



Cowra Shire Council
Private Bag 342
Cowra NSW 2794

Phone: 02 6340 2000
council@cowra.nsw.gov.au
www.cowracouncil.com.au

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Cowra Housing Strategy: Building a Sustainable Future for Our Community

Not just more homes, but homes that suit the entire spectrum of a modern, vibrant, rural community is what Cowra Council is hoping to encourage in the future as it reaches the latest phase of its Housing Strategy project.

The Cowra Housing Strategy is a comprehensive, forward-thinking analysis and plan designed to tackle the diverse housing needs of our growing community now and into the future. The strategy aims to support a range of housing options for residents of all demographics.

At the heart of the strategy is a focus on sustainable use of existing resources, with Council working to identify how it can better utilise and develop land and provide appropriate services depending upon the zone and area characteristics. This approach aims to meet housing demand while ensuring a balanced, sustainable growth model that benefits the whole community.

“From the very beginning, we’ve recognised that housing demand doesn’t operate in isolation. It’s an interconnected system, where changes to one housing stage affect others. We knew that focusing on just one housing type, such as medium-density or large-lot residential, wouldn’t work. What we needed was a balanced approach that addressed all stages of housing demand,” said Cowra Mayor Paul Smith.

“We’ve listened carefully to the community and business representatives, and this strategy reflects that input. It’s about being smart with what we already have and ensuring that housing options are available for everyone, whether they’re looking for a smaller lot in town or a larger block in the surrounding areas,” Mayor Smith added.

The strategy has identified opportunities for denser development within the town centre, close to Kendal Street and essential services, where residents will benefit from easy access to amenities.

It has investigated how to optimise existing R5 Large Lot zoned areas for additional land parcels, avoiding the need where possible to rezone valuable prime agricultural land while also planning at a finer scale to ensure future service provision can be integrated later.

Mayor Smith continued, “By focusing on areas that are already zoned for residential use, we can increase the supply of housing without compromising the integrity of our agricultural land. We’ve also been proactive in ensuring that future infrastructure, like roads, stormwater management,

water and sewer systems can be put in place to support new developments in areas like West Cowra.”

The final strategy reflects several updates based on community feedback received during the exhibition process. These updates include improved mapping for clarity, the inclusion of a Land Capability Assessment Report, and the incorporation of new population projections. The variances in population projections from state data has resulted in the strategy aiming to pursue high growth but balanced by some prudent land-release staging contingencies to prevent over-supply and landbanking.

“We’ve made changes where needed to ensure the strategy is as clear and effective as possible. The feedback we received has been invaluable in shaping the final document,” Mayor Smith said. “This strategy is not just a plan for today it’s a vision for the future of Cowra, with a clear focus on growth, sustainability, and affordability.”

The strategy also acknowledges the role of Cowra’s villages in meeting current housing demand. With undersized, fragmented RUI lots being considered for large lot residential developments in areas like Woodstock and Morongla, the strategy aims to ensure that housing needs are met throughout the Shire, not just in the town centre.

“The Cowra Housing Strategy is all about providing a variety of housing options for our community, whether that’s in the township or in our villages,” Mayor Smith said. “By looking at the needs of all residents, we’re ensuring that our Shire grows in a way that benefits everyone.”

“Looking ahead, the Cowra Housing Strategy is flexible enough to adapt to future population growth, whatever it may be. Council is committed to working with private developers to implement housing projects that align with the strategy’s goals, ensuring that our community thrives and remains a great place to live for generations to come.”

The Cowra Housing Strategy will now work towards formal endorsement with the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. After that, staff will commence tackling the list of actions that have been identified as priorities, where they can be further refined before being presented back to the community as part of the next stage of the project.

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