

## Briefing Note

**To:** DLALC  
**From:** Umwelt  
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**Date:** 23 April 2020  
**Subject:** Somersby Planning Proposal Bushfire Constraints – review of revised structure plan for Gateway

### Purpose

Umwelt completed a Preliminary Bushfire Assessment in June 2019 to accompany a rezoning review. The development footprint has changed in response to a more flexible approach to the future siting of rural-residential development and avoidance of a regional ecological corridor.

This briefing note provides summarised outcomes of Umwelt specialist bushfire studies at Reeves Road Somersby, NSW and consideration of the viability of the revised structure plan.

Consultation with RFS will occur after a Gateway Determination has been issued for the Planning Proposal.

### Outcomes/Key messages

The revised structure plan provides sufficient opportunities for set-backs and other protection requirements within the future rural residential land to satisfy the aims, objectives and performance requirements of Planning for Bushfire Protection 2018.

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### 1.0 Preliminary Bushfire Risk Assessment Report

Umwelt undertook a preliminary bushfire risk assessment for the proposed rezoning review request (RRR) in 2019. This initial investigation focused on determining if there was a viable developable area of land that could meet bushfire protection requirements and was based on the then indicative development footprint for the RRR. The assessment included and considered the following:

- Modelling of bushfire hazard across the proposed development areas in accordance with AS3959 *Australian Standard for Building in Bushfire Prone Areas*
- A summary of bushfire protection performance criteria and acceptable solutions under the *Planning for Bushfire Protection 2019*

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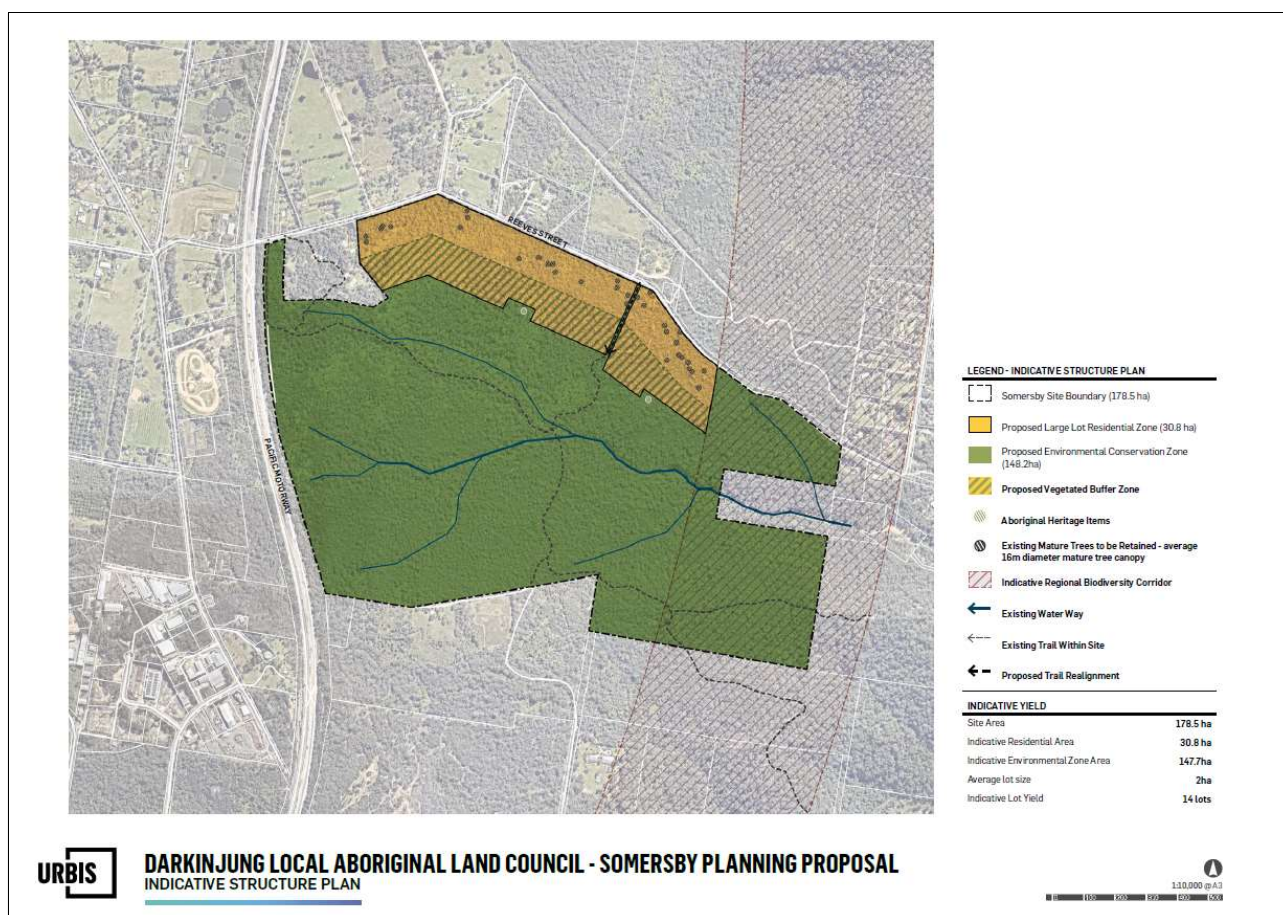
- Identified opportunities for cultural burning activities in surrounding bushland in accordance with the *NPWS Cultural Fire Management Policy*.

The hazard assessment showed that there were significant areas of the future development area that are viable for rural - residential housing, and that the creation of Asset Protection Zone (APZ) distances in accordance with Appendix 1 of Planning for Bushfire Protection could be accommodated within the proposed indicative development footprint.

The assessment concluded that provided that the proposed development, APZ areas, access and water supply facilities within the subject development site are constructed / designed / maintained in accordance with the recommendations as described in the report, it was a considered opinion that the proposed development could satisfy the aims, objectives and performance requirements PBP. These comprise a package of 'measures in combination' including asset protection zoning, construction standards, property roadway access & adequate water supply for firefighting purposes.

## 2.0 Revised Structure Plan

Darkinjung have since updated a proposed Structure Plan with a revised development footprint as shown in **Figure 1.1**.



**Figure 2.1** Current proposed Development Footprint (Urbis 2019)

The minimum APZ distances in the preliminary hazard assessment were 37 metres to the south, and 57 metres to the east and west. The difference in the minimum distances is based on a combination of vegetation (fuel) type and slope. The eastern and western ends of the future development area in the proposed Large Lot Residential Zone are the only sections that require an increased APZ distance,

as the future residential land in the middle of the development share the fuel reduced area from adjacent areas.

It is a considered opinion that the APZ for the residential dwellings can be accommodated within the primary disturbance footprint, which is outside of the vegetated buffer shown in the revised structure plan (Figure 1.1). This provides sufficient opportunity to implement these APZ prescriptions and to meet the other aims and performance requirements from RFS without relying on land within the buffer zone.

It should be noted that the APZ standard does not require the complete removal of all vegetation. The objective is to restrict the development of crown fires, and focuses on the removal of fine fuels and shrubs in the understorey, well as the thinning of trees.

The APZ requirements as a minimum should prescribe the following:

- Thinning of trees to provide a 3-5 metre separation between the crowns of individual trees
- Removal of most understorey shrubs and branches of trees, with only isolated clumps retained in areas well away from house sites
- Grass and fine surface plants to be mown to <10cm and maintained as such for the duration of the fire season.

### **3.0 References**

AS3959:2009 Australian Standard – Construction of Buildings in Bushfire Prone Areas (2011)  
Standards Australia, Sydney NSW.

Planning for Bushfire Protection – A guide for councils, planners, fire authorities and developers  
(2019) NSW Rural Fire Service, Sydney NSW

Umwelt Environmental & Social Consultants (2019) Preliminary Bushfire Risk Assessment Report,  
Reeves Road, Somersby, Prepared for Darkinjung LALC