

18.7 Hallidays Point Technical Studies

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Summary of Report

This report outlines the feedback received from the consultation undertaken with the community and relevant NSW Departments on the Hallidays Point technical studies.

The report recommends future options for Hallidays Point and the next steps for implementation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The Hallidays Point Biodiversity Study and Local Conservation Action Plan (Attachment 1), Hallidays Point Traffic Study including Appendix D (Attachment 2) and Hallidays Point Strategic Bushfire Study (Attachment 3 – to be amended to include a notation) be recognised as independent reference documents. These reference documents are to be considered and discussed in the documentation submitted with any future planning proposals and / or development applications for subdivision or manufactured home estates in the Hallidays Point area.
2. The Hallidays Point section of the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* be reviewed with specific consideration given to Diamond Beach Urban Release Areas 2 and 3 (DB2 and DB3) and Tallwoods Urban Release Area 1 (TW1), based on future infrastructure requirements and means of implementation.
3. The review of the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* be reported to Council to transparently consider any amendments and endorse community consultation to commence.
4. No planning proposals be accepted or lodged prior to the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* being reviewed to ensure that an acceptable solution for infrastructure is available except for Diamond Beach Urban Release Area 1 (DB1) where a planning proposal can proceed.
5. A notation be added to the Hallidays Point Strategic Bushfire Study (Attachment 3) stating that the future upgrade of Old Soldiers Road is not a viable option at the current time based on constraints in relation to ownership, cost and the required revocation of the National Park.
6. Council work in conjunction with the NSW Rural Fire Service and Hallidays Point community to develop a Community Bushfire Action Plan.
7. The infrastructure identified by the technical studies is considered in the review of the MidCoast Development Contribution Plans.
8. A planning proposal be prepared to implement suitable planning controls in the proposed MidCoast Local Environmental Plan to protect the wildlife corridors and the priority biodiversity attributes of Hallidays Point identified in the Hallidays Point Biodiversity Study and Local Conservation Action Plan.

Financial / Resource Implications

Implementation of the recommendations will be funded through the existing Land Use Planning, Natural Systems and Transport Assets budgets, as resources are available.

This report recommends a range of approaches to ensure that the infrastructure that is required to address future growth at Hallidays Point is appropriate and achievable. Funding mechanisms such as developer contributions plans for new urban release areas will need to be agreed and implemented to ensure infrastructure, biodiversity conservation actions and maintenance requirements generated by future growth are paid for by the beneficiaries including the future community.

Legal Implications

Council is required to undertake a public exhibition process prior to the adoption of a land use strategy that may inform the preparation of a local environmental planning instrument. Consultation on the draft technical studies is consistent with the requirements of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act).

Future planning proposals will need to be prepared in accordance with Division 3.4 of the Act and relevant NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure guidance, including the Local Environmental Plan Making Guideline (August 2023).

Risk Implications

The technical studies aimed to ensure that development occurs in the right location with appropriate infrastructure with the logical release of suitable land to meet demand. The technical studies indicated that there is a risk to future development in Hallidays Point in terms of insufficient funds being available to achieve the required infrastructure upgrades, requiring alternate funding mechanisms. These issues need to be resolved with a strategic approach prior to the consideration of future planning proposals.

Background

Hallidays Point comprises four coastal villages: Tallwoods, Black Head, Red Head and Diamond Beach, in addition to large areas of farmland, forest, parks and reserves. Hallidays Point is a significant growth area in the MidCoast. In response to this continued growth the following actions have occurred:

- 27 April 2022, Council resolved to prepare a Place Strategy for Hallidays Point to identify long-term environmental outcomes and development opportunities for the area and commenced discussions with the community.
- 28 June 2023, Council resolved that the draft Hallidays Point Place Strategy be completed in partnership with the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI). Consultation with relevant NSW Departments commenced on the draft technical studies.
- September 2024, DPHI reviewed its planning functions, determining that the Hallidays Point Place Strategy was no longer a priority for the Department. DPHI suggested Council proceed on a local planning pathway and finalise the draft technical studies to provide an appropriate means to consider the cumulative impacts of development in Hallidays Point in terms of biodiversity, bushfire and traffic impacts. Council proceeded with these studies as an important

means to consider the cumulative impacts, rather than wholly focusing on individual impacts often associated with a site-specific planning proposal or development

- 24 September 2025, Council resolved to undertake community consultation on the draft technical studies. Consultation occurred from 25 September until 3 November 2025 during the public exhibition period 100 submissions were received.

Discussion

During the public exhibition period, the following documents were made available to the community so that they could provide meaningful feedback:

- Draft Hallidays Point Biodiversity Study and Local Conservation Action Plan (referred to as the Biodiversity Study) (Attachment 1)
- Draft Hallidays Point Traffic Study including Appendix D: Bushfire Traffic Study (referred to as the Traffic Study) (Attachment 2)
- Draft Hallidays Point Strategic Bushfire Study (referred to as the Strategic Bushfire Study) (Attachment 3)
- Summary of draft technical study recommendations and actions (Attachment 4).

The studies applied a three-scenario approach to future development requirements in Hallidays Point as outlined below:

- Scenario 1 – no change (maintain the existing extent of development)
- Scenario 2 – develop existing residential zoned land (including Diamond Beach URA1)
- Scenario 3 – Scenario 2 development with the addition of urban release areas (URAs)

The urban release areas (URAs) for Scenario 3 are shown in Figure 1.

As outlined in the previous Council report (24 September 2025), the technical studies provide recommendations that do not align especially in terms of Old Soldiers Road upgrades, and there are no clear means of implementation. As a result, no clear approach to the future development of Hallidays Point is provided. This is reflected in the submissions received on the technical studies, with one submission pointing out that there is “*a lack of direction and solutions in the technical studies*”.

This report aims to consider the issues raised in the submissions and the findings of the technical studies in order to provide a way forward for Hallidays Point through a defined planning approach.

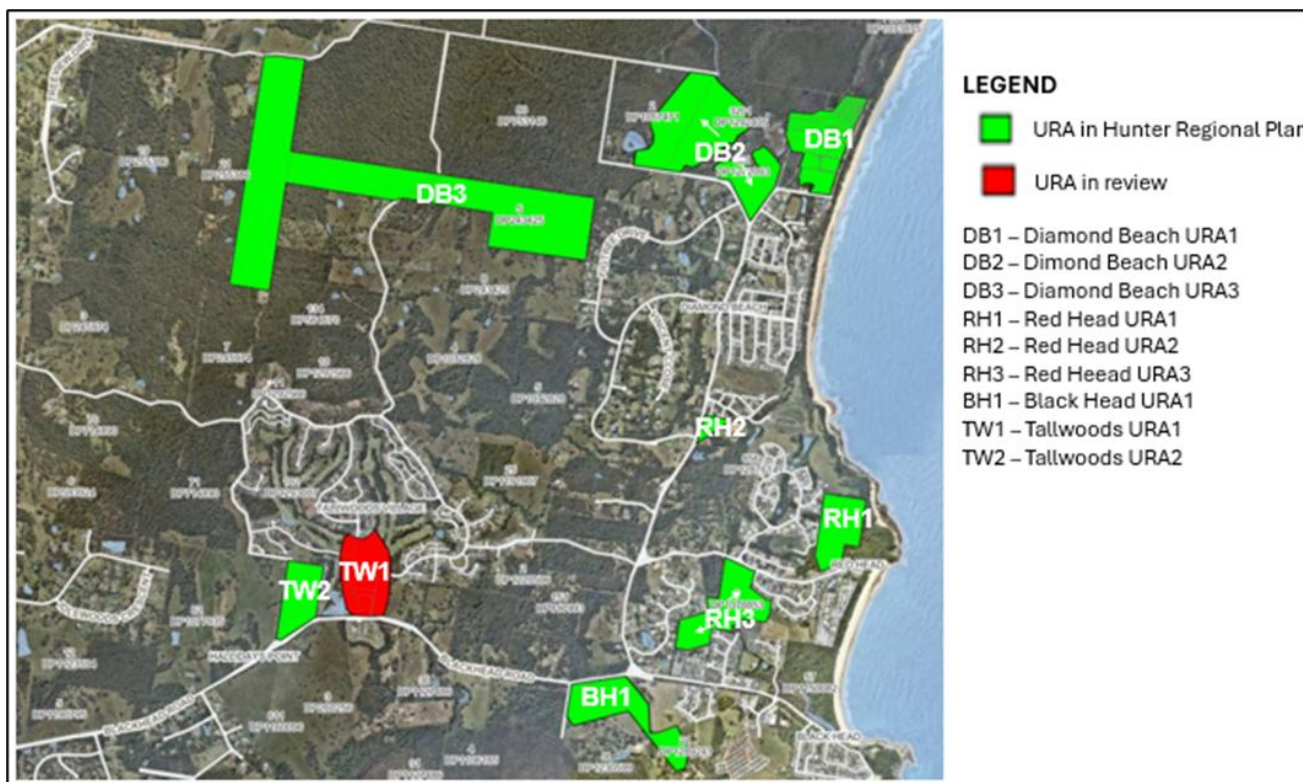


Figure 1: Urban release areas for Hallidays Point

A summary of the 100 submissions and responses to key issues is provided in Attachment 5. Copies of each submission received are provided in Attachment 6.

A review of the submissions received indicates that there is clear division in the community over the provision of infrastructure and future development.

In terms of the future development of Hallidays Point some submissions:

- oppose further development given the infrastructure and bushfire requirements (38 submissions)
- support further development to cater for growth and think that current restrictions on rezonings should be lifted (31 submissions)
- recognise that further development will contribute to Hallidays Point in terms of better services and facilities (40 submissions).

In terms of traffic generation, some submissions:

- indicate that the existing roads are inadequate to cater for future development, and that no development should occur until the infrastructure upgrades are undertaken (22 submissions)
- state that existing roads are adequate to cater for the future development (36 submissions)
- indicate that Old Soldiers Road upgrades are needed to address bushfire management (3 submissions)
- oppose an upgrade to Old Soldiers Road based on feasibility and biodiversity constraints (11 submissions).

In terms of bushfire planning, some submissions:

- state that a Community Bushfire Action Plan should be developed and implemented (31 submissions)
- indicate that the road network is inadequate for bushfire evacuation given the lack of appropriate or alternate evacuation routes (including Old Soldiers Road) (25 submissions)
- support bushfire protection measures (8 submissions).

Submissions relating to the Biodiversity Study generally support the recommendations and note the importance of biodiversity and its contribution to the character of Hallidays Point. These submissions stress the importance of protecting biodiversity. There were concerns raised that some recent development has impacted on biodiversity.

Owners of some of the Urban Release Areas (URAs) also lodged submissions regarding the impact of the technical studies on their sites.

Three submissions were received from NSW Departments which are outlined in Attachment 6 and are summarised below:

- **Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI)** – requests additional work to identify which sites are appropriate to develop, staging and infrastructure delivery
- **Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)** – provided suggested amendments to update data, clarifying discrepancies and provide guidance for watercourses and riparian zones.
- **Transport for NSW (TfNSW)** – advised that The Lakes Way is classified as a regional road and that Council is the Roads Authority for this road, as such they have no comments.

The following discussion examines some of the key submission themes in the context of the technical studies.

1. Infrastructure and Bushfire Requirements

The studies provided a list of actions and recommendations. A table from the Traffic Study identified the required level of infrastructure for the three scenarios (see Table 1).

The upgrade of Old Soldiers Road was identified as a recommendation in the Strategic Bushfire Study. However, Old Soldiers Road was not included in the Traffic Study as it was considered unfeasible given the constraints related to ownership, cost, and the required revocation of the National Park. To provide consistent direction, this needs to be notated on the Hallidays Point Strategic Bushfire Study (Attachment 3).

Several submissions considered an alternate access as being important for Hallidays Point. The reality is that many of the towns along the NSW coast have a singular access point. While it is an ideal situation to have an alternate access, many of these towns cannot be retrofitted to achieve this outcome. To fund an alternate access, it is likely that more URAs would have to be identified which would have a significant impact on the character and biodiversity of Hallidays Point.

Table 1: Estimated road network upgrade costs and timing (Source – Traffic Study pp73)

Location		Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Total Additional Dwellings		0	~1,652	~2,444
Road Upgrades	Blackhead Road Additional Westbound Lane The Boulevard to The Lakes Way	X	\$4,500,000	✓
	Blackhead Road Additional Eastbound Lane The Lakes Way to The Boulevard	X	X	\$4,500,000
	Blackhead Road Additional Westbound Lane Diamond Beach Road to The Boulevard	X	X	\$3,200,000
Intersection Upgrades	The Lakes Way & Blackhead Rd	X	\$3,000,000	✓
	Blackhead Rd & Diamond Beach Rd	X	\$1,500,000 (NSW Government)	✓
Estimated Cost		\$0	\$9,000,000	\$7,700,000

It is important that all residents are aware of this constraint and act appropriately, such as being prepared and evacuating early when there is a threat. Case studies identify that on average only 42% of people leave prior to a bushfire arriving. By the time people choose to leave there is a risk that the evacuation route is congested, impaired or even closed.

Therefore, early evacuation should be adopted by residents, if it is safe to do so. The Strategic Bushfire Strategy outlines actions including additional refuge areas, fire trails being maintained and the local branch of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) being adequately resourced.

A key challenge is that some of these actions fall outside of Council's jurisdiction, meaning that Council can advocate for but not implement some of these actions.

There was strong support in the submissions received, for the establishment of a Community Bushfire Action Plan. Council will work with the NSW Rural Fire Service and community to develop this action plan.

The Strategic Bushfire Strategy nominates three potential refuge areas. In response to not having an alternate access, the number of refuge areas could be increased to ensure that future development of any URAs accommodates a refuge area.

In terms of Scenario 2 infrastructure (Table 1) some key projects have progressed. The Lakes Way roundabout has been constructed and incorporates augmentation options for additional lanes if required. Planning for the roundabout for Blackhead and Diamond Beach Road is underway with construction anticipated to commence in 2026.

In terms of the additional westbound lane on Blackhead Road (The Boulevard to The Lakes Way), the Traffic Study notes that this is required to accommodate bushfire evacuation traffic only. It can be assumed that the timing of this road construction would be required toward the end of the development of all sites attributed to Scenario 2. It is therefore critically important that Development Contribution Plans are updated to ensure development contributes toward this infrastructure, and any funds collected for road infrastructure in current contribution plans consider the infrastructure identified in Table 1. Grant funding should also be sought to bring this infrastructure on-line as soon as possible.

The infrastructure requirements for Scenario 3 are extensive. Council's assessment indicated that the infrastructure was likely to be beyond what could be funded under contribution plan parameters, requiring developers to work together to find alternate means to build the infrastructure. The difficulty being that the infrastructure is expected to be cost-prohibitive, making it unfeasible for developers to achieve a suitable outcome.

Without a solution to implement the infrastructure, the problem will continue to be 'kicked down the road' (Old Soldiers Rd upgrades have been contemplated for over 20 years) to be resolved by individual rezoning applications. This is contrary to the intent of undertaking the technical studies. It is important to identify developments that will positively contribute to the urban fabric for Hallidays Point and to prioritise their development, rather than applying a 'first in' approach. This is consistent with comments from DPHI who recommended that the future growth be staged.

The technical studies did not examine a scenario where the number of urban release areas (URAs) were reduced based on the findings of the technical studies. If the URAs were reduced it follows that the traffic infrastructure requirements would also be reduced to make implementation more feasible.

2. Urban Release Area (URA) Review

It is important to consider the adopted URAs against the technical studies in the context of the long-term planning that has occurred for Hallidays Point. The URAs are shown in Figure 1 and the abbreviations for each URA are provided below:

- DB1 – Diamond Beach URA1
- DB2 – Dimond Beach URA2
- DB3 – Diamond Beach URA3
- RH1 – Red Head URA1
- RH2 – Red Head URA2
- RH3 – Red Head URA3
- BH1 – Black Head URA1
- TW1 – Tallwoods URA1
- TW2 – Tallwoods URA2.

It should be noted that TW1 (shown as red) is not identified as a URA in the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041*. DPHI advised that additional work was required to justify this URA and it was to be considered through the Place Strategy process. TW1 proposes a rezoning to extend the commercial facilities for Tallwoods and is likely to provide for ancillary housing.

(a) Long term planning

Planning for the URAs commenced in the early 2000s and was formalised in the *Mid North Coast Regional Strategy 2006-2031* which identified proposed future urban release areas. This strategy provided the foundations for future planning and identified the following URAs:

- DB1 prior to it being included in the SP2 Tourist zone
- RH2
- RH3
- BH1
- TW2

Extensive studies were undertaken to include these sites in the Regional Strategy. The community has been informed over the last 20 years that these sites would provide for the future growth of Hallidays Point. There has been a long-standing expectation that these URAs would be developed.

Several URAs were added following the adoption of the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* (Council resolution on 28 July 2021), which included:

- DB1 which recognised that the SP2 Tourist zone needed to be reviewed in accordance with the MidCoast Housing Strategy to be included in a residential zone. This URA was identified as having low constraints given it was considered infill development.
- DB2 and DB3 which were to provide more growth options for Hallidays Point. It was recognised that any future residential development was dependant on a strategic bushfire assessment. DB3 provided an option for an alternate access through a realignment of Old Soldiers Road, which benefited DB2. These URAs were identified as having medium constraints
- RH1 which was seen as infill development with existing residential land to the west and south. This site also contains an important environmental corridor and littoral rainforest proximity buffer zone that must be protected. This URA was identified as having medium constraints
- TW1 which was to cater for the creation of a commercial centre for Tallwoods and ancillary housing. This location was identified as having low constraints. It is noted that while this report identified TW1 as a URA, it is not identified in the *Hunter Regional Plan 2041* and is still under review.

The Council report on URAs (28 July 2021) noted that a large number of submissions were received for Hallidays Point. In particular, the NSW Rural Fire Service objected to any further rezonings in this locality until a strategic bushfire assessment was undertaken, which related to having a viable alternate second access (Old Soldiers

Road). Community submissions received for DB2, DB3 and RH1, raised concerns about environmental impacts, implications of bushfire and traffic options.

It is noted that the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* was based on a desktop analysis and was not supported by technical studies. The report recognised the need to undertake further strategy work for Hallidays Point, particularly the strategic bushfire assessment.

The more recent additions to the URAs for Hallidays Point were made in the last four years on the basis that a strategic bushfire assessment was required. In terms of long-term planning, DB2, DB3, RH1 and TW1 are the more recent additions to the URAs for Hallidays Point, which have added to the infrastructure requirements.

(b) Ecological values

The Hallidays Point Biodiversity Study and Local Conservation Action Plan (Biodiversity Study) bring together all ecological findings in *Figure 24 – Hallidays Point Wildlife Corridors and Nodes Plan* (refer to Figure 2).

DB2, DB3 and BH1 adjoin wildlife nodes and are subject to riparian and/or wildlife corridors. These URAs are on the northern and southern boundaries of the urban footprint for Hallidays Point. While the boundaries of the URAs generally follow these wildlife nodes, enabling urban development in such close proximity has the potential to detrimentally impact on the wildlife nodes from edge effects. This is particularly the case for DB2 and DB3 which adjoin Khappinghat National Park and the important Moor Creek riparian corridor. The extent of biodiversity issues for these sites is outlined in Table 19 of the Biodiversity Study.

RH1, RH3 and TW2 are also subject to riparian or wildlife corridors. Development of these sites will ensure the ‘missing link’ of the corridors is provided and protected, given adjoining development already protects sections of these corridors.

The URAs considered to have the highest level of environmental constraints are DB2 and DB3, and to a lesser extent BH1.

(c) Bushfire considerations

As indicated in the Hallidays Point Traffic Study, the constraints, ownership, cost, and the required revocation of the National Park, make the option of Old Soldiers Road unfeasible. The Strategic Bushfire Study (SBS) states that Old Soldiers Road provides a significant advantage for DB2 and DB3 given that it would provide a key access. In the absence of Old Soldiers Road, these locations would significantly contribute to traffic movements on Diamond Beach Road, the Black Head Road intersection and Black Head Road during evacuation. These sites adjoin natural bushland and are located a significant distance from The Lakes Way (via Black Head Road) adding to their bushfire risk.

It is noted however that DB1 already contains urban development and was considered under Scenario 2 in the Traffic Study.

The URAs considered to have the highest level of bushfire constraints from an exposure and access perspective are DB2 and DB3.



(d) Summary

As noted above, DB2 and DB3 are the most constrained URAs in Hallidays Point when considering the technical studies. In addition, TW1 is not an identified URA. These URAs are also more recent additions. If these URAs were removed as potential development sites, the total number of estimated dwellings for Scenario 3 would decrease by approximately 50%.

RH1 is considered to be warranted given it is an infill site with residential development to the west and south. Development of this URA will provide significant environmental outcomes including the provision of the missing link of the Seascope - Red Head Koala Corridor and protection and enhancement of Littoral rainforest.

More work is however required to fully understand the implications on infrastructure requirements based on a reduction in the number URAs and to determine how the infrastructure will be implemented (e.g. development contribution plans, planning agreements, grant funding). Further review of the URAs is required to better align the infrastructure requirements with future development.

This will involve a review of the Hallidays Point section of the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* with specific consideration given to Diamond Beach Urban Release Areas 2 and 3 (DB2 and DB3) and Tallwoods Urban Release Area 1 (TW1), based on future infrastructure requirements and means of implementation. This will need to be reported to Council to consider any amendments and proceed to community consultation.

As such, no planning proposals should be lodged until the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* is updated to ensure that an acceptable solution for infrastructure is provided. The exception to this is DB1 where a planning proposal can proceed as it forms part of Scenario 2, is land currently included in a tourist zone and is land that has numerous existing development approvals.

It should also be noted that the dwelling estimates in the technical studies have been undertaken based on standard residential subdivision, which generally achieves around 10-15 dwellings/ha. Some forms of development, such as manufactured home estates (MHEs), can have more intense dwelling intensities up to 45 dwellings/ha.

Therefore, any applications for MHEs or other development that significantly impact on dwelling numbers need to consider the technical studies. Such developments are likely to increase the extent of the road infrastructure needed at Hallidays Point. Mechanisms would need to be in place to determine if any additional infrastructure is appropriate and how the developer would facilitate the required infrastructure.

3. Biodiversity outcomes

The Biodiversity Study identifies important biodiversity attributes of local and regional significance and includes a range of actions to deliver important biodiversity outcomes. It is acknowledged that the wildlife nodes and wildlife/riparian corridors have been identified in previous strategies over the last 25 years. In some cases, these important biodiversity attributes have eroded over time, given that there wasn't an adequate level of protection provided through planning controls.

It is therefore proposed to undertake a planning proposal to amend the draft MidCoast Local Environmental Plan (after gazettal), to put in place planning controls to protect these important biodiversity attributes. In addition, elements of this technical study will be incorporated in the local provisions in the draft MidCoast Development Control Plan, which is currently being prepared.

The study also incorporates actions that fall outside the scope of planning controls. Council staff will continue to explore means to implement these actions, some of which involve community participation.

Conclusion

The submissions and the previous Council report (24 September 2025) indicate that there is currently no clear path to resolving the issues to address future growth at Hallidays Point.

Further review of the Hallidays Point component of the *MidCoast Urban Release Area Report 2021* is required to consider future infrastructure requirements and a means of implementation. The outcomes of this review will be reported to Council and will involve further community consultation.

The overall aim of this review will be to provide clear guidance on where future development is to occur in Hallidays Point, the infrastructure that is required facilitate it and how this infrastructure will be funded.

Consultation

Community consultation on the Hallidays Point technical studies was undertaken from the 25 September until 3 November 2025, during which time 100 submissions were received. A summary of the submissions is provided in Attachment 5 and an overview is provided in the Discussion section of this report.

Alignment with Community Strategic Plan

Community Outcome - Wellbeing

W-1 – Improve public safety and our community's ability to prepare and respond to emergencies.

Community Outcome - Natural Environment

NE-1- Protect our native flora, fauna and local ecosystems.

Community Outcome - Our Places & Infrastructure

PI-5 – Provide a safe, reliable and well-maintained road and broader transport network with options for active and shared travel.

Timeframe

Further development in Hallidays Point is contingent on providing clear guidance on where future development can occur and associated infrastructure that is required.

Additional investigations will need to be undertaken in a timely manner to enable planning proposals to proceed in the future.

List of Attachments

The following attachments are available on the meeting page of Council's website under the 'Attachments to Agenda' heading. The copy of Attachment 6 on the website has had the personal information redacted to protect the privacy of the members of the public providing the submissions.

1. Draft Hallidays Point Biodiversity Study and Local Conservation Action Plan [**18.7.1** - 194 pages]
2. Draft Hallidays Point Traffic Study with Appendices [**18.7.2** - 187 pages]
3. Draft Strategic Bushfire Study Hallidays Point [**18.7.3** - 74 pages]
4. Summary of draft technical study recommendations and actions [**18.7.4** - 7 pages]
5. Hallidays Point Place Strategy - Submission summary and response [**18.7.5** - 25 pages]
6. Hallidays Point Place Strategy - Submissions REDACTED [**18.7.6** - 328 pages]