

9 April 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 Development**

We are writing on behalf of The University of Newcastle, the proponent, in relation to a proposed Concept Plan under S83A for the development of the University Honeysuckle City Campus at 16 Honeysuckle Drive, Newcastle.

The site (excluding the former heavy rail line) 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 State Significant Development (SSD) for the purposes of *the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (the Act). It is noted that the proposal also triggers SSD as it is for the purposes of an educational establishment that has a capital investment value in excess of \$30 million.

The purpose of this letter is therefore 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 total precinct comprises three parcels of land within Honeysuckle identified as Sites 1-3 in Figure 1. The Site has an overall area of 20,412m² and comprises an undeveloped parcel of land at Site 1 and an at-grade car park and former heavy rail line across Sites 2 and 3. The site area does not include Wright Lane which runs between Sites 1 and Sites 2 and 3 or Civic Lane which borders the southern boundary of the site.

The Site is legally described as:

- Lots 1,2 and 3 in DP 1163346 (Site 1);
- Lot 21 in DP 1165985 (part Sites 2 and 3); and
- Part Lot 2 in DP 1226145.

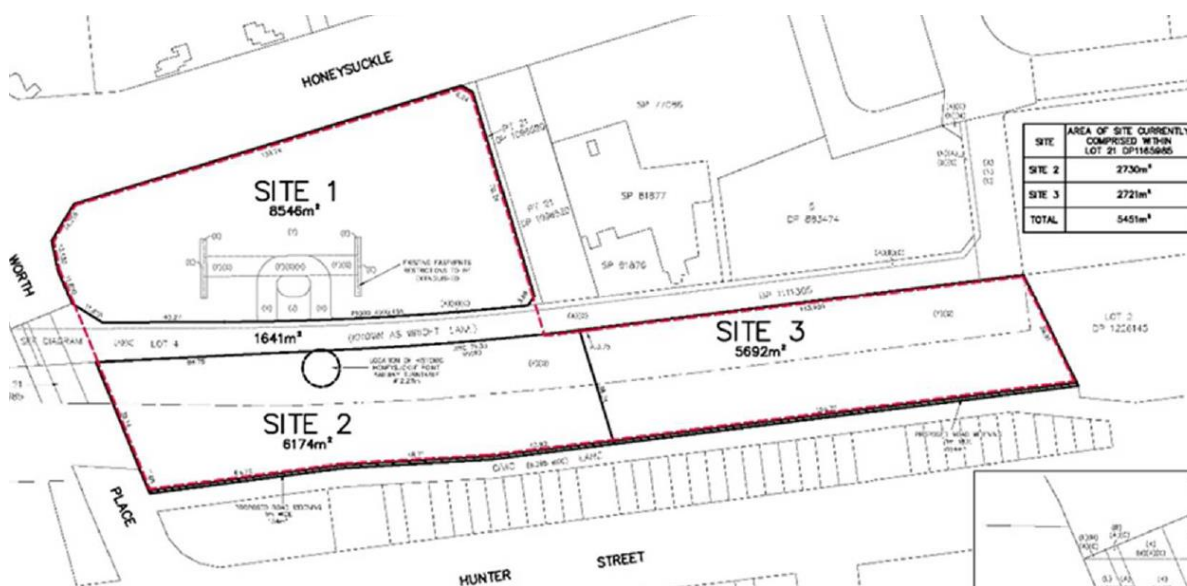


Figure 1 The site

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 Street.



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.

The proposed Concept Plan is the next step in achieving this vision and it follows the recent completion of the University's iconic NeW Space building in Newcastle's Central Business District. The Concept Plan will outline the planning and design framework to guide the future development of the site.

3.0 Description of proposed development

The SSD application will seek Concept Plan approval for the development of the University of Newcastle Honeysuckle Precinct campus. The Concept Plan will establish the following key principles to guide the future development of the campus:

- Land uses;
- Building envelopes;
- Maximum GFA;
- Preliminary landscape design;
- Built form design guidelines outlining how design excellence will be achieved; and
- Development staging.

A preliminary built form layout plan prepared by Cox has been provided at Figure 3. The plan also delineates the proposed first stage of the Concept development which will be subject to a future application.



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 Concept Plan:

- 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 is a key component of this.

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 will also create a substantial population base in the centre, including visitors to the university and student accommodation, 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.

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

The *State Environmental Planning Policy (State and Regional Development) 2011* (SEPP SRD) identifies development which 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 (excluding the former heavy rail line) 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. In addition, the proposal also triggers SSD in accordance with Clause 15 of Schedule 1 of the SEPP as is it for the purposes of an educational establishment that has a capital investment value in excess of \$30 million.

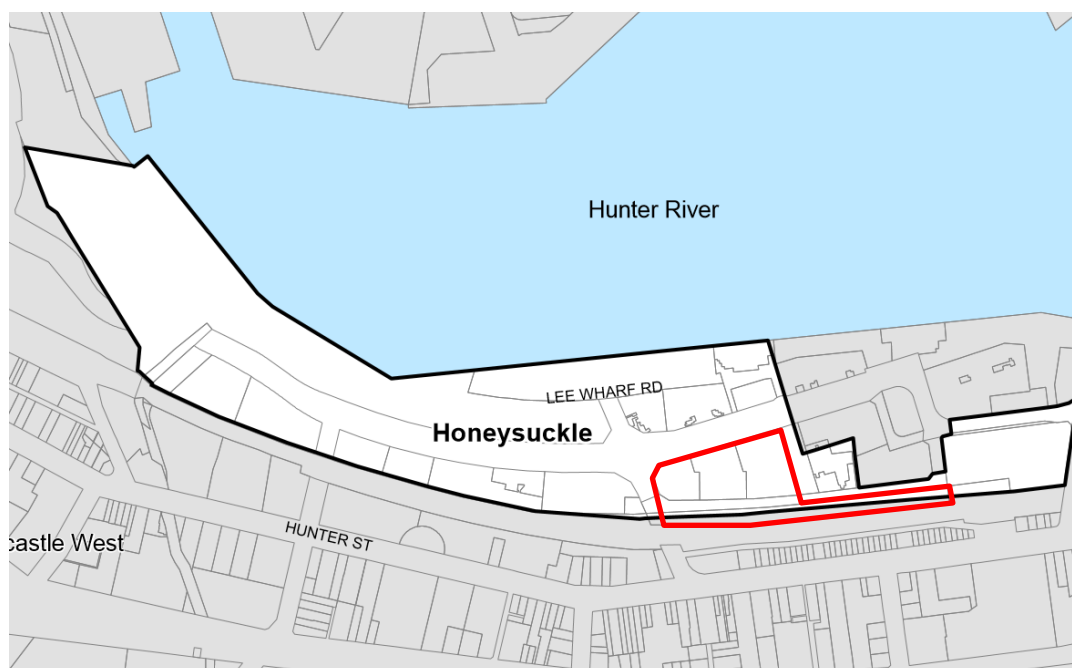


Figure 4 Honeysuckle SSD Site Map

Source: SEPP (State & Regional Development) 2011

4.3 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979

The Act establishes the assessment framework for SSD. Under Section 89D of the Act the Minister for Planning is the consent authority for SSD. Section 78A(8A) 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

All of the precinct, except for the rail corridor land along the southern boundary is zoned B4 Mixed Use under Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012 (LEP 2012). The rail corridor areas are currently zoned SP2 Infrastructure (Railway) which permits university land uses by virtue of Educational Establishments being permissible in the SP2 Infrastructure Zone under Clause 43 of State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017 (Education SEPP). Notwithstanding, a Planning Proposal seeking to rezone this land to B4 Mixed Use is currently in its final stages and is expected to be completed prior to determination of the Concept Plan SSD. The proposed university land uses will be 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 SSD 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 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. The EIS will address how the form, layout and siting of the building achieves optimal design and amenity outcomes. It will also consider the surrounding public domain and links through the campus to Hunter Street and the NeW Space Building.

Design Excellence

Clause 7.5(3) of the LEP requires that all new development in the Newcastle City Centre exhibits 'design excellence' and criteria are prescribed in the clause that must be met for design excellence to be achieved. The Site is within the defined Newcastle City Centre area and as such must satisfy the design excellence criteria under this clause.

In addition, Clause 7.5(4) specifies criteria that trigger the requirement for a design competition to be undertaken for a development, however the development proposed under the Concept Plan does not trigger any of the specific criteria. Notwithstanding, the University is dedicated to design excellence across future stages of the Site and the EIS will include a strategy that outlines a range of design excellence initiatives, including:

- The preparation of design guidelines to promote design excellence and to ensure the campus design is treated holistically moving forward;
- Early and ongoing engagement with the NSW Government Architect's proposed Design Excellence Panel and Newcastle City Council's Urban Design Consultative Group on the Concept Plan and future stages; and
- For nominated key sites within the campus, the University will seek to implement competitive design processes.

Overshadowing and solar access

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

Traffic, transport and access

A traffic and parking assessment will be prepared by a specialist traffic consultant and submitted with the EIS. The report will assess the access arrangements and the design and operation of the road network. The report will also examine:

- Road safety;
- Car parking demand management;
- Loading and servicing arrangements;
- Traffic impacts of the proposed development on the surrounding road network and intersections; and
- Accessibility to public transport; and
- Integration into the University's current transport management programs, including access between the Newcastle City and Callaghan campuses.

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 and updated 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. The Concept Plan EIS will be accompanied by a detailed flood study which will inform the proposed built form of the site.

On-site stormwater and retention will be required with each stage of development to ensure that an increase in stormwater discharge will not require an upgrade to the existing drainage network along Wright Lane.

Heritage

The site is not identified as a heritage item under the LEP 2012, however 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. The Concept Plan will establish design principles to protect the heritage integrity of the area.

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 very high archaeological significance. Previous heritage studies found that the turntable is expected to sit largely within Site 2 and is recommended for retention. The Concept Plan will set out how the turntable will be retained as part of the development.

A study of Aboriginal heritage will be 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 waiver will be sought for 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 the guidelines.

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.

6.0 Consultation

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

- Newcastle City Council;
- 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 Concept Plan for the 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,



Chris Forrester
Senior Urbanist
02 9409 4627
cforrester@ethosurban.com



Gordon Kirkby
Director
02 9956 6962
gkirkby@ethosurban.com