

Major changes to Tweed's housing plan

By Jonathon Howard

COUNCILLORS DEBATED the next 20 years of housing growth for the Tweed at their monthly meeting on Thursday, April 3, with major changes to the Growth Management and Housing Strategy options paper.

This is the Tweed's most important document and it will help shape the future of the shire.

Councillors voted on the next steps for the Growth Management Housing Strategy (GMHS), following the release of the Options Paper Version 2.

A vote was carried four votes to three in favour of the options paper, with Cr Reece Byrnes absent and the mayor using her casting vote to get the motion over the line.

Developed in collaboration with planning consultants PSA, the Options Paper Version 2 marks a crucial milestone in the process.

The document builds upon community and stakeholder feedback gathered during a consultation period held from February to March 2024, which saw more than 639 submissions and more than 4,000 individual matters raised for consideration.

Key development sites for short-term and medium-term growth include Kings Forest, Cobaki, Area E Terranora, Kingscliff and Bilambil Heights.

The revised Options Paper Version 2 also highlights rural housing opportunities, including proposals for secondary dwellings, dual occupancies, expanded rural villages and opportunities to subdivide within existing rural-residential clusters

The new version now allows secondary dwellings (granny flats) on rural land that's more than 10 hectares and detached dual occupancies on lots greater than 40 hectares.

The new document has removed village options as exhibited to the public, and will now be based on an individual village locality for areas such as, Burringbar, Crabbes Creek and Tyalgum.

The Kingscliff Health and Education Plan, including Cudgen Connections was removed.

While many of the originally proposed changes have been modified, some areas have been identified as requiring further investigation due to constraints such as lack of infrastructure or environmental challenges.

The meeting also considered various amendments including the proposed Tweed City Masterplan, and adjustments to specific growth areas like Banora Point and Pottsville.

Tweed Shire Council has also recommended further review of late submissions, such as requests from Australian Bay Lobster and Leda, seeking opportunities to expand employment-generating land uses and consider a land lease community at Piggabeen Road.

Following the council's adoption of the updated options paper, the next step will be the preparation of a Draft Tweed Housing and Employment Land Strategy, which will be brought back to the council for endorsement before it is publicly exhibited.

Mayor Chris Cherry said narrowing down the GMHS options to go for into the strategy was "probably one of

the most important jobs our council will do in our term".

"All options were put on the table and we heard very loudly and clearly from the community that there were many options not supported by them," she said.

"Using the multi-criteria analysis, including consideration of the ability to provide water and wastewater, the flood vulnerability or the exposure to tidal inundation allowed us to use the 80/20 rule to move forward with those options that will be easiest to implement and are supported by the community.

"We have identified significant areas for growth while protecting what makes Tweed special.

"On the rural housing options, we went with the community's submissions that identified support for secondary dwellings.

"We have started with the option to allow rural properties 10 hectares or larger to have secondary dwellings.

"This is an iterative approach that allows us to increase the number of properties that can do a secondary dwelling into the future if it proves to produce the outcome we need, which is more housing for our residents.

"What criteria will be applied to these dwellings will be decided as part of the strategy going forward.

"I really feel that the outcome we achieved is a very balanced way forward that has listened to the community."

Although Cr Nola Firth voted against the motion due to concerns about the effect of secondary and detached dwellings on the environment,



The Growth Management Housing Strategy has entered a new phase and councillors have voted in favour of version two of an options paper

other parts of it ensured important changes.

"Many localities were removed on the basis of the analysis of community concerns such as environmental protection, flood risk and lack of infrastructure," she said.

"The exact controls on secondary dwellings in rural land will be worked out in the next phase of the process.

"This will be important as we know there will be significant risk of negative impact on the environment – as noted in the staff report by the Council Sustainability and Environment Unit.

"Risks include habitat clearing, cats and dogs attacking and killing wildlife, weed proliferation and increased fragmentation of agricultural land.

"Given that habitat loss, feral animals and weeds are the known chief causes of wildlife extinction, we will need careful controls to look after our amazing but highly threatened biodiversity here in the Tweed."

Deputy Mayor Meredith Dennis said the GMHS is "such an important document, it shapes the way and where the Tweed will be developed in the next 20 years".

"We are running out of usable land for housing, this is land that is not flood affected or has environmental significance," Cr Dennis said.

"Our community have told us they don't want to be over developed like the Gold Coast.

"We do need to increase density to accommodate our growing population in appropriate areas.

"We need to protect our environment and also protect farmland.

"Our usable land for houses has been land banked for 30 years, tying our hands for more housing.

"More than 20 sites were taken off the table in the GMHS as the community have told us they were not appropriate.

"This is not the end of the process, there is more consultation with the community to come.

"I encourage residents to get involved and tell us what they want or don't want – after all this is why we are here."

YOUR THOUGHTS: What are your thoughts on the secondary dwelling controls for the Tweed? Send your thoughts and letters via email: editor@theweekly.net.au