# Conceptual Master Plan

Richmond River Lighthouse

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# Introduction

# 1.1 Background

GeoLINK has been engaged by Ballina Shire Council to prepare a conceptual master plan for the land containing the Richmond River Lighthouse and adjoining dwelling. The aim of this master plan is to identify potential future uses of the site.

The land is described as Lots 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, Section 78, DP 758047 and Lot 532 DP 729679, Parish of Ballina, County of Rous. The site is located on Harbourview Street and is also bounded by Beach Road and Suvla Street, East Ballina (refer to **Illustration 1.1**).

The Lighthouse is situated within public parkland on Lot 5. Immediately to its north, fronting Harbourview Street, is a late 1960s or 1970s brick dwelling, located within Lot 2. A simple treated pine log fence distinguishes the garden boundaries of this dwelling. Surrounding land uses include residential housing to the north, public parkland is located to the east and south and the coastal walk and ocean are located to the east of Sulva Street.

## 1.2 Heritage Significance

Richmond River Lighthouse is listed on the Register of National Estate held by the Australian Heritage Commission (Commonwealth Government). It is also listed under the *North Coast Regional Environmental Plan 1988* as a heritage item of state significance and listed within Schedule 1 of *Ballina Local Environmental Plan 1987* as an item of environmental heritage.

The multiple heritage listings indicate that the lighthouse is widely recognised and has a high degree of significance as a heritage item. It was built in 1866 and was the first of five lighthouses in the northern rivers region designed by colonial architect James Barnett (refer to **Illustration 1.2**).

The lighthouse is also significant for its contribution to the once vital north coast run of shipping and cargo between Queensland and New South Wales (Australian Heritage Commission 2007). The lighthouse annexe serviced the manual function of the lighthouse, but was demolished in 1940. It is now represented only by exposed footings adjacent to the lighthouse.

A lighthouse-keeper's cottage was previously located approximately 25 m north of the lighthouse. It was occupied by the light keeper and was thought to have been demolished in the 1920s, preceding the automation of the lighthouse. The existing dwelling was built in the 1960s or 1970s and was never occupied by the lighthouse keeper. It is not an item of environmental heritage and is not listed in any heritage list.

The broader Lighthouse Hill Precinct also has significant heritage values associated with its scenic attributes, its recreational history and the history of the local Bundjalung people. It is well documented that the site has a rich and colourful history for recreational use by locals and visitors.

A Conservation Management Plan (CMP) notes the high spiritual and cultural importance of the site to the Jali people, due to a massacre at the nearby Black Head (DPWS Heritage Design Services 2003). The site would also have been used by Aboriginal people for camping and other purposes. The CMP states that, due to a lack of Aboriginal archaeological evidence, the site itself is of low archaeological significance. It suggests, however, that it is of high cultural significance. The CMP states the importance of the spiritual and historical connection of the land and site to the Aboriginal people and the necessity to maintain and respect this for current and future generations.

## 1.3 Planning Overview

Lots 2, 3, 5 and 6, Section 78, DP 758047 are zoned within Ballina Local Environmental Plan 1987 as 2(a) Living area. Lots 532 DP 729679 and Lot 1 Section 78 DP 758047 are zoned 6(a) Open Space (refer to **Illustration 1.3**).

The objectives of 2(a) zone are to regulate the use of land to permit housing and ancillary development which is compatible with the character and amenity of the surrounding residential area. The current uses of the site only partially reflect this zoning. A wide range of potential uses would be within this zone; mostly requiring development consent and some being permissible only with advertised development consent.

The primary objectives of the 6(a) Open Space zone are:

- to identify land that is used or capable of being used for active or passive recreation purposes;
- to encourage the development of open spaces in a manner which maximises the satisfaction of the community's diverse recreation needs;
- to enable development associated with, ancillary to or supportive of recreation use; and
- to enable development that assists in meeting the social and cultural needs of the community.

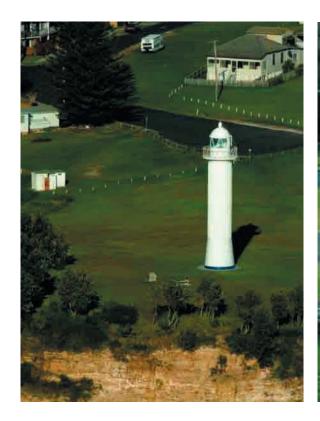
Lots 3, 5 and 6 Section 78, DP 758047 are located within the 'Historical Items' Planning Control Area within the Ballina Shire Combined Development Control Plan and the remainder of the site is located within the 'Open Space' Planning Control Area.

# 1.4 Site Description

The site has developed to include a private residence, which was built in the late 1960s to early 1970s and a working lighthouse surrounded by sloping, grassed 'public open space'. Mown lawn covers the majority of the site with the southern, western and eastern perimeters lined with Coastal Banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*) and grassland. Immediately adjacent to the lighthouse remains the exposed footings of the previous annexe.

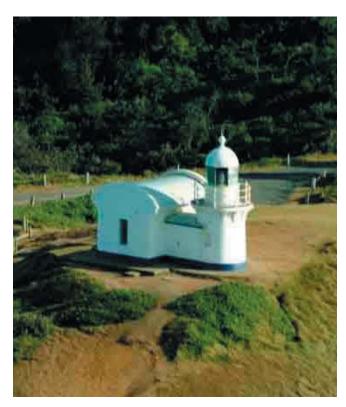
Source: GeoLINK Date: July 2007











Clarence River Lighthouse

Crowdy Head Lighthouse

Fingal Head Lighthouse

Tacking Point Lighthouse





Richmond River Lighthouse Architect: James Barnet 1870's

# **Lighthouse Architecture**



Source: GeoLINK Date: July 2007



#### LEGEND

Zone 2a Residential Living Area

Zone 6a Open Space

Zone 7f Environmental Protection Coastal Lands

# Site Analysis

#### 2.1 Overview

The subject site has been popular for picnics, weddings, whale watching and other recreational activities over many years. It is also currently used by local residents to access the coastal walk and beaches to the east. The site has a rich history to the local Jali Aboriginal people, is part of the maritime history of the region, and is a place of recreation for residents and visitors of Ballina (refer to Illustration 2.1). Characterised by an informal, ad hoc character, the site has very little linking its private and public elements.

## 2.2 Strengths

As with many prominent, coastal public spaces, the site's strengths are its:

- historical significance to the local Jali Aboriginal people;
- historical significance as a maritime site;
- past and present use as a recreational site; and
- substantial coastal views to the east and south.

# 2.3 Challenges

The site has several clear challenges, including:

- little protection from prevailing winds and weather;
- poor pedestrian connections to existing routes, particularly the coastal walk;
- a dangerous pedestrian connection point at the intersection of Beach Road and Sulva Street;
- no recreational or ablutions facilities;
- poor interpretive information for visitors regarding the site's history or present use;
- conflict of uses with a private residence dominating the existing parklands;
- no protection of the existing lighthouse or the remnant footings; and
- a poorly sited and unattractive wedding platform.

## 2.4 Opportunities

As would be expected with a prominent public recreational site, there are ample opportunities to improve the site including the potential to provide:

- a multi purpose facility complementing the parkland context;
- recreational facilities complementing existing use of the site (barbecues, tables, paths, ablutions, signage);
- interpretive historical and ecological information integrated into the site;
- formalisation of pedestrian circulation to improve its use and maintenance;
- connection with paths and crossings into the existing pedestrian network; and
- improved access to the site, including pedestrian connections and formalised car parking.

# 2.5 Site Analysis Summary

Richmond River Lighthouse Hill is under-utilised, having developed into an ad hoc array of conflicting uses. The presence of a leased, private residence has a profound effect on the public space that surrounds it. There are no on-site facilities (except for a wedding platform) and there is inadequate on-site parking. Wider pedestrian connections are severed by a busy and dangerous intersection.

The site, however, has enormous potential as a public place in Ballina Shire. As an elevated, public open space it has excellent views for whale watching and picnicking. The lighthouse itself encapsulates the potential of the site as an historical, interpretive place.

The potential associated with a carefully prepared master plan is to provide a management strategy and cohesive vision for the Richmond River Lighthouse site that could be implemented over several years, and in several stages (refer **Illustration 2.2**).







Aboriginal

East Ballina massacre site plaque and cross

Maritime

Ballina (Richmond River) Lighthouse

Recreational - 20th Century

"Long View Lighthouse Beach"

Source: GeoLINK Date: JULY 2007











# 3.1 Design Options

Three concept development options were designed for this site (refer to **Illustrations 3.1, 3.2, 3.3**) to provide varying degrees of intervention, development and cost. These options evolved following workshops informed by the site analysis.

#### 3.1.1 Design Option One

Design Option One (Illustration 3.1) offers the greatest intervention. Apart from on-site proposals, it also includes the reconfiguration of the existing car park / look-out on Suvla Street, with construction of an elevated pedestrian bridge over the top of Lighthouse Parade, to an elevated viewing platform on the adjacent land. From here the elevated pedestrian bridge extends over the top of Beach Road to the subject site, where it joins with pathways proposed through the site.

Within the site, adjacent to where the pedestrian bridge ends, a turf covered building with a sheltered outdoor deck to the north is proposed, built into the hill. This building could be used for a variety of public purposes, such as a wedding / function centre or restaurant. The lighthouse would be retained, but the existing dwelling would be removed and a heritage park and playground developed in its place.

Car parking would be formalised by a widening of Harbourview Street, on the northern boundary of the site. Informal picnic areas and barbeques would be provided along the south-western boundary of the site, amongst existing vegetation.

#### 3.1.2 Design Option Two

Design Option Two (**Illustration 3.2**) involves the reconfiguration of the car park / look-out on Suvla Street and the provision of a shared pedestrian / vehicle zone at the intersection of Sulva Street, Lighthouse Road and Beach Road. This would require a lowering of the speed limit in this locality.

Maritime heritage is addressed with historical interpretive design referencing the previous lighthouse-keeper's cottage and the lighthouse annex footings. Toilet facilities, a café, public park and playground will be located in place of the existing dwelling. Additional car parking would be provided in Harbourview Street and pedestrian paths would be provided through the site.

#### 3.1.3 Design Option Three

Design Option Three (Illustration 3.3) offers the least intervention, involving improvements to the safety of the link between the Sulva Street car park with traffic slowing signage and pedestrian crossings. The dwelling would be retained with its function shifted from residential to commercial (for example a restaurant, or a function centre). The garage would be removed. A public park and playground would be located next to this building.

All of the designs include formalisation of a path through the site, an ecological walk with barbecues around the south and south-east of the site and the installation of a path along Beach Road.

### 3.2 Implementation

The three design options have been proposed to provide Council options when assessing the costs and the ability to raise revenue from the development. It would be possible to provide a range of the facilities proposed over time, as funds allow, effectively moving from Design Option Three (least intervention) to the final implementation of Design Option One (most intervention).

Key elements of all three designs have therefore been summarised below into stages of development. The stages are set out in order of impact. The least intervention being the first stage, Stage A, and the elements with the greatest impact on the site being set out in the last stage, Stage D.

Cost estimates below are broad estimates to suit the purposes of this master plan.

#### 3.2.1 Stage A - Establishment

Establishment of recreational facilities, site safety and access has been addressed in Stage A. This stage aims to attract people to the site by initially changing the identity of the site to become a highly frequented public, recreation space for locals and visitors.

#### Formalisation of site entry, construction of main path

These works refer to Design Options Two and Three. Pedestrian entrance to the site at the intersection of Beach Road and Suvla Street would be enhanced with signage, renovation of existing stone steps, and construction of a formal path through the site from this point to the sites north-western corner. Cost estimate: \$12,000-\$15,000

#### Construction of interpretive ecological board walks and barbecue areas

These works refer to Design Options One, Two and Three. Boardwalks and gravel paths would be built over and adjacent to existing vegetation. Signs along paths will inform visitors about the ecology of the site. Depending on the other design elements proposed for the site, it may also include information about the Aboriginal history of the site and area. Barbecue areas will be located along the walk and on adjacent lawn areas. Toilet facilities will be built in the north-western corner of the site for Design Option Two and incorporated into the buildings of Design Options Two and Three.

Cost estimate: \$55,000

#### Traffic calming and crossings to establish connection to existing car park

These works refer to Design Option Three. The existing Suvla Street car park is used as a scenic look-out and for viewing surf conditions and migratory whales. Success of attracting people to the Richmond River Lighthouse site hinges on creating a safe and easily accessible link between this frequented car park and the site. In order to create a safe link, a pedestrian crossing and signage is proposed as a minimum.

Cost estimate: \$20,000

#### 3.2.2 Stage B – Improvement

Following the establishment of basic facilities on the site, Stage B proposes the improvement of the site with more tangible facilities giving a purpose to the site beyond an open park and lighthouse providing the ability to raise revenue on-site.

#### Formalisation of parking along Harbourview Street

These works refer to all three design options. Currently, cars drive onto the site as there is no parking provided and there are no barriers to stop them. Formalised parking would therefore protect the site from vehicular degradation. Removable bollards will allow for maintenance vehicles to access the lighthouse. Design Option One also provides for removal bollards which will accommodate additional parking for occasional larger events on the site.

Sealed, bitumen parking within the boundaries of the site offers approximately 33 car parking spaces including disabled parking. Along the length of Harbourview Street, proposed parking maintains the grassed open space on the site.

Cost estimate: \$30, 000

#### Removal of existing cottage and construction of playground, park, café and toilet facilities

These works refer to Design Option Two. The north-western corner of the site is proposed as a location for a children's playground, cafe and a public park. Situated here, the facilities will not obstruct views from the lighthouse to the ocean and the cultural landscape of 'open space' surrounding the lighthouse will be maximised. Construction of above mentioned parking on the site will allow easy disabled and pram access to the park and cafe.

The café and toilet facilities are proposed as two separate buildings. Both buildings would be a similar scale and have a simple, elegant design. Visually, these buildings should not 'scream for attention' as the lighthouse should be the prominent structure on the site. The café would have the ability to seat approximately 15-20 people inside at small tables and/or benches, and could also offer outdoor seating. It could also offer a takeaway menu so that visitors can take, for example, a coffee and sandwich or cake and sit elsewhere on the site to watch the whales or just look at the view.

Breamlea House (refer to Illustration 3.2) is an example of a structure that would be appropriate. When the house is in use the timber batten clad structure opens.

Cost estimate: \$250,000 (depending on design and scale of buildings)

#### Renovation of existing cottage as a new facility, construction of playground and park

These works refer to Design Option Three. The location of the existing garage is the ideal position for a playground and public park. This proposal retains the existing structure of the house but removes the garage. It is proposed to change its function from a rented, residential property to a commercial building. Proposed uses are outlined within Section 3.3.

Cost estimate: \$130,000

#### Stage C - Maritime Focus

Heritage attributes of the Richmond River Lighthouse site are embellished in Stage C. Design features aim to attract people to the site and inform them of some of its stories.

#### Protection and interpretive design of lighthouse annexe remains

These works refer to Design Option Three. Currently, footings of the lighthouse annexe, which was demolished in 1940, are exposed. Information about the lighthouse is provided on a small plague attached to the rear of the lighthouse (refer to image on Illustration 3.2) which is accessed by walking across these footings. Design Option One proposes to install a transparent horizontal plane of perspex (or similar material) approximately 700 mm above the ground, engraved and/or printed with information about the lighthouse and annexe. A plan of the annexe indicating its previous uses may be incorporated into this interpretive signage. Signage would protect the footings and offer more information about the site.

Cost estimate: \$200,000

#### Removal of dwelling and installation of paved interpretive design indicating location of original lighthouse-keeper's cottage

These works refer to Design Option Two. This design communicates to visitors the importance of the original lighthouse-keeper's cottage. The location and parameters of the building would be paved using a stone or concrete surface engraved with information and signage about the site's maritime history. Image (d) on Illustration 3.1 provides an example of how engraved stone can offer an interesting and dynamic

design intervention to a site. This paved area would also be frequently used for wedding ceremonies and wedding photographs. It offers views of the ocean and lighthouse in the background.

Cost estimate: \$130,000

#### Corten steel frame indicating lighthouse annexe form

These works refer to Design Option Two. Richmond River Lighthouse is one of five lighthouses designed by James Barnett. This lighthouse was the first of his designs built, and the only one which has seen the demolition of its annexe. In order to communicate the former shape and form of this annexe this design proposes to outline it with a Corten steel frame. Within this frame transparent, perspex panels will be fixed in selected areas to give a sense of its interior space. On these panels, information about the lighthouse and maritime history of the site will be printed and/or engraved. Protection and/or restoration of the foundation would be carried out with this design option.

Cost estimate: \$50,000

#### Heritage park and playground

These works refer to Design Option One. Construction of a park with elements inspired by information about the area's heritage is proposed. Local artists and artisans could be consulted and their skills and ideas incorporated into this development. A theme could be developed throughout the site, to fit in with the specific use of the turf-covered building. For example if the building is a gallery, then a sculpture court could be developed. If the building is an Aboriginal cultural centre, the park could incorporate work by local Aboriginal artists.

Cost estimate: \$100,000-\$150,000

#### 3.2.4 Stage D – Enhancement

Design elements in Stage D focus on transforming this site into a dynamic hub of the Ballina coastline attracting locals and visitors due to its historical, cultural and architectural attributes.

#### Construction of grass covered facility

These works refer to Design Option One. Located at the base of the site, towards the Sulva Street boundary, a turf-covered building fits into the contours of the site. From the lighthouse, the only visible element of the building would be a railing along the top where a viewing and wedding platform would be located on its turf roof. The building would be serviced by the existing car park on Sulva Street and the proposed Harbourview Street parking. Access to it from the Sulva Street car park would either be via the proposed pedestrian bridge or the pedestrian crossings. From a sheltered deck, located to the north of the building, would be a path accessing Harbourview Street for delivery, pedestrian and wheelchair access. Disabled car parking would be located at the base of Harbourview Street. Glass cladding along the entire east face of the building would offer spectacular views over the tops of the trees located on the vegetated slope along the coast. Possible uses for this building are suggested in **Section 3.3**.

Cost estimate: \$1.5-2 M (depending on design features)

#### Construction of pedestrian bridge, viewing platform and reconfiguration of Sulva Street car park

These works refer to Design Option One. As previously discussed, the greatest opportunities for exposing the site to more people is by linking it to the existing busy coastal path and the Sulva Street car park. Currently, this link is dangerous and does not offer a clear view of the lighthouse from the coast. Wheelchair and pram access are important considerations in addressing this link. The proposed bridge would have one end at the top of the stairs that joins the coastal walk to the Sulva Street car park, and the other on the site at the top of the existing stone stairs at the intersection of Sulva Street and Beach Road (refer to Illustration 3.1).

The walkway would have a viewing platform located on adjacent vacant land, as shown in Illustration 3.1. This platform would offer clear, unobstructed views of the ocean. The design of the viewing platform could

incorporate information about Humpback Whales and nearby surfing locations. The existing car park would be reconfigured to accommodate more car spaces and create a designated viewing area in the car park bounds.

Cost estimate: \$200,000

OR

#### Construction of elevated shared pedestrian zone

These works refer to Design Option Two. In order to create a safer and better utilised link between the Sulva Street car park and the site, this proposal would provide traffic calming measures with a shared pedestrian and vehicular zone at the intersection of Sulva Street, Lighthouse Parade and Beach Road. In order to achieve this, the roads would be paved and raised. The car park would receive the same treatment to link the areas.

Cost estimate: \$500 000

### 3.3 Proposed Uses

#### 3.3.1 Proposed uses for on-site buildings

Design Option One proposes the construction of a new grass-covered building, built into the hill. Option Three proposes the retention and re-use of the existing dwelling.

Incorporating a building into the design provides an ability to raise revenue from the site. To achieve this, and to add cultural value to the site, a combination of uses could be considered, such as:

- an art gallery. A gallery could be developed in many ways, including exhibiting artists from the Northern Rivers Region or showing selected travelling exhibitions. Travelling exhibitions would raise the profile of this space, regionally and nationally. The space could also show emerging or indigenous artists. Opportunities for revenue raising could be increased through running workshops and master classes across all disciplines associated with the arts, and incorporating a café and/or gift shop.
- a restaurant/ café/ function facilities. Any of these options, or a combination of options, could be
  applied to either of the buildings. A restaurant could operate at night, a café during the day and the
  space booked for functions such as weddings, birthdays or awards ceremonies.
- an Aboriginal cultural centre and gift shop. An Aboriginal cultural centre could incorporate ranger walks, talks, theatre, dance, food, art and activities. The activities would be designed to increase understanding of the historical, social and environmental aspects of the area.



#### LEGEND

- 1 Lawn
- 2 Existing vegetation
- 3 Existing coastal path
- 4 Lighthouse
- 5 Picnic platforms/BBQ's 6 Primary path 7 Elevated boardwalk/path

- 8 Path
- 9 Pedestrian crossing
- 10 Carparking
- 11 Heritage park & playground
  12 Reconfigure existing carpark
  13 Turf covered building
  14 Protected outdoor deck
  15 Building edge

- (wheelchair accessible)

  17 Whale watching platform

  18 Bridge to link lighthouse
  with existing coastal walk



(a) Ballina Lighthouse Hill and Beach 1940's



(b) Bradley's Head, Sydney Harbour



(c) Turf Covered Building, Ireland



(d) Federation Square, Melbourne



(e) Kings Park, W.A.



# Source: GeoLINK Date: July 2007



#### LEGEND

- Lawn
- Lighthouse
- Existing vegetation
  Existing coastal path
- Primary path
- Elevated boardwalk/path
- Picnic platforms/BBQ's
- Public toilets
- Path
- Signage indicating 40 zone
  Carparking
  Playground/Public Park

- 13 Cafe with out door tables
- 14 Engraved stone paving or similar interpretive design indicting location of origianl Pilots Cottage to also function as wedding platform 15 Steel/corten frame
- indicating lighthouse annex structure
- pedestrians
  17 Reconfigrue existing carpark



(a) Visual link to lower carpark



(b) 1902 Richmond River Lighthouse and Lighthouse Cottage



(c) Existing plaque on Lighthouse



(d) Richmond River Lighthouse & annexe



(e) 'Open' Breamlea House, Architect: Sean Godsell



'Closed'



Design 2



# Landscape/planting Pedestrian crossings Signage indicating 40 zone Carparking

- Playground/public park Opaque signage over

  - Adapt existing building
    Stone wall/wedding
    platform/seat
    (450 mm high max)
    Reconfigure existing



(a) Existing wedding platform



(b) Annexe footings and lighthouse



(d) Existing site view





4

# Conclusion

Richmond River Lighthouse Hill has become an ad hoc array of conflicting uses and is therefore currently under utilised. The private residence located within close proximity to the Lighthouse has a profound effect on the public space that surrounds it. There are no on-site facilities (except for a wedding platform) and there is inadequate on-site parking. Wider pedestrian connections are severed by a busy and dangerous intersection. The site, however, has enormous potential as a public place in the Ballina Shire. As an elevated, public open space it has excellent views for whale watching and picnicking. The lighthouse itself encapsulates the potential of the site as an historical, interpretive place.

The Lighthouse Hill Precinct strengths and weaknesses have been identified throughout the production of this conceptual master plan. The strengths of the site have been emphasised and the weaknesses have been moulded to produce three design options which provide Council with potential future uses of this significant site. These design options have been created to enable a realistic development which could be implemented over several years, and in several stages. A range of levels of intervention have been designed to significantly improve the use of the Lighthouse Hill Precinct.

# Project Team

The project team members included:

Veronica Monkley Ecologist/ Planner

Jane Fullerton **Environmental Designer** 

Dominic Finlay-Jones Architect

Rob van Iersel **Environmental Planner/ Director** 

# References

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