

# TOWARDS AN AREA PLAN FOR THE HOWARD SPRINGS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRE



*Discussion Paper for Stage 1  
Community Consultation*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION: AREA PLANNING FOR RURAL ACTIVITY CENTRES

## 1.1 Background

Over the next 40 to 50 years, the population of the Darwin region is expected to almost double with an increase of approximately 120 000 residents. The Rural Activity Centres have long been a feature of planning for the Darwin region and are expected to accommodate some of the projected growth.

Rural Activity Centres are discussed in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015, and Land Use Concept Plans for each of the four Rural Activity Centres (Howard Springs, Coolalinga/Freds Pass, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs) are provided in the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan 2016.

Both of these policy documents form part of the Northern Territory Planning Scheme. Area Plans for the Rural Activity Centres will also become part of the Planning Scheme to provide a decision making framework to inform future rezoning and development decisions. The relationship between the policy documents is shown in Figure 1.

*Figure 1: Planning Policy for the Litchfield Subregion*



## 1.2 Objectives

This discussion paper provides you with information about the process for preparing an Area Plan, and identifies the key opportunities and constraints of the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre. This information will help to guide you in providing the Northern Territory Planning Commission with valuable feedback about your vision for the Area Plan.

### 1.3 Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre

Today, the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre comprises commercial, community purpose and organised recreation zones focused around the intersection of Whitewood and Smyth roads. The Specific Use Zone known as Specific Use Zone – Litchfield Number 11 (SL11) has recently been subdivided into 20 lots with a minimum area of 750 m<sup>2</sup>. The remainder of the land within the Rural Activity Centre is in Zone RL (Rural Living), with lot sizes around 4 000 m<sup>2</sup> surrounding Ganley Court, and lot sizes of 2 ha or larger within the remainder of the Activity Centre boundary. The current land use zones are shown in Figure 2.

The Planning Commission is commencing work on developing options for the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre Area Plan. Stage 1 of the Area Planning process will investigate opportunities and constraints, and identify suitable land to accommodate growth. The Land Use Concept Plan for Howard Springs from the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan (Figure 3) will be used as a starting point for background investigations and consultation.

The Planning Commission's focus on planning will assist with maintaining the amenity and lifestyle of the rural area, ensuring there are reticulated services available to the growing population. Area Plans for Coolalinga/Freds Pass, Humpty Doo and Berry Springs will follow in the near future.

*Figure 2: Current land use zones in the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre*

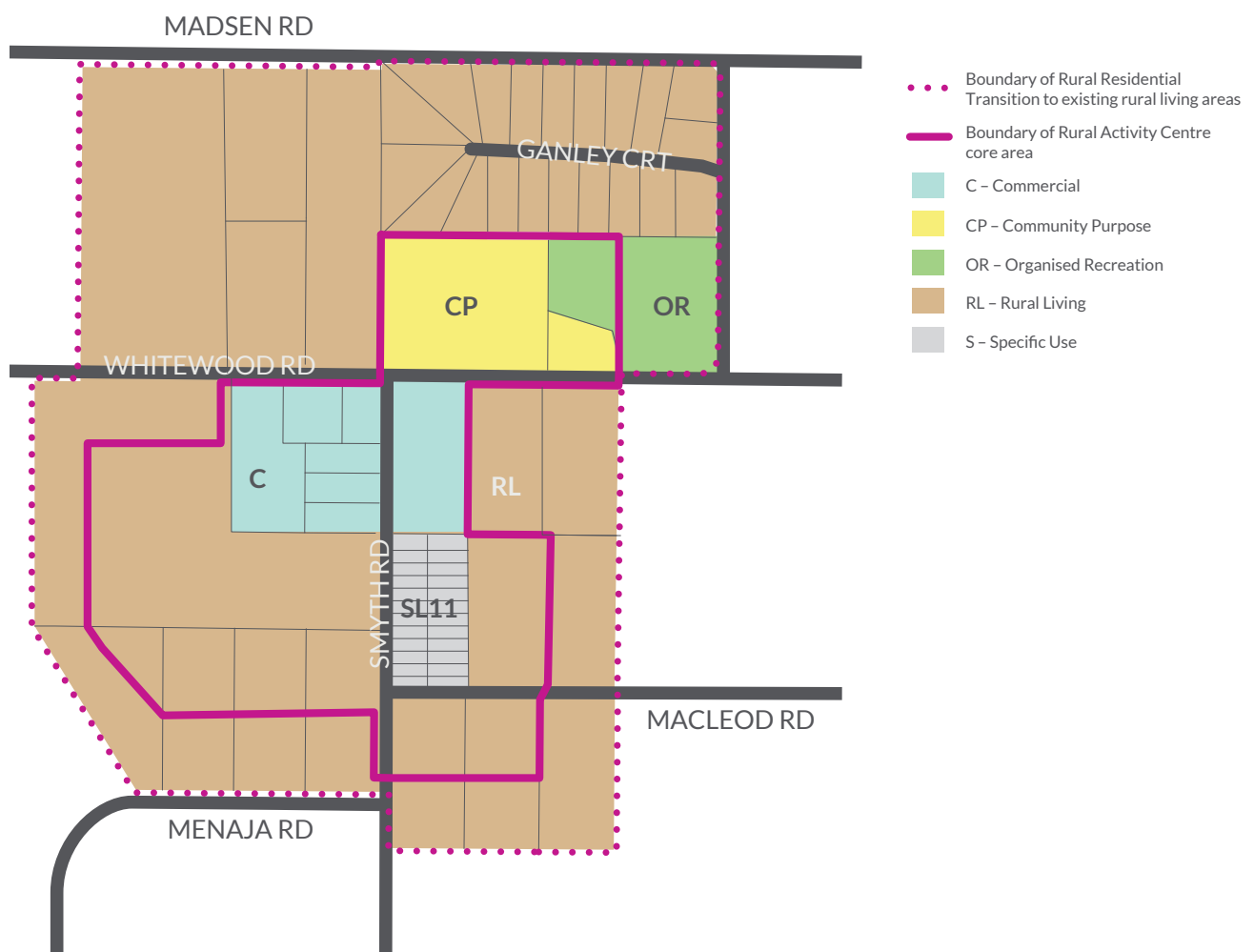
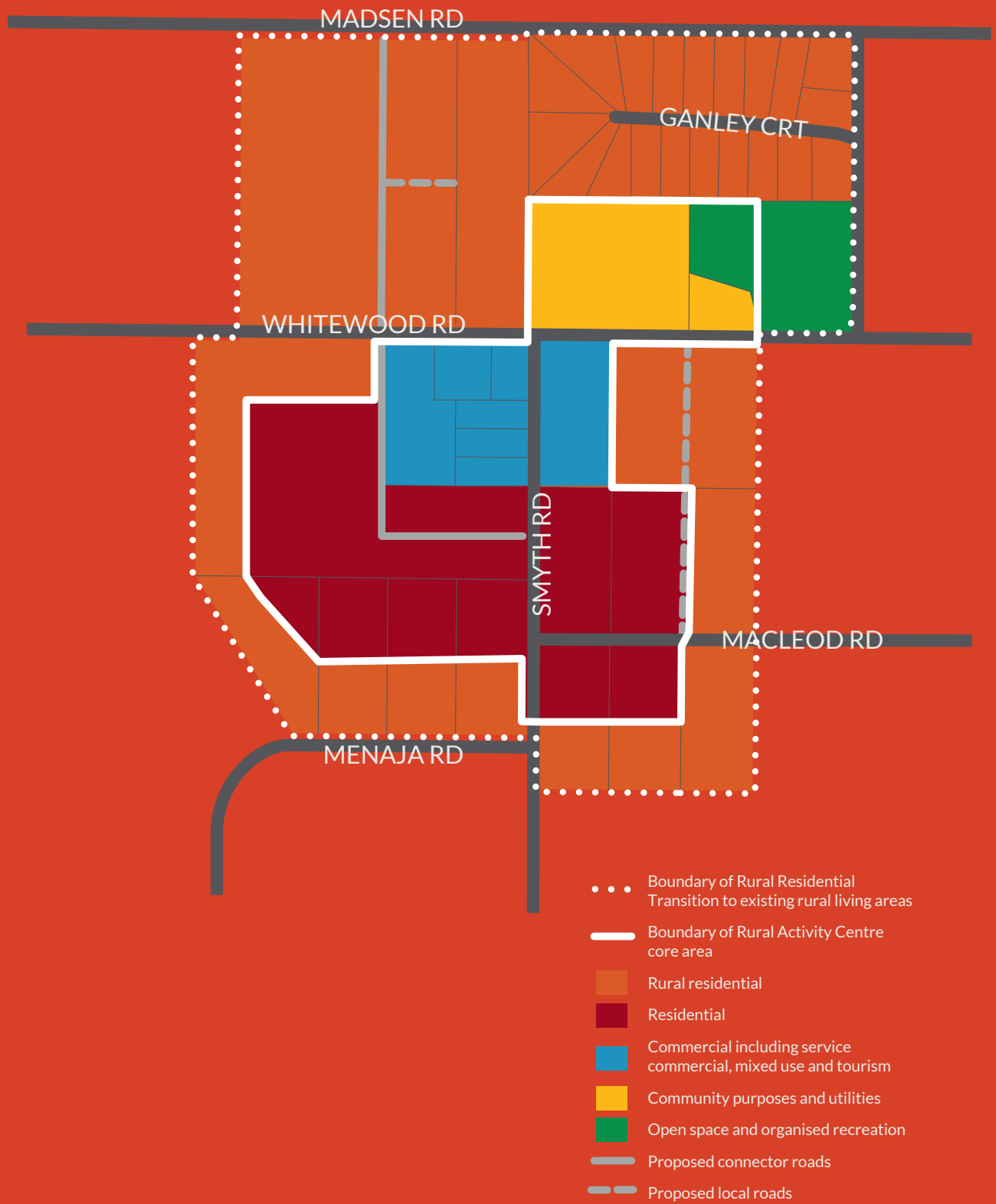


Figure 3: Land Use Concepts for the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre



## 2. WHAT IS AN AREA PLAN?

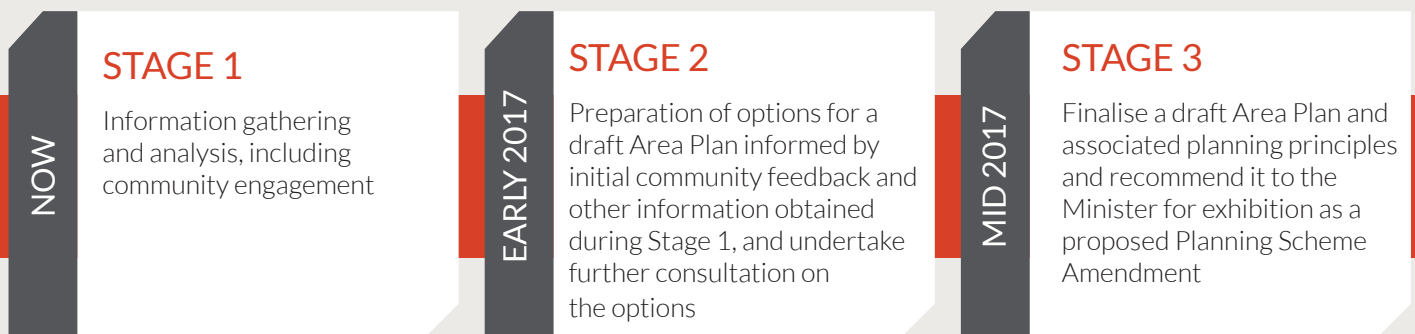
While the Land Use Concept Plan for Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre (Figure 3) provides a high level vision for the locality, the Area Plan will provide a more detailed future strategic planning direction by establishing a long term vision and land use framework for future development in the area.

An Area Plan usually contains a map or plan that determines how land can be best used in the future. These maps or plans are accompanied by planning principles that guide the decision makers and help people understand what the development objectives of the plan are. By clearly identifying these objectives, an Area Plan can provide the community, including owners, residents, businesses, developers and decision makers with confidence about the direction for future growth and investment. Area Plans also allow for servicing authorities, such as the Power and Water Corporation and local council, to plan and manage required infrastructure upgrades.

Area Plans **DO NOT** automatically rezone land. Any applications for rezoning must be made through the Minister responsible for administering the *Planning Act*.

## 3. HOW WILL THE AREA PLAN BE PREPARED?

This diagram shows the stages that will be used to prepare the Area Plan for Howard Springs.



**Stage 1** is an opportunity for you to participate in the planning process by contributing to the development of a vision to meet the future needs for Howard Springs. It is intended that once all three stages have been completed the Area Plan will form part of the NT Planning Scheme.

## 4. WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR HOWARD SPRINGS?

Background investigations have identified key opportunities and constraints specific to the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre. While reading them, please consider the following questions and how the opportunities and constraints may inform your answers. You may also use these questions to assist you with writing a submission or asking for further information.

### TELL US...

- 1. How do you see Howard Springs changing over time to provide housing options and commercial opportunities?*
- 2. What range of housing types and building heights should be considered, and how far should new residential growth extend?*
- 3. How could local traffic be managed to maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment around the commercial centre?*
- 4. How could mosquito breeding be managed without adversely impacting the natural amenity of the lagoons?*



## 4.1 Opportunities

### Protecting rural character and amenity

Focusing growth within the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre will limit the need for changes outside of the Rural Activity Centre boundary. The inclusion of several housing options within a defined area will preserve the rural character and amenity of the majority of Howard Springs while also accommodating the anticipated population growth of the area and ensuring that there is a viable hub to provide improved services for the broader Howard Springs locality.



### A walkable neighbourhood

Underdeveloped commercial areas offer the opportunity for more commercial activity as demand increases. Unconstrained land to the south of the existing commercial centre could accommodate a range of housing options within 400 m walking distance from the commercial and community services.

### Reduced groundwater impacts

Development of lots under 2 ha requires connections to reticulated water and will allow the population in Howard Springs to grow without increasing the demand on groundwater resources. Increasing densities within the boundaries of the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre will make upgrades to water supply infrastructure more viable. Increased densities will also be supported by reticulated sewerage, avoiding contamination of groundwater from on-site wastewater treatment systems.

### A better connected transport network

Increased density in Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre will make improvements to transport networks more viable. This could include new roads, public transport and active transport connections between Howard Springs and larger centres. There is also opportunity to extend Madsen Road south through Whitewood Road, toward Smyth Road, to relieve some of the current pressure on Whitewood Road.





## 4.2 Constraints



### Mitigating exposure to seasonally high levels of mosquitos

Preliminary studies by the NT Department of Health show seasonally high levels of mosquitos in the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre, coming from Dutchies Lagoon in the north and Wadham Lagoon in the west (Figure 4). The extent and methods for management of mosquito breeding sites will need to occur without undermining the drainage function and amenity of the natural lagoons.

### Private ownership of land

Most land within the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre is privately owned. This will have implications for the pace of growth and when key infrastructure can be delivered. An infrastructure contributions plan will allow the costs of new infrastructure to be equitably distributed between future developers. Discussions will be required with individual land owners to negotiate how the aspirations of land owners can be achieved concurrently with the needs and aspirations of the community as a whole.

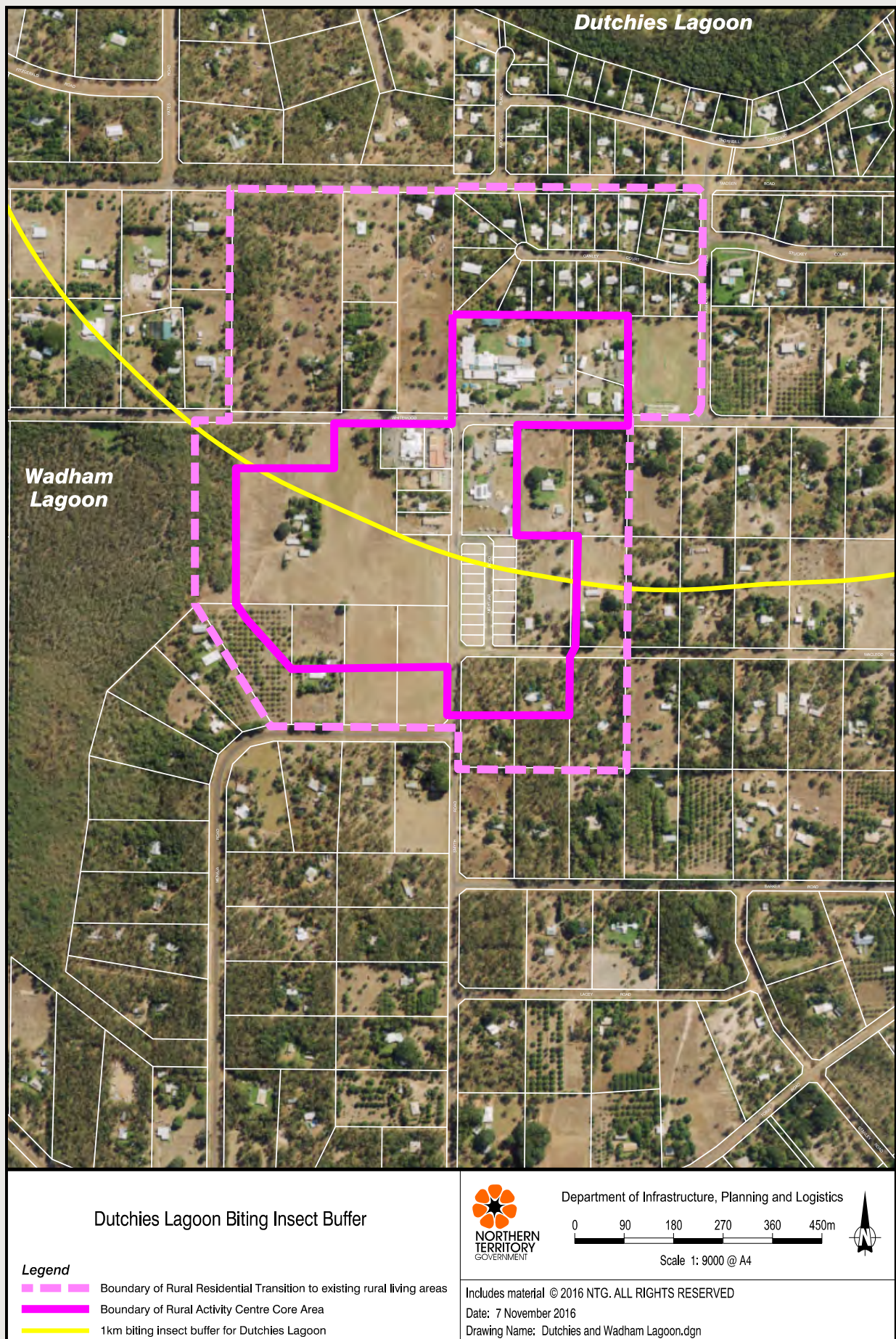
### Cost effective provision of infrastructure

Urban densities within the Howard Springs Rural Activity Centre would increase the viability of upgrading services including power and water supply infrastructure. An increase in density within the Rural Activity Centre will require the introduction of reticulated sewerage. A sewerage system is currently being planned with a future capacity for approximately 300 dwellings. The need for trunk infrastructure to be equitably funded by private developers may limit growth in the short term.





Figure 4: Biting Insects



## NOTES



For more information

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## Say Hello

See the website for a list of dates and locations

The Northern Territory Planning Commission is an independent and advisory statutory authority that prepares strategic land use plans to manage growth in anticipation rather than response.

The Planning Commission proactively sets the strategic framework for better integrated land use, transport and infrastructure planning, delivering more sustainable and cost-effective outcomes for the community, with sensitivity to environmental and heritage values.