

Submission to Department of Planning & Environment

Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan

Hydro Aluminium Kurri Kurri & Flow Systems Joint Submission 28th February 2018

Following the closure of the Kurri Kurri aluminium smelter, Hydro have been planning and undertaking demolition and remediation activities that will facilitate future development of the site and surrounding Hydro owned land. Hydro and Flow Systems have been working together to formulate a delivery strategy for this potential redevelopment and as such are pleased to make a submission to the Department regarding the Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan (GNMP).

Our submission emphasises the significant opportunities for community benefits to arise from the reclassification and re-development of the former Kurri Kurri aluminium smelter site.

The GNMP has been formulated based upon the Hunter Regional Plan (HRP), October 2016. The HRP does not fully recognise the game changing impact of the Hunter Expressway and its potential to influence both economic and social change in the Lower and Mid Hunter. The axis of influence is being augmented from the Newcastle – Thornton – Maitland corridor to the Newcastle – Wallsend – Kurri Kurri – Branxton corridor.

The linkage between the 2 corridors is Cessnock Road from Kurri Kurri to Maitland through Gillieston Heights.

The Hydro land, comprising of 2,000ha (20km²) is strategically located on both sides of and north of the Hunter Expressway. This parcel now has the capacity to be master-planned to address the four Visions of the HRP, and the Outcomes and Strategies of the draft GNMP.

The attached ANNEXURE describes the attributes of the site in addressing the specific Outcomes.

In particular, the Hydro lands can contribute to enhancing the environment – over 1,200 ha of conservation and biodiversity important land – with potential to incorporate compatible community access.

The former smelter site is being remediated and will soon be ready for new economy industries. These industries can take advantage of the infrastructure already in place – high voltage electricity distribution and connection, and rail, in addition to direct access to the Hunter Expressway.

Lands adjacent to the Hunter Expressway inter-change are ideally located for a number of logistics opportunities, wholesale and retail distribution, as well as urban support activities.

The adjacent Kurri Kurri TAFE could be a core for expanding education for the new economy, servicing the Lower Hunter, and new jobs at Kurri Kurri.

As well as employment and conservation, there is the potential for 6,000 residents on former grazing land in the north-east of the Hydro land holding. The new master-planned community will take advantage of its beautiful location over-looking the conservation lands, its location adjacent to the new employment opportunities, and access to Newcastle, Maitland, Cessnock and the Lower Hunter.

The vision for the site is for resilience, low carbon, and utility self-containment. We are actively working to produce a master-plan that makes little demand on external utilities, whilst integrating

development (based on innovative sustainable utilities infrastructure solutions) with the conservation, environmental and infrastructure attributes of the site.

Apart from stating that the site is subject to a Gateway Determination, the GNMP does not recognise the potential for this site to play a significant role in the development of the Greater Newcastle Region.

Kurri Kurri is identified as one of a number of Strategic Centres in the HRP; catalysing the development of the former smelter lands will support and enhance the rejuvenation of Kurri Kurri as a dominant Strategic Centre on the Hunter Expressway.

Hydro requests that the Department recognise the potential of the former smelter site to play a significant role in the economic, environmental and social development of the Greater Newcastle Region. The GNMP should be modified to reflect the urban (employment and housing) role that this site will play over the next 30 years.

Recognition of the site as residential and employment (and conservation) land in the GNMP will assist both Cessnock and Maitland Councils in progressing the master plan to create a desirable destination location for the Lower Hunter.

Regards,



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ANNEXURE:

Former Aluminium Smelter Site at Kurri Kurri

Purpose of the GNMP:

A purpose of the GNMP is to feed into the Strategies of the Local Government Councils in the preparation of their Local Environmental Plans.

It is essential that the importance of this site be incorporated into the GNMP as Employment and Residential (and Conservation) land so that Council planning has a strategic reason to proceed with LEP amendments. The land is currently zoned predominantly rural, despite having been used in part as an aluminium smelter. The former smelter site would be underutilised if returned to rural activities, especially given its strategic importance at a Hunter Expressway inter-change and adjacent to Kurri Kurri and its urban, employment and education facilities.

The GNMP also seeks to capitalise on investment through a collaborative approach. There are great investment opportunities for this site, and collaboration between a major land-owner, with a vision for a sustainable community outcome, and all arms of Government, will ensure successful community outcomes – in education, employment, dwelling diversity, environmental enhancement and resilience.

Hydro agrees with the Department's view that the Greater Newcastle economy is in a state of transitioning to a service, creative and knowledge city. We support the emergence of Newcastle as the pre-eminent regional metro city with global appeal.

The achievement of these high ambitions will best be fostered and facilitated collaborating with visionary land-owners and developers in master planned precincts.

Priority Release Areas.

The Plan identifies a number of priority land release areas. Several release areas that are progressing have not been specifically identified. It is apparent that some of the identified priority release areas are and will continue to struggle to produce housing – for a number of reasons.

These reasons include:

- Fragmented land ownership
- Lack of access or utility services (or both)
- Poor location
- High land and development costs.

These reasons do not apply to the Hydro site.

Hydro therefore requests that the site be made a priority housing release area.

Outcomes and Strategies of the GNMP:

The four key elements in Figure 3 of the GNMP contain the following key Outcomes and their associated Strategies

1. *The Leading Regional Economy in Australia*
2. *Enhance Bio-diversity rich natural environment*
3. *Greater Housing Choices and Jobs*
4. *Thriving Communities*

Our submission addresses each of these Outcomes and Strategies:

1 Leading Regional Economy:

The Hunter Regional Plan seeks to create a workforce skilled & ready for the new economy. This is supported in the GNMP.

1.6 Respond to the changing land use needs of the new economy.

The Hydro site lends itself to immediately transitioning to new economy employment – we are working with organisations that are enthusiastic to utilise the attributes of the site to initiate new economy industries and jobs.

In the longer term, the master-planning of the site, its implementation by a visionary partner, and the collaboration with existing community assets such as TAFE, will continue to contribute to the new economy and a resilient community.

The potential for the site, when fully developed, is for 3,000 direct jobs, plus multiplier dependent jobs created upon the linkages forged with the district and region.

2 Enhance Environment and Resilience for quality of life:

Over half the site (1,200+ha) is native vegetation or flood prone land. Endangered Ecological Communities are subject to Bio-certification and Bio-banking negotiations aimed at preserving these community assets for future generations.

2.1 Create great places.

By master planning a large, regionally significant site, great outcomes are envisioned; these can be enshrined in strategic and statutory plans, and implemented through collaboration between land-owner, development partners, regulators and the community. Creating great places where land ownership is fragmented can be difficult.

2.3 Enhance the Blue and Green Grid.

With over half the site to be set aside for conservation, flood management and open space, blue and green grid enhancement within the site can be assured, especially in partnership with a sustainable approach to utility infrastructure and servicing solutions. Appropriate linkages with the district can be planned and implemented.

2.5 Improve resilience to climate change.

It is contemplated that the site redevelopment incorporates sustainable utility services. Utilities that utilise local resources (sewer, solar energy, wind power) are resilient to climate change. The master plan can account for projected local climate change impacts, such as flooding, vegetation management.

3 Housing Choice & Jobs:

Deliver Housing Close to jobs & services.

3.2 Unlock supply in priority housing release areas and strategic centres.

The proposal is for the smelter owned lands, currently utilised for grazing, to be master planned and developed to provide a diverse range of housing. The new community will have access to education, retail, community facilities, and open space & recreational facilities.

The development of the land will complement current release areas in Gillieston Heights and Cliftliegh and facilitate new linkages to Kurri Kurri.

The 200ha of Employment and Business uses land will provide new economy jobs within walking and cycling distance of homes.

The site adjoins Kurri Kurri TAFE; its campus could be expanded, and its range of courses increased to provide the high levels of vocational training required for the new employment created.

There is sufficient land for the provision of further community institutions that could service the Lower Hunter Region, such as hospital and university campus.

These facilities would provide a boost to the local, district and regional economies, generating demands for wider housing choices including student, short term visitor and tourist accommodation.

4 Thriving Communities:

Improve connections to jobs, services and recreation.

4.1 Integrate land use and transport.

The proposal allows for the integration of land use and transport.

Being located at an interchange with the Hunter Expressway, and close to the Cessnock Road interchange, road transport opportunities exist to travel quickly to all points of the compass, including east to Newcastle, north to Maitland, and west to the Upper Hunter.

The site is dissected by the South Maitland railway, the capacity of which could allow for an inter-modal transport interchange adjacent to the Hunter Expressway.

4.3 Protect major freight corridors.

The Hunter Expressway, Cessnock Road and the South Maitland Railway each dissect or adjoin the land. These transport corridors can be enhanced through development of the site – for employment, commercial, retail, education, recreation and living.

4.4 Prepare for technology enhanced mobility changes.

The site, as a former aluminium smelter utilising a significant capacity of the State's energy generating capacity, is well placed to reverse the direction of current flow through on-site generation and storage – utilising renewable sources of energy. Technology enhanced mobility changes are embedded within our vision for this 21st century new integrated community and economic hub.

Summary and Conclusion

The Lower Hunter Regional Plan sets out 27 directions for the growth of the changing economy and demography of the Region. For the Lower Hunter to grow to be the leading Regional Economy in Australia, all the advantages and opportunities of the region must be developed to be sustainable and resilient adopting new technologies and diverse living, economy and housing.

The Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan, whilst promoting continued growth of existing well-located communities, must also facilitate new emerging economic hubs and living areas that respond to locational advantageous opportunities.

Redevelopment of the 2,000ha former Kurri Kurri smelter and associated lands, represents a never to be repeated opportunity for a strategically located, master-planned multi-use development serviced by both major roads and a railway.

The GNMP should identify the entire site as a priority planning area, so that Government agencies, Maitland and Cessnock Councils, and the proponent, can collaborate together to produce an outstanding statutory planning environment.

The outcome would assure a landmark site, incorporating extensive high-quality conservation lands (embracing several Endangered Ecological Communities), new age employment opportunities, commerce, education, and liveability and workability in a thriving economic and residential hub for the region.

Being located strategically in the centre of the Lower Hunter on the Hunter Expressway, the site's planning and development can be a catalyst for the new economy and a destination for innovators across the Region.

The proponents look forward to working with the Department and the Government in bringing about these game-changing opportunities for this dynamic Region and the Greater City of Newcastle.



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