

Preliminary Assessment Report

For declaration of a project as a Major Project under Part 3A of the
Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979

Pitt Town Residential Precinct

September 2007



JOHNSON PROPERTY GROUP
Creating living communities



INTRODUCTION

This preliminary assessment report has been prepared by Johnson Property Group (JPG) and is submitted to the NSW Department of Planning in support of a Major Project application made under Section 75B of Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. We seek the Minister's approval to accept this project as a Major Project, to increase development density (under a Concept Plan Approval) and to approve subdivision development on the land controlled by Johnson Property Group (Project Approval).

Johnson Property Group is seeking Concept Plan Approval on land owned or controlled by landowners in the study area to create approximately 390 conventional residential allotments and approximately 349 lots for rural housing. A further 176 rural housing lots are already zoned on other landholders land as part of Hawkesbury LEP Amendment 145 (see below). The total lots (not just new lots) permitted in the Pitt Town Investigation Area is therefore 915 lots as a consequence of this proposal.

Concurrently with the Concept Plan Approval process, Johnson Property Group seeks Project Application approval for 659 lots that are under Johnson Property Group control. Further details relating to this application can be found throughout this Preliminary Assessment Report.

This assessment provides the following information which is relevant to the proposal:-

- site location, context and description
- a background of the project;
- a description of the proposed development;
- justification for major project classification;
- applicable planning provisions;
- site assessment; and
- identification of environmental issues relating to the project.

SITE DETAILS

Location and Context

The township of Pitt Town is located approximately 6km north east of the township of Windsor which is located in the north-western area of Sydney. The Pitt Town investigation area is approximately 225 hectares in area and is located wholly within the Hawkesbury City Council Local Government Area. The investigation area includes land above the 20m AHD contour to the north of the Pitt Town township proper, and is generally bounded by the Hawkesbury River to the north, Cattai Road to the east, Buckingham Street to the south and Bathurst Street to the west.

Annexure A is a regional location plan of the Pitt Town area.

Governor Macquarie first set out Pitt Town in 1810 as one of the five "Macquarie Towns". The township was originally located further to the east, however, in 1815 Governor Macquarie approved the re-sitting of the town to an area closer to the farms located along the Hawkesbury River.

Site Description

Concept Plan Application

The total investigation area, as shown in Figure 1, is controlled by a number of landowners, as detailed in Table 1 below. Johnson Property Group owns or controls approximately 129 hectares of the total investigation area, whilst other landowners in the investigation area control approximately 27 hectares.

Table 1: Concept Plan Application land descriptions:

Lot	Deposited Plan	Ownership	Size (ha)
101	1113833	Fernadell Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	21.13 (Portion Only)
132	1025876	Bona Vista Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	18.04
14	865977	Bona Vista Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	11.81 (Portion Only)
11	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	8.68 (Portion Only)
12	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG joint venture)	8.30 (Portion Only)
13	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG joint venture)	9.58 (Portion Only)
14	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.44
15	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG optioned)	3.89
16	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.17
17	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.01
18	1021340	Vermont Quays Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	3.13 (Portion Only)
2	76375	David Robert Thornton & Christopher Michael Thornton (JPG optioned)	26.04 (Portion Only)
1	1057585	Triston Pty Limited & Bassam John Ghanous & Merryne Lynette Ghanous	2.00
2	1057585	Triston Pty Limited & Bassam John Ghanous & Merryne Lynette Ghanous	2.00
3	1057585	Triston Pty Limited & Bassam John Ghanous & Merryne Lynette Ghanous	2.00
4	1057585	Triston Pty Limited & Bassam John Ghanous & Merryne Lynette Ghanous	1.98
2	555257	David Robert Burns	0.12 (Portion Only)
1	808945	Anthony Eurell & Elizabeth Anne Eurell	0.39 (Portion Only)
2	808945	Joseph George Cook	1.38
3	808945	Michael Joseph Carty & Victoria Rosalina Carty	4.41
1	551960	Colonia Pty Limited (the Weller brothers)	12.43 (Portion Only)
Total All land			155.93 ha

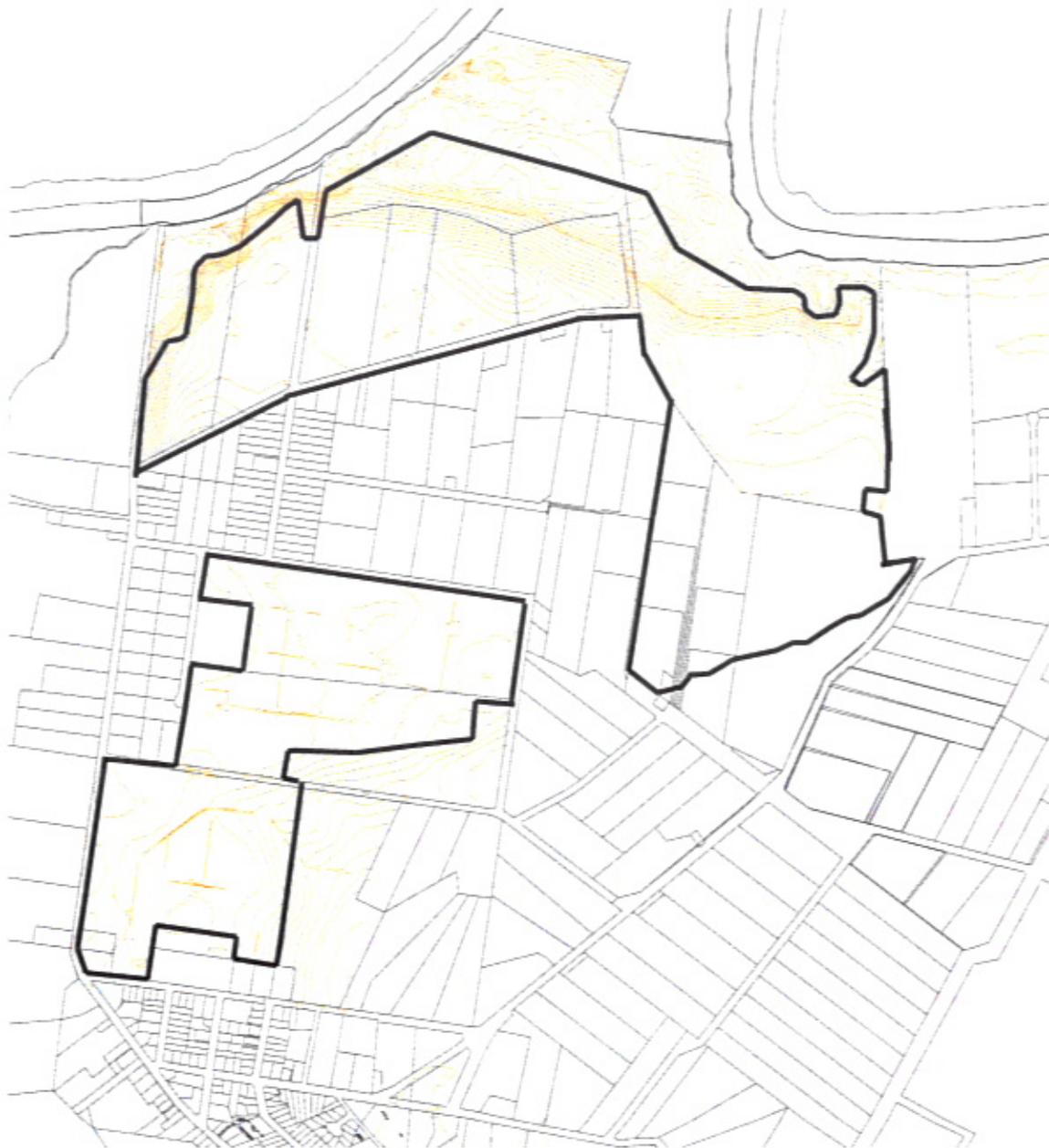


Figure 1 – Land to which the proposed Concept Plan applies

With respect to this Major Project Application, we apply to have a Concept Plan approved that amends the density controls that apply to the land marked with heavy black borders on Figure 1. The proposed amendments are discussed in more detail further on and are shown in **Annexure B**.

Project Approval

In relation to the 129 hectares (approx) of land that Johnson Property Group controls, we concurrently seek Project Approval Application. The land to which the Project Application applies is tabulated in Table 2 and Figure 2 below:

Table 2: Project Approval Application land descriptions:

Lot	Deposited Plan	Ownership	Size (ha)
101	1113833	Fernadell Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	21.13 (Portion Only)
132	1025876	Bona Vista Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	18.04
14	865977	Bona Vista Properties Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	11.81 (Portion Only)
11	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	8.68 (Portion Only)
12	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG joint venture)	8.30 (Portion Only)
13	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG joint venture)	9.58 (Portion Only)
14	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.44
15	1021340	Phillip Thomas Cleary (JPG optioned)	3.89
16	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.17
17	1021340	Coral Elizabeth Cleary (JPG optioned)	6.01
18	1021340	Vermont Quays Pty. Ltd (JPG entity)	3.13 (Portion Only)
2	76375	David Robert Thornton & Christopher Michael Thornton (JPG optioned)	26.04 (Portion Only)
Total JPG land			129.22 ha

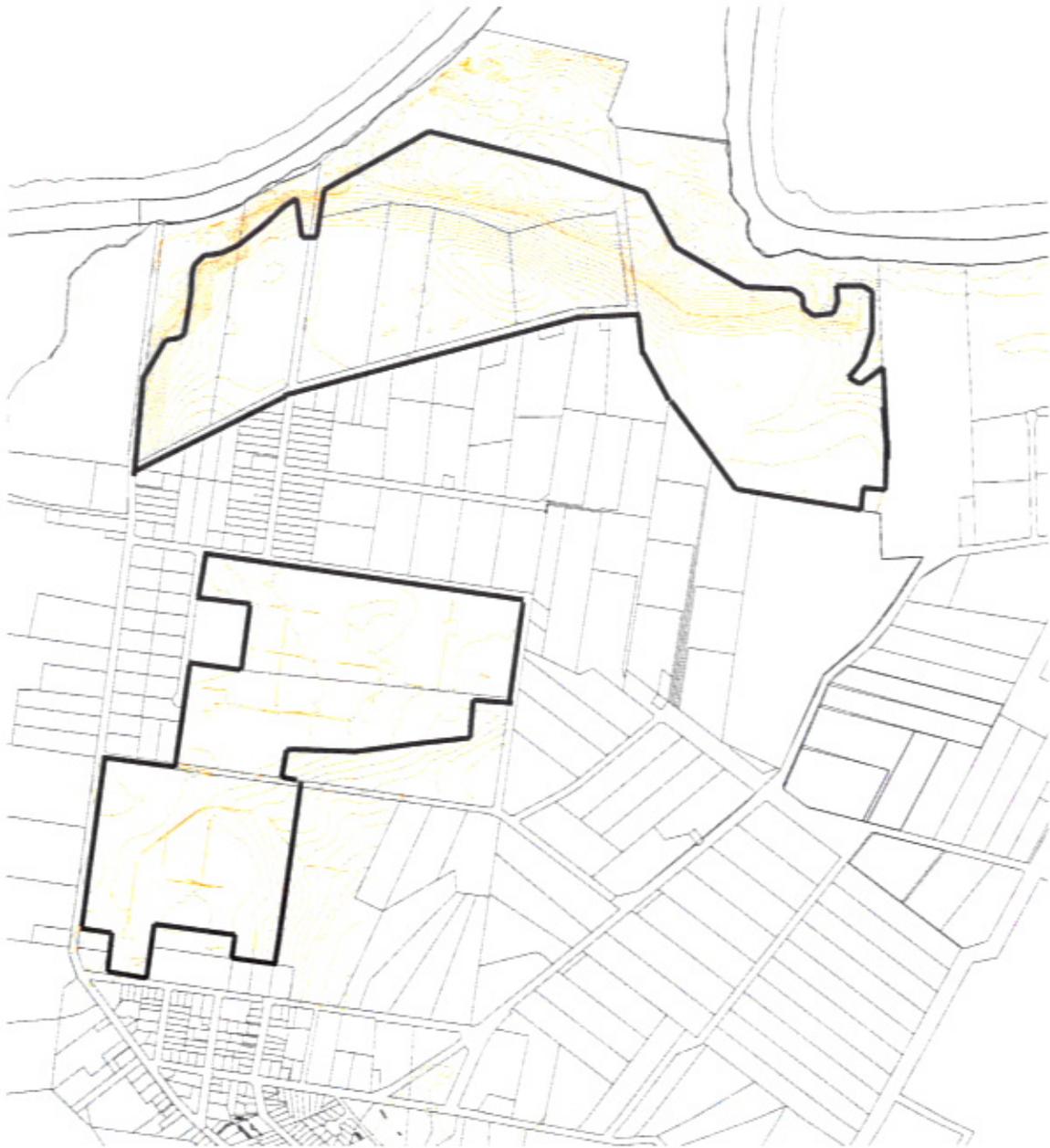


Figure 2 – Johnson Property Group land to which a proposed Project Application applies

The plan of subdivision of the land for the Project approval being sought is **Annexure C**.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Objective

Johnson Property Group is passionate about creating living sustainable communities. The objective of the proposed Pitt Town Residential Development Precinct is to create a sustainable and viable community that stimulates the local economy (principally through the creation of local jobs) and provides a greater public benefit, but is consistent with the rural ambience of the Pitt Town surrounds.

Project Overview

The Pitt Town Residential Precinct extends to the north of the existing Pitt Town township. Johnson Property Group hereby concurrently applies for Concept Plan Approval and Project Application Approval for development of the lands identified above at Pitt Town. Whilst the proposed Concept Plan applies to the entire investigation area (refer Figure 1), the Johnson Property Group owned or controlled land within this precinct is the land that we are applying for a number of project approvals under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* (refer Figure 2).

Annexure C comprises the plan of subdivision of the land for the Project Approval being sought.

The key features of the proposal are:

- Allowing an increased yield within the precinct (refer Figure 1) by reducing the minimum permitted lot size. This results in:
 - Approximately 41 hectares of land for conventional residential;
 - Approximately 88 hectares of land for rural housing;
- Retention of the existing Bona Vista homestead and curtilage;
- Approximately 27 hectares of land to be designated for open space purposes, adjacent to the Hawkesbury River. Associated community and recreational infrastructure will be covered in a proposed Statement of Commitments and will be prioritized in consultation with Department of Planning. Such infrastructure will be released sequentially through a stated work program;

- Approximately 13 hectares of land to be designated for open space purposes, on Bona Vista and Fernadell properties. Community and recreational facilities are proposed for the open space on Fernadell;
- The provision of associated infrastructure which will be prioritized in consultation with Department of Planning and released sequentially through a staged work program.

The proposal will be developed in stages over an 8 to 10 year time horizon, in accordance with an approved staging plan. A proposed staging plan will form part of our Project Application.

We have received Section 54 support from Hawkesbury Council to initiate a further rezoning of the land to allow for increased housing density. However, we understand that this proposal will not be acceptable to the Department. As a result, and due to the protracted process previously conducted with Hawkesbury Council, we seek Major Project approval for a combined Concept Plan and Project Application associated with the development of the Pitt Town Residential precinct. This Preliminary Assessment Report has been prepared to assist the Minister and the Director General in determining whether this project constitutes a Major Project under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

JUSTIFICATION FOR MAJOR PROJECT CLASSIFICATION

We seek confirmation that the provisions of Clause 6(1) of the Major Projects SEPP will apply to the Proposed Development such that, in the opinion of the Minister, the Proposed Development is development of a kind referred to in Schedule 1 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005 and to which Part 3A of the Act applies.

Pursuant to Schedule 1, the Proposed Development is primarily a residential development project with a capital investment value of approximately \$140 million.

Other contributing factors that we consider applicable in determining whether this project is a Major Project include:

- Heritage.
- Provision of Regional infrastructure.

- Previous dealings with Local Government.
- Employment.

We discuss each of these factors below.

Heritage

The study area contains the Bona Vista homestead, the site of Governor Bligh's farm (no longer existing) and a strip of land that is considered to have some Aboriginal significance.

The outline and type of development proposed on the Bona Vista property is similar to the footprint achieved under Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989 (Amendment 145). The outcomes are consistent with the heritage outcome under Amendment 145, in that the cartilage area around Bona Vista homestead is preserved.

The site of Governor Bligh's farm, as well as certain surrounding land, was deferred from Amendment 145. The deferment was to allow time to develop an understanding of the heritage significance of the land as an archaeological site and an historic cultural landscape, and was required by the Heritage Office. Additional research and investigation has now been undertaken into the Aboriginal and European archaeological and heritage aspects of the site. These findings have been discussed at some length with the Heritage Office, but no agreement on a development footprint or controls have been reached. The proponent therefore considers it appropriate that these issues be determined as part of this application.

Provision of Regional infrastructure

6 km of water main from Windsor Road, 14km of sewer rising main to the South Windsor treatment plant, 3 sewer pump stations and a high voltage electrical lead-in need to be provided to service the Pitt Town study area and a widening of Pitt Town Road from Windsor Road to Pitt Town township.

The scope of the required infrastructure is significant. The estimated cost of each of the key items of infrastructure provision and development are as follows:

Table 3: Infrastructure and Development Costs

ITEM	RATE PER LOT
s94 Contributions (works-in-kind)	\$10,620
s64 Contributions (sewer & major drainage)	\$39,850
Water Infrastructure	\$12,140
Electrical Infrastructure	\$15,930
RTA Infrastructure (Pitt Town Road, intersections & land acquisition)	\$20,330
Other State Government Fees	\$5,470
Council, LPI & Service Infrastructure Fees	\$5,350
Development Costs (construction, consultants, marketing, etc)	\$101,440
TOTAL	\$211,130

The above costs are based on a lot yield of 659 lots on Johnson Property Group owned and controlled land as proposed by this application and is exclusive of land acquisition, rezoning costs and financing costs.

Previous dealings with Local Government

Johnson Property Group first initiated a rezoning of the land with Hawkesbury Council in 1996. Despite our best efforts, the land was finally rezoned in 2006 (some 10 years after commencement). During this time, there have been constant delays from Local Government (resulting in more costs) in the rezoning process. The final rezoning resulted in some very stringent controls in relation to densities and provision of community infrastructure, to the point where the entire project (and past investment) becomes economically questionable.

It is worth noting that we have received Section 54 support from Hawkesbury Council to initiate a further rezoning of the land to allow for increased housing density. A copy of this advice can be found in **Annexure D**.

We therefore consider that this would be a development that is important in achieving State and regional planning objectives. It is our opinion that this project could be considered as a Major Project.

Employment

Based on ABS formula, the project will create approximately 1,985 full time annual equivalent years of employment during the construction phase. This translates into approximately 1,430 full time jobs and 1,100 part time jobs over the 10 year development period. Many of the jobs created will be locally based. Employment opportunities in the region are somewhat limited and this project will provide a significant fillip to jobs in the region.

APPROVALS SOUGHT

Concept Plan Approval

The subject land is covered in part within Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989 (Amendment 145). The zoning plan for Amendment 145 is attached in **Annexure E**. Should this project be accepted as a Major Project, then we seek the Minister's support to approve a Concept Plan for the land to allow increased housing opportunities within the investigation area, as shown in **Annexure B**.

We have received Section 54 support from Hawkesbury Council to initiate this further rezoning of the land so as to allow for increased housing density. A copy of this advice can be found in **Annexure D**.

Project Application Approval

Concurrently with the Concept Plan application, we seek Project Approval for the staged release of residential allotments on land that is controlled by Johnson Property Group. This will enable one approval to be issued for the entire Johnson Property Group lands so that staged construction drawings can be lodged for assessment to allow construction to commence.

Annexure C comprises the plan of subdivision of the land for the Project Approval being sought.

The design principles driving the development and the quality of the built form will be thoroughly evaluated to ensure that the quality meets contemporary standards. Draft design guidelines for the built form have been considered for the proposed development and are included in **Annexure F**. This document will take into account how the urban footprint will interrelate with adjoining lands not part of this Part 3A application.

As part of this application, we seek the following approvals:

1. Project Approval on land owned or controlled by Johnson Property Group in the study area for staged subdivision to create, subject to detail subdivision design:
 - o Approximately 390 conventional residential allotments;
 - o Approximately 269 lots for rural housing;
 - o Associated roads, drainage and service infrastructure;
2. Project Approval on land external to the site and not owned or controlled by Johnson Property Group in the study area for the construction of roads, drainage, footpaths and service infrastructure.
3. Project Approval to demolish existing structures on the site.
4. Project Approval to construct agreed recreation facilities in accordance with an approved work program.
5. Approval to amend Part E – Chapter 4 of the Hawkesbury City Council Development Control Plan (as the current DCP does not apply to lots under 750 square metres).
6. Approval for appropriate Complying Development provisions to apply specifically to the whole Pitt Town Residential Precinct.
7. Project Approval for the installation of signage, to market the development, on land external to the site but controlled by Johnson Property Group.

A staging drawing for the development has not yet been prepared, however we would anticipate approximately 60 to 100 residential lots being released each year over an 8 to 10 year time period.

SCOPE AND STAGING OF THE PROPOSAL

The expansion of Pitt Town is proposed to be developed in stages over an 8 to 10 year period. The proposed assessment strategy therefore, is for a combined Concept Plan application and a Project Application Approval on the land to which this application applies.

By combining the two processes, we believe that this will set the overall planning framework for the site and will address site-wide issues and relationships up front, consistent with the land use and development control provisions.

The proposed rezoning component will apply to the whole site and will delineate broad zones and associated development controls for the whole investigation area. The Project Application component of this proposal will establish a staged subdivision layout and provide for sequential infrastructure for the entire lands controlled by Johnson Property Group.

The current environmental planning instrument (Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989; Amendment 145) that applies to the area is too restrictive and does not achieve Department of Planning density targets. An amendment to the existing planning regime for the area is required so that not only can we achieve the desired density targets but also to secure a high level of community and recreational infrastructure to Pitt Town. Under the current planning regime for the site, the LEP Amendment placed some very stringent controls in relation to densities and provision of community infrastructure, to the point where the entire project (and past investment) becomes economically questionable.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT VALUE & EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Johnson Property Group estimates the capital investment value of the project to be approximately \$140 million (in 2007 dollars) over the life of the project (including developer funded housing construction).

Based on ABS formula, the project will create approximately 1,985 full time annual equivalent years of employment during the construction phase. This translates into

approximately 1,430 full time jobs and 1,100 part time jobs over the 10 year development period. It is likely that those jobs directly attributed to this development will most likely be local people with a vast majority from surrounding areas within the North-west sector, particularly in the Pitt Town and Windsor region.

As one of Johnson Property Group's initiatives, we propose to implement an Apprenticeship Scheme that will require every site contractor and building partner who works on the Pitt Town development to employ an apprentice or trainee (preferably from the local area). The scheme would be implemented in cooperation with the local TAFE colleges. Details of the Apprenticeship Scheme are available on Johnson Property Group's website (www.johnsonpropertygroup.com.au).

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING CONTROLS AND POLICIES

Planning Instruments that apply to the site

The following planning instruments and planning policy documents are considered relevant to the proposed development:

- State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005
- State Environmental Planning Policy 11: Traffic Generating Development
- State Environmental Planning Policy 19: Bushland in Urban Areas
- State Environmental Planning Policy 55: Remediation of Land
- Sydney Regional Environmental Plan 20: Hawkesbury-Nepean River (No 2 – 1997)
- Hawkesbury Council's *"Our City Our Future Strategy"*
- Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989
- Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989 (Amendment No. 145)
- Draft Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989 (Amendment No. 155)
- Hawkesbury City Council Development Control Plan

Existing and Proposed Zoning Provisions

Existing Zones

Under the provisions of the current Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989 (Amendment No. 145), the subject site is currently zoned:

- Housing Zone (with a designated minimum lot size of 750sqm);

- Rural Housing Zone;
- 5(a) Special Uses (School);
- 9(b) Proposed Road;

The subject land also includes a conservation area, pursuant to Clause 26 of Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989.

Proposed Zones

Under our proposal, we seek to amend Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan 1989, by incorporating a Concept Plan for the lands, as shown in **Annexure B**. The proposed zonings would be as follows:

- Housing Zone (with a designated minimum lot size of 550sqm, 650sqm or 750sqm);
- Rural Housing Zone (with a designated minimum lot size of 1000sqm, 2000sqm, 2500sqm or 1 hectare);
- 5(a) Special Uses (School);

CONSULTATION

Significant consultation has occurred over the last 11 years in relation to this project. Should it be required, Johnson Property Group could conduct further consultation with the community and Government Departments during the preparation of the environmental assessment for the land, should Director General's Requirements be issued for this project. However, we do stress that exhaustive consultation with all relevant bodies has been conducted to date.

SITE ASSESSMENT

A suite of environmental studies and assessments have been prepared for the site as part of the previous rezoning proposal considered by Hawkesbury Council. In most respects, all of these studies are relevant.

The initial studies focused on the land within Amendment 145. Further studies were conducted in the period up to 2006 in support of the inclusion of the area primarily being most of Lots 11 to 18 in DP 1021340, which was excluded from Amendment 145 (and some of which makes up the area known as 'Blighton' – refer **Annexure B and G**).

In particular, the main studies conducted as part of this previous rezoning process include:

- Pitt Town Local Environmental Study (April 2003) – prepared by Connell Wagner for Hawkesbury City Council
- Environmental Investigation Pitt Town Village (August 2006) – prepared by Don Fox Planning for Johnson Property Group
- Review of Flood Evacuation Capacity (January 2007) – prepared by the State Emergency Service for Hawkesbury City Council
- Heritage Landscape and Visual Assessment of Part of the site of Governor Bligh's 'Model Farm' Blighton near Pitt Town, NSW, Mayne-Wilson & Associates, November 2005.
- Pitt Town Cultural Landscape Management of Heritage Values – Report of the Working Group, October 2003.
- Lots 11 – 18 Hall Street Pitt Town NSW Aboriginal Archaeological Test Excavation report, Archaeological and Heritage Management Solutions Pty Ltd, February 2004.
- Historical Archaeological Assessment Research Design and Test Excavation Methodology for Lots 11 – 18 in DP 1021340 Land East of Punt Road and north of Hall Street Pitt Town, Archaeological and Heritage Management Solutions Pty Ltd June 2005.
- Fauna Survey and Assessment - Lands North of 20m AHD on Lots 11 – 18 in DP 1021340 and Lot 529 in DP 752050 Hall Street Pitt Town, Dr Stephen Ambrose, Ambrose Ecological Services Pty Ltd March 2006.
- Flora Assessment – Lands north of 20m AHD on Hall Street Pitt Town, Anne Clements & Associates Pty Ltd March 2006.
- Water Cycle Report – Brown Consulting July 2006.
- Geotechnical Investigation Report no 11124/1-AA, Geotechnique Pty Ltd June 2006.
- Preliminary Contamination Assessment Report no 11124/3-AA Geotechnique Pty Ltd June 2006.

OVERVIEW OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

To support the request for the Director General's Requirements relating to the environmental assessment, the following information has been extracted from the Connell Wagner Local Environmental Study and supporting Environmental Reports prepared as part of the rezoning process. This information is extracted to provide the Director General with an overview of the key environmental issues that generally apply to this site:

Physical Criteria

Geophysical

The main soils occurring in the study area are found on the underlying geology and can be categorized into three soil landscapes:

1. Freemans Reach
2. Berkshire Park
3. Agnes Banks.

Known occurrences of Acid Sulphate Soils identified in the study area include low lying areas of the Hawkesbury River Floodplain and are associated with Pitt Town Lagoon and Longneck Lagoon. The land in these areas have been classified as Class 2 and 3 Acid Sulphate Soils. No Potential Acid Sulphate Soils have been identified in the Pitt Town area.

Whilst the study area have been conducive to citrus and stone fruit production over many years, the clay content of the soils have created waterlogging which in turn has affected production.

The underlying geology of the study area and the resulting topography and soils do not pose significant limitations to urban development. Rather, the combination of geology, topography and soils imposes generally low overall constraints to urban development. Careful planning and management will be required to ensure that soil erosion and sedimentation of surrounding watercourses and water bodies does not occur.

Climatic Factors

Climatic influences have an influence on potential future urban development of the study area although these do not pose significant limitations. While hot summers and colder winters could potentially lead to reliance on mechanical heating and cooling systems, appropriate planning principles could be implemented to reduce this potential. This could include subdivision design, building design and orientation, insulation requirements and other similar design measures.

Air Quality

The potential health effects of ozone, NO₂ and fine particulates are the primary concerns regarding management of air emissions in the Sydney region. The health and environment effects of these pollutants are summarized in the NSW State of the Environment Report (EPA 2000). The pollutants result from a variety of sources with vehicle emissions being a major contributor. Consequently, reliance on private vehicle transport has the potential to increase the pollutant load.

Flooding

In their advice to Hawkesbury City Council dated 16 January 2007, the State Emergency Service concluded that 1,100 new lots can be added to the existing residential capacity in Pitt Town. They also concluded that the flood evacuation route should be raised to 17.3m AHD if possible because of the net benefit of reducing flood evacuation frequency for around 250 existing lots and all new lots.

Hydrological

Brown Consulting have assessed the impact of the proposed development on the water management objectives set out in the Hawkesbury DCP. Brown Consulting have proposed a series of detention facilities and concluded that the objectives of the DCP can be achieved.

Bushfire

No bushfire constraints are foreseen.

Ecological Criteria

Flora

The Connell Wagner LES found:

- Remnants of two ecological communities; Shale Gravel Transition Forest and Shale Plains Woodland, both listed as endangered ecological communities under the TSC Act. The remnants were described as being disturbed by farming activities;
- Of the locally occurring threatened species, only *Acacia bynoeana*, *Acacia pubescens*, *Dillwynia Tenuifolia*, *Grevillea*, *Junipierina*, *Sub Junipierina* and *Micromyrtus minutiflora*, *Persoonia newtans* and *Pultenaea parviflora* are considered to have the potential to occur on the study area;
- Only *Acacia pubescaens* was located in the vicinity of, but outside, of the study area;
- The study area contains large areas of low ecological value, which has been cleared in the past and contain few conservation values; and
- The study area was also considered to contain some areas of moderate and high ecological value occurring within the Bona Vista property.

Anne Clements & Associated P/L undertook a supplementary investigation and produced a report in April 2003. This report found:

- Vegetation in the south-east of the Bona Vista site, generally corresponding to the area mapped by Connell Wagner as being of high ecological value and considered to meet the criteria for shale gravel transition forest. This community is degraded and will require assisted natural regeneration in order to be a self sustaining ecological community in the long term.
- ACA also found several *Acacia pubescens* within the area of high ecological value.
- The vegetation in the north east part of the Bona Vista property, generally corresponding to the area mapped by Connell Wagner as being of no ecological value, was not considered to meet the criteria for shale gravel transition forest and was considered unlikely to regenerate so as to be self-sustaining.

ACA were subsequently then commissioned to investigate flora characteristics of that part of the study area outside the Connell Wagner LES study area; ie land below RL 20 to the north of Hall Street. ACA concluded as follows:



- The site has a long history of disturbance from agricultural activities, with settlement of the Pitt Town Area in the early 1800s and the earliest aerial photograph of the study area (91947) showing it almost completely cleared of tree vegetation;
- A total of 111 species (32 native and 79 exotic) were recorded in the Study Area;
- No Endangered Ecological Communities listed in the schedules of the Commonwealth EPBC Act 1999 or the NSW TSC Act 1995 were recorded;
- No threatened species listed in the EP&BC Act or the TSC Act were recorded;
- Ten species considered regionally vulnerable, including one species considered to be of particular significance in Western Sydney were recorded;
- Twelve noxious weeds were recorded.

The findings of the ACA report have been taken into account in the design of the open space areas, particularly the riparian corridors, where existing vegetation will be retained and reinforced.

Fauna

The Connell Wagner LES found:

- 16 of the 28 threatened species known to occur in the local area were found to have habitat within the study area;
- Only 2 of these threatened species, the Eastern False Pipistrelle and the Large Land Snail were located in the study area;
- Any future development should be required to protect and enhance vegetation providing habitat for threatened species.

Ambrose Ecological Services was engaged to assess potential impacts of the proposed development on fauna species in the area to the north of Hall Street outside of the Connell Wagner Study Area. AES found:

- Much of the site is already disturbed and/or cleared, but there is remnant vegetation in the riparian zone along the banks of the Hawkesbury River and this should be retained and enhanced;
- There will be no impacts on wildlife corridors if a 40m wide riparian zone is retained and reinforced;
- No threatened species were reported, but there is a potential for 12 threatened species to occur. Seven part tests conclude that the proposed development would not

significantly impact on these species, provided recommendations in the AES report are implemented;

- One nationally vulnerable species may potentially occur on the site and two nationally endangered species may very occasionally occur. As assessment under the EPCA Act concluded that there will be no significant impact on these species.

In addition to the recommendation for retention of the riparian zone, AES made two other recommendations relating to the design of the subdivision:

- Where possible, retain as many remnant canopy trees on other parts of the subject site by incorporating them into the subject site's landscape plan.
- Maintain a buffer zone of at least 40 metres in width from the top of the bank of the Hawkesbury River along the northern boundary of the subject site.

These recommendations have all been adopted in design of the development and the landscaping. Other recommendations related to construction and development will be addressed as part of the Project Application Environmental Assessment.

Cultural Criteria

The general locality has been occupied more or less continuously for several thousands of years by both Aboriginal and European people. European occupation of the area began with the exploration of the Hawkesbury region in c 1794.

Indigenous Archaeology

One archaeological survey for Aboriginal sites has been conducted in areas which occur partially within the broader Pitt Town LES area. Two scatters of stone artifact, a scarred tree and two isolated finds were located in the course of field surveys.

Non-Indigenous Heritage

In 1807, Governor Bligh, who has the most prominent historical associations with the area, established a "Model Farm" on an Estate that incorporated all of the study area. It was named 'Blighton' and was an extensive farmstead, consisting of at least nine major buildings plus ancillary structures, yards, fenced paddocks, gardens and plantings. The farm was a diverse and integrated endeavour that had its origins within the Model Farm

system that developed in Britain during the 18th century. As such, it combined animal husbandry with broad acre horticulture. Cattle and sheep were grazed, but the farm also had a strong focus upon both dairying and pig breeding.

'Blighdon' was farmed under Bligh's direction for only twelve months (in 1807) and land that once formed the Estate has been subdivided many times since then. The study area incorporates most of the northern half of the former Blighdon Estate, as depicted upon **Illustration 14**.



**Illustration 14 - Plan showing the boundaries of the Blighdon Estate.
(Base Map Graham Brooks & Associates P/L August 2003).**



During the late 19th century the structures associated with Blighton were allowed to decay, as pastoral activity became the focus of land use in the area. During the 20th century, removal of old, redundant features and buildings accelerated with the introduction of orcharding and the subsequent removal of these orchards in the 1980s and 1990s.

Today there are limited visible remains of the occupation sequence of the farm site, but the study area contains scattered physical 'relics' associated with occupation and land use over the last 210 years. In terms of the archaeological remains of the Model Farm, the test results from an investigation have shown that, at least within the 300mm deep plough zone across the site, basal courses of 18th and/or 19th century brickwork, in addition to any occupation deposits enclosed within a former structure, are likely to have been extensively disturbed to a point where the remains of significant occupation is barely detectable. Occupation deposits associated with the main historic structures on the site have in all probability been redistributed by 20th century farming activities, with any artefacts being scattered through the plough zone in the immediate vicinity of their structures.

Historic Cultural Landscape

The Historic Cultural Landscape significance is limited to the view, or 'prospect' from the northern end of the site - and most particularly from the north-eastern ridge on Lot 12 - looking across and along the Hawkesbury River toward Wilberforce and the Blue Mountains. This prospect has a high degree of contemporary aesthetic value, reinforced by its depiction by three artists in the early 19th century.

In terms of landscape heritage on the site, there are no items of landscape fabric remaining on it that date back to the time of Governor Bligh's occupation and use of it.

As the general public do not have ready access to the northern ridge on Lots 11 or 12, and are not able to appreciate the views or prospect from it, it cannot be said that the historic cultural landscape has acquired social significance.

Conservation Management Strategy

Johnson Property Group has proposed a Conservation Management Strategy for the Aboriginal and European heritage at Blighton. The key Conservation Policies that arise from the Conservation Management Strategy can be summarised as follows:

Differing Heritage Values across the Subject Land

Conservation management of Lots 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 will recognise that the overall area can be divided into four portions, each with differing heritage values:

- The high ground along the northern portion of Lots 11 and 12 has a confluence of Aboriginal, Historical Archaeological and Historic Cultural Landscape values of State Significance. This area has been identified within a proposed Conservation Zone.
- The low-lying river flats land to the north of the proposed Conservation Zone, on Lots 11 and 12, is important for its surviving open landscaped character, but it has no Aboriginal or Historical Archaeological values and relatively limited Historic Cultural Landscape values. It may also have Aboriginal associational values. This area has been identified within a proposed Open Space Conservation Zone that is contiguous with the proposed Conservation Zone.
- The open ground in the southern portions of Lots 11 and 12 has very limited Aboriginal or Historical Archaeological value and only limited Historic Cultural Landscape value. It does not need to be contained within the proposed Conservation Zone.
- Land within Lots 13, 14 and 15 has no defined heritage values that warrant special heritage management.

Each of these components of Lots 11, 12, 14 and 15 will be managed and developed in accordance with their recognised values.

NSW State Heritage Register Nomination

Land within the proposed Conservation Zone and its contiguous Open Space Conservation Zone should be nominated to the NSW Heritage Council for inclusion in the NSW State Heritage Register. None of the other sections of the subject land warrant SHR listing.

It should be mentioned that Johnson Property Group understands that a National Heritage nomination was lodged for the Pitt Town area in 2005. Hawkesbury City Council on 10 May 2005 resolved that a submission be prepared to the Australian Heritage Council, advising the Heritage Council that in Council's opinion sufficient work has been carried out



to guarantee the protection of the precinct, and further listing at the National Heritage List is not required. Johnson Property Group is not aware of whether that submission was ever prepared or lodged. As far as Johnson Property Group is aware, nothing else concerning the status or progress of the nomination is publicly available.

Hawkesbury LEP Heritage List Nomination

In recognition of the local significance of the subject land, the same area as is nominated for the NSW State Heritage Register should also be nominated to Hawkesbury City Council for inclusion as a Heritage Item on the Hawkesbury Local Environmental Plan.

Creation of a Conservation Zone on Lots 11 and 12

The high ground along the northern portion of Lots 11 and 12, which has a confluence of Aboriginal, Historical Archaeological and Historic Cultural Landscape values that are of State Significance, should be managed by the creation of a Conservation Zone as recommended within the Test Results reports for the initial archaeological investigations of both Aboriginal and Historical Archaeology. (Refer to **Figure 3** and **Annexure G**)

Creation of an Open Space Conservation Zone on Lots 11 and 12

The low-lying riverfront land to the north of the proposed Conservation Zone, on Lots 11 and 12, which is important for its surviving open landscaped character, should be managed by the creation of an Open Space Conservation Zone that is contiguous with the northern boundary of the proposed Conservation Zone and which extends to the river edge across the entire frontage of Lots 11 and 12. It will extend south along the Punt Road frontage of Lot 11 and be contiguous with the proposed Conservation Zone in that location. (Refer to **Figure 3** and **Annexure G**).

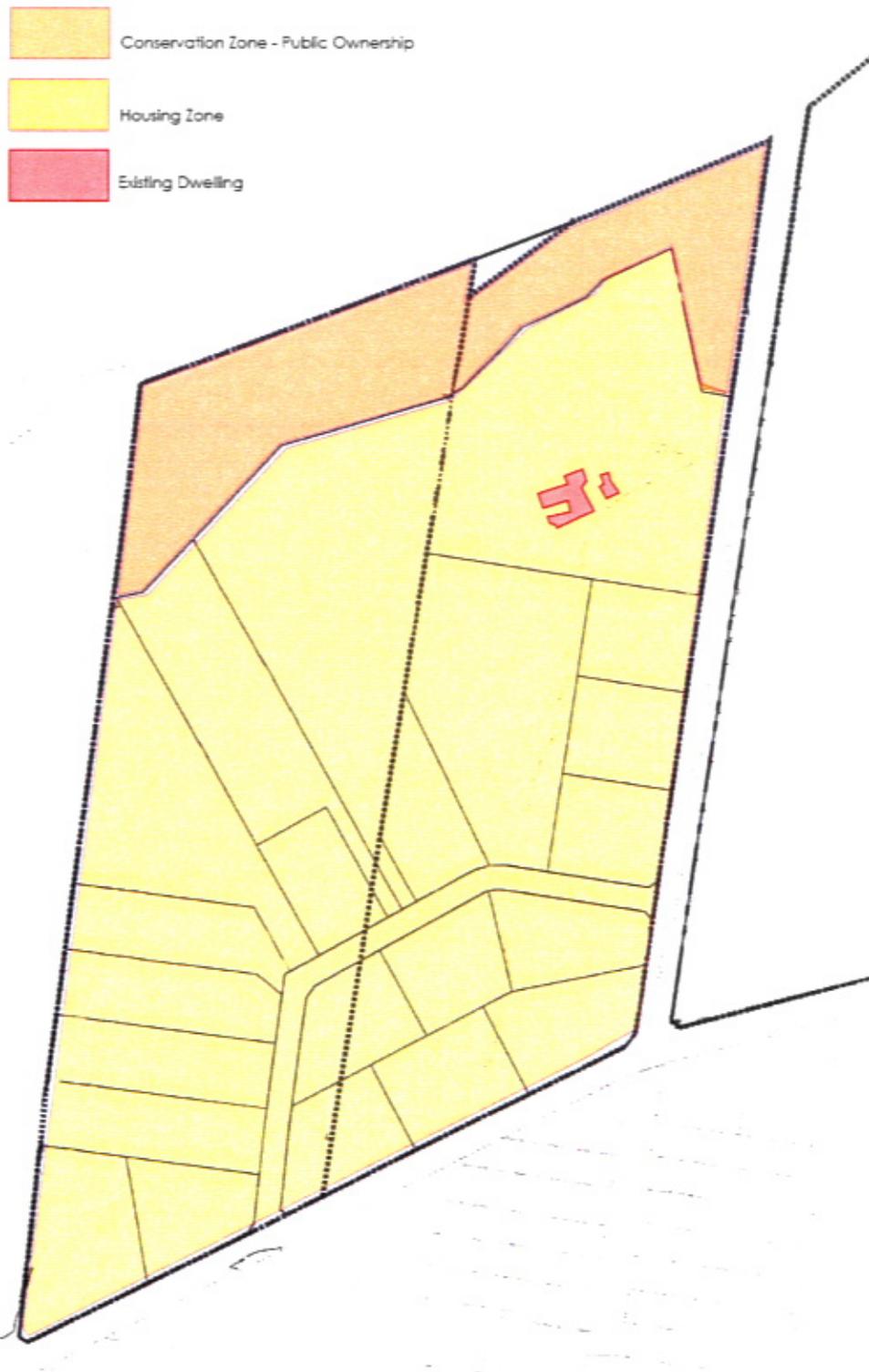


Figure 3 – Proposed Conservation Zone to protect the Blighton Heritage Resources

DEC contribution

Under its planning agreement with the State Government, Johnson Property Group is required to make a cash contribution to the Department of Environment and Conservation of \$630,000 plus CPI adjustment.

Infrastructure

Roads & Transport

Johnson Property Group has committed under a State Planning Agreement to widen Pitt Town Road to Windsor Road.

Schools

Johnson Property Group is required under its State Planning Agreement to dedicate 1.35ha of land to the Department of Education for the purposes of an expansion of Pitt Town school. This school contribution is valued at \$2m. An additional \$976,000, plus CPI, cash contribution is also required of Johnson Property Group, which will bring the total contribution to the Department of Education by Johnson Property Group to in excess of \$3m.

Services

The provision of infrastructure is not expected to be a constraint to the increased development proposed under this application.

Pitt Town - Area profile and housing demand

Residential development at Pitt Town will fill an existing demand for housing that cannot currently be satisfied elsewhere in the Hawkesbury LGA.

The areas to the south of Pitt Town (and Hawkesbury LGA) have undergone considerable development over the last 10 years. These include:

- Rouse Hill Regional Centre.
- Residential development in the Rouse Hill and Vineyard areas.
- Norwest Business Park.

Lend Lease, partnered with GPT Group is shortly to release Stage 1 of the Rouse Hill Regional Centre (RHRC), a community-based mixed-use development in north-western Sydney. The RHRC site is a 10-hectare site being developed at a cost of \$470 million. The Centre comprises approximately 65,000 square metres of retail space with more than 200 specialty stores and major retailers, a library, learning centre and residential apartments. Housing demand in the area is predicted to undergo a significant net increase as a result of this development. The Regional Plan for this area will release a number of residential blocks, typically ranging we understand from 255 square metres to a maximum of 450 square metres.

In surrounding Rouse Hill areas, infill development is now occurring with the majority of developers finishing subdivisions started many years ago.

Norwest Business Park, a 221 hectare business park has already resulted in increasing housing demand as people move further north to outlying suburbs in the bid to find prime residential building blocks.

Pitt Town is uniquely positioned to satisfy housing demand arising from these developments. Although the Rouse Hill Regional Centre will offer residential allotments in years to come, the demand for family sized building blocks has already become crucial. Pitt Town will offer the variety that existing areas of Rouse Hill/Vineyard and the RHRC cannot; standard and rural residential allotments from a minimum of 550 square metres up to 1 hectare.

In recent times there has been virtually no housing development in the Hawkesbury LGA, apart from small in-fill developments like the popular Windsor Downs community that reached capacity sometime ago with homebuyers forced to look elsewhere.

The Pitt Town area is proven to be popular for families and the basic household structure is primarily made up of couples with children (70%). There is also evidence of demand from residents of outlying areas to move from acreage to more manageable allotments whilst still retaining their association with the Hawkesbury community. Johnson Property Group has a significant waiting list of those interested in purchasing land when it becomes

available, demonstrative of the lack of supply that has been available in previous years in the area. Other agents in the area have also verified the need and request for building blocks in Pitt Town through their real estate offices.

Pitt Town is also well positioned to satisfy housing demand arising from increasing job opportunities in the Hawkesbury LGA.

Social Infrastructure

The 2003 Pitt Town Local Environmental Study undertaken by Connell Wagner and the subsequent 2004 Social Impact Assessment undertaken by Hawkesbury Council's Community Services branch, provided demographic profiles of the Pitt Town investigation area, upon which Amendment 145 was assessed. Social infrastructure is something that must be finalised as part of this application, as the level of development contemplated in this proposal is not sufficient to fund the community infrastructure that previous JPG proposals have contemplated.

Economic Development and Employment

The development of Pitt Town extension, will require provision of substantial infrastructure, including:

State Government

- RTA roads;
- Land and buildings for Pitt Town Primary School;
- Contributions to the Department of Environment and Conservation; and
- Other State Government contributions.

Trunk Services

- Extension of trunk water mains; and
- Extension of Integral Energy high voltage mains.

Hawkesbury City Council

- Section 94 contributions; and
- Section 64 contributions.



In the case of Hawkesbury City Council there are additional costs that may be imposed in regard to the sewer infrastructure. These costs are included in Table 3.

The Section 64 Contribution Plan included the sewer from Pitt Town to McGraths Hill (which caters for the additional lots created and the existing 221 houses and school in Pitt Town) and a contribution for Sydney Water's three town strategy. Council advised on 13 July 2007 that the Pitt Town sewer needs to go to South Windsor, in lieu of the three town strategy contribution. The additional cost to go to South Windsor from McGraths Hill (\$8,234,000) is much greater than the contribution allowance for the three town strategy (\$4,825,198 based on 659 lots). The sewer from McGraths Hill to South Windsor must also cater for the existing sewage at McGraths Hill (which services approx. 3,500 dwellings) as it is Council's intention to shut down this treatment plant sometime in the future.

This burden on the developer is very significant and needs to be reviewed.

The increased lot yield will improve the viability of public transport and hence reduce the need for subsidies. No analysis has been done to calculate the amount of the benefit. However, it is not unreasonable to conclude that the increase in the number of dwellings and residents will contribute to improved viability of providing a public transport service with greater choice and reliability and reduced unit costs.

The increased yield will provide a direct increase in the amount of rates collected by Hawkesbury City Council. The higher densities proposed under the current layout will allow efficient provision of services, providing a net benefit to Council.

In summary, the current proposal will provide:

- A lower contribution cost per lot, leading to greater housing and land affordability;
- Improved ability to fund the initial infrastructure (trunk water and electricity mains);
- Improved viability for public transport; and
- An increased rate base for Council.

In regards to employment opportunities, based on ABS formula, the project will create approximately 1,985 full time annual equivalent years of employment during the



construction phase. This translates into approximately 1,430 full time jobs and 1,100 part time jobs over the 10 year development period. In addition, our JPG Apprenticeship Scheme initiative would provide primarily construction jobs for the area's youth.

CONCLUSION

Johnson Property Group has been involved in the Pitt Town project for some 11 years and has a strong commitment to the Pitt Town area. We have received Section 54 support from Hawkesbury Council to initiate a further rezoning of the land to allow for increased housing density and amendment to lot sizes, that range from 550sqm to over 1 hectare. As a result, and due to the protracted process previously conducted with Hawkesbury Council, we seek Major Project acceptance for a concurrent Concept Plan and Project Application for development associated with the Pitt Town Residential precinct. This Preliminary Assessment Report has been prepared to assist the Minister and the Director General in determining whether this project constitutes a Major Project under Part 3A of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Should the Department of Planning consider this project as a Major Project, we seek Director-General Requirements so that we may commence our Environmental Assessment.

This project will provide an additional opportunity for increased housing stock to be developed in the Pitt Town precinct and would allow development to proceed in a timely manner.