



# VILLAGES STRATEGY







*Journey Through Time*, created by local school students and artist Steven Campbell.

## Acknowledgement of Country

Cessnock City Council acknowledges that within its local government area boundaries are the traditional lands of the Wonnarua people, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung people. We acknowledge these Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land on which our offices and operations are located, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now live within the Cessnock Local Government Area.

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# HOW TO READ THIS STRATEGY

# How to read this Strategy

This strategy is structured in the following way:

1. An introduction to the strategy, including its purpose, relationship to the planning framework and the outcomes of consultation undertaken to inform the Strategy;
2. An overview of what local character is and how it can be defined; and
3. Actions proposed to embed local character, separated into:
  - a. Planning Actions, i.e., possible amendments to Planning Controls – being the Cessnock Local Environmental Plan (CLEP 2011) and/or Cessnock Development Control Plan (CDCP 2010).
  - b. Other actions which are not any of the above, e.g., community or social events, or actions that require further investigation before amendments to planning controls can be made (e.g., heritage listings).

Timeframes for these Actions are 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 Strategy.





## Introduction

Our villages are an important part of our history, and they support thriving communities.

Many of our villages exist in rural or environmental settings. This important quality reflects their histories and provides 'breaks' between one village and the next.

## Purpose

The purpose of this Strategy is to reflect on the villages within the Local Government Area (LGA) and seek to understand the important features and characteristics that make them unique. By doing so, we gain a better understanding of their existing local character and how they may look and feel into the future.

This strategy seeks to define the existing and desired future character of the following villages:

- Greta
- Kearsley
- Laguna / Wollombi
- Mulbring
- North Rothbury

These village areas represent key entry points into the LGA, or which are tourist destinations or nodes in their own right.

Over time and as resourcing permits, this strategy will be amended to include consideration of other villages within the LGA which are not addressed by a separate Town Centre Strategy, Masterplan or Public Domain Plan.

## Relationship to the Planning Framework

At a local scale, this Strategy responds to goals, priorities and actions of the Community Strategic Plan (CSP) and Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS).

Cessnock 2036, our CSP, seeks to establish “A Sustainable and healthy environment”. Fundamental to supporting this goal is a balance between development and the existing environment, including the built and natural environments.

This Strategy has direct connection to a number of priorities in LSPS, including:

**Planning Priority 28:** Our commercial centres and villages are tourist destinations in their own right.

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

**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.

Action 13 of the LSPS responds to these priorities, requiring Council to “Prepare a villages strategy”

Additionally, Council’s Village and Activation Plan (November 2020) recommends the preparation of local character statements to inform place activation.

At regional scale, the strategy is informed by the Hunter Regional Plan 2041 (HRP 2041), as per the following strategies:

### Strategy 8.5

Local strategic planning should consider:

- Identifying towns and villages which have a strong tourism presence and/or serve as gateways to visitor experiences in surrounding areas
- Supporting a diverse range of tourism development, including events and placemaking initiatives which celebrate the local community, heritage and Country

### Strategy 9.5

When identifying expansion opportunities for rural towns and villages (including rural-residential), local strategic planning should consider the location of primary production and conservation lands and determine appropriate rural town and village growth boundaries to limit the encroachment of development into areas that have important agricultural, ecological, scenic or heritage value.

Planning priority 1 for the Hinterland District also requires planning for housing diversity in towns and villages.





## Consultation informing this Strategy

External consultation seeking feedback for the draft character statements and actions was undertaken in early 2022. The exhibition material included a Discussion Paper, that outlined the project intent, and analysed social, environmental and economic considerations that make up local character.

The feedback from these engagement activities helped to establish which features of the villages are most important to residents and visitors, and those that helped to contribute to its local character and needed to be preserved. Additionally, this feedback helped to identify the actions within this Strategy that will assist in embedding the desired future character of the villages.

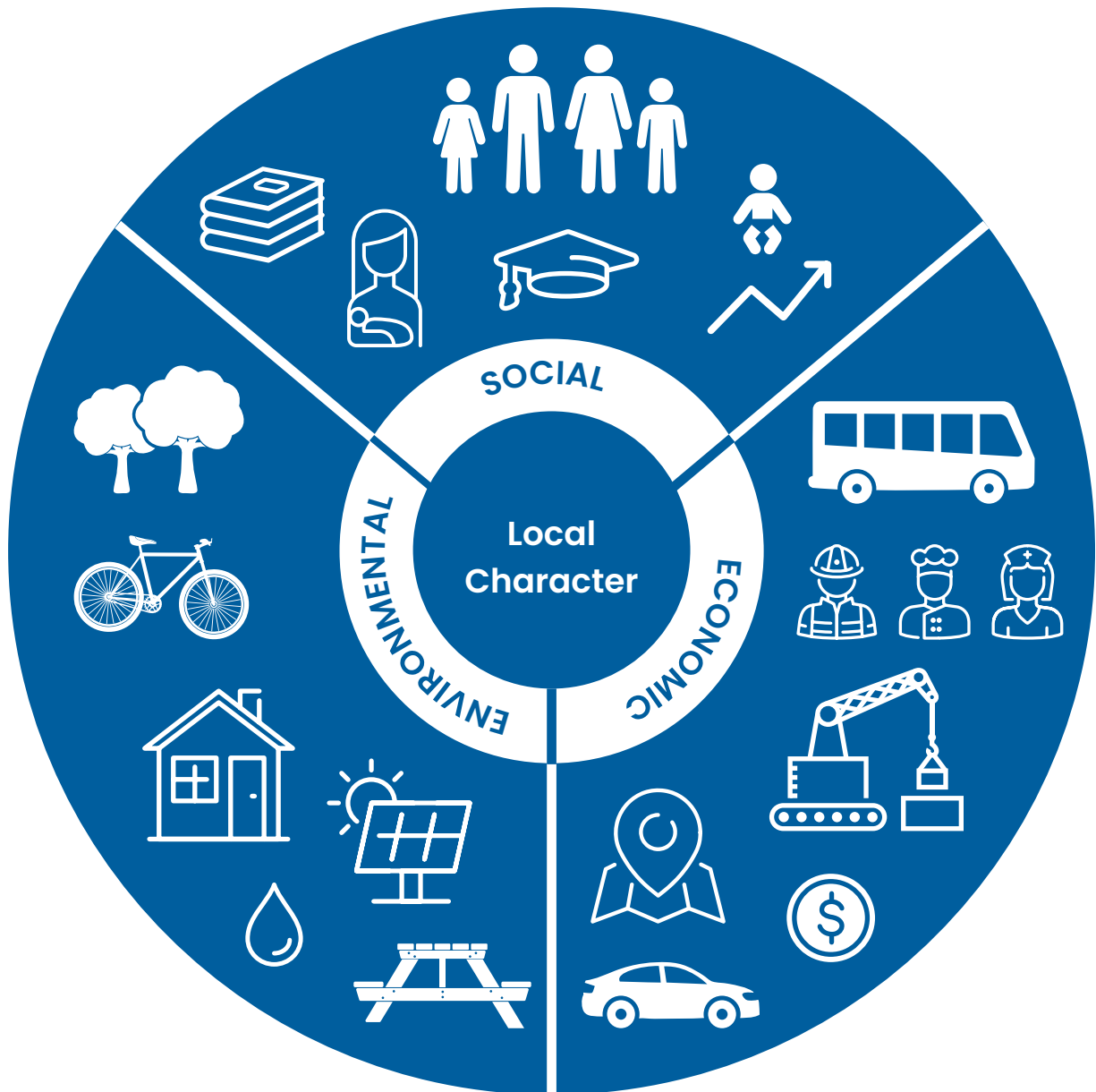
The draft Strategy was exhibited in Mid-2025. The Strategy has been amended post-exhibition to respond to these submissions where appropriate.



## What is local character?

Local character is what makes a place or area distinctive or unique. Local character is the combination of multiple factors, which relate to an area's history, built form, public and private spaces, community values, and how they connect to a place.

Local character is influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors.



**Figure 8:** Wheel of Local Character (modified from DPIE Local Character and Place Guideline, 2019)



## Natural and Built Environment

The interaction of the natural and built environment also informs the character of a place. The built environment refers to the type of development in an area, including land uses, subdivision pattern, building setbacks, streetscapes/types, architectural styles, density and building height.

The natural environment includes bushland, open spaces (including public parks), watercourses, topography (including landforms and views), vegetation cover and the opportunities it provides for recreation and refuge. The natural environment is also a critical component of connection to country for traditional landowners.

## Social Environment

The social environment relates to the local population, being the people who live, work and/or visit a place. The existing and predicted, or forecasted, demography (e.g., age, gender, dwelling types, family and household composition, education, employment etc.) can influence how a place feels and functions, and can help determine what is needed to support the existing and growing community.

The social environment also includes the social infrastructure that supports the local population and creates social hubs to meet, play or relax. In many cases, this can include aspects of the natural and built environment, such as a pub, sporting facility or park.





## Economic Environment

The economic environment relates to how an area forms part of a local or broader economic framework. A place can be defined by the type of businesses it supports, what types of employment is available for its residents, retail activity and the local road network to move people, goods and services.

There are a number of actions which have been identified which are equally relevant across all villages. These are identified in the following pages.





# GENERAL ACTIONS



# General Actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Develop signage and education programs to promote correct waste disposal practices, particularly for tourists.	Funding In-house resource capacity	Waste Management	Short
Install clear signage for public waste bins to minimise contamination and problem waste (i.e., Batteries).	Funding In-house resource capacity	Waste Management	Short







# **GENERAL PLANNING ACTIONS**





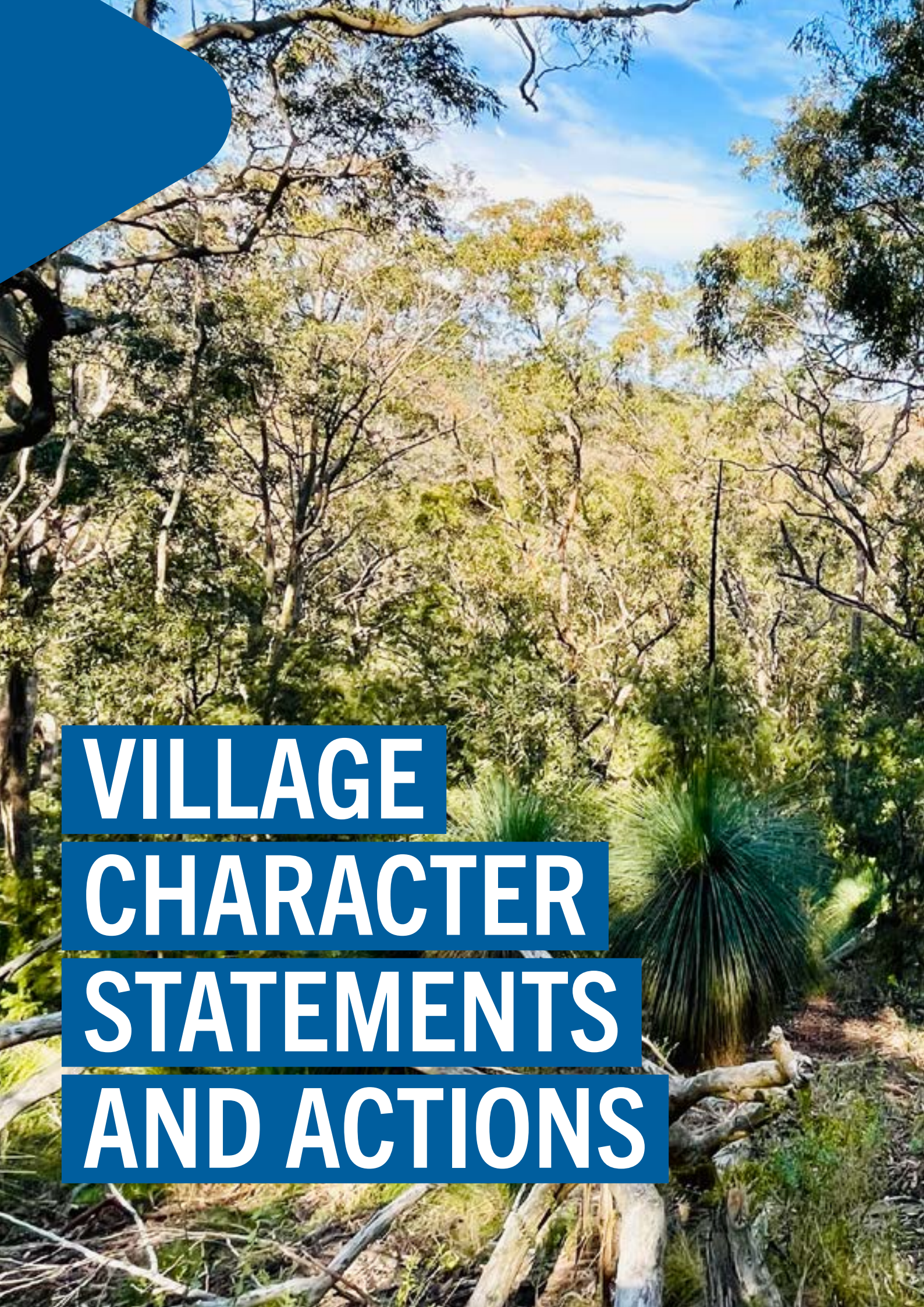
# General Planning Actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Integrate the local character statements into a new "Villages" Chapter of DCP 2010.	Residential LEP Theme review In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning	Short
Prepare a Laneways Strategy which seeks to identify issues and opportunities for higher utilisation of existing laneways, such as primary access for subdivided land / secondary dwellings.	Residential LEP Theme review Funding In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning Traffic and Transport Waste Management Hunter Water	Medium
Relevant matters for consideration include (but are not limited to) water and sewer infrastructure location, waste collection servicing, widths, contribution to local character and potential impacts, heritage value and initial/ongoing maintenance costs.			
Review the existing building line policy / DCP controls to maintain the presence of generous front setbacks and fencing.	Residential LEP Theme review In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning	Short



ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
<p>Prepare an amendment to DCP 2010 to address Ancillary Development, such as sheds, to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built form – Bulk, scale, height</li> <li>• Character</li> <li>• Neighbour amenity</li> <li>• Soft landscaping</li> <li>• Stormwater management</li> <li>• On-site wastewater disposal management</li> </ul>	<p>Residential LEP Theme review</p> <p>In-house resource capacity</p>	Strategic Planning	Short
<p>Commence the preparation of local character statements and identification of actions to reinforce local character for the Rural West villages: Paxton, Ellalong and Millfield.</p>	In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning	Short
<p>Commence the preparation of local character statements and identification of actions to reinforce local character for the remaining village areas.</p>	In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning	Medium





# VILLAGE CHARACTER STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS







# Village Character Statements and Actions

## Greta

### Existing Character

Greta is located east of the village of Branxton and west of the village of Lochinvar. It is one of the beads of villages along the New England Highway, providing linkages within and beyond the upper Hunter Valley to inland NSW.

Greta is also located within the Anambah to Branxton Growth Corridor.

Like many villages within the Hunter region, Greta was founded on the back of the coal industry in the mid to late 1800's and early 1900's. Unlike other settlements though, the village of Greta had prominence as an administration centre, featuring a police presence, court house and local chambers. These functions later being supported by the Greta migrant camp located south of the village, and then an army presence in the same locality.

The defining feature of Greta is the central green median, between the New England Highway and the original High Street, lined with mature Silky Oak trees (*Grevillea robusta*), in addition to the many areas of open space, particularly the multi-sports oval located on the village's eastern periphery. These open space areas provide a green break in the "hard" road infrastructure, offering opportunities for active and passive recreation, as well as places for community gatherings.

Subdivision pattern and many dwellings within Greta are representative of the era of establishment of the village, particularly

around the core of High Street / New England Highway. Allotments are generally grid-like, being rectangular in shape with modest frontages and deep in length. There are many examples of hipped roof cottages with front verandah. Many cottages have been well maintained, retaining the original façade and features, however modifications, particularly extensions to the rear of dwellings and ancillary structures are common.

The village core retains an active retail street frontage, comprising original buildings, in addition to some more contemporary developments. Parts of the village core retain the original sandstone kerb and guttering.

The village is experiencing some growth, with subdivisions occurring to the north and south of the village core. Subdivisions south of the urban core are in keeping with the existing average lot size of approximately 750 – 800m<sup>2</sup>. Subdivision north of the village core is more contemporary in nature, with lots of approximately 600m<sup>2</sup>. Dwellings in both localities however are generally modern brick and tile project homes.

There is evidence of infill development occurring, with some individual lot subdivisions, dual occupancies and secondary dwellings.

Greta is a family orientated village, with the predominant household type being couples with children.





## Future Character

Greta will continue to maintain a linkage to the past by the retention and maintenance of existing buildings within the village core. New development in the village core will be in keeping with these heritage values. Where possible, dwellings with features dominant at the time of the village establishment will be retained and maintained.

The context and setting of the village may change over time, as development within the Branxton to Anambah Growth Corridor advances.

The central median will be retained, with upgrades to tired infrastructure (e.g., seating/tables) utilising materials compatible with the surrounding built form. Upgrades to existing areas of open space will provide enhanced opportunities for active and passive recreation, as well as supporting places for family and community gatherings.

The heritage of Greta will be promoted and there will be more opportunities for activation of public open space through markets and events.

Greta will continue to be a location of choice for growing families. Infill development will occur, but will be focused on delivery of a range of dwelling sizes and forms, to provide opportunities for aging in place.

Growth of the village may occur but only where supported by Council's Urban Growth Management Plan. There will be limited further retail development outside of the existing village core and be reliant on activation of vacant sites and vacant premises. Such development will be of a "local" scale, providing goods and services for the local population.





## Greta







## Planning actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Undertake further investigations to determine whether Schedule 5 of the CLEP should be amended to include a listing for the sandstone steps at Hunter River Reserve.	<p>Comprehensive Heritage LEP Theme</p> <p>In-house resource capacity</p>	<p>Strategic Planning</p> <p>Local Heritage Committee / Partners</p>	Medium

## Other actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Review the existing stormwater management infrastructure which delivers water into Anvil Creek, with the view to identifying and implementing works or actions to improve the quality of Anvil Creek (e.g., gross pollutant traps, detention basins, wetlands, revegetation, education programs etc.).	In-house resource capacity  Funding	Sustainability  Infrastructure	Long
Review current arrangements with Local Landcare to identify and provide additional support to maintain green spaces (e.g., bulk waste removal, weed management, revegetation), particularly the Hunter River Reserve, Greta.	In-house resource capacity  Funding	Sustainability  Waste Management  Open Space and Community Facilities	Medium
Support opportunities to provide regular community events that engage children, young people and families which celebrate the multi-cultural diversity of the area resulting from settlement of migrants from the Greta Migrant Camp.	Plans of management  Licencing, approvals and insurances  Funding	Community and Cultural Development  Communications and Engagement  Economic Development  Chamber of Commerce / Business Chambers  Open Space and Community Facilities	Ongoing



ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Advocate for local heritage interpretation and signage to form part of the development concept for the redevelopment of the former Greta Migrant Camp.	In-house resource capacity	Strategic Planning Land owner	Intermediate
<p>Develop and promote a local heritage walk within and beyond the Greta township supported by a physical booklet, digital app and or static signage, considering places/items such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greta courthouse &amp; former police station</li> <li>• Greta Chambers</li> <li>• Road sections with sandstone kerbing</li> <li>• Greta migrant camp</li> <li>• Greta Hotel</li> <li>• Greta Station</li> <li>• Hunter River, including Hunter River Reserve</li> <li>• Local Collieries</li> <li>• Local indigenous features</li> </ul>	<p>Trails Strategy Review In-house resource capacity</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>Open Space and Community Facilities</p> <p>Strategic Planning</p> <p>Traffic and Transport Local Heritage Committee / Partners</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee</p> <p>Local Aboriginal Land Council</p> <p>Economic Development</p> <p>Sustainability</p> <p>Tidy Towns Committee</p>	Long
Develop concept plans for Whitburn and Norman Brown Parks, illustrating future opportunities.	<p>In-house resource capacity</p> <p>Funding</p>	Open Space and Community Facilities	Medium

# Kearsley

## Existing Character

The village has a significant relationship with historical coal mining activity within the locality. In particular, the South Maitland Railway (SMR) System main line, located at the northern most extent of the village is particularly important.

The village is surrounded on most sides by dense vegetation, and as such is visually disconnected from other urban settlements. Notwithstanding, the village is informally connected by a series of well utilised formal and informal trails through the adjoining bushland connecting to other villages, such as Abernethy.

Caledonia Street provides a local view corridor, but also significant views of the mountain ranges to the east, including the Sugarloaf range. Both Caledonia Street and Lake Road are lined with an avenue of crepe myrtles which provide vibrant colourful streetscapes during the summer months.

George Jeffrey Park, the adjoining hotel, the public school and community hall form the social hub/s of the village. There is limited business and retail activity, with a service station on Allandale Street fulfilling the role of a local general store.

Kearsley comprises two distinct yet connected areas, a larger lot rural residential area in the north-west, and a smaller lot residential area in the south-east with its core along Allandale Street. The two areas are connected by Caledonia Street and George Jeffrey Park. The former comprises predominantly single storey, detached dwellings, set on large allotments, the latter, comprises a grid-like subdivision pattern, with regular sized and shaped lots and midblock unformed laneways.

Dwelling styles include single-storey Victorian, bungalows, examples of later post-war styles, including lightweight weatherboard or clad dwellings, as well as contemporary dwellings (including project brick and tile homes). Battle-axe allotments and secondary dwellings are present but to a lesser degree.

## Future Character

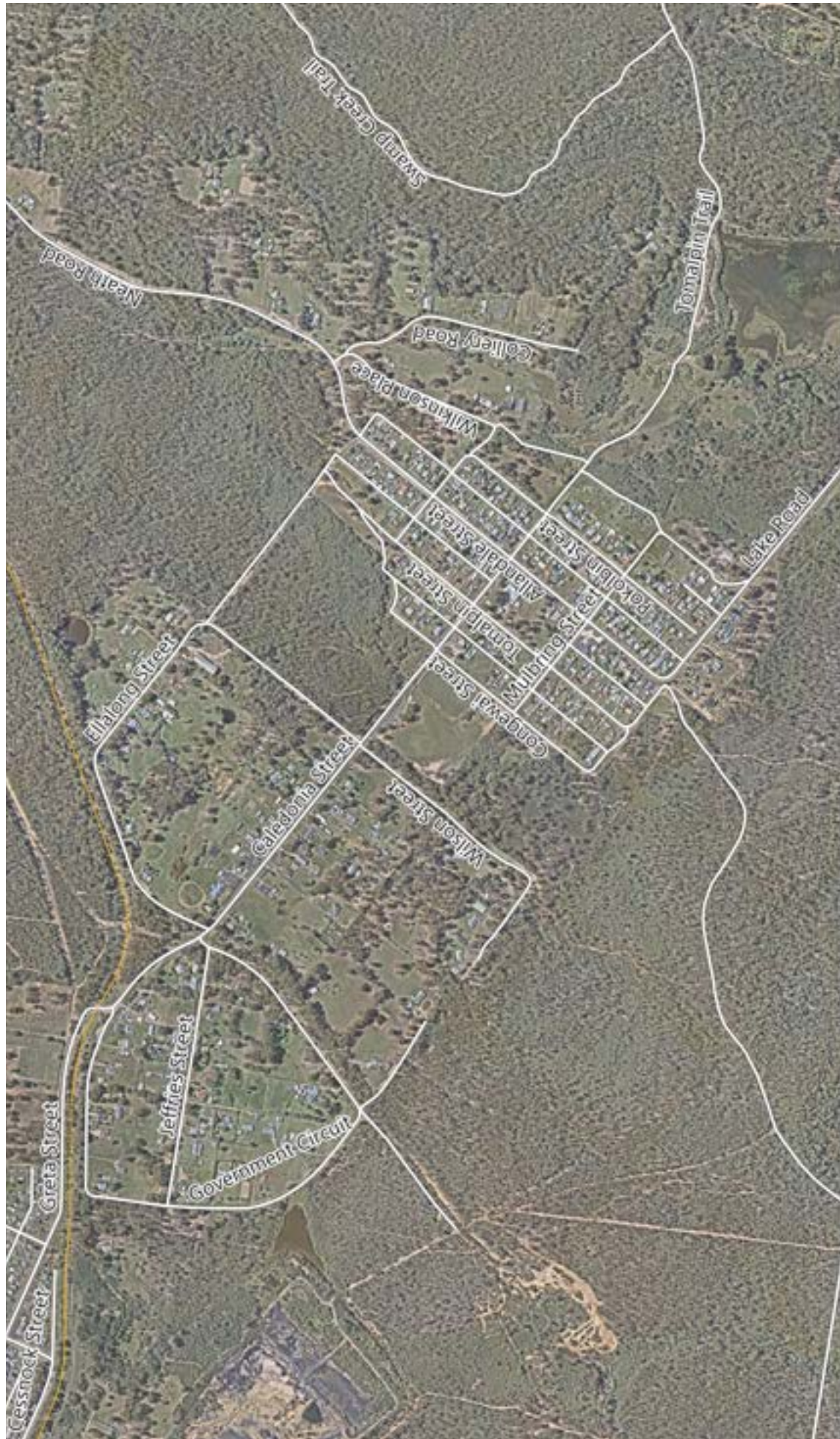
The future village of Kearsley will retain the view corridor along Caledonia Street, as will views to the Sugarloaf ranges. The existence of water and sewerage services within the smaller lot residential area will encourage the renewal of existing dwelling stock, through either renovation and/or knock-down/rebuilds, and some dual occupancy development. Subdivision of existing lots will occur, however should not deviate from the original subdivision layout.

Laneways will be preserved, and will continue to provide pedestrian permeability.

New dwelling development will be in keeping with existing dwellings, being predominantly single storey in height. Building lines and setbacks will be comparable with existing development. Future subdivision of land within the north-west area may be supported, so long as the rural nature is preserved, and subject to the ability to manage wastewater disposal on site. Lot sizes will not be smaller than 4,000m<sup>2</sup> unless connected to a reticulated sewerage system. Higher density development, such as boarding houses or seniors living are not encouraged, in order to preserve the low-density nature of the village.

Reactivation of the SMR for either passenger services, or as a shared pathway will provide opportunities for greater connectivity with adjoining areas.





## Kearsley





## Planning actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Investigate opportunities to rezone the R2 zoned area of Kearsley to RU5 Village and increase the minimum lot size to 750m <sup>2</sup> , comparable with other village minimum lot sizes within the LGA with the same servicing capacity and proximity to the Cessnock CBD (e.g. Kitchener).	<p>Regional and Local Strategic Planning Framework including Hunter Regional Plan and Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement and Housing Strategy</p> <p>Residential LEP Theme review</p> <p>In-house resource capacity</p> <p>Funding</p>	<p>Strategic Planning</p> <p>Department of Planning and Environment</p>	Medium



## Other actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Advocate for National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) to consider opportunities for access, use and embellishment of Kearlsey Dam and trails/ Werakata & Richmond Vale Trail	NPWS Parks Management Strategies  Risk Management Plans (contamination, site structures, passive surveillance)	Strategic Planning  NPWS	Intermediate
Undertake investigations and landowner consultation to identify the suitability of the South Maitland Railway System for reactivation for light rail services, and/or a future recreation (pedestrian / cycle) networks, with links to the Richmond Vale Trail.	Trails Strategy  Pedestrian and Mobility Access Plan  Traffic and Transport Strategy  Austar Coal Mine Operational Plan  In-house resource capacity  Funding	Traffic and Transport  Strategic Planning  Landowner	Long
Develop concept plans for George Jeffrey Park, illustrating future opportunities.	In-house resource capacity  Funding	Open Space and Community Facilities	Short
Support opportunities to provide regular community events	Licensing, approvals and insurances	Economic Deveopment	Ongoing

# Mulbring

## Existing Character

Mulbring is a rural village set in a wide valley surrounded by mountain ranges to the north, east, south and west within the Watagan National Park, Heaton State Forest and Sugarloaf State Conservation Area.

Whilst the village extent may be defined by areas comprising development, the village is intrinsically linked to the scenic landscape afforded by adjoining mountain landforms and rural land uses. Landscape scale views to mountain ranges, and of rural holdings, are visible from most areas within the village extent, but in particular along the road corridors. The southern approach Leggetts Drive afford views of the village; however, elevated landscape features, and vegetation adjoining Wallis Creek secrets the village from view from northern approach.

The village has a distinct entry point at the intersection of Leggetts Drive and Palmers Road, providing a sense of arrival and departure.

Subdivision pattern is generally grid like, with mid-block unformed laneways. Lot shape and sizes are variable, which enable a diversity of housing stock, and consequently affording opportunities to age in place.

The Park is the social hub of the village, providing opportunities for active and passive recreation and play.

## Future Character

Mulbring will retain its relative isolation and remain as a discrete entity, however there will be improved connectivity to Kearsley and Pelaw Main through the provision of on-road cycleways.

Existing landscape views will be preserved.

Some subdivision within the village will occur, however this will be minimal as access to reticulated sewerage infrastructure will remain unavailable. Any future growth of the village will be limited (and subject to Council's Urban Growth Management Plan), and require preservation of landscape and view corridors, within, beyond and to the village from available vantage points, including Leggetts Drive.

The Park will continue to be the social hub of the village, with some upgrades to promote accessibility, particularly from the school and additional opportunities for active play.

Opportunities to provide for the day-to-day needs of residents by the installation of a neighbourhood shop will be supported, but scale will be compatible with existing residential development, in terms of built form.

There will be a diversity of lot sizes and dwelling types with improved access to support services, providing more opportunities for aging in place.





## Mulbring



## Other actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Investigate establishing Mulbring as a conservation area within Schedule 5 of CLEP 2011 as a place comprising significant landscape (scenic) value.	Comprehensive Heritage LEP Theme In-house resource capacity Funding	Strategic Planning	Medium
Investigate the local heritage of Mulbring, particularly the grand stand (war memorial) to determine if there are additional items of heritage significance which should be recognised.	Comprehensive Heritage LEP Theme In-house resource capacity Funding	Strategic Planning	Medium
Investigate opportunities to provide more formal walking and cycling opportunities between Mulbring Park and the primary school.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Traffic & Transport	Long
Investigate the viability of a range of local area traffic management options to enhance road safety and amenity throughout the village.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Traffic and Transport	Medium
Review the existing stormwater management infrastructure, with the view to identifying and implementing works or actions to improve the quality of Wallis Creek (e.g. gross pollutant traps, detention basins, wetlands, revegetation, education programs etc.).	In-house resource capacity Funding	Sustainability Infrastructure	Long



ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Develop concept plans for Mulbring Park, illustrating future opportunities.	In-house resource capacity  Funding	Open Space and Community Facilities	Intermediate



# North Rothbury

## Existing Character

The village is formed either side of a natural depression/watercourse offers views from the village to the north. Views from the south of village offer views of the Brokenback mountain ranges. Wine Country Road also provides a lineal view corridor.

The village is surrounded to the north and east by the new "Huntlee" development area.

Further south, Old North Road, Rothbury, provides a gateway to the Hunter Valley wine region.

The village is intrinsically linked to historical coal mining in the locality.

The village comprises wide, tree-lined road reserves, and building allotments in a grid-like pattern of generous, but regular sizes. Mid-block unformed laneways are also present. The built form comprises predominantly single storey, detached dwellings, set on large allotments. Dwelling styles are variable, including single-storey Victorian, bungalows, examples of later post-war styles, including lightweight weatherboard or clad dwellings, as well as contemporary dwellings (including project brick and tile/metal roofed homes), particularly in the centre of the village around Olivia Place.

Connectivity within and between both areas relies on the road network, however a shared pathway connection to Huntlee/Branxton is available from Thomas Street, at the northern extent of the village.

The social hub of the village is Ayrfield Miners Park which provides opportunities for passive and active recreation.

The Ayrfield Miners Memorial and Rothbury Riot Memorial serve as ever-present reminders of the role of the unionised labour movement within Australia's history and in particular, the coal industry.

The village also has an important connection to local flora and fauna, in particular, *persoonia pauciflora*, a critically endangered shrub, found only in environs surrounding the Village.

## Future Character

The context and setting of the village may change over time, as development within Huntlee advances, however the village will remain a discrete entity.

Notwithstanding, the village will incorporate permeability opportunities for pedestrians to / from Huntlee.

There will be improved internal connectivity to Ayrfield Miners Park, and Wine Country Drive.

The village will continue to provide an alternative diversity in lot size and built form to Huntlee, though there will be some, but limited, subdivision.

Wide, tree-lined road corridors will be retained.

Ayrfield Park will continue to be a social hub in the village, with some upgrades to improve amenity.

The village will retain a sense of pride in its early industrial history and prominence as a location for rare and endangered flora.





## North Rothbury



## Other actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Advocate for the delivery of reticulated sewerage infrastructure within the original village area of North Rothbury.	Available and planned infrastructure capacities and approvals Funding In-house resource capacity	Environmental Health	Intermediate
Investigate the local heritage of North Rothbury to determine if there are additional items of heritage significance.	Comprehensive Heritage LEP Theme In-house resource capacity Funding	Strategic Planning	Medium
Investigate opportunities to provide more formal walking and cycling opportunities between the village and Wine Country Drive shared pathway.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Traffic and Transport	Long
Investigate the viability of a range of local area traffic management options to enhance road safety and amenity throughout the village.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Traffic and Transport	Medium
Review current arrangements with Bush Care to identify and provide additional support to maintain green spaces (e.g., bulk waste removal, weed management, revegetation), particularly the Frederick Street Road Reserve.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Sustainability Waste Management Traffic and Transport	Intermediate



ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Develop concept plans for Ayrfield Miners Memorial Park illustrating future opportunities.	In-house resource capacity  Funding	Open Space and Community Facilities	Medium



# Wollombi & Laguna Valley

## Existing Character

The Wollombi / Laguna valley is extremely significant for its Aboriginal and European heritage values.

The villages sit within a narrow valley and are the Gateway to Yengo and Yango National Parks, and the meeting place of the Wollombi Brook and Congewai Creek. Wollombi and Laguna play an important part of the cultural landscape within and beyond the LGA. Yengo National Park is also a World Heritage Area and declared Wilderness Area.

Laguna and Wollombi have their built form origins associated with the construction of the Great North Road, an inland route between Sydney and the Hunter Valley. This route first established the hamlet of Laguna in the same era, and because of this, and their proximity to each other, both are intrinsically linked. The village of Wollombi served as an administrative centre for the region.

The village area of Laguna is small and comprises few dwellings, but the local "Trading Post" and adjacent businesses, as well as a privately owned pool and cricket grounds support the surrounding district population and the local school.

Within Wollombi, buildings, pathways and features such as trees remain that were first developed in the early 1800's. With the onset of alternative travel modes, the decline in usage of the Great North Road effectively preserved the village intact with limited modern intervention. Because of this, Wollombi is a key tourist destination.

The central core on Wollombi Road hosts a range of businesses, and with surrounding wineries, support tourism as well as providing some limited services for the needs of the population within the valley.

There are few residential dwellings within the village extent. Most of the local population is

located outside of the village extent and are couples of or close to retirement age. There is anecdotal evidence that families with dependent children are moving into the area, particularly post-pandemic.

The population is actively engaged in the community, through business ownership, interest groups, media, local sport, events and the local Chamber of Commerce.

In addition to the built environment, key features of the locality are the views across farmland on the floodplain or upper slopes with backdrops of the mountain ranges in National Parks, State Forests and private landholdings. The Old North Road / Paynes Crossing Road also provides a significant view corridor.

## Future Character

Wollombi and Laguna will continue to be preserved, so to remain a substantially intact 19th century locality of significant importance.

The existing built form of the villages will be maintained, and existing infrastructure (roads, intersections, pathways etc.) improvements will occur in manner which is complementary to the heritage values of the village, using styles and materials which blend into the existing fabric of the village.

There is a recognised need for a greater resident population within the village and surrounding locality to support the local economy. However, given the significance of the heritage value of the village, its relative isolation, and incidence of flooding and bushfire risk, there is little tolerance to accommodate further infill development.

The Wollombi and Laguna valley will continue to be recognised and celebrated for its ambience and character which will continue to draw tourism and visitation to the area.





## Wollombi







## Laguna





## Other actions

ACTION	DEPENDENCIES	KEY PARTNERS	TIMEFRAME
Support opportunities to provide regular community events.	Plans of management Licencing, approvals and insurances Funding	Community and Cultural Development Communications and Engagement Economic Development Chamber of Commerce / Business Chambers Open Space and Community Facilities	Ongoing
Review current arrangements with Local Landcare to identify and provide additional support to rehabilitate the Wollombi Brook Nature Trail, as well undertake weed management and revegetation works.	In-house resource capacity Funding	Sustainability Open Space and Community Facilities	Medium
Support opportunities to promote the viability of local business and trades.	In-house resourcing capacity Funding	Economic Development	Ongoing



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