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To whom it may concern,

PRELIMINARY ABORIGINAL OBJECTS DUE DILIGENCE ASSESSMENT – 2 MANDALA PARADE, CASTLE HILL NSW

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Urbis has been engaged by Deicorp Projects Showground Pty Ltd (Deicorp) to prepare the following Preliminary Aboriginal Objects Due Diligence (ADD) letter for a State Significant Development (SSD-15882721) at the Doran Drive Precinct, 2 Mandala Road, Castle Hill NSW (herein referred to as the subject site).

The proposed development is understood to consist of the construction of a 20 storey mixed-use development, comprising retail, commercial and community space, 431 residential units and a public plaza.

The proposed development is understood to follow the recent approval of the Concept SSDA for the Hills Showground Station Precinct on 29 January 2021. As part of this previous SSDA an Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Heritage Assessment was prepared along with a Heritage Interpretation Strategy by GML for the whole of the precinct. The reports to be prepared as part of the existing SEARs will utilise relevant information from these previous reports.

The Planning Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for the SSDA were issued on 30 March 2021. Condition 13 requires the preparation of heritage management documents, as listed below:

> *Include an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment Report in accordance with relevant guidelines, identifying, describing and assessing any impacts for any Aboriginal cultural heritage values on the site, including archaeology.*

An Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Heritage Impact Statement prepared by GML in 2019[1] concluded the following in respect of the Aboriginal archaeological potential of the subject area:

> *The site has been assessed as having nil to low potential for Aboriginal archaeological sites or places. Therefore, the proposed works are unlikely to impact upon Aboriginal archaeological remains or heritage. GML advises that no further mitigation would be*

[1] GML, 2019, *Hills Showground Station Precinct Concept Approval: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Heritage Impact Statement*

required. In addition, GML advises that an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHAR) is not required at this time.

In recognition of this recommendation, a preliminary ADD letter has been prepared, which includes the following:

- Short summary of existing background information, including the GML heritage 2019 report.
- Preliminary search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) register.
- Summary of information, conclusion and recommendations.

It should be noted that this preliminary ADD is intended to summarise and verify the outcomes of GML's 2019 assessment in respect of the Aboriginal archaeological potential of the subject area. As such, it does not comply with the steps as outlined in the *Due Diligence Code of Practice for the Protection of Aboriginal Objects in New South Wales* (DECCW, 2010) ('Due Diligence Code').

Text which has been extracted verbatim from GML's 2019 assessment has been italicised throughout.

1.2. SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject site is located at 2 Mandala Road, Castle Hill within the local government area (LGA) of The Hills Shire Council local government area (LGA) (Figure 1 & Figure 2). The site is legally described as Lot 55 in DP 1253217.

The site is one of three development precincts that comprise the Hills Showground Station Precinct.

Figure 1 – Regional location

Figure 2 – Location of the subject area

1.3. AUTHORSHIP

This report has been prepared by Alexandra Ribeny (Consultant Archaeologist) with review and quality control undertaken by Balazs Hansel (Associate Director Archaeology).

1.4. LIMITATIONS

No site visit and invasive investigation of archaeological potential has been undertaken to inform this assessment. It must be noted that this report is limited to the desktop identification of the Aboriginal archaeological potential of the subject area. It does not assess potential cultural significance.

This report provides high level analysis of opportunity and risk relating to Aboriginal archaeology for the site and is not intended to serve as a comprehensive archaeological assessment of the subject area.

2. AHIMS SEARCH RESULTS

The search of the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS) was carried out on 24th May 2021 (AHIMS Client Service ID: 593181). The search was carried out for the following area: Eastings: 309179-317707, Northings: 6262717 – 6268698 (approximately 51km^2) with no buffer included.

It should be noted that the AHIMS register does not represent a comprehensive list of all Aboriginal objects or sites in a specified area as it lists recorded sites only identified during previous archaeological survey effort. The wider surroundings of the subject area and the Concord area in general have been the subject of various levels and intensity of archaeological investigations during the last few decades. Most of the registered sites have been identified through targeted, pre-development surveys for infrastructure and maintenance works, with the restrictions on extent and scope of those developments.

The AHIMS search identified no Aboriginal objects and/or places within the subject area. The AHIMS search identified 97 Aboriginal objects and 0 Aboriginal places. Aboriginal objects is the official terminology in AHIMS for Aboriginal archaeological sites. From now-on we will use the term of 'Aboriginal site(s)', 'AHIMS site(s)', 'archaeological site(s) or 'site(s)' to refer and to describe the nature and spatial distribution of archaeological resources in relation to the subject area.

Of the 97 sites identified, two were subsequently determined to be 'note a site'. A further 11 sites are identified in the AHIMS database as 'destroyed' and 4 as 'partially destroyed'. These have not been excluded on the grounds that they are indicative of the overall potential for sites within the vicinity of the subject area.

Figure 3 indicates the location of registered AHIMS sites in relation to the subject area. Basic and extensive AHIMS search results are provided in Appendix 1.

Figure 3 indicates that the majority of Aboriginal sites are concentrated along waterways within the vicinity of the subject area, including Cattai Creek, located approximately 200 metres to the west.

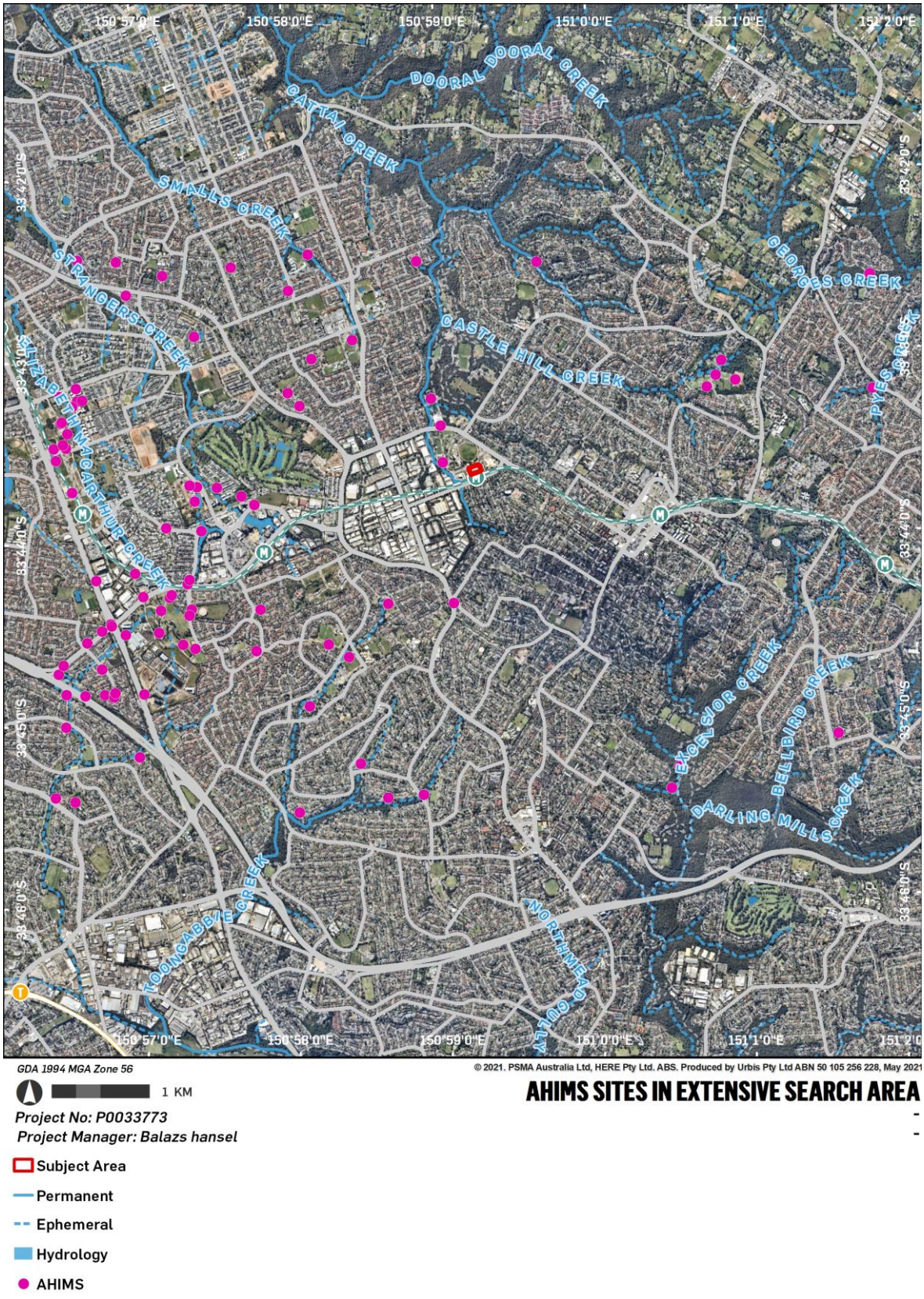

Figure 3 – Location of AHIMS sites relative to subject area

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3. LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

The Due Diligence Code identifies certain landscape features that have high potential for Aboriginal archaeological resources and cultural heritage. The following landscape features are identified as having high potential for Aboriginal objects:

- within 200 m of waters including freshwater and the high tide mark of shorelines; or
- located within a sand dune system; or
- located on a ridge top, ridge line or headland; or
- located within 200 m below or above a cliff face; or
- within 20 m of or in a cave, rock shelter, or a cave mouth.

The subject area is located approximately 200 metres east of Cattai Creek. As outlined in Section 3.2 below, the alignment of the creek was altered in the late 20th century, so that it was relocated 30 metres west of its original location, suggesting that it was originally located closer to the subject area.

Although the proximity of an historical creekline is indicative of Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity, the subject area has been subject to high levels of disturbance from the late 20th century, which is likely to have removed the natural soil horizon. Disturbance levels are further discussed in Section 3.4 below.

3.1. SOIL LANDSCAPE AND GEOLOGY

According to the 1:100,00 series soil landscape maps for Sydney,[2] the site overlies the Hawkesbury and Glenorie soil landscapes. The eastern component of the subject area is located on the Glenorie soil landscape, which occurs on Wianamatta Group shale, and is typically highly erosive, with natural topsoils usually containing friable loam underlain by harder clay. The Glenorie soil landscape in the site is located on a slope, and therefore is expected that any artefact-bearing topsoil would be shallow to a depth of around 150mm. The western portion of the subject area is on the lower-slope Hawkesbury sandstone soil landscape. On these lower slopes the topsoil, a loose quartz sand, tends to be discontinuous between outcrops of sandstone bedrock.

Erosion and high levels of disturbance in the late 20th century (see Section 3.4) are therefore likely to have removed the shallow soil profile which characterised the subject area, reducing Aboriginal archaeological potential.

3.2. HYDROLOGY AND LANDFORM

The subject area is located on a hill slope that slopes gently westwards towards Cattai Creek, 50-450m west of the site. The original Cattai Creek alignment was altered with the construction of the Hills Shire Council Depot, with bulk filling causing it to move around 30m west to its current position. At present, Cattai Creek runs along an artificial, incised channel that has been cut down to a depth of around 10m below the surrounding landscape.[3]

Cattai Creek is a second order tributary of the Hawkesbury River, located to the northwest of the study area. The segment of Cattai Creek in the vicinity of the study area is near the headwaters if a large catchment. It is, therefore, well located to a reliable freshwater water supply that could have supported an Aboriginal population all year round.[4] The creek would have also provided a large amount of

[2] Chapman, G et al. 1989, *Soil Landscapes of the Sydney 1:100 000 Sheet*, Soil Conservation Service of NSW, Sydney.
[3] Coffey Geotechnics, North West Rail Link Geotechnical Interpretive Report, July 2012, p.15.
[4] GML Heritage, Showground Station Precinct: Aboriginal Heritage Assessment, August 2015, p.7.

aquatica and terrestrial fauna, which could be used for food.[5] *The area would also have supported a range of terrestrial fauna, such as kangaroo, wallaby, possum, echidna, bandicoot and smaller animals. The Aboriginal people would also have harvested yams, roots, honey and native fruits.*[6]

3.3. GEOTECHNICAL INVESTIGATION, AUGUST 2020

EI Australia (EI) was engaged by Deicorp Pty Ltd to prepare a geotechnical investigation for the proposed development at the subject site.

Six boreholes were drilled (BH1, BH2, BH3M, BH4M, BH5M and BH6) to depths of 3.0m, 3.95m, 2.9m, 5.0m, 2.0m and 1.5m respectively. The location of the boreholes is indicated in Figure 4. The identified subsurface conditions of the subject site consisted of 0.6-4.0 metres of gravelly sand fill overlying 0.2-1.9 metres of hard silty and sandy clay overlying sandstone bedrock (Figure 5).

This corroborates an assessment of the historical development of the site (see Section 3 of the HAIS for further detail), which indicates that the subject site was subject to significant disturbance from the late 20th century, which would have removed natural soil profiles and resulted in the deposition of large quantities of fill. Fill levels were greater for BH1 and BH4M, consistent with the observation that the site ascends to the east.

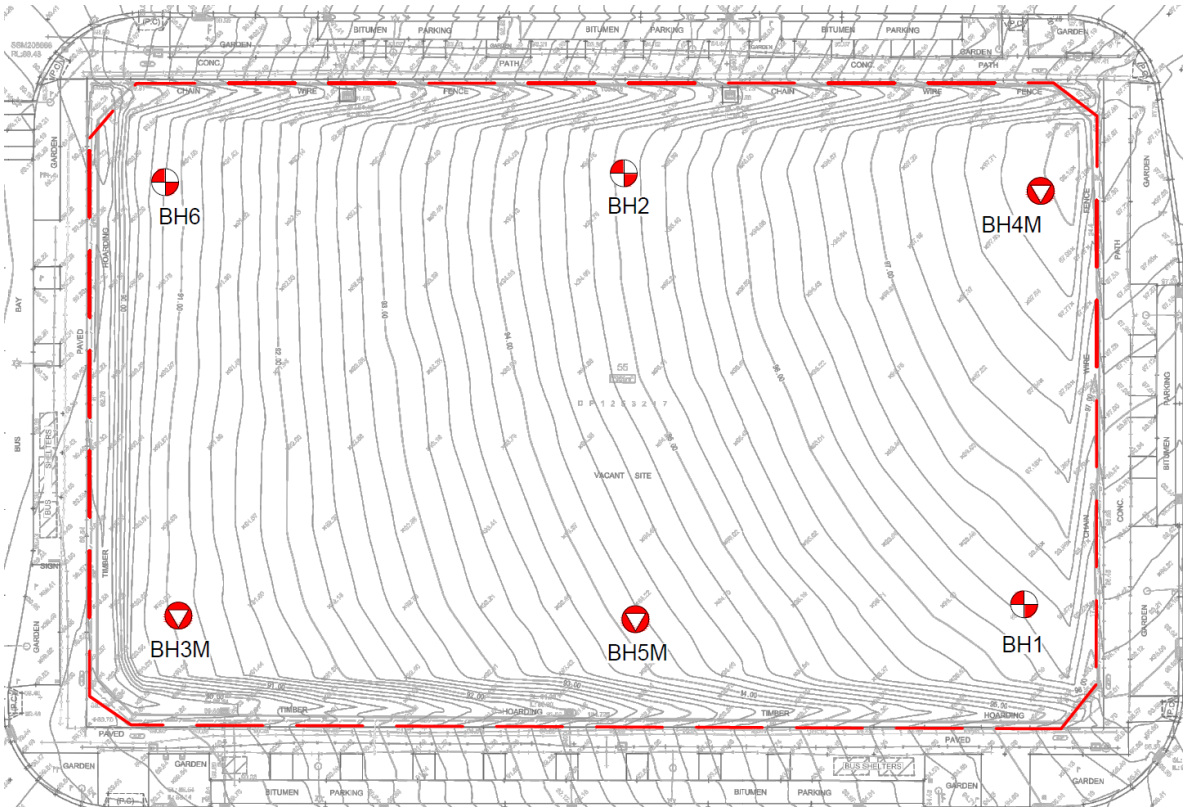

Figure 4 – Location of bore holes

Source: EI Australia, August 2020

[5] GML Heritage, Showground Station Precinct: Aboriginal Heritage Assessment, August 2015, p.8
[6] Ibid, p.7

Unit	Material[2]	Depth to Top of Unit (m BEGL)[1]	RL of Top of Unit (m AHD)[1]	Observed Thickness (m)	Comments
1	**Fill**	0.00	90.80 to 98.00	0.60 to 4.00	Gravelly sand fill was observed at the surface of BH4M and BH5M overlying low to medium plasticity silty clay fill. Low plasticity silty clay fill with sandstone and igneous gravels was observed at the surface of BH1, BH2, BH3M and BH6. Fill was assessed, based on our observations during drilling and SPT N Values to be variably compacted with values ranging from 8 to refusal indicated by hammer bounced;
2	**Residual Soil**	0.60 to 4.00	88.40 to 95.90	0.20 to 1.90	Medium plasticity, very stiff to hard silty clay and sandy clay with trace ironstone gravels, grading into weathered sandstone with depth. SPT values ranged from 21 to refusal indicated by hammer bounced;
3	**Class IV/V Sandstone**	2.00 to 4.60	91.80 to 94.40	0.40 to 0.90	Extremely to distinctly weathered, low strength sandstone.
4	**Class III Sandstone**	1.50 to 5.00	88.10 to 93.50	-[3]	Slightly weathered to fresh, high strength sandstone with Laminite beds. Laminite consisting of fine to medium grained sandstone interbedded with dark grey shale was encountered in all the boreholes at depths ranging from 23.33m BEGL (RL of about 67.67m) and 28.89m BEGL (RL of about 69.11m) with thickness of up to 3.70m.

Figure 5 – Summary of subsurface conditions

Source: EI Australia, August 2020

3.4. DISTURBANCE HISTORY

The soil profile of the subject site consists of 0.6-4 metres of fill overlying 0.2-1.9 metres of residual soil which sits immediately above sandstone bedrock (see Section 3.3 above). This stratigraphy suggests that Council activities on the site in the late 20th century, which included the conversion of the eastern portion of the site for playing fields, construction and demolition of the former Hills Entertainment Centre and subsequent depot operations, resulted in the natural soil profile being stripped almost down to bedrock and the deposition of significant fill levels.

Intact natural soils have therefore been removed from the subject area and, consequently, any aboriginal archaeological resources.

For further information in respect of the historical development of the subject area, reference should be made to Section 3 of the Heritage and Archaeological Impact Statement (HAIS).

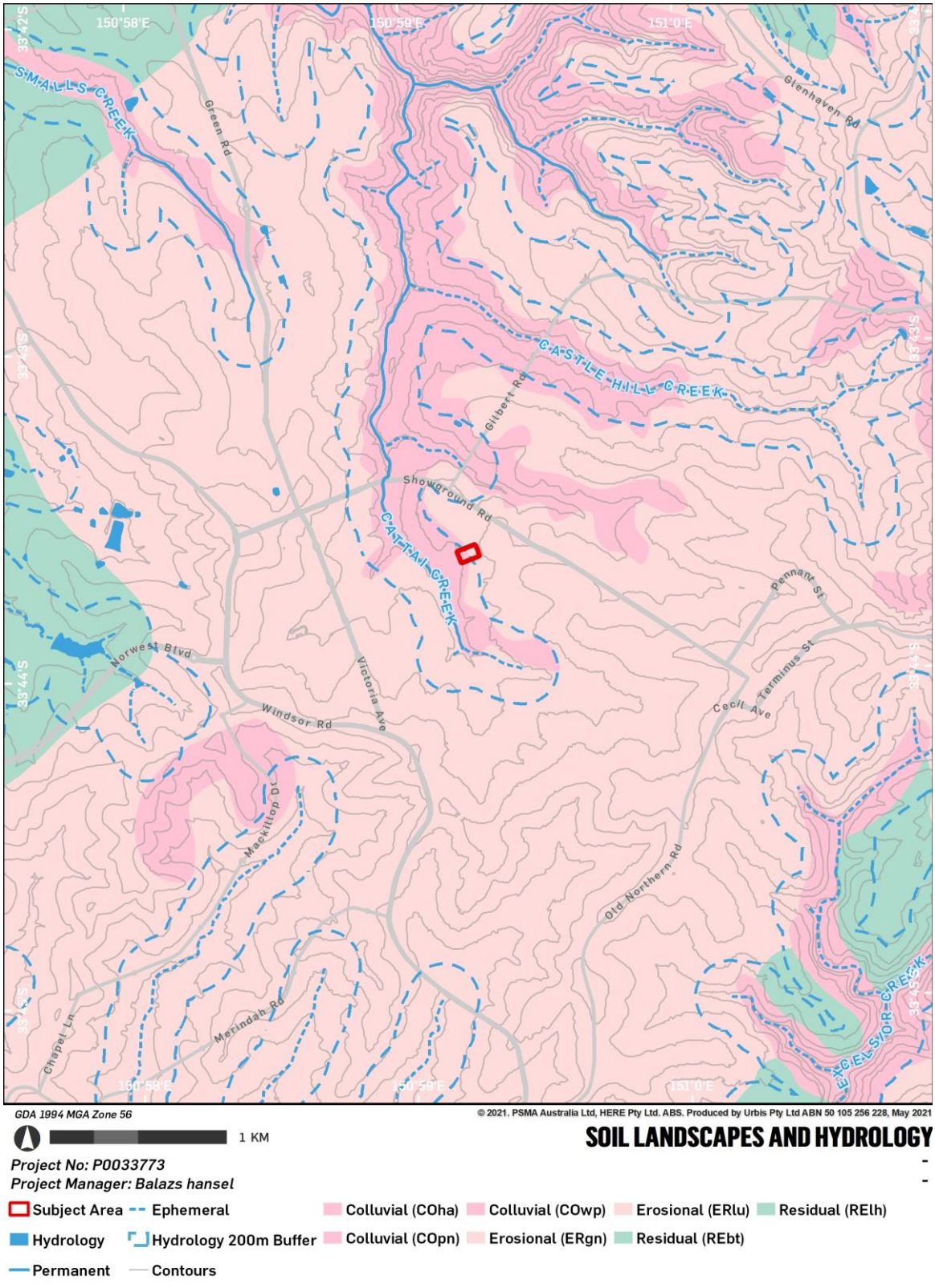

Figure 6 – Hydrology and topography

3.5. SUMMARY

The following conclusions are drawn from the above landscape analysis:

- The AHIMS search identified no Aboriginal objects and/or places within the subject area. The AHIMS search identified 97 Aboriginal objects and 0 Aboriginal places within the vicinity of the subject area.
- The majority of Aboriginal sites are concentrated along waterways, including Cattai Creek, which is located approximately 200 metres to the west of the subject area.
- The alignment of Cattai Creek was altered in the late 20th century, so that it was relocated 30 metres west of its original location and further from the subject area. Although the proximity of an historical creekline is indicative of Aboriginal archaeological sensitivity, the subject area has been subject to high levels of disturbance from the late 20th century, which is likely to have removed the natural soil horizon. Disturbance levels are further discussed in Section 3.4 below.
- The eastern component of the subject area is located on the Glenorie soil landscape and the lower-slope Hawkesbury sandstone soil landscape, both of which are shallow and subject to erosion. Erosion and high levels of disturbance in the late 20th century are therefore likely to have removed the shallow soil profile which characterised the subject area, reducing Aboriginal archaeological potential.
- Geotechnical investigations corroborated the historical development of the site (see Section 3 of the HAIS for further detail), which indicated that the subject site was subject to significant disturbance from the late 20th century, which would have removed natural soil profiles and resulted in the deposition of large quantities of fill.

Based on the above preliminary observations, this assessment agrees with the findings of the 2019 GML report, which concluded:

> *The site has been assessed as having nil to low potential for Aboriginal archaeological sites or places. Therefore, the proposed works are unlikely to impact upon Aboriginal archaeological remains or heritage. GML advises that no further mitigation would be required. In addition, GML advises that an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Assessment (ACHAR) is not required at this time.*[7]

[7] GML, 2019, *Hills Showground Station Precinct Concept Approval: Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Heritage Impact Statement,* p.55.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above preliminary observations, it has been determined that the subject area has nil to low potential for Aboriginal archaeological sites and/ or places.

In addition to the above, the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation 1 – Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Induction

It is recommended that periodic Aboriginal cultural heritage inductions be provided during excavation works, as prepared by Urbis. The induction material should include an overview of the types of sites and artefacts most relevant to the site (i.e. stone tools and concentrations of shells that could be middens) and the requirements of an 'archaeological chance find procedure' (refer below). This should be prepared for the project and included in any site management plans.

Recommendation 2 - Archaeological Chance Find Procedure

In concurrent of the recommendations of the Heritage and Archaeological Impact Statement (Urbis 2021), in the event that any Aboriginal objects are uncovered during site works, all activities must stop and Heritage NSW be immediately notified. An appropriately qualified archaeologist should be consulted for the purpose of implementing best practice protection and management measures while the relevant approvals are obtained.

Recommendation 3 – Human Remains

In the unlikely event that human remains are uncovered during any site works, the following must be undertaken:

- All works within the vicinity of the find immediately stop.
- Site supervisor or other nominated manager must notify the NSW Police and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Regulation Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- The find must be assessed by the NSW Police, and may include the assistance of a qualified forensic anthropologist.
- Management recommendations are to be formulated and applied in consultation with the Police, The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Regulation Branch of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and site representatives.
- Works are not to recommence until the find has been appropriately managed.

Kind regards,

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