



Our Ref: 18027

26th February 2018

Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036
PO Box 1226
Newcastle
NSW 2300

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: DRAFT GREATER NEWCASTLE METROPOLITAN PLAN 2036

We act on behalf of Scentre Group the owners and operators of the land known as Westfield Shopping Centre, Kotara.

This submission is a formal submission to the provisions of the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 as they relate to Kotara, a key strategic centre within the Newcastle and Lower Hunter region. An extract of the plan as it relates to Kotara is provided

Existing centres are a major contributor to the amenity and economic welfare and growth of Newcastle and the Hunter Region. They are of such importance that we believe strategic planning policy and legislation that may impinge on the orderly growth and development of centres needs considerable research, careful analysis and justification.

OVERVIEW OF HUNTER STRATEGIC PLANNING

In December 2015 the NSW Government released to public exhibition the draft Hunter Regional Plan which provided a long term strategic plan for a combined Hunter regional centre. Following an extended exhibition period the NSW Government endorsed the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 in October 2016. The Hunter Regional Plan 2036 sets the vision for the Hunter to be the leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant new Newcastle metropolitan city at its heart.

A key component of the Hunter's success was recognising and planning for the ongoing growth and renewal of the Greater Newcastle area incorporating the Newcastle CBD and surrounding strategic centres. The NSW Government committed to developing and delivering the first-ever Metropolitan Plan for Greater Newcastle.

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Kotara is identified in the plan as a regionally significant strategic centre within the Hunter and the Greater Newcastle area. The Hunter Regional Plan 2036 states that the *“success of metropolitan Newcastle depends on the ability to develop, diversify and connect strategic centres, including a successful city centre. The strategic centres contain significant clusters of professional, retail, health and education services that are forecast to be major drivers of the economy in the future.” “Reinforcing and encouraging development in strategic centres will help sustain their functions and create jobs closer to home”.*

The priorities for Kotara identified within the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 (p.69) are to:

- *Continue to provide regionally significant retail, and support growth and diversification of other employment and economic activities;*
- *Investigate opportunities for medium to high-density housing within (as shop top housing) or close to the centre, in areas not constrained by flooding*
- *Enhance public transport access to other strategic centres in Greater Newcastle.*

SUBMISSION TO THE PROVISIONS OF DRAFT GREATER NEWCASTLE METROPOLITAN PLAN 2036

The draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 (currently on public exhibition) is intended to align with the visions and goals of the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and deliver on the priority action to prepare a Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan. There is a strong focus on employment and integrating transport in the draft plan which states that:

“A key imperative for Greater Newcastle is to revitalise its city centre, and at the same time connect up its largest and fastest growing activity and employment centres, and logistics platform, so as to match up jobs and homes more efficiently.”

1. Job Creation and Employment

Kotara is identified within the draft Greater Metropolitan Plan 2036 as a centre that has 5,550 jobs in 2016 and is planned to have an additional 800 jobs created by 2036.

The ongoing redevelopment and renewal of Westfield Kotara is considered a key component of the renewal of Kotara and the transformation of Greater Newcastle as a metropolitan city.

Scentre Group is aligned with the vision for continuing to develop Kotara as a regionally significant strategic centre that, connected with other centres and the Newcastle CBD, will lead to the success of the Greater Newcastle and the Hunter as the leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant metropolitan city at its heart.

Westfield/Scentre Group have continued to invest in the Kotara centre since it was acquired in August 2003. More recent projects included a \$55 million investment into the Rooftop



Project which introduced 8-screen Events cinema complex and nine restaurants. This project employed approximately 150 direct construction jobs with over 70% being trades which were local to the Hunter Region. There were over 322 permanent and casual employees created across the new retaining on off at the centre.

More recently, the most recent expansion that has been approved by the Hunter JRPP and is currently under construction will bring 30 new stores including a new Kmart, JB hi Fi, Toys R Us, two international fashion mini major reinforcing Westfield Kotara as a premier lifestyle, entertainment and retail destination within Newcastle. This project is a \$160 million investment with approximately 313 direct construction jobs and around 250 ongoing jobs.

2. Improving Connections and Integrating Transport

The draft plan states that *"Transport infrastructure can expand labour markets, connect disconnected areas, shape patterns of development and unlock new land. The Newcastle Interchange and Light Rail from Wickham to Pacific Park, plus the establishment of Newcastle Transport as the operator of an integrated public transport system, provides the basis for future transport improvements."*

Kotara is an established high-activity area where people live, work, shop and socialise. It is recognised as a regionally significant strategic centre and as such should be an integral part of long term transport planning initiatives for Newcastle.

We are aware of the historic review of improvements to transport planning for Kotara including concepts developed by Council and reviewed by State Rail in the late 1990's for the relocation of Kotara railway station adjacent to the old Rundles factory (now bulky goods centre) as a centre piece of a new town centre for Kotara.

More recently, Scentre Group has made a submission to Newcastle Light Rail on future corridors for light rail connections to existing strategic centres in Newcastle. It has been advocated that the support for a link to Hunter Stadium and Entertainment Centre could be extended to connect with the retail, entertainment and employment centre of Kotara.

It is considered that given the historic and future strategic significance of the Kotara centre the public transport initiatives within the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 to improve connections to jobs, services and recreation should be extended to Kotara.

3. Catalyst Areas for Greater Newcastle

Kotara is identified as a Strategic Centre within the provisions of the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036. Kotara is also recognised as one of a number of "catalyst areas" which are places of metropolitan significance where a planned approach seeks to drive job creation and the transformation of Greater Newcastle as a metropolitan city.



Ingham Planning has been involved with the planned growth and renewal of the Kotara centre for over 25 years, dating back to the previous owners being AMP and the centres branding as Garden City Kotara.

We have been involved in responding to various amendments to local planning controls, various applications to Council and previous Land and Environment Court determinations. It has been consistently recognised and reinforced through this time by both the Land and Environment Court and Newcastle Council in issuing development consents under existing LEP's that Garden City (now Westfield Kotara) has served an important sub-regional function and draws its business from a wide area. The various expansions to the centre have been carefully designed and considered appropriate with respect to the regional role of the centre.

In over 25 years on working on the Kotara centre there has been no diminishment of population growth or the role and function of Kotara to justify unreasonable amendments to local plans that inhibit growth and renewal. The role and function of the Kotara centre in the Hunter region has only been enhanced during this period.

In regard to the stated priorities for the Kotara Shopping Centre Precinct within the Kotara strategic centre the draft plan states as follows:

"Newcastle City Council will align local plans to:

- *Consolidate and rationalise vehicle access from Park Avenue and increase active street frontages (such as ground level retail);*

As seen in many shopping centres the ease of accessibility to carparking from the adjoining road network is fundamental to the operation of the centre. While there is no significant retailing that directly fronts the major roads (Northcott Drive and Park Avenue) at ground level, the internal configuration of the centre with three main pedestrian malls effectively act like internal public spaces providing active retail facades in a comfortable air conditioned and weather controlled environment.

It is considered that the suggested "action" of consolidating vehicle access from Park Avenue is not possible for the current and future operations of the centre. The Park Avenue car parking entrances feed 5 levels of cars within the multi-deck carpark on the corner of Park Ave and Northcott Drive. Furthermore, under the current conditions of development consent, Park Avenue is the only access available to the centre 30 minutes after core trading hours and is particularly important for patrons using the Cinema and Restaurants precinct. It is also noted from details provided by Scentre Group that the ground level car park is the most popular in Westfield Kotara, currently turning over between 6-8 times a day.



Park Avenue provides a key operational role for the Westfield Kotara providing vehicle access to the regional road network and a public transport interchange for the centre. Existing access should not be consolidated and rationalised as they are critical in providing flexibility to customer and allow for efficient vehicle circulation to and from the centre.

It is considered that the proposed “action” of consolidating and rationalising vehicular access from Park Avenue will have a detrimental impact on the current operations and future viability of the centre and therefore cannot be supported.

In addition retailing and food courts on the level above the street have been designed to overlook Park Avenue and provide activation of the interface with commercial development on the opposite side of Park Avenue. The shopping centre is considered a vital component of Kotara and adds to the overall vitality and activity of the Kotara centre as a whole.



Photo 1 Westfield Kotara: Park Avenue Frontage

Pedestrian movement are restricted for safety reasons across Park Avenue by a dividing fence that runs along the central median of Park Avenue. Pedestrian movement is restricted to designated signalised locations that connect to pedestrian entry points to the centre.

- *Diversify the mix of land uses including housing;*

Scentre Group supports proposals for increased residential densities in and around the Kotara Centre including mixed use development that may be considered for the adjoining New Kotara Town Precinct on the opposite side of Park Avenue.



It is considered that future local planning should acknowledge the size and context of the Westfield Kotara landholding and provide appropriate height controls that do not impinge on the ongoing redevelopment of this centre. For example, by way of background it is noted that up until the gazettal of the Newcastle LEP 2012 there was not statutory height control applicable to this major shopping centre site. There was historically an urban design review role for all buildings over 12 metres within the Hunter region under the provisions of the old Hunter REP 1989. The objectives of this previous control were not to stipulate a maximum height standard but to ensure proposals were subject to public comment and reviewed for urban design reasons for their local impact and regional significance.

Subsequently, Newcastle LEP 2012 adopted 14 metres as a maximum building height standard generally for all commercial land within the Kotara Centre (including the bulky goods centre opposite Park Avenue). This had no reflection on the fact that the existing development of the Westfield Kotara site is well in excess of 14 metres. A 14 metre height standard is not appropriate for a major site within a strategic centre such as Kotara.

The local planning for the Kotara Shopping Centre Precinct should reflect the size and context of the site, remove the existing 14 metre height control standard and encompass objectives that reflect the recognised role and function of the centre

- *Improve integration and transition to the adjoining residential areas at Kotara and Adamstown.*

The integration of Kotara with Adamstown is heavily dependent on the public transport initiatives to integrate land use with transport. We support initiatives for Council to work with Transport for NSW and NSW Department of Planning to improve access to Kotara Railway station or alternate future light rail considerations and overall better integration of Kotara into the broader transport network

In regard to the integration and transition of the built form of the shopping centre to existing street frontages and adjoining residential development it must be stated that this has been a key consideration in all stages of development of the site. It is noted that the recent JRPP planning assessment and independent advice from the Newcastle Urban Design Consultative Group on DA 2016/0073 has supported the overall built form and urban design treatment of the centre.

The shopping centre has its primary frontages to the major commercial centre of Kotara and adjoins major arterial roads such as Park Avenue and Northcott Drive. The site also has frontages to Hudson Park at the rear of the centre and land identified for medium density residential development fronting Lexington Parade to the west and Cynthia Street to the south.



CONCLUSION

Kotara is clearly a strategically significant centre within Greater Newcastle catering for residential, commercial, industrial, educational and bulky goods and major retail land uses. It is clearly evident that Kotara has played and will continue to play a major role in the metropolitan structure in Newcastle and the Hunter region.

Overall, it is evident that Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 recognises the role Kotara has played and will continue to play in Greater Newcastle and the Hunter region. Kotara will continue to be a strategic centre and focal point for employment and economic activity within the Hunter Region.

In regard to Westfield Kotara site it is considered that the future local planning provisions for this “catalyst centre” within the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 should be amended to:

Kotara Shopping Centre Precinct

Newcastle City Council will align local plans to:

- facilitate the ongoing regionally significant retail role of the centre,
- ensure flexibility of built form to complement the nature and role of the centre and the likely change in residential densities within and adjoining the centre;
- Work with relevant authorities to better integrate the centre with the broader transport network to reflect its role as an important activity hub.

We forward this letter as a formal submission to the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 and trust that the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will fully review and consider the implications of this strategic plan upon the role and function of Kotara as well as the impact upon future ongoing investment and renewal of this major sub-regional centre in the Hunter region.

Yours faithfully

INGHAM PLANNING PTY LTD



APPENDIX A

EXTRACTS FROM
DRAFT GREATER NEWCASTLE
METROPOLITAN PLAN 2036



2036

CATALYST AREAS FOR **GREATER** NEWCASTLE

NEWCASTLE CITY CENTRE

BERESFIELD-BLACK HILL

BROADMEADOW

CALLAGHAN

EAST MAITLAND

JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL

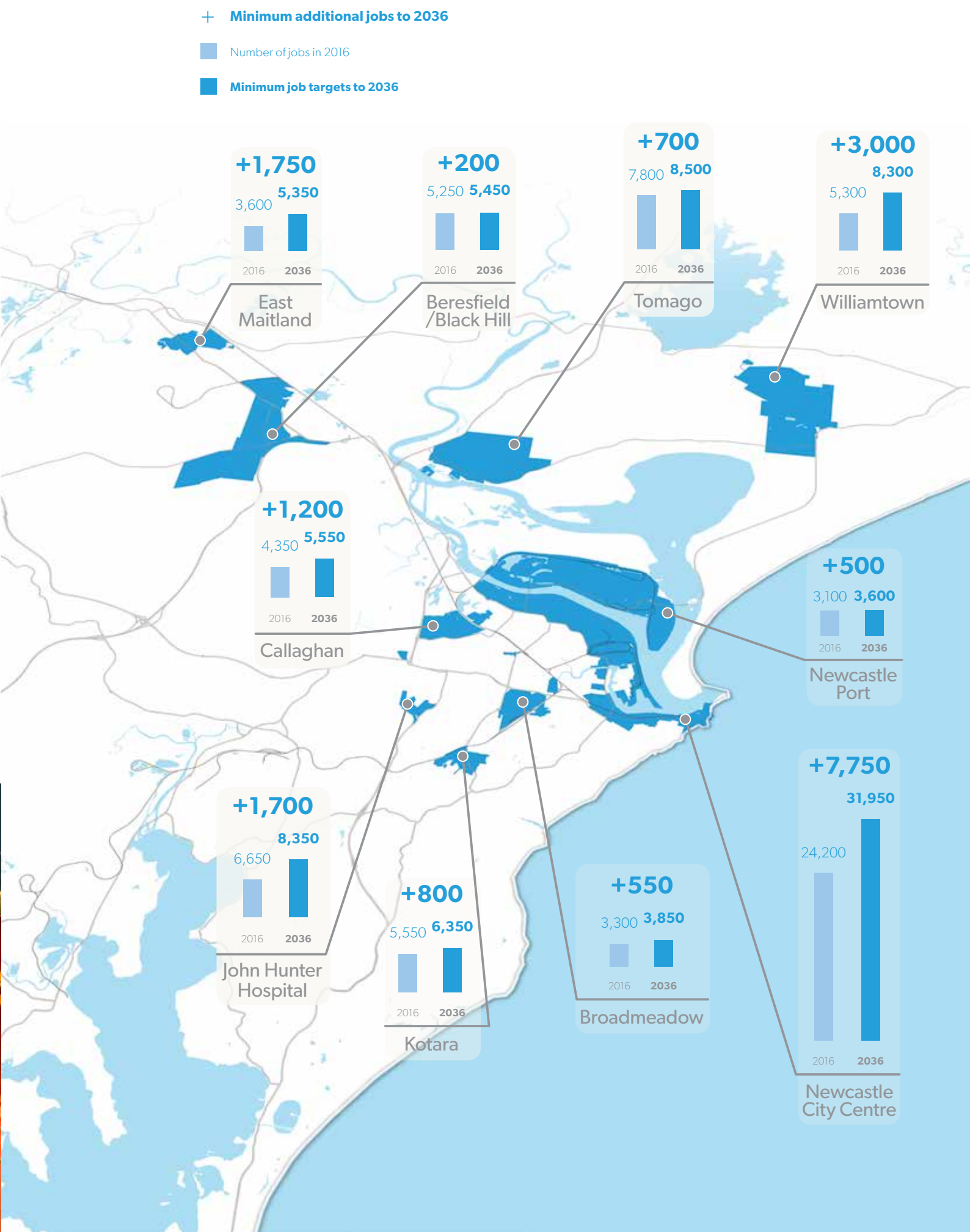
KOTARA

NEWCASTLE PORT

TOMAGO

WILLIAMTOWN

Figure 4: **Job targets for catalyst areas (2016-2036)**



KOTARA

Desired role in Greater Newcastle

- Diverse employment centre with mixed-use and high density residential connected to frequent public transport services.



800



Jobs

400



Dwellings

New Kotara Town Precinct

Newcastle City Council will:

- align local plans to facilitate commercial and business land uses and creation of main street character along Kullaiba Road
- improve pedestrian amenity and connections to New Lambton, Adamstown and Kotara Stations
- manage flooding and drainage constraints and apply the Green Infrastructure Principles
- align local plans to facilitate office and residential uses adjacent to the rail corridor
- align local plans to provide a minimum population density of 75 people per hectare
- work with Transport for NSW and NSW Department of Planning and Environment to improve access to Kotara Railway Station, and better integration into the broader transport network to reflect its role as an important activity hub.

Kotara Shopping Centre Precinct

Newcastle City Council will align local plans to:

- consolidate and rationalise vehicle access from Park Avenue, and increase active street frontages (such as ground level retail)
- diversify the mix of land uses including housing
- improve integration and transition to the adjoining residential areas at Kotara and Adamstown.

Park Avenue Employment Precinct

Newcastle City Council will align local plans to retain existing business development and industrial land uses to service the surrounding communities of Adamstown and New Lambton.

Kotara Residential Precinct

Newcastle City Council will align local plans to increase the potential for medium density housing with local services, and improve pedestrian and cycle connectivity to surrounding precincts within Kotara and the Fernleigh Track.

Searle Street Employment Precinct

Newcastle City Council will align local plans to intensify light industrial and office uses, and improve internal street layout and integration with surrounding residential and commercial areas and Kotara Railway Station.

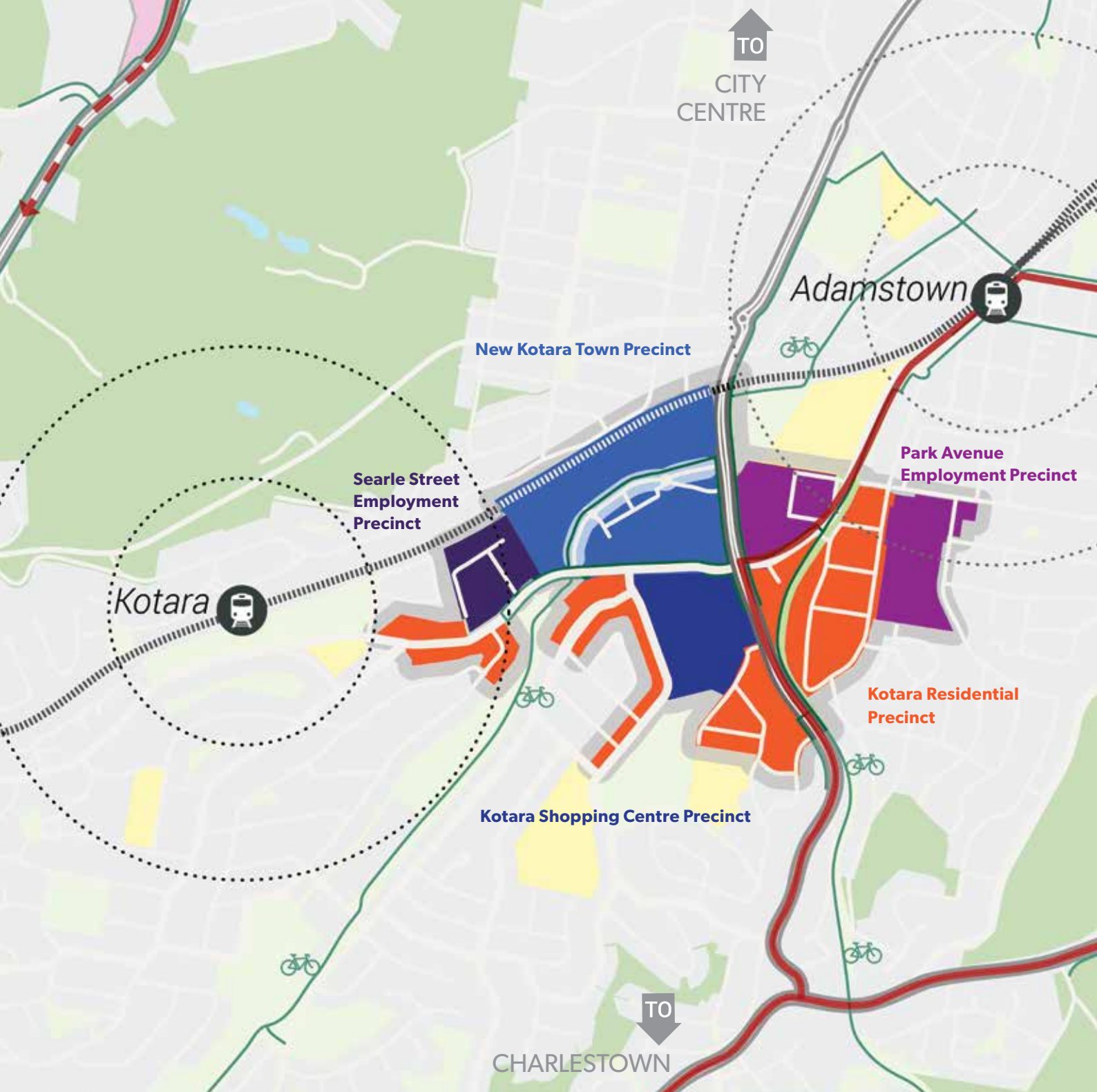


Figure 17: Catalyst Area
Kotara
2017

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|--|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| | Catalyst Area Boundary | | Cycleway / Shared Pathway |
| | School | | Railway |
| | Priority Multimodal Corridor | | Railway Station |
| | Corridor Investigated | | 400m and 800m walking catchment |
| | State Road | | Environmental |
| | Regional Road | | Open Space |
| | Local Road | | Waterway |