

6.7. PRELODGE MENT ENQUIRY FOR MATERIAL CHANGE OF USE FOR A RENEWABLE ENERGY FACILITY (SOLAR FARM) AT 6868 CAPTAIN COOK HWY, KILLALOE

REPORT AUTHOR	Jenny Elphinstone - Senior Planning Officer
MANAGER	Neil Beck, Acting Manager Environment and Planning
DEPARTMENT	Environment and Planning
PROPOSAL	Material Change of Use for a Renewable Energy Facility - Solar Farm
APPLICANT	Brazier Motti on behalf of J. and V. Noli Pty Ltd Ground Floor Woree Plaza 12-20 Toogood Road Wooree Qld 45870
LOCATION	6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe
PROPERTY	Lot 32 on SP332240
PLANNING SCHEME	2018 Douglas Shire Council Planning Scheme Version 1.0
ZONING	Rural Zone
LEVEL OF ASSESSMENT	Impact Assessable
REQUEST FOR PRELODGE MENT	Prelodgement received 16 December 2024 Request for Council reporting.
STATUTORY ASSESSMENT DEADLINE	N/A
REFERRAL AGENCIES	Applicable when application is lodged.

LOCALITY



Figure 1– Locality Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That:

1. Council resolves that with respect to the prelodgement enquiry lodged in relation to the redevelopment of 6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe, being Lot 32 on SP332240, the proponent be advised that the following concerns are held;
 - a. The proposed development on the land is contrary to the Strategic Framework. Council is not supportive of development that detrimentally imposes on the Shire's scenic amenity and detrimentally impacts on scenic routes.
 - b. The development is inconsistent with the purpose of the Zone as it does not provide for rural uses, compromises the long-term use of the land for rural purposes and does not contribute to the scenic amenity and landscape character.
 - c. The development fragments and results in a loss of rural land, in particular Good Quality Agricultural Land (GQAL).
 2. Council resolves that the proponent be advised that any future application would need to address the above concerns.
 3. Council notes that the above information is offered in the context of providing open and frank without prejudice comment from Council in relation to the proposed uses. The determination of any future application is a matter for Council following detailed assessment of the application, including consideration of any properly made submissions (where applicable).
-

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Request for prelodgement advice is sought by the landowners for a material change of use to establish a Renewable Energy Facility – Solar Farm on part of the land.

The proposed development is not consistent with the Strategic Framework of the Council's current Planning Scheme, nor with the Rural Zone, nor with the Landscape Values Overlay.

The proposed development is not considered to be a Rural purpose. There has been no demonstration that the land is constrained to such an extent that it cannot be used for rural purposes. The change of use will result in the alienation and fragmentation of rural land.

The proposed development will impact on the quality of the landscape and scenic route.

TOWN PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Background

The land comprises an area of 88.11 hectares, with road frontages to Captain Cook Highway and Killaloe Dump Road. The land is mostly flat and generally falls west to east.

Constructed drains exist providing for drainage replacing waterways that ran from west to east and traversed the land prior to the establishment of agriculture. Another constructed drain runs parallel to the eastern side boundary and falls from north to south. These drains collect into wetlands some of which have high ecological significance. The eastern boundary is particularly low lying. The Applicant advised,

"The land is currently used for agricultural purposes and is void of vegetation. The transition from sugarcane production has commenced onsite with high value horticulture

crops (taro, ginger etc.) grown in the western region with the balance of being utilised for grazing. The subject site is generally surrounded by large rural holdings utilised for similar land uses. Existing structure and dam are sited on the northern portion of the land."

Previous Consideration

Written prelodgement advice has issued to the landowner on a similar development providing the following advice.

"The Shire has a very limited, narrow strip of agricultural land, generally sited between the coastal systems and the foothills of the Great Dividing Range. The Shire supports two areas of immense natural importance: the World Heritage Queensland Wet Tropics; and the World Heritage Great Barrier Reef. These two areas meet within the Shire and the activities on the land between these two features are controlled by various instruments to ensure their sustainability and conservation.

Council's economic development has two primary income streams, being tourism and agriculture. With the recent closure of the Mossman Mill concern is held with the agriculture futures for local farmers. Nevertheless, the agricultural land within the Shire is generally good quality agriculture land and needs to be maintained in sufficiently sized lots, without fragmentation, and without impacts that would reduce viability or lead to inappropriate conflicts. Concern is held with the occupation of the land by this non-rural use for a significant length of time, being at least thirty years.

Significant concern is held with the visual impact of the development on the amenity and view corridors. The development is considered a visual intrusion on the landscape.

The site is located adjacent a mapped Scenic Route within the Landscape value overlay code. Land beyond the mapped Scenic Route and associated buffer area is designated as containing Medium Landscape values. Even with vegetation screening, to all boundaries, the vistas of the area will be imposed upon. Any development of a large solar panel installation on the ground needs to be away from scenic vistas and mapped scenic routes."

Proposal

The proponent (landowner) has requested the prelodgement enquiry be forwarded to Council for consideration prior to lodging an application for a material change of use for a Renewable Energy Facility for a solar farm on part of the land (approximately 7ha).

The solar farm will be accessed from Killaloe Dump Road. The proponent advises the development components will be as follows.

- *The proposal incorporates a 3MW PV Solar System, comprising of 4615 x 650w panels and battery storage contained within three (3) relocatable units that are the approximate size of a standard 6.1m long (20ft) shipping container.*
- *Panel supports will be no taller than 4.0m.*
- *Energy production is estimated to output 3,419,230 kwh per annum to the local power grid, an equivalent of approximately 624 homes being powered.*
- *It is estimated the solar farm will offset approximately 171 tonnes of carbon annually.*
- *Connection to the local energy grid will be achieved via existing electricity infrastructure adjacent to the subject site, as generally indicated in Figure 3.*
- *Sheep grazing within the area containing the panels will be deployed as a natural method of maintaining the land, reducing the need for chemical and mechanical interventions.*

The proponent also advised that, *“Initial enquiries suggest the proposed solar farm will be able to connect within existing electrical infrastructure within proximity to the site.”*

The prelodgement request includes a visual amenity assessment report.

A copy of the prelodgement request is attached.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

While the State has further regulated wind farms requiring impact assessable development through the Planning (Wind Farms) Amendment Regulation 2025 (Amendment Regulation), a similar framework has yet to be developed for solar farms. The Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy produced the *Queensland Solar Farm Guidelines, Practical guidance for communities, landowners and project proponents* under the former State Government in 2018.

Sections 61 of the *Planning Act 2016* outlines matters Council, as the Assessment Manager, must have regard to when determining a development application. Notably the assessment includes compliance against the whole of Council's Planning Scheme, including the Strategic Framework, the inclusion of any referral agency decision and consideration of submissions.

The main concerns regarding the development in respect to the Planning Scheme considerations are discussed below.

Strategic Framework

The proposed development on the land is contrary to the Strategic Framework. The development detrimentally imposes on the Shire's scenic amenity and detrimentally impacts on scenic routes.

Concern is raised with the economic impact of the development where the development may take-up all of the available feed-in supply to the local network therein inhibiting others to provide this supply. Advice has been sought from Ergon Energy, and as yet this matter remains outstanding.

Rural Zone

The proponent contends that the use will not cause further fragmentation of agricultural land, noting that the solar panel structures will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the site continued to be used for agricultural purposes and sheep grazing / grazing activities will be deployed as a natural method of maintaining the land within the area containing the panels.

This opinion is not concurred with. The development effectively locks up the land for a non-rural purpose and is in inefficient and inappropriate use of good quality agricultural land. The development that is inconsistent with the purpose of the Zone as it does not provide for rural uses, compromises the long-term use of the land for rural purposes and does not contribute to the scenic amenity and landscape character.

Landscape Values Overlay

The proponent acknowledged that without mitigation the development will impact on the scenic route and important scenic amenity of the locality. The proponent asserts that within three (3) years the development will be screened by earth mounds and vegetation mitigating the visual impact to sensitive receivers and those using the transport network along Captain Cook Highway.

This opinion is not concurred with. The visual assessment report is limited. The view from the higher Highway pavement level available further to the north is not considered. Views are not just those from within and to the road corridor but are three dimensional whole landscapes and include considerations of rural character. These views are viewed from many positions within the Shire. The development is considered to detrimentally impact on the rural

landscape and scenic corridors.

Public Notification

Under the Planning Act the application would be subject to public notification for a period of 15 business days. At the time of determination Council must consider all properly made submissions. A properly made submission entitles the submitter to third party appeal rights.

LGIP & ADOPTED INFRASTRUCTURE CHARGES

The development is outside the sewer reticulation service area. Where approved a development would trigger Infrastructure Charges, the quantity of charge is nominated in Council's Infrastructure Charges Resolution (No.2) 2021 as, "*to be determined.*"

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following area outlines where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Regulator: Council has a number of statutory obligations detailed in numerous regulations and legislative Acts. Council also makes local laws to ensure that the Shire is well governed. In fulfilling its role as regulator, Council will utilise an outcomes based approach that balances the needs of the community with social and natural justice.

Under the *Planning Act 2016* and the *Planning Regulation 2017*, Council is the assessment manager for the application.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Prelodgement Enquiry MCU (Solar Farm) 6868 Capt Cook Hwy [6.7.1 - 29 pages]



16.12.2024

Our Ref: 35437-006-01
Your Ref:

The Chief Executive Officer
Douglas Shire Council
PO Box 723
MOSSMAN QLD 4873

Attention: Planning & Environment

Dear Planners,

**Pre-lodgement Enquiry for
Establishment of Renewable Energy Facility - Solar Farm
6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe – Lot 32 on SP332240**

Brazier Motti acts on behalf of the landowner, J. & V. Noli Pty Ltd, in relation to the abovementioned proposal.

Prior to proceeding with a Development Application for Material Change of Use for a Renewable Energy Facility - Solar Farm we seek Council's Formal Pre-lodgement review and feedback with consideration at a Council meeting.

The following has been prepared to assist with Council's pre-lodgement advice of the proposed development.

1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site is located at 6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe, precisely described as Lot 32 on SP332240 and comprises an area of 88.11 hectares, with road frontages to Captain Cook Highway and Killaloe Dump Road (**Figure 1**). The subject site is accessed from both frontages.

The land is currently used for agricultural purposes and is void of vegetation. The transition from sugarcane production has commenced onsite with high value horticulture crops (taro, ginger etc.) grown in the western region with the balance of being utilised for grazing. The subject site is generally surrounded by large rural holdings utilised for similar land uses. Existing structure and dam are sited on the northern portion of the land.

The land is mostly flat and generally falls west-east, and a waterway traverses the southern portion of the site.

The subject site is zoned Rural for the purpose of the *Douglas Shire Planning Scheme 2018*. An extract of the zoning map is shown on **Figure 2** below. Land immediately adjacent to the subject site is also zoned Rural.



Figure 1: The subject site and proposed solar farm, extract from Queensland Globe 2024



Figure 2: Zoning Mapping and easements, extract from Douglas Shire Council Planning Scheme 2018



2.0 BACKGROUND

Historically, the tourism and sugar industries have been the principal determinants of economic activity, employment, and population growth in Douglas Shire. As Queensland's second largest agricultural export, the sugar milling industry has been an important contributor to the employment and economic wellbeing of regional communities.

In response to the recent demise of the Mossman Sugar Mill, the Douglas Shire is undergoing a significant transition period, soon leaving an abundance of cane land vacant for alternative rural uses. There is now an immediate need to diversify the economy and explore economically viable options for the sustainability of the regional economy and workforce.

3.0 THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the development of a Renewable Energy Facility (Solar Farm) on part of the land contained within Lot 32 on SP332240. The solar farm is proposed to utilise the southern portion of the subject site, amounting to approximately 18.0 acres (or approximately 7ha) as generally depicted in **Figure 3** below. The proposed solar farm will be accessed from Killaloe Dump Road.

The proposal for development of a solar farm directly responds to the significant economic and industrial transition from sugar cane production in the Douglas Shire. It is acknowledged that infrastructure and environmental constraints present limitations for alternative crops that are viable within the region, and therefore the development of renewable energy infrastructure can offer sustainable and practical use of historical cane land.

Details of the solar farm infrastructure are as follows:

- The proposal incorporates a 3MW PV Solar System, comprising of 4615 x 650w panels and battery storage contained within three (3) relocatable units that are the approximate size of a standard 6.1m long (20ft) shipping container.
- Panel supports will be no taller than 4.0m.
- Energy production is estimated to output 3,419,230 kwh per annum to the local power grid, an equivalent of approximately 624 homes being powered.
- It is estimated the solar farm will offset approximately 171 tonnes of carbon annually.
- Connection to the local energy grid will be achieved via existing electricity infrastructure adjacent to the subject site, as generally indicated in **Figure 3**.
- Sheep grazing within the area containing the panels will be deployed as a natural method of maintaining the land, reducing the need for chemical and mechanical interventions.

Initial enquiries suggest the proposed solar farm will be able to connect within existing electrical infrastructure within proximity to the site.

Detailed design and site plans will be provided at the time that a development application is submitted with Council.

The proposal for the renewable energy facility (solar farm) can demonstrate consistency with the land uses identified for the Rural Zone in the *Douglas Shire Planning Scheme 2018*. The proposal does not cause further fragmentation of agricultural land. The proposed structures will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the site continued to be used for agricultural purposes. Sheep grazing / grazing activities will be deployed as a natural method of maintaining the land within the area containing the panels.

In the event that the proposed land uses cease to operate, the proposed structures can be removed to allow for agricultural cropping to be undertaken within the site.

The proposal acknowledges that the protection of ecological and scenic landscape values is a significant factor for consideration in the implementation of any infrastructure scheme. A visual impact assessment prepared by GGI Landscape Architects, included within **Attachment A**, demonstrates that the proposed solar farm will not have detrimental impact on the scenic amenity and rural characteristics of the land. Proposed screening and mitigation measures will minimise the visual impact to sensitive receivers and those using the transport network along Captain Cook Highway. Views into the solar farm should be screened out by 3 years with proposed layered & staggered planting on mounded earth. The proposed vegetation buffer itself creates a low profile that will not deter from the natural lay of the land or impact views of the mountains.

The proposal can be appropriately conditioned to ensure the scale of development remains consistent with the Rural Zone.

Overall, the proposal is considered to be compatible with the subject site and surrounding locality. Furthermore, the establishment of a solar farm supports the economic diversity and sustainability of Douglas Shire.



Figure 3: Extent of proposed solar farm and general location of proposed power connection.

4.0 DOUGLAS SHIRE PLANNING SCHEME 2018

In demonstrating consistency with The *Douglas Shire Planning Scheme 2018 (planning scheme)*, a high-level assessment against the overarching purpose of the planning scheme consisting of the applicable strategic framework themes, relevant zone and overlays is presented to demonstrate alignment of the proposal with Council's intent for the Douglas Shire. Table 1 below identifies the following applicable designations:

Table 1: Planning Scheme Themes and Designation

Type of Designation	Designation and Applicability
Strategic Framework Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theme 2: Environment and Landscape Values Theme 3: Natural Resource Management Theme 5: Economy Theme 6: Infrastructure and Transport
Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Zone
Overlay	Landscape Values Overlay <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scenic Route Scenic Route Buffer

4.1 Strategic Framework

The strategic framework sets the policy direction for the planning scheme and forms the basis for ensuring appropriate development occurs within the planning scheme area for the life of the planning scheme. The specific outcomes applicable to the proposal have been identified and are detailed below with comments demonstrating compliance:

4.1.1 Environment and landscape values

Relevant elements for specific outcomes for environmental and landscape values include:

Section 3.5.3 Biodiversity

- 3.5.3.1.2 – Development:
 - is located in areas that avoids significant adverse impacts on matters of state environmental significance (MSES) and matters of local environmental significance (MLES);
 - protects and enhances MSES and MLES; and
 - maintains and enhances ecological connectivity.

Response

A landscaping buffer will include a variety of native vegetation, ultimately enhancing the biodiversity of the area. The development does not encroach on and will not impact on natural corridors and habitat links.

- 3.5.3.1.4 – Aquatic biodiversity is protected through the minimisation of development impacts on waterway and wetland environments.

Response

The proposal intersects a Queensland waterway for waterway barrier works (low). However, appropriate siting of the proposed infrastructure will not obstruct the waterway and existing surface permeability will not be impacted.

Section 3.5.4 Coastal zones

- 3.5.4.1.3 – Waterways and wetlands are managed and maintained to ensure the natural quality and quantity of water delivered to the Coral Sea is not diminished.

Response

Infrastructure will be sited to avoid the existing waterway on the subject site. Additionally, landscape maintenance with the provision of grazing sheep will offer a natural substitute to limit chemical interventions. Water quality and quantity will therefore not be impacted by the development.

Section 3.5.5 Scenic amenity

- 3.5.5.1.1 – Development protects, maintains and enhances the region's Landscape values as shown on the Landscape values overlay maps contained in Schedule 2.

Response

It is noted that the subject site is located adjacent to a scenic route (Captain Cook Highway) and within a scenic buffer area. The land is identified as having medium landscape value. A visual impact assessment has been conducted, found within **Attachment A**, and demonstrates that appropriate measures such as vegetation screening and buffer mounds will sufficiently mitigate visual impacts of the proposed infrastructure, and therefore not detract from the scenic amenity of the area. Views into the solar farm should be screened out by 3 years with proposed layered & staggered planting on mounded earth. The proposed vegetation buffer itself creates a low profile that will not deter from the natural lay of the land or impact views of the mountains.

- 3.5.5.1.2 – Major scenic routes and scenic outlooks, as shown on the Landscape values overlay maps contained in Schedule 2, are protected from both the detrimental visual impacts of development and inappropriate vegetation clearing that may detract from the scenic qualities of the scenic route, outlook or ocean-side views.

Response

The subject site has been cleared and historically used for agricultural purposes that satisfy the Rural Zone purpose. No vegetation clearing is required for the proposal. Any visual impacts of development will be mitigated appropriately to maintain the scenic amenity of the area as detailed within the visual impact assessment is included within **Attachment A**.

**Section 3.5.6 Air and acoustic protection and hazardous materials**

- 3.5.6.1.1 – The air and acoustic environment and hazardous materials are carefully managed to maintain the health and well-being of the community and the natural environment.

Response

The proposed solar farm will not impact on the air and acoustic environment of the locality. No hazardous materials will result from the proposal.

4.1.2 Natural resource management

Relevant elements for specific outcomes for natural resource management include:

Section 3.6.2 Land and catchment management

- 3.6.2.1.3 – Water quality, in-stream and riparian waterway values, and the nature-based recreation values of modified waterways, and wetlands and their catchments are protected from harmful activities.

Response

Infrastructure will be sited to avoid the existing waterway on the subject site. Additionally, landscape maintenance with the provision of grazing sheep will offer a natural substitute to reduce chemical and mechanical interventions. Water quality and quantity will therefore not be impacted by the development.

- 3.6.2.1.4 – Development is planned, designed, constructed and operated to manage stormwater in ways that help protect the environmental values of waters including the biodiversity and functioning of the aquatic ecosystem.

Response

The proposal intersects a Queensland waterway for waterway barrier works (low). However, appropriate siting of the proposed infrastructure will not obstruct the waterway and existing surface permeability will not be impacted.

Section 3.6.3 Primary production, forestry and fisheries

- 3.6.3.1.1 – The viability of agricultural land is protected and maintained. Land uses that have the potential to conflict with on-going primary production are not established in rural areas.

Response

The proposal will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the site continued to be used for high value horticulture and grazing purposes. Additionally, the provision of grazing sheep within the solar farm will offer a natural substitute to reduce chemical and mechanical interventions. The location of the proposed land use is considered appropriate for the site and surrounding locality, and new structures associated with the proposed land uses are



consistent with the Rural Zone. In the event that the proposed land uses cease to operate, the proposed structures can be repurposed for agricultural uses.

- 3.6.3.1.2 – Rural areas include a range of rural activities of varying scale depending on land suitability and access to appropriate infrastructure, with development being consistent with prevailing land uses in the area.

Response

The subject site is within a Rural Zone under the planning scheme. It is noted that a renewable energy facility (solar farm) is considered as an inconsistent use within the Rural Zone. Taking into consideration that Major Electrical Infrastructure, Substation, Telecommunication Facility and Utility Installation can be considered as consistent development, the establishment of a solar farm with less impacts would be considered as compatible with the land. The subject site has historically been used for agricultural purposes, and the general layout is considered suitable for development of a solar farm. Access to connection of electricity infrastructure is adjacent from the subject site and readily accessible.

4.1.3 Economy

Relevant elements of the specific outcomes for economy include:

Section 3.8.2 Economic growth and diversification

- 3.8.2.1.1 – Economic growth that supports clean, green businesses and resilient communities is encouraged throughout the Shire. In particular a range of economic initiatives is facilitated in appropriate locations, including:
 - (a) the growth of new and traditional industries;
 - (b) further development of Port Douglas as a premium tourist destination;
 - (c) establishing Douglas Shire as a player in the global tropical tourist market;
 - (d) targeting infrastructure that strengthens Douglas Shire as a tourist destination and a gateway to the region;
 - (e) promoting the Shire's marine industries;
 - (f) providing for higher value jobs, particularly for young people;
 - (g) focussing on education and knowledge-based industries;
 - (h) taking advantage of the digital age and associated digital economy;
 - (i) protecting the assets on which existing and future business relies, such as agricultural land resources and the beautiful natural environment;
 - (j) enhanced economic opportunities through appropriate development of Aboriginal Freehold Land.

Response

The planning scheme acknowledges that other supporting industries and services will continue to emerge. The proposal will support the growth of the renewable energy industry and will diversify the economy of the Douglas Shire. The provision of clean, green energy will minimise reliance on traditional energy resources and promote resilient communities.



Additionally, the proposal will benefit the natural environment by offsetting approximately 171 tonnes of carbon annually. The proposed structures will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the site continued to be used for agricultural purposes.

Section 3.8.4 Primary production

- 3.8.4.1.1 – Opportunities to enhance agricultural industry particularly in the Shire’s rural towns through the expansion of existing activities, development of value-adding processes and the introduction of new crops will be supported. However, sugar production will continue to be the most dominant cropping activity in the Shire.

Response

It is noted that with the decommissioning of the Mossman Sugar Mill, cane farming will cease as primary production in Douglas Shire. The development of a solar farm offers a sustainable, alternative use of the subject site, and is considered appropriate use of land. Additionally, sheep grazing will occur within the solar farm offering a natural substitute to reduce chemical and mechanical interventions.

- 3.8.4.1.2 – Grazing activities are supported where they do not intrude into vegetated and / or steep land.

Response

The subject site is generally flat and has been cleared for previous agricultural purposes. Therefore, the inclusion of grazing activities for the sustainable management of the land is considered appropriate for the subject site.

- 3.8.4.1.3 – The availability and viability of rural land for on-going agricultural uses is not compromised by inappropriate or incompatible development.

Response

The proposed structures will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the site continued to be used for agricultural purposes. In the event that the proposed land uses cease to operate, the proposed structures can be removed for cropping uses.

4.1.4 Infrastructure and transport

Relevant elements of the specific outcomes for infrastructure and transport include:

Section 3.9.2 Energy

- 3.9.2.1.1 – The energy needs of the Shire are met in a manner that minimises impacts on the health of the surrounding communities, natural



environments and scenic amenity, and wherever possible, supports low emission and/or renewable energy sources.

Response

Solar farming as a renewable energy source supports the sustainability and resilience of energy production for Douglas Shire. Native vegetation screening is proposed to mitigate any scenic amenity impacts to sensitive receivers. The proposal will benefit the natural environment by offsetting approximately 171 tonnes of carbon annually

- 3.9.2.1.2 – Renewable energy facilities, such as small-scale wind turbine generators and solar panels can connect to an existing, nearby high voltage electricity network (with adequate capacity) without significant environment, social or amenity impact.

Response

The proposal is within proximity to existing electricity infrastructure, and it is expected that connection can be achieved without complication.

With respect to the significance of landscape values and scenic amenity of the locality and the implementation of appropriate visual impact mitigation measures, the proposal is considered to generally align with the specific strategic outcomes outlined above.

4.2 Zone Code

Under the *Douglas Shire Planning Scheme 2018*, the subject site is within the Rural Zone. Generally, the Rural Zone provides for rural uses including cropping, intensive horticulture, intensive animal industries, animal husbandry, animal keeping and other primary production activities. In demonstrating consistency, a high-level assessment of the proposal against the overall outcomes of the Rural Zone Code is provided below.

The purpose of the code will be achieved through the following overall outcomes:

- (a) *Areas for use for primary production are conserved and fragmentation is avoided.*

Response

The proposal does not cause further fragmentation of agricultural land. The proposed structures will not restrict the agricultural use of the site with the balance of the subject site continued to be used for agricultural purposes. In the event that the proposed land uses cease to operate, the proposed structures can be removed for agricultural uses.



(b) Development embraces sustainable land management practices and contributes to the amenity and landscape of the area.

Response

The proposed grazing activities as a form of sustainable land management of the solar farm are considered appropriate for the subject site and contribute to the rural amenity of the area. Any visual impacts from the proposed structures will be mitigated with the provision of native vegetation landscaping.

(c) Adverse impacts of land use, both on-site and on adjoining areas, are avoided and any unavoidable impacts are minimised through location, design, operation and management.

Response

Even though a Renewable Energy Facility is considered as an in-consistent use within the Rural Zone, when taking into consideration that Major Electrical Infrastructure, Substation, Telecommunication Facility and Utility Installation can be considered as consistent, the establishment of a solar farm would be inline with the above-mentioned land uses.

Development will be contained within part of the subject site as generally depicted in **Figure 1** and will not impact on adjoining land uses or balance of the subject site. Any visual impacts from the proposed structures will be mitigated with the provision of native vegetation landscaping.

(d) Areas of remnant and riparian vegetation are retained or rehabilitated.

Response

The subject site is generally cleared of vegetation. Some riparian vegetation exists along part of the existing waterway; however, the proposed structures are sited to avoid impacts to this area.

4.3 Landscape Values Overlay

Landscape values and scenic amenity are identified as one of the key contributors to the identity of Douglas Shire. The subject site is located adjacent to a scenic route and within a scenic buffer area. Therefore, a high-level assessment of the proposal against the overall outcomes of the Landscape Values overlay has been included for the purpose of this pre-lodgement enquiry.

The purpose of the code will be achieved through the following overall outcomes:

(a) areas of High landscape value are protected, retained and enhanced;

Response

The proposal is not within a High landscape value area.



- (b) areas of Medium landscape value are managed to integrate and limit the visual impact of development;*

Response

The visual impact assessment prepared by GGI Landscape Architects, included within **Attachment A**, demonstrates that the proposed solar farm will not have detrimental impact on the scenic amenity and rural characteristics of the land. Proposed screening and mitigation measures will minimise the visual impact to sensitive receivers and those using the transport network along Captain Cook Highway. Views into the solar farm should be screened out by 3 years with proposed layered & staggered planting on mounded earth.

- (c) the landscape values of the Coastal scenery area are managed to integrate and limit the visual impact of development;*

Response

The proposal is not within a coastal scenery area.

- (d) development maintains and enhances the significant landscape elements and features which contribute to the distinctive character and identity of Douglas Shire;*

Response

The proposal includes the provision of native vegetation screening and earth barriers to mitigate visual impacts of the proposed structures. Vegetation will assist in integrating the subject site with the surrounding land and may overall improve the scenic amenity of the locality. Native vegetation choices will further contribute to the distinctive character and identity of Douglas Shire.

- (e) ridges and vegetated hillslopes are not developed in a way that adversely impacts on landscape values;*

Response

The subject site does not contain ridges and vegetated hillslopes.

- (f) watercourses, forested mountains and coastal landscape character types remain predominantly natural in appearance in order to maintain the region's diverse character and distinctive tropical image, in particular:*
- I. areas in the coastal landscape character type which are predominantly natural and undeveloped in appearance retain this natural landscape character;*
 - II. watercourses which are predominantly natural and undeveloped in appearance retain this natural landscape character;*



- III. *the rural character of cane fields and lowlands landscape character types which are predominantly rural or natural in appearance are maintained;*
- IV. *landscape values are maintained when viewed from lookouts, scenic routes, gateways and public places.*

Response

The proposal includes the provision of native vegetation screening and earth barriers to mitigate visual impacts of the proposed structures. Vegetation will assist in integrating the subject site with the surrounding land and will improve the scenic amenity of the locality. Native vegetation choices will further contribute to the distinctive character and identity of Douglas Shire. The visual impact assessment, found within **Attachment A**, concludes that appropriate mitigation measures will minimise impacts to sensitive receivers of road users, nearby dwellings, and scenic lookouts.

- (g) views towards High landscape value areas and the Coral Sea are not diminished;*

Response

The proposed structures will not interfere with areas of High landscape value or views to the Coral Sea.

- (h) development is consistent with the prevailing landscape character of its setting, and is neither visually dominant nor visually intrusive;*

Response

The proposed structures solar farm will be concealed appropriately with native vegetation screening, further enhancing the landscape. The visual impact assessment, found within **Attachment XXX**, concludes that appropriate mitigation measures will minimise impacts to sensitive receivers of road users, nearby dwellings, and scenic lookouts.

- (i) advertising devices do not detract from the landscape values, character types or amenity of an area.*

Response

The proposal does not include advertising devices.



5.0 CONCLUSION

The abovementioned has demonstrated that the proposed Material Change of Use (Solar Farm) on land located at 6868 Captain Cook Highway, Killaloe, precisely described as Lot 32 on SP332240, with the provision of appropriate mitigation measures, is considered to generally align with the overarching purpose of the strategic framework and Rural Zone Code of the *Douglas Shire Planning Scheme 2018*.

The planning scheme acknowledges that other supporting industries and services will continue to emerge, given they are consistent with the future strategic intent of Douglas Shire. The proposal presents an appropriate pathway towards the diversification of the economic and industrial environment of Douglas Shire following the decommissioning of the Mossman Sugar Mill. Further, it supports the transition from traditional energy resourcing to a sustainable and renewable source that will benefit not only the local community but the broader natural environment.

It is acknowledged that the proposed infrastructure, without mitigation, will impact on the scenic route and important scenic amenity of the locality. However, with appropriate native vegetation screening and earth barriers a detailed within the supporting Visual Impact Assessment it is considered that the subject site in this instance is suitable for the proposal as it will not permanently affect the character or amenity of the locality or the zone. Furthermore, with regard to the uncertainty surrounding the future of Douglas Shire's economic environment, it is considered that there are sufficient grounds to support the proposed development of this nature.

Accordingly, we seek pre-lodgement advice if the Material Change of Use (Solar Farm) would be supported by Council.

We trust that the enclosed documentation is sufficient to allow Council to provide preliminary assessment and confirm if the proposed development can be supported. However, should you have any further queries or wish to discuss please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Yours Sincerely,

MICHAEL TESSARO

Senior Planner

Brazier Motti Pty Ltd

ATTACHMENT A





Pre-application Stage Visual Assessment Report

Proposed Solar Farm LOT 4 ON RP893855, COOK HIGHWAY, KILLALOE

Revision	Date	Approved by
A	26/11/2024	RG
B	06/12/2024	RG

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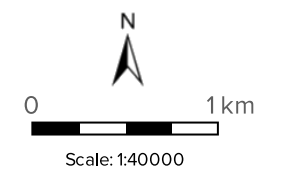
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A. Locality Plan



 PROPOSED SOLAR FARM
LOCATION
AT LOT 4 ON RP893855
COOK HIGHWAY
KILLALOE



Printed at: A3

Print date: 26/11/2024

Not suitable for accurate measurement.
Projection: Web Mercator EPSG 102100 (3857)

For more information, visit <https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/help-info/Contact-us.html>

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**Queensland
Government**
Department of Resources



B. Key Plan



Legend

-  Land Parcel
-  Captain Cook Highway
-  Local Road
-  Proposed Solar Farm approximate area within Lot 32, SP332240
-  Proposed Vegetated Buffer extent
-  Photo + Montage View Reference point



Printed at: A3
Print date: 25/11/2024
Not suitable for accurate measurement.
Projection: Web Mercator EPSG 102100 (3857)
For more information, visit <https://qldglobe.information.qld.gov.au/help-info/Contact-us.html>

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C. Character Description



Picture 1 – Looking north, subject site on the right.



Picture 2 – Looking west, subject site on the right.

The subject site, Lot 4 on RP893855 on the Cook Highway, Killaloe, sits on a generally flat, straight stretch that is typical between Port Douglas and Mossman.

The streetscape is a high value Scenic drive passing by predominantly agricultural land, - cane farms, at road level or lower on flat topography. By contrast to the west and in the distant north are impressive Mountain ranges. The cane growth determines view corridors as it grows and is cut over the cycle of the year. At the time of investigation most cane had been harvested and views were open. It is noted that the impact of sugar cane growth on viewing corridors may change in the future should the region be used to grow different crops.

This investigation takes in the views from the Cook Highway approaching from both north and south, as well as the view from Killaloe Dump Road looking west.



D. Photo Montage Views



EXISTING VIEW APPROACHING FROM THE SOUTH



PHOTO MONTAGE VIEW 1 – ANTICIPATED VEGETATION ESTABLISHMENT
REFERENCE KEY PLAN - PAGE 13



EXISTING VIEW APPROACHING FROM THE NORTH



PHOTO MONTAGE VIEW 2 – ANTICIPATED VEGETATION ESTABLISHMENT

REFERENCE KEY PLAN - PAGE 13



EXISTING VIEW LOOKING WEST ON KILLALOE DUMP ROAD



PHOTO MONTAGE VIEW 3 – ANTICIPATED VEGETATION ESTABLISHMENT
REFERENCE KEY PLAN - PAGE 13



E. Landscape Buffer Proposal

PROPOSED BUFFER PLANT SPECIES

Botanical Species	Common Name	Mature Height
<i>Acmena smithii</i>	Lillipilli	2-6m
<i>Allocasuarina littoralis</i>	Black She Oak	3-8m
<i>Attractocarpus fitzalanii</i>	Brown Gardenia	5-8m
<i>Backhousia citriodora</i>	Lemon Scented Myrtle	3-8m
<i>Cleistanthus hylandii</i>	Bernie's Clystanthus	2-4m
<i>Gardenia psilioides</i>	Gardenia Glennie River	1m
<i>Gardenia scabrella</i>	Star Flower	2-3m
<i>Leea indica</i>	Bandicoot Berry	3-5m
<i>Lomandra hystrix</i>	Mat Rush	1m
<i>Maniltoa lenticellata</i>	Cascading Bean	8-10m
<i>Phyllanthus cuscuthiflorus</i>	Pink Phyllanthus	3-4m
<i>Syzygium australe</i>	Lillipilli	3-5m
<i>Xanthostemon chrysanthus</i>	Golden Penda	6-10m
<i>Xanthostemon verticillatus</i>	Little Penda	2-4m

Species have been selected to be suitable and in character with the Douglas Shire, Port Douglas and Coastal Communities, Landscape Zone. The species list all exhibit resilient growth and dense foliage form. A mix of species and heights is desirable to avoid single species failure, and improve visual coherence with the landscape character. The vegetated buffer, would require a minimum width of 6m to allow a 2-3 row, layered & staggered planting to further enhance the density and screening. The proposed buffer would be mounded and irrigated, with soil thoroughly prepared. A mixture of different plants with a variety of foliage shapes, sizes and natural colours has been considered.



Acmena smithii



Allocasuarina littoralis



Attractocarpus fitzalanni



Backhousia citriodora



Cleistanthus hylandii



Gardenia psilioides



Gardenia scabrella



Leea indica



Lomandra hystrix



Maniltoa lenticellata



Phyllanthus cuscuthiflorus



Syzygium australe



Xanthostemon chrysanthus



Xanthostemon verticillatus



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CLIENT
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PROJECT
PROPOSED SOLAR FARM
VEGETATED BUFFER

LOCATION
LOT 4 ON RP893855,
COOK HIGHWAY,
KILLALOE
DOUGLAS SHIRE

DRAWN	RG		
APPROVED	RG		
SCALE	AS SHOWN @ A3		
DATE	NOVEMBER 2024		
SHEET No.	LPS_1	REV.	-
JOB No.	L2415		



F. Impact on View Corridors

The viewing points and the rendered images above demonstrate that the proposed solar farm development on the site will be heavily screened by the proposed deep vegetation buffer proposed along the Cook Highway frontage, as well as the Killaloe Dump Road. Views into the solar farm should be screened out by 3 years with proposed layered & staggered planting on mounded earth. The proposed vegetation buffer itself creates a low profile that will not deter from the natural lay of the land or impact views of the mountains.

The proposed development suggests a maximum height of solar infrastructure of 4m, and these will be entirely screened by the proposed landscape buffer.

Note that the growth and effectiveness of landscape screening is dependent on numerous factors other than the length of time. These factors include soil type and preparation, plant species, early replacement of any failed plants, irrigation schedule, weather conditions, and establishment/ maintenance plan including mulching and fertilisation. The graphics in this report have assumed a reasonable quality of workmanship and ongoing maintenance is employed in the establishment of the landscape.