

Student accommodation

A Policy Directions Paper informing
the Better Housing Amendment



Alignment with our roadmap

The Better Housing Amendment is helping to achieve the outcomes of our Corporate Plan 2022–2027 and realise our vision:

Our Moreton Bay. Amazing places. Natural spaces.

The strategic pillar this amendment specifically relates to is:



Our well-planned places

Our well-planned places pillar aims for Moreton Bay to have a network of well-planned and connected places and spaces, enhancing lifestyle, accessibility and employment choices by 2033. This amendment will be considered in the development of our Growth Management Strategy.

Read more about Council's Corporate Plan and the pillars that underpin it at: moretonbay.qld.gov.au/Services/Reports-Policies/Corporate-Plan#a1-3



Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the Kabi Kabi, Jinibara and Turrbal Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waterways of the Moreton Bay Region, and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging. We recognise that the Moreton Bay Region has always been a place of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance to First Nations people.

We are committed to working in partnership with Traditional Custodians and other First Nations communities to shape a shared future that celebrates First Nations history and culture as an irreplaceable foundation of our region's collective identity.

Disclaimer

The Moreton Bay Regional Council and its officers accept no responsibility for any loss whatsoever arising howsoever from any person's act or omission in connection with any information, expressed or implied, contained within this paper. Nothing in this paper should be taken as legal advice.

Student accommodation

For Public Consultation

About the Better Housing Amendment

The Better Housing Amendment proposes changes to the Moreton Bay Regional Council Planning Scheme 2016 (MBRC Planning Scheme) to support *better housing and better neighbourhoods* across our region.

Since the MBRC Planning Scheme commenced, our neighbourhoods have grown and changed. And residents have told us they want more space in their neighbourhoods—for greenery, for privacy and for parking.

This amendment proposes a range of updates to the planning rules to enable Council to address residents' concerns and ensure we achieve housing diversity where we need it most.

The amendment includes changes related to:

- Next Generation Neighbourhoods
- Off-street car parking
- Secondary dwellings
- Student accommodation
- Warner Investigation Area boundary reduction

**Better housing,
better neighbourhoods**



Timeline



2021 - 2022

Prepare amendment

Changes drafted and submitted to State Government for review

Timing subject to change.



Mid-2023

Public consultation

A formal submission can be made on the proposed amendment



Mid/late 2023

Finalise amendment

Consider feedback and Minister signs off



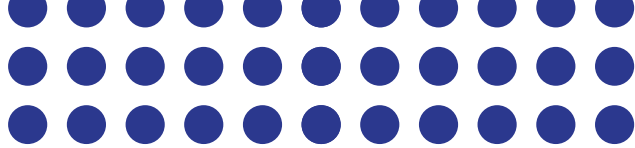
Late 2023/early 2024

Adopt amendment

Changes formally start

Student accommodation

For Public Consultation



What you will find in this paper

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Background to this paper

1.1 Purpose

This purpose of this paper is to provide a clear rationale for recommended changes to the MBRC Planning Scheme to support improved functional, building design and amenity outcomes for Student accommodation developments in the Moreton Bay Region.

The opening of the new University of the Sunshine Coast campus at Petrie in early 2020 prompted development activity for Student accommodation in the surrounding area.

Housing diversity and providing different housing options like Student accommodation is important to support long-term growth management in the region. However, issues have emerged in relation to the quality, scale and intensity of recent Student accommodation developments (approved under the current MBRC Planning Scheme).

1.2 Student accommodation review

As a result of emerging issues, a review has been undertaken of Student accommodation development outcomes being achieved.

The review has focused on land in the General Residential Zone (Next Generation and Urban Neighbourhood precincts), and Emerging Community Zone -Transition precinct of the MBRC Planning Scheme.

To inform future policy directions and recommendations for improvement, investigation of the issues being experienced included:

- Reviewing relevant development applications approved under the MBRC Planning Scheme to understand the effectiveness (or otherwise) of provisions and areas for improvement;
- Reviewing and comparing standards with other SEQ (and Queensland) planning schemes to help identify a best-practice response;
- Input/advice from Council's design experts on best-practice urban design principles and further scrutiny of the MBRC Planning Scheme's current Student accommodation requirements, including areas of alignment or inconsistency;
- Reviewing student numbers and regional demand factors, to better understand emerging demographic trends; and

- Documentation of key findings and recommendations into a policy directions paper (this paper).

Council is also undertaking a Regional Building Design Review. Multi-story Student accommodation development will also be considered through analysis of built form outcomes for tall buildings in the region.

1.3 What is Student accommodation?

All local government planning schemes reference mandatory definitions set out in State legislation (the *Planning Regulation 2017*).

Student accommodation is categorised under the broader definition of Rooming accommodation which comprises a variety of 'shared' (or communal) residential uses.

Under State legislation, **Rooming accommodation** means:

- the use of premises for residential accommodation, where each resident has a right to occupy 1 or more rooms but does not have a right to occupy the whole of the premises, has only limited facilities available for private use and shares other rooms, facilities, furniture or equipment (outside of the resident's room) with 1 or more other residents.

1.4 Current rules for Student accommodation

Rooming accommodation uses are anticipated where they have: 'good and proximate access to services and facilities required to support the needs of residents' and are designed to provide a 'high standard living environment'.

All Rooming accommodation uses (including Student accommodation) are subject to most of the same development requirements as other residential uses including:

- development supports pleasant, safe and attractive living environments that are sympathetic to (relevant) precinct character.
- site density:
 - In Next Generation Neighborhood Precinct (NGNP) a 'medium-high density residential character' in proximity to services/ public transport (and 'low-medium character' elsewhere);
 - Urban Neighbourhood Precinct (UNP) sets a minimum density and seeks to avoid underdevelopment.



- building height;
- setbacks and site cover;
- building design and landscaping; and
- car parking.

Requirements that relate specifically to Rooming accommodation (including Student accommodation) focus on providing recreation facilities for residents and ensuring that any on-site facilities are 'useable', of a satisfactory size and location, and minimise any potential adverse impacts on residents and neighbouring properties.

1.5 Overview of recent Student accommodation development

The review considered recent Student accommodation development applications that have been approved under current MBRC Planning Scheme requirements and policy settings.

A total of eight development applications for Student accommodation were submitted to Council between 2016 and 2021. Of these, only two were solely for Student accommodation purposes. The remaining applications involved a mix of long-term and short-term accommodation in addition to Student accommodation within multi-level, mixed-use, residential-style developments.

These developments were designed to provide opportunity for proponents to adjust the developed product in response to shifts in market demand.

In these cases, the development applications have been assessed against the design controls for these other development forms, which poses a challenge for considering the implications of current policy settings for Student accommodation.

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Policy directions to support better outcomes

Through the Student accommodation review, several key issues arising from development proposed and occurring within urban residential areas of the region were identified. These were principally design, siting and neighbourhood amenity-related matters.

Key issues identified include:

- **On-site density and development intensity**

This is affected by the number of people accessing and using the site and can increase the potential for noise/amenity impacts particularly on immediately adjoining premises. Higher on-site density often places pressure on existing site cover and setback requirements.

- **Open space and landscaping**

The balance of built form and open space on a site can influence potential off-site impacts, particularly the degree of impact on immediately adjoining premises and streetscape amenity and character.

- **Building design and appearance**

Buildings can appear bulky and box-like and can struggle to integrate into existing urban environments if they lack sufficient articulation of facades and external detailing.

Residential buildings that appear out of scale or that lack enough design detail can impact the amenity of adjacent residential uses, neighbourhood character and streetscapes.

- **Off-street car parking**

Adverse car parking impacts contribute to perceptions of overdevelopment and compromise neighbourhood amenity through increased numbers of cars parking on the street.

Section 3 of this paper outlines recommended changes to the MBRC Planning Scheme to achieve these policy directions. The recommendations aim to provide clear direction to support improved design, siting, function and neighbourhood amenity outcomes for Student accommodation development.

Based on the issues identified through the review, three key policy directions (PD) are proposed to support improved Student accommodation development outcomes.



Policy direction 1 Minimising adverse impacts

The density of Student accommodation development (number of students/ beds) is managed to minimise adverse impacts on the amenity of neighbouring properties.



Policy direction 2 Positive streetscapes and open spaces

Student accommodation incorporates visually attractive design elements and open space/ landscaped areas to provide a comfortable living environment and positive streetscape contribution.



Policy direction 3 Generating sufficient car parking

Student accommodation is provided with sufficient off-street car parking to meet the demand generated by the development.

3

Recommendations for improvement

3.1 Better management of on-site density and development intensity

Rationale

The MBRC Planning Scheme currently measures density based on a dwellings per hectare ratio rather than rooms/beds. This does not account for the typically higher occupancy of residential buildings containing multiple beds/rooms for students in communal residential living. These often do not have identifiable and/or discrete dwellings when compared to permanent long-term accommodation typologies, such as Multiple dwellings.

Current policy sets minimum densities for development based on the creation of dwellings as opposed to rooms/beds.

There is a lack of clarity as to how site density is managed for Student accommodation development, where dwellings are not being created.

Increased on-site density puts pressure on car parking demand which is similarly measured in the current planning scheme on a per dwelling ratio rather than by the number of bedrooms the Student accommodation facilities contain.

Increased resident/student density can also place pressure on the building envelope including setbacks, site cover and height. This can result in an overdevelopment of the site and impacts on adjoining properties and streetscapes.

Recommendations



R1

Remove the linkage of Student accommodation density with a dwelling per hectare rate, and:

- In the NGNP, change the density range for Student accommodation to be based on 100-300 single beds or students per hectare.
- In the UNP, a new policy (in addition to the current minimum density requirement) to require the ultimate density of residents/ Students for Student accommodation to be appropriately managed to avoid adverse amenity impacts on neighbouring sites.



R2

Require off-street parking ratio to be recalibrated to a per single bed/student ratio not a per dwelling rate (the proposed off-street parking ratio is outlined at section 3.4, recommendation 7).

3.2 Improving open space and landscaped areas on-site

Rationale

The MBRC planning scheme currently requires Student accommodation development to include communal open space and recreational facilities *'for the recreational needs of the users of the lot'*. Existing examples for compliance require communal open space (inclusive of landscaping and deep-planting) to be a minimum of 20% of the site with a minimum dimension of 5 metres. In addition, 50% of this area is required to be provided in one area, be safe, readily accessible/ convenient and clear of elements such as clotheslines, water tanks and parking.

Communal open space in larger developments is important in providing landscaped open space, built form relief and suitable on-site recreational facilities for resident use and amenity.

The minimum area requirement is commonly being reduced in favour of increased site cover and reduced boundary setbacks. This is further compounded by development able to provide communal open space entirely as internal recreation areas.

Other SEQ Councils typically include a minimum component to be provided outdoors or open to the sky. These outcomes support open space on the ground with on-site landscaping and green areas that provide built form relief, along with open-air recreational opportunities.

Recommendations



R3

Strengthen policy for communal open space to reinforce the role that outdoor communal open space (particularly at ground level) plays in providing for the on-site recreation needs of residents/students, and to avoid these spaces being impacted by increased building footprints.



R4

Revise current communal open space area requirements so that a minimum component is provided outdoors at ground level and includes a combination of landscaped areas and useable recreation space that align with other comparable South East Queensland (SEQ) Councils.

✗ Poor example

This development for a mix of residential uses (including Student accommodation) in Petrie provides limited ground level, outdoor communal open space for recreation that is integrated with landscaped areas.

3.3 Using balconies to improve building design

Rationale

The planning scheme currently requires that residential buildings are designed to respect the character of the zone, precinct and streetscape in which they are located; along with other design-related built form requirements. These requirements for taller buildings are subject to a separate Regional Building Design Review.

Under the current planning scheme, Student accommodation is not required to provide private open space whereas other SEQ Council planning schemes include a minimum private open space area based on a single bed/room per development ratio (as opposed to a bedroom per dwelling ratio).

Reviewing relevant development applications approved under the MBRC Planning Scheme revealed there are challenges in managing the appearance of building bulk and breaking up larger residential building forms when there are fewer balconies.

Balconies are typically provided as part of multi-residential development to satisfy a component of a development's private open space requirements with minimum areas and dimensions based on a bedroom per dwelling ratio.

When incorporated into building design, balconies lessen the appearance and impact of building bulk. Balconies also help the integration of new residential uses into existing neighbourhoods. They do this by breaking up a building's external façade and adding variety and interest, as opposed to stark or blank, straight walls. Incorporating balconies would support improved building design outcomes.

Recommendations



R5

A new requirement for Student accommodation where exceeding two storeys to provide balconies of a minimum size of 16m² and dimension of 3m, per four single beds/rooms. This will help improve building articulation, avoid a bulky or 'box-like' building form, and provide access to additional living space for residents, in addition to communal open space areas.



R6

Continued review of built form matters for tall buildings in a comprehensive way as part of the (separate) Regional Building Design Review:



✓ Good example

Development approval for a mix of residential accommodation, including Student accommodation, in Petrie achieves the minimum density in the Urban neighbourhood precinct. Outdoor communal area and balconies provide for recreation needs.

3.4 Providing sufficient off-street car parking

Rationale

The current minimum off-street carparking ratios for Student accommodation are 0.2 spaces per dwelling. Maximum ratios also apply. This minimum ratio appears to be an anomaly and is resulting in unusually low numbers of off-street car parks. It calculates on-site parking based on dwellings, as opposed to the numbers of beds or rooms within it. This creates difficulties achieving adequate parking to meet needs. A maximum parking ratio is also problematic in this context.

Carparking impacts arise from on-site undersupply and contribute to perceptions of overdevelopment and compromised neighbourhood amenity through increased numbers of cars using on-street spaces.

Reviewing and comparing standards with other SEQ (and Queensland) planning schemes confirms that for Student accommodation most include a per bed, per student or per room ratio, which more accurately aligns and

responds to the land use occurring on site. Reduced ratios in these Councils only apply in locations close to high-frequency public transport. At present, MBRC requires an average of 60% less car parks than Sunshine Coast and the Gold Coast for Student accommodation development.

As part of the off-street parking review project, an interim response was identified to amend specific carparking ratios in the current planning scheme to address community issues and concerns. The proposed changes to parking ratios within the NGNP and UNP of the General Residential Zone and the Transition Precinct of the Emerging Community Zone for rooming accommodation (including Student accommodation) are as follows:

Rooming accommodation (including Student accommodation): align with ratios from the Sunshine Coast of - one space per two beds and one space per staff member.

Recommendations



R7

Amend current car parking ratios applicable to Student accommodation in the General residential zone (NGNP and UNP) and Emerging Community Zone (TP) to implement new car parking ratios of one space per two beds and one space per staff member.



R8

To support this, an updated policy requirement is required to reinforce the need for off-street car parking to be provided to meet the demand generated by residents/visitors.



For more information

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