



DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES REPORT

13 March 2007

DSDS6	COMMENTS ON DRAFT MID NORTH COAST REGIONAL PLANNING STRATEGY	
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SUMMARY:

The Draft Mid North Coast Regional Planning Strategy has the potential to provide the basis for planning for expected increased settlement in the Region up to 2031, however, the Draft Strategy is lacking in a number of aspects, most notably in respect to identifying the infrastructure needed to support settlement over the life of the plan.

The Draft Strategy also presents a number of opportunities for Kempsey Shire in respect to supplying industrial and rural residential land to service the needs of the Port Macquarie Hastings/ Kempsey Sub-Region, development of a highway service centre and providing for affordable residential development away from the immediate coastal zone.

The Draft Strategy provides the framework for councils to build on existing local planning strategies, however, there are a number of issues that need to be addressed if the objectives of the Draft Strategy are to be realised.

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DESCRIPTION:

Local Growth Strategies

Finalising the Regional Strategy relies on individual councils developing local growth strategies which the Draft Strategy indicates will be completed by mid 2007. This timeframe would appear to be overly ambitious as the guidelines referred to for preparing the local growth management strategies have not been released. Given the exhibition period ends 16th March 2006 and allowing a reasonable period for proper consideration of submissions, it is unlikely that the Strategy would be adopted before May 2007 leaving little time to prepare local growth management strategies.

Whilst Council is in the process of preparing a revised Residential Land Release Strategy, it is unclear whether Council's strategy will meet the requirements of these guidelines, which in any event would need to be aligned with the period covered by the Regional Strategy.

The local growth management strategy is also required to incorporate rural residential development. Council's current Rural Residential Land Release

Strategy unnecessarily restricts such development in localities where there is a demonstrated demand and is currently under review. Due to current staff shortages, this strategy has been delayed and will not be completed within the time provided. (See "Rural Residential Subdivision")

By letter of 20th February 2007, the Department has advised that a full local growth management strategy will not be required and the Department will "...liaise with councils to clarify the level of planning assessment which will adequately address relevant issues, consistent with the policies published in the draft regional strategy." From these comments it is apparent that the guidelines are unlikely to be developed within the stated timeframes with councils having to rely on the interpretation of individual officers within the Department. Due to the lack of certainty, Council has been requested to allocate \$25,000 in the 2007/08 Estimates as a contingency for completing the local growth management strategy.

Once adopted as part of the Regional Strategy, the process and flexibility for reviewing local growth management strategies is unclear.

Given the flexibility provided in the Draft Strategy to allow releases that are outside adopted local growth management strategies, it would seem unnecessary to rush the preparation of the local growth management strategies.

Dwelling Projections and Land Availability

It appears that dwelling projections and land availability will be determined on a sub-regional basis with Kempsey and Port Macquarie-Hastings vying to provide for 17,800 dwellings over the life of the Strategy. Given the disparity in capacity to fund infrastructure, Council may be placed at a disadvantage when local growth management strategies are being considered on a Sub-Regional basis.

In the event the local growth management strategies of Kempsey and Port Macquarie-Hastings demonstrate capacity for more than 17,800 dwellings, the Draft Strategy does not indicate the criteria the Department will use to determine how the de facto quota will be distributed.

In respect to the Kempsey/Port Macquarie-Hastings Sub Region, where proposals that fall outside local growth management strategies are deemed to meet the Sustainability Criteria, the Draft Strategy does not indicate whether the projected number of dwellings identified by each local growth management strategy will need to be adjusted downwards or whether variations agreed to in one LGA will affect projected dwellings for the other LGA in the subregion.

Dwelling Densities

The Draft Strategy states that 40% of the expected population increase will be accommodated within existing urban areas across the Region. Whilst it is expected that existing larger centres such as Port Macquarie and Coffs Harbour will provide a higher proportion of higher density development, proposed densities in the Shire's towns and villages are likely to be higher than the currently being achieved. The Department has advised that Council will need to set density targets with Port Macquarie-Hastings before the Strategy is finalised, however, the method is unclear.

In this regard, a meeting has been set for 22nd March 2007 with the Department of Planning and Port Macquarie-Hastings staff to discuss the matter.

Rural Residential Subdivision

The opportunity exists for the supply of rural residential land to be considered on a Sub-Regional basis to satisfy the demand for both Kempsey and Port Macquarie-Hastings. The Kundabung area, for example, has several geographical advantages over areas in Port Macquarie-Hastings which may be used to justify rural residential development in the locality.

Low Cost Housing

Strategies for low cost housing to be developed as part of the local growth management strategies should ensure that such development is distributed across the Sub-Region to meet the needs of the community for each LGA, as opposed to any one LGA bearing a disproportionate responsibility across the Sub-Region.

Character Statements

The need to include Character Statements for each locality in the local growth management strategy is supported and DCPs for Hat Head and Crescent Head contain provisions to satisfy this requirement. The proposed heritage DCP will also address this requirement in Kempsey, Gladstone, Bellbrook and Willawarrin, however, additional work is required for South West Rocks and Stuarts Point.

The draft 2007/08 Estimates and 10 Year Budgets include provision for \$20,000 each year to complete locality-based Development Control Plans which will incorporate provisions to identify and preserve the character of the Shire's towns and villages.

Economic Development and Employment Growth

Industrial Land

The Draft Strategy identifies the opportunity for Kempsey Shire to contribute towards the supply of industrial land to meet the needs of the Kempsey/Port Macquarie-Hastings Sub-Region. The Draft Strategy suggests that based on past development trends which primarily relates to light industry, 82ha will be needed to meet demand in the Sub-Region.

The Draft Strategy suggests that 25% of the 47,000 new jobs needed to be created in the Region will need to be met by creating new industries and services supplying markets outside the Region.

It is suggested that in order to attract larger manufacturing industries that have not traditionally set up in the Sub-Region, consideration should be given to including an allowance for large lot industrial subdivisions (>5000m²) of perhaps an additional 50ha.

The Department has advised that Council will need to set targets for the provision of industrial land with Port Macquarie-Hastings before the Strategy is finalised however, again the method is unclear.

Highway Service Centres

The Draft Strategy indicates that the current Ministerial direction relating to highway service centres will be amended to prohibit highway service centres on the Mid North Coast section of the Pacific Highway, except at specified locations. These include Kempsey, Maclean, Woolgoolga and Taree which has the potential for significant positive benefits and is likely to attract investment by providing certainty.

Regional Industry and Economic Plan

At the MIDGOC Strategic Alliance – Town Planners Group meeting of 23rd February 2007, Mr Bill Calcutt, Executive Officer Mid North Coast Regional Development Board addressed the Group providing an overview of the MNC Regional Economic Profile to be prepared on behalf of the Board and its relationship to the draft MNC Regional Strategy.

The Group recognise the need to assist in the development of mechanisms to more effectively incorporate economic development considerations into regional and local planning strategies.

The Group agreed to a request to nominate a representative on the REP Steering Committee to provide a regional strategic planning perspective to the project on behalf of the Group.

The Regional Industry and Economic Plan being prepared by the Regional Development Board will be an important means of coordinating the funding and investment attracting activities of the Board, and other agencies and its incorporation in the Strategy is supported.

Environment and Natural Resources

It is proposed to exclude areas of high conservation significance from areas identified in the local growth management strategies as being available for development. Whilst this is supported, provision needs to be made to allow flexibility to accommodate agreements made under the new "Biobanking" Regulations.

Natural Hazards

Flooding

The Draft Strategy provides for prohibition of new residential development on land that is within the 1:100 year flood plain and which is contrary to the NSW Floodplain Development Manual. Any move to provide greater certainty that reduces pressures on councils to allow ad hoc development within the floodplain is supported.

Sea Level Rise

Whilst the need to consider the impacts of sea level rise is supported, in order to ensure consistency in coastal areas, councils should not be expected to undertake investigations in isolation which should be the subject of a state and federal government policy approach.

Regional Transport

The Draft Strategy states that domestic flights operate from Kempsey Airport which should be corrected.

Provision of Infrastructure

In order for the Strategy to provide the level of certainty needed to attract new investment to the Region, it is important to identify the infrastructure needed to support the projected population increase over the life of the Strategy.

In addition to the list of infrastructure projects included in the Draft Strategy that are proposed for the immediate future, the Strategy needs to clearly state what the Government considers needs to be provided over the life of the plan, regardless of how such infrastructure is to be funded.

It is suggested that each council be required to provide a list of the infrastructure it sees as necessary to support the expected growth within each LGA. The Regional Strategy should prioritise these needs on a Sub-Regional basis, including an analysis of the economic feasibility of providing the infrastructure to coincide with the level of development expected at different stages over the life of the plan.

Reference should also be made in the Strategy to specific standards for service provision which could form the basis of identifying the future need for public services including the number of schools, hospitals, doctors, police etc.

It is proposed to impose levies at the time of rezoning for any increased demand for State Infrastructure, however, there is a lack of any apparent analysis of the impacts on development of proposed state infrastructure levies in the Region and the time and cost implications for rezoning.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

If properly formulated and implemented, the Draft Strategy has the potential to result in more sustainable development by providing a broader regional perspective when determining environmental impacts of development.

- ***Social***

The Draft Strategy has the potential for reducing adverse social impacts associated with rapid population impacts by recognising and providing mechanisms to ensure adequate public and social services are provided.

- ***Economic (Financial)***

The Draft Strategy presents opportunities for increased development in the Shire by requiring the needs of the Port Macquarie – Hastings/Kempsey subregion to be considered in future land releases.

- *Policy or Statutory*

The Draft Strategy will specify strategic planning requirements needed to be satisfied to allow for future land releases.

RECOMMENDATION:

That a submission be made on behalf of Council to the Department of Planning in respect to the Draft Mid North Coast Regional Strategy in accordance with the above report.

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R B Pitt
DIRECTOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES