

Visual Impact Assessment

Lot 3, DP 1124849
36 Cockatoo Ridge
Aberglasslyn NSW 2320

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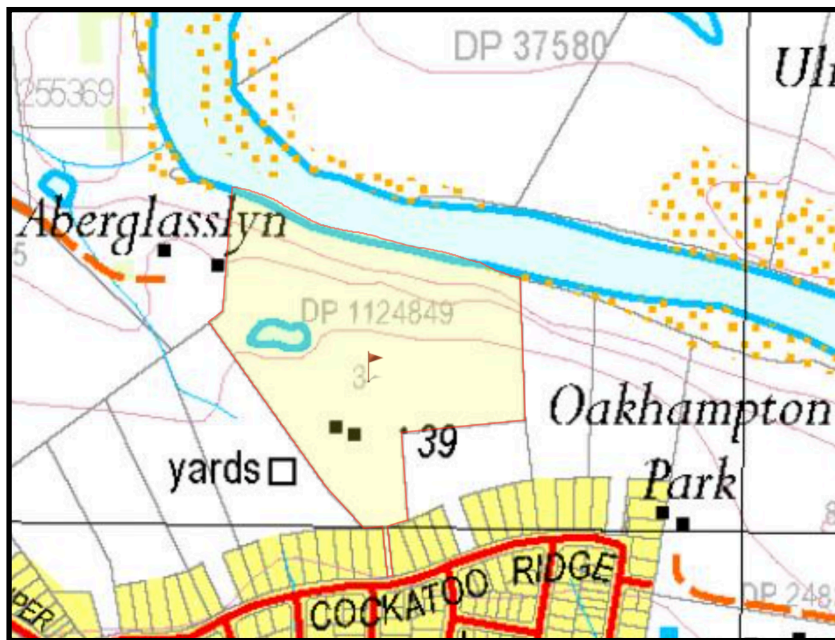


Fig 1: Lot 3, DP 1124849, 36 Cockatoo Ridge Aberglasslyn NSW 2320

Table of Contents:

List of Figures:	Page 3
Introduction:	Page 4
Site Description:	Page 5
Visual Impact Assessment:	Page 6
Magnitude and Sensitivity:	Page 9
Mitigation:	Page 13
Conclusion:	Page 16
Reference:	Page 17
Appendix 1:	Page 18
Appendix 2:	Page 20



Fig 2: Satellite Image of 36 Cockatoo Ridge Aberglasslyn NSW 2320

List of Figures:

Fig 1: Lot 3, DP 1124849, 36 Cockatoo Ridge Aberglasslyn NSW 2320

Fig 2: Satellite Image of 36 Cockatoo Ridge Aberglasslyn NSW 2320

Fig 3: View 285° West from the North Eastern boundary corner.

Fig 4: View 105° East from the North Western boundary.

Fig 5: View 285° West from the proposed building's Eastern corner.

Fig 6: View 150° East from Aberglasslyn Lane near Aberglasslyn Cottage.

Fig 7: View 120° East from Melville House.

Fig 8: View 240° West from Maitland Vale House.

Fig 9: View 150° East from Maitland Vale Road vantage point.

Fig 10: Map showing relative locations of Aberglasslyn Cottage, Melville House, Maitland Vale House, and Eelah House.

Fig 11: View 105° East from the North Western boundary with mitigation plants

Fig 12. Plant schedule from the Landscape Plan.

Fig 13. Landscape Plan showing existing and proposed tree cluster shelter plantings.

Introduction:

The purpose of this Visual Impact Assessment report is to:

- Identify and describe the existing visual/landscape environment and to evaluate its current qualities including an assessment of visual quality.
- Identify viewsheds and to locate and/or identify typical viewpoints from which the impacted areas may be seen.
- Determine what the likely impacts the proposal may cause to the prevailing visual/landscape quality of the area and to make recommendations, where appropriate, to reduce the visual impact of the proposed development if required.

This report will present an analysis of viewpoints both within and without the boundary of the lot, consisting of photo montages showing the landscape and proposed built forms, with priority consideration given to the State heritage listed site of Aberglasslyn House.

The report will also address items of sensitivity and magnitude in regards to those viewpoints, and propose mitigation responses to those items.

Site Description:

The suburb of Aberglasslyn is part of Maitland City Council and is located approximately 5 kilometres North-West of Maitland. The site is registered as Lot 3, DP 1124849 within Maitland City Council local government area.

The site's Northern boundary is the Hunter River. The site's North-Western boundary abuts with Aberglasslyn House. The site is located to the North of the sub-division containing Cockatoo Ridge.

Aberglasslyn House views the site from the North West, at a lower elevation. The height difference between ground floor of Aberglasslyn House and the proposed building is about 15 metres. Aberglasslyn House is a Heritage Listed building, two story sandstone construction with a slate roof, currently occupied as a private residence. The distance between Aberglasslyn House and the proposed building is approximately 280 metres.

The topology of the site is a rolling hill, rising in elevation from the access road to the South, rising up Northward to the existing residence, then flattening out on the ridge before sloping downwards towards the Hunter River.

The site consists of grass land cover and is mostly cleared of trees, rock platforms emerge through out, with a tree-line outside the Northern boundary along the Hunter River. Individual developed trees located in the West surround the water catchment dam area and stand between Aberglasslyn house and the existing residence. The existing residence is located on the site's South, at the highest elevation.

Apart from the existing residence, additional improvements to the site include the access road from Cockatoo Ridge, a free-standing garage, a concrete water tank, boundary and internal cattle fencing, and a cattle dip.

There is a water catchment dam on the Western side of the site, about halfway between the existing residence and Aberglasslyn House. The majority of the site's natural drainage flows into the Hunter River.

Visual Impact Assessment:

Landscape character zones have been identified in the Category 1 Aberglasslyn Investigation Area, Rezoning Application & Master Plan - Heritage Assessment, October 2004. There are seven general zones, see Appendix 2 for further details.

- 1) Zone 1 The existing NSW Heritage Council curtilage: This zone includes Aberglasslyn House.
- 2) Zone 2 The immediate setting for Aberglasslyn House where no new development that detracts from the significance of the house should take place: The proposed residence is located in this zone.
- 3) Zone 3 The buffer zone around the ridge line where a scatter of a few widely spaced buildings may be acceptable:
- 4) Zone 4 The middle ground / tenanted lands where low density occupation may be maintained:
- 5) Zone 5 Views across the river:
- 6) Area south of the ridge line outside the Aberglasslyn House curtilage:
- 7) Category 1 Lands outside the curtilage recognised by Maitland City Council:

Visual Catchment:

Note: Figures 3, 4, 6, 9, and 10 contain a computer generated three dimensional model of the proposed building inserted into the landscape. This model is for indicative purposes, the intent of which is to provide an impression only. The model does not represent the final position, size, or colour, etc, of the proposed building.

The photos in figures 3 to 9 were taken with:

Camera: Canon EOS 700D
Lens: EFS 18-55mm

Figures 3, 4, and 5 show the perspective towards and from Aberglasslyn House.

Figure 3:

The proposed building is below the surrounding visual catchment of the mountain range and local tree line. Aberglasslyn House is partially obscured by the slope of the hill.

Figure 4:

This is the view from the boundary line at Aberglasslyn House. The proposed building is partially obscured by the hill's slope. Existing clumps of established trees break up the view.

Figure 5:

This view show Aberglasslyn House from the location of the proposed building. Multiple established trees provide a visual break.



Fig 3: View 285° West from the North Eastern boundary corner.



Fig 4: View 105° East from the North Western boundary.



Fig 5: View 285° West from the proposed building's Eastern corner.

Magnitude:

The proposed building is simple in form, orientated with the long side facing North, thereby presenting a view of the short side of the building to Aberglasslyn House, foreshortened and receding into the East. The proposed building is a single storey dwelling. Materials and external colours have been selected to complement the surrounding visual environment. Additional excavation into the hill is proposed to reduce the building's visible height. The 280 metre distance between Aberglasslyn House and the proposed building is characterised by rolling grassy plain and established Eucalyptus trees. Views to and from Aberglasslyn House of the proposed building are broken up by the slope of the hill and mature Eucalyptus trees.

Sensitivity:

The sensitivity of the site has been addressed in the referenced Study (Ken Taylor 1995) and in Maitland City Wide Development Control Plan Aberglasslyn Area Plan - Section 2.12 Heritage. The Study made 5 recommended provisions for incorporation into a Development Control Plan. The intent of these recommendations is for the landscape character of the site to be able to absorb the changes created by proposed improvements and to minimise their impact.

The recommendations were:

- 1) Houses be single storey
- 2) Have corrugated metal roofs
- 3) Ancillary buildings be clustered around main buildings
- 4) Proposals be accompanied by a landscape concept plan to indicate tree planting. Tree planting should avoid rigid paddock boundary planting. Plantings should form cluster shelter plantings around building groups and in paddocks.
- 5) Paddock fencing should maintain the existing timber post and wire style.

Additional requirements are tabled in the Development Control Plan. See Appendix 1.

Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9 show the visual catchment aspects from the surrounding environment outside the boundary of the site.

Figure 6 shows the view from Aberglasslyn Cottage, 94 Aberglasslyn Lane. It shows distant views of the proposed building partially obscured by existing trees, with the proposed building falling below the ridge line. The distance from this vantage point to the proposed building is approximately 870 metres.

Figure 7 presents the view from Melville House, 202 Melville Ford Road. The site appears to be completely obscured from this vantage point of 2.6 kilometres.

Figure 8 shows the view from Maitland Vale House, 113 Campbells Road. There is 1 kilometre between this point and the site. The view is completely obscured by trees.

Figure 9 shows the view from a vantage point on Maitland Vale Road, West of the entrance to Eelah House, 467 Maitland Vale Road. The distance is 2.3 kilometres. This

view is not indicative of the view from Eelah House, however, it shows the proposed building below the ridge line of the site.

Figure 10 shows the overall relative location of the above mentioned buildings of interest surrounding the site.



Fig 6: View 150° East from Aberglasslyn Lane near Aberglasslyn Cottage.



Fig 7: View 120° East from Melville House.



Fig 8: View 240° West from Maitland Vale House.



Fig 9: View 150° East from Maitland Vale Road vantage point above Eelah House.

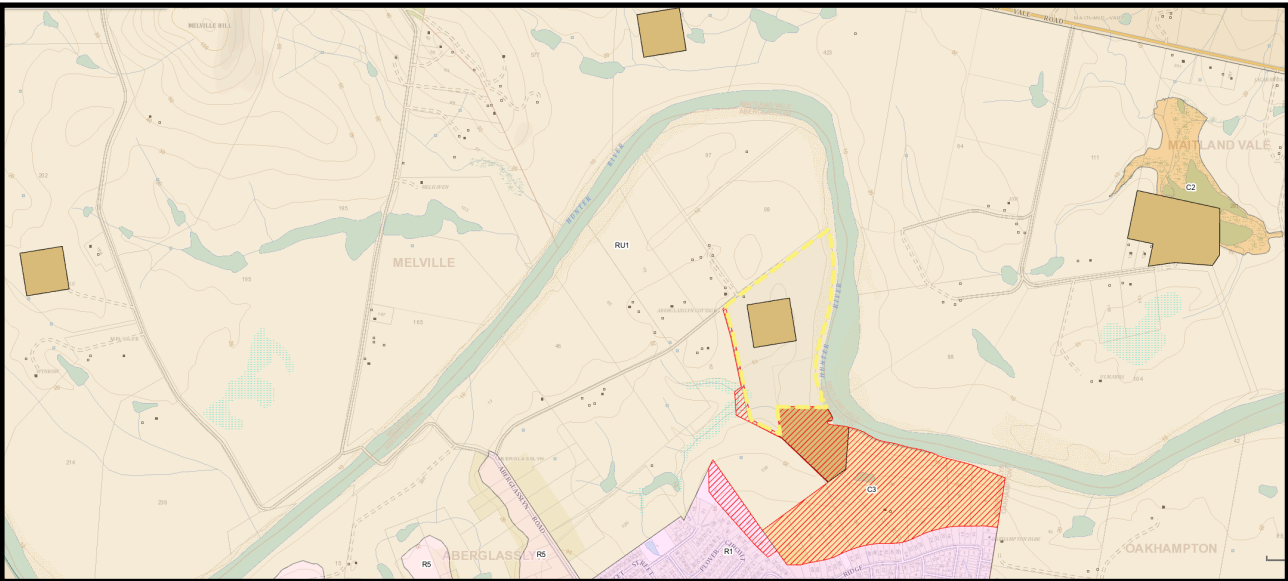


Fig 10: Map showing relative locations of Aberglasslyn Cottage, Melville House, Maitland Vale House, and Eelah House.

Mitigation:

The following development principles have been incorporated into the design to mitigate visual impact:

- A. The orientation of the proposed building - presenting the foreshortened side of the building to Aberglasslyn House, the positioning of the proposed building below the ridge-line (including additional excavation), and the distance between Aberglasslyn House and the proposed building, all reduce the impact on the visual catchment of Aberglasslyn House.
- B. The 5 recommendations from the Study (Ken Taylor 1995) have been incorporated into the design, i.e. single storey building, complementary building materials, ancillary building locations, tree planting, and paddock fencing.

In regards to plantings, the following trees have been selected to form the initial cluster shelter plantings around building groups and in paddocks. The selected trees are medium to fast growing and it is envisaged that the trees will form sufficient visual breaks to provide improved mitigation as the years progress. Further planting of trees will also take place, with selections made from the Trees Near Me Application.

The trees selected in the Plant Schedule are:

1. Gum tree (Eucalyptus)
2. *Alectryon tomentosus* (Hairy Bird's Eye)
3. *Toona ciliata* (Australian Red Cedar)
4. *Casuarina cunninghamiana* (River Sheoak)
5. *Elaeocarpus obovatus* (Woolah)

Gum Tree (Eucalyptus):

Gums are medium to large size trees reaching up to 40 metres tall. Gums are fast-growing trees and may achieve a growth rate of up to 2 metres in height per year.

Alectryon tomentosus (Hairy Bird's Eye):

In its natural habitat it may reach 15 metres tall with a stem diameter of 30 centimetres.

Toona ciliata (Australian Red Cedar):

Toona ciliata is a deciduous tree growing to a height of 30 metres by 30 metres wide at a medium to fast rate. The growth rate can be over 1 metre in height each year given favourable conditions.

Casuarina cunninghamiana (River Sheoak):

Casuarina cunninghamiana is an evergreen tree growing to 30 metres tall by 20 metres wide at a fast rate. Under favourable conditions, early growth rates are about 2 metres per year.

Elaeocarpus obovatus (Woolah):

Elaeocarpus obovatus is a medium to large rainforest tree that can grow up to 30 metres tall.

Figure 11 shows an impression of potential growth of plant clusters, providing additional visual breaks. This image is the mitigated version of Fig 4, showing the view from the boundary near Aberglasslyn House. The plant locations were approximated from the Landscape Plan.

Figure 12 is the Plant Schedule tabled on the Landscape Plan.

Figure 13 is the Landscape Plan where existing and proposed plants have been marked out. The tree cluster will form breaks of the visual catchment from Aberglasslyn House that will develop as the trees grow and mature.



Fig 11: View 105° East from the North Western boundary showing the plant schedule

ID	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME
1	Existing Gum trees	
2	" <i>Allocoryon tomentosus</i> ?	
3	<i>Leucaena ciliata</i>	Aust. Red Cedar
4	<i>Casuarina cunninghamia</i>	Sheoak
5	<i>Elaeocarpus olivatus</i>	Woolah
6		

Fig 12. Plant schedule from the Landscape Plan.



Fig 13. Landscape Plan showing existing and proposed tree cluster shelter plantings.

Conclusion:

A Visual Impact Assessment was undertaken in regards to the long range perspectives looking towards and from Aberglasslyn House, and to determine visual impacts on catchments.

Aspects of the magnitude and sensitivity of the design were examined. Multiple references were consulted with mitigation responses developed to address the concerns.

Photo montages, including 3D models of the proposed building, showing views from within and without the boundary were examined. Views from prominent locations outside the boundary are, in most cases, in excess of 1 kilometre.

The selection of the position of the proposed building reduces the impact on Aberglasslyn House by distance, orientation, and position on the hill's slope.

Medium to fast growing trees have been selected to provide mitigation to impacts on the visual catchment. It is envisioned that these initial tree clusters will provide further breaks to the visual impact within the next couple of years, as the trees grow. The tree selection will represent the local varieties already present in the environment.

It is argued that the proposed dwelling does not detract from the significance of Aberglasslyn House. This is supported by:

- Photo montages showing the proposed building in the environment
- The Landscape Plan showing existing and on-going mitigation (i.e. proposed new trees added to the visual catchment).

Reference:

1. Ken Taylor, Aberglasslyn House: Heritage Landscape and Visual Catchment Conservation Study, Cultural Heritage Research Centre, University of Canberra, 1995.
2. Maitland City Council Pre-Lodgement Meeting Minutes 09/03/2023.
3. Transport for NSW: Guideline for landscape character and visual impact assessment. Environmental impact assessment practice note EIA-N04. Centre for Urban Design 2020.
4. Bush Fire Assessment Report: Increased residential development 36 Cockatoo Ridge, Aberglasslyn, NSW, 2302 Title: 3/DP1124849.
5. Growing Australian Cedar and other Meliaceae species in plantation. A report published by the RIRDC/Land & Water Australia/FWPRDC/MDBC Joint Venture Agroforestry Program RIRDC publication Number 04/135 2005.
6. Trees near me: <https://treesnearme.app> (website)
7. Plants for a future: <https://pfaf.org/user/Default.aspx> (website)
8. Maitland City Wide Development Control Plan Aberglasslyn Area Plan 2007.
9. Category 1 Aberglasslyn Investigation Area, Rezoning Application & Master Plan - Heritage Assessment, October 2004

Appendix 1:

Excerpts from Maitland City Wide Development Control Plan Aberglasslyn Area Plan 2007

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fencing of such allotments shall be of post and wire style (or similar), so as to minimise any visual impacts of development
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2.12 Heritage

Objectives	Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that archaeological sites and places of indigenous heritage significance are suitably identified, managed and where necessary conserved To ensure that development does not adversely impact upon the setting and context of Aberglasslyn House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archaeological investigations and studies are required for any subdivision development, to determine the extent of any aboriginal sites, relics or areas of significance, including appropriate management and conservation measures proposed, in accordance with the requirements of the National Parks & Wildlife Act (1974) and the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act A Statement of Heritage Impact is required for subdivision that relates to land containing the Heritage Control Area and adjacent to Aberglasslyn House, to ensure that development, in the opinion of the Council, does not adversely impact upon the setting and context of Aberglasslyn House Existing vegetation within the Heritage Control Area is to be retained so as to provide a visual screen and scenic backdrop for new development. Where practicable, new dwellings should be located adjacent to, or behind established trees. Development of dwellings within the Heritage Control Area is to be consistent with Figure 5. Western Precinct Structural Limitations Plan and Figure 6. Western Precinct Building Envelope Residential development in the Heritage Control Area shall include specific design and construction measures to comply with the requirements for the minimisation and management of any heritage impacts to Aberglasslyn House All development within the Heritage Control Area as shown in Figure 3 shall be limited in height to ensure that no structure or element thereof protrudes above the surface defined by the

	<p>Structures Limitations Plan Figure 5.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dwellings and ancillary buildings shall be a maximum of one storey (although they may include habitable rooms within a roof/attic space) and shall only be located within the Principal Structures Zone shown in Figure 5. Fencing within the Heritage Control Area and particularly the Landscape Only Zone shown in Figure 5 shall be limited to traditional timber post and wire rural style fencing Ancillary residential buildings including single storey garages or carports (and single storey recreation/community buildings in the case of a specifically designed community title subdivision) may be considered within the Ancillary Structures Zone shown in Figure 6, subject to Council's consent A visual transition shall be created between the new Aberglasslyn urban development and the rural landscape setting of Aberglasslyn House by landscaping of the north-western boundary of the West Precinct to create a dense screen planting (windbreak) as a total visual screen for the length of the HCA boundary. The screened plantings must be of a durable and suitable species to ensure sufficient height and spread is achieved. Such plantings shall be completed in the first stage of subdivision for the West Precinct, to ensure the plantings reach a satisfactory height and maturity prior to any new housing development being completed in that section of the Precinct Landscaping within the Landscape Only Zone as indicated in Figure 5 shall be limited to scattered plantings of endemic eucalypts consistent with the historical use of the site for grazing. No other structures or plantings are to be located within the Landscape Only Zone Any dwellings or outbuildings within the Heritage Control Area shall be constructed of external materials and finishes with darker colours and tones, so as to limit visibility, protecting the heritage qualities and rural setting of Aberglasslyn House. External building materials and finishes must also be non
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	<p>reflective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A suitable "Schedule of external colours and building materials" must be submitted to Council for approval with a Statement of Heritage Impact and Development Application for subdivision of land within the Heritage Control Area. The relevant development consent will subsequently have a restriction as to user on the subdivision, to apply that Schedule on the land title
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2.13 Key Development Sites

Objectives	Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that key development sites are properly designed and planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any dual occupancy, medium density or integrated housing development within the West Precinct must be located and designed around areas of high amenity, being sites adjacent to open space, water bodies and bus routes Residential development within the West Precinct shall comprise detached dwellings of one or two storeys, dual occupancy, medium density or integrated housing development in accordance with Council's Urban Housing Chapter of the Maitland City Wide DCP The following sites or land uses shall be located and designed so as to comply with the provisions, standards and requirements of the Maitland Citywide DCP. In particular, development must be consistent with the relevant Precinct Plans, and the objectives and requirements within this Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neighbourhood shops Schools and community facilities, including safe access, bus bays and adequate parking Existing rural land uses Exhibition villages

Figure 3

Appendix 2:

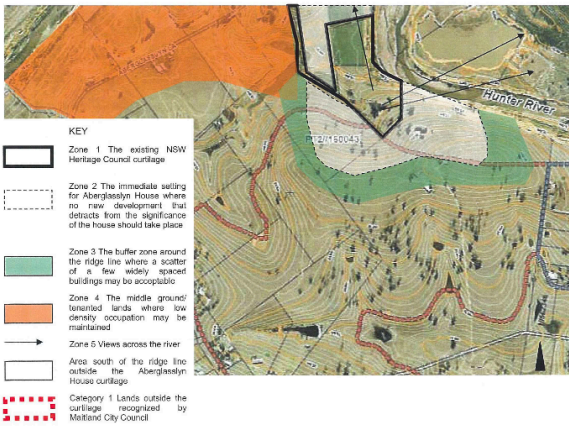
Excerpts from Category 1 Aberglasslyn Investigation Area, Rezoning Application & Master Plan Heritage Assessment, October 2004

Final Report

was originally used for grazing comprising part of the Lock-Up Paddock and part of the Lagoon Paddock, which were 242 and 240 acres respectively. Mid to late twentieth century occupations include some dairy farming and the former operation of a small abattoir near Aberglasslyn Road. Most recently the area has been used as grazing land.

The only European heritage constraints on development in this part of the area are:-

- that it is desirable that the early pattern of fencelines associated with the early land grants are preserved in any new development for example as roadways or as lot alignments;
- that the dump sites are subject to archaeological monitoring during disturbance;
- that the existing buildings and structures are archivally recorded to local heritage standards, and
- that no buildings south of the ridgeline, from below the buffer zone should be visible above the ridge south of Aberglasslyn House.



Page 66

Category 1 Aberglasslyn Investigation Area, Rezoning Application & Master Plan - Heritage Assessment, October 2004

Figure 7.7 The zones identified in the curtilage study for Aberglasslyn House.

Final Report

6.3 Local Government

Aberglasslyn House is listed as an individual place of heritage significance on the Maitland Built Heritage Inventory. The Category 1 Lands exclude an area around Aberglasslyn House which Maitland City Council currently recognises as Aberglasslyn's curtilage. [See Figure 6.2] Maitland City Council principally manages heritage values in the area under DCP No.34 Maitland Conservation and Design Guidelines.

Relevant sections are:- **Part 4.0**

4.2 Subdivision [page 90] – The existing subdivision pattern is recognised as a reflection of the history of an area.

To retain these physical indicators of the history of a locality, therefore, subdivision proposals in Conservation Areas or on land in the vicinity of or on which a heritage item is situated, require careful consideration.

Development application proposals and drawings must show that:-

- the character and heritage significance of the Conservation Area is not adversely affected;
- vistas and views to and of any heritage items in the vicinity, especially the principal elevations of the building are not interrupted or obscured;
- so that the landscape quality is retained.

4.2 Heritage Items and Land in the Vicinity of Heritage Items [page 92]

Development applications for subdivision in the vicinity of a heritage item generally require a Statement of Heritage Impact demonstrating to the Council's satisfaction that:

- the significance of the item will not be compromised by the subdivision or future development that may occur as a result of the subdivision proceeding.
- the allotment and building spacing ...will preserve vistas and views to and from the item, especially the principal elevations of the building(s);
- that the setting of the heritage item and a satisfactory curtilage including important garden and landscape elements, is retained;
- the scale and form of proposed new construction or buildings on the lots to be created will be compatible with and will not detract from the significant and dominant heritage elements of the item;
- the subdivision will not require re-arranged vehicular access or car parking (on or off the site of the proposal) that would adversely affect the heritage significance of the item, particularly the principal elevations.
- an Archival and Photographic Record of the setting of the item may be required if its context is substantially altered by the proposed subdivision and likely future development.

Page 48

Category 1 Aberglasslyn Investigation Area, Rezoning Application & Master Plan - Heritage Assessment, October 2004

