



Visual Impact Assessment (VIA)

**PLANNING PROPOSAL –
ADDITIONAL PERMITTED
USES TO INCLUDE A
SERVICE STATION**

**254 Tarean Road, Karuah,
NSW, 2324**

(LOT: 1 DP: 507141)

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Document Versions and Disclaimer				
No:	Date:	PP Ref:	Author:	Review by:
Version 1	04/03/2022	VIA – 254 Tarean Road, Karuah	AR	MB
Version 2	05/04/2024	VIA – 254 Tarean Road, Karuah_V2	AB	AB
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Perception Planning Pty Ltd has been engaged by Coastal Earth Moving Hire PTY LTD (**‘the client’**) to prepare a Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) for a Planning Proposal for a Schedule 1 – Additional Permitted Use for a Service Station at 254 Tarean Road, Karuah, NSW, 2324 (**‘the site’**). The site is located on the southern side of Karuah Road adjoining moderate to large rural residential allotments. The site is located in the Port Stephens Local Government Area (LGA).

Given the proposal has the potential to alter the existing rural landscape, and visual amenity of the site, this VIA has been prepared. The VIA demonstrates that despite the change in land-use, the future development of the site, is suitable when considered against the context and character of the immediate locality.

Visibility is a product of both how easily a site is seen and the number of viewers that see it. Visibility also relates to visual sensitivity and how the viewer is impacted by the development.

It is considered that the proposed change in land-use zone will have a low to negligible visual effect on the existing visual catchment surrounding the subject site and does not result in the development being out of character with the locality.

The VIA will expand on those matters that have been summarised above to assist Council in completing a detailed assessment of the proposed development.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) is to assist Council in their assessment and determination of the proposed development and to assist the community in understanding the development and associated visual impacts relating to scale, height, density and bulk from prominent vistas within the locality.

This VIA has been prepared in accordance with best practice principles, applicable aspects of the Development Assessment Framework and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (EP&A Act) 1979 (s4.15). In the absence of national or state level guidelines for VIA preparation, an approach has been developed in accordance with the following best practice guidelines:

1. Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (The Landscape Institute & The Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013)
2. Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (Landscape Institute Guidance Note, March 2019).

Changes in views and visual amenity are a consideration within the planning process under s4.15 of the EP&A Act. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that no-one has a 'right to a view'. This includes situations where a residential's property outlook and/or visual amenity is judged to be 'significantly' affected by a proposed development.

The objectives and methodology of this VIA are as follows:

- To provide a description of the site, existing development and the surrounding locality,
- To provide a description and nature of the proposed development,
- To identify and provide a discussion on the prominent vistas towards the proposed development, and
- To provide an assessment of the impact of the development on the visual amenity of the surrounding locality.

For the purposes of the assessment, two key criteria; 'sensitivity to change' and 'magnitude of change' have been used to identify and assess the level of potential visual impact, as follows:

Criteria 1: Sensitivity

Sensitivity includes both the 'susceptibility' of the viewer or receptor, and also the 'value' of the landscape in which the viewer experiences change. These two concepts are co-dependent in determining the sensitivity of a landscape and the extent to which it can accept change of a particular type and scale without adverse effects on its character. Generally, the key factors for consideration is based on the number of people affected, land use and the distance of the viewer from the proposal (EDAW, 2000).

In this case, sensitivity can be reasonably assumed in advance. Those living within view of the site are usually regarded as the highest sensitivity group, as it is recognised that in considering the likely effects on visual amenity experienced by residents that *'residents at home, especially using rooms normally occupied in walking or daylight hours, are likely to experience views for longer than those briefly passing through an area'* (GLVIA3 para 6.36).

Criteria 2: Magnitude of Change

The magnitude of change at any particular residential property depends on the nature, scale and duration of the particular change that is expected to occur and is described as substantial, moderate, slight or negligible based on interpretation of the following parameters:

- a. Distance of the property from the development
- b. Extent of the development in the view
- c. Angle of view in relation to orientation of the property
- d. Proportion of the view occupied by the development
- e. Local context in which the development is seen
- f. Extent of other built development visible, in particular vertical elements.

1.2 REPORT FORMAT

The principal tasks of the VIA process are reflected in the report's format, as follows:

- **Task 1:** Description of the existing environment and context of the site;
- **Task 2:** Identification of prominent viewpoints / vistas and a range of people and places that have visibility to the site;
- **Task 3:** Description of the proposal and associated materials, colours and design;
- **Task 4:** Determination of the likely visual impact for people and from places;
- **Task 5:** Assessment of significance associated with the visual impact and/or change;
- **Task 6:** Key findings and conclusion.

2 EXISTING ENVIRONMENT

2.1 SITE DETAILS

Site Characteristics	
Address	254 Tarean Road, Karuah, NSW, 2324
Lot / DP	Lot: 1 DP: 507141
Area	1.662 ha
Zoning	RU2 – Rural Landscape
Consent Authority	Port Stephens Council
Current Use	Service Station and Commercial Premises
Site Constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acid Sulfate Soils – Class 5• Minimum lot size – 20ha• Bushfire Prone – Category 1 & 3

2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is a single parcel of land with an area measuring 1.662 hectares. The site is bordered by Tarean Road to the north and rural lands to the south, east and west.

The site is currently zoned RU2 – Rural Landscape. The area zoned RU2 is subject to a minimum Lot size of 20ha. The site does not meet the minimum lot size for the zone.

Karuah is located on both sides of the Karuah River, on the boundary of the Port Stephens and Great Lakes Local Government Areas, and at the western end of the Port Stephens Waterway. Most of the village is located on the western side of the river, within Port Stephens Local Government Area, with a small settlement on the eastern side of the river in Great Lakes Shire.

The site is located 1.2km or a 2-minute drive from the Karuah town centre; 21.2km or a 16-minute drive to Medowie; 24.5km or a 17-minute drive to Raymond Terrace, 57.1km or a 47-minute drive to Nelson Bay; and 52.8km or a 48-minute drive to the regional city of Newcastle. The site is identified in the Karuah Place Plan for a future short term employment land and supports key strategic land-use planning documents such as the Hunter Regional Plan and the Port Stephens Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The site has a history of commercial land-uses, such as service station, retail premises and residential use on the large rural lot. Although the service station is no longer operational, all infrastructure has been retained including fuel pumps. Tarean road interconnects with the Pacific Highway which is a dual laneway carriageway connecting the site to strategic centres of Medowie, Raymond Terrace, Nelson Bay and the regional city of Newcastle.



Figure 1 - Aerial image of subject site (Perception Planning, adapted by author, 2022).

2.3 CHARACTER OF LOCALITY

Visual character is formed by patterns created by the relationship of all elements within an area, including both the public and private domain.

Karuah is a suburb of the Port Stephens LGA and is largely consolidated surrounding the township and toward the Karuah River. There are two entries into Karuah via Pacific Highway both entries are characterised by larger sized allotments on rural zoned land and new housing estates. Since the adoption of the Karuah Growth Strategy, most of the land identified as suitable for residential development has been rezoned and new housing estates complete or under construction.

Dense vegetation is located south of Tarean Road with Karuah River located beyond this. Tarean Road is lined with vegetation which largely obscures views onto private property from the public domain. Both entries to Karuah have a distinct rural and residential appearance with Karuah being characterised as a growing coastal town.

Karuah is located on both sides of the Karuah River, on the boundary of the Port Stephens and Great Lakes Local Government Areas, and at the western end of the Port Stephens Waterway. Most of the village is located on the western side of the river, within Port Stephens Local Government Area, with a small settlement on the eastern side of the river in Great Lakes Shire. The 2016 Census for the Karuah Suburb (SSC12076) identified that Karuah had a resident population of 1,411.

Local character is distinctive and differentiates one area from another. It includes all aspects of the built environment, as well as the sense of place, and how people respond to that place. Local character might reflect cultural or social identities and values, it can be shaped by history, landscape and location, or it might be aspirational and reflect desires and future priorities. Local character can create a sense of belonging and community. Housing can have a significant impact in defining the local character of an area and can be planned and designed to contribute to and enhance the character of a place.

The local character of the area under assessment is shaped by mildly undulating topography and rural landscape, shown in **FIGURES 2 - 4**. The locality has historically been utilised as rural residential properties with limited evidence of primary industry. West of the subject site is undeveloped land zoned RU2 Rural Landscape. Karuah Village is located further west and extends to the Kaurah River. Since the adoption of the Karuah Growth Strategy, most of the land identified as suitable for residential development has been rezoned and new housing estates complete or under construction.

The proposed additional permitted use will introduce a new element into the existing character of this area. It is expected that the locality over time will see an increase in larger vehicles accessing the subject site as the area is developed. This will also be characterised by a change in the road network. However, given the position of the subject site this is not anticipated to result in a significant impact upon the adjoining properties.



Figure 2 – Existing conditions at 254 Tarean Road, Karuah



Figure 3 – Approach to subject site heading east along Tarean Road towards Karuah Village



Figure 4 – Approach to subject site heading west along Tarean Road towards Pacific Highway

3 DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING CONTEXT

3.1 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The subject site, shown in **FIGURE 1**, is a medium sized allotment containing a service station, commercial premises, and managed land. Established vegetation is scattered intermittently throughout the site as shown in **Figure 2 - 4**. The Planning Proposal is for an addition permitted use of the land to enable a service station.

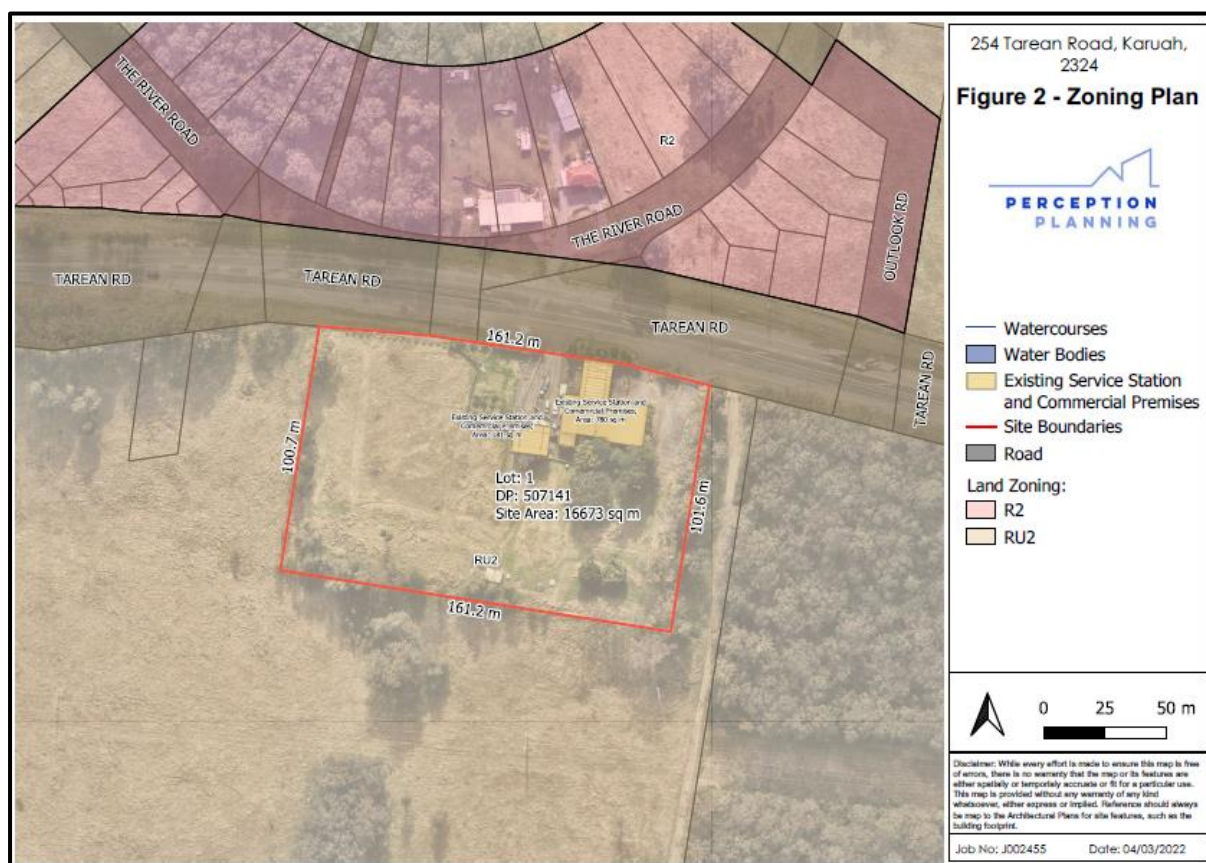


Figure 5 – Existing Building and Zone map, 254 Tarean Road, Karuah

The proposed additional permitted use under Schedule 1 of the LEP will re-establish the historic use of the site. The redevelopment of pre-existing uses on this land will improve the visual perception of the site when viewed from Tarean Road.

3.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

Karuah Place Plan

The site is identified in the *Karuah Place Plan* (KPP) as a site for future temporary employment lands in accordance with the KKP (P.15).

Accordingly, the context behind the proposal is that:

- The site has a history of commercial land-uses, such as service station, retail premises therefore is considered to be a located within a suitable location; and
- the subject site is in a suitable locality for easy access to Pacific Highway; and

As such, the proposed location of the additional permitted use is consistent with the preferred intent of the land under the KPP.

Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 (PSLEP 2013)

The subject site zoned RU2 – Rural Landscape as shown in **FIGURE 6**. The Land Use Table of the LEP identifies the following objectives for the RU2 zone:

Zone RU2 Rural Landscape

- *To encourage sustainable primary industry production by maintaining and enhancing the natural resource base.*
- *To maintain the rural landscape character of the land.*
- *To provide for a range of compatible land uses, including extensive agriculture.*



Figure 6 – Current land use zone – 254 Tarean Road, Karuah

The current land use zone does not facilitate the development of the service station; accordingly, the planning proposal, as shown in **FIGURE 5**, seeks to incorporate the additional permitted use clause under Schedule 1 of the LEP to re-establish the historic use of the site in accordance with the *Karuah Place Plan*.

The proposal and supporting documentation demonstrate that the intention of the proposal is to maintain the existing aesthetics of the locality ensuring that the character is not compromised as a result of the change in land use. Given the intention of the current land use zone, RU2, is to ensure the amenity of the rural landscape is retained whilst facilitating the primary production, it is believed that the 'good' design of a future premises on the site

will not result in significant adverse visual impacts. Nor is it considered that the future development would result in land use conflicts which impact upon the current viability of the surrounding RU2 zoned land.

The planning proposal is considered to integrate within the existing character of the locality, contributing to Council's preferred intention for the site. The proposal has considered the environmental constraints of the land and been designed accordingly to ensure minimal environmental impact will occur as a result of future development. To this extent, the proposed development is considered consistent with the intent of the RU2 land use zone objectives and is consistent with the objectives of the *Karuah Place Plan*.

Port Stephens Development Control Plan 2014 (PSDCP)

The PSDCP will be applicable to future development of the site as a service station.

4 VIEWPOINTS AND IMPACT

4.0 SUMMARY

Visibility is a product of both how easily a site is seen and the number of viewers that see it. Visibility also relates to visual sensitivity and how the viewer is impacted by the development.

Locations can be visually sensitive for a number of reasons however generally relate to aspects including landscape type, landscape character, extent of vegetation, scenic quality and visibility, and how these each combine. Two main visual amenity issues have been identified as key concerns when considering the proposed development of the subject site, including:

- Change to the existing character of the site and the need to achieve an attractive overall development appropriate to the rural landscape and setting; and
- The potential effect on the surrounding rural residential settings due to any changes in views approaching the site from surrounding street connections.

The existing driveway access to Tarean Road will facilitate vehicle movements with an internal road network servicing the premises.

The planning proposal will enhance the subject site and locality by reinstating the historic land use and improving the visual impact of the site. The size, height and design of the future development will be assessed on individual merit and impact within the locality. It is considered that any future visual impact can be managed through appropriate siting and landscaping. It is considered that the proposal is appropriate for the existing and future character of the locality in accordance with the intentions and objectives of the KPP.

For the purpose of this assessment, three viewpoints have been chosen, including:

1. **Viewpoint 1** – site viewed travelling east along Tarean Road.
2. **Viewpoint 2** – site viewed from the opposing side of Tarean Road (facing south)

3. **Viewpoint 3** – site view travelling west along Tarean Road

4.1 **VIEWPOINT 1: SITE VIEWED TRAVELLING EAST ALONG TAREAN ROAD**



Figure 7 – Current view approaching site from Tarean Road, travelling east.



Figure 8 – Proposed view approaching site from Nelson Bay Road, travelling east.

As evidenced by **Figures 7 to 8**, the sensitivity to change from Tarean Road looking southeast towards the site is moderate when in a stationary position. It is however noted that views towards the site are further reduced due to not being held for a long period of the time when in a travelling vehicle.

From a public domain viewpoint, the degree of sensitivity to change and change to visual amenity is low. Future development of the site will incorporate landscaping along the front boundary which will enhance the visual perception of the site. From this easterly approach, it is considered that view sharing impacts are largely limited to road users and are minimal in nature. Future development enable by the proposal will be obscured by the future vegetation which limits visual impact on rural landscape and from the public domain.

The proposal has been considered to maintain consistency with the intentions of the KKP and the objective of the RU2 zone to maintain the amenity of the rural landscape. It is considered that future development of the land will not result in significant visual impacts and can integrate within the surrounding context of the locality.

Given the dilapidated state of the existing built form structures occupying the site the proposed development is not considered to be visually obtrusive from this viewpoint, rather it will contribute to the visual of the site and the identity of the locality. Sensitivity to change is negligible and the impact of the planning proposal and magnitude of change from this location is slight.

4.2 VIEWPOINT 2: SITE VIEWED FROM THE OPPOSING SIDE OF TAREAN ROAD (FACING SOUTH)



Figure 9 – Site view from the opposing side of Tarean Road (facing south)



Figure 10 – Site viewed from the opposing side of Tarean Road, (facing south)

From a public domain viewpoint, the degree of sensitivity to change and change to visual amenity is low. **FIGURE 10** demonstrates that visibility of the development is most prominent from the residential land on the opposing side of Tarean Road.

However, existing visibility of the site is low due to the existing vegetation. From this southerly approach, it is considered that view sharing impacts will be minimal in nature and development of the site will improve the visual perception of site from these lots. Future development enable by the proposal will be obscured by the existing vegetation which limits visual impact on rural landscape and from the public domain.

The proposed development is not considered to be visually obtrusive from this viewpoint, rather it will contribute to the presence of the site and the identity of the locality. Sensitivity to change is negligible and the impact of the planning proposal and magnitude of change from this location is slight.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development achieves sympathy to the surrounding properties and is appropriate for the context and character of the area.

4.3 VIEWPOINT 3: SITE VIEWED TRAVELLING WEST ALONG TAREAN



Figure 11 - Current view approaching site from Tarean Road, travelling west.



Figure 12 – Existing vegetation adjacent the western frontage of the site

From a public domain viewpoint, the degree of sensitivity to change and change to visual amenity is moderate from this location. **FIGURE 12** demonstrates the existing vegetation which is established adjacent to the built structures currently occupying the site. This existing vegetation will act as a screening buffer when the site is approached from the west along Tarean Road. Whilst much of the boundary is lined with existing native vegetation, clear gaps, and sightlines along Tarean Road toward the proposed development area will be viewed from the public domain.

The site is bounded by rural properties to the west. From this viewpoint, the degree of sensitivity to change and change to visual amenity is low. The adjoining neighbours are screened from the subject site by existing vegetation. It is anticipated that future construction of structures along this western boundary will result in a change to the visual outlook to the southern boundary. Despite the change, the site of 264 Tarean Road has not been developed therefore is not afforded any significant views over the rural landscape. Thus, to this extent, the visual impact on the residential properties is considered low.

It is considered that view sharing impacts are largely limited to road users and are minimal in nature. The proposed development is not considered to be visually obtrusive from this viewpoint. Sensitivity to change is negligible and the impact of the planning proposal and magnitude of change from this location is slight.

Overall, it is considered that the proposed development achieves sympathy to the surrounding properties and is appropriate for the future desired context and character of the area.

5 KEY FINDINGS AND SOLUTIONS

When considering the effect of the proposed development from viewpoints, the level of impact is determined by a combination of:

- The situation from which people may view components of the development (e.g. residential occupancy or motorists);
- The number of people with a view towards the development from any one location;
- The distance between a person and components of the development; and
- Duration of time that a person may view the development.

As the site is presently developed with a service station and commercial premises, the residences positioned within the closest proximity to the future development of the land are not considered to be highly affected because of the re-development.

Appropriate inclusion of appropriate setbacks, height, materials, colours and articulation and landscaping for future premises' in proximity to the residences can mitigate visual impacts. Further, the aforementioned residential land located directly to the north of the site is identified as future investigation employment land under KPP.

This VIA has found that the proposed development would have a low to negligible visual effect on the existing visual catchment surrounding the subject site. Visibility of the development is most prominent from the immediate streets; however, visibility quickly decreases when stepping away from the site.

The planning proposal has taken into consideration the existing rural landscape context and the future intentions for the site from the KKP to inform the proposal. Considering the proposal seeks to re-establish the historic use of the site, it is believed the future development of the land for the purpose of a service station will have negligible visual impact from the public domain.

The proposal contributes to the future intend use and nature of the site without adversely affecting the character of the existing streets and associated development.