



Our Ref:BS:KL:37915

9 February 2016

The General Manager
Hunter & Central Coast
Department of Planning and Environment
PO Box 1226
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

SUBMISSION ON DRAFT HUNTER REGION PLAN - HOLMES - BUCHANAN

PRÉCIS

The key message in this submission is that Kurri Kurri and immediate surrounds should be included in Hunter City and should be clearly recognised as providing for future growth in both housing and employment land.

Kurri Kurri is well located with superior access to facilities and services and employment opportunities, relative to other new release areas that have been included within Hunter City.

There is a strategic land parcel at Buchanan that can support further development of Kurri Kurri as a regional community and also provide accessible housing for the broader Hunter Region with ready access to the strong employment markets in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

We believe the Buchanan site is important to the region and the Regional Plan should not prevent Council from considering the site as part of its work on the Cessnock City Wide Settlement Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

We take this opportunity to congratulate the NSW Government for releasing the Draft Hunter Regional Growth Plan for consultation and in particular for the recognition given to the great city of Newcastle as a regional centre. We strongly support the ongoing development of the region and actions that support its continued growth.

We have been engaged by the Holmes Family to prepare a submission to the Draft Hunter Regional Plan. The Holmes Family own land that is strategically located at Buchanan (near Kurri Kurri) immediately south of the John Renshaw Drive interchange on the Hunter Expressway. This submission therefore focuses on the opportunities this site provides in the context of the draft Hunter Region Plan and the draft Plan for Growing Hunter City. We appreciate that The Department took the time to meet with us and Cessnock Council on 18 January 2016 in relation to the Buchanan site.

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The Buchanan site comprises 550 hectares of land with sufficient unconstrained lands representing about 50% of the site, which could potentially provide some 3500 residential lots, while preserving the remainder of the land for recreation and conservation purposes. Whilst we have determined that the site is suitable for residential purposes it may also be suitable for a combination of residential and employment uses.

We have lodged a planning proposal for the Buchanan site with Cessnock City Council and will work with Council and the Department to determine the most appropriate outcome as Council progresses with its review of the Cessnock Settlement Strategy.

While accepting the role of Council's in developing their settlement strategies; the need for regional strategic planning should not be understated and we are of the view that the Buchanan site should be considered in the broader regional context and not only as part of Cessnock City Council land use strategy.

DISCUSSION

The omission of Kurri Kurri from "Hunter City" we find surprising, given its central location within the lower Hunter and the extent to which the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy 2006 relied upon this area to provide future housing.

The plan included as **Appendix A** shows the existing development and other known residential and employment lands at a broader scale. The location of the Buchanan site and our suggested alternate boundary for Hunter City are also shown.

Despite physical constraints relating to flooding and conservation there are further opportunities around Kurri Kurri to strengthen the emphasis on this area for future growth. More particularly given its location relative to other centres the area should be included within the Hunter City boundary.

Kurri Kurri is recognised as a town centre in the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy 2006.

The travel distance from Lochinvar to the western end of the Newcastle Link Road at Cameron Park is 36.3 km and the travel time is 23 minutes, compared to 19.4 km and 14 minutes from Kurri Kurri and yet Kurri Kurri is excluded from the area defined as Hunter City. Buchanan is even closer to Newcastle being 13.8 km and 10 minutes from the end of the Newcastle Link Road.

While the Regional Plan acknowledges that there is an area around Hunter City where growth and change are significantly influenced by activities within the metropolitan area, the draft Hunter Regional Plan does not acknowledge the significant role that Kurri Kurri and surrounding areas can play in the future of the Hunter.

Kurri Kurri is centrally located and accessible to Maitland, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle as well as both the upper and lower Hunter. The accessibility of Kurri Kurri to the broader Hunter region in all directions means it has the potential to become an important district centre even more so than Cessnock which is located further west. Kurri Kurri enjoys a high level of access to services such as the TAFE, hospitals and schools as well as employment.

The following figure shows existing and proposed development around Kurri Kurri and the Buchanan Site. Employment land is shown purple and residential in pink. Low lying land north east of the town centre is also shown.

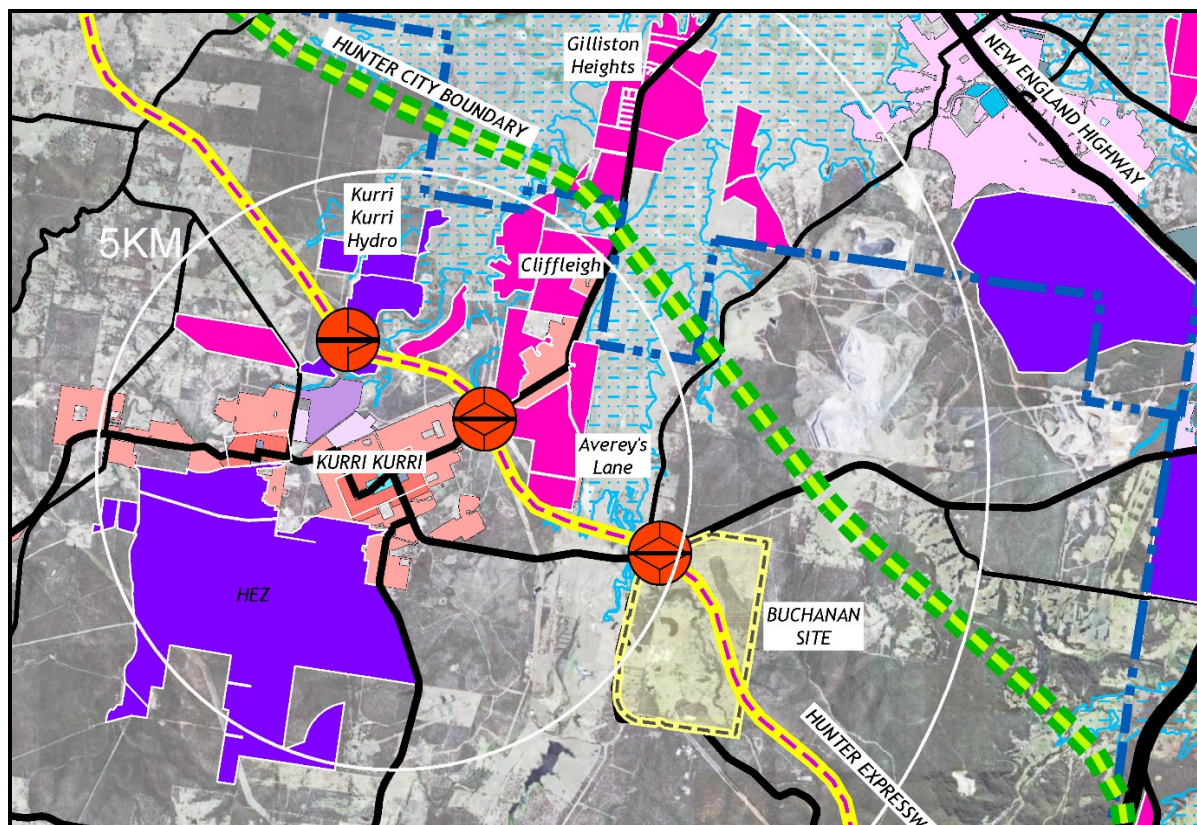


Figure 1: Kurri Kurri future development.

Kurri Kurri provides a superior level of services and accessibility when compared to other release areas identified in draft Hunter Regional Plan and should be included as part of Hunter City. For example it provides health services and will have reasonable access to the proposed hospital at Metford and even the John Hunter Hospital via the Hunter Expressway. One of the weaknesses identified in the Cessnock Settlement Strategy for the Kurri Kurri commercial centre was the “ability to provide more competitive shopping and function as an attractive neighbourhood shopping centre”. Increased local development will facilitate more competitive shopping by increasing demand consistent with Action 4.2.5 of the Regional Plan which aims to support retail growth.

The significance of Kurri Kurri as a centre will increase as new release areas and employment lands are developed. The accessibility of Kurri Kurri and surrounding area make it a desirable location for the future growth of the Hunter Region. The Buchanan Site can further strengthen the role of Kurri Kurri as a regional community.

Action 2.2.3 of the draft Regional Plan supports opportunities to grow industries within clusters including HEZ and notes that industries looking to expand can take advantage of the high level of connectivity provided by the Hunter Expressway and John Renshaw Drive. While the preferred use for the Buchanan Site is for residential development due to its high amenity and access to a range of existing employment lands with additional

growth capacity including HEZ and at Beresfield / Thornton, the land could also support some employment lands (particularly on the land east of the Hunter Expressway), supporting the principle of locating housing close to jobs.

Action 3.1.1 of the draft Regional Plan attempts to avoid, minimise and mitigate the impacts of development on significant environmental assets. Figure 12 is confusing with respect to the definition of environmental corridors. It is our understanding that the intention is to provide broad focus areas rather than specifically nominating conservation areas with defined boundaries.

The Buchanan site sits on the edge of the Watagan to Stockton green Corridor as mapped in the 2006 Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. The majority of the site is cleared land used for grazing and egg production. The submitted planning proposal identifies that only 50% of the site would be developed and any new LEP would be bio-certified. Development of the site will have minimal environmental impact and will utilise existing infrastructure while providing housing close to jobs in a location that will support Kurri Kurri as a town centre. The positive development attributes of the site outweigh any potential environmental benefits that could be derived from the site.

Action 4.1.1 of the draft Regional Plan notes that the NSW Government will work with council's to investigate demand for and opportunities to accommodate new housing growth in regional towns and villages, and investigate options to encourage a more diverse range of housing types, particularly in release areas. There are a number of contradictory statements within the draft document that relate to this action that need to be resolved.

The Case for Buchanan

The Draft Regional Growth Plan does not attempt to identify specific future development sites however it can be read as excluding sites such as Buchanan that are not part of Hunter City. Conversely there are statements that would support development of the site. The Department should recognise the strategic benefits of the site in the broader context of planning for the Hunter Region and the Regional Growth Plan should not limit Cessnock City Council's strategic considerations when reviewing the Cessnock Settlement Strategy.

Direction 1.1 identifies that providing better connections between the urban areas of Hunter City will improve productivity and help build the economic success of the region. There is no better example of this than the construction of the Hunter Expressway.

The draft Hunter City Plan while noting that the Hunter Expressway provides "unprecedented access between the Hunter Valley and Hunter City" states that consideration of further development that relies on the Hunter Expressway as access will not be supported if it impacts on this primary purpose as an inter region freight route.

The Buchanan site is located adjacent to the Buchanan Interchange. Logically this supports development of this site and use of this significant infrastructure investment. We acknowledge the argument to protect road infrastructure however suggest there is capacity in the road system to accommodate the growth anticipated within the

Cessnock LGA with capacity for further development around Kurri Kurri including the Buchanan site.

The RMS website states “The Hunter Expressway was designed to accommodate long term development and growth in the Hunter Region in the coming decades. (Refer to **Appendix C**)



Figure 2: Buchanan Interchange.

Traffic volumes on John Renshaw Drive west the Hunter Expressway are significantly less than when this was the primary traffic route between Cessnock and Newcastle. Traffic Volumes on George Booth Drive have also reduced since construction of the Hunter Expressway. George Booth Drive remains an alternate access route to Lake Macquarie. The majority of traffic generated from the site would be attracted towards facilities and services west of the Hunter Expressway. Buchanan Road also provides a route from the site to Maitland.

We do not believe that there are such extensive development opportunities in and around Kurri Kurri that would compromise the Hunter Expressway. Reference is made to the plan included as **Appendix B** and **Figure 1**. The majority of this area is either vegetated or flood prone which will limit further growth opportunities and therefore limit the impact

on the road system. Some growth should be supported. Certainly a number of presentations by government upon the opening of the Hunter Expressway gave this impression with comments such as “game changer”, “Regional Shaper” and “the need to leverage off this investment” being repeatedly mentioned.

Initial discussions with Cessnock City Council have confirmed the site as being a “strategic site” worthy of investigation. There are a number of existing residential release areas located between Kurri Kurri and Maitland along Main Road including Gillieston Heights, Cliftleigh, Avery’s Lane and Kurri Kurri Hydro lands that along with this site can strengthen the role of Kurri Kurri in the region.

This large land parcel at Buchanan comprising 550 hectares of which about 280 hectares is considered suitable for development enjoys the same benefits as other sites in and around Kurri Kurri but with the additional advantage of being located closer to Newcastle and employment land at Thornton Beresfield and within the Hunter Economic Zone.

We believe the high visual amenity of the site, the size of the site and the potential development yield would support local services including local shops, playing fields and a primary school that would be complimented by and support existing services and infrastructure provided in Kurri Kurri. The developable part of the land is predominantly held in a single ownership making the site attractive to large scale developers whilst ensuring a master planned and co-ordinated development outcome. The following aerial photograph and concept plan illustrates the sites development potential.



Figure 3: Aerial image of Buchanan Site.

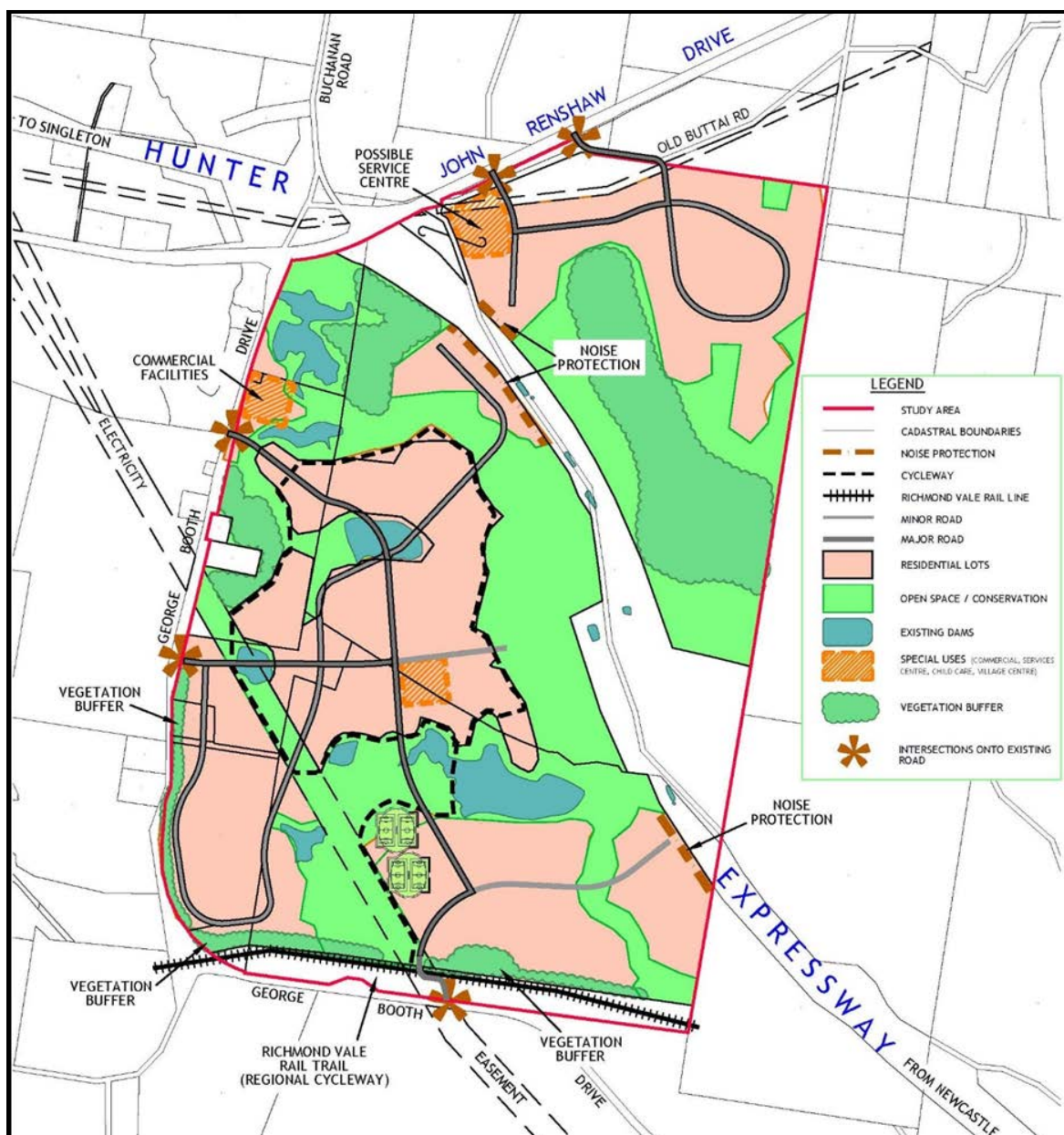


Figure 4: Buchanan Concept Plan.

Development of the site would be consistent with Goal 4 of the draft Regional Plan which is to support robust regional communities. The site would deliver housing opportunities (and potentially additional jobs) close to the regional community of Kurri Kurri but also relatively close to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. The Hunter Expressway and additional housing around Kurri Kurri would have the potential to stimulate the unrealised development potential of The Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) south west of Kurri Kurri.

The draft Regional Plan supports the growth of existing communities within the hinterland where it supports increased use of existing local facilities (pp79). The Kurri Kurri to Maitland or indeed the Cessnock to Maitland corridor warrants further discussion in the Regional Plan and in particular Kurri Kurri warrants inclusion in Hunter City.

The draft plan states that as Hunter City and Cessnock grow the hinterland will become an increasingly popular lifestyle destination. Notwithstanding the reference to hinterland growth Kurri Kurri should be included within Hunter City, the growth Plan supports the growth of existing communities within the hinterland where it supports increased use of existing local facilities. It is not unreasonable to consider the Buchanan site as part of the Kurri Kurri Regional community that will support growth of Kurri Kurri as a town centre, given that it is a similar distance from the centre of Kurri Kurri as the new release area of Cliftleigh.

Direction 1.2 of the Draft Plan for growing Hunter City states that a significant supply of new land has been released or identified as a preferred location for the future development of new homes to deliver around 42,400 new lots and that this when combined with infill development will be sufficient to meet projected housing demand over the life of the plan. The draft Regional Plan acknowledges the challenge to deliver this land supply for housing. Based on our experience and knowledge we question whether the projected yields will be achieved and indeed if all the identified land can be economically developed. The majority of new release areas are located on the extremities of the Hunter City Boundary and in locations further remote from jobs and services compared to the Buchanan Site. Are the new release areas in the places where people wish to live and to be able access jobs, facilities and services? The majority of jobs and tertiary education facilities are located within Newcastle and Lake Macquarie but most of the new land releases are located north and west of Maitland. Whilst this may be a sound strategy to deliver housing during a mining boom it is less relevant when most jobs are closer to Newcastle and Lake Macquarie.

There is a statement in Direction 1.2 of the draft Plan for Hunter City which is reinforced by Direction 5.1 that the district has enough land supply in land release areas to meet projected demand for new urban development and that significant residential commercial and industrial growth opportunities exist for the short medium and long term. Whilst these statements may be quantitatively correct, there is substantial doubt that there is sufficient land in locations, where people want to live with access to jobs and that can be economically developed. Kurri Kurri including the Buchanan Site has better housing attributes than other areas and is an appropriate location within the Hunter for encouraging housing growth.

We are concerned that draft Regional Plan does not recognise the future development potential of this strategic land holding. The Regional Plan should not preclude the ability to consider new land releases. At least the 2006 strategy had sustainability criteria to allow this to occur. If 117 Directions are proposed to require compliance with the plan it is critical that there be a process that allows the consideration of new opportunities.

The Buchanan site provides opportunities consistent with action 4.1.1 especially “to deliver “a more diverse range of housing types, particularly in new release areas, to provide a choice of housing”.

Action 4.2.1 of the draft regional Plan identifies the need to investigate options to integrate the delivery of housing and Infrastructure. Relative to other release areas the Buchanan Site has superior access to services. No new road infrastructure is required and we have

investigated opportunities for on-site sewer disposal which can be delivered without additional cost to government.

Action 4.2.3 of the draft regional Plan seeks to deliver Housing that meets the varied needs of communities. The strategy notes that increasing the supply of housing can also help reduce the upward pressure on the cost of housing. Buchanan provides the opportunities for different housing types and a variety of housing product for the region whilst adding to supply.

SUMMARY

The key message that we are delivering in our submission is that Kurri Kurri and immediate surrounds should be included in Hunter City and should be more clearly recognized as potentially providing for housing and employment as part of Hunter City. Clearly Kurri Kurri is well located with superior access and attributes to make this contribution relative to other areas that have been included within Hunter city.

The premise that there is sufficient land zoned urban is questionable but even if true we are of the view that there is not sufficient economically developable land in locations where people want to live and having good access to the stronger employment options of Newcastle and Maitland.

Buchanan is strategically well located and therefore represents a significant opportunity to provide for future housing demand. Whilst the draft Regional Growth Plan does not specifically exclude Buchanan from being considered for an urban outcome we are concerned that there are statements within the Growth Plan that could be interpreted as excluding Buchanan.

The Draft Growth Plan should not discount new areas for rezoning where it makes sense to do so on the grounds that there is sufficient land elsewhere zoned (noting that not all the land zoned is well located relative to market segments and where employment is stronger). The draft Plan should include a similar process as the Sustainability Criteria in the current Lower Hunter Regional Strategy for sites not identified in a Council Settlement Strategy.

The Buchanan site is located at the first interchange off the expressway and we strongly believe that the significant investment in this intersection (likely to be \$10 million) should be leveraged to the fullest extent possible.

The site apart from being well located has substantial cleared areas (representative of its current and previous farming activities and consistent with its rural zoning) and has significant areas free from flooding. Buchanan should not be a missed opportunity.

We look forward to working with Council and the Department on the strategic plans for Buchanan and strongly believe that the site has significant opportunity to make a positive contribution to the urban structure of the Hunter (Hunter City).

Should you require any additional information or wish to discuss this submission please contact our Hunter Office on 49785100.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Marler', written in a cursive style.

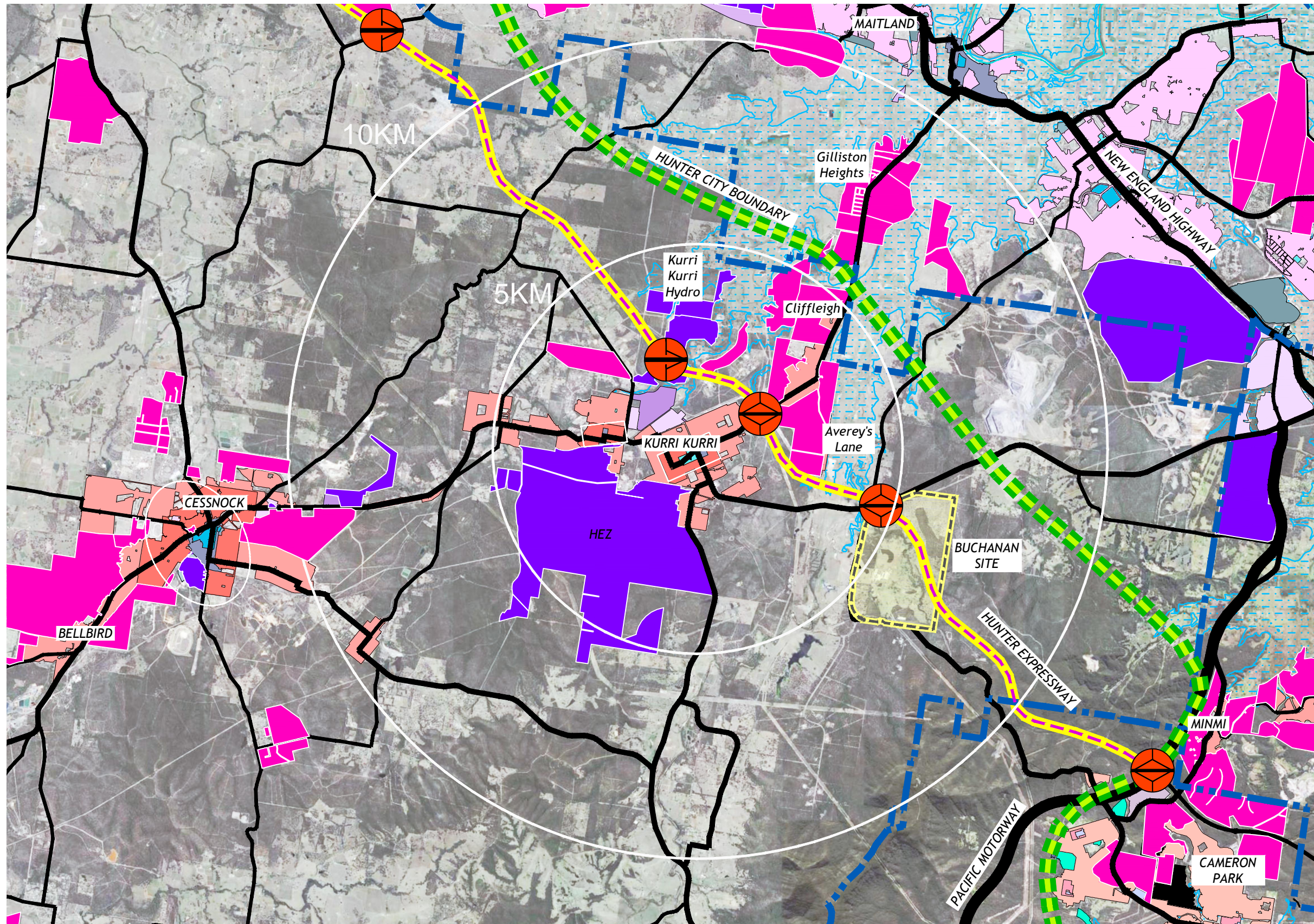
CRAIG MARLER
Planning Manager
ADW Johnson Pty Ltd
Hunter Office

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Cc to Cessnock City Council
Attention: Wonona Fuzzard

APPENDIX A

Strategic Context Plan



Zone

- B1 Neighbourhood Centre
- B2 Local Centre
- B3 Commercial Core
- B4 Mixed Use
- B5 Business Development
- IN1 General Industrial
- IN2 Light Industrial
- IN3 Heavy Industrial
- R2 Low Density Residential
- R3 Medium Density Residential
- R4 High Density Residential
- Deferred matter
- Future Industrial Development
- Future Residential Development
- LGA boundaries
- Hunter City
- Interchange (4 way)
- Interchange (2 way)
- Low land (sub 10m AHD)



Bar Scale 1: 100,000 (A3)

D	15/01/2016	Add low lying land	MS
C	10/12/2015	Update & add Hunter City	MS
Ver.	Date	Comment	By

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PLAN PURPOSE: PLANNING INVESTIGATIONS

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: GEORGE BOOTH & JOHN RENSHAW DRIVE, BUCHANAN

COUNCIL: VARIOUS

DWG REF: 37915-CONCEPT-002-D PM:BS

CLIENT: G,J,S&M Holmes

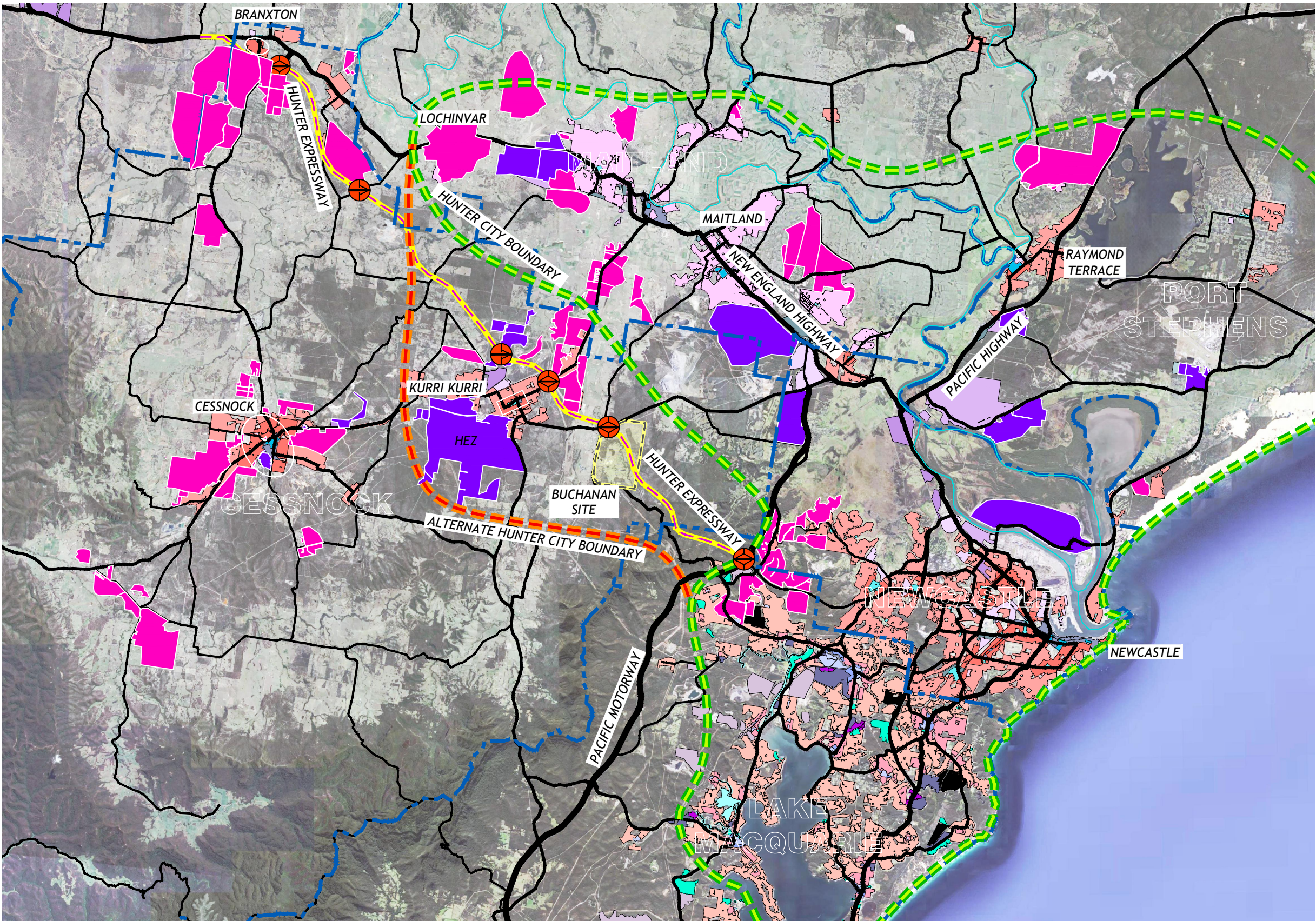


This plan was prepared at the Hunter office ph: (02) 49785 100

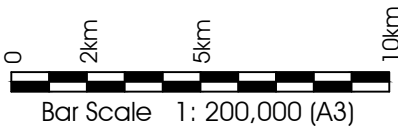
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APPENDIX B

Proposed Hunter City Boundary Amendment



- Zone**
- B1 Neighbourhood Centre
 - B2 Local Centre
 - B3 Commercial Core
 - B4 Mixed Use
 - B5 Business Development
 - IN1 General Industrial
 - IN2 Light Industrial
 - IN3 Heavy Industrial
 - R2 Low Density Residential
 - R3 Medium Density Residential
 - R4 High Density Residential
 - Deferred matter
- Future Industrial Development
- Future Residential Development
- LGA boundaries
- Hunter City
- Interchange (4 way)
- Interchange (2 way)



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D	15/01/2016	Add low lying land	MS
C	10/12/2015	Update & add Hunter City	MS
Ver.	Date	Comment	By

PLAN PURPOSE: PLANNING INVESTIGATIONS

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION: GEORGE BOOTH & JOHN RENSHAW DRIVE, BUCHANAN

COUNCIL: VARIOUS

DWG REF: 37915-CONCEPT-002-D PM:BS

CLIENT: G,J,S&M Holmes



This plan was prepared at the Hunter office ph: (02) 49785 100

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APPENDIX C

Statement of Design Intent for Hunter Expressway

The Hunter Expressway

The Hunter Expressway opened to traffic on 22 March 2014. The expressway has improved travel times for motorists between Newcastle and the Upper Hunter and has improved journeys across the broader network. Preliminary traffic data shows around 20,000 vehicles per day using the Hunter Expressway on weekdays and weekends.



The Hunter Expressway

Expand

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- [Project objectives](#)
- [Key features](#)
- [Community engagement](#)

Updates and announcements

Hunter Expressway improves traffic flow and reduces congestion

Since it opened on 22 March 2014, the Hunter Expressway has improved travel times for motorists between Newcastle and the Upper Hunter and has improved journeys across the broader network. See [About this project](#) for further details.

Project background

The Australian Government provided \$1.5 billion funding and the NSW Government up to \$200 million to complete the Hunter Expressway.

This \$1.7 billion project involved the construction of a four lane freeway link between the M1 Pacific Motorway near Seahampton and the New England Highway, west of Branxton. The new expressway provides a new east-west connection between Newcastle and the Lower Hunter and is one of the biggest road infrastructure projects to be built in the Hunter.

Preliminary traffic data shows around 20,000 vehicles per day using the Hunter Expressway on weekdays and weekends.

Other key routes, particularly the New England Highway near Maitland, have greatly benefited since the expressway opened.

Preliminary data shows major decreases in traffic on the New England Highway, with a 45 per cent reduction through Lochinvar and about a 25 per cent reduction through East Maitland and Maitland.

Heavy vehicles on the New England Highway through Lochinvar have fallen by up to 65 per cent and heavy vehicles through Maitland have fallen by more than 40 per cent.

Of the routes accessing the expressway the Newcastle Link Road has seen a 30 per cent increase in traffic, which is similar to what Roads and Maritime had predicted.

Traffic at Weakleys Drive has experienced a decrease of 15 to 20 per cent of total traffic, with a reduction of around 20 to 25 per cent in heavy vehicles.

Cessnock Road, near the New England Highway, has experienced an increase in the order of 1,500 vehicles per day. However, this increase is much lower than anticipated. Similarly, Buchanan Road and Hart Road have had increases in the order of 1,500 to 2,500 vehicles per day, which is also lower than expected.

The improvements to traffic flow on the New England Highway and the reduction of traffic on this key route is a great outcome for motorists.

The Hunter Expressway was designed to accommodate long-term development and growth in the Hunter region in the coming decades. Roads and Maritime will continue to monitor traffic counts as traffic settles into established patterns.

[Read more about this project >>](#)

Project objectives

The Hunter Expressway, a 40 kilometre expressway link, provides significant improvements in travel time and safety for motorists travelling between Newcastle and the Upper Hunter.

Key features

- Six grade-separated interchanges allow motorists to access the expressway.
- 40 kilometres of dual carriageway freeway
- 52 bridges, including almost 800 metres of high bridges through Sugarloaf Range.

Community engagement

Milestones and achievements 2013

View or download a brochure detailing the [Hunter Expressway milestones and achievements](#) (PDF, 3.76MB).

Environmental Protection Licence (EPL) data

The community can access Environmental Protection licence (EPL) monitoring data for the Hunter Expressway:

- [\(EPL\) M1 Pacific Motorway to Kurri Kurri \(Thiess\)](#)
- [\(EPL\) Kurri Kurri to Branxton \(Abigroup\)](#).