

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure

tonIRF23/2977

Mr Justin Fitzpatrick-Barr

General Manager

Singleton Council

PO Box 314

Singleton NSW 2330

Via email: council@singleton.nsw.gov.au

Attention: Ms Mary-Anne Crawford

Subject: Singleton Local Housing Strategy 2021-2041

Dear Mr Fitzpatrick-Barr,

I refer to Council correspondence requesting the Department's approval of the Singleton Local Housing Strategy 2041.

I am pleased to conditionally approve the Local Housing Strategy (LHS), with the exception of the rezoning criteria for consideration of additional greenfield land. Any consideration of additional greenfield land outside the strategic growth areas identified in the LHS should occur through regular reviews of the strategy or a strategy addendum process.

A revised strategy or addendums should be submitted to the Department for review and approval before planning proposals are lodged for rezoning for land not identified in the current strategy. It is considered this approach will best support the effective and efficient delivery of land supply and supporting infrastructure.

The Department consulted with relevant government agencies as part of its review of the LHS. Agencies were generally supportive of the directions and actions proposed, and suggestions were provided about how the criteria could be improved. Council should consider these matters when undertaking the next review of the strategy or in the preparation of any future addendums:

- a BDAR is not required to support a rezoning as it is DA tool, with the criteria rather requiring appropriate biodiversity assessments be undertaken to identify environmental values and strategically determine areas that warrant conservation;
- replace references to "high biodiversity value, or environmental significance" with "areas of High Environmental Values" consistent with the Hunter Regional Plan 2041;
- impacts on high value scenic landscapes such as near or in the vineyards and equine district should be avoided consistent with the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 and proposals in sensitive locations be supported by an appropriate level of visual assessment;

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- require an infrastructure serving plan and a staging and sequencing plan to ensure services can be delivered, to manage land use transitions, and to co-ordinate development with infrastructure;
- impacts on heritage are to be managed and proposals be supported by a Statement of Heritage Impact (SOHI) if they may affect any state heritage registered items, and a due diligence assessment for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. An Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report should be considered when Aboriginal cultural heritage is present;
- minimise impacts on rural and agricultural lands and ensure the risk of land use conflict is considered;
- ensure flood risk considerations adhere to the NSW Flood Risk Management policies and to replace reference to sites not being “located on the floodplain” with not being “below the flood planning level”. The floodplain includes all land impacted by any flood event up to the probable maximum flood which may limit opportunities for new housing; and
- demonstrate that any impacts on the transport network can be managed.

I note the LHS also proposes that Council will evaluate the merit of a proposal based on whether it provides significant public benefit. Council should consider measures to define what constitutes significant public benefit to ensure this assessment is transparent and equitable so that certainty is provided for future developers and the community.

The LHS includes a comprehensive list of actions, several of which directly support the objectives of the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 by increasing housing supply and diversity. Council is encouraged to prioritise these actions including reviewing the feasibility of existing zoned areas, reviewing LEP and DCP controls as well as developer contributions, and working with key stakeholders to identify barriers to housing supply and impediments to increasing diverse and affordable housing.

In implementing the strategy, I encourage Council to also take appropriate measures to ensure

- an infrastructure delivery and staging plan is prepared in consultation with agencies to inform the appropriate sequence and co-ordination of existing undeveloped zoned land and any new sites so that infrastructure and housing are delivered in a timely cost-effective way;
- that recommendations from the Singleton Floodplain Risk Management Plan and any future floodplain studies and plans are incorporated into the strategy and its actions as required. This includes the recommendations of BCS regarding working with SES to understand evacuation in the Singleton town centre (SGA16). Should the strategy need to be amended, it should be returned to the Department for further review and approval; and

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- any future proposals are supported by relevant technical studies and demonstrate consistency with the Hunter Regional Plan 2041, relevant local planning directions, and applicable State Environmental Planning Policies.

Regarding the Anambah to Branxton Regionally Significant Growth Area, the Department's Local Planning and Council Support team will continue to collaborate closely with Council and state agencies on the current work that is being undertaken. Once this work is completed, it is recommended that Council consider updating its strategy to ensure a consistent approach to the area.

Should you have any enquiries about this matter, I have arranged for Mr Luke Fanayan, to assist you. Luke can be contacted on 4927 3131.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig Diss".

15 November 2024

Craig Diss
Acting Director, Hunter and Northern Region
Local Planning & Council Support

Encl: Agency submissions