

New Sunshine Coast Planning Scheme Issues Paper

The Sunshine Coast Council has started a community consultation about the development of the new planning scheme for the region. It has considered a report prepared by Council officers on preliminary principles for the development of the new planning scheme that is expected to be approved by the State Government for implementation in 2024. The following is an excerpt from the paper that sets out these principles:

- Retain strong and clearly defined growth management boundaries.
- Provide a compact, transit-supportive and sustainable pattern of settlement.
- Provide for vibrant, compact centres as a focus for economic and social activity and protection of the Sunshine Coast activity centre network.
- Encourage economic diversification and leverage investments in key infrastructure and region shaping projects.
- Maintain a strong position on building height as a key feature distinguishing the Sunshine Coast from other metropolitan areas in SEQ.
- Promote Sunshine Coast Design principles.
- Prioritise high quality urban landscaping, deep planting and walkable leafy streets.
- Increase focus on the design of multi-unit residential and mixed use development.
- Maintain a focus on local planning (i.e. retention of local plans as a key concept and building block for the planning scheme).
- Protect biodiversity, landscape character and scenic amenity.
- Protect the ongoing viability of natural economic resources (e.g. agricultural land, forestry, fisheries and extractive resources).
- Encourage appropriate value adding rural enterprises.
- Avoid constrained or high hazard areas and improve resilience in existing areas.
- Adapt to a changing climate.

The paper goes on to identify the following themes for the Strategic Framework of the new planning scheme:

- Shaping sustainable growth.
- A smart economy.
- A healthy and resilient region.
- A creative community of communities.
- Connected people and places.

Blackall Range Local Plan

The Blackall Range local plan applies to an area that includes the Flaxton, Mapleton, Montville and the surrounding land. Over the past 30 years, the Blackall Range Development Control Plan, the subsequent Iconic Places Act and the Blackall Range Local Plan have provided a degree of protection of environmental and landscape values and rural and village lifestyles.

The purpose and overall planning outcomes of the Blackall Range local area plan are intended “to protect and reinforce the discrete character of the area’s villages and retain the integrity of the rural landscape of the Blackall Range escarpment”. The plan further

specifies “that development retains the built form, streetscape, landscape character and natural environment elements that contribute to the character and identity of the Blackall Range— ——. The form and scale of developments is low key with buildings that are low rise and cover a comparatively small area of the site, thereby leaving significant areas for landscaping and private open space.” There is a specific code assessable requirement that any proposed development is limited to a maximum height of two storeys.

What should the Blackall Range community be seeking to improve in the Blackall Range local plan and the overall planning scheme?

Recent strategic planning workshops and community consultations held by MVA and MADCA have demonstrated strong community support for these values and ensuring that the new planning scheme and the Blackall Range Local Plan continues to protect them. Three significant community events have been held over the past two years; the Montville Futures Workshop (March 2019), the Mapleton Retirement Village Survey (July 2020) and the Mapleton Strategic Planning Workshop (March 2021) that explored community views on strategic and planning issues and give some guidance on this question. There was strong endorsement that the character of the built and natural environment of the region should be retained; that the village aspect and rural nature of the region, with low density built form, was essential to protect. There was strong support for protecting and enhancing the biodiversity of the region and its outstanding vistas and scenic amenity.

It is noteworthy that these community aspirations are consonant with a number of the planning scheme principles mentioned above, such as maintaining a focus on local planning, protecting biodiversity, landscape character and scenic amenity, and adapting to climate change. The themes for the strategic framework of the new planning scheme are also reflected in strong community support for the Blackall Range being a connected and inclusive community that values its outstanding landscapes and associated natural ecosystems, and embraces an economic, environmental and culturally sustainable future.

Proposed Amendments to the Blackall Range Local Plan

The following proposed amendments are a mixture of more general proposals and quite specific ones that respond to community views.

The Blackall Range local plan should have a stronger Context and Setting statement about preserving and enhancing the outstanding rural landscapes and the small village ambience and heritage values of the Blackall Range.

The Purpose and Overall Outcomes section of the local plan should include a statement about the outstanding scenic amenity of the area and the man in tenancy of view lines along the Blackall Range Tourist Drive.

There should be an explicit statement about the impact of climate change on the hinterland environment, including altering building codes.

The recently proposed over 50's lifestyle resort village at Mapleton highlighted significant deficiencies in the current local plan and the overall planning scheme, which it is proposed can be addressed by the following amendments:

Residential Density

The proposed development had a residential density of 19 dwellings per hectare with a plan that provided for building sites of 200 – 240sq.m. with houses spaced around 1.0. – 1.5m. apart. The plan was completely inconsistent with the Blackall Range local area code performance outcome PO1, which requires developments to be “consistent with and retains the discrete rural village identity and architectural character of the Blackall Range and, in particular the villages of Montville and Mapleton in terms of scale, siting, form, composition and use of materials”.

However, the overall planning scheme code assessable outcome, PO4, for residential density under the Residential care facility and retirement facility code which the Council applied to the proposal allows up to “30 equivalent dwellings per hectare where in the Low density residential zone” and so the proposed dwelling density was code compliant.

It is proposed that PO1 of the Blackall Range local plan be amended to include the following sentence in Table 7.2.3.4.1 Performance outcomes.

No development must have a residential density that exceeds 10 equivalent dwellings per hectare of land not including hard surface areas (e.g. roads, paths, parking areas) for sites zoned Community Facilities and annotated as residential facility/retirement facility.

Another deficiency in the local area plan is any reference to the lack of reticulated water and sewerage services across the region. The main sources of water are rain water collected from roofs, bore water and storage dams and ponds. Sewerage is handled either by pump out or by legacy septic systems or more recently by secondary treatment systems.

It is proposed that Section 7.2.3.3, Purpose and Overall Outcomes be amended to include a statement referring to the lack of reticulated water and sewerage services and fire fighting infrastructure that needs to be considered in any proposed developments. Reference should also be made that there are water catchments in the local plan area which impose additional planning requirements on proposed developments.

Impact Assessment

It is also clear from the three community events mentioned above and other planning issues taken up by the Blackall Range community over the years, such as the Links and Sundale development proposals at Montville, that there are strong community expectations that when major developments are proposed, the community will be consulted.

The impression given until recently is that the Council is not interested in listening to residents and rate payers concerns about proposed developments, which leads to public protests and letter writing campaigns. The result is a lot of wasted time, effort, money and angst on the part of protesting public and developers who have invested in projects that eventually are not approved. It is time that the Council adopted a less confrontational

approach to consultation with the public who have to live with the consequences of poor planning decisions.

To address the community desire for more say in proposed developments, it is proposed that the planning scheme be amended so that :

Any development proposal that seeks a material change of use or change to the zoning of a site is made impact assessable.

It is further proposed that the Sunshine Coast Plan Tables of Development Assessment (Table 5.5.16) be amended to include impact assessment if an area is zoned for community facilities and is:

- (a) annotated as residential care facility/retirement facility in a Community facilities zone,**
- (b) in an urban or non-urban area without access to reticulated sewerage or reticulated water supply or urban firefighting infrastructure,**
- (c) in an urban or non-urban area and adjoining a State-controlled road.**

These amendments would address the sewerage, water supply, firefighting and road access and noise impact issues, and provide for appropriate community consultation.

Pre-lodgment Discussions

It is proposed that applicants for development applications who undertake pre-lodgment discussions with planning staff are advised of the significant infrastructure and catchment issues associated with development within the Blackall Range local area plan and the need to fully address the performance outcomes contained within the local area code.

Expansion of Blackall Range Local Plan Footprint

It is proposed that subject to further community consultation, consideration be given to extending the Blackall Range Local Plan footprint to include the Dulong, Kureelpa and Hunchy areas to the east and the Baxter Creek Valley and areas along Obi Obi and Delicia roads to the west. This will allow a consistent planning approach to the hinterland escarpments and plateaus behind Nambour, Woombye and Palmwoods and the western edges of the northern Blackall Range.

These areas to the east and west of the current local plan footprint share much in common:

- Access to facilities/services in Mapleton, Flaxton and Montville such as schools, kindergarten, shops, markets, medical and aged care services, cafes, restaurants, post offices, sporting and community facilities, clubs, associations and social and cultural interactions.
- Shared infrastructure such as roads, pathways, walks, telecommunications, electricity and firefighting resources.
- Shared biodiversity, environmental and landscape values, rural and village lifestyles, history, heritage, national parks, and major dam and river catchments.
- Shared interest in dealing with climate change and its impacts and sustainability issues relevant to the hinterland.

- Shared interest in dealing with risks to lives and property and economic and natural resources such as bushfires, landslip, flooding, drought, extreme wind and rainfall, feral animal predation and invasive weeds.

The high degree of common interests shared across these communities makes a strong case for formal recognition through a shared local plan.