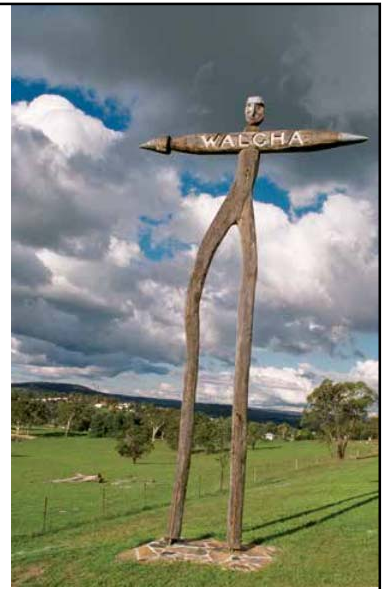


# DRAFT WALCHA LOCAL STRATEGIC PLANNING STATEMENT 2036



## Acknowledgement

Walcha Council acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future. This Plan acknowledges a strong belief amongst Aboriginal people that if we care for country, it will care for us. This is supported by the knowledge that the health of a people and their community is reliant on a strong physical and emotional connection to place.

Conserving Aboriginal heritage and respecting the Aboriginal community's right to determine how it is identified and managed will preserve some of the world's longest standing spiritual, historical, social and educational values.

The sculptures depicted on the cover page form part of the Walcha Open Air Gallery and include: "True Born Native Man", "The Cocktail Lounge", Walcha Fitzderby Chambers, "The Family" and "Rainbow Serpent". "The Whale" is included overleaf as part of the Foreword.

# Foreword

The Walcha Local Strategic Planning Statement 2036 is an important and significant step in planning for Walcha’s future economic, social and environmental needs.

The statement recognises that Walcha is a great place to live and work, and that the future is bright and exciting. It outlines a vision for a thriving and prosperous Walcha region and identifies the building blocks to maximise opportunities for jobs and development. Most importantly, the document emphasises the retention of the unique character of our local area and protects what makes it a special place for us all.



Eric Noakes  
Walcha Council Mayor

DRAFT

## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	4
<b>REGIONAL CONTEXT</b> .....	5
Walcha Council Region.....	5
Community Profile .....	6
Our Local Advantages .....	6
Our Local Opportunities.....	8
<b>VISION</b> .....	9
<b>PLANNING PRIORITIES</b> .....	10
Summary of LSPS Planning Priorities .....	11
<i>Our Economy</i> .....	12
<i>Thriving Places to Live and Grow</i> .....	2
<i>Infrastructure to Support Growth</i> .....	7
<i>A Strong Connection to Place</i> .....	8
<i>A Sustainable Environment</i> .....	10
<b>ACTION PLAN</b> .....	12
Funding & Investment.....	12
Monitoring & Reporting.....	12
Strategies and Key Actions.....	13
<b>RESOURCES</b> .....	20

## Figures

Figure 1 - Walcha LGA in relation to NSW .....	5
Figure 2 - Walcha township .....	7
Figure 3 - Walcha in the Regional Context.....	8
Figure 4 - Walcha LGA .....	9
Figure 5 - Freight corridors map .....	12
Figure 6 - Environmental assets.....	15
Figure 7 - Walcha housing areas .....	2
Figure 8 - Nowendoc housing areas.....	3
Figure 9 - Walcha Road housing areas.....	3
Figure 10 - Woolbrook housing area .....	4
Figure 11 - Potential Woolbrook investigation area.....	5
Figure 12 - B2 & B4 zoned land in Walcha.....	6
Figure 13 - Existing infrastructure in Walcha township.....	7
Figure 14 - Heritage items in the Walcha township .....	9
Figure 15 - Walcha is well placed to harness renewable energy.....	10

# INTRODUCTION

The Walcha Local Strategic Planning Statement 2036 (LSPS) identifies clear planning priorities for the Walcha local government area (LGA) to address the planning and development issues of strategic importance as well as support and develop our local identity, values and opportunities. The LSPS sets short, medium and long-term actions to deliver our community priorities and vision as referenced in the *New England North West Regional Plan 2036* and *Community Strategic Plan Walcha – 2027*. The statement will shape how the land use zones and development standards in the *Walcha Local Environmental Plan 2012* (LEP) and *Development Control Plan 2019* (DCP) evolve over time to meet the community's future economic, social and environmental needs.

As an integrative local plan, this statement is informed by state-wide and regional policies. It has been prepared in accordance with clause 3.9 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, which requires that the statement identify:

- the basis for strategic planning in the area, having regard to economic, social and environmental matters,
- the planning priorities for the area that are consistent with any strategic plan applying to the area as well as any applicable community strategic plan,
- the actions required for achieving those planning priorities,
- the basis on which the council is to monitor and report on the implementation of those actions.

## The purpose of this statement is to:

- outline the characteristics which make our area special
- articulate our region's advantages and opportunities
- identify our shared values to be enhanced or maintained
- provide a land use vision for the Walcha LGA to 2036
- direct how future growth and change will be managed
- identify any required changes to planning provisions in the LEP and DCP
- identify where further strategic planning may be required
- outline how the strategies and key actions of the plan will be implemented

# REGIONAL CONTEXT

## Walcha Council Region

Walcha LGA forms part of the New England North West region, located half-way between Sydney and Brisbane and approximately 200 kilometres inland from the NSW Mid North Coast. While the Walcha LGA forms part of the wider New England North West region, it is distinguished by its elevation on the south-eastern edge of the New England Tablelands.

The LGA includes the township of Walcha as well as the surrounding villages of Woolbrook, Walcha Road and Nowendoc. The town of Walcha forms the focal centre that provides essential retail, commercial and community services to local residents, including a modern multi-purpose health service facility as well as primary and secondary schools. The centre of Nowendoc fulfils local service needs and contributes to the unique local character of the area.

The LGA is well connected. Walcha is strategically located at the junction of the Oxley Highway and Thunderbolts Way, a crossroads which provides the area with unique access to the advantages generated by the growing regional cities of Tamworth, Armidale and Port Macquarie. Thunderbolts Way also forms part of the fastest route from the LGA to the major centres of Newcastle and Sydney. The New England Highway (approximately 50km west of Walcha, along the Oxley Highway) and Great Northern Railway Line provide key links to Sydney and South East Queensland markets, east coast ports including Newcastle and Port Botany and the international airports of Wellcamp, Brisbane and Sydney.

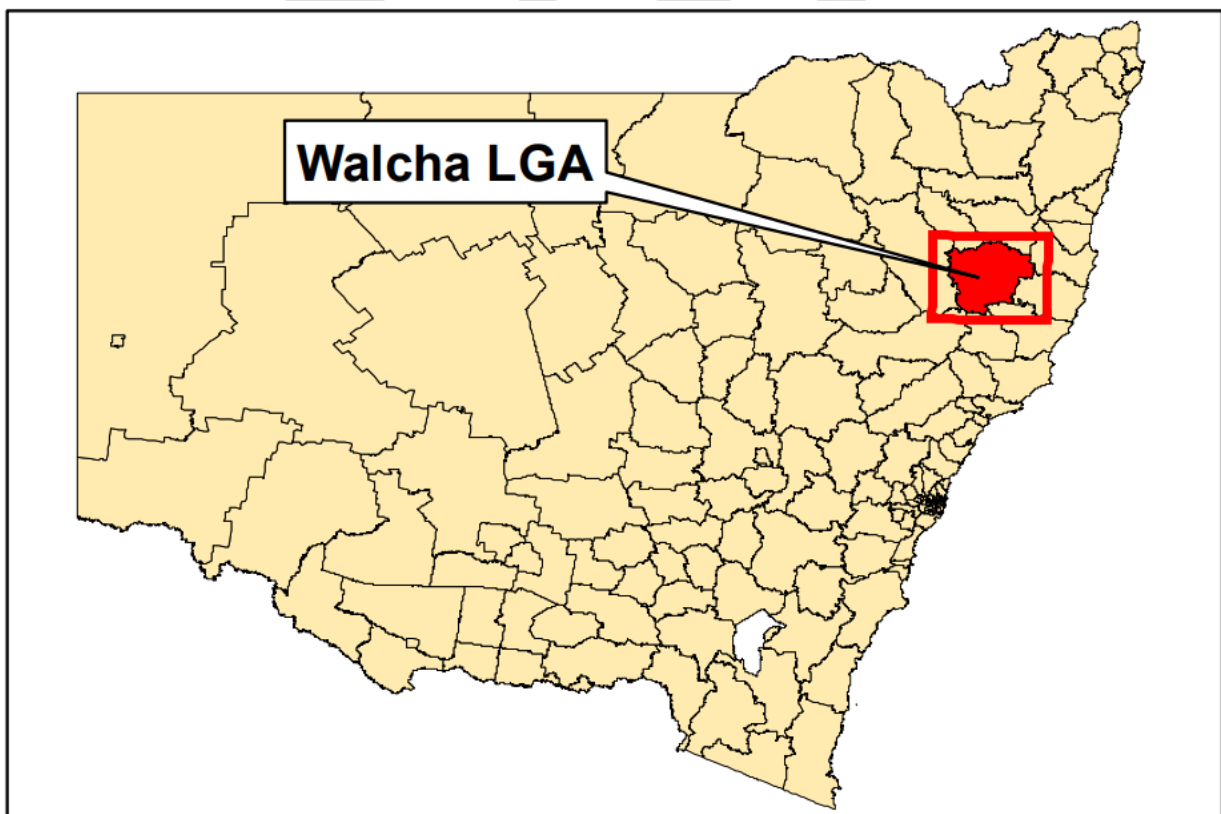


Figure 1 - Walcha LGA in relation to NSW

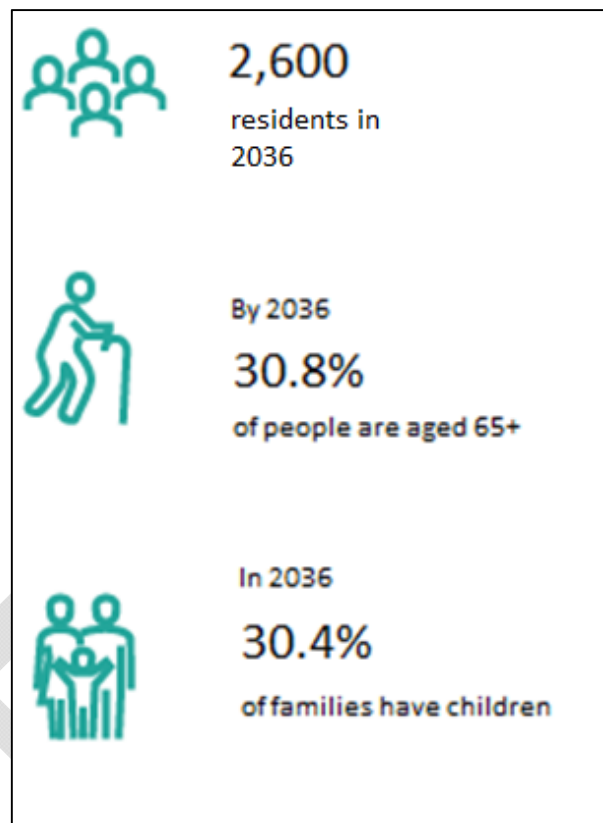
## Community Profile

Residents of the Walcha LGA have a strong sense of community pride.

Population growth, the retention of young people and families, the preservation of local businesses and provision of essential services are key themes in planning for the future of the Walcha region.

Walcha town is the oldest town and first settlement on the New England Tablelands. It constitutes the primary village of significance in the LGA and is home to more than half the resident population of the Shire. The region's expansive agricultural lands support the balance of the LGA's residents together with 760,000 sheep and 85,500 cattle.

The population of the Walcha LGA is projected to change. The NSW Department of Planning and Environment projects that by 2036, the LGA's population will continue to age with an increasing number of residents over 65 years old.



## Our Local Advantages

The Walcha district is located at the top of the Great Dividing Range and is among the most beautiful highland areas in Australia. The LGA is one of the largest stock-carrying areas in Australia, with the main employing industry (41.1%) being primary production comprised of agriculture, forestry and fishing.

Located on the Northern Tablelands at elevations of over 1,000 metres, the Walcha region has a cool temperate climate with warm summers and cold winters. The weather, combined with the soil type, rainfall, altitude and pastures, provides an ideal foundation for quality grazing industries. The area is suited to a range of grazing pursuits; however, wool and prime fat lamb production together with cattle breeding and fattening are the major grazing activities. The area is also known as a producer of high-quality native hardwoods, and its importance as a softwood producing area is increasing. Interest in the area's renewable energy generation potential associated with wind, solar and hydro power is also growing.

The Walcha LGA comprises approximately 640,028 hectares (6,410 km<sup>2</sup>), accommodating a unique natural environment including 205,000 hectares of national park, wilderness and state forests. The Shire is home to the Macleay Gorges as well as the internationally significant Werrimimbe National Park and Oxley Wild Rivers National Park. Outdoor adventure-based activities including hiking, canyoning, mountain biking and bird watching are popular in the region. Iconic visitor experiences such as Apsley Falls, Green Gully Track, travelling the Thunderbolt's Way and Oxley Highway (popular motorcycle routes), and the 1,500 km of trout streams (home to rainbow and brown trout) continue to draw domestic and international tourists for both day trips as well as longer stays.

Complimenting the region's natural landscape is the Walcha township and attractions such as the Open Air Gallery. The gallery currently comprises 49 sculptures, which equates to approximately one piece of public art for every 50 of Walcha's citizens. Contributing artists are local, national and

international, with many of our local artists being internationally renowned (including Stephen King). The works largely comprise sculptural pieces, many of which have been created using local timbers. In 2003 an exhibition of Walcha's art was held in Sydney and, in an essay written for the catalogue, the art critic John McDonald wrote:

*“Walcha has found a way of signposting its continued vitality. For a modest investment of ratepayers’ funds, the Council has given the town a special place on Australia’s cultural map. This has come about with the assistance of artists and supporters who have donated a great deal of time and expertise to create this unique facility. It is an example of many individuals working together for the good of a community in which they share strong family and sentimental ties.”*

Walcha's commercial core area enhances the bespoke theme and offers cafes, art galleries, handmade stores and studios as well as boutique, gift and antique shops. As the primary settlement of significance, the town of Walcha has developed over time with clear precincts, aiding visitors in their discovery of the township and ensuring that future development can be undertaken in a sustainable and logical manner. To the south of town lies environmental living areas which provide a connection to nature so integral to the region. The central business district and its adjoining mixed use areas are provided with access via the Oxley Highway and Thunderbolts Way, encouraging travellers to stop and explore. Sporting fields, riparian areas and residential development are all easily accessible from the commercial core, with sculptures included in the Open Air Gallery providing interest along the way.

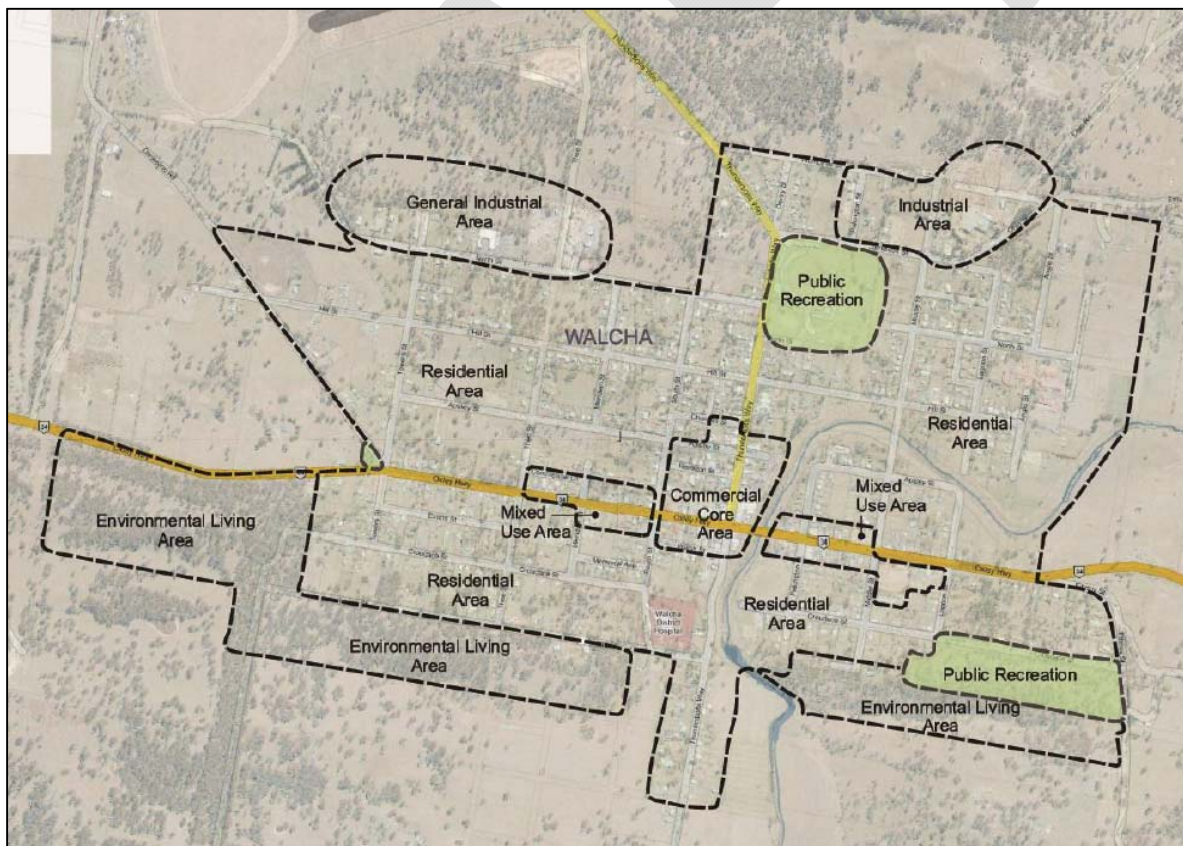


Figure 2 - Walcha township



## Our Local Opportunities

The attractive lifestyle offered by the Walcha LGA, access to education and good transport connectivity to Sydney and northern NSW makes the region an appealing base for people serving a range of markets including tree changers, professionals and micro-business owners. This LSPS identifies strategic planning priorities that strengthen the community's goal to be a vibrant, welcoming, resilient and sustainable community. This goal will be realised by maximising historic strengths in agriculture and forestry, supporting growth and industry diversification (including the horticultural sector and development of Ag Tech industries) and utilising the telecommunication networks to enable productivity enhancements in livestock and other agricultural industries. Continued investment in key road infrastructure to improve productivity and facilitate further growth in agriculture and tourism is also anticipated, together with embracing developing technologies, attracting renewable energy infrastructure and building on the opportunities provided by adjoining regional cities.

### Benefits of our proximity to regional cities:

The regional cities of Northern NSW provide economic stimulus and high-quality health, education and recreation options for the entire region

These cities have sizeable anchors including major hospitals and university campuses that will shape change and development

Tamworth and Armidale will accommodate much of the projected population growth in the New England North West region over the next 20 years, supporting critical jobs expansion and providing the region with key health and education services

Port Macquarie is one of the primary anchors on the North Coast, delivering new jobs, more diverse housing and high quality essential services

Walcha is ideally situated to maximise opportunities associated with these growing regional cities. A larger market, increased demand for tourism as well as access to regional and international ports and airports all have the potential to benefit businesses in the Walcha region.

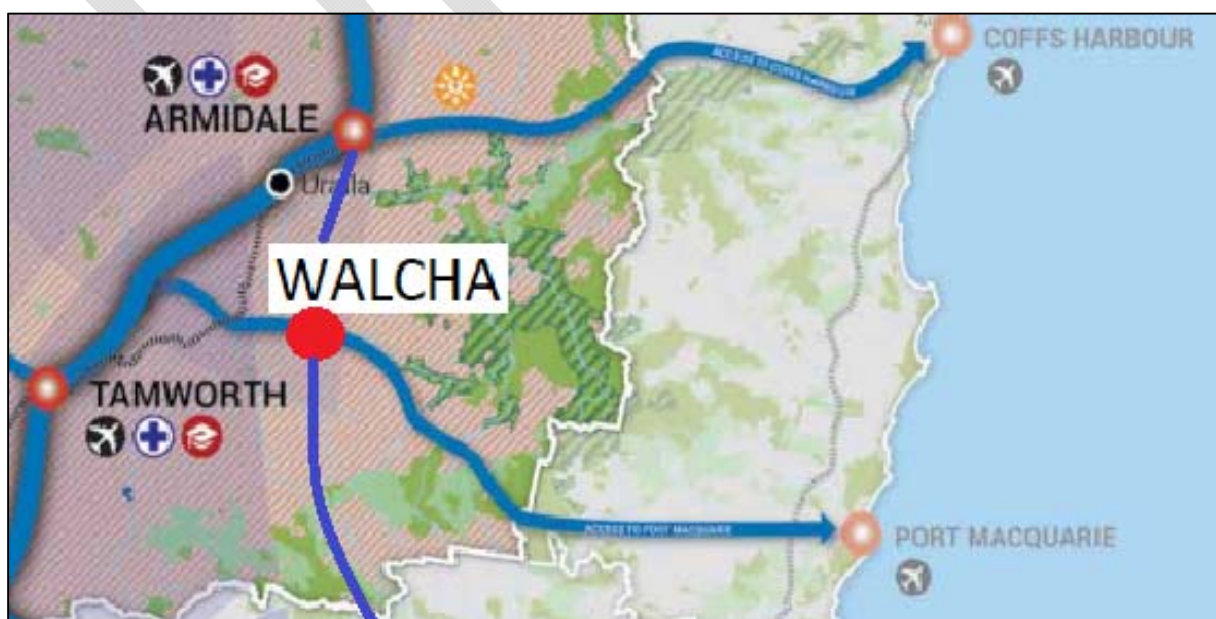


Figure 3 - Walcha in the Regional Context

# VISION

“To utilise our strategic location at the crossroads of the Oxley Highway and Thunderbolts Way to develop our diverse and productive agricultural activities, support the growth of Walcha township and connected villages and captivate visitors with our vibrant natural and cultural tourist attractions”

In 2036, Walcha Shire is a desirable place to live. It is supported by its prime agricultural lands in the western two-thirds of the LGA, the village of Walcha and picturesque tourism destinations in the national parks in the eastern extent of the region. Walcha, Walcha Road and Nowendoc provide opportunities for a village lifestyle, with rural residential areas available in southern Walcha and surrounding the heart of Nowendoc.

Council, through the LSPS, supports a growing and diversifying local economy that is sustainable and resilient. Strengthening local businesses; capitalising on opportunities associated with agricultural production, agri-business, freight logistics, and renewable energy; growing visitation to the area and attracting new residents, businesses and investment have all been pivotal in Walcha LGA continuing to be an attractive alternate lifestyle option.

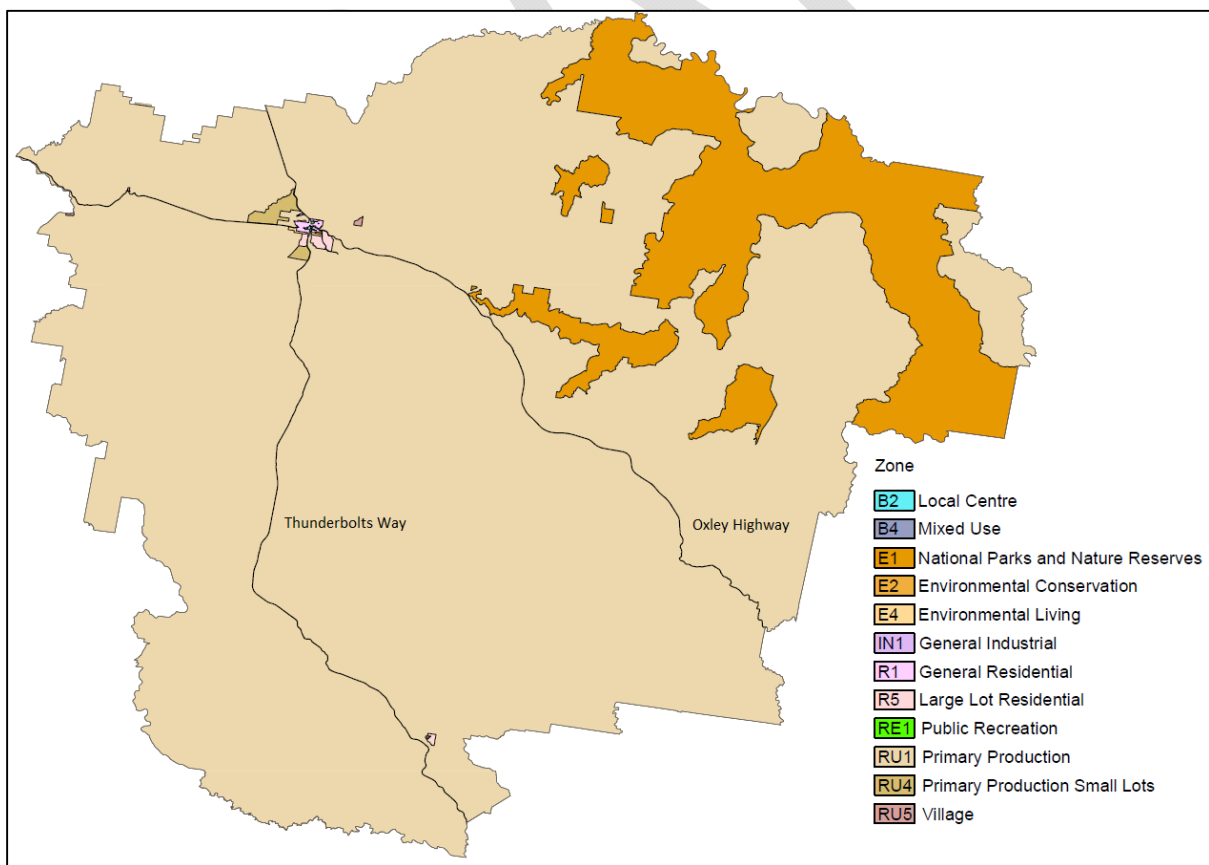


Figure 4 - Walcha LGA

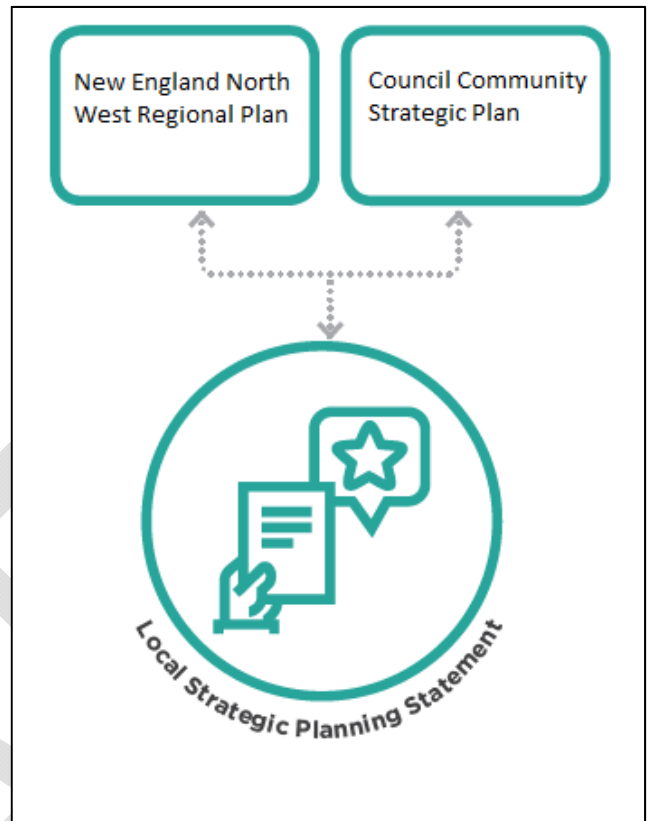
# PLANNING PRIORITIES

The planning priorities for the Walcha LGA aim to align with our vision. These priorities have been compiled having regard to the provisions of the *New England North West Regional Plan 2036* (Regional Plan) and the *Community Strategic Plan Walcha – 2027* (CSP). The Regional Plan provides the overarching framework to guide subsequent and more detailed land use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions for the New England North West region. The CSP is the guide for the future of the Walcha LGA, and represents the broader vision, aspirations, goals, priorities and challenges for the Walcha community.

As an integrative local plan, this statement is also informed by state-wide and regional policies.

The priorities of the key informing strategies can be categorised into the following broad groups:

- our economy;
- thriving places to live and grow;
- infrastructure to support growth;
- a strong connection to place;
- a sustainable environment.



## Summary of LSPS Planning Priorities

Having regard to the priorities of the existing strategies that apply to the Walcha LGA, the planning priorities identified by this LSPS can be summarised as follows:

### Our Economy



1. Encourage diversification in grazing agriculture, horticulture and agribusiness to grow these sectors and respond to domestic and international opportunities
2. Foster resilience and diversification in the agricultural industry to respond to the ageing farming workforce and climate change
3. Expand nature-based adventure and cultural tourism places and enhance visitor experiences

### Thriving Places



4. Deliver a variety of housing options in Walcha and promote development that contributes to the unique character of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook
5. Raise the area's profile and awareness of employment, business development and lifestyle opportunities, particularly for younger people and provide services for the ageing population

### Infrastructure



6. Continue to develop access and logistics infrastructure on appropriate sites to encourage new industry opportunities

### Connection to Place



7. Protect and celebrate our unique sense of place

### A Sustainable Environment



8. Identify and promote wind, solar and other renewable energy production opportunities; manage and support the transition to renewable energy

## Our Economy

### Planning Priority 1

*Encourage diversification in grazing agriculture, horticulture and agribusiness to grow these sectors and respond to domestic and international opportunities*

Walcha has vast productive agricultural plains with agriculture and related services accounting for an estimated 40 - 50% of the region's economy. As the predominant employer, the performance of the sector has flow on effects for many other businesses in the region. Crucial to the continued vitality of the agricultural sector is productive agricultural land which is unencumbered by conflicting or competing land uses.

This strong economic agricultural base is expected to underpin new and emerging industries to create a dynamic regional economy. Agricultural enterprises are adopting a range of technologies to grow production including biotechnology, water efficient crop species and cultivars, remote farm monitoring and automation. New technology will be leveraged to create a positive change in the agricultural industry via the promotion of intensive agriculture, horticulture, green industries and renewable energy generation. Further, appropriate co-location of related industries (agglomeration) will maximise infrastructure, decrease supply chain costs, increase economies of scale and attract investment. Industries that co-locate also have the potential to use the by-products and waste materials of other industries to create new products and services.

Walcha is uniquely positioned to develop new supply chains to export produce to Asian markets via existing and emerging opportunities such as the Tamworth Regional Airport, the Inland Rail and the Port of Newcastle.

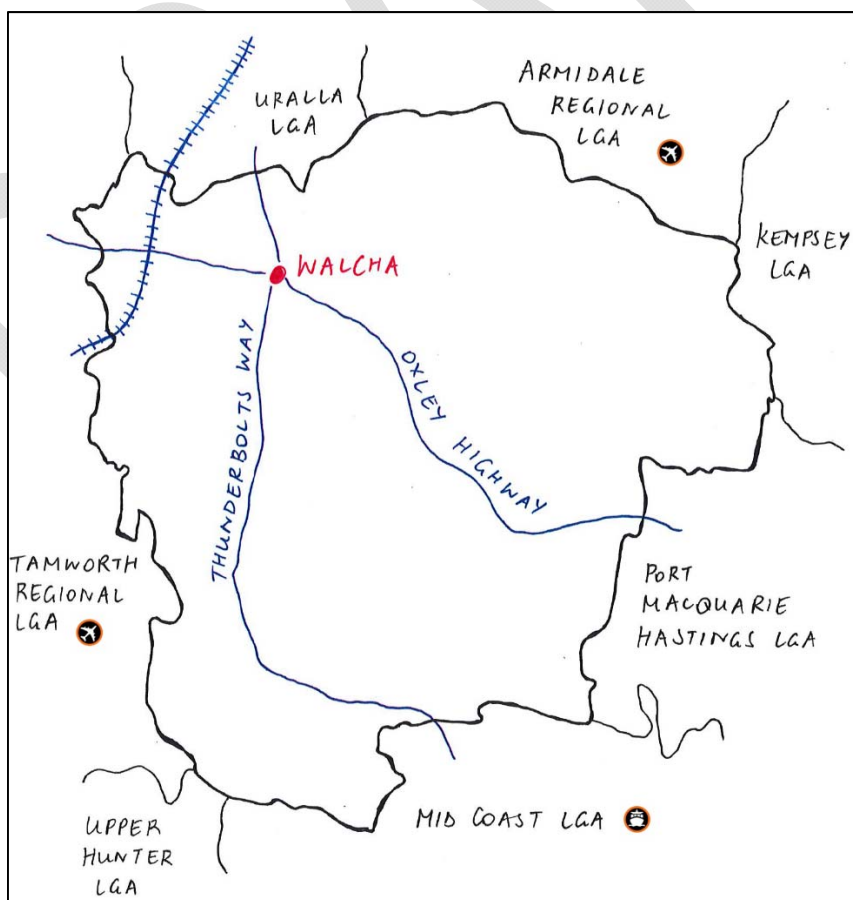


Figure 5 - Freight corridors map

## Strategic Direction

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
Protect productive agricultural lands across the LGA from land uses that may lead to land use conflict or fragmentation of property	Continue to implement appropriate rural land use provisions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• protect biophysical strategic agricultural land identified by NSW Department of Primary Industries – Agriculture;</li> <li>• restrict the encroachment of incompatible land uses;</li> <li>• ensure that land use standards for minimum subdivision sizes in the LEP reflect trends and enable a productive agricultural sector</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Grow and diversify intensive agriculture and agri-business	Ensure planning provisions accommodate the changing needs of agriculture as well as the development of intensive agriculture, agri-businesses and associated value-adding activities	Ongoing
Increase opportunities to move agricultural produce to market	Support and grow existing and potential freight and logistics facilities by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identifying and protecting key infrastructure corridors that assist current and future development as well as capitalise on inter-regional connections and external markets;</li> <li>• protecting network opportunities and distribution from incompatible land uses or land fragmentation;</li> <li>• continuing to liaise with Namoi Unlimited (Joint Organisation) to ensure that strategic infrastructure is included in regional freight and transport infrastructure plans, including plans for high productivity vehicles;</li> <li>• working with stakeholders to update transport network capacity as demand changes, including Salisbury Creek, Chimney Swamp Bridge and Surveyors Creek Bridge</li> </ul>	Ongoing

Developing and maintaining a skilled workforce is essential to business growth and diversification and to build resilience within the Walcha community. Given the cyclical nature of the local and regional economies, the workforce needs to be innovative and adaptable to work across sectors.

It is also important that Council plan for greater resilience to a variable climate. The *Western Enabling Regional Adaptation New England North West region report* prepared by the Office of Environment and Heritage provides a snapshot of the near future (2030) and far future (2070) climate change scenarios. In summary:

- the region is expected to experience an increase in all temperature variables (average, maximum and minimum), more hot days, and fewer cold nights for the near and far futures. Heatwaves are also projected to increase, be hotter and last longer;
- seasonality of rainfall will change. Autumn rainfall will increase in the near future and the far future. The majority of models agree that winter rainfall will decrease in the near future. Summer rainfall is projected to decrease in the near future; however, summer rainfall is projected to increase in the far future;
- fire risk will increase, with projected increases in average and severe Forest Fire Danger Index values in the near future and the far future.

These climate changes have the potential to affect not only our environment (through drought, changing rainfall patterns, heatwaves and storm events) but our community's economy, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and overall water security.



**Strategic Direction**

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
Foster resilience and diversification	Support growth that fosters resilience and diversification by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that planning provisions can accommodate the changing needs of agriculture (including the development of intensive agriculture);</li> <li>promoting investment in the agricultural supply chain by protecting these assets from land use conflict and the encroachment of incompatible land uses</li> </ul>	Ongoing
Encourage tourist land uses that are complimentary to agriculture	Ensure that the planning provisions not only protect rural areas, but allow for diversification of compatible land uses (such as farm stay accommodation and eco-tourist resorts)	Ongoing
Respond to impacts anticipated as a result of climate change	Develop appropriate planning policies (such as a Development Control Plan) which manage natural hazard risks and avoid vulnerable areas	Ongoing
	Consider the impacts of climate change addressed by the Office of Environment and Heritage in the <i>Western Enabling Regional Adaptation New England North West region report</i> , particularly in relation to the environment, the community’s health and wellbeing, infrastructure and overall water security	Ongoing

**Planning Priority 3** *Expand nature-based adventure and cultural tourism places and enhance visitor experiences*

Walcha’s natural environment, cultural features and visitor experiences (events) are expected to continue to attract tourists and offer diversity within a predominantly agricultural region. The LGA offers a range of tourism opportunities including access to the eastern gorge country as well as varied activities

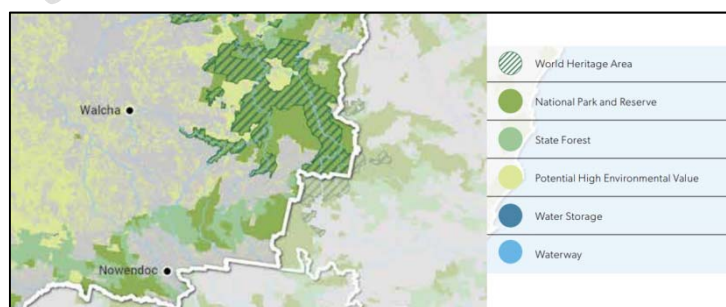


Figure 6 - Environmental assets

such as mountain biking, fishing and nature-based tours. Iconic visitor experiences such as trout streams and waterfalls will continue to draw domestic and international tourists, contribute to attractive lifestyles and grow the local economy. With the emergence of ‘new tourism’ associated with the millennials, the experience economy and active families, together with existing markets such as baby boomers (including the caravan and RV markets) and touring motorcyclists, the LGA is well located to optimise tourism.



## Strategic Direction

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
<p>Promote sustainable development and protection of our natural resources through the planning system</p>	<p>Support the growth of sustainable tourism to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• focus development to areas of least biodiversity sensitivity and implement the ‘avoid, minimise, offset’ hierarchy to biodiversity and areas of high environmental value;</li> <li>• facilitate the use of Council owned land for community / public events and festivals. This could be achieved by the inclusion of a clause in the LEP to permit temporary events without development consent</li> </ul>	<p>Year 0 – 2</p>
<p>Expand tourism and visitor opportunities</p>	<p>Promote opportunities to expand visitation to regionally significant nature-based tourism places, including the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park and World Heritage Areas</p> <p>Encourage opportunities to identify culturally appropriate Aboriginal tourism opportunities through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• consultation with the Local Aboriginal Land Council;</li> <li>• encouraging tourism development in natural areas that support conservation outcomes;</li> <li>• strategically planning for a growing international tourism market; and</li> <li>• aligning with the Destination Management Plan prepared by Destination NSW</li> </ul> <p>Promote tourism opportunities through Walcha’s built heritage and utilising the <i>Walcha Strategic Heritage Action Plan 2019-2039</i>.</p> <p>Position Walcha to be known for its art culture, national parks and as a destination for touring motorbikes.</p> <p>Ensure planning policies (such as a Development Control Plan) facilitate tourism and visitor accommodation as well as supporting land uses, while also protecting areas of high environmental, Aboriginal and historic significance via appropriate development standards</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 3 – 5</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

## Thriving Places to Live and Grow

### **Planning Priority 4**

***Deliver a variety of housing options in Walcha and promote development that contributes to the unique character of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook.***

The population of Walcha LGA is ageing, which will increase demand for services to facilitate 'ageing in place' as well as supported accommodation and aged care homes. To encourage new residents while also accommodating the existing community, it will be important to deliver a mix of housing types and lot sizes. Walcha has an adequate supply of existing zoned residential land, including R1 General Residential, R5 Large Lot Residential and E4 Environmental Living which are provided with minimum lot sizes ranging from 350 square metres to 2 hectares. These lot sizes aim to accommodate higher density living in proximity to the Walcha city centre and associated infrastructure, with lifestyle allotments providing a buffer between the urban and rural landscapes. The varied land zoning can accommodate a range of housing types and aims to preserve the central business district, residential neighbourhoods, environmental areas and rural landscapes. The flexibility of the LEP subsequently contributes to the delivery of housing diversity and choice, assists in affordability, helps meet the needs of an ageing population and creates more walkable, vibrant and accessible places.

The centres of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook are afforded with land zoned R5 Large Lot Residential and RU5 Village to support the retention of the unique character of these settlements. Minimum lot sizes of 1,000 square metres and 2 hectares further accommodate the delivery of a diverse range of housing options that complement the existing charm of these communities.

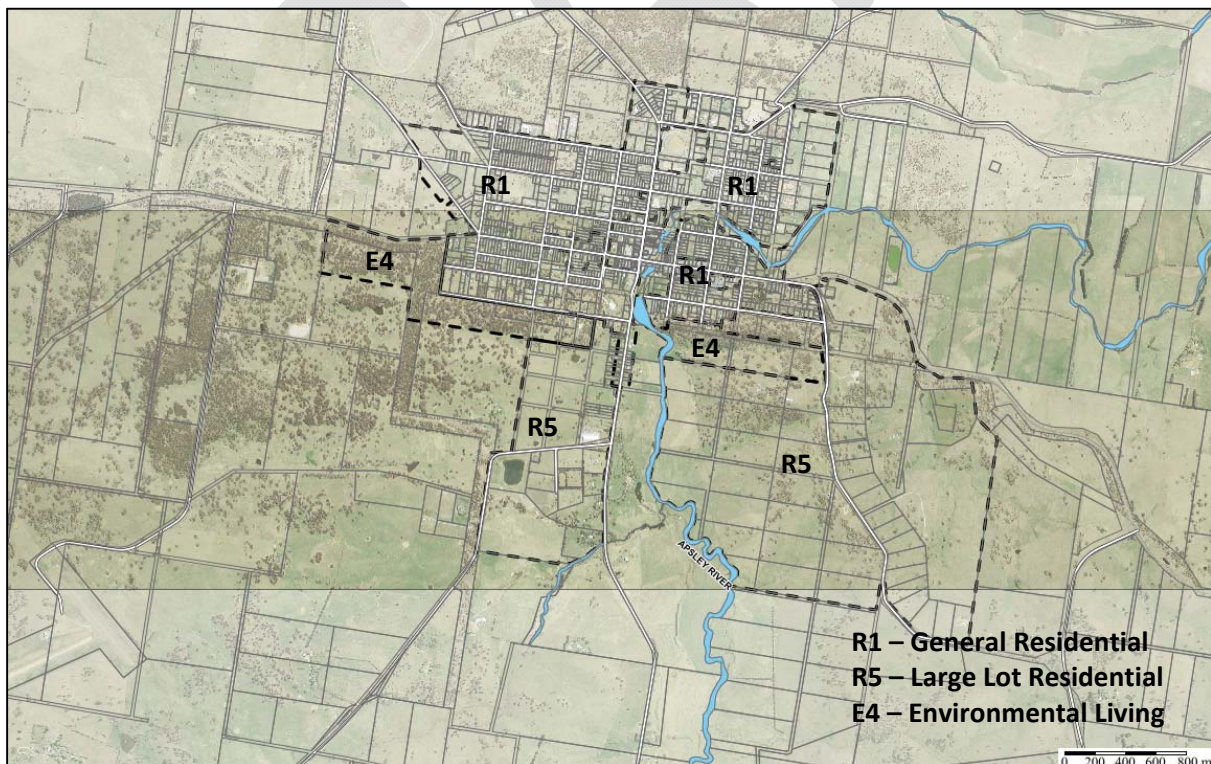


Figure 7 - Walcha housing areas

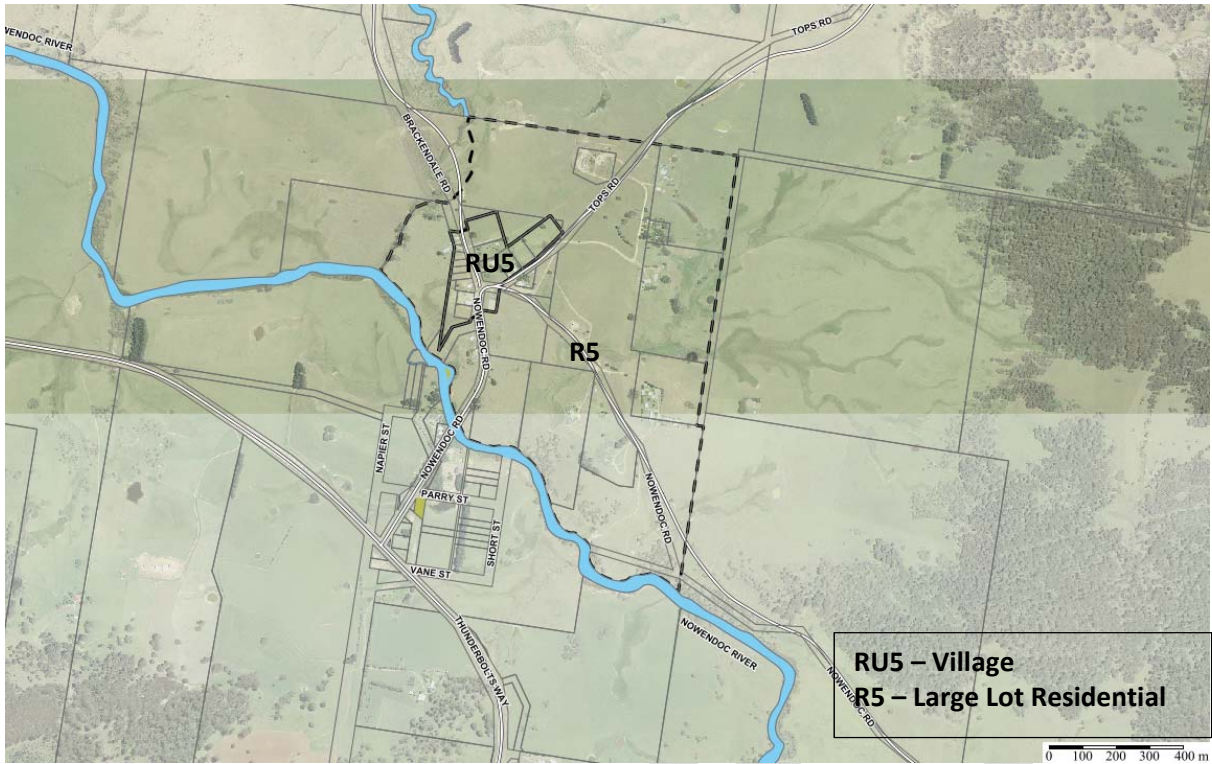


Figure 8 -- Nowendoc housing areas

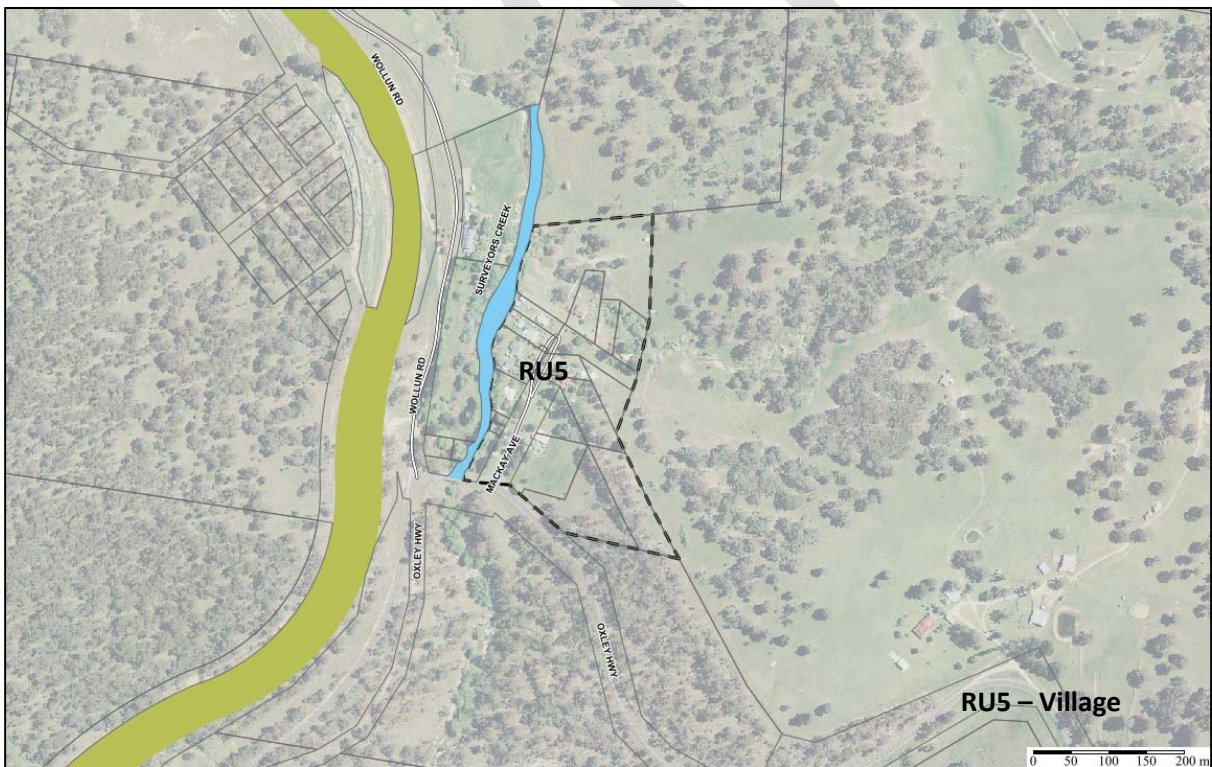


Figure 9 - Walcha Road housing area

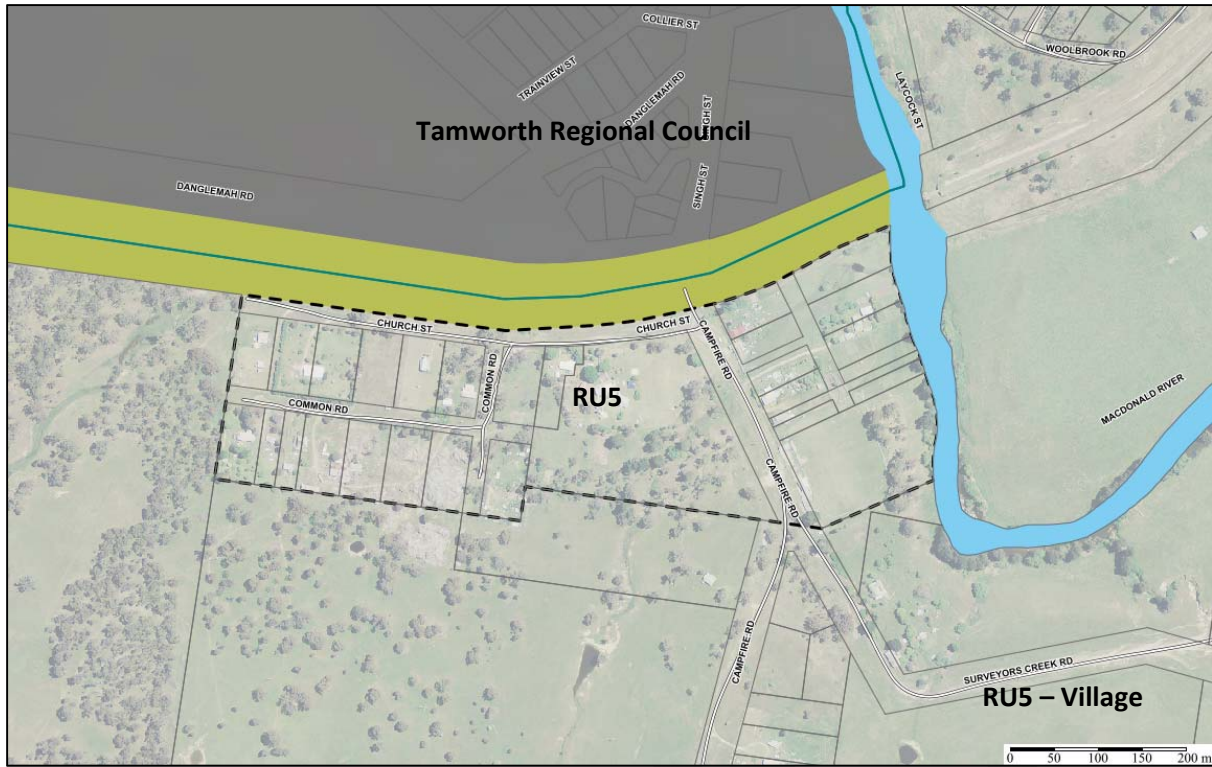


Figure 10 - Woolbrook housing area

**Strategic Direction**

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Plan for housing to meet the needs of a changing population</b></p>	<p>Promote the prosperity of our urban areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• directing future residential and large lot housing to existing zoned areas of R1, R5 and E4 land within Walcha; RU5 and R5 zoned land in Nowendoc; and RU5 zoned land in Walcha Road and Woolbrook;</li> <li>• protecting and enhancing the unique aspects of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook; and</li> <li>• providing increased opportunities for housing in Woolbrook via appropriate land rezoning;</li> <li>• supporting the availability of an appropriate housing supply by responding to changing housing needs, as well as household and demographic changes (e.g. increased demand for independent living units and residential aged care facilities);</li> <li>• assessing any required infrastructure delivery and its subsequent feasibility</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p>

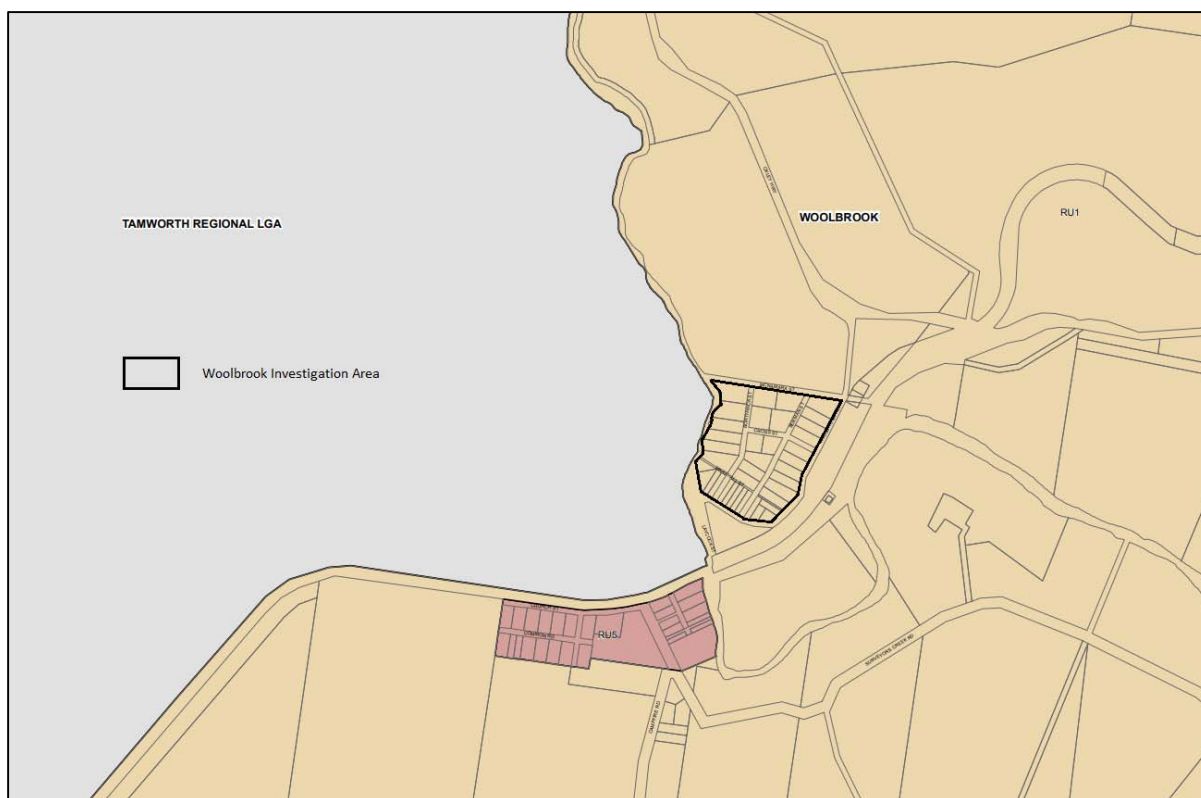


Figure 11 - Potential Woolbrook investigation area

**Planning Priority 5**

***Raise the area's profile and awareness of employment, business development and lifestyle opportunities, particularly for younger people and provide services for the ageing population***

It is vital that future strategic planning for the Walcha LGA aim to reverse the current out-migration of young people and families, thereby facilitating not only population growth but also the retention of local businesses and essential services. The *Western Enabling Regional Adaptation – New England North West region* report identifies a number of drivers as contributing to the loss of regional youth: declining regional services and support mechanisms, an ageing workforce, education, a lack of employment opportunities and of affordable housing for young people, the school leaving age is increasing and students are not taking up apprenticeships.

The attraction of new industry, workers, residents and visitors through collaborative marketing campaigns and promotions incentives is to be emphasised. This will foster generational change, with younger people bringing new ideas, skills and business practices.

In order to raise the area's profile, achieve sustainable population growth and regenerate local communities, future strategic planning will maximise existing zoned employment land, strengths and local businesses. It will also identify opportunities to facilitate new residents and economic opportunities. Ensuring that the infrastructure and services needed to support economic development are available is also essential, as well as services for the existing ageing population.



Figure 12 - B2 & B4 zoned land in Walcha

**Strategic Direction**

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Stimulate economic opportunities</b></p>	<p>Undertake an Economic Development &amp; Employment Strategy that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strengthens and reinforces Walcha’s existing business and mixed use areas;</li> <li>• raises the profile of the area and awareness of opportunities for employment, business development and quality of life, including the Walcha CBD;</li> <li>• prioritises industry diversification, job creation, capacity building and resource efficiency;</li> <li>• targets opportunities for younger demographics;</li> <li>• fosters collaboration with business sectors to develop employment opportunities that can attract and retain younger people as well as professional and skilled workers;</li> <li>• examines the existing land bank and planning provisions as well as their ability to accommodate new and diverse business opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>Year 5 – 10</p>
<p><b>Enrich quality of life and wellbeing of residents</b></p>	<p>Promote infrastructure and services that support healthy, active lifestyles for young families as well as the region’s ageing population such as activation of the river precinct for passive recreation</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>

## Infrastructure to Support Growth

### Planning Priority 6

*Continue to develop access and logistics infrastructure on appropriate sites to encourage new industry opportunities*

The Walcha LGA is strategically located at the junction of the Thunderbolts Way and Oxley Highway, providing freight access to Queensland, the Mid-North Coast, Newcastle, Sydney and the west of NSW. Reflecting this connectivity, Walcha is home to several road freight transport companies that provide livestock and general freight services to the broader NSW region. Walcha's existing infrastructure endowments have also made it an attractive proposition for investment in renewable energy generation and transmission which may present infrastructure challenges as well as opportunities requiring further consideration.

Continued investment in road infrastructure (such as road widening and reconstruction of pavements on the Thunderbolts Way) will improve productivity as well as facilitate the flow of goods to market. Additionally, investment in key infrastructure that supports and facilitates growth, including mobile telephone infrastructure, electricity infrastructure and servicing of commercial and industrial land will also assist to remove barriers to growth.

Water security in the region is a major contributor to the establishment of new industry opportunities, as it is a critical input that creates surety for investment not only for agriculture but also for people and the businesses that compliment agriculture. Investment in additional off creek storage capacity to drought-proof Walcha will help position the LGA as a favourable, competitive location for businesses to seek and grow.

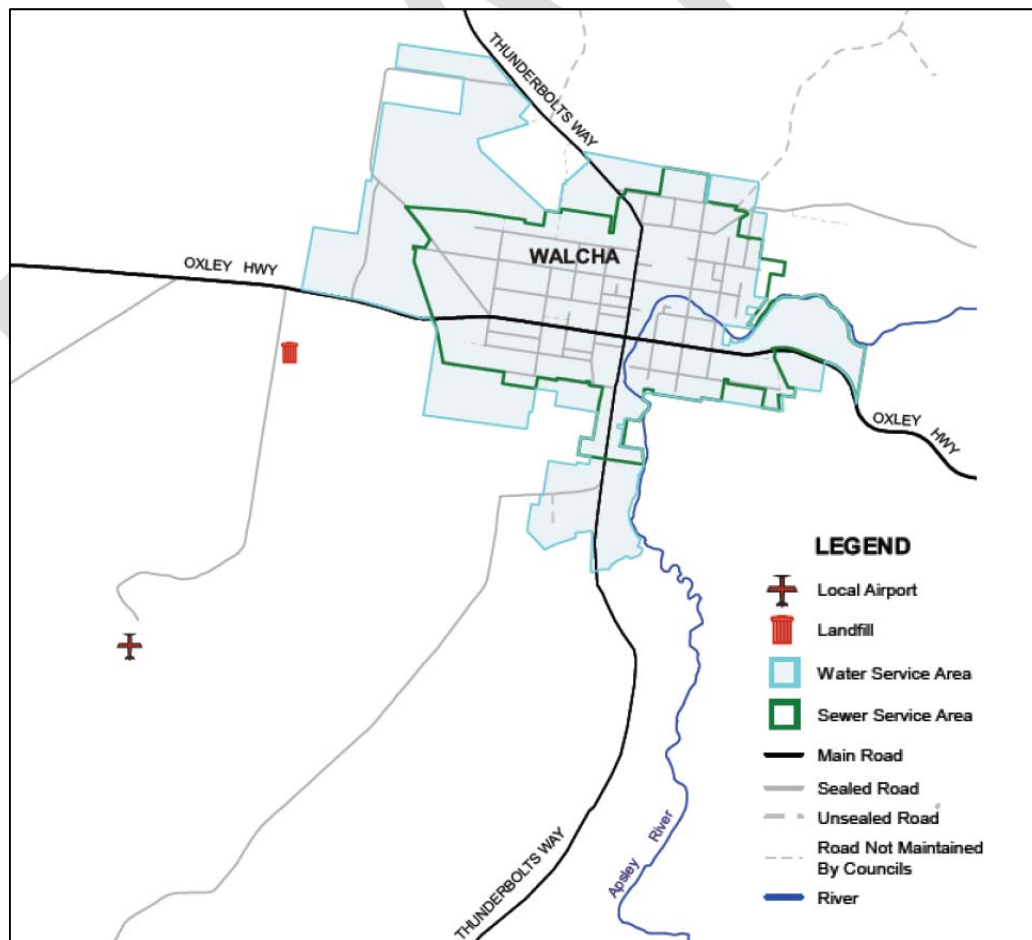


Figure 13 - Existing infrastructure in Walcha township

## Strategic Direction

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
Generate new industry opportunities	Determine the suitability of infrastructure to support growth by reviewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council’s existing water, sewer and stormwater management plans with a focus on land use provisions and policy options;</li> <li>• the condition and capability of the road network to support the freight sector, increase connectivity, and accommodate new industry opportunities;</li> </ul>	Year 5 – 10
Commitment	Action	Timeframe
Generate new industry opportunities (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the capacity of the region to support renewable electricity infrastructure;</li> <li>• existing telecommunication infrastructure with the view increasing mobile phone coverage and the reliability, speed and affordability of the internet</li> </ul>	Year 5 – 10
Provide well-located and serviced supplies of industrial and employment lands	Undertake an employment land review that examines current land availability (approximately 7.2 hectares) to ascertain any physical constraints or infrastructure servicing constraints that prevent future land uses; as well as land suitable for future development	Year 5 – 10

## *A Strong Connection to Place*

### Planning Priority 7

### *Protect and celebrate our unique sense of place*

Walcha residents have a strong connection to place, incorporating the natural environment, built environment and cultural space. Walcha Council recognises Aboriginal people as custodians of the land and recognises the significance of their spiritual and cultural connection to the land. This connection long pre-dates European settlement in the area, with evidence of Aboriginal occupation of the Tablelands dating back thousands of years. Despite physical modification of the land, many places of significance remain.

Protecting, enhancing and conserving places and buildings of heritage significance, including Aboriginal places and relics, is important to preserve the unique nature of the Walcha LGA. These places provide a sense of cultural value, identity and a connection to the past. Heritage buildings, including state listed items such as the former St Andrew’s Anglican Church and Rectory, Walcha Road railway station, Ohio Homestead and Woolbrook rail bridge over McDonald River make a significant contribution to the area’s distinct character. These buildings, together with significant places, are critical to attract new residents and visitors to the area. Development of new initiatives such as experiential tourism and the Open Air Gallery will also contribute to the creation of a sense of place.

Nurturing social capital is also an important aspect of protecting our connection to the region. The actions detailed in this statement aim to facilitate community cohesion, accommodate shared



beliefs of the community and improve the connection to country via preservation of European and Aboriginal culture.

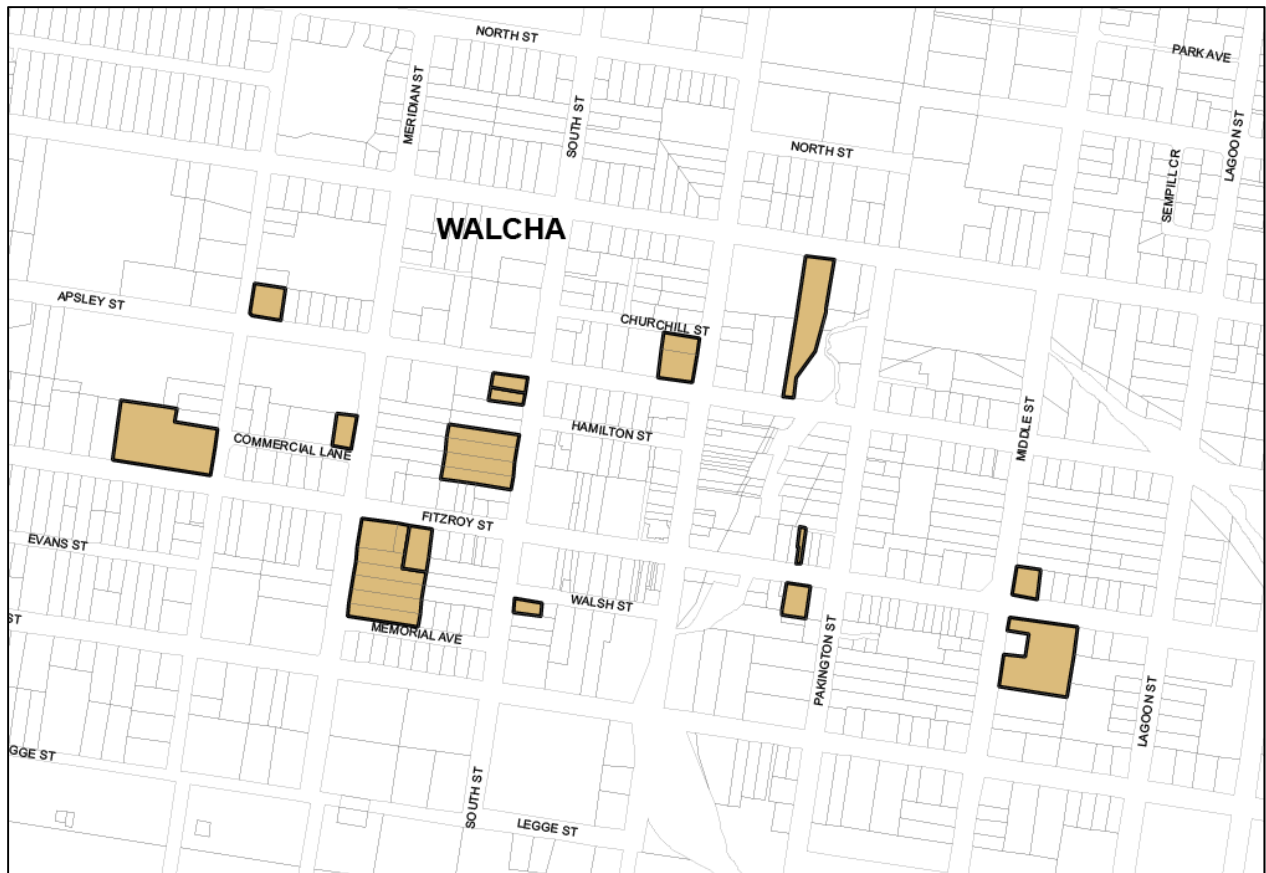


Figure 14 - Heritage items in the Walcha township

**Strategic Direction**

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
<p><b>Maintain the character of the Walcha Local Government Area through orderly development of the natural and built environment</b></p>	<p>Apply appropriate provisions to protect and conserve environmental and heritage assets across the LGA, while permitting a range of land uses to assist in the preservation of the region’s important assets</p> <p>Implement the <i>Walcha Strategic Action Plan 2019-2039</i> and to have a it overlooked by a Committee of individual stakeholders that will meet on a bi- annual basis to ensure implementation. These meetings will also provide the opportunity for further ideas to mature and relationships between key stakeholders to further develop.</p> <p>Utilise the <i>Walcha Strategic Action Plan 2019-2039</i> in conjunction with the NSW Heritage Branch to identify and protect heritage items, and include appropriate local planning controls</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Year 0 – 10</p>

	Support local heritage studies in consultation with the local Aboriginal community and adopt appropriate measures in planning strategies and local plans to protect Aboriginal heritage	Ongoing
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### A Sustainable Environment

<b>Planning Priority 8</b>	<b>Identify and promote wind, solar and other renewable energy production opportunities; manage and support the transition to renewable energy</b>
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The Australian Government Renewable Energy Target and the NSW Renewable Energy Action Plan reflect the transition to a more sustainable and resource-efficient economy. These targets aim to achieve a ‘closed-loop’ economy, whereby all outputs become either inputs for other activities or are returned to natural systems as benign emissions rather than pollutants. Considering the increasing importance of renewable energy, and the barrier that traditional energy costs can create, it is imperative that the LGA’s natural advantages in generating renewable energy be maximised.

The New England Tablelands is afforded with extensive wind and solar resources, and several advantageous pumped hydro-energy storage sites are available on the edges of the Walcha plateau. Walcha is ideally located for the construction of new storage facilities and delivery of dispatchable power to the system. Reflecting this, Walcha LGA is included in the New England Energy Zone, a key NSW priority energy zone identified in the *NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy*, and will become a focus for investment and jobs in modern energy generation. The New England region has been included as an energy zone due to its high energy potential where planned transmission infrastructure upgrades are able to connect multiple projects at a lower cost. Consideration of the impact on productive agricultural land and important view corridors will be key during the assessment of any future development applications.



Figure 15 - Walcha is well placed to harness renewable energy

**Strategic Direction**

Commitment	Action	Timeframe
<b>Explore options for renewable energy generation to encourage a diversified economy</b>	<p>Encourage the development of wind and solar farms in appropriate areas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• avoid/manage impacts on the scenic rural landscape and visitor attractions;</li><li>• have available access to essential infrastructure, such as substations;</li><li>• preserve valuable farming land;</li><li>• facilitate appropriate smaller-scale renewable energy projects using biowaste, solar, wind, hydro, geothermal or other innovative storage technologies</li></ul>	Ongoing

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# ACTION PLAN

This LSPS describes the long-term land use strategy for the Walcha LGA to 2036. This statement is intended to be a living document and should be revised on an ongoing, as-needs-basis so that the plan remains responsive, relevant and local. To this end, it is intended that the statement will be updated upon completion of the various actions identified throughout the document. Revisions to the LSPS may also be required in response to significant changes within the LGA, such as new infrastructure investment and employment opportunities or significant changes in projected population growth.

Council will monitor and report on progress of the LSPS priorities, actions and outcomes in an annual report. This will inform adjustments to the LSPS to ensure local planning policy is effective, responsive and delivering on local community aspirations. A comprehensive review will be undertaken in 2026, if not earlier.

Community feedback will be regularly sought. It is anticipated that this consultation will identify continuous improvement opportunities and will ensure that the LSPS continues to reflect the community's social and economic needs as well as their vision of the future desired state of the local area.

Existing governance arrangements with Namoi Unlimited (previously known as the Namoi Joint Organisation of Councils) shall continue to be utilised to support effective approaches to cross boundary issues. The need to collaborate with other councils in the region recognises the wider role that Walcha's strategic planning and decision-making plays in achieving the objectives of the *New England North West Plan 2036*. It also recognises the potential impact that strategically important decisions regarding critical infrastructure, environmental issues, housing, investment and a range of other topics covered in the LSPS may have on the plans of neighbouring communities. These valued cross boundary partnerships will also help deliver Walcha's vision by driving efficiencies in accessing government funding, attracting inward investment and accessing a wider field of expertise.

## Funding & Investment

Strategies and studies required by this statement will primarily be funded in the future 4-year delivery program and annual operational plans of Council, although availability of funding via the Regional Growth fund and other state agency opportunities will also be explored.

## Monitoring & Reporting

Council will monitor, review and report on its LSPS to ensure that its planning priorities are being achieved, using the existing Integrated Planning & Reporting framework (IP&R) in accordance with the *Local Government Act 1993*.

## Strategies and Key Actions

Enablers	Strategies and Key Actions		
	Planning Priority 1: Encourage diversification in agriculture, horticulture and agribusiness to grow these sectors and respond to domestic and international opportunities	Planning Priority 2: Foster resilience and diversification in the agricultural industry to respond to the ageing farming workforce and climate change	Planning Priority 3: Expand nature-based adventure and cultural tourism places and enhance visitor experiences
Community Strategic Plan	<p>CSP 1.1: Walcha will be serviced by an integrated and efficient transport network</p> <p>CSP 6.6: The character of Walcha and its surrounding villages will be maintained while protecting the productivity of our rural land</p>	<p>CSP 6.5: Agricultural activities will be environmentally sustainable</p>	<p>CSP 2.1: Commercial and tourist development will be promoted and encouraged to grow in harmony with the natural environment, to take maximum advantage of commercial opportunities and to increase local employment</p> <p>CSP 6.6: The character of Walcha and its surrounding villages will be maintained while protecting the productivity of our rural land</p>
Regional Plan	<p>Direction 1: Expand agribusiness and food processing sectors</p> <p>Direction 3: Protect and enhance productive agricultural lands</p> <p>Direction 13: Expand emerging industries through freight and logistics connectivity</p> <p>Direction 14: Enhance transport and infrastructure networks</p>	<p>Direction 2: Build agricultural productivity</p> <p>Direction 3: Protect and enhance productive agricultural lands</p> <p>Direction 6: Deliver new industries of the future</p> <p>Direction 12: Adapt to natural hazards and climate change</p>	<p>Direction 8: Expand tourism and visitor opportunities</p> <p>Direction 11: Protect areas of potential high environmental value</p>

Enablers	Strategies and Key Actions		
	Planning Priority 1	Planning Priority 2	Planning Priority 3
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p><b>Support and grow existing and potential freight and logistics facilities (Ongoing)</b></p> <p>Continue to provide safe and efficient passage of heavy vehicles through the Walcha LGA, by focusing on key freight routes and connectivity to markets.</p>	<p><b>Undertake local and regional freight planning to ensure that “pinch point” are identified and removed wherever possible.</b></p>	
<b>Facilities and Institutions</b>			<p>Promote opportunities to expand visitation to regionally significant nature-based tourism places, including the Oxley Wild Rivers National Park and World Heritage Areas (Ongoing)</p>
			<p>Encourage opportunities to identify culturally appropriate Aboriginal tourism opportunities (Year 3 – 5)</p>
<b>Regulation and Policy</b>	<p>Continue to implement appropriate rural land use provisions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>protect biophysical strategic agricultural land identified by NSW Department of Primary Industries – Agriculture;</li> <li>restrict the encroachment of incompatible land uses;</li> <li>ensure that land use standards for minimum subdivision sizes in the LEP reflect trends and enable a productive agricultural sector (Ongoing)</li> </ul> <p>Ensure planning provisions accommodate the changing needs of agriculture as well as the</p>	<p>Support growth that fosters resilience and diversification by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensuring that planning provisions can accommodate the changing needs of agriculture (including the development of intensive agriculture);</li> <li>promoting investment in the agricultural supply chain by protecting these assets from land use conflict and the encroachment of incompatible land uses (Ongoing)</li> </ul> <p>Ensure that the planning provisions not only protect rural areas, but allow for</p>	<p>Support the growth of sustainable tourism to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus development to areas of least biodiversity sensitivity and implement the ‘avoid, minimise, offset’ hierarchy to biodiversity and areas of high environmental value;</li> <li>facilitate the use of Council owned land for community / public events and festivals (Year 0 – 2)</li> </ul> <p>Ensure planning policies (such as a Development Control Plan) facilitate tourism and visitor accommodation as well as supporting land uses, while also protecting areas of high environmental, Aboriginal and</p>

	development of intensive agriculture, agri-businesses and associated value-adding activities (Ongoing)	diversification of compatible land uses (such as farm stay accommodation and eco-tourist resorts) (Ongoing)	historic significance via appropriate development standards (Ongoing)
<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Strategies and Key Actions</b>		
	<b>Planning Priority 1</b>	<b>Planning Priority 2</b>	<b>Planning Priority 3</b>
<b>Regulation and Policy</b>		Develop appropriate planning policies within the <i>Walcha Development Control Plan 2019</i> which manage natural hazard risks and avoid vulnerable areas (Ongoing)	
		Consider the impacts of climate change addressed by the Office of Environment and Heritage in the <i>Western Enabling Regional Adaptation New England North West region report</i> , particularly in relation to the environment, the community's health and wellbeing, infrastructure and overall water security (Ongoing)	

Enablers	Strategies and Key Actions	
	<p><b>Planning Priority 4: Deliver a variety of housing options in Walcha and promote development that contributes to the unique character of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook</b></p>	<p><b>Planning Priority 5: Raise the area's profile and awareness of employment, business development and lifestyle opportunities, particularly for younger people and provide services for the ageing population</b></p>
<p><b>Community Strategic Plan</b></p>		<p>CSP 5.5: Young people will be retained and supported to live in Walcha</p>
<p><b>Regional Plan</b></p>	<p>Direction 18: Provide great places to live            Direction 20: Deliver greater housing diversity to suit changing needs            Direction 21: Deliver well planned rural residential housing</p>	<p>Direction 7: Build strong economic centres            Direction 17: Strengthen community resilience</p>
<p><b>Infrastructure</b></p>		<p>Promote infrastructure and services that support healthy, active lifestyles for young families as well as the region's ageing population (Ongoing)</p>
<p><b>Regulation and Policy</b></p>	<p>Promote the prosperity of our urban areas by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• directing future residential and large lot housing to existing zoned areas of R1, R5 and E4 land within Walcha; RU5 and R5 zoned land in Nowendoc; and RU5 zoned land in Walcha Road and Woolbrook;</li> <li>• protecting and enhancing the unique aspects of Nowendoc, Walcha Road and Woolbrook; and</li> <li>• providing increased opportunities for housing in Woolbrook via appropriate land rezoning;</li> <li>• supporting the availability of an appropriate housing supply by responding to changing housing needs, as well as household and demographic changes (e.g. increased demand for independent living units and residential aged care facilities);</li> <li>• assessing any required infrastructure delivery and its subsequent feasibility (Ongoing)</li> </ul>	<p>Undertake an Economic Development &amp; Employment Strategy (Year 5 – 10)</p>



Enablers	Strategies and Key Actions
	<p><b>Planning Priority 6: Continue to develop access and logistics infrastructure on appropriate sites to encourage new industry opportunities</b></p>
<b>Community Strategic Plan</b>	CSP 6.3: Water supply and sewerage services will be physically and environmentally sensitive
<b>Regional Plan</b>	<p>Direction 7: Build strong economic centres</p> <p>Direction 10: Sustainably manage and conserve water resources</p>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p>Determine the suitability of infrastructure to support growth by reviewing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council’s existing water, sewer and stormwater management plans with a focus on land use provisions and policy options;</li> <li>• the condition and capability of the road network to support the freight sector, increase connectivity, and accommodate new industry opportunities;</li> <li>• continue to eliminate freight “pinch points” within the network to enable first and last mile freight access to local farmland.</li> <li>• the capacity of the region to support renewable electricity infrastructure;</li> <li>• existing telecommunication infrastructure with the view increasing mobile phone coverage and the reliability, speed and affordability of the internet (Year 5 – 10)</li> <li>• develop a long term strategy to secure a reliable supply of potable water for Walcha, including the provision of a new off stream storage dam to provide water storage when the Macdonald River flow is insufficient.</li> </ul>
<b>Regulation and Policy</b>	Undertake an employment land review that examines current land availability (approximately 7.2 hectares) to ascertain any physical constraints or infrastructure servicing constraints that prevent future land uses; as well as land suitable for future development (Year 5 – 10)

Enablers	Strategies and Key Actions
	<b>Planning Priority 7: Protect and celebrate our unique sense of place</b>
<b>Community Strategic Plan</b>	<p>CSP 5.3: Walcha’s cultural identity will be enhanced</p> <p>CSP 5.4: Walcha’s Aboriginal communities will be supported and strengthened</p> <p>CSP 6.1: Walcha’s distinct and diverse natural and built environment will be protected and enhanced</p>
<b>Regional Plan</b>	<p>Direction 7: Build strong economic centres</p> <p>Direction 22: Increase the economic self-determination of Aboriginal communities</p> <p>Directions 23: Collaborate with Aboriginal communities to respect and protect Aboriginal culture and heritage</p> <p>Direction 24: Protect the region’s historic heritage assets</p>
<b>Facilities and Institutions</b>	<p>Finalise the community-based Heritage Study in conjunction with the NSW Heritage Branch to identify and protect heritage items, and include appropriate local planning controls (Year 0 – 2)</p> <p>Support local heritage studies in consultation with the local Aboriginal community and adopt appropriate measures in planning strategies and local plans to protect Aboriginal heritage (Ongoing)</p>
<b>Regulation and Policy</b>	<p>Apply appropriate provisions to protect and conserve environmental and heritage assets across the LGA, while permitting a range of land uses to assist in the preservation of the region’s important assets (Ongoing)</p>

<b>Enablers</b>	<b>Strategies and Key Actions</b>
	<b>Planning Priority 8: Identify and promote wind, solar and other renewable energy production opportunities; manage and support the transition to renewable energy</b>
<b>Community Strategic Plan</b>	CSP 6.4: Walcha will increase the use and production of renewable energy
<b>Regional Plan</b>	Direction 5: Grow New England North West as the renewable energy hub of NSW
<b>Infrastructure</b>	<p>Encourage the development of wind and solar farms in appropriate areas that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• avoid / manage impacts on the scenic rural landscape and visitor attractions;</li> <li>• have available access to essential infrastructure, such as substations;</li> <li>• preserve valuable farming land;</li> <li>• facilitate appropriate smaller-scale renewable energy projects using biowaste, solar, wind, hydro, geothermal or other innovative storage technologies (Ongoing)</li> </ul>

# RESOURCES

Destination Country and Outback NSW Destination Management Plan 2018 – 2020

Future Transport Strategy 2056

Making it Happen in the Regions: Regional Development Framework

Namoi Unlimited Namoi Region Road Network Strategy 2018

New England Development Strategy 2010

New England North West Regional Plan 2036

NSW Transmission Infrastructure Strategy

Regional Development Australia Regional Plan 2016 – 2019

Southern New England High Country Regional Economic Development Strategy 2018 – 2022

State Infrastructure Strategy 2018 – 2038

Walcha Council 2017 – 2018 Annual Report

Walcha Council 2018 – 2019 Operational Plan

Walcha 2027: Walcha Council Community Strategic Plan

Walcha Development Control Plan 2019

Walcha Strategic Heritage Acton Plan 2019-2039

Western Enabling Regional Adaptation New England North West region report