is some evidence of minor anti-social activities currently occurring at the site (beer cans and drug paraphernalia).

The proposed development will, in contrast, introduce significant improvement to both active and passive surveillance of the area, with the introduction of the following:

- Community and Commercial employees in the area during day/evenings, who can be active protectors of the area.
- Passive/Active surveillance by patrons/customers in the area throughout the day/evenings.

- Passive surveillance of the area by residents/guests of the seniors apartments, penthouses and hotel.
- Active and opportunistic surveillance as a result of the proximity to the police station, with the area passed by regular patrols and workers during shift changes, resulting in a significant deterrent to crime.
- The nightclub is located in the basement of the hotel in stage 4 and has access to this basement area. Access will be controlled via the hotel and security provided as part of the nightclub use will provide active surveillance and capable defenders in the area.

Surveillance for the proposed development and uses will be less successful in relation to the following:

- When activity from community and commercial uses ceases, the public plaza outdoor areas at ground floor may offer areas where concealment from the street and units above is possible.
- Natural passive and active surveillance of the basement public carpark would be an issue, especially outside of key activity times.
- The service and parking accesses will have lower levels of natural surveillance due to being areas not highlighted to the public and needing to be visually separated from public areas.
- Emergency exits are generally not provided with natural or passive surveillance due to being distributed around the site.

To address these issues, the following is recommended:

- Access control to areas such as the basement carpark, loading dock areas and building entrances/exits needs to be of a high standard (see discussion later within report).
- CCTV should be provided in a targeted approach to areas such as the basement carpark, public plaza and outdoor areas, and all building entrances/exits. CCTV should be highlighted and signposted so that it acts as a deterrent to crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as a source for information following incidents.

- Public areas within and around the site should be well lit during night time hours to improve surveillance of the areas, as well as the effectiveness of CCTV.
- Internal parts of community and commercial use areas should be provided with security alarm systems.
- Late night operations of the nightclub will be required to provide security for entrances and surrounding areas.
- Residential units shall be provided with a method to observe the hallway in without having to open the door (peephole or CCTV).

Territorial Reinforcement

The proposed architectural and landscaping treatment show excellent delineation of uses and definition of areas which are public, private or commercial.

The private residence areas of the seniors living and penthouse apartments are easily delineated with the areas located above ground level and having no connection with other spaces, other than the entrance lobbies at ground level which are separate compartmented frontages.

The public areas are defined by building form and landscape treatment, whilst the commercial use areas are defined by building form and landscape treatment, which indicates a change of use whilst still allowing for free access between the areas.

The service areas of the development accessed from West Street are also appropriately treated and provide service vehicle access and parking areas, whilst not encouraging other access by pedestrians, etc., which may give access to service areas by unauthorised persons. Whilst cyclists will use this area to access the proposed Class 2 bike facilities, these will be by employees and workers within the community/commercial uses who know the destination and access will not generally be encouraged for other cyclists.

The public areas are expected to be highly utilised by the community and will be targeted for daily maintenance in terms of cleaning, graffiti removal, etc., and

will be well maintained areas which would discourage anti-social behaviour. The Council has a very successful graffiti removal program ('Graffiti Buster') which has been implemented to remove graffiti in the area as soon as it appears. This program will be implemented for the subject site.

Access Control

Given the mixed uses on the site, there is a need for excellent access control between uses so that access is separated for community, commercial and residential uses.

The proposed development design provides excellent separation of access for uses, with residential uses having their own defined separate access lobbies and lifts. Whilst the exit stairs are shared with other uses, re-entry to the residential floors from the exit stairs shall not be available, except as required by BCA compliance. Likewise, the community uses are not connected with commercial uses, etc., other than the lift connections with the basement carparking area, which do not open directly to the communal areas but instead open externally to the common community plaza area.

Access control is required for all building entry points and exits to ensure access can be controlled outside of operating hours for community and commercial uses and to control access only to residents, guests and management/staff for seniors living areas.

In relation to access control, the following measures are recommended:

- Access to carparking areas should be controlled. The residential parking areas (located at levels 1 and 2) will need to have an automatic door which can be operated by a card or similar system, as well as from units to allow legitimate guests of residents to obtain access as allowed by the resident. Access to the basement carparking area is required to allow public access during community and commercial uses; however outside of normal hours, access should be restricted and it is suggested that access/egress to and from the carpark should be restricted by security doors between night time hours (such as between 11pm and 6am), with access only available via card or similar system for on-site users who

may require occasional access, such as the hotel, nightclub or cinema operators.

- The lifts for the residential and commercial uses should operate on a card system or similar so that they can only be operated and used by residents, etc., who have an access card. Public lifts connecting the public basement carpark to the plaza should be locked down between the same hours as the basement carpark and only useable by a card system after lockdown hours.
- Fire exit doors can often be located in areas with poorer surveillance and, as such, require suitable locking devices which prevent entry from the outside other than with a key. This should include suitable strike shields to minimise the opportunity for tampering with locks.
- The loading dock has also been identified as an area with potentially poor surveillance, and a high level of security access control with security roller shutter and access door should be provided.
- Glass commercial frontages should be provided with security/laminated glass to minimise opportunities for break/enter to shops.
- The plaza areas should be provided with bollards and other features to prevent unauthorised vehicular access and potential ram raid opportunities.

DISCUSSION

The proposed development is considered to have positive outcomes in terms of site crime opportunity in the area. The introduction of mixed uses in the area will provide a significant increase in active and passive surveillance at the site and in the area generally, providing improvements to crime safety in the area.

Analysis of the development proposal revealed some opportunities to improve the performance of the development in terms of resistance to opportunistic crime. In this regard the following recommendations are made:

- All public areas within and around the site should be lit between sunset and sunrise to maximise surveillance of those areas.

- CCTV should be provided to public areas, carpark areas and building entry areas. CCTV should be obvious and highlighted to act as a deterrent to opportunistic crime.
- Alarm systems should be provided for the internal commercial and community use areas.
- Residential units shall be provided with a method to observe the hallway in without having to open the door (peephole or CCTV).
- A management plan for maintenance of the public areas and external commercial areas shall be prepared and implemented, providing for daily maintenance of these areas in a clean state and the removal of any graffiti, using Council's Graffiti Buster program or otherwise funded and implemented.
- External surfaces should utilise surfaces which are easily cleaned of graffiti or not easily tagged.
- Access to resident parking areas shall be controlled with a security shutter with car/remote access required.
- The public basement carpark area should be locked down during the period of 11pm-6am, with access only available for authorised persons. Appropriate signage of lockdown times should be provided throughout the parking area. Lifts available for public use in the carpark area shall be locked down for the same periods.
- All other lifts shall be controlled via a key/card system (or similar) so that access to lifts and residential areas is only available for authorised persons.
- All exit doors shall be provided with a high quality locking system, including strike shields which prevent entry from the outside without a key/card system or similar to allow access for authorised persons.
- The loading dock will be provided with security roller shutters and access controls for all entrance doors.
- Glazed commercial frontages will utilise security/laminated glazing to minimise opportunity for smash and grab style offences.
- Bollards shall be provided where necessary to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the public plaza areas.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The locality is identified as having a moderate site area rating for crime risk, primarily due to its location within the town centre 'hotspot'. This is based upon the crime statistics for the area and a review of the environmental features of the site.

The proposed development will increase active and passive surveillance in the area and may be expected to reduce crime risk in the area generally. Some recommendations have been made to reduce the potential for opportunistic crime throughout the development as follows:

- All public areas within and around the site should be lit between sunset and sunrise to maximise surveillance of those areas.
- CCTV should be provided to public areas, carpark areas and building entry areas. CCTV should be obvious and highlighted to act as a deterrent to opportunistic crime.
- Alarm systems should be provided for the internal commercial and community use areas.
- Residential units shall be provided with a method to observe the hallway in without having to open the door (peephole or CCTV).
- A management plan for maintenance of the public areas and external commercial areas shall be prepared and implemented, providing for daily maintenance of these areas in a clean state and the removal of any graffiti, using Council's Graffiti Buster program or otherwise funded and implemented.
- External surfaces should utilise surfaces which are easily cleaned of graffiti or not easily tagged.
- Access to resident parking areas shall be controlled with a security shutter with car/remote access required.
- The public basement carpark area should be locked down during the period of 11pm-6am, with access only available for authorised persons. Appropriate signage of lockdown times should be provided throughout the parking area. Lifts available for public use in the carpark area shall be locked down for the same period.

- All other lifts shall be controlled via a key/card system (or similar) so that access to lifts and residential areas is only available for authorised persons.
- All exit doors shall be provided with a high quality locking system, including strike shields which prevent entry from the outside without a key/card system or similar to allow access for authorised persons.
- The loading dock will be provided with security roller shutters and access controls for all entrance doors.
- Glazed commercial frontages will utilise security/laminated glazing to minimise opportunity for smash and grab style offences.
- Bollards shall be provided where necessary to prevent unauthorised vehicular access to the public plaza areas.