



# CAMDEN COUNCIL

# Rural Lands Strategy

November 2018

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## Executive Summary

The Camden Local Government Area (LGA) has historically been known as a highly productive rural region with current agricultural land use accounting for 50% of the LGA. The eventual development of land within the South West Growth Area (SWGA) will reduce the total area of rural land to one third of the Camden LGA.

Council's Community Strategic Plan outlines the challenges and opportunities expressed by the community including maximising the opportunities from growth and retaining the valued aspects of Camden's rural and country heritage and landscape. The Plan identifies the need for Camden's growth to be managed carefully and effectively to ensure the retention of the places, landscapes and characteristics of Camden's rural and country heritage and backdrop.

As Camden develops there are a number of emerging pressures that have the potential to have significant impact on Camden's rural lands including the Western Sydney Airport, South West Rail Link extension and the M9 Orbital. In response to these pressures, Council engaged the expertise of Booth Associates to prepare a Rural Lands Study (2016) which provides the evidence base for this Strategy.

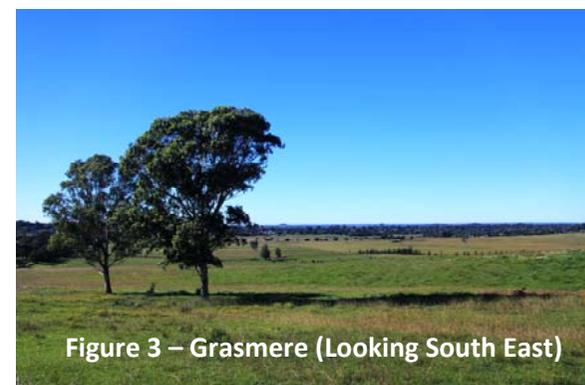
This Strategy includes key planning principles and a corresponding set of actions.

The key planning principles are:

1. Protect Camden's remaining rural lands;
2. Retain Camden's valued scenic and cultural landscapes;
3. Provide certainty and avoid rural land fragmentation;
4. Minimise and manage rural land use conflict;
5. Enhance Camden's Rural Economy;
6. Minimise unplanned non-agricultural development; and
7. Maximise opportunities for relocation of rural enterprises.

This Strategy will help guide decision making on land use planning on and adjacent to rural zoned land.

The Rural Lands Strategy does not apply to land within the South West Growth Area (with the exception of the action to investigate the potential introduction of appropriate zones within the SWGA to provide a buffer between rural land uses and urban development).



## Background

The Camden LGA is located on the fringes of the Sydney Metropolitan Area and is within the Macarthur region. The area's rich farming heritage can be traced back to 1795 when Governor Hunter went in search of stray cattle and found them settled by the Nepean River, a place he named 'Cowpastures' – a name that still exists today. Much of Camden's proud farming history stems from the influence of the Macarthur family. This began in 1803 when Lord Camden granted John Macarthur more than 5,000 acres allowing him to import the first pure merino rams and ewes to Australia. Grape growing was introduced in the early 1800s through experienced European winemakers with the Macarthurs at Camden Park establishing the first commercial vineyard. Local wines were soon winning gold medals in England, resulting in Camden vines being used to establish vineyards in the United Kingdom.

The Camden LGA is currently experiencing significant expansion of urban development. The LGA has historically been known as a highly productive rural region with current agricultural land use accounting for 50% of the LGA. The South West Growth Area will reduce the total area of rural land to one-third of the Camden LGA.

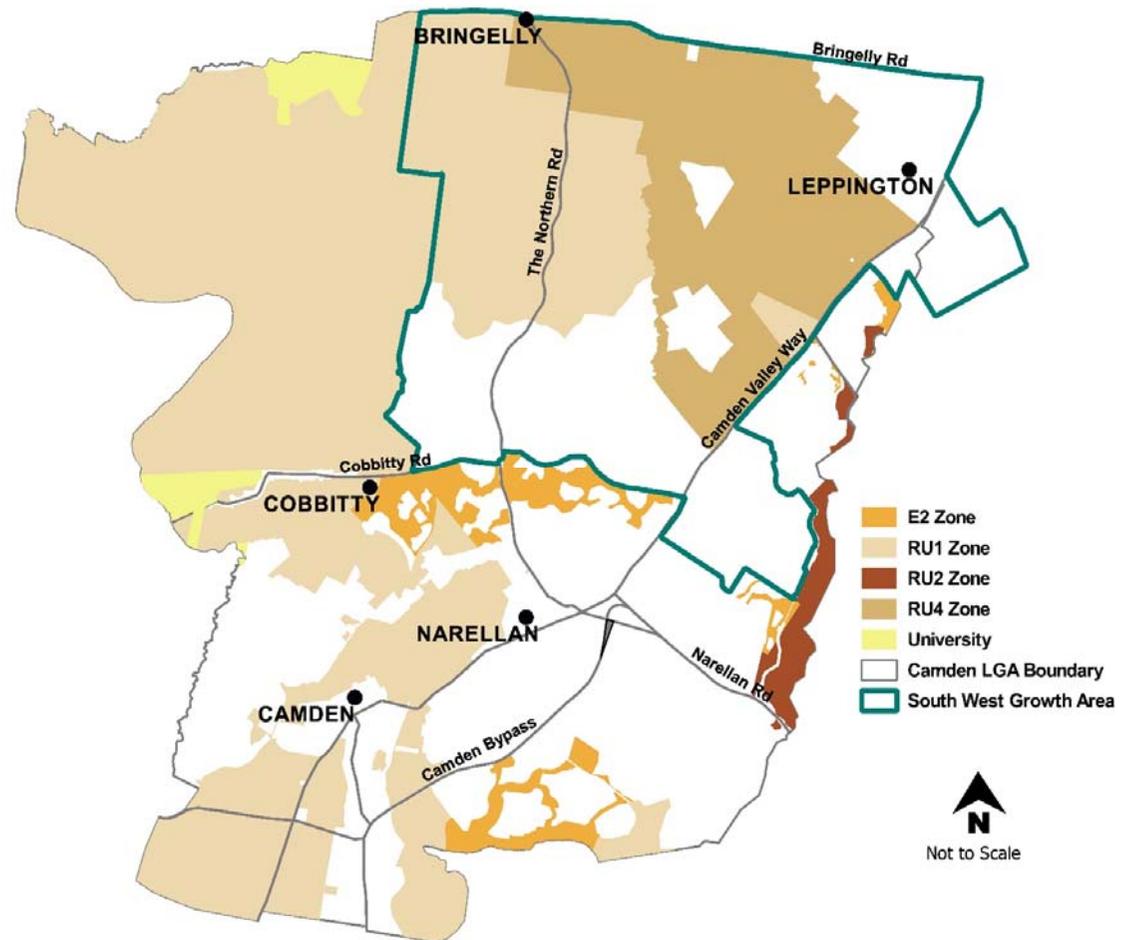


Figure 4 – Camden's Rural Land & South West Growth Area

## Strategic Context

### *Greater Sydney Region Plan & Western City District Plan*

The Greater Sydney Region Plan highlights the need for scenic and cultural landscapes to be protected and for environmental, social and economic values in rural areas to be protected and enhanced. Importantly, the Plan includes strategies to identify and protect scenic and cultural landscapes (Strategy 28.1) and to limit urban development to within the urban area (Strategy 29.2).

The Western City District Plan highlights the environmental, social and economic values of the Metropolitan Rural Area and the Plan includes priorities to protect and enhance scenic and cultural landscapes (W16) and to better manage rural areas (W17).

The District Plan notes that the rural hills and ridgelines of Camden create a distinct setting for neighbouring urban communities. The Plan also notes that Western Sydney Airport will be a catalyst for agricultural export from the region.

### *NSW Government Right to Farm Policy*

The NSW Government has adopted a *Right to Farm Policy*. The main intent of the policy relates to a desire by farmers to undertake lawful agricultural practices without conflict or interference arising from complaints from neighbours and other land users. The *Right to Farm Policy* contains a number of actions which aim to:

- Strengthen land use planning;
- Improve education and awareness;
- Ensure current reviews of environmental planning instruments (such as State Environmental Planning Policies and the Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan) include consideration of options to ensure best land use outcomes and to minimise conflicts; and
- Establish a baseline and ongoing monitoring and evaluation for complaints related to farming.

This Strategy broadly aligns to the Government's *Right to Farm Policy*.



**Figure 5 – Cattle loading ramp**



**Figure 6 – Rural Industry (Duck Farming)**

### ***Community Strategic Plan***

This Strategy aligns with the Community Strategic Plan which includes the following objectives:

- Urban development is managed effectively; and
- Rural land is adequately administered.

The actions identified in this Strategy will provide a framework to achieve these objectives.

### ***Camden Economic Development Strategy 2013***

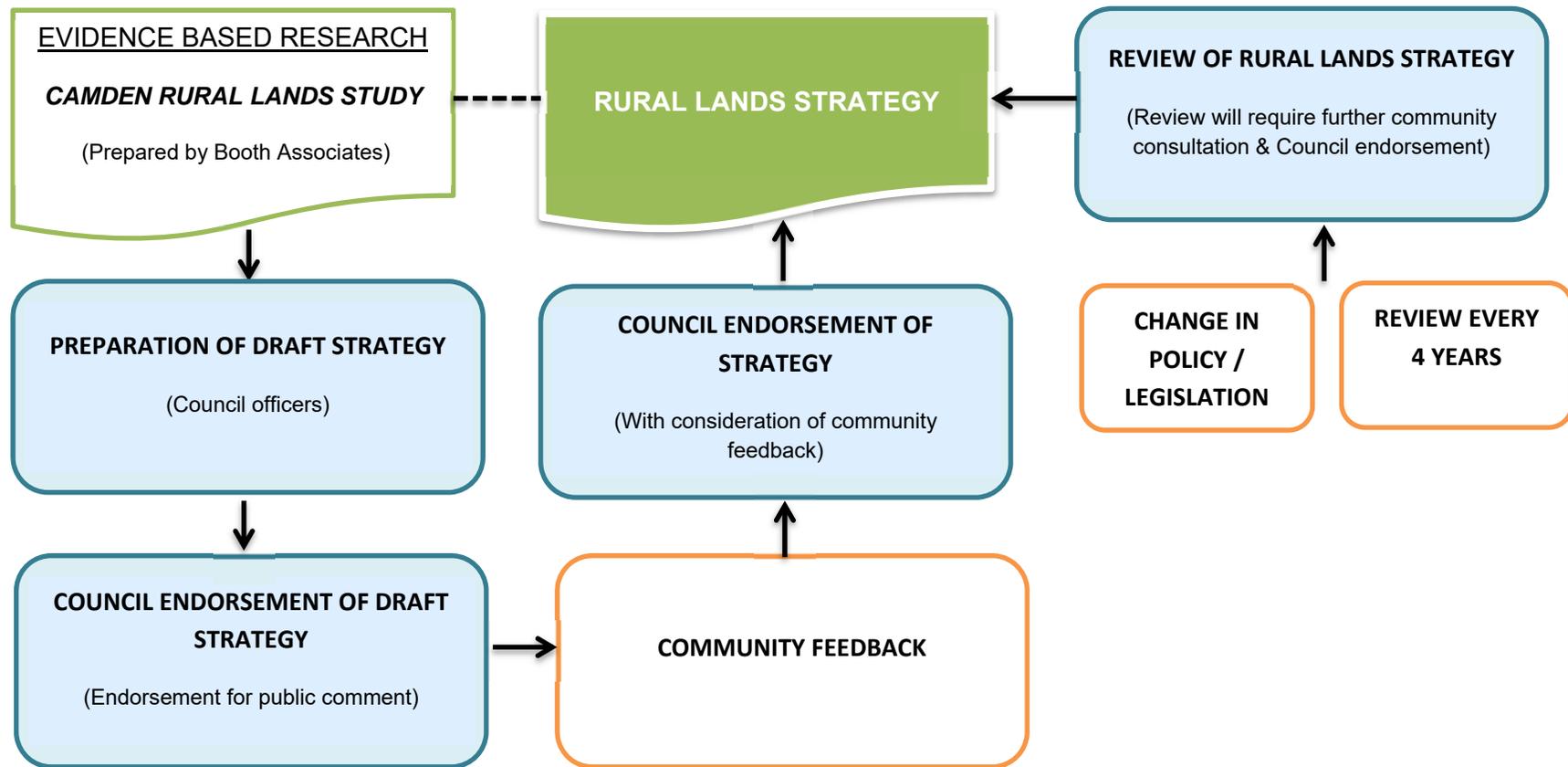
The Economic Development Strategy provides a plan of action to guide economic development activities. A number of 'Target Sectors' are identified which guide the areas on which Council will focus over a four year period. With particular reference to the Agricultural Target Sector, the SWOT Analysis identified the strength of this Sector, on the need to develop and build on existing agriculture knowledge, markets and explore opportunities with agricultural research and innovation. Another major opportunity identified by the Strategy in this Sector is to provide and support opportunities for fresh food production in order to offset the impact of the loss of agricultural land through the development of the South West Growth Area.



**Figure 7 - Cobbitty**

## Policy Preparation & Review Process

Figure 8 – Preparation and Review Process



## Development and planning considerations

### *Infrastructure and Growth*

There are a number of emerging pressures that have the potential to have significant impact on Camden's rural lands including the Western Sydney Airport and the Outer Sydney Orbital (OSO).

The OSO needs particular consideration. Transport for NSW has recently consulted with the community on a recommended corridor of land for the OSO for a possible future motorway and freight rail line. Council objected to the at-grade alignment of the OSO on various grounds, including the likely adverse impact on Camden's agricultural lands and agricultural economy.

Council's submission is available to view at <https://www.camden.nsw.gov.au/council/plans-and-strategies/submissions-and-position-papers/>

Following the consultation of the proposed OSO alignment, Transport for NSW have released new information about the OSO including the provision of a future 10 kilometre tunnel from north of Cobbitty Road, Cobbitty to south-east of Cawdor Road, Cawdor.

### *Land Use & Conflict*

The Camden LGA is a productive agricultural area, and a large proportion of this activity is associated with intensive agriculture land uses. These intensive land uses occupy a relatively small proportion of land in the LGA, and consist mainly of poultry, pigs, vegetables, nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf.

The Camden LGA has a long tradition of agricultural pursuits and this has assisted to control land use conflict as residents who work in agriculture are generally more understanding of the impacts associated with this industry. As more urban development occurs and residential populations grow where employment in agriculture is not as high, land use conflict increases.

Left unresolved, land use conflict has the potential to result in the displacement of rural industries. While Council has a role in facilitating orderly planning and development, good industry management is key for achieving positive outcomes.

### ***Camden's Rural Economy***

Camden's rural land is important, not only because of its role in providing Sydney with fresh food, but because of other benefits which arise through protection of the land such as tourism and cultural and landscape values.

Agricultural production in the Camden Local Government Area is significant. Camden is a significant producer of grapes for wine, cauliflowers, lettuce, cultivated turf, sheep and lambs, dairy cattle, beef cattle and crops and pastures for hay. Further, tourism in the Camden Council area is important financially to the rural sector, with strong growth potential.

### ***Scenic and Cultural Landscape***

The main components of Camden's landscape are hills and ridges, flood plains and remnant native vegetation. These are prominent in the visual gateways and routes in the area and deserve special consideration and protection.

The rural heartland of Camden is composed of landscapes which clearly demonstrate historic settlement patterns and associations. There are many historic properties of state significance due to their rarity, integrity and ability to demonstrate historic associations and processes.

There are important views into and out of Camden Town and Cobbitty Village.

There is also need to maintain scenic quality, a range of scenic character types, visual access to the landscape and to landmark features, the historic meaning of landscape and the ability to interpret, conserve and manage visual and cultural heritage impacts.

The Camden Rural Lands Study (Booth Associates, 2016) found that protection of the scenic amenity and rural character of the LGA is warranted.

### ***Constraints***

There are a number of key land development constraints that must be recognised when considering current land use, land capability, and development potential. These include flooding, native vegetation and bushfire risk. Notably, the Nepean River which runs north along the western side of the Camden LGA includes a significant floodplain. Flood plains act as a natural buffer for urban encroachment and should be protected.

Floodplain soils such as those on the Nepean River can be very productive as they tend to be highly fertile. These areas also have access to water which can be used for irrigation. The risk and impact of flooding however, is significant and can be a disincentive to development including intensive horticulture and intensive animal production.

**Figure 9– Vineyard, Camden**



## Sydney Metropolitan Rural Area

A Plan for Growing Sydney adopted the term 'Metropolitan Rural Area' (MRA) to describe the non-urban areas at the periphery of Greater Sydney.

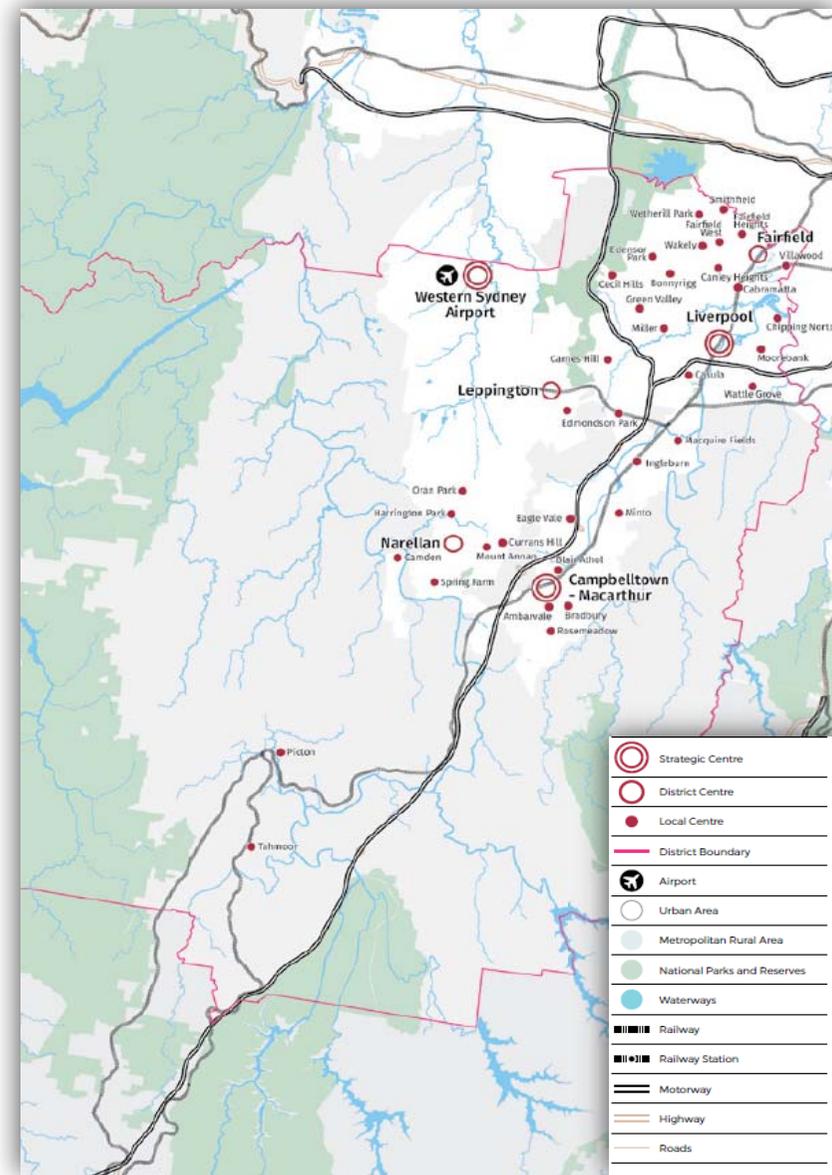
The Western City District Plan provides a more detailed vision for the MRA and explains that the MRA includes primary production and resource extraction, tourism and recreational assets, towns and villages.

The District Plan promotes a design-led, place-based planning approach in the MRA to help manage environmental, social and economic values, maximise the productive use of rural areas, and to incentivise biodiversity protection for remnant bushland vegetation. The District Plan notes that increased demand for biodiversity offset sites and limiting urban development in the Metropolitan Rural Area will help make it more attractive for landowners to protect biodiversity on private land.

## Key Planning Principles

Table 1 (below) outlines the seven key planning principles that will inform land use planning decision making for Camden.

*Table 1 – Key Principles – Rural Planning*



Principle	Background
<p><b>P1. Protect Camden's remaining rural lands</b></p>	<p>Camden's rural land is important, not only because of its role in providing Sydney with fresh food, but because of other benefits which arise through protection of rural land. These benefits include tourism and scenic and cultural landscape values which provide a positive contribution to Camden's identity and social fabric.</p> <p>Agriculture is a significant industry for the Camden LGA with the value of production in 2010 being \$43.5M. Beyond its economic contribution, Camden's rural lands provide much valued scenic amenity and rural character for which Camden is known for.</p> <p>There are a number of emerging pressures that have the potential to have a significant impact on Camden's rural lands including the M9 Orbital, Western Sydney Airport, and the review of the South West Growth Area (SWGA).</p> <p>There is a need to address rural character and land use conflict at the interface of the SWPGA and surrounding rural zoned land.</p>
<p><b>P2. Retain Camden's valued scenic and cultural landscapes</b></p>	<p>The main components of Camden's landscape are hills and ridges, flood plains and remnant native vegetation. These are prominent in the visual gateways and routes in the area and deserve special consideration and protection.</p> <p>The rural heartland of Camden is composed of landscapes which clearly demonstrate historic settlement patterns and associations. There are many historic homesteads which have views to one another and there are important visual views into and out of Camden Town and Cobbitty Village.</p> <p>This principle is in line with the Greater Sydney Region Plan which includes strategies to identify and protect scenic and cultural landscapes (Strategy 28.1) and to limit urban development to within the urban area (Strategy 29.2).</p>
<p><b>P3. Provide certainty and avoid rural land fragmentation</b></p>	<p>Agricultural productivity relies upon land use planning controls such as zoning and minimum lot sizes to protect land from speculation, inappropriate development and increased land prices.</p> <p>The existing minimum lot sizes are an effective tool to avoid further land fragmentation and minimise and manage land use conflict.</p>
<p><b>P4. Minimise and manage rural land use conflict</b></p>	<p>Land use conflicts between rural producers and residents surrounding them can be an impediment to agricultural production.</p>

Principle	Background
	<p>The Camden LGA is a productive agricultural area, and a large proportion of this activity is associated with intensive agriculture land uses. These intensive land uses occupy a relatively small proportion of land in the LGA, and consists mainly of poultry, pigs, vegetables, nurseries, cut flowers and cultivated turf.</p> <p>Rural-urban conflicts typically arise where there is insufficient separation between incompatible land uses, where rural activity is poorly managed or where new residents do not understand the type of activities prevalent in their new location.</p>
<p><b>P5. Enhance Camden’s Rural Economy</b></p>	<p>There is a need to enhance Camden’s rural economy by identifying potential activities through which Camden Council can support and promote viable and sustainable agriculture.</p> <p>There are a number of agricultural opportunities that may result from the development of the Western Sydney airport. This includes closer proximity to domestic and international markets using air freight that could support and grow certain agricultural sectors such as fresh cut flowers.</p> <p>The University of Sydney (Camden Campus) is Australia’s leading tertiary education provider in Agriculture and Veterinary Science. The Camden Campus is an important asset that should be protected from urban encroachment. Council will work with the University to investigate innovative opportunities for the Camden Campus.</p>
<p><b>P6. Minimise unplanned non-agricultural development</b></p>	<p>This principle is in line with the Greater Sydney Region Plan which includes strategies to identify and protect scenic and cultural landscapes (Strategy 28.1) and to limit urban development to within the urban area (Strategy 29.2).</p>
<p><b>P7. Maximise opportunities for relocation of rural enterprises.</b></p>	<p>There is a need to maximise the opportunities for the relocation of rural enterprises displaced by the SWGA. All existing RU4 small lot primary production land is located within the SWGA. As a result of the progressive conversion of this land for urban purposes there will no longer be any RU4 land in Camden LGA. In addition, RU1 primary production zoned land will be reduced significantly.</p>

## Strategy Actions

Table 2 – Strategy Actions

Principle	Action	Measurement	Timeframe	Relevant other plans/strategies
1. <b>Protect Camden's remaining rural lands</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide an advocacy role that the preferred M9 corridor option minimises impact on rural zoned land.</li> </ul>	<p>Adopted Strategy is forwarded to Transport for NSW.</p> <p>Council has ongoing dialogue with Transport for NSW and the Greater Sydney Commission and adjoining Councils regarding the protection of Camden's Rural Lands.</p>	<p>On adoption of Strategy.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Plan for Growing Sydney</li> <li>Western City District Plan</li> <li>Camden Community Strategic Plan</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential introduction of appropriate zones within the South West Growth Area to provide a buffer between rural land uses and urban development.</li> </ul>	<p>Undertaken during precinct planning.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010</li> <li>Camden Development Control Plan 2011</li> <li>Sydney Region Growth Centres State Environmental Planning Policy.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with Wollondilly Council to explore options to protect agricultural land and encourage food production.</li> </ul>	<p>Council has ongoing dialogue with Wollondilly Council to explore options to protect agricultural land</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Community Strategic Plan</li> <li>Camden Economic Development Strategy 2013</li> </ul>

Principle	Action	Measurement	Timeframe	Relevant other plans/strategies
		and encourage food production.		
<b>2. Retain Camden's valued scenic and cultural landscapes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a detailed visual study of Camden's rural lands (excluding the South West Growth Area) in conjunction with key stakeholders.</li> </ul>	Visual Study is completed.	2018-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010</li> <li>Camden Community Strategic Plan</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate options to incorporate scenic protection controls in Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010.</li> </ul>	Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010 is reviewed.	2018-19* *Following completion of Visual Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review existing development controls to provide additional guidance on scenic protection.</li> </ul>	Camden Development Control Plan 2010 is reviewed.	2018-19* *Following completion of Visual Study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Development Control Plan 2010</li> </ul>
<b>3. Provide certainty and avoid rural land fragmentation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain the existing 40ha minimum lot size (Camden LEP 2010) for rural land to avoid further land ownership fragmentation.</li> </ul>	40ha minimum lot size is retained.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010</li> </ul>
<b>4. Minimise and manage rural land use conflict</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review existing development controls to provide additional guidance on land use conflict.</li> </ul>	Camden Development Control Plan 2010 is reviewed.	2017-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Development Control Plan 2010</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate the potential introduction of appropriate zones within the South West Growth Area to provide a buffer between rural land uses and transition urban development.</li> </ul>	Undertaken during precinct planning.	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010</li> <li>Camden Development Control Plan 2011</li> </ul>

Principle	Action	Measurement	Timeframe	Relevant other plans/strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare informative / educational material for the community about farming impacts and conflicts.</li> </ul>	Informative / education material is available to the community and is available to download on Camden Council's website.	2017-18	- Camden Community Strategic Plan
<b>5. Enhance Camden's Rural Economy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate potential activities to support and promote viable and sustainable agriculture.</li> </ul>	Ongoing implementation of the Economic Development Strategy	Ongoing	- Western City District Plan - Camden Economic Development Strategy 2013
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the University of Sydney to investigate innovative opportunities for the Camden Campus.</li> </ul>	Ongoing implementation of the Economic Development Strategy.	Ongoing	- Western City District Plan - Camden Economic Development Strategy 2013
<b>6. Minimise unplanned non-agricultural development on rural land</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor the implementation of the criteria for planning proposals seeking rezonings on rural land (excluding SWPGA).</li> </ul>	Criteria for planning proposals is reviewed and monitored annually.	Ongoing	- Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010
<b>7. Maximise opportunities for relocation of rural enterprises.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retain the 40ha minimum lot size for rural land.</li> </ul>	40ha minimum lot size is retained.	Ongoing	- Camden Local Environmental Plan 2010

## Criteria for Rezoning Proposals

The table below outlines a set of guiding criteria to assist in the assessment of planning proposals for rezonings on rural land (outside of the SWGA). The assessment criteria is intended as a guide only and proponents will be subject to the assessment processes that apply to all planning proposals under NSW planning legislation and guidelines.

Table 3 – Criteria for Rezoning Proposals

ID	Assessment Criteria	Key considerations (Pre-Gateway)
1	Proposals must be consistent with state and local strategic plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement / ongoing maintenance of biodiversity, ecological, scenic and productive values.</li> <li>• Agricultural land production value.</li> <li>• Rural economic benefit.</li> <li>• Net community benefit.</li> </ul>
2	Proposals must not adversely impact on the operation of existing rural enterprises.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existing intensive agricultural land uses.</li> <li>• Land use conflict – utilisation of the Land Use Conflict Risk Assessment (LUCRA) tool developed by the NSW Department of Primary Industries.</li> </ul>
3	Proposals must be a logical extension to existing urban areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proximity to public transport and other community services.</li> <li>• Essential services availability (including cost of extending services or upgrading roads and other infrastructure).</li> </ul>
4	Proposals must not reduce the quality of scenic landscapes, vistas, ridgelines, or heritage values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Siting and design impacts.</li> <li>• Natural and physical constraints and opportunity of rural land, including high value vegetation, bushfire and flooding.</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

The Camden LGA is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia and there are a number of emerging pressures that have the potential to have a significant impact on Camden's rural lands namely the Western Sydney Airport and the M9 Orbital. In response to these pressures, this Strategy highlights the need to protect Camden's valuable rural lands which are an important local and district feature.

Camden's rural land is important, not only because of its role in providing Sydney with fresh food, but because of other benefits which arise through protection of the land such as tourism and cultural and landscape values which provide a positive contribution to Camden's identity and social fabric.

This Strategy is in line with the Western City District Plan which includes priorities to protect and enhance scenic and cultural landscapes (W16) and to better manage rural areas (W17).



Figure 11 – Views from Cobbitty looking south to Camden

Cheviot Drive, Cobbitty (looking west)

