

Berry Forum Submission re Planning Proposal for 55 Wire Lane

The following findings of the Joint Regional Planning Panel relating to a similar proposal at 510 Beach Road in 2016 are directly applicable in this case –

- The proposal essentially seeks to remove an area of agriculturally viable land from agricultural production and propose an increase in rural residential land.
- The Illawarra Shoalhaven Regional Plan sets strategic directions for protecting regionally important agricultural lands as an asset to food and fibre production; and protecting the region's biodiversity corridors in local planning controls.
- The subject land predominantly comprises soil types suitable for high quality grazing (formerly identified as prime agricultural and cropping land)
- It is the Panel's understanding that there is no strategy relevant to rural zones justifying the proposal.
- There is a risk that rezoning the subject land will establish an expectation or precedent that other land zoned RU1 Primary Production could or should be rezoned as R5 Large Lot Residential. This risk is exacerbated by the absence of strategic identification of regionally important agricultural lands and the absence of a strategy to identify preferred locations for rural residential subdivisions

Conclusion

- On balance while the Panel is of the view that there are justifiable reasons to maintain the agricultural use of the site, the earlier land use decisions of adjoining lands distinguishes this site from the other sites exhibiting similar characteristics, which means strategically it is appropriate to revisit the planning framework.

Recommendation

- There should not be any further consideration of rezoning proposals for rural residential subdivision until Council has developed a rural residential strategy and has identified regionally important agricultural lands.

Key Issues with Proposal for 55 Wire Lane

The JRPP identified the 510 Beach Rd proposal as an exception due to earlier land use decisions that do not apply in this case. The relevant factors are -

- The land at 55 Wire Lane is identified as prime crop and pasture land, which was previously advertised as "fertile farmland regularly pasture improved".
- The Wire Lane proposal would set an adverse precedent for permitting rural residential development, with the potential to change the nature of the whole area between Beach Road and Coollangatta Road and severely threaten the rural amenity of the area.
- The proposal does not align with the Shoalhaven Growth Management Strategy 2014 or the South Coast Regional Strategy and is not the result of any strategic plan or report.
- The South Coast Regional Conservation Plan calls for a green corridor between Barren Grounds and Seven Mile Beach National Parks, which is being realised through the Berry Wildlife Corridor. The property in question sits within that corridor.
- Community participation in preparation of the SLEP was based on an expectation of protection from ad hoc decisions that would change the nature of the landscape.