

22 March 2016

The General Manager
Hunter and Central Coast
NSW Planning and Environment
PO Box 1226
Newcastle NSW 2300



Dear Sir/Madam,

Draft Hunter Regional Plan and Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City

Urbis acts on behalf of the Stony Pinch Consortium (the Consortium) who own approximately 3,600ha of land at Ashtonfield located partly within the Maitland and Cessnock local government areas. This submission is made on behalf of the Consortium to the public exhibition of the Draft Hunter Regional Plan (HRP) and Draft Plan for Growing Hunter City (GHC).

Summary of submission

In summary, we submit as follows:

- We support the approach of the HRP and GHC documents in providing a holistic and structured approach to the planning and development of the region, with a strong emphasis on improving the integration of urban development with services and infrastructure.
- We support the four key goals articulated in the HRP being to (i) *grow Australia's next major city*, (ii) *grow the largest regional economy in Australia*, (iii) *protect and connect natural environments*, and (iv) *support robust regional communities*.
- We support the overarching direction of the HRP to guide future population growth in the region summarised as follows: *'Hunter City's population is concentrated in an urban area with access to a range of housing choices, employment, amenities and services. Development within the existing urban footprint supports connected communities. Infill development and new land release will support the efficient use of land and an efficient transportation system'*.
- We acknowledge the approach adopted in the GHC of providing a 20 year planning framework for the 'city' and in directing future housing development to areas *'released or identified as preferred location for the future development of new homes in line with previous regional strategies'*.
- We seek **inclusion** in the GHC of reference to the potential for consideration of areas for urban development which are able to demonstrate connectivity and integration with existing urban development notwithstanding not being currently 'identified' or 'released' for urban development.
- We seek **specific recognition** in the GHC to Stony Pinch as a 'preferred location' for future development, reflecting both the strategic attributes of the site and the inclusion of the property as an 'investigation area' in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy.
- We request review of the statement in the GHC regarding the Maitland – New England Highway Corridor (in which Stony Pinch is located) that, *'The district has enough supply in land release areas to meet projected demand for new urban development. To maximise the efficient use of infrastructure and sufficient housing choice, new land releases will be sequenced for development'*

in a pipeline of growth sites that meet short, medium and long term demand.' Specifically, we seek **inclusion** of areas for urban development that are able to demonstrate connectivity and integration with existing urban development irrespective of whether they are categorised as currently 'released' for urban development.

Overall we request the strategic merits of Stony Pinch as a 'preferred location' for future development by recognised in the GHC.

Stony Pinch

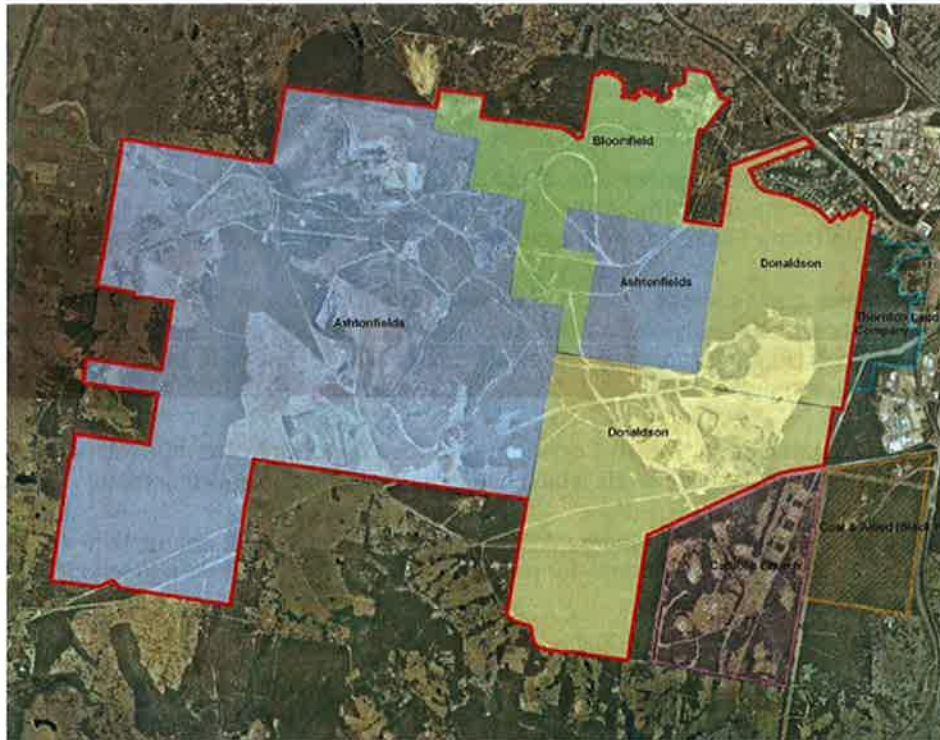
Stony Pinch is a 3,600ha landholding centrally located within the Lower Hunter Region. The site is located partly within both the Maitland and Cessnock Local Government Areas (LGA) at Four Mile Creek, with the eastern boundary abutting the Newcastle LGA boundary.

Regional location



Stony Pinch comprises three landowner groups; Donaldson Coal (a subsidiary company of Yancoal), Ashtonfield and The Bloomfield Group as shown in the plan below. These companies have been operating mining activities in some parts of the site for over 75 years. The landowners have long held agreements and leases so that they act cooperatively in utilising the mining infrastructure on the site to transport product coal to the Port of Newcastle for export. The cooperation agreement between the parties, entered into in 2008, created the Stony Pinch Consortium (the Consortium) which facilitates the landowners to act as a co-ordinated and single entity in the planning and development of Stony Pinch as a future post-mining development.

The Site



-  Stony Pinch
-  Ashtonfields
-  Bloomfield
-  Catholic Church
-  Coal & Allied (Black Hill)
-  Donaldson
-  Thornton Land Company

The site has had an extensive history of continuous mining for a long period. The mining operations produce coal mostly for international export through the Port of Newcastle, directly from a rail loop on the site. In recent times the coal mining operations on-site have evolved with the Donaldson open-cut mine closing recently, having exhausted its reserves. The Bloomfield open cut mine is nearing its closure as per its conditions of consent. The Abel and Tasman underground mine leases that extend south from John Renshaw Drive, are expected to continue for some time. The changes in the mining activity will result in a substantial reduction to the areas of the site required for mining.

Strategic importance of Stony Pinch

Key attributes contributing to the strategic importance of Stony Pinch are:

- **Direct connectivity to existing residential urban area** – the eastern and north-eastern boundary of the site is directly adjacent to existing residential areas, and create a logical extension of the existing urban area clustered along the New England Highway. Stony Pinch would become a seamless extension to the existing urban development pattern in the 'Eastern Sector' which, apart

from Thornton North, has limited potential for future housing supply due to environmental constraints and flooding.

- **Connected existing infrastructure** – existing residential street patterns can be extended onto the site in the initial stages, to limit infrastructure upgrades and maximise opportunity to use existing infrastructure.
- **Employment growth** – approximately 1,067ha of zoned and future planned employment lands about the eastern side of the Stony Pinch site. These lands, coupled with the opportunity for employment land on Stony Pinch, create a significant employment hub for the region.
- **Proximity to centres and services** – situated between Maitland (8km north-west) and Newcastle CBD (23km south-east), and unrivalled access to major roads including the F3 Freeway, New England Highway and Hunter Expressway, provide connectivity of the lands with regional level centres, infrastructure and services.
- **Connected to Watagan Conservation Corridor** – provides opportunity for redevelopment planning to incorporate biodiversity lands which can extend the Watagan Conservation Corridor.
- **Rail Spur** – the existing rail spur servicing mining operations onsite which connects to the Hunter Rail Line provides a long-term opportunity for passenger rail to service future residential development on the Stony Pinch site.
- **Medium to Long Term Residential Land Supply** – The site is a single land holding that provides certainty of a medium to long term delivery pipeline of residential land.

The combination of these attributes position Stony Pinch to have a long term redevelopment potential to support up to **10,300 dwellings**, and 1,500 jobs while still delivering approximately **2,100ha** of biodiversity conservation lands. The scale of development potential of Stony Pinch would deliver significant positive regional implications on housing supply and affordability, which are key local and state planning objectives.

Extensive submissions have been made to the Department of Planning and Maitland and Cessnock Councils providing details of the attributes of the site and identifying potential future urban development opportunities as mining operations phase out. Detailed site masterplanning has been conducted, demonstrating the ability for land release to occur as an extension and integrated with existing urban development.

The strategic attributes and importance of Stony Pinch have been reflected in the identification of the site for investigation to support 'future employment lands' in the previous Lower Hunter Regional Strategy.

Maitland Council recognises the strategic attributes of Stony Pinch for potential future urban development through inclusion of the site as a 'preliminary investigation area' in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy 2012. The MUSS states the following:

'Stony Pinch Preliminary Investigation Area

A wider area surrounding the existing Thornton/Ashtonfield PIA has been identified for future consideration pending the outcomes of the LHRs review and site specific studies. Any future land use proposed for this general area would need to address the existing and ongoing mining and mining related activities in the immediate locality. Significant biodiversity constraints are also present. The abovementioned issues for the Thornton/Ashtonfield investigation area are relevant to the Stony Pinch PIA.'

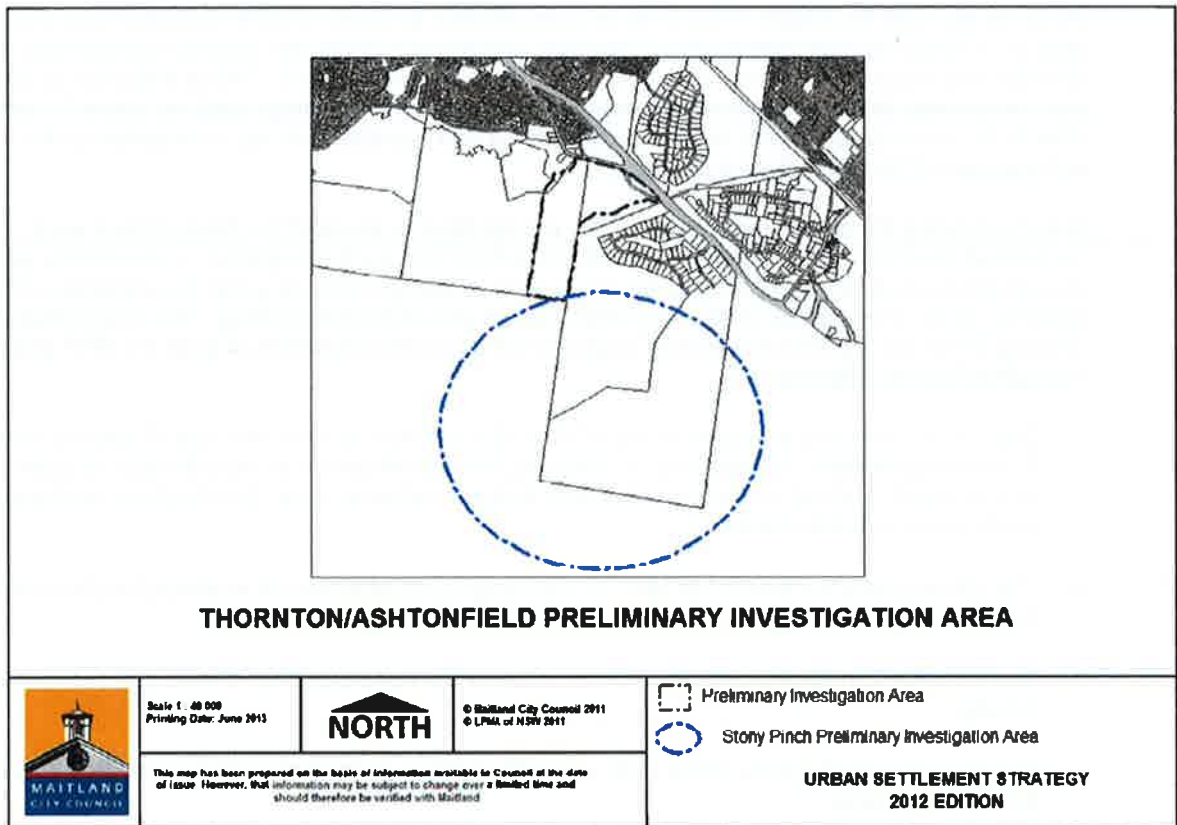


Figure 20: Thornton/Ashtonfield Preliminary Investigation Area.

Submission details

The Consortium supports the approach of the HRP and GHC documents in providing a holistic and structured approach to the planning and development of the region, with a strong emphasis on improving the integration of urban development with services and infrastructure. In addition, we support the four key goals articulated in the HRP being to (i) *grow Australia's next major city*, (ii) *grow the largest regional economy in Australia*, (iii) *protect and connect natural environments*, and (iv) *support robust regional communities*.

The Consortium also supports the overarching direction of the HRP to guide future population growth in the region summarised as follows: *'Hunter City's population is concentrated in an urban area with access to a range of housing choices, employment, amenities and services. Development within the existing urban footprint supports connected communities. Infill development and new land release will support the efficient use of land and an efficient transportation system'*.

The Consortium acknowledges the approach adopted in the GHC of providing a 20 year planning framework for the 'city' and in directing future housing development to areas *'released or identified as preferred location for the future development of new homes in line with previous regional strategies'*.

However **we seek inclusion** in the GHC of consideration of areas for urban development which are able to demonstrate connectivity and integration with existing urban development irrespective of whether they have been 'identified' or 'released' for urban development. This is important to ensure that the strategy does not preclude the potential to consider landholdings such as Stony Pinch that are able to demonstrate the merits of long term planning and development that contributes to the achievement of the goals for the region.

Notwithstanding the above, we seek **specific recognition in the GHC to Stony Pinch as a 'preferred location'** for future development. We submit that such recognition is appropriate given the evident strategic attributes of the site for future urban development and given the inclusion of the property as an 'investigation area' in the Maitland Urban Settlement Strategy. We submit that inclusion of Stony Pinch as a 'preferred location' supports the goals and objectives of both the HRP and GHC as highlighted by the following:

- The site satisfies key principles of the HRP of (i) supporting the efficient use of land benefitting from strong transport connections, (ii) focusing new development as an extension of exiting urban development, and (iii) achieving a desirable balance between urban development and retention of ecologically valuable areas.
- The site supports the aim of the HRP of encouraging development at strategic locations benefitting from existing infrastructure.
- The site offers an exceptional opportunity to foster the transformation of land use post-mining activity.
- The site respects the aims of the HRP of avoiding urban encroachment into identified agricultural and resource land.
- The site supports the desired investment in regional habitat corridors and participating in private conservation schemes, including offsetting large areas of ecologically endangered communities within the site.

We request review of the statement in the GHC regarding the Maitland – New England Highway Corridor (in which Stony Pinch is located) that, *'The district has enough supply in land release areas to meet projected demand for new urban development. To maximise the efficient use of infrastructure and sufficient housing choice, new land releases will be sequenced for development in a pipeline of growth sites that meet short, medium and long term demand.'* (Page 38)

Specifically, we seek inclusion of consideration of additional areas for urban development that are able to demonstrate connectivity and integration with existing urban development notwithstanding not being currently 'released' for urban development.

To give this effect, we propose inclusion in the GHC of the following:

Projected demand for new urban development in the district will be supplied by sites which are able to demonstrate connectivity and integration with existing urban development. These sites may be in land release areas or may be yet to be released. To maximise the efficient use of infrastructure and sufficient housing choice, new land releases will be sequenced for development in a pipeline of growth sites that meet short, medium and long term demand.

Sites such as Stony Pinch satisfy these criteria and should be considered for development in sequence, having regard to their unique attributes.

Summary

We request an opportunity to meet with the Department in support of this submission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'John Wynne', is positioned above the printed name.

**John Wynne
Managing Partner**

