Table of contents

Introduction: Purpose and principles.................................................................4
Theme 1: Local character and sense of place......................................................8
Theme 2: Lively and safe villages......................................................................14
Theme 3: Access and equity............................................................................18
Theme 4: Region of villages, hamlets and small communities.......................21
Theme 5: Local environment..........................................................................26
Theme 6: Sustainable development...............................................................30
Summary........................................................................................................34
How can I have a say?..................................................................................35
Introduction: Purpose and principles

“Destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

William Jennings Bryan

Purpose of the Rural Villages Strategy

Our rural villages are an important part of the Tweed’s history and character. They also have an exciting role to play in the region’s future.

The purpose of the Rural Villages Strategy is to look at the villages of the Tweed and, together with the local communities, provide for the future role of each of them in the settlement network of the Tweed Valley. This will be underpinned by:

• Recognising and documenting the local, unique character of each village;
• Identifying options for improved regional connections between the rural villages, Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and coastal villages;
• Establishing priorities guiding future development;
• Considering needs, including housing needs of different community groups and different incomes; and
• Integrated approach to land use and efficient provision of services and infrastructure.

Purpose of the Discussion Paper

This Discussion Paper provides a basis on which everyone can provide feedback to Council on the content of the Rural Villages Strategy. It gives an insight into the type of actions the community has suggested or Council has identified as being suitable for consideration in the Strategy.

The Discussion Paper summarises extensive community consultations carried out in past months and puts forward ideas and themes for consideration within the Strategy.

While exploring the issues and opportunities, this Discussion Paper takes into account principles of sustainable planning, council and state government priorities, and the variety of views, and opinions expressed by individuals and communities. It has been prepared with the intent of leading to the development of a Rural Villages Strategy which Council has the capacity to deliver on.
Creating positive change begins with meaningful conversation. This Discussion Paper puts forward ideas, thoughts and dreams with the aim to spark further discussions, capture as many views, and opinions as possible.

Everyone who lives, works or visits the rural villages, as well as the wider community, is invited to make comments.

While reading this Discussion Paper, it is important to think about villages and places we live in, work or visit; to think about the needs of those places and communities now and in years to come; how they can contribute to the region and better serve local communities.

The readers can choose to comment on the entire paper or on particular themes. Questions are included in each section and at the back of the Paper to help draw out views and focus responses.

Developing the Strategy

The process of developing the Rural Villages Strategy has been divided into four stages, as shown in the figure above. The first two stages, Discovery and Dreaming, are all about intensive community consultation set up to gather as many comments, thoughts, dreams as possible. This Discussion Paper and community consultations scheduled for July 2014 aim to summarise those two stages. Everyone is encouraged to read this document and provide feedback, but most of all to attend any of the consultation sessions (please refer to the Council website or Tweed Link for dates of the sessions). This will be followed in the next stage: Design, with the preparation of the draft Rural Villages Strategy for public exhibition, subject to endorsement by the elected Council. The final stage, Delivery, will aim at ensuring that recommendations and actions defined in the Strategy are implementable.
Principles of the Strategy

So far in the Discovery and Dreaming stage, almost 200 people from local communities have attended seven workshops carried out in November 2013 and March 2014. There have been more than 2,200 visits to Council’s online community engagement platform [www.yoursaytweed.com.au/ruralvillages](http://www.yoursaytweed.com.au/ruralvillages) and numerous letters, emails and telephone calls have been received.

Feedback provided so far has been grouped into four categories, as listed below:

1. **Help existing places flourish.**
2. **Create great new places.**
3. **Protect the villages’ vibe.**
4. **Protect the natural and cultural heritage values.**

As these categories summarise what is important to the community, it is proposed that they be established as the guiding Principles of the Rural Villages Strategy. Consistency with these Principles will ensure that the Rural Villages Strategy achieves balance between the principles of sustainable planning, needs of local communities, council and state government priorities.

Council’s Vision Statement

The Tweed Community Strategic Plan 2013/2023 defines the following vision for the Tweed:

> “The Tweed will be recognised for its desirable lifestyle, strong community, unique character and environment and the opportunities its residents enjoy.”

The Community Strategic Plan is the peak visionary document for Tweed Shire for the coming decade. Its primary purpose is to document the community’s priorities and objectives for the Tweed during this period. The Rural Villages Strategy will have its own vision statement, describing the desired future of the Tweed’s hinterland. This vision though needs to be consistent with the Community Strategic Plan.

Other relevant documents

The scope of the Rural Villages Strategy will be consistent with the Strategy’s Purposes, outlined on page 4 of this Discussion Paper. The Strategy, once exhibited and endorsed by Council, will be complemented by several other planning documents:

- **Rural Land Strategy (draft)** - this Strategy is being prepared parallel with the Rural Villages Strategy. It is investigating how rural lands could best be managed into the future.
- **Sustainable Agriculture Strategy (draft)** - this Strategy is addressing a range of factors impacting on the viability and diversification of agriculture in the Tweed.
- **Tweed Economic Development Strategy 2014** - the aim of this Strategy is to identify practical actions for the enhancement of the Tweed Shire economy. It includes several recommendations for the rural villages and Tweed hinterland.
- **Tweed Local Environmental Plans 2000, 2012 & 2014** - the LEPs are the primary planning tools used to control and guide the future development of land. They set out what development is permitted on land, whether Council approval is needed and/or whether any special requirements apply.
- **Tweed Vegetation Management Strategy 2004** - this is Council’s adopted approach to environmental protection and management.
- **Far North Coast Regional Strategy 2006-2031** - prepared by the State Planning Department, this Strategy manages the Region’s high growth rate in a sustainable manner. It applies to Tweed, Lismore, Kyogle, Byron, Ballina and Clarence Valley Councils.


Crabbes Creek general store
Rural villages of the Tweed Valley

Rural villages form a network of connections between all settlements within the Tweed, including the coastal suburbs, and outside the Tweed (settlements in Byron Shire, and Gold Coast). Some of the rural villages: Stokers Siding, Tyalgum, Uki and Chillingham demonstrate strong connections with Murwillumbah, while others, particularly Bilambil and Tumbulgum are in close proximity to rapidly growing urban suburbs of Terranora, Banora Point, and Bilambil Heights. Their linkages with Murwillumbah are weaker when compared with the rural villages in the west of the Shire.

It is important to carefully analyse connections between all settlements of the region, as they determine access to services, employment opportunities, and lifestyle of local communities. The Rural Villages Strategy should attempt to strengthen these relations, which are crucial not only to the villages, but also to Murwillumbah with its role of a central hinterland town.

What is a rural village?

The North Coast Urban Design Guidelines provide for the following characteristics of a rural village:

- Compact and well-defined with an obvious centre and community focus
- Informal edges that interface the village and the surrounding natural or rural environment.
- Located in close proximity to a waterway or on a major highway or rail line.
- Surrounded by farmlands.
- Generally of walkable size.
- Surrounding landscape provides strong visual connections with the environmental setting.
- A range of functions, including residential dwellings, community facilities, public open space and commercial area.
- Formal street grid generated by a wide mixed-used main road.
Theme 1: Local character and sense of place

A sense of place emerges through knowledge of the history, geography and geology of an area, its flora and fauna, the legends of a place, and a growing sense of the land and its history after living there for a time. Through time, shared experiences and stories help to connect place and people and to transmit feelings of place from generation to generation.

Dr Thomas A. Woods

Village life as a process

While a vibrant and unique village can be a goal in itself, it should also be the first step in an holistic, strategic plan that considers the values of local communities, the community’s feeling towards places they live in, and lessons from the past which determine the shape and form of villages today.

These values and feelings were in the focus of community workshops and online consultation which commenced in November 2013. Communities of all key rural villages (Burringbar, Mooball, Tumbulgum, Uki, Tyalgum, Stokers Siding, Chillingham and Crabbes Creek) shared the same view: it is a strong sense of community and sense of place that defines the villages today and makes them unique and great to live in.

As one participant stated, “the beauty is that it is a village, not a town. We don’t want over-development. Any new house or building should be in the style of the original timber building”.

This quote can be used as a succinct summary of discussions with the local communities carried out last year. The key theme of these discussions was the sense of place, so important, and so unique for each of the Tweed’s rural villages.

In general terms, the concept of sense of place can be defined as the product of the inter-relationship between three components of place: people, natural systems, and built environment, as outlined in the diagram below, (based on an idea from Canadian researcher Steven Thorne):

The sense of place in the context of the rural villages is to a large extent determined by the history of development in the Tweed Valley, the spirit of communities and their roles in the early days of European settlement. A look back into history can provide us with a handful of useful lessons.
Lessons from the past

Planning for sustainable settlements is usually underpinned by a desire to create a new quality, which would respond to rapid changes in social, environmental, and economic processes happening both locally and globally. However, interesting and important lessons from the history of rural settlements in the Tweed suggest that the ideal future vision of those settlements resembles their roles in the early years of the previous century. In those early days, the villages were a focal point for local communities, primary communication, supply, meeting, recreation and employment centres for people scattered across the Tweed Valley.

Early days of these villages offer a good example of vibrant, well-organised places with a strong sense of community. Community halls, churches, schools and general stores built more than one hundred years ago continue to serve local people and preserve our heritage. The best way to protect these places is to ensure they remain in use and are valued by the community.

Today, the rural villages still retain the scale and character, which date back to the early twentieth century, however their central role in the local neighbourhood network has declined due to several factors, including: the decline of agriculture (e.g. dairy and banana industries), fast access to larger employment centres like Murwillumbah or Tweed Heads/Coolangatta, closure of the Casino-Murwillumbah rail line and development of new transit roads bypassing the villages.

The built form of each rural village in the Tweed Valley represents an accumulated community memory of the origins of development in this region. In this context, future development should respect and contribute to this ‘layering’ of community memory and heritage. This will enhance the image and sense of place of the villages and lead to a better quality, more respectful design of new development.

Share your thoughts

1. What lessons from the past discussed in this part of the Paper should be considered as priorities and guide the development of the Rural Villages Strategy?
2. What cultural or heritage values do you think are important to the villages?
3. Are there any other “lessons from the past” or untold stories for consideration in the Rural Villages Strategy?
Character of the built environment

The character of the built environment of every village comes from a combination of many components of the area including topography, natural features, roads, open spaces, architecture of buildings, fences and the relationship formed between them. Each component has a different level of contribution to the character of built environment.

The character of built environment is fragile and can be damaged or destroyed by just one inappropriate development, for example an out of scale dwelling house located at the main road, or advertising structures, bulk earthworks or landscape works.

Protection of the built environment can be achieved via suitable development controls aiming to conserve and enhance the defined character of each rural village and to retain the existing landscape character and topographical settings of their natural neighbourhood. Such controls should apply to different types of development, including minor forms such as alterations, additions, infill development, landscape works or erection of advertising signs or use of land in public domain.

Example: Chillingham

The two images of dwellings in Chillingham (left) show two buildings located approximately 100 metres away from each other. The old butcher’s shop displays the unique features of the architecture of the early twentieth century and contributes to the local character of the village. The dwelling house (bottom, left) may respond positively to some components of the local character (topography, local road network), but it is less characteristics of the aesthetic qualities of the traditional architecture of Chillingham.

Example: Tumbulgum

Riverside Drive, Tumbulgum’s main road, with adjoining dwellings, is a heritage conservation area under the Tweed Local Environmental Plan (LEP). According to the provisions of the LEP, all forms of development that could affect the heritage significance of the conservation area require development consent. When determining a development application, Council considers the extent to which the proposed development would affect the heritage conservation area.

These requirements do not advocate the reproduction of heritage forms along the Riverside Drive, instead, support new design of high quality, which is sympathetic in scale, form and finish and is respectful of its context. Similarly, provisions of the LEP aim to protect certain buildings or structures which are listed as heritage items.
Example: Uki

Similar to Tumbulgum, parts of the village of Uki are a heritage conservation area under the Tweed Local Environmental Plan. In addition, Uki village is subject to the site-specific section of the Tweed Development Control Plan 2008 (Section B20 Uki Village).

The Uki Village DCP provides that all new development should complement the existing setting within the streetscape. This is achieved by a set of specific development controls provided under the DCP, which include the following:

- New development shall incorporate architectural elements consistent with the prevailing character of each precinct.
- Where there are uniform levels or setbacks within the streetscape, infill development is to be consistent with the levels and setbacks of adjoining buildings.
- Building heights must conform to those of adjoining significant heritage items and other contributory buildings.

Share your thoughts

In its shire-wide Development Control Plan, Council requires consideration of the local character at the development stage. However, the Code’s State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP), allows for certain types of development without this consideration, unless the area/village is listed as heritage conservation area under the Local Environmental Plan.

That is why the village of Chillingham is exposed to risk that new development (or redevelopment) may not be suitable to the local context.

Complimentary controls in Uki (listing as a conservation area and site specific development control plan) ensure that new development will be sensitive to the existing built form. On the other hand, these controls may prove quite restrictive in the case of an “alternative” development; for example, co-housing or eco-housing which usually have a different subdivision pattern and more dense form.

1. What would be an appropriate form of planning for protection of the local character of built environment in the villages?
2. How important is the character of built form to you?
3. Do you think that all villages should have the same level of controls?

Extract from Uki Village DCP
Places for people

Local communities need spaces that are inviting, popular, and create a meaningful place: community halls, public halls, squares. Each village also needs a pedestrian focused mixed-use main street with varied life, where commercial, recreational and social activities are supported with room for necessary pedestrian traffic. Such spaces are important because they help connect people, they also contribute to the sense of place, and establish a visual and cultural value characteristic for each village.

Design and management of such places should carefully consider vitality and tranquillity; both of these values are highly regarded in rural villages. It is important to remember that such places cannot be created simply through policies or strategies. They require a number of careful initiatives undertaken and co-ordinated by local government, local communities and community groups. Some of the local communities are actively advocating for such places.

Draft Tyalgum District Plan

One example of planning for places for people in the public domain has been provided under the Draft Tyalgum District Plan, developed by the Tyalgum District Community Association. The draft Plan states that public spaces in Tyalgum should be reinforced via the following strategies:

- Develop the distinctive character of each space, helping the public to understand its purpose, and where appropriate, any historical associations.
- Identify detailed car parking, landscape and urban design objectives and outcomes in the public domain.
- Create spaces to enhance the facilities for lifestyle and passive recreation for tourists and residents.
- Identify management strategies (i.e. traffic and parking) for the public domain areas for any future markets that may occur.
- Reinforce existing and promote new pedestrian and cycle linkages between the public domain and open space areas within the villages and its environs.
- Public amenities blocks to be maintained and upgraded, within the village character.
- All public domain areas to be appropriately signposted.
- That the cemetery be defined and a formal entrance created.

All the above recommendations aim to improve public domain in the village but require a certain amount of Council/public resources to implement.

Stokers Siding and District Community Strategic Plan

Local community of the Stokers Siding district identified several objectives:

- Identify gathering spaces and/or maintain existing facilities for community use,
- Upgrade recreational areas in Stokers Siding village,
- Plan and establish a series of pathways for recreational walking and cycling,
- Recognise and document historical aspects that contribute to local identity.
Localism

The aims of the Rural Villages Strategy (see page 4) highlight the importance of strengthening regional connections between the villages. This should help unlock the potential of all rural villages by establishing unique partnerships between them, key business groups and Council. Central to this goal is the view that regions can and should stimulate their own growth through mobilisation of local assets and resources, so as to capitalise on their specific advantages and land features. This view is often referred to as localism.

“If communities are stronger and more connected at the local level, overall productivity rises at the national level (…) We want to enable regions to broaden their traditional economic base – through new partnerships, new skills and new technologies. In this way, communities will become more resilient, more viable and more sustainable in the longer term. The people who live and work in regional Australia know their patch best (…). They are best placed to identify the drivers for change and the potential for partnerships and new markets” (Source: The Commonwealth Government, Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government).

In recent years local communities of the Tweed Valley have been very proactive in their efforts to establish connections and partnerships between the villages. This has resulted in a number of community-prepared plans and strategies: Caldera Community Economic Transition Plan 2009 and district plans for Uki, Chillingham and Tyalgum. Many initiatives recommended within these plans have been successfully implemented, some of them are yet to be acted upon.

The challenge for the Rural Villages Strategy is to establish a long term partnership between Council and rural communities to integrate all previous strategic work, identify projects and initiatives to strengthen the viability and vitality of rural villages and to set up the framework for working towards those actions.

Share your thoughts

In recent years local communities have developed a number of community-based plans and strategies. The Rural Villages Strategy will attempt to build on these documents and reinforce those actions and recommendations that Council has the capacity to deliver on.

1. What key projects defined by the communities should be reinforced by the Rural Villages Strategy?
Theme 2: Lively and safe villages

Pillars of a Healthy Community:
shapes its future; cultivates leadership everywhere; creates a sense of community; connects people and resources; knows itself; practices ongoing dialogue; and embraces diversity.

Source: The Coalition for Healthier Cities and Communities

Lively villages - the “five Cs”

One of the common themes raised by local communities during workshops held in the last few months was the desire to retain the lively and compact form of the villages. “It is important my village stays small, isn’t over-developed, isn’t over-run and retains its village atmosphere” - this comment, made during a workshop session in Burringbar, is a good representation of this theme.

Howard Blackson, director of US-based planning firm Placemakers, explains lively villages or neighbourhoods with the “five Cs” principle: compact, complete, connected, complex and convivial.

There are many advantages of planning for lively rural villages with a compact form: more opportunities for social interactions, efficient and less expensive infrastructure, better access to primary services, more efficient public transport, walkable neighbourhoods, concentration of employment and better integrated regional economies.

All these characteristics not only contribute towards liveability within the rural villages, they also ease development pressure on adjoining farmland and bushland.

Rural villages of the Tweed Valley have managed to retain their compact built forms, which date back to the 19th and 20th century. However, as provided in the table below, density of population dropped by almost half between 1911 and 2011 (source: Australian Bureau of Statistics). The table below compares the densities in Uki; a similar trend can be observed in all rural villages of the region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uki</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average size of household</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average size of lot</td>
<td>~2000</td>
<td>~2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of residents per hectare</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Decline in average size of household in Uki and following reduction in residential density in the village.

According to the 2011 Census data, the average size of a household in all rural villages today varies from 2.4 (Chillingham) to 2.6 (Burringbar, Stokers Siding, Tyalgum).

As the average size of a household is expected to decline further, the issue of density requires a targeted approach. While analysing the appropriate, sustainable size of population of the rural villages, consideration should be given to this trend and its implication on the village’s structure and connections.
Share your thoughts:

1. As outlined in the table on previous page, the average size of a household in rural villages has over time declined by 50%, yet the lot size pattern has remained unchanged. Do you think Council should reduce the lot size standard in the rural villages to align it with reduced size of households? Do you think it would have a negative impact on village’s amenity?

2. Planning for urban areas recognises the following principle: “the more compact a neighbourhood is, the more variety of community facilities and services can be offered”. Do you think this principle applies to the rural villages? Is it valid in the rural context?

Connectivity

The compact, traditional neighborhood structure of the rural villages means that most daily activities and destinations can be reached with walking distance. Regardless of the destination, for both residents and visitors a walk in a village space is a social activity in the sense that it creates an opportunity to enjoy the landscape, exercise or simply begin a conversation with other pedestrians along the way.

An acceptable and comfortable walking distance is hard to define, however relevant research suggests that a walk of 500 metres appears to be a distance most people are willing to walk. This distance, however, depends on a number of factors including not only the age of a walker, but most importantly the quality of the route and design of the space. Most places in the villages should be available within 10 minutes from home or from the village centre.

A lesson from the past: if we look at old photographs of Tweed’s settlements 100 years ago, pedestrians are always shown moving freely and unimpeded in every direction. Towns and villages in those times were the domain of pedestrians. Buildings and awnings defined the street edge with shaded and active uses. Upper levels provided opportunity for views beyond surveillance over the street.

All rural villages benefit from good walking conditions for both local residents and visitors. The following aspects should be considered while planning for walkable neighbourhoods:

- quality of the path,
- appropriate location of crossings,
- clarity of direction,
- lighting,
- convenience of journey (direct connectivity),
- visual amenity,
- shaded footpaths,
- dimensions of the footpaths,
- clear of obstructions,
- appropriate signage,
- place to sit, gather, relax, and
- availability of public toilets.
Safety

Safety is a crucial component of planning for friendly, inviting places for people and should generally be considered in two dimensions. As a general concept, safety is focused to maintain and enhance thriving communities where people feel protected and secured. In this context, safety is related to the conviviality (being one of the “five Cs” principles outlined on page 14), as the social connections ultimately build a sense of safety and sense of place.

Within this general, theoretical framework, safety, particularly in the town planning context, can be promoted through careful consideration of many detailed solutions in rural villages.

There are many design principles which contribute to general safety of a neighbourhood:

• Quality street lighting and lighting to public places. Various types of lighting should be considered for different villages to respect their individual character.
• Consideration of natural surveillance opportunities and sightlines through appropriate landscaping.
• Pathways and cycleways: villages should consider forms of physical separation of bicycles, pedestrians and vehicles particularly in areas (or events) where there is a high volume of people walking and riding their bikes.
• Traffic should be slowed in areas of high pedestrian activity.
• The position of planting and choice of species in public space should be such that it does not create hiding places.
• Pedestrian entrances to buildings are prominent and located with direct access from streets and public spaces.
• Public spaces which attract people to gather are readily visible from nearby buildings or main roads,
• Crime prevention initiatives.
• Appropriate signage that helps people move around.

Compact form of the rural villages enables people to reach destinations within their village by walking, as shown in the above examples.

While planning for walkable neighbourhoods, each village should be analysed separately, by its local context. Edges may be delineated by steep slopes, waterways, natural corridors, main roads or other physical barriers.

Share your thoughts

1. What do you think Council can do to encourage walking in the rural villages?
2. Do you have any preferred pathways in your village? Do they need any improvements?
Successful village planning includes consultation with local community. This can help foster sense of shared ownership and responsibility and encourage people to take pride in new places and their condition.

What is more, well designed public spaces, responsive to community expectations should be well used and offer fewer opportunities for crime. It is important that the local community is well aware of who is responsible for the maintenance and management of a place.

**Share your thoughts**

1. What are the key factors affecting safety in your village?
2. Which of the design principles mentioned in this Theme are relevant to your village?
3. What else can be considered in the Rural Villages Strategy to improve safety?
Theme 3: Access and equity

People living in the rural villages are a very diverse group in terms of age, cultural background or disabilities. Further, there are some people who may be classed as disadvantaged or at high risk, due to different circumstances that have led to financial difficulties, isolation from other people and essential services.

The Rural Villages Strategy should recognise the need for all members of local communities to have appropriate and equitable opportunities to participate in community life, as well as access to education, necessary health care and economic opportunities.

Council’s recent initiatives towards access and equity

In recent years, Tweed Shire Council has embarked on the preparation of strategies and policies addressing the access and equity theme:

- Tweed Youth Strategy and Action Plan
- Draft Positive Ageing Strategy
- Access and Inclusion Policy 2014

These documents have numerous objectives and goals, which can be summarised in the following statement: Tweed Shire Council is committed to work closely with the local communities to improve services to all population groups and provide initiatives to enhance access, equity and community well-being. The above documents have a shire-wide application. As such, they provide (or will provide) decision making framework for the rural villages of the Tweed Valley.

Within this context, and in order to avoid unnecessary duplication of provisions, the role of the Rural Villages Strategy should be limited to the following actions:

- The Rural Villages Strategy should be consistent with the shire-wide strategies and policies on access and equity; and
- While consulting the local communities (for example, during the public exhibition stage), Council can collect any information, comments and thoughts from the communities in relation to local, specific access and equity matters, and develop measures to resolve them, consistently with the wider planning framework.

For example, one of the commonly expressed themes during the workshops held in November 2013 was that Council should advocate for suitable seniors housing development in rural villages to facilitate ageing in place. In this context, the role of the Rural Villages Strategy will be to properly analyse demand for senior housing development in specific villages and provide recommendations determining potential future development of such facilities.
Access to employment and services

Commutes to distant employment centres usually consume a certain percentage of family time, budget, reduce take-home pay and time for interaction in local villages. What is more, longer and regular car travel to employment destinations outside the local community increases the demand for infrastructure, particularly road upgrade and maintenance, which affects the budgets of local governments. In addition, long commutes have certain environmental and social costs, as they contribute to air and water pollution and to the reduction of leisure and family time.

One of the challenges for rural communities today is to find ways to provide various community groups with smart and cost-efficient access to jobs, shops, services, education, and health care. An overview of a number of case studies indicates that an approach that combines transport planning with appropriate land use planning for compact neighbourhoods can result in better access and thus enhance quality of life for residents.

According to the Tweed Shire Council Access and Inclusion Policy, Council is committed to:

- The principle of universal access with a broader commitment to access and inclusion for all people who live, work in and visit Tweed Shire;
- The development of policy and planning processes that incorporate the principles of universal design;
- Promoting access and inclusion in the community through leadership by example and through the provision of information and advice;
- Planning, building and maintaining an accessible, inclusive community within the scope of its role and functions;
- Providing accessible and inclusive services;
- Providing information and communications in accessible formats;
- Maintaining workplaces that are accessible and inclusive for staff, trainees, volunteers and students; and
- Achieving these commitments through the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Action Plan.

Share your thoughts

1. What services or programs should be made available to the local communities in the rural villages?

2. How many members of the rural community cannot attend services due to lack of transport or are unable to reach services in the places in which they are provided? Is cost a barrier to these services?

3. What other social, cultural or economic initiatives can be undertaken by Council and local communities to enhance access, equity and community well-being?
During the drafting of the Rural Villages Strategy consideration should be given to understanding the local road network, to verify if it supports multiple modes of transportation, including walking, cycling and public transport and how to the enhance village centres by making them more accessible and pedestrian friendly, for example to consider slowing automobile traffic.

Distances between the rural villages and the major hinterland town of Murwillumbah certainly make walking and bicycling more challenging. A trail system that links the settlements could serve as a recreational or tourism attraction as well as a commuter route safe from higher-speed roads. Trail systems have been shown to provide economic and social benefits to adjoining areas.

A trail network based on the disused railway could connect many of the former railroad villages (Mooball, Stokers Siding, Burringbar) with towns like Murwillumbah, Byron Bay and Mullumbimby and provide a major recreational amenity for cyclists and joggers.

### Tweed Shire population facts:
- **Children under 14 years:** 17.4% (NSW: 19.2%)
- **Young people 14 – 24 years:** 10.4% (NSW: 12.9%)
- **People over 55 years:** 36.4% (NSW: 26.4%)
- **One parent family:** 18.6% (NSW: 16.3%)
- **Need for assistance with core activities:** 6.9%

Source: ABS Census 2011

### Share your thoughts
1. Would you consider cycling as an alternative form of transport on daily basis? What, in your opinion, is the maximum distance of convenient travel by bicycle?
2. What other forms of alternative transport would you like to see in the Tweed?
The role of regional planning in the Rural Villages Strategy

Regional planning seeks to balance the natural and built environment values with the spatial distribution, number and size of settlements in a specific region. It also deals with the efficient placement of infrastructure, land use activities and desired growth of settlement across a large area of land.

Principles of regional planning have informed the early stage analysis for the Rural Villages Strategy: Each non-coastal settlement in the Tweed Valley has been assessed against criteria provided under the North Coast Urban Design Guidelines. As a result each settlement has been classified as hamlet, village or urban settlement.

Each village (Tumbulgum, Stokers Siding, Burringbar, Mooball, Uki, Tyalgum, Crabbes Creek and Chillingham) performs a specific role in its catchment: provides basic services, access to primary education, and opportunities for the local community to socialise. Other settlements, which performed such a role in the past: Bilambil or Cudgen, can be classified today as urban settlements, as their role in region diminished due to proximity to rapidly growing coastal suburbs and towns.

Regional planning assists in analysing the role of each village in its catchment, connections between villages, and overall condition of the region with its population and economy base. Regional planning can also assist in determining whether there is a need for additional village/s to emerge.
There is a strong connection between the size of population of the villages and the range of services, facilities and employment base available. The size and range of services is also linked with the location within the regional network: villages located at the main road corridors (Uki, Burringbar, Tumbulgum) have a stronger employment base than Stokers Siding, Crabbes Creek or Chillingham, which are located in a distance from the major roads. There is also a strong connection between availability of local services and population of certain catchment: Uki and Tumbulgum villages offer greater variety of services than, for example, Chillingham or Stokers Siding.

Theme 6 of this Paper identifies a need to plan for more sustainable population of the rural villages, through provision of housing diversity. This process should be supported by additional actions aiming to combine the objective of improving availability of infrastructure and services with the objective of creating employment and income concentrated in the villages. Such approach would increase opportunities available to residents of the region.

These opportunities would in consequence mitigate differences in quality of life and improve the overall sustainability of the Tweed Valley Region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Village Population</th>
<th>Catchment population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tumbulgum</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>1429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uki</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>2201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tyalgum</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>1197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chillingham</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>1191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilambil</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stokers Siding</td>
<td>655 (suburb)</td>
<td>294 (suburb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crabbes Creek</td>
<td>294 (suburb)</td>
<td>294 (suburb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burringbar</td>
<td>858 (suburb)</td>
<td>1812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mooball</td>
<td>377</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ABS 2011, no accurate data was available for Bilambil and Stokers Siding (the data provided in the Census include population living in wider statistical area).
Do we need more villages?

This Discussion Paper outlines the key features of a rural village in Tweed Valley (see page 7).

These features refer to, in general terms, built form, landscape features and availability of essential services and goods meeting the needs of the local population and people living in the neighbourhood (in the villages’ catchment). The list of landscape features suggests that a preferred landscape context of a village consists of:

- a waterway, major road or rail line,
- proximity to farmlands and rural dwellings requiring provision of services,
- unconstrained land supporting settlement of a walkable size,
- surrounding landscape providing visual connections with the environmental setting.

This list of key features has been used to assess all rural settlements in order to recognise a hierarchy of settlements in Tweed Valley.

The list may have another application: it can assist in discussion whether there are suitable locations for new villages to be developed or a justified need to plan for expansion of smaller settlements.

The map below shows key rural villages in the context of their neighbourhoods, or catchments to which they provide services. The catchments are approximate only, their boundaries are based on landscape features, road network, settlement pattern and distances between the villages and Murwillumbah. For example, residents of Dum Dum are likely to travel to Uki to access basic services (general store, post office, school) and to Murwillumbah for high order services (shopping centre, cinema, hospital). Residents of Limpinwood can access local services in Chillingham or Tyalgum.

The majority of rural settlements in the Tweed Valley are within a catchment of a rural village. However, there are areas, as shown on the map below, north and east of Murwillumbah, with no local services base. These parts of the Valley offer an opportunity to investigate a need for additional villages.
Case study: Dungay

Dungay is a small settlement located at Tomewin Road between Murwillumbah and Gold Coast’s Currumbin Valley. The settlement has not been classified as a village due to its small size and lack of village’s characteristics provided under the North Coast Urban Design Guidelines. At the same time, Dungay has certain landscape and built form features favouring its potential expansion:

- location at major road connecting Murwillumbah and Gold Coast;
- location on relatively unconstrained land supporting settlement of a walkable size;
- surrounded by relatively large area of rural and rural-residential dwellings; and
- existing features: public school, aged care facility and a cafe.

The settlement is heavily constrained by the lack of infrastructure provisions, particularly water and sewer reticulation. Notwithstanding that, the site is an example of an area for further investigation and a visioning exercise carried out together with the local community.

Case study: Nunderi

Nunderi is an example of a relatively large urban settlement located in rural setting. This settlement has developed relatively recently. Nunderi is a rural residential settlement on the urban fringe rather than a traditional village providing services to the rural communities. Nunderi does not have features typical of a rural village. There is no mixed-use main road, fairly limited range of community and commercial services and its subdivision pattern with cul-de-sac roads and relatively similar lot sizes resemble that of a typical urban development. It does not have a distinctive centre with places for the local community to meet.

Nunderi is located on Clothiers Creek Road, which connects Murwillumbah with coastal suburbs of Cabarita Beach and Bogangar and has good access to Tweed Valley Way. Location in the network of local roads makes Nunderi a central place for adjoining suburbs, such as Farrants Hill, Clothiers Creek or Eviron. This locality may be a potential site for further investigation and community consultations, not solely in order to plan for additional residential development, but to analyse its potential to accommodate community facilities and availability of commercial goods and services meeting the needs of the local community.

Potential further development of the settlement is constrained by lack of appropriate sewage reticulation network.
Case study: Bilambil and Cudgen

These two settlements are located relatively far from each other, however both of them have a similar history of settlement and face similar challenges and difficulties today.

Both Bilambil and Cudgen were developed as early rural settlements providing services to the local, rural communities. Cudgen village, at the beginning of the twentieth century had two churches, a police station, two hotels, a community hall, and a general store with post office. Bilambil was one of the first areas in the Tweed which experienced attempts to grow bananas on the elevated areas of volcanic soils nearby. It also hosted soldier settlements with soldiers’ children attending the primary school in Bilambil.

The role of these two villages have significantly declined due to several factors, with the most significant of them being a proximity to rapidly expanding urban areas of adjoining coastal towns.

Bilambil village today is located less than 1.5 km from the edge of residential pockets of Terranora with its population of almost 3,000 residents, shops, schools and high order services. In addition, land north of the village, in Cobaki and Bilambil Heights, has been identified for further residential development under State Government’s major projects system.

Cudgen is in a similar situation: this settlement is located within walking distance to Kingscliff, suburb which is currently experiencing rapid growth (population of more than 6,000 residents). In addition, it adjoins Kings Forest site which is identified for major residential development in the near future.

Due to the specific location, these two settlements (Bilambil and Cudgen) should not be considered as rural villages but rather as rural settlements on the urban fringe. They are facing different challenges than the rural villages and as such many of the solutions and actions raised in this Discussion Paper may not be applicable.

Bilambil and Cudgen are part of Tweed’s settlement history, and should be subject to a separate, locality-specific planning exercise in order to protect their heritage values and better connect them with adjoining urban areas.

Share your thoughts

1. What would you most want your village to be like in the future?
2. What additional services should be available in your village for the local communities and visitors?
3. Do you think an increase in availability of services in the villages would have adverse impact on the visual amenity and character of the rural villages?
4. Do you think there is a potential for new rural settlements to emerge in the Tweed Valley? Are they necessary?
Theme 5: Local environment

“As the goal of sustainable development is to permanently improve the living conditions of human beings, social and economic development must be carried out in a way that is environmentally and ecologically sound. Active participation in sustainable development ensures that those who are affected by the changes are the ones determining the changes. The result is the enjoyment and sharing of the benefits and products generated by the change”.

Core objectives

One of the three core objectives of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, adopted by all levels of Australian government in 1992, is to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems. Since 1992, the “best practice” approach towards planning for biodiversity and ecological integrity in both urban and rural areas appears to hinge upon the following three factors. First, land use planning must be strategic and be aware of the context of wider local and regional conservation objectives; secondly, planning for biodiversity and ecological integrity must be supported by robust regulation; and thirdly, local government must collaborate with private landholders, local communities and relevant governing agencies.

Tweed Shire Council is committed to protecting biodiversity and maintaining ecological integrity of the Tweed Valley through the combination of these three factors. This is achieved by the regulatory framework (environmental zones in the LEPs, clearing controls, Development Control Plan, waste disposal plans) and initiatives, programs, grants and strategies undertaken or coordinated by Council; for example, bushland regeneration and koala protection. There are also numerous community-led initiatives supported, or co-funded by Council.

One of the objectives of the Rural Villages Strategy, as stated on page 4 of this Discussion Paper, is to establish priorities guiding future development. This objective, in context of environmental protection and management, can be achieved through appropriate integration of environmental issues into plans and strategies relevant to the rural villages and their impact on the environment.

Environmental issues in the wider, Shire-wide context, are addressed in a range of Council documents, particularly the draft Rural Land Strategy (which is in preparation parallel to this Strategy), Tweed Vegetation Management Strategy 2004 and the Tweed Local Environmental Plan 2014.
Integrating the environment in urban planning

The concentration of people and economic activities in rural villages and towns of the region creates localised pressures on the environment, such as loss of natural habitat or increased stormwater runoff. At the same time, development and economic activities have implications for environmental conditions of the entire region and beyond. These implications can be mitigated through the integration of the environmental considerations into the management of further development within the villages. This process can be summarised as follows:

- Local environmental issues: mitigation of the localised issues can lead to reduction of risks and improvements of amenities within the village area. This can include improvements to certain infrastructure to reduce environmental hazards;

- Regional environmental issues: reducing environmental impact in the vicinity of the village. In particular, this involves reducing air and water pollution and strengthening ecosystem services;

- Global environmental issues: ensuring that activities within the villages (and the region) do not have detrimental impacts elsewhere in the world.


The protection and management of the natural environment in the local and regional context is the statutory role of Council. As outlined on the previous page, this is carried out with the use of the regulatory framework (LEPs, clearing controls, development assessment process, waterway controls or waste disposal plans) and various incentives aimed to improve land management practices.

The global environmental issues can be responded to through both Council and community-led initiatives in sustainability.

Sustainability: efficient villages

The concept of sustainability as it applies to human settlements can be viewed as an “umbrella concept”, assisting in dealing in a comprehensive manner with the related goals of planning for efficient settlements, building lively and healthy neighbourhoods, promoting long-term economic gain and protecting the environment.

Sustainability is embedded into Tweed Shire Council’s role, as mandated by the Local Government Act which requires all councils to properly manage the environment, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development:

The overarching aim for planning the Tweed’s future is sustainability.

To address community concerns, a balance has to be struck between economic and urban development on the one hand, and retaining the shire’s natural beauty and diversity on the other, so people can enjoy a wide range of lifestyles and a high quality of individual and community life; for current and future generations.

Source: Tweed Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2013/2023

It is not a role of the Rural Villages Strategy to redefine the framework of sustainable planning in Tweed Valley, however the Strategy should consider, and provide recommendations towards efficiency and viability of the rural villages.

Planning for efficiency of rural settlements (being efficient use of materials, energy, water and land) is one component of sustainable planning. In this context, efforts towards improving efficiency of the rural villages should, in general terms, focus on environmental impacts of development, eco-friendly technologies, promoting local production, alternative forms of transport and efficient use of energy.
Rural villages and other small settlements can make significant contributions to sustainability by more efficient use of resources and energy. In addition, sustainability policies, tailored to suit needs of small communities, can ensure that environmental protection and economic development do not have to be in conflict. Efforts towards sustainability can help reduce costs and improve the efficiency of local businesses, reduce overall housing costs and improve quality of life.

Sustainable, more efficient living patterns in the rural villages does not need to be based on “one size fits all” provisions; instead, they should be about a diversity of choices within a community. For example, more efficient use of land does not mean smaller lots in the villages, but consideration to alternative forms of housing (for example co-housing, pocket neighbourhoods) complementing existing built form.

How to be more efficient?

Case Study: Top 20 sustainability policies for small settlements.

Small, rural settlements require a different approach towards sustainability than major, densely populated cities. Some initiatives or policies successfully implemented in cities will not work in the rural context, due to limited resources, small population and lack of funding. On the other hand, there are initiatives or activities which are likely to be successful in small communities.

In 2013, the ICMA (International City/County Management Association) survey asked local government bodies of small and rural communities in USA to identify which sustainability activities had been successfully implemented. A total of 1844 government bodies responded to the survey which resulted in a following “Top 20 List”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability policy</th>
<th>Municipalities adopting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community-wide recycling for residents</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government office recycling</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking and walking trails</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy audits of government buildings</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requiring sidewalks in new developments</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting a local farmers market</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling household hazardous waste</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-efficiency lighting</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycling of household electronic waste</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-wide recycling for businesses</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tree preservation and planting program</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heating and cooling upgrades in government facilities</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use water pricing to encourage conservation</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchased fuel-efficient vehicles</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-wide collection of compost material</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning codes to encourage more mixed-use projects</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actions to protect quality of aquifers</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Installed high-efficiency traffic lights</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set limits of impervious surfaces on private property</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-locate recycling with trash containers in public spaces</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of community-led initiatives

Although top-down approaches can be effective in influencing real biodiversity outcomes through implementation of policies or strategies, bottom-up, community-led initiatives can help change the underlying ideas and values held by landholders, which largely determine the ecological character of urban landscapes via land management. Local governments can encourage good community stewardship through assisting with ecologically-sensitive landscaping works, providing native seedlings and wildlife boxes, or helping to set up bushcare and community environment groups.

An example of a community-led initiative is the “Caldera Community Economic Transition Plan 2009”, which identifies protection and remediation of the natural environment as one of the Key Focus Areas: “this includes bush and habitat regeneration, caring for our rivers and water quality, protecting ecosystems through management and protection of biodiversity, and an appreciation of the natural scenic beauty of the area. Examples of possible initiatives include removal of exotic weeds, remediation of damaged river banks, linking stands of remnant vegetation through tree planting initiatives, development of walking and cycling tracks to promote low-impact access to natural areas and developing ways to help protect wildlife and treat sick or injured animals” (Caldera Community Economic Transition Plan 2009).

Share your thoughts

The table on previous page outlines many potential opportunities for rural communities and local governments to improve sustainability management.

1. What other opportunities are there for Council and the local communities to achieve positive outcomes on sustainability issues?
2. How can Council work together with the community to achieve them?
3. What organisational approaches and workforce capabilities are needed to successfully implement these initiatives?
Theme 6: Sustainable development

“Sustainable communities maintain and improve their social, economic and environmental characteristics so that residents can continue to lead healthy, productive and enjoyable lives. Sustainable development in these communities is based on the understanding that a healthy environment and a healthy economy are both necessary for a healthy society.”

NSW Premier’s Department Sustainable Rural Communities Project

Planning for the future of rural settlements in the Tweed Shire needs to acknowledge development occurring in the coastal suburbs. Coastal villages of Pottsville, Hastings Point, Casuarina, Cabarita and Kingscliff experience significant growth, new major development areas of Kings Forest and Cobaki will soon be released for urban development. Revitalisation of Tweed Heads is likely to lead to increased density and height of buildings in that town. In the same time, the rural villages of the Tweed are facing certain economic, demographic and social changes and challenges, similar to other parts of rural and regional Australia. They include decline of agriculture, loss of young people, loss of jobs and services in the villages. Declining population in rural villages means they struggle to provide many of the key services such as access to health care, education, aged care, better services and infrastructure and housing options.

At the same time, local communities of the rural villages generally value the small size and certain remoteness of places they live in and do not wish to see the villages lose their scale and character. Feedback from residents of Chillingham and Crabbies Creek indicates they do not want their villages to change at all.

The challenge for the Rural Village Strategy is to properly recognise and respond to these trends: demographic and economic conditions of the rural villages, rapid expansion and development of coastal suburbs and desire of local, village communities for their settlements to remain small. A potential outcome of the Strategy could lead to the process of revitalisation of the rural villages by planning for sustainable population (attracting back young people), planning for an adequate range of services available in the villages whilst preserving what is special about the settlements.

New development can bring certain benefits to the villages, however it is critical that the communities are consulted at the early strategic planning stage.

The Rural Villages Strategy will be successfully delivered only if the vision for future is supported by both the local community and local government, and is consistent with the targets and objectives of the state’s strategic planning framework.
Variety of housing options

The majority of rural villages in the Tweed lack housing diversity. In most villages, existing dwellings have a similar size, height and lot pattern. In addition, many of these dwellings are aging which results in increasing maintenance costs and low levels of energy efficiency. This homogenous form can result in certain social, economic and environmental issues.

Villages and settlements offering a wider range of housing types in varying price ranges (townhouses, attached and detached dwellings, secondary dwellings, units along the main road, senior housing or co-housing) are more likely to attract and retain residents at all life phases: families with children, single-person households, retirees, or people with disabilities. This diversity of people, housing and places is an attribute of healthy, vibrant and economically sustainable communities.

Limited housing diversity has a flow on effect of inability to attract labour to the area or movement of young people out of the community due to affordability concerns. The lack of employment opportunities cannot be attributed solely to the lack of appropriate, varied housing offered in the area, however these two factors should, in the rural context, be analysed in conjunction.

Any future development of dwellings in the rural villages should facilitate an increase of the employment and population in the area to support expansion of social and community infrastructure. This should also be supported by appropriate planning for water and wastewater and transport infrastructure in accordance with the principles of area- based, integrated development process.

The Retirement Village (caravan park) in Bilambil is an example of accommodation tailored for community members aged 55+. This type of accommodation allows older residents to “downsize”, sell the family home and at the same time remain in their village community, among family and friends.

The need for housing for older members of the communities was one of the common themes raised during community consultation carried out in November 2013.

The current demographic trends of the villages indicate that the population of residents aged over 65 is expected to grow at an increasing pace over the next years. According to NSW Government research paper “Population Issues for Sydney and NSW: policy frameworks and responses”, the number of people aged over 65 in New South Wales is expected to outnumber children aged below 15 years by 2018.

A similar, if not greater, demographic projection in rural locations in the Tweed Valley means that demand for aged care (in different forms, including senior housing accommodation) is expected to significantly increase.

Aged care facilities can bring certain benefits to the villages: aged community members will be able to stay in their village rather than move away. Senior housing should also contribute to the availability of medical services in the village and increased demand for local services and supplies. Payments and income from investments earned by retirees would likely be spent locally and could be a significant component of local purchasing.
Local services and local employment base

Availability of different housing types, sizes and costs create opportunities for people of various ages to remain or move into the area. This is beneficial for the economical viability of local services. For example, declining number of children in local schools or child care centres (particularly in Stokers Siding and Crabbes Creek) or declining income of the local business owners can be partially attributed to the lack of housing options. Other factors include improved transport and communication means as cars and internet have allowed local residents to access schools and services well beyond their village.

New development in the villages may help maintain a range of services and quality of life of local residents and diversify the economic employment base of the community.

A diverse population is more sustainable and should also encourage new businesses or employment opportunities to be created in the villages and in the region: as the numbers of people in (or around) a village increase, so does the opportunity for local employment and the viability of community facilities, sports clubs or recreation areas.

One of the major general trends in employment in the last 10 to 15 years is the increasing importance of small and medium enterprises. Urban areas are seeing a significant change in their labour market structure with reduction of employment in the industrial and manufacturing sectors while gains are mainly in the services sector. This trend, and new communication technologies offer a variety of opportunities to the rural villages. In addition, Tweed Valley’s villages have value adding advantage of unique endogenous resources (as jobs based on local resources are more protected from potential non-local competitors and are more sustainable). These resources should be properly identified in every village, as they may vary from one area to another with a view towards the diversification of employment activities in all sectors of the local economy. Council should ensure that the the rural villages are attractive and desirable place for business (there is a perception that some of the Government regulations create barriers to business investment in the Shire).

Murrwillumbah, in the context of small business in the rural villages, should be viewed as a local hub, integrating business located across the Valley. For example, Murrwillumbah could host coworking facilities with office space and telecommunication available for small businesses from those villages which do not have satisfactory access to internet.

Tourism opportunities

Tourism is one of the main economic activities in the Tweed Valley and is a key solution to the decline of traditional economy based on agriculture. As stated in Caldera Community Economic Transition Plan 2009, “The Caldera offers excellent regional branding opportunities as have been expressed in the Green Cauldron and Rainforest Way marketing initiatives which highlight the World Heritage scenic and natural beauty of the area and the extensive areas of national parks and nature reserves. However this has not as yet been translated into further development of the area’s tourism infrastructure”.

There are many opportunities, including walking/biking trail networks, connecting villages west and south of Murrwillumbah, branding villages, for example Tumbulgum, Uki or Tyalgum as “tourist shopping villages”, development of eco-tourism, farm stay accommodation or water-based sports (water recreation) in Tumbulgum and potentially Uki or niche markets and music festivals.
Rural development vs village development

As the objectives of the Rural Villages Strategy (see page 4) focus on the settlements only, consideration must also be given to other relevant Council strategies, particularly the draft Rural Land Strategy.

One of the purposes of developing the Rural Land Strategy is to provide recommendations regarding the future use of rural land in the Tweed Valley. This Strategy is investigating matters related with suitable non-agricultural landuses in rural areas and viability of the rural enterprises in the Tweed. Another objective of the Rural Land Strategy is to investigate the current subdivision (lot size) controls and look at potential alternatives.

The Rural Land Strategy and the Rural Villages Strategy are being prepared concurrently and are expected to provide a framework for future rural planning in the Tweed Valley. It is important that they are consistent and avoid duplication of recommendations.

Share your thoughts

1. Do you think the rural villages need greater housing diversity (small lot housing, senior housing or affordable housing)?

2. Do you think a variety of housing types, sizes and costs would have adverse impact on the visual amenity and character of the rural villages?

3. What makes the rural villages a good place to live, work, learn and play? What other services or facilities should be located in the villages?

4. What should be made the priority for future planning of the rural villages?

This Discussion Paper advocates for sensitive, sustainable development within, or in proximity to the existing settlements, based on consultation with local communities and a best practice approach to sustainable regional planning. Such development has the following benefits for rural villages:

- Achieves the “five Cs” principle (see page 14): compact, complete, connected, complex, convivial;
- Provides a variety of housing options, much needed in the villages;
- Does not impact on scenic values of the surrounding landscape;
- Requires less investments in infrastructure than development resulting from subdivision of rural land;
- Promotes sustainable forms of transport;
- Leads to improved employment opportunities when carried out in accordance with the principles of area-based, integrated development process;
- Strengthens established settlement hierarchy of the region;
- Enhances the role of Murwillumbah as a central place providing services to the local communities;
- Supports local economies.

To assemble or to disperse - integration of various functions and uses in the villages, as in A ensures versatility, wealth of experience, social sustainability and a feeling of safety. Disintegrated development, as in (B), does not have these values. Source: Gehl, Cities for people, 2010.
Summary

This Discussion Paper aims to stimulate discussions about the future of the inland villages of the Tweed Valley. It is Council’s intention to plan for this future together with the local communities and with everyone who is passionate about the Tweed. This Discussion Paper does not recommend any future directions or actions for the villages or the entire region (this will be the role of the Rural Villages Strategy). The six key themes addressed in this Paper represent the feedback received to date and possible options for consideration in the Rural Villages Strategy.

The next steps

Everyone is invited to make comments and provide Council with ideas and thoughts about the future of the villages and the region. Council’s preferred way of receiving feedback from the community is always in a written form. Please visit our website dedicated to this Strategy: http://yoursaytweed.com.au/ruralvillages to leave your comments there, or email Council’s Planning Reform Unit: PlanningReforms@tweed.nsw.gov.au.

Council will organise community workshops in key rural villages in May and June 2014, where everyone will have a chance to meet with Council officers and other members of the community to talk about this Discussion Paper and the Strategy.

Tweed Valley as region of villages - but what does it mean?

1. A strong, connected, mutually supportive community.
2. A high degree of public participation in decisions affecting life, health and well-being.
3. Efficient villages with a sustainable and diverse population, maintaining their traditional, compact built form.
4. A variety of housing options for each community group, including affordable housing and housing for seniors.
5. The role of each settlement in the regional network is defined through strategic planning which involves local government and communities.
6. A clean, safe, high-quality environment.
7. Biodiversity and ecological integrity stable now and sustainable in the long term.
8. The meeting of basic needs for all people, with access to a wide variety of experiences and resources.
9. An optimum level of appropriate public health care services accessible to all.
10. A diverse and innovative economy able to adapt to changing needs.

(Source: Key parameters for healthy cities, communities and towns, Hancock T & Duhl L)
How can I have a say?

We encourage you to review the Discussion Paper, consider questions provided in the “Share your thoughts” boxes and provide feedback to inform the drafting of the Rural Villages Strategy.

To provide feedback please use the questionnaire available on next page. You may simply fill out the form and post to Council on address provided below. This form is also available on the Your Say Tweed page dedicated to this project: [www.yoursaytweed.com.au/ruralvillages](http://www.yoursaytweed.com.au/ruralvillages)

All responses to this Discussion Paper will be considered by Council officers and community based Reference Panel to inform the Rural Villages Strategy at the drafting stage.

Alternatively, you are invited to make a more detailed written submissions and either mail to:

Planning Reform Unit  
Rural Villages Strategy  
Tweed Shire Council  
PO Box 816  
Murwillumbah NSW 2484

or email to:

planningreforms@tweed.nsw.gov.au

Want to know more?

All documentation related to the Rural Villages Strategy is available on Your Say Tweed website, at:


Other strategies, plans and policies which are of relevance to the Rural Villages Strategy are available on Council’s website, at:

Rural Villages Strategy: Your Thoughts

1. What are you passionate about in your village?

2. What do you think should be done to improve public open space in your village?

3. Do you think the villages need more residential development or housing diversity for a range of household types?

4. Would you consider walking and cycling tracks as important part of transport network in your village?

5. What other forms of alternative transport would you like to see/use in the Tweed?

6. What are the key factors affecting safety in your village?

7. What opportunities are there to improve economic, social and environmental sustainability of your village?

8. What can be undertaken by Council and the local community to improve access and equity?

9. What should be made the priority for future planning of the rural villages?

10. What should be improved, or created in your village? List up to five thoughts, in order of priority (1 - highest, 5 lowest).

Your name: _______________________________ Village where you spend the most time: _________________________
Your address:______________________________________