



Hawkesbury City Council

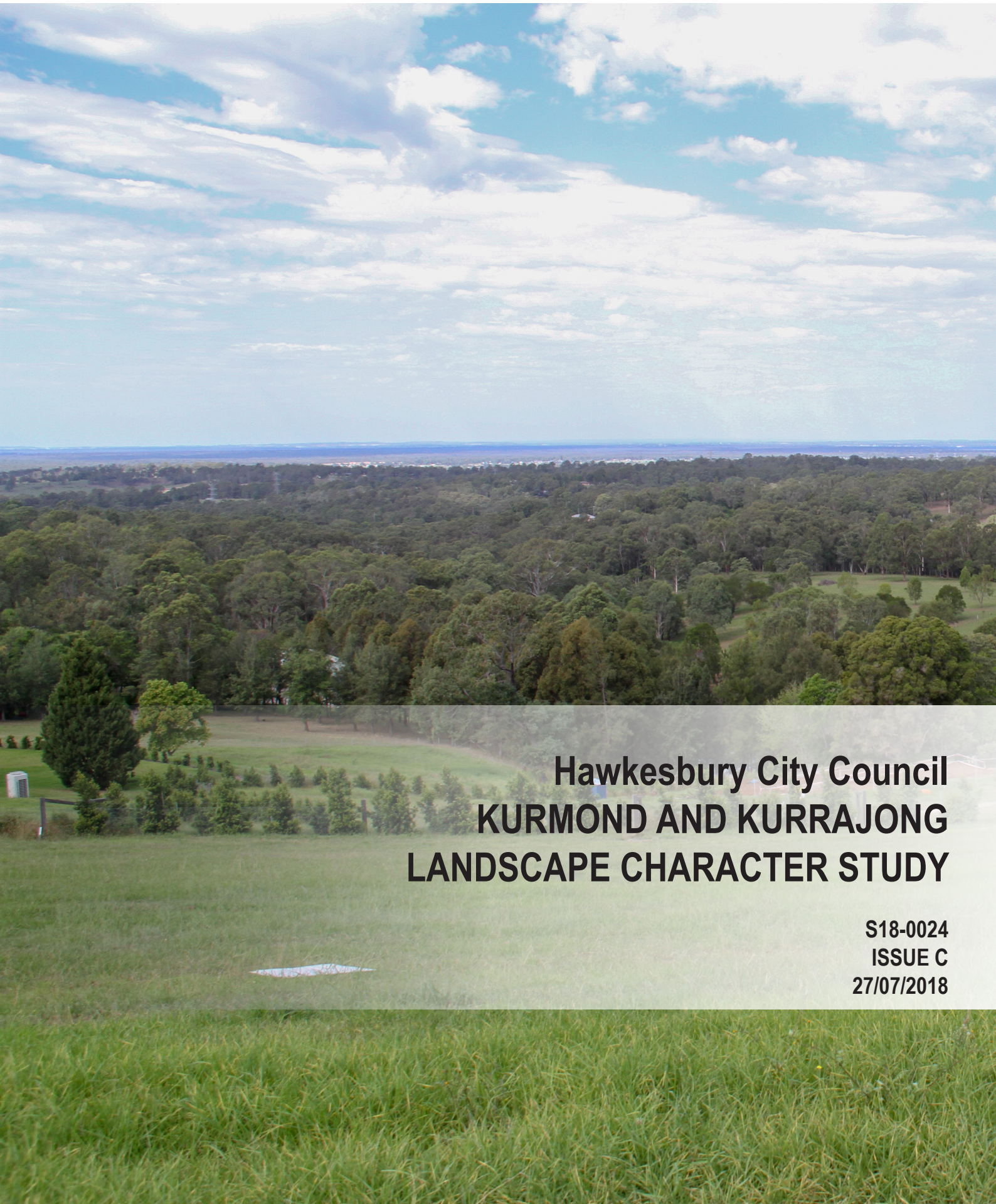
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to
item 164

Kurmond and Kurrajong Landscape
Character Study

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CLOUSTON associates



**Hawkesbury City Council
KURMOND AND KURRAJONG
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY**

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Cover Image:
Rolling Hills Landscape • Kurrajong

KURMOND AND KURRAJONG LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Gently rolling hills • Kurrajong

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to undertake a detailed assessment of landscape character of Kurmond and Kurrajong to inform amendments to planning guidelines and controls.

This study builds upon planning frameworks including the Hawkesbury Residential Land Strategy 2011, and work associated with Structure Planning - Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area 2015.

The study identifies important aspects of existing landscape character that will inform the way the landscape is planned and managed in the future.

Four main landscape character types have been identified:

1. Rural Villages
2. Ridgeline Streets
3. Pastoral Valleys
4. Remnant Vegetation

Key views and vistas of the undulating landscape have been identified and described so that they can be retained and protected through future planning controls. Criteria and controls are needed to ensure that residential development reflects and retains Kurmond and Kurrajong's existing landscape character.

In particular the study finds that, while Council's Local Environment Plan provides clear objectives for rural development in the LGA, the allowance of lot sizes as low as 2,000m² in such locations would lead to a form of development at odds with the landscape character in such areas.

A suite of objectives and guidelines have been formulated to address the constraints and opportunities in the Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area. These guidelines apply to the themes of access, land use, natural environment, cultural heritage, character and identity, amenity and safety, built form and layout, and infrastructure.

The proposed next steps arising from this study include:

- integrating findings on key views and vistas into planning controls
- consolidating rural zoning into one zone (potentially R5 Large Lot Residential)
- updating controls on rural lot sizes to a minimum 4,000m²
- urban design improvements to the public realm in the Kurmond and Kurrajong centres.

The study also concluded that this approach could be readily adopted for all rural areas in the LGA.



INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Kurrajong Village • Kurrajong

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

There has been a steady market demand to expand residential dwellings in the Kurmond Kurrajong area and as a result several planning proposals are in train that could challenge Hawkesbury City Council's aim to protect the scenic and environmental qualities of these localities.

Criteria and controls are needed to make sure new residential development reflects and retains Kurmond and Kurrajong's existing landscape character.

The Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area has been determined by considering the land clustered around or on the periphery of villages and other matters such as slope,

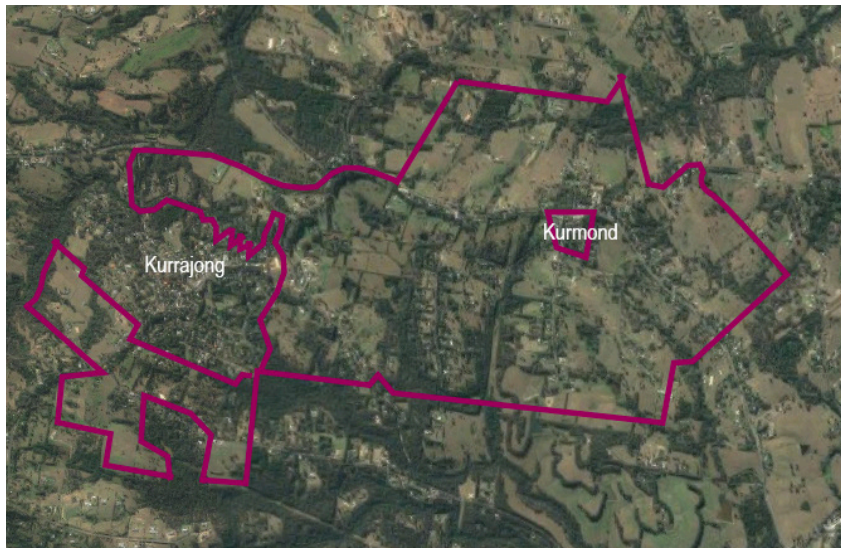


Figure 1. Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area

existing vegetation, existing road layout and accesses, and zone and property boundaries.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report is a landscape character study of Kurmond and Kurrajong. It provides a detailed assessment of the defining characteristics and sense of place in the Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area. It determines what aspects of the streetscapes, landscapes and buildings are positively contributing to make the area identifiable and unique.

The study recommends strategies to preserve and enhance the landscape in the face of residential expansion. This study will inform a structure plan for Kurmond and Kurrajong that recommends appropriate locations, typical lots sizes and desired built form character for future development in the Investigation Area. It will inform the way that the landscape is planned and managed by government and the private sector.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study combines desktop studies and in-field investigation. A review of aerial photography, historical information, topographical features, and various planning and strategy documents explores patterns and scale of landform, land cover and built development. Site visits were conducted to review, record and analyse the existing landscape typologies and the way the landscape is experienced in the Investigation Area. The study includes a combination of objective and subjective judgments supported by clear evidence and reasoned arguments.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE LOCALITY

The Upper Hawkesbury is a raised plateau area, linking to the great mountain barrier of the Blue Mountains Plateau. The rocks forming the plateau were deposited 200 million years ago as a sandy sediment. The Hawkesbury River curves through an area covered by deep river-silts and gravels deposited over millions of years.

The first inhabitants of the land in the Hawkesbury Shire were the Darug people. They were attracted to the land with its abundance of food sources focused around the river system – birds, fish, shell fish and some plants. The Aboriginal population along the Nepean-Hawkesbury system became scarce with the onset of European settlement due to disease and repeated clashes between Aborigines and the white settlers.

In 1794, former convicts established small farms on the alluvial soils along the Hawkesbury River. They saw the rich fertile soils as a way to prevent famine and starvation for the colony. The farms of the Hawkesbury-Nepean became a major source of grain, and ended the uncertainty of food supplies that characterised the early years of the colony.



Image 1. Citrus Orchards, Kurrajong. Source: Records Authority of NSW

The settlers soon discovered that the Hawkesbury was prone to repeated flooding at unpredictable intervals. The severity of the floods became legend, with harvests, homes and livestock at constant risk. The river also provided the vital link between the Hawkesbury region and Sydney.

Located at the base of the Blue Mountains, Kurrajong was often recorded as Kurry Jung and Curryjong and also Wheeny. Kurrajong is apparently the Aboriginal name for the popular shade tree which provides food for livestock.

Kurmond is a small village located between Kurrajong and North Richmond. Originally called Longleat apparently after a property located in the vicinity although the origins of the property are not known. The name Kurmond is apparently a blend of 'KURrajong' and 'RichMOND' and was in use by the 1920s.

Governor Lachlan Macquarie toured the district in 1810 and noted in his journal, 'We rode through fine open forest and hilly country for about five miles to the foot of Curry Jung Hill, which is very long and steep to ascend ... and from whence we had a very grand noble prospect of the low Green Hills.'

The route westward was blazed in 1823 by Archibald Bell from Richmond, guided by an Aboriginal woman. The Bells Line of Road was notoriously bad, especially in the upper reaches of the mountains. The Bells Line of Road was used by drovers and travellers so inns, accommodation and refreshments were located along the route.

In the late 19th Century, Kurrajong was noted as a small village with three churches, two small schools and three boarding establishments. Longleat Public School was established in 1920 and renamed Kurmond Public School in 1926.

Subdivision of farm land was offered in the 1880s – 1890s, small farmlets from 4-11 acres and a few larger ones. These farms of the Kurrajong district didn't appear to have much agricultural potential, and were described as poultry farms, orchard blocks and rural retreats. The pasture land of the slopes and uplands was of poor quality and the light sandy soils were not as fertile as the alluvial plains.

The main produce from the small farms was citrus, peas, beans and stone fruits. A small area was used for dairy farming, and there was also cultivation of 'Kurrajong Wool' or wattle bark, used by tanneries. A land use survey conducted in 1943 showed that a considerable area of land in the Kurrajong area remained in its virgin state or had reverted back to secondary-growth forest scrub.

A decline in profits from agriculture saw numerous farmhouses in Kurrajong advertising accommodation for guests. Numbers of visitors increased with the opening of the Kurrajong-Richmond rail link in 1926. More recently, significant population increases have occurred in Kurmond and Kurrajong with suburban subdivision taking place in each locality.

As may be seen from this brief history there is a strong rural and agricultural heritage in the area worthy of conservation into the future.

PLANNING CONTEXT



Acreage block nestled amongst bushland • Kurrajong

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

METROPOLITAN CONTEXT

Planning for future residential uses in the Hawkesbury Local Government Area (LGA) needs to consider how the LGA itself, and the wider district and region, is expected to grow and change over the next few decades.

This requires Council to work within the strategic planning direction set by the NSW Government and the Greater Sydney Commissions for:

- Greater Sydney in the Greater Sydney Region Plan – a metropolis of 3 Cities including the Western Parkland City
- The Western City District, of which the Hawkesbury is a part.

Greater Sydney Region Plan

The Greater Sydney Region Plan forecasts that between 2016 and 2036, the Western City District is expected to grow by 740,000 people in 2016 to 1.1 million people by 2036. This equates to a need for nearly 40,000 new homes in 2016-2021 alone, and nearly 185,000 new homes between 2016 and 2036. Of this, the Western City District Plan sets a five-year housing target for Hawkesbury LGA of 1,150 new homes between 2016 to 2021.

However, further work is required to understand the housing and economic impacts of the growing population, with Hawkesbury LGA expected to grow from around 67,000 people in 2016 to just over 85,000 people by 2036.

The Greater Sydney Region Plan also notes that flooding in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is one of the most significant natural hazards in Greater Sydney. It states that if the 1867 flood – where the river level reached 19.7 metres at Windsor – were repeated today, 12,000 residential properties would be impacted, 90,000 people would need evacuation and damages would cost an estimated \$5 billion.

Western City District Plan

The Western City District Plan collectively classes Richmond and Windsor as a strategic centre, recognising its expanded role as a hub for retail and commercial services; major health facilities including the Notre Dame University medical teaching campus. The Plan also identifies a growing tourism opportunity, focused on colonial history, rural character, agriculture and environmental assets including the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, the Hawkesbury River and the surrounding agricultural lands.

The Plan sets a baseline target of 12,000 jobs by 2036 (up from 10,300 in 2016) with a higher target of 16,500 jobs.

The existing aerospace and defence activities at RAAF Base Richmond is a hub of logistics support for the Australian Defence Force. Over 450 aerospace workers work within the precinct for the Royal Australian Air Force, United States Air Force, Northrop, Airbus Group Australia Pacific, Lockheed Martin, Standard Aero, GE Aviation, L3 Aviation Products and CAE.

Combined, the RAAF Base, Western Sydney University Hawkesbury campus, TAFE NSW Richmond, and a new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and mathematics) Secondary School will complement business activities around the Badgerys Creek Aerotropolis that will be focused on the planned Western Sydney Airport.

North West Growth Area

Part of Hawkesbury LGA is within the North West Growth Area, an area designated by the NSW Government as suitable for large scale greenfield land releases. In the case of Hawkesbury, the release areas are also located within a relatively short distance of the Richmond rail line.

Western Sydney City Deal

Hawkesbury City Council is involved in the Western Sydney City Deal, a 20-year agreement between the Australian and NSW governments and Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly councils that will optimise the opportunity of the new airport and focus on connectivity; jobs; skills and education; planning and housing; liveability and environment; and governance.

Western Sydney Airport will also create international and domestic tourism opportunities. This will have a positive influence on the Hawkesbury's visitor economy by better connecting visitors to the places like the Hawkesbury Regional Gallery, heritage areas including the Macquarie towns, visitor experiences such as the Hawkesbury Farm Gate Trails, and exceptional landscapes and waterways.

The Hawkesbury's unique landscape also offers rich soils for agricultural production that can in turn lead to export opportunities that will link to Badgerys Creek Airport. The Western Sydney University at Hawkesbury Campus and AgriPark Research Centre provide tertiary education in medical and forensic science, animal science, natural science, sustainable agriculture and food security with world-class research facilities in grasses, pastures, legumes, insects and ecology.

Hawkesbury LGA is, therefore, ready to face the future, which a rich and diverse economy and expected population growth that can be optimised to bring more opportunities and services to more people.

Hawkesbury Housing and Employment Strategy

In response to these issues and opportunities, Council needs to develop detailed housing and employment strategies .

In the case of housing, planning that focuses housing development in the right locations:

- Within the areas of the North West Growth Area located within Hawkesbury
- Near existing transport connections or centres
- Within easy access of future job locations
- Within existing urban areas with good access to existing services such as education, health and commercial services
- That minimise risks associated with flooding and bushfires.

In the case of employment, planning that focuses economic development in the right locations, that build on:

- The areas natural advantages, its rich soils and associated agricultural lands, its areas of natural beauty and wilderness
- Its strengths, the cluster of aerospace, education, research and employment activities between Windsor and Richmond
- Richmond and Windsor as a strategic centre, recognising its expanded role as a hub for retail and commercial services; major health facilities including the Notre Dame University medical teaching campus
- Growing tourism opportunities, focused on colonial history, rural character, agriculture and environmental assets including the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage area, the Hawkesbury River and the surrounding agricultural lands.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The following reports and actions are critical in understanding the current planning context within which this Landscape Character Study is placed.

These documents are a combination of either the strategic or the statutory intent of Council, whereby the Strategic is the setting of desired outcomes that are important to the local community and the Statutory is the provision of appropriate rules and regulation that form the decision making framework for individual development proposals.

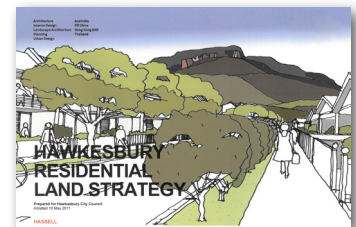
It is critical that the strategic and the statutory continue to align properly in order to provide the best outcomes as development pressures continue across the Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area.

Development outcomes should be consistent with the broader vision for the Council that is encapsulated by the strategic documents. In reality, the current planning context is in need of refocusing so that individual development decisions do not override the collective objectives and outcomes that give effect to the vision.

Hawkesbury Residential Land Strategy 2011

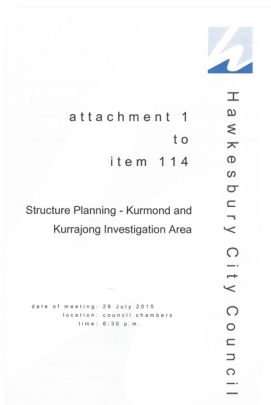
This strategy aims to accommodate between 5000 – 6000 additional dwellings by 2031, primarily within existing urban areas, without enforcing a great burden upon rural areas or villages. In doing so, it seeks to preserve the unique and high quality natural environment of the Hawkesbury area, and maintain the viability of existing rural villages.

The future development of rural villages is recommended to be low density and large lot residential dwellings, which focus on proximity to villages and services and facilities. Impacts on agricultural land should be minimised, and scenic landscape and natural areas protected.



Hawkesbury Community Strategic Plan 2017 – 2036

This is a broad based plan that provides a blue print for the more detailed planning to come. It relates to this study through its key direction relating to shaping the growth of the Hawkesbury area. It seeks to respond proactively to planning so that we achieve “a balance of agriculture, natural environment and housing that delivers viable rural production and maintains rural character”.



Structure Planning - Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area 2015

In July 2015, council adopted development principles and a local planning approach for the area identified as the Kurmond and Kurrajong Investigation Area. The development principles are derived from a detailed analysis of the major physical, infrastructure and servicing constraints of the land such as slope, vegetation, watercourses, roads, water and sewer. An output from this work was to include consideration of the following issues in any assessment of proposed development in the area:

- What land may be suitable for large lot residential / rural residential development.
- What land may need to be protected or conserved (e.g. land containing threatened species or endangered ecological communities, riparian areas, land with significant slope, significant view lines). The nature and location of future development (e.g. the type of residential development and minimum lot size requirements).
- Likely development yield and take up rate.
- The extent of rural village expansion and limits to growth.
- The nature and location supporting public infrastructure (e.g. roads, intersections, drainage infrastructure, community facilities, parks and recreation facilities).
- Mechanisms to fund and provide supporting public infrastructure



Place Score Community Insights Report 2018

This document is based upon surveys and assessments of what local communities value in their town centres and local areas.

This report highlighted that people across the LGA had a high care factor for the natural environment, including views and vegetation. The overall visual character of the area was attributed a high value by all respondents.

Kurmond and Kurrajong villages were included in this report and the specific outcomes for these villages strongly reflect the overall desire of the LGA's residents.

Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 2012 (HLEP 2012)

The Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 2012 is the primary local planning instrument. It sets the fundamental planning standards for development, including the critical matters of land zoning and minimum lot size for subdivision.

For the Kurmond Kurrajong Investigation Area this is a combination of the zones described as RU1 Primary Production and RU4 Primary Production Small Lots. These zones occupy the rural areas that surround the villages. The minimum lot size maps of the HLEP2012 identify predominately 4 hectares or 10 hectare minimums for new subdivision within these areas. The HLEP2012 also provides environmental layers such as water courses and biodiversity mapping that help to highlight significant and potentially sensitive natural features of the locality. Council must consider the provisions of the HLEP2012 when assessing and determining Development Applications.

Various Planning Proposals to amend HLEP2012

Since adoption of the HLEP2012, there has been growing pressure upon Council to amend certain key provisions that have acted to restrict development. These Planning Proposals have been primarily seeking to replace the larger minimum subdivision lot sizes currently prevailing in rural locales, with much smaller minimum lot sizes that are more aligned with rural residential or residential development. They have not sought to change the underlying zoning of the land, thus creating some potential conflict between a rural zone with a residential density.

There has been in excess of 20 Planning Proposals, a number of which have successfully proceeded through the process resulting in amendments to the HLEP2012. There are a number of outstanding proposals awaiting determination.

Various Development Applications

Arising from the various Planning Proposals that have changed the minimum lot size for subdivision but not changed the underlying zoning of the land, have been a series of Development Applications for subdivision. Applications are not meeting the current zone objectives but may still be approved. Individually, these development proposals exhibit consistency and compliance with the newly prescribed minimum lot sizes, but collectively could have significant impacts upon the values of the locality that are seen by the community as being intrinsic to its character.

Of particular concern to Council is the appearance of planning proposals for rural areas with lot sizes as small as 2,000m². Lots of this size will fundamentally change the rural character of these locations.

Within the context of all of the above plans and actions, it is the objective of this study to provide some coherent and consistent guidance for the future of the Kurmond Kurrajong Investigation Area. Once key strategic outcomes are identified, it is critical that the statutory tools of Council, work in such a way as to allow development to be consistent with those outcomes.

Economic Assessment

An economic assessment of Kurmond and Kurrajong by Peter Leyshon indicates that further retail expansion does not appear warranted. There is a reasonable range of services in both centres and no evident retail vacancies. The ridge locations limit further expansion though both centres would benefit from public domain improvements.