



On Public Exhibition

Draft Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy

Exhibition period

From 5 April to 17 May 2024

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DRAFT SHELLHARBOUR RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

GYDE
Consulting

February 2024

DRAFT SHELLHARBOUR RURAL LANDS STRATEGY



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PART A – OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

The rural lands of Shellharbour are an important part of our Local Government Area (LGA) and the broader Illawarra-Shoalhaven region. Land currently zoned for rural purposes comprises about 28% of our City's land area and provides scenic, social, economic, recreational and environmental benefits to the community.

For the purpose of this strategy, the City's rural lands also include land zoned for environmental purposes, which often merges with rural zoned land. Extensive agriculture, farm buildings and farm stay accommodation are all permitted uses in the environmental management zone.

In recent decades, urban expansion such as at Tullimbar, Calderwood and Dunmore, and major infrastructure projects, particularly the Albion Park Rail bypass, have resulted in a loss of parts of Shellharbour's rural lands. This development also has the potential to cause land use conflict with remaining agricultural producers. Rural land will continue to be subject to competing land use interests. This makes ensuring the viability of the remaining rural lands and the local rural economy even more important.

Maintaining rural values and balancing outcomes within rural areas relies on an integrated approach employing land zoning and subdivision controls through Council's Local Environmental Plan (LEP) as well as measures to control impacts on land and water, which can be applied through Council's Development Control Plan (DCP) or other supporting planning mechanisms. It is essential for Council to develop clarity around the uses and extents of rural lands to protect and enhance their amenity and viability into the future.

1.1 Background

This strategy builds on previous strategic planning including the *Urban Fringe Local Environmental Study* prepared by Council in 2010, and the *Rural Planning Project Baseline Studies* prepared in 1996, *Rural Planning Workshops Outcomes Report* prepared in 1999 and *Supplementary Information to the Baseline Studies* prepared in 2000. The strategy has also been guided by the NSW Department of Primary Industries document entitled *Planning for Agriculture in Rural Land Use Strategies*. A summary of this guideline document is provided at Appendix B: Best practice for rural land use strategies.

Once adopted, the Rural Lands Strategy will constitute Council's policy position on rural land in Shellharbour. It will also inform Council's planning framework to ensure strategy outcomes are achieved.



1.2 Purpose of strategy

The purpose of this Rural Lands Strategy is to provide a framework and direction for the ongoing planning and management of the rural lands within the Shellharbour LGA.

The objectives of the Rural Lands Strategy are to:

- » be the guiding document for the future planning, development and management of rural lands within the Shellharbour LGA.
- » inform robust decision making and outcomes for planning proposals, development applications and a review of broader strategic plans such as the Shellharbour LSPS and Shellharbour Local Environmental Plan 2013.
- » consider appropriate land use planning controls reflective of the circumstances of Shellharbour's rural lands taking into account the impacts of emerging pressures and opportunities.
- » make recommendations for the future of Shellharbour's Rural Lands focusing on growth management, maintaining rural values, preserving biodiversity, economic development and land use planning.

1.3 Structure of the strategy

The structure of this strategy is as follows:

- » **Part A – Overview** – provides an introduction and context for Shellharbour's rural lands
- » **Part B – Priorities and Outcomes** – identifies the key priorities for Shellharbour's rural lands and the outcomes we are seeking to achieve
- » **Part C – Place – Based Frameworks** – presents place frameworks for the identified rural precincts and actions for each precinct that will deliver on the priorities and outcomes in Part B
- » **Part D – Implementation** – outlines how the strategy will be implemented, including aligning the actions with Council's Community Strategic Planning framework



1.4 Engagement

Engagement with Council staff, Government agencies and Councillors has been undertaken throughout development of the draft strategy. This included face to face or online meetings with representatives from the following organisations: Department of Primary Industries (DPI) Agriculture, DPI Fisheries, Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), DPE Biodiversity Conservation Division, Rural Fire Service, Department of Regional NSW Mining, Exploration and Geoscience and Endeavour Energy.

Community drop-in sessions were held in June 2023 at both Albion Park and Shell Cove. Issues raised by the community included:

- » the need for biodiversity connectivity along the ridgelines and waterways noting that wildlife adds to the rural character and needs to be prioritised.
- » strong demand for hobby farms across the rural lands as well as the presence of a huge tourist market of Sydney on Shellharbour's doorstep.
- » current minimum lot sizes do not ensure economically viable rural properties but prevent subdivision into more manageable rural lifestyle properties
- » opportunity for rural heritage items to be celebrated/incorporated into agritourism
- » importance of maintaining scenic rural values including hillsides and native vegetation
- » local food production should be encouraged
- » encroachment of urban development destroying rural outlook and preventing rural property owners from baiting foxes due to the risk to domestic pets
- » traffic congestion in Albion Park resulting from urban expansion into former rural land in Calderwood and Tullimbar
- » need to protect European heritage
- » recognise, value and protect Aboriginal culture and sites

Additionally, the public was invited to provide their thoughts online via Council's Let's Chat website.

In response to the question "What do you value most about Shellharbour's rural land", answers included: "the dairy industry", "the beauty of the land and seeing the cattle", and "green pastures, riparian forested strips and escarpment providing a beautiful back drop"

When asked "What are the most important things you want to see retained or enhanced?", responses included:

- » continuation of the dairy industry
- » farms as proper farms with paddocks, pasture, animals and/or crops
- » native trees as wind breaks
- » bushland and animal habitat
- » riparian forest

In answer to the question "Are there opportunities for new activities in the rural lands?", suggestions included bush regeneration, restoring creek lines, new agricultural crops, animal husbandry, tourism and nature bathing.

Following the community drop-in sessions, some rural land owners requested in-person meetings with relevant Council staff. At these meetings general information was shared regarding the preparation of this Rural Lands Strategy.

Summaries of formal consultation, including themes received during feedback, are provided at Appendix A.



2. Context

2.1 Location and environment

The Shellharbour LGA is located on the NSW South Coast approximately 85km south of Sydney CBD. It covers about 147 square kilometres in area and together with Wollongong LGA to the north and Kiama LGA to the south makes up the Illawarra region.

The western boundary of the LGA is defined by the top of the Illawarra escarpment, the northern boundary by Marshall Mount Creek and Macquarie Rivulet while the southern LGA boundary generally follows rural property boundaries and the Minnamurra River near the coast.

The main watercourses within Shellharbour are the Macquarie Rivulet which flows in an easterly direction from Macquarie Pass meandering its way to Lake Illawarra, and the Minnamurra River, which enters the Pacific Ocean to the south of Killalea Regional Park.

Large areas of the LGA contain high environmental values, particularly Macquarie Pass National Park and the vegetated hills.

The Princes Highway, Princes Motorway, Illawarra Highway and South Coast Railway are the major transport corridors connecting the LGA to adjoining areas.

Urban areas of Shellharbour are concentrated in the northeast of the LGA near the coast, although new suburbs such as Tullimbar and Calderwood have resulted in the urban footprint extending further inland.

A map of the Shellharbour LGA highlighting the location of the City's rural lands is shown in Figure 1.

2.2 Shellharbour's rural lands

Shellharbour's rural lands are split into two main areas: the western part of the LGA centred on Tongarra, Calderwood, Tullimbar, and Yellow Rock and an eastern rural area incorporating Croom and Dunmore.

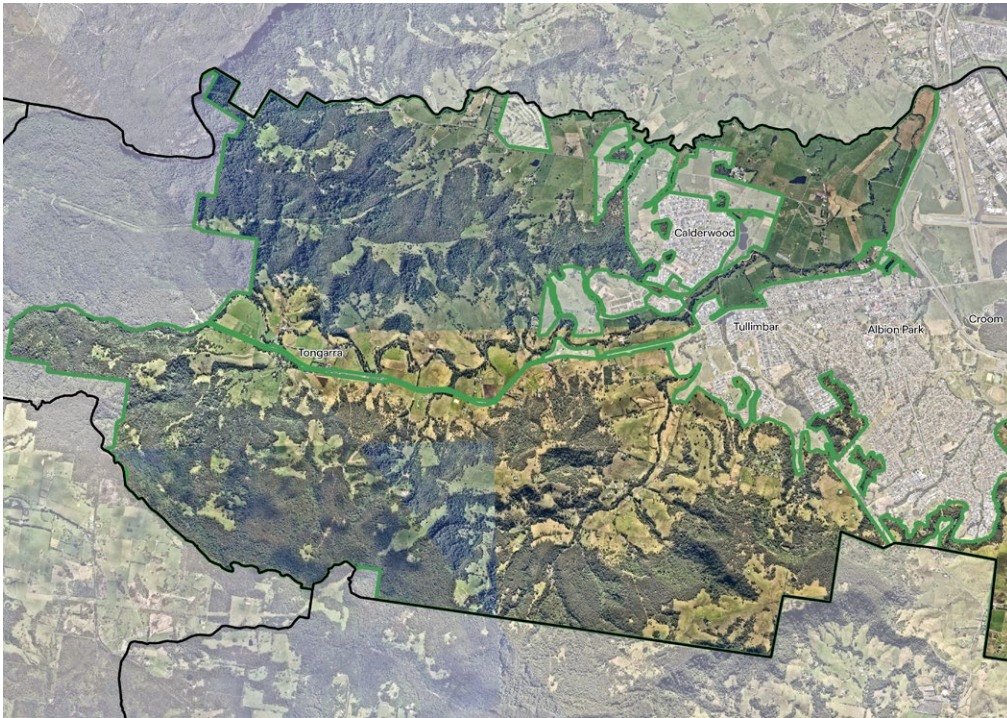




Figure 1: Rural Lands Strategy

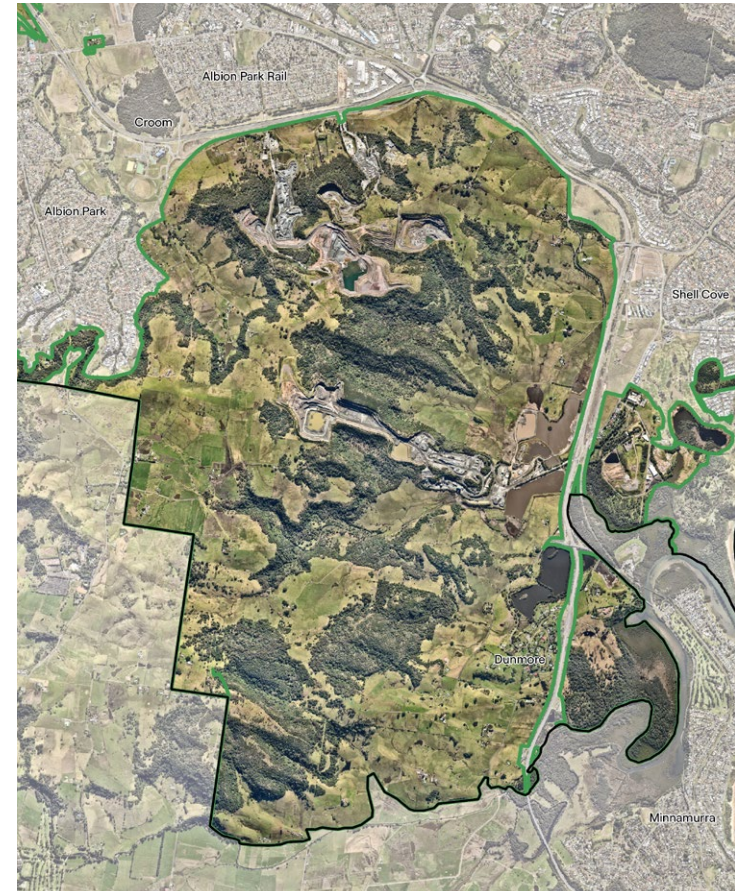
WESTERN RURAL LANDS

The suburbs comprising the western rural lands include Tongarra and Yellow Rock and the non-urban parts of Calderwood, Tullimbar, Albion Park and Albion Park Rail. These western lands generally drain to Macquarie Rivulet



EASTERN RURAL LANDS

The eastern rural lands are dominated by the mineral resource and transition area associated with hard rock and sand quarries at Croom and Dunmore. The land is generally more undulating in comparison with the western rural lands apart from the southern part of Dunmore, which slopes gently toward the Minnamurra River.



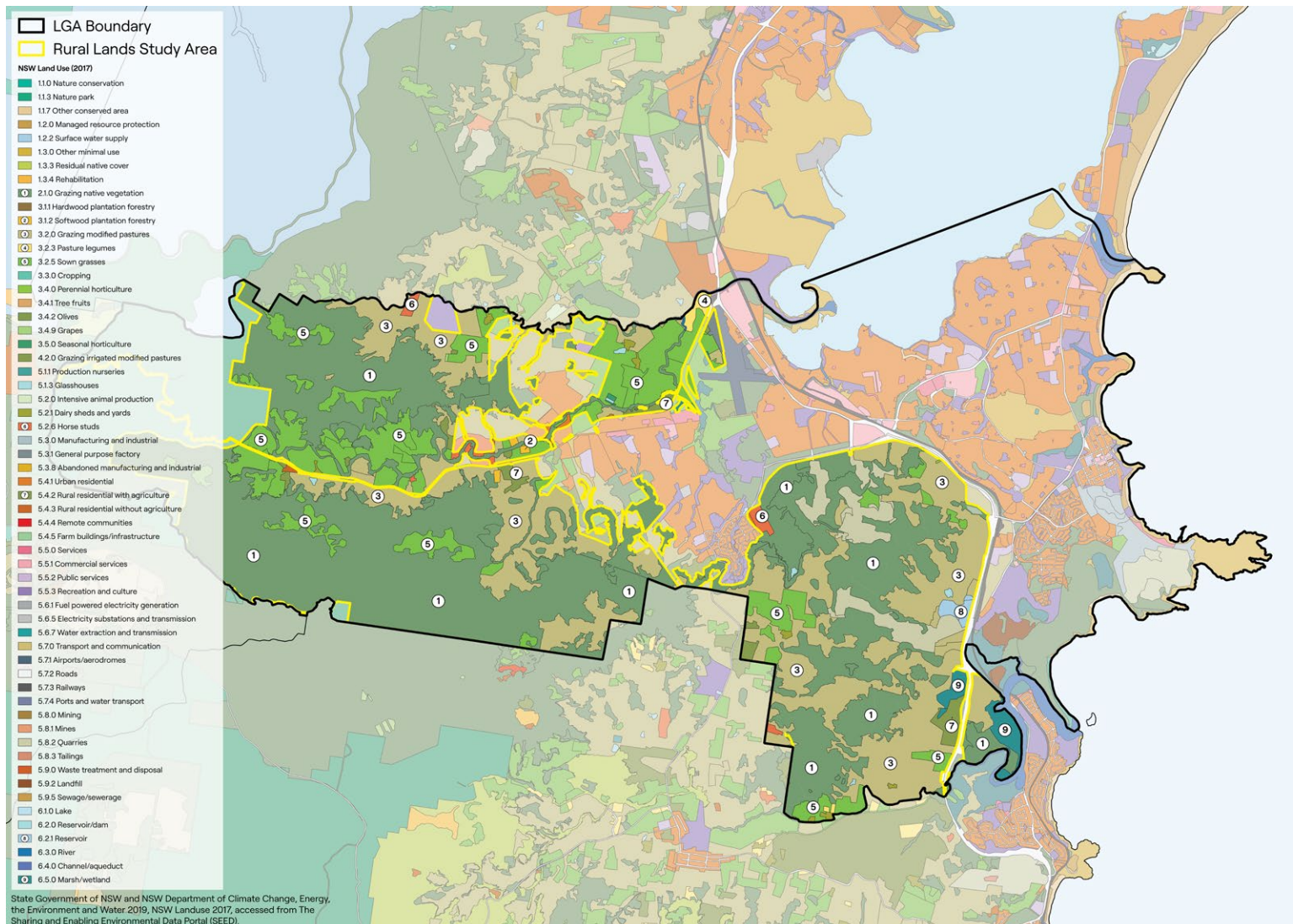


Figure 2: Land Use Map

LAND USE

While not covering as vast a geographic area as neighbouring LGAs, Shellharbour's rural lands nonetheless contain a variety of land uses as depicted in the land use map in Figure 2. The most widespread land uses are: grazing within areas of native vegetation, grazing within modified pastures (predominantly beef cattle) and grazing within sown pastures (predominantly dairy cattle). There are also a small number of horse studs. Quarries feature within the Eastern rural lands at Croom and Dunmore. At the time of data capture in 2017, only 3 ha of land was utilised for seasonal horticulture.

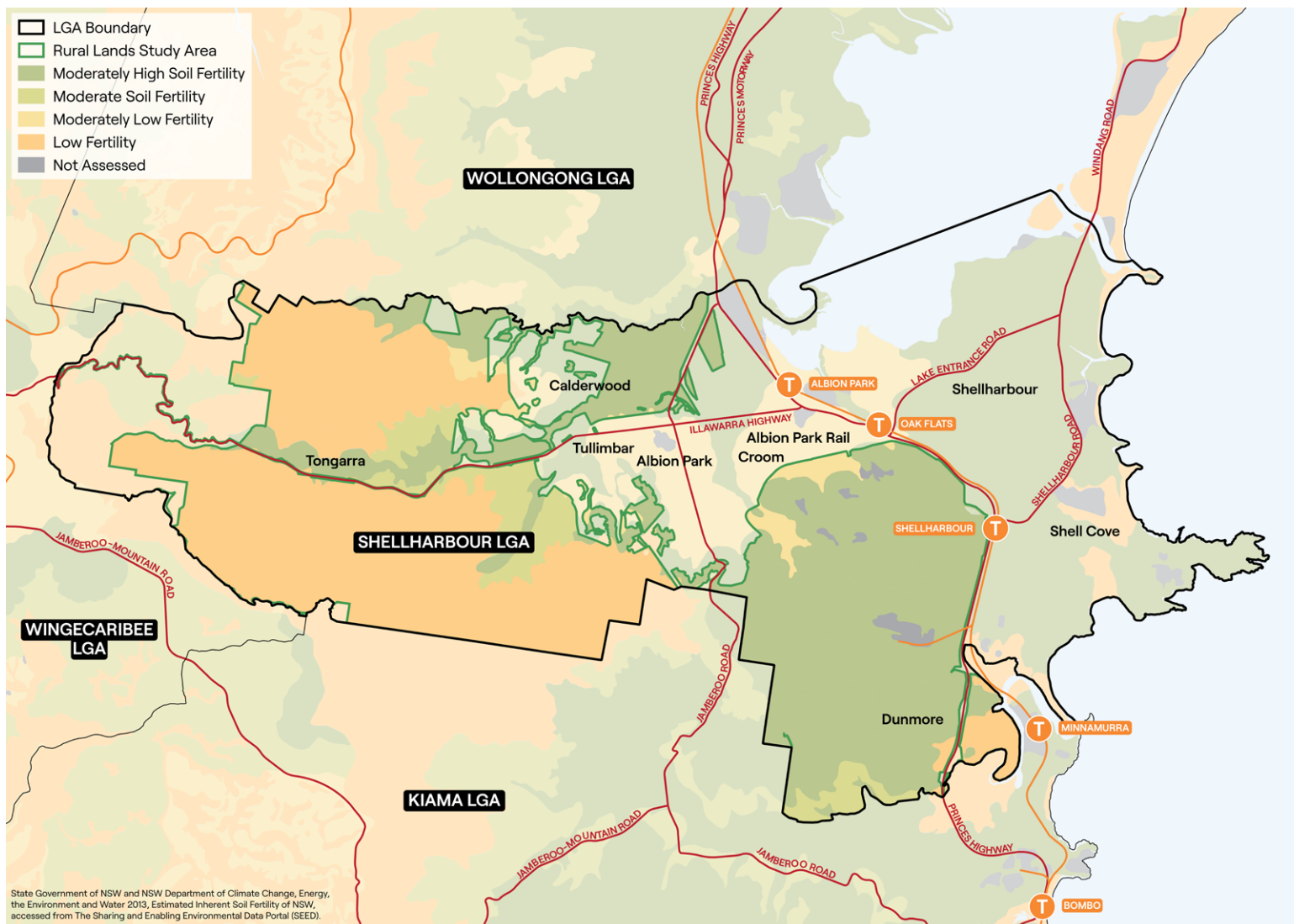


Figure 3: Inherent Soil Fertility Map

SOIL FERTILITY

As shown in Figure 3, the most fertile soils within Shellharbour's rural lands are associated with the hills of Croom and Dunmore and lower-lying land along Macquarie Rivulet, Marshall Mount Creek and Yellow Rock Creek. It should be noted that low fertility soils do not preclude agriculture, but will affect the type of agricultural uses that can be sustained by the land.

2.3 Policy context

ILLAWARRA-SHOALHAVEN REGIONAL PLAN 2041

The Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041 (ISRP) provides the strategic policy, planning and decision-making framework to guide the region to sustainable growth over the next 20 years.

The ISRP 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.

The ISRP sets out four focused themes to direct planning efforts throughout the region:

- » A productive and innovative region
- » A sustainable and resilient region
- » A region that values its people and places
- » A smart and connected region.

The ISRP also outlines key objectives to direct decision-making. The following objective and associated strategies are of particular relevance to this Rural Lands Strategy:

Objective 9: Promote agriculture innovation, sustainability and value-add opportunities

Strategy 9.1: Promote agriculture and aquaculture innovation, sustainability and value-add opportunities such as agritourism.

Strategic planning and local plans should consider opportunities to:

- » *protect identified important agricultural land and industries from other land uses, land use conflict and fragmentation*
- » *protect assets and infrastructure such as freight and logistics facilities from land use conflict and the encroachment of incompatible land use to facilitate investment in the agricultural supply chain*
- » *minimise the impacts of development on aquatic habitats in aquacultural estuaries*
- » *manage water availability and protect water sources.*

Strategy 9.2: Enable new rural residential development only where it has been identified in a local strategic plan, prepared by council and endorsed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

The ISRP identifies that demand for land for urban purposes can put pressure on agricultural productivity. While the population grows, agricultural land must be protected and land use conflicts minimised.

The Regional Plan identifies growth for the future of the Shellharbour LGA, specifically aiming to "enhance the diversity and strength of Shellharbour City Centre".

This development will bring greater investment, services, diversity and connectivity to the area.

However, increasing land-use pressures will also need to be managed sustainably and appropriately over the next 20 years.

The ISRP acknowledges the valuable hard rock resource lands within the Dunmore-Shellharbour Hills. This is reflected in the following objective and strategies:

Objective 10: Sustainably maximise the productivity of resource lands

Strategy 10.1: Consider the ongoing operation of existing mining and resource extraction and future development of known resources.

Strategic planning and local plans should consider opportunities to:

- » *protect areas of mineral and energy resources potential*
- » *protect infrastructure that facilitates mining industries, such as road and rail freight routes, from development that could affect current or future extraction*
- » *address water resource constraints and impacts.*

Strategy 10.2: Consider opportunities for strategic biodiversity conservation measures around known hard rock resource lands to protect environmental values and provide certainty for extraction activities

Other objectives of relevance to the Rural Lands Strategy include:

Objective 16:

Support the development of a circular economy Under this objective, the plan encourages transition to a circular economy, bringing opportunities for new industries and employment.

While the focus of the objective in the ISRP is on waste management, including reusing, repairing, sharing and recycling waste, circular economy principles are also relevant to the rural economy – as discussed in Outcome 3.4 of this strategy.

Objective 18: Provide housing supply in the right locations

Under this objective, the Plan states:

Shellharbour City Council through its local strategic plans has identified that it has an adequate land supply for the next 20 years to meet projected demand for housing. Shellharbour's Local Housing Strategy will be periodically reviewed to ensure there remains an adequate supply of zoned land to supply housing in the right locations. If future reviews of council's local strategic plans or the Urban Development Program identifies additional land is needed, Council will consider the suitability of locations for additional greenfield land across the local government area.

This statement indicates that it may be appropriate for consideration to be given to whether any rural zoned land within the LGA could be earmarked for longer-term urban investigation. This matter is addressed through this Rural Lands Strategy.



SHELLHARBOUR COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2032

The Shellharbour Community Strategic Plan (CSP) sets the long-term strategic direction for the LGA, identifying key objectives to enhance the local community over the next 10 years.

The CSP identifies community, environment, economy and leadership as key priorities for the future that inform subsequent Council plans and activities.

The protection of rural land from housing development is identified in the CSP as an issue of increasing importance for Shellharbour.

This Strategy aims to establish clarity and certainty around land intended for rural uses to safeguard it into the future.

LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT

The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) creates a land use vision for the future of the Shellharbour LGA, guiding planning decisions and growth management.

Planning Priority 14, reproduced in Figure 4, and LSPS action P14.1 are of particular relevance to the Rural Lands Strategy. The LSPS identified the need to develop a Rural Lands Strategy in action P14.1, to ensure that our rural lands are sustainable and reflects community needs and values. The development of this Strategy assists Council in implementing the actions of the LSPS.

PLANNING
PRIORITY
P14

Protect and enhance our rural lands

WHAT THE COMMUNITY TOLD US:

- Our rural lands should be protected and enhanced
- Need to maintain open spaces
- Preserve our rural outlook
- Ensure that rural land is not lost to housing development
- The balance between urban, rural and scenic areas make Shellharbour City a great place to live, and this needs to be protected and maintained

COUNCIL WILL:

- Protect and enhance our rural lands and outlook towards the Illawarra Escarpment
- Consider other land uses that will broaden the potential use of agricultural lands
- Identify complementary land uses that are appropriate to occur in our rural lands to improve the viability of rural industries

**RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES,
PLANS AND STRATEGIES:**

- Shellharbour Local Housing Strategy
- LEP
- DCP

ACTIONS		TIMING	COUNCIL INFLUENCE	IP&R ACTION
P14.1	Preparation of a Rural Land Use Strategy to ensure the management of rural lands is sustainable and reflects community needs and values	Short	Control	2.2.1.3

Figure 4: Planning Priority

LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY

The Shellharbour Local Housing Strategy (LHS) aims to address the appropriate provision of all forms of housing for the LGA, responding to housing supply and demand issues and their policy implications.

The LHS identifies demand for approximately 10,625 new dwellings in Shellharbour over the next 25 years, to be delivered as a mix of greenfield and infill development.

The LHS concludes that Council's existing land use controls, if developed to its full current capacity, should more than adequately provide for the housing demand projected for Shellharbour to 2041.

This conclusion should allow the LGA to withstand pressure to rezone more rural land for residential development in the short to medium term.

It is thus essential for Council to develop clarity around the land uses and extent of rural lands to maintain and enhance their amenity and viability for agricultural production into the future.

Once adopted, this Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy will represent Council's policy position on rural lands in relation to its role in housing supply.

LAKE ILLAWARRA COASTAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM 2020-2030

The Lake Illawarra Coastal Management Program (CMP) aims to provide the strategic direction and specific actions to address threats to the Lake to maintain and improve its ecological, social and economic value with the view to achieve ecological sustainability for Lake Illawarra over the long term.

The majority of Shellharbour's western rural lands drain to Macquarie Rivulet, one of the main watercourses that runs into Lake Illawarra.

Run off from these Western rural lands into Macquarie Rivulet can impact sediment and nutrient loads, which reduce the Lake's water quality. Water quality to support estuary health is directly impacted by chemical contaminants and increased sediment and nutrient loads from catchment development (in terms of both the development process and the ongoing land use that contributes to poor water quality and increased quantity). Considering the future of the western rural lands can assist with improving the Lake water quality and consideration of the identified threat of development to Lake Illawarra.

SHELLHARBOUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS

The Shellharbour Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013 sets out objectives and permitted and prohibited land uses within the City's rural and conservation zones. Land use zones under consideration in this strategy include:

- » RU1 Primary Production
- » RU2 Rural Landscape
- » RU6 Transition
- » R5 Large Lot Residential
- » C2 Environmental Conservation
- » C3 Environmental Management
- » C4 Environmental Living

The zone objectives and permitted and prohibited uses for each of the above land use zones can be viewed in the Shellharbour LEP on the NSW Legislation website.

Most of these lands are zoned under Shellharbour LEP 2013, however some rural and conservation lands are included in Shellharbour LEP 2000 (Zone 1 (a) the Rural A zone) and Shellharbour Rural LEP 2004 (Zone 1(a) Agriculture or 1(rl) Rural Landscape). There is an opportunity to include rural land zones from LEP 2000 and LEP 2004 into LEP 2013, this should be considered in future work planning programs.

STATE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING POLICIES

The State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) (Primary Production) 2021 applies to all of NSW including Shellharbour and contains the following aims:

- (a) to facilitate the orderly economic use and development of lands for primary production
- (b) to reduce land use conflict and sterilisation of rural land by balancing primary production, residential development and the protection of native vegetation, biodiversity and water resources
- (c) to identify State significant agricultural land for the purpose of ensuring the ongoing viability of agriculture on that land, having regard to social, economic and environmental considerations
- (d) to simplify the regulatory process for smaller-scale low risk artificial waterbodies, and routine maintenance of artificial water supply or drainage, in irrigation areas and districts, and for routine and emergency work in irrigation areas and districts
- (e) to encourage sustainable agriculture, including sustainable aquaculture
- (f) to require consideration of the effects of all proposed development in the State on oyster aquaculture
- (g) to identify aquaculture that is to be treated as designated development using a well-defined and concise development assessment regime based on environment risks associated with site and operational factors.

At the time of preparation of this strategy, the NSW Department of Primary Industries had not yet finalised State significant agricultural land mapping/listings referred to in point (c) above.

Other SEPPs of relevance to this Rural Strategy include:

- » SEPP (Biodiversity and Conservation) 2021, which sets out approval requirements for vegetation removal in non-rural zones, including environmental zones.
- » SEPP (Exempt and Complying Development Codes) 2008, specifically:

- Part 3A Rural Housing Code, which specifies circumstances where dwelling houses or ancillary developments can be erected as exempt or complying development- i.e. a streamlined assessment program, and
- Part 9 Agritourism and Farm Stay Accommodation Code, which sets out criteria for the development of “farm experience premises”, “farm gate premises” and “farm stay accommodation” on land zoned RU1, RU2 or RU4 to be classified as complying development.

LOCAL PLANNING DIRECTIONS

The following local planning directions, issued by the Minister for Planning under section 9.1(2) of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, apply to planning proposals lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment and are of relevance to this Rural Land Strategy:

- » Direction 9.1 Rural Zones – has the objective to protect the agricultural value of rural land, by stipulating that a planning proposal must not rezone land from a rural zone to an urban zone unless justified by a strategy approved by the Planning Secretary or a study which gives consideration to the direction. Rezoning of rural land may also be allowable if deemed to be in accordance with the relevant Regional Plan (in this case the Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041) or considered to be of minor significance.
- » Direction 9.2 Rural Lands has the following objectives:
 - (a) protect the agricultural production value of rural land,
 - (b) facilitate the orderly and economic use and development of rural lands for rural and related purposes,
 - (c) assist in the proper management, development and protection of rural lands to promote the social, economic and environmental welfare of the State,
 - (d) minimise the potential for land fragmentation and land use conflict in rural areas, particularly between residential and other rural land uses,
 - (e) encourage sustainable land use practices and ensure the ongoing viability of agriculture on rural land,
 - (f) support the delivery of the actions outlined in the NSW Right to Farm Policy.

The direction applies when a planning proposal will affect land within an existing or proposed rural or conservation zone or changes the existing minimum lot size on land within a rural or conservation zone. It stipulates that a planning proposal must:

- a) be consistent with any applicable strategic plan, including regional and district plans endorsed by the Planning Secretary, and any applicable local strategic planning statement
- (b) consider the significance of agriculture and primary production to the State and rural communities
- (c) identify and protect environmental values, including but not limited to, maintaining biodiversity, the protection of native vegetation, cultural heritage, and the importance of water resources
- (d) consider the natural and physical constraints of the land, including but not limited to, topography, size, location, water availability and ground and soil conditions
- (e) promote opportunities for investment in productive, diversified, innovative and sustainable rural economic activities
- (f) support farmers in exercising their right to farm
- (g) prioritise efforts and consider measures to minimise the fragmentation of rural land and reduce the risk of land use conflict, particularly between residential land uses and other rural land use
- (h) consider State significant agricultural land identified in chapter 2 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (Primary Production) 2021 for the purpose of ensuring the ongoing viability of this land
- (i) consider the social, economic and environmental interests of the community.

The direction also requires that a planning proposal that changes the existing minimum lot size on land within a rural or conservation zone must demonstrate that it:

- (a) is consistent with the priority of minimising rural land fragmentation and land use conflict, particularly between residential and other rural land uses
- (b) will not adversely affect the operation and viability of existing and future rural land uses and related enterprises, including supporting infrastructure and facilities that are essential to rural industries or supply chains
- (c) where it is for rural residential purposes:
 - i. is appropriately located taking account of the availability of human services, utility infrastructure, transport and proximity to existing centres
 - ii. is necessary taking account of existing and future demand and supply of rural residential land.

Figure 5 illustrates how this rural land strategy relates to other strategic planning documents affecting Shellharbour LGA.

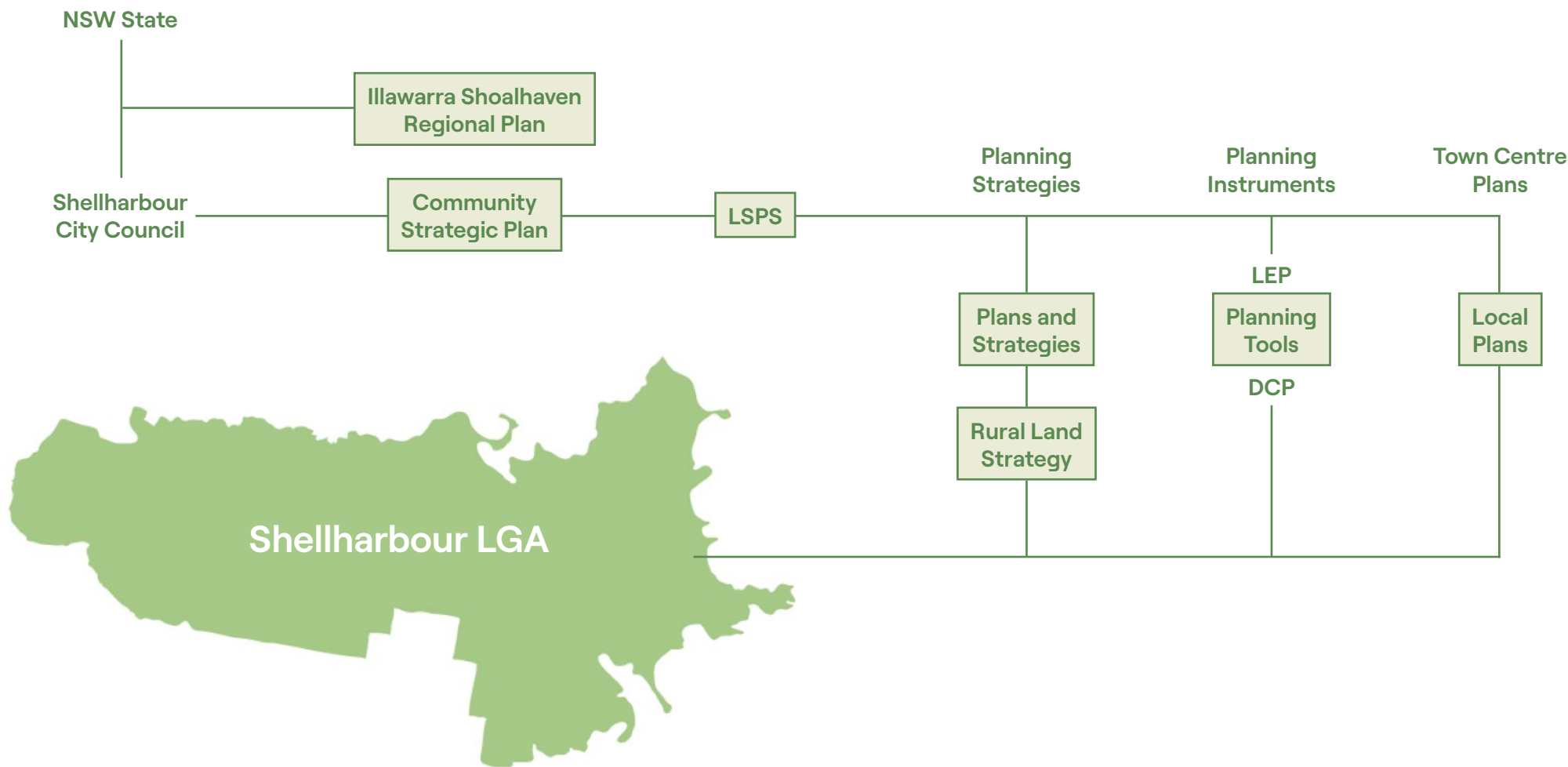


Figure 5: Rural Land Strategy

2.4 Infrastructure and urban growth

Shellharbour LGA falls under the Illawarra Shoalhaven Urban Development Program (UDP), the NSW Government's program that manages land and housing supply. The UDP monitors the planning, servicing and development for new urban areas as well as the provision of housing in existing urban areas in Wollongong, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven. The Calderwood urban development project area is identified in the West Lake Illawarra Growth Area – one of two regionally-significant growth areas identified in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven Regional Plan as shown in Figure 6. Calderwood is expected to accommodate 3 new schools and a new shopping centre and community facilities near the intersection of Calderwood Road and Escarpment Drive. Urban development will eventually extend north to the LGA border at Marshall Mount Creek and into



Figure 6: Calderwood Aerial Image 2013

Wollongong. Escarpment Drive will continue north through the growth area, connecting to the West Dapto urban release area.

The Calderwood Urban Development Project Concept Plan was approved by the State Government in 2010 under the now-repealed Part 3A of the Environmental Planning & Assessment Act. This paved the way for the staged development of approximately 700 ha of former rural land for housing and supporting urban services. Figures 6 and 7 contain aerial images of Calderwood in 2013 and 2023, demonstrating the dramatic land use change that has occurred over the past decade. Impacts of such significant land-use intensification and change will be addressed throughout this Strategy.



Figure 7: Calderwood Aerial Image 2023

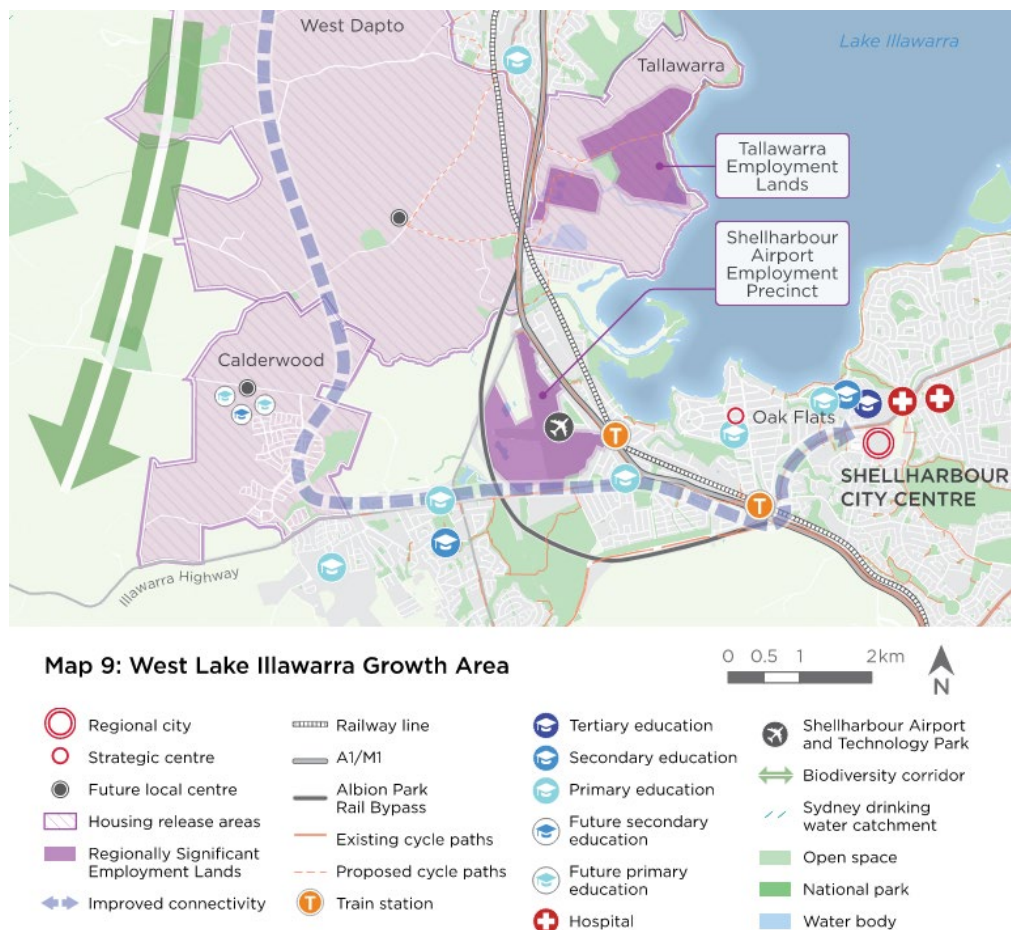


Figure 8: Excerpt from Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2021 - 2041 (p 65)

Urban growth is continuing south of the Illawarra Highway at Tullimbar, where areas of residential-zoned land remain to be developed.

A key infrastructure project adjoining rural land is the proposed Tripoli Way Extension (Albion Park Bypass). The project aims to reduce congestion on the Illawarra Highway through Albion Park, creating a continuous travel route between Terry Street in the east and Broughton Avenue in the west avoiding the town centre. The new road, shown in Figure 8, will delineate the interface between Albion Park's residential land and rural land, with land on the northern side of the road zoned RU6 Transition. This may provide opportunities to efficiently connect rural industry markets to consumers.

In the southern part of the City, a new Shellharbour Hospital is proposed at Dunmore Road, Dunmore. The extension of urban infrastructure, including sewerage, to service the new hospital may provide an opportunity to service properties further south along Dunmore Road. This may also act as a catalyst for consideration to be given to rezoning land that currently has a rural or transition zoning.

Council's Local Housing Strategy (LHS) identifies demand for approximately 10,625 new dwellings in Shellharbour over the next 25 years, to be delivered as a mix of greenfield and infill development. Not only is there considerable opportunity for additional populations to be accommodated within the already-identified West Lake Illawarra Growth Area, there is also scope for increasing dwelling densities within established suburbs such as Albion Park, Albion Park Rail, Barrack Heights, Oak Flats, Warilla and Shellharbour Village. This LHS outcome provides evidence-based certainty that Shellharbour City LGA currently does not need to rezone more rural land for residential development.

In addition, the Department of Planning and Environment has directed in the ISRP 2041 that “if future reviews of council’s local strategic plans or the Urban Development Program identifies additional land is needed, Council will consider the suitability of locations for additional greenfield land across the local government area.” Given the LHS has identified that Council’s existing land use controls would more than adequately provide for the housing demand projected for Shellharbour to 2041, the Rural Lands Strategy does not identify additional greenfield land in the LGA.

NSW Department of Primary Industries also recommend that future housing demand and supply is best addressed through a whole of LGA housing strategy (such as the LHS), this approach ensures that future housing is provided in the most appropriate and efficient manner for the community.

Source: Department of Primary Industries ‘Planning for Agriculture in Rural Land Use Strategies, 2022’





Figure 9: Tripoli Way Extension Project

PART B – RURAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES

Priority 1: Establish a defensible rural boundary

Parts of Shellharbour’s rural lands have come under pressure to be rezoned to allow for further urban expansion. The continued rezoning of rural land to accommodate urban development will exacerbate issues already being experienced within the LGA, such as traffic congestion, increased stormwater runoff entering local waterways, loss of rural amenity and increased potential for land use conflict between rural and residential areas.

OUTCOME 1.1 The rural boundary is reflected in Shellharbour LEP

To a large extent, zoning within the Shellharbour LEP already adequately reflects the boundary of the City’s rural lands.

The Shellharbour community has, in recent years, witnessed the impacts of major infrastructure projects and greenfield residential development on the City’s rural lands. Feedback provided through Council’s Let’s Chat website and at in-person drop-in sessions in June 2023 showed the community has a strong desire to maintain existing rural lands and to protect the land from inappropriate development and land use conflict.

There are several ways in which Council can utilise the Shellharbour LEP to maintain rural land values and viability of rural industries.

Land use zoning is an important mechanism to control what types of development may and may not be permitted on the land to limit uses to those that are compatible with primary production.

In some areas of the LGA, rural land zoning does not reflect established land uses and should be reviewed. Examples include the existing Dunmore Lakes Estate rural residential precinct, Croom Lane in Albion Park Rail, and Calderwood Christian School. A review of planning controls in these locations should be undertaken to inform amendments to land zone and minimum lot size maps within LEP 2013, with the intention to ensure planning controls reflect the established land uses in these locations.

Likewise, minimum lot sizes are critical for preventing the fragmentation of rural land, which can undermine the ability for the land to be used for viable primary production.

Finally, a balanced approach is required in deciding which land uses should be permissible within rural zoned land. Uses should support the economic viability of rural land without leading to land use conflict.

A review was undertaken of permitted land uses within the RU1 Primary Production and RU2 Rural Landscape zones in Shellharbour LEP 2013. Currently permitted uses in the RU1 zone which may not be compatible with the zone objectives include “schools” and “community facilities”. Uses which could be added as permissible with consent in both the RU1 and RU2 zones include “rural workers’ dwellings, research stations” and “emergency services facilities”. Within the C3 Environmental Management zone, “agritourism” could be added as a permissible use, while consideration should be given to prohibiting “group homes” and “home-based childcare” which may not be appropriate in areas with this zoning.

ACTIONS:

- 1.1.1 Prevent any further encroachment of development incompatible with farming operations through the establishment of an urban growth boundary through the adoption of this Rural Lands Strategy.
- 1.1.2 Undertake a planning proposal to amend the permissible uses in the RU1, RU2 and C3 zones as recommended by this strategy
- 1.1.3 Review existing rural zoning in the following locations:
Croom Lane, Albion Park Rail,
Calderwood Christian School, Calderwood
Dunmore Lakes Estate, Dunmore

Priority 2: Establish an appropriate transition area in the west of our City

The development of residentially zoned land within the Calderwood Urban Development Area will potentially create land use conflict on its western edge.

The Calderwood Urban Development Area has a 1.4km (approx.) frontage of land zoned for residential lots (as small as 300sqm) immediately adjoining rural lands.

OUTCOME 2.1 New rural land use opportunities are investigated for land west of Calderwood Urban Development Area

The development of this Strategy has identified an opportunity for Council to undertake a precinct plan to inform a vision for the future of these western rural lands to reduce land use conflict and provide opportunities for innovative uses that are compatible with traditional agriculture and the adjoining residential lands.

This precinct plan will be developed in collaboration with rural landowners and the wider community.

The precinct plan will include detailed studies, site analysis and assessments to identify the extent of constraints in this area (such as land use conflict) and inform future opportunities such as agricultural uses in the western rural lands.

ACTION:

- 2.1.1 Develop a precinct plan for the future of rural lands to the west of Calderwood, in collaboration with rural landowners and the wider community.

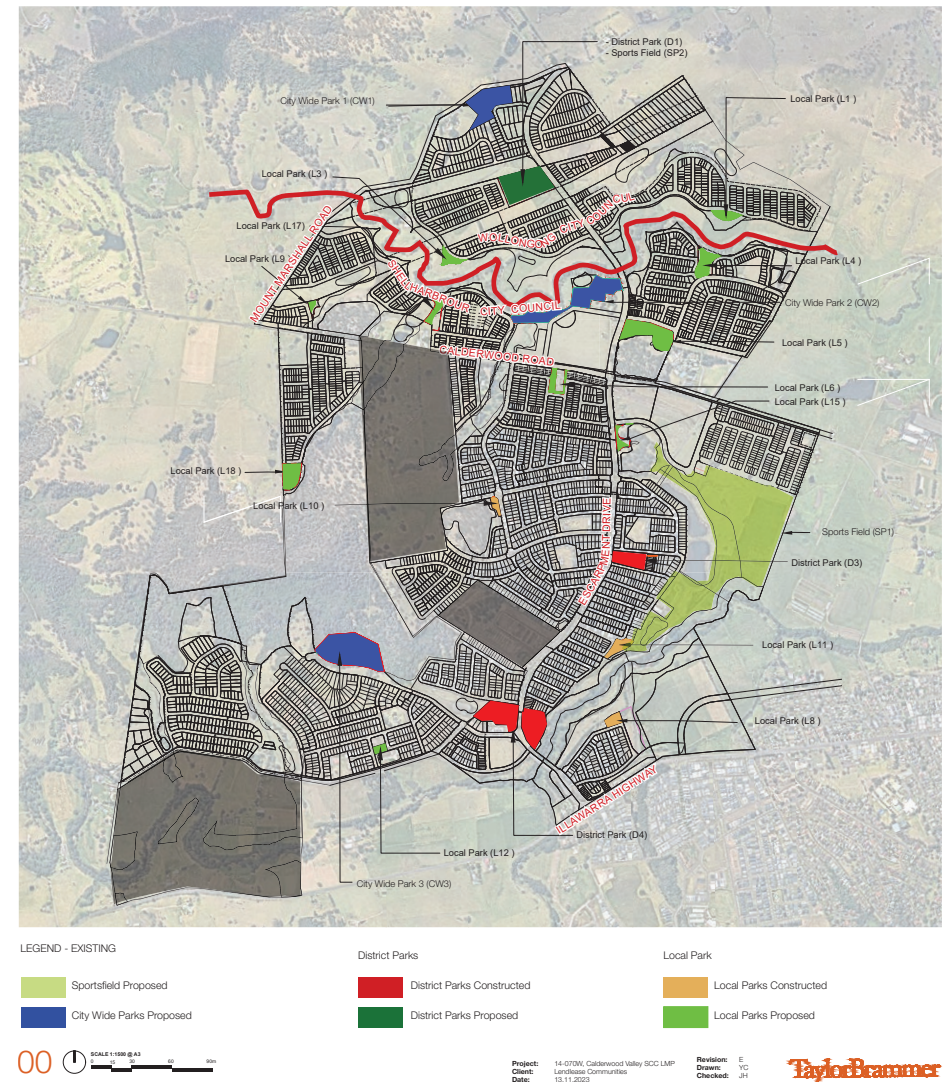


Figure 10: Calderwood Subdivision Layout

Priority 3: Promote a sustainable and resilient rural economy

The Department of Primary Industries Agriculture Industry Snapshot for Planning: Illawarra/Shoalhaven Region (2020) identifies the gross value of agricultural production in the Illawarra Shoalhaven Region is over \$97.3m (2015/16) and supplies 11% of the State's milk production. In the Shellharbour LGA, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identifies Milk production as the highest agricultural commodity by Gross Value in 2020/21.

Farming in coastal areas such as the Illawarra Shoalhaven Region provides benefits and opportunities for farmers and urban communities. By sustaining agriculture close to (peri) urban areas, there are a range of advantages for farmers ranging from opportunities for market differentiation and alternative income streams, access to labour, resources and materials, higher land values allowing increased borrowing ability, opportunities to grow high value crops which benefit from market proximity (reduced food miles and spoilage).



Cupitt's Estate, Ulladulla. Credit Destination NSW

Enhancing Shellharbour's capacity to sustainably develop and diversify its rural economy will support the region's ability to adapt to shifting global economics, natural hazards, development pressures and population growth.

Opportunities to fortify existing industries and to strengthen innovation and industry diversification throughout the LGA should continue to be prioritised, and new avenues for support, through partnerships, funding arrangements or community-led programs, should be explored.

As the region's economy continues to grow, an emphasis on sustainability and resiliency will underpin the delivery of rural industry, activity and development in the region.



Cupitt's Estate, Ulladulla. Credit Destination NSW

OUTCOME 3.1 Dairy farming is supported and protected

Historically, dairy farming has been an intrinsic part of Shellharbour's economy and identity.

Dairying in Shellharbour dates back to the 1800s when small dairy operations existed at Albion Park, Tongarra, Yellow Rock and Dunmore.

The Illawarra Cooperative Central Dairy and butter factory opened in Albion Park Rail in 1889 and operated continuously until its closure in 1985. At its peak, the factory was supplied by 120 local farms. Consistent with trends in other agricultural industries, there has been a shift to fewer, larger and more efficient dairy farms. This trend has also been influenced by the deregulation of the dairy industry in the year 2000.

In 2023, only 4 dairy farms remained in Shellharbour City, the largest and most visually prominent being Tate's dairy farm at Calderwood and Albion Park.

The ongoing viability of dairying in Shellharbour can be supported by:

ACTION:

- 3.1.1 The upgrade of Calderwood Road should require opportunities for ongoing stock crossing



RURAL SPOTLIGHT: TATE'S DAIRY

Tate's Dairy Farm at Calderwood/Albion Park has been operational since the 1950's. In recent years, the farm's operations have been threatened by urban development, including the Albion Park Rail bypass, which required the resumption of a large area of farmland and forced the relocation of one of the farm's previous two dairies, and the Calderwood urban release area.

Despite the challenges of encroaching development and the trend towards large-scale dairy farms, the Tates are committed to the ongoing production of milk in Shellharbour.

They have invested a significant amount of capital into a new 60-unit rotary dairy; 7,200 sqm loafing shed, and 60kW solar PV and battery storage system. The Tates see their proximity to Sydney as a major advantage in terms of food miles and note that the quality of their pasture and grazing conditions for their herd make them a sought-after supplier of fresh milk.

Part of Tate's landholdings to the west of Shellharbour Airport currently used for grazing is identified within a 66ha area for a future Illawarra Regional Business Park (IRBP). The IRBP is currently subject to various constraints and is considered a longer-term development option. As such, the current industrial land zone should be subject to a planning review in 5-10 years time.



OUTCOME 3.2 Agriculture in Shellharbour is more diverse

Most rural and environmental-zoned land in Shellharbour LGA has a 40 ha minimum lot size (which equates to approximately 100 acres). This 40 ha standard was statewide policy introduced in the 1970s, which set the basis for subdivision limits in rural areas. 40 ha was considered an appropriate minimum lot size to restrict rural residential settlement while ensuring the preservation of agricultural lands and viable rural holdings. Since then, Shellharbour City Council introduced flexibility in the subdivision of rural land through clause 4.2 of LEP 2013. When applied, this clause allows for a reduction in minimum lot size controls if dwelling entitlements are not established on the undersized lot. This mechanism allows land owners greater flexibility in achieving the objectives of the land zone and increases agricultural viability.

Throughout the development of this Strategy, landowner consultation indicated that 40 ha in Shellharbour may be too small to derive a sustainable income from traditional grazing yet too large to be affordably managed as a hobby farm. This feedback indicates that rural landowners may not be fully aware of the opportunities for rural subdivision under clause 4.2.

The flexibility provided by rural subdivision clause 4.2 provides opportunities for other agricultural uses and industries which may better suit the lands constraints and address feedback received from land owners. For example, intensive plant horticulture, a type of agriculture, presents a significant opportunity for local food production and agritourism. This more modern form of farming requires less land, and, in the case of hydroponic production, is not reliant on the presence of fertile soils. Agriculture, including agritourism, aquaculture, extensive agriculture, intensive livestock agriculture and intensive plant agriculture, are currently permitted with consent in RU1 Primary Production, RU2 Rural Landscape and RU6 Transition land zones as specified in LEP 2013. To demonstrate the viability of this industry, a table containing examples of viable farms operating on less than 10 ha in other local government areas containing peri-urban rural land is included at Appendix C.

The analysis shows that there are already a significant number of lots smaller than the minimum lot size, particularly within RU1 zoned land along Calderwood Road and Yellow Creek Road. There are also a number of undersized lots within C3 zoned land at Yellow Rock and south of the Illawarra Highway at Tongarra.

ACTIONS:

- 3.2.1 Support the diversification of agricultural activities within Shellharbour by promoting horticulture and aquaculture opportunities
- 3.2.2 Council to raise awareness to eligible rural land owners regarding the use of LEP 2013 clause 4.2 Rural Subdivision



OUTCOME 3.3 Agritourism is supported and promoted

The ongoing function and viability of Shellharbour's diverse rural economy can be strengthened by the sustainable growth of agritourism throughout the LGA.

Agritourism includes land uses that complement existing agricultural businesses, such as farm experiences, cellar doors, retreats, roadside stalls and fruit picking.

Related to agritourism is farm stay accommodation, which, subject to certain requirements, can be carried out without the need for development approval.

Supporting rural landowners to explore agritourism options can add value to existing agricultural operations, strengthening and diversifying the region's rural economies and provide primary producers with opportunities to have valuable direct contact with end customers, so they can better understand consumer preferences and demands.

Agritourism provides an opportunity for landowners to add resilience by creating an alternate income stream and may increase the value of production on the land – for example “pick your own” fruit or vegetables.

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has recently published a document called “Setting up an agritourism business –A guide to planning approvals” to assist anyone opening – or thinking about – an agritourism offering as part of their agricultural business. The guide can be downloaded at: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-09/setting-up-an-agritourism-business.pdf

In addition, Destination Sydney Surrounds South, partnered with Destination NSW have developed resources and networks for those starting out in Agritourism. View more at <https://dnsss.com.au/agritourism/>

ACTIONS:

- 3.3.1 Promote grant opportunities from Destination NSW for tourism-related activities
- 3.3.2 Incorporate agritourism into Visit Shellharbour website



Glenburnie Orchard, Darkes Forest.
Credit: Destination NSW & 199353 Longstocking Brewery, Pambula.



Italian Cooking Experience, Credit: Destination NSW

OUTCOME 3.4 Rural and complementary businesses are encouraged

As Shellharbour continues to develop, the region will look to ensure the efficient and sustainable consumption of resources by promoting principles of a circular economy, whereby energy from resources is reduced, reused, recycled and recovered, enhancing efficiency and environmental sustainability throughout the supply chain. Promoting a circular rural economy throughout Shellharbour will strengthen the region's ongoing environmental, economic and social success and will enhance the region's capacity to respond to global economic and natural crisis.

For the agricultural industry, a circular economy presents possibilities for significant efficiencies and input cost reductions through energy generation, recycled water use, and opportunities for renewables and waste solutions. Renewable energy generation is a key component of a functional circular economy and will play an important role as NSW moves towards a net zero economy. Council has also committed to working with the community to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. With the majority of our community emissions coming from electricity (48% of the total emissions, according to the Central Resource for Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data in NSW), greater access to renewable energy will assist the Shellharbour City community in transitioning to net zero by 2050. Development interest in renewable industries such as wind or solar farms will need to be managed to ensure compatibility with the surrounding environment. For example, solar energy production in appropriate areas of Shellharbour's rural lands could be supported to capture a wide range of environmental, economic and employment benefits. However, such industry must be carefully coordinated so as to mitigate negative impacts to the area's productive rural lands, scenic values and tourist activity.

During the development of this Strategy, consultation with local primary producers indicated that rural businesses had experienced significant increases to input costs such as transport and electricity in recent times, in some cases leading to financial strain. This highlights the importance of industry resilience and encouraging continued support from local consumers to ensure businesses remain viable. Examples of rural

and complementary businesses already operating within the Shellharbour LGA are included on the following pages.

Regenerative agriculture is increasingly being recognised as an appropriate response to the challenges of degraded soils and landscapes and climate variability. Fundamentally, regenerative agriculture is about restoring and enhancing ecosystem function on farms and in landscapes through practices designed to work with the landscape, climate, people and livestock. Practices typically associated with regenerative farming include:

- » adaptive grazing management (this can be rotational, cell or strategic)
- » reduced reliance on agricultural chemicals (ranging from reduced inputs, to organic amendments, to microbial inoculants, to no inputs)
- » integrated pest and weed management
- » mixed species planting in grasslands, pasture phases and cover crops
- » biodiverse plantings within the farming landscapes, and any efforts to promote biodiversity
- » no-till farming
- » stubble retention
- » water ponding and spreading.

According to NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI), many of these practices are tried, tested and evidence-based.

Additional resources on regenerative agriculture can be explored at Soils for Life, an independent, non-profit organisation that supports farmers to regenerate soils, for resilient people, communities, businesses and landscapes. See case study of building resilience into the landscape at Jillamtong, near Braidwood NSW on page 36 "<https://soilsforlife.org.au/>"

References

Orgill S and Dougherty, W, NSW Department of Primary Industries, 2021. Regenerative Agriculture



Figure 11: Solar-powered Battery Energy Storage System at Tate's Dairy, Calderwood

RURAL SPOTLIGHT: CALDERWOOD VALLEY MUSHROOMS

Calderwood Valley Mushrooms has been operating since 2005 with the original mushroom farm on the site having been established in 1984. It is the only commercial mushroom farm in the Illawarra region and is uniquely positioned to provide fresh mushrooms to the local market. The farm is located in the upper Calderwood Valley on a 29-hectare landholding, most of which remains covered in native bushland.

The farm directly employs 15 people and indirectly supports numerous other local jobs. The farm sources mushroom compost from a large-scale mushroom farm in Windsor and imports peat moss from The Netherlands.

The mushrooms are grown in large, insulated sheds which are required to be kept at around 18 degrees in temperature.





Figure 12: Farmgate sales sign, Calderwood

RURAL SPOTLIGHT: JAMBEROO AQUACULTURE

Jamberoo Aquaculture, located on a 10-hectare property in the Croom Valley, was established in the 1990s at one of the region's original dairy farms known as "Tabbagong". The property and business was bought by the current owners in 2009 who have built the business into a thriving operation. The farm grows Silver Perch and Golden Perch as well as yabbies. Fingerlings (juvenile fish) and yabbies are sold to people to stock their own dams or for aquaponics, while larger fish are mainly sold through Sydney Fish Market. The location is accessible for customers from Sydney, Canberra, the Southern Highlands and the South Coast and is visited by local school and university students. Jamberoo Aquaculture uses state-of-the-art bio-filtration systems which avoid the need for chemicals to keep the fish ponds and cages clean. In addition to aquaculture, the farm also produces modest quantities of beef cattle, honey from beehives and eggs from chickens.



ACTIONS:

- 3.4.1 Investigate opportunities to promote local rural businesses and products
- 3.4.2 Investigate potential to establish regular farmer's market in Shellharbour
- 3.4.3 Encourage the establishment of new primary production enterprises such as horticulture to build capacity and resilience in the City's rural economy.

Priority 4: Protect biodiversity and waterways

Shellharbour's rural land interfaces extensively with land containing high biodiversity values. In most instances, the boundary between rural and conservation-zoned land occurs where the land becomes too steep to be suited to rural uses. While the majority of land zoned for rural use has been cleared of native vegetation, there are pockets of rural-zoned land which retain biodiversity values.

Waterways and their associated riparian areas form important biodiversity corridors for both terrestrial and aquatic species.

Significant waterways within Shellharbour's rural areas include Marshall Mount Creek, Macquarie Rivulet, Frazers Creek, Yellow Rock Creek, and Hazleton Creek, all of which flow into Lake Illawarra, and Rocklow Creek, which flows into the Minnamurra River.



Causeway crossing of Macquarie Rivulet

OUTCOME 4.1 Natural areas are enhanced, protected and connected

(Aligns with Planning Priority P12 in LSPS)

The community has become increasingly aware of the importance of preserving natural areas and maintaining or restoring connections between vegetated areas. Wildlife corridors are connections across the landscape that link up areas of habitat. They support natural processes that occur in a healthy environment, including the movement of different species to find resources like food, water and shelter.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has prepared biodiversity corridor mapping at a regional scale that highlights the location of vegetation that forms an important habitat function for native fauna settlement, living and breeding, or dispersal and movement through the landscape. The mapping is based on the findings of many studies of native fauna and how they use and move through native habitat in fragmented landscapes. It also indicates locations where opportunities exist to strengthen corridors through strategic revegetation. This DCCEEW mapping is reproduced in Figures 13 and 14. Various mechanisms exist to provide for the revegetation, conservation and ongoing management of biodiversity corridors, such as the creation of Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements which can provide a funding source for such work. At a local level, Shellharbour's biodiversity corridors are mapped and included in the Illawarra Biodiversity Strategy (2011).

ACTION:

- 4.1.1 Review and update Council's Terrestrial Biodiversity mapping to ensure protection and resilience of biodiversity corridors within the LGA and neighbouring regions.

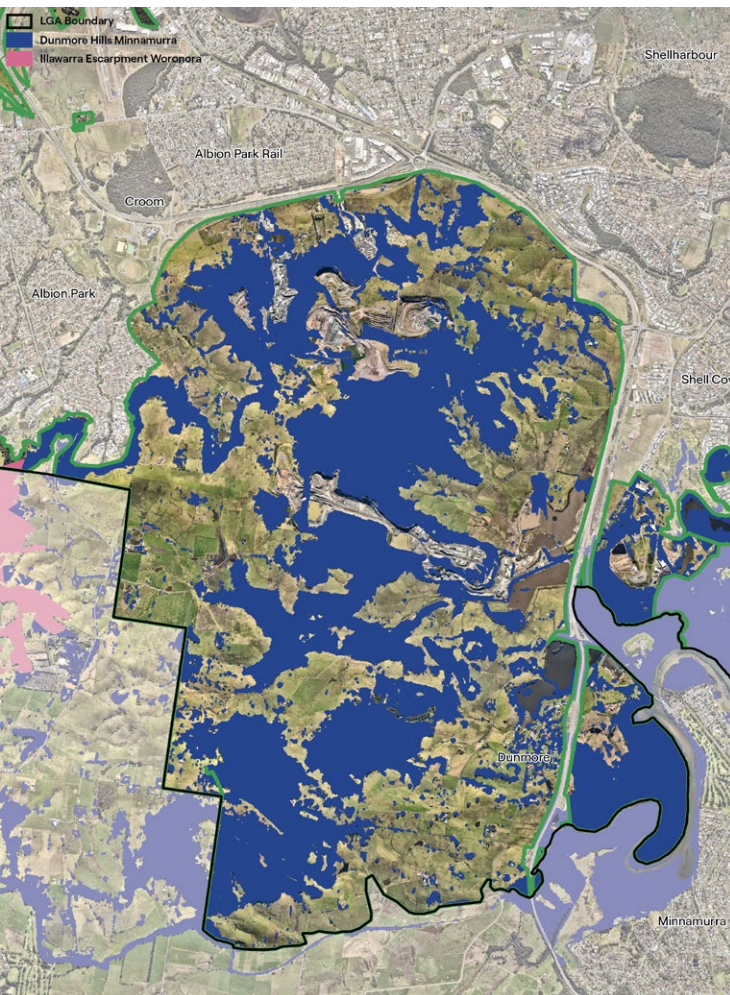


Figure 13: Eastern rural lands biodiversity corridors
Source: Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Biodiversity Corridors 2023, DCCEEW

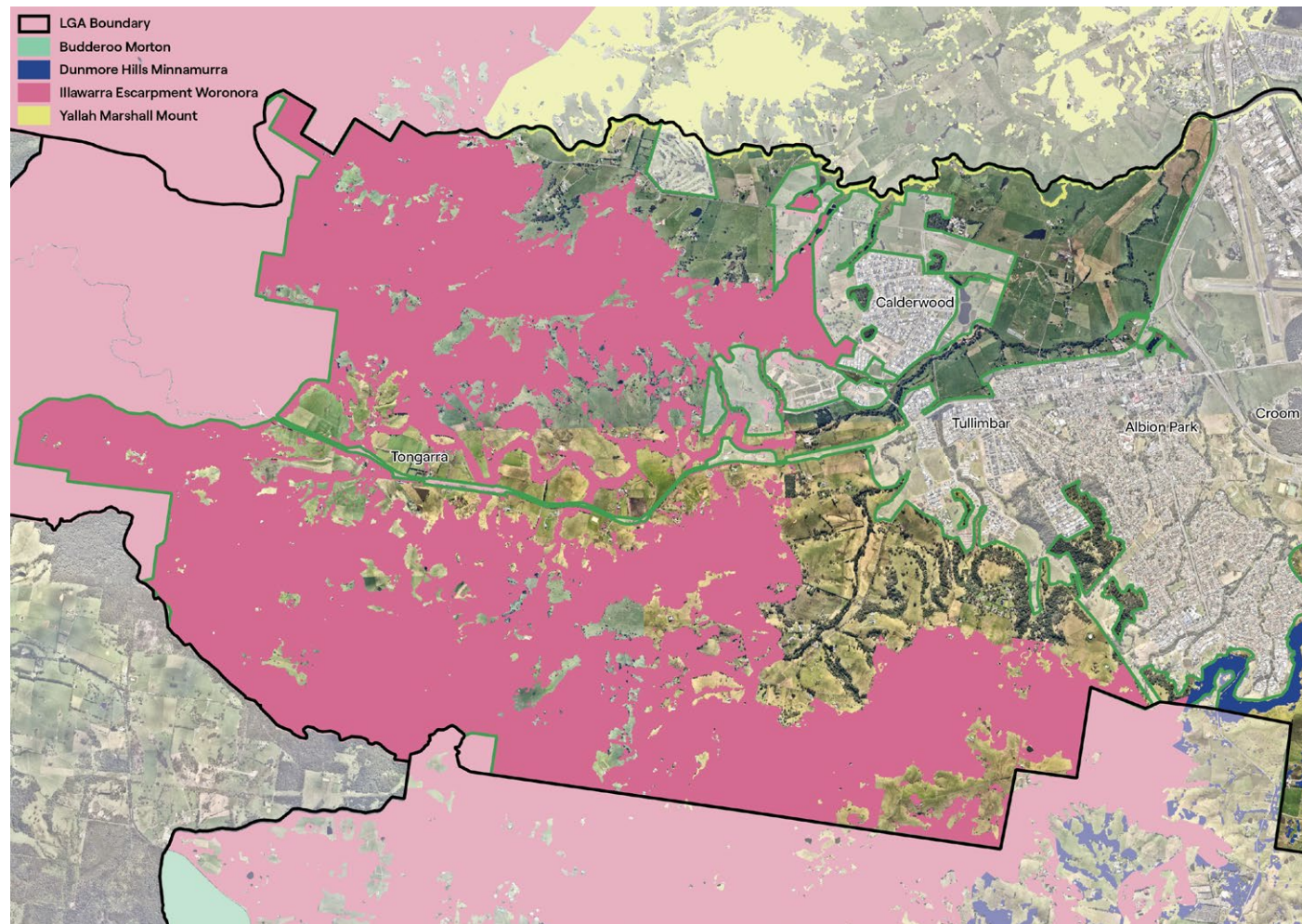


Figure 14: Western rural lands biodiversity corridors
Source: Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Biodiversity Corridors 2023, DCCEEW

OUTCOME 4.2 Health of soils and waterways are enhanced

(Aligns with Planning Priority P13 in LSPS)

NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, The Environment and Water (DCCEEW) recognises that healthy soils and waterways contribute to a healthy environment, society and economy, and support strong, resilient communities and cities. For rural lands, healthy soil and waterways provide support to ecosystems and the primary production of food and resources. The management of rural land, including stressors such as pollutants, and the impacts of development need to be well managed. Aerial mapping demonstrates that over time, sections of Shellharbour's major waterways have become degraded; due to tree clearing and removal of natural vegetation, uncontrolled access from stock, weed infestation and increased runoff from urban development and land use intensification.

Continued stress on soils and waterways health and integrity can impact on the stability and ability to perform valuable ecosystem functions such as conveyance of surface water runoff during rain events, a source of water for irrigation and stock, providing habitat for aquatic and amphibious species, acting as corridors for wildlife and providing visual amenity.

Ongoing monitoring is an important mechanism to enhance the health of our waterways. The Lake Illawarra Coastal Management Plan 2020 requires ongoing monitoring of nutrients and sediments in runoff of development sites where there will be a large-scale change or land-use intensification. Further, Council undertakes water quality monitoring programs throughout the LGA. This includes testing at two locations along Macquarie Rivulet (Upper & Lower). Water samples are analysed for nitrogen, ammonia, oxides of nitrogen, total nitrogen, total phosphorus, temperature, pH, electrical conductivity, dissolved oxygen, total suspended solids, turbidity, chlorophyll-a, and enterococci bacteria.

There is an opportunity for landowners and community to also contribute to the maintenance, enhancement, regeneration and protection of soils and watercourses

throughout rural and agricultural areas, by approaching regeneration at a site specific level. Approaches such as regenerative farming provide benefits to soil quality, biodiversity, resilience and agricultural carrying capacity, in some cases also provide indirect benefits via Agritourism and improved visual amenity.

Regenerative agriculture resources can be explored at Soils for Life, an independent, non-profit organisation that supports farmers to regenerate soils, for resilient people, communities, businesses and landscapes. <https://soilsforlife.org.au/>

Sources: [Managing land and soil | NSW Environment and Heritage](#)
[About land and soil information | NSW Environment and Heritage](#)
[Waterway health | NSW Environment and Heritage](#)

ACTIONS:

Waterways can be maintained or improved through the following actions:

- 4.2.1 Undertake performance audit of stormwater infrastructure associated with new urban development at Tullimbar and Calderwood
- 4.2.2 Run an education campaign for rural landowners with direct access to major watercourses about the importance of maintenance and rehabilitation of riparian zones and availability of grant funding
- 4.2.3 Promote the establishment of Landcare groups to improve and maintain riparian areas along major watercourses.
- 4.2.4 Increase monitoring and compliance of erosion and sediment control during construction activities.
- 4.2.5 Continue water quality testing program in Macquarie Rivulet
- 4.2.6 Investigate barriers to fish passage along Macquarie Rivulet and their potential removal

RURAL SPOTLIGHT: REGENERATIVE FARMING - JILLAMATONG, BRAIDWOOD

Holistic management and complementary approaches have improved soil fertility, biodiversity and water cycle movement through the landscape and brought many indirect benefits to productivity, landscape health, cash flow stability and resilience.



Slowing down the movement of water through the landscape and storing water for use in drier times.



Capture and relocate fertility: Moated dams in low points throughout the landscape contribute to lush areas of plant growth. The cattle graze these areas and then take the fertility back up the hill as they move higher up during the later parts of the day.



Encouraging biodiversity: Improved ground cover and widened tree corridors have resulting in resilience in the landscape and improved feed for cattle.

You can read more at:

<https://soilsforlife.org.au/observing-resilience-at-jillamatong/>

Priority 5: Protect the scenic quality and heritage significance of rural lands



Shellharbour's rural lands are highly valued for their scenic quality. In numerous locations, particularly within the western rural lands, rural vistas include the iconic Illawarra escarpment as a backdrop. Often this scenic amenity is enhanced or complemented by items of local heritage significance including historic farmhouses and historic school buildings at Dunmore, Croom and Tullimbar, planted trees and dry stone walls.

Community engagement has revealed a desire to maintain the City's scenic rural vistas, noting the adverse visual impact urban expansion has had in some rural locations.

OUTCOME 5.1 Important rural landscapes are identified and protected

The key gateways to Shellharbour's rural lands are:

1. the Illawarra Highway at Tongarra (travelling east from Macquarie Pass)
2. the Illawarra Highway at Tullimbar (travelling west from Albion Park)
3. the Princes Motorway at Albion Park Rail (travelling south from Wollongong)
4. the Princes Highway at Dunmore (travelling north from Kiama)

These gateways, and the rural land visible from them, are depicted in the planning framework maps in Section C of this document.

Council will prepare an Urban Greening Strategy for the local government area. Outcomes of the greening strategy will inform greening initiatives within rural areas, such as new greenfield development at Calderwood and Tullimbar, where development is having a significant impact on rural vistas within the City. The protection of rural lands from rezoning and inappropriate development will help to mitigate these impacts, as will the maturing of trees within new urban precincts over time.

ACTIONS:

- 5.1.1 The development of Council's proposed Greening Strategy should seek to enhance rural vistas within the LGA.
- 5.1.2 Prepare DCP statements of significance for important rural landscapes identified in this Strategy

Shellharbour City has a rich and diverse heritage beginning with an Aboriginal history of thousands of years and a more recent history that includes early settlers, timber getters, farmers, fishermen and quarrying.

Numerous studies have been undertaken to help us understand what is important about our area. As a result of these studies, we have a list of places with statutory heritage protection. Schedule 5 of Shellharbour LEP 2013 lists the City's heritage items, many of which are located within the LGA's rural lands. The LEP provides controls for development to protect both our Aboriginal heritage and our European heritage.

Heritage items in our rural landscapes may include buildings or any parts of a building, farmyard structures, trees, views, or cultural landscapes which may encompass a collection of these things.

OUTCOME 5.2 Sites of cultural and heritage significance are protected and celebrated

A number of heritage items are located along Swamp Road in Dunmore. This, combined with the scenic rural amenity of the area, makes it conducive to being promoted as a heritage tourist route. This could be done by way of signage and inclusion in tourist materials for example.

Clause 5.10 of Shellharbour LEP requires the consent authority to consider the effects of proposed development on the heritage significance of any heritage item or heritage conservation area to which the development relates.

The LEP also includes conservation incentive provisions. These provisions allow Council to grant consent to development relating to a heritage item that would otherwise not be allowed, if the development would facilitate the conservation of the item. This allows the owners of properties containing heritage items an additional degree of flexibility when considering development options.

ACTIONS:

- 5.2.1 Council raises awareness among owners of properties containing heritage items of Heritage Conservation Clause 5.10 in Shellharbour LEP and its potential to allow the adaptive re-use of the item.
- 5.2.2 Establish and promote heritage tourist route along Swamp Road between Dunmore and Jamberoo
- 5.2.3 Review Heritage Provisions in the DCP
- 5.2.4 Prepare Shellharbour City Heritage Strategy



Telegraph Retreats Cottages, Cooperabung
Credit: Destination NSW

Priority 6: Ensure housing in rural areas is compatible with long-term planning objectives

Land use zoning is the primary tool by which Council controls land use and development within the LGA. Shellharbour LEP 2013 prescribes land zone objectives, and specifies permitted or prohibited development within each zone. In the context of rural land, consideration should be given not only to the zoning of rural areas, but also to the potential of land use conflict with existing rural uses or urban uses. A comprehensive review of planning controls has been undertaken to inform this Strategy.

Shellharbour LEP 2013 RU6 Transition zone serves to protect and maintain land that provides a transition between rural and other land uses of varying intensities or environmental sensitivities, and minimise conflict between land uses within this zone and land uses within adjoining zones. The RU6 Transition zone is already applied to multiple parcels of land south of Macquarie Rivulet at Albion Park; this contiguous land is approximately 1.6km in length and 22Ha in area. Primary Production land joins to the north and low-density residential land continues to the south. The proposed Tripoli Way Extension will immediately adjoin the 1.6km of RU6 land and introduce a new boundary between existing rural and urban zones. It is recommended that the RU6 land zone be maintained in this area, as it provides a valuable transition area between the Rivulet and rural uses to the north, and the residential areas joining the future Tripoli Way to the south.

The future uses of lands in lower Calderwood, should be considered within the context of the Calderwood Urban Development Area. Specifically, this Strategy makes recommendations for land at 2514 Illawarra Highway, currently zoned RU1 and used for rural purposes. This land is approximately 43Ha in area, with a 1km frontage on the Illawarra Highway to the south. To the north, the land has approximately 700m frontage adjoining North Macquarie Road. Macquarie Rivulet intersects this property, essentially creating two separate areas of land. The northern section of this land is already adjoining a residential road and will be surrounded by residential development to the north, east and west. For these reasons, it is recommended that the northern section of this land, which fronts North Macquarie Road be investigated for residential rezoning, to create a contiguous residential offering. Retaining the southern part of 2514 Illawarra

Highway as rural will provide opportunity for continued agricultural industry, and maintenance of an important rural landscape.

With regard to the provision of residential accommodation in other rural areas, the current land zones specify permitted or prohibited development. Shellharbour LEP 2013 permits the establishment of dual occupancies (attached) with consent in RU1, RU2, RU6, C3 and C4 zones if minimum lot size requirements are achieved. Within RU1, RU2, C3 and RU6 zones, Shellharbour LEP 2013 currently prohibits dual occupancies (detached), secondary dwellings and rural workers dwellings. These prohibitions have been carried over from previous LEPs and stem from a rationale that such forms of development may undermine the zone objectives relating to primary production and the rural character of the land.

What appears to be one farmhouse complex is preferred instead of multiple farmhouse complexes throughout rural lands. This is supported by controls within Shellharbour Development Control Plan (DCP), Chapter 34 Visual Landscape Character; which encourages traditional rural and bushland setting building styles and ensures visual impacts of proposed development are minimised.

During community consultation, some rural landowners noted that the inability to construct an additional dwelling limited the capacity for intergenerational occupation of rural properties and denied owners the opportunity to derive supplementary income from an additional dwelling on their land.

A comprehensive review of planning controls has been undertaken to inform the provision of additional dwellings in rural areas and address community feedback. This assessment has determined that dual-occupancies (attached) are still the preferred type of residential accommodation in rural zones. However, rural workers dwellings may serve as an alternative form of residential accommodation for family and workers in rural areas. In the longer term, this Strategy also identifies an opportunity to explore adaptive reuse of existing mineral resource lands within rural areas, following completion of extraction operations.

OUTCOME 6.1 Investigate permissibility of rural workers dwellings on commercial farms in RU1 and RU2 within LEP 2013

A comprehensive review of planning controls has determined that dual-occupancies (attached) are the preferred type of residential accommodation in rural areas, and that further investigation regarding the role of rural workers dwellings be undertaken to facilitate an alternative form of residential accommodation.

Rural workers dwellings are defined in Shellharbour LEP 2013 as *a building or place that is additional to a dwelling house on the same lot and that is used predominantly as a place of residence by persons employed, whether on a long-term or short-term basis, for the purpose of agriculture or a rural industry on that land.*

Investigating the benefits of amending Shellharbour LEP 2013 to permit rural workers dwellings with development consent on commercial farms (within RU1 and RU2 land zones) may address matters raised in community feedback, and provide an additional dwelling to support accommodation for family and/or workers.

NSW Department of Primary Industries have developed guidance for Councils to assist in planning approaches and the development of criteria for rural workers dwellings. This guidance should be considered when investigating the permissibility of rural workers dwellings within LEP 2013. DPI identify permanent dwellings which are surplus to the efficient use of rural resource lands may restrict future primary industry development, be inconsistent with zone objectives and undermine rural zone planning strategies. The development of this Strategy has identified more investigation is required to undertake evidence-based decision making to ensure the establishment of additional dwellings in rural areas are justifiable and contribute to the land zone objectives. At a minimum, rural workers dwellings should be restricted to commercial farms.

The investigation would need to have regard to Shellharbour DCP relating to visual landscape character, siting, clustering and distance controls.

ACTION:

- 6.1.1 Investigate permissibility of rural workers dwellings on commercial farms in RU1 and RU2 within LEP 2013

OUTCOME 6.2 Consider inclusion of Temporary Workers Accommodation definition and local provisions in LEP 2013

NSW Department of Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) exhibited a proposed Temporary and Seasonal Workers' Accommodation Toolkit in 2023. Temporary workers' accommodation provides housing on a temporary basis for workers who need accommodation for the life of a project or, more importantly in relation to rural lands, on a seasonal basis. DPHI's proposed changes include a standard definition of 'temporary workers' accommodation' and the inclusion of specific provisions for construction accommodation in certain renewable energy zones (Shellharbour LGA was not specified as a REZ).

After DPHI has considered submissions, it will prepare any updates to the proposed definition. DPHI will seek feedback from councils on the draft definition and any proposed amendments to local environmental plans that are necessary to update land-use tables to establish permissibility for temporary workers' accommodation and update or introduce local provisions.

At the time of developing this Strategy, this work by DPHI had not been finalised. Once finalised, guidance will be provided for councils adopting a local provision regarding locational and zoning considerations and local complying development provisions for rural workers' dwellings.

ACTION:

- 6.2.1 Council to consider the inclusion of Temporary Workers Accommodation definition and local provisions in LEP 2013

Source: [Explanation of Intended Effect - Temporary Workers' Accommodation Draft \(amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com)

OUTCOME 6.3 Quarrying of identified resources continues and opportunities for reuse of land explored following completion of extraction

Shellharbour's rural lands are resource-rich, containing significant reserves of sand and high-quality basalt rock. This rock is highly valued for use as aggregate in concrete and asphalt products as well as railway ballast.

Quarry products from Shellharbour are transported by road, rail and sea and are used throughout the state for construction projects such as the new Western Sydney Airport.

Quarrying in Shellharbour has been carried out for over 100 years and quarrying industries will remain an important part of the region's economy for at least the next two decades.

The LGA contains the following extractive industry operations:

Company	Location	Material
Boral Resources (NSW)	Dunmore	Basalt, Sand
Cleary Bros (Bombo)	Croom	Basalt
Holcim (Australia)	Croom	Basalt
Hanson Construction Materials	Shell Cove (Bass Point)	Basalt

Hanson received approval in 2014 to increase the depth of extraction within their Bass Point quarry from 0m Australian Height Datum (AHD) to -40m AHD, allowing access to total reserves in excess of 74 million tonnes of basalt hard rock. The approval also allows for the transportation of up to 4 million tonnes per annum of quarry products.

At the time of writing, a recent State Significant Development Application had approved the Stage 7 expansion of Cleary Bros Albion Park Quarry (located at Croom). This approval allows for extraction of an additional 21 million tonnes of hard rock material. The previous approval's maximum extraction rate was 900,000 tonnes per annum, represents approximately 24 years' supply.

A proposed modification to Boral's consent for their Dunmore quarry would allow for the extraction of an additional 28.5 M tonnes of hard rock reserves, extending the life of the quarry to 2043 assuming no change to the current extraction rate of 2.5M tonnes per year.

Approved rehabilitation management plans dictate how the land is to be rehabilitated post-extraction. This generally involves re-profiling, reintroduction of soil and revegetation.

Opportunities for reuse of land should be explored through detailed studies undertaken as the extraction period is coming to an end. These studies should inform and ensure that reuse of the land is appropriate for the needs of the community.

Noise, vibration and dust impacts from quarries are subject to conditions of consent and ongoing monitoring. In addition, Shellharbour LEP 2013 aims to reduce the potential for land use conflict relating to quarry operations by mapping a "Mineral Resource Area" and "Transition Area". Development on land within the Mineral Resource Area is subject to State Environmental Planning Policy (Resources and Energy) 2021, which aims to protect the current or future extraction of extractive materials.

Development within the Transition Area is subject to Clause 6.11 of the LEP which aims to minimise the impact new land uses and development will have on mineral and extractive resource operations and vice versa.

Some community members suggested that the application of Clause 6.11 served to unnecessarily restrict some development within the transition area.

ACTIONS:

- 6.3.1 In consultation with Department of Regional NSW – Mining, Exploration and Geoscience, review:
 - Extent of Transition Area Map and/or
 - Uses permissible within the transition areas, with a view to improving rural production and viability and enhancing the diversity of uses in this area.
- 6.3.2 Undertake planning study when extractive industries are approaching completion.

PART C – PLACE-BASED FRAMEWORKS

Eastern rural lands

A framework for the Eastern rural lands is depicted in Figure 15.

CROOM

The Croom rural precinct is bounded by the Princes Motorway to the north and east, James Road to the south and extends to the LGA boundary with Kiama to the west. The land is fertile, includes heritage items and is mostly undulating, reaching elevations in excess of 150m.

Croom is a significant location for mineral resources and contains two major quarries operated by Holcim Australia and Cleary Bros. Along with other local quarries at Dunmore and Bass Point, these quarries provide state-significant resources to the transport and construction industries. Extraction activities are expected to continue for at least the next 20 years. Nearing the completion of quarrying activity in Croom, studies should be undertaken to inform adaptive reuse opportunities for these areas.

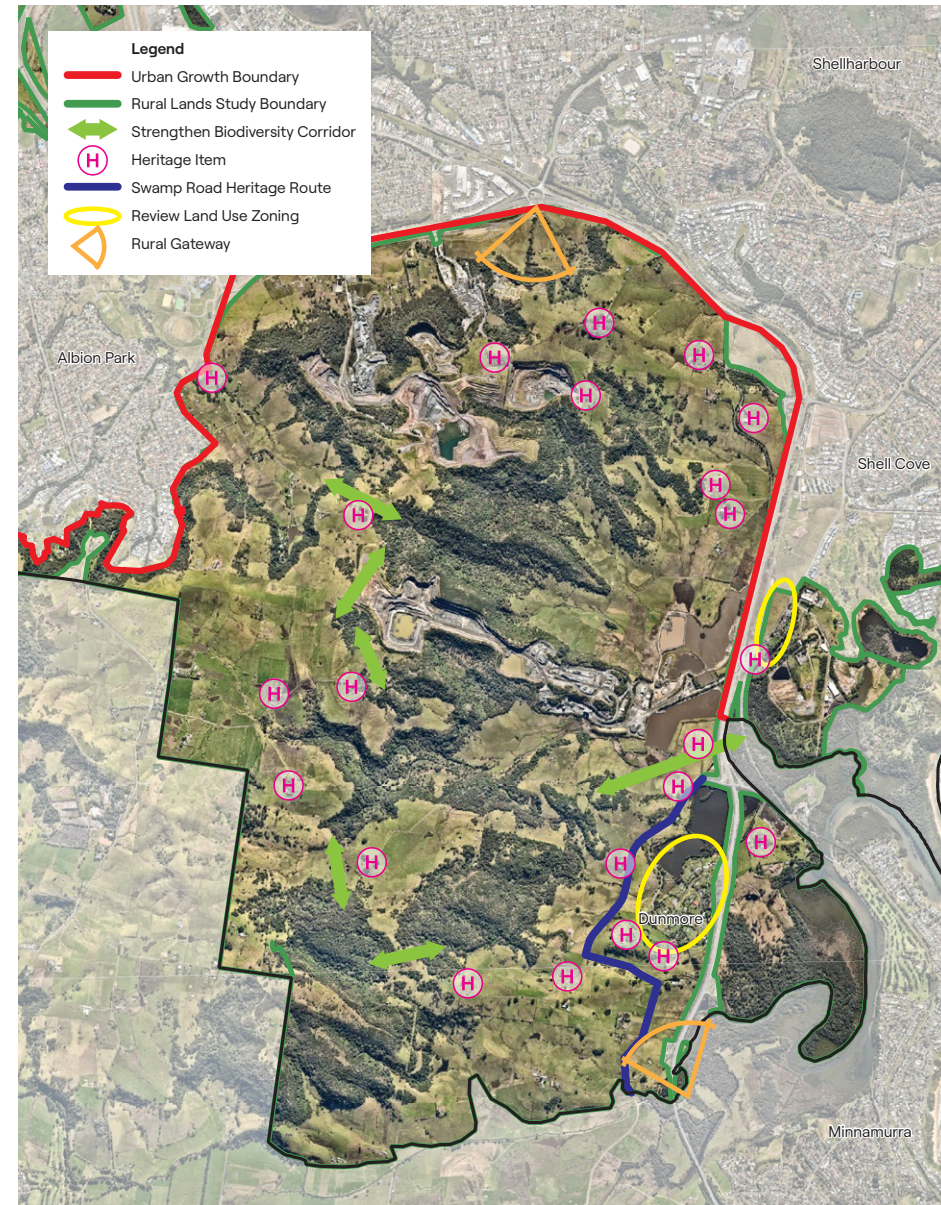


Figure 15: Planning Framework – Eastern Rural Lands

DUNMORE

The Dunmore rural precinct lies in the southernmost part of the City. Like Croom, it features fertile and highly undulating topography, with higher and steeper areas retaining remnant native vegetation. Of all Shellharbour's rural suburbs, Dunmore contains the greatest number of heritage items. This presents an opportunity for a rural heritage corridor along Swamp Road which could be a focus for agritourism, noting that the road intersects with Tourist Route 9 at Jamberoo Road to the south.

A major quarry, operated by Boral, is located in the northern part of the Dunmore precinct. Nearing completion of quarrying activities, studies should be undertaken to inform the reuse opportunities in this area. At the end of the quarry's life, rehabilitation should include reinstatement of riparian vegetation along Rocklow Creek and strengthening of the biodiversity corridor which connects to Killalea Regional Park.

Infrastructure including greenfield residential development and the new Shellharbour Hospital is taking place along Dunmore Road. The extension of urban infrastructure, including sewerage, to service the new hospital may provide an opportunity to service properties further south along Dunmore Road. This may also act as a catalyst for consideration to be given to rezoning land that currently has a rural or transition zoning along Dunmore Road.

The existing Dunmore Lakes Estate rural residential precinct warrants rezoning and an amendment to the minimum lot size map in Shellharbour LEP 2013 to reflect the land use in this location.



Western rural lands

A framework for the Western rural lands is depicted in Figure 16.

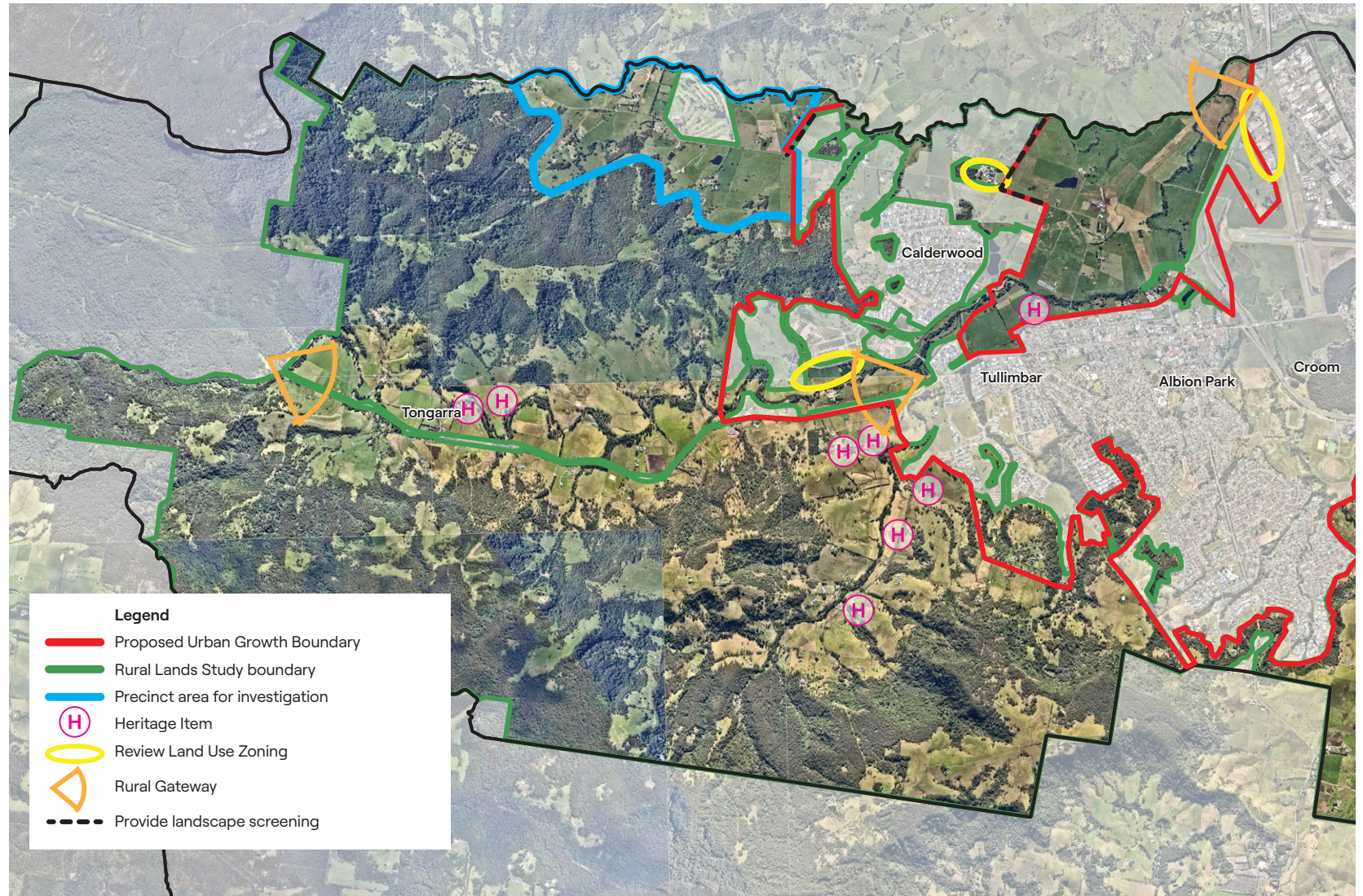


Figure 16: Planning Framework – Western Rural Lands

LOWER CALDERWOOD/ALBION PARK

The rural precinct referred to as Lower Calderwood/Albion Park is dominated by Tate's dairy farm and contains the most fertile rural land in the City which is associated with the Macquarie Rivulet floodplains. The precinct is highly visible from the Princes Motorway and clearly demonstrates Shellharbour's ongoing rural character. It is arguably also the precinct that has come under the most pressure from urban development, including unsupported rezoning requests, construction of the Princes Motorway Albion Park Rail bypass and encroachment of the Calderwood Urban Development Area. Clear land use planning principles are required to maintain the long-term viability of dairy farming operations within the precinct. The precinct is highly visible from the Princes Motorway and clearly demonstrates Shellharbour's ongoing rural character.

A large part of the precinct is subject to inundation during flood events. Recent flood modelling prepared for Council estimates the depth and extent of flooding during a "probable maximum flood". This modelling, illustrated in a map at Appendix D, shows that much of the land between the airport and Calderwood Urban Growth Area would be inundated up to a depth of 3 metres or more during such an event.

Recommendations for Lower Calderwood / Albion Park include:

- » Existing RU6 Transition Zoning between Tripoli Way and Macquarie Rivulet is maintained
- » Rural land use zoning is reviewed for Calderwood Christian School and Croom Lane industrial area
- » Land at 2514 Illawarra Highway Calderwood fronting North Macquarie Road may be considered for residential zoning
- » Urban Growth Boundary to be enforced as depicted in Figure 16.
- » Landscape screening is provided along western and eastern edges of Calderwood Urban Development Area.

CALDERWOOD VALLEY

The Calderwood Valley precinct refers to land west of Marshall Mount Road and the Calderwood urban release area. It is bounded by Marshall Mount Creek, which also forms the LGA boundary with Wollongong to the north, environmental zoned land to the south, and Marshall Mount Road and the Calderwood Urban Release Area to the east.

The Calderwood Valley Golf Course is an established recreation feature within this precinct. The golf course, along with The Links Shell Cove is one of only two courses in the Shellharbour LGA and offers a recreational opportunity for locals and visitors within a picturesque rural setting.

The development of this Strategy has identified an opportunity for Council to undertake a precinct plan to inform a vision for the future of these western rural lands to reduce land use conflict and provide additional opportunities for innovative uses that are compatible with traditional agriculture and the adjoining residential lands.

This precinct plan will be developed in collaboration with rural landowners and the wider community. It is anticipated the precinct plan will include detailed studies, site analysis and assessments to identify the extent of constraints in this area (such as land use conflict) and inform future opportunities.

TULLIMBAR/YELLOW ROCK

The Tullimbar/Yellow Rock rural precinct is also being impacted by encroaching greenfield development. It has been subject to unsupported requests for rezoning in recent years. A comprehensive review of planning controls has determined that the controls regarding land zones lot size and dwelling types within these areas are to be maintained. It is recommended that consideration be given to supporting the establishment of new rural uses such as agritourism and horticulture, so that agricultural uses are maintained.



TONGARRA

The Tongarra rural precinct is potentially the most scenic and pristine of the City's rural precincts, being framed by Macquarie Pass to the west and vegetated ridgelines to the north and south, with Macquarie Rivulet meandering its way through the landscape. A review of planning controls has determined that the controls regarding land zones lot size and dwelling types within these areas are to be maintained. It is recommended that work to enhance the functions of Macquarie Rivulet, such as rehabilitation and regeneration of riparian zones are implemented.

PART D – IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The table below contains all the recommended actions within this Strategy. It identifies the entity or entities responsible for implementation of the action and assigns a priority level of low, medium or high and timeframe of immediately, short term (less than 2 years), medium term (2-5 years) or long term (greater than 5 years).

Action ref.	Action	Responsibility	Priority/Timeframe
1.1.1	Prevent any further encroachment of development incompatible with farming operations through the establishment of an urban growth boundary through the adoption of this Rural Lands Strategy.	SCC	High / Immediately
1.1.2	Undertake a planning proposal to amend the permissible uses in the RU1, RU2 and C3 zones as recommended by this strategy	SCC	High / Immediately
1.1.3	Review existing rural zoning in the following locations: » Croom Lane, Albion Park Rail » Calderwood Christian School, Calderwood » Dunmore Lakes Estate, Dunmore	SCC	Medium / Medium term
2.1.1	Develop a precinct plan for the future of rural lands to the west of Calderwood, in collaboration with rural landowners and the wider community.	SCC, WCC	Medium / Medium-term
3.1.1	The upgrade of Calderwood Road should require opportunities for ongoing stock crossing	SCC	High / Immediately
3.2.1	Support the diversification of agricultural activities within Shellharbour by promoting horticulture and aquaculture opportunities	SCC	Medium / Medium term
3.2.2	Council to raise awareness to eligible rural land owners regarding the use of LEP 2013 clause 4.2 Rural Subdivision	SCC	Medium / short term
3.3.1	Promote grant opportunities from Destination NSW for tourism-related activities	SCC	Medium / short term
3.3.2	Incorporate agritourism into Visit Shellharbour website	SCC	Medium / short term
3.4.1	Investigate opportunities to promote local rural businesses and products	SCC	Medium / short term

Action ref.	Action	Responsibility	Priority/Timeframe
3.4.2	Investigate potential to establish regular farmer's market in Shellharbour	SCC	Medium / short term
3.4.3	Encourage the establishment of new primary production enterprises such as horticulture to build capacity and resilience in the City's rural economy.	SCC	Medium / short term
4.1.1	Review and update Council's Terrestrial Biodiversity mapping to ensure protection and resilience of biodiversity corridors within the LGA and neighbouring regions.	SCC	High / short term
4.2.1	Undertake performance audit of stormwater infrastructure associated with new urban development at Tullimbar and Calderwood	SCC	Medium / Short-term
4.2.2	Run an education campaign for rural landowners with direct access to major watercourses about the importance of maintenance and rehabilitation of riparian zones and availability of grant funding	LLS	Medium / Short-term
4.2.3	Promote the establishment of a Landcare group (or similar) to improve and maintain riparian areas along major watercourses.	SCC, Landcare, LLS	Medium / Short-term
4.2.4	Increase monitoring and compliance of erosion and sediment control during construction activities.	SCC	High / Immediately
4.2.5	Continue water quality testing program in Macquarie Rivulet	WCC, SCC	High / Immediately / Ongoing
4.2.6	Investigate barriers to fish passage along Macquarie Rivulet and their potential removal	SCC	Medium / Medium-term
5.1.1	The development of Council's proposed Greening Strategy should seek to enhance rural vistas within the LGA.	SCC	High / short term
5.1.2	Prepare DCP statements of significance for important rural landscapes identified in this Strategy	SCC	Medium / Medium term
5.2.1	Council raises awareness among owners of properties containing heritage items of Heritage Conservation Clause 5.10 in Shellharbour LEP and its potential to allow the adaptive re-use of the item.	SCC	High / Immediately

Action ref.	Action	Responsibility	Priority/Timeframe
5.2.2	Establish and promote heritage tourist route along Swamp Road between Dunmore and Jamberoo	SCC, Heritage NSW, Kiama Municipal Council	Medium / Short-term
5.2.3	Review Heritage Provisions in the DCP	SCC	Medium / Medium term
5.2.4	Prepare Shellharbour City Heritage Strategy	SCC	Medium / Medium term
6.1.1	Investigate permissibility of rural workers dwellings on commercial farms in RU1 and RU2 within LEP 2013	SCC	Medium / Short-term
6.2.1	Council to consider the inclusion of Temporary Workers Accommodation definition and local provisions in LEP 2013	SCC	Medium / Short-term
6.3.1	In consultation with Department of Regional NSW – Mining, Exploration and Geoscience, review: » Extent of Transition Area Map and/or » Uses permissible within the transition areas	SCC / Department of Regional NSW	Medium / Medium term
6.3.2	Undertake planning study when extractive industries are approaching completion.	SCC, Quarry Companies	Low / Long-term

REVIEW

We will review progress of outcomes and actions in the Rural Lands Strategy within 5 years of its adoption by Council. The review will ensure outcomes and actions remain relevant and consistent with any changes to 'upstream' strategic planning documents. Timeframes / priority levels for actions will be updated as necessary.

CONCLUSION

The existing rural lands in the Shellharbour LGA comprise the majority of our City's land area. Shellharbour's rural lands provide scenic, social, economic, recreational and environmental benefits to the community. Changes to traditional local rural industries such as dairying has led to a decline in the overall number of income-generating farms within the region. Nonetheless, modern farming methods such as intensive horticulture and aquaculture provide possibilities for new forms of primary production within the rural lands. Additionally, agritourism and the adaptive re-use of local heritage items present opportunities to complement agricultural activity in a way that preserves the rural character and amenity of the landscape. This strategy will assist Council to manage the LGA's rural lands and make consistent and defensible decisions relating to proposed development and land use changes.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this document:

CMP	Coastal Management Plan
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
DCP	Development Control Plan
DRNSW	Department of Regional NSW
ISRP 2041	Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan 2041
KMC	Kiama Municipal Council
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
LHS	Local Housing Strategy
LLS	Local Land Services
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
SCC	Shellharbour City Council
UDP	Urban Development Program
WCC	Wollongong City Council

APPENDIX A – CONSULTATION SUMMARIES

Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

LET’S CHAT SHELLHARBOUR

Council’s Let’s Chat Shellharbour webpage was available for community feedback from the 21st of June 2023 to 16th of July 2023.

Let’s Chat Feedback Summary	
Views	362
Visits	315
Visitors	223
Contributions	36

Table 1 Let’s Chat page engagement statistics

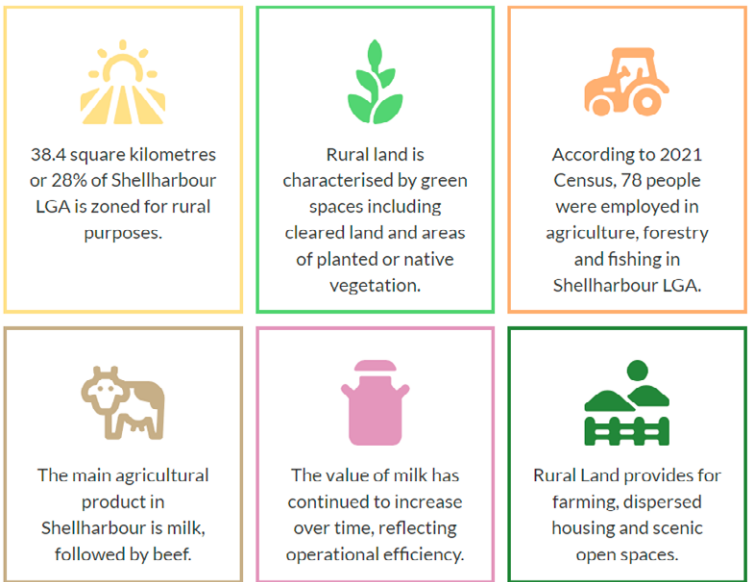


Figure 1 Rural Lands facts for Let’s Chat Shellharbour

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Community members were welcome to provide free-text feedback and notes to council of the future of Shellharbour’s rural lands.

A total of **12** responses were received to council’s Lets Chat page, themes are included below.

Responses
Value of the rural lands has been lost with increasing development.
Protect rural land from developments and preserve the remnant vegetation, particularly along roads and waterways.
Consider improving the native biodiversity value of rural lands to increase the natural capital value for landholders and the community.
The preservation and conservation of natural areas alongside the rural industries is a valued asset to the suitability of a Shellharbour area. The Structure Map shows rural lands are essential to east-west biodiversity corridors, please protect these corridors.
More natural environments protected and planted within our local area, including wildlife corridors.
Opportunity to map natural bushland with habitat corridors and landcare sites, rivers waterways and wetlands.
Green belt boundaries in land use planning to protect open countryside from urban sprawl.
Properties over 10 acres should be permitted to build a second dwelling to allow older generations to continue to live there with family.
Large lot and small acreage around the periphery of the suburbs to allow diverse housing and hobby farms more options than small lots.

QUICK QUESTIONS

Community members were asked the following questions to provide their feedback on Shellharbour's rural lands.

What do you value most about Shellharbour's rural land?

Respondents value the existing dairying industries, scenic beauty, and environmental benefits of rural lands. Specifically, the importance of riparian zones, provision of clean air and the escarpment were noted.

What are the most important things you want to see retained or enhanced?

Themes which arose included the preservation and enhancement of: Rural fabric and rural zoning, dairying Industries and usable agricultural lands, riparian corridors, biodiversity and habitat, windbreaks for stock and buffers to residential lands.

One response thought the identification of rural zoned land for rural purposes was no longer required, given the development of greenfield suburbs in Calderwood, Tullimbar, Yellow Rock (and Tongarra) and Shell Cove/Dunmore.

Are there opportunities for new activities in the rural lands?

Respondents identified sustainable land use and financial feasibility are important considerations for new rural activities. One respondent noted matters such as land use conflict (eg noise) should be considered.

Suggestions for new activities included: biobanking, bush regeneration and tourism.

STATIC LIBRARY DISPLAY

A static library display was available for viewing for community members from 29th of June 2023 to 10th of July 2023.

A total of **39** relevant contributions were received and **37** irrelevant contributions received (an additional numbers were removed as they were not appropriate or relevant to the Strategy).

Relevant feedback from community has been included below and considered in the development of the Strategy.

Rural lands relevant

Opportunities for alternative living such as Tiny Homes

Protected conservation and introduction of threatened species – and trees!

Rural areas are important for our ecology but we also need green space

More "wild" areas-meadows for pollinations

Opportunities to create a space to learn about farming and sustainability

Establish homes for people on these lands

Think about sustainability

Regenerate it to the original bushland and ecosystems

Conservation and protection of green space and natural areas

Ecotourism hub



COMMUNITY DROP-IN

Two onsite community drop-in information sessions were held on Wednesday 21st of June 2023 at the following locations.

- » Centenary Hall 3:00pm to 4:30pm
- » The Links – Tavern at Shellcove (The Lounge) 5:00pm to 6:30pm

50 community members were present at the Centenary Hall community drop-in with **24** community members at The Links community drop-in.

A total of **74** community members present across both onsite drop-ins.

The drop-in sessions were advertised to the community by letter to rural land owners, the Shellharbour Let's Chat webpage, Shellharbour City Council social media pages and Shellharbour City Council eNewsletter: Snapshot.

Both community engagement sessions were attended by the same staff with the same information presented.

Project Team

Shellharbour City Council	G. Hoynes
	K. Robinson
Gyde Consulting	A. Donald
	N. O'Brien

Following these drop in sessions, a number of rural land owners requested to meet with project officers to learn more about the Draft Strategy and possible impacts to their land. A total of five meetings were held and general information shared with the stakeholders.

WHAT WE HEARD: COMMUNITY

Community members were interested in the detail of the plans and wanted to understand more about the Rural Lands Strategy.

A summary of key matters raised during the information session is provided below.

Biodiversity

Local residents suggested that the wildlife adds to the rural character and needs to be prioritised, the need for biodiversity connectivity along the ridgelines and waterways was also cited as a need for the local community.

Agritourism and Circular Economy

Residents cited a strong demand for hobby farms across the rural lands as well as the presence of a huge tourist market of Sydney on Shellharbour's doorstep. Some thought that current minimum lot sizes did not ensure economically viable rural properties while preventing subdivision into more manageable rural lifestyle properties.

Some attendees noted there was an opportunity for rural heritage items to be celebrated/incorporated into agritourism.

Rural Lands Characteristics

Local residents stated that the peaceful, quiet and serene quality of the area is attractive to the local community and should be protected.

The importance to maintain hill-scapes, native vegetation and landscape values was cited by the local community.

Urban Development

Concerns were raised regarding high traffic and parking constraints at Albion Park as a result of increased urban development in the area. Other concerns included the encroachment of urban development and possible land use conflicts.

WHAT WE HEARD: KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Tate's dairy at Calderwood noted that dairy farming has historically been an intrinsic part of Shellharbour's economy and identity. Their farm's proximity to Sydney is a major advantage in terms of food miles, noting that both NSW and QLD are currently importing milk from Victoria.

Urban development has threatened the farm's operation in recent years including the Albion Park Rail bypass and the Calderwood urban release area by Lend Lease and others. Stormwater runoff into Macquarie Rivulet is a particular concern.

Tate's dairy noted that they are not currently interested in diversification of their operations into agritourism or farmgate sales due to additional risk and complexity.

A representative from one of the local quarries stated the importance for residents to understand the purpose of the mineral resource transition area in limiting exposure to the impacts of blasting etc.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Below themes were captured during feedback sessions with community.

Biodiversity

Biodiversity – Water Quality

- » Retain and improve water quality for Lake Illawarra .
- » Waterways should be retained for biodiversity and not made into drainage corridors.

Biodiversity – Vegetated Lands

- » Keep existing vegetated lands and provide linkages.
- » Preserve vegetated lands and escarpment with appropriate zoning.
- » Enhance vegetation linkages around and on quarry lands and areas not for future extraction.

Biodiversity – Riparian Corridors

- » Utilise vegetation links through urban areas to strengthen biodiversity corridors.
- » Provide for riparian corridors along waterways, exclude stock and intensive agriculture.
- » Provide biodiversity corridors from escarpment to lake, quarries, and coast.

Biodiversity – Wildlife

- » Use endemic and threatened species in corridors.
- » Provide opportunity to reintroduce lost species into escarpment and foothills.
- » To keep green zone for the wild life

Agritourism and Circular Economy

- » Agritourism is an opportunity for escarpment and rural land.
- » Encourage local food production for local community.
- » Expand business opportunities on Rural Lands.

Quarries

- » Quarries to be accountable for pollution.

Rural lands characteristics

Lot size

- » Opportunity to investigate reduced lot sizes for example 30/40/50 acre lots.
- » Retain 40ha policy to protect best agriculture land and landscapes .

Rural boundary

- » Define a final urban boundary.
- » Keep ridge lines clear of development and housing.

Dwellings

- » Provision to build a secondary house on properties under 100 acres.
- » Provision to build a detached smaller dwelling on properties over 100 acres.
- » Proposal to build a smaller 2nd dwelling on properties more than 10 acres.
- » 2nd dwelling on rural property less than 40 acres – most of the rural land is multi-generational, where older family members want to stay on their land. Victoria and Queensland allow for a 2nd dwelling for carers on the land.

Connectivity

- » Better internet service.
- » Improved road infrastructure.

Characteristics

- » Maintain and grow existing resource base of rural lands. Support existing viable uses of rural lands, in all forms

Heritage

- » Protect our European heritage.
- » Recognise, value, and protect our aboriginal culture and sites.

Engagement approach

- » Maps too difficult to understand – a general presentation would have been helpful.
- » Council should write to landowners again when draft strategy goes on exhibition

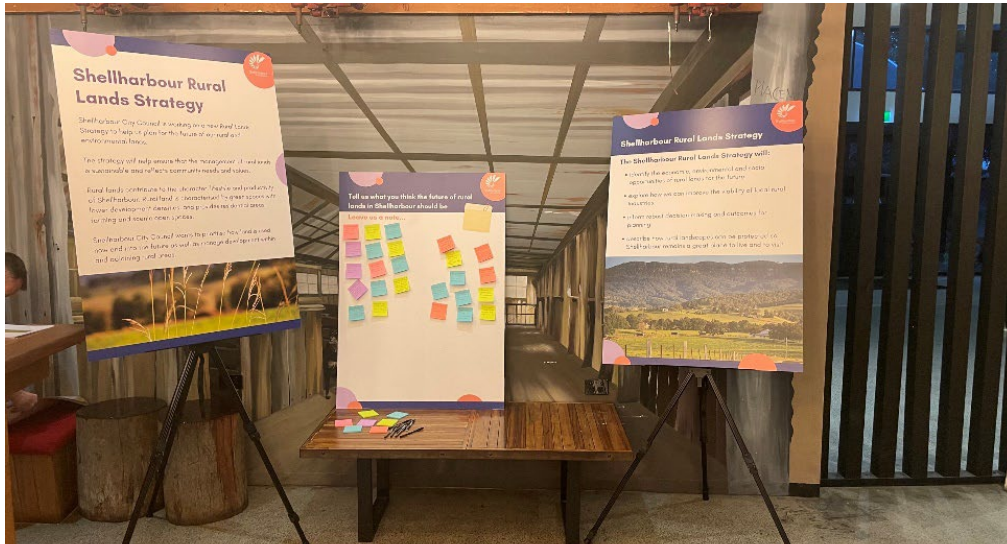


Figure 17: Community drop-in information session

APPENDIX A: LET'S CHAT SHELLHARBOUR FAQs

What is a Rural Lands Strategy?

A rural lands strategy is a document prepared by council which addresses the strategic planning matters relating to the rural lands in our local government area.

Why do we need a Rural Lands Strategy?

A significant portion of the Shellharbour local government area is non-urban, supporting a patchwork of rural uses, quarries and natural areas. Our community has told us that they value the rural lands in our region. A Rural Lands Strategy will allow Council to plan for the future of our rural and environmental lands. It will help us to prioritise how land is used now and into the future.

What will be in the Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy?

The Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy will outline how the environmental, social and economic value of our rural areas can be best managed. It will:

- » identify the most appropriate uses of the land
- » explore how we can improve the value of local rural industries
- » describe how rural landscapes can be protected so that Shellharbour remains a great place to live and visit.

What are the aims of the Rural Lands Strategy?

The aims of the Rural Lands Strategy are to:

- » Identify the economic, environmental and social opportunities of rural lands for the future.
- » Guide future planning, development and management of rural lands within the Shellharbour LGA.
- » Inform robust decision making and outcomes for planning.
- » Consider appropriate land use planning controls taking into account the impacts of competing land use priorities and opportunities.

» Make recommendations for the future of Shellharbour's Rural Lands focusing on:

- Growth management
- Rural lands preservation
- Protection of environmental lands
- Economic development (including agriculture innovation and value-add opportunities such as agritourism)
- Land use planning

Will this strategy rezone rural land for residential or other purposes?

No. The Rural Lands Strategy will set priorities for the management and future planning of rural lands and may include place-specific recommendations. These priorities and recommendations will be guided by community feedback.

Any proposal to rezone land would need to go through a separate and lengthy process set out by NSW Planning legislation. That process includes public consultation and usually requires decisions to be made by the elected Council. The final decision to rezone land rests with the NSW Minister for Planning.

The Rural Lands Strategy will provide an evidence base that supports how we make decisions and outcomes for planning.

What are the next steps?

Development of the Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy is now underway. Gyde Consulting is working with Council to develop the Strategy.

We will be working with the community and local stakeholders during June 2023 to hear what they have to say about developing a Rural Lands Strategy for Shellharbour.

A draft Rural Lands Strategy will be delivered to Council and placed on public exhibition later this year.

How can I have my say?

Online feedback coming soon!

We will be holding two community drop-in sessions on Wednesday 21 June 2023.

- » Albion Park Centenary Hall 3:00pm - 4:30pm
- » The Links Shell Cove 5:00pm - 6:30pm

You are welcome to drop-in to either session at a time that suits you.

You can also email community@gyde.com.au to ask questions or provide your feedback.

APPENDIX A: ONSITE COMMUNITY DROP-IN AO BOARDS

SHELLHARBOUR RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

Shellharbour City Council is working on a new Rural Lands Strategy to help us plan for the future of our rural and environmental lands.

The new strategy will help ensure that the management of rural lands is sustainable and reflects community needs and values.

Rural lands contribute to the character, lifestyle and productivity of Shellharbour. Rural land is identified by characteristic green spaces with lower development densities and providing residential areas, farming and scenic open spaces.

Shellharbour City Council wants to prioritise how land is used now and into the future as well as manage development within and adjoining rural areas.



SHELLHARBOUR RURAL LANDS STRATEGY

The Shellharbour Rural Lands Strategy will:

- identify the economic, environmental and social opportunities of rural lands for the future
- explore how we can improve the viability of local rural industries
- inform robust decision making and outcomes for planning
- describe how rural landscapes can be protected so that Shellharbour remains a great place to live and to visit



NEXT STEPS



Tell us what you think the future of rural lands in Shellharbour should be
Leave us a note...



APPENDIX B – BEST PRACTICE FOR RURAL LAND USE STRATEGIES

Best practice for the preparation of rural land use strategies is set out in the NSW Department of Primary Industries guideline document, *Planning for Agriculture in Rural Land Use Strategies* (July 2022).

The objectives of the guideline are to ensure:

- » that the needs of agriculture are considered in the strategic planning process
- » that opportunities for the growth of agricultural industries are considered through the strategic planning framework
- » the strategic planning process gives careful consideration to land uses in rural areas which are incompatible with agriculture.

According to the guideline, a rural land strategy should:

- » identify the linkages agricultural industries have with supporting industries, infrastructure and other components of the production chain to ensure a holistic picture of the agriculture related industry in the LGA is known.
- » prioritise agricultural land for agricultural production.

In order to support new and emerging agricultural industries and diversification, rural land use strategies should:

- » establish a clear policy position that agricultural land use is supported and encouraged in rural areas.
- » identify appropriate small scale complementary land uses which can be integrated into agricultural enterprise(s)/rural industries on a site.
- » describe the circumstances in which small scale complementary land uses are supported on agricultural land to ensure that the primary use of the land continues to be agricultural production.
- » not undermine existing safeguards for the maintenance of productive agricultural land and/or industries.
- » encourage leasing and share farming practices.

Rural land use strategies should:

- » **acknowledge the challenges to agriculture from climate change**, including hotter temperatures, higher risk of drought and more intensive fire weather or rainfall events. In low lying areas, sea level rise will reduce floodplain drainage capacity.
- » **support existing and potential intensive agricultural land uses** by preventing encroachment by incompatible land uses
- » **consider the establishment of appropriate buffers** to manage the risk of land use conflict between agricultural and other uses.
- » **recognise the broader role agriculture plays in establishing the character of rural areas** and its importance to local communities and agritourism.
- » **ensure a strategic approach to the application of rural land use zones** including zoning highest quality agricultural land RU1 Primary Production
- » **be informed by a review of permissible land uses in rural zones** to protect agricultural land uses
- » **review rural land holding sizes and land area requirements of likely or preferred agricultural industries prior to considering reducing minimum lot sizes**
- » **NOT focus on the provision of housing in rural areas**
- » **Demonstrate genuine consultation and engagement with agricultural industries and landholders**

APPENDIX C – EXAMPLES OF PRIMARY PRODUCTION ON SITES LESS THAN 10 HA

Product	Business Name	Suburb	LGA	Zoning	Minimum Lot Size	Actual property size
Strawberries	Berrylicious Strawberries	Thirlmere	Wollondilly	RU1	16 ha	5.7 ha
Vegetables	Dilliro Vegetables	Tahmoor	Wollondilly	RU4	2 ha	2 ha
Flowers	Camellias R Us	Glenorie	Hornsby	RU4	2 ha	2.5 ha
Flowers	Bilpin Blossom Farm	Kurrajong Heights	Hawkesbury	RU2	20 ha	6.1 ha
Vegetables & Fruit	Oakville Harvest	Oakville	Hawkesbury	RU4	2 ha	3.9 ha¹*
Mushrooms	Hillcrest Mushrooms	Maraylya	Hawkesbury	RU4	2 ha	3 ha
Wholesale Nursery	Engalls Nursery	Dural	Hornsby	RU2	2 ha	5.4 ha*
Wholesale Nursery	Scotts Tubes	Mangrove Mountain	Central Coast	RU1	20 ha	6.1 ha*
Wholesale Nursery	Jamberoo Native Nursery	Curramore	Kiama	RU2	20 ha	2.1 ha

¹ * Comprises 2 adjoining lots in single ownership

APPENDIX D – MACQUARIE RIVULET PEAK FLOOD DEPTHS – PROBABLE MAXIMUM FLOOD

