

Developing agritourism and tourism on a farm in Land Use Zone C4: Environmental Living



This guide outlines what types of agritourism and tourism accommodations and experiences are permitted by NSW Planning Legislation on commercial farms on [C4 Environmental Living land](#) in the Lithgow Local Government Area.

It aims to help Lithgow farmers who are interested in diversifying their farm incomes with tourism.

Council's Planning Officers can help you with advice on

- What types of agritourism and tourism developments are permitted on your farm
- How to distinguish between different types of similar development (such as short-term rental accommodation (STRA) and a farm stay accommodation)
- What approval pathways might be an option for you: a Development Approval (a DA), or a fast-tracked approval (complying development), or in what circumstances no approval is needed (if certain conditions are met)
- The exact requirements for developments as specified in the state planning legislation.

You can apply for a free meeting with a Council Planning Officer using [this form](#).

Council's Tourism Manager is also happy to support you in developing an agritourism or tourism offering on your farm. You can arrange a meeting to speak with them by calling (02) 6354 9999 or emailing council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au.

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What is agritourism?

Agritourism is an on-farm tourism experience that connects guests to farmers and their farming activities and produce.

Some types of tourism offerings can also be developed on farms with approval. An example is a bed and breakfast with rural views, where the guests do not interact with the farmer or their farming or produce.

There are lots of **benefits for farmers** from having agritourism and tourism on the farm. The additional income can help with cash flow, reduce debt, and diversify farm income to reduce risk, and enable a farmer or their adult children to earn a living on the farm (replacing an off-farm job). It can be easier to earn income from tourism than from farming, and tourism is a growing industry. Hosting guests can also provide social contact, and pride from sharing farming practices and conservation efforts.

Recently, state planning legislation changes have made agritourism easier to develop on commercial farms. This was done to enable farmers to diversify their incomes, while protecting productive agricultural land by maintaining farming as the principal use of the land.

The four types of agritourism with simplified planning approval pathways are as follows.

Farm stay accommodation	Farm experience premises	Farm gate premises	Roadside stall
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short stay accommodation such as cabins (in existing buildings or new buildings) Camping in tents and caravans Glamping 	Tourism experiences, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm tours Horse riding Skills workshops Events, including weddings Farm animal interactions 	Interactions with the farm's produce, such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tastings Cooking classes Cellar door 'Pick your own' experiences Retail sales of value-added produce, such as cheese or preserves School visits 	Sales of farm produce or handcrafted goods from a roadside stall

These can only be developed on land where the main use of the land is the production of agricultural goods for commercial purposes. Agritourism on commercial farms must be secondary to, and supportive of, the farm's agricultural activities. It must not detract from farming, or become the more dominant activity.

You can develop agritourism offerings on your property if:

- **Your property is a commercial farm (rather than a hobby farm), and**
- **The agritourism offering will be ancillary (secondary) to the farm.**

NSW Planning Legislation defines a **commercial farm** as a farm on which agriculture is undertaken:

1. On [land that is categorised as farmland](#) (click on the link to see what is defined as farmland).

or

2. That is a [primary production business](#) (or part of a primary production business), including a business that has temporarily ceased to be a primary production business because of a natural disaster (click on the link to see what is defined as a primary production business).

If you are not sure if your proposed agritourism offering will be **ancillary** to the farm, one of Council's Planning Officers can help you.

Approvals for your agritourism development

For developments in C4 Land Use Zone there are two pathways for Council planning approval of agritourism development: exempt development, and development approval.

Note: Complying development is not an approval pathway option in the C4 Land Use Zone.

Exempt development provisions in the state planning legislation enable you to establish a small-scale agritourism activity if the development meets certain conditions.

It is a quicker and low-cost way to start an agritourism business.

The conditions are outlined in the simple-to-understand guide called [Setting up an agritourism business](#).

The **development application pathway** must be used where a development does not meet all of the conditions for either exempt or complying development.

Read [Your Guide to the DA Process](#) to learn more about applying for development approval.

Temporary use of land: If you would like to temporarily offer agritourism or tourism on your farm, such as to trial a type of agritourism offering, development consent may be granted for a temporary use, for a maximum of 52 days (whether or not consecutive days) in any 12 month period. Learn about the [conditions for development consent for temporary use of land](#).

Stages when developments require approvals or permits

There are three stages where your development might need approvals or permits:

1. Planning approval to proceed (complying development certification or development application).
2. Construction certificate if building works will be part of your development.
3. Operational permits (such as a food license or a liquor license, and permits for new driveways and new effluent disposal systems).

Some approvals are dependent upon other approvals, which means that you cannot apply until another approval has been granted (or an exemption issued). For example, you need development approval before you can apply for a construction certificate.

Some approvals need to be applied for at the same time. For example, if you need to upgrade a septic system or install a new septic system it should form part of the overall approval process.

Because of the complexities of approvals, a first step in your agritourism or tourism development needs to be a meeting with a Council Planning Officer or a planning consultant. This will prevent any (potentially expensive) surprises or time delays further down the track.

The importance of compliance

The purpose of the planning legislation is to protect public health, wellbeing, and safety. After all, you wouldn't want your neighbours to be doing things on their farm that would impact your quality of life, such as hosting weddings every weekend with hundreds of cars driving down your dirt road and a loud reception party until 1am, or not managing their guest accommodation's septic waste or greywater properly and contaminating the creek that runs through your farm.

Compliance with legislation is also essential for business viability.

What are the potential risks and consequences of not securing Council approval for your agritourism development?

If a development is not compliant, consequences can include the following:

- Exclusion from participating in the short-term rental accommodation industry by being placed on the Short Term Rental Accommodation Exclusion Register which is used by organisations such as Airbnb.
- Essential services may not be able to be connected or maintained. A tradesperson can lose their license (i.e. their livelihood) for non-compliant work, and therefore will likely turn down work on a non-compliant project.
- If infrastructure is not up to code, it may cause unintended injury, legal exposure, reputation damage, and stress, and may also negatively impact the guest experience, resulting in lower ratings in reviews and therefore reduced bookings/sales.
- You may not be able to secure insurance, or an insurance claim you make may not be honoured by your insurance company. The liability cost could be significant if a guest receives a permanent disability on your farm, and could even bankrupt your farm business.
- Once identified by Council, non-compliance could result in a potential future large cost to either retrofit your development to meet legal requirements, or demolish any non-complying infrastructure and start again. Alternatively, it could result in you not being allowed to use the infrastructure that you developed for agritourism, resulting in a loss of tourism income to pay off loans, if you took them out. This could also bankrupt your farm business.
- Non-compliance may result in unsafe working conditions for yourself, and staff and contractors.
- Non-compliance will limit your ability to promote your agritourism offering to potential customers, if you try to avoid Council learning about it. Destination marketers won't promote it, and your agritourism experience will not be able to be included in packages with other tourism businesses, or be sold through travel wholesalers such as travel agents and tour operators.
- Non-compliance may result in conflicts with neighbouring farms and the community, for example if noise is not managed by compliance and impacts neighbours.
- You may unintentionally build where extreme weather events such as floods and bushfire could destroy your infrastructure.
- It can be challenging to sell a non-compliant business and property, or sell it for its full value.

You should never assume your development does not need approval, but should always check with one of Council's Planning Officers or a planning consultant.

What if I am already operating a tourism business without approval, or I am not sure if it is compliant?

There are too many risks to your business to continue to operate without being sure it is compliant with relevant legislation. Speak with one of Council's Planning Officers or a planning consultant as soon as you are able to find out what is required to become compliant.



Types of agritourism and tourism accommodation permitted on commercial farms on C4 Land in Lithgow

Note: In the state planning legislation, farm stay accommodation is different from other types of short term visitor accommodation, and has its own distinct requirements.

Agritourism	Tourism	
Farm stay accommodation	Bed and breakfast accommodation	Eco-tourist facilities
<p>NSW Planning Legislation definition</p> <p>A building or place—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> on a commercial farm, and ancillary to the farm, and used to provide temporary accommodation to paying guests of the farm, including in buildings or moveable dwellings. <p>Farm stay accommodation can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing or new buildings used for short stay accommodation including cabins (with up to a total of 5 guest bedrooms) Tents, caravans, and other moveable dwellings. 	<p>An existing dwelling in which temporary or short-term accommodation is provided on a commercial basis by the permanent residents of the dwelling and where—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> meals are provided for guests only, and cooking facilities for the preparation of meals are not provided within guests' rooms, and dormitory-style accommodation is not provided. <p>The accommodation that is provided to guests must consist of no more than 4 bedrooms.</p>	<p>A building or place that—</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> provides temporary or short-term accommodation to visitors on a commercial basis, and is located in or adjacent to an area with special ecological or cultural features, and is sensitively designed and located so as to minimise bulk, scale and overall physical footprint and any ecological or visual impact. <p>It may include facilities that are used to provide information or education to visitors and to exhibit or display items.</p> <p>See the requirements for eco-tourist facilities</p>
<p>Examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change the use of a rural workers' dwelling to farm stay accommodation Host tents or caravans Construct 'glamping' platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct new buildings (e.g. cabins) Change the use of, alter, or add to existing buildings for farm stay accommodation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hosted bed and breakfast accommodation Ecotourism accommodation

Agritourism		Tourism	
Farm stay accommodation		Bed and breakfast accommodation	Eco-tourist facilities
Pathway to approval			
<p>Exempt development (no approval required if all conditions are met)</p> <p>See pages 23-28 of the Setting up an agritourism business guide for details on the standards your development have to meet to be exempt from approval.</p>	<p>Development application</p> <p>If your farm stay accommodation development does not meet the conditions for exempt development as outlined in pages 23-28 of the Setting up an agritourism business guide, you will need to submit a Development Application for approval from Council.</p>	<p>Complying development</p> <p>A bed and breakfast accommodation may be able to use the fast track complying development certification pathway outlined on page 5 of this Home-based enterprises factsheet.</p> <p>Development application</p> <p>If you don't meet the conditions for complying development, you will need to submit a Development Application for approval from Council.</p> <p>Read Your Guide to the DA Process to learn more.</p>	<p>Development application</p> <p>You will need to submit a Development Application for approval from Council.</p> <p>Read Your Guide to the DA Process to learn more.</p>

Agritourism developments that are exempt from requiring approval

The following types of development do not require planning or building approval if the development meets the specified conditions. It is important to check with a Council Planning Officer that your development does meet all the conditions.

Types of development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tents • Glamping platforms • Caravans • Campervans • Camper trailers • Building platforms or decks for glamping tents • BBQ shelters • Minor external building alterations • Minor internal building alterations • A pathway or paving • A driveway • Erecting a sign 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construct a new building for farm stay accommodation • Modify, alter or extend an existing building or manufactured home for farm stay accommodation • Change the use of one of the following to a farm stay accommodation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An existing house • A manufactured home <p>Note: As exempt development, you can change the use of a farm stay accommodation back to the type of residential accommodation it was previously. This means that, for example, you can use the building for part of the year as a rural workers dwelling for farm workers and for part of the year as a farm stay accommodation for paying guests.</p>
<p>See pages 26-28 of the Setting up an agritourism business guide for the standards you have to meet for the following to be exempt development.</p>	<p>See page 24 of the Setting up an agritourism business guide for the standards you have to meet for changing the use of residential accommodation or a manufactured home to farm stay accommodation to be exempt development.</p>

If you cannot meet all the development standards for exempt development, you will need to lodge a [development application](#) with Council.

Do I need approval from Council to host camping on Hipcamp or list accommodation on Airbnb?

All types of guest accommodation and camping and caravanning need to be compliant with relevant legislation. Aside from development approval, there may be other permits or licenses required by your business.

Hipcamp

NSW Planning's [Setting up an agritourism business guide](#) clearly outlines the conditions that all must be met to host campers and caravanners on your farm without development approval from Council (as exempt development) (see pages 26-27 in the guide).

Airbnb

[Short-term rental accommodation \(STRA\)](#) is accommodation in residential homes made available to guests on a commercial basis for a short-term period. STRA is often marketed through online booking platforms such as Airbnb and Booking.com.

- Hosted STRA is where the host resides on the premises during the provision of accommodation to guests.
- Non-hosted STRA is where the host does not reside on the premises during the provision of accommodation to guests.

Lawfully constructed residential dwellings that are permitted to be used as residential accommodation can use the exempt development pathway for STRA. Typical rural residential dwellings that can be used for STRA include a house, or a secondary dwelling such as a granny flat. However, rural workers' dwellings and moveable dwellings such as tiny homes and caravans are not permitted for use for STRA.

STRA is not a tourist and visitor accommodation land use (tourist and visitor accommodation means a building or place that provides temporary or short-term accommodation on a commercial basis), and a property used for STRA remains a residence. Approved tourist and visitor accommodations, such as farm stays, bed and breakfasts, hotels, motels, camping grounds and caravan parks, are not required to register for STRA. These types of accommodations can also be listed on online platforms such as Airbnb and Booking.com.

Because farm stay accommodation is a tourist and visitor accommodation land use, it does not fall within the definition of short-term rental accommodation. A farm stay accommodation is "a building or place, on a commercial farm, and ancillary to the farm, used to provide temporary accommodation to paying guests of the farm, including in buildings or moveable dwellings."

If you are unsure of the status of your accommodation, contact one of Council's Planning Officers or a planning consultant for confirmation.

A mandatory [Code of Conduct for the Short-term Rental Accommodation Industry](#) sets out the legal responsibilities for all industry participants. A host must act lawfully, which includes being compliant with planning laws. Anyone who contravenes the Code of Conduct is put on the [STRA Exclusion Register](#) which means they are excluded from participating in the short-rental accommodation industry.

Learn more at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/policy-and-legislation/housing/short-term-rental-accommodation

Planning approval steps to developing agritourism and tourism developments on your farm

Step	Description
1. Read Setting up an agritourism business	If you are considering developing any type of agritourism on your farm, read – in its entirety – the comprehensive and helpful guide called Setting up an agritourism business . The guide will help you understand what types of agritourism developments can take place on your farm, and what are the conditions to be met to not need approval, or to be able to use fast track approval known as complying development. Note any additional requirements relevant to your development, such as requiring a food safety license, a traffic management plan, a biosecurity management plan, and/or a bush fire safety plan.
2. Read Council's Development Control Plan	Council's Development Control Plan (DCP) provides supplementary detailed guidance for developments in Lithgow. Read any sections that are relevant to your development.
3. Meet with a Council Planning Officer or an independent Planning Consultant	<p>When you first have the idea in your mind of the possibility of developing agritourism or tourism on your farm, and before you settle on any particular type or scale of development, meet up with one of Council's Planning Officers who can help guide you towards a type of development with fewer compliance requirements.</p> <p>It would also be ideal to have Council's Tourism Manager join this meeting. They can support your development with advice about the types of tourism the region needs more of, and the types of visitors to the region to design your offering for. They will also connect you with the support that the wider tourism industry can provide to your business.</p> <p>You may wish to write down your idea and/or sketch out a map of your property and where the development would be, and any other important information about your property e.g. where farm activities take place, flood zone, environmentally sensitive areas, and so on. You can see what types of overlays (such as bushfire risk and flood risk) lie over your property at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/spatialviewer/#/find-a-property/address</p> <p>Even if you believe your development would meet all the conditions for Exempt development and therefore you would not need approval from Council, have a combined meeting with Council's Planning Officer and Tourism Manager to go through your idea.</p> <p>If you do need approval, this early advice will likely save you time, money and frustration. They may be able to identify opportunities to decrease compliance requirements and save you money, such as by recommending a slightly different location on your property for your development. Also discuss the supporting documentation required for a development application, if required, and any other requirements, such as licenses and other permits.</p> <p>You can apply for a free meeting with a Council Planning Officer using this form. Alternatively, you may wish to consult with a certified planning consultant instead.</p>
4. Talk with your neighbours	Talk with your neighbours while you are planning your development to identify any concerns you will need to address, such as an increase in traffic, the impact of cars turning into your property, signage, and making sure visitors do not trespass onto neighbouring properties, or cause nuisance, damage, or safety issues to your neighbours.
5. Plan out your development	Undertake detailed planning for the agritourism or tourism offering you'd like to offer on your farm. It is recommended you develop a business plan and a marketing plan for it.

Step	Description
6. Apply for approval	<p>It is recommended that you hire a planning consultant to prepare your approval application, if you require one (either an application for complying development or for complying development certification or a development application). Your application must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear concise description of the proposed development • The landowner's consent • The estimated cost of the development (a Cost Estimate report) • A site plan of the land • A sketch plan of any proposed new dwellings indicating floor layouts and proposed external finishes and heights • An environmental assessment called a Statement Of Environment Effects. <p>Your site plan should indicate (where applicable):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location of the property, its boundary measurements (how long each side of the property is), and the site area • The location of existing vegetation and trees on the land • The location and uses of all existing buildings on the land • The location and uses of buildings on properties adjoining the land • The location of proposed new buildings or works in relation to boundaries of the land • Proposed vehicular access points • Proposed methods of draining the land. <p>Apply via www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/onlineDA. Applicants are required to pay a digital application processing fee for certain planning applications and certificates.</p> <p>If you are doing building work, once your development application has been approved, you will also need to get a construction certificate and appoint Council or a registered certifier as the principal certifier before any building work can begin.</p>

Other permits, licenses and requirements

There are a range of other permits, licenses and other requirements to consider when developing agritourism or tourism on your farm, such as food and alcohol licenses, bushfire safety, complying with the Building Code of Australia, accessibility for people with a disability, traffic management, placement of signage, waste management, biosecurity, removing vegetation, and conservation of wildlife habitat, amongst others.

Please read pages 18-20 of the [Setting up an agritourism business](#) guide for further information on these.

Local contacts and agritourism development resources

Phase of development	Purpose / help available	Organisation	Contact Details
I'm interested to learn if agritourism or tourism is right for me	Would agritourism be right for my family and my farming calendar?	Australian Regional Tourism	Enabling Agritourism: A guide for farmers planning to diversify
	What types of agritourism can I develop on my farm? (without and with approval)	NSW Planning	Setting up an agritourism business guide – this is a key resource See NSW Planning's other agritourism resources
		Lithgow City Council	Planning Officer (02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
	What types of agritourism are needed in this region that I could consider? (and what types does the region have too many of?)	Independent certifier	
		Lithgow City Council	Tourism Manager (02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
I'm interested in learning more about developing an agritourism or tourism offering	Visitors to Central West NSW – who they are and what they want from an agritourism experience	Lithgow City Council	Tourism Manager (02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
	Developing a tourism experience	Destination NSW	NSW First online training program: Develop module
		Destination NSW	Developing agritourism guides: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are visitors looking for? • Creating bookable agritourism experiences • How to create world-class agritourism experiences
		Destination Central West	Industry Development Officer info@dncw.com.au Take their brief Agritourism Readiness Survey
		Wine Australia	Growing Wine Tourism recorded webinar series

Phase of development	Purpose / help available	Organisation	Contact Details
I'm interested in learning more about developing an agritourism or tourism offering (cont.)	Being connected into the tourism industry	Local, regional and state tourism organisations	Sign up to receive tourism industry newsletters from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination Central West • Destination NSW • Tourism Australia
	Financial planning, including tax implications	Financial advisor	
	Business planning and advice	Service NSW	Business Bureau
	What is required to secure planning approval	NSW Planning	Setting up an agritourism business guide
		Lithgow City Council	Planning Officer (02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
		Planning consultant or certifier	
	Biosecurity planning	Local Land Services	Central Tablelands Local Land Services
	Bushfire safety	NSW Rural Fire Service	NSW Rural Fire Service
	Food safety licensing	Lithgow City Council	(02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
	Alcohol licensing	Liquor and Gaming NSW	Liquor and Gaming NSW
Insurance (agritourism insurance is usually separate from a 'farm pack' insurance product)	Insurance broker		
Construction	Registered builder		

Phase of development	Purpose / help available	Organisation	Contact Details
I'm ready to promote my agritourism or tourism offering	Advice on how to market effectively	Lithgow City Council	Tourism Manager (02) 6354 9999 council@lithgow.nsw.gov.au
	Basic training in tourism marketing	Destination NSW	NSW First online training program: Promote and Sell modules
	Learn how to sell via third parties such as travel agents and tour operators by paying commission	Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC)	Tourism Trade Ready program



Department of Primary Industries
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