

Draft ShapingSEQ 2023 Update - Submission

This submission is provided by Master Builders in response to the Draft ShapingSEQ 2023 Update.

Meeting the current housing supply pressures requires new planning responses that address the intersection with construction regulation (primarily the National Construction Code).

As populations and households change, different housing types are needed. Small auxiliary dwellings, smaller units, terrace and townhouses and smaller detached dwellings are expected to be increasingly in demand. However, changes to the National Construction Code 2022 result in challenges to build viable products. The planning system must work with the Construction Code to facilitate the delivery of diverse, affordable housing.

The housing pressures apply not only South East Queensland but throughout the State, the solutions proposed in this submission therefore be equally applied across Queensland.

Master Builders submits the following:

1. Mandatory State-wide Housing Code

Master Builders reiterates its previous feedback to the Queensland Government that the mandatory adoption of the Queensland Housing Code is a key priority. The Code should apply across Queensland, extending through to local covenants.

A mandatory Queensland Housing Code will facilitate best practice, to realise efficiencies in the planning and building processes, helping to make housing more affordable. In particular, the Code would facilitate the construction of single storey homes on small lots, facilitating the most affordable detached housing product (particularly having regard to National Construction Code 2022 changes).

The Code would work by setting consistent requirements for building setbacks, heights, siting and design, parking, fencing and private open space. All elements that relate to a building and its site and not the wider community context. All elements best determined by best practice in design.

Local government would use their planning schemes to clearly map and specify appropriate development. The Housing Code would then be used to articulate the building envelope within that site. In this way, a single statewide code at the building stage, in no way impinges upon local government controls but rather brings certainty, clarity and transparency to the housing delivery process. It provides the owner, builder and community with a shared understanding of what can be built on any given site right across Queensland.

Further, there needs to be a quick and inexpensive option for assessing minor, low risk variations to the ‘acceptable solutions’ in the Housing Code. That is where the variation does not impact on the amenity of the neighbouring properties. For example, in the case of a small increase in the size of garage door. We therefore recommend the inclusion of an ‘exemption certificate’ process within the existing Concurrent Agency Referral process.

It is also important that our planning and building system is well placed to continue to evolve and respond to the changing needs of our communities. We therefore recommend that innovative design continues to be explored through developments in Priority Development Areas and that these developments should therefore sit outside the Housing Code where necessary.

2. Facilitating ‘Gentle Density’

As populations and households change, different housing types are needed. Small auxiliary dwellings, smaller units, terrace and townhouses and smaller detached dwellings are expected to be increasingly in demand. A new “Gentle Density Model Code” is needed to facilitate this type of development in low density residential areas and help meet the ambitious infill targets.

Under the Code, dual occupancy should be allowed on all lots provided the overall development fits with the agreed building envelope. That is, there should be no fixed minimum lot size.

In addition, there must be more action to support the commercial viability of the small unit/attached dwelling projects, if the infill goals are to be achieved. Consideration should be given to the success of overseas models of gentle density and infrastructure charges concessions.

3. Reconfiguring a Lot Code

Reconfiguring a Lot Code must also be developed to support the creation of lots which allow for the construction of affordable homes.

Achieving the social and environmental goals in the National Construction Code for accessible housing and energy efficiency, is heavily dependent on the size, configuration and orientation of the lot on which the housing is placed. A Reconfiguring a Lot Code can set best practice as to how to sub-divide the lots to allow for the energy efficiency and accessibility requirements to be included in the building design without requiring significant compromises or adding unnecessary costs.

4. Infill vs Greenfield

We understand the focus on infill development. However, there are challenges in achieving the ambitious infill targets at least in the short term, including lack of feasibility for small unit developments, and the potential reluctance of local governments to approve subdivisions where community sentiment is against higher density (from such as freehold terrace houses on very small lots in suburban areas).

Accordingly, in the short to medium term at least, additional greenfield developments are also needed to achieve the housing supply needed.

We refer to the joint industry letter to the Deputy Premier (dated 19 September) which set this out in detail.

Master Builders Queensland
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