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**Planning Department response to Helensburgh planning proposals**

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment today endorsed strengthened environmental protections for Helensburgh and deferred other areas for further investigation.

**Planning rules for Helensburgh**

The approved amendment to the Wollongong Local Environmental Plan conserves land at Helensburgh, Stanwell Tops and Otford for environmental conservation is generally in line with Wollongong City Council’s proposal.

Further investigation into Central Otford, Otford North and Lady Carrington Estate South will be undertaken following a recommendation by the independent Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP).

Following consideration of the JRPP report and its own review, the Department has also decided to retain the E3 Environmental Management zone for the Land Pooling area.

A spokesperson for the Department said the decision had been made in order to ensure that the land with high environmental value was appropriately protected.

“The environmental value of the conserved land at Helensburgh, Stanwell Tops and Otford is obvious and backed by evidence,” the spokesperson said.

“The other four precincts are different – the land is cleared or located close to existing residential areas. That’s why further investigation is required to make sure that the planning rules allow the most appropriate use of the areas in the future.

“The new LEP also focusses on jobs, separately creating a light industrial and enterprise corridor in appropriate areas while recognising the value of the Symbio Wildlife Park by applying a tourism zone to the area.”

**Land Pooling site and Lady Carrington Estate South**

The Department's decision retains the zoning of the Land Pooling site for environmental management, and refuses a separate private proposal to change planning rules that would have allowed 400 houses on the Land Pooling site.

In line with views from Wollongong City Council and JRPP advice, the Department refused the application because any development on these sites would have potential impact on:

- the Hacking River Catchment; and
- the Royal National Park.
There also remain questions as to whether the Land Pooling site contains remnants of the Southern Sydney Sheltered Forest, listed as an Endangered Ecological Community.

In developing the advice, the JRPP inspected the area and held public meetings in Helensburgh that saw more than 50 people addressing the Panel.

Wollongong City Council has now been asked to develop a separate proposal to amend the planning rules around the cleared areas on Lady Carrington Estate South.

“Once the additional studies and plans are developed the new proposal will be publicly exhibited to allow the community to have its say,” the spokesperson said.

For more information on the decision visit www.leptracking.planning.nsw.gov.au/

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