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Settlement and housing

BACKGROUND

The Far North Coast Region is built on a network of towns and villages. Currently urban centres contain around half of the Region's population, and provide key services and facilities. These centres are linked by the Region's transport corridors and infrastructure networks. The Region is characterised by mainly detached housing (71%) with less reliance on multi-unit dwellings (22%) and other forms of accommodation (7%).

Regional centres

Tweed Heads and Lismore are the two current major regional centres for the Region. Ballina will develop as the third major regional centre, recognising the importance of its airport and its role as a river and coastal lifestyle centre. The major regional centres, which will contain 35% of the Region's additional housing, will be reinforced as the major service and population centres.

Towns

The major towns of Murwillumbah and Casino, and towns of Mullumbimby, Byron Bay and Kyogle support the major regional centres. These communities provide a focus for some future urban development within their service catchments.

Villages

Surrounding the larger centres are a number of villages such as Uki, Pottsville, Brunswick Heads, Bangalow, Nimbin, Clunes, Alstonville, Wardell, Bonalbo, Woodenbong, Coraki and Evans Head, ranging in size and the types of facilities and services provided. These provide highly valued diverse lifestyles and a sense of community, reinforcing the Far North Coast as a 'region of villages'.

Dwelling projections

The Region is faced with smaller households and an ageing population. In combination with population growth, decreasing

occupancy rates will increase the need for more dwellings. It is estimated that approximately 51 000 new dwellings will be needed to house an additional 60 400 people over the next 25 years. A 7% buffer is built into the proposed dwelling targets to address future estimated vacancy rates and tourism needs.

Housing types vary throughout the Region, with most multi-unit dwellings found in coastal areas, particularly in the major regional centres of Tweed Heads and Ballina. Decreasing occupancy rates and changing demand from traditional single detached housing to multi-unit dwelling types means that the provision of a variety of housing forms is needed in appropriate locations.

The Strategy reinforces and promotes increased housing choice by directing future urban growth to appropriate locations across the Region. Higher density living is to be encouraged around the town centres and areas of major employment.

HOUSING MAP



- | | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|--|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| | Major Regional Centre | | Region Boundary | | Existing Urban Footprint |
| | Developing Major Regional Centre | | State Boundary | | Proposed Future Urban Release |
| | Major Town | | Highway | | Existing Rural Residential |
| | Town | | Main Roads | | |
| | Village - Inland | | Rail Line | | |
| | Village - Coastal | | Rivers and Creeks | | |



OUTCOMES

Settlement pattern

The Regional Strategy identifies and promotes a settlement pattern that protects environmental values and natural resources while utilising and developing the existing network of major urban centres, reinforcing village character, and requiring efficient use of existing services and major transport routes. A defined hierarchy of centres achieving appropriate densities will provide a range of housing giving choice in form and affordability. Sufficient land will be made available for employment purposes and community facilities.

The regional settlement pattern will accommodate future growth while providing quality places to live. Local councils will be assisted in achieving this outcome by detailed character and design standards in the North Coast Urban Design Guidelines to be released as part of the Settlement Planning Guidelines.

Land will not be zoned for future urban investigation as it may create speculative land values and unreasonable long term aspirations for future higher uses that may not be appropriate due to physical constraints and/or infrastructure capabilities.

To accommodate the additional 60 400 people anticipated to be living in the Region by 2031 the Regional Strategy has set individual dwelling targets for each local government area (see Table 1).

The Strategy aims to achieve a more appropriate mix for future housing that reflects the Region's changing housing needs (i.e. 60% single dwellings and 40% multi-unit for the 51 000 proposed dwellings within the Town and Village Growth Boundaries by 2031).

A Local Growth Management Strategy will be prepared by each council to outline how it will meet these targets through the preparation of their future local environmental plans. Settlement

Planning Guidelines will guide councils when undertaking this work. The Department of Planning will assist councils in determining the housing mix for each council area.

Town and Village Growth Boundaries

The Strategy plans to efficiently use land allocated for urban development without sacrificing the identity of the area. For some towns and villages this will result in infill development, with greater housing choice and affordability. For other areas it may result in the creation of new villages or extensions to existing ones.

The areas within the Town and Village Growth Boundaries (see map series at back of document) identify the land required to meet the Region's urban housing and employment needs until 2031 (not including future rural residential development). These areas will accommodate a range of urban

TABLE 1: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA DWELLING TARGETS (FOR AN ADDITIONAL 60 400 PERSONS)

LGA	Existing dwellings (2006)	Additional new dwellings to 2031
Ballina	16 720	8 400
Byron	13 090	2 600
Kyogle	4 110	3 000
Lismore	17 640	8 000
Richmond Valley	8 710	9 900
Tweed	34 650	19 100
Totals	94 920	51 000



uses including housing, tourism, industry, business, infrastructure, community facilities and urban open spaces.

Not all land identified within the Town and Village Growth Boundary can be developed for urban uses. The rezoning of land or the development of existing zoned land within the Town and Village Growth Boundary for urban, commercial or industrial uses will be subject to more detailed investigations to determine its capability and future yield. Land that is subject to significant natural hazards and/or environmental constraints will be excluded from development. Other land may be required for open space, drainage, maintenance of interurban breaks or environmental uses/buffers and will be protected for these purposes.

Open space may be located outside the Town and Village Growth Boundary where suitable land is not available within the mapped areas. In determining where future open space may be located outside the Town and Village Growth Boundary, areas of high environmental or natural resource value must be avoided.

Where demonstrated by a local environmental study that a minor adjustment to the Town and Village Growth Boundary is necessary so that new development is consistent with it, some minor variations of the boundary may be considered.

In determining the extent of any variation, consideration will be given to the efficient use of infrastructure/services, avoidance of significant environmental constraints and natural resources, and reinforcement of the regional settlement hierarchy. Any minor variation will be determined through a joint analysis undertaken between the local council and the Department of Planning.

Coastal Area

The Regional Strategy limits future land release for urban or rural residential development within the Coastal Area to protect fragile and vulnerable areas and ecosystems. By catering for additional housing in other parts of the Region, this policy will help sustain and invigorate non coastal centres.

In the Coastal Area, only land within a Town and Village Growth Boundary may be released for urban purposes. This will ensure that the high coastal environmental values that attract people to the Region are protected while still providing housing opportunities. Sixty per cent of the Region's future dwelling needs will be provided within this area.

Non-coastal area

To reinforce the function and role of non-coastal settlements, future land releases should first be directed

to land identified within the Town and Village Growth Boundary. Any future development proposals on greenfield sites in the non-coastal area located outside of the Town and Village Growth Boundaries are subject to satisfying the Sustainability Criteria (Appendix 1).

Rural residential development

Rural residential development will continue as a housing choice for people in the Region. In the future such development will be located close to existing centres, avoiding areas of significant environmental and landscape value, and significant natural resources (including high quality agricultural land). An adequate level of services will be provided to meet the community's needs.

In order to limit urban growth along the coast and ensure efficiencies in land utilisation and infrastructure provision, no further rezoning for rural residential development (other than land in an approved land release strategy) will be permitted in the Coastal Area.

For land in the non-coastal area, rural residential land release will occur in accordance with existing local rural residential strategies or in a review negotiated between councils and the Department of Planning, consistent with the Regional Strategy.



ACTIONS

Settlement and housing

- Local environmental plans, local growth management strategies and other statutory planning controls will align with the Regional Strategy's settlement network (as shown on the Housing Map) to contain the spread of urban development, efficiently utilise existing services and infrastructure, and protect areas of high conservation value.
- Tweed Heads, Lismore and Ballina will be promoted and supported as major regional centres of population and service provision for the Region.
- Councils will review the building height limits within the central business areas, major employment areas and major tourism areas of Tweed, Ballina and Lismore local government areas.
- Local environmental plans will ensure that all new development reinforces existing urban and rural centres, towns and villages.
- New development must be located in a manner that prevents ribbon or strip development along major roads and does not impact on the safety and efficiency of arterial roads.
- A land release staging program will be developed to ensure the orderly release of new housing.
- Where development or a rezoning increases the need for State infrastructure, the Minister for Planning may require a contribution towards the provision of such infrastructure.
- Councils will plan for a range of housing types of appropriate densities, location and suitability that are capable of adapting and responding to the ageing of the population.
- Local government will consider a range of affordable housing strategies, including forms of low cost housing, suitable zonings and development controls to improve housing choice, and specific schemes. These strategies must be consistent with relevant State policies.
- Existing land use rights will not be diminished by the Regional Strategy.
- Local environmental plans generally should locate major health and educational facilities in urban areas.

SETTLEMENT PLANNING GUIDELINES

Implementation of the Regional Strategy will be supported by Settlement Planning Guidelines prepared by the Department of Planning to assist councils in preparing a Local Growth Management Strategy. These guidelines will include:

- additional detail on environmental criteria and its application
- planning principles for residential, rural residential, commercial, industrial and tourism lands
- urban design principles for maintenance of local character and consideration of the North Coast climate
- a framework for a new Far North Coast Housing and Land Monitor.

The Settlement Planning Guidelines will also provide further detail for councils, developers and the community on the information needed and processes to be undertaken in planning for the Region's growth.

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- New caravan parks and manufactured home estates, where there is any potential for permanent accommodation to occur, should be located generally in urban areas.
- Local environmental plans cannot use the Transition Zone in the Standard Instrument (Local Environmental Plans) Order 2006 to identify land for future urban investigation purposes.
- Local environmental plans will maintain interurban breaks between existing and new settlements.

Town and Village Growth Boundary

- The Town and Village Growth Boundary is defined by the Town and Village Growth Boundary Map (see sheets 1 to 6 at back of document).
- No land in the Coastal Area will be released other than land identified within the Town and Village Growth Boundary or within an approved rural residential release strategy.

- Councils will prepare a Local Growth Management Strategy prior to zoning further land for urban, commercial and industrial uses in accordance with the Settlement Planning Guidelines.
- Councils will demonstrate through the Local Growth Management Strategy how dwelling targets (Table 1) for each local government area will be met in local environmental plans.
- Planning for urban land must be integrated with the supply of relevant infrastructure and transport provision.
- Any development proposed for greenfield sites in the non-coastal area that is located outside of the Town and Village Growth Boundary will be subject to satisfying the Sustainability Criteria (Appendix 1).

Rural residential development

- Future rural residential land will only be released in accordance with a Local Growth Management Strategy agreed to by council and the Department of Planning, and consistent with the Settlement Planning Guidelines.
- No new rural residential development will be permitted within the Coastal Area, other than development already zoned or within an approved rural residential release strategy.
- Planning for rural residential land must be integrated with the supply of relevant infrastructure and transport provision.

