

GYDE

Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy 2023-41

Update to Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy 2017
CONSULTATION DRAFT

submitted to Upper Hunter Shire Council

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PREFACE

What is the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy?

The *Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy* outlines key land use policies and principles for the Upper Hunter local government area (LGA), and provides the planning context for the preparation of the Local Environmental Plan (LEP) provisions. The Strategy was first released by Upper Hunter Shire Council (Council) and endorsed by the NSW Government in 2011 (the 2011 Strategy).

The 2011 Strategy had a planning time frame to 2032, with:

- recommended actions for achieving the Upper Hunter community's land use objectives, consistent with the Council's vision for the future of the LGA; and
- recommended changes to the LEPs in line with the community's vision and land use objectives.

The strategy was reviewed and updated in 2017 by City Plan Strategy and Development (now GYDE Consulting) in association with Land and Environment Planning.

The updated strategy was adopted by Council in February 2017.

Reviewing and updating the 2017 Strategy

The Strategy's monitoring and review framework identifies a joint commitment by Council and the then NSW Department of Planning (the Department) to review and update the Strategy every five years. In 2022, Council engaged Gyde Consulting to undertake this review. The preparation of this updated Strategy was funded by Council and overseen by representatives from Council and the Department of Planning & Environment.

This Strategy:

- Has been informed by consultation with Council and relevant NSW Government agencies to review the 2017 Strategy's planning directions and update the evidence base;
- Reflects a high-level review of areas recommended by the 2017 Strategy, or through subsequent proposals, for further investigations to support changes in land use; and
- Responds to the directions outlined in the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041*, which was released by the NSW Government in 2022.
- Responds to the current strategic plans and policies issued by the NSW Government as well as public and private investment and interest in the LGA.

A draft updated Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy (draft Strategy) was exhibited for public comment in xxx 2024.

The final Strategy was adopted by Council in xxx 2024.

How will the 2023 Strategy be used?

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.

What's new or different in this Strategy?

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 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).

1. PART A – OVERVIEW

Part A describes the purpose of the Strategy, the area to which it applies, and how the Strategy report is structured.

1.1. Application and Effect

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy (the Strategy) applies to the Upper Hunter Shire Local Government Area (LGA), illustrated in Figure 1.

The Strategy aims to provide clear direction for decisions taken by Council and NSW Government agencies relating to the future use of land within the LGA for the next 18 years, to 2041. It is intended to

guide the preparation of comprehensive LEP planning controls (providing regulatory land use controls). It also establishes a policy framework to facilitate opportunities as they emerge in the future.

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

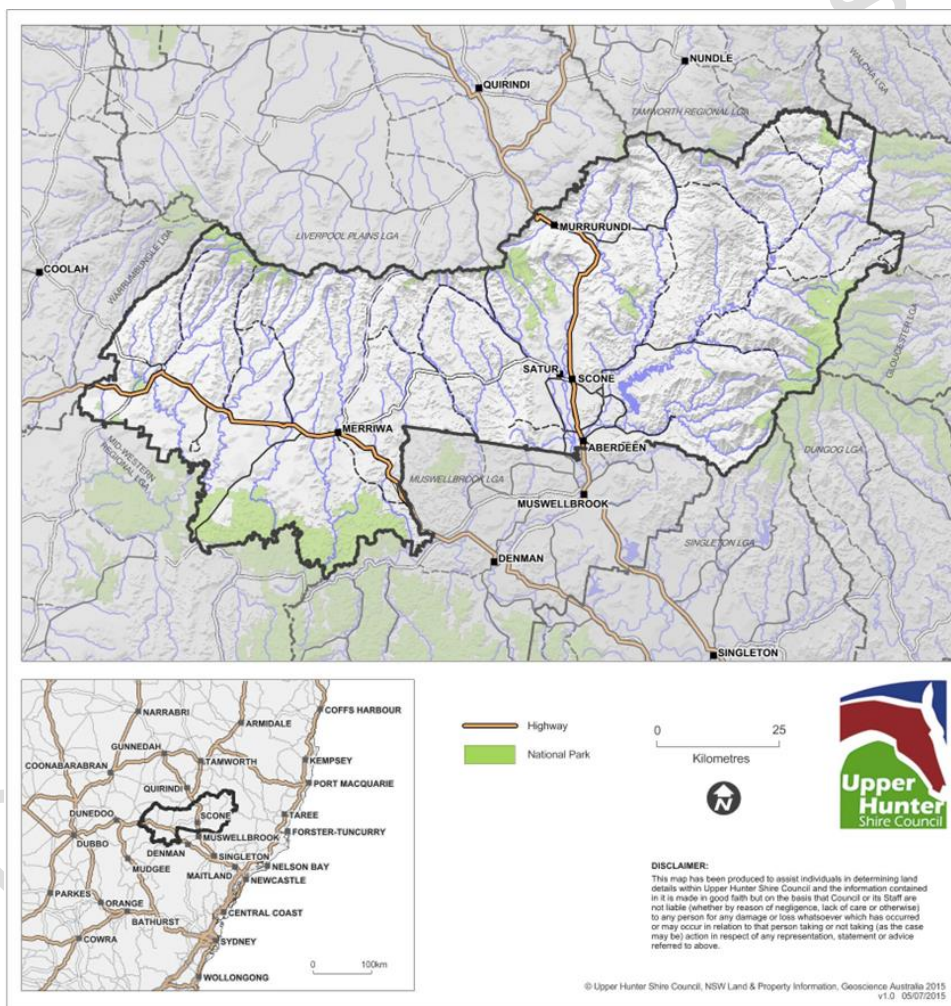


Figure 1: LGA Boundary

1.2. Related documents

The Strategy is based on the information and land use planning issues identified in the 2017 Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy (the 2017 Strategy). It focusses on issues that are within the control of local planning provisions, such as Council's Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP).

The Strategy has been informed by several reference documents, which are separately available. These include:

- Regional strategies and plans, such as the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 (NSW Government, 2022);
- 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)

1.3. Strategy Structure

- 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 as well as thematic directions for Towns, Villages and Rural Living Areas, Rural Lands and Environmental Values.
- Part D identifies how the Strategy will be implemented, monitored and reviewed.

2. PART B – PLANNING CONTEXT

Part B summarises key characteristics and drivers of change that are expected to affect future land use and development across the LGA. This includes opportunities and challenges arising from the LGA's:

- Strategic planning framework within the context of broader NSW State and Hunter Regional considerations;
- Settlement pattern and available infrastructure;
- Natural ecosystems and biodiversity;
- Land and water resources;
- Built environment; and
- Projected future population and economic growth.

The information presented is based on the data available at the time of writing.

2.1. Overview

Upper Hunter Shire is a large LGA with an area extending to around 8,100 square kilometres. Although this makes up around a quarter of the broader Hunter Region's total land area, at around 14,000 people, the LGA is home to around 2% of the region's population.

Rural industries represent the predominant land uses and drive the LGA's strong economic performance. Key economic and employment sectors include:

- Equine industry, as the Horse Capital of Australia the LGA has the second-largest thoroughbred horse breeding area in the world;
- Agricultural production and grazing, and other rural industry such as the Scone Abattoir.

- Mining, with many residents being employed in the sector in adjoining LGA's and Tourism.

Around 60% of the LGA's population live in four settlement areas, all of which occur along the New England Highway and Golden Highway. These highways have served as long-standing trade routes between regional NSW and national and global markets in Newcastle, Sydney and Brisbane. They generate a significant amount of traffic through the LGA every day and afford residents convenient connections to jobs and services in larger urban centres within the Hunter and adjoining regions.

Scone, situated on the New England Highway, is the largest urban area in the LGA. At around 5,013 people, it accommodates over a third of the total population. It is also the LGA's administrative capital and is the predominant location for the majority of its jobs and services, including retail and commercial businesses as well as tertiary education and health facilities. Other larger settlements occur along the New England Highway at Aberdeen (population 1,872) and Murrurundi (population 822) and along the Golden Highway at Merriwa (population 1,042).

The balance of the LGA's population lives in smaller villages and rural areas. These settlements are more dispersed and may service rural communities far beyond their borders. Parkville, Wingen, and Blandford, situated along the New England Highway between Scone and Murrurundi, are afforded more convenient connections to urban networks and services, whereas Cassilis, Bunnan, Gundy and Moonan Flat are more remote.

2.2. Summary of predominant LGA characteristics

Table 1: Summary of predominant LGA characteristics

| PREDOMINANT LGA CHARACTERISTICS | |
|--|--|
| Rural land use and character | <p>Land is predominantly used for rural production (generally grazing and cropping with small areas of forestry) and conservation (national parks). A large extent of land used for agriculture is classified as prime agricultural land.</p> <p>A significant area of land in the LGA is subject to natural hazards (flooding and bushfires).</p> <p>Land use conflict in rural areas is expected to increase over the Strategy timeframe, arising from growing demands for rural residential subdivisions and through the emergence of renewable energy developments such as wind farms and solar farms.</p> |
| Diverse and prosperous economy | <p>Good employment opportunities, through high dependence on agriculture, equine and mining industries in adjoining Local Government Areas. However, it is noted that the mining industry, in particular, is subject to volatility and expected to decline in the long term.</p> <p>Emerging tourism and events sector focusing on local strengths such as agriculture, horses, aviation and railways, and nature-based experiences in national parks and reserves.</p> |
| Increasingly urban population | <p>Population growth is expected to primarily concentrate in Scone and Aberdeen.</p> |
| Rapidly ageing rural population | <p>Rural areas and villages are expected to have stable or declining populations. These areas currently have the fewest young people, and communities are generally expected to age rapidly.</p> |
| Sufficient supply of urban lands | <p>All urban areas have a supply of housing lands that is more than capable of meeting long-term growth projections. Coordinating the delivery of infrastructure (particularly priority upgrades around sewer and water) and efficient use of lands will be an ongoing challenge.</p> <p>Existing commercial centres have capacity to further accommodate growth, but some may require investments to encourage revitalisation and renewal.</p> <p>Scone and Aberdeen have sufficient supply of urban industrial lands. Demand for additional urban industrial lands in other areas is uncertain and should be considered further in Merriwa and Murrurundi.</p> |
| Transport advantages and challenges | <p>The New England Highway, Golden Highway and Main Northern Railway Line afford significant transport advantages through the LGA but can create tensions at a local level. The LGA has relatively poor public transport accessibility within towns and to regional service centres.</p> |
| Significant Infrastructure upgrades | <p>Since the last strategy update, the following infrastructure projects and programs have been in train which are expected to retain and attract residents to the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scone Bypass • Singleton Bypass |

PREDOMINANT LGA CHARACTERISTICS

- Muswellbrook Bypass
- Belford to Golden Highway upgrades
- Upgrades to Scone Airport
- Establishment of the Hunter Renewable Energy Zone and Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone (CWO REZ)
- Muswellbrook pumped hydro project
- Goulburn River solar farm
- Liddell Power station closure and establishment of the Hunter Energy Hub
- Investments into the Scone Race Club Precinct
- Hills of Gold Wind Farm
- CWO REZ transmission line.
- Coal mine developments

Draft for public consultation

2.3. Key factors influencing growth

The Upper Hunter population rates have been bouncing between growth and decline depending on the strength of mining within the overall Hunter. This is reflected in the 2022 DPE projections. While formal projections published in 2022 indicate that the Upper Hunter Shire population will decline by 2041, there have been a number of developments that indicate that significant factors have changed since these projections indicating a case for growth in the area.

There has been a significant number of new infrastructure projects that have been planned or announced within the LGA which would have a significant impact on the population over the next 20 years. Regional and local projects have the potential to retain and attract more working age people and families within the LGA for longer. The new scenario projects a population of 17,000 by 2041, growth at the rate of 0.91% per year.

2.4. Key factors influencing land use

Key matters that will affect land use in the area are the ability to maintain viable economic activities, the ability to maintain an attractive lifestyle, the retention of young people (mainly between the ages of 15 to 25 years), and the attraction of new residents to the Upper Hunter. This will necessitate provision and maintenance of high-quality key infrastructure (transport, water and urban), community services (especially education and health), and amenity (landscape and environment) at a reasonable cost.

Factors that will influence population growth and

future land uses in the Upper Hunter include:

- Economic diversification
 - Hunter Renewable Energy Zone and Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone establishment
 - New Goulburn River solar farm
 - Merriwa Solar Farm
 - Hills of Gold Wind Farm
 - Hunter Energy Hub
 - Establishment of the Federal Net Zero Authority
 - Improved tourism offering, such as investment into the Scone Race Club precinct.
 - Improving connectivity and infrastructure
 - New England Highway upgrades and bypasses (Scone, Muswellbrook, Singleton)
 - Scone Airport upgrades
 - Increased water security including the completed Scone to Murrurundi water pipe.
 - Revitalisation of town centres
- Climate change and resilience
 - Increased likelihood of extreme weather conditions and impact on the community and environment
- Changing population and demand for housing and services
 - Fewer young people and increase in aging population.
 - Housing supply and affordability pressures
 - Advancement in technology and the growth of working remotely.

2.5. Strategic Planning Framework

The Strategy provides directions for land use and development planning to support broader objectives set out in State, regional and local planning documents.

The Strategy supports the implementation of a consistent planning framework for Upper Hunter and has taken into account relevant State planning policies and directions under Section 9.1 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Preparation of the Strategy has taken into account regional plans and strategies, especially the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041*.

Key drivers of change that will impact on land uses in the Upper Hunter, and for both the demand for and supply of land for employment uses and new homes include:

- Increased exposure to natural events such as flood and bushfire in a changing climate. This will impact on the suitability of certain lands for future development.
- Increased demand for housing from the tree change/ work from home city exodus prompted by the COVID 19 pandemic.
- Changing community perspectives in housing choice, sustainability and lifestyle.
- Significant State and Local government investment in the area, such as:
 - New England Highway upgrades such as the completed Scone Bypass and associated upgrades and bypasses proposed for surrounding areas (i.e. Singleton and Muswellbrook), upgrades.
 - Upgrades to Scone Airport, including the new Warbirds Museum.
 - Upgrades to Scone Race Club Precinct.
 - Completion of the water pipeline from Scone to Murrurundi.

- Impacts of strategic planning and private investment in the greater region, such as the identification of the Hunter Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and Central West Orana REZ.

2.5.1. Federal Government initiatives

National Net Zero Authority

The Australian Government has established a new Net Zero Authority that is responsible for promoting orderly and positive economic transformation as the world decarbonises, to ensure Australia, its regions and workers realise and share the benefits of the net zero economy.

The Authority commenced in July 2023 and will:

- Support workers in emissions-intensive sectors to access new employment, skills and support as the net zero transformation continues.
- Coordinate programs and policies across government to support regions and communities to attract and take advantage of new clean energy industries and set those industries up for success.
- Help investors and companies to engage with net zero transformation opportunities.

The Authority will help steer the Government's agenda to support communities, workers and industries. Its mission is aligned to the Paris Agreement (international treaty on climate change) and is about making sure that no one is held back as the economy changes.

The Authority will include a focus on regions and industries that have traditionally powered Australia's economy. As traditional industries adapt and transform, the Authority will work to ensure new industries are coming online, and workers, communities and regions are supported.

2.5.2. State Government Strategies

Hunter Regional Plan 2041

Originally published in 2016 and updated in 2022, the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041* is the NSW Government's blueprint to deliver the vision for the NSW Hunter Region to be the best region in Australia to live, work and play thanks to its spectacular environment and vibrant communities.

The Regional Plan sets four regionally focused principles:

- **Growth:** Support a net zero emissions economy and foster employment growth, competitiveness and innovation
- **Community:** Promote places to be together by weaving nature into our towns and cities with having welcoming, safe streets and public spaces
- **Resilience:** Reduce risks associated with place-based shocks and stresses to improve the community's ability to withstand, recover from and adapt to changes and become more resilient.
- **Equity:** Communities should be safe and healthy with residents having opportunities for economic advancement, housing choices and a secure retirement

The Plan provides an overarching framework to inform subsequent and more detailed land-use plans such as Council's Community Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Planning Statement.

NSW Government Response to the NSW Independent Flood Enquiry

In March 2022 the NSW Government commissioned an independent expert inquiry into the preparation for, causes of, response to and recovery from the 2022 catastrophic flood event across NSW.

The Inquiry included a number of recommendations regarding planning better for living with flood risk including improved flood planning and preparing disaster adaptation plans for all towns.

While the NSW Government has accepted many of the recommendations, there is still further work to be done before these recommendations are implemented.

As such it is not known how the supply of residential and employment land will be affected.

Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy 2018

The Greater Hunter Regional Water Strategy is designed to manage the region's water needs over the next 30 years.

The strategy looks at existing and near-future risks to water security, and factors that could affect these risks. In particular, it looks at the risk of a drought worse than the worst drought on record and the effect it would have on the region's water security.

The strategy outlines policy, planning and infrastructure options to improve water security within the Greater Hunter. It recommends the following actions:

- connect water supply infrastructure across the Greater Hunter, so that water can be transferred to areas of major growth and critical locations in times of drought.
- investigate water reuse schemes for industry to increase the amount of water available.
- give greater certainty to industries by preparing plans that sets out how water will be shared and managed during severe droughts.
- work with AGL to manage their water requirements as it transitions from thermal power stations to renewables and contributes to the region's economic diversification.
- improve environmental outcomes by placing less stress on rivers and groundwater during times of drought.

The two storages in the Upper Hunter are Glenbawn Dam and Glennies Creek Dam. The former is located east of Scone. These dams are operated by Water NSW to supply bulk, raw water for irrigation town and stock and domestic needs as far downstream as Maitland.

The yield of Glenbawn and Glennies Creek Dams is heavily dependent on tributary inflows from the upstream, unregulated rivers. During normal years, the storages only top up the difference between water orders and tributary inflows. During drought, tributary inflows diminish and the percentage of storage contribution to fill water orders increases.

In terms of the Upper Hunter, key outcomes from the strategy are:

- Water security was confirmed as the primary economic risk facing the Upper Hunter, with the risk across all sectors (such as mining and power generation), not just agriculture.
- Analysis of historical rainfall patterns shows that droughts have been under-estimated in the Upper Hunter, and a stronger variation of in rainfall occurs across the Greater Hunter region, in terms of the area where the strategy applies.
- The Lower Hunter and Upper Hunter water systems are currently not connected. They currently operate as two separate systems and the water cannot physically be transported to other areas. This creates constraints in the market performance as the water may not be located in the right location. Connecting the two systems offers savings in capital and operating expenditure associated with the deferral of the next major water source augmentation for the Lower Hunter, providing additional drought resilience in the region and greater source diversification for both systems.
- The Upper Hunter has low water reliability. Although Glenbawn and Glennies Creek Dams are large, they only regulate a small proportion of the valley. Also, Lostock, which has the potential yield, is a small dam. The eastern catchment is high yielding but largely unregulated and disconnected from the demands for mining and power stations located in the central catchment.
- The impacts of planned power station closures also have water implications, not just electricity implications.

Hunter Central Coast Enabling Regional Adaptation Report 2021

The Hunter and Central Coast Enabling Regional Adaptation (HCC ERA) project builds on local knowledge to understand climate vulnerabilities in the Hunter and Central Coast (HCC) regions and identify opportunities to respond. The project supports regional decision-makers to enhance government service delivery and planning at a regional and subregional scale in the context of climate change.

The HCC ERA project has sought to:

- provide a credible evidence base for regional adaptation planning by developing a regional understanding of the impacts of projected climate change, and vulnerability to the expected impacts for the HCC
- build on the capacity of regional decision-makers to undertake adaptation action by improved understanding of regional climate change impacts, adaptive capacity, vulnerability and adaptation options, and
- strengthen relationships between sectors across local and state government in the HCC, with a view to capturing opportunities for regional climate change adaptation projects.

Nine system transition models were developed through the HCC ERA project and are discussed in detail:

1. Aboriginal cultural values
2. Circular economy
3. Community resilience
4. Emergency management
5. Industry transformation
6. Planning
7. Protection of natural systems and environment
8. Transport and infrastructure
9. Water and water security.

Achieving the aims of the project will come from two strong themes: the need for collaboration between agencies, and integration of knowledge and governance.

2022 Housing Package

The 2022 Housing Package is the NSW Government's response to the Regional Housing Taskforce, which was established on the supply and affordability of housing in Regional NSW.

The five main recommendations made by the Regional Housing Taskforce were to:

- Support measures that bring forward a supply of 'development ready' land.
- Increase the availability of affordable and diverse housing across regional NSW.
- Provide more certainty about where, when and what types of homes will be built.
- Investigate planning levers to facilitate the delivery of housing that meets short term needs.
- Improve monitoring of housing and policy outcomes and demand indicators.

In response, the NSW Government has adopted all recommendations of the Regional Housing Taskforce as part of a comprehensive effort to improve housing supply and affordability in regions.

The NSW Government has set a target of delivering 127,000 new homes across regional communities over the next 10 years.

Key actions to meet this target include:

- The roll out of a Regional Urban Development Program to ensure supply of development-ready land for new homes
- Benchmark targets for housing supply and serviced land in regional NSW
- Monitoring of key housing performance indicators via digital data platforms
- Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund to prioritise upfront planning.
- Removing the barriers to diverse and affordable regional housing through policy reform.

The Housing Package will support Council's initiatives to boost the supply of diverse and affordable housing in existing centres and towns as well as identify new 'greenfield' residential areas.

A 20-Year Economic Vision for Regional NSW

The strategy was prepared under the previous Liberal NSW Government as a blueprint for economic strategy and investment.

This strategy is a plan for sustainable, long term economic growth for regional NSW which hosts a third of NSW's population and produces around one fifth (\$125 billion) of Gross State Product. Regional NSW is seeing investment like never before, with over \$8 billion of investment committed to supporting regional communities and economies.

The \$2 billion Regional Growth Fund has delivered over 2,100 projects to support growing regional centres, activate local economies and improve services. \$295 million under the Resources for Regions fund is used to support mining communities which has included \$7.78 million towards the Upper Hunter Regional Mine Affected Roads Program.

Key principles and actions relate to the following areas:

- Infrastructure
- Skills
- Advocacy and promotion
- Business environment
- Economic strength and diversity.

Regional Economic Development Strategy – 2023 update

In 2018, the NSW Government developed Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) for 38 Functional Economic Regions (FERs) across regional NSW, which were identified under the 'A 20 year Economic Vision for Regional NSW'. The Upper Hunter is in the Hunter FER.

The 2023 REDS Update provides an updated evidence base to guide governments in making policy and investment decisions to enhance resilience and drive sustainable, long-term economic growth in regional NSW.

Since the original strategy release in 2018, the

region has experienced bushfire, floods, COVID-19 and the mouse plague, however has also seen new significant economic opportunities emerging.

The Hunter Region has seen:

- significant investment delivered since 2018, with projects of note being the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) and investments in transport connectivity such as the Scone, Muswellbrook and Singleton bypasses.
- significant population growth which brings both opportunities and challenges.
- its key industries remain resilient despite substantial challenges in this period.

The key strategies which arise from the 2023 Update area to:

- Improve inter and intra connectivity of the region to boost business opportunities in the 'engine' industries of agriculture, mining, manufacturing and tourism.
- Diversify the region's economy to build resilience while leveraging opportunities presented by transformative change in the mining and energy sectors.
- Improve infrastructure, services and amenities to fully realise and sustain the region's growth potential.
- Invest in development of the region's local workforce capability and capacity.

Temporary and Seasonal Workers' Accommodation toolkit

The NSW Government has prepared a draft Temporary and Seasonal Workers' Accommodation Toolkit following recommendations from the Regional Housing Taskforce in October 2021.

A new planning framework and guidelines to assist regional Councils to plan housing for temporary and seasonal workers was exhibited from 16 August to 27 September 2023. Councils can consider and nominate zones/ and or local provisions to be inserted into their LEP via a self-repealing SEPP within 3 months of the exhibition period.

Key elements of the policy include:

- A new standard definition of temporary workers accommodation to be used across the state,
- Adding 'temporary workers accommodation as a subset of the 'residential accommodation' land use, and
- Providing Councils flexibility in terms of the zones where temporary workers accommodation is permitted along with any other local provisions which are required, i.e., locational factors.

As part of the policy reform, there will be provisions inserted into a State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) which allows for 'construction accommodation' to be permissible with consent in certain zones for land within the Central West-Orana (which Cassilis is located in) and the New England Renewable Energy Zones (REZs).

2.5.3. Council Strategies

Upper Hunter Community Strategic Plan 2032

The Upper Hunter Community Strategic Plan 2032 (UHCSP) sets the long-term strategic direction for the community. It identifies community priorities for the next 10-20 years. All Council plans and activities are based on the strategic goals identified in the UHCSP and supporting delivery program.

The Community and Council vision, outlined in Upper Hunter Shire's Community Strategic Plan 2032 is:

“A quality rural lifestyle – in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community”

The Strategy recognises that the use, development and ongoing management of land within the LGA are relevant to the vision's five community priorities:

- A connected community
- Protected environment
- Thriving economy
- Quality infrastructure
- Responsible Governance

Council has identified five community priorities to guide Council's agenda :

Table 2: Summary of 5 themes of the Community Strategic Plan

| THEME | VISION | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| A connected community | Developing and deepening connections of people to each other and their community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 Advocate for and increase the availability and affordability of health services. • 1.2 Work collaboratively to address social disadvantage. • 1.3 Increase promotion of healthy lifestyle. • 1.4 Enhance partnerships to maintain a safe community. • 1.5 Advocate for, support and provide services and facilities for the community. • 1.6 Provide and support a range of community events, festivals and celebrations. • 1.7 Acknowledge and respect our Aboriginal culture, heritage and people. |
| Protected environment | Ensuring the ongoing protection of our environment and natural resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.1 Advocate for, facilitate and support programs that protect and sustain our diverse environment for future generations. • 2.2 Encourage and support community participation to care for our environment. 2.3 Ensure all actions, decisions and policy response to natural hazards and climate change remain current. • 2.4 Implement and regularly review Strategic Land Use Plans, Environmental Planning Instruments and Development Controls, which reflect the needs |

| THEME | VISION | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| | | <p>and expectations of the broad Community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.5 Provide efficient and effective advisory, assessment and regulatory services focused on being customer 'friendly', responsive and environmentally responsible. • 2.6 Plan, facilitate and provide for a changing population for current and future generations. • 2.7 Provide efficient and effective waste and recycling services and support improved waste minimisation and recycling practices. • 2.8 Implement policies to ensure the protection of strategic agricultural lands, equine critical industry clusters, natural resources and heritage. |
| Thriving Economy | Strengthening our vibrant industries and economy while seizing emerging opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.1 Broaden and promote the range of business and industry sectors. • 3.2 Encourage retail and commercial business to increase local employment opportunities. • 3.3 Provide attractive and functional town centres and support revitalisation of the towns and villages including investment in built heritage and improvement of existing buildings. • 3.4 Provide diversity in tourist attractions and experiences. • 3.5 Promote the Upper Hunter's unique brand identity. • 3.6 Facilitate and support increased and innovative tourism and marketing opportunities. |
| Quality Infrastructure | Maintaining and developing our infrastructure network to meet the ongoing needs of our population. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.1 Provide for replacement, improvement and additional Community and open space infrastructure through investment, best practice and risk management. • 4.2 Provide inviting public spaces that are clean, green, properly maintained, well designed, encourage active participation, family friendly and accessible to all. • 4.3 Provide safe and reliable water and sewerage services to meet the demands of current and future generations. • 4.4 Upgrade and maintain the road network and bridges. • 4.5 Advocate and improve access to communication services. |

| THEME | VISION | STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Responsible Governance | Providing efficient and responsible governance in order to effectively serve the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.1 Effectively and efficiently manage the business of Council, while encouraging an open and participatory Council with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, action and response. • 5.2 Council is focused on innovation and continuous improvement to ensure a high quality of service which is aligned with business needs and community priorities. • 5.3 Effective financial and asset management to ensure council's long-term sustainability. • 5.4 Open and effective communication methods and technology are utilised to share information about Council plans, intentions, actions and progress. • 5.5 Community is effectively engaged, can provide opinion and contribute to decisions that plan for the present and future of the Upper Hunter Shire. • 5.6 Develop and maintain effective reporting systems that enable Council to measure and report on performance. • 5.7 Effective management of risk underpins all Council decisions, service delivery and behaviours. • 5.8 Develop leadership skills and build networks through a range of formal and informal opportunities. • 5.9 Ensure Council is a great place to work by supporting Council employees in maximising their contribution. • 5.10 Encourage and build strong partnerships between the Community, business and all levels of government to support implementation of the CSP 2032 and to deliver the Community priorities. • 5.11 To participate and encourage regional coordination and planning between Councils and other organisations. • 5.12 Provide timely and effective advocacy and leadership on key community issues and priorities. |

Upper Hunter Local Strategic Planning Statement

The Upper Hunter Shire Council Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020 (LSPS) is the Council's plan for the community's social, environmental and economic land use needs over the next 20 years.

Local Planning Priorities, sorted under the plan's five themes, are summarised as follows:

Table 3: Summary of Local planning priorities

| LOCAL PLANNING PRIORITIES | RESPONSE |
|--|--|
| Sustainable Environment: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use, development and management of land avoids the long-term degradation of natural environmental systems • The development of land and infrastructure is orderly and economical • Protection and rehabilitation of biodiversity and ecosystems • Planning anticipates and responds to the implications of climate change • Facilitate the use of renewable energy |
| Implications for land use planning: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use constraints require investigation and mapping, including urban salinity around Scone and the drinking water catchment around Glenbawn Dam |
| Caring Community: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting people and property from hazards • Villages and rural areas offer the services that communities need • Towns offer the services that communities need |
| Rural Economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable agriculture • Protect agricultural land • Accommodate employment-generating activities |
| Quality and Healthy Living | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage for the housing needs of the community • Provide connection to areas of natural landscapes and cultural heritage • Country towns are rich in heritage and reflect the character of the local community • Provide healthy places to live, work and visit by encouraging the provision of shade • Provide healthy places to live, work and visit by creating walkable and bicycle-friendly neighbourhoods |
| Vibrant and Creative Community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre Revitalisation • Facilitate Tourism • Encourage economic diversification |

Hunter Joint Organisation Strategic Plan 2032

The Hunter Joint Organisation (JO) is a collaborative body that brings together the ten Councils in the region to provide a united and local voice for their communities. Their Strategic Plan sets out a vision for the region, and then provides an overview of strategic actions required to deliver the vision.

The Hunter JO has identified the vision for the region as follows:

We are a Region that:

- *Is globally connected and whose residents enjoy transport and digital infrastructure and systems that enhance their economic and lifestyle opportunities.*
- *Is prepared for change and ready to withstand, adapt and recover from natural and human induced risks.*



- *Has an economy that continues to grow and evolve as a powerhouse of the state and national economies, providing more and higher quality jobs; and*
- *Will protect, preserve and improve the high standard of liveability and pristine environments.*

The four themes of the Strategic Plan are connectivity, resilience, jobs and a growing economy and liveability

The Hunter Joint Organisation wants to be proactive about supporting positive change and growth to the area while the economy is evolving and transitioning away from traditional coal and energy-based industries. It also wants to maintain quality of life for the existing residents.



Figure 2: Themes and priority statements of the JO Strategic Plan (Source: Hunter Joint Organisation)

Upper Hunter Employment Lands Strategy

The Upper Hunter Employment Lands Strategy (ELS) is a joint initiative between the Upper Hunter Councils of Singleton, Dungog, Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Shire.

The Strategy seeks to identify opportunities for the Region to transition from an agricultural-mining dominated economy to a more diverse and modern economy focused around higher order and productive industries and the knowledge-intensive economy, supporting new and high-paying jobs.

The Strategy identifies the strategic vision and goals for the Region as being to leverage the existing strengths across heavy industry, energy, equine, tourism and viticulture sectors, while supporting a more aggressive expansion into renewable energy, food and fibre, health and the 'new economy' with jobs based on digital business opportunities.

The actions of the Strategy have been integrated into the directions where possible.

2.6. Settlement and Infrastructure

Over 60% of the population currently live in the LGA's four largest towns. Scone, as the administrative centre for the LGA, is the largest town with a population of more than 5,000 people. Aberdeen, Merriwa and Murrurundi range between 850 to 2,000 people.

The LGA also accommodates a number of smaller villages and standalone rural living areas. Around

13% of the LGA's total population currently live in seven villages ranging between 200 and 400 people.

The LGA's rural areas are home to scattered rural communities who support the productive agricultural, particularly equine, industries that underpin the LGA's economic and employment base.

Table 4: The Strategy's settlement pattern

| TYPE | LOCALITY | GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Town | Scone Aberdeen Merriwa Murrurundi | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accommodates a diverse mix of higher order uses, including residential, retail, commercial and light industry. Preferred location for regional-level services and facilities, including health, aged care, education and recreation catering to a larger service catchment area. Includes a commercial centre that is the focus for service delivery and social interaction. May include rural living areas at the urban fringe (e.g. large lot residential or rural smallholdings developments). Preferred location for public transport interchange facilities. Will be serviced by urban infrastructure, including reticulated water/sewer. |
| Village | Blandford Bunnan Cassilis Gundy Moonan Flat Parkville Wingen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally accommodates a population of less than 500 people, but may provide services for broader rural communities. Predominantly provides residential uses, but may include a small commercial centre. May include rural living areas at the urban fringe (e.g. large lot residential or rural smallholdings developments). Non-residential uses, including retail, commercial, light industrial and recreational are planned and accommodated to meet localised (neighbourhood) demand and provide convenience. Higher order non-residential uses may be provided where the Village is remote (>20km) from a Town. May be serviced by reticulated water/sewer. |
| Stand-alone Rural Living area | Cullingral Rd, Merriwa Glenbawn Rd, Segenhoe Bunnan Road, Owens Gap Middlebrook | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clusters of low-density residential uses surrounded by rural lands Characterised by large lot residential and rural smallholdings developments. Typically located further than 10 minutes' drive from a Town or Village centre May include non-residential uses related to rural industry, including hobby farms. Typically not serviced by reticulated water/sewer. Will be managed to prioritise the ongoing viability of surrounding rural industries. |

The distribution of infrastructure to provide services for communities and businesses in towns, villages and rural areas across the LGA reflects this settlement pattern. Current considerations with regard to infrastructure are summarised in the table below.

Table 5: Infrastructure considerations summary

| ROADS | |
|---|--|
| Highway | <p>The New England Highway is a National Highway maintained by NSW Roads and Maritime Services with Commonwealth funding.</p> <p>The New England Highway goes through all the towns and villages located along it, except for Scone, where the bypass has now been completed.</p> <p>The Golden Highway in the west of the LGA is a State Highway and goes through Merriwa. The total length of highways through the LGA is 145.52km. It provides an important link to western NSW and connections to towns such as Dubbo.</p> |
| Urban roads | Urban roads are generally adequate for existing traffic volumes, but the cost of works needed to maintain these to a satisfactory standard is an issue. |
| Rural roads (sealed) | Sealed rural roads comprise a total of 317km of local roads, plus 166km of regional roads. The existing local road network is adequate to cater for expected demand, and current Council policy is not to extend the current network of sealed local roads unless paid for by individual development proposals. |
| Rural roads (unsealed) | The Council is responsible for 1,162km of unsealed rural roads. |
| WATER SUPPLY | |
| Scone | <p>Reticulated supply - Source: Glenbawn Dam</p> <p>All existing dwellings supplied with filtered but untreated water</p> |
| Aberdeen | <p>Reticulated supply - Source: Hunter River</p> <p>All existing dwellings supplied with filtered but untreated water</p> |
| Merriwa | Source: Groundwater (sub-artesian bore) sources |
| Murrurrundi | Source: Reticulated supply - Source: Glenbawn Dam |
| Cassilis | Source: Groundwater (sub-artesian bore) sources |
| Parkville Wingen Blandford | The Scone-Murrurundi water supply pipeline provides the opportunity for villages of Parkville, Wingen and Blandford also to have a reticulated water supply in the future. |
| Other villages and rural areas | Source: mixture of rainwater tanks and/or bores, creeks and rivers |

| SEWER | |
|--|--|
| Reticulated sewer services are available in all urban areas. All properties in urban areas are connected, where economically feasible. Only a small number of properties in each town are not connected. | |
| Scone | Treatment plant: adjacent to Bill Rose Sports Complex <i>Treatment and disposal includes effluent reuse on commercial and community land.</i> |
| Aberdeen | Treatment plant: Abercairney Terrace |
| Merriwa | Treatment plant: Hall Road |
| Murrurrundi | Treatment plant: adjacent to the New England Highway |
| STORMWATER | |
| Urban areas | The local network of stormwater drainage is adequate in existing urban areas, although additional trunk drainage works have been identified for Scone. |
| BUSHFIRE FACILITIES | |
| Whole LGA | Bushfire fighting facilities are provided throughout the LGA. Currently, there are 30 brigades and 17 stations distributed through the Shire, equipped with 32 fire tankers, 30 tanker vehicles and 6 support vehicles. |
| WASTE MANAGEMENT | |
| Whole LGA | <p>The Council has 5 Waste Management Facilities in the LGA: at Aberdeen, Scone, Murrurundi and Merriwa, and a small site at Cassilis. Service areas for waste collection include the urban centres and villages of Bunnan, Gundy, Moonan Flat, Parkville, Wingen and Cassilis. Kerbside recycling commenced in August 2006 in all urban areas.</p> <p>Council has an approved Waste Management Strategy 2021-2031, which has the key outcomes and objectives identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus on the circular economy and waste hierarchy in terms of managing waste. • Introduction of a Food Organics Garden Organics (known as FOGO) service to the LGA. • A key action of preparing a landfill Closure Plan for all Waste Management Facilities (WMF) to progress rehabilitation in accordance with the plan and approach ultimately approved by the EPA. • Undertaking a Site Selection Study to find a new site for the Merriwa and Murrurundi Waste Transfer Stations (WTS). <p>In 2018, Council was awarded a grant for the construction of Waste Transfer Facility (WTF) at both the Merriwa and Murrurundi WMF and partial closure of these landfills. The grant was aimed at minimising landfill at the sites, enabling future landfill closure, addressing environmental issues, reducing operating costs and providing improved customer experience.</p> |

2.8. Population growth and change

The NSW Government regularly releases population and household projections, and implied dwelling requirements, for each LGA in the State.

A summary of the key characteristics is provided in the table below:

Table 6: Upper Hunter LGA - Summary of important demographic characteristics (based on 2021 census data)

| CHARACTERISTIC | DATA |
|--|--|
| Total population | The resident population in 2021 was estimated to be 14,229 people. Scone is the largest urban centre, with a population of 5,013, Aberdeen 1,872, Merriwa 1042 and Murrurundi 822 persons. |
| Key characteristics of Upper Hunter LGA 2021 population | Most residents are Australian born, comprising 84% of the population. About 5.7% of the population identified themselves as being of indigenous origin. 70% of households were families, of which 43% comprised couples with children, 46% couples without children, and 14% single parent families. Of remaining households, 29% were single persons and 3% were group households. The proportion of single person households is expected to increase in the future. |
| Spatial variation in population characteristics 2021 | Scone planning area has the most diverse employment and the widest range of industry sectors. Aberdeen has the youngest population and is also most dependent for employment outside the LGA, especially in the mining industry. There are virtually no jobs in the mining industry in Upper Hunter LGA. Merriwa and Murrurundi have the oldest populations and lowest incomes. Merriwa has a stable population, but Murrurundi has a growing population. |
| Dwellings | In 2021 there were 6,355 dwellings in the LGA, of which 4,988 (78%) were separate houses. This has drastically shifted since 2011, where 90.72% were separate houses. Of the total number of dwellings, approximately 13% were unoccupied. This is consistent with the 2011 census data. |
| Age dependency 2021-2041 | In 2021 19.3 % of the total population was aged 14 and under, whereas people aged 65 and over has been rising and now sits at 20.1%. |
| Workforce | The labour force was 5,431 as per the 2021 census data figures. In 2021, a total of 131 people were identified as unemployed out of a total labour force of 5,735 (2.2%). |
| Employment by industry sector | The Upper Hunter Shire supports 5,703 jobs. Around a fifth of employed people in the LGA were still employed in agriculture, a total of 1,217 people. |

2.8.1. Forecast projections

The most recent their DPE projections published in 2022 indicate that the Upper Hunter Shire population will decline from **14,064 in 2022 to 13,276 by 2041**. On average, that is an annual growth rate of **-0.3% each year**.

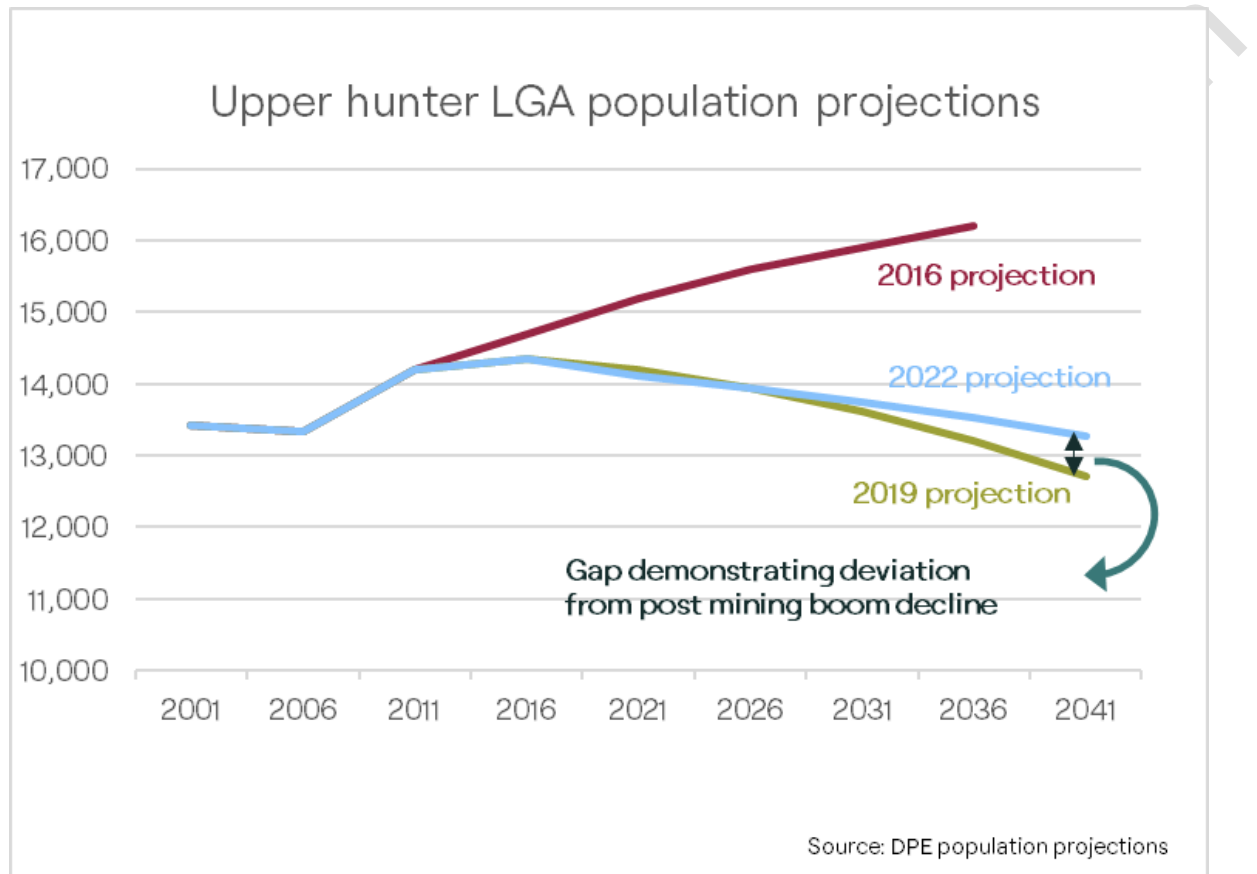


Figure 3: Upper hunter LGA population projections (Source: DPE population projections)

The 2022 DPE projections have calculated the 2041 population to be 13,276 with a loss of 780 persons in the LGA in this period.

DPE 2022 projections model an ageing population in Upper Hunter LGA out to 2041. The projections demonstrate an increase of 645 older adults in the LGA while all other demographic groups are expected to decline between 2021 and 2041.

The largest decline was projected to be among the working age population with a decrease 850 adults in the population between 2021 and 2041

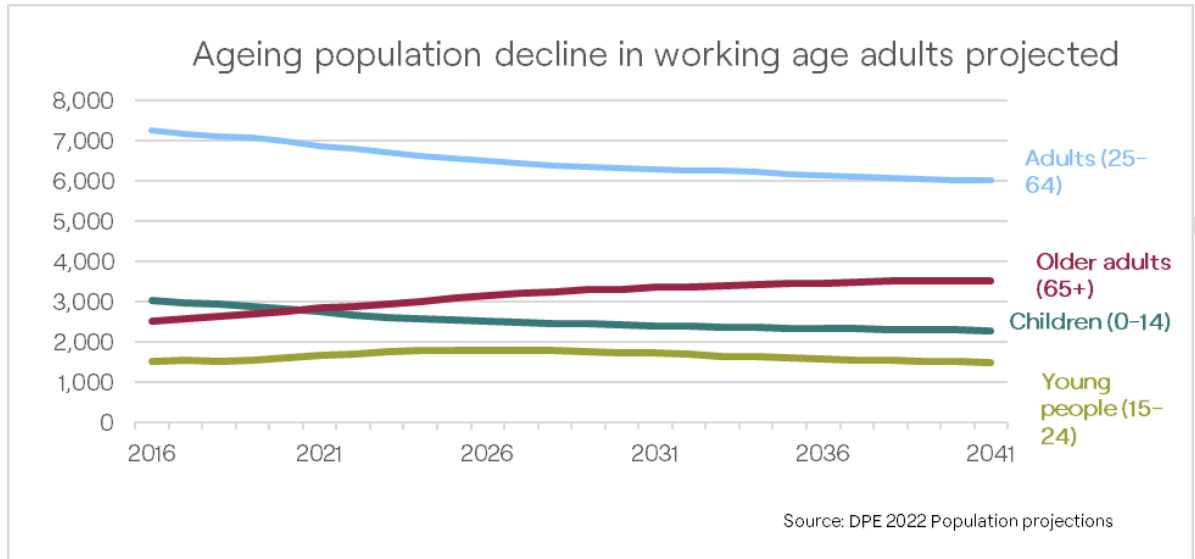


Figure 4: DPE population projections

Suggested updated projections by Gyde (2023)

Gyde Consulting has created updated projections to reflect recent changes in population movements and investment in the LGA post the latest DPE projections. Our projections have modelled significant population growth in Upper Hunter Shire LGA based on social and economic changes described earlier in this section.

The LGA has recorded historic population growth rates up to 2% in the mid-2000s because of the mining boom causing an influx in migration of working age adults.

Due to infrastructure projects announced in or around the Upper Hunter Shire LGA, there is the potential for the LGA and satellite towns to attract even more people from the broader region. Current projections do not take into consideration the impact new ongoing projects and investment offering employment opportunities, which will

attract people into the local area. Post COVID trends such as working from home has promoted 'tree changers' to the area along with the displacement of urban fringe dwellers from other areas.

The latest ABS Estimated Resident population (ERP) released in 2022 continues in its deflection from the DPE Projections. In 2022, almost 230 additional persons reside in the LGA according to the ERP.

Population in the LGA according to the 2022 ERP has gone from a decrease to an increase in population in a year. This conflicts with the decline projected by DPE in the same year. Over time, the gap between the projections and the LGAs population is increasing, with more people living in the LGA than anticipated.

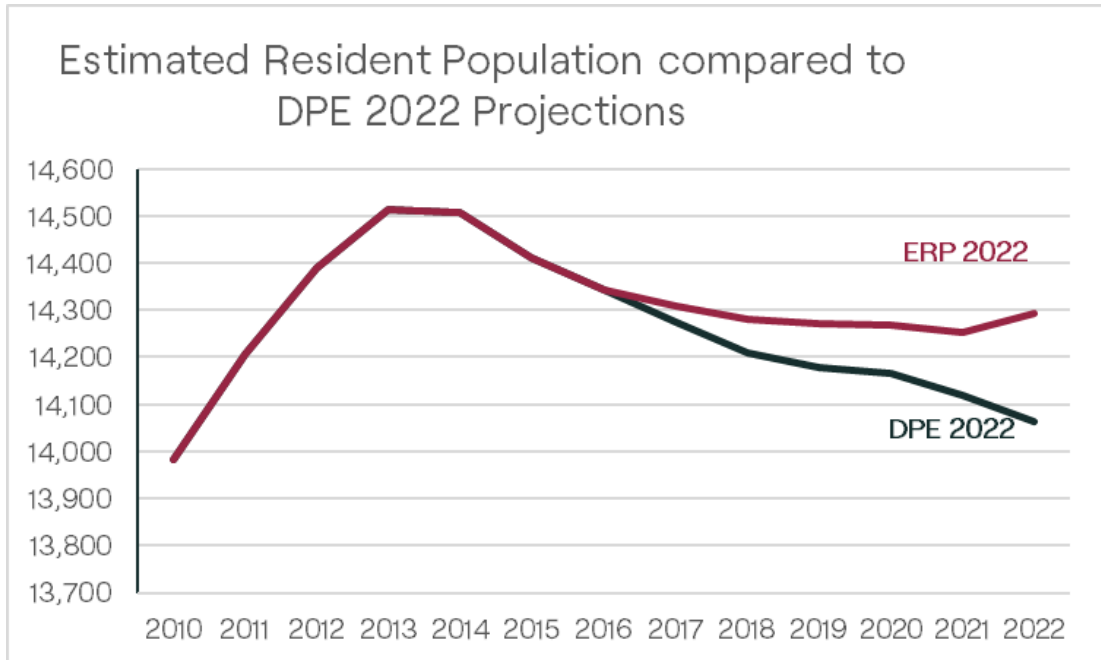


Figure 5: Estimated Resident Population under Gyde Modelling

Implications of differing population projections

Given how significantly the projections have changed in between the 2016 and 2022 projections, modelling a future outcome can and will change over time. Noting the deflection in population projections between 2019 and 2022, the LGA is observed to be recovering from the post-mining boom population decline.

The core difference between the data is that under the current DPE projections, the population will fall, while the Gyde data is indicating that a rise in population will occur.

The strategic planning framework as listed in **Section 1.1** above tells us the story as to the growth. The strategic planning shows a confidence in the area which is followed by investment. Projects such as the upgrade to Scone Airport (funded by the NSW Government) encourages confidence in and investment by the private sector in and around the area. Investment in road and energy infrastructure create construction and operational jobs, which further bring people and maintain them in the area. Scone’s status as the

‘Horse Capital of Australia’ along with the largest equine veterinary practice in the southern hemisphere, an equine focused TAFE and Equine Research Centre, also brings employment and industry investment.

Previous population projections were based around the ‘boom and bust’ cycle of the mining industry. However, short to medium term investment is occurring. The following table shows announced and/ or funded projects with the pink represents planned projects with set timelines whereas the green represents projects announced without specific timeframes for delivery. The medium growth scenario by Gyde Consulting projects around 16,300 residents to be residing in the LGA by 2041. This would mean a growth of around 3,000 additional persons compared to DPE projection of 13,200 persons.

The medium growth scenario projects an average growth rate of 0.9% per year between 2022 and 2041.

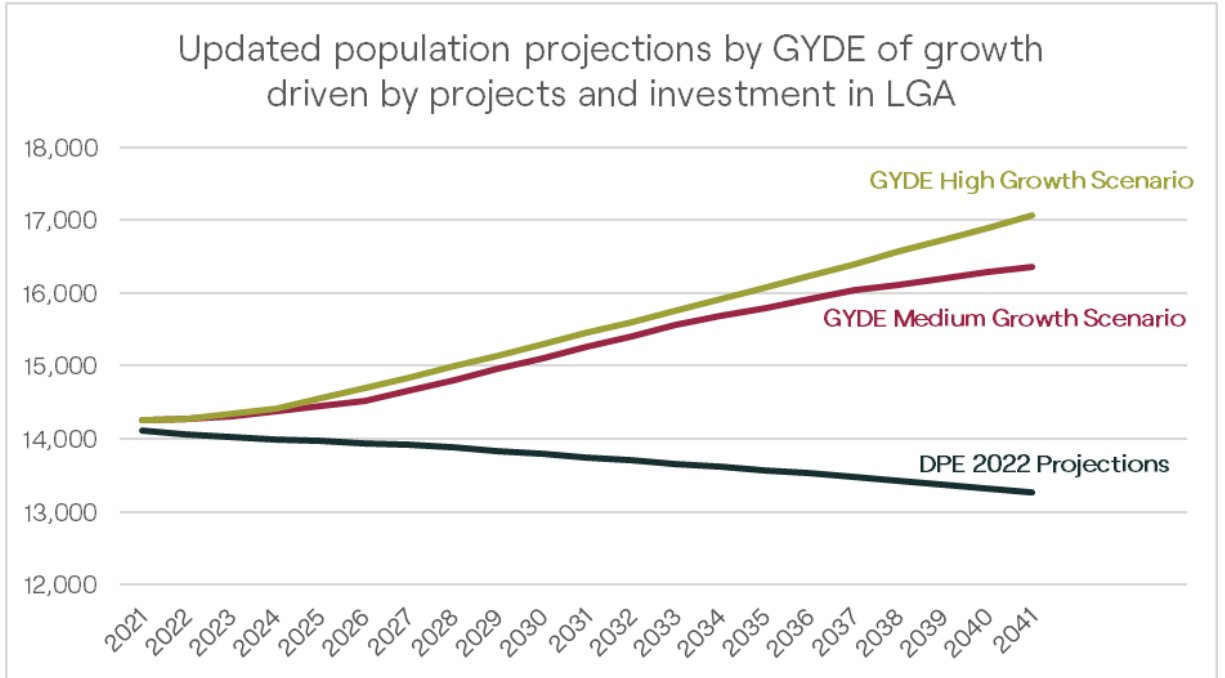


Figure 6: Updated population projects (Source: Gyde Consulting)

The targeted change in population needs to be reflected in changes to the LGA's future housing supply, including how the market operates. To meet the basic needs of the alternative population growth scenario, an increased volume of supply must be simultaneously supported by structural changes that diversify the types of new homes available.

As such, in order to accommodate this growth, an estimated 50-60 dwellings per year is required.

3. PART C – STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

Part C sets out the strategic directions for land use and development planning across the LGA. It is founded on a vision and supporting principles that aim to:

- Reflect the Community and Council vision, the strategic objectives of other plans applying within the LGA, and the objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (EP&A Act); and
- Respond to relevant State and Regional planning provisions, current Local planning provisions, and key issues as identified in previous versions of the strategy.
- Provide actions for future planning or implementation of that direction.

This Part of the Strategy sets out the context, objectives, policies, and strategic actions for general considerations, applying to the whole of the LGA, as well as thematic considerations for specific areas or localities. These strategic directions will provide a basis for decision-making and will assist in shaping further planning investigations and plan-making during the Strategy timeframe.

Strategic objectives, policies, and actions for each of the key planning issues are outlined in this section of this document. The omission of reference to an issue does not mean that it has not been considered in the Strategy or is not of importance. While it may not be regarded as a key issue, it is likely to have been considered in conjunction with another issue.

3.1. Vision and Principles

The Community and Council vision, outlined in Upper Hunter Shire's Community Strategic Plan 2032 is:

“A quality rural lifestyle – in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community.”

A range of factors are expected to influence demands for new dwellings across the LGA during

the Strategy timeframe, as summarised below:

- The population is expected to grow and maintain steady growth.
- The population is expected to age. A range of housing, including seniors housing will allow people to age in place and cater to older residents moving in (e.g., tree changers).
- Household sizes are expected to reduce. This is a national trend, generally, and is particularly relevant where populations are rapidly ageing. It may require a greater number of dwellings proportionate to overall population growth.
- The LGA is already home to mining workers who benefit from convenient commutes southward and will increasingly become a preferred residential option for mining workers and their families.
- The local economy is growing and diversifying. Building off its existing natural and industrial assets, the LGA is well placed to attract a range of new opportunities in industries such as care (aged and child), tourism, research and training, and renewable energy production. The equine cluster growing in and around the racecourse presents a further growth opportunity, as does the airport precinct along with significant infrastructure projects bringing in both temporary and permanent workers. Providing a range of housing choices to attract a skilled workforce will support this economic growth.

Management and monitoring

Part of the key outcomes of the Strategy is regular management and monitoring. Council will continue to use the Housing and Land Monitor to review residential, employment and rural residential land supplies across the whole LGA. The information that this too provides will be considered in conjunction with other planning considerations to inform rezoning decisions and future updates of the Strategy.

This is further outlined in **Section 4.2**.

3.2. Key Principles

3.2.1. General Growth Principles

The Planning Context in Part B showed the following:

- Upper Hunter Shire's settlement pattern is well established, and existing settlement areas have the capacity to accommodate the growth and change anticipated to 2041.
- There is a need for an additional 50 dwellings per year up to 2041.
- Scone will be maintained as the largest and most diverse centre for housing, jobs and services in the LGA.
- New urban growth will be accommodated in existing Towns and Villages.
- Opportunities for new rural residential developments will be accommodated in appropriate urban fringe locations and within the standalone rural living areas.
- While some physical expansion of existing settlement areas may be considered, no new settlement areas are anticipated to be required to 2041.

New development to accommodate growth and change within the LGA will be directed across the existing settlement pattern. The general characteristics described for each town and village in the following sections will assist in guiding future planning decisions for each nominated locality. Any specific growth areas are identified in the specific investigation areas identified for the four towns and other rural areas.

Population growth and change will be heavily influenced by national and Sydney metropolitan trends, as well as growth in local and regional employment and work commuting patterns.

As family sizes decline and the population ages, it is likely that higher demand for smaller sized dwellings will occur, including single storey dwellings for aged persons. Housing affordability and providing adequate seniors accommodation are expected to continue to be significant issues over the life of the Strategy.

Demand for new dwellings is projected to be about 50 per year in the LGA, of which 35 to 45 would be in towns. Most of the development is expected to occur in Scone. Residential lands released in towns and villages will accommodate this projected dwelling demand, although take-up of residential lots may depend on the extent of rural residential demand, and the proportion of dwellings in multi-unit housing.

There is currently reasonable provision of urban infrastructure and services (e.g. roads, electricity) for existing towns and villages in the LGA. However, water and sewer capacity issues do exist within the Scone STP which will restrict growth until fully resolved. Minimal growth is expected in villages, which is reflective of the servicing limits in all village areas.

Local social infrastructure, community services and recreational facilities are reasonably well catered for within the LGA. The trend for increasing centralisation of many regional and specialist services means that higher-order facilities are predominantly located in the Lower Hunter. Maintaining and improving transport links to these facilities will be important to support the health and wellbeing of local communities within the LGA

3.2.2. Economic Growth Principles

Urban employment lands and centres

Providing a sufficient supply of land that is zoned and serviced to accommodate employment-generating activities is important to the wellbeing and resilience of local communities as well as the growth and diversification of the LGA's economy. Dedicated employment lands cater predominantly for industrial, commercial (including retail) or institutional (e.g. health and education) uses within or close to urban areas. The Strategy also recognises that agriculture is a major employment industry in the LGA and provides directions to assist in safeguarding agricultural lands.

Important locations for services and employment-generating uses in the LGA include:

- Town and village centres, the largest being in Scone. These are predominantly in the form of traditional main streets situated along the New England and Golden Highways. Each offers a range of retail and other in-person services that cater to their surrounding communities as well as passing Highway trade.
- The Satur Road precinct, which accommodates Scone's Airport, Equine Centre and a number of tertiary educational institutions – now has Racing NSW ownership around racecourse.
- Regional level hospitals and community health facilities in Scone, Merriwa, and Murrurundi.
- General and light industrial areas in Scone, Aberdeen and Merriwa.

Key considerations for employment lands during the Strategy timeframe are summarised below:

For commercial and institutional uses:

- The greatest demands for commercial development are expected to occur in Scone, which already caters to the widest population catchment. The role and function of Scone's existing Town Centre (in Kelly Street) is changing and being revitalised since the construction of the Scone Bypass. This may also lead to pressure for commercial

developments along the new Bypass corridor that need to be carefully considered, particularly in relation to vehicle access and egress. The Strategy supports precinct-level planning to establish priorities for planning and development controls.

- The current supply of commercial lands in town centres is anticipated to be sufficient to meet demands for new developments. This may require planning to encourage the re-use or redevelopment of existing or underutilised commercial sites as part of the revitalisation of the Scone Town Centre.
- The service delivery model for health is expected to increase the role of private service providers, which may lead to greater demands for these types of uses in all towns and around public health facilities in Scone, Merriwa, and Murrurundi.
- Council is planning to grow aviation services and diversify uses around the Airport. This will continue to be guided by a precinct-level strategic plan.

For industrial uses:

- Existing supplies of industrial lands in Scone and Aberdeen are expected to be capable of meeting demands for the next 10-20 years, however some rationalisation of established industrial areas in both towns would improve interfaces to growing residential areas.
- Demand for lands specifically dedicated for light industrial uses in Murrurundi and Merriwa will continue to be influenced by the flexibility of the current zoning regimes in these towns, which permit a limited range of light industrial uses to occur within the existing residential areas. The Strategy carries forward support for an additional 2 to 5ha (collectively) of lands suitable for light industrial uses to be identified in Merriwa and Murrurundi, noting that:
- Existing supplies of lands in the existing industrial area in Merriwa are expected to be

capable of meeting demands for the next 5 years, but further planning is required to secure a longer-term supply.

- Formalising an area for light industrial uses in Murrurundi would assist in providing certainty for future investment and an opportunity for co-

locating businesses to benefit from shared infrastructure.

- The LGA does not currently have any lands identified for heavy industry, though future demand for this type of development is relatively uncertain.

Draft for public consultation

Table 7: Direction 1 - employment land general principles

| DIRECTION 1: EMPLOYMENT LAND GENERAL PRINCIPLES | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an adequate supply of industrial land to meet demand for development and facilitate employment opportunities. • To provide adequate space for commercial, retail, community and cultural developments in compact, walkable Town and Village centres. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment lands will be regularly reviewed and maintained to provide an adequate supply of land zoned and serviced for industrial and commercial uses is available in a minimum of 2 landownerships in each town (if possible). • A network of commercial centres will reflect the Settlement Pattern adopted by the Strategy, which will be used to consider the preferred location and scale of commercial, retail, community and civic developments. • The current supply of land zoned for business uses in Town and Village centres will be rationalised, and future development to strengthen commercial centres will be supported by appropriate planning controls. • Inappropriate commercial developments (e.g. bulky goods retailing) will be discouraged from locating in industrial areas. • Intensive/industrial agriculture uses may be permitted in industrial areas. • Community and cultural facilities will be permitted in business and industrial zones. • Traffic impacts of industrial developments will be assessed, and management requirements may be identified to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Utilise existing highway access points wherever possible; – Avoid or minimise industrial traffic through existing or planned residential areas; and – Enable the future potential for industrial areas to be accessible to public transport – The creation of new direct vehicular access to highways will generally be discouraged. • Use and development of lands fronting highways, will be encouraged to provide vehicular access by a road other than the highway, where practicable. • The consolidation of existing highway frontage lots will be encouraged to create new service access roads (e.g. via side road or rear lane). |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the boundaries of and supply of floorspace within commercial centres in Towns and Villages. • Reviewing the zoning regime in Merriwa and Murrurundi to consider the range of light industrial uses permitted in residential areas; and • Identifying the potential for an additional 2 to 5 ha of industrial lands in Merriwa. |

3.2.3. Residential Growth Principles

The data presented in **Section 2.8** indicated that the LGA is growing, as is the demand for housing. It is imperative that the actions from this strategy allow for the consideration of the well planned and sustainable release of land and development of housing both in type and location.

The key principles this strategy is to focus on are:

- Ensuring sufficient residential lands for population growth.
- Encouraging infill development where possible in existing towns and villages.
- Delivering high quality housing in great places.
- Provide a range of housing opportunities and choices.
- Deliver well planned rural residential areas.

Housing lands and dwelling – overview

The LGA already provides diverse housing choices to suit a range of lifestyles in towns, villages, and rural living areas, and demands for new dwellings are expected to vary across different localities. More dwellings will be required to meet growth in some areas, and a greater diversity of dwelling types is expected to be required in all towns.

Key considerations for housing demands during the Strategy timeframe are summarised below.

- As the largest centre of population, employment and services, Scone is expected to experience the greatest pressure for housing growth, and account for the majority of new residential developments.
- A more moderate level of growth is expected in Aberdeen, which is likely to be heavily influenced by employment demands in the mining industry.
- Demands for medium-density housing, low-income housing and rental accommodation are expected to be greatest in Scone and Aberdeen, and should be directed in areas with good access to shops, services and public transport.

- While populations of Merriwa and Murrurundi are expected to remain relatively stable, the rapidly ageing nature of these communities will generate demand for new housing.
- A preference for rural living opportunities, including dwellings on large residential lots and rural smallholdings, is expected to continue. These are generally characterised by developments:
 - At the urban fringe, generally in estates adjoining a towns or villages with services such as sealed roads, water and reticulated sewer, and lot sizes of 4,000m² to 2 hectares;
 - In villages, created as part of historic subdivisions and providing opportunities for dwellings on larger residential lots. Current zoning regimes also allow for home-based businesses, including light industrial uses, in residential areas;
 - On rural lots of 2 to 10 hectares, comprising residential use within a rural environment, generally close to a town and with some services. This also includes isolated 'concessional' lots of less than 40 hectares; or
 - On rural lots of 10 to 40 hectares, which are primarily residential in use, but where small-scale agricultural activities are also carried out.

The Strategy seeks to accommodate most demands for rural living in urban fringe areas close to towns to:

- Where possible, provide connections to urban infrastructure networks, including water and sewer;
- Afford residents easy access to shops and services; and
- Minimise the potential for land use conflict with rural industries, or fragmentation of agricultural lands.

Benchmarks for the number of new dwellings expected across the LGA to 2041 are identified in **Section 2.8.1**. These benchmarks are based on current population projections. They support the principle that the majority of all new dwellings should be located in towns, with the majority of these dwellings located in Scone.

An ongoing challenge for planning during the Strategy timeframe will be directing new residential developments to support the timely and cost-effective delivery of infrastructure and creation of cohesive neighbourhoods. The Strategy considers priorities for precinct-level planning and opportunities to rationalise housing lands in specific localities.

Draft for public consultation

Town infill

Promoting infill development in Towns will:

- Enable existing centres to grow, providing space for more services and employment-generating uses to meet the needs of local communities and support local economic growth;
- Give more people direct access to established urban infrastructure and services (e.g. health and education) in larger centres, which can support the efficiency and ongoing viability of these services;
- Provide greater housing choices for existing and incoming residents, including more medium density residential outcomes; and
- Promote a more compact urban form, minimising land use conflicts with rural industries, and the rate at which rural or environmental lands are converted to urban uses.
- Allow the more efficient use of land and public infrastructure.

Towns' commercial centres will continue to change in response to the changing demands of surrounding communities. The greatest level change is expected in Scone's Town Centre, where the reduction in vehicle traffic arising since the completion of the Scone Bypass, and reclassification and revitalisation of Kelly Street (prompted by the Council's Scone CBD Revitalisation Project), will encourage private investment.

Conventional detached housing is anticipated to remain the predominant market preference for new dwellings during the Strategy timeframe. However, the trend towards smaller household sizes is

expected to increase demand for smaller house types, such as small lot or dual occupancy detached dwellings, townhouses, and units. The availability of these types of housing, particularly where they are located close to jobs and services in commercial centres, can support specific demographic sectors that are important to Upper Hunter's community and economy, including seniors, seasonal workers, and low-income households.

The feasibility and take-up of Town infill is influenced by a range of factors, including (but not limited to):

- The availability of large areas of new lands released for residential development, particularly on the fringes of existing Towns and Villages;
- Subdivision and design controls, such as minimum lot sizes, site coverage (e.g. floor space ratio), building heights, setbacks, or dual occupancy considerations;
- Lot consolidation considerations;
- Site constraints and management considerations, including flooding and heritage;
- Opportunities for mixed use commercial/residential developments; and/or
- Infrastructure servicing requirements, particularly water, sewer and stormwater;

Council will facilitate greater opportunities for Town infill by reviewing and updating its planning controls to consider the above factors. This will aim to minimise impediments to infill development whilst recognising the need to protect and manage environmental and social values.

Table 8: Direction 2: residential land general principles

| DIRECTION 2: RESIDENTIAL LAND GENERAL PRINCIPLES | |
|---|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide lands that are available for residential development and can meet anticipated demands for housing growth and change in line with population growth. • To direct housing growth in line with the LGA's settlement pattern. • To support the timely and cost-effective delivery of infrastructure required to service new residential development. • To create cohesive and attractive residential areas. • To support urban infill development with an appropriate planning framework. • To provide planning controls that allow appropriate residential infill development, taking into account important issues such as flooding, adequacy of servicing, streetscape and urban character, heritage, and water sensitive urban design. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New commercial development will be prioritised in and around established Town Centres. • Residential infill development will be encouraged in and around Town Centres to increase housing choice. • Town infill development proposals must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Demonstrate no increase in flood risk to existing or proposed properties; – Identify how heritage conservation outcomes will be implemented; and – Identify infrastructure capacity, servicing and management requirements, particularly sewer and drainage; and – Consider impacts to the character and scale of surrounding existing developments. • Undertake a strategic review of infill potential across all Towns to identify impediments to infill development (e.g. flooding, heritage, restrictions to current principal planning controls). • Assess infrastructure service capacities, particularly water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage, as part of any proposed infill development. • Maintain a suitable supply of zoned residential land to meet projected demand in each town and village. • Determine the suitability of land for residential development based on the following attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Flat-moderate grades – Service and infrastructure capacity/staging – Access to community services and facilities – Access to convenience/other retail – Road access – Road and lot orientation to maximise passive solar design opportunities and energy efficiency – Good aspect and neighbourhood amenity. • Direct urban growth to areas where effective use could be made of existing urban infrastructure/reserve where capacity is available. • Maintain a minimum of 2 development fronts in separate ownership in each town to maintain market place competition if possible. |

DIRECTION 2: RESIDENTIAL LAND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prevent inappropriate subdivision or non-reversible land use within the identified preferred investigation areas for future urban expansion.• Ensure potential public transport accessibility for all residential development, and provision of shopping and other facilities within walking distance where practical.• Consider urban sustainability issues in the determination of new areas for urban expansion (e.g. servicing limits to allow future water recycling, protection of biodiversity values, road and subdivision layout to provide optimum orientation for solar access). |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prioritise Investigation Areas as identified in the Strategy to assist with rationalising the existing housing lands supply.• Prepare policies to facilitate planning agreements for large development proposals that support the preferred long term urban structure.• Prepare a letter targeted to landowners in each town where development opportunities have been identified to promote the potential for additional residential development opportunities which can be discussed with Council.• Promote the use of the Low Rise Housing Diversity Code to encourage infill development which may be possible under Complying Development provisions.• Monitor the take up of infill in all towns to inform network and service delivery planning and identify the need for future amendments to planning controls.• Assess infrastructure service capacities, particularly water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage, as part of any proposed infill development.• Regularly monitor and review housing lands take-up and availability of supply to inform LEP plan-making.• Incorporate future climate change adaptation and responses in future planning instruments and documents, including water saving, solar lot orientation, water reuse, etc. |

3.2.4. Key Infrastructure

Urban water and sewerage

The capacity to supply adequate water supplies and wastewater services is an important consideration when planning for growth in towns and villages across the LGA.

Reticulated water services are already available in all towns, as well as in Cassilis. A number of considerations for water supply networks and infrastructure are expected, including:

- A new water pipeline between Scone and Murrurundi has now been completed. This will address supply limitations during dry conditions in Murrurundi.
- Current water supply, pumping and storage infrastructure in Scone will need to be taken into account in planning for projected residential development.
- The ongoing planning for the potential to back feed water from Scone to Aberdeen.

Sewerage capacity in all towns is a limiting factor for growth in the area. Scone's sewerage treatment plant is at capacity and upgrades to capacity is a priority to accommodate growth. However, villages and rural living areas are generally not serviced with reticulated sewer. Provision of this service is currently considered financially unfeasible due to the dispersed and low-density nature of developments. This will continue to limit growth potential in these areas.

The current water and sewer service areas are constrained and provide a limit to future urban development and rural residential development opportunities in towns across the LGA. Requiring developers to fund extensions to service areas beyond these limitations will support Council to sustainably manage these networks.

Table 9: Direction 3. Urban water and sewerage

| DIRECTION 3. URBAN WATER AND SEWERAGE | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide secure, high quality water supplies to all towns. • To provide a suitable sewerage system for all towns. • To support opportunities for upgrades to reticulated water and sewerage networks to benefit existing villages and rural living areas. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the upgrade of the Scone Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) and actions around this to increase its capacity. • The LGA-wide water and sewer servicing strategy will be maintained to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Address service capacity issues in existing urban areas; – Identify network expansion requirements to facilitate the staged development of existing urban release areas (lands zoned in LEP); and – Consider network expansion requirements that may be required to service investigation areas identified in the Strategy. • The expansion of water and sewer infrastructure will be limited to existing service areas (as at 2023), and investigation areas identified in the Strategy. • The cost of providing water and sewer services to new urban developments will be recovered through appropriate levies and contributions, as provided for under relevant legislation. • Proposals for speculative urban rezonings (i.e. in locations not identified in the Strategy) must demonstrate that water and sewer services can be provided, and that the costs for providing infrastructure will be covered by users or developers. • Land use requirements to deliver new or improved water and sewer infrastructure will be supported with appropriate planning controls. • Proposals for residential and rural residential rezonings will generally not be supported on lands located above the height limit that allows reticulated water services to be provided. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a business case around the upgrade of the Scone Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) and actions around this to increase its capacity. • Investigate the feasibility of providing a reticulated water supply to the Middle Brook rural residential area. • Monitor water and sewer networks to identify supply and capacity issues. |

3.2.5. Investigation Areas General

The way in which land is used and developed in the coming years may change to accommodate new growth. The Strategy will be maintained to identify Investigation Areas for specific localities. This will assist Council and other stakeholders by recognising:

- The preferred areas for changing land uses, particularly to accommodate urban growth; or
- Areas that are anticipated to experience pressure for changing land uses, including rural residential developments.

Recognising these locations early in the planning process will assist Council and other stakeholders in undertaking future investigations to consider the suitability of lands for development and may lead to the preparation of Planning Proposals to rezone land during the Strategy timeframe.

The Strategy identifies fifteen Investigation Areas, which are classified as either:

- **Priority**, where planning to confirm the suitability of lands and capacity for development (e.g. yields) should be undertaken in the short to medium term, to meet an objective of the Strategy. The purpose of identifying these is to facilitate the preparation of Planning Proposals to rezone land within the Strategy timeframe.
- **Preliminary**, where changes in use may eventuate in the longer term, including beyond the Strategy timeframe. Planning Proposals to rezone land in these areas may be heavily dependent on other factors, such as infrastructure or the availability of suitable lands to accommodate similar developments nearby. The purpose of identifying these areas in the Strategy is to assist stakeholders, including Council and landowners, to consider precinct-level issues such as flooding, transport, and infrastructure.

To clarify, Preliminary Investigation Areas have been identified to indicate where future rezonings may be considered suitable in principle but are not expected to be required in the next 10 years. Council will generally only consider Planning Proposals (rezoning requests) for Preliminary Investigation Areas as part of the regular process of reviewing and updating the overall Strategy, unless it can meet the criteria for speculative rezonings and/ or it meets a high-level principle of the Strategy.

The current supply of lands available for residential, rural residential and employment-generating uses is generally considered to be sufficient to meet the anticipated demands for development across the LGA during the Strategy timeframe. With few exceptions, the Investigation Areas identified in the Strategy will enable Council and other stakeholders to support other Strategy objectives or better outcomes for communities.

The Strategy maps identify boundaries for investigation areas. These boundaries are indicative, noting the following:

- The full extent of the investigation area boundary shown is not intended to be reflective of the full extent of the resultant zone.
- Modifications of boundaries may be considered as a result of future planning investigations, to achieve outcomes in line with the broader directions of the Strategy, including (but not limited) to:
- To protect important agricultural lands, biodiversity or other natural resources located within the current investigation area boundary; or
- To accommodate the efficient delivery of local infrastructure.

Where inconsistency occurs between Strategy maps and text, the text will prevail.

Table 10: Direction 4 – Investigation areas general principles

| DIRECTION 4 – INVESTIGATION AREAS GENERAL PRINCIPLES | |
|---|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support the efficient use of existing urban land and infrastructure. • To support the coordinated release and development of new urban lands and infrastructure. • To indicate the preferred long-term locations for urban growth in towns and villages. • To avoid or minimise the potential for land use conflicts with rural and urban industries. • To limit the fragmentation of rural landholdings. • To minimise costs to Council in relation to the assessment of speculative rezonings. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation areas identified in the Strategy will be the preferred locations for rezonings to accommodate new development. • Investigations to support rezonings in the areas identified will be prioritised in line with the adopted Strategy. • Investigation areas will be reviewed and updated as part of the process of reviewing and updating the Strategy. • Proposals to rezone lands in locations outside of investigation areas (speculative rezonings) will be considered during the 5-yearly review of the Strategy and may be considered where proponents meet the requirements specified. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require future investigations for rezonings to address the considerations identified in the Strategy. • Invite expressions of interest for new investigation areas as part of the process of reviewing and updating the Strategy. |

Speculative rezonings

Investigation areas for all four towns and where relevant, villages and rural areas have been identified. These are Council's preferred locations for rezonings to accommodate urban, rural residential and employment uses during the Strategy timeframe. The ongoing suitability of these investigation areas will be considered as part of the regular process of reviewing and updating the overall Strategy.

Council's preferred approach to dealing with speculative rezonings is to include them as part of the regular review and update to the Strategy. The Strategy review process has been preceded by an open call for potential investigation areas, to support a fair and transparent consideration of alternative sites on their merit. This will continue as an action for each 5-year review of the Strategy.

It is possible that opportunities may arise for development in locations that are not currently

identified as investigation areas (referred to as speculative rezonings). A degree of flexibility may be given to consider speculative rezonings in extraordinary circumstances, such as in response to unforeseen opportunities, or land supply deficits, subject to considerations described below.

Assessing speculative rezonings outside the regular Strategy review process may limit the opportunity to assess all potentially suitable locations. It can also result in additional costs incurred to Council, and planning legislation allows for these costs to be recovered from the proponent. Applications for speculative rezonings made outside the regular Strategy review process must demonstrate consistency with the Strategy's broader directions, and identify the broader implications for land supplies, including investigation areas identified in the Strategy. Council may choose to initiate an early review of the Strategy, as required.

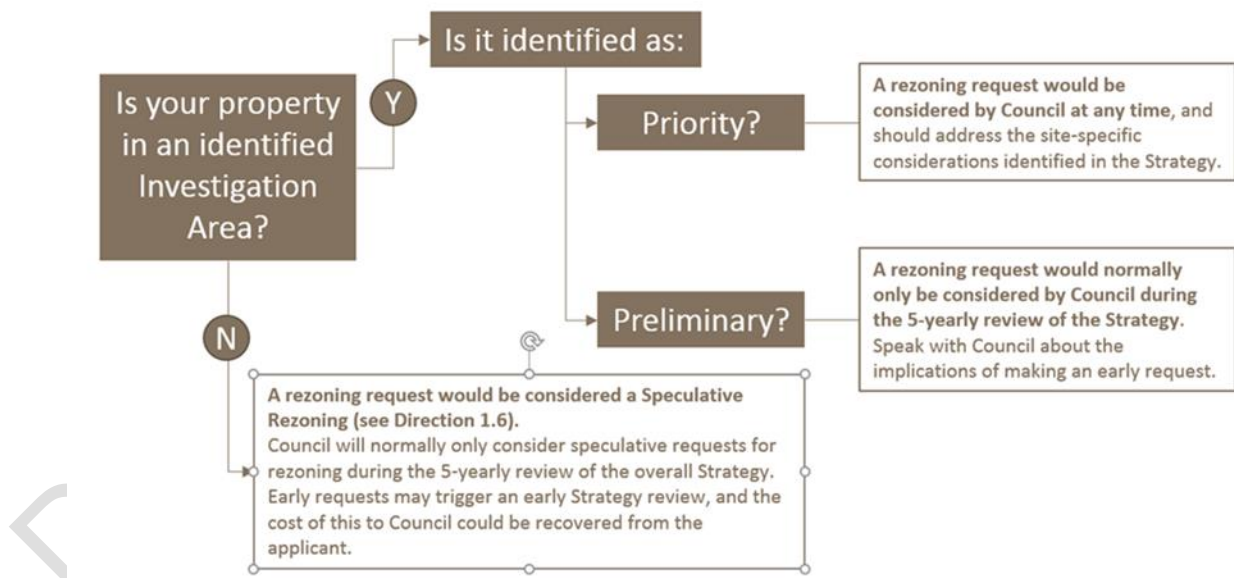


Figure 4: Rezoning pathway proposed by Council

Table 11: Direction 5 – speculative rezonings actions

| DIRECTION 5 – SPECULATIVE REZONINGS ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prioritise development in preferred locations identified in the Strategy. • To provide limited flexibility for considering proposals that are inconsistent with the Strategy, based on their merit. • To minimise the cost to Council of assessing or preparing speculative rezonings. • To support a fair and transparent assessment of the suitability of alternative sites for rezoning. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future reviews of the Strategy will continue to be preceded by a call for sites to be included in a review of Investigations Areas. • Any proposal to rezone land to accommodate urban or rural residential development in locations not identified in the Strategy will be subject to assessment against the criteria established in the Strategy. • Where not included as part of the general call for sites preceding a Strategy review, speculative rezonings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will require the preparation of an addendum to the Strategy, which should identify the implications of the proposal on the Strategy’s identified land supplies; • May trigger an open call for alternative sites, to provide for an equitable and transparent assessment process; and • May incur additional fees to cover the cost to Council to review the implications of the new rezoning on the LGA-wide strategy, and to assess or progress the proposal. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop more detailed guidelines for considering speculative rezonings, including fees associated with the assessment and/or preparation of planning proposals that are not already identified as Investigation Areas. |

Criteria for any rezoning

Any Planning Proposal for a rezoning (whether or not it is within an identified Investigation Area) must ensure that the following criteria is met:

Table 12: Criteria for rezoning land

| Criteria | Assessment |
|--|---|
| Current zoning | What is the current land zoning? |
| | Is it environmental zoned land? |
| Strategic planning framework | Is the growth aligned to the strategy's target areas? |
| | Does it address a land supply gap or deficiency? |
| Location near existing township or current investigation area | Is the site near or abutting a current investigation area? |
| | Is the site near an existing town or village? |
| Land ownership | Is it fragmented land ownership? |
| | Is there developer interest? |
| Land use conflict | New development (including roads), or any change to an existing land use adjoining, adjacent to, or in the vicinity (within up to 2km) of locally important agricultural land shall have no adverse impacts on an existing agricultural use or enterprise, or potential future use of the land for agriculture. |
| | Scone Airport - Must consider OLS and ANEI/ ANEF noise requirements around airport. 24-hour access needed to airport |
| | Buffer zones required between employment/ industrial land and residential land |
| Infrastructure and services | Upgrade requirements to the sewerage treatment plant |
| | Will any new development be able to cover any augmentation to services |
| Transport corridor/ Access and traffic | Will new development have any impact on any State Roads, such as the New England Highway and the Golden Highway |
| Flood Liable | Existing rural zoned land subject to flooding will be retained as agricultural land unless it can be demonstrated that the flood risk can be mitigated. |
| Bushfire Prone | Is the site mapped as being bushfire prone? |
| | Can bushfire risk be mitigated with the future development? |
| Soils | Are the soils identified as Acid Sulfate Soils or saline soils? |
| | Are the soils black soils? |

| Criteria | Assessment |
|--|---|
| Visual Impact | What is the impact on the surrounding landscape? |
| Slope | Does the land have a gradient in excess of 18 degrees? |
| Heritage | Is the land within a Heritage Conservation Area or include a listed Heritage Item? |
| Agricultural productivity and value | An investigation area should not cause permanent and irreversible loss of any identified important agricultural land. |
| Environmental values | Surface water catchments and groundwater systems affecting important agricultural land must be retained. New developments or land use changes can demonstrate a neutral or beneficial impact on surface or groundwater quality and availability. |
| | Does the land have a riparian corridor? |
| | Is the site mapped as having conservation values on it? |

3.3. Towns

This section provides specific directions in relation to the future structure of the LGA's four major Towns. The Strategy recognises that it will be important to meet long-term urban expansion opportunities in Scone and Aberdeen and to ensure that opportunities are not compromised by short-term demands for low-density or rural residential developments. Any provisions for investigation areas are also outlined in this section.



Figure 7: Images of Upper Hunter Shire Council towns (Source: <https://upperhuntercountry.com/>)

3.3.1. Scone

Overview

With a population of around 5,013, Scone is the largest settlement in the LGA, and accommodates the greatest and most diverse concentration of jobs and houses. The town is situated on the New England Highway 150km north of Newcastle and 130km south of Tamworth. It is nestled between the foot slopes of Scone Mountain to the east and the rich alluvial floodplains of Dartbrook and Kingdon Ponds to the west.

Scone is known as the Horse Capital of Australia and is the gateway to the second-largest concentration of stud farms in the world. The town provides an important focus for market and service-based activities associated with surrounding agricultural industries, particularly horse breeding and beef cattle production. These industries are important to Scone's identity, local economy and labour market, represented by major facilities including the largest veterinary practice in the southern hemisphere, a large livestock selling centre and a meatworks.

The town is an increasingly popular destination for visitors, as the key node for accessing a range of the Hunter's unique natural landscapes, including the Barrington Tops, Burning Mountain, the Wingen Maid and a variety of rural landscapes. The Horse Capital theme is celebrated each year through the Scone Horse Festival.

Services and employment-generating activities are focused in:

- Scone's Town Centre, comprising a range of retail and service businesses centred on Kelly Street, which forms part of the New England Highway. Businesses and services have historically benefitted from passing trade associated with the Highway, and the Town Centre is serviced by a train station. The change in traffic flows arising from completion of the Scone Bypass will influence the role and

function of the Town Centre, which is also benefitting from works associated with the Scone CBD Revitalisation project.

- Scone's older industrial area, to the north of town, is centred on Muffett Street while a new industrial area on the western side of the railway line offers further capacity to accommodate industrial-related uses on lands fronting the New England Highway and potential access to the heavy rail line. Broader (regional) economic drivers will continue to influence take-up of industrial lands. The location of new industrial uses within this area will need to consider impacts arising from growth in the adjoining residential area to the south.

Areas around Scone Airport and Satur/ Scone Racecourse are considered in **Section 3.3.2**.

Scone's well-established residential neighbourhoods are predominantly characterised by single dwellings on large residential allotments. An increasing number of dual occupancies and multi-dwelling residential buildings have been delivered closer to Scone's Town Centre, with further opportunities for small-scale renewal of an aging housing stock. Facilitating further residential infill within and around to the Town Centre will be an ongoing challenge.

More broadly, Scone is home to the LGA's largest regional health and educational facilities, including a public hospital and TAFE campus. The town also provides a range of cultural, sporting, and recreational facilities, including a library, Bill Rose Sporting Complex/White Park, Murray Bain Oval, Elizabeth Park and Scone Park. The town is also serviced by a train station, situated in the Town Centre, offering passenger services to Sydney, Newcastle, Tamworth, Armidale, and Moree

Proposed Investigation Areas

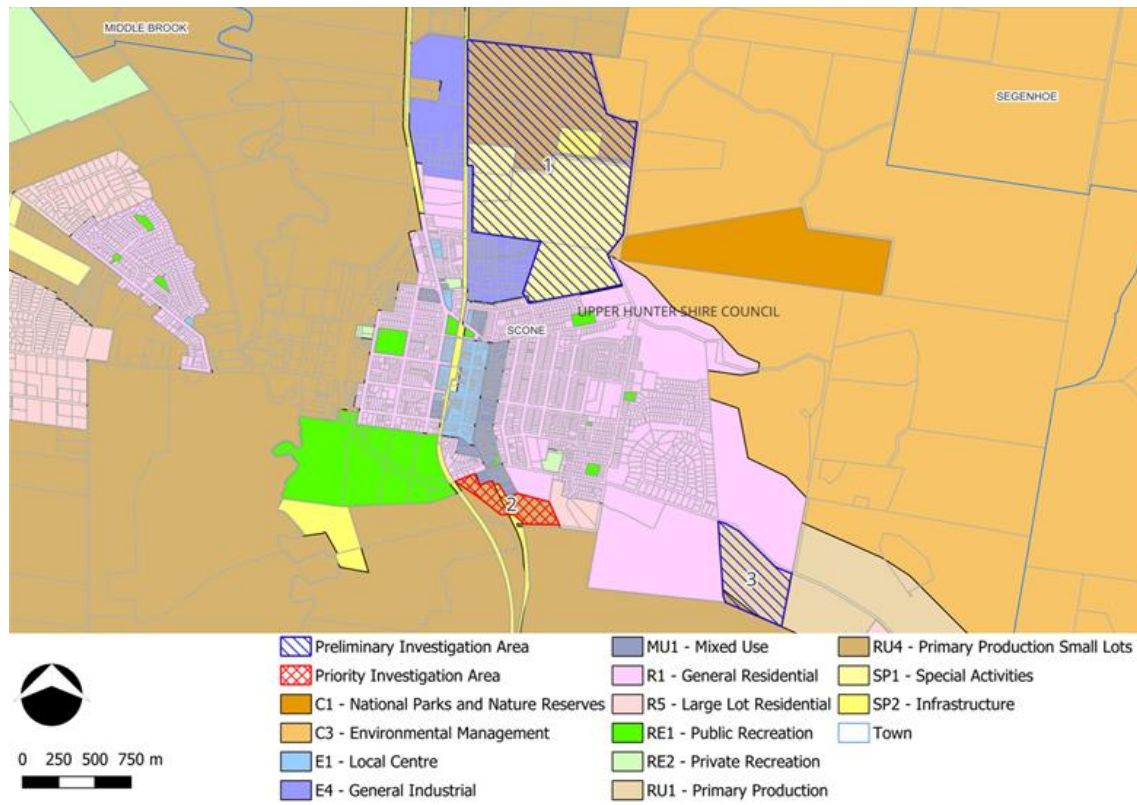


Figure 8: Proposed investigation areas for Scone Township

Table 13: Scone Township Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPDATE |
|-----|-----------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Scone North | <p>Preliminary To support long-term expansion of industrial land supply.</p> <p>Suitable for spot rezonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere.</p> | Industrial | <p>Maintain as preliminary investigation area, pending any further strategic work.</p> <p>Maintain opportunities for spot rezonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere.</p> |
| 2 | Scone South | <p>Priority Investigations should be undertaken in parallel with broader land use review / strategy for Town Centre.</p> | Mixed use / opportunity site | Maintain as priority. |
| 3 | Scone Southeast | <p>Preliminary To identify the preferred location for long-term residential expansion of Scone Township.</p> | Residential | <p>Maintain as preliminary investigation area.</p> <p>Need to consider overall residential lands supply and demand, including the availability of suitable lots on adjoining land already zoned for residential uses, as well as soil salinity and drainage.</p> |

Summary

Table 14: Direction 6: Scone actions

| DIRECTION 6: SCONE ACTIONS | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify land that should be investigated for changing land uses to support long-term settlement expansion. To make efficient use of existing urban areas and infrastructure. To limit the exposure of the town to major flood events. To provide a range of affordable housing choices and promote housing market competition. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigation Areas, as identified in the Strategy, will be prioritised as described for further investigations to consider rezoning. Rural residential land re-zonings on lands adjoining the township will be discouraged to minimise the long-term risk of sterilising future urban lands. Support the co-location of industrial uses in and around the established industrial area to the north of Scone. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise owner-initiated proposals for rezonings in identified Investigation Areas, where they address the locality considerations identified in the Strategy. Maintain Area 1 -Scone North as a preliminary investigation area but allow for spot rezonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Identify a policy objective to support the co-location of industrial uses in and around the established industrial area to the north of Scone. Maintain Area 2 - Scone South as a priority investigation area for mixed use development. Investigations should be undertaken in parallel with broader land use review / strategy for Town Centre in the short term to be undertaken in parallel with investigations for Scone South. Maintain Area 3 – Scone Southeast as a preliminary investigation area for future residential development subject to meeting supply and demand, as well as addressing soil salinity and drainage as part of the detailed analysis. Identify a policy objective to discourage rural residential land re-zonings on lands adjoining the township, to minimise the long-term risk of sterilising future urban lands. |

3.3.2. Satur and Scone's Airport and surrounds

Overview

Scone's Airport represents an important part of the local transport infrastructure and may facilitate future economic development opportunities. Precinct-level planning will continue to be guided by the Council's precinct-level strategic plan for the Airport. Land use and development planning controls will be important provisions to support the implementation of this plan, particularly to:

- Protect this infrastructure from urban encroachment and adverse environmental impacts, and
- Provide adequate adjacent land to encourage airport related development and activities.

This may limit the types of uses and form of development that may occur within an appropriate buffer zone around the Airport and will continue to be applied through special zonings to facilitate appropriate opportunities. Maps identifying key considerations, such as the obstacle limit surface and extent of aircraft noise for the Airport will continue to be reviewed and updated to provide for safe and efficient airport operations.

The specialised area centred on Satur Road, to the west of town, already accommodates the Scone Airport, the Equine Centre and tertiary educational institutions. The co-location of these facilities

makes the area an important destination for staff, students, and tourists. These services and the specific operational requirements of each facility may offer further opportunities for commercial developments during the Strategy timeframe.

To the west of town, Satur is an increasingly popular area offering a mix of traditional residential and rural fringe housing options, as well as accommodating the Airport and the racecourse and associated services. Flood prone lands, predominantly associated with the Kingdon Ponds watercourse, will continue to provide a rural-natural break between Scone's traditional core and Satur.

In Satur, demand for residential development is expected to continue along the Satur Road and Moobi Road corridors. The capacity to accommodate further residential development here will be considered in line with long-term planning requirements of the key economic assets, including the Airport and will recognise existing agricultural activities and future growth potential for these industries. The transition of lands to accommodate urban development, particularly along the Moobi Road corridor, will respect the surrounding rural character and productivity.

Proposed Investigation Areas

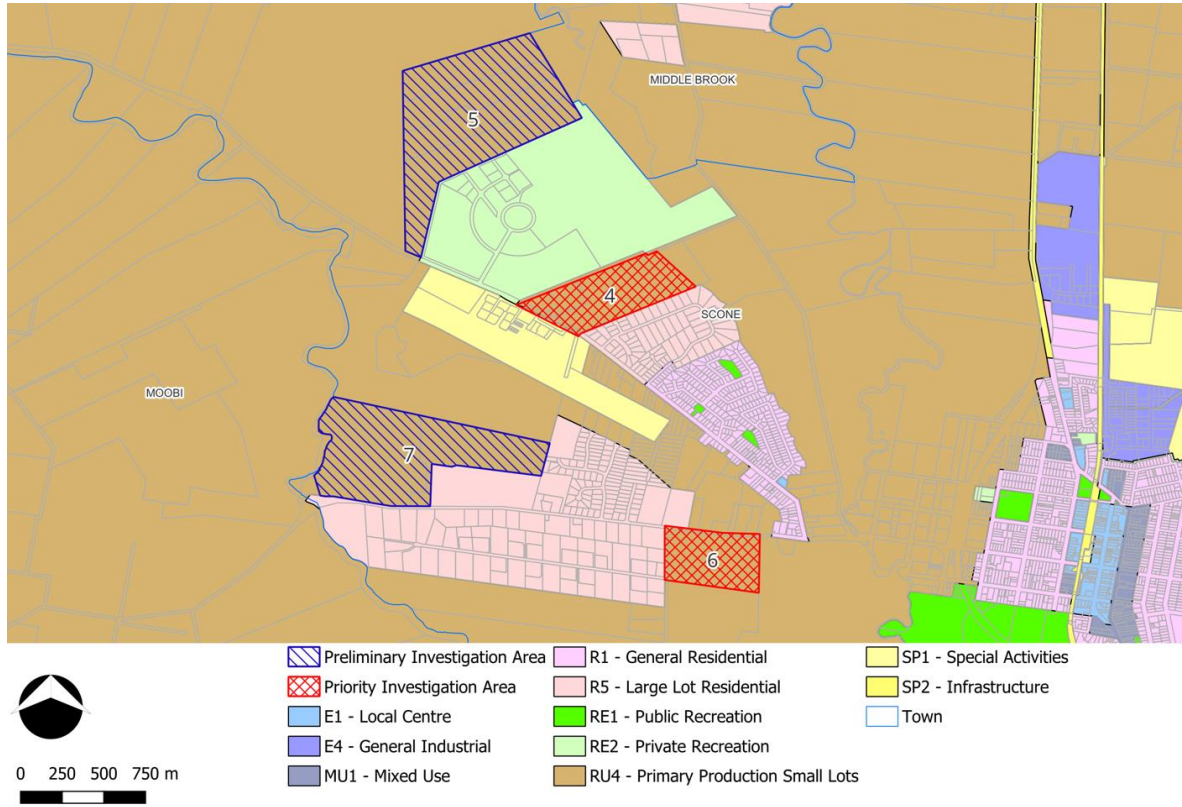


Figure 9: Scone Airport, Satur and surrounds investigation areas

Table 15: Satur and Scone's Airport and surrounds Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | 2017 CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPDATE |
|-----|--------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---|
| 4 | Scone Racecourse-South | Priority To support the ongoing viability and growth of surrounding economic assets (e.g. Airport, TAFE and Equine Centre) | Employment/ Opportunity site | Maintain as Priority area given the investment in the racecourse area and the opportunity to expand area around the TAFE and equine centre. Would need consideration of land use buffers between uses and neighbouring R5 large lot residential development to the south. |
| 5 | Scone Racecourse – North | Preliminary To support the ongoing viability and growth of surrounding economic assets (e.g. Airport, TAFE and Equine Centre) | Employment/ Opportunity site | Maintain as preliminary given the investment in the racecourse area and the opportunity to expand area around the TAFE and equine centre. However, the site to the south would need consideration of land use buffers between future uses and agricultural land uses to the north. |
| 6 | Moobi Road – East | Preliminary | Rural Residential | Change to priority This area may be suitable for residential and large-lot residential uses, adjoining established and popular rural residential areas. Investigations should be prioritised to coordinate precinct-level planning for land use and infrastructure. |
| 7 | Moobi Road – West | Preliminary - To identify the preferred location for rural residential expansion in the long-term (15+ years). | Rural residential | Maintain as Preliminary. This area may be suitable for large-lot residential uses, subject to take-up of supply in existing adjoining areas to the south and east. Potential to expand the area further north towards the airport, subject to any development in this area being tied to the airport. |

Table 16: Direction 7: Satur, Scone Airport and surrounds actions

| DIRECTION 7: SATUR, SCONE AIRPORT AND SURROUNDS ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To retain and attract employment-generating uses along the Satur/Bunnan Road corridor, particularly to support the ongoing viability and growth of the Airport and Equine precinct. To provide for the continued operation of Scone Airport on a 24-hour basis and facilitate airport related employment generation in line with Council's Strategic Plan and vision for the Airport. To allow for future rural residential development in the area which is compatible with the operations of the airport. To ensure that future rural residential development is not on land which is identified as agriculturally significant and provide buffers to surrounding significant agricultural land. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain suitable LEP zones for the airport and surrounding buffer lands to limit development on adjacent land which may be adversely affected by airport related noise or may impact on airport operations. Maintain suitable zoning of buffer land in an appropriate location to enable airport related employment generating development. Ensure suitable development opportunities for rural residential development in existing precincts established in the area. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain SP1 Special Activities- Airport zoning for the Scone Memorial Airport and LEP provisions relating to development affected by aircraft noise and land within the obstacle limitation surface, so that these issues are taken into account in development proposals and complied with when determining development applications. Retain noise exposure forecast (NEF) contours around the airport as an overlay to the LEP map. Retain special development guidelines in the Upper Hunter DCP in relation to development in the vicinity of the airport. Ensure that infrastructure zoned land permits existing dwellings and allows dwellings associated with airport use but restricts further subdivision potential with the use of Clause 2 of Schedule 1 – Additional Permitted Uses. Apply a minimum 100m buffer around the airport to prevent new noise sensitive development. Maintain Investigation Area 4 – Scone Racecourse South as a priority investigation area and encourage and support rezoning and strategic planning for this key employment area. An appropriate buffer with the existing residential development further south is to be established as part of the master planning process. Maintain Investigation Area 5 – Scone Racecourse North as a preliminary investigation area subject to resolving any potential land use conflict with existing agricultural uses to the north. Support Investigation Area 6 – Moobi Road – East being a priority investigation area for further rural residential development, subject to preliminary investigations regarding black soils and confirmation that rural residential development would be possible with this constraint. Maintain Investigation Area 7 – Moobi Road – West as a preliminary investigation area. Any potential expansion of the existing rural residential area along Moobi Road to the north west towards the airport should not be supported as this has the potential to cause land use conflict with the airport and prevent further expansion. Expansion should only occur if the uses align with the Additional Permitted Uses clause in the LEP (i.e. hangar access to the runway is provided). |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Require any planning proposal along Moobi Road (either east or west) to include a DCP chapter for rural residential development which includes (but is not limited to):<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lot sizes, particularly a transition from rural residential to rural uses along the boundary.• Managing areas of biodiversity within lots.• Access and traffic circulation, particularly minimising the number of access points along Moobi Road. |
|--|--|

Draft for public consultation

3.3.3. Aberdeen

Overview

Aberdeen is the second-largest settlement in the LGA, with a population around 1,850. The town is situated on the New England Highway, approximately 14km south of Scone and 12km north of Muswellbrook. The area was originally a stopping point at the junction of the Dart Brook and the Hunter River, with the Hunter River continuing to form a natural boundary at the west of town.

Aberdeen's population grew rapidly after the establishment, in 1892, of a large abattoir in the north of the town. More recently, population growth has been heavily influenced by mining employment opportunities available in Muswellbrook and Singleton. This is expected to continue influencing demands for housing and services during the Strategy timeframe.

Aberdeen's well-established residential neighbourhoods are characterised by single dwellings on larger lots, set within a grid pattern of local streets. The future housing demands anticipated in Aberdeen during the Strategy time frame will continue to be accommodated in the

large area released for this purpose to the south east of town.

Aberdeen has a small Town Centre, with shops and businesses centred on McQueen Street, which forms part of the New England Highway. Town Centre shops and businesses service the local community as well as passing trade. This area is considered to have sufficient capacity to accommodate demands for commercial development during the Strategy timeframe. The Strategy also supports a greater diversity of housing in and around the Town Centre, including medium density housing, low-income housing, and seniors' accommodation.

Lands have also been allocated to accommodate a range of employment-generating uses to the south of the town, including:

- A mixed-use area at the southern entrance to the town, with dual frontage to the New England Highway and rail line; and
- An industrial area to the east of the rail line, adjoining a growing residential area.

Proposed Investigation Areas

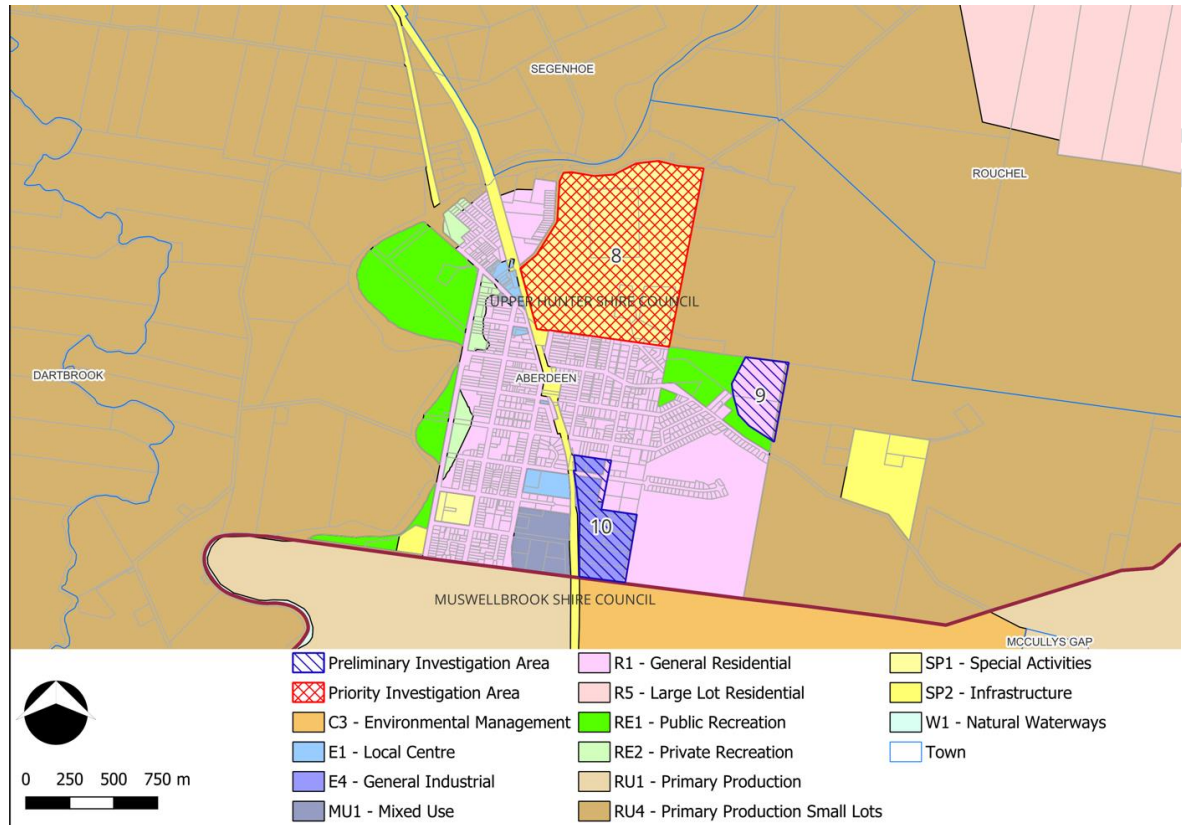


Figure 5: Aberdeen investigation areas

Table17: Aberdeen Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPDATE |
|-----|-----------------|--|-------------|--|
| 8 | Former Abattoir | Priority Recognising this as an opportunity site for re-use. | Employment | Maintain as Priority Need to assess contamination issues and flooding constraints. |
| 9 | Aberdeen East | Preliminary Subject to identification of re-use potential at Former Abattoir | Opportunity | Maintain as Preliminary investigation area. |
| 10 | South Aberdeen | Preliminary Recognising the long-term potential to further accommodate residential uses, subject to take-up of new industrial and/or residential lands already available. | Residential | Maintain as Preliminary Recognising the long-term potential to further accommodate residential uses, subject to take-up of new industrial and/or residential lands already available. |

Table 18: Direction 8: Aberdeen actions

| DIRECTION 8: ABERDEEN ACTIONS | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify land that should be investigated for changing land uses to support long-term settlement expansion. • To rationalise the town's supply of residential lands, making efficient use of existing urban areas and infrastructure. • To provide a range of affordable housing choices and promote housing market competition. • To rationalise the town's supply of industrial lands, supporting the efficient use and re-use of established industrial areas. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any future strategic planning of Aberdeen must be based in the outcomes of an updated flood study. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the update of the Aberdeen Flood Study to determine constraints and potential mitigation measures to support further development. • Propose the establishment of a Aberdeen Heritage Conservation Area. • Maintain Investigation Area 8 - Former Abattoir site as a priority investigation area and support employment generating uses on the site subject to contamination, flooding and potential land use conflicts. • Maintain Investigation Area 9 - Aberdeen East as a preliminary investigation area • Maintain Investigation Area 10 - South Aberdeen as a preliminary investigation area. • Encourage commercial uses in the South Aberdeen investigation area which are permissible in the MU1 – Mixed Use Zone with consent. |

3.3.4. Merriwa

Overview

Merriwa is a rural town situated on the Golden Highway 185km west of Newcastle and 215km east of Dubbo in an agriculturally rich area of the Upper Hunter Shire. The town has a population of around 1,000, but, being remote from the larger service centres of Muswellbrook (around 70km) and Scone (around 65km), it services a broader district of rural communities. It is also a popular rest stop for travellers on the Golden Highway.

The town maintains strong ties with agricultural production and agricultural industries remain a major employer for the town and surrounding rural communities. The area was traditionally known for quality wool and fat lambs, with broadacre grain production and beef cattle more recently becoming dominant commodities.

Merriwa has a strong small business sector providing a wide variety of goods and services to locals and visitors. Commercial activity is centered on Bettington Street, which forms part of the Golden Highway, catering to local demands and passing trade. More broadly, the town also provides a range of community facilities including a local hospital, aged care facilities, primary and secondary schools as well as various sporting facilities that cater for the broader district.

An existing industrial area, to the west of town, represents one of the only industrial areas currently

available along the Golden Highway. While demand for industrial development is anticipated to remain low, the Strategy maintains support for long-term industrial growth in this location.

Merriwa's residential areas are predominantly characterised by single storey dwellings on large allotments and based on a traditional grid pattern with wide streets. Residential growth rates are anticipated to remain low with development predominantly accommodated in a new release area in the south-eastern part of town.

A large part of the town is identified as a heritage conservation area, which contains a number of buildings and places of heritage significance. While infill development has the potential to contribute to residential growth and renewal, it will be influenced by heritage protection and management requirements.

State-driven plans to develop and diversify NSW's energy resources sector has led to current projects proposing renewable energy on rural lands surrounding Merriwa. This may influence growth and change within the town, both during and beyond the Strategy timeframe. Early identification of long-term (50+) land use and management requirements can support future urban growth and protect town amenity.

Proposed Investigation Areas

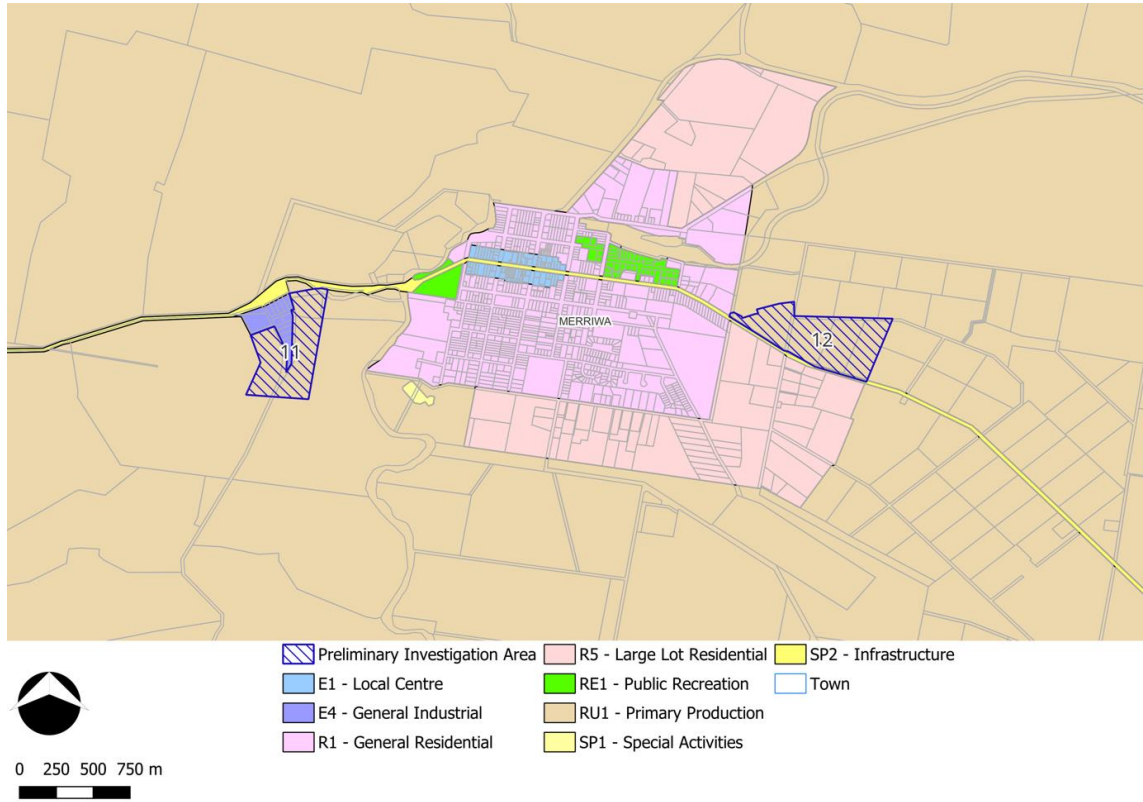


Figure 6: Merriwa Investigation Areas

Table 19: Merriwa Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPDATE |
|-----|-------------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| 11 | Merriwa Industrial Area | <p>Preliminary</p> <p>To support long-term expansion of industrial land supply. Suitable for spot re-zonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere.</p> | Employment / Industrial | <p>Maintain as Preliminary</p> <p>To support long-term expansion of industrial land supply. Suitable for spot re-zonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere.</p> |
| 12 | Merriwa East | <p>Preliminary</p> <p>To establish a long-term township boundary for the purposes of managing the potential for mining encroachment. Recognising long-term opportunity to further accommodate residential expansion (beyond the life of this strategy). May be appropriate for rural fringe uses where this does not compromise the potential for future urban expansion.</p> | Residential | <p>Maintain as Preliminary</p> <p>To establish a long-term township boundary for the purposes of managing the potential for mining encroachment. Recognising long-term opportunity to further accommodate residential expansion (beyond the life of this strategy). May be appropriate for rural fringe uses where this does not compromise the potential for future urban expansion.</p> |

Table 20: Direction 9 – Merriwa actions

| DIRECTION 9 – MERRIWA ACTIONS | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify land that should be investigated for changing land uses to support long-term settlement expansion. • To make efficient use of existing urban areas and infrastructure. • To establish long-term settlement boundaries to safeguard the town from possible future mining encroachment. • To provide a range of affordable housing choices and promote housing market competition. • To support the future growth of the industrial area in the town. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial rezonings will be encouraged to occur in Investigation Area 11, where a suitable site is not available in existing industrial areas. • Rezonings in Investigation area 12 will generally not be considered during the Strategy timeframe. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation Area 11 - Merriwa Industrial area is to be maintained as a preliminary investigation area, however given the potential demand for industrial area allow for consideration of appropriate rezoning applications for developments with high employment generating potential. • Investigation Area 12 - Merriwa East is to also be maintained as a preliminary investigation area. • Not propose any new investigation areas for Merriwa for areas currently of a rural zone in this reiteration of the UHLUS. • Review the influence of current heritage conservation area planning controls on infill potential in Merriwa. • Continue using the Housing and Land monitor to regularly review the supply of industrial land, to inform rezoning considerations for Investigation Area 11. |

3.3.5. Murrurundi

Overview

Murrurundi is situated on the New England Highway approximately 200 kilometres north of Newcastle and 90 kilometres south of Tamworth. The town is nestled at the base of the Liverpool Ranges and is bisected by the Pages River, which runs through the centre of town.

The town has a population of around 850, but, being more remote from the larger centres of Scone (40km south) and Tamworth, services a broader district of rural communities. It is also a popular rest stop for travellers along the New England Highway.

Agricultural industries, particularly beef cattle production and horse breeding, remain the predominant employment sector for the town and surrounding rural communities. The future establishment of an industrial area may support further employment opportunities and diversification of the local economy.

The town has an emerging art industry and contains numerous historic buildings and sites of heritage significance. Commercial activity is centred on Mayne Street, which forms part of the New England Highway. Murrurundi's popularity with highway through-traffic is demonstrated through the take-up of lands within the highway corridor for arts and crafts businesses, food and drink premises and cottage industries. Local retail, hospitality and service type businesses are also increasingly important employers.

The town's layout is based on a traditional grid pattern of wide local streets. Neighbourhoods adjoining the town centre have been identified as a

heritage conservation area and are predominantly characterised by older style single storey dwellings and cottages. Other residential areas in the town are characterised by single dwelling houses on large allotments. Residential growth will continue to occur primarily in a new release area in the north-eastern part of town. Some infill development may also provide residential growth and renewal in the older established parts of town.

More broadly, Murrurundi provides a range of community facilities including a local hospital, medical centre, aged care facilities, library, pre-school, and primary school. Local sporting facilities include Wilson Memorial Oval, tennis courts, public swimming pool and golf club. The town is also serviced by a train station offering passenger services to Sydney, Newcastle, Tamworth, Armidale and Moree.

The flexibility of historic planning controls has previously allowed home-based businesses, including light industrial uses, to occur within residential areas. The Strategy recognises the changing nature of industry, and the need to provide separation between some industrial activities and residential uses.

The Strategy had previously identified the need to establish a new industrial area in the town to accommodate new industrial uses, however the land possible for this type of use is poorly located and unlikely to be taken up. As such, the Strategy does not recommend investigating any further new industrial land for Murrurundi. A review of planning policy to ensure that flexibility for appropriate uses can be accommodated within the town itself.

Proposed Investigation Areas

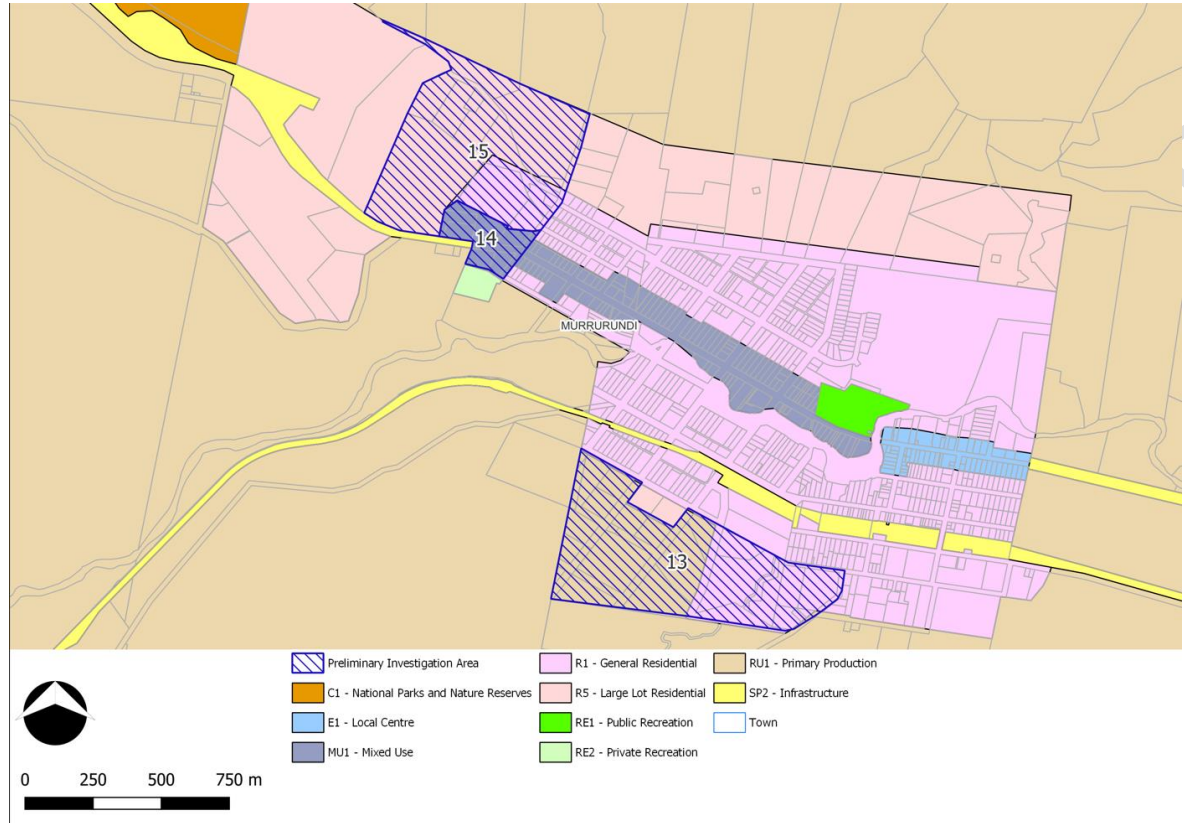


Figure 7: Murrurundi Investigation Areas

Draft for public

Table 21: Murrurundi Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY – 2017 | FUTURE USE – 2017 | 2023 UPDATE AND COMMENT |
|-----|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|--|
| 13 | Murrurundi South East | Preliminary Opportunity to create a health-related precinct adjacent to existing Hospital. Subject to identification of suitable access arrangements, including railway crossing and traffic management through residential areas. | Employment | Maintain as preliminary but allow the opportunity to present spot rezonings for employment generating uses. |
| 14 | Murrurundi West – Employment | Preliminary investigation area. | Opportunity/ Mixed use | Maintain as preliminary |
| 15 | Murrurundi West – Residential | Preliminary investigation area. | Residential | Preliminary investigation areas Recommend reviewing the minimum lot size in the area zoned R5 – Large Lot Residential to allow for greater flexibility and density subject to meeting the methodology criteria. |

Table 22: Direction 10 – Murrurundi actions

| DIRECTION 10 – MURRURUNDI ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify land that should be investigated for changing land uses to support long-term settlement expansion. • To make efficient use of existing urban areas and infrastructure. • To provide a range of affordable housing choices and promote housing market competition. • To support the future establishment of an industrial area in the town. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Industrial rezonings will be encouraged to occur in Investigation Area 10 and Area 11. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Investigation Area 13 - Murrurundi South West as a preliminary investigation area. • Maintain Investigation Area 14 – Murrurundi West – Employment as a preliminary investigation area. • Recommend reviewing the minimum lot size in Investigation Area 15 – Murrurundi West – Residential in the area zoned R5 – Large Lot Residential in particular to allow for greater flexibility and density subject to meeting the methodology criteria. • No further investigation areas to be proposed. • Flood study for Murrurundi to be updated before any further strategic planning occurs to determine long term land uses. • Work with industry and the community to identify the requirements and considerations to establish more flexible land uses within existing employment and mixed-use zoned land in Murrurundi. • Promote a health-based precinct in and around the Murrurundi Hospital and investigate zonings which support this objective. • Once an industrial area is established in Murrurundi, use the Housing and Land Monitor to regularly monitor the supply of industrial lands |

3.4. Villages and Rural Areas

3.4.1. Overview

Outside its larger Towns, the LGA has seven established Villages and a number of standalone Rural Living areas.

- *Standalone Rural Living areas* refers to lands zoned RU5 Large Lot Residential (or equivalent), which are surrounded by lands zoned for rural production or environmental protection, are located more than 5 to 10 minutes' drive from an established Town or Village centre, and are not provided with reticulated water/sewer.
- *Urban Fringe areas* refers to similar land zonings that adjoin residential or economic land zonings, or which are situated within 5 to 10 minutes' drive from a Town or Village centre and provided with reticulated water/sewer.

These smaller and dispersed settlement areas collectively accommodated around 20% to 25% of the LGA's total population. The LGA's Villages are also a valuable reflection the area's built history and play an important role in delivering local services, including education, health, recreation and retail facilities, to support surrounding rural communities.

The Strategy recognises that the drivers of population growth and change in Villages and standalone Rural Living areas are distinct from those in Towns. In particular, housing markets and service networks in these settlement areas are heavily influenced by local employment demands in surrounding rural areas, as well as the growing preference for rural lifestyles across the Hunter region, which has increased since the COVID pandemic started.

The rate and distribution of development is expected to be heavily influenced by the quality of lifestyle offered by the supply of lands available for development. Key considerations for buyers will include the characteristics of the land, as well as accessibility to services in local towns and

employment opportunities within the LGA or elsewhere within the Region.

Directing new rural residential developments to appropriate locations will be an ongoing planning challenge during the Strategy timeframe. These types of development can result in conflict with commercial agricultural uses, and separation from agriculture is normally desirable. There are also important contextual considerations relating to the provision of services and infrastructure, environmental impacts, water availability, traffic, and biodiversity.

The majority of new rural residential development is expected to occur and will be encouraged near Scone. This is intended to cater to the growing preference for rural lifestyles. It will afford the majority of residents seeking a rural lifestyle access to services, including retail located within Scone, and, in turn, will assist in generating demands for additional services in the town. This will also support the efficient use or extension of Scone's existing urban infrastructure, including water and sewer networks.

The LGA's dispersed Villages and standalone Rural Living areas are not expected to be the main focus for residential growth during the Strategy timeframe. However, demographic trends, including the rapidly aging nature of the LGA's population, are expected to lead to smaller household sizes in these areas. The Strategy does recognise that this may generate greater demands for new housing located outside of Towns, proportional to population growth.

The Strategy also recognises that growth and change will vary across each Village. Those Villages situated near Scone (Parkville and Wingen) and along the New England Highway (Bunnan) are anticipated to experience somewhat higher growth rates than those located elsewhere. This will be supported by the potential extension of

reticulated water infrastructure coming from the recently constructed water supply pipeline from Scone to Murrurundi.

The Strategy is intended to provide greater certainty in relation to the preferred location of new housing outside of Towns in order to, where possible, assist in avoiding land use conflicts, minimise adverse impacts to primary production land and lessen the associated flow-on effects to rural industries of increasing the value of rural lands.

It provides a framework that:

- Recognises the substantial supply of lands already available to accommodate new residential development in established Villages and stand-alone Rural Living areas;
- Encourages the majority of new rural residential dwellings to be provided in urban fringe areas around towns and villages, with over 80% located within 5-10 minutes' drive of Scone and near other villages situated along the New England Highway;
- Identifies additional investigation areas to support future rezonings in order to assist in coordinating long-term planning and provide

greater certainty for rural landowners in Villages or Rural Living areas that are expected to experience the greatest demand;

- Provides criteria for future rezoning requests for large lot residential and rural small holding development outside identified investigation areas, which will be considered in line with the Strategy's approach to speculative rezonings.
- Clarifies the preferred LEP zones (RU4 Rural Small Holdings, R5 Large Lot Residential, or E4 Environmental Living) to be applied, based on the desired rural residential outcome;
- Recommends further actions to identify the staging of rural subdivisions; and
- Recommends requirements for DCP provisions and Section 7.11 and 7.12 contributions plans to be provided following rezoning.

Council will continue to use the Housing and Land Monitor to review residential and rural residential land supplies in Urban Fringe areas, Villages, and standalone Rural Living Areas. The information that this tool provides will be considered in conjunction with other planning considerations to inform rezoning decisions and future updates of the Strategy.

3.4.2. Villages

Overview

The LGA's seven Villages are a valuable reflection of the area's built history and each has distinct character and planning issues.

The Strategy supports the LGA's villages to continue offering alternative living opportunities to larger Towns. This recognises that all Villages have historic subdivision patterns, that is reflective of the local rural character. Under current planning controls, all villages are zoned RU5 (Village), collectively providing a total of 161 ha of net land zoned to accommodate a range of uses, including housing, and other community facilities, and a limited range of commercial developments. Larger minimum lot sizes (2,000m² or greater) will assist in maintaining lower density living, in keeping with Village character.

Demand for additional residential development in all Villages is expected to be relatively low, compared with larger Towns. The Strategy recognises that residential growth may be higher, proportional to population growth, due to the rapidly ageing nature and shrinking household size expected in Villages and their surrounding rural communities. Some Villages may experience stable or declining populations during the Strategy timeframe.

Providing sufficient capacity and maintaining services across dispersed Villages will continue to

be a planning challenge throughout the Strategy timeframe. The Strategy recognises that Villages across the LGA currently have minimal infrastructure services. With the exception of Cassilis, none of the Villages currently have reticulated water supplies, and many are subject to constraints in relation to onsite effluent disposal.

The Strategy anticipates and supports moderately higher growth rates in Villages located near Scone, in particular Parkville, which has identified Investigation Areas and those along the New England Highway more generally than those located elsewhere. This will assist in affording more residents easy access to larger service areas located in Towns and provide more opportunities to extend infrastructure networks and services into Villages, where financially sustainable.

The Housing and Land Monitor indicated that the existing supply of land zoned for residential development across all of the LGAs Villages can, theoretically, provide a sufficient number of additional residential lots to satisfy anticipated demand. This supply will continue to be regularly reviewed by Council to inform rezoning decisions and future updates to the Strategy.

A brief overview of the Strategy's planning considerations for all Villages is provided in **Table 23**.

Table 23: Summary of planning considerations for Villages

| Village | Planning considerations | |
|-----------|-------------------------------|---|
| Blandford | Net zoned area (ha) | 16.6 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 15 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demands over Strategy timeframe.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Flooding constraints on multiple fronts will require further planning and management. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Potential to connect to reticulated water supply network via proposed Scone to Murrurundi pipeline |
| Bunnan | Net zoned area (ha) | 30.3 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 73 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demands over Strategy timeframe.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Underlying energy resource potential, with active coal and petroleum exploration licenses. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Remote from existing networks. |
| Cassilis | Net zoned area (ha) | 13.0 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 3 <i>Demographic trends suggest a stable or declining population. Supply considered sufficient to meet demands over Strategy timeframe.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Soil types and steep slopes will influence location and design of new development. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Reticulated water supply available. Funding is available for a reticulated sewerage scheme. |
| Gundy | Net zoned area (ha) | 17.5 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 4 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demand over next 10 years. The need/potential for village expansion should be considered in the longer term.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Flooding constraints limit westward expansion. Underlying energy resource potential with active petroleum exploration license. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Remote from existing networks. |

| Village | Planning considerations | |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Moonan Flat | Net zoned area (ha) | 14.1 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 2 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demand over next 10 years. The need/potential for village expansion should be considered in the longer term.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Flooding constraints. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Remote from existing networks. |
| Parkville | Net zoned area (ha) | 26.9 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 46 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demand over Strategy timeframe. Some expansion beyond current village boundary may be considered in later years of the Strategy, subject to provision or reticulated water supply, to offer greater diversity of location within the village.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Flooding constraints limit westward expansion. Suitable vehicle access across Highway/Railway required to support eastward expansion. Rural industries operating adjacent to village will influence eastward expansion. Underlying energy resource potential with active petroleum exploration license. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Potential to connect to reticulated water supply network via proposed Scone to Murrurundi pipeline |
| Wingen | Net zoned area (ha) | 42.3 |
| | Estimated no. additional lots | 72 <i>Supply considered sufficient to meet demand over Strategy timeframe.</i> |
| | Locational considerations | Flooding constraints limit westward expansion. Suitable vehicle access across Highway/Railway required to support eastward expansion. Underlying energy resource potential with active petroleum exploration license. |
| | Water/sewerage considerations | Potential to connect to reticulated water supply network via proposed Scone to Murrurundi pipeline |

Parkville

Parkville is one of the seven villages in the LGA and is located to the north of Scone. The village is zoned RU5- Village with a minimum lot size of 2000sqm. The village has a clear boundary by way of both the zoning and the minimum lot size map, as areas around it are zoned RU4- Primary Production Small lots and have a minimum lot size of 40ha. However, there are existing lots to the east of the railway line which are well under the minimum lot size and some of which are being used in a quasi rural-residential way.

Parkville, like all villages in the LGA, is not serviced by reticulated water. Community consultation by Council has revealed that the local residents do not support the provision of reticulated water to villages such as Parkville due to the high cost. As such, the allowance of more standard residential development in Parkville is not supported.

There is currently only one minimum lot size permitted in the village. It is recommended to allow for further strategic planning in the area and consideration of larger lot sizes which provide a transition between the village and rural uses.

However, any further development of rural residential uses east of the rail corridor must consider land use conflict with established agricultural uses, including existing poultry farms in the first instance. If an appropriate buffer cannot be established, then the priority must remain with protecting these key agricultural industries from encroachment.

Any further rural residential development in Parkville would need to demonstrate how the lots would be serviced given that both reticulated water and sewer are not available.

Proposed Investigation Area

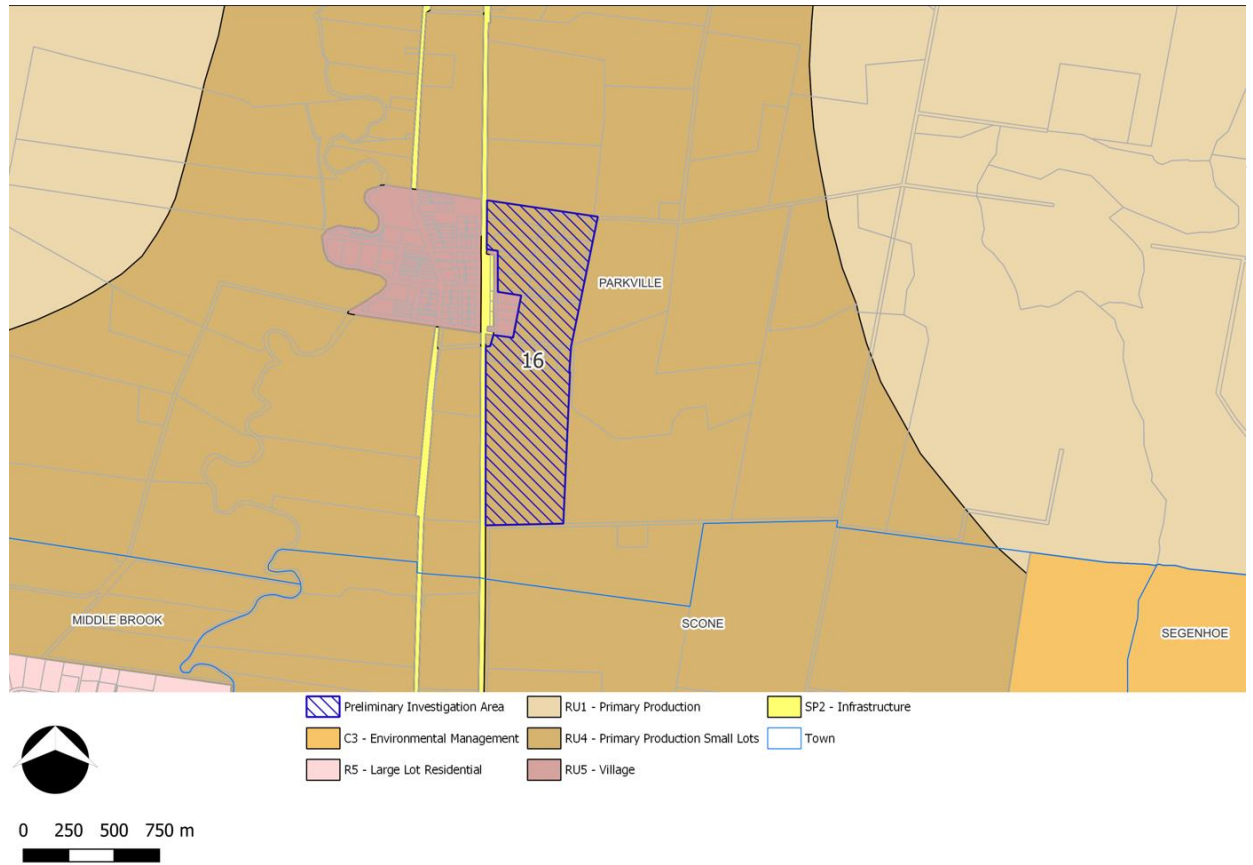


Figure 8: Parkville Investigation Area

Draft for PLU

Table 24: Parkville Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPATE |
|-----|----------------|---|-------------------|--|
| 16 | Parkville East | <p>Preliminary</p> <p>Subject to identification / resolution of strategic planning requirements for surrounding rural industries.</p> | Rural residential | <p>Maintain as Preliminary</p> <p>Subject to identification / resolution of strategic planning requirements for surrounding rural industries and servicing requirements.</p> <p>If the resolution of land use conflict can be resolved then it is recommended to allow for planning proposals for rezoning to provide a more diverse housing product in the village.</p> |

Draft for public consultation

Table 25: Direction 11 – Villages general actions

| DIRECTION 11 – VILLAGES GENERAL ACTIONS | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support Villages to provide alternative living opportunities to larger Towns. • To maintain an adequate supply of residential lands in each Village. • To encourage new development to occur within existing Village boundaries, where this is compatible with locational considerations. • To recognise the distinct character and locational considerations of each Village. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In unsewered areas, reticulated water supply services will only be provided where satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure adequate and safe wastewater disposal. • Expansions to the zoned boundaries of Gundy and Moonan Flat may be considered during the Strategy timeframe, subject to demand and locational considerations, to maintain a 10-year supply of residential lands. • Expansions to the zoned boundary of Parkville may be considered during the Strategy timeframe, subject to locational considerations and the provision of reticulated water supply services and resolving land use conflict with surrounding agricultural uses. • The minimum lot size for subdivision and construction of a dwelling house may be varied in each Village, for the purpose of improving environmental outcomes, increasing dwelling density or supporting infrastructure utilisation and efficiency. Where this is considered, the minimum lot size: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In unsewered areas, must be based on onsite wastewater disposal requirements; • In all areas, should consider potential impacts to surrounding properties (including separation distances between dwellings) as well as local character and landscape setting, to maintain the village's rural outlook. • Considerations for maintaining the local character and landscape setting of Villages, including the identification of incompatible land uses, will be articulated in planning controls (e.g. DCP and LEP supplementary objectives). |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Investigation Area 16 - Parkville East as a Preliminary Investigation Area for rural residential lots in Parkville East if the following can be demonstrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How any further rural residential lots will be serviced, – Resolution of land use conflict with nearby agricultural uses. • Require all applications for residential development (subdivision and construction) in unsewered Villages to demonstrate safe and adequate provision of on-site wastewater disposal. • Consider increasing the standard minimum lot size in unsewered Villages from 2,000m² to 4,000m², to provide adequate area for on-site wastewater disposal. • Review the objectives and permissible uses identified in the LEP for the RU5 Village zone and consider including additional provisions to reflect existing Village characteristics. • Complete flood studies and identify flood risk management requirements for Blandford. • Continue to monitor the take up of residential lands in all Villages to identify the need for future amendments to planning controls. |

3.4.3. Rural Living areas

Rural residential development adds to the range of housing choices available within the LGA. Lots are principally provided to afford residents a rural outlook, with some spatial separation from their neighbours. In contrast to rural smallholdings, rural residential lot sizes are typically too small to sustain productive agricultural activities, though larger lot sizes (greater than 4ha) may provide opportunities for 'hobby farming.'

The Strategy supports maintaining a 5-year supply of rural residential lands.

Council will continue to use the Housing and Land Monitor to review and update these benchmarks.

A range of lands are already available across the LGA to accommodate future rural residential developments, in urban fringe locations near Scone, Merriwa and Murrurundi as well as in a number of standalone Rural Living Areas.

The collective capacity of the LGA's existing rural residential lands supply is considered to be more

than sufficient to meet demands throughout the Strategy timeframe. The Strategy's rural residential lot supply benchmarks support the majority of rural residential development to be provided close to Towns and Villages. This will assist in minimising the potential for land use conflict and make best use of existing infrastructure services.

The creation of new stand-alone Rural Living areas (remote from Towns or Villages) will not be supported during the Strategy timeframe.

Safeguarding long-term agricultural capabilities across the LGA from the cumulative impacts of rural residential subdivisions will be an ongoing challenge for planning during the Strategy timeframe. **Table 12** sets out the criteria and benchmarks that Council will refer to when considering the suitability of lands for any rezoning proposals (see **Section 3.2.5** in relation to speculative rezonings) as well as development applications for subdivision and dwelling construction.

Middlebrook

Middlebrook is located approximately 5-6km to the north west of Scone and provides for a rural residential lifestyle, while still being close to urban services.

The area is zoned R5- Large Lot Residential with a minimum lot size of 1 hectare.

The 2017 strategy identified land to the west of the current estate as a priority investigation area, and land to the north as a preliminary investigation area. It is proposed to maintain these designations.

Land to the west of Middlebrook Road has piecemeal zoning, indicating that 'spot' rezonings are coming through and the EOI process indicated developer interest. It is encouraged to undertake a high-level strategy for the full investigation area which can provide overall guidance in managing:

- A mix and transition of lot sizes, particularly towards the rural edge.

- Water/sewer, noting that rural residential uses are unlikely to be serviced by reticulated water in the short- to medium- term.
- Access and traffic circulation, including consideration of internal lot layouts to minimize the number of access points along Middlebrook Road; and
- Priorities for managing biodiversity, flooding, bushfire.

It would also be important to establish an 'edge' of development in this area, so the developments do not create a negative cumulative impact.

Alternative expansion options eastward and southward are limited by flood constraints.

No further rezoning opportunities should occur in Middlebrook North until all development has been completed in Middlebrook West.

Proposed Investigation area

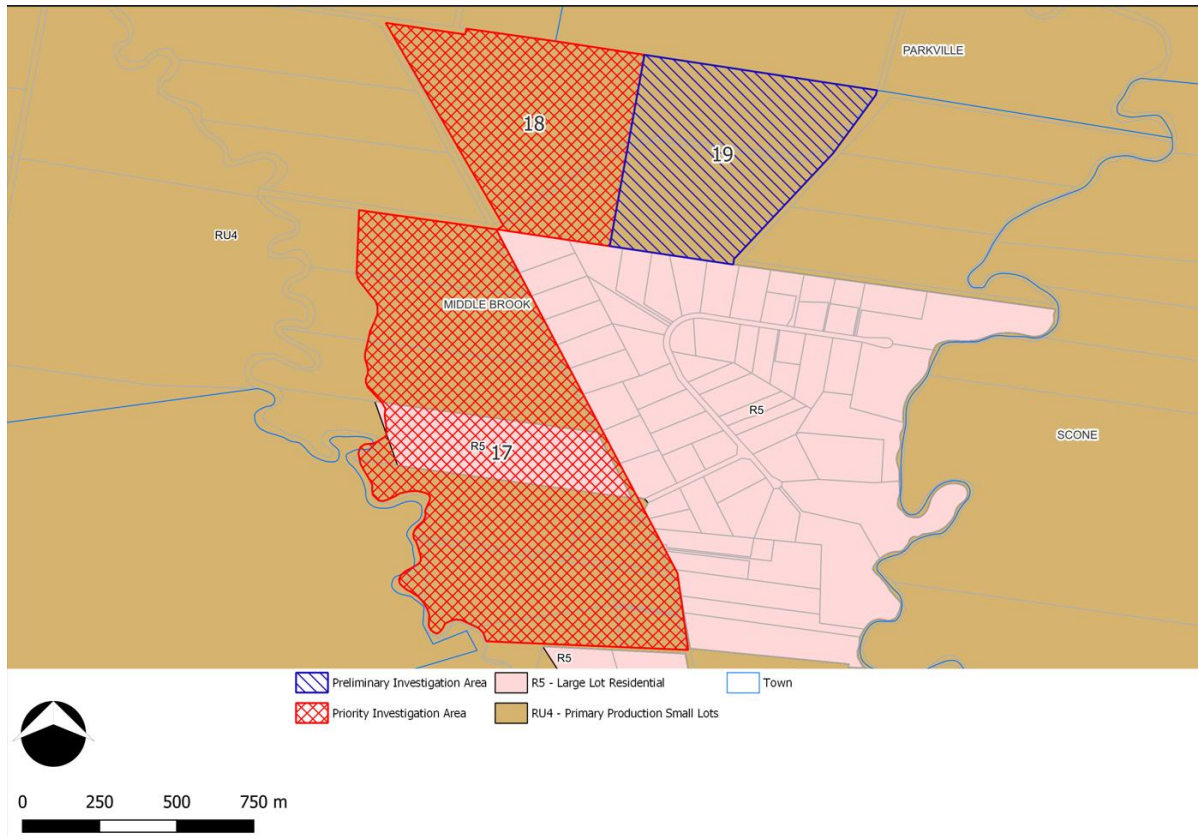


Figure 9: Middlebrook Investigation Areas

Table 26: Middlebrook Investigation Areas summary

| REF | SITE | CATEGORY | FUTURE USE | 2023 COMMENT AND UPDATE |
|-----|-----------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| 17 | Middlebrook West | Priority To support efficient use of land, recognising recent re-zonings and developer interest. | Rural residential | Priority To support efficient use of land, recognising recent re-zonings and developer interest. |
| 18 | Middlebrook Northwest | Preliminary Long-term opportunity to further accommodate rural residential uses, subject to conclusion of investigations and re-zonings for Area 17. | Rural residential | Change to priority. Developer interest in the area to compete with Middlebrook West. . |
| 19 | Middlebrook Northeast | Preliminary Long-term opportunity to further accommodate rural residential uses, subject to conclusion of investigations and re-zonings for Area 17. | Rural residential | Maintain as Preliminary Long-term opportunity to further accommodate rural residential uses, subject to conclusion of investigations and completion of re-zonings for Area 17 and 18. Will be constrained at the rear towards the creek and with existing agricultural activity. |

Table 27: Direction 12 – Rural living areas actions

| DIRECTION 12 – RURAL LIVING AREAS ACTIONS | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To balance demands for the provision of new rural residential development with the need to preserve areas important to urban, agricultural, scenic or environmental values. • To provide an adequate supply of lands to accommodate rural residential development in appropriate locations. • To encourage the greatest amount of rural residential development to occur near Scone, close to existing services and infrastructure. • To provide range of different rural residential lot sizes, taking into account locational and environmental considerations. • To provide basic services in areas identified as suitable for rural residential development. • To identify appropriate development controls for future rural residential developments. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply of rural residential lands will be maintained and regularly reviewed through the Housing and Land Monitor. • The provision of basic services will be prioritised in locations expected to experience the highest levels of growth, as identified in the Strategy. • All proposals for new rural residential developments must support the long-term preferred settlement structure, and will be considered against the benchmarks for identifying land suitable for rural residential development outlined in the Strategy. • Precinct-level planning will be undertaken for rural residential areas expected to experience higher levels of growth and/or within fragmented landownership to coordinate planning for access, traffic circulation, environmental management and infrastructure delivery. • Maintaining the LGA's supply of agricultural lands will generally take priority over the provision of rural residential development. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider establishing planning controls (e.g. LEP) that identify minimum, average and maximum lot size benchmarks for particular localities. This would allow for more flexible design to reflect environmental and planning constraints. • Prepare general (LGA-wide) guidelines for the design of rural residential areas to incorporate into Council's DCP. • Maintain Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West as a priority investigation area. • Prepare a high-level strategy for Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West which can provide overall guidance in managing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A mix and transition of lot sizes, particularly towards the rural edge. – Water/sewer, noting that rural residential uses are unlikely to be serviced by reticulated water in the short- to medium- term. – Access and traffic circulation, including consideration of internal lot layouts to minimize the number of access points along Middlebrook Road; and – Priorities for managing biodiversity, flooding, bushfire. • Propose Investigation Area 18- Middlebrook Northwest to become a priority investigation area given developer interest in the area and to provide competition for Middlebrook West. • Do not support any further planning for Investigation Area 19- Middlebrook Northeast until all development has been completed in Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West and Investigation Area 18 – Middlebrook Northwest. |

DIRECTION 12 – RURAL LIVING AREAS ACTIONS

- Ensure with any future strategic planning that there is a priority for reticulated water in the area.

Draft for public consultation

3.5. Rural Lands

Agriculture is the largest land use in the LGA, occupying around 82% of the LGA's land area. Agricultural industries have historically been the major contributor to local economic activity, with equine activities, beef cattle grazing, dairying, viticulture and horticulture being the current main pursuits.

The LGA's agricultural contribution is regionally significant. The LGA contains half the Hunter Region's agricultural area, a quarter of the Region's farms, and provides a third of its agricultural production value. Agriculture is the LGA's highest direct employer, with around 20% of employed residents (about 1,200 people) working in the industry. The Strategy recognises that the LGA's natural features and existing agricultural infrastructure and capabilities are regionally-important assets, and supports the LGA to continue providing highly productive and sustainable agricultural lands well into the future.

The Strategy also recognises that the needs of agricultural industries are changing, which will continue to have implications for land use planning throughout the Strategy timeframe. Key considerations are summarised below.

- The agriculture sector is relatively stable in terms of production, but direct employment is expected to continue declining, both in numbers and as a proportion of employed residents.
- The average size of farms in the LGA is relatively stable, but broader regional and national trends appear to be for an increase in farm size.
- While the best agricultural lands in the LGA are located along the alluvial floodplain systems of the major rivers, and on the Merriwa Plateau, most agricultural enterprises are constrained by water availability.
- The growing preference for rural living across the Hunter Region, and the continued development of energy (coal and gas) resources within the Hunter Valley are

considered long-term threats to local agricultural industries.

This section outlines land use planning directions for the LGA's rural areas relating to:

- Development on or near agricultural lands;
- Subdividing rural lands;
- Rural water supplies and protection of catchments;
- Climate change implications for land use;
- Development of coal and gas resources located within the LGA; and
- Rural servicing costs and requirements.

3.5.1. Agricultural lands

The ongoing productivity and profitability of agricultural industries is important to the LGA's local economy and its communities. The Strategy considers sustaining commercial agriculture to be essential from an economic, social and environmental point of view.

Agricultural lands are a finite resource. While production systems and activities will vary, there is a fundamental need to preserve land in a size, subdivision pattern and condition that will provide for its continued use and adaptation to other forms of agricultural production over time.

Land use planning can assist in protecting agricultural lands by preventing it from becoming fragmented and minimising the potential for land use conflict to arise where land is, or may in future, be used for agricultural purposes. This can be achieved by:

- Using strategic planning to guide various types of development, including to accommodate renewable energy, urban, and rural residential uses away from key agricultural land and to avoid land use conflicts;
- Supporting the provision or improvement of infrastructure (such as roads or telecommunications);

- Specifying minimum sizes for subdivision of rural land and the erection of dwellings, affecting the permissibility of agriculture-related activities (e.g. rural worker dwellings, sheds and buildings, farm based industries, etc.); and
- Otherwise separating or restricting uses that may be incompatible with agriculture.

Lands may be important to agriculture as a result of their natural characteristics, or due to their situation in relation to relevant markets and infrastructure. A number of methods have been applied throughout Australia to identify and map important agricultural

lands. These methods can be used to consider and apply appropriate planning provisions, including land use zones in rural areas.

The Strategy supports this approach and seeks to strengthen the local policy framework to protect important agricultural lands. It identifies a local framework for assessing impacts on agricultural lands within the LGA, which will be used to inform land use decision-making. This framework is intended to assist in the assessment of development proposals and mitigate against competing land uses

Table 28: Direction 13 – Agricultural lands actions

| DIRECTION 13 – AGRICULTURAL LANDS ACTIONS | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support protection of agricultural land that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is sufficient in size and quality to accommodate and maintain a range of commercial agricultural production in accordance with land capability and suitability; and – Maintains a significant share of the local labour force. • To identify rural production areas and provide for uses in rural areas that are compatible with agricultural production. • To maintain other environmental values in rural areas, which supports agriculture (including protection of biodiversity and natural ecosystems, rural landscapes, and water quality). • To facilitate opportunities for tourist activities that not adversely affect agricultural land use. • To ensure the implications of climate change are considered in local land use decision-making, particularly in rural areas. • To support the ongoing viability of the LGA's agricultural industries in the context of changing climatic conditions. • To support opportunities for new types of rural enterprises that may emerge as a result of the implications of climate change. • The implications of climate change on local rural land uses, industries and communities will be continuously monitored, drawing on best available research and information. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important agricultural land will be identified and protected from conflicting land uses through the implementation of the local framework for assessing impacts to agricultural lands. • Agricultural impact assessments must be prepared for any proposal identified as having the potential to adversely impact important agricultural lands. • Proposals identified as being incompatible with existing or potential future agricultural enterprises will be generally discouraged or will be required to establish and maintain appropriate buffers. • Water supply requirements, including necessary water licences and appropriateness of ground water usage, will be considered for non-residential rural development proposals. • Farm and property management plans will be required to address water quality and availability. • Local-level agricultural lands mapping studies (including those recently completed by Hunter Councils) will be given consideration in the assessment of planning proposals and development applications. • New or improved methods for identifying important agricultural lands will be considered. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate options for incorporating the Strategy's local framework for assessing impacts to agricultural lands into statutory planning provisions (e.g. LEP) or, alternatively, DCP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mandate the preparation of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for certain developments that occur within areas identified as important to agricultural industries; and – Identify and map important agricultural lands categories. • Prepare detailed guidelines or templates for an Agricultural Impact Assessment. • Review current planning provisions (e.g. LEP zoning use tables) to discourage incompatible land uses and activities in agricultural zones and establish suitable separation distances, using the criteria outlined in the Strategy. • Develop policies for dwellings erected in conjunction with intensive agricultural production. • Implement performance-based outcomes for the quality of water being discharged. |

3.5.2. Rural Subdivisions and dwellings

Council has a significant regulatory influence over future rural land use through controls on the subdivision of rural land, as well as minimum area requirements for a rural dwelling entitlement. Minimum subdivision size affects agricultural viability, enables effective provision of infrastructure servicing, and prevents land use conflicts that may arise from allowing residential uses on small lots in rural areas. The Strategy takes into account *State Environmental Planning Policy (Primary Production) 2021* which provides a State-wide framework in regard to rural planning and subdivisions.

Under the current LEP there are a range of minimum lot size development standards for rural subdivisions that will allow a dwelling to be erected. In addition, there is some flexibility to create smaller lots without dwelling entitlements, where this is for the purpose of primary production.

There does not appear to be a clear common holding size for viable (or suitable) agricultural production. A 2007 review of the rural holdings sizes within the LGA showed that:

- The average size of rural holdings was 261ha, and the overall average lot size was 58ha;
- The most common lot size on which agricultural activities were conducted ranged from 100 to 400ha;
- Holdings with areas below 100ha averaged between 1 to 2 lots per holding, indicating that smaller lots are not large enough for the predominant types of commercial agriculture (i.e. grazing); and
- Around 25% of all rural holdings have non local (or absentee) landowners.

The LEP currently applies two rural zones and a range of minimum lot sizes to cover the rural areas. The zones - RU1 Primary Production and RU4 Rural Small Holdings - have reasonably different land use tables, with the RU1 zone permitting a wider range of rural activities such as mining,

depots, cemeteries and function centres. The RU4 zone is largely limited in use to the floodplain around Scone and Aberdeen, as well as the riparian/ creek corridors north of Gundy and Moonan Flat. A number of locally significant planning issues have been included as objectives to the RU1 zone, including impact of mining on agricultural land, protecting the agricultural value of land, and maintaining rural character.

The minimum lot size for rural subdivision varies according to the following;

- Zoning - the RU4 zone has a different minimum lot size (40ha) to RU1 (ranges from 40ha to 400ha)
- Location - the minimum lot size increases with distance from Scone and Aberdeen. Generally, 40ha minimum for first 10km radius from town, then 100ha for next 10km, then 400ha for next 10km
- Historic administrative boundaries - the minimum lot size for the previous Scone LGA (increasing by distance from town and by zoning) is different to the Merriwa, where a 100ha minimum lot size applies and Murrurundi, where a 40ha minimum lot size applies.

The Strategy supports a coordinated approach to identifying appropriate guidelines and standards for rural subdivisions. This will be based on an updated rural landholding analysis and review of rural lot subdivision provisions and minimum areas, consistent with the policy objective to protect agricultural land and productivity.

A dwelling entitlement is given to each allotment created by a subdivision. The Strategy also supports the need to ensure that dwellings on rural lots are linked to the agricultural use of the land and minimise the extent of unplanned rural residential developments in areas where essential infrastructure is not planned for. It is important for the planning controls to recognise this and balance out the need to maintain the primary use of rural land for agriculture.

Table 29: Direction 14 – rural subdivisions actions

| DIRECTION 14 – RURAL SUBDIVISIONS ACTIONS | |
|--|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To establish minimum rural subdivision sizes within the Upper Hunter LGA that are of sufficient size to accommodate and maintain a range of commercial agricultural production (predominantly grazing enterprises). • To provide minimum allotment sizes that take into account land capability and agricultural suitability. |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP provisions for subdivision of rural land should reflect land use capability and the requirements for maintaining commercial agriculture. • Minimum lot sizes (with a dwelling entitlement) are to reflect broad scale land capability/suitability. • Additional rural subdivision should ensure that adequate infrastructure and services are provided to new lots (including roads, electricity and telecommunications). • New subdivision is not to result in the creation of a right or expectation of additional water rights (e.g. by ensuring no creation of additional lots with river frontage, requiring onsite water provision, or by prior purchase of water entitlement). • Farm or property management plans should be recognised as an LEP consideration in determining rural subdivision requirements. • Recognise that production systems now often utilise multiple properties when setting minimum lot sizes and reviewing rural subdivision proposals. • Ensure that dwellings on rural lots are provided to support the use of the land for agriculture. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the suitability of minimum lot subdivision sizes in rural zones to support the protection of agricultural land and production within the LGA. • Review the 'dwelling entitlement' provisions under Clause 4.2B of the LEP to ensure they are 'fit for purpose'. |

3.5.3. Rural water supplies and protection of catchments

While access to water is primarily regulated by the State Government (e.g. Water Sharing Plan), water entitlements for rural subdivisions have the potential to generally reduce water availability and security. This can affect rural land uses and industries, including agriculture, that rely on the availability of adequate supply of water of suitable quality.

Protecting urban water supply catchments is also a priority, and will necessitate additional

considerations for developments located within the Glenbawn Dam catchment area, in particular.

Some land uses or activities have a greater potential to impact on water availability. The planning system provides an opportunity to consider the impacts of these activities to water supplies where development requires consent (e.g. rural industries, farm dams, plantation forests, and aquaculture) or through the application of specific planning controls (e.g. LEP or DCP provisions).

Table 30: Direction 15: Water Supply and Catchment Actions

| DIRECTION 15 – WATER SUPPLY AND CATCHMENTS ACTIONS | |
|---|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain adequate water quality and availability to enable sustainable rural land use within the area. To ensure water availability, quality and protection of catchments and water resources are considered in land use decision-making. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognise water sharing plan provisions for sub-catchments in land use decision-making. Require rural rezoning or subdivision proposals to provide details of existing and proposed provision for water entitlements. Subdivisions which create additional basic water right entitlements on rivers or streams or within catchments subject to high stress will not be supported. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement LEP zoning and requirements in Glenbawn Dam catchment area and foreshores to protect water quality, especially for drinking water and consider extending the coverage of the LEP map to provide further catchment protection measures. Include specific water quality and use objectives for rural zones (e.g. reference to Catchment Action Plan or the like, and water sharing plans) and DCP 2015 revisions. Consider including an LEP overlay identifying sub-catchments and stressed streams. Include LEP provisions which require consideration of water entitlements and access in the determination of development applications for subdivision (except consolidation of lots). |

3.5.4. Coal and Coal Seam Gas

Coal mining has progressed up the Hunter Valley for generations. While not directly located in the LGA, mining employs local residents although it is located in the neighbouring Muswellbrook and Singleton LGAs.

Council is committed to maintaining a productive rural landscape across the LGA by sustaining and growing the area's traditional agricultural and equine industries. It recognises the potential introduction of coal and coal seam gas activities as a threat to this commitment. It has asserted this through the publication of its Position Statement for Coal and Coal Seam Gas Activities (Upper Hunter Shire Council, 2015). It is noted that this position remains the same now, and is further referenced in other strategic planning documents such as the Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The Strategy seeks to maintain agriculture as the dominant land use and ensure it is not compromised by other land uses within the Upper Hunter Shire. It also aims to protect existing towns and villages surrounded by coal and coal seam gas resources (e.g. Merriwa) from the potential for mining encroachment through the use of strategic rezonings

Since the 2015 version of the strategy, the NSW Government has provided further strategic guidance in relation to this issue. This includes the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Resources and Energy) 2021* (the Resources and Energy SEPP) has been introduced.

The Resources and Energy SEPP has banned open cut mining in several areas, including the Dartbrook mine located near Aberdeen. It also bans petroleum exploration, petroleum production and petroleum related works within the Upper Hunter Shire Council area.

The 'Future of Gas' Statement as released by the then NSW Government in 2021.

Two key outcomes of this statement were to:

- support limited gas exploration in the future beyond the Narrabri Gas Project, and
- provide more certainty about areas where gas production and exploration were and were not to occur.

The statement includes a map, outlining key areas where gas will and will not be considered. Areas of the Upper Hunter are clearly indicated in blue, which are prohibited areas of development.

While it is supported by state government policy, this direction further identifies specific policies to ensure that coal or coal seam gas mining does not occur in the LGA.

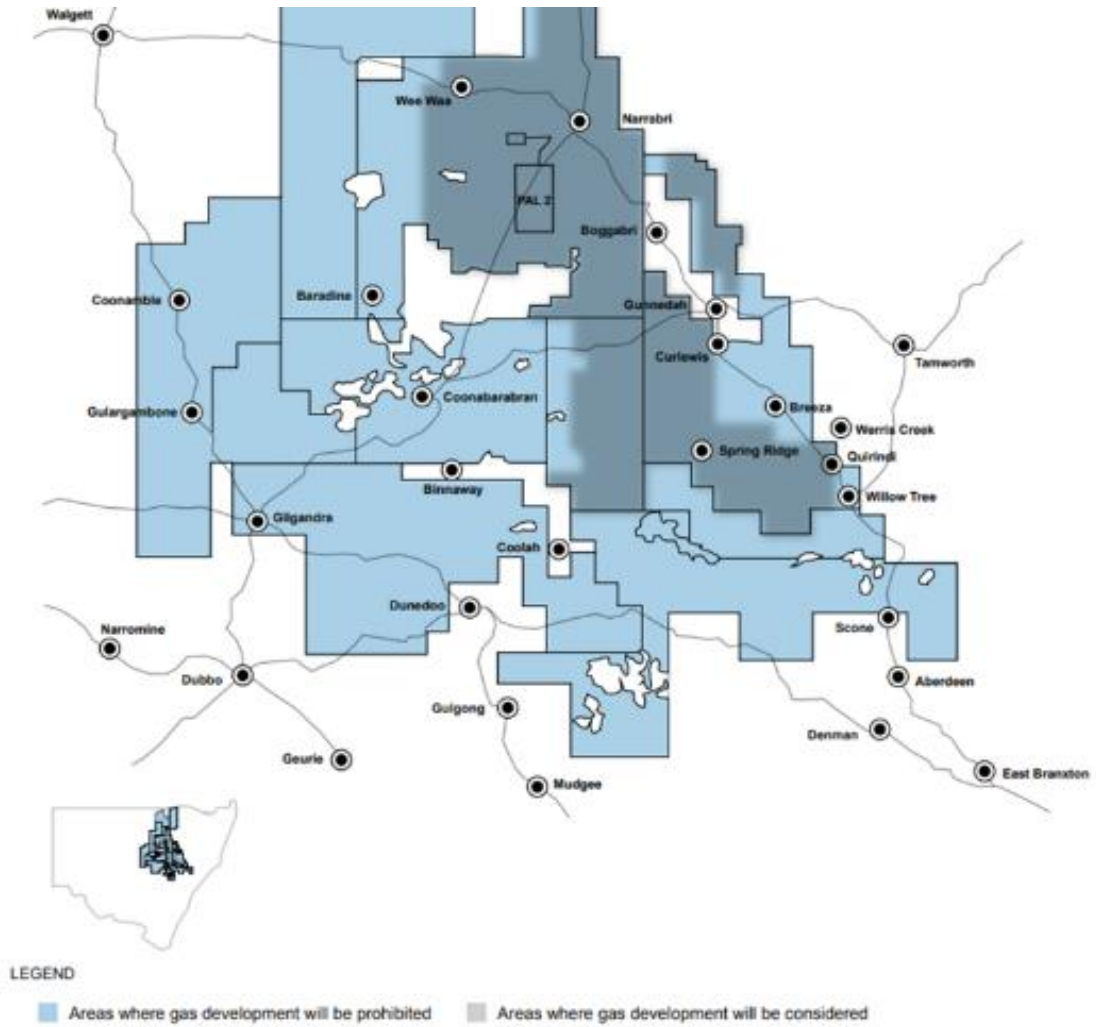


Figure 10: Future of Gas Statement Map outlining where gas developments are considered and prohibited (Source: NSW Government)

Table 31: Direction 16 – coal and coal seam gas actions

| DIRECTION 16 – COAL AND COAL SEAM GAS ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respond to the potential for development demands in relation to coal and coal seam gas resources occurring in LGA. • To maintain agriculture as the dominant land use. • To avoid or minimise the impact of coal and coal seam gas extraction on the agricultural and environmental values. • To give adequate consideration to rehabilitation requirements of mined land, including filling of any final voids or surface disturbance left following mining. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council will continue to advocate to the NSW Government that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planning assessments for coal and gas mining developments must consider the cumulative impacts of development, recognising social, economic and environmental impacts; – Environmental impacts of any coal and gas mining developments are fully assessed, and that these consider impacts on aquifers or in areas affecting aquifers; – The strategic planning context and regional-scale impacts are considered, especially in relation to infrastructure and transport, rural amenity, water, soils, contamination, air quality and biodiversity; – Requirements for mine rehabilitation and ultimate (post-mining) land uses are considered as part of the development assessment; and – Exclusionary requirements for coal and coal seam gas activities, including exploration and extraction, (as set out in State-level policy) should be extended to include locally important agricultural lands. • Rural areas of mining potential within the LGA will be zoned RU1 Primary Production, and include specific zone objectives for coal mining to minimise potential conflicts with, and impacts on agricultural land uses and the biophysical environment. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby the NSW Government in line with Council's position statement on coal and coal seam gas. • Identify and map locally important agricultural lands within the LGA. |

3.5.5. Rural servicing costs and requirements

Rural servicing requirements include telecommunications, roads, electricity, garbage services, bushfire response services, and mail delivery. These services are generally adequately provided in most rural areas within the LGA at present. The cost of upgrading infrastructure and maintaining service networks to support dispersed development can be expensive, and may become uneconomical for some service providers. The Strategy aims to utilise a range of funding mechanisms, including local contributions, to maintain and, where possible, improve service provision to support the LGAs rural communities.

Within the LGA, rural services are provided by

Upper Hunter Shire Council as well as State government agencies and, increasingly, private companies. The implications for service infrastructure and capacity of development in rural areas, including to support new dwellings, will continue to be a key consideration for planning during the Strategy timeframe.

The land use planning system provides a means of ensuring that community costs are taken into account in new rezoning proposals and development projects, including through the opportunity to levy funds through, for example, the application of Planning Agreements or Development Contribution Plans

Table 32: Direction 17 - rural servicing costs and requirements and actions

| DIRECTION 17 - RURAL SERVICING COSTS AND REQUIREMENTS AND ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To maintain adequate services and infrastructure for rural communities across the LGA. To ensure rural servicing costs and requirements are taken into account in land use decision-making. To generally limit extensions to current rural service areas to minimise ongoing maintenance costs. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development within rural areas should not adversely affect rural infrastructure or existing service levels, particularly for road and electricity networks. Developers will be fully responsible for providing the capital costs attributable to their development to upgrade all necessary services required by Council policy. Council will seek opportunities to levy funds for infrastructure through a range of funding mechanisms, including planning agreements (made under s7.4 of the EP&A Act) and contributions plans (e.g. plans made under S7.11 and s7.12 of the EP&A Act). |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare policy guidelines or planning provisions (e.g. DCP) relating to service standards and requirements. Develop contribution plans or planning agreements, as required, to provide for necessary upgrades to rural infrastructure and services. |

3.6. Environmental values

Many areas within the Upper Hunter have important environmental values and/or are subject to constraints that may limit development opportunities and therefore need to be taken into account in planning. These areas should be identified in LEP provisions, and may require specific development control guidelines.

3.6.1. Natural hazards

Natural hazards are accepted as constraints to land use in order to limit damage to life and property. Within the rural areas of the Upper Hunter LGA, these are predominantly flooding and bushfires. Policy for natural hazards is primarily determined by NSW Government guidelines. A summary of available information and references is included in the Situation Analysis.

Various parts of the Upper Hunter LGA are subject to flooding, but little information exists other than for some urban areas, including Scone, Aberdeen, Murrurundi and the village of Blandford.

This section provides land use planning directions for:

- Natural hazards;
- Land capability (including salinity);
- Biodiversity and natural ecosystems; and
- Heritage issues, scenic and cultural landscapes.

Except for Aberdeen, where a recent flood study has been undertaken, available flood risk information is not current. Updated flood plain risk management studies and associated flood plain risk management plans are needed for all towns, and for Blandford.

Existing residential areas are relatively isolated from bushfire prone land, although significant areas of bushfire prone land in the LGA have potential to impact upon the location of rural residential areas and other rural development.

Table 33: Direction 18 – Natural hazards actions

| DIRECTION 18 – NATURAL HAZARDS ACTIONS | |
|---|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that natural hazards are considered when making development decisions, and that hazards are minimised wherever possible. • Maintain current and accurate flooding and development data that guides land use planning decisions to limit damage to life and property. • Identify land with potential for bushfire hazard and implement systems to minimise danger to life and property. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt a consistent flood standard for the Upper Hunter LGA, in accordance with floodplain management studies. • Appropriately consider bushfire, flooding and salinity as natural hazards in LEP provisions. • A conservative approach to development will be taken in areas already highly prone to flooding or bushfire, recognising the likely exacerbation of these hazards because of climate change. This may require additional construction standards for new development. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade and maintain spatial information systems on natural hazards for planning overlay maps to be included in proposed LEP provisions. • Undertake updated flood studies for Aberdeen, Murrurundi and Blandford. • Floodplain risk management studies and updated floodplain risk management plans are needed for all towns and villages (with the exception of Aberdeen) potentially affected by flooding, following updated flood studies. • Upgrade and maintain bushfire mapping and make readily available as a reference for development proposals and assessment. • Include land with flooding limitations or requiring further investigation as an LEP overlay map. |

3.6.2. Land capability

Regional scale rural land capability mapping exists for the whole LGA and provides information on limits to land use potential and management issues. This primarily focuses on soil erosion and slope stability.

Other important natural resource issues that desirably should be reflected in LEP provisions are lands affected by salinity, and groundwater resources (particularly floodplain aquifers) requiring protection or consideration in development proposals.

Table 34: Direction 19 – Land capability actions

| DIRECTION 19 – LAND CAPABILITY ACTIONS | |
|---|--|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that future subdivision of land has regard to the capability of the land for future use, and that boundaries are located appropriately having regard to water catchments and capability considerations. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take into account land capability limitations in planning controls and development proposals (e.g. construction of roads and subdivision). |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade and maintain spatial information systems on land capability (including but not limited to reactive soils and salinity) for planning overlay maps to be included in proposed LEP provisions. Identify rural land capability matters (acid sulphate soils, flooding, salinity, groundwater vulnerability, slope stability, reactive soils) as LEP overlay maps. |

3.6.3. Biodiversity and natural ecosystems

Conserving biodiversity and natural ecosystems is a key principle underpinning the concept of ecologically sustainable development. The Strategy predominantly accounts for matters relating to biodiversity and natural ecosystems through its recommendations for appropriate zonings and protection for conservation reserves, biodiversity impacts of proposed new urban and rural residential areas, and potential adverse impacts from coal mining developments.

The *Hunter Regional Plan 2041* identifies two proposed biodiversity corridors within the LGA. These are:

- The Liverpool Ranges Link, at the LGA's northern boundary; and
- The Upper Hunter Valley Link.

These broad proposed biodiversity corridors are expected to be the focus of further ecological

investigations at State and Local Government levels to identify conservation objectives and priorities that can assist in protecting and enhancing habitat connectivity. Council will continue to work with the State Government to improve the quality of, and access to, information relating to high environmental values.

The relatively poor vegetation information for the LGA and extensive clearing and widespread former distribution of the nationally listed endangered ecological community (White Box – Yellow Box – Blakeley's Red Gum Grassy Woodland) means that development or rezoning proposals potentially affecting native vegetation require appropriate investigation. The objectives and provisions of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* also need to be considered in the determination of opportunities for future development.

Table 35: Direction 20- biodiversity and natural ecosystems actions

| DIRECTION 20- BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain the ecological values of conservation reserves, and recognise their other economic benefits, including their role in supporting tourism. • Zone conservation reserves appropriately in the LEP. • Minimise adverse impacts of development on land adjoining or affecting existing conservation reserves by establishing buffer areas and appropriate LEP provisions and development guidelines. • Maintain or improve biodiversity values in the Upper Hunter. This includes protection and recovery of threatened species, communities and populations and their habitat, and endangered ecological communities. • Consider opportunities to reverse the effect of Key Threatening Processes for threatened species, as identified under the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> and the <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i>, when determining planning provisions and development proposals. • Undertake further strategic local area studies of biodiversity values and planning responses in parts of the LGA expected to be subject to further pressure for urban expansion, large lot residential and rural small holding development. |
| Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of biodiversity in the Upper Hunter LGA will be recognised where decisions are made about land use. • Areas of high biodiversity value will be protected in a network of reserves with buffers between them and incompatible land uses or activities. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider identifying important regional, sub-regional and local wildlife and habitat corridors and incorporating these within an LEP overlay map, with appropriate provisions and/or environment zonings with suitable permissible and prohibited uses. • Where significant natural values exist on private land, the Council will encourage the voluntary adoption of conservation agreements, the establishment of Private Protected Areas under the Natural Heritage Trust National Reserve System, Nature Conservation Trust Agreements and/or management plans. Consideration may be given to zoning land C2 Environmental Conservation. • Request the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and Commonwealth Department of the Environment to undertake or fund surveying and mapping of high-quality native vegetation areas and the distribution of endangered ecological communities, for the purpose of including this information as an overlay map forming part of the LEP. • Ensure consideration and implementation of appropriate threatened species legislation during determination of development applications (<i>Biodiversity Act 2016</i>, <i>Fisheries Management Act 1994</i> and the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>). Guidelines for the application of these provisions could be included in DCP provisions. |

3.6.4. Heritage issues, scenic and cultural landscapes

The LGA's rural areas contains many sites of heritage significance. There are also landscapes with scenic and cultural values, which provide important social and economic benefits. Part of the protection of rural character relates to environmental amenity, including maintaining air quality and a quiet acoustic environment.

The need to conserve the Upper Hunter rural area's built heritage is important for tourism and maintaining identity and cultural history.

Approximately 250 heritage items and 5 heritage conservation areas (Merriwa, Cassilis, Murrurundi, Scone West, Scone Central) are currently listed in Schedule 5 of the LEP.

The aboriginal heritage management system is maintained by the NSW Government, and is subject to confidentiality policies to protect sites. It identifies at least 488 sites of aboriginal significance in the LGA, most of which are located in rural areas. There is also potential for many more to be identified.

Table 36: Direction 21 – Heritage, Scenic and Cultural Landscapes Actions

| DIRECTION 21 – HERITAGE, SCENIC AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES ACTIONS | |
|--|---|
| Objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify and protect Aboriginal heritage. To identify and protect post-Contact heritage. |
| Policies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage listings will be reviewed and updated for inclusion in the LEP (Schedule 5). Heritage and landscape will be taken into account by implementing LEP provisions and development control plan guidelines. Where there is lack of information on these issues, further investigation will be required prior to zoning amendments or development consent. |
| Strategic actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a heritage study of Upper Hunter Shire to review current listings within the LGA and to identify additional items for listing in the LEP (Schedule 5). Prepare heritage inventory sheets for each heritage item in the LGA to support protection and development assessment. Develop a register of significant cultural heritage sites, based on the Upper Hunter Aboriginal Heritage Study, to inform planning decisions. Prepare a Heritage Study to establish a Heritage Conservation Area in Aberdeen. |

4. PART D – IMPLEMENTATION

Part D describes how the Strategy will be implemented, including how it relates to other plans and strategies, the priority actions to be undertaken by Council to give effect to the Strategy's directions, and how the Strategy will be reviewed and updated in future.

4.1. Planning administration and strategy implementation

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy will be implemented by Council through its normal administrative and planning processes. The following strategic actions are proposed relating to planning administration and implementation:

- Ensure future service demands are integrated with Council's financial and infrastructure planning.
- Maintain Council's existing housing and land monitor for the LGA, particularly for residential, rural residential and industrial land.

Implementing the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy

Table 37: Future strategic work program priorities

| ISSUE | PRIORITY ACTIONS |
|---|---|
| Amendments to LEP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support rezonings in priority investigation areas • Review permissible land uses and minimum lot sizes in rural zones • Investigate opportunities to incorporate the local framework for assessing impacts to agricultural lands |
| Amendments to DCP | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare guidelines and standards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The local framework for assessing impacts to agricultural lands – Precinct or site-specific plans for select investigation areas |
| State-wide biodiversity and land management reforms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake further review of biodiversity information for the LGA and detailed assessment of issues relating to proposed development areas. • Investigate opportunities to improve planning provisions for protecting flora and development fauna survey requirements |
| Local Contributions or Service Plans | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and update plans to reflect growth forecasts and directions outlined in the Strategy. |
| Planning Agreements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare guidelines for use of planning agreements within the LGA |

will primarily be through the preparation of LEP and DCP provisions under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. This provides the regulatory framework for land use and, where possible, should not duplicate other approval processes (e.g. native vegetation clearing or water use).

Strategy implementation also requires further strategic land use analysis of some issues and the preparation of development control plans. Table 16 shows the scope of the anticipated program that can be built upon with subsequent studies and information.

The Strategy also closely relates to a range of other formal and informal plans and documents, such as the Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program and Operational Plan. LEPs in adjoining LGAs, catchment action plans, road and utility infrastructure planning, tourism development, and state of the environment reporting programs are also relevant.

Key plans and programs are shown in Table 38.

Table 38: Strategy relationship with other plans and programs

| PLAN OR PROGRAM | ROLE, AND RELATIONSHIP TO LAND USE STRATEGY |
|---|--|
| Community Strategic Plan and Delivery Program and Operational Plan | These documents identify Council visions and priorities, and administrative framework. The Land Use Strategy is informed by and supports the broader vision and objectives for the LGA. Projects to support the implementation of the Land Use Strategy will be delivered in line with Council's Delivery Program, and as identified in its Operational Plan. |
| Regional land use strategies, including: Hunter Regional Strategy 2041 (NSW) | These documents provide an overall planning framework for the region within which the LGA is situated. The LGA's Land Use Strategy is important to giving effect to regional-level directions, providing greater detail in relation to the policies and strategic actions. |
| Local environmental plan (LEP) | The LEP is the key local instrument for regulating land use and implementing Strategy. It will be an important tool for implementing the Land Use Strategy, including through amendments to land zonings. |
| Development control plan (DCP) | This is a supplementary instrument for regulating development and implementing Strategy, providing guidelines for matters not included in LEP provisions. |
| Local contributions or service plans | Plans made under s7.11 or 7.12 of the EP&A Act or under s64 of the Local Government Act are instruments that enable Council to levy funds to provide infrastructure or services relating to new developments. The Strategy will assist in maintaining and developing these plans to reflect the growth patterns that are anticipated to occur across the LGA. |
| Upper Hunter Housing and Land Monitor | This is an important tool for monitoring the take-up of lands zoned for residential, rural residential and industrial developments within the LGA. It will assist in informing future considerations for managing land supplies, including the sequencing of investigation areas identified in the Strategy, or the need to identify additional investigation areas. |

4.2. Monitoring and review

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy outlines the key land use policies and principles for the LGA. The Strategy has a time frame to 2041, but also provides a broad planning framework for the long-term future of the LGA up to 50 years and beyond.

Upper Hunter Shire Council will monitor the implementation of the Strategy in its annual report, prepared under the *Local Government Act 1993*. This monitoring and review of the Strategy will be closely undertaken with the Department of Planning and Environment and other relevant agencies. Importantly, also, the assumptions on housing demand, population growth, industrial land demand, and economic development affecting the LGA, generally, will be the subject of a major

review undertaken jointly every 5 years by the Council and the Department. Each major review will take place upon the release of ABS Census of Population and Housing data. The major 5-year reviews will also be undertaken to update as necessary the Strategy's Objectives, Policies and Strategic Actions. The LEP and other documents, such as the DCP and Local Contributions Plans, will then be appropriately amended.

In this way, the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy will become a dynamic document, able to be refined and updated over time, but able to always maintain its fundamental strategic planning direction in guiding the future growth and change of the LGA.

Table 39: Direction 22: Ongoing monitoring and review

| DIRECTION 22: ONGOING MONITORING AND REVIEW | |
|--|--|
| Strategic actions | <p>Maintain and annually update Council's Housing and Land monitor to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inform the requirement for all rezonings during the life of the strategy, - Review residential supply and demand, - Dwelling and subdivision approvals, - Monitor housing land take up and availability of supply - Availability and take-up of commercial and industrial land - Review the take up of residential land in all villages, - Review the rural residential lands supply. |
| | <p>Monitor and review Local Contributions Plans to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support long term growth to be financially sustainable and facilitate delivery of the preferred urban structure. - Maintain local Contributions Plans in line with additional residential rezonings. - Provide for necessary upgrading to rural infrastructure and services |
| | <p>Review provisions for Planning Agreements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specify infrastructure requirements in partnership with the NSW Government and/ or landowners. - Allow for the necessary upgrading to rural infrastructure and services. |
| | <p>Prepare policies to facilitate planning agreements for large development proposals that support the preferred long term urban structure.</p> |
| | <p>Develop a policy on use of Voluntary Planning Agreements to provide for infrastructure and services.</p> |

Appendix A

Actions and Directions table

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Employment land general principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the boundaries of and supply of floorspace within commercial centres in Towns and Villages. • Reviewing the zoning regime in Merriwa and Murrurundi to consider the range of light industrial uses permitted in residential areas; and • Identifying the potential for an additional 2 to 5 ha of industrial lands in Merriwa |
| 2 | Residential land general principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise Investigation Areas as identified in the Strategy to assist with rationalising the existing housing lands supply. • Prepare policies to facilitate planning agreements for large development proposals that support the preferred long term urban structure. • Prepare a letter targeted to landowners in each town where development opportunities have been identified to promote the potential for additional residential development opportunities which can be discussed with Council. • Promote the use of the Low Rise Housing Diversity Code to encourage infill development which may be possible under Complying Development provisions. • Monitor the take up of infill in all towns to inform network and service delivery planning and identify the need for future amendments to planning controls. • Assess infrastructure service capacities, particularly water supply, sewerage, and stormwater drainage, as part of any proposed infill development. • Regularly monitor and review housing lands take-up and availability of supply to inform LEP plan-making. • Incorporate future climate change adaptation and responses in future planning instruments and documents, including water saving, solar lot orientation, water reuse, etc. |
| 3 | Urban Water and Sewerage | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare a business case around the upgrade of the Scone Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) and actions around this to increase its capacity. • Investigate the feasibility of providing a reticulated water supply to the Middle Brook rural residential area. |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor water and sewer networks to identify supply and capacity issues |
| 4 | Investigation Areas General Principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require future investigations for rezonings to address the considerations identified in the Strategy. Invite expressions of interest for new investigation areas as part of the process of reviewing and updating the Strategy. |
| 5 | Speculative Rezonings Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop more detailed guidelines for considering speculative rezonings, including fees associated with the assessment and/or preparation of planning proposals that are not already identified as Investigation Areas. |
| 6 | Scone Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise owner-initiated proposals for rezonings in identified Investigation Areas, where they address the locality considerations identified in the Strategy. Maintain Area 1 -Scone North as a preliminary investigation area but allow for spot re-zonings to accommodate employment-generating uses in short to medium term, where specific proposals cannot be accommodated elsewhere. Identify a policy objective to support the co-location of industrial uses in and around the established industrial area to the north of Scone. Maintain Area 2 - Scone South as a priority investigation area for mixed use development. Investigations should be undertaken in parallel with broader land use review / strategy for Town Centre in the short term to be undertaken in parallel with investigations for Scone South. Maintain Area 3 – Scone Southeast as a preliminary investigation area for future residential development subject to meeting supply and demand, as well as addressing soil salinity and drainage as part of the detailed analysis. Identify a policy objective to discourage rural residential land re-zonings on lands adjoining the township, to minimise the long-term risk of sterilising future urban lands |
| 7 | Satur, Scone Airport and surrounds actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain SP1 Special Activities- Airport zoning for the Scone Memorial Airport and LEP provisions relating to development affected by aircraft noise and land within the obstacle limitation surface, so that these issues are taken into account in development proposals and complied with when determining development applications. Retain noise exposure forecast (NEF) contours around the airport as an overlay to the LEP map. Retain special development guidelines in the Upper Hunter DCP in relation to development in the vicinity of the airport. Ensure that infrastructure zoned land permits existing dwellings and allows dwellings associated with airport use but restricts further subdivision potential with the use of Clause 2 of Schedule 1 – Additional Permitted Uses. Apply a minimum 100m buffer around the airport to prevent new noise sensitive development. Maintain Investigation Area 4 – Scone Racecourse South as a priority investigation area and encourage and support rezoning and strategic planning for this key employment area. An appropriate buffer with the existing residential development further south is to be established as part of the master planning process. |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|------------------|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Investigation Area 5 – Scone Racecourse North as a preliminary investigation area subject to resolving any potential land use conflict with existing agricultural uses to the north. • Support Investigation Area 6 – Moobi Road – East being a priority investigation area for further rural residential development, subject to preliminary investigations regarding black soils and confirmation that rural residential development would be possible with this constraint. • Maintain Investigation Area 7 – Moobi Road – West as a preliminary investigation area. • Any potential expansion of the existing rural residential area along Moobi Road to the north west towards the airport should not be supported as this has the potential to cause land use conflict with the airport and prevent further expansion. Expansion should only occur if the uses align with the Additional Permitted Uses clause in the LEP (i.e. hangar access to the runway is provided). • Require any planning proposal along Moobi Road (either east or west) to include a DCP chapter for rural residential development which includes (but is not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Lot sizes, particularly a transition from rural residential to rural uses along the boundary. – Managing areas of biodiversity within lots. – Access and traffic circulation, particularly minimising the number of access points along Moobi Road. |
| 8 | Aberdeen actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritise the update of the Aberdeen Flood Study to determine constraints and potential mitigation measures to support further development. • Propose the establishment of a Aberdeen Heritage Conservation Area. • Maintain Investigation Area 8 - Former Abattoir site as a priority investigation area and support employment generating uses on the site subject to contamination, flooding and potential land use conflicts. • Maintain Investigation Area 9 - Aberdeen East as a preliminary investigation area • Maintain Investigation Area 10 - South Aberdeen as a preliminary investigation area. • Encourage commercial uses in the South Aberdeen investigation area which are permissible in the MU1 – Mixed Use Zone with consent. |
| 9 | Merriwa actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigation Area 11 - Merriwa Industrial area is to be maintained as a preliminary investigation area, however given the potential demand for industrial area allow for consideration of appropriate rezoning applications for developments with high employment generating potential. • Investigation Area 12 - Merriwa East is to also be maintained as a preliminary investigation area. • Not propose any new investigation areas for Merriwa for areas currently of a rural zone in this reiteration of the UHLUS. • Review the influence of current heritage conservation area planning controls on infill potential in Merriwa. • Continue using the Housing and Land monitor to regularly review the supply of industrial land, to inform rezoning considerations for Investigation Area 11. |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|--|---|
| 10 | Murrurundi actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Investigation Area 13 - Murrurundi South West as a preliminary investigation area. • Maintain Investigation Area 14 – Murrurundi West – Employment as a preliminary investigation area. • Recommend reviewing the minimum lot size in Investigation Area 15 – Murrurundi West – Residential in the area zoned R5 – Large Lot Residential in particular to allow for greater flexibility and density subject to meeting the methodology criteria. • No further investigation areas to be proposed. • Flood study for Murrurundi to be updated before any further strategic planning occurs to determine long term land uses. • Work with industry and the community to identify the requirements and considerations to establish more flexible land uses within existing employment and mixed-use zoned land in Murrurundi. • Promote a health based precinct in and around the Murrurundi Hospital and investigate zonings which support this objective. • Once an industrial area is established in Murrurundi, use the Housing and Land Monitor to regularly monitor the supply of industrial lands |
| 11 | Villages general actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Investigation Area 16 - Parkville East as a Preliminary Investigation Area for rural residential lots in Parkville East if the following can be demonstrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How any further rural residential lots will be serviced, – Resolution of land use conflict with nearby agricultural uses. • Require all applications for residential development (subdivision and construction) in unsewered Villages to demonstrate safe and adequate provision of on-site wastewater disposal. • Consider increasing the standard minimum lot size in unsewered Villages from 2,000m² to 4,000m², to provide adequate area for on-site wastewater disposal. • Review the objectives and permissible uses identified in the LEP for the RU5 Village zone and consider including additional provisions to reflect existing Village characteristics. • Complete flood studies and identify flood risk management requirements for Blandford. • Continue to monitor the take up of residential lands in all Villages to identify the need for future amendments to planning controls. |
| 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rural living areas actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider establishing planning controls (e.g. LEP) that identify minimum, average and maximum lot size benchmarks for particular localities. This would allow for more flexible design to reflect environmental and planning constraints. • Prepare general (LGA-wide) guidelines for the design of rural residential areas to incorporate into Council's DCP. • Maintain Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West as a priority investigation area. • Prepare a high-level strategy for Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West which can provide overall guidance in |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|------------------------------------|---|
| | | <p>managing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A mix and transition of lot sizes, particularly towards the rural edge. - Water/sewer, noting that rural residential uses are unlikely to be serviced by reticulated water in the short- to medium- term. - Access and traffic circulation, including consideration of internal lot layouts to minimize the number of access points along Middlebrook Road; and - Priorities for managing biodiversity, flooding, bushfire. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Propose Investigation Area 18- Middlebrook Northwest to become a priority investigation area given developer interest in the area and to provide competition for Middlebrook West. • Do not support any further planning for Investigation Area 19- Middlebrook Northeast until all development has been completed in Investigation Area 17 - Middlebrook West and Investigation Area 18 – Middlebrook Northwest. • Ensure with any future strategic planning that there is a priority for reticulated water in the area. |
| 13 | Agricultural lands actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate options for incorporating the Strategy’s local framework for assessing impacts to agricultural lands into statutory planning provisions (e.g. LEP) or, alternatively, DCP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mandate the preparation of an Agricultural Impact Assessment for certain developments that occur within areas identified as important to agricultural industries; and - Identify and map important agricultural lands categories. • Prepare detailed guidelines or templates for an Agricultural Impact Assessment. • Review current planning provisions (e.g. LEP zoning use tables) to discourage incompatible land uses and activities in agricultural zones and establish suitable separation distances, using the criteria outlined in the Strategy. • Develop policies for dwellings erected in conjunction with intensive agricultural production. • Implement performance-based outcomes for the quality of water being discharged. |
| 14 | Rural subdivisions actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the suitability of minimum lot subdivision sizes in rural zones to support the protection of agricultural land and production within the LGA • Review the ‘dwelling entitlement’ provisions under Clause 4.2B of the LEP to ensure they are ‘fit for purpose’. |
| 15 | Water Supply and Catchment Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement LEP zoning and requirements in Glenbawn Dam catchment area and foreshores to protect water quality, especially for drinking water and consider extending the coverage of the LEP map to provide further catchment protection measures. • Include specific water quality and use objectives for rural zones (e.g. reference to Catchment Action Plan or the like, and water sharing plans) and DCP 2015 revisions. |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|--|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider including an LEP overlay identifying sub-catchments and stressed streams. Include LEP provisions which require consideration of water entitlements and access in the determination of development applications for subdivision (except consolidation of lots). |
| 16 | coal and coal seam gas actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobby the NSW Government in line with Council's position statement on coal and coal seam gas. Identify and map locally important agricultural lands within the LGA. |
| 17 | rural servicing costs and requirements and actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare policy guidelines or planning provisions (e.g. DCP) relating to service standards and requirements. Develop contribution plans or planning agreements, as required, to provide for necessary upgrades to rural infrastructure and services. |
| 18 | Natural hazards actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade and maintain spatial information systems on natural hazards for planning overlay maps to be included in proposed LEP provisions. Undertake updated flood studies for Aberdeen, Murrurundi and Blandford. Floodplain risk management studies and updated floodplain risk management plans are needed for all towns and villages (with the exception of Aberdeen) potentially affected by flooding, following updated flood studies. Upgrade and maintain bushfire mapping and make readily available as a reference for development proposals and assessment. Include land with flooding limitations or requiring further investigation as an LEP overlay map. |
| 19 | land capability actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade and maintain spatial information systems on land capability (including but not limited to reactive soils and salinity) for planning overlay maps to be included in proposed LEP provisions. Identify rural land capability matters (acid sulphate soils, flooding, salinity, groundwater vulnerability, slope stability, reactive soils) as LEP overlay maps. |
| 20 | biodiversity and natural ecosystems actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider identifying important regional, sub-regional and local wildlife and habitat corridors and incorporating these within an LEP overlay map, with appropriate provisions and/or environment zonings with suitable permissible and prohibited uses. Where significant natural values exist on private land, the Council will encourage the voluntary adoption of conservation agreements, the establishment of Private Protected Areas under the Natural Heritage Trust National Reserve System, Nature Conservation Trust Agreements and/or management plans. Consideration may be given to zoning land C2 Environmental Conservation. Request the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and Commonwealth Department of the Environment to undertake or fund surveying and mapping of high quality native vegetation areas and the distribution of endangered ecological communities, for the purpose of including this information as an overlay map forming part of the LEP. Ensure consideration and implementation of appropriate threatened species legislation during determination of |

| DIRECTION NO. | THEME | ACTIONS |
|---------------|--|--|
| | | development applications (<i>Biodiversity Act 2016, Fisheries Management Act 1994 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>). Guidelines for the application of these provisions could be included in DCP provisions. |
| 21 | Heritage, Scenic and Cultural Landscapes Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a heritage study of Upper Hunter Shire to review current listings within the LGA and to identify additional items for listing in the LEP (Schedule 5). • Prepare heritage inventory sheets for each heritage item in the LGA to support protection and development assessment. • Develop a register of significant cultural heritage sites, based on the Upper Hunter Aboriginal Heritage Study, to inform planning decisions. <p>Prepare a Heritage Study to establish a Heritage Conservation Area in Aberdeen.</p> |
| 22 | Ongoing monitoring and review | <p>Maintain and annually update Council's Housing and Land monitor to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the requirement for all rezonings during the life of the strategy, • Review residential supply and demand, • Dwelling and subdivision approvals, • Monitor housing land take up and availability of supply • Availability and take-up of commercial and industrial land • Review the take up of residential land in all villages, • Review the rural residential lands supply. <p>Monitor and review Local Contributions Plans to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support long term growth to be financially sustainable and facilitate delivery of the preferred urban structure. • Maintain local Contributions Plans in line with additional residential rezonings. • Provide for necessary upgrading to rural infrastructure and services <p>Review provisions for Planning Agreements to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specify infrastructure requirements in partnership with the NSW Government and/ or landowners. • Allow for the necessary upgrading to rural infrastructure and services. Prepare policies to facilitate planning agreements for large development proposals that support the preferred long term urban structure. <p>Develop a policy on use of Voluntary Planning Agreements to provide for infrastructure and services.</p> |