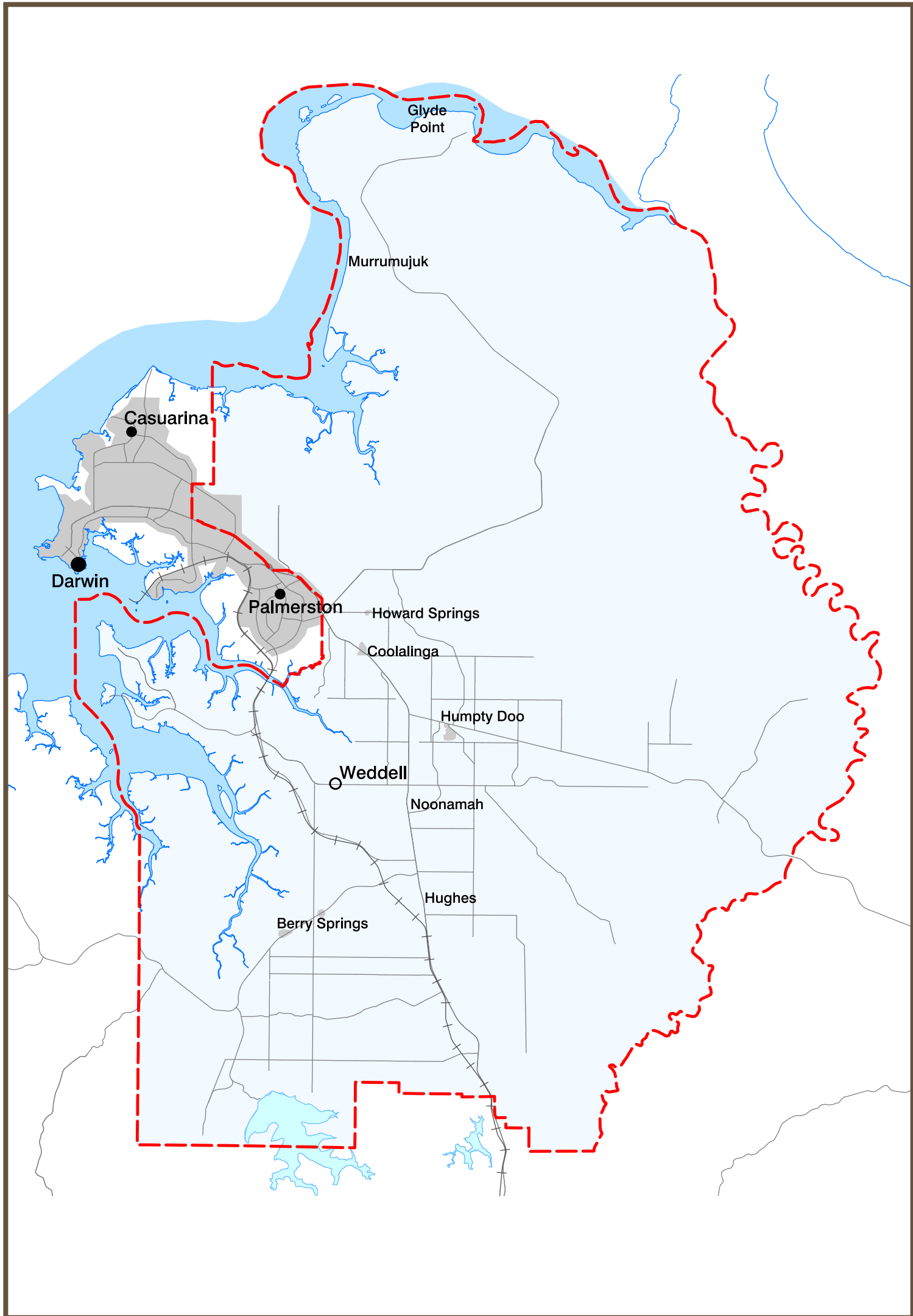


CONSULTATION FOR A LITCHFIELD SUBREGIONAL LAND USE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2015



NORTHERN TERRITORY
**PLANNING
COMMISSION**



Contents

1	Introduction.....	2
2	What is a subregional land use plan?.....	2
3	How will the plan be prepared?.....	2
4	What will guide the development of the subregional plan?	3
4.1	Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015.....	3
4.2	Litchfield Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2002	3
5	Litchfield Subregion	4
6	Residential	4
6.1	Rural lifestyle areas	5
6.2	Urban and peri-urban.....	5
7	Rural activity centres.....	6
7.1	Coolalinga / Freds Pass	8
7.2	Howard Springs	10
7.3	Humpty Doo.....	12
7.4	Berry Springs.....	14
7.5	Pine Forest	16
8	Transport networks.....	18
8.1	Road network.....	18
8.2	Public transport.....	18
8.3	Cycle paths	18
9	Community facilities and open space.....	20
10	Useful terms.....	20
11	Further investigations	20

1 Introduction

The greater Darwin region is expected to almost double in population with an increase of 120 000 residents over the next 40 to 50 years, including an additional 20 000 residents in the next 5 to 10 years. As the region grows in population, there will be a need for more housing, services and facilities.

The NT Planning Commission is establishing a strategic planning framework across greater Darwin, which includes a subregional land use plan for the Litchfield municipality. Planning for future land use is important to ensure that infrastructure and services keep pace with the changing needs of a growing community.

The purpose of this document is to guide community feedback in the development of the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan. It provides information about:

- the process of preparing the subregional plan
- the profile of Litchfield subregion
- issues to be considered in accommodating a growing population

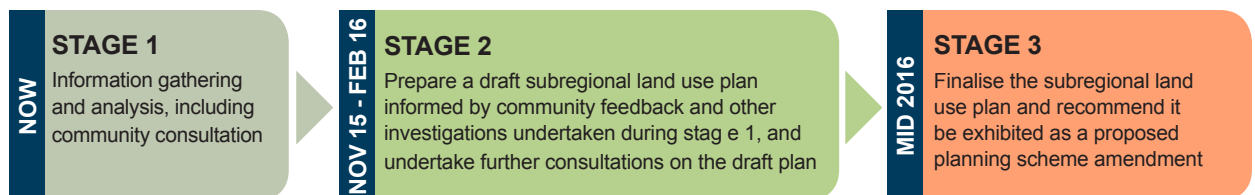
2 What is a subregional land use plan?

The Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will provide detailed land use planning for the Litchfield municipality, particularly in the identified rural activity centres in Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Fred Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest.

Importantly, the Litchfield Subregional Land Use Plan will form part of the NT Planning Scheme and will focus on identifying and protecting:

- natural resources, including ground water, extractive minerals and agricultural and horticultural soils
- land to support commercial and community uses, and a variety of residential options within rural activity centres, rural lifestyle areas, and urban/peri-urban areas
- an interconnected network of transport and utility corridors to enable the efficient movement of people and goods

3 How will the plan be prepared?



Stage 1 is an opportunity for you to share your thoughts and ideas on how the Litchfield subregion can meet the challenges associated with a growing population. This document includes questions that may assist you to prepare a submission or to contact us for more information. Your thoughts, comments, questions and feedback will help us to develop a draft subregional land use plan for further consultation.

4 What will guide the development of the subregional plan?

4.1 Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015

The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 was included in the NT Planning Scheme as a reference document in July 2015. It identifies the essential characteristics and needs that will shape future development in the region and establishes an overarching framework for that development.

The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan will acknowledge that Litchfield's proximity to established urban concentrations and abundant land inevitably dictate that future urban development will be located within its boundaries. This is evidenced by long term plans for a new city at Weddell and proposed urban development at Holtze, Hughes Noonamah, Noonamah Ridge and Murrumujuk. It responds to the challenges of population growth in the Litchfield area by establishing principles that protect the amenity of the majority of the existing rural lifestyle area, including:

- rural lifestyle is a legitimate land use and established localities should be protected
- large unserviced lots outside of urban areas are difficult to replicate due to land and water constraints
- alternatives to larger lots are increasingly being sought for retirement and affordability reasons
- undeveloped land adjacent to transport networks and existing activity centres creates opportunities to establish the viability of essential service infrastructure and the critical population mass required to support a concentration of activities and increased housing choice outside urban areas
- rural activity centres will provide a core of expanded local facilities and services with a range of residential options decreasing in density from urban residential within the core and transitioning to larger lots as a buffer to adjoining unserviced rural lifestyle areas
- identifying rural activity centres at Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Freds Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest
- smaller appropriately serviced residential lots in rural activity centres would increase the sustainability of larger rural lifestyle lots by reducing the impacts of future population growth on natural resources, particularly groundwater
- increased local population will support a greater range of local facilities, including public transport and improved local employment opportunities

The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 acknowledged that future detailed infrastructure investigations and planning will be required to guide coordinated and efficient development to meet the needs of existing and future residents within rural activity centres and rural lifestyle areas.

4.2 Litchfield Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2002

The Litchfield Planning Concepts and Land Use Objectives 2002 established a framework for development that attempts to balance the diversity of expectations placed on land use and resources. This includes providing for a rural lifestyle, agriculture (including horticulture) and extractive industries while protecting the natural environment as a valued element of the lifestyle enjoyed by residents.

5 Litchfield Subregion

The Litchfield Municipality has a population of 22 123, living in 7539 dwellings (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2015). Population growth projections indicate that over the next 40 to 50 years, the Darwin Region will almost double in population with an increase of approximately 120 000 residents. The Litchfield subregion will accommodate some of this growth, with estimates suggesting that an additional 500 dwellings will be required in the near term of 5 to 10 years, and a total of 17 500 dwellings in the longer term of 40 to 50 years (MacroPlan Dimasi 2013).

Most of this growth is likely to occur in the urban/peri-urban areas of Holtze, Weddell, Noonamah, Hughes and Noonamah Ridge, and identified rural activity centres at Berry Springs, Coolalinga / Freds Pass, Howard Springs, Humpty Doo and the Pine Forest.

6 Residential

Tell us...

- *Do you think that accommodating anticipated population growth in the urban/ peri-urban areas and rural activity centres is a practical means of preserving the established rural lifestyle?*
- *How do we achieve the critical population mass needed to establish the viability of extending essential service infrastructure to new urban development such as Weddell?*
- *How and where would you accommodate growth in established rural lifestyle areas?*
- *How do we accommodate increasing interest in alternatives to larger lots, particularly for older residents looking to retire or younger people seeking affordable housing in their rural communities?*
- *How do we ensure the sustainability of larger rural lifestyle lots that rely on groundwater given the anticipated population growth within the region?*
- *Do you think undeveloped land in areas adjacent to transport networks and existing activity centres is an appropriate location for growth?*
- *How should we encourage opportunities for a choice of lifestyle in terms of lot size and access to services?*
- *What are your views on appropriate buffers between different residential localities to maintain and enhance the amenity of established areas and to protect the natural environment?*
- *Do you agree that minimum lot sizes in Zone RR (Rural Residential) should remain larger in Litchfield at 10 000m² than everywhere else in the NT at 4000m²?*

6.1 Rural lifestyle areas

Rural lifestyle areas are generally residential, with great variation in lot size but most commonly about 2 hectares. This area makes up the majority of housing provided in the Litchfield Subregion. The lot size ensures sufficient separation of bores from septic systems to avoid contamination of drinking water. The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 endorses this rural lifestyle as a legitimate land use and prioritises protection of established localities.

The established pattern of subdivision, especially around Howard Springs and Humpty Doo, means that opportunities for orderly subdivision from 2 hectares to smaller lots are economically marginal and challenging to achieve.

The minimum lot size in Zone RR (Rural Residential) throughout the NT is 0.4 hectares (4000m²), except for within Litchfield where the minimum lot size is 1 hectare (10 000m²).

6.2 Urban and peri-urban

Urban areas are characterised by the suburban development and infrastructure established throughout Darwin and Palmerston, while peri-urban (also known as semi-rural) is an area with both urban and rural characteristics, such as larger lots that are generally further from shops and services. These peri-urban areas can be a buffer between urban areas and rural lifestyle areas.

Many people assume that there is an abundance of land available to develop for urban and residential use, however, this is not actually the case. The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 discusses many of the constraints that have shaped the structure for future land use. The last stages of Zuccoli and Muirhead are about to be constructed and future development is being considered at Lee Point and Berrimah Farm. Once these sites are developed, there will be no more land in Darwin or Palmerston on which to build suburbs.

Darwin and Palmerston will continue to grow slowly through construction of apartments, units and townhouses at infill locations. To continue to build new suburbs to meet demand, we need to investigate affordable options to deliver infrastructure to new land, and provide a variety of housing types at competitive prices.

The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 identified a number of locations for urban and peri-urban uses. Some are close to established urban areas, while others are more remote but create opportunities for private sector contributions to urban development. Localities providing opportunities for both public and private development create the potential to improve the economic viability of providing the required major infrastructure.

The development of the Palmerston Regional Hospital in Holtze provides an opportunity for urban development on adjacent unconstrained land. Weddell, and surrounding areas, are suitable for urban development and will become an appropriate option over time, as services and infrastructure come nearer, and therefore become more affordable, or if the area can deliver amenities not found elsewhere.

7 Rural activity centres

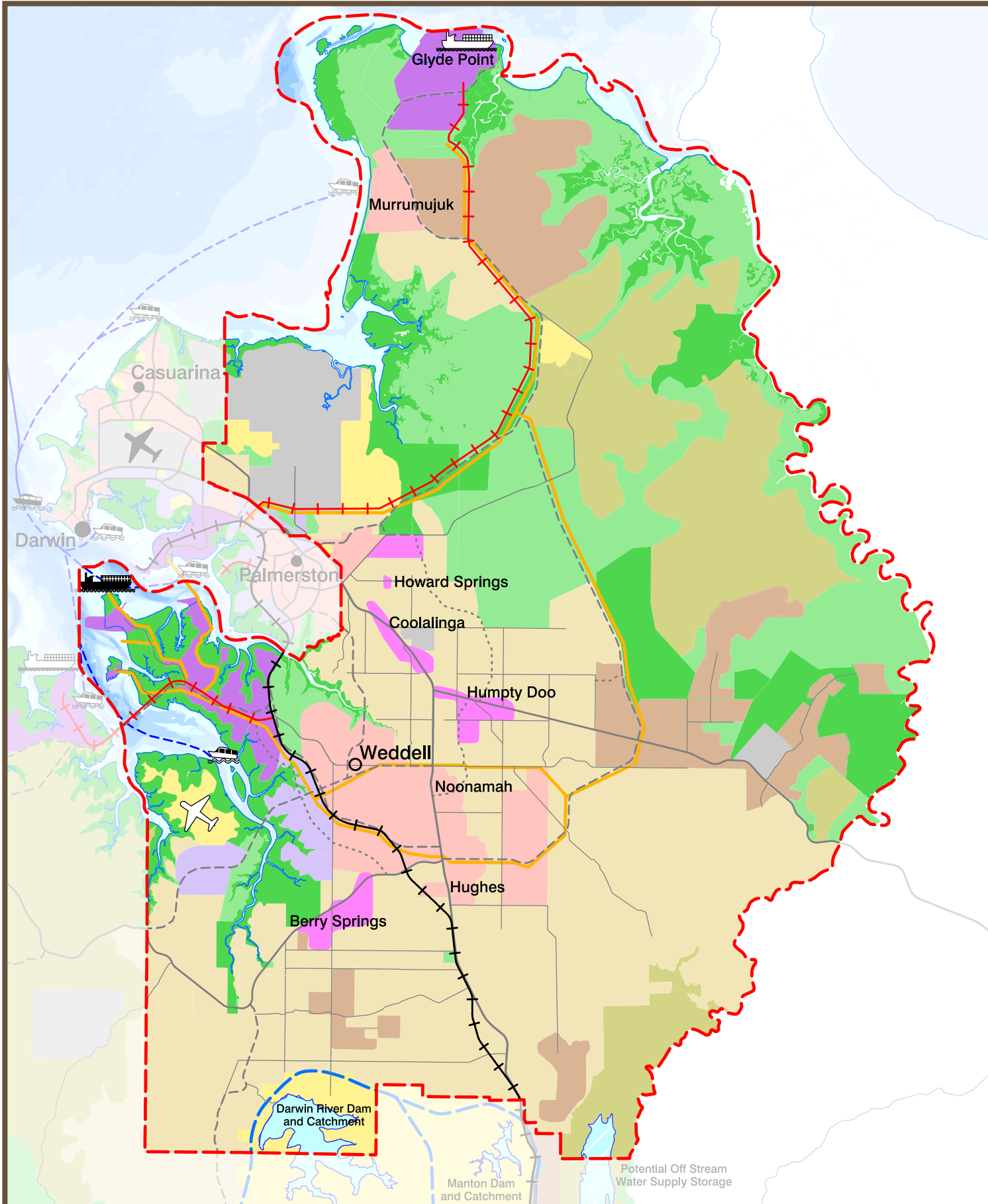
Tell us...

- *Are the rural activity centres in appropriate locations to expand community facilities and services?*
- *Do you support an increased local population within rural activity centres to enable a greater range of local facilities, including public transport and improved local employment opportunities?*
- *Within the identified rural activity centres, do you support a variety of housing types, decreasing in density from the core to larger lots as a buffer to rural lifestyle areas?*
- *What services or facilities would you like to see provided in rural activity centres in the future?*

A rural activity centre is also known as a district centre, where you find local community services and facilities to meet day to day needs of residents, including shops, banks, offices, restaurants, cafes, parks, schools and a variety of housing types. The Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 outlines the role of centres such as Berry Springs, Howard Springs and Humpty Doo, in providing retail, commercial, industrial, community services, and recreation facilities. Coolalinga, located on the Stuart Highway, serves the whole rural area, and provides more shops, services and residential options than the other rural activity centres.

A lack of water supply and sewerage infrastructure has generally constrained the concentration of activities envisaged in these centres. The exception has been Humpty Doo, where reticulated water and sewerage supported development, over time, of a wide range of activities including commercial, service commercial, light industry, community uses and some urban style residential.

Directing some of the anticipated population growth to rural activity centres may establish the critical mass to establish power, water and/or sewer services, and relieve the development pressures seen elsewhere in the rural lifestyle area.



LEGEND

 Subregion Boundary

 Urban / Peri-Urban

 Rural Lifestyle

 Horticulture

 Community / Government

 Open Space / Natural Area

 Mangrove / Conservation

 Industry

 Strategic Industry

 Commonwealth

 Rural Activity Centre

 Grazing / Agriculture

 Utility Corridor

 Water Supply Catchment

 Existing Waterbody

 Potential Waterbody

 Coastline

+ Existing / Planned Railway

 Existing / Planned Ferry Route

 Existing / Planned Arterial Road and Transport Corridor

 Existing / Planned Collector Road

 Existing / Planned Airport

 Existing / Planned Sea Port

 Existing / Planned Ferry Terminal

 Existing / Planned Regional Centre

7.1 Coolalinga / Freds Pass

Tell us...

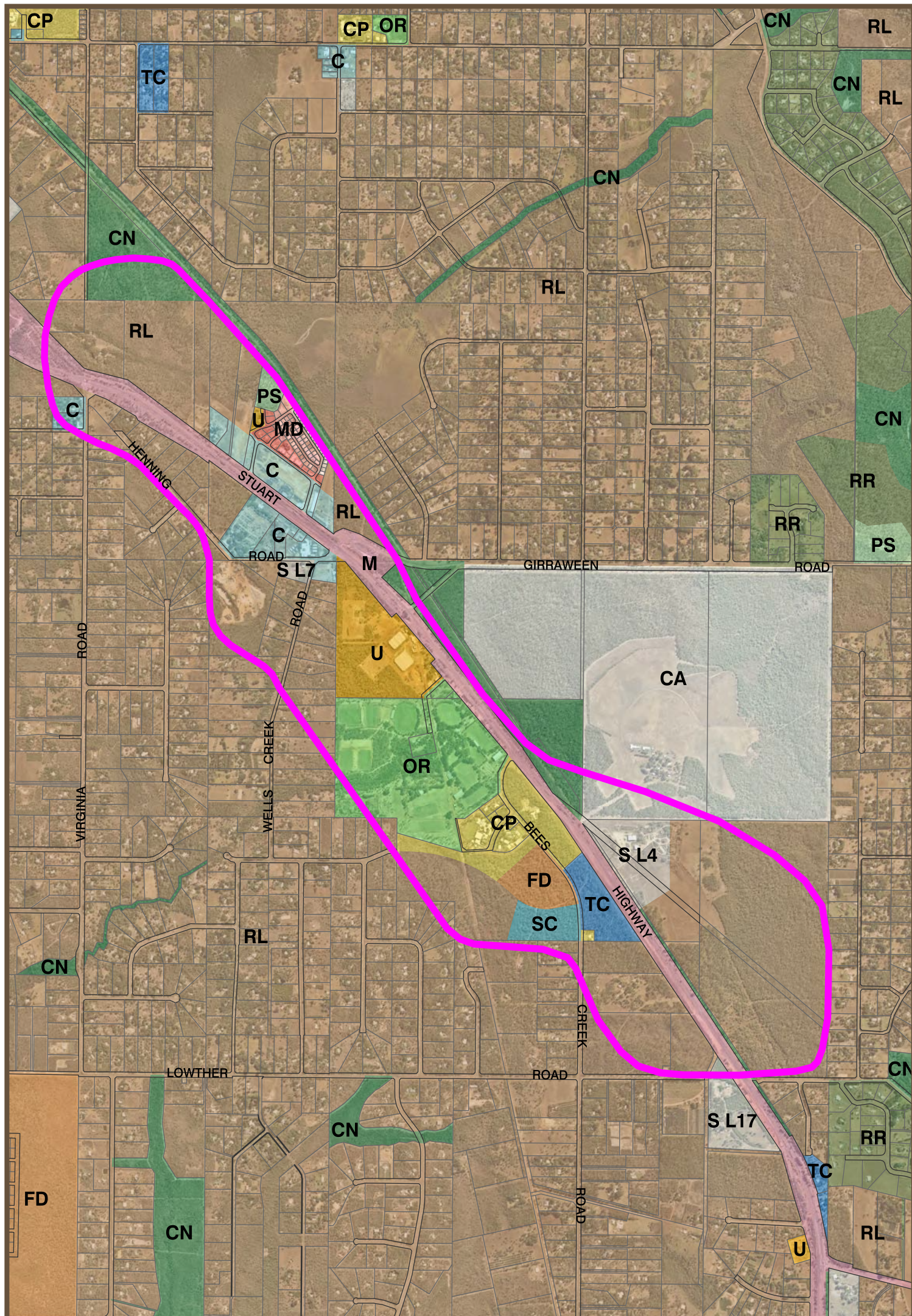
- *Are there services and facilities here that are also needed in other rural activity centres?*

Coolalinga is the busiest activity centre in the rural area, providing a large range of services and facilities that attract people from a broad catchment. The centre spreads from the schools on Bees Creek Road to the shops at Coolalinga. At the 2011 Census, there were approximately 450 dwellings and 1000 people living in and around the Coolalinga / Freds Pass rural activity centre. Over the last four years, approximately 200 dwellings have been built in the new subdivision. The main commercial centre is located on the Stuart Highway, providing a high level of exposure to passing traffic for businesses.

Freds Pass is well known for its sporting ovals, equestrian facilities and weekend markets, which draw people from across the rural area. The pink outline on the map opposite identifies the potential area for a range of lot sizes, housing types, additional services and recreational facilities.

Existing facilities and services:

- large supermarket
- multiple service stations
- fast food outlets
- restaurants and cafes
- speciality shops
- accommodation (caravan park)
- bus terminal (park and ride)
- vet
- medical services
- automotive services
- pharmacy
- organised sport and recreation facilities
- equestrian facilities
- community market
- childcare centre
- primary school



7.2 Howard Springs

Tell us...

- *Do you think the lots on Ganley Court are an appropriate buffer between the rural activity centre and the rural lifestyle area?*

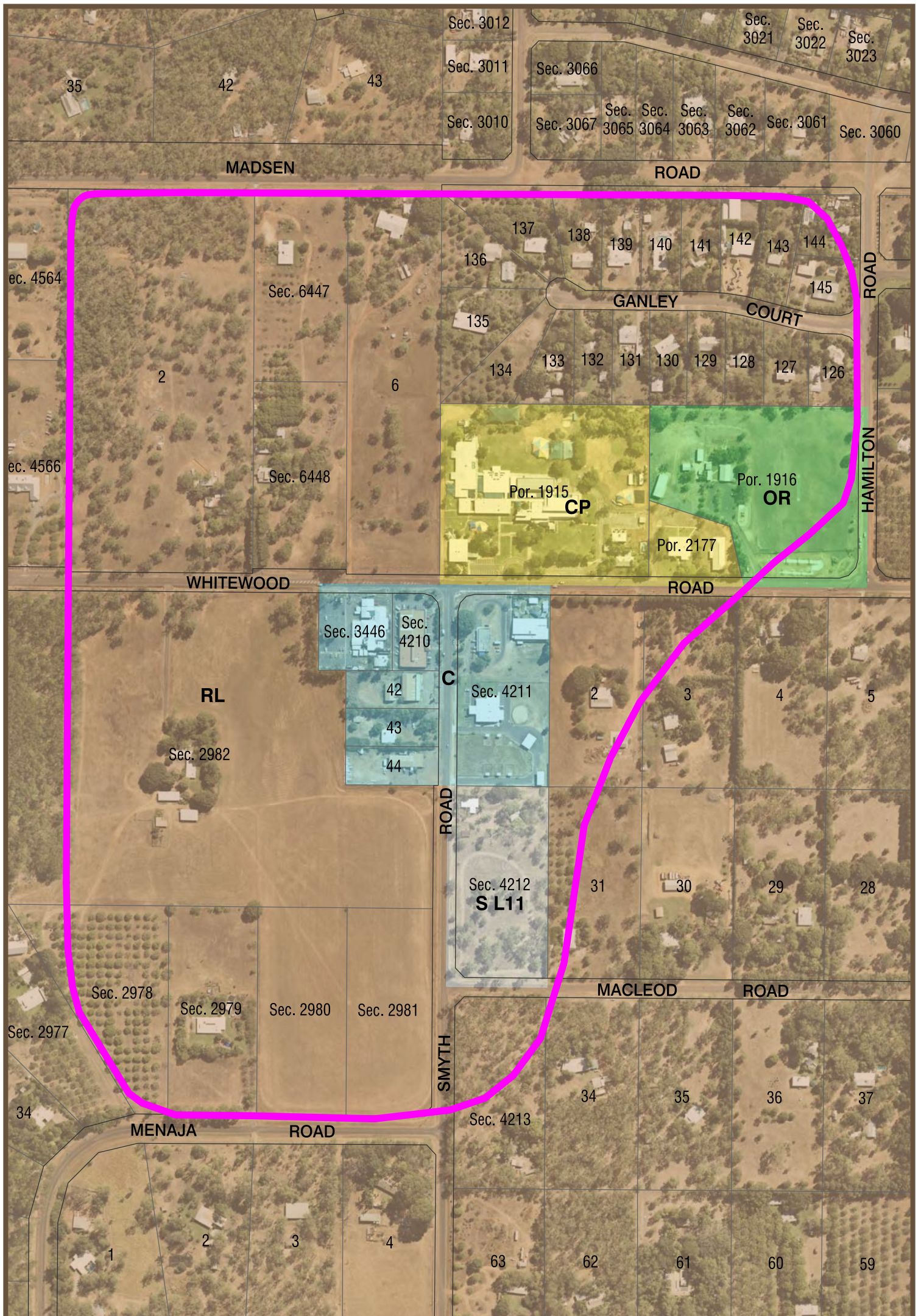
Howard Springs is a smaller rural activity centre located 9km from Palmerston CBD. The services and facilities meet the day-to-day needs of residents. At the 2011 Census, there were approximately 800 dwellings and 1650 people living within 2km of Howard Springs shops.

The pink outline on the map opposite identifies the potential area for a range of lot sizes, housing types, additional services and recreational facilities.

Existing facilities and services include:

- supermarket
- speciality shops
- takeaway food
- tavern
- primary school
- childcare centre
- medical services
- pharmacy
- community hall
- fire station
- vet
- BMX track
- cricket oval

Lot sizes near the shops vary. The map opposite identifies Lot 4212 has been rezoned to Zone SL11 that allows for a subdivision with a maximum of 20 lots with a minimum lot size of 750m².



7.3 Humpty Doo

Tell us...

- *Do you think undeveloped land adjacent to the Arnhem Highway and the activity centre is an appropriate location for growth?*

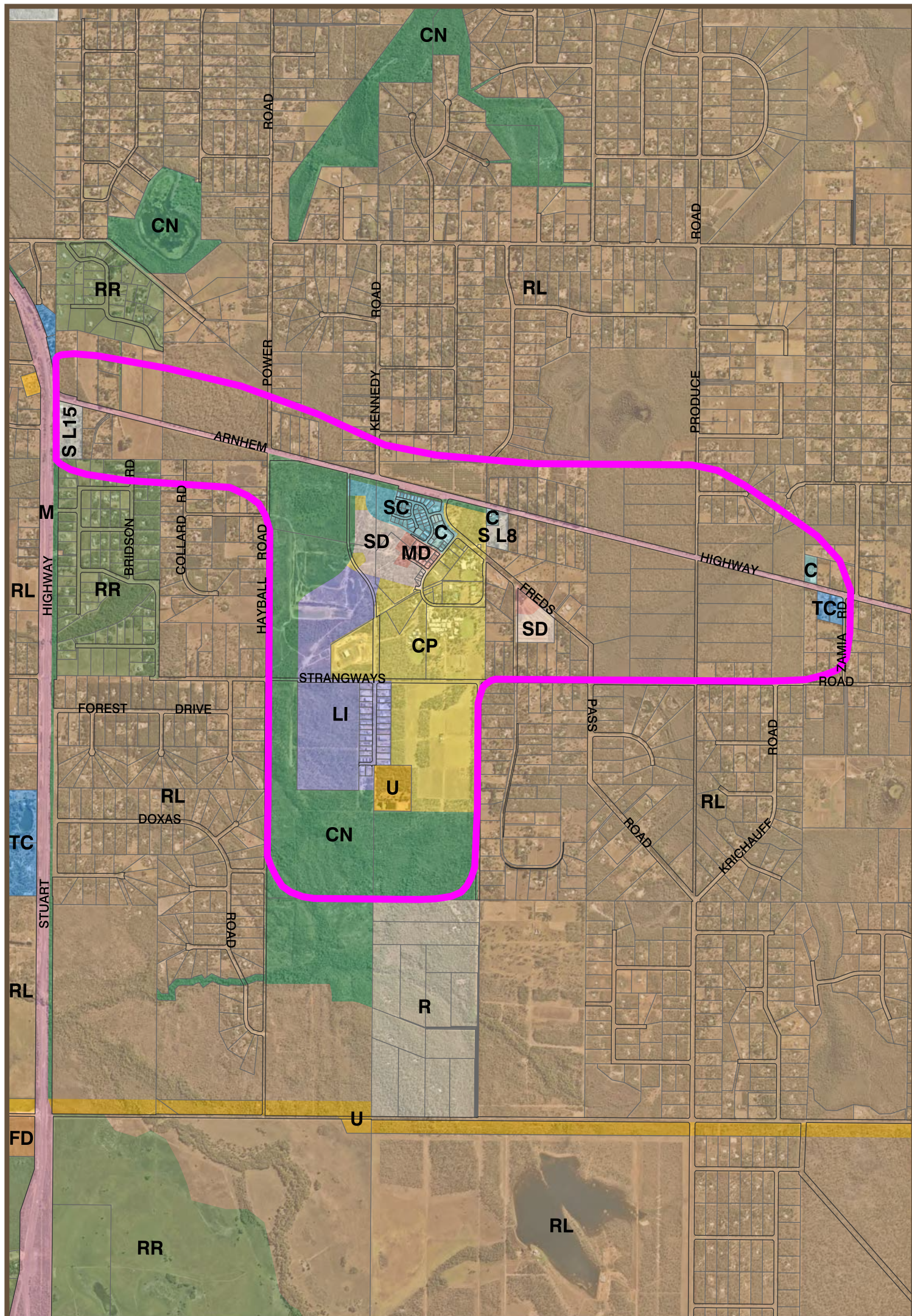
Humpty Doo is a large rural activity centre located just south of the Arnhem Highway, 3km from the Stuart Highway, and 19km from Palmerston CBD. At the 2011 Census, there were approximately 400 dwellings and 1000 people living in and around Humpty Doo. The services and facilities meet the day-to-day needs of residents, as well as providing for a wider catchment through services such as medical and higher education facilities. Some multiple dwellings exist close to the shops, and there is existing land zoned for single and multiple dwellings.

The pink outline on the map opposite identifies the potential area for a range of lot sizes, housing types, additional services and recreational facilities.

Land along the highway is part of the area being considered as there are a number of large lots and areas of undeveloped land that could be subdivided in a coordinated manner to create a local road network connecting to the Arnhem Highway at safe locations.

Existing facilities and services include:

- supermarket
- speciality shops
- takeaway food
- tavern
- childcare centre
- primary school
- high school
- church
- community hall
- fire station
- police station
- light industry
- automotive services
- service station
- hardware store



7.4 Berry Springs

Tell us...

- *Should Cox Peninsula Road be prioritised as an arterial road with limited access points?*

Berry Springs is a rural activity centre attracting an increasing level of interest due to new facilities such as the shopping centre and tavern, and the direct connection to Palmerston via the sealed Finn Road. The commercial centre is approximately 28 kilometres from Palmerston CBD via Finn Road, or approximately 37 kilometres via the Stuart Highway. The services and facilities are spread over 3.5 kilometres along Cox Peninsula Road, from Berry Springs primary school to the commercial centre at Doris Road.

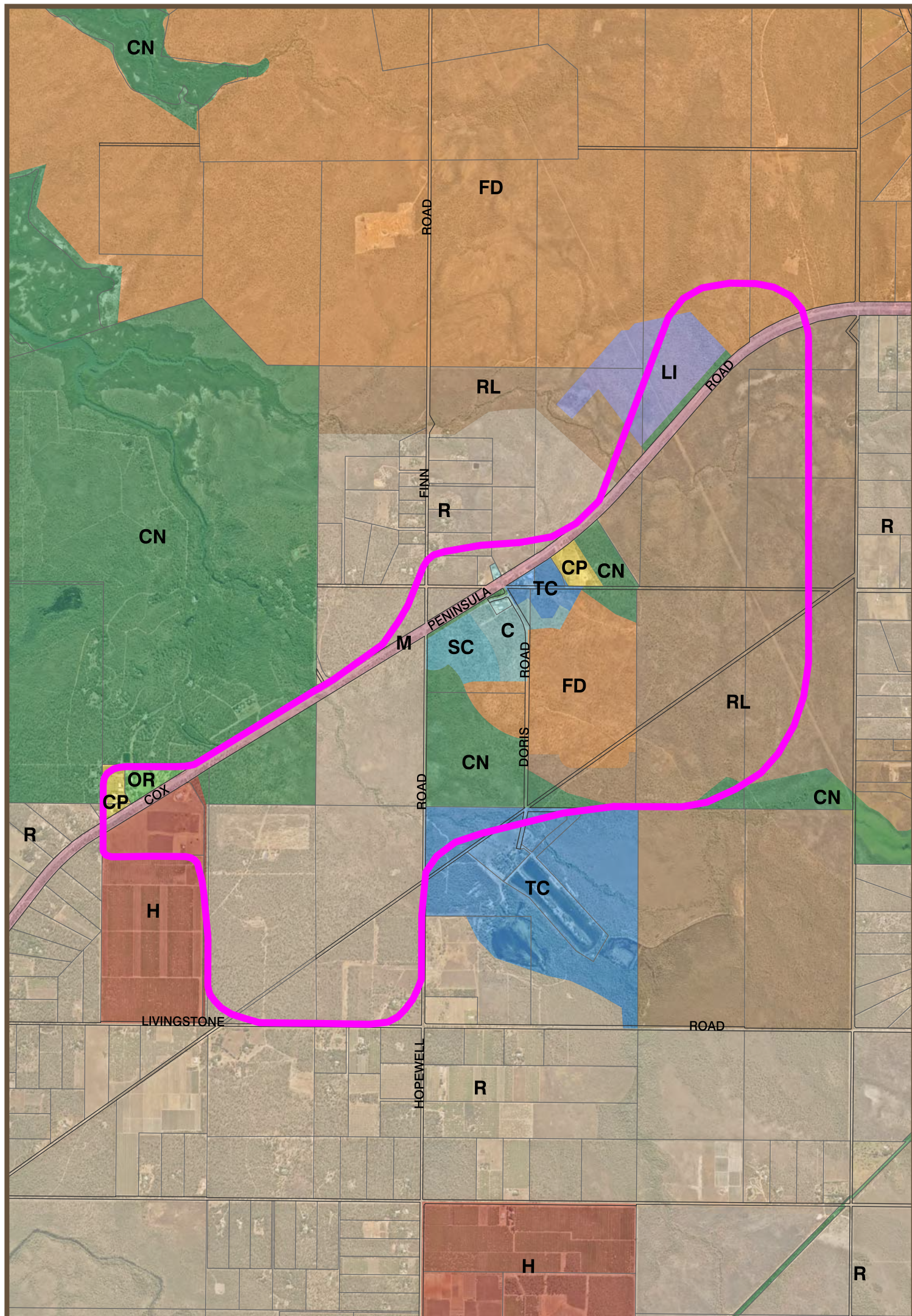
At the 2011 Census, there were approximately 320 dwellings and 735 people living in and around the Berry Springs rural activity centre. The services and facilities meet the day-to-day needs of residents.

The pink outline on the map opposite identifies the potential area for a range of lot sizes, housing types, additional services and recreational facilities. The large land holdings in this activity centre provide good opportunities for appropriate future development.

The study area is mostly on the southern side of Cox Peninsula Road, so that people coming to Berry Springs can access services and facilities without crossing Cox Peninsula Road, making it easier for traffic to flow.

Existing facilities and services include:

- supermarket
- hardware store
- speciality shops
- pharmacy
- takeaway food
- cafe
- tavern
- automotive services
- service station
- primary school
- fire station
- light industry
- Territory Wildlife Park
- Berry Springs Nature Park
- accommodation (caravan park)



7.5 Pine Forest

Tell us...

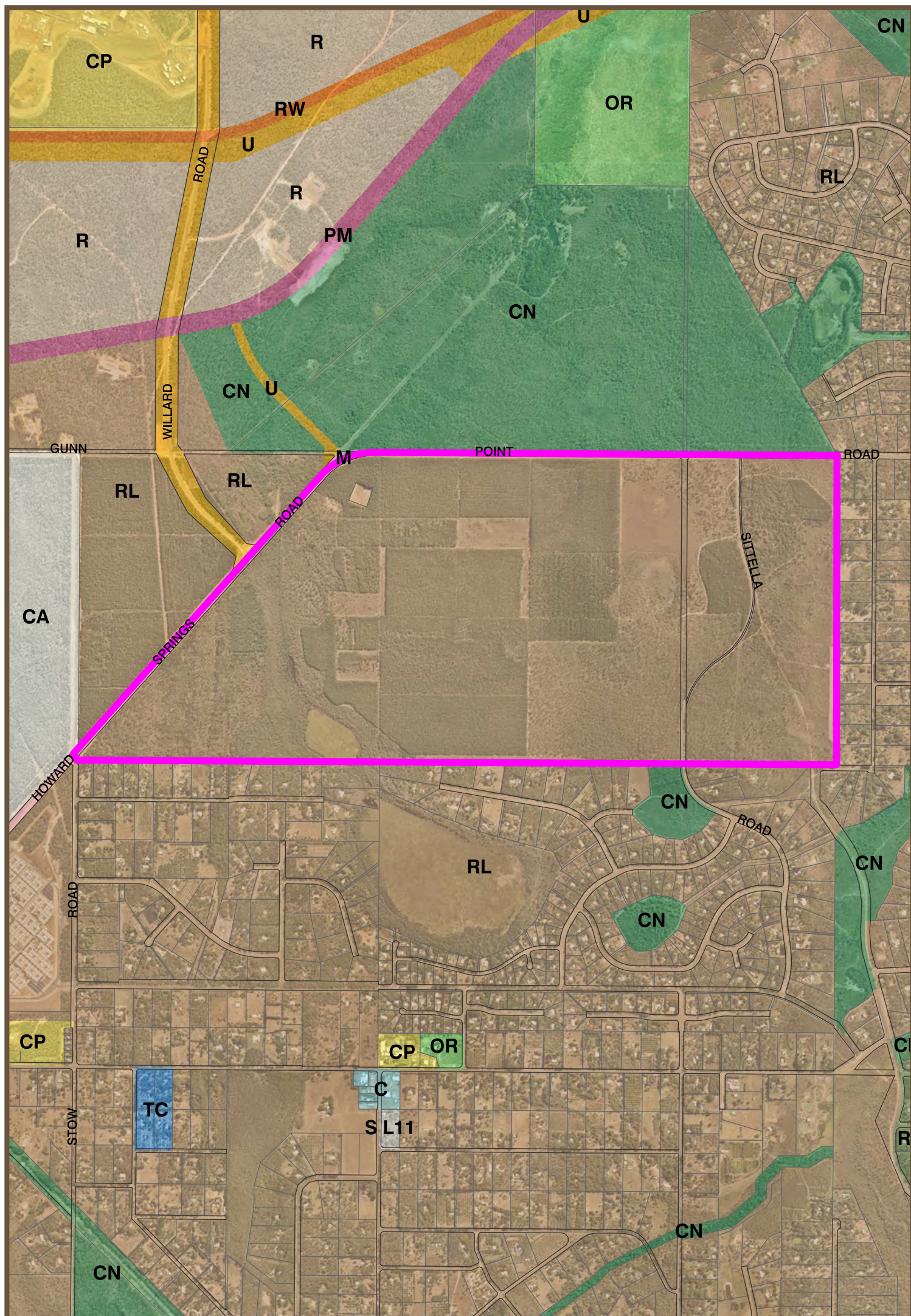
- *If developed, what size lots should be next to the existing 2 hectare lots?*

The Pine Forest was identified in the Darwin Regional Land Use Plan 2015 as a rural activity centre to recognise the potential of the site and local environmental conditions, specifically the springs at the nearby nature park. While there are potentially many solutions, the cost of providing reticulated infrastructure must be balanced against the price of developed land, which could lead to a mix of lot sizes similar to what is found in other rural activity centres.

The area is identified by the pine trees originally planted for forestry purposes. Today the land is a combination of vacant crown land and land held by the NT Land Corporation. It is popular with off-road cyclists who have created an extensive network of cycle paths throughout the area.

Any planning for future use of the area must consider the environmental values of the area, including Howard Springs Nature Park, which provides a wading pool, and shady picnic areas surrounding the central spring-fed waterhole. The aquifers that feed the spring are also a source of drinking water for Darwin, and require careful management to maintain water quality.

There are no services or facilities in the rural activity centre, however, it is only 8km to Palmerston CBD and 4km to Howard Springs rural activity centre.



8 Transport networks

Tell us...

- *What potential implications could future population growth have on the Litchfield transport network?*
 - *What opportunities can you see to improve the local road networks, including cycling links?*
-
- *Are public transport options appropriate for the Litchfield area?*
 - *Do you consider the park and ride facilities a positive asset in the community?*

8.1 Road network

The Stuart Highway carries the largest volume of traffic to and from the rural area, with more than 24 800 vehicles daily travelling past the Howard Springs traffic lights. Howard Springs Road and the Arnhem Highway also carry a significant volume of traffic, with 10 000 and 7600 vehicles daily respectively.

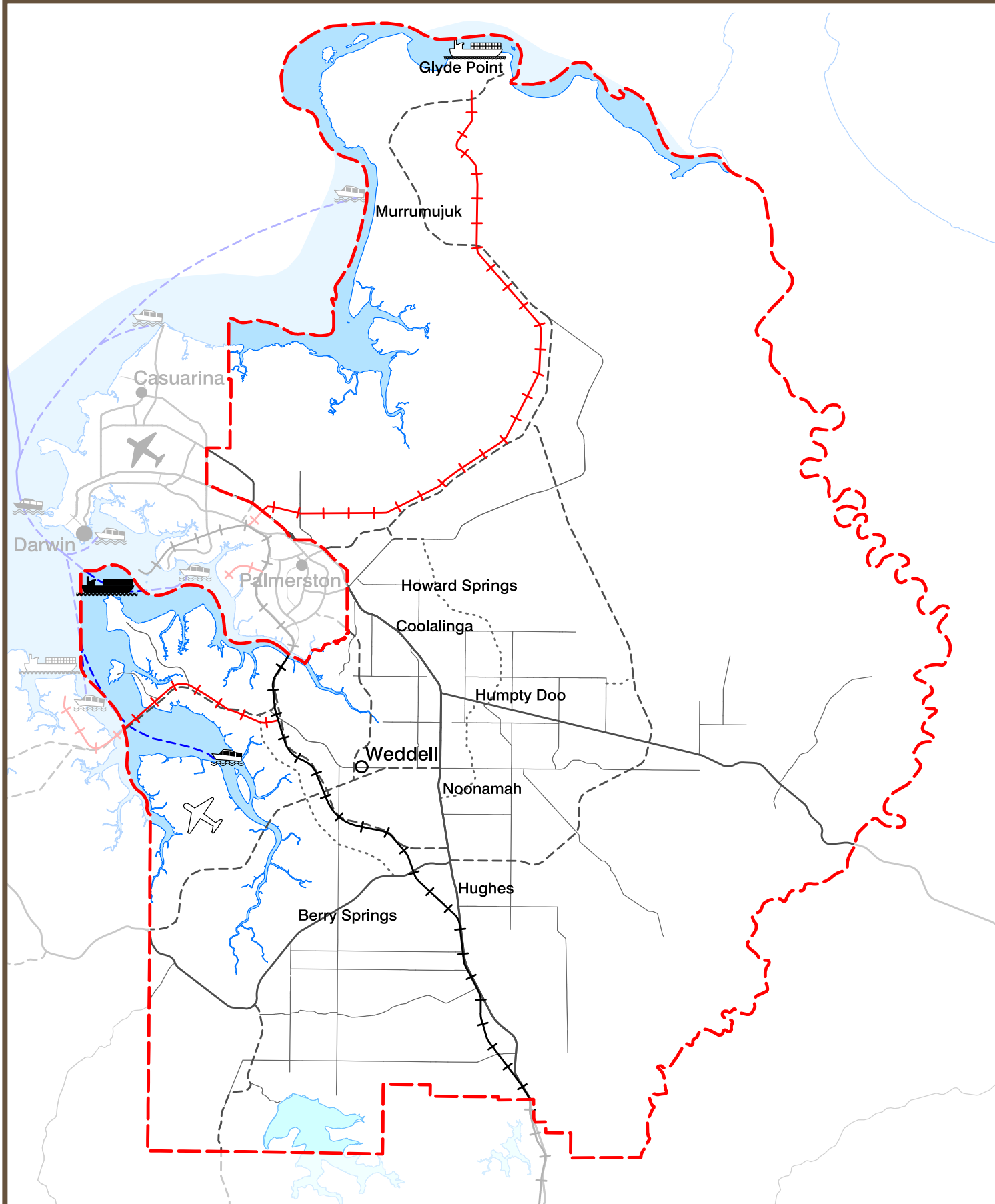
Arterial roads are designed to move lots of people, long distances with as few interruptions as possible. Collector Roads provide a shared function moving both people and freight between homes, business, farms and mining sites. Local roads primarily provide access to individual properties. Population growth will attract more vehicles, and when the existing roads reach their capacity to move traffic, some roads may need an extra lane or traffic lights, or a new road to move traffic in a different route.

8.2 Public transport

Public transport services extend to the rural area, moving people mostly during peak hours between Humpty Doo, Bees Creek, Noonamah and Palmerston. The Coolalinga and Humpty Doo park and ride facilities allow commuters to park their car or bike and take advantage of public transport into Palmerston and Darwin CBD.

8.3 Cycle paths

The extension of the off road shared path in the old rail corridor from Yarrowonga to Howard Springs was completed in 2011. A permanent bike counter on the path shows that more people currently use the path for recreational cycling at the weekends than for commuting during the week. Concepts are being investigated for continuing the existing path along the rail corridor to Coolalinga and a new path connecting Howard Springs to southern Palmerston along Lambrick Avenue is planned for construction in 2015. An existing off road path provides for local access at Humpty Doo.



LEGEND

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| - - - Subregion Boundary | Existing / Planned Airport |
| - - - Existing Waterbody | Existing / Planned Sea Port |
| - - - Ocean / Sea | Existing / Planned Ferry Terminal |
| + + + Existing / Planned Rail | |
| - - - Existing / Planned Ferry Route | |
| - - - Existing / Planned Arterial Road and Transport Corridor | |
| . . . Existing / Planned Collector Road | |
| - - - Coastline | |

9 Community facilities and open space

Tell us...

- *Should new community facilities and public open space be made available in the rural activity centres?*

Community facilities are provided in each of the rural activity centres, and can include schools, halls, libraries, childcare centres, police and fire stations, medical services and churches.

Open space in the rural area is provided as managed facilities (such as Freds Pass and Howard Springs Nature Reserve), community parks (such as Humpty Doo Village Green) and also as undeveloped natural spaces (such as Girraween Lagoon).

10 Useful terms

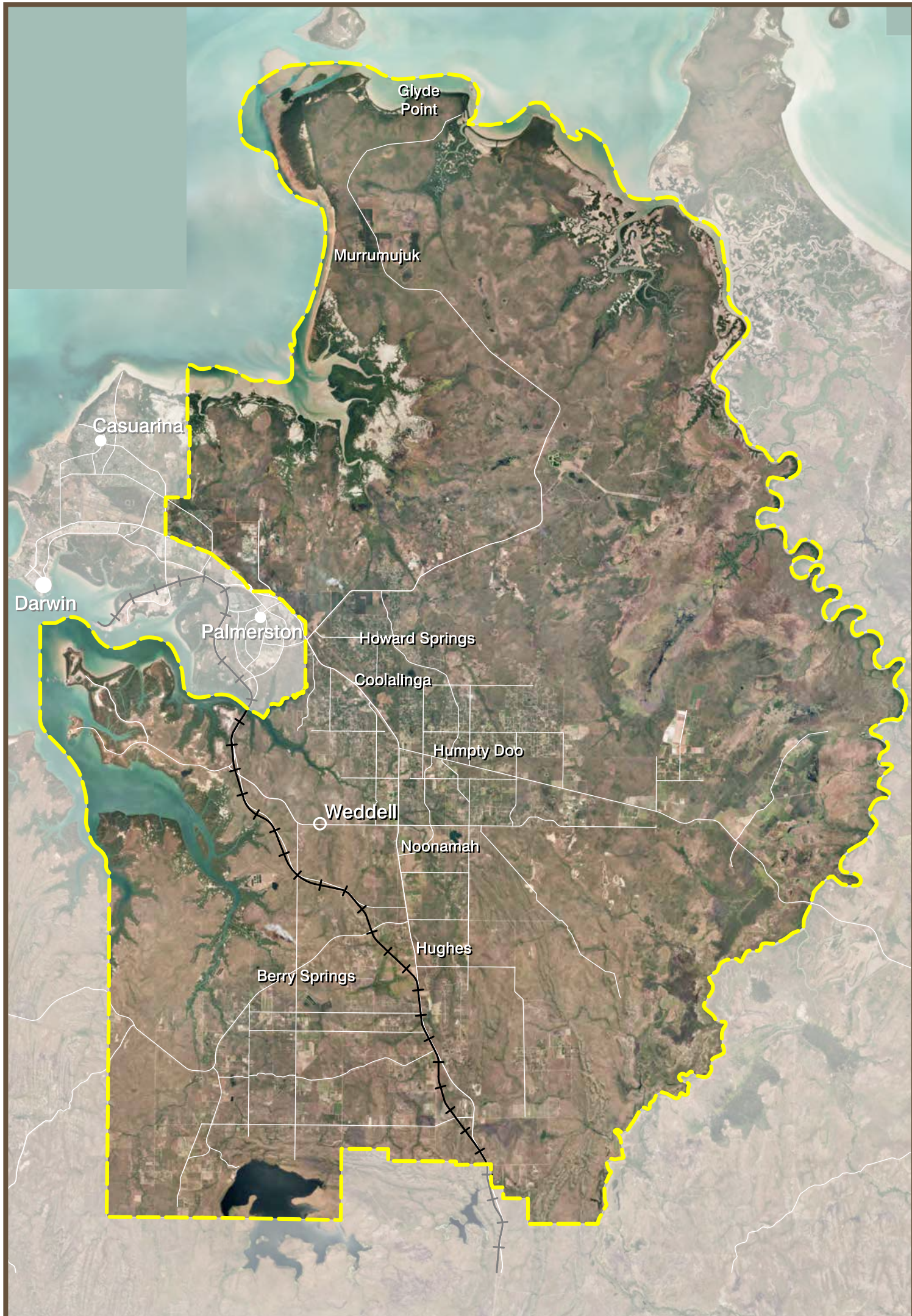
Activity centre	a place with vital community services and facilities to meet day to day needs. Can include shops, banks, offices, restaurants, cafes, parks schools and a variety of housing types.
Community facilities and services	includes schools, halls, libraries, childcare centres, police and fire stations, medical services, religious facilities
Peri-urban	also known as semi-rural, an area with both urban and rural characteristics
Public open space	areas of land reserved for green space and/ or natural environments and intended for use for recreation (active or passive) by the general public
Reticulated services	electricity, water, sewer, drainage and/or telecommunications infrastructure that connects individual parcels of land to major supply or treatment utilities
Rural activity centre	also known as a district centre, a place with vital community services and facilities to meet day to day needs. Can include shops, banks, offices, restaurants, cafes, parks, schools and a variety of housing types.
Rural lifestyle area	lots outside rural activity centres
Service infrastructure	includes roads, sewer, water mains, power networks, stormwater or any other essential infrastructure required for basic living standards
Seasonal waterlogging	soils that become waterlogged during the wet season
Social infrastructure	infrastructure supporting social service requirements, including schools, community centres, public open spaces, organised recreation facilities, community health services and childcare centres
Transport corridor	road or reservation containing high frequency public transport
Walkable catchment	400 metres or a 5 minute walkable catchment is generally considered a comfortable walking distance. A comfortable walking distance varies, and can also be assessed based on an individual's willingness to walk, the weather, aesthetics, attractiveness, directness and safety of the walking route and the facilities at the destination

11 Further investigations

Further investigations are required to inform this subregional plan. Studies include:

- provision of open space and community facilities
- provision of retail, office, residential and industrial floor space
- capabilities of the power, sewer and water networks
- preliminary biting insect assessment for the rural activity centres

More information about the outcomes of these studies will be provided during Stage 2 of this project.



For more information:

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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.