
Environmental & Community Services

ECSC.12.2

DRAFT UPPER HUNTER LAND USE STRATEGY

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PURPOSE

The draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy is being referred to the committee for endorsement before being placed on public exhibition.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. endorse the draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy.
2. place the draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.
3. receive a further report following the public exhibition period.

BACKGROUND

The current land use strategy was adopted by Council on 27 February 2017 and was conditionally endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning & Environment on 21 July 2017.

A briefing on the draft land use strategy was provided to Councillors on 27 November 2023.

REPORT/PROPOSAL

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy (Strategy) aims to provide clear direction for decisions taken by Council and NSW Government agencies relating to the future use of land within the Upper Hunter Local Government Area (LGA).

The Strategy outlines key land use policies and principles for the Upper Hunter Shire LGA and provides planning context for the preparation of Local Environmental Plan (LEP) provisions.

The Strategy was first approved in 2011 (including NSW Government endorsement) and was last reviewed and updated in 2017

The Strategy states land use planning objectives and strategies to guide growth and change, and identifies where growth and change are expected to occur. It also identifies infrastructure requirements to support development and will help inform local and state government budget processes.

The 2023 Strategy maintains the same structure as the 2017 Strategy, with updated information presented in four parts:

- Part A formally identifies the purpose of the Strategy and the area to which it applies.
- Part B summarises the main planning issues facing the LGA.
- Part C sets out the directions for land use and development planning in the LGA, including general (LGA-wide) directions (Section C.1), as well as thematic directions

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for Towns, Villages and Rural Living Areas, Rural Lands and Environmental Values (Sections C.2-C.5)

- Part D identifies how the Strategy will be implemented, monitored and reviewed.

The Strategy identifies investigation areas to direct future urban, employment and rural residential rezonings to appropriate locations. These have been identified based on a review of investigation areas previously proposed by the 2017 Strategy. This review recognised:

- Council's Housing and Land Monitor (2014 and updated annually), which indicates that the current supply of lands for urban and rural residential development is generally considered to be sufficient to meet anticipated demands throughout the Strategy timeframe; and
- A strategic review of investigation areas proposed by the 2017 Strategy, and through subsequent planning proposals, against potential land use conflict risks.
- An update of new investigation areas following on from the Expressions of Interest (EOI) process held by Council in August 2022.

Finally, the 2023 Strategy has been updated to reflect new information and considerations arising from:

- Updated population, demographic and economic forecasts;
- Regional policy and strategy developments, including the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041*;
- Current NSW Government strategic plans and policies for the area;
- Public and private sector investments; and
- Local policy and strategy developments, including (but not limited to), the Local Strategic Planning Statement, the Upper Hunter Employment Lands Strategy and Council's position statement on coal and coal seam gas (2015) and a strategic plan for Scone's Airport (2014).

The draft Strategy and Investigations Area Review are provided in Attachments 1 and 2 respectively.

OPTIONS

1. (a) endorse the draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy.
(b) place the draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy on public exhibition for a period of 28 days.
(c) receive a further report following the public exhibition period.
2. Not endorse the draft strategy and seek amendments.

CONSULTATION

The EOI process was used to assess landholder interest in maintaining existing investigation areas and to identify new investigation areas subject to a detailed assessment. A total of 27 submissions were received, 14 of which related to existing investigation areas, 8 relating to new sites which were discounted on a first review and 5 relating to new sites which went through a detailed assessment.

Consultation with government agencies has commenced, however, no submissions have been received to date.

STRATEGIC LINKS

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a. Community Strategic Plan 2032

This report links to the Community Strategic Plan 2032 as follows:

Protected Environment

Ensuring the ongoing protection of our environment and natural resources.

- 2.4 Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs and expectations of the broad Community.
- 2.6 Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations.
- 2.8 Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage.
- 2.3 Ensure all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current.

Responsible Governance

Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community.

- 5.1 Effectively and efficiently management the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response.

b. Delivery Program

- Review of strategic planning documents

c. Other Plans

- Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy 2017
- Upper Hunter Shire Local Strategic Planning Statement

IMPLICATIONS

a. Policy and Procedural Implications

Nil

b. Financial Implications

The review and update of the Strategy has been funded from Council's existing budget.

c. Legislative Implications

The Strategy takes into account the objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* in identifying proposed actions to implement the vision. This legislation provides the legal framework for the preparation of LEPs.

d. Risk Implications

If an updated strategy is not adopted, there will be inadequate planning for future growth, resulting in unsatisfactory land use planning outcomes for the Upper Hunter Shire LGA.



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e. Sustainability Implications

Adoption of the Strategy will help Council to ensure that growth and development across the Upper Hunter Shire is managed sustainably.

f. Other Implications

Nil

CONCLUSION

The draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy is being referred to the committee for endorsement before being placed on public exhibition.

The Strategy outlines key land use policies and principles for the Upper Hunter Shire LGA and provides planning context for the preparation of Local Environmental Plan (LEP) provisions.

A further report will be provided to the committee following public and agency consultation.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1 Draft Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy