Housing Needs and Liveability

Planning Proposal Study

Elderslie Rd, Branxton

submitted to Singleton Council
on behalf of Belford Land Pty Ltd

MAY 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hunter Region's outstanding natural setting, strategic geographic location, relaxed lifestyle qualities and diverse employment opportunities have rendered it one of the country's most attractive regional locations. The Hunter region has reported an annual growth rate of 1% per year since 2018, and regional migration trends due to the COVID-19 pandemic have further accelerated population growth[1]. The supply of new housing in the region has not kept pace with demand, contributing to an increase in house prices and a reduction in homes available to rent. Ensuring that a continued supply of diverse housing choices is made available to market is essential to supporting the successful and sustainable development of the region.

This *Housing Needs and Liveability Study* has been prepared to support a Planning Proposal to amend the *Singleton Local Environmental Plan 2013*. The Proposal aims to facilitate large lot residential development alongside the existing residential subdivision of Radford Park, in the town of Branxton.

The existing development at Radford Park has successfully delivered large lot residential lots to the Branxton locality, to great market effect. Demand at the existing Radford Park has exceeded supply, with the most recent stages selling to preregistered buyers prior to market release. The typology offers a unique residential product; large lots with a rural outlook that benefit from town conveniences and enhanced proximity to key services. The large lots also ensure compatibility with adjoining rural land and facilitate retention of mature trees that exist within sections of the site.

The following Report establishes a comprehensive evidence base to underpin the justification of this Proposal. The Report provides a detailed analysis of housing supply and demand in the Branxton locality, assessing key housing demand indicators and providing a quantitative analysis of housing supply in the area. The Report also provides an in-depth liveability assessment that further justifies the strategic merit of the Proposal, serving to demonstrate that the location is liveable and aiding in the identification of key elements that will enhance community liveability that should be considered as planning of the Proposal progresses.

[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Population Statistics', 2017 onwards.

1. INTRODUCTION

This Report has been prepared by GYDE Consulting on behalf of Belford Land Pty Ltd (our client) to support the preparation and assessment of a Planning Proposal to amend the *Singleton Local Environmental Plan 2013* (Council's LEP) for the following properties (hereafter referred to as 'the site'):

- Lot 1 DP1124566
- Lot 111 DP850244
- Lot 122 DP116584, and
- Part Lot 300 DP1248134.

The Planning Proposal seeks to rezone land suitable for development from RU1 Primary Production to R5 Large Lot Residential. It is envisaged to be an extension to the adjoining Radford Park Estate, which comprises around 150 Torrens Title rural residential lots with lot sizes averaging around 4,000m^2. An estimated yield of between 150-200 additional Torrens Title rural residential lots has been used for assessment purposes in this report, with development staging assumed as below:

- Stage 1 – 70 to 80 lots
- Stage 2 – 50 to 70 lots
- Stage 3 – 30 to 50 lots.

This Report assists in the consideration of the Planning Proposal by:

- Justifying the release of additional land for large lot residential development, underpinned by a rural-residential needs analysis of the Branxton subregion and housing trends across the Hunter Region more broadly,
- Identifying any site-specific recommendations to enhance liveability that should be incorporated into the masterplan review and updated layout, and
- Identifying the 'nexus' with community infrastructure to inform planning efforts as the project progresses.

This Report should be read in conjunction with the Planning Proposal Report (prepared by GYDE Consulting) and other supporting technical studies.

2. OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGIES

2.1. Planning Areas

To prepare this Report, we have obtained and analysed data available from a range of sources. Wherever possible, we have attempted to understand information geographically to enable place-specific analysis. Our assessments have largely sought to benchmark insights relevant to the Branxton Subregion, as defined in the *Branxton Subregion Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan* adopted jointly by Cessnock and Singleton Councils in 2016. This recognises the shared socio-economic characteristics of the area.

We acknowledge the separate data sources upon which our analysis relies each used different geographical boundaries to collect or report information. Consequently, we have had to make 'best approximations' to conduct some elements of our analysis. The following briefly describes how different data areas were defined and aligned within the context of the Branxton Subregion.

Branxton Subregion

This Report largely considers insights relevant to the Branxton Subregion (Figure 1). The Branxton Subregion is defined in the *Branxton Subregion Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan*.

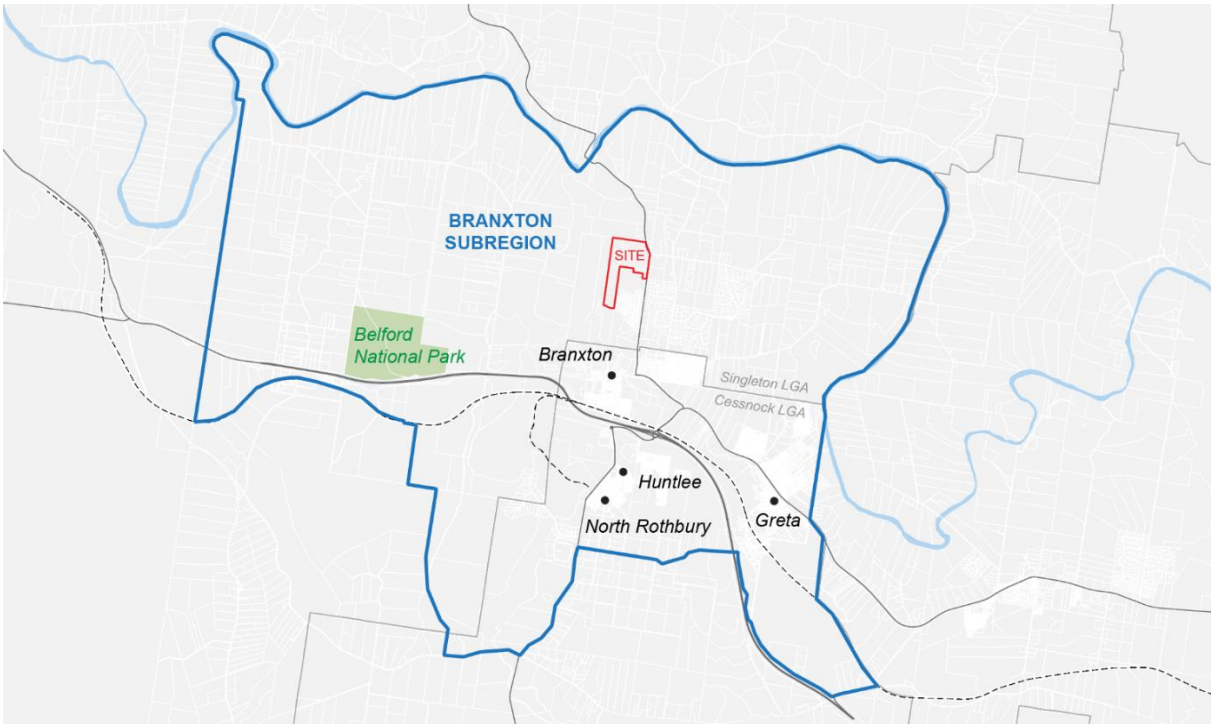


Figure 1: Branxton Subregion as defined in the Branxton Subregion Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan.

Lower Belford and Greta postcodes

Data indicating housing need within the study area (including total property listings and time on market, weekly asking sale price, rental vacancy, and weekly asking rent price) have been derived from SQM Research; relevant to the postcodes of Lower Belford (2335) and Greta (2334).

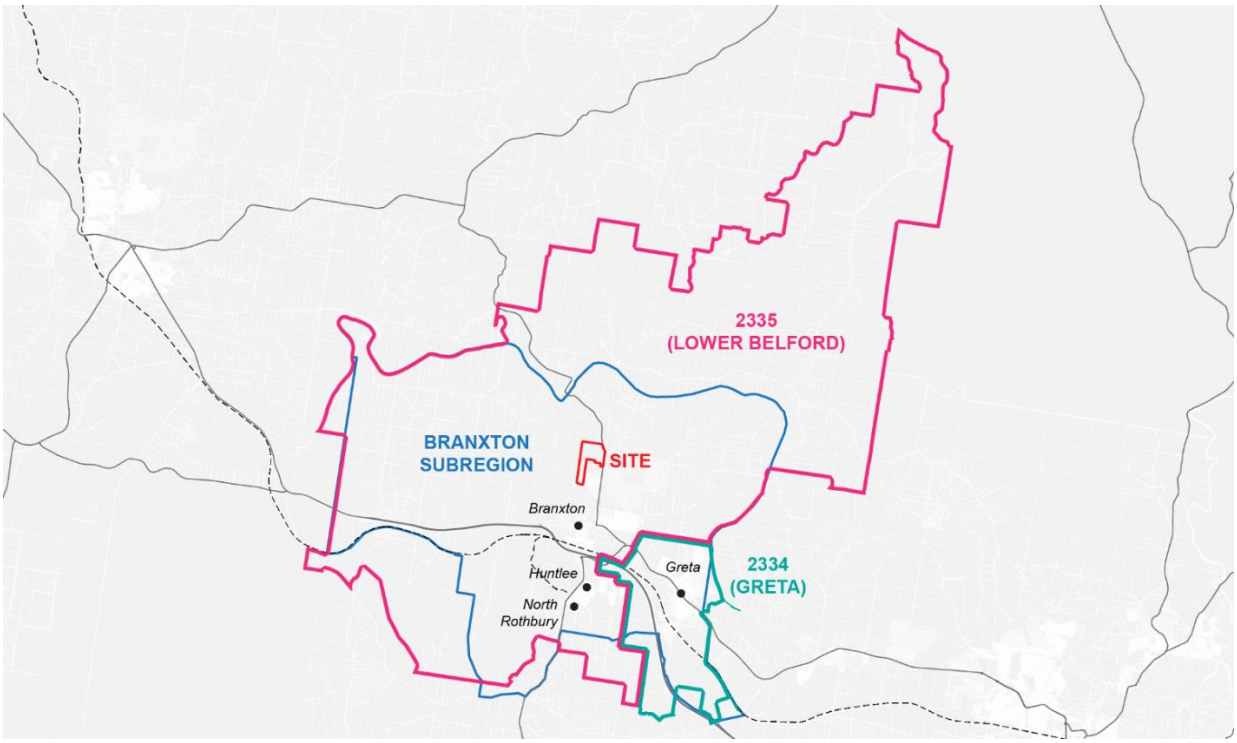


Figure 2: Lower Belford (2335) and Greta (2334) postcodes.

Branxton-Greta-North Rothbury

Demographic analysis contained within this report has been derived from profile.id. Data related to the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury profile area has been considered in this analysis.

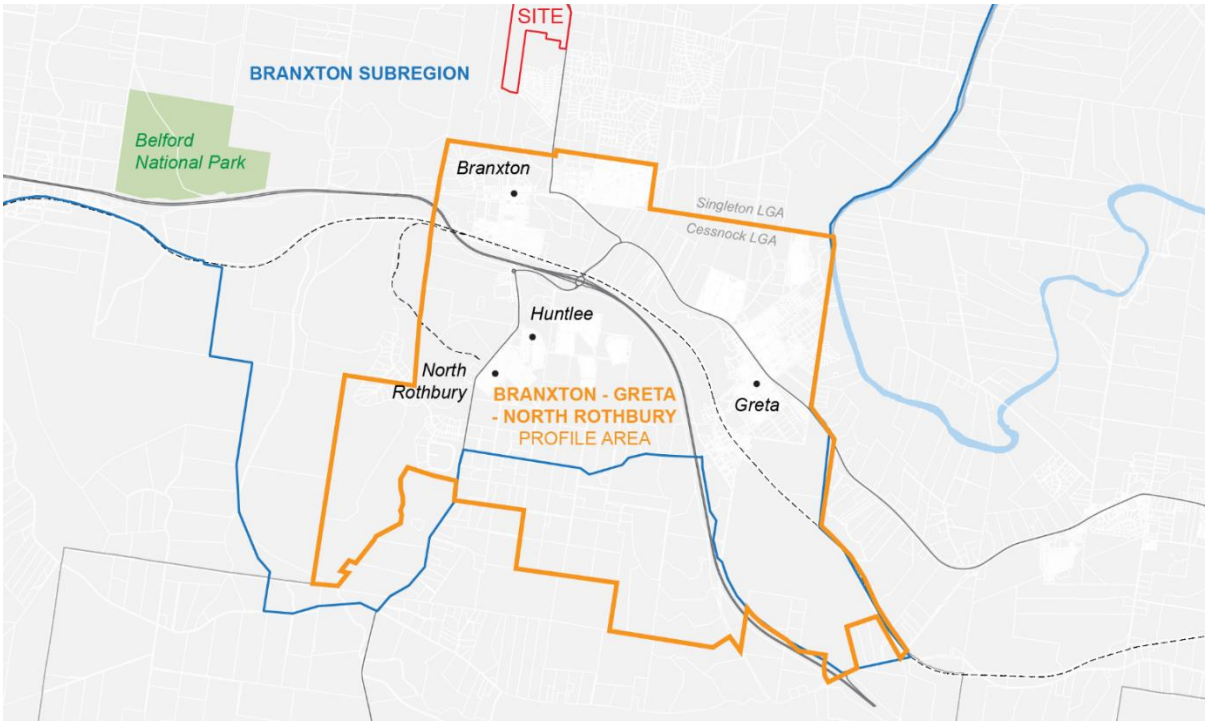


Figure 3: Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury profile area.

15-minute Drive Travel Isochrone

Using the suburb of Allandale in the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District (the furthest location in this District from Radford Park), a 15-minute-travel time isochrone benchmark was applied and used to derive analysis related to liveability and infrastructure.

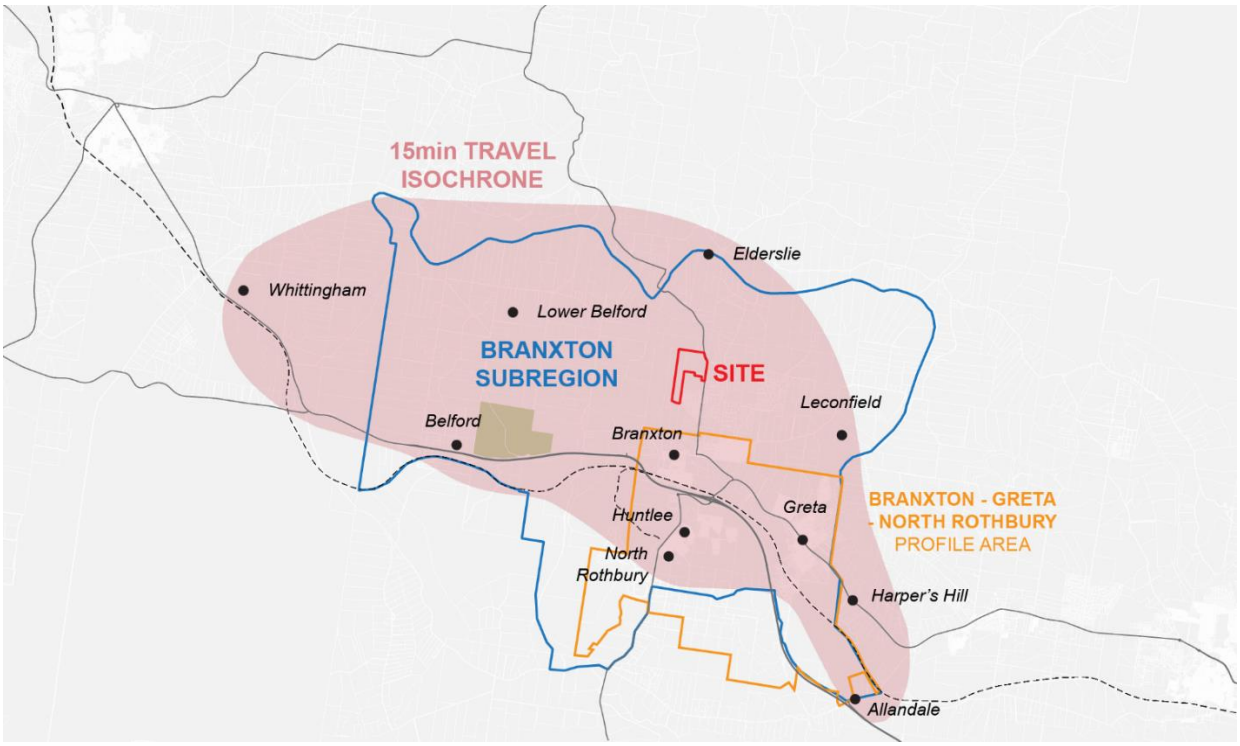


Figure 4: 15-minute drive travel time isochrone.

3. HOUSING NEED

3.1. Approach

Our analysis of housing need recognises the existing Radford Park Estate provides a unique residential product, offering large lots that are rural in outlook but benefit from urban conveniences, including reticulated water and sewer, high speed NBN, and cycling distance of a town centre that is currently being revitalised. The Planning Proposal would facilitate the continuation of supply for this type of product, serving to enhance the diversity of housing choices available to the market.

This Report provides an analysis of supply and demand considerations as they apply to the large lot residential typology in the Branxton Subregion. The Study consults population and housing data from sources such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and SQM Research. A housing capacity assessment has been compiled for the Branxton Subregion, analysing the availability of lots for large lot residential development, understanding current and future theoretical capacity and identifying other environmental constraints that may limit development potential.

3.2. Demand considerations

3.2.1. Hunter Region

The Hunter is Australia's largest regional economy, and home to its seventh-largest city. In 2021, it had a population of around 750,000 people and has historically grown, on average, by around 9,000 people each year[2]. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hunter has experienced accelerated growth rates, which has been attributed to a significant reduction in the number of people choosing to leave the Region as well as a continued increased in people choosing to move to the Hunter from elsewhere. ABS figures indicate an overall increase in net migration of 38.7% in the 2019-2020 period, representing the start of the pandemic, based on Estimated Residential Population levels[3].

When considered collectively, key housing demand indicators suggest that the supply of new housing in the Hunter Region has not kept pace with population growth and that this trend was evident before the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated regional population growth rates. These key indicators include the asking price and time on market for properties offered for sale, and the vacancy rate and asking rent for properties offered for lease.

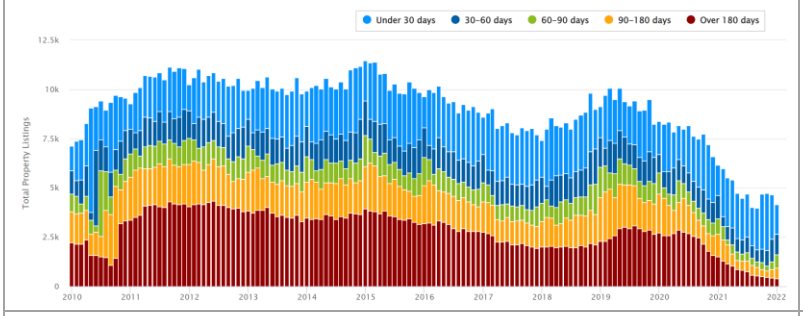
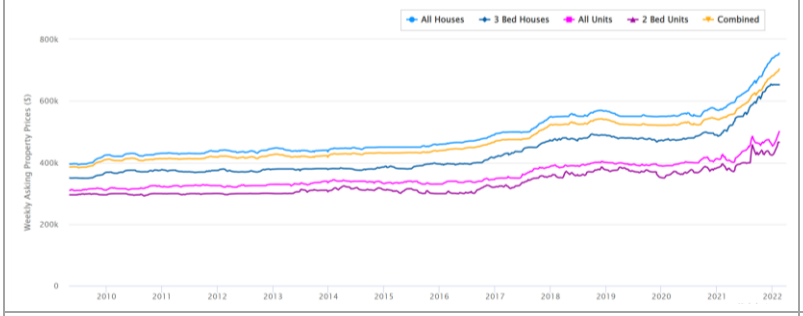
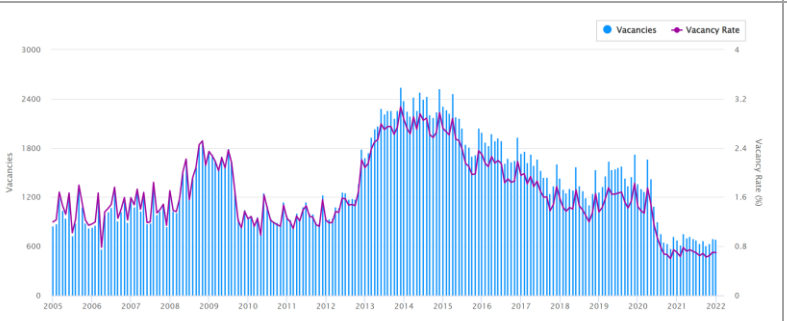
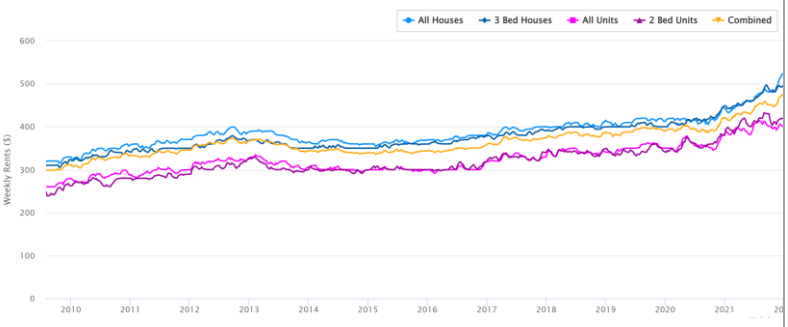
At the regional level, there has been a 15% rise in asking price over 12 months for a 3-bedroom home in the Hunter, indicating that the established demand trends have accelerated during the pandemic[4]. While there is some degree of uncertainty as to the longevity of the accelerated growth rates seen during the pandemic, the Hunter Region is expected to continue to see strong levels of population growth, reflective of broader economic development opportunities. In other words, the Hunter's population will continue growing.

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Population Statistics', 2001 onwards.

[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Population Statistics', 2017 onwards.

[4] SQM Research, 'Asking Price for Hunter Region', 2021.

Table 1: Summary of regional-level housing indicators, 2010-present. (Source: SQM Research)

SUMMARY OF REGIONAL-LEVEL HOUSING INDICATORS FROM 2010 TO TODAY	
	**Total Property Listings for sale (Hunter Region)** available online
	**Asking sale price (Hunter Region)** available online
	**Residential Vacancy Rates (Hunter Region)** available online
	**Weekly Rents (Hunter Region)** available online

3.2.2. Branxton Subregion

The Branxton Subregion was singled out for enhanced long-term planning initiatives in 2016 due to its strategic location at the outer frame of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Area and northern end of the Hunter Expressway. Demand for housing within the Subregion is expected to reflect metropolitan-level demand, particularly as new services and job opportunities are established through the delivery of key growth areas such as the new town at Huntlee.

We analysed key housing demand indicators across all residential product types for postcodes 2334 (Greta) and 2335 (Lower Belford) as a best approximation for the Branxton Subregion. **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** show that there have been fewer properties offered for sale across both postcodes in recent years, with properties that are listed selling faster. **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** also indicate an abrupt increase in sale prices.

A 3% rental vacancy rate is considered healthy because it represents a market balanced between tenants and owners. **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** illustrate the high degree of variability in the rental market in the Branxton Subregion, with vacancy rates tending to consistently fall below the 3% healthy market benchmark. On average, data suggests that around 20 rental properties are listed per month, and nearly all are leased in under 30 days. When considered alongside the rise in weekly asking rents, demand is again proven to exceed supply.

Collectively, these indicators suggest there is an increasing demand for housing within the subregion and that the lack of availability of property on market (for sale or rent) is leading to an increase in the cost of housing.

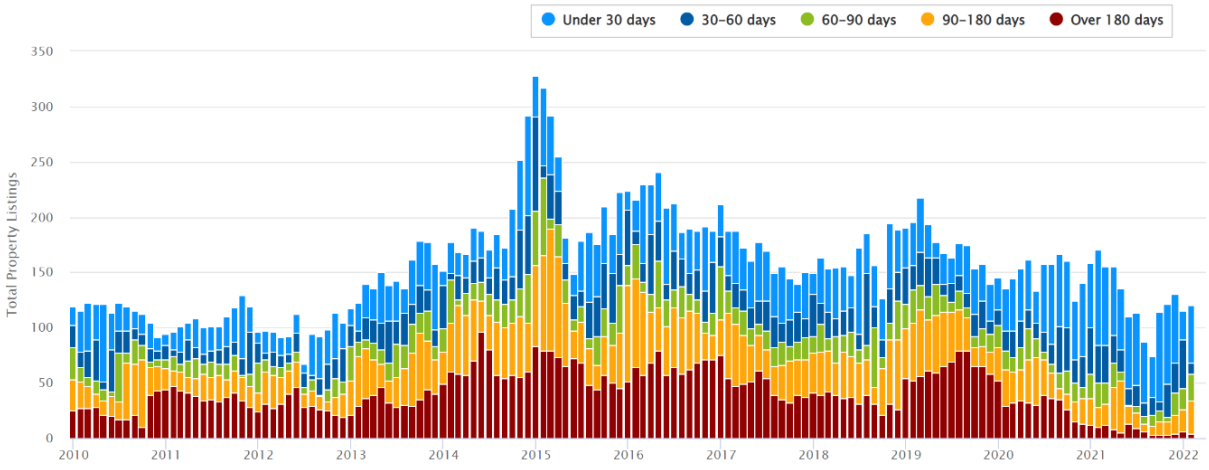


Figure 5: Total property listings and time on market (postcode 2335).

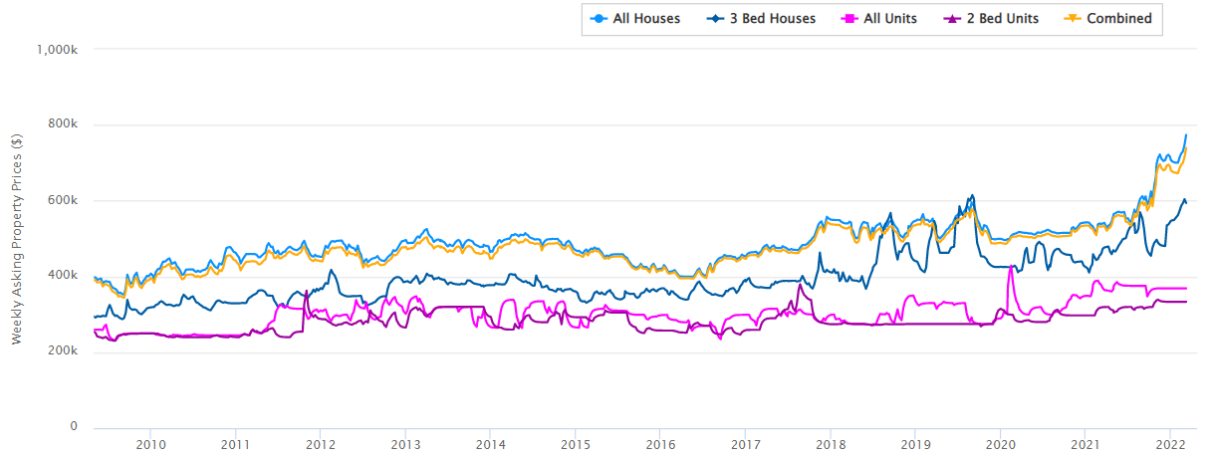


Figure 6: Weekly asking sale price (postcode 2335).

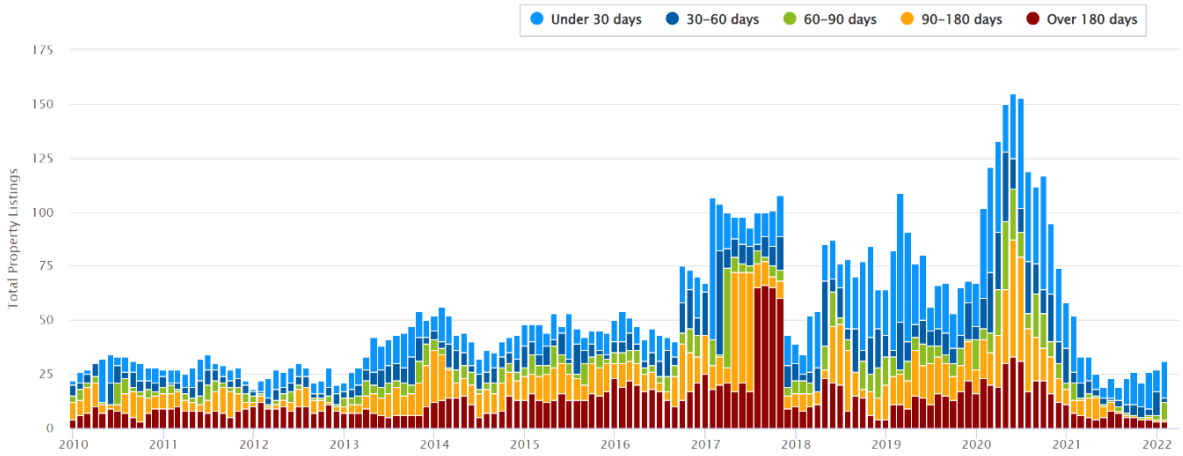


Figure 7: Total property listings and time on market (postcode 2334).

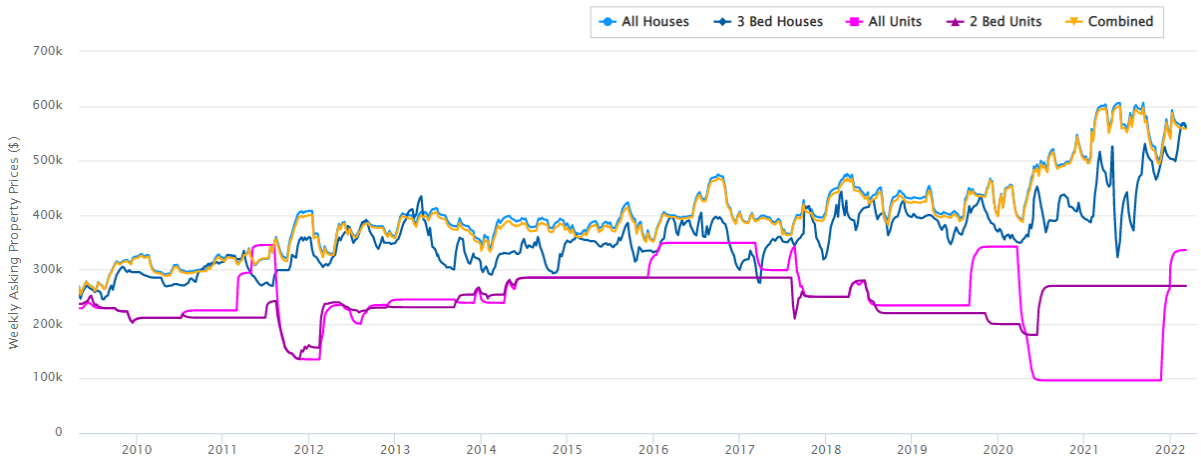


Figure 8: Weekly asking sale price (postcode 2334).

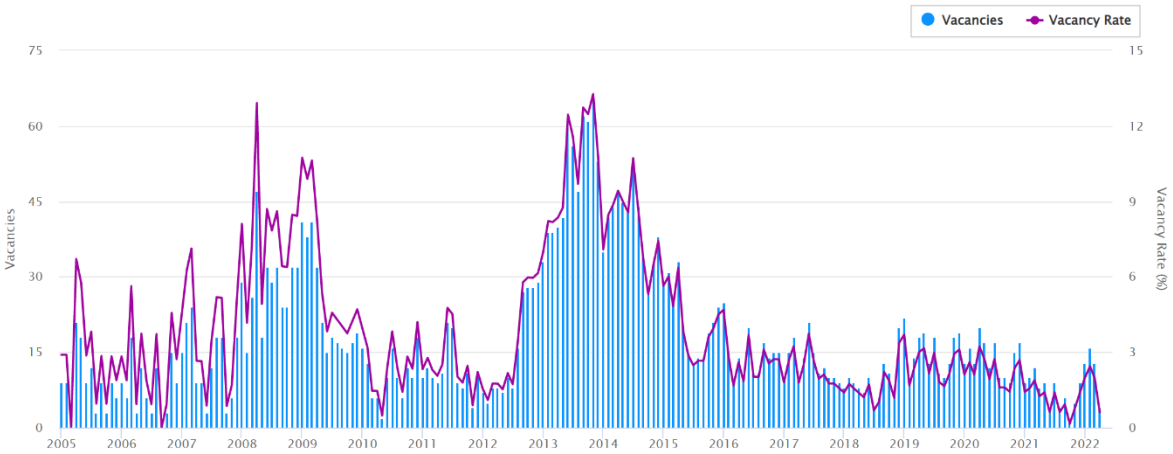


Figure 9: Rental vacancy (postcode 2335).

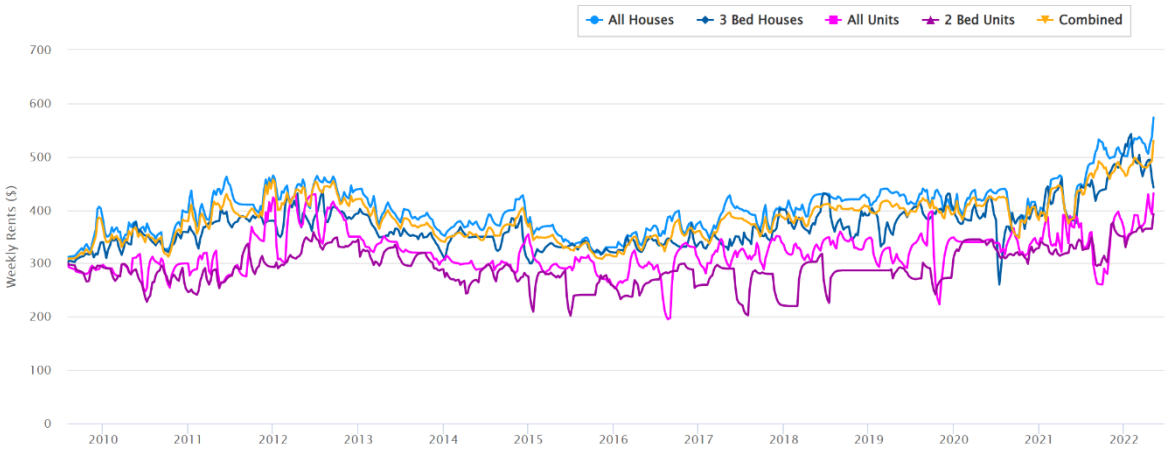


Figure 10: Weekly asking rent price (postcode 2335).

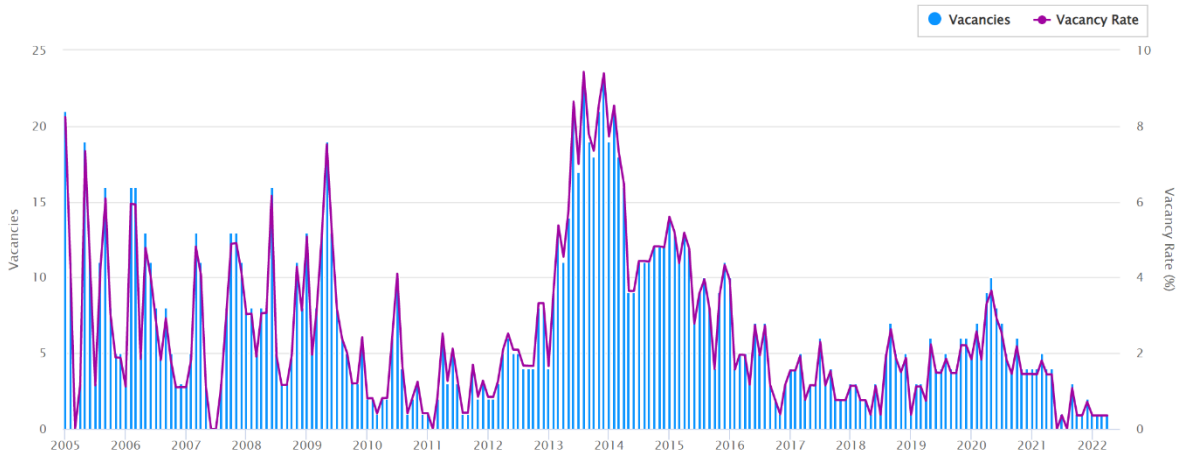


Figure 11: Rental Vacancy (postcode 2334).

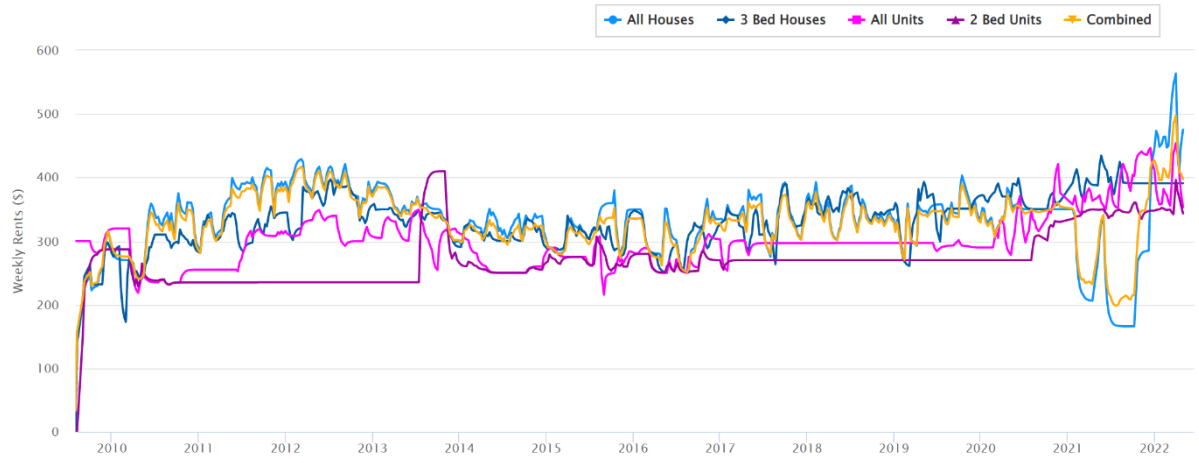


Figure 12: Weekly asking rent price (postcode 2334).

3.2.3. Radford Park Estate

The housing demand data available for the Branxton Subregion does not specifically report on the type of large lot residential product that would be facilitated by the Planning Proposal. However, sales data provided by the existing Radford Park Estate demonstrates a sustained high level of demand since 2020, with the most recent stages pre-sold to an established list of potential buyers who had registered interest. This demonstrates that buyer demand exceeds supply at an Estate level.

Table 2: Radford Park Estate sales.

STAGE RELEASE	NO. LOTS RELEASED	SALES PERIOD
1	39	2 years (2014 to 2016)
2 & 3	54	10 months (August 2020 to May 2021)
4	11	10 days (12 to 22 July 2021)
5-6	41	*Pre-sold before market release*

3.3. Supply considerations

3.3.1. Hunter Region

The Hunter is the largest regional economy in Australia, undergoing a major structural change. GYDE's recent research into housing supply in the Hunter (prepared for Government and peak industry body clients) has revealed several important insights, as summarised below. These echo many of the recommendations put forward by the NSW Regional Housing Taskforce in 2021.

The Hunter is growing. Greater Newcastle is the seventh largest city in Australia, and every year, the broader Hunter Region effectively adds a town the size of Parkes to its population. This trend pre-dated the COVID-19 pandemic but has been amplified over the last 2 years, not because more people are choosing to move to the region (though in-migration has remained steady) but because far fewer working-age people are leaving. Business confidence, evidenced by job vacancies, indicate this trend is set to continue.

The Hunter is a supply-driven housing market. Housing supply hasn't been keeping up with real demand since around 2017. This was previously evidenced in Table 1, with trends showing the accessibility of housing (for sale and rent) in conjunction with the cost of housing (for sale or rent). In short, housing was gradually becoming less available and more expensive from around 2017 to the start of the pandemic. During the pandemic, these trends shifted markedly, and now reflect problematic levels.

The NSW Government's housing projections have also tended to fall short of real demand. Figure 13 shows the implied dwelling requirement for the Lower Hunter LGAs derived from the NSW 2019 projections (in green) alongside projected housing supply. It illustrates that the industry has been consistently delivering new housing above the implied dwelling requirements, which – in conjunction with demand considerations – could be reflective of corrections compensating for historical supply shortfalls.

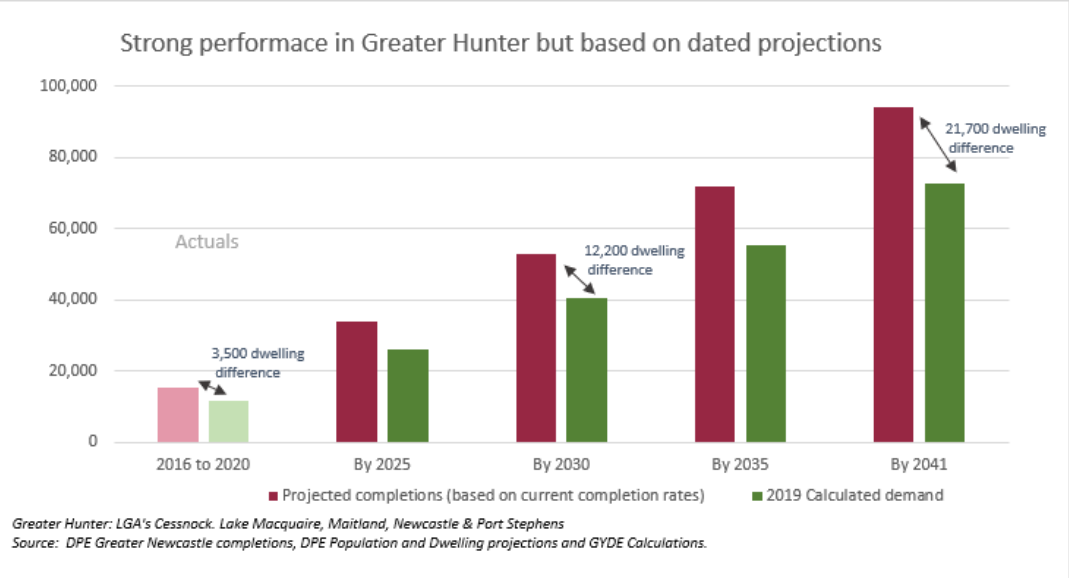


Figure 13: Greater Hunter implied dwelling projections compared with supply

Housing growth isn't uniform across the region. The proposed Planning Proposal is located where development activity (reflected through rezonings as well as approvals and completions) in the Hunter is currently highest: in the area between the strategic centres of Maitland, Cessnock and Singleton at the westernmost edge of the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan area.

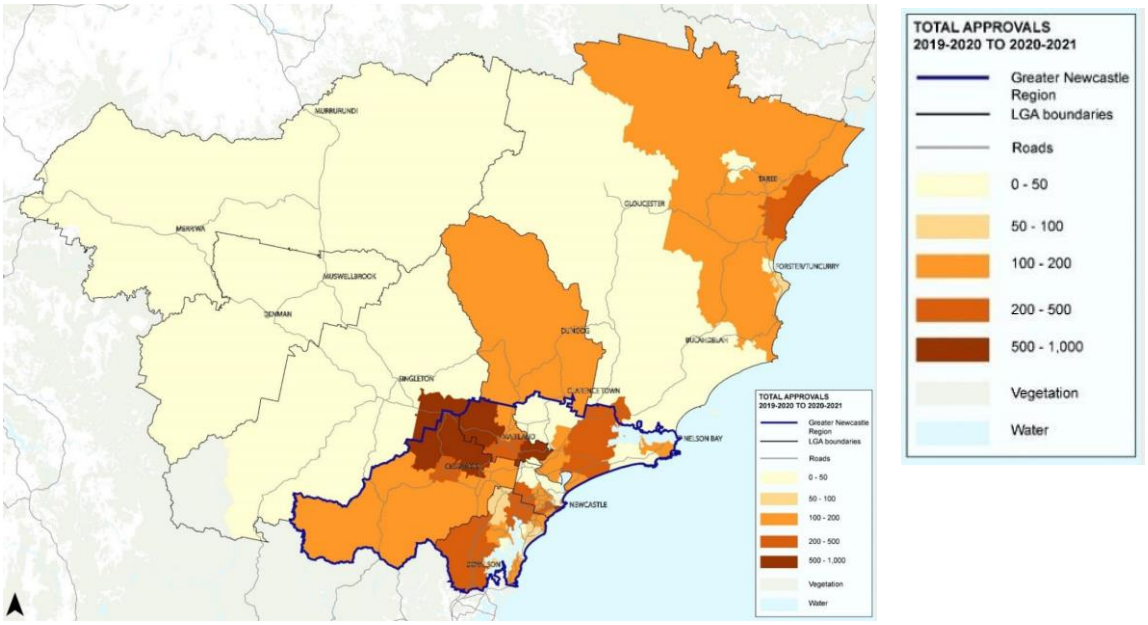


Figure 14: Development Approvals 2019/20 to 2020/21. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021)

To be effective, housing supply needs to be reliable and robust. The continuity of greenfield land supply is critical to maintaining the volume of housing that the Hunter needs, both to address historic shortfalls and to accommodate future demand. This relies on tracking not only the theoretical capacity of growth areas, but also understanding where we can achieve larger windfalls, such as through delivery on consolidated landholdings or leveraging investment in infrastructure.

3.3.2. Branxton Subregion

There are several housing supply sources with the capacity to result in a net growth of homes within the Branxton Subregion. Key considerations for these sources are summarised below.

- The new town emerging at Huntlee has been planned to provide up to 7,500 dwellings. It is already a productive supply source, offering a volume staged release. Residential products predominantly comprise detached single dwellings interspersed with medium density options (e.g., townhouses) across 4 'village' areas. More diverse housing options will be offered within the town centre and two separate large lot living areas off Wine Country Drive and Old North Road. We note the first of these large lot areas (Aria Estate) was release in 2022.

- There are opportunities to realise growth through infill development within the historical towns of Branxton and Greta. These are constrained by a range of factors including flooding and heritage.

- There is also latent zoned capacity at Anvil Creek, which is associated with an approved (but never constructed) integrated golf course development. This site recently sold, and we understand it is subject to a comprehensive masterplan review. This site is unlikely to become a significant productive supply source in the next 5 years, given the average approval and construction timeframe.

The Planning Proposal seeks to facilitate additional supply of large lot residential product specifically. This type of product is typically reflected in R5 Large Lot Residential and C4 Environmental Living zonings. These zonings are currently applied to around 914ha of land (across 653 legal lots), as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Total land deliberately zoned for large lot residential products

ZONE	NO. LOTS^	TOTAL AREA (HA)
R5 – Large Lot Residential	637	227
C4 – Environmental Living	16	687
Total	653	914

^ based on cadastre mapping

Areas within the Subregion that have been deliberately zoned for large lot residential products are shown in Figure 15, with area-specific supply considerations summarised below.

- **Greta (North and South)** - The village is bookended to the north and south by R5 zoned land, with a 2,000m^2 minimum lot size standard applying. Both areas are already relatively established, with only a limited number of vacant lots remaining. The current lot size pattern does indicate additional subdivision potential is still possible on selected lots. Supply to the market would need to be driven by individual owners providing smaller projects (e.g., 1 to 4 lot subdivisions) in the northern area or moderate size projects (e.g., 1 to 8 lot subdivisions) in the southern area. Several lots are constrained by vegetation or flooding concerns that may reduce the likelihood of projects of this size proceeding.

- **Branxton (North)** - Land to the north of town is zoned R5, with an 8,000m^2 minimum lot size standard applying, apart from Radford Park, where a 4,000m^2 minimum applies. The approved supply capacity at Radford Park is already constructed or committed. Outside Radford Park (under construction), the capacity to provide additional supply to the market would be negligible, noting most of this land is already relatively established with only a limited number of vacant lots remaining. The current lot size pattern does indicate additional subdivision potential is still possible on selected lots, noting most of these appear to be currently occupied by small rural enterprises (e.g., vineyards or orchards).

- **Lower Belford** - Land west of Standen Drive in the vicinity of Belford National Park is zoned C4, with a 1ha minimum lot size standard applying within the Murrays Rise Estate and a 4ha minimum lot size standard applying elsewhere. The approved supply capacity at Murrays Rise is 118 lots, with early-stage construction already underway. Outside Murrays Rise, supply to the market would be exclusively driven by individual owners providing smaller projects (e.g., 1 to 4 lot subdivisions).

- **Wine Country Drive** - South of North Rothbury, land to the west of Wine Country Drive is zoned R5, with the minimum lot size standards dependent on serviceability by reticulated water and sewerage systems. Under the Cessnock LEP, where land is serviced, a 2,000m^2 minimum lot size standard applies; otherwise, a 2ha minimum lot size standard applies. This area is comprised of two adjoining master planned estates. The established Hanwood Estate does have additional capacity for subdivision but based on aerial imagery, does not appear to have been in production in the last 10 years. The remaining developable area is heavily vegetated, which may constrain the viability of future development if appropriate biodiversity approvals are not already in place. The emerging Aria Estate (associated with the Huntlee development program) has been planned to provide around 115 residential lots, with early-stage development commenced in 2022.

- **Old North Road** - Land to the north of Old North Road is zoned R5. We could not find detailed information to confirm its planned capacity but understand this land is associated with the Huntlee development program and expect it could be delivered as a master planned estate. This area is more remote from services, heavily vegetated and impacted by flooding; these factors may influence its overall capacity and the timing for development.

3.3.3. Radford Park Estate

The approved supply capacity at Radford Park is already constructed or sold.

3.3.4. Large lot residential capacity in the Branxton Subregion

Modelling for the purposes of this housing supply analysis has been developed using a high-level, conservative approach. Analysis has involved the identification of sites in the Branxton Subregion that are located in land zones where large lot residential products are permissible, being R5 Large Lot Residential and C4 Environmental Living.

Of lots located in these land zones, theoretical capacity has been determined, identifying lots in both planned estates and some other parcels of land capable of further subdivision. Theoretical capacity has generally been determined by application of the minimum lot size controls, calculated at an efficiency rate of 85%. In the instance of R5 land at Old North Road, where significant vegetation and other environmental concerns constrain the site, an efficiency rate of 50% has been applied.

Remaining large lot residential capacity in the Branxton Subregion has been determined as those lots not located in estates that are already sold, and those that are not limited by significant environmental constraints.

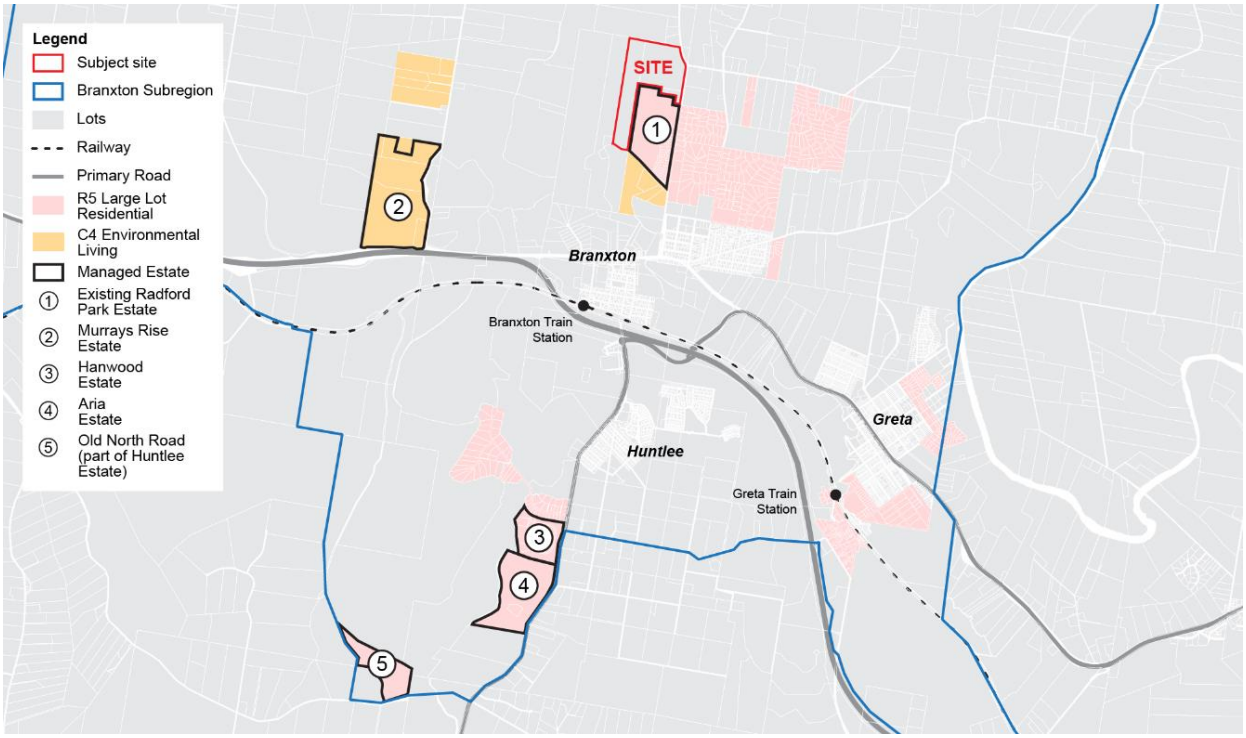


Figure 15: Land capable of large lot residential development.

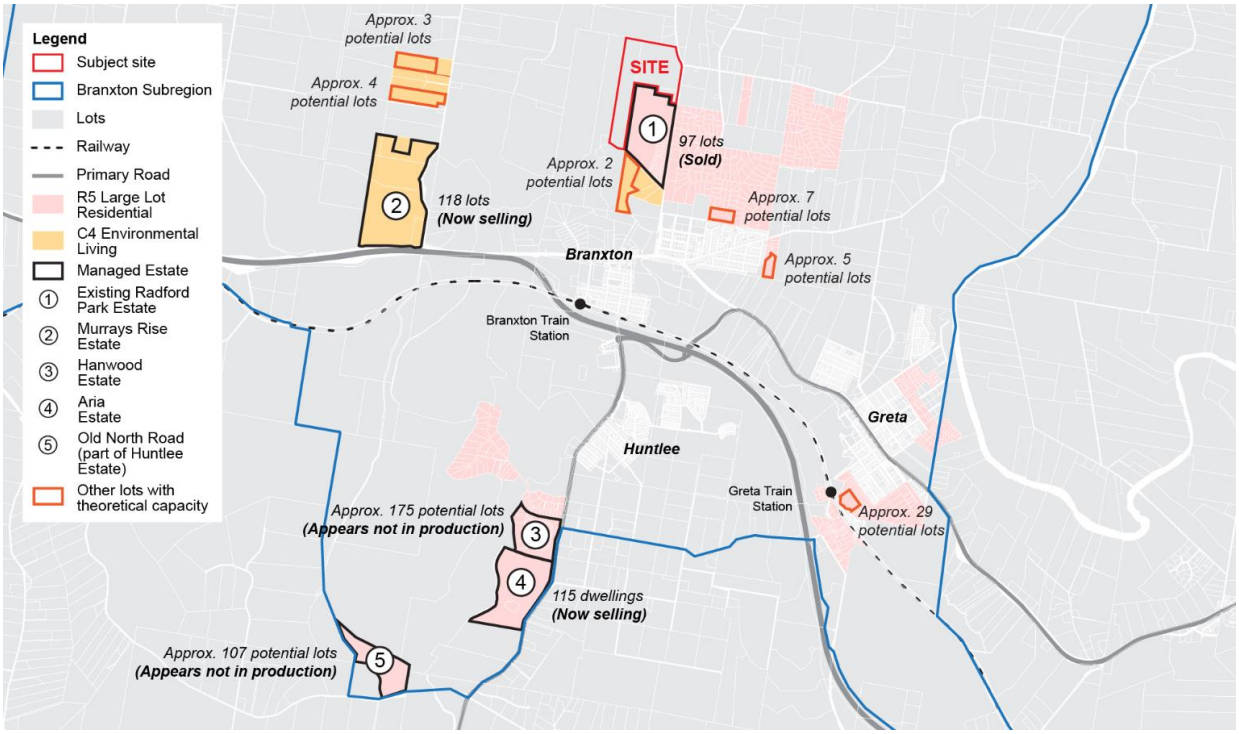


Figure 16: Theoretical large lot residential capacity.

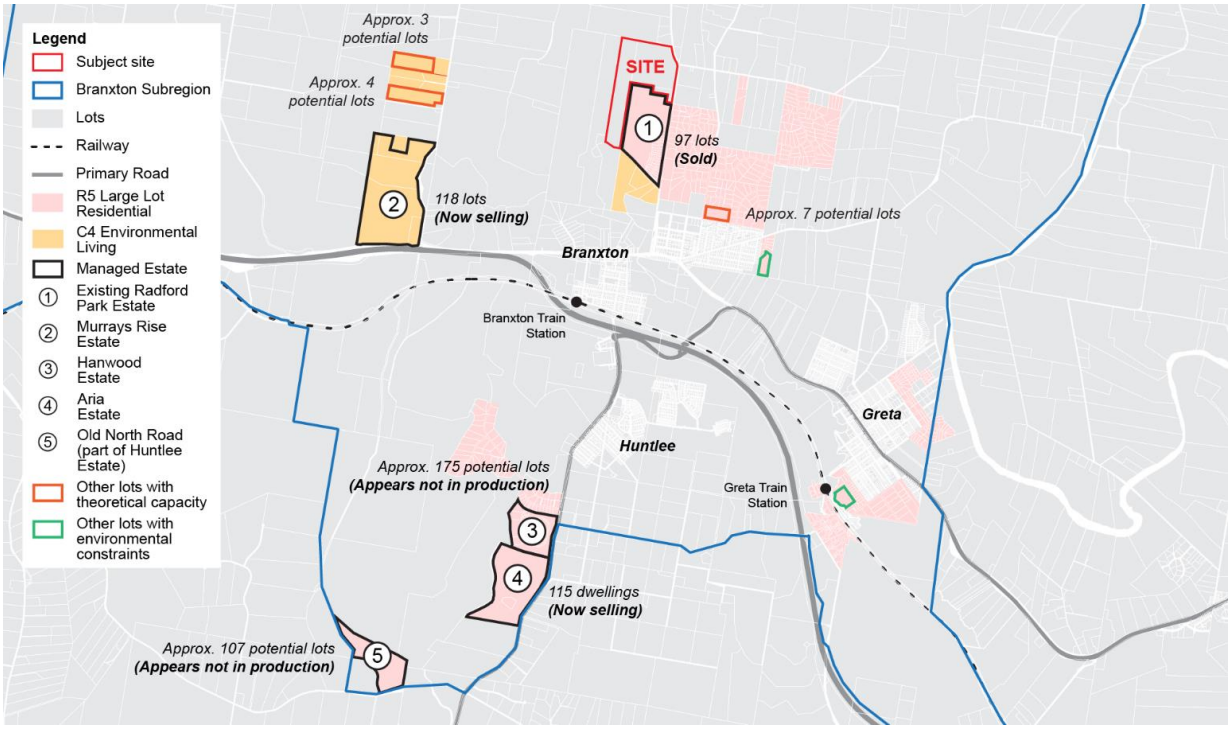


Figure 17: Other sites with environmental constraints.

3.4. Summary of analysis

The evidence presented above indicates that within the Hunter generally, and the Branxton Subregion within this, the demand for housing exceeds supply. This trend is evident from as far back as 2017 and has been accelerated in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was not possible to establish annualised demand or take-up specifically for the large lot residential products that the proposed Planning Proposal seeks to facilitate. However, buyer demand has already exceeded supply within the adjoining Radford Park Estate.

Additional capacity to supply large lot residential products is available within the Subregion, predominantly through the delivery of other master planned estates. Of these, only Murrays Rise Estate (at Lower Belford) and Aria Estate (at Wine Country Drive) are considered to have productive capacity in the short to medium term.

Both estates provide different types of products to that which the Planning Proposal seeks to facilitate, noting Murrays Rise is producing much larger environmental living lots and Aria is marketed as a premium vineyard lifestyle product.

The Radford Park Estate delivers a unique product to the Branxton Subregion, providing large lot residences that benefit from a rural outlook, but which are located in close proximity to key services and amenities at Branxton. The Proposal will aid in the provision of a sufficient volume and diversity of housing close to this town centre, while delivering residential development within North Branxton as an identified growth area that offers existing associated infrastructure.

Augmenting the supply of housing at Radford Park is thus considered to be in the public interest, enabling the delivery of a more affordable and more convenient large lot residential product than is otherwise currently under development in the area.

4. ENHANCING LIVEABILITY

The *Singleton Local Strategic Planning Statement 2041* (adopted in 2020) commits Council to carrying out a liveability assessment for urban areas. This assessment consideration was identified by Council during pre-lodgement consultation as a requirement to be addressed in conjunction with the Planning Proposal. The purpose of this assessment is to demonstrate that the location is liveable and describe what else, if anything, should be incorporated into the planning for the estate to maintain or enhance residents' liveability.

The *Liveability Assessment Tool*, developed by Hunter New England Population Health in February 2012, provides the methodological framework for determining liveability in a specified catchment.

4.1. Approach

4.1.1. Focus Areas

The Liveability Assessment Tool is framed around four overriding socio-economic principles which are generally accepted as delivering 'good liveability':

- **Connectivity:** Being connected implies that something or someone is united, linked or joined together. Building connectivity into developments is about providing the pathways that enable people to come together and to use the facilities and amenities in their local area, including footpaths, bicycle paths and public transport.

- **Sustainability:** Sustainability is the ability to provide for the needs of the current population without damaging the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is about conducting business in a resource conservative and resource efficient manner. When a process is sustainable, it can be carried out over and over without negative environmental effects or impossibly high costs to anyone involved.

- **Accessibility:** A community which provides equal opportunities ensures people are not excluded from the activities of society and everyone has access to the necessary items to achieve a task or goal. Opportunities can be built 'into' communities, through provision of infrastructure and services that encourage active participation by people of different ages, ethnicities, abilities, and genders.

- **Flexibility:** Can be defined as the ability to change, to fit the circumstances or to accommodate and support a range of needs of various populations. Flexibility includes concepts like adaptability, diversity, and adjustability.

The Framework includes 15 Focus Areas that are applied to each of the above categories to provide a measure and a score. The 12 Focus Areas identified as relevant to the proposed Planning Proposal (listed below) were measured and assessed across the four overriding principles.

- Access to Quality Employment
- Access to Fresh Food
- Access to Physical Activity
- Access to Flexible and Affordable Housing
- Access to Public Transport
- Access to Childcare Services
- Access to Education
- Access to Health Care Services
- Access to Social Infrastructure
- Access to Communication
- Community Safety
- Social Cohesion and Participation

4.1.2. Assessment Catchment

The assessment catchment was defined as the geographic area where residents from the Planning Proposal site are most likely to access services and community infrastructure because of proximity or convenience. Convenience has been defined as the amount of time most people might consider reasonable when travelling to access goods and services.

Using the suburb of Allandale in the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District (the furthest location in this District from Radford Park), a 15-minute-travel time isochrone benchmark was applied to define the catchment area. The catchment area (shown in Figure 18) was calculated using an estimated 15-minute travel time from the Planning Proposal area to the following suburbs:

- Branxton 2335
- East Branxton 2335
- Greta 2334
- North Rothbury 2320
- Allandale 2320
- Elderslie 2335
- Leconfield 2335
- Huntlee 2320
- Belford 2335
- Lower Belford 2335
- Whittingham 2330
- Harpers Hill 2321

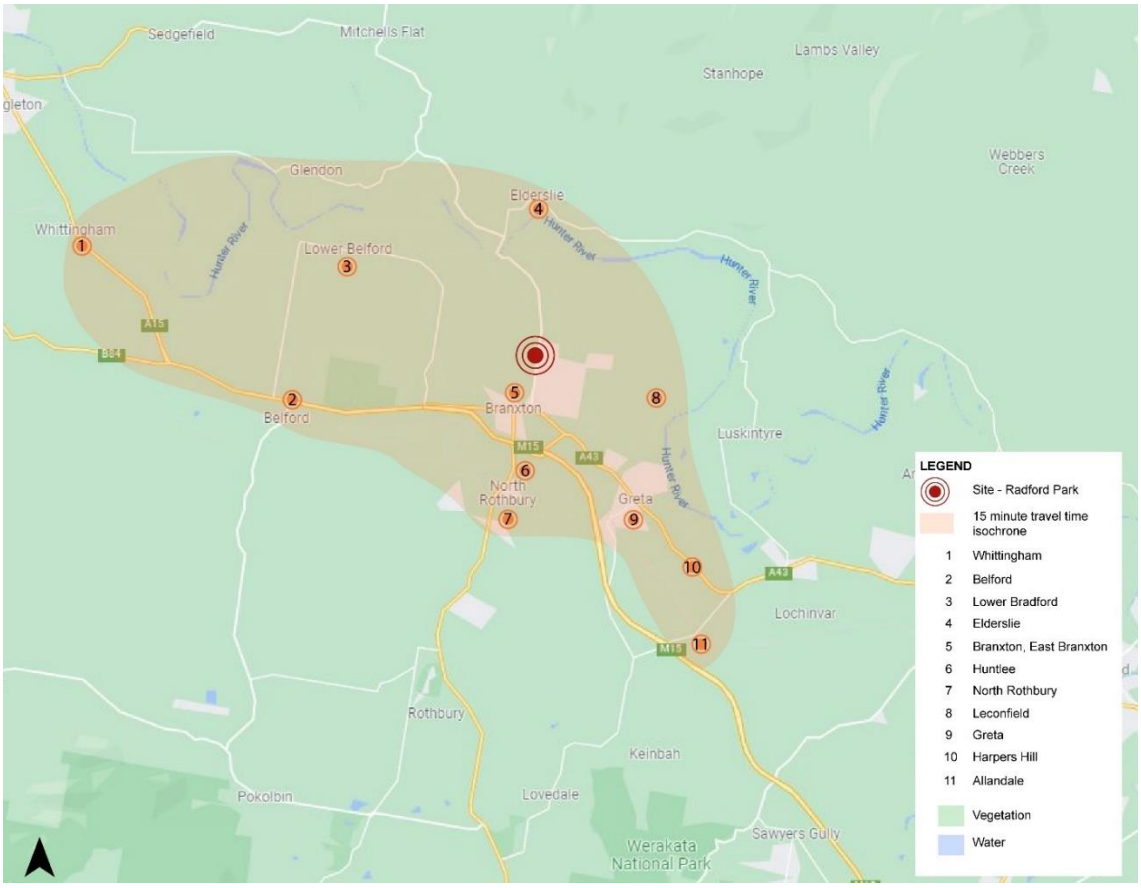


Figure 18: Liveability assessment catchment.

4.1.3. Desktop Analysis

The Liveability Assessment Tool provides recommended data sources to assist with evaluating each liveability indicator. These include a range of publicly available data, which were obtained for analysis as follows:

- ABS Census Data for Branxton - Greta - Pokolbin SA2, supplemented by profile.id small area data for the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District prepared exclusively for Cessnock City Council. We do acknowledge that the profile.id dataset excluded land within the Singleton LGA; however, it does capture the majority of the urban area immediately adjoining the Planning Proposal area. This dataset was preferred as it offered immediate access to benchmarked population, housing, migration, journey to work, and SEIFA data.

- NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOCSAR) data was analysed to understand the rates and nature of criminal activity. This is provided at an LGA-level, and our analysis included data for both Cessnock and Singleton LGAs, benchmarked against the region.

- Government strategies and plans; involved the identification of government-endorsed positions relevant to liveability outcomes. This assisted with identifying locally specific needs, and any planned changes or initiatives that may impact liveability indicators in the future.

The outcome of our desktop analysis is provided in Appendix 1.

4.1.4. Neighbourhood Survey

To supplement and enhance the desktop analysis, the Liveability Assessment Tool recommends conducting a project-specific community survey, providing quantitative and qualitative data from residents in the catchment area.

A Neighbourhood Survey was designed and conducted using a simple random sampling method for a period of 2 weeks in early February 2022. Over that period, 49 people responded to the survey. The survey questionnaire and response analysis are available in Appendix 4.

We acknowledge the small sample size as an assessment limitation in interpretating the survey data. Given the survey was not the primary data source, conclusions and recommendations resulting from the overall assessment can be regarded with a high level of confidence.

4.2. Key findings and recommendations

Our Liveability Assessment reflects a catchment-level evaluation of the 12 Focus Areas having regard for existing and planned service infrastructure. A summary of our assessment findings is provided in Table 4, with the assessment provided in its entirety in Appendix 2.

This section summarises our recommendations to address areas for improvement identified by our assessment. Strengthening the Branxton and Huntlee Town Centres, under initiatives already progressing by government strategies, will enhance outcomes related to accessibility to key services and amenity (such as health, educational, care and community facilities), as well as providing greater employment opportunity. Enhancing recreational opportunity, through both open spaces and efficient, safe and active movement corridors, will support key physical activity, connectivity and social and community infrastructure outcomes. Delivering diverse housing options to the Branxton Subregion will address concerns of residential housing supply and affordability, while synchronising with wider investment in services, transport, and infrastructure in the community.

These findings are provided to assist with future planning and decision making, with specific considerations for enhancements that can be delivered through the Planning Proposal process.

Table 4: Summary of Liveability Assessment findings.

Focus Area	Indicators measured	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity	Summary
ACCESS TO QUALITY EMPLOYMENT	Overall Access to Employment	✓				Generally good overall, though most jobs are located outside the immediate catchment. Areas to improve are already being addressed through government-led initiatives, including growth and renewal at Branxton's Town Centre and the staged development of employment lands and Town Centre at Huntlee.
	Access to Local Employment	✓		✓	✓	
	Access to a Range of Employment Options		✓	✓		
ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD	Healthy Food Consumption	✓				Generally good access to food, with a strong local supermarket presence. Increasing access to local produce through local farmer's markets, for example, is encouraged.
	Access to Local Food	✓		✓	✓	
ACCESS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	Overall Participation in Physical Activity	✓				Accessibility to parks and playgrounds for recreation, and connectivity through paths and cycleways were identified as the strongest areas for improvement in conjunction with the proposed Planning Proposal. These would be significantly enhanced through specific public realm improvements.
	Participation in Active Transport	✓		✓	✓	
	Use of and Satisfaction with Sport and Recreation Facilities	✓				
	Use of and Satisfaction with Footpaths and Cycleways	✓		✓	✓	
ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING	Home Ownership	✓				Lack of housing diversity overall, with specific shortfalls observed in medium density products, properties available for rent, and aged care options. Creation of additional large lot residential supply is supportable as a high-demand product in a high-demand location. Consideration of housing needs of future workforce within the broader catchment in upfront strategic planning is encouraged but outside the scope of the Planning Proposal.
	Affordability of Rental Properties	✓				
	Variety of Housing Type	✓	✓	✓		
ACCESS TO PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Provision of Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	Availability of infrastructure does not appear to be matched by availability or quality of service. Specifically, passenger services on the Hunter rail line between Singleton and Maitland are subservient to freight movements (particularly coal haulage). Broader network improvements are required to address these concerns, which are outside the scope of the Planning Proposal. In conjunction with this, improving connectivity to public transport stops and stations from the Planning Proposal area can serve to remove access as a barrier.
	Use of Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Perception of Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ACCESS TO CHILDCARE SERVICES	Access to Childcare	✓				Desktop analysis suggests the number of childcare centres is adequate for the current population and this was not identified as an issue by survey respondents. Keeping providers up to date about where and when growth will occur can assist with future service delivery and resourcing.

Focus Area	Indicators measured	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity	Summary
ACCESS TO EDUCATION	Access to Local Schools	✓		✓	✓	The catchment is well served by public and private primary schools, but students currently travel outside the catchment to attend high school. The provision of primary and secondary education appears adequate to catering for the level of growth facilitated by the Planning Proposal. Keeping providers up to date about where and when growth will occur can assist with future service delivery and resourcing.
	Access to Tertiary Education	✓		✓	✓	
ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES	Access to GP Services	✓				The catchment is well serviced by general practitioners and dentists, and around 75% of survey respondents accessed some form of primary care within the catchment. Residents must travel outside the catchment for specialist or referral services. Emergency health services are available within a 20min drive, which is typical for a regional area. There are limited aged care options available within the catchment, and these appear to be at capacity. The Planning Proposal has limited scope to enhance health care related liveability attributes. However, keeping providers up to date about where and when growth will occur can assist with future service delivery and resourcing.
	Access to Emergency Services	✓				
	Access to Dental Services	✓				
	Access to Community Health Services	✓				
	Access to Home Care Services	✓				
	Access to Aged Care Accommodation	✓				
	Access to Specialist Medical Services	✓				
ACCESS TO COMMUNITY FACILITIES	Location of Council owned community facilities and public space	✓			✓	Accessibility to parks and playgrounds for recreation, and connectivity through paths and cycleways were identified as the strongest areas for improvement in conjunction with the Planning Proposal. These would be significantly enhanced through specific public realm improvements. Existing Council plans already indicate future enhancements to and provision of new community facilities within the catchment. These are considered suitable to enhancing liveability for future residents and would be supported by – and in some cases are contingent upon – an increase in population as facilitated by the Planning Proposal.
	Quality and Flexibility of Public Space	✓	✓		✓	
	Use of Community Facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ACCESS TO COMMUNICATION	Access to Communication	✓				Internet uptake within the catchment is consistent with national levels and fewer than 10% of survey respondents indicated issues with the quality of service. Demands are expected to increase as working and learning from home becomes normalised; however, service enhancements are outside the scope of the Planning Proposal.
COMMUNITY SAFETY	Perceptions of Safety				✓	Most survey respondents (86%) reported feeling generally safe. Areas for improvement related to safe off-road connections along Elderslie Road and maintenance of public verges, etc.
SOCIAL COHESION AND PARTICIPATION	Connection to a place				✓	Survey responses revealed a strong community spirit emerging, and a great sense of pride in living in the area. Suggested improvements related to providing infrastructure / meeting places within the estate for people to come together or have neighbourhood events.
	Participation in consultation				✓	

4.2.1. Overview

Our assessment indicates the Planning Proposal is situated in a catchment that has many positive liveability attributes. One of the most defining indicators of liveability is the degree to which people feel happy to live in a place. When asked to what extent they agreed with the statement 'I am happy to live in this neighbourhood', 91% of survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed. There appears to be a strong community spirit and pride of place emerging, with most respondents identified strongly with the rural feel of the immediate area, balanced with its proximity to urban conveniences, including some within walking distance.

> *"I'd like to see the area be somewhere you can park in the garage Friday night and not get in the car again until Monday morning and be able to have things to do and access to local places that can be reached on foot or bike safely and easily".* Survey respondent.

Many liveability attributes are already earmarked to be further enhanced by measures already identified in the plans and strategies developed by Cessnock and Singleton Councils. The areas for improvement identified as within the Scope of the Planning Proposal would be significantly enhanced through relatively minor public realm improvements. Those identified as reliant upon external factors mainly relate to issues universal to the Hunter Region (e.g., housing diversity and affordability, public transport, and employment changes arising from economic restructuring).

4.2.2. Enhancing liveability through the Planning Proposal

Fundamentally, the proposed Planning Proposal facilitates the creation of an additional supply of large lot residential products, which are high-demand housing products contributing to the diversity of housing types on offer in a high-demand location.

The two areas for improvement emerging from the neighbourhood survey related to accessibility to parks and playgrounds for recreation, and connectivity through paths and cycleways.

> *"Currently the closest park is Branxton and there is no safe pathway to walk or ride there. Whereas if there was one included in the estate it would be more accessible and could be used on a regular basis. Other local housing estates being established have included park areas".* Resident email, November 2021.

While there is a range of open space and recreational infrastructure available within the catchment area, survey responses indicate residents did not tend to rely on local parks when undertaking physical activity. The most common location for physical activity reported by survey respondents was their backyard. Most cited connectivity to, and availability and condition of public spaces as barriers to use.

> *"A local spot of parkland with communal gym equipment would be great or a walking circuit with exercise spots along the path would encourage outdoor activities and a friendly neighbourhood vibe".* Survey respondent.

The existing Radford Park estate already offers around 2.3ha of landscaped area around the existing detention basin at the southern boundary of the estate, which residents appear to use as a passive recreational area, such as for dog walking. Singleton Council's *Open Space and Recreation Needs Study* sets a target for each resident to live within 500m of a park of at least 0.5ha, and for each resident to live within 750m a playground. This target can be facilitated

by the proposed Planning Proposal, through the identification of additional parklands, preferably located centrally or to the north of the existing Radford Park estate. Future approvals should be encouraged to include a playground for children that is conveniently located to cater for both existing and future residents.

> *"We would do more if it was more convenient and safer to do so. Lack of paths makes it dangerous for kids who have just learned to ride a 2-wheel bike down roads".* Survey respondent.

Providing additional infrastructure within the Estate that encourages people to come together or have neighbourhood events will also serve to strengthen the emerging community spirit. Suggestions included covered BBQ/picnic areas.

Improving active travel connectivity within the catchment would enable more residents to minimise car travel for local trips, increase physical activity, and would also promote a more vibrant and cohesive community identity. The health and environmental benefits of walking and cycling are well documented, and Councils have identified the need to facilitate these activities in documents such as: *Every Step Counts: Singleton Walking Routes*; *Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older People*; *Singleton Child Friendly Strategy*; *Cessnock Trails Strategy*; *Cessnock Cycling Strategy*; *Cessnock Health and Wellbeing Plan*; and *Cessnock Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan*. There is broad local government support to improve connectivity in the catchment through the provision of paths and cycleways.

The Planning Proposal can facilitate improved opportunities for physical activity within the Estate by extending the internal pedestrian connections. Appropriate path alignment and urban design treatments (e.g., wayfinding, lighting, paving materials) should be considered to balance safety with the area's rural character.

The existing Radford Park Estate already provides an off-road path along the full extent of its Elderslie Road frontage. Continuing this link southward to the New England Highway would afford residents safer walking and cycling options to Branxton's Town Centre (around 20m walk) and Greta. This connection would leverage recent State Government and Council investment in the construction of the Branxton to Greta shared cycleway.

4.2.3. External liveability considerations

Our assessment identified a need to improve housing diversity through the provision of more medium-density products, rentable stock, and additional aged care places within the catchment. The provision of these types of housing is outside the scope of the proposed Planning Proposal but should be supported through other government-led initiatives.

> *"Would love to see money spent in Branxton to improve some of the local shops / add additional vendors".* Survey respondent.

The Planning Proposal will allow more people to live within cycling distance of Branxton's Town Centre, which is identified as a priority for urban renewal, including through increased commercial floorspace, in the Branxton Town Centre Masterplan adopted jointly by Cessnock and Singleton Councils. This increase in population can improve business confidence within the Town Centre, which should continue to be supported by Government-led delivery of public domain improvements and facilitation of urban renewal and activation.

Access to quality employment and secondary and tertiary education is already good, though these are mostly situated outside the catchment. This results in a relatively high dependency on car-based travel and longer-than-desirable commuting times for work or study. Our assessment identified there is a high level of public transport infrastructure provided, including bus stops and train stations. However, the evidence reveals the availability and quality of public

transport services, and poor perception of public transport as barriers to use. Government-led initiatives should be prioritised to enhance public transport networks in response to the higher levels of population growth expected within the catchment.

We are also aware of several initiatives that may serve to increase job creation within the catchment. These include growth and renewal within Branxton's Town Centre, the staged delivery of Huntlee involving the development of over 100ha of employment lands, in addition to a new Town Centre, and broader initiatives by State and Local Governments to support growth in the Hunter Valley Wine District, and renewable energy sectors. Collectively, these are expected to lead to new employment opportunities closer to home in relation to the Planning Proposal over the long term. The changing housing needs arising from these initiatives should be considered in upfront strategic planning to ensure local housing and economic growth are balanced.

5. PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

In NSW, the infrastructure contributions regime is established in the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.* This system is currently undergoing reform. At the Planning Proposal stage, it is relevant to establish the cumulative demands and funding mechanisms available to ensure adequate provisions are in place when the LEP is amended, prior to individual development applications being lodged.

The proposed Planning Proposal seeks to facilitate the creation of around 150-200 additional large residential lots, which will result in additional demand for services and community infrastructure. This section establishes the basis to plan for community infrastructure as the Planning Proposal progresses.

5.1. Approach

We undertook a desktop analysis to establish an understanding of the existing and planned supply of community infrastructure relevant to the Planning Proposal. This involved a review of relevant strategic planning and asset management plans within a reasonable supply catchment area. Our approach to undertaking this work is described below.

5.1.1. Scope of Community Infrastructure

Community infrastructure is broadly defined as the framework of physical facilities ideal to support and sustain a community of people to live and work. For this assessment, community infrastructure has been limited to the types of assets delivered by or on behalf of Governments. These are categorised as follows:

- Community facilities
- Childcare facilities
- Education facilities
- Health facilities
- Emergency response facilities
- Parks and Playgrounds
- Sporting and Recreational facilities
- Public Transport.

Within these categories, infrastructure can also be further categorised in terms of service level, as follows:

- Primary order services or facilities - typically provided in a local or community setting, these tend to be the first points of contact in the community and cater to the smallest catchment levels. Examples include primary schools, general practitioners' offices, or fire stations.

- Secondary order services or facilities - typically provided at a precinct or district level, supporting several primary catchments. They tend to provide more advanced, specialised, or coordination services. Examples include high schools, specialist health consulting rooms or referral clinics, or fire control centres.

- Tertiary order services or facilities - the most specialised level, catering to regional or state-wide catchments. Examples include training and vocational colleges, referral hospitals, or fire area command centres.

Responding to the proposal for a local residential community at Radford Park, our assessment focused predominantly on primary order infrastructure, with select consideration for secondary order health and educational infrastructure.

5.1.2. Community Infrastructure Supply Catchments

The infrastructure supply area was defined as the geographic area where residents from the Planning Proposal site are most likely to access services and community infrastructure because of proximity or convenience. This area was consistent with the Liveability Assessment Catchment (described in Section 4.1.2), involving the following suburbs within an estimated 15-minute travel time from the Planning Proposal:

- Branxton 2335
- East Branxton 2335
- Greta 2334
- North Rothbury 2320
- Allandale 2320
- Elderslie 2335
- Leconfield 2335
- Huntlee 2320
- Belford 2335
- Lower Belford 2335
- Whittingham 2330
- Harpers Hill 2321

We also acknowledge that some community services or infrastructure may not be conveniently located within a 15-minute travel time from the Planning Proposal area, particularly higher order education (e.g., high school) and health facilities (e.g., specialist or hospital) servicing larger population catchments. These are typically available in larger or strategic centres, so our search area for higher order infrastructure was extended to include centres at Cessnock, Singleton, Kurri Kurri, and Rutherford which are all within a 30-minute drive.

5.1.3. Community Infrastructure Providers

Multiple parties provide community infrastructure, including State Government, Councils, private operators, developers, and community groups. Each provider takes a unique approach to strategic planning and asset management.

This assessment was limited to identifying the key State Government agencies and Councils providing community infrastructure relevant to the future residents of the Planning Proposal area to assist with engagement efforts as the Planning Proposal progresses. We also noted the nature of non-government providers (e.g., not for profit, private company, etc.), where possible, to assist with understanding local markets and operating models.

5.1.4. Infrastructure Contributions Framework

Infrastructure contributions are key to helping Councils and the NSW Government deliver Local, Regional and State infrastructure, including public and open space, footpaths, cycleways, and community facilities. Key considerations for the three main types of infrastructure contributions informing this assessment are summarised below.

Contributions type	Considerations
Local infrastructure contributions	There are two forms of local infrastructure contributions, established under the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* 1979: • Section 7.11 contributions are charged where there is a demonstrated link between the development and the infrastructure to be funded. • Section 7.12 levies (Fixed Development Consent Levies) are an alternative to s7.11 contributions, charged as a percentage of the estimated cost of the development. In this case, *Singleton Development Contributions Plan 2008,* is the relevant plan applying to the future development of the site. Given the site's proximity to the LGA border, the community infrastructure catchment for the Planning Proposal has potential to encompass land in both the Singleton and Cessnock City LGAs. However, the ability to levy local development contributions is limited.
Special infrastructure contributions	A Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) for the Hunter Region has been proposed but not yet finalised. The *draft Hunter Region SIC determination* publicly exhibited in January 2019 has been referred to in preparing this Report.
State Infrastructure (Urban Release Area)	If approved, the proposed expansion of the Radford Park Estate is expected to be identified in Singleton LEP 2013 as an urban release area. This designation would trigger Clause 6.1 of the LEP which requires "satisfactory arrangements" to be made for the provision of designated State public infrastructure before the subdivision of land.
Planning agreements	Planning agreements are a tool that allows planning authorities and developers to work together to deliver innovative infrastructure outcomes. They can be negotiated at both the Local and State Government level. • State planning agreements are negotiated between a developer and the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, for the provision of regional or State infrastructure. • Local planning agreements are negotiated between a developer and a council, for the provision of infrastructure to support communities. The application and negotiation of any Planning Agreement in conjunction with the Planning Proposal should have regard to the *Planning Agreements Practice Note* (issued February 2021).

5.2. Key findings and recommendations

For clarity, this assessment was limited to considerations for community infrastructure. The reader should refer to separate assessments of the Planning Proposal as relevant to other infrastructure considerations (e.g., stormwater, roads, etc.).

5.2.1. Satisfactory Arrangements for State Infrastructure

Our review identified the need to consider whether growth facilitated by the Planning Proposal can be accommodated within the current public school capacity (primary and high school). The demand arising from the expected yield on other State Infrastructure considerations for health and emergency management is considered to be manageable through normal adjustments in service provision / resource planning. We note the *Singleton Development Contributions Plan 2008* collects funds for Bushfire Services provided by the Rural Fire Service.

If the Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) for the Hunter Region proceeds, that would become the statutory mechanism to collect financial contributions for State Infrastructure. Under the framework proposed in the *draft Hunter Region SIC determination,* the Planning Proposal would result in the creation of 'greenfield residential land' because it seeks to rezone land from a rural zone to a qualifying residential zone. Consequently, the future residential subdivision and residential development of the land would be subject to the residential development rate applying in the Upper Hunter Service Catchment Area, which was proposed at $658 per lot.

If the Special Infrastructure Contribution (SIC) for the Hunter Region does not proceed, contributions for State Infrastructure can be secured through the "satisfactory arrangements" provisions of the Singleton LEP which apply to all urban release areas.

5.2.2. Local Contributions mechanisms

The *Singleton Development Contributions Plan 2008* would apply to the future rural residential subdivision and development of the site, enabling the collection of contributions for specified items. The site is within the Branxton Catchment, with an established per-lot contribution rate associated with bushfire services, rural roads, and open space and recreation, noting:

- Contributions associated with open space and recreation appear to be directed toward LGA level assets. The Plan states additional rural parklands within the Branxton Catchment were not considered at the time, due to concerns about under-utilisation within villages and rural areas.
- A new gravel cycleway along McMullins Road was identified as an infrastructure item benefiting from contributions collected from the Branxton Catchment. This item does not appear to have been delivered to date, and we note its delivery would not be of direct benefit to future residents within the Planning Proposal area.

Under the current Local Contributions framework, there does not appear to be a clear mechanism for providing Council-owned playground equipment within the Planning Proposal area, or to continue the off-road path along Elderslie Road to the Singleton LGA boundary. Delivery pathways for these improvements should be considered as the Planning Proposal progresses.

5.2.4. Joint considerations with Cessnock City Council

The proximity of the site to the Cessnock LGA means future residents are likely to utilise a range of community services and facilities that are owned or maintained by Cessnock City Council out of convenience. This predominantly includes local pathways, parks, community halls, and sporting facilities located in Branxton and Greta.

The *Cessnock Citywide Contributions Plan 2020* establishes the framework for developer contributions associated with a range of infrastructure within the Branxton - Greta District Catchment within the Cessnock LGA, which future residents living within the Planning Proposal area are likely to utilise out of convenience. The Plan directs developer contributions collected for development within the Cessnock LGA towards planned improvements for:

- Open Space and Recreation Facilities, including to funding in-catchment upgrades to the Branxton Aquatic Centre, Greta Skate Park, and local parks in Branxton, among others.
- Cycleway Facilities, including the Branxton to Greta shared cycleway, and a series of off-road pathways.
- Community Facilities, directed towards regional facilities (no in-catchment projects identified).
- Roads and Traffic, directed towards LGA-wide improvements / maintenance (no in-catchment projects identified).

A range of public domain improvements have also been identified for Branxton's Town Centre, as per the *Branxton Town Centre Public Domain Plan* adopted in 2019. These works were considered in the making of the *Cessnock Citywide Contributions Plan 2020.*

Under the *Cessnock Citywide Contributions Plan 2020*, delivery of project number CW123 will provide the new off-road path on Elderslie Road - New England Highway to Singleton LGA boundary, achieving an important segment of the desired safe connection between the Planning Proposal area and the wider catchment. This is earmarked for delivery in 2027-31. In relation to this project, we note:

- By 2027 the current Radford Park estate will be fully constructed, with around 150 new households. Bringing this project forward would better serve these residents and provide stronger socio-economic connections to Branxton's Town Centre.
- This project also relies on the delivery of the remaining segment from the Singleton LGA boundary to the existing Radford Park estate boundary (approximately 400m). These segments should be constructed as a single project, which will provide cost efficiencies and complete the desired link in its entirety.

5.2.5. Further engagement with key providers

We recommend engagement with the following key providers of community infrastructure as the Planning Proposal progresses as follows.

Engagement level	Organisation	Justification
Consult pre-exhibition	Singleton Council	To align growth potential with local service provision and funding mechanisms.
	Cessnock City Council	Given the proximity of the site to Cessnock City Council's jurisdiction.
	School Infrastructure NSW	To advise of growth potential and establish enrollment capacity at local public schools (primary and high school).
	Transport for NSW (Regions)	To advise of growth potential and address impacts on classified road network.
	NSW Health	To advise of growth potential and inform future service delivery / resource planning.
	Hunter New England Local Health District / Health Infrastructure NSW *Rural and Regional Unit*	
	NSW Police Force *Northern Region / Hunter Valley Police District*	To advise of growth potential and inform future service delivery / resource planning, including in conjunction with coordinated emergency planning initiatives.
	NSW Fire and Rescue	
	NSW Rural Fire Service	
	NSW Ambulance *Hunter Zone 2*	
	NSW SES *Hunter Northern Zone*	
	Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle	As a key provider of existing primary schools this will serve to advise of growth potential and inform future service delivery / resource planning.
	Businesses operating within the Town Centres at Branxton and Greta	To advise of growth potential and inform future service delivery / resource planning.
	Heritage NSW	To align growth potential with proposed management of Aboriginal cultural heritage within the site.
	Hunter Water Corporation	To advise of growth potential and inform future service delivery / resource planning.
	NSW Department of Primary Industries	To advise of rezoning resulting in reduction of land zoned RU1 Primary Production.

Engagement level	Organisation	Justification
	NSW Environment, Energy and Science (Biodiversity)	To advise of growth potential and address impacts on native vegetation, requirement for a vegetation management plan.
	Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR)	To advise of growth potential and address impacts on waterfront land associated with on site watercourse.
No action required	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service	Nil or negligible impacts expected to the Belford National Park.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Understanding the context, strengths, pressures and opportunities of the Branxton Subregion provides essential insight into the current and future needs of the community and will underpin the delivery of a successful residential community at Radford Park.

This *Housing Needs and Liveability Study* provides a detailed evidence base and analysis of key housing indicators for the Hunter Region generally, and the Branxton Subregion specifically. The findings conclude that demand for housing in the Branxton Subregion far exceeds current supply, while supply of well-located large lot residential housing is very limited. The trend may be observed right across the Hunter Region and is found to have accelerated significantly due to the changes in lifestyle and employment patterns associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, this Study presents an in-depth assessment of liveability indicators in the Branxton Subregion, analysing key considerations such as demographic, employment, housing and community infrastructure data. This assessment indicated that the Branxton Subregion benefits from many positive liveability attributes and boasts strong satisfaction within the existing local community. Findings of the Liveability Assessment should inform the future delivery of public domain enhancements, including future open spaces and pathways to enhance recreational and social opportunity and improve connectivity for residents. The assessment also identified other key liveability factors that will be addressed by the proposed Planning Proposal, including the recognised need to enhance housing diversity, connectivity, access to education and employment opportunities, as well as support for the economic growth of the Branxton Town Centre.

The Planning Proposal provides for the delivery of a much-needed, affordable and convenient supply of housing to the Branxton Subregion. The Proposal will contribute to the Subregion's diverse dwelling offerings and will provide housing with strategic proximity to essential town services, in North Branxton as an identified growth area. The delivery of in-demand, community-oriented, large lot residential housing with a rural outlook best reflects the subject site's position as the interface between the growing Town Centre of Branxton and the region's surrounding rural lands.

APPENDIX 1: LIVEABILITY ASSESSMENT INPUTS

A1.1 Demographic Summary

A review of the demographic data for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury provides a broad understanding of the different characteristics of a population and its changes over time. This area is undergoing considerable development, particularly through the emergence of a new town at Huntlee. Demographic data for this area is therefore appreciated as highly changeable.

Quantitative data sets have been included in this Summary to inform and support Assessment findings and recommendations. The primary source of the demographic data is the 2016 ABS Census, compiled for the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury profile area on profile.id. Where possible, more recent ABS data has been included.

While it is acknowledged that the profile.id dataset does not directly correlate to land within the LGA of the subject site, it is preferred for its relevance as the site's connected community; best capturing the majority of the urban area and services immediately adjoining the Planning Proposal area.

 **Population**	• On 30 June 2020, the total population of Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury was 7,221 people. • Since 2019, the population has grown by 1.46%. Population growth in Regional NSW was 0.83% • The Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury population is expected to increase to 11,130 by 2031, and 14,104 by 2041.
 **Age Structure**	• For Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Cessnock City, there was a higher proportion of children (under 18). 29.1% of the population were aged between 0 and 17 compared with 24.3%. Among the largest changes between 2011 and 2016 census was an increase in parents and homebuilders (39 to 49) (+164), and an increase in primary schoolers (5-11) (+129)
 **Household Type**	• In 2016, 35.2% of households in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury were made up of couples with children, compared with 25.4% in Regional NSW. There was a higher proportion of couple families with child(ren) as well as a higher proportion of one-parent families than Regional NSW • In Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury there was a high proportion of lone person households (22.7%), which had increased by 112 households since 2011. • In Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury there was also a higher proportion (28.9%) of larger households (those with 4 persons or more) compared with Regional NSW (22%). • The number of households is expected to rise from 2,395 in 2016 to 5,254 in 2041. • The average household size is expected to reduce slightly from 2.72 in 2016 to 2.68 in 2041.
 **Household Tenure**	• 'Household tenure' for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 shows 68% of households were purchasing or fully owned their home (25.1% and 43.1% respectively), and 25.4% were renting. • There was a smaller proportion of households who fully owned their dwelling (24.6%) and a larger proportion with mortgages (42%) than in Regional NSW, which were reported as 35.5% and 28.6% respectively. • The largest changes in housing tenure categories for the households in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury between 2011 and 2016 were: Mortgage (+75 households); and Renting (+68 households). • The number of dwellings in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury is forecast to grow from 2,528 in 2016 to 5,543 in 2041, with the average household size falling from 2.72 to 2.68 by 2041.

 **Education**	• There were 561 'Babies and pre-schools', representing 8.8% of the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury population in 2016. Of those 561, 168 were attending pre-school. • There was a higher proportion of students attending primary school in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 (11.3%) than Regional NSW (8.2%). • In 2016, 6.4% of the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury population, or 411 students were attending secondary institutions, a similar proportion to Regional NSW. • 3.3% of the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury population were learning at a tertiary level in 2016, compared with 5.0% for Regional NSW. • In 2016, 52.7% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 30.3% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 44.8% and 38.0% respectively for Regional NSW.
 **Employment**	• 2,847 people living in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 were employed, of which 63% worked full-time and 36% part-time. • Data for 'Industry of employment' for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows more Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury residents (17.5%) worked in mining than any other industry in 2016, followed by Health Care and Social Assistance (285 people or 10.0%), and Accommodation and Food Services (260 people or 9.1%).
 **Travel to Work**	• On Census Day 2016 in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, 79.2% of people travelled to work in a private car, 0.1% took public transport and 0.8% rode a bike or walked, and 1.9% worked at home. There were 4 people who caught public transport to work (train, bus, tram or ferry) in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, compared with 2,255 who drove in private vehicles (car – as driver, car – as passenger, motorbike, or truck).
 **Income**	• Household income levels in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 shows that there was a larger proportion (19.0%) of high income households (those earning $2,500 per week or more) and a lower proportion (15.9%) of low income households (those earning less than $650 per week), compared with Regional NSW at 14.6% and 22.0% respectively.

A1.2 Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage

The Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) measure the relative level of socio-economic disadvantage and/or advantage (e.g., professional occupations, high income, higher education levels, larger houses) based on a range of Census characteristics, allowing a relative comparison of different areas. The key comparison indicators shown in Table 5 illustrate the scores and rankings for the site and surrounding areas, noting:

- A higher score on the index means a *lower* level of disadvantage.
- A higher percentile indicates a higher socio-economic status. For instance, a percentile of 72 indicates that approximately 72% of Australia's suburbs are more disadvantaged, while 28% are more advantaged.

In 2016, Branxton - Greta - Pokolbin had SEIFA index score of 1010, with a percentile of 51.

Table 5: Lower Hunter SA3 and Maitland SA3 SEIFA Index. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016)

Area	2016 index	Percentile
Australia	1001.9	46
Branxton - Greta - Pokolbin	1010	51
Cessnock	888	8
Cessnock LGA	925	21
Cessnock Region	995	44
Dungog	989	41
Kurri Kurri - Abermain	903	10
Maitland	978	35
Maitland East	978	35
Maitland LGA	983	56
Maitland North	1064	79
Maitland West	960	28
New South Wales	1001	45
Regional NSW	971	29
Singleton	979	36
Singleton LGA	994	64
Singleton Region	1018	55
Thornton - Millers Forest	1038	65

A1.3 Crime Data

Data from NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOCSAR) was analysed to understand the likely sense of safety in the subject locality. LGA related data, in this case Singleton and Cessnock LGA data, as well as the Hunter regional data were analysed to understand the rates of criminal activity.

The main findings of the crime data analysis from BOSCAR includes:

- At 1080.1, Branxton has a significantly higher incident rate per 100,000 population than NSW, at 624.6 incidents
- Motor vehicle theft is significantly higher with 540.1 incidents per 100,000, compared to NSW at 134.7
- Motor vehicle theft incidents have been stable over the last 2 years
- Domestic assault is higher than NSW at 495 and 400.9 incidents respectively
- Domestic violence incidents show stability over the last 2 years
- Steal from motor vehicle incidents show stability over the last two years, however at 405 per 100,000 they are significantly higher than NSW at 345.7
- Nondomestic assault incidents are comparable with NSW at 360 and 355.5 respectively, with a stable trend over the last 2 years.

A1.4 Strategy and Plan Review

The most relevant strategies and plans were reviewed to understand the strategic framework and context for the Liveability Assessment.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
Branxton Subregional Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan	The Branxton Subregional Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan aims to guide the future development of the Branxton Subregion through a period of higher levels of growth and change. The vision for the Subregion offers a picture of what the Councils are jointly looking to achieve for communities over time. It is captured in three statements describing the optimal desired future outcome for the area. These statements are intended to guide and inspire planning and development over twenty or more years. • There is Flourishing Development Growth is high. A new major centre is a hive of business activity. Housing options are diverse. It is a place for investment and prosperity. Local jobs are in new business sectors like education and professional services. • There is a Strong Sense of Community Wellbeing, Infrastructure supports the needs of its communities There is a high level of active and healthy activities like walking, cycling and playgrounds. The environment is clean and safe. Roads and bridges are connected, and people can travel to and through the Subregion efficiently. • There is a Vibrant and Distinctive Character Culture and history are acknowledged and respected. Main streets are busy, and there are many reasons to visit. It is a place that is distinctive and well-recognised beyond the Hunter Region. People of all ages are in the Subregion because the services are there. It is an attractive place to live[5].
Branxton Town Centre Master Plan	The Masterplan for Branxton's Town Centre aims to facilitate its long-term transition from a Highway centre to a local place. In defining the Town Centre, the Master Plan identifies opportunities to reinforce its role as a village town centre and the focus of commercial and social activities for the broader Subregion. Opportunities include: • Business uses **-** Business floor space in Branxton Town Centre has been estimated at around 8,250m². There is potential to expand this over time to approximately 24,000m².
Cessnock Traffic and Transport Strategy	The Cessnock LGA Traffic and Transport Strategy (CTTS) is the blueprint for the city's transport network over the next 25 years, with a particular focus on expected accelerated growth in the region. The CTTS aims to improve and future proof the City's transport network that improves access to housing, jobs and services. Key policy positions that stem from the CTTS are:

[5] Cessnock City Council, Singleton Council and the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, 'Branxton Sub Region Land Use Strategy and Structure Plan', 2016.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
	• **Land use intensification** is focused in the most accessible centres, defined as those centres most accessible by active transport then by public transport then by traffic and parking. Land use mix is designed and influenced to minimise trip making and to achieve economies of scale for active transport and public transport facilities provision. • **Active transport** (walking and cycling) is encouraged for access to education, commuting purposes, recreational purposes (linked to open space plan), and by connecting facilities which target the specific needs of each user group. Pedestrian and cyclist safety is paramount. • **Public transport** efficiently moves residents to key destinations within and outside the Council area using logical, accessible and connected services, maximising the use of infrastructure that gives a travel time advantage over cars. Service coverage ensures social equity.[6]
Cessnock 2031: Vision for the Future - Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan	The purpose of this Plan is to strategically consider future community facility needs across the Cessnock LGA and for such planning to be considerate of expected population growth up until 2031. Initiatives identified for the Branxton, East Branxton, Greta planning areas are: • Early Childhood Facilities - Immediate expansion is required for the Central Cessnock and Branxton, East Branxton, Greta planning areas. This includes expansion for both childcare and preschool programs. • Multi-Purpose Community Centre - The Branxton, East Branxton, Greta and surrounding areas are likely to experience considerable growth by 2031, and as a result, could transition from a mid-sized township to a sub-regional township. If this were to occur, this planning area would require the construction of a multi-purpose community centre and is earmarked as part of the Huntlee residential development. To support community connections, all future multi-purpose centres should include space for neighbourhood centre type services and activities. • Seniors Centre - In catering for an expected growth in population for people aged 70 years and over, it is recommended that space be included within future multi-purpose centres to provide a range of activities that meet the needs of this population group. • Disability Services Facilities - Space for disability programs should be co-located within multi-purpose community centres. • Youth Centre - The Branxton, East Branxton, Greta and surrounding areas will require, by 2031, the construction of a youth space. It is recommended that the youth space be co-located within the proposed multi-purpose community centre, earmarked for the Huntlee residential development. • Libraries - The Voluntary Planning Agreement for the Huntlee Residential Development makes the provision for a library. The proposed library is approximately 2000m^2 and is to be co-located with a youth centre and neighbourhood centre. It should be determined at the time of drafting the design if this facility is to be the main headquarters for library operations given that it would offer more space than the current Cessnock Library (which is approximately 1070m^2 in size). • Museums - In the design process for any new library it should be determined if the facility could include an allocated space for temporary museum exhibitions.

[6] Cessnock City Council, 'Cessnock LGA Traffic and Transport Strategy 2018', 2018.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
	• Revitalised Aging Precincts - At Branxton, DP 627860 and DP 1137953 (Lot 1 and 2) have a total land size of 7280m^2. The buildings and/or services at the site include Branxton Pre School, Branxton Community Hall and Branxton Playgroup. Many of these buildings are owned by Cessnock City Council. However, given the ageing condition of some of the buildings, it is recommended that a masterplan be developed for this precinct, exploring how it can be revitalised as a key community hub within the planning area. • Aged Care Facilities - Based on benchmarking standards for residential care places, by 2031 an additional 119 places are required for high level care and 108 places for low level care. [7]
Cessnock Disability Action Plan 2021 - 2025	Cessnock City Council's *Disability Inclusion Action Plan* and *Singleton Action Plan* demonstrate both Councils' commitment to improving opportunities for people with disability to access services, activities, facilities and information. The purpose of the Plan is to outline the practical steps Council will take over the next four years to create a more inclusive community for people with disability living in and visiting the LGA. The most relevant key areas of action in the Plan are: • Improve accessible paths of travel and parking in key destinations • Improve accessibility of public spaces and facilities • Enhancing social and recreational opportunities for people with a disability • Addressing access issues with the Town Centre Revitalisation • Improving the accessibility of the built environment. [8]
Cessnock Health and Wellbeing Plan	The Health and Well-being Plan 2017-2021 provides Cessnock City Council with strategic direction for how it can play its part in improving the health status of residents living within the LGA. Relevant key actions include: • Central business district areas provide a physical environment where walking is an accessible means of active transport • Residents and visitors are provided with opportunity to engage in active living with a wide range of recreation and sporting facilities provided • Housing in the Cessnock LGA is affordable and a range of housing options are available for residents • The Cessnock LGA is an accessible and inclusive community • The Cessnock LGA has a range of transport options available to residents and visitors • Localities are designed to enable participation in active transport. [9]
Cessnock City Library Review and Strategy	The Strategy recommends that with a proposed medium density population exceeding 10,000, Huntlee needs a local and modern library facility that offers a wide range of services and programs. Given many of the residential lots due to be developed in Huntlee will be in the Singleton LGA (approximately 33%), the Strategy recommends that Cessnock City Council investigate a joint

[7] Cessnock City Council, '2031: A Vision for the Future Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan', 2016.

[8] Cessnock City Council, 'Disability Action Plan 2021-2025', 2021.

[9] Cessnock City Council, 'Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-21', 2017.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
	agreement for the delivery of library services in the area.[10]
Cessnock Cycling Strategy	The Cessnock Cycling Strategy sets Council's direction and framework to establish a bicycle friendly environment within the LGA over the next 20 years. The Strategy identifies regional opportunities to develop: • Connections between towns and villages • Connections to neighbouring LGAs • Recreation and tourism. Regional improvements impacting the study area include an-road connection on Wine Country Drive from Old North Road to Thomas Street, completing the regional link from Cessnock through to Branxton. Potential users are identified as secondary children, recreation, commuter, and touring. [11]
Cessnock Jobs Strategy	The Jobs Strategy outlines economic development priorities and opportunities that will maximise the potential and prosperity of the Cessnock LGA. The strategy articulates the opportunities for the Cessnock LGA to strengthen its position as a desired place of residence, visitation and employment. The jobs Strategy identifies: • Branxton, Greta and Huntlee are growth areas with 7,500+ new homes approved for development. In an area where the Hunter's newest town of Huntlee meets the retro feel of Branxton and Greta, there is more than 100 hectares of greenfield business zoned land available. • A shift away from jobs in traditional industries such as mining and manufacturing, to service and knowledge industries, particularly hospitality and aged care. • Lower levels of educational and higher-level tertiary attainment are limiting the ability of the community to meet the demand for a more diversified, higher skilled workforce. • For the Braxton, Greta and Huntlee areas, quality infrastructure considerations to support economic development include heavy vehicle transport, high speed internet, and mobile phone coverage. [12]
Cessnock Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan	This Strategic Plan aims to identify the recreational needs of the community, the opportunities which currently exist and appropriate actions to meet identified gaps and improve current provision. The Strategic Plan finds that in the Branxton-Greta Planning Area: • There is a significant surplus of Regional Sportsgrounds which will increase by 2036. There is also a surplus in Local Sportsgrounds • The current deficit of District Sportsgrounds will increase by 2036 • Park provision is generally well balanced now and in the future. [13]

[10] Cessnock City Council, 'Cessnock City Library Review: Report and Strategy 2014 - 2024', 2014.

[11] Cessnock City Council, 'Cessnock City Council Cycling Strategy 2016', 2016.

[12] Cessnock City Council, 'Jobs Strategy, Greater Cessnock 2036', 2021.

[13] Cessnock City Council, 'Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan', 2019.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
Cessnock Skate and BMX Strategy	The overall objective of the Skate and BMX Strategy is to provide an updated strategic direction on the future provision, development and management of wheeled sports for the Cessnock LGA. The Plan concludes that as a result of projected growth within the Greta - Branxton Planning Area, it is expected the proportion of people looking for access to youth spaces will increase. Considering the number of young families that will continue to be drawn to these areas, consideration needs to be given to the type and number of skatepark facilities in this area.[14]
Cessnock Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan (PAMP)	The aim of a PAMP is to provide a plan to improve pedestrian safety and to encourage walking within the study area, with objectives including to facilitate a healthy, active, engaged and cohesive community into the future through improved pedestrian facilities. The Plan highlighted: • A lack of on-road, off-road and general recreational bike tracks • The conditions of footpaths and the absence of connected bike lanes is a deterrent for people who would like to use active transport more frequently • There were 38 locations in the Branxton/Greta area where there are works required to improve pedestrian and cycling links.[15]
Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older People	The Lifestyle Plan recognises the changing needs of the Singleton LGA and directs actions and resources appropriately to ensure the diverse needs of older people will be met. Relevant actions in the Plan include: • Extend the network of pathways, walking trails and cycling tracks linked to the wider network of open space in Singleton to cater for the popularity of walking as a recreational activity for all age groups, including older people. • Develop parks and gardens with interest and destination points that will attract and appeal to older people (such as public art, heritage items, landscaped gardens, seating, shading, water features, outdoor fitness areas). • Through the Transport Working Group, lobby relevant agencies to improve and encourage provision of accessible public transport options. • Work with appropriate bodies to facilitate the development of an independent living retirement village.[16]
Cessnock Trails Strategy	The Strategy will enable Council to support active and healthy lifestyles and embrace opportunities for trail-related tourism and economic activity. These opportunities extend north from Cessnock with key localities being Pokolbin, Branxton and Greta, with potential for enhanced for connectivity towards Singleton. The Trails Strategy advocates new trail projects to enhance trail linkages in Branxton, facilitating active lifestyles.[17]

[14] Cessnock City Council, 'Skate and BMX Strategy 2020', 2020.

[15] Bitzios Consulting, 'Cessnock LGA Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan (PAMP)', 2016.

[16] Singleton Council, 'Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older People 2015'.

[17] Cessnock City Council, 'Trails Strategy 2020', 2020.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
Singleton Open Space and Recreation Needs Study (OSRNS)	The vision for Singleton's open space is to create an accessible and integrated network of spaces and places that provides a diverse range of sport and recreation opportunities for the community. The Plan identifies Singleton's villages as having a high supply of open space, from village sport and recreation reserves, rest stops and undeveloped spaces, and there is a need to rationalise open space, including the provision of excessive infrastructure items, as a trade-off for sound base-level provision of quality, flexible open spaces. At the time of the OSRNS (2013) Belford was listed as 'undeveloped', with an open space provision of .6387ha. Council's current open space provision standards are one park within 500m of each resident, at a minimum size of 5,000m^2, and a playground within 750m of each residence.
Singleton Socio-Economic Development Strategy	The Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS) provides strategic direction to Council staff to ensure efficient and effective use of internal and external resources in our pursuit to improve the liveability of the Singleton LGA. The Plan identifies strategic focus areas and actions to improve the living standards, wellbeing and happiness of residents through applying socio economic principles to planning and actions. These include: • Investment attraction and industry diversification and new opportunities for sustainable regional development • Capital investment in regional economic infrastructure • Capital investment in regional social infrastructure that supports community services, arts, heritage, culture, health and wellbeing • Increased tourism offerings and develop tourism product • Increased access to a high-quality education system.[18]
Singleton Sustainability Strategy 2019 - 2027	The Sustainability Strategy 2019-2027 provides direction in promoting, facilitating and supporting community in social, economic and environmental sustainability. The Strategy seeks to identify priority activities for the community, Council and partner organisations that promote sustainable outcomes. The Strategy adopts United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide its sustainability actions, including: • Capital investment in regional social infrastructure that supports community services, arts, heritage, culture, health and wellbeing • Increased access to a high-quality education system.[19]
Every Step Counts: Singleton Walking Routes	Singleton Walking Routes, a joint initiative of Active Australia and Singleton Council, identifies the location of six walking paths and is designed to promote health and wellbeing by doing regular physical activity. These walking routes are marked with signs at various intervals identifying distances travelled in steps and metres. Singleton Walking Routes identifies walking as "one of the most convenient, least costly and easiest forms of physical activity, suitable for people of all ages

[18] Singleton Council, 'Singleton Socio-Economic Development Strategy 2020/2024', 2020.

[19] Singleton Council, 'Singleton Sustainability Strategy 2019-2027', 2019.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
	and abilities" .[20]
Hunter Valley Visitor Economy Destination Management Plan	The Plan sets out to increase the range and quality of Hunter Valley products and experiences and champions the attraction, development and improvement of events, activities, facilities, services, attractions, and experiences to increase visitor demand. The Plan identifies 10 significant challenges being faced by the destination. The Plan aims to: • Have high quality infrastructure and services which meet the community's needs • Allow and foster a mix of diverse business and employment options - creating a balance between working vineyards, residential, visitors and tourist amenity • Create a stronger retail industry across the destination • Champion and facilitate an industry wide skills development and quality service improvement program • Develop and implement a bicycle/walking trails/paths network across the Hunter Valley region • Facilitate stronger place making development in the Hunter Valley towns and villages • Establish a Centre of Hospitality Training Excellence, leveraging the current Hunter Valley Hotel School facilities • Introduce a Work Ready program for newly trained industry personnel to build soft customer service skills that are required to get employment.[21]
Singleton Villages Place Making Strategy	The Place Making Strategy for the villages of Singleton incorporates the place making process into Council's priorities and projects. It provides a strategic framework for place-based management, enhancement and activation of the multiple villages across the Singleton LGA. The Plan identifies opportunities for Lower Belford and Hermitage Road including: • Creation of a sense of community in the local area • Social and community activities aimed at the local community rather than the wider region • Improve connectivity with wider Singleton.[22]
Buildings Asset Management Plan, Cessnock City Council	Cessnock City Council provides building assets to the community serving various functions, some of which includes community halls, libraries, sporting venues and aquatic facilities, public amenities and childcare. The Plan identifies population growth and demographic change as drivers that will put pressure on Council's existing infrastructure, and also a demand for multiuse buildings. The Plan identifies new assets required to meet future population demands in the catchment including a library and community centre, community building and childcare facility to be built in Huntlee. [23]
Cessnock Open	The Plan identifies population growth and demographic change as drivers that will put pressure on

[20] 10,000 Steps Singleton and Singleton Council, 'Every Step Counts: Singleton Walking Routes', n.d.

[21] Cessnock City Council and Singleton Council, 'Hunter Valley Visitor Economy Destination Management Plan', 2014.

[22] Singleton Council, 'Singleton Villages Place Making Strategy 2015', 2015.

[23] Cessnock City Council, 'Buildings Asset Management Plan', 2018.

STRATEGY/PLAN	SUMMARY
Space and Other Structures: Asset Management Plan	Council's existing open space and other structure assets. The Plan identifies new assets required to meet future population demands in the study area including local sporting fields, two district parks, and eight local parks.
Cessnock City Wide Infrastructure Contributions Plan 2020	The City-Wide Contributions Plan 2020 identifies the provision of the following infrastructure and upgrades as part of its 2020 – 2031 Works Schedule: [24] • Greta Central Oval, upgrades in accordance with masterplans (inclusive of upgrade to multipurpose court) • Miller Park upgrades • Branxton Aquatic Centre upgrades • Greta Skate Park upgrades • Local Park in Branxton • Branxton Oval upgrades • Provision of Multipurpose Centre, fit out and carpark at Huntlee.

[24] Cessnock City Council, 'City Wide Infrastructure Contributions Plan 2020', 2020.

APPENDIX 2: LIVEABILITY ASSESSMENT OUTPUTS

The economic, social, environmental and health benefits of urban liveability are recognised by all levels of government, both in Australia and globally. Liveable communities are safe, socially cohesive, inclusive and environmentally sustainable. They have affordable housing linked via public transport, walking and cycling infrastructure, to employment, education, shops and services, public open space and social, cultural and recreational facilities.

A liveability assessment provides a place-based or spatial analysis to understand liveability strengths and challenges across identified areas. A liveability assessment provides a convenient method to understand social, economic and environmental factors that influence public health and quality of life outcomes for all residents of an area. These assessments can assist with future planning for an area in light of newly proposed development plans and population growth.

Applying the Liveability Assessment Tool, this Assessment draws from relevant demographic data, Cessnock and Singleton Council strategies and plans, findings from a review of catchment infrastructure and the results of a Liveability Survey to identify liveability 'levels'. Where weaknesses are identified, the Assessment makes recommendations to guide future planning and decision making for both local governments.

It should be noted that many aspects of liveability are subjective. What one person or one population group finds liveable may be different to the next. When considering the liveability qualities of the catchment, it is important to consider the specific needs and values of its different population groups.

A2.1 Access to Quality Employment

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's employment statistics are an important indicator of socio-economic status. The levels of full or part-time employment, unemployment and labour force participation indicate the strength of the local economy and social characteristics of the population.

The following tables describe three components of access to quality employment: Overall Access to Employment; Access to Local Employment; and Access to a Range of Employment Options. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Overall Access to Employment	✓			
Access to quality employment is a social determinant of health, providing workers with financial resources to support themselves and their families. Access to local employment reduces vehicle kilometres travelled, time, and traffic congestion. It also increases the likelihood of people using active transport such as walking, cycling and public transport and has been associated with improved self-reported health[25]. Access to local employment with shorter travel times has the potential to support work-life balance with shorter travel times found to be associated with a reduced risk of obesity.[26] **Measure:** Percentage of the population employed **Data Source:** 2016 ABS Census				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Local Employment	✓		✓	✓
The availability of local employment can impact the sustainability and connectivity of a community. Local employment options can facilitate active transport options such as walking and cycling which have a positive impact of personal and environmental health. Local employment options increase the use of public transport and reduce car dependency. Local employment opportunities also decrease travel times enabling greater time for recreation and personal relationships. **Measure:** Method of travel to work; Respondents travelling to employment by motor vehicle or public transport **Data Source:** 2016 ABS Census; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

[25] Badland, H, et al., 'Are Area-Level Measures of Employment Associated with Health Behaviours and Outcomes?' *An International and Interdisciplinary Journal for Quality-of-Life Measurement*, 2017.

[26] Frank, L, Andresen, M and Schmid, T, 'Obesity relationships with community design, physical activity, and time spent in cars', *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2004.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to a Range of Employment Options		✓	✓	
The availability of different employment options contributes to liveability through employment flexibility. Employment flexibility provides opportunities for residents with varied skills and levels of education. A community with a broad range of employment options can respond to changing demographics over time. **Measure:** Percentage of the population across occupation types **Data source:** 2016 ABS Census; Strategy and Plan Review				

Data for 'Employment status' for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows 2,847 people living in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 were employed, of which 63% worked full-time and 36% part-time. Analysis of the employment status (as a percentage of the labour force) in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion in employment, and a higher proportion unemployed. Between 2011 and 2016, the number of people employed in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury showed an increase of 173, and the number unemployed showed an increase of 107. In the same period, the number of people in the labour force showed an increase of 281 or 10.1%.

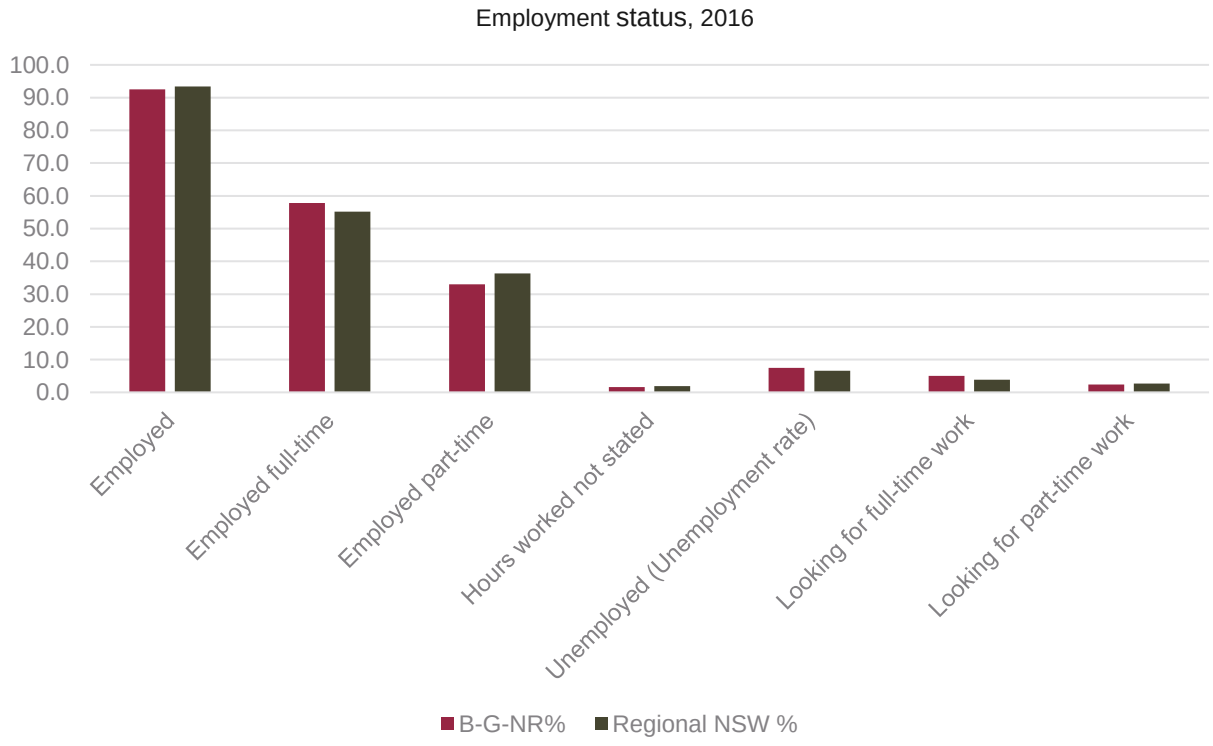


Figure 19: Employment status. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Almost 80% of employed residents within the catchment travel to work by private car. On Census Day 2016 in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, 79.2% of people travelled to work in a private car, 0.1% took public transport, 0.8% rode a bike or walked, and 1.9% worked at home. There were 4 people who caught public transport to work (train, bus, tram or ferry) in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, compared with 2,255 who drove in private vehicles (car – as driver, car – as passenger, motorbike, or truck).

Consistent with the 2016 Census data, 57% of Liveability Survey respondents said they worked away from home. 94% of respondents to the question on the mode of transport most used to get to work answered 'private vehicle'. In households where 1 - 3 people worked away from home, 62 respondents had varying travel times from 20 minutes (7 people) to 2 hours (4 people). The most common travel time was 40 minutes (11 people) followed by 30 minutes (10 people).

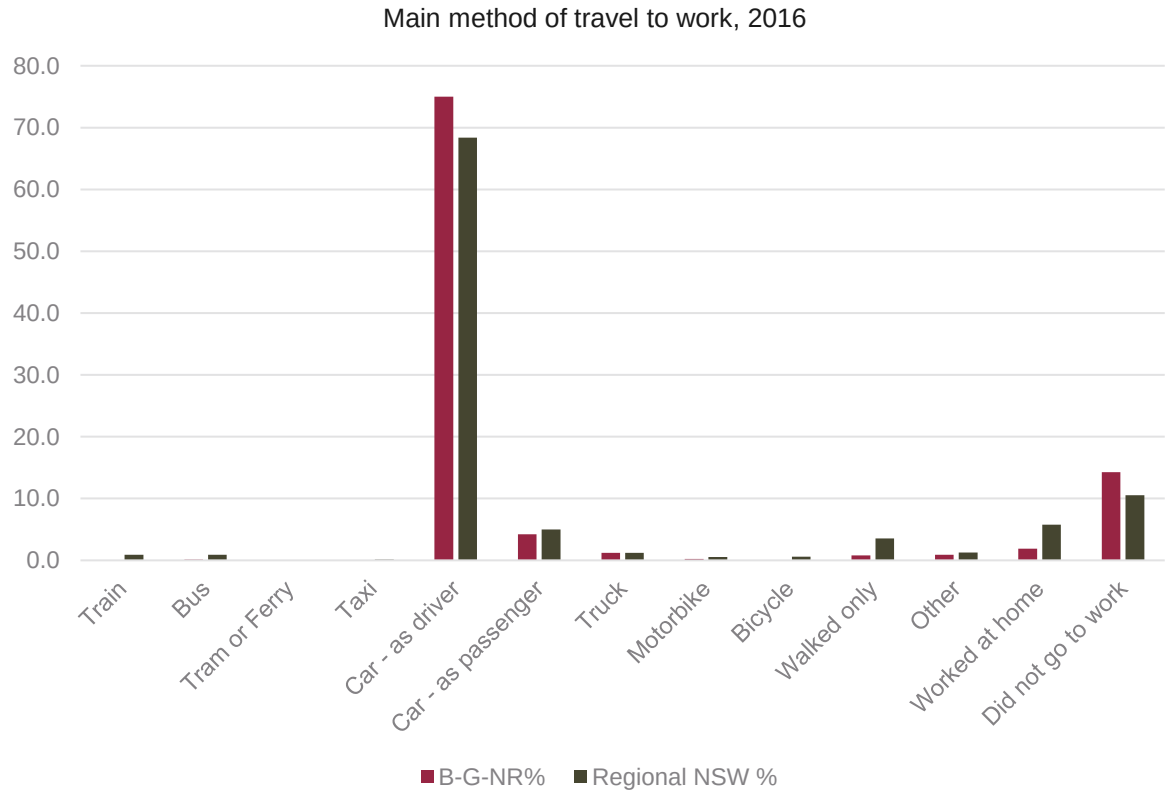


Figure 20: Main method of travel to work (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's industry statistics identify the industry sectors in which the residents work (which may be within the residing area or elsewhere). This will be influenced by the skill base and socio-economic status of the residents as well as the industries and employment opportunities present in the region. Data for 'Industry of employment' for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 shows more residents (17.5%) worked in mining than any other industry, compared to Regional NSW (2.4%). Number employed in mining are followed by Health Care and

Social Assistance (285 people or 10.0%), and Accommodation and Food Services (260 people or 9.1%). The largest changes in the jobs held by the resident population between 2011 and 2016 in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury were for those employed in Health Care and Social Assistance (+92 persons); Manufacturing (-74 persons); and Accommodation and Food Services (+54 persons).

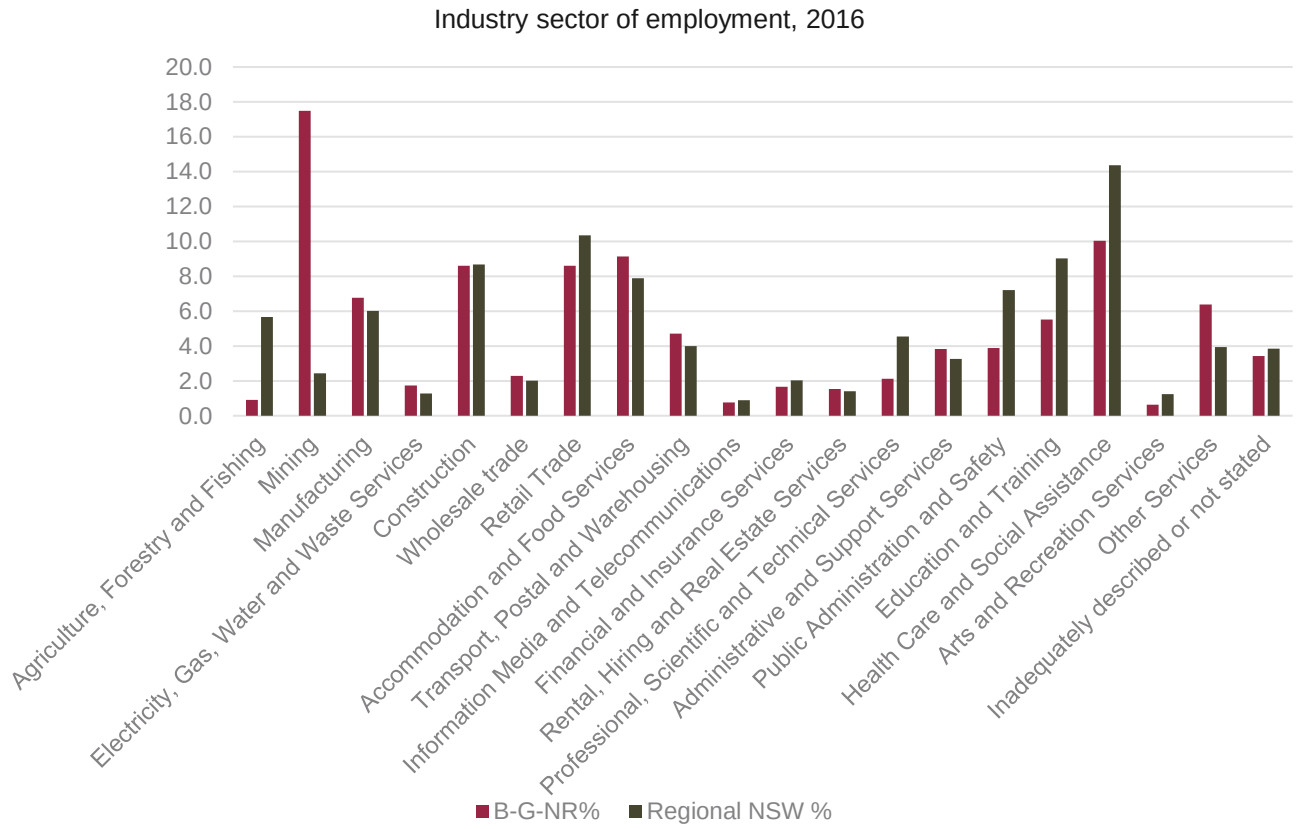


Figure 21: Industry sector of employment. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.1.1 Discussion

Overall access to employment is good. The Hunter Expressway provides access to employment sources such as the natural resources/mining sector, the services sector in Singleton, Maitland or Cessnock, and the tourism sector located throughout the Hunter Region. The catchment benefits from bus transport serving regional centres, and the Branxton and Greta commuter railway stations.

Only seven (7) respondents to the Liveability Survey indicated a travel time to work time of under 15 minutes, perhaps representative of limited employment opportunities within the catchment. While this is currently the case, employment opportunities are likely to improve slightly as development increases in the catchment. The Branxton Town Centre Master Plan identifies the expansion of the centre over time from 8,250m² to approximately 24,000m², and at Huntlee there is more than 100 hectares of greenfield business zoned land available. Together with strategies to move the

region away from traditional industries such as mining and manufacturing to service and knowledge industries, particularly hospitality and aged care, there is a degree of flexibility to improve local employment.

As the broader locality matures, authorities may wish to consider increasing the number of public transport services from Branxton Train Station, which will provide access to higher order employment opportunities within Newcastle.

Coal mining accounts for a large portion of the working population in the catchment and the natural resource industry is the largest in the Region. Employment in the coal sector may be heading for a decline and this will impact the employment options available to a large portion of the population.

Opportunities have been identified in Regional and Subregional plans, as well as Singleton Council's *Economic Development Strategy* and Cessnock's *Jobs Strategy*, for industry diversification. The NSW State Government and Councils in the Region are facilitating the development of other industries like tourism, the services sector, and renewable energy. This will also improve employment options in the Region.[27]

Lastly, while walking or cycling to work in rural communities is not a possibility for many as a form of regular transport, finding alternatives to private car travel will be essential to a more sustainable way of living. Providing greater access to employment locations through Demand Responsive Transportation (DRT) may increase job opportunities and reduce dependencies on private vehicles.

[27] Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, 'Hunter Regional Plan 2036', 2016, and Singleton Council, 'Singleton Local Strategic Planning Statement 2041'.

A2.2 Access to Fresh, Healthy Food

Access to fresh food provides people with the opportunity to purchase nutritional foods which support healthy eating behaviours and lifestyles. Living within easy walking distance of fresh food stores encourages and enables people to walk or cycle instead of driving, reducing risk of chronic disease and supporting sustainable communities.

The following table describes a key indicator of access to fresh, healthy food. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Healthy Food Consumption	✓			
Ability to access healthy food is influenced by many factors including income, local availability of affordable foods and transport. Food choices are influenced by time, knowledge, and culture. Access to fresh, high-quality fruit and vegetables is influenced by local food production, food transport, retail mix and pricing. **Measure:** Respondents eating the recommended two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetable per day. **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022; Catchment Infrastructure Review; Strategy and Plan Review				

A2.2.1 Discussion

The Infrastructure Review reveals that residents in the catchment are close to a range of fresh food options, including a local IGA supermarket, butcher and the Hunter Farm Collective located in Branxton Town Centre, Huntlee Shopping Centre and shops in Greta. Branxton Fish and Chippery provides seafood options, and Sally and Patricks Handpicked Fruit and Vegetables provides delivery to the areas of the catchment.

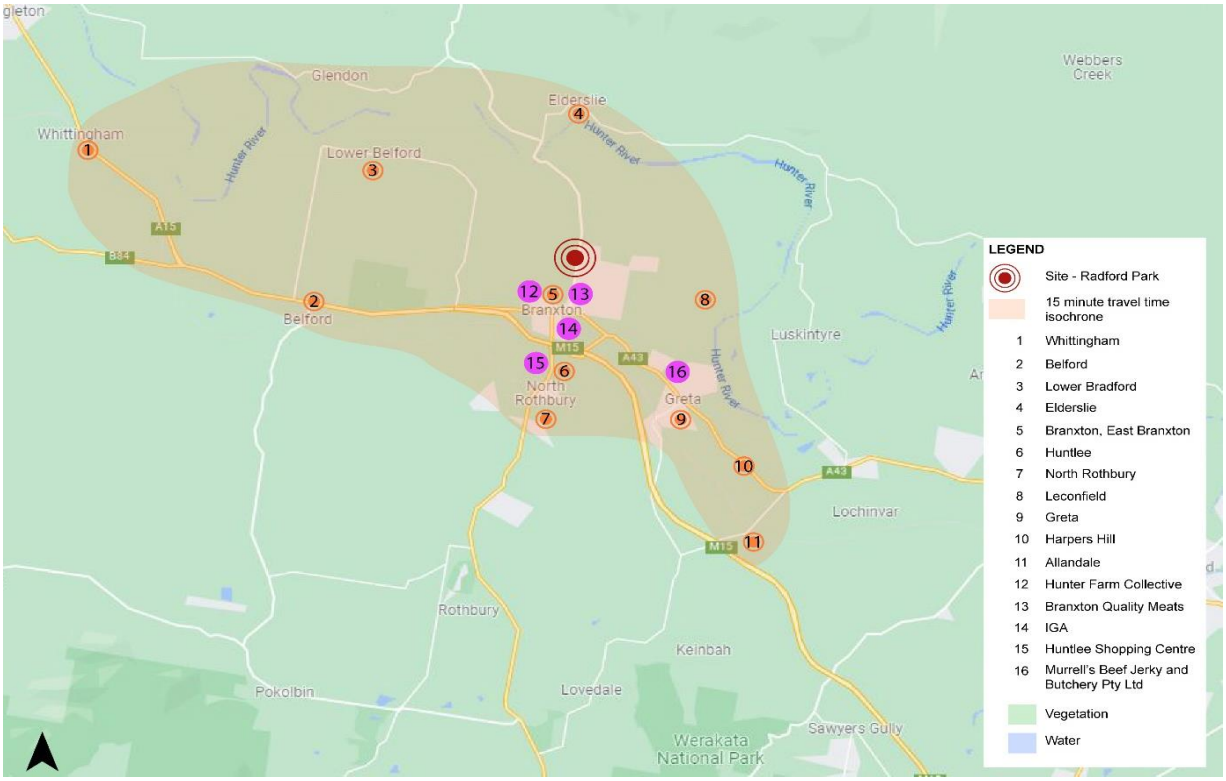


Figure 22: Catchment fresh food outlets (Source: Gyde Consulting)

83% of respondents to the Liveability Survey indicated they had access to fresh good quality food all the time or mostly, while 17% said they had access some of the time. The high percentage of people indicating access to fresh quality food correlates with the high proportion of respondents consuming the recommended intakes of fruit and vegetables daily (53%) or a few times a week (44%).

The Liveability Survey found that most living in the catchment travelled to Huntlee Shopping Centre for groceries, including fresh fruit and vegetables, and other items.

> *"It would be lovely to have the farm growing fresh produce and fresh eggs again. Also, it would be great to have a roadwork park small shop to be able to grab fresh bread and home-made goods during the day that we can walk to instead of having to drive to Branxton. Even a nice little Cafe type van that you could grab coffee and lunch like Huntlee would be nice".* Liveability Survey Respondent.

More restaurants, a better supply of fresh fruit and meat, cafes, fresh food market and fresh food delivery were identified by respondents as ways to increase liveability.

> *"The opening of community farmers markets on a regular weekly basis would be great".* Liveability Survey Respondent.

The expansion of the Branxton Town Centre from 8,250m² to approximately 24,000m², identified in the Branxton Masterplan, provides flexibility that would enable a greater number of fresh food outlets to establish in the area, providing greater choice to consumers and providing a more competitive market. There is also flexibility in that large lots in the catchment enable owners to grow their own fresh produce, also potentially enhancing practices around sustainability and recycling.

Given the issues with connectivity in the catchment, most residents are unlikely to live within walking distance of fresh food stores (most people will not regularly walk distances greater than 800m - 1km to destinations such as shops and services[28] especially if bulky purchases need to be carried). For this reason, connectivity scored well.

[28] Gunn L, et al., 'Identifying destination distances that support walking trips in local neighborhoods', *Journal of Transport & Health*, 2017.

A2.3 Access to Physical Activity

Access to places for physical activity like local open spaces and parks are important to liveability, providing places for people to meet, socialise, recreate play, and connect. Access to these areas is associated with increased physical activity and improved mental health. Public open space includes parks and recreational reserves, sporting fields, public gardens, nature reserves, civic areas, and promenades.

The following tables describe four components of Access to Physical Activity: 'Overall Participation in Physical Activity'; 'Participation in Active Transport'; Use of and Satisfaction with Sport and Recreation Facilities'; and 'Use of and Satisfaction with Footpaths and Cycleways'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Overall Participation in Physical Activity	✓			
Being physically active improves the immune system and mental and musculoskeletal health and reduces other risk factors such as overweight and obesity, high blood pressure and high blood cholesterol. Adults aged 18-64 should be active on most (preferably all) days, accumulating at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity physical activity each week (or an equivalent combination of both). People aged 65 and over should accumulate at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most, preferably all days. **Measure:** Respondents that undertake the recommended level of physical activity per week **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Participation in Active Transport Options	✓		✓	✓
The benefits of active transport are recognised in health, transport, and urban planning fields. Active transport reduces congestion in the road network and can reduce infrastructure costs, as well as delivering health benefits through physical activity and disease prevention. Active transport delivers environmental benefits by contributing to lower air and noise pollution, with positive flow-on health outcomes. Infrastructure that supports walking and cycling also contributes to social equity and inclusion goals, providing opportunities for low-cost modes of travel.[29] Active transport is defined as walking and cycling to a given destination. **Measure:** Respondents who use active transport options **Data Source:** 2016 ABS Census; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Use of and Satisfaction with Sport and Recreation Facilities	✓			
Research exploring the influence of the environment on physical activity has emerged in the past decade. Environmental factors explored include: the built environment, such as proximity to parks, playgrounds and sports facilities; access characteristics, such as transport, footpaths, traffic lights and crossings; the natural environment such as climate and weather; and perceptions of safety. Analysis of data from an Australian population survey of recreational physical activity revealed that while the prevalence of participation in any specific physical activity and regular physical activity generally both decreased as remoteness increased, participation in some popular team sports increased with increased remoteness.[30] **Measure:** Respondents very satisfied or satisfied with sport and recreation facilities **Data source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

[29] RMIT Centre for Urban Research, 'Transport Policy Brief'.

[30] Eime, R et al., 'The relationship of sport participation to provision of sports facilities and socioeconomic status: a geographical analysis', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 2017.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Use of and Satisfaction with Footpaths and Cycleways	✓		✓	✓
Liveable neighbourhoods have a street network which promotes walking and cycling around the local area. Street connectivity describes how well-connected streets are to each other and is typically measured as the density of intersections in each area. Research shows that people walk more when they have access to pedestrian routes and connections that are safe, direct, and pleasant to use. High-quality pedestrian infrastructure like footpaths and crossings are also important to ensure communities, businesses and services are accessible to people with mobility limitations and to parents with prams.[31] **Measure:** Respondents very satisfied or satisfied with footpaths and cycleways **Date Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022				

A2.3.1 Discussion

Based on self-reported data from the 2017-18 National Health Survey, more than half of adults (55%) didn't participate in sufficient physical activity.[32] Women were more likely than men to be insufficiently active (59% compared with 50%). The rate of insufficient physical activity generally increases with age; less than half of those aged 18-24 were insufficiently active (41% of men and 48% of women) compared with more than two-thirds of those aged 65 and over (69% of men and 75% of women).[33]

Statistics specific to the Hunter New England Local Health District indicate that just over 40% of the population aged 16 and over do not participate in the recommended daily amount of physical activity.[34] Participation has declined steadily from approximately 60% in 2003.

In response to the question 'How often are you and your family physically active (enough to elevate your heart rate) in the following locations", most Liveability Survey respondents nominated once or twice a week, followed by those that were physically active every day.

At home in the yard was the most popular location, with 48% being physically active daily, followed by 39% being physically active once or twice a week. Block size was identified as the primary attraction to the Estate by respondents to the liveability Survey residing in Radford Park.

[31] Andrade et al., 'Designed to Move: Active Cities', 2015.

[32] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Insufficient physical activity', 2020.

[33] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Insufficient physical activity', 2020.

[34] Hunter New England Local Health District, 'Health Stats', 2019.

49% of respondents said they participated in physical activities on paths and trails, and 40% at parks and playgrounds once or twice a week. Going to the gym was the second most popular location for daily physical activity (21%), however it also had the highest proportion of respondents (62%) indicating it as a physical activity they never attend.

The Infrastructure Review shows the catchment benefits from established open spaces and recreational assets, however 51% of respondents indicated they did not participate in physical activity in local parks in or outside their neighbourhoods.

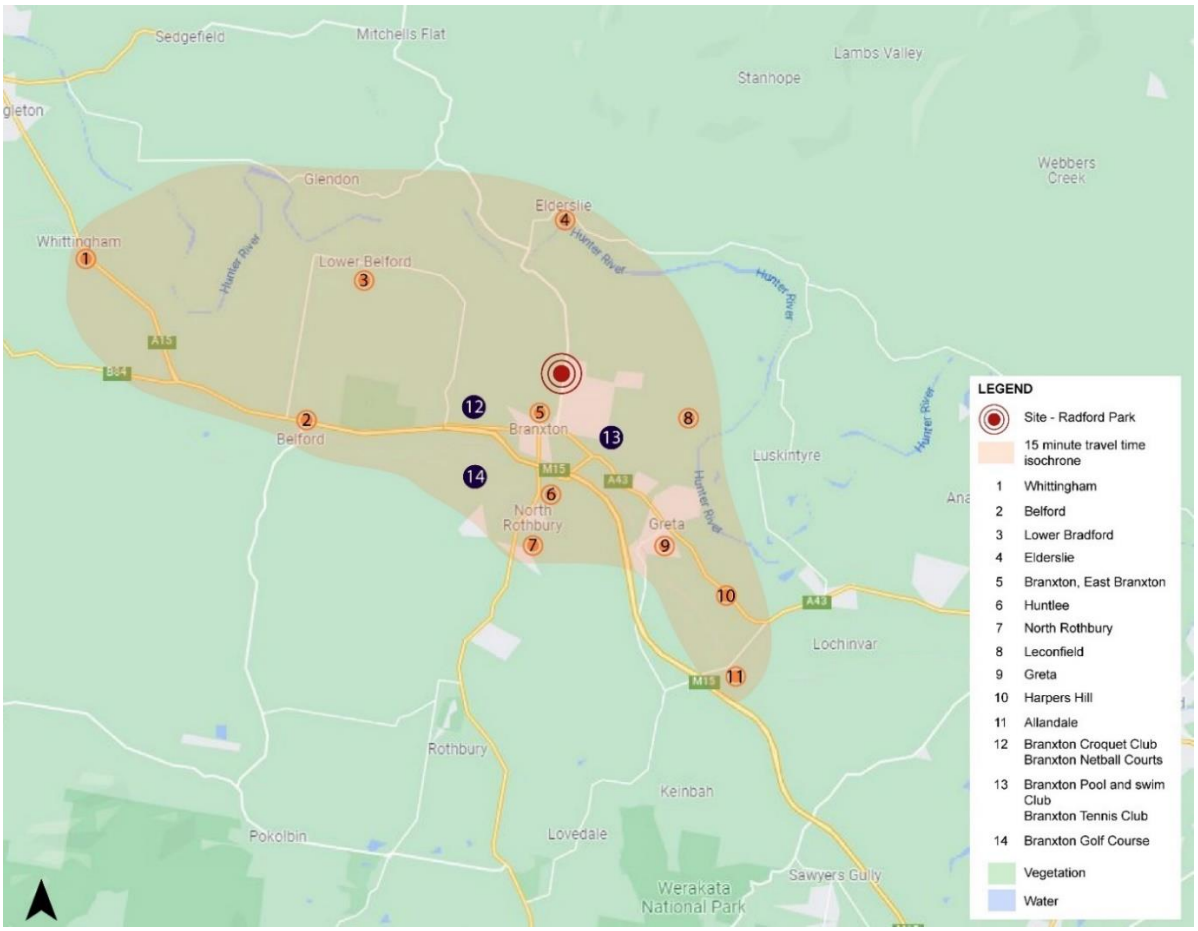


Figure 23: Catchment sport and recreation infrastructure.

Non-usage of local parks and other recreation facilities may also be in part be explained by the identified barriers to participation, where 74% of Survey respondents nominated safe connections between places, 67% the availability of local facilities like play and fitness equipment, and 42% the condition of local facilities.

Unsurprisingly then, 29% of Survey respondents indicated they were somewhat dissatisfied, another 29% were neither dissatisfied or satisfied, while 11% were satisfied and 16% were somewhat satisfied with recreation opportunities.

Survey comments on physical activity were predominantly focused on a park and playground for kids, pathways and

connectivity to provide access to destinations.

Clearly, problems with connectivity within the catchment have a correlation with non-park usage. It is not unusual for rural communities to use private vehicles to travel long distances to access services, however 91% of respondents in the catchment indicated that they use their cars to attend parks and playgrounds.

> *"I have to get into the car to do anything, so I end up staying home a lot".* Liveability Survey respondent.

42% of respondents to the Liveability Survey were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with footpaths and cycleways in the neighbourhood. In response to the question "What are the top 3 improvements that could be made to your neighbourhood to increase convenience", out of a total of 109 responses the second most requested improvement related to the need for improved pathways and connectivity (28 respondents), with parks and playgrounds for kids the most popular request (29 respondents).

Answering the question "Do you or your family use an active form of transport (e.g., walk or cycle) to get to and from places in your neighbourhood?", 59.57% said no, and 40.43% said yes. The most common use of active transport options was to go to parks (36%), or cafes (21%). No respondents indicated they use active transport options to travel to work.

The Strategy and Plan Review, including *Every Step Counts: Singleton Walking Routes*, *Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older People*, *Singleton Child Friendly Strategy*, *Cessnock Health and Wellbeing Plan* all identify activities like walking and cycling as desirable for healthy communities. Indeed, the *Cessnock Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan* identifies 38 locations in the Branxton/Greta area where there are works required to improve pedestrian and cycling links.

Additional open spaces, including a local sporting field, district and local level parks, have been identified for the Huntlee area in the *Cessnock Open Space and Other Structures Asset Management Plan*. New cycleway routes and upgrades identified in the Cessnock and Singleton Council Plans to construct and adapt pathways may improve connections to sport and recreation facilities and increase opportunities for physical activity.

A2.4 Access to Flexible and Affordable Housing

Access to flexible and affordable housing has significant social and economic benefits for individuals, families, the wider community, and the economy. It has been linked to household health and wellbeing, capacity to participate in education and the workforce, rates of family violence, levels of reliance on social supports and participation in society. Affordable housing is also needed to accommodate diversity in a community, to maintain social cohesion, and to support and sustain local economies with a range of services and businesses.[35]

The following tables describe three components of Access to Flexible and Affordable Housing: 'Home Ownership'; 'Affordability of Rental Properties'; and 'Variety of Housing Type'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Home Ownership	✓			
Homeownership offers a wide range of benefits to individuals and households. These include increased wealth accumulation, improved labor market outcomes, better mental and physical health, increased financial and physical health for seniors, reduced rates of divorce, and improved school performance and development of children. These beneficial financial and social outcomes are due to the stability offered by homeownership, as well as the incentives created by the process and responsibilities of becoming and remaining a homeowner.[36] **Measure:** Housing Tenure **Date Source**: 2016 ABS Census				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Affordability of Rental Properties	✓			
The supply of affordable private rental housing is of critical importance in understanding labour market mobility and employment opportunities in Australia, particularly because the proportion of Australian households occupying private rental housing is growing. The 2017–18 ABS *Survey of Income and Housing* estimates that 27% of Australian households live in private rental housing, up from 20% in 1997–98. **Measure:** Housing Tenure **Date Source**: 2016 ABS Census				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Variety of Housing Type	✓	✓	✓	

[35] Melbourne School of Design - Transforming Housing, 'Affordable Housing for All', 2016.

[36] International Housing Association, 'The Benefits of Home Ownership', n.d.

Housing form diversity is desirable to accommodate differing housing needs. Different family changes or types may require different housing in terms of size, cost, closeness or access to amenities. Without such housing diversity being available, changing housing needs can mean people have to move out of the area or adopt unsatisfactory accommodation arrangements, potentially impacting family relationships, health and wellbeing.

Measure: Dwelling Type
Date Source: 2016 ABS Census

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's Household Income is one of the most important indicators of socio-economic status. Data for Weekly household income for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows 19.0% of households earned an income of $2,500 or more per week in 2016, 15.9% were low-income households, compared with 14.6% and 22.0% respectively for Regional NSW.

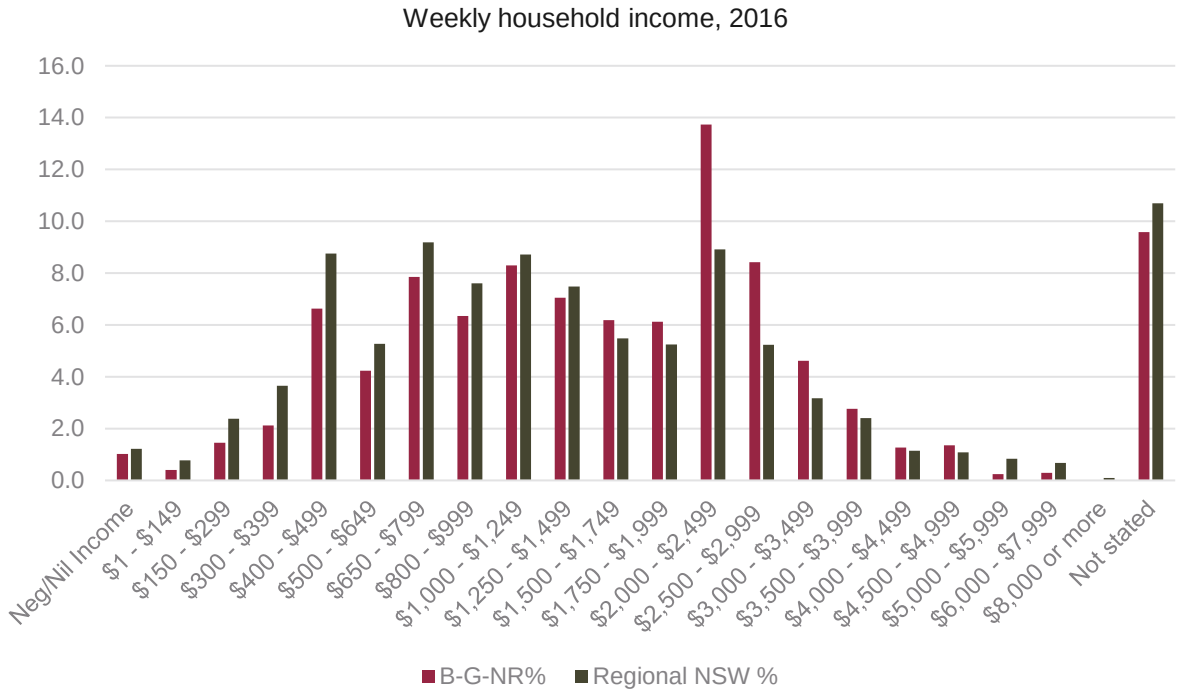


Figure 24: Weekly household income. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's Housing tenure data provides insights into its socio-economic status as well as the role it plays in the housing market. Data for Household tenure for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, 68% of households were purchasing or fully owned their home (25.1% and 43.1% respectively). 25.4% were renting privately, and 0.0% were in social housing in 2016. There was a smaller proportion of households who owned their dwelling; a larger proportion purchasing their dwelling than in Regional NSW. The largest changes in housing tenure categories for the households in Branxton - Greta - North

Rothbury between 2011 and 2016 were: Mortgage (+75 households); and Renting - Private (+68 households).

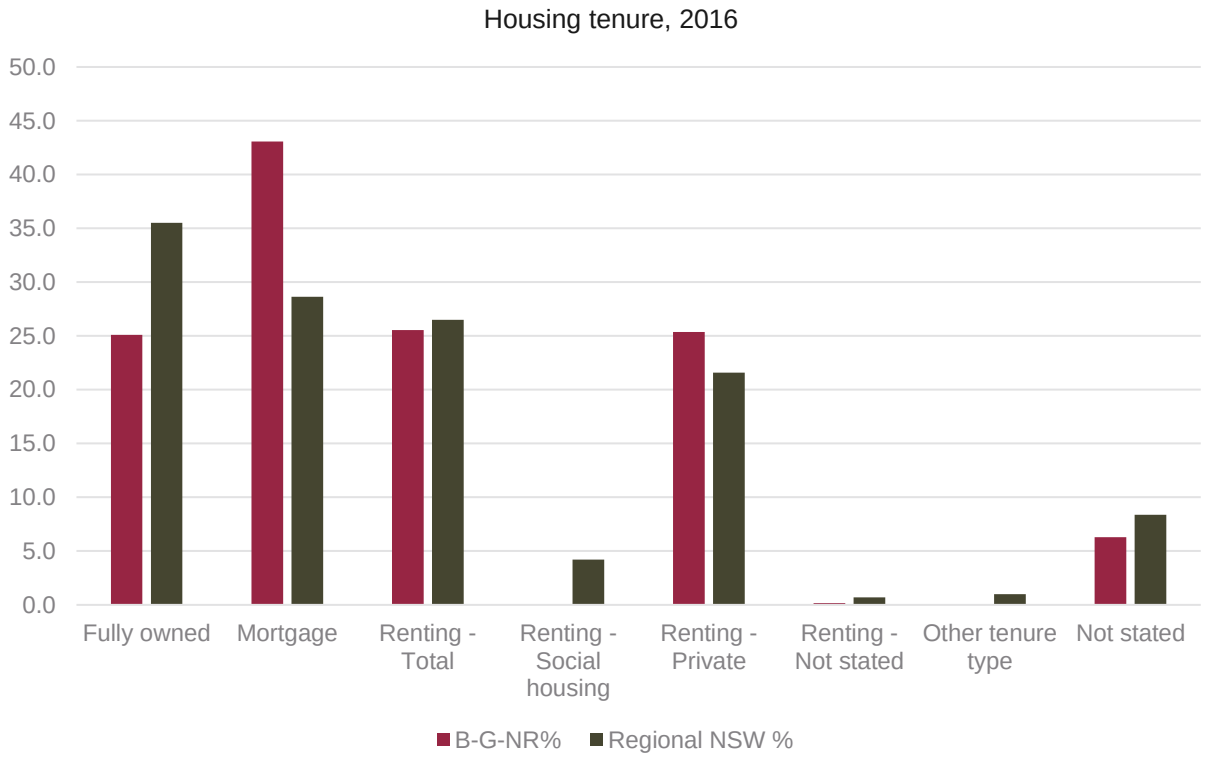


Figure 25: Housing tenure. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Mortgage repayments are directly related to house prices in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury, length of occupancy and the level of equity of homeowners. When viewed with Household Income data it may also indicate the level of housing stress households in the community are under. In mortgage belt areas it is expected that households will be paying a higher proportion of their income on their housing compared to well-established areas. First home buyer areas are also likely to have larger mortgages than upgrader areas where households move in with equity from elsewhere.

Monthly housing loan repayments of households in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury compared to Regional NSW shows there was a smaller proportion of households paying high mortgage repayments ($2,600 per month or more), as well as a smaller proportion of households with low mortgage repayments (less than $1,200 per month). Overall, 12.2% of households were paying high mortgage repayments, and 17.9% were paying low repayments, compared with 15.6% and 29.7% respectively in Regional NSW. The median rent for a house in the Branxton Subregion in 2016 was

$220 per week[37], increasing to $340 per week in 2022[38].

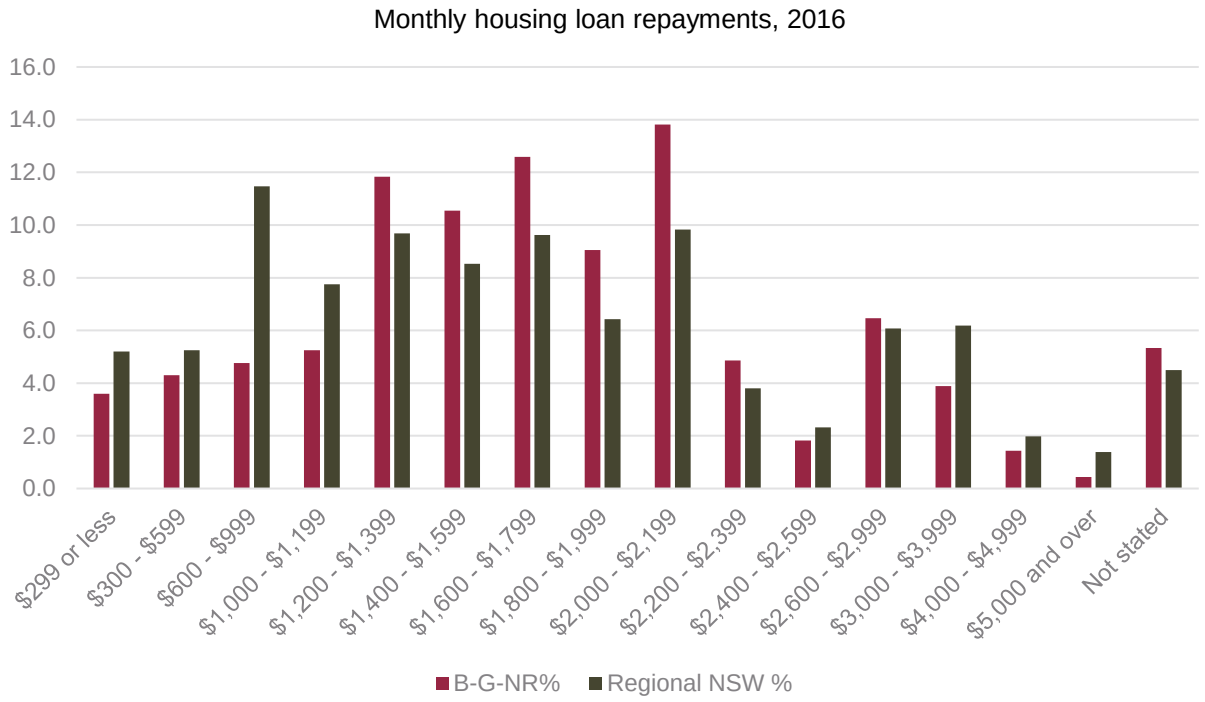


Figure 26: Monthly housing loan repayments. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Housing affordability typically refers to the relationship between expenditure on housing (prices, mortgage payments or rents) and household incomes. Housing tenure is related to housing affordability. Housing affordability can be expressed as the ration of housing costs to gross household income. Housing costs are defined as the sum of rent payments, rate payments, and household mortgage related payments. Housing stress is typically described as lower income households that spend more than 30% on gross income on housing costs.[39]

In the Branxton Subregion in 2016 the percentage of mortgage repayments to total household income was 25%, compared to NSW at 31%.

[37] SQM Research, 2022.

[38] CoreLogic, 2022.

[39] Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2019.

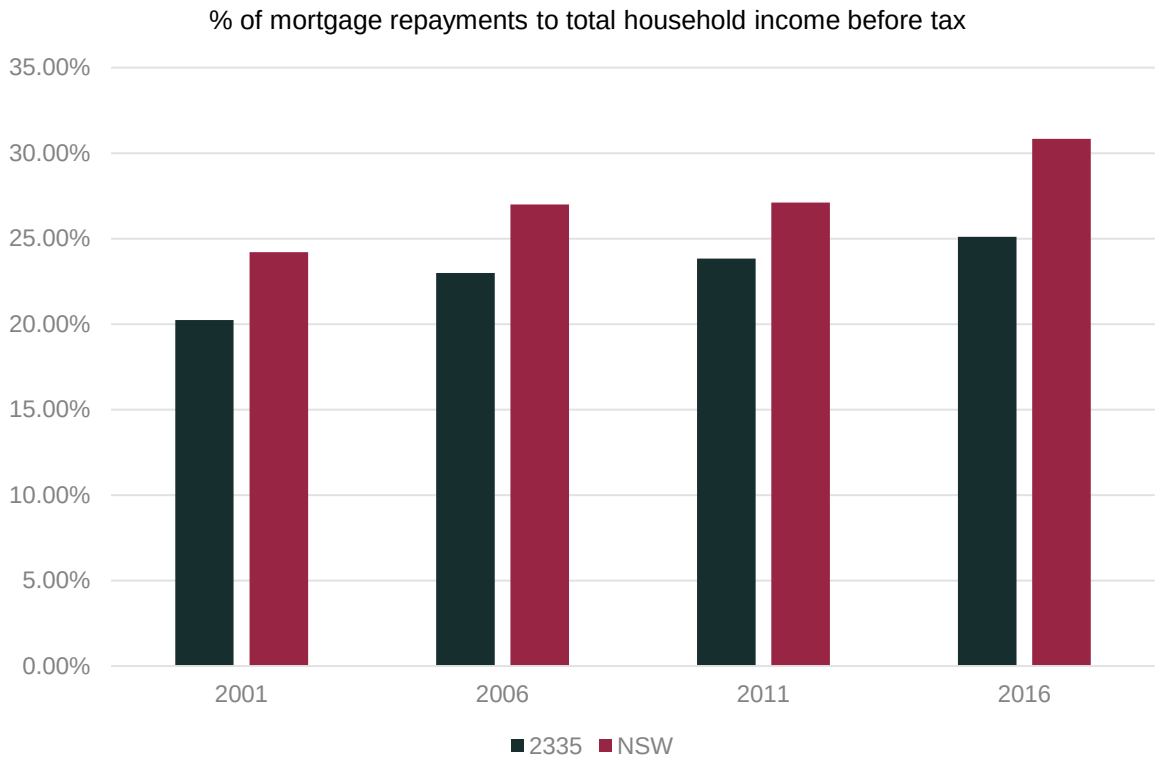


Figure 27: % of mortgage repayments to total household income before tax. (Source: SQM Research)

Data for 'Dwelling type' for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows there were 2,328 separate houses in the area, 132 medium density dwellings, and no high-density dwellings. 93.5% of all dwellings were separate houses, and 5.3% were medium density dwellings, compared with 80.2% and 14.3% in the Regional NSW respectively. A total of 94.1% of the dwellings in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury were occupied on Census night, compared to 87.3% in Regional NSW. The proportion of unoccupied dwellings was 5.9%, which is smaller compared to that found in Regional NSW (12.3%).

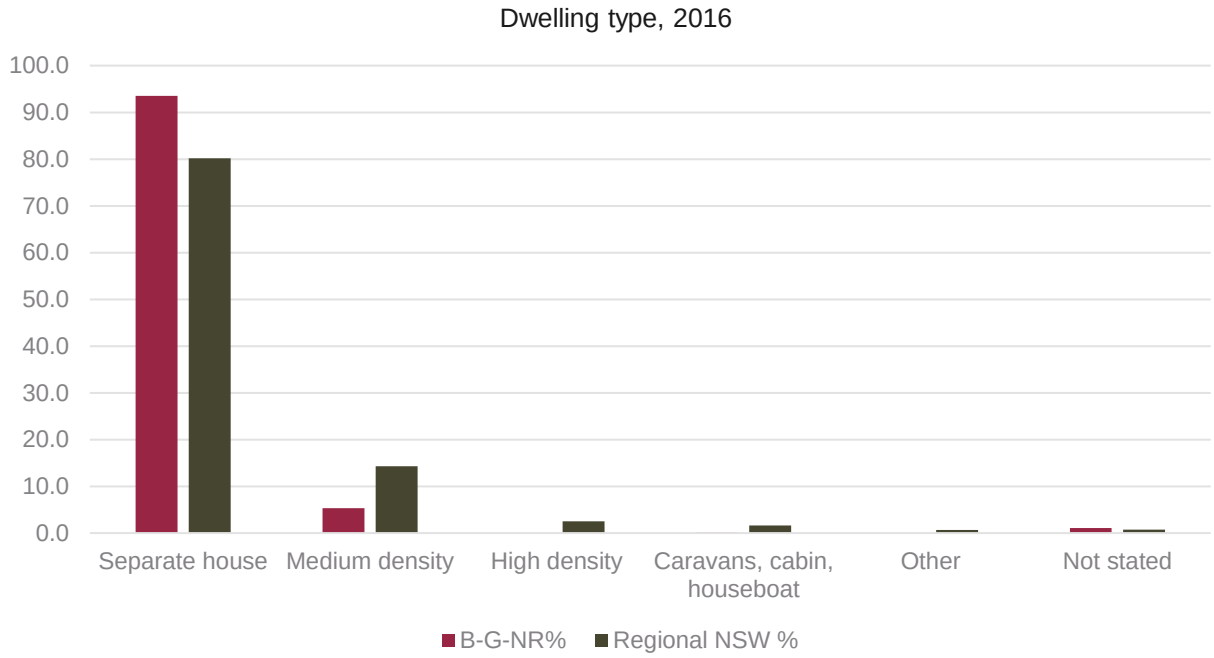


Figure 28: Dwelling type. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury has seen high levels of residential development in recent years and this is forecast to continue. Residential development forecasts assume the number of dwellings in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury will increase by an average of 121 dwellings per annum to 5,543 in 2041. The addition of dwellings to the housing stock is a major driver of population growth in an area, providing opportunities for households to relocate from other areas or new households to form locally (such as young people leaving the family home or separations/divorces).

Table 6 below shows the results of the forecasts for population, households and dwellings in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury.

The number of dwellings in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury is forecast to grow from 2,528 in 2016 to 5,543 in 2041, with the average household size falling from 2.72 to 2.68 by 2041.

It is important to look at the relationship between population and average household size. If the average household size is falling, then there will need to be growth in the number of households (and dwellings for them to live in) to maintain or grow the population.

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury	Forecast year					
Summary	**2016**	**2021**	**2026**	**2031**	**2036**	**2041**
Population	6,516	7,953	9,612	11,130	12,631	14,104
Change in population (5yrs)		1,437	1,659	1,518	1,501	1,474
Average annual change		4.07	3.86	2.98	2.56	2.23
Households	2,395	2,921	3,547	4,116	4,684	5,254
Average household size	2.72	2.72	2.71	2.70	2.70	2.68
Population in non-private dwellings	3	3	3	3	3	3
Dwellings	2,528	3,082	3,743	4,343	4,943	5,543
Dwelling occupancy rate	94.74	94.78	94.76	94.77	94.76	94.79

Table 6: Population forecasts and households. (Source: Population and household forecasts, 2016 to 2041, prepared by .id)

A2.4.1 Discussion

In the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District, 68% of residents either own outright or are purchasing their homes. This is comparable to the 67% of Australian households that were homeowners and mortgagees at the 2016 census.[40]

Data developed by SQM Research for the Branxton Subregion shows that in 2016 mortgage repayments were at 25% of total household income before tax, short of the 30% deemed to be a determinant of housing stress. This indicates a level of housing affordability in the catchment.

The level of affordability and accessibility to the housing market should however be viewed in the current context. In 2016 the median Regional NSW house price was $290,205.[41] In February 2022 the median house price in the 2335 postcode was $690,000. While lower than the NSW median house price of $880,000, the increased cost of housing in the Branxton Subregion, and the rest of the State, is cause for concern.

The per week median rent in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in January 2022 was $340.00 for a house, compared to Cessnock with a medium house rental price of $400.00.

Relatively high incomes, high home ownership and purchasing numbers also indicate a level housing affordability, and it is likely that the supply of further dwellings will increase the proportion of home ownership.

Demographic data on Housing type showed that in 2016, 93.5% of all dwellings were separate houses. Data for Dwelling type is consistent with Household type showing the greatest numbers of households as ‘Couples with children’.

Dwelling type is an important determinant of Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's residential role and function, with

[40] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, ‘Home ownership and housing tenure’, 2021.

[41] PRD Nationwide Australian Economic and Property Report, 2016.

larger, detached, or separate dwellings more likely to attract families and prospective families. Those respondents to the Survey that either resided, purchased but hadn't moved in yet, or were considering the catchment suburb of Radford Park to live indicated that large blocks and opportunities for a family was the primary reason they were attracted to the area. Population forecasts do project that the average household size is likely to reduce slightly by 2041.

While dwelling types in the catchment are suitable for families, the lack of housing diversity is reducing accessibility and impeding certain cohorts including younger people and smaller households wishing to stay or relocate to the area for family reasons, or those looking for employment.

The lack of housing diversity reflects the zoning prohibiting attached dwellings, dual occupancies, multi dwelling and boarding houses. Amending relevant statutory planning controls for some areas in the catchment in the future to allow smaller allotments may assist with housing supply and increase the flexibility of the area to accommodate more rentals. This is supported by the Branxton Subregional Land Use Plan vision, in which flourishing development includes diverse housing options.

A2.5 Access to Public Transport

Public transportation systems include a variety of transit options such as buses, and heavy and light rail. These systems are available to the public, may require a fare, and run at scheduled times.

Transportation systems help ensure that people can reach everyday destinations, such as jobs, schools, healthy food outlets and healthcare facilities, safely and reliably. Public transportation services play an important role for people who are unable to drive, including those without access to personal vehicles, children, individuals with disabilities, and older adults.[42]

The following tables describe three components of Access to Public Transport: 'Access to and Provision of Regular Public Transport'; 'Use of Public Transport'; and 'Perception of Public Transport'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to and Provision of Regular Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓
Access to and the provision of public transport services can provide an indication on the availability of public transport and can be a high determinant of use. **Measure:** Number of daily bus and train services; Respondents that indicated 'very easy' or 'easy' to the question: 'How do you rate the ease in which you and your family can access public transport. **Date Source**: Transport for NSW data; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Use of Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓
The level of public transport use can provide an indication of the accessibility of the service offered. **Measure:** People who use public transport to travel to work; Respondents who use public transport to travel to school, shops; restaurants; health and wellbeing services; parks and playgrounds; sporting activities. **Date Source**: 2016 ABS Census; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022				

[42] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 'Public Transport System: Interventions Addressing the Social Determinants of Health', 2022.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Perception of Public Transport	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reported satisfaction with public transport services and the exploration of barriers to use are key measures of public transport access and service quality. **Measure:** Respondents satisfied or most satisfied with public transport. **Date Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022				

A2.5.1 Discussion

The Catchment Infrastructure Review revealed both buses and trains service the catchment and connect residents to employment and retail centres like Singleton, Cessnock, Maitland, and Newcastle.

Branxton and Greta Train Stations are part of the Hunter Line, which provides connectivity between the Newcastle Interchange and Scone. Departures occur every 40 minutes, on average, during conventional peak travel periods. The journey duration from Branxton/Greta to the Newcastle Interchange is between 51 minutes - 1hr and 50 minutes on weekdays. There are limited services from Branxton and Greta on weekends and public holidays.

Public bus route No.180 and 180x service the catchment, providing connectivity between Singleton and Maitland with stops at intervals along the New England Highway at Belford, Branxton, Greta, Harper Hill, and Allandale. The 180 Bus service runs four times a day on weekdays, and three times on Saturday. There are no bus services on Sunday. Public bus route 179 travels from North Rothbury to East Maitland.

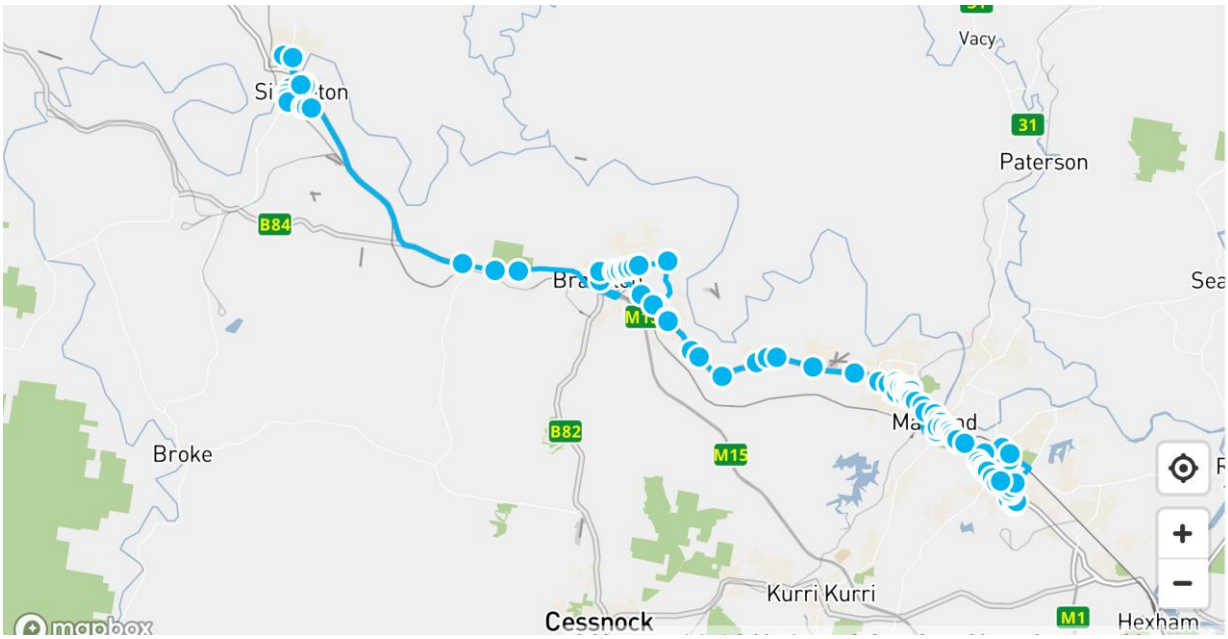


Figure 29: 180 Bus route Singleton to Maitland. (Source: Transport for NSW Mapbox)

Despite the provision of bus and train services in the catchment, wider travel zones and the limitations of fixed route transportation to access services presents challenges for many rural areas.

Regional centres at Maitland to the east, Cessnock to the south, and Singleton to the west, are on public transport routes, however large industrial estates at Rutherford to the east, the Hunter Economic Zone to the south and Hunter Valley Vineyards are not on direct public transport routes. There is no evidence of public transport initiatives like Demand Responsive Transportation (DRT).

In Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury on Census day in 2016, 101 employed people caught the bus, and 86 the train. Over 16,500 travelled by car as driver or passenger. These usage rates are comparable with Regional NSW, where on the same day in 2016, 100 employed people caught the bus, and 83 the train. Over 15,500 travelled by car as driver or passenger.

Liveability Survey responses show that the only significant use of public transport was by those travelling to school (26%), with private vehicle (57%) the preferred travel to school method.

There was a high level of ambiguity around public transport in the catchment, with the majority of respondents to the Survey neither satisfied or dissatisfied. There was a relatively high proportion of respondents that were either very dissatisfied or dissatisfied.

64% of respondents to the Liveability Survey indicated that they are neither satisfied or dissatisfied with the public transport in their neighbourhoods, while 29% said they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. 7% of respondents said they were satisfied. Most respondents answering the Liveability Survey question in which they rate the ease in which they can access public transport shows 51% indicated it was neither easy nor difficult, followed by 36% that said access to public transport was difficult or very difficult.

The Cessnock *Traffic and Transport Strategy* lists public transport that 'efficiently moves residents to key destinations within and outside the Council area using logical, accessible and connected services, maximising the use of infrastructure that gives a travel time advantage over cars' as a key policy position. Improving and encouraging the provision of accessible public transport options is identified as an action in the *Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older People*, while the *Singleton Sustainability Strategy* aims to work with the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Further investigation may be required to examine ways to improve public transport patronage. Access issues like insufficient pathways leading to bus stops and train stations may be contributing factors. An investment in public active transport infrastructure may provide greater choice of travel modes and make walking and cycling more attractive. Considerations to lesson private car use may also include Demand Responsive Transportation (DRT) to increase geographic coverage.

A2.6 Access to Childcare

A child's participation in an organised early childhood education program assists in the development of their cognitive abilities and helps with enhancing social and emotional skills while interacting with their peers, helping to ease them into full time school.

Studies have found that childcare in the first three years of life benefited children from disadvantaged backgrounds the most. For three- to five-year-olds, longitudinal studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of high-quality, focused preschool programs in reducing the effects of social disadvantage, developing children's social competency and emotional health, and preparing children for a successful transition to school.[43]

Childcare programs also assist parents with their caring responsibilities and support their economic and social participation.

The following table describes Access to Childcare. The principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Childcare	✓			
This type of care is provided to younger children. An inability to access childcare services can impact on the ability of family members to undertake work and generate incomes. Difficulty accessing these services may occur for a variety of reasons, including lack of local services, financial constraints and transport issues. Access to childcare services also increases opportunity to participate in active transport (walking and cycling) and has potential to improve community cohesion. **Measures:** Age Structure by Service Group; Proportion of the population attending childcare (preschool); Number of childcare services in the catchment. **Date Source**: 2016 ABS Census; Catchment Infrastructure Review.				

Overall, there were 561 'Babies and pre-schools', representing 8.8% of the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury population in 2016. Of those 561, 168 were attending pre-school.

[43] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Literature review of the impact of early childhood education and care on learning and development', 2015.

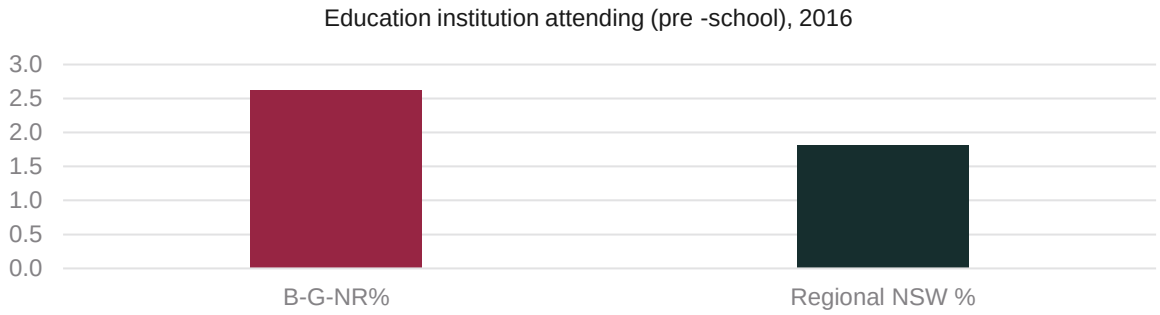


Figure 30: Education by institution attending pre-school. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.6.1 Discussion

In 2016, 35.2% of households were made up of couples with children, compared with 25.4% in Regional NSW. In the same year, there 561 children in the 0 - 5 age group, or 8.8% of the population. This number is forecast to increase to 927 in 2031, and 1,135 in 2041.

There are nine childcare centres located within the catchment. This number of centres is adequate for the current population, although further investigation is advisable to determine the availability of places.

Childcare was not identified as an issue by any of the respondents in the Liveability Survey.

Increases in population, housing density and employment opportunities will increase the need for childcare centres and places. The Cessnock *Community Infrastructure Plan* identifies the need for the expansion of early childhood facilities in the catchment, with a centre listed in the *Contributions Plan* to be delivered in Huntlee by 2031.

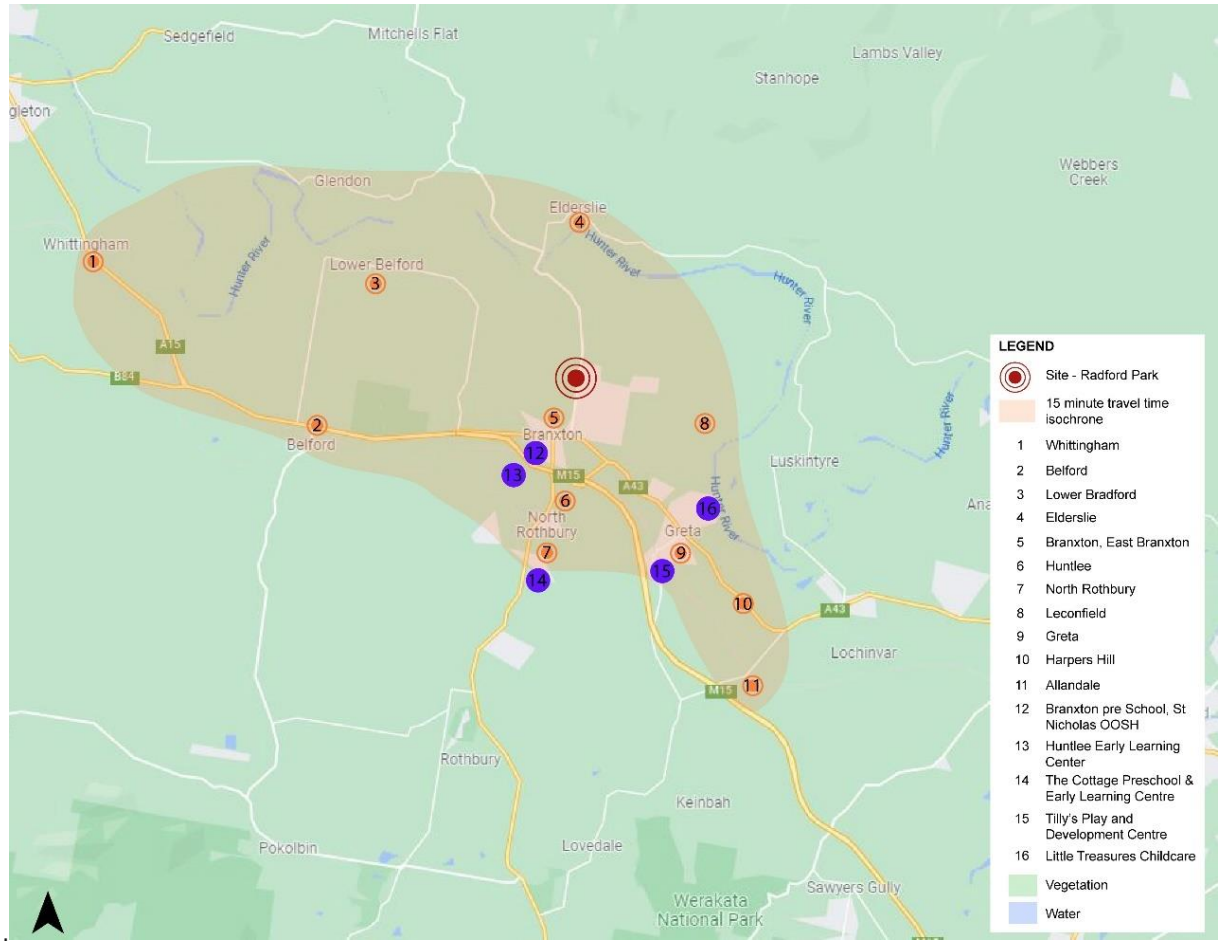


Figure 31: Catchment childcare centres.

A2.7 Access to Education

Schools play an important role in creating liveable cities. They are where young populations learn, grow, and develop and are a core component in the life of our communities. Schools and education services in general are a key driver for productivity, economic prosperity, and global competitiveness, as well the creation of human capital.

Tertiary education refers to all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools. Tertiary education is instrumental in fostering growth, reducing poverty, and boosting shared prosperity. A highly skilled workforce, with lifelong access to a solid post-secondary education, is a prerequisite for innovation and growth: well-educated people are more employable and productive, earn higher wages, and cope with economic shocks better. Tertiary education benefits not just the individual, but society as a whole. Graduates of tertiary education are more environmentally conscious, have healthier habits, and have a higher level of civic participation.[44]

The following tables describe two components of Access to Education: 'Access to Local Schools' and 'Access to Tertiary Education'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Local Schools	✓		✓	✓
Schools, especially primary schools, are recognised as particularly important in fostering social connections in new areas, where friendship, neighbour and acquaintance networks are yet to be established. Access to local schools also increases opportunity to participate in active transport (walking and cycling) and has potential to improve community cohesion. **Measures:** Age Structure by Service Group; Household Type; Number attending primary school; Number of schools in the catchment; Travel time to school. **Date Source**: 2016 ABS Census; Catchment Infrastructure Review; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022.				

[44] The World Bank, 'Higher Education', 2020.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Tertiary Education	✓		✓	✓

The share of Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's population attending educational institutions reflects the age structure, as it is influenced by the number of children attending school; proximity to tertiary education, which can mean young adults leaving home to be nearer to educational facilities; and, the degree to which people are seeking out educational opportunities in adulthood, especially in their late teens and early twenties.

Measures: Population attending tertiary education; Number/location of tertiary education facilities in the catchment.
Date Source: 2016 ABS Census; Catchment Infrastructure Review; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022.

Analysis of the share of the population attending educational institutions in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a higher proportion attending primary school. Overall, 11.3% of the population or 726 students were attending primary school.

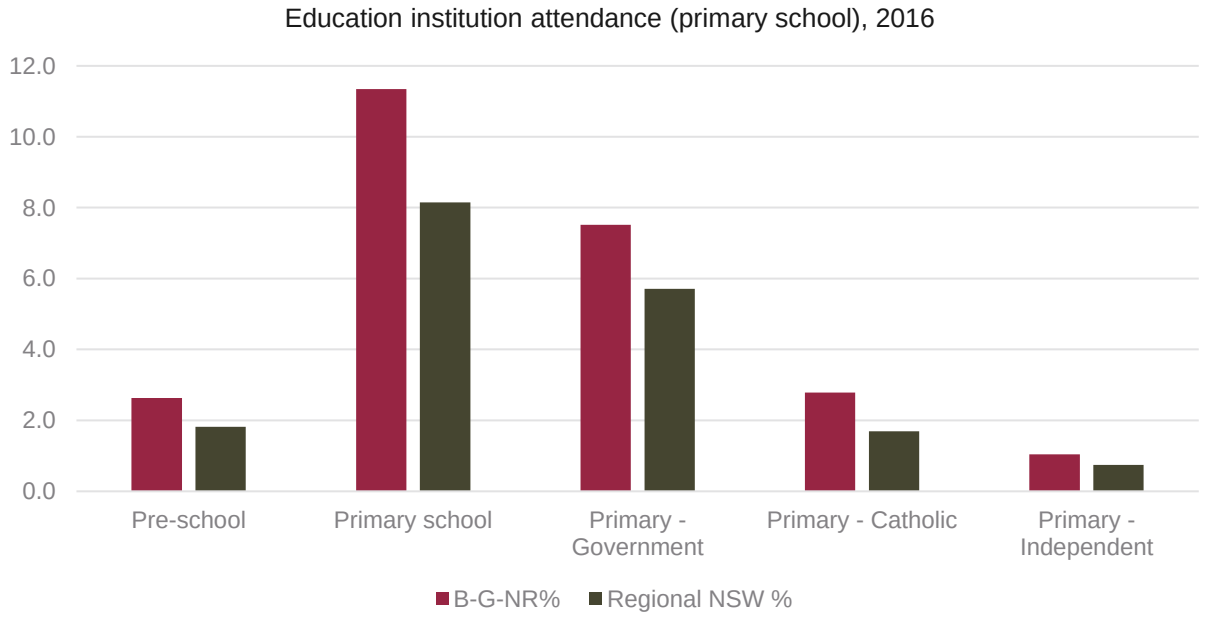


Figure 32: Education institution attendance (primary school). (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

The share of the population attending secondary educational institutions in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a similar proportion attending high school. Overall, 6.4% of the population, or 411 students were attending secondary institutions.

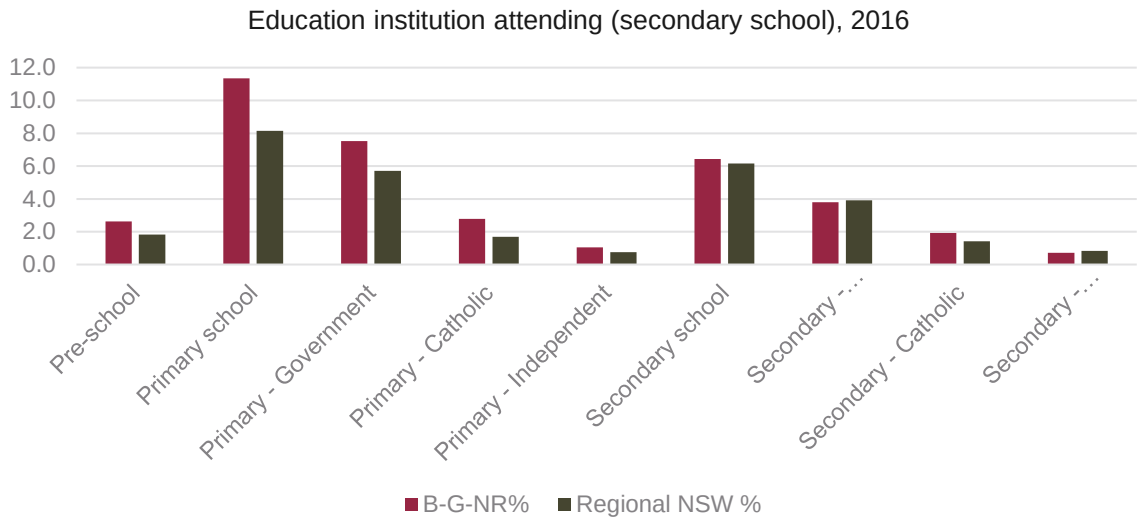


Figure 33: Education institution attending secondary school. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

The share of the population attending tertiary institutions in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion engaged in tertiary education. Overall, 3.3% were learning at a tertiary level, compared with 5.0% for Regional NSW.

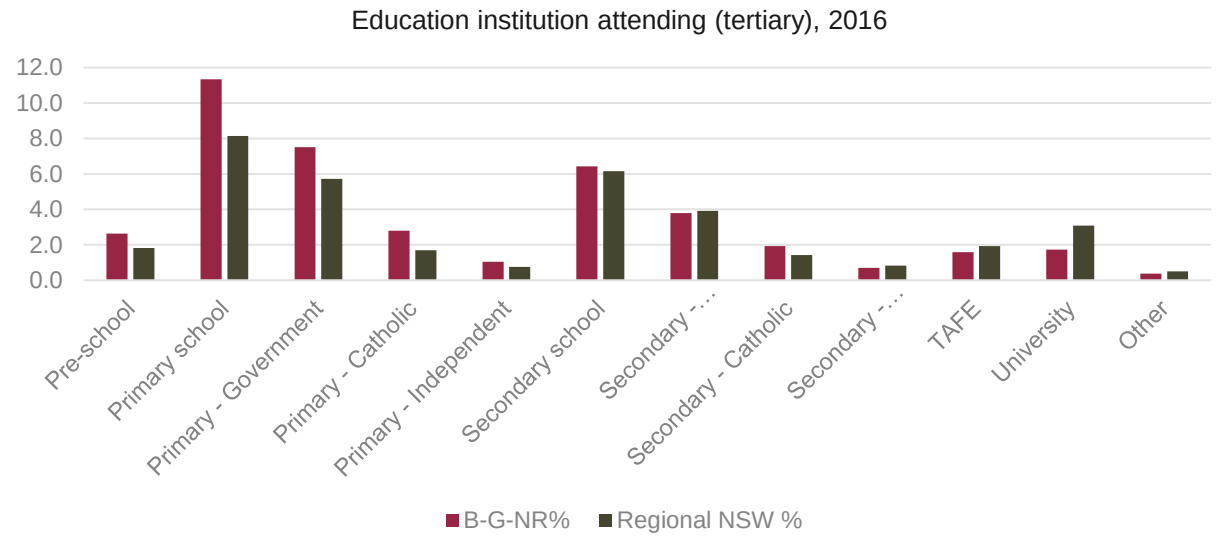


Figure 34: Education institution attending tertiary. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's school completion data is a useful indicator of socio-economic status. In 2016, 30.3% of people aged over 15 years had completed Year 12 schooling (or equivalent). Overall, 52.7% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 30.3% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 44.8% and 38.0% respectively for Regional NSW.

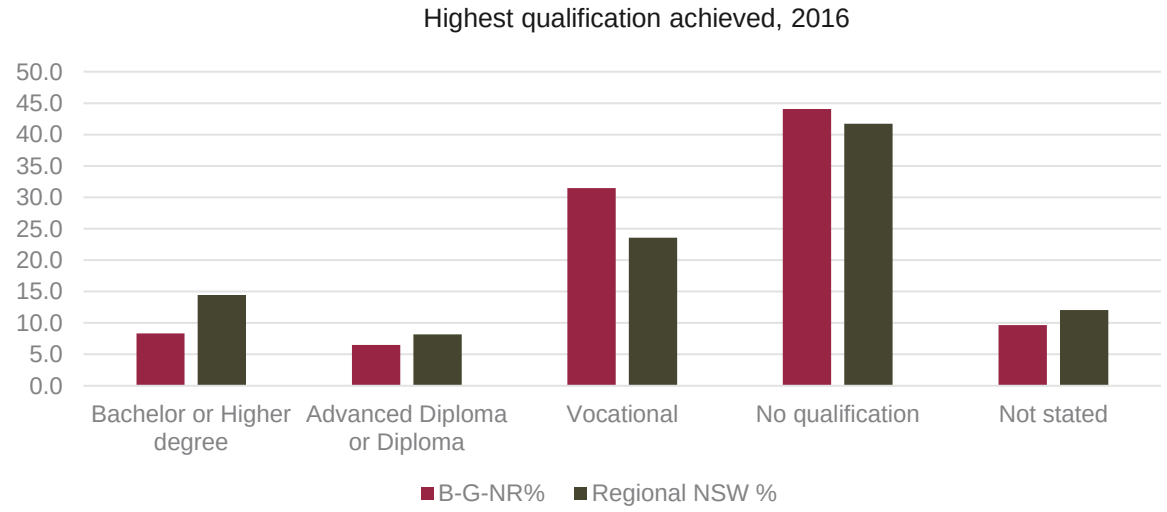


Figure 35: Highest qualification achieved. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.7.1 Discussion

Census data from 2016 shows significantly more children attending primary in the catchment compared to regional NSW. Population forecasts indicate that persons aged 0 - 16 will grow from 1,814 in 2016, to 3,812 in 2041, an increase of 110%. The 20 - 24-year-old age group, the age bracket most likely to attend tertiary education, will increase from 349 in 2016 to 692 in 2031, and 859 in 2041.

The catchment scores well regarding access to public and private primary schools, locating six co-ed and secular in the catchment. There are no high schools in the catchment, the closest being in Singleton.

There were lower numbers of students learning at a tertiary level compared to Regional NSW in 2016. The closest tertiary education facility to the catchment is Singleton TAFE.

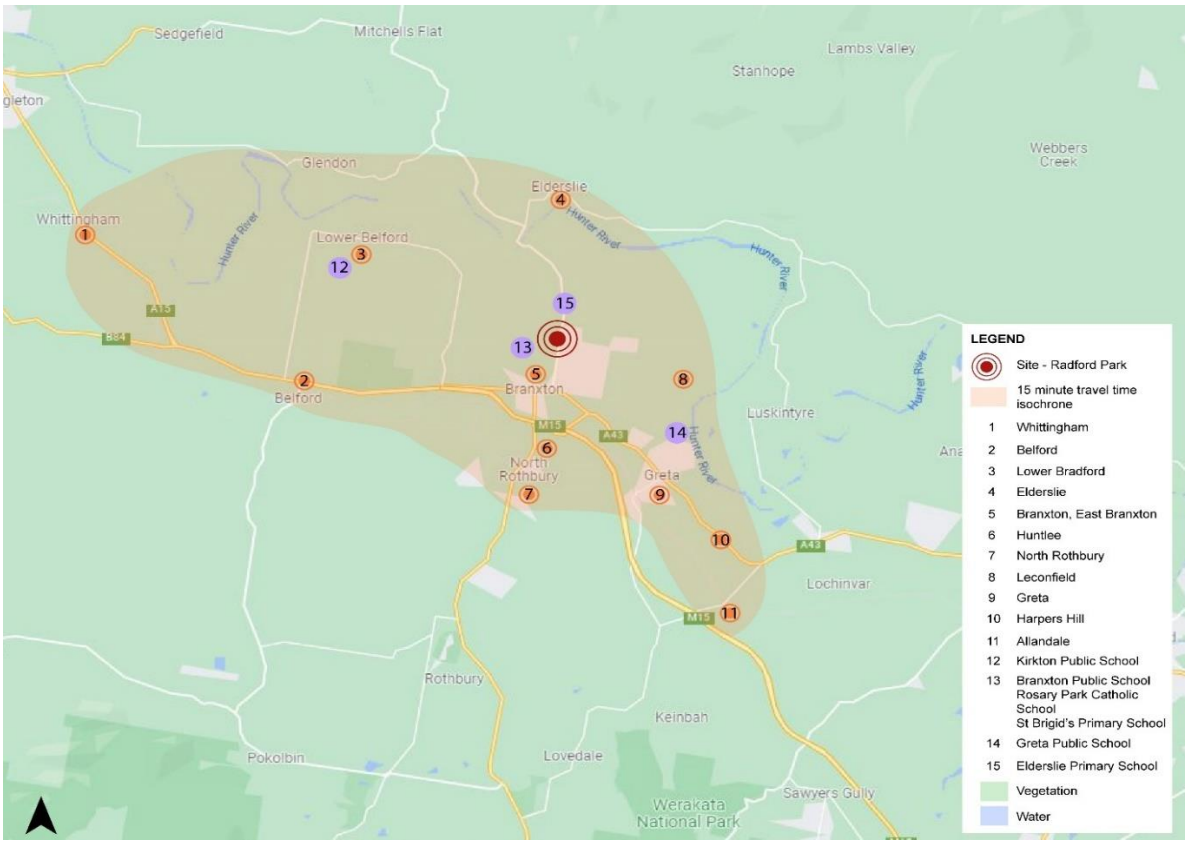


Figure 36: Catchment primary schools.

Responses to modes of transport in the Liveability Survey indicated that 26% travelled to school by bus, and 57% via private vehicle. Out of 28 valid responses, 13 said they travelled more than 15 minutes to get to school, perhaps reflecting that there are no high schools within travel time isochrone. 5 - 10 minutes was the most common travel to school time. Only 1 respondent that completed the Liveability Survey indicated that they attended a tertiary institution.

Extended travel times to access secondary and tertiary education institutions are not unusual for regional areas. Connectivity to facilities in Singleton and other larger centres like Newcastle by public transport is available.

2016 Census data reveals that 52.7% of the population left school at Year 10 or below, and 30.3% went on to complete Year 12 or equivalent, compared with 44.8% and 38.0% respectively for Regional NSW.

Cessnock *Jobs Strategy* identifies lower education levels as limiting the ability of the community to meet the demand for a more skilled and diversified workforce as the area shifts away from mining and manufacturing. *Hunter Valley Visitor Economy and Destination Management Plan* identifies significant skill shortages in the visitor economy, with a key action to "champion and facilitate an Industry wide skills development and quality service improvement program". The *Singleton Socio Economic Development Strategy* also identified industry diversification and new opportunities for sustainable regional development as a focus area.

The Strategy and Plan Review did not however reveal any initiatives to develop any additional vocational or higher education facilities in or closer to the catchment.

A2.8 Access to Healthcare Services

Access to health services affects a person's health and well-being. Regular and reliable health care requires a broad range of activities and services, from health promotion and prevention to treatment and management of acute and chronic conditions.[45]

The following tables describe three components of access to quality employment: 'Overall Access to Employment'; 'Access to Local Employment'; and 'Access to a Range of Employment Options'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to GP Services	✓			
Equitable access to primary health services like general practitioners is essential to the operation of an effective health care system. Access to such services may be limited by distance, the availability of services, and transport. **Measure:** Number of GP services in the catchment; Respondents accessing local health services **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022.				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Dental Services	✓			
Access to dental services is an important determinant of overall health throughout life. Access to such services may be limited by distance, the availability of services, and transport. **Measure:** Number of dental services in the catchment; Respondents accessing local health services **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit; Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, 2022.				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Emergency Health Services	✓			
Access to emergency services like ambulance, after hours medical and hospital-based emergency departments are an important component of a complete health care system. Access to such services may be limited by distance, the availability of services, and transport. **Measure:** Number of emergency health services in the catchment **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit				

[45] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Primary health care in Australia', 2016.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Community Health Services	✓			
Community health services provided by the Local Area Health Service include Transitional Aged Care; Child and Family Health; Footcare; Dietics; Social Work; Psychology; Drug and Alcohol; Sexual Assault Services; School Immunization; Speech Pathology; and Occupational Therapy. Many of these services are provided in the home. **Measure:** Number of community health services in the catchment **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Home Care Services	✓			
Home care services include Meals on Wheels; Home Nursing; Respite Care; Assistance with Self Care; body movement or communication activities. Many of these services are provided in the home. **Measure:** Number of home care facilities in the catchment **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Access to Aged Care Accommodation	✓			
Aged care accommodation includes Retirement Homes; Nursing Homes; Assisted Living; Aged Care Hostels; and Respite Accommodation. **Measure:** Number of aged care facilities in the catchment **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit				

The need for assistance of people in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury compared to Regional NSW shows that there was a lower proportion of people who reported needing assistance with core activities. Overall, 4.01% of the population, or 257 people reported needing assistance with core activities, compared with 6.2528% for Regional NSW. The largest proportion of those in need of assistance was in the 80 + age cohort.

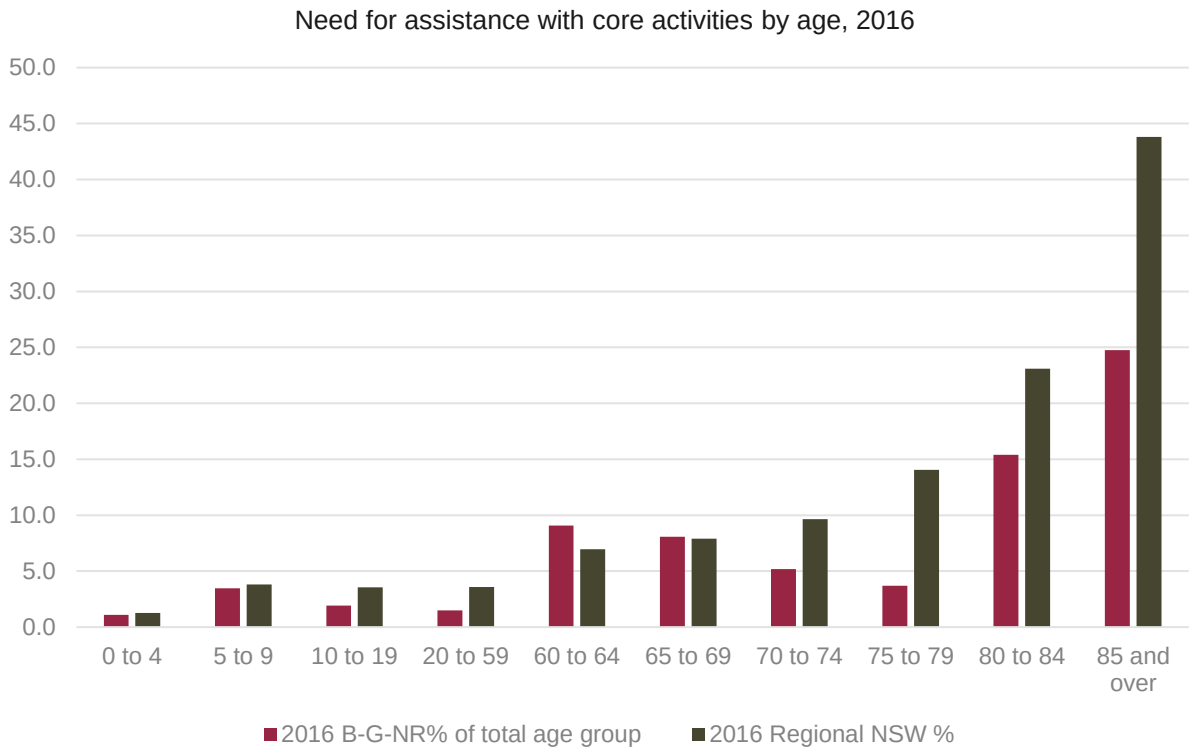


Figure 37: Need for assistance with core activities. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.8.1 Discussion

The catchment is well serviced by general practitioners (GP) with medical centres or doctors' rooms in Branxton, East Branxton and Huntlee. The Branxton medical centre is complemented by a pathology centre located along Maitland Street, as well as alternative health services elsewhere in the local centre. Additional GPs are in Greta. Similarly, the catchment is well served in terms of dental services with one located in Branxton and the other in Greta, both listing 5 dentists each on staff.

75% of respondents to the Liveability Survey said Branxton was their main location to access a health professional (GP and dentist), with 43% indicating Huntlee as their main preference. Outside the catchment, Maitland (55%) and Kurri Kurri (50%) were the main locations to access a health professional.

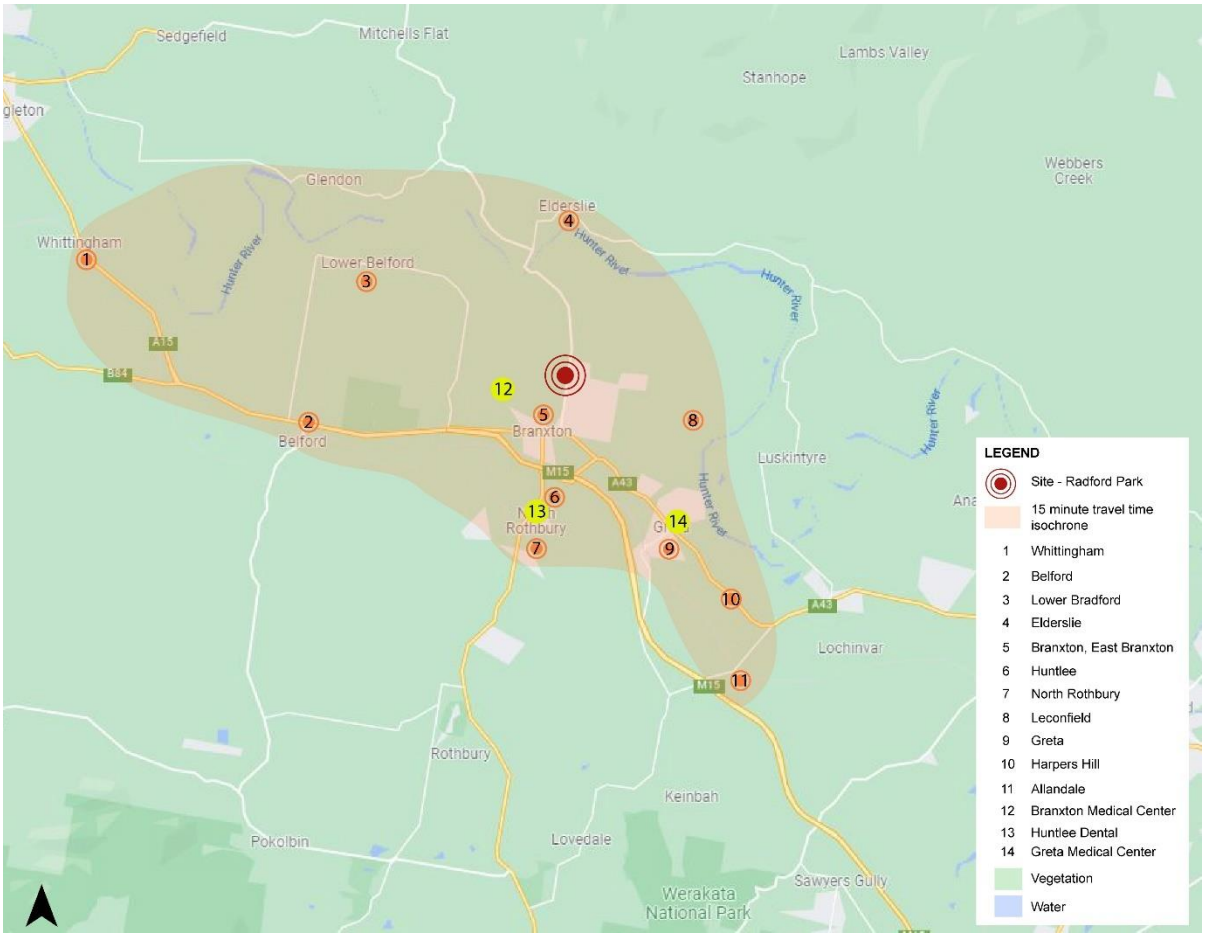


Figure 38: Catchment medical clinics and dentists.

Except for an optometrist, no specialist medical facilities are in the catchment. Good connectivity by bus, train and community transport to Singleton, Cessnock and Newcastle centres provides access to a range of specialist services.[46]

Increased floor space planned for the Branxton as identified in the Branxton Town Centre Masterplan may create opportunities for more medical services. Such services are also permissible in residential zones.

Singleton Hospital provides the closest emergency health service, approximately a 20-minute drive from the centre of the catchment. Emergency services are also available in Cessnock and Maitland. This is consistent with most regional settlements in the Hunter Region. There are no indications that additional emergency services will be provided closer to the catchment, however the volunteer ambulance service in Branxton does provide for emergencies when required.

Community health services including the Hunter Domestic Violence Support & Advisory Service, Australian

[46] Department of Health, 'National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health', 2016.

Breastfeeding Association, and the Gospel Church Central Hunter and a Maternal, Child and Family Health Service are within the catchment. Additional services are close by in the major centres of Singleton and Maitland.

Our Care Services Ltd, located in Singleton, provide community transport, meals on wheels, social support, home modification and maintenance and other services. While located outside the catchment, they do provide mobile services to the region which provides reasonable accessibility and connectivity.

Having few community health services or home care services in regional settlements is not uncommon, however 257 people that live in the catchment reported needing assistance at the 2016 census. Further, the largest proportion of those in need of assistance was in the 80 + age cohort.

The development of a new multipurpose Community Centre in Huntlee as identified in the *Cessnock Infrastructure Strategic Plan* may consider the need for relevant community services within the centre. Community consultation and demographic analysis would be required to identify the ideal service mix.

While the Age Structure profile for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury shows a relatively low proportion of people in the age bracket that could potentially require aged care accommodation, it also shows that the 65-69 and 70–74 cohorts as the those with the greatest increases between 2011 and 2016. This is reflective of the national aging of the population.

Branxton Gardens is a retirement village for over 55s located in the catchment with independent living units and apartments, and serviced apartments for sale. Access to these is limited. No other aged care accommodation services exist in the catchment.

In Singleton, Mercy Aged Care Services have a 44-bed facility, and Calvary Cooinda have a 34-bed facility. The Singleton Lifestyle Plan for Older people includes an action to work with the appropriate bodies to develop an independent living retirement village.

As identified in the Cessnock *Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan*, based on benchmarking standards for residential care places, by 2031 an additional 119 places are required for high level care and 108 places for low level care (across Cessnock).

A2.9 Access to Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is a key component of liveability, providing access to essential community services and resources.[47] Access to a wide range of different types of social infrastructure is therefore important for the creation and ongoing development of healthy communities. High levels of access to social infrastructure are linked to increased physical activity and wellbeing[48] and increases satisfaction with the local community[49] improving social interactions and mental health outcomes.[50]

The following tables describe three components of Access to Social Infrastructure: 'Location of Council Owned Community Facilities and Public Space'; Use of Community Facilities'; 'Quality and Flexibility of Public Space'. For each, corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Location of Council Owned Community Facilities and Public Spaces	✓			✓
Location and distribution are good measures of accessibility. Locating community facilities and public open space within a walking distance of homes is likely to increase patronage and increase the likelihood of patrons walking or cycling which has attendant health benefits and extends the length of the recreational activity. It is particularly important where rates of car ownership are low or for older or mobility challenged persons. **Measure:** Number of Council owned community facilities and open space in the catchment **Data Source:** Catchment Infrastructure Audit				

[47] Davern, M, et al., 'Using spatial measures to test a conceptual model of social infrastructure that supports health and wellbeing', *Cities & Health*, 2017.

[48] Giles-Corti, B, et al., 'The influence of urban design on neighbourhood walking following residential relocation: Longitudinal results from the RESIDE study', *Social Science & Medicine*, 2013.

[49] Lowe, M, et al., 'Planning healthy, liveable and sustainable cities: How can indicators inform policy', *Urban Policy and Research*, 2015.

[50] Evans, G, 'The built environment and mental health', *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 2003.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Use of Community Facilities	✓	✓	✓	✓
The proportion of residents that utilize community facilities and public space is a strong indicator of access. Understanding usage can help understand any barriers to participation. **Measure:** Respondents identifying 'there are places close to our home for our community to meet, gather and share activities. **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey,2022; Strategy and Plan Review.				

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Quality and Flexibility of Public Space	✓	✓		✓
Public space designed to be flexible so it can accommodate multiple uses is important to ensure a range of user groups are able to use the space at different times of the day for different purposes. Public spaces are most valued by the community when they can be used by multiple groups. **Measure:** Proportion of respondents that were very satisfied or satisfied with recreation opportunities; Respondents identifying 'the condition of local facilities' as a barrier to participation **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022; Catchment Infrastructure Review; ABS, 2016.				

Knowledge of how the age structure of the population is changing is essential for planning age-based facilities and services, such as childcare, recreation and aged care. Between 2016 and 2031, the age structure forecasts for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury indicate a 65.4% increase in population under working age, a 61.9% increase in population of retirement age, and a 74.5% increase in population of working age. Data for 'Service age' groups for Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury in 2016 compared to Cessnock City shows there was a higher proportion of children (under 18). 29.1% of the population were aged between 0 and 17 compared with 24.3%. Among the largest changes between 2011 and 2016 census was an increase in parents and homebuilders (39 to 49) (+164), and an increase in primary schoolers (5-11) (+129).

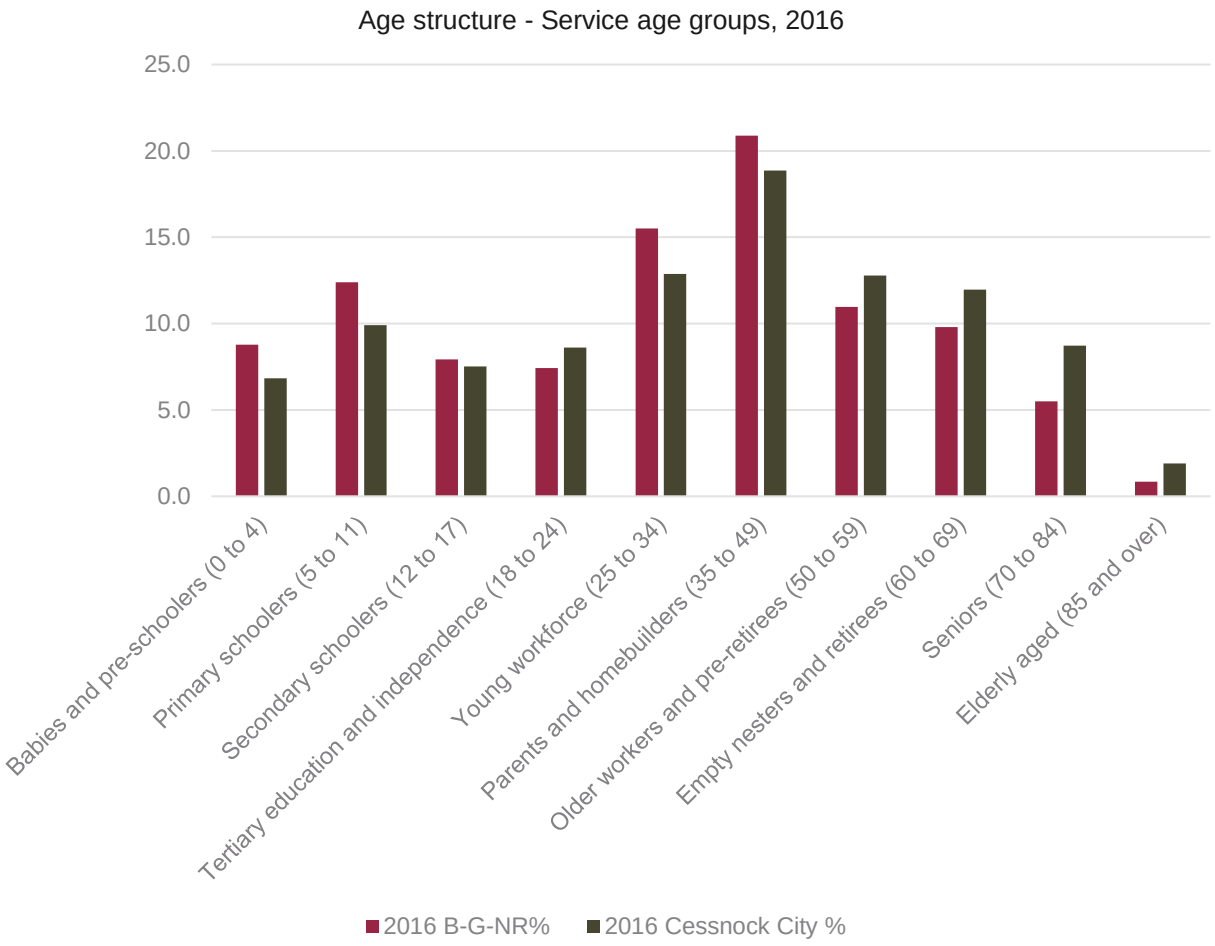


Figure 39: Age structure service groups. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

In 2016, the total population of Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury was estimated to be 6,516 people. It is expected to increase by over 4,614 people to 11,130 by 2031, and 14,104 by 2041, and an increase in the number of households from 2,395 in 2016 to 5,254 in 2041.

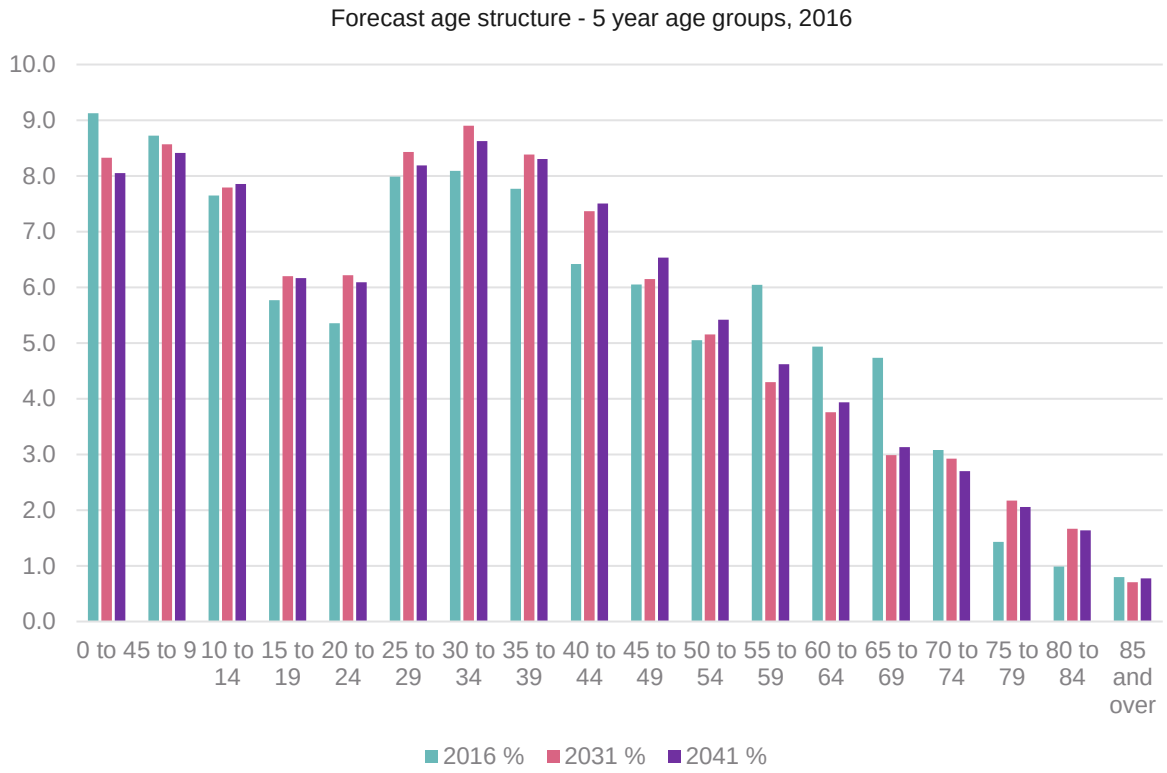


Figure 40: Forecast age structure. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury's housing type is one of the most important demographic indicators, providing key insights into the level of demand for services and facilities as most are related to household types. In 2016, 35.2% of households were made up of couples with children in 2016, compared with 25.4% in Regional NSW. There was a higher proportion of couple families with child(ren) as well as a higher proportion of one-parent families than Regional NSW.

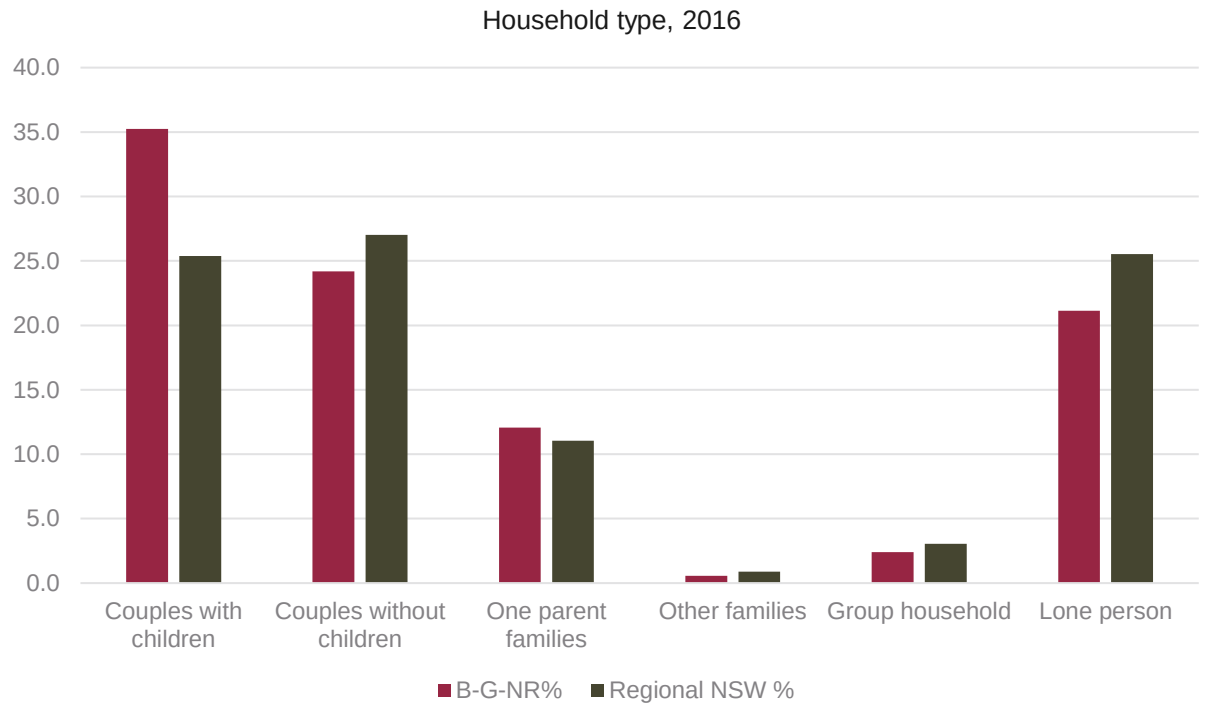


Figure 41: Household type. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.9.1 Discussion

The Age Structure of Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury provides key insights into the level of demand for age-based services and facilities, and how demand is likely to change in the future. While the need for suitable services and facilities applies to all age groups, the comparably high numbers of parents and home builders, babies and pre-schoolers and children of primary school age suggests a demand for those that are proximal and age appropriate.

The Catchment Infrastructure Review identifies three community facilities in the study area, with two available for hire and one museum and arts centre. Branxton Community Hall has a large space that can be used for a range of activities including church services and dancing. There is also a stage which provides the facility with a degree of flexibility.

There are 10 parks and reserves owned by Singleton and Cessnock Councils in the catchment, including two off leash parks and a number having amenities like playgrounds and picnic facilities. Belford National Park is in the catchment area, though it does not currently provide visitor facilities.

While these public spaces are generally well appointed, currently they are unlikely to meet Singleton Council's current open space provision standards are one park within 500m of each resident, at a minimum size of 5,000m^2, and a playground within 750m of each residence, as identified in the *Open Space and Recreation Needs Study*.

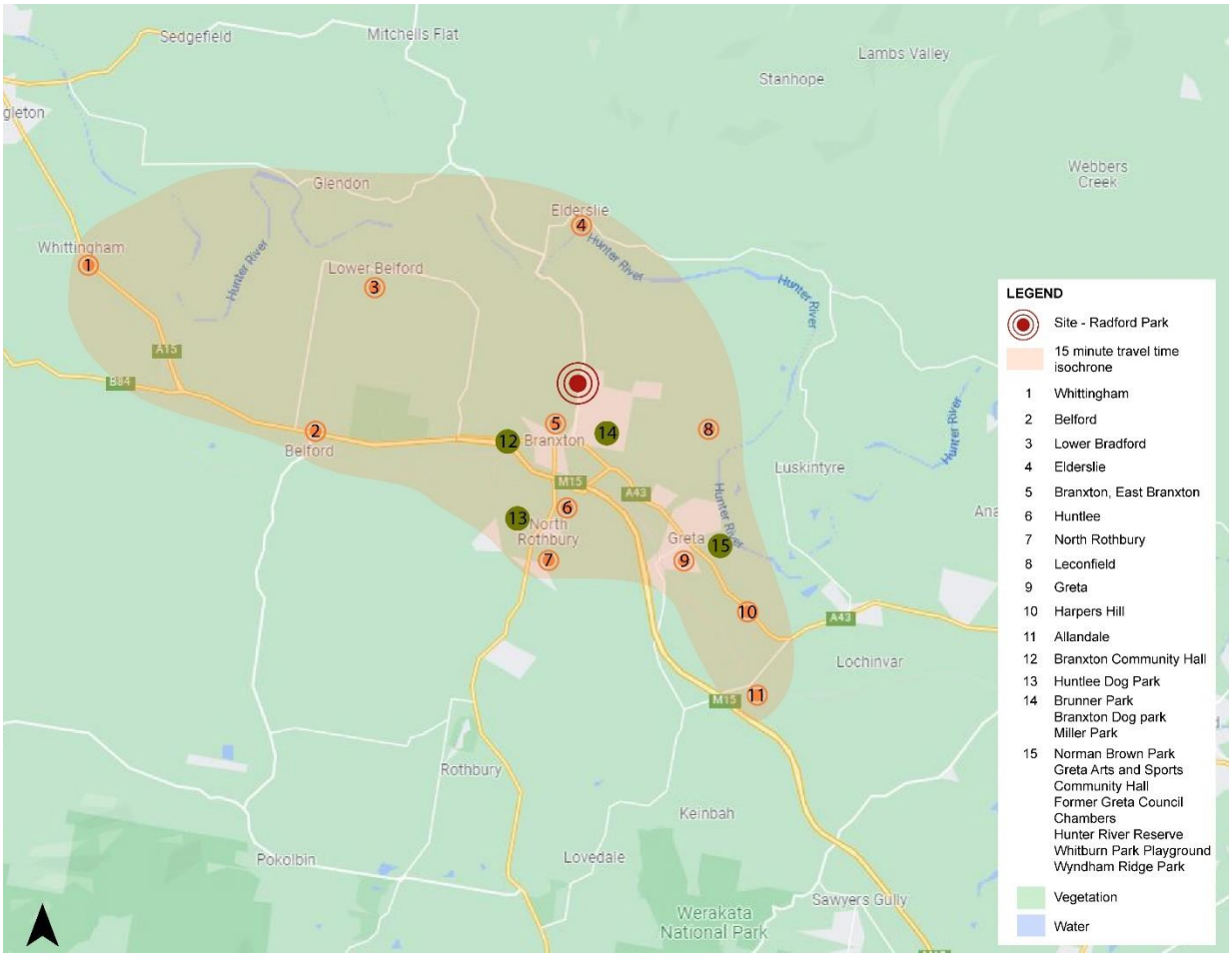


Figure 42: Catchment social infrastructure

When responding to the question “Is there anything else you would like to add about the neighbourhood in relation to physical activity”, of the 18 responses, 5 nominated the need for children’s playground and park in Radford Park, with 6 respondents identifying the need for exercise related facilities like basketball courts, gym equipment and a 50-metre swimming pool.

> *“A nearby basketball court would be ideal”.* Liveability Survey Respondent.

The need for more community facilities in the catchment is identified in the Cessnock *Community Infrastructure Strategic Plan* based on the likelihood that population growth would mean a transition from a mid-sized township to a sub-regional township. A multipurpose community centre has been identified as a need, catering for seniors, young people, and those with a disability. A library approximately 2000m^2 is also proposed to be co-located with the multipurpose facility. The Singleton *Socio-Economic Development Strategy* recommends capital investment in regional social infrastructure that supports community services, arts, heritage, culture, health, and wellbeing.

Demographic data indicates there is a high proportion of families with children in the catchment, with parents and

homebuilders (35-49) the largest population age group. Forecasts indicate that by 2031, 65% of the population will be under working age. Increasing numbers of children and young people in the catchment will require amenities that cater for their needs, proximal to where they live.

While many of the blocks in the catchment are large and are attractive purchases in part because they provide an abundance of space for kids to play, local parks and playgrounds provide additional opportunities for children to explore, socialise and build their capabilities.

52% of Liveability Survey respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that there were places close to home for the community to meet, gather and share activities, while 32% neither agreed nor disagreed. Importantly, when asked to nominate barriers of access to local facilities, 74% said safe connections between places, 67% said the availability of local facilities, and 42% said the condition of local facilities.

Demographic data for the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District demonstrates comparably high proportions of children aged 0 - 17. Apart from playgrounds, there are currently no facilities to directly cater for young people in the catchment, which reduces accessibility.

The Cessnock *Skate and BMX Strategy* concludes that with projected population increases of young people within the Greta - Branxton Planning Area, consideration needs to be given to the type and number of skatepark facilities in the area.

A2.10 Access to Communication

An internet connection is now an important utility for most households in Australia. It is increasingly required for accessing essential information, taking part in the digital economy, working from home and school education needs. It can support social connections and reduce the need for vehicle trips. A lack of internet access is likely to indicate a level of disadvantage and could be related to socio-economic factors, age, or geographical isolation.

The following table describes a component of Access to Communication: 'Home Based Internet Access'. Corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Home Based Internet Access	✓			
The internet has become integral to school, tertiary education, and work from home. It is the gateway to many services. Effective internet connections can enable the operation of home-based businesses, which can have positive effects like reduced vehicle usage and commuting time. **Measure:** Respondents very satisfied or satisfied with their home internet connectivity **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022				

Analysis of the type of internet connection of households in Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury shows that there was a higher proportion (78.7%) of households with an internet connection compared to Regional NSW (73.1%). Between 2011 and 2016 the number of households with an internet connection increased by 273.

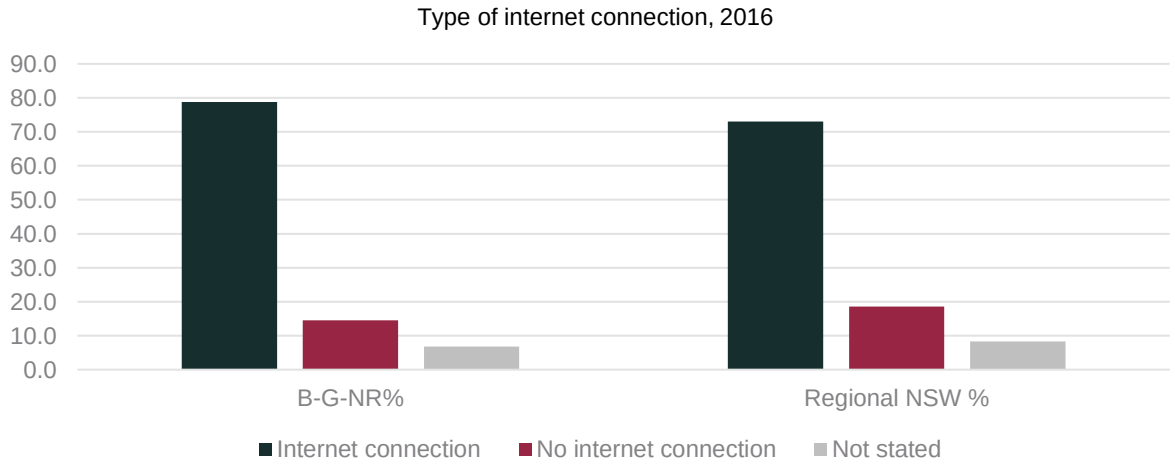


Figure 43: Type of internet connection. (Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2011 and 2016. Compiled and presented by .id)

A2.10.1 Discussion

An internet connection is now an important utility for most households in Australia. It is increasingly required for accessing essential information and taking part in the digital economy.

43% of respondents to the Liveability Survey were either very satisfied or satisfied with their internet connection, while 48% were neither satisfied nor unsatisfied. Just under 10% of respondents indicated that they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their internet connectivity. The catchment is consistent with Australia-wide uptakes, where in 2016 nearly 80% of all households had internet access.

2016 demographic data capturing methods of travel to work indicates only a small proportion (1.9%) of residents worked from home. The greatest demand for home-based internet access is most likely from those attending primary, secondary and tertiary education.

In more recent times home internet access has become increasing important as more people work from home, higher education institutions are progressively using online teaching as a business model, and schools have had to develop infrastructure to support online learning. It is likely that more recent data demonstrates a further increase in households with an internet connection to reflect these trends.

Lack of internet access is likely to indicate a level of disadvantage and could be related to socio-economic factors, age, or geographical isolation.

A2.11 Community Safety

Safety is fundamental to the liveability of a place, and 'Feeling safe' is the most important attribute that Australians believe contributes to making somewhere a good place to live.[51] Maintaining a welcoming, safe and inclusive character increases economic prosperity, and creates healthy, thriving, and connected community.

The following table describes a component of Community Safety: 'Perceptions of Safety'. Corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Perceptions of Safety				✓
Implementation of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and planning initiatives have been found to reduce crime, but also support other liveability factors like promoting community capacity, cohesion, and connectivity.[52] **Measure:** Respondents that felt safe in their neighbourhood. **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022				

Data from NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research (BOCSAR) was analysed to understand the likely sense of safety in the subject locality. LGA related data, in this case Cessnock and Singleton LGA data, as well as the Hunter regional data were analysed to understand the rates of criminal activity.

In the year 2020, the highest number of recorded incidents were for:

- Malicious damage to property (582)
- Steal from motor vehicle (314)
- Fraud (293)
- Motor vehicle theft (277)
- Domestic violence related assault (259)
- Steal from dwelling (244)
- Nondomestic violence related assault (239)
- Break and enter dwelling (229).

Overall, the Cessnock LGA has a higher crime rate than NSW, with 1.2x the rate of violent offences and 1.6x the rate of property offences in the period January 2020 to December 2020. The number of property offences has decreased

[51] Ipsos, 'Life in Australia Survey, 2020.

[52] Seifi, M, et al., 'CPTED & Liveability: Synergy between Liveability Indices and Dimensions of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design', *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 2020.

by 17.2% in the last 2 years, and 5.6 % over the last 5 years.

The offence with the highest rate per 100,000 population is ‘Malicious damage to property’. The trend over the past two years has increased 10% but has been stable over the past 5 years.

The second and fourth most common offenses were ‘Steal from motor vehicle’, and ‘Motor vehicle theft’ respectively, with a stable trend in Motor vehicle theft over the past 5 years, and a decrease of 27.3% over the past 2 years, and a 12.2% decrease over the last 5 years.

In 2020, for retail/wholesale premises in the Cessnock LGA, the most common offences were fraud, which has been stable over the past 5 years.

For outdoor/public places premises, the most common offences were other theft, receiving or handling stolen goods, malicious damage to property, motor vehicle theft, possession and/or use of cannabis, and non-domestic violence related assault.

For carparks, the most common offences were steal from motor vehicle, motor vehicle theft, malicious damage to property, and arson.

For licensed premises, the most common offences were offensive language, non-domestic violence related assault, break and enter (non-dwelling), receiving or handling stolen goods, steal from retail store, malicious damage to property, and intimidation.

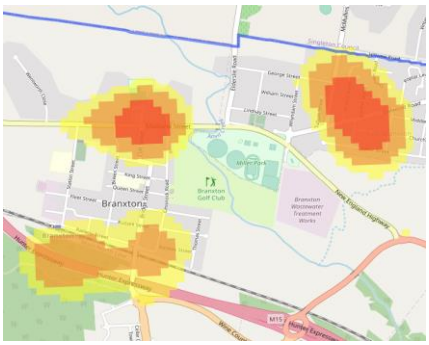
Crime incidents for the Branxton - Greta - North Rothbury District are based on NSW Centre for Crime Statistics and Research October 2020 to 2021 rates. The most common incidents for Branxton include:

- Malicious damage to property (1080.1)
- Motor vehicle theft (540.1)
- Domestic assault (495)
- Steal from a motor vehicle (405)
- Nondomestic assault (360).

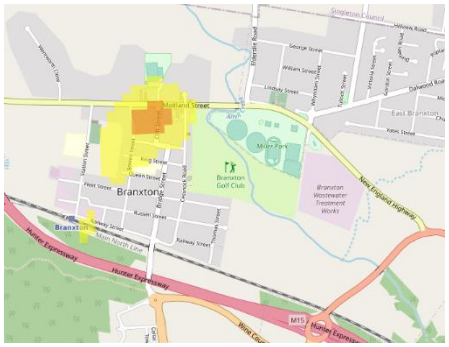
Main conclusions include:

- At 1080.1, Branxton has a significantly higher incident rate per 100,000 population than NSW, at 624.6 incidents
- Motor vehicle theft is significantly higher with 540.1 incidents per 100,000, compared to NSW at 134.7
- Motor vehicle theft incidents have been stable over the last 2 years
- Domestic assault is higher than NSW at 495 and 400.9 incidents respectively
- Domestic violence incidents show stability over the last 2 years
- Steal from motor vehicle incidents show stability over the last two years, however at 405 per 100,000 they are significantly higher than NSW at 345.7
- Nondomestic assault incidents are comparable with NSW at 360 and 355.5 respectively, with a stable trend over the last 2 years.

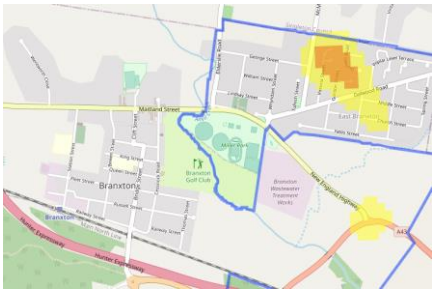
Figure 44 illustrates the significant ‘hot spot’ maps for the study area. In some cases, crime hot spots in surrounding suburbs are identified to provide context. These maps identify five of the most prevalent crime types and show locations where these crimes are particularly prevalent in relation to the site.



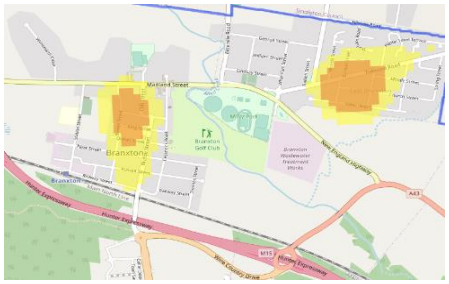
Theft (motor vehicle theft)



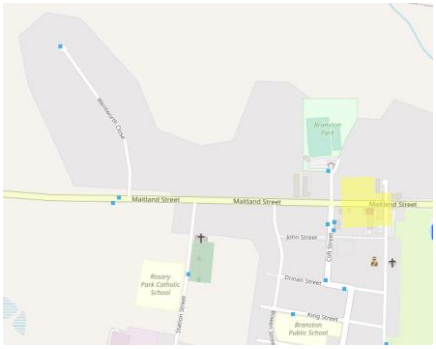
Malicious damage to property



Theft from motor vehicle



Assault (domestic assault)



Non-domestic assault

Figure 44: BOSCAR crime statistics heatmaps. (Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research)

A2.11.1 Discussion

BOSCAR crime data shows incidents of criminal activity within the Cessnock LGA, the Singleton LGA, and the Hunter Region generally, have remained stable during the period April 2019 to March 2021. In this period categories of criminal activity such as 'break and enter dwelling', 'steal from retail store', 'malicious damage to property', and 'steal from motor vehicle', have reduced substantially.

When asked about how safe they felt in their neighbourhoods, 86% of respondents said they either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement: "I generally feel safe in the neighbourhood".

Despite the high perceptions of safety, there were suggestions made by respondents that indicate safety concerns:

"Grass around the footpaths kept short due to snakes two older children catch the bus and get off along Elderslie the v drain is very overgrown".

"It is very scary walking along Elderslie Rd when there is no path".

"Miller Park is too far/dangerous for little kids to walk to".

"Lack of paths makes it dangerous for kids".

A2.12 Social Cohesion and Participation

Social cohesion holds communities together. It's about people being connected, included, and feeling part of their community. It refers to the sense of trust within neighbourhoods and people's willingness to help their neighbour. It is about shared values, feelings of belonging and community reciprocity. Social cohesion and connection are an important aspect of creating a healthier, sustainable, and more liveable place.

The following table describes a component of Social Cohesion and Participation: 'Connection to Place and Social Cohesion'. Corresponding principles of liveability are ticked, and data measures and resources provided.

	Accessibility	Flexibility	Sustainability	Connectivity
Connection to Place and Social Cohesion				✓
Participation in community activities strengthen cohesion, a sense of personal belonging and community. Feeling a connection to place can also be exhibited through an intention to remain in the community and acknowledging it as a good place to live. **Measure:** Respondents that agreed or strongly agreed on being connected to their community; Respondents that strongly agreed or agreed that they are happy to live in the neighbourhood **Data Source:** Neighbourhood Liveability Survey, Gyde 2022				

A2.12.1 Discussion

The Liveability Survey asked several questions to determine how socially connected people felt to their neighbourhoods. 73% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they felt like they were part of the neighbourhood; 80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that people in the neighbourhood were friendly towards them; 36% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they participate in activities with people in the neighbourhood; and 78% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I am happy to recommend this neighbourhood to others as a place to live". 91% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I am happy to live in the neighbourhood".

These responses indicate a good foundation from which increasing levels of cohesion can grow, however connectivity issues and lack of some facilities may be restricting social participation.

Lack of connectivity that prevents people walking or cycling within the catchment is forcing people to depend on private motor vehicles. While dependence on the car impacts personal health and wellbeing and the environment, it also limits opportunities for incidental social activity and interaction.

Similarly, community infrastructure like parks and playgrounds also provide opportunities for social interactions around a common interest.

> *"Having a young child and knowing or other families with young children it would be great to have a park area the kids could enjoy and also create an opportunity to meet others and build a community spirit. I felt a park area would not take away the rural setting and could be a positive added inclusion".* (Resident email, November 2021).

When asked to provide ideas about liveability in their neighbourhoods, several respondents to the Liveability Survey linked building community cohesion with the need for additional infrastructure.

> *"A larger park area with bbq or patio cover would allow for neighbours to gather or for annual parties to create local connectivity and community. Local produce, a restaurant or cafe or local grocer/corner store may have residents a spot to gather and support". Liveability Survey respondent.*

In general, the Survey response revealed that community spirit and providing opportunities for people to come together was an important for liveability in the catchment.

"More community organised events from the developer to get everyone together". Liveability Survey Respondent.

APPENDIX 3: RESOURCES TO SUPPORT PLANNING FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Table 7: Community Infrastructure identified within the designated catchment or nearest available (indicated in grey)

Name	Address	Comment
COMMUNITY FACILITIES		
Former Greta Council Chambers	96 High Street Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Community Operated as the Greta Historical Museum
Branxton Community Hall	35 Bowen Street Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Accessible toilet & parking; Air-conditioning (foyer & kitchen), fans (main hall); Kitchen; Off-street parking; Stage • Capacity: 294
Greta Arts and Sports Community Hall	1 Water Street Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Portable stage; Kitchen; On-street accessible parking; Office space • Capacity 476
CHILDCARE FACILITIES		
Branxton Pre School	35 John Street Branxton	• Not for profit • Caters for ages 3 to 6yrs • Operates 41 weeks/yr from 8:15-3:45pm
Huntlee Early Learning Centre	4 Winepress Rd Branxton NSW	• Family owned • Caters for ages 6 weeks to 6yrs • Operates M-F 6:30am-6pm
The Cottage Preschool & Early Learning Centre	1764 Wine Country Drive North Rothbury	• Family owned • Operates M-F 6:30am-6pm
Greta Community Pre School	1 Water Street Greta	• Not for profit, community-owned • Operates M-F during school terms
Branxton Play Group	35 John Street Branxton	• Community organisation • Caters for ages 0 to 5yrs • Operates Mondays only 9:30-11:30am
St Nicholas OOSH Branxton	Station St Branxton	• Before and After school programme • Caters for ages 5 to 12yrs
Tilly's Play and Development Centre	4a Nelson St Greta	• Privately owned • Caters for ages 0 to 12yrs • Approved for 102 places • Operates 51 weeks/yr from 6.30am – 6.30pm

Name	Address	Comment
Little Treasures Childcare	55 Wyndham St Greta	• Family owned • Approved for 104 places • Caters for ages 6 weeks to 6yrs • Operates M-F 6:30am-6pm
Super Sprouts Family Daycare	East Branxton	• Appears to be owner-operated, home-based care
EDUCATION		
Branxton Public School	12 King St Branxton	• Co ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
Rosary Park Catholic School	35 John Street Branxton	• Co ed; Religious (Catholic) • Operated by the Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
St Brigid's Primary School	Station St Branxton	• Co ed; Religious • Operated by the Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
Kirkton Public School	797 Standen Dr Lower Belford	• Co ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
Greta Public School	2 Wyndham St Greta	• Co ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
Elderslie Primary School	107 Lodges St, Elderslie	• Co ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
Singleton High School	75-81 York St, Singleton NSW 2330	• Co ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
Rutherford Technology High School	30 Avery St, Rutherford	• Co-ed; Secular • Operated by NSW Dept of Education
HEALTH		
Branxton Medical Centre	58A Cessnock Rd Branxton	• Private billing practice; 5 GPs
Huntlee Family Practice	Wine Country Dr Branxton	• Private billing practice; 5 GPs
Greta Medical Centre	29 High St Greta	• Private billing practice; 5 GPs
Huntlee Dental	4/22 Empire Street, Branxton	• Private billing practice; 5 Dentists
Greta Dental	29 High St Greta	• Private billing practice
Lake and Valley Optical / AIE Optical	3/22 Empire Street, Branxton	• Private billing practice

Name	Address	Comment
Cessnock Hospital, co-located with Cessnock Community Health Service	View St, Cessnock	• Emergency Department available • Operated by Hunter New England Health
Singleton Hospital, co-located with Singleton Community Health Service	Dangar St, Singleton	• Emergency Department available • Operated by Hunter New England Health
Kurri Kurri Hospital, co-located with Kurri Kurri Community Health Service	Lang St, Kurri Kurri	• Emergency Department available • Operated by Hunter New England Health
John Hunter Hospital, co-located with John Hunter Children's Hospital	Lookout Rd, New Lambton Heights	• Regional referral hospital • Emergency Department available • Operated by Hunter New England Health
EMERGENCY RESPONSE		
Branxton Police Station	52 Cessnock Rd Branxton	• NSW Police Force • Operates under the Northern Region / Hunter Valley Police District
Branxton Greta Fire Station	2 Drinan St Branxton	• NSW Fire and Rescue
Rutherford Ambulance Station	*21 Gillies St, Rutherford*	• *NSW Ambulance*
SES Cessnock Local Unit	*Col Turnbull Parade, Pokolbin*	• *NSW State Emergency Service* • *Hunter – Northern Zone*
PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS		
Brunner Park	32 Dalwood Rd, East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Picnic furniture; playground
Miller Park	8 Maitland Street East, Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Accessible toilet; BBQ and picnic furniture; Car parking; Off-leash dog exercise area; Outdoor gym equipment; Shaded playground; Sporting fields
Branxton Park	8 John Rose Ave, Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Memorial rotunda, Public Car Park, Sporting fields, Caravan / RV Park
Branxton Dog Park	East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Off Leash
Huntlee Dog Park	1794 Wine Country Drive, North Rothbury	• Cessnock City Council • Off Leash

Name	Address	Comment
Hunter River Reserve	Orient Street, Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Open space; picnic furniture; bushland
Norman Brown Park	59 High Street, Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Picnic furniture; Playground; Public toilets
Plantation Reserve	New England Highway, Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Open space
Whitburn Park - Playground	22 Whitburn Street, Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Picnic furniture; Shaded playground; Shared pathway
Wyndham Ridge Park	Talleyrand Court, Greta	• Cessnock City Council • 14 BBQ and picnic furniture; Playground
Ayrfield Miners Memorial Park	6 Morgan Street, North Rothbury	• Cessnock City Council • Memorial and open space; BBQ and picnic furniture; Playground; Public toilets; Basketball courts;
Lions Park	National Hwy 15, East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Open space
Belford National Park	Belford NSW	• NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service • Limited access; No visitor facilities
SPORT AND RECREATION		
Branxton Pool and Swim Club	30 Dalwood Road East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Outdoor seasonal 33 metre pool with ramp access, covered toddler pool with water play features; change rooms; kiosk; small grandstand; picnic shelters; grassed areas
Branxton Netball Courts	Maitland Street East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Netball courts
Branxton Tennis Club	6 Maitland Street East Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Tennis Courts
Branxton Croquet Club	8 John Rose Ave, Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Croquet courts
Branxton Golf Course	22 Cessnock Rd Branxton	• Cessnock City Council • Golf Court

Name	Address	Comment
Greta Arts and Sports Community Hall	1 Water Street Greta	• Cessnock City Council • Netball and basketball court; Kitchen; On-street accessible parking; Office space
PUBLIC TRANSPORT		
Bus 179	North Rothbury to Stockland Green Hills	• Transport for NSW • Services Monday - Saturday
Bus 180	Singleton Heights to Stockland Green Hills	• Transport for NSW • Services Monday - Saturday
Bus 180x	Singleton Heights to Stockland Green Hills	• Transport for NSW • Monday – Sunday and public holidays (limited services)
Branxton Station	Railway St, Branxton	• Transport for NSW • Hunter Line (limited services) • Monday – Sunday and public holidays • Commuter car park • Location not accessible, but has wheelchair ramp for boarding
Greta Station	Nelson St, Greta	• Transport for NSW • Hunter Line (limited services) • Monday – Sunday and public holidays • Commuter car park • Location not accessible, but has wheelchair ramp for boarding
WASTE		
Singleton Waste Management Facility	Dyrring Rd, Fern Gully	• Operated by Singleton Council • Kerbside bin service; Annual Domestic Waste voucher; Annual bulk waste collection. • On-site Community Recycling Centre; Recycle shop

APPENDIX 4: NEIGHBOURHOOD LIVEABILITY SURVEY

1. NEIGHBOURHOOD LIVEABILITY SURVEY

Introduction

Belford Land established the Radford Park Estate, north of Branxton, in 2015, providing people with a chance to buy into a new community offering a rural outlook right in the heart of the Hunter Valley. The current estate masterplan is nearing completion, and Belford Land is now planning future extensions.

Find out more about Radford Park here:

https://radfordpark.com.au/

As part of these planning efforts, Belford Land wants to hear from current and prospective residents, and those from urban areas surrounding Radford Park in the Singleton and Cessnock local government areas, to help gauge and improve liveability in the area. GYDE Consulting has prepared this survey to start the conversation.

What is a liveable neighbourhood?

A liveable neighbourhood is a great place to reside. It is resilient with competitive social, economic, and environmental advantages. Creating well-functioning, liveable neighbourhoods requires long-term commitment to delivering improvements through a combination of land-use planning, infrastructure investment, environmental protection, sustainability initiatives, and community development strategies. The liveability of a neighbourhood directly influences its residents' quality of life and wellbeing. Critical benchmarks for a liveable neighbourhood are where residents:

- **Feel safe, socially connected, and included**
- **Have housing options that suit their lifestyle (and budget)**
- **Can readily access things to meet their day-to-day needs – such as work, education, local shops, parks and open spaces, health and community services, leisure and culture activities – preferably via a range of transport options including public transport, cycling and walking networks.**

Survey participation

Your participation in this survey is very much appreciated but is completely voluntary and anonymous. Survey responses will be strictly confidential and data from this research will be reported only in the aggregate. Your responses will be used to inform the planning and design of new development stages and, where possible, changes to help improve the liveability of Radford Park and surrounding areas for existing and future residents.

It should only take around 15 to 20 minutes to complete the survey, which asks a series of questions about your experiences and perspectives. You can withdraw from the survey at any point.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please start with the survey now by clicking on the Start button below.

1. Please indicate the suburb where you currently live

- ( ) Radford Park 2335
- ( ) Branxton 2335
- ( ) East Branxton 2335
- ( ) Greta 2334
- ( ) North Rothbury 2320
- ( ) Leconfield 2335
- ( ) Huntlee 2320
- ( ) Belford 2335
- ( ) Lower Belford 2335
- ( ) Wittingham 2330
- ( ) Allandale 2320
- ( ) Other (please specify suburb name and postcode)

2. What is your age?

- ( ) 18-24
- ( ) 25-34
- ( ) 35-44
- ( ) 45-54
- ( ) 55-64
- ( ) 65+

3. Do you identify as:

- [ ] Female
- [ ] Male
- [ ] Nonbinary
- [ ] Other
- [ ] Prefer not to say

4. How many people live in your household? (including you)

5. Besides yourself, who else lives with you? (select all that apply)

- [ ] Spouse
- [ ] Child or children
- [ ] Parents (yours)
- [ ] Other adult relative or friend 18 or older
- [ ] I live alone
- [ ] Other

6. Do you...

- ( ) Own the house you live in?
- ( ) Rent the house you live in?

7. Do you live in Radford Park?

- [ ] YES, and I live there now
- [ ] YES, but I haven't moved in yet *(Go to Q11)*
- [ ] NO, but I am considering *(Go to Q11)*
- [ ] NO, but I live within approximately 15 kilometres (5-15 minutes) *(Go to Q15)*
- [ ] None of the above

8. If you live in Radford Park, about how long have you lived there?

Years

Months

9. If you live in Radford Park, does your household intend to move out?

- ( ) YES, in the next 2 years
- ( ) YES, in the next 5 years
- ( ) NO, we have no plans to leave

10. Please let us know your reason(s) for leaving Radford Park

11. In your opinion, what are the TOP 3 *(1 being the priority)* most appealing aspects of Radford Park? (e.g., large land footprint, space for children to play, dogs to run around, space for a large shed, grow your own produce etc)

1.
2.
3.

12. In your opinion, what are the TOP 3 *(1 being the priority)* least appealing aspects of Radford Park? (e.g., unsuitable lot sizes, access to services and community infrastructure, isolation, style of homes commuting, the visual landscape, large lots etc)

1.
2.
3.

13. On a scale of 1 to 5 *(1 being 'Exeeds expectations' and 5 being 'Fails expectations')*, to what extent do lot sizes in Radford Park meet your expectations?

1. Exceeds expectations	2. Meets expectations	3. Somewhat meets expectations	4. Below expectations	5. Fails expectations
○	○	○	○	○

14. If you built or are intending to build a home in Radford Park, did you or will you specify/include any of the following cost reducing/sustainability measures *(tick all that apply):*

- [ ] Solar panel system
- [ ] Rainwater tanks
- [ ] Drought tolerant landscaping
- [ ] Cross flow ventilation
- [ ] Energy efficient appliances
- [ ] Water efficient plumbing fixtures
- [ ] High performance window frames and glazing
- [ ] Other (please specify)

15. Do you work away from home?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

16. If yes, what is the postcode of the place where you normally work?

17. Do you study away from home?

- Yes
- No

18. If YES, what is the postcode of the place where you normally study?

19. Where are the MAIN 3 LOCATIONS where you tend to do the following activities? *(Rank 1 = most often to 3 = least often)*

	Radford Park	Branxton	Greta	Huntlee	Rutherford	Central Maitland	Singleton	Kurri Kurri	Cessnock
Grocery shopping									
Shopping for other items (e.g., clothes, presents)									
Play sports									
Visit a park / playground									
Go for a walk / walk the dog									
Go out for dinner / drinks (dining in)									
Get a takeaway									
See a health professional (e.g., doctor, dentist, psychologist, etc.)									
Visit the Post Office / Bank									

20. What modes of transport do you most commonly use to get to the following places? *(Select all that apply)*

	Private vehicle	Bus	Train	Bicycle	Walk	NA
Work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
School	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Shops	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restaurant/Pubs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Health and wellbeing services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parks and playgrounds	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sporting activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

21. What is the approximate travel time (one way) for your journey to work?

Adult 1 _____

Adult 2 _____

Adult 3 _____

22. What is the approximate travel time (one way) for your journey to high school?

Child 1 _____

Child 2 _____

Child 3 _____

Child 4 _____

23. What is the approximate travel time (one way) for your journey to a tertiary education facility?

Person 1 _____

Person 2 _____

Person 3 _____

24. Overall, how satisfied are you with local public transport (i.e. bus and train) networks / services in your neighbourhood?

- [ ] Very satisfied
- [ ] Satisfied
- [ ] Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- [ ] Dissatisfied
- [ ] Very dissatisfied

25. On a scale of 1 - 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest), how do you rate the ease in which you and your family can access public transport in your neighbourhood?

- [ ] Very easy
- [ ] Easy
- [ ] Neither easy nor difficult
- [ ] Difficult
- [ ] Very difficult

26. Do you and your family have access to good quality fresh food?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) Mostly
- ( ) Sometimes
- ( ) Rarely

27. How often do you and your family consume the recommended intake of two services of fruit and five serves of vegetable per day?

- ( ) Every day
- ( ) A few times a week
- ( ) About once a week
- ( ) A few times a month
- ( ) Once a month
- ( ) Less than once a month

28. How satisfied are you with your internet connectivity?

- ( ) Very satisfied
- ( ) Satisfied
- ( ) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ( ) Dissatisfied
- ( ) Very dissatisfied

29. What TOP 3 improvements *(1 being the top priority)* could be made to your neighbourhood to increase convenience for you and your family

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

30. How often do you and/or your family do any of the following activities?

	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a fortnight	Once or twice a month	Hardly ever
Go for a bike ride	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Go for a brisk walk	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Go for a jog / run	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )
Play in the park	( )	( )	( )	( )	( )

Other (please specify)

_____

31. Do you and your family use an active form of transport (e.g., walk or cycle) to get to and from places in your neighbourhood?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No

32. If you answer yes to Q31, can you tell us for what purpose do you use active transport (i.e. shopping; work)?

_____

33. Overall, how satisfied are you and your family with the footpaths and cycleways in your neighbourhood?

- ○ Very satisfied
- ○ Satisfied
- ○ Somewhat satisfied
- ○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ○ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ○ Dissatisfied
- ○ Very dissatisfied
- ○ Other (please specify)

34. How often are you and your family physically active (enough to elevate your heart rate) in the following locations?

	Daily	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a fortnight	Once or twice a month	Hardly ever
At home in the yard	○	○	○	○	○
On local paths / trails	○	○	○	○	○
At parks / playgrounds in your neighbourhood	○	○	○	○	○
At parks / playgrounds outside your neighbourhood)	○	○	○	○	○
At a gym	○	○	○	○	○

If you tend to exercise in a location we haven't listed, please specify:

35. Do you feel any of the following are barriers to you and your family being physically active? *(Select all that apply)*

	Yes	No	Unsure
The availability of local open space	○	○	○
Safe connections between places (e.g., via pathways, cycle paths)	○	○	○
The availability of local facilities (e.g., play or fitness equipment, etc.)	○	○	○
The condition of local facilities (e.g., play or fitness equipment, etc.)	○	○	○
The availability of organised activities (e.g., sports programs, group classes, etc.)	○	○	○
The quality of lighting (at night)	○	○	○

Other (please specify)

36. Overall, how satisfied are you with recreation and other opportunities for you and your family to be physically active?

- ○ Very satisfied
- ○ Satisfied
- ○ Somewhat satisfied
- ○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ○ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ○ Dissatisfied
- ○ Very dissatisfied

37. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the neighbourhood in relation to you and your family's physical activity?

38. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: 'I am happy to live in this neighbourhood'.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree

39. Please rate your agreement with the following statements based on how you feel about your neighbourhood

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel like I am part of the neighbourhood	○	○	○	○	○
People in the neighbourhood are friendly toward me	○	○	○	○	○
I participate in activities with people in the neighbourhood	○	○	○	○	○
I generally feel safe in the neighbourhood	○	○	○	○	○
I am happy to recommend this neighbourhood as a place to live to others	○	○	○	○	○
I connect with friends or other people in the neighbourhood via Facebook, Instagram or other social media platform	○	○	○	○	○
There are places close to home for our community to meet, gather, and share activities	○	○	○	○	○

40. Do you have any other ideas (big or small) about liveability in your neighbourhood that you want to tell us about?