

30 July 2018

17418

Ms Carolyn McNally
Secretary
NSW Department of Planning & Environment
320 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms McNally

**RE: Request for Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements
University of Newcastle, Honeysuckle City Campus – Stage 1A**

We are writing on behalf of The University of Newcastle, the proponent, in relation to a Stage Significant Development (SSD) application for the detailed design proposal of Stage 1A of the proposed University of Newcastle City Campus at 16 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle.

The site is identified on the Honeysuckle State Significant Development Sites Map and the development has a capital investment value in excess of \$10 million and therefore it is SSD for the purposes of *the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act).

The purpose of this letter is to request the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed development. To support the request for the SEARs this letter provides an overview of the proposed development, sets out the statutory context, and identifies the key likely environmental and planning issues associated with the proposal.

1.0 The site

The Honeysuckle City Campus at 16 Honeysuckle Drive comprises three parcels of land, identified as Sites 1-3 in **Figure 1**, with a total area of 20,412m². The land identified for Stage 1A (marked as Lot A1 on the Concept Plan) is situated entirely within Site 1, which has a total area of 8,546m² and remains an undeveloped parcel of land.

The Stage 1A Site is legally described as Part Lot 1 in DP 1163346 (Site 1).

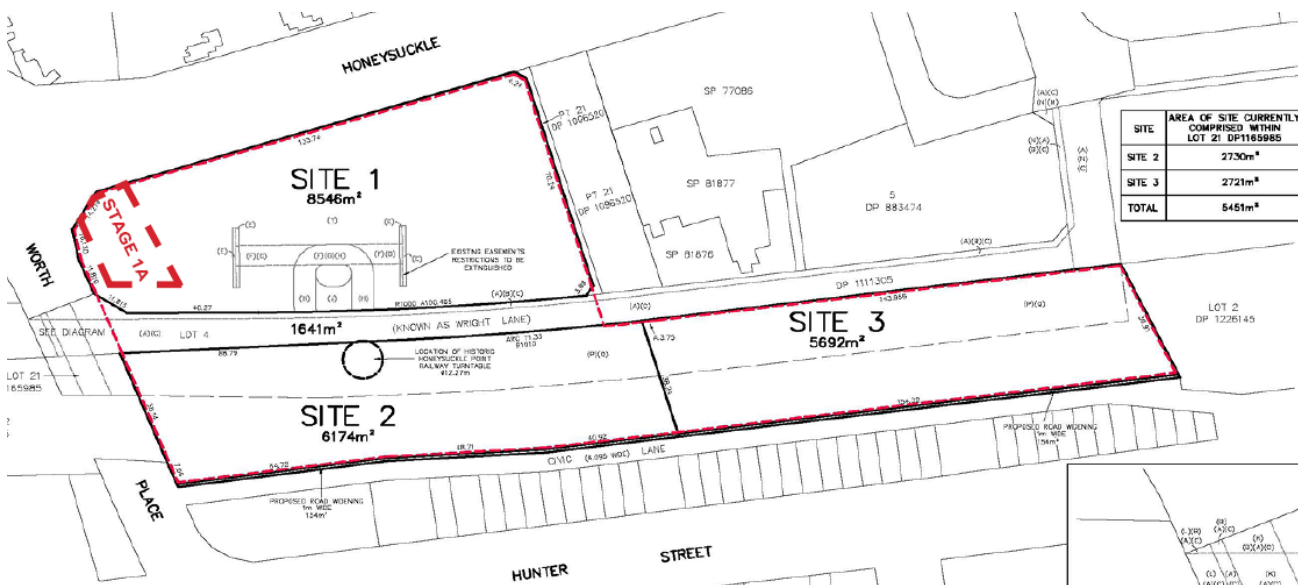


Figure 1 The Stage 1A within Honeysuckle Campus boundary

Source: Cox

The surrounding land uses of the site are depicted at Figure 2. North of the Site is a series of predominantly high density shop top housing developments with some commercial and tourism uses between. The Honeysuckle Hotel is located beyond this, on the edge of the Hunter River. East of the Site is a mixed use precinct comprising residential, commercial and tourism uses, including the Newcastle Museum. Low to medium scale commercial development is located south of the Site, along Hunter Street, as well as the University’s recently completed NeW Space building. West of the site is predominantly residential and commercial development along Honeysuckle Drive.



Figure 2 Site context

Source: Cox

2.0 Background

The University of Newcastle's NeW Futures Strategic Plan (2016-2025) establishes the University's strategies to support their global and national agenda in education, research and innovation. The plan includes a long term vision of delivering new modes of education focused on compact campus settings in central locations to promote engagement and collaboration with the community and to ensure the University continues to attract the best local and international students and academic staff.

A SSD application (SSD 9262) was recently submitted to the Department that seeks Concept Plan approval under Section 4.21 of the Act for a new Honeysuckle City Campus that encapsulates Sites 1-3. It seeks to establish the planning and design framework to guide the future development of the site in accordance with the University's long term vision.

The Stage 1A proposal is to sit within the framework established by the overall Concept Plan for the Honeysuckle City Campus and seeks consent for the detailed design of the first building of the new campus.

3.0 Description of proposed development

The SSD application for Stage 1A will seek approval for the development of a new building on the Honeysuckle City Campus that accommodates the University's School of Creative Industries (SOCl) and an 'Innovation Hub'. These facilities will provide learning studios and flexible spaces for co-working, meetings and informal collaboration. In summary, the Stage 1A proposal includes:

- Design and construction of a single standing, multi-storey building on the corner of Worth Place and Honeysuckle Drive;
- Space for the use of the Innovation Hub, SOCl and building fit out to make these spaces suitable for their uses;
- Associated landscaping and infrastructure works.

A preliminary built form layout plan prepared by Cox is provided at **Figure 3**, delineating the location of Stage 1A in context of the wider Concept Plan for the long term development of the campus.



Figure 3 Preliminary Concept Plan

Source: Cox

4.0 Planning context

4.1 Strategic Planning

The following strategic planning documents are relevant to the proposal and will be considered through the preparation of the SSDA:

- Hunter Regional Plan 2036;
- Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036; and
- NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan 2012.

In particular, the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 is a 20 year blueprint for the future of the Hunter and the development of the Site will play an important role in meeting its strategic planning objectives. Developing a national Centre of Excellence for Health and Education is one of the four priority objectives of the plan and expanding the University’s presence in the city centre with a creative and collaborative educational facility aligns with this objective.

The development is also expected to play a significant role in revitalising the Newcastle City Centre in accordance with Direction 3 of the Plan as it will be a catalyst for further investment in the centre, attracting new skilled jobs and encouraging innovation and partnerships with the private sector.

The University’s expansion through Stage 1A will also assist in creating a substantial population base in the centre, including students, staff and visitors to the university, which will support local business and provide activation of the surrounding public domain.

The Draft Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036 is the first-ever draft metropolitan plan for the greater Newcastle area and it builds on the strategies outlined in the Hunter Regional Plan 2036. The Draft Plan emphasises the importance of the University’s presence in the city centre, with Strategy 1.5 promoting the expansion of education and innovation clusters to facilitate the growth of complementary land uses such as research institutions and student housing. Stage 1A aligns with this strategy by providing a new School of Creative Industries and Innovation Hub within the city centre.

4.2 State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011

State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011 (SEPP SRD) identifies development that is declared to be State Significant. Clause 2 of Schedule 2 of the Policy provides that the proposed development as described herein is SSD as follows:

Development that has a capital investment value of more than \$10 million on land identified as being within any of the following sites on the State Significant Development Sites Map:

- ...
- (d) *Honeysuckle Site*
- ...

As the Site is located within the Honeysuckle State Significant Development area and the proposal has a capital investment value in excess of \$10 million it is classified as SSD.

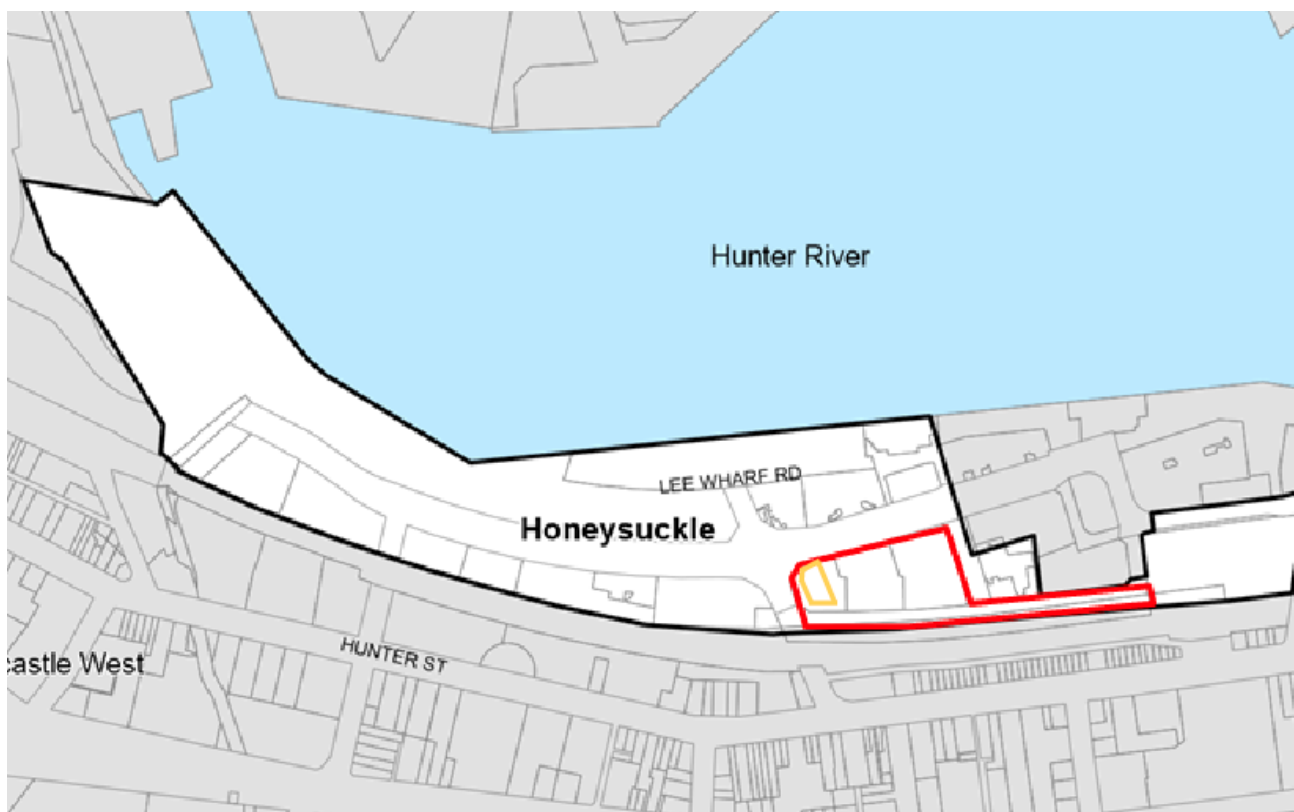


Figure 4 Honeysuckle SSD Site Map

Source: SEPP (State & Regional Development) 2011

4.3 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The Act establishes the assessment framework for SSD. Under Section 4.38 of the Act the Minister for Planning is the consent authority for SSD. Section 4.39 requires that a development application for SSD is to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement in the form prescribed by the Regulations. This request for SEARs will inform the requirements of the EIS.

4.4 Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012

Under the Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012) the entirety of the land included as part of Stage 1A is zoned B4 Mixed Use. The proposed development is for an education establishment, which is permissible with consent in the B4 zone.

4.5 Other planning policies

In addition to the above, the following policies apply to the site and will need to be considered as part of the SDD application:

- State Environmental Planning Policy No. 55 – Remediation of Land (SEPP 55).
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007.
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017.

5.0 Overview of likely environmental and planning issues

Based on our preliminary environmental assessment, the following are the key environmental assessment issues that will need to be considered as part of the future DA:

Urban design and built form

The form, layout, and siting of development proposed as part of Stage 1A will be consistent with the envelopes approved as part of the overall Concept Plan for the University Honeysuckle City Campus. The EIS will address the height, density, bulk and scale of the proposed development within the context of the locality and will demonstrate how the proposal integrates with the local environment and the desired future character of the area as established by the Concept Plan.

Design Excellence

Clause 7.5(3) of the LEP requires that all new development in the Newcastle City Centre exhibit 'design excellence' and criteria are prescribed in the clause that must be met for design excellence to be achieved. Clause 7.5(4) also specifies criteria that trigger the requirement for a design competition to be undertaken for a development, however the development proposed for Stage 1A does not trigger any of the specific criteria.

The Site is within the defined Newcastle City Centre area and as such must satisfy the design excellence criteria under Clause 7.5(3). The Concept Plan establishes the built form framework for the Site and how design excellence will be achieved through the subsequent stages of development. The design of Stage 1A will reflect the built form framework and Urban Design Guidelines established by the Concept Plan.

It is proposed to engage with the State Design Review Panel (SDRP) throughout the design process in accordance with GANSW's Design Excellence Guidelines. In this regard, it is proposed to present the first 'design option' to the Panel in the coming weeks, with the view of presenting a 'developed option' prior to formal submission of the SSD application. It is envisioned that a 'resolved option' would subsequently be presented to the Panel as part of the response to submissions process.

Overshadowing and solar access

The EIS will provide a shadow analysis to assess the potential overshadowing impact on existing and proposed development and open space surrounding the site.

Traffic, transport and access

A traffic and parking assessment that encompasses the entirety of the University Honeysuckle City Campus will be prepared by a specialist traffic consultant and submitted with the Concept Plan EIS. The EIS for Stage 1A will demonstrate how the proposed traffic and parking arrangements are consistent with that of the future Concept Plan approval.

Geotechnical/Contamination

A geotechnical and contamination study has been prepared for a previous development proposal at the Site. This will be reviewed in the context of the proposed land uses of Stage 1A and a Phase 2 contamination study and Remediation Action Plan will be developed if necessary.

Flooding and Stormwater

Flood mapping indicates that the site is in a 'Flood Fringe' area and that Worth Place to the west of the site is a major floodway. A detailed flood study was developed as part of the Concept Plan EIS and the Stage 1A development will be consistent with this and incorporate any identified required mitigation measures.

Heritage

While the site is not identified as a heritage item under the LEP 2012, Lots 2 and 3 are located within the Newcastle City Centre Heritage Conservation Area and a number of local heritage items are located within proximity of the Site. As such, the heritage integrity of the proposal will be considered as part of the detailed design of Stage 1A.

Despite not being listed in the LEP as a heritage item, the remnants of a locomotive turntable dating between 1856-1895 and associated with the former Honeysuckle Station are located on the site and are considered to be of high archaeological significance. Previous heritage studies found that the turntable is expected to sit largely within Site 2 and it is recommended for retention. The Concept Plan sets out how the turntable will be retained as part of the delivery of Building B and the Stage 1A application will be consistent with this.

A study of Aboriginal heritage is being undertaken to confirm whether the Site has any Aboriginal archaeological heritage and if so details of how this will be protected will be provided in the Concept Plan.

Biodiversity

The site has previously been cleared and does not contain any significant vegetation. As such a biodiversity waiver request was granted by the Department and OEH for the entire Concept Plan site from the requirement to prepare a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report for the development.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

All new developments are to meet the University's Environmental Sustainability Plan and as such the proposal will demonstrate consistency with the sustainability objectives and requirements of these guidelines as well as any planning controls.

Landscaping

The Stage 1A EIS will include detailed landscape plans identifying the location of future landscaping and relevant details regarding the species to be used in soft and hard landscaping areas.

Acoustic Impacts

The site is proximate to shop-top residencies immediately across Honeysuckle Drive. As such, a Noise Impact Statement addressing acoustic amenity and mitigation measures will be submitted as part of the SSDA. This will also assess the impacts of any external noise sources on the proposed academic use.

Construction and Operational Impacts

The EIS will address and consider the construction and operational impacts of, or on:

- Noise and vibration;
- Construction and operational traffic; and
- Water and air quality impacts.

Disability Access

A Disability Access Review demonstrating an appropriate degree of accessibility in accordance with the Disability (Access to Premises - Buildings) Standards 2010 will be submitted with the SSDA to address matters of disability access.

Building Code of Australia

A BCA Report will be submitted with the Stage 1A EIS, demonstrating the compliance of the development with the Building Code of Australia.

Waste Management

A Waste Management Plan to address storage, collection, and management of waste and recycling within the development will be included as part of the Stage 1A EIS.

Crime Prevention

Crime Prevention will be considered in the Stage 1A application through the inclusion of a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) assessment that includes necessary mitigation measures.

6.0 Consultation

In preparing the EIS, it is expected that the proponent will undertake consultation with the following stakeholders:

- Newcastle City Council;
- State Design Review Panel;
- Hunter Development Corporation;
- Transport for NSW;
- Roads & Maritime Services;
- Office of the Government Architect;
- Office of Environment & Heritage; and
- Surrounding landowners and the community.

7.0 Conclusion

On the basis that the project is classified as SSD in accordance with SEPP SRD, the University of Newcastle formally requests SEARs for the preparation of an EIS for the proposed Stage 1A development of the University Honeysuckle Precinct campus.

We trust that the information detailed in this letter is sufficient to enable the Secretary to issue the SEARs for the preparation of the EIS. Should you have any queries about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9409 4927 or cforrester@ethosurban.com

Yours sincerely,



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