

Preliminary Assessment

Huntlee New Town - Stage 1

Submitted to
Department of Planning
On Behalf of
Huntlee Holdings Pty Ltd

August 2007 ■ 07303

JBA Urban Planning Consultants Pty Ltd operates under a Quality Management System. This report has been prepared and reviewed in accordance with that system. If the report is not signed below, it is a preliminary draft.

This report has been prepared by Gordon Kirkby

Signature  Date 13 Aug 07

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Signature  Date 13 Aug 07

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APPENDICES

A	Letter from Department of Planning dated 19 April 2007
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1.0 Introduction

This preliminary assessment is submitted to the Department of Planning to assist the Director-General in determining the level and scope of the environmental assessment required to accompany a Project Application for Stage 1 of the proposed Huntlee New Town (currently the subject of a Concept Plan Application). Stage 1 of the Huntlee New Town includes the following:

- Subdivision associated with the first residential neighbourhood;
- Subdivision associated with the first component of the employment lands;
- Subdivision for the rural residential development; and
- Site preparation, infrastructure, road works and open space associated with the above.

The preliminary assessment has been prepared on behalf of the applicant, Huntlee Holdings Pty Ltd by JBA Urban Planning Consultants Pty Ltd, and is based on information provided by Huntlee Holdings and its team of specialist consultants. Huntlee Holdings Pty Ltd replaced Hardie Holdings Pty Ltd as the applicant in June 2007.

This preliminary assessment includes the following information relevant to the proposal:

- background to the proposal;
- a description of the project;
- site description;
- proposed planning provisions applying to the site;
- consultation; and
- identification of the environmental issues associated with the project;

1.1 Project Background

In a letter dated 2nd February 2007, JBA Urban Planning, on behalf of the Applicant, wrote to the Minister for Planning requesting that he:

1. agree to consider a rezoning of the Huntlee New Town site by way of its inclusion as a State Significant Site in Schedule 3 of the Major Projects SEPP;
2. form the opinion under Clause 6 of the Major Projects SEPP that the proposal is a Major Project to which Part 3A the Act applies; and
3. authorise the proponent to submit a Concept Plan for the proposed development.

The request was submitted in the context of a Deed of Agreement entered into between the NSW Government and the Applicant for the implementation of an environmental offsets scheme to complement and support the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy (DOP) and the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan (DECC).

The key parameters of the Huntlee proposal as provided for in the Deed of Agreement and request to the Minister are as follows:

- Up to 600 hectares of land to be developed for residential (up to 7,200 lots);
- Up to 93 hectares of land to be developed for rural-residential (300 lots);

- Up to 160 hectares to be developed for employment lands;
- The provision of associated infrastructure including upgrades to local road, bus and rail networks, sewerage and water infrastructure and the dedication of land for education and health services, community facilities and utilities;
- Dedication of 876 hectares of high conservation value land at Huntlee that is identified in the Regional Strategy and the draft Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan (DEC); and
- Dedication to the Government of a further 4988 hectares of conservation land currently owned by Hardie Holdings in other locations in the Lower Hunter Region;

In a letter dated 19 April 2007, the Department of Planning advised that the Minister had agreed to consider listing the Huntlee New Town as a State Significant Site in Schedule 3 of the Major Projects SEPP with appropriate zoning and development controls. The Minister also agreed to concurrently consider a Concept Plan under Part 3A of the EP&A Act for the proposal (**Appendix A**).

On 2nd May 2007, a request for Director General's Requirements for the Concept Plan was submitted to the Department accompanied by a Preliminary Assessment Report (PAR). Huntlee Holdings are currently preparing the Concept Plan and supporting Environmental Assessment Report for submission to the Department.

The PAR for the Huntlee Concept Plan foreshadowed that the Applicant would lodge a separate Project Application and accompanying PAR for construction works associated with the first stage of the Huntlee development and seek to have the Project Application for these works assessed concurrently or shortly following the Concept Plan, pending the outcome of the design process for the Concept Plan.

2.0 Project Description

2.1 Project Overview

This Project Application is for Stage 1 of the Huntlee New Town currently the subject of a Concept Plan application and State Significant Site listing for the Huntlee New Town. The Applicant, Huntlee Holdings are seeking Project approval for the following:

- Subdivision for up to 2000 residential lots, open space and community facilities;
- Works associated with the creation of the Persoonia Park;
- Subdivision for the first stage of the employment lands;
- Subdivision for 300 rural-residential lots;
- Construction of associated community infrastructure including landscaping, open space, and recreation areas; and
- Construction of associated physical infrastructure (both on and off site) including:
 - roads and associated intersections;
 - stormwater management; and
 - water supply and sewerage;

The environmental offsets included in the Deed of Agreement with the NSW Government relate to the concept plan and SSS process and the dedication of conservation lands will occur when the Concept Plan and associated rezoning is approved. The environmental offsets will be assessed as part of the Concept Plan process and are therefore independent of this application.

The expected time-frame for the implementation of Stage 1 to 5 years.

Capital Investment Value

The estimated capital investment value of the Stage 1 works is in excess of \$80 million.

2.2 The Site

2.2.1 Huntlee Location and Context

The Huntlee New Town is located to the south of the town of Branxton in the Hunter Valley of NSW (**Figure 1**). The site straddles Wine Country Drive linking Cessnock with the New England Highway. Within the overall site, the proposed urban area is bounded to the north and east by the Main North Railway and proposed F3 extension link corridor, to the south by the village of North Rothbury and to the west by the Black Creek floodplain. Other adjoining uses include vineyards, rural residential development and general agriculture. The area covered by the Huntlee Concept Plan is shown in **Figure 2**.

This Project Application relates to Stage 1 of the Huntlee New Town Development which will include the first residential neighbourhood, the first component of the employment area and the rural residential areas. The Stage 1 areas in the context of the overall Huntlee Concept Plan area are shown in **Figure 3** and discussed in more detail in the following sections.

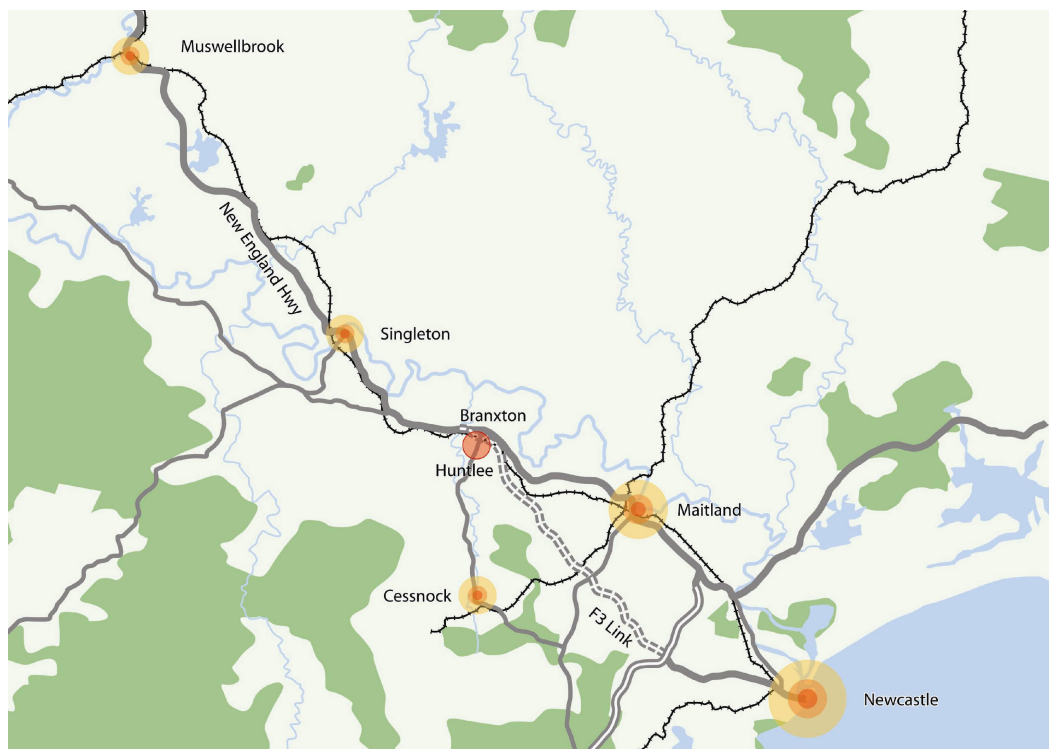


Figure 1 – Site Location and Context

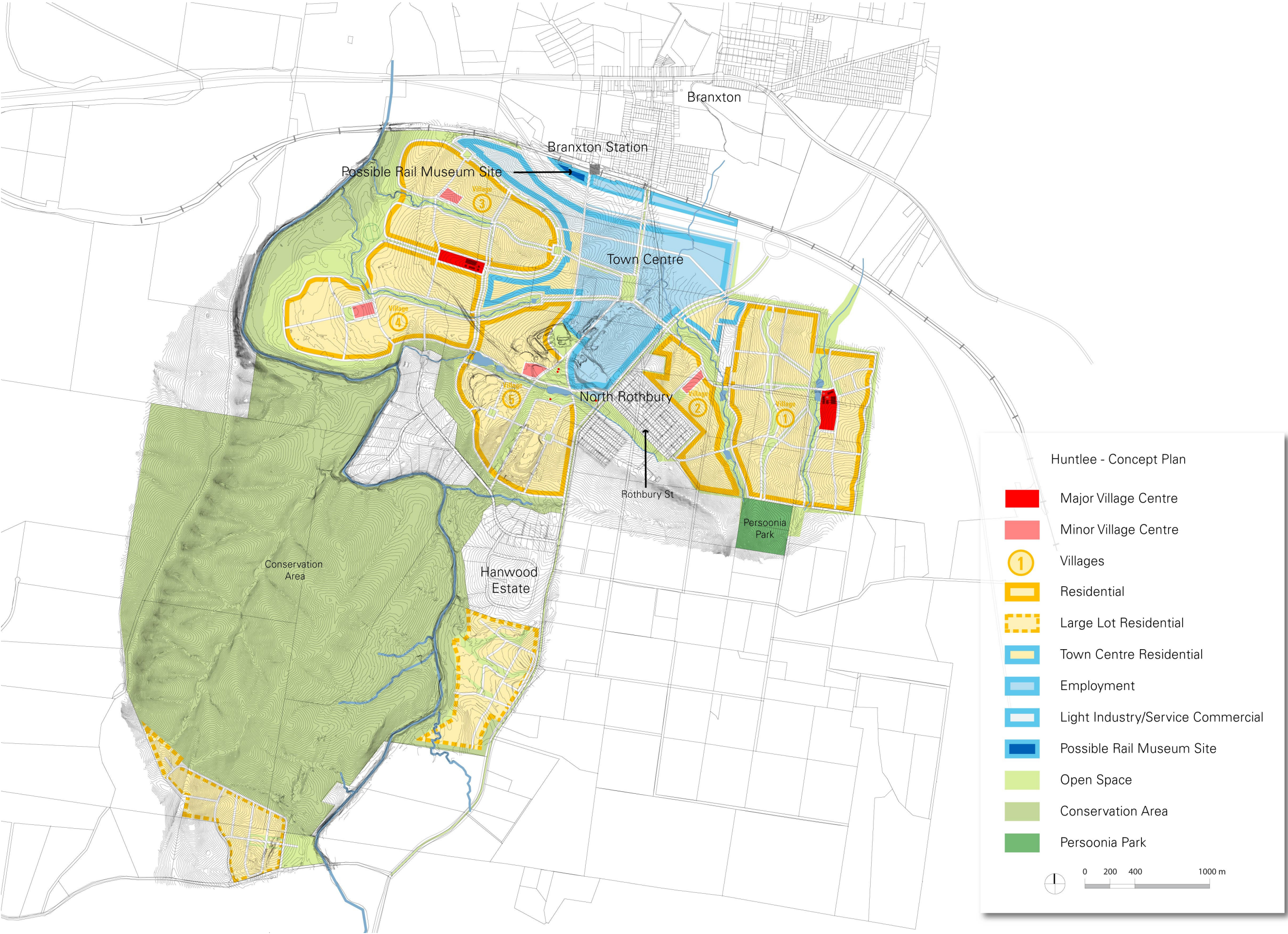


Figure 2 – Huntlee Concept Plan (preliminary)

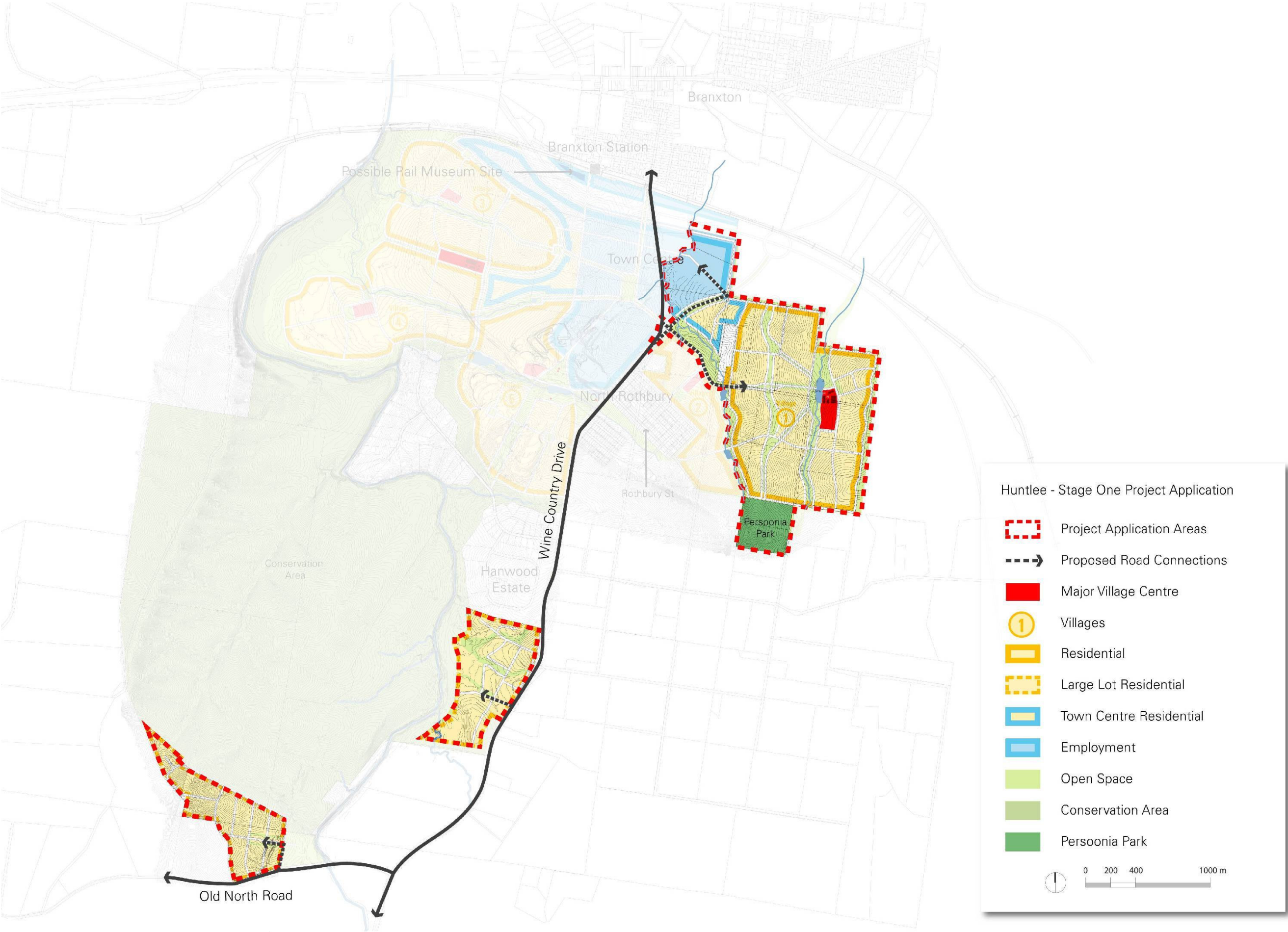


Figure 3 – Stage 1 Project Areas

The First Residential Neighbourhood

The first residential neighbourhood occupies an area of 180 hectares and is located generally in the area to the east of the village of North Rothbury. The first neighbourhood is proposed to accommodate approximately 2000 residential lots and will contain a neighbourhood centre with local retail and community facilities and a primary school. It is proposed that the initial property sales office will be temporarily located in the neighbourhood centre. The Project Application will seek approval for:

- Subdivision for up to 2000 residential lots, open space and community facilities;
- Construction of associated community infrastructure including landscaping, open space, and recreation areas; and
- Construction of associated physical infrastructure (both on and off site) including:
 - roads and associated intersections;
 - stormwater management; and
 - water supply and sewerage;

A preliminary plan of the first residential neighbourhood is shown in **Figure 4**.



Figure 4 – First Residential Neighbourhood (preliminary)

Stage 1 Employment Lands

The first stage of the employment lands is a 24 hectare parcel located adjacent to Wine Country Drive north east of the first residential neighbourhood. The area will ultimately straddle the future realignment of Wine Country Drive when it connects with the F3 extension. This area will also be immediately adjacent to the future Huntlee town centre. The Project Application will seek approval for:

- Detailed design and construction of associated physical infrastructure (both on and off site) including:
 - roads and associated intersections;
 - stormwater management; and
 - water supply and sewerage.

Rural Residential Development

The two rural residential areas are located to the south of the proposed Huntlee urban area. The northern rural residential area is located to the west of Wine Country Drive and is proposed to accommodate up to 129 lots of varying sizes. The southern rural residential area is located on Old North Road is proposed to accommodate up to 171 lots.

The Project Application will seek approval for:

- Subdivision;
- Detailed design and construction of associated physical infrastructure (both on and off site) including:
 - roads and associated intersections;
 - stormwater management; and
 - water supply and sewerage.

Preliminary plans of the northern and southern rural residential areas are shown in **Figures 5 and 6**.



Figure 5 – Northern Rural Residential Area (preliminary)

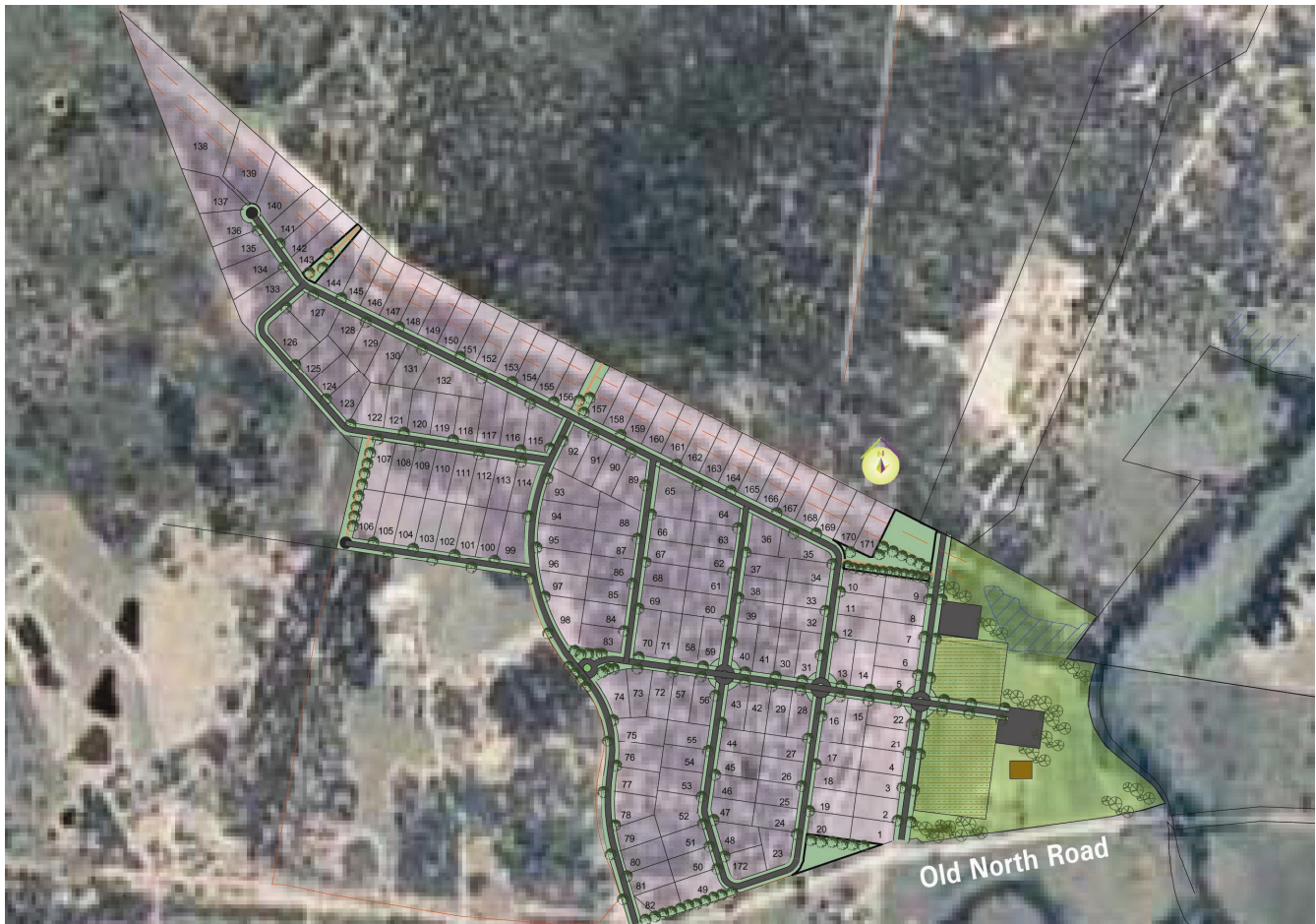


Figure 6 – Southern Rural Residential Area (preliminary)

2.2.2 Current Land Uses

Land use within the Stage 1 development areas is predominantly characterised by gently undulating areas of regrowth woodland and cleared areas used for agricultural uses. The Stage 1 areas of the site are unaffected by the former mining and associated activities that occurred elsewhere within the Huntlee Concept Plan Area. The Stage 1 development areas are owned by Huntlee Holdings.

3.0 Relevant Planning Instruments and Controls

3.1 Overview of Planning Instruments Applying to the Site

The following planning instruments and planning policy documents are of key relevance to the proposed development:

- State Environmental Planning Policy (Major Projects) 2005;
- State Environmental Planning Policy 11: Traffic Generating Development;
- State Environmental Planning Policy 55: Remediation of Land;
- Draft State Environmental Planning Policy 66: Integration of Land Use and Transport;
- Hunter Regional Environmental Plan 1989;
- Lower Hunter Regional Strategy 2006;
- Cessnock Local Environmental Plan 1989; and
- Singleton Local Environmental Plan 1996.

3.2 Existing and Proposed Zoning Provisions

The majority of the Stage 1 development areas are located within the Cessnock LGA including the first residential neighbourhood, the first stage employment area and most of the rural residential areas. A small section of the rural residential development along Old North Road is located within Singleton Shire. As outlined earlier, Huntlee Holdings are seeking a rezoning of the Concept Plan area as a State Significant Site and will submit draft zoning provisions, consistent with the LEP Template, to facilitate the range of land uses proposed for Huntlee as part of its Concept Plan and SSS submission.

Table 1 shows the current zoning provisions and proposed future zones for the various components of Stage 1:

Stage 1 Area	Current Zoning	Proposed SSS Zoning
1 st Residential Neighbourhood	Rural Living	R1 General Residential
Stage 1 Employment Zone	Rural 1(a)	B5 Business Development
Rural Residential	Rural 1(a) – Cessnock Rural 1(a) - Singleton	R5 Large Lot Residential

4.0 Consultation

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with the community, Councils and Government agencies during the formulation of development proposals for the site. This process commenced with a community “Charette” held in July 2005 for the previous “Sweetwater” proposal that was attended Cessnock and Singleton Councils, local community and adjoining land owners and government agency representatives. A number of open days in local villages were also held where members of the community could drop in and asked questions about site planning issues. The issues raised during these processes have informed the current planning for the Huntlee New Town.

As part of the current Concept Plan process, an information session was held with relevant State Government Agencies, utility providers and local Councils on 29th May 2007. The session included a presentation on the project, a site inspection and a question and answer session. Subsequent meetings have been held with a number of agencies and Councils on a range of on-going matters associated with the Huntlee proposal.

Huntlee Holdings has developed an on-going consultation strategy that encompasses Councils, Government agencies, the original community Charette participants, other community groups and Aboriginal groups. Issues associated with the Stage 1 Project Application will be addressed as part of that process and run concurrently with the concept plan consultation.

5.0 Preliminary Assessment

The information below has been prepared to assist the Director-General in identifying the general requirements and key environmental issues associated with the project.

A number of environmental studies and assessments are currently being prepared, in accordance with the Director-General's Requirements for Huntlee as part of the Concept Plan and SSS process. These studies will address and resolve key environmental and infrastructure issues across the entire Huntlee Concept Plan area. In many cases these studies will apply to the Stage 1 project and resolve issues at the Concept Plan stage. For other issues, the Stage 1 environmental assessment will provide greater detail in terms of design and engineering and implementing commitments made in the Concept Plan.

5.1 Approvals and Permits

In the absence of the provisions of Part 3A of the EP&A Act, the proposed development may have required approvals and permits under the following Acts:

- Roads Act 1993
- National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974
- Water Management Act 2000
- Rural Fires Act 1977
- Fisheries Management Act 1994
- Native Vegetation Act 2003

These agencies are being consulted during the preparation of the Concept Plan process. This consultation will also include the Stage 1 Project Application.

5.2 Matters of National Environmental Significance

The Huntlee site contains a number of threatened species and ecological communities that are listed in the schedules to the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). These matters of National Environmental Significance are likely to be affected by the proposal and accordingly a referral has been made to the Department of Environment and Water Resources (Cwth) to determine if the proposal is a controlled action requiring approval under the EPBC Act. Should the Commonwealth declare the Concept Plan a Controlled Action; the Stage 1 Project Application will address any matters raised by the Commonwealth as part of the EPBC process.

5.3 Overview of Potential Environmental Impacts

The key environmental considerations associated with the proposed development are as follows:

- Urban Structure
- Built Form
- Transport and Access

- Infrastructure Location, Provision, Staging and Funding

Other issues to be addressed in the assessment include:

- Flora and Fauna
- Mine Subsidence
- Water Management
- Bushfire Management
- Employment Generating Uses and Economic Development

5.3.1 Key Issues

Urban Structure

Analysis will be undertaken to develop a detailed urban structure of the Stage 1 areas, consistent with the overall Concept Plan. This analysis will include:

- land use (residential, employment, community etc);
- subdivision patterns;
- recreation and open space provision;
- road layout, hierarchy and local access points;
- pedestrian and cycle access and circulation;

Built Form and Urban Design

The Project Application will incorporate and further develop in detail the urban design principles underpinning the Huntlee Concept Plan. These principles are being developed in the context of the site's setting including landscape, topography, views and vistas and former land uses. The Project Application will include a development control plan to ensure high standards of urban design and landscaping are achieved in subsequent development.

Transport and Access

The Project Application will include the construction of roads and associated intersections and infrastructure within the Stage 1 areas. The assessment will address:

- transport and traffic planning within the Stage 1 areas and consistency with the overall Concept Plan traffic assessment and proposed road network;
- interim traffic generation and access arrangements prior to the F3 Extension and Wine Country Drive re-alignment;
- consistency with public transport proposals in the Concept Plan; and
- pedestrian and cycling connections to the local area and key transport nodes (i.e. routes and facilities).

Infrastructure Location, Provision Staging and Funding

The Stage 1 Project Application will implement the utility and infrastructure servicing report to be prepared for the Huntlee Concept Plan. The application will include location and construction of stormwater, water supply and sewerage infrastructure both on and off site to service the Stage 1 development areas and, where required, infrastructure required at this stage to accommodate future development stages.

Implementation and construction of required regional infrastructure will be incorporated, consistent with the provisions of any Voluntary Planning Agreement with the Minister for Planning. The Project Application will be accompanied by a draft Voluntary Planning Agreement with Cessnock and Singleton Councils for the provision and or funding of local community infrastructure.

5.3.2 Other Issues

Flora and Fauna

An Ecological Constraints Master Plan (ECMP) for the Huntlee site is being reviewed for the Huntlee Concept Plan in the context of the Environmental Offsets Scheme in the Deed of Agreement with the NSW Government and the requirements of the DOP and DECC. The Stage 1 Application will include the proposed 17 hectare *Persoonia* Reserve to be dedicated to the NSW Government for the conservation, research and propagation of *Persoonia Pauciflora*.

The Stage 1 Application will address the recommendations of the ECMP as they relate to the development areas, habitat / riverine corridors and landscaping

Mine Subsidence

A small section of the southern rural residential area is potentially affected by subsidence associated with former mining activities. The Project Application assessment will address this issue and any restrictions or guidelines associated with development in this area will be considered in the proposed subdivision layout and infrastructure provision for this area.

Water Management

Stormwater management guidelines are being prepared for the Huntlee Concept Plan. The guidelines will ameliorate the impact of stormwater from the development on the flow and water quality downstream, including the implementation of water sensitive urban design principles. The Stage 1 Project Application will detail stormwater management infrastructure location and designs.

The first residential neighbourhood, first stage employment area and the southern rural residential area are all above the 1 in 100 year flood level. The western portions of the northern rural residential area are within the 1 in 100 year flood level. This will be a factor in the subdivision layout to ensure lots incorporate developable lands.

Bushfire Management

The planning and assessment underpinning the Huntlee Concept Plan will include bushfire planning principles to minimise the overall risk, consistent with relevant guidelines and taking into account staging of development. These principles will be reflected in the design of Stage 1 development areas and the location and extent of asset protection zones will be determined as part of the Stage 1 Project Application.

European Heritage

No items listed in Hunter Regional Environmental Plan (Heritage) 1989, Cessnock LEP 1989 or Singleton LEP 1996 are within or adjacent to the Huntlee Concept Plan areas. Nor are there any sites listed on the State Heritage Register. The former Rothbury Colliery however is listed in the Heritage REP as an item requiring further investigation. This area is not included in the Stage 1 application.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

A preliminary archaeological options and constraints study of indigenous archaeology on the site was undertaken for the Huntlee site in 2003. This study is being reviewed as part of the Huntlee Concept Plan process and consultation with Aboriginal Groups on the revised study has been undertaken. The original study did not identify any archaeological sites or nominate any potential cultural heritage areas within the Stage 1 project.

6.0 Conclusion

Huntlee Holdings is seeking approval for a Project Application for subdivision and infrastructure works associated with the first stage of the Huntlee New town development. The information contained in this preliminary assessment is to assist the Director General in determining the level and scope of any requirements for the environmental assessment to accompany the project application.

The environmental assessment report that will accompany the Project Application will be prepared in accordance with the Director-General's Requirements and in the context of the overall Huntlee Concept Plan and the Environmental Offsets Scheme underpinning the Deed of Agreement with the NSW Government.