
6 URBAN SETTLEMENT



While the overall population of the Upper Hunter LGA is expected to increase by up to 0.5% p.a. in the Strategy time frame (25 years), there will be variability in trends between different locations. In addition, housing and settlement requirements are expected to change. The approach taken in the Strategy will affect the distribution of urban development, and the long term settlement structure of towns and villages.

Growth will be influenced by national and Sydney metropolitan trends, as well as growth in local and regional employment and work commuting patterns. As family sizes decline and the population ages, it is likely that higher demand for smaller sized dwellings will occur, including single storey dwellings for aged persons.

Demand for new dwellings is projected to range from 50 to 80 per year in the LGA, of which 35 to 55 dwellings would be in urban areas, mostly in Scone. Residential land release in urban areas is expected to reflect this projected dwelling demand, although this will depend on the extent of rural residential demand, and the proportion of dwellings in multi-unit housing.

There is currently reasonable provision of urban infrastructure and services (e.g. roads, electricity, water and sewer) for the towns in the Upper Hunter LGA. Water supply limits and economic limits on service extensions have been taken into account in formulating the Strategy. Minimal growth is expected in villages, and there are servicing limits in all village areas.

Social infrastructure, community services and recreational facilities are reasonably well catered for within the Upper Hunter LGA, although the trend for increasing centralisation of many specialist services means that these are located in the Lower Hunter, and transport must be available to access these. Housing affordability and providing adequate suitable seniors accommodation are expected to continue to be significant issues over the life of the Strategy.

A number of maps are provided within this Strategy which identify areas for potential urban expansion throughout the life of the Strategy. A key method for identifying the amount of land required for short term rezoning is the establishment of a coordinated land monitoring system to track the construction of new dwellings and commercial/ industrial developments, and the creation of new allotments across the LGA. This system would extend from medium density and infill housing to fringe urban development, commercial, industrial, rural small holdings and general rural areas. It would assist in measuring the take up of existing zoned or serviced land, identifying market and development trends, and in determining the staging of future land releases and rezonings to maintain adequate land supply.

The following estimates in Table 4 are adopted for the purposes of the Strategy. These estimates are based on the demographic information and expected trends outlined in the Situation Analysis report. It should be noted that these are for the LGA as a whole, and that there is considerable variability between different planning areas.

Table 4: Summary of Upper Hunter LGA projections

Strategy forecast	Estimate (25 years to 2032)	Comment
Population change	Estimated 0.25% to 0.5% per annum growth. Range from 14,600 to 15,400 by 2032	Population growth would primarily result from in-migration of new residents to the area, mainly in and around Scone. General decline in the rural population is expected
Dwelling occupancy rate	Decline from 2.5 persons per dwelling to 2.1 persons per dwelling	Ongoing decline in occupancy rate creates demand for an additional 50 dwellings per annum (with no population growth)
No. of new dwellings required	Average 50 to 80 new dwellings per year	Depends substantially on dwelling occupancy rate and dwelling type availability
Changes in type of dwellings required	Increase in small single dwellings, seniors accommodation (especially single storey), and units/townhouses	Lower demand for large houses (i.e. 3 to 4 bedrooms) likely in long term
Urban/rural split	By 2032, urban areas in Upper Hunter are expected to have about 70% of the population with about 4,140 persons in rural areas	It is anticipated that 60% of additional dwellings to 2032 will be in urban areas, of which about 75% will be in Scone, 20% in Aberdeen, and about 5% shared between Merriwa and Murrurundi. Villages and rural areas are expected to account for about 30% of new dwellings.

Key land use planning issues regarding urban settlement in the Upper Hunter LGA were identified in the Situation Analysis as follows:

- Projected population change and housing demand
- Identification of areas for future urban expansion around Scone and Aberdeen (and road networks)
- Adequacy of land for industry and commerce, and requirements for additional land and services (primarily Scone)
- Town infill development opportunities and constraints (e.g. heritage and infrastructure)
- Water and sewerage capacity and service areas
- Development guidelines for Scone Airport and surrounding land
- Development guidelines for urban highway frontage land
- Industrial land issues in Murrurundi and Merriwa.

Information on these issues is presented below, together with objectives, policies and strategic actions.

6.1 Projected population change and housing demand

As outlined above, the main population issues that need to be addressed over the life of the Strategy are the projected ageing of the population, with lower dwelling occupancies, a requirement for smaller dwellings close to services, and provision of seniors' accommodation.

As the largest centre, Scone is expected to experience pressure for population growth, and will account for the majority of new development. Although some growth is expected in Aberdeen, the populations of Merriwa and Murrurundi are expected to remain stable.

The Situation Analysis report identified a range of housing issues in the LGA, highlighting particular sectors of the population in housing stress, relative house prices, and the need to provide for medium density and low income housing for certain groups. There is scope in the Strategy to influence these issues through provision of appropriately zoned land, services, and detailed LEP provisions.

A key objective of the Land Use Strategy is to provide for additional residential development in the urban area of Scone. Growth projections reflect steady growth which can be accommodated relatively easily within the current urban form, and with some limited additional urban areas.

Existing residential areas within Scone typically consist of single dwelling houses situated on relatively large allotments (often in excess of 1,000m²), with streetscapes characterised by wide local roads and generous areas of open space. Given the rural setting of Scone; the previous settlement pattern; and the desire by existing and future residents for a rural lifestyle, it is likely that this form of low density residential development will continue. The Council envisages that the character of the town will continue to be defined by large residential allotments with access to services, wide tree lined roads, generous parks and open space (including extra wide road reserves and landscaped areas) and large stormwater management areas, based on the principles of water sensitive urban design. The provision of generally large minimum lot sizes, along with the availability of smaller lots through infill development and zoning for medium density development, will ensure that housing choice is maximised.

In regard to the availability of already zoned land Upper Hunter Council has provided the following information:

- Aberdeen – area available is 76 ha which equates to 400 lots and
- Scone – area available 78 ha which equates to 390 lots eliminating a natural drainage area that would not be suitable for development.

Objectives – Projected population change and housing demand

- Ensure Upper Hunter LGA has urban land that is zoned and serviced to meet projected housing needs up to 2032.
- Identify long term strategic urban growth options for Scone for 50+ years.
- Facilitate provision of housing to meet changing household formations and the needs of an ageing population (e.g. varying size and form).

Policies – Projected population change and housing demand

- Provide adequate zoned residential land in Scone to meet anticipated requirements for between 5 and 10 years supply (250 lots minimum to 500 lots maximum).
- Provide residential zoned land in at least 2 ownerships to provide competition and alternative development options.
- Encourage seniors' accommodation in suitable locations and access to services.
- Support the provision of affordable housing requirements by maintaining adequate residential land.
- Facilitate medium density housing in existing residential areas, subject to accessibility, urban design, amenity and sustainability criteria.
- For new Greenfield residential development, consider seeking planning agreements with developers to provide for residential development of a certain type, and/or affordable housing (e.g. medium density and single storey seniors accommodation).
- Recognise the need to cater for different sectors (youth, seniors and single persons).
- Provide a greater range of residential lot sizes especially in the 500 to 1000m² range, and support attached and medium density dwellings in appropriate locations.
- Design residential development to promote potential public transport accessibility, and enable provision of shopping and other facilities within walking distance where practical.

Strategic Actions – Projected population change and housing demand

- Establish a land monitor to review residential supply and demand, dwelling and subdivision approvals.
- Prepare Section 94 Contributions Plans prior to gazettal of LEP providing additional residential zoned land.
- Review the current village zoning for Murrurundi and replace with appropriate urban zones using Standard LEP provisions.

6.2 Identification of areas for future urban expansion around Scone and Aberdeen (and road networks)

It is essential to meet the long term urban expansion opportunities for Scone and Aberdeen, and to ensure that these are not prejudiced by short term development. This section focuses on the future urban structure of the towns of Scone and Aberdeen, major servicing and accessibility requirements, and the criteria that should be applied to future development proposals that may arise in long term urban growth areas.

Anticipated demand for urban land has been identified in Section 6.1. Scone LEP 1986 provides for an urban population of around 6,000 persons in Scone and Aberdeen, and was reviewed in the *Scone Urban Study* (Hilltop Planners 1996).

However, the 2006 population for Scone and Aberdeen of around 6,330 persons requires greater land area than previously anticipated, largely as a result of recent lower density development and lower dwelling occupancy rates. This means that additional land needs to be provided for urban expansion.

The *Scone Urban Study* recommended that the appropriate level of vacant land supply should equate to at least one years building demand, and preferably 2 years. It identified a need for additional zoned land, and provided the following strategies:

- residential development in Scone to be restricted to the current northern limit
- rationalise zoning of residential and industrial land to the east of the town
- undertake a review of the eastern boundary of development, minimum lot sizes on steeper land, and DCP guidelines.

The proposals in the *Scone Urban Study* remain generally appropriate, however a land bank equivalent to around 5 years supply is now recommended. These are shown on Map 6.1, which should form the basis of future urban zoning to 2032. The proposed urban structure provides medium term expansion opportunities for Scone and does not prejudice long term growth options for the town which are conceptually indicated on Map 6.1 and in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of long term future urban expansion options for Scone

Option	Comments
Scone North industrial	Land zoned part Special Uses and part Intensive Agriculture in current LEP. Consider providing for additional industrial use in short to medium term. Potential for 25 to 30 ha of industrial use in short to medium term. Potential for 25 to 30 ha of industrial zoned land with light/general industrial uses. Alternative potential road access to industrial area available from north via Common Road. Retain existing abattoir/saleyards/landfill site as special activities or similar zone. Review zone options in draft LEP.
Scone South East	Part of proposed St Aubins development. Subject to further investigation for short to medium term residential use. Approximately 100 ha of land with potential for 500 to 900 lots (800 to 1,500m ² lots). Applicant also proposes 4 ha for lifestyle village catering for seniors living. Would require new access to New England Highway in the long term. Potential environmental constraints require investigation, including likelihood of endangered ecological community and groundwater salinity. Review Area currently zoned for rural residential purposes but not developed (Area H). Consider appropriate subdivision minimum areas having regard to environmental constraints and the potential for water and sewer servicing.

Option	Comments
Scone South tourism/ commercial	An investigation zone of approximately 10 ha of land for tourism or commercial purposes has been identified by Council. Development along the highway should have regard to development guidelines prepared for urban highway frontage land (e.g. in a development control plan. Refer to Section 6.7 of this Strategy). Also investigate zoning of 1 ha on north east side of road (Scone Toyota) for commercial purposes. Prominent gateway location at entrance to Scone with need for special consideration of visual and traffic implications. Consider appropriate zoning options for employment uses. Zoning provisions should limit commercial activities to avoid any adverse affect on Scone CBD.

Currently there is adequate zoned residential zoned land in Aberdeen to meet demand. While the long term development options for Aberdeen proposed in the *Scone Environmental Study* (Planning Workshop 1982) remain reasonable, it is unlikely that these areas will be required in the foreseeable future. Existing zonings should be rationalised and/or supplemented with DCP provisions to provide for improved urban structure, staging of release areas and to recognise anticipated demand estimates. There is also a mismatch between residential and commercial zonings in Aberdeen which should be reviewed. Map 6.2 shows the urban structure and future expansion areas proposed for Aberdeen.

Table 6: Summary of long term future urban expansion options for Aberdeen

Option	Comments
Former Aberdeen abattoir site	Former meatworks site currently zoned special uses, with an area of 90 ha. Potential for change to industrial use and employment development in short term. Further investigate options for light/general industrial use and review proposed LEP zoning. Consider part zoning for special activities and/or adjoining rural zone.
Aberdeen East	Recognised in the past as a potential future area for medium term residential extension. An area of approximately 30 ha is currently zoned part residential and open space. Investigate appropriate future land use options.
South Aberdeen residential	Investigate changing 15 ha of current industrial and special uses zoned land to residential zone to facilitate future urban development of South Aberdeen and prevent future incompatible land uses.

Water, sewerage and servicing are key issues requiring further investigation, future access requirements and locations of commercial and industrial land also need to be taken into consideration. Within the period of this Strategy, future servicing should be investigated, and no land use decisions (e.g. subdivision, rural residential development or rezoning) should be made which will prevent the implementation of the long term urban expansion concept.

Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy

SCONE-EXISTING ZONINGS AND INVESTIGATION AREAS

Legend:

- 1/1 Rural Small Holdings
- 1/2 Intensive Agriculture
- 1/3 Rural Prime
- 1/4 Residential A
- 1/5 Residential B
- 1/6 Residential C
- 1/7 Residential Medium Density
- 1/8 Medium Density Residential
- 1/9 Medium Density Residential
- 1/10 Medium Density Residential
- 1/11 Medium Density Residential
- 1/12 Medium Density Residential
- 1/13 Medium Density Residential
- 1/14 Medium Density Residential
- 1/15 Medium Density Residential
- 1/16 Medium Density Residential
- 1/17 Medium Density Residential
- 1/18 Medium Density Residential
- 1/19 Medium Density Residential
- 1/20 Medium Density Residential
- 1/21 Medium Density Residential

Investigation Areas:

- Parkville East Rural Residential
- Scone North Industrial
- Scone South East Residential
- Scone South Tourism/Commercial
- Scone North West Rural Residential
- Scone West Rural Residential
- Scone South Rural Residential

Scale: 1 km

Map 6.1