

## **Attachment 1.**

### **Maitland City Council Submission – draft Hunter Regional Plan and draft Plan for Growing Hunter City – March 2016**

#### **Executive summary**

Council welcomes the release of both the draft Hunter Regional Plan as well as the companion document being the draft Plan for Growing Hunter City. The release of an up-dated strategic framework for the region is considered overdue. Council notes and supports a number of important commitments to the Hunter Region by the NSW Government. A number of these commitments however have resource implications for councils and this consideration needs to be included in a future implementation plan.

There is also a large number of recommendations and proposed actions in the draft Plans. It is recommended that these actions are prioritised in the final Plans and that the timeframe and funding sources for their implementation is clearly outlined in the annual reporting process.

It is noted that the Maitland City Council area is largely included within the boundary of the Hunter City. Adjoining areas to the north, west and south of the Hunter City are identified as part of the Hunter City hinterland. This includes centres such as Kurri Kurri, Heddon Greta, Greta and Branxton. The Hunter Expressway is also included in the hinterland.

However, it is considered important to recognise the importance and impact of the Hunter Expressway. It would be appropriate to consider the inclusion of the Expressway and adjacent urban areas in the Hunter City rather than as part of the “hinterland”. This includes areas associated with the corridor of development from Maitland to Kurri Kurri as well as the Hunter Expressway and west to Branxton. It is requested that further discussions on this matter be held with the Department of Environment and Planning, Cessnock City Council and Maitland City Council prior to finalisation of the Plans.

The need to recognize the impact and role of the Hunter Expressway in supporting new development in the Hunter Region needs to be addressed in the final Plans. The Hunter Expressway has significant impacts on land use planning and future travel patterns in the Maitland LGA. This includes the Gillieston Heights urban release area currently being considered by the Department for a gateway determination.

Council supports the Hunter City concept in principle for regional planning purposes, however it is important to note and retain the historical identity of different cities and localities such as Maitland within Hunter City.

Council also considers that there is merit in renaming the Hunter City to another name such as the Hunter Metropolitan Area. While the area may generally be considered as one urban area, the latter term gives greater recognition of the different cities and localities that exist within the Hunter City as currently defined in the draft plans.

Identifying the need for the coordinated and adequate funding of infrastructure to support future growth through a new system of State Infrastructure Contributions is supported, however there is uncertainty as to whether this will result in the timely delivery of infrastructure for existing urban release areas where current shortfalls exist, including at Thornton North, Lochinvar, Farley and Gillieston Heights.

There is currently a shortfall in infrastructure provision which is not matching the existing high population growth in the City. The existing Council budget and developer contributions are not keeping pace with the infrastructure needs of a growing population in some areas. Council recently submitted an application for funding under the Local Infrastructure Growth Scheme to supplement infrastructure provision in Thornton North due to a shortfall in Section 94 contributions.

The recommendation to prepare an integrated housing strategy and urban development program for Hunter City is supported, however it is important that relevant councils are closely involved with this initiative.

Council would like to see a similar hierarchy of centres identified in the draft Hunter Regional and Hunter City Plans that was included in the 2006 Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. For example, this will provide the necessary support to ensure that Central Maitland remains the primary commercial centre in the Maitland LGA. It is not regarded as appropriate to have both Central Maitland and Green Hills/Metford identified at the same level in the regional hierarchy (ie regional centres).

The draft Plans identify there is significant flood risk for Central Maitland and that future potential residential growth is limited. The Council submission states that there needs to be continued support for future suitable residential development in Central Maitland, as previously identified in the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and Council's Central Maitland Structure Plan. New residential development appropriate to the flood risk and consistent with the Floodplain Development Manual is supported by Council. If additional flood mitigation infrastructure is required for Central Maitland, this should include consideration of potential flood evacuation options and be included as part of the proposed Maitland land use and infrastructure strategy.

The Council submission also notes that greater focus and detail needs to be given to environmental protection in the draft Plans, including recognition of local habitat and vegetation corridors.

Council would also like further information about the proposed management plan to be developed for an identified national pinch point at Beresfield and Woodberry where a number of transport infrastructure and environmental corridors are located in close proximity.

Council is supportive of the proposed governance arrangement for the Plans, but is seeking further detail about the proposed arrangements and the implications for local government involvement. It is understood that the final Plan will be overseen by a Coordinating and Monitoring Committee comprising representatives of the NSW Government agencies and councils across the Hunter region.

It is also understood that implementation will be the responsibility of the NSW Government, the 11 local councils and the associated Hunter Pilot Joint Organisation.

Further specific information on the roles that councils will play in the proposed governance and implementation arrangements is requested to be provided in the final Plan. It is requested that there is further consultation with councils prior to finalisation of governance arrangements for the Plans.

Implementation of the Plan will require adequate resourcing being available at both State and local levels to effectively implement the range of actions contained in the Plans. As well as providing funding for the provision of adequate infrastructure to support future development, funding is also required for the necessary studies and investigations identified in the Plans.

### **Background comments – growth in Maitland City Council area**

Maitland City Council area is located in a centrally strategic location in the Hunter Region. Maitland City has an annual growth rate of 2.1% with an estimated resident population at 75,170 (ABS est. resident population 2014). The Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy (MUSS) provides a broad direction for future urban growth in the Maitland LGA. This Strategy makes provision for on-going population growth in the City over the next 15-25 years. The Strategy nominates a medium growth rate of 2% per annum for the Maitland LGA, with the population at this rate estimated by the NSW Government to be 100,500 by 2031.

Strong population growth in the City as a result of continuing greenfield urban release area and urban infill development around existing centres are resulting in on-going development pressures across the City for both additional residential and employment lands. The main centres nominated for future growth and development include Central Maitland, East Maitland, Thornton and Lochinvar. There is also a significant expansion of the Green Hills shopping centre currently underway.

Recent development trends indicate that the proportion of infill development to greenfield development is increasing. While over 80% of current urban development occurring within the LGA is in greenfield developments, the MUSS aims to increase the amount of development in centres and urban infill as a proportion of total development to 25%. The average proportion of infill to greenfield development has been 17% over the last five years.

Development trends also indicate that the proportion of medium density to total development is also increasing. Approximately 19% of total development comprised medium density and dual occupancy developments in the period 2001 to 2015.

There is also a good supply of employment lands in the City, with the MUSS Annual Report identifying a total of 30+ years supply. In particular there is a large stock of employment land near the Rutherford airport. This land is well located with good potential links to both the New England Highway and the Hunter railway line. A State significant development project application has been recently lodged with the Department of Environment and Planning for an rail intermodal terminal facility and business park at Rutherford. This project if it proceeds could be a significant further catalyst to future economic development in the City.

Council is committed to facilitating local economic development and job creation opportunities within the LGA and is currently preparing an economic development strategy.

## DRAFT HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN

It is noted that the draft Hunter Regional plan has four overall goals:

- Grow Australia's next major city – Hunter City
- Grow the largest regional economy in Australia
- Protect and connect natural environments
- Support robust regional communities

The overall direction of the Hunter Regional Plan is supported. These actions include a focus on better co-ordination of planning with infrastructure provision across the region. Particular support is given for initiatives to reduce land-use conflicts between mining, urban and rural uses and to develop an integrated housing strategy for Hunter City.

Proposed actions to protect and enhance the environmental values of the region are also supported, including improving the access and quality of information and to identify priority investment within regional habitat corridors and preparation of local strategies to protect these corridors.

The concept of Hunter City for regional planning purposes is also broadly supported, however it is noted that further comments about the name "Hunter City", recognition of the different communities within Hunter City, as well as comments about the proposed boundary of the Hunter City, are outlined in greater detail below.

There are other initiatives that are also strongly supported, such as the initiative to establish a Hunter Urban Development Program which will monitor housing and employment land supply and delivery.

### Further specific comments about the draft Hunter Regional Plan include the following:

Action 1.1.1 of the Hunter Regional Plan, Principle 3: "Protect the environment and respond to climate change impacts" does not provide definitive environmental actions to meet the principle.

Mapping: Maitland's natural resources are not identified in either the Hunter City Plan or the Hunter Regional Plan including the SEPP 14 Woodberry Wetland and other important water bodies such as Wentworth Swamp, Tenambit Wetlands or the recognition of the length of the estuary extending to Oakhampton. There is no recognition of Council policy, the Greening Plan or Council's environmental mapping.

Previous regional plans have identified urban growth areas with limited recognition of the natural resources affected by the decisions and directed development values towards the environment at a local level. By noting an area of urban growth and predestined corridors it is assumed that the local environment is sacrificed to be cleared for development and causes unnecessary argument at the planning stage. With the exception of the Wallsend-Minmi Corridor, it is noted that the draft Hunter Regional Plan has not identified any potential future urban release areas. Further comments are made on this issue under the comments on the draft Plan for Growing Hunter City.

Figure 12 of the Hunter Regional Plan provides for “focus areas for sustaining regional habitat connectivity”. Further information is required on how the “focus area for conservation planning”, which includes Maitland, enhances habitat through “enhanced connectivity through delivery of urban and transport infrastructure”.

Direction 3.2 of the Hunter Regional Plan suggests that as the region grows, coastal areas such as Lake Macquarie, Hunter River Estuary, Port Stephens Estuary, Wallis Lake estuary and the Hunter’s adjacent marine waters will need to be protected. It is considered that specific actions to address this issue should be part of the plan now as the areas are already under threat. Action 3.2.2 makes reference to the Hunter Estuary Management Plan- this was 2009 not 2008.

Action 4.1.2 “Manage the supply of housing in rural areas to protect social, environmental and economic values” appears to refer to areas outside the “Hunter City” area. The Hunter City area also has rural areas which should also be recognised in the plans. Council is currently reviewing the 2005 Rural Lands Strategy.

In both the Hunter City Plan and the Hunter Regional Plan there appears to be a limited focus on protection and connection of natural areas for the Hunter City area, where as the environmental protection should be region wide and not isolated to certain areas.

Council considers that understanding of the Plans would benefit from the background studies and investigations that have been prepared to inform the Plans being made publically available. For example, the SGS Housing and Feasibility Studies that were undertaken in 2013 appear to contain some very useful information, however it is not clear whether this information was used in the preparation of the draft Plan.

The Hunter Regional Plan makes reference to the Hunter Regional Transport Plan. The Hunter Regional Plan provides an action for developing an infrastructure strategy, and this should relate to the state transport services and infrastructure strategies that may be in the Hunter Regional Transport Plan. The infrastructure strategy should examine how public transport services can be accommodated by new infrastructure.

## **Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City**

### **Overall comments**

Council supports the Hunter City concept in principle for regional planning purposes, however it is important to note and retain the historical identity of different cities and localities within Hunter City. For example, Maitland is a different City to other areas including Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens. It is understood that the Hunter City concept is separate to the concurrent processes associated with LGA amalgamations and boundary adjustments.

Further comments are also made about the proposed boundary including the “hinterland” concept which are outlined in more detail below. Council also considers that there is merit in renaming the Hunter City to a more appropriate name such as the Hunter Metropolitan Area.

The draft Plan notes that the Maitland- New England Highway Corridor District has enough supply in land release areas to meet projected demand for new urban development. While this is consistent with Council’s Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy 2015 Annual Report, which notes there is currently some 23 years supply of residential land in Maitland, it should be recognised that there are several planning proposals for additional urban release areas that have not been included in the draft Plan for Hunter City. This includes the Anambah URA planning proposal, which has a gateway determination, and Gillieston Heights South URA which has been recently forwarded to the Department seeking gateway determination.

The Gillieston Heights South URA is part of a larger planning proposal that has been lodged with Cessnock City Council by Hydro for a major industrial and residential development centred adjacent to the Hunter Expressway and the suburbs of Heddon Greta and Cliftleigh. Together these future URAs will support a major growth corridor with good linkages to both the Hunter Expressway, Maitland and Cessnock.

These planning proposals are likely to have a lead time to development and are expected to provide significant future land supply for housing over the next 5-10 years and beyond.

Whilst the Hunter Expressway has a primary function to provide for movement of intra-regional traffic including freight, the benefits and impetus for growth of the Expressway to both local and regional populations in both Maitland and Cessnock LGAs, as well as the Hunter region more generally, appear to have been under estimated in the draft Plan. The Expressway will continue to be a major impetus for growth in this corridor due to the major interchanges located at Heddon Greta, Buchanan Road, Hart Road and at Allandale/Lovedale Road. This growth pressure is already occurring and is reflected in recent growth trends within the existing Gillieston Heights URA.

The MUSS 2015 Annual Report notes that in 2015 the Gillieston Heights urban release area was the fastest growing urban release area in the City with 334 additional people settling in this area. As at November 2015, 50% of the URA has been developed for residential purposes with 119 hectares available for development. In relation to the rate of development, it is the second fastest urban release area in the City after Thornton North.

It is considered there would be merit in inclusion of the Hunter Expressway and associated adjoining areas in the Hunter City area, in order for regional planning to be undertaken in a comprehensive and holistic way. It is requested that further discussions on this matter be held with the Department of Environment and Planning, Cessnock City Council and Maitland City Council prior to finalisation of the Plans.

Concern is also expressed with the following statement:

“Any consideration of further development that relies on using the Hunter Expressway as access will not be supported if it impacts on this primary purpose.” (P. 37) This appears to potentially conflict with the later statement:

“Employment land in locations where industries can benefit from access to resources as well as national transport infrastructure. This will also recognise broader opportunities to deliver strategic employment locations along the Hunter Expressway.” (P. 38)

It is clear with current and planned development and planning proposals approved or under consideration within both Maitland and Cessnock Council areas, particularly developments using the Kurri interchange, future employment and residential development in the region will benefit significantly from having good access to the Hunter Expressway.

It should also be noted that Council has also received other planning proposals at Mt Vincent Road at East Maitland and at Bolwarra Heights. This is in addition to two planning proposals for urban extension sites Council is currently considering at Morpeth. The Mt Vincent Road proposals are currently being assessed by an independent planner on behalf of Council. Future development at Mt Vincent Road will, if approved, also likely result in additional traffic on the Hunter Expressway at the Buchanan Road interchange.

Council welcomes the coordination of a regional cycleway plan. (Ref. DRAFT PLAN FOR GROWING HUNTER CITY – Page 15 – DIRECTION 1.3 Enhance City-wide transport).

The Hunter Regional Plan should aim to improve passenger transport access and services on the existing rail network. This should include new stations, new lifts, and new interchanges for connecting bus services and park and ride facilities.

New urban growth areas and the proposed new Maitland hospital within Hunter City are in close proximity to the existing rail network. The existing rail network, which provides good coverage within the Maitland local government area, presents opportunities to improve passenger transport services, and reduce dependency on private vehicle transport.

Higher housing density development around existing rail interchanges will make public transport more sustainable, housing more affordable, reduce carbon emissions by less vehicle traffic, and improve passive surveillance of usage of such transport facilities. Lower density housing development in outer urban areas, on the other hand, may be unnecessarily increasing the cost of transport and utilities infrastructure.

Ref. DRAFT PLAN FOR GROWING HUNTER CITY – Page 13 – ACTION 1.2.2 Investigate new land release areas to deliver housing in the longer term

Specific comments are made below about particular directions and actions within the Hunter City Plan that relate to the Maitland – New England Highway Corridor District:

#### **Direction 5.1 Sequence urban growth**

##### **Action 5.1.1 Develop a land use and infrastructure strategy for Maitland to coordinate the planning and delivery of State and local infrastructure**

This action to develop a land use and infrastructure strategy is strongly supported and is a high priority for Maitland, as it is across the entire Hunter region. In particular the uncertainties and inequities across localities regarding the draft State Infrastructure Charges (SIC) and other State

infrastructure programs such as Housing Acceleration Fund and Local Infrastructure Growth Scheme (LIGS) needs to be addressed as a matter of priority.

The Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City' (PGHC) is a sub-plan of the Hunter Regional Plan and clearly identifies the Maitland-New England Highway Corridor District as being critical to the delivery of housing supply over the next 20 years. The PGHC also recognises the importance of ensuring that high priority is given to the provision of essential infrastructure to support housing growth in this area:

It is noted that the draft Plan states that the NSW Government will work with infrastructure providers and councils to:

- prioritise infrastructure delivery based on land use and infrastructure strategies for growth areas, starting with the Inner West and Maitland-New England Highway Corridor Districts . . .

. . . The NSW Government will develop land use and infrastructure strategies to better integrate land use planning and development activity with infrastructure needs (see Direction 5.1). In response to these plans, the NSW Government will prioritise infrastructure delivery in the Inner West and Maitland-New England Highway Corridor Districts, which contain the City's largest supply of new release areas and which in recent years have consistently achieved some of the highest growth rates in regional NSW. These districts have sufficient housing lands to meet the projected regional population growth in the City beyond the life of the draft Plan . . .

. . . The NSW Government will investigate special infrastructure contributions currently applying to the Lower Hunter, which spans the Inner West and Maitland-New England Highway Corridor Districts. This will occur as part of a series of operational improvements that support infrastructure funding and delivery. The special infrastructure contributions will replace the existing satisfactory arrangements and voluntary planning agreements currently being applied. The NSW Government will work with infrastructure providers and councils to:

- review a special infrastructure contribution for the Inner West and Maitland-New England Highway Corridor Districts.

### **Comments on Action 5.1.1**

While the recognition being given to the importance of infrastructure provision to the Maitland – New England Highway Corridor District under the PGHC is a positive step, the main issue is whether the Department's timeframe in developing and implementing a new special infrastructure contributions framework will be adequate to address timely infrastructure provision for a number of URA's that are already developing – eg. Thornton North, Lochinvar, Farley and Gillieston Heights.

The strategy states that “. . . the NSW Government will work with Maitland City Council to develop a growth area framework . . .” that will include a range of key initiatives including infrastructure sequencing. It is important that the NSW Government commit the resources that are necessary to properly and efficiently develop a revised state or regional infrastructure contributions framework and also to commit to an appropriate programme for this to occur.



Any revised state or regional infrastructure framework should also consider how it might apply to a URA that is substantially developed such as Thornton North (noting that some developers have entered into WIK agreements with Council and VPA's with the State Government) to ensure fairness and equity across all stakeholders.

The shortfall in infrastructure provision and delivery has been a key reason for development being delayed in a number of urban release areas in Maitland. The proposal to prepare an Infrastructure Sequencing Plan is supported. In particular the action to prepare a land use and infrastructure strategy for Maitland that includes a growth area framework is noted and welcomed.

For example, recently Council has made an application to the New South Wales government's Local Infrastructure Growth Scheme (LIGS) for funding under this scheme to address the shortfall in income under the Thornton North Section 94 Plan resulting from the imposition in 2010 of the NSW governments cap on per lot infrastructure contributions. LIGS funding addresses the gap between the maximum contribution that councils can charge developers and what it actually costs councils to deliver essential public infrastructure such as roads, stormwater facilities and public open space.

The shortfall in funding has impacted on all items in the Thornton North Section 94 Plan, with the most significant impact being on road and traffic facilities. For example the Section 94 Plan includes funding for the upgrade of Raymond Terrace Road. This was done as an interim solution as it is the only State road in the Lower Hunter that is funded through Section 94 contributions.

The amount of funding to be sought, however, this is subject to IPART's current review of the Thornton North Section 94 Plan. As demonstrated in the LIGS submission, there is simply not the funding capacity within the plan to fund the items listed in the works schedule to the Thornton North Section 94 Plan.

- The Thornton North Section 94 Contributions Plan was adopted by Council in February 2008 with a per lot contribution of \$31,560 (including contributions towards City Wide facilities in accordance with the Maitland City Wide Section 94 Contributions Plan 2006).
- This plan is currently the most expensive s94 plan in the Lower Hunter impacting on the key issues of development cost and housing affordability.
- The contribution towards Road and Traffic Facilities alone in the original plan was \$19,263.
- A Ministerial Direction was issued in 2010 requiring that Council must not impose a condition of consent under s94 requiring the payment of contributions exceeding \$30,000 per residential lot in the Thornton North Release Area.

In addition to the cap imposed on the Section 94 Plan, since 2011 there has been ongoing uncertainty about finalisation of the draft Lower Hunter Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) and whether items such as Raymond Terrace Road would be included. In addition private developers at Thornton North have recently made application for assistance under the Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF) for funding assistance for the Raymond Terrace Road/Government Road intersection. Council is not aware of the outcome of this application at this stage.

The RMS was successful in 2014 in obtaining HAF funding for the construction of the eastern interchange within the Lochinvar URA, however this project is still in the planning phase and further delays may impact on future development approvals and housing delivery at Lochinvar.

## **Direction 5.2 Grow centres and communities within the district**

It is noted that the draft Plan aims to support the growth and expansion of centres in East Maitland including Green Hills and the proposed hospital at Metford. Council supports the objective to encourage the growth and expansion of existing centres and increase the delivery of housing, commercial and retail services that are provided to meet the needs of a growing population. This is consistent with Council's Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy which identifies the centres of Central Maitland, East Maitland, Thornton and Rutherford being a focus for future infill development. This includes higher density development that offers a greater range of housing types and sizes.

It is however noted that the current Lower Hunter Regional Strategy had a defined centre hierarchy including Newcastle Regional City, six major regional centres including Central Maitland and a number of town centres including East Maitland, Thornton, Rutherford and Lochinvar. Green Hills is identified as a stand-alone shopping centre. This hierarchy supports the centre hierarchy that is identified in the Maitland Activity Centres and Employment Clusters Strategy (2010). Council's Strategy identifies Central Maitland as a major regional centre and Greenhills as a specialised retail precinct.

Council would like to see a similar hierarchy of centres identified in the draft Hunter Regional and Hunter City Plans. For example, this will provide the necessary support to ensure that Central Maitland remains the primary commercial centre in the Maitland LGA. It is not regarded as appropriate to have both Central Maitland and Green Hills/Metford identified at the same level in the regional hierarchy (ie regional centres).

It is also noted that the Strategy advocates larger-scale infill and urban renewal near railway stations and traditional main streets. As a follow up action to the Affordable and Adaptable Housing Action Plan completed by Council in 2013, Council is currently undertaking a review of lot sizes within its residential zones, as well as potentially investigating those areas of the City where it may be more appropriate to introduce an R3 Medium Density or R2 Low Density Residential zone. This will provide greater direction and certainty as to where different housing types, including medium density housing, are located.

### **Action 5.2.1 Investigate opportunities for growth in Central Maitland**

It is noted that the NSW Government will work with Council to develop strategies to support and reinforce the civic, economic and administrative role of Central Maitland. The draft Plan also notes that further potential residential growth within Central Maitland is limited due to extensive flood risks. This is in strong contrast with the existing Lower Hunter Regional Strategy 2006, which nominated a target of 3,200 jobs and 1,300 dwellings for the Major Regional Centre of Central Maitland.

While the flood risk in Central Maitland and Lorn is acknowledged and the future dwelling targets may need to be reviewed, Central Maitland has been zoned to support new residential and mixed-use development, including both R1 General Residential and B4 Mixed Use zones. Council's existing policy framework is to encourage appropriate new commercial, mixed use and residential development in Central Maitland, supported by the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and Central Maitland Structure Plan.

Significant investment in public infrastructure is also occurring to encourage and support both new commercial and residential development. Council is supportive of new residential development that addresses the flood risk appropriately. New development will also be more resilient to flooding than existing development that was constructed prior to the NSW Floodplain Development Manual providing a strong policy approach for addressing flood risk. Council has recently adopted updated DCP controls for flooding which ensures that sound construction materials are utilised and maintains the policy position that all habitable uses are located above the flood planning level.

It is therefore considered that the Hunter City Plan needs to recognise the potential for future residential growth in Central Maitland. Whilst acknowledging the flood risk, new residential development is a central component of the revitalisation of Central Maitland as a major regional centre.

In relation to future infrastructure provision for Central Maitland, the Hunter River Flood Risk Management Study and Plan that has been recently adopted by Council, identifies that improving the flood evacuation capability for existing and future residents in Central Maitland and Lorn is an important priority. The Study and Plan identifies that a high level evacuation route should be constructed as a priority, with a feasibility study of priority options to be undertaken as a first step. At the same time the Study and Plan identifies that suitable new urban development that addresses the flood risk should be supported in Central Maitland, as new development is generally more resilient to flood risk than older existing development.

Council has also recently received approval to access funds under the 2015/16 Floodplain Management Program Voluntary House Raising scheme. This will provide financial support to eligible homeowners in low hazard flood prone areas to assist them raise their houses and therefore make them more resilient to future flood risk. This program is part of a range of measures to address flood risk that includes flood mitigation and improvements in flood awareness and more effective flood evacuation. Houses that may potentially benefit from the scheme are located in East Maitland, Central Maitland, Telarah and Lochinvar.

Council is also seeking funding for the following projects under the 2016/17 Floodplain Management Program:

- Flood Study for Wallis, Fishery, and Swamp Creeks.
- Flood Study for Lochinvar Creek.

Council previously applied for funding under the 2015/16 Floodplain Management Program to undertake the feasibility study for a high level evacuation route for Central Maitland and Lorn, however this project was not successful in attracting funding. Council's position remains however that this project is a high priority if the flood risk for Central Maitland and surrounding areas is to be

satisfactorily addressed. As well as affecting existing communities in Maitland, including Central Maitland, Lorn and Gillieston Heights, flooding events can have a major disruptive impact on the National and regional road network, including the New England Highway and Cessnock Road. The New England Highway was cut in 2007 and 2015, while Testers Hollow on Cessnock Road is also flooded on a regular basis, including in 2007, 2013, 2015 and most recently in January 2016.

Assistance to better flood-proof the regional road network around Central Maitland needs to be given a high priority for infrastructure funding. In particular the upgrading of Testers Hollow is a critical priority for the region due to the growing population and development pressures and it being an important access route from Maitland to the Hunter Expressway.

Council continues to have discussions with the Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) on this matter, as the regional road network, including Cessnock Road and the Long Bridge, is the responsibility of the RMS.

It is noted that the draft Plan recognises this need for flood protection with the following statement: "Future investment in flood mitigation may be required to adequately protect lives, livelihoods and infrastructure.....new housing construction will be accompanied by flood mitigation infrastructure where needed." (P.37)

Council considers that if additional flood mitigation infrastructure is required for Central Maitland and nearby communities, this should also include consideration of possible flood evacuation routes and be considered as part of the proposed Maitland land use and infrastructure strategy.

#### **Action 5.2.2 Develop a health precinct in Metford**

This action is strongly supported. Council will continue to work with NSW Health and relevant agencies to ensure that a future hospital is served by appropriate supporting infrastructure and particularly improved public transport links to the health precinct from nearby railway stations and retail centres.

Council requests more detail including anticipated timing around delivery of the precinct and associated public infrastructure upgrades.

#### **Direction 6.1 Address Hunter's national pinch point to strengthen habitat connectivity and transport efficiency**

##### **Action 6.1.1 Develop a framework to balance competing interests and deliver conservation, transport and land use planning objectives.**

The Plan identifies a pinch point in the eastern side of the LGA where the M1 Pacific Highway, M15 Hunter Expressway, New England Highway, Main Northern Railway Line, North coast Rail Line and the Hunter Valley Coal Chain come together.

Council strongly supports this action in principle, however notes that little detail is provided in the draft Plan around the achievement of this action. It is noted that the NSW Government will work in partnership with councils and the community to develop an integrated management plan for the area that reflects a balanced approach to environmental, transport and economic issues. Council

questions what status the management plan will have in the planning legislation framework (ie will it be an advisory document only?)

The Hunter City Plan recognises preferred habitat corridors should be retained, and priorities for investing in conservation to sustain habitat connectivity. This needs to be clarified however that it recognises the need for conservation of habitat where it is available and not just government directed corridors from key regional associated plans. There is a need for recognition of threatened species in urban areas in remnant vegetation and the plan should provide direction on creation of “stepping stone” corridors rather than linear.

Protection of the environment needs to be recognised across the entire region and not suggest enhancing one area at the expense of another, as this could lead to loss of local communities of threatened species and potentially drive some species closer to urban areas causing stressful impacts to both the fauna and humans. There needs to be further consultation with councils on this matter. Maitland City Council is currently in the process of reviewing its Greening Plan.

From a transport perspective, the proposed M1 extension to Raymond Terrace is of interest to Maitland City Council as it is a key gateway to Maitland City. The half-interchanges at Black Hill and Tarro of this M1 Motorway extension will service significant traffic volumes to and from Maitland City.

In addition many intra-regional trips to and from Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Port Stephens travel through this section of the Pacific Highway.

Council recently provided comments on the layout of the proposed M1 extension to Raymond Terrace, which noted that the proposed layout and design, combined with the absence of a northwards-bound turn to the M1 motorway from the Hunter expressway, would not alleviate the impact of growth in freight traffic in this area to the extent that it could. This is due to the growth in local freight and general traffic in the area, as well as the need for regional traffic on the Hunter expressway that wishes to travel north-bound on the M1 to have to use John Renshaw Drive and therefore will continue to contribute to local traffic flows.

A copy of the Council’s submission on the proposed M1 extension is attached for information.

Suitable connections need to be considered between the M1 Pacific Motorway Extension to Raymond Terrace and the Thornton/Beresfield industrial land area. The Thornton/Ashtonfield Preliminary Investigation Area (as identified in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy) adjoining the existing Beresfield industrial lands may also be a consideration for future industry.

The Department of Planning & Environment’s action to develop a land use and infrastructure strategy should include:

- a freight strategy component that addresses a network of industrial centres,
- the need for a freight hub,
- the need for regional intermodal terminals,
- coordinate with planning the new Freight corridor, and

- consideration of environmental impacts

Council is aware that the Regional Intermodal Taskforce was recently formed by the NSW Government 'to assess the fitness for purpose, financial viability and sustainability of existing and planned logistics intermodal terminals in Regional NSW' will assist with understanding the area need for these facilities. The taskforce could provide planning information to a freight component of the Hunter Regional Plan/ Hunter City Plan. Other environmental factors would include: the existing rail network/ planned freight corridor, existing environmental constraints, and planned urban growth areas/ investigation areas.

This would also assist in planning infrastructure suitable for the transport logistics industry.

### **Mapping comments**

It is also considered that there is a need to improve the mapping of the national "pinch point" shown on P. 41 for Councils and other parties to better understand the area under investigation for improvements.

Comments are also made on the Maitland – New England Highway Corridor District map (P. 36). The Anambah Road and two other urban release areas at Anambah are not shown on the map and should be included. River Road Windella is shown on the map as urban release area, however this is not the case.

### **Governance arrangements**

Council supports the formation of the Hunter Regional Plan Coordination and Monitoring Committee. It is understood that this will be the primary mechanism by which the Plan will be implemented. Figure 3 in the draft Hunter Regional Plan outlines the structure of the Committee comprising the following membership:

- Chair NSW Department of Planning and Environment
- Councils (One from each Council)
- Office of Environment and Heritage
- Roads and Maritime Services
- Infrastructure NSW
- Department of Industry
- Transport for NSW
- Department of Premier and Cabinet

This Committee should ensure regional priorities are set, new infrastructure and services are considered for urban growth areas at the same time, and the integration of land use and transport.

Clarification and further details of local government representation on the Committee is requested. Figure 3 in the draft Hunter Regional Plan also refers to the Committee reporting to the Hunter

Regional Leadership Group on progress of the Plans. More details of membership and role of this Group is requested.

More information is also requested on the role that the Hunter Region Organisation of Councils and Hunter Pilot Joint Organisation will also be in relation to the Coordination and Monitoring Committee.

### **Plan implementation**

Implementation of the Plan will require adequate resourcing being available at both State and local levels to effectively implement the range of actions contained in the Plans. As well as providing funding for the provision of adequate infrastructure to support future development, funding is also required for the necessary studies and investigations identified in the Plans.

Initiatives such as the preparation of an integrated housing strategy for the Hunter City are strongly supported (Action 1.2.3), however this will require adequate resources to address effectively. It is not clear whether there will be one housing strategy prepared for the proposed Hunter City, or whether each council prepares a strategy which is potentially included as part of Council's strategic plan.

The preparation of an urban development program for Hunter City is also strongly supported, with the input of each Council being a key component of development of the Strategy. It is however crucial that the urban development program is supported by an infrastructure program that identifies clear funding sources and a timetable for its delivery

There are a large number of initiatives contained in the Plans. These initiatives need to be prioritised, costed and clear responsibilities, timelines and performance indicators established for their implementation. If it anticipated that where councils are responsible for implementation of some of the actions, then additional sources of support and funding will be required for local government to actively participate in the implementation of the Plan.