



Gawler Rural Directions Report



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In Collaboration with:

**Gawler Environment Centre, Gawler Environment and
Heritage Association, Gawler River Riparian
Restoration and Transition Gawler**

December 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report advocates the creation of a sustainable planning vision for rural areas in the vicinity of Gawler in the face of growing pressures for urbanisation. Remnant rural zones in the area lack the legislated protection and associated certainty for rural investment of areas like the Barossa Valley and Willunga Basin, yet are a key part of a peri-urban food bowl, as well as possessing environmental and social values worth conserving and enhancing.

2. SCOPE AND CONTEXT

Gawler Environment Centre (GEC), Gawler Environment and Heritage Association (GEHA), Gawler River Riparian Restoration (GRRR) and Transition Gawler are local non-profit community groups based in Gawler with shared concerns and hopes about the future of rural lands near the town of Gawler. They will be referred to herein as ‘the community groups’.



Plate 1: Cereal crop in an urban zone north of Gordon Road & west of Main North Road



Plate 2: Gawler River biodiversity corridor



Plate 3: Sheltered and protected growing boosts productivity

Regional Planning Directions was approached to facilitate a consultation with the community groups, and prepare an outcomes report articulating a positive vision for rural lands in the environs of Gawler.

The main focus of the consultation and report is rural-zoned land south and west of Gawler, largely within the Town of Gawler, but also extending a short way into the areas of the City of Playford and the Light Regional Council.

On the eastern rim of Gawler – Gawler East – Concordia - Hewett, a combination of rural and hills face zoning, the *Character Preservation (Barossa Valley) Act 2012*, and the Environment and Food Protection Area legislation afford strong, durable protection for primary production and other rural values beyond the urban edge.

Earlier strategic planning for metropolitan Adelaide also sought to protect rural land separating the greater Gawler urban area and the main urban area on the northern Adelaide Plains (in Cities of Playford and Salisbury).

One strand of this expression of intent was the Metropolitan Open Space System (MOSS) study area (see Figure 1).

The 2007 planning strategy for metropolitan Adelaide defined a continuous belt of rural areas in the Town of Gawler and City of Playford from near the coast to the hills as 'areas of strategic interest for primary production' (Map 12: Industry).

Protection of the eastern part of this rural precinct aligns with the following goal in the Town of Gawler Community Plan: "Maintain a clearly defined township, one which is distinct from neighbouring areas". This vision, which aligns with the views of the community groups, is now under threat.



Figure 1: Metropolitan Open Space System (MOSS) study area in relation to Gawler

Threats include:

- New planning legislation facilitates landowner-initiated re-zonings without sole reliance on initiation by a Planning Minister or Councils. This is likely to increase pressure for fragmentation and conversion of productive rural land without clear provisions countering such pressure in the relevant legislation and/or regional plan.
- The relevant regional plan, the 2017 Update of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide, shows the urban boundary differentiating land for urban and rural uses longer-term is now the inner perimeter of the Environment Food and Production Areas (EFPA) – see Figure 2. This creates ambiguity and uncertainty about the future of rural zoned land south of the EFPA in both the Town of Gawler and parts of the adjoining City of Playford – see Figure 2.
- Rural areas excluded from the legislated EFPA and Character Preservation Districts may therefore offer less investment certainty to those interested in investing in long-term primary production enterprises.

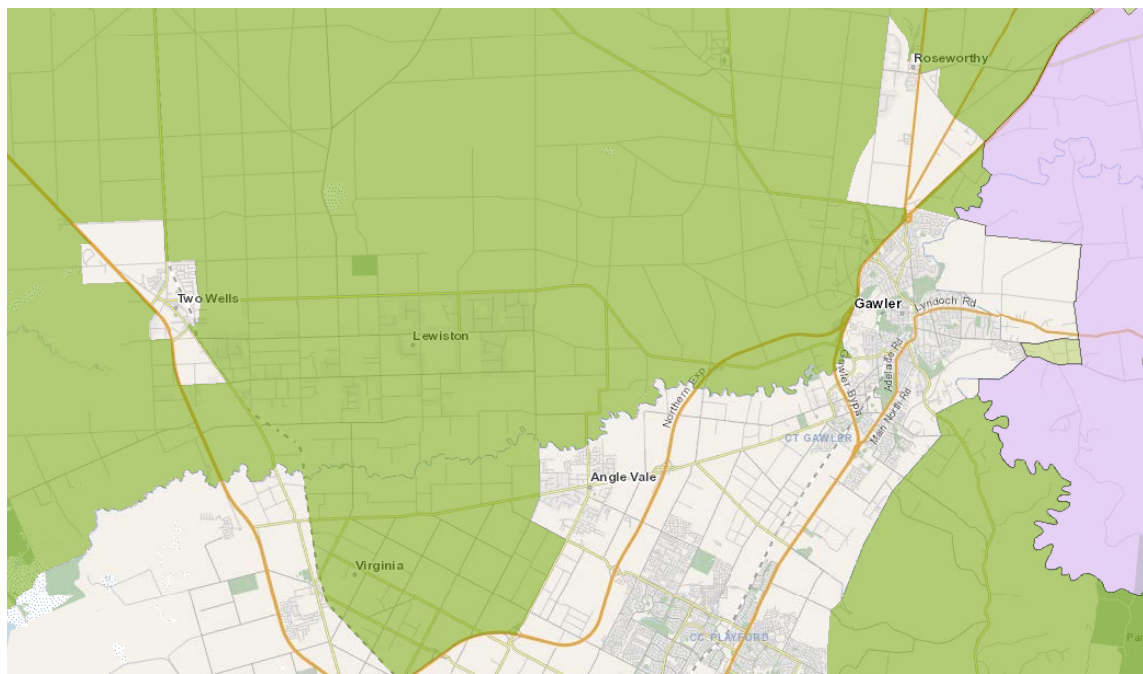


Figure 2: Existing EFPA (green) & Character Preservation District (pink) near Gawler

The imminent review of the 30-Year-Plan for Greater Adelaide in 2023 is a key opportunity to re-assert the concept of a productive green belt or rural

break of high value for primary production separating two distinct urban areas – northern Adelaide and Gawler.

The leapfrogging of major urban growth to Roseworthy warrants a rethink and rejig of the MOSS study area in Figure 1. The Northern Expressway passing through areas of potential long-term greenbelt on both sides of the Gawler River needs to be taken into account. (The area on the north bank of the river generally west of Gawler – Willaston is in the EFPA, as shown on Figure 2.)

There is also a need to build upon past efforts to implement adopted strategies, where this has faltered through lack of priority or funding in recent years. In this regard, it is noted that the 2010 30-Year-Plan for Greater Adelaide sought to prioritise the following activities for the Greater Adelaide open space framework:

- greening the Gawler Buffer as an urban forest, which will consist of about 230 hectares by 2014;
- developing the Gawler River linear park, which will link a system of open space in and around Gawler with the Gawler, South Para and North Para rivers, by 2036;
- rezone 130 hectares in the Gawler buffer as open space by 2012.

Gawler and its Rural Setting

Existing facilities and characteristics that the people of Gawler value include the town's function as an important regional centre, noted for its heritage, education opportunities, excellence in health care, commitment to the environment, sporting clubs, three rivers with adjacent public open space, excellent transport links to the city, volunteerism and community service organisations, SA's largest country show, and innovative agriculture and horticulture.

The local community also values Gawler's rural setting. The agricultural land near Gawler is typified by excellent soil, good quality groundwater and an excellent climate for year-round production. Amongst the many (approximately 200) rural landholders are dryland farmers, horse breeders and trainers, racing stables, fruit and nut producers, floriculturists, field vegetable growers, protected growing specialists (food, flowers, orchard seedlings), food processors and some of SA's largest nurseries. Supporting these enterprises are agri-business firms, marketers, contractors,

professionals and employees. This rural-based business community generates significant employment and other synergies with and benefits to the nearby urban population. An important group of rural landholders are lifestyle farmers who value their rural activities whilst also undertaking other employment in the Adelaide area.

The soil of the southern Gawler area is very suitable for agriculture and horticulture. Gawler's freedom from shallow saline groundwater and the relatively high quality of the groundwater are just two of the practical reasons for the retention of its rural land for agriculture/horticulture. The Northern Economic Plan supports the Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS), using recycled water from the Bolivar Waste Water Treatment Plant, via an expanded irrigation distribution network, as part of an economic priority for "Premium food and wine produced in our clean environment and exported to the world".

Whilst many of the enterprises in the southern Gawler rural area have good access to groundwater, and a few to the Virginia Pipeline scheme water, others are currently limited in what they can achieve in terms of irrigation. Active discussion about a recycled water pipeline from Bolivar to the Barossa Valley, possibly via Gawler, is ongoing in the context of the 'Barossa New Water Project' being managed by Kellogg Brown and Root Pty Ltd (KBR). There is potential for a network of recycled water mains servicing southern Gawler, and a desalination plant at Bolivar Treatment Plant to reduce the salinity of the water to sustainable levels for irrigation (<850ppm TDS). Other potential sources of additional water include the purification and long-term storage of Gawler River water and/or urban runoff in aquifers, and a new sewerage and stormwater treatment plant to service planned housing developments.

The draft Regional Strategic Plan Barossa Gawler Light Northern Adelaide Plains 2022-2025 (Regional Development Australia, 2022) states:

"The Northern Adelaide Irrigation Scheme (NAIS) was established in 2017 and extends the Virginia Pipeline Scheme which has been reticulating recycled water in the Virginia Horticultural area since 2014. The water is offered at approximately 1200-1600 ppm at an advertised cost of 84 cents per kilolitre plus capital contribution. This is too expensive for competitive broadacre horticulture and smaller holdings of protected crops. Water quality is an issue for both. Soil health is at risk and over the long term environmental degradation."

The draft plan advocates further public investment for recycled water treatment and distribution infrastructure, competitive pricing to reduce supply costs for growers and drive economic growth, and continuing investment in water use efficiencies including monitoring technology.

The Town of Gawler Climate Emergency Action Plan states that:

“The greening of Gawler, supported by Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) is an essential contribution to adapt to hotter climates with longer periods of heat and water scarcity.”

It includes the following action:

“11.1 Establish sufficient plantings on council land and encourage greening on private land by 2030, that will result in 30% tree canopy cover by 2045 when the trees have matured.”

Kurna Cultural Heritage

Kurna people are the traditional custodians of the Adelaide Plains. Surveys of Kurna cultural heritage values have been undertaken in recent decades related to infrastructure projects such as the Northern Expressway and major urban developments. Kurna people have recently undertaken major repatriation and reburial of historic remains at the Smith Road Cemetery. Consultation with Kurna people has been a key to local projects, and in the wider region, has occurred as part of the Kurna native title claim and in relation to parks in the nearby hills and along the coast (eg. the Adelaide International Bird Sanctuary). Kurna people have a keen interest in land management, native food production and environmental protection and restoration.

Existing Reports and Investigations

A number of reports and investigations about the future role of Gawler’s rural land have been completed, providing significant information about the area that can be utilised in its planned future.

Also, it is understood that other significant local research is being undertaken by Regional Development Australia that will generate relevant findings.

Existing references are included in Appendix A and known ‘work in progress’ of significance is listed in Appendix B.

The ***Metropolitan Open Space System (MOSS)*** concept outlined in a initial report by Department of Environment and Planning (1987) focussed on providing for green space, parks, recreation and biodiversity in a girdle of 'parklands' around Adelaide, parts of which were a Gawler Green Belt joining the Adelaide Hills biodiversity area with a Gawler River Corridor (see Figure 1). MOSS comprises both private and public land. The community of Gawler saw value in the 'Green Belt' concept, because it also achieved a visual and psychological separation of the town from the much larger aggregation of suburbs to the south, reinforcing rural ambience and providing an entrance to Gawler. The City of Playford has zoned the southern part of the Gawler Greenbelt as Open Space and Rural Neighbourhood, the latter zone allowing for much closer settlement. On the Town of Gawler's side of the Council boundary, land within the Greenbelt is zoned Rural.

The northern boundary of MOSS has been the Gawler River. However, this may warrant reconsideration given the major urban development occurring at Roseworthy to the north, the significance of views from the Northern Expressway near the Gawler River (as well as from Gawler Bypass and Two Wells Road), and the regional significance of land along both sides of the Gawler River as a hills-to-coast corridor with habitat value and linear open space potential. The Gawler River corridor also connects with the riparian corridors of the North and South Para Rivers upstream. There is scope to extend the existing riparian open space and trail networks.

The ***Gawler Rural Land-Use and Infrastructure Investigation*** reports by Jensen Planning + Design (2015) made more recent and specific recommendations for a rural buffer area providing separation between Gawler and the northern edge of the main urban area of metropolitan Adelaide. The rural buffer area contains approximately 1,700 hectares and a mix of rural, rural living, industrial and open space uses, comprising the suburbs of Kudla, Hillier, Evanston Gardens and Uleybury Hills.

The Jensen study addressed amenity and biodiversity aspects, the character of the entrances to Gawler, the viability of the land zoned Rural for primary production, and infrastructure issues. The recommendations addressed land use policy to ensure the area continues to be a defining area between metropolitan Adelaide and the more urbanised areas of Gawler.

The recommendations report (Jensen Planning + Design, 2015) defined distinct areas of varying character and function, and therefore differing objectives and policy responses, with key objectives relating to each area proposed as follows:

- Area 1 - Rural (generally parts of Hillier)

Building on synergies with the Virginia horticulture area, future opportunities for improved water supply and quality, and productive capabilities of the land, opportunities for further intensive productive agricultural land uses should not be prejudiced by further urban development. A continuation of rural activities, with a focus on horticultural production, is therefore encouraged. A minimum of 4 ha allotment size is recommended, and amalgamation of allotments is encouraged.

- Area 2 – Rural Living (generally the Kudla area)

In order to improve the amenity of this area, further investment is required. Policy should encourage further development of rural living opportunities comprising residential uses on large, attractive, vegetated and well-managed allotments. It is important that the area does not become “suburban” in character, and so appropriate allotment width to depth ratio should be established to prevent land division resulting in long, narrow allotments with minimal frontages. A minimum allotment size of 5000m² should apply. To achieve this size and frontage, consolidation of allotments may be required. Improved provision of road infrastructure is required.

- Area 3 – Buffer Main North Road Approach

Because of the high numbers of people travelling into Gawler along Main North Road, this area has the greatest opportunity for people to see views of open rural character and thereby maintain a visual buffer between the town of Gawler and metropolitan Adelaide. The buffer function will be primarily achieved by maintaining key views from the main entrances into the Town of Gawler of a predominantly open rural character. These views separate and distinguish Gawler from the urban character of metropolitan Adelaide. Currently, land division in this area under 4 ha is noncomplying. The recommended policy response is that no further land division will be supported.

- Area 4 – Rural Landscape Protection Approach (generally views towards the escarpment)

This area preserves the natural and rural character of the scenic features of the Gawler hills as a backdrop to the Adelaide Plains. There should be no increase in the existing number of allotments, with boundary adjustments only.

Areas already zoned for urban growth within the Town of Gawler, but still in rural use, were not included in the scope of this work.

It is noted that the concept of a rural buffer between the urbanised area of Gawler and urban areas to the south outlined by Jensen Planning + Design omits full consideration of the rural landscape on both sides of the Gawler River including land in the Light Regional Council which is prominently visible from the Northern Expressway (and other roads) and forms part of the 'gateway' to Gawler.

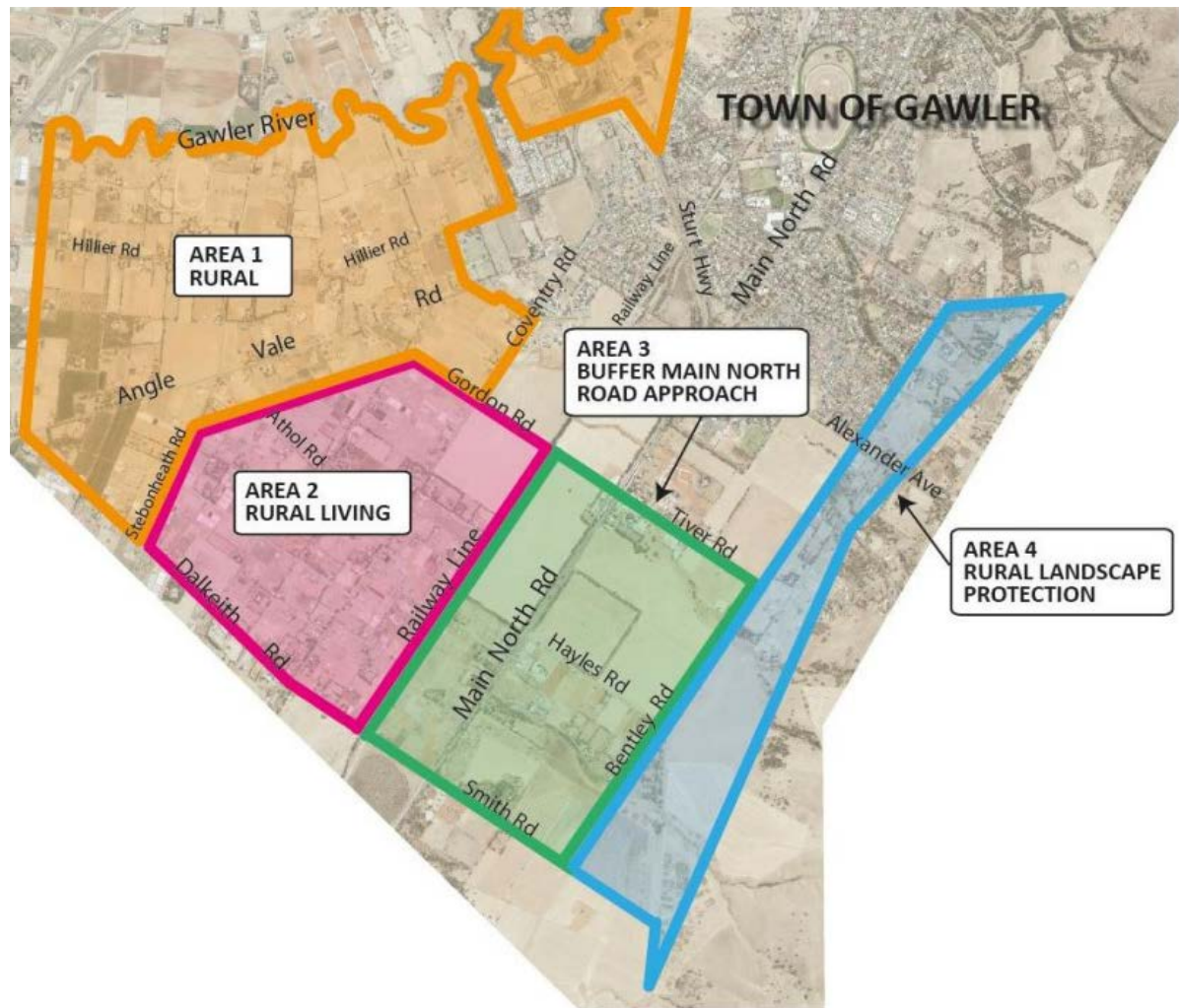


Figure 3: Sub-Areas for Planning Purposes

Figure 2: Sub-areas defined in Jensen Planning + Design, 2015

The **Land Capability Assessment - Gawler Rural Zone** (2022) by Arris Consulting sought to assess the capability and suitability of Rural Land within the Town of Gawler for primary production and assess the factors that impact the commercial viability of primary production in the Rural Zone. It presented information about physical and economic aspects such as potential agricultural enterprises soil, gross margins, potential sources of recycled wastewater for irrigation and alternative uses of the land by integrating sporting precincts. It concluded that future primary production on most of the

land will best be suited to intensive annual horticultural in-soil or protected growing or small-scale perennial horticulture. The distribution of suitable irrigation water is an important issue. The report did not consider the potential for either Certified Organic growing or direct marketing, each of which can increase profitability of small/medium enterprises significantly.

3. VALUES

Representatives of the community groups, and a review of relevant literature and plans (see Appendix A), have identified the following values of the rural lands and open space in and around Gawler:

Agriculture/horticulture
Economic and community resilience
Peri-urban infrastructure and land use
Biodiversity/ecological
Recreation / open space
Landscape conservation.
Heritage

Agriculture/horticulture – what we know:

- Gawler's alluvial soils and relatively high quality of groundwater favour irrigated crops.
- Proximity to both local and wider market opportunities and air transport for fresh produce.
- Emerging investment in niche processing for value added products.
- Good access to infrastructure, such as transport, and resources such as recycled Bolivar water (if it can be accessed at the right cost and quality).
- Good access to a diverse workforce, research, training and education.
- The above combined with a flattish terrain creates a potential for a significant mix of land uses and value adding, coexisting with intensive primary production.

- Smaller land parcels available in the area can facilitate the entry of smaller-scale enterprises into the market.

Economic and Community Resilience:

- As above
- Economic diversification linked to local primary production and rural landscape
- Employment opportunities.
- Short-distance supply-chains less prone to disruption (due to pandemics and other hazards).
- Food security.

Peri-urban physical and social infrastructure (existing and potential):

- Location for infrastructure that supports, and may not readily fit into, the nearby urban areas.
- Synergies with rural uses, eg. recycled water for irrigated crops.
- Access by proximity to educational resources, knowledge, expertise, innovators, agri-business services, smart technology etc.

Biodiversity/ecological:

- Gawler River is a major habitat corridor linking the hills to the coast, including over 150 species of flora and fauna, especially around abandoned loam pits.
- Other riparian / creek corridors coming from the foothills onto the plains.
- In the production landscape, many landowners and enterprises are enhancing biodiversity, including economic use of native species.
- Some State Government land in the south has been progressively re-vegetated.

- Potential for biodiversity and biomass/bio-sequestration plantings on dedicated land (eg. Renewal SA land, major transport corridors).
- Key biodiversity areas were mapped by Greening SA, but did not fully survey private agricultural land or road verges (McGregor & Durant, 2019).
- Ecological services of floodplain have been retained to a significant degree.

Recreation / open space

- Council-owned open space, predominantly along the rivers, helps to define the character of the Town of Gawler (Town of Gawler et al, 2016).
- State Government holdings are substantial with potentially usable open space, eg. adjacent Smith Road and Dalkeith Road.
- Smith Road Cemetery.
- The passive recreation value of open, rural views and vistas contributes to community wellbeing.
- Regional significance of a physical and psychological break between urban districts as identified by the Town Planning Committee in its 1962 report on Metropolitan Adelaide, and reiterated in subsequent MOSS reports and the current Town of Gawler community plan.

Heritage

- Kurna cultural heritage. (There is a thriving indigenous 'bush tucker' business in the area interested in engaging further with cultural and biodiversity initiatives.)
- Kurna people have recently undertaken major repatriation and reburial of historic remains at the Smith Road Cemetery.
- Kurna people have an important role in a Vision such as this.
- Gawler's significance and identity as early country town in South Australia's colonial development.

Landscape conservation

- Western slopes of Mount Lofty Ranges forming a backdrop to the plains.
- The Gawler River corridor.
- Open, rural character of key 'gateways' to Gawler.

This is an interim rather than comprehensive list of values and could be expanded.

For example, the area contains examples of innovative and affordable housing at Hillier.

4. VISION

Area of Application

A final **Gawler and Environs Rural Area** will be defined based on a combination of existing (mainly rural) zoning and the above values. It is expected that will not include any parts of the existing EFPA, Character Preservation District, or zones promoting urban growth.

Vision

The Gawler and Environs Rural Area will be an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable precinct where opportunities for agricultural innovation and diversification linked to locally supported research and education, biodiversity, conservation and investment in tourism, recreation and the community are realised. It will be a hard-working **green** area supporting strong economic output and employment as well as infrastructure essential to the ecosystems, sustainability and circular economy of Gawler and its dependent community.

Process

This vision will be strengthened through planning that captures synergies between its complementary supported values. Consultation with and between community groups, Kurna traditional custodians, agricultural businesses and local government can inform the relevant planning opportunities.

Guiding Principles

Decisions on non-agricultural land use and development will ensure that agricultural production is not detrimentally impacted upon or unreasonably constrained.

Policy instruments will be durable and resilient enough to afford effective long-term protection leading to investment certainty for farming and other compatible enterprises.

Opportunities for new agricultural and rural land uses, including value adding and agri-tourism, will be preserved and promoted.

Decisions on land use will ensure that adverse impacts upon the natural environment and cultural heritage assets are minimised or avoided.

Sites of environmental significance will be protected and enhanced on both public and private land, and their contribution to biological diversity recognised in decision making.

Protection and enhancement of economic and social benefits of tourism and recreation assets through integrated, partnership based planning.

Support for diverse and sustainable primary production activity will be given through sound management of water and soil that protects natural resources, including good quality recycled water supply.

Infrastructure provision and resource use will be sensitive to the environment whilst ensuring the needs of the community are considered.

Kaurna People will be involved and have their interests recognised.

Desired Character (Overall)

The area will be characterised by diverse primary production uses, predominantly agriculture and horticulture, with associated value adding activities, plus areas for biodiversity and ecosystem services, and infrastructure requiring or suited to a peri-urban and/or plains location. The area will complement landscape protection areas of high visual sensitivity and different terrain like the Hills Face Zone, supporting a greater range of rural development including enclosed horticulture where this is consistent with maintenance of an open, spacious rural character especially in the vicinity of major transport routes or other public vantage points.

NOTE: The desired character of sub-areas will also need to be defined (including with regard to the investigation of rural areas south of Gawler by Jensen Planning + Design (2015)).

Broad Strategies / Next Steps for Governments

1. Undertake further work to help define policy for key 'gateways' or views along major transport routes including Main North Road and the Northern Expressway, the Adelaide Gawler rail lines, the Gawler River and other corridors or areas of higher biodiversity significance, and interfaces between rural and urban or rural living zones.
2. Government funding and support for affordable, fit-for-purpose water supply and green infrastructure to support the Vision.
3. Review Victorian Green Wedge and other integrated management strategies that promote ecological, economic and social resilience for productive landscapes, and their communities and enterprises in comparable peri-urban contexts.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

The following section scopes a range of potential strategies for delivery of a better-protected land base for primary production and environmental protection and enhancement, recognising that private land tenures dominate and will continue to dominate the area affected, notwithstanding some public land of strategic significance.

The focus is on protective area-specific legislation and other statutory tools associated with the planning system. Current support tools for decision-making on development include zoning and overlays in the Planning and Design Code, which are intended to help deliver strategies of regularly-reviewed regional plans.

The next regional plan review for Greater Adelaide is due in 2023, and in this Implementation section is treated as a given (as opportunity to give effect to the Vision).

The public Planning Portal currently lacks detail of a timeline and methodology for this review and how community can participate. Hopefully this will appear early in 2023.

Also of note is an independent panel review of planning system implementation (the ‘Stimson review’), with public consultation underway at the time of writing. The due date for submissions is **16 December 2022**.
https://plan.sa.gov.au/planning_review/have_your_say

While the scope of the Stimson review may overlap with the regional planning review to a degree, it is mostly addressing a State system, rather than issues for a region or sub-region. The 2023 regional plan review is more likely to be the critical one for planning the future of rural areas near Gawler.

Other options include potential legislation changes or even a new special Act to protect additional rural and greenbelt land in Greater Adelaide.

Other complementary strategies will be very important as well - to support primary producers and other enterprises and encourage investment in a challenging peri-urban context, to create opportunities for sustainable employment, public recreation facilities and other community assets, and to promote biodiversity enhancement, carbon farming and other ecological services.

While controls to stem urbanisation of valuable rural land are key, encouragement of non-regulatory measures is also vital including fit-for-purpose governance and administration arrangements, educational, community investment, community participation, voluntary management agreements and market-based measures and the provision of funding and other resources.

The right mix of policy instruments is better than relying on one. Government buy-in and adequately resourcing will be critical for all of the above and may require the government to move from an urbanisation mindset to more ecologically sustainable paradigms.

Examples of good practice in this regard are the Victorian Green Wedge management plans. Green Wedges are non-urban areas of metropolitan Melbourne outside the Urban Growth Boundary that safeguard areas for agriculture, biodiversity, recreation, open space, natural resources, heritage and landscape conservation.

Beyond the areas retained for rural use, it will also be important to incorporate biodiversity into the forward planning of areas allocated for urban expansion: “Without proper planning and implementation at an early stage biodiversity is likely to decline significantly and irreversibly.” (McGregor & Durant, 2019)

Environment and Food Production Areas

The Environment and Food Production Areas (EFPAs) cover rural areas of the Adelaide Plains, Adelaide Hills, Alexandrina, Light, Playford, Mount Barker, Murray Bridge and Yankalilla Councils.

The EFPA were introduced in April 2017 to generally protect valuable food producing and rural areas as well as conserving natural landscapes and environmental resources in parts of Greater Adelaide region (State Planning Commission, 2021).

The stated intent of Environment and Food Production Areas is to:

- protect rural, landscape and environmental areas from urban encroachment
- encourage consolidation within the existing urban footprint and renewal of existing urban areas
- ensure that any expansion of the urban footprint is made transparently and based on agreed evidence
- help prevent ad hoc land use changes that may compromise investments that rely on the maintenance of those rural landscape and environmental areas. (State of SA, 2017)

Associated controls, pursuant to Section 7 of the Planning Development and Infrastructure Act 2016 (PDI Act), preclude residential land division creating 1 or more additional allotments within the EFPA.

As the controls were not immediately operative, a significant number of EFPA landowners took advantage of an intervening period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2019 in applying for and receiving approval of one or more additional residential allotments within the EFPA (especially in Rural Living Zones).

In 2021, the State Planning Commission conducted the inaugural review of the Environment and Food Production Areas (EFPA), a statutory requirement every 5 years under Section 7 of the PDI Act. The review had very limited statutory terms of reference and did not recommend significant alterations to the EFPA.

Section 7(3) describes the Commission's role as follows:

*(3) In making any decision under this section (following the establishment of the initial environment and food production areas under subsection (1)), the Commission **must ensure that areas of rural, landscape, environmental or food production significance within Greater Adelaide are protected from***

urban encroachment and the Commission may only vary an environment and food production area if the Commission is satisfied—

(a) that—

(i) an area or areas within Greater Adelaide outside environment and food production areas are unable to support the principle of urban renewal and consolidation of existing urban areas; and

(ii) adequate provision cannot be made within Greater Adelaide outside environment and food production areas to accommodate housing and employment growth over the longer term (being at least a 15 year period); or

(b) that the variation is trivial in nature and will address a recognised anomaly.

[emphasis added]

The Commission's 2021 report anticipated the proposed boundary variations would be implemented in 2022, subject to the required legislative steps.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

EFPA are effective at containing urban pressures that can adversely effect or result in irreversible loss of primary production, landscape and environmental resources.

Commission is obliged by Section 7(3) to ensure values of EFPA are protected.

Weaknesses or Risks

EFPA excludes productive rural areas in the Town of Gawler and some of those in the City of Playford.

Pressure stemming from un-met demand for rural lifestyle maybe transferred from EFPA to less protected non-EFPA rural areas, eg. rural zones in the Town of Gawler.

It is unclear how conflict will be resolved between urban growth demand, if not able to be met in non-EFPA areas, and the intent of protecting primary production, landscape and environmental resources throughout the region.

The Commission appears not to be obligated by Section 7 to ensure that **non-EFPA** areas of rural, landscape, environmental or food production significance within Greater Adelaide are protected from urban encroachment (unless perhaps they are Character Preservation Districts).

Opportunities

Extend EFPAs to include areas of strategic importance for primary production on the Northern Adelaide Plains south of the Gawler River, involving amendment of Section 7(1) to establish a new plan defining an updated EFPA – PATH: **legislative amendment.**

Oblige decision-makers including State Planning Commission to give priority to protection of all valuable primary production land in Greater Adelaide, not just the EFPA or a Character Preservation District – PATH: **legislative amendment.**

Regional plan to assign priority to protection of all valuable primary production land of strategic interest in Greater Adelaide, not just the EFPA – PATH: **review of Greater Adelaide plan.**

COMMENTS:

Protection of strategic rural land and its values is harder to reverse if implemented through the **legislated** EFPA.

A regional plan is otherwise more prone to review in favour of urban fringe expansion. Strategic planning and transport have been key drivers of urban expansion in Greater Adelaide in the past (Liu & Robinson, 2016).

Strengthening protection through provisions of a revised Regional plan may counteract pressure for Code Amendments seeking to rezone productive land, but cannot be regarded as durable protection compared to **legislated** EFPA.

Character Preservation Districts

The *Character Preservation (Barossa Valley) Act 2012* and the *Character Preservation (McLaren Vale) Act 2012* became operational on 18 January 2013. The legislation provides that the special character of the two districts is recognised, protected and enhanced while providing for the economic, physical and social wellbeing of the communities within the districts.

This legislation precludes the creation of inappropriate residential development in the rural areas of the Barossa Valley and McLaren Vale districts to halt urban sprawl to the north and south of Adelaide, thereby seeking to provide for continued viable farming and primary production activities. It also reinforces character values so that development does not detract from the special character of these two districts.

The special character of each district has been considered in terms of the five character values identified in the legislation:

- the rural and natural landscape and visual amenity of the district
- the heritage attributes of the district
- the built form of the townships as they relate to the district
- the viticultural, agricultural and associated industries of the district
- the scenic and tourism attributes of the district.

The Barossa Valley Character Preservation District lies to the east of the Town of Gawler defining a hard limit to urban expansion in that direction.

The two Districts have been defined based on a distinct geography and communities of interest, and associated identity and character. Although the Barossa Valley Character Preservation District is close to Gawler, it is separated and distinct from the Gawler rural area on the Northern Adelaide Plain with both the urbanised areas of Gawler and the rural living area of Gawler Belt in between. Also, the Gawler rural area is contiguous with horticultural areas more typical of the Northern Adelaide Plain than the Barossa Valley.

In terms of a third Character Preservation District, tailored to address the values and a vision for a distinct Gawler and Environs Rural Area, this presupposes another Act of Parliament for which sufficient political will would need to be found.

SWOT Analysis

The Character Preservation District option has generally similar strengths and weaknesses to those described for the EFPA above.

Special legislation could offer a chance to respond more effectively to local issues that may require different policy settings to the two existing legislated Character Preservation Districts and the EFPA. The question will be if there is an appetite for this in the context of the direction of recent planning reform in

terms of simplifying and reducing the number of zones and similar policy layers.

Greater Adelaide Regional Plan Provisions

SWOT Analysis

The State Planning Commission assumes responsibility for preparing, or overseeing preparation of, a regional plan for each planning region.

A regional plan must be consistent with any state planning policy and include a long-term vision (over a 15 to 30 year period) for the relevant region or area, including provisions about the integration of land use, transport infrastructure and the public realm, and recommendations about the application and operation of the Planning and Design Code in the relevant region or area.

There is a lack of regional plans prepared under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*, to base a SWOT analysis on. However, it is considered that the 2017 Update of the 30-Year-Plan for Greater Adelaide failed to articulate a well-defined vision for rural areas on the Northern Adelaide Plain between the EFPA boundary and the northern edges of urban Adelaide.

State Planning Policies of particular relevance include:

- State Planning Policy 4: Biodiversity
- State Planning Policy 6: Housing Supply and Diversity
- State Planning Policy 8: Primary Industry.

https://plan.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/552884/State_Planning_Policies_for_South_Australia_-_23_May_2019.pdf

Without contrary direction in a State Planning Policy or legislation, a regional plan is more prone to review in favour of urban fringe expansion. Strategic planning and transport have been key drivers of urban expansion in Greater Adelaide in the past (Liu & Robinson, 2016).

This suggests strengthening protection through provisions of a revised Regional plan may counteract pressure for Code Amendments seeking to rezone productive land, but a regional plan is dynamic and alone may not offer long-term durable protection.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The consultation and review documented in this report is a precursor to a review of the Greater Adelaide regional plan. The report also touches on options of an expansion of the legislated Environment and Food Production Areas or a new Character Preservation District that would offer more durable rural protection. The EFPA and CPD are policy mechanisms introduced to protect other areas of strategic interest for primary production, tourism or conservation in recent years, but would need to be accompanied by a range of other non-regulatory measures to support a working landscape and a prosperous and resilient community.

The regional plan review process has considerable scope to clarify either a direction that favours urban expansion at expense of rural values or an outcome consistent with the Vision and Values outlined herein, and a number of earlier or current strategic plans, including the Town of Gawler's community plan and a series of past planning strategies for Greater Adelaide.

It is important to establish a strategic direction for land use and development based on identification of key opportunities and constraints identified through research, and which is sufficiently fine-grained, descriptive and clear to effectively guide future decision-making in a way that will not undermine the intent of an adopted vision for the area.

Finally, it is noted that this Report has not focussed significantly on the Gawler River corridor in relation to floodplain issues, or public access and connected river paths, important themes addressed in previous planning reports and policies. These also need to be further developed.

Appendix A: References

Arris Consulting, 2022: Land Capability Assessment - Gawler Rural Zone.

Department of Environment and Planning, 1987: A Proposal for a metropolitan open space system: second generation parklands study.

Jensen Planning + Design, 2015: Gawler Rural Land-Use and Infrastructure Investigation Report 2, for Town of Gawler.

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McGregor, J. and Durant, M., 2019: Town of Gawler Biodiversity Management Plan. Greening Australia.

Regional Development Australia, 2022: Regional Strategic Plan Barossa Gawler Light Northern Adelaide Plains 2022-2025, Draft for Consultation.

State Planning Commission, 2021: Review of EFPA Boundaries Outcomes Report.

State of SA, 2016: Northern Economic Plan.

State of SA, 2017: Update of the Greater Adelaide Plan.

Town of Gawler Climate Emergency Action Plan 2022-2030

Town of Gawler Community Plan 2030+

Town of Gawler, Fyfe and Suter Planners & Wax Design, 2016: The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Plan 2025, Background Report.

Town of Gawler & Healthy Environs P/L, 2016: Environmental Management Plan.

Town of Gawler & SMEC, 2013: Gawler Urban Rivers Master Plan.

Appendix B: Work in Progress

A Regional Development Authority study in progress is investigating the water entitlements being used by growers. In summary, access to the T2 aquifer is better developed in the western part of the council area, whereas some of the Kudla area is poorly served by bores, mainly into the Quaternary aquifers. Whilst the T2 aquifer exists in the Kudla area, the purchase of entitlements and drilling of (deeper) bores into the T2 requires significant investment by individuals. Proximity to the Gawler River is an advantage if using the T1 or Quaternary aquifers.

The Regional Development Authority is also surveying and engaging with enterprises in the Gawler rural area.

The Draft Regional Strategic Plan 2022-2025 developed by Regional Development Australia Barossa, Gawler, Light and Adelaide Plains is on consultation until 13 January 2023.