

## Greenfield Development

Ms Elise Holmes is an experienced developer of greenfield sites and takes pride in delivering high quality residential developments. She is about to embark on Stage 2 of a greenfield residential development on the fringes of a small regional town in an area designated by the state government as a commuter corridor.

Ms Holmes contracts Argus Pty Ltd to deliver the project and Mr Goh Fa Broke, the project manager, has undertaken a feasibility study so Ms Holmes can apply for a loan. The proposal is to build 750 dwellings on the 30-hectare forested site. The bank says it will provide a development loan for a feasibility study which shows a profit not less than 12%.

Due to the number of dwellings proposed it is considered a state-significant application. It will be assessed by Timber Tops Council and determined by the Regional Planning Panel.

Stage 1 has 550 detached single-storey dwellings on 22 hectares of previously forested land. The average block sizes are 280 m<sup>2</sup>. The dwellings are complying development and are required to have one tree in the front setback and one tree in the rear setback. Front and rear setbacks are 4 and 3 metres respectively. The overall layout provides for one street tree in front of each property. Construction of Stage 1 commenced 8 years ago and is nearing completion.

Ms Elise Holmes is happy to accede to a proposal by the council planner, Ms Dee Zein, to review Stage 1 to identify where improvements can be made with Stage 2. In addition to the water engineer and roads engineer, Ms Dee Zein invites Council's landscape architect and urban forest manager, Ms Olivia N. Lovett, to join her, Ms Elise Holmes and Mr Goh Fa Broke for a site inspection and review of Stage 1.

In preparation for the meeting, Ms Olivia N. Lovett measured the urban forest canopy over the 30-hectare site on i-Tree. The canopy cover was about 5%. Ms Elise Holmes engaged consulting arborist, Mr Tim Bermils, to undertake an audit of the trees that had been planted. The audit revealed that 80% of the street trees had survived; 50% of the trees out the back were still growing (the remainder being replaced by swimming pools, paved courtyards, other paraphernalia or they had died from lack of care); and the front yard trees had a 65% survival rate. Based on the remaining trees Mr Tim Bermils calculated that the canopy would attain about 10% when the trees had fully established. He noted that many of the trees were growing in limited space and on average, their health was fair.

Ms Olivia N. Lovett wanted the development to provide 35% canopy cover, in line with council's urban forest strategy rather than the 14% likely to be attained by Stage 1.

Ms Elise Holmes submitted her proposal and it was due to be considered by the Regional Planning Panel the following month. The proposal included a 6-metre wide median strip down the centre of the main road of Stage 2 retaining existing native trees. This would provide a wildlife corridor and contribute about 3% to the canopy cover.

Council was not prepared to support the proposal without it being demonstrated that urban forest canopy would be substantially increased. What strategies could Ms Olivia N. Lovett recommend that could improve urban forest outcomes of the development proposal?

