

Robertson Village Precinct Plan

ROBERTSON is working rural village located at the eastern gateway to the Shire on the Illawarra Highway. It provides a district focus the Shire's eastern rural areas. It is a relatively compact village, but with an 'open' spatial character. There are two small residential precincts separated from the main village area, at Fountaindale Road and Mackeys Lane.

Robertson has a typically 'grid' road pattern, divided by the Unanderra railway line. The Illawarra Highway (Hoddle Street) runs through the centre of the village. Robertson has a distinct, but distant, sense of landform enclosure with low ridges flanking the village to the north-east, north, west and southwest.

A key identifying natural feature of the village is the remnant stands of Yarrawa Brush rainforest and woodland vegetation, particularly on the higher ground (especially the Robertson Nature Reserve which is a relatively intact parcel of remnant rainforest) and also adjacent to the watercourses like Caalang and Wallagunda Creeks. These creeks are also important environmental features in their own right.

The hub of non-residential activity is focused along the main street (Hoddle Street), that takes on a traditional 'country town' ribbon development form. A range of community facilities have also been established in the village, including a School of Arts hall, pre-school, community centre, recreation club and churches. Playing fields and associated amenities and a playground are located in the centre of the village at Hampden Park.

Robertson is described in the Sydney Canberra Corridor Regional Strategy as a 'Town'. Towns are described as "small to medium concentrations of retail, health and other services with generally lower density housing. They are generally reliant on higher order centres for specialised services, shopping and employment." Wingecarribee Shire Council categorises Robertson as a village due to its particular environment sensitivities.

Community Profile

The 2011 census records a population for Robertson of 1,202 persons comprising 585 males and 617 females. Residents aged 35-49 comprise the largest population group (24.9%) followed by primary school age children (15.1%). It is more of a family-based population than evidenced in the towns.

Of the 1,202 residents, over 90% were at the same residential location in the previous five years which indicates a very high residential stability in the village.

The industries most represented (in order) in the resident workforce are Manufacturing, Construction, Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, Public Administration & Safety and Information Media & Technology.

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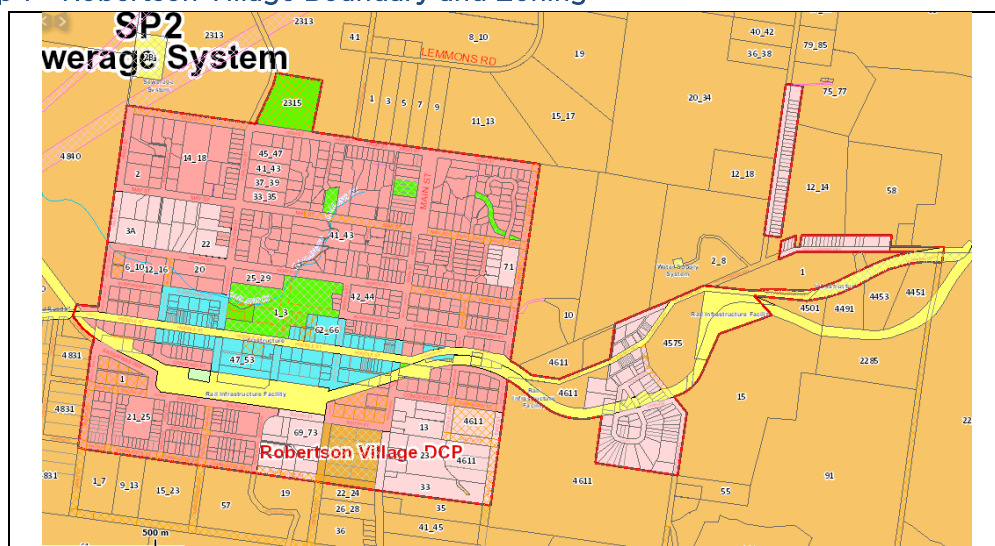
Land Use Profile

The Robertson urban area is contained within the red boundary shown on Map 1 following. The colours represent the various zonings within the village at the time of printing. A legend follows the map.

The most dominant zone is R2 Low Density residential zone comprising 52% of the village. Some 20% of the village is zoned R5 Large Lot Residential, much of it in locations to the east separated from the main village. Public open space comprises some 5%.

There is no Conservation Area in Robertson but there are a cluster of individual Items of Heritage on Hoddle Street in the vicinity of the railway station as indicated, marked brown, on Map 2 below.

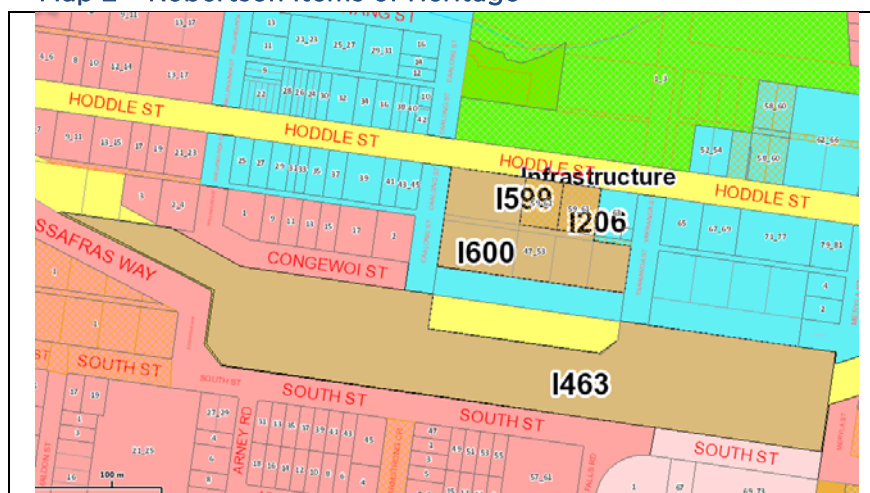
Map 1 – Robertson Village Boundary and Zoning



B1 Neighbourhood Centre	R2 Low Density Residential
B2 Local Centre	R3 Medium Density Residential
B4 Mixed Use	R5 Large Lot Residential
B5 Business Development	RE1 Public Recreation
B7 Business Park	RE2 Private Recreation
E1 National Parks and Nature Reserves	RU1 Primary Production
E2 Environmental Conservation	RU2 Rural Landscape
E3 Environmental Management	RU3 Forestry
E4 Environmental Living	RU4 Primary Production Small Lots
IN1 General Industrial	SP1 Special Activities
IN2 Light Industrial	SP2 Infrastructure
IN3 Heavy Industrial	SP3 Tourist

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Map 2 – Robertson Items of Heritage



Residential Lot Capacity

Council's estimate of vacant land potential as at 2012 indicates there is the potential for a further 187 dwellings in the Robertson residential areas. Some lots have been developed since 2012 but there remains potential for at least 35% growth in dwelling supply within the Robertson village without any variation to current residential zones or minimum lot sizes.

Robertson	
Property Type	Total
Vacant Single Lots	32
Vacant Multiple Lots	68
Occupied Single Lots	20
Occupied Multiple Lots	67
Dual Occupancy	0
Total Potential	187
Existing Dwellings	474
Potential + Existing Total	661

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Robertson is particularly distinctive in that it has an extensive B2 Local Centre business zone, totalling some 6.5% of all land within Robertson. As a percentage of land in the core Robertson village area it is even higher. This extensive core business zone through much of the centre of the village across Hoddle Street from Hampden Park provides excellent opportunities for medium density residential development and compact housing which would achieve a greater dwelling yield than the lot analysis suggests.

Development Control Plans (DCPs)

Specific development controls for Robertson are contained within the Robertson Village DCP. For development controls on rural and environmental land surrounding the Robertson urban area, the Rural Lands DCP covers land zoned RU1 Primary Production, RU2 Rural Landscape and E3 Environmental Management. The Rural Living DCP covers land zoned RU4 Primary Production Small Lots and E4 Environmental Living. A review of all DCPs will occur in 2016 and Robertson property owners will have the opportunity to contribute to that review.

Local Planning Strategy Workshop

During 2010 and 2011 a series of workshops was held across the Shire involving all towns and villages. The purpose of the workshops was to obtain feedback from participants as to what they considered to be the current Strengths and Weaknesses of their locality and what they perceived to be the main Opportunities and Threats for the future. This type of analysis is known by the acronym SWOT.

Some 40 property owners attended the Robertson workshop on 12 August 2010 at the St John's Church Hall. The table below summarises the key comments. Some comments may appear inconsistent, but are included to reflect the full range of opinions expressed. Council appreciates the contribution made by all workshop participants.

KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
STRENGTHS	
There is a strong village atmosphere. Perceived as being community-focussed, friendly, safe and good for children and families. Good essential services & facilities.	The village atmosphere – not too big and impersonal, friendly people, quiet rural surroundings, safe streets, essential services available such as school, PO, bakery, supermarket, hardware store, fuel.
	It has a strong history and sense of place. Good people.
	Isolation gives us a unique character.
	The size of the village – not too big.
	Clear boundary around the village and rural lands beyond. No suburban sprawl.
	Lifestyle – village atmosphere, friendly, safe, rural, large blocks of land.

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KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
	Good area for families - safe, friendly, good school.
	The people. Lots of volunteers.
	Sense of community with involvement in the people and environment. Sense of community cohesion.
	Good mix of people – young, middle aged, older. Good mix of occupations – farmers, business owners, tradespeople, professionals.
	Talented people – artists, crafts people, writers, poets.
	Lots to do – REPS, monthly markets, clubs and groups, music, shops, Robbo Show.
	Cultural facilities such as the halls and CTC.
	We are well serviced for a small village – good doctor, chemist, etc. Plenty of parking. Good school. Nice sporting fields. Caalang Creek and Hampden Park. Nice shops - Pizzas in the Mist. Interesting cemetery.
Natural features of the area.	Natural beauty of the area and access to natural features.
	Surrounded by National Parks.
	Proximity of the Illawarra and beaches, waterfalls & National Parks & other natural areas.
	Its location – close to Wollongong where there are good medical services and shopping.
	Close enough to Sydney, but not too close.
	No floods or bushfire threats.
High quality agricultural land producing good quality product.	Good agricultural land. Good rainfall and fertile soil. Good climate. Clean air. Robbo Spuds.
Is a recognised tourist destination.	Attractive for tourists.
Well located between Sydney, Wollongong, Goulburn, Canberra for economic benefits.	Proximity to major markets.
WEAKNESSES	
Lack of public transport connecting Robertson with other areas of the Shire and to areas outside the Shire.	Lack of public transport, either connecting Robertson with the rest of the Shire, or connecting the Shire to Sydney and the coast.
	No passenger rail service even though we have rail lines and a station.
	No taxi service for elderly needing to go to medical appointments.
	Need to have a car in order to live in Robertson – no public transport to other parts of the Shire to shop. Even hard to shop in Robertson without a car – main street too long.
Poor pedestrian and bikeway facilities around the village.	Lack of pedestrian access, particularly across the creek and railway line.
	Lack of pedestrian and cycle ways around the village.

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KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
	Poor access across the railway line is a particular problem for children going to school.
The development of the main street, both in terms of design and density.	Development of main street gives a poor impression.
	No real village 'centre'.
	Not a pretty village – too strung out and fragmented along the main street.
	Village has developed a 'suburban' look, especially since the paved footpath, with lines, was put in.
	Shops too spread out along the main road.
	Historical layout of the main street, particularly the way the main road and the railway line dissect the town.
Village not large enough to be economically sustainable – seen as a problem both for consumers and potential employees.	Lack of convenience shops in the village. Lack of services such as medical and financial.
	Little employment in the village.
	Lack of critical population levels to support local shops and other employment.
	Loss of young people and working families due to no employment opportunities.
	No medical facilities. No sporting facilities. No education facilities such as tutors, music teachers.
	The boundaries of the village need to be extended.
	Village population a bit too homogeneous.
Poor environmental management.	Environmental weeds and pests – privet, blackberry, fireweed and rabbits.
	Poor maintenance of public verges – weeds and potential snake dangers.
	Poor stormwater management, particularly around the school.
	No sewer facilities.
	No recycling facilities.
No aged care facilities.	No aged care facilities to allow older people to remain in the village.
Lack of confidence in Council's planning processes, both past and current.	Lack of belief and trust in Council's management of the planning process.
	There is a lack of vision in the planning of the village. Town planning reflects 1890s approach. Poor planning process.
	Some poor planning and designs in the past.
Sundry.	There is too much misinformation circulating around the village – too much gossip.
	The weather – it is often wet and windy.

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KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
OPPORTUNITIES	
Make the village more attractive and connected with a real 'focus'.	Make the main street more attractive.
	Develop main street as a green, tree-lined pedestrian area with shops, cafes etc.
	Develop a cohesive shopping area. More businesses in village such as shoe repairer and optometrist.
	Walking and cycling paths to better connect the village and provide interest for tourists.
	Foot bridge over Caalang Creek.
More infill development which allows for some medium density and aged housing.	There is room for more people, provided the village remains as such, not a 'commuter' town, or suburb.
	Create a village 'core' with medium density accommodation.
	Retirement village, or other forms of aged care.
	Low density retirement living.
	Some medium density development within the village boundaries so older people can stay.
	Higher density along main street, but still larger blocks elsewhere.
	Growth to a sustainable size, both economically and environmentally.
	Expansion within the village boundary to a more economically viable size.
	Expansion of village boundaries.
	Working from home – telecommuting.
	New people bring in new ideas, including from overseas.
	Place power underground when sewer connection earthworks done.
	International twinning.
Improved public transport to other parts of the Shire and to locations beyond the Shire. Improved road access to the coast.	Improved public transport so people can live in Robertson without a car. Good for everyone, especially people who are now too old to drive.
	Passenger rail facilities between Moss Vale and Wollongong.
	Upgrade or replace Macquarie Pass.
	Better tourist facilities – lookouts, walkways etc.
New approach to planning the village.	Create a vision for the village.
	New and innovative planning because the village is still only half-built.
	Undertake neighbourhood character study to determine what qualities make an attractive rural settlement.

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KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
	Cater to the needs of residents from birth to grave – pre-school, school, starter jobs for teens, good jobs for families, retirement care.
Take advantage of good soil and climate for more food production to provide a stronger agricultural base and better quality food within the village.	New forms of agriculture and horticulture to make the most of good soil and water.
	Local food production and opportunities to sell in village.
Stronger tourism base to take advantage of natural beauty and agricultural base of the area as well as arts and crafts opportunities.	Eco-holiday destination.
	Increase in passing trade because of the highway.
	More arts and crafts opportunities.
	Historic rail run to the coast.
Better environmental awareness and management	Cleaner energy sources supported by village.
	Environmental Catchment Study Centre.
	Community garden, food forest, farmers' markets, gourmet food businesses.
THREATS	
Increased urbanisation and extension of village boundary causing loss of village atmosphere and environmental damage.	Too many people would ruin village atmosphere and character.
	Over development of the village.
	Too much population can cause commuter traffic.
	Threat to natural assets from development.
	Pollution if sewer is delayed or not adequate.
	Sewer may still not be big enough, even when it is finally finished.
	Pollution to drinking water.
	Poorly managed development that destroys the environment.
	Limited winter sun if development too dense.
	Will lose its friendly, safe, village atmosphere.
	Change of village lifestyle through too much development and smaller lot sizes.
Village becomes unsustainable because population base is too low to support shops and improved services.	Spending outside the village because we don't have the shops and services to keep that spending here.
	Restrictions on zoning and lot size changes. Not allowing any expansion.

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KEY ISSUE	CONSIDERATIONS
	May be bypassed because of slow / poor decision-making by Council.
	Urban sprawl - Bowral East style of development.
	Poor planning.
	Lack of aged housing.
	Being small and forgotten.
	People will move away unless services are available.
	Powerful pressure groups who will not support growth.
	Failing businesses due to lack of sufficient population to support them.
Loss of farming base.	Loss of farming community – potato growers and dairy farms.
	Urbanisation and loss of productive agricultural land. Potential for groundwater and flooding impacts.
	'Pitt Street' farmers.
Broader environmental issues.	Pumping of local aquifers by SCA.
	Coal mining.
	Archaic and repressive planning controls.
	Weeds and pests through poor management.
	Fuel costs will force people out unless public transport available.
Other general concerns.	Increased house and land prices.
	Macquarie Pass. Lack of transport facilities.
	'Divisive' population growth such as seniors housing.
	State government taking over Council's planning powers.

SWOT Analysis

The greatest strength of the village was seen to be the quality of community life the village enjoys. People care about their community which is perceived as being safe and friendly, a good place for children. There is a mix of people and interests.

The loss of this strong sense of community, through future development of the village, was seen as the highest threat, although this threat was often expressed in terms which included phrases such as 'too much' or 'over-development' or 'poorly managed' indicating that the scale and style of development and how it is managed are the focus of this concern.

The second greatest strength was the quality of the natural landscape with close access to nature reserves, natural parks and waterfalls. The unique qualities of the rural landscape were also recognised and both were seen as qualities that tourists, as well as residents, can appreciate. The loss of the farming base and loss of local control to state authorities were seen by some as threats to this strength.

The main weaknesses identified related to a lack of public transport to other parts of the Shire and to areas outside the Shire as well as to inadequate pathways around the village

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itself. There was also concern about the poor road links to the coast, particularly Macquarie Pass.

Of about equal concern were issues with the appearance and design of the village - scattered development extending along the main street and no 'centre' to provide a focus to the village, as well as concerns that low scale development did not provide sufficient population to achieve a sustainable economic base for existing and potential retail, business and service facilities.

These weaknesses are reflected in the key opportunities identified for the village, namely to make the village more attractive with some infill development and a central 'focus'. This infill was also seen as providing a stronger population base to achieve a higher level of economic viability for more shops and businesses. Clearly this opportunity needs to be balanced against the perceived threat of loss of village atmosphere through future development of the village.

It should be noted that WLEP 2010 already provides a range of opportunities which encourage uses through the extensive B2 Local Centre zone which can address a number of issues raised in the workshop – infill development, a more cohesive main street, a range of densities, tourist accommodation and aged accommodation. Such development would provide additional population and a stronger economic base without extending the town boundary or overcommitting infrastructure facilities.

Under WLEP 2010, the B2 Local Centre zone permits, with Council consent, a range of accommodation, including dwelling houses, secondary dwelling, semi-detached dwellings, dual occupancies, attached dwellings, multi dwelling housing, residential flat buildings, hostels, boarding housing and group homes, as well as tourist and visitor accommodation, including hotel or motel accommodation, serviced apartments, bed and breakfast accommodation and backpackers' accommodation. The Seniors Living SEPP permits seniors housing in the B2 zone. The Affordable Housing SEPP permits affordable housing. Such developments would provide opportunities for funds to improve pathways and networks within the village and the increased population base may enable improved public transport to be provided.

In 2014 Council began working with the Robertson community as part of the Our Village Our Future initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to establish a vision for the village, and use existing strengths within the village to devise tangible actions to work towards achieving this vision. Council's work on the Caalong Street Bridge is now complete.

Submissions to Amend WLEP 2010

During the exhibition of the Draft Wingecarribee Local Planning Strategy 2015-2031, Council received and assessed several submissions to amend the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan (WLEP) 2010.

Since the completion of the above SWOT analysis, the Robertson Sewage Treatment Plant has been completed and property owners are now in the process of transitioning across to that system. One submission to the Draft Strategy requested that Council review the current minimum lot size of 2,000m² in the R2 Low Density Residential zones within the village.

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In response to this submission and previous representations from some property owners, it is RECOMMENDED:

THAT the controls for and location of minimum lot size within Robertson Village be included in the 2016 review of the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 taking into account the availability of sewage infrastructure.

RESOLUTION OF COUNCIL 23 MARCH 2016

In adopting the Wingecarribee Local Planning Strategy on 23 March 2016, Council effectively adopted the above recommendation, RESOLVING:

THAT the controls for and location of minimum lot size within Robertson Village be included in the 2016 review of the Wingecarribee Local Environmental Plan 2010 taking into account the availability of sewage infrastructure.