

Mr Peter Thompson  
General Manager  
Wagga Wagga City Council  
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Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Our ref: 545032

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Attention: John Sidgwick

Dear Mr Thompson

**Planning proposal (PP-2022-4114) to amend Wagga Wagga Local Environmental Plan 2010**

I am writing in response to the planning proposal you forwarded to the Minister under section 3.34(1) of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act) in respect of the planning proposal to *rezone land from RU1 to R1 General Residential and RE1 Public Recreation and apply Urban Release Area provisions at Lots 23 and 25 DP757246 456 & 474, Plumpton Road, Rowan (known as 'Sunnyside')*

As delegate of the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, I have determined that the planning proposal should not proceed for the following reasons:

- The planning proposal has not demonstrated strategic merit
- The planning proposal is presented in two disjointed parts and does not clearly explain the intended outcome
- The planning proposal does not provide adequate assessment of site-specific matters.

The State government is committed to working with Council to plan for the growth of a prosperous Wagga Wagga. The Department supports robust strategic planning, prepared with community and agency consultation, as the platform for sustainable growth. Subsequent divergence from agreed strategic directions, in the absence of a strong evidence base or community and agency engagement, undermines the value of strategic planning and creates uncertainty for State investment and for the community.

The planning proposal is inconsistent with Council's Local Strategic Planning Statement (2021) which set the City's strategic direction following community and agency consultation. The LSPS recognises the Northern Growth Area as the key area for urban expansion with an expectation it will provide most of the City's new greenfield housing. The Northern Growth Area is said to have qualities making it the 'clear choice' for urban expansion including its proximity to the Special Activation Precinct and University and to existing suburbs, facilitating links to existing infrastructure networks.

The LSPS also identifies other greenfield opportunities on existing zoned land and recognises a variety of infill and urban renewal opportunities that will be needed to provide the housing diversity to meet the City's needs.

Strategy inconsistency does not rule out a planning proposal where circumstances have changed. In this case however, insufficient evidence is provided on why the Northern Growth Area's timing necessitates a new development front to proceed in advance, the options that have been considered to meet short to medium term housing needs (such as those identified

in the LSPS) and why rezoning rural land to create a 'Southern Growth Area' is a preferred solution.

Council's upcoming housing strategy provides an opportunity to determine Council's housing needs, consider the different options for meeting those needs and determine an optimal planning program to meet those needs over time. Given that work is now underway it is not appropriate to allow this planning proposal to proceed.

The planning proposal lodged with Council proposed a different outcome to that subsequently lodged with the Department for a Gateway determination. Council submitted an 'Addendum' that discussed its preferred alternative however the supporting reports were not updated. This complicated the assessment of this proposal and would have made it difficult to interpret by agencies and the community. In future, Council is requested to avoid planning proposal 'Addenda', except for minor changes. The Department's Western Region team can advise when an Addenda is appropriate, if required.

I note that financial support is being provided by the Department to Council for housing, including:

- Funding of Council's Local Housing Strategy under the Regional Housing Strategic Planning Fund.

The Local Housing Strategy should provide a platform for coordinated action by all stakeholders to meet future housing needs in Wagga Wagga. Strategy 5.1 of the Riverina Murray Regional Plan sets out expectations for local housing strategies.

- Funding of infrastructure under the Regional Housing Fund.

In 2022, Council was successful in obtaining \$1.4m from the Regional Housing Fund for a sewer augmentation project. \$700,000 has already been paid to Council to commence this work. The second payment of \$700,000 has not been released as planned, Council was unable to deliver its commitments under Stage 1 of the program for the Northern Growth Area under the terms of the funding agreement.

I understand Council is preparing information in response to a recent interagency committee review of Council's progress on funding agreement milestones, including identifying an alternate infrastructure project to deliver dwelling capacity elsewhere in the LGA.

The Department will continue to help Council plan for growth where infrastructure can be readily located and serviced, and where agencies are planning to invest. The Department supports Council's vision for the Northern Growth Area and will work with Council to ensure remaining funding under the Regional Housing Fund is allocated to support housing in strategically planned areas.

The Department has also offered to provide separate financial support to Council to progress rezoning investigations for the Northern Growth Area, as noted in recent discussions between Council staff and the Department's Western Region Team.

Should you have any enquiries about this matter, I have arranged for Garry Hopkins, Director Western Region, to assist you. Garry can be contacted on 0421 052 052.

Yours sincerely



11/05/23  
**Malcolm McDonald**  
**Executive Director**  
**Local and Regional Planning**

Encl: Gateway determination