



The Camden Haven Eco Village will rise on 14 hectares near Kew on the NSW North Coast. When all the lots are sold and houses built, the population will be about 240.

## Eco village points way to greener future

Report Robert Harley

One small subdivision proposal on the NSW North Coast – the Camden Haven Eco Village – is showing a way to the future.

The roads will be narrower and cooler; food will be grown in an orchard on the site; and the environmental performance – the amount of greenhouse gases saved – will be monitored.

One of the partners behind the project is architect Ian Bailey. For years he has been designing sustainable houses only to see the benefit dissipated because of the poor layout of the neighbourhood. "The standard of subdivision is pretty appalling and unsustainable. This will be a benchmark; the aim is to show by example," he said.

The project has gained a big tick from local government. The Port Macquarie-Hastings Council reduced developer contributions to \$8000 because of the way it will reduce greenhouse gases.

Sustainability consultant Michael Mobbs said the council's decision was an Australian first.

"No other project has been given exemption from developer charges because it is designed to measurably cut climate change," he said. "In these hard times, that is hard cash [more than \$1.2 million] saved upfront. It makes the project more viable for this developer and for the market if they copy it."

The Camden Haven Eco Village is planned for a 14-hectare holding

near the village of Kew south of Port Macquarie, where Mr Bailey and his partner Annie Georgeson have now gained approval for a 64-lot subdivision.

The lots will average 650 square metres – bigger than standard suburban lots today – but the project will also include six terraces zoned to allow for business use, eight sites for town houses and six lots specially for one-bedroom houses.

"We have 8000 sq m set aside for community garden and orchard and the aim is to provide 25 per cent of food on site," he said.

"And we are trialling car share, which has not been done in the country before."

One of the simplest changes is the roads. They will be 5.5 metres

wide, against the standard 9m, and will be pale in colour – eco pavers or recycled concrete – and overhung by trees. Mr Bailey said the change would make the village six to 10 degrees cooler. But it required months of negotiation over the needs of garbage trucks and the Rural Fire Service.

Mr Bailey stressed that Eco Village would not be an alternative commune: "You will be able to live the sort of life you are accustomed to but you do it responsibly."

When all the lots are sold and houses built, the population will be about 240. Mr Bailey has higher aspirations: "If we are to address the problems and issues of climate change, we are going to need to get this sort of thing in front of the mainstream market," he said.