

Our Plan, Our Future, Our Cessnock



Cessnock

LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT
2036



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Ngayan marrungku paran wiyan Wanarruwa mirumalikan para ani parrakupa, ngatan ngayan marrung wiyan Ngarrakay paranpa, yurakaykal, pangaykal ngatan kumpakal.

Cessnock City Council acknowledges Wonnarua people as the traditional custodians of the land and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and future.

WARNING: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned that this document may contain images of people who have died.

Image: Mount Yengo, located in Yengo National Park, is of great significance to local Aboriginal peoples.

Mayor's Message

I am pleased to endorse the Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The LSPS sets a strong vision for the planning direction of our Local Government Area (LGA) for 20 years. Closely aligned with our Community Strategic Plan, it reflects our picturesque setting and unique assets as Australia's oldest wine region and mining heritage. This region has many things to offer, including our prodigious natural assets. We are home to many national parks and conservation areas, including Yengo National Park. Did you know that approximately one third of our LGA is part of the Greater Blue Mountains UNESCO World Heritage Listed Area?

The LSPS celebrates our diverse cultural history, our distinctive towns and villages, and emphasises the importance of our local values. The LSPS seeks to protect our unique rural and environmental setting and our way of life within our towns and villages while acknowledging our region's increasing contribution to housing and employment in the Lower Hunter.

The planning priorities outlined within the LSPS reflect our future land use directions based on the themes: liveable, productive, sustainable and unique. They echo the things we love about our region and what it means to be a member of the Cessnock community.

To ensure the land use outcomes identified in the LSPS are realised, Council must work together with the state and federal government to achieve the best possible outcome for our community.

The LSPS reinforces the importance of a strong local focus. Since the draft of this document was exhibited our LGA has experienced some incredibly trying and uncertain times. We have survived the worst bushfire season in living memory, we have seen our paddocks and vineyards green up thanks to the recent rains – a welcome sight, sound and smell after years of drought. Immediately following these climate emergencies we are faced with the Covid-19 Pandemic. As this document goes to press, we are still grappling with the immediate and day-to-day impacts of this situation. We can take comfort that the LSPS has so strongly addressed the importance of planning for the protection of our local resources, of ensuring the economic viability of our region and of supporting us all by sustaining a unique and liveable community.

This document will be integral to the future of our Cessnock.

I am proud of the Cessnock we are creating, and I look forward to watching our vision continue to unfold.

BOB PYNSENT
MAYOR



Cessnock City Council



Local Strategic Planning Statement

Published May 2020

Availability



The Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement is available on Council's website:

www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au

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For further information contact Strategic Planning:



Cessnock City Council
PO Box 152
CESSNOCK NSW 2325



02 4993 4100



council@cessnock.nsw.gov.au

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CCC	Cessnock City Council
CPP	Community Participation Plan
CSP	Community Strategic Plan
DCP	Development Control Plan
DPIE	Department of Planning, Industry and Environment
EP&A Act	Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979
GNMP	Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan
GNFTP	Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan
HRP	Hunter Regional Plan
IP&R	Integrated Planning and Reporting
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council
LEP	Local Environmental Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
LG Act	Local Government Act 1993
LSPS	Local Strategic Planning Statement
NSW	New South Wales
RMS	Roads and Maritime Services
TAFE	Technical and Further Education NSW
TfNSW	Transport for NSW

HEIRARCHY OF TERMS AND NUMBERING

Planning Priorities	Establish the core priorities for land-use planning within the Cessnock LGA. Planning priorities are numbered consecutively.
Planning Principles	Council will assess strategic and statutory planning matters against the planning principles when making decisions. Planning principles are uniquely numbered, restarting at 1 with each planning priority.
Actions	Tasks and projects to be implemented to ensure that the planning priorities are achieved. Actions are numbered cumulatively by action type. For example, any and all actions to prepare a Housing Strategy will be numbered the same.

TIMEFRAMES

Intermediate	0-2 Years
Short Term	3-5 Years
Medium Term	5-10 Years
Long Term	10+ Years
Ongoing	For actions that will continue to be implemented for the lifespan of the LSPS.

Planning Context & Strategic Framework

Legislative Context

The LSPS is part of a hierarchy of strategic planning documents and is a mandated requirement of NSW State Government under section 3.9 of the EP&A Act.

The LSPS seeks to implement the actions of the HRP and GNMP that are relevant to this, and the Council's own priorities as set out in the Community Strategic Plan and other adopted strategies and actions. The LSPS outlines how Council will implement its planning functions. As such it has a direct influence on the following planning documents:

- local environmental plan
- development control plan
- local contributions plan/s
- community participation plan
- strategies
- policies

The actions identified by the LSPS will be implemented through these planning documents.

Strategic Framework

Hunter Regional Plan 2016-2036

The HRP provides the overarching strategic framework to guide the NSW Government's land-use planning priorities and decisions in the Hunter Region. The NSW Government's vision for the Hunter is:

"the leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant new metropolitan city at its heart."

To achieve this vision the Government has set four goals for the region:

1. The leading regional economy in Australia
2. A biodiversity-rich natural environment
3. Thriving communities
4. Greater housing choice and jobs

The Plan specifies priorities for Cessnock that have been addressed in this LSPS.

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036

The GNMP 2036 sets out strategies and actions to capitalise on investment in aviation, transport, education, health and tourism that will drive sustainable growth across the Greater Newcastle area and identifies environmental strategies that are addressed throughout this LSPS. The plan also assists achieve the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 vision to be a leading regional economy in Australia.

Greater Newcastle Future Transport Plan

The GNFTP provides an overarching strategic vision for the transport network that will guide transport planning for the next 40 years. The plan explores several key initiatives, including an integrated public transport network for the Hunter, car sharing services, addressing pinch points in the local road network and separating passenger and freight rail services through the Lower Hunter Freight Corridor.



Planning Context & Strategic Framework

Council Framework

Cessnock 2027 Community Strategic Plan 2017

The CSP identifies the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future.

Development of the CSP involved extensive community engagement and together residents, visitors, property owners, business owners, community organisations and government committed to the desired outcomes and strategic directions of the Plan.

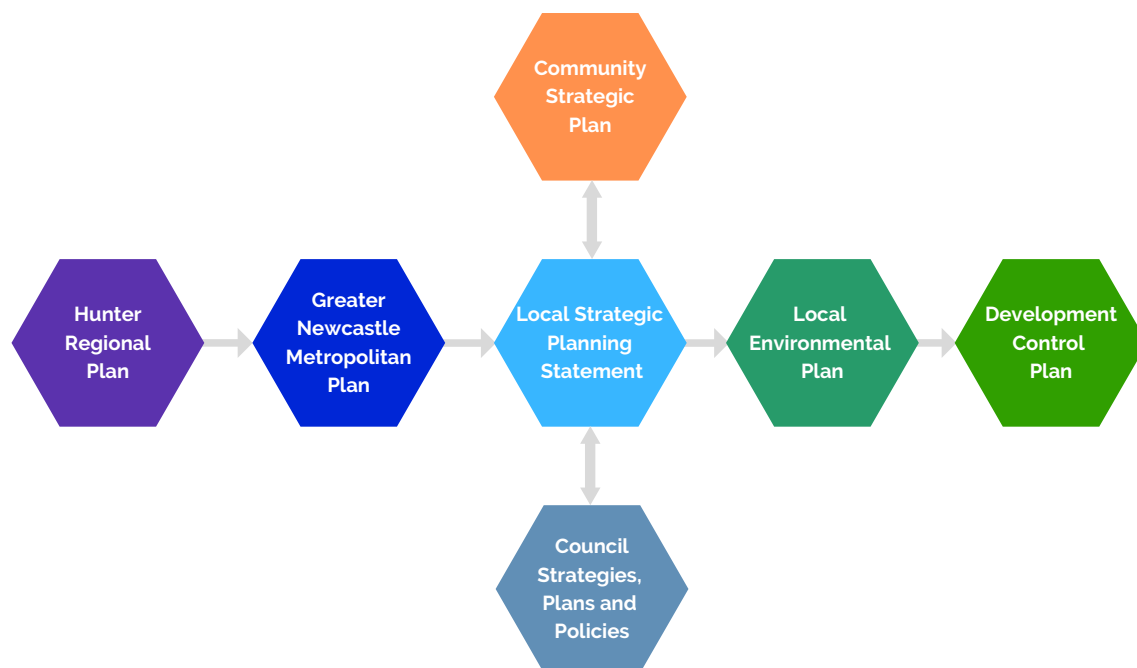
The strategic themes of the plan are:

- a connected, safe and creative community;
- a sustainable and prosperous economy;
- a sustainable and healthy environment;
- accessible infrastructure, services and facilities; and
- civic Leadership and effective governance.

City Wide Settlement Strategy

The CWSS was adopted by Council in 2003 and last reviewed 2010. It is currently the primary document guiding land use planning and growth in the Cessnock LGA.

The CWSS implements the outcomes and actions arising from the former Lower Hunter Regional Strategy 2006 and sets out the strategic directions that were used to inform the preparation of the LEP, including directions and actions relating to housing, rural and employment land.



About the LSPS

Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement

OUR PLAN, OUR FUTURE, OUR CESSNOCK.

The overarching goal of the LSPS is to guide planning decisions made by Cessnock City Council and to set the planning direction for the LGA.

The LSPS sets out clear planning priorities, principles and actions to accommodate future population growth, support economic development and protect our important environmental and rural landscapes, diverse heritage and unique social assets. It articulates Council's land-use and economic context in the wider Lower Hunter Region over the next 20 years as a place of residence, visitation and employment.

In recent years Council's Strategic Planning Team has undertaken a variety of projects that have featured community engagement. We've reviewed the engagement outcomes of these projects and the outcomes of the extensive community engagement undertaken throughout our public exhibition period for the LSPS and coupled the information with the recommendations of the CSP. We've done this to ensure that the LSPS identifies and reflects:

- the characteristics that define the unique local identity of the Cessnock LGA;
- the community values that are important to you so that they can be maintained and enhanced; and
- how growth and change will be planned for and managed into the future.

The LSPS gives effect to and implements the actions of the HRP and the GNMP; and will inform Council's land-use planning priorities to 2036.

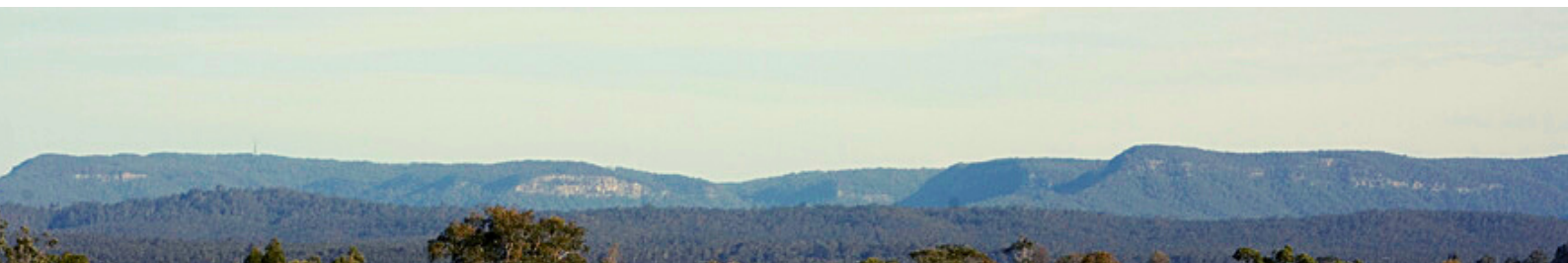
Structure and Interpretation

The LSPS consists of:

- A vision that outlines an aspirational direction for Cessnock for the next 20-years;
- Four **themes** that identify the desired direction of our LGA;
- 30 **planning priorities** that are the core objectives for land-use planning across the LGA. They identify how planning matters will be measured and addressed to ensure that development is considered and appropriate for our region;
- **Planning principles** that will guide the Council's decisions on planning matters; and
- 72 **actions** that Council will complete to achieve the planning outcomes. These actions will be incorporated into Council's work programs.

The LSPS will be supported by an **Implementation and Action Plan** (IAP) that collates the actions by theme and planning priority. The IAP outlines how the implementation of the LSPS will be monitored and reported.

The LSPS will be reviewed periodically to ensure it continues to meet the community's expectations and future needs. The review will be aligned to the development of Council's 4-year Delivery Plan. The LSPS will be Council's strategy to guiding and understanding how strategic and statutory plans will be implemented at the local level.



Liveable

The liveable theme is about achieving a quality lifestyle for our community. Achieving and maintaining this requires infrastructure and services that our communities need. It requires the provision of a range of housing choices and is influenced by the character, compactness, connectivity and vibrancy of our towns and villages and the public spaces within them.



Productive

The productive theme is about ensuring land and resources are put to best use and that opportunities for employment are maximised. It requires local policy to be carefully managed to encourage industries and a planning framework that protects the interests of our valuable land and existing industries.



Sustainable

The sustainable theme is about identifying and protecting our important environmental land and natural assets for the benefit of our community now and into the future. It requires local policy to place greater worth on our natural assets and a planning framework that protects our environmental values and plans for greater resilience to climate change.







Unique

The unique theme is about preserving and promoting those aspects of our area that set it apart from others. It requires a local policy that places a greater emphasis on the intrinsic value of what makes our region special and a planning framework that supports development while ensuring it is not at the expense of the character of the region.



Planning Themes and Priorities

Our Cessnock is...

			
Liveable	Productive	Sustainable	Unique
Planning Priority 1: Our urban areas are compact.	Planning Priority 8: Our rural land is protected from incompatible development.	Planning Priority 17: Our lands of environmental value are protected and enhanced.	Planning Priority 22: Our rural landscape is retained and enhanced.
Planning Priority 2: Housing is diverse, adaptable and affordable and our urban areas facilitate affordable living.	Planning Priority 9: Our wine tourism industry is supported and enhanced	Planning Priority 18: Our areas of biodiversity and biodiversity corridors are enhanced and protected.	Planning Priority 23: The scenic and rural landscape of our Vineyards District is preserved.
Planning Priority 3: The character and vitality of our town centres and villages is protected and enhanced.	Planning Priority 10: Our City encourages a variety of niche tourism opportunities.	Planning Priority 19: Our waterways are healthy, and water quality and water security are improved.	Planning Priority 24: Our Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected and celebrated.
Planning Priority 4: Our community is safe, healthy and active.	Planning Priority 11: Our City has a defined hierarchy of commercial centres.	Planning Priority 20: Our community adapts to climate change and builds climate resilience.	Planning Priority 25: Heritage-based tourism is facilitated and promoted.
Planning Priority 5: Infrastructure and services meet the needs of our community and are appropriately funded.	Planning Priority 12: Our town centres are the focus of local commerce.	Planning Priority 21: Developments minimise environmental impacts and respond to site environmental characteristics and natural hazards.	Planning Priority 26: Nature-based and recreational tourism is facilitated and promoted.
Planning Priority 6: Rural residential, large lot residential development and environmental living are considered in limited and appropriate locations	Planning Priority 13: Our industrial land is developed in an orderly manner and meets future development needs.		Planning Priority 27: Our region is internationally acclaimed for its events, festivals and hosting functions.
Planning Priority 7: Urban development is encouraged in areas with existing infrastructure.	Planning Priority 14: Our industrial land fosters economic growth, business diversity, and employment opportunities.		Planning Priority 28: Our commercial centres and villages are tourist destinations in their own right.
	Planning Priority 15: Key infrastructure is leveraged to support economic growth.		Planning Priority 29: Our villages retain their unique qualities that reflect their histories.
	Planning Priority 16: Our City embraces technology and innovation.		Planning Priority 30: Growth of our villages occurs in a way that protects their character and setting in the rural and environmental landscape and responds to risk of bushfire and flooding.

Our Vision

By 2036, Cessnock's population will have grown to almost 80,000 people and another 5,000 homes will have been built in our towns and villages to accommodate the growth. Our region is **liveable**, being renowned for its relaxed country lifestyle. Our area is a leader of wine tourism, eco-tourism and agri-based tourism in NSW. Our towns and villages are connected to the Greater Hunter by active transport routes and frequent public transport services.

Our region is home to a range of **productive** industries, including new forms of industry, which take advantage of our prime location within the Hunter and accessibility to freight, air and port infrastructure and other regional centres in NSW. Cessnock's economy is responsive to technological change and new economic centres at Kurri Kurri, the former 'Hydro' Aluminium site and at Black Hill provide new employment opportunities. The Cessnock Vineyards District continues to produce premium wines of world class standing.

Our **sustainable** lifestyle is evident, as we celebrate the area's extraordinary native bushland. Important environmental lands and areas of high biodiversity are protected and well-managed and owners of properties with high environmental value are financially rewarded to conserve biodiversity on their land. The health of our waterways is regularly monitored and previously degraded waterways regenerated. New development is sustainable and responds to natural hazards, climate change and site characteristics, while minimising environmental impacts.

Our **unique** towns, villages, environment and heritage are a destination for tourism and widely renowned for their stunning appeal. Our community celebrates its Aboriginal, mining and viticultural heritage.

The Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement sets this vision for land-use planning and outlines our priorities, planning principles and actions to achieve this goal.



Our Place in the Region

Situated in the Lower Hunter Region the Cessnock LGA is located across the traditional lands of the Wonnarua people, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung People. The LGA covers approximately 1,950 square kilometres and forms part of the Lower Hunter. European settlement since the 1820's saw the establishment of pastoral lands, the coal mining industry, the viticulture industry and more recently a thriving tourism industry.

While mining was the principal industrial base and source of employment in the Cessnock Region for the first half of the twentieth century, changes in the mining industry, including deepening coal seams and automation has led to the closure of the vast majority of mines in the area. It was announced that the last active mine in the area was placed into care and maintenance during the original exhibition period of this document. The character, heritage and distribution of towns and villages throughout the LGA is a legacy of the region's coal mining past.

The decline of mining in the Cessnock LGA is in contrast to the success of the Hunter Region's viticulture industry.

The Hunter Valley is Australia's oldest wine region, colloquially known as Hunter Valley Wine Country, the region is internationally acclaimed, particularly for the shiraz and semillon varietals. With over 150 wineries, the region is home to more cellar doors than any other wine region in Australia. The viticultural industry gives rise to a thriving tourism industry that includes restaurants, accommodation, events, galleries and specialty shops.

The Cessnock LGA is currently witnessing substantial growth. Urban development is rapidly expanding within a growth corridor between Cessnock, Kurri Kurri and Maitland, and between Branxton, Greta and Rutherford.



195,000ha
land area



59,985
residential population (2019)



22,737
dwellings (2016)



Cessnock and adjoining local government areas

Wonnarua

"lands of hills and plains"

Our LGA at a Glance

The 195,000 hectares of land within the Cessnock region is currently categorised into the following land use zones:



103,084ha

Rural zones
(Excluding RU3 Forestry)



5,246ha

Residential zones
(Including R5 Large Lot Residential and RU5 Village)



405ha

Commercial zones



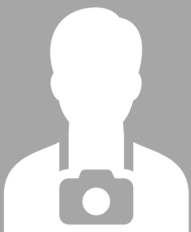
1,198ha

Industrial Zones



57,826ha

Environmental zones



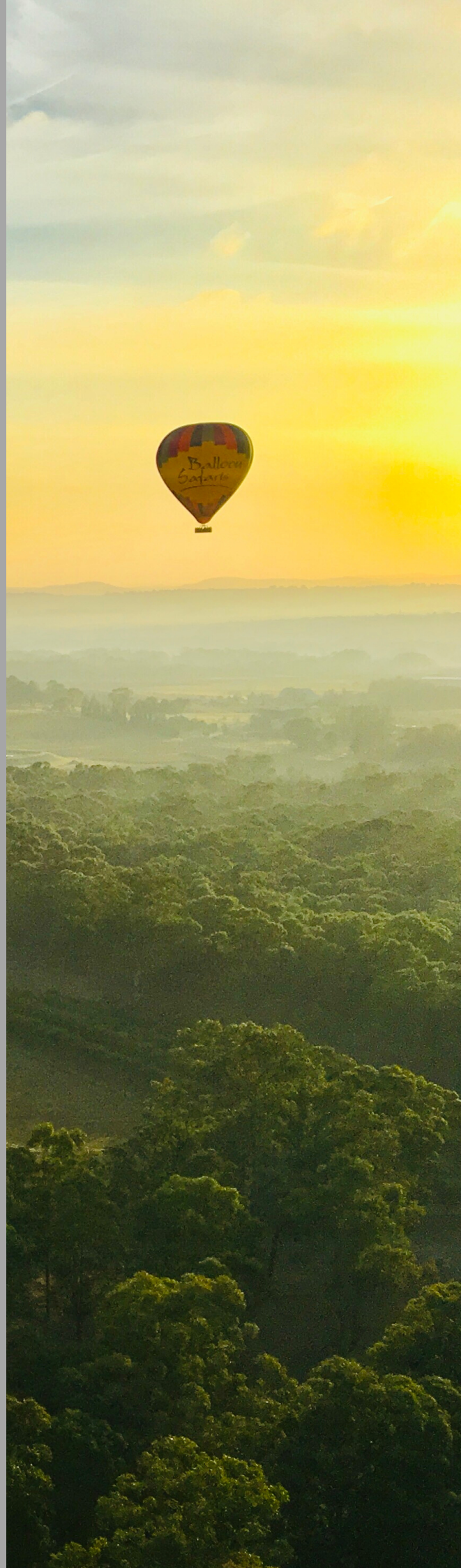
669ha

Tourist zone



25,630ha

Forestry zone



Our Community

Our Cessnock LGA is home to 59,000 people, the majority of whom reside in a thin urban belt between the townships of Cessnock and Kurri Kurri. The region's rural character and amenity is one of our key strengths. The community values the rural lifestyle, opportunities for larger lot residential properties and access to a range of community services and recreation facilities.

The median age of our population is 38, which is consistent with the median age in NSW. This is projected to remain stable in the coming years with our aging population offset by younger people drawn to the region's relative affordability, lifestyle and access to employment. This scenario is already playing out in Cessnock's urban release areas, including land at North Rothbury, Branxton and the Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor. In 2016, the median age at North Rothbury, Cliftleigh and Heddon Greta was 33, 24 and 34, respectively. In contrast, some of our more established localities in our LGA, such as Kurri Kurri and Branxton are witnessing a rising median age. This may indicate a lifestyle choice by older residents who have chosen to live closer to the established commercial centres or within lower maintenance, medium density housing.

There were 23,684 people in the labour force in 2016. Half of these people were employed full-time and a further third, part-time. 8.7 percent reported as being unemployed. The rate of unemployment in 2016 was markedly higher than both the state and national average of 6.3 and 6.9 percent, respectively. Unemployment is a major contributing factor to the higher level of disadvantage.

In 2016, the most important industry sectors were accommodation and food services, retail trade, health care and social assistance, education and training and manufacturing. Three in every five people employed worked in these industries¹. Employment land at Black Hill, the Kurri Kurri Industrial Precinct and the redevelopment of the former Kurri Kurri Aluminium Smelter site are anticipated to play a pivotal role, in providing future local employment opportunities.

	2016 59,101 2036: 70,000-80,000
	2016 24,000 2036: 30,350 – 35,000
	10 year average population growth Cessnock: 1.8% NSW: 1.3%
	New Jobs by 2036 5,369
	Average household size: Cessnock: 2.57 NSW: 2.42

¹ REMPLAN

Our Natural Environment

Our region is known for its' environmental value, and scenic beauty. Our natural environment and landscape are an integral part of what makes region special and unique.

The Cessnock community identified a *'sustainable and healthy environment: promoting a sustainable balance between development and preserving our natural environment'* as one of the five important themes of the CSP that they would like to see happen by 2027. It is important to protect our natural environment for the benefit of the community now and into the future.

Cessnock is characterised by large areas of steep, heavily vegetated terrain in the south and east, as well as flat, cleared areas surrounding the town of Cessnock and neighbouring urban areas. The flat terrain around the Cessnock township contains some of the largest remaining remnants of valley-floor vegetation in the Hunter Valley. National parks and state forests cover 40% of the Cessnock land area (78,769 hectares). The national parks include Werakata, Wollombi, Yengo, Sugarloaf and the Watagans. Yengo National Park forms part of the listing for the UNESCO Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. The listing was made in recognition of the extraordinary natural values that the area contains, including unique plants and animals and associated communities.

The Cessnock LGA has a unique identity, central to which are the prominent items of heritage significance and the 'country town' character of the City's centres. Our LGA contains several hundred items of heritage significance, including items of

indigenous, built and natural significance. Cumulatively, these prominent places and buildings help establish the character of our area.

	40% of the LGA is National Park or State Forrest
	A UNESCO World Heritage Area
	97.5% of the LGA is Bushfire Prone
	A regionally significant biodiversity corridor



Our Important Places

Cessnock City is a regional LGA of well-established towns and villages set among some of the Hunter Region's most valuable natural bushland.

Cessnock and Kurri Kurri are the City's largest townships and benefit from their status as strategic centres in the State Government's HRP 2036 and GNMP 2036. The City's centres are well-regarded for their abundant heritage, character, festivals and events, including the annual Spring Awakening Festival at Cessnock and Nostalgia Festival at Kurri Kurri.

Our LGA contains a major share of the internationally recognised Hunter Valley Wine Country covers an area of approximately 13,250 hectares, to the north of the Cessnock township. Wine Country is one of the primary tourist destinations in the Hunter Region and is a major focus for visitor attractions, events and activities.

	230 European heritage Items
	Australia's oldest wine region
	4 Heritage Conservation Areas
	Significant Aboriginal Places

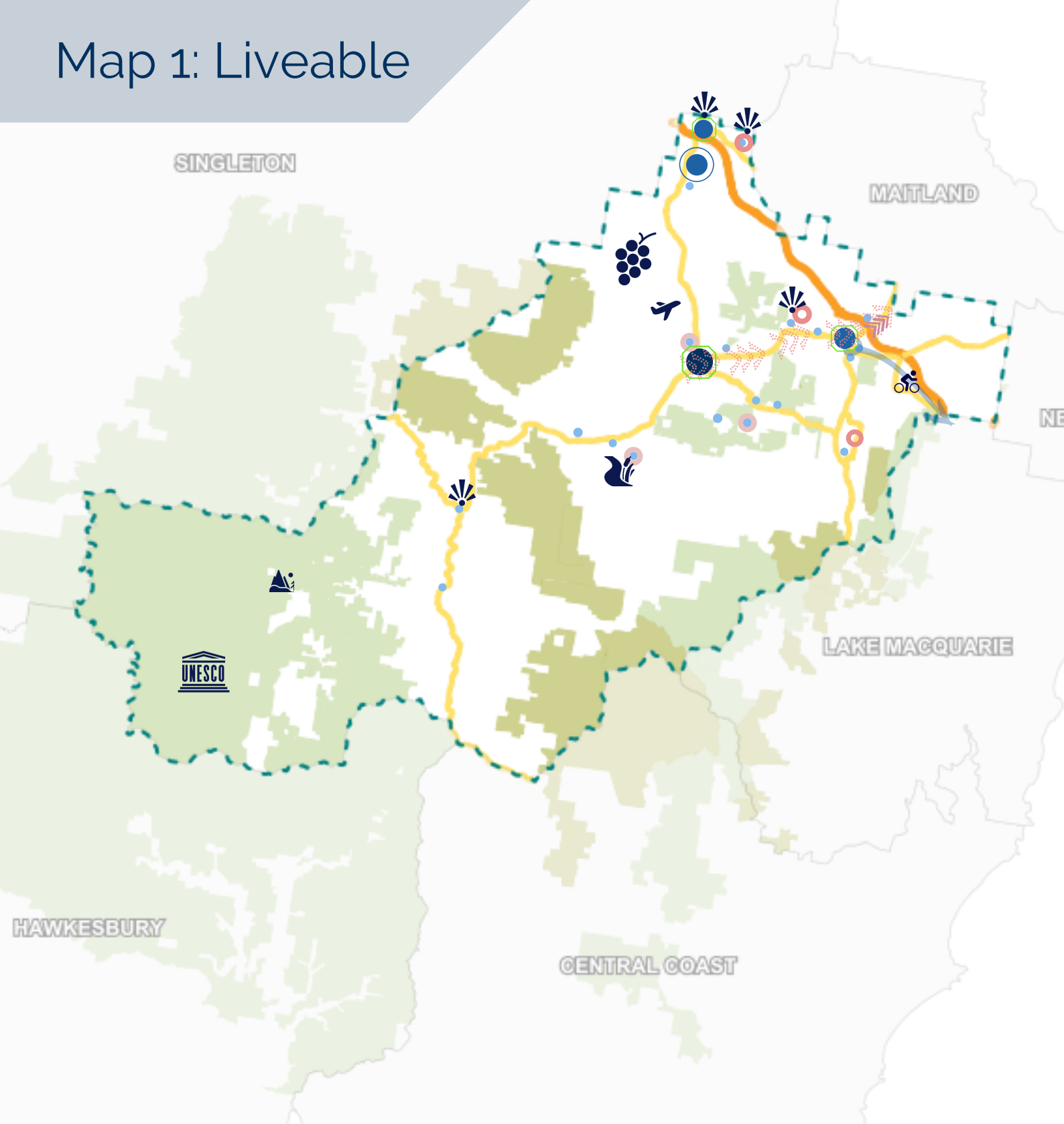






Liveable

Map 1: Liveable



- | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Hunter Expressway | Active Transport Connections | Cessnock to Maitland Growth Area |
| Regional Roads | Airport | Cliftleigh - Heddon Greta Corridor |
| State Forrest | Ellalong Lagoon | Investigation Areas |
| National Park | Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area | Investigation Areas (Limited Potential) |
| Sub-regional Centre | Heritage Conservation Areas | Priority PDP Improvements |
| Local Centre | Hunter Valley Wine Country | Richmond Vale Rail Trail |
| Emerging Local Centre | Mount Yengo | |
| Town | | |
| Villages | | |

Planning Priority 1: Our urban areas are compact.

Over 90% of Cessnock's housing stock is detached dwellings on single lots. Lack of housing diversity reduces opportunities for people to participate in the housing market. It also limits opportunities for people to consider different housing types to respond to their stage in life.

Many established areas are characterised by ageing housing stock on large lots. As these lots are redeveloped, there are opportunities to achieve more dense housing types such as dual occupancies and multi-unit dwellings. Therefore, as our population increases over the next few decades there is an opportunity to accommodate some of this growth in existing residential areas.

Compact residential settlements with higher densities have a range of benefits. With more people living in the same area, infrastructure can be used more efficiently, costs are reduced and the viability of other urban services such as public transport are supported. Compact settlements mean that a greater population can share the cost of infrastructure. Creating compact settlements and consolidating growth in existing residential areas increases the affordability of housing, promotes housing diversity and may have other benefits, such as promoting lifestyles that are more active.

Council aims to provide higher quality and more affordable services by encouraging infill development, including medium-density housing in appropriate locations. Infill development is encouraged in established residential areas including Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Branxton and Weston. Additionally, medium density development, such as shop-top housing is encouraged in the commercial centres. These areas are already well-served and connected to employment and lifestyle services and can facilitate active lifestyles. Furthermore, work will be undertaken in our centres to improve their liveability, such as improved open space and better public domain and community facilities. The State Government aims to achieve a high infill scenario and have 60% of our future development within our established settlements. If we are to achieve this target, there would need to be a fundamental change to the existing patterns of development.

To support this planning priority to achieve compact urban areas, additional low-density residential, urban release areas will only be considered when land supply falls below an appropriate threshold. This will be monitored and reported on an annual basis. In existing, undeveloped urban release areas higher densities will be promoted around centres and high amenity areas.

Figure 1: Example of low density development



Planning Principles

1. Medium density residential development is encouraged in and around our centres.
2. Public domain improvements are prioritised in commercial centres at Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Branxton and Weston.
3. Public and active transport initiatives are prioritised in areas in and around existing commercial centres at Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Branxton and Weston.
4. Community facilities are generally located in our commercial centres and locations of high public activity.
5. Our urban areas are compact and fully serviced.

Actions

1. Prepare a Local Housing Strategy that–
 - Analyses local housing needs and housing preferences.
 - Responds to the spectrum of housing types and needs across the local government area.
 - Prioritises the delivery of infill housing within existing urban areas.
 - Meets social and affordable housing requirements for low and very low-income households.
 - Considers the extent of the existing R3 Medium Density Residential zone in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Weston and Branxton.
 - Considers opportunities for medium-density development along the Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor.
2. Prepare an Urban Growth Management Strategy including a sequencing strategy for future development .
3. Prepare a corridor plan for the Cliftleigh – Heddon Greta Corridor–
 - To ensure the area is adequately serviced and new growth is integrated with the existing residential areas.
4. Prepare an annual monitoring report–
 - To report on land and housing supply and demand.
 - To inform when it is necessary to investigate the provision of additional land for development.
5. Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan–
 - To permit higher density development, such as shop-top housing, in B2 Local Centre, B3 Commercial Core and B4 Mixed Use zones where considered appropriate in respect to environmental constraints.
 - To review the extent of the existing R3 Medium Density Residential zone in the Kurri Kurri, Cessnock, Weston and Branxton commercial centres and opportunities for medium density development along the Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor.
 - To review the zoning in urban release areas to encourage medium-density development around commercial centres and areas of high amenity.
6. Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan–
 - To include development controls for dual occupancy and medium-density development that maintains the neighbourhood character.



Figure 2: Example of higher density development

Planning Priority 2:

Housing is diverse, adaptable and affordable and our urban areas facilitate affordable living.

With our community expected to grow to between 70,000 and 80,000 by 2036, an additional 6,350 dwellings need to be built. Furthermore, the way we live, and our household structure are also changing.

Our average household size has declined from 2.54 people per household in 2011, to 2.51 people in 2016 and is predicted to be 2.42 by 2036. Another significant influence on housing is the change in age structure. Across Cessnock the median population is expected to remain stable (currently 38); however, in centres such as Kurri Kurri and Branxton the median age is currently rising. At different stages of our lives we have different needs and preferences for housing. These changes in our community have implications for housing design and subdivision.

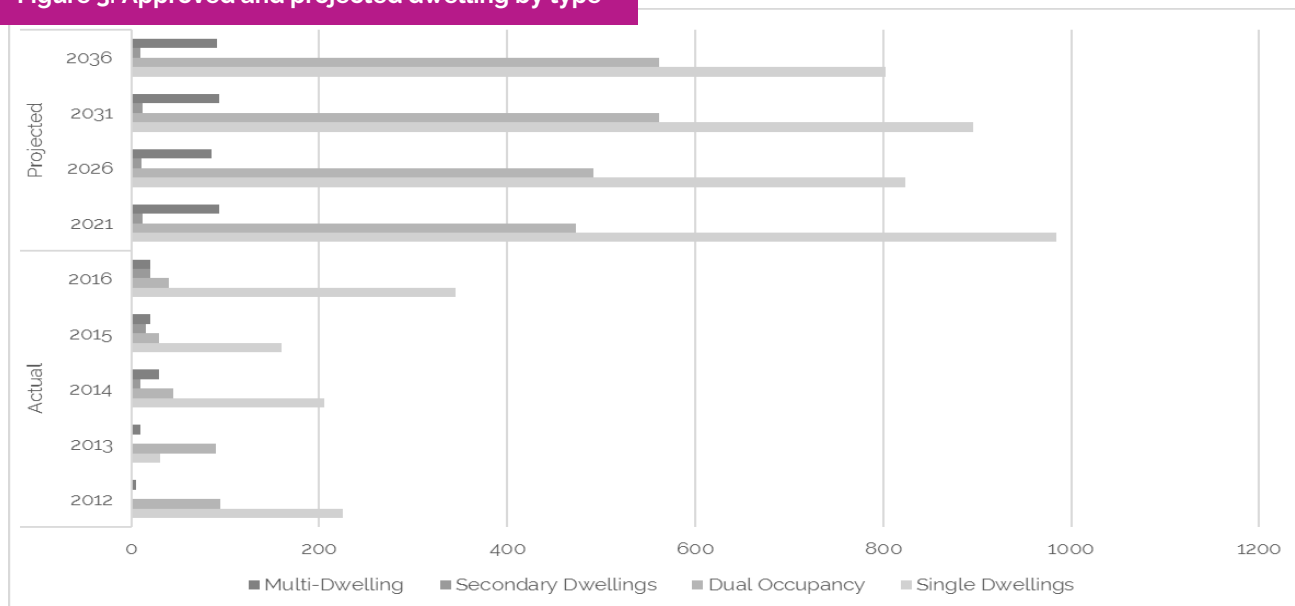
A diverse housing stock can help meet the needs of our current and future community. Housing diversity provides different price points for people to buy or to rent and it allows people to change housing types throughout their lives. Housing types and the location of housing can also have a significant impact on living

affordability. Affordable living encompasses all costs associated with day-to-day life including housing, lifestyle and transport costs. Compact centres reduce transport costs and a well-designed building can reduce costs associated with heating and cooling.

Affordable housing is housing that is suitable for the needs of low to moderate income households, so that these households are able to meet other basic living costs such as food, clothing, transport, medical care and education. This is not to be confused with social housing, which is provided by the community housing providers to assist people who are unable to afford or access suitable accommodation in the private rental market.

The Hunter Expressway has significantly increased the accessibility of Cessnock to other areas of the Hunter. This has meant greater access to other land markets in the hunter markets. Growth in these submarkets is a potential threat to Cessnock's housing market so we must provide a competitive advantage in terms of price and/or amenity.

Figure 3: Approved and projected dwelling by type



Over the past few years there has been significant disruption in the short-term accommodation industry caused by platforms such as AirBNB. The proximity of the vineyards district to our urban areas has resulted in a moderate loss of housing stock to tourist accommodation. Council will monitor the short-term accommodation market and its impact on housing

affordability. In the future it may be necessary for council to consider policies to manage this type of use; similar to those policies being adopted by other local governments.

Planning Principles

1. Settlements are designed, located and appropriately serviced to reduce living costs, support affordable living and provides adaptable housing.
2. Open space, transport and community facilities are provided in urban release areas and these are designed to meet the needs of residents.
3. Affordable and adaptable housing and seniors' living is provided in well-connected urban centres.
4. Ageing in place is facilitated by good access to transport, services and community facilities.
5. The capacity of existing services and infrastructure is maximised.
6. Social infrastructure is concentrated in existing and emerging urban centres.
7. Infrastructure needs are determined and costed prior to additional urban release areas being rezoned.
8. The full cost of infrastructure within urban release areas is provided by the developer through mechanisms such as contribution plans.

Actions

- | | |
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| 1. | Prepare a Local Housing Strategy that– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyses local housing needs and housing preferences. • Responds to the spectrum of housing types and needs across the local government area. • Prioritises the delivery of infill housing within existing urban areas. • Meets social and affordable housing requirements for low and very low-income households. • Considers the extent of the existing R3 Medium Density Residential zone in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Weston and Branxton. • Considers opportunities for medium density development along the Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor. |
| 2. | Prepare an Urban Growth Management Strategy. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include development controls that encourage affordable and adaptable housing. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that appropriate infrastructure is funded by the developer. |

Planning Priority 3:

The character and vitality of our town centres and villages is protected and enhanced.

Renewing the public domain and revitalising streetscapes in our centres are key priorities for Council. Unique, functional and vibrant town centres are important to stimulate economic growth and encourage tourism, investment, and prolonged visitation. Town centres with good amenity are more likely to attract tourism, repeat visitation and spending. Maintaining the appearance of our streetscapes and the facilities and historic buildings within them, is fundamental to creating a positive visitor experience.

Council has carried out considerable master planning for the main centres at Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Weston and Branxton. Council has commenced public domain improvements in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri and Branxton and funding to continue to implement the town centre master plans will be pursued.

Many of the commercial buildings in our centres were constructed in the early 20th century and they contribute greatly to the streetscape and character of our towns and villages. Maintaining these buildings and to ensure that they remain active will require innovative ways to adapt and re-use these important structures.

Access and parking will continue to play an important role in our town centres. Parking will be managed in a way that encourages active streets and public

spaces and reinforces compact centres. Public transport will also continue to play an important role in providing access to our town centres and ensuring they remain compact, functional and accessible.

Local planning policy will be reviewed to ensure it provides clear, contemporary and targeted outcomes that support appealing, high amenity streetscapes. Better public and active transport links between centres will be encouraged, in particular along the corridor between Cessnock and Maitland.

The growth of our urban environment will incorporate open space, recreational opportunities and waterways. Future development will therefore consider the preservation of green corridors, protection of water quality and equitable access to public recreational facilities.

A number of smaller villages exist across Cessnock. Most of these villages have historic qualities including buildings and their setting in the landscape. The characteristics of these villages vary with some located on main transport corridors, being relatively proximate to established urban areas. Other villages are considered more isolated and do not have access to reticulated services, such as water and sewer. Development in some of these villages is encouraged; however, it needs to occur in way that protects the important qualities of that village.

Planning Principles

1. The revitalisation of our town centres and villages is prioritised.
2. Town centre enhancements are consistent with Council's endorsed strategies, masterplans and public domain plans.
3. New developments in our centres contribute to appealing and pedestrian-friendly town centres.
4. Town centres are highly accessible to all types of transport.
5. Town centre car parking is efficient and managed in a way that supports active streets and public spaces.
6. Pedestrians are prioritised in our town centres.
7. The public domain is used for community events and celebration.

Actions	
6.	Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that there are adequate design standards for buildings in our centres. To ensure the preservation of green corridors and water sensitive urban design principles. To include provisions to encourage increased place making in our centres.
8.	Review the Parking and Access Strategy for the Cessnock Commercial Centre.
9.	Continue to apply for government funding to implement the public domain works that are identified in Council's endorsed town centre strategies and masterplans.
10.	Continue to capture development contributions and investigate alternative funding options to complete town centre public domain works.
11.	Prepare a town centre place-making strategy to encourage development and investment that will increase activation, amenity and use of existing sites in our centres.
12.	Target the Local Heritage Fund to façade improvement for heritage buildings in our centres.
13.	Prepare a villages strategy that– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifies key features of each village. Identifies opportunities for improvements to the public domain in each village.
14.	Council will prepare a Local Character Study and Local Character Statement for residential land in relevant City locations.



Planning Priority 4: Our community is safe, healthy and active.

Well-planned communities can improve people's qualities of life by promoting healthy, active living and by supporting inclusive communities. Our aim is to create liveable communities where all people, regardless of age or ability, are able to lead active, independent, healthy lives and access and interact with their community freely and safely.

Providing for safe communities involves planning for environmental hazards and protecting residents and property from identified risks. The growth of our centres and villages must consider the suitability of expansion in respect to constraints such as bushfire, mine subsidence and flooding.

The design of buildings and spaces and the connections between them can contribute to liveable communities. Building design with strong connections to the street and public spaces improves casual surveillance and safety and connects residents with the public domain. Our urban spaces and villages will be designed to encourage the use of open space and encourage active lifestyles. Open spaces for passive and active recreation will be provided within walking distance of residents. Open space will form part of a broader green and blue grid to provide the community with a network of open space and connected urban tree canopy.

Streets that balance vehicle movements with safe and attractive cycling and walking networks are important to promote active lifestyles. Council already has a program to build an integrated, shared pathway network and public domain plans for a number of our strategic centres. These works are to be in accordance with the Pedestrian Access Mobility Plan 2016, the Cessnock Traffic and Transport Strategy 2018 and forthcoming Trails Strategy.

As these plans are implemented our community will enjoy greater connectivity within our residential areas and to our centres and other important areas, such as employment and educational nodes. This will provide people with an alternative to private vehicles and support active lifestyles. Appropriate end-of-trip infrastructure, such as secure cycle parking and amenities will be provided within developments and in our centres and at key destinations.

The Richmond Vale Rail Trail proposal to develop a shared cycling and walking route along the disused Richmond Vale Railway will provide tourism opportunities and active recreational connections to Newcastle. Council will continue to work with adjoining councils and other parties to deliver this exciting recreation asset.

Planning Principles

1. Public spaces are designed in accordance with the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and place-making.
2. Active transport principles are applied to urban release areas.
3. Pedestrians will be prioritised in our town centres.
4. Residential areas and employment centres are connected to recreational areas, town centres and other key nodes by active transport routes and public transport.
5. Built environments are healthy through good design and landscaping.
6. Urban areas are designed in a way that promotes inclusivity and accessibility.
7. The green and blue grids and urban tree canopy cover of the area are enhanced.

Actions

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| 2. | Prepare an Urban Growth Management Strategy. |
| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review minimum lot size and subdivision controls to promote higher density around urban centres, key transport nodes and along major road corridors. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure adequate guidance is provided for access requirements. • To include provisions to encourage energy efficiency and greening of buildings. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To contribute to the active transport works in Council's Traffic and Transport Strategy. |
| 15. | Investigate options for a cycleway and trail through the Vineyard District. |
| 16. | Prepare a Greener Places, Urban Forest Policy and Street Tree Policy. |
| 17. | Continue to implement Council's adopted plans for access and mobility, recreation and open space, traffic and transport and community. |
| 18. | Undertake a movement and place study for our roads in major urban areas. |
| 19. | Support a place-based planning approach to better guide planning and urban design outcomes for urban areas. |

Planning Priority 5:

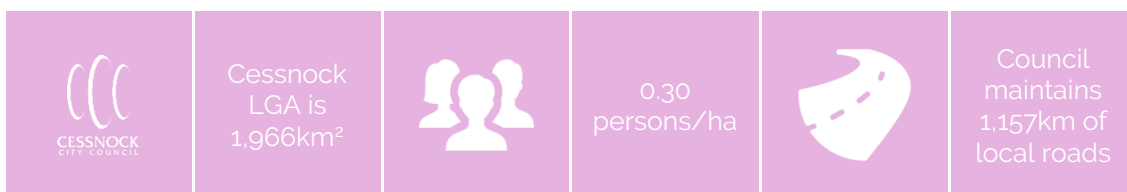
Infrastructure and services meet the needs of our community and are appropriately funded.

Infrastructure includes all the physical components that support our community to go about our daily lives. Typically, these include roads, water, sewerage, telecommunications and community and recreation facilities. Cessnock is generally well-served by existing infrastructure; however, there remains large areas without reticulated services and as is common with many Councils, Cessnock maintains a backlog of infrastructure provision and maintenance (particularly roads). Hunter Water is a key stakeholder to delivering the provision of reticulated water and sewer throughout the LGA.

The Cessnock Local Government Area is 1,966km² in area and has a population density of 0.30 persons per hectare. Council maintains 1,157 km of local roads, 337 km of unsealed rural roads, 59 major culverts, 120 km of stormwater drainage and 74 vehicle bridges. The size of our population relative to the extent of infrastructure that Council maintains places a significant financial burden on council resources. To address this imbalance and to overcome the infrastructure backlog Council will continue to seek funding opportunities from the state government.

New greenfield development is generally well-served and there are mechanisms in place to ensure that developers provide new infrastructure through contributions plans and planning agreements. It is acknowledged that Council's current contribution framework does not accurately reflect the costs of servicing new development and council continues to review its contribution framework to address this.

Existing infrastructure in many of our established urban areas have significant additional capacity, particularly in water and sewerage infrastructure. In areas where lot sizes are large and housing stock is aging, there may be opportunities for redevelopment of these lots for medium-density development. In other areas, there may be opportunities for secondary dwellings or dual occupancies. Increased development within existing urban areas takes advantage of capacity in existing infrastructure and reduces housing costs and the ongoing costs of maintenance by Council and service provide



Planning Principles

1. Infrastructure for new development is appropriately planned and funded.
2. Infill development within our established urban areas is encouraged.
3. Large lot residential areas will only be supported where services and infrastructure exists or these utilities can be reasonably extended or provided by the developer.
4. Rezoning land for urban purposes will be prioritised in areas where existing infrastructure capacity exists.
5. Community facilities will continue to be located in our centres and our villages.
6. Recreation facilities are located in areas with strong connections to surrounding residential areas and good access to public transport cycleways and road networks.

Actions

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| 2. | Prepare an Urban Growth Management Strategy. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that appropriate infrastructure is funded by the developer. • To incentivise infill development within existing urban areas. |
| 20. | Council will continue to monitor residential land supply. |
| 21. | Council will continue to participate in the Hunter Urban Development Program. |

Planning Priority 6:

Rural residential, large lot residential development and environmental living are considered in limited and appropriate locations.

A substantial proportion of the Cessnock LGA is zoned for rural or environmental purposes. This includes the Vineyards District, farmland and areas of environmental and landscape value. While the core objective for rural and environmental land is to protect it from further fragmentation, urban encroachment and incompatible development, it is also recognised that there is a market for *lifestyle lots* and the residential use of some land may be appropriate in certain circumstances.

In order to protect agricultural land from potential land-use conflicts and unplanned rural residential development, it is important to provide a transition from rural activities and agricultural landscapes to urban areas. The provision of land for large lot residential may be beneficial in limited circumstances; for example, to provide increased separation between unmanaged or ecologically sensitive land to provide greater bush fire mitigation outcomes for development or to provide a transition from rural to urban uses.

Large lot development is an inefficient use of land. In addition to the larger area that they consume, they also require additional infrastructure and servicing which is not wholly costed into Council's contribution and rates frameworks and are therefore effectively subsidised by the rest of our community. Although large lot developments are not a preferred development type, Council acknowledges that there is a market for this type of development and that this maybe appropriate in limited situations. Therefore, proposals for large lot zoning may be supported where they meet the following criteria:

- they do not reduce the viability of significant agricultural, rural or environmental areas.
- they provide a Council identified transition from urban to rural land-uses;
- they do not reduce the viability of rural lands for agricultural purposes;
- they are consistent with Council's Urban Growth Management Strategy and do not undermine Council's policies to create *compact centres*; and

- services and infrastructure exist (e.g. sewer, water) or these utilities can be reasonably extended or provided at no cost to Council.

Rural residential development, which is the use of a rural property primarily for residential purposes is also a popular lifestyle choice. However, rural residential development can have environmental, social and economic costs that are significantly higher than those of standard residential development. One of the most significant risks is of conflict of productive rural properties and the amenity expectations of rural residential dwellers. They may also have expectations for urban level services such as access, utilities and services such as rubbish collection which cannot be met. At present, the construction and occupation of a dwelling on a rurally zoned lot that is less than the minimum lot size can only occur with a dwelling entitlement.

Our area contains clusters of significantly undersized rural allotments that are unlikely to be viable for traditional agricultural purposes. Some of this land is serviced by utilities (or utilities can be reasonably extended or provided) and if used for a residential purpose would be unlikely to undermine the use of adjoining lands for agriculture use. In these circumstances, Council may consider rezoning the land to facilitate a more appropriate outcome.

Council has identified several possible investigation areas for urban expansion. It is intended that the investigation areas will ultimately contain a mix of zonings, potentially residential, large lot residential and/or environmental. In this regard, the investigation process will be subject to the outcomes of Council's forthcoming Urban Growth Management Strategy.

Environmental living provides for land-uses that are compatible with the special ecological, scientific or aesthetic values of the area. This may include low-impact residential development in certain areas. Where residential uses already exist in areas of high environmental value it is may be appropriate to rezone these properties to E4 Environmental Living to acknowledge this.

Planning Principles

1. Large lot residential housing does not encroach into the Vineyards District, agricultural, rural or environmental areas.
2. Large lot residential development may be supported where it provides a transition from urban to rural land-uses.
3. The subdivision of land for large lot residential purposes does not reduce the viability of rural lands for agricultural purposes.
4. Large lot residential areas will only be supported where services and infrastructure exists (e.g. sewer, water) or these utilities can be reasonably extended or provided.
5. Where it is assessed as suitable and compatible to the protection of the environment, residential land within areas of high environmental value may be rezoned to E4 Environmental Living.
6. High quality agricultural land is protected and effective buffers are provided.
7. Dwellings located in rural areas and areas of high environmental value are sited and designed to minimise the visual and ecological impacts.
8. The interface between urban areas and rural land or environmental land is managed to minimise visual impacts.

Actions

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| 2. | Prepare an Urban Growth Management Strategy. |
| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review the minimum lot size and zoning requirements at Bellbird. In particular, the minimum lot size at Echidna Close and the rural zoning at Edden Street, Bellbird.• To review the land-uses in the E4 Environmental Living zone. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To include criteria to guide the rezoning of land to E4 Environmental Living. |
| 22. | Undertake an Environmental Lands Study. |



Planning Priority 7:

Urban development is encouraged in areas with existing infrastructure.

Existing infrastructure in many of the City's established urban areas has significant, additional capacity, particularly water and sewerage infrastructure. In areas where lot sizes are large and housing stock is aging, there may be opportunities to redevelop for medium-density housing. In other

areas, there may be opportunities for secondary dwellings or dual occupancies. Increased development in existing urban areas takes advantage of infrastructure capacity, reduces housing costs and ongoing infrastructure maintenance costs, borne by Council and service providers.

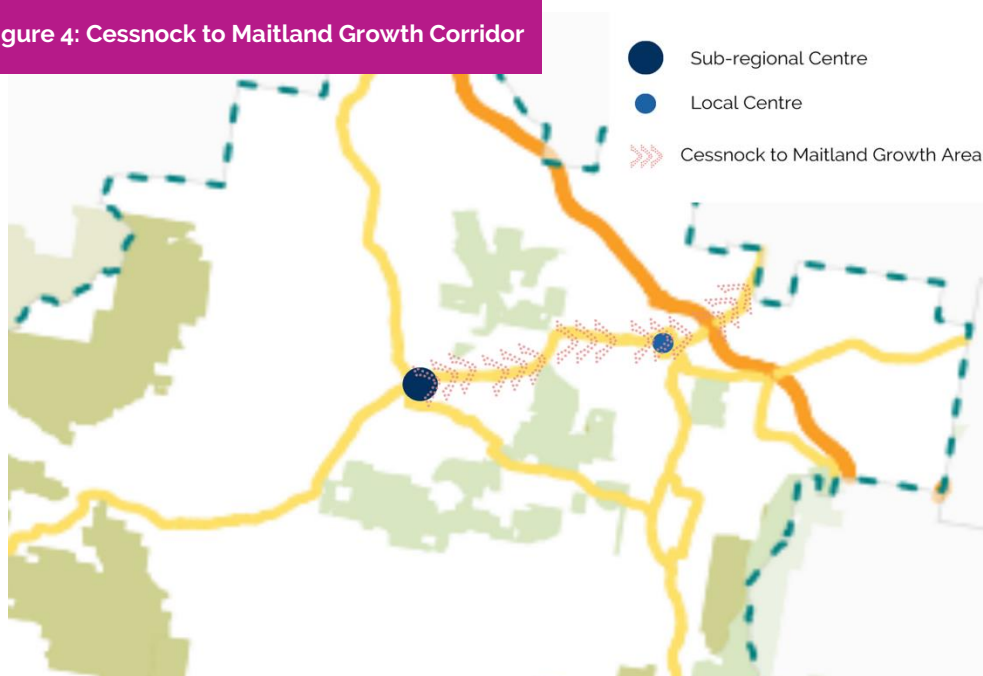
Planning Principles

1. Infill development is encouraged in established urban areas.
2. Our urban areas are compact and well serviced.
3. Residential development is supported in unconstrained areas of the Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor.
4. New growth is integrated with the existing residential areas and adequately serviced.

Actions

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| 3. | Prepare a corridor plan for the Cliftleigh–Heddon Greta corridor. |
| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan–
To rezone residual parcels of land from the Hunter Express Way. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To incentivise infill development in existing urban areas. |

Figure 4: Cessnock to Maitland Growth Corridor

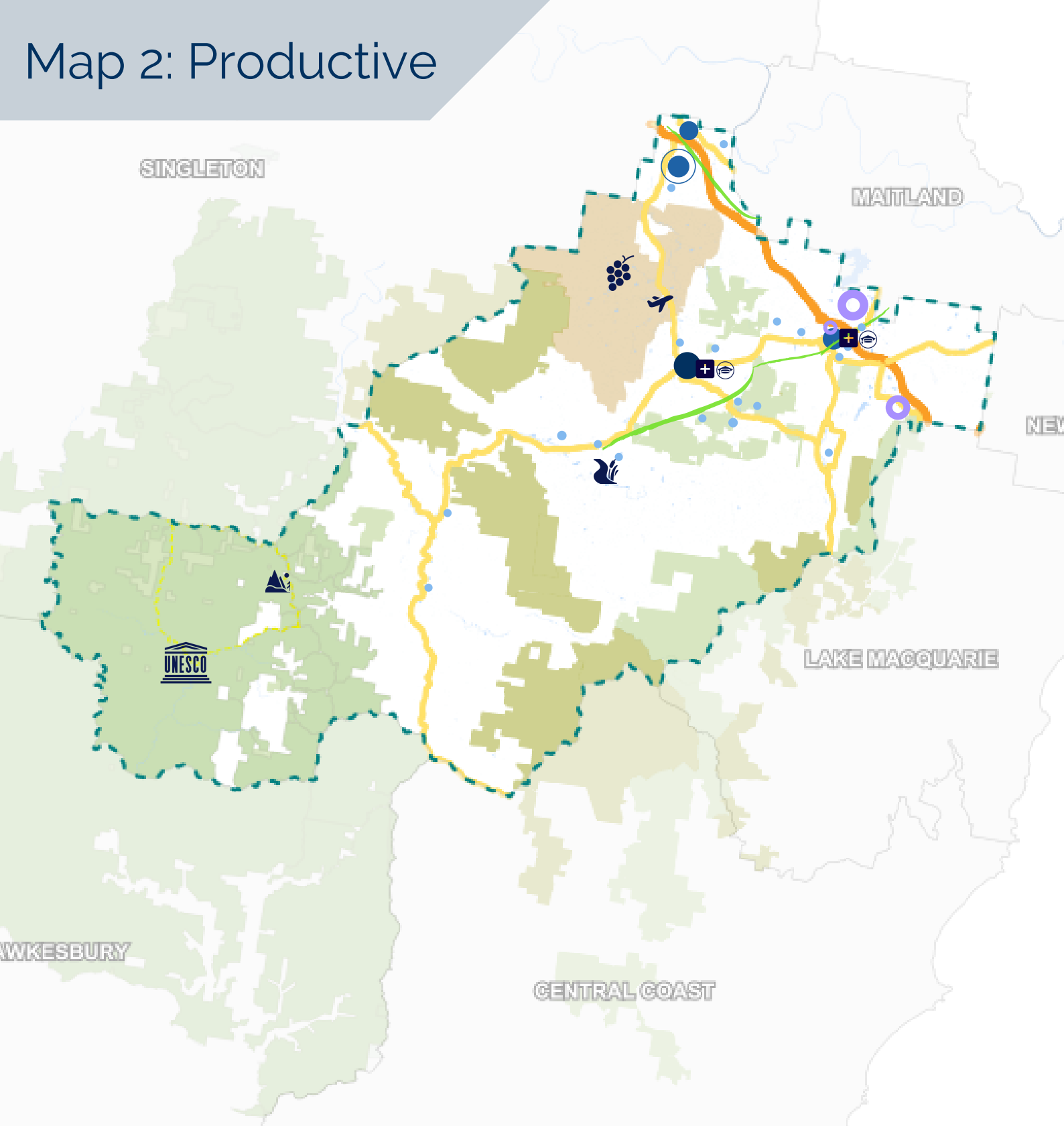






Productive

Map 2: Productive



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|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Hunter Expressway | Airport | Critical Viticultural Cluster |
| Regional Roads | Ellalong Lagoon | Rail Corridors (Public & Private) |
| State Forrest | Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area | Future Major Employment Nodes |
| National Park | Hunter Valley Wine Country | Hospital |
| Sub-regional Centre | Mount Yengo | TAFE |
| Local Centre | | |
| Emerging Local Centre | | |
| Town | | |
| Villages | | |

Planning Priority 8: Our rural land is protected from incompatible development.

The scale of the agricultural sector in Cessnock is in broad decline, with the gross value of agricultural production (GVAP) falling between 2001 and 2011. In the 2010-11 financial year, the total GVAP was \$24 million with poultry, crops, wine grapes, cattle and eggs the top five commodities.

Agricultural land is important for regional employment and food security but is vulnerable to encroachment from urban development and activities. A key issue for rural land-use planning is to protect important agricultural land while appropriately managing competing interests for that land.

Immediate threats to important agricultural land across Cessnock include fragmentation (by subdivision), urban encroachment and the cumulative impact of larger scale non-agricultural development.

The use and consolidation of smaller allotments will be encouraged, and appropriate buffers will be applied to new development to ensure primary production continues to thrive on important agricultural land.

In order to sustain rural activities, it is important to maintain separation between agriculture and urban development and avoid industries and activities on rural land that are incompatible with primary production. Separation of rural and urban land-uses

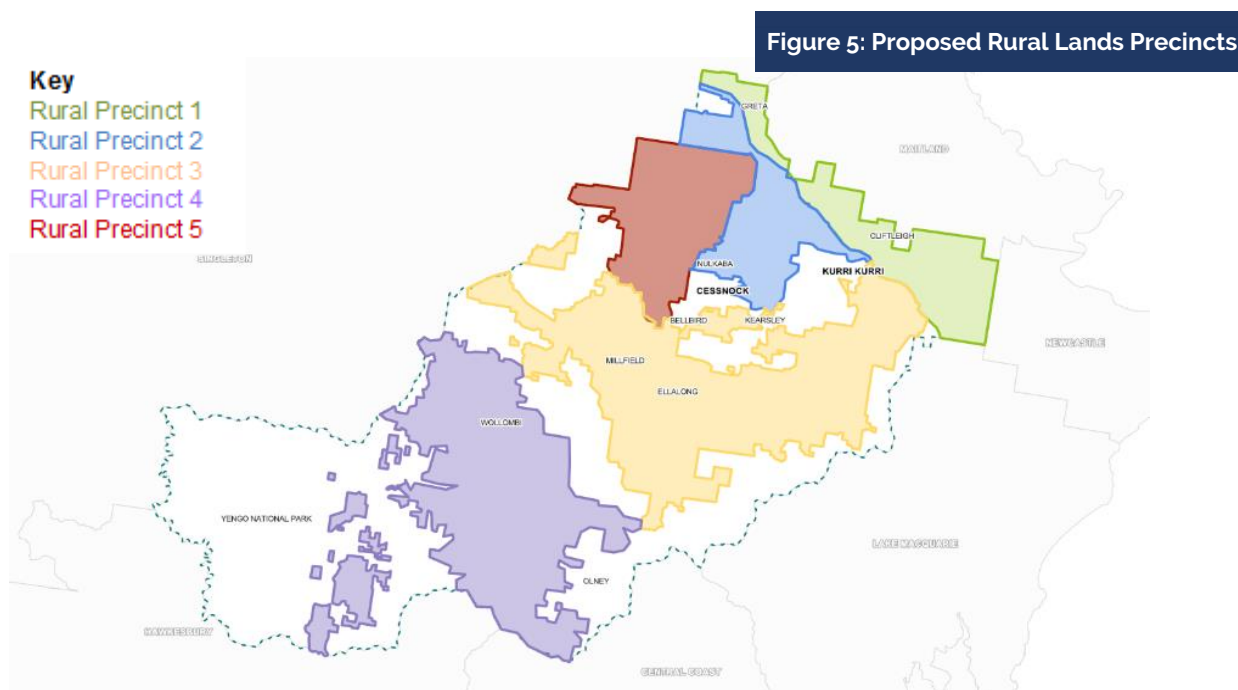
is vital to ensuring the unique character of our rural land is preserved and productive agricultural activities are afforded appropriate protection.

Land-use separation can be implemented in a variety of ways, including the use of physical buffers (e.g. vegetation corridors), controlled planning buffers (e.g. transition zones), development standards (Council's LEP) and relevant planning controls (Council's DCP).

The capability of land for agricultural pursuits varies significantly across Cessnock, with several areas being far more suited to agricultural activities. For this reason, a precinct-based approach to managing the diversity of rural land may be appropriate. The 2017, Rural Lands Study, recommended dividing the Cessnock's rural land into five core precincts, see **Figure 5: Proposed Rural Lands Precincts**. The precincts share common landscape elements, land-use and topographical characteristics and could be used to inform location specific development standards and controls.

Rural land in the LGA is currently divided into the following zones:

- RU2 Rural Landscape;
- RU3 Forestry; and
- RU4 Primary Production Small Lots.



Planning Principles

1. Fragmentation of rural land is discouraged, whereas the use and consolidation of existing undersized lots is encouraged.
2. Effective buffers are maintained to protect rural lands from further encroachment by non-agricultural development.
3. Productive and potentially productive rural land is appropriately zoned and protected from land-use conflicts.
4. The agricultural production value of the Vineyards District is protected from incompatible uses.
5. The retention and expansion of infrastructure and industries that support the agricultural sector will be encouraged.
6. The impacts of higher risk, non-agricultural land-uses are appropriately managed to mitigate impacts on the rural, environmental and scenic values of the LGA.

Actions

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| 5. | <p>Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To review the extent and application of the RU4 Primary Production zone subject to the recommendations of the Vineyards District Discussion Paper. • To ensure that land-uses are compatible with the rural landscape. • To investigate the inclusion of all rural zones in Clause 5.3 Development near zone boundaries. • To Investigate the merit of introducing a RU6 Transition zone to buffer rural and environmental zones. |
| 6. | <p>Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan–</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure objectives and controls appropriately reflect the different character areas within the Vineyards District. • To ensure higher risk, non-agricultural land-uses are managed appropriately. • To introduce effective buffer distances to protect existing and potential rural land-uses from incompatible development. • To ensure objectives and controls are sufficiently robust to protect important agricultural activities from inappropriate development, including urban encroachment, land fragmentation and inappropriate forms of residential and tourism development. |
| 23. | Investigate a precinct planning approach for the rural and environmental areas to reflect the different character and capabilities of land across the region. |
| 24. | Identify and map important agricultural land, significant agricultural landscapes and sensitive view sheds. |
| 25. | Lobby the State Government to realign the Viticulture Critical Industry Cluster boundary with the RU4 Primary Production Small Lots Zone and the important viticultural land map to ensure uniform status across the Vineyards District. |
| 26. | Investigate policy options to protect the region's productive agricultural land from fragmentation and inappropriate development. |
| 27. | Investigate the viability of new and emerging agricultural industries and how to support diversification of the sector through local planning policies. |
| 28. | Prepare a Rural Lands Policy. |



Planning Priority 9: Our wine tourism industry is supported and enhanced.

The Cessnock Vineyards District contains a diverse range of tourism development which supports the wine industry, including cellar doors, accommodation, restaurants and a variety of cultural and recreation facilities and events. For landowners, the supporting wine tourism industry provides important opportunities to reinforce and diversify product offering and income.

The wine industry in the Hunter Valley accounts for a significant share of the regional economy, delivering an annual economic contribution of over half a billion dollars.² The industry supports approximately 2,800 direct and indirect jobs across the Hunter Valley³ and accounts for 15 percent of total visitation to the Hunter Valley and 20 percent of overnight stay visitors.⁴ For Cessnock, this equates to 279,000 overnight visitors each year.⁵

The wine and tourism industries in Cessnock are significantly co-dependent. Tourist and other non-agricultural development are an important component of the Vineyards District and help sustain the economic viability of viticulture. However, if not carefully managed, non-agricultural development in the Vineyards District may have a negative cumulative impact on the rural, viticultural and heritage significance of the landscape, result in amenity impacts and undermine agricultural productivity and the scenic viticultural landscape that

is fundamental to the overall appeal of the Vineyards District. For this reason, it is important development in the Vineyards District is managed carefully to ensure the ongoing viability of both the wine and tourism industries.

The tourism industry will continue to thrive in the Vineyards District. Opportunities to expand the range of compatible forms of tourism development will be encouraged, enabling landowners to diversify their income and use of the land. Rural trails and cycleways throughout the Vineyards District will provide new ways to move around the area and the established town centres will be positioned to take advantage of tourism generated by the Vineyards District.

The economic value of wine tourism to the local and regional economy will be reflected in Council's land-use policies to protect local employment opportunities and encourage growth in wine tourism spending, investment and regional visitation. Council will work collaboratively with representatives from the community and the wine and tourism industry to develop land-use policy for the Vineyards District. Collaborative planning ensures local knowledge is captured, that policy remains relevant and effective and that non-agricultural development is sympathetic and contributory to the scenic rural and viticultural amenity of the area.

	73% or 1,685ha of the Hunter Valley vineyards district is located within the Cessnock LGA		Cellar door outlets: 130+		Jobs generated by viticulture & wine tourism: 2,800
	Annual visitor nights: 279,000		Restaurants: 60		Economic contribution of the wine industry: \$502 million
	Beds for Tourists: 5,500		Australia's oldest wine region		15% of total tourist visitors to the Hunter Region

² (Gillespie Economics and AgEconPlus, 27 November 2017)
³ (Gillespie Economics and AgEconPlus, 27 November 2017)

⁴ (RMCG, June 2017)
⁵ (RMCG, June 2017)

Planning Principles

1. Land-use policies that affect the Vineyards District recognise the economic and employment contribution of the wine tourism industry to the local and regional economy.
2. Council and representatives from the Vineyard District community and peak business groups will work collaboratively to develop land-use policy relating to the Vineyards District.
3. Non-agricultural development in the Vineyards District is sympathetic and contributory to the scenic rural character of the area.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure land-uses and controls in the Vineyard District are compatible with the scenic rural character of the area and the long-term economic sustainability of the District. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide clear development standards for the range of non-agricultural development that is permitted in the Vineyards District. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contributions framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To repeal the Tourism S94 Plan.• To capture contributions from tourist-related development under council's Section 7.12 Levy Contributions Plan. |
| 29. | Continue to facilitate the Vineyard District Community Working Group for the Vineyards District Project. |



Planning Priority 10:

Our City encourages a variety of niche tourism opportunities.

The Cessnock LGA contains a variety of tourism ventures in addition to those supporting the wine industry. From murals in Kurri Kurri and the rail museum in Richmond Vale to the Cessnock Zoo and the unique heritage of Wollombi; the tourism offerings in the Cessnock LGA are many and diverse.

The region's tourism industry is continually evolving, with new experiences regularly introduced to the market. Many of our non-wine tourism industries are agriculturally based, such as produce from the farm, farm-gate stays and 'meet the makers' establishments.

The region's tourism industry will be encouraged to strengthen and diversify. To achieve this, it is important that the planning framework is proactive and is able to adapt to enable new and innovative tourism opportunities. Allowing flexibility for diversification of tourism will assist in building a resilient and competitive economy and generate growth.

To encourage the growth of new tourism industries, services and infrastructure needs to be provided in locations suitable for tourism uses. The region's major gateways will be examined as a priority to provide opportunities for compatible tourism development and provide regional entry statements.

Planning Principles

1. Diverse and innovative tourism industries are encouraged.
2. Tourism operations are compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
3. Tourism activities are supported by essential infrastructure that is appropriately funded.
4. Local produce is promoted as part of the tourism experience in the Hunter.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide flexibility for new tourism development in suitable locations. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide clear development standards for the range of non-agricultural development that is permitted in rural and environmental areas and the Vineyards District.• To provide guidance on appropriate design and building in rural and other sensitive areas. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that tourism development contributes to infrastructure provision and town centre improvements. |



Planning Priority 11:

Our City has a defined hierarchy of commercial centres.

A hierarchy of commercial centres defines the level and type of service provision for each centre and assists the planning process by identifying an appropriate service level in different sized centres across the region. The Cessnock LGA contains several commercial centres that vary in terms of size, function and the population they serve.

The City's hierarchy of centres is defined by planning 'zones'. Development standards relevant to each of these zones help guide the scale, type and form of development that may occur. In addition to the core commercial zones, a B4 Mixed Use Zone is used in and around the Cessnock, Kurri Kurri, Weston and Huntlee town centres and permits a range of flexible uses. However, care must be taken in the application of the B4 Mixed Use Zone, if used too broadly, it has the potential to undermine the core business area.

Cessnock is the LGA's principal centre on the basis of its population size and range of services it provides the local community, including higher-order retailing,

professional services and government administration. The centres at Kurri Kurri and Branxton support Cessnock by providing shopping, business and professional services to their surrounding districts and without duplicating regional services provided in the Cessnock City Centre. Smaller centres throughout the region satisfy the day-to-day needs of local residents and workers who live in the immediate area.

The extent of the B4 Mixed Use Zone around our local centres will be reviewed in line with the commercial centre hierarchy. The zone will be restricted to within the sub-regional centre of Cessnock and local centres, where there is a genuine prospect of relatively intense, integrated retail or business with residential development. Care will be also taken to ensure that development within the B4 Mixed Use Zone at Huntlee does not grow beyond the needs of the immediate community at North Rothbury and to a point where it may undermine the viability of other centres elsewhere in the City.



The extent and zoning of the commercial land will be investigated in line with the commercial centre hierarchy outlined in *Table 1: Centres Hierarchy*.

Table 1: Centres Hierarchy

Classification	Description	Core Zone	LGA Centres
Sub-regional Centre	Principal centre for commercial development in the LGA. Concentration of business, higher order retailing, employment, professional services and civic functions and facilities.	B3	Cessnock (Strategic Centre)
Local Centre	Service the surrounding district with opportunities for shopping and business, including health and professional services.	B2	Kurri Kurri (Strategic Centre) Huntlee (Emerging Centre) Branxton
Neighbourhood Centre	Comprises a small strip or cluster of shops in a mostly residential area to meet the day to day needs for local residents and workers.	B1	Weston Greta Bellbird (Future Emerging Centre) Abermain Pelaw Main Heddon Greta
Village Centre	A neighbourhood centre on a smaller scale. Services available may be limited to a pub or general store.	B1 RU5	Abernethy Wollombi Kearsley Paxton Kitchener Ellalong Millfield Mulbring Nulkaba

Planning Principles

1. Our centres exist in a logical hierarchy that reflects the catchment that they serve.
2. Our centres meet local retail and service needs, without reducing the viability of other centres nearby.
3. Mixed-use development will be supported in centres where there is a genuine prospect of relatively intense, integrated retail or business use with residential development.
4. Development is consistent with the objectives of the land-use zone and consistent with the commercial centre hierarchy.
5. Tourism and visitor related proposals are encouraged in all centres.

Actions

5. Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan–
 - To align the zoning of centres to reflect the centres hierarchy.
 - To ensure permitted development is consistent with the objectives of each zone.
 - Investigate the extent of the B4 Zone at Huntlee, to provide a clear direction as to Huntlee's future role in the centre hierarchy.
 - To ensure the extent of the B3 Commercial Core, B4 Mixed Use and B7 Business Park zones are appropriately utilised in the Cessnock Town Centre.
 - Investigate the extent and value of the B4 Mixed Use Development Zone at Weston.
30. Progress the 'Hydro' Planning Proposal–
 - Apply a new B5 Business Development Zone to the Hydro site south of the expressway and north of the existing Kurri Kurri Industrial Estate.

Planning Priority 12: Our town centres are the focus of local commerce.

Town centres are an important part of our community and provide a diverse range of services and facilities in a central location. Centres that are compact and pedestrian friendly, with clear connections and signage are typically more successful and are more likely to encourage visitation and activity.

Reinforcing the role of the City's centres as the focus of local commerce will reduce retail spend leakage, attract further professional services and encourage a greater presence of the tourist and visitor economy through higher amenity, visitation and improved merchandising and branding.

Emphasis will be placed on policies that encourage, protect and guide commercial development to our established centres. Proposals for new out-of-centre

commercial development will not be supported without a comprehensive economic assessment demonstrating substantial net community benefit and without adverse impacts on existing industrial or commercial land.

Proposals for unique or specialised retail or industry may be supported if the proposal does not conflict with the role of any existing commercial or industrial land elsewhere in the LGA.

Proposals that seek to increase economic activity, activation and amenity within existing centres will be encouraged as a priority, together with regional scale development and complementary uses that perform the role of employment anchors in town centres.

Planning Principles

1. Developments that increase the economic activity, activation, amenity and the use of our centres will be supported.
2. Proposals for out-of-centre commercial development will not be supported without a comprehensive economic assessment demonstrating substantial net community benefit, or evidence that the proposal will not conflict with the role of any existing commercial land elsewhere in the LGA.
3. Developments that take advantage of vacant sites and buildings in our existing centres will be encouraged.
4. Major employment anchors in or near our centres will be encouraged.
5. Complementary land-uses near health and education precincts will be supported.
6. Tertiary education facilities will be encouraged to develop niche specialisations.

Actions

31.	Engage with local business chambers and public organisations to determine how the local planning framework can be modified to support their continued growth and diversification.
32.	Lobby the State and Federal governments to encourage new public organisations, including health and education services to establish in the local government area.
33.	Investigate opportunities to incentivise the creation of shared workspaces in our centres.
34.	Lobby for a university presence that capitalises on the LGA's strengths.
35.	Continue to implement place-making and public domain strategies and continue to apply for funding to support the City's centres.

Planning Priority 13:

Our industrial land is developed in an orderly manner and meets future development needs.

There is approximately 1,250 hectares of zoned industrial land in the Cessnock LGA. The majority of this land, almost 900 hectares, is within the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ). A further 200 hectares is located within the emerging Black Hill Employment Area. At present, both these industrial precincts are largely undeveloped. Cessnock's remaining industrial land is located near Kurri Kurri (approximately 100 hectares), with several smaller industrial precincts located in the Cessnock and Branxton centres (approximately 40 hectares)⁶.

Industrial land to the north of the Kurri Kurri centre and at Black Hill is logistically well-placed to take advantage of three major road networks - the Hunter Expressway (HEX), the New England Highway and the M1. The Black Hill Employment Area is part of a larger tract of employment land extending into the Newcastle and Maitland LGA's and is recognised as a catalyst area in the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan. The employment lands at Black Hill, Kurri Kurri Industrial Estate and the former aluminium smelter site at Kurri Kurri are priority employment areas due to their proximity to these major transport corridors and regional centres. These strong inter-regional links are favourable for freight and logistics, which is an important growth industry for the LGA and source of future employment opportunities⁷.

In comparison to Black Hill and land to the north of Kurri Kurri, the HEZ is significantly constrained by its location, environmental and access issues. As a result of these constraints, much of the HEZ will not witness

any significant level of development and will not be the primary industrial precinct of interest in the future. Other locations in the LGA have become more suitable to the market for attracting industrial activities.

Our City is well positioned to capture a larger share of the regional economy and employment generating development. This is primarily due to the outstanding connectivity between our City and other major centres and ports in the Hunter Region. The City's employment land offers substantial opportunities for economic growth and diversification by leveraging off the strength of major industry, tourism and service-related activities occurring, or anticipated to occur, in the LGA. However, to attract new investment, the focus of employment land must be on those areas that are proximate to the HEX interchange at Main Road, which links to the City's main population axis between Kurri Kurri and Cessnock.

The use and uptake of employment land will be monitored to ensure the adequate provision of land to support ongoing economic growth. To avoid the risk of excessive oversupply, infrastructure and other cost risks, no new proposals for industrial land will be considered until the next major employment lands review. Proposals for unique or specialised retail or industry may be supported if the proposal does not conflict with the role of any existing commercial or industrial land elsewhere in the LGA.

Planning Principles

1. Industrial precincts with immediate access to inter-regional linkages will be supported as a priority.
2. Proposals for additional industrial or commercial land will not be supported without strong economic justification, or evidence the proposal will not conflict with the role of existing commercial or industrial land elsewhere in the LGA.
3. The use and uptake of employment land will be monitored.

Actions

- | | |
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| 4. | Prepare an annual monitoring report– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To record the use and uptake of employment land over the life of the strategy.• To inform when it is necessary to investigate the provision of additional employment land. |
| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate the extent of industrial zoning within the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) in consultation with landowners and State government agencies and rezone significant environmental lands to an appropriate environmental zone. |
| 30. | Progress the 'Hydro' Planning Proposal– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the inclusion of employment land to encourage a range of appropriate industries and specialised retail premises. |

⁶ (SGS Economics and Planning, May 2017)

⁷ (SGS Economics and Planning, May 2017)

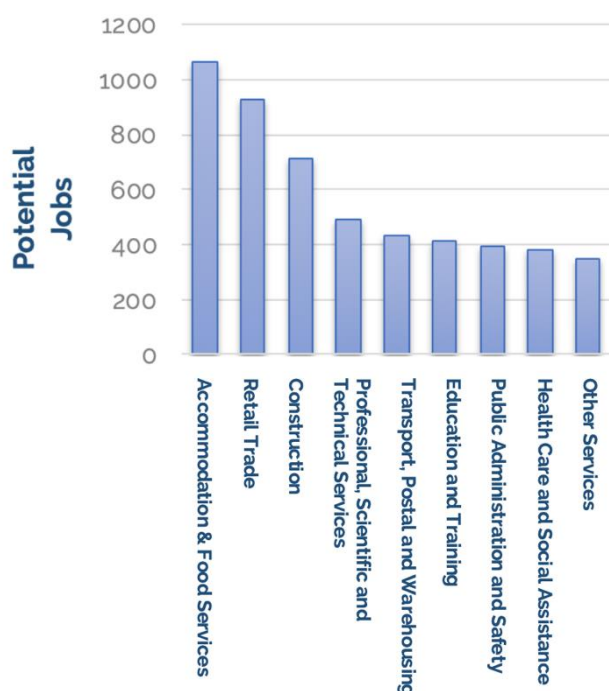
Planning Priority 14:

Our industrial land fosters economic growth, business diversity, and employment opportunities.

The construction of the HEX has fundamentally changed the relationship between our industrial land and access to regional centres in the Hunter Valley and the Port of Newcastle. The HEX has improved our city's connectivity to the New England and Golden highways in the north and the M1 and Pacific Highway in the east. Our city's connectivity to the Greater

Newcastle Metropolitan Area continues to have positive impacts, including improved prospects of attracting new industries and responding to emerging economic sectors. *Figure 7: Cessnock LGA Industry Growth to 2036*⁸ shows the LGA's key growth industries to 2036.⁸

Figure 7: Cessnock LGA Industry Growth to 2036



A considerable amount of our city's zoned industrial land is vacant.⁹ Vacant land has advantages from a planning perspective, as established development is often a significant impediment, preventing change. During this period of change, the planning framework needs to be flexible to accommodate new and emerging industry sectors.

We intend to simplify the number of employment zones that are currently used, while expanding the range of activities that are permissible in each zone. Redefining our employment land and supporting the economic activities that take advantage of our regional connectivity will encourage economic growth, employment, business resilience,

sustainability and diversity. Specialised retail precincts for bulky goods will be encouraged at the Hydro site at Kurri Kurri and to the south of the established centre at Cessnock. These precincts, ideally zoned B5 Business Development, will encourage new retail premises that require larger floor space, and which leverage off the outstanding connectivity from which their location benefits. Major freight movement corridors will be protected to support regional connectivity and land-use for industrial and mixed-use activities

⁸ (SGS Economics and Planning, May 2017)

⁹ (SGS Economics and Planning, May 2017)

Planning Principles

1. Employment generating activities that take advantage of the City's strengths, including its inter-regional connectivity will be supported.
2. Greater land-use diversity in employment zones will be supported.
3. Proposals for new specialised retail precincts are supported by a comprehensive economic assessment that demonstrates substantial net community benefit without adverse impacts on existing industrial or commercial land.
4. Industries that implement sustainable forms of energy generation and supply will be encouraged.
5. Our local planning framework relating to employment zones is simplified.
6. Major freight movement corridors will be protected to support regional connectivity and land-use for industrial and mixed-use activities

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To redefine and simplify the employment zones. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan to– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide clear design and building standards for industrial development. |



Planning Priority 15:

Key infrastructure is leveraged to support economic growth.

Our city contains major regional infrastructure that is capable of generating substantial opportunities for economic growth.

The HEX has fundamentally changed our relationship with Greater Newcastle and centres along the State's East Coast. Accessibility afforded by the HEX has made housing in our region more appealing, with residential areas, like those at Huntlee and Cliftleigh, experiencing significant growth.

Cessnock has several major employment centres near the HEX and M1. The city's proximity to regional infrastructure is attractive to logistic-based industries and other employers seeking transport connectivity. The Hydro site at Kurri Kurri and the emerging Black Hill Employment Area will provide significant employment land with immediate connections to the HEX and M1, respectively. The Kurri Kurri and Branxton town centres will also continue to benefit from their location relative to the HEX and enjoy greater interest and deepening and diversified retail and industrial offerings.

Cessnock Airport is presently the busiest uncontrolled airport in NSW and is relied upon for charter and recreational flights and for emergency purposes. Expanding and upgrading the Airport may attract additional regional and charter aircraft operators as well as providing opportunities for more commercial flights, employment, tourism and other new markets. To ensure there is potential for the airport to grow in capacity and expand operations in the future, development on land surrounding the airport needs to be carefully managed.

TAFE NSW has a strong presence in Cessnock with a campus in the Cessnock centre and a major facility at Loxford. Cessnock TAFE is a major regional employer as well as an important educational facility for our community. Its proximity to the Hunter Valley Vineyard Area, major mining activities and Hunter Valley equestrian industry, presents opportunities for industry specific education. The region would benefit from an expanded tertiary education service, including a university campus.

Council's Traffic and Transport Strategy proposes a number of ambitious road upgrades, improved connections and new routes in and around the LGA that, if achieved, will change how we move around the city. Changes to the road network will also affect existing development, particularly development that is reliant on passing trade. Significant changes to the road network will need to be accompanied by planning and economic studies to evaluate their impact on existing urban areas and development.

The former heavy rail corridors traversing the city, will be preserved for future use, including for passenger services, freight and logistics, cycleways or walking trails. The network of rail corridors will provide opportunities to link towns and villages and destinations across the City with strategic regional locations, including Newcastle. Council is currently preparing a trails strategy, which will help guide development and management of trails across the LGA.



Planning Principles

1. Land-use is consistent with the Hunter Expressway Land-use Strategy and Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan.
2. Land-use in the vicinity of Cessnock Airport is consistent with Council's Airport Strategy.
3. Land-use and infrastructure planning are aligned to maximise the use and capacity of existing infrastructure and development is appropriately sequenced.
4. Kurri Kurri's proximity to the HEX is leveraged to support specialised retail and industrial uses.
5. The economic impact of significant road projects such as by-passes on existing centres and land-uses is evaluated.

Actions

36.	Continue to implement the Cessnock Airport Master Plan.
37.	Continue to implement Council's Economic Development Strategy.
38.	Continue to implement the Cessnock Traffic and Transport Strategy.
39.	Investigate park and ride facilities and commuter parking at public transport nodes and HEX interchanges in collaboration with the RMS.
40.	Investigate amending land-use zones in areas affected by significant changes to the road network.
41.	Preserve the rail corridor for potential future use.
42.	Investigate and plan for the provision of a university campus in the LGA.



Planning Priority 16: Our City embraces technology and innovation.

Technology has brought significant change to our lives and our cities. It provides new opportunities for innovation, transportation, employment and communication. As the world becomes increasingly connected and as technology evolves, Cessnock will embrace the opportunities this presents.

The next generation mobile network roll-out in Australia has commenced. The 5G network offers greater speeds, connectivity and responsiveness and will support a new generation of technologies like cloud hosting and automated vehicles. The 5G network will unlock new business opportunities and provide new ways of communicating and engaging.

Advances in transport technologies and in particular, automated vehicles, will change the way we move around our city. Testing these new technologies has already commenced in our region, with the City of Newcastle one of the first world cities trialling automated vehicles in July 2019.¹⁰ While it may be many years before we see automated vehicles in our town centres, other transport related technologies will provide opportunities to make our city and towns more efficient. Parking overstay detection systems,

intuitive traffic signals, responsive street lighting all represent technologies that can have a significant, positive impact.

The retail sector is the second largest industry sector in Cessnock. In 2016, the retail sector employed 2,291 people, being 10.6% of total employment in the LGA. The popularity of online shopping and changes to traditional shopping formats continue to have an impact on many town centres, including our own. This trend is likely to continue and will drive changes in the ways we shop and interact with traditional town centres. In response, it will be necessary to provide new and innovative ways to attract people to visit and spend money in our town centres.

New technologies and greater connectivity will support new ways for Council to interact with the community. Many transactions between Council and the community will be increasingly carried out through Council's website. Similarly, these technologies may also provide new ways of engaging, collaborating and working with our community, which are more inclusive, transparent and responsive.

Planning Principles

1. New technologies and innovations that lead to greater efficiencies and experiences are supported.
2. New technologies that support existing businesses and attract new technology and businesses are encouraged.
3. Our centres will embrace accessibility and mobility technologies.
4. We will employ technology and innovation techniques to engage the community.
5. We will embrace new technologies to support greater engagement, transparency and responsiveness of planning decision.

Actions

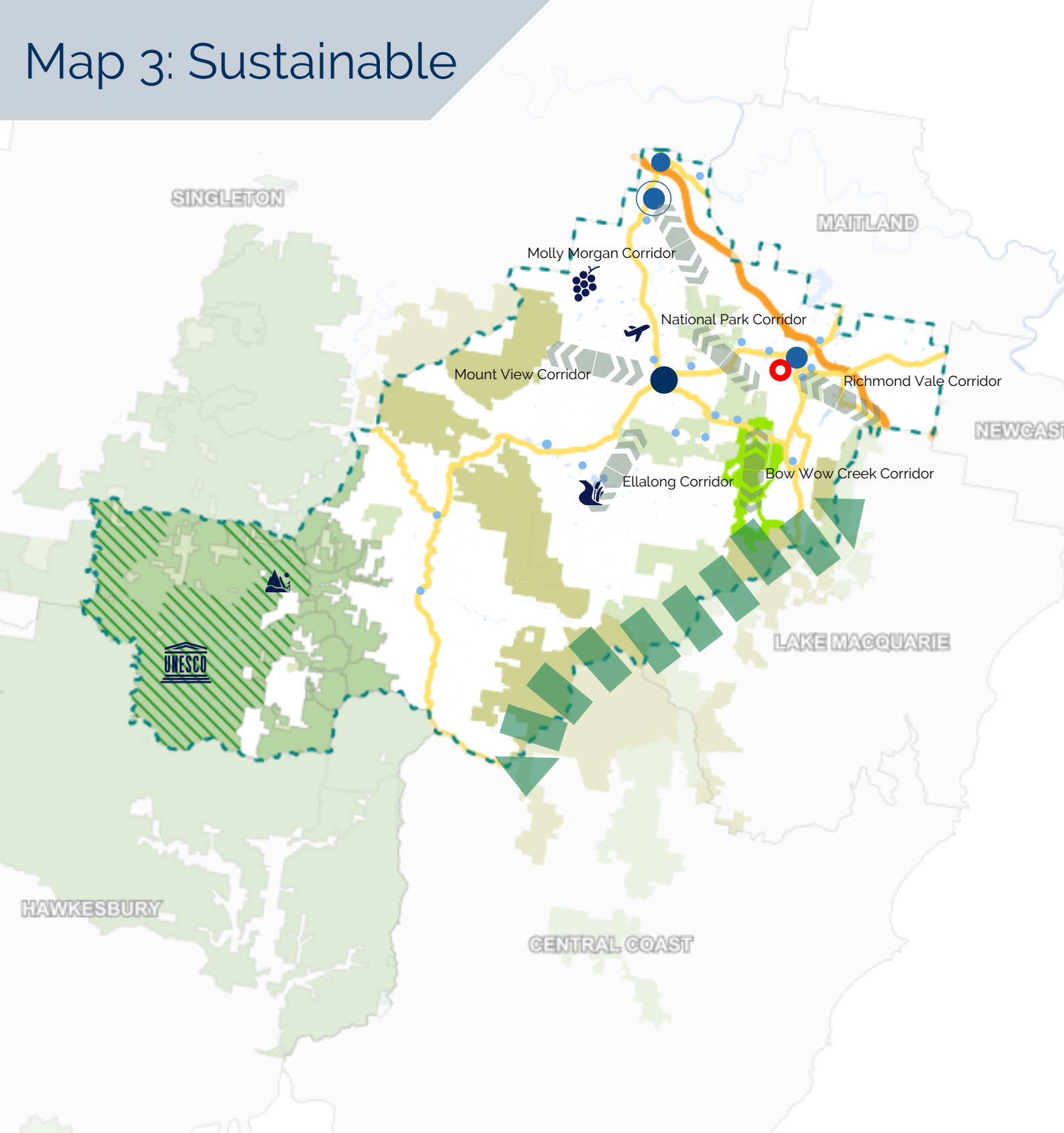
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| 43. | Prepare a Smart City Strategy. |
| 44. | Lobby for broader internet and mobile coverage. |

¹⁰ <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Council/News/Latest-News/City-wheels-out-first-driverless-vehicle>



Sustainable

Map 3: Sustainable



— Hunter Expressway

— Regional Roads

■ State Forrest

■ National Park

● Sub-regional Centre

● Local Centre

● Emerging Local Centre

● Town

● Villages

✈ Airport

🌊 Ellalong Lagoon

🏛 UNESCO Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

🍇 Hunter Valley Wine Country

🏔 Mount Yengo

■ Bow Wow Creek Gorge

■ Creeks & Waterways

■ Wilderness Declared Area

➤ Regional Biodiversity Corridor
Watagans - Stockton Link

➤ OEHLandscape Conservation
Corridors

● Hunter Economic Zone

● World Heritage Area

Planning Priority 17:

Our lands of environmental value are protected and enhanced.

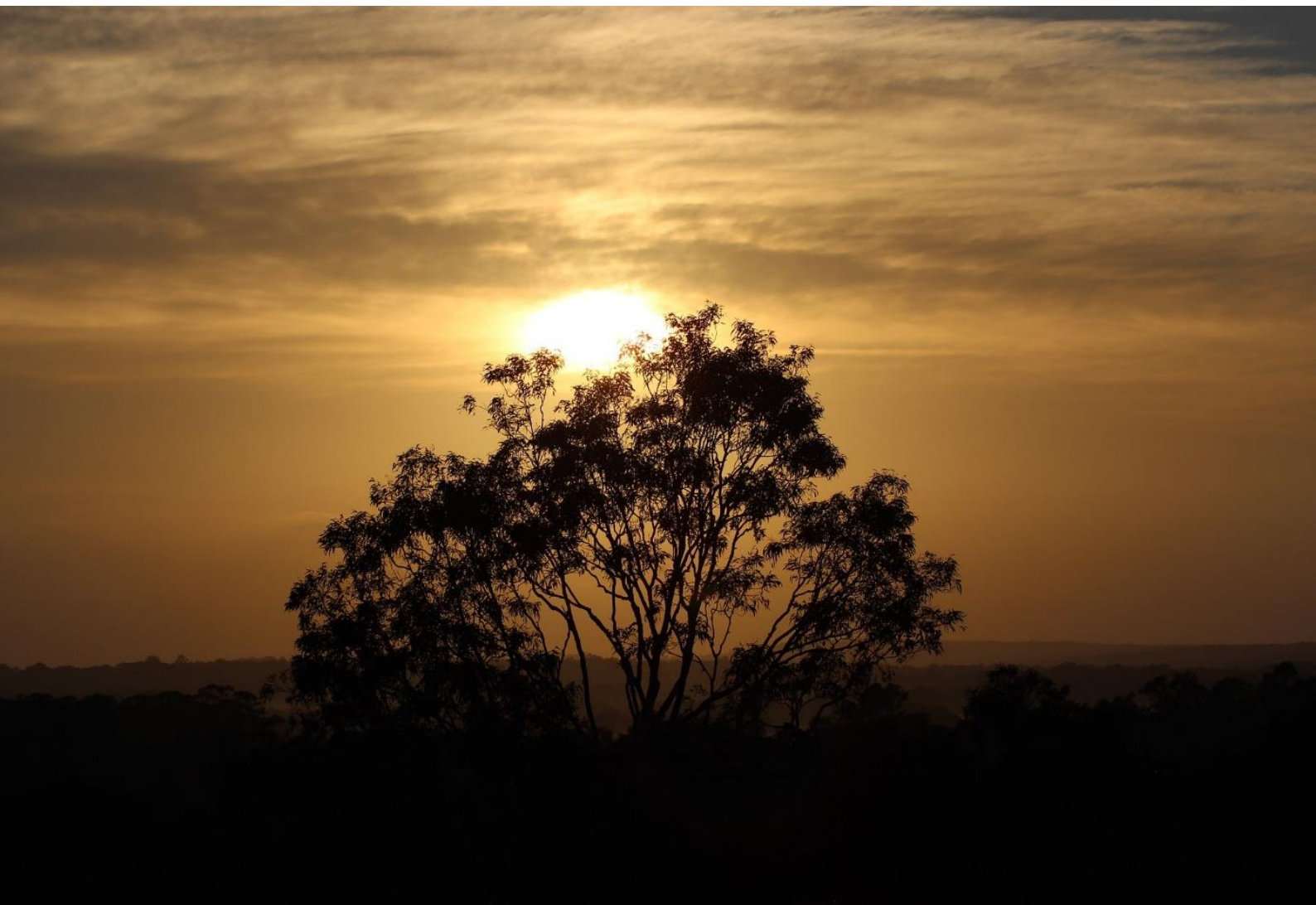
Cessnock has lands of high environmental value that are currently zoned for rural, industrial or residential development. These lands appear to have been primarily used for either environmental conservation or environmental management purposes, but this is not reflected in the current zoning. On the other hand, there are areas of the LGA that are environmentally zoned, but the basis for the zoning is unclear. An evidence based, consistent and consultative approach to zoning our environmental lands is needed.

The Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) is an example of an area of high environmental value that is zoned for industrial purposes. It comprises almost 900 hectares of heavily vegetated land. As discussed in Planning Priority 14 of this strategy, the significant environmental qualities of the HEZ means that it will not be the principal industrial precinct of interest in the LGA in the future. Previous ecological surveys of the HEZ have identified suitable habitat for the critically endangered Regent Honeyeater

(*Anthochaera Phrygia*). The area also contains a number of threatened ecological communities including Lower Hunter Spotted Gum variants. In consultation with the landowners, Council will seek to rezone the environmentally significant areas of the HEZ to an appropriate environmental zone.

Council has not undertaken any significant review of the environmental zones since the new zones were introduced in 2011. The first step to protecting our environmental lands is undertaking a study to identify those lands of high environmental value.

The application of environmental zones will also be reviewed, and Council will establish a clear process for identifying the principles and criteria for environmental zoning. This process will include extensive consultation with the local community and the relevant government agencies.



Planning Principles

1. Natural assets and lands of environmental value are identified and protected.
2. Areas of high biodiversity are identified and conserved.
3. Development at the interface of our state forests and national parks has minimal environmental impact.
4. Areas of high environmental value are protected from encroachment by incompatible land-uses.
5. Environmental lands will be protected by appropriate environmental zones.
6. The planting of native vegetation in streets, parks and other passive open space will be encouraged.
7. Future masterplans for our town centres include green infrastructure outcomes of the NSW Greener Places Policy and extensive areas of native vegetation.
8. Developments that are likely to result in a Serious and Irreversible Impact (SII) on biodiversity values will not be supported.

Actions

- | | |
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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate the use of environmental zones. • To investigate the use of buffer zones between areas of high environmental value (e.g. National Parks) and urban areas. • To ensure the land-uses permissible in each of the environmental zones are consistent with the objectives of the zone. • To investigate the extent of industrial zoning within the Hunter Economic Zone in consultation with landowners and state government agencies, with the aim of rezoning significant environmental areas to an appropriate environmental zone. • To examine the urban release areas and rezone riparian corridors to an appropriate environmental zone. • To investigate the introduction of planning controls to reduce land-use conflict for lands of high environmental value. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To update the trees and vegetation management provisions. • To review and update the tree species list to ensure that it contains primarily local native species. • To introduce effective buffer distances to environmental lands from incompatible development. |
| 22. | Undertake an Environmental Lands Study. |
| 45. | Prepare an Environmental Strategy. |
| 46. | Investigate if it is appropriate to introduce a sensitive land map with a clause that requires Council to consider the environmental qualities of the land in any planning proposals or development applications. |
| 47. | Engage with Austar, Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other major land holders about the future management of their lands and to reflect the environmental value of these lands in the Environmental Lands Study. |
| 48. | Enhance development and implement green and blue grids within new and existing urban areas. |

Planning Priority 18:

Our areas of biodiversity and biodiversity corridors are enhanced and protected.

The Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan defines biodiversity as:

'the variety of life on earth – life forms, the different plants, animals and microorganisms, the genes they contain and the ecosystems they form. It is usually considered at three levels: genetic diversity, species diversity and ecosystem diversity'.

Conserving biodiversity is a critical part of preserving ecosystem services. All living creatures, including humans, depend on ecosystem services for the necessities of life. Ecosystem services are the benefits provided to living creatures (including humans) through the transformation of resources into essential goods and services e.g. clean air, water,

food, fibres for clothing¹¹. Ecosystem services are produced by the functions that occur in healthy ecosystems and are critical to our ongoing survival.

Biodiversity corridors play an extremely important role in the maintenance of biodiversity as habitat loss and fragmentation are the two main drivers of the continuing decline of biodiversity across the landscape.¹² Biodiversity corridors are areas of usually native vegetation, that link habitat. The benefits of these corridors are:

- ecological processes for plants (e.g. pollination and seed dispersal);
- wildlife movement (e.g. migration for breeding and feeding);
- allowing species to migrate to escape rising temperatures/habitat changes resulting from climate change;
- reducing the risk of local species extinction and inbreeding;
- reducing the incidence of disease;
- maintaining species diversity;
- ecosystem services; and
- scenic and recreational benefits to the community.

Cessnock has a number of previously identified biodiversity corridors. The *Cessnock Biodiversity Management Plan* prepared by the NSW OEH identifies six landscape conservation corridors (refer to **Map 3: Sustainable**). These corridors connect priority conservation areas across the region. The Plan recommends rehabilitation and revegetation to strengthen and support the conservation of these areas. The Hunter Regional Plan identifies one significant regional biodiversity corridor: the 'Watagan to Stockton Link that runs along our south eastern boundary. The proposed environmental lands study may identify additional high value biodiversity corridors.



¹¹ Costanza R, d'Arge R, De Groot R, Farber S, Grasso M, Hannon B, Limburg K, Naeem S, O'Neill RV, Paruelo J, Raskin RG, Sutton P and Vandenbelt M (1997). 'The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital'. Nature 387:253–260. Department of Planning and Environment's 2017 NSW population, household and dwelling projections for the Cessnock LGA.

¹² Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), 2004. Wildlife Corridors.

Planning Principles

1. Lands of high biodiversity value are identified and conserved.
2. Significant biodiversity corridors will be identified and protected.
3. Regeneration and revegetation of identified biodiversity corridors will be encouraged.
4. The impacts that planning proposals or development applications have on biodiversity corridors are considered early in the planning process.
5. Development in biodiversity corridors is not intensified and development that would sever a biodiversity corridor will not be supported.

Actions	
5.	Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To rezone the Crown Land within the National Park Corridor to an appropriate Environmental Zone in consultation with the NSW State Government.
16.	Prepare a Greener Places, Urban Forest Policy and Street Tree Policy.
44.	Prepare an Environmental Strategy.
49.	Continue to implement actions from Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2014.
50.	Investigate planning mechanisms to provide greater protection for areas of high biodiversity and biodiversity corridors.
51.	Investigate the possibility of Council making strategic land purchases for the purpose of establishing Biodiversity Stewardship Sites*.
52.	Work collaboratively with stakeholders to identify lands of high biodiversity and strategies to protect and enhance these areas.
53.	Work with the state government to ensure the long-term protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors e.g. the Watagan to Stockton Link through strategic bio-certification.
54.	Continue to implement the Cessnock Biodiversity Management Plan.
55.	Investigate funding and grant opportunities to support environmental improvement works.

* Biodiversity stewardship site means land that is designated by a biodiversity stewardship agreement to be a biodiversity stewardship site for the purposes of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.



Planning Priority 19:

Our waterways are healthy, and water quality and water security are improved.

A number of significant waterbodies are located within the Cessnock LGA including Ellalong Lagoon, Mill Swamp, Wentworth Swamp, Testers Hollow and John Browns Lagoon/Colliery Dam. These waterbodies have a 50m buffer around them currently and are protected by an environmental conservation zone, to minimise impacts from surrounding land-uses. Council will review this zoning as part of the environmental zones review to ensure that the zone, location and extent are effective and continue to protect these important local assets.

In addition to these waterbodies, Cessnock contains numerous waterways. As a result of the heavily vegetated nature of the southern and eastern parts of our area, many of the creeks in these areas are in excellent condition. They exhibit good water quality and provide valuable habitat for native aquatic species. The creeks located on the flat, cleared areas and those that run through urban areas are generally in poorer condition. This is a result of human activities like clearing riparian zones, dumping rubbish, creating polluted runoff, erosion and sedimentation. We will need to undertake some waterways' health assessments to establish baseline conditions so that we can put strategies in place to improve water quality and monitor our success over time.

Healthy waterways provide many environmental, economic, aesthetic and social benefits to

communities. Local waterways provide Cessnock with many benefits, including:

- providing habitat for aquatic species;
- drinking water for fauna and livestock;
- irrigation for agriculture;
- habitat for terrestrial fauna (on the banks);
- recreational opportunities for humans e.g. fishing, kayaking etc; and
- conveying stormwater away from residential areas.

Water security is anticipated to become critical as the impacts of climate change become more pronounced. Water security is defined as

*"the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability."*¹³

Cessnock does not form part of a NSW drinking water catchment and the responsibility of providing water resides primarily with Hunter Water. Hunter Water supplies potable water and treats wastewater for most residences in the Hunter. However, Council also has a role to play in improving water security and water quality.

Planning Principles

1. Important waterways are identified and protected.
2. Significant riparian corridors and water bodies are protected and revegetated in accordance with [NSW Water: Guidelines for riparian corridors on waterfront land](#).
3. The amount of waste entering our waterways is reduced.
4. Regeneration of waterways is encouraged.
5. Water saving measures encouraged.
6. Increasing onsite water retention and reuse is encouraged.
7. The naturalisation of stormwater systems is achieved.

¹³ UN-Water (2013), Water Security & the Global Water Agenda – A UN-Water Analytical Brief

Actions	
5.	Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure significant riparian corridors and water bodies are zoned to an appropriate environmental zone.
6.	Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To Introduce Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) controls. To review stormwater management standards.
22.	Prepare an Environmental Lands Study.
44.	Prepare an Environmental Strategy.
56.	Prepare a policy on the protection of watercourses and drainage channels.
57.	Investigate the zoning of lots that contain significant waterbodies to ensure the type, location and extent of zoning is appropriate.
58.	Apply for grant funding for projects that improve water security, water quality and the condition of urban waterways.
59.	Implement a water-sampling program to establish a base line for monitoring the success of the Environmental Strategy.
60.	Work with Hunter Water to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> naturalise and potentially increase capacity of water and drainage channels throughout the LGA subject to flooding assessments; and undertake specific water saving and improvement initiatives related to recycled water usage and integrated water management solutions.



Planning Priority 20:

Our community adapts to climate change and builds climate resilience.

Cessnock is susceptible to a variety of natural hazards. The region is predicted to experience increases in the severity and frequency of storms, floods, heatwaves, bushfires and drought as a result of climate change.

In Australia, heatwaves are responsible for more deaths than any other natural hazard. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, very young or those with pre-existing medical conditions are most at risk during these events. Heatwaves are also a burden on the economy, they increase household costs through cooling and cause stress to our natural environments and flora and fauna.

Bushfire behaviour too is predicted to be intensified by climate change. The Hunter Region is projected to experience an increase in average and severe bushfire weather in summer and spring¹⁴ in the future. The length of the bushfire season is also increasing which is reducing the time available for preventative works such as hazard reduction burns. As we have witnessed, bushfires can result in loss of life, property and long-term economic and environmental impacts. During the extreme 2019-2020 bushfire season, severe bushfires ravaged the east coast of Australia

including parts of our community. This recent disaster has highlighted the need for government to re-examine planning mechanisms to further minimise the risk to lives and property posed by natural hazards. To this end, Council acknowledges the important role that traditional Aboriginal land management practices have played in shaping our natural environment and the important role they can play in the future.

Our community and our environment will be better able to cope with the impacts of climate change if we actively build resilience. Resilience to natural hazards ensures that people, property, infrastructure, the economy and the environment can cope with shock and stresses these events create, while also allowing communities to recover more quickly.

The NSW Government, through the Climate Change Policy Framework has set NSW the target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. This aspirational target has also been reiterated within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan. Cessnock Council is committed to preparing a Climate Change Policy that is consistent with State policy.

Planning Principles

1. The impact of climate change and natural hazards is considered at all stages in the planning process.
2. Climate change adaptation is promoted and considered in land-use planning.
3. Embrace traditional Aboriginal land management practices.
4. Resource consumption and waste generation is reduced.
5. Renewable energy generation is encouraged in suitable locations.
6. Our urban areas are compact.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that the zoning and land-uses for land that is significantly affected by natural hazards (e.g. flooding and bushfire) reflect the risk.• To identify lands that may be suitable for renewable energy projects and reflect that through zoning.• To identify opportunities for urban agriculture and other measures to improve food security. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To review development on flood prone land provisions, the Flood Risk Management Policy and existing flood studies to include climate change considerations.• To review development controls to ensure that they build resilience and that development is appropriate for the level of risk.• To prepare development controls to improve building performance and include sustainable development initiatives.• To review planning controls to encourage investment in renewable energy.• To include land-use policies that reduce resource consumption and minimise waste generation. |
| 61. | Prepare a Climate Change Policy and Strategy. |

¹⁴ NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (2014), Hunter Climate change snapshot.

Planning Priority 21:

Developments minimise environmental impacts and respond to site environmental characteristics and natural hazards.

It is becoming increasingly important for our lifestyles and buildings to respond to the environment. As our population grows, we need to ensure there are adequate resources available to maintain our lifestyle including energy, water and waste management.

We need to be creating buildings and developments that minimise impact on the environment and that are appropriately designed and located to respond to natural hazards. Development, including the use, the intensity and the design of buildings needs to respond to the unique characteristics of a site.

Our shared future will require that we work with less as demand on limited resources rises in line with an increasing global population. Cities and towns have a very important role to play in our sustainable future. One of the most important principles is to support compact towns and cities by encouraging more development within our existing urban footprint. This can be achieved through infill development, higher density residential forms and resisting rezoning additional greenfield residential land that leads to sprawl.

Compact cities minimise the cost of infrastructure and maximise its capacity. More ratepayers in a

smaller catchment lowers the ongoing cost of providing and maintaining infrastructure resulting in more funding available for community facilities and other services. Compact towns and cities reduce transportation costs, support public transport and encourage walking and cycling.

The design of urban areas and buildings needs to consider the use of water, energy and building materials. The smart design of buildings and material choices can reduce the amount of energy needed for heating and cooling and reduce the demand for water. This has benefits not only for the environment but also economic benefits to property owners. Buildings and public spaces should be designed to maximise the efficient use of water, minimise the use of energy and reduce the lifecycle cost of building materials.



Planning Principles

1. The sustainable use of resources is encouraged.
2. Technology that assists in the sustainable use of our resources is embraced.
3. Our urban areas are compact.
4. Quality sustainable design outcomes are encouraged.
5. Opportunities to capture and reuse stormwater and wastewater are maximised.
6. The intensification of land-uses on sites with significant natural hazards will generally not be supported.
7. Development in areas of unacceptable bushfire risk will be discouraged.
8. Development will continue to be assessed in accordance with the government's *Planning for Bushfire Protection* guidelines.
9. Urban release areas and sensitive land-uses such as aged-care facilities, childcare centres and hospitals will be located above the probable maximum flood (PMF) level.
10. Mine subsidence will continue to be considered in the rezoning and development of land.
11. Rehabilitation of degraded and contaminated land is managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and in consultation with the appropriate government agencies.

Actions

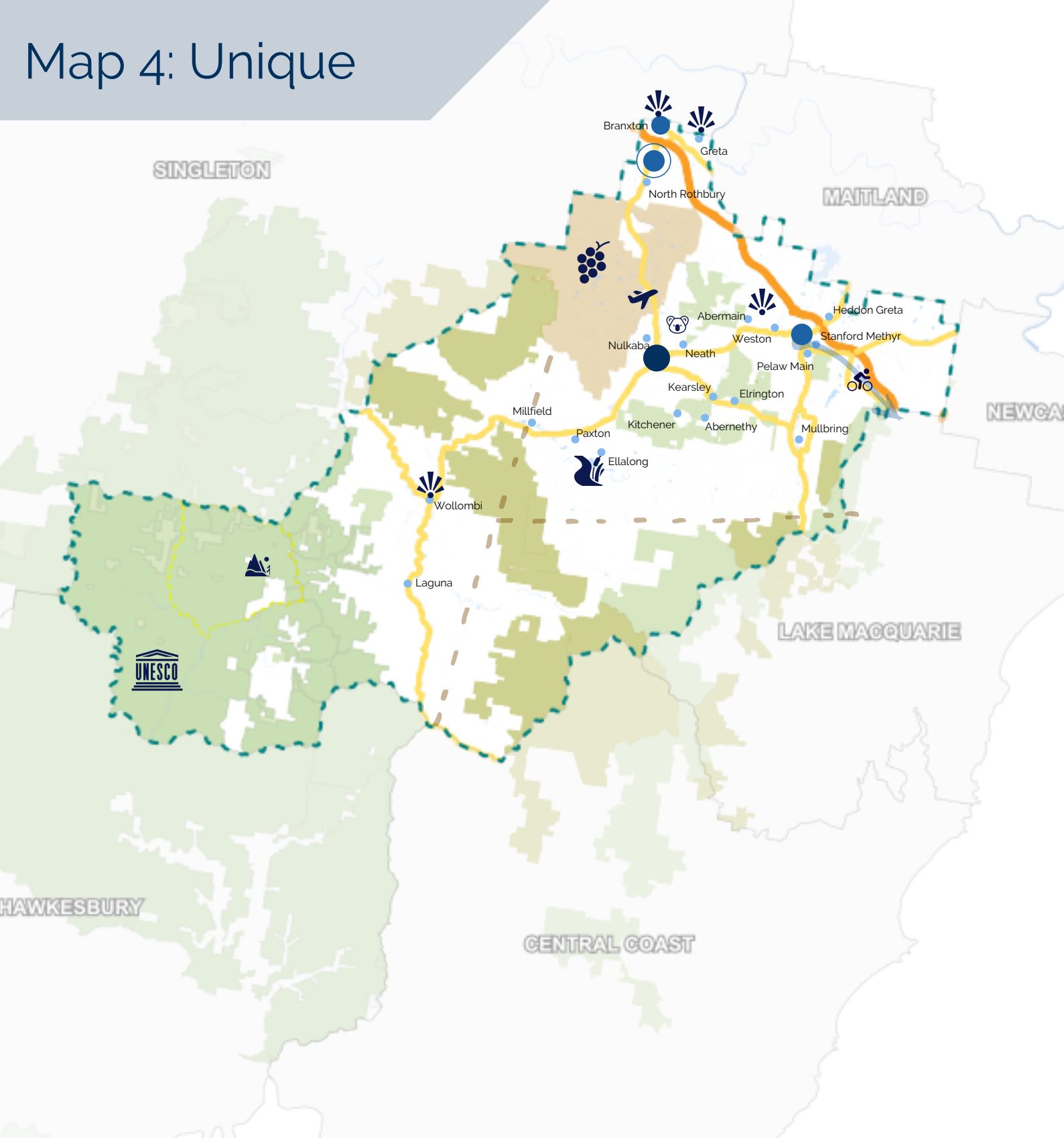
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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the zoning and land-uses for land that is significantly affected by natural hazards (e.g. flooding and bushfire) reflect the risk. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare development controls to improve building performance and include sustainable development initiatives. • To include best practice policies for subdivision and development. • To include controls relating to rehabilitation and remediation of degraded land. |
| 44. | Prepare an Environmental Strategy. |
| 62. | Prepare a Green Building Policy. |





Unique

Map 4: Unique



— Hunter Expressway

— Regional Roads

■ State Forrest

■ National Park

● Sub-regional Centre

● Local Centre

○ Emerging Local Centre

● Town

● Villages

✈ Airport

🌊 Ellalong Lagoon

🏛 Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area

🍇 Hunter Valley Wine Country

🏔 Mount Yengo

🌿 Heritage Conservation Areas

➡ Richmond Vale Rail Trail

🚴 Active Transport Connections

🐾 Hunter Valley Zoo

● World Heritage Area

— Finchley Reserve

— Great North Walk

Planning Priority 22: Our rural landscape is retained and enhanced.

Cessnock's landscape is characterised by scenic ranges, internationally significant national parks and vineyards, and extensive areas of rural landscape. These rural areas, mountain ranges and environmental lands are distinctive features and integral to the identity of the area.

The aesthetic value and viability of agricultural landscapes needs to be protected from expanding urban areas and from encroachment of incompatible land-uses. The right to farm and the continuation of existing, and potential future rural uses must be protected and encouraged.

Separation of rural and environmental land from urban areas can be achieved in various ways. Policies to promote compact urban centres through infill and higher density development reduce the amount of urban sprawl, physical buffers such as vegetation corridors could be created, or regulated buffers could be imposed such as transition zones.

The Hunter Regional Plan nominates Cessnock for significant population growth and development. This makes it critical that we have a clear direction for the preservation and protection of our rural landscape and amenity. Establishing a clear position on protecting rural and environmental amenity will assist Council in mitigating the impact of population growth.

Planning Principles

1. Scenic view corridors of the region are protected and enhanced.
2. The rural character and amenity of the land is preserved and enhanced.
3. The scenic rural landscape of the Vineyards District is preserved.
4. Dwellings located in rural areas and areas of high environmental value are sited and designed to minimise the visual impact.
5. Dwelling entitlement provisions reflect the rural amenity.
6. The interface between urban areas and rural land or environmental land is managed to minimise visual impacts.
7. Visually significant views, topography and tree-lined local road corridors are preserved.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate options to add scenic protection controls. • To review the minimum lot sizes in rural and environmental zones. • To ensure permitted land-uses are compatible with the rural character and amenity of the Vineyards District. • To remove reference to the R5 Large Lot Residential zone in Clause 4.2A of the LEP. • To update the LEP Dwelling Entitlements Map to include parcels of land that have been identified as having an entitlement. • To investigate the viability of the RU6 Transition zone or a local provision to provide buffers. • To investigate local policy relating to dwelling entitlements. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include development controls that minimise the impact of urban development at the rural – urban interface. • Identify visually significant views and tree-lined local roads and provide controls to protect these assets. |
| 28. | Prepare a Rural Lands Policy. |

Planning Priority 23:

The scenic and rural landscape of our Vineyards District is preserved.

The Vineyards District is characterised by gently undulating hills surrounding central and northern Pokolbin to the more elevated and rugged terrain of the Broken Back Range. Narrow, tree-lined, rural roads, sparse and unimposing rural development, together with regular and unobstructed views across the viticultural landscape are all important elements that have helped shape the widely recognised character and amenity of the Vineyards District.

The scenic rural character of the Vineyards District contributes significantly to the success of the tourism industry and is an important component of the overall experience sought after by tourists. However, the balance between supporting the growth of the tourism industry and preserving the scenic rural landscape qualities that underpin the attraction for tourism remains a significant and ongoing planning challenge.

In the future, the natural scenic amenity and rural character of the Vineyards District may need to be protected and, in some areas, restored to sustain the Hunter Valley Vineyard experience and support the tourism industry. Encroachment of urban and non-agricultural development will need to be carefully managed to ensure the scenic rural landscape that underpins tourism, is preserved for future generations. The local planning framework will need to establish clear policy outcomes for this important area.

Enhancements to public infrastructure in the Vineyards District, including local roads, trails and recreation and community facilities will need to be sympathetic to the overall rural and viticultural amenity and scenic rural landscape. Wherever possible, native vegetation will be preserved in road corridors to maintain the rural character.

Planning Principles

1. The rural character and scenic amenity of the land is preserved and, where possible, enhanced.
2. Development in the Vineyards District is consistent with the findings of the Vineyards District Project.
3. Visually significant views and tree-lined local road corridors will be preserved.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure the zone applied to the Cessnock LGA Vineyards District and the land-uses it nominates as permissible are compatible with the rural character and amenity of the area. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure an appropriate level of protection for each 'character area' with the Vineyards District.• To ensure the 'Significant Areas' map provides sufficient protection to valuable landscape elements. |



Planning Priority 24: Our Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected and celebrated.

Cessnock has a rich Aboriginal history and a strong indigenous cultural identity. Our Aboriginal cultural heritage is diverse and includes places, art, artefacts, burials, grinding grooves, potential archaeological deposits, scarred trees, stone arrangements, and ceremonial locations. Some of these items and places are highly valued and of great significance to the local Aboriginal people.

Council is committed to the protection and conservation of our Aboriginal cultural heritage values. In order to achieve this, Council has identified the need to prepare a Heritage Strategy that aims to recognise, protect, enhance and promote heritage items and heritage conservation areas. Council is also

committed to undertaking Phase 2 of the Aboriginal Heritage Study, which will seek to identify Aboriginal places, objects and sites that are of significance to the Aboriginal community.

There are around European 230 heritage items, four heritage conservation areas and one Aboriginal place of heritage significance already listed in the LEP. These original listings were based on the Cessnock Heritage Study, which was originally undertaken in 1994 and reviewed in 2017. Council acknowledges the need to review and update the LEP due to the time elapsed since the last comprehensive review.

Planning Principles

1. The heritage significance of Aboriginal places, objects and sites is identified, protected and celebrated.
2. Our city embraces its indigenous heritage and culture.
3. Aboriginal cultural heritage is respected as a fundamental part of our identity.
4. Council's heritage planning documentation relating to Aboriginal cultural heritage is clear, accurate and up to date.
5. There is a strong, collaborative relationship between Council and the local Aboriginal people and groups.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environment Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure heritage items and heritage conservation areas are appropriately identified and protected; • To consider how Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural landscapes can be protected; and • To recognise heritage as it relates to the character of an area -considering ways to identify clusters of places and items which contribute to the significant character of a place. |
| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include controls for development in heritage conservation areas. |
| 63. | Prepare an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Strategy in consultation with local Aboriginal people and groups. |
| 64. | Undertake Phase 2 of the Aboriginal Heritage Study. |
| 65. | Continue to apply for funding to continue the local heritage small grants program and heritage advisory service. |

Planning Priority 25: Heritage-based tourism is facilitated and promoted.

Cessnock has a rich and diverse history in our villages and in the landscape, including Aboriginal cultural heritage, convict history, mining heritage and European heritage. This history is an important part of our identity and the character of our towns.

Wollombi is well known for heritage tourism and many other villages could further capitalise on heritage tourism including Branxton, Greta and Kurri Kurri. A heightened appreciation and promotion of heritage items has the potential to significantly increase the contribution that heritage tourism make to the local economy.

It is important that heritage items are visited by locals and tourists to increase the enjoyment and

knowledge of heritage items and to improve building conservation. Maintenance is more likely to be undertaken on a heritage item that is occupied than an abandoned one.

Improving the information available on heritage items and ensuring ongoing protection of sites through maintenance will ensure that heritage will continue to contribute to our economy and character of our towns.

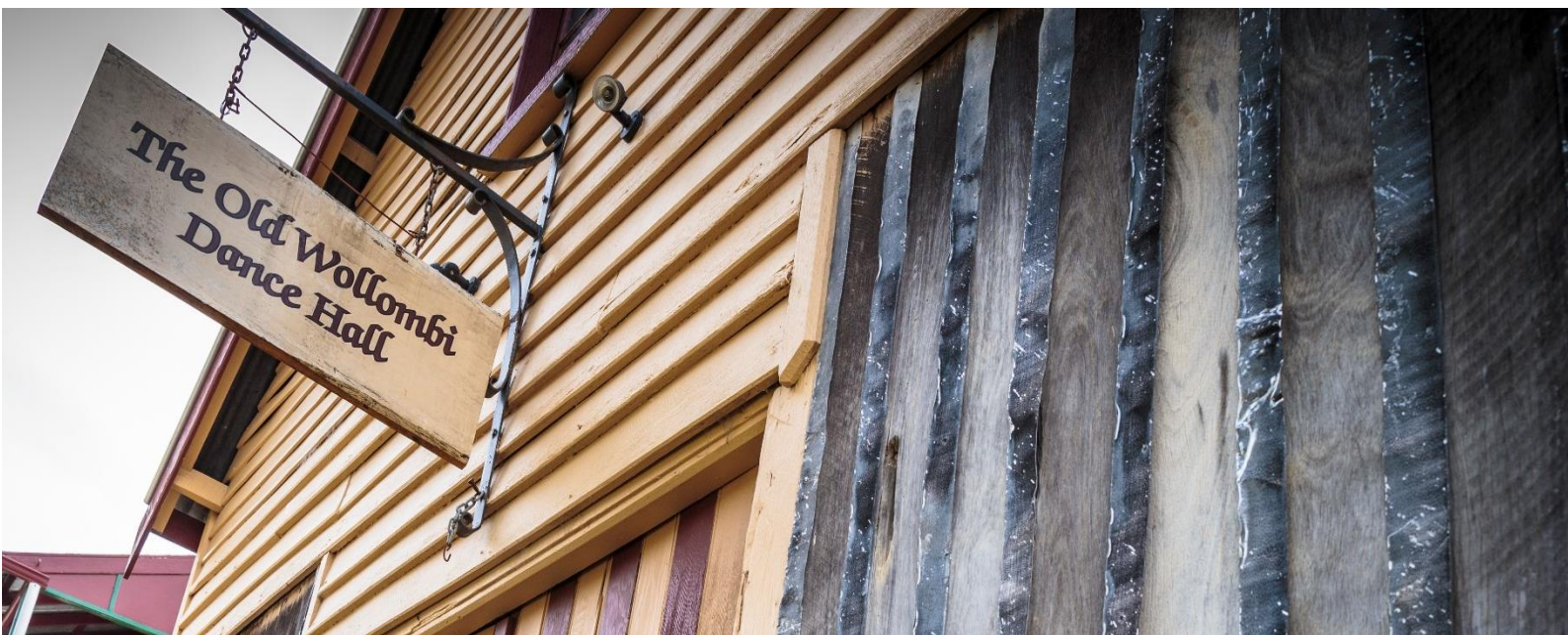
Council aims to improve planning controls to encourage the restoration and adaptive reuse of heritage items to ensure their preservation and our enjoyment of them into the future.

Planning Principles

1. Places of heritage significance are identified and protected.
2. Public heritage items are accessible.
3. Heritage items are adaptively reused.
4. The heritage significance of items and areas is recognised and celebrated.
5. Maintenance of heritage items is encouraged.

Actions

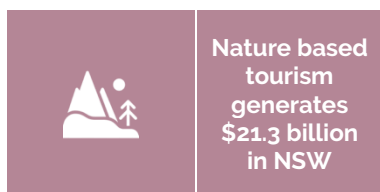
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| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide guidance on developing heritage items and in conservation areas, including provisions for adaptive reuse and disabled access. |
| 66. | Prepare a Heritage Strategy– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To recognise, protect, enhance and promote heritage items and heritage conservations areas.• To promote key heritage attractions.• Investigate the merit of a heritage interpretation plan to provide guidance and strategies on communicating the significance of heritage items and heritage conservation areas to the local community and visitors. |
| 67. | Continue to apply for funding to continue the Cessnock City Council Local Heritage Small Grants program and heritage advisory service. |



Planning Priority 26:

Nature-based and recreational tourism is facilitated and promoted.

Cessnock is home to significant mountain ranges, National Parks, expansive bushland, vast rural landscapes and quality recreational facilities. These assets provide a range of tourist opportunities. Nature and recreational tourism also has the added benefit of improved health and wellbeing, both for residents and visitors.



Recreational linkages, such as the Richmond Vale Rail Trail and the Great North Walk provide linkages between Cessnock and surrounding areas. There is potential to expand the recreational linkages with a linkage through the vineyards district. It is important that linkages such as these be promoted to encourage active enjoyment and greater use. To maximise the benefit of these linkages, connections should be provided to towns and villages where possible to encourage visitors to into our centres and

to assist our region, capitalise on the economic benefits of tourism.

The landscape, scenery and rural land provides opportunities for eco-tourism and agri-tourism to grow. Given the strong reliance these uses have on the rural landscape, natural environment and agricultural land, it is imperative that they occur in suitable locations, maintain the rural amenity and environmental values and are appropriate to natural hazards. The planning framework needs to ensure that these uses can occur in appropriate locations while retaining the rural amenity and significant agricultural and environmental values.

Our area has renowned sporting facilities such as golf courses, mountain-biking tracks, hiking trails and football facilities that have hosted international events. Sports tourism provides an opportunity to attract an additional tourism market and to capitalise on expenditure that brings. Adequate supporting infrastructure needs to be provided to continue to attract these events and encourage visitors to extend their stay.

Planning Principles

1. Sustainable, active, nature-based recreation links are encouraged.
2. Our regional recreation facilities are promoted and enhanced.
3. National Parks, State Forests, open spaces and recreational destinations are accessible and appropriate facilities are provided.
4. Environmental values and the scenic rural landscapes are maintained.
5. Infrastructure for nature-based and recreational tourism is appropriately funded.
6. Recreational linkages are connected to towns and villages.
7. Eco-tourism promotes environmental significance of the region and is sensitively designed.
8. Agri-tourism supports and promotes the viability of agriculture as the primary use.

Actions

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| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that eco-tourism is sensitively designed and minimises environmental impact. To ensure that agri-based tourism supports the viability of agriculture. |
| 7. | Review Council's development contribution framework– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure that community infrastructure needed to support nature based and recreational tourism is appropriately funded. |
| 15. | Investigate options for a cycleway and trail through the Vineyard District. |
| 68. | Promote the Watagan and Yengo National Parks as destinations of natural and Aboriginal significance. |
| 69. | Prioritise the implementation of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. |

Planning Priority 27:

Our region is internationally acclaimed for its events, festivals and hosting functions.

Our region is a significant entertainment node and has hosted many internationally acclaimed events and festivals. Shows at the Cessnock Performing Arts Centre, concerts in the vineyards, cultural events, local festivals, golfing events, weddings, sporting events and markets are just a few of the events our area has hosted. These events, festivals and functions are a significant generator of local pride, tourism and revenue for the local and regional community.

To host acclaimed events appropriate supporting infrastructure such as transport, accommodation, signage and food and drink services is also needed. Currently, patrons from outside of the area travel to the event on either a designated function bus or stay overnight, typically in the vineyards district. Town centres have capacity to support events and festivals and encourage visitors to extend their stay. Infrastructure, such as transport, from town centres to key event destinations should be improved to further encourage the connection between town centres and event destinations.

Significant events, which often host large numbers of people, need to be appropriately located. This includes being easily accessible, appropriate to the hazards of the site, such as flooding and bushfire, and having minimal impact on surrounding land-uses. It is

important to identify and protect areas with a strong tradition of events, or areas that are suitable for events to provide certainty to event organisers and support the concept of entertainment hubs, which can be fully resourced and internationally recognised.



To ensure the region's international reputation is maintained we must continue to support events and ensure they are undertaken in appropriate locations and are provided with the necessary services and infrastructure, including public transport, active transport and road networks.

Planning Principles

1. Events are appropriately located and managed.
2. Areas with strong traditions of live music and performance are identified and protected.
3. Venues and events are accessible for people of all abilities.
4. Visitors to events are encouraged to visit town centres.
5. Infrastructure for events is appropriately funded.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure major events are permitted in strategic centres and other suitable locations.• To enable land-uses that support events, such as tourist and visitor accommodation, function centres, to be permissible in strategic centres and other suitable locations. |
| 70. | Continue to undertake the Vineyards District project. |

Planning Priority 28:

Our commercial centres and villages are tourist destinations in their own right.

Our commercial centres and villages play a crucial role in supporting tourism industries with a number of them having unique attractors. Facilities such as the Cessnock Performing Arts Centre and Baddeley Park continue to attract tourists, along with the Kurri Kurri murals, the Richmond Vale Railway Museum and Heddon Greta's drive-in. There is potential for our centres to build on these assets and function as tourist hubs with specialty shops, cafes, accommodation and RV parking and services.

Our villages each have individual characters, which draw people to them for a range of reasons. Wollombi continues to be a popular destination for visitors. Its scenic location and heritage character, along with the significance of the surrounding landscape attracts a large number of visitors and supports local businesses.

Branxton is another significant centre leveraging its village character. There are also a number of significant heritage buildings in the area that further contribute to the town's character. With the opening of the Hunter Express Way and the development of Huntlee the township has a new opportunity to build upon these characteristics to become a significant tourist destination.

Kurri Kurri is well positioned to capitalise on tourism. The centre is easily accessible from the Hunter Expressway, close to the future Richmond Vale Rail Trail and Richmond Vale Railway Museum and contains the unique Kurri Kurri murals. This centre should continue to capitalise on these tourism attractors and continue to provide supporting tourist infrastructure and services.

To encourage visitors to town centres and villages we must provide appealing pedestrian areas to encourage activity on the streets and increase the length of time spent in centres. Towns and villages should build upon their existing character and ensure they are able to be self-sustaining and support a growth in tourism. An increase in tourist visitation in our centres and villages will have a number of positive flow on effects to the local economy.

There are opportunities for villages and commercial centres to capitalise on the wine industry and encourage tourists to extend their stay in the villages and centres. Our Centres and villages provide excellent opportunities for accommodation and associated supporting infrastructure for the vineyard area. Increased visitation in villages and centres will also allow villages and commercial centres to capitalise and showcase the unique features and character that they currently have.

Planning Principles

1. Visitor and tourism attractions are encouraged in our towns and villages.
2. Synergies between the wine industry and tourism are further developed in villages and centres.
3. Connections from key tourist destinations to towns, centres and villages are encouraged.
4. Villages and centres have unique gateways and way-finding signage is provided.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To ensure that permitted development is consistent with the objectives of the RU5 Village zone. |
| 13. | Prepare a villages strategy that– <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifies key features of each village.• Identifies opportunities for improvements to the public domain in each village. |
| 71. | Continue the implementation of the town centre public domain plans. |
| 72. | Investigate and identify precincts that require local character statements. |

Planning Priority 29: Our villages retain their unique qualities that reflect their histories.

There are 16 villages across Cessnock. Each village is unique, in terms of its historic beginnings, its character and opportunities for future development. Many of these villages such as Kitchener, Abernethy, Ellalong, Paxton and Millfield started out as isolated mining communities surrounded by large areas of rural land or bushland. This is an important quality to the character of these villages and should be retained. Other villages are situated along the main road corridor between Bellbird and Maitland. These include; Neath, Abermain, Weston and Heddon Greta. In all these cases, it is important to manage development between each village so that there remains a sense of arrival and a sense of leaving. This will help retain their unique qualities.

Wollombi has a unique heritage and is an important tourist attraction for the region. This village will require particular consideration to ensure that its character is protected and the impact of tourism managed.

The emerging village centre at Pokolbin has a distinctive role in serving the needs of the tourists to the vineyards area, providing accommodation and showcasing local wines, crafts and produce. It also provides a focus of activity for the vineyards area.

Our villages are an important part of our history. They support thriving communities and offer unique lifestyle opportunities. Understandably, more people want to live in these areas. Additional residents can contribute to better facilities and services and take advantage of existing infrastructure. However, future growth of villages needs to be managed to ensure that the identity of each village is maintained and infrastructure costs minimised.

The qualities that make our villages special must be protected through careful consideration of planning and development proposals.

Planning Principles

1. Green breaks between Cessnock's villages and towns are maintained.
2. The beads of villages' concept between Bellbird and Maitland is supported.
3. The growth of our villages preserves their key features.
4. Development on the periphery of existing villages may be supported where:
 - 4.1. Infrastructure including reticulated sewer and water, is available and adequate or can reasonably be extended at no cost to Council or the community; and
 - 4.2. The proposal maintains the rural and/or environmental land separation between villages; and
 - 4.3. Environmental constraints such as flooding, bushfire and mine subsidence are appropriate to the proposed development; and
 - 4.4. Significant clearing of vegetation is not proposed; and
 - 4.5. Features that contribute to the villages character including heritage will not be negatively impacted; and
 - 4.6. Other site-specific features and key features nearby will not be negatively impacted e.g. the Cessnock Airport and Vineyards.

Actions

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| 6. | Review the Cessnock Development Control Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include development controls to inform development at Wollombi. |
| 13. | Prepare a villages strategy that– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies key features of each village. • Identifies opportunities for improvements to the public domain in each village. |

Planning Priority 30:

Growth of our villages occurs in a way that protects their character and setting in the rural and environmental landscape and responds to risk of bushfire and flooding.

Many of our villages exist in rural or environmental settings. This is an important quality that should be retained as it reflects their histories and provides 'breaks' between one village and the next. It is also important that the rural use or potential rural use of the surrounding land is not undermined by encroaching development.

Cessnock's villages provide unique lifestyle opportunities and pressure to develop in and around the villages is high. However, development needs to occur in a manner that retains the qualities that draw the community there in the first place.

Infill development, development within the existing village footprint, is an appropriate way to provide for additional residents without sprawling into the surrounding rural land or bushland or into the next village. It is also a way to take advantage of the capacity in existing infrastructure. More people in the same area reduces infrastructure costs and maintenance of that infrastructure (such as roads, water supply and sewerage) and may support local facilities, shops, pubs and parks. Infill development should occur in villages where servicing requirements including reticulated water, and sewer are available have capacity to accommodate further growth and the cumulative impacts of on-site sewer management systems can be managed. Other factors including heritage conservation areas, environmental constraints such as flooding and mine subsidence and aircraft noise exposure need to be considered in determining which villages can accommodate infill development. It is anticipated that there is potential for infill development Abermain, Ellalong, Greta, Heddon Greta, Kearsley, Millfield, Neath, Paxton, Pelaw Main and Stanford Merthyr. Infill development is not considered appropriate in the villages of Elrington, Kitchener, Laguna, North Rothbury and Wollombi at this time.

Housing diversity is relatively low across the Cessnock LGA and particularly in our villages. Council's current planning regulations only allow for low density residential development in the village zone. However, there may be opportunities to allow other types of housing in the villages.

While most development is expected to occur within the existing village footprint there may be opportunities to rezone land on the edge of existing villages where the expansion will not adversely affect existing or potential rural use and the development of the land does not detract from the sense of entry and

exit from the village. Potential expansion of villages needs to consider the following factors:

- availability of reticulated sewer and water,
- the existence of heritage items and conservation areas,
- proximity to other villages and services
- impact of mine subsidence proclaimed areas,
- environmental considerations, including vegetation
- environmental hazards such as flooding and bushfire
- biophysical potential of the area including the agricultural viability of the area; and
- other considerations such as Aircraft noise

Detailed studies and potentially master planning would need to be completed for any proposal to develop outside of the village's footprint.

Our villages are an important part of our history and they support thriving communities. More people living in the villages will help support local facilities, shops, pubs and parks and reduce infrastructure costs. Our villages need to have a variety of housing options that allow residents to move between housing options as their lifestyles change.

The devastating bushfire crisis that deeply affected our community reminds us of the risks that these events can bring. Parts of our region are affected by flooding and bushfire, when these events occur, they demonstrate how isolated some areas are and how difficult it can be to protect and service those communities. When considering the growth of our villages Council will consider the risk of placing more people in those areas most vulnerable to bushfires and flooding.

Planning Principles

1. Green breaks between Cessnock's villages and towns are maintained.
2. The beads of villages' concept between Bellbird and Maitland is supported.
3. Development on the periphery of existing villages may be supported where:
 - 3.1. Infrastructure including reticulated sewer and water, is available and adequate or can reasonably be extended at no cost to Council or the community; and
 - 3.2. The proposal maintains the rural and/or environmental land separation between villages; and
 - 3.3. Environmental constraints such as flooding, bushfire and mine subsidence are appropriate to the proposed development; and
 - 3.4. Significant clearing of vegetation is not proposed; and
 - 3.5. Features that contribute to the villages character including heritage will not be negatively impacted; and
 - 3.6. Expansions will not affect the potential for agricultural development; and
 - 3.7. Other site specific features and key features nearby will not be negatively impacted e.g. the Cessnock Airport and Vineyards.
4. Infill development that occurs in villages helps fund infrastructure and support local facilities, shops and venues.
5. Infill development within the existing village zones maximises existing sewer and water infrastructure.

Actions

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| 5. | Review the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consider if dual occupancies and multi-unit dwellings are appropriate in the villages. • To provide minimum lot sizes in the RU5 Village zones that promote higher density and housing diversity where reticulated sewer and water are connected, and the site is not otherwise constraints. |
| 13. | Prepare a villages strategy that– <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies key features of each village. • Identifies opportunities for improvements to the public domain in each village. |

Implementation, Monitoring and Reporting

The Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement is structured around the four themes of Liveable, Productive, Sustainable and Unique, and has 30 Planning Priorities and accompanying Planning Principles that will guide Strategic and Statutory planning matters to 2036. 72 Actions establish how Council will achieve the Planning Priorities.

In order to implement, monitor and report on the delivery of the actions contained in the LSPS, a transparent, efficient and effective governance framework is required.

The LSPS will be implemented in line with the Implementation and Action Plan. Council will:

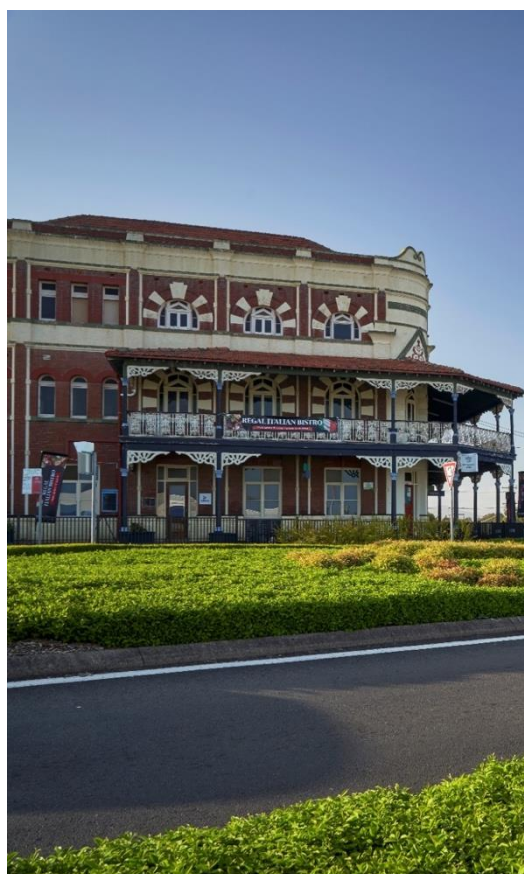
- aim to develop a simple and clear local planning framework with fewer land-use zones and local policies;
- resist additional regulation where simpler solutions can be implemented;
- continue to improve the accessibility of information to the public;
- strive to prepare planning documents that are written in plain English;
- adopt best practice in relation to community involvement in its land-use strategies and pursue innovative and novel ways to engage the community in decision-making;
- promote a less-adversarial approach to development decisions by providing a clear framework around merit-based decisions; and
- prepare an annual monitoring report that outlines the progress of the LSPS actions.

The LSPS will support the CPS and will be reviewed concurrently with the CSP every 4 years. The actions provided under each of the planning priorities will align with, and inform, Council's 4 year Delivery Program and 1 year Operational Plan.

The horizon of longer-term actions means their delivery is subject to potential currently unknown factors (internal and external). More certainty will occur over time, which will inform future revisions. Any amendments or alterations to longer-term actions will be reflected in future Delivery Programs and Operational Plans.

The timeframes for implementation are defined as follows:

Intermediate	0-2 Years
Short Term	3-5 Years
Medium Term	5-10 Years
Long Term	10+ Years
Ongoing	For actions that will continue to be implemented for the lifespan of the LSPS.



References

List of informing studies, plans and documents:

- Cessnock Rural Lands Study 2017, RMCG
- Vineyards District Study 2017, RMCG
- Cessnock Employment Lands Study, SGS Economics and Planning, 2017
- Cessnock Urban Housing Study, SGS Economics and Planning, 2017
- Economic Contribution of the Hunter Valley Wine Sector to the Hunter Valley Economy, Gillespie Economics and AgEconPlus, 27 November 2017
- REMPLAN
- Cessnock Biodiversity Management Plan - <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/biodiversity/CessnockBMP.pdf>
- NSW Greener Places Policy - <https://www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au/resources/ga/media/files/ga/discussion-papers/greener-places-discussion-draft-2017-11.pdf>
- Serious and Irreversible Impact (SAIL) –
- <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Biodiversity/guidance-decision-makers-determine-serious-irreversible-impact-190511.pdf>
- <https://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Council/News/Latest-News/City-wheels-out-first-driverless-vehicle>
- [Costanza R, d'Arge R, De Groot R, Farber S, Grasso M, Hannon B, Limburg K, Naeem S, O'Neill RV, Paruelo J, Raskin RG, Sutton P and Vandenbelt M \(1997\). 'The value of the world's ecosystem services and natural capital'. Nature 387:253–260.](#) [Department of Planning and Environment's 2017 NSW population, household and dwelling projections for the Cessnock LGA.](#)
- [Department of Environment and Conservation \(NSW\), 2004, Wildlife Corridors.](#)
- [UN-Water \(2013\), Water Security & the Global Water Agenda – A UN-Water Analytical Brief](#)
- [NSW Office of Environment and Heritage \(2014\), Hunter Climate change snapshot.](#)