

Draft Batemans Bay Master Plan 2025 Check List of Issues

The Eurobodalla Shire Council has released a draft Batemans Bay Masterplan and are seeking feedback from the community. Written submissions close 30 June 2025. SHASA encourages all members of the ECSN to make a submission.

SHASA has identified a number of significant concerns with the draft Master Plan. These include:

1. Process

The Process undertaken to develop the Master Plan.

- The ESC Housing Strategy should be finalised before draft master plans for townships are developed. The township and suburbs should be considered together as well as separately.
- The failure to consider the Council's Coastal Management Plan or Climate Action Plan, in addition to any plan or policy including the ESC:
 - Community Strategic Plan (CSP), Community Engagement Strategy, Batemans Bay Waterfront Master Plan and Activation Strategy,
- This draft has apparently been prepared in a vacuum of strategic planning. It does not acknowledge the master plan developed through extensive community consultation, prior to release of a draft, with the final released in 2019. SHASA acknowledges the time and energy commitment of Council and the community to the preparation of the 2015 plan and wishes to ensure that the decisions reached at that time are not ignored.

2. Failure to consider climate impacts on the future of Batemans Bay

- Climate – the current situation on the Northern Beaches and mid North coast has many lessons for the Eurobodalla in the future. Over 10,000 houses flood damaged, significant infrastructural damage, billions of dollars in damage. We can expect the next seventy years to bring far more extreme climate events to Australia's coast that will impact low lying property.
- The past weather is not a good indicator of future weather. Approving more, and more expensive, development on land that is now at increased risk of flooding does not seem to be good business. Therefore we should not be building more on the low lying areas, but planning a retreat of our essential infrastructure to higher ground.
- Insurance risks. Many properties in these flood prone areas have had their insurance premiums skyrocket to unaffordable levels and in some cases cannot even get insurance. They are becoming **stranded assets**.
- Over the next seventy years the major impacts of climate change in Batemans Bay will certainly include:
 - Significant sea level rise (just look over the Bay to Surfside and Long Beach)

- Storm surges (just look over the Bay to Surfside and Long Beach)
- Bushfires
- Increased flooding

3. Engineering requirements for construction on riverine and coastal sites

This will make building some of the proposed high rise apartment towers very expensive.

Very expensive foundations required to build on swamps/low lying riverine areas.

The draft master plan does not mention the geotech as a challenge, consideration, risk in development. The risk of not being able to secure adequate insurance, or the likely increase in the cost of insurance, has not been considered in the draft plan.

4. Quality of the build

We do not have builders that can build quality high rise apartments. Just look at the problems plaguing high rise apartments in Sydney.

5. Aesthetics and appropriateness of heights

High rise apartments are out of character with the South Coast. No other similar local government areas with similar geography and population are planning high rise apartments. Where high rise development has been permitted, at the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast in Queensland, there is considerable community dissatisfaction with the impact the towers have had on the aesthetics of the area, traffic pressure, and community spirit.

- The draft plan is seeking to increase the height limit of future development to 100 metres. Our members have been unable to find any example of a coastal town similar to Batemans Bay where buildings of such height are proposed. The most similar plans, for Wide Bay, Byron Bay and Coffs Harbour, are not proposing heights above 6 storeys, and in most cases less.
- There is no evidence that high rise apartments will contribute positively to the community, or address the crisis of affordable housing in this area.

The South and Far South coast has its own character and charm. It is unlikely to be improved through any ambition to reproduce the Gold Coast on the South Coast!!!

6. Will not fix the problem of affordable housing

These high rise apartments, if they are constructed, will likely be targeting high income people from Canberra wanting a holiday apartment with views of the Bay. Today nearly four of every ten houses in the Eurobodalla are owned by people who do not live in the Eurobodalla. Many are empty most of the time.

More housing does not equal more affordability. In Anglicare's 2025 Rental Affordability Snapshot, they reveal data "that calls into question the assumption that increasing supply alone will ease rental stress for low-income households. The data shows that even with more properties on the market, affordability rates (that's the number of properties available to rent

that cost less than one third of the renter's weekly income) remained static or actually declined for most groups."

The idea that private supply alone will improve affordability is not borne out by the evidence... Increasing supply is part of the solution, but only if the right supply is built. If the Council wants to increase affordable housing, it must propose ways of providing the right supply.

7. Insufficient green space and usable green space

Usable green space is vital to a livable and vibrant community. The Master Plan mentions the value of green space several times but apart from replacing the Perry Street carpark little or no new green space is created. Existing green spaces will be lost if development is allowed on existing RE1 and RE2 areas such as Mackay Park and the foreshore in front of Clyde Street.

8. Crime and safety. This 367 page document only mentions crime once. "Introduce crime protection through environmental design principles" on page 52. This is despite Batemans Bay having extremely high rates of crime. It is ranked 100 out of 100 on the Red Crime Maps.

8. Future population projections and where they come from.. A lot of people moved to the Bay, and other smaller rural and regional towns, during the pandemic. However, this demand appears to have peaked. In the last year the population of the Bay increased by 0.1%. The plan assumes a very significant increase in population but does not acknowledge the significant investment in public infrastructure that will be required.

9. Council needs to be transparent about the reasons why this major transformation is needed.

Council has not been able to sell the former bowling club site despite signs saying a sale is under consideration. We understand that a developer may have lobbied Council to lift the height restriction for the town centre in order to build high rise apartments on the site.

The draft master plan is not explicit about what land is Council owned. What is the Council's role in this. What would the benefit to the community be?

Recommendation

That this draft be not be accepted, but that the Council revisit the Master Planning process, build on the work of Council and community over the last few decades, and undertake wide consultation with all key stakeholders, not just developers and businesses in Batemans Bay. We believe that a truly consultative process will come up with many options for development that will lead to a Batemans Bay that is unique, beautiful and welcoming while being clearly well attuned to its Country and its people.