

4 September 2011

Mr Martin Karm
Statutory Planner
Planning and Delivery, Asset Management Directorate
NSW Department of Education and Communities
35 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

HUNTLEE STAGE 1 PROJECT APPLICATION

Dear Mr Karm

I refer to your Department's submission in response to the public exhibition of the Huntlee New Town Stage 1 Project Application and the subsequent meeting at your office with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and our client, Huntlee Pty Ltd, on 11 May 2011.

In your submission you advised that the location of the proposed primary school in the Stage 1 Residential Village 1 area was not considered to be a suitable location for a number of reasons, mainly relating to its proximity to flood liable land and potential safety concerns for school children. In response to your submission, the location of the proposed school has been revised to ensure that it addresses these issues and meets the requirements set out in the NSW Department of Education and Communities' *Draft Advisory Notes for Developers and Consent Authority for Master Planning New Education Facility Sites*.

This letter and supporting information describes the new location of the proposed primary school site and its compliance with the relevant guidelines and issues previously raised by your Department. It should be read in conjunction with the supporting plan appended to this letter (**Attachment A**).

1.0 BACKGROUND

Huntlee is located to the south of the town of Branxton in the Hunter Valley of NSW. The site straddles Wine Country Drive (MR 220) 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 the Hunter Expressway corridor, to the south by the village of North Rothbury and to the west by the Black Creek floodplain.

The Project Application relates to Stage 1 of Huntlee. The Stage 1 Residential Village located to the east and north of the existing village of North Rothbury. The first stages of the employment lands are located between North Rothbury and Branxton, straddling Wine Country Drive. The 120 large lot residential area is located to the south of the site on Wine Country Drive some 1.5km south of the village of North Rothbury.

2.0 ISSUES

In a letter dated April, 2011 the following issues were raised by DEC regarding the school's original position:

School Site Location

- a) *The site is situated on and adjacent to land mapped as flood prone. Locating school children on land prone to flooding is not supported for the following reasons:*
 - I. *School communities are identified in Local DisPlans as a community group likely to require special attention in relation to the impact of a source of risk (such as flooding) and are therefore vulnerable in such circumstance.*
 - II. *Places school children and teachers in danger of being affected by life threatening floods, resulting in unacceptable life safety risks that can be avoided through good planning.*
 - III. *Schools are identified by Emergency Management NSW as potential evacuation spaces during a State emergency. Locating the school site on flood land would likely discount the facility being used for such purposes during periods of significant flooding threats. This represents a loss for the whole community. Good village and town planning would dictate that education facilities are sited in areas where its uses can be of significant community value in times of distress.*
 - IV. *Creeks and water courses will pose a general security issue for the school due to trespassing over the creek. Particular concern would be focussed on young primary school infants who would be located within the vicinity of the creek.*
 - V. *Locating school land on flood land will result in increased construction costs to meet building standards for flood conditions.*
 - VI. *Locating school on flood land requires an Emergency Flood Plan thus requiring the school to maintain and update provisions and preparation for flood risk, safety and evacuations.*

Staging and delivery of education infrastructure

The proposal outlines a subdivision in 2014/2015 for the school site. The provisions for a new school are driven by demographic conditions and budgetary allocations. Therefore the proponent should note that whilst a school site may be subdivided in 2014/2015, its actual delivery may differ to that projected by the proponent.

It is recommended the proponent investigate and consult with the Department on staging and delivery of education establishments as an ongoing matter.

State Infrastructure contributions

In the absence of a specific education contribution in the VPA and a final binding Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) over the Lower Hunter Region the proposal will place a considerable constraint on the Department in terms of the provision of future education infrastructure.

Continuing Consultation

Ongoing consultation regarding the other school sites, delivery and detailed planning and design of proposed education infrastructure is required. It is recommended that the proponent undertake continuing consultation with the Department and include consultation as a specific Statement of Commitment.

3.0 NEW SCHOOL SITE

In response to the issues raised above and the new Education Facility Master Plan Guidelines the school has been relocated approximately 150m to the east. The new school location and amended village centre design means that the school is now completely outside the land identified as 1 in 100 year flood liable. The new location ensures there is an adequate buffer (100m) between the flood liable land and the school. The new school site is also entirely above the flood planning level which includes a 0.5m freeboard over the 1 in 100 year flood level.

The new location means that the school can safely be used as a community meeting point during periods of significant flooding threats and the school no longer needs to prepare and maintain an Emergency Flood Plan.

A buffer has also been created between the new school site and the creek. This area (the previous school site) will now be developed partially for the neighbourhood village centre and partly for residential purposes. Creeks and water courses were identified as a potential security issue for school children due to potential trespassing. The amended design will significantly reduce the likelihood of trespassing occurring from the creek into the school, thus improving the safety of school children.

Further recommendations from DEC include that the proponent investigate and consult with the Department on staging and delivery of education establishments as an ongoing matter and that the proponent include consultation as a specific Statement of Commitment.

Ongoing consultation with DEC will be undertaken and be included as a specific Statement of Commitment. Final details of an education contribution are still to be finalised.

4.0 MASTER PLANNING NEW EDUCATION FACILITY SITES

An architectural plan of the new school location prepared by Cox Richardson is attached at **Appendix A**.

Compliance with relevant criteria for establishing a suitable site for Government education facilities is set out in **Table 1** below.

Establishing a suitable site for Government education facilities

Table 1 - Key development information is summarised in

Item	Description	Compliance / Comment
General	Support strategic policy goals of NSW State Government as identified in State Plan, Metropolitan and Sub Regional Strategies	The Huntlee proposal is specifically identified within the Sub Regional Strategy as a major urban release area
Surface Area	New Greenfield Primary School - 3.0 Hectares	Proposed school lot is 3 ha in size
Shape of Site	Shape of site should be regular	School lot is rectangular in shape
Sitting general	Located relatively central to residential catchment area	Due to site constraints the school is located just off centre to the east, this position however is still centrally located within the residential catchment area
Siting Distance	As far as possible, a primary school should be within 1.6kms road distance of the bulk of its likely drawing area	The bulk of the proposed school's likely drawing area is within 1.6km.
Bushfire	Not located within or adjacent to land mapped as Bush Fire Prone or on a site that requires an Asset Protection	The Huntlee Stage 1 Development Area is located within bushfire prone areas as indicated on Cessnock

Item	Description	Compliance / Comment
	Zone (APZ)	Council's Bushfire Prone Land Map. An APZ is to be created around the entire Stage 1 development area. As the school site is centrally located within the Stage 1 development it is not within or adjacent to the APZ.
Air Quality	Site will not give rise to significant issues associated with dust, smoke, odours or the like	The location of the site will not cause or be impacted by issues such as dust, smoke or odours as this is a new greenfield residential development.
Topography	Not located on land that has a slope greater than 1 in 10 or requires substantial cut and fill	The topography of the site is characterised by gently undulating terrain and is generally defined 0–5% grade. The site will not require substantial cut and fill.
Water Quality	Not located within or immediately adjacent to land mapped as being within 1 in 100 year flood levels	The location of the school is approximately 100m from land marked as the 100 year flood level.
Land forms, geology and soils	Not located on land identified as being contaminated, high soil erosion and or/stability concerns, mapped as high probability of Acid Sulphate Soils occurring	The site does not have any stability concerns nor have a high probability of Acid Sulphate Soils. The site is not identified as contaminated.
Ecology	Not located on land that supports: ■ Endangered Ecological Community ■ Threatened or endangered flora and fauna ■ Sensitive areas (wetlands, bushlands, etc)	An Ecological Constraints Master Plan assessment showed that the large majority of threatened species and ecological communities found at Huntlee are represented in the proposed conservation areas in the south of the site. Further the Environmental Lands Offset Agreement, involving the dedication of up to 780 ha at Huntlee and up to a further 4,988 ha of conservation land in a number of locations in the Lower Hunter Valley Region provides robust ecological outcomes for threatened species and ecological communities. The proposed school site itself does not contain any threatened species, populations or ecological communities.
Indigenous Heritage	Not located on land identified as an Aboriginal place of Heritage Significance or subject to a Native Title claim	There are no places of Aboriginal significance and the site is not the subject of Native Title Claim
European Heritage	Not located on land identified as an archaeological site or has a Heritage Item	There are no known items of European heritage or archaeological significance on site

Item	Description	Compliance / Comment
Traffic, Transport and access	The school should be located on a distributor or collector road (to alleviate noise and traffic problems) Ensure site is easily accessible for a range of transport modes that include: walking, public transport, private vehicle and bike riding	The school occupies the entire block and is bounded by 4 roads. The principal frontage to the site is identified as a collector road in the road hierarchy and will also form part of the bus route through village. The school site is also easily accessible with walking and cycle paths, private vehicles access and public transport options available.
Urban Design	- Has 3 street frontages - Main Street frontage should not be located opposite a T-intersection - Desirable to be adjacent to a community playing field - Allows for security and privacy through visibility and appropriate surrounding development - Is not overly overshadowed by surrounding development - Considered future form and structure of centres, towns and future development	- The site has 4 street frontages. - The main street frontage is not located opposite a T-intersection. - The site is located adjacent a community park and within 100m of a linear open space network. - The school is surrounded by residential development, a village centre and open space providing high levels of visual security. - The school will not be significantly overshadowed by surrounding development. - The future of the site and its surrounding development has been considered in the design. The school site has been located adjacent to the proposed village centre and on a public transport route.
Land use	Not located within or immediately adjacent to: - Land zonings (IN1 – IN4), (E1-E4), (W1-W3) - Special uses such as: airports, substations, wind farms and the like - Inappropriate retail and commercial development such as: bottle shops, brothels, registered clubs and the like - Development with potential undesirable impacts or risks such as: flight paths, bulky good premises, hostel, hotel depots and the like	The site is not located within or adjacent to any industrial, environmental or waterway zoned areas. There are no special uses such as airports, wind farms or the like in the surrounding area. Further, the zoning surrounding the site will not contain any inappropriate commercial or retail development. Further there are no undesirable impact risks arising from things such as flight paths or bulky goods warehouses.
Visual Aesthetics	Located so that unpleasant visual land uses (e.g. industrial land uses) are not within short or medium range views	There are no unpleasant visual land uses within any range of views.
Socio-economic	That the site is suitable to result in social inclusive outcomes (e.g. election days, markets) and as emergency shelter and/or meeting points during times of severe socio-economic disturbance	The location of the school is adjacent to the neighbourhood centre of the proposed Residential Village 1 of Huntlee. It will provide a suitable meeting place for community social events such as markets and election days. The location is also suitable for use in times of an emergency

Item	Description	Compliance / Comment
Noise and Vibration	Site is not located nearby or immediately adjacent to high noise or vibration generating development such as flight paths, railway tunnels and the like	The site will be surrounded by residential development and the village centre and will not be impacted by noise or vibrations. The site is over 1km from the Main North Rail Line.
Service and Drainage	■ The site is fully serviced for water, electricity, sewage, gas, telecommunications etc to appropriate capacity for education uses ■ The site is well drained to ensure water logging and consequent instability (slippages) would not appear to be an issue	The site will be fully serviced with the required infrastructure. The site will also be well drained to ensure water logging and slippages do not occur.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Huntlee Pty Ltd has taken into consideration the issues raised by DEC in its submission to the public exhibition of Stage 1 Project Application, and at the meeting held in May 2001. As a consequence, Huntlee proposes to redesign the Stage 1 Residential Village to relocate the proposed primary school to a site approximately 100m to the east of the original site. The new site has been assessed against the relevant criteria in the *Draft Advisory Notes for Developers and Consent Authority for Master Planning New Education Facility Sites*. It is considered that the proposed new site meets the criteria set down in the draft advisory notes.

It would be appreciated if the department could advise that it is satisfied in principle that its issues have been addressed to enable the plans for the Stage 1 Project area to be revised to include the new site as part of the Preferred Project Report.

Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9409 4912 or gkirkby@jbaplanning.com.au.

Yours faithfully



Gordon Kirkby
Director