
4.1 SCENIC HILLS LANDSCAPE UNIT 1

DENHAM COURT ROAD – RABY ROAD (SH-LU1)



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Figure 4.1.1. The views over SH-LU1 extend over the whole of the Scenic Hills to Mount Sugarloaf in the distance (at the far left of this photograph). This high quality view marks the entrance to the Campbelltown LGA near Denham Court Road.

Figure 4.1.2. Bunbury Curran Hill and Varroville from St Andrews Road. This is an important and readily accessible view which continues to demonstrate the characteristics of the historic Colonial cultural landscape.

Figure 4.1.3. These 'hidden' valleys along Denham Court Road are of exceptionally high scenic quality.

Figure 4.1.4. Bunbury Curran Hill from Raby Road. Bunbury Curran Hill viewed from the south near Raby Road has a clearly defined asymmetrical profile. The perception of depth is heightened by the overlapping bands of undulating hills reaching from the foreground to the edge of Bunbury Curran Hill and edged by the trees lining the creeks. This photograph was taken from Raby Road, another important entry route to the Campbelltown LGA.

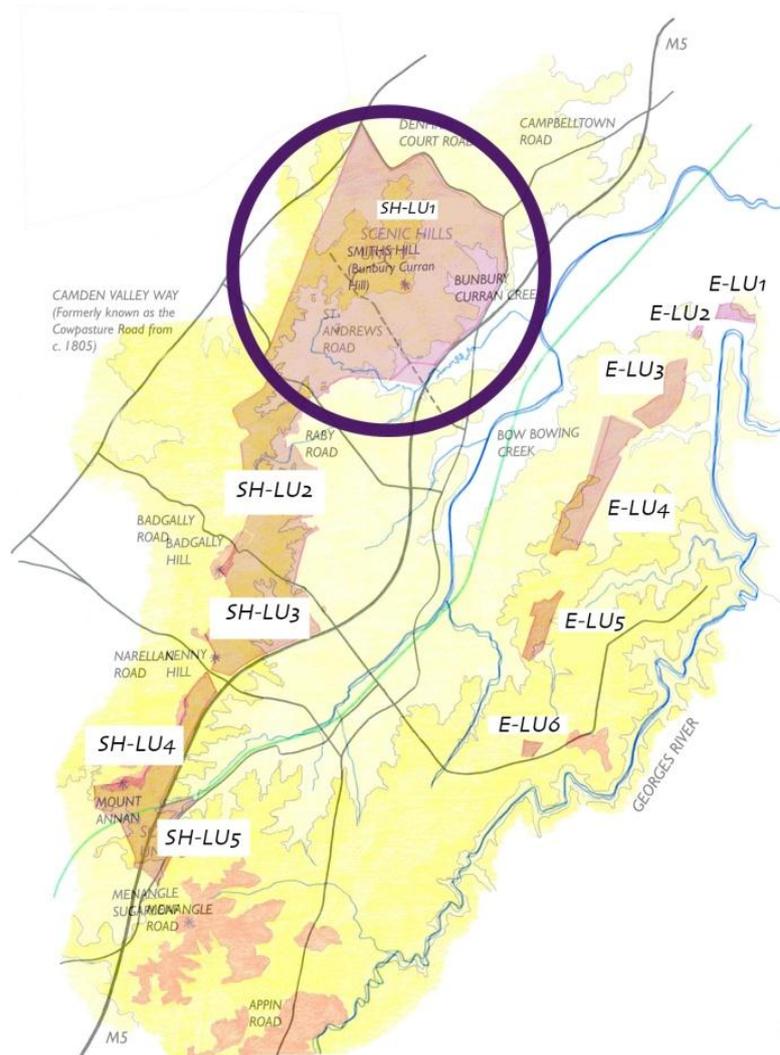


Figure 4.1.5. Location of Scenic Hills – Landscape Unit 1.



Figure 4.1.6. The character of the Unit is pastoral with areas of Cumberland Plain Woodland, some of which is likely to be original and the remainder re-growth. African Olive, a noxious weed, is invading the slopes of Bunbury Curran Hill. The primary landscape of the Unit features include the prominent edge of Bunbury Curran Hill, which is surrounded by the complex folds of its foothills that extend and define the remainder of the Unit.

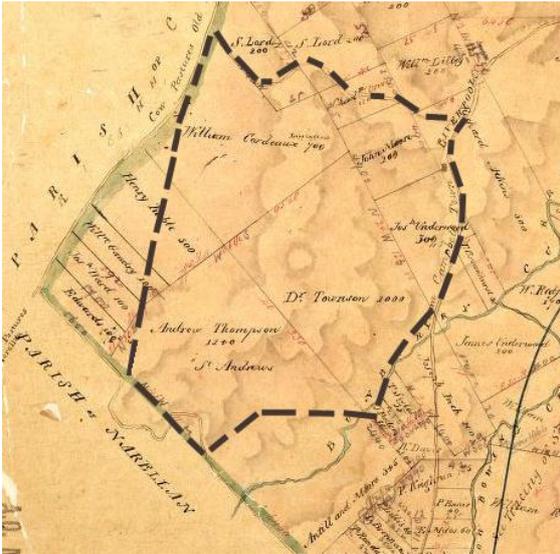


Figure 4.1.7. Detail from an early map of Minto Parish showing the original land grants in SH-LU1. The alignment of Campbelltown Road can be seen. St Andrews Road follows the boundary between Townson and Thompson's grants, with Raby Road forming the southern edge of Thompson's St Andrews Estate. The part of SH-LU1 within the Parish is shown outlined in bold.

n.d.) (NSW Department of Lands Parish Map Preservation Project PMapMN04; image [14064401](#))



Figure 4.1.8. The 1956 aerial photography reveals that in the late 1950s the landscape of SH-LU1 was mainly cleared grassland. Much of today's vegetation is regrowth with the exception of the remnant Woodland near the western end of St Andrews Road and substantial eucalypts lining the sides of the early Campbelltown, St Andrews and Raby Roads. These are important elements in today's scenic landscape. (NSW Lands Department photographs - part of image missing)



Figure 4.1.9. SH-LU1 is visible from many places within the LGA. These views emphasise the scale and breadth of the landscape and the quality of the skyline, even when viewed from a relatively low perspective such as this point along Campbelltown Road near St Andrews where the view extends across the Varroville Estate with Bunbury Curran Hill to the right and Badgally Hill and Mount Universe in the distance towards the left of the view. Development in the foreground of this view would block the ability of the general community and in particular those travelling along Campbelltown Road to appreciate and feel a sense of connection with the panoramic breadth and scope of Campbelltown's setting.



Figures 4.1.10. The view from Ashmead Place in EESPL4 looks over the intermediate ridge of Robinhood Farm to the ridge of SH-LU1 beyond.

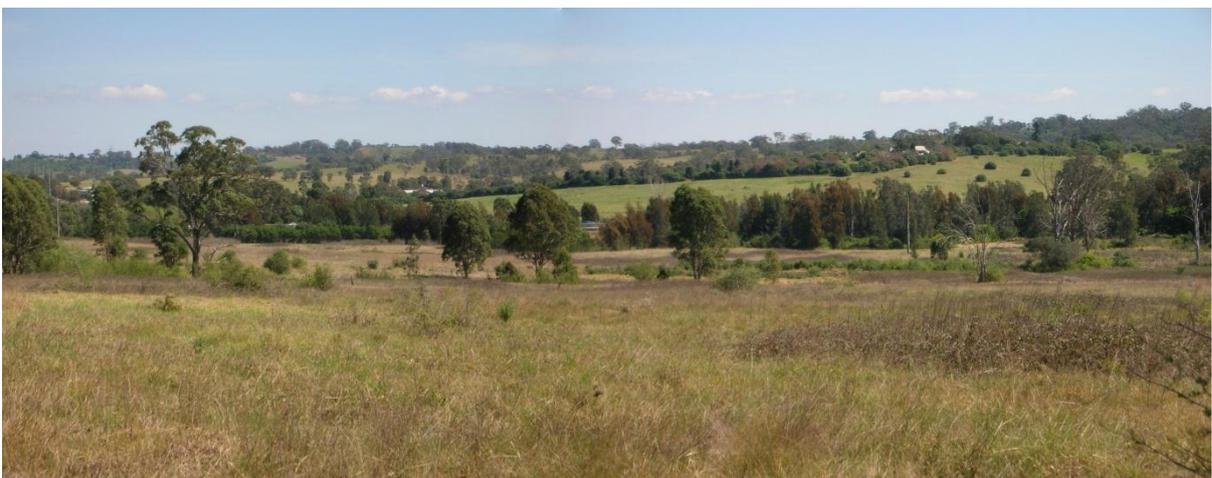


Figure 4.1.11. Looking south-west from Campbelltown Road near St Andrews to Varroville and Raby Road. This view contains many of the elements of a scenic landscape, with the perception of atmospheric depth enhanced by the varying bands of vegetation receding into the distance, evidence of the pastoral landscape – a historic house screened by dense mature planting, the range of hills behind with soft skyline, and built elements visually subservient to the visual impact of the successive folds of ridges and valleys. The ability to appreciate the textural depth and visual recession created by alternating layers of light green paddocks and darker green trees is a critical component of the scenic view.



Figure 4.1.12. More distant views towards the area are also of excellent quality and visual interest. The connectivity and reciprocal nature of these views was an important objective of the early planning for the satellite city as an urban landscape in a valley sheltered by the hills. The band of undeveloped grassland set well below the vegetated ridgeline contrasts with the darker colours of the trees and urban areas and provides a constant reminder of the depth and purpose of the Scenic Hills.

This panorama was taken from the location of an early property Kyngmont in E-LU4 (Eagleview Rd). Bunbury Curran Hill is in the centre, with Raby Hill on the left and the landscape of Denham Court Road to the right. The ridgeline is soft and vegetated, with some areas of planting clearly visible. The range of hills in the far distance is the Blue Mountains and enhances the sense of depth in the landscape.

4.1.1 CONTEXT

Scenic Hills – Landscape Unit 1 (SH-LU1) is centred on the early Colonial land grants of 1000 acres made to Dr Robert Townson in 1809 known as Varroville and the 1200 acres immediately to the south of this granted to Andrew Thompson in 1816 known as St Andrews. Their shared boundary is marked today by the alignment of part of St Andrews Road. SH-LU1 also incorporates most of Robert Cordeaux’s grant of 700 acres which was situated to the north-west of Townson’s, as well as part of the land granted to Simeon Lord and several smaller settlers.

The spectacular landscape of SH-LU1 provides a dramatic sense of arrival to the Scenic Hills as Campbelltown Road winds down towards the valley floor. Each crest or change in direction reveals another spectacular panorama over the landscape that extends from Denham Court Road to Mount Annan in the far distance. A seemingly endless series of peaks, valleys and ridges appear and transform as one moves through the landscape, creating a richly rewarding aesthetic experience which does much to establish the ‘sense of place’ for the whole Campbelltown LGA.

Even those using the busier route of the freeway (the Hume Highway) are able to appreciate the richness of variety in the topography and the undeveloped quality of the landscape that opens once past the large-lot residential subdivision of Denham Court. The sign ‘Scenic Hills Riding Ranch’ laid in white on the slope was, until removed recently, a landmark known to all who travel the route and potentially played a role in popularising the name “Scenic Hills” over the “Central Hill Lands” used in the earlier maps and plans. This area has remained undeveloped and includes notable views of Varroville set in its visually intact historic landscape with Bunbury Curran Hill rising behind.

The original configuration and landscapes of the Colonial landscape continue to be expressed clearly through the roads, subdivisions and land uses seen in the unit today. Subdivision north of St Andrews Road has been comparatively modest. Although new uses such as the riding ranch and the (now closed) Veterinary Research Station have been introduced in the 20th Century, their modest built forms and continued focus on rural/pastoral

land uses has ensured that their impact on the historic scenic values has been minimal. The landscape has retained its pastoral character on the lower slopes and foothills, with the evidence of human activity being limited to a small scattering of modestly scaled buildings and a chain wire security fence. Most of this fence is set below the level of the road and is set well back from it, providing a generous verge from which it is possible to stop and appreciate the quality of the views in more detail. The upper areas of Bunbury Curran Hill are more vegetated with areas of original and regenerated Woodland and areas of cleared pastureland on the upper level. Its south-eastern slopes are suffering from invasion by the African Olive weed.

The landscape between St Andrews and Raby Roads is similarly pastoral although evidence of re-subdivision is more evident, particularly that part of the Unit close to Raby Road, where there is little natural vegetation.

The primary non-residential uses in the Unit are the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch and the Catholic Church's Mt Carmel Retreat, Monastery, Hall and High School. A more recently introduced use is the Serbian Orthodox Church's St Sava's College which is located at the western end of St Andrew's Road. The Scenic Hills Riding Ranch is a large horse riding facility that extends over the northern half of the former Varroville estate. Its impact on the aesthetic qualities of the landscape is modest. The extensive grazing paddocks have allowed the Ranch to continue to contribute to the historic and visual curtilages of the Varroville Estate; and the sheds, fences and outbuildings are modest in scale and materials, ensuring that they have remained visually recessive elements in views over the landscape.

The buildings of the monastery, retreat and high school are each larger in scale and visual impact than traditional rural land uses would be in this location, but the impacts of the monastery and retreat in particular are somewhat mitigated by their compact footprint, location away from the main road, use of visually recessive building materials and the protection of historic pastoral land uses over the remainder of the properties. Their primary impact on the landscape has arisen from the introduction of non-rural landuses rather than the visual intrusion of the built elements. It is understood that approval has been granted recently for additional work including the erection of a priory but no details were available about this development or its likely impact on the Scenic Hills at the time of writing.

The Mount Carmel Catholic High School is situated to the south-east of St Andrews Road near the suburban development of Raby. The complex is large and set well back from both St Andrews Road and Spitfire Drive. Although screened lightly from the public domain it is a prominent element in local views over this part of the Unit.

Another substantial land use within the area until relatively recent times was the Veterinary Research Station located to the north of the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch. This facility was relocated to the Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute at Camden several years ago and the land is now used primarily for grazing. The site contains a range of buildings and intentions for its future use are not known. It is situated in one of the most important locations within the Scenic Hills and establishes the foreground of most of the panoramic views between Campbelltown Road and Bunbury Curran Hill.

One of the most significant early agricultural activities undertaken within the Scenic Hills was viticulture – Robert Townson's grapes were recognised as amongst the best in the Colony.

The shadow patterns of vine terraces from the Colonial period can still be seen in places within this Landscape Unit. This land use has recently been re-introduced to the area, with a small winery being located adjacent to Raby Road.

The Ingleburn Dam (part of the Sydney Water Upper Canal system) is situated at the far edge of the Unit with access from Camden Valley Way and via a track through private property from Raby Road.

The focal point of the Unit is the historic Varroville Estate, with its early Victorian house set on a low ridge against the imposing backdrop of Bunbury Curran Hill to the west and the rolling topography of Andrew Thompson's former St Andrews estate to the south. It is interesting to note that Governor Macquarie thought the siting of the house ill-advised – his journal does not record his preferred location, but after his trip to the top of Bunbury Curran Hill he may have thought that the house should have been located higher on the slope to capture more of the scenic views of the surrounding area. The landscape of the Varroville Estate includes significant plantings, outbuildings and evidence of early infrastructure such as Charles Sturt's chain of hand-formed dams. Other evidence is more subtle, such as the traces of the alignment of the route of the original carriage drive from the original entrance from Campbelltown Road that are still visible as a depression in the paddock facing the freeway when viewed in the early morning or after a period of rain (see Figure 2.3.2).

The original grant has been subdivided into the areas around the house and its immediate garden; the bulk of the original Varroville grant including Charles Sturt's dams and the farm outbuildings; Bunbury Curran Hill and the bushland subdivision of St James' Road; and the low-lying area near the creek which was the original eastern boundary of Varroville but is now alienated by the freeway. Although in multiple ownership today, Varroville's historic and visual curtilages have survived substantially intact for 200 years and can still be readily understood and appreciated as a Colonial cultural landscape. It is critically important for Campbelltown, the Cumberland Plain (as the site of the earliest Colonial settlement) and the State of NSW that this rare historic complex remains intact and able to be interpreted as a cultural landscape. It is however currently subject to several applications and proposals for development, the implications of which are discussed below.

Bunbury Curran Hill is asymmetrical in section from east to west, with the escarpment-like slope rising to the ridge above Varroville and then falling towards the gently undulating landscapes of Leppington in the Camden LGA to the west. The land immediately west of the ridge was reserved for regional open space in the early planning strategies for Campbelltown, and a viewing platform was proposed. This open space was created and is accessible to the public, but is low-key and somewhat difficult for the casual visitor to locate. The viewing platform mentioned in the 1973 documentation has not been constructed. Panoramic views are available from near the ridge over the Sydney CBD, North Sydney and Bondi Junction business districts in the north and to the west towards the Blue Mountains on the western horizon. Access to the views over the rich topography of the eastern half of the Scenic Hills is obstructed by a fence and hedge.

Part of the plateau to the west of this ridge was subdivided for large-lot (mostly 2ha) development prior to 1974, and the lots on the south-eastern side re-subdivided to create the open space along the ridge. Although aerial photographs taken in 1956 show this area as cleared grazing land, its character today is distinctly different to the remainder of the Scenic

Hills, with tall trees enclosing the view and the houses nestled beneath a canopy of trees. This re-growth of Cumberland Plain woodland has extended over the area to the western end of St Andrew's Road as well.

The western portion of SH-LU1 on the plateau between Bunbury Curran Hill and Camden Valley Way also demonstrates a landscape quality noticeably different to that found on the eastern side of the ridgeline. The topography is gentler and the roadside edges are well vegetated, which limits the potential for views into the landscape from the public domain. Camden Valley Way is a busy distributor road and although promoted as a scenic route, its aesthetic qualities in this area have been compromised by the visually chaotic range of commercial development lining its western side (within the Camden LGA). No indication of the presence of a high-quality pastoral landscape of the Scenic Hills to the east is available from this location.

The largest surviving parcel of land in SH-LU1 is within this upper area. It is comprised of 281 hectares of William Cordeaux's land grant (of 700 acres) and several smaller grants to other early settlers. This property has retained its rural character, being cleared for grazing with large stands of dense vegetation dividing the internal spaces. The original farmhouse is visible in the 1956 photographs but has now been demolished and the area cleared, although sub-surface archaeological evidence is likely to remain. Sydney Water's Upper Canal winds through the centre of this property from the Ingleburn Dam to the south to cross Denham Court Road near its intersection with Camden Valley Way. The whole of this property has been identified by the Growth Centres Commission as an urban growth area to be known as East Leppington. No details were available about the proposed development at the time of writing so its impacts and the implications for the remainder of the Scenic Hills cannot be addressed in this report. Although this area is separated geographically from the most scenic part of the study area it is still part of the landscape and its development will have the potential to have significant implications for the conservation of SH-LU1. Some of these implications are identified below.

Denham Court Road marks part of the boundary between the Campbelltown and Liverpool LGAs. The implications of the different approaches to the management of the cultural landscape by the two councils over many years can be seen clearly through the contrast between the landscapes to the north and south of the road. The northern side (within the Liverpool LGA) is characterised by large dwellings developed in the sprawling pattern typical of rural-residential development. The aesthetic quality of the landscape is dominated by visually assertive house designs and materials. Several houses of similar scale and visual impact have also been built on the southern side of Denham Court Road within the Unit; although on significantly larger lots.

The landscape immediately to the south of Denham Court Road lies within the Scenic Hills and although perhaps not as well known as the remainder of the Unit, it also demonstrates very high aesthetic qualities, being dominated by the complex folds of the foothills of Bunbury Curran Hill. Travelling along Denham Court Road reveals a series of small valleys which are partially hidden from casual view by the overlapping edges of the complex topography. This has resulted in an intimately scaled and enticing landscape with a significant sense of three-dimensionality which contrasts with the broad, panoramic nature of the vista available only a few hundred metres further to the west near the intersection of

Denham Court and Campbelltown Roads. The 'hidden' nature of these small valleys encourages the visitor to appreciate the variety of spatial and aesthetic experiences created by the richness and depth of the landscape.

SH-LU1 also extends south of St Andrews Road to Raby Road. Although this part of the Unit is also situated within one of the earliest land grants in the Campbelltown LGA (Thompson's St Andrews) no evidence of any early building fabric or other evidence of settlement other than traces of earlier plantings is known to have survived. The extent of the grant is still defined clearly by St Andrews and Raby Roads.

The area between St Andrews and Raby Roads is visually and functionally contiguous with the Varroville and Bunbury Curran landscapes to the north. The main ridge extends south from Bunbury Curran Hill in a slight saddle, the landscape being more undulating and the peaks not as strongly defined by changes in vegetation as they are elsewhere throughout the Scenic Hills. The integrity of the pastoral quality of this landscape is high, with extensive paddock areas and little or no natural vegetation on most properties other than where sheltered in creek valleys. This more open character has resulted in the houses and other structures near Raby Road being prominent in the viewscape, with their impacts dependant on the attention given to the sensitive siting, scale, use of materials and landscaping of the immediate setting.

The landscape of the western end of Raby Road also has a 'hidden' quality, although it is not as visually spectacular as that found along Denham Court Road. It is notable for its sudden appearance in the view only after the main ridge has been crossed, with the alignment of the road enhancing the bowl shape of the valley and drawing the eye towards the opposite slope and upwards to the next ridgeline, emphasising the sense of spatial depth that is one of the defining elements of the landscape of the Scenic Hills.

The landscape of SH-LU1 is under significant threat at the present time. Proposals (both formal and informal) have been submitted to permit the redevelopment of almost the whole of the area north of St Andrews Road for a variety of commercial uses, including in addition to the major residential development at East Leppington; a large business park and heavy vehicle service/rest facility adjacent to the freeway. The impacts that these developments would be likely to have on the scenic qualities of this landscape are discussed below.

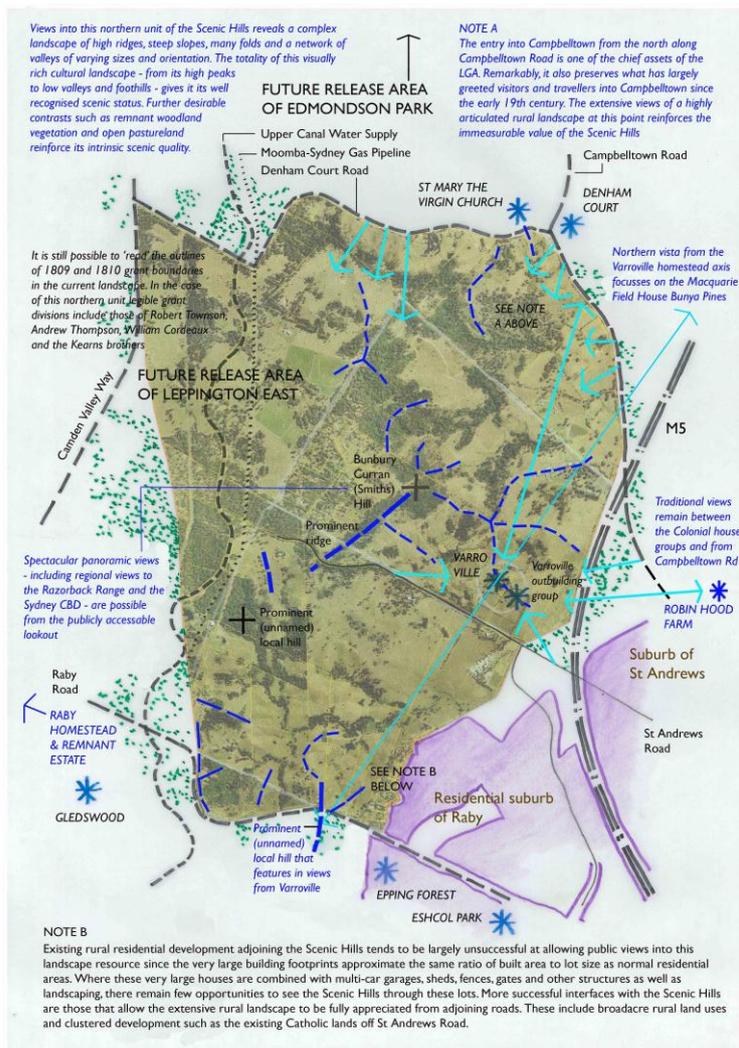


Figure 4.1.13. Topographic features and major characteristics of the landscape of SH-LU1.



Figure 4.1.14 to Figure 4.1.16 (opposite). The quality of the views when travelling through the Scenic Hills towards Campbelltown and the main valley have been documented for over 200 years and they continue to demonstrate impressive scenic values as a serial landscape. The character of the route itself contributes to the experience, with the alignment of Campbelltown Road twisting and winding between tall trees set into the wide verges and each turn and crest in the road opening another spectacular view over the Scenic Hills.





Figure 4.1.17 and Figure 4.1.18 (detail). The views when arriving at SH-LU1 from the north along Campbelltown Road are dominated by Bunbury Curran Hill and its foothills. Its aesthetic value is notable due to its undeveloped character, the visual complexity and interesting configuration of the topography, the balance of pastoral and natural vegetation and the sense of depth and spatial complexity created by a variety of elements in the foreground, mid-ground, background and distance of the view. It is also notable for the way that the elements constantly reposition themselves in different configurations as one moves through the landscape. The area in the foreground of this photograph is the former Veterinary Research Station which is now in private ownership. It is situated in one of the most aesthetically critical parts of the Unit, forming the foreground for views from Campbelltown Road over the Scenic Hills.



Figure 4.1.19. Even this simple view contains fore, mid and distant elements, with a high level of visual interest due to the undulating topography and textural and colour contrast from the grasses and trees.



Figure 4.1.20. Looking to Varroville from Spitfire Drive near St Andrews Road. Bunbury Curran Hill is visible in the distance on the left of this photograph.



Figure 4.1.21. Looking to Bunbury Curran Hill from Campbelltown Road near the intersection with Denham Court Road. Many places offer panoramic views which extend to the southernmost part of the Scenic Hills. Signs of habitation are few, yet it is clearly a constructed pastoral landscape with bands of grassed paddocks and trees forming three-dimensional patterns of human activity.



Figure 4.1.22. Although relatively large in scale, these buildings demonstrate traditional form and sit well within the landscape. Note Badgally Hill on the skyline to the south-west (looking to Badgally Hill from Campbelltown Road).



Figure 4.1.23. The series of ridges and valleys between Bunbury Curran Hill and Denham Court Road demonstrate very high scenic values due to the interesting topography and sense of enclosure which establishes an intimate, hidden character to this northernmost part of the Scenic Hills. The visual contrast between the cleared grassland and the drifts of darker-coloured trees facilitates an understanding of the depth and richness of this landscape (Denham Court Road).



Figure 4.1.24. A similar hidden landscape quality can be found to the west of the main ridgeline between St Andrews and Raby Roads. This view from west of the intersection with St James Road demonstrates the spatial complexity, textural interest and visual recession that are important elements of the landscape of the Scenic Hills (St Andrews Road).



Figure 4.1.25. The primary land use in the northern part of SH-LU1 is grazing. The Scenic Hills Riding Ranch occupies over 200 ha of land, stretching from the freeway to the western slopes of Bunbury Curran Hill and extending over part of the original Varroville Estate. It contributes to the scenic qualities of this landscape through its traditional character, lack of urban-style buildings and by facilitating the retention of traditional land uses strongly associated the historic cultural landscape. (The horses shown in this photo are grazing on land adjacent to the Riding Ranch.)



Figure 4.1.26. The Scenic Hills Riding Ranch sign was, until its removal recently, laid into this prominent knoll adjacent to the freeway and had become a local landmark, advertising not only the business, but also the landscape to the thousands who use the freeway each day.



Figure 4.1.27. The Upper Canal is an engineering work of State Heritage Significance. It winds through the Scenic Hills from Denham Court Road in SH-LU1 to Menangle Road in SH-LU5. This photo shows the Canal as it passes through SH-LU1 near Denham Court Road.



Figure 4.1.28 and Figure 4.1.29. Evidence of pastoral activity such as this small stock yard and loading ramp can still be found. Relics such as these enhance our understanding of the earlier layers of use of the landscape. Viticulture has been practiced in the Scenic Hills since early Colonial times, and Varroville was renowned for the quality of its wine. A small vineyard has been established on one of the smaller lots fronting Raby Road. This use is historically consistent with the earlier landscape as well as providing an active rural landuse to help ensure the ongoing viability of the rural landscape into the future.



Figure 4.1.30 (above) and Figure 4.1.31 left (detail). The interface between suburban and pastoral development is managed more successfully in this area than in SH-LU2. The impact of the large-lot residential development has been mitigated by the low built forms and large trees on the lower, residential side of the properties as well as the substantial plantings of native Cumberland Plain species such as Forest Red Gums on some lots.



Figure 4.1.32 (left) and Figure 4.1.33 below (detail). Some of the more recent developments have been suburban in character and design. Sited at the crest of prominent hills and built of light and reflective materials, these characteristics do not blend sympathetically into the traditional rural landscape.





Figure 4.1.34. The area to the west of the Bunbury Curran Hill is known as East Leppington. This land has been designated as an Urban Release Area. At present it is a predominantly pastoral landscape with areas of remnant and revegetated Cumberland Plain Woodland vegetated landscape. No clue is available from this view of the topography of the landscape immediately to the east, as can be seen in this view along the western edge of the side from Camden Valley Way (within Camden LGA).

Although largely screened from the remainder of the area identified as the Scenic Hills landscape, the land designated for development extends over a considerable proportion of the area of SH-LU1, covering more than 280 ha of the total site area of just over 1300 ha. Even though this part of the landscape is hidden from casual view from most of the remainder of SH-LU1, development of this scale will have the potential to affect the integrity of the aesthetic qualities of the remainder of the Scenic Hills through direct or indirect and it is important that careful attention be paid to the design, siting and likely ancillary impacts of any development on both the surrounding properties and the landscape of the Scenic Hills as a whole.



Figure 4.1.35. Raby Road forms the southern boundary of the Unit with SH-LU2. Raby Road is an important link between the Campbelltown and Camden LGAs. Its straight alignment follows the western edge of the historic St Andrews Estate and directs the eye to the skyline. The profile of the skyline in this part of the Unit is not as dramatic as found elsewhere in the Scenic Hills, being lower and lacking prominent peaks. The ability to appreciate the depth of the landscape has been made more difficult by the expansive development covering the foothills to the main ridge line, but the generally undeveloped quality of the land (with some notable exceptions) once within the Unit has meant that the landscapes of both SH-LU1 (to the right of Raby Road in this photograph) and SH-LU2 (to the left) have remained high quality ones.



Figure 4.1.36. When travelling west along Raby Road and approaching the crest of the hill there is no hint of the quality of the scenic landscape over the ridge.



Figure 4.1.37. The unfolding nature of the view from the crest of Raby Road when travelling west is both surprising and of a very good quality.

Traces of earlier viticulture can still be seen in the cleared area on the far slope. The sinuous nature of the road also adds to its aesthetic qualities.



Figure 4.1.38. The landscape of the 'back valley' of the Scenic Hills viewed from Raby Road where it enters the Campbelltown LGA from the west is also of a very high aesthetic quality, with the road leading the eye through the landscape to the hills of the EESPLs in the distance.



Figure 4.1.39. Excellent views to the north and east are to be found from the 'back valley' of Raby Road. The new house on the main ridgeline (towards the right of the image) is a prominent element that intrudes into the skyline of this panoramic view, even from this distance.



Figure 4.1.40. The view from the crest of the main ridgeline where cut by Raby Road extends over the EESPLs to the distant skyline of the Georges River plateau in the east.



Figure 4.1.41. The “back valleys” west of the main ridge between Bunbury Curran Hill and Raby Road are also of a very high scenic quality, with rolling pastures and hills receding towards the more heavily vegetated Bunbury Curran Hill and the plateau behind. This scene is marred only by utility infrastructure such as the tower in the foreground of this view (taken from Raby Road).



Figure 4.1.42. Once the main ridge is crossed when heading east on Raby Road the straight alignment of the road draws the eye towards the intermediate ridge. The wide, grassed verges and informal placement of eucalypts establishes a park-like quality to the arrival sequence, but the introduced plantings and increasing densities of development mean that it reads as a residential, not rural or pastoral landscape.



Figure 4.1.43 . Varroville is sited on a low ridge extending below Bunbury Curran Hill, which provides a backdrop for views over the property. The house today is surrounded by vegetation – the buildings visible in this photograph are the stables and outbuildings. The route of the carriage drive can still be seen today (arrowed).



Figure 4.1.44 and Figure 4.1.45. Varroville is a highly significant Colonial cultural property which, although its legal curtilage has been significantly eroded by the successive subdivision of the estate by previous owners, has retained the aesthetic and historical integrity of its original setting as a modest Victorian house acting as the focal building within of an expansive pastoral landscape. The stables and outbuildings are no longer on the same title as the main house and are in different ownership, raising significant issues for the future conservation of its historic curtilage.



Figure 4.1.46 and Figure 4.1.47. Varroville house is not aligned to Bunbury Curran Hill, but rather to an axis between the Araucaria marker trees at Macquarie Fields House and the main ridge of the Scenic Hills near Raby Road. Badgally Hill and Mount Universe are also still visible through the trees from next to the house, as can be seen above. The grassed slopes of the hills near Mt Universe (SH-LU2) add interest and depth to the view by contrasting colour and texture with that of the vegetated hilltops. A young Araucaria (Bunya Pine) has been planted at Varroville to provide continuity when the existing tree comes to the end of its life. In years to come it will be an important marker of the property in views over the Scenic Hills.



Figure 4.1.48. The siting of Varroville house relatively low to the surrounding landscape is demonstrated clearly by this photograph, taken looking towards the north-east. The current legal curtilage and heritage listing of this property does not extend beyond the fence line although the visual and historic curtilage of the property has retained a highly contributory level of visual and functional integrity which has allowed this important property to continue to read as a substantially intact and highly significant cultural landscape.



Figure 4.1.49 and Figure 4.1.50 (below). The explorer Charles Sturt was an early owner of Varroville. He is recognised as a pioneer in the science of water conservation within the early Colonial landscape and recorded constructing a 'dam in every paddock' on the property. This was one of the earliest known attempts at water conservation in the Colony. Many of these dams appear to have survived in what is likely to be their original, hand formed configuration and have the potential to provide highly significant evidence of this important technological innovation from the period of early Colonial settlement.



These dams are no longer located on the same title as the main house and if development proceeds in their vicinity the evidence will be in danger of being lost or significantly overwritten and their archaeological and technological research potential effectively destroyed.



Figure 4.1.51 and Figure 4.1.52. The scenic quality of the landscape transforms from panoramic pastoral to enclosed bushland as St Andrews Road climbs Bunbury Curran Hill. Although well sheltered from more distant views by the topography and the trees, St James Road and St Davids Road provide the access to the lookout and area of regional open space near the crest of Bunbury Curran Hill and are part of a popular walking route. The contrast between rural and bushland landscapes is emphasised by the abrupt transition as the road winds uphill beneath the overhanging canopies of the trees lining St Andrews Road, many of which are old-growth.

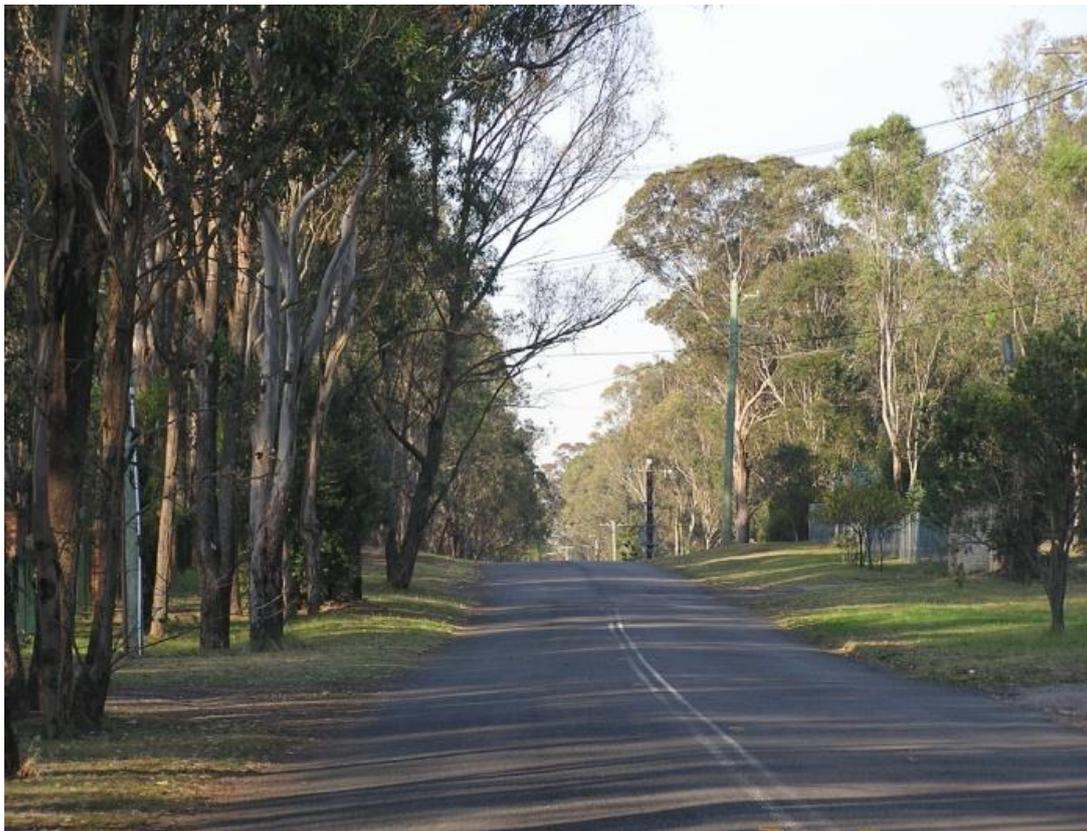


Figure 4.1.53 to Figure 4.1.55 (opposite page). The land immediately to the west of the Bunbury Curran Hill ridge was originally part of the Varroville estate but was excised and subdivided for small lot rural housing at some time after 1956. Although these properties demonstrate a notably different scenic character to most of the Unit, their location under the canopy of regrown Woodland vegetation has created a distinctive sub precinct with a high aesthetic quality within SH-LU1.

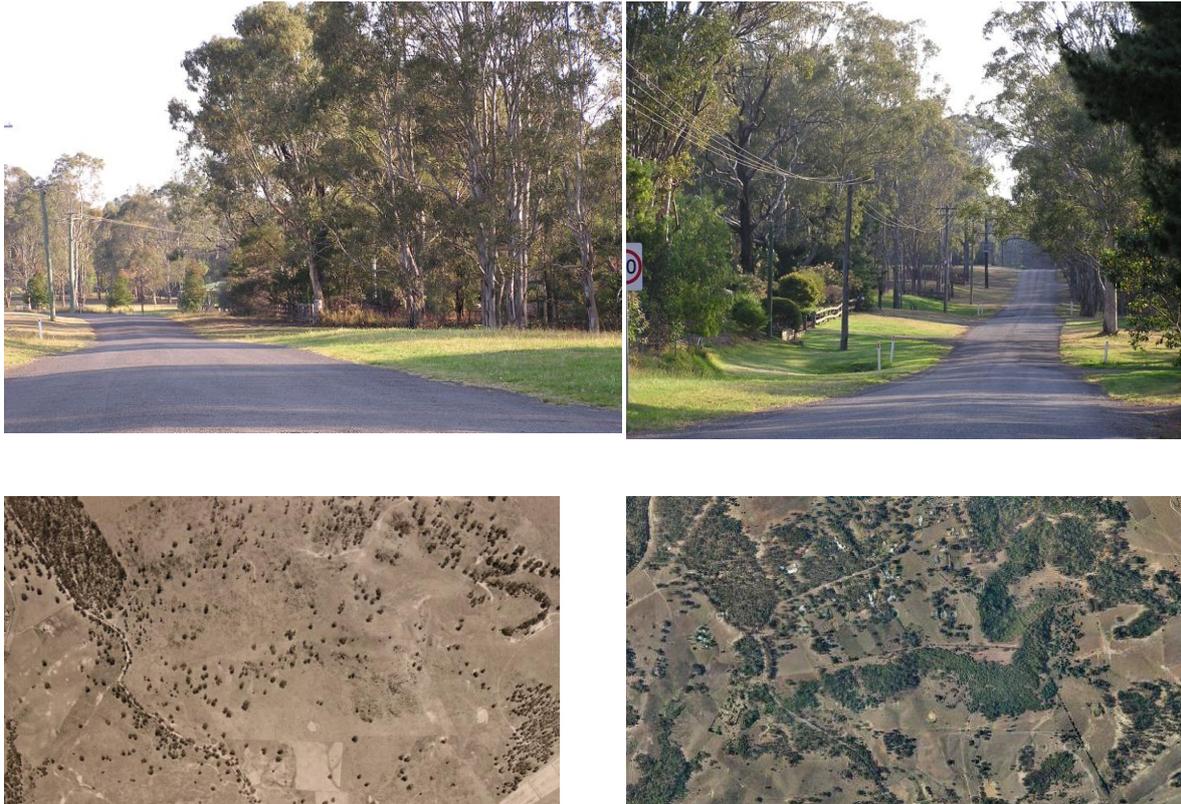


Figure 4.1.56 and Figure 4.1.57. Lot sizes in the subdivision of St James Road are less than 3ha, well below the 100 hectares required under today's controls. The subdivision was approved prior to the introduction of any planning controls and it now demonstrates good aesthetic qualities due to the extensive woodland tree cover. The 1956 aerial photograph (left) reveals that this area was cleared grazing land only 50 years ago. The path leading into the area from St Andrews Road approximates the route of St James and St Davids Roads today.



Figure 4.1.58 and Figure 4.1.59. The view from the small area of regional open space near the ridgeline of Bunbury Curran Hill is extensive, reaching from the Sydney Central Business District to the north (left) to the Blue Mountains to the south-west (right), but the eastern side of the ridge is in private ownership and public access is blocked by fences and planting which limit opportunities to view over the Campbelltown valley and Holsworthy Plateau from this historically significant location.



Figure 4.1.60 . The small yet well-formed valleys along Denham Court Road create a series of intimate spaces which both introduce and define the character of the Scenic Hills when entering the LGA from the North along this route. Their undeveloped character is particularly important and contributes highly to their aesthetic significance as elements of the landscape of the Scenic Hills.



Figure 4.1.61. View over one of the 'hidden valleys' along Denham Court Road. Although enclosed in character gaps in the trees and hills allow views to the ridge of the EESPLs in the distance.



Figure 4.1.62. At the eastern end the sense of enclosure lessens as the valleys start to open into the main landscape of the Scenic Hills near Campbelltown Road.



Figure 4.1.63 and Figure 4.1.64. The character of development on the northern side of Denham Court Road within the Liverpool LGA (left) is typical of large-lot suburban development common throughout the outskirts of the Sydney metropolitan area and contrasts strongly with that of SH-LU1 opposite (right). Although the lot sizes on the northern side are generous, many of the houses are large in scale and visually prominent. Development of this type within the Scenic Hills would destroy its aesthetic and environmental values.

4.1.2 SIGNIFICANT VIEWS AND VISTAS

SH-LU1 contains a wealth of highly significant views and vistas. They are experienced when looking towards the Unit, away from the Unit, over the Unit and within the Unit. Each of the major roads affords quality serial views to be enjoyed when driving through the area.

Most of the views in SH-LU1 are panoramic and surround the viewer when moving through the landscape. One of the most important characteristics of the views in SH-LU1 is that they demonstrate a very high level of visual complexity and interest through their topography and undeveloped character. Most are unimpeded by structures, whether in the foreground, mid-ground or background. The views are not gained from a single location, nor even a range of vantage points, but instead they are experienced 'in the round', as one moves through the landscape. It is essential that the potential to understand the aesthetic and historic values of the Unit spatially rather than as a flat 'stage set' continues to be protected.

The quality of the views over this rolling landscape are also enhanced by the contrast afforded between the trees and other vegetation that follow the folds and creek lines of the topography, and the treetops that outline the edges of the valleys. Together these provide a strong sense of recession in views.

Of particular note are the views from Campbelltown Road near the former Veterinary Research Station which extend towards Mount Annan at the southern end of the Scenic Hills, and embrace Kenny Hill, Badgally Hill, Mount Universe, the ridge at Raby Road and Bunbury Curran Hill in a single panorama.

The views towards Bunbury Curran Hill are particularly important and can be appreciated from the north, east and south of the Unit. The foothills and foreground to these views are undulating and pastoral in character and contrast strongly with the darker greens of the higher slopes. Many (depending on the relative heights and angles) have further significance because they also encompass the substantially intact visual curtilage of Varroville.

These significant views towards Varroville are available from many different locations and perspectives, including St Andrews Road, the freeway and Campbelltown Road. Although the freeway view is brief due to the prevailing speed of travel, it is of a high quality because it allows a sense of the original Colonial landscape to continue to be seen and appreciated by thousands of travellers every day. Both the accessibility and visual quality of this view informs and in many ways defines the 'historic' landscape of the Campbelltown LGA to those using the freeway, and it therefore plays a critical role in defining the Campbelltown's unique character and sense of place to the wider community.

The ridge near Raby Road is not as high as other parts of the Scenic Hills but is a locally prominent element which has historic and aesthetic significance as one of the alignment points of the Varroville complex. Varroville was sited carefully along the axis between Macquarie Fields House and the edge of the ridge and the small prominence near Raby Road before it falls to the north in a shallow saddle.

Significant views are also available from the top of Bunbury Curran Hill but their accessibility to the community is limited by the topography, land ownership, lack of signage and other information to encourage visitors to seek them out. Although the views that are available from this location are excellent, and stretch as far as the Sydney CBD and Blue Mountains, the truly spectacular views over the Scenic Hills and main Campbelltown Valley to the East Edge Scenic Protection Lands which form the skyline of the opposite side of the valley are to be found from the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch and are not accessible to the general public.

These views over the Scenic Hills from Campbelltown Road between Denham Court Road and St Andrews Road are of the highest quality. They are complex, multilayered, recessive and full of visual interest. Their serial quality as one travels along Campbelltown Road is particularly notable, with the prospects opening and closing continually with the changes in local topography and alignment of the road.

One of the most important aspects of these views is their accessibility from the roadside. They are not obstructed by residential or other development, nor by sound attenuation walls. Instead, the verges are wide and lined by old-growth eucalypts which emphasise the traditional, rural character of this route. The residential development on the eastern side of Campbelltown Road (not within the study area) on the Liverpool LGA side of Denham Court Road demonstrates the impacts that 'large lot' residential development can have on the rural landscape. Campbelltown Road remains a popular route but its role as the primary access to the City of Campbelltown has been replaced by the freeway which has created a different set of viewing opportunities.

The hidden quality of the valleys lining the southern side of Denham Court Road are also highly significant elements in the scenic landscape, as is the valley on the northern side of Raby Road to the west of the main ridge line.

A short passage of aesthetically pleasing roadside landscape is also found when winding up the side of Bunbury Curran Hill on St Andrews Road with the dense native vegetation arching high overhead and creating a high quality natural landscape experience.

The survival of so many highly significant views and vistas within this Landscape Unit provides important physical evidence of the foresight of the earliest planning controls in the

area, and also of the commitment of Council and the community to the ongoing conservation of the unique qualities of the setting of the LGA.

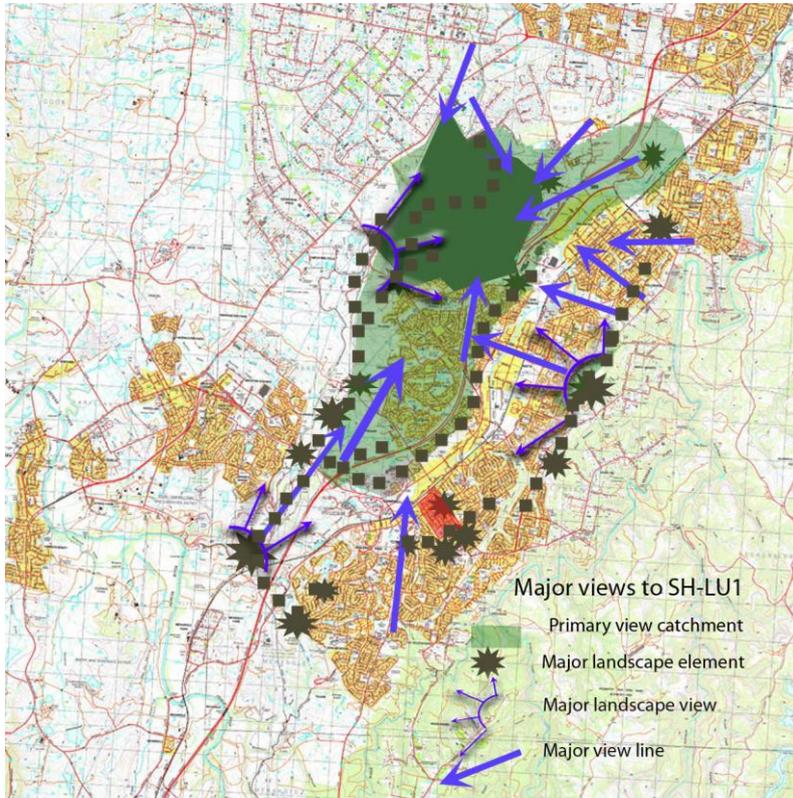


Figure 4.1.65. Major views toward and over SH-LU1. Its prominence from many parts of the main Campbelltown valley is demonstrated when the views and vistas are mapped. The topographic separation of the area to be developed as East Leppington can also be seen, with the only views in this area being of a local nature, including the good view looking south along Sydney Water's Upper Canal from Denham Court Road.

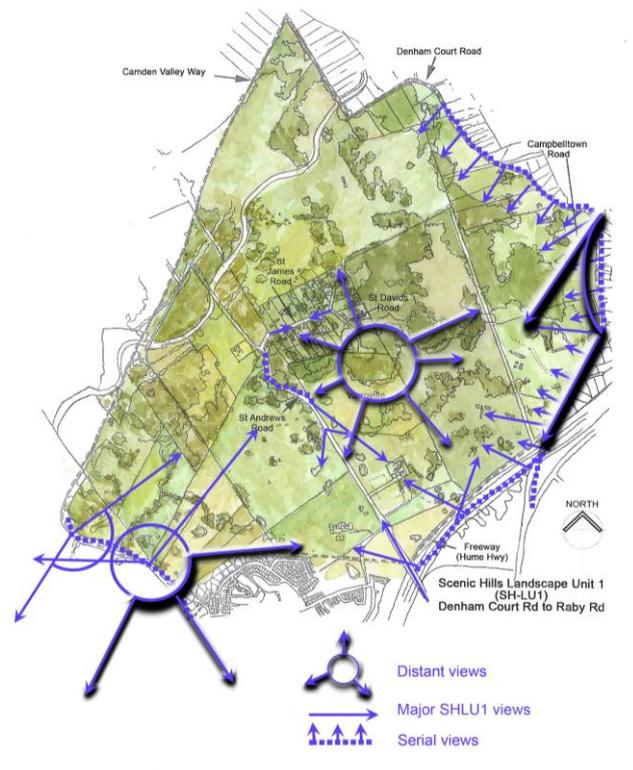


Figure 4.1.66. The views and vistas outward from SH-LU1 are expansive in their extent and high in quality. Particularly impressive views are available from Bunbury Curran Hill, the highest part of the Landscape Unit, and extend to the skyline in all directions. Those to the east and south are however found within private property and not accessible to the community at the present time. High quality serial views over the Unit towards other Landscape Units are also available when travelling along Campbelltown Road.

4.1.3 SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE QUALITIES AND VALUES IN SH-LU1

SH-LU1 is a highly significant Colonial cultural landscape. It continues to demonstrate the qualities and aesthetic values identified by notable early commentators, including Governor Lachlan Macquarie who in 1810 noted the superior quality of the landscape, and the writings of numerous other historically significant personalities since this time.

SH-LU1 also demonstrates the following principal characteristics:

- It continues to act as the scenic gateway to the main Campbelltown Valley, particularly when travelling south along Campbelltown Road. The arrival sequence provides a series of opportunities to engage with the ever-changing and scenically engaging landscape of the Scenic Hills. These views remain highly accessible to the general community because they have not been blocked or obscured by development in the foreground of the views.
- It contains one of the most scenically and historically significant natural landscape features within the Campbelltown LGA, Bunbury Curran Hill.
- It provides opportunities for engagement with a range of different types of view, from the intimately scaled valleys of Denham Court Road to the tunnels of Eucalypts arching over St Andrews Road as it winds up Bunbury Curran Hill, which in turn are contrasted by the broad panoramas from Campbelltown Road over the whole of the Scenic Hills landscape.
- Extensive views beyond the area are also available from within SH-LU1, including to the Sydney CBD and the Blue Mountains National Park.
- It contains Varroville one of the most important surviving Colonial cultural landscapes in New South Wales. Although much of the original grant has been excised from the legal curtilage of the property, the lack of development throughout this landscape has allowed it to retain its original visual and functional curtilage as a farmhouse set in a pastoral landscape of quality which is now rare in New South Wales. The curtilage also contains a series of dams that show characteristics of having been hand-made and, if so, have the potential to provide important and very rare physical evidence of one of the earliest attempts at water conservation for agricultural use in the colony;
- The prevailing land use continues to be rural, and evidence was found of historic rural uses such as viticulture being re-introduced into the area. The impacts of the few non-rural uses have been minimised because they have been situated away from the most prominent viewsheds and for the most part have respected the need for buildings and infrastructure to be low-key and aesthetically neutral in their design, siting and finishes, and very importantly, are modest in their scale.
- It includes a highly significant and historic engineering work, the Sydney Water Supply Upper Canal and Ingleburn Dam which continues to operate in accordance with its original design intention.
- The north-western part of the Unit is particularly intact. Its landscape quality is significantly different to the remainder of the Unit, demonstrating a good natural landscape value due to the density of the Cumberland Plain Woodland vegetation

surrounding the site. Although it could be described as having low potential to contribute to the aesthetic quality of the Scenic Hills as a pastoral cultural landscape due to the difference in topography and vegetation, it still falls within the landscape of the Scenic Hills and contributes positively to its values.

- The western part of SH-LU1 beyond the main ridge is revealed suddenly and spectacularly when passing over the ridge of Raby Road. The road follows the rise and fall in the local topography and adds to the sense of rural landscape. Excellent views of Bunbury Curran Hill are available from this different perspective, and assist in understanding and appreciating the three-dimensionality of the landscape.
- This area is also highly intact, with little evidence of recent development.

RETAINING THE SCENIC RURAL LANDSCAPE

- preserve undeveloped, rural character
- protect the historic cultural landscape including buildings, structures and views
- prevent further development that may intrude on landscape or views- protect existing subdivision pattern
- protect traditional rural uses
- protect sympathetic recent uses (viticulture and religious)
- prevent land uses that will have unsympathetic visual impact

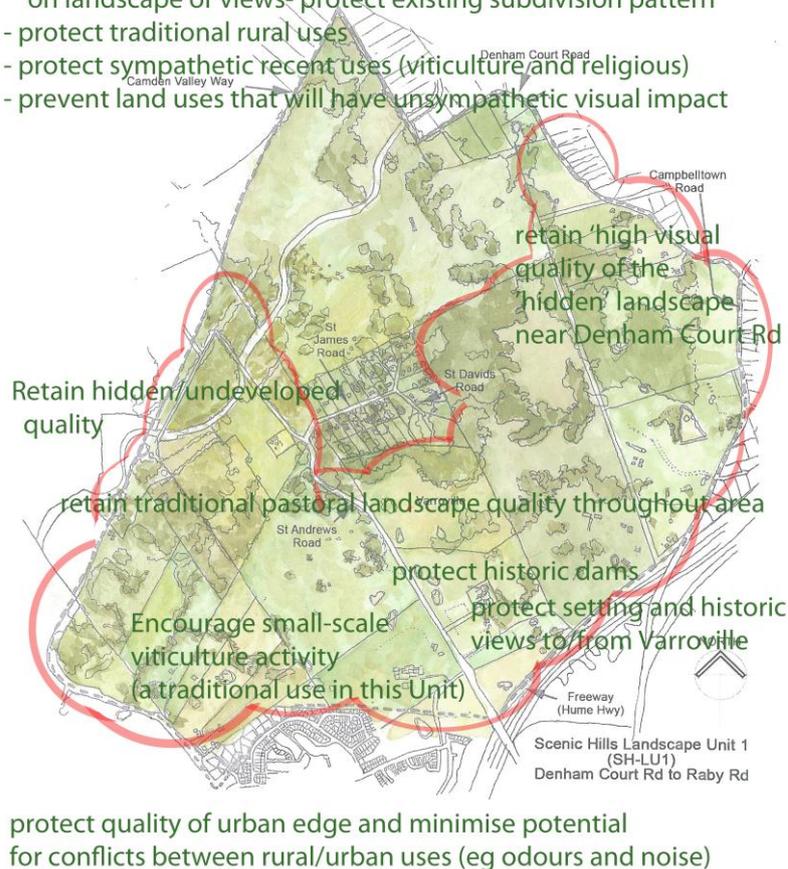


Figure 4.1.67. Priorities in the protection of SH-LU1's scenic qualities.

4.1.4 NATURAL CONSERVATION VALUES AND THE VISUAL QUALITIES OF SH-LU1

No detailed information was available about significant ecological habitats or species within the Scenic Hills Landscape Units. It was noted during the fieldwork that the lower portions of the Landscape Unit were substantially cleared and the upper reaches had retained a higher proportion of mature canopy. The aerial photographs reveal that most of this upper landscape had been substantially cleared prior to 1956, and some large areas of regrowth were found, including mature specimens of Cumberland Plain Woodland species.

Part of the Unit, particularly that at the western edge in the vicinity of Ingleburn Dam, has retained some substantial areas of vegetation that appear to be remnant original areas of Cumberland Plain Woodland.

Particularly good examples of mature trees were found lining the verges of many of the historic routes such as Campbelltown Road and St Andrews Road. The same trees are also evident in the 1956 aerial photographs and their mature size and location lining the route of early roads suggest that they were retained from the original clearing of the landscape and may predate European occupation.

Significant portions of the area showed evidence of infestation by the African Olive and Box Thorn, both noxious weeds that were introduced to the region in the Colonial era. Particularly dense stands were found on the steep slopes of Bunbury Curran Hill.

4.1.5 EXISTING STATUTORY PLANNING CONTROLS AND THE QUALITIES OF THE VISUAL AND SCENIC LANDSCAPE OF SH-LU1

Almost all of the land within SH-LU1 is located within the area covered by the Campbelltown LEP District 8 (Central Hills Lands) (LEP D8), with a small part within the Campbelltown LEP 2002 (Urban Area). It should be noted that LEP 2002.

Most of the Unit is zoned 7(d1) Environmental Protection (Scenic), with the area of open space at Bunbury Curran Hill zoned 6(c) Open Space (Regional) and the Upper Canal zoned 5(a) Special Uses (Water Supply). Most of the land within this Unit is also subject to the 'escarpment protection area' control which recognises the topography of the area and prescribes urban design requirements to ensure that new development will blend successfully with the surrounding landscape.

The primary aim of LEP D8 is to ensure that the Central Hills Lands District retains the character of a rural landscape and provides a strong functional and aesthetic contrast to the urban areas of the valley below.

A small diamond-shaped parcel of land near the St Andrews Road overpass in the south-eastern corner of SH-LU1 is within the area covered by Campbelltown (Urban Area) LEP 2002 and is zoned 5(e) Special Uses Public Purposes Corridor. The purpose of this zone is to reserve land for the major electricity transmission corridor which extends across the main valley to the open area between E-LU3 and E-LU4 in the EESPLs. The land near Raby Road adjacent to the suburban development is also within LEP 2002 and is zoned 7(d6) Environmental Protection with a minimum lot size of 0.4 ha.

The aims, objectives and permissible uses within the 7(d1) Environmental Protection (Scenic) zone in LEP D8 focus on the need to protect the scenic and environmental qualities of the landscape through facilitating appropriate land uses such as agricultural and other low impact uses and by empowering Council to refuse development that would not achieve this objective.

The evidence of the fabric in the area and historic aerial photographs suggests that the substantive land use in the Unit has remained rural, although the intensity of ancillary development such as dwellings and other uses (such as the Retreat and Monastery) has increased significantly over the past 50 years. The impact of the introduction of these additional structures on the aesthetic and historic qualities of the landscape has ranged from minimal to highly intrusive. Some development has been achieved in a visually modest manner and now blends seamlessly into the views over the area, whereas other development has been sited or designed without apparent consideration of the visual impacts on the landscape and now distracts the eye from the scenic qualities, and/or in places has become an active intrusion into significant views.

Little development has occurred in the special uses or regional open space zones.

The purpose of the 7(d6) Environmental Protection 0.4ha minimum zone in LEP 2002 was to provide a buffer or transitional zone between the densely settled suburban and undeveloped rural landscapes. The development that has occurred is typical of that found in this type of subdivision, with standard residential dwellings, gardens and recreational facilities such as swimming pools and tennis courts dominating the properties. The prevailing character of this part of the Unit is residential rather than rural.

4.1.6 EXISTING LOT SIZES AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE VISUAL QUALITIES OF SH-LU1'S LANDSCAPE

The minimum lot size required for the subdivision of land and/or the erection of a dwelling in the 7(d1) zone of LEP D8 is 100 ha. The purpose of this limit was to protect the historic balance between land uses, property sizes and scenic qualities in the area by discouraging land speculation through preventing subdivision that would undermine the scenic quality of the landscape and its agricultural viability and also by discouraging other potentially intrusive uses that did not have a need for a lot of this size.

The concessionary provisions of the LEP have had a significant impact on the visual qualities of SH-LU1's landscape by allowing the erection of a dwelling on lots that existed prior to 1974 (when detailed planning controls were introduced), and also the erection of dwellings to provide accommodation for farm workers.

A simple calculation based on the total area of land in private ownership within the 7(d1) zone would suggest that the maximum number of lots (and therefore dwellings) at 100 hectares per lot should be 13. The landscape has however been subject to successive subdivisions over the years which led to approximately 58 lots existing in 1974. Most of these were given the potential to erect a dwelling under the concessionary development clause.

It is informative to note that only two lots were larger than 100 hectares at that time and did not rely on this concessional provision, and also that neither of these properties has been subdivided since. Figure 4.1.72 shows the range of lot sizes found in the Unit and Figure 4.1.73 shows the distribution of these lots throughout the Unit.

The research and fieldwork revealed that approximately 49 dwellings have been built throughout the Unit in addition to the institutional accommodation at the Monastery and Retreat. Their distribution is uneven, with the areas near Raby Road and St James Road having 30 dwellings, or approximately 60% of the total. The reason for this density is evident from the subdivision pattern: the parcels in these areas are significantly smaller than elsewhere in the Landscape Unit – and also smaller than much of the remainder of the Scenic Hills Study area. It was noted also that evidence of recent (post 1974) subdivision of properties already less than 100 hectares was also found, including the creation of four lots from three near Denham Court Road. The rationale for these approvals was not available.

Three examples were also found of the creation of additional lots by re-subdividing undersized lots; including one that created a very small (c2 hectares) curtilage around an existing dwelling and placed the balance in a larger lot, on which an additional dwelling was then erected. The reasons that these subdivisions were approved is not known, but the implications for the future management and conservation of the values of the Scenic Hills landscape are significant and a priority should be placed on preventing similar development in the future.

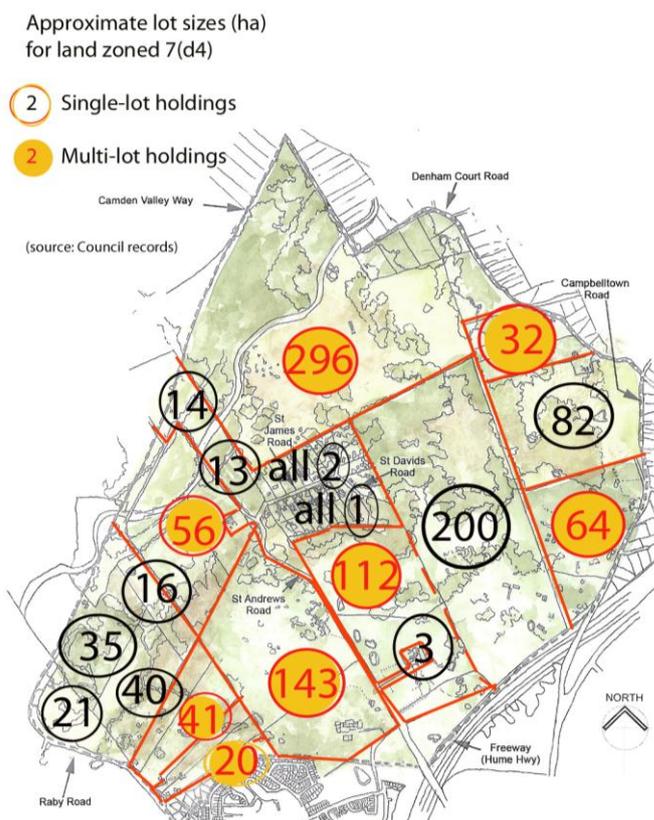


Figure 4.1.68. Land within the 7(d1) zone requires a minimum area of at least 100 ha prior to subdivision or the erection of a dwelling. Only two lots are greater than 200 hectares and therefore have the potential for further subdivision under the existing controls.

Many adjacent lots are in the same ownership or appear to be owned by related groups or companies however. These are shown by the yellow dots on this map.

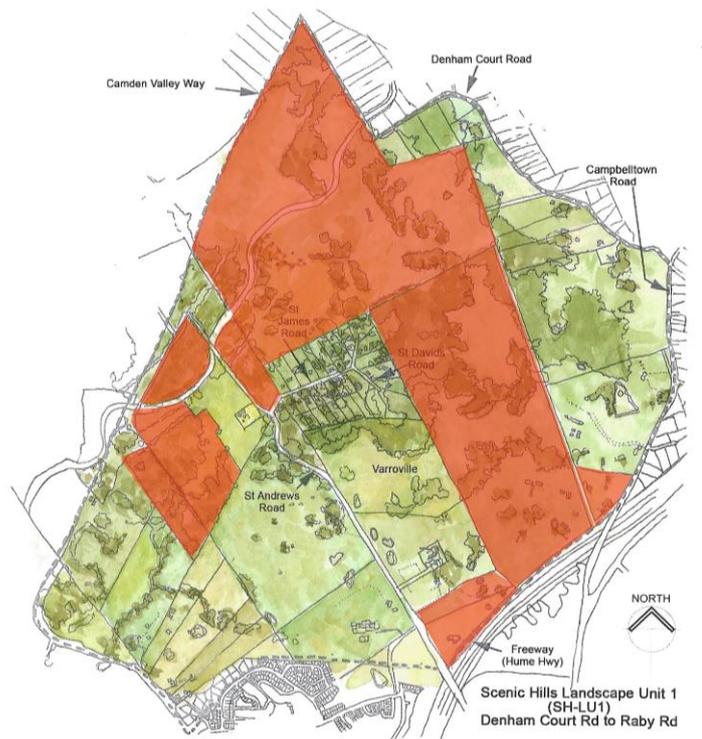
Although almost all lots were significantly smaller than this, 41 of the 64 parcels have at least one dwelling on the property, and four showed evidence of having more than one. The LEP allows this in certain circumstances.

The 100 hectares minimum lot size was nominated purposefully to encourage rural land uses and allow the reasonable development of existing lots, whilst at the same time preventing land speculation for subdivision that would erode the scenic quality of the landscape. Concessions were granted to allow owners of existing lots to erect a dwelling, and most of these have been taken up.

(Note: this figure excludes areas reserved for regional open space and other undevelopable parcels such as narrow slivers of land remaining from road widening. It also excludes the properties zoned 7(d6) 0.4ha large-lot residential near Raby Road.)

Figure 4.1.69. Summary of subdivision potential under the existing LEP. The lots greater than 200 hectares are shaded in pink. The large parcel marked Leppington East has been designated for major land release in the future, although under the existing controls subdivision into only two lots is possible.

The lots outlined in red had no dwelling visible either on visual inspection or on aerial photographs. All other parcels contained at least one dwelling.



Lots without dwellings (2009)
(nb: mostly less than 100ha)

Four clusters of development at a significantly higher density significantly higher density were identified: the development near St James Road (with lots between 1 and 2.5 hectares), small-farm development to the north of Raby Road near the main ridge (between 10 and 40 hectares), a group of properties along Denham Court Road (various sizes) and an area of large-lot residential development abutting the suburban area north of Raby Road.

The St James Road subdivision reads as a very low density bushland-edge residential development which is quite different in its character to that of the pastoral areas of the Scenic Hills to the east and south. The aesthetic quality of this part of the landscape is high, with the houses and ancillary development being visually recessive elements nestled beneath the towering canopy. Internal vistas are strongly defined by the linear qualities of the roads and the drifts of trees which open to allow the alignment of the carriageway and emphasise the informal character to the landscape.

The historic aerial photos reveal that as recently as 1956 this area was largely cleared, with little difference evident in the vegetation between this upland area and the rolling landscape below. Both were substantially pastoral landscapes. Although the re-growth and residential development has meant that the character of this part of SH-LU1 now reads as a bushland edge rather than grazing landscape it still contributes to the scenic qualities of the Landscape Unit and provides a visually enriching contrast to the prevailing landscape of the Scenic Hills. When Cordeaux's grant at East Leppington is developed this St James Road/St Davids Road subdivision will form the interface between the rural/bushland and residential landscapes.

The residential density proposed at East Leppington should not be considered a precedent for similar proposals elsewhere in the Landscape Unit, including in the nearby bushland areas near the escarpment (such as St James/St Davids Roads). Such development would lead to a loss of the tree cover along the ridgeline. It would also result in the erection of new dwellings near the ridgeline (which presumably would be sited and designed to maximise their access to the panoramic views) will be likely to be visible in views towards Bunbury Curran Hill from many locations within SH-LU1 and throughout the wider landscape of the Campbelltown LGA. It would also have an adverse impact on the setting of Varroville.

Another area of the Scenic Hills with a relatively high density is the landscape near Raby Road where it crosses the main ridge line. This part of the Unit however demonstrates many of the principal characteristics of the pastoral landscape, with grassed paddocks prevailing, and few substantial groups of trees other than those sheltering in gullies with only their canopy visible. These help to define the spatial complexity and sense of depth of the landscape. It also contains multiple dwellings. Fieldwork revealed at least four dwellings²⁶ and a commercial shed near the ridge of Raby Road. The underlying subdivision pattern is long and narrow, with the parcels being between 10 and 26 hectares. The main structures on each are sited close to Raby Road and are prominent in views from the public domain over the Landscape Unit to the north. Such a lot pattern 'reads' as being of a higher sensitivity than its nominated maximum.

This subdivision pattern was created before 1974, and its configuration reveals that several of the structures predated this, since the boundary follows around the footprints of sheds and dwellings to create separate parcels. None of these structures are evident in the 1956 aerial photographs. The evidence of the fabric visible from the public domain suggests that some structures have been built more recently within these earlier lots. The existing density of this part of SH-LU1 would therefore seem to be in accordance with the concessional development provisions of LEP D8.

The visual impacts of this group of houses and sheds on the wider landscape have been significant. They are prominent elements in views towards or over this part of the Unit, most being situated on the highest point on their lot and many having little significant vegetation to help anchor the dwelling to its site. Dwellings built using materials such as highly glazed roof tiles are particularly prominent elements and their reflectivity can be highly distracting in views over the pastoral landscape of the Scenic Hills. The use of a traditional palette of materials should be encouraged.

The third area of particular interest when considering the impacts of the existing controls on the visual qualities of the Scenic Hills landscape is the small group of properties adjacent to Denham Court Road in the north of SH-LU1. Two lots (10.1 hectares and 9.7 hectares) have been created by the re-subdivision of a single lot; and another two have been reconfigured by realignment of their common boundary to provide one small (c2 hectare) property around a dwelling and the other now a substantial holding of more than 82 hectares. The reasons for these developments being approved are not known.

²⁶ Two additional shed-like structures were noted on the aerial photographs that may also contain accommodation.

The impact of these subdivisions on the scenic qualities of the landscape has however been significant and is expressed clearly through the recent construction of the six dwellings within a 600m length of Denham Court Road. Although not suburban in density the aesthetic qualities of this group are more akin in their scale, design and siting to the development found in the Liverpool LGA to the north of Denham Court Road than the traditional pastoral landscape. The footprints of the houses are large, with extensive resort-style landscaping of Cocos Island Palms found on individual properties and introducing colours and textures which are visually incongruous into the traditional rural setting of the Scenic Hills.

The final area of increased density in SH-LU1 is the small grouping of 0.4ha residential properties near the north-western edge of Raby. Although some exceptions were noted the majority of these properties have been effectively fully developed. Although clearly residential in their land use they are set very low in the landscape and read as part of the adjacent residential area. Most are screened by native vegetation including mature eucalypts. If the screening effect of the trees was to be lost this group would no longer make negligible positive contribution to the scenic qualities of the landscape.



Figure 4.1.70 . This aerial image of the development found at the suburban/rural interface in Raby demonstrates that large lots often facilitate large development, and the extra space is used in many cases not for planting, but for the installation of amenities such as swimming pools, tennis courts and multicar garages. The lots that are well-planted have significantly less 'urban' impact on the adjacent rural landscape. (Source: Google maps. [HTTP://maps.Google.com](http://maps.google.com) 2009)

4.1.7 EFFICACY OF EXISTING STATUTORY CONTROLS IN PROTECTING THE VISUAL AND SCENIC QUALITIES OF SH-LU1'S LANDSCAPE

The 7(d1) Environmental Protection (Scenic) zoning under LEP D8 has been effective in achieving the aims of the existing and historic planning legislation and policies by controlling the introduction of inappropriate land uses to the Unit. This has been due to the strongly expressed objectives of the zone, the detailed provisions and to Councils commitment to enforce the LEP and continue to respect the principles behind the establishment of Campbelltown as a compact city within clearly defined and strongly maintained urban edges.

LEP D8 also appears to have been reasonably effective in preventing the re-subdivision of land since the introduction of controls. Almost all existing lots were found to have been created prior to 1974, although four examples were found of later subdivision which resulted in the creation of lots less than 100 hectares in area. The reasons for these being approved are not known.

Notwithstanding the reasons behind the creation of these additional lots, the nature of some of the more recent development suggests that the LEP has not always been effective in ensuring that any development that does occur is of minimal visual impact has not always been high. The Escarpment Preservation controls of LEP D8 specify that building materials with dark colours and low reflectivity should be used, but examples were found where these controls have not been followed strictly, leading to an unfortunate outcome. Careful attention needs to be paid to the detailed design, location and scale of any new structure. This issue needs to be addressed throughout the Scenic Hills.

The creation of a double row of lots on the northern side of suburban McDonnell Street as large-lot (0.4ha) residential development was intended as a buffer between the rural and suburban land uses. Most houses have been modest in scale and the properties are mostly well vegetated, particularly between the houses and the pastoral landscape to the north-west. These mature trees have allowed these dwellings to have a significantly lower visual impact than similar development in such as in the adjacent SH-LU2. The development itself however is still clearly residential in character and reads as part of the suburban, not pastoral landscape and should not be considered as an option for development in a landscape where protection of 'pastoral' visual qualities are important.

The study team is aware that many locations within the unit have been the subject of recent proposals for major development. These proposals have included:

- the major urban release area in East Leppington;
- the development of an extensive Business Park over much of the historic curtilage of Varroville;
- the construction of a truck servicing/rest stop within the area zoned special uses under LEP 2002; and
- tentative proposals to increase land-use densities on lots that are significantly below the legal size of 100 hectares.

Council has either formally or informally rejected each of these proposals because of the impact that they would have on the scenic and environmental qualities of the landscape.

The scale and persistence of these applications suggests however that pressure will continue to be exerted by developers who see the Scenic Hills as a landscape of economic opportunity, with a source of land enjoying superb views in close proximity to a major urban centre. These requests need to be balanced against the irreplaceable quality and value of the protection of the setting of the urban area for the whole community.

4.1.8 POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF LAND USES ON THE IDENTIFIED VISUAL QUALITIES OF SH-LU1

The potential impacts of introducing additional land uses into an area can be difficult to predict without knowing the detailed scale and nature of the proposed new use. In the case of the Scenic Hills it is highly probable that any new urban or pseudo-urban use will have a direct and potentially serious adverse impact on the scenic qualities of this Landscape Unit for many reasons, including the following:

- New land uses will irreversibly change the balance of historic pastoral, historic and contemporary scenic and low impact contemporary elements within the Unit.
- Introducing new land uses in the vicinity of St Andrews Road, Varroville, Bunbury Curran Hill, or the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch will be likely to compromise the visual setting and curtilage of the highly significant colonial cultural landscape of Varroville.
- Introducing new land uses in the immediate vicinity of Varroville will be likely to obscure permanently and potentially destroy significant archaeological evidence associated with the historic cultural landscape such as the early dams, outbuildings and infrastructure such as fences and the carriage drive.
- Introduction of structures associated with the new land-use will further compromise the ability to appreciate and interpret the wider historic pastoral landscape of the Scenic Hills (i.e. a substantially undeveloped landscape dominated by grassed paddocks and used for the grazing of animals or other agricultural activities) by:
 - altering the balance of built and natural elements within the landscape;
 - obscuring existing significant elements or views;
 - introducing new elements into existing significant views. The evidence of recent developments within the Scenic Hills demonstrates that the contemporary preference of many owners is to locate new structures on the highest point within the site to maximise views. Surrounding planting is kept to a minimum so that views are not obscured. Development of this type will remain prominent elements in any view over the subject land;
 - introducing contradictory elements such as non-rural built forms; and
 - non-rural and non-residential land-uses will be likely to demand buildings of a scale and footprint which will be bulky and visually disturbing elements within the rural landscape. Non-residential land uses also demand extensive car parking facilities and other infrastructure such as formal gardens, fencing and gates which are intrinsically contrary to any cultural landscape significant for its scenic qualities.

The introduction of additional land uses of a commercial nature will also be likely to have significant aesthetic and other environmental impacts through the subsequent increases in traffic generation, demand for car parking, driveways and the like, as well as contributing to a cumulative erosion of the integrity of the landscape, increases in pollution, water run-off from hard paved surfaces into Bunbury Curran Creek (a tributary of the Georges River) and the further erosion of the quiet, rural quality of the local roads in the Unit.

A prominent land use in this precinct is religious/institutional, with several contemplative retreats and a high school. A second school was approved recently at the western end of St Andrews Road. The existing school is sited at the eastern end of St Andrews Road near the suburban area, and sits prominently in an open paddock. Although it has little landscaping to help it blend into views, its position at the lowest point of the Landscape Unit and relatively compact scale within its setting help it minimise its impact on the wider landscape. The other institutional uses in the Landscape Unit are also compact in their footprint and are designed and sited unobtrusively with predominantly dark materials that have allowed the buildings to blend into the landscape in distant views. The significant increase in the intensity of these uses or the introduction of further institutional development should be discouraged through the zoning and density provisions of the new local environmental plan.

The largest single holding within the Unit is 281 hectares on the plateau above Bunbury Curran Hill. This property has retained its original agricultural/rural land use and is likely to contain environmentally significant vegetation, including areas of potentially undisturbed Cumberland Plain Woodland. The original Leppington farmhouse can be seen on the 1956 aerial photographs but has now been demolished. The former State Government's Urban Growth Centres Commission has designated this land as a 600 lot urban release area to be known as Leppington East. Depending on the scale and visual impact of the development and the amount of clearing required, it will have the potential to have a direct visual impact on the northern slopes of Bunbury Curran Hill as well as the valleys in the vicinity of Denham Court Road, and its successful integration with the landscape of the Scenic Hills will require careful consideration of screening, retention of significant landscape elements and characteristics as well as the delicate management of interface impacts such as traffic access and the screening of boundaries.

Perhaps the greatest potential threat of the Leppington East development on the Scenic Hills however is the likelihood of nearby owners seeking to capitalise on their holdings in a similar manner. The primary land use in SH-LU1 should continue to be rural – and any other development (including the erection of a dwelling house) should only ever be ancillary to this.

It is very important that the scenic qualities of SH-LU1 are not interpreted as being significant only when viewed from a major public place or identified viewpoint. If this were to occur, the Scenic Hills would lose their integrity as a unified and spatially complex landscape where the 'hidden' areas are valued as much as the grand panoramas.

4.1.9 POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF INCREASED DENSITIES ON THE IDENTIFIED VISUAL QUALITIES OF SH-LU1

The existing density controls apply both to the minimum lot size for further subdivision and to the site required for the erection of a dwelling. There is little potential for further intensification of development or subdivision within SH-LU1 without amending this requirement. Any further subdivision or intensification of this will be likely to have an adverse impact on this sensitive and significant landscape.

It should be noted that the existing minimum lot size of 100ha is substantially larger than most lots within the area. This was a strategy established purposefully by the (then) Department of Planning as a method of protecting areas of environmental and scenic sensitivity by preventing subdivision and has proven highly effective in protecting the Unit from overdevelopment. It should also be noted that the current Department of Planning and Infrastructure continues to endorse the use of lot sizes larger than those existing in order to achieve particular environmental or other relevant outcomes.

Notwithstanding this, the concessional provisions established at the time of making LEP D8 have meant that much of the Unit, particularly the area near Raby Road, has already been developed to a density of more than one dwelling per 20 hectares, or more than five times the nominal statutory density. The potential impacts on the landscape values of the Scenic Hills of increasing the density of development to effectively regularise these concessional densities were then assessed.

LIKELY IMPACT OF REDUCING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE TO 50 HECTARES

If the minimum lot size for subdivision was to be halved from the existing 100 hectares to 50 hectares, the distribution of existing lots would mean that the potential for additional lots/dwellings in SH-LU1 would be minimal since almost all properties are either smaller than 50 hectares in size already or, if over 50 hectares, are still less than 100 hectares and could not subdivide or erect an additional dwelling unless several smaller lots were amalgamated first. The only property large enough to be subdivided into 50 hectare lots would be the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch. Encouraging the development of only this environmentally and aesthetically highly sensitive part of SH-LU1 would have a significant adverse impact on the scenic and historic values of the Landscape Unit and should not be supported.

LIKELY IMPACT OF REDUCING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE TO 20 HECTARES

The concessional development provisions of the existing LEP have resulted in an effective existing average density of one dwelling per 20 hectares. These lots are however not distributed evenly, and if this average was to be reflected in the zoning controls (ie the minimum lot size reduced to 20 hectares) approximately 11 additional properties would be able to be created (and dwellings erected) without the need to amalgamate land.

The size and configuration of the properties in the area means however that the majority of these additional houses would be erected within the historic curtilage of Varroville (including the land now part of the Scenic Hills Riding Ranch) and the large lot immediately to its north, which would then have a significant adverse impact on this highly vulnerable area of the

Landscape Unit. The only other beneficiary of formalising this density would be one property in the southern part of the area (currently c.40 ha), which could potentially be entitled to subdivide and erect one additional dwelling.

LIKELY IMPACT OF REDUCING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE TO 10 HECTARES

The impacts of reducing the minimum lot size to 10ha throughout the Unit (except the land at Leppington East and near the ridge at St Davids/St James Roads) were then considered. Approximately 58 additional lots (and dwellings) would be possible under this scenario – plus ancillary access roads, infrastructure, fences and outbuildings.

Although reducing the minimum lot size to 10ha would allow most current owners to make considerable windfall gain from their land, the number of dwellings would be nearly triple the existing and even if strong design controls were imposed, this density would have significant and permanent adverse impacts on the landscape and scenic qualities of the Unit as well as the setting of Campbelltown and should not be considered further.

LIKELY IMPACT OF REDUCING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE TO ALLOW MORE INTENSE DEVELOPMENT IN THE VICINITY OF ST JAMES ROAD

It is understood that informal requests have been made by owners of land in the existing subdivision at St James Road/St Davids Road (off St Andrews Road) to rezone their land to allow subdivision for more intensive development. These lots are already between 1 and 2.5 ha in area and demonstrate a very different pattern of development and scenic quality to that of the surrounding pastoral areas of the Unit. They are also adjacent to the land proposed for urbanisation at Leppington East. These characteristics should not be used as an argument to justify the re-subdivision of the area however.

In the case of land in this small area several critical matters must be addressed before intensification of development could be considered. These include impacts on the bushland character of the precinct, impacts on loss of tree cover near the ridge of Bunbury Curran Hill and the possibility of a need to screen the impacts of the proposed urbanisation of the adjoining land at Leppington East.

One of the main dangers of development in this location will be the temptation by owners to build as high as possible to gain access to the spectacular views available over the ridge to the east and south. This would interrupt the vegetated ridgeline which is an important part of the views towards Bunbury Curran Hill from the urban valley and should be prevented through zoning, density and urban design controls.

If the precinct is developed more intensively than at present it will have the potential to have an adverse impact on the visual context and setting of the approach to the adjacent Regional Open Space. The integrity and value of the open space as the pinnacle of the most important look-out point in the LGA needs to be protected through ensuring the ongoing physical and land-use contiguity between the landscape of Varroville and the steep ascent up St Andrews Road through relatively undisturbed bushland to the summit.

Increasing the density of residential development under a canopy of trees would also be likely to require compliance with the requirements of the NSW Rural Fire Service for the siting of new buildings in fire prone areas. Further details about these requirements are contained in section 5 (the East Edge Scenic Protection Lands). Compliance with these requirements in this location would be likely to lead to the loss of canopy cover and the scenic and environmental amenity of this landscape.

It is considered that this precinct has already been developed at a density significantly higher than that which has been permitted in the remainder of the area since the introduction of planning controls, and although superficially obscured from the scenic pastoral landscape, this land is within the original land grant of Varroville and it is integral to its historic, cultural, environmental and aesthetic significance.

The only opportunity for an increase in development would be minor, and limited to the land on the northern side of St James Road and the eastern side of St Davids Road. It may be possible to achieve a nett density of 1 dwelling per hectare providing that the 'bushland living' model for development is used. In cases where lots are under 2ha at present this will require lots to be amalgamated and the property developed in a cohesive manner rather than piecemeal battle-axe style development. A high priority will need to be placed on retaining large and densely planted areas of vegetation as a buffer between these areas and the adjoining residential areas. Additional buffers will be necessary as part of the Leppington East development. A model has been developed as part of this report for development at similar densities in the East Edge Scenic Protection Lands and this should also be used in the St James/St Davids Road precinct (refer to Appendix 1). Additional controls over landscaping (such as species selection) and the height and bulk of buildings will also be required.

The land to the south of St James Road is already 1ha in area and has no capacity for intensification under this model.

LIKELY IMPACT OF REDUCING THE MINIMUM LOT SIZE OF PROPERTIES ON THE RURAL/URBAN EDGE

Although these properties have been fully developed and 'read' as part of the suburban landscape, the impact of rezoning them to a standard residential density (in this case approximately 600 m²) was assessed. If this was to be permitted the density of this edge would potentially be subject to significant increase in development potential, with up to four times the existing number of dwellings. Such intensification would require additional infrastructure such as the provision of roads or other access, and would further increase the impact that the suburban development of Raby has on the quality of the surrounding landscape.

Its most significant impact however would be to reduce the amount of land on each site potentially available for the planting of trees and other vegetation to screen the interface between the two landscape types. This precinct includes several properties that are well planted and demonstrate the positive impact that planting of appropriate rural species can have in screening the worst impacts of residential subdivision from the rural landscape. It should be noted also that these large trees require large lots to grow to maturity, and that

this needs to be provided for when identifying lot sizes and footprints of new development (including outbuildings and swimming pools) in order to prevent later conflict caused by the impacts of roots and overhanging branches on these types of structures.

The other issue that needs to be considered is that these properties have all been developed and that the configuration and siting of the houses and outbuildings mean that there is little effective development potential without demolition and/or site amalgamations. The houses are relatively new with high levels of embodied energy and such a course of action would be environmentally irresponsible.

It is recommended that the existing lot size of 4000m² be retained for this interface.

LOT SIZES IN SH-LU1: CONCLUSIONS

The essential character of the pastoral landscape of the Scenic Hills is derived from its extensive areas of open, grassed paddocks. Any further intensification of development of this landscape will result in the loss of the historic scenic and environmental values of the most intact area of the Unit and thus the landscape of the Scenic Hills as a whole. There is some potential for increase in density in part of the bushland ridge area north of St James and east of St Davids Roads providing that the location, form and siting of buildings is controlled strictly and high quality landscaping is integrated into each development. If the model described in Appendix 1 is not adopted no further development should be considered for this sub-precinct.

4.1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CONSERVATION OF THE VISUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES OF SH-LU1

The following recommendations are made to ensure the conservation of the visual and environmental significance of SH-LU1's cultural landscape. They should be read in conjunction with the recommendations for the whole landscape described in section 4.0.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SH-LU1

- It is very important that the scenic qualities of SH-LU1 are not interpreted as being significant only when viewed from a major public place or identified viewpoint. If this were to occur, the Scenic Hills would lose their integrity as a unified and spatially complex landscape, and one where the 'hidden' areas are as scenically valued as much as the grand panoramas.
- The protection of the scenic quality of the land between the urban areas of Campbelltown and Liverpool in perpetuity was a major promise when Campbelltown was first developed as a satellite city and should continue to be respected.
- Protect the quality and integrity of the sequential views when entering the Campbelltown LGA from the north along Campbelltown Road. This sequence is of the highest quality and any development within the 'picture plane' will be likely to harm the scenic values known to have been valued by travellers since the early Colonial era. The threat arises from not only from proposals to develop the Varroville Estate as a business park, but also the vacancy of the former Veterinary Research Station, now in private ownership.
- St Andrews Road: this road demonstrates high-quality scenic values consistent with those of a traditional rural landscape as it travels across the hills of the study area. It also provides a change of environmental quality rare in the Scenic Hills as it winds up the slope of Bunbury Curran Hill through the natural bushland. When travelling downhill, sequential and publicly accessible viewing points are revealed across the landscape and to the EESPLs on the other side of the valley. The alignment of this road also has historic value as it marks the boundary between Varroville and the adjoining St Andrews Estates. These scenic qualities inform Campbelltown's sense of place and their protection should be a high priority.
- Further subdivision of the land near St James' and St Andrew's Roads should not be supported unless it is carried out in accordance with the Model for Bushland Living in Appendix 1 of this report and also in accordance with detailed design and landscaping controls for development near ridgelines as shown in the Appendix.
- Protect the quality of the 'hidden' valleys adjacent to Denham Court Road. Their visual detachment from the remainder of the landscape of the Unit should not be used as a justification for development. This hidden quality is highly significant and provides an intimate contrast to the broader and more panoramic views from the other side of the ridge. This quality cannot be protected through an intensification of

development or land-use activity. It should remain part of the non-urban landscape of the Scenic Hills.

- Varroville and its historic setting: Varroville is one of the few Colonial properties in the Cumberland Plain to have retained the integrity of most of its historic visual and contextual setting. This is now under threat due to the subdivision and sale of most of the property to a separate ownership from that of the house, resulting in significant difficulties and challenges in maintaining the historic curtilage and protecting it from development. Although the house and its immediate garden is heritage listed, the majority of the property is not; including the stables and other outbuildings associated with the Homestead, the original driveways and the evidence of explorer Charles Sturt's innovative and pioneering attempts to conserve water in the dry colonial landscape by building a hand formed 'dam in every paddock'. It is recommended that the whole of the original historic curtilage be investigated for inclusion on the State Heritage Register in recognition of this significance and a conservation management plan be prepared to guide the ongoing management of the estate as one of the most important in the Sydney basin. The land uses of the original estate should remain pastoral, views to and from the house and home paddock should be protected throughout, original driveway and paddock lines should be reinstated/interpreted and archaeological investigations should be carried out of the dams on the property to identify and protect those formed by Sturt.
- Bunbury Curran Hill: It is recommended that the public be allowed to access the main eastern ridge so that this highly significant view is available to the whole community over the main Campbelltown Valley to the EESPLs and beyond; and to the south over the distant hills of Mount Sugarloaf, Mount Annan, Badgally Hill, Kenny Hill and the intermediate landscape. The ridge and infestations of weeds prevents ready access to the main views to the east and south. No structure that may break or compromise the skyline, in either close or distant views formed by the ridge, should be permitted.
- Further subdivision of the high quality landscape in the valley north of Raby Road and towards the west of the Unit would not be appropriate and should not be supported.
- Any other new development within the Landscape Unit should be required (through urban design controls such as a development control plan), to be located below any nearby hilltop or ridgeline. This is consistent with the historic development model of the Colonial Cultural Landscape which covers the Scenic Hills and helps to ensure that new development respects the scenic qualities of the area.

PROTECTING CAMPBELLTOWN'S COMPACT FOOTPRINT AND TIGHTLY DESCRIBED URBAN EDGE - RECOMMENDED URBAN EDGE: SH-LU1

It is recommended that the existing footprint of the Scenic Hills be retained.

The area of 4000m² large-lot residential land plays an important role as a buffer between the fully urban and fully rural landscapes. It should be retained within the area identified as

‘sensitive’ and managed as a transitional space to minimise the impact of the rural and suburban landscapes on each other.

Land uses that may facilitate denser or inappropriately scaled buildings or a pseudo-urban outcome should also be prevented.

It is recommended also that the land identified for the Leppington East Growth Centre development area remain within the boundary of the Scenic Hills even if it is rezoned by the State Government. Details of the design and planning strategies for this development are not available at the time of writing and cannot be commented upon here in any detail. The site is large (over 280 ha) and the potential impacts of development on the scenic and environmental values of the Unit (including the Water Supply Upper Canal) are significant. Retaining the area within the Landscape Unit will help to ensure that the designers, developers and eventual residents of the development remain cognisant of the high level of environmental and aesthetic sensitivity of the landscape and the need for the new development to sit lightly within this.

The recommended boundary of the urban edge is shown in Figure 4.1.71 below.

PROTECTING CAMPBELLTOWN'S COMPACT FOOTPRINT AND TIGHTLY DESCRIBED URBAN EDGE - RECOMMENDED LAND USE ZONES AND DENSITIES: SH-LU1

The Department of Planning's Standard LEP Template provides zones for Councils to apply to land within their areas.

- It is recommended that the land within SH-LU1 be zoned E3 - Environmental Management with an Environmental Overlay in accordance with the Standard Template zones as described in Section 3.
- The land currently zoned 7(d6) large-lot residential near Raby Road should be zoned E4 – Environmental Living in recognition of its role in providing a transition between the scenic rural landscape and the adjacent suburban development.
- The land within the Leppington East Metropolitan Development Program area will be zoned accordingly; the details of which have not been released. If the release area does not proceed or if there is no commencement of the detailed planning process for the area by the time the substantive LEP is being resolved then the land should be zoned E3.
- It is recommended that the minimum lot size in the Unit remain 100 hectares with the following exceptions:
 - properties abutting St James and St Davids Roads – 1ha (10 000m²) subject to strict compliance with Model for Bushland Living and additional ridgeline protection landscape controls.
 - properties currently zoned 7(d6) adjacent to Raby – retain existing 4000m²
- Concessional lot entitlements should not be included in the LEP.
- The land zoned 5(a) – Special Uses (Water Supply) should be zoned SP2 – Infrastructure

- The land zoned 6(c) Open Space (Regional) should be zoned RE1 – Public Recreation

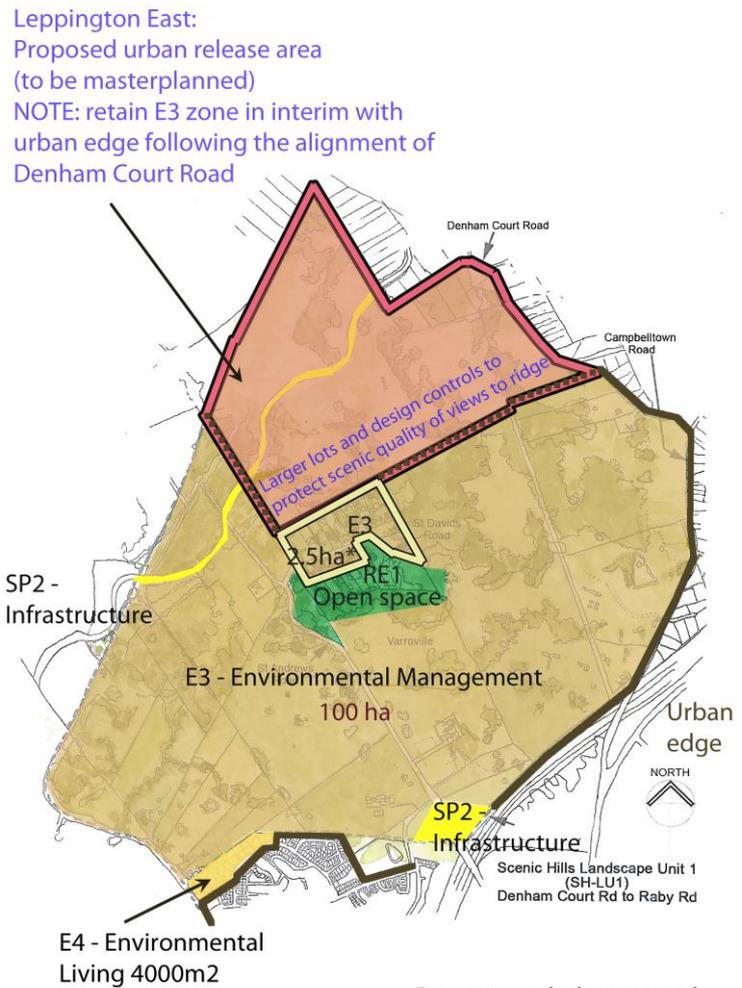


Figure 4.1.71. Recommended zoning and urban-rural edge of SH-LU1. The land shaded pink is within the East Leppington release area and once developed will be suburban in its density. If the land release does not proceed the plateau should remain recognised as part of the Scenic Hills. The large-lot residential area near Raby plays an important transitional role and should be recognised as being part of the landscape of the Scenic Hills.

* the minimum lot size in the small area of E3 near the top of the ridge (outlined in ochre) could be 1ha providing that the model in Appendix 1 is used.

Recommended zones and minimum lot sizes